



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Nicodemus National Historic Site
510 Washington Avenue, #B1
Nicodemus, Kansas 67625

Near the end of Reconstruction, formerly enslaved African Americans left Kentucky in organized colonies to seek freedom on the fertile soils of Kansas.

Nicodemus represents the involvement of African Americans in the westward expansion and settlement of the Great Plains. It has national significance as the only remaining western town established by African Americans during the reconstruction period following the Civil War.

The National Park Service helps preserve America's special places so that current and future generations can enjoy our great heritage.

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

The Flowering of Nicodemus is published three times a year by Nicodemus NHS.

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SPOTLIGHT ON “AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE FUND” PARKS

Martin Luther King Jr. NHS - Atlanta, Georgia

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. lived with a vision of something greater than himself. In Atlanta, Georgia, the National Park Service works to preserve his legacy and continue that vision. Visitors to Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site can tour the house he was born in, the Church he attended as a child and preached at as a man, and the tomb where he's buried. A modern visitor center interprets the impact that Dr. King has had on society, and the “I Have A Dream” World Peace Rose Garden promotes the power of nonviolent protest in the struggle against injustice.

Admission to Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site is free to the public, but there is limited space on the tour of his birth home, so reservations are advised.

For more information visit:
www.nps.gov/malu



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Park News

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Flowering of Nicodemus

From the Superintendent

Nicodemus News

Angela Wetz
Superintendent

I am very happy to be here in Nicodemus. It's been great getting to know people, and I look forward to meeting more of the extended community in the coming months. I thank you for the warm welcome and encourage you to stop by the office or call if you have suggestions or comments.

Easements

We are progressing on façade and grounds easements for the Township Hall, Schoolhouse, First Baptist Church, and St. Francis Hotel. Title work was contracted, and we hope it will be completed expediently. The easements required the National Park Service to do Environmental Site Assessments on each of the properties. Phase I assessments were completed in January. Phase II testing for lead paint around the buildings was completed in early March on the Schoolhouse, Township Hall, and First Baptist Church. We should have final reports for each building soon and will provide these to the landowners upon request.

The final step is to work with the solicitor's office to format the easements, and then they should be ready to sign pending title work completion. A copy of the draft easements was sent to the parties at the beginning of March.

If the easements are finished soon, work on the Schoolhouse will begin in May or June. Schoolhouse work will include stabilizing the building by replacing the foundation. Design work



Once easements are signed, restoration work on the District #1 Schoolhouse can begin. (William Pope, NPS)

for the Township Hall has been funded and future work will include installation of storm windows, replacement of sidewalks, installation of drains, cleaning exterior limestone, repairing a leak around the chimney, and making the front doors ADA accessible. Within a month we should know if the Township Hall project will be funded and if work will begin this year or next.

Employment Opportunities

A temporary maintenance position was advertised for two weeks starting March 11, 2013. The new employee should arrive in June. We also hope to get two Student Conservation Association (SCA) interns this summer. One will be an interpretation intern, to help in our visitor center and in developing educational programs, and the other will be in maintenance, to assist with facility management, and the historic preservation projects.

Wayside Exhibits

We have begun to develop wayside exhibits in cooperation with the Nicodemus Historical Society and Roberta Wendel from our regional office. We would like to have drafts for review by late spring, and a few temporary waysides before the Emancipation Celebration/Homecoming.

Sequestration

As you may have heard, sequestration has impacted the National Park Service. At Nicodemus we expect this will mean a reduction in services provided to visitors, and elimination of all off site ranger led programs. We will also be reducing the special programs that are offered throughout the year. The wayside exhibit funding from the regional office is being held back due to sequestration, so we are proceeding with the project with our park funding, but on a much reduced scale.

Around Town

Historical Society News

By Angela Bates
Nicodemus Historical Society

We are planning a great 2013, and will keep you abreast as we resume publication of our newsletter. If you are a member of the Historical Society, look for your copy in the mail soon. If not, please join. Dues are only \$25 annually, and we need your support to keep the Nicodemus legacy alive!

On June 15th we are hosting the Nicodemus 'Jazz, Blues, and a Little Country Too festival.' The featured jazz group is Tee Dee Young and his band Scandalous. An "Ernestine's BBQ Cook-Off" is also planned for that day. Anyone who would like to enter the competition should contact Angela Bates at 785-421-3311.

During the 135th Emancipation Celebration, the descendant group that participated in the Sadieville, Kentucky, and Ellis, Kansas reenactments, will be performing their arrival in Nicodemus for the afternoon program.

Work has been completed at the museum and we are returning to our offices. The bathroom and kitchen were removed to create more storage and exhibit space. Please make arrangements to stop by when you are in the area. Call first (785-839-4280) to make sure that we are there!

Nicodemus Homecoming 2013

By Sharyn Dowdell
Nicodemus Township

Plans are underway to commence the 135th Annual Emancipation/ Homecoming Celebration here in Nicodemus July 25-28. The theme for this year is '150 Years of Emancipation - 135 Years of Emancipation Celebration.' The weekend will feature events that include Abraham Lincoln and the arrival of our descendants from Kentucky in the Fall of 1877. The parade will be led by Tom Strahan, a famous Lincoln re-enactor who will also be on hand for other events Saturday. We are still working to secure a jazz



Tee Dee Young's Band will be the headline act at this years Jazz and Blues Festival. (Publicity Photo)

group for Friday and Saturday evenings and the dances. Also included during the weekend will be the welcome reception/ice cream social, the pancake breakfast, vintage baseball games and the gospel extravaganza featuring the group 'Heaven Bound' from Denver. The t-shirt design this year is truly awesome! We plan to have shirts available for pre-sale at www.nicodemuskansas.org.

Church services will be provided by the Rev. Lawrence Clark, a descendant, and will be followed by a community dinner at the hall. As usual, hotel rooms will be in short supply, so make plans now for the last weekend in July. We look forward to seeing you!

Junior Ranger Day

On Saturday, April 27, at 10:00 AM, Nicodemus National Historic Site will host a Junior Ranger Day. There will be programs highlighting some of the unique features that can be found in your National Parks, as well as several fun activities and the chance to create a panel for the Dream Rocket Project. The day will culminate in a ceremony to swear in America's newest Junior Rangers. Lunch will be provided by the Western National Parks Association, and all youth are invited to attend. If you know of someone who might be interested in attending the event, or if you would like to receive more information, please contact us.

Around the Park

Early African American Settlement in Graham County

By Michelle Huff
National Park Service

The 1879 state and the 1880 federal censuses of Graham County were conducted only six months apart and were only one number different in their total counts of African American settlers in five townships, (483 and 484). What was really going on with the changes in population numbers and with the 1880 census itself isn't evident until a closer look is taken. There were actually 85 new African American settlers on the 1880 census, but 84 of the settlers on the 1879 census are unaccounted for on the 1880 census, either because they moved, married, died or were somehow not counted. The latter appears to be the case with Henry Williams, the Switzer brothers, the Sadler family, part of the Napue family, part of the Samuels family, Margaret Watts and her sons and W.H. Smith (co-founder of Nicodemus), and his family. Lists of African American settlers in Graham County will be available shortly. De-

scendant information concerning errors or omissions would be greatly appreciated. The lists will be posted on our website and will also be available by email or hard copy. Please contact Michelle Huff (785-839-4321, michelle_huff@nps.gov), for copies.

February Concert a Success

By Phyllis Howard
National Park Service

On Saturday February 16, the program "Make a Joyful Noise" was held in the Nicodemus Township Hall. Sincere thanks go out to the Hill City Christian Praise Band, the Lighthouse Mass Choir, the First Missionary Baptist Choir, and our featured group, the United Black Voices Gospel Choir from Manhattan, Kansas. The United Black Voices Gospel Choir was established in 1971 by the Kansas State Black Student Union in Manhattan, Kansas. JohnElla Holmes, a descendant of Nicodemus, is the advisor for the choir. Approximately seventy people attended the program and enjoyed a wonderful afternoon of music. All of the groups did an outstanding job!



Kansas State University's United Black Voices Gospel Choir visited Nicodemus in February. (Angela Wetz, NPS)

DID YOU KNOW.....

We are celebrating Women's History Month in Nicodemus! Did you know that Jennie (Francis) Fletcher was the only woman in the first group of thirty Nicodemus settlers that arrived in the summer of 1877?



Nicodemus NHS is on Facebook

By William Pope
National Park Service

You are on our mailing list, so there is a good chance you like to stay current with what goes on at Nicodemus National Historic Site. We send out newsletters three times a year, and host monthly Superintendent Coffees, but sometimes we need a faster means of conveying information to our friends and partners. Now there is a new way to keep up with us. We're on Facebook! With this new platform we can share timely updates about coming events, exciting news about park planning, and interesting factoids of Nicodemus history. If you are on Facebook, please consider liking our page! You can get there by typing the link into your browser, or by scanning this barcode with your smart phone.



www.facebook.com/NicodemusNPS

Nicodemus in the Spotlight

It's always great to share about the important role Nicodemus plays in American history. On February 13, Nicodemus was the featured Getaway on the front page of nps.gov. If you missed it, you can read the article here:



<http://www.nps.gov/getaways/nico>