**Exoduster Tour
Kansas Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway
and Additional Kansas African-American Heritage Sites**

Kansas has one of the deepest black histories of any state outside the South. African-Americans began leaving the South before the Civil War in search of a better life and many found their way to Kansas. In doing, so, they joined white settlers and Native Americans in integrating the prairie. Post Civil War there was a mass immigration of African Americans. Theirs marked one of the most remarkable migration in the United States, following the Civil War. It involved former slaves who left the South to build homesteads in the West. Those who participated were called **Exodusters**. Their legacy of courage carried into the 20th century as Kansans spearheaded the effort to end segregation in America’s public schools. Visit the sites where the course of history was changed and learn about the men and women who changed it.

This tour information is anchored on the Kansas Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway which tells the story of Exodusters. The tour brochure is attached. We have also listed other potential sites in Kansas you might find of interest. They are listed in alphabetical order for easy reference. Please refer to the Kansas map we are enclosing for site locations. In this way you can easily develop your tour based on your point of entry into the state.

**Exoduster Tour of Kansas Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway**
Travel the byway as you trace the Exoduster migration and settlement in central rural Kansas. The Exoduster Tour brochure is attached.

***“When I landed on the sail, I looked on the ground and I says this is free ground,” ,said Exoduster John Solomon Lewis who was among those who came to Kansas. “Then I looked on the heavens, and I says them is free and beautiful heavens. Then I looked within my heart, and I says to myself I wonder why I never was free before?”***

**St. John** – Martin Cemetery. The first settlers of Ohio township in Stafford County were African American. The township was directly south of St. John. Exodusters also lived in St. John. The Martin Cemetery, an all-black cemetery, is a small fenced space named for a family living in the area who also donated the property.

**Stafford** – The story of Exodusters in Central Kansas is told through an exhibit of historic lass negative photos and the film “The Black Frontier” The collection of 29,000 glass negatives came from photos taken over 8 decades in the Gray Photo Studio in St John and is considered one of the largest glass negative collections in the nation.

**Great Bend**- The Cemetery Tour (brochure attached) will help guide you through this cemetery where 12,000 people from all backgrounds and walks of life are buried. In this cemetery, you can visit the gravesite of George Washing and Catherine Walker. Oscar Micheaux’s grave in also located in this cemetery. He is the only person buried here who has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

**Hoisington**- A stop at the Hoisington Cemetery offers a rare look at African American folk art gravestones

**Ft. Scott**
The **Trolley Tour** visits several historic sites in Fort Scott including the **Fort Scott** **National Cemetery** which is one of the 12 original national cemeteries designated by President Lincoln in 1862. Here, 101 black infantrymen from the nation’s first Colored Volunteer Infantry are interred. View the **Gordon Parks Exhibit**, which features a collection of Parks’ black/white and color photography.
 **Larned**
Discover complete and authentic army post from the 1860s – 1870s, **Ft. Larned** . After the Civil War, Congress authorized the creation of two all-black cavalry units: the 9th and 10th U.S. Cavalry Regiments. These units became popularly known as the **Buffalo Soldiers.** Of the several companies that made up the 10th Cavalry, Company A served at Fort Larned from 1867 to 1869.

**Lawrence**
The **Watkins Community Museum of History** features exhibits of the **Wakarusa Valley Underground Railroad** sites. If interested, a step on guide will be provided to follow Quantrill’s fiery path through Lawrence and hear tales of tragedy and heroism. (Insider Tip: Consider a stop at the **Booth Family Athletic Hall of Fame**)

**Leavenworth**
Established in 1827, **Ft. Leavenworth** is the oldest continuously operating fort west of the Mississippi River. The fort was headquarters for the 10th U.S. Cavalry – the Buffalo Soldiers – name by the plains Indians because their hair resembled that of the buffalo. Visit the Buffalo Soldiers Monument. The historic Bethel Church, now the **Richard Allen** **Cultural Center** was a stop on the **Underground Railroad.**

 **Minneapolis**
Learn about the incredible life of a former Missouri slave who became an innovative Kansas farmer at the **Ottawa County Historical Museum**. Museum features a special exhibit dedicated to the life of **George Washington Carver** who lived near Minneapolis.

**Nicodemus**
This historic village of Nicodemus was one of several frontier towns settled entirely by free slaves following the Civil War, and is the only remaining town west of the Mississippi River. Established in 1877, it has since been designated a **National Historic Site** and consists of two churches, a hotel, a school, and the Nicodemus Township Hall. Currently, the Township Hall is the only building open to the publicand serves as the town’s visitor center**. The Nicodemus** **Livery Company** also provides covered wagon tours of the town along with youth and adult history programs .(Insider Tip: Don’t miss out on Ernestine’s BBQ)

**Topeka**
In 1954, the Supreme Court handed down the landmark decision to end segregation in public schools. Monroe Elementary School has been designated the **Brown v Board of Education National Historic Site**. The **Kansas Museum of History** tells the stories of Black soldiers who fought for Kansas and Black settlers who sought freedom in Kansas.

**Wichita**The **Kansas African-American Museum** is located in the refurbished 1917 Calvary Baptist Church. Exhibits showcase the achievements of African-Americans from city leaders to soldiers and inventor and include artifacts, programs, and visual arts. At **Old Cowtown Museum**, a living history museum, African-American guides lead tours relating to black cowboys. One-third of the cowboys who led cattle drives from Texas to Kansas were persons of color.