

Black Exodus settles State of Kansas

by Martha Anderson

Tired of the deceit and perfidy practiced against them, Negroes in every state in the Union began a quiet migration westward after the Civil War. Whites were not so aware of this quiet exit until amnesty was granted to the once rich confederate landholders, who returned to their plantations and began looking around for laborers only to find "old John" and "Sue" long gone along with all the others they had dogged around so long. Blacks from areas all along the Mississippi left by the hundreds in any kind of conveyance they could rig together and those that had none walked. Whites got their dogs, guns and boats, blocked rivers and tried to stop them. But still they came. Moving ever westward into Oklahoma where friendly Indians helped them; Missouri, Kansas, and North and South Dakota. Some younger and more intrepid struck out for Mexico.

By 1879 the state of Kansas bore the brunt of this influx of migrants. Through the inspiration of one Benjamin Singleton, an ex-slave who had gone to Canada and returned to form the Tennessee Real Estate and Homestead Association, in 1869.

Prior to the forming of the Association many appeals had been made by a committee composed of five hundred Blacks to the Senate and Congress. They first asked, "to help us out of our distress, or protect us in our rights and privileges." This was ignored. The second appeal asked for land in the West or an appropriation of money which would enable them to sail for Liberia. This was refused. The Committee then announced the intention to seek the help of another government which would allow them to live under its flag. Still there was no attempt by Congress to communicate with the Committee. The plight of the Blacks was dubbed "a childish whim."

Disappointed by the refusal of Congress for any consideration Benjamin Singleton and Henry Adams, with the aid of a white railroad man, W.R. Hill, began organizing an exodus that shook Kansas. An estimated 20,000 migrated into the state. Several years prior to the exodus scouts had been assigned to check various likely locations. They had brought back favorable reports on some locations, so now the Blacks had some idea of where they were going and what the country was like. Thirty percent of the migrants

came from Mississippi, twenty percent from Texas, and fifteen percent from Tennessee. Some of the Exodus leaders were beaten or driven out of town. One Kansas settler who came back to get his family was seized by whites who cut off both his hands and threw them in his wife's lap, saying "Now go to Kansas."

But, Benjamin Singleton and Henry Adams had done their work well. Thousands of Blacks were now alerted and they kept coming. Congress woke up in December of 1879, and ordered a full scale Congressional investigation in an attempt to prove it was a Republican plot to move Black voters into areas where they would and could vote Republican. But, when the Senate Committees composed practically entirely of Democrats got to the bottom of the matter that learned it was the desire for freedom and equal rights that caused the exodus, and Exodus leaders sent work back by the Black man Congress had sent to forestall them that "they would rather starve on the prairie than go back South and accept the oppression and degradation heaped upon them." Benjamin Singleton, instigator of the Exodus, did not run or hide. Called to Washington, he candidly told the Senators: "I am the whole cause of the Kansas migration."

So many migrants arriving put a great strain on Kansas, but sympathetic whites rallied to aid them in many instances. Governor St. John helped form a Freeman's Relief Bureau. Kansas residents collected over \$100,000 dollars for their aid. Meat packer Philip P. Armour, after personally touring the area around Wyandotte, Kansas, returned to Chicago and collected \$25,000 dollars from industrial friends as well as providing from his packing plant.

The people fanned out throughout the state. Colonies were created at Baxt-Springs, which became known as the Singleton Colony; a group from Lexington, Kentucky located in Graham County in the Solomon Valley; another group from Kentucky formed a settlement known as Morton City. Singleton formed a settlement in Morris County at Dunlap. Others were formed at Wabunsee and Chataugua. Dogs, river blockades and murder had not stopped Blacks in their quest for freedom.

In several years time, through hard work and thrift, Blacks managed to purchase twenty thousand acres of land and to build 300 houses within the state. But, in those first years, most of the work



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involved spades and grubbing hoes. There were only one or two horses to a settlement. Many had spent their last dollar for railway fare and had no money to buy lumber for houses, so they lived in dugout sand burrows. For fuel they burned buffalo chips and sunflower stalks. It was a hard first year. Many whites blamed the white railroad representative, W.R. Hill, for the misery and plight of the Exodusers those first years. Later, they relented and named a city for him which today is known as Hill City, a very thriving town.

The most outstanding community established by the Exodusers was at Nicodemus, Kansas, in the Solomon Valley. Named after a slave who came to

America on the second slave ship, bought his freedom and became affluent, the little community garnered the respect of many Kansas citizens. It was one of the few settlements undisturbed by internal dissension. It had its own Masonic Lodge and one of the best bands in Northwest Kansas, an academy, and some years later earned the distinction of furnishing the state with its first Black auditor, E.P. McCabe.

After the people of Nicodemus became economically independent they broke up their colony organization and with a high celebration thanked the people who had aided them through those first bleak, dark days and the drought years of 1883.

Basketball tourny scheduled

A star-packed tournament of Northeast area basketball players will be featured this weekend at the Cascade Community College Gymnasium. The first game is scheduled to begin at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, April 30, 1976 with sizzling competition to run through until the Championship game, scheduled Sunday, May 2, 1976 at 4:30 p.m.

Local teams vying for first place trophy honors include Dr. Bernard's, Northeast Youth Service Center, University of Portland and the Net Burners. Out of town competition will feature such names as John Brisker, Emmett Bryant, Larry Jackson, Cla-

rence Ramsey and Larry Pounds. Out of town competitors hail from Seattle and Yakima, Washington.

Cascade Community College Gymnasium is located at the corner of North Albina and Killingsworth Streets. Admission is 50c for high school students and \$1 for adults. For more information, contact Willie Stoudamire at 282-0452.

Oregon claims world record

Two University of Oregon students are entering a claim for a world record in the three-legged walk.

Delta Upsilon fraternity brothers Joe Croft, a University of Oregon sophomore from Woburn, Massachusetts, and Arnold Beyer, a junior from Woodburn, joined in a three-legged tandem and walked 20 miles Saturday (April 24th) in four hours, 25 minutes as participants in the annual Eugene March of Dimes Walkathon.

The time, they claim betters a record set last year by Croft and Steve Hauck, a University of Oregon junior from Ashland.

Croft and Beyer plan to submit their accomplishment to the Guinness Book of World Records.

Cancer Fund reports gain

More than \$103,000 is reported "in the bank" from the American Cancer Society's Residential Division by Crusade Chairmen Dave Gilley of Clackamas County, George Bach of Multnomah County, and Bill Mapleshorpe of Washington County. Multnomah County Residential Crusade Chairman Doris (Mrs. Donald) Schwab reports that the three counties are working to have all the house-to-house money and materials turned in by the last day of April. "More than 90 percent of our kits are already accounted for," Mrs. Schwab stated, "and the volunteer leaders are urging every worker in the area to complete their calls and turn in all funds and supplies before the 1st of May."

Home Maintenance discussed

The Portland Metropolitan Steering Committee - EOA (Incorporated) has scheduled three Home Maintenance and Financing Seminars for the second week in May, 1976. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, local financial institutions and building industries, as well as other concerned agencies, will participate in the seminars.

All residents within the target areas of Southeast, Northwest and North Portland, as well as other interested persons within the Portland area, are invited to participate in the seminars, free. Follow-up services will be provided to help all participants after the seminars.

For those residents who have any difficulty, such as transportation, baby-sitting, etc., in attending the seminars,

they may apply for assistance at the PMSO Housing Program, 220 Northeast Russell Street, Phone: 288-8391.

The Seminars are scheduled as follows: 1. May 10 and 11, 1976 - 7:30 to 10:00 p.m., University Park United Methodist Church, 4791 N. Lombard Street. 2. May 12 and 13, 1976 - 7:30 to 10:00 p.m., PMSO Building, 220 N.E. Russell Street. 3. May 14 and 17, 1976 - 7:30 to 10:00 p.m., St. Stephens Church, 1112 S.E. 41st Avenue.

The subjects to be discussed will include: electric, plumbing, carpentry, painting, roofing, siding, insulation and other home repairs; along with Federal, State, local, and other housing programs.

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