



Born to Be (Blacks in the American West)

Taylor Gordon

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Famous in the 1920s as a singer of Negro spirituals, Taylor Gordon was born into the only black family living in White Sulphur Springs, Montana. His rough-and-ready upbringing in that mining boom town is warmly remembered in *Born to Be*. Gordon describes with panache his early years in the Old West, where he was not aware of racial prejudice. As a boy he carried messages from civic leaders to the town madam, served drinks to the “sports,” and scurried up plenty of excitement.

The book shows him leaving Montana for the East, experiencing the arrows of bigotry, chauffeuring for circus impresario John Ringling, and forging a singing career that won him a place in the Harlem Renaissance and an appointment with British royalty. Gordon finally returned to White Sulphur Springs—after an extraordinary career riddled with misfortune. But he was still flourishing at the age of thirty-six, when the autobiographical *Born to Be* ends.

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