A Little More Freedom

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As is perhaps appropriate for a study of migration, this book has traveled the longest road of any of my projects, and the debts incurred along the way are correspondingly numerous. I might not have tried to retool from a historian of alcohol and temperance into a student of African American migration had it not been for the example of my departmental colleague Gary Owens, who negotiated the transition from Tudor-Stuart history to modern Ireland with blazing success. For the methods and approaches used I credit most of the inspiration to the late Dick Alcorn. Dick not only helped to initiate me into quantitative analysis, but also accustomed me to thinking about towns and cities as parts of urban systems and taught me the importance of human mobility across the historical landscape. At about the same time as I was learning from Dick Alcorn, I read Lawrence Levine’s *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*. This pioneering work both revealed new possibilities in studying African American life at the grassroots and boldly proclaimed the centrality of agency in African American migration.

The route from inspiration to interesting and useful findings lay through numerous archives, and I would certainly have lost my way without the assistance of their custodians. I wish particularly to thank three guides who went out of their way to help: Nancy Turner, former curator of the Archives and Special Collections, Ball State University; Wilma Gibbs, archivist at the Indiana Historical Society and editor of *Black History News and Notes*; and Lena Calhoun at the Stark County District Library in Canton, Ohio, whose job description did not include enthusiastically providing crucial help to visiting researchers, but who did anyway. Mrs. Carrie Pope Banks in Champaign, Illinois, and Dr. Norma Snipes Marcere in Canton, Ohio, graciously consented to be interviewed.

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