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A.G. Webber
Illinois Wesleyan University

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THE PURSUIT OF A DREAM:
MOBILITY IN THE LABORING CLASS OF EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY BLOOMINGTON

A.G. WEBBER
ILLINOIS WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY
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PREFACE.

I would like to thank the members of my Senior Research Honors Committee--Professors Sue Anderson, Paul Bushnell, John Heyl, and Jerry Israel--for all of the invaluable assistance and criticism they have given me. Especially,

Sue Anderson for taking time out from her regular duties to teach a mechanical incompetent with a visceral fear of complicated technology how to run the computer. The computer was a big part of this study, and Dr. Anderson's patient help was outstanding.

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Jerry Israel, my mentor for these four years at Illinois Wesleyan, for the whole idea in the first place.

A. T. Webb

THE PURSUIT OF A DREAM:

MOBILITY IN THE LABORING CLASS OF EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY BLOOMINGTON

> American legend has it that the United States has long been the "land of opportunity" for the common man. No other society has so often celebrated social mobility, none has made a folk hero of the self-made man to quite the same degree. The idea of the distinctive fluidity of our social order has been a national obsession for more than a century.[1]

> The predominence of ungrounded assumption over hard knowledge about past societies reflects partly the traditional concerns of historians, who have been more interested in politics, great men, governmental policy, and ideas than in the patterns made by the everyday lives of people.[2]

Searching for the underlying reality in the "land of opportunity," especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, has become one of the most significant and rapidly developing areas of American historical research. The myth of America as a place where the ambitious man was free to make his fortune through hard work and enterprise has been enduring, albeit little subject to scrutiny. The possibility of social and economic advancement for all men is central to a society styling itself as liberal, democratic, and capitalistic. In the early years of the twentieth century, this possibility was firmly held in the popular imagination. America is a nation of immigrants, drawn by the possibility of a better life. Free men laboring in a free economy, released from the class discriminations of the Old World, made the "land of opportunity" what it was. The popular evangelists of ready wealth, from Horatio Alger to Samuel Smiles preached this social gospel; the lives of the Carnegies and Rockefellers bore its witness. But aside from the great men, what could ordinary laborers expect as their reward? It was never maintained that everyone could achieve the maximum that the society promised. But is was also never con-

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[1] Stephan Thernstrom, Poverty and Progress, (New York: Atheneum, 1975), p.1.

[2] Michael B. Katz, The People of Hamilton, Canada West, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), p.8.

sidered that any hard worker was doomed to the minimum, regardless of his efforts to advance his station.

Working with the lot of laborers in the mid-nineteenth century, Stephan Thernstrom in Newburyport, Massachusetts, and Michael Katz in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, have found that the popular promise of social mobility in the New World was in fact fulfilled, but not to the degree we have traditionally believed. Arriving separately at careful, and sometimes surprising conclusions, Thernstrom and Katz found that for the stolid hard worker, a certain measure of success was possible, maybe even at times probable; and if the contemporary view of their gains is that they were small, it was not a view shared by those earnest laborers.

Yet there are problems with their findings, at least in regard as to how far they can be generalized. Both Newburyport and Hamilton presented special situations. In the middle and late periods of the last century, both cities had begun to stagnate under the influence of more successful neighbors, Boston and Toronto respectively. A city experiencing relative decline could not be expected to present the same opportunities for mobility that a thriving, growing metropolis would. Further, neither city was a part of that essential American experience, the frontier. Newburyport was a old Yankee fishing village and mill town, Hamilton a part of British Canada. This must serve to abstract both a certain degree from what might be considered the more typical American situation, at least as far as the place for fortune-making is concerned. Finally, both studies are set in the nineteenth century. The promise of mobility did not die with the _fin de siecle_, but rather might even be seen as strengthened in what was becoming a fully industrialized nation and awakening world power. In the Middle West, industrial heart of the nation, the old frontier, was the dream of mobility for the laboring man alive and well in the first two decades of the twentieth century?

Bloomington, Illinois, in the years between 1902 and 1922 will be the subject of the present study, much in the manner of Thernstrom and Katz. Utilizing a random sample of Bloomington's

unskilled day laboring class, the fortunes of almost two hundred men wil be compared to the myth of social mobility over the twenty-year period. They were workers at the very bottom of the economic ladder, with no where to go but up. It must also be assumed that they occupied the lowest level of the social order too, so that their lives would be the acid test of the economic and social system. In a word, Horatio Alger will again be put to the empirical examination.

Initially, the economic situation of Bloomington, most especially the composition of industry, will be examined in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, followed by accounts of the lives of men who labored in Bloomington during the latter era. Then various measures of social and economic mobility will be discussed and presented in a statistical fashion. Finally, the validity of the findings for Bloomington will be examined both in comparison to the work of Thernstrom and Katz, and to the larger society of the period.

MANUFACTURING IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BLOOMINGTON.

> The City Council of Bloomington induced Eliel Barber to bore for coal in 1863, but only black shale was found...in 1867, the McLean County Coal Company opened a shaft at the junction of the Chicago & Alton, the Lake Erie, and the Big Four railroads. More mines were worked, one at 302 feet and the other at 540 feet.[3]

Bloomington, during the middle and late nineteenth century was not noted as a heavily industrialized community. As early as the 1870's, the Daily Pantagraph was reduced to complaining that it could not find even five local citizens who did not sell insurance. This, of course, is not to say that there existed no industry in Bloomington in which the laborer could seek employment. The Civil War had left Bloomington with a highly diversified mixture of predominately light industry. Much of this in-

[3] H. Clay Tate, The Way It Was in McLean County 1972-1822, (Bloomington, Ill: McLean County Historical Society, 1972), p.190.

dustry was intimately connected with supplying the needs of the surrounding agricultural countryside.[4] Before the Civil War, businesses had produced plows and reapers to farm the prairie sod, wagons to haul grain to the mills that had opened, and clothing and medicines to fight the violent Illinois winter.[5] Bloomington was chiefly the market for the farmers of McLean County, and the opportunities for the urban laborer were marginal, given the structure of the local economy.

But growth did come. By 1870 over 17,000 lived in Bloomington. Out of this naturally grew construction and service industries supplying consumer goods from saddles to cigars. Most importantly, the railroad had arrived to ship McLean County's crops to distant markets, and coal was needed to fire the locomotive boilers, not to mention the homes and businesses of the resident population. Bloomington, in 1870, was for the the unskilled laboring man a mining town. All of central Illinois rested upon a deep, rich lode of bituminous coal, and most cities in the area had operating shafts. The mines in Bloomington were located in the northwest part of the city, near the railroad tracks (for easy access), and provided work for over 700 miners,[6] making it by far the largest employer of unskilled labor. The McLean County Coal Company employed around 200 of the miners, many of them Irish, German, and Swedish immigrants for $3.50 to $4.00 per day.[7] The miners were considered clannish and wild by polite Bloomington society. In 1870, the Daily Pantagraph sourly noted that the area around the mines was the "Five Points of Bloomington" famous for the "pure cussedness of its residents."[8] Aside from the mines, brick-making and the railroad were major

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[4]Much of the following discussion about Bloomington industry is based on U.S. Census material. See Appendix 3 for a complete listing of the Bloomington industrial employment picture at this time.

[5]Tate, p.173.

[6]Louise A. Lange, "The Social and Economic History of Bloomington, Illinois, 1870-1874", (Master's thesis, University of Illinois, 1939), p.21.

[7]Lange, p.23.

[8]Lange, p.8.

sources of employment. Five brick-making establishments employed about 100 men, as did the infant railroad. The Chicago & Alton railroad had opened locomotive repair shops just north of the mines. Other important Bloomington industries were carriage-making, patent medicine formulation, and flour-milling. Few of these industries employed more than a dozen workmen. The Bloomington industrial laborer could expect an average daily wage of $1.50 (the miners were relatively well-paid) at a time when a pair of men's boots sold for $2.00 to $10.00, a shave and a haircut two bits, and a beer a nickel.[9] At the same time in Newburyport, Thernstrom found the price of houses ranged from $300 to $1,000, the average being about $600.[10] It would be doubtful that housing was dramatically less expensive in Bloomington. Clearly, the laborer who remained a laborer faced a grim economic reality by almost any standard of measure, even if his wife and children worked. This, of course, was by no means peculiar to Bloomington. A man might survive in such an existence, but certainly not get ahead.

Through the late decades of the nineteenth century, the overall economic picture of Bloomington remained about the same. The coal mines remained a large employer although they had entered into a long and slow decline that would terminate in their closing in the late 1920's. Brick-making retained its premier status among small industry. Carriage-making and patent medicines began to be eclipsed, but foundries and printing shops moved in to take up the economic slack, representing industries of more promise in the twentieth century. The most important change that took place in the character of the local labor market was caused by the railroad. Bloomington civic leaders had lobbied long and hard with the Chicago & Alton railroad, donating land, approving bonds, and finally outbidding the city of Chicago as the location for a major repair depot, manufacturing facility, and freight yard on the

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[9] Lange, pp.23, 29.

[10] Thernstrom, p.118.

northwest side. The Chicago & Alton grew to employ almost 2,000 skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled workingmen by the eve of World War I. Here was represented a large-scale employer offering to the laborer the possibility of training and advancement. For many Bloomington laborers in the early twentieth century, the Chicago & Alton shops were a central factor in the process of mobility.

Between 1880 and 1900, the population of Bloomington grew from 17,476 to 23,528. Such growth is always accompanied by expanding opportunities in the industries that provide goods and services to the new residents, and in 1900, Bloomington counted 185 different manufacturing concerns catering to their needs. But what did this mean in terms of advancement opportunities for the unskilled laborer? A clear-cut answer is hard to determine. These industries were in the greatest part very small concerns and that would tend to militate against the availability of jobs opening for even workers possessing special skills. Among the large-scale employers of unskilled labor--the mines, the railroad, and the brickyards--competition for jobs must have been keen. Louise Lange found several instances of "hard times" throwing laborers out of work and freezing employment opportunities. The awesome rate of transiency among laborers, a subject to be explored in detail later, also gives evidence that Bloomington by no means offered unlimited prospects. Only as a matter of inference, it can be said that the economic situation facing the Bloomington laborer of the nineteenth century was one of only moderate growth and opportunity for mobility through employment.

MANUFACTURING IN BLOOMINGTON, 1902-1922.

> ...I entered the Chicago & Alton shops and served my time as a machinist apprentice receiving 5¢ an hour for a ten hour day. After four years of this, I became a full-fledged machinist.[11]

In any reckoning of the overall economic situation in Bloom-

[11] Joseph Schneeberger, "The Chicago & Alton Shops," in Home Town on the Cornbelt, ed. Clara Louise Kessler, vol. IV, p.24.

ington in the first two decades of the twentieth century, especially in regard to the specific economy of the working class, the shops of the Chicago & Alton railroad in the northwest corner of the city are of great significance. Soon after the turn of the century, the Chicago & Alton shops began to undergo a rapid expansion, so that by 1910, almost 2,000 workers were employed in skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled positions. Locomotives and rolling stock were repaired, and finishing work done on passenger coaches. Contemporary estimates placed the number of persons connected with the railroad either as employees, families of employees, or otherwise directly associated, at around 8,000, which would represent about one-third of the total Bloomington population.[12] But the importance of the railroad shops cannot be measured by size alone. Here was a place where an unskilled laborer could find work that was steady and moderately well-paid, but more importantly, offered ready chances for occupational advancement. Machinists, electricians, carpenters, steamfitters, etc., were all in demand at the Chicago & Alton and the railroad was willing to train the lucky few. This was precisely the situation in which the upwardly mobile laborer had to place himself.

Besides the railroad, several other industries were available to the laborer. Builders and contractors employed nearly 1,000 laborers of varying skills. Certainly the turn of the century had seen a boom in the Bloomington construction industry. A disastrous fire of June 19, 1900, destroyed the downtown section of the city, taking the county courthouse and reducing many square blocks of businesses and homes to piles of rubble. The rebuilding was completed in about two years, and Bloomington's moderate population growth meant only moderate opportunities in this particular industry. Though declining, the coal mines continued to provide work for about 500 miners, and the same number of individuals engaged in the cigar-rolling trade in several dozen small establishments around town. While not a promising job, cigar-making was easily learned and usually the operations could use another hand, paid on a piece-work basis. Like the mines, the cigar

[12]Tate, pp.173.

trade was headed for decline in the 1920's, owing to the growing popularity of cigarettes. Rounding out the major employers of laborers were two foundries, several printers, a tilemaker, and a number of flour mills.[13] Again, most of these industries remained rather small, and the expansion of employment opportunities was slow.

Referring to the great fire of 1900, the preface to the 1902 edition of the Bloomington City Directory noted that the city had demonstrated its underlying economic strength by the rapid recovery it had effected after the calamity. But it went on to caution against considering Bloomington a "boom community", rather as one where growth was "steady and deliberate." This was accurate, if perhaps optimistic appraisal of the general economic situation that prevailed in Bloomington in the early twentieth century. For the laborer, the growth of a community meant jobs in an expanding market, and unfortunately such growth as Bloomington did experience was only moderate. Between 1900 and 1920, the total population of Bloomington increased from 23,528 to 28,768, having reached 25,768 in 1910. This represented a 9.7% increase between 1900 and 1910, below the average for comparable Illinois communities.[14]

Undoubtedly, this would reflect negatively on the local job situation, and prompt laborers in Bloomington to emigrate to other localities where the "boom" was going strongly. Further, census reports show a decline in the number of laborers employed in manufacturing during this same period. While the census numbers do not reflect all laborers at work in the community (refer to Appendix 3 for those types of manufacturing included), they do provide a consistent and accurate barometer of the contraction or expansion of the labor market as a whole. The number of laborers employed in the surveyed industries in Bloomington stood at 2,850 in 1900, dropped to 2,495 in 1910, and recovered to 2,818 by 1920. These numbers, coupled with the population growth in the same period, point to a relative decline in the employment opprotunities available to the laborer. It is difficult to explain why this occurred. The era was, of course, marked by financial panics in 1907 and

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[13] Tate, pp.174-175.

[14] See Appendix 4 for comparative data, and a summary of U.S. Census figures gathered for Bloomington in the period under consideration.

again in 1913; America's entry into World War I rekindled the national economy, but this of course slowed down in 1919. A possible clue may be found in the trend to consolidation found in industry at the time. In Bloomington, the total number of manufacturing establishments fell from 185 to 107 to 83 in 1900, 1910, and 1920 respectively. This can be viewed as part of a national trend in industry, the rationalization of the American economy. In the nineteenth century and on into the early twentieth, Bloomington, like most cities, had its own butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers, not to mention coal mines and brickyards. But with the march of technology and the development of economies of scale, the local cottage industries died out, taking their jobs with them. In central Illinois, Bloomington was becoming a loser, its relative industrial base in decline.

This is an admittedly incomplete picture of manufacturing in Bloomington in the early twentieth century, partly descriptive and partly speculative. However, it would seem safe to conclude that opportunities for advancement in Bloomington between 1902 and 1922 were limited, especially when compared to what might be had in other communities nearby, given what we know about relative rates of growth. Bloomington was growing in a "slow and deliberate" manner, and for the ambitous laborer, so were the chances for mobility. Opportunities for social and economic advancement were not lacking, but they were not available to all, and this fact was one of the chief determinants of social mobility in Bloomington.

THE LIFE OF THE LABORER IN BLOOMINGTON.

> My father worked hard all of his life, real hard. But I guess we were always poor.[15]

Manufacturing must be reagrded as the *sine qua non* of occupational, economic, and social mobility for the turn of the century laborer. The workingman needed, above all else, to find

[15] Interview with Mrs. Adeline Barnard and Mrs. Edna Buck, Bloomington, Illinois, 12 November 1977.

a job in an industrial concern that could offer him security and advancement. This was true for a number of reasons. The unskilled workingman, having no attachment to a local industry was forced into day labor. Whether digging ditches or carrying hods, such employment would neither be secure nor well-paid. It also inclined the laborer to transiency, as he looked for steady employment, and as will be seen, transiency formed a major barrier to economic mobility. The laborer needed to break the cycle of drifting from job to job, day by day if he was to get ahead. Industry offered the only possibility.

Why industry? For the urban laborer, almost any road to success was blocked from the beginning by circumstance. To farm required a large capital outlay and a knowledge of agriculture. Central Illinois by the early twentieth century was by no means the frontier, and the days of cheap land were gone forever, especially in McLean County. It must also be remembered that the years immediately prior to World War I were a time of unparalled farm prosperity. Agriculture was no longer open to all, now that there was money to be made in it. The unskilled laborer had neither capital nor special knowledge, and both would have been in large amounts. Much of the same is true for opening one's own business. The laborer lacked money for rent and inventory, and lacked the skill to operate successfully. Entry into the professions required an expensive and time-consuming education which the laborer could not afford. The typical unskilled laborer had been born poor (or why would he be a laborer?), with any easy road to success closed to him. The old saying that it takes money to make money was amply demonstrated by the position of the laborer.

Thus a job in industry was sought. To find a job in such a place as the Chicago & Alton shops, the P.H. MaGirl foundry, etc., would mean steady and reliable work paying an adequate wage. Further, these industries offered the promise of occupational advancement to skilled positions through on-the-job training. Not every worker could achieve all this, but the possibility was there. For the laborer lacking skills and money, industry offered the only avenue of acquiring both through hard work. So this is where our attention must be directed.

The west side of Bloomington had always been regarded as the "laboring section" of town. Many of those who worked in the coal mines or the Chicago & Alton shops lived near their work, and consequently, the northwest section of the city was almost totally laboring class. It also had a significant number of immigrants.[16] In the years following the Civil War, Irish immigrants had settled in Bloomington, living on the west side and working in the mines and the then fledgling railroad. By the turn of the century, however, the Irish and their descendants had left the west side for the more fashionable northeastern part of town. They had, by and large, left the shops and mines too, at least in so far as they no longer had the laboring jobs but had moved into management positions. Contemporaries claimed that by the early twentieth century, nearly all of the Chicago & Alton foremen and managers were Irish. But their historical presence lingered on in the west side of Bloomington, whose residents, now Germans, Hungarians, and Swedes, were collectively known as the "West Side Irish."[17]

To gain an even clearer understanding of the life of the laborer in Bloomington at the turn of the century, what amounts to short case studies will now be undertaken. The lives of two German immigrants who settled in Bloomington will be described to show in human terms what the promise and process of social mobility meant.

Living on the west side near the Chicago & Alton shops, on Mulberry Street, was the German immigrant laborer Herman Mittelstaedt.[1] He had left Germany at age nineteen and made his way to LaPorte, Indiana, where he worked on a diary farm. He had not planned to stay in LaPorte, however, and soon departed for Bloomington, where, lacking both skills and money, Mittelstaedt found work as a helper in a bakery, followed by stints as a deliveryman and a ditchdigger. In 1905, he found work in the coal mine. Mittelstaedt remained

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[16]Foreign-born comprised about 20% (4,086 of 20,484) of Bloomington's population in 1890. See Appendix 4.

[17]The description of turn-of-the-century Bloomington is based on a combination of material gathered in interviews with contemporaries and the Kessler volume. Certain specific citations are included where appropriate.

[18]Interview with Mrs. Barnard and Mrs. Buck, Herman Mittelstaedt's daughters. The author wishes to express his grateful appreciation for all of their help.

with the coal mine for twelve years, when he quit and began work in the Chicago & Alton shops. Working seven days a week, he would, as a boilermaker helper, climb into the great boilers of the locomotives and scrape off the accumulated scale. To supplement his pay, his two daughters worked part-time after school as soon as they were able. Though always a hard and conscientious worker, Herman Mittelstaedt never advanced occupationally beyond his unskilled position with the railroad.

One cannot say, however, that Herman Mittelstaedt achieved no measure of success. In Thernstrom's analysis, simple upward occupational mobility was only one criterion of success. The laborer might own property, or simply hold a steady job when previously he had worked on a day to day basis. Any or all of this would give evidence of mobility. The Mulberry Street neighborhood was composed predominately of German immigrant laborers. Most of these laborers, including Mittelstaedt, owned their own homes through the good offices of Giese the grocer, himself a German immigrant, who loaned money for the purchase of real estate. Most of the homes were small, three or four rooms, with a yard enclosed by a fence, which contained a pig or a cow along with some chickens. A vegetable garden was usually planted in the back. Some of the streets in the area were brick, most of dirt which was muddy or dusty depending on the weather. The Republican city government balked at providing the immigrant Democrats with such things as paved roads, not to mention sewers, water, and street lights. But the immigrant laborers on the west side had achieved self-sufficiency with steady employment and homes which they owned.

Frederic Klawitter and his wife arrived in Bloomington after leaving Germany in 1884.[19] He had saved a small sum of money, and purchased two lots on the south side of town near the end of Madison Street, near his brother, who had immigrated some years before. While relatively uninhabited when Klawitter arrived, the south side too began to fill up with German immigrants until its resi-

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[19]Interview with Miss Frieda Klawitter, Bloomington, Illinois, 25 October 1977. Miss Klawitter is the daughter of Frederic Klawitter. Again, the author wishes to express thanks for the kindness shown him in researching this study.

dents became known as the "South Hill Dutch." With what money he had left, Frederic Klawitter built a three room house on one of his lots, and sent for relatives still living in Germany. Within a few years, parents, grandparents, and children totalling nine persons lived in the Klawitter house. Frederic Klawitter labored at various odd jobs--janitor, pressroom worker, construction laborer--and his wife took in laundry. In 1899, while working as a printer's helper, he earned 50¢ per week, which rose to $1.50 after two years. His children began work as soon as they were able. The Klawitters also grew vegetables in the yard, and raised pigs and chickens. Sugar and flour were the only staples regularly purchased. Like Herman Mittelstaedt, Frederic Klawitter owned his own home, but unlike Mittelstaedt never found steady employment. Yet he stayed in Bloomington, apparently finding something better than what he had left.

In these last two cases, the stabilizing influence of the immigrant community should not be underestimated. But its influence eventually waned, especially during World War I. In 1910, the Bloomington Americanization School was founded to aid recent immigrants in the city in learning English and American history in preparation for citizenship.[20] Meanwhile, a German-American society had been formed to put on parades and dances. The Lutheran Church conducted services in English and German, and the nuns at St. Joseph's Hospital spoke German to the sick. When the war came, the Americanization School experienced its busiest years, as fearful immigrants sought to shed their European identity, the German-American society disbanded, and the ethnic nature of the neighborhoods declined.

For the native-born American the story was often different. W.B. Clooney, whose parents immigrated from Ireland, was born in Chenoa, Illinois in 1879. He quit high school his senior year, and drifted among odd jobs until he learned that the Toledo, Peoria, and Western railroad was looking for telegraphy trainees. He learned telegraphy, but went with the railroad to Pontiac as a baggageman, then ticket agent. In 1911, he quit the Toledo, Peoria, and Western railroad, and joined the Chicago & Alton as chief ticket

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[20] "The Bloomington Americanization School", in Kessler, vol. I, pp.279-280.

agent in Bloomington, in the process becoming part of the supervisory elite of the railroad.

Joseph Schneeberger, quoted previously (p.6), when he began work at the Chicago & Alton shops, was born in Bloomington in 1886. He was able to complete high school, holding his first job in a 5¢ and 10¢ store at age fourteen. He was paid $2.50 per week, very good wages for a young man stocking shelves. He stayed there for three years, when he entered the railroad shops, remaining there for the rest of his life. Schneeberger was able to secure an apprenticeship, and by age twenty-one had become a skilled worker, a machinist. Why did Joseph Schneeberger (who eventually rose to foreman) obtain an apprenticeship that made possible promotion into the elite of skilled laborers, while Herman Mittelstaedt did not? By definition, a skilled trade requires training of the type an apprenticeship provides; here it made the difference between advancement and a life of unskilled labor. Whether age, anti-immigrant prejudice, or simply luck was the deciding factor cannot be discerned from available sources.

Earlier, the paramount importance of employment in a manufacturing industry was discussed as the vehicle for the laborer's advancement. This is not to say, however, that other means to social and economic mobility were not attempted. As a general rule, however, these ventures were not often successful for reasons already discussed. To return for a moment to Horatio Alger, it is to be recalled that many of Alger's up-from-the-slums heroes made their fortunes in their own businesses with luck, pluck, and plenty of hard tugging at the bootstraps. Laborers in Bloomington, too, attempted to run their own businesses, typically low-capital service ventures ranging from purchasing a horse, cart, and shovel, and then advertising as a contract excavator, to the rooming house business. How available credit and capital was to laborers is unknown, although the evidence of this survey indicates that it must have been very difficult to obtain. The other option for the laborer was white-collar employment by someone else. Both of these avenues to success usually ended in failure.

Charles Adreon and Frank Hotchkiss were unskilled laborers but by 1909 and 1905 respectively, they had opened pool halls.

Their capital came from unknown sources, and both jumped directly from laboring to managerial status. By 1911, both had left Bloomington their pool halls defunct.[21]

Marion Baker had been a seemingly prosperous laborer, consistently having large personal property tax assessments. In 1905, he opened a rooming house, the Baker House Hotel, and soon had assessments comparing favorably with the professional population of Bloomington. However, some time after 1920, he too left town and the Baker House Hotel folded.

These three individuals are examples of the five laborers in this survey who struck out in business on their own. None achieved any lasting success, but none who failed returned to laboring in Bloomington--instead they usually left town. This is interesting, but its meaning is unclear. Did they leave seeking better business opportunities elsewhere? Did they flee creditors? Did they hear of more promising manufacturing jobs out of town? One cannot answer these questions with certainty, given the available information.

Turning to laborers in non-manual positions employed by others, the story is much the same. Frank Salch worked for thirteen years as a bartender, but left Bloomington in 1917. John Morrissey did stay in town and in 1911 became a travelling salesman, one of almost 400 based in Bloomington. He accumulated a modest amount of property. A black man, William Thomas provides an interesting case. He worked as a laborer around town until 1905, when he went to work with the section gangs for the Chicago & Alton. By 1907, he had been appointed a city police patrolman, but disappeared four years later.

What has been presented here has been an impressionistic portrait of the laborer's Bloomington in the early twentieth century. Glimpses of the factories, the neighborhoods, the immigrants and the laborers provide a human background against which aggregate statistical discussions take place. It can always be shown that what is true generally may be false specifically in dealing with societies. Bloomington sixty years ago was a different place from what it is today--more industry, more immigrants, more people on the down and

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[21]The following case studies were taken from cities directories as a part of gathering information used in this study.

out. And here is where much history and sociology has stopped, in description and impression, in generalization from individual cases. In an appendix to Poverty and Progress, Thernstrom undertakes criticism of what is an essentially ahistorical analysis of the past. While finding that sketches of "fictive persons" provide some insight into the process of social mobility, he cautions, "one grave limitation of the composite drawings (i.e. generalizing from certain specifics) is that they were constructed without regard for scientific canons of verifiability, in a manner which allowed the biases of the author to operate unchecked. Even more important is the fact that they were presented without supporting quantitative data of any kind."[22] To avoid this error, what now must be done, having described the stage on which the social drama is played out, is to quantify the process as it took place.

THE EXTENT OF TRANSIENCY.

> Although the historical rhythm of geographic mobility remains unclear, one fact has been established. The internal movement from place to place within past societies was astonishingly high, a conclusion which holds for a varied collection of places throughout a long span of time.[23]

Transiency, for the purposes of this study the movement of laborers out of Bloomington, was one of the major factors in the life of the earlier twentieth century laborer. It effected their opportunities for finding a job promising advancement, and what achievements, it any, they attained while employed. We believe that America today is a mobile society. This was true of America yesterday, possibly to an even greater degree. This, of course, conflicts with the popular myth of the American past as a time when communities were stable, and people knew their neighbors. Bloomington, at least its laboring class of the early twentieth century, was anything but stable. Table 1 illustrates the surprising rate of transiency among laborers in Bloomington. The rapid turnover of laborers in the sample is readily apparent, especially in the early years.

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[22]Thernstrom, p.234.

[23]Katz, p.119.

Table 1. Number of Laborers Dropped from Sample.

1902-	43%	(79/183)
1902-1904	31%	(32/104)
1904-1905	14%	(10/72)
1905-1907	14%	(9/62)
1907-1909	13%	(7/53)
1909-1911	17%	(8/46)
1911-1913	3%	(1/38)
1913-1915	11%	(4/37)
1915-1917	21%	(7/33)
1917-1919	8%	(2/26)
1919-1920	21%	(5/24)
Not dropped	10%	(19/183)

Total of 183 in sample. Percentages indicate laborers leaving from diminishing totals in parentheses. With 19 of an original 183 remaining after 20 years, a persistence rate of slightly over 10% is yielded.

Considering the number of laborers who disappeared between years in which samples were taken, some truly surprising numbers result. From these figures, it is quite obvious that the laboring population of Bloomington was an ever-changing, volitile group. The myth of the stable American city is shattered when over 60% (111/183) of those laborers originally included in this sample had left town in less than two years. Further, the overall population of Bloomington increased throughout the period studied. This is no absolute loss of population. Even if job opportunities were only moderately expanding or stable during this period, the outward migration from the city does not necessarily indicate the elimination of laboring jobs. To carry the speculation to an extreme, it is doubtful that if the number of laboring jobs were actually declining, they would decline in such a sudden and wholesale manner. The only possible conclusion is that typically laborers floated in and out of Bloomington, arriving in town, working at odd jobs for a years or two, and then moving on. One might make an analogy to a university, where the total number of students remains relatively stable, doing the same "job," while the composition of the student population is always changing at a rapid rate.[24]

Where did these laborers go? Death only accounts for about 5%

[24] To carry the university analogy further, (but to get ahead of myself), a point might be made about the length of time spent at a university and ultimate occuaptional advancement achieved. This will be seen to be true of laborers (re length of time), but more study is needed for students.

of the number dropped. Thus we are left with the 95% of those laborers who left Bloomington for parts unknown. To track them down would be an impossible task. Only by examining the population rolls of every city in America could the ultimate destination of those laborers who left Bloomington be determined. Another point must now be considered. We know that the laborer tended to be unstable in regard to residence in any particular city. But what of residence inside a city? Would the laborer be any more stable within a city during the time he spent in it. Table 2 suggests that even within Bloomington, the laboring population moved about.

Table 2. Address Changes By Laborers from Year to Year.

	No Change from Previous Year	Change	Total(N)
1902	100%	0	183
1904	60%	40%	104
1905	72%	28%	72
1907	69%	31%	62
1909	61%	39%	53
1911	78%	22%	46
1913	84%	16%	38
1915	72%	28%	37
1917	78%	22%	33
1919	85%	15%	26
1920	83%	17%	24
1922	100%	0	19

Early on, laborers tended to be quite mobile within Bloomington, while as years passed the more stable members of the laboring population constituted a larger part of the sample. But it must be remembered that these stable laborers were a minority. If the behavior of the "average" laborer could be described, it would entail not only movement in and out of the city, but also of transiency within Bloomington itself, moving from one address to another, one neighborhood to another. One impression gained from the data may help explain at least partially this phenomenon. Often the laborer tended to change local addresses about as frequently and at about the same time as he changed jobs. These were days when cars and buses were almost non-existent (it is inconceivable that the unskilled or even skilled laborer of that time would own an auto) and street cars limited in their usefulness. More often than not, the laborer walked to work.

If a study would be made of change of employment, addresses, and locations of employment, I would strongly suspect that correlations could be drawn between location of dwellings and places of employment.

After twenty years, only 10% (see Table 1) of the original number of laborers remained in Bloomington. As a group, the Bloomington laboring population was undergoing constant and large-scale emigration and replacement. The effect this had on the laborer's chances for social mobility was of great importance.

TRANSIENCY, OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY, AND THE LABORER.

> The ordinary workman of Newburyport, in short, could view America as a land of opportunity despite the fact that the class realities which governed their life chances confined most of them to the working class.[25]

The two factors of transiency and occupational mobility are invariably connected, each influencing the other, but in ways that are not always readily apparent and demonstrable. Further something of a chicken-and-egg problem exists here. The experience of laborers can be quantified only for the time they remained in Bloomington. Once the laborer left town, nothing more can readily be learned about him. Thus while discussing occuaptional mobility and transiency, facts must be drawn from a group of stable laborers, i.e., those laborers residing in Bloomington in any particular year. There is no other way, save the previously mentioned national survey. What the vast majority of laborers needed to attain occupational advancement was employment in a steady job at a local industrial concern. Only by remaining with that job, it stands to reason, could the laborer hope to achieve either the training necessary for more skilled positions, or a raise in wages, or both.

Table 3 breaks down the occuaptional attainments of Bloomington laborers by their years of residence in the city. A very close correlation can be observed between stability and occupational advancement, and transiency and non-advancement.

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[25] Thernstrom, p.164.

Table 3. Cumulative Occupational Totals, 1902-1922.

	Unskilled	Semi-skilled	Skilled	N/M self	N/M oth.	Total
1902	100%	0	0	0	0	183
1902-1904	90%	6%	1%	1%	2%	104
1902-1905	83%	7%	3%	4%	3%	72
1902-1907	77%	7%	8%	5%	3%	62
1902-1909	73%	10%	8%	6%	4%	53
1902-1911	67%	11%	11%	4%	8%	46
1902-1913	62%	16%	13%	3%	5%	38
1902-1915	64%	17%	11%	3%	6%	37
1902-1917	59%	19%	13%	3%	6%	33
1902-1919	62%	19%	11%	4%	4%	26
1902-1920	62%	21%	8%	4%	4%	24
1902-1922	58%	26%	11%	0	5%	19

This table represents frequencies of occupatioal status among all laborers sampled still in Bloomington an any particular year. For example, figures for the 1902-1909 group represent the occupational attainments of all 53 remaining in Bloomington, for the year 1909. N/M self refers to those self-employed in non-manual occupations, and N/M oth. refers to non-manual positions in the employ of someone else. See Appendix 5 for types of jobs classified as unskilled. etc.

These figures summarize much of what has been said thus far about the laborer in regard to transiency and occupational mobility. The extent of transiency is readily evident in the rapidly declining totals of laborers remaining in the sample. Roughly half have left within two years and again a third of the remainder in the next. A winnowing process is at work here, separating the transient from the stable laborers. In a catagorical analysis, it is simple to see the relationship of the variables.

Among unskilled laborers, there is initially a steady decline in both their absolute and relative members. Of all laborers, those who were unskilled and remained unskilled were the most likely to leave Bloomington. Yet they also continue to compromise about 60% of the laboring class for nearly half the period in question. Should this lead us to believe that six of ten laborers who began their laboring career as unskilled workers would remain so? Quite possibly. The limitations that the worker faced become clear; occuaptional mobility was available to only a minority of laborers, regardless of whether they were transient or not. An interesting pattern emerges for those laborers attaining semi-skilled positions, the minimum

occupational advancement possible. Although they grew in their percentages as fewer laborers remain, their absolute number remained almost completely stable. The semi-skilled laborer seemed to attain promotion quickly, and then remain occupationally and geographically fixed. Often semi-skilled jobs differed little from unskilled jobs, aside from providing somewhat more job security, a fact reflected in the stability of the semi-skilled worker. It was the exceptional laborer who found himself in a skilled position. Again, they represent a group which reached its maximum advancement early, and remained stable. It is to be noted that those two laborers remaining as skilled workers in 1922 attained their positions as an engineer and machinist in 1907 and 1905 respectively. A picture emerges of stability and occupational advancement in close, though not necessary, connection. A consideration of laborers by discrete groups by years of residence, as Table 4 shows, at least partially reinforces this.

Table 4. Occupation By Discrete Group In Years of Residence.

Years of Residence	Unskilled	Semi-skilled	Skilled	All N/M	Total(N)
Less than 2 yrs.	100%	0	0	0	79
Up to 2 yrs.	97%	0	0	3%	32
2-3 yrs.	90%	10%	0	0	10
4-5 yrs.	78%	11%	11%	0	9
6-7 yrs.	72%	0	0	28%	7
8-9 yrs.	50%	25%	12%	12%	8
10-11 yrs.	0	0	100%	0	1
12-13 yrs.	50%	50%	0	0	4
14-15 yrs.	42%	28%	14%	14%	7
16-17 yrs.	50%	50%	0	0	2
18-19 yrs.	40%	40%	0	20%	5
20 yrs.	58%	26%	11%	5%	19

The information provided here is, of course, not as clear as that in the cumulative totals found in Table 3, and suffers from some distorsion produced by the low number of laborers found in some residence groups. It does, however, illuminate certain facts about the sometimes tenuous nature of the relationship between transiency and occupational mobility. It would fly in the face of all evidence to deny that there exists a positive correlation between stability and occupational advancement. Yet it must be stressed that the relationship is not inevitable, as Table 4 shows. There is a rather random distribution of skills and non-manual positions among the groups, coupled with a general reduction of the number of unskilled

as time progresses. Just the same, to cite an example, those laborers who lived in Bloomington only 8-9 years did just as well or better, in aggregate, as did the group that remained the entire twenty year period. This may suggest two things--that stability and advancement had no absolute, only a general connection, and that advancement in the job market was not an onging process for the typical laborer, but rather something of reaching a plateau.

Table 5 illustrates the process of occupational mobility with a series of year by year comparisons. The time-stratified nature of occupational mobility is readily apparent.

Table 5. Series Comparison of Occupational Mobility.

	No Change	Upward Mobility	Downward Mobility	Total(N)
1902 by 1904	90%	10%	0	104
1904 by 1905	92%	8%	0	72
1905 by 1907	92%	6%	2%	62
1907 by 1909	98%	2%	0	53
1909 by 1911	93%	7%	0	46
1911 by 1913	94%	3%	3%	38
1913 by 1915	100%	0	0	37
1915 by 1917	100%	0	0	33
1917 by 1919	100%	0	0	26
1919 by 1920	100%	0	0	24
1920 by 1922	100%	0	0	19

What is being compared here is the laborer's change, either up, down, or none at all, in occupational status from one year to the next. The rigid stratification of the occupational hierarchy can clearly by seen. There was only a slight trickle upwards in the early years of the survey, as those laborers able to achieve higher occupational status made their advancement. Slippage downward is for all practical purposes nonexistent, reinforcing the belief that once the worker attained some sort of promotion his status was quite secure. Mostly, the laborer stayed where he was from year to year. It is almost astounding to consider that absolutely no mobility occurred in the last nine years of this study. The unskilled worker made his advancement quickly, or was faced with a choice of remaining unskilled or leaving town. There is no way of knowing how conscious the individual laborer was of this choice, but the high rate of transiency among Bloomington laborers gives evidence that they were not entirely unaware of it. Taken together with Table 4, Table 5 illustrates how

occupational mobility worked--a little very soon, nothing after a short while for many. Still, the picture of social mobility in Bloomington is not yet complete.

TRANSIENCY, OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY, PROPERTY, AND THE LABORER.

> Occupation, of course, is not the sole determinant of social status; men make certain social advances without changing their occupations at all.[26]

Advancement in the hierarchy of the industrial world was by no means the only way for the laborer to increase his public-esteem and improve his self-image. It has been noted that home ownership was probably not uncommon among certain groups of even the unskilled. Even if the laborer did not own real estate, he might increase his other personal property holdings and thereby demonstrate some measure of mobility. Property mobility would seem to be considerably easier to attain than occupational mobility, because a job promotion almost always depended on the actions of someone else, a supervisor, while any laborer who saved his money could go forth and buy things to provide comfort and convenience. One must not consider this an insignificant factor in the reckoning of social mobility. The immigrant, the drifting transient laborer, often had little more than the shirt on his back. To have possessions could serve to demonstrate outwardly that a laborer, possibly lacking occupational advancement, still could better himself through hard work and thrift.

The property ownership measured herein consists of personal property assessments as printed in the Daily Pantagraph, personal property consisting of all property owned by an individual exclusive of real property. The assessments made during the 1902-1922 period were by door-to-door inspection, and tended to be conservative. The valustions may seem small at first glance, but the effects of fifty-five years of inflation in the intervening years must be considered. To give an idea of what the assessment meant during the period, a moderately successful laborer, owning a three-room house and furniture would have an assessment in the $15 to $25 range. Theodore Kemp, president

[26] Thernstrom, p.115.

of Illinois Wesleyan University during the period, was assessed for $92 of personal property, while Adlai E. Stevenson, Sr., former Vice-President of the United States, figured for $370 with his large home on Franklin Park. The Chicago & Alton railroad property was valued at $53,524 for all machines, equipment, supplies, etc., and represented the largest single assessment in Bloomington.

As might be expected, property accumulation had the same stabilizing effect on the laborer as did occupational advancement, although not quite as certain. And, as might be expected, the time it took to accumulate property was rather short for the successful laborer, as was true of occupational advancement. Table 6 demonstrates this.

Table 6. Time to First Assessment, By Years in Residence.

Years to First Assessment	Total Years in Residence					
	1	2	3-5	6-9	10-15	16-20
1	4%	22%	16%	13%	8%	35%
2	-	0	10%	33%	33%	8%
3-5	-	-	5%	0	0	4%
6-9	-	-	-	33%	17%	23%
10-15	-	-	-	-	0	19%
16-20	-	-	-	-	-	0
No Assessment	96%	78%	68%	20%	42%	12%
Total(%)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total(N)	79	32	19	15	12	26

The tremendous importance of this early aquisition of property is very demonstrable. The group that was the most stable, those who lived in Bloomington 16-20 years, were in almost all cases those who owned property earliest. Of that particular group, more than a third were already assessed in the first year of the survey, illustrating that although the laborer might be unskilled, he nonetheless could advance in at least one economic sphere. But here again it may be seen that the interrelated factors of transiency, occupation, and property adhere to no absolutes. Even among the most stable laborers, some never accumulated property, while at the same time the plains drifters who remained in town only one year might manage to own at least something. Yet for the most part, the laborer who was to be a property-owner became one soon, regardless of his occupational level.

The size of the valuation must next be considered. Obviously, the larger the assessment, the more property the laborer owned, and one might suppose, the better off he was. Again, as Table 7 shows,

there is an unmistakeable relationship between transiency and property accumulation. The more stable laborers had higher assessments than the less stable in nearly all cases.

Table 7. Size of Average Assessment, By Years in Residence.

Ave. Assessment($)	Total Years in Residence					
	1	2	3-5	6-9	10-15	16-20
0	96%	78%	68%	20%	42%	12%
1-10	0	3%	0	6%	0	0
11-15	1%	10%	26%	33%	8%	19%
16-20	1%	6%	0	20%	42%	35%
21-25	0	3%	0	6%	8%	11%
25+	1%	0	6%	12%	0	23%
Total(%)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total(N)	79	32	19	15	12	26

The average assessment was obtained as a numerical average of all assessments reported for a laborer.

To continue the examination of property ownership by laborers, Table 8 breaks down the sample by discrete groups by years of residence, and gives the average assessment for each of those groups.

Table 8. Assessment By Discrete Group In Years of Residence.

Years in Residence	Average Assessment($)
Less than 2 yrs.	0.70
Up to 2 yrs.	3.20
2-3 yrs.	5.90
4-5 yrs.	4.80
6-7 yrs.	13.40*
8-9 yrs.	12.60
10-11 yrs.	22.80#
12-13 yrs.	12.70
14-15 yrs.	7.30
16-17 yrs.	19.20
18-19 yrs.	11.30*
20 yrs.	20.60

*These figures are adjusted for skewing by exceptional cases
#There is only laborer in this residence group.

Average personal property assessment here is calculated by dividing the sum of average individual assessments by the total number of laborers in a particular residence group.

Tables 7 and 8 show unmistakeably that property accumulation was a process that favored the stable laborer. But it usually was not a building process. To take the first of these two propositions, it

can be seen from Table 7 that the percentage of laborers owning no personal property (or at least having no assessment) steadily diminished from 96% of those in residence only one year to 12% among those remaining in Bloomington 16-20 years. When this data is compared to that found for occupational advancement (Table 4), a relatively discernable pattern of the stable laborer advancing both occupationally and in regard to property can be seen. Stability did favor the accumulation of property, and in all probability, property favored stability. When one considers that the average valuation of $20.60 for those workers in residence for twenty years (Table 8) might represent the contents of a three or four-room house before the days of trucks and interstate highways, the reason that property was stabilizing is clear.

Yet laborers tended to gain property in a rather unusual manner, at least as far as available evidence suggests. As was stated earlier the accumulation of property was not a building process. What is meant by this is that one might expect the stable laborer to steadily increase his assets over the years. This seemingly just did not happen, something which complicates the picture of property ownership and raises difficulties with the Horatio Alger school of social mobili The caution must be kept in mind that this data is two abstractions from reality--first gathered by roving assessors, and then reported in the Pantagraph, but nonetheless it is doubtful that wholesale distortion could occur. Simply, the laborer tended to gain property in a haphazard fashion, usually attaining his maximum amount in a manner wholly unconnected with his occupation (or change of) or relative stability. Table 9 demonstrates this.

Table 9. Cumulative Personal Property Assessments, 1902-1922.

	Maximum Assessment to Date ($)						
	0	1-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	25+	Total(N)
1902	87%	2%	5%	4%	2%	2%	183
1902-1904	83%	2%	7%	5%	1%	1%	104
1902-1905	71%	7%	11%	4%	3%	4%	72
1902-1907	79%	3%	10%	5%	0	3%	62
1902-1909	56%	2%	23%	8%	2%	10%	53
1902-1911	56%	4%	8%	16%	4%	13%	46
1902-1913	57%	3%	11%	19%	3%	8%	38
1902-1915	50%	0	25%	17%	3%	6%	37
1902-1917	47%	0	25%	9%	3%	3%	33
1902-1919	65%	4%	15%	4%	4%	8%	26
1902-1920	42%	0	0	8%	25%	25%	24
1902-1922	42%	0	0	11%	22%	26%	19

Table 9 represents frequencies of assessment amount group for all laborers at a particular time. These figures provide a more fine-tuned piece of evidence to show the peculiar manner in which laborers went about attaining property. While it is true that at the extremes the very transient tended to have nothing, and the very stable tended to have the most, there is much confusion in the middle. The number of laborers holding medium assessments in the $15-$25 range tended to fluctuate rather wildly over time, disregarding most of the previously established rules. This is reinforced when a comparison of year-to-year property mobility is made as in Table 10.

Table 10. Series Comparison of Property Mobility.

	No Change	Upward Mobility	Downward Mobility	Total(N
1902 by 1904	75%	13%	16%	104
1904 by 1905	72%	14%	14%	72
1905 by 1907	71%	8%	21%	62
1907 by 1909	67%	33%	0	53
1909 by 1911	61%	26%	13%	46
1911 by 1913	58%	19%	24%	38
1913 by 1915	56%	22%	22%	37
1915 by 1917	78%	13%	9%	33
1917 by 1919	62%	4%	35%	26
1919 by 1920	50%	46%	4%	24
1920 by 1922	74%	16%	11%	19

In this table a wealth of interesting information is revealed. The point has been stressed that the laboring class in Bloomington was quite volatile. So, apparently, it was in its accumulation of property. On an average basis, roughly a quarter of the laboring class was either gaining or losing property in comparison to what it had before, the rest staying the same. Here the rules of stability did not apply. Those laborers who had lived in Bloomington twenty years gained, lost, and stayed put at a rate nearly identical to that group (of which they, of course, had been a part) only in town for a year in the course of the survey. Property then, might seem to operate as an independent variable in the equation of social mobility.

These figures also tell a story about the state of the national economy in the years studied. A financial panic struck in 1907, and 21% of all laborers lost ground from the year before. But by 1909, the economy had recovered and 33% of the laborers improved their lot.

Panic struck again in 1913, and this time 24% had lesser valuations, but the later recovery was not as strong as before, upward and downward mobility breaking even. The most spectacular economic effects were caused by World War I. The economic slowdown following the prosperous war years caused 35% of Bloomington's laborers to suffer reduced valuations. But with the arrival of the Roaring Twenties, almost a full half had effected recovery. None of these observations is an absolute indicator, bit they provide an interesting sidelight on the local effects of national economic gyrations.

A final consideration of this relationship between property accumulation and occupational mobility may serve to tie together much of what has been said up to this point. The working thesis of this study has been that the factors of transiency, occupational advancement, and property accumulation all figured in, and interacted with eachother in the process of social mobility for the laborer. Earlier, it was mentioned that the pattern (or lack thereof) of laboring property ownership did not bode well for the popular social theory of the day. Specifically, if the laborer could not add to his wealth, and watch it grow at a geometric rate, how could he hope to acquire the necessary capital to pull himself out of the working class and into the class of entrepeneurs. It is clear by now that this was not a probability for most laborers. In fact, this survey lacks even one successful example of this occurring.

Yet we would still believe that it is possible. Of greatest importance to this, a relationship should exist between upward occupational mobility and the simultaneous accumulation of property. Should this be true, it would prove that at least the <u>means</u> existed for this promise to be reality.

The Pearson Correlation is a statistical device to measure just such a relationship. It yields a numerical coefficient to show if there exists any relationship between two variables, and what the extent of that relationship was. A Pearson Correlation between property and occupation, found in Table 11, for the years of this survey gives an excellent summation of what has been so far in regard to the workings of occupational mobility, property accumulation, and indirectly, transiency.

Table 11. Pearson Correlation, Property and Occupation, 1902-1922.

					Coefficient	Significance
Property	1902	with	Occupation	1902	.0263	.362
"	1904	"	"	1904	.1323	.090
"	1905	"	"	1905	.3285	.002
"	1907	"	"	1907	.3226	.005
"	1909	"	"	1909	.2428	.041
"	1911	"	"	1911	.1538	.156
"	1913	"	"	1913	.0599	.362
"	1915	"	"	1915	.1317	.222
"	1917	"	"	1917	.0972	.298
"	1919	"	"	1919	.2491	.110
"	1920	"	"	1920	.3404	.052
"	1922	"	"	1922	.2538	.147
"	1902	"	"	1922	.3558	.067

The only significant correlations (i.e., coefficients whose significance is below approximately .050) are for the years 1905, 1907, and 1909. The year 1920 is close to a significant correlation, as is the comparison of 1902 and 1922.

When considering the data supplied by the Pearson Correlation, three factors must be remembered. First of all, occupational mobility that did occur was almost exclusively in an upward direction. Secondly, distribution of property was rather haphazard over most years and among most occupational groups. Finally, there was little variation in skill level in the early years of the survey; in fact, all laborers were unskilled in the first year, so any property distribution would appear random. One interesting relationship can be seen, that while not absolute, illuminates the working limits of occupational and property mobility. Table 5 demonstrates that all occupational mobility ceased after 1913, most of it occurring in the early years. Table 11 shows that property and occupation only had a significant (upward) relationship to each other from 1905 to 1909. Taken together it would seem to indicate that the critical time for the upwardly mobile unskilled laborer occurred from about three to five or six years after he entered a labor market. By this time, the most transient workers had left, and the stable mobile laborer made his move. The fact that the comparison of 1902 and 1922 is very close to significance indicates that this process was already at work (see also Table 6; stable laborers tended to be assessed early) for the laborer who would get ahead to some degree. Beyond this point, the employment situation was rigidly stratified and property ownership under

the influence of other, unknown variables. This offers no explanation but only an observation.

BLOOMINGTON, NEWBURYPORT, AND HAMILTON, CANADA WEST.

> Was mid-nineteenth century Hamilton unique, or was it one of a particular type of city, or was it representative of widespread structures and patterns?[27]
>
> Unless it can be shown that Newburyport was, in some important respects, representative of the larger society of which it was a part, this book will be of purely antiquarian interest.[28]

It is useful at this point to return to the work of Thernstrom and Katz, where this study began. Both scholars answered the questions that they had posed to themselves about the general applicability of their studies in the affirmative. The study of Bloomington would seem to indicate that the findings of Thernstrom and Katz are also applicable to a later period. Thus, it would seem that the results from Bloomington are not anomalous.

Among the laborers of nineteenth-century Newburyport, it was quite unusual for one of their number to advance into a skilled or non-manual occupation,[29] a situation very similiar, if not identical, to that of Bloomington. For the Newburyport laborer, as for his counterpart in Bloomington, lack of capital, education, or special skills limited careers in skilled or non-manual occupations. Thernstrom found that in many cases the sons of laborers, because of the depressed economic situation of their families, had to go to work as soon as possible, denying them the education and training necessary for many skilled and/or non-manual positions. Further, in most cases apprenticeships to skilled positions were out of the question because local industry simply did not offer them, or if offered, they provided little in the way of economic return to the family. Thus the son of a laborer often became a laborer himself, and a cycle was born. This may help explain why the laborers of both Newburyport and Bloom-

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[27] Katz, p.314.

[28] Thernstrom, p.192.

[29] Thernstrom, pp.103-104.

ington as a group failed to advance into skilled or non-manual positions. Handicapped from youth by a lack of training, these laborers remained relegated to low-paying unskilled jobs, never able to accumulate the savings that made possible advancement either for the laborer or his progeny, skilled and non-manual jobs being filled by those whose economic backgrounds had made the necessary preparation possible. This is not to say that the laborer in Newburyport or Bloomington had no such chance for advancement--only that it was rare.

Michael Katz declared that transiency and inequality were the two great themes of the nineteenth century.[30] The former, transiency, was undeniably a great theme in Hamilton, Newburyport, and Bloomington if anything becoming more pronounced as transportation improved and the nation expanded and industrialized. Both Thernstrom and Katz found that approximately 60% of the laborers they sampled disappeared over the course of a decade.[31] The comparable figure for Bloomington is almost 80%. The massive turnover of the North American population, transients moving haphazardly from place to place, seems to have been a universal feature of the laboring class from the middle of the nineteenth century to the early years of the twentieth. At least as far as laboring populations were concerned, the composition of cities was not stable at all.

Inequality is more difficult to discuss quantitatively. Katz found a paradox in Hamilton in what he saw as a rigidity in social and economic structures existing with the exceptional experiences of individuals who accomplished all sorts of upward <u>and</u> downward mobility. Certainly one only has to survey the picture records of Bloomington in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to confirm the existence of inequality and social stratification. But both the great men of Bloomington might own their own homes and have money in the bank. Indeed, both Thernstrom and Katz found property mobility much easier to achieve then occupational advancement, home ownership being a major factor in the laborer's stability and advancement. Thernstrom even asserted that property ownership was a real probability for the stable laborer.[32] Yet by and large none of

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[30]Katz, p.17.

[31]Thernstrom, p.85., Katz, p.20.

[32]Thernstrom, p.117.

these cities saw social mobility of an extensive nature, aside from th extraordinary experiences of a small number of individuals.

SOCIAL MOBILITY IN BLOOMINGTON.

> ....certainty is an illusion, and repose is not the destiny of man.[33]

It is not simple to draw conclusions about the reality of social mobility in Bloomington during the early twentieth century. There are many factors to figure in the whole equation and some of them are not easily quantifiable. Justice Holmes said that "certainty is an illusion." The certainty with which social mobility may be theorized upon may be just that.

The lot of the laboring man in Bloomington during this time was not one of unfailing success, advancement, or even recognition. But it was not wholly depressed either. If the question were asked straightaway--Could social mobility be a reality for the Bloomington laborer?--the answer would be a qualified yes. Katz stated "the United States is a country where upward mobility exceeded downward."[34] Thernstrom agreed, when he observed that "the men of Newburyport shared a common secular faith, and abiding belief in the American social system and the progress it seemed to guarantee."[35]

So America offered the dream of betterment to the laborer. At times the dream was fulfilled, but more often it was a hollow promise. If anything, it all comprised a cycle that could run one of two ways. For some, stability allowed time to advance up the occupational ladder and acquire property. Better jobs and more property encouraged stability, and a beneficent cycle was born. On the other hand, transiency militated against job advancement and the acquisition of property, which in turn encouraged more transiency in a search for the proverbial greener grass over the next hill. But these rules did not always apply. The black laborer (see Appendix 2) did not advance,

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[33] Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., from an address delivered at the dedication of the new hall of the Boston University School of Law, 1897.

[34] Katz, p.174.

[35] Thernstrom, p.190.

no matter how long he remained in Bloomington, and was relegated to a permanently depressed economic condition. Usually immigrant laborers did not do as well as native-born. Still, we have William Thomas, the black policeman; Herman Mittelstaedt and Frederic Klawitter, who owned their own homes.

The rela question then, must be what the social system of early twentieth-century America meant to the laborer of the time. If the gains seem small now, we cannot afford the condescension of one age for another. The laborer may have been transient as he passed through Bloomington, but one can only think that he left in the belief that things were better elsewhere. Maybe they were, given what we know of the local economy of the time. Even if the unskilled laborer did not become a skilled worker or white-collar businessman, the security afforded by a steady job as opposed to day labor must not have been insignificant. Unquestionably, the accumulation of property was possible, and even probable for the laborer. Thernstrom said of the laborers of Newburyport--

> Few of these men rose very far on the social scale; most of their upward shifts left them manual laborers still...this was not the ladder to the stars that Horatio Alger portrayed... it was, however, social advancement of a kind immensely meaningful to men whose horizons of expectations were not those of an Alger hero.[36]

For the laborer of early twentieth-century Bloomington, social mobility was the pursuit of a dream. All were free to join in the chase, and some succeeded in getting a hold on at least part of the chimera. As this study began, America was a major industrial power, and as it ends, America had become a world power of the first rank. The Great Depression was seven years off, the economy essentially unfettered. Here is where the new studies begin. For the laborer in Bloomington, social mobility was the ideal to be sought; the real might not have matched his expectations, or even our own from this late vantage point. Yet it existed, sometimes here, sometimes there, and always just enough to keep the dream alive.

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[36]Thernstrom, p.223.

SOME NOTES ON THE METHODOLOGY.

The original sample for this study consisted of the names of 199 individuals drawn at random from the 1902 edition of the Bloomington-Normal City Directory. They were selected only if they lived in the city of Bloomington and listed their occupation only as "laborer" indicating no particular skills or association with a local industry. These names were subsequently traced through available directories (the years 1904, 1905, 1907, 1909, 1911, 1913, 1915, 1917, 1919, 1920, and 1922) for the following twenty year period. They were segregated by their years in residence; once an individual was no longer listed he was no longer traced. Also, a total of 16 names had to be eliminated from the sample when later others with the same name appeared, a possible source of confusion.

The personal property assessments were obtained from the Daily Pantagraph, which printed them yearly.

Information on the condition of the laboring class in Bloomington in the early years was obtained from interviews with descendants of actual laborers surveyed.

The classification of jobs reported by laborers in later years (see Appendix 5) was based on the list reported in the appendices to Katz's book.

For some statistical work (notably frequencies, studies of upward and downward mobility, and the Pearson Correlation) a computer was utilized with the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS). In this procedure, all information gathered on laborers (i.e., name, address, job, assessment) was reduced to a numerical code and saved in computer file. All variables were numerically identified.

I would heartily recommend the use of the computer to those doing a social history of this sort. It will very quickly eliminate much of the drudge work for those with facility in its use. Yet programs such as SPSS do have their limitations. It is not always possible to ask it to do exactly what you want; if it could be possible, it might take just as long as hand calculation. But when it is necessary to wield large amounts of data, survey and summarize it, and achieve final and complex calculations, it is of great value.

EXTENT OF OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY, BY RESIDENCE

Laborers in Residence, 1902-1922

Total--	19	
Non-manual--	1	(5%)
Skilled--	2	(11%)
Semi-skilled--	5	(26%)
Unskilled--	11	(58%)

Laborers in Residence, 1902-1920

Total--	5	
Non-manual--	1	(20%)
Skilled--	0	
Semi-skilled--	2	(40%)
Unskilled--	2	(40%)

Laborers in Residence, 1902-1919

Total--	2	
Non-manual--	0	
Skilled--	0	
Semi-skilled--	1	(50%)
Unskilled--	1	(50%)

Laborers in Residence, 1902-1917

Total--	4	
Non-manual--	1	(14%)
Skilled--	1	(14%)
Semi-skilled--	2	(28%)
Unskilled--	3	(42%)

Laborers in Residence, 1902-1915

Total--	4	
Non-manual--	0	
Skilled--	0	
Semi-skilled--	2	(50%)
Unskilled--	2	(50%)

Laborers in Residence, 1902-1913

Total--	1	
Non-manual--	0	
Skilled--	1	(100%)
Semi-skilled--	0	
Unskilled--	0	

Laborers in Residence, 1902-1911

Total--	8	
Non-manual--	1	(12%)
Skilled--	1	(12%)
Semi-skilled--	2	(25%)
Unskilled--	4	(50%)

Laborers in Residence, 1902-1909

Total--	7	
Non-manual--	2	(28%)
Skilled--	0	
Semi-skilled--	0	
Unskilled--	5	(72%)

Laborers in Residence, 1902-1907

Total--	9	
Non-manual--	0	
Skilled--	1	(11%)
Semi-skilled--	1	(11%)
Unskilled--	7	(77%)

Laborers in Residence, 1902-1905

Total--	10	
Non-manual--	1	(10%)
Skilled--	0	
Semi-skilled--	0	
Unskilled--	9	(90%)

Laborers in Residence, 1902-1904

Total--	31
Non-manual--	1 (3%)
Skilled--	0
Semi-skilled--	0
Unskilled--	30 (97%)

Laborers in Residence, 1902

Total--	79
Non-manual--	0
Skilled--	0
Semi-skilled--	0
Unskilled--	79 (100%)

SUMMARY FOR BLACK LABORERS

Occupational Mobility, All Black laborers, 1902-1922

Total--	30
Non-manual--	1 (3%)
Skilled--	0
Semi-skilled--	1 (3%)
Unskilled--	28 (94%)

Transiency Among Black Laborers, 1902-1922

1902-1904	63%	(19/30)
1902-1905	0	
1902-1907	27%	(3/11)
1902-1909	25%	(2/8)
1902-1911	40%	(2/6)
1902-1913	0	
1902-1915	0	
1902-1917	50%	(2/4)
1902-1919	0	
1902-1920	0	
Not Dropped	6%	(2/30)

Total of 30 in sample. Percentages indicate laborers leaving from diminishing totals in parentheses. With 2 of an original 30 remaining after twenty years, a persistence rate of slightly over 6% is yielded.

Black laborers constitute 16% of the total sample. This would be an over-representation for the Bloomington population at large, but not for laborers. Since the original sample was taken on a random basis, there is good reason to believe that 16% is correct, if not conservative.

INDUSTRIAL ESTABLISHMENTS IN BLOOMINGTON, 1870-1900[1]

1870[2]-

Industry	No. Employed	No. of Establishments
1. Brickmaking	94	5
2. Carriage and wagon making	85	20
3. Patent medicines	80	4
4. Flour-milling	79	13
5. Men's clothing	62	7
6. Tin, copper and sheet-iron working	49	13
7. Saddlery and harness	46	11
8. Railroad cars	44	1
9. Iron casting	36	4
10. Agricultural implements	28	5
11. Masonry	27	1
12. Woolens	26	1
13. Sash, doors, blinds	19	2
14. Distilled liquor	17	1
15. Cigar-making	15	3
16. Marble and stonework	11	2
17. Gas	7	1
18. Musical instruments	7	1
19. Boots and shoes	6	1
20. Soap and candles	6	1
21. Animal oil	4	1

1880[2]-

1. Brickmaking	148	17
2. Furniture making	89	8
3. Iron casting	73	5
4. Patent medicines	41	2
5. Meat-packing	40	1
6. Carriage and wagon making	38	8
7. Saddlery and harness	32	15
8. Tin, copper and sheet-iron working	32	10
9. Sash, doors, blinds	27	2
10. Marble and stonework	26	3
11. Cigar-making	24	4
12. Lumber	23	6
13. Agricultural implements	20	3
14. Printing and publishing	20	1
15. Baking	15	4
16. Malt liquor	15	1
17. Confectionary	10	3
18. Linseed oil	8	1
19. Men's clothing	7	3
20. Soap and candles	4	1

[1]From 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th United States Censuses of Manufacturing Establishments doing $25,000 business per annum.

[2]Figures are for McLean County, including Bloomington.

1890[3]-

Industry	No. Employed	No. of Establishments
1. Brickmaking	187	4
2. Iron casting	181	6
3. Printing and publishing	122	9
4. Men's clothing	116	13
5. Lumber	89	4
6. Cigar-making	53	9
7. Saddlery and harness	49	7
8. Carpentry	46	7
9. Carriage and wagon making	46	7
10. Flour milling	43	4
11. Patent medicines	34	5
12. Baking	30	4
13. Blacksmithing	28	13
14. Boots and shoes	14	9
15. Confectionary	9	4

1900[3]-

1. Iron casting	168	7
2. Printing and publishing	122	7
3. Brickmaking	103	5
4. Lumber	81	3
5. Men's clothing	74	11
6. Carpentry	67	11
7. Cigar-making	57	15
8. Plumbing	52	6
9. Saddlery and harness	36	8
10. Millinery	31	5
11. Blacksmithing	25	15
12. Watches and clocks	19	13
13. Flour milling	17	5
14. Carriage and wagon making	16	6
15. Monuments	13	3
16. Painting	13	6
17. Dyeing and cleaning	5	4
18. Boots and shoes	3	2
19. Bicycle repair	3	2

[3]Figures are for Bloomington only.

COMPILATION OF CENSUS DATA

	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920
Bloomington pop.	--	17,476	20,484[1]	23,528	25,768[2]	28,768
Number of manufacturing establishments	--	--	--	185	107	83
Number employed in manufacturing[3]	--	--	2,524	2,850	2,495	2,818

[1]Includes 4,086 foreign-born and 16,498 native-born.

[2]Represents a 9.7% increase from 1900-1910; rates for other Illinois cities during the same period--Quincy 0.9%; Elgin 15.8%; Joliet 18.1%; Peoria 19.3%; Aurora 23.4%; Chicago 28.7%; Rockford 46.2%; Decatur 50.0%; Springfield 51.3%; Danville 70.4%; East St. Louis 97.4%

[3]Totals are for industries listed in Appendix 3.

OCCUPATION LIST--The following were types of employment reported in the City Directory by laborers sampled in this study, and what catagory of occupational rank they represented for statistal work.

Non-manual--
Bartender, cattle-buyer, conductor, clerk, flour broker, ice dealer, motorman, police patrolman, poolroom manager, rooming house owner, salesman

Skilled--
Boilermaker, bricklayer, carpenter, carriage-maker, locomotive engineer, mason, machinist, plasterer, plumber, pressman, printer

Semi-skilled--
Railroad fireman, waterworks fireman, house painter, roofer, tinner

Unskilled--
Cartman, cemetary worker, hay hauler, hostler, housemover, janitor, laborer, liveryman, miner, teamster, watchman, worker

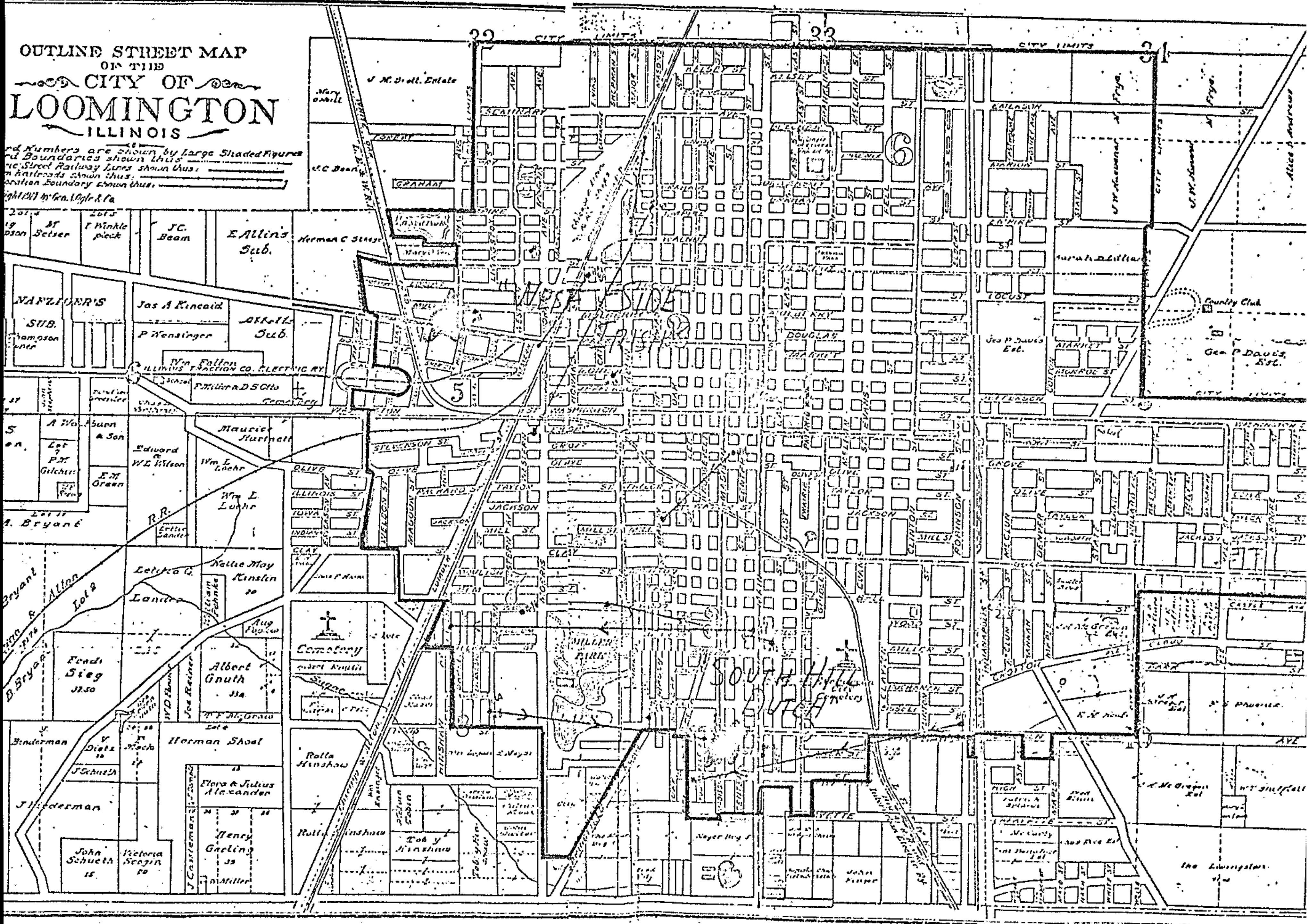
Unclassified--
Died, retired

APPENDIX 6

The following is a map of the city of Bloomington, circa 1914. The corporation boundaries are outlined in red. The shops of the Chicago & Alton railroad are colored yellow, the location of Illinois Wesleyan University in green, and the downtown area in blue.

The green dots and lines marked with arrows indicate the location of the homes of the remaining 19 laborers. They show the direction of movement, if any, that occurred within the city.

Finally, the homes of Herman Mittelstaedt and Frederic Klawitter are marked by red stars.


OUTLINE STREET MAP
OF THE
CITY OF
LOOMINGTON
ILLINOIS
CITY LIMITS
WEST SIDE
SOUTH HILL
MILLER PARK
Country Club
Cemetery
ILLINOIS TRACTION CO. ELECTRIC RY.
Chicago & Alton
WASHINGTON
STEVENSON ST
OLIVE
TAYLOR
JACKSON
CLAY
MILLER ST
LOCUST
MARKET
MONROE ST
JEFFERSON
GROVE
KELSEY ST
EMPIRE
WALNUT
GRAHAM
SEMINARY
DOUGLAS
MILL ST
IOWA
ILLINOIS
INDIANA
ROBINSON
MC CLUN
CROXTON
AVE

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