

# HISTORIC NICODEMUS KANSAS

In the summer of 1876 W. R. Hill, who was originally from Indiana migrated to the western plains of Kansas. He met and became partners with W. H. Smith, an African American resident of the area since 1874. They began a partnership that led them to establish two towns on the western high plains of Kansas. Hill City, to be populated by whites, and the other, an all African American town they named Nicodemus.

They traveled to Topeka in search of African American who wanted to settle in northwestern Kansas. While in Topeka they contacted a group of African American men, all from Kentucky, who were interested in their venture. Shortly thereafter, the Nicodemus Town Company was organized with W.H. Smith as president, Simon P. Roundtree as secretary, Zach T. Fletcher as corresponding secretary, and W.R. Hill the treasurer.

The actual site of Nicodemus was said to have been selected by W. R. Hill. When he selected the town site of Nicodemus he was said to have looked all day, and after waking from a rest in the shade of a cottonwood tree, he decided that that location was as good as any. The site of Nicodemus is located approximately one-half mile from the eastern border of Graham county and less than a mile north of the Solomon River, on Highway 24, between the towns of Stockton and Hill City.

The name Nicodemus, is believed to have been selected from a song written by Henry Works, a Civil War song writer. The titled was "Wake Nicodemus". The lyrics were printed on circulars used to promote Nicodemus. It encouraged African Americans to leave the South and seek refuge on free government land in Kansas. Nicodemus was known by slaves throughout the South as a prophet and the first slave to have bought his freedom. The lyrics used on the circular is as follows: