



Flowering of Nicodemus

From the Superintendent

Welcome to the summer 2012 Flowering of Nicodemus newsletter. A lot of things are happening.

MOVING ON.

First, I will be leaving to take the role as Superintendent of North Country Trail in Michigan in mid to late August. The most important thing I have learned during my tenure at Nicodemus is the importance of family. My wife Stephanie's family is going through some significant health challenges and it is time for us to return to our roots to help them. Stephanie, Ben and I will miss you all. Sam will be staying with his job in Hays and you will probably see him periodically as he has made some strong personal friendships with people here. It has been a blessing to have worked with you.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

We hope to hire seasonal/temporary staff in interpretation and maintenance in the next few months. The seasonal Maintenance position will be open for two weeks starting June 29 2012 on www.usajobs.com: On the website, click on the blue "Search Jobs" bar, then enter: "MWRC-12-OC-0159" in the "Keyword Search" bar. We will announce the interpretive positions in the near future.

AME CHURCH FOYER WORK

This summer we will see work on the foyer of the AME church to make it accessible to view the church interior. We are in line

for funding in 2014 to restore the interior shell of the building.

STATUS OF TOWNSHIP HALL AND SCHOOL

We hit a bump in the road with stabilization of the Schoolhouse and the Township Hall. Ah, government bureaucracy. Recent review of the laws that govern operations here require an easement to be established before federal monies can be invested in privately owned properties. We are working with the Township, the American Legion and the First Baptist Church congregation to get this required paperwork in place so these important stabilization projects can proceed this coming spring or summer.

ORAL HISTORIES

The Oral History project funded by NPS and implemented by the Historical Society and the University of South Florida will be completed this coming winter. Our thanks to all involved in this project.

WAYSIDES

The first phase of wayside planning- those informational panels that are pretty typical at national and state sites- will be completed this winter. The second phase will involve the actual design of the panels, and the third phase is the fabrication and installation of at least some of them. So by 2014 we should see some new panels in place.

VISITOR CENTER

The Site Selection Study for a potential Visitor Center is complete. Contrary to its name, no specific site has been selected yet, but the criteria for square footage needs and characteristics of an "ideal" location have been determined. Over the next year we will be moving forward with the necessary process. This, as with ALL projects, is a partnership with the greater Nicodemus community and no Visitor Center will be developed without the willing participation of the property owner(s) and the community at large.

PARKS FOR THE PEOPLE

Kansas State University and City College of New York design and planning studios have prepared their visions for "Reimagining Nicodemus- the Park and the Community". We hope to present this information to you all at Homecoming this summer

Best wishes to you all.

MARK

DID YOU KNOW.....

Did you know that the Nicodemus African Methodist Episcopal Church building was originally the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church?

Around Town

NICODEMUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS- Angela Bates

Site Bulletins

In partnership with the Western National Parks Association and Nicodemus National Historic Site, eight informative Site Bulletins have been completed by descendants Sharyn Dowdell, Twilla Berry, Esther Clark, Steve Jones, and Angela Bates, with the assistance of editor, Karen Madorin. Sharyn was assigned two site bulletins entitled "Aunt Blanche - The 4-H Lady" and "Homecoming – The Annual Emancipation Celebration". Twilla wrote "Brown Chapel – A.M.E. Church" and "Negro Spirituals and Gospel Music – Message in the Music". Esther's were, "Ties That Bind" (quilters) and "Making the Grade – Education at Nicodemus", and Steve's were "Nicodemus Political Movers and Shakers – Town Builders – County Organizers" and "Breaking Records and Barriers" (athletes). Angela coordinated the project and directed research, while Karen provided writing and editorial guidance. Historical photos from our collection were used for the brochures.

The research and writing process for the descendants fostered a new interest in the history. Sharyn commented, "I have a new appreciation for the history. I didn't realize there was so much to it." Twilla - "Doing this project was like a revival and a birth. It was adventurous and exciting to learn about the people and the history, their challenges and victories. I enjoyed researching and learning about them and am saddened about their loss, but it all motivated me to continue the good fight of faith and to learn more of our rich history." Steve - "I wonder how my life would have changed if I had learned while I was in school about these phenomenal people who established the town, Nicodemus Township and Graham County." Esther - "It was exciting and interesting. I found out a lot of information that I didn't know and it made me want to find out more and work more with our history."

Karen commented, "I love discovering my own connection between my community of Ellis and Nicodemus. Until we did the

research I didn't realize how many athletes, politicians, musicians, educational leaders, and others that Nicodemus has produced and who have made a difference in the world."

For me as project director, I have been enlightened by the effects that this project has had on everyone involved, including myself. I've pushed and encouraged to have descendants engaged in all of our projects and this is another example of how, when we are engaged, everyone benefits.

Wayside Exhibits

This is another great project funded by the Park Service that engages the descendants through the Historical Society. Sharyn, Twilla and Esther have been intimately involved in the research by reviewing Nicodemus newspapers, genealogy files, census records, and other resources.

Karen Madorin and Cris Criscitello have been engaged reviewing deed and census research. Seventeen wayside exhibits in Nicodemus and around the township have been identified for potential development and placement. Additional signs are also being considered. Subsequent phases of this project include the design of the signs and fabrication. The entire process will take up to three years to complete.

Vintage Baseball Revived

Roberta Robinson has provided her entire block, south of the Nicodemus Villa to be used for a new baseball field. Roberta offered her property for use when she heard discussions about the need for a new field. County Commissioner Don Scott, who was present during a meeting with the community at the Visitor Center on June 5th, was asked if the county would assist in preparing the block for the baseball field. Angela and Steve Jones met with Gary Hyde from the County for an initial site review on June 14th. The first game on the new field will be at Homecoming against the "Hodgeman 9", whom the Nicodemus Blues II, vintage

team played in 2010. We are hoping to have games throughout the balance of the summer and fall, depending on challenging teams. Anyone wanting to assist or support this effort in any way please contact Angela at (785) 839-4280.

Meet and Greet

Our annual Meet and Greet/Beans and Jeans event is scheduled for Thursday evening, July 26, during Homecoming. Wear your jeans and cowboy hat and come on out for the free feed!

HOMECOMING- Sharyn Dowdell

Plans for the 135th Annual Homecoming Celebration are proceeding nicely. As usual, we need volunteers for a number of areas including setup and cleanup. Highlights this year include the vintage baseball game played at a new location and will include bleachers and a dugout thanks to the generosity of the City of Palco. Graham County is providing the equipment and labor to establish the new ball field. Check the website, Nicodemuskansas.org, for the full schedule and don't forget to order your group photo of Homecoming 2011.

TOWNSHIP- Sharyn Dowdell

The Township Board continues to meet each month and conduct the business necessary to function. The playground has been worked on again to control the sand- a requirement for our insurance. Several trees in the park and hall area need attention and will be worked on in the very near future. The board is still considering painting the water tower which is showing signs of weather damage.

KBFA- Sharyn Dowdell

Several lots in Nicodemus have been purchased and there are plans being made to build a permanent home for milling and sales of the flour and pancake mix. The group will again serve breakfast on the Saturday morning of Homecoming and will have pancake mix for sale. Please visit the website and mail in your application for membership.

Around the Park

HISTORICAL OBJECTS AND ARCHIVES

TRANSFERRED- Michelle Huff

In May, the second collection of Nicodemus National Historic Site historical objects and archives were transferred to the special National Park Service Midwest Region curatorial storage facility in Independence, Missouri. The facility offers a secure and environmentally safe place for the site collection that cannot be provided here.

Among other Nicodemus N.H.S. collection items stored at the facility are all of the smaller Nicodemus AME Church collection items, including the church candelabra, the time capsule cigar box and its contents, parts to two small tables, various light fixtures and globes and Reverend Wilson's religious and non-religious book collection that includes a very interesting collection of various notes, envelopes, programs, announcements and other paper items used by him as bookmarks.

We are confident that the collection items we have transferred to the curatorial storage facility will be very well taken care of by the excellent curatorial staff at Harry S. Truman National Historic Site, who are also the curatorial staff at the nearby storage facility.

DIVERSITY MONTH CELEBRATED MAY

2012- Phyllis Howard

During the month of May, Nicodemus National Historic Site, in partnership with the Solomon Valley Highway 24 Heritage Alliance, celebrated the diverse heritage of the Solomon Valley. Visitors were invited to stop by the Township Hall to view the special display of posters and an informative slide show about six different communities from Glasco to Hoxie. Kansas has a rich history of ethnic settlement - African Americans, French Canadians, Germans, Czech, English, and others. All learned to survive, thrive and celebrate life in the Solomon Valley.

Stories were written by contributors via the Solomon Valley Highway 24 Heritage Association. The graphic design of the panels was prepared by Rhona Drilon of Manhattan Kansas. Leo Oliva, editor for the Solomon Valley Highway 24 Heritage Alliance Newsletter, put together the informative PowerPoint. Our thanks to them all for their hard work and quality products.

A NEW FACE IN TOWN, ASHLEY KLINGLER

Ashley Klingler is a student at Kansas State and is here as an SCA (Student Conservation Association) volunteer. Ashley was born and raised in Lake Orion, Michigan. She attended a college-prep high school in Bloomfield Hills, MI and chose Kansas State for its top-ranked programs. Her major is Regional and Community Planning. As a junior, in the spring of 2012, Ashley joined a studio focused on re-developing National Parks in partnership with the Van Alen Institute's "Parks for People" program. During her SCA Internship, Ashley will be involved in coordinating and presenting the results of the "Parks for People" program to the community. With only a few more years to go, Ashley is looking forward to graduating in spring 2014 with a Masters in Regional and Community Planning, a Minor in Geography, and a Minor in Leadership Studies.

Welcome Ashley!!!



Ashley Klingler, new SCA intern

HISTORICAL NICODEMUS TOWNSHIP BOUNDARY CHANGES- Michelle Huff

For some time now, I have wondered if the current boundaries of Nicodemus and Hill City Townships were the original boundaries, in part because they are currently so much smaller than the other townships. In researching the question, I found that the original township of Nicodemus was organized and platted in 1878 as part of Rooks County. I searched for a map that would show those original boundaries. I asked Lowell Beecher of the Graham County Historical Society if he knew of an 1870s or pre-1883 map that proved that Nicodemus Township was originally twice as large as it is now. He searched the GCHS archives and found a map that had been changed to show what the original townships were and their boundaries. The map has a hand written note at the top which states "Commissioner Districts and Townships as of April 15, 1880". The map shows that boundary lines were redrawn for Nicodemus and Hill City Townships sometime between 1880 and 1883 to make the southern boundary for both townships the South Fork of the Solomon River, thus creating Wildhorse Township. It does indeed reveal that Nicodemus Township had originally been twice as large as it is today.

This new evidence changes some of the 1879 and 1880 township locations for African American settlers in Graham County that were published in this newsletter in November, 2010 and March, 2011. I am working on a site bulletin about the special 1879 Census and the 1880 Federal Census that will have complete listings of all of the African American settlers and their children, and in which townships they were located.

Many thanks to Lowell Beecher of the Graham County Historical Society for his significant help with this research effort.

DID YOU KNOW.....

Did you know that in 1881, the still new County of Graham, Kansas had 22 post offices and 40 organized school districts; Nicodemus School District #1 being the first.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Nicodemus National Historic Site
 510 Washington Avenue, #B1
 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.

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Federal Job Announcements: (USAJOBS)

www.usajobs.opm.gov

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SPOTLIGHT ON “AFRICAN-AMERICAN EXPERIENCE FUND” PARKS:

CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL, LITTLE ROCK ARKANSAS

In the fall of 1957 Little Rock became the symbol of state resistance to school desegregation. Arkansas Governor Orval E. Faubus directly questioned the sanctity of the federal court system and the authority of the United States Supreme Court’s desegregation ruling while nine African-American high school students sought an education at the all-white Little Rock Central High School.

The controversy in Little Rock was the first fundamental test of the United States resolve to enforce African-American civil rights in the face of massive southern defiance during the period following the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decisions. When President Dwight D. Eisenhower was compelled by white mob violence to use federal troops to ensure the rights of African-American children to attend the previously all-white school, he became the first president since the post-Civil War Reconstruction period to use federal troops in support of African-American civil rights. For more information, visit www.nps.gov/chsc.

