

*Charles "Pappy" Carr in the yard of Luther Bailey's Topeka home, ca. 1911. Courtesy of Mark Scott.*

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# Fleeing Missouri Bloodhounds: Pappy Carr's Escape to Free Kansas

*edited by Mark Chapin Scott*

**L**uther C. Bailey (1866–1947) wrote the following slave narrative of Charles Carr several years before the latter's death in 1914. A Topeka insurance agent, real estate developer, and writer/historian, Bailey sold accident insurance on his many business trips throughout Kansas. He regularly met people from all walks of life, and "Pappy" Carr was among those he thought the most interesting. Although the "colored" Topeka janitor seemed otherwise "the least likely hero," Bailey strongly believed that the account of Carr's harrowing escape from slavery should be recorded for posterity, even though Carr himself was "exceedingly reticent in telling his story."<sup>1</sup> Bailey was so impressed by the story that he even persuaded the reluctant Carr to be photographed.

Bailey's own interests were not limited to his successful career in insurance and real estate. He was a popular after-dinner speaker, regularly addressed meetings of the Kansas Historical Society, and was a board member of the Topeka Public Library. Bailey also wrote poetry, an unpublished novel, and a variety of historical essays on American and Kansas history. He corresponded with Kansas author Margaret Hill McCarter, poet Edwin Markham, and Admiral George Dewey—the "Hero of Manila Bay."<sup>2</sup>

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Mark Scott was born in Topeka in 1948, attended Topeka schools, and received multiple degrees from the University of Kansas. He has been a college professor, intelligence analyst, political appointee, historian, translator, and business consultant. His continued interest in the history of Kansas is reflected in his work published in past issues of *Kansas History*: "The Little Blue Books in the War on Bigotry and Bunk" (Autumn 1978) and "Langston Hughes of Kansas" (Spring 1980). The Langston Hughes story was subsequently published in abbreviated form in the *Journal of Negro History*. It served as a major source for Arnold Rampersad's two-volume biography of Hughes (1986), and Floyd Cooper later used the story as the basis for his children's book *Coming Home: From the Life of Langston Hughes* (1994).

1. "The Dash for Liberty in Kansas by Charles Carr (Pappy Carr)," unpublished manuscript, personal collection of Mark Chapin Scott, Ojai, California.

2. See, for example, Margaret Hill McCarter to Luther Chapin Bailey, February 17, 1911; Bailey, "The Story of the Arickaree (or Beecher Island)," unpublished typescript; L. C. Bailey to William E. Connelley, Secretary of the Kansas State Historical Society, October 23, 1916; "Bailey May Enter Race," unidentified newspaper clipping; and various poems and unpublished manuscripts in editor Mark Scott's personal collection, Ojai, California.

**A**s far as history was concerned, Bailey was most interested in stories celebrating the lone hero fighting against overwhelming odds. In 1902 he wrote an article on the fall of the Alamo for an insurance periodical, and he was persistent in coaxing Charles Carr to recount his flight from slavery. But the story Bailey thought most compelling was the Battle of Beecher Island, which was fought in 1868 in northeastern Colorado, although the frontiersmen involved had been dispatched from forts in Kansas. The battle featured fifty-one army scouts defeating as many as one thousand Indians. Bailey not only meticulously investigated details of this battle, but personally interviewed survivors. He also wrote a moving tribute to Roman Nose, the Cheyenne chief killed at Beecher Island, whom Bailey considered "one of the greatest of all Indian chieftains."<sup>3</sup>

In a letter to Bailey dated February 17, 1911, Margaret Hill McCarter wrote, "I understand that you have spent much time in collecting the stories of the heroic deeds of great men, and of the events of history marked by daring and courageous action. It is a laudable pursuit. . . . It may seem a small thing to you. To me the pleasure you have given to many of us . . . seems a thing the recording pen must write large in the Great Story Book. And I thank you sincerely for it."<sup>4</sup>

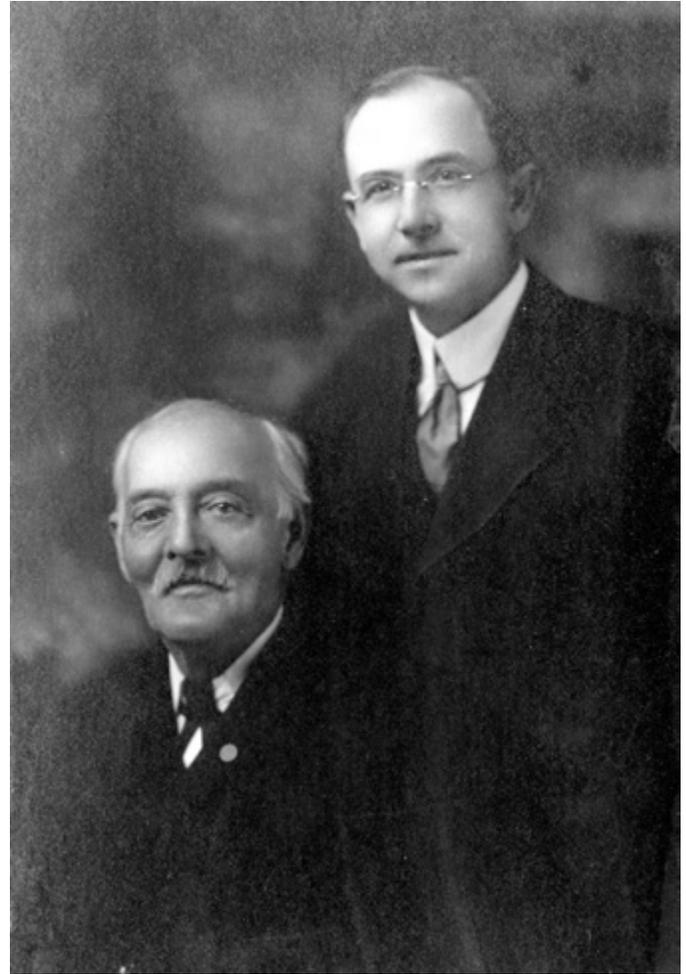
Topeka professional men interested in discussing issues of the day regularly met at the Bailey home at 909 Garfield Street. Among the members of this group was Arthur Capper, journalist, publisher, Kansas governor, and United States senator.

At the time Bailey interviewed Charles Carr, Topeka was largely segregated along racial lines. Although the public library did not refuse black patrons, African Americans lived in segregated neighborhoods, ate in segregated restaurants, and attended segregated schools; this was the city that would later figure so prominently in the Supreme Court's decision *Brown v. Board of Education*. Unlike his contemporary Theodore Roosevelt, Bailey never proclaimed the superiority of the "Anglo-Saxon Race." But like many of his peers, Bailey believed that races and ethnic groups possessed unique characteristics; his belief that African Americans had a mild and gentle disposition mirrored the views of Mark Twain.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, by the standards of his day, Bailey would have been considered radical in his attitude toward black Americans, even though his mother's family had been Virginia slave owners. Family members never recalled him using a racial epithet of any kind. In fact, he once scandalized friends by stating that the ultimate

3. Bailey, "The Story of the Arickaree."

4. McCarter to Bailey, February 17, 1911.

5. On segregation in Topeka and the landmark *Brown* case, see, among many others, Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York:



Luther Bailey (right) wrote many historical essays, but the story he found most compelling was the 1868 Battle of Beecher Island. Although the battle was fought on the Arikara River in northeastern Colorado, the army officers in command were based at Fort Wallace in northwest Kansas, and their troops were fifty-one so-called Kansas scouts. Bailey meticulously researched the incident and personally interviewed survivors, among them Allison Pliley of Kansas City, pictured here with Bailey in 1911. Courtesy of Mark Scott.

solution to the race problem was intermarriage. It may be noteworthy that other than Bailey, no other individual—white or black—was so determined to document the story of Charles Carr's escape from slavery.

Bailey's typed account of the Pappy Carr story lay forgotten for more than a century in a box of old documents until accidentally discovered in 2013 by his great-grandson Mark Chapin Scott, the editor of this article. Scott edited another

Alfred A. Knopf, 1976); see Mark Twain, *Mark Twain's Autobiography* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1924), 1:100–101; and for Roosevelt's comments on race relations, see Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West*, vol. 1, *The Spread of English-Speaking Peoples* (New York: The Current Literature Publishing Company, 1905), 21, 29.

previously unpublished Bailey story (an eyewitness recollection of a February 1895 train robbery in western Kansas), which appeared in *Kansas History* as "Insured Against Train Robbers: A Kansas Christmas Tale" (Winter 2009–2010).<sup>6</sup>

A Dash for Liberty in Free Kansas  
by Luther Chapin Bailey

In the western suburbs of Topeka stands a small frame school house. And each morning one can see an interesting figure who, with bell in hand, calls the children to their daily tasks.<sup>7</sup>

He is very tall, and in his prime stood about six foot three inches, weighing more than two hundred pounds, with as fine a muscular development as was ever possessed by an athlete. He is now very old, having reached his ninetieth year, but goes about his daily tasks with the greatest kindness.<sup>8</sup>

His lineage can be traced to a strange mixture. He inherited from a great-grandfather the sturdy and determined integrity of a Scotchman; from a Cherokee Indian that stoical courage which, when aroused, makes its possessor a most formidable antagonist, while the negro [*sic*] blood which courses his veins gives him that mild and gentle disposition so peculiar to that race.

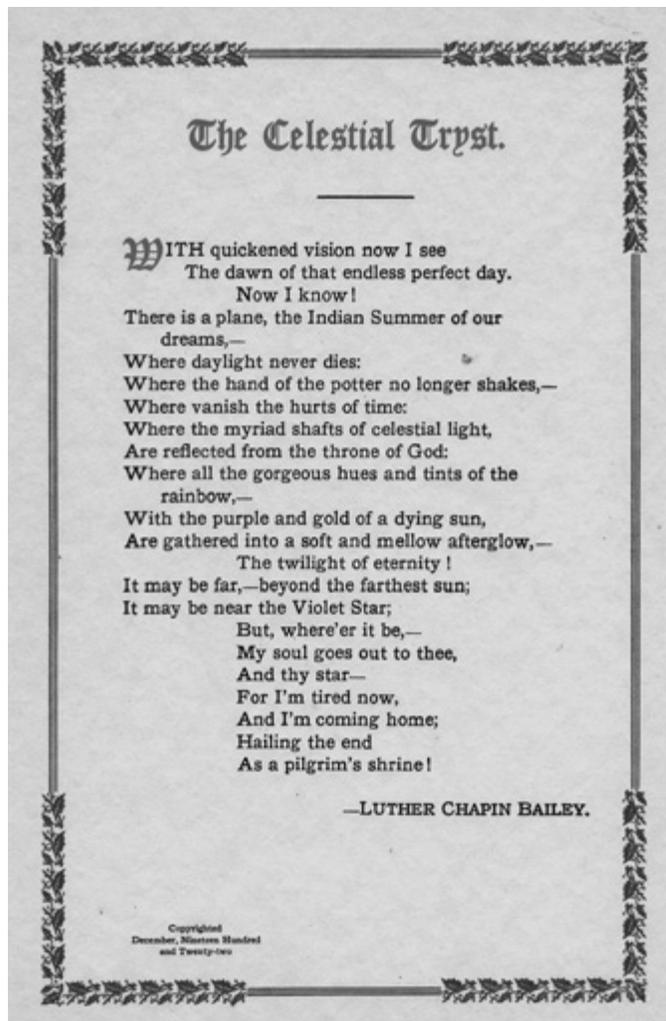
"I love God and little children" said the German Poet, and one might look long before finding a character so completely exemplifying Heine's beautiful sentiment. A person cannot be bad or go far wrong who remains young at heart and finds great delight in the company of little children and animals.

He was christened Charles Carr, but in recent years has won the name of "Pappy Carr" from innocent hands. While this stalwart figure makes his daily rounds, one sees something quite remarkable. As his majestic figure stoops to grasp the hand of the talkative child in his path and "Pappy Tarr" punctuates the conversation, both

6. Mark Chapin Scott, ed., "Insured Against Train Robbers: A Kansas Christmas Tale," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 32 (Winter 2009–2010): 267–73, available online at [http://www.kshs.org/publicat/history/2009winter\\_scott.pdf](http://www.kshs.org/publicat/history/2009winter_scott.pdf). Bailey died on May 1, 1947, and was buried with his head resting on his favorite book—English author Charles Lamb's *Essays of Elia*—in the family plot in Topeka Cemetery.

7. The 1910 federal census listed Carr's occupation as "Janitor, School House." U.S. Census, 1910, Kansas, Shawnee County.

8. Burial Records of Topeka Cemetery; Topeka Cemetery, "Death Records Database," access restricted, Topeka, Kansas. Carr was born on April 15, 1826, and died on April 9, 1914, so he was not ninety at the time of this interview. In Bailey's unpublished outline for the story, he noted that Carr was eighty-five years old, which means that the interview took place in 1911.



Luther Bailey was a popular after-dinner speaker who also wrote poetry, an unpublished novel, and a variety of historical essays on American and Kansas history. He corresponded with Kansas author Margaret Hill McCarter, poet Edwin Markham, and other notables. Bailey's poem, "The Celestial Tryst," was published in 1922, shortly after the death of his wife, Ida. Courtesy of Mark Scott.

might mark him as the least likely hero. He has but one title, although like all courageous men he is exceedingly reticent to tell his story.

He is passionately fond of horses, as he was reared on a Kentucky horse farm, and nothing arouses his resentment as much as the slightest indifference or abuse of one of these creatures.<sup>9</sup> For many years, "Nell," a splendid bay carriage mare, has been consigned to his special care,

9. Even before Carr's birth, the breeding of horses had become increasingly profitable in Kentucky, and according to Dan White, "By 1840, there were more than half a million people in Kentucky and the horse population numbered 431,000. . . . The state had become an important supplier of top-quality horses, sending them in droves of fifteen to thirty

and the companionship of horse and man is so touching that it might have furnished inspiration to the author of *Black Beauty*. It is not uncommon for this noble animal, in passing along the streets of Topeka, to call to him in her plaintive whinny, detecting his presence even sooner than the master detects her own.

**H**e was born a slave in the blue grass country of Kentucky. His life was as happy as could fall to one of more than average intelligence, conscious of his lowly station. And yet he speaks in the most kindly terms of the Fleming family in which he was reared, and emphasizes with great emotion that no master could have been kinder to him than the one with whom he grew up from childhood as playfellow as well as bedfellow in the old trundle bed.<sup>10</sup>

On a neighboring plantation lived a Methodist minister who had in his family a servant girl who became the wife of Charles Carr. Children were born to them, and the happiness which blessed their lives—with the assurance that the pangs of separation might not come to them with such masters—kept them far removed from the conditions which might ruthlessly banish father or mother to the cotton fields.<sup>11</sup>

to the southern states, especially South Carolina.” Kentucky also became a leader in the breeding of race horses. Perhaps Carr was fond of horses because he had once been a stable boy in Fleming County, Kentucky. Kent Hollingsworth, *The Kentucky Thoroughbred* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 17; Dan White, *Kentucky Bred: A Celebration of Thoroughbred Breeding* (Dallas, Tex.: Taylor Publishing Company, 1986), 70.

10. The burial records of Topeka Cemetery clearly stated that Carr was born in Fleming County, Kentucky. In the narrative Carr seemed to be referring not to a location, but to an individual. “Fleming” may have been the only name Carr’s fading memory could recollect when pressed by Bailey for the slave owner’s identity. In Bailey’s typed draft of the story, the name of Carr’s owner was left blank, then later penciled in, suggesting that Carr himself had difficulty recalling his owner’s surname. Carr had evidently been both slave companion and servant of his young owner. The close association may help to explain why that owner, sympathetic to Carr’s desire not to be separated from his own family, was later willing to sell him to a slaveholder living very near the Missouri farm of Carr’s wife and daughters (see below).

11. According to cemetery records, Nancy Lewis Carr was born in “Kentucky” on November 9, 1827, but census takers recorded various years of birth—1831, 1829, 1830, 1827, and 1832. Carr said Nancy had been a “servant girl”—possibly a house slave rather than a field slave. The 1870 federal census indicated that Nancy could read, but could not write. All other Kansas and federal censuses, except 1880, reported that she could neither read nor write. All of those censuses stated that Charles could not read or write. The 1870 federal census listed three children living in the home who had been born in Kentucky—Mary (1851), Pheobe [sic] (1852), and Rebecca (1855). See Kansas State Census, 1865, Leavenworth County, Leavenworth; Kansas State Census, 1875, Shawnee County, Soldier Township; Kansas State Census, 1905, Shawnee County, Topeka; and U.S. Census, 1870, Kansas, Jackson County;

But the time came when all things changed. The Dred Scott Decision annulled the Missouri Compromise, which had made the southern boundary of Missouri the northern limits of slave territory.<sup>12</sup> The minister’s family who owned Mrs. Carr decided to migrate to Missouri, settling about four miles southeast of St. Joseph.

Charles Carr’s master, moved by the pathos of that separation, proposed to sell him to someone near the home of his wife, who accompanied her master.<sup>13</sup>

All this occurred but a few years before the Civil War, when Kansas had become free territory after a desperate struggle in which Lawrence was sacked and destroyed while other outrages of a heinous character were perpetrated upon this state by those who wished to impress upon its Constitution the stamp of slavery.<sup>14</sup>

As the growing abolition sentiment heralded the approach of the war, those who held slaves in the North wished to be rid of them, fearing that the separation which the Secessionists threatened would entail a heavy

U.S. Census, 1880, Kansas, Shawnee County; Burial Records of Topeka Cemetery.

12. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 was initially abrogated by the popular sovereignty provision of the Kansas–Nebraska Act of 1854, which, unlike the Compromise, allowed slavery in Louisiana Purchase territories north of Missouri’s southern border. Three years later, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* that, among other things, the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional and Congress could not prohibit slavery in the territories. See, among many others, Nicole Etcheson, “The Great Principle of Self-Government: Popular Sovereignty and Bleeding Kansas,” *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 27 (Spring–Summer 2004): 14–29, available at [http://kshs.org/publicat/history/2004spring\\_etcheson.pdf](http://kshs.org/publicat/history/2004spring_etcheson.pdf).

13. It was common at that time for Kentucky slave owners to relocate to Missouri. According to historian Diane Mutti Burke, “The forty-year period from 1821 to 1860 was one of extraordinary movement of settlers from Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Virginia to Missouri.” Most likely the Carrs lived and worked on a farm, rather than a plantation, for as Mutti Burke also wrote, “Most Missouri counties boasted of a few large estates that usually were patterned after those found in Kentucky and Virginia, but more common were the thousands of modest farms that were scattered throughout the countryside.” An average slaveholder in Missouri owned only five slaves, and the men usually worked as general farmhands alongside their white owners. Unfortunately, there is not enough information available to determine precisely who the owners of the Carrs were. Connie McCoy, Northwest Missouri Genealogical Society, St. Joseph, Missouri, email message to the editor, May 18, 2013; Diane Mutti Burke, *On Slavery’s Border: Missouri’s Small-Slaveholding Households, 1815–1865* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 24–25, 50, 98, 200.

14. Lawrence was “sacked” in May 1856, but the real destruction came during the Civil War with Quantrill’s raid on August 21, 1863; nearly two hundred men and boys were killed and 182 buildings were destroyed, with property damage estimated “as high as \$2.5 million—in Civil War-era dollars.” Edward E. Leslie, *The Devil Knows How to Ride: The True Story of William Clarke Quantrill and His Confederate Raiders* (New York: Random House, 1996), 237; Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004).



Carr knew that he would be pursued and hunted like a wild beast, and because of the Fugitive Slave Law, could be apprehended and returned to the service of his master anywhere in the country. He also knew that many in the North were desperately opposed to that law, and so he resolved to die rather than submit to a fate that to a man of his character was worse than death.

Having learned of the possibility of being sold, he planned his escape. The next morning, he visited the Missouri River, which lay but a few miles west of his home. In so doing, he carefully investigated the feasibility of crossing over into Kansas, determined to proceed northward when once across the river.

He found a fisherman's hut, and nearby—in a sequestered bend of the stream sheltered by a clump of willows—the fisherman's boat. This at once defined his course. Marking the spot, he returned quietly to

*This engraving of a slave auction was published in The Child's Anti-Slavery Book: Containing a Few Words about American Slave Children in 1859. Abolitionists countered proslavery propaganda that depicted enslaved people as happy by showing the harsh effects of slavery on the family. Carr fled from his master to avoid sale to Louisiana and separation from his wife and children. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.*

loss in such property. Large numbers were therefore sent to the South.

Some had been sent south from Charles Carr's neighborhood, but he determined he would never go.

A slave buyer visited the home of his master one day in 1859 for the purpose of purchasing slaves. Charles was offered for sale, but the buyer reserved a few days to investigate the character of his purchase.

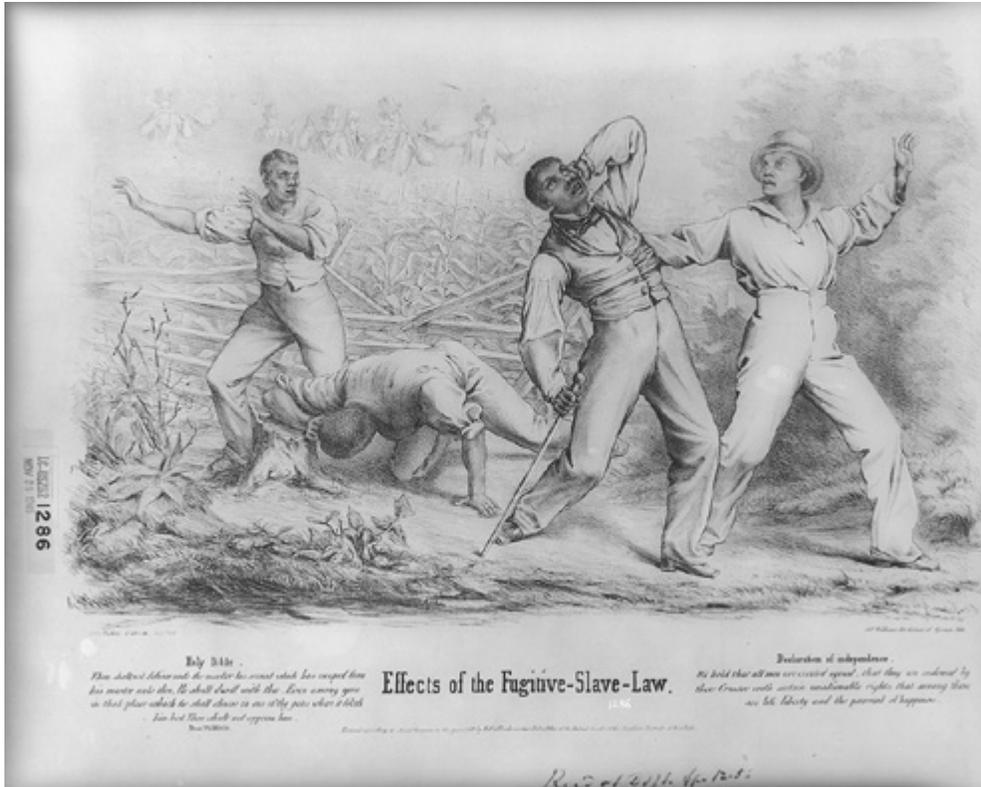
In the meantime, Charles had learned that if he were sold, his destination would be the cane fields of Louisiana. He already knew the story of Mrs. Stowe's Uncle Tom. No Simon Legree for him. Knowing that he would be separated from his family and forced into hard labor in the cane fields, he resolved to run away, and, if necessary, to fight for his life.<sup>15</sup>

15. Slaves in the Upper South feared being "sold down the river" for many reasons. Sales would permanently separate them from their family and friends. While Missouri slave men were usually employed as

await the coming of darkness.

Early that evening, he visited his wife and children at the minister's home, and said goodbye. He briefly whispered to her why he had come, and told her of his plans. The parting was especially painful because it was so hurried, with no time for any kind of emotional farewell. Having assured her that if he survived he would return to claim them when the danger had passed, he said his final farewell. His wife and children were safe, for her

farmhands, slaves on the cotton and sugar plantations were brutalized in labor gangs working long hours in a harsh and often unhealthy climate. Transportation of slaves from the Upper to Lower South could be extremely cruel. Missouri slave Marilda Pethy recalled, "Why, I seen people handcuffed together and driv [sic] 'long de Williamsburg road like cattle. Dey was bought to be took south." Missouri slave William Wells Brown watched "a slave woman who leaped to her death from a steamboat rather than be taken south, and another young slave man, en route to the Deep South, jumped overboard and was killed when struck by the boat's paddle wheel." Mutti Burke, *On Slavery's Border*, 124, 184.



which would soon become his only guide, he heard the strains of “My Old Kentucky Home”:

Weep no more, my lady,  
Then weep no more  
today.

I will sing one song of my  
old Kentucky home

Of my old Kentucky  
home far away.

Oblivious to the impending danger, other negroes [sic] in an adjacent cabin were caroling the old Southern melody in such plaintive tones that he again saw the old home in the blue grass country, recalling how within the span of a few years he had become a refugee and an outcast, hunted with a price on his head. His fighting blood was aroused as he awaited the moment to flee when the curtains of his master’s house would be drawn for the night.

Through the maples encircling the house he could see lights that had been steadily gleaming throughout the evening now being extinguished.

The house was in darkness, the family retired. Silence reigned except for the ticking of the old clock. Even the watch dog lay asleep in the barn. This was his chance.<sup>16</sup>

Congress passed a Fugitive Slave Act in 1850 that required people in free states to assist in the capture and return of escaped slaves. Carr knew that the Fugitive Slave Law meant that he could be apprehended and returned to the service of his master from anywhere in the country. Many Northerners resented this expansion of slavery’s power. This 1850 lithograph includes both a quotation from the Declaration of Independence and one from Deuteronomy: “Thou shalt not deliver unto the master his servant which has escaped from his master unto thee. He shall dwell with thee. Even among you in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates where it liketh him best. Thou shalt not oppress him.” Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

master had promised to keep her while he lived, freeing her at his death.

A lonely and dreary walk of two miles brought him to his cabin. On the way back, he cursed the fate that had made him a black man, made him a slave. He repeatedly asked himself why any man should deprive him of his liberty and claim him as a thing to be bought and sold like a beast of the field. Why should any man have the right to destroy his home?

Reaching the hut, he carefully prepared a small pack of clothing, then sat on an old stool just outside the door awaiting the chance to escape. At the last moment, he decided to arouse two other slaves and give them the opportunity to join in his *desperate undertaking*.

And so there he sat waiting in front of his cabin on that balmy autumn night. Gazing at the friendly North Star,

16. Carr’s escape was apparently not in 1859, but in 1860, on a night when there was a “balmy autumn breeze.” The 1870 federal census reported that in 1861 Nancy Carr gave birth in Missouri to a son, John. If Charles was the father of that child, it means that he was in the locale the previous year. Nancy bore no more children until 1866, when Eddy was born in Kansas. This suggests that the Carrs were reunited as early as 1865.

If local slave owners had feared expropriation of their slave property, the election of Abraham Lincoln in November 1860 only intensified their concerns. From the perspective of many Missouri slave owners, Lincoln’s election simply made a bad situation even worse, because they already had numerous reasons to fear uncompensated loss of their chattel property. Missouri’s western border south of the great bend in the Missouri River had no natural barrier, making it especially difficult to prevent fugitive slaves from crossing into Kansas Territory, which was dominated by antislavery partisans after 1857. In 1859—the year

Carr rushed to the hut where his companions had gathered, telling them what would probably be their fate if they decided to remain. He urged them to join him in his determined effort to escape.

**T**hey quickly agreed. Then the three slaves, having packed their small kits of clothing, stealthily crept through neighboring bushes and tall grasses toward the Missouri River (for they shunned the public highway). They reached the river where the fisherman had tied the boat. Quickly releasing it, they silently pulled it along the bank a sufficient distance up the river that the plash [sic] of the oars might not be heard by its owner, thereby revealing their movements.<sup>17</sup>

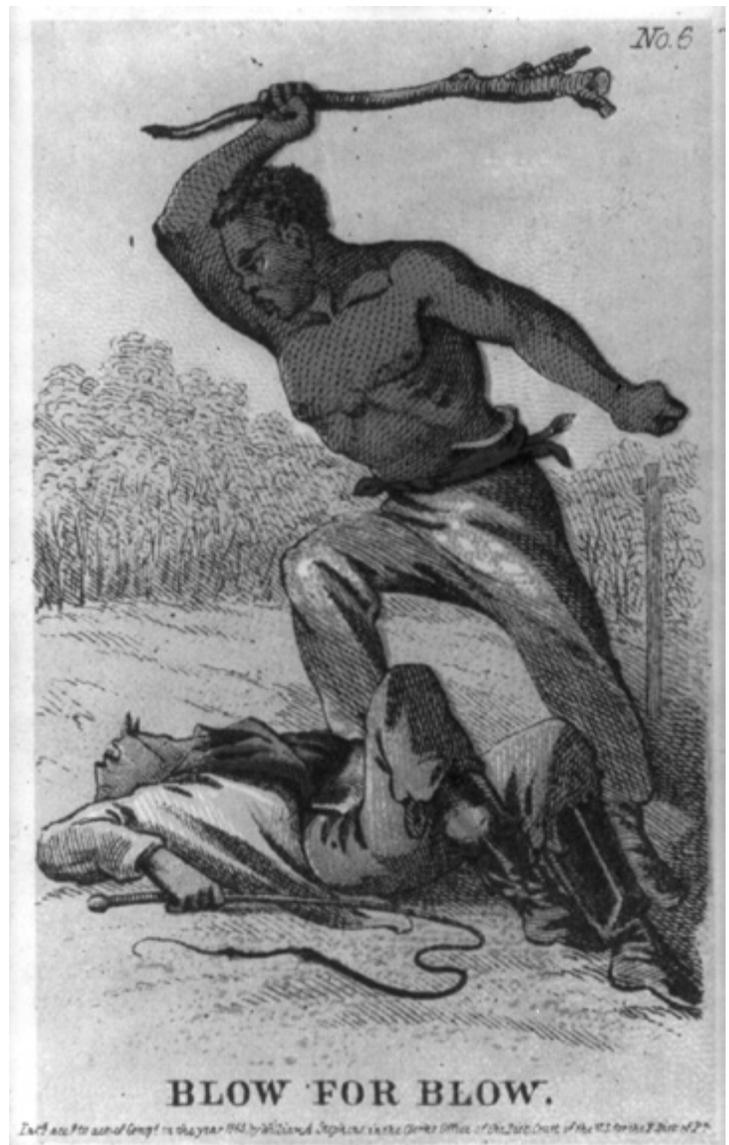
Reaching the opposite shore of the river, they quickly disembarked and stood for a brief moment on its banks. They were in Kansas, and Kansas—after the Border Ruffian War—was free territory. Yet under the Dred Scott Decision, they could be apprehended and dragged back to servitude.<sup>18</sup> There would be no safety for them there.

They reached the western bank of the river shortly after midnight and quietly pushed northward through

before Carr's escape—a slave patrol in Platte County, Missouri, pursued fugitive slaves into Kansas, where they caught them along with white abolitionist Dr. John Doy, who had helped them escape. Doy was convicted of violating the Fugitive Slave Law and was incarcerated in the Buchanan County jail—not far from the farm where Carr himself lived. Doy's friends soon rescued him from the jail. Mutti Burke, *On Slavery's Border*, 176–77; U.S. Census, 1870, Kansas, Jackson County.

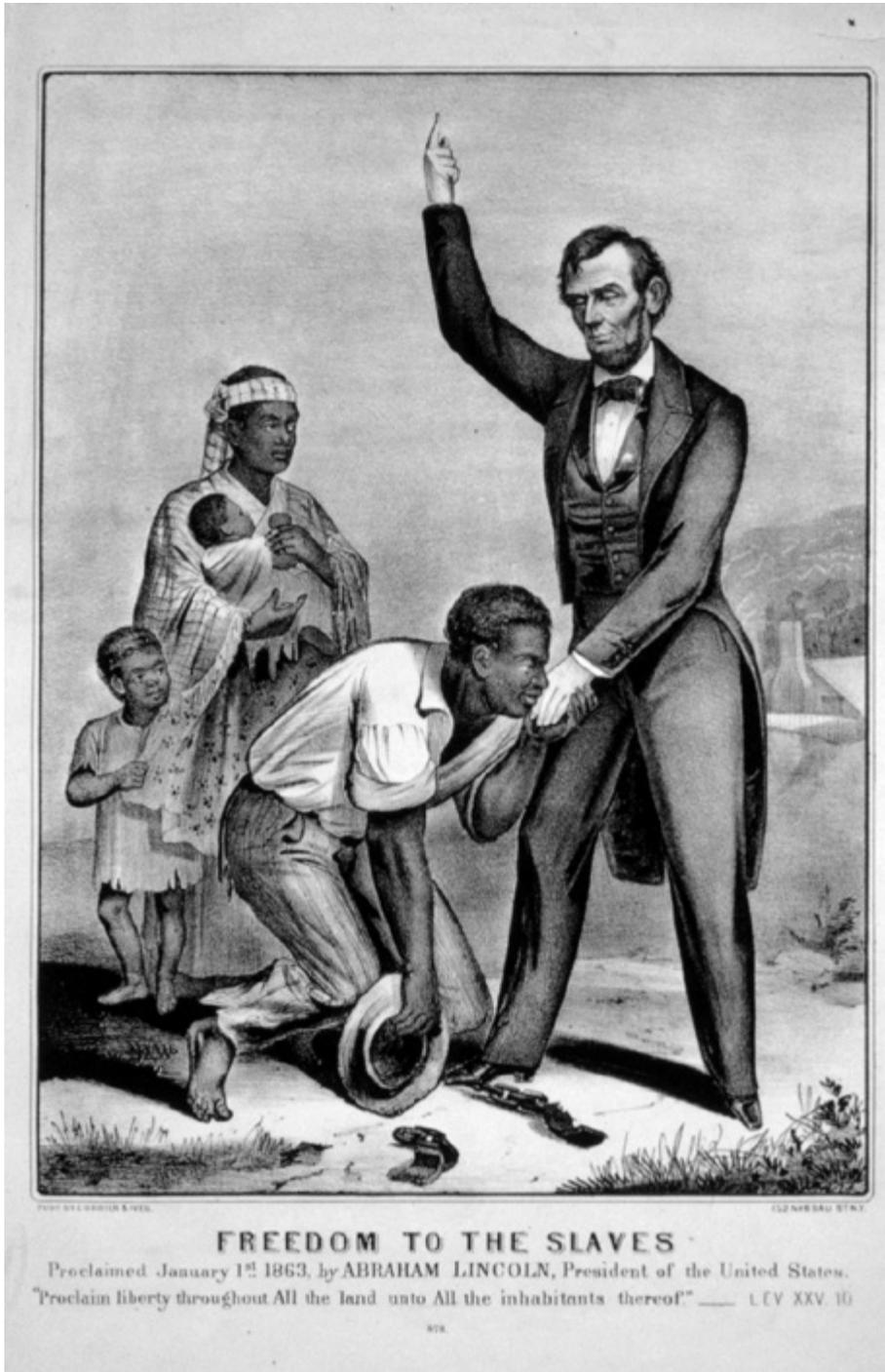
17. "In the 1850s, the beacon of freedom shone brightest in Kansas, where many western Missouri slaves believed they would receive assistance from the antislavery settlers who were pouring into the territory," wrote Mutti Burke. "Some northwest Missouri slaves, such as the man Doy was convicted of enticing to freedom, escaped into Kansas Territory by commandeering small boats or simply walking across the frozen Missouri River in wintertime." Mutti Burke, *On Slavery's Border*, 177.

18. The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, not the *Dred Scott* decision, gave slaveholders the right to pursue their slaves wherever those fugitives fled and ordered all agencies of the federal government to aggressively provide assistance. The act empowered court-appointed commissioners to arrest and imprison escaped slaves such as Carr, and it authorized them to take depositions and grant certificates to claimants to retrieve their human property. It also empowered local officials to "employ so many persons as he may deem necessary . . . and to retain them in his service so long as circumstances may require." Such a posse would in fact pursue fugitive slave Charles Carr. The reward system was weighted in favor of the claimant; if a commissioner ruled for a claimant, the commissioner received a fee of ten dollars (approximately two hundred and sixty dollars in 2010 dollars). If the commissioner determined that the claimant was not the legitimate owner, the commissioner's fee was five dollars. The act further imposed a penalty of one thousand dollars (the rough equivalent of twenty-six thousand



This lithograph created in 1863, is part of a larger set of collectable cards showing the transformation of an enslaved man into a soldier in the Union army. Here, he strikes a white man who previously had whipped him. To make his escape, Carr used a hastily made club to fight off the attack of an armed posse and bloodhounds. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

dollars in current dollars) on any official who refused to assist in the capture of runaway slaves. Persons who helped slaves escape, gave them food, or provided shelter were subject to a one thousand dollar fine and a jail sentence of six months. Individuals who apprehended the fugitives collected a reward. Stanley W. Campbell, *The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, 1850–1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), 112, 185, 187; for the above quotation and the full text of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 and the Kansas–Nebraska Act, see *United States, The Constitution of the United States, with the Acts of Congress, Relating to Slavery, Embracing the Constitution, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793, the Missouri Compromise Act of 1820, the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, and the Nebraska and Kansas Bill, Carefully Compiled* (1854; reprint, San Bernardino, Calif.: Ulan Press, 2012), 19–24.



*The Emancipation Proclamation, issued by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863, declared free all enslaved people in states in rebellion against the Union. Carr always held that the Emancipation Proclamation was of comparably little importance to him personally, because he had won his freedom in that brutal battle with his hickory club. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.*

the broken and uneven country of northeastern Kansas, thickly studded by dwarfed timber and underbrush.

At about daybreak, they came to a clearing and took

refuge for the day in a large brush heap. They remained there until about five o'clock in the evening, when they heard the baying of hounds. They did not worry about this at first. But suddenly a clear note rang out from the leader, which made them instantly apprehensive, for they recognized the deep bellowing howl of a bloodhound. They were being pursued, with a price of five hundred dollars on the head of Charles Carr.<sup>19</sup>

Having learned of their escape, a posse had immediately been formed the next morning. It consisted of a leader with four companions well-mounted and armed. They were accompanied by two bloodhounds. Assisted by the dogs, they took up the trail and followed it westward to the river. However, it was very difficult for the horses to cross at that location—the river there was deep and turbid. They were forced to take a circuitous route two miles south. Having crossed the river at that point and reaching the Kansas side, they followed it up to the place where the slaves had crossed. The dogs took the trail, eagerly pursuing the fugitives, finally overtaking them in a clearing. Hearing the baying of the hounds, Carr immediately emerged from his hiding place and called to his companions, telling them to come out quickly, as they would soon be forced to fight for their lives. He exhorted them to stand up to the fight and under no circumstances surrender. He assured them that if they did not, they would not escape the cane or cotton fields.

Suddenly seizing an ax, Carr cut a small hickory sapling, careful to grub out a portion of the root with

19. In offering a reward of five hundred dollars, Carr's owner obviously considered him valuable property; five hundred dollars in 1860 would be the approximate equivalent of twelve thousand dollars in 2010 dollars.

the club. He quickly trimmed off its branches, and, when finished, made it a weapon capable of inflicting terrible punishment on an enemy. It was about four feet long, and the root on the end made a bludgeon like one loaded with lead.

Carr quickly helped his companions in the preparation of similar weapons. They had scarcely finished the task when the baying of the hounds warned them that the fight was on.

Quickly leaping in front of his companions, Carr took the initiative. As the hounds emerged from the woods and caught sight of their quarry, they rushed at them with the fury so characteristic of the breed. The lead dog sprang at Carr, who with the agility of an Indian stepped to one side. Before the dog could reach him, the hickory club circled his head, striking it squarely behind the ears, and crushing its skull. With a terrific howl, the vicious brute rolled on its back, whined piteously, jerked its legs, and died.

Carr scarcely recovered before the second bloodhound attacked him more viciously than the first, its instinct for revenge thoroughly aroused. But with the same agility, Carr again leaped aside and agilely brained the second dog with a blow of the club. He kicked both dogs into a ravine, where the second one lay piteously moaning.

Carr had scarcely dispatched the dogs when the slave posse emerged from the woods into the clearing. With pistols in both hands, they spurred their horses on, charging the negroes [*sic*], shooting as rapidly as possible, determined to cower the fugitives into surrender.

Carr's courage was superb. Again brandishing his club, he sprang to the shock of battle. He struck out boldly within the circle of riders, rushing wildly at horse and man, repeatedly striking the horses with such terrific fury that the animals could not be urged forward.

In the meantime, the posse was trying to kill him with their withering gunfire. The fight quickly developed with Carr alone against the field. At the onset of the battle, his companions had fallen on the ground like craven cowards, begging for mercy.

This was Carr's salvation, for when the four members of the posse leaped from their horses to bind his companions, Carr—like a deer—fled several hundred yards into a thicket. He was about to plunge into a cornfield when the leader of the posse mounted a fine gray horse, halted directly in his pathway, and with two guns drawn and frightful oaths, commanded Carr to surrender.

Carr now realized that this was a battle of one against many, that the odds were all against him, with death staring him in the face. For as he stood on that lonely path,

he looked into the muzzles of two deadly guns in the hands of a brutal man. Quickly pretending to surrender, he began parleying with his enemy for terms, all the while advancing slowly, or rather edging closer to the man as he leaned upon his club. He was calculating precisely how many strides lay between him and the slaver, and the chances of striking him with his club before the man could shoot.

**A**pproaching his enemy as closely as he thought possible, he sprang at him with such terrific rage that for an instant the slaver could not fire. Carr's club descended with such terrible force that it barely missed the slaver's head, striking instead his horse—directly between the ears. The blow so thoroughly crazed the animal that it whirled in a circle, utterly oblivious to the furious spurs of its master.

Carr again swung his club. As the horse wheeled around, the slaver threw himself prostrate on the animal's neck, piteously begging, "For God's sake, don't kill me!"

The entreaty fell upon deaf ears. The fugitive, driven to desperation, knew that someone must die. As the hickory club whirred and fell, it struck the rider squarely on the back of the head, fracturing his skull. He fell to the ground like a log. The poor horse dashed through the woods, glad to escape the hellish combat.

Carr plunged without hesitation into the nearby cornfield. The rows ran north and south, and he selected one. A good distance in from the edge, he ran rapidly to its northern edge. He fled under the cover of night, which by now was rapidly approaching. He rushed into an open meadow, up an ascending hill, and lay down in tall grass so completely exhausted that for more than an hour he did not move. Meanwhile, he could hear men on horses riding frantically around the field while uttering the vilest curses against him.

When he had regained his strength, he continued his journey northward, but his pursuers were still patrolling the cornfield, confident they would capture him in daylight.

Morning dawned. Having searched the fields so thoroughly, the slavers were chagrined to discover that their quarry had flown, chagrined especially because their leader had been fatally wounded. They returned to Missouri for all their pains with only the dying man and two cowardly negroes [*sic*].

Meanwhile, Charles Carr plodded steadily onward to liberty, guided throughout that night by the North Star.<sup>20</sup>

20. Carr did not linger in "free" Kansas. Section 28 of the Kansas-



Charles “Pappy” Carr was employed as a yardman at Bailey’s Topeka home, located at 909 Garfield Street. This circa 1915 photograph is courtesy of Mark Scott.

After his desperate battle, it seemed to Charles good indeed to be on the broad, wide prairies of Nebraska, a free man, for such he was. He has always held that the Emancipation Proclamation was of comparably little importance to him personally, since he had won his freedom in that brutal battle with his hickory club.

At about 10:00 a.m. the next day—Sunday—he approached a farm house near Plattsmouth, Nebraska.<sup>21</sup> He was starving by then, having eaten nothing for nearly forty-eight hours. He begged a farmer for some food. The sympathetic soul, perhaps divining that he was a fugitive slave, took him into the house and gave him a

Nebraska Act specifically stated that the provisions of the Fugitive Slave Act were to “be in full force within the limits of” Kansas Territory. “Runaway Missouri slaves were just as likely to be captured in bordering free states and territories, especially after the passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law,” wrote Mutti Burke. “Not only did owners hunt their runaways—or employ others to do so—but many citizens of Illinois, Iowa, and Kansas happily collected payment for their efforts.” United States, *The Constitution of the United States*, 40; Mutti Burke, *On Slavery’s Border*, 180.

21. Carr did not indicate precisely where he and his two companions reached the Kansas side of the river; he probably did not know, particularly since their crossing occurred at night. The location was most likely somewhere between Atchison in Atchison County and White Cloud in Doniphan County, near the Kansas-Nebraska border. Setting out for Plattsmouth at any point between these two towns would have involved traveling a considerable distance within a short time. In 2013 the distance from Atchison to Plattsmouth was 107.7 miles, from White Cloud to Plattsmouth 77.8 miles.

loaf of bread and jar of milk (his wife had gone to church). Charles ravenously devoured the food, then pushed on to Omaha.

In Omaha, he found employment with a party of freighters who made the six-week trip across the plains between Omaha and Denver. He did this for several years, becoming thoroughly acquainted with the perils of Indians and massive herds of buffalo that roamed the plains.

Later, he lived among the Potawatomi Indians on the Platte River near Fort Phil Kearny, and when the war was over, returned to find his wife and children in Leavenworth, where they were happily reunited.<sup>22</sup>

Pappy Carr brought his family to Topeka, and no man has lived a more exemplary life, always attending strictly to his own affairs, intensely industrious, and in all a splendid citizen.<sup>23</sup> [KH]

22. Either Carr or Bailey was slightly mistaken regarding the location. Whoever reported this undoubtedly meant that Carr lived near Fort Kearny on the Platte River in Nebraska, not Fort Phil Kearny, which was in northeastern Wyoming. There was also confusion regarding exactly when Carr lived “among Potawatomi Indians on the Platte River near Fort Kearny.” When the federal government initiated its Indian removal program in the early nineteenth century, it relocated the Potawatomis to present-day Kansas, not Nebraska. Carr actually lived “among” the Potawatomis shortly after he left Nebraska, and by 1870 he owned a farm in Douglas Township, Jackson County, Kansas. That farm would have been very near the eastern boundary of the Kansas Potawatomi reservation. When the census was enumerated, Charles and Nancy Carr had six children living with them: Mary (age nineteen), Pheobe [sic] (eighteen), Rebecca (fifteen), John (nine), Eddy (four), and James (one). By March 1, 1875, the Carrs had moved just south to a farm in Soldier Township, Shawnee County, but soon Carr gave up farming and moved to Topeka, where he worked as a laborer. The family lived in several different locations in Topeka during the late nineteenth century, but during the 1910s the Carrs purchased a home at 1030 Grand Avenue (now SW Plass Avenue, which lies between Woodward and MacVicar Avenues), and Charles worked as a “janitor” at the African-American Douglass School, which was located in west Topeka at Brooks (now Jewell) and Munson Avenues. In the last years of his life, Carr worked several jobs. In 1910 he was employed as a “y[ar]dman” at Bailey’s 909 Garfield Street home. The following year, Bailey interviewed Carr and arranged to have him photographed standing next to the Bailey

home. In 1912 the city directory again listed Carr as “janitor.” Howard R. Lamar, ed., *The New Encyclopedia of the American West* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998), 905; Noble L. Prentis, *A History of Kansas* (Winfield, Kans.: E. P. Greer, 1899), 34; U.S. Census, 1870, Kansas, Douglas County; Kansas State Census, 1875, Shawnee County, Kansas; *Radges’ Topeka Directory, 1878–1879* (Topeka, Kans.: Commonwealth Book and Job Printing House, 1878), 50; U.S. Census, 1880, Kansas, Shawnee County; Donna Rae Pearson, Local History Librarian, Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, email message to the editor, August 15, 2013; Shari Schawo, Genealogy Librarian, Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, email message to the editor, May 14, 2013; *Radges’ Topeka City Directory, 1910* (Topeka, Kans.: Polk-Radges Directory Company, 1910), 165; *Radges’ Topeka City Directory, 1912*, 161.

23. According to the burial records of Topeka Cemetery, Nancy died of “complications” on April 26, 1909. The following year, Charles was living with daughter Phoebe Atkinson, a widow, at the same Grand Avenue address. In 1912 only one African American named Carr was listed in the city directory: “Charles M Carr (c), janitor, r 1030 Grand av.” His burial records stated that he died of “complications” two years later—on April 9, 1914—and was buried next to his wife. His funeral expenses were paid by his sixty-five-year-old daughter, Mary Elizabeth Carr Smith, who had been born a slave in 1851 on a Kentucky plantation, been a slave in Missouri, and had found freedom in Kansas. U.S. Census, 1910, Kansas, Shawnee County; *Radges’ Topeka City Directory, 1912*; Burial Records of Topeka Cemetery.