



Flowering of Nicodemus

From the Superintendent

Kansas Winter Wonderland

My, how time flies! We are nearing the end of 2011 and awaiting the arrival of a brand new year. The summer tourist season is behind us now and winter is here. Although, Nicodemus has fewer visitors during the winter season, those who find themselves venturing this way have the opportunity to see an amazing “winter wonderland” on the open plains of Northwest Kansas. You can almost hear sleigh bells ringing, if you listen.

Highlights of Homecoming 2011

Homecoming 2011 was a resounding success with the support of the Homecoming Committee, Western National Parks Association and the Nicodemus Historical Society. We had a host of truly amazing speakers.

Author and actor Joseph Marshall III, a member of the Lakota nation, discussed relationships between Native Americans and African Americans on the nineteenth century plains. Mr. Marshall and his wife, Connie, graciously took some time to autograph copies of several of his books, which we have on display in our bookstore, in the Visitor Center. Superintendent Judy Forte, from the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site in Atlanta, Georgia, gave us some insight on the ways in which the Atlanta community and the National Park Service developed a partnership through a shared vision, to achieve the goal of establishing one of the true gems of the National Park Service system, honoring the great civil rights leader.

Local speaker Barrie Tompkins, actor, president and co-founder of the Nicodemus Buffalo Soldier Association, along with his troop of Buffalo Soldier re-enactors, gave an interpretive presentation of the life of a Buffalo

Soldier.

Also hailing from Atlanta, the Ballethnic Dance Company presented a ballet interpretation of the staged play “Flyin’ West”, which highlights the struggles of four black women in Nicodemus. The Ballethnic Dance Company creatively blends classical ballet with modern jazz, African and other ethnic dance forms. What an awesome weekend!

Nicodemus Junior Ranger Program

The Nicodemus National Historic Site Junior Ranger booklets are finally done!! Thanks to the very hard work of Andrew Watson during the summer of 2010, and descendent John Ella Holmes and graphic artist, Rhona Drilon this past summer, we have some absolutely BEAUTIFUL booklets designed to help youth understand and appreciate the national significance of historical Nicodemus.

Interpretive Planning Meeting

In August, we held our third annual Long Range Interpretive Planning meeting with the community to identify project priorities. In September, we folded in a few other projects to create a great “To Do” list for fiscal year 2012 (October 2011 through September 2012). As always, there is much to do here in Nicodemus.

2012 Special Events Calendar

Top priority on the “To-Do” list is the creation of a Special Events Calendar. Park Ranger Phyllis Howard has compiled a list of themes and associated activities, events or exhibits for each month of Calendar Year 2012. If you have any suggestions or comments please feel free to contact Ranger Howard at the Visitor Center. Other top

ranking future projects include opening the foyer of the Nicodemus African Methodist Episcopal Church for public viewing. Plans to begin some much needed stabilization work on the historic Schoolhouse and the Township Hall are also on our list of things to do.

Work includes foundation repair, siding replacement and painting at the Schoolhouse and fix drainage issues, stone work, etc at the Hall).

Funding to take the first step toward a comprehensive Wayside panel system is in-hand. We will be partnering to gather written and photographic information about many historic sites in the Nicodemus and Wildhorse townships (including, perhaps, even Kentucky, since that state is the origin of the Nicodemus story).

Site Bulletins Grant Project

Recently, the park was awarded a grant to support small research projects (“Site Bulletins”). We have partnered with the Nicodemus Historical Society on this very important project. The grant will fund the creation of eight Site Bulletins.

We are striving to maintain an open communication relationship with the entire community, so, if you have any questions, suggestions or if you think we are overlooking something of importance to the community, please, let us know.

*Thanks and hope you
enjoy the holidays!
Cordially, MARK*

Around Town

Nicodemus Historical Society News

50 oral history interviews have been completed. A modification provided funding for 10 additional interviews. The entire oral history project will be completed by end of September 2012. During the Emancipation/Homecoming Celebration 10 descendent interviews were video recorded. Special thanks, to Dr. Antoinette Jackson from the University of South Florida in Tampa who returned this summer with three of her students, Justin Hosbey, Margaret Allsopp and Whitney Goodwin to assist in the project. We are especially proud of Justin who graduated this year with a degree in Anthropology. Justin was here over the summer of 2010 doing research on the "Women of Nicodemus" which was the subject for his Master Thesis. Congratulations Justin!

The Site Bulletin project will begin in January and will provide four Nicodemus descendents an opportunity to develop 8 bulletins. The project will entail researching existing Historical Society archival files and photographs, NPS files, and other local resources to collect information for the site bulletins. After research has been completed they will write the 8 bulletins with the assistance of a professional editor. This project will provide the community and descendents an opportunity to contribute and participate.

The photographic history book is almost completed. We hope that we will have it in your hands by the end of the year. It has taken longer than anticipated to pull photographs, review and select 200 for the book. Our collection is quite extensive and was overwhelming when we started reviewing and selecting photographs. There were too many to select from and narrow down, so a decision was made to expand the project to include additional books. The photos that have been selected reflect the children of Nicodemus, from infants to teens. Most photographs are of the first and second generation of descendent children, and vary from studio photographs to personal photos. We hope that when you get your copy you will be very pleased and be able to identify some of your own family

members. If there are no photos of your family members, please note that we probably don't have any in our collection, so please consider donating some to reflect your family connection to Nicodemus.

Pioneer Day, October 1, focused on the Cowboys/girls of Nicodemus. Herbert Rodes, a Nicodemus descendent living in Omaha and director of marketing for the Nebraska Cattlemen's Association, was honored with the 2011 Nicodemus Exceptional Cowboy Award. Within the township hall a large display featuring historical photos, memorabilia, and seven saddles were on display. The historic saddles included those belonging to Winfred Bronson, John Taylor and Mose Dabney.

Gary Alexander grew a giant pumpkin and everyone guessed its weight. Bertha Carter won a pumpkin pie for coming closest to guessing the actual weight of the giant pumpkin which was 342 pounds.

Barrie Tompkins of the Nicodemus Blacksmith Company gave a very interesting talk and demonstration on horseshoeing.

A free chili feed was provided followed by a cake commemorating the occasion. The afternoon came to an end with country and western music and dancing.

Angela Bates

Nicodemus Township Board

During the early fall, we had a few of the streets worked on to fill the cracks and repair one intersection. We hope to have funds to do some more streets next year.

Our treasurer, Becky Clark, has moved from the area. Her replacement will be Megan Hart who will fill her position until the next election in November of 2012. Although Hart will be new to the business affairs of this township, we welcome her to the board, and look forward to working with her to achieve the goals of the community which we serve.

The property where the gazebo was built continues to be an unresolved issue. We are confident that we can work things out.

The community Christmas potluck dinner will be on December 17th at the Villa beginning at 5pm. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend. Come join in fellowship with us and bring a dish if you can. There will be plenty of treats. So come and enjoy!!

Kansas Black Farmers Association

Members of the Kansas Black Farmers Association, continue to meet regularly and have high hopes for the future distribution of our products. We are presently negotiating with one property owner to purchase enough lots inside the Nicodemus Township to build our own facility. Although we have not milled any flour recently, we still have our famous pancake mix for sale. It is available at several locations here in Kansas, including, The Pineapple Post in Plainville, Kansas Originals on I-70 at Wilson and also their store location in the Topeka Turnpike service area, Dewayne's Designs on Main Street in Hays, and of course, the Park Service Visitor Center here in Nicodemus. We are still filling mail orders from our many friends across the nation.

2011 Nicodemus Homecoming

Homecoming went very well this past July. Everyone seemed to enjoy the weekend of scheduled events. One of the highlights this year for descendents was being back in the Township Hall after the long absence from that venue.

The Homecoming committee has met a couple of times since then and we will begin regular monthly meetings again after the first of the year.

We received many good suggestions in response to the survey we sent out to those on the e-mail list and will start addressing some of those possibilities at our next meetings. One suggestion that would really make a difference would be for each family to donate \$100 to the committee to cover all expenses for the weekend!! If all families participated, this would make all events FREE, and would allow each family to receive one free Nicodemus Homecoming Celebration t-shirt. Think about it!!

From the Visitor Center

SHARING THE STORY WITH YOUTH

On Wednesday November 16th, Park Ranger Phyllis Howard completed three “Distance Learning” sessions with Mrs. Lavonne Niedermeyer’s 6th grade Language Arts classes at Johnson County Central Middle School, McCook, Nebraska. The students enjoyed their “Distance Learning” field trip and learning about the history of Nicodemus. There were 36 students total for the three sessions.

On Thursday November 18th, Park Ranger Howard gave a live presentation about Nicodemus to Mrs. Sherry Hutchcraft, other teachers, and the 3rd grade classes at Ross Elementary School in Dodge City, Kansas as part of their studies about immigration. Mrs. Hutchcraft’s class will be the first class to enjoy Nicodemus’s Educational traveling trunk. The class is looking forward to completing the new Junior Ranger book and earning their badges. Before leaving the school, Ranger Howard was presented with four copies of the book “The History of Nicodemus” retold by Mrs. Hutchcraft’s Third Grade



Class. The book was dedicated to Ranger Howard and the class’ community project. The beautiful quilt in the background of the photo of Ranger Howard and Mrs. Hutchcraft’s class is a class project on the different immigrant groups that came to Kansas seeking a better life for themselves and their families.

Phyllis Howard, Park Ranger

2012 Nicodemus NHS Calendar of Events

An exciting calendar year of annual events is planned for 2012. The list below shows the themes for each month. Would you like to help us further develop events for any particular month? If so, feel free to contact Park Ranger Phyllis Howard at: 785-839-4233, Tuesday – Saturday from 9:00am to 4:30pm

January Theme: Leadership/Politics

February Theme: Freedom

March Theme: Women’s History Month

April Theme: Youth

May Theme: Diversity

June Theme: Music

July Theme: Emancipation/Homecoming Celebration

August Theme: Men of Nicodemus

September Theme: Founders Day – The Boom Years

October Theme: Pioneer Days

November Theme: Patriotism

December Theme: Holiday Celebration Open House



SPOTLIGHT ON AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE FUND PARKS:

FREDERICK DOUGLASS NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Frederick Douglass was born on a plantation on the Eastern Shore of Maryland around 1818. He died 77 years later in his home at Cedar Hill, high above Washington, DC. In his journey from captive slave to internationally renowned activist, Douglass changed how Americans thought about race, slavery and American democracy. Since the early 1800s Douglass’ life has *(continued, page 4)*



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Nicodemus National Historic Site

510 Washington Avenue, #1
Nicodemus, Kansas 67625

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.

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.

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

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**Federal Job Announcements:
(USAJOBS)**

www.usajobs.opm.gov

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been a source of inspiration and hope for millions. He has also been an ever present challenge, demanding that American citizens live up to their highest ideals and make the United States a land of liberty and equality for all. Douglass was such an impressive speaker who broke so many of his audiences' preconceptions that some people began to doubt he was truly a fugitive slave. To prove them wrong Douglass wrote his first autobiography, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845).

In 1861 tensions over slavery erupted into civil war. Douglass welcomed the conflict as the cataclysmic event needed to wipe slavery from America. As always, he acted as the nation's conscience, arguing that the war was about more than union and state's rights. It was, he said, about a new birth of freedom, a great step towards the promise of the Declaration of Independence.

Following the end of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, new possibilities opened up for Douglass. He moved from Rochester, NY to Washington, D.C., eventually buying the home at Cedar Hill. During this time he served as the U.S. Marshall for the District of Columbia, the District's Registrar of Deeds, and the U.S. Minister to Haiti and Charge d'Affairs to the Dominican Republic. Despite his victories and successes, Douglass still had many battles to fight. African Americans' hold on their newly won civil rights remained tenuous and women were still not allowed to vote. He continued to work to expand civil rights in the country until his death in 1895.

For more information go to the NPS website: www.nps.gov/frdo.