



Flowering of Nicodemus

FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Happy Holidays everyone! By now Thanksgiving will have already passed and the Christmas holidays with all the excitement and stress and joy will be here. I wish you all a warm, relaxing and safe holiday season with friends and family.

These last couple of months have been quite busy with the end of the fiscal year on September 30, which always brings an unending series of surprises, reports and last minute demands that keep us from our regular duties. The staff has responded valiantly. I am indebted to them. More and most importantly, it has been fun working with them all.

Now begins the next step - developing our strategy for progress. In the next couple of months I intend to further develop our proposals for improvements at Nicodemus NHS. Notably, improvements to the AME Church and plans for a new Visitor Center. Now, given the speed with which government usually works (!), I don't expect physical changes in the next couple of years, but I *do* expect that in the next two years we will set the stage - identifying all the legal, physical, cultural and environmental requirements - for each project and jockey them into position for funding. Though the competition is steep within the Midwest Region and across the entire national park system, we have critical needs and sound projects worthy of investment. I ask you all to send good thoughts that our path is clear and smooth along the way.

The AME Church

When I walked into the AME Church for the first time, I was awestruck. First, by the degree of work that is needed to be done and second by the feeling of this special, welcoming, sacred place. I have visited and worked on a lot of religiously valued places, and I must say the impact of the AME church was as strong if not stronger than many of these. So what do we have planned for the future of the AME church? Nothing is set in stone yet- and I would appreciate your opinions- but the Church should be opened for visitation by the community, descendants, and visitors to experience what worship by the Nicodemus Community was like "way back when". We are grateful to the Township Board for their help in working out property line issues that if not taken care of early in the process would undoubtedly become a wrench in the mechanism later on. Thanks Sharon, Alvena and Becky.

The Visitor Center

As you are aware, we currently lease the Township Hall to serve as the point of contact for visitors to Nicodemus. We are extremely grateful to the Township for the use of the Hall. Of course, this is not a permanent location. The big question is "If it isn't a permanent location, then what is?" The answer is our task for the next year. Former Superintendent Williams had done some excellent research that I hope to build upon in the next few months. I need to hear from you as well: What special facilities do you think should be included in a Visitor Center? Should it include any special materials, configured in any special way that would reflect the history and countenance of the people who settled here 131 years ago and all those who have called Nicodemus home since then? Please let me know. 785-839-4321 or mark_weaver@nps.gov.

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FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Rearranging the Furniture at the Visitor Center

I hate it when my wife suggests this. It is never quick and painless- although we do end up discovering a lot of long-lost dog toys. But let me tell you, the process went smoothly for us at the Visitor Center. The staff met, discussed the issues, and developed a possible plan. Everyone bought into it, and one Saturday with the strong back and computer reconnection skills of Josh Sharon our student maintenance intern, we succeeded in making the transformation in one day. The bookstore area is now in the southwest corner, the television is in the southeast corner, and the stage is now open to view without obstruction. All we lack is a place to store the folding chairs and assorted equipment that rest behind dividers at the back of the stage and in a corner of the Hall. Once we tackle the basement, we hope to “find” more needed storage space to help out in this regard.



The new bookstore area in the Visitor Center.

Long Range Interpretive Plan.

This plan will be completed in 2009. It will set the stage for how we approach and how we implement the telling of the story of Nicodemus. While it may seem like a pretty straightforward task to tell the story, this plan will be a very valuable reference document for future interpretive action and activities at the Park.

Historic Resource Study

This project will take about two years to complete. HRA Gray and Pape of Seattle and Cincinnati has been contracted to identify and evaluate the historic context of Nicodemus, that is, to ensure that we're telling not only the appropriate depth of the story but the breadth as well. In other words, do we tell the story not only of Nicodemus, but of the life of its citizens before they came here? Should we incorporate the stories of those that moved here and subsequently left for Denver, Topeka or the state of California? Should we tell the story of how Nicodemus related to surrounding communities over the years? In brief, this completed document will help to further enhance the historical record and to aid in the interpretation of the site to the public.

As you can see, there's a lot of work to be done. PLEASE, contact me if you have any questions, concerns or comments. I want/need to hear from you. Call me: 785-839-4321. Email me: mark_weaver@nps.gov. Or stop by: We're in apartment 1B of the Villas, 8 to 5, M-F.

NEWS ABOUT TOWN

Mother Herndon turns 100

Mother Dorothea Herndon, Aunt Dot, or whatever name you give her, celebrated her 100th birthday at the Township Hall on November 8, 2008. This lady really lights up the room. Over 50 people attended to celebrate her life so far. A beautiful slide show, music, testimonials and the surprise arrival of her best friend from Kansas City made for a delightful afternoon. Many thanks to Gil Alexander and all the others who worked so hard to put on this special event.



DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know there are twenty National Park units formally recognized by the National Park Foundation through its African American Experience Fund (AAEF)?



From the AAEF website:

“From Historic Sites that preserve the legacies of the Tuskegee Airmen and Frontiersmen at Nicodemus, to ones that tell the stories of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Mary McLeod Bethune and George Washington Carver, our National Parks are rich with African American history and more!

Our mission at The African American Experience Fund is to connect all Americans to the considerable contributions of African Americans throughout our country’s history that is commemorated and brought to life in our National Parks. Since 2001, we have raised private funds to support educational, volunteer and community engagement programs in the National Parks and Historic Sites that honor and tell the story of the African American Experience.”

In each issue of the Flowering of Nicodemus we’ll introduce you to one AAEF park. To make it easy for us, we’ll go alphabetically. In this issue: African Burial Ground National Memorial, New York City.

African Burial Ground National Memorial

From the AAEF website:

African Burial Ground National Monument (290 Broadway, First Floor, New York, New York 10007).

From the late 17th through the early 18th centuries, free and enslaved Africans were buried in a 6.6 acre cemetery in what is now Lower Manhattan, outside the boundaries of the settlement of New Amsterdam (now New York). Lost and forgotten because of centuries of development and landfill, this burial ground for an estimated 15,000 Africans was discovered by construction workers during excavation for a federal office building in 1991. The remains of 419 men, women and children recovered at that time provided extensive insight into the lives of some of the earliest African settlers in America. Today a memorial at this National Monument honors them, recognizing their African heritage and their contributions to the early development of the city that became the financial capital of the world.”

For more information about the Monument, go to: www.aaexperience.org or www.nps.gov/afbu.





National Park Service
U. S. Department of the Interior

Nicodemus National Historic Site
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EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

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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Photo credit: Stephanie Weaver