The Fourth Federal Reserve District encompasses eastern Kentucky, Ohio, western Pennsylvania, and six counties in the northern panhandle of West Virginia. When these boundaries were established in 1914–15, they contained the world’s largest concentration of finished steel manufacturers.

The Census of 1920 established nine main categories of employment. About 61.8% of the Fourth District states’ labor force was employed in one of the three major categories—agriculture, manufacturing, and mining activities—a proportion exceeding the national average of 59.6%. The District had a larger share of workers employed in both mining and manufacturing firms than the nation and a smaller percentage of workers engaged in agriculture.

Clearly, it was a highly industrialized region. A nearly continuous string of steel mills and factories extended from Cleveland through the Mahoning Valley and on to Pittsburgh. In many other counties throughout the District, manufacturing was the largest employer among the three major industry groups, but activities within manufacturing were diversified. In fact, steel works and rolling mills accounted for only 14.1% of the leading manufacturing industries in Ohio in 1923. Moreover, even in counties throughout the District where mining or agriculture was the dominant employer,
Regional Conditions in the 1920s (cont.)

From 1890 to 1930, the District's population growth was closely related to the development of mining and manufacturing. Counties dominated by these industries accounted for 92.3% of the population increase for the entire District—a trend that has been reversed more recently. By 1930, the Fourth District had 11,555,730 residents, 9.4% of the nation's inhabitants. More than a quarter (27.4%) of them lived in the counties containing Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Cincinnati, the areas with the largest number of manufacturing establishments.

Although manufacturing was dominant, the District also had important agricultural and extractive industries. Farming was widespread and accounted for 16.5% of the District states’ employment in 1920. A large share of farm workers lived in eastern Kentucky, a state where agriculture was the principal occupation for 46.8% of all workers.

By 1930, 19.2% of the nation’s mining workers lived and worked in the 47 eastern counties of the Fourth District. A year earlier, these counties had produced 36.1% of the nation’s bituminous coal. Coal mining was particularly important because it was the foundation upon which the industrial development of the District rested.