African-American communities in Kansas have been the subject of a number of scholarly investigations conducted over several decades. Black migration to Kansas, participation of black troops from Kansas in the Spanish American War, and education of African-Americans in nineteenth-century Kansas are the foci of these studies. Yet, except for the establishment of Nicodemus as a black colony, our knowledge of communities in Kansas where black experiences, cultures, and institutions evolved has remained rather limited.

Thomas Cox’s study of the African-American community in Topeka and his history of the blacks in Wyandotte County have laid the groundwork for further research on the growth of black neighborhoods during the nineteenth and twentieth cen-

"We All Seem Like Brothers and Sisters"

The African-American Community in Manhattan, Kansas, 1865-1940

by Nupur Chaudhuri

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Amanda "Aunt Mandy" Watson Keel was born in Vicksburg, Tennessee, in 1864, and later made her home in Manhattan. This ca. 1895 photo was taken at Sixth and Humboldt streets near the home of the John Elliot family, Amanda's employer. Aunt Mandy died in Manhattan in 1938.
turies. Though social processes generally occur throughout a society at a given time, they almost always vary in shape, content, and consequence from place to place and community to community within that society. Because many communities collectively determined the contour of black society in general, accounts of other black settlements as well as the three already mentioned are needed to create an understanding of the evolution and contribution of African-American communities in nineteenth-century Kansas. By studying individual black communities in several towns and cities, one can gain a comprehensive view of the African-American culture in Kansas and acquire an insight into what is specifically and uniquely local to a particular town.

This study of an African-American community between 1865-1940 is an effort to reconstrukt the unfolding process of community development among the blacks in Manhattan. It focuses on patterns of early residence and employment, education of the African-American children, and religious, social, cultural and political activities. Neighborhoods provide a framework to study social processes, affording us the opportunity to use the “little” picture as a means to achieve empathy and to discov cover the “big” picture. Experiences of the African-American community during the latter part of the nineteenth century also offer a unique lens through which we can view Manhattan’s past.

Social, economic, political, and institutional experiences of African-American communities are examined from such sources as census data, newspaper articles, church records, official records on marriage, and from the narratives of different community activities. But these sources provide only part of the necessary information for reconstructing the black experience. Accounts of the growth and development of many African-American communities, especially those in small-town Kansas, are often the experiences of ordinary people whose lives, activities, and feelings are commonly overlooked and unrecorded. Because oral history—recording private feelings, priorities, and values—is an important means of recapturing responses of the common people in a community, interviews of twenty-three elderly African-American citizens in Manhattan also served as a source of information for this article.5

The 1855 territorial census of Kansas recorded that thirteen blacks and mulattoes lived in Riley County and the adjacent counties of Pottawatomie, Clay, Marshall, and Washington. Whether any one of them lived in Manhattan is not clear, but the U.S. census of 1860 showed no blacks residing in Manhattan.

The 1865 state census provides us with the first concrete evidence of blacks living in Manhattan. That year Manhattan’s total population of 328 included nine African-Americans. The black population was apparently smaller in Manhattan than in some of the adjacent areas such as St. George Township in Pottawatomie County, which had a black population of sixteen. According to the 1865 census, two black families resided in Manhattan: the Simmons and the Thomases. Oliver Simms (age thirty-two) came from Georgia and his wife, Eliza (age thirty-six), was from Kentucky. Edom Thomas (age thirty-six) also came from Kentucky. Records of marriage certificates in Manhattan indicate that Edom Thomas married Amanda on November 9, 1865. The Thomas family consisted of thirteen-year-old M. Thomas, twelve-year-old B. Thomas, and two-year-old Abraham Lincoln Thomas. A sixteen-year-old male J. S. Thomas from Massachusetts, and unrelated to the Edom Thomas family, lived in Manhattan Township and worked for R. H. Kimball, a prominent early settler in Manhattan.6

The subsequent years until about the mid-1880s can be seen as a period of marked increase in the growth of the black commu

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4. Ibid., 26. 5. These interviews were conducted between September 1983 and September 1984, and the interviewees were over the age of sixty and had lived in Manhattan for more than fifty years. The tapes of these interviews are at the Riley County Historical Society Archives in Manhattan, Kansas (hereafter cited as RCHS Archives). Ten tapes are transcribed and one copy of each transcript is at the RCHS Archives. In this article no distinction has been made between blacks and mulattoes.

6. All the census data consulted are in the Kansas State Historical Society.

7. Records of marriage certificates are located in the RCHS Archives.

8. 1865 census does not spell out the names of the members of the Thomas family.
nity. Whereas in 1865 the African-American population constituted about 2.7 percent of the total population, in 1870 the black population made up 5.9 percent of the total population. The federal census noted an interracial marriage between Charles Mathews, a thirty-three-year-old black farmer from Georgia, and Mary Mathews, a thirty-two-year-old white woman from Indiana. The same census also revealed that the majority of the black population of sixty-five, of which forty-four were males and twenty-one females, came from Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Georgia, Arizona, North Carolina, Indiana, and Illinois. Some blacks like Sally Breakbill, living in adjoining areas, also moved to Manhattan in the period between 1865 and 1870. Forty-one-year-old Sally Breakbill and her family were living in St. George Township in 1865. She had been sold away from her first husband before the Civil War, and later she married William Breakbill, a black farmer in St. George Township. Sally had four children, two of whom were from her first marriage. William Breakbill, soon after the birth of her third child, left Sally. She then moved to Manhattan sometime before 1870.

The state census of 1875 noted that the black population rose to about one hundred of which sixty-four were males and thirty-six were females. The percentage of the population that was black nearly doubled in the next five years. The increase in the population was due to both an influx of arrivals from other


The black population in Kansas grew slowly until the mid-1870s. In 1875, the state census tallied about one hundred African-Americans in Manhattan.
The 1879 Exodus significantly increased the black population of Manhattan. Those fortunate enough to find work were usually employed by white residents. Here Robert (or John) Keele assists his employer’s children with a burro ride.

states and resettlements of blacks within the state of Kansas. The Griggsbys from Tennessee and the Mitchells from eastern Kansas are examples of the new immigrants. With about one hundred people, Manhattan had a visible black ethnic community before the 1879 Exodus.

In 1879, the black migration to Kansas, including Manhattan, took a sharp upward turn. In a few months in 1879, some six thousand blacks from Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas immigrated to Kansas. Their movements were unplanned and unorganized. This migration to Kansas is known as the Exodus of 1879 in reference to the perception of these African-Americans that they were going to the “Promised Land.”

Many black refugees, coming by boat, landed at Wyandotte, first stop inside the Kansas border, which they considered to be a sanctuary. This river town with about five thousand residents was totally unprepared to receive such a large influx of destitute black migrants. Tension mounted and on April 18, 1879, the mayor of the city issued a proclamation prohibiting any steamboat line or transportation company “importing destitute persons to our shore.” By now 1,700 to 2,000 destitute blacks were already in Wyandotte. On April 21, the steamboat Durfee arrived in Wyandotte with another 240 black passengers. When the captain of the boat was told not to unload any passengers at Wyandotte, he anchored his boat near the Plankington and Armour packing plant in Kansas.

City, Missouri. Lacking any municipal ordinance prohibiting the entry of black immigrants, the authorities in Kansas City, Missouri, were forced to accept this group of 240 passengers. A money-raising campaign was quickly launched, and within a few days all but one family were shipped to Manhattan.\(^9\)

The *Manhattan Enterprise* on May 2, 1879, gave an account of the arrival of these African-American immigrants:

As soon as it became known last Thursday that two car-loads of Exodists had reached this place, they were visited by a large number of citizens of both sexes, all ages and colors. Being entirely destitute, active measures were at once taken for their relief. The whole number were removed to the old paper mill, where they are at present. The accommodations are not great, but there is good shelter from the weather.

According to the newspaper report, 104 persons were put off in Manhattan and one of them died shortly after his arrival. The whereabouts of the other passengers are not known. The *Manhattan Enterprise* further reported that 70 persons from this group immediately began to work as farm laborers, and the rest, mothers with children, had to be taken care of for food and shelter. The city had to find accommodations for the helpless refugees. The newspaper noted that many of our farmers need cheap hands yet do not feel able to build a shanty to accommodate the mother and children. The first few days after the arrival of the Exodists it costs some $15 per day to feed [all of] them. This has dwindled down until now it costs only $5 per day.\(^12\)

On April 25, 1879, a meeting was held in the office of a local merchant, George W. Higginbothom, "to consider what steps should be taken in reference to colored refugees from the South, now seeking homes in Kansas."\(^13\)

An executive committee of George W. Higginbothom, L. R. Elliot, E. L. Patee, S. M. Ferguson, J. T. Ritchie, George S. Gree, and J. T. Ellicot was created to look after the interests of the black refugees.\(^14\) Dr. E. L. Patee volunteered the service of free medical treatment for sick refugees and even extended the offer to furnish the needed medicine without charge, if no offer of relief came from local druggists.

The official record of J. P. Peckham, township trustee of Manhattan Township, included the names of all refugees who were unable to provide for themselves. The records from April 1879 to July 1880 recorded the names of the black refugees and the amount of help these individuals received from various citizens of the town. Peckham listed the names of the exodusters separately from the names of the long-time African-American residents of Manhattan. The records reveal that by May 24, 1879, $65.35 had been spent for provisions and fuel for the exodusters, as well as $9.30 for cooking utensils.

The *Exodus significantly increased the black population of Manhattan*. The 1880 census lists its total population as 2,105. The number of black men, women, and children was 315, or 15 percent of the total population. But this was to be the peak in relative size of the black community. Although the population of blacks increased slightly during the next five years, the total population in Manhattan increased even more, so that when compared with the overall population, the black community actually decreased from 15 percent to about 12 percent by 1885. The census data from 1880 to 1940 clearly indicate that in Manhattan the black population progressively decreased from the highest figure of 15 percent in 1880 to slightly more than 2 percent in 1940, although the absolute number of the black citizens randomly fluctuated in the year 1920 and 1940.

While demography can say something about the vitality of a black community and its impact on the private lives and experiences of these early African-American settlers, other sources can aid in piecing together a comprehensive view. From the interviews of senior citizens and from newspaper accounts, one can attempt to form a picture of the black experience in Manhattan. Among the twenty-three African-American senior citizens interviewed, five traced their roots in Manhattan as far back as 1880 and 1910. They were aware of their heritage in American slavery. Lena Wilson indicated that her mother was a slave in Mississippi before she came to live in Manhattan. Deola Bennett stated, "my grandpa on my mama's side, he was a slave. . . ."
It took them a whole year to come through Illinois; and Dorothy Elaine Brown Fulghem stated that her grandmother from her mother’s side was a slave. She believed that most of her family came from Tennessee “during the slavery time.” Helen Christian Baker reported that her grandfather and his family came to Manhattan in a covered wagon. Ruth Bayard informed us that her great-grandmother, a slave in Kentucky, came here with her family “during the time slaves became free.” George Giles stated that his grandmother came to Manhattan in early 1900. As to why her ancestors chose to come to Kansas, Deola Bennett acknowledged, “They [her grandparents] did not know where they were going to camp. They finally said, ‘Just go to Kansas.’ So they made it to Kansas.” Dorothy Fulghem explained.

They were white people that brought them up here to Kansas. That’s the way I understood Grandma. And it seemed like they worked for people, but yet and still they had their independence. . . . The folks just brought her. [Mrs. Fulghem asked herself] Were they sharecroppers? I believe they were and they brought my grandmother.

Where the black pioneers established their first homes in Manhattan is not clear. The first black church in Manhattan, known as the Second Methodist Episcopal Church, was built in 1866 at the corner of Sixth and El Paso on the south side of the town. The establishment of this church suggests that a number of black families lived in the vicinity of the church, but others apparently settled elsewhere away from the church so that no specific neighborhood existed in the beginning.

Segregation was a later development. Mrs. Fulghem recalled hearing from her grandmother about living on Blumont Hill on the north side of the town. When the exodusters arrived in Manhattan, some of them apparently sought homes in the northern part of the town. But by 1880, a large black population had settled in the southwest part of the town. The Nationalist in January 1880 reported that “at the rate the colored people are building in the southwest part of town, they will soon have to have a separate city government. New houses are going up all the time.” This tended to homogenize the black community around the residential center established by the pioneers. No apparent reason for the move towards the south side has been found in any contemporary documents, but some of those interviewed had their own thoughts on the subject. Mrs. Fulghem noted, “Segregation. They [whites] got all the black people and they got this land together and we are all pushed back over here, so that is why this is our part of the town.” She further amplified, “That is where everyone was, every family, they each had so much land, and that was just where all the black people were, and families. We had our own churches, we had our school.” On this southward move Ruth Bayard remarked, “They [whites] just wanted blacks south of Poyntz [Avenue], kind of like in a little settlement.”

According to the interviewees, the black neighborhood was confined between Second and Tenth streets and between Pottawatomie and Colorado streets. Deola Bennett forcefully stated, “That’s where the Negroes live. Well, we couldn’t go farther than Colorado [Street], that’s where the Negroes could buy. You couldn’t go up there. Oh, no. My God, no. They didn’t want you up there.”

Over and over again interviewees emphasized that the African-Americans could hardly establish residence outside of their neighborhood in other parts of Manhattan. Mrs. Fulghem described how white families tried to stop them from buying a house on Colorado Street. Even though they paid half the price of the house in cash, the banks refused to lend them the rest of the money. But they bought “the house under the assumption of the same name that it was in and on the thing, under the quota that if you miss one payment, you leave everything you ever put in this place.” Finally, by borrowing money from Mrs. Arthur Peine, who had been raised by Mrs. Fulghem’s grandmother, they paid back the bank.

The forced segregation promoted endogamous relationships in the black community. Roberta Starnes described her neighborhood on Yuma Street, “Everybody was kin around us . . . my grandmother’s sister lived next door to us.” The segregated African-American families depended on each other for help and mutual support in their struggles for a decent and

15. Nationalist, September 12, 1879.
16. Ibid., January 9, 1880.
respective living. Rosa Louise Hickman said, "In those days everybody looked after everybody's children. You didn't do anything that you got away with. Somebody told your parents. They could correct you and they would tell on you. . . . We are sort of like one family, we just all stuck together." Responding to the feeling of oneness, Ruth Bayard reported, "We all seem like brothers and sisters, more like a family, and we just didn't have nothing to choose from because we was around each other all the time in school and, you know, just kind of around together in a cluster."

In the segregated south side, a few white families lived in the midst of the predominantly black community. Clara Elizabeth Irving Settler remarked:

Next door to us was a white family on the left, on the right was also a white family, and the next door down was a black family. Across the street was a white family. I would say in the block that we lived was integrated . . . but the street itself was mostly black.

Although the African-Americans had limited mobility and opportunity in this white dominated society and their resentment of such treatment ran deep, they apparently harbored a feeling of good will toward white families who lived south of Yuma. Mrs. Settler commented, "We got along fine. We were all in about the same economic level, so they couldn't say anything. All poor people."

Among early African-American settlers, Sally Breakbill apparently created a strong impression at least in the mind of one person in the white community. Ellen Ellsworth-Martin,
daughter of Josiah Pillsbury, a prominent early white settler in Manhattan, wrote, "I remember seeing Aunt Sallie come into the Baptist Church with her little brood every Sunday morning. They sat in the part of the church which was called 'Amen corner.' They were always starched and clean. Aunt Sallie was a fine Christian woman." Another black woman widely respected by whites was Clarinda Craig who began to work as a midwife in the late 1870s. Ellen Ellsworth-Martin noted that "a good many Manhattan's early citizens owe their lives to Auntie Craig for the wonderful care she gave them." These women were exceptions because they had more contact with the whites. Although the blacks found empathy from some members in the white community, the African-Americans generally lived under fear of ridicule and hostility from members of the dominant race. In two instances black women were physically attacked by white teenagers:

Most of the exodites are unusually polite persons. Not long ago, one of the women was coming from Dr. Stillman's with a pail of milk of her head, and some brutal boys stoned her, not only knocking the pail from her head, but considerably bruising her face and arms. The same boys, whose name we withhold this time, stoned another woman, cutting a large gash in her face. This in return for the politeness of these strangers in a strange land! We trust that if this ever happens again, the young out-

Until the turn of the century, black children attended the same school as whites. Shown here are both an 1888 class in Manhattan's integrated Old Central School (top), and students in the all-black Douglas School which opened in 1904.

19. Ibid.
laws will be arrested and punished severely."

Obviously, some citizens condemned such violent acts, but these acts served as reminders to blacks that generally greater safety was to be found within the confines of their own community.

Since the 1880s, African-Americans have become actively involved in opposing discrimination. The Afro-American League, among several organizations in Topeka, was a pioneer group in maintaining opposition to any form of racial discrimination. Some African-Americans from Manhattan such as A. Cooper and W. H. Hamilton joined the Afro-American State League and worked for civil liberties.21

These efforts, however, had only very limited effect in cultivating positive relations between social groups. Interviews with the black senior citizens describe the extent to which social interaction was limited between the black and the white communities. Usually, once a year on Emancipation Day, August 2, the black community was allowed to share space with the white community in the white neighborhood. According to Mr. and Mrs. Fulghem:

On this day the white folks would feed us the food. And it was election day, or it was close to the election day. That was when somebody from downtown wanted to be elected. Oh, you know, for county attorney, sheriff, or mayor. Yes, we would go up there and have somebody to barbecue it and fix it.

Only on that day could black families have their own picnics and social gatherings at the city park and swim at the city swimming pool. However, even then the two groups were not really integrated. Although the whites allowed the blacks to share their space in the city park, they maintained their distance from the African-Americans.

Among the various festive occasions, Emancipation Day was an especially important day for African-Americans. A procession formed at colored Methodist church, and, headed by the Band, marched through Poyntz Avenue to the grove across the Kansas, making a good showing. On the grounds, a speaker's stand had been erected, long tables arranged and several [band] stands were in full blast.22 After listening to several pieces of band music, at noon, the president of the group called the people to order and "prayer was offered by a reverend colored gentleman from abroad." The principal speaker, a Reverend Lynch of Topeka, directed his comments towards the "new comers" and to their "present situation." "After the program at the grove was carried out, they repaired to the County hall, where they danced till morning."23 The interviews of the elderly blacks reveal that the black community celebrated Emancipation Day until the celebration was discontinued after 1930. This was explained with the comment that "those things just faded out, and July 4 replaced the day for all."

Distinct separation between the two races persisted through the turn of the century. Like many centers of social activities, the theater hall was segregated. The African-Americans attending shows at the Wareham Opera House were allowed to sit only in the balcony. Around 1908, the owner of this opera house wrote in his diary:

The largest audience that has convened in the opera house this session came together last Friday night to hear the music rendered by the Remeye concert company, in fact it was a jam from pit to gallery [sic]. "Nigger heaven" was gay with new Easter bonnets and the bald headed [men] row was occupied by modesty and decorum.23

All public places except the hospitals were segregated. Public accommodations like restaurants and hotels and even the single dormitory (now Van Zile Hall) of the Kansas State Agricultural College practiced discrimination. Black students who attended the college lived on the south side of the town. Mrs. Starnes mentioned that her mother rented rooms to four black college students. Mrs. Hickman and Mrs. Alexander listed the names of the black families who rented rooms to black students. Iva Benjamin, one of the interviewees, stated:

In the late thirties and forties I used to cook for the students, and the biggest I ever had was twelve students. The annex where I would serve evening meals, because years ago where they [black students] lived, they did not have cook-

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20. Nationalist, September 5, 1879
22. Nationalist, August 5, 1880.
23. Harry Wareham's Scrapbook, RCHS Archives.
ing privileges, and you could not go in any of these eating places and eat unless you ate in the kitchen. Even at the bus station you ate in the kitchen.

Leaders of the white community further strengthened the isolation of blacks by promulgating a law which prohibited unescorted white women from entering restaurants operated by the blacks. 24

Even the local churches maintained the color barrier by requiring African Americans to sit in the back. Although blacks attended these churches, they really were not part of the congregation. Perhaps this desire to belong led many of them to establish their own church which would then be their place for cultural expression and social bonding. One church had been built before the Exodus, and three more churches were constructed thereafter. The first black church in Manhattan, Second Methodist Episcopal Church, was organized as a mission church in 1866. It was a wooden frame building with a seating capacity of one hundred. The Freedmen's Aid Society of the Annual Conference provided this church with aid for many years, and additional help came from the white First Methodist Episcopal Church. In the 1880s, the Second Methodist Episcopal Church was located on Fifth Street between the Rock Island and the Union Pacific tracks. Alfred Griggsby, Edmond Williams, John Williams, William Davis, Thomas Bula, Brother Logan, and Edom Thomas were some of the trustees during the 1870s and 1880s. From 1866 to 1881, Reverend Griffing served as minister, and after Reverend Griffing's death, Reverend William became the pastor. During this time two services were held on Sundays with prayer meeting on Wednesdays. After the morning service, Sunday School was held. In 1881, the congregation had fifteen members, and the number rose to thirty-five in 1883. In the early 1900s, the Second Methodist Episcopal moved to Tenth and Yuma, and a stone church building, called Shepard Chapel in honor of Bishop W.O. Shepard who dedicated the church, replaced the frame structure in 1916. Shepard was a minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church from the Wichita area. 25

Around this time approximately forty-six people attended the Shepard Church.

Reminiscing about erecting the stone building, Deola Bennett stated, "Oh, yes, when they broke the line, they had a plow and everybody in there paid a dollar and you pull the plow across the line." George Giles remembered, "My mother bought a window, had her name on one of those windows. [It] was a painted window."

The Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in October 1879, and a wooden frame building which could seat about one hundred people was erected at 401 Yuma Street in 1900. Reverend Oscar Haskins was the first pastor and Reverend Mathew Jones succeeded him in October 1880. Some of the trustees of this church in the 1880s were Ed Williams, George Wesley, George Barney, John Anderson, and Nick Holbert. Two services were held on Sundays, and Sunday Schools were held after the morning services. In the 1880s, the superintendents of the Sunday School were Mary Inman, Smith Burdett, A. H. Haywood, Caroline Berry, B. G. Gilbert, and Edmonia Alexander. Usually, two teachers taught the Sunday School, which began with ten students. By 1892, the number of students had increased to sixty-five. 26

In March 1880, a group of blacks began conducting worship services in Avenue School, located at the present site of the middle school on Poyntz Avenue. This congregation was organized by the First Baptist Church and was named the Second or Colored Baptist Church. It is not clear, however, from the church records or the interviews why the First Baptist Church organized the Colored Baptist Church. In 1882, the congregation obtained a frame building at Ninth and Yuma, and about forty adults and seventy-five children attended the Sunday School. Reverend Abraham Cooper was the pastor and Lewis Call was the superintendent. In 1920, the Second Baptist merged with Mount Zion Baptist Church, and the reorganized church was named Pilgrim Baptist Church. 27

Little is known about the Mount Zion Baptist Church. It was organized around 1890 at the corner of Juliette and El Paso streets, with seventy members, and Reverend W. H. White of Topeka served as a pastor. Emma Parks, one of the inter-

24. Manhattan Republic and Manhattan Nationalist, August 20, 1936.

25. For more information on Shepard Church see Homer E. Socolofsky, From the Beginning: A History of the First United Methodist Church, Manhattan, Kansas 1855-1985 (Manhattan: First United Methodist Church, 1985).


27. For more information on Pilgrim Baptist Church see Ruth Bayard, "History of Pilgrim Baptist Church," RCHS Archives.
viewees, reported that her father started the Church of God in Christ around 1933, and meet-
ings were held at his home at 1020 Colorado.

Besides fulfilling the religious needs of Manhattan's black com-
munity, the churches played an important role in promoting close-knit social bonds. The black ministers took turns in organizing the church services so that the entire African-American community could attend the same church on a particular Sunday. The churches were the center for social activities. Interviews of the African-American senior citizens explain how the early pastors of these churches organized their programs: for a number of years, Bethel A.M.E. Church had its program on the first Sunday of the month; Shepard Church held its program on the second Sunday of the month; Pilgrim Baptist Church on the third Sunday of the month; and the Church of God on the fourth Sunday of the month.

Recollecting her childhood, Helen Baker stated:

I think we hardly ever went out of our block, and that's where we would go would be church. We went to church quite often. There was always something going on for the kids in our church. We would go to different houses and gather food and go back to church and eat it.

Churches became their second home in their limited world, as evidenced by Rosa Hickman's response:

Well, as children you had to go in them days, you know. You may go in the morning, you didn't get back until like it was

In the early decades and well into the twentieth century, the majority of black males were employed as day laborers. These two men have taken a moment away from their work with a harvest crew.
night. And then, if you get sleepy like at night, well, then, you straightened out in them pews and go to sleep, because, you know, no need to say "I want to go home" or something, because in those days you know the mother and father was the head of the household and not the children.

In their interviews the senior citizens repeatedly emphasized that the church had many important roles in shaping the course of their lives. Mrs. Fulghem noted, "We were raised in the church, and the church was just full, and just active and everything. We had our league, we had our regular meetings and everything."

In the 1960s, the Shepard Church merged with the First Methodist Church. Explaining this merger, Mr. Fulghem remarked, "Most of the older people died out, and it wasn't enough members to keep the church going and to pay ministers. . . . It was one of the things I really hated to see go down. It was our church." Mrs. Bennett expressed her feelings by stating, "We lost it and white folks took it over and we have to go there."

Little is known about the education of black children in Manhattan before 1879. Many blacks in Kansas believed that only through education would they be able to achieve economic prosperity and improve their social status. In the absence of any written records, we can only presume that during the 1860s and 1870s the blacks in this town shared those feelings. Many whites also believed that only through education would blacks become productive and responsible citizens. 28

During the early 1860s, the only schools open to blacks in Kansas were privately supported Freedmen's schools or evening schools. Later in the decade, with the rise of the African-American population, charity schools could not accommodate all the black children. Consequently, public schools were under pressure to provide education for African-American children, although many white citizens, fearing that "mixed education" implied the eradication of social differentiation, did not wish to integrate the public school system. In 1867, the Kansas Legislature passed a law that supported separate but equal education for both black and white children. The statute made the school districts responsible for the "education of white and colored children, separately or otherwise, securing to them equal educational advantages." The implementation of separate schools came about in two phases, the legislature first allowing separate schools only in first-class cities, and by 1868, allowing the same for second-class cities.

In the early 1860s, however, a small minority of white Kansans had voiced opposition to the system of separate schools either on moral grounds or because of economic considerations. The factors for and against the system soon were embroiled in a major political issue. The citizens of Manhattan were also divided. In his editorial in the Nationalist, Albert Griffin asked every citizen to work against the increasing prejudices "which prohibited colored brethren and sisters' from obtaining an equal education." Voicing opposition to this attitude of integrated school systems, one subscriber wrote, "Compel us to associate with the negro, and we become a slave in turn." Because their numbers were few in Manhattan in the 1860s and early 1870s, it is likely that the black children attended the same school as the white children. Ellen Ellsworth-Martin attended school with black children, and in her reminiscences she wrote about the funeral of one of her black classmates—eleven-year-old Tom, son of Kate Noris. Tom's funeral was held in the Methodist Church, and the entire class under the supervision of Libby Hoyt attended. The children laid flowers on the casket, and Ellen recalled, "That was the first tragedy that came into our young lives and I never forgot it." Unlike their parents, the white and the black children and some of the teachers were not self-conscious about integrated education.

After the 1879 Exodus, the number of black children in Manhattan increased considerably, and the question of an integrated school system became a greater issue. When the school board met in August 1879, the Manhattan Enterprise reported, "The annual school [board] meeting was held at the new school house last Thursday. There was a very small attendance. Among the questions which came up was whether the colored scholars should have separate apartments from the whites. It was decided not." The debate on totally segregated schools continued in the press and in the school board meetings for the next few years, and the promoters of such philosophy apparently achieved a partial victory in 1884 when black children began attending separate classes from the white children but in the same building.

Both the black and white population of Manhattan perceived Selina Wilson as the principal of the black students and Eli Freeman as the second teacher. Wilson was teaching first grade with twenty-seven students, whereas Freeman was teaching second grade with thirty-four students. In 1896, among fifteen students that graduated from Manhattan's ninth grade, one was a black student, Sarah E. Thomas, daughter of Edwin Thomas a laborer and Emma Thomas a homemaker. In 1901, the number of black students in Manhattan's school was 137. This number dropped to 111 in 1902 and to 107 the following year. In this last group of 107, 51 were female students.

The first reference to a completely separate school for Manhattan's black children can be found in the minutes of the board of education meeting on July 6, 1903. It recorded that "Eli C. Freeman and Eli Cruise repre-

29. Quoted in ibid., 259.
31. Nationalist, February 12, 1875.
32. Ibid., February 26, 1875. Similar views of segregation were expressed again in the Nationalist on March 5, 1875.
34. Manhattan Enterprise, August 22, 1879.
35. Mercury, Manhattan, June 16, September 15, 1886.
36. Ibid., January 23, 1896. Occupations of Edwin and Emma Thomas are listed in 1880 federal census.
37. Manhattan Nationalist, August 13, 1903.
38. Dedication Exercise for the New Douglas School Building, Manhattan: October, 1937. The school board meeting records for this time period are no longer extant.
senting the Americus Club were present and presented views of that club regarding separate schools for colored people.” A week later on July 13, 1903, all white members of the board of education met to consider the advisability of building a new school of two rooms suitably located to accommodate the colored pupils of the city. At this meeting, the board of education decided to “employ two persons to circulate petitions among the colored people with a view to ascertain their desires regarding the new building.” Presumably the board members wanted to find out about the attitude of the blacks regarding a segregated school.

A second special meeting was held on July 16 to further consider the feasibility of a separate school, and a delegation of the African-Americans was present at that meeting. The “matter was discussed pro and con by them, after which the Board went into a secret session.” The board decided to postpone any decision at that time. Finally, at the school board meeting on August 3, 1903, a motion was made to build a two-room building. Following a deliberation, the motion was approved by a vote of six to one. The president of the school board and the building and grounds committee of the city were authorized to take preliminary steps toward the erection of the building. Requests for sealed bids for the construction of a ward school were published in the local newspaper and the building was completed at a cost of $3,828.

The black community was not generally supportive of the idea of segregated education for their children. At the regular board meeting on September 7, 1903, “a committee of colored people was present and presented a remonstrance against the building of a separate building for the colored pupils.”

The board of education nevertheless went ahead with its plan to construct a building for the black students. The minutes of the special meeting of the board on September 16, 1903, stated, “It was moved and seconded that the board proceed with the building of a new school house according to specification and that Smith and Correll be awarded the contract for the same.”

Upon the request of the African-American community, the board approved the name of the new Fifth Ward building as the Douglas School, after Frederick Douglass, the noted abolitionist and black advocate, and ordered that the name be cut on the stone. The Mercury of January 13, 1904, reported that the new Douglas School opened with sixty children on January 4, 1904.

Some of the African-American senior citizens interviewed had a different perspective on the establishment of the Douglas School. They believed that the school was created to provide a job for Eli Freeman, a black teacher. Deola Bennett stated that “a man got a piece of money and lied, said that there is going to be a night school, and turned it into a nigger school.”

Few parents of the interviewees ever attended primary school in Manhattan, unlike many of the interviewees, who attended the Douglas School. George Giles recalled that he was a student of Mr. Freeman, who taught first through third grades. The black students attended through the sixth grade in the Douglas School, after which they went to an integrated junior and senior high school. Some of the senior citizens we interviewed told us that their memories of the integrated school system at the junior and senior levels are filled with unpleasant experiences of stark racism.

Remembering her high school days, Clara Settler stated:

In high school when we went to the auditorium for the assembly, they would always sit us in the back. Even though the school was integrated. I remember that the day I graduated from junior high and also when we went from assembly, you were supposed to be seated alphabetically, but they would sit all the blacks together or at the back of the room.

Emma Parks recalled that most black boys did not go beyond seventh or eighth grade. Incentive for education did not exist for the blacks. Built-in social barriers to a decent and respectable livelihood for the blacks were the major impediment to seeking education. Clara Settler stated:

Well, I really don’t think it made much difference that whether if you [were] taught in the school. Course, wages were low at that time, so I really couldn’t say... Most of the ladies cooked in the fraternities and sororities and the men were janitors. I don’t think it made any difference about your education.

39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Manhattan Nationalist, August 13, 1903.
42. Ibid., September 10, 1903.
43. Ibid., September 17, 24, 1903.
44. Although Douglas School was named for Frederick Douglass, the school’s correct name is Douglas.
The fulfillment of ambition for the black people rested on opportunities to execute their skills, to acquire new crafts, and to develop talents that the society was ready to accept. Thus, the pattern and scope of employment that became available to the African-Americans provides an index to the narrative of their struggle to establish themselves in the society.

In 1865, the black population consisted of three men of working age, all of them were employed. Edom Thomas was a laborer, Oliver Simms a teamster, and J. S. Thomas a servant. None of the working age women were employed for wages. The employment patterns, opportunities, and preferences for members of the black community became more varied in the years following the development of the nucleus of this African-American community.

During the 1870s, the majority worked as laborers on surrounding farms or in the town. Several were self-employed as barbers and farmers. Stephen Steward and two of his family members worked as barbers. After working as a teamster in the 1860s, Oliver Simms became an owner of a farm on which he worked for the next couple of decades. Eighteen-year-old William Fields from Missouri worked for the G. F. Brown family—a white pioneer family in Manhattan. Richard Thomas and John Foreman worked as stone masons. Foreman himself employed James Alexander from Texas as a laborer. Noah Morgan from Indiana worked as a hotel cook. William Cox from Virginia was employed as hotel porter. Edom Thomas also worked as a hotel porter.

Job opportunities were limited for black women. The majority worked as laundresses, domestics, midwives, or cooks.

The African-American Community
Only five of twenty-one black women were gainfully employed between 1865 and 1875. Working as domestics were Sally Breakbill, Sarah Craig from Missouri, Deborah Alexander from Indiana, and Eliza Mathews from Kentucky. Martha Mathews worked as a hotel cook.

The 1875 state census data showed that black men generally worked as laborers. Some, like Alfred Griggsby from Tennessee and Thomas Hill from Maryland, worked as craftsmen, carpenters, or harnessmakers. Jerry Mitchell, who once hauled material by wagon from Leavenworth to Fort Riley, settled in Manhattan after he met Rose Taylor. Jerry and Rose Mitchell raised their family of twelve children at 731 Potawatomie, the site of present Bell Air Apartments. Later in his life, in 1912, Jerry Mitchell started the first garbage collection for the city of Manhattan. The Mitchells helped with the construction of the Shepard Methodist Chapel around 1916.

In the 1870s, most of the African-American women did not work for wages. The few women who found employment opportunities worked largely as laundresses operating their businesses from home. In the 1870s, Kate Noris, Eliza Hill and Sally Breakbill, who previously worked as domestics, began to wash clothes for others at home. Hanna Noris, daughter of Kate Noris, began to work as a domestic at age seventeen.

The census data of 1880 revealed that nearly 84 percent of the employed black men worked as day laborers. In 1880, 20 percent of the women were employed and of those slightly 45. Pioneers of the Bluestem Prairie, 406.
more than half worked as laundresses, and the remaining either worked as domestics, midwives, or cooks. The census data of 1885 indicated that 77 percent of the working force among the African-American men served as day laborers. In 1895, men were still working primarily as day laborers, and some worked for the railroad. Although at this time very few women worked outside the home for wages, Selina Wilson of Arkansas was the first black teacher in Manhattan. About a year later, a second teacher, Eli Freeman, was employed, and in 1900, Hattie Jones joined Wilson and Freeman in teaching the African-American children.

Job opportunities for physically able black men were limited between the period 1885 and 1895. In 1885, 64 percent of the working black men were employed. In 1895, less than 50 percent of them were employed. In the period between 1885 and 1895, less than 5 percent of black women worked outside the home for wages. The poor harvests and the national depression of the previous years were responsible for much of the unemployment in the African-American community. In 1910, over 45 percent of women worked outside their home to supplement their family income.

In the years following the 1890s, black men and women held varied occupations. Joseph Williams worked in 1900 as a traveling showman, and Andrew Lewis was a U.S. mail carrier. In 1915, Giles Cooper became the first black policeman in Manhattan. The 1910 census data revealed that a large segment of black working women were earning wages as laundresses either operating from their own homes

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<th>Manhattan Population</th>
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<td>Lewis Henderson</td>
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<td>Lewis Holly</td>
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<td>A. Jackson</td>
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<td>four children</td>
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<td>Lucy Collins &amp;</td>
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<td>Melissa E. Davis</td>
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Manhattan Township Trustee Book, RCHS Archives, #200, p. 71-72.
or working at private homes. Mrs. Settler’s maternal grandmother took in washing and ironing to put her daughter [Mrs. Settler’s mother] through school. Mrs. Fulghem’s and Mrs. Starnes’s mothers also did ironing at home for college students. In the 1920s, George Giles’s grandmother and mother worked as cooks for mess halls at Fort Riley, and during the same time period they owned a restaurant at 615 South Ninth Street. In the 1920s and 1930s, most of our female interviewees worked as domestics or as cooks. Deola Bennett reported that she did housework for an army couple for twenty-five cents per hour. In the 1930s, Iva Benjamin worked as a domestic for a family of four and received $5.00 per week, and her mother did housework for $4.50 per week. In the 1930s and 1940s, Mr. Lorraine Alexander ran the movie projector at Wareham Theater, and during the same time period George Giles played professional baseball with the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro League. Another black family owned a restaurant at 721 Riley in the 1930s.

The history of the African-American community in Manhattan from 1865 to 1940 clearly indicates that racism dictated the terms of interracial relationship and the access of blacks to institutions in the society at large. Their churches and their own close communal bonds were major forces enabling the few hundred black men, women, and children to provide a strong foundation for the African-American ethnic community in Manhattan. About her life and experience Dorothy Fulghem stated, “I think we came a long ways, and I think back there in those times I lived there, I was satisfied because I didn’t know any better.” Regarding the present and future relationship between the blacks and the whites in Manhattan, Deola Bennett commented:

I believe right now, a black man and the rest of the world can get along, cause the Bible is coming true. The dark race shall stretch forth their wings and rise. They doing it, ain’t they? Slowly, slowly, goin’ rise in the east and go to the west, yes sir. If the white man had kept his hand off the black man all of this, none of this would happen.

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