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Article Summary: Robert Ball Anderson was the largest black landowner in Nebraska in 1910. He began as a slave in Kentucky, served in the 125<sup>th</sup> Colored Infantry during the Civil War, homesteaded in Nebraska and was able to build a life as a prosperous, well-respected land owner in Nebraska.

#### Cataloging Information:

Names: Robert Ball Anderson, Robert Ball, Alfred Anderson, Bill Burton, Dock Cooper, Alois Civis, Constantine Klemke, Vincent Dvorak, Irvin M C Jackson, Charles Grosier, Nancy Bush, William Fosket, Keith L Pierce, Charles Burlaw, Joe Bartas, Frank Bartas, John Gaines, James Motley, George Jessen, Chris Hansen, Daisy Graham, John Wesley Graham, William Anderson, Russell Miller, Ernest Graham, A M Miller W B Bliss, Henry Rogowski; Dr Eikner; Thomas Hovorka

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Photographs / Images: Robert Ball Anderson, about 1925; Hemingford street scene during the 1920s; Robert Ball Anderson and members of the Hemingford GAR, December 4, 1930; Government-issue gravestone of Robert Anderson, Hemingford Cemetery



*Robert Ball Anderson, about 1925.*

Robert Ball Anderson, Ex-Slave,  
A Pioneer in Western Nebraska,  
1884-1930

*By Darold D. Wax*

Robert Ball Anderson was born a slave on March 1, 1843, in Green County, Kentucky. He was among five children born while his mother lived on a farm owned by Colonel Robert Ball.<sup>1</sup> Their father resided on the neighboring plantation of Alfred Anderson, who in 1860 held 67 slaves, ranking him among the largest slave owners in the commonwealth.<sup>2</sup>

Robert's master operated a more modest farm, raising hemp and flax. On the eve of the Civil War, he held 17 slaves, ranging in age from a 60-year-old male to a baby girl of two years. The slaves occupied four small log cabins. Robert's mother, a house servant, lived with her five children in a cabin measuring 12 feet square.<sup>3</sup>

Until he was 21, Robert lived on the Ball farm in south central Kentucky. When he was 6, his mother, who had somehow aroused the displeasure of her mistress, Mrs. Ball, was sold to a trader, who carried her to the cane fields of Louisiana. Robert never saw her again. His father had before made frequent trips to visit his family. After 1849 and the sale of his wife, however, these visits became increasingly infrequent, and Robert saw much less of his father.<sup>4</sup>

Initially Robert worked as a house servant and errand boy. A favorite of the colonel, as he grew up he was permitted to travel about the countryside in a wagon at the side of his master. Eventually, however, following an altercation with the colonel's wife, Robert was transferred to the fields. He spent the last years in bondage as a field hand, under a regimen much different from what he had known before.

Only on rare occasions had Robert considered running away from the Ball plantation. The idea had always been hastily

discarded in the belief that escape was fraught with too many dangers. The Civil War altered the situation, for as the fighting dragged on and Union troops came to dominate military affairs in Kentucky, the likelihood of reaching safety behind federal lines increased. During the fall of 1864, Robert fled his home, making his way to a recruiting office at Lebanon in neighboring Marion County. Taking an oath of allegiance to the United States, he joined the Army under the name of Robert Ball.<sup>5</sup>

His regiment, the 125th Colored Infantry, began training for combat duty, although the war ended before he and his comrades saw action. The remainder of his three-year enlistment was spent in the West, including a year at Fort Bliss, Texas. His regiment retraced its march across the Plains in 1867, and shortly thereafter he was discharged at Louisville.<sup>6</sup>

Robert Ball's military career was followed by several years of wandering about the Midwest. After his discharge he had returned to Green County and the Ball plantation, but he found conditions grim and unappealing. "Things," he concluded, "were pretty much in chaos." Moving on to Iowa, he worked on construction and as a farm laborer before beginning the serious pursuit of his dream. He was powered, he stated, by "the idea of owning my own land and being independent."<sup>7</sup>

In 1870, Robert Ball Anderson (he and his siblings had agreed to take their father's name) arrived in eastern Nebraska. Settling in Butler County just below the Platte River before it makes its final dip southward and flows into the Missouri, he filed claim under the Homestead Law for 80 acres of land. For a decade he held on there, combatting a national economic crisis that brought low farm prices and struggling against drought and grasshopper infestations. He was forced to capitulate in 1881, having lost everything. His dream evaporated, he moved on.<sup>8</sup>

Anderson spent the next three years as a farmhand in north-eastern Kansas. While he appreciated the good wages and the opportunity for some schooling—the only formal education in his entire life—he "was not satisfied."<sup>9</sup> Still consumed with the idea of being independent and having his own place, he elected to begin over again. Forty-one years old in 1884, he embarked upon a quest that brought his idea to fruition.

Anderson quit his job and with his savings headed for western Nebraska. There, Robert Anderson established roots, won status and recognition as a pioneer rancher, and assembled land holdings that brought him economic security and prosperity.

Several developments contributed to opening the Nebraska Panhandle to white settlement. By 1885 the once-proud Plains Indians could be disregarded by federal and private agencies engaged in promotional campaigns that included western Nebraska.<sup>10</sup>

The decade of the 1870s had been dry, with rainfall amounts far below the average. The cycle reversed itself in the 1880s; the rains came, bringing water and soaring hopes. While Nebraska's mean average rainfall is 22.84 inches, the average was 24.18 inches for the decade of the 1880s. Where before there had been suffering and failure, now the promise of prosperity burst over the area like a brilliant ray of sunshine.<sup>11</sup>

The Union Pacific Railroad, the harbinger of an advancing American civilization, had followed the Platte River across Nebraska in 1868. The Burlington and Missouri had built into southwestern Nebraska in 1883 and had run a diagonal north-westerly across the Sandhills by 1890. The Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley (North Western) ran across the northern tier of counties in 1885. Branches sub-divided the areas in between. Whenever railroad lines were opened, the corporations stood to benefit from rapid settlement, and builders pushing through Nebraska were not exceptional. The railroads were not inclined to overlook the economic benefits of settlement by farmers, who were capable of converting bands of steel into highways of gold.

The railroads could count, as always, on a strong ally, the United States government. Official surveys had progressed to the point where encouragement was given to prospective settlers. The better farmlands of the Panhandle beyond the unproductive Sandhills ranges awaited the settlers' labor to transform them into blooming fields. Everything seemed to be in order, and the rush of settlement was not long in coming.

Robert Anderson chose an uncertain and highly competitive life. It is likely that he came by train and was briefly a transient in either Valentine on the FE and MV or Sidney on the

UP. For one thing, federal land offices were located there. In addition, towns near newly opened lands attracted a class of entrepreneurs known as "locators"; early on the scene and possessed of some knowledge of the countryside, they sold their services for a fee. While their fees could be exorbitant, the service they rendered expedited the staking of claims; settlers were willing to pay the charge in return for a quick land claim. Anderson's initial claim was in a part of Dawes County that in 1886 was separated and formed into Box Butte County. The country was wild and virgin, never having felt the bite of a plow.<sup>12</sup>

Anderson had exhausted his homestead rights in Butler County. Now he took up a tree claim under the provisions of the Timber Culture Act, whose requirements included planting 10 acres of trees, part of a government plan to change the nature of the prairie. "The idea was good," he observed, "but the ones who conceived it did not know anything about the soil or the requirements to make such a forest grow."<sup>13</sup>

After his claim on the southeast quarter of Section 35, Township 28 North, Range 51 W was recorded at the land office, Anderson began the last stage of his journey to the site of his holdings.<sup>14</sup> In some ways this was the most trying part of the trip west, for roads were poor. Occasionally, small knots of dugouts and tents interrupted the landscape, the homes of earlier arrivals. The Hughes Ranch, a large concern that ran cattle north of the Niobrara River in Dawes County, kept a small store where travelers on the Sidney Trail paused for refreshments. One pioneer reported in 1885 that Hughes charged 25 cents for a drink of whiskey; the combination of price and spirits made travelers kick "like a three year old steer."<sup>15</sup> Anderson was among the first settlers in his immediate area, although the next spring—the spring of 1885—others began to appear and he soon had neighbors: Bill Burton, Dock Cooper, Alois Cavis, and Constantine Klemke. The population rose markedly in the years after 1884; the census of 1890 reported 5,494 inhabitants in Box Butte County.<sup>16</sup>

Supplies were not easy to come by during the first years, before Hemingford was founded in 1886, and food provisions were used sparingly. Essential goods were obtained at Hay Springs, some 30 miles northeast of Anderson's place. For-

tunately, an ample supply of game was available. Antelope roamed the area and offered a nutritious meat. But Anderson relied more on smaller game, hunting "cotton tail rabbit and jack rabbit, prairie chicken and grouse."<sup>17</sup>

Apart from a food supply, which necessitated planning and rationing as well as work, the matter of shelter was also critical. At first Anderson and his neighbors lived in dugouts. The scarcity of trees dictated against their use in the construction of houses. Eventually Anderson put up farm buildings and other small structures, using lumber hauled in from Pine Ridge, approximately 15 miles from his home.<sup>18</sup>

Soon, however, residents put up sod houses, which even neophytes constructed with little difficulty. One early pioneer, relating his beginnings in the Panhandle, stated: "We tried to break some sod for a building with no experience in building sod houses. We did fairly well."<sup>19</sup> Within a matter of months Anderson was at work on his own two-room sod house. He later added wooden-frame segments.<sup>20</sup>

An opportunity to earn money came from railroad construction in Nebraska. Between 1880 and 1890 the Burlington Railroad moved from central Nebraska through the northwest Panhandle into South Dakota.<sup>21</sup> Homesteaders in the Panhandle discovered that employment was available as railroad construction workers. Their claims filed and residences established, they flocked to eastern Nebraska in 1886 and 1887 to work on the Burlington.<sup>22</sup> Once Anderson had his trees planted and had begun improvements on his land, he gained employment as a construction worker on the Burlington. He spent three years as a railroad cook. All the while, he related, "I drew my pay regularly and saved my money. At the end of the three years I had considerable money saved up"—\$1,600. "I wanted to invest this [money] so it would bring me an income. I loaned the money, which was all I had. In a few months the fellow I had loaned to, left the country and took my money with him. Again I was broke."<sup>23</sup>

Anderson was "pretty blue," but not broken in spirit. Shaken, he returned to his land. In some respects the reversal was a blessing in disguise, for after returning to western Nebraska he entered into farming with new vigor and commitment. Approaching a banker in Hemingford, he negotiated a loan that enabled him to buy a yoke of oxen and a good plow.

The interest—3 percent a month—he thought excessive, but the loan “was my only chance.” The trees he had planted were not flourishing, and many had died. Giving up on the idea of a forest on the plains, Anderson went to work with his oxen and plow. “I plowed out a little garden and planted that, then I started to break out some land for grain.”<sup>24</sup> This marked a new beginning for Anderson. The decade of the 1890s brought economic disaster to thousands of Americans as businesses collapsed, mortgages were foreclosed, and the specter of hunger and deprivation stalked the land. Anderson, however, prospered during that restless decade, not by taking advantage of the misfortunes of others but by hanging on with a grim determination.

The cycle of wet and dry years continued, with a return to a period of scant rainfall beginning early in the 1890s. In 1890 the average rainfall for the state had been 17 inches. It dropped to 13½ inches in 1894. Production of agricultural goods, particularly corn and wheat, fell, and there was a sharp decline in farm prices. Wheat that sold for 76¢ a bushel in 1890 brought only 40¢ in 1895. Corn over the same period dropped from 48¢ to 18¢ a bushel.<sup>25</sup> Farmers’ economic grievances spilled over into politics and in Nebraska led to political realignments. But while politics provided a diversion for the disgruntled agrarians, it could not immediately solve their economic problems.<sup>26</sup> Gradually they gave up and left the land. “Only the strong and the courageous, the ingenious and the stubborn, remained.”<sup>27</sup> Anderson remained.

Alone for more than two decades by 1890, a veteran of hard times in Nebraska in the 1870s, and a tested participant in the pioneering era, Anderson was well-versed in the struggle for survival. Providing much of his own food and almost self-sufficient in other respects, he was without dependence on others. Neighbors, often with wives and children whose welfare could not be overlooked, were candidates for early departure. Staying behind, Anderson added to his landholdings, buying the homesteads of those who left. Between 1890 and 1900 his farm—a single quarter—was transformed into a sprawling domain; he became, he declared, “a king.”<sup>28</sup>

He doubled his acreage in September, 1889, when he acquired the northwest quarter of section 3, township 27N, range 51W, the government patent for which was issued on

September 21, 1891. A mix-up in filing records was discovered three years later when the patent on his original claim was delivered. The patent was to the southwest quarter of section 35, whereas the quarter he had settled was the southeast quarter. Confusion over titles was not unusual, and in Anderson's case it was only discovered after the patent was drawn up. The title to his home place was erroneously granted to Vincent Dvorak in January, 1895. In 1896 Anderson purchased his home quarter for \$300, thus resolving the conflict and bringing his holdings to 480 acres. His holdings reached a full section when he obtained by warranty deed from Irvin M. C. Jackson the southwest quarter of section 3. Although located in two different sections, his property was connected and adjoined his original tree claim. Then in 1900 he acquired an additional three quarters. Charles Grosier deeded a quarter of land to Anderson in June, 1900, and in October, 1900, he purchased for \$300 a half section from Nancy Bush.<sup>29</sup>

Capable of living without luxuries, Anderson not only bought land during the 1890s but managed to pay his debt to the Hemingford bank. He continued to break out ground, all that he was able to farm, and raised wheat and oats. In addition to farming, he began to run cattle and horses. The horses he raised for sale, which with the grain he marketed constituted his income. As the new century dawned, Anderson stated that he was making "it along pretty good."<sup>30</sup>

In hardly more than a decade and a half, Robert Anderson rose to a position of economic security. He was the owner of 1,120 acres of land. In 1900 the average size farm in Box Butte County was 758 acres. A decade later the census reported 588 farms in the county. Only 162 of them (approximately 28 percent) were in excess of 1,000 acres. By then, Anderson had added to his already large holdings.<sup>31</sup>

His property reached two full sections in July, 1902, with the purchase of the northwest quarter of section 34, township 28N, range 51W.<sup>32</sup> Two years later, taking advantage of the Kinkaid Act, which allowed homesteads of 640 acres in 28 counties of western Nebraska, he added another 160 acres to his domain.<sup>33</sup> Anderson relied on the Kinkaid Act to obtain the northwest quarter of section 35, township 28N, range 51W. "Watching my chance," Anderson related, "I filed on a preemption claim next to my tree claim."<sup>34</sup> With this Kinkaid

quarter, Anderson owned nine quarters of land, a total of 1,440 acres.<sup>35</sup> Between 1904 and 1918 Anderson added four more quarters, bringing his total to 2,080 acres. The accumulation of property was no small achievement; it represented money saved, business acumen, effort, and planning. By 1910 Anderson was the largest black landowner in the state, with property valued at \$15,640. Even by the standards of the Plains states, where farms came in large sizes, Robert Anderson was a major property holder by 1920.<sup>36</sup>

Equally impressive was the skill with which he organized his holdings, the good sense he exhibited in putting together his more than 2,000 acres. His property was located in townships 27-28N, range 51W. He owned sections 34-35 in township 28, and section 3 in township 27. The lands all were connected; township 27 lies just south of township 28, and Anderson's sections in the one adjoined the section and quarter in the other. Thus, on the western and northern sides his lands stretched for two miles.<sup>37</sup>

The years between 1900 and 1922 were good years for Anderson and others in western Nebraska. The economic and political discontent of the 1890s did not evaporate, but the reform impulse was now most visible in the eastern urban areas of the country. Farm prices were not notably depressed, and after 1914 and the outbreak of World War I, farmers, like the rest of the population, experienced a growing prosperity. Busy buying land, adding improvements, later building a large house, and taking time, too, to enjoy life, Robert Anderson clearly made money. Still, he mortgaged his lands on occasion. In 1906 two quarters in section 35 were mortgaged to William Fosket. Ten years later he began borrowing on his land in earnest. Mortgaging eight quarters in the spring of 1916 to the First State Bank of Hemingford and Keith L. Pierce, he obtained a grand sum of \$10,000. It is not clear why such extensive mortgaging and such a large amount of money were necessary. He was beginning to travel some during these years. He left Hemingford for Thermopolis, Wyoming, in mid-July, 1916. Traveling by train, he expected to "visit other western points of interest." While satisfied with a Spartan existence, keeping careful account of expenditures, he was willing to share his wealth with relatives. Some of the mortgaged land was redeemed by 1921; other quarters were redeemed

and then re-mortgaged. In July, 1918, he mortgaged 1,120 acres to the Royal Highlanders for \$13,000, a portion of which he paid off in 1921.<sup>38</sup>

Some of his money went for upkeep and improvements of house, barns, and equipment. He succeeded in breaking out more than a quarter of land by 1910; 165 acres were counted as improved in the census of that year. Much of the grain grown on his cultivated land was used for feeding stock and was not sold on the market. His farm machinery and implements were valued at \$175.<sup>39</sup> A relative who spent the winter of 1910-1911 with Anderson recalled that while he was still making do with his soddy, the general appearance of his barns, sheds, and corral bespoke care and attention. Another, a neighbor familiar with his operations, reported: "He kept it [the farm] up pretty good."<sup>40</sup>

Most of Anderson's land was left in pasture. On his roughly three sections of range land, Anderson raised cattle and horses, primarily the latter. He had as many as 50 head of horses at a time—draft animals used in farming operations before the advent of power equipment in the 1920s. Hemingford, nearby on the Burlington Railroad, became a livestock shipping point, moving cattle valued at \$75,000 and horses valued at \$10,000 in 1903.<sup>41</sup> Some of Anderson's horses may have been included, for he was into the breeding business by 1900. Although he engaged in a variety of agricultural activities, he was regarded chiefly as a horse breeder.

Anderson also tried his hand at raising fruit and berries. In his *Memoirs* he stated he planted "shrubbery, gooseberries, raspberries, blackberries, grapes, apples and plums, and found they would all grow with a little extra care."<sup>42</sup> In 1912 the local newspaper reported that his "green apples, pears, cherries, currants, gooseberries and plums [were] all in fine growth and some [were] ripening." In Hemingford he sold produce from his wagon to shoppers or to merchants such as Charles Burlew. Frequently he encouraged friends to drop by his ranch and pick excess fruit or vegetables. Some families made all-day outings to the Anderson ranch, where they ate fruit and carried away more in baskets. The Joe Bartas family in August, 1913, picked currants at Anderson's place. "His bushes are overloaded," the *Hemingford Journal* reported.<sup>43</sup> Farmland to till, horses and cattle to care for, chickens and

pigs to feed contributed to a full schedule of activities for Anderson. He was 57 years old in 1900, but he continued to be active into his late 60s. Relying on permanent hired labor was unusual, but neighbors assisted each other with tasks that were more than one man or a single family could handle.

Anderson was motivated by a strong sense of community, believing that if "you don't work right together, you won't make it." Frank Bartas, a neighbor, often exchanged help with Anderson, especially at crop-gathering time. In May, 1912, Joe Bartas assisted in dehorning Anderson's cattle. At times machinery was exchanged.<sup>44</sup>

Nevertheless, Anderson sometimes employed farm laborers. A great-nephew spent the winter of 1910-1911 on the ranch caring for the livestock. The next year another nephew assisted until the fall work was done, then departed for the East. Some time later John Gaines, also a great-nephew, came to Nebraska and worked with Anderson for several years. Transients were also hired for brief periods. Anderson welcomed the relatives, not just because they helped him operate his 2,000-acre ranch, but because they were a lifeline to his past, a means of maintaining a connection with his people. Such ties were strengthened by travel to renew acquaintances with family members. In the late 1890s he traveled to Springfield, Illinois, to visit a half-sister and her family.<sup>45</sup> He enjoyed traveling as time and finances permitted, especially during winter months. When over 70, he visited the old Ball plantation in Kentucky, where he had spent his early life as a slave. Camera in hand, he trudged about the place photographing the remains of the Ball house, then in an advanced stage of disrepair. He had not been back since 1867 when discharged from the Army. Now, 50 years later, he was drawn back to his beginnings, beginnings that he identified with Colonel Robert Ball, long since in his grave. He stopped at Greensburg, the county seat, to visit the courthouse his former master, a stone mason, had built. Court had been recessed for the day, and a group of men were milling about. He approached them:

[I] excused myself and ask if anyone could tell me how old that old building was. None of them could. One man seemed interested and ask me why I wanted to know. I told him that my old master had built the building. This man suggested that perhaps the clerk could tell me and took me in to the building and to the clerk's office.

Informed of the basis for his interest, the clerk and the man began poring over the records that might reveal something of the history of the structure. Anderson was pleased when the documents were located "proving that I was right" and that Colonel Ball had built the courthouse. The passage of more than half a century did not diminish his hatred of the institution of slavery but neither did it reduce in his mind the stature of his former master. The winters of 1920-1921 and 1921-1922 were given over to extensive travel by train through the South and even outside the country. His older brother lived at Forrest City, Arkansas, and Robert probably established his base of operations there. Commenting on his winter vacations, Anderson observed that the traveling "appealed to me and as I became better situated, I took more trips." By 1922 he could say that he had "traveled almost all over the United States, and have been in Cuba and Mexico."<sup>46</sup>

In 1915 James Motley, who had married Anderson's niece, moved his family from Oklahoma to the ranch. Anderson and Motley ranched together. For Anderson this was less than full retirement, though it eased him toward a different life style.<sup>47</sup> The Motleys left in 1920. After 36 years as a rancher in the Panhandle, Anderson in March, 1920, "quit farming." His horses, cattle, mowing machines, plows, wagons, seeders, and "other articles too numerous to mention" were disposed of at a public sale. George Jessen agreed to a three-year lease of Anderson's property. The arrangement was more than a business relationship, for Anderson and the Jessens shared living quarters.<sup>48</sup> This was possible because about the time the Jessens arrived Anderson completed work on a beautiful new house, replacing his 30-year-old soddy.

A carpenter was hired to construct the new house not far from Anderson's soddy. A fine two-story dwelling—"one of the best in these parts at that time"—it had a striking gambrel roof. The main floor consisted of four rooms and a pantry, the upstairs four bedrooms, each with closet. The interior was nicely finished with pine floors and varnished cabinets and cupboards. A wide porch ran around two sides of the house. In an unfinished basement a cement tank was constructed for storing water, which Anderson planned to pump to trees and shrubs. Anderson was proud of his new home, a monument to his dogged determination and a symbol of his triumph over nature.<sup>49</sup>

Still, Robert Anderson was in the final analysis alone. His friends were many, but except for visits from relatives he lived in isolation several miles from Hemingford. He was secluded, too, in that he lived in a white society. Black people were not curiosities in western Nebraska, but there were few permanent black residents. This was a far cry from Kentucky's black culture patterns on which he had relied in early days, though it was the world in which he had chosen to live.

Nevertheless, questions do arise over his place in local white society. How did he get on with the white power structure? What was it like walking the streets of a town where he was a fixture, but another black was a novelty? The years during which Anderson put together his ranch lands and established himself in Box Butte County were critical ones for race relations in the United States. Whites in the South worked out solutions to a "Negro problem." Though removed from the cockpit of Jim Crowism and racial conflict, Robert Anderson nevertheless lived in a society influenced by racist ideas.

Nebraska prohibited slavery in the State Constitution of 1875: "There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in this state," Article I, Section 2 declared, "otherwise than for punishment of crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted." The same article, Section 25, asserted "there shall be no discrimination between citizens of the United States in respect to the acquisition, ownership, possession, enjoyment or descent of property."<sup>50</sup> In 1893 Nebraska lawmakers approved a civil rights law which stated:

All persons within this State shall be entitled to a full and equal enjoyment of the accommodations, advantages, facilities and privileges of inns, restaurants, public conveyances, barber shops, theatres and other places of amusement, subject only to the conditions and limitations established by law and applicable alike to every person.

Violations of the provisions were deemed misdemeanors punishable by fines of \$25 to \$100. When the Legislature chartered Nebraska University in 1869, it provided that "no person shall be deprived of the privileges of this institution because of age, sex, color or nationality."<sup>51</sup> All of these statements are important for understanding the racial climate in Nebraska and represent concern for equality of opportunity.

Election laws, however, required that in cities of 40,000 to 100,000 population the "color" of the voter be included on the

registration card to indicate whether the voter was black or white. In 1915 the election commissioner was made responsible for recording the color of registered voters. More suggestive of attitudes regarding blacks were the miscegenation statutes. In 1911 the Legislature declared marriages void "when one party is a white person and the other is possessed of one-eighth or more negro, Japanese or Chinese blood." A law of 1913 stated, "The issue of the [mixed] marriage shall be deemed to be born out of wedlock."<sup>52</sup>

Nebraska's population, except for the troubled decade of the 1890s, showed steady growth. The net increase during the nineties was about 8,000, from 1,058,910 in 1890 to 1,066,910 in 1900. In-migration shot up thereafter, and by 1910 there were 1,192,214 persons living in the state. The figures for 1920 and 1930 were 1,296,327 and 1,377,963 respectively. Slightly more than half of Nebraska's white population in 1900 (51.9 percent) was of native parentage. Thus, nearly half had direct Old World contacts: 20.8 percent had foreign parentage, 9.7 percent were of mixed parentage, 16.6 percent were foreign born. It was still the case in 1920 that those with foreign and mixed parentage and the foreign born accounted for over 40 percent of the white population. Those born abroad declined to 11.5 percent.<sup>53</sup>

The population of Box Butte County, where Anderson lived, grew from 5,572 in 1900 to 8,407 in 1920. Whites in 1910 numbered 6,068 of the total population of 6,131. Foreign or mixed parentage persons numbered 1,464, and 683 were foreign born. By 1920 the number of foreign born in the county had grown to 708. Some 94 Mexicans lived in the county in 1920.<sup>54</sup>

Fugitive evidence suggests that immigrants quickly embraced the racist, anti-black, views of white America.<sup>55</sup> The issue is of some importance, since Robert Anderson came into contact with a fair number of first-generation Americans. Still, the whites of Nebraska had only a small black community with which to deal. Blacks accounted for a miniscule segment of Nebraska's population, less than 1 percent before 1920. The absolute numbers reported in the censuses of 1900, 1910, and 1920 were 6,269, 7,689, and 13,242. Like other blacks who left the South, those in Nebraska were overwhelmingly urban residents. Rural blacks grew from 1,068 to 1,121



*Hemingford street scene during the 1920s.*

between 1910 and 1920, while urban dwellers increased from 6,621 to 12,121. In 1910 well over half lived in Omaha or rural Douglas County. Blacks in Omaha and South Omaha amounted to 5,143 of the 7,689 blacks in Nebraska.<sup>56</sup>

Anderson was not the only black man living in Box Butte County. The county's black population in 1910 was 55, just under 1 percent of the population. Many were laborers, some with families, who had come to the Alliance area as Burlington workers. By 1920, 173 blacks lived in the county. Robert Anderson lived near Hemingford, an exclusively white town.<sup>57</sup>

Anderson's world was a section of Box Butte County that "stretched from his own neighborhood, encompassed the town of Hemingford, and reached occasionally to Alliance in the southeast corner of the county. Prior to 1899, Hemingford had been the county seat. When Alliance supplanted it, Anderson was obliged to travel there frequently to transact business. Anderson may have made friends among Alliance blacks, but his associates in the main were whites in and around Hemingford. As a local resident put it, Anderson "realized he was in a white community."<sup>58</sup> More to the point, the community knew he was a black man, a special sort of black and even a special sort of man.

Not many settlers antedated Anderson in the Box Butte country. With a select group of others, he had triumphed over an inhospitable land. The view others had of Anderson included his place as an early settler; the plaudits heaped upon pioneers also were extended to him.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, his Army service and association with the Grand Army of the Republic were significant matters. Many settlers in northwest Nebraska were Union veterans, held in special regard and accorded places of respect in community celebrations.

Though Anderson had not seen action during the war, his military record was solid. His military accomplishments were enhanced by his life in bondage and escape from slavery to join the Union cause. A fixture in the annual Memorial Day ceremonies, Anderson epitomized for many what the Civil War was about—slavery and equality.<sup>60</sup>

In sum, Robert Anderson was prominent in the community because of his pioneer status, his military record, and his success in farming and ranching. "If there was ever a

gentleman—if I've ever known one—it was Robert Anderson,” recalled a man who from boyhood days had known Anderson around Hemingford. Another, in a comment that has darker meanings, declared, “He was a first-class nigger.”<sup>61</sup>

Neighbors noted bachelor Anderson's standards of cleanliness. He kept his own house, did his own laundry, and appeared in public in neat, clean attire. His soddy was unusually spotless. Passages in his *Memoirs* indicate that cleanliness ranked high on his scale of values. Whites impressed by his personal standards were no doubt reacting to the disheveled appearance of some farmers and bachelors, as well as revealing their stereotyped view of the Negro as dirty and unclean.<sup>62</sup>

For all his modesty and seriousness of countenance, Anderson had a sense of humor. His wit was keen, and among friends he laughed easily. Children were delighted by him, and he found their laughter and innocence attractive. The children of Constantine Klemke, who lived close by, believed Anderson a special person. His horse-drawn wagon coming down the road brought screams of anticipation: Candy for her 10 children was something to look forward to. The younger ones he took on his lap, talked to and teased. Other children in Anderson's neighborhood were similarly attracted to him.<sup>63</sup>

In town Anderson was inclined to stop and visit with young people on the street or perhaps in the stores. His Memorial Day treks to the cemetery had children clamoring to gain a place on his wagon. For many children, especially those who saw Anderson only in town, he was an object of curiosity because he was black. He gave them their only living example of a black man. Remembering his boyhood around Hemingford, one former resident said: “Anderson was the first Negro I had ever seen, and I was curious. I made it a point to talk with him whenever we happened to be in town at the same time.”<sup>64</sup>

Kind and gentle, Anderson was known for his honesty and fairness. These were values or goals he worked toward: “I have always tried to be fair and honest in my dealings with others,” he recorded. Early in the century he frequently told Assessor Chris Hansen that he wished to pay all the taxes for which he was liable. Accustomed to the usual tax evaders, Hansen was struck by Anderson's spirit of cooperation.<sup>65</sup>

Anderson participated in neighborhood and community social activities, though he was cautious in his relations with others. Understanding the attitude of whites and aware of how they might react, he avoided asserting himself. When his assessment of persons was favorable, he might open up, let his guard down, and then become warm and relaxed. He thus managed to live and prosper in western Nebraska without antagonizing anyone who counted. He once stated: "Everyone in Box Butte County, and western Nebraska, regardless of color, is my friend."<sup>66</sup> He often took the initiative and dropped in on friends, the Klemke family, Frank Bartas, and Chris Hansen. "He was just a man you could sit down and visit with, easy, you know," one pioneer recalled. Another, who knew Anderson in his last years, observed that you talked with him "one man to the next."<sup>67</sup>

On one occasion Anderson, Thomas Hovorka, and another man shipped cattle by rail to the Omaha Stockyards. While in Omaha they discovered that most eating establishments and hotels would not accept all three; where the two white men could eat, Anderson was excluded. They decided to stick together and eventually were able to locate establishments that accepted them all. "He was the only black man around," a resident of Hemingford related, "and we felt that he needed support." One Memorial Day visiting spectators enquired, "What's a nigger doin' carryin' the flag?" Friends rose to his defense. When Dr. Eikner set up practice early in the century, he aroused anger by his unwillingness to accept Anderson. The doctor refused to eat in the hotel dining room when Anderson was there. Generally speaking, townspeople were embarrassed by the doctor's behavior. As gossip about such affronts spread, Hemingford residents were inclined to ridicule the doctor and to defend Anderson's right of access to public accommodations.<sup>68</sup>

In accepting Anderson whites did not entirely free themselves from racial stereotypes. Hemingford residents absorbed the negative racial attitudes operating at the national level. Blacks passing through Hemingford, for example, were viewed with suspicion by unfriendly whites. In 1913 two transient blacks, a man and a woman, were arrested by the marshal on a charge of disorderly conduct. The man was permitted to remain on probation, since he was employed by a local contractor, but the woman was "sent out of town."<sup>69</sup>

People liked Anderson, but the underside of the community's perception of Negroes in general was evidenced in the residue of terminology that outlasted him and bespoke seamier attitudes. Thus his ranch later was referred to by some as "the nigger place."<sup>70</sup>

Hemingford-area whites often referred to the black rancher as "Uncle Bob." Probably started innocently, this patronizing title was alive with the suggestion of attitudes. "Uncle" and "aunt," of course, as applied to blacks, were holdovers from slavery days as a means of addressing blacks. For whites, uncle was a comfortable term, perhaps signaling respect but at the same time connoting a particular social status. Mr., Mrs., and Miss, terms of respect, were reserved for whites and not loosely employed when referring to blacks. They called up possibilities of social equality that were unacceptable for Negroes. Adults often used the term uncle in direct conversation with Anderson and parents passed it on to their children. The black man whose visits to the ranch were anticipated and whose trips to town brought clusters of young people to exchange pleasantries was Uncle Bob.<sup>71</sup>

Another appellation applied to Anderson, "Zip Coon," appeared late in 1912 in a newspaper report from his area, Lawn Precinct: "Zip Coon, the very funny fellow," the item read, "says, there are lots of rabbits this fall and they are better than ox tail soup." In ensuing months there were frequent references to Zip Coon. Early in 1913 he was listed with neighborhood residents who were preparing to sell horses. Later news articles had Zip Coon in town as a transactor of business, as a farmer with "his potatoes all dug," and as "a caller at Klemke's." It was all great fun, whether meant to cast aspersions or not, but it served to remind people of Anderson's differentness.<sup>72</sup>

Anderson never forgot that he was black, that his world was white, and that problems were inherent in that situation.<sup>73</sup> Life was easier because he was alone, one isolated black man. This changed after 1922 when relatives came to live with him. The white citizens of Hemingford were confronted with a larger group of blacks in their midst.

In 1922 in Forrest City, Arkansas, at his brother's home, Anderson met his bride-to-be, Daisy Graham.<sup>74</sup> Daisy was the oldest of eight children of poor Tennesseans, the John Wesley

Grahams. An eighth-grade graduate, she went to Arkansas hoping to find employment. For all the deficiencies of her own education, it was superior to that of most Southern blacks. Hired at a rural school, she taught for about four years, from 1918 until 1922.<sup>75</sup> While earning enough to pay her expenses and send \$10 a month to her family, she thought "things were even worse" around Forrest City than in Tennessee.

The couple met in February, 1922; 30 days later, on March 19, they were married. She was 21, he 79. Later she said, "He loved me, but I didn't [love him] when I married him."<sup>76</sup> His 2,080-acre ranch valued at \$61,000<sup>77</sup> dazzled the young woman whose entire life had been spent in the South. Handsome even in old age, intelligent, worldly, and well-traveled, Anderson offered a form of security available to her nowhere else.

Anderson's affluence was real enough despite the fact that his lands were heavily mortgaged. Only two quarters were unencumbered; the remaining 11 carried mortgages totaling \$25,000.<sup>78</sup> The debts later were paid, demonstrating that he had not miscalculated his ability to pay. He did, perhaps, make other miscalculations; in succeeding years mortgages of the Anderson land became commonplace.

Anderson and his bride arrived in Hemingford on April 28. The newspaper reported the event in a brief front-page story: "Robert Anderson, commonly known as Uncle Bob, was born in slavery." A sketch of his early life and long residence in Box Butte County followed. "[Anderson] is a good worker and has amassed [sic] considerable of the worlds goods. . . . All of his friends offer him congratulations and best wishes for himself and wife."<sup>79</sup> The story noted that "no one knew of this marriage until they arrived home." Friends who had known him for years were startled by the news. Reportedly he had confided to friends that he was wary of women, fearful that they might be attracted by his wealth. A neighbor summed up the feelings of many regarding the marriage with, "Well, I'll be cow-kicked."<sup>80</sup>

Anderson's bride was thrilled by her new life in Nebraska. "I thought it was exciting," she later declared. Anderson's ranch home, with its flowers, plants and trees, approximately half an acre, was esthetically pleasing. It was a long way and a far cry from the hopelessness of Tennessee or Arkansas. Much

later, after a great deal had changed, Daisy looked back on her husband's wealth, property, and house and saw it in more grandiose terms than it had been. The large house became a 23-room mansion; Anderson employed as many as 40 workers on the ranch, while she directed "a complete staff of household helpers." More accurately, she recalled the fine clothes and personal belongings that Anderson provided her.<sup>81</sup>

The George Jessen family, with one more year remaining on its three-year lease of Anderson's property, had prior notice of the marriage. Anderson wrote Jessen suggesting that they share the house. This was acceptable; the Andersons took two rooms, a bedroom and living room, on the first floor. For nearly a year the Andersons lived in cramped quarters. A cooking stove was installed in their living area, and Anderson prepared the meals. Mrs. Jessen no longer did Anderson's washing or looked after his meals. Things were different for everyone, including Anderson's friends. They stopped thinking of him as the retired bachelor-rancher and instead saw him as a new bridegroom.<sup>82</sup>

Mrs. Anderson had expressed concern about living in an all-white community, wondering what kind of welcome would be extended. Anderson had told her that it made "no difference about color where I live." Neighborhood residents and townspeople attempted to continue seeing their old friend and to help his wife feel comfortable. For her part, she missed the presence of black acquaintances, once remarking that none lived within 30 miles. People organized a charivari, a form of greeting for a new couple. The ritual associated with such affairs was observed: Friends met at the Anderson ranch; the Andersons refused to let them in. Then came the inevitable practical jokes, as the group warmed up to the evening's fare. The doors opened in due course, the guests flowed in, and treats and conversation followed.<sup>83</sup>

In other respects the reception extended Daisy Anderson was less cordial. Anderson went with his bride to the Hemingford hotel soon after their return, and the new manager, who did not know him, denied them service. Informed of Anderson's status in the community, the manager still refused to serve Mrs. Anderson. Anderson and his wife left in disgust. When the Methodist Ladies' Aid Society made plans for a program to raise money, Daisy volunteered to perform a jig. Some

members, offended by her demonstration, began to ostracize her socially.<sup>84</sup>

The Jessen lease ran out in 1923, and the family settled on a nearby farm. Anderson's in-laws from Tennessee, Mr. and Mrs. Graham and at least four of their children, now appeared to share in Anderson's largess. People around Hemingford felt threatened by additional blacks, and a certain amount of community hostility was directed against them.<sup>85</sup>

Nevertheless, some persons labored to make Anderson's bride and her family feel at home. Until the fall of 1925, they kept the Andersons and Grahams involved in social affairs. In late April-early May, 1925, the Andersons hosted a supper guest, received a neighbor on a social call, and on two successive Sundays had families as their guests. The Andersons, in turn, paid visits to others and frequently were dinner guests of friends.<sup>86</sup> Increasingly, however, social contacts diminished. Anderson's old friends seemed not to get on well with his newly acquired family. Anderson, caught in the middle, tried to mediate between local residents and the Grahams. Mrs. Anderson's two brothers flirted with trouble, and people regarded them with suspicion.

Gradually, Anderson retreated into a shell. His brother William and wife arrived from Arkansas soon after Mrs. Anderson's people moved in. Their intention may have been just to visit, or they may have hoped to stay. In any case, they moved on. In Hemingford the old black man moved from shop to shop with his young wife. Occasionally he stopped to talk with acquaintances and to exchange greetings, but these moments were fleeting.<sup>87</sup>

Anderson's advancing years contributed to his reduced social life and his reluctance to participate in community affairs. During the late spring of 1925, he was sick in bed for several weeks. Upon recovering he tried to resume an active physical life. He sometimes motored into town with the Graham family to buy groceries, lumber, or other supplies for the ranch. He also resumed his travels. Not long after his illness he visited Kansas City. A more ambitious journey was made to the National Grand Army of the Republic convention at Grand Rapids, Michigan, in August, 1925, in company with his wife. Five thousand strong, "feeble in body but strong in spirit," the old soldiers marched down the city streets,

knowing it "might be the last parade of the organization."<sup>88</sup>

Mrs. Anderson soon assumed full command of farm and ranch activities. She was not reluctant to assert herself, despite her unfamiliarity with the business world and her lack of farm experience. Once the lease arrangement with George Jessen ended, Mrs. Anderson plunged in. Her two able-bodied younger brothers and two hired men supplied much of the manpower. Robert Anderson, through his wife, once again entered the livestock business, running cattle and a few horses. In 1928 she began preparing more land for crops, an activity also engaged in by other nearby farmers. The plan was to run tractors around the clock; the hired help worked from morning until 6 at night, when they were replaced by Mrs. Anderson's brothers. That spring an entire section was prepared for planting. While not a bad decision, the purchase of farm equipment as well as other expenses combined to drain off much of Anderson's capital.<sup>89</sup>

The cash outlays were met by additional mortgages. The Andersons mortgaged ten quarters of land to the Durland Trust Company on September 10, 1923, in the amount of \$31,500. Less than two years later, in March, 1925, the three remaining quarters were mortgaged for \$10,000. In a period of roughly 18 months, more than \$40,000 in cash was acquired at the cost of heavily mortgaging all of Anderson's land.<sup>90</sup> Mrs. Anderson and her family had expensive tastes. Such huge sums of money, foreign to their background, left them slightly disoriented.

Mrs. Anderson developed a taste for the "fine clothes, Irish linen and lace garments of the period." As a bachelor, Anderson had never felt a need to buy a motor car, relying instead on his wagon and team. The Buick dealer, Russell Miller, was no doubt pleased that Mrs. Anderson's family found larger vehicles to its liking. Between 1923 and 1930 Anderson bought several Buicks. In 1923 the six-cylinder, seven-passenger touring car, the Buick model normally bought by the Andersons, cost over \$1,400.<sup>91</sup> They also owned a GMC truck. Further, sodbreaking required other costly machines. Two McCormick-Deering tractors headed the list.<sup>92</sup>

These expenses did not seem ill-timed or ill-advised. Farmers in the area broke out much ground after 1927, land never before cultivated. Moreover, farm prices were fairly

high. Anderson's land was planted to wheat, oats, and barley. The next year some 20,000 bushels of wheat brought in over \$20,000.<sup>93</sup> The income helped cancel existing mortgages. But in 1928-1929 more land was mortgaged for \$28,000. For Anderson it was all rather hectic and bewildering. Baffled by what went on, he could not halt or even slow the economic descent. And if he ever tried, he soon gave up; he was old and tired by 1928. Though saddened by the "easy come, easy go" style of life, he accepted it fatalistically.<sup>94</sup>

One achievement grew out of his belated marriage: his *Memoirs*. This small 57-page narrative deals primarily with Anderson's life as a slave in Kentucky. While Daisy encouraged her husband to relate the events of his life and then recorded his remarks, major editorial and other assistance was provided by several Hemingford residents.<sup>95</sup>

The volume was printed in 1927 on the press of the *Hemingford Ledger*. Announcement of its publication was made in June: "Robert Anderson, well-known colored man, an old homesteader, has prepared a little book, his Memories, telling something of his life and condition in slavery, and his efforts to get on top." The community was reminded that Anderson had been "punished until his body is like a board full of knots," a reference to the physical abuses he had endured as a slave. "The little book," the article concluded, "is ready for sale, and a number of them have already sold. Anyone desiring a copy can get it from Uncle Bob or his wife, or at the Ledger Office. The supply is limited. Get yours now before they are all gone."<sup>96</sup>

Anderson closed his autobiography by expressing satisfaction with his life and current condition:

I am getting old now, and can't do much work. I have a good farm, well stocked with plenty of horses, cows, and farming machinery, with shade trees, fruit trees, grapes, berries, and have money in the bank to tide me over my old age when I am unable to earn more. . . . I am a rich man today, at least rich enough for my own needs.<sup>97</sup>

Seemingly pleased with his economic position and with his situation generally, Anderson appeared happy and contented. But much that seemed real was only an illusion. Anderson still owned 2,080 acres of land valued at nearly \$75,000, as well as two tractors, a truck, and other farm machinery. He had also built a smaller house for his wife's parents. The land,

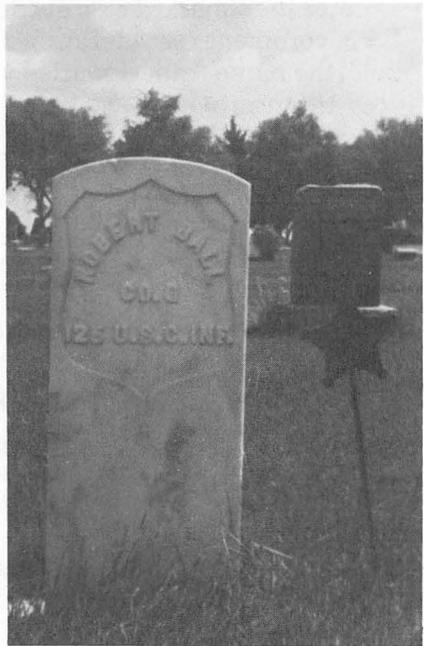
however, remained mortgaged. Between 1923 and 1928, \$69,500 was obtained through mortgages on the ranch. Although he was the largest black landowner in Nebraska, his lands, through the mortgages, were slipping away. His understanding of what was happening was reflected in his attitude and behavior. Associates seldom saw him—it was almost as if he was prevented from visiting old friends—and he showed some signs of being less than happy. The whole dismal affair, someone remarked, was “just like a castle tumbling.”<sup>98</sup> The old fight and determination were evaporating, partly subdued by his advancing years. He used a cane and tired more quickly. By March, 1930, Anderson had deeded his property to his wife, who became the legal owner of the Anderson ranch.<sup>99</sup>

Eight months later, Anderson, his wife, her brother and a friend were traveling by car in eastern Nebraska, returning, according to newspaper accounts, from a visit with his brother at Forrest City, Arkansas. On Sunday, November 30, near Union, a small town 40 miles east of Lincoln, the car left the road and overturned in loose gravel. Daisy was bruised and Ernest Graham, who was driving, escaped unhurt. Robert Anderson died en route to St. Elizabeth Hospital in Lincoln. The attending physician recorded the cause of death as shock resulting from the accident. The body was taken to an Omaha mortician.<sup>100</sup>

Anderson was 87 years old. The Hemingford newspaper reported that the community was “shocked” at news of Anderson’s death. The accident and his obituary were given front-page coverage, accompanied by a picture of Anderson and GAR members of homesteading years. Of the 13 men in the photograph, only A. M. Miller survived Anderson. The newspaper account lauded him: “He won and retained until the day of his death, the respect and friendship of his neighbors and friends in this community. . . . Having taken land in a fortunate section and having good business judgment, he gained much of this world’s goods. . . . [He was noted] for his honesty, kindness and generosity.” It was a generous story about a man who had been in his way one of Hemingford’s leading citizens. His rural neighbors were even more deeply touched by his death:



*Robert Ball Anderson (left) and members of the Hemingford GAR, December 4, 1930. Courtesy of Hemingford Ledger.*



*Government-issue gravestone of Robert Anderson, Hemingford Cemetery.*

He is one of the pioneer settlers, coming here when there were no railroads and Alliance was but a mere place. He had always been a respectable kind-hearted friend and neighbor, always ready to render assistance whenever needed. Although he has left us, his kind acts will remain bright in the hearts of his fellowmen.<sup>101</sup>

His remains were shipped by rail from Omaha to Hemingford, where they arrived December 3. "The high esteem in which Robert Anderson was held," the *Ledger* reported, "was in evidence by the vast number of friends gathered at the depot and his home to greet the silent war veteran and former resident of Box Butte County. . . . 'Bobby' Anderson as he was called, was given the honor and respect due him." The body was taken to his ranch. His coffin was a plain pine box, brought out from town by neighbor Henry Rogowski.

The Methodist Church was packed at 2 p.m., December 4, for the services. The Reverend W. B. Bliss officiated. Anderson's body was buried with military honors at the cemetery. The grand chaplain of the Nebraska GAR from Omaha and the chaplain of the Alliance chapter conducted the ceremony.<sup>102</sup>

Later the standard engraved granite marker provided by the US government for veterans was set in place. It reads, "Robert Ball [the name Anderson used while in the service], 125th Colored Infantry, Co. G."

## NOTES

1. Robert Anderson, *From Slavery to Affluence; Memoirs of Robert Anderson, Ex-Slave* (Steamboat Springs, Colorado, 2nd ed., 1967), 3. March 1, 1843 is the birth date given by Anderson in his memoirs, and corroborating evidence exists. See Service Record of Robert Ball, Co. G, 125th Regiment, U.S. Colored Infantry, National Archives. On the other hand the censuses of 1850 and 1860 report no male slave held by Robert Ball corresponding exactly in age to Robert's alleged birth in 1843. This could well be a function of the haphazard way in which census takers went about their task; the ages of whites, for example, often show discrepancies. It may be, too, that slave owners did not always recall birth dates of individual slaves and failed to check carefully before reporting to census officials.

2. *Ibid.*, 4; MS. Census, Population Schedules of 8th Census (1860), Kentucky, Green County, and Slave Schedules (1860), Kentucky, Green County, both in National Archives, Washington; Lewis Collins, *History of Kentucky* (Louisville, 1877), 295.

3. MS. Census, Population Schedules of 8th Census (1860), Kentucky, Green County; Slave Schedules (1860), Kentucky, Green County; Anderson, *From Slavery to Affluence*, 3-5.

4. This and succeeding paragraphs are based on *ibid.*, *passim*.

5. Service Record of Robert Ball, Co. G, 125th U.S. Colored Infantry.

6. Records of 125th Regiment, U.S. Colored Infantry, National Archives; Richard

K. McMaster, *Musket, Saber, and Missile; A History of Fort Bliss* (El Paso, Texas, 1962); Anderson, *From Slavery to Affluence*, 44-47.

7. *Ibid.*, 48-51.

8. *Ibid.*, 51; Land Patent, Homestead Certificate No. 2411, recorded at David City, Butler County Courthouse, Nebraska, 1875. The patent was made out to "Robert Anderson, alias Robert Ball."

9. Anderson, *From Slavery to Affluence*, 51.

10. See Robert M. Utley, *The Last Days of the Sioux Nation* (New Haven, 1963).

11. James C. Olson, *History of Nebraska* (Lincoln, 1966), 195.

12. See Mari Sandoz, *Old Jules* (New York, 1935), for remarks on activities of land locators; Memoir of Constantine Klemke, 1885, typescript in possession of Albert Klemke, Hemingford, Nebraska.

13. Roy M. Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage; The Public Domain, 1776-1936* (Lincoln, 1962), 218-219; Anderson, *From Slavery to Affluence*, 52.

14. Numerical Index to Lands, Township 28N, Range 51, 171, Box Butte County Courthouse, Alliance, Nebraska.

15. Memoir of Constantine Klemke, 1885.

16. *Ibid.*; Rose Rosicky, *A History of Czechs (Bohemians) in Nebraska* (Omaha, 1929), 250-253; *Standard Atlas of Box Butte County Nebraska, Including a Plat Book of the Villages, Cities and Precincts of the County* (Chicago, 1913), 36; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of The United States Taken in the Year 1920*, Vol. I, *Population 1920, Number and Distribution of the Inhabitants* (Washington, DC, 1921), 116.

17. Anderson, *From Slavery to Affluence*, 54; Memoir of Constantine Klemke, 1885; interview, Mrs. Hayes Chandler, Alliance, Nebraska, 1974. Typescripts of interviews cited are in the possession of the author.

18. Memoir of Constantine Klemke, 1885; interview, Mrs. Hayes Chandler.

19. Memoir of Constantine Klemke, 1885.

20. Anderson, *From Slavery to Affluence*, 53-54, and photo facing p. 52; interview, Mrs. Hayes Chandler.

21. Richard C. Overton, *Burlington West, A Colonization History of the Burlington Railroad* (Cambridge, 1941), 463.

22. Memoir of Constantine Klemke, 1885.

23. Anderson, *From Slavery to Affluence*, 54-55.

24. *Ibid.*, 56.

25. Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 232.

26. The Populist Revolt is examined from the perspective of Nebraska in *ibid.*, chaps. 18 and 19.

27. Sandoz, *Old Jules*, 180.

28. Anderson, *From Slavery to Affluence*, 56; interview, Bill Meyer, Hemingford, Nebraska, 1974.

29. Numerical Index to Lands, Township 28N, Range 51, 166, 171; Numerical Index to Lands, Township 27N, Range 51, 6, 11; Patent Record Book, Book I, 141, Box Butte County Courthouse, Alliance, Nebraska.

30. Anderson, *From Slavery to Affluence*, 56.

31. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910*, Vol. III, *Agriculture, 1909-10* (Washington, DC, 1913), 30-31.

32. Numerical Index to Lands, Township 28N, Range 51, 166.

33. Arthur R. Reynolds, "The Kinkaid Act and Its Effects on Western Nebraska," *Agricultural History*, XXIII (1949), 20-29; James Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 258-260; Addison E. Sheldon, *Land Systems and Land Policies in Nebraska* (Lincoln, 1936), 145.

34. Reynolds, 23; Numerical Index to Lands, Township 28N, Range 51, 171; Anderson, *From Slavery to Affluence*, 55.

35. Reynolds, 23.
36. Numerical Index to Lands, Township 27N, Range 51, 11, 12; Numerical Index to Lands, Township 28N, Range 51, 166, 171; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Negro Population in the United States* (Washington, DC 1918), 659. Nebraska Writers' Project, Works Progress Administration, *The Negroes of Nebraska* (Lincoln, 1940), 8.
37. *Standard Atlas of Box Butte County Nebraska*, 36.
38. Numerical Index to Lands, Township 27N, Range 51, 6, 11-12; Numerical Index to Lands, Township 28N, Range 51, 166, 171; *Hemingford Ledger*, July 13, 1916.
39. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Negro Population in the United States*, 659.
40. Interviews, Mrs. Hayes Chandler, Frank Bartas, Hemingford, Nebraska, 1974.
41. Anderson, *From Slavery to Affluence*, photos facing 40, 52; *Alliance Herald*, April 8, 1904.
42. Anderson, *From Slavery to Affluence*, 56-57.
43. Mae Manion, 'Prairie Pioneers' of Box Butte County (Alliance, Nebraska, 1970), 81-83; interviews, Frank Bartas, Allison Johnson, Hemingford, Nebraska, 1974, Nellie Black, Hemingford, Nebraska, 1974, Mae Manion, Alliance, Nebraska, 1974; *Hemingford Journal*, July 18, 1912, Aug. 14, 1913.
44. Interviews, Mrs. Hayes Chandler, Frank Bartas, Anna Gogert, Hemingford, Nebraska, 1974, Al Klemke, Hemingford, Nebraska, 1974; *Hemingford Journal*, May 16, 1912.
45. Interviews, Mrs. Hayes Chandler, Frank Bartas, Nora Hansen, Hemingford, Nebraska, 1974; *Hemingford Journal*, November 21, 1912, May 22, 1913.
46. Anderson, *From Slavery to Affluence*, 18-19, 57, photos facing 2, 16.
47. *Hemingford Journal*, Sept. 24, 1914; interview, Mrs. Hayes Chandler.
48. *Hemingford Ledger*, March 18, 25, 1920. Interview, Mrs. O. W. Horstman, Hemingford, Nebraska, 1974.
49. Copy of interview of H. Wildy, conducted by Vance E. Nelson, curator, Fort Robinson Museum, Crawford, Nebraska, fall, 1966; interviews, Mrs. Hayes Chandler, Mrs. O. W. Horstman; *Hemingford Ledger*, July 3, 1919.
50. Pauli Murray, ed., *States' Laws on Race and Color and Appendices, Containing International Documents, Federal Laws and Regulations, Local Ordinances and Charters* (n.p., 1950), 259, 260.
51. *Ibid.*, 261.
52. *Ibid.*, 261, 263.
53. Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 248; *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920*, Vol. III, *Population 1920* (Washington, DC, 1922), 590, 606; *Negro Population in the United States, 1790-1915* (Washington, DC, 1918), 43.
54. *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920*, Vol. I, *Population 1920* (Washington DC, 1921), 116; *Ibid.*, Vol. III, 595, 606.
55. U.E. Fries, *From Copenhagen to Okanogan; The Autobiography of a Pioneer* (Portland, Oregon, 1972).
56. *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920*, Vol. III, *Population 1920*, 590; *Negro Population in the United States, 1790-1915*, 100; Nebraska Writers' Project, Works Progress Administration, *The Negroes of Nebraska*, 11.
57. *Negro Population in the United States, 1790-1915*, 100, 819; *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920*, Vol. II, *Population* (Washington, DC 1922), 1350.
58. Interview, Lena Enyeart, Hemingford, Nebraska, 1974.
59. Interview, Nora Hansen.
60. *Hemingford Journal*, June 3, 1909, June 6, 1912, May 6, 1914, May 27, 1914; *Hemingford Ledger*, October 7, 1915.
61. Interviews, Allison Johnson, Al Mabin, Hemingford, Nebraska, 1974.
62. Interviews, Mrs. O. W. Horstman, Nellie Black, Hemingford, Nebraska, 1974; Anderson, *From Slavery to Affluence*, 29.

63. Interviews, Al Klemke, Allison Johnson, Regina Burlew, Alliance, Nebraska, 1974.
64. Interviews, Anna Gogert, Tony Kuhn, Hemingford, Nebraska, 1974; written communication from Mr. Lester G. Britton, Chicago, January 28, 1975.
65. Interviews, Regina Burlew, Nora Hansen; Anderson, *From Slavery to Affluence*, 58.
66. Interview, Nellie Black; Anderson, *From Slavery to Affluence*, 58.
67. Interviews, Nellie Black, Bill Meyer.
68. Interviews, Ruth Green, Nora Hansen, Mae Manion, Regina Burlew; copy of interview of H. Wildy, conducted by Vance E. Nelson, curator of Fort Robinson Museum.
69. *Hemingford Journal*, June 12, 1913, Oct. 2, 1913; *Hemingford Ledger*, November 20, 1919, March 1, 1923, September 20, 1923.
70. Interview, Mrs. Paul Armstrong, Hemingford, Nebraska, 1974.
71. Interviews, Al Klemke, Anna Gogert, Nora Hansen, Mae Manion.
72. *Hemingford Journal*, Nov. 14, 1912, Mar. 27, 1913, Sept. 4, 1913, Sept. 18, 1913, Nov. 6, 1913, May 6, 1914.
73. Interview, Allison Johnson.
74. Interview, Mrs. O. W. Horstman; *Hemingford Ledger*, May 4, 1922.
75. *The Register, Denver Archdiocesan Edition*, January 25, 1968.
76. *Ibid.*; *Denver Post*, October 4, 1970; Anderson *From Slavery to Affluence*, 57; "New Americans," Part 1 of a four-part television series titled "Black Frontier," produced by KUON-TV, University of Nebraska Television, 1970. Anderson's life is examined in Part I of this series, and Daisy Anderson comments on a number of issues.
77. *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Agriculture*, Vol. VI, Part I (Washington, DC 1922), 690.
78. Numerical Index to Lands, Township 27N, Range 51, 11, 12; Numerical Index to Lands, Township 28N, Range 51, 166, 171. Mortgage debt was very common in Nebraska and Box Butte County in 1922. Well over half the farms in the county carried mortgages in 1920. *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Agriculture*, Vol. VI, Part I (Washington, DC 1922), 683, 717.
79. *Hemingford Ledger*, May 4, 1922.
80. *Ibid.* The remark attributed to the neighbor was provided by Ruth Green. Other information in this paragraph is taken from confidential interviews.
81. "New Americans," Part I of "Black Frontier," produced by KUON-TV, University of Nebraska Television; *Register, Denver Archdiocesan Edition*, January 25, 1968.
82. Interview, Mrs. O. W. Horstman.
83. "New Americans," Part I of "Black Frontier," produced by KUON-TV, University of Nebraska Television; interview, Frank Bartas.
84. Confidential interview.
85. *Hemingford Ledger*, April 12, 1923; Confidential Interviews.
86. *Hemingford Ledger*, May 7, 1925, June 11, 1925, July 9, 1925, Oct. 8, 1925.
87. Confidential Interview.
88. *Hemingford Ledger*, May 7, 1925, July 9, 1925, July 16, 1925, August 27, 1925, September 3, 1925, September 17, 1925.
89. Interview, Ervin Rogowski, Hemingford, Nebraska, 1974.
90. Numerical Index to Lands, Township 27N, Range 51W, 11, 12; Numerical Index to Lands, Township 28N, Range 51W, 166, 171.
91. *Register, Denver Archdiocesan Edition*, January 25, 1968; *Hemingford Ledger*, March 19, 1925, March 26, 1925; Confidential interviews; *Saturday Evening Post*, March 17, 1923, 37.
92. Interviews, Ervin Rogowski, Bill Meyer; *Successful Farming*, November, 1927, 25; *Bureau Farmer*, December, 1927, 25.

93. Interviews, Ervin Rogowski, Bill Meyer.
94. Confidential interviews. Anderson was sick in bed for several weeks during the winter of 1926-1927. See *Hemingford Ledger*, January 20, 1927.
95. Anderson, *From Slavery to Affluence*, 57; Daisy Anderson Leonard, "Have You No Shame," in *ibid.*, 79; interviews, Mrs. Hayes Chandler, Tony Kuhn; Confidential interviews.
96. *Hemingford Ledger*, June 9, 1927.
97. Anderson, *From Slavery to Affluence*, 58.
98. *Bureau of the Census, Negroes in the United States, 1920-1932* (Washington, DC, 1935), 654, 655; Numerical Index to Lands, Township 27N, Range 51W, 11, 12; Numerical Index to Lands, Township 28N, Range 51W, 166, 171; Confidential interview.
99. Numerical Index to Lands, Township 27N, Range 51W, 11, 12; Numerical Index to Lands, Township 28N, Range 51W, 166, 171; *Compiled Statutes of Nebraska 1929* (Lincoln, 1930), Chap. 30, Decedent's Estates, 762-763.
100. *Alliance Times & Herald*, December 2, 1930. Medical records in St. Elizabeth Community Health Center, Lincoln, Nebraska, were summarized in a letter to the author from Jack E. Stiles, Lincoln, March 14, 1975.
101. *Hemingford Ledger*, December 4, 1930.
102. *Ibid.*; *Alliance Times & Herald*, Dec. 5, 1930; Interview, Ervin Rogowski; *Hemingford Ledger*, December 4, 1930.