

## Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

### Section 88, Pages 2611 - 2639

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

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## Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

BEN. S. HENDERSON.

J. D. McBRIAN.

OFFICE OF

HENDERSON & McBRIAN,

ATTORNEYS-AT-LAW,

vs.

Sedan, Kas., 3 188

personally we know him to be an honest  
Gentleman and therefore I shall only say  
He exercised very bad judgment  
in placing these people on a high,  
rocky, sandy and very poor prairie  
where the best farm in this county  
would stand. He gave each 40 acres  
of land and not a good brock, to be paid  
for in five years. They went upon  
this land, no house, horse, cow or pig  
went out for the neighbors when they  
could get work, and at odd times  
went on a horse and a team huh, then  
in the spring they went for the  
farm in the neighborhood and  
succeeded, each, in getting from two  
to five acres of good brock. Their  
wives and children with the hoe cultivated



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Sedan, Kas., 188

This census, and the husband worked out,  
travelling ten miles in some instances  
sustaining work. To support their families  
and some of them had to work for  
twenty five cents per day. What they  
had cultivated at home would not  
amount to ten dollars in any one case  
and little as it was they placed great  
"hopes and faith" in the result, but before  
their crops matured cattle belonging to  
them to do farmers, running at large  
destroyed every ear of corn they had  
(we have no hard law in this country)  
So you now see these poor people,  
eighteen families total of sixty three  
is on a poor truck of land, not one  
cent of money, all much needed, nothing  
to eat and winter all much here



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J. D. McBRIAN.

OFFICE OF  
HENDERSON & McBRIAN,  
ATTORNEYS-AT-LAW,

vs.

Sedan, Kas., 9<sup>th</sup> 188

All of the above I know from personal investigation. After I heard their story I then made inquiry as to the extent of help they had received from Mr. Bolam and the amount he has given to these 14 families would easily feed six persons ten days. Mr. William Chas. a good reliable house and well to do farmer living in the valley adjacent to this settlement also tells me that the help these people have received from Mr. Bolam, amounts to nothing and I believe him, he is a friend of these people and has helped several families this summer — Now in conclusion let me say if these colored people could be cared for this winter we placed on some good



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OFFICE OF

HENDERSON & McBRIAN,

ATTORNEYS-AT-LAW,

vs.

Sedan, Kas.,

188

land they would not be a burden to  
any county but would be self sustaining.  
I was raised in Kentucky my father  
was an owner of slaves and I know  
or at least I think I know a "nigger"  
when I see him and there is not one  
in the number (65) that I visited.  
I spent 4 years and over in fighting  
for their liberty, as well as my own, and  
it is now to me much rendering to  
see them poor, ignorant people starve  
and be imposed upon. It ought not  
to be, it must not be. Now Gov  
these are all facts I have told you all  
and when Judge Le Long or any person  
else represents that several hundred  
colored people are destitute in this  
county, they represent a falsehood  
over



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And if the so called Freedmen's  
Relief Association at Independence  
had, have done what, the people  
whose donations pass in their hands,  
expected them to do, not one of these  
unfortunate people would be in  
the condition they are.

I write you in great hurry and have  
not time that can in writing that  
perhaps I should, yet I hope you will  
be able to ~~see~~ grasp my ideas.

Very respectfully,  
your friend

Ben Henderson

P.S. I still adhere to the principals as  
stated in my letter to you of March 16"/82.  
Things politically "turn out" as I predicted.  
The fight is now on hands. I wish you  
and the cause of Temperance Success.  
Remember I want any who in Temperance  
honor. I received an invitation from  
Rev. A. M. Richardson to attend the Annual  
Meeting of the State Temperance Union at  
Topeka on the 19 & 20 of this month, would  
like to be there very much, but I am  
afraid I can not attend.

Yours  
B. H.





## Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

BEN. S. HENDERSON.

OFFICE OF  
HENDERSON  
ATTORNEY

vs.

Chaut. Co

No. 3947 Book D Page 559

From B. S. Henderson

Place Sedan, Kas

Date 9. 7. 1882

Rec'd

Sedan, Kas., Sept 7 1882

Hon. J. R. St. John.  
Topeka Kas

Dear Governor

Your of August 31<sup>st</sup> received in due time, its contents carefully noted & in order to give you the information you desire, it was necessary that I should visit the homes of the colored people in this County. Since the delay in writing you until now. There are three "Colored Settlements" in this County one South East of the town of Peru. In that Settlement the colored people are generally in a prosperous condition with perhaps some very few exceptions but none are destitute. There is another Settlement North East of Sedan that



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Rollin Lenawee Co, Mich.  
June 11. 82.

My dear Friend  
Gov<sup>r</sup> St John

I read with real pleasure the notices of thee & thy work in the "Witness" & other papers, & cannot forbear taking the pen to bid thee God speed! I hail thee, the friend of suffering humanity! Friend of the poor & friendless, Apostle of Temperance & the enemy of tyranny & oppression!! I rejoice to see thy name brought forward as one for the next Presidential election. I hope & pray that so good a man may become the chief magistrate of this vast republic!

My health is improving, but I am not yet well or strong enough to return to Kas. to aid the poor refugees. I hope they are doing

*desire of thy sincere friend  
Oliver H. Cornstock.*



## Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

*with*  
 well, & that they will become  
 good law abiding tax paying  
 citizens, a blessing to the young  
 State of Kas. which has rec<sup>d</sup>.  
 them so kindly & hospitably.  
 I wish some vigorous effort  
 could be put forth, for their  
 elevation & education. Their  
 training for future useful-  
 ness seems to me a very im-  
 portant matter now.  
 I am greatly interested in the  
 "Agricultural & Industrial  
 Institute" near Columbus, Kas.  
 I wish it could become a State  
 Institution. Is it likely that  
 your State legislature could  
 be induced to aid it? I agree  
 collect \$5000\* or so, annually for  
 its support from private con-  
 tributions of benevolence, would  
 the State Treasury add the same

\* Possibly \$2000 or Three thousand might be better to commence with.



## Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

amount? or less or more. I should  
 like to see it grow & develop into  
 a second Hampton, Va. on a  
 less expensive scale. About  
 \$8000. have been invested in it  
 already. Many hundreds have  
 been benefited by it, & I trust thou-  
 sands will be ultimately.  
 Hast thou ever been repaid  
 the \$78. thou advanced for poor  
 old "Uncle Peter" & wife & others  
 of the refugees from thy own pri-  
 vate purse? If not I hope to  
 get it for thee by & bye if my  
 health permit.  
 I hope Congress will refund to  
 me & my friends \$772  $\frac{72}{100}$   
 that we paid for Custom house  
 demands on English donations  
 of clothing, bedding, crockery &  
 for the refugees. We are that  
 amount out of pocket & we are

on the nomination  
 for the  
 third  
 term!

accept any wages  
 heartfelt congratulations



## Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

poor & cannot afford to lose it.  
Will thou kindly say a word to  
Thos. Ryan about it, before the  
re-assembling of Congress. He paid  
the duty on the goods because  
they were lying for mos. rotting in  
the Custom house in New York.  
waiting for Gov<sup>t</sup> to re-enact the  
Bill for their admission duty  
free. What a nuisance these  
protective tariffs are, & how  
hard upon the poor!  
I have had a very pleasant visit  
from our dear friend Laura S  
Haviland; she has been spending a  
few days with me. My love  
to thy wife & daughter. May  
the peace of God that passeth  
all understanding be thine  
here, & against thy name in the  
volume of his book above, may  
happiness be written, is the





## Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

*Freedmen's Relief Worker*

No. 3951 Book D Page 559

From Mrs E. L. Comstock lose it.

Place Rollie Mich a word to

Date 9. 11. 1882 before the

Rec'd Congress. He paid

Ans<sup>d</sup> duty on the goods because

they were lying for Mrs. Rotting in  
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W. T. YOE, P. M.  
E. T. Mears, Ass't P. M.  
E. N. Plank, Jr., Mailing Clerk.  
B. J. Dalton, Clerk.

Post Office,

Independence, Kansas,  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY,

Sept 11<sup>th</sup>, 1882

Gov John St. John

Dear Sir: In reply to  
your inquiry.

From observation I think that  
the colored people of this county  
are really doing as well as  
could possibly be expected, con-  
sidering how poor they were  
when they came, and how  
unfit they were to labor  
without an overseer. Among  
the many, there are some who  
are making comfortable homes,  
others doing fairly, & others  
still, unfitted to take care of them-  
selves. They are practically useless  
as laborers, without an overseer,  
and yet want wages of good



## Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

(2)  
hands. This class are shiftless,  
and have many wants not sup-  
plied. I have never visited the  
settlements spoken of by Mr. Istaw,  
& the great destitution he speaks of  
exists in Chautauqua county.  
That there exists some destitution  
among them I have no doubt, but  
think that Mr. W's good heart & nature  
is often imposed upon, and es-  
pecially by this class who have  
been reared to accept gifts and  
charity, as their due. Their wants  
are not great, and I believe that  
the larger portion can and will  
get through the winter without  
aid. While it is true that we  
have in this section bountiful  
crops, these poorest colored people,  
have but little - they have not  
known how to provide in summer,  
and as work in their localities





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W. T. YOE, P. M.

E. T. Mears, Ass't P. M.

E. N. Plank, Jr., Mailing Clerk.

B. J. Dalton, Clerk.

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Post Office,

Independence, Kansas,

MONTGOMERY COUNTY,

....., 188.....

will be scarce, this winter, they will have to "root hog or die," like white people, and from bitter experience learn to provide for themselves. I think that Kansas is able to feed them, but the whites of their localities have given as much as they feel able,

Mr. Votaw, in 1881, mortgaged his home to pay debts for goods he had distributed to the negroes. That debt is unpaid, & it is my opinion that if he could collect the \$500 & interest, he would go out of the relief business in disgust. I believe he has been honest and true, & has done a worthy charity, but our people are very tired of it.





## Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

*Mont.*

No. 3980 Book *D* Page *563*

From *W. J. Yac*

Place *Indepes*

Date *9*

Rec





## Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

Chaut. Co

No. 4138 Book D Page 583  
 From A. D. Perkins  
 Place Sedan Ks  
 Date 10. 2. 1882

Chautauqua Co Kansas  
 Oct 2 1882  
 Governor John P St John  
 Dear Sir

I have sealed  
 my self to write to you  
 as far as I can to ask you  
 a little information. We have  
 heard a great many reports  
 about your desertion we  
 wish to know if it is  
 true or not we  
 thought all this time that  
 you was our friend and  
 yet think so till we hear  
 from you & we heard that  
 you had wrote fast and  
 stop the ad that we  
 hear was a coming



## Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

but we hope and trust -  
in God it is not so  
for we are in a Turbler  
Condition for we believe  
if you could see or know  
our true Condition that  
you would do all you  
could for us for  
we have neither <sup>horse or mule</sup> nor mule  
or any thing to plow  
with we had to make  
our little crops with our  
hves I wish I could see  
you face to a face  
and I could tell you  
all a but it what  
we need and want we  
dont need what we have  
had and what we have  
had there is a plenty  
of white men in this  
S D C. that know our  
suffering suffering



## Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

and will give the  
True Statement - about -  
us we have bin here  
one beere yeare through  
hard times an we have  
made much of a crop  
some of our white -  
friends told me  
that - I had better  
write to you and  
you would give  
me the True Statement  
if you wishes to  
know any thing  
more about us  
write to me and  
meatly and I will  
tell you all that  
I know



## Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

a bant- our  
people and bant-  
now much they  
have got for  
I have got it  
all back down  
we are in a poor  
part of the State  
and labor is  
scarce here there  
is a great many  
of old people here  
that is not able to work  
much now may  
the Lord

Bless you write  
soon  
my address Sedan

Charlanna  
your respectful Kansas  
A D Perkins



## Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

Parsons, Kans.; 10<sup>th</sup> Nov<sup>r</sup> 1892  
To Gov. J. P. St. John,

Dear friend;

Not knowing  
of thy prospective visit to Parsons,  
I left here on the 28<sup>th</sup> ult. with Andrew  
Atchison (of Dunlap in Morris Co), to ascertain  
the real condition of the colored refugees  
in Chautauqua County. We went to  
Independence, where he gathered what  
information he could from others and  
returned home; but as I wished to  
see for myself, I rode over to Canyville,  
from thence to the "Fairfax Settlement"  
and walked around from house to  
house, calling upon both white & colored  
families and had a meeting of colored  
children & youth of the neighborhood.  
I found similar differences existing  
among the colored folks as with the white





## Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

race in regard to industry, energy, management, &c; but of course the former - since they acquired their freedom - have not had the advantages of experience and education possessed by the latter; and the traces of bitter prejudice still existing against the descendants of Ham serves as a barrier to their pecuniary success in many localities. I think the mass of the colored people in that vicinity have been working hard this season in clearing off that bushy upland, producing fair crops of cotton, sweet potatoes, corn & sorghum, and putting away some vegetables for winter use; while others have nothing laid by. Most of the white neighbors are poor and have not cash to spare to pay for labor; but part of them are kindly disposed to the colored folks and seem willing to divide with the most destitute. The colored people there told me they could get along first rate if they just had teams & farming implements to start with.



## Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

When I returned to Parsons day before yesterday I was surprised to find that thou had been here and favored the people with some excellent discourses which appeared to give general satisfaction. I greatly regretted not being able to listen to them and to enjoy thy company. I spent last evening at Aug. Wilson's, where his wife gave me an account of thy visit, & we unanimously decided that it would be very desirable and promotive of much good to have thee here during the approaching County Fair in this City from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> inst, inclusive. If thou canst possibly come, please do so. I have recently ascertained with much regret that certain white men have been and are trying to prejudice the colored people against thee, with the view of influencing their votes at the coming election. Thus far brief explanations & assertions by me, have appeared to satisfy the disaffected ones. I wonder if it would be desirable for thee



## Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

No 1111  
 F. S. Exoduster to the family  
 to have two or three mass meetings of  
 colored people in S. E. Kansas (say at  
 Fort Scott, Columbus, Parsons & Independence),  
 in order to rid their minds of any unfavorable  
 impressions which may have been made  
 by such men as James De Long.  
 Thou canst think about the matter any how.  
 I hope nothing will induce thee to  
 swerve for a moment in the least degree  
 from that strict adherence to right - that  
 noble, fearless vindication of correct  
 principles & practices in reference to the  
 important issues of the day, whereby  
 thou hast thus far gained the respect and  
 confidence - I think I may say the love  
 of millions of the best men women & children  
 of our vastly extended Country. Let no  
 contemptible efforts of enemies or of misguided  
 friends discourage thee or cause thee to swerve from  
 the path of duty; is the earnest desire of thy sincere friend,  
 Wilmer Walton.



## Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

No. 4136 Book D Page 583

From Wilmer Walcott

Place Parsons, Ks

Date 10. 6. 1882

Rec'd

10<sup>th</sup> Nov 6<sup>th</sup> / 82

Dear friend;

Not knowing of thy prospective visit to Parsons, I left here on the 28<sup>th</sup> ult. with Andrew Stetson (of Dunlap in Morris Co.), to ascertain the real condition of the colored refugees in Chautauqua County. We went to Independence, where he gathered what information he could from others and returned home; but as I wished to see for myself, I rode over to Canyville, from thence to the "Fairfax Settlement" and walked around from house to house, calling upon both white & colored families and had a meeting of colored children & youth of the neighborhood. I found similar differences existing among the colored folks as with the white





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Columbus Kansas  
10 - 24 - 1882

J. P. St. John  
Gov. of Kansas  
My Dear Friend

As all  
good citizens of our state  
are interested in everything  
that promises permanent and  
reliable character to our  
Institution for learning and I  
know that our worthy Governor  
is more so than any one else -  
An unexpected opportunity was  
afforded me some days since  
of looking into the workings of the  
A. & J. Institute which was opened  
last year for developing the  
freedmen amongst us - and in  
considering that the state was new



## Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

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and the drought of last year  
cut off all the crop thereby in  
great measure crippling every  
effort put forth in starting the  
enterprise disheartening the managers  
and discouraging the freedmen.  
now take a glance further on -  
with the opening of the New year  
The Genl Supt L. M. Pickens seeing  
that starving or beggary was the  
portion of quite a no. of men who  
had formerly took advantage of the  
open winter and quarried stone  
and built over 2 miles of good  
fence enclosing fine pasture  
field the orchard &c also  
making 100 rods of underground  
on a piece of low land that  
grew fine potatoes this year -  
When spring opened hewing commenced  
for the 3 years rice through  
the winter so they were strong



## Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

And ready for business he  
 took a Colored boy for each  
 team and then teaching first how  
 to hitch it up taught them to  
 plow ~~herrow~~ etc -  
 on my visit I found 12 tons of  
 fine Broom Corn that is being made  
 into brooms by Colored men under  
 care of a White Foreman in the  
 factory - ready market is found for  
 them just as made -  
 1000 bushels of Sweet-Potatoes are  
 being dug and hauled on put on  
 the market - 12 Acres of Cotton was  
 grown but the early frost has  
 damaged it badly -  
 30 head of fine hogs are getting  
 fat off their portion of 50 acres  
 Corn grown - I must not forget  
 the fine fresh water pond in the  
 pasture field that was made at  
 a time to give work to the needy -  
 60 tons of good hay have been put in  
 safe keeping for winter use -  
 The orchard produced fine crop of fruit



## Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

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A night school of 10 scholars is in good running order - but the Supt says he sees no way yet to start a regular day school unless the friends of the cause can furnish a suitable teacher as all the Institution could do would be the leading -

The Blacksmith keeps the family's waggon &c in good repair and the waggon maker & Carpenter does his part also some work for the neighbors.

Pardon my long letter but my great interest in the freedmen as a citizen & our dear friend E. L. C. writing labor in trying to elevate them is my only apology -

I am sincerely Thy friend  
John M Watson

P.S.  
If the facts I send will be any use do what seems right them -





## Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

*Cher. Co*

No. *4223* Book *D* Page *599*

From *J. M. Watson*

Place *Columbus Mo*

Date *10. 24. '82*

Rec'd .....