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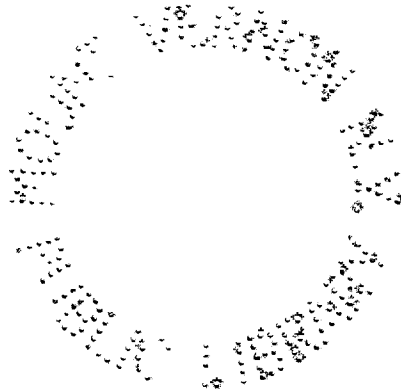
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A STUDY OF THE NEGRO POPULATION
OF MOUNT VERNON

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BY

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"It should be recognized that Negro society is not homogeneous, that it has its economic and social gradations, and that it is entitled to share in an opportunity not only to better itself but at the same time to increase the standards of the whole community. Closer cooperation in this problem is of major importance. Generalizations must give way to specific problems in order to attempt a solution. Responsibility must be assumed not only from within but the community must awaken to its own responsibility."

President's Conference on Home Building and Home ownership. Washington, D. C., 1931. Housing Objectives and Programs, ed. by John M. Gries and James Ford. Washington, D. C., President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, 1932.

THE CITY OF MOUNT VERNON

Eighty-four years ago there was not even an elementary settlement where the city of Mount Vernon now stands. Three years later this same land was vibrant in the throbbing heart of a community of 1,370 people. This extraordinary change was largely due to the efforts of a certain John Stevens, the president of an organization known as the "Industrial Home Association No. 1." With a membership of 1000 individuals of moderate means but of high ideals they purchased the land where the city is now situated and distributed it equally among them. In 1853 Mount Vernon became an incorporated village and in 1892 it was incorporated as a city with a population of 10,830 persons.

THE LOCATION OF THE CITY

Mount Vernon is situated in the southeastern corner of Westchester County adjacent to the Bronx Borough of New York City. Its geographical location makes it a veritable gateway out of the congested metropolis into the open spaces of one of the richest and most attractive sections in the country.

The city is only 4.13 square miles in area or 2,644 acres, the smallest area of any city in this region. Three railway lines pass through its borders diverging from New York City and extending farther into Westchester and Upper New York State. In addition to these, there are the Interborough Subway lines which extend to the city's front door. The Harlem Division of the New York Central and the New York, New Haven, and Hartford are older than the city itself and were an important reason why the "Industrial Home Association No. 1" in 1850 selected this location for their homes in an attempt to escape the exorbitant rentals of New York and yet enjoy its manifold conveniences. (1) A similar relationship exists between the growing Negro neighborhood and the New York subway lines. The subway lines are within walking distance of the main Negro residential section which is itself within a stone's throw of the principal business centers. In general the proximity of Mount Vernon to Greater New York has had a dual influence upon the population both white and colored. On the one hand, it stimulates by shifting to the city a great part of its urban population, on the other, it vitiates by drawing off vital energy that otherwise would be utilized in constructive local endeavor.

THE FIRST NEGRO FAMILIES

The first infiltration of Negroes to these parts is not definitely known, although as early as 1740 there were 6000 Negroes in New York City. "Van Rensselaer's "History of the City of New York in the 17th Century" states that "The Dutch brought the "Swarten" to the colony before Manhattan houses were a decade old."

"Records show that as early as 1697 a free Negro by the name of Antonio owned a tract of land just south of what is now known as Gramercy Park. Another operated a farm where the City Hall now stands. In 1762 Samuel Francis, a West Indian Negro commonly known as "Black Sam", purchased a house at Pearl and Broad Streets known as the Queen's Head, where he catered to such well-known personages as Governor Clinton and General George

Washington. It was in this tavern, popularly known as Fraunces Tavern, that Washington and his officers had their farewell meeting."⁽²⁾

Similarly, in Mount Vernon the Negro is inextricably associated with the early history of the city. Before Mount Vernon's population was large enough to be considered even an elementary settlement and at least seventeen years before it was incorporated as a village and received the name which it now bears, a Negro squatter and his family owned and tilled a farm in the neighborhood of Fulton and Edison Avenues.]

A study of the deeds and records in the Register's Office at White Plains pertaining to this property reveals the name of Ben Turner, "a black man" who owned the site along the "Road to the Town Landing." There is evidence that his claim extends back as far as 1819. The last payment of taxes was made in 1893, the year after the incorporation of the city, although it is believed that Rebecca Turner, a daughter, and her family remained in the city until 1900.⁽³⁾

As early as 1890 the federal census tabulated 177 Negroes when the total population of the city was only 10,830. These figures were adjusted by the municipal census of 1893 at 15,513 and 230 respectively. The fact that 87 colored children were attending the public schools in 1900 is a fair indication that these early colored citizens brought their families and established permanent homes.

Both the Grace Baptist Church and the Centennial African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church date back several years before the turn of the century, which is striking evidence of a growing community spirit among early Negro inhabitants. The former group met at the First Baptist Church on Second Avenue and Second Street under the auspices of the Women's Christian Temperance Union until they were able to erect a small building on the corner of Eighth Avenue and Third Street. Very soon afterwards the Methodist congregation established themselves a few doors south on Eighth Avenue. About these two centers the colored population has tended to concentrate although as late as 1916 there were no important colored sections. On the contrary, the early Negroes were decidedly scattered, separating themselves by families instead of by groups. Today the churches have moved farther south on the block and, as shown in Map I, this is now the most densely populated Negro center.

The material for this chapter was secured by reading from the "History of Westchester County" by Frederic Shonnard; "The History of Mount Vernon" by "The Daily Argus" and by interviewing old colored residents. Assistant Corporation Counsel, Irving J. Bland, was interviewed concerning his report on the Fulton Avenue property which he consummated after a year's search pending a tax sale.

- (1) Shonnard, Frederick and Spooner, W.W. "History of Westchester County," p. 579
- (2) Hubert, James H. "The Negro in New York", p. 3
- (3) "The Daily Argus", January 29, 1935. p. 1

THE PRESENT NEGRO POPULATION

The year 1920 marked the beginning of a phenomenal growth in the Negro population. During that year the United States Census Bureau reported 1,345 colored persons or 3.1 per cent of the total population. Ten years later the census report recorded an increase of 2,263 new-comers or 168.2 per cent, raising the proportional standing of Negroes in the city to 5.9 percent, or approximately 6 percent, almost twice the ratio in 1920. These figures were augmented to 6.4 percent during the last three and a half years.

TABLE I

Percent of the population by Race and Nativity: 1900-1934

| | WHITE | FOREIGN BORN | NEGRO |
|------------|-------|--------------|-------|
| 1900 | 74.0 | 24.6 | 2.4 |
| 1910 | 71.1 | 26.0 | 2.9 |
| 1920 | 73.3 | 23.6 | 3.1 |
| 1930 | 70.8 | 23.2 | 5.9 |
| 1934 | 73.4 | 20.4 | 6.4 |

Source: 12,13,14,15, U.S. Census and Mount Vernon City Census Report, 1934. (Mimeographed)

The trend is significant. As shown in TABLE I, the native-white population during the last four decades has remained practically static in relation to the total or aggregate population. The foreign-born element shows not merely a relative decrease but an actual loss of 906 inhabitants since 1930 if we are to accredit the recent City Census Report. The Negro population alone has shown a steady increase in relation to the general population.

On the basis of the 1920 and 1930 figures, theoretically at any rate, there will be within fifty years almost a third more Negroes in Mount Vernon than foreign-born and almost a third as many Negroes as native-white persons. Whether this time will ever come or whether other important factors will intervene to distort and forestall the theoretical results, one thing is certain from these figures: that is, that the Negro constitutes a vital element in the population of the city, an element which is rapidly increasing in size and importance and bringing with it many perplexing social problems.

THE NEGRO MIGRANT

One theory is that the early Negro inhabitants were brought up from Virginia and Carolina summer resorts to work as servants. These in turn sent for their relatives and placed them in domestic and personal services as soon as an opportunity arose. (1) However the remarkable influx of Negro migrants between 1920 and 1930 can be explained adequately only in terms of the larger movement of the Negro into the principal large cities of the North. This migration began shortly after the beginning of the World War, was retarded by the depression of 1921, and was resumed again in 1923 through 1930. Concentrated movements of

Negroes followed definite streams of migration to six or eight principal cities New York, Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, St. Louis. Invariably these people occupied definite areas of the larger cities. As these areas became insufficient for the persistent influx of the new inhabitants and in proportion as these areas have failed to expand to receive the increasing element, Negroes have gradually infiltrated into the surrounding suburban districts.

Mount Vernon by its location was naturally a recipient of a large proportion of the new-comers, who either because of a sincere dislike for the rapid city life or the inability to make the acute adjustment, early came here. Since that time important contacts have been established and virtually whole neighborhoods have migrated directly to the city. A study of the registers of the sixteen colored churches and missions revealed that Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina vie in importance as native states. In all but two larger churches these were the only states represented by significant contingents of the congregation. R. Maurice Moss found this condition true throughout Westchester and Long Island. (1)

TABLE II

Increase of the Negro population since 1890

| | <u>Number</u> | <u>Increase</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|--|---------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1890 | 177 | - | - |
| 1893 | 230 | - | - |
| 1900 | 516 | 286 | 124.3 |
| 1910 | 896 | 380 | 73.6 |
| 1920 | 1,345 | 449 | 50.1 |
| 1930 | 3,608 | 2,263 | 168.2 |
| 1934 | 4,136 | 528 | 14.5 |
| Percent increase 1893 - 1934 . 1698 per cent | | | |

Source: 12, 13, 14, 15, U.S. Census and Mount Vernon City Census Report, 1893, 1934. (The latter mimeographed.)

The City Report of 1934 shows a much retarded increase in the Negro population, the figure being only 528 greater than in 1930. This is a 14 per cent increase while for a similar period in the last decade there was a 56 per cent increase or 792 individuals. Charles S. Johnson (2) has expounded the correlation of the migration of the Negro into northern states in prosperity years and the corresponding retardation in economic depressions. So convincing is this relationship that Mount Vernon may well expect a new influx of colored migrants as soon as the gloom of the depression is lifted.

Material for this chapter was secured from reading chapters on Negro migration in "The Negro in American Civilization" by Charles S. Johnson; "Negro Problems in Cities" by J. T. Woolfer Jr.; "Races and Ethnic Groups in American Life" (Monograph in Recent Social Trends) by J. T. Woolfer Jr.

(1) Moss, Maurice R. "The Negro population Westchester County", p. 8 (Mimeographed.)

(2) Johnson, Charles S. "The Negro in American Civilization", p. 19

THE NEGRO NEIGHBORHOOD

The colored community in Mount Vernon is not a single contiguous settlement but has developed along the lines of earlier beginnings. The City census of 1934 reported Negroes in every Election District. Negro residents as distinguished from domestic workers were found in 24 of the 37 districts. A number of colored families may be found on Locust Street, North High Street, North Terrace Avenue, North Fifth Avenue, South Street, and South Third Avenue. Other isolated families may be found on Devonia Avenue, Washington Street, and Vista Place, while the principal settlement is in the southwest portion of the city extending from Second Street on the north to Sandford Boulevard on the south and lying between South Fourth Avenue on the east and Thirteenth Avenue on the west. This last division holds about 71 per cent of the entire Negro population.

As late as 1922 the present colored community was predominantly occupied by Italians. This is especially true of South Seventh Avenue near Third Street. Here are a group of flats with the most meager housing facilities built twenty to thirty years ago to accommodate the new foreign element coming into the city in response to the labor opportunities offered by the building of the New York, Westchester, and Boston Railroad. In 1922 new Negro residents occupied a few old private houses and frame flats on Eighth Avenue in the immediate vicinity of the churches with about forty families living in three old tenements in the next block popularly known as the A.B.C. Flats. Proportionally a larger number resided on the north side of the city than today.

In recent years more prosperous Negroes have spread westward into homes vacated by white persons formerly living on Ninth and Tenth Avenues. Here the streets are pleasant and the homes are well kept. There is a considerable mixture of white and colored people in Negro neighborhoods, the white residents, who are principally Italian, are rapidly moving across the line into the Bronx, south below Sandford Boulevard and north into Chester Hill.

TABLE III

Negro population by Election Districts

| <u>Election District</u> | 1934 | <u>Negroes</u> |
|--------------------------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | | 951 |
| 2 | | 233 |
| 3 | | 24 |
| 4 | | 262 |
| 5 | | 6 |
| 6 | | 124 |
| 7 | | 249 |
| 8 | | 18 |
| 9 | | 12 |
| 10 | | 24 |
| 11 | | 62 |
| 12 | | 217 |
| 13 | | 167 |
| 14 | | 648 |
| 15 | | 280 |
| 16 | | 76 |
| 17 | | 54 |
| 18 | | 3 |
| 19 | | 40 |
| 20 | | 4 |
| 21 | | 64 |
| 22 | | 45 |
| 23 | | 23 |
| 24 | | 130 |
| 25 | | 2 |
| 26 | | 8 |
| 27 | | 117 |
| 28 | | 13 |
| 29 | | 18 |
| 30 | | 29 |
| 31 | | 16 |
| 32 | | 31 |
| 33 | | 18 |
| 34 | | 30 |
| 35 | | 29 |
| 36 | | 73 |
| 37 | | 36 |
| | TOTAL | 4,136 |

Source: Mount Vernon City Census Report, 1934. Table 6A (Mimeographed)

DENSITY

Third Street, moving west from South Fourth Avenue descends precipitously into Seventh and Eighth Avenues and simultaneously into the most congested area in the city. In the block bounded by West Third Street on the north and West Fourth Street on the south lying between Seventh and Eighth Avenues there are 620 persons or 155 individuals per acre. This is four times greater than the average density for the entire city which registers only 30 persons per acre. The condition here is characteristic of what may be found in a slightly lesser degree throughout all the Negro neighborhoods, particularly in a few dilapidated buildings scattered in isolated parts of the city. It is a notable fact that the density of Mount Vernon is three and a half times greater than the average for New York City including the suburbs. In New York there are 4,336 persons per square mile while in Mount Vernon with its meager territory the ratio is 15,507 per square mile. Note: (The density of Manhattan is over 330 persons per acre.)

Of the 620 individuals living in the above block, about 60 per cent are colored and about 40 per cent Italian. This is the heart of the Negro community. Within this immediate vicinity there are three pool rooms, two playgrounds, two public tennis courts, two beer gardens, seven churches (five of which are colored), a girls' community center and the South Side Boys' Club. The district is semi-commercial, with many of the homes situated above store fronts and in the rear of business establishments. It has become almost a rule of urbanization of the Negro migrant to inhabit these interstitial regions between commercial and residential sections following the train of several foreign groups who have moved to more desirable neighborhoods.

The material for this chapter was secured from the Mount Vernon City Census Report of 1934. Actual observation

IV

HOUSING

The extent of over-crowding, filth, and squalor existing among certain elements in Mount Vernon was spectacularly revealed in 1934 in an extensive Slum Clearance Survey sponsored by the Westchester Woman's Club. This study makes available information which otherwise would have been impossible to obtain within the scope of the present study.

Mr. Clarence S. Lee, director of the Survey submitted the following report concerning a previously mentioned block.

"On South Seventh Avenue between the blocks of Third and Fourth Streets there are 198 children and 241 adults, making a total of 439 individuals that we have accounted for in the Slum Clearance Survey. These individuals are members of 98 families who pay an aggregate rent of \$2,270.00 per month for 329 rooms. This is an average of \$7.204 per room.

There are 83 toilets and only 8 bathrooms for the accomodation of these 98 families or 459 individuals and nearly half of the toilets are in hallways. Counting all rooms in the block excluding kitchens, there are ten rooms for every 19 people. These figures were arrived at through the information furnished by the survey conducted for the Slum Clearance Project."

Of the 98 families, 56 were Negro and 42 Italian. Possible an even more dilapidated group of tenements is situated on South Fourth Avenue which are occupied exclusively by colored people. The supervisor's summary follows:

"The majority of houses in this block are residential and in fair condition. All of the houses are in fair condition down to and including No. 450 on the west side of the street. (the beginning of Negro tenements). From No. 450 for 500 ft. including one vacant 37 1/2 x 1000 lot, the houses are in bad condition. The six houses that cover this space are run down and dilapidated. Most of them are three story type consisting of six apartments each. The cellars are damp, some containing water and rubbish. Most of these houses appear to be more than 20 years old and sadly in need of painting and repairing. None of them have modern improvements. The airshafts and the back yards are filled with rubbish."

In this group of houses there are 265 individuals or 61 families, 42 toilets and baths, six of the baths are in hallways, and 145 rooms, including kitchens. Hot water is a luxury and ventilation in most cases is designated "poor"; "sanitary conditions are favorable for the growth of disease and germs." There is not "sufficient heat and insufficient natural light." Heat is supplied by coal ranges in the kitchens and kerosene light was found prevalent. Unlike the Seventh Avenue group, these houses are of the old tenement type carrying from 4 to 6 rooms in each apartment. Ten cases of two families sharing the same apartment and dividing the rent were discovered.

These conditions are generally duplicated in groups of flats on Franklin Avenue and on Locust Street, and in an old dilapidated building on South Second Avenue which is of particular notice as it is almost directly opposite the Mount Vernon Public Library. Similar conditions may be found generally throughout the city where old buildings have gone beyond profitable repair and are turned over to Negroes at a comparatively exorbitant price, who accept them, first, because they lack better accomodations and second, because often southern standards, which are at best inferior, are mistaken for adequate housing conditions.

It is important to note that over 98 per cent of all the defective houses reported in the survey were in Negro neighborhoods. Of the families living in these places 322 were colored, 160 were Italian, and only 34 were of other nationalities. Where Negroes and Italians inhabited the same building with practically identical facilities the Negro usually paid a

slightly higher rental.

This study condemns the quoting of glaring isolated revelations as unscientific, yet, the frequent recurrence on summary reports of the adjectives dilapidated, unsanitary, insufficiently ventilated, etc., prompts the legitimate use of a few excerpts to reflect the tone of the entire survey.

3 West Sandford Boulevard

"This house is very old and dilapidated both inside and out. The outside has not been painted in years. The halls are ill kept. The floors in many of the apartments have holes in them and the walls are dirty and cracked in many cases."

216 South Seventh Avenue

"There is a beer garden in the front of the building on the ground floor. Halls and stairs in very poor condition. Floors sink in as you walk on it. Halls dirty and dark during daytime; steps splintered; banisters shaky and of no support; all windows and doors need fixing."

163 South Ninth Avenue

"Old stucco structure in very poor condition - plaster is cracked and falling. Woodwork is splintered and old. House is greatly in need of replastering and repairing and also painting. Plumbing is very bad, faucets leaking, pipes are rusty and old, a water pipe in hallway dripping. Gaps between the floor boards about 1/4 inch wide causing a terrible draft from the cellar. Walls are very dirty. Holes in floor boards. Ventilation very bad; heat is made by coal stoves. Three rooms on the third floor are attic rooms. Walls and ceilings are bare in places showing beams. Cellar is made into an apartment. No vacant apartments in house."

Note: Railing on stairway is ready to fall apart. Toilet on first floor has no ventilation, very dark and odorous. Bath on third floor is in no condition to be used. Beams are exposed making it cold. Bathtub is cracked. Toilet is not fastened to the floor and it is in terrible condition."

(Many of these houses are admitted by the fire authorities to constitute fire traps.)

It should be re-emphasized however, that less than one-half of the colored population is represented by the housing survey and that there are an increasing number of Negroes owning and renting homes that are as neat, well-equipped, and as well furnished as any in the city. The majority of the better homes may be found in the periphery of the principal Negro settlement about Ninth and Tenth Avenues and Bushnell Place while others are scattered throughout the city.

HOUSING AND HEALTH

Though the death rate in Mount Vernon is among the lowest in New York State for both white and colored, the relationship of disease and overcrowding in these near slum areas is illuminating. Map II expresses

better than words the startling correlation of congestion and economic stringency with sickness. Compare Map II with Map I showing the distribution of the Negro population.

Leading medical experts have recently relinquished the belief that tuberculosis is a racial weakness of the Negro and have now ascribed its causes to social circumstances. Weatherford and Johnson state that "Tuberculosis is a disease which has its greatest incidence among the lower economic groups. Its seriousness is closely related to social and economic factors, and its prevention has become as much a sociological as a medical problem. Poverty, poor food, bad housing, overcrowding, overwork, and worry diminish resistance. Improvement in economic well-being usually carries with it improvement in resistance to its fatal ravages. Dr. Louis I. Dublin, of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, one of the foremost of authorities on this question, has pointed out that tuberculosis is not uniformly distributed in the population as a cause of death; that it is a workingman's disease" (1)

RENT

Despite the reduction of rentals generally due to hard times, and the limited facilities discovered on the block of South Seventh Avenue between Third and Fourth Streets, the tenants paid an average rental of \$7.204 per room. Of the five buildings housing both white and colored tenants, colored tenants were found paying an average of \$.87 more per room for the same accommodations. The white tenants paid an average of \$6.36 per room while colored paid \$7.23 per room. The average for the South Fourth Avenue group is slightly lower, being \$6.42 per room.

In better neighborhoods the rental is usually \$10 to \$12 per room and the disparity between white and colored rentals becomes more pronounced. It should be remembered that whether in quiet residential sections or in the congested near-slum-area, rent takes a disproportionate share of the Negro's earnings.

HOME OWNERSHIP

There are according to the City Census Report of 1934, 70 colored home owners, coming together with other propertied Negroes approximately 117 parcels of land estimated at \$500,000. Practically all of this property was bought since 1920. Few persons have lost their homes on account of the economic conditions.

HOUSING AUTHORITY

Although the Housing Project was approved by the federal government as a relief project and \$1,500,000 was thus available, the Board of Alderman defeated by a four to one vote the ordinance providing for a Housing Authority to comply with the federal provisions. Ostensibly the project was defeated because it was thought that it would not be self-liquidating and the city government would be burdened with additional taxation. Other rumors bespeak of a political controversy between a Democratic Mayor and a Republican Board of Alderman as evidenced by the Aldermanic vote.

Material for this chapter was secured principally from the extensive housing Survey sponsored by the Westchester Woman's Club. (The Schedule employed in this Survey included 27 relevant items such as race, occupation, and employment, size of family etc., in addition to more technical items as to number of rooms, windows, etc. A summary report by the supervisor briefly described the prevailing condition noted in the schedule. Original sheets of the City Census were consulted in ascertaining colored home owners and current articles commenting on the housing survey in the "Daily Argus" were found very helpful. Madge Headly's chapter on housing in "Negro Problems in Cities" edited by J. T. Woolfer Jr. was read as a background.

1. Weatherford, Willis D. and Johnson, Charles S., "Race Relations," p. 371

HEALTH

Generally Mount Vernon ranks within the lower bracket of the fourteen cities of New York State having the lowest death rate. In 1931 it won the peculiar distinction of having the lowest death rate of any of the thirtyone cities of the state, while in 1932 with the sole exception of White Plains, it had the lowest infant mortality rate in cities with a population over 25,000. This standard could not have been attained were it not for the Negro rate which dropped from 9.2 death per 1000 (exclusive of stillbirths) in 1930, to the remarkably low rate of 6.6 in 1931, or 19.5 o/o lower than the rate for the city in 1932. The Negro infant mortality rate registered only four deaths in contrast to ten in 1931.

VITAL STATISTICS

On the whole, Negro mortality rates are not excessive and when compared with those of New York City present a very wholesome picture. The birth and death rates registered for nine years are as follows:

TABLE IV

Births and Rates (exclusive of stillborn) per 1000 showing Negro births and rates

| | <u>TOTAL</u> | <u>RATE</u> | <u>NEGRO</u> | <u>RATE</u> |
|-----------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1926..... | 1055 | 19.8 | 47 | 19.1 |
| 1927..... | 1199 | 21.1 | 62 | 22.4 |
| 1928..... | 1198 | 20.9 | 100 | 33.2 |
| 1929..... | 1149 | 19.2 | 84 | 26.1 |
| 1930..... | 1084 | 17.4 | 83 | 22.6 |
| 1931..... | 1064 | 18.6 | 80 | 21.4 |
| 1932..... | 1045 | 16.7 | 78 | 19.8 |
| 1933..... | 914 | 14.5 | 77 | 19.4 |
| 1934..... | 871 | 13.6 | 78 | 18.8 |

Department of Public Health Reports, 1926-1934. State adjusted through Mount Vernon 1930

TABLE V

Deaths and Rates (exclusive of stillborn) per 1000 showing
Negro births and rates

| | TOTAL | RATE | NEGRO | RATE |
|------------|-------|------|-------|------|
| 1926 | 546 | 10.3 | 20 | 8.1 |
| 1927 | 493 | 8.9 | 23 | 8.3 |
| 1928 | 549 | 9.6 | 34 | 11.2 |
| 1929 | 561 | 9.4 | 32 | 10.0 |
| 1930 | 530 | 8.5 | 34 | 9.2 |
| 1931 | 514 | 8.2 | 25 | 6.6 |
| 1932 | 566 | 8.9 | 35 | 9.2 |
| 1933 | 491 | 7.8 | 34 | 8.6 |
| 1934 | 525 | 8.6 | 34 | 8.2 |

Figures taken from the Mount Vernon Department of Public Health Reports, 1926-1934. State adjusted through 1930.

TABLE VI

Stillborn by color and nativity of father

| | TOTAL | NATIVE-WHITE | FOREIGN-BORN | NEGRO |
|------------|-------|--------------|--------------|-------|
| 1926 | 35 | 19 | 11 | 5 |
| 1927 | 37 | 17 | 19 | 1 |
| 1928 | 45 | 17 | 20 | 8 |
| 1929 | 37 | 18 | 17 | 2 |
| 1930 | 45 | 22 | 16 | 7 |
| 1931 | 41 | 25 | 13 | 3 |
| 1932 | 32 | 20 | 11 | 1 |
| 1933 | 42 | 20 | 14 | 7 |
| 1934 | 47 | -- | -- | 2 |

Figures taken from the Mount Vernon Department of Public Health Reports, 1926-1934. State adjusted through 1930.

There are many implications involved in the mortality rates and no attempt will be made to exhaust them. Fecundity, lack of birth control, freer sexual lives of the lower economic groups may reflect in prevailing birth rates while increased medical and clinical attention has undoubtedly aided in mitigating mortality for both the white and colored population. In our particular case there is also an intriguing economic element involved. Sociologists universally claim with convincing proof that there is an emphatic relation between the economic status and vital statistics. Were it not that the entire death rate has been reduced during the past four years, one should conclude that state and federal provisions which have largely eliminated the economically destitute were responsible for the lowering of Negro deaths. From the mortality figures it would seem that if this factor is involved at all it has its greatest influence upon infant mortality.

TABLE VII

Infant Mortality Rate per 1000 live births (exclusive of stillbirths) by color of Father

| | TOTAL | NEGRO | WHITE |
|-----------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1925..... | 41.8 | 122.4 | 57.9 |
| 1926..... | 52.6 | 101.7 | 46.2 |
| 1927..... | 48.6 | 98.4 | 45.9 |
| 1928..... | 46.9 | 118.3 | 40.9 |
| 1929..... | 45.3 | 59.5 | 42.0 |
| 1930..... | 37.0 | 56.8 | 35.3 |
| 1931..... | 42.0 | 125.0 | - |
| 1932..... | 38.2 | 51.3 | - |
| 1933..... | 33.0 | 77.9 | - |
| 1934..... | 35.6 | 51.3 | - |

Figures taken from the Mount Vernon Department of Public Health Reports, 1925-1934. State adjusted through 1934.

CAUSES OF DEATH

For a selected number of diseases over a period of four years heart disease held first place as a cause of death for the general population; cancer, second; bronchial and lobar pneumonia, third; apoplexy, fourth; premature birth, fifth; and pulmonary tuberculosis, sixth. Among Negro deaths heart disease also held first place; bronchial and lobar pneumonia, second; premature birth, third; acute and chronic nephritis, fourth; pulmonary tuberculosis, fifth; and cancer, sixth. It is interesting to note that while cancer is second as a cause of death for the general population, it is sixth for the Negro, and tuberculosis which is sixth for the general population, is fifth for the Negro.

Considering all causes of death for 1934 tuberculosis was thirteenth for the white and sixth for the Negro. This condition is characteristic of the registered health rates throughout the country as far as cancer is concerned but is somewhat contradictory in the case of tuberculosis. The disparity is more apparent that real since there are no accommodations in the Mount Vernon Hospital for contagious cases and therefore local tubercular cases are sent to the county hospital at Grasslands where the deaths are often lost sight of pending state allotment. According to the figures of the tuberculosis nurse there were eight colored deaths from tuberculosis in 1934 making the rate 193.4, or second as a cause of deaths instead of fifth as indicated by the death register. In 1929, the latest year for which figures are available, tuberculosis held second place as a cause of death for Negroes in the general registration area and seventh place as a cause for all deaths. In New York State tuberculosis was third for Negroes and sixth for white.

The tuberculosis nurse of the Department of Public Health reported 18 active cases of tuberculosis in 1934, nine of which were colored.

During March 1935 Negro Health Week was observed in several cities of the county under the sponsorship of the White Plains Urban League, in which tuberculosis as a cause of death was brought into special prominence. The sociological aspects of the disease have been previously stated in connection with housing. The importance of wholesome recreation, better housing, an enhanced economic status, and sanitary working conditions cannot be over-emphasized in directing this phase of the health program.

TABLE VIII

Causes of death per 100,000 for the general population

| | 1928 | 1929 | 1930 | 1931 | 1932 | 1933 | 1934 |
|---------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| T. B. Pulmonary | 20.8 | 21.7 | 16.2 | 22.5 | 24.0 | 11.1 | 14.0 |
| Other T. B. | 5.2 | 3.4 | - | 1.6 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 7.8 |
| Cancer, all forms | 100.1 | 92.0 | 83.8 | 98.1 | 91.1 | 76.2 | 110.7 |
| Heart disease | 228.5 | 185.7 | 183.6 | 193.0 | 180.6 | 152.4 | 146.6 |
| Pneumonia, bronchial & lobar | 92.4 | 103.7 | 96.7 | 88.5 | 92.7 | 57.1 | 85.8 |
| Accidents | 36.5 | 40.3 | 30.6 | 33.8 | 38.4 | 27.0 | 35.9 |
| Typhoid | 3.8 | - | 3.2 | - | - | 3.2 | 7.8 |
| Whooping cough | - | - | - | 1.6 | - | - | - |
| Diphtheria | 3.8 | 1.7 | - | - | - | 1.6 | - |
| Measles | - | - | 1.6 | - | - | - | 1.6 |
| Scarlet fever | 7.0 | - | - | - | 1.6 | 1.6 | - |
| Premature birth | 22.6 | 30.1 | 20.9 | 20.9 | 25.6 | 19.0 | 29.3 |
| Apoplexy | 69.4 | 68.4 | 75.7 | 48.3 | 57.5 | 47.6 | 49.6 |
| Diabetes | 15.6 | 15.0 | 14.7 | 14.5 | 19.2 | 11.3 | 42.1 |
| Syphilis | 3.8 | 1.7 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 4.9 | 3.2 | 3.1 |
| Congenital deformation | 8.7 | 5.0 | 3.2 | 1.6 | 6.4 | 3.2 | 1.6 |

Figures are derived from the Mount Vernon Department of Public Health Reports, 1928-1934. State adjusted through 1930.

TABLE IX

Causes of Death per 100,000 for the Negro population

| | 1927 | 1928 | 1929 | 1930 | 1931 | 1932 | 1933 | 1934 |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|--------|
| T.B. Pulmonary | 36.2 | 33.2 | 93.8 | 54.6 | 26.8 | 25.5 | 75.6 | 48.4 * |
| Other T.B. | - | - | - | - | - | - | 25.2 | 24.1 |
| Cancer, all forms | - | 132.8 | 31.3 | - | 26.8 | - | 50.4 | 48.4 |
| Heart Disease | 289.9 | 199.2 | 218.8 | 273.1 | 133.9 | 127.4 | 251.9 | 217.6 |
| Pneumonia, Bronchial and Lobar | 253.7 | 166.0 | 187.5 | 81.9 | 81.9 | 254.9 | 151.2 | 120.8 |
| Accidents | - | 33.2 | 31.3 | - | 54.6 | 25.5 | 25.2 | 72.5 |
| Typhoid | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Whooping cough | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Diphtheria | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Measles | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Scarlet fever | - | - | - | - | 109.1 | 101.9 | 125.9 | 48.4 |
| Premature birth | - | - | - | 27.3 | 26.8 | 76.4 | - | 120.8 |
| Cerebral hemorrhage | 108.7 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Apoplexy | - | - | - | - | - | 25.5 | - | - |
| Diabetes | 36.3 | 33.2 | 31.3 | 54.6 | - | - | - | - |
| Syphilis | 72.5 | 33.2 | - | 81.9 | 71.9 | - | - | - |
| Nephritis | 72.5 | 33.2 | 437.5 | 109.2 | (26.8) | 25.5 | 25.2 | 72.5 |

Figures are derived from the Mount Vernon Department of Public Health Reports 1927-1934. State adjusted through 1930.

Tuberculosis nurse of the Department of Public Health reports 8 deaths in 1934 which would raise this figure to 193.4

INFANT MORTALITY

The pre-eminence of premature birth as a cause of death is likewise closely related to environmental factors, poverty, personal hygiene, and prenatal

(1)

care. Osborn and Neumeyer, referring undoubtedly to the records of the Children's Bureau, states "there is a regular decrease in the death rate of babies from families whose fathers earn \$500 or less per year to those in which they earn \$1200 or more. A similar relation exists between the infant mortality rate and the number of rooms in which the family lives." According to the figures obtained in the study of the Children's Bureau, where fathers earned less than \$450 per year the Negro infant mortality rate was 163.7 and the white was 164.8.⁽²⁾ In the Milbank Fund Study 48 percent more sickness was found among the unemployed than among steady workers.

The Negro death rate from premature birth in Mount Vernon was 125.9 in 1933 and 48.4 in 1934 per 100,000 population, while the white rate was 16.9 in 1933 and 28.3 in 1934. The infant mortality rate per 1000 live births was 77.9 in 1933 and 51.3 in 1934 for colored, and 33.0 and 35.6 respectively for all groups.

There has been a marked improvement in infant mortality rates during the last ten years due to the expanded clinical service offered by the Department of Health and to the excellent work of the Visiting Nurses Association which expends 20 % of its service among the Negro group. In 1925 the total infant mortality rate was 41.8 while the Negro rate was 122.4. These figures have been more or less consistently reduced to 35.6 for the total and 51.3 for the Negro. As shown in Table VII the Negro rate is still 30.6 per cent higher than that for the total population.

RECOMMENDATIONS

General health conditions among Negroes of Mount Vernon is commendable though they are usually below the average for the city and consistently below that for the native white. When the death rates for 1934 are analyzed on the basis of nationality and color the Negro rate of 8.2 per 1000, exclusive of stillbirths in 1934, is found to be 19.5 percent higher than that for the native white which is only 6.6 for the same number and considerably lower than the foreign-born which is 13.6 per 1000, exclusive of stillbirths. These figures would seem to recommend more specific health efforts among these two groups of the city's population. Special health studies by seasoned medical experts are both valuable and necessary. The latest health surveys should be available and antiquated beliefs concerning innate disabilities of the Negro should be exchanged for the more constructive interest in planned health programs.

Material for this chapter was secured from the Reports of the Mount Vernon Department of Public Health; "Vital statistics", published by the U. S. Census Bureau, 1929; "A Review of Health Conditions and Needs in Mount Vernon", published by the General Department of Public Welfare of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, 1930; and from chapters on Negro health in "The Negro in American Civilization" by Charles S. Johnson; and "Race Relations" by Weatherford and Johnson.

(1) Osborn, L.D. and Neumeyer, M.H. "Community and Society", p. 130.

(2) Woofter, T.J. "Races and Ethnic Groups in American Life", p. 153.

THE ECONOMIC STATUS

The Negro more than any other important group in America lives nearest the bare subsistence level. While he has entered many new fields in the skilled trades and the professions, he has in the main followed a few menial occupations which through time have become almost traditional. In recent years, however, and particularly during the present economic depression there has been a wholesale displacement of the Negro from even these meek and lowly positions. The extent of this displacement due to racial reasons is not ascertainable but numerous advertisements designating "white persons desired" would seem to indicate a degree of importance. This is unfortunate since the Negro can least afford economic losses of any kind. Charles S. Johnson quoting one of his students puts it nicely when he states that "one percent makes little difference to a statistician but it spells hell to a man on the edge of starvation."

THE GAINFULLY EMPLOYED

At the outset it is only fair to state that the differences in methods, machinery, and criteria employed in the federal and municipal censuses may tend to affect an error in comparisons made upon these respective figures. At present, there is but one obvious discrepancy; that is, the basis of computing the gainfully employed. The federal census included all persons ten years of age and above while the city census set the age of employment at sixteen. This disparity is undoubtedly slight.

In 1930 the federal Census Bureau recorded 61.6 percent of the Negro population reporting gainful occupations and only 42.5 percent of the white. In 1934 there were still 38.6 percent colored gainfully employed and only 31.8 percent white. This is not an anomaly. In respect to relative size, the Negro working population has for many decades surpassed the white. The greater proportion of workers among colored people indicates fewer retired persons, few if any persons forming a leisure class, and a vast army of housewives seeking remunerative occupations. The effect of the depression upon the Mount Vernon Negro can be seen only partially, as shown in Table X, in the comparative loss of gainful employment since 1930. With the colored population there has been a 23.0 percent loss while with the white only 10.7 percent. If all other things were equal the Negro would have suffered twice as much as the average white person.

TABLE X

Gainful Employment by Color

| | <u>1930</u> | <u>Percent</u> | <u>1934</u> | <u>Percent</u> | <u>Loss</u> |
|-------|-------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| White | 24,578 | 42.5 | 18,989 | 31.8 | 10.7 |
| Negro | 2,223 | 61.6 | 1,599 | 38.6 | 23.0 |

TABLE XI

Unemployment by Color

| | 1930 | Percent | 1934 | Percent | Increase |
|-------|-------|---------|--------|---------|----------|
| White | 1,923 | 3.3 | 15,542 | 25.9 | 22.6 |
| Negro | 280 | 7.7 | 1,096 | 26.4 | 18.7 |

UNEMPLOYMENT

From the table on unemployment it will be seen that the Negro unemployment was proportionally more than twice as high as the white in the more normal year of 1930 before the ravages of unemployment were in full swing and approximately the same as the white in 1934 after four consecutive years of business and industrial shrinkage. The increase in Negro unemployment is 3.9 percent lower than for the white. This is a fairly general condition exemplified in several cities. However, if cognizance were taken of the part-time workers a truer expression of the real situation would result. The fact that the Negro can afford little shrinkage in employment accounts more than anything else for the high percentage of Negroes on relief rolls. There are few relatives to appeal to, small savings have been long dissipated, and traditional jobs are being rapidly usurped. Fortunately, the Negro, being accustomed to live at a low level of subsistence, has been able to make the adjustment without conspicuous distress.

THE RELIEF SITUATION

During March of 1935 there were 475 colored families receiving government aid on home and work relief projects. This figure, though not startling, since the Negro has lost twice as many jobs as the white population, is nevertheless tragic. According to the 1934 census there are 898 colored families and from the above figures over one-half of the Negro population is on relief. The Negro constitutes 23% of the total 2,014 families recipient of relief in March. There were 722 Italian families, or 36% and 255, or 14% other foreign-born. Five hundred and sixty-two families, or 22% were designated American. These figures were taken from a study of the Department of Public Welfare itself. The Italian group, for purposes convenient to them, included both foreign-born Italians and those whose parents were foreign-born.

The Associated Charities performs 7% of its service among colored people. Figures from the Salvation Army were not returned.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

Mount Vernon is rapidly changing from a city of homes "urbs jucundarum domuum" into a city of apartments and industries. There are forty-two dress factories, seven cleaning and dyeing plants, the Ward Leonard Electric Company, the Ward Motor Vehicle Company, the home office of the Westchester Lighting Company, beverage and chemical factories, three macaroni factories, and a number of laundries. NO study of Negro employment by these enterprises were made but it is estimated that Negroes form a negligible factor in them.

The vast majority of Negroes are domestics, porters, and common laborers. There being little work for men, laborers usually take what they can get while porters receive from \$12 to \$15 per week. Colored women in domestic service receive from \$35 to \$40 per month for full time and \$16 to \$25 for part-time. This is in striking contrast to the wages of a decade ago as reported by R. Maurice Moss when laborers received from \$5 to \$7 per day and women from \$60 to \$80 per month for unskilled labor!

The following statistics are based on a survey of Negro economics by Mrs. Benjamin F. Levister during the winter of 1933, which was included in a report submitted to the Commission on Race Relations of the Federal Council of Churches.

Negro church employees:

18 men, 20 women, 2 minors

Professional workers:

Physicians, 3; dentists, 1; pharmacists, 1 (proprietor and three clerks); undertakers, 3; lawyers; 1.

Personal service group:

Beauty culturists, 18; barbers, 8; tailors, 2; employment agents, 5; real estate agents, 5.

Negro business establishments:

One pool room owned and another run by Negroes; 5 auto repair shops; 5 painting and decorating establishments; 1 grocery store; three moving and express businesses; 4 retail coal businesses; 2 Negro beer gardens; 2 taxi businesses; 1 Negro restaurant employing two clerks each.

Government and municipal employees:

Of the 188 persons employed by the Mount Vernon Department of Public Works 5 Negro laborers were employed, the Mount Vernon Department of Public Health, 1 Negro laborer; Mount Vernon City Court, none; Mount Vernon Fire Department, none; Mount Vernon Police Department, none; Mount Vernon Recreation Commission, two; part time workers; the Board of Education, two janitor helpers.

Of the 81 employees in the local United States Post Office, 19 were Negroes.

In general the depression has brought a larger percentage of private business enterprises among Negroes due to the loss of conventional jobs.

Material for this chapter was taken from the original sheets of the 1934 city census; the federal census of 1930; a study of relief applicants by the Department of Public Welfare and a survey of the Negro of Mount Vernon submitted to the Commission of Race Relations of Federal Council of Churches, 1933 by Emma Barlowe. For a background the "Summary and Analysis of the materials presented at the Conference on the Economic status of the Negro" held in Washington, D.C., May 1933, and prepared by Charles S. Johnson was read.

(1) Moss, R. Maurice. "The Negro Population of Westchester County", p. 26.

CRIME AND DELINQUENCY

Studies of Negro crime generally proceed along one of three directions. The first is to accept the much bombarded attitude that the Negro is of a lower level of intelligence which makes him the more anti-social animal. The second is based upon the sociological explanation expressed in the decadence of the institution of the family before and after the Civil War and the economic and biological influences of his present status in the existing social order, and finally, upon the belief that there is a tendency on the part of the departments of justice to suspect, arrest, and convict a Negro when under similar circumstances a white man would hardly be questioned.

None or all of these explanations can explain away the fact that the Negro crime rate is appallingly greater than his proportional representation in the population although E. B. Rueter in his book "American Race Problems" found that Negro crime was less than that for certain other groups of the general population though higher than the white taken as a whole. (1)

In Mount Vernon the crime rate for the Negro is not at variance with the general situation. Of the 1,418 arrests made for criminal infractions of the law in 1934, four hundred and sixty-two were Negro offenders. This is 31.9 per cent of all arrests made by the police although the Negro population constitutes but 6.4 per cent of the total population. The ratio is practically general over a considerable period as indicated by the police reports for the past two and a half years. In 1933 Negroes constituted 31.6 per cent of the arrests, and for the first three months of 1935, 37.7 per cent.

The types of crime accounting for the greatest percentage of violations may be discerned from the following table. Disorderly conduct and vagrancy, which are loose terms for a number of minor offences, constitute the great bulk of arrests. In 1934 the Negro was arrested seven times as often as the white for disorderly conduct, eleven times as often for vagrancy, and sixteen times as often for petit-larceny. Crimes of violence—assault and disorderly conduct, are generally greatly out of proportion to the population ratio, while grand larceny, forgery, and the violation of labor laws are below that for the white.

TABLE XII

DISTRIBUTION OF CRIME 1934

| | White | Percent | Negro | Percent |
|-----------------------------|-------|---------|-------|---------|
| Arson | 1 | 100.0 | - | - |
| Arson (attempted) | 1 | 100.0 | - | - |
| Assault - 1st degree | - | - | - | - |
| Assault - 2nd degree | 3 | 50.0 | 3 | 50.0 |
| Assault - 3rd degree | 66 | 56.1 | 48 | 41.9 |
| Burglary | 14 | 50.0 | 14 | 50.0 |
| Burglary - Attempted | 4 | 66.6 | 2 | 33.3 |
| Disorderly conduct | 155 | 69.9 | 70 | 31.1 |
| Homicide by vehicle | 10 | 91.0 | 1 | 9.0 |
| Homicide by negligence | 1 | 100.0 | - | - |
| Homicide criminal | 1 | 50.0 | 1 | 50.0 |
| Interfering with an officer | 2 | 28.6 | 5 | 71.4 |
| Kidnapping | 2 | 100.0 | - | - |
| Larceny, Grand | 2 | 66.6 | 1 | 33.3 |
| Larceny, Petit | 42 | 47.2 | 47 | 52.8 |

| | White | Percent | Negro | Percent (con't) |
|---------------------|------------|-------------|------------|-----------------|
| Malicious mischief | 12 | 85.7 | 2 | 14.3 |
| Rape | 2 | 40.0 | 3 | 60.0 |
| Threatening a crime | 17 | 54.8 | 14 | 45.2 |
| Vagrancy | 167 | 79.1 | 44 | 20.9 |
| Forgery | 2 | 100.0 | - | - |
| Policy Slips | 31 | 44.9 | 38 | 55.1 |
| All crimes | 956 | 68.1 | 462 | 31.9 |

These figures showing arrests for 1934 were taken from the Mount Vernon Police Department Annual Report for 1934.

The police records which are used almost exclusively offer a fairly comparable record of the crime situation in Mount Vernon. Unfortunately no designation as to color is made in the annual judicial reports, thus making figures of Negro convictions and acquittals inaccessible without recourse to the original daily reports. Most studies of Negro crime, however, find that the Negro is convicted more often than the white offender. This is due to a number of factors which are more or less difficult of statistical record. The Negro is often without counsel; and on the other hand, when found guilty he is more often unable to pay the fine imposed upon him. All of the inhibitions brought to bear in the case of a man of wealth and standing in the community are strikingly lacking in the case of the disinherited Negro. Ordinarily, the defendant who is without funds will prefer to plead guilty to petty crimes, thus placing himself at the mercy of the presiding officer, rather than to contest the charge at the possible expense of incurring the wrath of the court.

Women constituted .064 per cent of all criminal arrests in 1935 and .093 per cent, in 1934. Negro women constituted .042 and .041 per cent for the two years. For the female crime colored women constituted 45.1 per cent of the women arrested, and white women 54.9 per cent in 1934. Leading types of female crime for both white and colored women for 1934 are given in the following table:

TABLE XLII

DISTRIBUTION OF FEMALE CRIME 1934

| | White | Percent | Negro | Percent |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| Assault 3rd degree | 3 | 33.3 | 6 | 66.6 |
| Disorderly conduct | 15 | 48.4 | 16 | 51.6 |
| Intoxication | 18 | 53.4 | 14 | 46.6 |
| Larceny, petit | 4 | 28.6 | 10 | 71.4 |
| Vagrancy | 20 | 71.5 | 8 | 28.5 |
| All crime | 72 | .051 | 60 | .042 |
| All female crime | 72 | 54.9 | 60 | 45.1 |

These figures were taken from the Annual Report of the Mount Vernon Police Department 1934

THE YOUNG CRIMINAL

A special study was made of the criminal offenders between the ages of 16 and 21 inclusive. Of the 1,418 arrests made in 1934, 228 fell into this group. Twenty-three per cent, of the latter group were colored. The range of crime within these age limits included virtually the whole gamut of criminal infractions, from murder and burglary to vagrancy and intoxication. Of the 228, twenty-three were sixteen years of age, 35 were seventeen, 25 were eighteen, 30 were nineteen, 26 were twenty, and 35 were twenty-one years of age. Only eight of this group were foreign-born which is probably due to the age limitation set up here. The incidence of Negro arrests fell within the nineteen year old group. There were no sixteen year old arrests, 4 seventeen, 11 eighteen, 15 nineteen, 11 twenty years and 13 twenty-one years of age.

Unfortunately police arrests are not an absolute measure of crime and in the absence of actual convictions and acquittals an obvious discrepancy exists. Dispositions of the above cases were taken from the police register. Exactly one-half of the white and one-third of the colored cases were dismissed. About one-fifth of the white and one-third of the colored received suspended sentences; one of each were held for the Grand Jury; twenty white and two colored were placed upon probation; and eight white and four colored were placed in penal and correctional institutions.

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

The Children's Court figures offer a hardly more encouraging picture. Of forty-six delinquent boys brought before the court in 1934, fourteen were colored boys. Thirteen of these boys were arrested for stealing and one for incorrigibility. One was immediately committed to a state institution and three others were subsequently committed when arrested upon a second charge. One of the remainder was dismissed and nine are still on probation. Of the thirty-two white boys, nineteen were charged with stealing, seven with disorderly conduct, two with incorrigibility, and one with truancy, one with malicious mischief, and two with violation of the Curfew law. Of the thirty-two white boys arranged before the court, two were immediately placed in institutions, one was dismissed, one was discharged to the Commissioner of Child Welfare and twenty-eight were placed upon probation. Five were later discharged as being satisfactory, one was later committed to a state institution when brought before the court a second time and another was discharged to the Commissioner of Child Welfare. The age range for the colored boys was from eleven to fifteen and for the white, nine to fifteen.

Delinquent girls are usually scarce, there being only four in 1934, three white and one colored. Two were charged with stealing, one with assault and one with running away from home. All were placed upon probation.

These figures were paralleled by the report of the Westchester County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to children. During 1934 this organization handled cases involving seventy-two colored children which were approximately one-third of all cases handled during the year. Sixty-seven were adjusted and five were brought into the Children's Court. Six colored adults were prosecuted for crimes involving neglect inadequate and improper guardianship, sex crimes, and disorderly and ungovernable children.

CAUSES OF DELINQUENCY

(2)

Henry J. McGuinn in a study of delinquency in sixteen cities found that

"judges and court workers, without exception, mentioned the economic factor as perhaps the chief contributing cause of excessive delinquency among Negro children. Low wages and subsequent inability of the father to support the family result in both parents going to work, so that neither can be at home when the child should be sent to school. As the children return home before their parents do, and have little systematized recreation to attract their attention, they drift into trouble. A second factor is the broken family." McGuinn also found more delinquency during the winter months when playgrounds were closed.

CAUSES OF CRIME

To set forth the causes of crime would be to recount the causes already enumerated for bad health; that is, bad housing, poverty, the absence of Negro mothers from their homes during the day, the lack of wholesome and supervised recreation, worry, morbidity, despair, and the complete loss of morale.

Unless we accept the first point of view set forth in the beginning of this topic that of a natural criminal tendency among colored people, and thus rule out all the progress made in crime correction in the past fifty years, we are forced to see in the excessive arrests for petit larceny and the possession of policy slips all the blighted hopes of a proscribed people to make two ends meet. There is hardly a criminal study made that has not manifested a certain relation between poverty and the degree and seriousness of crime. Indeed the submerged condition under which some Negroes live tend to drive them into crime.

The Chief Inspector of Mount Vernon Police Department attributed the excessive Negro crime rate to "floaters", a shiftless, irresponsible, criminal element, that drift in and out of cities with every wind that blows. The permanent colored residents are thought to be respectable and law-abiding people. The lesson here is that one should hesitate in arriving at hasty conclusions about Negro crime rate without first consulting some recommended treatment of it that weighs all the "buts", the "pros", and the "cons". After all explanations are exhausted, however, Negro crime still remains excessive.

One of the glaring causes of crime in Mount Vernon is with certainty traceable to the well-nigh complete lack of character building agencies working among colored people (See Chapter X). In 1932 the City Boys' Club made negotiations for taking over a club on South Seventh Avenue located in the heart of the Negro community and formerly run by the Knights of Columbus who excluded Negro boys. Contingent upon this venture the Club made a study of delinquency in Mount Vernon and found 80 per cent of the delinquents coming from this neighborhood. The Club was taken over and its doors were thrown open to all boys regardless of race, color, or creed. In 1934 only 39 per cent of the city's juvenile delinquency was registered from this district. Here is living proof of what wonders are possible if a larger Community Chest Fund should share more generously toward making the Negro a more creditable citizen - not to mention the equivalent saving in the police and judicial budgets. "If you despise a man as a social and economic outcast you do your best to make him act like one." (3)

Material for this chapter was taken from the Mount Vernon Police Department Annual Reports, from the Children's Court Calendar and the reports of the Westchester County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and the Westchester County Children's Association. Chapters on crime were read from the following books: "Negro Problems in Cities", J.T. Woofter Jr. (Under chapter on recreation); "Recent Social Trends", J.T. Woofter Jr.; "The Negro in American Civilization" Charles S. Johnson; The Negro in New York, James H. Hubert.

- (1) Johnson, Charles S. "The Negro in American Civilization" p. 315-314
- (2) McQuinn, Henry J. chapter on recreation in "Negro Problems in Cities"
edited by J. T. Woofter Jr. p. 228
- (3) Hubert, James H. "The Negro in New York" p. 16

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VIII
NEGRO ORGANIZATIONS

Disintegration of Negro society in Mount Vernon is practically complete, a condition seriously exaggerated by the economic depression but by no means due entirely to it. There is always an element of depression with the Negro. Traditionally he is the marginal man in American industry, "the last to be hired and the first to be fired." There is also the disintegrating force of the proximity to New York City, a factor which is often underestimated or not considered at all. A cursory examination of organization in the principal cities of Westchester County revealed that there exists a direct relationship between the degree of Negro organization and the distance from the metropolis.

COLORED CHURCHES

Sixteen churches, five of which were missions, were discovered by the investigator. All of these bodies returned questionnaires with the exception of one, revealing beyond expectation the great number of small churches in the city. These churches maintain a set of untrained and self-appointed pastors who play upon the emotions of their small congregations which are composed of from ten to thirty persons. One church which had recently separated from another of the same denomination was composed of a single family. The pastor lives in Brooklyn and visits the church for meetings.

James Weldon Johnson says of this comparatively recent development "We must stamp out as far as we can the bootleggers of religion, those parasites who, whenever they can get together a sufficient number of hard-working women, will open a store-front or basement church and peddle a spurious brand of Christianity at a relatively exorbitant price. Some of these men may be sincere, but the majority of them are ignorant, lazy louts, who would be of greater value to themselves and to the race if they were put to manual labor." (1) Specifically, the multiplicity of small sects denies the larger institutions the financial and moral support so sorely needed to make them felt in a real way. The Negro church is traditionally the most powerful agency of the Negro community and with it prostrated as it is in Mount Vernon, conditions among Negroes naturally take a backward step.

None of the churches have any recreational facilities or equipment. Four have basements suitable for meetings and one or two small rooms. Nevertheless, there are no recreational activities, no program and indeed, no personnel. All of the smaller churches rent store-fronts or small halls while four of the larger ones are laboring under heavy mortgages. Not one was found owning the church property free of debt.

One of the most significant discoveries in the survey was the number of unchurched Negroes. There are according to the Mount Vernon City Census of 1934, 4,139 colored residents in the city. Over 3,555 were enumerated as church members, yet, in the present survey only 2,021 were found enrolled on church attendance. The whole outlook exposes a mournful lack of appeal of the church due in no small measure to the economic conditions, but as previously stated, not entirely so.

An equally devastating feature of the whole situation is the few children affiliated with churches and the comparatively large percentage of this number that come under the tutelage of untrained and unlearned teachers. This is particularly true among the smaller sects though there is a dearth of able teachers throughout the entire church population. Four hundred and sixty-six children and young people between the ages of one and twenty were found attending all churches.

This is 35 per cent of the total 1,300 colored children falling within the above age group. Of these 466, three hundred and sixty-four were under fifteen years of age and only 121 between the ages of 15 and 20. Of the total 466, one hundred and sixty-two, or thirty-five per cent, were found in store-front churches.(2)

In social service the church is restricted to visiting the sick, which to a large extent is left to the pastors. In a subsequent part of this study dealing with recreation the church is discussed as a cultural and recreational agency. It should be further said in conclusion that leadership in the church is seriously embarrassed by financial circumstances.

UPLIFT ORGANIZATIONS

The church situation is but typical of a worse condition among other groups. There are 6 purposeful or uplift organizations in the city including one veterans' post, with only two showing any evidences of life. The remaining four are practically dormant but for an occasional public meeting. The two specified agencies while more active, are on the whole unable to find an influential place in the life of the community. All of these organizations have volunteer officials and with the exception of two meet either in the homes of their members or at the various churches. (See Appendix H)

There are also 10 fraternal organizations which with the exception of two are merely executing the perfunctory duties, externally living only in name. Many of the lodges returned questionnaires unanswered on the principle of secrecy, but information covering the real condition existing among them was obtained from indirect sources. In addition to the 16 churches and 6 uplift organizations, four political and 25 "socializing" clubs were discovered. This explains in striking fashion what James Weldon Johnson means when he asserts that the Negro society is "over-organized" even to the point of total disintegration.

POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS

Politically the Negro is a non-entity. The same duplication, antipathy and petty jealousy which is found among other groups is also undermining political efforts and nullifying the effectiveness of the Negro vote generally. There were, when this phase of the study was completed, four different "competing" colored political clubs - two Democratic and two Republican. One of these, a women's organization created in defiance of the inactivity of the existing club of that party, was formed during the month of the survey. Its impotence is almost assured due to initial differences arising out of its formation.

There are 2,736 colored people of voting age. Eighty-eight (3.1 per cent) are disqualified because of illiteracy, leaving a potential voting strength of 2,648 including the sick and aged. The Negro voting strength is localized in the First and Fourteenth Election Districts where there may be found 1,629 colored people - 981 in the First and 648 in the Fourteenth.

During the past four years Negro leaders have paid increasing attention to the elections of members of the Board of Education. It is generally felt that with the increasing colored population there ought to be a greater Negro representation in the schools. In 1931, 1932, and 1934 the colored element ran two of its clergymen. The general apathy stultifying the community life failed to be broken; denominational antipathies were aroused and consequently a poor showing resulted. The Negro vote was 440 in 1932 and 268 in 1934 out of a possible 1,177 eligible voters.

There are but nine colored persons on the regular municipal payrolls. Seven of these are laborers. The irony of the situation is that one of these laborers, a truck driver, is vice-president of a colored Democratic organization.

THE OUTLOOK

The outlook is not altogether disconcerting. There are a number of competent individuals of intelligence and integrity gradually displacing the pseudo-leadership which has so long impeded real progress. These persons are supported by an increasing number of graduates from our high schools who are now returning from college to seek positions of responsibility. Though conditions are still chaotic the pervading restlessness approaches a level of wholesome indignation that will eventually forge itself into a formidable forward step.

(See Appendices E - J)

This material was secured from questionnaires returned by 15 churches and 24 other organizations, and by personal observation.

- (1) Johnson, James Weldon, "Negro American, What Now?" p. 24.
- (2) Figures adjusted from the United States Census, 1930.

IX

EDUCATION

Indeed there should be no concern on our part to study the Negro student apart from the rest of the student body were it not that here as well as in most other relations, he is influenced by special social and cultural factors. His economic status, family instability, place of birth, and "high visibility as a group" are factors justifying research into his scholastic and disciplinary problems. This is true if the teacher is to understand her pupil and not be captivated by stereotyped attitudes which are too often disparaging. Since the fundamental principle of the public schools of the State of New York, that students are but students as far as Boards of Education are concerned, eliminates separate statistics for Negro students, detailed information about local conditions is lacking. However, a general view is available by reading expert studies of other cities. (See note)

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TABLE XIV

School Enrollment - 1934

| | <u>TOTAL</u> | <u>NEGRO</u> |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Davis High School | 1290 | 22 |
| Edison High School | 368 | 20 |
| Washington Junior High School No. 1 | 948 | 186 |
| Lincoln School N. 2 | 495 | 0 |
| Grimes School No. 3 | 782 | 83 |
| Nathan Hale School No. 4 | 683 | 221 |
| Hamilton School No. 5 | 679 | 25 |
| Wm. Wilson Junior High School No. 6 | 1045 | 0 |
| Robert Fulton School No. 7 | 541 | 40 |
| William Penn School No. 8 | 472 | 27 |
| DeWitt Clinton School No. 9 | 1318 | 24 |
| Columbus School No. 10 | 531 | 115 |
| Sophie J. Mee School No. 11 | 367 | 95 |
| Longfellow School No. 14 | 442 | 20 |
| Nichols Junior High School No. 15 | 797 | 16 |
| Francis Pennington School No. 16 | 496 | 3 |
| TOTAL | 11,343 | 897 |

SCHOLARSHIP

Scholastically the colored student does well despite the many handicaps that militate to his disadvantage. One report on this subject states that "where the student has been exposed to adequate training in the home, and has substantial family background the Negro student compares favorably in scholarship with the white student and in some cases excels." At the present time there is one high school student who has earned membership in the National Honor Society, the highest scholastic honor offered in the public schools. The Washington Junior High School, which has the second largest body of colored students, reported 90 out of 136 on the honor roll. Here, however, the honor roll is not strictly scholastic but combines effort, conduct, scholarship and the general attitude of the student. Nevertheless this high percentage speaks well of the colored pupils.

TABLE XV

School Attendance by Age, Nativity, and Color - 1930

| <u>AGE</u> | <u>NATIVE-WHITE</u> | <u>FOREIGN-BORN</u> | <u>NEGRO</u> |
|------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| | 38.6 | | |
| 7 - 13 | 98.6 | 98.3 | 98.7 |
| 14 - 15 | 96.6 | 96.2 | 88.5 |
| 16 - 17 | 76.6 | 59.5 | 54.8 |
| 18 - 20 | 31.2 | 14.2 | 6.9 |

Source: 15 U. S. Census V. 2 P. 1161, "School Attendance by Color, Nativity, Sex and age periods, for Cities of 50,000 to 500,000: 1930."

Comparatively, there have not been enough colored girls and boys continuing their education through high school to graduation and into college. This is due to the fact that parents are unable to support the student during high school while in most cases the student loses interest and quits because of lack of incentive and the hostile environment in which he lives.

In 1934 there were eight colored graduates of a total of 486, or .017 per cent, and in 1935, ten colored graduates in a class of 470 of the Davis High School. In the Washington Junior High School there were 11 colored graduates and 156 white in 1934 and 9 and 101 respectively in January 1935. There were no colored graduates from the Edison Vocational and Technical High School in 1934 and a possibility of four in 1935. The inter-racial report to the Federal Council of Churches recorded 14 colored students attending college in the fall of 1933.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

There is a healthy feeling of friendship in Mount Vernon schools between white and colored pupils. Colored pupils are active in sports, music, and other extra-curricular activities that are semi-scholastic in nature or sponsored directly by the school. There are two instances in less recent years where colored boys have been selected as vice-president of the student body of an elementary school and many instances where they have held class offices.

EVENING SCHOOLS

The Evening School classes are important in this concern not because there are records of an increase in attendance by colored adults which is probably true, but because there are three colored teachers employed here. These persons are working under the State Adult Education Program which has two purposes; one, to extend educational opportunities to persons desiring to further their education, and secondly, to furnish employment to unemployed teachers. These classes are open to all persons but in two of them all of the students are colored. One of these classes is a study of the Negro in American History and is the first of its kind in Westchester County. There are no colored teachers in the regular school system. It is hoped by Negro leaders that the example set by the Evening School will pave the way for the early introduction of Negro teachers into the regular school program.

TABLE XVI

Illiteracy 10 years old and over by nativity and color

| | <u>NATIVE-WHITE</u> | <u>FOREIGN-BORN</u> | <u>NEGRO</u> |
|------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| 1910 | 0.2 | 11.4 | 5.1 |
| 1920 | 0.1 | 14.9 | 3.5 |
| 1930 | 0.2 | 10.4 | 3.2 |

Source: 13, 14, 15 U.S. Census

LIBRARIES

The Mount Vernon Public Library is the second largest library in Westchester

County, containing 112,919 volumes in 1934. In many respects it is superior to that of Yonkers which must supply books to a much larger city. The circulation in 1934 was 571,532 as compared with 555,265 by the Yonkers library which had a book stock of 114,472 volumes.

A hasty check of books on Negro countries and tribes, Negro stories, songs, poetry, drama, biography, race problems, history, slavery, etc. revealed over 350 volumes. Following a display of books on the Negro during National Negro History Week, an editor of the "Amsterdam News", a colored weekly of New York City, commended the librarian, stating that the exhibition contained one of the finest selections of books on the Negro that he had seen.

Material for this chapter was secured from the 1934 School Census of Mount Vernon, the United States Census of 1910, 1920, 1930; personal interview of school authorities and colored students. Figures on the Mount Vernon and Yonkers libraries were taken from the annual reports of these institutions for 1934.

Note: Read chapter on "Schools" by W. A. Daniels in "Negro Problems in Cities" edited by J. T. Woolfer, Jr. and "Negroes in Common schools of the North", and "Problems of Educability" in "The Negro in American civilization" by Charles S. Johnson.

RECREATION

The problem of supplying wholesome recreation to a group that is economically prostrated, congested, and otherwise delimited is an important one. Henry J. McGuinn stressed the general need of supervised recreation in reference to delinquency among colored children. (1) There is a commensurate if not a more pressing need to allay crime and despair among colored adults, who account for one-third of the crime of the city although they represent one-sixteenth of the population.

MUNICIPAL FACILITIES

It is difficult to evaluate the work of the Recreation Commission in its relation to the Negro since we have no available criteria running back seven or eight years upon which to base our conclusions. There is no doubt that the Negro has benefited from municipal recreational programs, although the peculiar problem facing the colored people is, in its larger dimensions, yet to be solved. In the present report an attempt is made to set forth recreational facilities and programs provided by the city, the Community Chest agencies, and colored churches, and in some measure to locate and analyze the essential cultural and recreational needs of the colored community.

Playgrounds: Within the last seven years the Mount Vernon Recreation Commission has erected three playgrounds in the vicinity of the colored settlement; two are located on South Seventh Avenue and one on Eighth Avenue near Fifth Street. In the three playgrounds mentioned above colored children are said to form from one-third to two-thirds of the attendance although no segregated record is kept. Attendance here is generally above the average with the new South Seventh Avenue playground taking the lead for several years. Congestion in these neighborhoods is the primary cause for the high attendance.

Parks: Mount Vernon is tardily developing an adequate park system. There is one beautiful park of twelve acres containing a large stadium, baseball diamond, six tennis courts, a track, and a number of other facilities. Another field, back of the city incinerator is now being developed while one other, Hartley Park, is in the center of the city and contains only six acres. All of these parks are some distance from the Negro neighborhood and do not affect them substantially as a group.

The Girls Community Center: During the last three years the Recreation commission has conducted a recreational center for girls in an apartment above the South Side Boys' Club. There are about 300 members between the ages of 5 and 23, although few over 18 attend. Almost 1/3 of the enrollment are colored girls but upon two visits of the investigator an even smaller fraction was in attendance. The quarters here are extremely small and facilities are necessarily limited. During summer months this center has been closed due to the greater attraction of playgrounds in the neighborhood.

Gymnasias and dances: For many winters the Recreation Commission, with the co-operation of the Board of Education, has supplied gymnasium facilities to the public. Last winter there were two athletic classes per week for colored men and boys and one for colored women and girls. These classes begin at 7:30 in the evening and continue until 9:30. Colored leaders have supervised these groups although the basis of separation is not upon differential grounds and has met with the full approbation of the colored people. Furthermore a number of younger girls attend the gymnasium held at School No. 3 for colored girls and also the Edison High School class which is largely attended by white girls.

In addition to the athletic classes a public dance for colored people is held at one of the public schools every week from October to May. The dances are attended in very large part by school children above fifteen years of age. Comparatively, these dances are well attended. The average attendance for the public dances was 84 per week for the colored, and 183 for the white. A colored orchestra has been engaged for the colored dances with the result that interest has been stimulated.

Tennis: Two tennis courts located within the colored settlement are now in the process of erection. The land was granted to the city some ten years ago and was formerly designated as the site for a community center which never materialized. These courts will afford recreation of a finer sort to the better class of colored resident. Construction of these courts is financed by city, state, and federal funds with the city bearing one-fourth of the burden.

Other Municipal Activities: Numerous other public activities such as tournaments, leagues, and athletic meets have been sponsored by the Recreation Commission in its much expanded play program but with the exception of the colored chorals, Negroes have not responded with interest. The underlying requisite of some degree of organization from within seems to be lacking.

Personnel: The Recreation Commission employs two Negro directors. One of these, a woman, is ably trained in playground work while the other is a young man who won distinction for himself in athletics in high school. Only one of them is paid from the regular city funds, the other being paid from funds supplied by the state and federal governments. These persons are employed in connection with the summer playgrounds and gymnasium classes during the winter.

OTHER AGENCIES

It is estimated that there are at least 500 male Negroes between the ages of 15 and 25 and about 700 girls and young women. Here is the crux of a real problem. Questionnaires sent to the sixteen Community Chest agencies revealed that only two that included recreation as a phase of their program had any colored members; two objected to the use of their facilities by Negroes while two others excluded the Negro for sectarian reasons though not upon the basis of color. The Boys' Club South Side has a membership of 100 colored boys principally between the ages of seven and fifteen. The colored boys compose about one-third of the total membership according to the official report but only about one-fifth of the actual attendance as judged by personal observation. There is no difference made in the treatment of the boys and little or no conflict has arisen since the first few weeks. (See Chapter VII, Crime and Delinquency, last paragraph). The white groups is composed almost entirely of Italian boys.

The Boy Scout Council reported one colored scout registered in Troop No. 10 and thirty in Troop No. 14. Troop No. 14 is a colored troop in existence for more than fifteen years. For reasons unknown the troop has never attended the white camp although they have been invited.

THE CHURCH

The Negro community has long realized the urgent need for a cultural and recreational center for its young men and women. In 1925 an appropriation of \$20,000 was available from the Rockefeller Fund and architectural plans were practically complete for the erection of a building on a plot of land granted to the city for social purposes, as a center for white and colored community use.

This movement was obstructed, according to reports, by white residents in the neighborhood who prevailed upon the Board of Aldermen against the much needed enterprise. Later in 1929 the Centennial A. M. E. Zion church launched a well planned building campaign for a new church containing a sumptuous community house "for the entire community". This effort was frustrated by the general economic depression. Today the Negro community is unable to meet the increasing need; its only centers, the churches, have no recreational facilities and none provide recreational programs.

The church situation has been taken up in detail in another part of this study. (See Chapter VIII Negro Organizations). The general poverty existing among the churches would prevent them from taking an active part in this respect. The most that they have to offer are occasional programs in the nature of rallies, musicals, and dinners. These are meagerly attended even by the older members and their appeal is almost wholly within their own congregations.

As a character building agency the church serves about 466 of the total 1,300 children between one and twenty. Six of the larger churches have only 343 children attending Sunday School and Young People's meetings. In the best circumstances the churches are seriously lacking in trained teachers and directors. Pastors and superintendents are continually complaining of being unable to hold the young people after they reach sixteen years of age. The entire church population between the ages of fifteen and twenty is only 140 and for the six larger churches only 92, allowances being made for three churches that did not answer this item of the questionnaire. Four churches have only basements suitable for meetings and only one has rooms that can be used for meetings. None of them are equipped beyond chairs, tables, and a stove.

THE OUTLOOK

The outlook is serious indeed. The general community has become aroused by an unusual restlessness among young people. This is true in spite of the work of a number of private organizations, churches, public institutions, a fuller school life, and a larger arena of commercial "recreational" enterprises catering to the wants of the average white boy. The Negro has been largely abandoned to pool rooms, beer gardens, and street corners where his character is often warped and anti-social attitudes are developed. Colored girls with few other alternatives are forced into the streets, into unguarded dances, and into more degrading circumstances where moral virtues are lost before they are able to appreciate them. This condition, which is sharply reflected in the short list of colored graduates from our high schools, is accounted for by the sorrowful lack of character building agencies so much more necessary to counteract the evil influences of the Negro community.

An illustration is given in conclusion. A crucial case arose during the course of this study involving a proprietor of one of three pool parlors that are located within fifty yards of each other in the colored neighborhood. Seven boys, four of whom were colored, were held in an action against the pool-room owner, charged with violation of state and city laws which prohibit minors in such places. The case was dismissed on the grounds of insufficiency of evidence although the boys were admittedly in the parlor and were under age. The "Daily Argus" reports a dispute between the court and the police over the sufficiency of evidence presented, with the latter promising to appeal to higher authority. The charge was preferred by an indignant deacon of one of the colored churches. (2)

from questionnaires returned by colored churches and Community Chest agencies and by personal investigation.

- (1.) Henry J. McGuinn's chapter on "Recreation in "Negro problems in Cities" edited by T. J. Woofter, p. 27.
- (2.) "Daily Argus" January 29, 1935, p.1

XI

INTER-RACIAL CO-OPERATION

Race relations in Mount Vernon are not bad in the sense of being vicious; the worst complaint is indifference. There are few instances of inter-racial meetings of any kind either by volunteer organizations such as the Y.M.C.A. or by the churches. Only three white churches to the writer's knowledge, the Community Church, the First Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Vernon Heights Congregational Church have exemplified more than a passing interest in colored people and their problems, and few if any cases are reported of colored pastors exchanging pulpits or speaking before white congregations or vice versa. Plans however have been laid for a county inter-racial program by a group of white and colored persons interesting themselves in ameliorating this condition. This group is cooperating with the Commission of Church and Race Relations of the Federal Council of Churches and had its first meeting in January 1934 in which it set forth in summary fashion the prevailing conditions in practically all places in the county having an appreciable colored population. The Mount Vernon report found 99 per cent of colored church members in colored churches and only 1 per cent in white churches.

SCHOOLS

In school the Negro student receives little direct instruction about his race due to the principle maintained here that all students are merely students as far as the school is concerned. There is one commendable exception in the Washington Junior High School which makes an effort once or twice a year to bring notable Negro talent before the student body in the assembly. This talent is sometimes taken from the student body and sometimes from without. On June 18, 1935 the Excelsior Harmony Singers, a colored choral, appeared before the assembly. (The Washington Junior High School is within the Negro community and has the second largest body of colored students.) There is the best of relations among white and colored students with colored boys and girls playing an important role in athletics and music. Another noteworthy innovation has been a class in Negro history which was recently inaugurated in the Evening School under the direction of a colored instructor who is a University graduate. This is the first of its kind in Westchester County.

There seems to be but one complaint entertained by colored people in regard to the educational program, that is, that with the exception of the Adult Education teachers it includes no colored teachers or clerical help on its regular payrolls. (See Chapter IX Education, under Evening Schools).

LIBRARIES

The Mount Vernon Public Library possesses an excellent collection of books written by and about Negroes and is primarily responsible for the present study. In deference to the course in Negro history, books on the Negro were displayed during National Negro History Week. The Librarian of the Mount Vernon Public Library is making a commendable effort to extend facilities of the Library and to attract a larger membership from the colored population. (See Chapter IX, Education, under Libraries).

OTHER CONTACTS

There is no discrimination in any of the public institutions though it has been previously noted that Negroes are excluded from the Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., and a number of other volunteer organizations. There is further occasion for complaint in the instances of a few semi-public enterprises, such as, restaurants and theaters. In these instances, and particularly in the latter, Negroes have been subject to some form of segregation. In some theaters ushers direct the colored patron to the balcony and engage him in an embarrassing argument if he refuses to go there. This is true even when prices for the balcony and orchestra seats are the same price. The practice in some theaters is to give Negroes tickets for the balcony as soon as they appear at the ticket office and to detain them unduly and unnecessarily until the manager can be found to authorize the exchange of the tickets. Here again the Negro patron is humiliated.

PERSONS IN OFFICIAL POSITIONS

A more profound complaint is that of indifference, an unsympathetic, sink-or-swim attitude assumed by some who are in positions to be most helpful. This condition is due in some degree to the unaggressive, indifferent attitudes of intelligent Negroes themselves but that does not justify hostility of a sort by these especially entrusted with the social development of the city. There are a few persons and institutions that are earnestly interested in elevating the Negro; but there are others who are motivated by prejudice or the lack of manly courage to take a definite stand in his favor. Indeed there are one or two who openly advocate making conditions for the Negro as inhospitable as possible so as to dissuade the influx of colored residents. The fallacy of this argument is stated in the discussion of the "Negro Migrant". (See Chapter II).

Racial adjustment is essential and inevitable whether it be wholesome on a high plane of co-operation, or tardy and enforced encumbered by deep-seated animosities founded upon friction and misunderstanding. Those who are in doubt as to the proper attitude should be referred to the example of Cleveland, Ohio as reported by Dr. Paul E. Baker in "Negro White Adjustment". Here it was proved that there was not enough prejudice of the type that would organize itself against the Negro as certain persons had believed. "To recapitulate" it should be recognized that Negro society is not homogeneous, that it has its economic and social gradations, and that it is entitled to share in an opportunity not only to better itself but at the same time to increase the standards of the whole community. Closer cooperation in this problem is of major importance. Generalizations must give way to specific problems in order to attempt a solution. Responsibility must be assumed not only from within but the community must awaken to its own responsibility." - President Hoover's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, Housing Objectives and Programs, p. 287.

Material for this chapter was taken from the survey of the Negro Population of Mount Vernon filed with the Commission on church and race relations of the Federal Council of Churches, by Emma Barlowe; for studies of local institutions in other connections and from personal interview and personal observation of certain individuals.

(1.) Baker, Paul E, "Negro white adjustment".

XII

RECOMMENDATIONS

Rather than sever recommendations from their content it proved a better plan to make them as they appeared necessary. As the study progressed, the crucial need for more welfare work among colored people became increasingly apparent and was finally confirmed by the body of findings. Not the type of sporadic, disconnected, disorganized, or even specialized work of certain existing institutions that might address themselves to this task with purposes and benefit, but a program of lofty dimensions, and breadth of social vision. Most of the ills of the Mount Vernon Negro are transient, not chronic, and might be alleviated with comparative ease by an institution of sufficient integrity and financial strength.

The initiative for such an effort it it is to be of the greatest service must inevitably begin with the Negro himself with the whole-hearted cooperation of the social uplift groups of the city. Employment, education, health, housing, sanitation, recreation - among both male and female - must all be prominently within this program.

APPENDIX A

Population of Mount Vernon by color, Nativity and Sex - 1900 - 1934

| | NUMBER | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | 1900 | 1910 | 1920 | 1930 | 1934 | 1900 | 1910 | 1920 | 1930 | 1934 |
| Total | 21,228 | 30,919 | 42,726 | 61,499 | 64,047 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Male | | 14,844 | 20,434 | 29,634 | | | | | | |
| Female | | 16,075 | 22,292 | 31,085 | | | | | | |
| White | 20,685 | 30,001 | 41,358 | 57,828 | 59,890 | 97.6 | 97.1 | 96.8 | 94.0 | 93.4 |
| Male | | 14,459 | 19,862 | 28,053 | | | | | | |
| Female | | 15,542 | 21,496 | 29,775 | | | | | | |
| Native White | 15,456 | 21,972 | 31,268 | 43,549 | 46,517 | 73 | 71.1 | 73.2 | 70.8 | 72.7 |
| Male | | 10,350 | 14,727 | 20,723 | | | | | | |
| Female | | 11,622 | 16,544 | 22,826 | | | | | | |
| Foreign Born | 5,229 | 8,029 | 10,090 | 14,279 | 13,373 | 24.6 | 26.0 | 23.6 | 23.2 | 20.8 |
| Male | | 4,109 | 5,138 | 7,330 | | | | | | |
| Female | | 5,920 | 4,952 | 6,949 | | | | | | |
| Negro | 516 | 896 | 1,345 | 3,608 | 4,139 | 2.4 | 2.9 | 3.1 | 5.9 | 6.4 |
| Male | | 363 | 549 | 1,528 | | | | | | |
| Female | | 533 | 796 | 2,080 | | | | | | |
| Others | 26 | 22 | 23 | 63 | 79 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Male | | | | 53 | | | | | | |
| Female | | | | 10 | | | | | | |

Source: 12,13,14,15 U.S. Census Reports Mount Vernon City Census Report, 1934.

APPENDIX B

Population of Mount Vernon by Race and Nativity - 1920

| | NUMBER | PERCENTAGE |
|------------------|--------|------------|
| Total population | 42,726 | 100.0 |
| Native White | 31,268 | 73.2 |
| Foreign Born | 10,090 | 23.6 |
| Negro | 1,345 | 3.1 |

Source: 14th U.S. Census Vol.III p.681 (Table 8 - Age, for cities of 10,000 or more: 1920)

APPENDIX C

Population of Mount Vernon by Race and Nativity - 1930

| | <u>NUMBER</u> | <u>PERCENT</u> | <u>FAMILIES</u> |
|------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Total Population | 61,499 | 100.0 | 15,327 |
| White | 57,828 | 94.0 | 14,530 |
| Native-white | 43,549 | 70.8 | 8,783 |
| Foreign-born | 14,279 | 23.2 | 5,747 |
| Negro | 3,608 | 5.9 | 776 |

Source: 15th U.S. Census Vol 111 p. 323 ("Population by sex, color, age, etc. for countries by minor civil divisions")

APPENDIX D

Population of Mount Vernon by Race and Nativity - 1934

| | <u>NUMBER</u> | <u>PERCENT</u> | <u>FAMILIES</u> |
|--------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Total population | 64,047 | 100.0 | 16,699 |
| White | 59,908 | 94.6 | 14,824 * |
| Native-white | 46,675 | 73.2 | 10,337 * |
| Foreign-born white | 13,373 | 20.4 | 5,349 * |
| Negro | 4,139 | 6.4 | 898 * |

* Estimated on 1930 basis

Source: Mount Vernon City Census Report - 1934

APPENDIX E

COLORED CHURCHES AND PASTORS

| | |
|---|--|
| Macedonia Baptist Church Rev. Rinico Nelson | 141 South Ninth Avenue 145 West Fourth Street |
| Grace Baptist Church Rev. J. M. Levister | 240 South Eighth Avenue 461 South Ninth Avenue |
| Unity Baptist Tabernacle Rev. E. W. Bowen | 9 West Third Street 230 West 122nd St. N. Y. C. |
| Centenial A.M.E. Zion Rev. H.E.W. Blount | 253 South Eighth Avenue 316 South Eighth Avenue |
| Saint Paul A.M.E. Church Re. S.B.B. Timmons | 116 East Third Street 116 East Third Street |
| Saint Clement's Episcopal Church Rev. Claudius A. Nero | 126 South Ninth Avenue 258 South Tenth Avenue |
| The Church of God and Saints of Christ Elder James A. Bowie | 427 South Seventh Avenue 447 South Fifth Avenue |
| The Seventh Day Adventist Elder Darius Thaddeus Wilson | 49 South Fourth Avenue 15 Rochelle Place, New Rochelle |
| Mount Zion Congregational Church Rev. G. Martin | 417 South Eighth Avenue 413 South Eighth Avenue |
| Jerusalem Congregational Christian Church Rev. J. A. Brodie | 202 South Eighth Avenue 210 South Seventh Avenue |
| The Bible Way Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ Elder Kenneth Goodman | 134 West Third Street 474 Wyonona St. Brooklyn, N. Y. |
| Rescue Mission Rev. Eva Richardson | 49 North Third Avenue 40 Mount Vernon Avenue |
| Mt. Sinai Fire Baptist Holiness Church Rev. Mrs. B. N. Adams | 214 South Seventh Avenue 251 South Eighth Avenue |
| The Church of God in Christ Rev. A. Sanders | 3 West Sandford Boulevard 4259 Seton Avenue, Bronx, N. Y. |
| The Full Gospel Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ Elder Melvin McDowell | 215 South Eighth Avenue 4409 Mundy Lane, Bronx, N. Y.C. |
| Saint John Congregational Christian Church Rev. S. Johnson | 246 South Fifth Avenue 246 South Fifth Avenue |

APPENDIX F
COLORD CHURCHES OF MOUNT VERNON

| CHURCH | DENOMINATION | ESTABLISHED | ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP | ENROLLMENT |
|--|--------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------|
| 1. Macedonia Baptist | Baptist | 1913 | 400 | 700 |
| 2. Grace Baptist | " | 1889 ⁸ | 200 | 300 |
| 3. Unity Baptist Tabernacle | " | 1933 | 50 | 80 |
| 4. Cent. A.M.E. Zion | Methodist | 1896 | 200 | 350 |
| 5. Saint Paul A.M.E. Zion | " | 1934 | 21 | 37 |
| 6. Saint Clement's * | Episcopal | 1910 | 75 | 125 |
| 7. The Church of God and Saint of Christ | Sabbath Day | 1918 | 35 | 62 |
| 8. The Seventh Day Adventist | Seventh Ad. | 1934 | 15 | 15 |
| 9. Mount Zion Congregational Cong. (Baptist) | | (1924) | 28 | 65 |
| 10. Jerusalem Congregational Cong. | | (1922) | 20 | 65 |
| 11. St. John Congregational | " | 1934 | (20) | (20) |
| 12. The Bible Way Church of Our Lord Jesus Churst | Apostolic | 1934 | 10 | 10 |
| 13. The Rescue Mission* | " | 1929 | 40 | 60 |
| 14. Mount Sinai Fire Baptist Holiness | " | 1931 | 20 | 22 |
| 15. The Church of God in Christ " | | 1932 | 40 | 60 |
| 16. The Full Gospel Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ | | 1929 | 30 | 30 |

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Apostolic churches are "sanctified" or "holiness " churches.

* Missions

APPENDIX G
STATUS OF COLORED CHURCHES

| | BUILDING | RECREATIONAL FACILITIES | E ENTERTAINMENTS | YOUNG PEOPLE | | S.S ATTENDANCE |
|-----|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|--------------|-------|----------------|
| | | | | 1-15 | 15-20 | |
| .1 | 1 Mortgaged | Basement 3 rooms unequipped | One program per month--musical rally, dinners etc. | 45 | 30 | 75 |
| .2 | 2 Mortgaged | Basement unequipped | One program per month | 40 | 10 | 60 |
| .3 | 3 Rent | None | 15-20 programs during 1934 | 15 | 15 | 20 |
| .4 | 4 Mortgaged | Basement unequipped | 25 programs during 1934 | 38 | 22 | 45 |
| .5 | 5 Rent (Store front) | None | 6 programs and entertainments during 1934 | 15 | 12 | 20 |
| .6 | 6 Mortgaged (Not answered) | Basement unequipped | Not answered. | 70 | N.A. | 60 |
| .7 | 7 Mortgaged | None | 6 programs, 4 Minstrels & Plays | 17 | 5 | 22 |
| .8 | 8 Rent (hall 2nd Fl.) | None | 8 programs (monthly) | 10 | None | 12 |
| .9 | 9 Rent (Store front) | None | Christmas and Easter exercises 3 church aid programs | 42 | 3 | 45 |
| .01 | 10 Rent (Store front) | None | 20 programs | 12 | 5 | 17 |
| .11 | 11 Rent " " | " | Not answered | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. |
| .21 | 12 Rent " " | " | " | 12 | 2 | 15 |
| .31 | 13 Rent (hall 3rd Fl.) | " | " | 16 | 14 | 25 |
| .41 | 14 Rent (Store front) | " | Strictly religious--preaching etc. | 21 | None | 30 |
| .51 | 15 Rent " " | " | Not answered | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. |
| .61 | 16 Rent " " | " | 2 dinners | 11 | 3 | 20 |

N.A.--Not Answered

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M 2

APPENDIX H

COLORED ORGANIZATIONS OF MOUNT VERNON

| NO. | NAME | KIND | INCORPORATED | ORGANIZED |
|-----|--|------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. | National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Mount Vernon Branch | Protective | 1909 (National) | 1929 (Mt. Vernon) |
| 2. | Negro Civic League | Welfare | 1931 | 1931 |
| 3. | Welfare Workers Club | " | Unincorporated | 1926 |
| 4. | Mount Vernon Civic Union | " | " | 1934 |
| 5. | Progressive Democratic Club | Political | " | 1931 |
| 6. | Eureka Colored Democratic Club * | " | 1931 | 1931 |
| 7. | Harriet Tubman Republican Club | " | Unincorporated | 1935 |
| 8. | Frederick Douglass Republican Club | " | " | 1928 |
| 9. | Morris Link Post No. 1117 American Legion | Veteran | 1934 | 1934 |
| 10. | Hairdressers' Club Local No. 70 | Union | 1933 | 1933 |

APPENDIX I

STATUS OF COLORED ORGANIZATIONS

| NO. | MEETING PLACE | MEMBERSHIP | | MEMBERSHIP UNDER 30 YRS. | OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS |
|-----|--|------------|-------|-----------------------------|--|
| | | ACTIVE | TOTAL | | |
| 1. | At various churches and homes | 50 | 85 | 25 | None (1) |
| 2. | Edison High School 60 So. 3rd Ave | 35 | 150 | 20 | " (2) |
| 3. | Rotates among various homes | 35 | 55 | None | Outing to 200 children-Xmas party to 150-clothes (3) |
| 4. | Rotated among various homes | | | | None (4) |
| 5. | 49 So. Fourth Ave (Rent for occasions) | 93 | 162 | 30 | Few minor jobs for Negroes (5) |
| 6. | 66 W. Third Street | 150* | 330 | 100 | None (6) |
| 7. | Republican Headquarters 10 So. 2nd Avenue | 24 | 24 | None | None (7) |
| 8. | Rotates | Dormant | N.A. | " | " (8) |
| 9. | Mt. Vernon City Hall | 40 | 40 | " | 5 Veteran Widows cared for (9) |
| 10. | | 14 | 14 | N.A. | 5 homes re-established N.A. (10) |

* These figures are probably exaggerated.

APPENDIX J

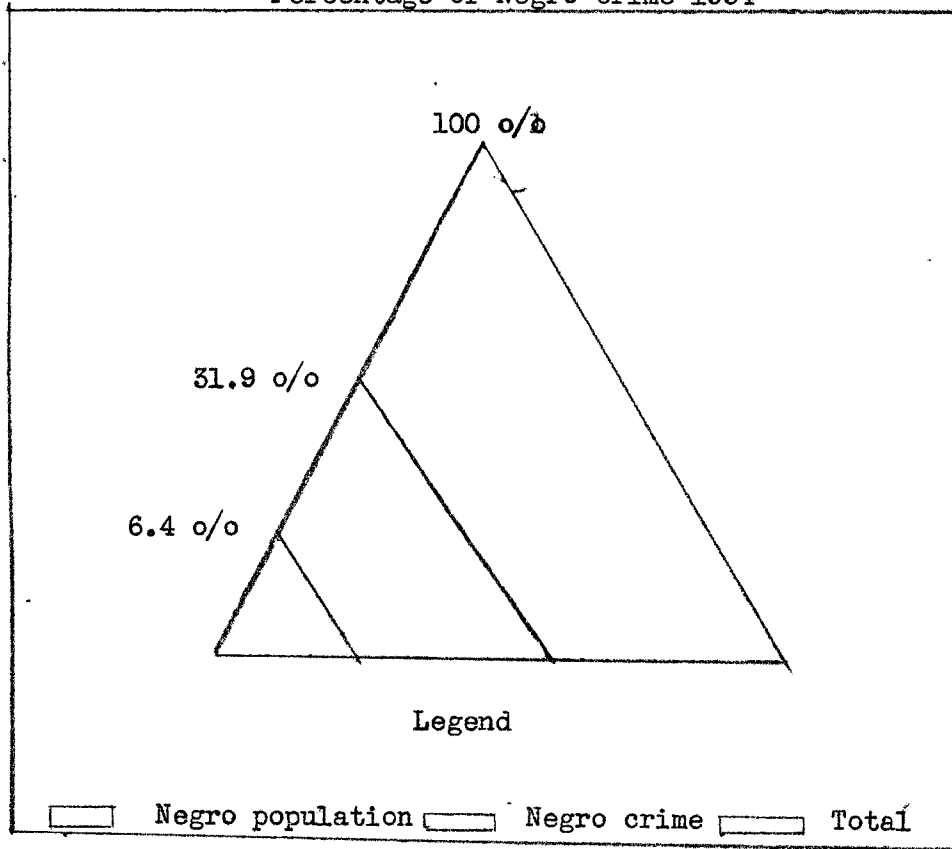
FRATERNAL ORGANIZATIONS

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| Crystal Stream Tabernacle No. 15 | 160 South Fourth Avenue |
| Knights of Pythia, Pythias Nightingale No. 9 | 49 South Fourth Avenue |
| Magnolia Court, Order of Clanthe (women) | 49 South Fourth Avenue |
| I.B.P.O. Elks of the World No. 348 Blossom Heath | 160 South Fourth Avenue |
| I.B.P.O. Elks of the World No. 225 (Celestial Temple) (women) | 160 South Fourth Avenue |
| O.E.S.A.F. & A. Masons, Cornerstone Chapter No. 40 | 49 South Fourth Avenue |
| O.E.S.A.F. & A. Masons, Cornerstone Chapter No. 34 (women) | 49 South Fourth Avenue |
| Progressive Chapter F.&A. Masons No. 42 | 160 South Fourth Avenue |
| Order of Eastern Star, Chapter No. 42 (women) | 160 South Fourth Avenue |
| Household of Ruth No. 5212 Odd Fellows (women) | 160 South Fourth Avenue |
| Watchmen of the Ancient East | 160 South Fourth Avenue |

TWENTY-FIVE SOCIAL CLUBS WERE ENUMERATED

APPENDIX K

Percentage of Negro crime-1934



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