

THE BLACK CHURCH IN INDUSTRIALIZING WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA, 1870-1950

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THE growth of corporate business in the United States during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries caused employers to recognize the importance of regulating large groups of previously undisciplined industrial laborers. In an attempt to develop a dependable and efficient force of employees, industrialists supported churches that espoused the work ethic and preached thrift and sobriety to industrial workers.¹ Employers in the Pittsburgh area developed a particularly close relationship with black churches in Western Pennsylvania. Black industrial workers who played important roles in religious affairs impressed businessmen, and convinced them that employment stability was tied to church membership. Both before and after World War I employers believed that black churches preaching the work ethic deserved their support and encouragement. As a result they gave money and property to struggling black congregations, and they hired black welfare workers who actively participated in church affairs. Once these ties were established, an intricate and deferential relationship evolved between black churches and big business in the Pittsburgh vicinity. Black clergymen believed the numerical growth of their congregations resulted from increased employment opportunities in local industries, and some black preachers who ministered to small churches took jobs in industrial facilities throughout the Pittsburgh area. Since they and their churches benefited from industrial philanthropy, few among the black clergy pro-

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1 Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York, 1978), 116-18; Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Rockdale: The Growth of an American Village in the Early Industrial Revolution* (New York, 1978), 296-397; David Brody, *Steelworkers in America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), 116-17; August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *Black Detroit and the Rise of the U.A.W.* (New York, 1979), 9-10, 17-18.

tested against racial discrimination in hiring, promotion, and job assignments. Not until labor unions developed in the mass production industries during the 1930s did black clergymen support organized labor and openly denounce unfair employment practices against black workers.

Pittsburgh possessed the largest concentration of blacks in Western Pennsylvania. Between 1870 and 1880 the black population dramatically grew from 1,996 to 6,136. A slow, but steady migration of blacks, principally from Virginia and Maryland, quadrupled the black population to 25,623 in 1910. The black migration from the South also affected several outlying communities mainly along the Ohio, Monongahela, and Allegheny rivers. In 1910 blacks were most numerous in Homestead, Braddock, McKeesport, and Washington where their numbers ranged from 500 to 1,400 people. Other towns with more than two hundred blacks included Rankin, Johnstown, Monessen, New Castle, Duquesne, and Coraopolis.²

In Pittsburgh 2,859 black men were engaged in manufacturing and mechanical jobs in 1910, and they comprised nearly one-third of the city's 9,940 gainfully employed black males. These industrial workers were scattered in scores of occupations, but the largest single groups were general laborers who numbered 1,226 and iron- and steelworkers who came next with 789. The same pattern prevailed in industrial communities in other parts of Western Pennsylvania. General laborers predominated, but blacks also worked as iron and steel employees, coal miners, coke laborers, and tin plate workers.³

The first black congregations in Western Pennsylvania were the African Methodist Episcopal and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion denominations in Pittsburgh. A traveling denominational missionary started the Bethel A.M.E. Church in 1822. Several years later, in 1836, a series of prayer meetings and preaching services culminated in the founding of the John Wesley A.M.E. Zion Church. In the late

2 Ann G. Wilmoth, "Toward Freedom: Pittsburgh Blacks, 1800-1870," *Pennsylvania Heritage* 4 (Dec. 1977): 15; U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Population*, vol. 1, 212; U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Negro Population in the United States, 1790-1915*, 102-3.

3 U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Population, Occupation Statistics*, vol. 4, 590-91; Richard R. Wright, Jr., *The Negro in Pennsylvania: A Study in Economic History* (Philadelphia, 1912), 222-32. Also see microfilm rolls of the 1900 census for such towns as Duquesne, McKeesport, Connellsville, Homestead, and Braddock.

1830s, the Avery A.M.E. Zion Church and the Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church developed independently out of another series of religious gatherings among black residents in Allegheny City, now Pittsburgh's North Side. The "mother" church among black Presbyterians was the Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church founded in the Hill District in 1868. In 1914 and 1917 the Reverend Charles H. Trusty, the pastor of Grace, nurtured two additional congregations in other sections of Pittsburgh. The Bidwell Street Presbyterian Church began in the city's North Side, while the Bethesda Presbyterian Church started in the East Liberty area. Black Episcopalians gained a congregation in 1904 when the Reverend Scott Wood organized the St. Augustine Mission. St. Phillip's Church, a branch congregation also established by Wood, merged with St. Augustine in 1917 under the Reverend Shelton Hale Bishop, and formed the Church of the Holy Cross. Despite this denominational diversity, the Baptists claimed the most congregations among Pittsburgh blacks. Prior to World War I, they had at least thirty churches in the Smoky City. Metropolitan and Ebenezer, the leading congregations, founded in 1868 and 1875 respectively, each counted more than one thousand members during the early 1910s.⁴

Usually two or three congregations served as the center of religious life for black migrants in nearby industrial communities. One Methodist congregation affiliated either with the African Methodist Episcopal or the African Methodist Episcopal Zion denominations existed with one or two Baptist churches. In 1882 fourteen Homestead blacks organized the Park Place A.M.E. Church. Between 1883 and 1900, it was a part of a preaching circuit and was variously attached to A.M.E. congregations in Braddock, Duquesne,

4 J. Ernest Wright, "The Negro in Pittsburgh," WPA Survey, American Guide Series, Ethnic Survey, 1940, unpublished ms in the State Archives, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg, Pa., 3-5, 8-9; "A Brief Historical Statement Concerning Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, Pa.," *Afro-American Council Program*, 1951, ms Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pa.; souvenir program, *29th Anniversary of Bidwell Street Presbyterian Church*, Pittsburgh, Pa., October 24 through November 1, 1943 (courtesy of the late Dr. Samuel G. Stevens, Lincoln University, Pa.); Bethesda U.P. Church, *Golden Anniversary, 1917-1967*, and *Silver Ordination Anniversary of Rev. Leroy Patrick, 1942-1967*, ms Presbyterian Historical Society; *New York Age*, Sept. 30, 1909, Jan. 20, 1910; *Holy Cross Episcopal Church Bulletin*, Pittsburgh, Pa. (n.d.), (courtesy of Wendell L. Wray, University of Pittsburgh); *Pittsburgh Courier*, Jan. 27, 1912; Randall K. Burkett, *Black Redemption: Churchmen Speak for the Garvey Movement* (Philadelphia, 1978), 114.

and Pittsburgh's South Side. Its membership reached one hundred in 1905, and shortly before the wartime migration, it was dropped from a circuit that it shared with Duquesne and was given a full-time minister. The other congregation, the Clark Memorial Baptist Church, was organized as Clark's Chapel during the 1890s. At the turn of the century, Coraopolis had three black congregations: the Mount Olive Baptist Church started in 1889; the St. Paul A.M.E. Zion Church began in 1900; and in 1904 several members of Mount Olive withdrew to form the New Hope Baptist Church.⁵

In most cases these congregations owed their existence to black migrants who came to Western Pennsylvania to work in its burgeoning industries. Blacks moved to the region to improve their economic condition, and they sought familiar religious institutions to help them adapt to their new surroundings. These factors motivated James Claggett, a migrant from Mount Zion, Maryland, who became an employee at the Duquesne steel plant in 1888. In 1891 he became a charter member of the Payne African Methodist Episcopal Church. Similarly, Samuel Marshall of Halifax, Virginia, secured a job at the National Tube Company in 1892, and helped to organize the Bethlehem Baptist Church in McKeesport in 1889. Another migrant from the Old Dominion, Oliver Douglass, worked as a machinist in the steel industry and was an employee of the Carbohydrogen Company. He also viewed the black church as an important part of his new life in Western Pennsylvania and helped to establish the New Hope Baptist Church in Coraopolis in 1904.⁶

Before World War I, a few industrial employers expressed an interest in these new and struggling congregations. They believed their support of black churches would help their employees adapt to the industrial environs of Western Pennsylvania and remind them of the importance of the work ethic and the value of thrift and

5 Wallace G. Smeltzer, *Homestead Methodism, 1830-1933* (Pittsburgh, 1933), 154, 157 (Carnegie Free Library, Munhall, Pa.); *98th Annual Session, Pittsburgh Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, Sept. 21-26, 1965; Park Place A.M.E. Church, Homestead, Pa., *Souvenir Program Booklet* (courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Wheeler, West Mifflin, Pa.); *Minutes of the 38th Session of the Pittsburgh Annual Conference of the A.M.E. Church*, meeting in (Bethel A.M.E. Church) Wilkes-Barre, Pa. (1905), 313-14, 339-40 (courtesy of Dr. Edna McKenzie, Allegheny County Community College, Pittsburgh, Pa.); Edward Maurey, *Where the West Began: A Story of Coraopolis and the Ohio Valley* (1930), Archives of Industrial Society, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pa.

6 *Duquesne Times*, May 1, 1952; *Pittsburgh Courier*, Sept. 18, 1926, Mar. 17, 1928.

sobriety. During the 1870s William H. Rosensteel, the proprietor of the Rosensteel Tannery in Woodvale, Pennsylvania, played an important role in the development of the Cambria Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in Johnstown. In 1873 he went to Maryland to recruit blacks to work in his newly-established tannery. Charles W. Cook, a black Civil War veteran, responded to Rosensteel's offer, came to Johnstown with a few others, and organized an A.M.E. Zion congregation. Rosensteel helped the struggling Zionites by allowing them to worship in his tannery loft, and later by helping them to secure a lot on which to build a church. The Cambria Iron Company cooperated in 1875 by selling some land to the congregation for the nominal sum of one dollar.⁷

When World War I inaugurated a massive migration of black southerners to Western Pennsylvania, industrial employers formalized their relationship with black churches. Black welfare workers whom they hired to recruit black laborers and to facilitate their adjustment to northern life participated actively in religious affairs. Moreover, industrial officials provided black congregations with verbal encouragement, financial assistance, and help in locating and acquiring property. Since black churches promoted work discipline and provided migrants with familiar social and religious institutions, they attracted substantial support from mill, mine, and factory officials.

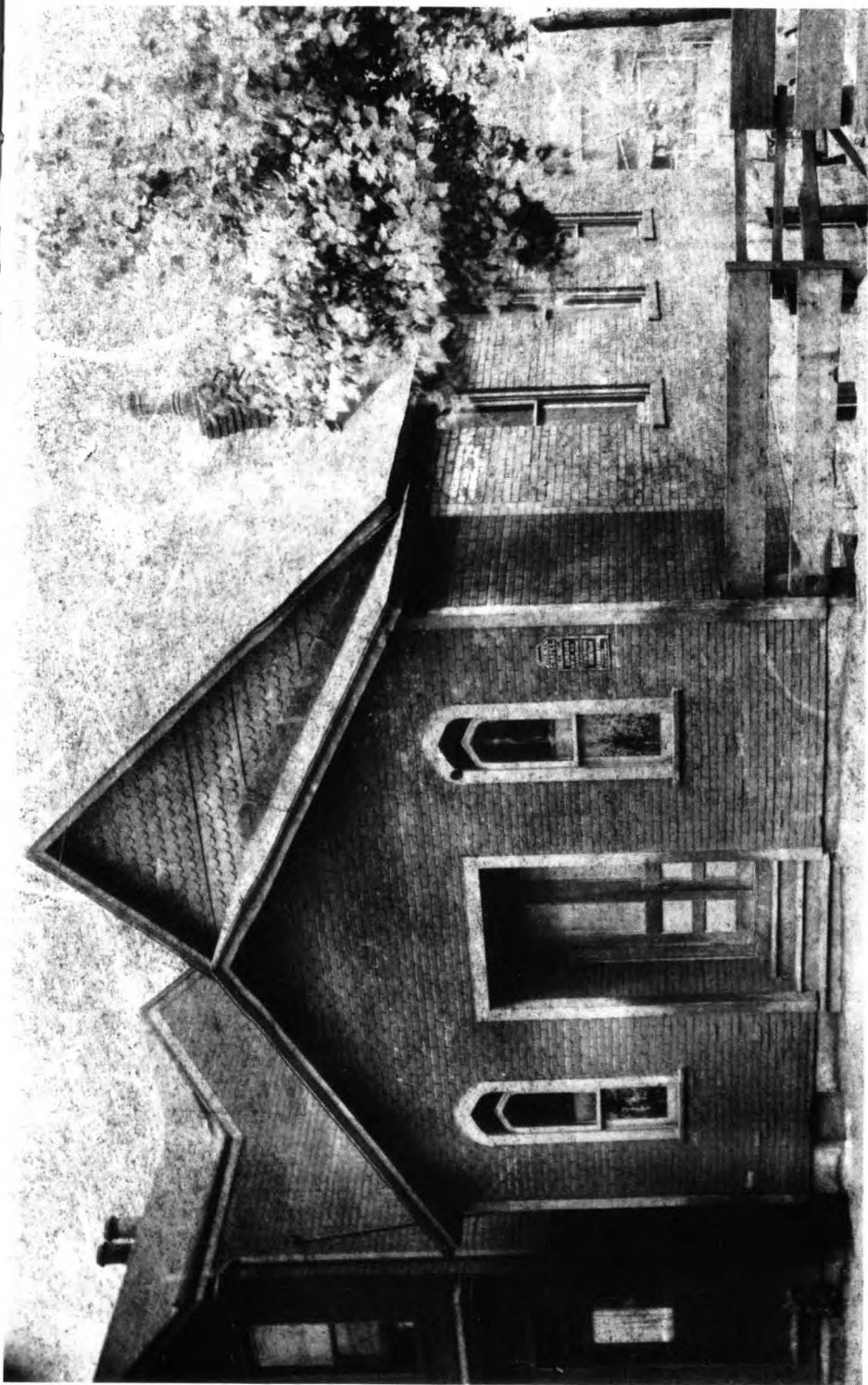
The wartime migration brought more than 8,000 blacks to Pittsburgh between 1915 and 1917. They increased the city's black population from 25,623 in 1910 to 37,725 in 1920, and raised the percentage of blacks in the total population from 4.8 percent to 6.4 percent. John T. Clark of the Pittsburgh Urban League estimated that another 25,000 blacks settled in the Smoky City during a second wave of migration in 1922 and 1923. In 1930 Pittsburgh's black population was 54,983, or 8.2 percent of all city residents. Similar increases occurred in numerous industrial communities throughout Western Pennsylvania. In Homestead, for example, the black population rose from 867 in 1910 to 1,814 in 1920, and to 3,367 in 1930; the percentage of blacks in Homestead's total population rose from 4.6 percent to 8.8 percent between 1910 and 1920, and then to

7 "Heritage: A Black History of Johnstown," *Tribune-Democrat*, Feb. 12, 1980, 3; Florence M. Hornback, *Survey of the Negro Population of Metropolitan Johnstown, Pennsylvania* (1941), 15, University of Pittsburgh Libraries, Pittsburgh, Pa.

16.2 percent in 1930. Immediately before World War I, black industrial laborers in the Pittsburgh area numbered 2,550. The wartime migration swelled their numbers to 7,897 in 1916 and to 14,610 in 1919. The number of black steelworkers in the Pittsburgh vicinity rose from 820 or 2.2 percent of the industrial work force to at least 7,000 during the peak of the war, making up 13 percent of all steel employees in the region. The postwar influx of blacks to Western Pennsylvania pushed their numbers up further — to 16,900 by 1923 or 21 percent of all industry laborers. During the 1910s and 1920s coal mines in Western Pennsylvania drew substantial numbers of migrants to Uniontown, Westland, Washington, Canonsburg, Midland, and other towns in the region. In 1927 the importation of black strikebreakers dramatically increased the number of black coal miners in the area. Before the strike, the Pittsburgh Coal Company employed fewer than 350 blacks, or 7 percent of the work force. By 1928 the company had 3,516 black miners who made up 38.9 percent of all its employees. Similarly, the number of black employees at the Pittsburgh Terminal Coal Company rose from 100, or 2 percent of the work force, to 962, or 42 percent of all company laborers.⁸

The task of acclimating these recent migrants to the work regimen of industry and to life in local mill and mining communities fell to black welfare workers. Beginning in 1918, employers hired these social service employees to reduce the high turnover among black laborers, to supervise community centers, and to provide migrants with a variety of social and recreational activities. The involvement of these welfare officials in black religious affairs extended the influence of their employers and symbolized the importance industrialists attached to black churches. Cyrus T. Greene, the black welfare worker at the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company in East Pittsburgh, enthusiastically endorsed black churches. He boasted that black Westinghouse employees helped to raise \$75,000 in a 1920

8 The author discusses these black population and employment increases in his "Black Steelworkers in Western Pennsylvania, 1915-1950" (Ph.D. diss., Washington University, 1978), 18-22, 25-27, 32-33. Also see *Pittsburgh Courier*, Oct. 24, 1925, and Leonard Allen, interviewed by Dennis C. Dickerson, Westland, Pa., Sept. 9, 1975, and David Jemison, interviewed by Dennis C. Dickerson, Westland, Pa., Sept. 9, 1975. Readers will also benefit from the following articles which explore the issues of black migration to Pittsburgh: Peter Gottlieb, "Migration and Jobs: The New Black Workers in Pittsburgh, 1916-1930," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 61 (Jan. 1978): 1-15, and John Bodnar, Michael Weber, and Roger Simon, "Migration, Kinship, and Urban Adjustment: Blacks and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900-1930," *Journal of American History* 66 (Dec. 1979): 548-65.



(Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Carl O. Dickerson of Philadelphia)

Payne Chapel A.M.E. Church in Duquesne (1932-1935). Founded in 1891 by blacks from Elizabeth and from Maryland. A few were early black employees in the Duquesne mills. After the World War I migrations, newly hired black steelworkers and their families worshipped there.

fund drive for one of the local congregations. He noted that their contributions "were as large, if not larger, than a majority of the members," and that in one church, black Westinghouse workers comprised the majority of the deacon board.⁹

Black welfare workers developed close ties with black pastors and their congregations. Because they carefully cultivated close relationships with black preachers and black churches, industrialists were certain to have a positive public image within this important segment of the black population. Macon Lennon of the Duquesne steel works encouraged the Workingmen's Bible class in 1920 by allowing the pastor of the Fourth Street Baptist Church in Rankin to preach at a company-run boardinghouse. One of his successors, Charles Broadfield, belonged to the Payne Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, where in later years he served as a trustee and choir director. When the congregation outgrew its building in the late 1920s, Broadfield offered the mill's community center to the Reverend P. A. Rose for use during the summer. Like Broadfield, George Foster Jones of the Clairton steel works served the First African Methodist Episcopal Church as its choir director. In 1921 he organized a "colored community chorus" which benefited from the support of the First A.M.E. Church and the Mount Olive Baptist Church. Jones also brought black preachers to the mill's community room to speak to black workers each Sunday. At least twice he invited the Reverend C. Y. Trigg, the pastor of the Warren Methodist Episcopal Church in Pittsburgh, who in 1920 participated in a conference on blacks in northern industry.

Grover Nelson of the Homestead steel works was similarly involved in black religious affairs. Like his colleague Jones in Clairton, Nelson had an interest in music. In 1921 the Jerusalem Baptist Church in Duquesne invited him to play his saxophone at a special musical program. Nelson became acquainted with the Reverend J. A. Terry, Sr., the pastor of Homestead's newly-founded Blackwell A.M.E. Zion Church. In 1925, when the denomination's Allegheny Annual Conference convened at Terry's church, Nelson came to the gathering to represent his employers. He also belonged to the Rodman Street Baptist Church in Pittsburgh, and during the 1920s he decided to enter the ministry. Homestead steel officials adjusted

⁹ Cyrus T. Greene, "The Negro Workman at the Westinghouse," *Competitor*, Oct.-Nov. 1920, 181.

his schedule to allow him to attend the Western Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh. After briefly serving at a church established for black workers by the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company in Ford City, Nelson agreed to become the pastor of another congregation formed in Homestead in 1930. In subsequent years, while still employed at the Homestead steel works, Nelson pastored the Mount Olive Baptist Church in Rankin and the Victory Baptist Church in Pittsburgh. In 1937 he served as supervisor of the Western District of the Pennsylvania Baptist Convention.¹⁰

Industry officials supplemented the efforts of black welfare workers by extending direct encouragement and financial assistance to area black churches. Samuel G. Worton, the assistant superintendent of the Duquesne steel works, spoke at the Jerusalem Baptist Church in 1919 during a cornerstone-laying ceremony. He commended the Reverend John M. Clay for undertaking this major project and praised his black employees for belonging to the Jerusalem Church and helping the pastor to acquire a new edifice. In the early 1920s the Clark Memorial Baptist Church in Homestead erected a new building at a cost exceeding \$100,000. In less than three years, the congregation raised about \$90,000 to pay on its debt. In 1924, during a mortgage liquidation drive, the Carnegie Steel Company offered the church a \$5,000 contribution if the congregation agreed to raise a comparable sum to match it. In the late 1920s officials at the Aliquippa Works of Jones and Laughlin Steel gave an annual gift of \$150 to each of the town's black congregations. They included the Bethel Baptist Church, the Tried Stone Baptist Church, the Jones Chapel Methodist Church, the Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, and the Church of God in Christ. In 1928 the Wright Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in Washington benefited from a "financial campaign" that local white businessmen conducted for the congregation. On other occasions industry officials in Western Pennsylvania preferred to help black

10 *Duquesne Times*, July 20, 1920, Apr. 8, 1921; *Homestead Messenger*, July 8, 1925; *Clairton Tattler*, Mar. 18, 1921, Apr. 22, 1921, Jan. 13, 1922; *Pittsburgh Courier*, Aug. 21, 1937; "Industrial Conference Meets," *Competitor*, Mar. 1920, 75; Mrs. Mattie Christian, interviewed by Dennis C. Dickerson, Duquesne, Pa., Apr. 22, 1975; Mrs. Colesta Long, interviewed by Dennis C. Dickerson, Philadelphia, Pa., Mar. 27, 1979; Paul L. Payne, interviewed by Dennis C. Dickerson, Clairton, Pa., Mar. 15, 1975; the Reverend J. A. Terry, Jr., interviewed by Dennis C. Dickerson, Pittsburgh, Pa., Mar. 3, 1980; Mrs. Irma Baskerville, interviewed by Dennis C. Dickerson, Pittsburgh, Pa., Mar. 4, 1980.

churches by allowing them to worship on company-owned property. In 1917, in Johnstown, the Reverend J. H. Flagg organized the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Reverend W. Sloan started the Mount Sinai Baptist Church. Since the Cambria Steel Company owned a building previously occupied by a white congregation, local mill managers permitted the two black groups to share the building. The same year black migrants from Clayton, Alabama, organized the Shiloh Baptist Church. Cambria Steel responded by donating another company-owned structure for Shiloh to use. In the early 1920s the Lockhart Iron and Steel Company in McKees Rocks sponsored a Baptist church for black employees and allowed them to use a chapel located in a company-owned recreation center. Similarly, in 1931, a coal firm in the mining town of Brownsville allowed a Colored Methodist Episcopal congregation to worship in one of its buildings.¹¹

Black ministers and denominational leaders recognized that increased employment prospects for blacks in the Pittsburgh vicinity meant greater opportunities to found new congregations and add to the membership of existing churches. The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, a southern-based denomination, had no congregations in Western Pennsylvania before the World War I black migration. At the 1916 session of the Washington-Philadelphia Annual Conference, Bishop Lucius H. Holsey and the delegates approved the creation of a new Pittsburgh district. Bishop Randall A. Carter, who was assigned to the Pittsburgh area, believed "that thousands of our C.M.E.s would be coming to the city for employment." In May 1917 the denomination gave Carter \$2,000 to purchase property for a new C.M.E. congregation in Pittsburgh. His Episcopal colleagues also raised money in their respective districts for "the Pittsburgh work." As a result of this national support, three Colored

11 *Duquesne Times*, Aug. 8, 1919; *Pittsburgh Courier*, Aug. 23, 1924; *The Star of Zion*, July 26, 1928; *The Christian Index*, June 11, 1931; Bartow Tipper, interviewed by Dennis C. Dickerson, Aliquippa, Pa., Mar. 4, 1980; Hornback, *Survey of the Negro Population*, 190-91; "Heritage," *Tribune-Democrat*, Feb. 2, 1980, 7. *Golden Anniversary Souvenir Booklet of Shiloh Baptist Church, 1917-1967*, Johnstown, Pa., Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg, Pa.; William P. Young, "The First Hundred Negro Workers," *Opportunity*, Jan. 1924, 18; National Association of Corporation Training, Pittsburgh Chapter, Minutes of Meeting, Unskilled Labor and Americanization Section, Feb. 2, 1922, 4, Industrial Relations Department, Affiliates File, Box 34, Series 4, Records of the National Urban League, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C.

Methodist Episcopal congregations, the Carter Chapel, the Cleaves Temple, and the Beebe, were organized in Pittsburgh by 1926. The C.M.E. Church also spread to Monessen, Donora, Ford City, Johnstown, Vandergrift, Brownsville, Washington, and to the steel town of Farrell "where our people are coming by the hundreds."¹²

Bishop George Lincoln Blackwell of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church observed similar opportunities in the industrial areas of Western Pennsylvania. In 1924 he divided the Allegheny Annual Conference into two presiding elder districts, and directed his subordinates to expand the denomination into several coal mining communities. In 1927 the Reverend William A. Blackwell, the presiding elder of the Pittsburgh district which included the Kiski coal region, hoped "to enter Leechburg (since) many of our people have gone there to work and will stay for some time." Also during the late 1920s the Zion congregation in Leisenring No. 1 in Westmoreland County gained "many new members from Alabama" because of job opportunities in the town's coke-making facilities.¹³

As a result of the black migration to Western Pennsylvania, the membership of area black churches increased dramatically. Leading black congregations in Pittsburgh grew even larger because of employment opportunities in local industrial plants. The Euclid Avenue African Methodist Episcopal Church reported 305 members in 1905, but grew to 1,500 in 1926. The membership of Ebenezer Baptist Church increased from 1,500 to 3,000 between 1915 and 1926. The Central Baptist Church gained 544 new parishioners during 1917 and early 1918, bringing its total membership to 1,752, while the John Wesley African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church attracted 1,200 new members between 1920 and 1926. The Reverend Elijah L. Madison, the pastor, established a branch congregation, the Wesley Center African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, in 1927, and it grew to 2,500 members in 1948. Similar, but less dramatic increases occurred in outlying industrial communities. The Jerusalem Baptist Church in the steel town of Duquesne, for example, had forty mem-

¹² *The Christian Index*, July 20, 1916, Jan. 31, 1918, Feb. 28, 1918, May 3, 1923, Nov. 8, 1923, July 14, 1927, June 11, 1931; U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Religious Bodies: Summary and Detailed Tables*, vol. 1, 1926, 511; *Yearbook of the 21st Session of the Ohio Annual Conference*, C.M.E. Church, 1954, 25, 35, 51.

¹³ William J. Walls, *The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church: Reality of the Black Church* (Charlotte, N.C., 1974), 262; *The Star of Zion*, Feb. 18, 1926, Mar. 24, 1927.

bers in 1915, but expanded to two hundred members in 1919. In Homestead, the site of another important steel facility, the Park Place African Methodist Episcopal Church grew from ninety members in 1916 to more than four hundred members in 1924.¹⁴

Aspiring black clergymen also settled in Western Pennsylvania during the black migration of World War I and the 1920s. Like other migrants, they came to the area primarily to find industrial jobs, but they continued their deep involvement in church affairs. Two migrants, the Reverends J. H. Flagg and Isaac S. Freeman, belonged to the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Flagg, a blacksmith in Enterprise, Alabama, migrated to Johnstown in 1916 to work in the Cambria steel mills. Freeman, a migrant from Blakely, Georgia, moved to Philadelphia in 1923 and to Aliquippa in 1924 where he became an employee in the nail mill at Jones and Laughlin Steel. African Methodist Episcopal congregations existed in neither Johnstown nor Aliquippa when Flagg and Freeman moved to Western Pennsylvania. In 1917 Flagg organized the Bethel A.M.E. Church in Johnstown, and during the 1920s Freeman started the Ebenezer A.M.E. Church in Aliquippa. Some black migrants with ministerial aspirations chose to serve their churches as assistant pastors. William Hall, a Virginian, and William Thomas, a South Carolinian, came to Duquesne in 1921 and 1923 respectively. Each became an employee at the Carnegie steel works. Moreover, Hall served the Jerusalem Baptist Church as an assistant pastor, and Thomas held the same position at the Payne Chapel A.M.E. Church.¹⁵

Black clergymen who doubled as industrial employees and preachers whose congregations consisted primarily of steelworkers, coal miners, and factory laborers depended upon local industrialists for employment and for occasional philanthropy to their struggling congregations. As a result of this relationship between clergymen and industrialists, black preachers emphasized the importance of the work ethic and avoided trenchant criticism of discriminatory practices in black hiring, promotions, and job assignments.

14 Pennsylvania, Department of Welfare, *Negro Survey of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, 1927), 63; *Minutes of the 38th Session of the Pittsburgh Annual Conference of the A.M.E. Church*, 1905. Burkett, *Black Redemption*, 114; *The Crisis*, Apr. 1918; *Pittsburgh Courier*, Oct. 9, 1926, Apr. 30, 1927; Walls, *African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church*, 602; *Duquesne Times*, Apr. 25, 1919; *Homestead Messenger*, Nov. 1, 1924.

15 "Heritage," *Tribune-Democrat*, Feb. 12, 1980, 4; *A.M.E. Christian Recorder*, Dec. 25, 1978; Tipper interview; *Duquesne Times*, Sept. 12, 1941, Oct. 16, 1956.

Numerous black clergymen who pastored small congregations were not inclined to criticize their employers. Their churches had limited resources, which compelled their ministers to find jobs in local industries. In most cases these preachers served congregations in outlying mill and mining communities where black churches tended to have far fewer members than most black congregations in Pittsburgh. Theodore Roosevelt Snowden, a migrant from Portsmouth, Virginia, and an alumnus of Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, became an employee at the Jones and Laughlin Steel plant in Aliquippa in 1933. While he worked in the blast furnace department, Snowden pastored the First Missionary Baptist Church, a small congregation in Leetsdale. J. A. Terry, Jr., started preaching in the Allegheny Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in 1931. In 1939 he became the pastor of A.M.E. Zion congregations in Bedford and Walker's Mill. During the early 1940s, while serving the Braddock Park A.M.E. Zion Church in Braddock Hills, Terry secured a job at the Blaw-Knox Company in Pittsburgh. Although his bishop later assigned him to Zion congregations in the mining towns of McDonald and Blairsville, Terry continued to work as a crane man at his plant's Pittsburgh mill. The African Love Hope Baptist Church and the Trinity African Methodist Episcopal Church, two black congregations in Ellwood City, each had less than fifty members. In 1950 the pastors of both congregations worked for the National Tube Company, a subsidiary of the United States Steel Corporation.¹⁶

Black clergymen espoused the work ethic and encouraged blacks to value their jobs and obey their employers. Although these preachers were not industrial stooges, they shared similar views with employers on the importance of hard work and sobriety. In 1911 the Reverend J. E. Morris of the Corey Avenue African Methodist Episcopal Church in Braddock wrote the *Pittsburgh Courier* about William Darwin, a black worker who lost his eye while laboring at the American Steel and Wire Company in Rankin. Morris congratulated Darwin for engaging "in the honest pursuits of life" rather than "loafing around some saloon or pool room (like) many of our young men." In 1923 the Reverend Henry P. Jones of the Euclid Avenue African Methodist Episcopal Church in Pittsburgh eulogized W. A. Clay, a molder and boss rougher at the Carnegie

¹⁶ *Steel Labor*, Dec. 1960; Terry interview; Charles R. Walker, *Steeltown* (New York, 1950), 225-74.

steel mills since the 1890s. When "a high company official" came to pay his respects to his deceased employee, Jones praised Clay and other black workers who valued "their positions of trust." Also in 1923 the Pennsylvania Baptist Convention met in Pittsburgh and discussed the issue of "shiftlessness" among black industrial workers. Before the meeting ended, the clergymen decided to appoint "special representatives" to speak with local employers about ways to improve the attitudes of their black employees. In 1928 three black speakers including the Reverend A. L. Walker of Moon Run told a crowd of black miners that the Pittsburgh Coal Company had a policy of standing by its black employees. They encouraged blacks to be "upright and industrious," and to appreciate "the excellent opportunities" that the company provided.¹⁷

Some courageous black preachers criticized industrial employers for their discriminatory treatment of black workers and for their hostility toward organized labor. In 1928 the Reverend I. H. Hawkins, the pastor of the Mount Lebanon Baptist Church in Brownsville, supported his coal mining parishioners in their efforts to improve working conditions, and he backed his son, Isaiah Hawkins, in his attempt to reform the United Mine Workers of America. When the Reverend J. A. Terry, Sr., became the pastor of an African Methodist Episcopal Zion congregation in Meyersdale during the 1930s, he assisted a local union of coal miners by serving as their secretary. As trade unions gained increased support from the Roosevelt administration through the passage of Section 7a of the National Industrial Recovery Act in 1933, and later through the Wagner Act of 1935, more black clergymen endorsed the labor movement and abandoned their deferential relationship to industrial employers. Since the C.I.O. declared its opposition to racial discrimination and promised to promote the interests of black workers, several black organizations, including the NAACP, the National Urban League, and the National Negro Congress, became allies of its affiliate unions. When the National Negro Congress and the C.I.O. convened a conference in Pittsburgh in 1937 to discuss strategies for bringing black steelworkers into the union, they won the cooperation of the Reverend T. J. King of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Pittsburgh and Bishop William J. Walls of the Allegheny

¹⁷ *Pittsburgh Courier*, Mar. 25, 1911, Jan. 20, 1923, Oct. 27, 1923, Sept. 15, 1928.

Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Several other black churches in Pittsburgh also supported the effort.¹⁸

Some steelworker-preachers played an important role in advancing unionism in the Pittsburgh vicinity. The Reverend Fletcher Williamson, a black minister and a chipper at the Duquesne steel works, for example, helped to organize a local lodge of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steelworkers in 1933. When the Steelworkers Organizing Committee absorbed the Amalgamated Association in 1936, Williamson preached unionism among black workers and was eventually elected an officer of Local No. 1256. During the organizing drives of the late 1930s, Williamson testified in Pittsburgh at a hearing of the National Steel Labor Relations Board. Under heated questioning by the attorney for his employer, the United States Steel Corporation, the nervous Duquesne preacher defended the steelworkers union and its efforts to unionize both black and white employees.¹⁹

Although other steelworker-preachers possessed firsthand knowledge of the racial problems that they and other blacks encountered in local industries, they did not publicly promote unionism in Western Pennsylvania. Charles W. Torrey, an Alabama migrant who pastored the Macedonia Baptist Church in Duquesne and worked at the Edgar Thomson steel plant in Braddock, personally endorsed the C.I.O. and became a member. Unlike Fletcher Williamson, however, Torrey gave steel unionism no public support, and he used his considerable oratorical and organizational skills exclusively in the church on religious matters. J. L. Simmons, an employee at Lockhart Iron and Steel in McKees Rocks and a Baptist pastor in Carnegie and Pittsburgh's West End, personally embraced steel unionism to free himself and others from the arbitrary will of plant bosses. However, four black organizers assumed the task of acquainting fellow black Lockhart employees with the Steelworkers Organizing Committee, while Simmons, the Georgia-born preacher, stood on the sidelines.²⁰

18 *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 12, 1928; Terry interview; Wright, "The Negro in Pittsburgh," 19-20; Lawrence S. Wittner, "The National Negro Congress: A Reassessment," *American Quarterly* 22 (Winter 1970): 893.

19 George Powers, *Cradle of Steel Unionism, Monongahela Valley, Pa.* (East Chicago, Ind., 1972), 42; *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 4, 1960. Roger Payne and Carl O. Dickerson, interviewed by Dennis C. Dickerson, Philadelphia, Pa., Apr. 13, 1976.

20 The Reverend Charles W. Torrey, interviewed by Dennis C. Dicker-

The growth of influential labor unions in several mass production industries and the involvement of federal, state, and local fair employment practices commissions in black worker affairs, however, reduced the dependence of black clergymen and black churches upon the good will of employers. During the 1940s blacks in such important industries as steel, coal mining, auto making, and rubber manufacturing belonged to C.I.O. unions. Because of this development, Horace Cayton, a black sociologist and a columnist for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, wrote in 1946 that "few Negro preachers" dared to oppose the United Steelworkers of America and other such unions since it would mean the sure loss of their congregations.²¹

The unionization of black workers allowed their ministers to speak out against industry's discriminatory treatment of black employees and facilitated the occupational advancement of several black steelworker-preachers. During World War II the Reverend Benjamin M. McLinn of the St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, and a fellow black clergyman, the Reverend Rucker, made successful attempts to eliminate discriminatory hiring practices at Jessop Steel, the American Can Company, and a few other industrial plants. In 1943 they began to cooperate with the local United States Employment Service in making periodic reviews of the Washington labor market in order to spot employment opportunities for black workers. The Reverend Theodore Roosevelt Snowden, a Jones and Laughlin Steel employee and Baptist pastor in Leetsdale, was proud of his long affiliation with Local No. 1211 of the United Steelworkers of America. He contended that "my union has helped me and my people in the field of civil rights and in the mills where we can hold any job for which we can qualify by experience and seniority."²²

Strong industrial unions and government involvement in black

son, Duquesne, Pa., Mar. 21, 1975; the Reverend J. L. Simmons, interviewed by Peter Gottlieb, Pittsburgh, Pa., June 13, 1974, Pittsburgh Oral History Project, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg, Pa.

21 *Pittsburgh Courier*, Feb. 16, 1946. For a discussion of these issues of black involvement in industrial unions and federal involvement in black workers' affairs see my dissertation, "Black Steelworkers in Western Pennsylvania, 1915-1950," Chapters 5 and 6.

22 Milo A. Manly to G. James Fleming, Nov. 15, 1944, Records of the Fair Employment Practices Committee, Region III, R. G. 228, Box 610, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; G. James Fleming to Will Maslow, Oct. 30, 1944, *ibid.*; "Rev. Benjamin M. McLinn," in Richard R. Wright, Jr., ed., *Encyclopedia of African Methodism* (Philadelphia, 1947), 191-92; *Steel Labor*, Dec. 1960.

worker affairs reduced the importance of industrial philanthropy to black clergymen and black churches in Western Pennsylvania. In the past, financial contributions to struggling black congregations and gifts of property and buildings facilitated the growth of black religious institutions. Black preachers with small congregations found jobs in area industries and supplemented their meager salaries. Black denominational leaders welcomed employment opportunities in area mills, mines, and factories because they drew black migrants to the Pittsburgh vicinity and provided new members for churches in Western Pennsylvania. The unionization of black workers during the 1930s, however, loosened ties that bound the black church to big business in the Pittsburgh area. The involvement of black workers in labor organizations which challenged the power of industrial employers freed black ministers to extend their racial protests to the crucial occupational concerns of black clergymen and laymen in the mines, mills, and factories of Western Pennsylvania.