

TRIVMP over great odds

THE STORY OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN CENTRAL KENTUCKY IS NOT A PLEASANT ONE. THOUGH FARMS IN THE BLUEGRASS COUNTIES WERE LARGER MOST FARMS DEPENDED ON CORN, HEMP, AND CATTLE, CROPS ILL-SUITED FOR SLAVES. IN SCOTT COUNTY, FOR EXAMPLE, ONLY FORTY THREE FARMS QUALIFIED FOR THE DEFINITION OF PLANTATION. MOST SLAVES, THEREFORE, LIVED IN GROUPS OF FIVE OR LESS. SOMETIMES THE RESULTING INTIMACY BRED AFFECTION BETWEEN MASTER AND SLAVE. MORE OFTEN, HOWEVER, IT LED TO OVERWORK, INADEQUATE PROVISIONS AND SEXUAL ABUSE.

DURING THE CIVIL WAR KENTUCKY SLAVES VOICED THEIR SENTIMENTS THROUGH THEIR ACTIONS. THOUSANDS DESERTED THE PLANTATIONS, SEEKING SAFETY IN UNION ARMY CAMPS AND TAKING ADVANTAGE OF "PALMER'S PASSES," THE TRAVEL VOUCHERS ISSUED BY GENERAL JOHN M. PALMER TO BLACKS SEEKING TO LEAVE OR FIND WORK.

AFTER THE WAR AFRICAN AMERICANS WANTED REAL FREEDOM. THEY SOUGHT LAND, HOUSING, AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES. JOHN ALVORD, ORGANIZER OF THE FREEDMANS SAVINGS BANK CLAIMED THAT THE 12,000 BLACKS IN THE LEXINGTON AREA WERE AMONG THE MOST PROSPEROUS IN ALL OF THE SOUTH. WHITES, HOWEVER, RESENTED EVEN THE LIMITED OPPORTUNITIES FOR BLACKS. REGULATORS, WHITES WHO WANTED TO RESTORE THE OLD WAYS, BURNED FREEDMEN SCHOOLS, AND MURDERED, MUTILATED AND TERRORIZED THE FREEDPERSONS.

AFRICAN AMERICANS FOUND SUPPORT IN THEIR COMMUNITIES AND THEIR CHURCHES. THE BLACK CHURCH, EXCLUSIVELY CONTROLLED BY BLACKS, BECAME THE CENTRAL UNIFYING FORCE AND THE PRIMARY INSTRUMENT USED TO PROMOTE AND DEFEND BLACKS POLITICALLY, ECONOMICALLY AND SOCIALLY.

NEVERTHELESS, CENTRAL KENTUCKY'S AFRICAN AMERICANS BELIEVED THEY COULD ACHIEVE MORE OF THE AMERICAN DREAM. IN THE SPRING OF 1877 W.R. HILL AND REV. ROUNDTREE, PROMOTERS OF A BLACK SETTLEMENT CALLED NICODEMUS IN KANSAS, VISITED LOCAL CHURCHES AND ENCOURAGED EMIGRATION. MT. OLIVE CHURCH OF DRY RUN, FIRST BAPTIST OF GEORGETOWN, STAMPING GROUND BAPTIST, ZEBULAH BAPTIST OF WHITE SULPHUR AND MT. PLEASANT IN SADIEVILLE LED THE MOVEMENT. KANSAS BECAME THE 'PROMISED LAND,' BEGINNING A RELATIONSHIP THAT ENRICHES THE LIFE OF BOTH KANSAS AND KENTUCKY.

• consequent AA & whites daily interacted in the mines & work.

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