



Early Black Migration
and the
Post-emancipation Black
Community in
Cabell County, West
Virginia, 1865-1871

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ABSTRACT

West Virginia's formation divided many groups within the new state. Grievances born of secession inflamed questions of taxation, political representation, and constitutional change, and greatly complicated black aspirations during the state's formative years. Moreover, long-standing attitudes on race and slavery held great sway throughout Appalachia. Thus, the quest by the state's black residents to achieve the full measure of freedom in the immediate post-Civil War years faced formidable challenges. To meet the mandates for statehood recognition established by President Lincoln, the state's legislators were forced to rectify a particularly troublesome conundrum: how to grant citizenship to the state's black residents as well as to its former Confederates. While both populations eventually garnered the rights of citizenship, the fact that a significant number of southern West Virginia's black residents departed the region suggests that the political gains granted to them were not enough to stem the tide of out-migration during the state's formative years, from 1863 to 1870.

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West Virginia's formation divided many groups within the new state. Grievances born of secession inflamed questions of taxation, political representation, and constitutional change, and greatly complicated black aspirations during the state's formative years. It must be remembered that in 1860 the black population in the Virginia counties comprising the current state of West Virginia totaled only 5.9 percent of the general population, with most found in the western Virginia mountain region.¹ Moreover, long-standing attitudes on race and slavery held great sway throughout Appalachia. As historian John C. Inscoe notes, "southern mountaineers were first and foremost southerners and they viewed slavery and race not unlike those of their yeoman or even slaveholding counterparts elsewhere in the South."² Thus, the quest by the state's black residents to achieve the full measure of freedom in the immediate post-Civil War years faced formidable challenges.

This essay builds upon the voluminous works studying the historic movement of black people in immediate post-emancipation America, and focuses on southern West Virginia where the state's largest contingent of black residents resided among the state's largest contingent of former slave owners and southern sympathizers.³ To meet the mandates for statehood recognition established by President Lincoln, the state's legislators were forced to rectify a particularly troublesome conundrum: how to grant citizenship to the state's black residents as well as to its former Confederates. While both populations eventually garnered the rights of citizenship, the fact that a significant number of southern West Virginia's black residents departed the region suggests that the political gains granted to them were not enough to stem the tide of out-migration during the state's formative years, from 1863 to 1870.

In the mid-1860s, Collis P. Huntington's decision to construct the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad from Richmond, Virginia, through the New River Valley to Cabell County, West Virginia, helped reverse black out-migration in the region. Attracted by the promise of wage-labor employment with the upstart railroad, thousands of workers, many of

them black, poured into the valley, initiating the first phase of industrial capitalism in southern West Virginia. In 1871, Huntington founded a town that took his name and became the western transshipment station for the railroad, encouraging a black influx into Cabell County. Those arriving in Cabell County, and eventually Huntington, settled among a small black residential population of farmers and agricultural workers who were too few, too dispersed, and too poor to witness much change in their lives beyond the fact that they were all now free. In the process, these migrants irrevocably transformed the nature of life and commerce in the region.

Cabell County was as far removed from Richmond and the Tidewater region as any county in Virginia, situated adjacent to the Ohio River and the western frontier. Named for William H. Cabell, the former Virginia governor from 1805-1808, the county was formed in 1809 out of Kanawha County. At first it encompassed 1,750 square miles, including all or parts of Lincoln, Wayne, Logan, Boone, Putnam, and Wyoming Counties. In subsequent years the county's political boundaries shrank.⁴ By 1867, five districts encompassing 282 square miles in the southwestern corner of the state comprised the county.

Initially drawn by its strategic location adjacent to the Ohio River near southeastern Ohio and eastern Kentucky and cognizant of the county's cheap, arable land, plentiful timber, and abundant navigable waterways, slaveholders increasingly settled in the county throughout the early to mid-1800s. Frequently accompanying them were their slaves.⁵ By the mid-1800s, the county's two main towns, Guyandotte and Barboursville, were vibrant villages. By the early 1830s, Guyandotte was hosting many river travelers as well as benefiting from the construction of a road which connected it with the James River and Kanawha Turnpike at Barboursville, the county seat.⁶ During its prime in the 1830s, the turnpike's importance as an east/west artery for all manner of travel and commerce was second only to the National Road.⁷ In effect, the road linked the county's agrarian and commercial economies to the regional and world markets, leading to increasing settlement in or adjacent to the villages throughout the mid-1800s.



Map 1.1 Western Trails of Virginia, 1780-1850. Source: Carrie Eldridge, *Atlas of Appalachia Trails*, 1998.

The road was also a conduit for the transportation of slaves to the Deep South. Traveling through southwest Virginia in the late-1830s, British geographer and geologist George Featherstonhaugh encountered the “singular spectacle” of slave drivers marshalling three hundred slaves across the New River. Forced to sing to banjo accompaniment, the slaves forded the river manacled and chained together in double files.⁸ The growing importance of the turnpike to the village and region is further revealed by the fact that Cabell County’s largest ever slave population existed during the 1830s and 1840s. In 1850 the population of Guyandotte was one thousand.⁹ By the early 1850s, the town was the termination point of a stage

line from Staunton, serving “a great many travelers, traveling either eastward or westward,” as well as “the landing place of a great number of hands in transporting salt down the Kanawha and Ohio Rivers on their return to the Kanawha Salt Works.”¹⁰ Black settlers also traveled through the town. After manumission by their owner Mary Garland in 1852 (over the wishes of her two slave-trading brothers—the Lumpkins), Lewis Brooks, his wife, and their ten children made their way from Richmond to Proctorville, Ohio, via Guyandotte.¹¹

In effect, the turnpike allowed for commerce, travel, and migration along the same lines of latitude. In its sometimes difficult westerly course, it intersected and interconnected seven counties in the Virginia piedmont and four in western Virginia before encountering the eastern edge of Cabell County. By the mid-nineteenth century the county increasingly operated as a nexus and crucible, located on the axis of the North and South, and slavery and freedom.¹² Although one scholar argued that slavery did not become a flourishing institution in western Virginia, slavery’s grip on the region actually tightened through the middle decades (1840-1860).¹³ Though small in comparison to the slave populations of Virginia’s mountain counties, Cabell County’s slave and free black populations grew throughout the middle decades. Throughout its formative years Cabell County was what Ira Berlin labeled a “society with slaves”—a society in which slaves were never central to the economy or social structure—as distinct from “slave societies” found in the rice- and cotton-growing regions of the deeper South where the political economy was inextricably woven into the fabric of the institution, and “the master-slave relationship provided the model for all social relations.”¹⁴

During the Civil War, the county, rent by the divided allegiances of its populace, was a microcosm of the protracted and fractious nature of the sectional schism that produced the natural resource-rich thirty-fifth state. In direct contrast to the state of Virginia, whose people voted to secede from the Union, Cabell County’s citizens voted to remain in it. However, the town of Guyandotte voted to secede. Thus, within the county, families and clans split,

literally brother against brother, cousin against cousin. For many, the issue of slavery was not nearly as important as the threat of Northerners to their way of life, and the social, economic, and political dominance exerted by slaveholders in the Chesapeake Bay area. Slaves within the county, like those within the region, took advantage of the fluid state of affairs during the Civil War, with many fleeing across the Ohio River to freedom.

Table 1
African American Population for Selected Virginia/West Virginia Counties, 1860-1870¹⁵

	Cabell	Green-brier	1860 Jefferson	Kanawha	Mercer	Monroe
Free	24	186	511	181	29	107
Slave	305	1525	3960	2184	362	1114
Total Black	329	1711	4471	2365	391	1221
White	7691	10500	10064	13765	6428	10536
Total	8020	2211	14535	16150	6819	10757
% Black	4.1	14	30.7	14.6	6	11.4

One contributory factor in black out-migration from the county from 1860 to 1870 is the fact that slaves in Cabell County, as well as throughout West Virginia, were not freed by the Emancipation Proclamation but by an act of the state legislature in February 1865. One scholar argues, however, that the act had little effect on the practice of slavery because blacks did not actually gain their freedom until the end of the Civil War.¹⁶ Thus, the state's black residents were forced to wait another two years after the proclamation for their freedom, certainly an exceedingly difficult proposition for many seeking to "seize the moment" and flee and/or leave the county. Indeed, white residents were sharply divided over the status of slavery in the new state constitution, but had no issue with agreeing to an exclusion policy that would ban either slave importation or free black migration into the state.¹⁷ Consequently, the question of immediate or gradual emancipation for the state's slaves had

embroiled the Constitutional Convention of 1863 in contentious debate.¹⁸ Ultimately, Lincoln's prerequisite for statehood forced the hand of state legislators who passed the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865.

The end of the Civil War only amplified apprehension within the state over the nature and extent of black citizenship. In truth, many white residents (like whites throughout the South) feared that every gain achieved by freedmen and women after the Civil War would result in a loss of white stature and authority, a difficult prospect for many trapped in the past.¹⁹ Yet, despite these sentiments, the state legislature's gradualist approach to recognizing black citizenship rights produced results. In 1866 the state legislature in Charleston took steps addressing African American citizenship, the same year legal marriages between blacks were first recognized. In 1868, though, basic rights for the state's black residents remained circumscribed.²⁰ That same year, the Fourteenth Amendment was ratified and blacks were allowed to act as witnesses in the courts. Intense debate over how to incorporate the substantial number of former Confederates who were barred from voting by test oaths ignited passions that endangered the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment.²¹ In 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment was fitfully passed, granting the right to vote to the state's African American residents. However, anger and dismay over denying the franchise to white Confederates while granting it to black residents created a backlash. As a consequence, many conservative Republicans allied with Democrats, leading to approval of the Flick Amendment, which enfranchised former Confederates. Proposed in 1870 by former Union soldier W. H. H. Flick, a member of the legislature of Pendleton County, the constitutional amendment granted suffrage to adult males and was ratified the following year.²²

Continuing Confederate sentiment, political discord, and the lack of economic opportunities during the state's formative years exacerbated the tide of black out-migration initiated by the Civil War. Historian Forrest Talbott argues that West Virginia's black population declined 13.5 percent during the decade of the war, while the number of whites entering the state during the same period

grew by 25 percent.²³ In the counties comprising southern West Virginia, another authority writes that 20 percent of southern West Virginia black residents departed the state after emancipation.²⁴ Affiliated with out-migration during the war years, black population throughout the region declined between 1860 and 1870. Although the black population of Mercer County increased slightly from 391 to 394 in the decade from 1860 to 1870, it decreased in the counties shown in Table 2.

The diary entries of white Barboursville dentist, businessman, and slave owner William F. Dusenberry show that there were also those freedmen who explored the region but remained rooted to the county.²⁵ Four years after the end of the Civil War, Dusenberry's diary details the logical nature of trips by "Black William," an employee of "Robert," who was an associate of Dusenberry, recounting eleven months of travel (including two steamboat trips up the Ohio River) conducted by him throughout the region. Black William's travels suggest three key points: first, that he possessed the capacity and resources to travel; second, that he initiated and maintained social contacts throughout the county and region; and lastly, that he possessed the ability to negotiate terms to ensure his continued well-being. Yet, while the entries reveal the freedman's mobility, they also illuminate the racist regard in which he was still held, and the potential ramifications of his travels.²⁶

Table 2
Black Out-migration in Selected West Virginia Counties, 1860-1870

	Cabell	Green- brier	1870 Jefferson	Kanawha	Mercer	Monroe
Black	123	1103	3488	2238	394	1003
White	6306	10314	9731	20111	6670	10181
Total	6429	11417	13219	22349	7064	11124
% Black	1.9	9.7	26.4	105.6	9	
% of Black Out- migration	63	36	22	5.4	n/a	18

Another traveler, visionary and itinerant railroad magnate Collis P. Huntington arrived in the village of Guyandotte in Cabell

County in early 1869 for a purpose. There is no record that he spent much if any time among Cabell County's black residents during his sojourn. Brilliant, obstinate, and indefatigable, the six-foot four-inch former "peddler and storeowner" was a man unlike any other to visit the area. From humble beginnings he had built a fortune through his association with Leland Stanford's Central Pacific transcontinental railroad endeavor.²⁷ Now, far away from his California roots, Huntington was scheduled to survey personally the largely uninhabited southern shore of the Ohio River over the course of several days. His quest: to find the perfect site for the western terminus of his recently acquired railroad, the Chesapeake and Ohio, for which he had paid a purported \$850,000. Only after a great deal of comprehensive, persuasive, and, in some cases, forceful legal maneuvers and financial negotiations did Huntington acquire control of the C & O. Availing himself of his contacts, expertise, and stature, and aware of the vast potential wealth to be made, Huntington sought and gained financial backing from both sides of the Atlantic in his quest.²⁸ As one historian relays, "Huntington was accustomed to buying legislators, inspectors, even U.S. congressmen to get what he wanted. Only Virginia's western mountain stood in the way."²⁹ One biographer, more pointed in his commentary, referred to Huntington as "a hard and cheery old man with no more soul than a shark."³⁰

Huntington, with many ex-Confederates commanding his army of workers, initiated the industrialization of southern West Virginia through the construction of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad.³¹ Though the number of whites and immigrant laborers far exceeded that of blacks in southern West Virginia during the early construction, there is no doubt that black migrant laborers were sought after and valued by railroads. As one historian notes, "Most of the 'day laborers' on the line were freed blacks from eastern Virginia who were drawn to the railroad by high wages."³² In 1871, the *Charlottesville Chronicle* complained that the Chesapeake and Ohio was draining off all the black labor in Virginia, leaving many farms and plantations neglected. As the editor affirmed, "They will listen much more readily to the agents of the railroad companies

than to the planter.”³³ As A. A. Taylor remarks, “Testimony was all but unanimous that the migrant labor was efficient.”³⁴ In 1870, the *Cabell County Press* reported, “Work has now been regularly commenced on nearly every section from Guyandotte to Charleston. There are at present about 300 negroes engaged on different sections of the work, and we learn that they make excellent hands.”³⁵

After spending weeks scouting several sites on the Kanawha and Guyandotte Rivers for his transshipment beachhead, Huntington settled on four miles of river frontage west of the Guyandotte River and the town of Guyandotte.³⁶ Here, he decided, would be the western terminus of his railroad, linking Richmond, Virginia, to the Ohio River, a dream dating back to men like George Washington, who as a surveyor saw the potential of the C & O Canal connecting the Virginia tidewater ports with the Ohio Valley.³⁷ Like Washington, Huntington envisioned America’s future in western expansion, with him at the corporate helm of his transcontinental railroad. The future West Virginia town figured mightily in his plans: its close proximity to timber, coalfields, iron mines, oil, and natural gas furnished advantages as a manufacturing center. Additionally, and of great import, it offered favorable opportunities for connections with steamboat lines to Cincinnati.³⁸



Map 1.2 Chesapeake and Ohio and Norfolk and Western Railroad lines in southern West Virginia. Source: *Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Census, 1790-1920*, by William Thorndale and William Dollarhide.

Through the auspices of his Central Land Company, Huntington purchased some five thousand acres of property, including sufficient ground for the uses of the railroad, rights of way, extensive machine and car shops, engine houses, depots, and accessory buildings for various purposes, and land on the north side of the Ohio River for the site of a planned future bridge. On February 27, 1871, the town of Huntington, West Virginia, was incorporated. The U.S. Post Office officially recognized the new town the following May.³⁹ After clearing off four miles of riverfront property, crews began construction of “a round-house, a brass and iron foundry, a blacksmith and boiler shop, a shop to build passenger cars, a large building to manufacture and repair freight cars, and a drying house for lumber,” according to historian Ronald Eller.⁴⁰

In stark contrast to the relative ease of building the transshipment station, completion of the railroad through the New River Valley proved to be a much more daunting endeavor. More than a dozen tunnels were projected, aggregating some 24,000 linear feet, more than four and a half miles. Enormous amounts of dirt and stone required removal. Miles of roadbeds adjacent to West Virginia’s rivers had to be raised above flood level. To carry out his plans Huntington needed millions of dollars and thousands of laborers to cross to the rugged mountains of the southern part of the state. Black southerners played an integral and vital role felling forests, raising roads, driving spikes, and blasting tunnels. In fact, not more than 125 miles southeast of the town, in the primeval wilderness of the New River Valley, a stout and skilled John Henry, along with nearly 1,000 men, most of them African American, constructed the mile-long Big Bend Tunnel, “then the longest tunnel in America at the time of its completion.”⁴¹ From the sweat and blood of black people, native-born whites, and European immigrants, the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway advanced from Virginia to the Ohio River. By 1871, the railroad employed 5,000 black workers, with Huntington serving as the center of much of this activity, with more than a 1,000 men employed in various projects in the immediate proximity of the town.⁴² In 1873, Huntington completed his railroad, linking the Ohio Valley with the Kanawha and New River Gorge,

and Richmond further east.⁴³ In effect, black migrants, seeking to improve their lives by negotiating and navigating through what Joe W. Trotter Jr. calls “the dynamics of industrial capitalism,” transformed the industrial labor force of southern West Virginia and Cabell County.⁴⁴

As a white boy of fourteen, A. W. (Alex) Hamilton worked in early 1870 on the construction of the West Virginia extension between White Sulphur Springs and Hawk’s Nest (near Charleston). Hamilton, who was born and raised near the James River and Kanawha Turnpike, recalled that “all the stone workers were Irish,” illuminating the importance of immigrant labor to the railroad. His recollections also show the importance of black labor to operations and the nature of their employment:



Image 1.1 Drivin' Steel. [Photograph]. Blacks from rural areas of the upper south helped to lay track for the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad through the New River Valley, connecting Richmond, Virginia, to Huntington, West Virginia. Retrieved July 19, 2011, *John Henry: The Steel Drivin' Man*, from: <http://wvencyclopedia.org/exhibits/12?section=1>. Courtesy of C&O Historical Society, Clifton, VA.

The actual construction of the extension was begun in the early spring of 1870, and the whole of the extension from White Sulphur Springs to what is now the City of Huntington seems to have been laid out in sections, contracts awarded, and work began almost simultaneously, as work seemed to be going on at the same time for the entire distance, the labor being negroes from Virginia and North Carolina, which were brought on the trains to White Sulphur Springs, where they began the long trek on foot over the James River and Kanawha turnpike (now Midland Trail) to the point or points where they were to work. These gangs would run from one to three hundred, accompanied by “chuck-wagon” and the boss or bosses in charge.⁴⁵

Overwhelmingly composed of single men, work gangs frequently existed on the frontier in isolated work camps. Notably, though, some of these camps grew into enclaves, boom towns, and even communities, with many named after railroad officials: Alderson, Crozet, Talcott, Thurmond, Huntington, and Parsons, to name a few. Addressing the establishment of shanty towns affiliated with the work camps, one historian writes, “Many of these shanty towns developed into permanent communities with stores, churches, and schools serving the needs of construction crews.”⁴⁶ Importantly, life in the work camps provided opportunity. Extended periods of isolation afforded time to save substantial sums of money. Many black laborers acquired enough money to purchase farms when the road they were working on was completed. Many also acquired skills and took great pride in blacksmithing, masonry, tunneling, and mining.

Yet, despite the acquisition of skills and improved self-confidence, and the state’s loyalty to the Union, much of post-emancipation West Virginia remained beholden to southern mores which perpetuated negative perceptions and attitudes of black capability and progress. Shortly after the war, the new state had enacted two segregation laws, one against intermarriage and the other against interracial

schools. Despite the impediments, political agitation, while muted, was one method the state's early black residents used to address the complexity of the new era. Providing support to Stephen D. Engle's contention that "politics became the chief instrument by which freedom could be realized, since it served to bring local mandates in line with national legislation," in the fall of 1870, black men voted for the first time in Cabell County, when fourteen, comprising 26 percent of the total black voting population, cast their ballots in the state election of 1870.⁴⁷ On October 22, 1870, William F. Dusenberry noted black-voter excitement in his diary, "Election today. Much excitement on account of niggers voting."⁴⁸



Image 1.2 The C&O Line. [Photograph]. East portal of Great Bend (or Big Bend) Tunnel. Courtesy, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC.

That year, though, only a small and dispersed black residential population resided in the county (see Map 1.3). A few still possessed the surnames of prominent Cabell County white families: for example, Black, Kilgore, Jenkins, and, most prominently, Morris. Scattered throughout the county's five districts of Barbourville, Guyandotte, Union, Grant, and McComas were seventy black adult females and fifty-three adult males, including twenty-five mulattoes and sixty-six children under the age of eighteen. The 123 African American pioneers residing within the county represented 1.9 percent of the general population. Being mindful that African Americans residing in West Virginia born before the war would have cited their birthplace as Virginia, fifty-eight were West Virginia natives, forty Virginian, six hailed from North Carolina, three cited Ohio as home, two were from Kentucky, and one person each cited Tennessee, South Carolina, and Louisiana as their birth state. The broad nativity illuminates the encompassing impact of the slave trade and migration on the county's black experience. Unfortunately, the 1870 federal census fails to cite familial or household relationship.⁴⁹



Map 1.3. Five Districts of Cabell County, 1870. Source: Carrie Eldridge, *Cemeteries of Cabell County, West Virginia*, vol. 2.

Examination of the black residential population within the various districts provides insight into the economic status of early black settlers in the county. In 1870, the district of Barboursville, the county seat and the most affluent white district, encompassed territory that abutted the other four, and stretched from the Cabell-Wayne county line in the west to the Union district line in the east. Combined black wealth, comprising real estate and personal assets, totaled \$415. No blacks owned real estate, and personal assets averaged \$46 per black household. Average white-household real-estate value in Barboursville was \$2,439; personal assets averaged

\$610 per household. Average white- household size was 5.7 persons while average black-household size was five, with the households of Benjamin and Mandalay Morris and Patsey Dean, with seven individuals each, comprising the largest. The district included forty-five nonwhites in 1870, twenty-three blacks and twenty-two mulattoes, out of a total population of 1,228. Within the town of Barboursville resided fourteen blacks and 371 whites. Nine African American households are listed, including two sets of Morrises, the only familial relationship (along with the George Morris household in McComas) listed in the 1870 census.⁵⁰

Eighty-five-year-old Virginia-born farm worker Samuel Morris possessed a personal estate valued at two hundred dollars. His household included Louisa, a twenty-eight- year-old housekeeper; Ester, thirty; and Henry, twenty-two, the only West Virginian. Not far away lived his mulatto sister, Eliza Morris, a sixteen-year-old live-in domestic servant. The thirty-two-year-old West Virginian Benjamin, a farmworker, headed the other Morris household with Mahala, his wife, a housekeeper and state native. Together, the two had a personal estate listed at one hundred forty dollars, two daughters, Ann and Mary, aged eight and two, respectively, and sons, Moses, Charles, and William, aged six, four, and three months.⁵¹

Located at the junction of the Ohio and Guyandotte Rivers south of Greenbottom, the district of Guyandotte encompassed the oldest part of Cabell County and contained its second most affluent population. Out of a population of 2,095, it, not surprisingly, also housed the largest number of nonwhites within the county—thirty blacks and twenty-four mulattoes. Here resided the county's most affluent black residential population. Combined black wealth totaled \$1,128, with blacks possessing \$645 in real estate and personal wealth and the mulatto population holding \$483. Interestingly, \$375 of real estate (inheritance?) was owned by sixteen-year-old farmworker and student Richard David.⁵² All six of the black children attending school in the county were from Guyandotte.⁵³

Real-estate holdings for the 365 white households in Guyandotte totaled nearly \$817,000 and over \$183,400 in personal assets.

White-household average real-estate holding was \$2,238; personal assets averaged \$503 per household, totals slightly below those of Barboursville's white population. Nine black households, the same number as in Barboursville, resided within the district. However, the size of nonwhite households was greater than those found in the remaining districts. The average household size in Guyandotte was six (compared to 6.2 persons per white household). Six of the nine black households in Guyandotte consisted of five individuals. Three held more than six persons, including that of Virginia-born John and Luella Shaver, aged twenty-six and twenty-four, their nine-month-old daughter Mary W., David, and Olive, aged twenty-three and eighteen, and Eurginge, a one-year-old girl. Two households held more than eight persons, the largest nonwhite households in the county, including that of Elijah and Virginia Tucker, with eight, and James and Julia Farrist, with ten.⁵⁴

The largest district, Union, in the northwest and lying east and west of State Road #2 leading from Greenbottom on the Ohio River to the Mud River, was home to only one black household, that of previously mentioned former Cabell County slave and current farmworker Anderson Ross (Rose) and his longtime companion, former Cabell County slave and servant Mary Lacy, both thirty-five and West Virginia born, and three children, fifteen-year-old farmworker George, twelve-year-old Christina, and three-year-old mulatto John P. Although schools were in the area, neither George nor Christina attended, suggesting that either their value to household maintenance precluded school or the racial dynamics of the area precluded the possibility. The state did not pass any provision addressing the funding, appropriation, and enumeration of Negro schools until 1872. These five lived among 972 whites in a rural, predominately agricultural area, a situation rendering unlikely a separate school for black people. And a similar geographic, demographic, and social circumstance existed in Grant Township, in the northeast corner of the county, adjacent to Lincoln County, where two nonwhite, native-born households resided. Mulattoes William and Margaret Coalman shared one with their two young children, aged two and one. Thirty-year-old William was a railroad

worker while twenty-seven-year-old Margaret, who could neither read or write, worked as a domestic servant. Forty-seven-year-old Rosa Jourdan, who could neither read nor write, headed the other household. These five resided in a township of 980 whites.⁵⁵

McComas, located in the southern part of the county, straddling the Guyandotte River, was home to ten nonwhites, nine blacks and one mulatto, eleven-year-old Henry Smith. These ten resided within a total population of 1,149. George and Nancy Morris, fifty-two and fifty-five, respectively, maintained a household consisting of four other children. George, an illiterate farmworker and Nancy, a housekeeper, possessed a personal estate valued at a remarkable \$1,215, a sum nearly four times higher than any other black household in the county, and an amount greater than the total reported wealth of the county's remaining black population.

The large size of some households, the age differentials between members, and the differing surnames within them were typical for black (and even white households) of the era, and provide evidence of the power of kinship and social networks in 1870 Cabell County. One historian recognized the significance of this trait: "It is clear that, in rural southern society, the nuclear family frequently co-habited within a larger, rather flexible household. Moreover, neighboring households were often linked by ties of kinship. These linkages helped to determine very specific (but by no means static) patterns of reciprocal duties among household members, indicating that kinship clusters, rather than nuclear families, defined women's and men's daily labor."⁵⁶ Charlestonian Mrs. Fay Peters Gamble Davis, discussing the continuity between the slave-era origins of her family and the intergenerational family/kinship networks binding its members, remarked, "The first generation of Peters had qualities of being strong, loving and fond of children. These qualities seem to have been handed down through the generations. For instance, my nephew Andrew Peters, adopted his sister-in-law's child when a burgular [*sic*] killed her mother while she was decorating her Christmas tree, and also another little girl. Also, it was customary to name a son for a brother. Joseph [her grandfather] left no sons, but there are several Joseph Peters named after him."⁵⁷

Black households comprised diverse kin, generational, and racial configurations impacting economic status for better and worse. The three Morris households, containing seventeen individuals, nine adults and eight children, controlled personal estates worth an extraordinary \$1,555, a sum exceeding the \$1,203 amassed by the county's remaining seventeen African American households. None of the five school-age children within the Morris households attended school. The household of thirty-three-year-old West Virginian and Barboursville resident Patsey Dean included sixteen- and seven-year-old Frederick and Henry Wheatfield, thirteen-, eight-, and five-year-old Marcellis, Susan, and Charles Mills, and two-year-old Anabelle Price, all from West Virginia. None of the school-age children attended school. The household of Virginia-born Elijah and Virginia Tucker included the following family members: fifty- and fifty-one-year-old Virginians Jupiter and Virginia Vivey, sixteen- and eleven-year-old Lupita and Leah Vivey, from West Virginia and Virginia, respectively, twelve-year-old West Virginian Rose, and eleven-year-old Virginia-born Henry Blake. Leah, Rose, and Henry attended school.

Though no longer shackled to the institution of slavery, in 1870 work and land still bound the county's black residents to a particular lifestyle which, when combined with their low numbers and dispersed population, largely precluded school attendance. Moreover, the lack of interest by the state legislature did nothing to help matters. But, importantly, given their economic realities, the county's African Americans did not confront patronage or tenant farming as African Americans did in Virginia and throughout the South, as a transitional economic system.⁵⁸ Thus, it is probable that the absence of racially based economic systems helped to facilitate the development and institutionalization of wage-labor capitalism in Huntington.

One of the first black men to acquire employment with the C & O Railroad was Nelson Barnett, who attained a position of foreman in the section from White Sulphur Springs (West Virginia) to Huntington before he was ordained.⁵⁹ Barnett's great grandson, Nelson Barnett Jr., citing oral tradition within the family, believes

that the elder actually met and established some type of relationship with C. P. Huntington which assisted his eventual employment.⁶⁰ In the spring of 1871, just months after the incorporation of Huntington, West Virginia, the thirty-one-year-old itinerant preacher arrived in the village with a group of black migrants from Buckingham County, Virginia. Like so many before them, this group had traveled the James River and Kanawha Turnpike to traverse the Appalachian Mountains before arriving at their destination. After spending some time preaching at churches throughout the Ohio Valley, Barnett had acquired a job on a then upstart railroad, and then walked back to his home in Buckingham County. There, he spread the word to friends and family of “honest work to be had” on the railroad. Soon, he explained, Huntington would be a key station of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, and jobs and other blacks would surely follow.⁶¹

Against the above backdrop of postwar sociopolitical, cultural, and economic transition, migration, by its very nature, frequently left migrants exposed and vulnerable. As the state with the highest average elevation of any state east of the Mississippi River, navigation through West Virginia was difficult, with the New River Valley especially hazardous terrain. One writer described the valley as “a howling wilderness.”⁶² On his ten-day journey west to rendezvous with his stepfather in Charleston, West Virginia, Booker T. Washington noted that “the travelers had to descend from the high cliffs along the New River gorge to the riverbed, cross the river, and push up a steep trail to the heights on the other side.”⁶³ Washington further reflected on the arduous nature of such ventures:

All of our household and other goods were packed into a wagon drawn by two horses or mules. I cannot recall how many days it took us to make this trip, but it seems to me, as I recall it now, that we were at least ten days. Of course, we had to sleep in the wagon, or what was more often true, on the ground. The children walked a good portion of the distance.

One night we camped near an abandoned log cabin, and my mother decided that, instead of cooking our frugal meal in the open air, as she had been accustomed to do on the trip, she would build a fire in this cabin and we should both cook and eat in it during the night. When we had gotten the fire well started, to the consternation of all of us, a large and frightful looking snake came down the chimney. This, of course, did away with the idea of our sheltering ourselves in the cabin for the night, and we slept out in the open air, as we had done on previous occasions.⁶⁴

Common features of early black migration included: 1) the initial exploratory trip performed solo by a young black male on foot or horseback; 2) evaluation, sometimes over extended periods of time, of a prospective locale; 3) a return trip to retrieve family and/or friends, or the relaying of word through a third party for them to come; 4) preparation for the move; and finally, 5) migration. Extended periods of isolation or separation compelled mindfulness of one's place, geographically and socially. In his study on black migration to McDowell County, West Virginia, Howard P. Wade relays, "Since strange blacks were suspect once they left the community in which they were known, it was a dangerous undertaking."⁶⁵

In truth, once one crossed over the Appalachian Mountains, farms and small towns dotted the region, forming an almost continuous link into the Kanawha and Ohio River Valleys. Surely, a number of black migrants were able to take advantage of the formal and informal informational network provided by freedmen and freedwomen. Although the *specifics* of the migrant experience might have differed, the general conditions of the aggregate did not. Black agency (as well as social interactions between blacks and whites) in post-Civil War Cabell County, like the South, was constrained for years by paternalistic attitudes. In fact, many whites never adapted to the changes emancipation wrought. Certainly, this was true in Cabell County, West Virginia, as it was throughout the shattered

South. And, given the lingering Confederate sympathies permeating a significant proportion of the county's and region's white population, black migrants challenged the historical status quo in their quest to build lives. With their worldly possessions tightly secured, tens of thousands, many composite families, embarked, in wagon and on foot, to distant destinations, frequently outside of their native states.⁶⁶ Recalling conversations with the descendants of early Huntington's black migrants, local black historian Edna Duckworth recalled that many times she heard, "My family came over the Blue Ridge in a wagon. I heard it so often until I wondered, was it a wagon train?"⁶⁷

As indicated, the vast majority of black migrants engaged in purposeful, frequently informed journeys, yet many newly freed blacks, lacking a clear destination or perceived to lack one, were seen as threats to civil society. Frequently, whites conflated unstructured and seemingly recreational movement of the newly emancipated with aimlessness.⁶⁸ Migrant and former Huntington resident, historian Carter G. Woodson challenged the portrayal of newly emancipated black men as wayward, hedonistic, and corruptible, as well as the rationale behind it. In the aftermath of the demise of the "peculiar institution," unfettered travel and joyful expression, he argued, were merely the natural expressions of emancipation by the African American "to put his freedom to a test." Thus, it is understandable that, for a time, the profundity and intensity of liberation was interpreted by black people "not only as freedom from slavery but freedom from responsibility."⁶⁹ In truth, as another historian more pointedly wrote, many blacks moved about "for little reason other than that they now had the *freedom* to move."⁷⁰ Any understanding of the county's (and Huntington's) nascent black migrant population lies in examining the means and ways William, and the others above, adapted to their new freedom. Perhaps Charles S. Johnson summarized it best: "After all, it means more that the Negroes who left the South were motivated more by the desire to improve their economic status than by fear of being manhandled by unfriendly whites. The one is a symptom of wholesome and

substantial life purpose; the other, the symptom of a fugitive incurageous opportunism.⁷¹

What is clear is that, on the heels of the Civil War and emancipation, blacks and whites, for reasons both linked and separate, departed Virginia (and West Virginia). Emancipation precipitated significant change throughout Cabell County. After the war, the county's total population had declined from 8,020 in 1860 to 6,429 in 1870. Yet, due to increasing land values associated with the established territory, and because the county had remained largely untouched by the war, the value of its 160,500 acres had only fallen slightly, from 1.68 million dollars in 1860 to 1.55 million in 1870, a negligible drop compared to the tobacco-growing counties of central Virginia.⁷²

Yet the value of personal assets per white household in the district of Guyandotte dipped from \$1,192 to \$503, a fact partially attributable to the damage inflicted to the town during the war, white migration, and the loss of the town's 101 slaves, a loss that mirrored the dramatic drop in the county's black residential population, from 329 in 1860, including 24 free blacks, to 123 by 1870.⁷³ Interestingly, tobacco production nearly doubled during the decade as more people, eyeing increased profits, shifted to tobacco and away from corn and wheat.⁷⁴ Thus, in 1870, Cabell County's economic foundation was firmly entrenched in agriculture.⁷⁵ Too poor to acquire land, the vast majority of the county's black population faced the uneasy and long-term prospect of working it to achieve their goals.

Given Nelson Barnett's calling, native intelligence, and persuasive powers, it is easy to imagine his group seeking guidance and counsel through prayer before making their decision. Eventually, James Henry Woodson, Barnett's brother-in-law, agreed to join him. Other able-bodied men joined in and eventually, after packing their belongings and as many people as they could onto Woodson's horse-drawn wagon, the "family" began the journey west from the farmlands of New Canton, Virginia. Six years after the end of the Civil War and eight years after West Virginia obtained statehood, the assembly (composed of Barnett, his twenty-five-year-old wife,

the former Betty Woodson, their three young children, Carter, McClinton, and George, James Henry Woodson, family friend Anderson Radford, and perhaps others) arrived in the town.⁷⁶

A few months before the end of the Civil War, James Woodson was a slave in Fluvanna County, Virginia, when he learned that Abraham Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation. Woodson fled his master and later came under the protection of Union soldiers, during which time he assisted in raids upon Confederate soldiers and storage facilities. After the war, Woodson returned to Fluvanna County, and shortly thereafter married former slave Anne Eliza Riddle of New Canton, Buckingham County, Virginia. (During the war, Riddle had watched over her mother and siblings, and through her efforts ensured the family remained intact and safe during the transition from slavery to freedom). The couple moved to New Canton and eventually became the parents of nine children, the youngest of whom was Carter G. Woodson.⁷⁷

After her marriage to James Woodson in 1869, the couple and relatives moved west across the Appalachians where the men hoped to gain employment with the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad or in the coal mines. Woodson acquired work at a railroad construction site on the western section of the railroad close to where Huntington would eventually rise. In 1870, the family moved back to Buckingham County where they would reside before deciding to migrate to Huntington in 1871.⁷⁸ Surely, the travails and successes of the past informed, guided, and fortified their efforts as they traveled west to the dusty hamlet located on the Ohio River. There, they, like thousands of other black migrants in immediate postbellum America, built a life.⁷⁹ In their efforts, they were unremarkable, merely participants in the long-standing historical process of movement and migration. Yet, in no small way, they were pioneers, perhaps even heroes. The first generation of migrants entering the town after its incorporation arrived at a propitious time. In 1870, Huntington possessed no black churches or schools, no black stores or restaurants, and no black elected officials in the town or county.⁸⁰ The efforts of the Barnett and Woodson families, as well as others, to rectify this situation would shape Huntington's social, cultural,

economic, and political development throughout the late-nineteenth century.

NOTES

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1. According to Thomas E. Posey, *The Negro Citizen of West Virginia* (Institute, WV: The Press of West Virginia State College, 1934), 5, the black population totaled 21,144: 18,371 slave and 2, 773 free. The white population totaled 355,526.
2. John C. Inscoe, *Race, War, and Remembrance in the Appalachian South* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 24.
3. Representative works include Carter G. Woodson, *A Century of Negro Migration* (1918; repr., New York: Russell and Russell, 1969); W. E. B. Dubois, *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (1935; repr., New York: Athenaeum, 1977); Nell Irvin Painter, *The Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas after Reconstruction* (1976; repr., Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1986); Ronald L. Lewis, "From Peasant to Proletarian: The Migration of Southern Blacks to the Central Appalachian Coalfields," *Journal of Southern History* 55 (Feb. 1989): 77-102; Earl Lewis, *In Their Own Interests: Race, Class, and Power in the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Jacqueline Jones, *The Dispossessed: America's Underclass from the Civil War to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1992); and Joe W. Trotter Jr., *Coal, Class, and Color: Blacks in Southern West Virginia, 1915-1932* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), and "The Formation of Black Community in Southern West Virginia Coalfields," in *Appalachians and Race: The Mountain South from Slavery to Segregation*, edited by John C. Inscoe (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 284-301.
4. In 1824, Logan County was formed, followed by Wayne County in 1842, Boone in 1847, Putnam in 1848, and lastly by Lincoln in 1867.
5. In Kenneth Noe's article "Appalachia's Civil War Genesis: Southwest Virginia as Depicted by Northern and European Writers, 1825-1865," *West Virginia History* 50 (1991): 98, he cites historical geographer Edward K. Muller's model of regional growth which provides helpful perspective by describing three distinct phases of regional development. In the "pioneer" phase, settlers established communities far removed from commercial markets. Low population and the time and energy required to establish homes and farms hindered the development of agriculture beyond subsistence needs. Transportation was confined to a few natural routes. However, with increasing settler influx and population growth, communities passed into a second "specialized" phase. Intra- and

interregional connections improved, resulting in increasing settlement and the beginnings of commercial agriculture and manufacturing. In the final “transitional” phase, national transportation and marketing systems, especially railroads, integrated communities into the national economy.

6. Joe Geiger Jr., “The Tragic Fate of Guyandotte,” *West Virginia History* 54 (1995): 29.
7. Carrie Eldridge, *An Atlas of Appalachian Trails to the Ohio River* (Huntington, WV: CDN Printing, Inc., 1998), 29, Special Collections, Cabell County Public Library, Huntington, WV. See also J. W. Miller, “History of Barboursville Community,” accessed on July 17, 2008, available from <http://www.wvculture.org/history/agrext/barbours.html>.
8. Kenneth W. Noe, “A Source of Great Economy? The Railroad and Slavery’s Expansion in Southwest Virginia, 1850-1860,” in *Appalachians and Race*, 109. For further insight, see Wilma A. Dunaway, “Put in Master’s Pocket: Cotton Expansion and Interstate Slave Trading in the Mountain South,” in *Appalachians and Race*, 116-32.
9. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Compendium* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1854), 357.
10. *Extracts from the Records of the County Court of Cabell County, West Virginia, from January 2, 1809 to July 6, 1863*, Minute Book No. 6, 167.
11. *Ironton Register*, Nov. 12, 1896; Frances B. Gunter, “Barboursville” (n.p., 1986), 21, West Virginia & Regional History Collection, West Virginia University Libraries, Morgantown. See also Miller, “History of Barboursville Community.” Steamboats also offered autonomy and opportunity not found on land. Sometime in the late 1820s or early 1830s, thirteen-year-old fugitive slave Joseph Jones obtained work as a “deck sweep” on a steamboat passing Point Pleasant, Virginia, on its way to Cincinnati. By the end of his three-year term, during which he traveled frequently to small towns on both sides of the Ohio River housing small black populations such as Gallipolis and Burlington, Ohio, and Point Pleasant and Ripley, Virginia, Jones had learned to read and write, as well as “advanced far enough in arithmetic to take care of his accounts, that is, he had mastered the four fundamentals and that was considered a good education in that day.” See John L. Jones, “The Story of the Jones Family,” *History of the Jones Family*, edited and annotated by Nancy E. Aiken and Michel S. Perdreau (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, Inc., 2001), Local History, Athens County Library Services, Nelsonville, OH, 3-27.
12. For a more expansive examination of the black experience in antebellum Cabell County, see Cicero M. Fain III, “Race, River, and the Railroad: Black Huntington, West Virginia, 1871-1929” (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2010), 20-73.
13. Alrutheus A. Taylor, “Making West Virginia a Free State,” *Journal of Negro History* 6, no. 2 (Apr. 1921): 132.
14. Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 8.

15. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Statistics, vol. 1, *Ninth Census of the United States, 1870* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1852), 71-72.
16. Ancella Radford Bickley, "Black People and the Huntington Experience," in *Honoring Our Past: Proceedings of the First Two Conferences of West Virginia's Black History*, edited by Joe W. Trotter Jr., and Ancella Radford Bickley (n.p., [1991]), 132, Special Collections, James E. Morrow Library, Marshall University, Huntington, WV (hereafter cited as MUSC).
17. Inscoe, *Race, War, and Remembrance*, 30. See also Richard O. Curry, *A House Divided: A Study of Statehood Politics and the Copperhead Movement in West Virginia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1964), 91-92.
18. Forrest Talbott, "Some Legislative and Legal Aspects of the Negro Question in West Virginia during the Civil War and Reconstruction, Part 1," *West Virginia History* 24, no. 1 (Oct. 1962), 15. Refuting arguments (while simultaneously denigrating Negroes) by those fearful that the state would soon be overrun by free Negroes, Senator Waitman T. Willey stated in the state Constitutional Convention of 1863, "There is nothing in the soil or climate of West Virginia to attract a free negro, but much to repel him. Besides, the kind of labor which will be required here, will not be of a character to induce his employment."
19. Willie Lee Rose, "Masters Without Slaves," in *Slavery and Freedom*, edited by William W. Freehling (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 89. See also Howard N. Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).
20. Talbott, "Some Legislative and Legal Aspects of the Negro Question," 31.
21. An 1867 *New York Herald* editorial on the question of Negro suffrage, reprinted in the *Union Register* of southern West Virginia's Monroe County (Nov. 9, 1867), undoubtedly articulated the views of many whites. "Shall this continent be given up to barbarism for a fanatical experiment and a party scheme? This and none other, is now the question before the American people. Shall we throw away what we have have [sic] acquired of science and civilization, blot out our history, give up all aspirations of the future, that the nigger may become supreme and restore the land to that happy state of nature in which Africa now is? Is Africa such a magnificent evidence of the nigger's greatness that the example of its history should induce us to change our system for his?"
22. Phil Conley, *West Virginia: A Brief History of the Mountain State* (Charleston, WV: Charleston Printing Co., 1940), 86-87. Also see John Sheller, "The Negro in West Virginia before 1900" (PhD diss., West Virginia University, 1954), 192-93.
23. Talbott, "Some Legislative and Legal Aspects of the Negro Question," 9. Throughout the Ohio River Valley, blacks fled to northern towns and cities during the war. According to Joe Trotter (*River Jordan: African American Urban Life in the Ohio Valley* [Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998], 56), "In rising numbers, fugitive slaves and free blacks left the Confederate states and moved into Union territory. Under the impact of

wartime migration, Louisville's black population dramatically increased from 6,800 to nearly 15,000, Cincinnati's rose from 3,730 to 5,900, Pittsburgh's from less than 2,000 to 3,200; Evansville's from no more than 100 to 1,400."

24. Ken Sullivan and Randy Lawrence, "Black Migration to Southern West Virginia, 1870-1930," *Goldenseal* (Winter 1997), 52. On page 9 in his "Legislative and Legal Aspects," Talbott notes that "the decidedly unfriendly attitude of the white people in general, and limited economic opportunities prevented Negro immigration for a few years after the War." See also Stephen D. Engle, "Mountaineer Reconstruction: Blacks in the Political Reconstruction of West Virginia," *Journal of Negro History* 78, issue 3 (1993): 140.
25. Joe Geiger Jr., *Civil War in Cabell County, West Virginia, 1861-1865* (Charleston, WV: Pictorial Histories Publishing Co., 1991), 2-3.
26. Carrie Eldridge, *Looking at the Personal Diaries of William F. Dusenberry of Bloomington, Virginia, 1855, 1856, 1863, 1871* (n.p., 1998), Huntington, West Virginia: KYOWVA Genealogical Society, 13-14, 16, 18-19, 31-32, 40.
27. For more on Huntington, see Cerinda W. Evans, *Collis Potter Huntington, 2* (Newport News, VA: The Mariner's Museum, 1954) and David Lavender, *The Great Persuader* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1970).
28. See Charles V. Bias, *A History of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad Company and Its Predecessors, 1784-1977* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1979), 85-100, Transportation Library, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL. See also Lavender, *The Great Persuader*; Ronald D Eller, "Mountain Road: A Study of the Construction of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad in Southern West Virginia, 1867-1873," (Master's thesis, University of North Carolina, 1973); and Scott Reynolds Nelson, *Steel Drivin' Man: John Henry, The Untold Story of an American Legend* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2006).
29. Nelson, *Steel Drivin' Man*, 5.
30. Eller, "Mountain Road," 73.
31. See George Selden Wallace, *Huntington through Seventy-five Years* (Huntington, WV: 1947), 77, 79-80. Among many ex-Confederates employed by the railroad in positions of authority in the New River Valley were Claiborne R. Mason, Colonel T. M. R. Talcott, General Williams C. Wickham, and Cabell County resident and one-time sheriff, George McKendree.
32. Eller, "Mountain Road," 47.
33. Ibid.
34. A. A. Taylor, "The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia [Part 1]: The Migration," *Journal of Negro History* 11, no. 2 (Apr. 1926): 339.
35. *Cabell County Press* (Guyandotte), Apr. 18, 1870.
36. See Bias, *History of the Chesapeake and Ohio*, 105. According to James E. Casto's *Huntington: An Illustrated History* (Northridge, California:

- Windsor Publications, Inc., 1985), 23, a popular story conveyed through the years by locals is that Guyandotte lost the terminal due to an incident that occurred when Huntington and his party visited the town, and tied their horses to hitching posts to go explore the town on foot. Huntington's horse backed around on the sidewalk obstructing passing pedestrians and compelling the mayor to fine Huntington five dollars. For this outrage, Huntington moved the terminal downriver. See also *Herald Dispatch*, Dec. 24, 1895.
37. Evans, *Collis Potter Huntington*, 517.
 38. According to Casto (*Huntington: An Illustrated History*, 14), "The years 1830-1930 are generally considered by river historians to be the 'century of the steamboat.'" C. P. Huntington did prove to be prescient. As Leland R. Johnson (*An Illustrated History of the Huntington District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1754-1974* [Washington, DC: GPO, 1977], 77), explains, even four years after its founding, the city was already hailed as one of the most important ports on the Ohio River. The city's importance as a river port and freight transshipment point continued to the point that Huntington was recognized as the nation's "greatest inland port by the mid-twentieth century."
 39. Casto, *Huntington: An Illustrated History*, 23-25; Evans, *Collis Potter Huntington*, 525-26; Lavender, *The Great Persuader*, 272.
 40. Eller, "Mountain Road," 43.
 41. Louis W. Chappell, *John Henry: A Folk-Lore Study* (1933; repr., Port Washington, NY: Kennicutt Press, 1968), 57. Recent scholarship strongly suggests the veracity of John Henry's existence. However, the nature of his employment has shifted from railroadman to tunneler, a position requiring greater skill and possessing greater danger. For more about John Henry, see Guy B. Johnson, *John Henry: Tracking down a Negro Legend* (New York: AMS Press, 1969) and Brett Williams, *John Henry: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983). Scott Reynolds Nelson's *Steel Drivin' Man* may have put to rest discussion on the true identity of John Henry. Nelson convincingly argues that John Henry was John William Henry, born in 1847 in Elizabeth City, New Jersey, was convicted of housebreak and larceny and sent to the Virginia State Penitentiary. His skeleton was unearthed at the penitentiary with those of about three hundred prisoners. Further, Nelson contends that Henry did not work on Big Bend but on the nearby Lewis Tunnel.
 42. See Eller, "Mountain Road," 43, and Charles Turner, "The Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad in Reconstruction, 1865-1873," *North Carolina Historical Review* 31, no. 1, (1954): 165.
 43. *The Ironton (OH) Weekly Journal*, Feb. 28, 1873. Among the public ceremonies commemorating the event was one in which a barrel of water from the James River was poured into the Ohio River at Huntington. See Charles Henry Ambler, *West Virginia: Stories and Biographies* (New York: 1937; repr., Rand McNally & Co., 1942), 354.
 44. Trotter, "Formation of Black Community," 284.

45. A.W. (Alex) Hamilton, "Early Recollections of the Beginning and Completion of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway between White Sulphur Springs and the Ohio River as to the Vicinity in and around Hawk's Nest," 1, Charles Austin Goddard Papers, 1857-1942, Reel C103, Pos.c.1, Mss1G5412a, Manuscript Collection, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.
46. Eller, "Mountain Road," 50.
47. Engle, "Mountaineer Reconstruction," 165.
48. Eldridge, *Diaries of William F. Dusenberry*, 22.
49. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Ninth Census of the United States, 1870* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1872).
50. Ibid.
51. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1864). While not conclusive of a previous master-slave relationship, it is certainly suggestive that three separate white Morris households are listed as slave owners in 1860. The 3 households of John, owner of 12, Charles, owner of 4, and James, owner of 3, totaled 19 bondspersons.
52. *Ninth Census of the United States, 1870*.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid. John Shafer is listed as John Shaver, aged 26. *The Tenth Census of the United States, 1880*, lists him as John Shaffer, aged 38. See the U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Tenth Census of the United States, 1880* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1880).
55. Ibid.
56. Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1995), 84.
57. Mrs. Fay Peters Gamble Davis, "The Thomas Peters Family History," *Celebrating Our Roots: Origins of Black Families in West Virginia*, edited by Elsa Mae Davis (Dunbar, WV: McKnight's, Inc., 1976), 7, Vernon R. Alden Library, Ohio University, Athens.
58. For a fuller discussion on the development of patron/patronage in Buckingham County, see Diane Swann-Wright, *A Way out of No Way: Claiming Family and Freedom in the New South* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 23-42.
59. Rick Baumgartner, "First Families of Huntington," reprinted from *Huntington Advertiser*, 18 part series, Oct. 28, 1976-Mar. 24, 1977, 26, MUSC.
60. Nelson L. Barnett Jr., interview by author, May 17, 2002, Columbus, OH, transcript in possession of author.
61. This composite history is drawn from: Mrs. Callie Barnett, interviewed by John Cyrus and Lowell Black, Nov. 2, 1972, Huntington, WV, MUSC; *Huntington Advertiser*, July 10, 1974; Rick Baumgartner, "First Families

- of Huntington,” MUSC; Bessie Woodson Yancey, *Echoes from the Hill: A Book of Poems* (Washington, DC: Associated Publishers, 1939); Doris Miller, *A Centennial History of Huntington, 1871-1971* (Huntington, WV: Franklin Printing Co., 1981); Casto, *Huntington: An Illustrated History*; Jacqueline Anne Coggin, *Carter G. Woodson: A Life in Black History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993); Edna Duckworth, *A Black History of Huntington*, edited by Lana Gillespie Boggs (n.p., [1990]), MUSC; Nelson L. Barnett Jr., “Seven Generations of Barnetts: A Short History,” in *Honoring our Past*, 318-20, MUSC; Trotter, “Formation of Black Community,” 284-301; Nelson L. Barnett Jr., interview; Nelson L. Barnett Jr., Colonel Riddle Genealogical Chart (n.p., n.d), transcript in possession of author; *Huntington Herald Dispatch*, Feb. 9, 2004; and *Tenth Census of the United States*, 1880.
62. Louis Chappell, *John Henry: A Folk-Lore Study* (Frommannsche Verlag: Walter Biedermann, 1933), 59.
 63. Raymond W. Smock, *Booker T. Washington: Black Leadership in the Age of Jim Crow* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2009), 24.
 64. Booker T. Washington, *An Autobiography by Booker T. Washington: The Story of My Life and Work* (Atlanta, GA: J. L. Nichols & Co., 1901), 21.
 65. Howard P. Wade, “Black Gold and Black Folk: A Case Study of McDowell County, West Virginia, 1890-1940” (Ph.D. diss., University of Miami, 1990), 38.
 66. Rebecca A. Shepherd, in her article, “Restless Americans: The Geographic Mobility of Farm Laborers in the Old Midwest, 1850-1870,” *Ohio History* 89, no. 1 (Winter 1980), 26, states, “Demographer Everett S. Lee hypothesizes that the tendency of an individual to migrate is affected by the number of positive and negative factors at both origin and destination, as well as the number of obstacles to be surmounted in moving from one location to another. Lee argues that the urge to migrate is particularly strong in a country possessing regions of some diversity, or an unexplored frontier. In such situations the normal inertia of residential persistence is overcome by the desire to migrate to take advantage of perceived opportunities at the new location.”
 67. Duckworth, *A Black History of Huntington*, 3.
 68. In 1875, the *Huntington Advertiser* (Apr. 15) argued that incorrigible and impoverished black men, known as “roosters,” intoxicated on their liberty but aimless in ambition, populated the region.
 69. Carter G. Woodson, *A Century of Negro Migration (New York: Russell and Russell, [1918] 1969)*, 117, 118.
 70. Jerrold M. Packard, *American Nightmare: The History of Jim Crow* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002), 40.
 71. Charles S. Johnson, “How Much Is the Migration a Flight from Persecution?” *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* 1, no. 9 (Sep. 1923): 272.
 72. The Statistics of Wealth and Industry, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Ninth Census of the United States, 1870* (Washington, DC: GPO), 2

73. *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, and Ninth Census of the United States, 1870*.
74. Statistics on Cabell County crop production are as follows: tobacco—1860, 65,587 lbs.; 1870, 135, 410 lbs.; corn—1860, 240,210 bushels, 1870, 167,600 bushels; wheat—1860, 65,715 bushels; 1870, 42,592 bushels (The Statistics of Wealth and Industry, *Ninth Census of the United States, 1870*).
75. Wallace, *Cabell County Annals and Families* (1935; repr., Baltimore, MD: Clearfield Co., Inc., Richmond, VA, 1997), 65.
76. Barnett, “Seven Generations of Bernetts: A Short History,” 318-20; Barnett, interview; Baumgartner, “First Families of Huntington”; Duckworth, *A Black History of Huntington*, 3; “History of the Church,” *116th Anniversary of First Baptist Church* (n.p., 1988), 1, MUSC.
77. Charles H. White, *The Hidden and Forgotten: Contributions of Buckingham Blacks to American History* (Marceline, MO: Walsworth Press, 1985), 83-84.
78. *Ibid.*, 84-85.
79. *Ibid.*
80. Cicero M. Fain III, “The Forging of a Black Community: Huntington, WV, 1870-1900” (master’s thesis, Ohio State University, 2003), 39.