



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Nicodemus National Historic Site
510 Washington Avenue, #B1
Nicodemus, Kansas 67625

Near the end of Reconstruction, formerly enslaved African Americans left Kentucky in organized colonies to seek freedom on the fertile soils of Kansas.

Nicodemus represents the involvement of African Americans in the westward expansion and settlement of the Great Plains. It has national significance as the only remaining western town established by African Americans during the reconstruction period following the Civil War.

The National Park Service helps preserve America's special places so that current and future generations can enjoy our great heritage.

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The Flowering of Nicodemus is published three times a year by Nicodemus NHS.

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Check out our website:
www.nps.gov/nico

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National Historic Landmark

By Dustin Smith
Student Conservation Association

A plan to extend the National Historic Landmark designation is nearly complete. Currently, the Nicodemus National Historic Landmark is only made up of the town's 161 acres. If the new proposal is approved, the National Historic Landmark will include all of Nicodemus Township plus the area of Kebar, in Wild Horse Township. Of the resources surveyed in Nicodemus Township and Kebar, there were 176 resources that contributed to the area's historical significance and only 29 resources that were noncontributing. Extension of the NHL status will not affect property rights. Draft copies are available in the Visitor Center or on our website.

Nicodemus Township residents have until July 19 to review the draft and provide feedback. Following review the draft will be forwarded to Washington, D.C., where a two-step review process by the National Park System's Advisory Board will take place. Residents will receive notice prior to final review of the document.

Please send comments to:

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Park News

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Flowering of Nicodemus

From the Superintendent

Nicodemus News

Angela Wetz
Superintendent

Things are starting to heat up in Nicodemus. I am excited to experience my first Homecoming/Emancipation Celebration on its 135th year later this month. I am pleased that the NPS can host Troy Strahan as "Abraham Lincoln" for this event.

Several exciting developments have come up. We are planning on having a community learning "bus ride" from Ellis to Nicodemus. During this ride community members and NPS staff can learn together about this portion of the original descendants' journey to find their home at Nicodemus. I am working with Tallgrass Prairie to get busses, and the tentative date is August 20th. This ride is part of the theme of the National Park Foundation grant to get school groups to the site next school year.

The park requested an oral history interview with former Senator Bob Dole to get information on his work on the Nicodemus National Historic Site legislation. We had a quick turnaround response and I went to Washington DC and performed the interview on June 14th. Senator Dole gave the National Park Service all rights to the interview and it will be posted to the website.

Turf Project

In the next few months we will be implementing a sustainable turf project that will be non-invasive, and improve turf conditions. The project will begin at the AME church, Township Hall, and roadside park.



Rick Lewis, Angela Wetz, Senator Bob Dole, Elaine Hackett. (Elaine Hackett, NPS)

Easements

Due to an alleyway that is still owned by the county going through the Schoolhouse property and time constraints on the funding, we had to return the money for the Schoolhouse stabilization project planned this year. A representative of the American Legion met with the county commissioners in early June and they have agreed to convey the alleyway. They are working through the conveyance process. After the conveyance of the alley the we hope to get the easement in place and funding secured in the future.

The easement with Nicodemus Township is expected to be signed any day, and the design work is being finalized. We hope the funding will

come through and the work will be accomplished next fiscal year. We have started working on the easement for the First Baptist Church as well.

Waysides

The funding for the waysides was recently awarded to us, and we will be working with the Nicodemus Historical Society, the community, and design team to move forward with the design phase of this project. A meeting to kickoff the project is planned for the end of August.

I look forward to seeing everyone at Homecoming. As always, if you have any questions or comments, please contact me.

785-839-4321, Angela_Wetz@nps.gov

Around Town

Historical Society News

By Angela Bates
Nicodemus Historical Society

Ernestine’s BBQ has reopened and is providing lunch daily and evening meals on Fridays and Saturdays. Make sure you stop in or make reservations if you are planning to visit Nicodemus (785) 421-3311. Ernestine, a Nicodemus’ culinary icon and long time resident is being memorialized at the cafe by her niece and cook Angela Bates. Angela and Ernestine operated in the Priscilla Art’s Club/ Crackerbox School adjacent to the Visitor Center for several years before Ernestine passed in 2004. The new café is the re-modeled house where Ernestine lived. Her piano, historical photos, and culinary items are on display. While visiting the café you can see Ernestine in one of her last TV commercials, and hear Ernestine and her sisters (The William Sisters) as they sing old time gospel from an album they made in the 1970s. Monthly living history and musical programs are being planned. Call to see what’s scheduled!

The Jazz, Blues, and Country Too Festival in conjunction with the first annual Ernestine’s BBQ Cook-Off held on Saturday, June 15th was a success. It was the first festival since 2006 and plans are already underway for next year’s event. Tee Dee Young’s blues band from Kentucky was a big hit. TD walked among the crowd and wooed listeners with his guitar.

The Arrival in Nicodemus Reenactment will be one of the many highlights of this year’s ‘Homecoming’ celebration. The large group of descendants that participated in two previous reenactments (Sadieville, Ky and Ellis, Ks) will finish their 1877 journey to Nicodemus. The reenactment will take place right after the parade on Saturday, July 27.

The ball diamond should be ready for the Nicodemus Blues II vintage baseball game during Homecoming. The team will play the newly organized vintage team, “Russell Prairie Clippers.”

Township News

By Sharyn Dowdell
Nicodemus Township

Our projects of the year included two blocks of street repairs, which have been completed. We are also installing a few more electric outlets in the roadside park so that all of the Homecoming vendors can be located there. Those improvements should be completed by the first part of July. We also ordered address number signs for all current residents of the township. Those for the outlying residents have arrived and will be delivered soon, and address numbers for the town site should arrive soon.

Plans for the Emancipation Celebration are progressing as usual. Our theme this year is ‘Emancipation – 150 years of Freedom, 135 years of Celebration.’ The shirt design is awesome! Shirts can be pre-ordered on our website: www.nicodemuskansas.org.

The program will focus on Emancipation and will include Troy Strahan who portrays Lincoln reading the Emancipation Proclamation.



Visitors enjoyed several great bands at this year’s Jazz, Blues and Country Too Festival. (Will Pope, NPS)

Nicodemus gets “Ticket To Ride”

By Phyllis Howard
National Park Service

We are delighted to announce that Nicodemus National Historic Site has been awarded the “Ticket To Ride” grant from the National Park Foundation. The “Ticket To Ride” program is supported by a \$500,000.00 grant from the Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund, and provides transportation so students can explore National Parks around the country. Our plan is to have students travel by bus to the railroad station in Ellis, Kansas where the first settlers got off the train, and then tour part of the 40 mile route where the settlers walked through the Happy Hollow area. Students will then travel two miles by wagon on their final approach to Nicodemus and walk the last stretch into town.

A special thank you to Margaret M. Verhase for the beautiful gifts that she gave residents of Nicodemus for Mothers Day. The gesture touched the community’s heart in a special way, and everyone was surprised and thankful to receive the roses.

Around the Park

NPS Veteran in Nicodemus

By Jim Roessler
National Park Service

I have worked on and off with the National Park Service since May of 1992, working in 10 National Parks: Great Basin National Park, Bandelier National Monument, San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, Petrified Forest National Park, North Rim of the Grand Canyon, Big Bend National Park, Fort Donelson National Battlefield, Mammoth Cave National Park and now I am here at Nicodemus National Historic Site.- My interests are singing karaoke, lap swimming, and bicycle and motorcycle riding.

Experiencing Preservation

By Dustin Smith
Student Conservation Association

I am very excited to be working as a Facilities Management Intern here at Nicodemus. I graduated in 2008 from Ellwood City High School, which is one hour north of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and went on to receive my B.A. in history from Indiana University of Pennsylvania in the fall of 2012. I decided to come to Nicodemus because of its unique role in history and because I’m hoping to gain experience in historic preservation before pursuing a master’s degree in 2014.

Interpreting History

By Scott Marshaus
Student Conservation Association

I came to Nicodemus to connect with the rich history of this community. I am an interpretive intern for the Student Conservation Association, and a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire where I’m seeking to obtain a Masters of Arts in Public History. I am excited to explore and research the history of Nicodemus, and am looking forward to meeting many of you at this years Emancipation Celebration!



Our new maintenance employee and SCA interns from left to right: Scott, Dustin & Jim. (Will Pope, NPS)

International Volunteers

By William Pope
National Park Service

In 2011 I worked as a crew leader for American Conservation Experience, building trails and fences on America’s public lands. The conservation corps allowed me to get my first taste of working for the National Park Service, and along the way I also made some great friends from all over the world. Earlier this year three of those friends contacted me about volunteering for the NPS at Nicodemus National Historic Site. For two of them that idea will become a reality this summer. Let me introduce you to Kelly and Andrea.

Kelly Burchmore will be volunteering from mid-July to mid-September. She is from Buckinghamshire, England and is studying Ancient History at Royal Holloway University of London. During her time in the conservation corps she worked at three NPS units: Grand Canyon National Park, Wupatki National Monument, Lake Mead National Recreation Area, and

also did some trail work near St George, Utah. When not studying Kelly loves playing ultimate frisbee with her university’s team, and she helps run a meeting program for international students at the University.

Andrea Bracesco will be here during the month of August. He hails from Monza, Italy and is studying Material Engineering and Nanotechnology at the Engineering School of Milan. In the conservation corps he worked in two NPS units: Grand Canyon National Park, and Grand Canyon Parashant National Monument. Andrea enjoys hiking in the Alps, swimming, basketball, rugby, and biking. He’s also an amateur astronomer.

Both of them are very excited to volunteer for the National Park Service in Nicodemus! The third friend, Andrew from England, wasn’t able to volunteer due to some family priorities, but sends the town his best wishes. We appreciate their commitment, and are excited to have their world perspective in Nicodemus!