***CHAPTER FIVE: Post Civil War Migration and Settlement***

*The western black migration is assessed in this chapter. The first vignette,* ***A Black Woman on the Montana Frontier*** *describes the remarkable business success of a freedwoman in Virginia City, Montana.* ***The Founding of Nicodemus****,* ***Willianna Hickman Remembers Nicodemus*** *and* ***Nicodemus in the 1990s*** *profile the most famous black settlement in Kansas. The sudden mass migration of thousands of blacks to Kansas called "The Exodus of 1879" is profiled in* ***Black Texans and the Kansas Exodus*** *and* ***Address to the Colored People of Texas****. Perhaps the most famous black settler in the state is described in* ***George Washington Carver in Kansas****.* ***Race Relations in Late 19th Century West Kansas*** *shows one consequence of black settlement in the state. The 1890s migration to Oklahoma and Indian Territories is profiled in the vignettes,* ***Black Dreams of Oklahoma****,* ***The Battle for the Cimarron Valley****, and* ***Edwin P. McCabe and Langston City, Oklahoma Territory****. On all-black towns in the West see* ***Booker T. Washington Describes Boley, Indian Territory****, and* ***Allensworth, California****.* ***To Emigrate to Nebraska****,* ***Homesteading on the Plains: The Ava Speese Day Story*** *and* ***Black Colonies in Colorado*** *show other efforts to settle the High Plains. In* ***Virginia City and Dodge City: 19th Century Black Urban Outposts*** *we glimpse African American life in two of the most famous western towns while* ***Kate D. Chapman Describes Blacks in Yankton, D.T.*** *(Dakota Territory) profiles black life in a not so famous western town. The vignettes* ***African Americans in a Frontier Town*** *and* ***The Demise of Lawlessness at Fort Griffin*** *profile the small black community in a West Texas frontier community. Three vignettes,* ***Jim Kelly and Print Olive****,* ***D.W. "80 John" Wallace: A Black Cattle Rancher****, and* ***End of the Trail: Black Cowboys in Dodge City*** *depict the black cattle drover.* ***Black Cowboys and the Pendleton Roundup*** *shows African American participation in the founding of the most famous Oregon Rodeo.* ***Black Businesses: Arizona Territory*** *suggests significant African American entrepreneurial activity even when the black population is small. Finally, the North Dakota childhood of Era Bell Thompson, a noted photojournalist for Ebony Magazine is profiled in* ***A North Dakota Daughter****.*

*Terms For Week Five*:

*Homestead Act, 1862*

*Sarah Gammon Bickford*

*Ava Speese Day*

*Benjamin "Pap" Singleton*

*Nicodemus*

*Founders of Nicodemus*

*W. R. Hill*

*W. H. Smith*

*Reverend Simon P. Roundtree*

*Benjamin Carr*

*Jerry Allsap*

*Jeff Lenze*

*William Edmonds*

*The Great Exodus of 1879*

*Edwin and Sarah McCabe*

*Langston City*

*Cherokee Strip*

*Cimarron Valley*

*Boley, Indian Territory*

*Deer Lake*

*Kinkaid Homestead Act, 1904*

*Oscar Michaeux*

*Kate D. Chapman*

*James Edwards and Robert Ball Anderson*

*Jim Kelly*

*Daniel Webster "80 John" Wallace*

*Pendleton Roundup*

*George Fletcher*

**A BLACK WOMAN ON THE MONTANA FRONTIER**

*From 1888 to 1931 Sarah Gammon Bickford owned and managed the Virginia City Water Company, that serviced Virginia City, Montana. A partial account of her remarkable life provided by her daughter Mabel Bickford Jenkins, is reprinted below.*

Sarah Gammon arrived in Virginia City, Montana, a rough, frontier gold mining community in 1871. Born a slave on December 25, 1855 in North Carolina, Sarah was raised by an aunt in Knoxville, Tennessee after her parents were sold away. When she was fifteen Sarah and her Aunt accompanied the family of Judge William Murphy overland from Tennessee to Virginia City, where Murphy, a Confederate veteran, was slated to serve as a Magistrate.

Sarah first worked as a chambermaid in one of the hotels and later married William Brown, one of the gold miners. Three children were born to the marriage but only one, Eva, survived. William Brown died in 1877 and three years later Sarah married Stephen Bickford, a white miner from Maine who was twenty years older than the widow.

In 1888 the Bickfords bought two-thirds of the Virginia City water system which brought water drinking down from surrounding mountains through wooden logs. The Bickfords substituted iron pipes for the wooden logs which allowed indoor plumbing. Later they added hydrants along the street.

Sarah Bickford, acknowledged as Virginia City's first "career woman" managed the books for the system, billing customers and controlling expenditures. She also ran the Bickford farm on the eastern edge of the city. There with her four children by Stephen Bickford, she cultivated vegetables and poultry including ducks which were sold to the small colony of Chinese miners in Virginia City.

When Stephen Bickford died in 1900 Sarah became the sole owner and manager of the water plant and farm. Although she was aided by her oldest daughter, Virginia, she nevertheless enrolled in a Business Management course from a correspondence school in Scranton, Pennsylvania, to become more proficient in the affairs of her business. Feeling more confident in her ability to manage the company she bought out the other third of the water business from Harry Cohn, making her the sole owner. Eventually she acquired additional springs to meet the demands of the growing town. She also became its first philanthropist, purchasing and maintaining at her own expense, several historic buildings in Virginia City. She moved her office into the Hangman's Building, the largest and oldest building in town, made famous by Virginia City's Vigilantes who in 1870 hanged five outlaws from a beam of the building while it was under construction. The office was the home of what Bickford now called the Virginia City Water Company. Sarah Gammon Bickford continued to manage the Company until her death in Virginia City in 1931.

*Source: Mabel Bickford Jenkins, "Stephen E. and Sarah G. Bickford: Pioneers of Madison County, Montana," Unpublished paper, 1971, pp 1-9.*

**THE FOUNDING OF NICODEMUS**

*Western historian W. Sherman Savage provides a brief account of the western Kansas colony of Nicodemus.*

One result of the black exodus was the establishment of the black agricultural towns which were founded in several states....The best‑known of these colonies was Nicodemus, which was settled along the Kansas‑ Pacific Railroad in Graham County.. The colony, scattered over an area about twelve miles long and six miles wide was located....about one hundred and twenty miles from Kansas City. It had a population of seven hundred. The timber along the Salmon River furnished fuel and wood for construction of huts....

In 1877 the people of Nicodemus, limited to a few teams of horses or oxen, put under cultivation all the land they could. During the first year an average of about six acres per person was under cultivation. Some had small plots while others had as much as twenty acres. From a small beginning this Kansas colony progressed so that by 1879 it was a prosperous community and had a post office, stores, hotels, and a land office. Like other villages in Graham County, it aspired to become the count seat.

In 1879 the citizens of Nicodemus passed a series of resolutions in which they thanked the people of Kansas and other states for their help to the colony and requested that no further charitable assistance be extended to them. As explained by the authorities in the colony, the reason for this request was that some among them would use charity as a means to avoid working. Charity would also bring into the community many destitute, undesirable persons. The people of Nicodemus believed in work. They also believed in self‑support. After four years, the colony form of life was dissolved and every individual worked for himself, with women working alongside men in the fields.

Nicodemus continued to grow, and as late as 1910 it was a thriving farm community. In that year the town's first farmers' institute was held for the purpose of improving the agriculture of the community. According to a Chicago Tribune reporter, the success of Nicodemus had some influence on other agricultural towns which developed on the frontier in later years. Ironically, some of the population of Nicodemus was drawn off to these.

*Source: W. Sherman Savage, Blacks in the West, (Westport, Conn., 1976), pp. 100‑101.*

**WILLIANNA HICKMAN REMEMBERS NICODEMUS**

*Willianna Hickman, an Exoduster from Kentucky was 31 when she traveled with her minister husband, their six children, and 140 other colonists to the all-black settlement of Nicodemus in west Kansas. They got off the railroad at Ellis, Kansas, some thirty miles away, on March 3, 1878. In the vignette below she describes the last part of the journey to Nicodemus.*

I had some trouble getting housed as my children broke out with measles on the way. We dwelled at a farm house that night. The next night members of the colony had succeeded in stretching a tent. This was our first experience of staying in a tent. We remained in the camp about two weeks. Several deaths occurred among the children while we were there.

We left there for Nicodemus, traveling overland with horses and wagons. We were two days on the way, with no roads to direct us save deer trails and buffalo wallows. We traveled by compass. At night the men built bonfires and sat around them, firing guns to keep the wild animals from coming near. We reached Nicodemus about 3 o'clock on the second day.

When we got in sight of Nicodemus the men shouted, "There is Nicodemus." Being very sick I hailed this news with gladness. I looked with all the eyes I had. I said, "Where is Nicodemus? I don't see it." My husband pointed out various smokes coming out of the ground and said, "That is Nicodemus." The families lived in dugouts. The scenery to me was not at all inviting and I began to cry.

From there we went to our homestead fourteen miles west of Nicodemus. Rev. S.M. Lee carried us to the farm in his wagon and as usual there was no road and we used a compass. I was asleep in the wagon bed with the children and was awakened by the blowing of horns. Our horns were answered by horns in the distance and the firing of guns, being those of my brother Austin, and a friend, Lewis Smith. They had been keeping house for us on our new homestead. Driving in the direction of the gunfiring, we reached the top of the hill where we could see the light of the fire they had built to direct our way.

Days, weeks, months, and years passed and I became reconciled to my home. We improved the farm and lived their nearly twenty years, making visits to Nicodemus to attend church, entertainments, and other celebrations. My three daughters were much loved school teachers in Nicodemus and vicinity.

*Source: Dorothy Sterling, ed., We Are Your Sisters: Black Women in the Nineteenth Century (New York, 1984), pp. 375-376.*

**NICODEMUS IN THE 1990s**

*The following contemporary description of Nicodemus comes from a 1991 Wall Street Journal article on the colony.*

Nicodemus, billed by its 19th century prompters as "the Largest Colored Colony in America," is fighting for its life. The town and its surrounding farms total no more than 50 people. Its stores are gone and its school long closed....Its only weapons are history itself‑‑and a powerful sense of community that keeps tugging expatriates home.

Sixty‑two‑year‑old Charlesst Bates has come home from Southern California where she kept house for the rich and famous and once served John Wayne her apple pie. Her sister Ernestine Van Duvall, 70, also has come back from California; she made lemon pie for Walt Disney. Veryl Switzer, a running back for the 1950s Green Bay Packers, still journeys from his administrative job at Kansas State University to his farm just outside town....

Next month's annual homecoming, a celebration not so much of a town but of an extended family, will draw back hundreds from as far away as both coasts. A public television documentary is in the works. Meanwhile Angela Bates, herself home to nearby Hill City from Washington, D.C., is dreaming even bigger dreams. Ms. Bates, 38, is pressing the Kansas congressional delegation to have the town declared a national historic site. "People say there's nothing here," she says as meadowlarks sing and the golden light of late afternoon floods down on Mount Olive cemetery. "But I feel so blessed that I have Nicodemus. I have a place. I have roots. I feel I've been selected to be from this place."

There is something here that's rare in a nation of interchangeable suburbs. It is a sense of identity and of continuity of history. Buried on Mount Olive's little hilltop is Angela Bates's great‑great‑grandmother, American Bates. The name is appropriate, for what has unfolded here is an uniquely American story‑‑and, argues Princeton historian Nell Irvin Painter, an overlooked one.

The western frontier had black homesteaders....yet the history of the West is typically depicted as a "hyper‑Anglo" experience says Painter. "The myth is that the cities were full of all these swarthy people with curley hair," she says, "while the West for the antithesis of all that. Actually, blacks played their part in Western history. Nicodemus is an expression of black frontier hopes."

By 1877 the frontier was in western Kansas. That year seven speculators‑‑six blacks and a white‑‑incorporated Nicodemus which they named for a legendary slave who managed to buy his freedom, and they fired off handbills grandly addressed to "The Colored Citizens of the United States." And they come, first from Kentucky, later from Tennessee and Mississippi. By 1878, Nicodemus' population had soared to nearly 700, including some whites. Nothing in their experience had prepared the former slaves for the blazing heat, bitter cold and wind‑swept grass...

After 1878 the exodus movement had peaked and Nicodemus was on the verge of decline. Bypassed by the railroads in 1888, it began its century‑long downward spiral.

Historic‑site designation would bolster tourism by making at least portions of the town a unit of the National Park Service, most likely bringing in an interpretive center and federal restoration money,. It would also serve to celebrate sheer endurance and, some argue, a matter‑of‑fact confidence that contrasts with the shrunken horizons and shriveled hopes of the inner cities. "Here," declares Ernestine Van DuVall, "we don't worry about what we can't do. We just do."

*Source: Wall Street Journal, June 11, 1991, p. 1.*

**BLACK TEXANS AND THE KANSAS EXODUS**

*Although most of our class discussion focuses on the African Americans in Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee who were part of the exodus to Kansas in 1879-1880, a significant number of blacks migrated from one part of the West, Texas, north to Kansas. The following account by Leonard Wilson describes this intra-regional movement.*

From October, 1879, to the first weeks of 1880, the "Kansas fever" reached epidemic proportions. Negroes were leaving Texas for Kansas in groups of from four or five to as many as five hundred in one body. Practically every county reported that large numbers of blacks were migrating or making preparations to do so. A great many of the "dusters" traveled by train. It was reported that "one railroad car contained ninety emigrants whose fares totaled over one thousand dollars." The Navasota (Texas) *Tablet* stated that blacks in Grimes County were buying tickets at a rate of almost fifty per week. Those "who did not have full fare bought tickets as far North as possible." By early December it was reported that "very few negro voters remained in northern Grimes county...

The general route of the wagon trains went through Dallas and Sherman, then on to Denison, the last rendezvous in Texas. At Denison the "dusters" replenished their provisions, made repairs, and rested themselves and their stock before crossing the Red River into Indian Territory and on to Kansas. During December, at the peak of the exodus, it was not uncommon for that city to report that every vacant building was filled with Negroes waiting to move on to Kansas, altogether from three hundred to a thousand immigrants were departing Denison every three or four days.

The exodus ended as quickly as it had begun. After January, 1880, fewer and fewer Negroes were migrating from the state. By January 30 Denison reported that there were more Negroes returning from Kansas than going. Similar reports from Sherman and Dallas stated that the leaders of the exodus had called a halt to the movement until the following fall. By April so few Negroes were migrating out of the state that one editor was flabbergasted when he heard that some blacks were still moving to Kansas. "All foolish negroes are not dead," he exclaimed. "A few days ago about fifty negroes in twelve wagons passed through Sherman on their way to Kansas."

Any suggestion as to the exact causes of the abrupt end of the exodus is purely speculative. There are, however, some conclusions that may be reasonably drawn from the evidence. Undoubtedly, some of the Negro's urge to migrate was blunted by the gloomy experiences related to him by some of the "dusters" who had begun to return to Texas as early as December, 1879. This disappointed group reported that all the glowing promises of finding a good life in Kansas were simply not true. It is also possible that the general decline of Democratic popularity and the upsurge of the Greenbackers offered some political hope for Texas blacks.

It appears, however, that the most important factor influencing the Negroes' decision to abandon the migration scheme was a slight improvement in their economic conditions. This conclusion is not intended to imply that there no longer existed serious economic problems among the black population. Rather it means that there was a small, but perceptible shift of Negro labor from the farm to newly developing industries...thus relieving somewhat the depressed condition of agricultural labor. In the eastern section of the state, may former filed hands were slowly being employed by the lumber industry... In the coastal area, hundreds of blacks worked as stevedores and in other shipping-related industries along the coastal waterways. Perhaps the largest non-agricultural employer of Negroes was the railroad industry. Thousands of blacks left the fields to work as common laborers, track layers, brakemen, engineers, and mechanics.

Most of the Texas "dusters" settled in the southeastern section of Kansas, particularly in Labette, Neosho, and Bourbon Counties. It appears that in general they were much better prepared for settlement in the new country than their fellow immigrants from the lower South. One Kansas report that some of the first group, those who arrived by train, had enough money either to by or rent homes and farms. During the winter the Texans built about fifty homes in or around the city of Parsons, sometimes paying as much as four hundred dollars for city lots. By early 1880, at least two former Texans owned and operated prosperous grocery stores in Parsons.

Many Texas blacks who traveled by wagon-train owned enough stock to start immediately working the land the purchased. Dr. C. Rockhold of Parsons testified that some of the Texans' wagons were pulled by as many as six horses. Some blacks who were unable to purchase land found work as wage laborers on white owned farms and remained in the towns working as day laborers and domestic servants... It was reported in early 1880 that over a thousand of them were profitably employed in the wood cutting industry...

Despite the uncertainty of their condition, very few of the "dusters" were eager to return home. Henry Ruby testified that a white Texan, August Horne of Grimes County, went into Kansas to encourage some Negroes to return. Horne promised a "heaven" that is, a box house with brick chimney and glass windows, to all who would follow him back to Texas. He was able to convince about fifty blacks. Horne was more successful than another white, a Mr. Stringfellow, who was also in Kansas urging blacks to return to Texas... He found few takers despite the fact that in addition to a "heaven" he would pay a dollar per day in wages plus the use of a horse or mule. Commenting on the Negroes' refusal of Stringfellow's generous offer, one black pointed out that they had heard such propositions before. "It is the same old song," he remarked. "We will come out at the end of the year without anything, just as we always have done. We cannot do anymore than starve here, and we will not go back..."

*Source: Leonard Wilson, Jr., "Texas and 'Kansas Fever,' 1879-1880," (MA Thesis, University of Houston, 1973), pp. 60-64, 86-89.*

**ADDRESS TO THE COLORED PEOPLE OF TEXAS**

*The address partly reprinted below, first appeared in the Galveston Daily News on July 5, 1879. It originated with a convention of Texas African Americans who after meeting in Houston on July 4, 1879, concluded that they should emigrate from their state to Kansas.*

We the undersigned delegates and representatives of the colored people of the state of Texas, in convention assembled, respectfully submit for the impartial consideration of all friends of liberty and justice the following facts in regard to the many grievances and general condition of our race throughout the south...

*First*--That in 1865 directly after our emancipation our former masters refused to maker provision for our race to become an intelligent prosperous people, and that they enacted laws which virtually denied to us many of the rights of free men...and have reduced our people to a new system of servitude.

*Second*--That many hundreds of our people have been murdered in cold-blood by white men, and that our former masters have never made any effort to prevent those high crimes against civilization and good government...

*Third*--That the absolute control of all branches of the several state governments of the South has passed into the hands of the only master class [under whom] laws can be enacted to oppress our people and deprive them of their civil rights..

WE therefore advise the colored men in every neighborhood and county throughout Texas to organize into colonization clubs, and to use unremitting industry and economy in order that they may be prepared for emigrating when the proper time shall arrive. When arrangements are concluded for an exodus of the colored people from Texas, they will be informed through the proper channels...

We are still in the wilderness that borders slavery, ignorance and poverty on the one hand, [and] liberty, education and prosperity on the other. We will never cease our efforts to at last emerge from this wilderness of doubts, fears and tribulations until we are finally made secure in the enjoyment of our civil rights and liberties in a land where all classes of people unite in maintaining all of the principles that perpetuate a free and just form of government.

We call upon our people throughout the south to unite together in this SECOND AND REAL EMANCIPATION. By unity, harmony and a faithful adherence to the great principles of universal suffrage, liberty, and equal rights to all men, the dark clouds of ignorance, poverty and tyranny that now overshadow our people will drift away, and the bright morning beams of the glorious sun of liberty, justice, prosperity and progression will illume our way and lead our people on to a higher and a more advanced state of civilization.

Animated by heartfelt gratitude, we herewith extend to his excellency, John P. St. John, governor of the state of Kansas, and all of the noble philanthropists of the west and north, the sincere thanks of the colored people of Texas for the prompt aid and sympathy so freely bestowed upon our oppressed brethren heading to "free Kansas" to escape fearful persecution from the blood-thirsty hands of their white tyrants and assassins of Mississippi and Louisiana....

*Source: Galveston Daily News, July 5, 1879, reprinted in .*

**AFRICAN AMERICANS IN A TEXAS FRONTIER TOWN**

*The Clear Fork country around the Fort Griffin military outpost was often described as western in geography but southern in culture. For the small African American community in this West Texas town the description was particularly apt. Here is local historian Ty Cashion's description of race relations in the community in the 1870s.*

As a group, African Americans in the Clear Fork country did not enjoy the admiration and gratitude that local whites accorded the Tonkawas. Anglo citizens were readily willing to admit that the blacks, like the Indians, were an inferior race, but stopped far short of treating them as dependents. All but a handful of the hundred-odd black civilians living in Shackleford County in 1880 resided in the vicinity of Fort Griffin. Four black people and one Hispanic family, in fact, were Albany's only nonwhites. Many former buffalo soldiers remained near the post after being discharged. The families of these men often joined them, and most erected small homes on the "town side" of Collins Creek in a subdivision that had existed since the town was first platted. Other black people were scattered about town. Lulu Wilhelm remembered that a group lived in "three little houses right in a row" amidst an enclave of white residents. Griffin's mulatto barber, Elijah Earl, lived next to a bartender and his wife near the Clear Fork crossing, and an elderly black woman lived alone on a hill near the post.

As in most communities, the average black or mulatto citizen at Fort Griffin held a menial job, but several achieved distinction in more substantial endeavors. Single women worked largely as servants and cooks, some for the area's large ranches. Men, too, were employed as cooks, but many more, such as "Old Nick," who worked for James A. Brock, were ranch hands; others were laborers. Several owned farms and ran a few cattle and hogs. Others identified themselves as teacher, minister, freighter, porter, blacksmith, and barber. Such jobs likely did not sustain their large families--often seven or eight to the household. Many, such as...Charlie Fowler, who hauled wood to the fort, found odd jobs and daywork to help ends meet.

African Americans infrequently interacted with whites socially, a practice that both races accepted for different reasons. Local affairs, like the two Christmas Eve parties in 1880 as well as dances and picnics, were celebrated separately. Black people also sent their children to a segregated school. In other parts of Texas with larger African American populations, the minority enjoyed associations such as the Colored State Grange, the Colored Farmers’ Alliance, and even limited membership in the Knights of Labor. At Fort Griffin, however, about the only formal communal focus for black citizens was the American Methodist Episcopal Church; in 1878 the baptism of four women by Reverend Shepherd Middleton merited a line in the *Echo* [the town newspaper].

Whites, out of prejudice and fear, kept African Americans at arm's length. Even though Captain Robson eagerly sought printing work, he published the notice: "No JIM CROW work at this shop," Anglos, convinced of the blacks' "natural inclination toward violence," heartily recommended discouraging disruptive behavior by extreme measures. The *Echo* reprinted an article from the *Fort Worth Daily Democrat* that suggested "castration and fire" would be fitting punishment for any "Negro who raped a white woman." The entry was obviously a warning. As elsewhere in Texas, whites at Fort Griffin were still apprehensive about the recent taste of freedom that African Americans had won. Mahalia Dedmon, a former slave who moved to the Clear Fork after the Civil War, remarked that the behavior of local blacks caused her to fear that they would indeed be "returned to slavery."

Such concerns were seldom well grounded; Anglos were quick to remind any forgetful African Americans of the prevailing caste. Jet Kenan told of a white transient who once walked into a near-empty Griffin saloon and invited a black man, Alan Dudley, to join him for a drink. Bartender John Hammond, somewhat bemused but fully annoyed, served them. The drinkers, related Kenan, "tipped glasses and down their throats went the liquor." After the white man departed, Hammond railed at Dudley for the egregious breach of etiquette. The black man's tactful explanation spoke volumes about race relations at Fort Griffin. "Mr. John," he supposedly stated, "I knowed he was nothing but white trash and I drank with him just to show you how low down he was..."

Some former Clear Fork people nevertheless remembered more pleasant incidents and associations between the races. Upon stopping at Griffin on his way to Fort Concho, Lieutenant Henry Flipper--the only black officer in the U.S. Army--led a "sextet" that serenaded the townsfolk one summer evening. A "colored boy" who broke horses for stable owner Pete Haverty earned the reputation as "the pluckiest and grittiest fellow we know of," according to the *Echo*. And Jet Kenan seemed to regard Elijah Earl as an esteemed acquaintance; he described the barber and former soldier as a "very intelligent, courteous, likable fellow." Both Kenan and Joe Matthews openly claimed the friendship of a man named Sutton. The rancher remarked that he kept a very clean place "for a Negro man" and was never reluctant to stop there for a meal...

\* \* \*

For African Americans, Emancipation Day provided an occasion that was all their own. In 1879 about a hundred of them from Shackleford and adjoining counties gathered to celebrate the holiday at a grove on the Clear Fork, two miles from Fort Griffin. While everyone enjoyed a picnic lunch, Elijah Earl and William Jones delivered what the *Echo* called "appropriate addresses." School children also "spoke their pieces in a creditable manner." The observance, however, was interrupted when three drunk black men--one brandishing a six-shooter--rode their horses into a group of women. The younger people had hoped to cap the celebration with a dance in town, but the continuing menace of the party crashers precluded it...

*Source: Ty Cashion, A Texas Frontier--The Clear Fork Country and Fort Griffin, 1849-1887, (Norman, 1996), pp. 258-260, 241-242.*

**GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER IN KANSAS**

*George Washington Carver is best known as Tuskegee Institute's agricultural scientist who devised various uses for the peanut. Long before Missouri-born Carver became a university professor and researcher in the Deep South, he was a homesteader, one of the forty thousand African Americans who established themselves in Kansas between 1870 and 1900. Carver apparently avoided all-black settlements such as Nicodemus and sought out instead an area with few African American homesteaders. He claimed 160 acres in Ness County on the western plains of Kansas in 1886. Also, like thousands of white and black would-be homesteaders, too little water and too much debt forced him to relinquish his homestead in 1891. Carver left Kansas for Iowa State University where he received the education that launched his later career as a scientist. The vignette below by historian Linda O. McMurry describes his brief sojourn as a homesteader in western Kansas.*

George Washington Carver proved to be a typical settler in almost every way but color. In August 1886 he bought a relinquishment on a quarter section of land south of Beeler. He continued to live with and work for [white settler George H.] Steeley while he constructed his own dwelling. Lacking native timber on his claim, like most plains settlers, he built a sod house. Such houses were constructed of bricks cut from thick, strong sod from low spots on the prairie. Carver's house was a little smaller than average--only fourteen square feet. When the walls reached the right height, he put in a window and a door and constructed a framed roof over which he placed tar paper and a layer of sod. The walls of sod houses were usually three feet thick and plastered with clay. This made the houses warm in the winter and cool in the summer, but they were also very dark and prone to insect invasions.

Carver's house was completed on 18 April 1887, and two days later he moved in with only a cookstove, bedstead, bed, cupboard, chairs table, and laundry equipment for furnishings. He had solved one of the three major problems on the plains--the lack of wood. He still had to face the other two; the lack of water and the frequency of extreme weather, ranging from burning drought to crippling blizzards. He managed to survive a blizzard that struck in the middle of January 1888 and killed over two hundred people along its wide swath from Texas to Canada. On the matter of water he was not as lucky. He tried digging a well in several places but never found water, and had to rely on Steeley's spring about three fourths of a mile away.

Carver also depended on Steely for many of his farming implements, since he owned only a spade, a hoe, and a corn planter. Breaking seventeen acres of land, he planted ten in corn, vegetables and rice corn. He also set out a number of trees and purchased ten hens. His only taxable personal property consisted of his accordion and a silver watch, each valued at five dollars. His 160 acres and homestead may not have amounted to very much but it was more than he had ever owned before.

The grimness of the frontier usually created a spirit of communal help and friendship among settlers and sometimes partially erased racial barriers. Carver was one of only a handful of blacks in the immediate area... His talents and personality soon won him the respect of his white neighbors. Indeed, on the frontier he appeared even more remarkable to those around him and was widely considered to be the best-educated person in the area. He developed an interest in art, taking his first lesson from Clara Duncan, a black woman who had taught at Talledaga College in Alabama and later became a missionary for the African Methodist Episcopal church. He also played his accordion for local dances and joined the Ness City literary society, which met weekly for plays, music, and debates. Carver participated in these activities and was elected assistant editor of the group. The whites of Ness County clearly recognized Carver's "specialness." One later remarked, "When I was in the presence of that young man Carver, as a white man of the supposed dominant race, I was humiliated by my own inadequacy of knowledge, compared to his."

*Source: Linda O. McMurry, George Washington Carver: Scientist & Symbol (New York, 1981) pp. 25-27.*

**AFRICAN AMERICAN COLONIES IN COLORADO**

*From the early 1870s to the 1920s various African American organizations sought to establish colonies for ex-Southern blacks in Colorado. The following vignette from a 1976 article by historian George H. Wayne, describes some of their efforts, culminating with Dearfield, the most successful of these attempts.*

Black interest in colonization in Colorado dates back to 1872 when a group of black Georgians sent agents to the territory seeking possible home sites. At various times in the late 19th Century blacks exhibited interest in sites near Denver, Canon City, Craig, and Pueblo. One hundred blacks arrived in Southern Colorado from Georgia, in 1875 hoping to begin stock raising. By 1902 short-lived colonies were established near Denver and Canon City by two ministers, Jesse Pack and John Ford, joining a similar effort in nearby Cortez. In 1904 Lieutenant Colonel Allen Allensworth, who eventually established a black town in California that bore his name, visited Craig, Colorado on behalf of a group of prominent blacks from Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia, to investigate the prospects of an agricultural colony. The most ambitious effort however, evolved in Pueblo in 1902 when Isaac B. Atkinson founded the Ethiopian Protective and Beneficial Aid Association, whose objectives were to help its members buy homes, obtain employment and protect themselves as citizens. The Association's proposed 4,000 colony along the Arkansas River near Pueblo would include a shoe factory, tannery, general store, school, hospital and retirement home, most of which would be supported by sugar beets harvested from the surrounding farmland.

Dearfield, in Weld County, was the only Colorado colonization effort that achieved any long-term success. Dearfield was the idea of O. T. Jackson, a messenger for Colorado governors who arrived in the state in 1887. Inspired by Booker T. Washington's *Up From Slavery*, Jackson believed successful farm colonies were possible in Colorado and chose as his first site, a forty acre tract which he homesteaded, twenty-five miles southeast of Greeley. Jackson attracted other black Denver investors who made additional land purchases, including Dr. J. H. P. Westbrook, a physician, who suggested the name Dearfield. The town's population peaked at 700 in 1921, with area families occupying nearly 15,000 acres. Dearfield's farmers produced wheat, corn and sugar beets and like their Weld County neighbors, prospered during World War I because of the European demand for American foodstuffs. Town-founder Jackson was also its most prominent businessman. He owned the grocery store, restaurant, service station and dance hall. The war years were the apex of the town's prosperity. Declining agricultural prices and the attractiveness of urban employment, caused Dearfield to steadily lose population. When Jackson died in 1949, only a handful of "pioneers" remained.

*Source: George H. Wayne, "Negro Migration and Colonization in Colorado--1870-1930," Journal of the West 15:1 (January 1976): 112-117.*

**TO EMIGRATE TO NEBRASKA**

*On New Years Day, 1884, black Nebraska homesteader I.B. Burton, sent a letter to a Washington D.C. newspaper, The People's Observer, urging other African Americans to settle in his state. Part of the letter is reprinted below.*

*Mr. Editor:* As I sincerely hope that many of our people will avail themselves of the privilege of settling upon vacant lands in the west, I shall endeavor to give a few plain directions to those who may desire to do so....

The whites in the south have always been taught and led by a false philosophy concerning themselves and the respect due to the Negro, and it is useless to expect any change. Certainly no colored man will think so little of himself and his family as to remain, in low and unhealthy parts of the country to perform labor for the whites who "disdain labor," and try to make him believe that he is the only one than can labor down there and live.

But, as to where we may live and prosper the best, is a question which we must soon solve thoroughly and practically. Prudence would suggest that it would be better to seek a healthy climate and one where peace, law and respectability reigned, and where political murders would not occur; and where we could gain in intelligence and civility.

Let us turn now more directly to our subject--How to succeed on a small capital or on small means. First of all, let all who make up their minds to emigrate West, determine to succeed. And to succeed co-operation is the first thing to be effected; and which will strengthen and serve as a check to many sudden and foolish impulses, as it will cause much discussion, deliberation and the exercise of a great deal of common sense. Let no one feel provoked or impatient over former troubles, and determine to "go it blind," for nothing can be gained by such a course.

Beginning with the uplands of northern Arkansas and extending through Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, southern Dakota, and other states and territories, west, the climate is very healthy, and the people, for the most part, civil, and the laws wholesome. We should determine beforehand, by careful inquiry, to what state or territory we wish to go, and form colonies or large settlements.

A large company can emigrate and purchase railroad lands for about half of what it would cost single persons, or single families, and the fact is, single persons are by no means as desirable as families or large settlements. By emigrating in large crowds, cars can be gotten very cheap, and into which all valuables, such as bedding, bureaus, pianos, organs or articles of any kind, can be shipped very cheap, in case one cannot sell them to an advantage where they are.

A good and shrewd man or men employed as agents will do immense good. Wholesale goods and machinery can be shipped the same way in large lots for the colony with wide-awake agents. Windmills are indispensable in the far west, and one windmill could be made to answer four or five farmers--each having an interest in it. Thus, for a few years, one reaper would do the work of a half dozen families, and one mower could serve more than that number. Thorough-bred stock can be purchased by a number of men and shipped in the same way. In my next letter I shall speak of how to get land; from whom to get it, and how to build.

I. B. Burton

Crete, Nebraska

January 1, 1884

*Source: Washington People's Observer, January 19, 1884, p. 2.*

**HOMESTEADING ON THE PLAINS: THE AVA SPEESE DAY STORY**

*The Kinkaid Homestead Act of 1904 which threw open thousands of acres of the Sandhills region of northwestern Nebraska, provided an opportunity for the only significant black homesteading in the state. Recognizing the arid condition of the land, the federal government provided homestead claims of 640 rather than 160 acres. The first African American to file a claim, Clem Deaver, arrived in 1904. Other blacks, particularly from Omaha, soon followed and by 1910 twenty four families filed claim to 14,000 acres of land in Cherry County. Eight years later 185 blacks claimed 40,000 acres around a small all-black community named DeWitty, after a local African American business owner. Yet black farm families by the early 1920s began leaving the isolated region for Denver, Omaha, or Lincoln. Ava Speese Day, in the vignette below, provides the most detailed accounts this homesteading community. Her recollections have been called a black "Little House on the Prairie" story because of their rich description of her childhood in the area.*

The Negro Homesteaders in the Sandhills were led there by my mother's father, Charles Meehan. He grew up in Detroit and Round Eau, Ontario, Canada, where he met and married Hester Freeman, born and raised in Canada. They heard of land available in Nebraska so went there, settling near Overton, where my mother, Rosetta, was born. When they heard about the Kinkaid Act, grandfather and several others investigated and filed claims northwest of Brownlee, along the North Loup River.

In the spring of 1907 he led the first emigrant train to Cherry County, accompanied by William Crawford and George Brown. He drove one of his three wagons, his son Den drove another and my mother, Rosetta, drove the third. She took care of her own team, greased the wagon wheels, and she was just turned sixteen. Uncle Bill rode with George Brown. He was fourteen. Grandpa's homestead was about twelve miles upriver from Brownlee on the north side of the river. Uncle Den was upriver two miles. Across from him was the Emanuel home, and another mile up was Jim Hatter. Two miles more was A.P. Curtis, and further up the Griffiths. Several miles on were Bert and Ida Morgan. William Crawford homesteaded about a mile down river from Meehans, and George Brown a mile east. His son, Maurice, who married Aunt Gertie, was farther east... Other negro families took Kinkaids farther down from the river until there were forty or more. There were the Price family, the Praythers, Bill Fords, Josh Emanuel, DeWitty. Jim Dewitty ran the store and post office, and after he left Uncle Dan Meehan was postmaster, and changed the name from DeWitty to Audacious...

Dad and Mom lived near Westerville for a year and then moved to Torrington, Wyoming, moving back to the Sandhills in November, 1915. At that time I was three years old. We lived with grandpa and grandma Meehan the first winter till our house could be built.

I remember them cutting sod for it. They laid the sod like we do brick today, overlapping layers. The door frames were made of 2x12's. This home was across the river from grandpa's on Uncle Ed's homestead that we rented for a few years... I could watch our house go up, our sod house. What a thrill on the occasions when we all rode the lumber wagon across to take a look up close. Before we moved in we knew where each piece of furniture would sit. Our first sod house was one large room. It was partitioned off in sections with curtains to make bedrooms. Later most everyone added a sod kitchen, joining them by using a window as the door to the new room. We felt we had a whole new house again... It was heaven, and we enjoyed it.

We had two big problems, the dirt and the flies. Summertimes we twisted newspapers and lit the tip. Holding this carefully it was swept close to the ceiling, which was made of brownish or pinkish building paper. The flame burned the wings off the flies and then they were swept up and burned. We only did this when dad was home. If the paper ceiling had caught fire, but it didn't. Otherwise we all waved clothes and drove they out. Then there were the sheets of grey fly paper you poured water on and the poison seeped out. And large sheets of sticky fly paper that gathered flies. Grandpa Meehan added a crowning touch to his soddy, he plastered the entire inside, no one had a home as easy to keep clean as grandma...

The negro pioneers worked hard, besides raising plenty of corn, beans and what vegetables they could, everyone raised cattle. It was too sandy for grain so the answer was cattle. If you did not have enough land you rented range land. We had range cattle and about sixty head of brood mares... We raised mules, and when they were broken to drive, brought a good price on the Omaha market.

One of my earliest memories is a trail herd... It was a sight to see them coming out of the hills on down the river... They traveled on open range where this was possible. Sometimes the entire three miles within our sight was a long line of cattle...

We attended one room frame schools. There was a coal bin attached on back and the older boys kept the coal scuttle filled from the bin... The backlot held two outhouses. If teacher caught us throwing spitballs we had to stand in a corner, or she spanked our hand with a ruler. It was a pretty bad offense of yours if you got spanked, teacher sent a note home with you and you got another spanking...

The negro teachers we had in Nebraska were Irene Brewer... Fern Walker... Esther Shores...and Uncle Bill Meehan. They were all good teachers but of course Uncle Bill was our favorite... Our school was Riverview, District 113... The School Superintendent preached two things to us, that teachers were underpaid, and that Knowledge is Power...

During summer there would always be a big picnic at 'Daddy Hannahs' place. This would usually be in August on the first Sunday. There would be speeches and eats and rodeo... Social life was very much a part of the community. There were dances, I mean parties held at homes. A great number of these forty families were excellent musicians so who was to provide music was no problem... Our family was fortunate, we had a cottage organ. You pumped the pedals to force air through the reeds. Dad used to play Sunday evenings and we all sang... We had fun around the organ, wore out two of them and a piano...

Looking back it seems that getting our 80 [acres] was the beginning of the end for us in Nebraska. There was one thing after another... In March 1925, we left the Sand Hills for Pierre, South Dakota... This account is factual, and I did not realize it would be so long, but, a way of life is not short. No, a way of life is not short.

*Source: Ava Speese Day, "The Ava Speese Day Story," in Frances Jacobs Alberts, ed., Sod House Memories, Vols. I-III (Hastings, Nebraska, 1972), pp. 261-275.*

**BLACK DREAMS OF OKLAHOMA**

*The following vignette describes the beginnings of the black land rush to Oklahoma in the early 1890s and the role played by Edwin P. McCabe in that immigration.*

After 1866, there were concerted efforts on the part of blacks to make the Oklahoma Lands a haven for blacks of the United States and the Indian Territory. However, those efforts met with little success. Nevertheless, blacks of the United States (and especially those of Kansas), refused to give up the idea, and after Oklahoma was opened to settlement on April 22, 1889, there was repeated on a smaller scale an exodus much like that to Kansas a decade before. This time, the efforts of black leaders were directed toward making the new territory a black state.

The dream was especially espoused by Kansas blacks. When it became apparent that Oklahoma would open to settlement, Kansas newspapers such as *The American Citizen* (Topeka) urged every black who wanted 160 acres to prepare and watch diligently for the opening. In July of that year W.L. Eagleson was described as the "prime mover" in a scheme to encourage Southern blacks to emigrate to Oklahoma. He had organized an emigration company, whose purpose it was to establish agents in the major cities of the South. At his headquarters in Topeka, Eagleson estimated that by July of 1890 he would have 100,000 blacks in Oklahoma....

Much of the black dream depended on the person of Edward Preston McCabe, who had served two terms as State Auditor of Kansas and in 1889 was serving as the Washington agent for the Oklahoma Immigration Association. Petitions began arriving in Washington from blacks in Kansas and Oklahoma, asking the President to appoint McCabe as Territorial Governor. Throughout March of 1890, McCabe worked unsuccessfully for the position. But by late March, excitement over the prospects of a black state was dying. McCabe gave up the idea of the Governorship and became a candidate for Secretary of the Territory. However, he was disappointed on that count, too. He moved to Oklahoma Territory in April and had been there only briefly when he was appointed the first Treasurer of Logan County. He carried out his duties as Treasurer and ran a real estate office at Guthrie. Although McCabe had evidently given up the idea of a black state, he continued to urge migration of blacks to the Territory, and exerted great influence on their pattern of settlement there.

Throughout McCabe's campaign for the offices of Governor and Secretary of the Treasury, the Oklahoma Immigration Association continued its work. It was generally successful and during the early months of 1890 its success added spirit and enthusiasm to McCabe's campaign. R.F. Foster, one of the Association's representatives in the South, reported in April, 1890 that on July 1 some 10,000 blacks would leave Alabama for Oklahoma, and that 1,700 had already left Atlanta. In August, a committee of three, representing some 300 blacks from Mississippi, were reportedly going to Oklahoma to investigate the prospects for immigration. And in February of 1891, a delegation of 48 from Arkansas arrived in Guthrie, to be followed by 200 then on their way from Little Rock. By the spring of 1891 blacks from the South arrived in Oklahoma on "almost every train."

*Source: Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., and Lonnie E. Underhill, "Black Dreams and 'Free' Homes: The Oklahoma Territory, 1891-1894," Phylon 34 (December 1973), pp. 342, 343-344.*

**THE BATTLE FOR THE CIMARRON VALLEY**

*The following vignette describes the nearly frantic efforts of African Americans to secure land in Oklahoma during the first years the territory was open to settlement.*

Hundreds of blacks had already arrived at Langston and were being cared for until time for the "invasion," as the papers called it. Immigrants arrived daily; thousands more were expected. They were reportedly armed, ready to secure homes "at any price," and were expected "to exclude all but members of their race from securing claims, at least until each negro has found a home." The prime leader in this endeavor was [Edwin] McCabe, who was trying to congregate at least 15,000 of his people at Langston by the day of the opening.

Tension mounted in nearby Guthrie as the day for the run drew near. The arrival of so many blacks was interpreted by Guthrie residents as an intended mass movement into the best of the lands to be opened--the Cimarron Valley, and there were plans on the part of "white settlers" and "cowboys" to preempt claims made by blacks. The Sac and Fox Indians also supposedly resented the presence of blacks in the run. It was claimed that they had sold their lands to the United States with the understanding the lands would be opened to white settlement. They....intimated that they would make it "uncomfortable" for blacks who settled among them....

Two days before the opening, there were rumors of corruption, as in the opening of the Oklahoma Lands, with "Sooners" already on the lands, preempting the choice claims. The blacks were reported determined to make successful claims to the northern part of the lands... By this time there were some 2,000 [black] men at Langston; half of them were armed. Determined to succeed, they planned to settle four of their numbers on each quarter section to ensure protection of their claims. On the night of September 21, thirty armed members of the group, headed by "William Eggleston *[sic]* and the postmaster" descended on a camp of whites nearby. The surprised cowboys offered no resistance as the blacks issued a proclamation that the land across the line belonged to them and that they would hold it at all costs. After giving the proclamation they returned to Langston.

On the day of the run, the blacks gathered at the line, many destitute and without food, but all determined to make their bids for new homes. Many of them met with violence. On the northern line, some were intimidated by whites, and they fled to areas where more blacks had gathered. Four miles south of Langston, two blacks became angry when some cowboys indicated their intentions to settle upon a quarter section desired by blacks. An argument ensued and, as a result, the blacks were badly wounded and did not make the run. McCabe, himself, who went out to see how his people were doing, returned to Guthrie with a report that he had been the object of violence. He had been on the lands a short time when three white men ordered him away. He refused to go, saying that he was an American citizen. One of the men pulled his gun and fired at McCabe, who was unarmed and dodged behind a wagon. The others pulled their six-shooters and fired five or six shots at him; they were almost upon him before he was rescued by a group of blacks who, armed with Winchesters, came to his assistance. In speaking of the white men, McCabe said, "I did not know them, but I believe they belonged to the crowd that threatened to kill all negroes found on the land." In spite of such violence, it was estimated that nearly a thousand black families obtained homes in these reservations....

Thousands of blacks were on hand for the opening of the Cheyenne-Arapaho lands. On the day before the run, large groups of them massed on the sand bars of the Cimarron and along the ninety-eight meridian south of the river. They carried their children and belongings on their backs. One white promoter had come from Topeka with 200 black homeseekers. Coming to Hennessey by train, they had walked the sixteen miles west to the Cimarron.... Most of the blacks were afoot, but they did not lose out in the run. They found their way to homesteads....in the blackjacks and sandy hills along the North Canadian River, many securing claims along the headwaters of Salt Creek.

*Source: Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., and Lonnie E. Underhill, "Black Dreams and 'Free' Homes: The Oklahoma Territory, 1891-1894," Phylon 34 (December 1973), pp. 342, 343-344.*

**BOOKER T. WASHINGTON DESCRIBES BOLEY, INDIAN TERRITORY**

*In a 1908 article in the popular magazine the Outlook, Booker T. Washington, describes the most famous of the all-black Indian Territory towns, Boley. Part of his description is included below.*

Boley, Indian Territory, is the youngest, the most enterprising, and in many ways the most interesting of the negro towns in the United States. A rude, bustling, western town, it is a characteristic product of the negro immigration from the South and Middle West into the new lands of what is now the State of Oklahoma....

It is a striking evidence of the progress made in thirty years that the present northward and westward movement of the negro people has brought into these new lands, not a helpless and ignorant horde of black people, but land-seekers and home-builders, men who have come prepared to build up the country....They have recovered something of the knack for trade that their foreparents in Africa were famous for. They have learned through their churches and their secret orders the art of corporate and united action. This experience had enabled them to set up and maintain in a raw Western community, numbering 2,500, an orderly and self-respecting government.

In the fall of 1905 I spent a week in the Territories of Oklahoma and Indian Territory. During the course of my visit I had an opportunity for the first time to see the three races--Negro, the Indian, and the white man-- living side by side, each in sufficient numbers to make their influence felt in the communities of which they were a part, and in the Territory as a whole....

I learned upon inquiry that there were a considerable number of communities throughout the Territory where an effort had been made to exclude negro settlers. To this the negroes had replied by starting other communities in which no white man was allowed to live. For instance, the thriving little city of Wilitka, I was informed, was a white man's town until it got the oil mills. Then they needed laborers, and brought in the negroes. There are a number of other little communities--Clairview, Wildcat, Grayson, and Taft-- which were sometimes referred to as "colored towns," but I learned that in their cases the expression meant merely that these towns had started as negro communities or that there were large numbers of negroes there, and that negro immigrants were wanted. But among these various communities there was one of which I heard more than the others. This was the town of Boley, where, it is said, no white man has ever let the sun go down upon him.

In 1905, when I visited Indian Territory, Boley was little more than a name. It was started in 1903. At present time it is a thriving town of two thousand five hundred inhabitants, with two banks, two cotton-gins, a newspaper, a hotel, and a "college," the Creek-Seminole College and Agricultural Institute... It was, it is said, to put the capability of the negro for self-government to test that in August, 1903, seventy-two miles east of Guthrie, the site of the new negro town was established. It was called Boley, after the man who built that section of the railway. A negro town-site agent, T.M. Haynes, who is at present connected with the Farmers' and Merchants' Bank, was made Town-site Agent, and the purpose to establish a town which should be exclusively controlled by negroes was widely advertised all over the Southwest.

Boley, although built on the railway, is still on the edge of civilization. You can still hear on summer nights, I am told, the wild notes of the Indian drums and the shrill cries of the Indian dancers among the hills beyond the settlement. The outlaws that formerly infested the country have not wholly disappeared. Dick Shafer, the first Town Marshal of Boley, was killed in a duel with a horse thief, whom he in turn shot and killed, after falling, mortally wounded, from his horse. The horse thief was a white man... Boley, like the other negro towns that have sprung up in other parts of the country, represents a dawning race consciousness, a wholesome desire to do something to make the race respected; something which shall demonstrate the right of the negro, not merely as an individual, but as a race, to have a worthy and permanent place in the civilization that the American people are creating. In short, Boley is another chapter in the long struggle of the negro for moral, industrial, and political freedom.

*Source: Booker T. Washington, "Boley, A Negro Town In The West", The Outlook, January 4, 1908, pp. 28-31.*

**EDWIN P. McCABE AND LANGSTON CITY, OKLAHOMA TERRITORY**

*The following account provides a glimpse of Edwin P. McCabe, 19th Century Republican politician, black nationalist, and town promoter who balanced these objectives while encouraging the settlement of Langston City, Oklahoma. Note the view of McCabe here as contrasted with the earlier vignette, "Black Dreams of Oklahoma."*

[Edwin P.] McCabe, one of the leading black Republicans in Kansas, had left Nicodemus in 1882 and resettled in Topeka, where he lived until 1890. His participation in local and county politics in Nicodemus prepared the way for his election to two terms in the Kansas State Auditor's Office. In 1886, he lost his bid to a third [term], but he continued to seek political appointments. A trip to Washington, D.C., in early 1890 resulted in his being offered a position as immigration inspector in Key West, Florida. He refused that offer, preferring to accept appointment by Governor George W. Steele as deputy auditor for Logan County, Oklahoma. In May 1890, McCabe moved with his family from Topeka to Guthrie, Oklahoma, and began his auditing duties with J.W. Lawhead, a political friend and colleague from Kansas, who became his immediate superior. Although he continued to reside in the biracial town of Guthrie, twelve miles southwest of Langston City, he also soon engaged in unofficial activities to promote Langston City townsites.

McCabe became a focus of attack by several white-oriented newspapers, including the Kansas City Times and the New York Times, concerned about black political aspirations in the Oklahoma Immigration Association. The inflammatory newspaper articles promulgated the idea that blacks planned to take political control of Oklahoma to establish an exclusively black state. McCabe was reputed to have lobbied in Washington for appointment as either territorial governor or secretary. The March 3, 1890, issue of the St. Louis Republic quoted an unidentified "friend" as saying that McCabe had been promised that the president would appoint a black governor if McCabe could prove that Oklahoma had a black majority, and the February 28, 1891, issue of the New York Times quoted McCabe as saying, "I expect to have a Negro population of over 100,000 within two years of Oklahoma...[and] we will have a Negro state governed by Negroes." Either McCabe had told the Times reporter what he thought the white-oriented press wished to hear, or perhaps the reporter deliberately misquoted him....The 1907 special statehood census figures indicate that never in the history of the territory could blacks have outnumbered white residents or posed a genuine threat of political domination in Oklahoma.

McCabe's endorsement of the idea of black states was transitory, if indeed he ever seriously contemplated it. Some months after the New York Times interview, he allowed his own Langston City Herald to print a letter from resident G.W. Sawner that said , "Surely McCabe...[realizes] the folly of a distinctly Negro state, rules by Negroes. McCabe knows it is impossible to keep the white men away from the Negroes....Negro supremacy is not the desire of the Negro or McCabe, but they do wish to see one state, at least, in the Union, where the Negro will have an equal chance in the race of life with other men." [McCabe's] behavior suggested not that he endorsed a separated state but that he recognized that predominantly black-populated towns might better allow blacks to achieve both personal and racial advancement.

*Source: Kenneth Marvin Hamilton, Black Towns and Profit: Promotion and Development in the Trans-Appalachian West, 1877-1915, (Urbana, 1991), pp. 101-102.*

**ALLENSWORTH, CALIFORNIA**

*Allensworth, California, profiled below, represented the Far West's version of the all-black town.*

It began in 1908 as a utopia for blacks, a place where former slaves could escape the indignities of discrimination. In its heyday, it was a thriving farm community with a lucrative railroad stopover. There was a constable and a justice of the peace. There were debates, a traveling glee club and theater performances. This was Allensworth, the only town in California established by blacks. But the dream began to fade. After half a century of struggling to survive, this black Mecca died in the 1960s, done in by the harsh flats of the San Joaquin Valley and the harsh realities of racism. "Its not in the history books, and it's been kept quiet for a long time," says Sally Clipps, an archivist for the state Department of Parks and Recreation in Sacramento. "But once you get there, you can see the history. You can feel it."

Through the efforts of historians and former residents, Allensworth became a state park in 1976. And today, residents and descendants are still trying to piece together its lost history. Recently, 3,000 people gathered at the partially restored site for a reunion. They held hands and sang spirituals in the reconstructed Baptist church. They traveled from Oakland, Fresno and Los Angeles. Some came from Chicago, Mississippi and Washington, D.C. One young boy marveled to his mother that he had never seen so many black people in his life. "It's a real special spirit--a feeling of pride--to know that these people were able to do what they did," says Dorothy Benjamin, 44, a Sacramento resident whose grandfather, Eddie Cotton, was among the town's first settlers. "This is our culture, our history."

The town was named after its founder, Allen Allensworth, a Kentucky slave who was sold and separated from his family at age 12 because he violated a state law that prohibited blacks from learning to read or write. [Nine years later, during the Civil War] Allensworth slipped behind Union lines. He joined the army and eventually became a lieutenant colonel, the highest-ranking black U.S. military officer at the time. When he retired in 1906, "the Colonel" began devising plans for a town that would attract the best and brightest of his race..."to prove to the white man, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the Negro is capable of self-respect and self-control." The concept was not a new one. Rather than test the limits of the racial restrictions of the day, blacks around the country were forming their own self-contained communities...Boley, Oklahoma, Nicodemus, Kansas, Mound Bayou, Mississippi.

While scouting locations for their settlement they contacted the Pacific Farming Company controlled by a group of wealthy land speculators, who offered to sell thousands of acres around Solito, a train depot halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco. The company readily agreed to do business with the blacks partly because the land was anything but fertile. But for the settlers, the rugged, untilled tracts were their only chance for salvation. At the time, two to three acres could be purchased for less than $1,000. Allensworth bought 2,700 acres.

Solito, renamed Allensworth, grew rapidly. Soon farmers, teachers and officers who had fought in the Civil War were flocking from Mississippi, Arkansas, Alabama and Texas, eager to take part in the great "Negro experiment." After a time, cotton, grain, sugar beets and livestock flourished with the help of irrigation. Within three years, the community had swelled to 300 families, and their success was touted in black periodicals around the country....Eventually, the community became a transfer station of the Santa Fe Railroad. Traveling cattle merchants arrived in Allensworth daily, providing a booming business for the local restaurant, hotel and Livery. Allensworth was designated a voting precinct. Its justice of the peace and constable were the first black men in California to hold elected office. The town was run by an association of representatives chosen by the residents.... There was even a fire auxiliary in which women were on call to "attend the fire with brooms which are to be kept wet so as to put out sparks..." according to newspaper accounts.... Education was so important to the town that they even taxed themselves extra to pay for a second school teacher because the state only paid for one....It was the only place in California that hired black teachers.

As Allensworth exceeded even its founder's vision, the town's prosperity angered its white neighbors. "They thought this would just be a town of migrant workers," said Ed Pope, 61, who moved to Allensworth in the late 1930s to pick cotton. "But when they saw how successful it was, they tried to destroy it." Sometime between 1911 and 1914 the Pacific Farming Company stepped in and took control of Allensworth's water rights, then issued an edict that no more land could be sold to blacks. Town residents sued and eventually regained control of their water supply. In 1914 the Santa Fe Railroad built a stop in the neighboring with town of Alpaugh, and lucrative business was diverted from Allensworth....The town's problems continued to worsen with the agricultural demand of a growing population lowered the natural water table, drying up drinking wells. When neighboring white towns formed a cooperative to build a new water system, they refused to allow Allensworth to participate. The devastating blow came in 1914: Col Allensworth--on a visit to Los Angeles to promote the community--accidentally stepped off the curb in front of a streetcar and was killed by a passing motorcyclist. Despite his death, may residents remained in Allensworth, tending their crops and continuing to eke out an existence.

But tragedy struck the town again in 1966, when state water officials discovered arsenic in three new wells that were being drilled. They blamed the problem on natural causes and ordered residents not to drink from the polluted wells. Health officials say arsenic had probably been in the drinking water since the town was founded. Eventually residents secured a $48,000 federal loan to build a new water system. In addition, the community--never straying from Allensworth's philosophy of self-help--donated an estimate $15,000 of their own labor to lay the new water lines.... [Nonetheless] once the arsenic was discovered many residents began moving away. Even as the new pipeline was being built, the town was on the verge of extinction. The few surviving buildings were a shambles and the population was just over 100....

Finally in 1976, the state approved plans to develop Allensworth Historic Park, a 240 acre site at the former town center. So far, half a dozen buildings have been restored, including Allensworth's home. There are plans to renovate 16 more....Although blacks still live there--some still making their living from he soil, more than half its 100 residents are Mexican farm laborers. "This is a town that refuses to die," says Ed Pope, "We're beginning to build it back."

*Source: Los Angeles Times, November 17, 1991, pp. E1-E9.*

**VIRGINIA CITY AND DODGE CITY: 19TH CENTURY BLACK URBAN OUTPOSTS**

*Television has been instrumental in shaping the contemporary popular image of the West. Two enormously successful television series--"Bonanza" and "Gunsmoke," typify that influence as the projected two small towns--Virginia City, Nevada. and Dodge City, Kansas, as 19th Century icons of the region. Popular wisdom purports that the towns had no African Americans. History shows otherwise. In each place briefly thriving black communities revolved around local churches. The vignettes below provide a glimpse into those communities.*

***Virginia City:*** A Meeting of black residents was held in Virginia City on December 1, 1863, to plan a celebration of the first anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation for January 1, 1864. The meeting, chaired by R. H. Scott, adopted the following resolution: "That we heartily tender our thanks to Abraham Lincoln...for the liberation of many of our enslaved brethren in the southern portion of the United States...and that the Emancipation Proclamation...has created in us a strong desire...to prove ourselves worthy of the gift of God to man, Liberty...by going forth to battle against the enemies of God, Liberty and Union."

A meeting of colored citizens held on February 3, 1870, resolved to celebrate the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, whenever it should occur. A one-hundred-gun salute was planned for the morning of the day of ratification, and a total of $227 was collected at the meeting to defray expenses... The first event was a parade through Virginia City to Gold Hill. The parade formed at the "Hall of the Lincoln Union Club" on April 7, 1870, a few days after the amendment had been declared ratified... The parade, preceded by an American flag and the Virginia [City] Brass Band "playing popular patriotic airs," contained a "fine silk flag" made by the black women of Virginia City... On one side of this flag were the words, "Justice is slow, but sure..." The parade consisted of about fifty men walking, followed by twelve carriages containing men, women and children. "All were well-dressed, and the marshals rode on horseback.. In all the procession numbered nearly... 150 persons."

***Dodge City:*** Blacks represented 4.3% of the total Kansas population in 1880, while the 42 blacks...represented only 3.3% of Dodge City's households. There were seven discernible family households... With one exception, all of the seventeen males and fourteen females worked in poorly paid service occupations... Elizabeth Harris, cooked at one of the hotels. Hotels, in fact, used the services of black men more than any other business... Servants, black and white, represented 11.4% of the total workforce and could always find a position on Front Street or in the homes of the more prosperous businessmen. In one line of personal service, laundry, blacks had a near monopoly and at one point exercised a bit of economic exclusiveness of their own by complaining of "Chinese...wash tub artists" threatening to take over... For blacks, life in Dodge was…better than it had been in their past experience.

Housing, always in short supply in cow town Dodge, was not a serious problem for the single servants and laborers who "lived in." Houses for families were small...but were gradually improved after 1885 when blacks began buying lots close together in Shinn's Addition south of the Arkansas River, a move which enhanced the cohesiveness of the community.

As was true of the white community in Dodge, the blacks separated themselves into a Front Street crowd and a respectable class. The "better" element held religious services in homes and occasionally supported revival meetings "across the dead line." The Union Church which catered to any and all congregations...also served the blacks... The few people who lived on isolated ranches and farms in the rural areas around Dodge were part of the larger black community. They came as independent homesteaders or ranchers and frequented Dodge City because it was the major trade center for southwestern Kansas.

*Sources: Elmer R. Rusco, "Good Time Coming?" Black Nevadans in the Nineteenth Century (Westport, Conn., 1975), pp. 72-74, 98, and C. Robert Haywood, "'No Less a Man': Blacks in Cow Town Dodge City, 1876-1886," Western Historical Quarterly 19:2 (May 1988):162-163, 165-167.*

**KATE D. CHAPMAN DESCRIBES BLACKS IN YANKTON, DAKOTA TERRITORY**

*In April 1889, seven months before Dakota Territory became the states of North and South Dakota, nineteen-year-old Kate D. Chapman, destined to be one of the few black female journalists in the nation, wrote about the small African American community in her hometown of Yankton. Her account suggested that African Americans could survive and even prosper in regions where the black population was small (according to the 1890 U.S. Census, Yankton had 59 blacks and South Dakota had 540). Part of her description of black Yankton is reprinted below.*

Yankton has a mixed population of five thousand inhabitants, about sixty of whom are Afro-Americans, who are all more or less in a prosperous condition. The schools, churches and hotels, are thrown open too all regardless to color, and the...the feeling that exists between the two races is friendly in the extreme.... The colored people pay taxes on fully $22,000 worth of property. The majority of them came from the Southern States only a few years ago, and by their industry have earned for themselves homes and the respect of all. One man, Mr. Amos Lewis, who came here ten years ago with nothing except a knowledge of plastering, now owns $5,000 worth of real estate, saying nothing of his fine team and other personal property.

Another man who is on the road to wealth, is Mr. James Parsons, who formerly kept a restaurant at this place; he is worth about $3,000 in cash and [has] property [worth] about $2,000....

J.B. Shaw, the city constable, is a progressive colored man and is worth about $1,500 He has a daughter who will be famous some day in the world of music....

C.T. Chapman\* is a cook by trade, and has thoroughly mastered his profession. He has a home valued at $2,500. He owns also a fine breed of hunting dogs valued at from $50 to $100.

Henry Robinson, who owns an elegant barber shop, situated on the principal street, has several white hands working under him, and has property worth about $2,500.

Another fine man belonging to the Afro-American race is Thomas Sturgiss, and excellent mechanic, who employs his idle hours in distributing good literature among the race. His home is valued at $1,000.

Washington Stokes, who now owns a $1,000 home says that he borrowed the money to pay the fare of himself and his wife when he came here from Eufaula, Alabama, and now is doing well.

Mrs. Amy Davis, a sprightly little widow has by her own exertions acquired $1,500 worth of property.

Mrs. Towns is also an industrious widow, owning $1,800 worth of real estate.

Mr. Fred Baker, assistant druggist in one of the largest drug stores, is a property holder in the South, and is worth about $800 in cash. He has been in Yankton about three years, and thinks it is just the place for poor colored people who want to get a fair show in the world.

Mrs. Proteau, whose husband, a Frenchman, perished in the blizzard last winter, up about Pierre, Dakota, owns a home worth $800....

The church, a branch of the A.M.E. connection, is valued at $2,000, and has a membership of twenty persons. A Masonic lodge is also in existence. The people are socially inclined and extend a hearty welcome to all who come. When we think of the crowded tenement houses, loathsome streets, foul air, bitter prejudice many of our people have to endure in the south, we are forced by the love we bear them to say, for the sake of health, wealth and freedom, come west. Dakota has been well named the 'Beulah Land,' for such she had proved to those of our people who have ventured, despite the prediction that they would certainly 'freeze to death,' to come to the Territory of Dakota.

Hoping you will visit the colored Yanktonians some fine day, I close with a line...from the brilliant Pope: "Worth makes the man, and want of it the fellow; The rest is all but leather and prunella."

\*[the father of Kate D. Chapman]

*Source: Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., "Kate D. Chapman Reports on 'The Yankton Colored People," 1889'" South Dakota History 7:1 (Winter 1976):32-35.*

**RACE RELATIONS IN LATE 19TH CENTURY WEST KANSAS**

*In the following vignette historian Craig Miner suggests that the acrimonious race relations which so often characterized exchanges between blacks and whites in larger cities of the nation, and throughout the South, did not evolve in small western towns such as Hays City or Kinsley, Kansas. His argument is reprinted below.*

Competition for population led...to...temporary tolerance for minority groups in western Kansas towns that was remarkable in contrast to the general national tone. It was part of a push for unity, an aspect of hard surroundings where one took help from wherever it came, but, however short lived, it induced, such cross-cultural, interracial empathy was a secret gift of time and place.

In 1879 "Uncle" John White, a black man who had lived in Hays City since 1868, was visiting a friend aboard a train. Stepping off as it departed, he fell, was dragged twenty yards, and then run over and cut to pieces. He had been a barber and restaurant owner; his "good humored countenance was a familiar object in Hays--everybody knew and like him," and his death was "like the passing of a landmark." Born a slave in Tennessee in 1815, White had gained his freedom in 1863 and come west with his wife. It was not unusual that the local paper should write up the lurid details of a grisly incident, but the recognition of a black man's central place in the life of a community, an understanding of his personal history, and an extension of the "heart-felt sympathy of our community" to his widow by name were hardly common in 1870s America.

Similar identification of a black man as an individual, not just a member of a race, came in Kinsley in 1879 when Jerry Saunders, proprietor of a local cleaning and repair shop, crushed the skull of another black man in a quarrel. In Wichita, the newspaper would be likely to have reported the wielding of razors but say it did not get the name of either party. But most people in Kinsley knew Saunders well, and his plight could not be easily ignored on account of his race. His name appeared regularly in the society columns, before and after the murder: when he fell skating on the ice and the girls giggled, or when he played baseball on the local nine where there was "no distinction of color shown." It was news in Kinsley when the "young men's social club (colored) gave a party, or when blacks organized the Pioneer Mutual Agricultural Association, or even when a black carpenter built an especially nice addition onto his "neat and cozy residence" in town. Therefore, the black murderer was for the community, its friend Jerry Saunders, and the Kinsley *Graphic* editor was relieved when, after Saunders gave himself up, the county attorney reduced the charge to fourth-degree manslaughter and the court imposed the minimum sentence. "Jerry Saunders is a hard-working colored man and has the facility of attention to his own business which has made him popular in the community, who, without an exception as far as we know, are glad that he escaped with a light sentence.

Evidence...can be found for other towns. When a Great Bend reporter learned in 1879 that a "colored lady of culture" from North Carolina was enrolled at the new normal institute in town, he suggested that the board of education enlist her as a teacher, especially because there were thirty black children in Great Bend schools. Some politicians would oppose it, the reporter thought, but the majority of the community would see the practicality of such a move. The same paper reported on a convention of the black citizens of Barton, Pawnee, Edwards, Ford, and Hodgeman Counties held in Kinsley on 4 July 1878 to elect delegates to the Business and Industrial Convention to be held in Kansas City, and suggested that Barton County blacks elect an extra delegate on their own. In Larned, a black man, Jerome Johnson, was on the staff of the Larned *Chronoscope* in the early 1880s and kept newspaper readers informed of everyday goings-on among local blacks. Their picnics, their weddings, their entertainment, their politics, and their dreams of a home in the West were chronicled in all the towns along with those of whites.

*Source: Craig Miner, West of Wichita: Settling the High Plains of Kansas, 1865-1890 (Lawrence, 1986), pp. 101-103.*

**JIM KELLY AND PRINT OLIVE**

*Jim Kelly was one of thousands of black cowboys who rode the trail from Texas to Kansas and Nebraska cattle towns. However, because of the biography of his employer, Print Olive, Kelley's name and his story can be reconstructed. Kelly once saved Olive's life in a Kansas barroom brawl. Yet even the biography of Olive, as you will read below, is susceptible to the prevalent racial stereotyping of black cowboys as obedient, accommodating servants even when the record indicates otherwise.*

On May 28 [1872] Print turned a big steer herd out of the Olive Pens and started it up the Chisholm Trail. With him he took Nigger Jim Kelly as wrangler, with a night hawk to help him. Jim was "a good man to cross the river with," as Print spoke of him, for Kelly knew no fear and was a valued hand when trouble arose on the trail. With quick reflexes, fast with a gun, loyal to Print and proud of it, Nigger Jim was irreplaceable in Print's mind. Jim's work with the horses of Olive remudas made them the envy of many Texas drovers and Olive saddlehorses brought top prices wherever they are shown, many being from Steel Dust breeding.

"That Nigger Jim can ride anything with a hole in it or hair on it," cowboys facetiously remarked. But in spite of the vulgar insinuation, Jim Kelly like most of the cowboys of his time, white, colored, or Mexican, shared an almost reverent attitude toward womenkind.

On the trail, Barney Armstrong, a faithful Olive cowboy, took the right point and Albert Herrera, a *vaquero* from Dime Box, rode the left. Buishy McGuire, a new hand, "wild and wolly and full o' fleas, ever bin curried below the knees," as the trail men told it, rode right swing. Gene Lyons, Print's friend, an easy-going young man with a calm disposition, the antithesis to McGuire, rode left swing. Gene had started as an Olive cook, and he was the friendliest of men.

The two flank riders were experienced *vaqueros*, Carlos and Francisco, brothers whom Print had picked up in Austin a few days before the drive started. At the drag, Print put two young and inexperienced boys, Ranny Johnson and Steve Nicholas, both seventeen. Henry Strain, a young colored boy, drove the chuckwagon and cooked. Victorio, an elderly *vaquero*, helped with wagon and remuda.

Print had the feeling from the start that it would be a troublesome trip. He was not disappointed in his forecast. The cattle ran every night for the first week in the brushy country north and across the San Gabriel, keeping the herders sleepless and irritable until a final bad run ended in the death of twenty head of big steers in a canyon. Among them had been the spooky leader of the stampedes.

"It's worth fifty head to get that bastard out of the herd," Print said. But when the stampedes had ended, near Fort Worth, trouble began between the cowboys.... One night at the wagon after some of the saddlestock in the remuda had strayed, McGuire quarreled with the trail-worn wrangler, Nigger Jim Kelly. The tall Negro, born a freeman and a very proud one, took his share of the bantering, then shoved his .44 under McGuire's nose. Looking straight into McGuire's eyes but speaking for the ears of the trail boss, Kelly said icily, "If Mista Print don't say 'Take it down' I'se goin' to blow the haid off youah shoulders, Bushy." Kelly pulled back the hammer.

Print allowed enough time to pass for the significance of the Negro's action to sift into McGuire's thick head, then he said quietly, "Take it down, Jim." Nigger Jim lowered the barrel of the gun and shoved it into his holster.

"Some day you goin' to cuss up the wrong man, Bushy," Print advised McGuire. Then he closed the subject for all time.

*Source: Harry E. Chrisman, The Ladder of Rivers: The Story of I.P. (Print) Olive (Denver, 1962), pp. 102-104.*

**D.W. "80 JOHN" WALLACE: A BLACK CATTLE RANCHER**

*Few African American cowboys acquired enough resources to become cattle ranchers. One exception, however, was Daniel Webster "80 John" Wallace, of West Texas. Wallace, who was born near Inez, Texas in 1860, would eventually become the state's most successful black rancher, eventually acquiring 10,240 acres by his death in 1939. Before he began his assent into the ranks of cattlemen, Wallace was a West Texas cowboy. The account below, part of a brief autobiography, describes that life.*

I have been asked by several of my white friends to write the history of my life and the pioneer days in the west. I have been trying for ten years to decide on making the attempt to comply to their request. I have never been ashamed of my life, but I have always felt I could not tell the facts of the old pioneer days in an interesting way, even though I have grown up with the west. I was born in Victoria County, Sept. 15, 1860, near Inez, Texas, on a small farm owned by Mrs. Mary Cross. The farm consisted of about 200 acres, a few cows, and other stock. The houses on the farm were built of logs. The place I stayed was a log house of two rooms and a small hall. All the rooms had dirt for floors. My parents worked on this farm...

In 1876 on the 13th day of March, I started to work for a Mr. Carr, who moved his family and a small herd of cattle to Lampasas County. After the work was over I left Mr. Carr with $1.50 in my pockets for Taylor County...where Tom Cross, the son of the woman on whose place I was born, was working for Sam Gholson. I stayed there and worked a year.... On the 12th of December 1878 I hired to a Mr. Clay Mann who lived in Coleman County. The next spring he bought beef cattle and drove them to Whitesboro. Later he established a ranch near Silver creek, a few miles south of Colorado City.

The Indians stole all of our horses in '78 and most of them in '79, but we stayed there all the year of '80. On the 19th of January in '81 Mann sold the J.D. Brand to a man by the name of J.W. Wilson. Mr. Mann then began to buy cattle and started the 80 brand. From this brand my friends gave me the name 80 John. The 80 brand ran to a large number, at one time Mr. Mann claimed to have 26,000 held of cattle. In 1883 he drove on the trail 4,000 cattle and established a ranch in Wyoming. In the spring of '84 he drove about 4,000 more. These cattle were sold at Dodge [City] Kansas...

Life on the range was altogether different from what the people find today. Our homes were dugouts when we were fortunate to find one where a buffalo hunter had lived. Sometimes we would take time to build one, but more often we used our wagons and the ground. It was common to lie on the ground in all kinds of weather with our blankets for a bed and a saddle for a pillow.

There were no stores closer than 90 to 150 miles from our camps. Often times the boys' clothes would become worn before we got a chance to go or send to town. We would take sacks, rip them up and make pants. Some one usually went to Coleman City about every two or three months for food, clothes and other things we needed.

I have seen people on the frontier who had a narrow escape for their lives, yet they would stay. Everyone slept with his gun under his head.... An outfit would furnish you with a gun and cartridges, usually a pistol and Winchester; you were not allowed to shoot a rabbit or small game... Rattlesnakes and dangerous beasts were plentiful. It was common to find a snake rolled up in your bedding or be awakened early in the morning by the howl of the wolf or the holler of the panther. Sometimes for fun the boys would rope a wolf.

I have stood guard dark, stormy nights when you couldn't see what you were guarding until a flash of lightening. Many times the cattle would stampede and in the rush, often the cattle or a cowboy was hurt. If a fellow got sick on the range, he just laid around camp until he got well or died. There were no doctors in the country. I have seen a pitiful sight of a cowboy groaning with pain while we stood around helpless, had nothing or knew nothing to lessen his misery....

*Source: R. R. Crane, "D.W. Wallace ('80 John'); A Negro Cattleman on the Texas Frontier," in West Texas Historical Association Yearbook 28 (1952): 113-118.*

**END OF THE TRAIL: BLACK COWBOYS IN DODGE CITY**

*The stockyards next to the Santa Fe Railroad tracks at Dodge City were the end of the trail for many of the Texas to Kansas cattle drives of the 1870s and 1880s. As such, it was a gathering point outside Texas for thousands of white and black cowboys who had spent months in isolation. Dodge City, however, was not Texas which at the time was increasingly characterized by racial restrictions which affected even the most independent-minded African American drover. Dodge City, or at least the part along notorious Front Street that entertained cowboys, proved surprisingly free of racial segregation. That tolerance probably stemmed from a combination of reasons including Kansas's reputation for racial liberalism and the economic realities of the hundreds of black cowboys eager to spend their wages in the saloons, restaurants, hotels, brothels and other businesses along Front Street. Whatever the reason, Dodge City businesses welcomed all regardless of race. White and black drovers shared hotel rooms, card games, cafe tables and, when necessary, jail cells. Historian C. Robert Haywood provides a glimpse of that remarkable southwestern Kansas anomaly to the 19th Century racial order.*

If Dodge Citizens were not of one settled mind in dealing with the permanent black residents, there is also little to indicate unanimity of action or attitude toward the black transients who arrived with the summer trail herds. The transient population, black and white, frequently outnumbered the permanent residents when summer season brought cattlemen and cowboys to town... There is no way of accurately determining the number of black cowboys who came to Dodge or were there at any one time. George W. Sanders of the Trail Drivers Association, as valid an authority as there is, estimated that about 25% of all cowhands were black. Estimates made at the time indicated there were usually around 1,550 cattlemen and cowboys in Dodge during the summer-trail season. Of these, about 1,300 were cowboys. This would mean that as many as 325 black men were in or near the town from June to August... Black cowboys, with the same dollars in their pockets as their white compeers, represented a significant factor in Dodge's economy.

Although subject to some of the same attitudes and customs as the permanent black residents, the black cowboys expected and received better treatment. The freedom and equality of range life had conditioned them to a more integrated friendship... As long as Dodge was a raw, open cow town, the black cowboy felt nearly as comfortable there as he did on the range or trail... Just how relaxed a black, trail-herd cowboy...could be is illustrated by Colonel Jack Potter's description of the arrival of a cattle crew when "old Ab" Blocker's colored cook, Gordon Davis, marched into Dodge City, mounted on the back of his left wheel oxen, with fiddle in hand, playing "Buffalo Girls Can't You Come Out Tonight."

Few, if any, of the early hotels, bars, and restaurants were segregated. J.A. Comstock recalled his own error in trying to exclude "a young mulatto cowboy" from the Dodge House where Comstock was clerk. After the cowboy had checked in, Comstock assigned a drunken white cowboy to share the extra bed in the same room. The black didn't mind sharing the room, but not with a raucous inebriate. When he ordered the drunk out of the room at pistol point, the man fled. Because of his action, Comstock's boss told him not to accept the black cowboy the next night. But when the clerk told him there were no rooms, the cowboy drew his pistol and waved it in Comstock's face, saying: "You are a liar!" The clerk quickly rechecked his roster and found a suitable room.

*Source: C. Robert Haywood, "'No Less a Man': Blacks in Cow Town Dodge City, 1876-1886," Western Historical Quarterly 19:2 (May 1988): 168-170.*

**THE DEMISE OF LAWLESSNESS AT FORT GRIFFIN**

*During the 1870s Fort Griffin was a "typical" frontier military town with a large floating population of gamblers (including briefly Doc Holliday), prostitutes, con men and other hustlers who preyed on the soldiers stationed there. Added to the mix were rowdy cowboys whose violence enhanced the town's reputation for lawlessness. By the early 1880s, however, settlers filled the open spaces and the town increasingly became more "respectable." What follows is a brief discussion of that transition, focusing on one of the last episodes of lawlessness which ironically involved Dick Bell, a black cowboy.*

As the 1870s came to an end, the edge of the plains was "fast settling up," in the words of boosters, and the potential for expanding into the Rolling Plains, the Southern High Plains, and even the trans-Pecos seemed limitless. Over the next decade railroads would cut through the grasslands, cattle would fill up the open spaces, farmers would plow the bottomlands, and towns would mushroom where just a few years earlier such scenes would have been inconceivable... The formative development of the Clear Fork country...would be complete by the end of the 1880s, and the experience of its pioneers would leave an indelible mark on the regional character of West Texas...

When the new decade began, Fort Griffin remained the most prominent town in western Texas, but clearly it had lost the vibrancy that had once made it the unrivaled center of the frontier... Despite townspeople's every effort, Griffin could not overcome its notoriety. Lawlessness, though infrequent, continued to reinforce outsiders' negative perceptions, contributing further to the town’s demise. During 1879 the killings of 'Cheap John' Marks and Charles McCafferty captured wide attention. The next year the moribund little village suffered two more incidents that rivaled any of the 'spectacular' killings that occurred against the colorful backdrop of Griffin's heyday.

The first evolved out of a drunken spree, when African American cowboy Dick Bell inexplicably mounted his horse and shot a boy's pet, then harassed a black teamster and some buffalo soldiers before a posse cornered him in a mesquite thicket. A running gunfight through the town followed, whereupon Bell took several wounds; as he wheeled around to face his pursuers, he accidentally shot his own horse and then went down himself. Some men loaded Bell onto a discarded door and left him to die at the home of an elderly black woman. Miraculously, he recovered. The *Echo* reported that Dr. Powell removed a bullet from his face and that he was "carrying six more balls in his body but is doing well." So well, in fact, that Bell escaped, followed by wild stories that he had killed "an even dozen men...."

*Source: Ty Cashion, A Texas Frontier--The Clear Fork Country and Fort Griffin, 1849-1887, (Norman: 1996), pp. 264-265.*

**BLACK COWBOYS AND THE PENDLETON ROUNDUP**

*The Pendleton Roundup is the most famous annual rodeo in the Pacific Northwest. Yet few contemporary spectators or participants realize that African Americans were among the founders and first performers during its early years. The account below provides a brief introduction.*

In 1908, a group of cowpunchers in Pendleton, Oregon, arranged to give an exhibition of bucking, bulldogging, roping, and other "wild west" stunts at the old ball park were the present Round-Up grounds are situated. These cowboys included Charles Buckner, "a colored man whose people lived south of Pendleton on Stewart Creek on a ranch." The punchers gave a two-day show which has been an annual event since 1910 known as "The Round-Up."

The following year a [local] black cowboy, George Fletcher, earned the reputation of "great" by his fellow riders and spectators. At age 21, during the three-day show his rides qualified him for the finals' contest. It was a spine-tingling spectacle to see him ride three of the best broncs--"Scarback," "Hot Foot," and "Going Some." On that day he proved able to "fork" the best. It is told that Fletcher...made such a brilliant showing at Pendleton, that when the crowd heard that he had not been allowed to win, they tore up his hat in little pieces and sold them in the stands to give George a prize." Other black who made a name at the Pendleton Round-Up were S.B. Therman and Lewis Mosley.

During World War I, as an enlistee while in Paris, France, Fletcher rode a so-called outlaw horse. "The crowd shouted *Viva, viva!* To them he was more than just a rider. He was a celebrity." According to one chronicler, Fletcher received 400 francs and "the undying admiration of the French people."

*Source: Clifford P. Westermeier, "Black Rodeo Cowboys," Red River Valley Historical Review 3:3 (Summer 1978):13.*

**AFRICAN AMERICAN BUSINESSES: ARIZONA TERRITORY**

*The following vignette from a 1971 Master's thesis, illustrates the range of black entrepreneurial activity in Arizona Territory in 1890 at a time when the African American population was only 1,357 out of a total population of 88,243.*

It is surprising to note that many Negroes from 1860 to 1880 not only had personal estates valued between seventy-five and two hundred seventy-five dollars, but several owned land ranging from one thousand dollars to two thousand dollars in total valuation. What is even more interesting is that from 1860 to 1900 as may as two hundred black men and women owned and operated their own businesses. Among those were William Neal and his wife, the daughter of Wiley and Hannah Box, who owned and operated the Mountain View Hotel in Oracle. Another hotel owner and operator was a Mrs. Lee, who came from Phoenix to Tucson in the mid-1890s and opened the Orndorff Hotel, which housed and employed several Negroes. Henry Ransom of Tucson was a part owner of the San Xavier Hotel and Joe Mitchell and Henry Corlay were Tucson's first Negro homesteaders and semi-realtors.... Mary A. Green, recognized as the first [black woman] in Phoenix, was able to obtain a loan from her employers...and purchase a small restaurant which she owned and operated successfully while still retaining a position as the Gray family cook. Robert L. Stevens, known as Phoenix's first wealthy black man, owned a department store in that area which catered solely to the needs of the city's black population. There were several other independent black businessmen in the Phoenix area, including Frank Shirley, who operated a chair of barber shops, Perry Pain, the first Negro hotel operator in Phoenix, and William P. Crump, owner and operator of the Phoenix Afro Wholesale Products Company.

These individuals who were the owners and operators of small businesses were the exceptions and not the rule: but their success helped illustrate the fact that Negroes could come to Arizona and establish themselves, despite the hardships of living in a frontier environment, and in spite of the feelings of prejudice and discrimination generated by those around them. The majority who come, however, were not so lucky. Most Negroes came to Arizona with no skills and were forced by....circumstances to seek employment at the bottom of the economic ladder. It is true that there were many white settlers who were likewise unskilled, but it seems that potential employers were generally more eager to hire [them]. But, for the most part, Negroes showed themselves to have been equipped to adapt to the frontier environment....

*Source: Robert Kim Nimmons, "Arizona's Forgotten Past: The Negro in Arizona, 1539-1965," (MA Thesis, Northern Arizona University, 1971), pp. 84-86.*

**A NORTH DAKOTA DAUGHTER**

*Although black western history is usually written in the context of groups of settlers either in urban or rural settings, perhaps more often in this region than in any other area of the United States, individual black families created homes and lives for themselves surrounded by EuroAmericans, Asian Americans, Latinos or Native Americans. The family of Era Bell Thompson is one example. Era Thompson eventually became an internationally famous photojournalist for Ebony Magazine. However, her early life was spent in North Dakota. The following vignette describes part of that life.*

Questions such as "where is North Dakota?" and "what is the world was a nice Negro like you doing in that godforsaken country in the first place?" led [Era Bell] Thompson to write her autobiography, *American Daughter*, about the influences of her experiences in North Dakota. As a black child growing up in North Dakota during the late teens and twenties, Thompson was the object of interest and prejudice. "I was very luck to have grown up in North Dakota where families were busy fighting climate and soil for a livelihood and there was little awareness of race," she states...

Thompson, daughter of Stewart Calvin (Tony) and Mary Logan Thompson, was born August 10, 1905, in Des Moines, Iowa, and was nine when the family moved to North Dakota in 1914... Like other immigrants to Dakota, the Thompson family had been drawn by the promise of a better life. Era Bell's brother Hobart had come to North Dakota in 1913 to work for his uncle, James A. Garrison, who had homesteaded near Driscoll. Hobart also worked for Robert Johnson, a black farmer who lived near Steele... Stewart and Mary Thompson had come to North Dakota at the urging of Garrison, Stewart's half-brother, to escape the problems of the city, problems which included limited job opportunities for their sons.

Garrison, with his Irish wife Ada and their two children, had homesteaded, receiving a patent on 160 acres near Driscoll on September 30, 1907. Tony Thompson and Garrison's mother, Mina Garrison, who was born into slavery January 19, 1821, and had come to North Dakota in 1909 to live with her son, James, died there May 21, 1911... [Garrison] wrote glowingly of the boundless prairie, the new land of plenty where a man's fortune was measured by the number of his sons, and a farm could be had even without money...

Era Bell Thompson's reactions to North Dakota were different from those of the rest of the family. She was excited about seeing Indians and about riding ponies. Her mother looked from the train window to the bleak, treeless, snowcovered land which was not at all like her native Virginia... Thompson's first reactions were to the beauty of North Dakota:

It was a strange and beautiful country my father had come to, so big and boundless he could look for miles out over the golden prairies and follow the unbroken horizon where the midday blue met the bare peaks of the distant hills. No tree or bush to break the view, miles and miles of grass, acre after acre of waving grain, and up above, God and that fiery chariot which beat remorselessly down upon a parching earth... Now and then the silence was broken by the clear notes of a meadowlark on a nearby fence or the weird honk of wild geese far, above, winging their way south. This was God's country. There was something in the stillness that spoke to Pop's soul, and he loved it.

*Source: Kathie Ryckman Anderson, "Era Bell Thompson: A North Dakota Daughter," North Dakota History 49:4 (Fall 1982):11-12.*