“If you took the hillbillies out of Ashtabula County, you wouldn’t have anyone left here.” That’s the assessment of Halley Hamrick, who, like hundreds of other mountaineers from West Virginia, Kentucky, Virginia, southern Ohio, and southwest Pennsylvania, came to Ashtabula County in search of work from 1940 to 1965. A few found the labor too hard, the industrial work schedule too structured, or the workplace walls too confining, and returned home. Another small percentage found the locals unfriendly, aloof, or downright biased and returned to the familiarity and warmth of kin. And for some, the pace of urban life was too quick, the neighborhoods too large, or the temptations of liquor, city women, and easy credit too hard to resist for an honest country boy in search of work.

But most stayed. Taking advantage of the wide variety of blue-collar jobs that could be had for the asking, they built new lives, started families, bought homes, raised children, sent them to college, and took active leadership roles in their places of employment, worship, recreation, and community service. Names common in Appalachia were interwoven with the surnames of Western Reserve pioneers¹ and Italian, Irish, Swedish, and Finnish immigrants who defined the typical Ashtabula County resident prior to 1940.

It was not a migration of great distance. Most of the Appalachian migrants to the Western Reserve traveled less than five hundred miles and for many it was only three hundred. But differences in the culture and landscape were significant. Most obvious was the contrast in the physical environment: Ashtabula County has no mountains or valleys to speak of.² The
region’s relative flatness amazed the mountaineer motorist accustomed to being able to see no more than a few hundred yards of the road ahead. For this convenience he sacrificed the mountaintop vistas of cascading peaks extending to the horizon and most likely into another state. In return he got Lake Erie, which gave the mountaineer a “fishing hole” unlike any he’d ever seen in the mountains. There were woodlands for hunting, too, and some of them yielded the familiar ginseng, yellowroot, and other herbs that were essential items in the mountaineer’s medicine chest.

There was a price to pay in culture, as well. The migrants’ cultural traditions had been preserved in isolated hollows and hamlets since the Scotch-Irish began to settle the backwoods of Appalachia in the mid-1700s. This traditional culture was destined to clash with the more progressive outlook of the North. In time, traditions became diluted or, especially in the case of music, assimilated and expanded. But in the first years of the mountaineers’ arrival, there were cultural differences to be reckoned with and worked through.

Traditionalism in Culture

*Mountain Families in Transition*, a case study of Appalachian migration from Beech Creek, Kentucky, to industrial cities of the Ohio Valley, identifies three basic traits of Appalachian culture: familism, meaning that all social relationships and institutions are “permeated by and stamped with the characteristics of the family”; puritanism, the foundation of the mountaineer’s faith and outlook on life; and individualism, which views every individual as a child of God and places high value on the self-made man.

Familism was a key to the success of the migration. The Beech Creek study demonstrated that strong kin relationships provided the link for entire families to pack up and move north. It took only one migrant to establish a beachhead in the new community; others soon followed. This closeness and cooperation of family made it possible for many of the migrants to survive and succeed in a culture that was opposed to their own: they had a local circle of family and neighbors from back home to which they could withdraw in times of crisis, need, or loneliness. A 1968 comparative social study of more than five hundred West Virginians who migrated to and remained in Cleveland showed that 26 percent of the suburban migrants no longer had
relatives in West Virginia; the researcher, John D. Photiadis of West Virginia University, speculated that those who were well established in the Cleveland suburbs had attracted their relatives to the city. And a 1969 study of Columbus Appalachian migrants, done by Jesus Antonio Rico-Velasco, showed that 40 percent of the migrants interviewed cited the presence of kin already living in Columbus as their reason for settling there. Economics was the only factor cited by more migrants (51 percent) as a significant reason for coming to Columbus. “For Appalachian migrants, it was found that the area of destination is not randomly selected,” according to Rico-Velasco. “Family structure and kinship ties played a very important role in the decision to migrate and in the selection of a place of destination.”

The other side of this familism was that the migrant did not sever ties with the family back in the mountains. While work, house, and conjugal family were in the North, the migrant’s “home” remained in the mountains. This love of ancestral homeplace drove the migrant to practice a rite of return for weekends, holidays, vacations, funerals, reunions, hunting seasons, and whatever other excuse he could devise. One of the first purchases the transplanted mountaineer made was a car so he could make the trip back to kin and homeplace, if only for a few precious hours on a weekend. John Photiadis’s study showed that up to 11 percent of the West Virginia migrants interviewed went back for visits more than ten times a year and only 7 percent of West Virginians who had migrated to the Cleveland suburbs never visited their home state. In the course of my interviews for this book, one migrant told me that he wondered if his move to the North had actually netted him an economic gain after subtracting all the money he had spent on cars, gasoline, and maintenance associated with these frequent trips back home.

The mountaineer’s love of homeplace did not go unnoticed by his northern neighbors. Merlin Mead was a union president and treasurer for Electromet during the era that the Ashtabula Township factory hired many migrant workers. Merlin said Electromet workers could get a four-day weekend by working ten days straight. The Appalachian workers loved this arrangement and came to work with their cars packed for the trip. As soon as they were done working, they drove by the house, picked up the wife and children, and headed south.

This love of homeplace was expressed in a joke that a mountaineer shared with Merlin. A man died, went to heaven, and was getting the introductory tour from St. Peter. He pointed out sections reserved for each denomination
as they toured the valley. Then he came to a hillside with a fence around it, and the new arrival asked who lived there. “Oh, these are all our West Virginia people,” St. Peter said. “They still think they have to go home every weekend.”

The Cold North
Another aspect of familism is the high value it places on neighborliness and hospitality. This value was often found wanting in the new culture, and the migrant could not understand why his Yankee neighbor did not open up his house or make available his resources as neighbors in his home hamlet would have done. Flavia Myers Cole migrated to Ashtabula County from near Charleston, West Virginia, in 1949. One of the differences she noticed between the two cultures was the northern attitude toward someone dropping in to visit. In the north, if the host was preparing dinner, the visit was viewed as an intrusion. A formal invitation was required for dinner, whereas in the Appalachian culture a visitor could expect his host to set another place at the table and insist he eat with them. This practice remains today in the homes of migrant families, where a visitor, no matter how casual, can hardly get away without eating a meal, or at the very least, having a beverage and snack with the family.

Industrial recruiters made the mistake of underestimating the strength of kinship when they scoured the mountains for out-of-work and underemployed Appalachian men. The industrialists expected to find desperate workers who would eschew the unity of the labor union and be thankful to have a good-paying job. This worked to a certain extent; as the Beech Creek researchers discovered, most of their subjects were not good “joiners.” But the tie of kinship imposed a unity that supervisors had not considered. If a relative, no matter how distant, fell ill or needed help back home, it was not unusual for the plant to see a substantial number of workers take off and head south to meet their kin’s need. But more distressing to the industrialists was the kinship of workers in time of strike. Ralph Ware, a West Virginia migrant, worked for Union Carbide thirty-nine and a half years, counting the strikes that periodically interrupted the work. Ralph said the worst strike came in 1967 and lasted seven and a half months. He said the workers as a whole exhibited solidarity during strikes, but for the migrants the struggle to do better and help each other extended beyond the union card to kin and community ties.

Merlin Mead was union president during the 1967 strike. He said moun-
taineers showed a commitment to the cause that was not demonstrated by many of the other workers when it came time to pull picket duty or hold out for better benefits and higher wages. “The number one picketers I loved were the hillbillies,” he said. “You bet your boots they were good people. Them, followed by the blacks. You give me a handful of mountaineers any time, and they’ll do it for you.”

The male migrant became assimilated into the new culture rather quickly by virtue of the workplace. His friendly, laid-back, honest personality helped him make friends with co-workers while his industrious work ethic won his supervisors’ support.9 For the migrant’s wife, however, assimilation was a slower process. Many of the women did not have a driver’s license. Further, most migrant families arrived in the North with only the clothes on their back, a few dollars in their pocket, a bed, and perhaps a piece of heirloom furniture. A migrant family getting established in a new community could barely afford one car (and its associated costs of operation with the frequent trips back home), much less a second vehicle for the wife to run errands. The
migrant’s wife and young children were stuck at home during the day; their neighborhood was only as wide as their feet could take them. Many of them lived in fear of their neighbors and the fast pace of the industrialized communities. Until friends and interests were established in the new community, the migrant housewife’s life was frequently one of boredom and fear broken by the periodic joy of a trip back home.¹⁰

The northerner had been trained to be suspicious or contemptuous of the migrants by way of stereotypes perpetuated in media sources such as Lum and Abner radio shows, Snuffy Smith cartoons, Ma and Pa Kettle films, and—in the 1960s—the Beverly Hillbillies television situation comedy. Many northerners were thus surprised when their migrant neighbors didn’t wear bib overalls, carry a “little brown jug,” have a still in the backyard and chickens running loose in the house, or drive a red junker with a Confederate flag painted on the hood. Emma Bonham, a West Virginia migrant, tells of her daughter, Pauletta Ann, coming home from school shortly after migrating in 1955. Pauletta was puzzled that the teacher had asked her if she really wore shoes and if she knew how to make moonshine. “Pauletta didn’t even realize what moonshining was,” Emma said. “She said she thought it was something you did under the moon.”

Perhaps the ultimate stereotype of a mountain person is a barefoot, bearded man lying on the front porch of a cabin, moonshine jug and shotgun next to him, pregnant wife rocking in a rickety chair, and hunting dog snapping at flies. Harry Gillespie, a White Sulphur Springs native, said that’s a hillbilly, and he never saw one when he lived in West Virginia—although he’s been called as much in Ohio. “I was a sophisticated hillbilly. . . . I’m a West Virginia hillbilly mountaineer,” he said proudly.

Regardless of how thoroughly the mountaineer adapted to the culture and ways of the North, his dialect remained an articulated disclosure of his origins. Jean Hornbeck, a West Virginia migrant, said some landlords didn’t trust the Appalachian migrants and turned them down over the phone on the basis of their dialect. Some mountaineers, desperate for housing, disguised their voices when inquiring about apartments. Other migrants found it was their unique vocabulary that caused problems. “I asked this clerk in a store to give me a poke,” Jean Wilfong said. “They called them ‘bags’ up here.” “She came home and told me what had happened,” Jean’s husband Loye said. “I told her, ‘You better keep your mouth shut or you are going to get poked.’”
Maurice Osburn and his sister Jean Hornbeck with the model Maurice made of the family’s home in Kedron, West Virginia, a farmhouse their father bought in 1944 after losing his job with the lumber company. *Photo by Carl E. Feather*
Ultimately what helped many mountaineers become assimilated into the new community was their strong religious background, which forced the migrant to find a place where the God of his childhood and mountains could be worshiped.¹¹ Some northeast Ohio churches took on a strong Appalachian flavor as the mountaineers brought their faith and music to worship. First Baptist Church in Ashtabula became a magnet for many of the West Virginia families after Harry and Ruby Gillespie came to faith there. So strong was the presence of West Virginians in the church that adult members put on “Hillbilly Nights” for those of mountain heritage. Dozens attended the gatherings, which featured down-home storytelling, music, and food.

The Appalachian migrants felt that God was with them as they came north, and that helped them weather the inevitable storms of settling in a new region. Further, the Beech Creek researchers concluded that the puritanical component of the culture gave the migrant a strong sense of right and wrong. Specifically, the mountaineer defined right as “self-discipline, hard work, keeping away from sensual pleasures, marital fidelity, thrift, and sacrificing for future goals.”¹² These are welcome traits in any society, traits that contribute to industry, strong families, neighborhoods, and futures.

Individualism, the third of the cultural traits identified by the Beech Creek researchers, is an outgrowth of that puritanical outlook. The mountaineer believes in the ultimate strength of democracy. He does not like to be told what to do, yet his attitude is not flippant, for the mountaineer knows freedom must be tempered with responsibility. This attitude produced a clash with the structured society of the North on more than one occasion.

The story is told of a migrant who came to Ashtabula in the early 1950s and rented an apartment on Center Street. Back in his West Virginia home the man had a habit of building a fire in his backyard, sitting by it and drinking beer late into the evening. He transferred that habit to the city, much to consternation of an elderly neighbor, who reported his barbecue to the fire department. The migrant insisted he wasn’t causing any harm and even showed the firefighters the garden hose he kept near the fire. But the firefighters insisted the fire had to be put out, and—grudgingly—the mountaineer obliged. “Fine,” he said. “But you’ll have to use YOUR hose to put it out with!”¹³

On a more positive note, this individualism and sense of right and wrong made the mountaineer a good worker and, combined with his kinship social structure, contributed to his success and adaptation in the North. The Ap-
palachian culture places a high value on the self-made man, and urban communities like Ashtabula provided the migrant with channels for attaining that status. The mountaineer’s culture and surroundings demand hard work for survival; in an environment of opportunity, that value blossoms into success.

The mountaineer is an individualist, but not a specialist. Out of the necessity to maintain an isolated lifestyle far from a service economy, he had to be a jack of all trades. The mountaineer continued to be a pioneer long after the rest of the country was settled. He is used to working hard and can do many different jobs, yet is modest about his accomplishments. Employers found these qualities desirable. Further, the mountaineer is a true self-starter who can take on and accomplish many different tasks with minimal supervision. Merlin Mead said the mountaineers who worked at Electromet possessed a keen ability with anything mechanical. “A lot of them weren’t real educated, but, by gosh, they had mechanical ability,” he said. “They could tear anything down, put it back together and make it work. They could keep the place running and do a good job.”

First-Generation Sources

The story of these migrants is the saga of any group forced to leave home for that once-in-a-lifetime chance at success in the world. They were no different than the Italian and Irish immigrants who had arrived at Ellis Island some fifty to seventy years before and ended up laying railroad track and mining coal in the mountains of West Virginia. They, too, had stories to tell, but their words were lost to the grave, their stories distorted and forgotten by successive generations.

That is why I set about to write this book, to seize the unique opportunity to document from primary sources the stories of these migrants’ lives in that mountain land and culture, the reasons for their coming, the connections that facilitated the move; and their struggles and successes in this new home. As a son of parents who migrated from West Virginia to Ashtabula County in 1956, I saw firsthand their intense love for the mountains and shared the pain they experienced every time the car headed north after a visit “back home.” They were doing it to give me the opportunities they never had, to provide security for a future that seemed so bleak in those mountain hamlets. They faced the scrutiny and mistrust all migrants experience as they
proved themselves worthy of the new land to which they were called and dis-
pelled the negative stereotypes of their native culture and home.

It is that negative stereotype that I particularly hope to dispel with this
book, to erase any conception of mountain people as lazy, dull, unmotivated,
uncouth, fanatically religious individuals. Yes, every culture has its members
who do not positively represent it. Yes, some migrants blew their wages on
liquor, raising hell and creating headaches for Ashtabula County bar owners,
policemen, and employers. But the majority of those migrants didn’t stay
long. They worked enough hours to pay for their work boots, first month’s
rent, and transportation, then packed their belongings in a brown paper
poke and bought a bus ticket back to the hollows and hamlets of home.

After interviewing scores of mountaineer migrants, I am convinced Ap-
palachia gave the North its very best, hardest-working, most resourceful and
ambitious individuals, who took on many of the jobs the locals did not want.
They have set examples of honesty, industry, and loyalty wherever they have
worked. They have established homes that are the pride of their neighbor-
hoods. They have proven themselves to be friendly, caring, conscientious, re-
sponsible citizens.

Their numbers are dwindling. Almost every day an obituary appears in a
northeast Ohio newspaper that reads “he/she was born in —, W.Va.” The
first generation of migrants who established a beachhead in the area from
1905 to 1940 is all but gone. Ruby Gillespie (chapter 4) and Larry Brown
(chapter 8) died during the production of this book. The second generation
is slipping away all too quickly and with it the stories of a way of life baby
boombers and Generation “X” cannot comprehend.

My first effort to document their stories came in the form of a series of
feature articles published by the Ashtabula Star Beacon during the week of
March 28, 1994. The series was well received and many readers asked that it
be published in book form. But I knew there were many more stories that
needed to be told, and for the next three years I pursued leads and conducted
interviews, basing chapters, whenever possible, upon the communities from
which the migrants came. It has been a rewarding effort, but also a frustrat-
ing one, for time is always at a premium, especially when it is spent on an
avocation. There are people whose stories I wish could have been part of this
document, but who for one reason or another did not want to be included.
And there are so many who have already gone home to the mountains of the
Lord, their stories left to the cold Ashtabula County soil.
To make the project manageable, I have focused on one county, Ashtabula, which was a destination for West Virginia migrants primarily. However, the migrants could have been from Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, or western Pennsylvania and Maryland; their destination Cleveland, Dayton, Columbus, Lorain, or Cincinnati. An estimated 100,000 to 130,000 Appalachians lived in Cuyahoga County in 1973; one study sample showed 73 percent of the Cleveland Appalachian population to be from West Virginia and 15 percent from Tennessee.¹⁵

The Ford and Fisher Body automobile factories and steel mills were major migrant employers and recruited workers through newspaper advertising in West Virginia. In June 1951 an unidentified Cleveland steel mill ran Help Wanted ads on several Sundays in the Charleston Daily Mail. The ads sought “Male Help” with “no experience necessary.” Transportation was furnished, rooms were arranged, and a representative was on hand at the West Virginia State Employment Service in Charleston. The mill went to considerable effort to make the employment process convenient.¹⁶ Two years later, another unidentified mill ran similar ads in the Charleston Daily Mail. This time, the employer was seeking high school graduates in one ad and those with a minimum of an eighth-grade education in another. The applicants had to weigh at least 145 pounds and be between eighteen and forty. As before, transportation and paid housing would be arranged.¹⁷

The Lorain/Elyria area, west of Cleveland, was also a landing zone for Appalachian migrants, particularly those from the Huntington, West Virginia, area. National Tube Company in Lorain frequently recruited in West Virginia for workers through newspaper advertising and recruiters stationed at state employment agency offices.

A 1980 study done for the Appalachian Regional Commission ranked Cleveland as the sixth most popular migration destination for Appalachian migrants during the years 1955 to 1960; Cincinnati ranked eighth, Columbus twelfth, and Dayton fifteenth. In all, more than 68,000 Appalachian migrants had arrived in those four cities during the period from 1955 to 1960.¹⁸ Regardless of which Ohio city the migrant came to, the reasons for coming remained the same: the push out of Appalachia by a lack of jobs and the pull of opportunity created by Ohio’s rapidly expanding economy.

This book is intended to be a popular, oral history of the Appalachian migration to northeast Ohio, not a genealogical research tool, social or economic history, or textbook of the migration.¹⁹ This is a book about common
people in search of a better life. In the process, they created history, families, and fodder for research. Accordingly, my work is foremost meant to be enjoyed, not suffered through. Its purpose is to honor, not dissect, a wonderful, overlooked group of people who made significant contributions to every community they called “home.”

Notes

1. The region known as the Western Reserve came into being in 1786, when Connecticut ceded to Congress all of its western lands except for a 120-mile-long strip of territory south of Lake Erie. This land, “reserved” for Connecticut, remained a colony of the state until 1800. The western section (the Firelands), containing half a million acres, was given to citizens whose property was burned during the Revolutionary War. The balance, amounting to three million acres, was sold to the thirty-five investors of the Connecticut Land Company in 1795. On Independence Day the following year, Moses Cleaveland and his surveying party arrived at the mouth of Conneaut Creek (Fort Independence and present-day Conneaut) to begin their work for the land company. James Kingsbury, with his wife and three children, had followed the company from Buffalo and settled at Fort Independence, but the surveying party continued west and founded the city of Cleveland along the Cuyahoga River.

Kingsbury's wife bore a child the following winter, the first white child born in the Western Reserve. Beginning in March 1798 with Alexander Harper, settlers began to arrive in Ashtabula County from New England. Communities took the names of their founding families (Austinburg, Harpersfield), the New England towns from which they hailed (Andover, New Lyme), or Indian names for the “river of many fish” (Ashtabula, Conneaut). For most of the nineteenth century, the Reserve remained a western double of its eastern parents in both appearance and nature. But the railroads and shipping industry that developed in the latter half of that century and heavy industry that came in the twentieth changed the region's flavor. Thousands of Italian, Finnish, and Swedish immigrants came to work on the docks at Ashtabula and Conneaut and to lay the rails that stretched from Lake Erie to the steel mills of Warren and Youngstown.


2. The swath cut through the Ashtabula Township landscape by the Ashtabula River (known as “The Gulf” to locals) is as close to a valley as one gets in Ashtabula
County. Not surprisingly, this valley attracted the migrants as a fishing and recreation spot. As for mountains, the southern section of Ashtabula County has some hills, but to a true mountaineer these are just road bumps.

3. The Scotch-Irish trace their heritage to Englishmen who received grants of land in Ireland from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries and to Lowland Scots who moved to northern Ireland in the sixteenth century. From about 1700 to 1776 more than a half million Scotch-Irish immigrated to the United States. As country dwellers, they gravitated toward the outback country of New England, western Pennsylvania, the Shenandoah Valley and what later became known as Appalachia. Germans accounted for the other major nationality group to settle the Appalachians, although there were English, Dutch, and Welsh, as well. For more background on the Scotch-Irish and Celtic background of the Appalachian people, see B. B. Maurer, ed., *Mountain Heritage* (Parsons, W.Va.: McClain Printing, 1980), 32–37.


5. John D. Photiadis, *Selected Social and Sociopsychological Characteristics of West Virginians in Their Own State and in Cleveland* (Morgantown: West Virginia University and U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Manpower Research, 1975). The author interviewed migrants from Mineral, Grant, and Raleigh Counties, West Virginia, who had moved to the Cleveland “West Virginia Ghetto” on the city’s near-west side and to Cleveland suburbs, either directly or by moving up from the ghetto. Cleveland’s West Virginia Ghetto was defined as Lorain Avenue between West Thirtieth and West Sixty-fifth and the Tremont and Clark-Fulton areas. On the east side, North Broadway, Goodrich, and Collingwood neighborhoods also had large numbers of Appalachian families. Photiadis’s study notes that Lakewood, Brook Park, Berea, Parma, Middleburgh Heights, and Brunswick were suburban communities to which the Appalachians migrated.

6. Jesus Antonio Rico-Velasco, “Immigrants from the Appalachian Region to the City of Columbus, Ohio: A Case Study” (master’s thesis, Ohio State University, 1969), 121.

7. Schwarzwaller et al., 159. Of thirty migrant men interviewed in the authors’ follow-up, sixteen were union members, “but only four were active in the sense of having attended a number of union meetings the previous year.” The authors conclude that membership in a union for most Beech Creekers was “a nominal status.”

8. Ibid., 154.

9. Dorothy Kunkin and Michael Byrne, in *Appalachians in Cleveland* (Cleveland:
Cleveland State University Institute of Urban Studies, 1973), quoted a 1970 statewide survey showing that one out of every three Ohio factory workers was an Appalachian migrant. “Statistically, Appalachian workers surveyed had held their jobs longer than non-Appalachians, had bought more houses per capita and had provided a stable labor force for Ohio manufacturing”; Kunkin and Byrne, 8. The study showed that after two years of living in the city, 60 percent of the Appalachian migrants had improved their occupational category. The study cited by the authors, *The Appalachian Migrants in Columbus, Ohio*, was done by the Junior League of Columbus in 1970.

10. John Photiadis noted that most of the problems reported by the Cleveland study group were related to social integration. The greater density of the population and the shift from rural to urban social interaction accounted for much of their dissatisfaction with Cleveland. Thirty-nine percent said city life bothered them “very much” or “quite a bit”; Photiadis, 18, 172–74.

11. An interesting observation among those “born-again” migrants interviewed is that while religion was an important presence in the mountains, many of them did not come into a “personal relationship with Jesus Christ” until they came north. For some, it was a matter of the gospel message being presented in a fresh way that challenged their approach to religion. For others, it was the security of the religion in a strange land or the realization of personal sinfulness after living on the wild side for a few years in a city filled with temptations. Finally, it may be observed that a number of the migrants went on to establish small congregations of Holiness and Southern Baptist in the region.

12. Schwarzweller, 214. The mountaineer viewed wealth as coming from the hand of God because he was living a good life. This thought obviously clashed with the more materialistic approach to wealth in the northern culture. To this day, many of the migrants see God’s hand in the blessings they have received in the north. Lucian “Lou” Philo Tenney, a migrant from Buckhannon, West Virginia, said one of the differences he has noticed between the southern and northern cultures is that people in West Virginia always have something to laugh about and be thankful for. No matter how bad the times or problems, the migrant could gather with his friends and kin and find some elements of joy or humor. Among Ashtabula natives I have often observed the opposite to be true. Conversation is frequently negative and focused upon what is lacking and oppressive in one’s situation.

13. This same mountaineer was also one to pull practical jokes on his neighbors and friends. He got into a disagreement with his neighbor and decided the best way to get even was public humiliation. So he called in to the local radio station’s “Swap Shop” program and announced that he and his wife had to get out of town in a hurry and were giving all their belongings away. All you had to do was drive by and pick them up. Then he gave his neighbor’s address. Within a few minutes the street was a traffic jam of bargain hunters being turned away by a very angry neighbor. After that incident the radio station changed its policy on taking addresses over the air.
The most infamous of these troublesome migrants was Arthur Lee Cole, who on October 21, 1957, shot and killed Ashtabula Police Department Patrolman Eino Toivola with a twelve-gauge shotgun as Toivola responded to a domestic dispute complaint. Cole, aged forty-seven, his wife, and three children came to Ashtabula County in the early 1950s from Floyd County, Kentucky. A June 3, 1959, Star-Beacon newspaper article noted that his court-appointed attorney, Robert H. Fuller of Ashtabula, described Cole as “the product of a marriage of first cousins in Kentucky’s squalid coal fields.” Cole had only a first-grade education and an I.Q. of 59. He had worked at the New York Central Reclamation Plant but was unemployed at the time of the murder. His police record included intoxication, disorderly conduct, and operating a vehicle without a license. In May 1958 he was found guilty of first-degree murder and sentenced to die in the electric chair the following June. But a series of appeals based upon insanity kept him on death row for six years, despite his admission of guilt and desire to pay the price with his life. He died at Lima State Hospital for the Criminal Insane in November 1965. One of his daughters told me that the family suffered great shame and felt ostracized from the community as a result of their father’s deed; the taunting was so great, the children had to drop out of school.

15. Kunkin and Byrne, 5. The population of Brunswick, for instance, one of the Cleveland suburbs to which Appalachians tended to migrate in large numbers, was estimated to be 50 percent Appalachian.

16. Charleston Daily Mail, 1 June 1951, 21. Workers sought included boilermakers, blacksmiths, bricklayers, machinists, riggers, millwright and electrician helpers, as well as inexperienced laborers.

17. Ibid., 1 June 1953, 15. Birth certificates were required to apply for these jobs. One ad requested “Birth certificate if under 21.”

18. Gary Fowler, Appalachian Migration: A Review and Assessment of the Research (Washington, D.C.: Appalachian Regional Commission, 1980), 26–27. A similar ranking for the period 1965 to 1970 placed Cleveland eighth, with 13,154 Appalachian migrants moving to the city during that time (Atlanta, Georgia, was first). Columbus ranked fourteenth, Cincinnati sixteenth, and Dayton twenty-second. The author quoted statistics given by Clyde B. McCoy in his presentation “Appalachian Migration Streams to Selected Metropolitan Areas” at the Conference on Appalachia in Urban Areas, Academy for Contemporary Problems, held at Columbus, Ohio, in March 1974.