

The Voice

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EDITORIALS
The views expressed in these columns are those of the writer and not of The Voice.—Pub.

Cleveland Gets Inspector

This week Cleveland gets its first Negro electrical inspector in the person of Robert Richardson, thanks largely to the efforts of the Urban League. Richardson is thought to be not only the first Negro to receive such an appointment in Cleveland, but the first in the United States.

Richardson's appointment climaxes a building trades project started in 1947 by The Cleveland Urban League, in conjunction with Local 38 of the Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, American Federation of Labor. It was at this time that the League began a concerted campaign to get Negro electrical contractors admitted to the union.

After considerable negotiations between union heads and Shelton B. Granger, the League's Industrial Director, the union admitted its first Negro contractor in October, 1949. This was one of Cleveland's outstanding Negro electricians, Robert Morgan, in whose shop Richardson was then an employee.

Soon afterward, in January, 1950, the union admitted two more Negro contractors, William Holt and Sanford Maxie. Then for about a year the situation remained static. Early in 1951 civil service examinations for the post of electrical inspectors were to be held, and the League began looking for qualified men to try for the job.

Richardson was urged by Granger to take the examination, and landed sixth place on the list. When it soon became obvious that the job would have to be offered to Richardson, some opposition developed in City Hall.



by **JAMES C. OLSON**, Superintendent
STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

One of the most extraordinary stories in all of Nebraska's history is that of the Brownville, Fort Kearney and Pacific Railroad. It is a prime example of speculative overconfidence in a period when reckless speculation was the order of the day. Its failure brought repercussions in the once-bustling Missouri River town of Brownville that are being felt to this day.

James J. Blake, formerly professor of history at Peru State Teachers College and now with the American Embassy in Belgium, told the story of this unusual and unfortunate speculation in *Nebraska History*, September, 1948. I can only summarize it here.

The railroad building fever that hit Nebraska in the late sixties and early seventies brought with it a conviction that a good railroad connection was a fundamental factor in the success of any community; towns and counties bonded themselves freely to acquire railroads.

The Brownville, Fort Kearney and Pacific was designed to connect Brownville with the Union Pacific at Kearney. This was only part of the dream, however—it would simply be one link in a great transcontinental system on which Brownville would be an important station. The *Nebraska Advertiser* declared that the railroad gave Brownville an opportunity to begin a "new era in her progress and prosperity which will know no stoppage until she becomes one of the leading cities of the Missouri valley, a centre known to the commerce of the world."

Brownville bonded itself to the hilt, and private citizens liberally subscribed to the stock of the new organization. Unfortunately, however, their grandiose scheme fell through. Of the 540 miles projected, only 10 were built, and

but four of these were permanently operated. One citizen wrote that it looked like "a rough road to travel. Three ties to a rail and nary gravel."

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