

Chapter One: “Necessity demanded that proper clothes be provided for the youngster”

The abundance of Anthracite coal in Northeastern Pennsylvania had been known about since the early eighteenth century, but until a process for igniting this hard coal—which burns at a much higher temperature than soft Bituminous—in a home hearth was discovered in 1808, it was considered useful only for blacksmiths.¹ Even after hard coal becoming profitable as a home heating fuel, transportation difficulties prevented Anthracite from becoming big business. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, a flurry of canal-building finally made Anthracite a profitable industry. Railroads replaced canals as the cheapest and fastest way to transport coal in the later half of the century. An 1869 law legalized the joint ownership of railroad and mining interests, and railroad companies began buying up the mines.² By the time of Freeland’s incorporations, mining companies were railroad companies, and were some of the most powerful industrialists in the nation. But this did not mean big payouts for the mine workers. Consolidation of ownership resulted in central planning of prices and production: increased efficiency for parent corporations, decreased wages and numbers of working days for miners themselves.³ Workers who protested were fired and sometimes even evicted from their company lodgings, along with their families.⁴

Company stores further limited the freedom of miners and their families. As deliberate company policy, the company store, was the only place to shop in a coal town.

¹ Donald L. Miller and Richard E. Sharpless, *The Kingdom of Coal: Work, Enterprise, and Ethnic Communities in the Mine Fields* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 3.

² Miller and Sharpless, 81.

³ Dan Rose, *Energy Transition and the Local Community: A Theory of Society Applied to Hazleton, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 72.

⁴ Miller and Sharpless, 272.

Prices were inflated, selection was limited, and the company was authorized to take payment for bills directly from miners' paychecks. This payment policy often resulted in miners receiving pay checks for negligible or even negative amounts. This experience of living in perpetual debt to one's employers is remembered in one of America's most famous mining songs:

You load sixteen tons, what do you get?
Another day older and deeper in debt
Saint Peter, don't you call me, 'cause I can't go;
I owe my soul to the company store.

In regions dominated by small, company-owned patch towns, freehold towns were oases of free enterprise, providing residents and visitors with a diversity of economic opportunities and commercial options. A historian of iron-mining towns has called freehold towns "leech towns," because they catered to the surrounding regions' vices, offering easy access to alcohol and prostitution.⁵ But freehold towns also offered area residents and their families access to banks, doctors, dentists, stores, and skilled artisans. Women in the patch towns outside of Freeland would have to walk much further to do their shopping "in town" than they would if they shopped at the company store, but the extra effort could be worth their while. Although the price difference between company and independent stores in the region declined over the years—from a peak of a 160% mark-up in 1877, when there were few competing, independent stores, to a relatively modest difference of 12½ % in 1902—a housewife counting her pennies would walk a few miles to save even ten percent.⁶ In contrast to the male narrator of the

⁵ Harold W. Aurand, *Population Change and Social Continuity: Ten Years in a Coal Town* (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Presses), 21.

⁶ Harold W. Aurand, *Coalcracker Culture: Work and Values in Pennsylvania Anthracite, 1835-1935* (Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania: Susquehanna University Press, 2003), 105.

“Fifteen tons” ballad, the eighty-year old woman who lists her debts in the Anthracite-region ballad “The Shoefly” must have been doing her shopping in a freehold town.

And as for Michael Rooney, I owe him some money;
Likewise Patrick Kearns, I owe him some more;
And as for old John Eagen, I ne'er see his wagon,
But I think of the debt that I owe in his store.
I owe butcher and baker, likewise the shoemaker,
And for plowing me garden, I owe Pat McQuail;
Likewise his old mother, for one thing or th'other,
And to drive away bother, an odd quart of ale.⁷

Freeland's first historian, William Watkins Munsell, describes the town in terms of its businesses in his 1880 *History of Luzerne, Lackawanna and Wyoming Counties, Pa.* His brief recounting of the town's brief history—a dozen short paragraphs, covering even fewer years—includes the 1874 founding of the miners' co-operative store, the 1877 opening of a store by a man named Henry Coon, and the undated establishment of the first tavern and blacksmith shops. Just a year after Freeland's incorporation in 1876, the town's mercantile offerings already comprised “eight stores, a bakery, eight taverns, two undertakers, two blacksmith shops, a town hall, and a boot and shoe store.”⁸ Freeland's next historian, H.C. Bradsby, had considerably more to write about in his 1893 *History of Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, with Biographical Selections*. The town was thirteen years older and nearly three times more populous (1,730 residents reported in the 1890 census).⁹ Freeland's businesses had expanded to included three hardware stores, two drug stores, two hotels, three merchant tailors, four clothing stores, four shoe stores, two

⁷ George Korson, *Minstrels of the Mine Patch: Songs and Stories of the Anthracite Industry* (Hatboro, Pennsylvania: Folklore Associates, Inc, 1964), 28.

⁸ William Watkins Munsell, *History of Luzerne, Lackawanna and Wyoming Counties, Pa.: With Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Some of Their Prominent Men and Pioneers* (New York: W. W. Munsell & Co., 1880), accessed June 01, 2010, http://www.andrew.cmu.edu/user/ct0u/munsell_f.html.

⁹ Andrew E. Funk, Jr., “A History of the Freeland Area: No. 7,” *The Standard Speaker*, March 7, 1949, afternoon edition.

livery stables, two blacksmiths, three wheelwrights, two furniture stores, two lawyers, five doctors, three bakers, four watchmakers, five milliners, two cigar factories, twelve dry goods and grocery stores, forty “small notion stores in different lines,” and two “very bright and progressive newspapers”: the five-column, weekly *Freeland Progress* and the seven-column semi-weekly *Freeland Tribune*.¹⁰

The business, and the business decisions, of coal and railroad magnates dominated the region, but the income and the employees these industries brought into the area made possible a great deal of small-scale economic activity as well.¹¹ No shop is an island. The businesses that Munsell and Bradsby build their histories upon are both examples of individual entrepreneurship and evidence of a community that supports their existence. Bradsby, the type of man to praise a newspaper as being “bright and progressive,” also praises the wisdom of the municipal government that made Freeland such an attractive place to set up shop. In addition to its advantageous geographical position, amid a cluster of company towns, Freeland also benefited from a low tax burden—the \$2,000 paid annually for an unspecified number of saloon licenses more than covered the interest on the public debt—and the “enterprise and foresight of the borough officials of 1891” who “boldly faced the unreasoning opposition of the old

¹⁰ H.C. Bradsby, *History of Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, with Biographical Selections* (Chicago: S.B. Nelson and Co., 1893), accessed June 01, 2010, History of Freeland, PA website, <http://www.andrew.cmu.edu/user/ct0u/bradsby.html>; Charles K. Stumpf, *Freeland* (Hazleton: Panorama, 199?), reprint of articles that originally appeared in the pages of *Panorama* magazine, July 1991 through Dec. 1993, 8.

¹¹ Herb Gutman has documented a similar situation in Paterson, New Jersey, where rapid industrialization, with “all the severe social dislocations incident to quick industrialization and urbanization everywhere” also opened up new opportunities for small retail businesses. Businesses that saw a particular boom in Patterson were grocers (105 in 1859 and 230 in 1870) and saloonkeepers (46 in 1859 and 270 in 1870). Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Vintage, 1977), 240.

fogies” and saw that “valuable improvements” like the jail, the firehouse, and the sewer (the cause of the public debt) were made.¹²

Bradsby has less praise for the borough officials of 1876. Speaking of the town as a “child,” he describes Freeland’s first incorporators as thinking too little of their offspring’s potential. Although Freeland’s founders recognized the moment when “necessity demanded that proper clothes be provided for the youngster,” they did not plan for the growth spurt of a healthy adolescence. He writes, “The first incorporators had no very exalted ideas of the future of the place, and did not cut the clothes as is done for boys, ‘to allow for growing’.” Instead, the town’s founders fit the borders to its 1876 size, sketching the boundary lines along the already-populated stretches of Ridge, Chestnut, Washington, and Main Streets.¹³ By 1893, these boundary lines were the main streets, with residences and businesses extending for several blocks to the south, all of the way to the tracks of the Lehigh Valley Railroad, which brought people and equipment into town and transported coal to Philadelphia and New York City.¹⁴ Bradsby characterizes Freeland in 1893 as an “overflow town,” and quotes an unnamed “witty Irishman” as calling Freeland a “kangaroo town—all hind legs.”¹⁵

Freeland was a boom town, growing faster than anyone expected or planned for, and it needed a better tailor than the one who cut its first suit. Bradsby’s use of fitting and cutting metaphors in his general-interest history is evidence of a broad cultural familiarity with the principles of tailoring, and of a ready metaphorical link between

¹² Bradsby, *History of Luzerne County, Pennsylvania*.

¹³ Stumpf, 7.

¹⁴ Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, New York, NY, *Map of 1895*, 3 sheets. Based on Freeland’s rate of growth in this period, the change between 1893 and 1895 would not have been significant.

¹⁵ Bradsby, *History of Luzerne County, Pennsylvania*.

clothing and growth. The provision of correct clothing is described as a productive rather than an acquisitive endeavor: proper clothes are “provided” (not purchased). Clothing is also seen as an investment in the future, cut to accommodate both a present and a future figure. This is a world in which clothing is custom-made to satisfy individual needs, either by a professional tailor or by a mother practicing home production. The count of sartorial businesses in Freeland in Bradsby’s history—three merchant tailors to four men’s clothing stores—indicates that this world was already on the wane in 1893. A ready-made men’s trade that had begun in the early nineteenth century, with haberdashery items like shirts, collars, cuffs, suspenders, socks, and ties, expanded in the latter half of the nineteenth century to include those items that had been the tailor’s purview: overcoats, suit jackets, vests, and trousers¹⁶. Technological innovation, mass production, and a large and growing immigrant work force allowed ready-to-wear companies to sell this latter group of items at a fraction of what a tailor would need to charge to meet expenses. According to costume historian Joan Severa, “The ordinary man of the [eighteen]-nineties wore nothing but mass-produced clothing.”¹⁷ And yet, tailoring remained a viable trade—because not all men considered themselves ordinary, and because mass-produced clothing was often in need of alteration before it would meet the cultural standards of fitting well (Figure 1.1).

Even a small town like Freeland, with its small middle-class population and regional customer base of patch-town miners and laborers, could support three merchant tailors in 1893. And the number of tailors in town, and in neighboring Anthracite towns,

¹⁶ For an overview of the ready-made industry, see Claudia B. Kidwell and Margaret C. Christman, *Suiting Everyone: The Democratization of Clothing in America* (Washington, D.C: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1974).

¹⁷ Joan Severa, *Dressed for the Photographer* (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1995), 471.

grew throughout the decade as the region's population boomed. The more successful tailors were well-known people in their communities. Of the approximately 2,200 success stories that Bradsby includes in the *Biographical Selections* portion of his history, 14 are the stories of successful tailors. Of the larger group, a few are what we now call professional men: doctors, lawyers, municipal officials, partners in large corporations; a larger number are trained artisans like watchmakers, jewelers, and butchers; and the majority are businessmen: hotel proprietors, general-store merchants, restaurant owners, boot and shoe store owners, dealers in stationary and in cigars. By this time, tailoring straddled the artisan/businessmen category. Most tailor shops were run as "Clothing and Tailor" operations, also known as merchant tailors.¹⁸ Here a man could purchase a ready-made suit or overcoat and a tailor's skills at altering it in one location. Some "Clothing and Tailor" proprietors were trained craftsmen, who had completed apprenticeships and worked for others for years before opening their own shops. These men stocked ready-made items as a secondary concern; their most valuable good was their skill. Other "Clothing and Tailor" proprietors were skilled mainly at business, counted on ready-made items as the bulk of their income, and employed trained tailors to do the work that they did not know how to do.

Bradsby's *Biographical Selections* includes two men who clearly fall into the later group. Over the course of his professional life, H.R. Hughes, a prominent person in Pittston, about twenty miles north of Freeland, moved from owning a merchant tailoring establishment to running a wholesale liquor business to overseeing a brewery to investing in real estate. Abram F. Peters, a retired merchant in White Haven, just eight miles west

¹⁸ Michael Zakim, "Customizing the Industrial Revolution: The Reinvention of Tailoring in the Nineteenth Century," *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 33 No. 1 (Spring 1998), 42.

of Freeland, began his working life as a farm hand, spent several years as a tailor, and then purchased a saw mill and ran a large lumber business until, “owing to the scarcity of lumber,” he was forced to retire. For these men, tailoring was one of many entries in an entrepreneurial portfolio, a stepping stone to a higher status and/or more profitable undertaking.

The majority of Bradsby’s prominent tailors, however, are trained artisans, committed to their craft. Twelve of the fourteen men are immigrants—four from Germany, four from Wales, two from England, one from Ireland, and one from Scotland. Typically, they completed apprenticeships in their native countries, beginning their training when they were 13 or 14 years old and serving in these roles for two to four years. Upon completing their apprenticeships, they found work as journeyman tailors, sewing together cut garment pieces, or cutters, cutting out the garment pieces from hand-drawn pattern pieces. This move up required these young men to move away. Many, like the German G. F. Buss, who emigrated when he was 18, or the Englishman Matthew J. Stephens, who emigrated when he was 17, did their post-apprenticeship work in the United States. Three of the Welshmen, however, spent several years working in various locations within the United Kingdom, building up experience and possibly savings before sailing overseas. In both cases, young journeymen and cutters were highly mobile within firms and between cities, moving many times before settling down into owning their own tailoring establishments. Robert Thomas, a Welshman, worked in Glasgow, Liverpool, Dublin, and on the Isle of Man before coming to America and opening his establishment in Slate Ridge, Pennsylvania. L.J. Davies, a Welshmen who immigrated at an earlier age, worked in Shenandoah, Bethlehem, and Freeland before setting up shop in nearby

Hazleton. The Scotsman J.W. Nimmo, another early immigrant, spent several years working for firms in Chicago and New York before establishing a business in Pittston, Pennsylvania.¹⁹ The skills of young tailors were standard, both between firms and across continents, and in enough demand that, faced with insufficient pay or an unpleasant or unhelpful master tailor, workers could easily find work elsewhere.

Unlike the businessman tailors he profiles, Bradsby's artisan tailors remained in the tailoring trade throughout their lives. Many prospered. L.J. Davies built up a brisk enough trade to warrant and afford a staff of 12 to 15 journeymen and cutters. Rowland Watkins, who established a shop in Freeland following a long stint as a journeyman and cutter in London, Liverpool, and Lamberis, was described by Bradsby as "enjoy[ing] a large patronage" in his new hometown. Of course, Bradsby was not interested in failures or nobodies. These 14 "Selected" men are a well-known and prosperous subset of all those earning their livings through custom production of clothing in the Anthracite region in 1893. His list does not include women working as seamstresses or dressmakers—by 1900, 47 in Freeland alone; or the 12 to 15 men on staff at L.J. Davies shop, many of them likely new immigrants, as Davies himself had been just six years earlier; or those less recent immigrants (to the region and/or to the nation) whose young businesses had yet to prove themselves successes or failures.²⁰

Bradsby may or may not have been a snob. Perhaps he should be forgiven for ignoring the newest and most geographically unstable portion of a booming population in

¹⁹ H.C. Bradsby, *History of Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, with Biographical Selections*, "Biographical Sketches" portion accessed June 10, 2010, Luzerne Co. Genweb, <http://www.pagenweb.org/~luzerne/bios/bibios.htm>

²⁰ 1900 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), "Pennsylvania, Luzerne County, Freeland Borough," accessed July 15, 2010, Digital scan of original records in the National Archives, Washington, DC, subscription database, <http://www.ancestry.com>.

what was, despite the threat of industrial production, a booming trade. Nationally, the number of men earning their living as tailors rose significantly in the last decade of the nineteenth century, from 123,516 in 1890 to 160,714 in 1900.²¹ This decade was also, and even more so, a boom decade for Freeland, whose population rose from 1,730 in 1890 to 4,896 in 1900.²² This growth significantly outpaced the growth of the Anthracite region as a whole, which had experienced its most rapid population increase ten years earlier (73,373 in 1880 to 119,919 in 1890), although population continued to grow significantly (to 143, 824) in the last decade of the nineteenth century.²³

Freeland boomed during this decade because both the number of new mines and the production of existing mines in the surrounding coal field were increasing rapidly. While nearby patch towns filled up with immigrants who had been recruited by friends, families, and/or company operatives to do this dangerous and purportedly lucrative underground work, Freeland filled up with artisans, service workers, and merchants who shared ethnic backgrounds with the mining population. The first wave of immigrants to the region, beginning in the 1820s and continuing through the 1880s, were Irish, English, Welsh, and German—ethnic backgrounds that Bradsby’s prominent tailors share with many of the butchers, jewelers, hotel proprietors, restaurant owners, merchants, and municipal officials who are also profiled. During the 1880s, a new group of immigrants from Poland, Russia, and Austro-Hungary came to the region in large numbers, most

²¹ U.S. Census Bureau, “Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1910, Thirty-Third Number: Occupations, Labors, and Wages” and “Statistical Abstracts of the United States, 1913, Thirty-Sixth Number: Occupations, Labors, and Wages,” Statistical Abstracts 1901-1950, <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/statab1901-1950.htm>.

²² Funk, “A History of the Freeland Area: No. 7.”

²³ Thomas Dublin and Walter Licht, *The Face of Decline* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), Appendix 1, Table 4.

taking jobs in the mines but others like George Hudacky, tailor; Jacob Susnowski, butcher; and George Setchock, storekeeper, settling in Freeland and establishing small businesses.²⁴

This was the period of greatest inter-ethnic tension in the region—both economic tension between new and old immigrant groups and cultural tension between native-born and immigrant customs. Using local newspaper articles as his source, the historian Rowland Berthoff uncovers “barroom fights between Welshmen and Germans or Irishmen and Italians, one-day ‘race wars’ between Magyars and Slovaks, gangs of Irish or Welsh boys beating a hapless ‘Hungarian’ or hooting at a Chinese laundryman, Slavic peasants-turned-laborers stoning a Jewish peddler, the dynamiting of a ‘Hungarian’ boarding house, German or Italian ‘carousing’ on the Yankee Sabbath, American constables arresting the riotous celebrants of a Polish wedding or christening.”²⁵ Even when miners from new and old immigrant groups were forced to work together (and, to insure their collective safety, to work well together), cultural and linguistic differences kept their larger social worlds segregated. Anthracite-region folklorist George Korson recorded a ballad, titled “A Hungarian Christening,” telling of unpleasant results when an Irish miner breaches this segregation by agreeing to be godfather to his “Hungarian” co-worker’s child. He and his wife dress in their best clothing and proceed to the church, where the ceremony goes smoothly, but tensions become apparent when they go back to the home of the proud parents for a celebratory meal.

When we got to the house, sure I gazed on the dinner.

²⁴ Rowland Berthoff, “The Social Order of the Anthracite Region: 1825-1902,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* Vol. 89, No. 3 (Jul 1965), 266; 1900 U.S. Federal Census, “Pennsylvania, Luzerne County, Freeland Borough.”

²⁵ Berthoff, 266.

My women then she sez “We’ll ate none o’ their rot.”
There were lumps of baloney with fat pork and cabbage
And dried up store cakes with raisins on top.
They asked me to ate, I refused them politely.
Oh, my, when I did, sure I thought they’d go wild,
If I hadn’t run, they would kill me completely
The day that I stood for the Hungarian child.²⁶

As is apparent in this ballad, inter-ethnic relations between the women in the community were generally more problematic than inter-ethnic relations between men. Women shared streets and sometimes even duplex homes with women from other backgrounds, but, by shopping at stores whose keepers shared their ethnicity and spoke their language and attending services in one of the many small ethnicity-specific churches throughout the region, they were able to minimize daily interaction with these neighbors. The sociologist Peter Roberts, who did field work in the region at the turn of the nineteenth century—and who coined the term *Sclav* to denote all recent immigrants—tells the following story: “In a miserable mining patch, we found an isolated English-speaking family among many Sclavs. The conversation had hardly passed beyond the usual exchange of pleasantries when the woman pointed with contempt to her neighbors and said: ‘We don’t have nothing to do with them.’”²⁷

Men, on the other hand, had no choice but to deal with their new neighbors. Most men—whether Irish or Polish, Welsh or Russian, American-born or Slovak—worked as miners or laborers, in jobs that required them to literally trust one another with their lives. Although newcomers generally worked as lower-status “day laborer” jobs within the mines, while more established immigrants enjoyed somewhat more stable “contract

²⁶ George Korson, *Minstrels of the Mine Patch: Songs and Stories of the Anthracite Industry* (Hatboro, PA: Folklore Associates, Inc, 1964), 133-134.

²⁷ Peter Roberts, *Anthracite Coal Communities: A Study of the Demography, the Social, Educational and Moral Life of the Anthracite Region* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1904), 24.

mining” positions, all were equally vulnerable to the economic threat of reduced hours and the physical threat of injury or death.²⁸ This shared vulnerability eventually became a sense of solidarity, observable in the miner’s union, which secured members from all ethnic backgrounds, and at the miners’ saloons, where new and old met to talk and to drink.

In 1901, Freeland had 70 saloons for its 5,250 residents. This is 1 saloon for every 75 people (including women and children), but this figure is misleading.²⁹ In addition to serving Freeland’s residents, the town’s saloons also served the many residents of nearby patch towns, which were dry.³⁰ Saloons were not an unwelcome or disreputable part of freehold communities in the Anthracite region. Sociological analysis completed at the turn of the nineteenth century concluded that 80 percent of the male population in Anthracite mining communities patronized saloons, and noted that support for temperance movements had been weak since at least 1888, when the question was broadly rejected when put up for a state-wide vote.³¹ Saloons throughout the Anthracite region were generally small, neat, and individualized operations; often set up in the living room or parlor of the saloon keeper’s home and staffed by the saloon keeper’s wife and children (Figure 1.2).³² Saloons operated on “the tick,” rather than on a cash basis. This suggests a drinking culture in which men established themselves as “regulars” at

²⁸ Korson, 14.

²⁹ Roberts, 231.

³⁰ Korson, 127.

³¹ Roberts, 238.

³² Roberts, 235.

particular saloons, and a small-town social network in which a customer whose tab had gotten too large and/or who had been avoiding the debt holder could easily be found.

In the 1890s, most, although not all, saloon keepers were Irish, English, or Welsh; one-time miners who had saved up enough money to purchase a building in which to establish a saloon and then retired into this safer and more relaxing line of work. These first-wave saloon keepers welcomed a clientele that included all ethnicities, although communication was not always easy between the two groups. A tick book from a saloon in Wilkes Barre, the Luzerne County seat, lists amounts owed by patrons identified as “Chicken-Eye Joe; the fellow with the big mustache; Pock-marked Andrew; the fellow who talks too much; John Good English; and My Dog Nell [a man who was always talking about his dog].”³³ These customers likely had names that were unspellable, if not unpronounceable, to the bartender, who nevertheless knew them well enough to assign appropriate nicknames.

During the same years that Poles and Irishmen were learning to live together in the mines and saloons of Anthracite towns, Italian immigration to the region also peaked, although the total number of Italian immigrant was significantly lower than that of the dominant ethnic groups. Between 1890 and 1900, Wilkes Barre’s Polish population grew from 393 to 1,632 and its Russian population from 149 to 469, while the town’s Italian population grew from a meager 23 to just 189.³⁴ Italians were relatively few, because Italian miners were relatively rare. There was a concentration of Italians in early strip mining operations, but Italians very rarely worked underground in Anthracite mines.³⁵

³³ Korson, 127.

³⁴ Roberts, 21.

One contemporary observer hypothesized that Italians were too timid to work underground.³⁶ A more sympathetic historian, writing 75 years later, suggests that Italy's emigrants, grown to adulthood in what was essentially a feudal society of home production and farming of small peasant plots, found the working rhythms and physical demands of underground mining unacceptable.³⁷ Freeland native Stanley D'Amore, whose immigrant father did work as an underground miner, suggests a third theory. D'Amore remembers that his father was part of a work team whose members did not speak English, reliant upon a boss who could translate orders into Italian for them.³⁸ Such ethnicity- and language-centered employment networks beget ethnic concentrations within industries. The fewer underground miners who speak Italian, the fewer Italian immigrants who will go into underground mining. On the other hand, significant numbers of Russians or Poles established as miners and mine bosses attract more young men of the same ethnicity, both those who already living in America and those considering the move.

By 1900, there were 34 Italian households in Freeland, comprising approximately 185 men, women, and children, some born in Italy, but the majority Pennsylvania-born American citizens. As in many communities across America, there were never enough Italians in Freeland for local or regional communities to develop; Italians were just

³⁵ Roberts, 33.

³⁶ Roberts, 33; Robert F. Foerster, *The Italian Immigrant of our Times* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1919), 350.

³⁷ Foerster, 65.

³⁸ Stanley D'Amore, interview by author, Freeland, Pennsylvania, June 31, 2009.

Italians.³⁹ Most households included more than one working man: the head of the household, one or more unmarried adult siblings or children, and occasionally one or more Italian-born boarders. Of the 49 working men included in the 1900 census, just 9 were employed as miners or slate pickers. There is no way of knowing how many, if any, of these 9 worked underground and how many were under the management of Serlisia Veccio, “stripping boss,” who rented the home where he lived with his wife and three surviving children.⁴⁰ Far outnumbering these 9 miners are the 21 men employed as laborers, a title that encompassed a wide range of occupational possibilities. Some laborers had full-time jobs within particular industries, and specified this on the census form; for example, 25-year old Meolas Ereca, a railroad laborer who lived with his brother (a miner) and had been in the country seven years.⁴¹ Those who called themselves “day laborers” or simply “laborers” worked wherever they could, as often as they could, at tasks that required of them only the most basic skills of physical strength and endurance. Laborers were the single largest occupational group among Freeland’s Italians: 43% of employed men, a percentage comparable to the number of men employed as laborers town-wide.⁴² Freeland’s nine Italian miners and slate-pickers comprise the second largest occupational group. The third most common occupation,

³⁹ Howard Gillette and Alan Kraut found this to be the case in a city as large as Washington D.C. in the fifty years before World War II. See Howard Gillette, Jr. and Alan M. Kraut, “The Evolution of Washington’s Italian-American Community, 1890: World War II,” *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Fall 1986), 8.

⁴⁰ 1900 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), “Pennsylvania, Luzerne County, Freeland Borough, District 54, Dwelling 236, Family 236, Serlisia Veccio household.”

⁴¹ 1900 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), “Pennsylvania, Luzerne County, Freeland Borough, District 54, Dwelling 502, Family 503, Meolas Ereca household.”

⁴² 1900 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), “Pennsylvania, Luzerne County, Freeland Borough”; “People of Freeland in 1897,” History of Freeland, Pa., accessed June 28, 2009, <http://www.andrew.cmu.edu/user/ct0u/frld1897.html/>.

listed by six men and one woman, is tailoring. This is a remarkably high number; 40% of all tailors in town were Italian, at a time when Italians were only 4% of the town's population. This number significantly bested national trends. In 1907, Italians were one in eight of all tailors entering the country.⁴³

The story of immigration to American's large cities is an often-told one, explored by historians and novelists alike. The story of immigration to small towns remains more mysterious, and yet immigrants dominated many of the America's small towns, in all regions of the country. Gaps in individual stories collectively pose larger historical questions: How did immigrants find their way to small towns? Why did they choose one town over another? Did they leave their home countries with these specific destinations in mind, or did an unsuccessful period in a large city push them to relocate? The path of Freeland's immigrant miners is pretty clearly understood. Industrial recruiters contracted with labor agents in Europe, who enticed struggling men with the promise of a wage far higher than what they were earning in their home country. These same agents arranged overseas passage to New York City or Philadelphia along with rail transportation from these city ports to one of the many mining towns throughout the region, of which even the smallest had a train station, since trains transported coal. In these towns, fresh immigrants were met by someone of their own nationality, who had been hired by the mining company to greet newcomers, find them positions as boarders, and supply them with the necessary equipment to begin working the day after their arrival.⁴⁴

No such network existed for an artisanal trade like tailoring—even if some tailors, like George Bonomo of Freeland did end up working in industrial settings, in his case as

⁴³ Foerster, 332.

⁴⁴ Miller and Sharpless, 172-175.

the foreman of the White Haven Silk Mill.⁴⁵ While Welsh or German tailors found their way to small Anthracite towns along side the large number of their co-nationals who had been recruited to work in the mines, Italian tailors had no such crowd to follow. Since few Italians of any occupation were living in the area, it is unlikely that newcomers had been informally recruited to these towns through boastful letters and/or visits from returning émigrés.

The tales of Bradsby's successful tailors, although none of them are Italian, provide some clues. As mentioned earlier, the men he profiles are highly mobile, moving from more populated and ethnically diverse towns or cities, where they work as journeymen in merchant tailoring operations, to small (and less populated and less diverse) towns, where they set up their own shops. Classified advertisements in tailoring trade publications announce tailor shops for sale in even the smallest American towns. Descriptions like, "The only live shop in a town of 2,000," and "Town of 900 inhabitants and military post of over 500 men. All good dressers and ready money" suggest that opportunity exists beyond the purchase of the one advertised business.⁴⁶ An Italian journeyman who was unsatisfied with his wages or bored with his responsibilities under his current American employer could have been prompted by advertisements like these, or by word-of-mouth descriptions of the population growth and economic opportunity of places like Freeland, to relocate to one of the region's many small towns. The very smallness of the towns may have attracted men born in similarly small towns in Italy, and the low, lush mountainous terrain of Northeastern Pennsylvania—before the trees were

⁴⁵ Stumpf, 18.

⁴⁶ Classified Ad, "Business Opportunities," *American Tailor and Cutter*, July 1909, 22; Classified Ad, "Business Opportunities," *American Tailor and Cutter*, Aug. 1909, 56.

clear cut to procure timbers for the mines or the streams polluted by run-off—may have reminded them of their native landscapes. Italian artisans may also have been socialized to a migratory lifestyle. In a study of immigrants living in Cleveland at the turn of the 20th century, the historian Josef Barton found that for Italian artisans migration between villages and subsequent upward mobility were both common prior to immigration.⁴⁷

A trained tailor could set himself up in business with a modest initial investment. The most expensive pieces of equipment he would need to purchase were a sewing machine and a cutting table—a long, chest-high surface upon which pattern pieces could be cut while standing upright. All other supplies carried small price tags: a roll of thin but durable paper upon which to draw pattern pieces, one or two good pairs of scissors, an iron and a goose (a piece of metal used to shape curves), and an adequate supply of the tiny, cheap tools used for hand sewing: needles, thimbles, and pins (Figure 1.3).⁴⁸ He would not need to keep fabric in stock, as fabric for each project was selected from a swatch book by the customer, ordered in a quantity adequate for the style and size requested, and included in the price of the final garment. He would not even keep much thread in stock, as thread for particular orders was procured through a similar process as the fabric: color and type (machine silk, buttonhole twist, skein or spool sewing) were selected from a sample book and ordered from a wholesale supplier. A tailor of modest ambition could set up a business in the living room or front parlor of his family home, much like the many saloon keepers in the region. If he had saved enough money to buy

⁴⁷ Josef J. Barton, *Peasants and Strangers: Italians, Rumanians, and Slovaks in an American City* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1975) 45.

⁴⁸ Anon, *Book of Old-Time Trades and Schools* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 2005, reprint of 1866 publication, 212-222. Other than the introduction of the sewing machine, the basic tools of the tailoring trade hadn't changed significantly in hundreds of years.

the house outright, his monthly expenses would be minimal and largely born by the customers who paid for the material costs of ordered garments.

Men who operated these types of home-based businesses were simply tailors, rather than the “Clothing and Tailor” or merchant-tailors, discussed earlier. They didn’t get rich, but they usually got by. A more ambitious tailor would opt for renting a storefront shop and keeping a hefty stock of ready-made items on site. Risks and potential rewards were both greater with merchant-tailor establishments. Like L.J. Davies of Hazleton he might enjoy an “extensive business,” and find cause to keep on staff more than a dozen journeymen tailors, or, like Abe Refowich of Freeland, he may go bankrupt, in this case with \$151,000 dollars of debt.⁴⁹

John Pecora, father of Ralph J. Pecora and one of Freeland’s six Italian tailors in 1900, chose the modest, home-based path, although the personal or financial motives behind this decision are unknown. There are more questions about this man than answers. No photos of him exist, he was never treated to a Bradsby-type biography, and he didn’t make it into the local newspapers until his death (unlike his fellow tailor and fellow Italian E. DePierro, who appears in the Thursday, August 4, 1898 issue of the *Freeland Tribune* for “entertain[ing] a large crowd at Main and Centre Streets on Monday evening with a fistic encounter” with the shoemaker Joe Fanelli.)⁵⁰ He died in October of 1905, when he was 43 and his oldest son 17, of unknown or unremembered causes. The brief obituary published in the *Freeland Tribune* mentions only that “he had been unwell for some time and returned only a few days ago from a Philadelphia hospital

⁴⁹ Bradsby, *Biographical Sketches*; Anon, “Brief Items of News,” *Freeland Tribune*, Nov. 3, 1898, front page.

⁵⁰ Anon, “Brief Items of News,” *Freeland Tribune*, August 4, 1898, front page.

where he had gone in the hope of improving his health.”⁵¹ If his children talked about him to their children, this generation did not pass along the lore to the next.⁵² He was the grandfather and then the great-grandfather that nobody knew anything about. This lack of knowledge suggests several possibilities: perhaps John Pecora was not a likeable man, perhaps he was not an approachable man, perhaps he was always working and his children simply had no stories to pass on. Another possibility, one supported by the behavior of his grandchildren and great-grandchildren seventy and eighty years later, is that his family did not indulge in reminiscing about the living or the dead.

Almost all of the available information on John Pecora comes from a handful of government documents: the 1900 census and an 1895 and an 1897 city directory. The information recorded in these few pages reveals a lot. John was born in Italy in October of 1863 and immigrated to the United States in 1884, when he was 21 years old.⁵³ A note on a family tree indicates that his mother, unnamed, was born in Naples; his father is not mentioned and siblings are unknown. Three years after arriving in America, he married Mary DiJoseph, also Italian and 11 years his junior. That same year, their oldest son Ralph was born. Ralph Pecora listed Freeland as his place of birth on several official forms, so the family must have been early settlers to the town, but information regarding John’s occupation or the family address at the time is unavailable. John is not listed among the tailors in the Freeland Business Directories for 1884-1886 or 1886-1888, an omission that suggests that he was employed as a journeyman or possibly even a laborer

⁵¹ Anon, “Funerals,” *Freeland Tribune*, Oct. 27, 1905, front page.

⁵² I conducted interviews with John Pecora’s last living grandson as well as six of his great grandchildren and none of them could provide even the most basic information about John Pecora.

⁵³ 1900 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), “Pennsylvania, Luzerne County, Freeland Borough, District 54, Dwelling 177, Family 177, John Pecora household.”

in those years. The next piece of information on John Pecora is his appearance in an 1895 business directory as a tailor located at 81 Washington Street.⁵⁴ (The missing 1890 Census records for Freeland, along with the records for most of the United States, were destroyed in a fire in the U.S. Commerce Building in 1921.)⁵⁵ Freeland's 1897 Directory confirms John Pecora's name and address, and further indicates that this location was used as both a home and a work address. The 1900 census indicates that John Pecora owned this home outright – no mortgage; that he worked 12 months of the year; that he read, wrote, and spoke English, and that he was a naturalized citizen.⁵⁶

We do not know what kind of a man the tailor John Pecora was, but we do know what kind of a town he did his tailoring in. A Sanborn Fire Insurance Company agent mapped Freeland in 1895—and again in 1900, 1905, 1912, and 1923—making meticulous record of the addresses, footprints, construction materials, number of stories, and primary usage of the buildings along Freeland's main streets. His intent was to accurately assess the fire risk and insurance liability for each site, but the information he collected can also be used to construct a mental image of the places that people walked, shopped, rode, prayed, worked, learned, ate, drank, and called home.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ “Businesses in the 1884-1886 city directory,” History of Freeland, Pa., accessed July 17, 2010, <http://www.andrew.cmu.edu/user/ct0u/frld1884-1886.html>; “Businesses in the 1886-1888 city directory,” History of Freeland, Pa., accessed July 17, 2010, <http://www.andrew.cmu.edu/user/ct0u/frld1886-1888.html>.

⁵⁵ “The 1890 Census,” National Archives website, accessed Dec. 14, 2010, <http://www.archives.gov/research/census/1890/1890.html>.

⁵⁶ 1900 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), “Pennsylvania, Luzerne County, Freeland Borough, District 54, Dwelling 177, Family 177, John Pecora household.”

⁵⁷ Tom Gates, “Information about Digital Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps,” accessed 6.11.10, <http://dmc.ohiolink.edu/help/sanborn Gates.html>; all of the maps for Freeland were generously scanned and emailed to me by Stephen Paczolt, in the Geography and Maps Division at the Library of Congress.

As a geographic whole, Freeland was a tall, narrow town in 1895, with homes and businesses crowding up against one another on long north-south blocks abutted by the property of the Cross Creek Coal Company to the west and a branch of the Lehigh Valley Rail Road tracks to the east (the LVRR tracks also formed the southern border of the town). The vast majority of Freeland's buildings were wood-frame construction, usually two and occasionally three stories tall, although there were a few brick buildings: the Yannes Opera House, the Freeland Lodge hall, two large stores on Centre Street, and the passenger train station for the Lehigh Valley Railroad, which had a wood-frame porch built out evenly around all sides. Most homes had porches—in the front, off the back, and/or to the side—and were built right up against their neighbors, who often shared walls. Centre Street, running north-south, and Front Street, running east-west, were the main business districts, although saloons and confectioners (ice cream and whiskey) were scattered throughout town (Figure 1.4). It was a very compact town: about a half mile tall and less than an eighth of a mile wide. Every point in Freeland was easily accessible, on foot, to every other, as well as to Cross Creek mines to the west. The mines of the Upper Lehigh, Highland, and Alvington Coal Companies to the north were further out, but still a reasonable walk.

Freeland's commercial diversity, as well as the diversity of nearby mining companies, was unusual for the Anthracite region in these years. When anthracite coal first became economically viable in the middle of the 19th century, most mine owners were small-scale entrepreneurs, who lived on the land that their workers mined, eventually in large mansions that dwarfed workers' housing. By 1896, however, 90% of the anthracite coal mines were owned by anthracite-carrying railroad companies, 96% of

which were controlled by one man, J. P. Morgan.⁵⁸ Small operators in the Eastern Middle coal field, of which Freeland is a part, held onto their properties longer than most. The patch towns that these operators built were generally prettier and better equipped than the corporate-owned towns, because the mine owner and his family lived there along with the miners. Drifton, the patch town nearest to Freeland, was a typical example of this better type of coal town. An 1878 article in the *Hazleton Evening Bulletin* described Drifton as “one of the best towns in the mining regions,” boasting “a magnificent hall for the employees, also a church, a large boarding house, and several hundred private houses. All of the buildings are lit by gas manufactured in the town. The store, office, depot, and some of the private houses are heated by steam.”⁵⁹ Corporate-owned patch towns were drearier. An 1880 map of Upper Lehigh, owned by the Upper Lehigh Coal Company, depicts a community dominated by a large breaker, two numbered mine entrances, and rows of monotonously identical company houses (Figure 1.5).⁶⁰ The few structures not directly connected to the mines’ operations are not very removed from this task either. The saw mill on the edge of town planed recently-cut timber into posts and timbers to shore up the mine walls. The two small schools educated miners’ children until the boys were old enough to begin working and the girls were deemed more useful at home. The company-owned Store and Post Office provided miners’ wives with a place to shop and the company with a way to reclaim a significant portion of employee pay.

⁵⁸ Rose, 76.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Andrew Funk, Jr., “A History of the Freeland Area: No. 5,” *The Standard Speaker*, March 5, 1949.

⁶⁰ D. G. Beers, “Upper Lehigh,” *Atlas of Luzerne County, PA: From Actual Surveys by and under the Direction of D. G. Beers* (Philadelphia: A Pomeroy, 1873), accessed June 01, 2010, <http://www.andrew.cmu.edu/user/ct0u/ULatlasmap150.jpg>.

The map of Upper Lehigh provides a clear contrast to Freeland's vibrant and varied local geography. Sanborn's 1895 maps of Freeland have captured streets busy with private homes and private businesses, as well as the promise of many numbered, empty lots—the town's boundaries have been expanded, its clothes resized to suit a gangly adolescent; Freeland now has room to grow. Centre Street is a patchwork of commercial enterprises: confectionaries, dry goods and notions stores, meat markets, barbers, grocers, furniture stores, hardware stores, bakeries, drug stores, and wallpaper shops. In just the five mapped blocks of Centre Street, there are 23 saloons. Many of these businesses are work/live addresses, where store owners, and their families, lived in rooms above and behind their store-front businesses. (The saloons are almost all work/live addresses.) These buildings, like all of Freeland's homes and businesses, vary in size and in shape. Someone walking or riding along Centre Street would have been able to recognize a particular store by its outline and its relation to other prominent buildings, even if she or he was unable to read the sign in its window or on its marquee. Someone looking for a particular address on a residential street could navigate by landmark as well, as the homes (unlike patch-town homes) were built to individualized footprints and floor plans. By 1895, night navigation of the town's commercial streets was aided by electric street lights.⁶¹ A resident who didn't want to stay home at night had the many saloons to choose from, as well as Freeland's two opera houses, nine restaurants, and two cafes.⁶²

⁶¹ Stumpf, 9

⁶² "People of Freeland in 1897," <http://www.andrew.cmu.edu/user/ct0u/frld1897.html/>.

For a man in need or in want of a new suit or overcoat, Centre Street would be the obvious place to go: the site of three “gents” stores, five clothing stores, and five tailor shops. John Pecora’s shop is a full block east of Centre Street and two blocks south of Main, unpromisingly to the periphery of this commercial center. His store is almost exactly in the middle of the block, beyond the line of sight from either corner. In both size and location, his business is a poor rival to the massive gentleman’s store on the corner of Washington and South Streets; although, unlike the gentleman’s store, John Pecora offered a personalized—a tailored—product.

By contemporary standards, John Pecora’s working-class neighbors (miners, laborers, a shoemaker, a boilermaker) would be unlikely customers for either the gentleman’s store or the tailor. But, in his ethnography of the Anthracite region, Peter Roberts describes a world in which all men wear vests and white shirts, overcoats and ties (Figure 1.6). The distinction he draws is not between poorly-dressed working-class and well-dressed professional men, but between the spendthrift habits of those who were born in the United States (whom he calls “Anglo-Saxons”) and the economizing of those who have recently immigrated from Southern or Eastern Europe (“Sclavs”). He writes: “The Anglo-Saxons pay for a suit of clothes from \$15 to \$25. Many of them wear tailor-made suits. They never go without collar and tie, cuffs and white shirt, studs, buttons, a gold watch and chain, and often a gold ring ... [I]n cold weather each has a comfortable overcoat, and many of them have two, one for fall and spring, and the other for winter.”⁶³ On the other hand, Roberts says, the Sclav will buy his clothing second-hand, will wear it until it becomes threadbare, and does not follow changes in fashion. Roberts estimates that “the average young man of native birth, married or single, would spend from \$40 to

⁶³ Roberts, 102.

\$50 annually in clothing; the Slav would not spend one half that.”⁶⁴ Approximately 50% of the heads of household in Freeland in 1900 were native-born.⁶⁵ John Pecora’s neighbors on his block of Washington Street, people with last names like Meehan, Williams, Jones, Page, all fall into this category. There is no way of knowing whether these or others were his customers. All that is certain is that he must have had some customers, for he stayed in business for the ten or so years between his first appearance in the Freeland Directory and his death.

Along with the out-of-the-way location, the size of the Pecora residence/shop further indicates that John Pecora was not among the more successful tailors in town. Eighty-one S. Washington is the smallest building on the right side of the block, just 22 feet wide and 20 feet long. It is a two-story, wood-frame house, with a front porch nearly abutting the street line and a shed, but no livery stable, in the back. The building enjoys an alley of open space between it and its neighbor to the south, but it shares a wall with its northern neighbor; at best, there were windows on three sides of the house (Figure 1.7). Housing what was, for a time, a family of eight children, along with a business, space must have been tight; although, this disadvantage had an obverse advantage: the back yard is ample, because the house is so small.

The advantage of owning the home outright was also great. While living, John Pecora was free of the pressure of earning a certain amount of money each month in order to meet a fixed rent or mortgage payment and did not have to worry about possibly being evicted when business was slow. His family never had to take in boarders, a

⁶⁴ Roberts, 103.

⁶⁵ 1900 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), “Pennsylvania, Luzerne County, Freeland Borough.”

situation which increased women's workloads and exacerbated overcrowded living conditions—one anthracite miner, born in 1915, remembers being told that at one point his father and first wife had 17 boarders in their small house.⁶⁶ Boarders could make trouble in families by not getting along with the wife or children or by getting along with them too well, as in this story from the *Freeland Tribune*: “George Freemer of Hazle Brook boarded with John Sulgin until Oct. 24, when he left, taking Sulgin's wife and child along with him.”⁶⁷ After John Pecora's death, the boon of home ownership passed to his widow, Mary. She never had to go into business, as did her neighbor, the widow Jane DeFoy, who owned a restaurant on the corner of Washington and Luzerne, or take a service job, as did her fellow townswoman 31-year old Amie Sweeney, also widowed, whose income as a housekeeper supplemented the money brought in by her oldest child, 14-year old John, employed as a breaker boy.⁶⁸ She never remarried, a fact that says as much about her financial situation as it does about her personal life.

Mary DiJoseph Pecora outlived her husband by nearly 50 years, dying in 1953 when she was seventy-nine years old. Like her husband, she was an Italian immigrant. Unlike her husband, she came to the United States as a very young child—she was either two, three, or six when she made the trip, according to the 1900, 1910, or 1920 census

⁶⁶ The miner mentioned is Gabe Ferrence, interviewed by Thomas Dublin in 1994; see Dublin, *When the Mines Closed: Stories of Struggles in Hard Times* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 165. In addition to feeding and cleaning up after boarders, miner's wives often washed their backs when they returned from the mines; see Roberts, 105.

⁶⁷ Anon, “Wife Thief Sent to Jail,” *Freeland Tribune*, Oct. 31, 1898, front page.

⁶⁸ 1900 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), “Pennsylvania, Luzerne County, Freeland Borough, District 54, Dwelling 235, Family 235, Amie Sweeney household.”; “People of Freeland in 1897,” <http://www.andrew.cmu.edu/user/ct0u/frld1897.html/>.

forms.⁶⁹ Different census forms also list her under different first names: Mary, Marie, Maria. All documents agree on her early age of marriage and motherhood: she was a few months shy of her 14th birthday when she gave birth to Ralph, her first child. She could neither read nor write when she became a mother, although she likely spoke better English than her much older husband, who had been in the country only three years. She gave birth to nine children before her husband's death, when she was just 31 years old. Seven of these children survived to adulthood: two sons and five daughters. By 1920, she had learned to read and write, or to lie to the census taker about her abilities. The 1930 census is the first record in which she is listed as a naturalized citizen. She lived at 81 S. Washington Street for the rest of her life, sharing the home with her younger daughters for many of those years—one would never marry, and two would marry in their thirties and forties. She counseled at least one of her granddaughters not to marry young.⁷⁰

Photographs of Mary Pecora do exist. One set of three black-and-white studio photographs taken in 1923 show her in formal, posed middle age (Figures 1.8, 1.9, and 1.10). At this point in her life, she is a tiny woman, small-boned and slender, with a narrow face dominated by long cheeks and sad eyes. In two of the photographs, taken in April of 1923, she wears a baggy wool coat with oversized fur collar and cuffs and a dark narrow-brimmed hat; in the other, taken about a month later, she wears a black silk blouse and dark wool or cotton skirt. She appears well dressed in all three images, but

⁶⁹ 1900 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), "Pennsylvania, Luzerne County, Freeland Borough, District 54, Dwelling 177, Family 177, John Pecora household"; 1910 Federal Census (Population Schedule), "Pennsylvania, Luzerne County, Freeland Borough, Fifth Ward, Dwelling 153, Family 213, Mary Pecora household"; 1920 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), "Pennsylvania, Luzerne County, Freeland Borough, Fifth Ward, Dwelling 129, Family 132, Maria Pecora household."

⁷⁰ Brenda Pecora, interview by author, Freeland, Pennsylvania, June 30, 2009.

then, to borrow the title of Joan Severa's book of 19th century daguerreotypes, she is "dressed for the photographer". She holds her hands at her sides, looks directly into the camera for one shot and then off to the side for another: classic studio poses. She wears no makeup. She does not smile, but rather keeps what seems to be a natural expression. In the April images, her mouth is set into a straight line and her effortless eyes look both sad and worried. In the May image, her mouth curls just a little bit more and her eyes, although still sad, twinkle, as if she had recently laughed.

It is possible that she was unhappy with the April images, and so went back for another just four weeks later. Certainly the blouse and skirt she wears in the May image fit better than the wool coat she wears in April, which is far too big. The arms of the coat sag and wrinkle and the waist is literally folded under to keep the fabric near her body. Either the coat was a hand-me-down or borrowed for the picture, or she was such a tiny woman that even the smallest off-the-rack clothing was not small enough. Her oldest son Ralph was a successful tailor by 1923, but Ralph's son did not remember his father ever making clothing for his mother, Ralph's wife. It is unlikely that he would have made clothing for his own mother, either. Women's reliance on ready-made or homemade clothing blurred the distinction between the attire of native-born and immigrant residents that Peter Roberts observed in male residents of the Anthracite region. Roberts guessed that, in 1904, native-born and foreign-born women both spent about \$25 annually for their wardrobes of cotton blouses and petticoats, and cotton or wool dresses and skirts.⁷¹

Two other images, both undated, show Mary Pecora at home, busy with a homemaker's tasks. She leans forward in a rocking chair, studying the crocheting in her hands. She sits at the dinner table with three of her daughters, all four of them looking

⁷¹ Roberts, 101.

down into their bowls (Figure 1.11). At the dinner table, two of Mary's daughters wear their hair pinned up at the backs of their heads, like adults, while the baby in the family, Matilda, wears her hair pulled back at the sides and loose down her back, an adolescent's hairstyle. If Matilda is 12 or 13 in this image, then these pictures were taken in 1918 or 1919. (Matilda was born in 1905, the year her father died.) In both images, Mary wears an identical outfit consisting of a loose light-colored cotton blouse tucked into a long, dark skirt, with a knitted vest or shawl folded over her shoulders and a floor-length white apron tied around her waist. She wears wire-frame glasses, absent in the studio photographs. Her left hand, clearly visible atop the table and working the yarn, does not carry a wedding ring. Likely taken on the same day, the images are unquestionably of the same room, a front room or parlor, which would have been John Pecora's shop when he was still living. In her widowhood, Mary Pecora has claimed it as living space. During a meal, it is a dining room. Otherwise, it is a sitting room, the table pushed back flush with the wall. The interior chair, occupied by Mary's daughter Elizabeth during dinner, rests beneath a window while Mary is crocheting. While these three daughters were living with her, someone in the family would perform the task of inserting and removing this chair every meal. The home appears to be comfortable, although not luxurious. A tall china cabinet in one corner displays a patterned tea set, but the many matching striped throw rugs on the floor are a cheap approximation of a room-sized carpet. The family eats dinner from a matching set of shallow white bowls, but the sauce is being served from a Mason jar.

The two final images of Mary Pecora show her in her back yard. In one, also undated, she is bundled up against the cold and leaning into a shovelful of fresh snow. In

the other, this one marked 1947, she stands in the same backyard space, now lush with flowers and plants, dressed in a patterned cotton dress, and smiles (Figure 1.12). Someone has labeled this picture, “Grandmom Pecora in her garden.” These two images, found among the possessions of a now-deceased granddaughter of Mary Pecora, were surprising to Mary’s last surviving grandson, Ralph Pecora, Jr., and his wife of sixty years, Caroline Massey Pecora. Carolyn was taken aback by the genuine smile Mary wears in her garden, Ralph by the sight of his grandmother shoveling snow. Asked why these images were so surprising, Ralph said simply that he never knew his grandmother to do anything like that. Carolyn was more expansive. She compared her grandmother-in-law to Whistler’s mother, and, laughing, attempted to capture Mary Pecora’s character by saying she was “always dressed in black, with her hair pulled back in a little bun back here, and she was always sitting in a chair ... I don’t think I ever saw her standing up.”⁷² Earlier in the interview, Carolyn had characterized Ralph Pecora, Sr. as “very reserved” and indicated that this same reserve was present in her husband, his son. Perhaps they both inherited this quality from Mary Pecora. Or perhaps Carolyn’s and even Ralph’s limited sense of what was typical for Mary Pecora is one instance of a generational gap repeated thousands of time across the region. The life circumstances of Mary Pecora and of someone of Carolyn’s generation were so vastly different that basic terms of mutual understanding could be hard to establish and cross-generational points of view hard to grasp.

In 1938, Harper’s editor George Leighton published an idiosyncratic book of sociology or social history (academic reviewers at the time weren’t sure how to categorize it) titled *Five Cities: The Story of their Youth and Old Age*. The book is just

⁷² Ralph Pecora, Jr., interview by author, Fishkill, New York, October 19, 2008.

this, the stories of the rise and decline of five American cities: Seattle, Washington; Omaha, Nebraska; Birmingham, Alabama; Lexington, Kentucky; and Shenandoah, Pennsylvania (yet another Anthracite community). The only introduction tying these five chapters together is short piece of fiction, describing the visit an unnamed man and his son made to the man's dying grandmother in Tunkhannock, Pennsylvania, forty miles north of Freeland. Tunkhannock was not a mining town, but one of the many things that this dying woman is said to have seen in her life was "Polish coal miners come up from Wilkes-Barre and Pittston and buy the run-down farms and make them bloom again." The grandmother asks her visitor about his project, presumably the book that this story opens: "Are you finding out a good deal about the country?" He tells her that he is and wonders if he might ask a question of her. "Why was it that you never gave anyone—your children, your friends, anyone—your confidence? Did you have some secret?" She tells him no, "The secret is that there was never any secret ... I didn't give anybody any confidences because there weren't any to give." She clarifies: "For a long time when I was young it was very difficult for me to talk to people. I could not get through ... I was uneasy and could not feel at home ... in the world. Then one day, I knew. I knew that in some way I could not understand, people knew how I felt and that I did not need to worry or work over it any more. That is all there is to the secret and that is why there were no confidences. Confidences are made by people who are afraid, but I was no longer afraid and so there was nothing to tell."⁷³

A grandmother tells stories or she doesn't. If she does, her grandchildren and their grandchildren feel that they knew her, and take her stories as truths. If she doesn't,

⁷³ George Leighton, *Five Cities: The Story of their Youth and Old Age* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), 6-7.

her descendents assume she had secrets and they begin to guess. Perhaps Mary and John Pecora were never married. No marriage certificate has been located and after her husband's death she is photographed without a ring. Perhaps she was pregnant when she married and/or moved in with John Pecora. On the 1900 census form, she lies about her oldest son Ralph's birth date (putting his birth date just six months before that of his younger sister) to make him seem a year younger than he was. Perhaps she never loved and didn't even like John Pecora. Perhaps she regretted each of her nine pregnancies and all of her life still felt like a needy child. Perhaps the death of her 17 old daughter Amelia in 1913 was a blow that caused life-long sorrow, for perhaps she felt particularly close with or connected to this daughter. While no one knows exactly what killed her husband, the cause of Amelia's death is clearly remembered by her grandson Ralph as obstruction of the bowels.⁷⁴

Marriage at 13 was many years younger than the 1890 average for women, which was 22, but among Italian women in the Anthracite region what would now be considered adolescent marriages were not unique.⁷⁵ Mary's own mother, Louise DiJoseph, was 14 when she married Mary's father, Michael. Two of Mary's neighbors, several years younger than she was, also married at 14. One woman living in Freeland, Pauline DePierro, was married at age 11, but she was many years older than Mary, born in 1834, and did not immigrate to the United States until her middle age.⁷⁶ For wives in

⁷⁴ Ralph Pecora, Jr. interview, October 19, 2008.

⁷⁵ U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Table MS-2. Estimated Median Age at First Marriage, by Sex: 1890 to Present," Internet Release Date September 15, 2004, accessed July 08, 2010, <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/tabMS-2.pdf>

⁷⁶ 1910 Federal Census (Population Schedule), "Pennsylvania, Luzerne County, Hazleton City, Ninth Ward, Dwelling 366, Family 371, Michael [Di]Joseph household"; 1900 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), "Pennsylvania, Luzerne County, Freeland Borough."

their teens as well as those in their twenties, nine or more pregnancies during their reproductive years were expected. One Anthracite-region doctor told the sociologist Peter Roberts that “among these women it’s a birth every year,” although for nursing mothers a child every two years (Mary’s average) was more typical.⁷⁷ Widowhood was also not unusual, especially in a town dependent upon the dangerous occupation of mining. Freeland’s 1897 Directory lists the names and addresses of women when they own businesses, have professional occupations (such as teaching), or are widows. One hundred and three women make it into the directory as the “widow of X.” Even more common than the early loss of husbands was the death of children. Freeland women who reported the same number of children living as children born on the 1900 census were slightly in the minority.⁷⁸ Many of these were young women with only one or two young children; opportunities remained for death to touch their families. Tallies like that of Anna Gallagher, who gave birth to 12 children and had 5 living in 1900, or Miriam Daubert, who also gave birth to 12 and by 1900 was the mother of 1, suggest family lives dominated by death. Some, however, were lucky. All 10 of Johanna McDonald’s children were living in 1900 as were all 11 of Elizabeth Miller’s children, although Elizabeth’s husband had passed away.

An informal review of the census records does not uncover any correlation between immigration status and child mortality. Children died in great numbers both before immigration and on American soil. Within the Anthracite region, most children lived in homes that would be deemed dirty and overcrowded by modern standards.

⁷⁷ Roberts, p. 69.

⁷⁸ Of 917 women with children, 488 had lost one or several of these children, and 429 had, as of yet, lost none.

Although the privately-owned homes in Freeland were a step above the company houses in patch towns—which, while varying in quality and size, too often met Peter Roberts’ description of having “[n]o cellar, no foundation, no plastering, no paper, no ceiling, simply the frame with rough hemlock boards nailed upright and strips fastened over the joints.”—most were quickly constructed wood-frame buildings, with just one or two rooms on each of two floors.⁷⁹ Robert’s sad story of a company-town miner wakened by the crying of his children, who cannot sleep because of the cold, could just as well have been set in a typical Freeland home; particularly as Freeland, which sits on Broad Mountain, nearly 2,000 feet above sea level, suffers uniquely unpleasant winters.⁸⁰ In the winter months, the typical overcrowding of both company and freehold homes may have been a boon for comfort, although not conducive to containing the spread of colds or flu. Roberts estimates that company homes of two to four rooms housed an average of nine to ten people per dwelling, including adult boarders.⁸¹ Many Freeland families, with five or more children, also took in boarders, in houses of comparable size.⁸²

With little room to play inside the home, children were forced outside into Freeland’s streets and yards, where a wide range of potential dangers threatened their safety. The trains coming in and out of town could kill a child (or an adult) instantly, but trains did keep to tracks and were easily spotted by anyone who was looking. Cave-ins of the undermined ground, on the other hand, could occur anywhere, at any time, and

⁷⁹ Roberts, 128; Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, New York, NY, *Map of 1900*, 5 sheets.

⁸⁰ “Freeland,” *The Encyclopaedia Britannica, a Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, Literature and General Information*, 11th edition, Volume 11, Franciscans to Gibson (New York: The Encyclopaedia Britannica Company, 1910), on History of Freeland, Pa. webpage, accessed July 08, 2010, <http://www.andrew.cmu.edu/user/ct0u/encybrit1910.html>.

⁸¹ Roberts, 129.

⁸² Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, *Map of 1900*.

often without any warning. Freeland's most famous cave-in occurred in the school yard of the elementary school, in the middle of a baseball game. Interviewed in 1949, Freeland resident Joseph Lindsay remembered the day: "[A] game of baseball was in progress in the school yard and one of the boys has made a nice hit and had just reached second base when the ground opened up behind him with a rumble."⁸³ New technologies presented additional new dangers. While the electric street lights installed in 1894 were intended to improve public safety, many residents were unfamiliar with the dangers of electrified wires.⁸⁴ The *Freeland Tribune* reported two electrocution deaths within two weeks in August of 1898. On Aug. 1, "the first fatality of its kind in Freeland," eight-year old John Repyof touched an exposed wire after climbing an electricity pole and his "life went out in an instant."⁸⁵ Just ten days later, 18-year old Jennie Allison leaned out her window to hear music playing outside, bumped up against an electrified wire, and "died without uttering a sound."⁸⁶ Local newspaper reports additionally mention deaths caused by mining and hunting accidents, farm animals and farm machinery, diphtheria and typhoid fever. Summing up this gruesome tally, a "Brief Items of Note" column in the Sept. 19, 1898 issue of the *Freeland Tribune* offers the following statistic (interesting as a news item, whether or not it was true): "One quarter of all people born die before six years and half before they are sixteen."⁸⁷

⁸³ Andrew Funk, Jr., "A History of the Freeland Area: No. 4," *Standard Speaker*, March 4, 1949.

⁸⁴ Stumpf, 8; Funk, "A History of the Freeland Area: No. 7."

⁸⁵ Anon, "Brief Items of Note," *Freeland Tribune*, Aug. 1, 1898, front page.

⁸⁶ Anon, "Brief Items of Note," *Freeland Tribune*, Aug. 11, 1898, front page.

⁸⁷ Anon, "Brief Items of Note," *Freeland Tribune*, Sept. 19, 1898, front page.

In such an environment, Mary's seven of nine children grown to adulthood represent a comparatively successful family, if survival is taken as a measure of success. Perhaps the most significant boon to her son's safety was their freedom from dangerous and physically demanding labor. In the 1900 census, Mary's two sons—Ralph, age 13, and Michael, age 11—are listed as being “at school,” rather than working as slate pickers, like many other boys their age. Slate pickers, also known as breaker boys, sat in rows in tall, sloped wooden structures (called breakers) built next to the mine entrances and picked the slate from the coal as it passed on a conveyor belt beneath their feet. Coal dust rose in clouds, splintered coal and slate were both sharp enough to cause serious lacerations, and the machinery that ran the conveyor belt could mangle a hand or arm or even drag a boy to a suffocation death in the coal. In the 1900 Census, the average age of the 79 slate pickers living in Freeland was 20 years old, but this number is highly misleading, as slate pickers were split between a large group of very young boys, ages 11 to 15, and a smaller group of semi-retired men, as old as 77, who returned to positions as slate pickers after having survived years of mining work underground.⁸⁸ Among the younger group of workers alone, the average age was slightly less than fourteen years old.

A 1902 law forbade mining companies from hiring boys under 14, but enforcement seems to have been lax. Four years after passage of the bill, Peter Roberts found that in most towns, there was “No apparent effect that we can see.” He attributed this to a variety of factors: “With a worthless system of gathering birth statistics, with parents who regard their children as productive agents, and with politicians in control of

⁸⁸ Dublin and Licht, *Face of Decline*, 49.

all civic offices, what hope is there of keeping tender boys of 12 and 13 from the breakers?”⁸⁹

Although they were enrolled in school, Ralph and Michael Pecora were almost certainly regarded as productive agents by their parents when they were at home. As the oldest son, Ralph experienced particular pressure to learn his father’s trade and help him with his business. Ralph’s last living son, Ralph Pecora, Jr., is certain that his father became a tailor because he was expected to, and not because he had any inherent interest in tailoring. “It wasn’t by choice, it was because he was the oldest. He had to learn the trade. The rest of his family had to be taken care of. That was the way the world was.”⁹⁰

According to Ralph, Jr., his father’s true loves were reading and fishing.⁹¹ An avid reader, his father “had several books going at the same time, always.” In a household of seven children, Ralph Sr. set aside two of six upstairs rooms for a personal library containing classic works of history, philosophy, and general knowledge, all stored in expensive, glass-paned bookshelves (Figure 1.13). Volumes from that library, now split up among Ralph’s descendants, include the 1910 Harvard Classics (edited by Charles. W. Norton), the complete works of Kipling, Ida Marbell’s four-volume *Life of Lincoln*, a thirteen-volume set of the *Memoirs of the Courts of Europe*, the complete works of Balzac, and the collected works of Mark Twain. Ralph, Jr. remembers that his

⁸⁹ Roberts, 181.

⁹⁰ Ralph Pecora, Jr., interview by author, Fishkill, New York, June 09, 2009.

⁹¹ Fishing seems to have been a popular passion in the anthracite region. Former miner John Zokovitch told Thomas Dublin that “We were just glad sometimes to have a strike so we could get out fishing or hunting or something.” (John Zokovitch, interview by Walter Licht, Morrisville, Pennsylvania, June 5, 1995). William Wrightson remembers that during bass season, his father and his father’s co-workers would take turns taking the day off, so that everyone would get a chance to play hooky and go fishing. (William Wrightson, interview by Walter Licht, Levittown, Pennsylvania, June 2, 1995.) Both interviews courtesy of Thomas Dublin.

father was both proud of and particular about the books he owned—“he didn’t want any trash in his library”—but that, as his children got older, he was open to their opinions on literature as well. Ralph, Jr. said, “Now he eventually gave in for my sisters who wanted novels to read, of certain types. But he put limits on those too.” Fishing, Ralph’s other passion, was another source of occasional conflict in the family. Carolyn Massey Pecora remembers the date of her in-laws’ wedding anniversary by the inevitable quarrel that resulted from its proximity to the opening of fishing season. “How I remember that [date] is, it was the opening of fishing season at the same time as it was their anniversary ... And she used to get mad. Because he’d go fishing on their anniversary.” Ralph, Jr. seconded this appraisal of his father’s priorities, supposing that his father “would have preferred if he could be out fishing all of the time.”⁹²

Like his sense of obligation to his father’s trade, Ralph’s passions for reading and fishing were likely developed early in his life. The formal education he received may or may not have introduced him to the classic books that he stocked in his library, but certainly he learned how to read and to write during his time in Freeland’s public schools, and developed a taste for the pleasures of these endeavors. Within the Anthracite region, Freeland had a reputation as a center of learning, as it was the site of the Industrial School for Miners and Mechanics, a tuition-free secondary school for the sons of miners, commonly referred to as MMI. Founded in 1879 by Eckley Coxe, one of the last independent mine owners, MMI offered evening classes—so as to not interfere with working hours for students who were typically employees as well—in the basics of spelling, grammar, and composition, along with more technical skills like mechanical

⁹² Carolyn Pecora, interview by author, Fishkill, New York, October 19, 2008.

drawing and construction in wood, stone, and metal.⁹³ The school's charter made clear its dual goal of helping students become of "much greater value to themselves and to those for whom and with whom they work."⁹⁴ By 1900, MMI had a student body of 120 students, taught by a faculty of six, while the public high school (built in 1899) had only 14 students in its first year.⁹⁵ It is unlikely that Ralph Pecora, who by late adolescence was effectively serving an apprenticeship to his father, would have attended classes at this high school. Rather, like most boys his age, his classroom education likely ended with late elementary school—what we would now consider middle school—and was followed by specific trade or industry training.

Freeland had two elementary schools in the 1890s; the many nearby patch towns each housed schools of their own.⁹⁶ Even elementary schools competed for students with opportunities for work, wages, and recreation. As low-skill agricultural and laboring jobs, along with the allure of an afternoon spent fishing, increased during fair weather, enrollment increased during foul. An "item of note" in the *Freeland Tribune* recorded the attendance of all Hazle Township schools in November of 1898 as 2,442, which included an increase of 287 since "the cold weather set in."⁹⁷

Like all children, Ralph learned as much from the world around him as he did from the formal lessons he received in school. Freeland was entering what would turn out to be a two-decade-long economic and population boom at the turn of the nineteenth

⁹³ Stumpf, 11.

⁹⁴ Roberts, 198.

⁹⁵ Funk, "A History of the Freeland Area: No. 5"; Stumpf, 15.

⁹⁶ Funk, "A History of the Freeland Area: No. 7."

⁹⁷ Anon, "Items of Note," *Freeland Tribune*, Nov. 28, 1898, front page.

century. The streets that Ralph walked along on his way to school (or to a fishing hole) would have been busy with commerce and construction, and the sidewalks crowded with a very diverse group of people: Russians, Slovaks, Italians, Poles, Welsh, Irish, English, and people who had been in the country long enough to call themselves Americans. The town was even home to two Chinese immigrants, 46-year old Nong Lee and his “servant” 63-year old Chang Lee who operated what was billed as a “Chinese laundry” on Centre Street.⁹⁸

The block of Washington Street that Ralph lived on remained relatively undeveloped into his adulthood, but one block west on Centre Street every storefront was occupied by some sort of business and the homes behind occupied by the family of some sort of businessman. The most common enterprises were saloons (seven in this block) and grocery stores (four), which shared the street with one or two barbers, bakers, milliners, watch makers, confectioners, dry goods merchants, boot and shoe proprietors, tinsmiths, furniture salesmen, cobblers, undertakers, tobacconists, and carpet weavers. Also on this block were two tailor shops, both larger and better situated than John Pecora’s shop on Washington Street. DePierro and Sons owned both the front and back buildings at 71 Centre Street and their Gents Store, which occupied the front of the lot, was advantageously near a corner. The tailor shop owned by the German immigrant George Sipple at 89 Centre Street, although smaller than DePierro’s, was twice the size of the Pecora shop and included a separate workshop in the back yard. Both were family businesses. The two sons at DePierro and Sons were (in 1900) in their twenties. George

⁹⁸ 1900 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), “Pennsylvania, Luzerne County, Freeland Borough, District 54, Dwelling 326, Family 327, Nong Lee household.”

Sipple's two teenaged daughters worked for him as a vest maker and a pants maker, and his widowed sister-in-law was in his employ as a tailoress.⁹⁹

Working women were not unusual in Freeland, even in 1900. By 1914, garment factories were the second largest employer in the Anthracite region. Other than the occasional mechanic or foreman, employees were almost entirely female and, for the first decade of the twentieth century, very young.¹⁰⁰ Freeland was home to two garment factories by 1900: the Freeland Silk Mill, whose 81 almost-entirely female employees had an average age of 16, and the Freeland Overall Company, which employed 21 female operatives, with an average age of 17.¹⁰¹ Among the combined workforce were several 11 and 12-year old girls. The vast majority of these young women were unmarried and living with their parents. The money they brought home, like the money earned by boys working as slate pickers, either supported widowed mothers or supplemented fathers' often-inadequate incomes. Mining was never a full-time job, with guaranteed hours and subsequently guaranteed paychecks for workers. The mines were worked, and the miners worked, when demand was high and supply was low. As soon as that balance shifted, the mines temporarily shut down, and the miners idled, with no money coming in. The garment factories (unlike child labor in the mine) offered families the advantage of economic diversification: wages were set and could be counted on, unlike mining incomes which fluctuated week by week.

⁹⁹ 1900 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), "Pennsylvania, Luzerne County, Freeland Borough, District 54, Dwelling 259, Family 259, Raphael DePierro household"; 1900 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), "Pennsylvania, Luzerne County, Freeland Borough, District 54, Dwelling 269, Family 269, George Sipple household."

¹⁰⁰ Rose, p. 73.

¹⁰¹ 1900 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), "Pennsylvania, Luzerne County, Freeland Borough;" Stumpf, 14.

Economic diversification was also desirable for Anthracite-region business owners, whose business suffered along with miners' fortunes. Merchants' interest in miners' paychecks was no secret. The *Freeland Tribune* tracked the fluctuations in merchants' moods throughout the fall of 1898. On August 1, "increased work at the collieries" showed an "encouraging effect upon merchants and others who depend upon miners for support." However, on August 29, the paper reported the discouraging news that output was running 250,000 tons behind that of the year before: "On this basis the trade can hardly be active and brisk." By the end of November, things had turned around again: "Reports from the surrounding collieries indicate that more money will be paid out in the vicinity of Freeland next month than in any other December for five years past. This means more buying."¹⁰² In nearby Scranton—a much larger community than Freeland, but one which shared Freeland's anthracite coal fields, ethnic composition, and topography—local business leaders formed a board of trade in the 1880s, which successfully lobbied the local government to offer tax abatements to new industries that set up shop in the city.¹⁰³ Freeland established a Board of Trades in 1895, comprising more than fifty local businessmen.¹⁰⁴ The opening of the Silk Mill and Overall Factory soon thereafter may have been a result of their efforts.

Some Anthracite historians (and some former mine employees) have concluded that garment factories became so prevalent in Northeastern Pennsylvania because they were a form of economic diversification that presented no threat to the mining

¹⁰² Anon, "Brief Items of Note," *Freeland Tribune*, Aug. 1, 1898, front page; Anon, "Three and a Half Million Tons," Aug. 29, 1898, front page; Anon, "Brief Items of Note," *Freeland Tribune*, Nov. 28, 1898, front page.

¹⁰³ Dublin and Licht, *Face of Decline*, 114-116.

¹⁰⁴ Stumpf, 14.

companies—mine owners did not need to worry that their male employees would leave their jobs for more reliable but unquestionably female garment-factory positions.¹⁰⁵ Others point to the early electrification of the area as the primary factor in bringing these types of operations to the area. Electric companies were early comers to mining towns, because mines were eager and ultimately high volume users of electricity. In 1884, nearby Hazleton became only the third city in the world to be electrified.¹⁰⁶ Historians have additionally speculated that silk mills and garment factories moved to Northeastern Pennsylvania (from places like New York City and Paterson, New Jersey) because they were looking for a nonunion work force, willing to accept lower wages than unionized workers in larger cities. This expectation, if indeed it were a primary motivation, would be soon disappointed. Anthracite-region garment workers, almost certainly influenced by the unionized men in their families and communities, quickly organized. During the Anthracite Strike in the fall of 1900, less than five years after the opening of Freeland's first garment factory, female workers at the Freeland Silk Mill also stopped work. After an unruly demonstration that resulted in the arrest of some of the female strikers, their demands were met: an increase in pay of \$3 per 55-hour work week for "lacers and spinners" and \$4 per week for other workers.¹⁰⁷

The 1900 strike was the first region-wide strike of Anthracite miners, bringing approximately 100,000 workers off the job in patch town after patch town, and in freehold towns as well. Freeland's importance in the region is indicated by union leader John Mitchell's decision to rally strikers at the town's public park, addressing what was

¹⁰⁵ Dublin and Licht, *Face of Decline*, 29.

¹⁰⁶ Rose, 72.

¹⁰⁷ Stumpf, 18.

recorded as a “huge crowd.” Mother Jones also spoke in Freeland during the strike, at the three-story Grand Opera House, which had presented a lavish presentation of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (complete with a pack of bloodhounds) earlier in the year.¹⁰⁸ The 1900 strike lasted just a few months and was regarded a victory for labor: wages were increased by ten percent and the price of gunpowder, which miners were required to buy from the mining company and to pay for themselves, was reduced.¹⁰⁹ Mitchell came out a hero, and Anthracite miners had their first taste of truly collective power, a power that required residents of dozens of small town to recognize their role in a regional Anthracite economy, and their importance to a larger national economy as well.

Freeland was a small town in 1900 (and never would be anything else), but she was not a provincial town. She was a town of immigrants, with foreign accents and foreign customs and relatives overseas. She was a town of connections, with trolleys and telephone wires providing access to and from nearby patch towns and railroad tracks extending all of the way to markets in Philadelphia and New York City. Coal travelled out on these tracks, and emissaries from the larger American culture travelled in. In 1900, when Ralph Pecora was thirteen years old, both the Pawnee Bill Wild West Show and the Lowery Brothers Circus stopped in town for several-day performances.¹¹⁰ The following year, John L. Sullivan, the first heavyweight champion of the world, umpired a minor-league baseball game in Freeland between the local team, the Freeland Tigers, and a team from nearby Reading.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Stumpf, 14.

¹⁰⁹ Dublin and Licht, *Face of Decline*; 34; one of their demands, ultimately unmet, was the closing of all company stores.

¹¹⁰ Stumpf, 16.

Of course, people could travel out on the railroad tracks as well. By 1898, the Lehigh Valley Railroad was running two trains a day to Philadelphia and two to New York.¹¹² The passenger station was just 600 feet from the Pecora home at 81 S. Washington Street. The whistles of the trains would have been part of the ambient noise Ralph Pecora, Sr. lived with every day. When his father died in 1905, with his mother barely old enough to be his mother and his seven younger brothers and sisters reliant upon him, Ralph was just 18 years old (Figure 1.14). He knew he would be a tailor, but, like many children of immigrants in the region, he had developed a wish to be economically and socially successful than his father had been.¹¹³ In the fall of 1908, he got on a train for New York City and came back three weeks later with a certificate from the Jno. J. Mitchell Cutting School, indicating that he had completed a “Cutter’s Course of Instruction in Men’s Garment Cutting.” He framed this certificate and hung it on the wall of what would now be his tailor shop in Freeland, Pennsylvania. Within ten years, he had relocated to busy, bustling Centre Street, in a shop twice as large as his father’s had been.

¹¹¹ Funk, “A History of the Freeland Area: No. 7.”

¹¹² “Railroad Timetables,” *Freeland Tribune*, Aug. 2, 1898, front page..

¹¹³ Peter Roberts found that “the descendants of foreign born parents” typically “rise to a higher grade of employment in the economic hierarchy [than their parents had] and thus improve their social status.” Roberts, 63.



Figure 1.1: An 1896 studio photograph of an unidentified man wearing what, based on the inexact fit, was almost certainly a ready-made suit. If all ready-made suits had continued to fit like this, tailors would not have had much to worry about. Image from Joan Severa, *Dressed for the Photographer: Ordinary Americans & Fashion, 1840-1900*, p. 516.



Figure 1.2: Undated image of Adam Sachs' Restaurant and Saloon, a typical “house-front” establishment. The proprietor and homeowner, Adam Sach, is standing on the front porch, holding the infant. Photo downloaded from Charlotte Tancin’s *History of Freeland* website and provided by one of Adam’s descendants, Fred Sachs.

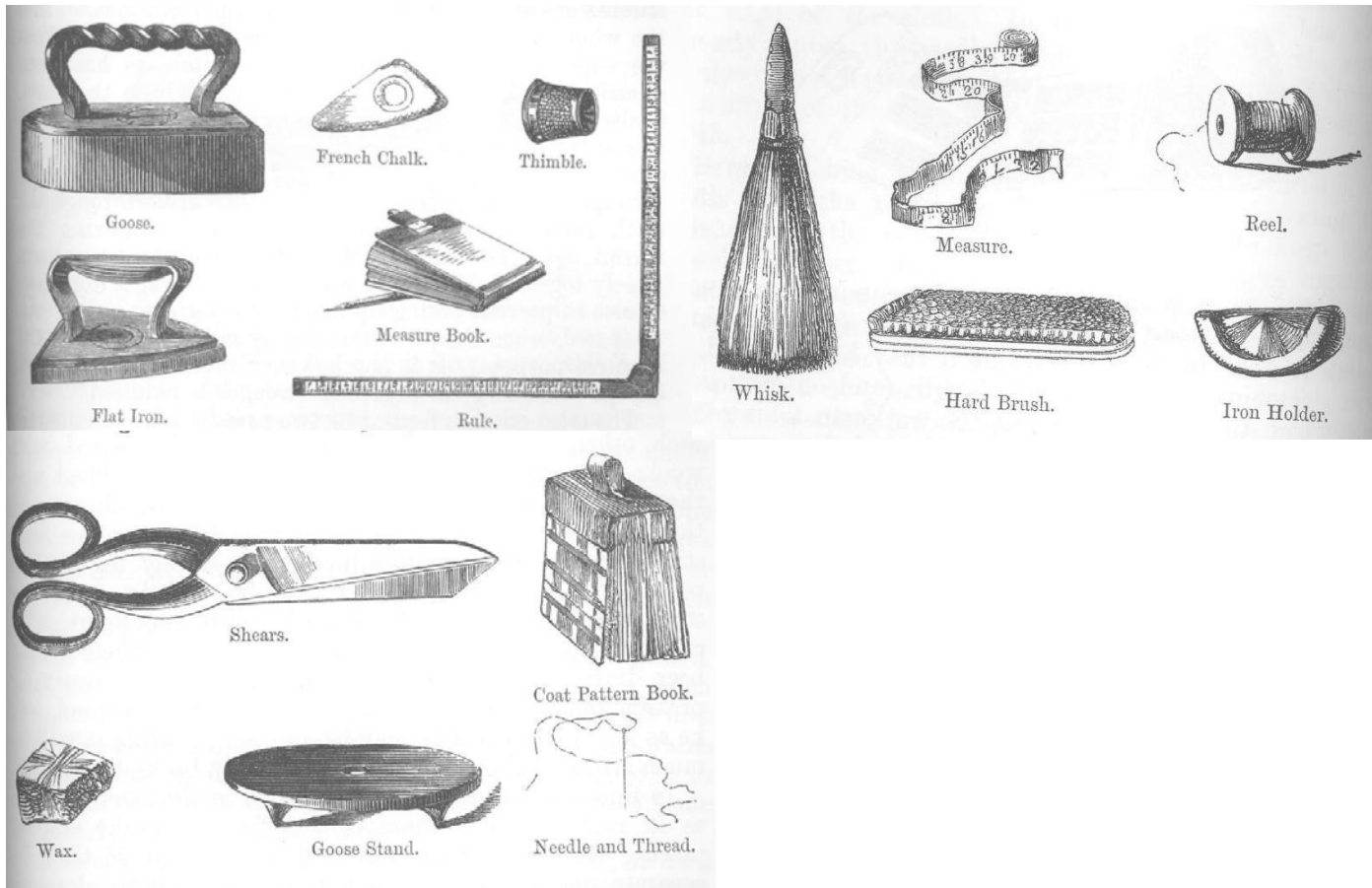


Figure 1.3: A selection of the simple and inexpensive tools used by a tailor on a daily basis. These sketches first appeared in an 1866 publication, but the same tools were still in use at the turn of the twentieth century. Images from a Dover Publications 2005 reprint of an 1866 copy of *The Boy's book of Trade and the Tools Used in Them*, pp. 215, 218, and 219.

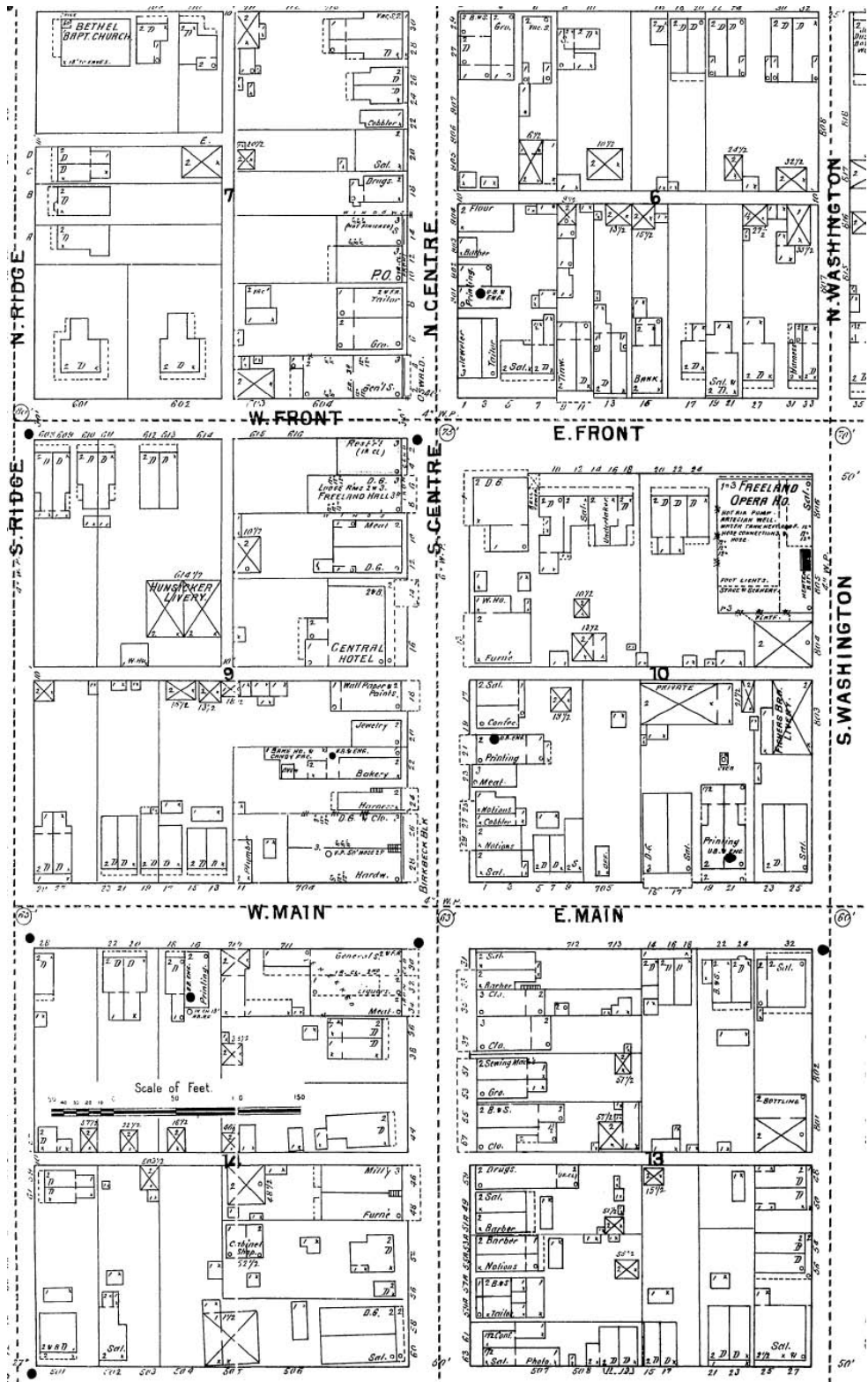


Figure 1.4: Portion of the 1895 Sanborn Fire Insurance map for Freeland, Pennsylvania, showing the main business district along Centre and Front Streets. Note the density and variety of commercial structures.



Figure 1.6: A family of Italian coal miners, circa 1906. Their suits are not only attractively styled and in good condition, they fit remarkably well. Image taken from Donald L. Miller and Richard E. Sharpless, *The Kingdom of Coal: Work, Enterprise, and Ethnic Communities in the Mine Fields*, p. 192.

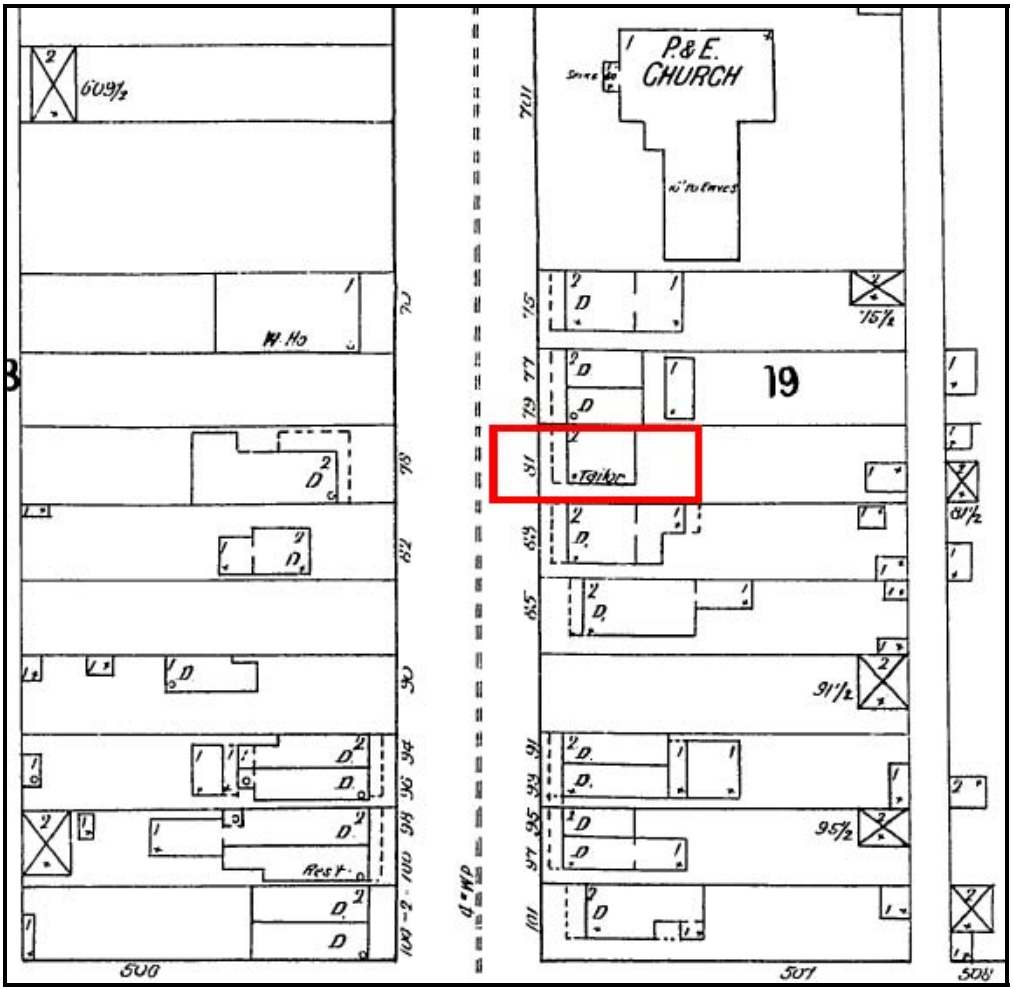


Figure 1.7: Portion of 1895 Sanborn Map for Freeland, Pennsylvania featuring the home and tailor shop of John Pecora (outlined in red).



Figures 1.8 and 1.9: Studio photographs of Mary Pecora, dated April 10, 1923.



Figure 1.10: Studio photograph of Mary Pecora dated May 17, 1923.



Figure 1.11: Undated image of Mary Pecora at the dinner table in the Washington Street home, with three of her daughters. Matilda sits with her back to the camera, Louise is to her left, Elizabeth faces the camera, and Mary sits at the head of the table.



Figure 1.12: “Grandmom Pecora in her garden.” Image of Mary Pecora in Freeland, dated 1947.



Figure 1.13: Photograph of Ralph J. Pecora in his personal library, taken in his later years.



Figure 1.14: Undated image of Ralph Pecora as a young man. Ralph is on the left and his brother Michael is on the right. The boy in the middle is identified on the back of the photograph as “John Gellot or a Vercusky boy.”