

[Rev. O. J. Burkhardt]

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5260 [say?]

Interview with Rev. O. J. Burkhardt.

At his home, 1236 Washington

Mrs. Burckhardt came to the door, one of the most charming, cultured women I have ever seen, black or white, (I haven't [seen?] many black women). She had a very pleasin , well-modulated, refined voice. The home was very neat. [At?] first I thought it was quite cluttered - there were so many paintings on the walls and so many painted vases on various stands and tables. There were several setees and an old-fashioned davenport, all recovered with tapestry, etc. When I talked with Rev. Burckhardt later - I had known that was very active in many organizations for securing better conditions for his race - I asked him if any Nebraska colored people were nationally known, he said "My wife is." When I remembered that my [sisten?] when chrnm of the race relations of the Federated Church women, had told of a visit to Mrs. Burkhardt when she was painting a picture for the city mission, what a fine artist she was.

Mr. Burckhardt could not tell me anything more than he had written in the article. He had told me at the capitol he would like to have me come to his home for he had some data there. Then he got it, it was just the same as the Hist. Society MS. He referred me to a Mrs. Williams from Cherry Co. who had lived there until recently, who lives just beyond the tracks on G.S. and he said she could tell stories but he could not tell any. I think the colored folk think that they will be made fun of some way, and they steer clear of any stories. He said his race had no more [superstitions?] [then?] any other. He told me of the various [churches] throughout the [state?] and the various settlements.

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He gave me his scrapbooks. He said the negroes were always highly regarded and liked up there. They ran the ranches. He told me of those whom he knew had moved away. I checked them on the MS. He said he had a Hist. of negroes in Custer Co, written by a negro but he could not find it. Dwight Griswold was up there and thought much of negroes, Mrs Murphy was a colored ranch lady. [??]

Among the towns where there are negroes, and consequently churches, he mentioned Beatrice (with a large settlement) Nebr. City (pioneer negroes - underground R.R.), Falls City (church established about 15 yrs ago), Fremont, Alliance, Grand Island, and [Hastings?]. He said there were several "old-timers" around [McCook?], No. [Platte?] (the latter old pioneers at time of Buffalo Bill, cattleboys), Kearney, Crete and Seward (the Bradleys came from Seward)

Mr. Burckhardt has been chrmn. of the negro civic [league] in Nebr. for the last 15 yrs. He has done much in advancing negro's cause. He mentioned placing negro girls in elevators in Omaha, colored clerks in [Orkins?]. He has worked much at the [penitentiary?] and saved negroes from the electric chair (See scrapbook) He mentioned the [securing?] a negro case worker here (Viola Walker?) Among the people from Cherry Co. he mentioned Mrs. Wm. Walker and Mr. [Stith?] on the Journal whose sons have gone on, one a grad. of [Howard?] Univ. (I think I had a Stith boy speak at our church [once?]) He said he had a History of Negroes in Custer Co. written by a negro but could not find it.