

THE GREAT EXODUS OF 1879 AND 1880 TO KANSAS

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B. S., Kansas State College
of Agriculture and Applied Science, 1923

A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of History and Government

KANSAS STATE COLLEGE
OF AGRICULTURE AND APPLIED SCIENCE

1942

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PREFACE

In this study, an effort is made to show how the Negroes in the South, even under adverse circumstances, struggled to flee from oppression in quest of a land offering opportunity to the unfortunate.

It is not strange that Kansas - the state where the great conflict began that ended in the liberation of the slave - should be the goal of the "Exoduster".

The principal sources of materials for this study have been from the Historical Library, the Newspaper Section, and the Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka, the library of the Kansas State College and personal interviews.

Indebtedness is acknowledged to Professor C. M. Correll and Dr. A. B. Sageser for their counsel and guidance during the study, and to Mrs. Lela Barnes and members of the staff of the Kansas State Historical Society, and those of the Kansas State College Library for their patient assistance and courtesies.

INTRODUCTION

An interest in the problems of the Negro race, and absence in the schools of the teaching of Negro History, except as it concerns slavery and the Civil War, led to this inquiry of when and how Kansas received the larger percentage of its Negro population.

Records show that in 1860 there were 627 Negroes in Kansas. By 1870 it had increased to 17,108 and in 1880 there were 43,107. In 10 years the population had more than doubled. Subsequent growth of the Kansas Negro population was relatively slow, the increase in the next 50 years being only 23,000.

Beginning in 1874, many Negroes migrated to Kansas from the South. This was an organized movement until February 1879 when a pitiable group of destitute Negroes, leaderless, not knowing where they were going except to "Kansas" arrived at Wyandotte. Most of the immigrants had started out with great confidence in Providence so, bound as they were for the "Promised Land", they took no thought of "the morrow". After February almost every boat from the South brought large numbers of Negroes. This movement to Kansas was called the "Exodus" and the "Exoduster" became another of Kansas' great problems.

By the close of the year 1879, fifteen to twenty thousand of these people had found their way to Kansas. It is from the colonizing of these southern refugees that the larger percentage of the present Kansas Negro population has come. Commemorative of this event are the words to the following plantation song written by Thos. P. Westendorf.

Going From De Cotton Fields

I's going from de cottonfields, I's going from de cane,
 I's going from de ole log hut dat stands down in de lane;
 De boat am in de ribber dot hab come to take me off,
 I's gone and jined de 'Exodus' dats making for he Norf.
 Dey tell me out in Kansas, dats so many miles away,
 De colored folks am flocking, cause dey're getting better pay,
 I don't know how I'll find it dar, but I is bound to try,
 So when de sun goes down tonight, I's going to say good-bye.

Chorus - I's going from de cottonfields
 And Ah! it makes me sigh!
 For when de sun goes down tonight,
 I's going to say good-bye.

But Dinah she don't want to go, she says we're getting old,
 She's 'fraid dat she will freeze to death, de country am
 so cold;
 De story 'bout de work and pay she don't believe am true,
 She's begged me not to do the thing dat I am bound to do.
 And so I's sold de cabin and de little patch of ground,
 Dat good ole master gave us, when de Yankee troops came down;
 My heart am awful heavy, and de tears am in my eye,
 For when de sun goes down tonight I's going to say good-bye.

Chorus -

It grieves me now to leave the place where I was born and bred,
 To leave de friends dat's living, and de graves of dem dat's
 dead;
 De flow'rs dat grow where master sleeps will miss my tender
 care,
 No hand like mine will ever go to keep dem blooming there.
 But den de times hab got so hard and I is ole and poor,
 De hungry wolf am looking in and snarling at my door;
 I's got to help de chil'ren some before I comes to die,
 So when de sun goes down tonight I's going to say good-bye.

WHY THE NEGRO LEFT THE SOUTH IN 1879 AND 1880

Just how the migration from the South started is a question never definitely settled, though a Congressional investigation produced three large volumes comprising 1700 printed pages of testimony on the subject.

On the 18th day of December, 1879, the United States Senate passed a resolution that a committee of five members be appointed to investigate the causes which led to the emigration and to report their findings to the Senate. The committee was given power to send for persons and papers and to sit at any time.¹

The committee appointed was composed of Daniel W. Voorhees of Indiana, Zebulon B. Vance of North Carolina, and George Pendleton of Ohio, Democrats; and William Windom of Minnesota and Henry W. Blair of New Hampshire, Republicans.

From the testimony given, witnesses apparently were chosen for their ability to whitewash the Southern planters who had mercilessly 'bulldozed' the Negroes, cheated them in commercial transactions, and kept them from voting in

¹ Report and Testimony of the Select Committee of the United States Senate to Investigate the Causes of the Removal of the Negroes from the Southern States to the Northern States. (3 parts)-1880.

elections. Many Kansans were taken to Washington as witnesses. They testified as to the care of these refugees and repeated hearsay stories of cruelties down South.

Beginning January 19, 1880, 153 witnesses were examined embracing persons from the states of North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Missouri, Kansas, and Indiana. The investigation lasted two months.

In response to a letter concerning witnesses from Kansas, Governor John P. St. John received the following communication:

U. S. Senate Chamber
Washington, March 22, 1880

Honorable John P. St. John
Topeka, Kansas

My dear Sir:

Your favor of the 15th inst. suggesting the name of George Charles and James Mitchell as desirable witnesses to appear before the exodus committee is received.

The names of those gentlemen had already been suggested by three parties and I have placed them upon my list to be summoned in case we can get authority from the committee to do so. I have no doubt they will be sent for.

I hear a rumor that Voorhees has sent out to Kansas an officer with blank subpoenas to select such witnesses as he may be able to find to testify in the manner desired. I do not know how much truth there is in the report, however. Have you heard anything of it? If so, please be good enough to inform me.

Replying to your suggestion in a previous letter that it would be desirable for the committee to hold sessions in Kansas, I regret to say that it will be impossible to induce the committee to go there. It will also be impossible to send any member of the committee there with authority to take

testimony as you suggest.

We shall have to content ourselves with selecting a limited number of the best witnesses we can procure and take their statements here. The majority of the committee being Democratic of course control its action to suit themselves.

Very Respectfully Yours

Wm. Windom²

The majority report of the committee held that the exodus was induced in a degree by northern politicians, and by Negroes in their employ and in the employ of railroad lines. The educational advantages were found to be insufficient and far inferior to those in most of the states of the North

"The condition of the colored people of the South is not only as good as could be expected but is better than if large communities were transferred to a colder and more inhospitable climate, thrust into competition with a different system of labor, among strangers who are not accustomed to them, their ways, habits of thought and action, their idiosyncracies, and their feelings."³ The individual black man may be benefited by migrating but it would be injurious to transplant a large group from the homes of their nativity.

² William Windom, Letter to Governor St. John, March 22, 1880. Archives, Division Kansas State Historical Society.

³ Report and Testimony of the Select Committee Report No. 693, 46th Congress, 2nd Session.

That there have been clashings of the races in the South socially and politically is never to be denied or wondered at; but when we come to consider the method in which these people were freed, as a result of a bitter and desolating Civil War; and that for purposes of party politics these incompetent, ignorant, landless, homeless people, without any qualifications of citizenship, without any of the ties of property, or the obligations of education, were suddenly thrown into political power, and the effort was made not only to place them upon an equality with their late masters, but to absolutely place them in front and hold them there by legislation, by military violence and by every other means that could possibly be resorted to; when we consider these things, no philosophical mind can behold their present condition, and the present comparative state of peace and amity between the two races, without wonder that their condition is as good as it is.⁴

The minority report contended that the people left because they were unable to endure the intolerable hardships, injustice and suffering inflicted upon them by the Democrats of the South, so fled panic stricken from their homes and sought refuge in a strange land.

Continuing the inquiry, Henry L. Adams, a witness from Shreveport, Louisiana, said a group of them had organized into a committee to see if it was possible to stay under a people who had held them in bondage. The committee finally numbered 98,000. Samuel L. Perry of North Carolina said many of these were induced to go to Indiana by circulars giving a description of government lands and railroads. In Alabama, the State Labor Union (colored) delegated Honorable George Marlow to visit Kansas in 1871. Benjamin Singleton, an aged colored man residing in Kansas, swore that he was

⁴ Ibid.

the "Father of the Exodus" and that he had brought 7,432 colored people to Kansas.

Louisiana and Mississippi witnesses said no single act of wrong inspired the movement, but a long series of oppression, injustice, and violence extending over a period of 15 years.

The investigation lasted over a period of two months. The Congressional Committee reported that 153 witnesses had testified and had convinced the investigators that the exodus was caused in a large degree by northern politicians, by Negro leaders, and by railroads, though there was some evidence that southern courts were unjust in their treatment of the colored population.

Booker T. Washington commented later on the action taken by Congress:

Thus with its usual recklessness Congress appropriated thousands of dollars to find out what was already known to every intelligent person and almost every school boy in the country - that the Negroes were leaving the South because of systematic robbery and political cruelties. Thousands of dollars to ascertain the cause of the poor Negro's distress, but not one cent to relieve it.⁵

A sample of testimony follows.

"Now Uncle Joe, what did you come for?" asked the investigator.

"Oh law! I follers my two boys and the ole woman and then 'pears like I wants a taste of voting afore I dies

⁵ Booker T. Washington, A New Negro for a New Century. (Chicago, Illinois, 1900) p. 290.

and de ole man doan' want no swamps to wade in afore he votes kase he must be Republican ye see".

Various theories, along this same line and others, have been advanced to account for this unusual course on the part of the Negroes.

"We've been working 14 long years", said an intelligent Negro, "and we ain't no better off than we was when we started".

Several thousand had left their cabins before the rush could be lulled. Every Sunday morning the banks of the Mississippi were crowded with emigrants and their friends who would come to bid them God speed into the 'Promised Land'. On June 29, 1879, a large number left on the Jane Howard and the crowd to see them off was unprecedented in the history of their movement. About 2,000 were present.

From the special correspondent under the head "The Crowd on the River", the list ran as follows:

Natchez, Miss.	. 75	Butterton Bayou, La.	200
Vidalia, La.	. 200	Bass Bayou, La.	. 300
Beaumont, La.	. 200	Arkman Landing, La.	250
New Carthage, La.	. 200	Greenville, Miss.	275
Leota Landing, Miss.	350	Vicksburg & vicinity, Miss.	1,200
Milliken Bend, La.	1,100		

Most of the Negroes who had quit work for the purpose of emigrating, but had not succeeded in getting away, were persuaded to return to the plantations. Hundreds of those

who returned from the river banks for lack of transportation, and thousands of others infected with the ruling discontent, however, worked harder than ever in the fields that summer and practiced more economy and self-denial than ever before in order to have the means the next winter and spring to pay their way to the "Promised Land".

"I tell you its owing to the radical politicians at the North", explained a representative known as the Bourbon type; "They've had their emissaries down here, and deluded the 'niggers' into a fever of emigration, with the purpose of reducing our basis of representation in Congress and increasing that of the northern states". Strange as it might seem, the migration first attracted general notice when this accusation was brought. The census report shows that although Kansas gained representatives so did many of the southern states affected by the exodus.⁶

⁶ Eleventh Census of the United States 1890; Biographical Directory of the American Congress 1774-1927. p. 39.

	Population		Representatives	
	1870	1880	1870	1880
Kansas	N- 17,108 W-346,377	43,107 952,155	3	7
Louisiana	N-364,210 W-362,065	483,655 454,954	6	6
Mississippi	N-444,201 W-382,896	650,291 479,398	6	7
Tennessee	N-322,331 W-936,119	403,151 1,138,831	10	10
Texas	N-253,475 W-564,700	393,384 1,197,237	6	11

After the Civil War the Negroes were not only very poor, very ignorant, and very timid, but they were armed with the franchise. Voting, which was widely regarded in the North as a duty, was looked upon by the Negroes of the South as the highest privilege in life; to be frightened out of the exercise of this privilege was to suffer a cruel injustice.

Some contended that the exodus was due chiefly to the loss of political power by the blacks at the end of the Reconstruction period, for during that time they had not only voted but had been chosen Senators, Representatives, and in one case, a State Governor.

Blanche Kelso Bruce, a Mississippi Negro, had been elected as representative to the United States Senate and served from March 4, 1875, to March 3, 1881; appointed Registrar of the Treasury by President Garfield May 19, 1881;

Recorder of Deeds for District of Columbia 1891-1893; and again served as Registrar of the Treasury from 1897 until his death in Washington, D. C. March 17, 1898.

John Roy Lynch also of Mississippi had served as member of the State House of Representatives 1869-1873 serving the last term as Speaker. He was elected as a Republican to the 43rd and 44th Congresses March 4, 1873 to March 3, 1877, and served again from April 29, 1882 to March 3, 1883, after successfully contesting the election of James R. Chalmers.

Joseph Hayne Rainey was elected as Representative to the 41st Congress to fill the vacancy caused by the action of the House of Representatives in declaring the seat of B. Franklin Whittemore vacant. He was the first Negro to be elected to the National House of Representatives, and was reelected to the 42nd, 43rd, 44th, and 45th Congresses, serving from December 12, 1870 to March 3, 1879.

James Thomas Rapier, a representative from Alabama, was elected as a Republican to the 43rd Congress March 4, 1873 to March 3, 1875.⁷

Pinckney Benton Stewart Pinchback, due to impeachment of Governor Warmouth of Louisiana, became Governor December 12, 1872.⁸

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⁸ Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1927.
⁸ Alice Fortier. A History of Louisiana, vol. 4, 1861-1903.

Some whites justified the violent methods (night-riding, whipping, mysterious disappearances, hangings and terrorism) used in many parts of Louisiana and Mississippi to disfranchise the Negroes, or compel them to vote under dictation, on the ground that the men who pay the taxes should vote them and control the disbursement of the public moneys.

The economic situation in the South became critical after the Civil War. The poor whites, who were unwilling to work themselves, so disturbed the Negroes that their employment was precarious. They were compelled to seek employment by the whites, as they had no capital to operate farms independently and some of those who, during the happiest days of Reconstruction, succeeded in acquiring property, saw it thereafter seized on the plea of delinquent taxes. The land in the South moreover remained in large tracts held by planters. Except in the case of poverty they never desired to dispose of it.

The practice of paying day wages was first tried. This is still used in the sugar and rice districts where laborers are paid from 50 to 75 cents a day. It was found impractical to maintain the wage system in the cotton districts. The Negroes said it reminded them too much of the slave gang driven out at day break and home at sundown.

Then the system of working on shares was tried. The planters themselves relinquished this system. Some of them

contended that the laziness and indifference of the Negroes made the partnership undesirable. Many others admitted that they were not able to advance the Negro tenant his supplies pending the growth of the year's crop.

They next resorted to the renting system, especially in the cotton district. While this threw the tenant on his own responsibility, it frequently made him the victim of his own ignorance. He had to pay such high rent that he seldom derived from his labor adequate returns to support his family. The worst feature of the rent plan was its concomitant, the credit system. Having no capital to begin with, the Negro tenant became dependent on his landlord or the crossroads storekeeper for advance of supplies, tools, food, and clothing during the year. This was secured by a lien on the crop. The great mass of Negroes depended for their living on this advance.

The Negro tenant began his season with three mortgages covering all he owned, his labor for the coming year, and all he expected to acquire during that period. It is easy to understand why the Negro rarely got ahead. Ignorance, improvidence, and his happy disposition under the influence of the lazy, drowsy climate, to which he was so well adapted physically, enabled him to endure these hardships, though the Negro was the loser, the white man was not often the gainer.

Then there were too many Negroes in the southern states both for their own good and that of the whites. Profusion of

Table 1. Population of white and negro in states of emmigration and percentage of negroes of total population.⁹

State	1870			1880			1890			1930		
	White	Negro	Per- cent	White	Negro	Per- cent	White	Negro	Per- cent	White	Negro	Per- cent
Alabama	521,384	475,510	47.69	662,185	600,103	47.53	833,718	678,489	44.84	1,700,775	994,834	35.7
Georgia	638,926	545,142	46.04	818,906	725,133	47.02	978,357	858,815	46.74	1,836,974	1,071,125	36.8
Louisiana	362,065	364,210	50.10	454,954	483,655	51.46	558,395	559,193	49.99	1,318,160	776,326	36.9
Mississippi	382,896	444,201	53.65	479,398	650,291	57.47	544,851	742,559	57.58	996,856	1,009,718	50.2
Tennessee	936,119	322,331	25.41	1,138,831	403,151	26.14	1,336,637	430,678	24.37	2,138,619	477,646	18.3
Texas	564,700	253,475	30.97	1,197,237	393,384	24.71	1,745,935	488,171	21.84	4,283,491	854,964	14.7

⁹ Eleventh Census of the United States 1890; Negroes in the United States, 1920-1932. p.24.

labor generally means misery for the laborer. Statistics show that the Negro population, though comprising less than 10 percent of the total population of the United States comprised approximately one-fourth of the population of the South. Of the states directly concerned, more than one-half of the population of Louisiana and Mississippi were Negro in 1880 and 47 percent of that of Alabama and Georgia.⁹

The emigration movement was probably accelerated by two men not widely known as race leaders. Henry Adams of Shreveport, Louisiana, an uneducated Negro, but a man of extraordinary talent, organized in 1877 a colonization council. This committee grew to the enormous size of 500 members. One hundred fifty of these were scattered throughout the South to live and work among the Negroes and report their observations. Members of this committee felt that they could no longer remain in the South and decided to leave. Membership in the Council was solicited with the result that by 1878 there were 98,000 persons from Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Texas belonging to the Colonization Council.

About the same time there was another conspicuous figure working in Tennessee. Benjamin, or "Pap", Singleton, who called himself the "Father of the Exodus", began the agitation for emigration as early as 1869. Singleton was president of a committee to invite Negroes to come to "Sunny Kansas". He founded two colonies here and brought a total

of 7,432 Negroes from Tennessee. "The advantages of living in a free state" were the inducements offered.

The colored people were infants. They had been the property of another race until just a few years before when they were freed and suddenly given political rights, and turned loose upon the world without money, education, or special friends. It would be difficult to conceive of a situation less favorable to healthy social progress than that in which they found themselves.

In this review of the causes that led to the exodus, it would be unfair to conclude that the blame rested entirely upon the whites. The fact seems to be that the movement was spontaneous to the extent that the freedmen were ready and anxious to go. The Negroes learned that they could escape and they flocked together to gain the moral support which comes from numbers.

EFFORTS TO STOP THE MOVEMENT

The excitement among the colored people at this time, with the consequent disorganization of labor, threatened disaster to the southern crops, and planters conventions were held among the whites and blacks to induce the latter to remain where they were and also to devise means to replace those who had already gone.

A mass meeting of planters was held March 28, 1879, to

consider the best method of replacing the colored labor that had left for Kansas, Indiana, and Ohio. They decided to communicate with Chinese Six companies of San Francisco to ascertain if they could supply their needs with an importation of coolie laborers. They asked for 1,000 Chinese to replace the Negroes. They received the following answer "Impossible to obtain number of Chinese. Cheap labor is also scarce here, and the only manner by which the Southern planters can obtain class of laborers they desire is to send an agent to Hong Kong and there hire and contract for a sufficient number of Chinese to justify them in chartering a ship direct for New Orleans". Planters in Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia said they would act upon this suggestion.

A convention of colored men was held at New Orleans on April 17, 1879, and of the 200 delegates about one-third were preachers, the remainder moral and social rather than political leaders. Addresses were made by P. B. S. Pinchback, Dave Young, and others advising the Negroes to adjust their differences with the planters and remain where they were. Against these race leaders, Singleton spoke with considerable feeling. He said, "They had good luck, and now are listening to false prophets; they have been boosted up and got their heads a whirling, now they think they must judge things from where they stand, when the fact is, the 'possum is lower down the tree - down nigh to the roots. They

either see darkly or are playing into the hands of the southern planters who fear a scarcity of labor".¹⁰ It was a turbulent meeting, but they finally adopted a resolution that the colored people of the South should migrate. The convention adjourned singing "John Brown".

Another convention was called to meet at Vicksburg on May 5, 1879, to take into consideration the labor troubles in the Mississippi Valley, and to devise some means to check the exodus of colored laborers. The call was signed by Governor Stone of Mississippi, and a number of prominent cotton growers. The colored people were requested to send delegates to participate in the deliberations of the convention and to state their grievances plainly. The convention met as scheduled at the Southern Concert Garden. There were fully 400 delegates present, including men from every county and parish on the Mississippi River between Helena, Arkansas and New Orleans, Louisiana. General Miles stated that the object of the meeting was to discover a better basis for understanding between capitalists, landowners, and laborers of the South. Addressing the colored portion of the convention, he said: "The God of Nature has made the colored men a tropical plant, the South was his home according to divine dispensation but if any desire to emigrate to Kansas or elsewhere no human power can prevent you. You have the same right to go as I have". Turning to the whites, General Miles said, "You should be honest in your transactions with the colored men".

¹⁰ Albion W. Small, "Benjamin Singleton" American Journal of Sociology. July 1909-May 1910.

Among others the following resolution was adopted:

Resolved, That this convention call upon the colored people here present to contradict the false reports circulated among them, and impress upon the more ignorant and credulous, and to instruct them that no lands, mules, or money await them in Kansas or elsewhere, without money or price, and report to the Civil authorities all persons disseminating such reports.

The convention adjourned May 7, 1879. The Negroes had but little to say.

Two days after the Vicksburg convention a meeting of colored men was held in Nashville, Tennessee (May 7, 1879). There were assembled representatives from Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and South Carolina, numbering altogether 140 men. Among the most prominent present were ex-Governor Pinchback of Louisiana, ex-Congressmen Rainey of South Carolina, Lynch of Mississippi and Rapier of Alabama, Honorable William Still of Philadelphia, Conwell of Virginia, Anderson of Indiana, Colonel Horton of Ohio, Barnett of Illinois, Lawton of Missouri, and many other well known leaders.

The resolutions set forth were extremely radical, demanding social and political equality for the colored people; opposing separate schools for the races; recommending the several state legislatures to enact laws providing compulsory education; and asking Congress to make an appropriation of \$500,000 to defray the expenses of Negroes of the South moving

to those states and territories where they could enjoy all rights which were guaranteed by the laws and constitution of the United States.

Unwilling to rely upon moral suasion, the whites resorted to force to stop the exodus. They denied the Negroes transportation and even imprisoned them on false charges. Negroes were also swindled in many sections by both white and colored.

An old woman who had camped in the brush near the depot in Topeka had in her possession four painted stakes about two feet long with the initials of her name carved upon them. She had bought them from a sharper who told her that with them she might stake out all the land she wanted and the government would give her a title.

A man who represented himself as a government agent went through Holmes, Mississippi, stating that on the following Sunday a free train would arrive at Durant, Mississippi, for the purpose of transporting all who wished to go to Kansas. He gave every Negro a flag which was to be stuck in the land he squatted upon in Kansas, thus giving him a valid title to the ground. They gave the man whatever money they had. On Sunday, June 15, 1,000 Negroes assembled at the railroad station at Durant. Of course, the free train did not arrive. The whole swindle was concocted by a club of white leaguers who told the people that the man was one of their northern friends.

Elder W. S. Johnson, colored, went to Hayes County in Texas, claiming he had been sent from Kansas to issue certificates of transportation which would carry a family and their goods, chattels, and merchandise to Kansas. He collected \$5.00 from each family which agreed to pay \$4.75 after getting to Kansas. The railroad agent, whom Elder Johnson said would sign the certificates, refused.¹¹

But Negroes to the number of thousands continued their way North despite this opposition - despite even the discouragement of their greatest leader, Frederick Douglass. In a lecture at Stanton, Virginia, he advised against migration saying that the warm climate was the best for them and that

One of the most unfortunate predicaments that can be imagined is a Negro in a snowbank. It don't look right, the colors don't blend harmoniously. Stay where you are, and so conduct yourself that men will be bound to respect you, work with your head and hands - seek to acquire knowledge as well as property, and in time you may have the honor of going to Congress, for if the Negro can stand Congress, Congress ought to stand the Negro.

This lecture was largely attended by the most cultivated white people of Stanton, Virginia who warmly congratulated Douglass on this conclusion of his lecture, "Self-Made Men".

The Negroes bitterly opposed this speech. Scarborough of Wilberforce University, answered:

¹¹ A. W. Banks, Letter to Gov. J. P. St. John. Archives Division Kansas State Historical Society.

Mr. Douglass says "stay". He is only repeating what Old Captain Anthony said to him just before he stepped on the car at the corner of Point Market and Fleet Streets, Baltimore, over fifty years ago. "Stay", why did not Fred Bailey stay? Stay, yes, stay in Gardner's Shipyard. If he had only stayed then, we would have never had a Fred Douglass to have said to the poor bleeding, starving, suffering citizens of the South, "Stay". He somehow or other can't help but feel regret at the course Mr. Douglass is taking but age and some other things are having a terrible effect upon his mind, which we trust will not prove fatal.¹²

The promoters of the movement were fortunate in having the support of Richard T. Greener, first Negro graduate of Harvard, and John Langston. They considered it a hopeful sign that the Negroes had passed through the stage of development of appealing to philanthropy into that of appealing to themselves.

President Hayes said there could be no question of the right of the Negro to migrate whenever he saw fit to do so, and that this right would and should be maintained.

C. K. Marshall, D. D., of Vicksburg, Mississippi, in an address on the Exodus delivered January 21, 1880, favored the idea but urged Negroes to go to Africa, "the land of their fathers", instead of remaining in this country. "If the gentleman had noticed the large number of mulattoes all over the South and especially in Vicksburg, he would have decided with us, that the Negro was already in the land of his fathers".¹³

¹² The Colored Citizen, June 7, 1879.

¹³ Booker T. Washington, A New Negro for a New Century.

It is certain that Negro labor was the best the South could have, and equally certain that the climate and natural conditions of the South were better suited to the Negro than any others on this continent. Had the conventions adopted some definite plan of action, the sessions might not have been in vain. It was unwise for them to devise schemes for importing Chinese when they should have been making plans to make the labor they had content.

THE EXODUS INTO KANSAS

The first Kansas knew of the impending exodus was the arrival of a boatload of Negroes at St. Louis in February, 1879. They were mostly from Madison Parish, Louisiana. The ground was covered with snow and the immigrants were dressed as though they were going to the cotton fields. Some were barefooted. They carried their few possessions in bags, bundles, and red bandana handkerchiefs. They expected free transportation from St. Louis to "Kansas".

Two weeks later another group arrived from Mississippi and Louisiana. After February, almost every day a fresh cargo of colored people was unloaded at the wharves of St. Louis.

On March 11, 1879, a party of 280 arrived in St. Louis by the steamer Colorado. They too were mostly in destitute condition. These were mainly from Hines County, Mississippi, and Madison Parish, Louisiana, and had started for Kansas

where they expected, upon their arrival, to be presented with forty acres of land, a pair of mules, and such other appurtenances as are necessary to stock and carry on a farm. Six hundred more were expected by March 17 on the Grand Tower.

Mayor Overstolz issued a proclamation on May 15 which warned all persons against coming into St. Louis without money to support themselves and to pay their fare to their destination. By March 19, nearly 1,500 were in St. Louis. What to do with them puzzled the municipal minds. Two or three hundred who had money were sent on to Kansas City.

On March 21, a reported asked one of the refugees, "How are you going to make it through?"

The refugee replied, "De good Lord'll see us safe fru, massa, - He's got us all in de hollow of his hand and He'll fatch us fru to Kansas or de Promise Land all in His own good time". "Ah! Amen sister", said the husband. There was an undercurrent of trust in Providence in the refugee's soul that lifted him above the ordinary accidents of life.

The authorities in St. Louis secretly paid the passage of the destitute people to Kansas City. The St. Louis men in Jefferson City laughed and said, "You Kansas folks want immigration; St. Louis will accommodate you!"

Early in April, the side wheel steamer, the Fannie Lewis, towing two barges on which were crowded 1,000 Negro refugees from Nashville, Tennessee tied up at the wharf at Wyandotte and made arrangements for the "exodusters" thereon. The citizens objected to their landing but Corvine Patterson¹⁴,

¹⁴ See Appendix.

Negro constable, and W. J. Buchan, white State Senator, pled the cause of the refugees and they were permitted to stay. Fires were built on the river bank and the Negroes prepared their supper from viands furnished by generous citizens to the accompaniment of such spirituals as "Rock Daniel", "Ride on Jesus, Ride On", and "I've Done Got Over".

The refugees were in charge of Isaiah Montgomery, an ex-slave of Joe Davis, brother of Jefferson Davis, who took about 500 of them to Topeka. The remaining group built homes along Jersey Creek in a settlement called "Rattlebone Hollow", and in old Quindaro, while literally hundreds squatted on the levee putting up shanties of scrapwood to form what was known as "Juniper Bottoms", or "Mississippi Town". Many were given employment in the packing houses.

The steamer Durfee landed at Wyandotte on April 6, in the midst of a terrible storm with about 250 more colored people on board, mostly from Tennessee and Mississippi. This group seemed in better shape both financially and materially than any that had yet landed, but like their former arrivals, had not enough money to get through the winter. They were well behaved, quiet, and orderly.

Both S. B. Armour and P. D. Armour of Chicago, who had been in the city several days, contributed to the support of these unfortunate people. For many days their carriage was seen on the levee and at the Sons of Protection Hall, where new arrivals were temporarily quartered. On Sunday a wagon

load of bread and bacon was distributed by Plankerton and Armour. This was repeated for several days. E. L. Hueche also contributed. It was stated by the refugees already there, that about 800 would land the next week.

On April 7, the Negroes of Wyandotte called a meeting and resolved to do all in their power to aid the refugees to emigrate to some other point.

The Packet, Joe Kinney, arrived in St. Louis on April 8 about noon with 300 aboard headed for Kansas. They were scattered about the lower deck, on the floor, and on piles of freight. Perhaps half a dozen had considerable sums of money; a number had a few dollars apiece while many were entirely out of money and suffering for something to eat. One man had \$150 deposited with the clerk, and an old "aunty", being asked why she came all the way to Kansas with no money, quietly stooped down and pulled a roll of greenbacks out of her shoe. There were several ten dollar bills in the roll which might have contained \$100.¹⁵

April 14, trouble occurred between the county and city authorities in Wyandotte in regard to the burial place of the colored paupers who had died. The county claimed that it had exhausted its quarterly fund for the business and had no authority to issue or accept more orders, while the city claimed it could bury only its own dead.

¹⁵ The Commonwealth, April 9, 1879.

On April 14, the steamer Joe Kinney from St. Louis, passed through the draw of the Missouri River bridge about 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon. It had on board, beside the usual assortment of merchandise, 150 more colored people who were destitute and many of them ill. They had been seven days coming up the river owing to the strong current running. They immediately camped out at Wolcott's lumber yard on arrival, but the rain poured down during the night and left them in a distressed condition. As soon as it was possible, those suffering were moved up town but all the colored churches and halls were full and room of any kind was in demand. The Honorable John M. Price of Atchison was in the city and stated that if 2,000 could be forwarded to Atchison they would be provided for.

Excitement ran high in Wyandotte on April 17. The chief cause was the discussion of the Negro Exodus. The streets were crowded with people who were beginning to feel that if boats continued to land these people by the hundreds, the town would soon be bankrupt.

Mayor Shelley of Kansas City, Missouri accompanied by Chief of Police Speers and V. J. Lane of the Herald, went through the quarters occupied by the colored people to investigate and plan for cooperative measures for their relief. After a conference with Mayor Stockton of Wyandotte and others, as to the hardships imposed on the citizens of Wyandotte in their humane efforts to relieve the sufferers

and make provision for the thousands who were following in their wake, Mayor Shelley determined to appeal to the Secretary of War for the removal of the refugees to the Government Reservation at Fort Leavenworth, where they could be subsisted at Government expense until some better plan could be adopted. The Mayor's dispatch and Secretary McCreary's reply follow:

Hon. Geo. W. McCreary, Sec. of War, Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

In our city and vicinity there are encamped 2,000 poor refugees from Southern states. These people are ignorant, helpless and wholly destitute. Death has already relieved us from the care of 1 in 30 since their arrival here and while K. C. takes care of her own poor and asks nothing from anybody for herself, yet we feel that the country does not expect us to support the poor of several states.

Can you not under these circumstances have the Commander at Ft. Leavenworth give us a part of the gov. reservation and issue rations until something permanent can be done for their benefit.

Very respectfully

Geo. M. Shelley

Mayor of K. C.

The above dispatch was forwarded about 11:00 and during afternoon the following reply was received:

Wash. D. C., April 16, 1879.

To Hon. Geo. M. Shelley, Mayor of Kansas City, Mo.

I cannot take the responsibility of issuing gov. rations to emigrants without authority and while Congress is in session that body has full power and may be applied to.

Geo. W. McCreary

Sec. of War

The Secretary evaded the responsibility by transferring it to Congress.

In commenting on the Exodus, F. C. Adams said, "The Secretary of War was not afraid of impeachment when he allowed tents to be used for the sufferers from inundation along the Mississippi River. He not only allowed this, but he issued rations from the government stores. He did the same during the yellow fever time in the South. No one thought or talked of impeachment then. 'But, OH!', say the weak pusillanimous cusses, that was for the lordly people of the South while you are asking aid for the poor ignorant Negroes".¹⁶

The Governor of Kansas, John P. St. John, then telegraphed our Representatives, Dudley C. Haskell and Thomas Ryan to see if they could get a bill passed whereby Fort Leavenworth could be used. He received the following communication:¹⁷

Washington D. C. 4/22/79

Garfield introduced bill for relief of colored emigrants tents - rations & \$75,000 --passage of the bill doubtful.

D. C. Haskell

Wash. D. C.

¹⁶ The Commonwealth, April 9, 1879.

¹⁷ D. C. Haskell Telegram to Governor St. John April 4, 1879.
 D. C. Haskell Letter to Governor St. John, April 28, 1879.
 Thomas Ryan Letter to Governor St. John, June 20, 1879.
 Archives Division Kansas State Historical Society.

House of Representatives

Washington, D. C. April 28, 1879

Dear Governor

Your telegram concerning the colored refugees and request that the Sec. of War grant permission to land at the Fort (Lea.) was duly rec'd and I have seen the sec. and replied by telegram. I write merely to explain that the Sec. is more than willing personally to aid the poor people who are fleeing from persecution but if he granted your request it would be like exposing himself to a drove of wolves. The southerners are wild over the exodus and they hope and pray (apparently) that enough of the poor creatures will come to want, to deter the rest from leaving.

There is no use of asking Congress to aid us, the chief fear among the southern fellows is that they will receive aid sufficient to sustain them.

I did not think it wise to even introduce a bill in Congress for there is no hope of passing it and the attempt I feared would only tend to check private subscriptions, and so work a positive danger.

Coming however from Garfield whose state is not directly interested it stands better than as if a Kansas was at work at it as a principal however I am doing all I can here to help the various relief movements and shall try to pass that bill. You may be assured of that. I presume the com. will smother it and refuse to report.

Your friend

D. C. Haskell

House of Representatives

Washington, D. C. June 20, 1879

My dear Governor

I have pleasure in acknowledging the receipt of your letter of the 17th Inst. I regret to say the Garfield bill is sleeping the sleep that knows no waking. I hope my dear Governor is not so daft as to believe for a moment that a Democratic committee of a confederate Congress would be

guilty of this great * of encouraging the exodus movement by extending to the refugees any national or other relief. I think I know the temper of our southern friends in the House upon this subject and I have no hesitation in saying to you that so far from their being willing to vote national aid they would be delighted to see all of them suffer the worst pangs of starvation and squalid poverty that they might be compelled to return to their old homes furnish to those they left behind a spectacle of suffering that will serve to * these from following. Do not hope for relief for the poor creatures from the 46th Congress. I am in hopes we shall get away from here next Tuesday.

Ryan

* illegible

At the close of a meeting held April 19, Mayor Stockton of Wyandotte City, issued a proclamation addressed to owners of steam boats and transportation companies forbidding the landing of any more destitute persons and stating that all boat officers and agents disobeying the proclamation would be held legally responsible, which implied a fine of from one dollar to five hundred dollars.

Wyandotte still had a thousand in their midst perishing daily for want of proper food and shelter. The city was a general hospital and business was suspended. The Relief Committee began to ask in the name of "common humanity" for donations of money to provide for and forward to their destination these suffering and destitute men, women, and children that destiny had thrust upon them. "We send the Macedonian cry for immediate assistance". Subscriptions were to be sent to H. M. Northup and Sons, bankers, Wyandotte, Kansas. The appeal was signed by Mayor Stockton.

The steamer Durfee was expected to land April 19 or April 20 with 500 additional immigrants. The citizens of Wyandotte resolved to prevent her landing there but on April 22, at a meeting of the Relief Committee, it was decided to withdraw the warrant issued for the arrest of the captain of the steamer Durfee and to permit the boat to land the immigrants.

An editorial in the New York World stated, "The Kansas Republicans are so deeply shocked at the suffering of the Southern Negroes that they want them to stay down South. Republican interest in the Negro we have observed increases as the square of the distance".¹⁸ On April 23, an article appeared stating, "We regard the action of Mayor Stockton of Wyandotte in issuing the proclamation to prevent the landing of the poor refugees from the South at the levee of that city a disgrace to himself as a man and to the city whose mayor he happens to be".¹⁹ Arrangements were made to send 100 families to Atchison, and 100 families to Lawrence on April 19.

The action of the Relief Committee in having Mayor Stockton withdraw the proclamation caused general dissatisfaction. The majority of the citizens deemed it necessary to prohibit the landing of the colored people on the Durfee.

¹⁸ The Commonwealth, April 8, 1880. "Kansas Philanthropy".
¹⁹ The Colored Citizen, April 23, 1879.

The ship reached Wyandotte on Monday about 7:00 o'clock. Captain Nelson interviewed Captain Keith of the boat and requested him not to land any more "darkies" at Wyandotte. At first the Captain objected, but, after consideration, concluded that he would not land but went up the stream and landed about 240 passengers at the old Bigger Packing House in Kansas City, Kansas. The citizens there were indignant but had to accept the situation. The refugees remained there only until Wednesday when the entire number, except one family, was shipped to Manhattan.

J. S. Pattee, of Manhattan, said, "It has been our advice all along to the immigrants to give up the idea of sticking together in large bodies and thus become a burden to each other and to the localities where they might stop, but to break up in small bands and each family look out for itself. In two-thirds of the towns in Kansas there are no colored people at all".²⁰

The people of Wyandotte were able to breathe more freely by April 24 as the Committee had sent two or three hundred with their luggage to Topeka, Lawrence, Atchison, Leavenworth, and other places along the Kansas-Pacific.

On May 16, 132 immigrants returned South on the steamer James Howard. They told reporters that they suffered greatly during their brief stay here and were anxious to get back to their homes again. Their transportation was provided for

²⁰ The Colored Citizen, April 14, 1879.

partially by their old employers.

According to officials of the Colored Refugee Board at St. Louis from 15,000 to 20,000 refugees passed through there. The people there attended to their immediate wants and sped them on their way, not only to Wyandotte but also to Topeka, Leavenworth, and Kansas City. Topeka became the principal receiving point.

Beginning in March 250 to 300 immigrants landed in Topeka every week. Relief work was inaugurated at a meeting in the Opera House at which Governor John P. St. John made a speech throwing wide the doors of the state and inviting the Negroes to the broad acres of Kansas where they were safe from persecution. Five hundred fifty dollars was raised by subscription at this meeting. Other persons prominent in the relief movement were three Quaker ladies; Mrs. S. T. Perry, Mrs. Laura Haviland, and Mrs. Elizabeth L. Comstock.

A Kansas colored State Emigration Bureau was formed on May 3 to look after the interests of the colored immigrants. The constitution was drawn up by T. W. Henderson, John M. Brown, A. D. DeFranz, C. M. Johnson, and W. C. Egleson.

The Kansas Freedmen's Relief Association, incorporated, was organized on May 8, 1879. The Corporation was formed "to relieve as far as possible the wants and necessities of destitute freedmen, refugees, and immigrants coming into the state, to provide necessary food, shelter, and clothing for them when unable to provide for themselves; to succor the

aged, the feeble and the sick; to aid and assist them in procuring work, and finding homes, either in families or, when they wish, to locate on government lands, and to do and perform other acts of charity and benevolence as the necessities of such freedmen, refugees, and immigrants may require and humanity suggest".²¹

Branch societies were formed in Parsons, Fort Scott, and Independence. At Kansas City there was no board but work of relief was placed in the hands of B. F. Watson, a colored minister, who lived there. Appeals were sent out by the Kansas Freedmen's Relief Association for help and in answer money and clothing poured in from all parts of the country and Europe. England contributed during 1879, \$8,000 and 50,000 pounds of goods.

In answer to a letter written by Governor St. John to Horatio Rust of Chicago²², the lumbermen of Chicago donated a car of lumber for barracks for the refugees. The Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad furnished free transportation. The United States Express Company, H. D. Colvin, Agent, and the Adams Express Company, Anson Gorton, Agent, sent packages of clothing and other things without charge. On April 29, 1879, Mr. P. D. Armour collected the sum of

²¹

Second Report of Kansas Freedmen's Relief Association, incorporated Articles of Incorporation.

²² Governor St. John Letter to Horatio Rust in Appendix.

\$1,200 from a few business firms for the relief of the refugees at Wyandotte.

April 24, there was a large meeting at Faneuil Hall, Boston, Mass. to provide relief for the immigrants. Governor Talbott, presided. In Cleveland, Ohio, \$200 was collected and sent to Governor St. John. Senator John J. Ingalls said he was inclined to think his state, Kansas, could absorb 100,000 of these people without serious injury or inconvenience.²³ A Kansas City Times editorial dated April 25, 1879 said: "the last attempt of Senator Ingalls to vindicate himself is by introduction of a bill making appropriation for the relief of colored immigrants to Kansas. Ingall's personal sympathy for the refugees must be getting intense but if he would drop \$10 in Wyandotte's contribution box it would be worth just \$10 more to his constituents than all the windy appeal he can make in favor of a \$75,000 donation by proxy". Ex-Governor Charles Robinson took nine families of refugees to his farm near Lawrence. He fed them until they were provided for in homes of their own upon public lands. James H. McKay, of the Pacific Coast Immigration Bureau, offered California as a place for the colored people as they needed laborers to succeed the Chinese. Individuals offered from 25 cents to \$3,000 as shown by the following correspondence.²⁴

²³ Harpers Weekly July 5, 1879, vol. 22, No. 1175.

²⁴ James H. McKay Letter to Governor St. John.

Anna Jameson Letter to Governor St. John.

Sam Willets Letter to Governor St. John.

Amand Way Letter to Governor St. John. Archives Division
Kansas Historical Society.

Pacific Coast Immigration
Bureau
No. 3 New Montgomery Street
under Grand Hotel
San Francisco, Aug. 12th 1879

Gov. St. John

Dear Sir

As the agent of the above Bureau I beg leave to call your attention to our state California as one peculiarly adapted in regard to climate and productions for homes for the colored people now leaving the South.

The question of labor is now of vital importance to our state, and as it is generally conceded that the Chinese must go our citizens are looking around for labor to succeed them. Our Bureau has been formed for the purpose of giving reliable information to the immigrant who desires to make California his home, or if he prefers it the Sandwich Islands, where like California, the climate and production are of a similar nature to the Southern States. -----

With much respect

James H. McKay

General Manager

Hamontown N. J.
Nov. 13, 1880

Ex-Gov. St. John

Dear Sir -- Will you please excuse the liberty I have taken in thus addressing you? I venture to do so knowing how faithfully you have labored in behalf of the freedmen. I will explain as briefly as possible my object in writing. I have about \$3000 which I wish to bequeath to the freedmen by faithful executors who will buy good land for them in Kansas which they can cultivate and make homes for themselves. This three thousand is about all I possess and as I am now 62 years of age and have been an invalid the last ten years, I may be obliged to spend some of it before my decease. I have however so far spent only the annual interest. My native state is Maine where I taught school over thirty years and earned the most of said money. For

the last ten years I have been unable to do anything for a livelihood. I have no near relatives and wish to bequeath this to the honest worthy poor. ----

Yours very respectfully

Miss Anna Jameson

Hammonton, New Jersey

303 Pearl St.
New York 11 mo 18/1879

John P St. John
Esteemed Friend

Javing been informed that thou art willing to act as agent to dispose of contributions for the benefit of the colony refugees, I take the liberty of enclosing check for \$500 and of asking thee to dispose of it in such way as in thy opinion will be of the greatest benefit to the greatest number

Respectfully thy friend

Sam Willets
(Willets & Co
Com. Merchants)

Aug. 7, 1879

----- Old time Abolitionists that boast of their devotion to the cause will give .25 or .50 after I have walked a mile to get to them.

Amand Way

Richmond Ind.

%.50 for freedmen

Ohio led the states in the amount of contributions, followed by New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Michigan, Illinois, and Iowa in the order named, but nearly every state sent something. By March 31, 1881, the Kansas Freedmen's Relief Association had deposited \$28,965.37 in the bank.²⁵ It is possible that the Association may have overdone this phase of the work. Although its agents disclaimed any intention to induce Negroes to migrate, the amount of aid may have constituted an inducement to immigration. At least some personal letters to Governor John P. St. John and others would indicate that.²⁶

Point Pleasant Concordia Parish, La.
May 18, 1879

Mister Post Master

Sir --

There is a great deal of talk about Kansas in this county and we hear so many stories that we don't know whether to believe them or not. Now we would like to hear something strait about it and we thought it best to write to you for information. Now we want your advice as to moving. We dont want to move unless we can better ourselves they tell us that the government will give us a mule and 40 acres of land and so much money and we believe it. We are an oppressed people. We are all honest working men and women and not afraid of work Considerable more intelligence about us than you think tell us the distance from here there and all about the country what you all raise if you raise any cotton or not. We have hailed boats but they wont stop the Democrats have monopolized the thing they way you are

²⁵ Minutes of Kansas Freedmen's Relief Association 1881
Archives Division Kansas State Historical Society.

²⁶ Ellis Jones Letter May 18, 1879 to Postmaster, Topeka, Kansas.

Willie Byers Letter August 20, 1879 to Governor St. John.
Samuel Muse Letter August 12, 1879 to Governor St. John.
Archives Division Kansas State Historical Society.

Republicans up there and most of us is the same the most
of us is penniless and awaiting for a government boat We
can stand any kind of cold weather was born in old Kentuck
and I tell you it was cold there but we colored people did
not mind a bit. I think we can conduct ourselves up there
that you all will be proud of us they saw we colored folk
are a set of things but you will find us allright. do
what you can for us and let me know soon and

Oblige many

Ellis Jones

Hollow Square Holo. Co. Ala.
Aug 20th 1879

To the Governor

of the State of Kansas

Dear Sir

I am a laborer (mechanic) would like to know what in-
ducement you offer to emigrants. I see a great deal in
papers but would like to have a letter from your honor.
Then I will know how to act. I with a number of others
(Farmers) would like to emigrate to some good country.
Please give me all the facts. Do you propose to help
emigrants. If so how and when. By replying at once

You will greatly

Oblige your servant

Willie Byers

Date 8/20

Recd 8/25

Ansd 8/26

Plaquemine Iberville, La
August 12th, 1879

To his Excellency
Gov John P. St. John
Topeka, Kansas

Dear

Sir:

We the colored citizen of the Parish of Iberville having called a mass meeting for the purpose of sending a committee to Kansas next March to investigate into the condition of your state and report back to us whether it would be favorable for us to emigrate to that state or not; desire to have your excellency to write to us giving us your advice

We are a laboring class of the South A great many of us have a little property and a few stock which we would dispose of to emigrate to your State if we are informed by your excellency that it would be advantageous We work very hard and make very large crops of sugar and cotton but we are very poorly paid and often time cheated out of that. Furthermore we desire to know in what condition are those whom left our state and have arrived into your State? Awaiting your reply I have the honor to be Governor yours

Very Respectfully

Samuel Muse

Chairman of the Committee to visit Ks.

If all replies were like this one, it would seem that immigration was not officially encouraged in Kansas.

Topeka Sept. 12, 1879

H. C. Weeden

Louisville, Ky

In answer to your letter of the 9th inst I have the honor to state that the State of Kansas or the general government extends no aid to any class of immigrants to this state. All who come here are expected to make their own living and be self-supporting.

About seven thousand colored people have come here from the South during the last four or five months. The state having quite a large population of colored people prior to that time however.

You ask me what kind of immigrants are most desirable to which I reply, men and women who are sober, honest and industrious and willing to work faithfully to better their condition and become law abiding citizens. In other words those of the colored people who would likely do best in Kansas are those who are accustomed to farming; good house servants also receive very fair wages.

Colored people desiring to come to Kansas should understand that this State offers no inducements whatever to any class of people except that found in its rich soil, healthy climate, full protection to life and property of every law abiding human being, free schools and a free ballot.

All who come here can enjoy these blessings but they should understand that they will be expected to be self-supporting and not a charge upon the charities of our people.

I sent you today a copy of our Agri. Report for 78-9 which will afford you much information.

Yours very truly,

John P. St. John
Governor

The following article appeared during this time:

Subscriptions are asked for from North Topeka for the colored people who are suffering. It is a mighty peculiar month in the year when there is not something the matter in Kansas. The people in Kansas wonder why immigration passes that state by. The reason is their confounded chronic beggary. If they would not cry for charity a whole year it would be good for the state.²⁷

No national aid other than the Congressional investigation of why the Negroes left the South was given. However, on April 10, 1879, the National Emigration Society perfected an organization. They chose an executive committee consisting of Senators Windom, Hamlin, Chandler, and Teller; Representatives Williams, Garfield, and Jorgenson; ex-Representatives Rainey and Lynch, A. M. Clapp, George C. Gorham, W. E. Chandler, M. M. Holland, J. M. Edmonds, C. M. Adams, O. S. B. Wall, M. Howard, H. W. Mendenhall, and Prof. R. T. Greener. The committee prepared a letter asking 100 prominent gentlemen to compose a National Committee to help guide and regulate the movement, and to give sympathy, council and judicial assistance.

I found no account of this committee's having done anything. However, Mayor Shelley of Kansas City, Missouri, said that a colored man in St. Louis told him that he was in correspondence with Senators Windom and Blaine as well as Wm. Lloyd Garrison and was acting under their instructions

²⁷ Negro Clippings, vol. 5-6, May 13, 1881. Kansas State Historical Society.

as members of the newly formed National Emigration Aid Society. Mayor Shelley said he had no proof of this except that the Negro was well posted and financially well fixed.²⁸

On April, 1880 Henry King, then postmaster at Topeka, wrote to Scribners Magazine:

There are at this writing 15,000 to 20,000 colored people in Kansas who have settled during the last 12 months. Thirty percent of them from Mississippi, 20 percent from Texas, 15 percent from Tennessee, 10 percent from Louisiana, 5 percent each from Alabama, and Georgia, and the remainder from other southern states.

These exodusters were thrust upon the charities of the provident until the communities that welcomed them to a temporary hospitality were compelled, as a measure of self-protection, to ask no more to come. The officers at Leavenworth refused to let boats land, and the Mayor even paid the captain of the steamer, Joe Kinney, \$250 to take them further north. The city of Atchison passed an ordinance against the importation of paupers. At Wyandotte a public meeting of protest was called and resolutions were presented, though not passed, declaring that the citizens would forcibly prevent the landing of more boats. At Topeka some one made an attack on the 'barracks' built to house the incoming immigrants. The acting Mayor of Wichita, A. Wiegand, sent a telegram to the Freedmen's Bureau, Topeka, July 16, 1879, saying, "Our city will prohibit the introduction of any more

²⁸ Kansas City Times. April 17, 1879.

exodus by quarantine. Shall return all who come". In Independence, according to the following letter, there was trouble concerning Negroes attending school.²⁹

Independence Kansas Montgomery
County Sept. 27, 1880

Governor St. John the Governor of the State.

We the colored citizens of independence Resol to inform you that whereas the school in which our children belong they have prepared a Room separated for the colored children on the account of the collar and we carried our children to the school in which they belong and they was turn away on the account of they collar and we withheld our children from going from school to school on the account of collar (7) or (8) hundred yards out of the way and applied to you about it

Witness

Please give us
your views and
your protection

Elder Esters

Louis Esters	B. Shaw
Alexander Haris	thomas Wood
Judge Smith	D. Andrews
E. Z. Robert	Britt Draper
S. Tillman	

The chaotic nature of the Negro Exodus was due to its spontaneous character and the fact that it was without order, system, or control. It resembled a wild stampede of an ignorant, indigent, undisciplined mass without leadership or intelligent direction of any sort. The objection raised in Kansas to the multitude coming from the South was not that they were black or humble, but that such a large portion of

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Elder Estes and Committee Letter to Governor John P. St. John, Archives Division Kansas State Historical Society.

them were destitute and helpless and immediately upon arrival became a charge upon the people.

DISTRIBUTION OF IMMIGRANTS

The Kansas Freedmen's Relief Association took charge of distributing the immigrants, as eight to ten thousand were received in Topeka. Many others found places to settle for themselves.

The first scheme tried was that of colonization. The Association made a payment on 1,280 acres of University land 50 miles west of Topeka. It was called the Wabaunsee Colony and was divided among 31 families who had a little means. They were allowed 19 years to pay for the land. Barracks, which were divided into family rooms and five common kitchens, were built by the Association. They also furnished rations, teams, and implements. Isaiah Montgomery, a Negro who had become wealthy by large land possessions in Mississippi given him by Joe Davis, purchased one section of land (640 A.) here. Quite a number of his laborers had come to Kansas with other Mississippi immigrants so he located nine of these families here first. Isaiah Montgomery returned to Hurricane, Mississippi, where he wrote Governor St. John the following letter.³⁰ By December 31, 1880 this colony was reported as self-sustaining.

³⁰ Isaiah Montgomery Letter to Governor St. John. Archives Division Kansas State Historical Society.

Office of
 Montgomery & Sons
 Dealer in
 Plantation Supplies

Hurricane, Miss. May 23, 1879

To His Excellency Gov. John P. St. John
 Topeka, Kansas

Dear Sir

I arrived home safely last Sunday and take advantage of the first available time since then to write you. I will first speak in explanation of some of my actions which probably appear inconsistent with the principles avowed to you. From the 5th March last up to the 1st of April some twenty families numbering about seventy head of Refugees left this place for Kansas. On account of exposure and mismanagement they fared badly, especially on the way from St. Louis to Wyandotte they contracted diarrheah from drinking the water of the Mo. River and pneumonia from the sudden changes incident to a long deck trip they most all concentrated at Wyandotte and while there through one of their number Wm Nervis frequently advised me of their destitute and suffering condition and finally asked that some arrangement be made for their return home. Our firm immediately placed the necessary funds in St. Louis, Mo. and I wrote Nervis giving the proper explanation to make the money available at the same time stating that I would come up if telegraphed for. In answer came the enclosed telegram worded as follows (Kansas City, Mo. 22/79 Rec'd Vicksburg Apr 22nd/1879 to Dr. Bowman, Tell Montgomery to meet me at St. Louis with people that left Davis Bend Wm Neras (should be Nervis) on receipt of this dispatch I immediately left for St. Louis arriving there I learned the people were still in Kansas City or Wyandotte and concluded to go on up there where I met them. found many sick and them all in bad condition generally some eight or ten had died of the rest some were living in improvised board shanties, some in Box cars that happened to be left near the Elevator many were camping on the River Bank. they were apparently overjoyed to meet me. I spent about a day among them relieving their necessities as far as practicable I also informed them that any wishing to return home could do so by having themselves and baggage ready to board the first steamboat bound for St. Louis. I then turned my face westward with the view of investigating Kansas and generally the condition of the immigrants, and the probable success of the Exodus. the Gentleman Mr. Cohn (who called on you) had no

connexion with me, but having been pointed out to him on one of the packets some time ago he recognized me on the N.O. St L & C RR and introduced himself learned my intended route and concluded to travel the same way in quest of laborers to bring back to his farm. At Lawrence, Ks. I met some of the best men that had left our place, they were anxious to locate on Land and on their account I first conceived the idea of locating a tract of several thousand acres with people from the same neighborhood. On my arrival at Topeka I became familiar with the management and disposition made of the colored Imigrants which led me to suggest the plan finally adopted by your association. You are familiar with the sequel. As a principle I favored Imigration of the colored people but doubted its success and practicability until after I had thoroughly investigated Kansas and its people and became acquainted with the high principle which actuate them in their endeavors to provide for the poor downtrodden homeless wanderers. I was anything but favorably impressed with the first view at Wyandotte and thought I was doing humane service in providing transportation for those who wished to return: My intention was to have half the section I purchased broken for fall wheat but I could not find any Oxen suitable for that purpose during the limited time I had to look, and upon consultation with my Brother we have determined that we cannot do anything toward breaking this summer because we have all that we can do to handle our cotton crop, the price bids fair to be remunerative and we are anxious to make a large crop. I don't know how we should have succeeded without the returned imigrantionists, they were very glad to get back, and give your country a hard name in many instances - which pleases the whites but the blacks to the contrary. the latter still cherish fond hopes of reaching the promised Land of Kansas and I believe will continue to go as opportunities arise but under better leadership and more prudent management. I am besieged with questions in regards to your country by all colors and classes it is necessary to be prudent in answering. I speak freer to the whites than to the blacks because there is considerable excitement on the subject among the latter already and any flattering remarks I should make would spread like wings of the morning the former do not relish my assertion that you have a fine country (despite the scarcity of wood) and that colored people can live there and better their condition if they knew how to proceed. they are pleased at my opinion that you people do not understand the management of colored people and that your present policy is inadequate to accomodate a wholesale exodus.

Of course they are not informed of the change you have made or contemplate making in the distribution of colored refugees. I hope the Association has provided for the families I recommended and got them on their lands. I shall watch their progress with much interest in fact more depends on their success than you are probably aware of. I told them they could write their friends here freely as to their progress and prosperity but not to indicate that I took any interest in situating them. I shall send some china, free seeds, and field hoes in few days or as soon as I learn that they are at the place. I have been anxiously looking for a letter from them or Gen Willard Davis (who represents me in the purchase) explaining if matters were progressing favorably or otherwise. This letter has already grown too lengthy and I fear I may take your patience to peruse it. please address an answer (as early as convenient) with no mark on the envelope to denote that it comes from the Capital or any official. Note that I address you without prefixing title in order that the letter may not attract undue attention. Nothing is too hard to suspicion of this country where it has been the custom for a century or more to ransack the mails to prevent the circulation of documents breathing the spirit of freedom. Hoping to hear soon of the favorable progress of the Freedmen R Association also of your continued good health. I am with best regards

Very respectfully

Your Obed Servt.

Isaiah T. Montgomery

P. S.

One of the first things I learned on reaching Home was that our country school which usually runs five months had been suddenly reduced to four months without previous notice to the Teachers or Trustees. I consider this a bad step in view on the heels of the late promises. Colored people being almost wholly the ones interested in country schools but we are dumb having no organ we cannot complain to an enlightened public, who consider free education one of the bulwarks of liberty. I find that there will be no trouble in finding purchasers (who are able to pay) for the section I requested reserved. My brother is of the opinion that we will take more.

Very respectfully

I.T.M.

In Topeka, through the kindness of Mr. Charles Curtis, temporary barracks were being constructed on the land near the river in the north part of town. The citizens in the first ward protested so the work was suspended. In the meantime a lot was secured outside the city limits for barracks. Some one threw the lumber in the river. Other lumber was procured and Judge Dawson had the building completed. Some people said that putting the barracks on the north side was a piece of spite work.³¹ By 1880, "Tennessee Town" was established west of the city limits by 500 exodusters. Other Negroes were settled in two colonies, "Mudtown" and "Redmonville" in north Topeka.

Coffey county grappled with the exodus problem in a way which tested the refugees' adaptation to Kansas soil. One hundred fifty "exodites" from Texas arrived at Burlington bringing with them 30 head of oxen, 18 or 20 wagons, several teams of horses, and household goods. They wanted land, but they had very little money after paying their fare and freight charges. A number of the citizens made arrangements to put them on school land, consisting of 1,000 acres on the west line of the county and gave them a chance to demonstrate their ability to hew out their fortunes in their own particular way. They required some help the first year

³¹ The Commonwealth. April 3, 1880.

so were assisted by the people in various ways.

Labette county received the full shock of the exodus in October and November of 1879 with the arrival of people from Texas. Chetopa, Oswego, and Parsons were about overrun with them. The number who came to Parsons was estimated at between 1,500 and 2,500. Generally speaking, they were a better type than those who came up the river. Many of them came in their own wagons and brought their own household furniture; others came by way of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad. Several of them purchased houses, others built for themselves. They continued to arrive throughout the remainder of the year. The all-colored sections where they lived in Parsons were called "Scuffletown" and "Mudtown". Until January 17, 1880, Negro immigrants continued to arrive in great numbers in Labette County on the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad and by trains across the Indian Territory. Some lived in tents and in wagons in the woods.

Winfield, in Cowley county, got her quota of these refugees who were seeking homes in Kansas. It was a common sight during 1879 to see dilapidated mules or horses hitched to crazy looking vehicles of all kinds and makes wandering pathetically along the highways and through the town. One evening there appeared upon the streets of Winfield quite a colony of these folk who were led by a remarkable singer mounted upon an empty box. His wonderful voice and songs

attracted great crowds who contributed liberally to their cause. The pathos of his voice and story in song inspired a local writer to contribute this to his memory:

The Refugee

Dis ole grey head, dese crippled jintz
 Are looking for a grave
 Sum whereon dis earth's bosom dat
 has never nursed a slave
 But fore I cross dese hands and feet my
 story I'll impart
 For it you wont protect dis head, you did
 once trust dis heart.

Chorus

I'll wait a little longer still --
 De clouds are sure to rise--
 De Lord is boun' to "show his hand"
 To dis chile 'fore he dies.

A colored colony was settled 30 miles northwest of Kinsley or 25 miles north of Dodge City on the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad at Hodgeman Center. This colony was formed near Lexington and Harrodsburg, Kentucky. Its location was selected by a committee of their own number which was sent out for that purpose. The colony, 107 in number, arrived at Hodgeman Center March 24, 1878, and immediately commenced their settlement. About 50 more came later.

Their houses were chiefly "soddies" and dugouts, with only one stone house and two frame houses. Soon all of these settlers had as much as 20 acres in cultivation. Since they were on the extreme frontier of settlement, some had to go to the railroad towns, 50 miles or more away, for work. During the wheat harvest they made from 75 cents to \$1.50 a day.

These people established a town when they first arrived and named it Morton City, after Oliver P. Morton. They put up a commodious frame building for a store and built a half dozen sod houses and dugouts on the low site. They were unable to comply with the town site law, so abandoned Morton City to the State School Commissioners, who selected the town site for school land. A number of mechanics and business men belonged to this colony. Thomas P. Moore and Berry A. Moore were carpenters and did well in contracting and building, and accumulated much property. They later carried on a bathing and laundry establishment. The Moores were grandsons of Honorable Thomas P. Moore who was a Congressman during Henry Clay's time, 1823-1829. Robert Johnson had a livery stable which accommodated 40 horses. He made, on the average, \$150 a month and owned property valued at \$1,200.³²

The Little Coney Colony located in Chautauqua County in 1881 consisted of about 56 families. The Kansas Freedmen's Relief Association assisted them in procuring the necessities of life. This Colony brought to a close the great migration and colony organization period.

³² The Commonwealth. April 3, 1880.

Prior to 1879 and 1880 colonies of Negroes had immigrated to Kansas and formed settlements. Some of the Exodusters were accommodated in these colonies at Singleton, Nicodemus, and Dunlap.

In 1865 Benjamin "Pap" Singleton, a mulatto who escaped from slavery into Canada, returned to Tennessee as poor as when he had left, except that he was a free man, and entered upon what he called his "mission". He made a trip to Kansas in 1873 as president of the Tennessee Real Estate and Homestead Association, which he had organized, and was so well pleased that he went back to Tennessee and gathered up 200 or 300 people whom he brought out and located in Cherokee county, not far from Baxter Springs. The settlement was called Singleton Colony. Those who came in 1873 did well. It was the success of this colony which drew the attention of the railroads to the Negroes as a possible source of revenue, and they began their extravagant campaign of advertising free lands in Kansas and of reducing the rates to these lands.

Singleton was assisted by the Tennessee newspapers which published his notices and addresses. Every year he brought a group of Negroes to Kansas. He associated with himself in this work Columbus Johnson who remained in Topeka and received the newly arrived Negroes and conducted them to their location, and by A. D. De Franz who organized the parties in Tennessee. Singleton traveled back and forth conducting the

colonists to Kansas.

The news of the successful Cherokee County Colony stimulated interest in Negro immigration which resulted in the organization of the colored people of Lexington, Kentucky in the summer of 1877 for the purpose of founding a colony on Government land in Kansas. The membership fee was \$5 which entitled one to any vacant lot on the town site. The colonists located in Graham County on the south fork of the Solomon river. They called their settlement Nicodemus, not for the Biblical character, but for the legendary Nicodemus who came to America on a slave ship and purchased his liberty. Of him the plantation Negroes in the South sang:

Nicodemus was a slave of African birth,
And was bought for a bag of gold
He was reckoned as a part of the salt of the earth,
And he died years ago, very old.

Nicodemus was a prophet at heart he was wise
For he told of the battles to come;
Now he trembled with fear when he rolled up his eyes
And he heeded the shake of his thumb.

As many of the colonists had served in the Union Army³³, they took soldier claims. There were five principal additions to the settlement, the groups varying from 25 to 350. One group was made up of Baptists led by Elder S. M. Lee of Georgetown, Kentucky; one group was from Clarksville, Tennessee, another led by their pastor from Mississippi. By 1879, the population was 700 scattered over an area 12 miles

³³ State Census. Kansas 1885. Graham County.

long and six miles wide on the extreme frontier. The people suffered severely the first winter and were forced to depend on charity. They received little aid from the white settlers of the county, who resented them so bitterly that Hill, who had helped Singleton, was blamed for bringing them in and was forced to flee. (Later Hill City was named after him). Men walked 30 miles to Ellis to get work; some got work on the railroads; others made a living gathering and selling horses. In April 1879, with not a dozen teams to 100 families, at a public meeting it was decided that no more charity was wanted and that the colony was self-supporting. At this time there were 25 houses and two churches, a Methodist and a Baptist, in the town - all crude dugouts. It was decided in the organization of Nicodemus that no saloons would be permitted on the colony lands.

Singleton's second large colony was located in Morris county, 16 miles from Emporia, at the town of Dunlap, May 18, 1878. Two hundred Negro families took up land in the Neosho Valley in The Kaw Reservation. They bought 7,500 acres of Government land at \$1.25 an acre, one-sixth in cash, the remainder to be paid in six years with six percent interest.

This settlement was on the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad and was surrounded by fertile prairie with plenty of water, wood, and building stone. Every colonist at Dunlap was required to own property, no renting was permitted. The

first crop was a disappointment but succeeding years brought prosperity.

Dunlap was selected as an educational center for the colored people of Kansas. The Freedmen's Aid Association of Dunlap maintained a Literary and Business Academy and there were two primary schools in the colony. The Presbyterian Church sent Rev. John M. Snodgrass as missionary to these people, and the Friends maintained an Industrial School. The town had two churches.

Singleton's circulars concerning this Colony were headlined:

Ho!

For

Dunlap Colony

Morris County, Kansas

The most prosperous colony in the state

7,500 acres of

Government land yet remains to be settled³⁴

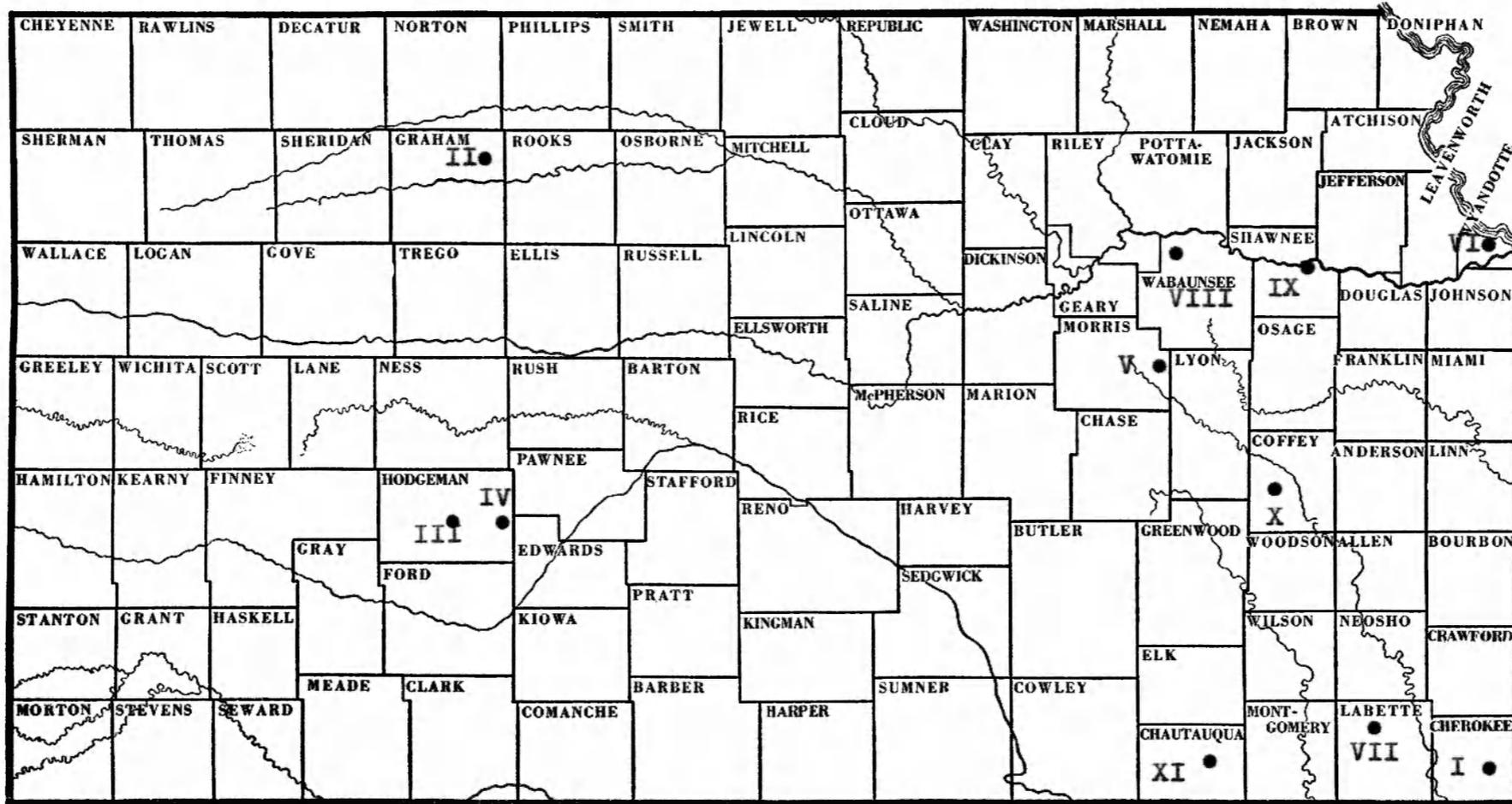
³⁴ Benjamin Singleton's Scrapbook. 1879. "Negro Exodus".

EXPLANATION OF PLATE I

Colonies and areas of cities in Kansas where "Exodusters" settled in 1879-1880

I	Singleton's Colony	- Cherokee	1873	- "Negro Hill"
II	Nicodemus Colony	- Graham	1877	- "demus"
III	Hodgeman Centre	- Hodgeman	1877	
IV	Morton City	- Hodgeman	1878	
V	Dunlap	- Morris	1878	
VI	Kansas City	- Wyandotte	1879-1880	("Mississippi town" or "Juniper Bottoms" "Rattlebone Hollow"
VII	Parsons	- Latette	1879	("Scuffletown" "Mudtown"
VIII	Wabaunsee Colony	- Wabaunsee	1879	
IX	Topeka	- Shawnee	1880	("Tennesseetown" "Redmonville" "Mudtown"
X	Burlington	- Coffey	1880	
XI	Little Coney	- Chautauqua	1881	

PLATE I



Kansas more than doubled its Negro population during this time. All counties, where there were Negro colonies, increased heavily in numbers by 1880. The Negro population in Shawnee county and Wyandotte county, only show increases in 1930. Fifty years after settlement the other counties had decreased in colored population.³⁵

The Freedmen's Relief Association scattered the immigrants in every direction according to the demands for employment. The success of the work is amply attested by the Census of 1880 which shows that the newcomers were widely distributed. While Topeka received perhaps 10,000 immigrants, the census shows a gain of only 3,175 and 4,627 in Shawnee county. Atchison, Wyandotte, and Bourbon counties slightly more than doubled their colored populations. Considerable numbers were shipped to counties containing Negro colonies - Cherokee, Graham, Hodgeman, Lyon, Morris, and Wabaunsee.³⁶

The final dissolution of the Kansas Freedmen's Relief Association was on April 15, 1881. John M. Brown was general superintendent.

³⁵

See Table 2, page 60.

³⁶ United States Census, 1880. Population in the United States, 1880. p. 390-391 (Table 5, counties); p. 418 (Table 6, cities). (See pages 61 and 62)

Page 60 missing in
original

Table 3. Kansas cities showing heaviest gains in Negro population during the exodus.

City	Negro population			Gain
	1870	1880		
Atchison	840	2787		1947
Fort Scott	460	1086		626
Lawrence	1412	1996		584
Ottawa	262	475		213
Parsons		678		678
Leavenworth	3023	3293		270
Emporia	105	546		441
Wichita		172		172
Topeka	473	3648		3175
Wyandotte	737	2095		1358
	<u>7,312</u>	<u>16,776</u>		<u>9,464</u>

Table 4. Kansas counties showing heaviest gains in Negro population.

County	Negro population		
	1870	1880	Gain
Atchison	1136	3410	2274
Barton		296	296
Bourbon	770	1716	946
Cherokee	134	1861	1727
Coffey	156	433	277
Cowley		221	221
Douglass	2352	3217	865
Franklin	364	923	559
Graham		487	487
Hodgeman		129	129
Johnson	438	899	461
Labette	94	2179	2085
Leavenworth	4284	4970	686
Lyon	126	1027	901
Marshall	8	231	223
Miami	466	868	402
Montgomery	65	684	619
Morris	72	532	460
Neosho	45	374	329
Osage	118	571	453
Riley	70	324	254
Saline	6	280	274
Sedgwick	9	268	259
Shawnee	729	5356	4627
Wabaunsee	85	646	561
Wyandotte	2120	4576	2456
	13,647	36,478	22,831

CONCLUSIONS

About 60,000 Negroes came to Kansas during the Exodus of 1879 and 1880, nearly 40,000 of whom were in destitute condition. About 30,000 settled in the country, some on rented land, and others on farms as laborers, leaving about 25,000 in cities, where, on account of crowded conditions and the hard weather, most of them greatly suffered and many died. Upon finding employment, however, most of them did well and became self-supporting within one year after their arrival. This was especially true of those in Topeka, Parsons, and Kansas City.

When Tennessee Town was settled, it was west of the city limits but the town has grown around it until now it is almost in the center of Topeka's west side. In this district live 2,000 Negroes, most of whom are descendants of the Tennesseans who came with the Exodus. Four churches, of which Shiloh Baptist is the largest, and one elementary school, the Buchanan School, serve the community. Two grocery stores and several lunch counters and soft drink stands conducted by Negroes are grouped around this center, while the oldest Negro establishment, Gaines and Sons Funeral Home, is located on Buchanan Street. Some disappointment has been expressed that the "darkies" do not sell their places and move on, but they do not seem inclined to do so.³⁷

³⁷ F. W. Giles, Thirty Years in Topeka, 1886. p. 370.

Two modern colonies have evolved out of Redmonville Colony, namely, "Sandtown" and "Jordantown". Sandtown is so called because it is on sandy land extending from North Topeka Avenue along the river bank. Much of the old Southern lore, folkways, and traditions are preserved in this area. Jordantown is less populous and is east of Kansas Avenue in North Topeka. Whites, Negroes, and Mexicans mingle in this section. "Mudtown" in South Topeka, the most densely populated of the Negro sections, has a population of more than 3,000. It takes its name from the muddy condition of the creek banks where the settlement was made.

"Mississippi Town", where many of the Exodusters were settled in Kansas City, Kansas, went out of existence in 1924 when it was condemned as an unsightly nuisance, and that part of the levee was transformed into Woods Weather Industrial District. "Rattlebone Hollow" is still extant although Negroes are not confined to that area. They have spread virtually all over the entire city forming a substantial civic group. Negro institutions include a University in Quindaro, a hospital, and the only Negro high school in the state (Sumner). There are many churches, four of which grew out of the Close Communion Baptist Church founded by Curtis Pollard, who came with the Exodusters. These churches are: King Solomon, Mount Zion, Pleasant Green, and Stranger's Rest.

Burlington has only three Negro families, seven people in all.

Nicodemus, the only surviving Negro colony outside the cities, was boomed in its early days as a "Negro Paradise". Now children play in the dusty streets before wooden or stone huts that contain but bare necessities - often wooden chairs and a table, a stove, and an iron bed. A tavern is the sole business place. Only churches have electric lights and the nearest telephones are at Bogue, six miles away. The residents are employed by Negro farmers of Graham County, and they go to Stockton or Hill City for supplies. The Nicodemus school house, near the southwest edge of town, a one-room frame structure painted white, was built in 1882 and is still in use. An annual celebration is held at Serigg's Grove on August Fourth when Negroes from all parts of the state as well as visitors from Oklahoma and Missouri join in a barbecue and watermelon feast under the cottonwoods. Square dances for the older residents are varied with modern steps for the younger set. Although most of the colonists have had to begin work at an early age, some have been graduated from college and a few have held county offices. Probably the most notable of these was E. P. McCabe³⁸, State Auditor 1885-1889, who later became a territorial official in Oklahoma. From a population of 500 in 1880, the town had declined to less than 200 by 1910.

³⁸ See Appendix.

The fundamental causes of the Negro Exodus from the "Egypt" of the southern states to the Kansas "Canaan" lay in the disturbed condition in the South - social, economic, and political. This would include:

1. Credit and Crop lien system.
2. "Forty acres and a mule delusion".
3. Freedmen's Bank failure.
4. Discouragement of the race from educational disappointments.
5. Fall of the Republican party in the South.
6. General restlessness.
7. Circulars sent out by Singleton and others.
8. Speculators in western lands, agents for railroads, and steamboat companies who were anxious for passenger traffic.

The movement produced great consternation among the planters of the Mississippi Valley who felt they would not be able to cultivate their broad acres unless the migration was speedily checked. Neither the calling of conventions in the South nor opposition from leading men like Fred Douglass, P. B. S. Pinchback, and Blanche K. Bruce had any effect.

The migrants journeyed by riverboat, a few by railroad, some by wagons, and a great number walked. Although relief boards were organized all over Kansas, the exodus was not well supported even by the Negroes because the refugees were destitute. This was unfortunate, but it must be remembered that it has been the poor and oppressed in all countries who have

emigrated. One never emigrates unless he seeks to improve his condition, to relieve himself and family of want, and to escape oppression and abuse.

The Halls of Congress rang with denunciations of the southern Egyptians whose hard hearts compelled the freedmen to leave the land of their birth for the new Northern Canaan but

it could not give one dollar for the benefit of the colored man who had spent two and one-half centuries in unpaid toil to enrich the South, from which he was forced to flee empty handed and almost naked. Verily consistency is a jewel!³⁹

If the Negroes felt that they were wards of the Republican party, they soon learned that they were wards of nobody, the favorite of no section, and that their success was a matter to be determined by their own efforts. The Republicans loved him as long as he was in Mississippi but in Kansas he was an undesirable citizen.

The larger percentage of the present Kansas Negro population came from the colonizing and migration of the Southern refugees. Thousands came to Kansas, but the masses of Negroes remained in the South in a condition not much better than their former state for the planters forgot their promises as soon as the Exodus ceased.

Time, education, and enforcement of the law are teaching the Negro his best place of residence whether North, East, South, or West.

³⁹ Booker T. Washington, A New Negro for a New Century.

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APPENDIX

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State of Kansas
Executive Dept.
Topeka, Kansas

Jan. 16, 1880
Horatio N. Rust
Chicago, Ill.

Dear Sir:

In answer to your letter of the 12th instant I have the honor to state that I am of the opinion that since last April 15,000 to 20,000 colored refugees have arrived in Kansas. Of this number not less than 12,000 were destitute. Their clothing was unsuited for this climate. The Freedman Relief Association organized here last spring has through its efforts secured employment for at least 10,000 of the 20,000. This has been accomplished by various societies organized in various portions of the state, some counties taking twenty families, some fifty and some high as one hundred and extending to them the opportunity of earning their own living. The association has established a small colony in Wabaunsee county, about fifty miles west of here. This colony, taking everything into consideration is getting along well, and I think, after say, July next, will be entirely self-supporting.

Barracks have been built near the city of Topeka that furnish reasonably comfortable quarters for about two

hundred persons but during the past six weeks the number crowded into these barracks would average perhaps four hundred persons while some have lived in tents with very scanty bed clothing and but little fuel. The result has been that the feet of quite a large number were frozen during cold weather about the time of holidays. These poor unfortunate creatures never murmur. They come to us as friends fleeing from their enemies. All unite in substantially the same story of cruelty, outrage and wrong heaped upon them by their oppressors in the South, the details of which I shall not undertake to relate to you now. Suffice it to say that during the past few years, they have been subjected to a worse condition of things than ever existed in the South before; the treatment extended to them being a disgrace to the civilization in which we live.

The Relief Association is now needing timber to build additional barracks and to finish houses that are already partly constructed by the Freedmen. The average number being fed by the association now is perhaps three hundred, this as you are aware, costs money. In order to secure homes and an opportunity for these people to earn their own living, they are distributed in almost every direction, the greater portion of their different localities through Kansas, wherever locations can be secured for them, while a few are sent to Iowa and Nebraska.

In making this distribution it becomes necessary to pay railroad fares which are a great deal of money hence you will see that money is necessarily required to carry on this work.

I have no means right at hand stating to you the exact sum that has been expended by the Relief Association.

I'm inclined to the opinion, however, that it will not vary far from \$20,000 during the last 8 or 9 months. At times the association has been almost destitute of funds, in fact I believe at one time, about ten days ago there was only 10¢ left in the treasury; but we were not disappointed. Just now, owing to the large numbers that are coming in every week and the corresponding large expenditures, there is but little money in the treasury, yet we have faith that it will come as it is needed.

Having in mind solely that which is for the best interest of these poor people, you will pardon me if I suggest to you, and through you to the philanthropic friends in your city, that in my opinion, the great state of Illinois that furnished to this country A. Lincoln who issued the Proclamation that set these people free, and Grant at the head of the great army that enforced it, could do no greater honor to herself and her martyred heroes than to open wide her doors to the unfortunate refugees and furnish homes for 50,000 of them where they could earn their living; instead of sending supplies to

them to a state that is already overcrowded with them to such an extent as to render it almost impossible to secure labor for them, so that they may be self-supporting.

I beg of you not to understand me as intimating that Kansas in any sense is complaining. Our people know what it is to struggle for freedom. They know its cost and we shall never turn our backs upon any law-abiding human being who is willing to put forth an earnest effort to make an honest living. I only make these suggestions to the people of your state for the benefit of the colored people, as you are of course aware that Kansas being yet in her infancy can absorb only a limited number of this unfortunate race who depend upon their labor for support. Whenever the labor market is overslacked, of course means of their support is cut short, and they are thrown back upon the charities of the people. We have here today as many as can secure employment, yet they have at times come to Kansas at the rate of at least 250 a week. They seem to think that this is the promised land. Of course it is difficult to tell what will be the result; but one thing may rest assured, that, God helping us, we shall ever work earnestly and faithfully to do our whole duty. The refugees from the South would gladly go to Illinois if they could be made to feel that your people were not opposed to their coming.

Oh, for a Lincoln or a governor to step to the front in your grand state and speak out boldly upon these questions, and arouse your people to a realization of the magnitude and importance of this movement on the part of the blacks. I assume that the present year will bring at least 100,000 of them northward. They must find a landing place somewhere. The movement will test the boasted love of liberty in the North. It will try the spinal column of politicians; it will separate the doubting Thomas from the brave Joshuas; it will ask the question whether any class of human beings are to have their liberties crushed out, in any portion of the country.

Kansas has never done anything to encourage the colored people to leave the South. We have simply, in dealing with this question, done as we believed God would have us do. It is not a political question in which is involved human liberty and the people of the North through whose bravery and devotion to liberty the colored people were set free, should not forget that these same colored people have always been true and loyal to our government, that they were the friends of our soldiers in the darkest days of the rebellion, and now, in their hour of distress we should stand by them in every laudable effort that they shall make to accomplish a second, and I hope their final emancipation. They do not come North because they prefer the Northern to the Southern states but they are compelled

to come, for the reason that they no longer feel secure in either life or property; or any reasonable degree of liberty. The white people of the South could put a stop to this exodus at once by simply extending to the blacks the same protection to life and property and equal rights before the law that the whites enjoy. But until these rights and privileges are guaranteed and enjoyed by the blacks, the exodus will continue, the refugees alleging that they would rather perish in their efforts to secure a lodgement in the North than to longer remain and suffer as they have heretofore in the South.

When the people of your state desire to know just what these poor people are in need of, they will find no difficulty in arriving at an answer, by thinking for a moment just what white people would require who are destitute of food, thinly clad, in a cold climate and without money, are among strangers.

I have not had time to go to the Headquarters of the Relief Association and get from the Secretary of the Association a statement of the receipts and expenditures, but I can assure you the Secretary will gladly furnish you such a statement, if you desire it.

The business of the association is managed with a view of the strictest economy the greater portion of the labor being performed, without money and without price. I feel assured that the works in the hands of true Christians

who have no other aim or object in view than to perform what they deem to be simple duty to a very much abused people.

I am very glad to be able to state that the refugees who have come to Kansas are sober, industrious, and well behaved and gladly experience the opportunity of making their own living when it is offered.

Very truly your friend,

John P. St. John

Benjamin Singleton

"Pap" Singleton did not live in either of his colonies but moved to Topeka. All his savings were spent in his schemes and by 1881, in his 73rd year, he was in want. He proceeded to announce through the Topeka newspapers that he would accept donations if sent to a certain warehouse, presumably the Kansas Freedmen's Relief Association Warehouse in North Topeka. The donations received kept him from want for a time.

On August 15, 1881, the Negroes of St. Louis paid tribute to "Pap" by celebrating his birthday at the Fair Grounds. Two thousand musicians and singers assembled. Invitations to leading orators from distant states were sent out.

A year later the Negroes at Topeka planned a party for Singleton. The celebration was held at Harzell Park near the city limits and five cents admission was charged. "Pap" at once announced that all who desired to assist him send donations to Dawdings Packing House or to Sim Watts, corner of 4th and Kansas Avenue.

He invited the higher government officials at Washington to attend his party, some of whom sent polite regrets which he had printed in the local newspapers. He made out a programme and put the Kansas notables down for speeches. They did not come, but the party was a success. One hundred guns were fired at sunrise and one hundred more at sunset; "John Brown's Body" was sung, everybody had a good time, and "Pap" was made \$50 richer. The next year on his birthday a barbecue netted him \$274.25. He terminated a successful life at Topeka in 1892 at the age of 82.⁴⁰

Interview with Paul Jones
August, 1941

Mr. Paul Jones left Chicago in 1880 for Kansas City, Missouri. He came to Topeka when John P. St. John was Governor.

"An auxilliary organization for Relief for Refugees was formed in Chicago to cooperate with the National Organization.

40

Albion W. Small, American Journal of Sociology. July 1909-May 1910.

I was secretary of the local group. We acquired a car load of clothing and food for the refugees as well as \$1,500 in money, for which I had a certified check and a bill of lading.

"I knew E. P. McCabe, State Auditor. I told him I had the bill of lading and the certified check so he introduced me to Gov. St. John. The Governor received the certified check and bill of lading which he turned over to John Brown, the leading Negro of the city. I then returned to Chicago.

They afterwards charged John Brown with using some of the funds received in purchase of a farm for himself.

Many of the colored people during the Exodus located in Kansas City, Kansas where they could get work in the packing houses. A number of them went to Graham county and acquired land there; with the opening of Oklahoma many went there. Some bought homes in Kansas City, Kansas.

McCabe, who came here to grow up with the country, was broke and used money belonging to a seamstress in Chicago whom he married later. He was Indian color with straight black hair, was dressy and a good talker. He had fine opportunities, made plenty money, and was a high liver.

Hall, who came out here with him, didn't like Kansas - it was too much like a desert for him.

McCabe moved to Nicodemus and was later elected State Auditor. This election swelled his head, so he didn't pay much attention to colored people.

I met him and his wife, who had on a \$500 fur coat, at the

Union Station in Kansas City, Missouri on their way to California to spend the winter. He said, if Harrison was elected he would go to Washington. McCabe showed me a certified check for \$10,000; he also owned three farms.

Harrison was elected; he went to Washington. He tried to be a gambler and was robbed of all his money. He then went to Oklahoma seeking a political job but was unsuccessful.

When McCabe died on a poor farm in Chicago, his body was shipped to Topeka under a false name. The undertaker refused to bury him until his wife came. She admitted it was her husband saying that she was ashamed for people to know in Topeka. His real name was used.

Corvine Patterson located in Kansas City, Kansas June 1868. He was a great Republican politician and a friend of the refugees. April 1879 he was elected constable as a result of the work he had done during the Exodus.

He committed suicide December 31, 1913."

Paul Jones was born at Culpepper, Va. At nine years of age he went to Chicago, Illinois. Attended Northwestern University and received the degree of Philosophy of Law. He was admitted to the bar in Mt. Vernon, Illinois and practiced in Missouri in 1883. He lives at 1723 Fillmore, Topeka, Kansas and was 85 years old at the time of this interview, August, 1941.

Interview with John W. Edmonds
August, 1941

"We came to Kansas in 1880 from Clarksville, Tennessee. We came part of the way on the steamboat Bell of Memphis. Those were hard times.

We left Tennessee because everyone said we could get one-hundred sixty acres of land free and become well-to-do in Kansas.

There were about 150 of us on the boat Anderson on the Cummings River. We took the Bell of Memphis at Cairo, Illinois to St. Louis where many were robbed by Isaiah Montgomery to whom we gave money to get from St. Louis to Topeka. He said the money ran out in Kansas City.

We had brought horses and wagons on the boat so they told us to hitch them and go to Topeka. The old people, women, and children rode on the train. The men and boys walked from Kansas City to Topeka.

This was in January. There was a little snow on the ground, but it wasn't very cold. We left Kansas City Tuesday, and arrived in Topeka, Saturday. There were two wagon loads of us.

When we arrived in Topeka we went to the barracks where we ate and slept, free. John Brown was in charge and was very good to us.

There were many deaths. I lost my sister who had caught cold.

The barracks were full. My mother, father, and five children stayed there until spring when we moved to North Topeka where we rented. I was fourteen. I was employed at the water works, but later helped build the north and south wings of the Capitol.

I am now seventy-five years old. I have been shipping clerk for Kansas State Printing Office fifty-seven years, but will retire December 31, 1940."

Mr. John W. Edmonds lives at 1320 Van Buren, Topeka, Kansas.

Letter Concerning the Nicodemus Negro Colony

Sept. 6th 1937
Pittsburg, Pa.
829 Bryn Maur Rd.

Mrs. Kathryne Henri
Bogue, Kansas

My Dear Madam:

I have learned through you, that our group of people, who are resident in Graham County, Ks. plan to celebrate -- on Friday Sept. 16th, the sixtieth (60) anniversary of the founding of the town of Nicodemus on its present site -- not far from the western line of Rooks County. -----

It all came about this way. I had arrived in Leavenworth that morning in April (1878) from Chicago intending to proceed to Hodgeman County, Kansas where a colony of people had

recently established a settlement, into which I proposed to cast my lot and become part of it. ----- Mr. Edward Preston McCabe had joined us on the colony plan but I preceded him west several days ----- but my instincts as a newspaper man prompted me to unearth Mr. John W. Niles the Colony Agent, learn from him their (Nisodemus) story up to then and to proffer him any service I could perform then and there on securing the custody of the supplies, and starting them out to the needy people.-----

Mr. Niles was so well pleased with the assistance I had rendered him, that, right off the bat, he made me a proposition to join in with his colony, and help him and its officials to make it a success. I accepted this offer both for myself and Mr. McCabe who arrived at Leavenworth several days later, and ratified my acceptance. -----

----- There was soon a big blaze of 'cow chips' on which the cooking was done; and right there and then Mr. McCabe who had been telling everybody how hungry and famished he was, lost his appetite. The nearness of 'cow chips' to the food was too much for his aesthetic "city raised" stomach, and while the rest of the party gorged ourselves he starved in silence; but he later became an adept 'cow chip' cook himself.

Setting out early the next morning we * the school moved just across the Rocks County line, about right (8) miles south by east of the river crossing into "demus", -----

* illegible

----- That was "Nicodemus". I confess to feeling disappointed. I had never seen a "Dug-lur" nor a "Sod-up" and I had not the least conception of how either of them looked.-----

I was assigned to the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Scott, and Mr. McCabe to the Backner's both of whom had homes along the main street opposite the post office and Fletcher's General - generally out of everything-store. -----

From that day things began to get busy for me and for "Demus" and life is too short to tell it all in one letter -----

Regards to everybody

Abram T. Hall, Sr.,

(Folder - Hall Abram T.

Wife first woman in Nicodemus)