Chapter 8

People of Southern European Origin

Immigration from southern Europe and adjacent islands began earlier in western areas, which had greater contact with America over past centuries. Azoreans, from islands a third of the way across the Atlantic from Portugal, arrived first, in the early 19th century. Then, beginning in the 1850s came northern Italians and Basques, many attracted initially by gold in California. Only in the 1880s did the great migration of the poorer and more isolated southern Italian and Greek villagers begin. As with most eastern Europeans, the peak years of immigration were between about 1890 and 1914, after which the First World War, the age of transatlantic travel and U.S. immigration restrictions of the 1920s resulted in very low quotas for southern Europeans.

As was true elsewhere in Europe, migration to America was largely a response to the shortage of land and jobs that came with rapid population growth and insufficient industrialization. Many families borrowed heavily to pay for the passage of a son to America, expecting remittances to be sent back to them that would lead to some improvement in their lives. The trip for others was made possible only with money sent from relatives already in America. By the 1870s crossing the Atlantic Ocean by steamship took only ten days and competition among the various lines made for low prices. Only a relatively few people thought of their migration as permanent. Before the 1880s most emigrants from Italy headed for Brazil or Argentina, and in later decades Italians often crossed the Atlantic several times or worked in Italy or Latin America during the North American winters (Nelli 1983).

To find temporary jobs throughout North America, unskilled immigrants typically used government bureaus and private labor agencies, especially in New York and Chicago. Railroads and factories and bridges needed to be built, and someone had to mine the coal and iron. Work was often backbreaking and dangerous. The agencies could also supply strikebreakers on short notice. However, those who were willing to remain in America after the initial period of transiency did settle down, thus shaping the distribution observable in 1980.

After the mid-1960s new immigration laws in the U.S. permitted many more southern Europeans to enter. This new flow has been predominantly of relatives of people already in America, but it has included higher proportions of women and trained technical and professional people than characterized the pre-1924 immigration. The different characteristics of the newcomers compared to the older immigrants and their American-born children have resulted in tensions between those groups and somewhat separate social worlds within many ethnic communities.

In the 1980 census, people who identified their ancestry as Spanish or one of the regions of Spain were reported only in the state-level data (Census 1983a), although they were included in the Other Spanish category totals for counties, as mapped in chapter 11. Apart from people of Spanish Basque ancestry, the Spaniard-ancestry total for the U.S. in 1980 was 62,747. Over a quarter of these lived in Florida, and New York and New Jersey together contained a third.

Most emigrants from Spain have gone to countries in Latin America, although in the 19th century some settled in New York, the major port of entry, or the former Spanish colonial areas of Louisiana and California. In the 1980s others were attracted to Florida, particularly the Tampa area, by opportunities in the cigar factories run by Cubans (Spaniards 1980). And after about 1910 some people from Spain became one small part of the large immigration from southern Europe to America's industrial cities and mines in New Jersey, West Virginia, and elsewhere. By 1920 the Spaniards recruited in the early 20th century for sugar-plantation labor in Hawaii had typically moved on to California.

The Spanish foreign stock figures for 1920 include Basques from Spain, discussed in a separate section of this chapter. Most of the 2,000 Spanish reported for Idaho were Spanish Basques, as were those in Nevada and Arizona, each of which had about 1,500 people whose origin was Spain.

The Spanish Civil War and World War II resulted in the arrival of refugees, and after 1945 the elimination of the previous small quota meant increased immigration from Spain. The presence of a Spaniard-ancestry population in America has been typically unnoticed. It has been divided by regional identities and dwarfed by the much larger numbers of Latin American origin.

### Portuguese Ancestry

#### 1980 Summary Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ancestry</th>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Multiple ancestry</td>
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Portions or, in the eastern United States and soon became the major settlement of Portuguese immigrants. Some men found jobs outfitting the ships, and others turned to fishing or farmwork, marrying or sending for wives after they became more secure. After about 1870, Azorean immigration was partially redirected to Boston due to the establishment of direct shipping connections and the decline of whaling. Those who chose to fish worked out of many different ports, such as Gloucester (Essex County) and Provintown (Barnstable County), where they came to predominate among the fishermen (Williams 1982). Other Azoreans helped develop Boston as the supply point for fresh fish in New England and New York. Many Azoreans moved into the countryside, and often across to Newport County in Rhode Island. There they became farmworkers and later farmers, specializing in fresh fruits, potatoes, and vegetables. In nearby Bristol County, Rhode Island, most people later worked in industry or services.

Manufacturing Employment. In the last half of the 19th century cotton textile mills were built in New Bedford and later in Fall River (also in Bristol County, Massachusetts), providing jobs as operatives for Azoreans. Fall River came to be known as Spindle City, and the Portuguese, together with some Poles, constituted the last stage in the ethnic evolution of mill labor (Silvia 1976). Fall River came to have almost as many Portuguese as New Bedford.

After the turn of the century, new immigrants arriving in the traditional Portuguese communities of southeastern Massachusetts found that job opportunities were often better elsewhere, such as Cambridge, Somerville, and Lowell, Massachusetts (all in Middlesex County). New London, Connecticut, had been a former whaling port and a major Portuguese settlement in the 19th century. However, because there was more work in Hartford, New Haven, and Bridgeport in the 20th century, the Portuguese moved to those industrial cities (Williams 1982). In Rhode Island, manufacturing jobs in Providence and other cities produced a relative shift of Portuguese out of Newport County.

In the 20th century there were also more immigrants from the mainland of Portugal. Some people came in groups for factory work in Danbury (Fairfield County) and Hartford, Connecticut, and Ludlow (Hampden County), Massachusetts (Pap 1981).

New York, Pennsylvania, and Illinois

Some Portuguese left eastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island for Yonkers and Mineola in the New York City area and the Newark (Essex County), New Jersey, area (Pap 1981). A community of Madeirans, responding to advertisements for foundryworkers, settled in Rochester (Monroe County), New York. Also, continental Portuguese began working in steel mills in Bethlehem (Northampton County), Pennsylvania.

In contrast to more typical immigrants, one group had motivations that were not primarily economic. In the 1840s Madeirans who had recently converted to Protestantism found a refuge from persecution in Illinois. They were welcomed by people in the Jacksonville and Springfield area, and despite rapid assimilation, the Portuguese-ancestry population of Morgan and Sangamon counties is evident in the 1870 data.

Hawaii

Azoreans had come to Hawaii since the early whaling days, but numbered only a few hundred before 1878, when sugar plantation owners began recruitment of Portuguese laborers, predominantly Madeirans (Pap 1981). Over the next 12 years family groups totaling over 12,000 men, women, and children arrived on 3-year labor contracts, and more than 3,000 additional workers came between 1906 and 1909 (Williams 1982). The Portuguese were brought to the plantations because the owners worried that the increasingly Chinese work force could organize opposition too easily; a mulatto labor force could be more easily controlled by the sugar growers. Also, the government of Hawaii hoped that the Portuguese immigrants, who included many more females than did the Chinese laborers, would be able to rebuild the islands' popu-
lation, which had declined drastically since contact with whites (Lind 1980).

The California Basque, like many Asians, typically did not continue as unskilled laborers on the plantations after their initial contract. However, the Portuguese, as whites, were often promoted to supervisor or overseer of Asian workers, and the growers imported Japanese, Koreans, and finally Filipinos to do the menial tasks. Others turned instead to small-scale farming and nonfarm jobs, frequently intermarried with Asians or other whites, and often moved from the “Big Island” and other plantation areas to Honolulu and other towns. Many were dissatisfied and moved to California, but in 1980 the people of Portuguese ancestry made up over 5 percent of the total population on three of the major islands (Hawaii, Kauai, and Maui).

California

Most of the first Azoreans in California had been sailors on whaling ships that had stopped in San Francisco Bay on their way to the Arctic. Once gold was discovered many more came, some on regular sailing ships from southeastern Massachusetts. Shore-based whaling operations between San Diego and Eureka dispersed the Portuguese along much of California’s coast. In the 1870s the dozen whaling stations from which men would spot and pursue migrating gray whales were essentially rural Azorean communities (Williams 1982). When that whaling ceased in the 1880s, most Portuguese turned to farming, often in local areas of Humboldt, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, or other coastal counties (Graves 1977).

A few Portuguese were logging in Mendocino County or mining in Siskiyou County in 1880 (Graves 1977), and others were fishing out of San Francisco or Monterey. In the last decades of the century some Azorean fishermen from Gloucester, Massachusetts, moved to Point Loma, near San Diego (Williams 1982). After the First World War they specialized in tuna fishing for the new canneries; in 1980 their descendants were still strongly represented in San Diego fishing operations.

Agricultural Settlements. Farming became by far the most important occupation of the Portuguese in California (Graves 1977). Initially, most settlements were in the San Francisco Bay area. By 1880 some Azoreans were dairying in Marin County, and they constituted over a fifth of the population of Sausalito. More typical, however, were the communities characterized by small-scale, intensive gardening to the east of the bay. The largest settlement was at San Leandro (Alameda County), where by 1909 the Portuguese probably represented two-thirds of the town’s inhabitants (Bohme 1956). Azoreans were also picking fruit in Sonoma County, tending vines in Santa Clara County, and milking cows in Stanislaus County.

Many Portuguese later developed their own fruit and vegetable or dairy farms in the San Joaquin Valley, such as in Atwater (Merced County) and Oakdale (Stanislaus County). The agricultural emphasis has continued such that in 1972 an analysis of Portuguese surnames among dairy farmers indicated that in Merced, Kings, and Tulare counties Azoreans made up at least two-thirds of the dairymen (Graves 1977). Moreover, in the area around Hanford, Visalia, and Tulare, Azorean farmers probably owned a substantially higher proportion of the farmland. In 1980 the Portuguese-ancestry population represented over 7 percent of the total population in both Kings and Merced counties.

General Patterns

Immigration from Portugal has been different from other European countries in that an unusually high proportion (39 percent) of all recorded Portuguese immigrants between 1820 and 1880 arrived here after 1859.

About half of these recent immigrants went to Massachusetts and Rhode Island; another 30 percent settled in New York and New Jersey, and about 20 percent moved to California (Pap 1981). Since 1920 hardly any immigrants have gone to Hawaii.

The Portuguese-ancestry population remains unusual in its distribution. The proportion of its population that lives in California (29 percent) is far greater than that of any other ancestry group except the Armenians. The pattern is distinctive in showing an unusually low correlation with the U.S. population distribution (Pearson coefficient r = .17). Only the populations of Slovene and Cape Verdean ancestries were less like the total American distribution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basque Ancestry</th>
<th>1980 Summary Statistics*</th>
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<td>Single ancestry</td>
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* Published Basque national totals are based on total responses of Basque, French Basque, and Spanish Basque ancestry. French and Spanish Basque numbers were excluded from the Summary Tape File (STF) data. Thus, county statistics, map, and text interpretation are based on these generalized single-ancestry Basque data only.

** Major cities or towns may be indicated in parentheses.

The Basque homeland has been divided since the 16th century between France and Spain, so that many people of Basque ancestry identified themselves specifically as either French or Spanish Basque. This distinction reflects the existence of two relatively separate Basque communities in the U.S. (Douglass and Bilbao 1975). However, allowing for an inflation of the French Basque numbers in Nebraska due to an apparent coding error (chapter 1), about half the people of Basque ancestry responded with the more general Basque response.

The immigration of Basques has been distinctive in its close relationship to the sheep industry. In the 19th century Basque emigrants typically chose destinations in South America, most commonly in Argentina and Uruguay, which remain by far the largest centers of Basque population in the Americas (Douglass and Bilbao 1975). There they often came to specialize in sheepranching, and some of these men later migrated to California.

Basques in the Sheep Industry

The Early South American Connection. It was in South America, rather than in the Basque country of Europe, that the early Basque immigrants to the U.S. learned the large-scale sheep-management skills that they adopted to the environment of the western states (Douglass and Bilbao 1975). Basque men left South America for California as early as 1848. Few found much gold, but within a decade several had established themselves as cattlemen in Southern California
(Douglass and Bilbao 1975). However, by the early 1860s the
ranching and leadership in wool marketing. Beginning in the
800s the migration to South America was partially diverted
to the American West, with fresh immigrants usually signing
up as unskilled shearers.

**Herding.** In the 1850s French Basques in Southern California
initiated a system whereby the herder had a financial stake in the size and well-being of the herd, with payment in
wages at the end of the contract. A herder could manage his
own animals together with those of the rancher he was work-
ning for and after a few years would have enough sheep to
begin his own business. Some then sold out and returned to
Europe, but many visited at home just long enough to find a
wife to bring back to America.

In the western U.S., the presence of coyotes and moun-
tain lions and the need to move flocks of a few thousand
sheep between pastures required the close supervision of a
herder. As shepherding evolved over the last century, the
herder lived in a tiny covered wagon or trailer camp and
moved his flock to different areas of the public domain or
leased private land. The man could, with the help of his dogs
and a rifle, guide and guard his charges and care for lambs
and other animals with special needs.

Over the last century most men who survived the loneli-
ess of herding for a few years became ranchers or farmers,
though some settled in nearby towns. Others left agriculture
altogether and moved to cities or returned to Europe after the
sojourn here. Shortages of shepherders during recent decades
have been solved by special provisions of the 1952 immi-
igration law. Because it has still been hard for shepherds
to find willing and conscientious herdsmen, in recent decades
between 150 and 360 Basques have been brought in annually as
temporary workers under 3-year contracts (U.S. INS. 1983).

**Geographical Expansion of Basque Settlements**

**California’s Central Valley.** In the 1860s the sheep indus-
try and Basque immigrants moved from Southern Calfornia
into the Central Valley, particularly in the southern
sections (Kern, Tulare, and Fresno counties). New herders
began to arrive directly from Europe, as letters and visits
made clear the opportunities in the sheep business.

Bakersfield (Kern County) and Fresno established them-
selves as major French Basque settlements. Although the size
of herds has been much reduced in recent decades and trucks
transport the animals over longer distances, some herdsmen still
move their tightly bunched flocks seasonally around the Kern
County area—in between the Central Valley, the nearby Ante-
lope Valley, and various stubbled wheelfields. In the early 1970s
the largest sheep outfits using the open ranges of the
West employed over 50 herdsmen and were Basque-owned and
headquartered in Bakersfield (Douglass and Bilbao 1975).

**Into the Basin and Plateau Country.** Overcrowding of
sheep on the valley lands led by the end of the decade to
transhumance—the transference of animals during the sum-
mer up into the mountain pastures of the Sierra Nevada
(Douglass and Bilbao 1975). By 1870 the increased farming
and development of the Central Valley began to push the
sheep industry over the Sierra Nevada and into the Great
Basin of northern Nevada.

Winemucca (Humboldt County) became the major
urban Basque center in northwestern Nevada, and Elko func-
tioned as a lesser focus to the east. After French Basques and
Basques from Navarre province in Spain had developed
many of the herding operations in Nevada, they came to be
replaced by Spanish Basques from Vizcaya, representing a
socially separate group. These Vizcayan Basques extended
sheepherding in the 1890s onto the Columbia Plateau of
eastern Oregon and southern Idaho. By the early 20th cen-
tury Boise (Ada County), Idaho, was serving as the supply
base and meeting center for Spanish Basque sheepmen from
eastern Oregon through southern Idaho.

In the 1970s most Basques in Idaho and adjacent parts of
Oregon, Nevada, and Wyoming were still of Vizcayan origin,
but those in California and other areas remained predomi-
nantly French or Navarrese (Douglass and Bilbao 1975).
However, in northern Wyoming’s Johnson County after one
French Basque herder was hired in 1902 by an Anglo-owned
outfit, chain migration initiated by that individual led to the
growth of a population most of whom had been born within
eight miles of the original herder’s village in France. The
French Basques of Buffalo have been an especially cohesive
community whose shepherds have come to dominate the
industry in that area (Cookson 1977).

Basques have long been the most common and generally
preferred herdsmen; however, in a few major western sheep

ranges Basques were less common. In Utah and southeastern Idaho Mormon fathers could use their sons as herdsmen, and in Arizona and New Mexico, Indians and Mexicans were often herdsmen.

**Basque Hotels and Festivals.** The towns and cities that provided supplies to ranchers and herdsmen developed small settled Basque populations and Basque boarding-houses. The hotels, located near the train stations, served new arrivals as job information centers, and hotelkeepers helped men adjust to America. The hotels were also centers of Basque social life and came to be famous for good, hearty food served in so-called family style. There was a frequent turnover of the immigrant Basque girls who waited on tables and cleaned the rooms for a few months before they were taken as brides by local Basques.

After a well-publicized and successful large festival near Reno, Nevada, in 1939, many traditional picnics for local Basque communities have developed into major festivals, with competitive events, dancing, and abundant food and drink (Douglas and Biltz 1975). Such festivals have attracted Basques from surrounding areas and distant settlements as well as the general public.

**Settlements Not Originating with the Sheep Industry.** Not all of the Basque distribution has been related to sheepherding. Some people moved to Eugene (Lane County), Oregon, to work in the lumber industry and others became miners at Green River (Sweetwater County), Wyoming (Cookson 1977). Many of the French Basques who left herding and ranching switched to dairying and hired fellow Basques as milkers, and some established themselves in the dairy industries of Chino (San Bernardino County) and the Los Angeles area (Douglas and Biltz 1975). The small Basque settlement in New York City developed as a way station for immigrants heading west. Most recently, skilled jat alai players have immigrated to Miami (Dade County), Florida, to play that Basque version of handball professionally.

Since the 1870s San Francisco has had an established Basque community and has been closely tied to the business and social life of Basques in the central Valley. The city's Basques have held a range of occupations from manual labor to wool marketing and various professions (Decroos 1983). After the Taylor Grazing Act in 1934 restricted itinerant shepherds on the federal rangeland and forced many Basques out of herding, some entered the gardening business in San Francisco. That specialty occupation was furthered by the removal of Japanese competition during World War II and is still distinctive for Basques in the Bay area.

**General 1980 Distribution.** The Basque-ancestry map reflects nearly all these developments, but the sheep industry heritage is especially evident. Boise (Ada County) in Idaho had the largest single concentration in the U.S., but an equally large population could be found in nearby counties and in southeastern Oregon. Isolated small towns and hamlets amidst the sagebrush of the range country, like McDermitt (Hemisford County) in Nevada and Jordan Valley (Malheur County) in Oregon that were predominantly Basque settlements may still be so, but most people of Basque ancestry had become urban or metropolitan.

### Italian Ancestry

#### 1980 Summary Statistics*

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Reported Ethnic Population</th>
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<td>Multiple ancestry</td>
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</table>

#### Counties with Largest Italian-Ancestry Population**

- New York City, NY: 212,490
- Nassau, NY: 209,312
- Suffolk, NY: 157,080

#### Counties with Highest Percentage of Italian Ancestry in Population

- Westchester, NY: 18.13
- New Haven, CT: 17.55
- Bergen (Hackensack), NJ: 16.66
- Nassau, NY: 16.08
- Suffolk, NY: 15.90

* County statistics, race, and food interpretations are based on single-ancestry data only.
* ** Major cities or towns may be indicated in parentheses.

In the years before about 1880 the immigrants to America were usually from northern Italy, the most prosperous and powerful region in which they had been born or a unified country only in 1870. These immigrants, who included well-educated professionals and skilled craftsmen such as stonecutters and masons, established small communities in many American cities. In New Jersey, for example, in the 1870s the silk manufacturers of Paterson, Garfield, and nearby cities began to recruit skilled weavers and dyers from Lombardy and Piedmont, men who later opposed the hiring of unskilled southern Italian labor in these mills (Vecoli 1963). The large terra-cotta works in Peru Amboy hired men from Tuscany who had specialized in making ornamental sculptures.

In nearly all American cities, however, the character of those early settlements and Americans' impressions of Italians were changed by the arrival after about 1880 of overwhelming numbers of illiterate and extremely poor peasants from southern Italy and Sicily.

Smaller regional identities were also pronounced in Italy, and chains of migration linked Italian regions and even individual villages with specific American settlements. The residents of small sections of Italian neighborhoods in American cities could often be characterized by their distinctive places of origin.

### City Settlements

The southern margins of the thriving American manufacturing region received fewer immigrants in the late 19th century than places to the north. Baltimore, Wilmington, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Louisville, and Saint Louis already had nearby supplies of unskilled U.S.-born black and white workers from the South (Goebel 1977). And these cities, many of which had been advantageously located in the days when the Ohio and Mississippi rivers were the major transportation arteries, were not expanding as rapidly in the late 19th century as the cities on the Great Lakes. As a result, in 1980 their populations had fewer people of Italian and Eastern European ancestries than cities to the north.

### Contrasts with Eastern European Settlement Locations

Italian immigration was greatest at about the same time that most eastern European immigrants were arriving, and in a broad sense there was competition between those groups for unskilled laboring jobs. In cities where Italians gained control over most unskilled laboring jobs, there were relatively few jobs available for Hungarians, Romanians, and Polish and other Slavic immigrants (Goebel 1977). Thus, industrial cities usually had high percentages of either Italians or Poles but not both.

Cities differences in the relative proportions of Italians and eastern Europeans (other than Jews) were also the result of different occupational specializations within the broad category of laboring jobs: Still significant in explaining 1980 ancestry patterns, however, is the fact that Italians tended to be concentrated in outside construction work and eastern European groups in iron and steel manufacturing, meatpacking, and the oil and chemicals industries (Goebel 1977).
Several factors were probably involved in this ethnic occupational differentiation. The labor contracting system was widely used by the Italians, the padrone system, involved a padrone or boss who was the intermediary or contractor between the laborers and the company or government bureau that needed construction or other such work done. After setting the terms of the contract, the padrone traveled with the immigrant workers to the worksite, arranged rudimentary living accommodations (often in railroad boxcars), and acted as their banker, overseer, and sometimes trustworthy guide. Labor contracts arranged by padrones seemed particularly well adapted to supplying short-term and mobile gangs of workers, who were needed for the construction of railroads and public works like streets, docks, and water and sewer lines (Golab 1977).

In contrast, the padrone system was not needed to fill the more permanent and locational stable unskilled labor jobs in the chemicals, oil refining, or iron and steel industries. There, networks of personal contact were used to supply eastern Europeans as needed by the companies. Also, employers generally thought that Slavic workers were better adapted to heavy industrial work. Thus, cities where the production of iron and steel was expanding in the late 19th and early 20th centuries got more Hungarian, Romanian, and Slavic workers than Italians.

Jobs for men in the garment industry were filled more by Italians (and Jews) than by Slavic immigrants partly because the Slavic peoples considered the needle crafts as women's work (Golab 1977). Thus, the attractiveness of New York City, Chicago, and Philadelphia for Italian and Jewish immigrants was partly related to the fact that those cities had unusually large number of jobs in the garment industries.

The padrone system was important geographically as a major factor in the dispersal of Italians throughout much of the United States (Forizio 1970). In the 1890s Italians replaced the Irish as the major source of laborers for railroad construction (Golab 1977). Italians made up almost half the railroad construction workers sent out of Chicago in the early 20th century, and they also made up most of the section crews maintaining the tracks (Imm. Com. 1911). Italian communities in many towns along railroad lines in the Mississippi Valley were begun by workers brought to these places under the system (Forizio 1970). Similar origins are known for early Italian settlements in Lincoln and Omaha, Nebraska; Pater- son and Newark, New Jersey; Syracuse, Cortland, and Os- wego, New York; and Boston and Lawrence, Massachusetts. Later, many Italians were hired directly by the railroads, and more permanent Italian communities appeared near railroad yards in numerous cities such as Cheyenne, Wyo- ming; Omaha, Nebraska; and Fort Wayne, Indiana.

The jobs taken by Italians were not so focused in a few cities as were the heavy industrial jobs of the eastern Euro- peans. Thus, Italians were distributed more evenly in the cities between Portland (Cumberland County), Maine, and western Pennsylvania. Although most immigrant men from southern Italy began as general laborers, many later operated machinery in a wide range of factories, especially in light industries. Second-generation Italian men were less likely to be general laborers; they held more diverse occupations, and often ran grocery stores or saloons (Hutchinson 1956). Women also worked, often in cigar and clothing factories, or at home sewing garments or, especially in New York City, making artificial flowers (Nelli 1983).

There was also seasonal work for some, as Italian families from several cities in New York state would leave their homes for the summer to work in the fields and vegetable canneries of upstate New York (Imm. Com. 1911). The especially low Italian-ancestry percentages in areas like northeastern Connecticut (Windham County) and Lewis County, north of the Mohawk Valley, in New York were due to the lack of other intensive agriculture or urban jobs in those predominantly rural areas of rougher terrain or colder climates.

New York and Philadelphia. An estimated 97 percent of Italian arrivals after 1880 landed in New York (Nelli 1983), where those who had no special job opportunities awaiting elsewhere could easily sign up for construction work somewhere through a labor agency. So many newcomers stayed in New York that it became easily the largest center of Italians in the country. Poor immigrants swarmed into the densely crowded slum tenements on Manhattan's Lower East Side, as others who came earlier sought a better living farther up Manhattan in Greenwich Village, East Harlem, or across the East River in Brooklyn. When subways were built to the North Bronx and to Queens, Italians bought land near the end of the lines for homes and gardens (Glazer and Moynihan 1963).

Statens Island, also within New York City, was another attractive destination, still rural in many areas. In these areas Italian immigrants and their children typically sought a village life and were in large part successful in developing geographically concentrated ethnic neighborhoods. In 1920 New York City had five times more people of Italian foreign stock than any other American city.

Immigrants who had friends or relatives in other cities could easily take a train from New York, as did most Italians who came to Philadelphia (Julliani 1973). There had been northern Italian merchants, musicians, and skilled workers and their families in Philadelphia well before 1880. They helped pave the way for the later immigrants, many of whom were able to get the better jobs available in the city's apparel factories—cutting and stitching suits, coats, hats, and shoes. Most Italian immigrants to Philadelphia, however, had to take difficult and low-paying laboring jobs in other cities.

New Castle and Chicago. One of the places where Italian ancestry was strongest in 1980 was New Castle (Lawrence County), Pennsylvania, north of Pittsburgh. In the early 20th century Italians in that area worked on farms and railroads, in quarries and cement plants, and on most large construction jobs (Bodnar 1972). Also, at that time New Castle was the largest American center for manufacturing tin-plated steel. Although Italians in most cities did not work in heavy industry, in New Castle those mills employed many Italians, and perhaps two-thirds of the laborers in the Standard Steel Car Works were Italians.

Chicago had both Italians and eastern Europeans, although in 1980 the percentage of Italian ancestry in Cook County's population was comparatively low. The city's diversity of manufacturing and its position as the transportation and labor market hub of the Midwest attracted many Italians. Although perhaps better known for its meatpacking, steel production, and rail yards, in 1980 Chicago was second only to New York in the value of manufacturing of men's clothing (Census 1980). Some outlying Italian settlements were formed in very early days, but most Italians originally lived near their jobs in the mix of factories and workshops of the Chicago River (Vesci 1983). Unlike the Slavs, did not live near the steel mills of South Chicago or near the stockyards.
New Orleans and San Francisco. These cities were unusual in the character of their early Italian settlements. Sicilians were coming to Louisiana in the 1850s on boats carrying lemons from Palermo. Seasonal harvest workers often came for jobs on sugar and cotton plantations, and those who stayed longer worked on the waterfront or as peddlers, later becoming merchants and importers (Nelli 1983). In the 1890s Sicilians from Louisiana led the way to Birmingham (Jefferson County), Alabama, where Italians by 1910 made up about half the immigrant work force in the coal, iron, and steel industries, although in that area they were seldom employed as coal miners (Imm. Com. 1911c).

Like the Sicilians in New Orleans, Italian immigrants to San Francisco became successful in business well before the later immigrants to eastern and midwestern cities. Many had come to California for the gold rush and were becoming established in 1860, when California had more Italians than any other state. Their arrival during the early period of California’s expansion enabled them to share both the work and the benefits of that state.

In the 1860s Italians typically settled in the low-rent housing of the Telegraph Hill area, but by the late 19th century many new arrivals were moving into adjacent North Beach, which became the largest Italian section of the city (Cinel 1982). Although some immigrants took trains across the country from New Orleans and New York, 95 percent of San Francisco’s Italians around 1920 had never lived in an eastern industrial city, having migrated directly to San Francisco from Italy.

San Francisco was also distinctive from other American cities in that among Italians, those from the north outnumbered those from the south during the entire period before 1930 (Nelli 1983). Deep-sea fishing out of San Francisco was first dominated by Genoese (though in the 20th century the Sicilians controlled most fishing), and northern Italians (Ligurians and Tuscans) had the expertise in market gardening and grape growing that enabled them to prosper outside the city. Nevertheless, in the early 20th century the many newcomers from southern Italy came in such large numbers and with so few resources of money or skills that they could often get only menial jobs like their fellow immigrants in eastern cities.

Mining Settlements

Coal Mining. After about 1890 Italians were sometimes the largest immigrant group in bituminous coal-mining towns, although they usually worked in strip mines or in other jobs aboveground. They made up over 12 percent of that industry’s workers in Pennsylvania and West Virginia around 1907. Among Italians, those from the northern provinces were much more common in midwestern and western coal mining, while southern Italians predominated in the fields of Pennsylvania and West Virginia (Imm. Com. 1911b,n). Italians also mined anthracite near Scranton (Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania).

Although there was a high rate of job turnover and most people later moved from the small mining settlements, some mining areas did show their history of Italian coal miners in the 1980 data: West Virginia’s Harrison and Marion counties, southeastern Kansas (Crawford County), Pittsburgh and Coal counties in southeastern Ohio, Vermilion County in western Indiana, and Carbon County, Utah. After 1900, Italians made up the major contingent of coal miners in northern and central Iowa, where they lived in makeshift company houses in the scattered coal camps (Schweider 1982). Despite the transience of those mining operations, a few descendants have remained, as in Appanoose County.

Italians were the predominant immigrant group in the little coal-mining towns of northern New Mexico’s Colfax County. When mining there declined, many moved to Raton (Colfax County) or over the pass to Colorado (Bohme 1959). There, the coal mines near Trinidad (Las Animas County) attracted enough Italians to give that county in 1980 the highest percentage of Italian ancestry outside the industrial Northeast. In southwestern Wyoming, particularly in Rock Springs (Sweetwater County), Italians (mostly Tyrolean) outnumbered other immigrant groups working for the Union Pacific Coal Company (Kathka 1977).

Metal Mining. Italian immigrants also mined iron in Upper Michigan and northern Wisconsin (Iron County), gold and silver in the Colorado Rockies west of Denver, and copper in Butte (Silver Bow County), Montana (Rolle 1968). In the Butte area they became part of the multiethnic force of laborers hired in the 1890s by Anaconda Copper from previous mining jobs in the Midwest. The Italians built small homes near the slag heaps on the outskirts of Butte, and soon a restaurant, an Italian parish church, and grocery stores helped make a viable Italian community.

Farming Settlements

Few Italian immigrants planned to farm in the United States. In any case, when most arrived, no good free land was available. Few had agricultural experience or inclination to begin commercial farming as practiced in America, where farmers lived on their own land rather than in the more sociable villages as in Italy. Not surprisingly, 85 percent of Italian immigrants and their children in 1920 lived in urban places.

Although most laboring jobs were in towns and cities, sometimes immigrants did farmwork. In Louisiana by the 1880s the sugar cane growers—angry that their black workers would strike or leave for better opportunities in the cities and the North—arranged for Italians from Italian areas of New Orleans, and midwestern cities to cut and process the cane harvests (Scarpaci 1975). During the first years of the 20th century Italian laborers in the area between New Orleans and Baton Rouge were doing most of the work previously done by blacks, and some Italians had become tenant farmers (Fleming 1905). For many decades, most found no satisfactory position within the southern caste system.

After 1900 many Italians in and near cities did become part-time or full-time farmers, cultivating small gardens for produce sale in town. Former miners and railroad workers in Colorado and Utah and laborers brought to Nebraska by padrones quit their jobs and began to raise vegetables and fruit (Lorizzo 1970). In upstate New York, some of the rich mucklands south of Lake Ontario had not been drained and farmed until Italians who had first arrived as railroad workers saw the opportunities there, improved the land, and became growers of vegetables, particularly onions.

The valleys of California were the setting for the largest agricultural developments by Italians. Many of the early immigrants to San Francisco had bought land on the outskirts of the city, and were growing vegetables for the local market. Some others were specializing in grapes for wine. The best-known operation was the Italian-Swiss colony (essentially Italian, rather than Ticinese or Swiss), begun in the early 1880s at Asti (Sonoma County). Later, Italian immigrants and their descendants developed numerous vineyards and nurseries in the Napa, Santa Clara, and San Joaquin valleys.

Planned Colonies. Over fifty agricultural colonies were organized, the belief that immigrants would be better off if, instead of crowding together in city tenements or migrating endlessly from one job to another, they would return to agriculture. The largest colonies were in southern New York and Hammondsport (Atlantic County). Italians who had once picked blackberries bought land and, with the seasonal assistance of newer immigrants from Philadelphia’s Italian community, produced a variety of crops and some manufactured items (Lorizzo 1970).

Although many colonies did not succeed as planned, some of the counties where farm settlements were located reported higher percentages of Italian ancestry in 1980 than nearly all surrounding counties, suggesting that some descendants of those first settlers have remained. For example, in 1904 about 1,200 Italians (mostly Venetians) settled in a colony promoted by the Illinois Central railroad, near Ide-
pendsce (Tangipahoa Parish), Louisiana, just north of New Orleans (Fleming 1905). They had originally been brought from New Orleans to that area as strawberry pickers, but in the colony they became growers (Iottizzo 1970). Also, the fact that the Memphis area (Shelby County) in Tennessee, has far more people of Italian ancestry than anywhere else in the state is probably partly due to the families, originally from the Po Valley, who came to raise fruits and vegetables (U.S. Industrial Commission 1901). In Texas some Scillian laborers who completed their railroad construction work in 1880 began farming cotton near Bryan (Brazos County), ultimately owning most of the rich productive land near the Brazos River. A century later that county had over 1,700 people of Italian ancestry.

In Arkansas, 500 families were brought directly from northern Italy in 1895 to the Sunnyside Colony in Chicot County to raise cotton and sugar cane (U.S. Industrial Commission 1901). However, the people were plagued by malaria, and promised improvements by the founder were never completed. After three years many settlers followed their pastor’s lead and moved to a nonmalarial area close to the Ozarks. This Tontitown settlement, a few miles west of Springdale in Washington County, was by 1920 the major wineyard center in the state and later became well known for its apple, grape, and wine production (Hewes 1953). Despite great economic changes in the last few decades, in 1980 Chicot and Washington counties recorded slightly higher percentages of Italian ancestry than all other counties in Arkansas.

Modern Metropolitan Patterns

By 1980 Americans of Italian ancestry typically resided in the larger metropolitan areas, both in suburban communities and in the old working-class neighborhoods. Oftentimes only the parents and grandparents, the Italian churches, and restaurants have remained in the declining central-city areas. Some housing has been occupied by newer Italian immigrants and other ethnic populations. Sometimes urban renewal has oblitered the old areas. Or, in a few cases like Boston’s North End, upgrading of apartments (gentrification) has had almost the same effect. The older and poorer Italians have usually had to move to escape the high rents, willingly paid by the well-to-do, young (and very likely non-Italian) professionals who replaced them (Nelli 1983).

After World War I the South Village section of Greenwich Village was home to many Italian families (Tricario 1984). Avoiding the invasion of other ethnic groups, it was a viable and thriving ethnic community for decades. Then, in the 1970s, with the legalization of old loft apartments, the influx of artists and young professionals from the adjacent SoHo section elevated prices and pressured many South Villagers to move out.

Most Italians, like the majority of Americans since World War II, envisioned the suburbs as the American dream. They moved outward from Manhattan in every direction. There were over 200,000 people of Italian ancestry in each of the suburban Long Island counties (Nassau and Suffolk). The move across the Hudson River to New Jersey, begun over a century ago, has given most northern New Jersey counties populations of over 10 percent Italian ancestry. But the older suburban county of Westchester, just north of New York City, has a higher percentage of people of Italian ancestry than any other county in America.

**Greek Ancestry**

**1980 Summary Statistics***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reported Ethnic Population</th>
<th>615,882</th>
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<td>Multiple ancestry</td>
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<tr>
<th>Counties with Largest Greek-Ancestry Population**</th>
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<tr>
<td>New York City, NY</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cook (Chicago), IL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Los Angeles, CA</td>
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<td>Middlesex (Cambridge; Lowell), MA</td>
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<td>Nassau, NY</td>
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<tr>
<th>Counties with Highest Percentage of Greek Ancestry in Population**</th>
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<tr>
<td>Essex (Lynn), MA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carbon (Pine), UT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hillsborough (Manchester), NH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Pine (Ely), NV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middlesex (Cambridge; Lowell), MA</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Counties, cities, and the interpretation are based on single ancestry data only.
** Major cities or towns may be indicated in parentheses.

The first group of Greeks to come to America arrived in Florida in 1768, but descendants of the survivors of that ill-fated colony have presumably lost all awareness of Greek ancestry (Moskos 1980). The New Smyrna colony, about 75 miles south of Saint Augustine, was begun by a Scotsman who persuaded about four hundred Greeks to sign up with others as indentured laborers. Many colonists died, and the rest rebelled under their harsh treatment. Within six years they just abandoned the settlement and moved to Saint Augustine, and it has been impossible to trace the descendants after the mid-19th century.

The distribution of the Greek-ancestry population in 1980 is based primarily on the settlements made by unskilled immigrants from the 1880s to 1914. This is so despite the fact that after several years most Greeks were not doing the same laboring work that had initially attracted them to each partic-
ular place. Typically, Greeks arriving before about 1924 went to the city where friends or relatives were living and took whatever job they could find. This usually meant becoming a peddler, bootblack, dishwasher, busboy, miner, factory worker, or railroad laborer. Even though working and housing conditions among these early immigrants were bad, others followed as long as there were jobs.

A great version of the padroso system operated in the larger cities, supplying railroad workers (in the West), peddlers, and shoeshine boys (Saloutos 1964). The incorporation of many shoeshine parlors as chains of large Greek-owned businesses provided at least some opportunities for the newly arrived young men, who became, in effect, indentured servants for several years.

Within a few years some immigrants had saved enough money to open a small business, such as a dry-cleaner's establishment, a luncheon, or a candy or grocery store. Greeks especially liked the restaurant business: in 1950 they were 30 times more likely to be cooks or restaurant managers than were other foreign-born men (Hutchinson 1956). There were Greek coffee shops and food stores to serve the Greek communities, but most eating places in those days usually did not specialize in Greek food. In the 1970s, however, because the new immigrants appeared just as ethnic cuisines were becoming more popular in American metropolitan areas, many of them were able to open restaurants serving Greek food (Moskos 1980).

The businesses that the immigrants developed over the years and the professional careers of many of their children could have been successful in most American cities. However, the communities had already become established. Later migrations of friends and relatives usually just reinforced the pattern created by the varied work opportunities in the early part of the century.

Northern Industrial Cities

Textile- and shoe-manufacturing towns in Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire first attracted Greek immigrants in the 1890s. In Lowell (Middlesex County), Massachusetts, a few Greek peddlers, desperate for any work at all, took some of the lowest paying jobs in a local textile mill (Burgess 1913). After a year's good work, the men were asked if they could bring other Greeks to work. Letters home brought hundreds more within a few years. Greeks replaced some of the French-Canadian and other workers in the evolution of textile-mill labor as it moved from Yankee girliffries to Irish and French Canadian immigrants and then at length to Eastern Mediterranean immigrants. In the early years Greek workers could not speak English, kept separate from the others, and with their plans for returning to Greece, felt little desire to support the labor union (Moskos 1980).

Even before 1920 many were leaving the factories to open small businesses, and those that remained were more apt to support labor organizations. By 1920 Greeks in Lowell constituted the third largest Greek community in America. By that time numerous other New England cities had Greek settlements, the largest of which were in Haverhill, Lynn, and Peabody (all in Essex County), Massachusetts, in Boston (Suffolk County), and in Manchester (Hillsborough County), New Hampshire. In 1980 the distribution of people of Greek ancestry was similar to that in 1920, and Essex County had a higher percentage of Greek ancestry in its population than any other county in the United States. Nearly all Greeks arrived through the port of New York, which has been the largest settlement throughout this century. Relatively few of the early Greeks in New York worked in factories. Rather, immigrant men started by hawking candy, fruit, and flowers, and after several years were often running a candy or flower shop, an ice-cream parlor, or a shoeshine stand (Burgess 1913). A few became importers, especially of Greek foods for both fellow Greeks and Americans. Until the 1960s there was no single large Greek section of New York City. However, a large Greek area did develop due to the increased immigration since 1965. Probably over 60,000 Greeks now live in the Astoria section of the city's borough of Queens (Moskos 1980).

Southern Settlements

The Greeks who settled in the South bypassed the industrial work that those in the North often did. Galveston, Texas, had a small Greek community, including a few fishermen and cotton ginners, as early as 1890 (Saloutos 1980a). In Atlanta in the early 20th century, immigrants managed to open fruit or grocery stores, and by 1920 they had a church, two coffee-houses, several restaurants, and additional small businesses (Ellis 1974).

Tarpons. The largest and most distinctive settlement in the South has been in Florida, at Tarpon Springs (Pinellas and adjacent Pasco counties). In that town, originally a winter retreat for the wealthy, local people had been employed to harvest sponges by hooking them with long
poles. After a Greek immigrant worker persuaded the head of the company that skilled Greek divers could gather many more sponges, about 1,500 sponge divers were brought in (Scourby 1984). The town's economy changed, and until World War II the men and their families made a majority Greek population, often politically allied with the local black community, some of whom worked for the Greeks. The sponge industry declined sharply in the late 1940s; some of the Greek community left, and many of their children married non-Greeks. Nevertheless, a few retirees from the North joined the community, and in 1980 one of every six residents of the city listed a Greek ancestry.

**Western Settlements**

In the western states the early Greeks were most frequently found in unskilled labor in mines or on railroads. Greek workers were highly transitory, and more permanent settlements appeared only when some men, deciding to stay in America, began in business and sent for wives or Greek girls to marry. The largest Greek settlements of this type were established by workers who had been recruited through an especially influential Greek labor agent, whose main office was in Salt Lake City (Papankolas 1976). Word spread in Greece and through coffeehouses in Chicago, and thousands of men made their way to Utah to be sent to various jobs throughout much of the West. Later, some men remained in towns near where they had been working.

Within Utah itself Greeks first worked in the mines and smelters. By 1905 Salt Lake City had its own Greek-town and Orthodox church. In 1912, the over-1,200 Greek workers at the new Bingham Canyon copper mine, just south and west of Salt Lake City, outnumbered the next largest laboring group (Italians) by two to one (Papankolas 1970). Greeks were sent to dig the coal of Carbon County, Utah, and became the largest component of the work force in those mines. Greek communities soon developed at the nearby railroad towns of Helper and Price, which later became headquarters for Greek shepherding in Carbon County and the surrounding area. Although the new immigrant laborers were treated with disdain by most Americans, there was greater tension than usual in Utah between the Greeks and the Mormons due to their differences in values and practices. However, the Greek presence became firmly established when immigrants entered business, during the 1920s, and later the professions.

Smaller Greek settlements in the West had a variety of origins. A few Greeks in Utah and southern Wyoming turned to shepherding and ranching, which probably brought the first Greeks to the adjacent part of Colorado, Moffat County (Saloukos 1980a). Most Greeks in Nevada worked in the copper mines and smelters near Ely in White Pine County. Greek communities appeared at the railroad towns of Pocatello (Bannock County), Idaho, and Cheyenne (Laramie County), Wyoming, along the main line of the Union Pacific.

On the Pacific Coast the Greeks who arrived before about 1890 were typically sailors, but in the early 20th century communities usually developed first when railroad workers or, in Oregon and Washington, potential loggers and sawmill workers arrived. San Francisco was the largest early settlement. Greeks came from Chicago and the East, looking for construction jobs after the 1906 earthquake, and later some left Utah and Colorado, where strikes and violence seemed an inevitable part of the life of miners (Daskaloglis 1981). Many of the city's Greeks worked for the street railway companies, sometimes as conductors and gripmen on the cable cars, and others in can or glass factories or at the Hunters Point shipyards.

**General Urban Concentration**

As of 1920, 88 percent of the people of Greek origin lived in urban areas. This relatively high percentage compared to other immigrant groups was a reflection of the fact that few Greeks had become farmers or ranchers, and the miners and railroad laborers based in rural areas remained but a small portion of the Greek population. Their descendants and new Greek immigrants are even more urban (93 percent) in 1980. Among the larger ethnic groups, only a few (e.g., Chinese, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans) were less likely to live in rural areas than were people of Greek ancestry (Census 1982c, 1983b).

Like other Americans, many people of Greek ancestry have moved to rapidly growing metropolitan areas in the South and West. Most do not live near each other in anything like the Greek-towns of the older cities. However, ethnic communities do flourish, as in Houston (Harris County), Texas, for those who wish to be involved (Scourby 1984).