



# Flowering of Nicodemus

The official newsletter of Nicodemus National Historic Site

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## New Superintendent Arrives At Nicodemus National Historic Site

Ms. Williams began her new position as Superintendent of Nicodemus National Historic Site (NHS) on December 29, 2003. She comes to the Site with 11 years of experience with the National Park Service. Prior to working at Nicodemus, Sherda led the cultural landscape program for the Midwest region of the National Park Service. The Midwest Region includes 54 National Park units in a thirteen-state region.

In her former position, Sherda assisted with the preservation of historic landscape in parks across the Midwest Region. She often served as cultural resource expert on park planning teams, including the Nicodemus General Management Plan (completed 9/2003). She assisted parks by managing contracts to help them with research and treatment projects. For example, she managed a contract that resulted in the Cultural Landscape Report (3/2003; unpublished) for Nicodemus NHS.

Sherda worked as a land management forester for International Paper Company in South Arkansas from 1976 - 1986. She managed a 84,000 acre timberland unit, which involved clearing and replanting areas after timber harvest, maintaining roads and boundary lines, supervising prescribed burns, and running a hunting lease program.

She continued her education after leaving International Paper company, earning a Masters in Landscape Architecture from Ball State University in 1992 where she specialized in historic landscape preservation.



In 1879, thousands of black people left the South and headed west to Kansas and other states.  
(Photo credit Kansas State Historical Society archives)

She began her career with the National Park Service that same year, conducting the newly developed Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI) program and producing a Cultural Landscape Report for Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial in Northern Ohio.

Sherda was born in Berkeley, California but lived there briefly. She lived in Berea, Kentucky, Dayton, Ohio, and Springfield, Missouri before completing high school in Noblesville, a small farm town north of Indianapolis.

She earned a bachelor's degree in forestry from Purdue University in 1976. She is the eldest of four children and has two sisters and a brother. Her parents are retired and live south of

Lexington, Kentucky. The staff of Nicodemus National Historic Site are happy to welcome Sherda as our new Superintendent, and hope to make her transition as painless as possible.

Reginald B. Murray, Park Ranger  
Interpretation

### From the Superintendent

Thank you very much for the warm welcome to Nicodemus! I had the pleasure of meeting many of you at the January 19<sup>th</sup> open house and look forward to meeting many more of you in the coming months. We are working on many exciting programs, events, and preservation activities. Here are some plans and activities we have underway at the Historic Site:

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**Development:** We are exploring the possibility of leasing land to place a temporary building for use as a visitor center, thereby reducing our interference with community activities in the Township Hall. Making the decision on whether we can lease other property will involve a lot of factors, including total cost, benefits to our visitors, and available locations. This will be a long process, as we are required to assess the impacts of this project and include public review of our plans. We will keep you updated on where we are in the process.

**Interpretative Programs:** Park Rangers Reggie Murray and Phyllis Howard are developing several programs for the upcoming months. Community members provided a wonderful set of photographs and memorabilia for the exhibit honoring the men of Nicodemus (see related article, page 2). Reggie is working on plans for Founders Day in September. Phyllis is working with Sharyl Cyphers on updating the web site (<http://www.nps.gov/nico>) and will be working on a "Teaching with Historic Places" lesson plan on Nicodemus that will, hopefully, be posted on the main NPS web site for use by teachers across the Nation. Reggie has been enhancing the bookstore, locating new books and sales items as we prepare for summer visitors. Both Reggie and Phyllis continue to make presentations to groups in the greater region. We are working on a policy on the types of sales items accepted for sale in the bookstore (to be published in a future newsletter).

**Visitation:** Attendance at Nicodemus NHS was 51,603 in 2003. Midwest Regional Director Ernie Quintana and his wife Myra Quintana visited Nicodemus on January 19<sup>th</sup>. They also visited Fort Larned NHS and Brown v. Board of Education NHS.

**Preservation Maintenance:** We will continue the foundation repairs on the A.M.E. Church this spring and summer. Stone is available and on-site to complete repairs to the south side. The doors of the Church have been restored by the NPS-Historic Preservation Training Center and are ready for installation in April. At the Township Hall, door closers on the front door were replaced, resulting in a tighter door and more energy efficiency. Snow removal kept Maintenance Worker Robert Brogden very busy for only one week this month—the region needs snow and rain desperately!

Sherda Williams, Superintendent

# The Men Of Nicodemus Time Honored Black History Month

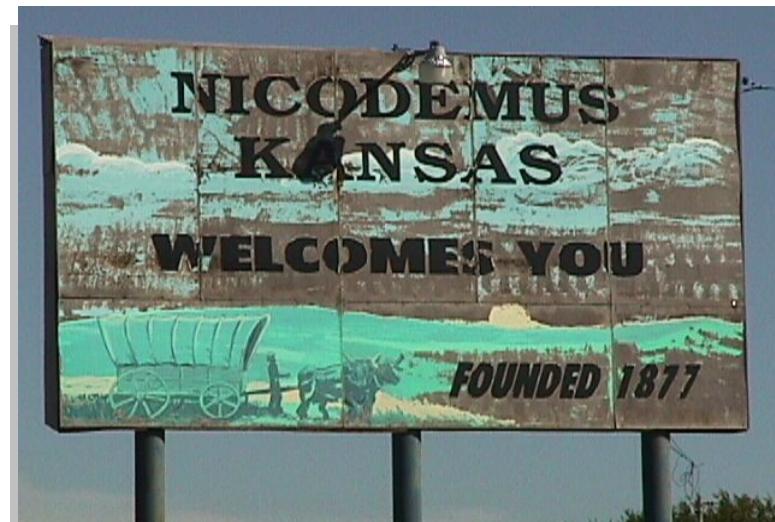
The exhibit "The Men of Nicodemus" was designed to continue the legacy of the original settlers of the community working together and to strengthen the partnership between the National Park and the Community. This was also a great opportunity to honor the men of Nicodemus who shared the American dream of serving their country. Some worked the land as cowboys and homesteaders. Some were religious leaders, political leaders while others served in the military. As the Community continues to grow, others were inspirational in sports and business. All contributed to the community and the Nation. The event was co-sponsored by the Nicodemus Historical Society

The exhibit shows how the men of Nicodemus held together families through hard work and a sense of determination. It also helps bring back memories of a time past. As descendants view old photographs as well as memorabilia, a time of relaxation and fun can be remembered. Even though the residents of Nicodemus are getting older and moving on, some have fond memories of happier and busier times in Nicodemus. This exhibit gave the descendants the opportunity to

share their rich heritage. At the beginning of the exhibit on February 14<sup>th</sup>, Gillian Alexander III shared some of the history of his Great Grandfather Samuel Garland one of the original settlers who was a homesteader as well as a Buffalo Solider from the Nicodemus area. Mack Curry an unannounced speaker spoke on the title "Inventing America: Black Men and Women That Helped."

Those in attendance on Saturday enjoyed hearing about the life of Samuel Garland as well as a day in the life of a Buffalo Solider from Mr. Alexander. Mr. Curry enlightened all about some of the things that Blacks have invented down through history that contributed to changes in our lives such as Kool-Aide and the first stop light. The exhibit was left in place for a week to allow those of the community and the general public who have a problem getting to see the presentations on Saturday to view and enjoy.

Phyllis Howard, Park Ranger Interpretation



Former Nicodemus sign, torn down for safety reasons. This sign was a beacon of hope when it was erected.  
(Nicodemus NHS photo)

# Nicodemus NHS Partners with WNPA

Western National Parks Association is a nonprofit cooperating association of the National Park Service. Headquartered in Tucson, Arizona, the association was founded in 1938 as the Southwest Monuments Association to support the interpretive activities of the National Park Service.

Today they operate bookstores at sixty- three National Park Service sites throughout the western United States, plus an online store with more than 600 educational products. In addition to developing publications, Western National Parks Association supports park research and helps fund programs that make park visits more meaningful.

One of their founding goals was to create and publish park- related information unavailable elsewhere. Currently we have more than 140 books in print with many new publications introduced yearly. Western National Parks Association supports parks by producing more than a half million pieces of free literature annually, including trail guides, newspapers, schedules, and brochures.

Since their 1938 founding, they've contributed more than \$25 million to national parks, generated through store sales to park visitors and the support of their members. The Western National Parks Association is a valued partner of Nicodemus National Historic Site. They return approximately \$2000 dollars to Nicodemus NHS each year. In 2003 these funds were used for the purchase of new publications and titles for the Bookstore.

Visit their website: <http://www.wnpa.org>



Nicodemus NHS bookstore supported by WNPA  
(Photo by NPS)

## New Books added to the Nicodemus Book Store

Cobblestone- Negro Leagues Baseball \*\*\*\*\*

Cobblestone- African American Pioneers and Homesteaders \*\*\*\*\*

African American Women Confront the West, 1600-2000 \*\*\*\*\*



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

### This month in History

Benjamin "Pap" Singleton (1809-1892), a former slave born in Nashville, Tennessee, became the leader of the "Exoduster Movement" Of 1879, In later years he was accorded the title "Father of the Exodus."

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The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

## "Wake Nicodemus"

The name Nicodemus comes from the story about the first slave to purchase his freedom for a bag full of gold. This name is also connected with a poem that is entitled " Wake Nicodemus". The last Emancipation Celebration held in Scruggs grove was in 1951. There was no picnic in 1952, but in 1953 the Emancipation celebration moved into town and carnival rides were erected on the vacant lot east of the Township Hall.

During the early 1970s, the Department of the Interior began to show interest in the town of Nicodemus. In 1973, the Afro-American Institute for Historic Preservation and Community Development conducted a study of Nicodemus and several other significant sites. As a direct result of this study, in 1974 the Afro-American Bicentennial Corporation filed a nomination form and inventory of cultural resources to establish the Nicodemus Historic District. Nicodemus was determined to be a site of national significance, and in January of 1976 it was designated a National Historic Landmark Historic District. The Nicodemus Historic District is composed of 5 structures and 161.35 acres. A National Historic Landmark was erected along South Street, north of the Township Hall.

In 1993, at the request of Congress National Park Service completed a National Historic landmark Feasibility Study. The study was conducted to determine whether Nicodemus would be suitable addition to the National Parks System. The study found Nicodemus "to be suitable for inclusion to the National Park System." On November 12, 1996, Congress established the Nicodemus National Historic Site. In 1997, a National Park Service 'arrowhead' sign was placed in the roadside park north of the Township Hall.

**Reginald B. Murray, Park Ranger**



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Nicodemus National Historic Site  
304 Washington Ave.  
Nicodemus, Kansas 67625

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

## COMING – A Job Opportunity at Nicodemus NHS

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Reginald B. Murray

### **Contributors**

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Phyllis Howard, Park Ranger  
Robert Brogden Sr., Maintenance

Comments? Write to:

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Bogue, Kansas 67625

General Information available on the Internet:

Federal Job Announcements  
[www.usajobs.opm.gov](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov)

Seasonal Employment  
[www.sep.nps.gov](http://www.sep.nps.gov)

NPS Intake Trainee Program  
[www.nps.gov/intake/](http://www.nps.gov/intake/)

NPS Midlevel Intake Program  
[www.nps.gov/training/](http://www.nps.gov/training/)

Our Administrative Technician Sharyl Cypher recently accepted a promotion to Administrative Officer for Fort Larned National Historic Site (NHS). Although Sharyl will continue to provide some support and assistance to Nicodemus NHS, later this spring we will hire someone to fill the position she left vacant – that of Administrative Technician for Nicodemus NHS. Please note that we will not be accepting the applications at Nicodemus NHS. The job will be announced (probably in mid-May 2004) on the USAJOBS web site; when posted on USAJOBS, the job announcement will provide details on where/when to submit applications. See the address for USAJOBS in the column **to the left**. Please review that site periodically after May 1<sup>st</sup> if you are interested in applying.

## THANKS

Thanks to all who attended the January 19<sup>th</sup> Open House, including Township Board members James Bates and Sharyn Dowdell, Graham County Commissioners, Hill City Times, Homecoming Committee members, Rooks County Economic Development Director, 1<sup>st</sup> Baptist Church trustees, and residents of Nicodemus and Graham County. Thanks to the Western National Parks Association (see the article on the WNPA) for providing refreshments at the Open House and to our co-sponsor, the Nicodemus Historical Society.

## UPCOMING EVENT