



# Flowering of Nicodemus

## From The Superintendent:

### THE HOLIDAYS APPROACH ONCE AGAIN!!

The weather sure is changing lately, for the worse, or for the better....I don't know. But one thing IS for sure, it's going to get colder and colder as the days wear on. We wish you a warm home, ice-free sidewalks and a wind that always blows the snow AWAY from where you have to shovel.

Since our last newsletter a lot has been going on:

**Homecoming.** As is done every year, the park ensured that additional "facilities" were available- portapotties, trash cans, etc, as well as keeping the Township Hall open later in the evening for access.

Additionally, the Park sponsored two nationally recognized speakers- Quintard Taylor and James Loewen speaking on the links between Nicodemus and Kansas History. We are grateful that they were able to fit us in their schedules.

**Roadside Park.** The Park purchased 5 new picnic tables, a hand washing station and sports equipment (for check-out at the Township Hall) to complement the two new recycling/trash containers purchased about a year ago. We welcome your suggestions for future purchases to support visitor services in the Park.

**Visioning for the Future.** We held a short brainstorming session on the Friday of Homecoming, but did not get much of a turnout. Our intent was to engage the community to identify what the future may hold for Nicodemus- not what they expect to happen based on current trends, but rather, if they could control the future, what would they WANT Nicodemus to become. Anyone with thoughts, ideas or suggestions are welcome to give us a call to discuss!

**Building Common Ground Through the Quilts of Many Hands.** This group project with the other 4 national parks in Kansas brought together elementary school students with local quilters to create quilts that tell the stories of Kansas' National Parks. The completed quilts went on tour to the five parks this past summer. (Of course, Nicodemus' quilt was the best, but we may be biased). Plans now call for display of all the quilts at the National Interpreters' Association national meeting this month. We hope to inspire other parks in other states to join the bandwagon and make their own quilts, eventually having at least one quilt for each of our almost 400 National Park units!

This coming year we have ambitious plans. While not everything will get accomplished (the wheels of government turn microscopically slowly), our hopes are to do as much as our small staff can possibly do:

**AME Church.** Have working drawings prepared for the rehabilitation of the Church. These drawings are necessary in order to ensure that all the work needed to be done is well thought through, prioritized and approved by cultural resource specialists before construction work starts. Then we will work on finding the funds to support the work in the drawings.

**Schoolhouse.** We are working with the American Legion to finalize a Cooperative Agreement that will allow the National Park Service to fund and coordinate the stabilization of some serious structural issues at the School. Once this agreement is signed we will have working drawings prepared for the School's stabilization. Construction work is planned for next year, and while there is no guarantee that funds will be available (money is tight

everywhere) the School is high on the list at our regional office. Cross your fingers.

**Township Hall.** We are working with the Township and GSA (General Services Administration) to prepare a lease agreement to allow the park to continue using the Hall as the Park Visitor Center. This may offer us a great opportunity to make improvements to the Hall in a short period of time. Stay tuned.

**New Visitor Center.** The ultimate goal is to establish a new Visitor Center somewhere near the town and return the Township Hall to the Township- as it should be. The Park is continually grateful that the Township has been so gracious to lend us the Hall for these fourteen years. This year we will be performing an Environmental Analysis / Value Analysis- government-ese for comparing properties from environmental and functional perspectives to identify the property best suited as a future Visitor Center. About 6 properties have been identified. Participation in this process is completely up to the property owners, and they can decline at any time. We thank them all for their interest in helping the Park in this process.

**Oral Histories.** The success of last year's oral history program, coordinated by the Historical Society, was rewarded with additional funding to support more oral histories this coming year! Congratulations!

**Collections Accessibility.** The Park supported efforts of the Historical Society to continue organizing the collection so that information can be more readily accessed. The work by Angela Bates and her staff is to be commended. You must stop by the Society to see the incredible progress that has been made.

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# The 1879 Graham County, Kansas Census

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**Photos.** Calling all photographs!!! The film about Nicodemus that the Park currently shows visitors is in sad shape. Ultimately, we hope to get a grant to cover the costs for a professionally produced Park film to rival films at other National Parks across the nation. In the interim, we need to replace what we have now. We are working with National Park Service specialists to edit down the one hour documentary "Nicodemus" by John Mann to about 15 minutes. The film includes a great number of historic and more-or-less contemporary photographs of Nicodemus residents, descendants and events, but we want to be sure it represents all family groups. If you have photos of individuals or groups that you would like to be considered for inclusion in the film, please give me a call by December 6. We'll coordinate how to borrow the photos. Once we have all the photos, we will have a special Coffee Hour, (inviting all local descendants and residents), when we will review the photos and make the selection. If you have any questions, or if you have photos, please give me a call by December 6. Many thanks.

We will continue to provide updates to all the work noted here at our monthly coffees, (the second Friday of every month), and in each newsletter. If you live near Nicodemus and would like to receive reminder notices about the Coffees, give us a call at 785-839-4321. We'd love to have you join us.

Wishing you well during the holidays.

*Mark Weaver, Superintendent*

...and the staff of Nicodemus National Historic Site.

In late 1879, Governor John St. John of Kansas ordered a census of Graham County for the purpose of organizing the county. On November 10, 1879, Nicodemus resident and land agent Abram T. Hall, Jr. was appointed by Governor St. John to conduct the census. Hall not only counted all of the residents of Graham County, (3,570), but also the number of households, (1,084), eligible voters, (1,026), and the number of cultivated acres, (17,709). His completed census and report were submitted to Governor St. John on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 1880 and as a result, a proclamation officially organizing Graham County, Kansas was issued by the Governor.

The 1879 census documented the colonization of the town of Nicodemus, Nicodemus Township and other parts of Graham County by former slaves and their families escaping the oppression of the post-civil war south. Census results indicated that heavy settlement of eastern Graham County from 1877 through 1879 by black and white homesteaders limited the availability of homestead land close to the town of Nicodemus and throughout the larger Township of Nicodemus for those black settlers arriving after early 1878. The result was that other eastern Graham County township populations also benefitted from black settlement.

The following are lists of names of black settlers in eastern Graham County that arrived by the end of 1879 and totaled 486.

## Town of Nicodemus:

**Boles**, Anderson & Caroline & 2 children  
**Burley**, Josephine & 4 children  
**Downing**, James  
**Fletcher**, Z.T. & Francis & 2 children  
**Forsythe**, Berry & Susie  
**Hall**, Abram T.  
**Harris**, Albert & Bertie & 4 children  
**Henry**, Handy  
**Keeney**, Frank & Lizzie & 1 child  
**Lee**, John & Emma & 1 child  
**McCabe**, E.P.  
**Moore**, Katie  
**Myers**, Jerry M. & Maria & 1 child  
**Napue**, Margaret & 1 child  
**Niles**, J.W.  
**Petty**, Aaron  
**Sadler**, Harriet & 2 children  
**Samuels**, Leona  
**Sanford**, George  
**Smith**, W.H & Martha & 7 children

## Nicodemus Township:

**Alsop**, Jeremiah & Serilda (sp.?) & 3 children  
**Atkinson**, J.E. & Sarah & 5 children  
**Barbour**, Scott & sister Maggie  
**Bradford**, Clay

**Bradford**, Clifford & Melvina & 7 children  
**Bradford**, Maria  
**Booker**, Rankin & Sallie & 2 children  
**Brooks**, Mason & Lubena & 2 children  
**Brown**, Hugh & Addie & 2 children  
**Buckner**, Henry & Sallie & 2 children  
**Burns**, Mary  
**Carr**, Nellie  
**Coleman**, Peter & Marian  
**Coombs**, Eldredge & Ellen & 4 children  
**Davenport**, Benjamin & Melvina & 4 children  
**Davenport**, Isaac  
**Davis**, Julia  
**Dawson**, Benjamin & Nancy  
**Deprad**, John  
**Dorsey**, George & Tabitha  
**Easton**, George & Anna & 1 child  
**Edmonds**, William & Mary  
**Foster**, Samuel & Olive  
**Fox**, Henry & Georgie & 3 children  
**Fulbright**, Martha  
**Griffen**, Amanda & 2 children  
**Gurley**, Oliver & 3 children  
**Harris**, Vincent & Ellen & 4 children  
**Hawkins**, Ruth  
**Horn**, Beverly & Francis  
**Irving**, Willis  
**Isaacs**, Nancy  
**Johnson**, David & Sallie  
**Johnson**, Eldridge  
**Johnson**, Ella  
**Johnson**, George & Amanda & 4 children  
**Johnson**, Henry & Mary & 1 child  
**Johnson**, Joseph & 3 children  
**Johnson**, Mary  
**Johnson**, Nettie  
**Johnson**, Thomas & Theresa  
**King**, Charles & Martha & 4 children  
**Kirtley**, Albert & Hallie  
**Kirtley**, Erasmus & 4 children  
**Kirtley**, William & Lizzie & 3 children  
**Lee**, Silas & Louise & 7 children  
**Lee**, Willis & Anna  
**Lewis**, J.A.  
**Lewis**, J. Austin  
**Lewis**, J.C.B. & Leonora & 1 child  
**Lewis**, Granville & Amanda & 4 children  
**Lewis**, Minor & Maria  
**Lilly**, Stephen & Amanda  
**Lindsay**, Jeff & Amanda & 3 children  
**Lored**, John & 5 children  
**Miles**, Charity  
**Miles**, Dudley  
**Miles**, Lizzie  
**Moore**, Jonas & Clara & 6 children  
**Neal**, John & Chloe  
**Neal**, Willis & Eliza & 1 child  
**Neill**, William  
**Page**, Charles & Georgie & 1 child  
**Posture**(sp.?), Susan  
**Reynolds**, Charles & Mary  
**Richardson**, Lizzie  
**Richartson**, Frank  
**Robinson**, Albert & Lizzie & 5 children  
**Roundtree**, S.P. & Martha  
**Scott**, John & Caroline  
**Scruggs**, Jackson  
**Scruggs**, Jerry & Catherine & 8 children  
**Scruggs**, Maria  
**Scruggs**, Victor  
**Smith**, Dianna  
**Smith**, Edmund & 5 children  
**Smith**, Garrett & Susan & 6 children  
**Smith**, Henry & Mary  
**Spencer**, Lucy

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## Building Common Ground Through the Quilts of Many Hands Project

Our sincere thanks go out to Mrs. Lois Richmeier and Mrs. Diana Parker's 4<sup>th</sup> grade classes at the Hill City Grade School, Mrs. Rosa Stokes and Ms. Esther Clark for participating in the *Building Common Ground Through the Quilts of Many Hands* project, which was a great success. The project was a collaboration between the five National Park Service units in Kansas, local elementary schools and quilting guilds within each park community. The project was funded by a grant from the National Park Foundation with additional support from the Walt Disney Corporation and Western National Park Association. Six very diverse and unique quilts that depict the untold stories of the five Kansas National Parks were produced by the students from participating 4<sup>th</sup> grade classes and local quilting guilds. The students designed their individual quilt blocks and wrote essays in association with each block. Park Rangers from each of the parks worked with each of the local schools and quilting guilds throughout the project.



Mrs. Rosa Stokes, Ms. Esther Clark, Mrs. Lois Richmeier, Mrs. Diana Parker and the Hill City Elementary School 4<sup>th</sup> grade class.

The Nicodemus NHS project began with students visiting the site on a field trip in February to learn about how the park was created, visit with the oldest living descendant in Nicodemus to learn about her childhood and quilting and to learn how the park is significant to the community. After the quilt blocks and essays were completed, Mrs. Stokes and Ms. Clark

assembled the quilt. In May, the students were given a pizza party and each student received a t-shirt with their picture on it holding their block. Awards for participation and appreciation were presented to the school and the quilters.

The project was a great success. The students had the opportunity to learn, hear stories and share experiences from their elders in the community and vice versa. Across Kansas, over 200 students were involved with the project. The completed quilts were displayed at each of the five Kansas National Parks from June through August. The quilts will be on display in November in Las Vegas, Nevada at the National Association of Interpretation Conference.

Our sincere thanks and congratulations go out to the students, volunteers and park staff that worked to make the project a great success.

*Phyllis Howard, Park Ranger*



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Former enslaved African Americans left Kentucky in organized colonies at the end of the post-Civil War Reconstruction period to experience freedom on the free soils of Kansas. Nicodemus represents the involvement of African Americans in the westward expansion and settlement of the Great Plains. It is the oldest and only remaining African American town west of the Mississippi River.

### Nicodemus National Historic Site

510 Washington Avenue, #1  
304 Washington Avenue  
Nicodemus, Kansas 67625

785-839-4321  
785-839-4233

NICO\_Ranger\_Activities@nps.gov

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

## News About Town

### Kansas Black Farmers and Nicodemus Flour Co-op

The KBFA meets each month and continues to keep the Teff project in focus. We are still working with the RC&D personnel to keep progress moving ahead.

We served breakfast to the hunters in our area for the Pheasant opener weekend. Although there were only a few hunters, they enjoyed their pancakes and sausage and stocked up on bags of pancake mix.

### Nicodemus Township

The township was able to get some needed work done to the Priscilla Arts Building this summer. We added a nice porch and made the entrance wheelchair accessible. The walls in the basement were worked on as well as the foundation. We had new windows made and installed.

The addition of the gazebo has been received well and it is getting a lot of use. There are some plants that will need replacing; but that is to be expected. We hope to have electricity and lights installed by spring.

We plan to have a Christmas potluck sometime in December. We hope to coordinate with the Villa for this event.

### Homecoming

Kim Thomas was voted into the coordinator position. I, Sharyn Dowdell, wish to thank those of you who have been instrumental in the preparations during the years I was the coordinator. Please continue to be involved with this event and remember how important you are to the success of YOUR homecoming.

*Sharyn Dowdell, Township Trustee*



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**Federal Job Announcements:  
(USAJOBS)**

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

The Flowering of Nicodemus is a publication of Nicodemus National Historic Site and is published three times per year.

**Stevens**, Stephen & Harriet & 3 children  
**Switzer**, Maxwell, Rutz(sp.?) & William  
**Taylor**, Emmeline  
**Taylor**, Ernest  
**Taylor**, John & 5 children  
**Taylor**, Mitchell & Millie & 7 children  
**Thomas**, Allen & Nora & 2 children  
**Thompson**, Perry  
**Vaughn**, John & Laura & 3 children  
**Washington**, George & Caroline & 9 children  
**Washington**, Sarah  
**Watts**, Margaret & 2 children  
**Welton**, Benjamin  
**Welton**, Benjamin, Jr.  
**Welton**, James  
**Welton**, Lewis & Maria & 2 children  
**Welton**, Stephen  
**Welton**, Willis  
**Williams**, Charles & Emma & 1 child  
**Williams**, Thornton & Elvira  
**Wimms**, Moses & Keziah  
**Wyatt**, Griffen

**Wildhorse Township**

**Blue**, Henry  
**Craig**, Franklin, Nettie & Sanford  
**Garland**, Samuel  
**Hall**, Henry  
**Jenkins**, John & Carrie  
**Napue**, Emmanuel  
**Samuels**, Clark  
**Samuels**, John  
**Stone**, Tolbert  
**Turner**, Taylor & Violet & 1 child

**Hill City Township**

**Allison**, Thomas & 2 children  
**Atkinson**, Lewis  
**Brown**, Lyman & Laura & 2 children  
**Glenn**, John & Mary & 5 children  
**Grimes**, Edward & Miranda  
**Grimes**, Edward, Jr. & Belle & 2 children  
**Hickman**, Daniel & Willina & 7 children  
**Hickman**, Francis  
**Hicks**, Merrit & Elvina & 7 children  
**Jackson**, John & Amanda & 5 children  
**Jones**, George & Francis & 5 children  
**Knuckles**, Bartlett & Lucy & 1 child  
**Roberts**, Garrett & Sallie & 2 children  
**Talbot**, Oscar & Angelina & 3 children

**Graham Township**

**Nevins**, O.G. & Peasie(sp.?)  
**Smith**, Anna B.

**Millbrook Township**

**Brown**, George & Marie & 6 children  
**Brown**, Nathaniel  
**Brown**, William & Sally & 10 children  
**Taylor**, Lizzie  
**Trotter**, George  
**Williams**, Blueford & fanny & 3 children  
**Williams**, Edward  
**Williams**, Willine

**Happy Township**

**Jackson**, Benjamin  
**Wilcox**, Monroe & Mary & 5 children

*Michelle Huff, Park Ranger*