



Flowering of Nicodemus

The official newsletter of Nicodemus National Historic Site

May, 2004

Vol 1: Issue 2

From the Superintendent

Three months have passed very quickly since I first arrived in Nicodemus. I have enjoyed getting to know more people and watching spring arrive on the High Plains of Kansas. There's an incredible beauty in this expansive landscape. My family has been warned that they may see me back in the wooded, hilly eastern parts of the Midwest only for temporary visits – after living in Nebraska for twelve years and now Kansas, I am “hooked” on wide open spaces. I was fortunate in finding a nice house in Stockton and am gradually settling in and unpacking.

We are getting a lot done at the National Historic Site. Here are some updates for you on what is happening or underway at Nicodemus National Historic Site:

Homecoming: Park Ranger Reggie Murray has arranged for Ms. Demetrius Lambert from Cleveland, Ohio to speak on Saturday during the Homecoming Celebration. She will talk about the Underground Railroad and its' significance. Come and witness Ms. Lambert's Characterization of “Nettie,” a slave on a southern plantation who will enlighten, entertain, and educate the audience about life on a plantation and the journey to freedom. Like many, Nettie could not leave but was instrumental in assisting others with their personal charge towards Canaan-land in the 1800's.

We hope that Midwest Regional Director Ernie Quintana will attend the Celebration to meet and talk with residents and descendents. We will again be assisting the Homecoming Committee by providing extra porta-potties and trash dumpsters, and will assist with site clean-up before and after the event

Preservation Maintenance: Foundation repairs on the A.M.E. Church are starting this month. Maintenance Worker Robert Brogden will be joined by Facility Manager William (Chappie) Chapman and his crew from Fort Larned NHS to complete repairs to the south side. At the same time, they will install the restored doors of the Church. Several safety experts from the Regional



Nicodemus 1953 (Photo Kansas State Historical Society archives)

Office have been through Nicodemus lately, so Mr. Brogden has been working on getting some minor safety updates done around the Township Hall and the Administrative Office in the Villa. One issue we will probably have to address this summer with the Township Board is the safety of the large trees around the Township Hall. They have been trimmed but have essentially reached maturity. We are discussing removal of about 3-9 trees around the Township Hall and Park this fall. We would replace removed trees with a similar species. We have noticed that some structural cracks are appearing in the walls of the Township Hall. The contractor that prepared the Historic Structures Report (2000) reports that they are seeing similar problems in structures across the Midwest due to dropping levels of ground water. A Historical Architect from our Regional Office will be coming down at the end of May to provide some advice.

Interpretative Programs: We have established a policy on the types of sales items that may be approved for sale in the bookstore

(see related article, insert page). Park Rangers Reggie Murray and Phyllis Howard are developing a Junior Ranger activity for Homecoming. Plans are in the works for a few special events over the summer. Visitation to the Site is increasing as the weather improves and visitation has increased in 2004 by 33%. Critical information on our web site was recently updated. (<http://www.nps.gov/nico>)

Development: As I mentioned in the last newsletter, the National Park Service is exploring the possibility of leasing land to place a temporary building for use as a visitor center. The process is (of course!) turning out to be more complicated than I anticipated. We are working on cost estimates and getting legal questions addressed so we can determine what option we want to pursue. There will be an opportunity for public review and input on the process, but it appears that I will not have possible options ready for public review until sometime next year.

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Working with NHS Partners: The First Baptist Church Trustees helped us review a report of recommendations and the draft construction drawings for stabilizing the historic Church structure. Although there is some minor work the National Park Service crews may be able to complete (either this summer or in the fall), the majority of the recommended stabilization work will have to be funded by grants. Our next step is to work together to prepare proposals for the Church to submit to foundations that fund preservation work.

Planning Projects: Last, but not least (and finally!), the General Management Plan (GMP) is being printed and copies will be distributed in about a month. Copies will also be available for you to pick up at Homecoming.

Commemoration Ceremony:

May 17th, 2004, the staff of Nicodemus National Historic Site traveled to Topeka, Kansas to take part in the Brown V. Board of Education 50th Anniversary Commemoration and its Grand Opening. We were fortunate to witness and hear educational and political leaders such as President George W. Bush Keynote Address, Jesse Jackson, Rev. John Shuttlesworth, Governor Kathleen Sebelius - Mayor of Topeka, and members of the Kansas Congressional delegation. The crowd was very appreciative and there were no incidents. There were beautiful gospel songs sang by three wonderful out of state choirs: Thurgood Marshal Academy Choir from New York City, 16th Street Baptist Church along with singer Michelle Williams from Birmingham, Alabama, and Williams Magnet School Choir and singer Michelle Williams. The unofficial visitor count at this special occasion was 5,000 + people in attendance.

Community Activity

The descendents of Nicodemus along with the Nicodemus National Historic Site will assist in celebrating the 126th Annual Nicodemus Homecoming Event, July 30th, 31st, and August 1st.

For information contact the Homecoming Committee Chairpersons: Freddie and Ivalee Switzer 1-785-839-4469 or Committee Secretary Mrs. Debra Alexander-Wilson at 1-785-421-5639

“Women Inspiring Hope and Possibility” Women’s History Month

African Americans have played important roles in the history of Kansas. On March 21st, the Nicodemus National Historic Site presented the exhibit “Kansans of African Descent: Selected Portraits.” The exhibit from the Kansas State Historical Society featured historic and contemporary photographs of well-known people who called Kansas home. Individuals featured included Benjamin “Pap” Singleton who was instrumental in bringing many African American immigrants to Kansas, Julie Lee who ran a grocery business in Nicodemus in 1877, and W. L. Sayers who was from Hill City and was elected as County Attorney. This exhibit was on loan from the Kansas State Historical Society.

In honor of Women’s History Month and inspired by the Midwest Region theme of “Women Inspiring Hope and

Possibility,” family photographs and memorabilia of generations of women from the Nicodemus area supplemented the exhibit. The theme celebrates the hope and sense of possibility that comes to our lives from the inspirational work of women. The women of Nicodemus serve as inspirations to all by their legacy of hard work and the determination to support their families. They helped shape this country through their hard work and contributions. This exhibit not only paid tribute to well-known Kansans but in some families three, five, or seven generations of Nicodemus women. Local residents brought in photographs, quilts, and other items. The general public as well as descendants were able to share the joy, beauty, and love of women from the area. The exhibits were left in place until April 2nd to allow those of the community and the general public the opportunity to view and enjoy the exhibit.

Phyllis Howard, Park Ranger Interpretation



(Photo Credit NPS)
We received photographs from many Nicodemus residents, including Mrs. Pearlina Moore, Mrs. Bertha Carter, and Mrs. Roberta Robinson. Shown here in the above 2000 photograph.

Top 5 Visited Units of the National Park System (2003)

Park Unit	Recreational Visits
1. Blue Ridge Parkway	18,344,049
2. Golden Gate National Recreation Area	13,854,750
3. Great Smoky Mountains National Park	9,366,845
4. Gateway National Recreation Area	8,567,769
5. Lake Meade National Recreation Area	7,915,581

Top 5 Visited National Parks (2003)

1. Great Smokey Mountains National Park	9,366,845
2. Grand Canyon National Park	4,124,900
3. Yosemite National Park	3,378,664
4. Olympic National Park	3,225,327
5. Rocky Mountain National Park	3,067,256

National Park System, Recreation Visits from 1998 to 2003

1998	286,739,115
1999	287,130,879
2000	285,891,275
2001	279,873,926
2002	277,299,880
2003	266,099,641

Reggie Murray, MPUR Coordinator
Monthly Public Use Report



Historic rose (Photo by Reggie Murray)

A rose by any other name is just a rose.

We have learned from a few descendents of Nicodemus there's a rose bush that was planted sometime ago, along the West wall of the First Baptist Church of Nicodemus. It's unclear as to when the roses were planted. So we were asked to watch it bloom and to measure the largest blossoms. We felt as though we were apart of the history behind the Rose of Nicodemus. A few of the blossoms measured in at 2 1/2 to 3 inches in circumference and 3 to 4 inches in diameter. If you have any information about this rose please give us a call.

Reginald B. Murray, Park Ranger
Interpretation



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Quote of the Month

We never know when even the smallest gesture of kindness can touch others in an unexpected and extraordinary way.
- Jeff Degner.

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

Local Resident Accepts New Position as Permanent Part Time Maintenance Worker.

We are pleased to announce the selection of Mr. Robert Brogden to fill the permanent Maintenance Worker position for Nicodemus National Historic Site (NHS). Robert has been working for the Site as a temporary Maintenance Worker since July 1998. He is the staff person responsible for maintaining the grounds, making minor stabilization repairs on the five historic structures (with owner consent), managing our safety program, and coordinating the work of contractors on site.

Robert brings a wealth of experience to the National Park Service. He served in the Army and Air Force from 1953 to 1975. Originally from Tennessee, Robert met his future wife, Billie (Bates) Brogden, in Nicodemus in 1954 when his Army unit was moving from Indiana to Colorado. Married in 1957, he and Billie raised four beautiful children. They have lived in Nicodemus since 1975 when Robert retired from the Air Force. Robert worked for Phillips Petroleum Company and The Kansas Department of Corrections prior to being initially hired by Nicodemus NHS in 1998.

Robert is an integral part of the NHS team and we are pleased that we continue to benefit from his wise advice, his great sense of humor, and especially his strong work ethic in caring for this significant Site!

This announcement was open to the public. We received a wide range of applications, both local and from out-of-state. We appreciate the interest.

Sherda Williams, Superintendent



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Nicodemus National Historic Site
304 Washington Ave.
Nicodemus, Kansas 67625

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

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

Editor

Reginald B. Murray

Contributors

Sherda Williams, Superintendent
Phyllis Howard, Park Ranger
Robert Brogden Sr., Maintenance

Comments? Write to:
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General Information available on the
Internet:

Federal Job Announcements
www.usajobs.opm.gov

Seasonal Employment
www.sep.nps.gov

NPS Intake Trainee Program
www.nps.gov/intake/

NPS Midlevel Intake Program
www.nps.gov/training/

Job Opportunities at Nicodemus NHS

Last month we mentioned that a position for Administration Technician would be advertised this month. We still plan to have that position listed at the end of May. However please note that the Administration Technician will be stationed Fort Larned National Historic Site so the Technician can mentor under the Administrative Officer.

At the same time we will also be advertising for a seasonal park ranger to work this summer in Nicodemus. The Seasonal Park Ranger will be assisting Park Rangers Reggie Murray and Phyllis Howard with the bookstore and with interpreting the story of Nicodemus to visitors. See the address for USAJOBS in the column **to the left**. Please check USA Jobs weekly after May 31st, if you are interested in either position.

UPCOMING EVENTS IN NICODEMUS

June 7th, 2004

Biking Across Kansas 800 bikers expected.

June 19th, 2004

Nicodemus Blues & Jazz Festival

June 2004

Geographic Alliance of Iowa- Dr. Kay E. Weller.

July 30th, 31st and August 1st 2004

126th Nicodemus Homecoming Celebration