

KANSAS HISTORICAL MARKER

NICODEMUS

In July, 1877, Negro "exodusters" from Kentucky established a settlement here in the Promised Land of Kansas which they named Nicodemus. Although the colonists lacked sufficient tools, seed and money, they managed to survive the first winter, some by selling buffalo bones, others by working for the Kansas Pacific railroad at Ellis, 35 miles away. In 1880 the all-Negro community had a population of more than 400.

Their industry brought approving notices in Kansas newspapers. One story concerned a farmer who with one cow "broke and improved twelve acres of prairie and cultivated eight acres of corn; his wife drives the cow and keeps the flies off." Another spaded a four-foot hedge row around 160 acres of land. Edward P. McCabe, who joined the colony in 1878, served two terms as state auditor, 1883-1887, the first Negro to hold a major state office.

By 1887, Nicodemus had churches, stores, lodges, a school and two newspapers, but its future was blighted when a projected railroad failed to materialize. Nevertheless, these pioneers who built so much with so little hold a proud place in the Kansas story.

Erected by State Historical Society and State Highway Commission