

Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

Section 23, Pages 661 - 690

Kansas Governor John P. St. John (1879-1883) received these letters from persons concerned with the migration of southern blacks to Kansas, commonly known as the Exodus or Exoduster movement. The letters come from blacks considering a move to Kansas, persons assisting with or monitoring the migration, officials of cities along the route, and persons providing for the relief of the migrants upon their arrival. The letters proceed in rough chronological order. Most include remnants of abstracts that were attached to the letter and then partially removed. The top of the abstract includes a reference to the letterpress book and page number of the governor's response. The governors' letterpress books are a separate collection. This collection comprises box 13 folders 13-15 and 20, box 14 folders 1-9, and box 15 folders 1-5 of the John St. John governor's records. The 1879-1880 correspondence was filed under "Immigration, Negro Exodus." The 1881-1882 correspondence was filed under "Freedman's Institute, Relief Association." A link to an inventory of St. John's entire governor's collection is available below. A full transcription is also available under "External Links."

Creator: Kansas. Governor (1879-1883 : St. John)

Date: April 1879 - October 1882

Callnumber: Governor's Office, St. John, Correspondence Received-Subject File, Box 13-15

KSHS Identifier: DaRT ID: 210296

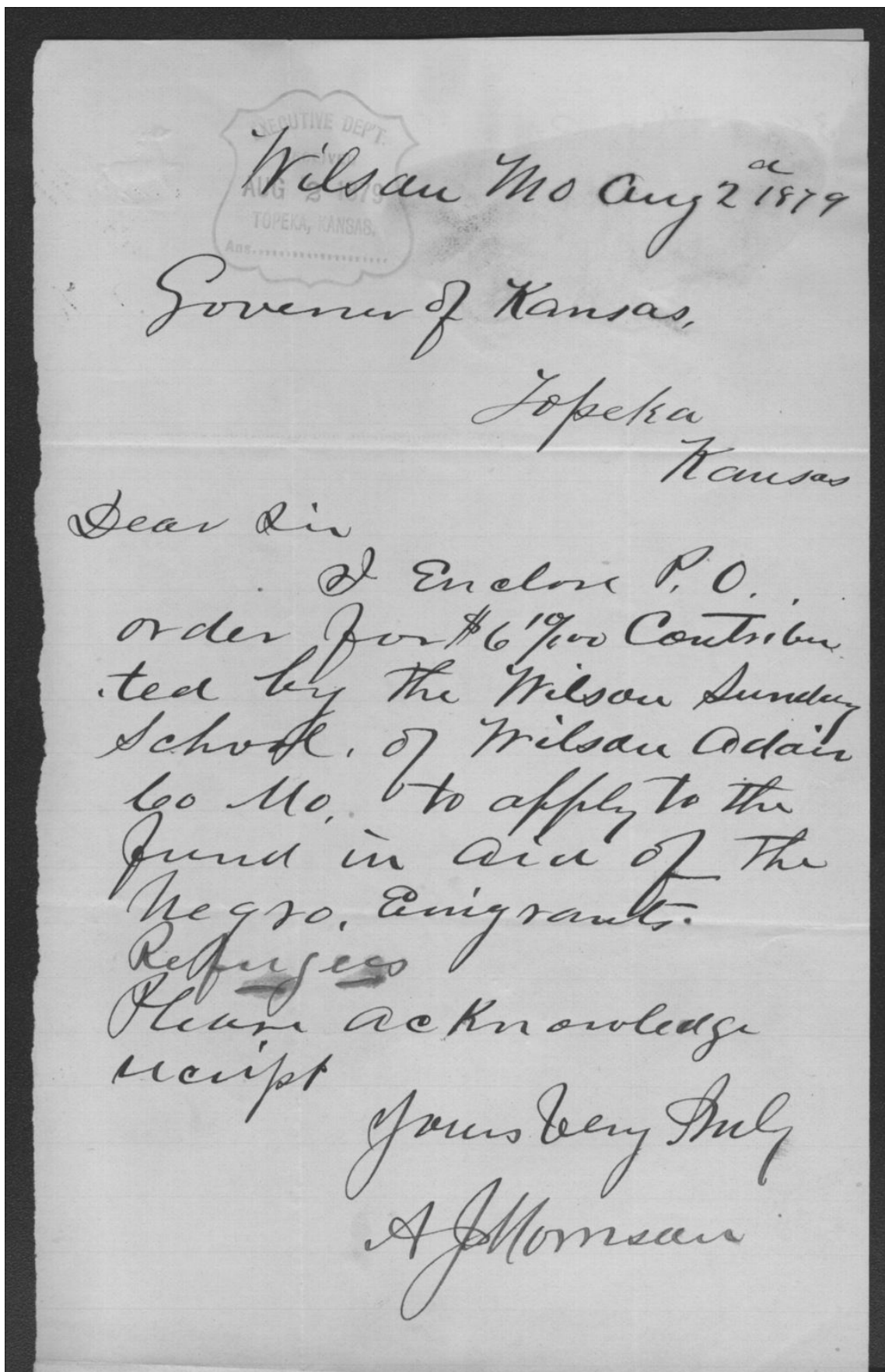
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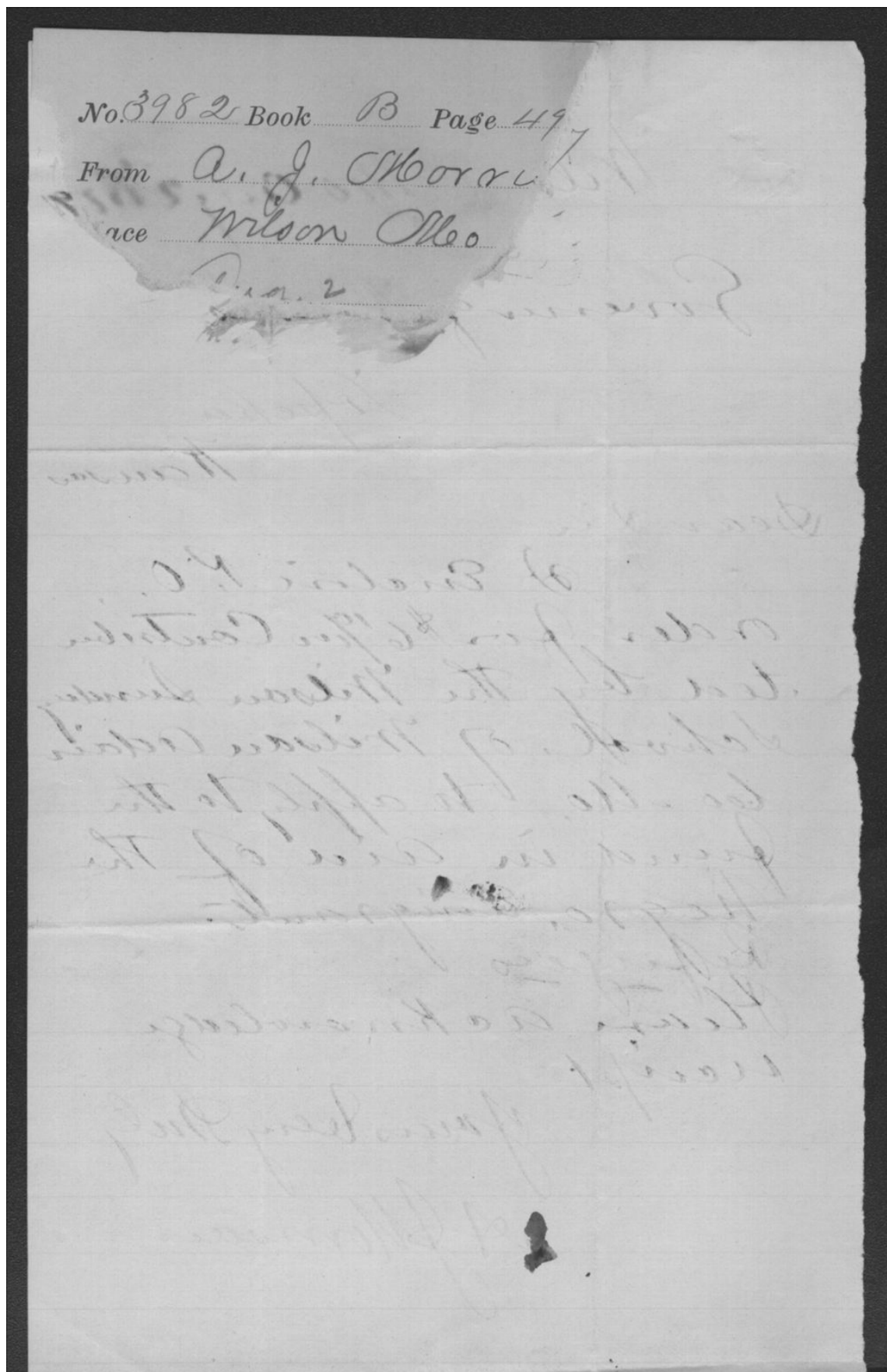
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Washington County, Texas.
Brenham, Aug 4th 1879.

Gov John P St John.
Topeka, Kansas.

Dear Sir. I had a conversation yesterday with a Mr. Cor, from Lawrence, Kansas. - at least he so represented himself a citizen of that place - who said that the citizens of Kansas were becoming thoroughly disgusted with the large migration of ignorant negroes to that state, and he gave it as his opinion. that they would if necessary - resort to force to stop it - if the Blacks continued to pour in upon them. His statements seemed so reasonable to me, in regard to the very natural disgust and opposition, that a thrifty and an intelligent people would have, to witness an influx of an ignorant and a destitute people, of a different Race coming in vast numbers upon them; that I again warn you of the urgent necessity of using prompt and effective measures to prevent disaster to this movement. It is quite natural that destitute suffering freedmen, to break loose from all restraint and pour headlong into Kansas, or elsewhere, when they honestly believe that they will thereby better their condition, and that a change of location of any kind can hardly make their present condition worse. The great majority of the Blacks are guided by such ideas, and the very moment an intelligent colored man, or any of their real white friends

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try to reason them out of rushing headlong into the Exoduster, without organization and due preparations, then trouble begins. First, many of them will conclude, that such advisers either oppose the Exoduster, or else are employed by the large plantation to adopt this roundabout method of preventing it. As an example of their suspicious ideas and character, I will state that when Mr. Hicks, read your Excellency's letter - written some ten days ago - to a large meeting of the freedmen, informing them, "that the State of Kansas, would not give lands free of charge to any class of emigrants, and advising all who migrated to that state, to come with means of their own, and to not ^{upon} depend or expect charitable contributions of any kind etc" - it fell like a wet blanket ^{the hopes of} upon a large class of freedmen. Many declare the letter a forgery, while others think that Hicks's misrepresentations to you, induced you to write it, but there are numbers of - in fact all of the more intelligent Blacks, who know the letter is genuine and expresses the true facts of the case, and who never expected free homes etc. Now there are not any of the leading colored men here, who has more influence over the masses of their people than Mr. Hicks, really has, but the very moment he or other colored leaders, throw themselves against the popular wishes and tide of sentiment of their people - right then their influence to do good, begins to ebb. As previously stated to your Excellency, in

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some of my former letters - there is a natural inborn jealousy existing between all of the colored leaders, and the very moment one of them is placed in a prominent position over others - conspiracy and confusion begin. All of the disappointed leaders then combine to pull him down, and when this is done, the same work goes bravely on to pull down his successful rival. This has been the history of San Domingo, Hayti, Liberia, and will continue to be the history of all governments exclusively composed of, and governed by the Negro Race. This is also one of the causes, why Africa, has remained, a barbarous, and an uncivilized Country,

Nothing but the vigorous and strong arm of the White Race, can subdue and control the colored people. You might take all of the intelligent and thrifty Blacks, of the South, and colonize them, in one of the finest countries of the world, and throw them upon their own resources, - with no white men to control and direct them - and they would never make any real progress in civilization, but would gradually relapse back into barbarism. This is perhaps, rather strange views for a Republican to present, but they have become impressed upon my mind from my life long experience with the Blacks, both as slaves, and freedmen, and the past and present history of the Negro Race, in all Ages, and Countries, seem to establish the soundness of such conclusions. I however sincerely be-

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lieve, that they can be made - by proper colonization - a far more intelligent and a prosperous people than ^{they} now are, or can ever become under the present circumstances now surrounding them. I therefore fully endorse the Exoduster movement, provided practicable means and plans are made and adopted to give this movement an intelligent direction. Unless this is done at an early day, the worst of results will surely flow from the Exoduster. I believe they should be colonized in some Territory, which should be set apart for them, and honest resolute white men, appointed to enforce rigid laws and regulations, which absolute necessity will always require to ensure anything pertaining to their ultimate and permanent good and well-being as a people. Nothing but a strong government, can maintain good order, and enforce obedience among and from them. In fact, I am an advocate for a strong central government for any and all people. I believe any government, founded as American Republics are, upon State sovereignty, is too weak, and will always produce disorder, and revolutionary tendencies. To return to the Exoduster question, permit me to state, that there are other troubles which we will have to confront in preventing dense masses of destitute freedmen from pouring in upon the North Western States, viz. The majority of freedmen here own per-

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sonal property, while many own real estate, and they will sacrifice their property for a mere trifle, in order to obtain means to migrate from the South. Unscrupulous white men here, who really favor the Exodus, secretly circulate the report among the Blacks, that free homes, one year supply of clothing and provisions will be given all who go to Kansas, and that ^{the} vast numbers who have already gone there, have thus been fully provided for. Many of these men spread such reports, partly because they know it will inflame the eagerness and desire of freedmen to hasten their efforts to get to Kansas, and really believing that they will get homes etc. free of charge; they will throw all of their property upon the market here, not caring whether it brings one half of its real value, so that they get means sufficient to pay their transportation to the North West.

This would, of course, open up a wide field of speculation and enable many small speculators, to swindle the Blacks for a long time, and even now it is generally believed by large planters and others who oppose the Exodus, that it was Northern men, who circulate these lying reports among the freedmen; when in fact it is Southern men, who are democratic voters that are guilty of this wrong. It is impossible to find out the names of such men, because they make such statements to freedmen, whom they know

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will not betray them or give their names. As an example of how this is safely done. I will state an instance. One day last week, an old colored man who has great confidence in me, came and asked me whether it was true, that free homes, one years supply of provisions and clothing was actually given all freedmen who emigrated to Kansas? I answered No, and fully explained to him, the absurdity of such ideas. He then said that he had been so informed, ^{by} a respectable white man, who certainly had no interest in deceiving him. I then asked, if his informant was a Republican, when he answered that he was not, and I vainly tried to get his name, but the old man said he would not give me such information, because it was unsafe to do so, and he had solemnly pledged his life to give no names, but was at liberty to tell other freedmen what he had learned etc. After explaining to him the reasons why many white people wanted freedmen to leave the country, he sorrowfully informed me, that his white informant had offered him fifteen dollars for a yoke of good work oxen, which were well worth forty dollars, and that he had come near accepting the offer, partly because he wanted to pay the white gentlemen, for his glorious news, and needed money

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to pay his transportation to Kansas, and also know that at this season of the year, he could not cash his stock for more than half of their value. The Blacks are naturally a Secretive people, and it is seldom that they will betray any white man, who is - as they believe - acting in good faith to promote their interests.

So, you see the many difficulties with which the real friends of a practicable Exodus, will have to contend against. Nothing but an Organization, of leading Northern Republicans, can check the headlong reckless course which the Exodus, is now tending, and threatening to result in a great National evil. I have watched its course with a real and a deep interest, and I have devoted much labor and care in carefully reporting every phase of its ^{aspect and} progress, to your Excellency, and other leading Republicans, of the North. I have done this with the earnest hope, that it would bring about an organization of Capital and brains to ^{success} ensure, and give this great movement a gradual and an intelligent direction. I shall continue to do what I can in this behalf, and as I learn anything of importance in relation to the movement among the Blacks here, I shall lose no time in communicating the facts to your Excellency.

Yours Obt. Servt.
Stephen A. Harknessworth.

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P.S. I have just been informed by a planter who lives some ten miles distant from here, that four colored families left his farm on the 14th inst for Kansas. They had waggon and good teams, and means to carry them through. They made arrangements with other tenants to gather their crops, and it is my opinion that they have been sent forward by their friends to spy out the country or promised land of Kansas, and to report back, what they can learn.

The planter, overtaken them after a days travel and offered many inducements to get them to return, but could do nothing with them. This shows the earnestness of the Exoduster movement here.

J. A. H.

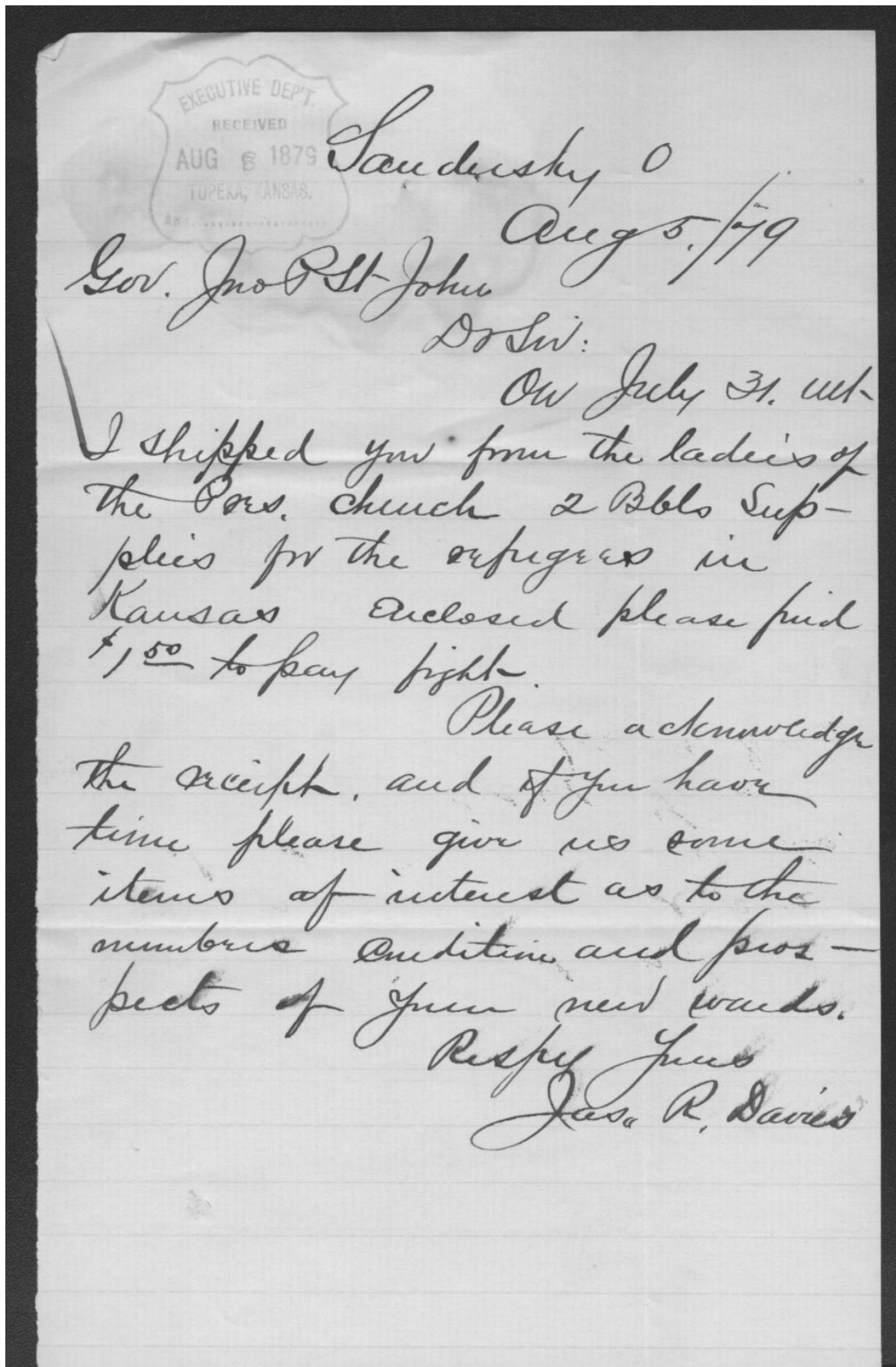
P.S. I have not been able to see or secure one of the Ohio Circulars yet. But I have had responsible colored men to tell me they have seen and read one of them sent to a freedmen here, who refuses to let any white man see or read it, because they are so warned in the circular. One of the colored men who has read the circular has wrote a letter of inquiry to the parties who sent it, and he promises to let me read the reply letter when he gets it.

Nearly all white laborers here warmly favor and encourage the Exodus, so it will be impossible for large planters to break it up, for they will not be permitted to use the Shotgun argument.

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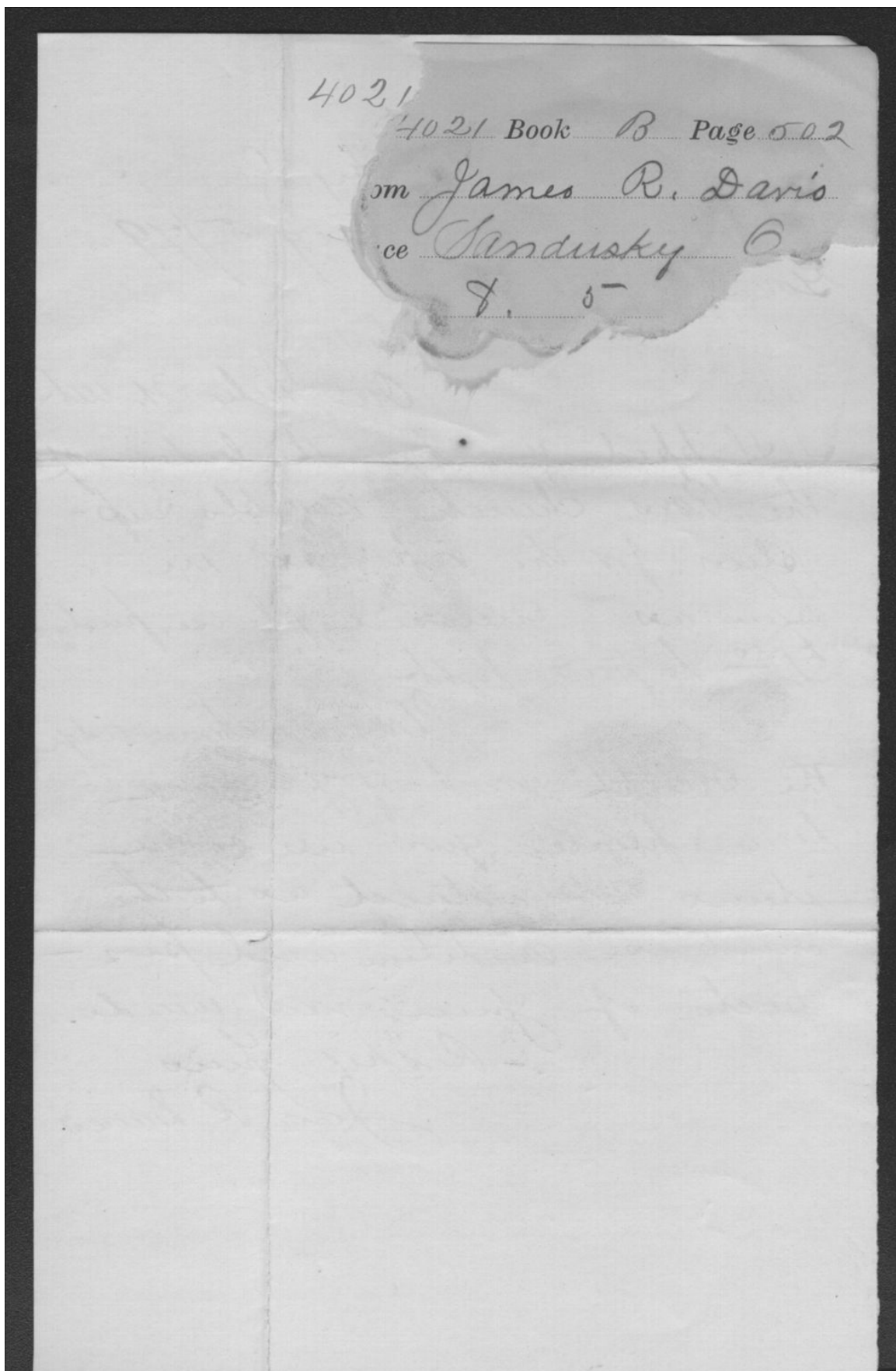
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EXECUTIVE DEPT.
RECEIVED
AUG 8 1879
TOPEKA, KANSAS

St. John

Dear Sir please
find enclosed an ^{order} draft of
\$5.00 for the benefit of colored emigrants
as from the circular I
saw in the New York weekly
Witness the association of
which you are President are
in need of funds to assist
them Yours truly
Benjamin Lamson
South Cedar Wayne Co.
N. Y.

P.S.
Please acknowledge the receipt
of the within and oblige
as above B. L.

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No. 4019 Book B Page 501

From B. Larnoon

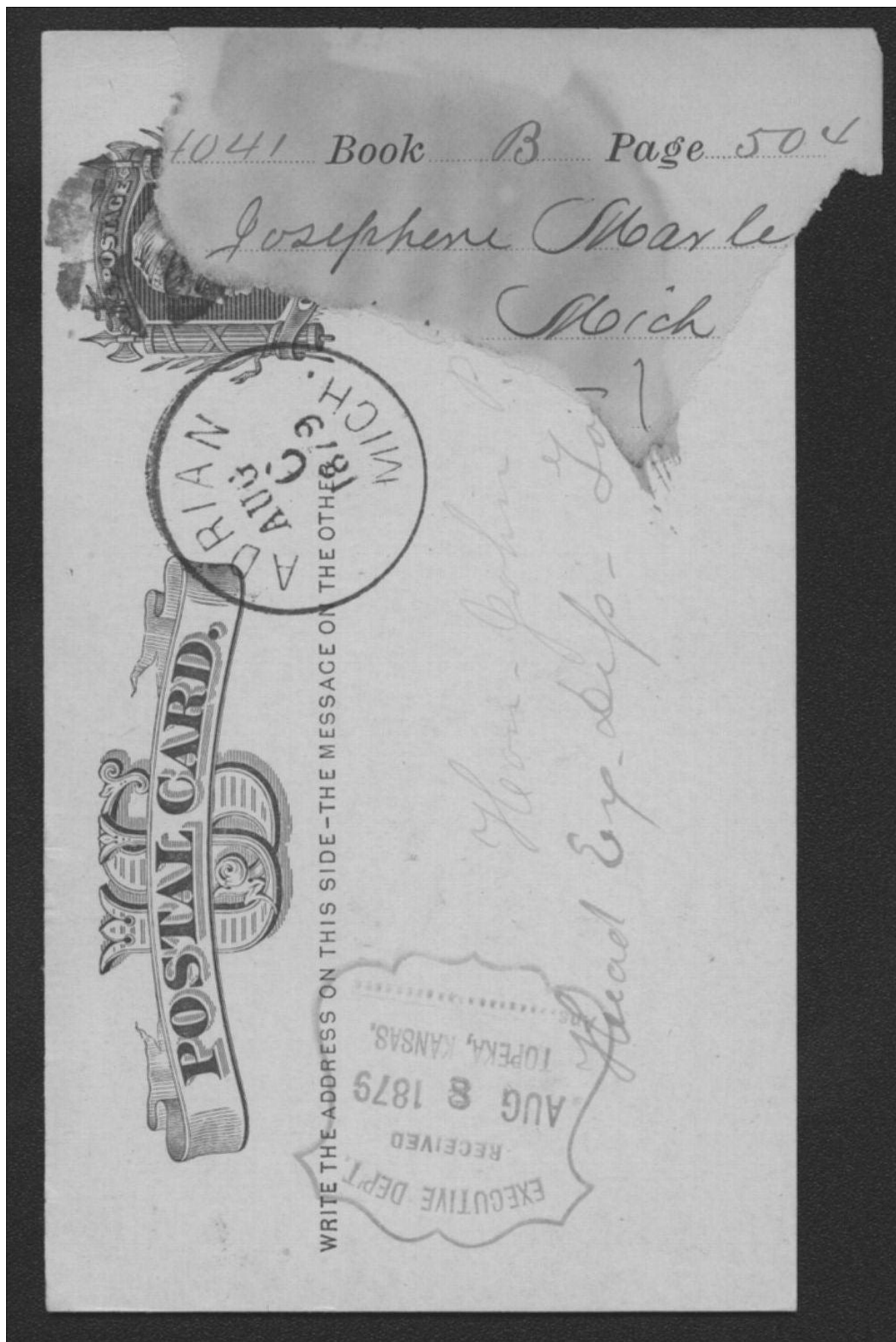
Place South Ladus (

Date N.D

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Hon. John P. St. John -
We desire to organize
for service in aiding you to care
comfortably - for the Refugees - seek-
ing light & rest - among us - and sup-
plying it - might be best to organize an
auxiliary to your "Freedmen's Relief Association"
as work is more efficiently done through
regular channels - Would you desire
it done in this way? We hope to have
several barrels of clothing & bedding - ready
for shipping next week also some money
where & to whom - shall we send - Will
call a meeting to organize soon as hear
from you - Yours in service for Jesus -
Adrian Mich - Aug 5 - Josephine Marlet -

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Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

EXECUTIVE DEPT.
RECEIVED
AUG 8 1879
TOPEKA, KANSAS.

Huntville Walker County Texas Aug. 5 1879
To his excellency Governor J. St. John
Topeka Kansas

Dear Sir I write you for information
concerning emigration having been duly
elected by my the Colord people of Walker
Trinity ^{and} ~~and~~ Madison Counties
A Commissioner on emigration I now
avow my self of the opportunity of
writing you a line for information
1. What are the chances for the Colord
People if they come to your state of
getting homes. the Colord people here in
this state the great majority of them
are very poor they work hard every
year but the land lord gets all the crop.
Hence they are unable to have a dime
that they can call their own
and they are determine to go
to some other state

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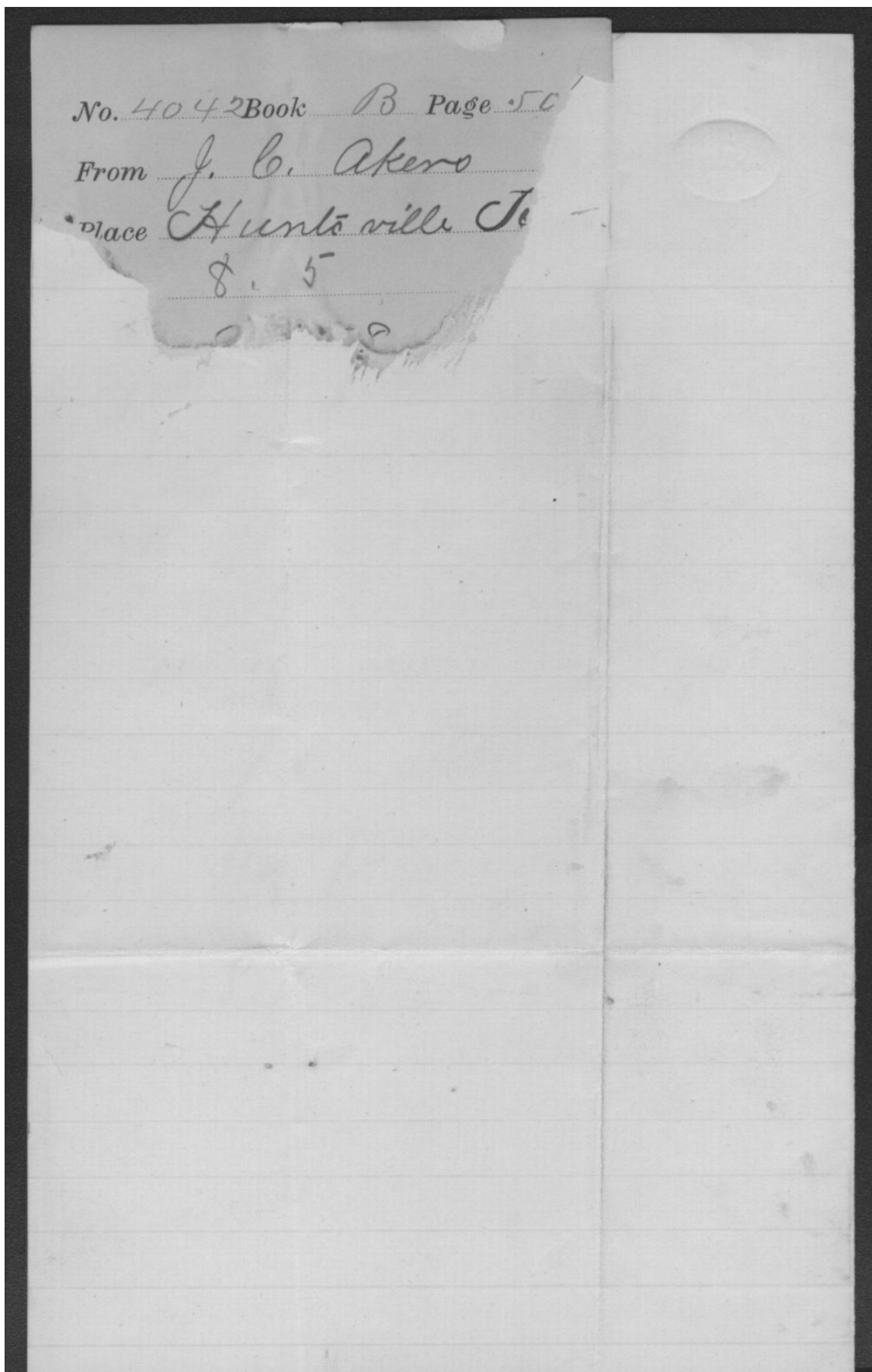
and tho seem to take
your state in preference

As Any information
you may see fit to
give will be thankfully
received and appreciated
Please write me on the
subject and oblige
yours Respectfully

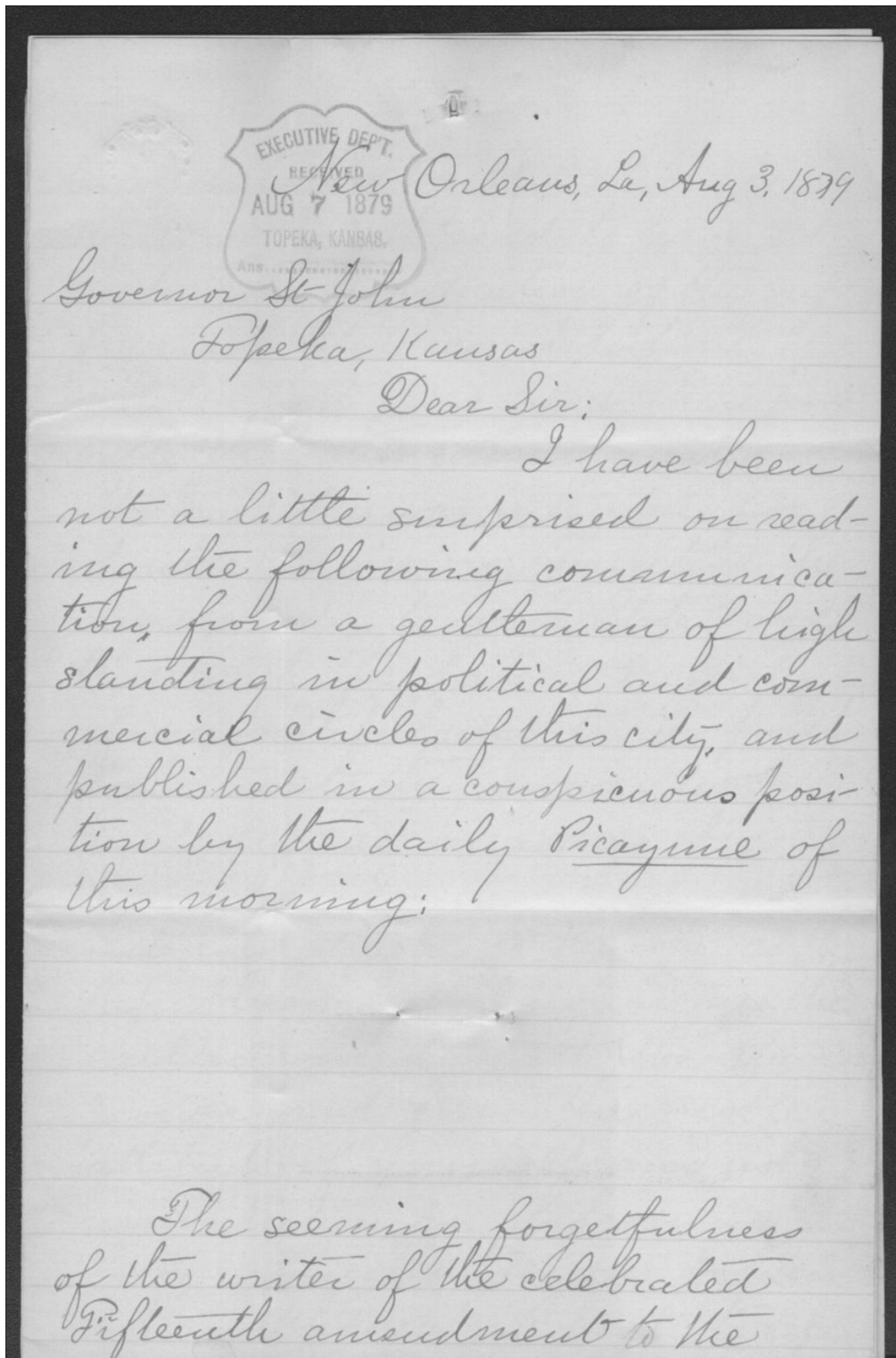
J. C. Akers
Huntsville
Texas
P.O. box 28



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Constitution of the U. S. which is universally supposed to have set aside race qualification of the suffrage in State constitutions is noted. But it is more than probable that ~~this~~ communication of Mr Sandidge was intended for double service, viz: To retard the negro exodus to your State; and to convict the ruling majority of unfaithfulness to the political tenets they now advocate, and urge as measures of wisdom upon the South. As a peculiar interest attaches to Kansas as the Republican battleground in the earlier contests with the slave power, and from the noble attitude of yourself and administration in welcoming its later refugees to your borders, I have thought it best to refer

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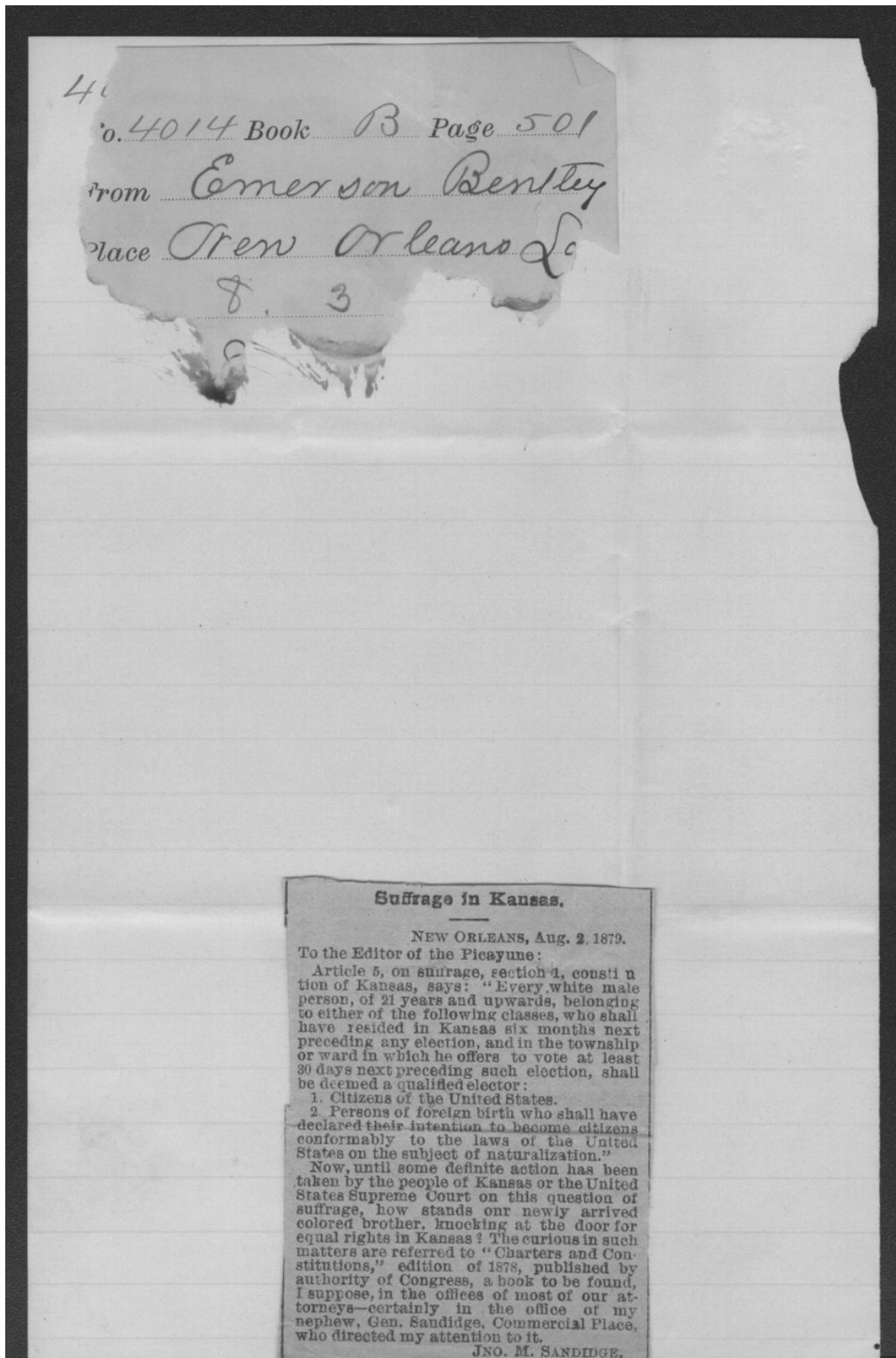
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the communication to you, and
to solicit your authoritative
reply to its contents. I am
satisfied that a brief statement
of your present legal restrictions
of the suffrage will commend
your State to the friends of
justice and equal rights in
the South. Hoping that this
intrusion upon your valuable
time will not be altogether
unwelcome, I remain

Very Respectfully,

Emerson Bentley

126 1/2 S. Johnson Street.

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E. D. HAINES & CO.,

BANKERS.



WEST CHESTER, PA.

August 4th 1879.

*To His Excellency,
John P. St. John.
Dear Sir:*

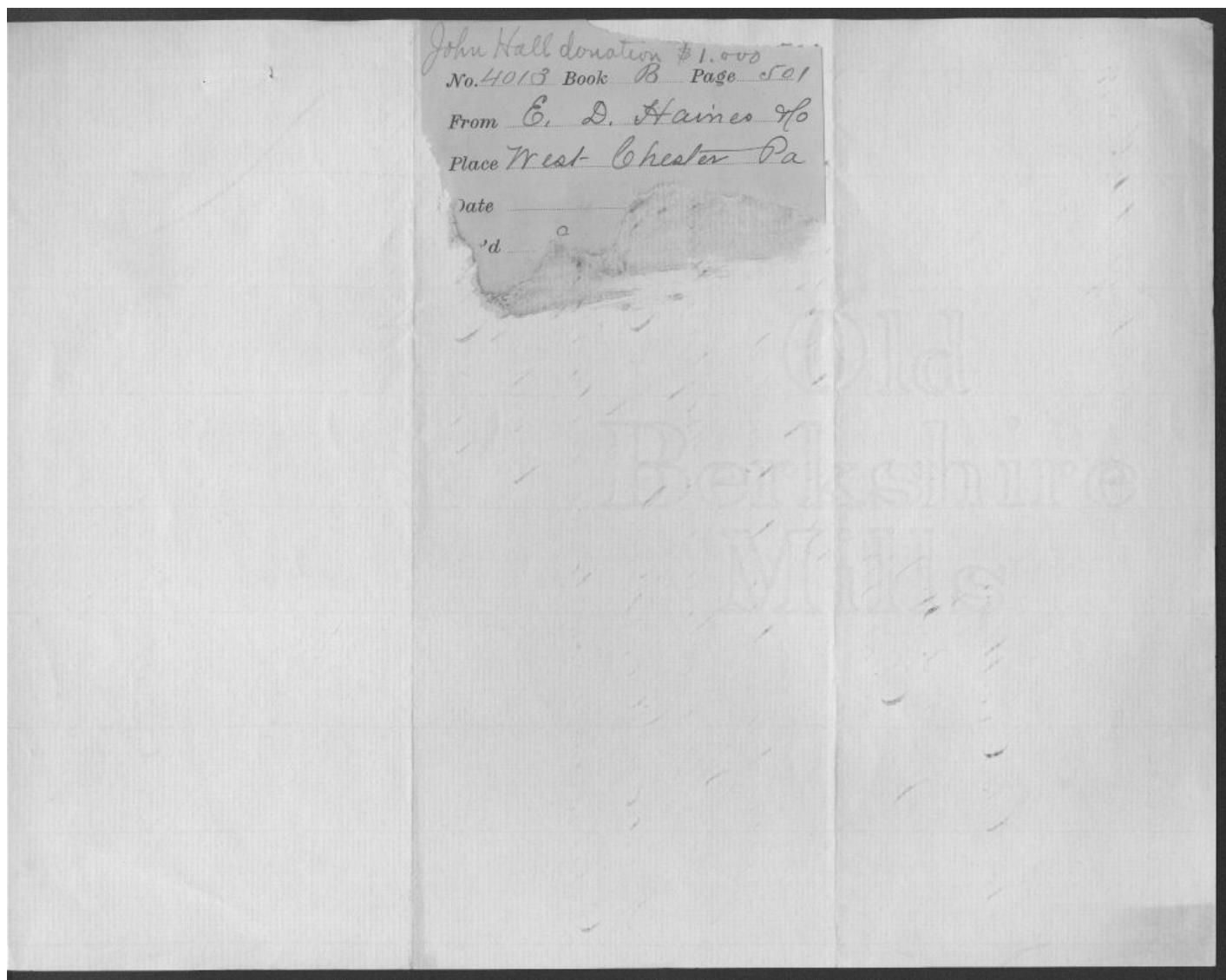
*Yours of the 29th ult, is
received and contents noted.*

*We enclose our draft on Messrs. Dresel,
Morgan & Co, New York, for One Thousand
Dollars in accordance with request.*

*Very Respy,
Your Obt. Servts.*

ED Haines & Co

Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

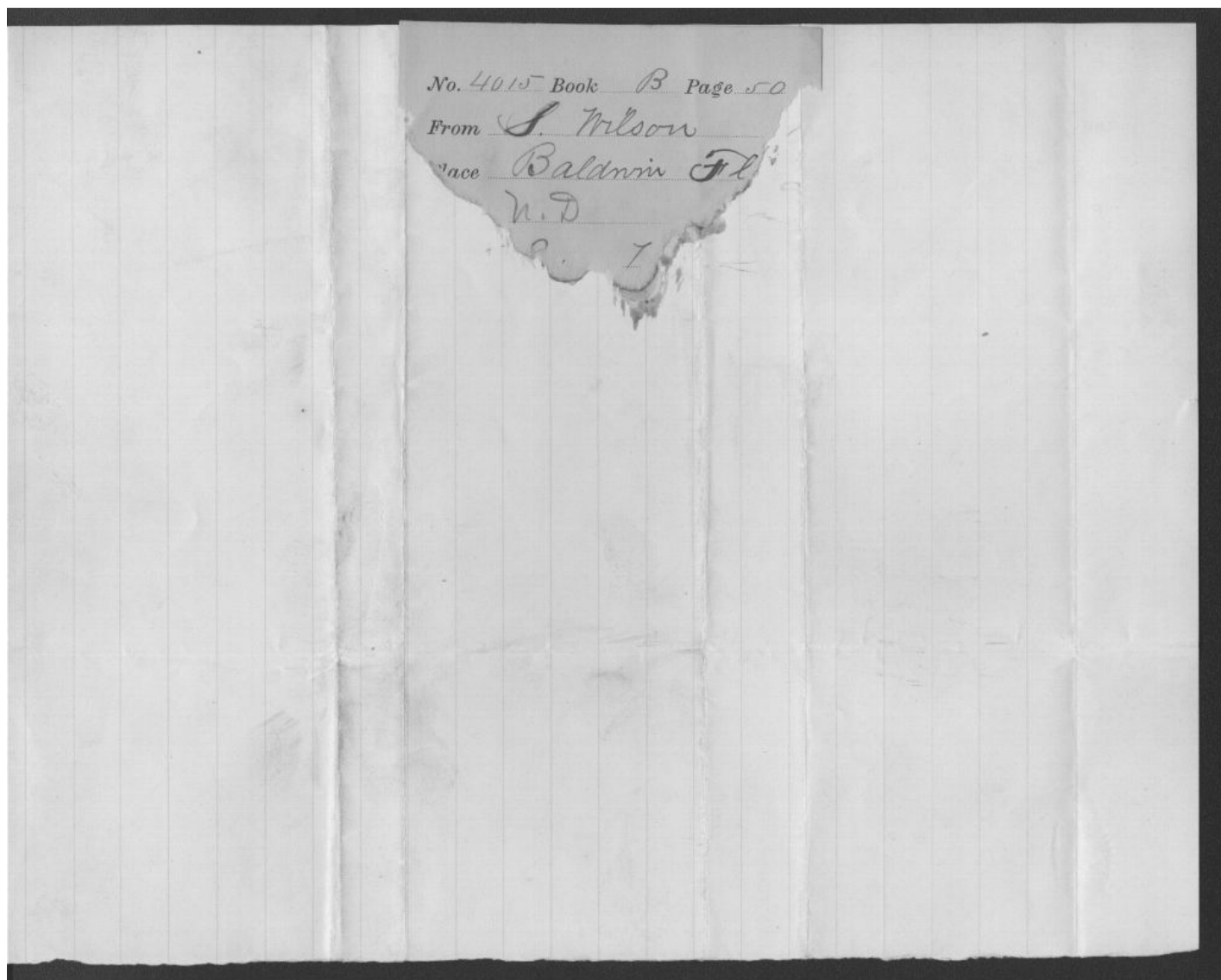


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Baldwin Fla Dear Governor I have read
the freedmen Relief
association and it affords me with much
Pleasure to think that some body remembers
us in our struggle I am anxious to live
this place of trouble where colored men live
are no more than cats there is more than
one too people that wants to live this
Country But we want to know what
is our Duty before we get there or what
will we have to pay Please let me hear
as soon as possible Yours Truly
James Wilson

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Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

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EXECUTIVE DEPT.
RECEIVED
AUG 7 1877
TOPEKA, KANSAS

THE NEGRO HEAVEN ON TRIAL.

Congressman Ryan, of Kansas, though a republican, does not hesitate to proclaim the truth about the effect of the "negro exodus" which some of his party managers and active workers have been so energetically setting afoot from the south. He says hundreds of the poor negroes about Topeka—where he lives—are absolutely starving, and that there is no prospect of their further relief by state aid or private charity. The resources of the Kansas people have been severely taxed to feed this endless horde of negroes, that has now been pouring in upon them ever since last March. Wyandotte, Leavenworth, Atchison, Topeka, and other principal towns in Kansas have been overrun by the tide—a regular Kuro-Siwo, or "Black Stream of Japan"—until there is neither the possibility of finding work or room for the new-comers. Indeed there is nothing but idleness, beggary and misery for the greater part of those who had arrived previous to July. Still the tide continues, and the poor blacks are suffering as they never suffered before. They had been told, by deceiving missionary workers from Massachusetts, and by lying handbills, adorned with pictures of all that constitutes a negro's paradise, that in Kansas they would find a land flowing with milk and honey—and fat raccoons. They were made to understand that there they would meet with friends, men of the old John Brown stamp, who would welcome and provide for all that would come. A society in Boston and Cambridge has had the hardihood to publicly proclaim, in the republican press there, its own share in producing this large negro emigration—a work which has been quietly but energetically going on for a year or more, and the declared object of which is to give the next Congress to the republicans, by cutting down the basis of the southern representation, and consequently the number of democratic members in the next House.

What a commentary is this admission on the practical working of their own scheme of "reconstruction" and negro suffrage!

What a commentary is this confessed condition of their deluded negro victims in Kansas, on the republican love of the negro!

What a commentary is the entire proceeding, on republican honesty in politics!

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Aug. 6

Democrat

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