

## MAKING A LIVING BACKGROUND ESSAY

The people who lived in Davis Bottom in the 1890s worked hard to make a living. They worked as laborers, housekeepers, waiters and cooks. Some of them worked for the railroad, for a brick yard, or for a lumber company. The men in the painting were probably waiters and had to work on Sunday. None of the men and women who lived in Davis Bottom earned much money, so they raised gardens and kept chickens to help feed their families. They had to carry water in buckets from public hand pumps in the neighborhood.



How do we know so much about their lives? We know about their houses and their *occupations* because that information was listed in the *census*. A person's *occupation* is the work that they do.

In the United States, every ten years, the federal government counts how many people live in the country. The *census* gives us information

about how many people live in every house in every neighborhood in every state.

While collecting this information, the census takers collect other kinds of information about people - like how old they are, and where they were born, and how they make a living. The census is a *primary source*, giving us information about the way people lived.