

# A “NEGRO COLONY” *for* TODD COUNTY

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**HISTORIANS ARE SOMETIMES SIDETRACKED** in their research by an intriguing fragment that leads away from the topic at hand. Such was the case when my attention was drawn to a headline in the *Todd County Argus* of May 3, 1917: “NEGRO COLONY WAS PLANNED . . . Plans Exposed and Proposition Failed to Get Across; Much Indignation Shown.” The accompanying unsigned article provided a brief account of the proposal and quoted “an old poster” or handbill, “part of the invaluable historical records,” that had been distributed to expose the alleged plan.<sup>1</sup>



According to the article, a W. H. Ward from New England settled in Todd County in 1869 or 1870 with his wife and “an adopted daughter who was a negress.” Ward was described as “prominent in abolition work” before the Civil War, “showing his faith in the colored race by taking the colored girl into his family.” The article then noted, “It was claimed that he even had aspirations for the office of county auditor.” At the peak of his campaign, however, “it was alleged he was secretary of a Negro Emigration Society which had designs” on land in Todd County. This “scheme” was disclosed through “the activities” of Jacob V. Brower, who asserted “plans were already laid for the importing of 700 Negro men and their families to occupy homesteads” in several townships. The article also stated that other agents of the Negro Emigration Society visited the area “to look the ground over, but owing to the intense feeling prevalent here, they changed their minds about beginning their colonization work.”

The handbill, said to have been found in the newspaper’s files, is the only direct evidence of the colonization plan. Its language is representative of the attitudes and prejudices of its era.

Who is Dr. Ward, this seeker after office? A negro second lieutenant; corresponding secretary of the Negro Emigration society for Todd County. 700 black bucks, 3,500 black men, women and children. Homesteads to be taken around Lake Osakis in the town-

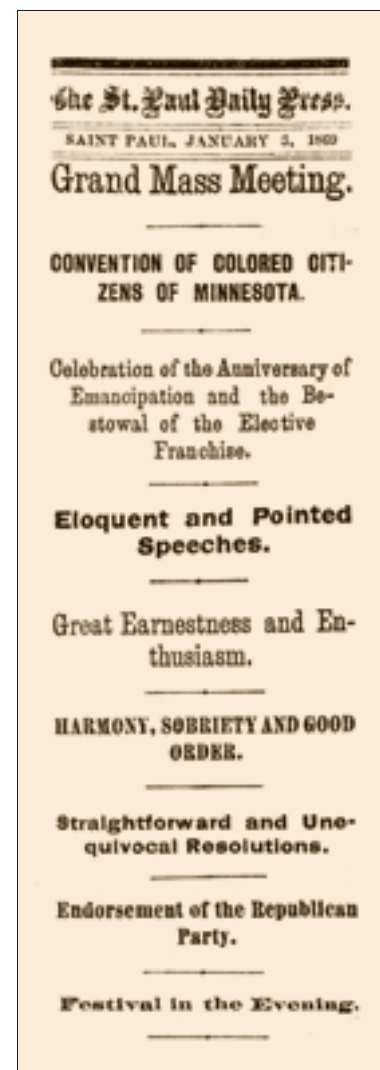
FACING: *Idyllic lithograph of Todd County, “Kandotta, M. T. (Minnesota Territory), Fairy Lake in the Distance,” from a painting by Edwin Whitefield, about 1858.*

ship of West Union and Long Prairie. Dr. Ward and one wench the first arrivals. Officers claims in the centre, Niggers on the outside. Do you want 700 black bucks at the ballot box? Dr. Ward is a candidate for auditor and white men are expected to vote for him.

Falsely identifying Ward as being black, the handbill ignites the fear that he was the first of several thousand who would not only occupy valuable land but also outnumber the white population. Residents would have known that the Fourteenth Amendment, ratified in 1868, made former slaves and black Union veterans eligible to file for land under the Homestead Act of 1862. Just as threatening, black males in Minnesota had been granted the right to vote in 1868. They could, thus, shape county politics.<sup>2</sup> The handbill’s wording is crude, racist, deceptive, and vague but it made its point: Ward posed a dangerous threat to the future of the county. Voters should not support his candidacy.

This newspaper story raised some intriguing questions and a few dilemmas. Historical investigation proved to be an enlightening, at times frustrating, search through limited and sometimes inexact sources. The article and its handbill, it turns out, contain several outright inaccuracies about Ward. Furthermore, no conclusive evidence emerged to establish when—or even if—a colonization plan existed. Still, the quest did reveal unexpected insights into local political rivalry in the newly established county, a rivalry that exploited settlers’ concerns over access to land and their underlying racial attitudes.

Todd County was settled rapidly after 1865, in particular by Union vet-



*Notice of a grand suffrage celebration, published in the Republican-affiliated St. Paul Daily Press, January 3, 1869*

erans from a variety of eastern states and border states such as Kentucky. German, Norwegian, and Swedish settlers also began to arrive. Long Prairie, from 1848 to 1855 the site of the Winnebago (Ho-Chunk) Indian Agency, was the county’s only village, with few stores in the late 1860s when Ward and his family appeared.

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The Minnesota state census of 1865 counted only 117 people (26 families) in Todd County. Four years later, a state report noted 226 landowners as compared with 12 in 1860. By 1870 the United States census enumerated 2,038 persons in the county, including one black female child.<sup>3</sup>

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The *Argus*, first published in Long Prairie in 1876, was the county's earliest newspaper. Its publisher in 1917 was John E. Chrysler, previous owner of the *Odebolt, Iowa, Chronicle*, who had recently acquired the *Argus*. Why Chrysler printed this item is unknown. Its author appears to have been familiar with the early history of Todd County. If Chrysler wrote it, he would have had to consult with some of the old settlers, since he was new to the area.<sup>4</sup>

It cannot be determined how widely the handbill was distributed, assuming that it was legitimate. Most likely, it would have been posted in conspicuous locations and delivered to the widely scattered farmsteads and few residents of Long Prairie village. Nor is it known how the *Argus* came to have the handbill in its files. The only other reference to it is found in Todd County historian Otis B. DeLaurier's 1935 history of Little

*The only known image of Timothy Harris Ward, from a composite of the officers of the First Regiment Tennessee Infantry Volunteers of African Descent*

Sauk Township. DeLaurier claimed to have in his possession "one of the original handbills posted and circulated in the county by [Ward's] enemies in this campaign." The historian commented, "We have never seen anything to equal this handbill for scurilous vulgarity." The *Argus* writer and DeLaurier, then, saw the original handbill, and both accepted it as authentic. There seems to be no reason to doubt their judgment.<sup>5</sup>

**AT THE CENTER** of the alleged plan for the black colony was Timothy Harris Ward. T. Harris Ward, as he signed himself, was born December 4, 1830, in Jersey, Licking County, Ohio. He married Lucy Ann Belknap in October 1852, and they later moved to Westerville in Franklin County, Ohio, where Ward practiced medicine. By 1860 the couple had two children, both of whom would die of diphtheria during the Civil



War. Licking and Franklin counties are in southeast Ohio near Columbus. This region included settlers from New England and Pennsylvania who “held more tolerant racial views” than others in the area and who were more active “in the anti-slavery and abolitionist movements and the Ohio Underground Railroad,” according to historian David A. Gerber. Whether Ward or family members were involved in antislavery activity is not known with any certainty—despite the *Argus* claim—but descendants think he may have studied medicine in Alexandria, Ohio, with his uncle Dr. Ezekiel Whitehead, an active abolitionist.<sup>6</sup>

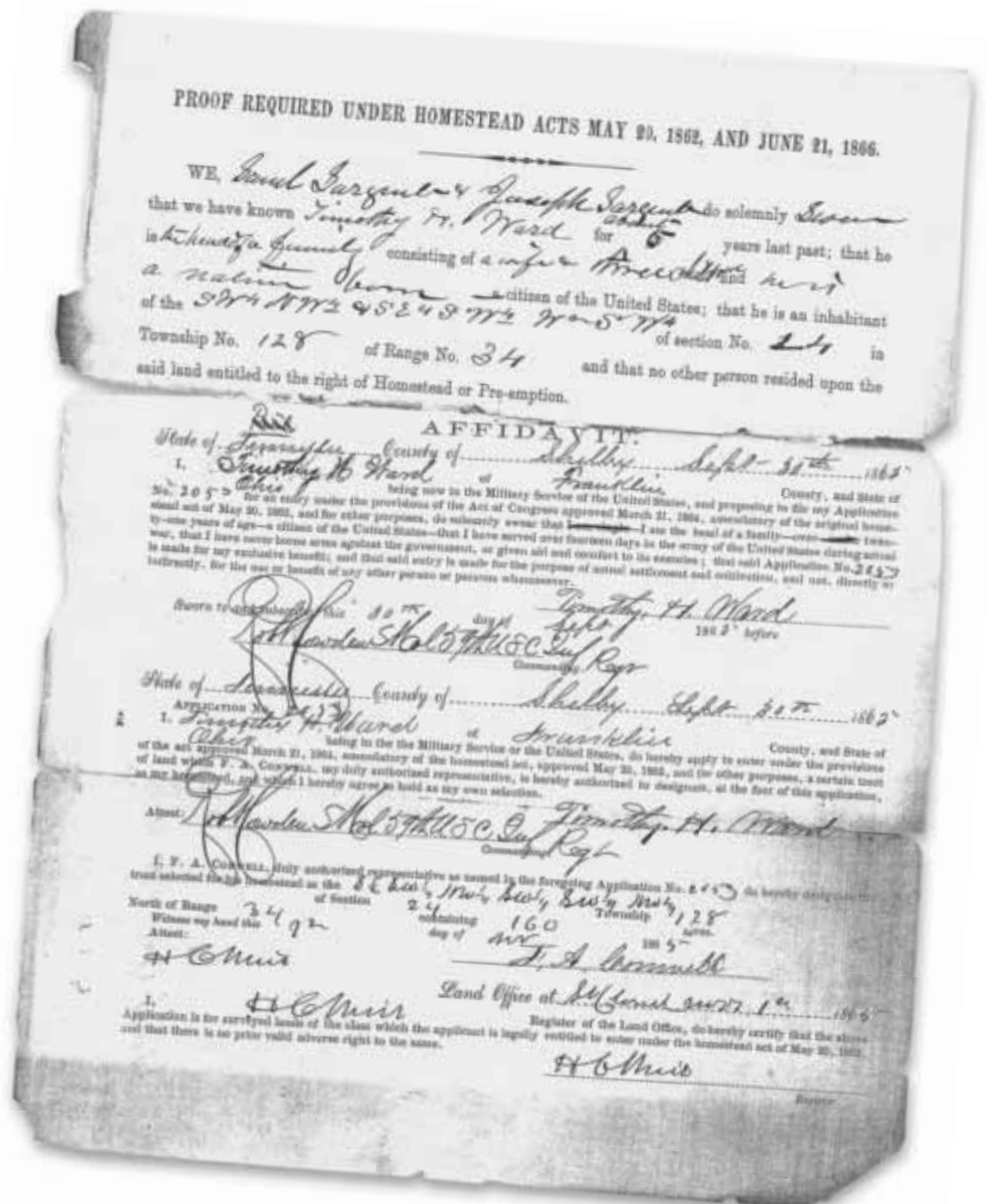
In December 1861 Ward, then age 31, enlisted in the Union army and served as a hospital steward in Company F of the Forty-Sixth Regiment Ohio Infantry. The Forty-Sixth was sent to Tennessee, where it fought at Shiloh and then in the Mississippi campaign. On June 26, 1863, Ward was commissioned a first lieutenant in the First Regiment Tennessee Infantry Volunteers of African Descent, which later became the Fifty-Ninth U.S. Colored Infantry, serving in Tennessee and Mississippi. He was captured at Ripley, Mississippi, sent to prison in South Carolina, and paroled in December 1864. Ordered back to the Fifty-Ninth in April 1865, he was honorably discharged in Memphis on January 31, 1866. He returned home to Ohio but soon moved with his wife and two children—an infant son and the adopted black girl—to Todd County.<sup>7</sup>

While still stationed in Memphis, Ward had filed for 160 acres under the Homestead Act. As amended in

1864, it allowed Civil War veterans and others to file without appearing before the land-office official in whose jurisdiction they sought to homestead. Why he wanted to leave Ohio and why he selected Todd County is not known. Much of Todd County was open for settlement, however, and the Long Prairie Land Company was headquartered in Cincinnati. Perhaps Ward met soldiers who were familiar with the prospects in Minnesota. Then again, his various moves later in life suggest

an adventurous, perhaps unsettled, spirit.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, Ward’s war experiences could have prompted the idea of helping settle black Union veterans and freed slaves where land was readily available. He may have felt such a responsibility in recognition of the Bureau of Colored Troops’ goal, according to historian Joseph T. Glatthaar, of recruiting “intelligent white men with high morals who were willing to make a commitment to uplifting the black race.”<sup>9</sup>



One of Ward’s homestead papers, filed while he was still stationed in Tennessee

**IN ANY EVENT**, in the early summer of 1866 Ward and his family arrived in Todd County in the company of Robert Mathews and several other families of Reformed Presbyterians, or Covenanters, from Lake Eliza, Indiana. There were Reformed Presbyterians in southern Ohio, too, including Licking Township; the Ward family, also Presbyterian, may have known members of that community and through them linked up with the Indiana group. Covenanters—St. Cloud’s notorious Jane Grey Swisshelm among them—were known to oppose slavery, support abolitionism, and aid runaway slaves. Mathews described the group’s travel from Sauk Centre in Stearns County to its future home: “Dr. Ward and myself marched on ahead of the caravan with our axes and cut our way through. It was about sundown when we reached the farmhouse of Mr. [Abraham D.] Brower.” That was the Ward family’s introduction to the Browsers.<sup>10</sup>

Among Ward’s family, of course, was Matilda Rogers, the African American girl then about 9 years old. She had been born in Mississippi and was, likely, a freed slave. How and when she joined the family is unknown, but soldiers returning to Minnesota after the Civil War often brought freed blacks with them as orderlies or servants. Rogers would

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attend the first school established in Round Prairie Township and, as Tilly Ward, the school in Sauk Centre after the family moved there in about 1872.<sup>11</sup>

Ward’s homestead was in Section 24 of what became Little Sauk Township, on land adjacent to Abraham Brower’s. Often referred to as Dr. Ward, he is said to have practiced medicine out of his home for several years, but the 1870 census lists his occupation as carpenter. Whether Ward ever did any farming, as required by the Homestead Act, is questionable. The 1868 Todd County personal property assessment notes that he had two horses and two cows but does not list any farm equipment. He could have hired the work done, though; as part of his application to perfect his claim, Ward signed a sworn affidavit that he had “cultivated said land,” and the two witnesses to his final proof of homestead affirmed that he built a house, “ploughed, fenced, and cultivated about 3 acres,” and fenced in about 17 uncultivated acres. By 1869 Ward had acquired another 160 acres in Section 24 of Long Prairie Township, and his wife, Lucy, 80 acres in Section 7 of Round Prairie Township.<sup>12</sup>

Among the earliest settlers, Ward had arrived before Todd County was officially organized. In late 1866 voters there petitioned Governor William R. Marshall to appoint a commission to form the county, then under Morrison County jurisdiction. The commissioners met on January 1, 1867, at the home of Abraham Brower (one of the new appointees) and named temporary county officers to serve until an election that fall. Jacob V. Brower, Abraham Brower’s fourth son and also a Civil War veteran, was named county auditor.



*Abraham D. Brower, paterfamilias and Ward’s neighbor, about 1863*

Ward does not appear to have been involved in this process unless as one of the petitioners. This may have been a factor in later developments. As DeLaurier contended, “For the first ten years after the organization of Todd County, A. D. Brower and his sons dominated the political situation.” Available evidence certainly supports that point.<sup>13</sup>

**THE ALLEGATION** that Ward planned a black colony arose during politicking before an unspecified election. DeLaurier wrote that a few years after Ward arrived in Minnesota, “the doctor allowed his friends to place him in nomination for the office of county auditor and the ensuing campaign was one of the most disgusting ever known in the county.” No source dates the contest; the nearest newspaper, the *Sauk Centre Herald*, covered Todd County elections but made no mention of this incident.<sup>14</sup>

Elections were held at two-year intervals in odd-numbered years. Because Ward relocated to Stearns County in 1872, the only possible

contests were in 1867, 1869, and 1871. Jacob Brower was re-elected county auditor in all three. As far as can be determined, Ward's name did not appear on these ballots. So, are the sources in error or incomplete? I think not. DeLaurier's phrase, "place him in nomination," suggests that Ward agreed to seek the nomination at the county Republican nominating convention. To be considered there, he would first have to campaign to gain the support of township delegates to that convention—challenging Jacob Brower and his family's political dominance. This could well have led to the scurrilous campaign against Ward and his withdrawal from the candidacy, either before the convention or as part of the political maneuvering that occurred there.

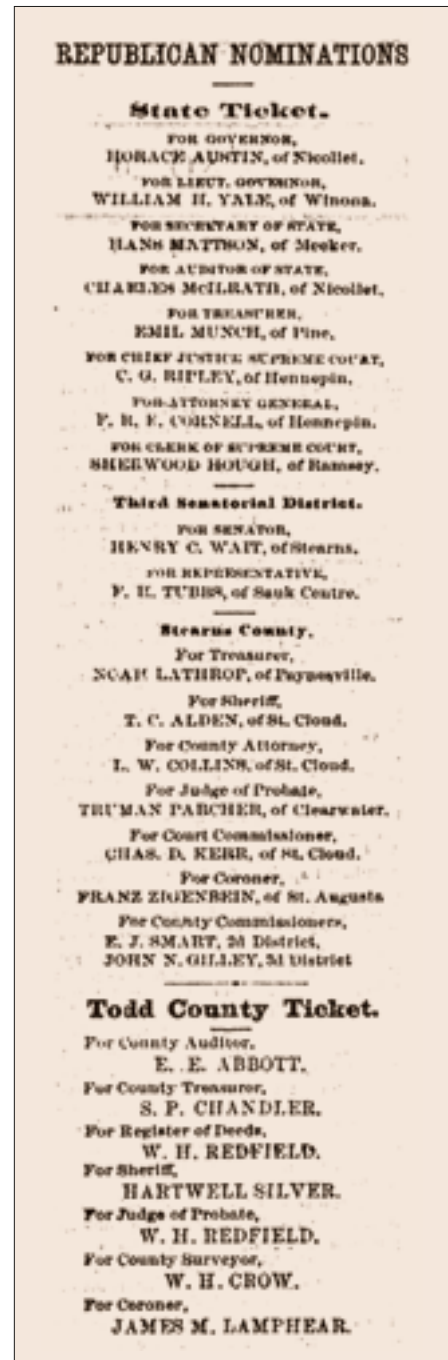
The wider political context might help identify the likely year. Ward and the Browsers were active Republicans; Ward served as chair of the county's Republican Central Committee. Party issues may have played a role in bringing forth the allegation against him. In late 1866, Abraham Brower had informed Governor Marshall, "Our county will throw a heavy Radical majority," referring to the faction pushing for punitive Reconstruction in the South. Aided by a significant increase in population, the party in Todd County was by 1867 "wide awake and at work," the *St. Cloud Journal* reported. Several years later, the *Sauk Centre Herald* claimed that elections for the county offices had "no party distinction," with "Democrats and Republicans alike being elected on the same ticket." Indeed, the county Republican convention nominated the only slate of candidates for the 1867, 1869, and 1871 elections.<sup>15</sup>

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Neither 1867 nor 1871 appear to have been controversial years, but several factors point to 1869. For one, that would be the first county election in which any possible black settlers could vote, as the handbill threatened. This could explain the reaction to Ward's candidacy. Furthermore, Minnesota Republicans were in the grips of a factional struggle, which had flared in 1868 when Ignatius Donnelly ran as a Republican against the party's endorsed congressional candidate, Christopher C. Andrews. Todd County voted 84 for Andrews, 82 for Donnelly. Statewide, the split allowed the Democratic candidate, Eugene M. Wilson, to win. This rift continued into 1869, with Republicans sharply divided over their nominee for governor. Not unexpectedly, these struggles reverberated into local politics. In July 1869, Jacob Brower asserted there was "a move on foot to draw a strict party line between Democrats and Republicans, while a considerable number are in favor of a people's [joint] ticket. . . . How the matter will terminate is yet to be seen." Given this context of party turmoil, 1869 appears the most likely time for events leading to the allegation against Ward.<sup>16</sup>

The Republican county convention met on September 1, 1869, at Round Prairie to nominate candidates for county offices and name two delegates to the state convention. Ward served as secretary. The

county's six townships could send a total of 20 delegates to the convention. Each township would have held a caucus to elect and instruct its delegates. Those instructions are not known, but Jacob Brower later suggested that the delegates failed to follow them. What occurred next seems



*Republican nominees, Sauk Centre  
Herald, October 21, 1869*

to have totally surprised the Brower interests. The *Sauk Centre Herald* remarked, “A strong effort was made at the convention to renominate the present efficient Auditor Mr. J. V. Brower,” but, contrarily, delegates nominated a new slate of candidates except for county surveyor. Instead of Brower or Ward, the convention chose Edward E. Abbott, the register of deeds, to run for county auditor.<sup>17</sup>

How did this come about? Abraham Brower attributed it to “a little too much fine wire pulling” at the convention. It seems clear that a major debate had occurred among the 20 delegates beforehand. Perhaps the split in the state Republican Party led Ward, Abbott, and others to propose, as Jacob Brower had predicted earlier, a straight Republican ticket for county offices. This move would be perceived as a threat to the Browsers because it challenged their broad-based political dominance. They might have taken action to counter that threat, possibly by publishing the handbill. After that vicious attack, Ward would have realized that he could not win nomination and decided to support Abbott. DeLaurier wrote, “The doctor was a refined and cultured gentleman, utterly incapable of resorting to such tactics as were necessary to prosecute a campaign of this character and he was defeated. . . . He was the victim of the most virulent phase of American politics.”<sup>18</sup>

Ward, as a party official, must have played a key role in securing the nomination of the Abbott slate. While their exact actions are unknown, clearly he and Abbott—and the involved delegates—were challenging the political power of the Brower family. Two weeks later, the *Sauk Centre Herald* observed, “As

caucuses are suppose [*sic*] to settle the question as to who are the choice of the people, we presume the matter is settled.” Abbott, the newspaper noted, was “a sound Republican and a man well fitted for the position and will no doubt receive the full vote of his county.”<sup>19</sup>

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The Browsers, however, did not take this setback quietly. Asserting that the county ticket did not agree with “the general views of the people,” Brower formed an “Independent” ticket that carried the election, receiving, himself, a majority of 46 votes over Abbott. The victor gloated that the result “exactly expresses the views of the people of Todd County concerning delegates to a county convention not following the instructions given by the caucuses.” James M. Gordon, a Brower supporter, observed, “Mr. Brower has made a very excellent Auditor and was deservedly popular in the county.” Despite the election outcome, Ward remained on the county Republican Central Committee, at least into the fall of 1870.<sup>20</sup>

**REGARDLESS OF WHEN** the handbill circulated, the question remains: Did T. Harris Ward plan to colonize some 700 African American families in Todd County, or was this a claim, as DeLaurier implied, concocted to deflect a political threat? Proof is difficult, if not impossible, to find. The only direct evidence would be the original handbill—referred to,

quoted, but never found. Period newspapers do not mention the proposed colony, and Todd County old settlers’ reminiscences are silent on the subject. The August 1917 edition of the *Minnesota History Bulletin* noted the *Argus* article but provided no additional information. In 1961, historian Earl Spangler cited this journal in his brief discussion of black colonization efforts, writing that Ward “proposed [a] colony in the Lake Osakis area about 1870, but after encountering a number of difficulties, he abandoned the scheme.” David V. Taylor’s more recent work, *African Americans in Minnesota*, documents later efforts to settle blacks in the state but does not mention any ideas or plans in Ward’s era.<sup>21</sup>

By accepting the handbill as authentic and providing additional information, the *Argus* article and DeLaurier’s account lend credence to the allegation but offer no proof that Ward either proposed or tried to initiate the black settlement. While the newspaper’s leading headline proclaims the plan as fact, a sub-headline introduces uncertainty: Ward was “claimed to have had such intentions.” The article does assert that “while the charge was never proven, it is positively known that Ward never denied it,” confirming the plan by default. But the author never explains how it was “positively known.” Perhaps he was stating what he knew from personal memory.<sup>22</sup>

Unlike the *Argus* story, DeLaurier’s brief account sympathizes with Ward, presenting the incident as an example of dirty politics. But DeLaurier, too, is ambiguous. His only reference to the colonization plan states that Ward’s “opponents spread reports that [he] was trying to keep

white settlers out [of four townships] claiming that the soldiers' claims filed in those towns were negroes' claims that Dr. Ward was bringing in." While not explicitly questioning the validity of the "reports," DeLaurier's use of "claiming" suggests uncertainty.<sup>23</sup>

If Ward did not intend to establish a black colony, on what basis would his opponents have conceived the idea as a way to attack him? They would have had to understand the concept of colonization and know the fears it would evoke. Discussion of establishing colonies for American blacks outside of the U.S. had occurred before the Civil War and reemerged during it, partly in con-

junction with emancipation. But by 1863 the idea was losing support.<sup>24</sup>

Emancipation, however, focused attention and concern on freed slaves migrating northward. As historian Leslie Schwalm wrote, "The number of African Americans newly arrived [in the Upper Midwest] from Southern slavery increased during the war—sometimes overnight. This had a major impact on the region." It also could have provided a context for the handbill. Between the autumn of 1862 and May 1863, some 388 former slaves arrived by steamboat in Minnesota. Most settled around St. Paul and Minneapolis and south along the Mississippi River. In 1863 the Minnesota legislature received

a petition asking it to prohibit black migration into the state. In June 1864 a Minnesota minister proposed bringing in some 10,000 blacks as paid laborers, their passage to be covered by their employers. This proposal went no further, but it certainly added to local concerns about black migration. African Americans continued to arrive in the following years; the 1870 census counted 738 blacks in Minnesota, a sizable increase from the 411 five years earlier. A state report explained, "The causes

*"Colored Emigrants Seeking Homes in the North," a topic compelling enough to warrant an engraving in Harper's Weekly, August 3, 1867*





connected with the war promoted a considerable movement of these people to Minnesota.”<sup>25</sup>

Toward the end of the Civil War, various proposals for colonies of black veterans within the United States heightened fears of black migration. As historian Donald Shaffer observed, some black soldiers had “explored the possibility . . . of establishing veterans’ colonies” by pooling their financial resources to acquire land. Most—but not all—of these settlements were intended for the South. In 1865 Minnesotan Thomas Montgomery, an officer in the Sixty-Seventh U.S. Colored Infantry stationed in Louisiana, considered a proposal from an agent of the St. Peter land district to establish a black farming colony in southern Minnesota for his soldiers. Montgomery was interested. He investigated the offer and told his troops, who reportedly received the idea enthusiastically. Although this proposal did not develop, it could have helped inspire the claim against Ward. It also lends credence to the possibility that Ward had a similar plan.<sup>26</sup>

As early as 1861, the *Chicago Tribune* had observed that northerners feared that freed slaves would “over-run the North.” This fear would likely have existed among recently arrived white settlers in Todd County, who might not have welcomed blacks, both because of racism and a perceived threat to land ownership. Historian Schwalm found, “Many midwestern whites assumed that any possibility of black gains in the region would impinge upon white status and citizenship.” The malicious and virulent language of the handbill suggests that its author knew that some county residents held or sympathized with the racist

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Several aspects of Ward’s background and behavior could be interpreted or presented as evidence that he was planning to establish a black colony or was capable of it. He had been an officer in a black infantry regiment, and an African American girl from Mississippi was a member of his family. He was from a region of Ohio known for its abolitionist and Underground Railroad activities, and he came to Todd County with a group of antislavery Reformed Presbyterians. Furthermore, he and his wife had acquired land beyond their own homestead.

Any one of these factors could have created rumors and stirred resentment toward Ward by residents, including Civil War veterans, who were antagonistic to African Americans. As Republicans, many had voted in 1868 in support of amending the Minnesota constitution to grant blacks the vote but, beyond that, would likely resist any effort by them to acquire land in the developing county. Historian V. Jacque

Voegeli has argued, “The blend of antislavery idealism and racism manifested by the [Midwest’s] leading Republicans mirrored clearly the views of their followers.” At the least, African Americans would be viewed as unwelcome competitors for homestead lands.<sup>28</sup>

**THE ISSUE OF LAND** is at the center of the accusation against Ward. The handbill asserted that, as “the corresponding secretary of the Negro Emigration society for Todd County,” he would be claiming homesteads in several townships. DeLaurier reported Ward’s opponents’ contention that the “soldiers’ claims . . . were negroes’ claims.” He went on to explain that the Fourteenth Amendment allowed the “considerable force of ex-slaves” in the Union Army “to make filings on homesteads.” In Reynolds, Leslie, Gordon, and Little Sauk Townships, there were “a large number of these soldier claims, and some of the claimants were negroes with the absurd and fantastic names given by their owners” under slavery. (This was DeLaurier’s effort to explain why a Marco Polo was listed on the 1867 tax roll for Leslie Township.)<sup>29</sup>

These tax rolls seem to corroborate evidence that can be gleaned from the land claims, lending support to the charge that Ward planned a black colony. The rolls for Gordon Township for 1866, 1867, and 1868, for example, include a large number of names that DeLaurier asserted were “not those of actual settlers.” He argued that these were soldiers who, before their discharge, filed for homesteads through agents but never made settlement or even saw their claims.<sup>30</sup>

My own research into the tax



*Civil War soldier, name and unit unknown, but his image preserved in the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society*

rolls of those four townships verifies DeLaurier's findings. Many of the names on the 1867 assessment rolls for Long Prairie Township, for example, do not appear in the county deed records and tract indices. I selected a sample of 81 names from two property assessment and tax lists for 1867 and names that appeared in 1868 and 1869 on published legal notices of abandoned homestead claims. I cross-referenced these 81 with the National Park Service (NPS) Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System and found that 55 were Civil War veterans. The NPS site lists each soldier by unit and rank, so men who served in black units can be identified. Of the 55 veterans, 37 had served in black units. However, many of the men in this database—white and black—had the same name, making it difficult to be certain that the individuals who abandoned homestead claims were African American. For example, the system lists 70 Washington Smiths, 17 of them members of a black unit, and 250 William

Perrys, 13 in black units. But which Washington Smith and William Perry filed in Todd County?<sup>31</sup>

If Ward did plan a black colony, he apparently had no intent to settle soldiers of his regiment there. The NPS site lists 1,687 soldiers, including officers, in the Fifty-Ninth. Only four names on the roster—two white officers and another two, probably African American soldiers—matched my sample. But, again, it is unknown which men with these names filed land claims in Todd County. In the end, only one of the 37 would-be homesteaders in the sample was, unquestionably, African American; only two soldiers had that name, and both served in a black unit.

But even if all 37 were African American and had filed homestead claims in Todd County, and even if similar findings emerged for the other three townships, the total settlement would be nowhere near the 700 families proclaimed on the handbill. The source of that number and its accuracy remain unknown. Nevertheless, 37 African Americans and their families probably would have been sufficient to raise alarm among most of the county's 2,000 residents, the majority of whom had only recently arrived.

**SO, WHAT CAN WE CONCLUDE** about this incident? There is no concrete evidence that T. Harris Ward formulated a plan to establish a black colony in Todd County, although historians Spangler and DeLaurier appear to believe that he did. The proposal that Thomas Montgomery entertained for a similar settlement in southern Minnesota shows that the idea was afoot at the time. Given Ward's history, it is feasible that he

had a plan that, to quote the *Argus* headline, "failed to get across."

There is no proof, either, that Jacob Brower authored or was responsible for the handbill. Still, he seems a logical possibility, since his political ambitions may well have been jeopardized if he lost an important reelection campaign. As auditor, Brower would have had extensive knowledge of land claims. He could have used this information as the basis for the allegation, and he would have been believable to his contemporaries. Jacob Brower played a prominent role in Todd County and Minnesota history. After serving as auditor from 1867 through 1872, he was elected to the state legislature and then appointed register with the St. Cloud land office. He also platted the town of Browerville but is best known for his role in establishing Itasca State Park.<sup>32</sup>

As for the handbill itself, an original copy may no longer exist. Nor would finding one prove that its claims were true. All that is known for certain is that no black colony was ever established in Todd County.



*Jacob V. Brower, Todd County auditor and possibly Ward's opponent, about 1874*

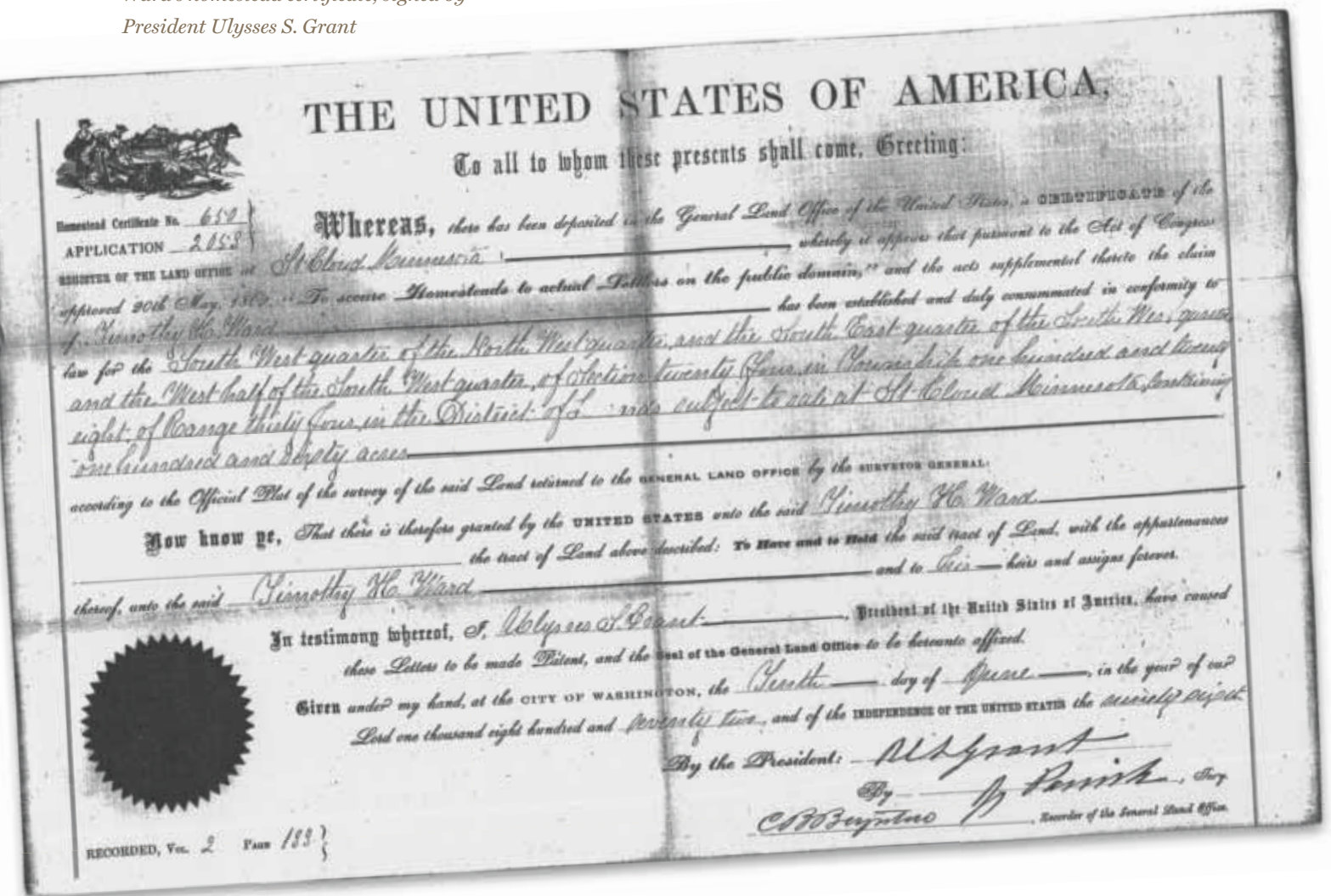
Nevertheless, researching this story yielded insights into the politics and prejudices of life in central Minnesota after the Civil War. Through the lens of this controversy, we see settlers jockeying for land and power in a newly established county. We see citizens, including outspoken Republicans, grappling with the potential impact of new civil rights for freed slaves. And we see how national and statewide politics reverberate on the local level.

By March 1872, Ward and his family had moved to Sauk Centre, where they remained for about two

years. They then relocated to Brainerd, remaining there until the fall of 1875 when they returned to Westerville, Ohio. After 1875, we lose any threads of the life story of Matilda Rogers, the Wards' adopted daughter. She does not appear in any subsequent records associated with the Ward family. The 1880 census does list a Matilda Rogers—age 23, single, born in Mississippi—living in Mississippi with her parents, who had been born in South Carolina. Perhaps this is the same young woman, as the age is about right, but proof remains elusive.<sup>33</sup>

In the summer of 1876, Ward accepted a position as physician for the Indian agency at Fort Berthold, Dakota Territory. In 1878 he returned to Ohio, and two years later moved with his family near Lecompton, Kansas. Then, in about 1891 they settled in Pomona, California, where Ward died in 1895. With him, and later his wife and sons, died any possible firsthand information regarding either the colonization plan or the handbill. And so, we are left with an intriguing but apparently unanswerable question that nevertheless illuminates larger issues in state history.<sup>34</sup> □

Ward's homestead certificate, signed by President Ulysses S. Grant



## Notes

The author thanks Ward Elliott, Mimi Escandon, and Claire Hield, descendants of T. Harris Ward, for providing very helpful information.

1. Here and two paragraphs below, *Todd County Argus*, May 3, 1917, p. 1. No evidence has been found to verify the figures. Likely, the handbill's author chose a number large enough to play on the fears of the white population. "Homesteads" could refer to claims under the Homestead Act of 1862 or to the more common usage: any amount of land and a home. If each of the "700" families claimed 160 acres under the act, the colony would occupy 112,000 acres. By 1868, some 26,240 acres in Todd County had been claimed this way—none, so far as can be determined, by African Americans. Sufficient land for the colony remained, but not entirely within the townships named; "Annual Report of the State Auditor," *Minnesota Executive Documents*, 1868, 405.

2. Minnesota Republicans amended the state constitution two years before the Fifteenth Amendment granted blacks across the nation the right to vote; David V. Taylor, *African Americans in Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002), 5–7.

3. "Report of the Assistant Secretary of State," *Minnesota Executive Documents*, 1865, 1: 439, and 1869, 835; "Census of the State of Minnesota," *Executive Documents*, 1870, 2: 757, 1022. Some census records give the population as 2,036.

4. *Odebolt Chronicle Progress Edition*, Oct. 29, 1953, [www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~iaohms/chroniclefirst.html](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~iaohms/chroniclefirst.html) (accessed Apr. 6, 2007). The *Argus* article includes information not mentioned in the handbill, suggesting access to other sources.

5. O. B. DeLaurier, "Township History—Little Sauk," *Long Prairie Leader*, Oct. 3, 1935, p. 11, reprinted in *Todd County Histories* (Todd Co. Bicentennial Committee, 1976), 47, 436, 118 (quote). All subsequent DeLaurier citations are to this book. Since the *Long Prairie Leader* purchased the *Argus* in November 1917, it is possible that DeLaurier's handbill is the same as the one in the *Argus* files.

6. Claire Hield, "Notes on Timothy Ward," Oct. 2002, augmented Oct. 2006, copy in author's possession; Timothy Harris Ward, pedigree chart, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) (accessed July 8, 2009); Ward Elliott to author, e-mail, Sept. 2, 2007; David A. Gerber, *Black Ohio and the Color Line, 1860–1915* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 11.

7. The Wards had two more sons in Minnesota. Hield, "Notes on Timothy Ward"; Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System,

[www.civilwar.nps.gov/cross](http://www.civilwar.nps.gov/cross) (accessed June 23, 2009).

8. Hield, "Notes on Timothy Ward"; Timothy H. Ward, venue affidavit and application #2053, Nov. 1, 1865, St. Cloud Land Office, General Land Entry Files, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Washington, D.C.

9. The Bureau of Colored Troops recruited white officers for black units. Candidates had to supply letters of recommendation and then appear before a board of examination. Once approved, they were responsible for recruiting black soldiers for their units. Joseph T. Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle: The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers* (New York: Free Press, 1990), 38–44, 47–48.

10. DeLaurier, *Todd County Histories*, 390–93. The Mathews group settled in what would become Round Prairie Township. Swisshelm left St. Cloud in 1863; Sylvia D. Hoffert, *Jane Grey Swisshelm: An Unconventional Life, 1815–1884* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 11–18. See also Robert Price, "The Ohio Anti-Slavery Convention of 1836," *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly* 45 (Apr. 1936): 173–88; William L. Fisk Jr., "The Scotch-Irish in Central Ohio," *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly* 57 (Apr. 1948): 111–25, both at <http://publications.ohiohistory.org> (accessed June 29, 2009). The Browsers settled in Todd County in 1860; DeLaurier, *Todd County Histories*, 382–84.

11. U.S., *Census*, 1870, Minnesota, Todd Co., population schedules, Little Sauk Twp., p. 1, microfilm ed., Minnesota Historical Society (MHS); *Sauk Centre Herald*, Mar. 30, 1872, p. 2; *Todd County Argus*, May 3, 1917, p. 1; Earl Spangler, *The Negro in Minnesota* (Minneapolis: T. S. Denison, 1961), 43–44. Rogers may have come to the family through contacts in Licking County but, more likely, Ward met her in Memphis, which, toward the end of the war, attracted many former slaves and their families from Mississippi. The families of black Union soldiers also began to arrive. On the terrible living conditions for the soldiers' families, see Kevin R. Hardwick, "Your Old Father Abe Lincoln is Dead and Damned: Black Soldiers and the Memphis Race Riot of 1866," *Journal of Social History* (Fall 1993): 109–28. After the Wards left, no African Americans lived in Todd County until the early 1900s. In 1910 there were two; U.S., *Census*, 1910, *Population*, 2: 1010.

12. U.S., *Census*, 1870, Todd Co., p. 1; DeLaurier, *Todd County Histories*, 118; *Todd County Argus*, May 3, 1917, p. 1; Assessors Return of Taxable Personal Property in the Township of Long Prairie, 1868, and Assessors Return . . . Long Prairie, 1869, Todd Co. courthouse archives, Long Prairie; Timothy H. Ward, Affidavit Required of Homestead Claimants, Feb. 1, 1871, and Proof Required Under Homestead Acts, Feb. 1, 1871, Land Entry Case File, final certificate #650, vol. 2, p. 133, NARA. See also Indenture for sale of land to Lucy Ward, Nov. 1, 1869, Todd Co. Deed Book A, p. 81, county recorder's office, Long Prairie. The Wards sold their land in the 1870s; Todd Co. Deed Book B, p. 371, and Deed Book D, p. 369–73.

13. "Report of the Assistant Secretary of State," *Minnesota Executive Documents*, 1869, 835; A. D. Brower to Governor William R. Marshall, Dec. 26, 1866, and J. V. Brower to Governor Marshall, Jan. 4, 1867, Records of Governor William R. Marshall, Minnesota State Archives, MHS; Todd Co. Board of Commissioners, meeting minutes, Jan. 1, 2, 1867, in *Todd County Histories*, 448–49; DeLaurier, *Todd County Histories*, 383 (quote). On January 2, James S. Brower, another son of Abraham D., was named county surveyor. See also Stephen E. Osman, "We Have Always Been Patriotic: The Brower Boys' Civil War," *Minnesota History* 61 (Winter 2008–09): 162–67.

14. DeLaurier, *Todd County Histories*, 118. Alexandria, Glenwood, Sauk Rapids, St. Cloud, St. Paul, and Minneapolis newspapers for 1868–71 were searched.

15. *St. Cloud Journal*, Oct. 3, 1867, p. 2; *Sauk Centre Herald*, Sept. 9, 1869, p. 3, Sept. 16, 1871, p. 2, Sept. 28, 1872, p. 2 (quote); A. D. Brower to Marshall, Dec. 26, 1866, Marshall records, MHS.

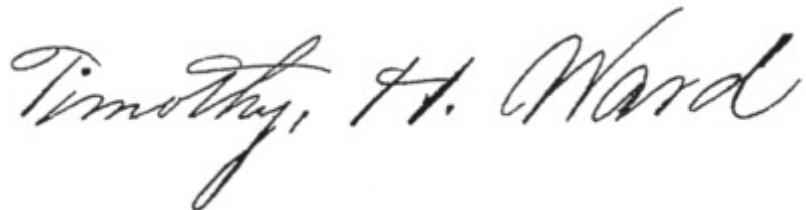
16. William W. Folwell, *History of Minnesota* (St. Paul: MHS, 1926), 3: 10–17; *St. Cloud Journal*, Aug. 27, 1868, p. 2; *Sauk Centre Herald*, Oct. 22, 1868, p. 2, Oct. 21, 1869, p. 2 (quote); Bruce White et al., *Minnesota Votes . . . 1857–1977* (St. Paul: MHS, 1977), 69.

17. *Sauk Centre Herald*, Aug. 12, 1869, p. 2, Sept. 9, 1869, p. 3; Sept. 16, 1869, p. 2 (quote).

18. *Sauk Centre Herald*, Nov. 11, 1869, p. 2; DeLaurier, *Todd County Histories*, 118.

19. *Sauk Centre Herald*, Sept. 16, 1869, p. 2.

20. *Sauk Centre Herald*, Nov. 11, 1869, p. 2; *St. Cloud Journal*, Nov. 11, 1869, p. 3.



At the state Republican convention, Horace Austin won the gubernatorial nomination, besting Ignatius Donnelly. The Todd County slate was perceived as anti-Austin. Election Day, too, seemed marked with controversy. Abraham Brower accused “that inevitable red pepper demagogue Bombastus Furiso” of trying, unsuccessfully, to stir up trouble at the polls. Brower does not identify Furiso, but he might have meant Silas P. Chandler, nominee for treasurer on the Abbott slate and a member of the central committee, who occasionally wrote satirical pieces for the *Herald*.

There is a slight possibility that 1871 was the contested election. Delegates to the county convention had a choice between Jacob Brower and John Wait for auditor, but Wait received only one vote. Publication of the handbill in 1871, though, might account for Ward’s move to Sauk Centre soon thereafter. *Sauk Centre Herald*, Sept. 16, 1871, p. 2, Apr. 13, 1872, p. 2.

21. DeLaurier, *Todd County Histories*, 7–11, 49–52; *Minnesota History Bulletin* 2 (Aug. 1917): 215; Spangler, *Negro in Minnesota*, 55; Taylor, *African Americans*, 7, 66–68; David V. Taylor to author, Mar. 15, 2007. The *New York Times*, Nov. 28, 1904, reported that a representative of Booker T. Washington was purchasing land in Beltrami County to “establish a colony of Southern negroes.” Perhaps these attempts fueled the 1917 *Argus* report that agents later visited Todd County—or perhaps they did visit. Robert C. Athearn, *In Search of Canaan: Black Migration to Kansas, 1879–80* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas), 127, describes the National Emigration Aid Society of Washington, D.C., which in the 1870s “aided southern black field-hands to move North.” I have been unable to connect this organization to Todd County.

22. *Todd County Argus*, May 3, 1917, p. 1.

23. DeLaurier, *Todd County Histories*, 118. DeLaurier’s credentials are impressive. Born in 1870, he knew many of the early

settlers and did extensive research for his histories. His father, who settled in Todd County in 1868, knew Ward. DeLaurier graduated from the University of Minnesota, was elected Todd County superintendent of schools, served as school principal in several states, practiced law, and drew up land title abstracts in the county before focusing on writing; DeLaurier, *Todd County Histories*, 431.

24. Nell Irvin Painter, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas After Reconstruction* (New York: Knopf, 1977), 113, 137, 149–50; Athearn, *In Search of Canaan*, 127, 131–33; W. E. B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880* (New York: World Publishing Co., 1968), 149, 260.

25. Leslie A. Schwalm, “Overrun with Free Negroes’: Emancipation and Wartime Migration in the Upper Midwest,” *Civil War History* 50 (Mar. 2004): 153; Spangler, *Negro in Minnesota*, 50–54; V. Jacque Voegeli, *Free But Not Equal: The Midwest and the Negro During the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 174; “Report of Commissioner of Statistics,” *Minnesota Executive Documents, 1870*, 2: 1015.

26. Donald R. Shaffer, *After the Glory: The Struggles of Black Civil War Veterans* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004), 40–41; Thomas Montgomery to his father, Mar. 22, 1865, Thomas Montgomery Papers, MHS; Spangler, *Negro in Minnesota*, 54–55.

27. *Chicago Tribune* in Voegeli, *Free But Not Equal*, 7; Schwalm, “Overrun,” 148.

28. Voegeli, *Free But Not Equal*, 28. This was the Republican Party’s third effort to add this amendment to the state constitution. Todd County citizens voted 150 to 42 in favor; neighboring Stearns and Morrison counties voted against it; *Legislative Manual of the State of Minnesota, 1869*, 89; Taylor, *African Americans*, 5–6.

29. DeLaurier, *Todd County Histories*, 63, 65, 118. Marco Polo’s homestead certifi-

cate #3467 was canceled on Feb. 26, 1874; Pat Tyler, General Land Office Records, e-mail to author, Apr. 18, 2007. In 1867 Long Prairie included the land that became Reynolds and Little Sauk townships, and West Union encompassed the future townships of Leslie and Gordon.

30. DeLaurier, *Todd County Histories*, 63, 65, 95, 106. Many individuals filed claims under the Homestead Act but never occupied their land.

31. Here and below, Assessor’s Return of Taxable Real Property in the Township of Long Prairie, 1867, and Assessor’s Return . . . West Union, 1867, Todd Co. courthouse; “Notice—U.S. Land Office,” repeatedly published in *Sauk Centre Herald*, 1868–69, p. 3; Soldiers and Sailors System, *www.civilwar.nps.gov/cvss*. There is further difficulty in identifying African American veterans: some enlisted under their master’s surname and later changed their name; some used false names; and some clerks made spelling errors. See Richard Reid, “USCT Veterans in Post-Civil War North Carolina,” and Donald Shaffer, “I Do Not Suppose That Uncle Sam Looks at the Skin,” both in *The Civil War Veteran: A Historical Reader*, ed. Larry M. Logue and Michael Barton (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 151–55, 203–05. The 1870 and 1875 censuses for Todd County provided no helpful information. Details in canceled homestead claim certificates, NARA, might make it possible to match a land claim to the correct individual.

32. Jacob Brower file, Todd Co. Historical Society, Long Prairie; DeLaurier, *Todd County Histories*, 383–84.

33. U.S., *Census*, 1880, Shubuta, Clarke Co., Mississippi, population schedules, p. 63, online ed.

34. Hield, “Notes on Timothy Ward”; Minnesota, *Census*, 1875, Population, Crow Wing Co., Brainerd, schedule 1, microfilm ed., p. 682; Spangler, *Negro in Minnesota*, 55; *Pomona Progress*, Nov. 14, 1895.

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