In Search of Canaan

Athearn, Robert G.

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In Search of Canaan: Black Migration to Kansas, 1879-80.

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Robert G. Athearn tells the story of the black migration from areas of the South to Kansas and other midwestern and western states that occurred soon after the end of Reconstruction. Working almost entirely from primary sources—letters of some of the black migrants, government investigative reports, and black newspapers—he sets the “Exoduster” movement into perspective as a phenomenon in frontier history.

“The strength of the book, aside from its sprightly style, is Athearn’s careful pursuit of the migration after its departure from the Deep South, and more successfully, his penetration of the politics of the Exodus.”

_Great Plains Quarterly_

“The research is solid, and the writing will hold the attention of specialists. The book’s most important contribution is its placing of the 1879 migration within the context of America’s frontier history.”

_The Historian_

“It is the work of a mature scholar, solid and thorough. Athearn has succeeded admirably in clearly documenting the fate of the Exodusters, of the ordinary black migrants to Kansas, and of the northerners and westerners who sought to help them in Kansas. He has painstakingly tracked down all their activities from Boston to Denver. Especially interesting is the impact of the Exodus on Kansas politics, particularly in the career of Governor John P. St. John.”

_Journal of Southern History_

Robert G. Athearn was professor of history at the University of Colorado at Boulder. He is the author of several books on western history, including _High Country Empire: The High Plains and the Rockies_ and _The Mythic West in Twentieth-Century America_, and was the inaugural recipient of the Western History Association’s Caughey Book Prize.