

Governor John P. St. John to Roseline Cunningham

In this letter, Governor St. John responded to Cunningham's inquiry (from June 18, 1879) about receiving financial assistance to cover the cost of emigration to Kansas. He informs her that there is no society to aid her travel costs, and that the promise of "40 acres and a mule" is a misrepresentation. While he states that he does sympathize with the Southern blacks' situation, he advises Cunningham that emigrants should not come to Kansas if they are destitute. He also provides her with information about Kansas, including the cost of farmland and the typical wage for laborers. Governor St. John, in addition to his official government duties, was also on the board of the Kansas Freedmen's Relief Association, This association was formed to provide aid to Exodusters such as Cunningham, but unfortunately the association did not have adequate funding to provide for all the Exodusters fleeing from the South.

Creator: St. John, John Pierce, 1833-1916

Date: June 24, 1879

Callnumber: Governor's Records--St. John--Letterpress Book--Box 5, No. 16

KSHS Identifier: DaRT ID: 210547

Item Identifier: 210547

www.kansasmemory.org/item/210547

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Executive Department
Topeka, Kansas
June 27/1876

Roseline Cunningham
West Point, Miss.

Madam:

Your letter of the 17th inst. has just been received, and in reply I have the honor to state that neither the State of Kansas, nor the general government, nor any society so far as I know, extends any aid to create emigrants to reach Kansas. Kansas has no emigrant agent, and any persons representing himself as such are impostors.

I am informed that parties have represented to the colored people in your State that by coming to Kansas they would receive 200 acres of land, a mule, &c. for a year for

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All such representations are without
any foundation whatever in fact, and
are intended to deceive the colored people
and mislead them to their detriment.

Kansas offers no inducements
pawn and except such as her
fair lands, well cultivated, and
other advantages presented, nor is any
advantage extended to any one class
of people that are not alike extended
to all classes. Lands can be bought
at from \$25 to \$100 per acre for down
payment on long time at low rates
of interest. But it must be borne in
mind that these lands are wholly
unimproved and that it requires
a team and farming implements and
a few acres of time and muscle to
put these lands under cultivation and
make them productive of a living
for the owner and his family.

Managers laborers are attracted

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follows. farm hands from 12⁰⁰ to 18⁰⁰
per month and board. House servants
from 10⁰⁰ to 15⁰⁰ per week and board.

During the last 90 days about thirty
on four thousand colored people have come
to Kansas from the South. a large proportion
of them having been in a destitute condition
but now, as a general rule, having obtained
employment are supporting themselves.

I would advise however, the colored
people not to come to any of the Northern
States entirely destitute of the means of
support for of day should, and especially
in large numbers, it will retard very much
the progress of their movement.

I deeply sympathize with them in
their distressed condition. I know that
they have never enjoyed that degree of
freedom, that under the constitution and
laws of our country, they are entitled to.
But I believe if they act judiciously in the
present movement, that the colored people

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will cause a brighter day to dawn upon
their race. ~~will~~ open the way to a more
prosperous future.

In Kansas, the life and property of
every human being, who steps the laws,
receive full protection, and all children
enjoy equal educational advantages under
the law.

Should a large number of immigrants
seek to settle in this state & immigrant colonies
I would advise you to select some discreet
reliable person to first come north,
select a location for your settlement,
to demand that when you start you can
continue in your journey directly to the point
selected, and in this way your agricultural
growing that otherwise would be expended
in looking up locations.

Very respectfully
John P. St. John
Governor