

**Written Testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources  
Subcommittee on Federal Lands**

**Marvin S. Robinson II - Independent Volunteer Researcher, Quindaro Ruins /  
Underground Railroad- Exercise 2019**

I. Introduction

Chairman the Honorable Tom McClintock, Chairman Rob Bishop, Ranking Member Raul Grijalva, Kansas 3rd District Congressional Representative Kevin Yoder and each of the Members of the Subcommittees, thank you for inviting me here to discuss the NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK designation of the QUINDARO TOWNSITE. My name is Marvin S. Robinson II and I am a honorably discharged U.S. Navy Veteran who has for 31 consecutive years actively pursued restoration and preservation of the QUINDARO TOWNSITE as an Independent Volunteer Researcher, identified as the Quindaro Ruins / Underground Railroad- Exercise 2019, that actually began 17 May 1987, when the archeological site had been approved to become (a now defunct sanitary landfill- toxic waste dump). I used my training and certification from my active duty as an Operations Specialist "O.I." Division to help chart, maneuver, conduct complicated communications and research information gathering and dissemination to broaden the understanding of both the importance of historic preservation and environmental and energy conservation.

It took all the way to 05 December 1991 to stop the now defunct proposed landfill in the U.S. Federal Court of Appeals in Denver, Colorado to obtain interception of a dump, naive as I

was then, I thought historic preservation and restoration would immediately begin. In 1998 the National Park Service was approved by Congress to establish the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program that had begun in 1991 as Study through the U.S. Interior Department that was supported by our former Congresswoman Mrs. Jan Meyers of Kansas, as well, as former U.S. Senators Nancy Kassebaum and the ICON the Honorable Bob Dole. By 2002 we finally obtained National Register of Historic Places designation of the Quindaro Townsite. Back then our largest method of trying to get assistance from federal government leadership was with petitions, telephone tree calls to their offices and MAILGRAMS.

08 May 1921 a Kansas City Times - Kansas City Star article was published: "Move Under Way to Save Old Quindaro" by journalist Steve O'Grady, 97 years later we are still trying to preserve, restore and get historic multi-layered cultural heritage recognition for indeed one of the most important anchors of our beloved nation's complicated and brilliant TIME CAPULES of LIBERTY, Freedom and Union Army sacred-spaces of HOLY GROUNDS. Another K.C. Star article published in 04 February 1937 headline was published "GHOST TOWN of Old QUINDARO May Live Again as a State Park". Today this morning in the halls and rooms where decision makers plan, plot and chart the course and speed for our country's heritage landscapes, QUINDARO TOWNSITE is on the radar scope for NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK before eyes, ears, minds and conscience for 21st century AMERICAN CITIZENS to appreciate, study, learn and dissect all the risk, sacrifices, bravery, visionaries that those who came before us, must have seen: who were also ahead of their TIME.

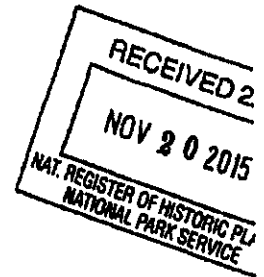
As a proud Navy Veteran, your support of H.R. 5613 the QUINDARO TOWNSITE as a new NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK would signify not just a bold embrace of historic preservation, but reassert that VETERANS all over the country can find efforts, passion projects of their own interest to help improve their own communities, states, regions and impact the national platforms of really important skills that have transferrable value from their active duty military service (almost 200,000 active duty personnel, become VETERANS every year) there are almost infinite possibilities on why your support could translate so much uplift to our nation's determination to keep being GREAT, again and AGAIN.

It is beyond my communications skills set to adequately convey exactly what this moment means to me and all the people who have helped and tried to assist with historic heritage preservation for the Quindaro Townsite, however all the professional rules of the road, rules of law, regulations, federal statues: whenever you get through- you each are invited to make a visit to inspect this fragile deteriorating crumbling RUINS that water-mark the very best of what those who came before us, collaborated to co-carve liberty, freedom and the UNION we all love and still hold dear to beloved United States of America.

II. The Following are communications to the U.S. Department of Interior- Request for consideration to elevate the QUINDARO TOWNSITE as a new NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

[REDACTED]

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11 November 2015

J. Paul Loether, Chief  
National Historic Landmarks Program  
U.S. Department of Interior  
National Park Service  
1849 "C" Street N.W (2280)  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Loether:

I am writing to request the QUINDARO RUINS / UNDERGROUND RAILROAD be considered as a candidate for designation as a NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK, as described in the FY2015 Historic Preservation of Underrepresented Communities. Quindaro has been referred to as the historic archaeological POMPEII of Kansas. This was due to the significance of its voluminous archaeological finds, Environmental Systems Analysis; Larry Schmits' archaeological excavation in 1987. There were roughly 100 building foundations unearthed and artifacts described and cataloged, in compliance with Section 106. Currently, the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka, Kansas houses the orphaned artifacts.

Quindaro Town was a Free-Port-of-Entry off the Missouri River for New England Emigrant Aid Society Abolitionists, Women's Suffrage Movement leaders, French Canadian Wyandot Indian Tribes' Removal from Ohio, Free Black Masons during the rugged, turbulent and rough Bleeding Kansas - Kansas' Territorial Eras.

When the New England Emigrant Aid Society arrived in Kansas Territory in mid-1800s, they collaborated with usage of land, resources, and adrenalin with Wyandot Tribal Nation to establish a haven for abolitionist activity. This activity embed, assisted and anchored African fugitives passages to liberation and freedom. The Quindaro Town was named after Nancy Quindaro Brown Guthrie, whose father was the Chief of the Wyandot Tribe. Quindaro in the Wyandot language is interpreted as "daughter of the Sun", "*bundle of sticks*" translating to mean "*in unity there is strength.*"

MILITARILY, Quindaro Ruins are significant and extremely important because the First Kansas Colored Union Army Regiment Volunteers: were recruited, camped, mustered and quartered there: noted for being, "The First to Serve the First to Die" in the American Civil War". The First Kansas Colored Union Army Volunteer Regiment fought at the Battle of Island Mound, in Bates County, Missouri – and renamed the Battle of Island Mound on the 'Toothman family farm' to "FORT AFRICA"!!!

Two EMMY AWARDS were issued on 03 October 2015 for the "BATTLE of ISLAND MOUND" for best historical documentary and in recognition cinematography excellence, (sponsored in part by the Missouri State Parks Department, Bates County and the Missouri State Historic Society). Units of the First Kansas Colored were described by their

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commanding officers as fighting with bravery and as capable as any Soldier' according to a variety of published written resource materials.

Then there was the SECOND KANSAS COLORED UNION ARMY REGIMENT as well, as the 79<sup>th</sup> Kansas Regiment was just as stealth of Black Platinum in their valiant service, investments, sacrifices and loyalty to the UNION ARMY.

Quindaro Ruins has already received recognition: National Register of Historic Places; National Parks Service Underground Railroad Network to Freedom; National Trust for Historic Preservation SAVE AMERICA'S TREASURES; Land and Water Conservation site. Equally the Quindaro Ruins was listed in the May 2015 as one of The Most Endangered Historical Sites by the Kansas City Historic Foundation. Previous inclusions of the Quindaro Ruins in the NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA Freedoms Frontier and U.S. Department of Transportation I.S.T.E.A. (Inter-modal Transportation Efficiency Act).

We are, humbled, grateful and anticipate the future of unbeknownst excitement with the Historic Preservation of the Underrepresented Communities of the tenacious "sacred- spaces of HOLY GROUNDS" of this mid-1800s cradle of liberty and sacrifice, of the down under Quindaro Ruins as a new NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK. The National Historic Landmarks Program and River and Trails Conservation Assistance Program of the National Park Service could not be thanked enough. I remain-

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marvin S. Robinson, II". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Marvin S. Robinson, II

K. C. Star, Feb. 4, 1937

## "Ghost Town" of Old Quindaro May Live Again as a State Park

**E**ARLY this spring when the warm winds blow over the hills north of Western university in Kansas City, Kansas, and through the old ruins of the once flourishing town of Quindaro, irks will bloom again as it always has bloomed in the spring—since the days the town of Quindaro was founded, about 1855. It is the only remnant of the pioneer days.

In a valley beside the tracks of the Missouri Pacific railroad are two mounds of rock. One represents what is left of the walls of one of the first hotels in Kansas. The mounds are less than 100 yards from the Missouri River, where river boats docked at the foot of Kansas avenue, the main street of old Quindaro.

### STATE PARK BILL IS IN.

Yesterday W. H. Towers, Negro representative in the state legislature from Kansas City, Kansas, introduced a bill to have the Quindaro ruins made into a state park.

The ravages of time and souvenir seekers have wrought havoc in the last few years with the old ruins. Not since 1873 has the old city of Quindaro been inhabited. In 1862, a year after Kansas was admitted to the union, the state legislature repealed a law incorporating Quindaro. Today it exists in the memory of the historians and the students of Western university, a state educational institution for Negroes, as one of the ghost towns of the West that flourished and declined, and yet contributed to the advent of civilization.

Quindaro is named for Nancy Quindaro Brown, an Indian princess of the Wyandot nation. At the time she met Abelard Guthrie she lived in Ohio. She fell in love with Guthrie, but her father objected to their marriage and took her to Kansas. Guthrie pursued her, married her and was admitted to the Wyandot nation with the title, "Man of Two Brains." He

later became a member of congress. Quindaro signifies a bundle of sticks—strength in union.

### Town Lots at High Prices.

By 1858, the year the town was incorporated, there were 100 buildings. There was a flourishing sawmill. The Lightfoot of Quindaro, a steamboat, carried on a trade between Quindaro and other frontier towns. The townsite stock boomed. Lots selling for \$1,000 one week often sold for \$5,000 a few weeks later. Speculation, overdevelopment, cessation of government checks to the Wyandot Indians and the panic of 1859 brought disintegration.

The ruins have long been a place of curiosity to students and Boy Scouts. Beneath the ruins of the walls are caves now nearly filled with debris. Bishop W. T. Vernon, president of Western university, remembers other caves from his boyhood days.

"The creation of a state park would be a most welcome development," Bishop Vernon said today. "The ruins are a sort of playground for our students as well as the subject of class tours."

# MUVE UNDER WAY TO SAVE OLD QUINDARO

## 5-Acre Townsite Would Make Beautiful Park.

Stone Walls Are Sligh Monument to  
Frontier City Whose Rise and Fall  
Took Seven Bustling Years.

By STEVE O'GRADY.

About a quarter of a mile due north of the Western university and on a slope facing the Missouri river, at a point almost directly opposite Parkville, are the ruins of Quindaro.

In the minds of many inhabitants, old and new, there is the frequent thought that Kansas City's undeveloped park system eventually will spread out and take in for its own the five acres which constitute the site of one of the first settlements in Kansas; a great town for its day, despite the fact that its rise and fall covered a span of less than seven years.

Horace Greeley, the noted editor of the New York Tribune, stopped off at Quindaro and wrote back to his paper that "Quindaro was destined to be a great inland city."

Sherman a frequent visitor. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman, who later became one of the great commanders of the army of the north, was a frequent visitor to Quindaro and looked upon it as the most proudf of the settlements along the muddy Missouri.

But this was all in a period prior to the Civil war, in a period when the issue of slavery was being debated with bitterness in the north and south and when Kansas was a battleground for the free-state and slave-state advocates.

It was free-staters from New England who established Quindaro and made the little town hum with industry for a brief period. In 1850 the townsite was laid out for the two years that followed the little community was described as one of the liveliest spots in the world.

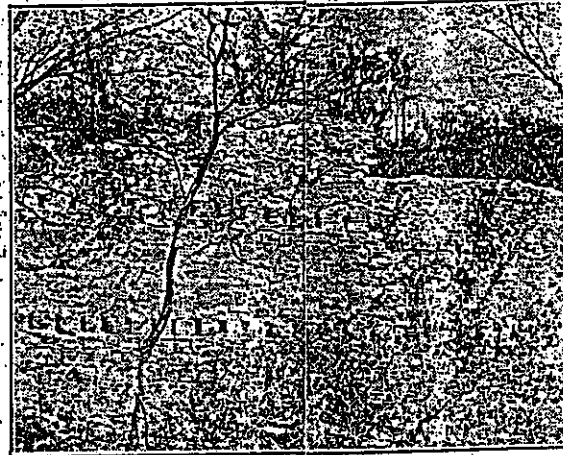
War Started Decline. During the first year of the Civil war Quindaro's decline began, and before the war was half over the town was virtually effaced from the map. Many of her men had gone to war. Others had sought safer retreats farther on. Various economic reasons were offered for the failure of the town, but they were unnecessary. Quindaro without specific reasons, had boomed to the bursting point over night and by natural processes it went out of existence. There were geographical, topographical and political reasons to offer for the fall of Quindaro, but these don't stir the heart that

remains to this day. The ruins of the town are still visible from the boats that pass up and down the river. In summertime there is an ivy mantle for these historic walls, some of which represent the remnants of a general store. It is believed, while one wall is all that remains of Quindaro's modern hotel, erected in 1857, with a guest capacity of forty-five.

Not a Man Now Alive. It is believed there is no one alive at this day who figured in the early history of the Quindaro community, but there is plenty of printed evidence at hand to show the town had about all the things to be found in a city of those days. There was the adequate tavern for the city's visitors; a newspaper, called the "Quindarian," and which later became "J. J. Lane's Herald" in the old town of Wyandotte; a ferry boat that handled traffic to and from Parkville; several merchandise establishments; saloons sufficient to handle the wants of the city; a dance hall and the notorious figures that went with dance halls 60 years ago; a bank; a government agency; Indians, good, bad and indifferent; and whites, that may be classified in the same category.

Charles Robinson, first governor of Kansas, was a resident of Quindaro when he came to this state from New England; and many of the men who made history in Kansas got their start there. There were no factories, to be sure, but there was a steamboat landing and scores of boats plying the Missouri river, stopped at the Quindaro wharves. Here they left supplies and goods, and the chief industries of the frontier village.

# A Reminder of Early Days



—Photo by Ostrom.

The larger section of the ruins of Quindaro. This ivy covered stone wall is in good state of preservation, after standing for more than sixty years. It is believed to be a part of the old Quindaro hotel.

Outstripped K. C. Mo. Atchison, Leavenworth and Wyandotte were the competitors of Quindaro before the war. Kansas City, Mo., scarcely had made its start, but Westport, Landing, as Kansas City, Mo., was called, was forging ahead, and when the war started, the boom of the Missouri town got under way.

Meanwhile, Quindaro, reputed to be intensely partisan in its support of the North, earned the hatred of the South-ern sympathizers across the river, and bushwhackers who were lenient with the citizens of Atchison, Leavenworth and Wyandotte, showed no mercy to the free-soilers of Quindaro. After the war had begun, Quindaro was given a wide berth by those who were reluctant to engage in the uncertain pastime of carrying their lives in their hands.

So Quindaro's light was doused suddenly. The community vanished as quickly as it had come into life. It faded like the flicking blaze of a candle in a summer breeze. A railroad that the foremen had projected never got beyond the site of the town. Its storekeeper went to another port. Its women and children sought the shelter of secluded villages of the interior. Its newspaper moved to Wyandotte. Its ferry boat tied up at the Parkville dock and remained tied, brass and brush sprung up in its new-made roads. Its log dwellings crumpled and decayed. Its wharves heaved the tide of the winding Missouri for a few years and then joined the yellow water.

But the Stone Walls Stayed. But Quindaro's great trees remained and her vines climbing down from the branches of oak and elm formed a loving nest over the stone walls that once were part of the commerce of a new and thriving town.

All that is left of the romantic metropolis, are these old vine-covered stone walls that stand in what was the center of the old town and serve as a marker for the city that rose and fell within seven years. A quieter or more inspiring woodland setting is not to be found in this vast metropolitan section. Every one who visits the quaint little spot overlooking the broad and placid river is ardent in advocacy of the sentiment that the city should buy the historic and treasured landscape and preserve it for all time.

There was a time not so many years ago when the ruins were far out of the way and not easily accessible, but with the growth of the city to the north and the extension of transportation facilities, Quindaro, the precious relic of ante-bellum days, virtually is a part of the city that profited by her fall.



—Photo by Ostrom.

A stone wall among the ruins. It rests close to the main line of the Omaha division of the Missouri Pacific railroad.

Sunday, May 8, 1921.