

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Nicodemus National Historic Site
in conjunction with the
119th Emancipation Celebration "Homecoming"
is celebrating its National Park Status**

**July 25th, 26th, 27th
Nicodemus, Kansas**

Nicodemus, Kansas the oldest and only remaining all African American pioneer town west of the Mississippi, will be celebrating its National Site designation in conjunction with the annual 119th Emancipation Celebration "Homecoming". Bill Gwaltney, Superintendent of Ft. Laramie, WY and African American military historian (consultant and starred in "Glory"), will be a guest speaker, along with Steve Linderer, Superintendent of Ft. Larned and acting Superintendent of Nicodemus (or one of his staff). Vernon Barney, employee of the National Park System in Arizona will be unveiling a commemorative poster. Vernon Barney, Navajo, ironically, was one of four Native Americans who were on the townsite to stabilize the A.M.E. Church in December, immediately following the Nicodemus National Site Bill, signed by President, Clinton in November 1996. It was approximately 120 years after the Native Americans (Osage and Potowattomie) saved the residents of Nicodemus from starvation, that Native Americans were in Nicodemus once again to, this time through the National Park System to assist in saving the A.M.E. church from sure demise. During the 3 week stay Vernon spoke of the sacredness of Nicodemus and the opportunity through the National Site designation to tell our great history and bring both Native and African Americans together. Vernon will be coming as a Native American and on his own and not as a representative of the National Park System. He wants to help heal the deep wounds of his people and African Americans by being here to participate in this great event.

The celebration will kick off on Friday, July 25 with registration at the Township Hall, starting at noon. A dance will be held that evening and all are welcome to participate in all activities for the week end. Saturday will kick off with a parade that starts at 11:00 a.m. followed by a program, descendent talent show/fashion show, a presentation entitled Forum for Equal Justice. The Kansas City/Leavenworth chapter of the Buffalo Soldier Association and some of the remaining original Buffalo Soldiers will be present to answer questions and show their wares. At 4:00 The Buffalo Soldiers will be performing their second annual cavalry (horse) exhibition. Come, meet and talk with Barrie Tompkins, (Buffalo Soldier re-enactor and president of the Nicodemus Buffalo Soldier Association) will be available to share his photos and experiences from two TNT movies that he acted in and assisted in training the men to do cavalry maneuvers. Several others who also participated in the movies will also be present. The first TNT movie, entitled "Rough Riders" will be aired on TNT July 20th. The second movie that Barrie is featured in along side Danny Glover and other African American stars is entitled "Buffalo Soldiers" and is scheduled to air sometime in December. Danny Glover recorded the radio message that runs on the TIS information system (1610 AM) installed at Nicodemus to direct visitors to the site. The evening will begin at 7:00 with a Gospel Extravaganza at the Baptist Church and a dance that will begin a 9:00. Sunday services will commence at 10:00 with the community dinner following. Various saddle clubs and horsemen/women will also gather in Nicodemus for this event. An old fashion horse race will be held, historical characters will be present, and other unscheduled events. The National Park System will be sponsoring a Junior Ranger History program for the youth. There will be plenty of food and vendors. The Nicodemus Historical Society will be opened for tours of their exhibits. GENERAL PUBLIC INVITED.

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