



# Flowering of Nicodemus

## From the Superintendent

### Summertime Whews!

I am writing this on June 6. The forecast calls for temperatures over 100 degrees. I guess summer is here, eh?

### Annette White Heading to Bighorn

First, we must mention that our wonderful Administrative Assistant, Annette White will soon be leaving for greener pastures (literally). She will be assuming the role of Administrative Assistant at Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area on the Montana / Wyoming border.

Annette saw us through a significant establishment and growth period for the park's administrative division, developing it as a fully functioning entity. Our sincere thanks for all her hard work and tolerance of the bureaucracy that often creates bumps in the road to success. Our best wishes to her in her new adventure. Everyone, please wish her the best.

### 133rd Annual Homecoming Celebration

On Friday, July 29th, at noon, the Park will host Judy Forte, Superintendent of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site in Atlanta. She will speak about how partnerships were developed between the National Park Service and the Atlanta community and how a shared vision for the future led to the establishment of one of the true gems of the National Park Service system. It can happen for Nicodemus too. Please attend to hear her words of wisdom and

inspiration.

On Saturday the 30th, the Park and the Western National Parks Association will be sponsoring Mr. Joseph Marshall to speak on the relationship of Native Americans and African Americans on the 19th century plains. Mr. Marshall was raised in a traditional Lakota household and is a member of the Rosebud Sioux tribe. He writes full time and has nine nonfiction published works, three novels, and numerous short stories and screenplays. He has won several awards for his books.

Following Mr. Marshall's presentation, Mr. Barrie Tompkins will make a short interpretive presentation on life as a Buffalo Soldier. Mr. Tompkins is President and co-founder of the Nicodemus Buffalo Soldier Association, which portrays the 10th Cavalry Regiment during the period of Western expansion in the late 1800's. He has appeared in two TNT movies: "Rough Riders" and "Buffalo Soldiers".

Following the Buffalo Soldier presentation, the Park and Western National Parks Association are proud to sponsor a one hour presentation and workshop of "Flyin' West" by the Ballethnic Dance Company of Atlanta. Flyin' West was originally staged as a play about Nicodemus highlighting the struggles of three black women. Ballethnic will perform Saturday afternoon at 3 pm in the Township Hall. Admission is free and open to the public.

Ballethnic Dance Company is a classically trained, culturally diverse company that involves the community, especially youth and those who are financially less advantaged, in an appreciation of classical ballet blended with modern, jazz, African and other ethnic dance forms. (<http://ballethnic.org>)

### Nicodemus Liason Team News

As mentioned in a previous newsletter, a Liaison Team has been created to serve as a point of contact for the Historic Site. The members are Gil Alexander, Sharyn Dowdell, Marilyn Gray, Angela Bates, Tom Wellington and Debra Alexander-Wilson. Contact them for more information.

The Liaison Team met a number of times this past spring to finalize the Walking Tour brochure and the new park film. The Walking Tour brochure is now at the printer and we expect delivery by Homecoming. Regarding the park film, until now we have utilized videos of three newscasts to inform visitors about Nicodemus. Recently we received funds to upgrade the film and include captioning and descriptive narration to assist those with hearing or sight limitations. We have chosen to replace the three videos with a distillation of the John Bright Mann film "Nicodemus". Next time you're in town, please stop by the Visitor Center, located in the Township Hall, to see it. Sincere thanks to the Liaison Team for their positive comments that resulted in something we can all be quite proud of.

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# Around Town

## Nicodemus Homecoming 2011

As usual, the faithful local group is working hard to make this event another success. We surely do miss Ms. Yvonne. She was always one of the major components in Homecoming and every other event in Nicodemus!

Most events will be quite similar to past years. And as usual, we need you out-of-towners to help pick up the slack. We here in town are dwindling and getting tired! We need your help. Check out the website for the schedule. There are several special events that everyone needs to attend. And watch your e-mail for chances to volunteer.

The dances are back in the Township Hall this year. We will see how that works out. But be sure and say thanks to the National Park Service for their cooperation in getting the dances back inside! Sharyn Dowdell

## Township Board

The Township Board hosted a major meeting last week. Since our regular scheduled monthly meetings are not well attended, we sent out postcards to every person that owns property in the township announcing the importance of attending this meeting. The topics were street repair, water tower maintenance and the tax levy. The turnout was phenomenal.

Those in attendance agreed that the board should approve spending approximately \$12,000 to repair the four blocks surrounding the township hall. We have hopes that this will happen before Homecoming. We will continue working on the streets as the budget allows.

It was decided to accept the bid of \$1,700 for biennial maintenance on the interior of the water tower. Although the tower needs to be painted, it was decided to do that at a later date. We also discussed the current tax levy

and the possibility of lowering the levy a few points to help lower taxes. The board will meet and work on the budget before it is due to the public in August.

Finally, there will be another change at the Priscilla Arts Building in the near future. Check it out and see what you notice!! Sharyn Dowdell

## Kansas Black Farmers Association

Our group continues to meet on a regular basis and chip away at some of the many projects we are involved with. There have been changes at the USDA level that affect some of our projects, but we are striving for bigger and better things in the future.

We will be sponsoring the Pancake Feed again this year at Homecoming. However, because of the shortage of funds (isn't that a worldwide issue?) we will be asking for a \$2.00 'donation' for each plate. Pocket change, right? We still have our famous pancake mix available. So stock up while you are in town and save shipping costs!! Sharyn Dowdell

## Nicodemus Historical Society

The Historical Society is completing 50 interviews for the Oral History Project, funded by the Park Service. These interviews include the 2nd, 3rd and 4th generation descendants. These interviews encompass descendants from various families and have been completed with travel to Chicago, Denver, L.A. and Sacramento. Additional funding will be awarded in the fall to complete additional 4th generation descendants. This project is a unique African American longitudinal oral history study.

Due to a water leak at the museum we have had to move our archives to the Township Hall and temporary offices to the Priscilla Arts Club building adjacent to the Township Hall. We will be the Priscilla Arts Club building adjacent to the Township Hall. We will be developing fund raising events to assist us in securing funds for repairs.

However, we are in need of a 'new' facility to securely house our archives and collections.

With funding from the Hansen Foundation we are able to continue processing our archives and photo collections. Cecelia Crockett who has been working on the project since October 2009, came back in February after she returned to Topeka last September. Archives are being electronically processed in a museum software program called 'Past-Perfect'. Although labor intensive, progress is slowly being made. "133 Years of Nicodemus Photographic History" in book format should be ready for our members by Homecoming. Additional copies will be available for those interested. Please contact us if you are interested in getting a copy: (785) 839-4280.

Gale Sayers, former Chicago Bears football star and Nicodemus descendent, visited Nicodemus on Wednesday, June 22, for the first time since childhood. Angela took him and his wife Artie, to his hometown of Speed to visit the old Ed Sayers homestead and the Washington Cemetery. Gale and his wife are planning to return for Homecoming.

Sayers was the roommate of Brian Piccolo, from the movie "Brian's Song". He is genealogically connected to the Sayers and other families of Nicodemus. Angela Bates



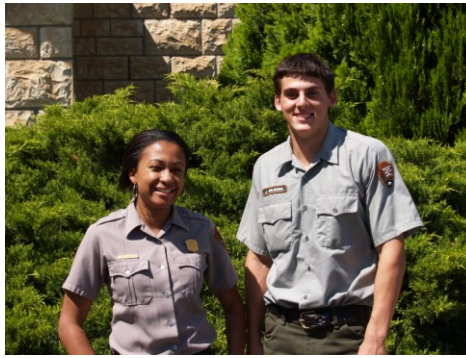
# From the Visitor Center

## Schoolhouse Closure

We have a number of dates for the closure of the District No.1 Schoolhouse: The Cultural Landscape Report states closure was in 1960. The information board in front of the School indicates closure in the late 1950's. Johnine Powell called to inform us that she has a copy of her '62-'63 report card from the from the District #1 School, with impressive grades and citizenship scores to boot! Does anyone have any information that can pinpoint the last year the School was in operation? Please contact the Superintendent, Mark Weaver, at [Mark\\_weaver@nps.gov](mailto:Mark_weaver@nps.gov) or 785-839-4321.

## Visitor Center Site Study

The Site Study for a potential new Visitor Center continues. We anticipate completion in late fall or early winter of this year. This represents the first step in a long process toward locating, designing and constructing a new Visitor Center.



## Returning Summer Staff

We are delighted to have seasonal Park Ranger Jamie Alexander, a senior at Kansas Wesleyan University in Salina and Justin Helberg, a sophomore at Oklahoma State University back with us again this summer. This is Jamie's fourth season here and Justin's second. Please welcome them back.

## Junior Ranger Ambassador

The Student Conservation Association (SCA) has once again provided funding support to secure a Junior Ranger

Ambassador for another summer. We are extremely pleased to announce that JohnElla Holmes will serve in this position in the summer of 2011. JohnElla will be working with a graphic artist to complete the editing of the two Junior Ranger booklets that were prepared to draft format last summer. As time allows, JohnElla will also develop a strategy for a Junior Ranger education trunk that will supplement the booklets. Congratulations, JohnElla!

## USF Thanks

Special Thanks to Dr. Antoinette Jackson from the University of Southern Florida in Tampa who returned this summer with three of her students. Margaret Allsopp, Whitney Goodwin, and Justin Hosbey continue working with the community on the Oral History Project. Justin did extensive research with the Nicodemus Historical Society last summer and completed his Master thesis on the Women of Nicodemus. Justin graduated this year with a degree in Anthropology. Congratulations to Justin Hosbey!



## Dunbar House: Another Park of the African American Experience Fund

Paul Laurence Dunbar was born in Dayton, Ohio in 1872. His parents, Joshua and Matilda Dunbar, were former slaves from a plantation near Shelbyville, Kentucky in Fayette County. Matilda Jane Dunbar learned to recite poetry by listening to the words of her slave master, as he recited poetry to his family, a common evening ritual for those families who could afford an education. She encouraged her son to get an education and was a great influence on his passion for poetry and prose.

Although, he was the only African-American student in his class at Dayton Central High School, Dunbar was named to the school's debating society, editor of the newspaper, class president, and president of the literary society. He would go on to become a student at Howard University in Washington, D.C. Despite his many talents and his educational background, Dunbar's literary genius was not fully appreciated until many years after his death from tuberculosis in 1906, at the young age of 33.

In 1936, the Ohio Legislature dedicated the Dunbar House as a memorial making it Ohio's first state memorial in honor of an African-American. The home was opened to the public as a museum two years later under the care and operation of the Ohio Historical Society.

Today the Paul Laurence Dunbar State Memorial is part of the National Park Service's Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park and the Dayton Aviation Trail. For further information, including hours of operation, and admission fees, visit the Dunbar House online [www.ohiohistory.org](http://www.ohiohistory.org) or call toll free 800-860-0148.

"We wear the mask that grins and lies  
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes  
This debt we pay to human guile  
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile."

*From the poem, "We Wear the Mask"*



**National Park Service**  
**U.S. Department of the Interior**

**Nicodemus National Historic Site**  
 510 Washington Avenue, #1  
 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

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**Federal Job Announcements:  
 (USAJOBS)**

[www.usajobs.opm.gov](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov)

The Flowering of Nicodemus is a publication of Nicodemus National Historic Site and is published three times per year.

Cont. from page 1, From the Superintendent

**DESIGNING THE PARKS INITIATIVE**

Recently, we have been informed that Nicodemus National Historic Site has been selected as one of only seven National Park Units (there are about 400 park units in the system!) to participate in the “Designing the Parks Initiative”. (www.designingtheparks.com, then go the April 12 posting under “Latest News”). Designing the Parks- a partnership of professionals, academics and others- will test universal design principles on issues particular to Nicodemus. It is our hope that the results will help the park and the community develop a direction for the future.

**ORAL HISTORY PROJECT UPDATE**

The Oral Traditions project initiated a couple of years ago will soon reach a

milestone of FIFTY oral histories recorded!!

Sincere thanks to the University of South Florida and the Nicodemus Historical Society for their untiring work to record the stories of Nicodemus. This project was groundbreaking in that it utilized Nicodemus descendants to interview other descendants (for example a granddaughter interviewing a grandmother).

**NEW ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF POSITION ANTICIPATED**

Sometime later this summer or early fall, the Park anticipates advertising via www.usajobs.com for an Administrative Assistant. If you are interested in learning more and/or wish to be notified when the announcement “hits the street”, please contact the Superintendent, Mark Weaver, at Mark\_weaver@nps.gov or 785-839-4321.