

## FAMILY ORIGINS IN A SOUTHERN ILLINOIS COMMUNITY

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This is a study of family histories of 140 biology students in the Harrisburg Township High School in connection with similar studies over a period of years, made originally in relation to problems in heredity.

Harrisburg township is a typical Ohio River Valley community of 15,000 people situated twenty miles from the river. It has two main industries, farming and coal mining, upon which other industries depend. Many miners own their homes. Their children constitute a large part of the school and are among the best students.

Thirty years ago the population was stabilized. Almost any family name in the township could be found in some other similar Ohio River Valley community. Their ancestors had come largely by way of the Cumberland Gap or down the Ohio in the days of flat boats. Fully half of the students in 1933 had ancestry traceable to Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, Georgia, and the Carolinas. A later migration of Germans and Irish was also fused with the earlier comers. Strangely, not less than ten per cent of this stabilized population had some American Indian blood traceable to such tribes as the Pawnees, Cherokees, and Crows.

Development of the immense coal fields following 1900 brought many families from the Ozark Hills region in adjoining counties and from southern Indiana and Kentucky. These differed little in origins from those who had come in the century before. Soon a new element came, mostly Lithuanians and Hungarians. To this was added a few English and Scotch miners and a scattering of other Europeans. (The negro population is omitted in this discussion.) Thus, the population increased five-fold in thirty years.

The older English-Scotch-Irish-German-French-Dutch-Welch stock, which came during the nineteenth century and became amalgamated in the Ohio Valley, refer to the newer Europeans as "foreigners". This older group and their descendants have traditions retained from the days of trappers, Indian fighters, and Black Hawk, Mexican and Civil War veterans. The ancestral elements of this group are now so blended that they are discovered only by tracing the line of descent. The surnames no longer indicate national origins. All these groups, the older ones which came during the century after the Revolutionary War and the Europeans who came during the first twenty-five years of the present century, are now so well assimilated that their children in the high school of 1000 students are not distinguishable by speech, scholarship, manners, dress, physical appearance, or traditions. Outward appearances are gone although a foreign language is spoken in some of the homes and some of the children can speak one or more of them. Two more generations will see the family trees branching to include representatives of all these groups in nearly every family. With immigration limited and transportation and communication increased, and through the influence of schools, there will be nothing remaining in this community to distinguish national origins except as they may be traced in family histories.