

The Voice

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EDITORIALS
The views expressed in these columns necessarily, a reflection of the policy are those of the writer and not of The Voice.—Pub.

OUT OF OLD NEBRASKA



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

An important question with those who went overland across Nebraska in the days before the railroad concerned the best time to jump off from the Missouri River for the long trip west.

It was more than 2,000 miles from the Missouri to California and Oregon. If one were going to make it before the snows of winter set in, it was necessary to get started as early in the spring as possible. Also, there was a definite advantage in being near the head of the year's emigration. Those who went early generally found grass and travel conditions better than those who followed. Then, too, during the California gold rush, there was a natural desire to be first in staking out claims in the new El Dorado.

At the same time, emigrants who started from the Missouri River too early in the spring found that it was difficult to get grass for their animals.

The first band of Oregon homeseekers started from the Missouri frontier early in May, 1841. The next year the emigration left the vicinity of Independence in the middle of May. The great emigration of 1843 (the first mass movement to Oregon) left Independence late in April.

The early guide books and letters of advice written by experienced travelers frequently touched on the question of the best time to start.

George Wilkes' *History of Oregon* contains the following advice, presumably given by a man who was in the emigration of 1843: "Emigrants should start as early as possible in ordinary seasons. The first of May should be set down if possible as the outside limit, and even as early as the first of April, would do."

During the short-lived Colorado gold rush, prospectors started for the Rocky Mountains at all seasons of the year, although, of course, most of them went across the plains in the spring of 1859.

The *Chicago Press and Tribune* of Feb. 4, 1859 commented: "Parties are beginning to move westward to the new gold fields . . . Within the next few weeks we presume all our thoroughfares will be crowded with emigrants."

Booker T.

— UP-TO-DATE and BEYOND —

By S. J. Phillips, Pres.

Booker T. Washington Birthplace Memorial
Booker Washington Birthplace, Virginia

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Knowledge will benefit little except as it is harnessed, except at its power is pointed in a direction that will bear upon the present needs and conditions of the race.

—Booker T. Washington

This is the 95th year since Booker T. Washington was born in a slave cabin on the Burrough's plantation in Franklin County, Virginia. Historians place his birth date April 5, 1856, and here at his birthplace, we have celebrated this day for the past six years.

As is our custom, the Anniversary celebration begins the Sunday before. On April 1st, over one thousand people came here to be inspired by Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, Congressman Thomas B. Stanley and Judge A. H. Hopkins. It was a dual ceremony; the first part was devoted to the unveiling of the name panel on a new three story building, to replace the one burned down last December; and the second part, aside from the formal installation of Mrs. Virginia H. Phillips as permanent Postmistress, was based upon the theme "American-Self Reliance."

The present national emergency requires a reappraisal of our position as American citizens; our rights under the Constitution; our way of life in a democracy; our responsibilities as citizens; and our preparations for sacrifices in a total war, if that becomes a reality.

In World war I, we as a group,

William N. Byers and John K. Kellom, in their *Handbook to the Gold Field of Nebraska and Kansas*, wrote: "Quite a number of adventurers, residing or wintering along the Missouri river, are preparing to set out for the mining region about the first of March. They will be obliged to carry with them, in addition to their own provisions and outfit, feed for their animals sufficient for twenty or twenty-five days, making it necessary to have stronger teams. This plan cannot be generally recommended to those living at a distance. The great mass of the emigration may calculate to leave the Missouri river."

were the least prepared to shoulder our share or national responsibilities. It is true that in the actual fighting our soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen—all acquitted themselves with distinction.

On the home-front, we were not prepared. Some of our leaders preached about integration into defense industry—yet very few saw the necessity for adequate large scale development of the required skills among Negroes. In times of stress, the nation or private industry doesn't have time to train enough manpower to meet the needs of our tremendous war-making potential. That reservoir of skilled craftsmen must come from the schools and colleges. It is obvious if we aren't constantly trying to interest young people in this type of training, then when necessity arises—when war is eminent, and production must be accelerated to meet military requirements—we will be left behind. All the hue and cry will avail us nothing, because we are not prepared. It usually takes a war to make us realize how misguided we are.

In the current emergency, we, at Booker T. Washington Birthplace Memorial have launched a new approach to this vexing problem and I want to tell you about it.

To fight Communism and advance the economic progress of the American Negro we are now concentrating our activities on SECP, for its immediate and long-term benefits.

SECP means SKILLED EMPLOYMENT FOR COLORED PEOPLE.



Always the PEAK of QUALITY

Progress Is Needed Now

Everyone is going to be watching the progress of the Urban League and the new executive secretary. It is just a human trait to watch progress rather than participate in it, and progress moves pretty slowly when it is watched.

It is wonderful to think in terms of progress but it is an uncomfortable procedure. There are those who would like to have things better but they will not co-operate. Then there are those who are doing pretty well and naturally they consider progress as a dangerous change. Some community leaders too, who know that community growth and progress would reduce them in

rank, so they would let things remain as they are. We have long been identified as a town in the grip of habit and ungrowth and we talk perpetually of progress—but it is just talk—we do little about it.

Progress makes changes and changes bring on contention but there is nothing to be alarmed about.

470 Negro families in Lincoln who are crowded into 311 dwellings, 40 of which are unfit for habitation, should have decent living quarters and adequate incomes to maintain their homes.

Let us give co-operation that will help our community progress.

An Approach to Minority Problems

To the sponsors of the one-day conference we send our thanks for so unselfishly and so soundly launching a program not simply to promote Negro interest, as such, but for a better community and a better world, for the good of all. It must be clear to all

that when we fight for the rights of a minority, we aren't just fighting for ourselves, but for the common good of all.

Wrong attitudes toward Negroes will persist as long as they are condemned to the lowest occupational status in American industrial life.

Resolution

The Lincoln Council of Church Women passed the following resolution at a regular meeting held in March:

"Asking Lincoln firms to employ persons of all races according to their abilities and qualifications; that we send a copy of this

resolution to Lincoln merchants, industries and other firms, to the Lincoln papers and the chamber of commerce; that we ask other organizations, clubs, and churches to support this resolution."

We believe you will be glad to be informed of this expressed wish of these women, your customers. MRS. H. E. SHELLEY
President
MRS. C. H. LEMON
Secretary

Lincoln Council of Church Women

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