



Flowering of Nicodemus

From The Superintendent:

Spring is right around the corner. Enough with the snowstorms already.

A lot has happened lately.

The park met with community members in January to get a better understanding of the history of its relationship with the town since its inception in 1996. One very important discussion identified the need for a Liaison Team to serve as the first line of communication between the park and the Nicodemus Community. At present, the team consists of Tom Wellington, Debra Alexander-Wilson, Marilyn Gray, Sharyn Dowdell, Gil Alexander and Angela Bates. Contact them for more information about the team and its role. We will continue to have the Coffee Hour the second Friday of each month and all are welcome to attend. Contact Michelle Huff to be placed on the contact list: Michelle_Huff@nps.gov or call 785-839-4321.

We have met twice with the Liaison Team. Following is a recap of some of the topics we have covered so far:

The Park Walking Tour

Brochure:

We have reviewed the preliminary text and graphics and will have a final draft shortly for final review.

This brochure will assist visitors as they walk around town.

The Park's role in the

community: The Park's primary responsibility is for the structures and landscape within the park boundary, which is a mere 3.75 acres, (approximately), consisting of the AME Church, Old First Baptist Church, Township Hall, St. Francis Hotel and the District No. 1 Schoolhouse. Anything beyond these boundaries is the primary responsibility of the Township. The park will continue to work with the Township to help resolve issues beyond the park boundary however the law permits.

The Park film:

The Park has received funding to improve the park audio-visual program, which presently consists of a series of news clips from the 1990's. We are working with the Liaison Team to edit another existing one hour long documentary to about 15 minutes to show to Park visitors as an orientation to Nicodemus. This film is intended to serve on an interim basis only, in anticipation of future funding to create a film comparable to those shown at other National Park Visitor Centers.

Other news:

The Site Selection Study consultants are looking at the best location for a proposed new Visitor center for the park. While there is no funding at present for the construction of a new Visitor Center, this study is helping set the stage. Stay tuned.

The Park is interested in working with the Liaison Team and the Community to develop a plan for the future of Nicodemus, since how the future of Nicodemus unfolds will undoubtedly impact the future of the park as well. If you have any thoughts or comments, please contact the Park or a member of the Liaison Team.

As usual, if you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me: mark_weaver@nps.gov or 785-839-4321.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT:
Nicodemus National Historic Site will be offering Volunteers In Parks opportunities this summer (2011) to those interested in acquiring interpretive, visitor services and cultural resource skills to gain knowledge, skills and abilities necessary when applying for National Park Service positions. For more information please contact Michelle Huff at michelle_huff@nps.gov or at 785-839-4321.

The 1880 Federal Census Of Graham County, Kansas

The special 1879 state census of Graham County, Kansas revealed that there were four hundred and eighty six African American settlers in eastern Graham County at the end of 1879. The 1880 Graham County Federal Census, conducted in the summer of 1880, revealed an increase in the African American population by 73 individuals. Some were new settlers to the county and some were new additions to families.

The following are lists of names of the new arrivals in 1880.

Town of Nicodemus:

Moore, Tama

Smith, William - Brother of Jenny Fletcher

Welton, Edward & son William E.

Nicodemus Township:

Anderson, Jno

Davenport, Cora – Baby daughter of Benjamin & Melvina Davenport

Grant, John

Hawkins, Thomas – Adopted son of Grant & Ellen Harris

Hayden, Mary

Hays, Leonard – Grandson of George & Caroline Watson

Hays, Edward – Grandson of George & Caroline Watson

Jones, Joseph & Anne

Kirtley, Clarence – Baby son of William & Lizzie Kirtley

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Spotlight On African American Experience Fund Parks:

Carter G. Woodson Home National Historic Site

Imagine a world in which people like you have no written history, or that which has been written is incomplete or distorted. Before Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson (1875–1950) began his work, there was very little information, and much of that stereotypical misinformation, about the lives and history of Americans of African descent.

The Carter G. Woodson Home

The Carter G. Woodson Home at 1538 9th Street, NW in Washington, DC, was Dr. Woodson's home from 1922 until his death in 1950. He directed the operations of the Association for the Study of African-American Life and History and pursued his own studies of African-American history from there. After his death, the home continued to serve as the national headquarters of the Association until the early 1970s. It is now vacant, closed to the public, and in need of rehabilitation. The home was acquired by the National Park Service in 2005.

Carter G. Woodson

Dr. Woodson was the son of former slaves, but earned his Ph.D. degree from Harvard University in 1912—only the second black American to do so (after W. E. B. DuBois). This achievement was even more extraordinary since he did not begin his formal education until he was 20 years old. He had been denied access to public education in Canton, Virginia, where he was born in 1875, and did not start school until he moved to Huntington, West Virginia. He received his high school diploma two years later, a bachelor's degree

from Berea College in 1897, and went on to earn B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of Chicago before attending Harvard.

ASALH

In 1915, Dr. Woodson founded The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (the Association) and The Associated Publishers to assure an outlet for the publication of works of African-American history and the scholarly work of black scholars. The Association is now known as The Association for the Study of African-American Life and History ([ASALH](http://www.asalh.org)). In 1926 the Association, under Dr. Woodson's leadership, established Negro History Week to coincide with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. Today this commemoration has expanded into Black History Month.



(The above is from their website: www.nps.gov/cawo).

“Steal Away”

In celebration of Black History Month and Kansas’ 150th birthday, Nicodemus National Historic Site and Western National Park Association sponsored “Steal Away”, a one woman play that is the story of a homesteader and an Exoduster. The play was written and performed by Mrs. Penny Musco a freelance writer, performer and native midwesterner who currently resides in New Jersey.

The performance, held at Hill City High School in Hill City, Kansas on February 21, 2011 was exceptional and well received by the audience.

The play was told from the perspective of Priscilla Sinclair, a Kansas homesteader in the summer of 1879 who meets Abigail and her family, former slaves from Mississippi. To the surprise of both women, Priscilla and Abigail become friends.



Penny Musco as Priscilla in “I’ll Fly Away”.
Photo courtesy of Stephanie Weaver, Hill City, KS

“Steal Away” not only touches on the hardships of the pioneering homesteaders, but also tells the significant but nearly forgotten tale of the 20,000 -40,000 African Americans who flooded into Kansas from the South after Reconstruction ended. They called themselves Exodusters, likening themselves to the Israelites called out of Egypt.

The title “Steal Away” comes from the Negro spiritual of the same name which, like most spirituals, has a double meaning. Not only do the lyrics refer to “stealing away” to heaven after death, but they could also telegraph a slave’s intention of running away.

Mrs. Musco wrote and performed “Steal Away” as an Artist-in-Residence at Homestead National Monument of America, in the Fall of 2009. She brought “Steal Away” to Kansas as part of the state’s sequicentennial celebration.

Visit <http://www.steal-away.com> for more information and to view two short clips from the performance.

(Information for this article was taken from the press release provided by Penny Musco.)

Phyllis Howard, Park Ranger



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

News About Town

Nicodemus Historical Society:

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.

The Nicodemus Historical Society’s museum building had a water leak that has caused the move of the archives collections and offices out of the building. The Society offices are presently located in the little building adjacent to the Township Hall Visitor Center and their collections are being temporarily stored in the Visitor Center. The phone number remains the same: 785-839-4280.

The museum building is ‘sick’ and is in need of a new septic system, roof and siding. The Society is accepting any assistance they can get, monetarily or voluntarily. They hope to lay the bricks from a fundraiser by Homecoming. They will notify members and brick purchasers of the installation date.

In celebration of Kansas’ 150th Anniversary, the Nicodemus Historical Society is publishing 134 years of pictorial history instead of the newsletters. Membership dues are \$25.00 this year and will cover the cost of your copy.

Angela Bates, Executive Director



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Comments? Write to:

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**Federal Job Announcements:
(USAJOBS)**

www.usajobs.opm.gov

The Flowering of Nicodemus is a publication
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Wildhorse Township:

Atherway, ?
Crawford, Omar & Sarah and three children
Fumer, Frank
King, Richard
Minor, Hiram & Margaret
Rawlins, C.
Scott, Miffian & E. and four children
Selvy, Charles & Mary
Selvy, Jeff
Selvy, Lewis
Selvy, Solomon
Selvy, William
Smith, Joseph
Tonhart, Sam & Mary and six children
Wilson, Tande & Mary & five Children

Millbrook Township:

Butler, D. & Martha and one child
Car???? , John & Mary and six Children
Dickey, P.
Froller, Calvin
Froller, George

Hill City Township:

Atkinson, Hannah – Daughter of Lewis Atkinson
Hickman, N.C. – Baby son of Daniel & Willina Hickman
Jones, Edgar & Sarah and one child
Winston, Benjamin

Michelle Huff, Park Ranger