

Quindaro Townsite National Commemorative Site

Quindaro was a town settled by Wyandot Indians and platted by abolitionists in the 1850s, at the height of the “Bleeding Kansas” years. Quindaro became a Free State port of entry and a stop on the Underground Railroad. The town provided a route for enslaved people to escape slavery, and helped stop slavery from spreading west. Quindaro also played an important role in Reconstruction through its Freedman schools and eventual University.

The federal government named Quindaro a National Commemorative Site through the National Park Service when the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act became law on Tuesday, March 12, 2019.

On Tuesday, April 23, 2019, the Quindaro Community gathered at the Quindaro Overlook to celebrate the newly designated Quindaro Townsite National Commemorative Site.

April 23, 2019



Reverend Stacy Evans

Allen Chapel AME Church, and the Western University Association



"We thank you, Father God, that after thirty years, all of the stakeholders, and everyone concerned realized, dear God, that we can't do it unless we do it together, Father. So we pray, dear God, that you bless us to continue to work together to bring back what's left of this town for preservation, Lord God, that all of the world can come to see it, Lord, to come to know it like we know it in the spirit of unity and freedom. These things we pray in the name of Father, Son, the Holy Ghost, and every heart said Amen.

We have a two-pronged approach. We want to do the trails through the ruins of the town. We want them to be state-of-the-art. And we want to build an archives interpretive center that will house the artifacts, that are now being kept in the Kansas Historical Society. The National Commemorative Site is a huge part of what makes this all possible. Because now we can apply for grants on federal levels. I'm told by the Unified Government, that this site, as unpassable as it is, is the most-requested tour in all of Wyandotte County."

Chief Janith English

Wyandot Nation of Kansas



"We now live in a time when conflict, political chaos, economic exploitation, violence, and disease are impacting millions of our brothers and sisters around the world. We're reminded that a simple act of identifying the marginalized and widening the circle of inclusion can be a powerful force for positive change. Like many of you, and your families, we have chosen to pursue empathy, interconnection, and interdependence in spite of centuries-long patterns of dispersal and scattering. I believe this is the path toward true freedom, the right to a self-determination that is willing to advocate for the rights of others.

Quindaro has so many stories to tell. May this space offer a safe harbor in which we can listen."



Mayor David Alvey

Unified Government of Wyandotte County & Kansas City Kansas



"I offer a special thanks to those who truly made this place sacred ground, the escaped slaves who risked the lash, and their lives to find freedom. A freedom that their creator had bestowed upon them from the beginning. A freedom due to them simply by virtue of their human nature. A freedom enshrined in the constitution, but, denied them as a political and economic expedient. A freedom that they rightly claimed for themselves and their children, and their children's children.

We must marvel at what it must have been like for these persons as they crossed the Missouri River from slavery to freedom. Certainly they would have understood that in their crossing over to freedom, they were fulfilling the will of God, just as the Israelites understood at their crossing of the Red Sea that their God had missioned them to break out of the slavery of Egypt. So we offer special thanks to the runaway slaves and to those who aided them, slaves whose leap to freedom from slavery landed them here at the Quindaro townsite and whose journey of freedom to do the good that they were called to do was launched here, and continues today in our community."

Secretary Brad Loveless

Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism



“As we make this a more welcoming site, as we develop it, we better interpret what it has, and what’s happened here, we believe that visitors will experience it in a new way, and that experience will, in fact, migrate over time.

We believe their experience personally will move. It’ll start with their head as they learn, and then it’ll move to their heart as they begin to understand and experience the spirituality of Quindaro. This will happen as they learn the stories of those that lived, and loved, and lost, and were freed at Quindaro.

In the future, whether you stop here at the Overlook, or you make it down the hill to these home and business sites, or you make it clear down past that to the bottoms, and are able to move through them, the marsh areas, past the timber, to the riverbank, you’ll be able to experience that walk that folks from here walked under cover of darkness.

You’ll be able to touch those same timbers that those steamboats tied up to. You’ll be able to touch those same ones that they walked past to get on those boats to head north to freedom.

Thus, the Quindaro experience will make this a sought-after destination, even more than it is today. And it will leave its participants changed. This story will become part of their story. This city and this state will be theirs. And then, we’ll be neighbors. And, as you all know, neighbors come back to visit again and again, and they bring their friends. So thank you for this wonderful, momentous day, and all the work that’s gone into it, and the cultural and economic value that it brings.



Regional Administrator Jim Gulliford

Environmental Protection Agency



“On this bluff, as we overlook the Missouri River, you recognize the preservation here is as important to the community today as it was to the people who built their lives here. Our nation’s water resources are no less important today than they were then. And it’s important that we protect them, and we build our communities around them. Moving forward, EPA is committed to continue partnership and support in the efforts to preserve this historical site. The members of our Brownfields team, and our Environmental Justice Program will continue to assist in the redevelopment of the Quindaro Townsite. This focus on real revitalization is a priority for the Environmental Protection Agency, as it helps communities like Kansas City, Kansas, like the Quindaro community, transform once idle properties into beacons of opportunity”



Kevin Yoder

Former U.S. Representative Kansas Third District

“Now our challenge is to take this designation, and reach the ultimate goal and ensure that Quindaro becomes a National Historic Landmark. That’s where we want to end up. Because by gaining that status, we gain resources, we gain infrastructure, we gain the ability to build the architecture and the infrastructure to make this what it needs to be. Ultimately to ensure that my children, your children, future generations all across America, never forget what happened here on these hallowed grounds, what it meant for our history, and most importantly, what it means for our future.”



U.S. Senator Pat Roberts

Kansas



“I would say the story of Quindaro Townsite provides a glimpse at several overlapping historical themes that contribute to a larger story of our nation. During the prime years of the town’s life, African Americans, Native Americans, exploration and settlement history—i.e., my great-grandfathers—that all intertwined in a marvelous effort to achieve freedom.”



“The thought occurred to me that the state’s motto, ‘Ad astra per aspera,’ to the stars through difficulty—boy if that doesn’t apply to this effort, then I don’t know what does. Thanks to the many individuals who helped unearth and recognize its historical significance, the town’s ruins were saved, and the Quindaro story lives on to be shared, for future generations. Maybe that’s the most important thing.

We have been in close communication with the National Park Service. They stand ready to work with the community in the effort to further our goals, and preserve and elevate the recognition of the Quindaro Townsite as an essential piece of Kansas history. On behalf of all of our speakers here together, it is now my unique privilege to unveil the Quindaro sign.”



U.S. Representative Emanuel Cleaver

Missouri Fifth District

“Look...we shouldn’t shy away from the “s-word”— slavery.

It is a part of the history, albeit ugly, of our nation.

It wasn’t nice.

It was ugly.

It was nasty.

It was humanity at its worst.

And I don’t think we ought to allow this celebration to go by without saying that there was something ugly took place – something raw and nasty.

But men and women that represented the great rainbow of America, wanted people to remember.

Joshua, bringing the Israelites over to Jordan...I mean the Missouri...I mean the Jordan, and he told a representative from each of the twelve tribes to pick up a great stone, after they’d crossed the river, and he said, place it in the road.

And the question from everyone was, “Reverend, why are we placing these stones in the road?” And he said, “We’re going to do this so that unborn generations of Jews will come along and ask, ‘What do these stones mean?’

This is the beginning of what I hope is a project that will lead to the complete restoration of Quindaro. And we’re doing it so that our children and our grandchildren, and even their children, may come here, and we can explain to them what those stones mean. Those stones have meaning. We can tell them that their great-great-great-grandfathers and their great-great-great-grandmothers risked drowning in the Missouri River, sliding across on that ice, in the dead of winter.

And then we ought to tell our children: there were botanists who lived back there. There were epidemiologists who lived back there. There were great men and women who lived back in that village. And those great men and women gave birth to the new African American people all over this country. And we will never allow that kind of thing to happen in this country again. We will never allow the divisions that will tear us up happen again. We must tell unborn generations what that village means.”



U.S. Representative Sharice Davids

Kansas Third District



“The story of Quindaro is one of facing adversity, is one of, in a lot of ways, triumph, and it intersects so many aspects of our country’s long, storied, complex history. And that’s true from the native people, through the abolitionist movement, women’s suffrage, and the journey of people who were enslaved in this country. The Wyandot tribe, have shared with me the word (Quindaro) translates into bundle of sticks, but the understood meaning of that is union. In union there is strength. And if we’ve seen anything today, it’s that when we come together to do things there is strength in that. And that really, that’s what we’re striving for.”



Marvin Robinson

Quindaro Community Advocate



“Last year, advocacy arrived in Congress as I joined Quindaro’s own Marvin Robinson in front of the House Natural Resources Committee. I want you to know how proud you should be of Marvin’s performance that day. I know his forefathers, our forefathers, would be proud of his work on behalf of Quindaro that moment. Marvin, as you know, has spent his life working on Quindaro, to anyone who will listen, right? But, on that day, it was Congress that was listening. It was Congress’s turn to listen. And as Marvin testified, and he passionately, recalled the historical significance of Quindaro, he was retelling our story, your story, Quindaro’s story. He was retelling America’s story. Its true heart and soul. As the bill passed the House unanimously last year, I know it was Marvin’s passion, and the passion of so many of you who have fought tirelessly for that, for this day, that made it a reality.”

Kevin Yoder
Former U.S. Representative, Kansas Third District

Executive Director Jim Ogle

Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area



“Quindaro teaches us lessons from the past that will help us guide a more successful future. By working together, the people of Quindaro: Wyandot Indians, formerly enslaved blacks, and committed abolitionists created a beacon to light our way. Many Freedom’s Frontier National Heritage Area partners pulled together to make the new National Commemorative Site designation possible. Freedom’s Frontier is proud to have nurtured and supported these combined efforts with resources and staff committed and focused to ensure that our entire nation will have a better understanding of the Quindaro story.”

Judge Duane Benton

U.S. Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals
Chair, Freedom's Frontier Board of Trustees

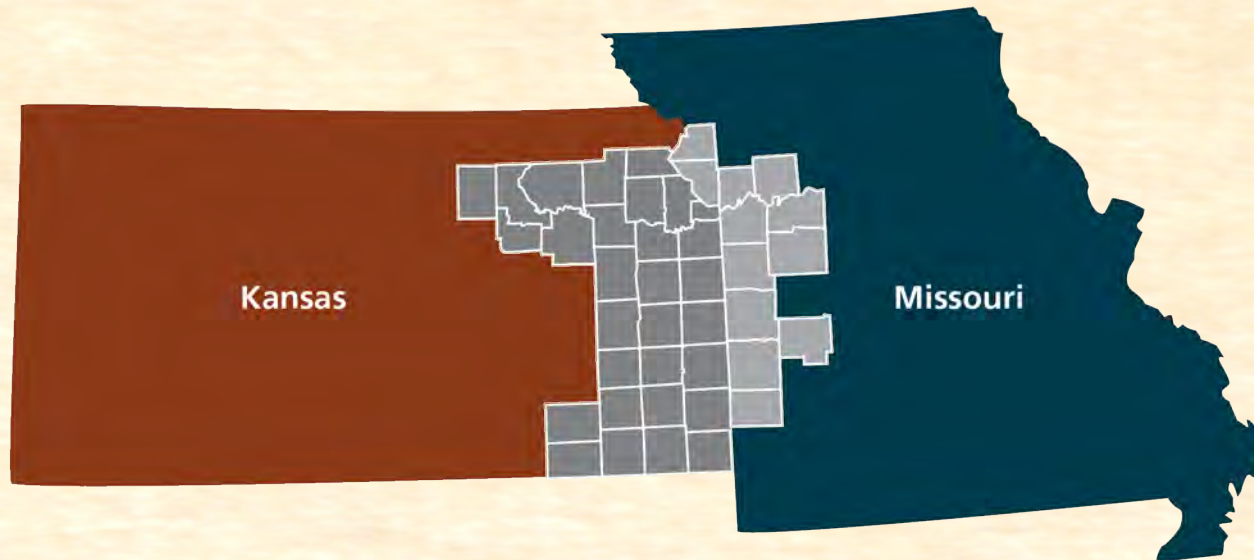


“The renaissance of the Quindaro effort shows why Freedom’s Frontier exists – to bring alive the stories that make our region unique. This renewed attention to Quindaro is the result of an extraordinary collaboration of committed partners and energized volunteers that Freedom’s Frontier is proud to facilitate.”

The stories of Quindaro – now reaching many for the first time – will astonish residents, visitors and scholars for years to come, like so many other stories in the Freedom’s Frontier National Heritage Area.”



Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area



Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area (FFNHA) brings together three nationally significant themes that defined our region:

- the settlement of the frontier
- the border and Civil Wars along the western frontier
- and the enduring struggle for freedom.

FFNHA covers 41-counties, 30,000 square miles, and encompasses more than three million residents. As one of 55 national heritage areas across the country working with the National Park Service, FFNHA cultivates both private and governmental resources to tell these nation-defining stories.

More than 165 historic sites and museums partner with FFNHA along with more than 100 additional partner organizations.

Freedom's
Frontier
NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA



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