

NICODEMUS, KANSAS



*The History of
Nicodemus:
Black Pioneering
In the Promised Land*

July 27 and 28, 1979

The Nicodemus Homecoming Program Committee secured funding through the Kansas Committee for the Humanities, for a Friday and Saturday Black History Symposium. The focus is an exploration of the cultural values reflected in the life of Nicodemus Township. The significant role played by Black freed-men and -women in the development of the State of Kansas and Graham County. The Past, Present, and Future of Nicodemus will be examined.

The Kansas Committee for the Humanities (KCH) is a group of Kansas citizens working in cooperation with the National Endowment for the Humanities, a federal agency created by Congress in 1965. KCH awards grants on a matching basis to support programs which increase public understanding and awareness of the humanities and which promote thoughtful discussion of public policy issues and other topics of general concern.

The humanities are those academic disciplines which relate to the study of man and to the extensions of man: his ideas, history, values. They are concerned with questions of values -- ethical, social, moral or aesthetic. The humanities deal with what it has been and is to be human, to make value judgments, to select a course of action.

Formed in 1971 at the invitation of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Kansas Committee was among the first 13 states to participate in what is currently a national program.

Membership includes persons from the general Public, and College and University Humanities teachers. All serve as private citizens on a volunteer basis.

Special Thanks to the Following Contributors for their GIFTS-AND-MATCHING Contributions:

Charlson & Wilson Insurance Agency, Manhattan, KS
First National Bank, Manhattan, KS
Manhattan Federal Savings and Loan Association,
Manhattan, KS
Mr. and Mrs. S. M. Samarra, Manhattan, KS

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Friday, July 27, 1979 - Township Hall

6 p.m. - 7 p.m. Registration

7 p.m. - 9 p.m. "The Settling of Black Towns --
Exodusters"

National Black Anthem:
Pianist - Gil Alexander

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Presiding: Veryl Switzer - Associate
Dean, Minority Affairs,
Kansas State University
"Acknowledgements"

Speaker: Dr. Kenneth Hamilton -
Professor, Black History
Department, Ohio State Univ.

Reactor: Dr. Edward Beasley, Chairman
Social Service Department,
Penn Valley Community College,
Kansas City, Missouri

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Responses: Veryl Switzer and
Ernestine Vanduvall

Saturday, July 28, 1979 -- Township Hall

"The History of Nicodemus: Black Pioneering in the Promised Land"

1:30-2:20

PANEL DISCUSSION

Moderator: Jacqueline M. Jackson,
Assistant Professor, Sociology,
Anthropology, Social Work Dept.,
Kansas State University

Panelists: Dr. Kenneth Hamilton, Reactor
Dr. Jacob Gordon, Chairman, Dept.
of African Studies, Univ. of
Kansas
Angela Jukes, President, A. J.
Interior Wall Designs Inc.,
Oxon Hill, Maryland
Dr. Dorothy Pennington,
Associate Professor, African
Studies and Communication, Univ.
of Kansas
Dr. Edward Beasley

2:30-3:30

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION - Park Area Adjacent
to Township Hall

#1 - Communication: Patterns of Cultural
Survival:

Dr. Dorothy Pennington
Ola Wilson - Local Historian
Ivalee Switzer - Recorder

#2 - The Intrinsic Value of Preservation

Angela Jukes
Rev. L. C. Alexander, Pastor, First
Baptist
Leota Napue - Recorder

Saturday, July 28, 1979 -- Township Hall

2:30-3:30

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (Continued)

#3 - Religion as an Institutional Foundation
Dr. Jacob Gordon
Rev. Chester Williams, Pastor, True
Light Baptist, El Centro, California
Fern Switzer - Recorder

#4 - Nicodemus as a Symbol of Survival:
Land and Economics
Dr. Kenneth Hamilton
Veryl Switzer
Dr. Edward Beasley
Ernestine Vanduvall
Lois Alexander - Recorder

3:45 - 4:45

GENERAL SESSION (Township Hall)

Small Group Reports

#1 - Communication: Patterns of Cultural
Survival

#2 - The Intrinsic Value of Preservation

#3 - Religion as an Institutional Foundation

#4 - Nicodemus as a Symbol of Survival:
Land and Economics

Wrap-up

Veryl Switzer and Jacqueline M. Jackson

"Nicodemus Past, Present and Future"
First Baptist Church and Annex

Program Schedule

Friday, July 27, 1979

3:00-6:00 p.m. GALLERY - Pictorial Essays (First Baptist Church Annex)

Gordon Parks Collection
Roots of Nicodemus

FILMS - 8:30-10:00 p.m. "Exodusters"
(First Baptist Church)

"Nicodemus: Black Heritage Revisited"

3:00-9:00 p.m. Family Tree - A Pictorial History of Nicodemus

Saturday, July 28, 1979

9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. GALLERY (First Baptist Church Annex)
5:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

*FILMS - 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (First Baptist Church)
6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Family Tree - A Pictorial History of Nicodemus

*Repeat from Friday.

Nicodemus and Homecoming in Review

Nicodemus, established on homestead land in Graham County, Kansas by Black Freedmen with assistance from a white Tennessee Minister, Rev. W. T. Hill, and named after a legendary slave, was officially founded on September 17, 1877. Nicodemus is endowed with a rich history. It is also evident of the great human phenomena of a mass migration of Blacks from the South to the Midwest under the Benjamin "Pap" Singleton influence.

Nicodemus is of national historical significance because it is the only remaining town established by Blacks of the "Exoduster" movement. It is the site of the oldest reported Post Office supervised by Blacks in the United States. On January 7, 1976, The Secretary of the United States Department of Interior designated Nicodemus as a National Historic Landmark District, and selected seven (7) buildings and sites as historic landmarks.

The Nicodemus Annual Celebration began in 1887 on the Townsite. In 1895, the location of this annual affair was moved to a place commonly known as the "Scruggs Grove", 1½ miles southwest of the Nicodemus Townsite. It remained there for 55 years or until 1950. Its initial purpose was to provide a picnic and entertainment for residents of the community. It later became a symbolic affair in celebration of the emancipation proclamation. Since 1946, the annual program has been known as the Nicodemus Annual Homecoming Celebration. This first annual Nicodemus Black History Symposium held in conjunction with the 1979 Homecoming Celebration is dedicated to the inspiration, the will to survive, and the courageous efforts of our forefathers in the settling of the Nicodemus Township on the extreme western edge of a frontier society in "The Land of the Free".

NATIONAL BLACK ANTHEM

Lift Every Voice and Sing

Lift every voice and sing
Till earth and heaven ring
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the listening skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past
has taught us,
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has
brought us,
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun
Let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod,
Bitter the chastening rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
Yet with a steady beat,
Have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered,
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the
slaughtered,
Out from the gloomy past,
Till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who has brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who has by thy might
led us into the Light
Keep us forever in the path, we pray,
Lest our feet stray from the places,
Our God, where we met Thee.
Lest our hearts drunk with the wint
of the world, we forget thee.
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,
May we forever stand,
True to our God
True to our native land.

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FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

NICODEMUS, KANSAS

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SUNDAY, JULY 31st, 1977

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THEME:

"Building for The Lord"

Theme Scripture - Nehemiah 6:1-3

Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;) (2) That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. (3) And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?