



Timeline

1861 - 1876
Political Influences

1877 - 1887
Establishment and Growth

1888 - 1996
Decline and Recognition

1861

American Civil War begins.

1863

President Abraham Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing all slaves in areas that are still rebelling against the United States.

1865

The Civil War ends in Union victory.

The 13th Amendment ends slavery.

President Lincoln is assassinated and a twelve-year era of Reconstruction begins in the South.

1867

Ratification of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution extends citizenship to all persons born or naturalized in the United States (citizenship for Blacks.)

Congressional (or Radical) Reconstruction begins in the South with passage of the Reconstruction Acts of 1867.

1870

Ratification of the 15th Amendment gives Black males the right to vote.



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1877

April 16 Earliest circular promoting Nicodemus predicts it will become the "Largest Colored Colony in America."

April 18 Seven Kansans form the Nicodemus Town Company, six of whom were Black:

- W.H. Smith, president
- Ben Carr, vice-president
- W.R. Hill, (the one White member) treasurer
- S.P. Roundtree, secretary
- Jerry Allsap
- William Edmunds
- Jeff Lenze

April 24 End of Reconstruction -- the last Federal troops withdraws from Louisiana.

June W.R. Hill selects the Nicodemus town site.

June 8 Hill files 160-acre town site plat with the government land office in Kirwin, Kansas, giving the town site company first option to buy the proposed site.

June 18 The first settler, the Reverend Simon P. Roundtree, arrives on the town site.

July 2 Roundtree invites "Colored people of the United States" to come and settle in the "Great Solomon Valley" in a circular.

July 30 The initial body of settlers, (numbering around thirty) takes up residence in the area. This group includes the town officers and Z.T. Fletcher and wife, the first woman in the colony.

August Hill spends most of the month in Kentucky enlisting recruits for the settlement.

Fall Z.T. Fletcher founds Nicodemus' first business, a general store. Later, in 1878, he adds a Post Office.

September Hill and Reverend M.M. Bell enroll nearly three hundred freedmen from the vicinity of Lexington, Kentucky for settlement in Nicodemus.

September 17 The Lexington, Kentucky group arrives in the colony. This date is celebrated as

the founding of Nicodemus colony.

Winter The first school in Nicodemus is conducted by Mrs. Z.T. Fletcher in her dugout home with 45 students attending.

1878

Spring A second large body of settlers (about 150) from Georgetown, Kentucky arrives in the colony. This group includes Reverend Silas M. Lee, founder of Nicodemus First Baptist Church, along with Reverend and Mrs. Daniel Hickman, who establish Mt. Olivet Baptist Church near Hill City, Kansas.

March Agents from Nicodemus appeal for subsistence aid in eastern Kansas (Manhattan).

May Another group of approximately twenty-five emigrants led by Reverend Roundtree leaves Kentucky for Nicodemus. About 125 Blacks build homes in Nicodemus and the surrounding area.

Fall Reverend Roundtree makes a successful plea for help for the struggling Nicodemus colonists at the Michigan State Fair. Citizens of Michigan donate several train car loads of commodities to Nicodemus settlers.

E.P. McCabe, a New Yorker who had settled in Nicodemus in April 1878, and A.T. Hall, a journalist from Chicago, establish themselves as attorneys and land agents in the town.

1879

William Green and S.G. Wilson, White businessmen, establish general stores in Nicodemus.

C.H. Newth, an English immigrant, sets up a general store, with a pharmacy included. Later, in 1880, he adds a meat shop.

February A Reverend Goodwin of Norton County, Kansas, conducts fifty Mississippi freedmen, the last large group of settlers, to the colony. This group may have been among the "Exodusters" from Louisiana and Mississippi who were migrating to Kansas in great numbers during this time.

An average of seven acres per homestead was put into cultivation.

April The Nicodemus Town Company was abolished.

June School District #1 is established in Nicodemus.

Summer Citizens of Nicodemus petition (with 25 signatures) for township status with Rooks County commissioners.

November 10 Kansas Governor John P. St. John appoints A.T. Hall to conduct the county

census.

December 2 Township elections are held in Nicodemus. Nicodemus designated temporary township seat.

Three Blacks are elected:

- Granville Lewis, Justice of the Peace
- H. Winn, Township Clerk
- Lewis Welton, Road Overseer

1880

The Black population of the County numbers between 500 and 700 (there were two conflicting census reports). The official census of February 1880 counts 700, or 20% of the entire population of the county, being Black. The Federal census of June 1880 reports 484 Blacks, or about 11% of the total county population, with 260 Blacks residing in Nicodemus Township and 224 in Hill City and Wildhorse Townships.

April 1 Governor St. John issues proclamation of organization of Graham County and E.P. McCabe is appointed temporary County Clerk.

June 1 Election of County officers is held. John DePrad of Nicodemus is elected County Clerk.

1881

Statistics for Nicodemus Township include: 275 Blacks, 83 Whites, 31 horses, and 10 mules (averaging one team for every four or five farms). There is an average of 12 acres per homestead in cultivation. Livestock numbers 43 head of cattle, 75 hogs. Crops include 997 acres of corn, 98 acres of millet, 50 acres of sorghum, and 50 acres of rice corn.

Nicodemus contains about 35 structures -- residential and commercial -- including three hotels, two livery stables, a blacksmith shop, a lumber yard, two churches, and two dry goods stores.

August 1 Emancipation Day (an annual celebration which continues to the present) is first observed in Nicodemus.

November E.P. McCabe is elected County Clerk. Later, in 1882, he is elected state auditor of Kansas, possibly the first Black to hold a high elective office in a northern state.

1886

May 13 White businessman, A.G. Tallman, established Nicodemus' first newspaper, The Western Cyclone.

1887

The School District #1 Schoolhouse is erected. Two teachers are employed for a nine-month school term.

A.L. McPherson, White banker, opens the Bank of Nicodemus.

Spring Nicodemus boasts four general stores, a grocery, two druggists, three land companies, a lawyer, two hotels, two livery stables, a blacksmith shop, a harness and boot repair store and an ice cream parlor. It has a baseball team, a literary society and a benefit society, a band and a music teacher.

March Voters of Nicodemus Township approve the issuance of \$16,000 in bonds to attract the Missouri Pacific Railroad to the community.

May 2 Union Pacific surveyors run a line through the town while plotting another route elsewhere. Nicodemus is eventually bypassed by the Union Pacific.

May 19 The editor of the Cyclone reports "Real estate in this city is changing hands to a considerable extent and is appreciating in value every day. [There is] a strong, firm and steady tendency which shows the healthy growth of the city."

August 17 White journalist, H.K. Lightfoot, founds a second newspaper, The Nicodemus Enterprise.