

THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN PRESENCE IN KANSAS CITY, KANSAS

The first recorded resident of African descent in the area that is now known as Kansas City, Kansas was a woman named Dorcas, who was brought here by William Walker, Jr. in 1847 to the Wyandot settlement at the mouth of the Kaw (Kansas River).¹

In his journal Mr. Walker speaks of his feelings regarding buying Dorcas. The Bill of Sale for Dorcas is still in existence. Mr. Walker also owned a male slave who became Dorcas' husband. He freed Dorcas and her husband before the Civil War began.

Following emancipation, ex-slaves came to Wyandotte County to settle. At the end of the Civil War many African-American veterans returned to this area. In 1879 an Exodus of African-Americans from the South to the Kansas City, Kansas area began. Over a year and a half period nearly 40,00 persons made the journey into Kansas.² Some travelled through Kansas City on their way to other areas of the state and others settled in Kansas City, Kansas.

Entry from William Walker's Journal:³

1847.

JANUARY, 1847.

Friday, 1.-In Harrisonville I this day bought at public sale a female slave about 32 years of age, named "Dorcas." If I have erred in this act, may God in his infinite mercy forgive me, though I feel no condemnation for the act. I shall endeavor to come up fully to what was said by the auctioneer who sold her, who said, when it was announced that I was the purchaser, "Now Dorcas, you have a good and kind master."

Hiatus.

Bill of Sale for Dorcas



"The Bill of Sale to William Walker of a negro woman named Dorcas, slave for life."

Transcription:⁴

"Know all men by these Presents that we John W. Bride and Greenbury Parker administrators of the estate of John Gipson deceased have this day as such administrators for and in consideration of the sum of three hundred and eighty dollars the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged bargained sold and delivered unto William Walker one certain negro woman slave for life aged about thirty five years of moderately dark complexion called and named Dorcas of the property of said estate to have and to hold said slave unto said William Walker his executors admrs. and assigns forever.

"And we said administrators as the legal Representatives of said decedent do hereby Warrant the title of said negro and that she is of sound mind and body and slave for life-- in testimony Whereof we have hereunto set our hands and seals (as such administrators) this 1st day of January A D 1847.

(Signed) "JOHN W. BRISCOE [SEAL]
"GREENBERRY PARKER [SEAL]
"Admrs."

NOTES

1. Greenbaum, Susan D. *The Afro-American Community in Kansas City, Kansas*. The City of Kansas City, Kansas: 1982.

2. Ibid.

3. *The Provisional Government of Nebraska Territory and The Journals of William Walker, Provisional Governor of Nebraska Territory*.

Edited by William E. Connelley.

Lincoln, Neb.: State Journal Company, Printers, 1899.

4. Ibid.