

Black History Notebook

The Exodusters

Exodusters, Westward Ho!
"Where we goin', Momma?"
"We're moving out West; to Kansas, maybe."
"Why do we have to go there?"
"Cause things will be better there. Things will be better..."

The time? After the Civil War. The destination? The Prairie territory - that land beyond the Mississippi acquired in the Louisiana Purchase - Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska and the Dakotas.

During the period just after the Civil War the Black-American experience reached an all-time low.

In response to the faltering Reconstruction, Blacks gathered their belongings, took their fate in their own hands and joined the migration westward.

In the 1870s there began to appear posters and broadsides addressed "To the Colored People of the United States of America." These notices extolled the "great advantages...for the great mass of people of small means" just waiting to be seized in the West. Such an attractive invitation got attention. Soon thousands would find such a bid too good to refuse.

By 1879, what had begun as a trickle became a flood. This great movement, a pioneer Black effort at self-improvement - an attempt to pull themselves up by their bootstraps - seemed almost Biblical. The analogy to the Children of Israel's exodus from Egypt was so striking that the migrants hitting the dusty trail came to be called "Exodusters."

Just as the Children of Israel had their Moses, the Exodusters had Benjamin "Pap" Singleton, remembered as one of the principal leaders of the first phase of the migration. After the War, Singleton concluded that the open lands of Kansas provided a good chance for Blacks to put down stable economic roots west of the Mississippi. Forming a Real Estate and Homestead Association, he then toured the South, speaking before Black audiences and encouraging them to consider moving west.

Hope is a very salable commodity; and Singleton was apparently a very good salesman. Between 1873 and 1878, largely through the efforts of Singleton and his associates, Blacks from the South streamed into Kansas and the territories of the Prairie. Black settlements, like the town of Nicodemus, Kansas, began to dot the western landscape. This first wave of Black migration was, it seems, well organized for it proceeded without significant mishap.

In 1879, however, the floodgates opened. This torrent of Exodusters, less organized and lacking funds, encountered some formidable barriers. Several towns along the way were inhospitable, sometimes hostile, refusing the migrants food or rest within their boundaries. For a time, even passage across the Mississippi was denied them when armed agents of Southern landowners threatened to sink riverboats transporting Blacks.

Still the migrants persisted and in three years upwards of 40,000 Exodusters made their way west.

PIONEER HOMEMAKING
Most settlers, White or Black, had similar experiences taming the Wild West. Getting there was half the battle. Because these pilgrims would in a sense be starting a completely new life, they took with them whatever they felt would ease their adjustment to strange surroundings. Not only did they pack as much food as they could manage, but, like Noah stocking his Ark, they carried live stock with them to be sure there would be eggs, milk, cream and butter, and replenishments for meat supplies. Seeds of various kinds were brought along, too, so that familiar and favored crops might be planted.



The Shores family settled near Westerville in Custer County, Nebraska, circa 1887. [Photo: Nebraska State Historical Society, Solomon D. Butcher Collection.]

Ho for Kansas!

Brethren, Friends, & Fellow Citizens:

I feel thankful to inform you that the

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15th of April, 1878.

In pursuit of Homes in the Southwestern Lands of America, at Transportation Rates, cheaper than ever was known before.

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Benj. Singleton, better known as old Pap,

NO. 5 NORTH FRONT STREET.

Beware of Speculators and Adventurers, as it is a dangerous thing to fall in their hands.

Nashville, Tenn., March 18, 1878.

In the 1870s, the Real Estate and Homestead Association

toured the South, encouraging Blacks to consider moving to

Kansas and the territories of the Prairie. Nearly 40,000

Exodusters made their way West. [Photo: Kansas State

Historical Society]

Migration, however, was rarely post-

poned because some item was missing

from what was the optimal supply of

essentials. In the *Nebraska Pioneer*

Cookbook, author Kay Graber says:

Almost universally, these newcomers

started out with nothing but hope and

hard work, building even their houses or

dugouts - literally from the land they

lived on. (Sod houses - so called because

they were constructed from large slabs of

the thick, heavy textured and clay-laden

prairie soil - may still be seen in the

region today, although they were origi-

nally intended as temporary shelters.)

The pioneers need to improvise did not

end with housing. The editors of the

sumptuous *Better Homes and Gardens*

ed the University of Oregon and William-

ette College of Law. Mr. Gevurtz was

formerly Director of Legal Aid Service in

Portland and presently is in private law

practice. He has been on the Board of

Trustees of the Waverly Children's home

for the past five years.

Planned Parenthood Federation of

America is the national, voluntary family

planning organization whose community-

based affiliates in 43 states and the

District of Columbia provided medically-

supervised family planning services to

more than one million persons in 1976.



"Pap" Singleton - [Photo: Kansas State Historical Society]

Heritage Cook Book state:

"Pioneer cooking meant working with limited ingredients and a lot of imagination. For example, when sugar was scarce and even sorghum molasses was in short supply, pumpkin or watermelon juice boiled to a syrup might be substituted. During a blackbird plague, black-birds took a prominent place on the menu. A Nebraska farm paper...lists thirty-three different recipes using corn. As for coffee, it might be made of parched barley, okra seeds, carrots, or cornmeal and molasses that had been fried, powdered and semi-burned; but it seldom had anything to do with coffee bean. Most households owned a coffee grinder, but it

was used to grind corn."

During summer, pioneer living was relatively easy, "many healthful foods could be found growing wild." On the other hand, during winter, "there were a few root vegetables, like potatoes or turnips. The cow, a victim of malnutrition during the winter months, usually went dry, so there was no milk then..."

The pioneer cooks' achievements were even greater when it is realized that they had so few cooking utensils. In fact, from the pioneer literature it would seem that the principal utensil was the Dutch oven. That versatile vessel was taxed to perform as a fry pan, stew pot, bread, cake, or pie pan. Small wonder that one-dish meals were frequent.



APPLE SPICE CAKE

Exodusters recipes

Kraft Kitchens has prepared recipes that bring memories of pioneer days on the plains.

Prominent among these recipes are dishes featuring mill-ground corn, which is significant in the history and economy of the Plains area - and indeed of the U.S.

Corn, which ranks with wheat, rice and potatoes among leading world crops, is America's most valuable crop. And, as far as can be determined, it is a grain native to America. A remarkably versatile food, corn has many uses, ranging from baked goods to whiskey. It is a major "feed" for domestic livestock; and among non-food products derived from corn are such varied substances as anti-freeze, ether, soaps, adhesives, paints and solvents.

The recipe suggestions also pay tribute to the venerable iron skillets and covered pots that serve pioneer cooks so manfully. These reliable friends to the cooks were the medium not only of fried or boiled dishes, but in the absence of stoves with ovens they also served to produce tasty baked or roasted dishes.

1/2 teaspoon baking powder
2 cups finely chopped peeled apples
1/2 cup chopped nuts
1 8-oz. container Philadelphia Brand Whipped cream cheese

Combine flour, sugar, margarine, milk, eggs, salt, cinnamon, vanilla, soda and baking powder; mix well. Stir in apples and nuts. Pour into greased 13 x 9-inch baking pan. Bake at 350°, 40 to 45 minutes or until wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cut into squares, serve warm with cream cheese.

Variation: Spoon Kraft caramel topping over warm cake squares topped with cream cheese.

CHEDDAR SKILLET BISCUITS

1 2/3 cups flour
1 tablespoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
3 tablespoons Parkay margarine
1 cup (4 oz.) shredded Kraft sharp natural cheddar cheese
1/2 cup milk

Combine dry ingredients; cut in margarine until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Stir in cheese. Add milk, mixing just until moistened. On lightly floured surface, knead dough ten times. Roll out to 1/2-inch thickness; cut with floured 2-inch cutter. Place in well-greased 12-inch skillet. Cover; cook over medium heat 15 minutes or until underside is golden brown. Turn. Cover; continue cooking 5 minutes. Serve warm. Approximately 1 dozen.

APPLE SPICE CAKE

2 cups flour
1 1/3 cups packed brown sugar
1/2 cup Squeeze Parkay margarine
1/2 cup milk
2 eggs
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon vanilla
3/4 teaspoon soda

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Gevertz joins national broad

ATLANTA, OCT. 15 - Mr. Ronald I. Gevurtz, of Portland, Oregon, has been elected to the national board of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. His election was announced by Henrietta H. Marshall, Chairman and Acting President, following the family planning organization's annual membership meeting here last week.

Mr. Gevurtz has been a member of the Board of Planned Parenthood of Portland for five years, serving as President in 1976 through 1977. A lawyer, he attend-

ed the University of Oregon and Williamette College of Law. Mr. Gevurtz was formerly Director of Legal Aid Service in Portland and presently is in private law practice. He has been on the Board of Trustees of the Waverly Children's home for the past five years.

Planned Parenthood Federation of America is the national, voluntary family planning organization whose community-based affiliates in 43 states and the District of Columbia provided medically-supervised family planning services to more than one million persons in 1976.

Tax statements mailed

Property owners in Multnomah County who haven't received their property tax statements should contact the tax collector's office, says Bruce G. Lawson, Director of the Multnomah County Division of Assessment and Taxation.

If they don't, Lawson says, they may not receive a copy of their tax statement in time to take advantage of the three percent early payment discount. The discount is open to anyone who pays their taxes in full on or before November 15th.

It is up to the owner of the property at the time taxes are due to pay the tax -

whether or not they have received a tax statement. Statements are mailed to persons listed on the official records.

Lawson says new owners, and anyone else not receiving a tax statement, should write or call the tax collector's office and request that a copy of the statement be sent to them.

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