

RE: JOHN BROWN STATUE

QUINDARO and WESTERN UNIVERSITY HISTORIC DISTRICT, 1856-1862 and 1881-1948
Vicinity of 27th and Sewell

The area in question was originally part of the Wyandott Purchase, the land that the Wyandot Indians bought from the Delaware in 1843. In January, 1855, the Wyandots signed a treaty dissolving their tribal status, taking citizenship, and dividing the Wyandott Purchase among individual members of the tribe, thus opening the area to white settlement. Ownership of the area in question under the Wyandot allotments was divided among 13 individuals, including Esquire Greyeyes, Mathew Brown, and Nancy Brown Guthrie.

In the fall of 1856, the Quindaro Town Company was formed by an alliance of abolitionist Wyandots and the New England Emigrant Aid Company. The intent was to develop a safe port of entry into Kansas for free-state settlers, as the established river ports such as Atchison and Leavenworth were in pro-slavery hands. The new town was named in honor of Nancy Brown Guthrie, whose Wyandot name was Seh Quindaro. Her husband, Abelard Guthrie, was vice-president of the town company and its principal promoter. The main representative of the New England Emigrant Aid Company was Dr. Charles Robinson of Lawrence, who was treasurer of the town company and later first governor of the State of Kansas. The president of the town company was a Wyandot, Joel Walker, and the other participants included such prominent early Kansans as S. N. Simpson, Vincent J. Lane, and Sam Pomeroy.

The plat of the proposed townsite was surveyed in December, 1856, by Owen A. Bassett, and covered the area from 18th to 42nd Street and from Parkview to the Missouri River. The plat included Quindaro Park, making it the first park in Wyandotte County and one of the oldest in the state. The Missouri River was somewhat to the west of its present location, exposing a long rock ledge which formed a natural levee for steamboat landings where the Missouri Pacific right-of-way is today. The main north-south street was Kansas Avenue (the present 27th Street).

tailoring, and business. Agriculture was also stressed, and a portion of the food consumed by faculty and students was raised on campus.

National recruiting efforts were the life blood of the school. Western University attracted students from throughout the United States, and a majority of those who attended were boarders. One of Western's strongest promotional assets was its music department. The department was begun in 1902 by R. G. Jackson, who was a recent graduate of the music department at the University of Kansas. In 1907, Professor Jackson founded the Jackson Jubilee Singers -- a musical troupe similar to the Fisk Jubilee Singers of Fisk University. Such noteworthy musicians as Etta Moten and Eva Jessye at one time performed with the Jackson Jubilee Singers. The group traveled across the country, giving concerts and publicizing Western University.

Reverend Vernon, the guiding force behind Western's growth and consolidation, gained a national reputation for his accomplishments at the school. He traveled extensively, lecturing and conferring with other black educators. In 1906, President Roosevelt appointed him Registrar of the U. S. Treasury, which at that time was the highest position in government to be attained by an Afro-American. Upon receipt of the appointment, Reverend Vernon took a leave of absence from Western. In 1910, he was reappointed to the Treasury post by President Taft, at which time he stepped down from the presidency of Western and was replaced by H. T. Kealing.

The famous statue of John Brown was erected on the campus of Western University in 1911. The statue was the first monument in the United States to be raised to the controversial figure. In view of the existing political climate, it was a project that was both courageous and defiant, as in 1910 Kansas City, Kansas had elected an avowed segregationist, J. E. "Cap" Porter, as mayor.

The effort to build the monument was begun in 1909. The major sponsor

of the drive was Bishop Abraham Grant of the AME Church, who was assisted by Dr. S. H. Thompson and I. F. Bradley. A sum of \$2,000 was raised in what was labeled "the washerwoman's contribution." The money also came from packinghouse workers, teachers, and businessmen. People of all races and from many different parts of the country donated money toward the establishment of this memorial. When the funding goal had been reached, an Italian sculptor was commissioned to carve the life-sized marble replica. The artist rendered the bearded figure of John Brown erect on a tall base, clothed in a great coat with a facsimile of the Emancipation Proclamation rolled up in his right hand. The inscription on the base of the statue reads, "Erected to the memory of John Brown by a grateful people."

The statue was placed in front of Ward Hall and unveiled at commencement exercises for the Class of 1911 on June 8 of that year. Bishop Grant was not present to view the completion of this project, as he had died the previous winter. The master of ceremonies was J. P. King, a teacher at Sumner High School (later to be principal of Northeast Junior High School and president of Western University). Three thousand people gathered on the grounds in front of the statue. A significant proportion of those in the crowd were white, and the dedication ceremony was regarded as a strong gesture of unity. Among the dignitaries present was the aging John P. St. John, who had been governor of Kansas at the time of the Exodus. He became nationally known for his efforts to find practical and just solutions for the problems of the Exodusters and, in his time, was nearly as controversial as John Brown had been.

Western continued to prosper through the 1920s, but like many small schools it was severely hurt by the Great Depression. Enrollments and contributions declined, and the establishment of the draft, followed by World War II, was the final blow. The class of 1943 had only 13 graduates,