

Oberlin

## Digital Commons at Oberlin

---

Honors Papers

Student Work

---

1925

### The Negro in Oberlin

Mildred Fairchild  
*Oberlin College*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.oberlin.edu/honors>



Part of the [Sociology Commons](#)

---

#### Repository Citation

Fairchild, Mildred, "The Negro in Oberlin" (1925). *Honors Papers*. 809.  
<https://digitalcommons.oberlin.edu/honors/809>

This Thesis - Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at Digital Commons at Oberlin. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Papers by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons at Oberlin. For more information, please contact [megan.mitchell@oberlin.edu](mailto:megan.mitchell@oberlin.edu).

THE NEGRO IN OBERLIN.

T H E S I S

Presented for the Master's Degree

May 20, 1925

by

Mildred Fairchild.

E. P.

### Bibliography and Sources.

- Cochran - Wm. Cox - Oberlin - Wellington Rescue Case.  
Fairchild - Oberlin Colony and College.  
Goodrich - Oberlin Jubilee.  
Leonard - Story of Oberlin.  
Annals - Oberlin Young Men's Slavery Society.  
Oberlin Evangelist Files.  
Oberlin Quarterly Review Files.  
Rawdon - The Colored Pupil in Oberlin Public Schools. (1914)  
Fiske - Reports of Religious Census Oberlin. 1907 and 1921.  
Oberlin Night School Bulletin. 1923.  
Woman's Progressive Club Bulletin. 1915.  
Annual Report of the Lorain County General Health District.  
Oberlin, Ohio, 1924.  
Mt. Zion Men's Bible Class and Civic Club. Minutes 1906 - 1924.  
Oberlin College Records of Colored Graduates.

### Public Records.

- Criminal Docket, Mayor's Court, 1908 - 1924.  
Birth Certificates, Oberlin Village, 1909 - 1911.  
Death Certificates, Oberlin Village, 1909 - 1911.  
Lorain County Health Department Records. Reports of Births and  
Deaths with Classifications, 1920 - 1923.  
Real Estate Assessment Report, Oberlin Village, 1916.  
Interviews.  
U. S. Census Reports.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS.

	Page
Introduction	1
Historical Sketch	2
Survey of Present Negro Community	17
Physical Characteristics	17
Housing and Environs	19
Health and Vitality	22
Economic State	27
The Home	34
Education	37
Religion	43
Recreation	48
Intellectual Life	52
Morality	55
Summary	59
Relation to Community	62
Conclusions	64

## THE NEGRO IN OBERLIN.

In every library of any standing there exists today and since the days of abolitionism a vast number of books and pamphlets dealing with the negro in America. Some treat of his virtues, some of his faults; some are sentimental, some harsh; nearly all discuss him as a race with emphasis on racial characteristics and racial possibilities. Only recently has the scientific spirit invaded the field sufficiently to reveal the possibility of honest progress through the specific study of concrete situations. As I write there lies on my table the March issue of the Survey Graphic devoted to "Harlem Mecca of the New Negro." Slowly we are appreciating that our knowledge of social science like our knowledge of physical science will advance only with the painstaking analysis of each contributing factor.

I have undertaken a study of the Negro in Oberlin, therefore, not with the expectation of contributing anything of particular value to Oberlin or to the colored man who lives here, but with the hope that a collection and an analysis of the vital factors in the life and the development of the negro community here, in so far as it is possible for me to ascertain and interpret these factors, will find a place, however small, in the sincere effort to build a comprehension of social affairs on a foundation of facts.

Oberlin offers a laboratory for such a study which is unique but not abnormal. It is unique in that the history of the relation of both town and college to the negro has been extraordinary in its ideals and purposes. It is typical nevertheless in that the outworking of these ideals has been that of any average town of its size and potentiality. Almost from the outset Oberlin has stood for justice and equality of opportunity for every man regardless of color. With the granting of the opportunity, its responsibilities for the most part have ended. We have no Utopia to observe, therefore, but a very ordinary town with ordinary problems, the usual successes and the usual failures, such as might be repeated in any locality in almost any state in the country.

#### HISTORICAL SKETCH

In 1835, two years after its founding, Oberlin College (there existed then no town except the college colony) faced the problem of the American Negro for the first time. With the growth of abolitionism in the North, the beginning in many states of hot debates on the wrongs of Slavery and the necessity of Freedom, and as an incident in that Movement the disruption of one Lane seminary, a theological school in Cincinnati, a large contingent of whose students wanted to join with Oberlin, the necessity of a definite stand regard-

ing the colored man became manifest. On the side of the negro there lined up the will of the founder, "Father" Shepherd, three brilliant leaders, Finney, Morgan and Mahan, eight proffered professorships and ten thousand dollars. Opposite stood the convention of the time popular sentiment, the fear of the untried and unknown. The winning of the day by the "three brothers, eight professorships and \$10,000", to use Father Shepherd's own phrase, even though it was done hardly and with a majority of one only, opened the doors of the old Oberlin Institute to Negroes, when few such doors were open, and thirty years before slavery ceased to be the law of the American Constitution.

"Whereas, there does exist in our country an excitement in respect to our colored population, and fears are entertained that on the one hand they will be left unprovided for as to the means of a proper education, and on the other that they will in unsuitable numbers be introduced into our schools, and thus in effect forced into the society of the whites, and the state of public sentiment is such as to require from the Board some definite expression on the subject; therefore, resolved that the education of the people of color is a matter of great interest and should be encouraged and sustained in this institution."

A poor, weak thing as resolutions go, ambiguous, illogical, it nevertheless resulted decisively in a distinct leadership in Oberlin, both in the college and the colony, on

the side of Negro Freedom and opportunity.

There were no colored students at the time seeking admission, only one colored person indeed resided within the county. One colored man followed the students from Lane Seminary a few months later-- a possibility watched for with so much apprehension by the colonists that the story is told of a small boy, son of one of the Trustees, at sight of the solitary black man approaching the village, dashing into the house with the breathless cry- "They're coming father- they're coming." \*

Little by little they did come. As the Abolition Movement grew, the leadership of Oberlin grew with it. From the first, pledged to Morality, Justice and Equality of Opportunity, it moulded its young men and women unflinchingly in the Abolition School. They in turn, during the long winter vacations then in vogue, spread out over the country to teach, lecture and preach Freedom and Justice for the Negro. The fame of Oberlin, and to many the infamy of it, penetrated far. The negroes began to filter through. The community which could preach so gloriously might also live as it preached.

Freedmen came to Oberlin during the quarter of a century between 1835 and the Emancipation as to a haven of opportunity. Noble spirited slave owners desiring to place their freed slaves where they would have such opportunity,

\* Fairchild. Oberlin Colony and College.



and be also not inconveniently near their native habitat settled them here, in some cases with bits of land or a few hundred dollars capital, to start them on the road to prosperity and independence. Even fugitives on their way to Canada dared sometimes to linger.

Until "the fifties" only a few families settled permanently, but as the agitation grew throughout the country and the Civil War approached several hundred colored persons found refuge here, Assured always of a kindly welcome, of a chance to work in so far as work was available and of educational opportunities both in the public schools and college, only the harsh Ohio "Black Laws" and the vigilant federal enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 kept the numbers comparatively low.

With such conditions Oberlin was, of course, a station on the "Underground Railroad." Innumerable stories are afloat of the experiences of the inhabitants, both colored and white, who attempted to give comfort to fugitives on their road to Canada. No violence was ever done to slave-catcher or police, but whole companies of students and of townspeople of both "colors" repeatedly united to discourage or block their efforts. Sometimes a ruse was used to confound the pursuers and throw them off the trail; sometimes crowds of citizens or students gathered about and either by conversation or mere numbers ef-

fecting the necessary delay. The most famous of such cases was the "Wellington Rescue" of 1858 when two or three hundred Oberlin people by carriage, horseback or on foot pursued a deputy U. S. Marshall, a sheriff from Columbus, Ohio, and a slave agent who had kidnapped a young negro a mile south of the town and were rushing him south on the assumption that he was a fugitive slave. At Wellington, eight miles south of town, the Oberlin people overtook their company waiting for the Cincinnati train, surrounded them, argued the case for six to eight hours and finally slipped the negro to safety. It was a flagrant resistance of the Fugitive-Slave Law resulting in the indictment of twenty-four Oberlin persons, most of them responsible and prominent citizens. The case dragged out for several months becoming a veritable battle ground for the political contention of the day. Two Oberlin men, one a leading white citizen, the other a colored man of extraordinary keenness and power, were convicted and sentenced to fine and imprisonment. Twelve others, mostly white, pillars of the community, remained voluntarily in jail for eighty-five days pending trial, as a protest against an unjust ruling of the court. The case has been listed by competent historians as one of the important incidents in the anti-slavery struggle, not incomparable to the publication of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and the John Brown Raid at Harper's Ferry.

The cause was on the whole not popular during the

two decades before the Civil War. Even among the surrounding towns of the Western Reserve in Northern Ohio, a district for the most part unflinchingly committed to the abolition of slavery, Oberlin was more or less notorious for her vigorous stand. A guide board six miles north stood for years "pointing the way to Oberlin, not by the ordinary index finger, but by the full length figure of a fugitive running with all his might to reach the place. The tavern sign four miles east, was ornamented, on its Oberlin face with the representation of a fugitive slave pursued by a tiger." \*

More serious were the threats repeatedly uttered against the College Charter at the Ohio Legislature. In 1843 the fourth attempt at repeal resulted in an indefinite postponement by a vote in the House of 36 - 29, and the effort was not made again.

Neither pressure had the slightest influence in mitigating the vigor of the Oberlin Abolitionism or tempering the quality of her mercy to the fugitive black. This was the spirit of the early Oberlin, college and town, toward the oppression of the negro; and this spirit was the basis upon which the negro community in Oberlin grew.

During the Civil War Oberlin shared heavily in the Union Service; a fact which naturally resulted in further cementing her interest in the ex-slaves' welfare. Four companies

\* Fairchild, Oberlin Colony and College.

of infantry went from the town beside volunteers to the cavalry and other branches. From the college "taking graduates and undergraduates together, it was estimated that not less than 850 were in the army at some time during the four years." \* Money and supplies followed the men. Justice and Freedom for all persons irrespective of race or color was a vital factor in the Oberlin tradition.

After the war the ex-slaves continued to drift in. Though not now in need of actual freedom, opportunity for life and education continued to allure them. One fine, old colored woman herself has told me of the hopes and the eagerness with which she at sixteen and alone in 1871 struggled north, first from West Virginia to Pittsburgh, then from Pittsburgh on with the expectation of finding the golden gates themselves at the entrance to Oberlin. She still recalls her vivid disillusionment when, standing in the center of Main Street, she asked a bystander how much farther it was to Oberlin and learned she was then in the heart of her longed for heaven. Such disillusionments must have been frequent.

The position of the colored man in the town and the characteristics of the group are rather more difficult to ascertain than the story of his coming. Charity was doubtless dispersed rather freely at the outset. Once the negro was establish-

\* Fairchild. Oberlin - Colony and College, 169-170.

ed however - that is no longer in need of immediate food and clothing and protection - he was expected to develop for himself an independent livelihood and to conform to all the rules and regulations of a citizen of the town. For the most part, the stories of the early days show him as conforming to the will of the community, deeply grateful for the sponsoring of his cause, and ready to do his utmost to prove his worth. There were exceptions to this rule as there will be in any community irrespective of race, but they were uncommon. One very kindly but well balanced observer writes of them in 1883: "The colored element (has) gradually increased until it has become a fifth part of the population\*\* There are among the colored people several prosperous business men and successful mechanics. A large portion are day laborers. They are a quiet and peaceable people in general, anxious for education for their children, and on the whole gradually improving." \*

Inevitably there must have been from the beginning among them a vast amount of abject poverty. Many of the colored townspeople, it is true, were students who found the atmosphere too tempting to leave; a very fair number were skillful mechanics or tradesmen, men who had bought their freedom and that of their families; (One Anson Jones paid \$8,000 for the freedom of himself, his wife and children); still others, a not inconsiderable

\* Fairchild, page 114.

\*\* See Census figures quoted later.

number, were brought up and established by former masters. Nevertheless great numbers-- without doubt the majority-- made their way to the town with only chance aid along the way-side, and arrived often little short of destitute.

There is no accurate way of estimating the proportional elements in the population of 422 negroes in Oberlin given in the census of 1860. The records list several who bought their freedom; forty-seven were established by one slave owner of North Carolina with a very fair little settlement on each family; again "A planter removed hither bringing certain slaves who were his own children as well. Having purchased quite a tract of land, he afterwards apportioned it out equally among them all. (One) Reverend George Whipple was applied to by several slave owners to receive and locate bondmen to whom they would give freedom, and some of them were settled in the Oberlin region." \* But such records can give us no reliable estimate of the numbers. We cannot err greatly, however, in the conclusion, from all the available reports, that a great deal of unmitigated poverty pertained among them.

In the early years, however, work in Oberlin apparently was plentiful. To clear the forest lands of their heavy timber, to prepare the soil for tilling, to build even a small town out of the wilderness was a task which for several decades re-

\* Leonard, page 421, The Story of Oberlin.



quired many hands and strenuous muscle. The story of one ninety-three year old man, while it is extraordinary, is indicative of the possibilities. The little party of four arrived in Oberlin one night in June of 1855. Word of their arrival carried discretely to the proper sources brought two of the towns most able citizens to their door within twenty-four hours. Work at clearing land and the chance to get the rudiments of an education were placed at their disposal immediately. The three able bodied men including the twenty-three year old youth accepted every opportunity gratefully. For three months they worked unceasingly, during the day felling trees and clearing land, in the evening studying under kindly white tutelage, the young man cooking the meals and "keeping house" as well. Their work brought them 75 cents a day apiece, but living was correspondingly cheap. The last of August they seized an opportunity to buy a small house, which became available at a low price, taking out a mortgage to cover the greater part of the purchase price. The mortgage they paid off "before ever dunned for it." A few years later the young man married-- the young woman also a fugitive in Oberlin-- bought a new tract of land on the edge of town, himself built the substantial little house which is still the "family homestead" and proceeded to found a family of ten children, seven of whom have attended college and have gone out as leaders for their people over the country. Three are high class artizans in Oberlin. Today the old man still makes his

garden and sells his vegetables, a respected and productive citizen.

Such were the opportunities in Oberlin for a man with the vigor and persistence to use them. His kind in every race, however, is exceptional. Less than a month before his arrival in Oberlin a poor, ignorant, half-sick negro woman with seven children, three feather beds and sundry trappings landed from the same district in Kentucky. Without doubt she was received as charitably as her vigorous neighbors and given the best opportunities available. The story of her fortunes was necessarily quite different.

The social welfare of the group as a whole in the early days is difficult to ascertain with any real accuracy. The "Quarterly Review" and the "Evangelist", for many years the two successive mouthpieces for Oberlin facts and philosophy, are rich in discussion of the "peculiar institution"- slavery - and of the needs of the negro people. Nearly every page, certainly every issue has articles of every sort regarding them. But little touches on the Negro in Oberlin. Oberlin's self-conscious days had not yet dawned.

In education the negroes were accepted quite on a par with the white people; the children placed in the regular schools, and as they qualified received in the preparatory and college departments. No special work was designed for them; they attended school and classes with white students. No compulsion was placed upon a white boy or girl to mingle with them



or even to sit with them in the class room. Apparently a kind of assumption of good will existed which for the most part kept matters running smoothly. Most of the white students of the college as well as the citizens of the town were or became abolitionists of varying degrees, so that common sympathy was with the colored man. The first enumeration of the common schools in 1842 shows a total of 224 pupils in attendance, with no distinction as to race. Nine years later, in 1851, we find the proportion of colored children recorded as 34 out of a total of 428 in the common school -- 19 colored males and 15 colored females, as against 190 white males and 204 white females.

In the college the proportion seems to have been oddly enough, somewhat larger. The first colored student followed the acquisition from Lane Seminary in 1836. Before 1840 only 20 out of 1105 students who had attended the college had been colored. From 1840 to 1860, however, the proportion we are told was four or five per cent. "Soon after the war the ratio rose to seven or eight per cent. but has fallen again to five or six in a hundred." (1883) \* Not all of these by any means came from the town of Oberlin. Some did. The first colored graduate recorded was a brilliant young Oberlin boy who completed his course in 1849. This was John M. Langston thereafter a lawyer in the town for nearly twenty years, a highly honored citizen, member of church, school board and

\* Fairchild, pages 111 - 112.

town council, later a U. S. Minister to Haiti, and member of Congress. His whole family apparently - father and five sons were notable members of the community.

During the early years the colored and white people joined in church and religious matters. The First Congregational Church, for many years Oberlin's only church, has received colored as readily as white members. Some of the older members of the early families are still listed as its members and attend its services. In 1866 the Rust Methodist Episcopal Church was founded by the colored people on their own initiative, not because of lack of cordiality among the whites, but because the type of worship and of creed of the rather austere New England Church was not satisfying to many of the warm hearted southern negroes reared largely as Baptists and Methodists, or at least akin to the white churches of those denominations in the South. "The colored church came into existence not because the colored people were not welcomed in all the churches, nor because a separate organization was desired by those who had been most favored with education and culture, but because considerable numbers of them felt more at home with a style of service and instruction more like that with which they had been familiar from their childhood." \* A goodly number continued their attendance at the white churches and until recent years found a thoroughly satisfactory church life with them.

\* Fairchild, page 107.

Further details are not readily obtainable and are probably unnecessary. If to President Fairchild's characterization in 1883 we add Dr. Leonard's of 1898 stated in his "Story of Oberlin," we get something of a picture of the development of the group as well as of the atmosphere in which it grew.

"Not far from one-fifth of the population is colored" Dr. Leonard wrote - "dwelling mainly together upon certain streets, for the most part upon the outskirts, though to a slight extent scattered here and there wherever able to purchase property." Whether the inability to purchase property in the better sections of town more generally was based upon the unwillingness of whites to sell to colored people, or to the limited purchasing power of the colored people Dr. Leonard does not say. Every record points to the latter explanation in the early days, however. He continues: "They are easily divisible into three classes. A considerable portion are intelligent, industrious, well-to-do, thoroughly respectable and in every way good citizens. A few are superior as blacksmiths, builders, etc. But to these are joined a considerably larger number of the unlettered who are good natured and well-meaning and harmless, but only semi-industrious and seriously lacking in forethought, ambition and energy, content therefore to live from hand to mouth. Then there is an over large fraction com-

posed of the shiftless and worthless, shading off into the vicious and criminal,--- and being given to drinking and petty theiving and related offences (they) are well known in the court room and county jail." That characterization brings us to the present period in the development of the group, of which I have attempted to make an adequate if incomplete survey.

I have enlarged upon the historical background only because it seems to me essential as a basis for any comprehension of the present tendencies and traits. Only with that well in mind can we presume to study the present situation. Oberlin, in comparison with others, has been for the negro a kindly, hospitable community actively championing his cause - offering the whole of its opportunities to any able to utilize them, making no especial efforts for any. It is a small town, a college town, with no other industries than "the making of men" in educational centers; simple in life, democratic in ideals, but limited in economic facilities for all but those engaged in "the one industry." Upon that foundation, what kind of a social structure it has been possible to build; it has been my purpose to study and discuss; or, more accurately, what variety of tree has grown from such a root?

SURVEY OF PRESENT COMMUNITY.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS.

The colored people in Oberlin at present form between a sixth and a fifth of the population. The U. S. Census of 1920 reports 666 negroes in Oberlin out of a total of 4,236 persons. The following table gives the proportion of white and colored as shown by the U. S. Census figures since 1860:

Table I.

PROPORTIONS WHITE AND COLORED IN OBERLIN,- 1860 - 1920.

Date	1860	1870	1890	1900	1910	1920
Total Population	2115	2888	4376	4082	4365	4236
Negro	422*	612	683	641	789	666
% Negro	19.9	21.1	15.6	15.7	18.1	15.7

\* 549 Negroes listed Lorain County 1860.

The detailed report lists, for 1920, 182 negro males over 21 years, and 222 females, leaving a total of 262 children or young persons under voting age. The records show voting males, that is over 21 years, for 1890, 193; 1900, 182; 1910, 235.

A very general opinion seems to prevail among both white and colored people that the census figures for 1920 are low for the colored population, that the decrease of over 100 shown as between 1910 and 1920 is not indicative of the probable situation. The prevailing impression of an increase during the migratory years immediately following the European War, the surfeited condition of the labor market in town, and the slow but

steady growth of real estate purchase are listed as the foundation for the opinion.

In July of 1924 a group of colored men themselves undertook a census of their numbers, finding a total of 841 negroes resident in the town. These apparently include 210 families and several households of unmarried persons. On the basis of these figures we would find the average of the families to consist of 4.0 persons. For the impression of an increase of negro population in Oberlin during the years of the migrations of southern negroes northward and the large settlements in Cleveland and other industrial cities in the vicinity, I can find no basis in population statistics even accepting the larger figures of the colored men's census in 1924. We see no increase since 1910 in excess or even equal to the increase between 1900 and 1910. A growth of 52 persons in fifteen years or even in ten years is hardly phenomenal. Moreover I can find no evidence of any considerable recent additions to the group. An impression prevails that a few drifted in and out of the town and continue to do so now. Apparently a very few remain or make an impression on the community.

The same census mentioned above, which indicates considerable care in taking, reports the colored people as living on eighteen streets of the town, distributed as follows:

Table II.

COLORED FAMILIES DWELLING IN OBERLIN.

Street	Number of Families	Street	Number of Families
Lorain.	20	Locust.	28
Park.	35	Groveland.	21
Pleasant-	20	Grafton	12
Main	23	Follette	9
Vine	16	Railroad.	5
Sumner	7	South	2
College	4	Maple	1
Union	3	Oakland	1
Parkwood	2	Frankford	1
		Total	210.

The great majority are shown to live in the south-eastern section of the village, with a generous sprinkling onto North Park and North Pleasant, North Main and East Lorain Streets.

HOUSING AND ENVIRONS.

Of these streets, nine are paved in all or in part; nine have no paving although they are in part improved-- cinder roads. Considering the great preponderance of paved over unpaved streets in Oberlin, the proportion of unpaved streets in the south-east section is very large. For the most part the water and sewers follow the pavings, the unpaved streets being also without city water and sewage systems. There are eight streets within the city limits without such service in any form one street without sewer but with water service piped across



from a parallel block. Where city service is lacking the homes are dependent upon wells and cisterns for water, and upon the usual out-houses and privies for toilet facilities. By Ohio State Law both paving and sewers are originally installed at 98% property owners' expense, 2% at village expense, in part at least the explanation for the lack in this section.

The housing varies in different sections. There are a very fair number of moderate-sized well-kept homes with neat premises, some showing considerable pride in arrangement and care. There are a larger number of small but neatly kept cottages with fairly good lawns and vegetable gardens. There are a fairly large number of dilapidated, poorly-constructed places sadly in need of repair and vigorous upkeep. Finally there are, especially on the outskirts of the Town a considerable number of tumbled-down, unkept houses and hovels, not fit habitations for human beings in this or any section of the country. The proportion of these is definitely smaller than is ordinarily observable in a similar southern community, but it is far in excess of the normal expectation in so comparatively prosperous a section as Northern Ohio. It has not been possible in the time allowed me to make a detailed, accurate study of the housing condition. I will, therefore, attempt no data on proportions or averages. Roughly they divide into four groups as I have named them.

For the most part one family inhabits one house.



There are a number of places, however, usually among the last two classes named, where two families of from two to five persons each, occupy a one story and a half or a two story cottage. Again, I can give no definite average of the number of rooms per family or the number of persons per room. Such data would be valuable to have. In most cases, to the best of my observance, the space is not inadequate according to the minimum average requirements of American housing standards. There are many cases, however, which drop below such a standard, that is one bedroom suffices for a family of four.

Ordinarily the living and home making correlates with the housing facilities. It ranges from the well furnished, well kept, well ventilated, thoroughly comfortable home, which is a credit to any community, to the crowded, dirty, poorly lighted and poorly aired hovel or to the barren shack with stove, table, a few chairs and a bed for the entire furnishing. The greatest number, by far, are decently furnished and reasonably well cared for though not always adequately ventilated. The majority are heated with stoves, both wood and coal. A few of the more prosperous homes are equipped with furnaces.

A tendency to improve the home conditions seems apparent, on the part of a considerable number. Where the streets are paved especially a certain pride of appearance both outside and within is evident and by all testimony is increasing. In my own observation, as well as that of a good many others, the improvement within the last ten years is striking.

HEALTH AND VITALITY.

The health and vitality of the group is an intricate problem always. Little data of statistical value is available in Oberlin previous to the years 1908 and 1909. The following is a table of the deaths in Oberlin over two representative periods of three years each, as taken from the Public Health Records. Certain diseases or causes for death have been shown as being of some racial significance.

Table III.

DEATHS OBERLIN VILLAGE.

Year	Causes						Age									
	Total	T. B.		Can- cer	Syph- ilis	Still- born	Oth- ers	Under 1 yr.	1-69 yrs.		70 yrs. plus					
	N. W.	N. W.	N. W.	N. W.	N. W.	N. W.	N. W.	N. W.	N. W.	N. W.	N. W.	N. W.				
1909	12	41	2	3	2	1	9	36	1	2	4	22	7	17		
1910	10	34	3	1	1	2	2	3	4	28	3	4	5	13	2	17
1911	9	33	1	1	3	1	2	7	27	3	5	3	9	3	19	
1921	10	43	2		8	1	3	9	30	2	6	2	17	6	20	
1922	12	47	2		7	1	6	9	34	2	7	5	23	5	17	
1923	14	46	2	3	5	1	1	1	10	37	4	3	7	19	3	24

The percentage of total death furnished by the colored people, as compared with the percentage of population, is about as we should expect. In 1909 they furnished 22.6% of the deaths;

in 1910, 22.7% as against 18.3% of the population in 1910. In 1921 they furnished 19.1% of the deaths as against 15.7% of the population in 1920. (Using census figures.) In 1923 the colored deaths amounted to 23.3% of the total.

An analysis of the causes of death as shown by the records may be worth while. The high percentage of tuberculosis in the six years studied, among the negroes as compared with the whites, is noteworthy and in keeping with findings elsewhere. The negroes have furnished eight tubercular deaths as against the whites nine. This does not at all prove the greater prevalence of tuberculosis among the negroes. It may suggest a greater fatality rate among them, whether due to poorer medical attention or lower resistance to the disease. The period studied is too brief, however, to constitute final proof. The small percentage of cancer is again noticeable, the negroes showing four cancer deaths to the whites 27, or only 12.9% of the total number. The almost entire absence of syphilis (and all venereal disease) is possibly due to medical reticence or failure to diagnose, rather than to the complete moral cleanliness of the town. Or indeed specific infections might be present without being the direct cause of death. The records on the subject are patently unsatisfactory. Of the causes which I have listed as "others," the greatest single factor is heart disease in one form or another.

Heart Disease apparently causes more deaths in Oberlin than any other one disease, not excepting cancer. In some cases this may be due to a specific infection, but at our present stage of knowledge this is still a matter of medical rather than social interest. The distribution of it between the two races seems to be about according to the normal expectation.

A comparison of the age grouping shows the average number of deaths for the six years as follows:

Under 1 year.		1 - 69 years.		Over 70 years.	
Negro	White	Negro	White	Negro	White.
2.5	4.5	4.3	17.1	4.3	19

The high percentage of the colored infant mortality, as against the white, and the high percentage of deaths among whites over 70 years as against the negroes, are noteworthy. The better medical care of the whites and their tendency to come to Oberlin for old age retirement are both contributing factors. If the last factor were removed the percentage of negro deaths would be somewhat larger.

The birth rates for the same period are also interesting.

Table IV.

BIRTHS OBERLIN VILLAGE.

Years	Total		Legitimate				Illegitimate			
	N.	W.	Alive		Stillborn		Alive		Stillborn	
	N.	W.	N.	W.	N.	W.	N.	W.	N.	W.
1909	9	37	8	37			1			*
1910	11	41	9	40	1	1	1			
1911	17	32	15	32	1		1			
1921	20	53	18	51	1	2	1			
1922	28	40	27	38		2			1	
1923	20	39	17	38		1	1		2	

\*Two white stillborn infants found on N. Y. C. tracks may or may not have been of Oberlin parentage.

The percentage of negro births to the total number of births as compared to the population percentages is interesting. In 1909 negro births make up 19.8% of the total; in 1910, 21.1%; in 1911, 34/6%. In 1921 they made up 27.4% and in 1923, 33.5%. An average for the six years shows 17.5 colored births as against 40.3 others, or 30.2% of the average total. The apparent increase in the colored births may be due to an actual increase and may be due to improved registration. In either case the high percentage of negro births is apparent. Very evidently it is due not so much to large negro families as to small white families. The difference in social stratification between the two races in the village,

\*\*Variance of records of stillborn between births and deaths due to ambiguity of birth certificates.

(the white group on the whole is a middle class not a laboring group,) and again the numbers of elderly white persons must both enter into the consideration.

On the basis of the figures the vitality index, (birth divided by deaths multiplied by 100) for the negroes averages considerably higher than that for the whites.

Table V.

Year	VITALITY INDEX OBERLIN VILLAGE.	
	Negro	White
1909	75	90.2
1910	110	120.6
1911	188.8	96.9
1921	200	123.2
1922	233.3	85.1
1923	142.8	84.8
Average	158.3	100.1

Here again we note an apparent increase in the negro rate, due evidently to the apparent increase in their birth rate.

Oberlin, since 1921, has had the advantage of the Lorain County Public Health Service with an office in the Oberlin City Hall, a staff of one physician, one assistant, three registered nurses, one laboratory assistant and one full time office secretary. Their work has been largely examination and treatment of school children and the handling of contagious and infectious

disease. A summer time child welfare clinic, it is expected, will soon become continuous. The clinic in two sessions in the summer of 1924 handled 28 white infants and 8 colored. A clinic for the treatment of specific disease has been started and will eventually be considerably enlarged.

In addition for the past five years, the Oberlin District Nursing Association has supplied one registered visiting nurse, visits to be paid for at a nominal rate when the patient is able to do so.

The records of the visiting nurse show, as an example:

Cases Attended.

	Total	White	Colored
Dec. 1922,	37	17	18
Oct. 1924,	40	20	20

Nearly half of the cases handled are colored. Five in December of 1922 were maternity cases, two in October of 1924.

ECONOMIC STATE.

The economic state of the negroes in Oberlin is one of the vital factors in any consideration of the group or of the problems confronting it. A detailed study could well be made of it which might yield new and valuable information. For my purposes I have attempted to make an estimate of the economic resources of the group as a whole, in so far as definite figures were available for me, and to analyze to the best of my ability, without a complete house to house canvass, the factors contribut-



ing to it.

In the judgment of a number of informed persons, both white and colored, the great preponderance of investment by colored persons goes in Oberlin to the real estate field. The tendency to buy homes and to purchase land is constantly and increasingly evident. A careful analysis of real estate ownership in the village, therefore, is of first importance. No reassessments of property have been made since 1916, so that values must be based on assessments of that date. Nevertheless a careful correction of real estate ownership has brought the data to the present time.

The following figures indicate the situation:

Total Real Estate Assessments.	Amount Owned by Negroes.	% of Total Owned by Negroes.
\$4,220,200.00	\$257,445.00	6.1%.
Total Number of Private Owners.	Number of Negro Owners.	% of Total Owners.
989	180	18.2%

The number of negro owners compares very favorably with the proportions of the population. The value of the negro holdings is noticeably small. Two factors need consideration in that connection. In the first place the total of over four million dollars includes real estate owned by Oberlin College, exclusive of the public buildings, which amounts to \$343,000. That with property belonging to other public corporations makes a total of \$436,990, which, while it probably represents capital accumulated by white persons



is not exclusively local capital. A more accurate comparison, therefore, would exclude such properties, giving us a total of value \$3,783,210. That correction, however, raises the percentage of negro owned real estate only 7/10.0f 1%, or to 6.8%. The other factor is the tendency toward low assessment of negro property, or, more correctly, the lesser land values usually attendant upon negro ownership in every community.

It may be interesting to note in this connection a comparison with the findings of H. L. Rawdon, who made a study along similar lines in 1914. Mr. Rawdon, by an analysis of the tax records for the year 1913, found 5.3% of the real estate negro owned. Whether the difference indicates a variation in the work of the two studies or an actual increase in negro real estate ownership between 1914 and 1924 is a question. The last is a possibility, though unproven without further data. Mr. Rawdon's findings on the ownership of personal property other than real estate are also worth noting. Of all personal property assessed in Oberlin in 1913, amounting to \$1,523,415, only .7% belonged to colored persons, a statement which corroborates the opinion that the colored people of Oberlin tend toward the purchase of real estate in preference to other types of investment.

The records of the Oberlin Banks show similar conditions.

In the Oberlin Savings Bank:

In the Savings Department,

6.3% of total number of accounts are for colored people.

7.2% of money on deposit is owned by colored people.

In the Commercial Department,

3.2% of total number of accounts are for colored people.

1.1% of money on deposit is that of colored accounts.

But of 160 stock holders of the bank only 2 are colored.

The Peoples' Bank shows a slightly larger percentage.

In the Savings Department:

7% of total number of accounts are for colored people.

9% of money on deposit is owned by colored people.

Four or five good sized accounts here bring up the average.

No definite figures were conveniently available for the checking accounts, but the percentage was lower in the opinion of the bank officials.

In all such comparison it is essential that one bear in mind the so-called class difference between the mass of the colored and the mass of the white people in Oberlin. None of the comparisons made is a comparison at all of racial differences. The whites of Oberlin, by the nature of the town, are a middle class, fairly prosperous though not at all wealthy group. The negroes of Oberlin on the whole make up the most of the laboring

group. There are white working men and women in Oberlin, but the opportunities and incentives are too small to hold many of them. The negroes, on the other hand, perhaps because of lesser opportunity elsewhere, persist in the village in spite of the limited economic advantage. In the opinion of a number of business men in the town, who are in a position to know, the savings of the colored people in Oberlin, in proportion to the economic condition, compare very favorably with any other group in town. Two men are listed as having accumulated between \$15,000 - \$20,000. Another is rated as worth over \$5,000. From a half dozen to a dozen are listed as having savings around \$2,500; a considerably larger number as having up to \$1,000.

A complete canvass of the jobs of the colored people in Oberlin would be invaluable, but that has not been possible for me in this study. A general review of the situation is an inadequate substitute but must serve the purpose.

In independent business there are among the colored people two high grade contractors and builders; one proprietor of a papering and painting establishment, who indeed has the only such establishment in town, and carries the majority of the town's interior work, except such as comes from outside sources or individual workmen; two or three small grocers; one proprietor of a new but growing bakery; one of a thoroughly up to date shoe repairing establishment, and a few small shop-

keepers. One colored physician, and two colored ministers (college and seminary trained men usually) make up the professional group.

Of high grade mechanics, brick layers, carpenters and plasterers, there is a considerable number. There are one or two plumbers and two or three barbers. According to the testimony of several well-informed colored men, the tendency is apparent for white men to replace these. The younger negroes are not going into these high grade artizan places.

About twenty-one colored men are regularly employees of the college. One is an expert carpenter and contractor; one is foreman of all general "campus" work; six are skilled workmen such as plumbers, painters or masons; thirteen are firemen, janitors and campus laborers. About twenty-five extra men are taken on during the vacation months in preparation for the ensuing term, of whom ten to fifteen are usually negroes. The wages vary from \$60 a month and board to \$1.02½ per hour; which last averages about \$200 a month. The modal wage is \$90 per month. Sixteen of the men are employed for twelve months; two for ten months and three for from three to five months. There is no other industry in Oberlin which compares with the college in the numbers of its employees. The Public Schools, Kindergarten Training School and Business College regularly employ colored men in similar

capacities, using something over half a dozen men between them. There are forty private, college and kindergarten dormitories which to a large extent employ negroes as do the two hotels, two bakeries and several of the restaurants.

A very considerable number commute daily by train or car to Elyria and Cleveland for employment. An appreciable number drive their Fords to the Amherst Quarries. The remainder do trucking, gardening, ditching and odd jobs when they are available. For this uncertain remainder I should especially like definite data. Public opinion represents it as a large group.

The unemployment situation, partly because of this last class, partly because of the seasonal nature of most of the type of work Oberlin uses, is usually acute during the winter months. The estimate of at least five informants of both races is that the average laborer in the town is out of work approximately three months. The current wage rate in the town for the less skilled workmen is 40 to 45 cents an hour, which for a forty-five hour week, forty week year would yield an annual income at best of \$720 to \$810. The very large group doing odd jobs averages considerably lower.

Like many suburban towns, Oberlin has place for women workers rather more, or at least as much as men. It is not possible to estimate accurately the numbers of colored

women who work by the day, some regularly, some part time. The combination of low earnings by the men together with the opportunity at hand for the women, brings about a fairly large proportion of women earning. The larger part of the domestic service in the town is furnished by them.

Under such conditions it is hardly surprising that 18% of the landowners in town own only  $6\frac{1}{2}\%$  of the property. It is perhaps rather more so that less than 20% of the population furnish 18% of the number of land owners.

#### THE HOME.

The physical aspects of the homes of the people, I have touched upon in my discussion of housing. There is another aspect, the social and moral, which is essential to any discussion of this kind, although statistics may not be obtainable upon which to base conclusions.

It has been my observation in the south that the better class of negro homes exhibit a comparatively high type of family life, with a unity, cohesion and bond of affection which is not easily out done. If there is any foundation in the notion of an inherent emotionalism in the negro race - and it is not the purpose of this paper to discuss racial characteristics - it may perhaps show itself at its best in

the home life of the educated negro. Parental sacrifice and ambition for the children, lasting affection and close bonds between parents and children and between brothers and sisters, are not peculiar to any race. They are, however, evidence of vigorous moral stamina and probable progress. The best of the homes of the colored people in Oberlin seem to me to exhibit this characteristic. There are parents who are making every effort and sacrifice to give their children education and opportunity. There are children who steadily, year by year, go out to swell the number of trained and able men and women, leaders of their race and their communities. Some of these homes encourage the best in the cultural arts; and some of them, lacking these, supply the need as best they can with a vigorous ambition and industry. These are the few perhaps rather than the many. The larger number are apparently well meaning but rather easily satisfied and discouragingly contented. A rather considerable element evince a distinct mental and moral degeneration, some with criminal tendencies, some with dull stolid incompetence that suggests mental deficiency.

The children, as would be expected in most cases, reflect the personality of the parents and the atmosphere of the home. While Oberlin homes, therefore, have trained and apparently still are training some of the leaders of the negro race, other Oberlin homes to a rather alarming degree are training moral degenerates and social incompetents.



Unfortunately for the community, it is the latter which the town encourages to remain to build new homes. For the brilliant young negro Oberlin has little opportunity. In business it might offer some, but Oberlin does not train them for business. Oberlin trains largely for the professions. For the lazy and the vicious, the town offers a combination of tolerance and neglect which both fosters their growth and allows them to serve as a perpetual drag upon the community.

The great majority of the colored homes in Oberlin come under neither category. Economically poor, but on the whole industrious, in so far as they can see chance for industry before them, affectionate, but lacking in incentive and ambition, they form a great middle group which, if it progresses at all, progresses slowly. Majority opinion indicates that there is a distinct improvement from decade to decade. The improvement in the physical appearance of the homes mentioned earlier is some thing of an index.

Unfortunately, the considerable number of colored women who must go out to work by the day, necessarily curtailing the care and supervision given their homes and children to that extent, must be reckoned as an appreciable factor in the development of the colored homes in Oberlin. The schools and the very excellent system of free kindergartens managed by the Kindergarten Training School partially compensate for the



mother's absence, but no influence outside the home can supply the children's need adequately.

#### EDUCATION.

One of the primary factors in the advancement of any people is the education of the young people. Education is Oberlin's specialty, its one industry. The influence of the educational opportunities upon the people of the town, therefore, is a large element, and in this the colored people share. The numbers of young negroes who attend and complete the courses in the numerous institutions as compared with the numbers of young native whites is small. But the numbers of young negroes who continue their education beyond the elementary schools is undoubtedly larger than among similar economic classes in an educationally less favorable environment.

Mr. Rawdon in 1914 made an interesting study of the colored child in the Oberlin Public Schools. Some of his findings will bear repetition well in this connection.

Table VI. is taken from his report.

Table VI.

Percentage White and Colored Children, Oberlin Public Schools.  
Years 1905 - 1913

Grade	White	Colored	Total
1 - 4	72.6	27.4	100
5 - 8	78.2	21.8	100
H. S.	89.7	10.3	100
Average	79.6	20.4	100

A comparison of the percentages shown by colored and white pupils shows a distinct falling off by the colored children as the grades advance, with a sharp decline for the High School. Of 229 pupils graduated from the High School in the years 1908 - 1913, 18, or 7.8% were colored.

Later figures show a decided improvement in the persistency in school. Records for the year 1923 show the following:

Table VII.

Numbers and Percentage White and Colored Children, Oberlin Public School - Year 1923.

Grade	Number			Percentage.		
	White	Colored	Total	White	Colored	Total.
1 - 4	283	89	372	76.1	23.9	100
5 - 8	249	79	328	75.7	24.3	100
H. S.	274	50	324	84.6	15.4	100
Total	806	218	1024	Average 78.8	21.2	100

On the work of the pupils in the school Mr. Rawdon gives the following:

Table VIII.

	Percent Retardation.		Percent Ahead of Grade.	
	Colored	White	Colored	White.
1905	70%	45%	3.5%	7.3%
1914	62%	46%	3 %	6 %

No percentages have been worked out since 1914, but there is little reason to suppose them very different. The poorer showing of the colored as against the white pupils Mr. Rawdon lays to the economic and social conditions of the home, these leading to tardiness, absence from school, and general lack of incentive to success. A fairer comparison, of course, would be between similar economic and social classes whatever the race, but that has not been available in Oberlin as yet.

No records of truancy among Oberlin school children are available. The percentage of days absent during the years 1905 - 1913 shows 4.1% for white children, 6.1% for colored, nearly 50% more for the colored than for the white children. Of this 4% more is for colored boys than for colored girls, whereas among the white children the reverse is the case. \* Whether the percentage of absence among colored boys is due to work or to truancy can not be determined.

\*Rawdon. The Colored Child Oberlin Public Schools.

In the college prior to 1900 approximately 5% of the students were colored. Since 1910 -- and the Academy has been given up during the last decade -- the proportions have been decreasing.

Table IX.

Percentage White & Colored Students, Oberlin College.  
1900 - 1924.

	White %	Colored %	Total
1900	96.34	3.66	100
1910	95.60	4.40	100
1920	97.58	2.42	100
1924	97.35	2.65	100

In 1924, 51 colored students were in attendance. 16 in the college, 6 in the Theological school, 24 in the Conservatory, 1 in the Summer School, 4 unclassified. A very small proportion came from the town of Oberlin.

The records of the colored graduates of Oberlin College throws a rather interesting light on this small percent. however. Of the 213 negroes who in June 1924 had graduated from Oberlin, 28 are listed as exceptionally able or brilliant, a proportion of 13.1%. Eighteen others are listed as noteworthy in some profession. Of the 28, eight were either born in Oberlin or very early removed here. Three others are members of one family, (father and two sons,) which received its impetus in part from early Oberlin training. Of the 28, eleven

are or have been national figures, of whom three were born and reared, or reared in Oberlin. Eight of the twenty-eight, of whom two are Oberlin products, are still too young to have proven their power.

The numbers of colored graduates shown by the Kindergarten Training School are likewise interesting. Of 711 graduates in 29 years, six were colored, or .842%. Of these five, .703% were Oberlin girls.

Not by any means, however, do all the colored Oberlin students taking advanced training do so at Oberlin. It is the opinion of the High School authorities that a very fair proportion of the colored High School graduates do take further training of some kind.

One other educational project needs to be mentioned--the Oberlin Night School. The Night School, initiated and operated, with the assistance of a Board composed of both negroes and whites, by one or two colored leaders is an interesting and rather unique institution. In the days of the early migrations Oberlin had a night school where the ex-slaves were taught the rudiments of an education, largely by white friends. In 1921 the similar need of numbers of vigorous young negroes, newly migrated from the South where schooling was either insufficient or not compulsory, fired one young colored man to begin evening classes for elementary education. With the help of the school superintendent and interested friends of both races

the school has grown to its present proportions. Twice a week it holds its sessions from 7:30 to 9 o'clock. Its curriculum educationally is a peculiar mixture, but it seems to be filling a need, and it is to be hoped it may expand. Classes in elementary arithmetic, reading, writing and spelling, taught by college students, in accounting taught by a business college student, <sup>in</sup> Bible and sewing are offered and draw a fairly regular attendance. With an enrollment of 144 in the year 1924-1925, the attendance during the Fall Term averaged 62. It apparently drops a little each spring, but not greatly, and each Fall term since 1921 has seen an increase. Financially it is, at present, supported by the Community Chest with a contribution of from \$600 to \$800.

It is interesting to notice that comparatively few recent migrants are now attendant upon the school, <sup>is</sup> It/ rendering service to the community, nevertheless, by giving the opportunity for elementary education to numbers of residents of from ten to twenty years standing who missed it in their youth. An appreciable reduction of the illiteracy among the older colored people has resulted.

The extra-curriculum educational forces might perhaps better be discussed under Recreation, and although some of them are educational in their aims and programs will be taken up as

RELIGION.

Religion is commonly supposed a large element in negro life, the proclivity to it almost a racial characteristic. In Oberlin the negroes show approximately the same religious proportions as the whites. Two religious censuses have been taken in Oberlin, in 1907 and again in 1921 by Theological students under the direction of Mr. Fiske. The report of 1907 showed two colored churches, the Rust Methodist Episcopal and the Mt. Zion Baptist, with memberships of 93 and 109 respectively. The report of 1921 shows five denominations or sects with a total membership of 256. The following table is taken from Mr. Fiske's report.

Table X.

Negro Churches - Congregations and Members -  
May, 1921.\*

Church Denominations.	Local Members Reporting.	Others Reporting Preference.	Total Parish.	Members Out-of-town: Churches.	: Members Reporting : 1907.	Total Parish 1907.
Totals	256	287	643	31	: 202	388
Mt. Zion Baptist	167	158	325	22	: 109	219
Rust M. E.	131	87	218	7	: 93	169
Christian Alliance	29	33	62	1	: 0	0
Episcopal Mission	20	8	28	0	: 0	0
Anti-Costal Mission	9	1	10	0	: 0	0

\* Fiske's Religious Census of Oberlin Community, page 4.

The increase between 1907 and 1921 is apparent.

Mr. Fiske's report stresses the increase in Negro population as the chief cause, but the 1920 Census, of course, show no such increased population. Rather smaller numbers are claimed by the two large churches at the present time, Mt. Zion stating 125 as its membership, Rust Methodist Episcopal claiming approximately 150.

Both of the leading churches are housed in a fairly adequate up-to-date manner. Both are free of debt at the present time. The present Mt. Zion Church was dedicated in 1905, built at a cost of \$5,000. \$500. of which was given by the Baptist Convention, the balance raised in the town of Oberlin. The work of building was donated by the members. The present building of the Rust Methodist Church was erected five years ago at a total cost of \$10,000. Of this \$2,000 came from one bequest, \$2,000 from the Methodist Conference. approximately \$4,000 from Oberlin Whites and \$2,000 from Oberlin Negroes. Both churches have a fairly long history. The Rust Methodist was founded about 1866 with a membership of about fifteen, its first building erected a few years later. The Mt. Zion Baptist was founded in 1886 with a membership of ten or twelve. The site of its present building was purchased in 1891, but largely because of the panic of 1893 no building was erected until 1904. Both churches have been hindered by short and uncertain pastors, some of which have been able, some less satisfactory. At the present time the Rust Church pastor has been here just



twelve months, the Mt. Zion congregation has recently called a new man to begin work June 1st. The average term of pastoral service has been less than three years.

Both churches claim thriving Sunday Schools and several adult organizations. The Mt. Zion Church lists a Ladies' Missionary Society, a Men's Bible Class, a Women's Bible Class and the Phyllis Wheatley Auxiliary of young married women, in addition to the Young People's Baptist Union. A thriving little church choir should be included in the list. Of these the Men's Bible Class is particularly noteworthy. No longer peculiarly a sectarian organization, it has grown into the "Men's Bible Class and Civic Club" with a membership of 45, including <sup>increasingly</sup> men from other churches, a vigorous program and a large attendance. This is the group which made the census survey in 1924 quoted above. In July of 1924 it raised \$292.95 among the colored people of Oberlin for the Lorain Disaster Relief Fund, not a large amount as such funds go, but a considerable donation from this group for an outside charity. It has, on its own initiative, sent representatives to meet with members of the Oberlin Exchange Club, a meeting which has been repeatedly quoted by members of both races as intensely interesting and charged with potential results. Little seems to have come from the meeting as yet, except a livelier interest in and respect for the colored men concerned on the part of the attending whites. In present and potential leadership, the group is exceptionally vigorous and interesting.

The Rust Methodist Church shows a similar group of organizations, The Men's Brotherhood, a Ladies' Aid Society and a Temple Aid Society, the latter especially interested in raising money for the pastor's salary, the Foreign and Home Missionary Societies, the latter with a group of young girls, the Queen Esther Circle, and a group of children, organized as auxiliaries with it, A group of young married women, "The Independents" and the usual Epworth League or Young Peoples' Society complete the list. One organization, "The Forum," is a vigorous, thriving body made up largely of young people, many of them students, a religious but non-sectarian group meeting on Sunday evenings in one or the other of the churches.

The three small sects have no building to house their organizations at present. Two of them at least meet regularly in quarters rented or loaned for the purpose. On the third I have been able to get no information. There appears to be little sympathy between these sects and the two large churches, or between the small sects themselves. Each conducts services according to the tastes of its members, and evinces a certain self-righteous contempt for the others. In this they, of course, follow the example of small communities of every race, where an evident narrowness of interests and contacts precludes a tolerant cooperation and unity even where differences of taste and belief exist.

Between the two larger churches there has always been

a degree of rivalry which, while it apparently has led to activity in some instances, in others has not been advantageous for the community. A growing sense of the need and desirability of friendly cooperation at all times manifests itself however at present.

In addition to the colored churches, there is a very small scattering of colored people in the white churches, particularly the Congregational. Most of these were members of the old First Church before the Uniting of the First and Second Congregational Churches. Practically all of them state a growing dissatisfaction with their present church life. They are no longer "at home" with the result that they find little church activity or religious satisfaction in the community.

The paramount lack in the church life of the Oberlin Negroes seems to be a developed leadership among the lay members. Some of the churches complain of this more than others. One expresses a fair degree of satisfaction in its activities. If the numbers of its leaders are comparatively limited-- and they are at present in most churches-- they compensate somewhat in the activity of the few and they show a wholesome sprinkling among the different age and sex groups. The general dearth of leaders and the consequent burdening of the few is nevertheless striking.

### RECREATION.

Like most churches of the present day, much of the church life of the members enters into the Recreational Field. For a particular group at least, the Bible Classes, Missionary and Aid Societies of the various kinds fill a large part of their leisure time. In addition to their regular programs, occasional socials, Fathers and Sons and Mothers and Daughters Banquets serve a true recreational purpose. The colored churches are joined with the white in a Religious Education Committee which includes Girls Work and a Boys Work Committee which is working on the Recreational Problem for the children and young people of both races. The Mothers and Daughters and Fathers and Sons Banquets and an effort at a scout program have been the main features of their general program to date.

Religious organizations, however, reach a comparatively small number. About one-half of the membership of the most active of the churches is counted as an active membership. The majority of the people, therefore, must find what recreation they have outside the church circles, however much or little the church influence extends beyond its doors.

A survey of the non-religious recreational facilities is less encouraging. One woman's club, The Progressive Woman's Club, founded in 1905 and federated in 1906 with the National Colored Women's Clubs has a membership of from 25 to 30 women; conducts regular bimonthly meetings with a program which in-

cludes generally informing, cultural and practical pursuits and is a considerable factor in the lives of its members. These women appear to have not only a personal interest but a sense of citizenship and community responsibility which bodes well for the whole group. They are for the most part the church women, however, many of them the leaders of their church affairs. The very size of the club in comparison with the number of colored women in Oberlin is indicative of the limitations upon it as a considerable recreative factor.

A portion of the general dearth the lodges fill. The Masons, Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias and Elks with their sister organizations seem all to have their coteries, though not all of them are equally active. On the whole they appear to show little activity outside their regular meetings.

For the largest number still we find little recreational opportunity. Two moving picture houses with nightly shows and two matinees a week draw largely. Two billiards and pool rooms attract a limited number, But commercialized amusements have their drawbacks for the majority; there is always the price of admission, and many of them do not have it with any regularity. The appearance of the four corners at the center of town is ample evidence of this state. At almost any hour of the day, two or three loafers may be seen standing for long periods of time. During the early evening when the weather is fine the numbers increase from ten to twelve. One beautiful evening I walked between a double row of eighteen men, the ma-

joy of them negroes. They vary the entertainment by changing their corner. Among the more enterprising persons, a certain amount of visiting back and forth, in some cases card playing and friendly gatherings, partially fill the need.

The lack for the children and young people is more serious than for the adults. The churches, as I have said, reach a part of them. Various Boy's Clubs, usually in connection with the churches, have at one time or another in the past sprung up, lived short lives, and died again. The Spartan Club a few years ago, made up of young colored boys from the two churches, took the athletic championship from the George Wood Clubs--athletic clubs of white boys in the town of long standing and enviable records. At the present time an effort is under way to establish Boy Scout troops for both white and colored boys in the town. The Queen Esther Circle of the Rust Methodist Church includes a few girls of from 15 to 18 years and is in part recreational.

A few of the young people take part in the activities in the High School-- the athletics, the orchestra and glee club. Where they have qualified and entered these organizations they seem to have made good records. One group of girls at the present time is studying to give a play "The Ladies of Cranford" under the direction of the night school. While the project is counted as educational and undoubtedly is so, it has a true recreational value. Formerly a thriving class of boys of High School age attended the night school dividing their time between the study of civics and a basket ball team. A decision



that the young men would learn civics in the regular day classes and that it was not the function of the Night School to furnish recreation closed the school and gymnasium to them.

One well located though not ideally equipped play ground, through private philanthropic enterprize, did good service with a half-time supervised program during the summer months for two or three years. A year ago the private management left it for public administration and financing, inasmuch as a new public play ground had been made available, with the result that no program at all was carried through in the summer of 1924.

At the present time Roller Skating seems to be the chief diversion open to the young people of all ages from six to twenty. At the rate at which they indulge in it, a town ordinance may possibly soon forbid them the walks, or at least regulate their traffic.

#### DOUGLASS CHOIR.

One more organization, the "Douglass Memorial Choir", deserves mention. Whether it be counted as recreation, education, or a part of the intellectual life of the people. It is all of these, and a unique and interesting example. The Douglass Memorial Choir was started four years ago by Mr. Donald Morrison of the Conservatory Faculty, a white man but one well acquainted with and deeply appreciative of the Negro Folk Music. For three years it has been training a body of Oberlin Negroes to sing that music, an art which was rapidly being lost among them. The



choir has now given three annual concerts of very real interest and great value to even so musically developed a community as is Oberlin. The membership includes from 60 to 75 men and women, including both students and townspeople, with the latter in the majority. Its meetings are held weekly during the school year, its concerts given in the spring.

#### INTELLECTUAL LIFE.

The intellectual life of the people as a whole I have already touched upon under various heads. It finds its expression largely through the educational, religious and recreational life. Such organizations as the Men's Bible Class and Civic Club, the Women's Progressive Club and the Douglass Choir serve both as outlet and stimulus for the mental activity of their members.

A few years ago a local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People seemed to be leading an active life. One rather notable convention of the organization was held here. At present no activity is evident.

Outside of these clubs, in the private and home life of the individuals, rests the most telling evidence, however, an evidence which is difficult sometimes to collect. The books read, the interests pursued, the conversations resulting, the lectures, concerts and meetings attended would tell the story.

The reports of the Public Library may serve as something of a guide. These seem fairly encouraging, often very

interesting. The books drawn out by negroes average well apparently with those drawn by whites. Every type from the most sentimental novel to discussions on Sociological and racial questions are included. Books of travel and bibliography are prominent. Comparatively few books of a technical nature are drawn by any except students, but that is undoubtedly true for most of our library-using American Publics. Without doubt the number of negroes using the library in Oberlin is in proportion to the population considerably smaller than the number of whites. There again the class rather than the racial differentiation must be considered. The educated negro in Oberlin reads on the average probably as much as the educated white. There are cases where he decidedly outstrips the average white. A certain self-conscious urge to self and race improvement is always evident. Even considerably less educated negroes in Oberlin will be found repeatedly striving to read to the limit of their comprehension. Whether one calls it presumption or idealism is possibly a matter of prejudice or taste.

For the largest number, however, the library remains much as it was founded, outside their daily walk. The present persistent use by the Public Schools should do something to habituate the pupils to it whatever their economic status.

Another interesting index is found in the increasing use of the Negro Periodicals. A few years ago comparatively few of the Oberlin colored people were habitual readers of

their own journals. Today a considerable number subscribe for or purchase these papers. A small barber shop carries a fair supply of them.

As to lectures, any lecture of a popular nature will draw a fair proportion of colored people. Those of a technical nature, whether on art or anthropology will attract a very few, sometimes two or three. In part this may be due to diffidence in attending the small gathering made up largely of whites. In the majority of cases it is undoubtedly a matter of education and interests.

Concerts, on the whole, are better attended than lectures. Music is often an easier language than speech, and one with a more universal appeal. Whatever one's stand on racial characteristics the negroes of Oberlin evince a rather considerable musical interest. When the negro tenor, Roland Hays, sang in Oberlin, large numbers of the colored people came to hear and support his performance. When the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra plays the colored attendance is naturally much less.

In the colored homes I have visited, including representatives of all classes, about three-fourths exhibit a musical instrument of one kind or another, often a piano when the other conveniences evidenced do not at all warrant it. Ordinarily only the poorest are without any musical facilities. The music played is often that of the best masters. *J* Books and magazines make a much smaller showing, but these are often present. The

economic status apparently correlates with this. Where there is no margin of living, there are no books. As the margin increases ordinarily the books, papers and magazines increase. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule.

### MORALITY.

The question of morality is a difficult one always. Morality, for my purposes here, I shall define as that conduct which is in agreement with the social interests and customs of the community. Whatever conduct is conducive to social disintegration or illness is immoral. Statistics of any real value, except under extraordinary circumstances, are impossible to obtain. Practically our only data on the subject is that obtainable from records of criminality. Table XI. shows an analysis of the criminal docket of the Negroe's Court for three representative years.

Table XI.

Criminal Cases, Mayor's Court, Oberlin.

	1924			1916			1907		
	Total	Negro	White	Total	Negro	White	Total	Negro	White
Totals	103	45	58	76	25	51	62	31	31
Traffic									
Violations	52	7	45	22	3	19	9	0	9
*Disorderliness	13	10	3	6	5	1	3	3	0
Intoxication	14	10	4	22	11	11	12	10	2
Selling In-									
toxicants	8	5	3	4	1	3	10	2	3
Disturbing									
Peace	2	1	1	4	1	3	17	10	7
Grand Larceny	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Petit Larceny	4	4	0	2	0	2	4	4	0
Others	6	4	2	15	4	11	7	2	5

\* Disorderliness includes sex immorality and gambling.

Of the 103 cases before the Mayor during the year 1924, 52 were for traffic violations of which 45 were committed by whites and 7 by negroes. Of the 51 other varieties 34 were committed by negroes, the largest numbers being for disorderliness and intoxication. An average for the three years shows 53% of the other than traffic violations committed by negroes; 20% of the offenses for disorderliness, and 34% for intoxication. A study of the records reveals the same person hailed before the court time after time, year after year. The penalty imposed is usually a small fine and discharge. In two cases this year houses for commercial vice have been raided and broken up. A comparison of the year 1924 with previous years shows a considerably more active court than heretofore, but the increase is largely in the interests of traffic regulation. 51 cases for other varieties of criminality in 1924 compare with 54 similar cases in 1916 and 53 in 1907. Increased attention to the more serious forms, however, seem apparent.

Could one be certain that this represented all or the greater part of the crime in Oberlin, one would perhaps feel little alarm. If certain inveterate offenders could be handled in a socially adequate way the balance would be comparatively small.

No estimate of any other than the officially recorded

crime is possible. No definite information seems available. Reports from both races consistently verify it as existing. Bootlegging, gambling and vice are the usual charges. No one claims that the uncaught lawlessness is limited to the colored people. That it all concerns them, however, in that it is promulgated in the district where the most of them live, in the midst of their homes and churches, is the factor vital to the health and stamina of the negro group. As one negro leader put it "How can we expect the boys and young men to come to<sup>a</sup> church social when in a house less than a block away there is rampant vice to pique their curiosity and lure them at least to the windows and back yard."

One white official seems definitely to have been involved during the last year. That he was discharged when suspected seems equally true, but considerably less popularly known. Years of doubt of the good intention and capability of the law combine with a public indifference to stultify both individual and official remedial action.

How much the reports I have here voiced are exaggerated and false I have no means of knowing. The universality of opinion on the subject is, however, rather striking. As if to verify it, within the last month one young negro has been shot and killed over a game of cards. The evidences of gambling and drinking were absolute. As yet the man who shot has not been brought to justice or even apprehended.

Of the sex-immorality and looseness of relations between young people, our only index is the birth record,\* and that is manifestly inadequate. During the six years studied eight illegitimate negro births were recorded, out of a total of 105, a percentage of 7.6. Five of the infants were reported as living. One of the unmarried mothers was listed as a student from out-of-town, one as a high school student. Two of the infants, different mothers, were recorded as having the same father.

That three illegitimate births are recorded in 1923 as against one in any other of the five years studied may betoken increased moral laxness, and may be the result of more rigid law enforcement of birth registration.

Of juvenile crime; all such cases in Oberlin are handled by the juvenile court of Elyria. It means no expert primarily interested in the problems of juvenile delinquency resident in Oberlin. Within the last two years, eleven cases from Oberlin have been handled by the Elyria Court. Of these, five were various types of dependents, all whites; five were delinquent boys from the ages of 12 - 14 years charged with truancy and petty thieving. All were colored; all were sent to the Lancaster Industrial School. The eleventh was a seventeen year old boy who climbed through a window to see a basket game.

So much for the criminality and lawlessness. Public opinion would indicate that there is either a fairly large or a very active criminal element in the town, a considerable portion of which is colored. Without doubt, public opinion exaggerates

\*See Table III.



gerates the actual case somewhat. Nevertheless the situation in a town of the type and character of Oberlin, would seem to call for public attention and action.

Whatever the facts regarding active immorality and lawlessness, there is no evidence that it is shared by the great mass of the colored residents more than by the white. The general honesty, reliability and acceptable moral code of the majority of the people is unquestioned by the best informed and most balanced judges of the situation. A growing discontent with the opportunities available for them- on the whole a sign of moral vigor in any people- a growing sense of personal responsibility both for their individual welfare and that of the social group are manifest.

#### SUMMARY.

A brief resume of the main facts brought out in the study may bring them together in more concrete fashion. The negroes of Oberlin we find to approximate a fifth part of the population, a proportion which from decade to decade remains fairly constant. There is little evidence to show any considerable permanent increase from the recent migratory movements of southern negroes northward.

We find then for the most part living in one general section of the town forming thereby an integral community within the larger community comprising the town. Their homes

vary greatly but the majority are increasingly adequate in both facilities and care. A considerable minority are unquestionably below the standards of physical health and decency for this or any section of the country. The surprising lack of decent sanitation within the town limits possible under the present system of installation of public utilities is a matter of public concern which threatens the health of the entire community.

In health and vitality the group compares very favorably with the whites of the town. The Lorain County Public Health Service reorganized in 1920 and now offering full time service, and a District Nurse, employed by private philanthropy in the village, are cooperating with the physicians in health service, a very fair portion of which goes to the economically less able group of whom the colored people form a large section.

The inadequacy of jobs available has kept the negro group for the most part with little margin above a living wage. Without sufficient opportunity for work and without consequent incentive to advancement, the majority of the people, in contrast to the few successful, have maintained a nearly static economic condition, keeping no more than apace with the increased cost of living.

Educationally the group compares favorably with other groups of its economic and social status. A tendency, nevertheless, to leave school inadequately prepared indicates either a failure on the part of the educational institutions to furnish the kind of training desired, or a failure on the part of the young people and their parents to appreciate the value of the training available. An appreciable increase in persistency in school is apparent, however, within the last ten years.

The statistics of church membership and prosperity indicates a similarly favorable comparison with other communities, approximately 60% of the adults claiming a church membership, and both the larger churches showing financial solvency. In spite of the data, a limited, active, developed and willing leadership cripples the work of some of the churches. A rather small but increasingly active and able group is a most encouraging exception to the rule, and if its leadership and enterprise can continue and increase, promises a happier future.

With a few rather notable exceptions the recreational facilities for both adults and children are totally inadequate. The exceptions, such as the work of one of the churches-- and with recreation I am classing practically the whole leisure time program-- one or two clubs and the Douglass Choir are worthy of careful note. There remains a very considerable element apparently whom these programs do not touch. Most especially do the children and young people suffer from the lack of wholesome recreation.

Intellectually and culturally the group varies quite as much as do the whites, including both intelligent, well-bred college graduates and others apparently morally and mentally degenerate, leading little better than an animal existence. The majority class between the two extremes evidencing an attempt at self-improvement, usually in correlation with their economic status.

The morality of the group, resting as it does largely on the economic and social opportunities available to the individuals, like the intellectual and cultural life varies. The majority are morally sound and socially adequate. An active minority taking advantage of the lack of social pressure and organization forced upon them exert a stultifying influence on the group and are a menace to the community.

#### RELATION TO COMMUNITY.

A word needs to be said regarding the relationship between the negro group and the town. Forming, as the colored people do, a small community within the community, that relationship is vital both to their own welfare and that of the town. The old Oberlin, democratic, without caste or prejudice, presented a unified front back of which all its members faced together. The unquestionable increase of caste in America, the constant northward-drifting race-prejudice have brought about

a change it is no longer possible to ignore even in Oberlin, however much or little we decry it. Constant contacts between all people regardless of race or class have their vigorous and wholesome influence on all the persons concerned. Under such circumstances one group may safely rely for leadership upon another more fortunate in resources and opportunity. Something of the kind evidently took place in the old Oberlin. The negroes accustomed, as they were, to white tutelage, assured by actual experience in the town of the unfailing and friendly help of the whites here, put their faith in that guidance, sometimes responding to it, sometimes resting upon it as their individual make-up dictated.

The new Oberlin for all its traditions and idealism, seems to me increasingly to be shifting off any sense of responsibility toward the colored group within its borders. Men, whose fathers and predecessors spent their evenings teaching the illiterate black, are wearying of the work and turning away indifferent or hostile. The result is a constant withdrawal or a flinging back of the negro to his own group and his own devices. Much of this is class not racial hostility. Its effect upon the less able group in either case must be the same. Not all the whites nor all the colored in Oberlin share in this separation of contacts or interests. The tendency, however, is apparent among many. Admittedly not every one will agree with that statement. The evidence I have found has, most of it, pointed that way.

A sense of personal responsibility for the success or failure of the individual and group, and a determination to be an integral part of the town as a member of that group would seem to be the reaction on the part of the more intelligent and far-sighted of the colored people. To claim such a spirit as yet prevalent among the many would be considerably to exceed the facts. If that spirit where it does exist becomes on occasions a desire for recognition, rather than a desire for attainment, the failing is a human not a racial characteristic.

A study of this kind, I suppose, fails of completion if it offers no suggestions for improving the social situation as it exists. I have contended at the outset that the mere gathering of the facts, in so far as my limitations permitted, and the placing of them in relation to one another is justification for the work. Moreover, I have not counted myself as yet expert enough to advise at any length as to the Social Process essential to any Social Betterment. A few factors, however, stand out particularly among the others as controlling influences, and these I feel justified in discussing.

The Economic Inadequacy of Oberlin to supply the needs of the number of people resident in the town is most apparent. The "Making of Men" through Educational Institutions offers little opportunity to the laboring group. In the days when the



town was building such labor was essential. In a town as nearly static for forty years as the Oberlin population indicates, the opportunity drops to a minimum. That the condition is the result of a deliberate policy on the part of the college officials and many townspeople I understand perfectly. But, I venture to suggest that the policy from the view point of the negro community eventually may prove disastrous for the town, and consequently of doubtful consequence for the college. If the population showed signs of diminishing one might wait for adjustment between it and the relatively decreasing opportunity. But as yet no evidence of such a course is apparent.

In many phases of social opportunity, Oberlin has genuinely offered its best, and to a large extent is still doing so. The schools have sincerely attempted to make no discrimination because of color. There are individual cases of failure to hold to their standard, but for the most part the policies hold and with a fair degree of success. The churches for all the apparent and increasing separation have maintained a spirit of cooperation which is in strong contrast to the spirit of hostility or neglect among the churches of many communities both North and South. The separation of churches seems quite as much the will of one race as the other, and the Ministerial Association and various inter-church committees include all the churches working together with apparent harmony.



In spite of this, the question arises as to whether all the social opportunity in the world - essential as it is - will suffice for any people when economic sufficiency is lacking. It is a question for the most serious study, upon which mere opinion can throw little real light. The situation among the negroes of Oberlin, in spite of certain brilliant and outstanding successes, the majority of whom necessarily seek their opportunity elsewhere, would indicate a negative answer. Progress in Oberlin is apparent without very careful study, but progress too slow for the best interests of everyone concerned, and considerably below the best standards of the race in other places.

For the better adjustment of the people to the economic opportunity available, at least one suggestion has been before the community for a number of years. Mr. Rawdon in his study of "The Colored Child in the Oberlin Public Schools" voiced it when in 1914 he advocated vocational training in the Public School System. Oberlin Public Schools prepare now as then primarily for College Entrance. Where college training is planned that is sufficient. When college training is not considered or advisable, whatever the race or class, it is manifestly inadequate and ill-adjusted to the needs.

In this day of constantly increased specialization, vocational training and vocational guidance are becoming in-

creasingly necessary. The old apprenticeship methods are failing to serve in Oberlin as elsewhere. Young people are impatient for high wages at the beginning of their work, and ignorant of the difficulties and limitations which beset the apparent industrial opportunity. Vocational training and expert guidance - and of the two guidance should precede - are being tried increasingly to fill the need in many far-sighted communities, and with increasing success. Such advice, of course, has no racial significance. It applies to colored and white indiscriminately.

Often it requires patient education to convince the very people who would most advantage from it of that advantage, but education must be a part of the program for any social advance. Where public funds are not available for such work, it is the proper function of private philanthropy to initiate and test out social experiments.

Next to the economic opportunity there is no greater lack among the majority of the Oberlin negroes than a wise and adequate leisure-time program. Such a program is fraught with difficulties. Through the interchurch organizations there is an existing machinery which is thoroughly adequate for excellent beginnings. But because of the question of real or apparent segregation the programs attempted fail often of their purpose. The program satisfactory to the one group is not satisfactory

to the other, with the result that succeeding for the whites it may fail completely for the negroes. Only a wise tolerance and will to success on the part of both groups can overcome the difficulty.

There are large numbers, however, whom the churches are not and probably cannot reach. These are fairly well handled among the whites by private and individual means. Among the negroes there is little such enterprise apparent. For the young people especially, the general irresponsibility or incapability of parents, which is increasingly apparent among both races, has less to offset it, therefore, among the negroes than among the whites. In consequence the need for a vigorous recreational program, whether public or private, is of vital importance.

A third measure, one which is essential to the health of the entire community, is <sup>a</sup> careful but vigorous cleaning up of the vicious elements within it. Most especially is this needed for the negro element, not because the guilt rests solely upon the negroes - by all evidence there are mental and moral degenerates among the whites which are considerably lower than any of the negroes, - but because practically all of it is foisted upon their community. Such a clean-up in a town organized as is Oberlin is probably impossible without an awakened public

sentiment far in excess of the irresponsible indifference of the average citizen of either color. A campaign for public knowledge of the facts would be a necessary prelude to any decisive action.

Another need is for specific information about and attention to the housing and sanitation conditions within the corporate limits. Not only for the sake of the colored people, but for the safety of the entire town some action is needed to improve the backward elements which threaten the health of the community.

Finally I would suggest that if there is any value in the movement for inter-racial committees started in the South, Oberlin might well profit from it. Not to handle mob-rule and lynching, civil liberties and adequate schools, but to handle these problems which I have mentioned,- industrial opportunity, wholesome recreation, decent and adequate housing, proper sanitation, vice and lawlessness, Oberlin has need for such an organization. Neither race alone can handle these matters adequately or satisfactorily. Together, they would be in a position to attack.

In closing let me suggest that Oberlin, the colored group especially, shows many of the characteristics of the average small town. A certain provincialism resulting from the lack of economic incentive, the lack of social and commercial contacts, the lack of aggressive, vigorous, physical

effort necessary to city life, is evident. The faults which I have discussed are possibly the faults of the average American village whatever the race of its inhabitants. The measures necessary to combat its social anemia are, therefore, in part the ones necessary to rebuild American village life - a vigorous handling of evident social disease, a sympathetic upbuilding of new strength through an enlarged experienced leadership, a more specialized economic adjustment to meet the ever increasing economic need.

The very evident improvement of the last ten or fifteen years - a period during which the whole town has made marked progress - is encouragement for the future. The presence and the gradual increase at the present time of certain elements of leadership is of prime importance. The seed for progress if properly vitalized and cultivated is probably here now as never before in recent years. That seed needs careful cultivation.