



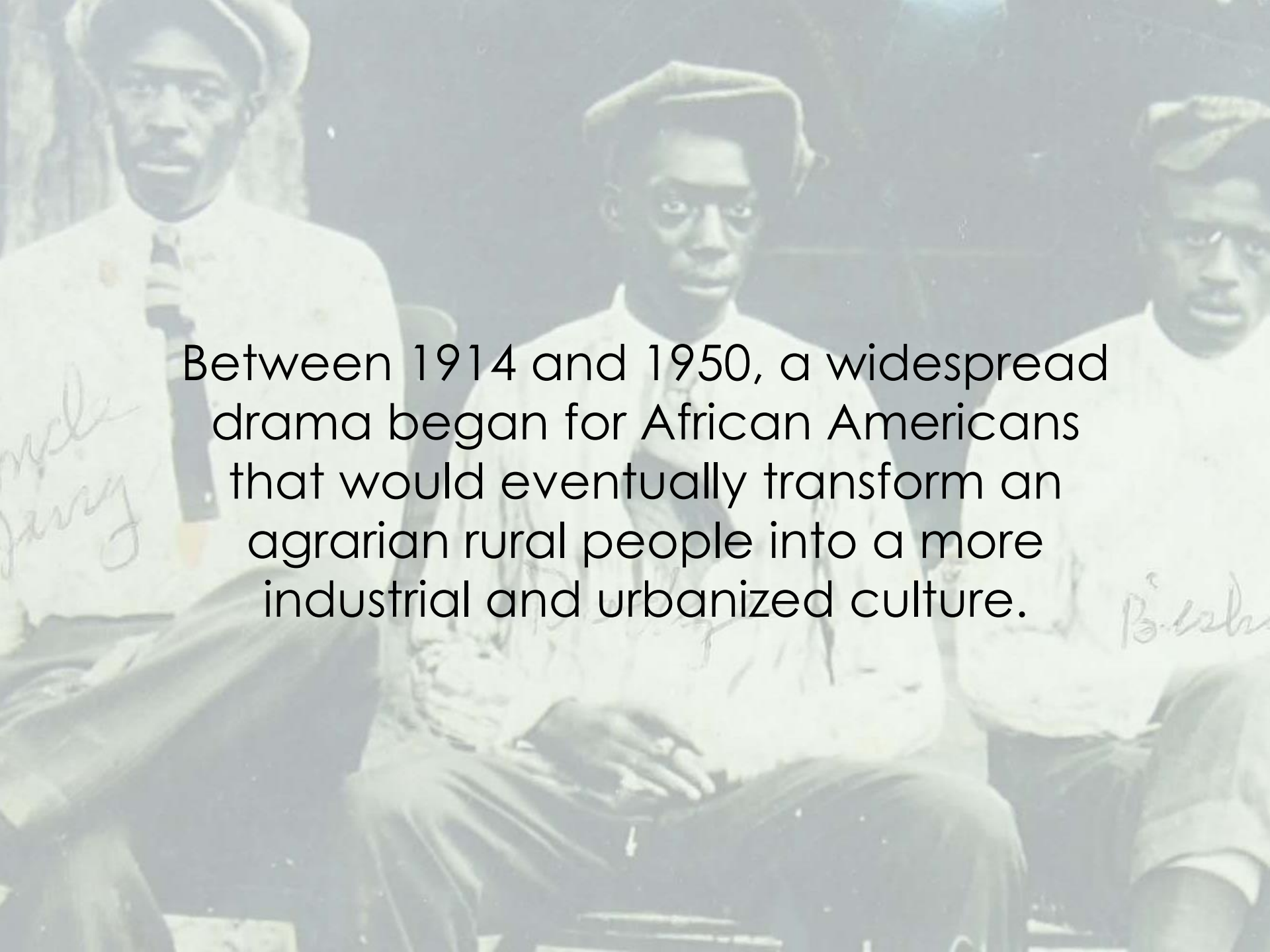
Mack
Harvey

Dodge

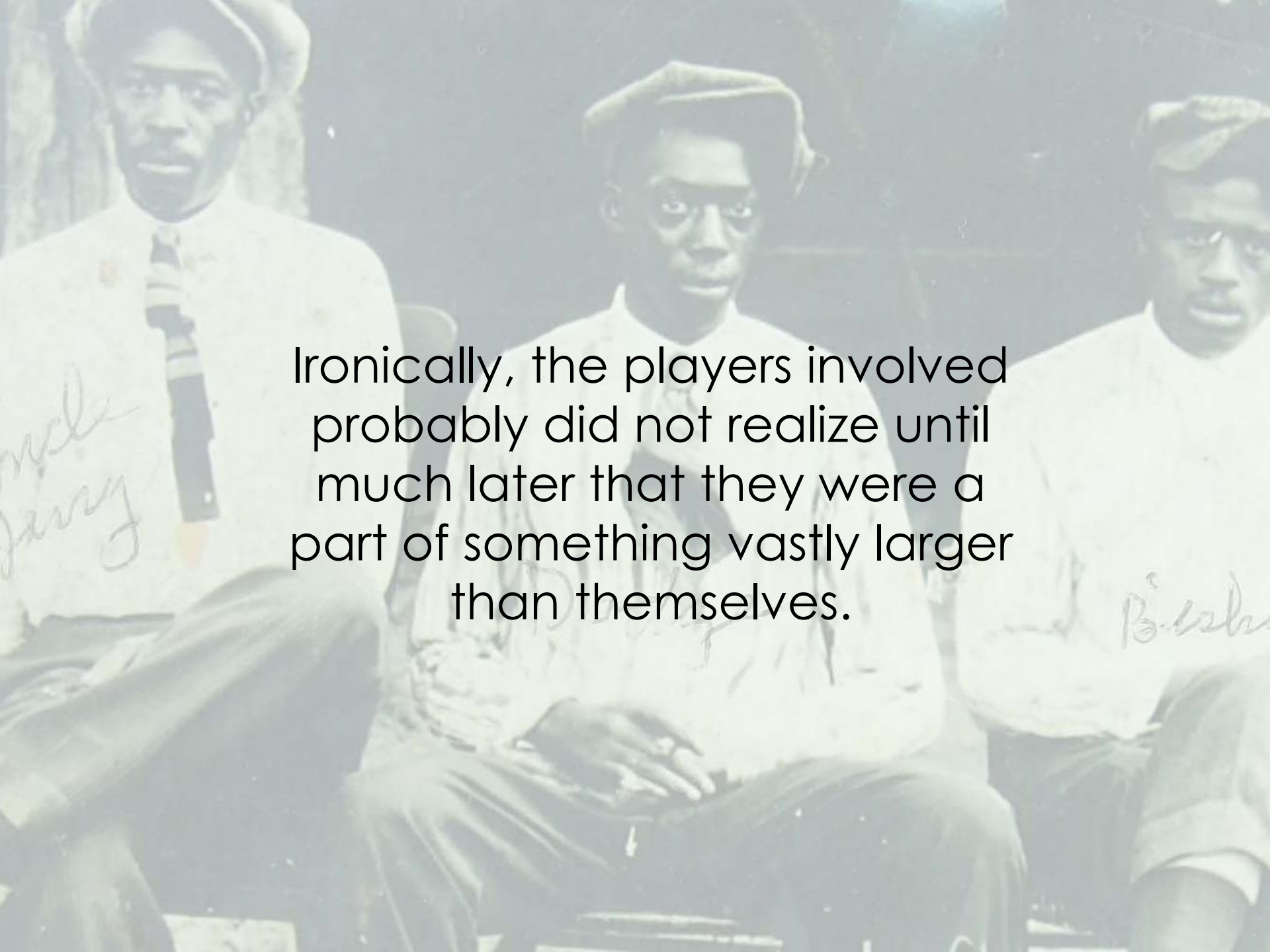
Bishop

Farther Along

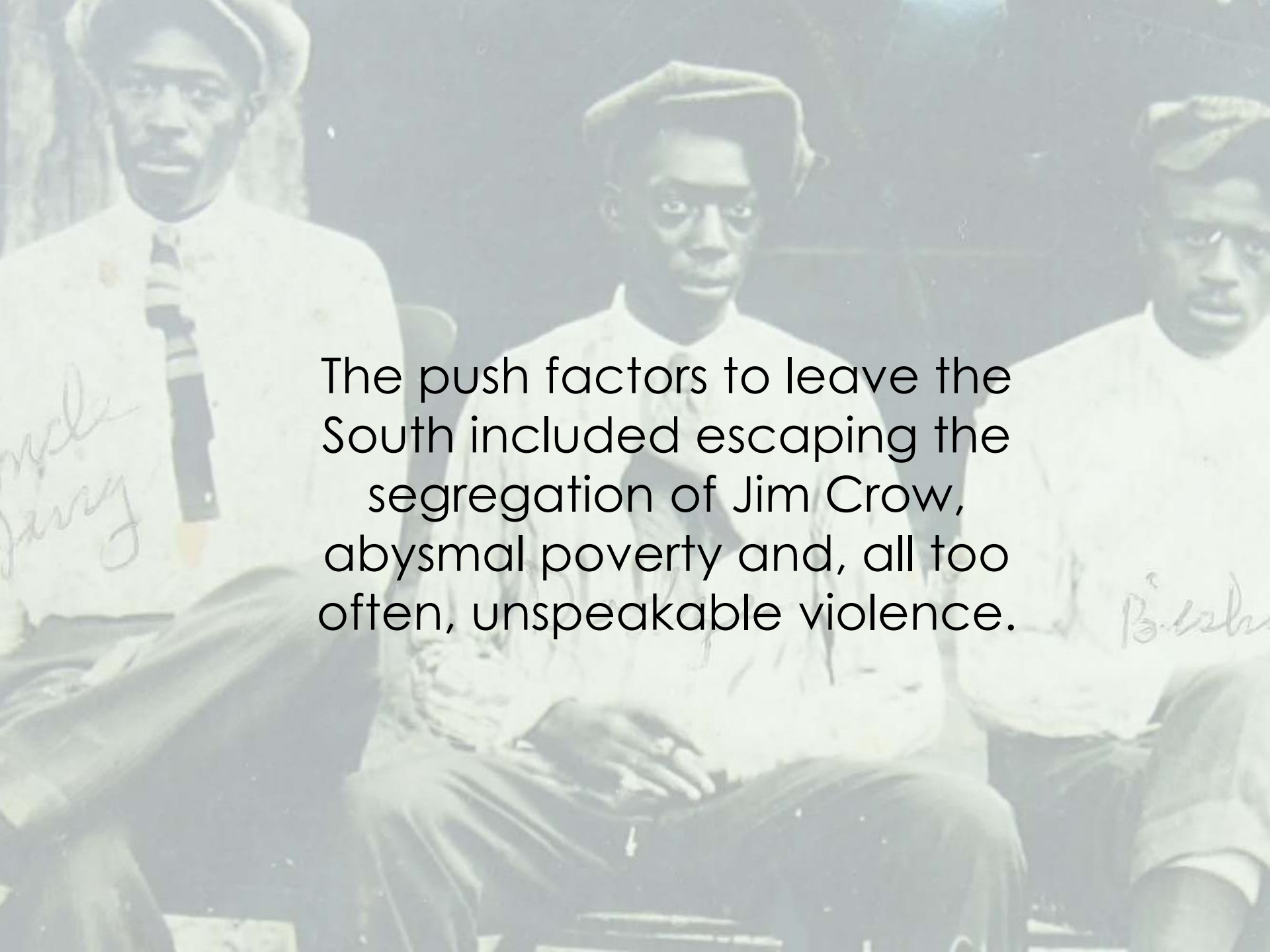
Faces of the Great Migration



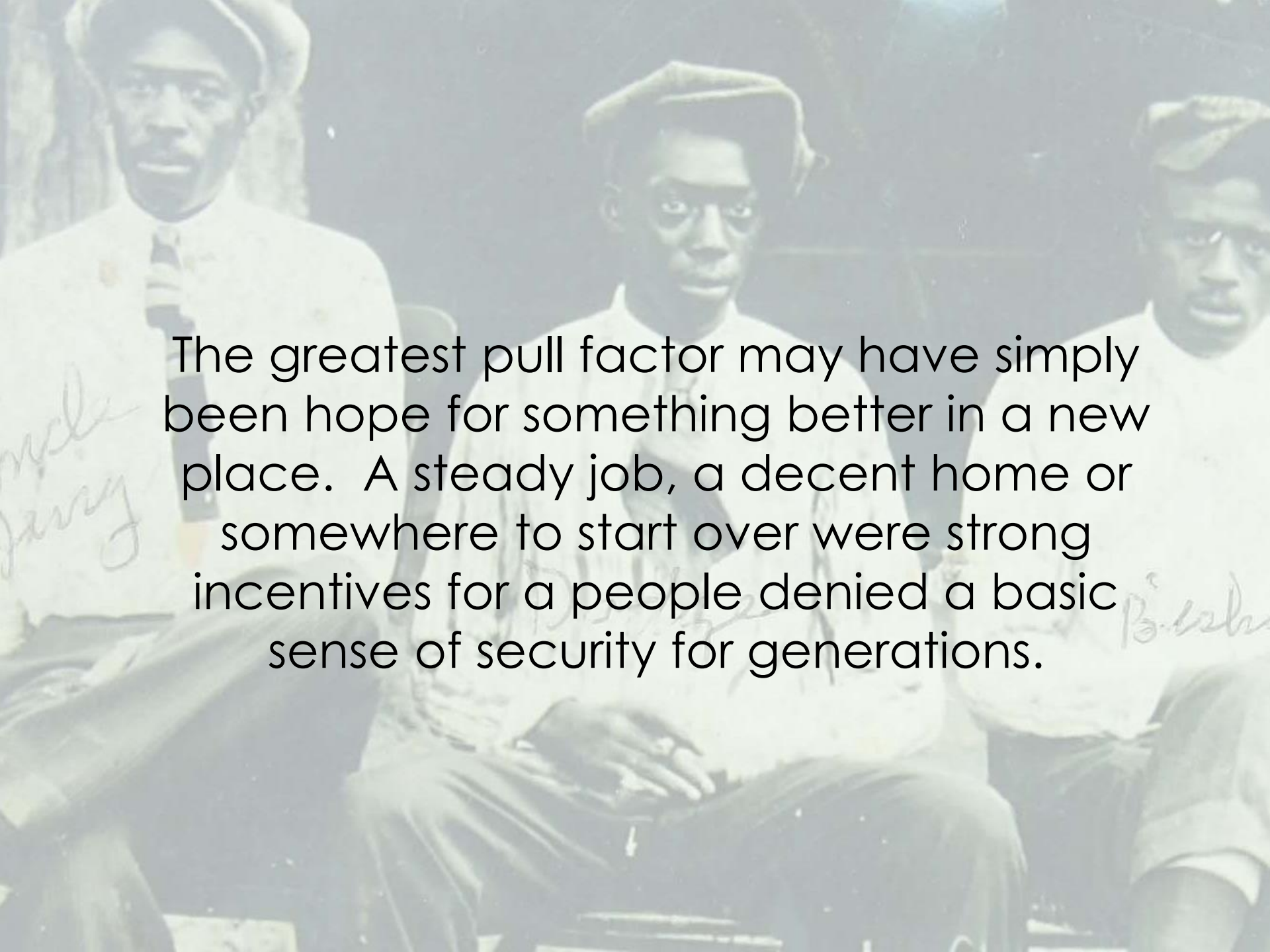
Between 1914 and 1950, a widespread drama began for African Americans that would eventually transform an agrarian rural people into a more industrial and urbanized culture.



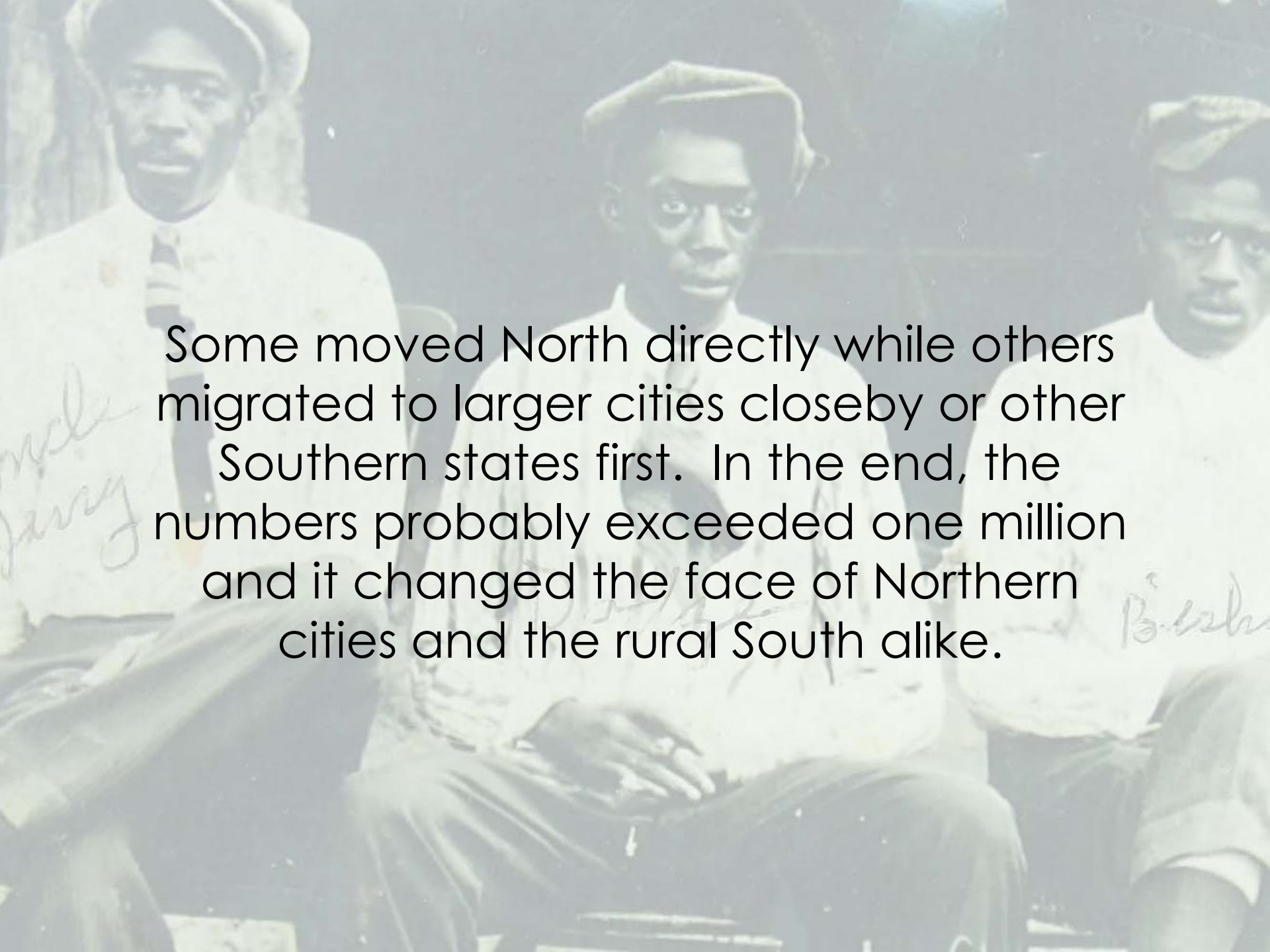
Ironically, the players involved probably did not realize until much later that they were a part of something vastly larger than themselves.



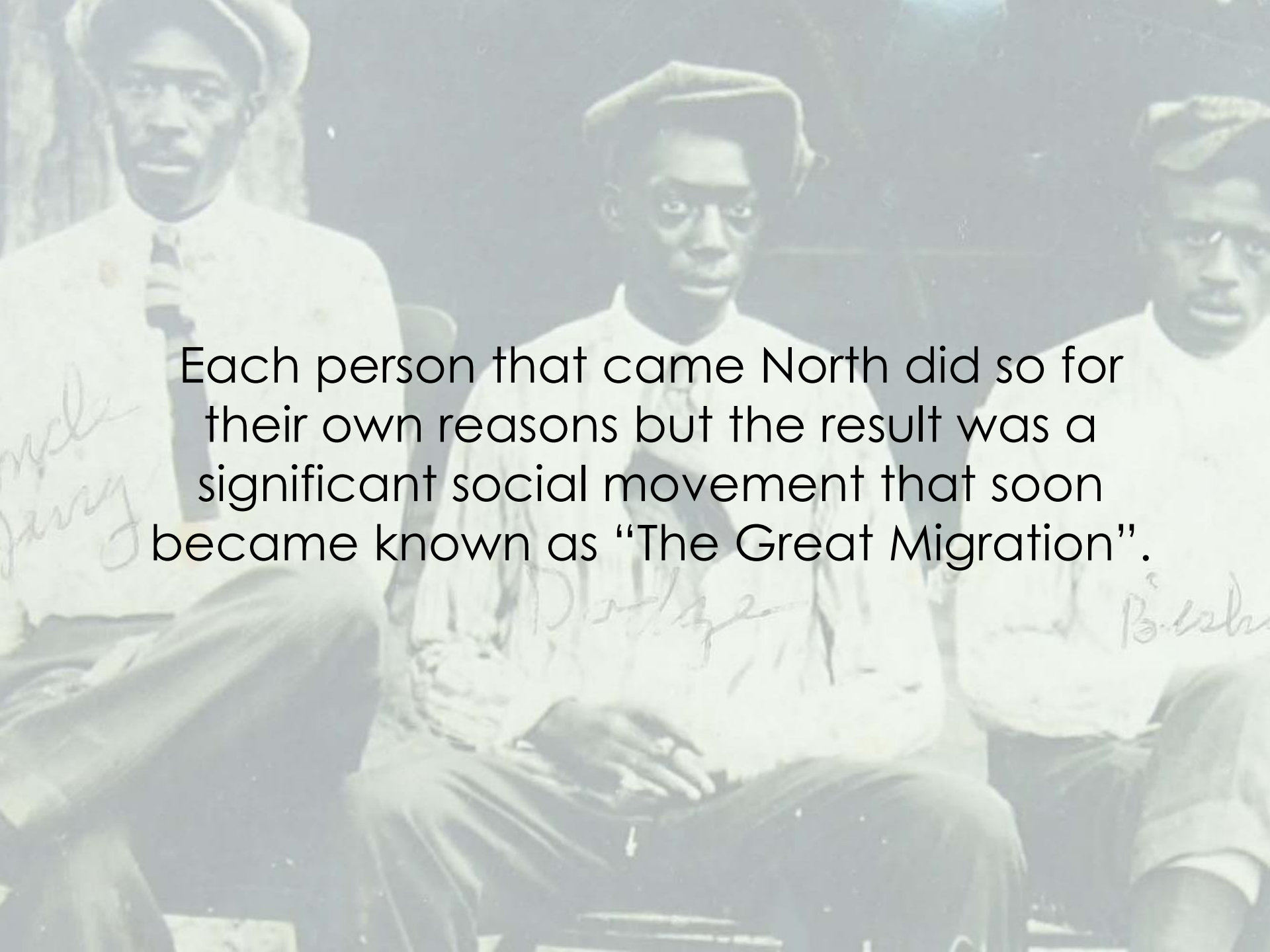
The push factors to leave the South included escaping the segregation of Jim Crow, abysmal poverty and, all too often, unspeakable violence.



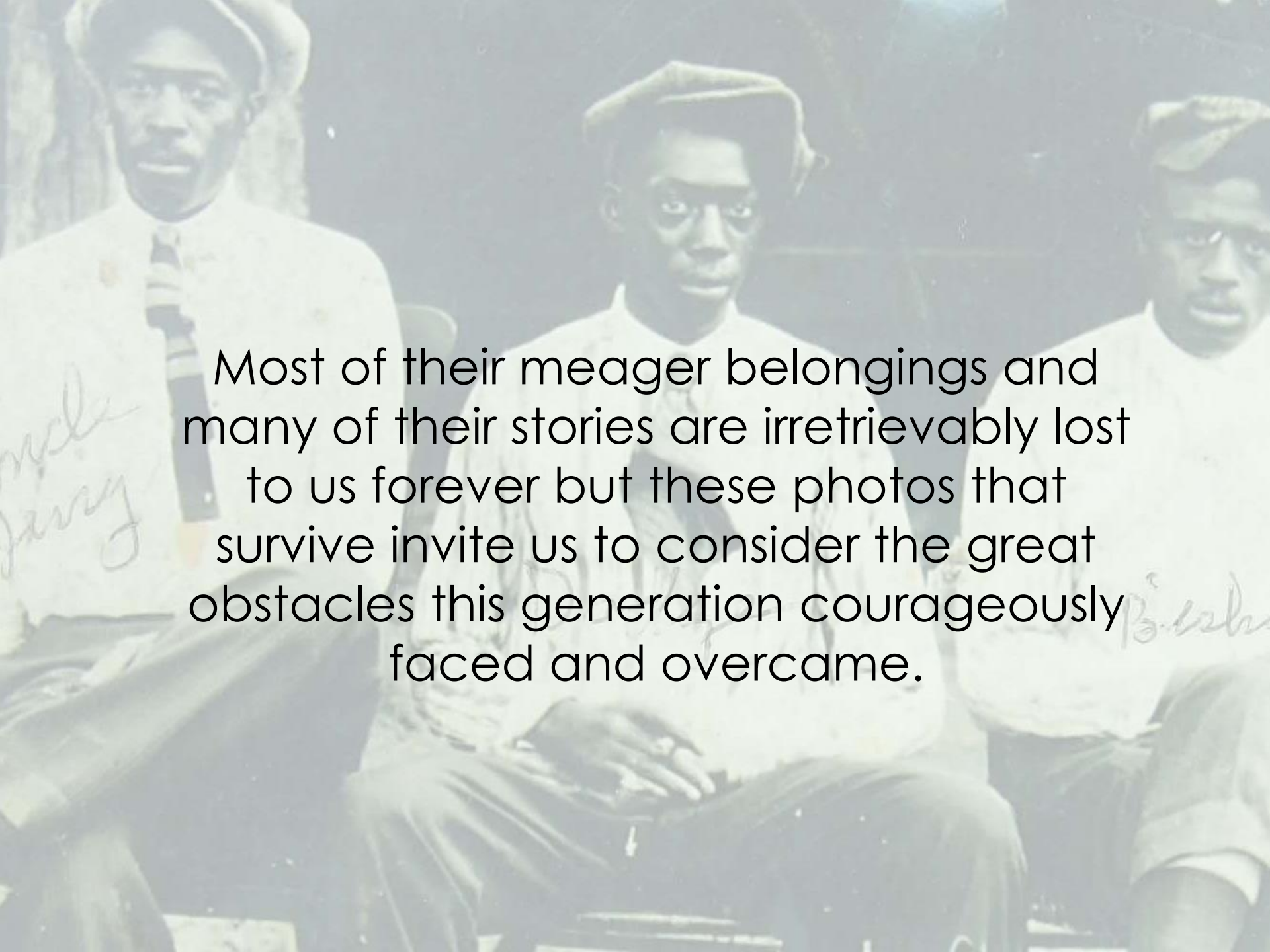
The greatest pull factor may have simply been hope for something better in a new place. A steady job, a decent home or somewhere to start over were strong incentives for a people denied a basic sense of security for generations.



Some moved North directly while others migrated to larger cities closeby or other Southern states first. In the end, the numbers probably exceeded one million and it changed the face of Northern cities and the rural South alike.

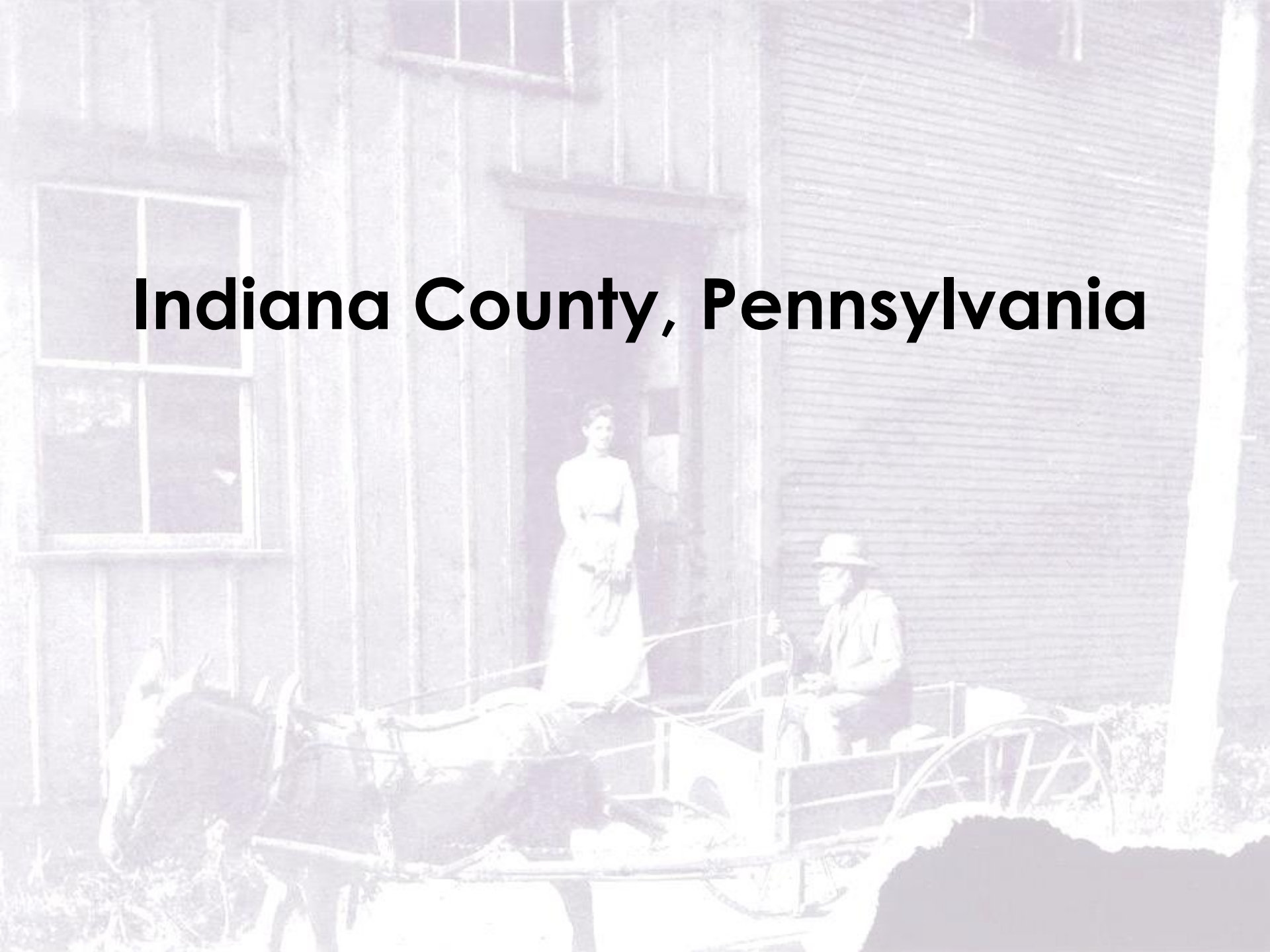


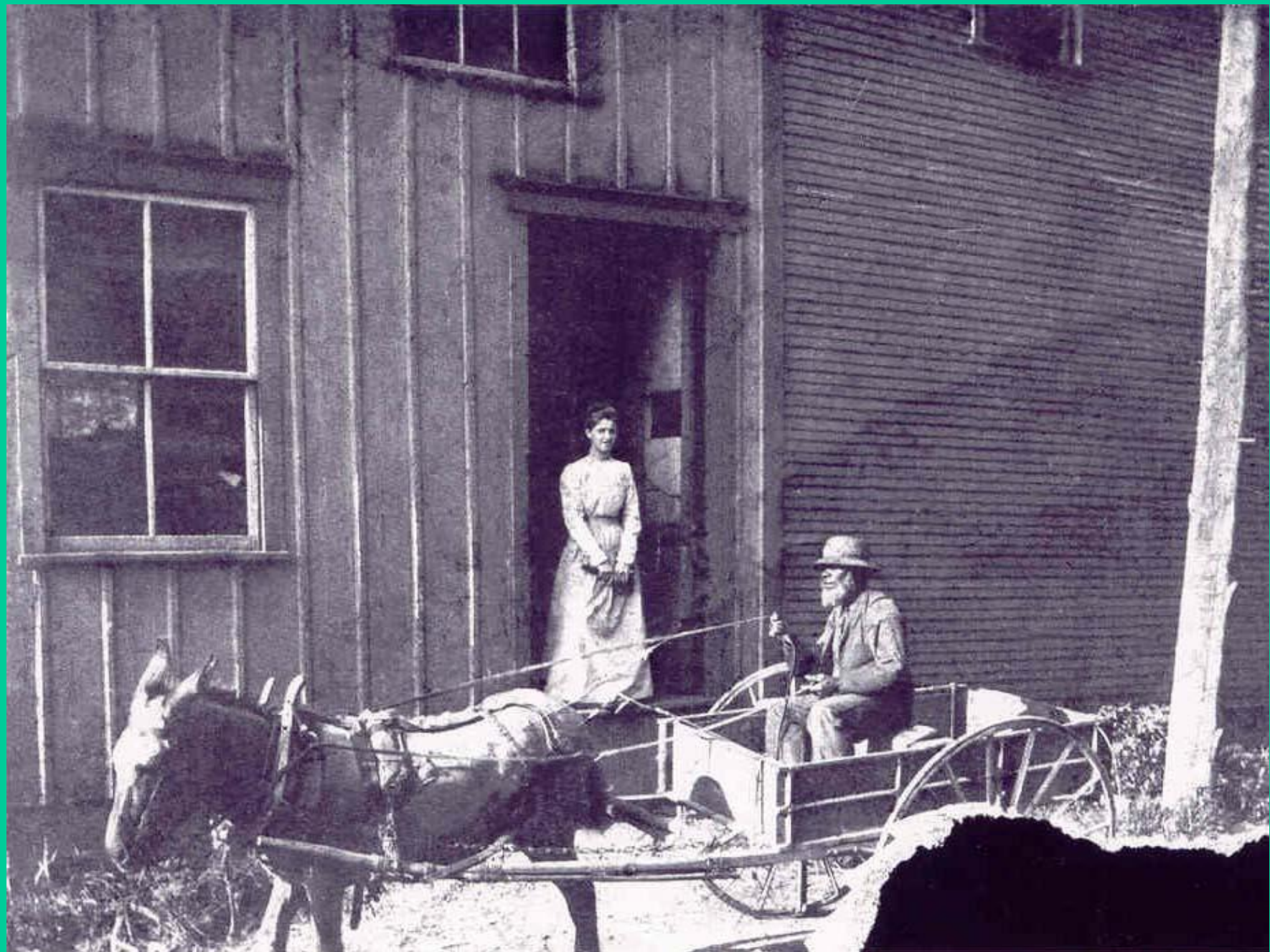
Each person that came North did so for their own reasons but the result was a significant social movement that soon became known as “The Great Migration”.



Most of their meager belongings and many of their stories are irretrievably lost to us forever but these photos that survive invite us to consider the great obstacles this generation courageously faced and overcame.

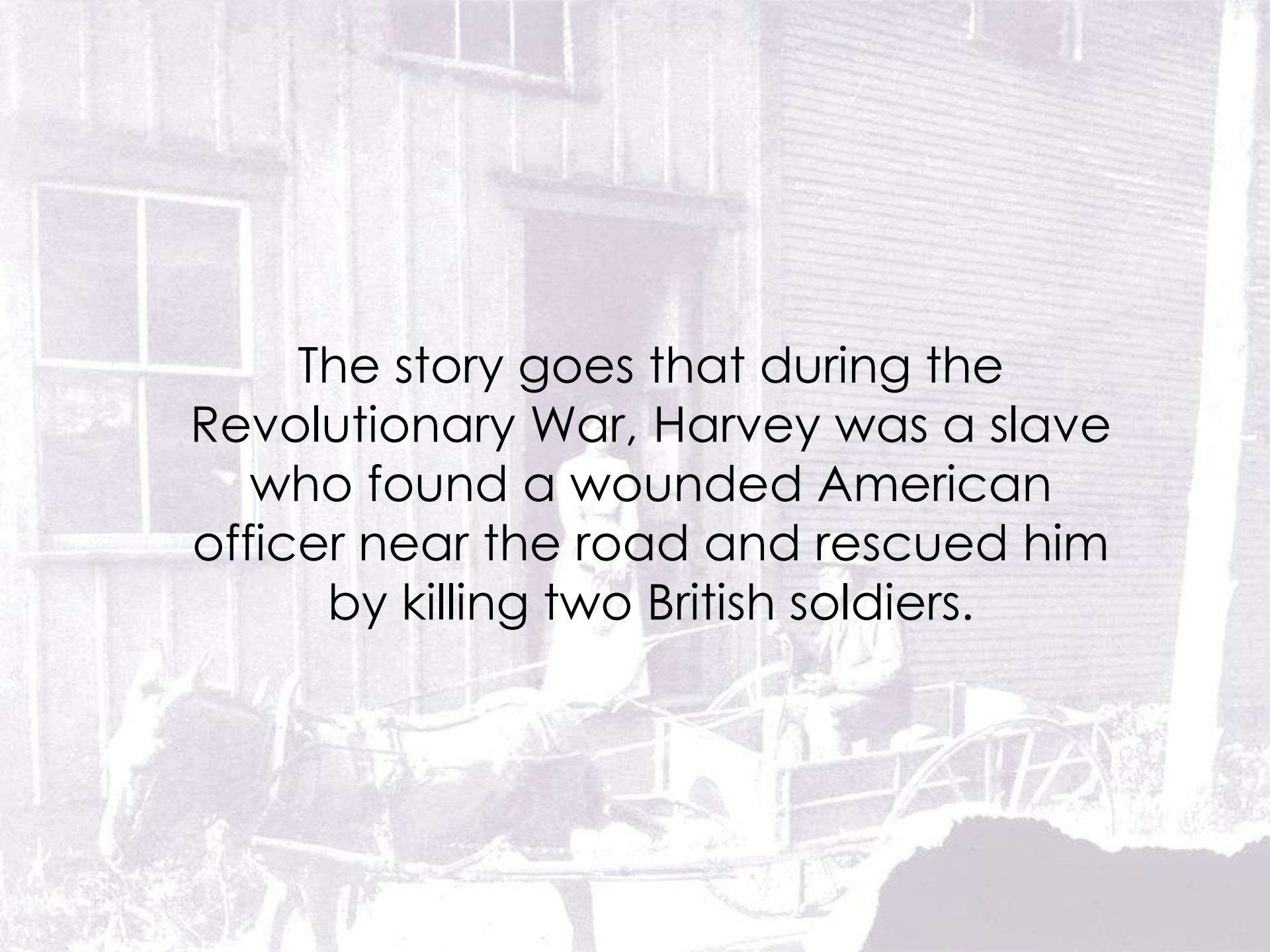
Indiana County, Pennsylvania






A historical black and white photograph showing a man and a woman on a horse-drawn wagon. The man is seated on the wagon, holding the reins, while the woman stands behind him. The wagon is pulled by a horse and is positioned in front of a large, two-story wooden building with a window and a doorway. The scene is set outdoors, with a tree trunk visible on the right side of the frame.

According to tradition, John Harvey
was the first Black settler in Indiana
County even before the county itself
was fully defined in 1803.

A historical black and white photograph showing a horse-drawn wagon in front of a wooden building. The wagon is pulled by a dark horse and carries a person lying down, likely a wounded officer. A driver is seated at the front of the wagon. The building behind them has a window and a doorway. The scene is set outdoors, possibly near a road.

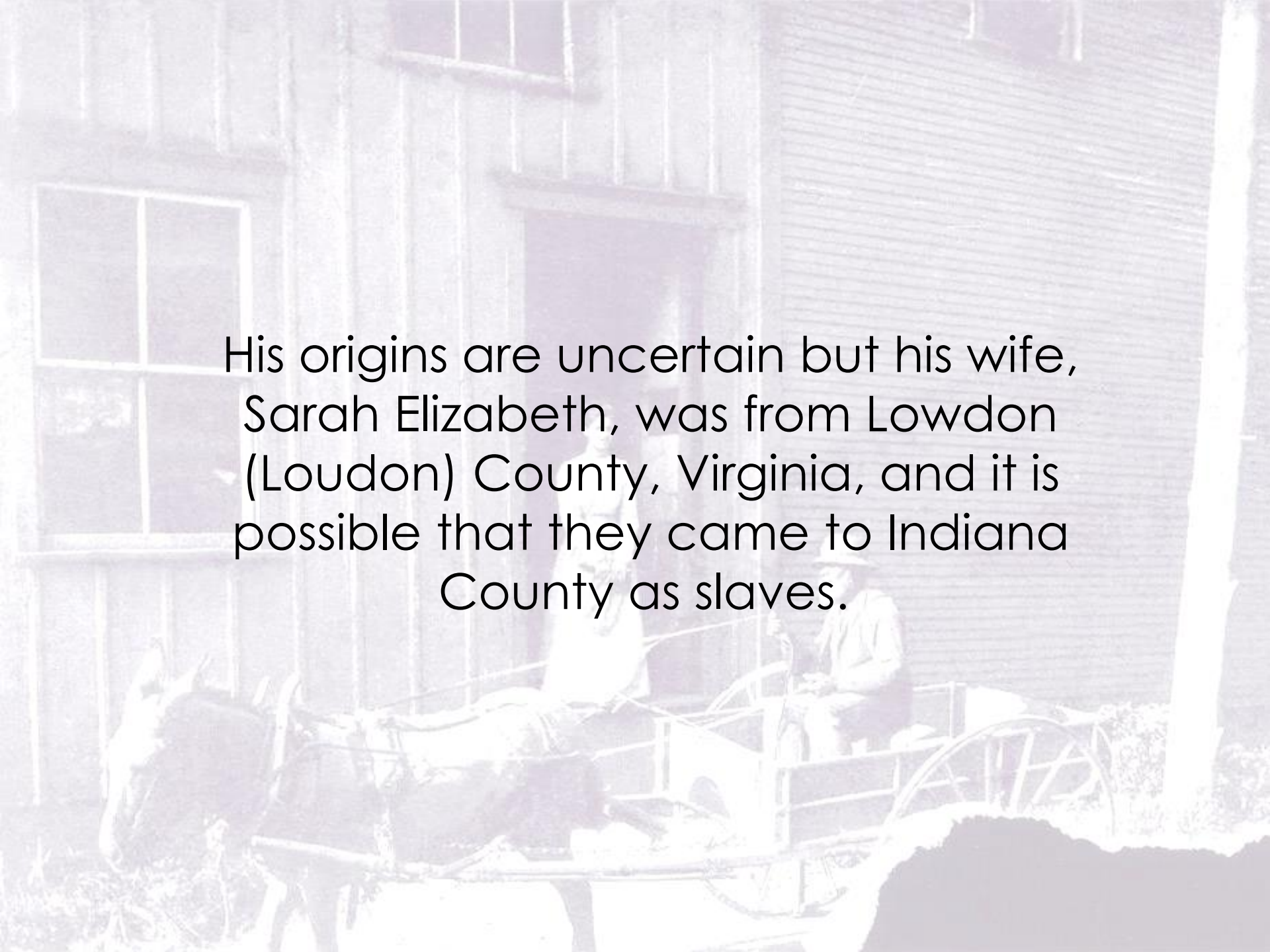
The story goes that during the Revolutionary War, Harvey was a slave who found a wounded American officer near the road and rescued him by killing two British soldiers.

A faded, sepia-toned historical photograph of a wooden building, likely a barn or farmhouse, with a horse-drawn wagon in front. The wagon is pulled by a team of horses. A person is visible standing near the entrance of the building. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent text box.

Indiana County also served as a stop on the Underground Railroad and there was a small African American population already in place by the time people began to arrive from the South during the years of The Great Migration.

A black and white photograph showing a man, identified as Frank Jennings, driving a horse-drawn wagon. The wagon is pulled by a team of horses and is positioned in front of a large, multi-story wooden building with vertical siding and a window. The man is seated on the wagon, holding the reins. The scene is set outdoors, with a tree trunk visible on the right side of the frame.

Frank Jennings (pictured driving the wagon) lived in the east end of Indiana near the schoolhouse on the way to Clymer.

A faded, sepia-toned historical photograph showing a man and a woman on a horse-drawn wagon. The man is seated on the right side of the wagon, wearing a hat and a light-colored shirt, holding the reins. The woman is seated on the left side, wearing a long dress and a headscarf. The wagon is pulled by a dark horse. In the background, there is a large wooden building with vertical siding and a window with multiple panes. The overall scene suggests a rural or agricultural setting from the late 19th or early 20th century.

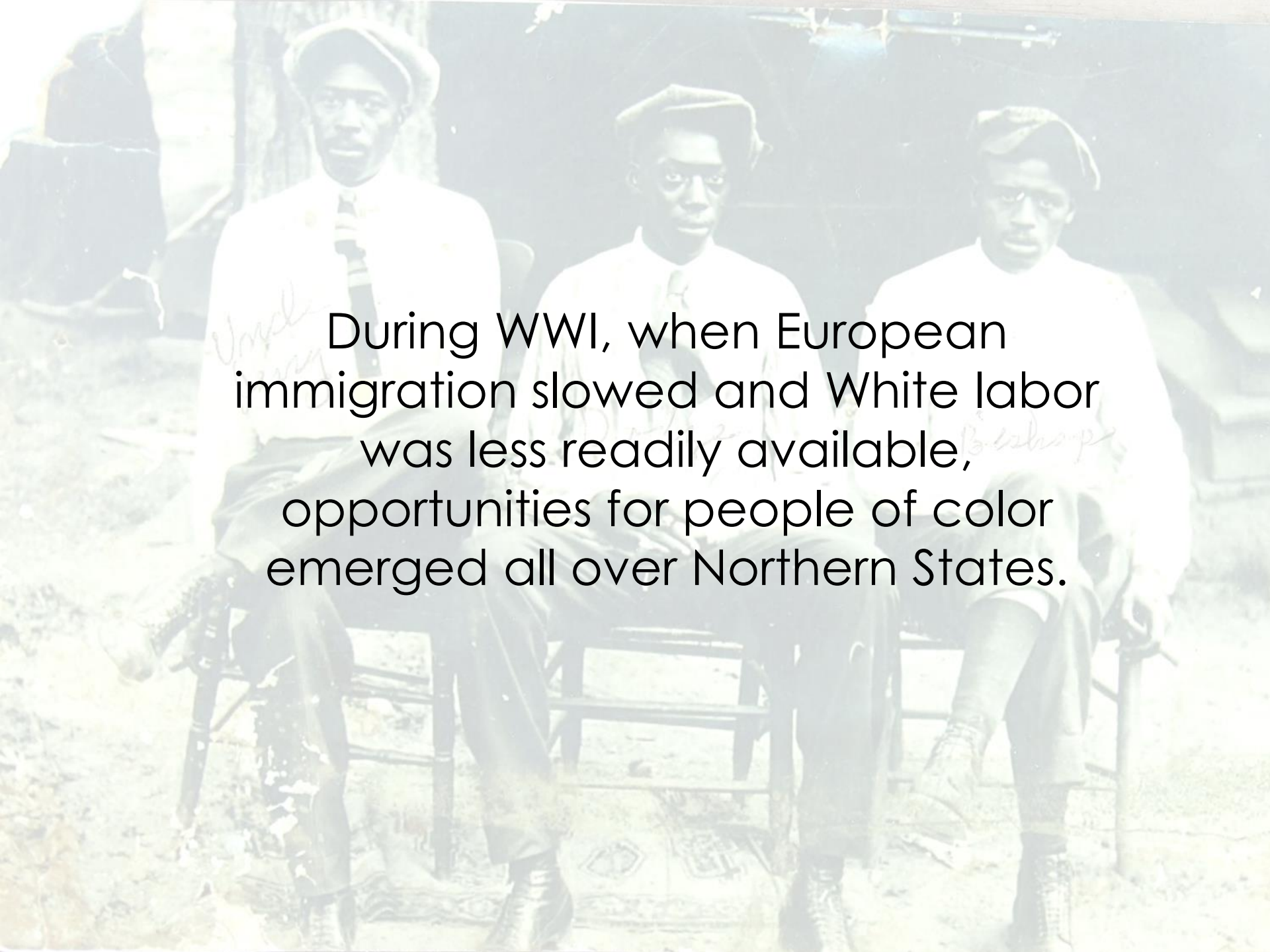
His origins are uncertain but his wife, Sarah Elizabeth, was from Loudon (Loudon) County, Virginia, and it is possible that they came to Indiana County as slaves.



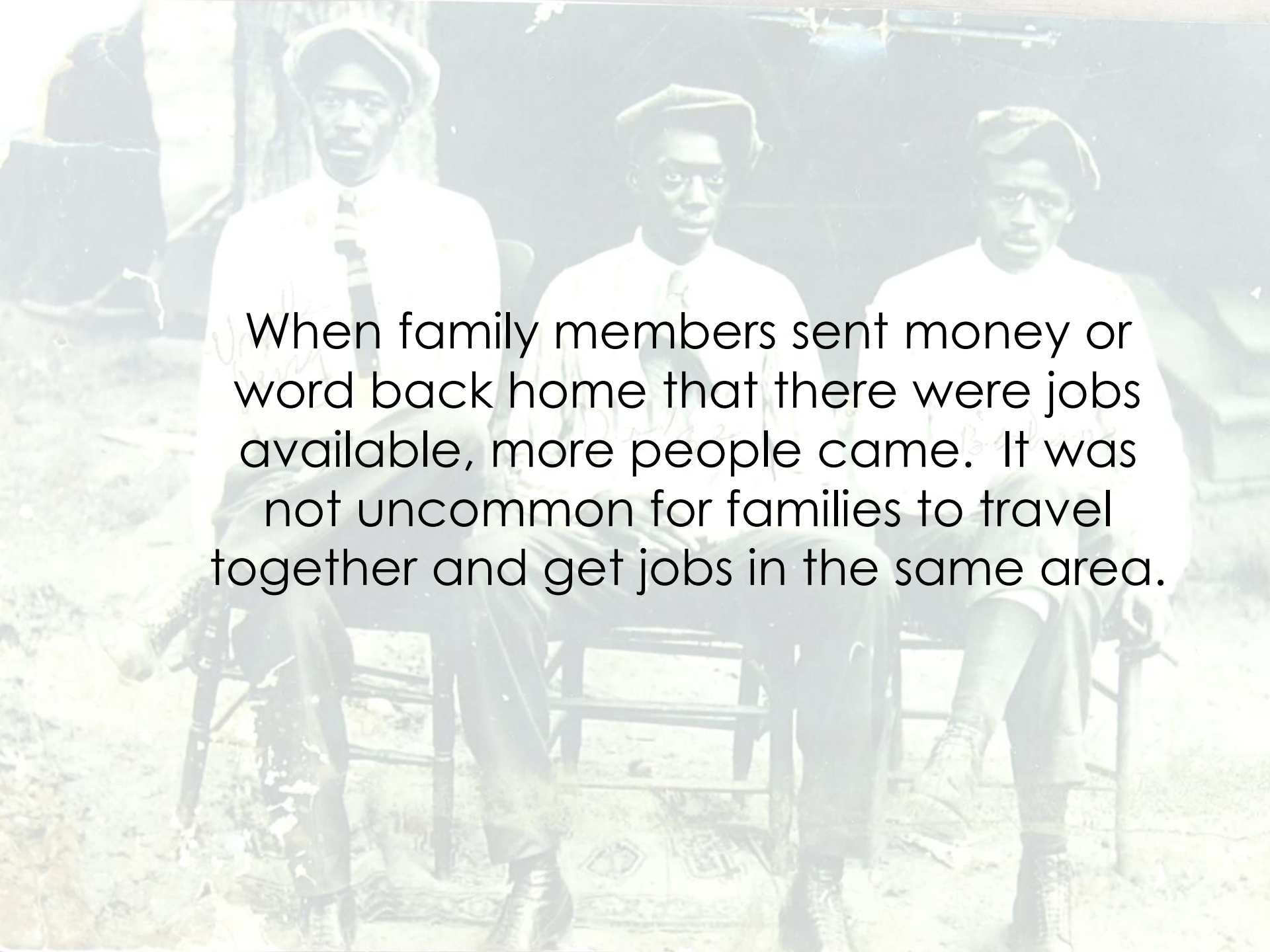
Uncle
Jerry

Dodge

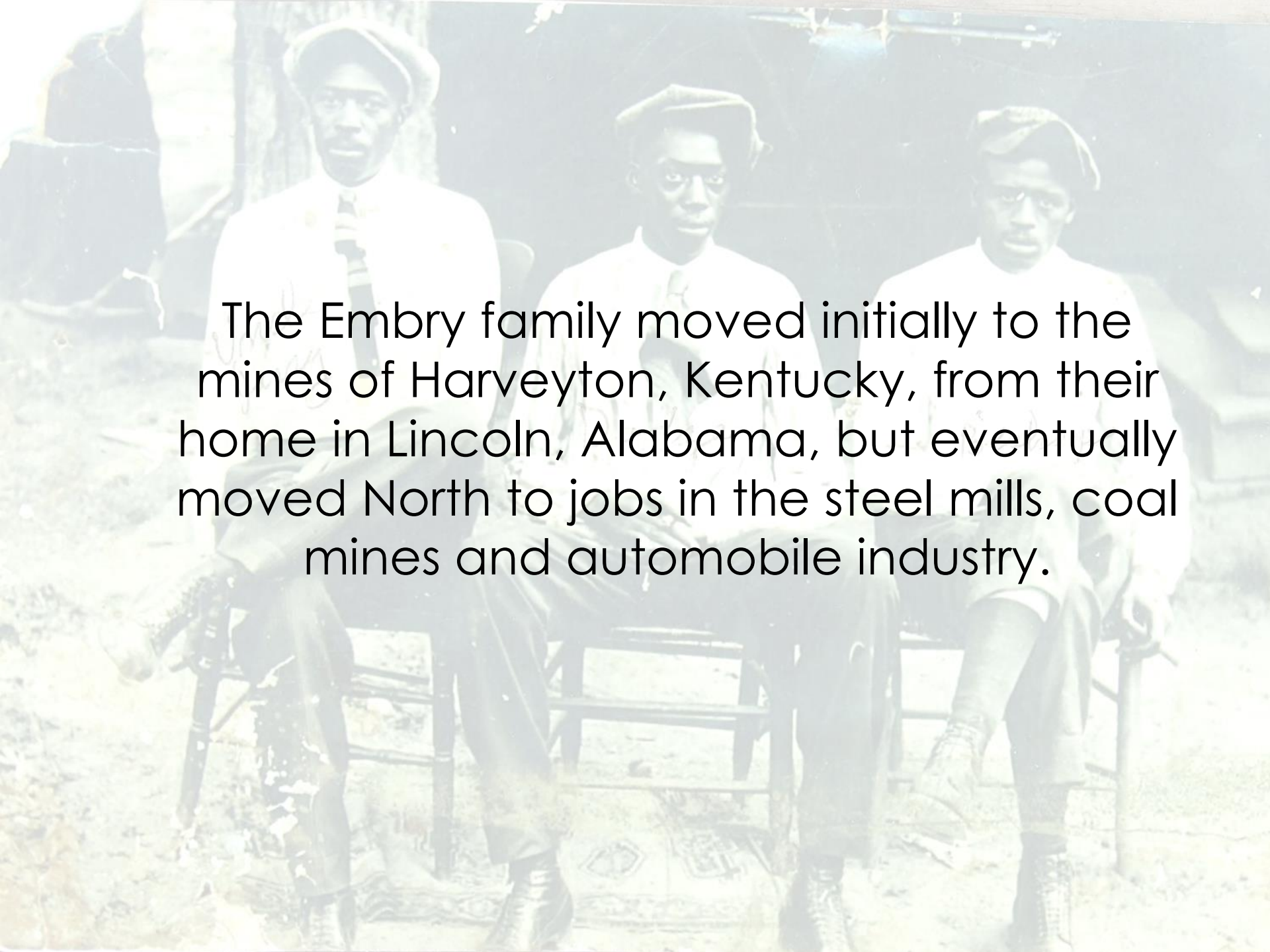
Bishop



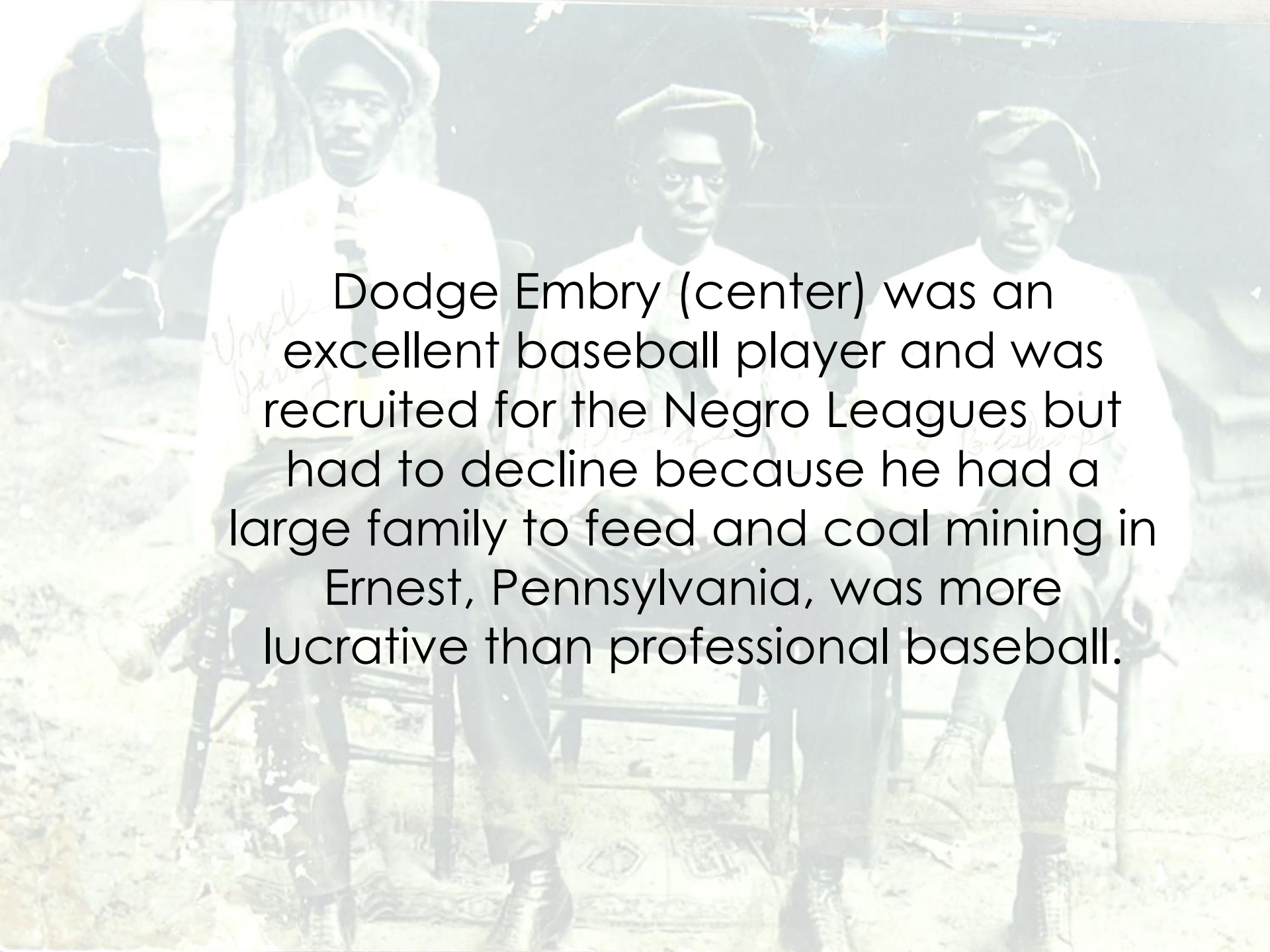
During WWI, when European immigration slowed and White labor was less readily available, opportunities for people of color emerged all over Northern States.




When family members sent money or word back home that there were jobs available, more people came. It was not uncommon for families to travel together and get jobs in the same area.



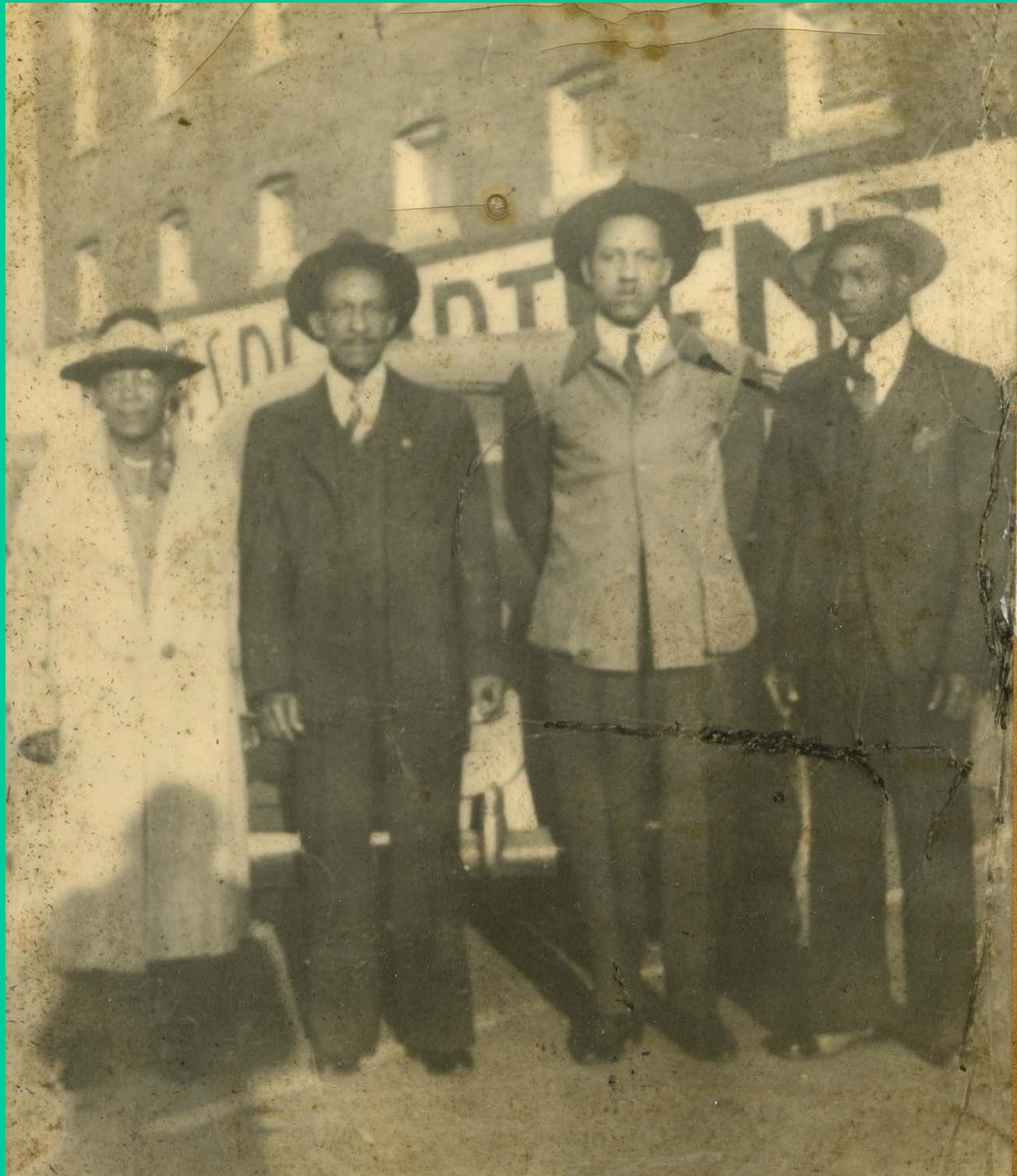
The Embry family moved initially to the mines of Harveyton, Kentucky, from their home in Lincoln, Alabama, but eventually moved North to jobs in the steel mills, coal mines and automobile industry.

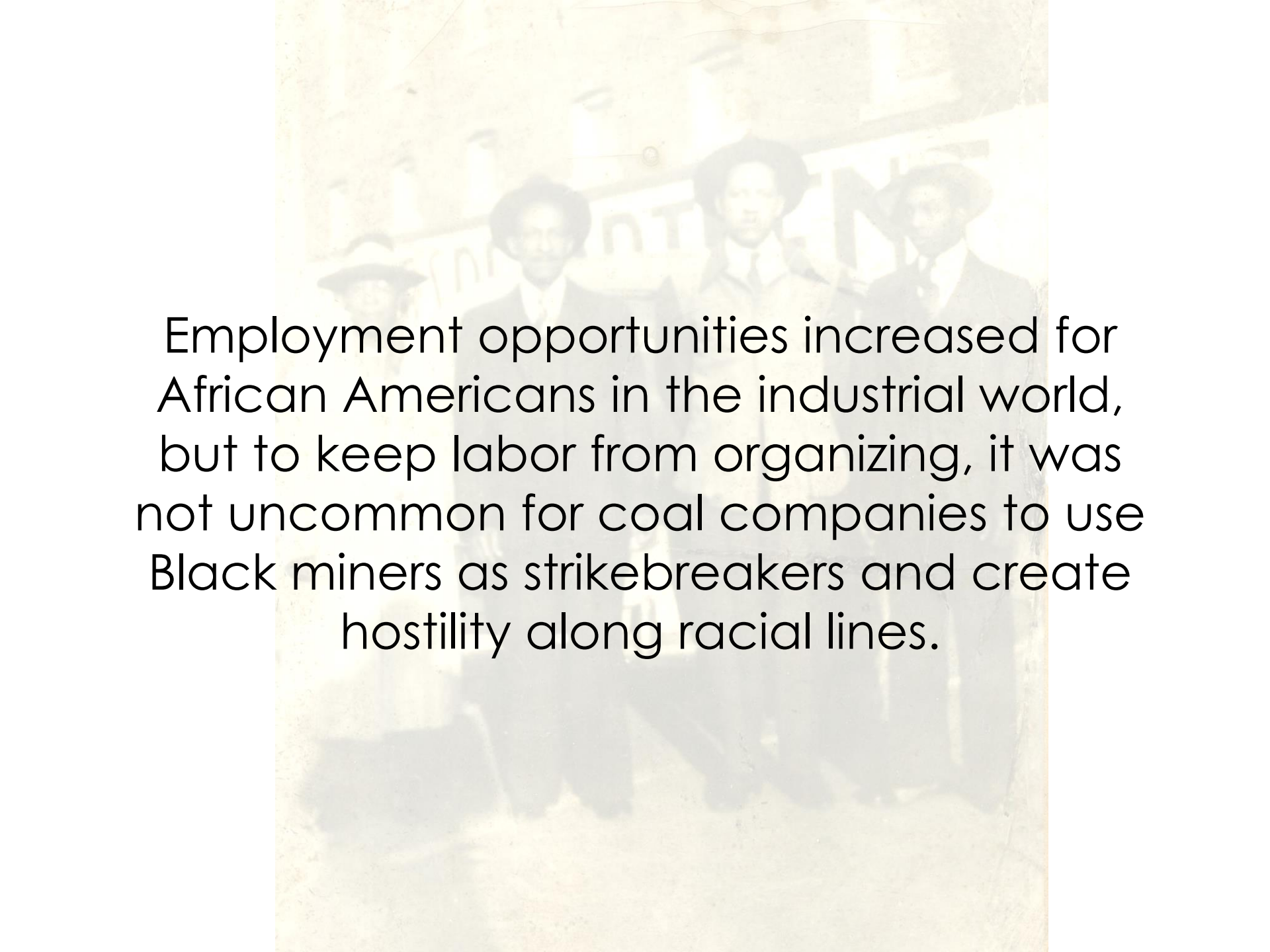


Dodge Embry (center) was an excellent baseball player and was recruited for the Negro Leagues but had to decline because he had a large family to feed and coal mining in Ernest, Pennsylvania, was more lucrative than professional baseball.

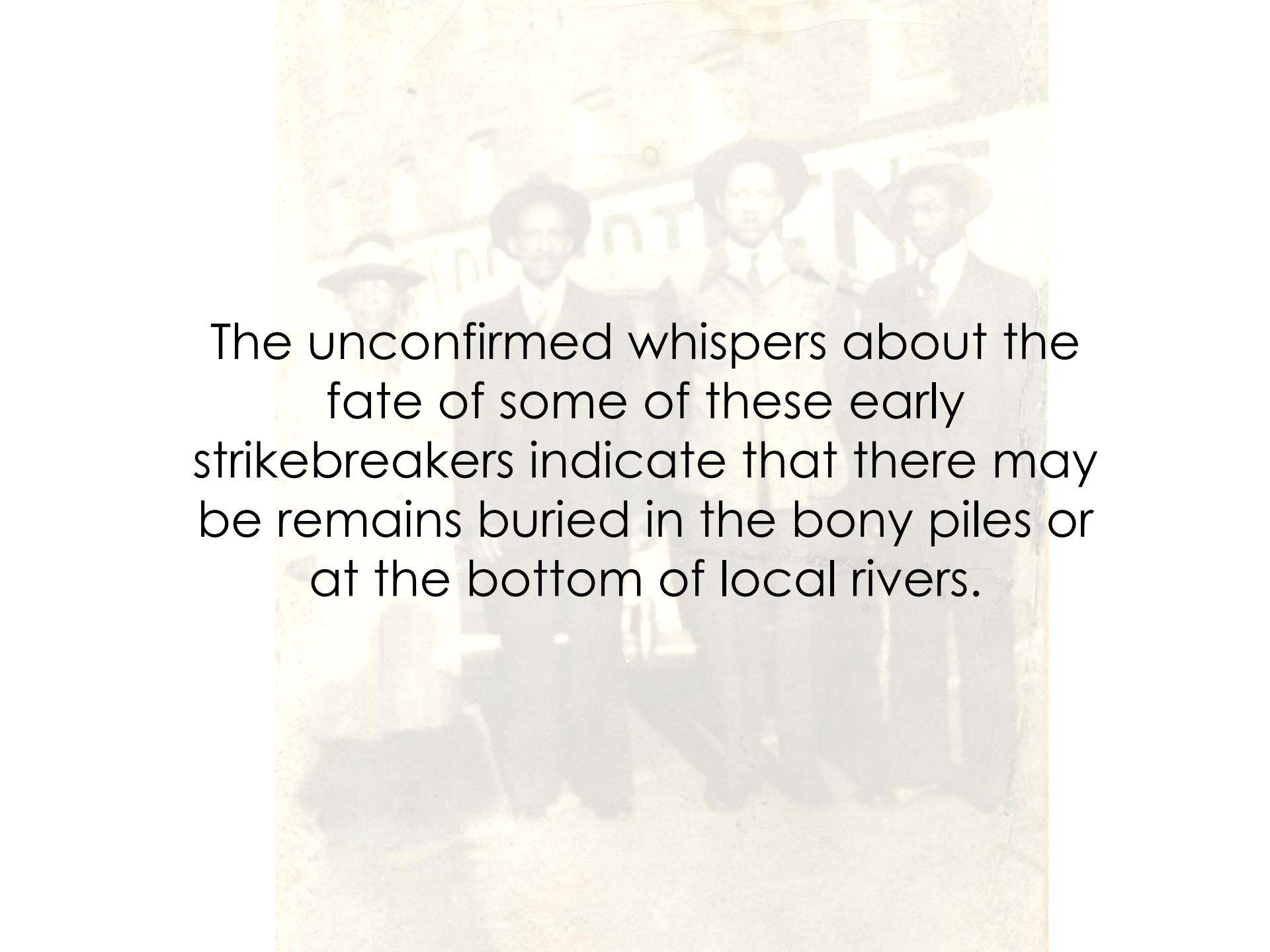


After spending some time in the coal mines, Jerry (left) eventually found work at Bethlehem Steel in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and Bishop (right) worked in the auto industry in Detroit, Michigan.

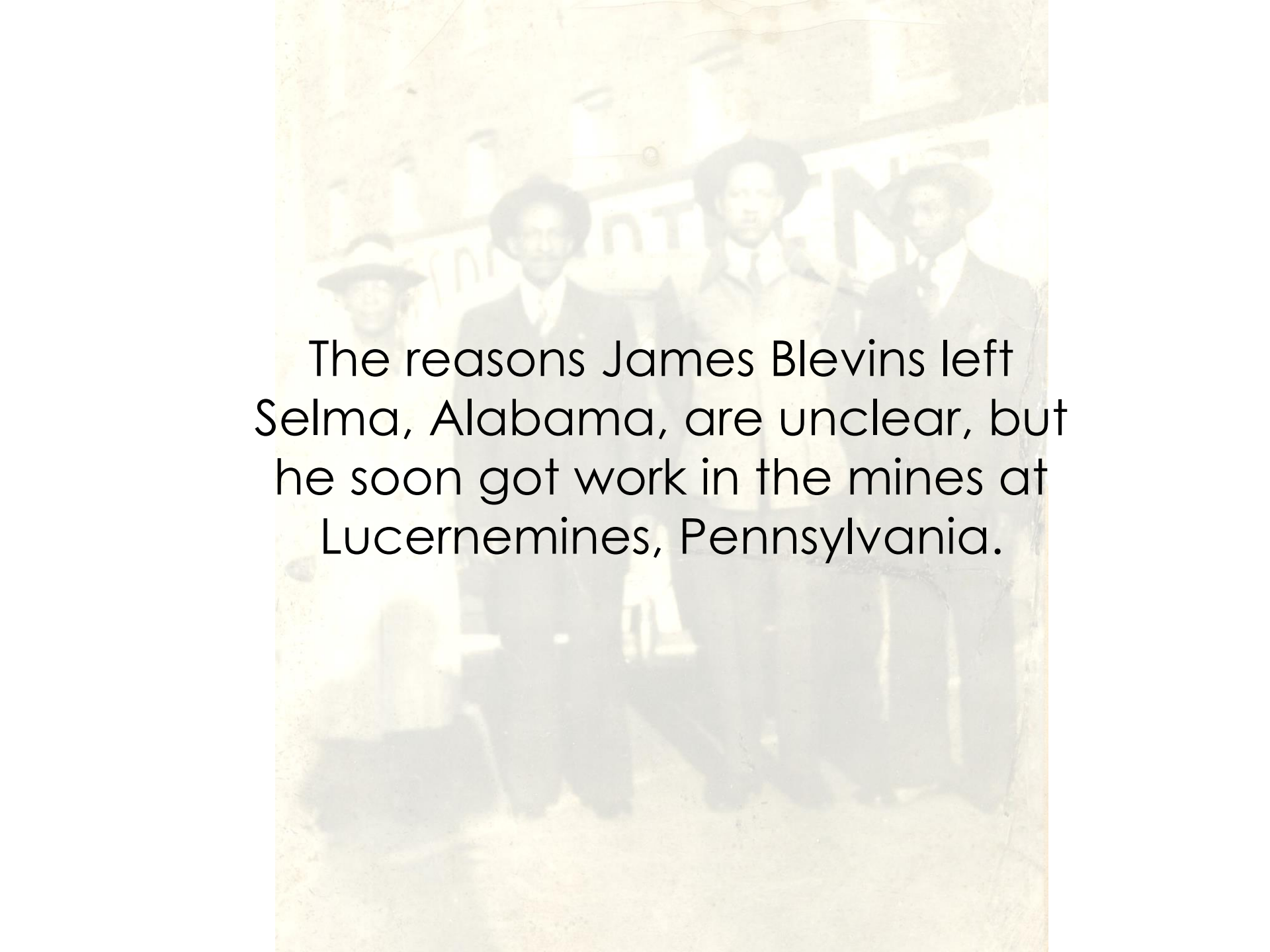




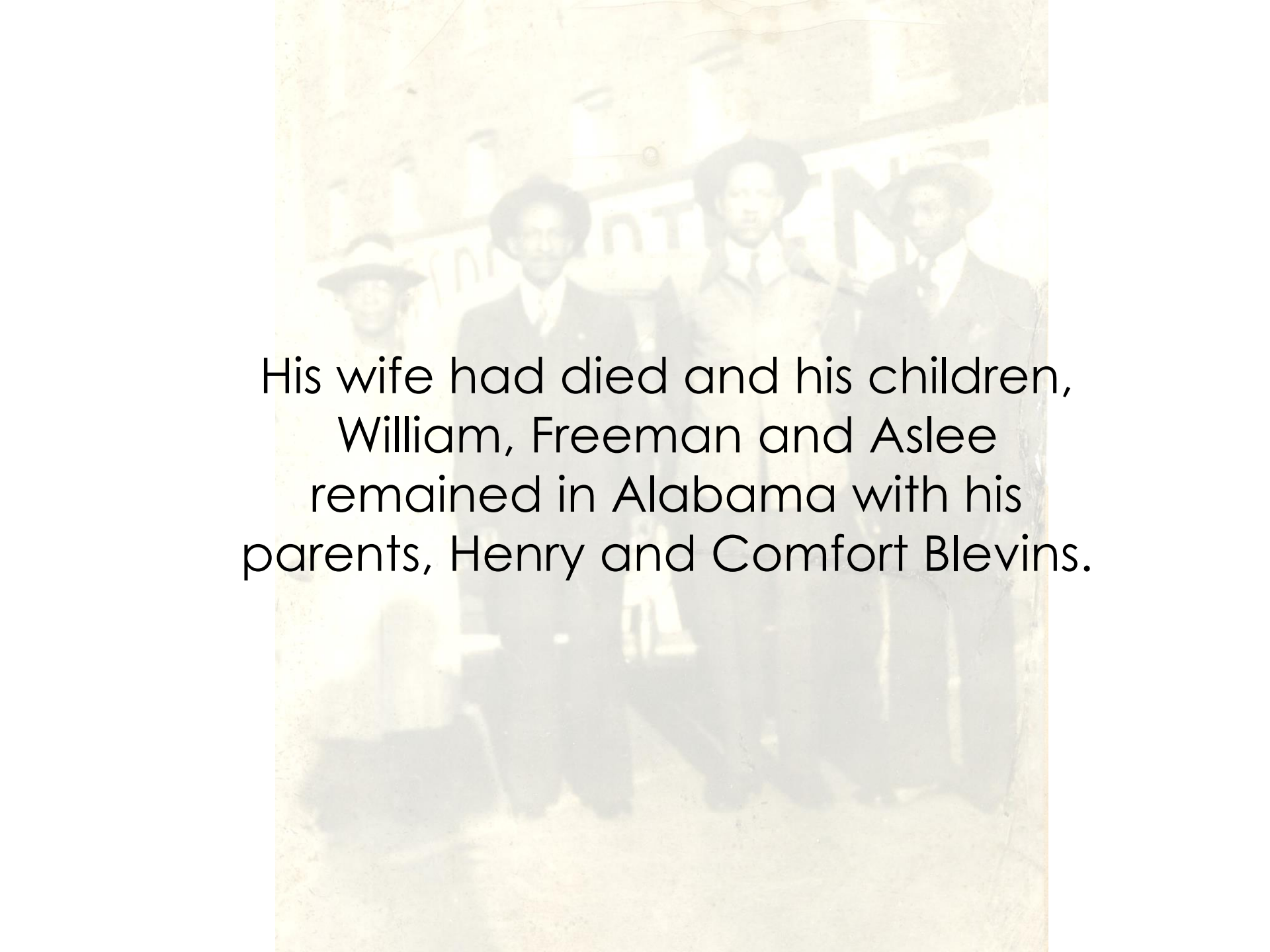
Employment opportunities increased for African Americans in the industrial world, but to keep labor from organizing, it was not uncommon for coal companies to use Black miners as strikebreakers and create hostility along racial lines.



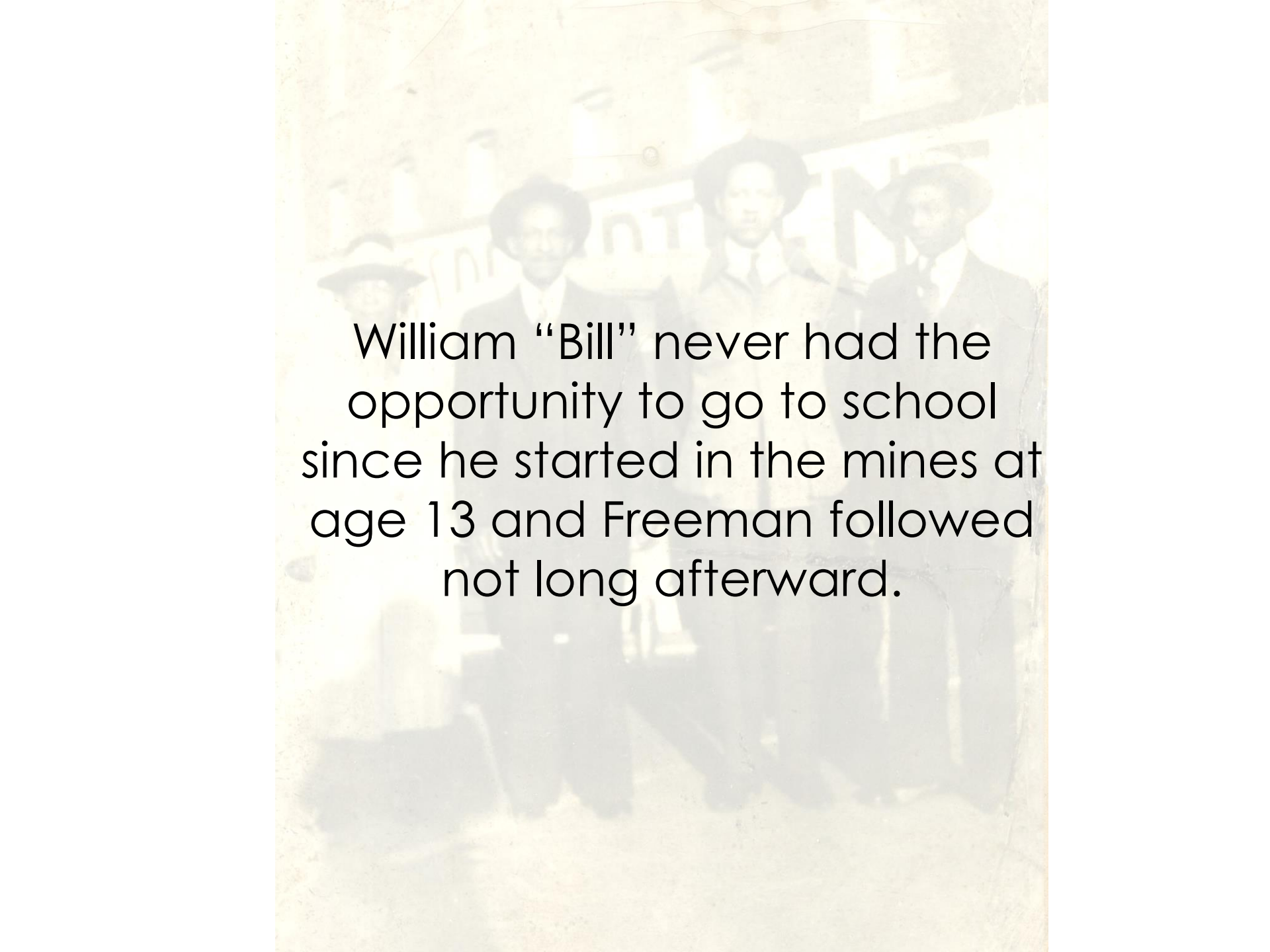
The unconfirmed whispers about the fate of some of these early strikebreakers indicate that there may be remains buried in the bony piles or at the bottom of local rivers.



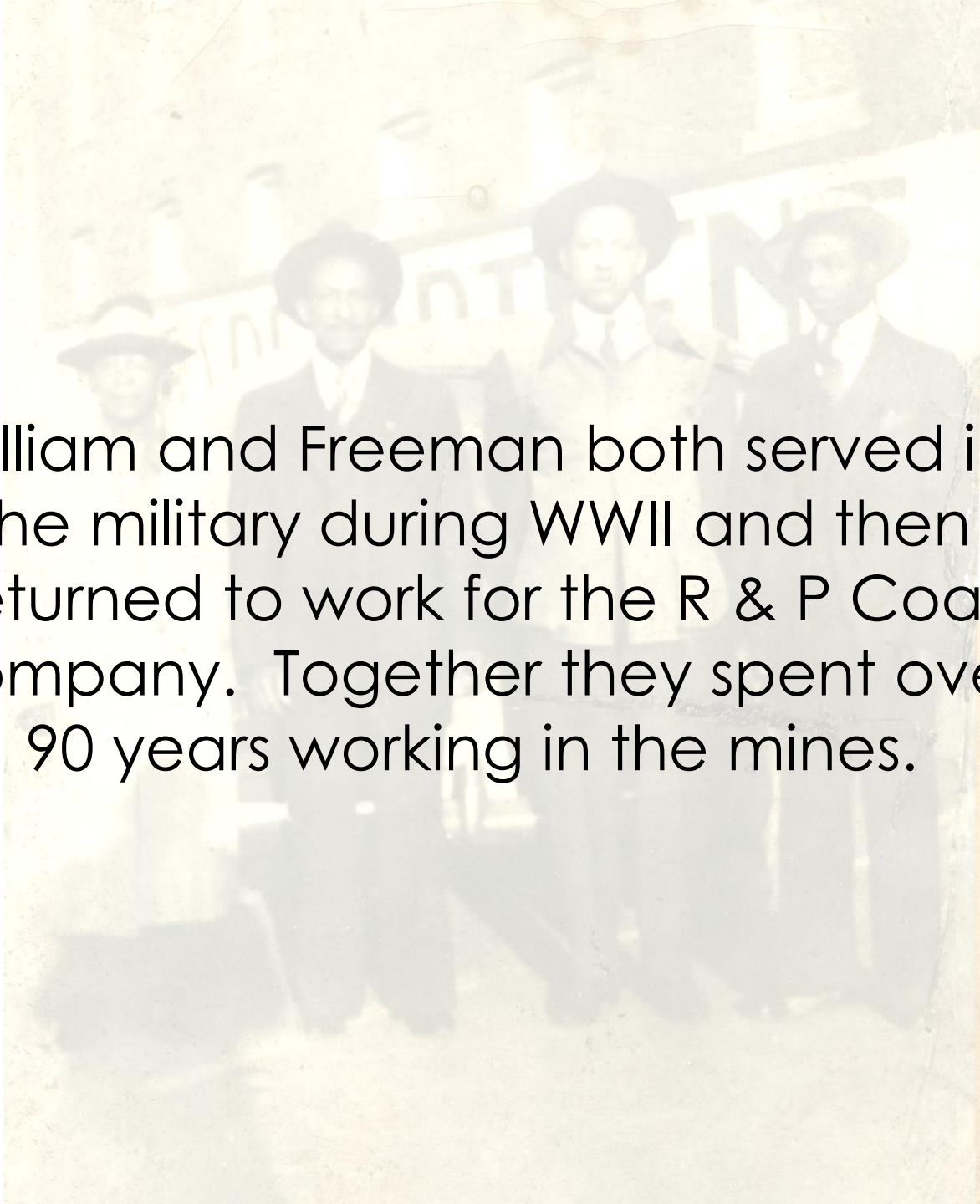
The reasons James Blevins left Selma, Alabama, are unclear, but he soon got work in the mines at Lucernemines, Pennsylvania.



His wife had died and his children,
William, Freeman and Aslee
remained in Alabama with his
parents, Henry and Comfort Blevins.



William “Bill” never had the opportunity to go to school since he started in the mines at age 13 and Freeman followed not long afterward.

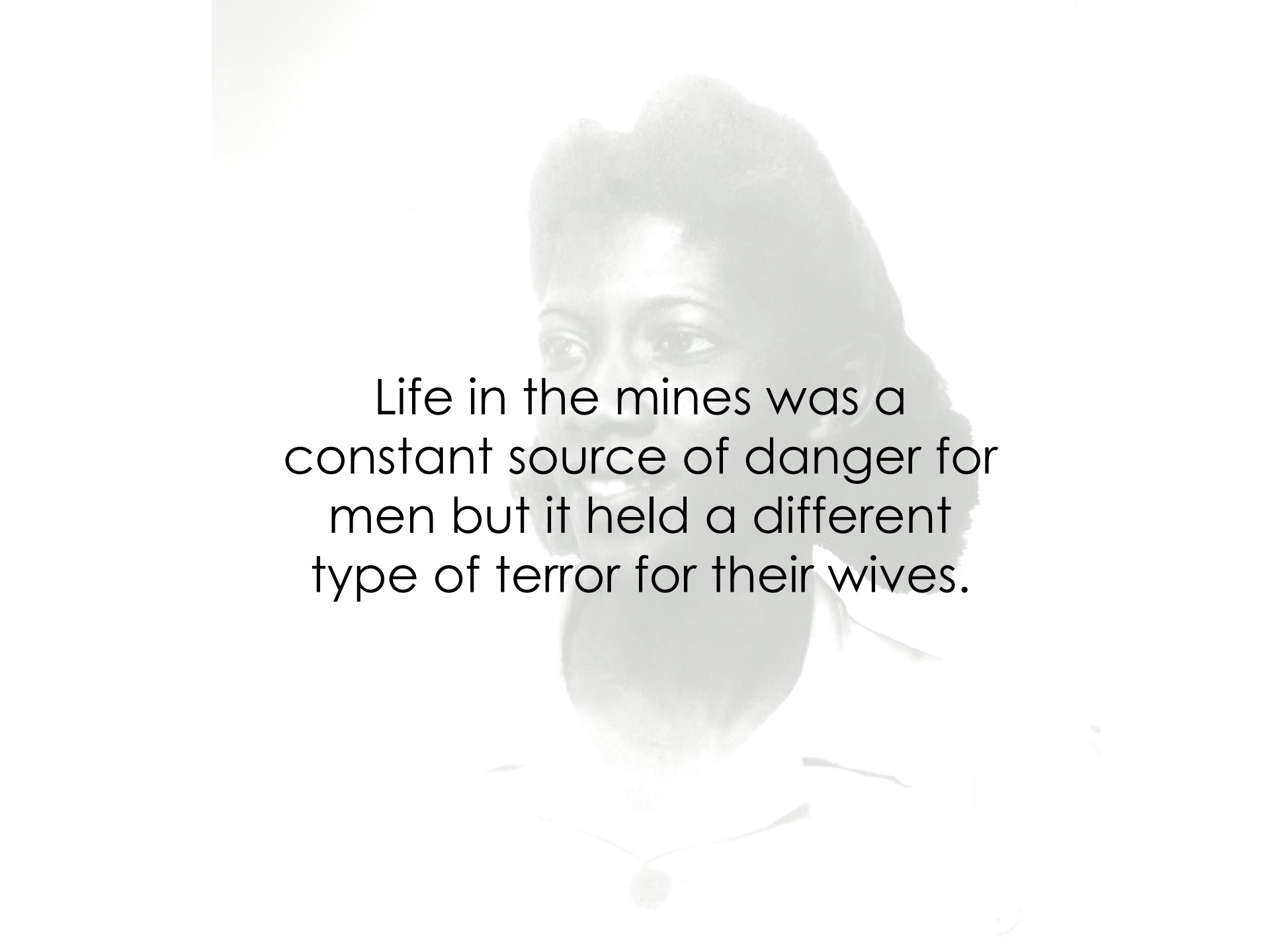
A faded, sepia-toned photograph of four men standing in a row. They are all wearing dark suits, white shirts, and dark ties. The man on the far left is wearing a light-colored hat. The man in the center is wearing a dark hat. The man on the far right is wearing a dark hat. They are standing in front of a building with a sign that partially reads "MINE".

William and Freeman both served in the military during WWII and then returned to work for the R & P Coal Company. Together they spent over 90 years working in the mines.

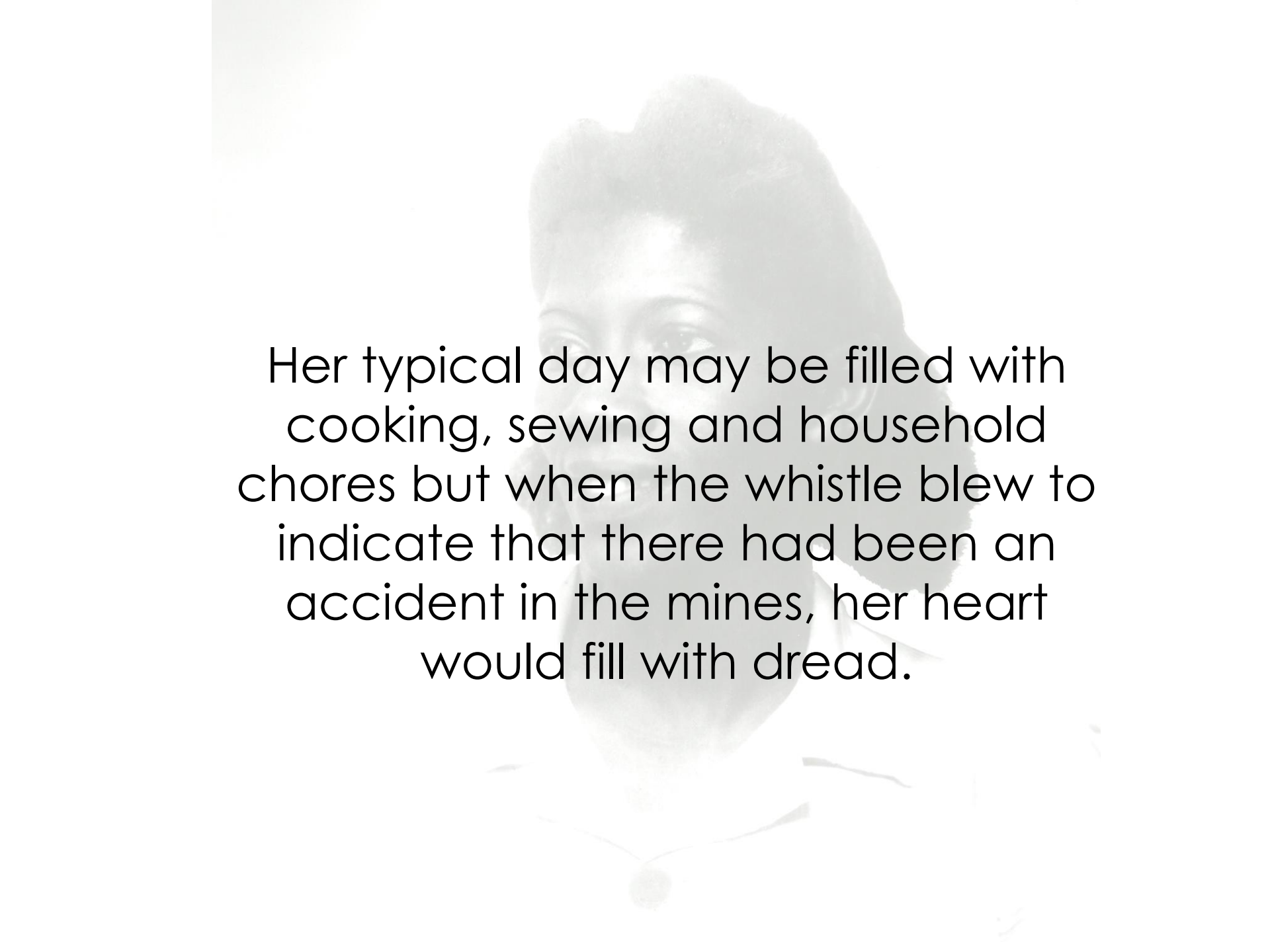


Pictured here (left to right) are
James's second wife, James,
William and Freeman Blevins.

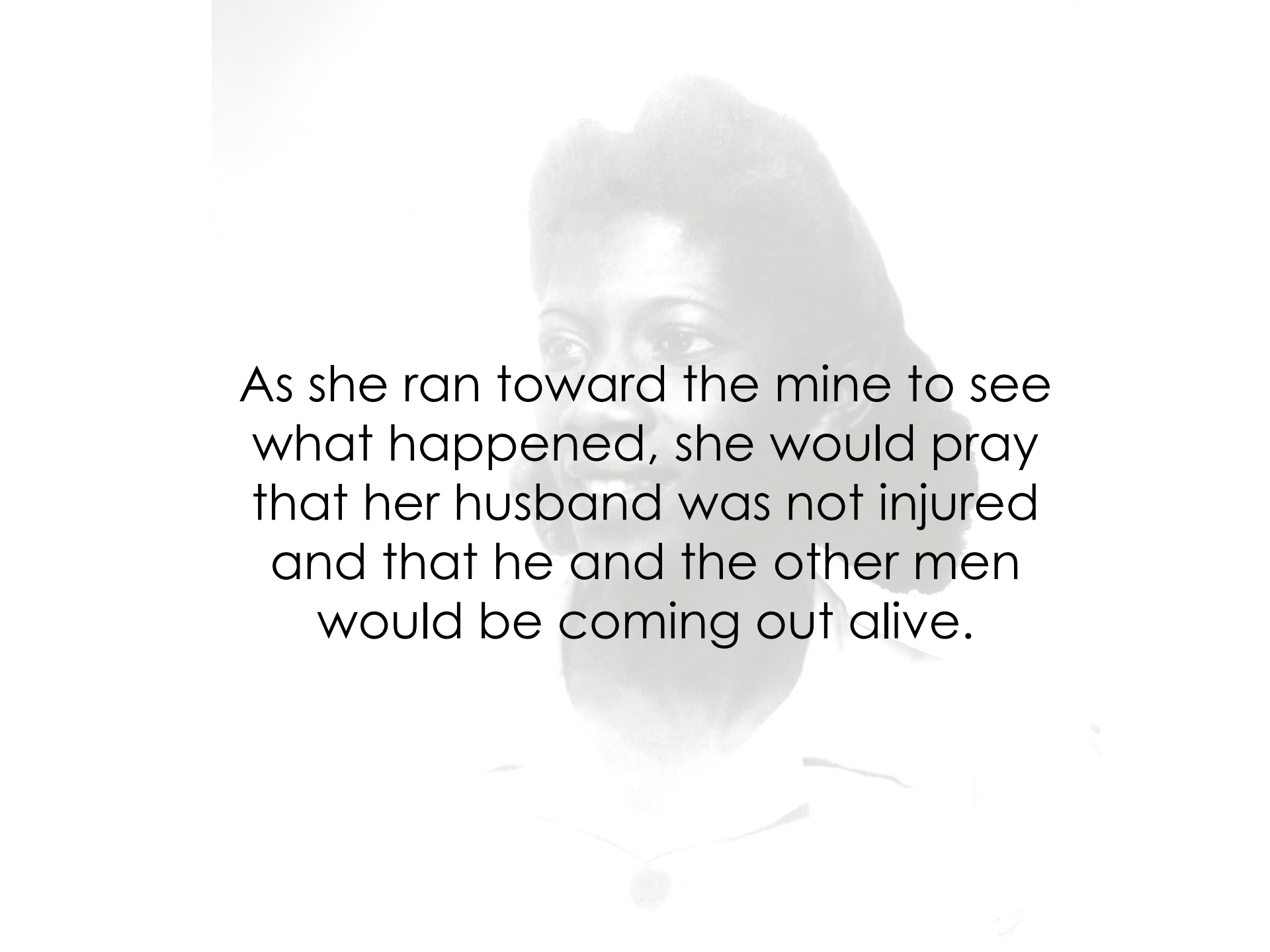




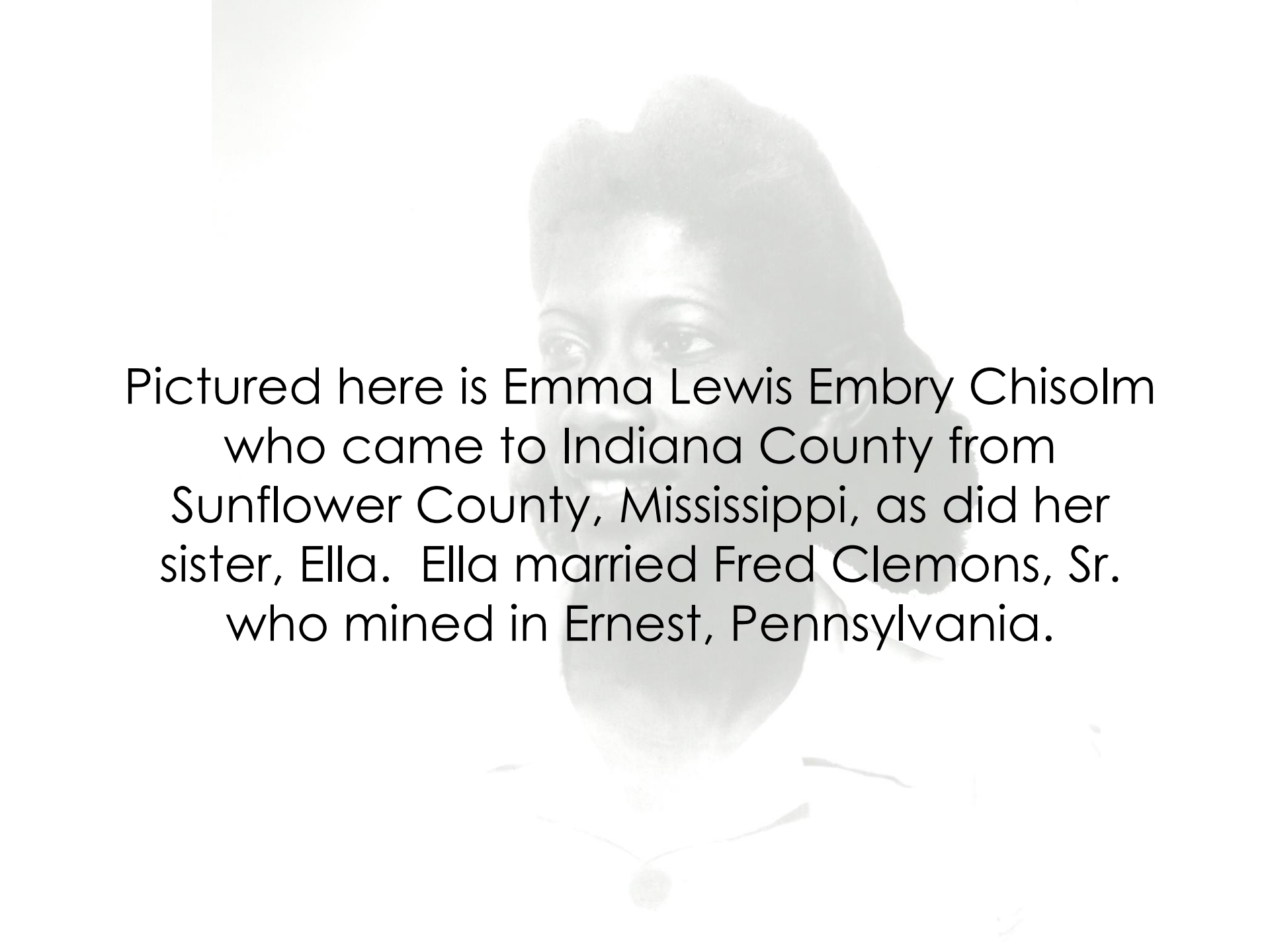
Life in the mines was a constant source of danger for men but it held a different type of terror for their wives.



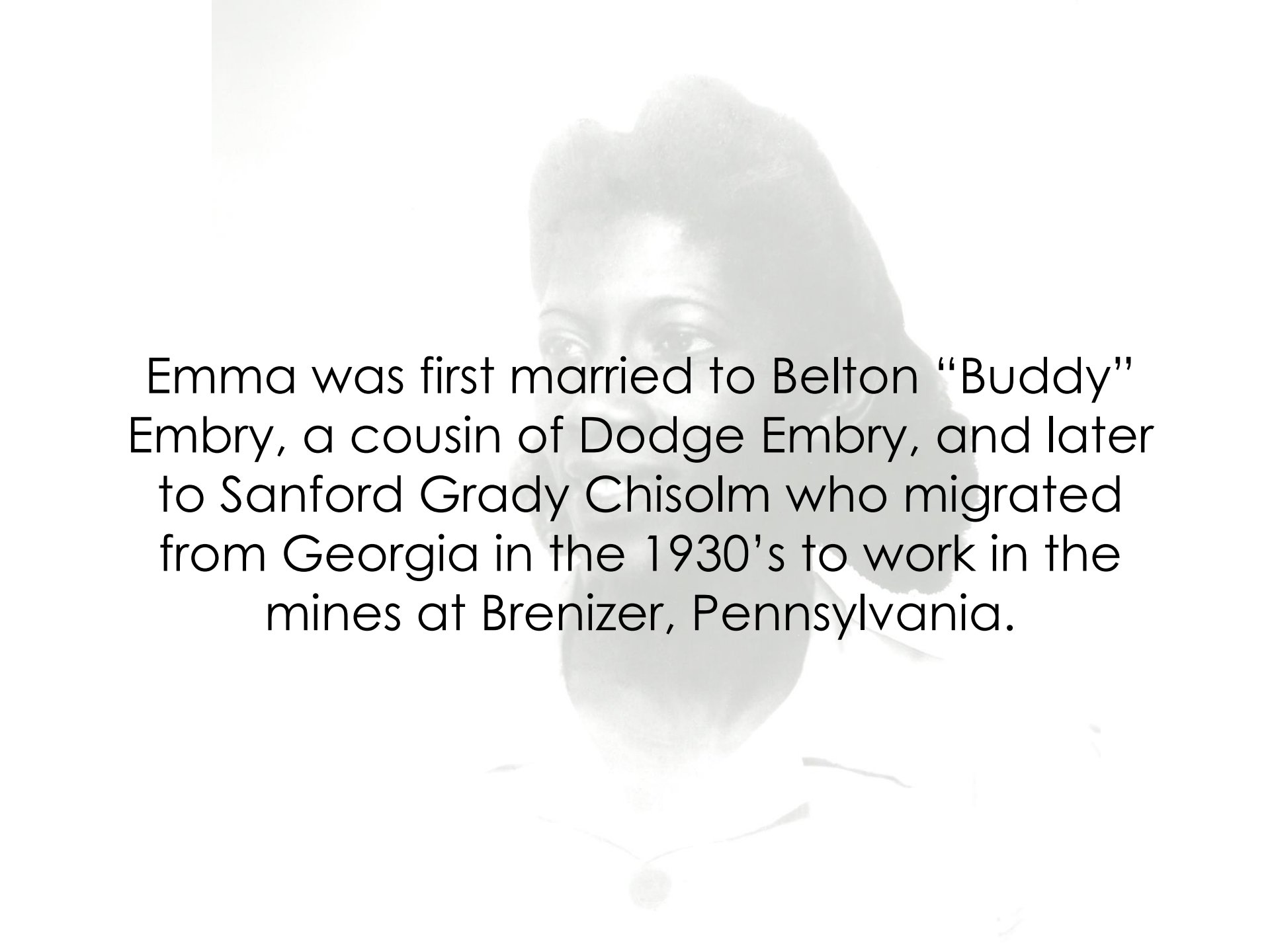
Her typical day may be filled with cooking, sewing and household chores but when the whistle blew to indicate that there had been an accident in the mines, her heart would fill with dread.



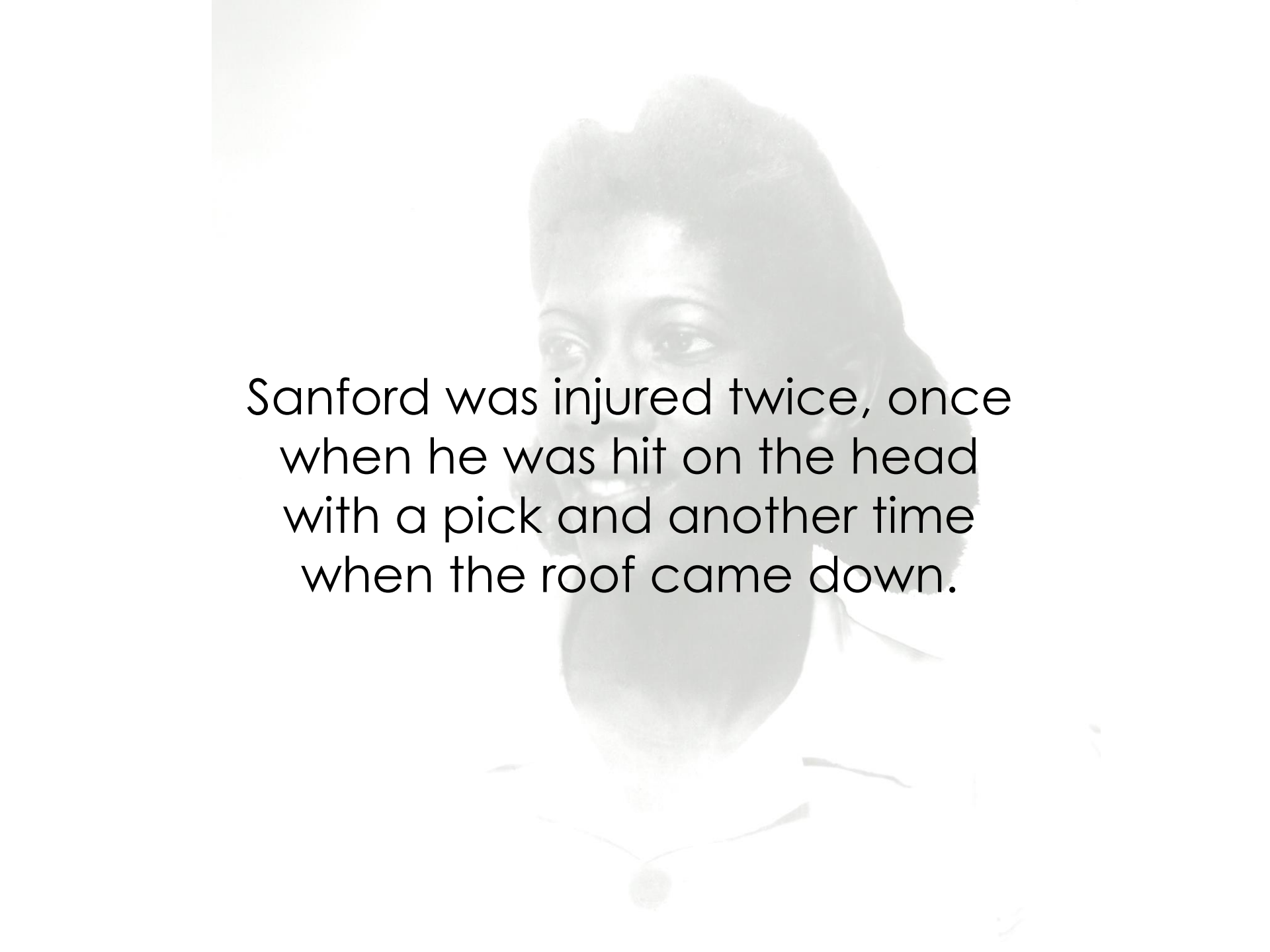
As she ran toward the mine to see what happened, she would pray that her husband was not injured and that he and the other men would be coming out alive.



Pictured here is Emma Lewis Embry Chisolm who came to Indiana County from Sunflower County, Mississippi, as did her sister, Ella. Ella married Fred Clemons, Sr. who mined in Ernest, Pennsylvania.

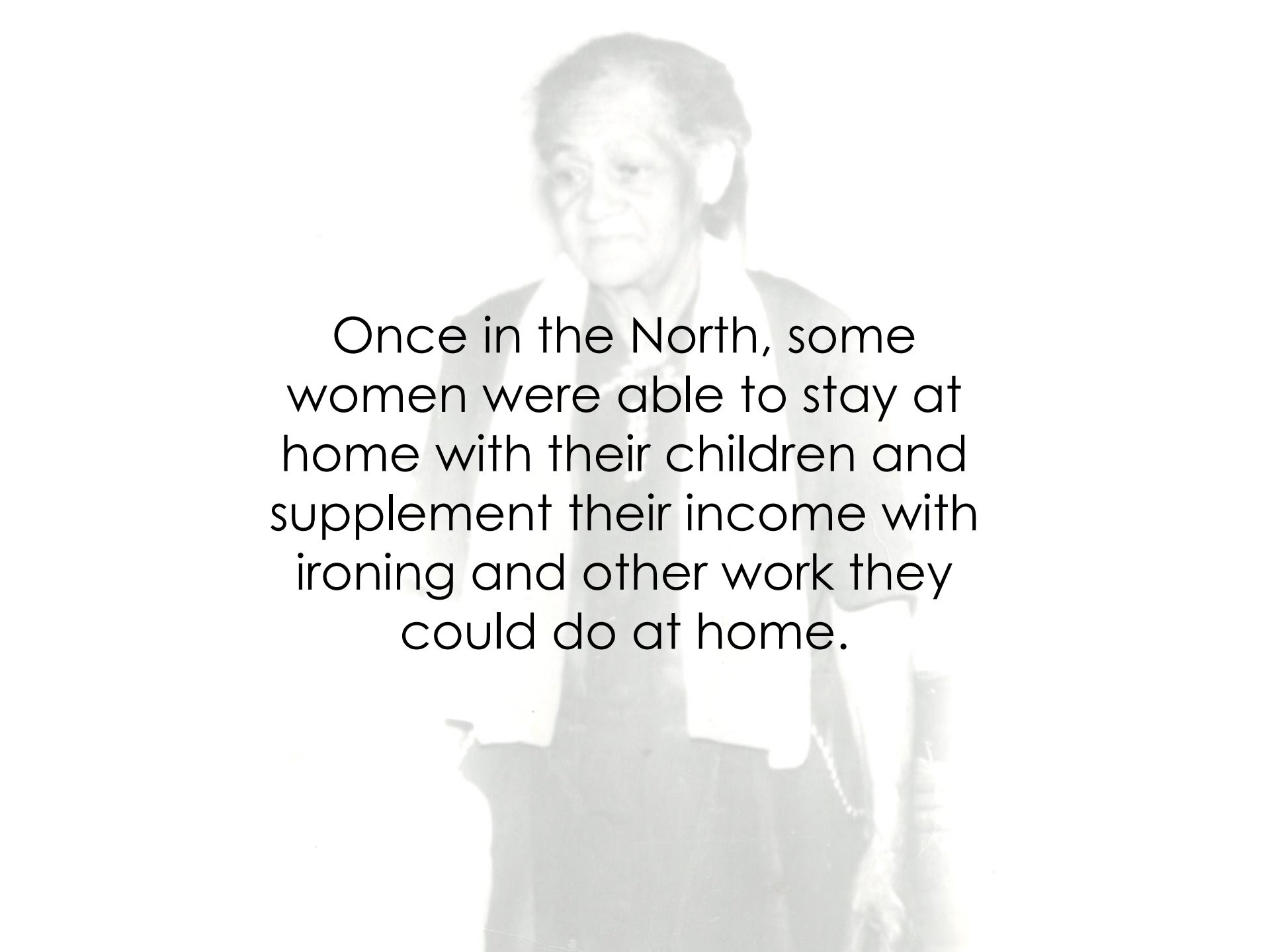


Emma was first married to Belton “Buddy” Embry, a cousin of Dodge Embry, and later to Sanford Grady Chisolm who migrated from Georgia in the 1930’s to work in the mines at Brenizer, Pennsylvania.

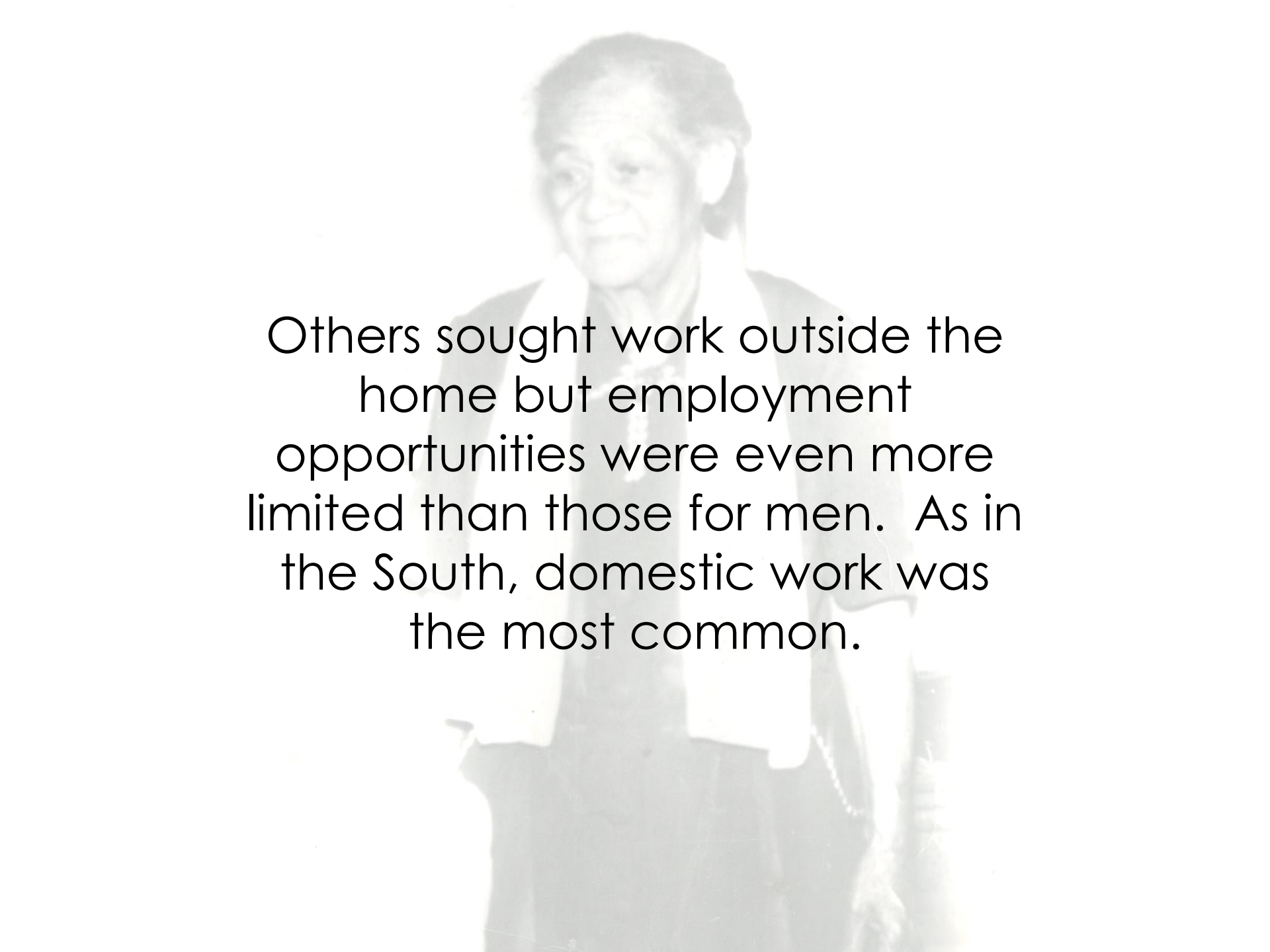


Sanford was injured twice, once when he was hit on the head with a pick and another time when the roof came down.

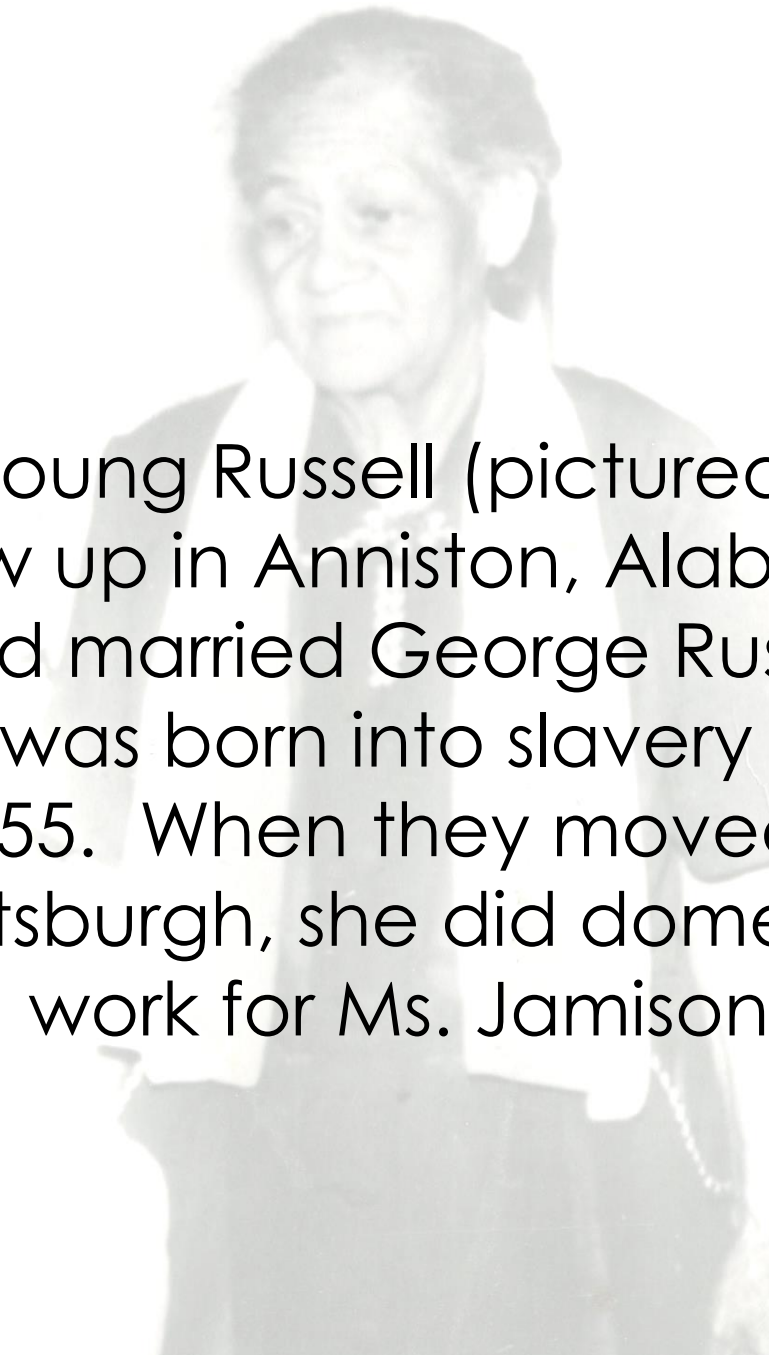




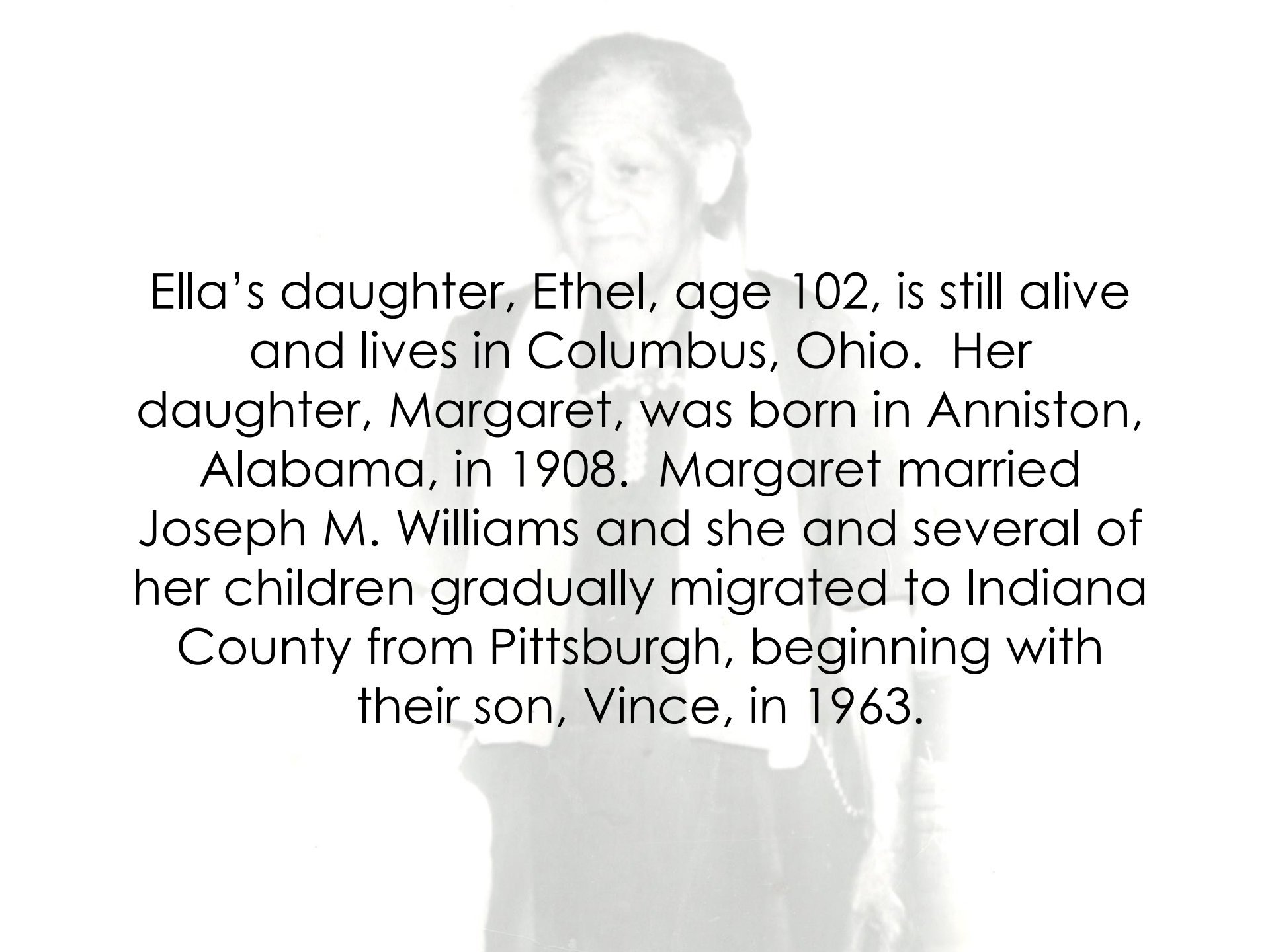
Once in the North, some women were able to stay at home with their children and supplement their income with ironing and other work they could do at home.



Others sought work outside the home but employment opportunities were even more limited than those for men. As in the South, domestic work was the most common.

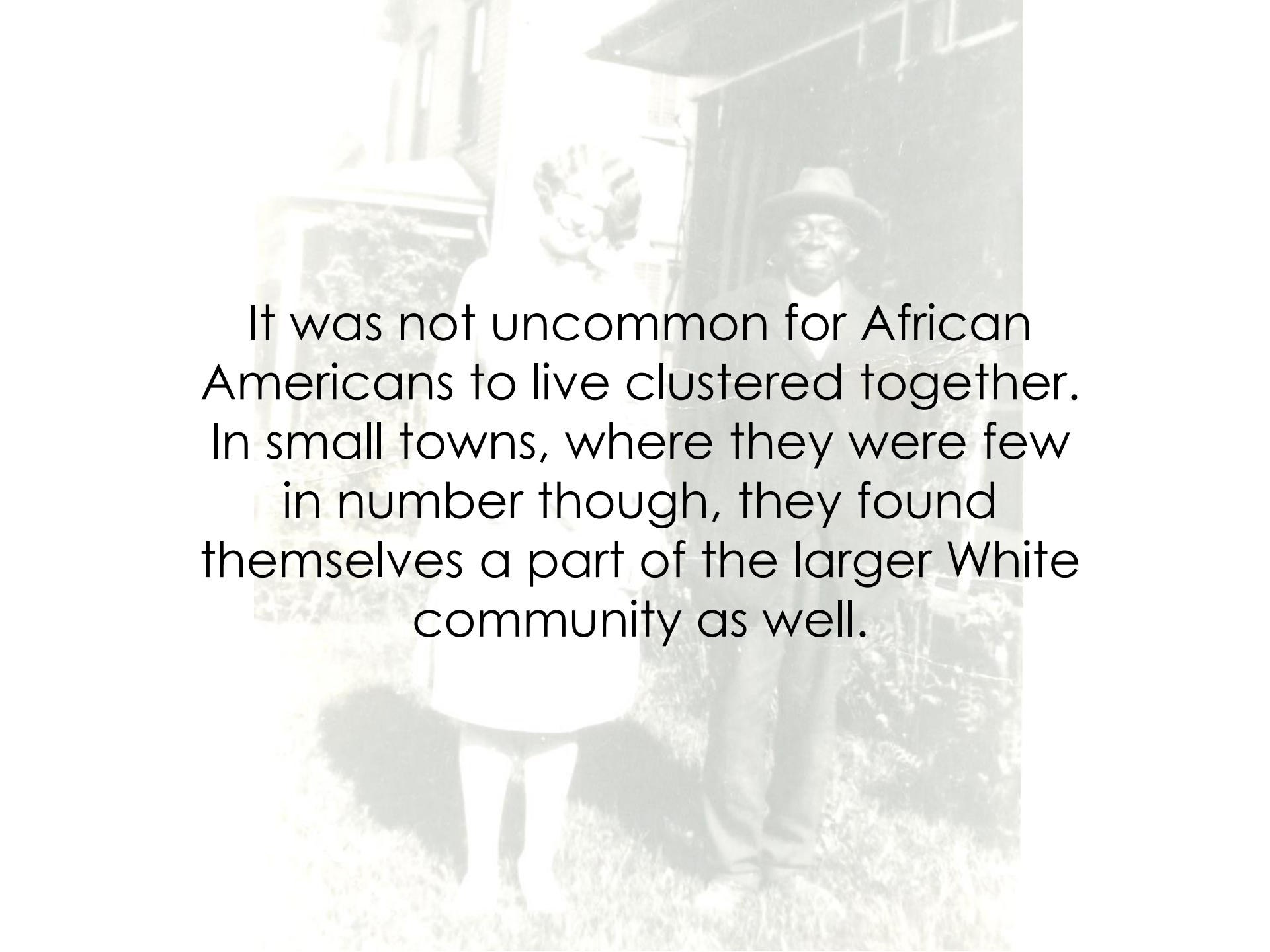


Ella Young Russell (pictured here) grew up in Anniston, Alabama, and married George Russell, who was born into slavery about 1855. When they moved to Pittsburgh, she did domestic work for Ms. Jamison.

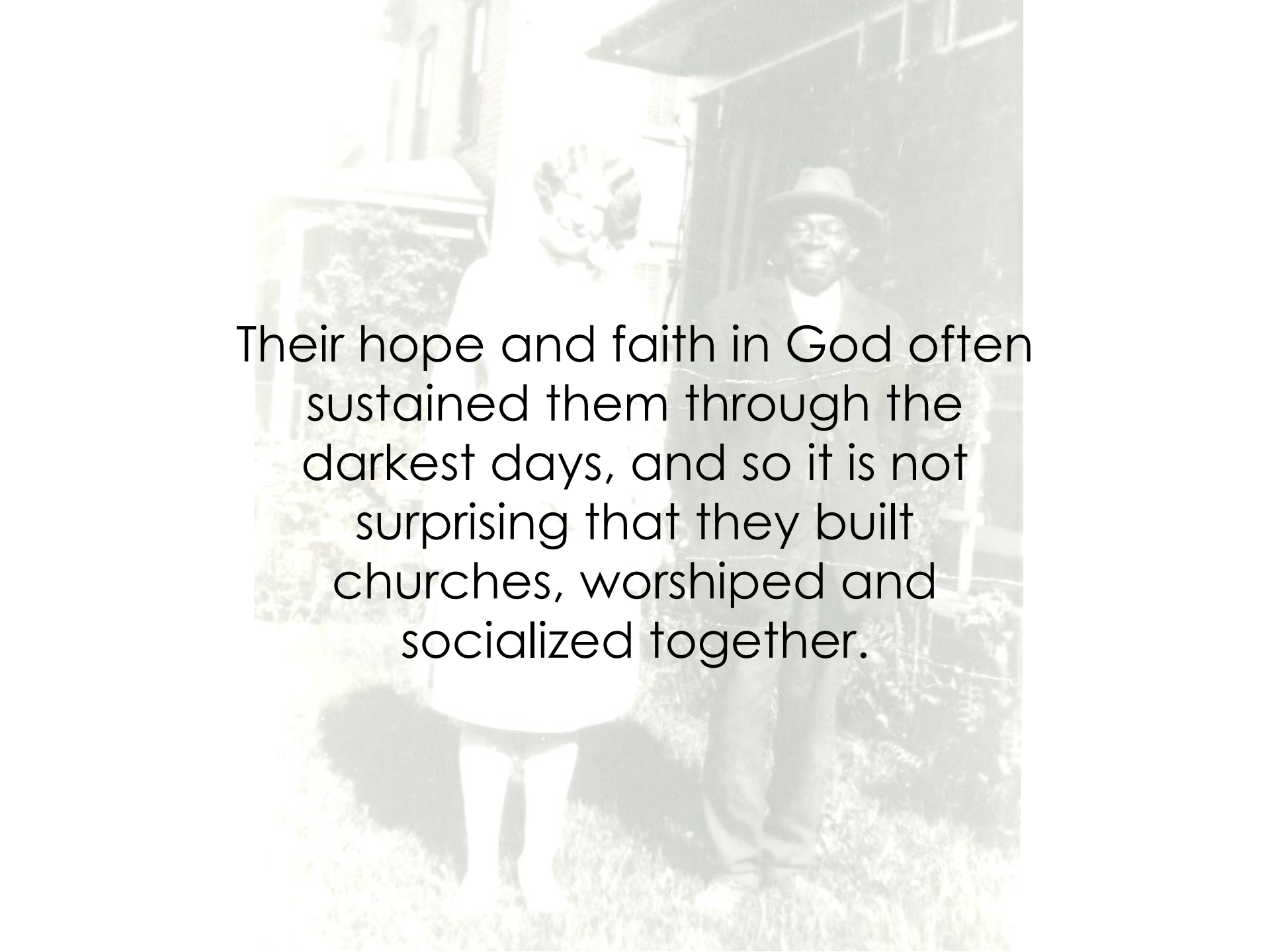


Ella's daughter, Ethel, age 102, is still alive and lives in Columbus, Ohio. Her daughter, Margaret, was born in Anniston, Alabama, in 1908. Margaret married Joseph M. Williams and she and several of her children gradually migrated to Indiana County from Pittsburgh, beginning with their son, Vince, in 1963.

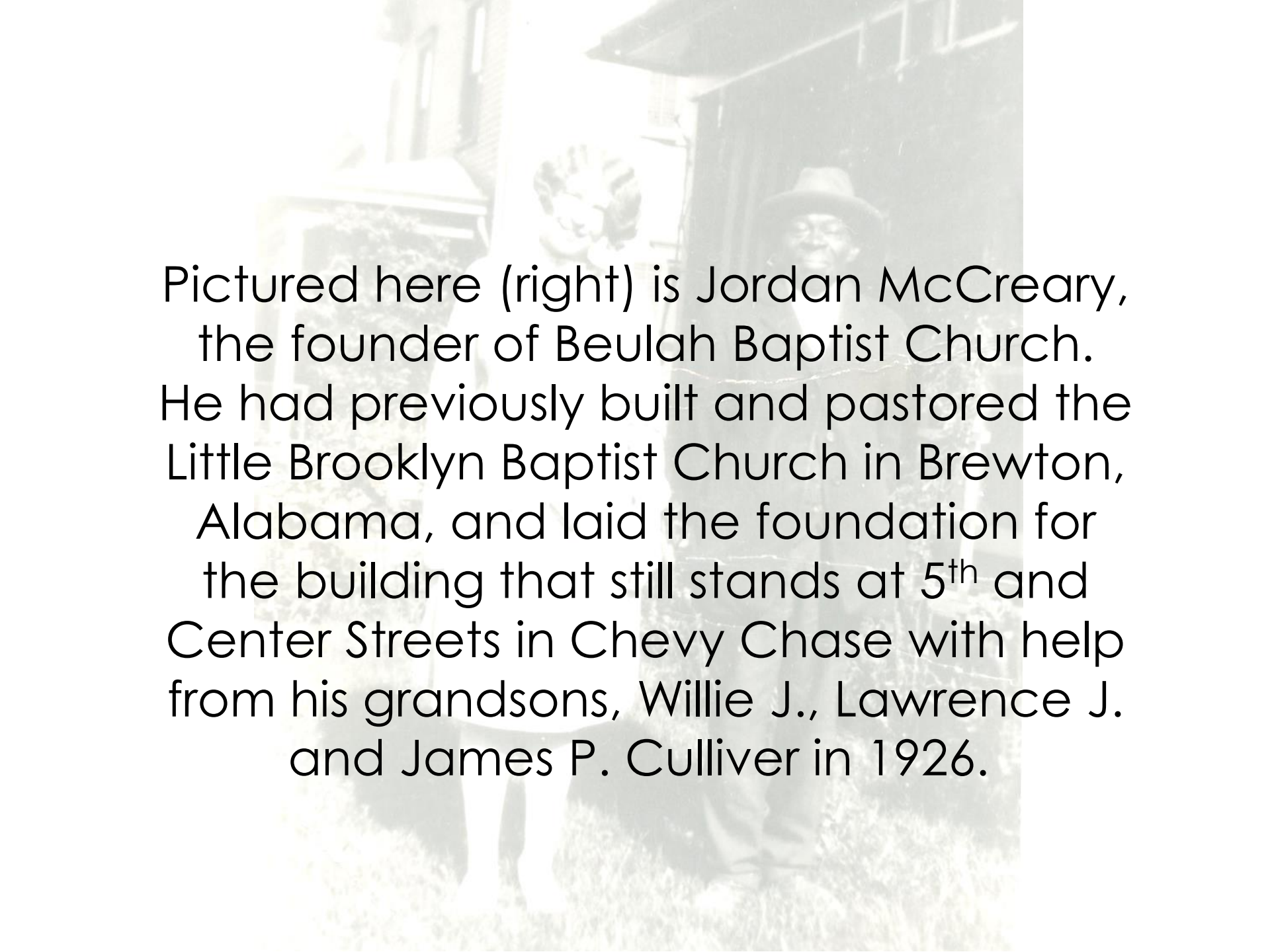


A faded black and white photograph of a woman and a man standing in front of a house. The woman is on the left, wearing a light-colored dress and a hat. The man is on the right, wearing a dark suit and a hat. The background shows a brick building and some foliage.


It was not uncommon for African Americans to live clustered together. In small towns, where they were few in number though, they found themselves a part of the larger White community as well.



Their hope and faith in God often sustained them through the darkest days, and so it is not surprising that they built churches, worshiped and socialized together.

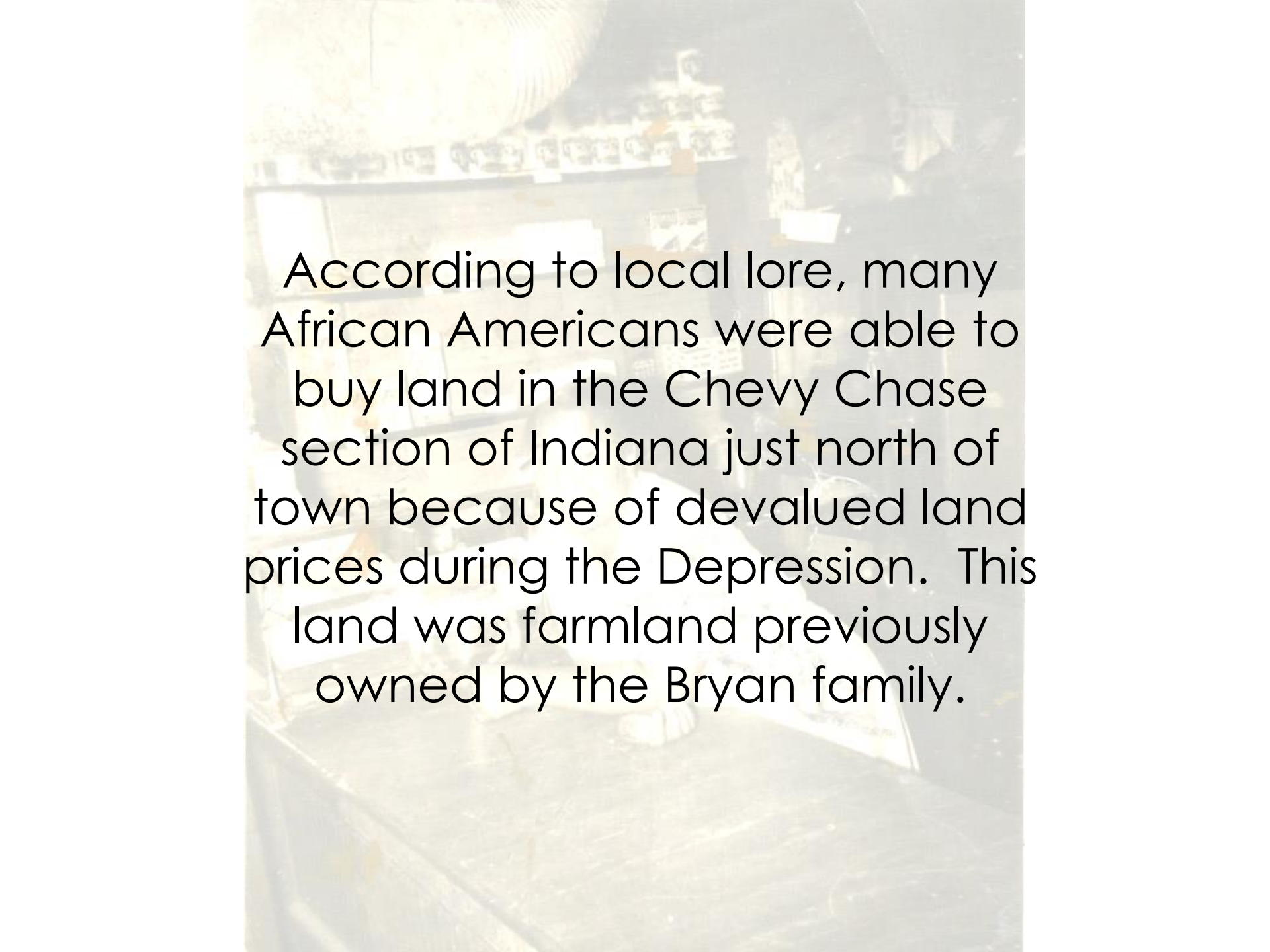


Pictured here (right) is Jordan McCreary, the founder of Beulah Baptist Church. He had previously built and pastored the Little Brooklyn Baptist Church in Brewton, Alabama, and laid the foundation for the building that still stands at 5th and Center Streets in Chevy Chase with help from his grandsons, Willie J., Lawrence J. and James P. Culliver in 1926.




He also started his own garbage collection business and his wife, Elizabeth, owned a store in the Chevy Chase community.

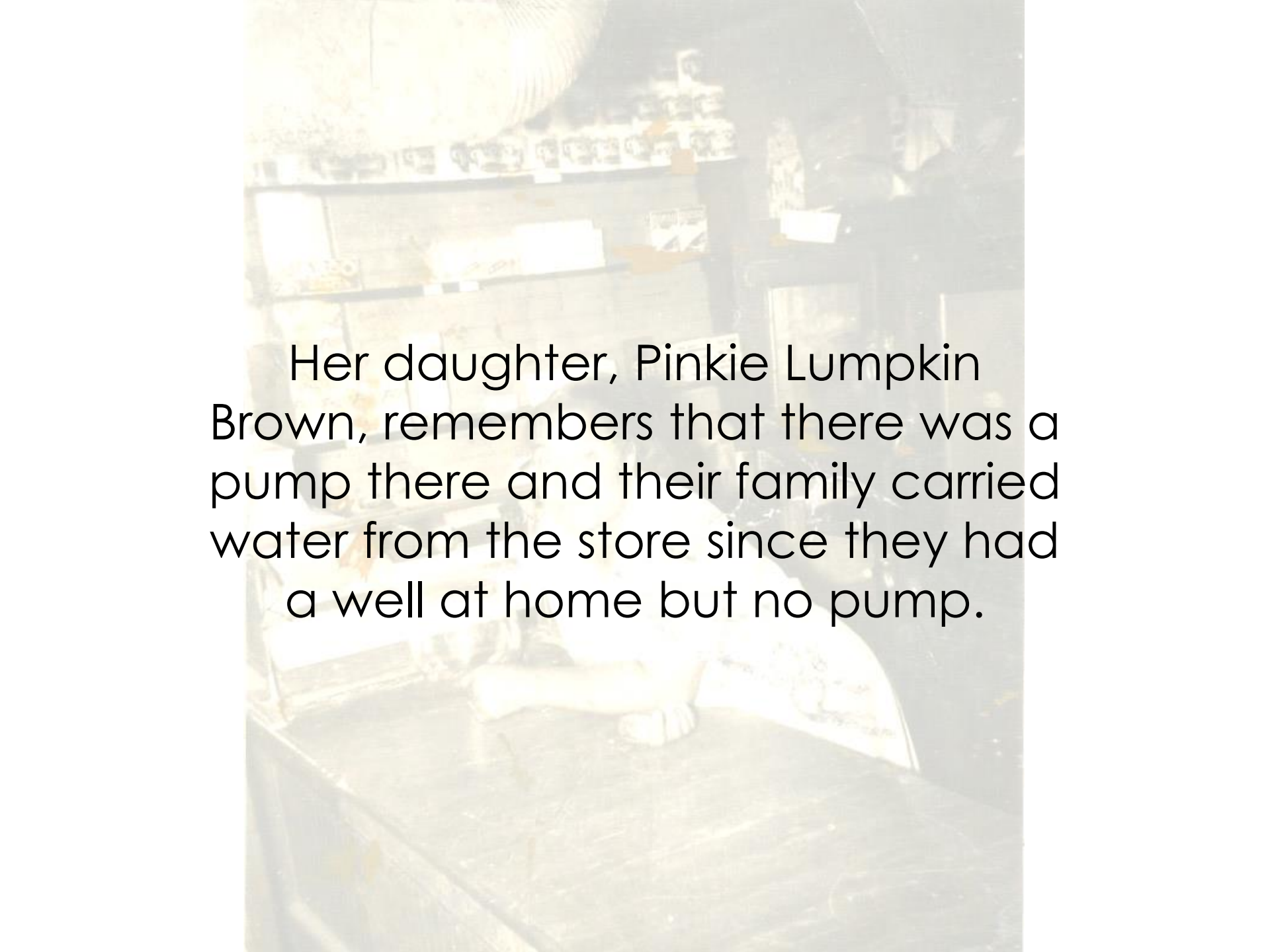




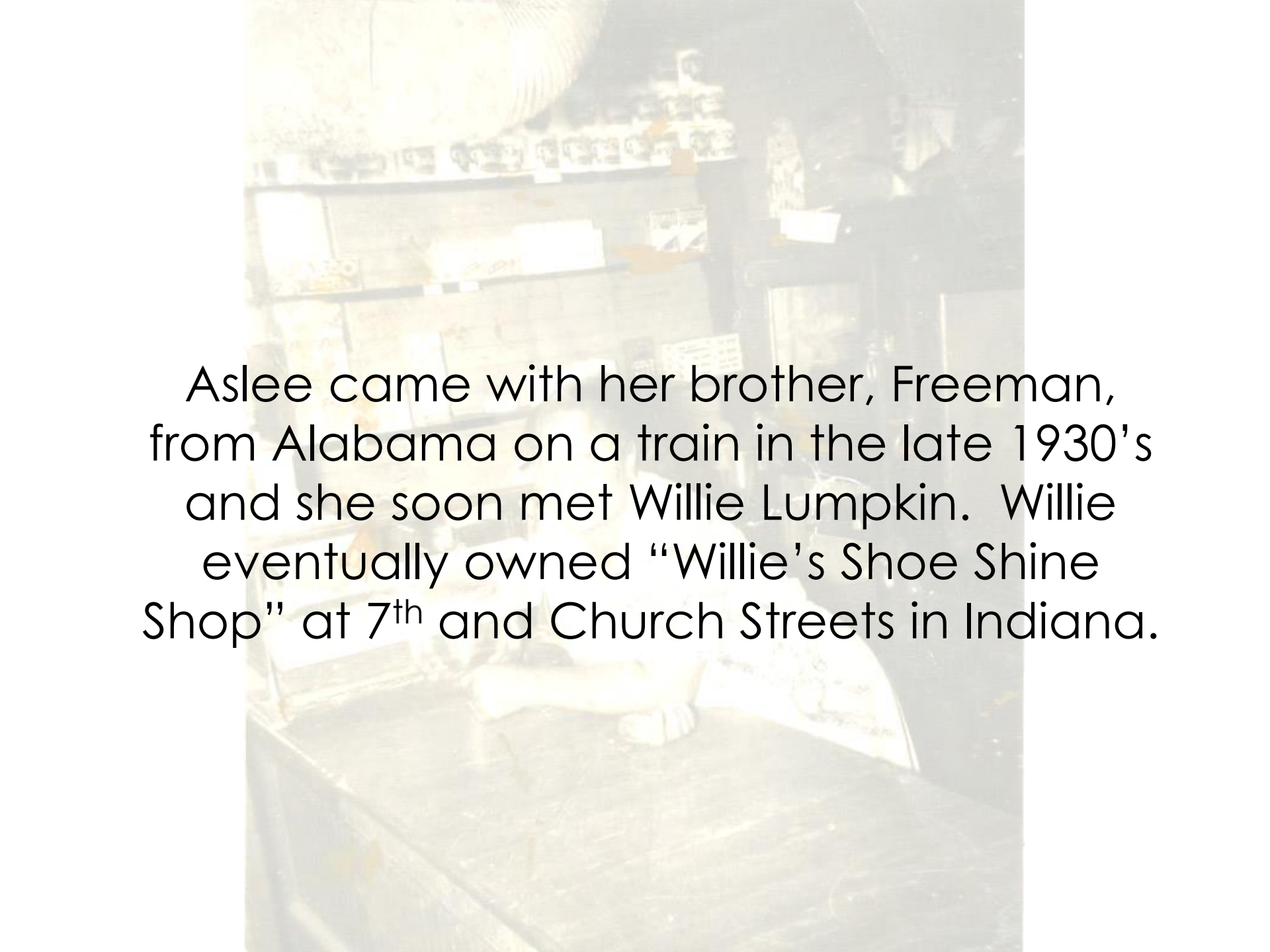
According to local lore, many African Americans were able to buy land in the Chevy Chase section of Indiana just north of town because of devalued land prices during the Depression. This land was farmland previously owned by the Bryan family.



Jordan McCreary's wife, Elizabeth,
had a small general store there and
Aslee Blevins Lumpkin (pictured)
helped to run it.

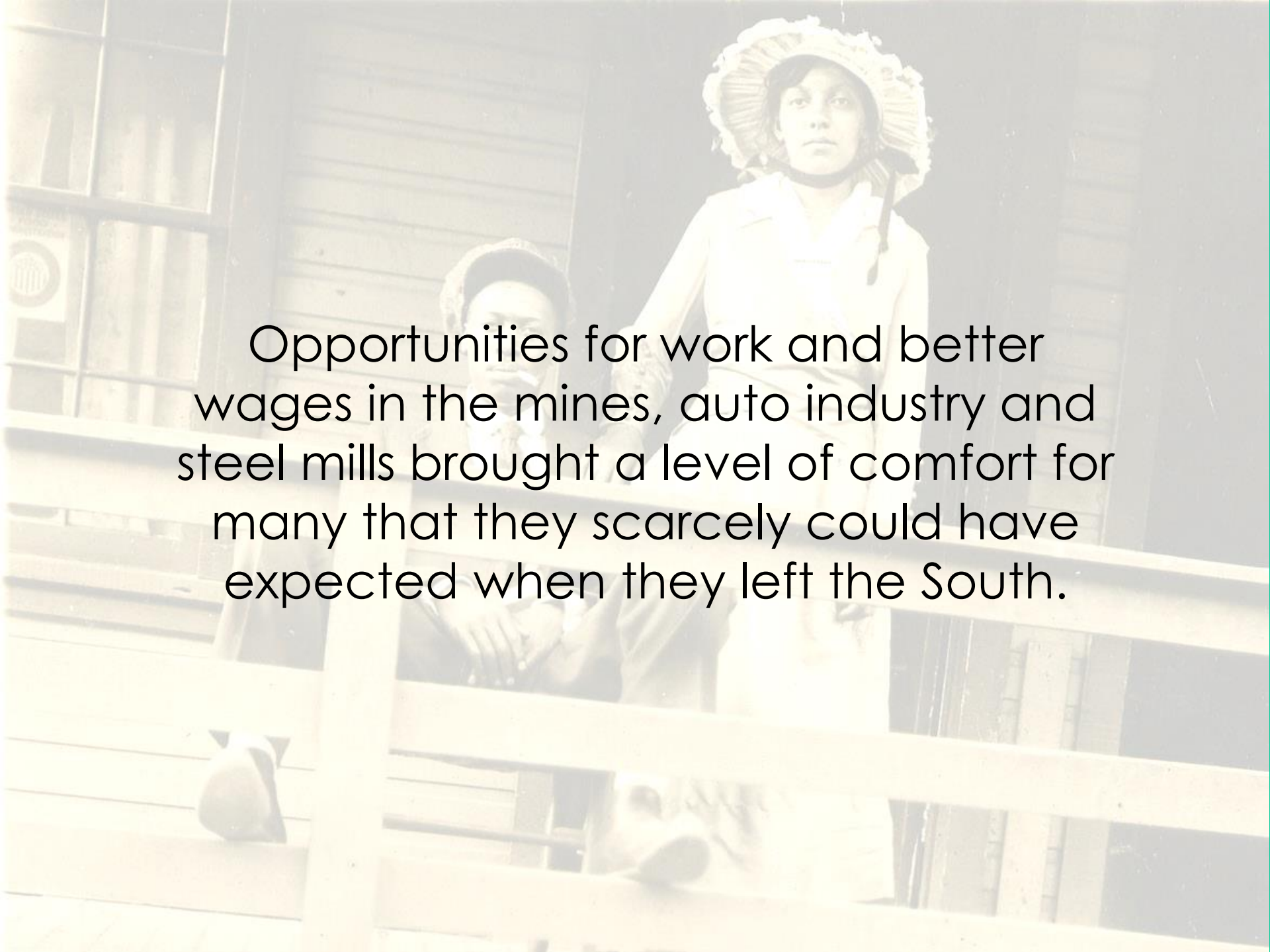
A faded, sepia-toned photograph of a store interior. In the foreground, a wooden counter is visible. Behind it, shelves are stocked with various goods, including what appear to be jars or containers. A person's hands are resting on the counter. The background shows more shelves and a hanging basket or container. The overall scene is dimly lit and has a historical feel.

Her daughter, Pinkie Lumpkin Brown, remembers that there was a pump there and their family carried water from the store since they had a well at home but no pump.

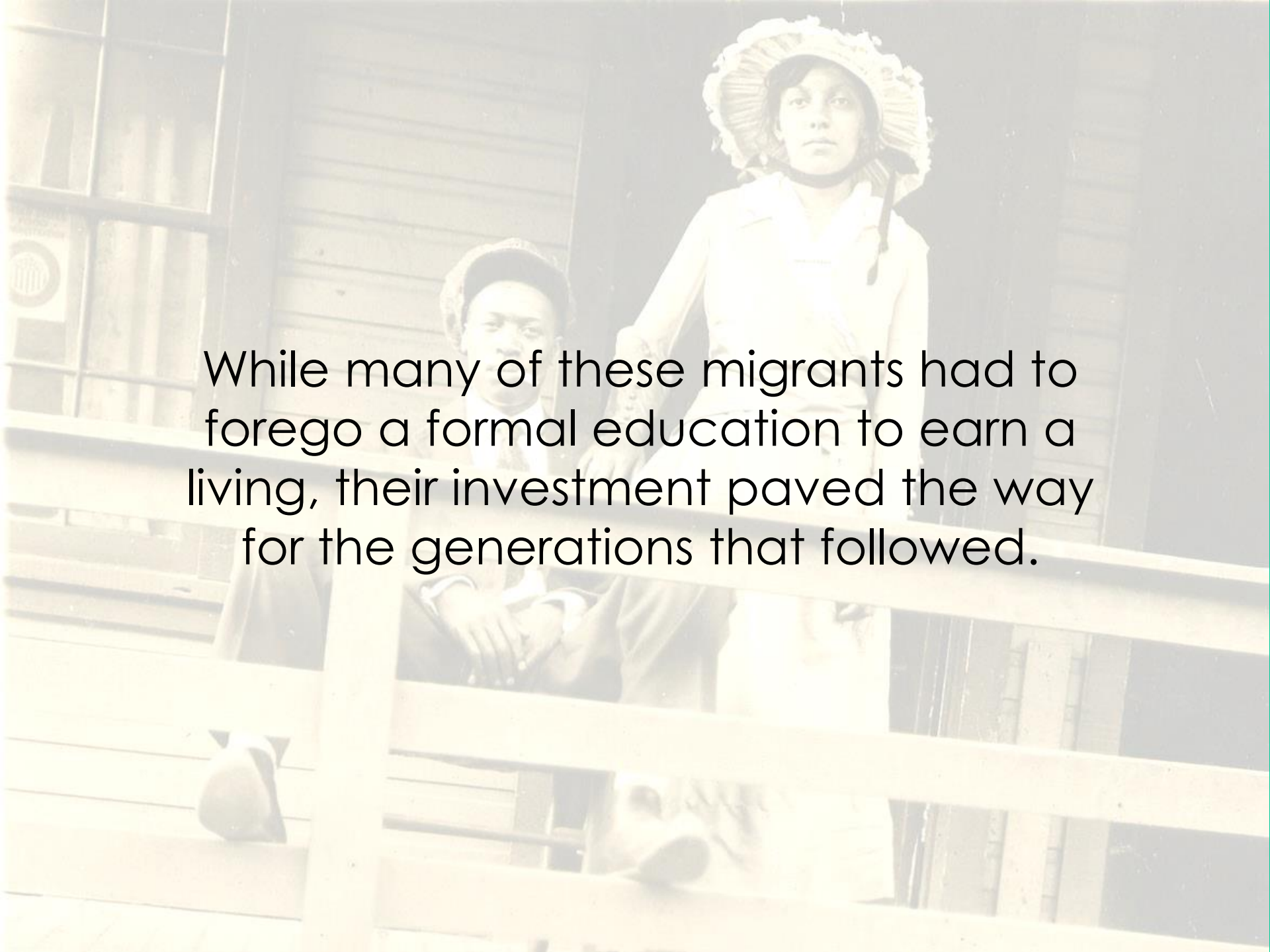


Aslee came with her brother, Freeman, from Alabama on a train in the late 1930's and she soon met Willie Lumpkin. Willie eventually owned "Willie's Shoe Shine Shop" at 7th and Church Streets in Indiana.

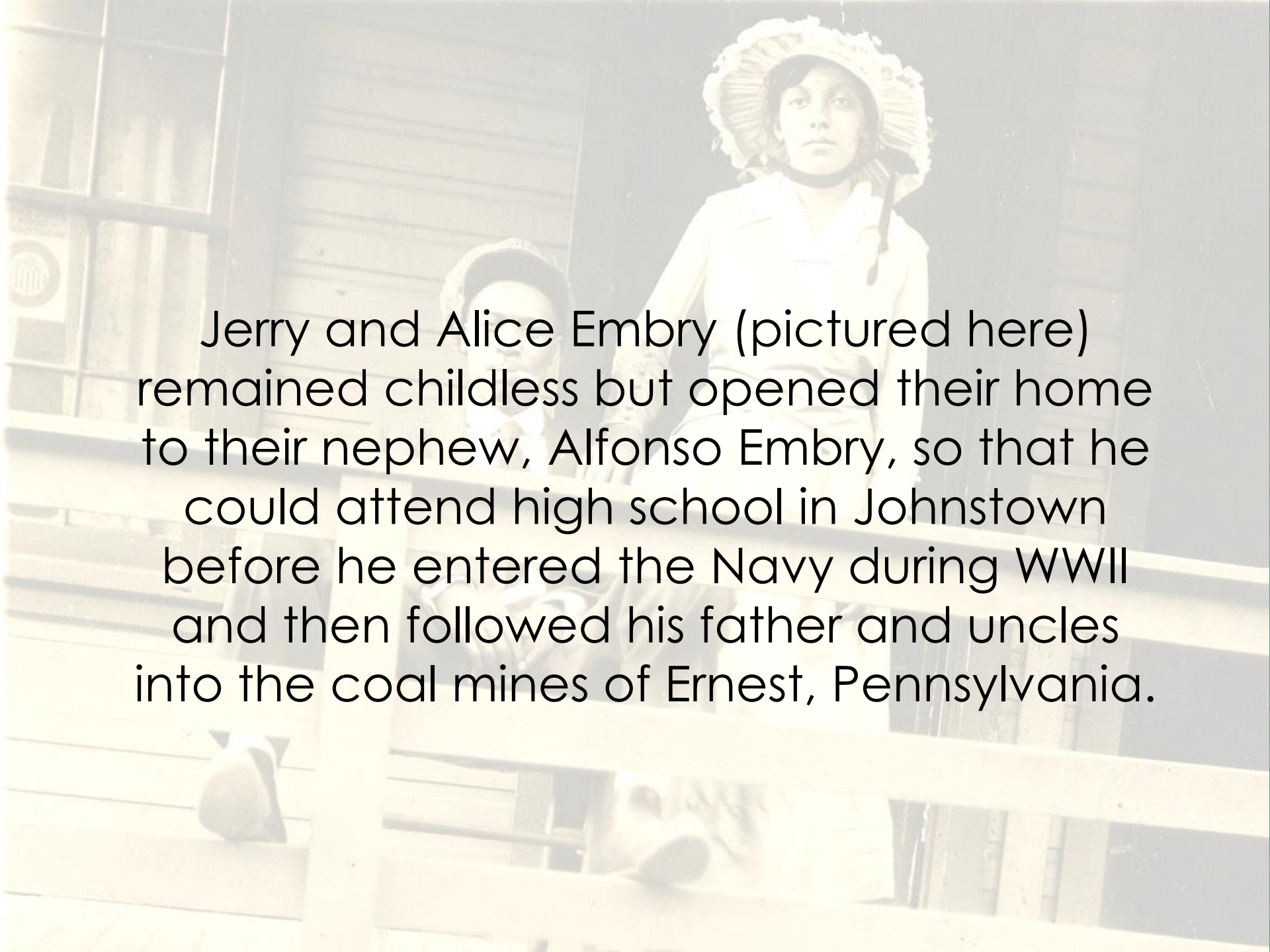




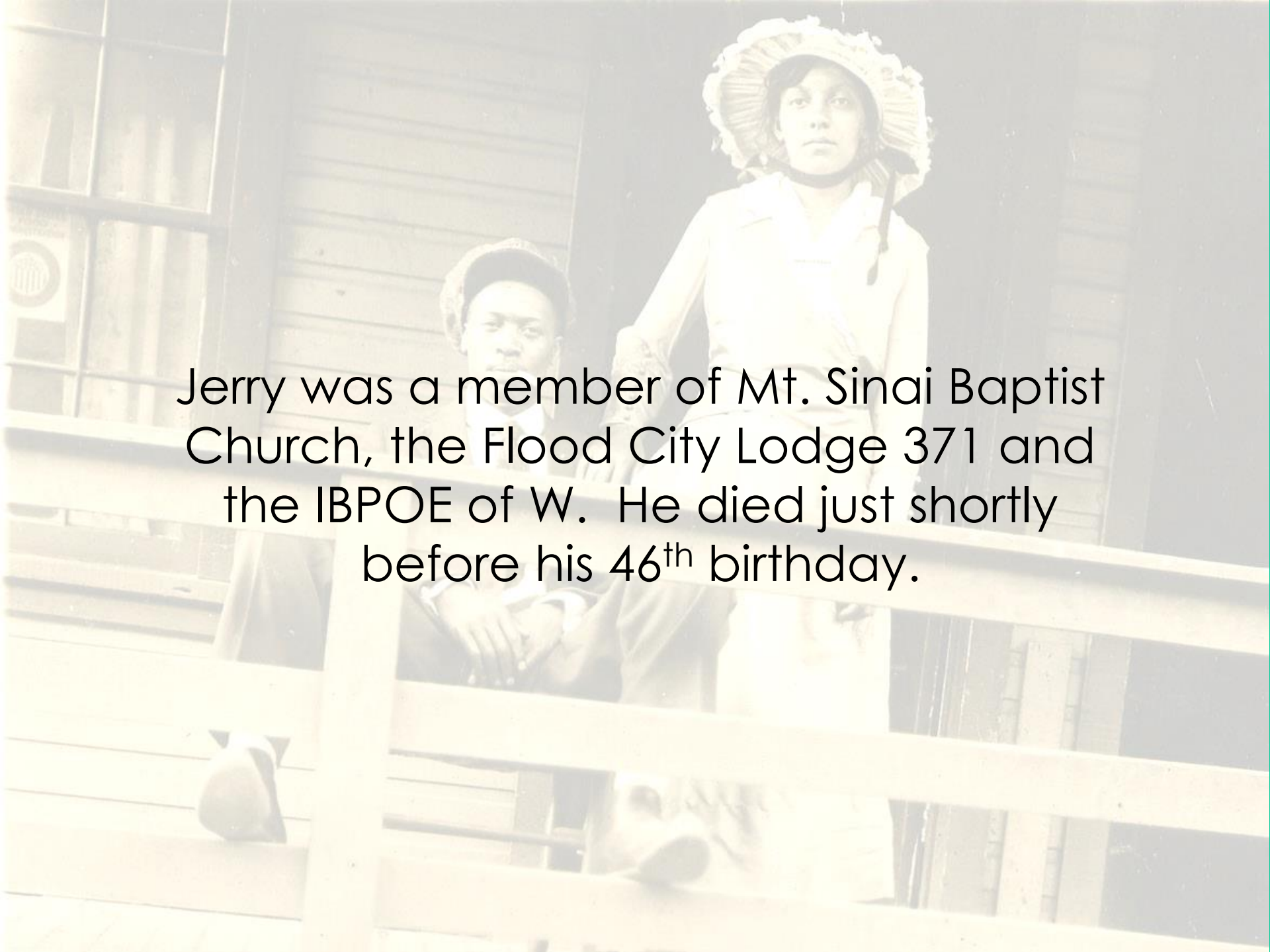
Opportunities for work and better wages in the mines, auto industry and steel mills brought a level of comfort for many that they scarcely could have expected when they left the South.



While many of these migrants had to forego a formal education to earn a living, their investment paved the way for the generations that followed.



Jerry and Alice Embry (pictured here) remained childless but opened their home to their nephew, Alfonso Embry, so that he could attend high school in Johnstown before he entered the Navy during WWII and then followed his father and uncles into the coal mines of Ernest, Pennsylvania.



Jerry was a member of Mt. Sinai Baptist Church, the Flood City Lodge 371 and the IBPOE of W. He died just shortly before his 46th birthday.



Photo Credits

Margaret Jennings Jones

Alfonso Embry

Pinkie Brown

Connie McCreary

Cecil Williams

Bernard McCreary



Recommended Reading

Crew, Spencer R. 1987. *Field to Factory: Afro-American Migration 1915-1940* Washington, D.C.: Dept. of Public Programs, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

Gottlieb, Peter. 1987. *Making Their Own Way: Southern Blacks' Migration to Pittsburgh, 1916-30.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

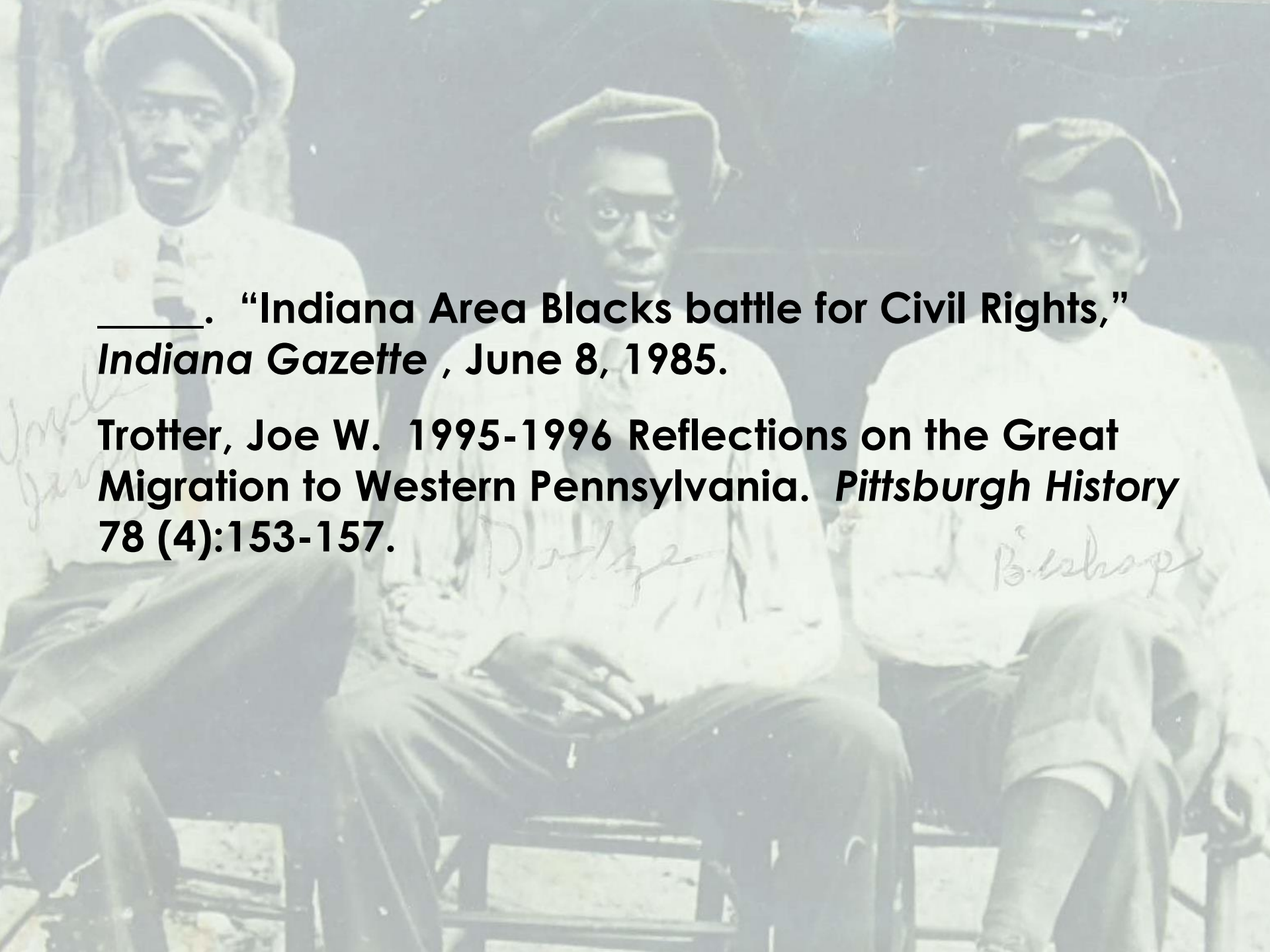
Trotter, Joe William. 1990. *Coal, Class, and Color: Blacks in Southern West Virginia, 1915-32, Blacks in the New World.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press.



_____ and Eric Ledell Smith. 1997. *African Americans in Pennsylvania: Shifting Historical Perspectives*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Kozol, Jonathan. "Expanding Academic Conscience," *Saturday Review*, 51 (August 17 1968) p. 21-3.

Stephenson, Clarence. *The Impact of the Slavery Issue on Indiana County*. Marion Center, Pa.: Mahoning Mimeograph & Pamphlet Service, [1964].



 . "Indiana Area Blacks battle for Civil Rights,"
Indiana Gazette , June 8, 1985.

Trotter, Joe W. 1995-1996 Reflections on the Great
Migration to Western Pennsylvania. *Pittsburgh History*
78 (4):153-157.



Video Resources

Williams, Bruce T. We'll make the journey [videorecording]: the African American story of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, Migration and Work. Johnstown, PA, 1992.

Websites

Black History Month

<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/bhm1.html>

Celebrating Black History

<http://www.time.com/time/reports/blackhistory/>

**Coal and Coke Heritage Center, Penn State Fayette,
Uniontown, PA**

<http://www.coalandcokepsu.org/>

**The Great Migration. Hypertext History: Our Online
American History Textbook**

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/article_display.cfm?HHID=443



Our Shared History: African American Heritage

<http://www.nps.gov/history/aahistory/>

**Special Collections and Archives, Indiana University of
Pennsylvania Libraries, IUP, Indiana, PA**

<http://libs0400.acadlib.iup.edu/depts/speccol/index.shtm>

**African Americans in Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania
Historical and Museum Commission**

**[http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/ppet/africanamericans/
page5.asp?secid=31](http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/ppet/africanamericans/page5.asp?secid=31)**