

Recovering the Celestial City: The Clarksville Contraband Camp, 1863-1869

By

David Britton

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in Public History

Middle Tennessee State University

Fall, 2025

Thesis Committee:

Dr. Andrew Fialka, Chair

Dr. Torren Gatson

DEDICATION

To Louisa, Mary Ann, Eliza and the others who accomplished the unthinkable. Let us make sure
your stories are heard.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The experience of writing this pushed me in ways that I needed. Seeing it through to completion still surprises me. Thanks to Martha Norkunas for planting the seeds in me and changing how I understand memory, memorials, and the commemorative landscape. Andrew Fialka took over the duties of my advisor after Martha retired and, frankly, I wish I would've met him earlier. He simultaneously encouraged and challenged me. My writing, such as it is, owes a lot to him and he has helped me turn this into something readable. Also, thanks to Torren Gatson for his willingness to read this. Bobby Cooley has been a steadfast friend and colleague, spending ample time in the research with me. We were working together on the Affricanna Town State Historical Marker when I first stumbled into the story of the Clarksville contraband camp. His own work promises to be remarkable. Michael Ramsey has given unending support, review, honest critique, and friendship that has spanned the last 20 years (what?). Frederick Murphy has believed in the work and championed me along the way, all while changing the world in his spare time. Thanks to you all.

Perhaps most importantly, my family deserves a lot of thanks and praise. My parents, Mark and Sylvia, for setting me on this course. My daughters, Elenore and Amelia, for their eternal optimism, support, and willingness to venture to historic sites, parks, and museums. I look forward to seeing the adventures you take in your own lives. And last, but far from least, my partner, Tonya. She's wise, patient, and sincere. Her own work in public history is endlessly inspiring. I'm thankful for you.

ABSTRACT

This thesis provides a microhistory of the Clarksville Contraband Camp in Montgomery County, Tennessee (1863–1869), and examines the camp's origins, its turbulent life, and its evolution into a permanent Black settlement. The research demonstrates how newly acquired economic capital, specifically via United States Colored Troops veterans and widows' pensions, provided a path for legal land ownership. Aided by two former Union officers turned claim agents, these former refugees and soldiers created a permanent Black community out of the former contraband camp. By reclaiming this forgotten narrative, and thereby the land upon which it happened, this thesis then advocates for the preservation and public interpretation of that former contraband camp, which lies mostly on the site of Austin Peay State University.

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Introduction: A Visit to the Celestial City

In November 1866, a local author dipped their pen in scorn to describe the village that had risen from a Union contraband camp in Clarksville, Tennessee. Aiming to walk to a previously remembered forest near the river, the author and company found themselves on the edge of the village. In a piece dripping with racist sarcasm, they wrote:

This place is the outpost of the Celestial City, and from it begins a street, that runs through the center of the Metropolis... [The land] spoke eloquently of a new and surprising change... called to mind the speedily coming extinction of the ancient white owners of the soil... before the march of the African, and his superior intellectuality.

The author and friends walked through the Freedmen's village, noting what was once romantically wooded was now denuded of forest, the trees replaced by "innumerable little patches of corn and tobacco, pumpkins, cabbages, etc." They paused at the "evidences of loftier civilizations" and "matchless architectural splendors" as they walked down a dirt path through the village. White teachers at the Freedmen's school and a local white minister, who sold land to the Freedmen, especially caught their attention. Finishing the article, the author wrote "our white race came to the Western world and despoiled the poor Indians of the lands that belonged to them, and they are rapidly becoming extinct. We must in turn expect to be stripped of our possessions by a superior race, and disappear before them."¹ The author's choice of "Celestial City" was a tongue-in-cheek insult because they were referencing John Bunyan's 1678 classic, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, in which the Celestial City is an allegory for Heaven, a symbol of ultimate purity, divine order, and the reward for a righteous life. To the 19th-century reader, the name evoked an image of a perfectly harmonious world as ordained by God. The author weaponized this sacred symbol, applying it to a Black community he viewed as the embodiment

¹ A Visit to the Celestial City. *Clarksville Weekly Chronicle*, 16 November 1866, 3.

of social chaos and impurity. Their goal was to create a blasphemous joke, thereby mocking the very existence of this newfound Black freedom.

Yet, the author unknowingly touched upon a powerful truth. For the hundreds of self-emancipating men, women, and children who found refuge there in Clarksville, the camp *was* a kind of Celestial City. They, too, were pilgrims. Their journey was not an allegory but a desperate flight from the very real “City of Destruction” that was chattel slavery. Their path was a perilous one, a pilgrimage toward the promise of freedom. The destination, though lacking streets of gold, was the first place they could begin to build a new community, create order out of the chaos of bondage, and claim their own lives.

By the end of 1863, Union-occupied Clarksville was a “City of Refuge” for self-emancipating Black refugees from slavery. Starting at the beginning of U.S. Army occupation of Clarksville, refugees made the perilous journey to safety behind Union lines. At a nearby plantation, John Barker enslaved sixty-three men, women, and children, all of whom left the plantation over the course of two years. Some, like Taylor, left right after President Lincoln announced the Emancipation Proclamation. Major, Elick, and Lucian waited several months to leave, but after the passing of General Order 143, which established the United States Colored Troop (USCT), went to Clarksville and enlisted in the Army.² Others like Daphne, Sooke, and Nellie left the plantation and came to the Army’s contraband camp.³

Barkers was just one of dozens of plantations in the region, large and small, where refugees fled places of enslavement for the perceived safety and opportunity behind Union lines in Clarksville, the refugee’s actions a microcosm of how Black people turned the tide of the

² War Department General Order 143 Ordering the Creation of the U.S. Colored Troops; 22 May 1863; Orders and Circulars, 1797 - 1910; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 94; NARA

³ John Nick Barker journal. 1843-1869. Clarksville Montgomery County Library. Entries for 1862-1865.

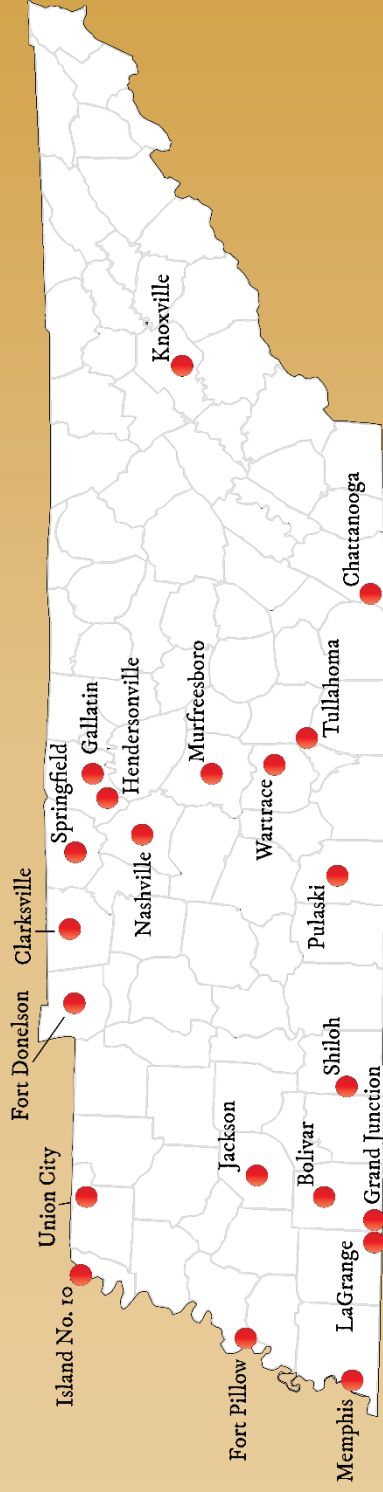
American Civil War. Clarksville's location, just a few miles south of the Tennessee-Kentucky line, and its substantial U.S. Army garrison also meant that it was a destination for enslaved people fleeing Confederate-sympathizing counties in southern Kentucky. Like all of the war-impacted South, Clarksville's cultural and physical landscape was forever changed.⁴

Designated as "contrabands" by the U.S. military, these refugees clustered in makeshift communities around U.S. Army garrisons across the South. These hundreds of sites, which ranged from informal, squalid settlements to formally administered camps, created new landscapes of freedom, yet the history of the contraband camp phenomenon remains profoundly underrepresented in preservation efforts (see figure 1). Most of these physical spaces are not recorded in standard community narratives, nor are their stories. Oftentimes, they are completely forgotten. Historian Amy Murrell Taylor records nearly 300 contraband camps across the U.S. South, of which at least twenty-three were in Tennessee alone.⁵ As of 2025, only six of these sites are preserved in any capacity at all. Some, like Camp Nelson National Historical Monument, provide full-scale preservation and interpretation efforts. Others, like the Cairo, Illinois contraband camp are only a historical marker. Otherwise, the remaining 294 sites are relatively unknown. Much work is still needed here and is addressed more completely in chapter three.

⁴ For an excellent overview of Contraband Camps during the Civil War, see Amy Murrell Taylor, *Embattled Freedom*, Introduction.

⁵ Identifying these sites requires research into primary source records, namely the Freedman's Bureau records, but also correspondence between officials responsible for the pre-Bureau camps in their respective Department and Post correspondence.

Contraband Camps in Tennessee, 1862-1865



Discovering and reclaiming these spaces, both in terms of representation in the preserved landscape and in the narrative, demands meticulous, localized studies to unearth their truth. To this end, this thesis provides a microhistory of the Clarksville Contraband Camp in Montgomery County, Tennessee, which operated from its informal beginnings in the fall of 1863 until its official closure in September 1865. It is also about the Freedmen's village that evolved out of the camp and was made legitimate by USCT widows and veterans purchasing land. Situated in a critical hub for the regional tobacco trade, Clarksville was a region where Black people constituted nearly fifty percent of the population. Ignoring the narratives of these self-emancipated refugees is therefore ignoring the very foundation of the post-war social order. By examining the camp's origins, its turbulent internal life, its critical role as a base for USCT recruitment, and its eventual evolution into a permanent Black settlement, this work argues that the Contraband Camp was the bedrock of modern Black community formation in Clarksville.

This thesis argues that Black war widows, white abolitionist lawyers, and post-war economic distress converged at the right time in Clarksville to create an unprecedented opportunity for Black land ownership, especially that of Black women. Leveraging extensive primary sources, I rely heavily on the rich, human detail found within USCT widows' pension applications. These documents, which record every facet of these women's lives from their marriages under slavery to the burial of their children at the camp, reveal the intricate web of kinship, loss, and mutual support that defined their camp experiences (see figure 2). The applications ensured that USCT widows were entitled to the capital provided by the Federal pension system, enabling them to purchase land. While white Clarksville initially denied the sale of land, an economic downturn and the disposal of land by a backlogged chancery court provided the specific avenue for land sales to the Black community. The convergence of this newly

acquired economic capital with unprecedented opportunity to own land provided the legal and financial backbone for the community's future.

[Sold by J. H. H. WOODWARD, Louisville, Ky.]

This Army Pension Declaration must be submitted before a Judge or Clerk of a Court of Record, and if before the Judge, the Clerk thereof will certify said Judge's official capacity and signature, and attest the same under the seal of the Court.

☞ A Justice of the Peace must not authenticate this paper. If he does the work is utterly useless, and must be all done over again before a Judge or Clerk of a Court of Record, as first stated.

[illegible]

That (10) No child was taken from the above named children
from Lamine River, I have children living, by a former teacher.

If applicant makes her mark, let two persons who write their names attested her signature; the officer administering the oath must not be one of the attesting parties.

ATTEST:

ATTEST:
David McCormick
W. W. Bennett

Kitty ^{her} Mc Reynolds Applicant.

Sworn to, subscribed, and acknowledged before me, the day and year first above written, and also personally appeared Henry Garrett last 100th U.S.C. Reg. and Rebecca Garrett residents of the County of City of Belakouk in the State of Minnesota persons whom I certify to be respectable and entitled to credit, and who, being by me duly sworn, say that they were present and saw Mrs. Kitty M. Reynolds (11) make her (12) mark to the foregoing declaration; and they further swear that they have every reason to believe, from the appearance of the applicant and their acquaintance with her, that she is the identical person she represents herself to be, and that they have no interest in the prosecution of this claim. that they did present a new and marriage performed as do all plain
have been alleged

If the witnesses, or either of them, make their mark, let two persons who can write their names attest the signatures. The officer administering the oath must not be one of the

ATTEST

ATTEST:
David McComick
H. W. Barker

Two witnesses

Henry ^{his} Garrett
 Piretta ^{his} Garrett

Sworn to and subscribed before me, this Seventh day of February, A. D. 186 6

Figure 1. Typical widows pension application

This project is situated within a still-developing historiography. Influenced by the field's social turn in the 1960s, late twentieth-century scholarship focused on the concept of Black agency and the social revolution of emancipation. Prior to this, the history of contraband camps was scattered and often treated as a footnote in military histories. The most essential works focus on correcting that by reestablishing forgotten narratives, while also attempting to understand the realities of how these camps worked for Freedmen and the process of emancipation. This historiography, young as it is, is part of the larger, and older, debate about "who freed the slaves?" The traditional narrative holds that it was President Lincoln who freed the slaves, his administration and policymaking during the war, specifically the Emancipation Proclamation. Vincent Harding pushed back against this idea in 1981 in *There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America*: "...the relentless movement of the self-liberated fugitives into the Union lines...took their freedom into their own hand."⁶ According to Harding, the Slaves freed themselves by their own determined action. James McPherson later wrote in response to the scholarship that followed Harding's lead, that we cannot discount the role of Lincoln in freeing the slaves. McPherson's top-down approach says that while some self-emancipation did happen, this was "very different from abolition" of slavery. Abolition "required Union victory; it required Lincoln's reelection in 1864; it required the thirteenth amendment."⁷ Ira Berlin, perhaps McPherson's biggest critic, wrote in response to McPherson's assertion that "If the Emancipation Proclamation speaks to the central role of constituted authority...it speaks no less loudly to the role of ordinary men and women."⁸

⁶ As quoted in James McPherson, "Who Freed The Slaves?", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 139, no.1 (1995): 1.

⁷ McPherson, 9

⁸ Ira Berlin, "Who Freed the Slaves?: Emancipation and Its Meaning," in *Union and Emancipation: Essays on Politics and Race in the Civil War Era*, David Blight and Brooks Simpson, eds. (Kent State Press: 1997), p.121

The Freedmen and Southern Society Project's multi-volume *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation* documentary project, of which Berlin was an editor and to which McPherson called a purveyor of "new orthodoxy", cemented Harding's assertion with its foundation of modern scholarship on Civil War emancipation.⁹ By collecting and publishing thousands of primary source documents, the Project demonstrated the massive scale of the contraband phenomenon. It established that hundreds of thousands of formerly enslaved people sought refuge within Union lines, and their presence fundamentally shaped Union military strategy and federal policy. By placing the voices and actions of formerly enslaved people at the center of the narrative, the project elevated the study of emancipation from a minor topic to a central component of Civil War history, proving that the struggle for freedom was an active, mass movement.¹⁰

Within the study of contraband camps specifically, studies written earlier than Harding have framed the discussion of refugee freedom within a complex mechanism of refugee persistence and determination and military policy made in response. Willie Lee Rose's *Rehearsal for Reconstruction* is a critical departure from military-focused histories, providing a deep analysis of the Port Royal Experiment in South Carolina, where the Union first attempted to manage the transition from slavery to freedom. Rose shows how the Union's efforts to govern,

⁹ Berlin, 108; McPherson, 9

¹⁰ This series includes: Series 1, volume 1, *The Destruction of Slavery*, ed. Ira Berlin, Barbara J. Fields, Thavolia Glymph, Joseph P. Reidy, and Leslie S. Rowland (Cambridge University Press, 1985); Series 1, volume 2, *The Wartime Genesis of Free Labor: The Upper South*, ed. Ira Berlin, Steven F. Miller, Joseph P. Reidy, and Leslie S. Rowland (Cambridge University Press, 1993); Series 1, volume 3, *The Wartime Genesis of Free Labor: The Lower South*, ed. Ira Berlin, Thavolia Glymph, Steven F. Miller, Joseph P. Reidy, Leslie S. Rowland, and Julie Saville (Cambridge University Press, 1990); Series 2, *The Black Military Experience*, ed. Ira Berlin, Joseph P. Reidy, and Leslie S. Rowland (Cambridge University Press, 1982); Series 3, volume 1, *Land and Labor, 1865*, ed. Steven Hahn, Steven F. Miller, Susan E. O'Donovan, John C. Rodrigue, and Leslie S. Rowland (University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Series 3, volume 2, *Land and Labor, 1866–1867*, ed. René Hayden, Anthony E. Kaye, Kate Masur, Steven F. Miller, Susan E. O'Donovan, Leslie S. Rowland, and Stephen A. West (University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

educate, and employ freedmen served as an important model and test case for federal policy toward emancipation and the later Reconstruction era. Rose also establishes the idea that this experience was a "rehearsal" for the Reconstruction period that followed the war.¹¹

Louis Gerteis adds to this argument a comprehensive analysis of the legal and logistical challenges the Union Army faced in handling the massive influx of formerly enslaved people. His work is essential for understanding how the "contraband of war" label evolved into a formal policy of freedom. Gerteis demonstrates how the sheer numbers of formerly enslaved people seeking refuge forced Union officials to create new legal categories and administrative systems, ultimately culminating in the creation of the Freedmen's Bureau. His work shows that emancipation was not just a moral decision but one made in response to a social crisis that the camps themselves created.¹²

In *Time Full of Trial*, Patricia Click re-establishes the narrative of the forgotten Roanoke Island Freedmen's Colony. Click provides an excellent example of a compelling and detailed microhistory of the Freedmen's Colony and contraband camp. Focusing predominantly on the experiences of white missionaries and soldiers single, Click lays out a how the Reverend James created a colony based on New England villages where Freedmen were allotted lots for living and farming. James was able to test many northern abolitionist notions of community-building in the colony while the camp became a test case for early Federal policy on contraband camps. Intended to become a permanent freedmen's village, the Federal government restored the property to white landowners at the close of the war, returning the Freedmen to the mainland to continue their new lives, stripped of the land and homes they thought were theirs to keep. The

¹¹ Willie Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment*, (Bobbs-Merrill, 1964).

¹² Louis S. Gerteis, *From Contraband to Freedman: Federal Policy Toward Southern Blacks, 1861–1865*, (Greenwood Press: 1973). Bobby Lovett also explored this on a regional scale in Bobby L. Lovett, *The African-American History of Nashville, Tennessee, 1780-1930: Elites and Dilemmas*, (University of Arkansas Press, 1999).

Roanoke colony provides an example of what was the more common result of the end of War on newly established Freedmen communities.¹³

In the past decade, two benchmark studies have pivoted the conversation about contraband camps towards the genesis of community within the camps. These are a critical departure from pendulum swing between McPherson and Harding and show that the two perspectives are not mutually exclusive. Refugees did force the issue by coming into Union lines. And the military responded with policy to manage the situation but also to aid and bolster its own strategies. In *Troubled Refuge*, Chandra Manning argues that contraband camps were as much places of community genesis as they were places of immense suffering. Manning views citizenship as an evolving process, much like emancipation is typically discussed, and this liminal space was continually negotiated by Freedpeople and their relationships to the U.S. Army. Black women are especially central to Manning's analysis. She states, "It was not as soldiers or as spouses to somebody else but as themselves that most black women came into contact with the U.S. Government, aided the breakdown of slavery, and built alliances with soldiers, the Union Army, and the national government in the era of the Civil War."¹⁴ This thesis extends Manning's argument past the war years by illustrating how lands purchased by widows of USCT soldiers helped establish a permanent community out of the Clarksville contraband camp.

Likewise, Amy Murrell Taylor turns to the stories of the refugees themselves to demonstrate her larger point: that "military necessity"- meaning the Army frequently made decisions for the refugees based on what best served the army's immediate strategic and

¹³ Patricia C. Click, *Time Full of Trial: The Roanoke Island Freedmen's Colony, 1862-1867* (University of North Carolina Press, 2001)

¹⁴ Chandra Manning, *Troubled Refuge: Struggling for Freedom in the Civil War*. (Vintage Books, 2016), 16.

logistical needs. Taylor employs several micro-histories to demonstrate the evolving relationships between the U.S. Army and refugees. Beyond her humanizing approach to discussing Civil War refugees, Taylor's discussion on community creation is especially appropriate. She states that the closing of refugee camps in Fall 1865 disrupted and destroyed new African American community efforts. Legal ownership of land, she writes, was the only real solution for community longevity, but those efforts were fleeting at best. This thesis stands as an example of the rare solution Taylor discussed: the process of community creation from the Clarksville contraband camp via legal ownership.¹⁵

Other works show how variable the process of community creation from contraband camps was. Katherine Chilton highlights that refugees migrated to Washington, D.C. not just for safety, but with the specific goal of forming independent households and controlling their own labor. The resulting settlements, including Freedmen's Village at Arlington, VA, show a collective effort to build community institutions like churches and schools, core endeavors to community making.¹⁶ Gavin Gerard Harrell builds on this and describes how the Arlington Freedmen's Village evolved into multiples lasting settlements. Harrell emphasizes that while the residents' own protests and collective action initially kept the village open for a time, the Federal government still closed the camp, and its inhabitants were forced to leave and create other nearby, more permanent communities.¹⁷ Abigail Cooper expands the discussion by viewing the camps through a cultural and religious lens. She calls them "incubators for revolutionary revival" where refugees transformed strangers into kin and created their own social order, a process seen

¹⁵ Amy Murrell Taylor, *Embattled Freedom: Journeys through the Civil War's Slave Refugee Camps* (University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 216-218.

¹⁶ Katherine Chilton, "'City of Refuge': Urban Labor, Gender, and Family Formation during Slavery and the Transition to Freedom in the District of Columbia, 1820-1875" (PhD diss., Carnegie Mellon University, 2009)

¹⁷ Gavin Gerard Harrell, "Arlington's Freedmen's Village: Becoming Untethered" (PhD diss., Liberty University, 2022)

in the records of the Clarksville Contraband Camp. She offers the Grand Contraband Camp in Hampton, Virginia, as an example of a settlement that grew from nothing into a "thriving, self-made" community, highlighting the internal strength and cultural cohesion that made a physical place a true home. The creation of churches and benevolent societies, Cooper says, are the foundations of community.¹⁸ Collectively, these works show that permanent community creation out of contraband camps were, as Taylor says, rare.

Most of the spaces where contraband camps were located are lost to development or gentrification. Thus, cross-disciplinary work is essential to the future of contraband camp studies and the preservation of such places. Katherine Erica Seeber's work on Mitchelville, South Carolina is a great example of this kind of work. Mitchelville was a federally sanctioned "experiment," but its residents took that opportunity and actively built a self-governing town with an elected council and a mayor. Seeber notes that despite a subsequent historical erasure, the descendants of Mitchelville maintain a deep connection to the land and the memory of their ancestors.¹⁹ Leveraging archaeology and GIS, Seeber demonstrates the modern community's connection to the past and a lost landscape. Clelie Cottle Peacock has made similar observations at the Bass Street community that Freedmen established at the foot Fort Negley in Nashville, TN. These places are still here in the archaeological record, if we know where to look, which emphasizes the need for microhistory. These kinds of cross-disciplinary analyses are critical toward future understanding of the Clarksville Contraband Camp.²⁰

¹⁸ Abigail Cooper, "'Lord, Until I Reach My Home': Inside the Refugee Camps of the American Civil War" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2015)

¹⁹ Katherine Erica Seeber, "Addressing Community Erasure with Community-Based, Participatory Research at Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park, Hilton Head Island, SC" (PhD diss., Binghamton University, State University of New York, 2024).

²⁰ Clelie Cottle Peacock, "On an Unshakeable Foundation: An Archaeological Investigation of the Postemancipation Black Community of Bass Street, the Church They Built, and the Lasting Identity They Formed in Nashville, Tennessee. (MA thesis, University of Southern Mississippi, 2024).

Finally, this thesis addresses the public memory of the Clarksville contraband camp and its hopeful preservation and public interpretation. By examining the historical erasure of the camp, its cemetery, and the ensuing Black neighborhood, this work engages with scholarship on the contested memory of the Civil War in the South. As David Blights writes in *Race and Reunion*, post-war Americans were faced with defining and untangling two profound lenses of Civil War memory – “healing and justice”.²¹ As a narrative of reconciliation between North and South won out over a narrative of emancipation, which favored equality, places like Clarksville (as did the nation, as Blight argues) emphasized “healing” over “justice”. Dwelling in the memory of the contraband camp impeded that process, especially in the ways that white Clarksville envisioned its own healing. Conversely, the Contraband camp was also forgotten by the Black community in Clarksville, as were the hundreds of refugees buried in its cemetery. But as Blight assesses, “African Americans could not afford the despair born of short-term defeats, however; their sense of history had to embrace a long view...”.²² By reintroducing the camp’s narrative, this thesis hopes for augmentation of that long view, public awareness and eventual preservation of its physical environ. I believe this thesis can help shift the Clarksville site towards an interpreted cultural asset, thereby confronting the legacy of historical oversight through high-quality stewardship of that cultural landscape.

Primary Sources and Methodology:

I grew up in Clarksville and was very familiar with the standard, local Civil War narrative: The U.S. Army took Clarksville early in 1862. Except for a brief period early on,

²¹ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 3

²² Blight, 304

Clarksville remained under the control of the U.S. Army, which then finished the incomplete Confederate Fort Sevier, renaming it Fort Bruce. In keeping with most local southern histories, the social history of the Civil War in Clarksville was largely one with a Confederate soldier orientation. A few skirmishes here and there, and for the most part that was the narrative. In recent years, however, scholars have coaxed more intricate Clarksville stories from more diverse sources. Published diaries and letters of local Confederate women present a remarkable, gendered perspective on the local narrative, albeit Confederate ones. The women express their frustrations with the dissolution of slavery and the domino effect it had on their personal lives, their hatred of Union soldiers, and in Sarah Kennedy's case, her survival in the absence of her Confederate Treasury employee husband.²³

Richard Gildrie has elaborated on the expansive guerrilla war and post-war violence that enveloped much of Montgomery County and the surrounding region. Focusing on the lower Cumberland valley around Fort Donelson and Clarksville, TN, Gildrie demonstrates that Guerilla's, and the community's support of these men, provided a quasi-Confederate control behind Union lines. In his article *Lynch Law and the Great Clarksville Fire of 1878*, Gildrie shows an 1878 Clarksville as riddled with racial tension. After the lynching of a Black man, tensions boiled over into a riot resulting in a massive fire which consumed most of downtown Clarksville.²⁴

²³ Minoa Uffelman et al., eds., *The Diary of Nannie Haskins Williams: A Southern Woman's Story of Rebellion and Reconstruction, 1863-1890* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2014); Minoa Uffelman et al., *The Diary of Serepta Jordan: A Working-Class Woman's Story of the Civil War* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2020); Minoa Uffelman et al., eds., *The Civil War Letters of Sarah Kennedy: Life Under Occupation in the Upper South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2023).

²⁴ Richard P. Gildrie, "Lynch Law and the Great Clarksville Fire of 1878: Social Order in a New South Town." *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (1983): 58–75; Richard P. Gildrie, "Guerrilla Warfare in the Lower Cumberland River Valley, 1862-1865." *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (1990): 161–76.

Others, like Phyllis Smith, have worked toward the preservation of a local African American cemetery, Mt. Olive.²⁵ This cemetery is the successor to the African Burial Ground discussed in this thesis and is the final resting place of many USCT soldiers. Smith's research on these soldiers has also resulted in the identification of the 101st USCT headquarters, on the Austin Peay State University campus. Smith's work resulted in a Tennessee State Historical marker installed at the headquarters site as well as a USCT monument installed at Fort Defiance historic site in Clarksville.²⁶ Other public history-oriented work has happened under Frederick Murphy and Tracey Jepson, who have worked diligently to have State Historical Markers installed for the downtown Clarksville Slave Market and the Negro Fair Grounds. This thesis's public history component continues the necessary work done by these scholars.

My interest in the Clarksville Contraband Camp began with my research for the Affricanna Town state historical marker at Dunbar Cave State Park, which is when I learned about the Freedmen's Bureau records.²⁷ This work relies heavily on the detailed information about the Clarksville contraband camp found in the records of the Freedman's Bureau which are essential for understanding the wartime, and post-war Black story in the United States. Found in National Archives record group 105, they are an immense record group and can be unwieldy to grasp, but fortunately, the National Museum of African American History and Culture has

²⁵ More on the preservation efforts underway by the Mt. Olive Cemetery Historical Preservation Society can be found at: <https://mtolivechps.weebly.com/>.

²⁶ Fort Defiance is the site of Fort Bruce and the chosen name for the site. It is a city park and preserves and protects the earthworks from the fort and provides an interpretive center and educational programming.

²⁷ Affricanna (sic) Town was a community of Freedmen established on the plantation of John Barker, near Dunbar Cave. Barker's journal mentions the community on several occasions, first in 1865 and finally in 1867. The location near Dunbar Cave was also near the property line between Barker and the much larger Warfield plantation. Hinging on Michael Vlach's assertions in "Behind the Big House", it is possible there was already a community present between the two plantations. Either way, it was an ideal place for living due to the several springs. The 1870 Federal census confirms the presence of Freedmen living near the cave. Affricanna Town is interpreted at Dunbar Cave State Park via a State Historical Marker, and three wayside interpretive panels.

facilitated the transcription of these records via the Smithsonian Transcription Center.²⁸ This effort has created an unprecedented opportunity to utilize this resource like never before.

The traditional narrative of the Civil War in Clarksville, while not inherently wrong, is incomplete at best. This is a result of over-reliance on records such as the Official Record, which, if combed through for mentions of Clarksville will present a narrative comprised entirely of troop movements, skirmishes, and the initial 1862 occupation of Clarksville. By shifting our view to other sets of primary sources, especially ones of a mostly social nature, a new narrative emerges. More than just the site of a minor Civil War fortification, Clarksville was a landscape of freedom for thousands of self-emancipating people, seeking refuge from slavery.

The Freedmen's Bureau records unveil a historical voice particularly difficult for historians to discover: that of Black women. Recorded in the correspondence between Freedmen's Bureau officials, their stories are heroic and at times gruesome, due to the violence perpetrated on their bodies by white enslavers. The stories found in the Freedmen's Bureau records led me to investigate pension applications filed by these widows, found in the *Civil War and Later Pension Files*, RG 15 in the National Archives.²⁹ I accessed some of these via Fold 3 or the National Archives catalog, but several required in-person visits to the National Archives in Washington, D.C. Understanding the value of the Widow's pensions was a gradual process. The more I spent time with them, the more I gleaned. To produce the dataset I used, I first identified pension applications filed from Clarksville. This was a geographical requisite for the study. Next, I identified applications that were filed because of the death of a soldier-husband in wartime

²⁸ Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Tennessee, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1869. Record Group 105, NARA, Washington, D.C. Accessed via the National Museum of African American History and Culture's transcription project: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/freedmens-bureau>.

²⁹ Civil War and Later Pension Files; Department of Veterans Affairs, RG 15, NARA, Washington, D.C. Partially digitized via www.Fold3.com and the National Archives on-line catalog.

service. Most often this meant the soldier had died from disease, but in limited cases this was combat-related injuries. This generally equated to pensions filed prior to early 1866, when the U.S. Army discharged the 101st and 16th regiments in Nashville. These were typically filed within two or three days after the soldier's death and, in Clarksville, handled by J.C. McMullen and J. Jay Buck, former Union officers turned lawyers and claim agents. This resulted in eighty-two pension applications that contributed to the dataset.³⁰ (see Appendix B)

Finally, I looked for pension applications that noted the widows' place of residence at the time of filing as at or near to the contraband camp. This resulted in thirty-four pension applications by widows with direct ties to the contraband camp. I did not focus exclusively on these women, however, as the greater dataset of eighty-three provided critical information about contraband experience – they just did not permanently settle there.

In each pension application there is a cover page, or the actual application. The remainder of the shuck of documents are a mix of depositions, interviews, and medical records, among others. The cover pages were filled out by pension agents – either McMullen or Buck in Clarksville. The agents would then facilitate depositions from people that could verify the marriage between the widow and the soldier. These depositions are a treasure trove of genealogical information. They knew the intricate web of marital and familial ties between plantations in the region from which they came. These records should not be overlooked as a resource for African American genealogy.

³⁰ To say there are more applicable pensions to examine is probably an understatement. I focused on soldiers who served in the 101st and 16th Infantry regiments, as these were both raised in Clarksville and certainly contribute the bulk of available data. However, the Bounty Pay book kept from 1869-1871 shows that soldiers from twenty-six other USCT regiments received bounty pay in Clarksville during those years.³⁰ The extent to which these soldiers' families lived in the contraband camps, or if they located to Clarksville after the war has yet to be examined, though it certainly should.

Land records proved to be another challenge entirely. While it became clear that wartime widows were purchasing property as early as 1866, the actual recorded deeds in the County archives rarely aligned with what I saw in the Freedmen's Bureau records and in the Pension application depositions. For instance, a letter between Freedmen's Bureau officers gives the names of nine widows who purchased lots with their payments, but I can only locate four of these women in the county deed books. This appears to be in part because some white land sellers sold property to Freedmen on annual installments. If the installments were not paid, the Black owners were evicted. Only upon full payment did the white seller make a deed to the new Black owner. Some sales were only recorded in chancery court estate auctions. Most of the initial sales in the subdivisions discussed in this thesis were sold in this way. Payments to the court, and delinquencies, for these properties were recorded in chancery minutes until the estate was officially settled. These sales were rarely recorded in the deed books.

Newspaper delinquent property tax lists can provide more detail.³¹ These publications listed Freedmen who owed property tax for the previous year and include those whose purchases were not yet recorded in the county deed books. Another complicating factor is that it was not uncommon for deed transactions to go unrecorded for years at a time, even among white citizens. Taken together, these situations provide a hazy picture of lands sales, at best.

This thesis is organized into three sections. Chapter 1 amends Clarksville's Civil War metanarrative by adding a more diverse primary source base that does not overlook the role of occupation, emancipation, and the contraband camp. This chapter details the initial, rapid influx of refugees (primarily from Kentucky), the military necessity that prompted its formal organization under officers like Captain William K. Brunt, and the active role of camp residents

³¹ For example, see *Clarksville Tobacco Leaf*, 14 June 1871.

in building social structures and infrastructure, including housing, schools in the seized Stewart College building, and large-scale, self-sustaining agricultural operations. It emphasizes the profound struggles of this period, documenting the rampant disease, the heartbreaking mortality rate, and the daily negotiations for rations, housing, and protection that defined the camp experience, particularly as evidenced by the mass burials in the unmarked Refugee cemetery.

Chapter 2 traces the immediate postwar transition from contraband camp to permanent village. This chapter analyzes how the collective bonds forged in the camp, particularly among the community of USCT widows, transformed the refugee site into a lasting settlement. It highlights the mechanism by which the financial security provided by USCT pensions and bounties was channeled through abolitionist claim agents like J.C. McMullen to successfully facilitate unprecedented Black land ownership via Montgomery County Chancery court land sales. This process led to the creation of geographically segregated neighborhoods—like Taylor’s Hill and Grattan’s Grove on the city’s periphery, illustrating the complex, dual nature of the post-emancipation landscape defined both by Black achievement and systemic white spatial control.

Chapter 3 addresses the enduring legacy and memorialization of the site. This chapter explores the historical forces that led to the erasure of the camp's memory, examining both the purposeful "forgetting" by the white elite through land speculation and the necessary communal "forgetting" rooted in the trauma of loss. It argues for the critical preservation and public interpretation of this sacred landscape, particularly as it underlies a major public university campus today. By advocating for a collaborative preservation strategy, this work seeks to reclaim the story of the Celestial City as a testament to the thousands of pilgrims who, through immense

loss and determination, forged their own freedom on this ground and laid the undeniable foundation for Clarksville's enduring Black community.

Bringing new primary records into the historical conversation fundamentally reframes the story of the Civil War in Clarksville, moving the focus far beyond the narrow, traditional account; this fresh narrative becomes significantly more detailed, more accurate, and better integrated into the national context, powerfully reminding us that the Civil War's consequences reached far beyond battlefield skirmishes and fortifications. Clarksville's Civil War narrative becomes Blacker, as although the Black community's story in Clarksville was already underway, it was permanently transformed by the collective experiences in and around the contraband camp. A new and enduring narrative was born where the flow of people escaping slavery encountered the U.S. Army; in this critical intersection, the widows of USCT soldiers received capital that they leveraged to transform that new landscape of freedom into the permanent foundation for the future Black community in Clarksville.

This thesis helps reclaim the Celestial City and this "lost" narrative of the Civil War in Clarksville. It advocates for public interpretation of the contraband camp on the landscape where it took place; that is, primarily the campus of Austin Peay State University. As students walk from Browning building to Harned Hall, or from the Dunn Center to the Music/Mass Comm building, they are unknowingly traversing over the very same landscape where thousands of refugees from slavery began their own personal journey into freedom. The goal of this thesis, then, is to connect the information in this study to this historic landscape in meaningful and substantive ways that bring remembrance and honor to those refugees and their freedom quests, while also edifying and enhancing the experience of Clarksville residents today.

Chapter 1. “I soon got so I wanted to be free”: The Clarksville Contraband Camp, Fall 1863- Fall 1865.

On 9 January 1900, a seventy-year-old Louisa Harper sat with Federal pension examiner C.D. Sloan and told him about her journey toward freedom, which began in Powhatan, VA, some fifty-plus years earlier. Louisa’s story, and the private details of her life, were required to justify her continued widow’s pension. Louisa was married three times in her life, first to Richard Turpin, the father of her two sons. “The white people separated us”, she said as she told the examiner of how her enslaver decided to move to Kentucky to be closer to her father, taking Louisa and her two sons with her.³² Some years later, Louisa married again, but this husband died an early death. In 1858, she married Green Harper, who lived on a plantation across the river from her. Their enslavers even granted them a legal license for their marriage. Louisa’s son, Joe Farley, later recounted that he “got so I wanted to be free.”³³ In the summer of 1864, both Green and Joe left near Cadiz, KY and came to Clarksville, TN to enlist in the USCT. Louisa soon followed them to Clarksville, where the rest of her life unfolded in a U.S. Army contraband camp and the Black community that was birthed by the camp’s presence. Thousands of others with stories like Louisa’s and Joe’s, yet still distinctively their own, came to U.S. Army-occupied Clarksville during the Civil War. Like Farley, each came into Clarksville because they also wanted to be free. Over the course of 1863 – 1865, these refugees navigated their new, liminal legal status and laid the groundwork for a permanent Black community. This chapter lays out the story of this contraband camp.

³² Louisa Harper, widow pension application no. 87,423; service of Green Harper (Pvt., Co. D, 101st USCT, Civil War); Civil War and Later Pension Files; Department of Veterans Affairs, RG 15, NARA

³³ Ophelia Settle Egypt, *Unwritten History of Slavery*, (1945, Fisk University), 49

Contraband camps represent a significant, yet often overlooked, chapter in the history of emancipation and Reconstruction in the Upper South. Likewise, without the inclusion of the contraband camp's story, the Clarksville Civil War narrative is incomplete. While many Civil War contraband camps across the South remain historically neglected, these hundreds of sites are essential to understanding the full scope of the Civil War and the genesis of Black freedom. In places like Clarksville and Montgomery County, where Black people constituted 50% of the population, neglecting the narratives of Black refugees from slavery and emancipation is literally neglecting at least half of the story. While recent scholarship has made key contributions to the historiography of contraband camps, a deeper understanding of these sites requires microhistories—highly detailed studies of specific, localized events. Unfortunately, very few of these places have been preserved or properly studied. Microhistory can help mitigate this problem by linking history to the landscape. The Clarksville camp provides a powerful example of these overlooked landscapes and highlights the pressing need for more localized studies. By examining the story of the Clarksville contraband camp from its creation until its dissolution, this chapter highlights the camp's pivotal role in the lives of Freedmen, both a landscape of freedom – where Black Americans encountered the first steps toward legal personhood- and a precursor to the historical Black community that exists in Clarksville today.

* * *

Clarksville is the county seat of Montgomery County and is situated at the mouth of the Red River on the Cumberland River. It was a key town in the regional tobacco trade which provided robust dark-fired tobacco to the world via New Orleans. Known as the Black Patch for the prevalent growth of dark-fired tobacco, the region encompassed Montgomery and Robertson counties in Tennessee, and then several Kentucky counties northward to the Green River. The

hub of tobacco growth, however, was Montgomery County, Tennessee, and Christian and Todd counties in Kentucky. In 1860, 46% of Montgomery County's population were enslaved Black people. Christian stood at 46% as well, and Todd at 42%.³⁴ Outside of these counties the average population of enslaved people dropped considerably. These three counties represented nearly 25,000 enslaved Black people at the start of the War (see figure 1).

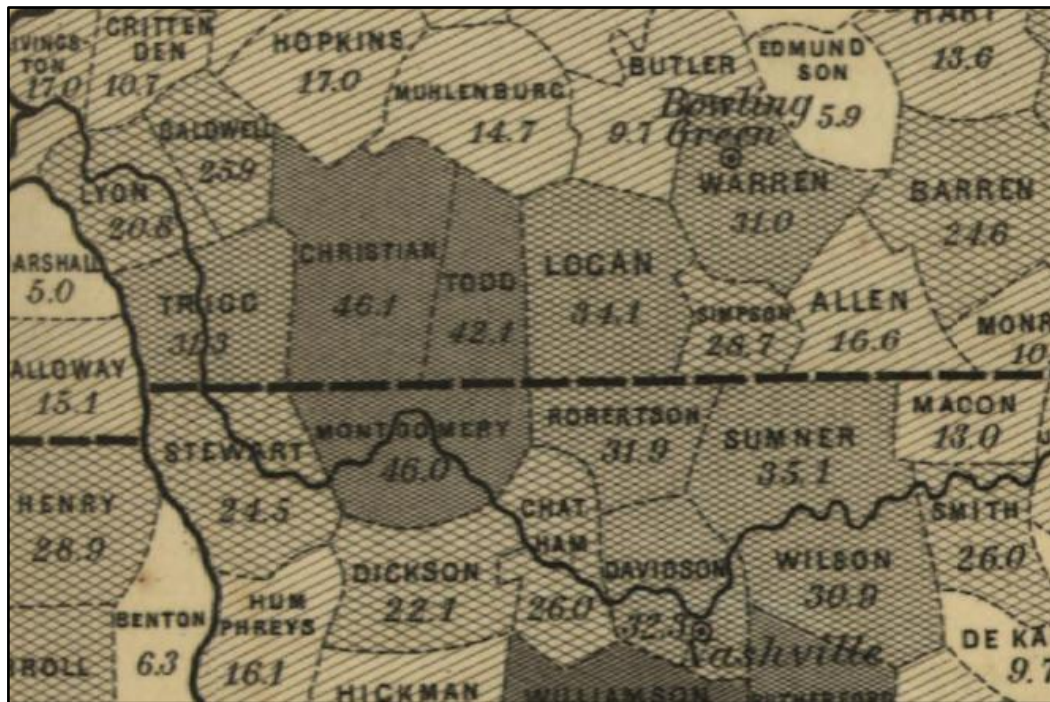


Figure 2. Hergesheimer, E. Map showing the distribution of the slave population of the southern states of the United States Compiled from the census of Washington Henry S. Graham, 1861. Map. <https://www.loc.gov/item/99447026/>

The presence and need for the Contraband camp are inextricably tied to General Order 143 and the creation of the USCT.³⁵ The legal foundations for the USCT and the contraband status of refugee slaves have significant overlap. Most refugees coming into Clarksville either

³⁴ 1860 Federal census data for Montgomery County, TN, and Christian and Todd counties, Kentucky. Accessed via Ancestry.com.

³⁵ War Department General Order 143 Ordering the Creation of the U.S. Colored Troops; 5/22/1863; Orders and Circulars, 1797 - 1910; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 94; NARA.

enlisted in the Army or were the families of those soldiers. Many of the male residents of the Clarksville contraband camp could have experienced either or both in the liminal state between chattel slavery and the passage of the 13th Amendment. While all refugees that came into Clarksville sought some version of freedom or respite, service as a soldier provided the added dimension of manhood. Government sponsored guns provided the ability to protect their families, as did their families living in the contraband camp. Military service also provided a statement of masculinity to themselves and in the eyes of the American public.³⁶ Whether a person's experience was as a soldier or as a Contraband, their status shifted their designation from property to recognized individuals with a tangible pathway to freedom. Either way, reaching Clarksville was paramount.

The pivotal moment in this shift was General Benjamin Butler's now-famous "Contraband Decision." In a stroke of wartime pragmatism at Fort Monroe in Virginia in 1861, Butler declared escaped enslaved people who came into Union lines as "Contrabands of War." This innovative legal interpretation allowed the Union Army to seize and utilize these individuals for their own purposes, bypassing the issue of their return to Confederate enslavers. The three pioneering men whose escape to Fort Monroe initially prompted Butler's decisive ruling were subsequently employed as laborers for the Union Army, setting an important precedent that quickly gained traction with garrison commanders across the South.³⁷

In the wake of Butler's decision, the U.S. Congress codified elements of this new reality into law with the 1861 Confiscation Act, which formally permitted the legal confiscation of

³⁶ E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*, (Basic Books, 1993), 233; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South*, (Oxford, 1997), 191; Lorien Foote, *The Gentlemen and the Roughs: Violence, Honor, and Manhood in the Union Army*, (New York University Press, 2010), 4, 162-165.

³⁷ Benj. F. Butler to Lieutenant Genl. Scott, 27 May 1861, B-99 1861, Letters Received Irregular, Secretary of War, Record Group 107, NARA; *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. [Washington, 1880–1901], series 1, vol. 2, pp. 648–52.

"rebel property."³⁸ However, the specific status of enslaved people under this initial legislation remained ambiguous. The law's scope was limited; it only allowed for the confiscation of enslaved individuals who were actively being used by the Confederate army or those who managed to physically reach the safety of U.S. Army lines. This ambiguity was addressed and strengthened in July 1862 with the passage of the second Confiscation Act, which granted permanent freedom to escaped enslaved people who sought refuge behind Union lines.³⁹ A critical distinction was that while the earlier law allowed for the potential return of "rebel property" to heirs after the named rebel's death, the 1862 Act explicitly prohibited the return of enslaved individuals under any circumstances.

Perhaps the most far-reaching consequences of the 1862 act was Section eleven, authorizing the President to "...employ as many persons of African descent as he may deem necessary and proper for the suppression of this rebellion".⁴⁰ Passed on the same day, the Militia Act strengthened this proposition.⁴¹ The Militia Act granted the Union Army authority to utilize formerly enslaved individuals in virtually "any capacity" within the U.S. Army. This foundational shift laid the groundwork for the official establishment of the Bureau of Colored Troops on May 22, 1863, under General Order 143, marking the beginning of a systematic and organized recruitment effort to enlist Black men into the military.⁴² Following General Order

³⁸ U.S., *Statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations of the United States of America*, vol. 12 (Boston, 1863), p. 319

³⁹ *An Act to suppress Insurrection, to punish Treason and Rebellion, to seize and confiscate the Property of Rebels, and for other Purposes*, Chapter CXCIV., U.S., *Statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations of the United States of America*, vol. 12 (Boston, 1863), pp. 589–92. Hereafter 'Second Confiscation Act'.

⁴⁰ Second Confiscation Act, section 11.

⁴¹ *An Act to amend the Act calling forth the Militia to execute the Laws of the Union, suppress Insurrections, and repel Invasions, approved February twenty-eight, seventeen hundred and ninety-five, and the Acts amendatory thereof, and for other Purposes*. Chapter CCI. U.S., *Statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations of the United States of America*, vol. 12 (Boston, 1863), pp. 597–600.

⁴² War Department General Order 143 Ordering the Creation of the U.S. Colored Troops; 5/22/1863; Orders and Circulars, 1797 - 1910; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 94; NARA.

143, the War Department quietly issued General Order 329 on October 3rd, 1863, which directed that the recruiting of Black troops could begin in Maryland, Missouri, and Tennessee, with Kentucky excluded.⁴³ Secretary of War Edwin Stanton dispatched Major George Stearns to Nashville, Tennessee in early September 1863 to superintend the recruiting of black troops. As part of his operation, Stearns soon ordered recruiting posts established at Clarksville and Gallatin.⁴⁴

In Clarksville, Black enlistment began in late September under the command of U.S. Army officer William K. Brunt. English-born Brunt immigrated with his father and siblings to the U.S. when he was a child. He grew up in Hawesville, Kentucky, but moved to Illinois after Confederate sympathies heightened in his hometown. He joined the 83rd Illinois Infantry regiment in 1862 in Monmouth, Illinois, and was sent to Fort Donelson shortly after the Confederate loss there. Then-corporal Brunt's experience with refugees began that September when Clarksville post commander Col. A.A. Smith ordered Brunt to take charge of 100 "presses" for the Nashville-Northwestern Railroad and send them to Nashville. Throughout October, Brunt assisted in forwarding refugees to Nashville for enlistment in either the USCT or to work on the railroads under General Gillem.⁴⁵

As refugee men came to Clarksville for enlistment, so did their families, increasing pressure on Army discipline and resources. A Syracuse, NY, newspaper correspondent in September described Clarksville as a town where the hillsides were "literally crowded with [refugee] cabins and tents."⁴⁶ Refugees swarmed into Clarksville and nearby New Providence,

⁴³ War Department General Order 329 Authorizing the Enlistment of Slaves in the U.S. Colored Troops; 10/03/1863; Orders and Circulars, 1797 - 1910; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 94; NARA.

⁴⁴ Col. R.D. Mussey to Maj. C.W. Foster, 10 October 1864, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Series 3, Volume 4, 768. Hereafter 'Mussey's Report'.

⁴⁵ Special Order 25, 24 October 1863. General Orders Issued, Records of the Post of Clarksville, entry 303A, RG 393, NARA.

⁴⁶ "Letter From Dixie" *Syracuse Daily Courier & Union*, 22 September 1864.

where they initially settled close to U.S. Army garrisons, presumably for perceived protection from slave patrols that roamed outside the city limits, but also because of the desire to keep together the family units attached to new Army recruits. In October, local Confederate sympathizer Serepta Jordan wrote in her diary that “negroes are flocking into the Yanks here at the fort by the droves.”⁴⁷ After an October order from Colonel Smith, Brunt’s responsibilities were now divided between recruiting men to send to Nashville and caring for refugees settled in Clarksville. Stearns’ focus was on recruitment, but at “about every army depot a crowd of blacks were congregated.”⁴⁸

When the recruitment stations were opened in Clarksville and Gallatin, “slaves ran away from their owners in Kentucky—some came as far as from Louisville—to enlist.”⁴⁹ Kentucky slaves flooded into the Clarksville and Gallatin posts, and Stearns’s agents evidently had few scruples about crossing the Tennessee-Kentucky border to secure recruits. “There are comparatively few more men belonging in [Gallatin] to be recruited,” one agent wrote in mid-October, before proposing a series of expeditions “particularly up near the Kentucky [state] line” and establishing temporary recruiting stations for a period ranging from two days to a week as the best way to secure more men.⁵⁰ On 8 October, civilian enlistment agent C.B. Morse reported to Stearns that the previous post commander, Sanders Bruce, had turned away escaped slaves seeking refuge in Clarksville, but the new commander, Col. A.A. Smith, approved of attempts to

⁴⁷ Serepta Jordan Diary. Minoa Uffleman et al. University of Tennessee Press

⁴⁸ Mussey’s Report, 770

⁴⁹ Mussey’s report, 768

⁵⁰ Unnamed Agent to Stearns, October 13th, 1863. Records of Captain R.D. Mussey, 19th US Infantry, Mustering Officer, Nashville, Relating to the Organization of Colored Troops, and of Major George L. Stearns, Committee on the Organization of Colored Troops, Dept. of the Cumberland, 1863-1864, Entry 1149C, RG 393, Records of Continental Army Commands, 1821-1920, NARA.

enlist black soldiers. "There is now here about one hundred thirty [who] are anxious to enlist. I think they will come fast now," Morse wrote.⁵¹

The rapid increase in population in and around Army camps in Clarksville concerned Colonel Smith. He believed the presence of non-military personnel in military camps created a discipline issue, and on 28 October 1863, Smith issued Special Order 30 that prohibited negro women from military lines, as it "increased demoralization" of the troops.⁵² The commander's concern intensified over the next month when he learned that Black recruits were roving into the countryside to force the release of their wives and others from their enslavers.

By the first of November, Brunt had sent over 500 men from Clarksville to Nashville for enlistment. The refugee population in Clarksville grew considerably that fall and Colonel Smith ordered Brunt to take charge of the "contraband camp barracks" at Clarksville. This was an ad hoc arrangement, as there was no formal contraband camp or management system in place at Clarksville yet. On his arrival, Brunt found "about 100 [refugees], half starved," a persistent problem for the remainder of camp history at Clarksville.⁵³ Brunt "got a requisition and team [and] fed them well."⁵⁴

In November, Stearns ordered recruitment for the 16th regiment of USCT at Clarksville. In the last days of that month, Brunt was promoted to captain and given charge of Company D of the new regiment, all of which intensified the refugee population in Clarksville.⁵⁵ The War

⁵¹ C.B. Morse to General George L. Stearns. October 22, 1863. Records of Capt. R.D. Mussey, 19th U.S. Infantry, Mustering Officer, Nashville, Relating to the Organization of Colored Troops, and of Major George L. Stearns, Committee on the Organizing of Colored Troops, Dept. of the Cumberland and Tennessee, 1863-1864, Entry 1149, RG 393, National Archives, Washington D.C.

⁵² Special Order 30, 28 October 1863, General Orders Issued, Records of the Post of Clarksville, entry 303A, RG 393, NARA.

⁵³ William Brunt to Robert Weir. 2 November 1863. GLC7006. The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, New York. Hereafter 'GL'.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ William Brunt to Martha Weir, 2 December 1863. GL.

Department authorized the first official contraband camp in Tennessee by order on 19 December 1863, but by first of 1864, it was clear that the population of escaped slaves in Clarksville was only growing.⁵⁶ General Granger placed Captain Ralph Hunt in charge of contrabands for the Department of the Cumberland. Nashville received its first camp occupants on 26 January 1864.⁵⁷

Colonel Smith inquired with Captain Hunt, who oversaw the recently established Nashville Contraband camp:

There are within and near the lines of this post a large number of Negro women and children and a few disabled, or decrepit negro men, fugitives who have come in from time to time who are beginning to be objects of charity. Since I have been in command here, I have made every possible effort to exclude them from my lines, but their collection here in considerable numbers has been unavoidable.⁵⁸

Fearing the refugees would be “brought to extreme suffering,” Smith detailed to Hunt how their numbers had increased so that they occupied most of the abandoned buildings in town and proposed a system to organize and care for them. Smith’s logic followed that since most of them were the families of US soldiers, some amount of government protection ought to be afforded to them. Smith proposed “...a system of home colonization upon deserted farms, or some other system established under the auspices of the general gov’t to put them to work at something which shall in some way compensate for the aid and protection which they are likely to

⁵⁶ Mussey’s Report, 770

⁵⁷ Letter of the Secretary of War communicating, In compliance with a resolution of the Senate of the 11th instant, a copy of the report of Hon. Thomas Hood and Hon. S. W. Bostwick, special commissioners upon the condition and treatment of colored refugees in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Alabama. *Senate Executive Documents.*, 38th Cong., 2d sess., no. 28, 1-2.

⁵⁸ Col. A.A. Smith to Capt. Ralph Hunt, 5 March 1864, Letters Sent, Records of the Post of Clarksville, October 1862-November 1865, entry 3023, RG 393. NARA.

require.”⁵⁹ On 5 March, Smith reported to Hunt the results of a census of refugee slaves in Clarksville.⁶⁰ Smith recorded 751 refugees, the majority of which were children.⁶¹

Two thirds of these refugees had arrived in Clarksville since the previous November. Smith wrote that he had tried enforcing every order to keep them out of military lines and largely blamed this on the insufficiency of guard lines and “the negro recruiting here.” Clearly frustrated at the situation, Smith expressed his concern for the refugee’s ability to survive without rations or housing. For this, Smith suggested to Hunt “...some measure be taken to colonize or put them in camp upon the abandoned plantations within this vicinity...or elsewhere in order that they may be placed in a condition to maintain themselves or be properly hired out with assurance of protection to both parties.”⁶² This idea was likely couched in the recent Special Order to establish the contraband camp in Nashville but is also evident of Smith’s familiarity with Butler’s decision at Fort Monroe and its power across the south.

The Clarksville contraband camp was established on the confiscated plantation of wealthy Confederate sympathizer Fisher A. Hannum. Hunt granted the necessary permission, and subsequently, on March 22, 1864, General Rousseau ordered Second Lieutenant Charles D. Irvine of the 16th (USCT) to take charge of and formally establish a contraband camp at Clarksville. Irvine successfully established the camp approximately one mile from the center of Clarksville, locating it on the abandoned Hannum plantation. As originally suggested in Smith’s plan submitted to General Rousseau, Hannum’s was a relatively small plantation, situated about

⁵⁹ Col. A.A. Smith to Captain B.H. Polk, 18 February 1864, Letters Sent, October 1863 – September 1865, Records of the Post of Clarksville. RG 393, entry 3023. NARA

⁶⁰ Col. A.A. Smith to Ralph Hunt, 5 March 1864. Letters Sent, October 1863 – September 1865, Records of the Post of Clarksville. entry 3023, RG 393, NARA.; Special Order 28, 26 October 1864. General Orders Issued, Records of the Post of Clarksville, entry 303A, RG 393, NARA.

⁶¹ Col. A.A. Smith to Ralph Hunt, 5 March 1864. Letters Sent, October 1863 – September 1865, Records of the Post of Clarksville. entry 3023, RG 393, NARA.

⁶² Letters Sent, March 5th, 1864, A.A. Smith to Capt. Ralph Hunt, in charge of Contraband camp in Nashville

one mile northeast of Clarksville, and was nestled among several other smaller plantations belonging to various members of the Clarksville elite. Hannum himself was a wealthy planter and a merchant who heavily relied on the New Orleans trade. He also served as the President of the Confederate Military Board in Clarksville. He eventually fled south to Huntsville, Alabama, in late 1861 and died shortly thereafter from yellow fever. Compared to other men of similar wealth in Montgomery County, Hannum's Clarksville plantation was rather small at around 100 acres; however, he owned a considerable amount of land in Mississippi. According to the 1860 Federal Slave Schedule, he enslaved twelve people in Clarksville.⁶³ The Union Army maintained an inventory of local plantations and buildings that fleeing Confederate sympathizers abandoned, intending to use them for official purposes, Hannum's among them. These properties were later turned over to the Freedmen's Bureau for management after June of 1865. The army officially seized Hannum's 100-acre plantation on April 4, 1864, designating it as the specific site for the Clarksville contraband camp.⁶⁴ (see figure 2)

⁶³ 1860 Federal Census Slave schedule, Montgomery County deed books

⁶⁴ D.R. Merritt & John T. Fort to Brig. Gen. Clinton B. Fisk, 30 August 1865, Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, Records Relating to Abandoned Property, Applications for Restoration of Property, C-H, Part 4, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for Tennessee, 1865-1869, RG 105, NARA.

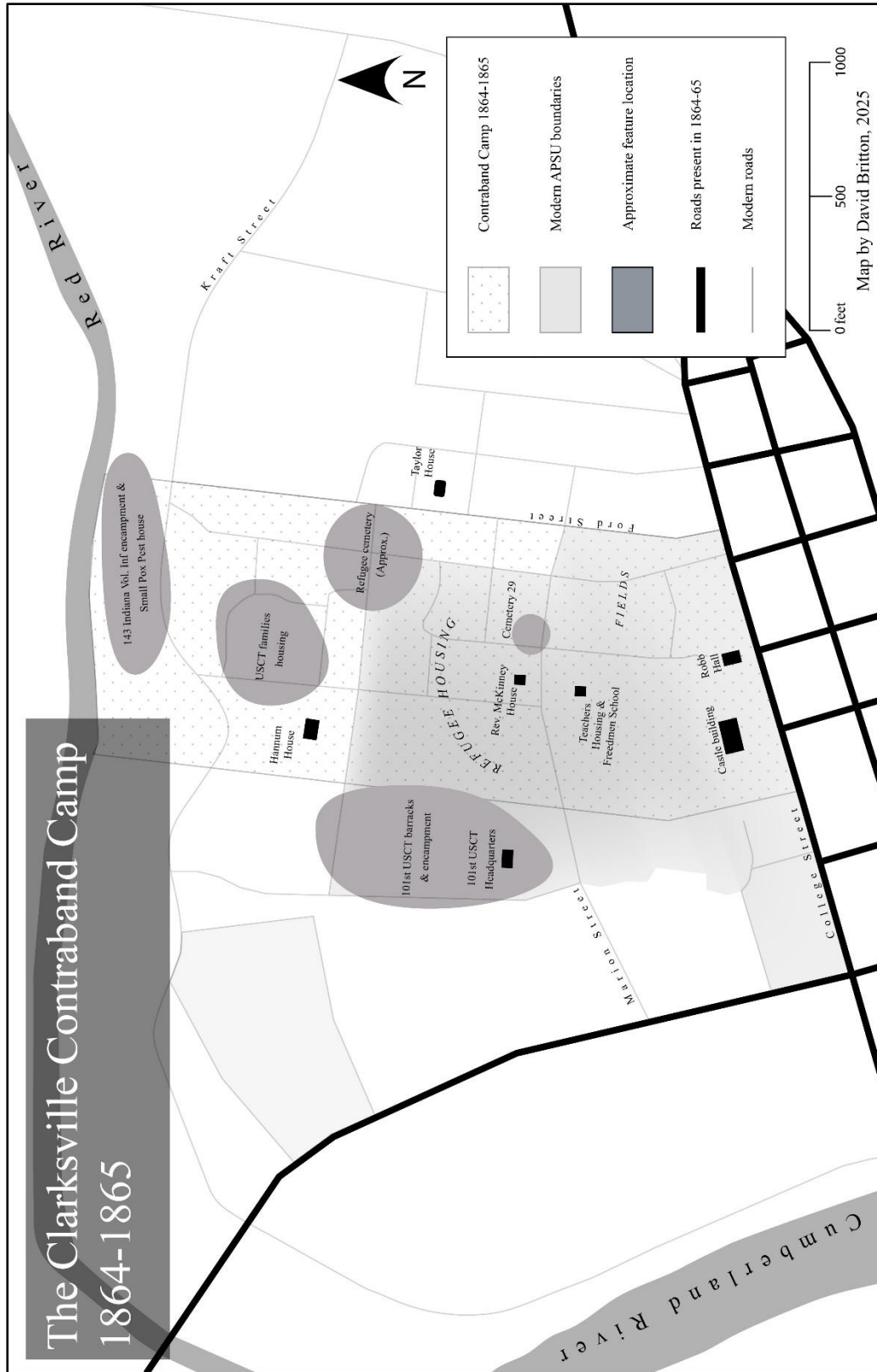


Figure 3. The Clarksville Contraband Camp, 1864-1865

Brunt wrote from Clarksville to his friend Martha on 18 May that “there is an effort to have me detailed to take charge of the contraband camp at this point. Brunt was conflicted about the potential appointment as he had only recently received his coveted command of a USCT company. “I may do it from duty but not from choice” Brunt told Martha. He reasoned that he could be contented in the situation if he could “do more good in trying to alleviate the suffering of those oppressed that are here poorly cared for by those in charge...”⁶⁵ On 30 May, General Thomas relieved Irvine of duty at the camp and instructed Captain Brunt to leave his company to formally take charge of the new Clarksville contraband camp.⁶⁶ Upon his arrival at the camp on 2 June 1864, Brunt was met with a dismal situation. “I found everything in a bad condition and the crop in weeds,” Brunt wrote.⁶⁷ He was short-staffed, and in just a few short weeks, the camp population had grown from the 751 people Smith counted in March to over 900 refugee men, women, and children, two-thirds of whom came from Kentucky.

Brunt managed the camp with these goals: to adequately house and feed the refugees, school the children, and provide work or enlistment for adults. Able-bodied men were enlisted in the military, while those fit for laboring were sent to the quartermaster’s office. The rest worked in the camp as seamstresses, carpenters, or farmers, among other occupations. After his arrival, Brunt immediately set out for Nashville to procure supplies and tools.⁶⁸ Above all, Brunt was determined to make the camp self-sufficient, reducing the need for government appropriations and by effect, protecting the camp from the inevitable closure at the end of the war.

Creating and maintaining adequate housing for refugees was a paramount issue for most contraband camps. For instance, in the Nashville camps, the lack of shade and provision of only

⁶⁵ Brunt to Martha Weir, May 17th, 1864. GL collection

⁶⁶ SO 26; CSMR of Charles D. Irvine, NARA RG94, Records of the Adjutant General’s Office

⁶⁷ Brunt to Martha Weir, July 3rd, 1864, GL Collection

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

tents were a concern for the health of the refugees. Early in the summer of 1864, refugee laborers at Clarksville constructed long, barracks style structures. These were several pens connected end to end, and each pen was fourteen feet square. Every two rooms shared a large brick chimney to provide a fireplace and bake oven for each room, and each included bunks to sleep six people. Other refugee housing in the camp consisted of tents, some with brick chimneys, and make-shift shacks.⁶⁹ A short distance from here was a small village where refugees were able to build their own houses, if they could procure the lumber, along with personal garden plots. These were mostly occupied by USCT soldiers' families, like Louisa and Green.⁷⁰ (see figure 3)

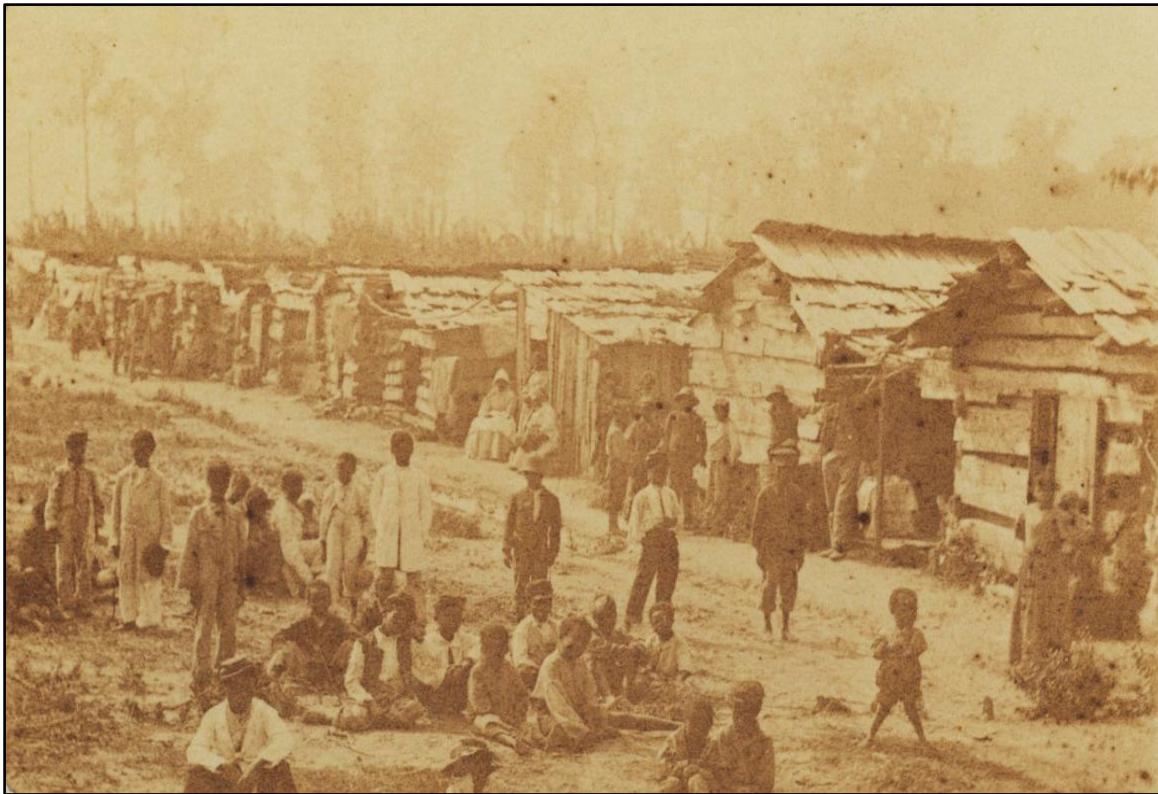


Figure 4. Contraband Camp in Helena, AR. There are no known photos of the camp in Clarksville, but this provides a great example of a contraband camp. Nebraska State Historical Society. RG3323.PH000006-000012

⁶⁹ *Sen. Ex. Docs.*, 38th Cong., 2d sess., no. 28, 9-10

⁷⁰ Lyman Abbott Reminiscences. *The Outlook*.

The camp sprawled across more than 100 acres of the Hannum farm and Stewart College campus and eastward onto the adjoining Poston and Brandon farms. While these farms were seized by the Army primarily for agricultural purposes, an 1867 chancery court record indicates there were also several freedman houses on the Brandon farm. The government only had authority to allow houses to be built on land they seized as abandoned property but this should not convey a picture of a neat orderly landscape. On the contrary, records make it clear that while the camp itself was run by the Army and could be described as orderly, refugees occupied every empty house in town and built make-shift homes wherever they could. The camp provided security, food, and housing for those who could not obtain it elsewhere, thus, camp ‘inmates’ residence in the camp were often temporary, as was the Army’s goal.

Personal investment in the homes built in the camp ultimately linked refugees to the landscape they had altered. For instance, Pvt. George Porter of Company K, 101st Regiment, paid Capt. Langdon thirty dollars for lumber used in building his house, securing his ownership of the house.⁷¹ Refugees were often emboldened by the support of the U.S. Army and built houses where they preferred. The blurred edges of the camp led to several disagreements between refugees and white property owners who had little power to stop what they believed was trespassing. Many of the resulting court cases took years to settle. For instance, Philip Bell built a house on what he, and Captain Brunt, thought was lands seized by the government on the west side of the camp. After the camp closed, the landowner refused to let Philip back into the house and rented it to another Freedman. Philip sued Eliza Drane through the Freedman’s Bureau, which Drane opposed, as she wanted the case to be tried in local civil courts where white local

⁷¹ George Porter receipt for payment, 22 July 1865. Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Tennessee, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1869, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 1, A – D, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for Tennessee, 1865-1869, RG 105, NARA.

judges would have sided with her. The Bureau ruled in Bell's favor and allowed him to move the house from her land.⁷²

Brunt also undertook the task of provisioning and establishing agricultural operations for a contraband camp, focusing heavily on securing food and farming implements. The primary goal was to make the camp self-sufficient: "This is an experiment, and if these camps can be made self-sustaining, or not a burden on the Government, then much will be gained for our cause."⁷³ The camp included a substantial field within and adjacent to the Hannum tract where refugees cultivated crops. By June of 1864, the camp had 200 acres in cultivation, half in corn and the rest in vegetables and tobacco.⁷⁴ However, the initial year's harvest was poor due to a late start and severe dry spell.⁷⁵ Brunt inquired with the Indiana Freedmen's Aid Commission for turnip seeds as he thought they could get forty acres planted in time for winter.⁷⁶ The adjacent Poston and Brandon farms provided several hundred additional acres located directly east and southeast of the camp for agricultural expansion. The Poston farm was part of the former John H. Poston plantation, which was one of the larger plantations adjacent to the town of Clarksville. Brunt successfully negotiated an agreement with Nancy L. Poston, John Poston's widow, to

⁷² Phillip Bell to Major Gen. O.O. Howard, 27 January 1867, Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 2 and 3, A-C, 1867, Part 1. Records of the Assistant Commissioner for Tennessee, 1865-1869, RG 105, NARA; Capt. Michael Walsh to Joshua Cobb, 30 January 1867, Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 2 and 3, A-C, 1867, Part 1. Records of the Assistant Commissioner for Tennessee, 1865-1869, RG 105, NARA; E.P. Drane vs. Philip Bell, enclosed in Bvt. Maj. Gen. W.P. Carlin to Maj. Genl. Howard, 30 January 1867, Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 2 and 3, A-C, 1867, Part 1. Records of the Assistant Commissioner for Tennessee, 1865-1869, NARA.

⁷³ William Brunt to IFAC, 7 July 1864. *Report of the board of Managers of the Indiana Freedmen's Aid Commission to the First Annual meeting held at Indianapolis, 7 September 1864*. (Ellis Barnes, Book and Job Printer, 1864). Emily Howland Papers, New York Heritage Digital Collections. Hereafter 'IFAC Report'.

⁷⁴ *Sen. Ex. Docs.*, 38th Cong., 2d sess., no. 28, 9-10; Abbott, *Reminiscences*; 10 July 1864, IFAC Report

⁷⁵ *Sen. Ex. Docs.*, 38th Cong., 2d sess., no. 28, 9-10; Abbott, *Reminiscences*.

⁷⁶ IFAC Report

utilize this property for growing crops.⁷⁷ Brunt hoped to have 1,000 acres under cultivation by the following spring.⁷⁸

Besides crop cultivation, Brunt was actively involved in procuring a wide range of supplies for the camp. In July 1864, Poindexter & Co. sold six one-horse plows to the camp for \$42. The same month, he made request to the Indiana Freedman's Aid Commission (IFAC) for four good plows, six shovel plows, and "three or four dozen hoes" for the farm labor force in the camp.⁷⁹ In December 1864, he made significant purchases from Hodgson & Lindely, including nineteen half bushels of potatoes, sixteen half bushels of dried apples, a bushel of onions, sixty-four pounds of soda, and over 400 pounds of coffee. The spring of 1865 saw further investment in agricultural infrastructure, with Brunt purchasing twenty-eight #12 plows for the camp.⁸⁰ In August 1865, he bought six tobacco knives from B.O. Keese for \$3.75, a tool specifically for tobacco cultivation.⁸¹ In July 1865, Brunt also acquired essential grain harvesting tools from Brown, Driver, & Co.⁸² At the closing of the camp, Brunt recorded thirty-four plows and six grain cradles and blades in the camp's tool inventory, indicating the significant investment in farming equipment that the camp made for its daily operations.⁸³

⁷⁷ Receipt to N.L. Poston for corn, 1865. Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 1, A-D, 1865, Part 2. Records of the Assistant Commissioner for Tennessee, 1865-1869, RG 105, NARA.

⁷⁸ 7 July 1864, IFAC Report

⁷⁹ Receipt from Poindexter & Co. to William Brunt for Contraband Camp. Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 1, A-D, 1865, Part 2. Records of the Assistant Commissioner for Tennessee, 1865-1869, RG 105, NARA.

⁸⁰ McReynolds & Holt to Brunt, March 3rd, May 22nd. Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 1, A-D, 1865, Part 2. Records of the Assistant Commissioner for Tennessee, 1865-1869, RG 105, NARA.

⁸¹ Receipt from B.O. Keese to William Brunt for Contraband Camp, 1865. Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 1, A-D, 1865, Part 2. Records of the Assistant Commissioner for Tennessee, 1865-1869, RG 105, NARA.

⁸² Receipt from Brown, Driver, & Co. to William Brunt for Contraband Camp, 1865. Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 1, A-D, 1865, Part 2. Records of the Assistant Commissioner for Tennessee, 1865-1869, RG 105, NARA.

⁸³ List of stores turned over to R.E. Farwell, 2 October 1865. Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 1, A-D, 1865, Part 2. Records of the Assistant Commissioner for Tennessee, 1865-1869, RG 105, NARA.

Under Captain Brunt's management, the Clarksville contraband camp utilized farming and other endeavors to generate its own income, contributing to Brunt's hope of self-sustenance. Brunt actively sold the produce from the camp's substantial farming efforts to generate necessary revenue for the camp, which in turn helped procure clothing and other necessities. In all documented instances, the payments went consistently back to the camp itself, which suggests a communal management of resources and income generated by the residents.⁸⁴ The year 1865 brought much more successful crop yields. On September 30, 1865, Brunt documented receiving \$50 from Dr. Taylor for corn that the residents grew on the east side of the contraband camp.⁸⁵ In another transaction, he sold corn for \$100 that the Freedmen grew on the Poston farm to B.F. Poston.⁸⁶ Ultimately, the agricultural output directly contributed to the camp's financial resources or supported various transactions that benefited the camp's overall operations. Besides selling some of the produce from the camp farm, refugees also used diverse means of income generation, like building houses for other refugees and selling berries.

Refugees farming within the contraband camp had a substantial impact on regional farming by depriving white planters of their traditional labor. An alarmed Tennessee Supreme Court Justice James Shackelford expressed concerns to General Thomas, noting that while local white farmers were ready to resume agricultural activities, they faced a severe labor shortage. He attributed the shortage to refugees, those formerly enslaved by the white planters, refusing to

⁸⁴ Statement of monies received for Freedman's Camp, 1864. Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 1, A–D, 1865, Part 2. Records of the Assistant Commissioner for Tennessee, 1865–1869, RG 105, NARA.

⁸⁵ Receipt from Z.M. Taylor to William Brunt for Contraband Camp, 1865. Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 1, A–D, 1865, Part 2. Records of the Assistant Commissioner for Tennessee, 1865–1869, RG 105, NARA.

⁸⁶ Receipt from B.F. Poston to William Brunt for Contraband Camp, 1865. Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 1, A–D, 1865, Part 2. Records of the Assistant Commissioner for Tennessee, 1865–1869, RG 105, NARA.

work for less than \$2 per day.⁸⁷ Camp records shed light on some of the experiences of some Freedmen farmers. After the camp closed, David Gonal, for instance, sought compensation for his labor on a government crop cultivated on the adjacent Brandon farm.⁸⁸

Brunt leaned heavily on the charity of Freedmen's aid organization like the Indiana Freedman's Aid Commission (IFAC) and Western Freedman's Aid Commission (WFAC) for agricultural supplies, but he asked even more of them for basic clothing for refugees. He noted to the IFAC that most refugees came to the camp with little more than the clothes on their backs. Brunt emphasized the need for clothing in the fall of 1864 and told IFAC that "many will suffer this winter if you don't send clothing". Exposure, he explained, was a major issue the previous winter, before there was an official camp, and that frozen hands and feet were a common sight. It was also a common cause of death in children at the camp, Brunt said. Aid societies sent boxes of used clothing to Clarksville, but they also followed through on Brunt's other requests, which were for shoemaking and sewing supplies. In the vein of self-sufficiency, Brunt believed that with the right supplies and instruction, he could set up schools for both trades to not only educate children with skills but also supply the camp. By 5 August, Brunt had a seamstress shop in full operation, supplying some clothing for the camp, and a shoemaker's shop employing twenty workers.⁸⁹

These aid societies were also an important source of teachers, whom Brunt employed in the camp and beyond. Even before the official establishment of the refugee camp under military

⁸⁷ J.O. Shackelford to General Thomas, 18 July 1865, Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 1, M-T, 1865, Part 4. Records of the Assistant Commissioner for Tennessee, 1865-1869, RG 105, NARA.

⁸⁸ Smith & Peffer to C.B. Fisk, 7 February 1866. Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 1 and 2, N-S, 1866, Part 4. Records of the Assistant Commissioner for Tennessee, 1865-1869, RG 105, NARA.

⁸⁹ Alexander M York Lt Col 15th USCI and Supt of Schools to Fisk Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 1, U-Y, 1865. Records of the Assistant Commissioner for Tennessee, 1865-1869, RG 105, NARA.

authority, the WFAC, supervised by John C. McKinney, and IFAC, under the guidance of Charles and Esther Newlin, took the initiative to establish seven schools in Clarksville and New Providence, specifically created to educate refugee children.⁹⁰ In the spring of 1864, McKinney reported a promising average attendance of approximately 130 students. This number continued to climb as the demand for educational opportunities grew among the refugees in the contraband camp.⁹¹ At the beginning of the camp, Capt. Brunt applied to the quartermaster to keep at least one classroom in the Stewart College buildings, which adjoined the refugee camp on its south side. Stewart College began as a Masonic University and was acquired by the Nashville Presbyterian Synod in 1855 as a synod school. The campus consisted of two primary buildings, the main building, or “castle”, and Robb Hall, the dormitory. As early as 1862, the U.S. Army used these buildings for various purposes but in spring of 1864, it provided at least one classroom for refugee children as well as teacher housing. After Brunt received permission from the Provost Marshal for use, the “castle” building at the college would serve multiple roles over the next years of the camps life: hospital, teachers’ barracks, shoe-making school, as well as refugee housing (see figure 6).

⁹⁰ IFAC Report, 7.

⁹¹ John McKinney to Board of Managers, 2 May 1864, IFAC Report, 20.



Figure 5. The Castle building at Stewart College as it appeared just prior to the War. Rhodes College Archives

The use of the significant local building for the education of formerly enslaved people stirred considerable local controversy, much to Brunt's delight. He gleefully reported on the outrage of the "secesh" who were incensed by the refugees' appropriation of the former college building. Brunt wrote, "(we) are using the fine college building for the Contraband school, which galls the secesh here. They think it an outrage to take their building erected to educate their children in and use it to educate their slaves in."⁹² Later that month, Brunt informed the IFAC of his intention to acquire the entire college building, expressing confidence that they could secure its use for at least a year.⁹³ McKinney noted in early June that the "schools are larger than they've ever been. 200 attended at the college building during last week. This comes from the

⁹² William Brunt to Martha Weir, 3 July 1864. GL.

⁹³ William Brunt to IFAC, 20 June 1864 in IFAC report

camp. Refugees are crowding in there." ⁹⁴ By July, the entire building was successfully obtained from the Provost Marshal, signifying a major victory for the educational initiatives at the camp. ⁹⁵ The newly acquired building, however, was not without its challenges. It required significant repairs, particularly as most of the glass in its windows was broken. The WFAC pledged to provide the necessary materials for these repairs, with the understanding that the Freedmen themselves would contribute the labor. Brunt envisioned a multifaceted use for the college building, hoping to convert it into teachers' quarters, a shoe-making school, a sewing room, in addition to serving as regular classrooms. By 7 July, he had successfully secured the use of the entire building, solidifying its role as a central hub for various educational and vocational training programs in the contraband camp.

The commitment to education extended to staffing these burgeoning schools. On 17 September, the IFAC commissioned two Black women as teachers, Kitty Fields and Lucy Claggett, a significant step that empowered members of the community to educate their own. From January 1864 through November 1865, the WFAC, IFAC, and the Quaker Western Friends Yearly-Meeting collectively operated an impressive twenty-nine separate schools. ⁹⁶ These educational facilities were strategically located: eleven within the refugee camp itself, four in New Providence, and seven in various church basements throughout Clarksville. ⁹⁷ However, the rapid growth of the refugee population also presented new logistical challenges. By November 1864, the sheer number of inhabitants in the camp reached a point where the school building

⁹⁴ John C. McKinney to IFAC, 4 June 1864 in IFAC report

⁹⁵ William Brunt to IFAC, 7 July 1864 in IFAC report

⁹⁶ William Brunt to IFAC, 2 September 1864 in IFAC report

⁹⁷ William Brunt, Report [on Freedmen Schools in Montgomery County, TN 1864-1865], Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Tennessee, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1870, School Reports, Monthly Reports from District Superintendents, Monthly Reports from District Superintendents, RG 105, NARA.

within the camp, a long, barracks-like structure, had to be repurposed for general refugee accommodation.⁹⁸

Detailed statistical reports, alongside personal observations from missionaries and military officials, paint a vivid picture of a community in constant flux, striving for stability amidst an ongoing conflict. The spring and summer of 1864 saw an immediate and substantial influx of refugees. This rapid increase in population presented immediate logistical challenges, foreshadowing the persistent struggles with overcrowding that would plague the camp throughout its existence. Between 4 April, the official start date of the camp, and 31 July, a remarkable 1,674 individuals sought refuge within its confines, comprising 550 men, 557 women, and 567 children. This initial wave suggests the family-oriented nature of many who escaped bondage. During this period, 153 men, 149 women, and 95 children were discharged from the camp, likely due to securing employment elsewhere. A significant number, 136 men, enlisted as soldiers. Tragically, these first months also brought the devastating loss of seventy-two children, along with five men and six women, succumbing to the harsh conditions and disease. Brunt wrote to the IFAC on July 7th that there were over 1,000 in the camp and that they come daily “anxious to taste freedom”.⁹⁹ By 31 July, the camp's population stood at 1,078 individuals, reflecting the dynamic movement of people in and out of its confines.

The momentum of growth continued into the fall of 1864. By September 2nd, the camp population had increased to 1,122: 281 men and boys over fourteen, 442 women and girls over fourteen, and 339 children.¹⁰⁰ These numbers suggest a growing proportion of women and children within the camp as the numbers of USCT enlistments grew. The scale of displacement

⁹⁸ Olive Brunt to Martha Weir, 11/4/64 GL

⁹⁹ Brunt to IFAC, 7 July 1864 entry, IFAC report.

¹⁰⁰ Brunt to IFAC, 2 September 1864 entry, IFAC report

was further emphasized by the fact that 1,900 names had been enrolled since the camp's organization, with a substantial 1,000 new arrivals since 3 June alone. Despite this, the camp remained a transitional space; 709 individuals had also been discharged since 3 June, in addition to seventy-eight earlier departures. Brunt was concerned, however, with the 2,000 Freedmen that lived outside the camp in Clarksville and New Providence. He was convinced they would return to the camp during the winter to be fed and clothed, straining already limited resources.¹⁰¹

Thousands of refugee men, women, and children perished in camps across the south from disease, starvation, or exposure. Brunt was right to be concerned, and the shadow of mortality loomed large over the camp and the adjoining garrison of the 101st USCT. The close quarters of the camp and resulting unsanitary conditions, combined with lack of shelter and inadequate food, led to rampant disease, especially smallpox. The official records of the camp, found among the Freedman's Bureau papers, however, record very few civilian deaths. A 31 July 1864 camp report recorded eighty-three deaths since the camp's inception, yet an April 1864 diary states that "large numbers are dying at Clarksville" – a mere two weeks after the official establishment of the camp.¹⁰² The following September, camp officials recorded fifty-four more deaths. Aside from a few numbers recorded in scant records, official camp records fail to record any additional refugee deaths.

However, 1866 Federal soldier grave relocation records and regimental records for the 16th and 101st USCT tell a very different story. In July 1865, Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs issued an order for all Union post commanders to record an inventory of all internments made in wartime. After Congress created the National Cemeteries to house the

¹⁰¹ Brunt to IFAC, 10 September 1864 entry, IFAC report

¹⁰² Entry for 20 April 1864, *The Heavens Are Weeping: The Diaries of George Richard Browder, 1852-1886*. (Zondervan, 1987), 176.

graves of fallen U.S. soldiers, they hired E.B. Whitman to take charge of the effort in the Department of the Cumberland. One of the more tedious efforts he was tasked with was recording the locations of recent U.S. soldier graves. Whitman and his teams traveled across Tennessee and Kentucky, keeping detailed notes about the locations of soldiers' graves for later exhumation and relocation to a National Cemetery. In Clarksville, Whitman recorded multiple cemeteries, noting their locations and providing detailed distances and landmarks. In one instance, Whitman records a row of twenty Black soldiers in a cemetery "1/2 mile north of the College, across a plowed field, near some large trees and about 50 yards west of Dr. Z.M. Taylor's house in the Refugee Burial Ground...."¹⁰³ In response to Meigs' request, Maj. William G. Bond of the 83rd Illinois Infantry, and one of the first Freedman's Bureau Agents for Montgomery County, made an even more detailed accounting of this cemetery where he noted only fifteen soldiers and that "in the same place there are some 500 freedmen buried."¹⁰⁴ The official record of the exhumed soldiers called it the "Contraband Graveyard."¹⁰⁵ Two other cemeteries in Clarksville contained the remains of refugees and USCT soldiers: one in New Providence and near to Fort Bruce, just over a mile north east from the contraband camp where the "graves are all unmarked and in such irregular order that it is impossible to distinguish soldiers from citizens graves", and one mile south of the refugee camp at the African Burial Ground where soldiers graves were "so intermingled with citizens graves it is impossible to count them".¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ [Whitman], *Journal of a Trip through Parts of Kentucky, Tennessee, and Georgia Made to Locate the Scattered Graves of Union Soldiers* [1866], p. 26, entry 685 RG 92, NARA.

¹⁰⁴ Maj. W. Bond list of cemeteries, cemetery #69, p. 57, contained in *Burial Registers of Military Post and National Cemeteries*, ca. 1862-1960, Tennessee: Cumberland National Cemetery. entry 627, RG 92, NARA

¹⁰⁵ *Burial Registers of Military Post and National Cemeteries*, ca. 1862-1960, Tennessee: Nashville National Cemetery. Entry 627, RG 92, NARA.

¹⁰⁶ Whitman, 247. Soldiers' graves in the New Providence cemetery were so indistinguishable from refugee graves that none were exhumed. All USCT soldiers interred there are still there today. Conversely, 131 bodies (number of

Cemeteries adjoining contraband camps and hospitals were common, as were the haphazard nature of burials. The federal government oversaw the burial of freed people who died in refugee camps, but due to the demands of war and a lack of federal funding, they often received hasty burials. In January 1865, a military official in Chattanooga reported that refugees were “dying by scores – that sometimes thirty per day die & are carried out by wagon loads, without coffins, and thrown promiscuously like brutes in a mass grave.” Similarly, in a Helena, Arkansas camp, a woman observed that deceased Freedmen were often buried in a mass grave with dead mules and horses.¹⁰⁷ Nashville camp officials kept a separate refugee cemetery for smallpox victims.¹⁰⁸ Though mass graves were common, the fact that Maj. Bond could observe that 500 people were buried in the Clarksville refugee cemetery suggests that at least some were individual graves.

Several depositions in widows’ pension applications contain stories of children and loved ones lost to disease and buried in the contraband graveyard at the camp site, even though the cemetery lacks a detailed burial register. Louisa Harper recounted the loss of her husband Green to “brain fever” and his burial “at the graveyard on the hill here”.¹⁰⁹ Joe Farley recalled to a pension agent that Mary Ann Shelby “had some children and they died right there in the camp. I saw about two of them buried.”¹¹⁰ Louisa Noseweather added that Mary Ann “had several

soldiers unknown) were exhumed from the South Clarksville cemetery and relocated to the Nashville National Cemetery.

¹⁰⁷ As quoted in Downs, *Sick from Freedom*, 27

¹⁰⁸ Burial Registers of Military Post and National Cemeteries, ca. 1862-1960, Tennessee: Nashville National Cemetery. Entry 627, RG 92, NARA. Though this cemetery is not marked today, evidence in the burial registers suggest this is the location of the current Davidson County pauper’s cemetery.

¹⁰⁹ Louisa Harper, widow pension application no. 87,423; service of Green Harper (Pvt., Co. D, 101st USCT, Civil War); Civil War and Later Pension Files; Department of Veterans Affairs, RG 15, NARA

¹¹⁰ Deposition of Joe Farley in Case of Mary Ann Shelby. 22 December 1893. Mary Ann Shelby, widows pension application no. 126,703; service of Jackson Balthrop (Pvt., Co. D, 101st USCT, Civil War); Civil War and Later Pension Files; Department of Veterans Affairs, RG 15, NARA.

[children] to die there in the contraband camp.”¹¹¹ Mary Ann clarified to the special examiner: all four of her children, Nicy, Dicy, Mary, and Allie died in the contraband camp before their father perished on 16 April 1865.¹¹² Five of Marinda Fort’s children died by the end of 1865 in the contraband camp, and her last daughter by the soldier, Sarah, was born several months after his death.¹¹³ Malvina Fox’s newborn child, Sabra, was born one week after her father, David, succumbed to smallpox in a Nashville hospital. Sabra contracted smallpox as well and died in the Clarksville contraband camp at only seven months old.¹¹⁴ Eliza Nance recounted how her husband’s first wife and child both died in the camp, before marrying her a year later.¹¹⁵

While countless parents buried children at the camp, many children became orphans as both parents succumbed to disease. Anderson, Mildred, Ellen, Jack, and Ben Griffey became orphans after their parents died. Their father, Granville, died in the contraband camp from pneumonia on 8 January 1865. Their newly widowed mother, Phyllis, contracted smallpox and died on 30 August 1865 in the contraband camp.¹¹⁶ Phyllis and Granville had been married since 1848. Nancy, Ellen, Archie, and Walton Thweatt were orphaned when their father, Albert died of smallpox on 14 January 1866, followed by their mother, Minerva, four days later. All of these people, among hundreds of others, are likely buried in the refugee cemetery. Today, this cemetery is most likely located on the east side of the Austin Peay State University campus and partially

¹¹¹ Deposition of Louisa Noseweather in case of Mary Ann Shelby. *ibid*

¹¹² Deposition of Mary Ann Shelby in the case of Mary Ann Shelby. *ibid*

¹¹³ Marinda Fort, widows pension application no. 121,280; service of Richard Fort (Pvt., Co. D, 101st USCT, Civil War); Civil War and Later Pension Files; Department of Veterans Affairs, RG 15, NARA.

¹¹⁴ Malvina Fox, widows pension application no. 122,192; service of David Fox (Pvt., Co. D, 101st USCT, Civil War); Civil War and Later Pension Files; Department of Veterans Affairs, RG 15, NARA.

¹¹⁵ Eliza Nance, widows pension application no. 126,589; service of Leftridge Nance (Pvt., Co. I, 101st USCT, Civil War); Civil War and Later Pension Files; Department of Veterans Affairs, RG 15, NARA.

¹¹⁶ Phyllis Griffey, widows pension application no. 87,651; service of Granville Griffey (Pvt., Co. D, 101st USCT, Civil War); Civil War and Later Pension Files; Department of Veterans Affairs, RG 15, NARA.

on private land – possible even under city streets, although further geophysical and archaeological research is required to be certain.

Cemeteries, like the refugee cemetery, were central to Black community creation. Depositions in widows pension applications indicate that Freedmen continued to bury their dead in this contraband cemetery after the camp closed in the fall of 1865, and at least until the 1867 subdivision and sale of the camps lands to satisfy debts incurred by the Hannum estate. Like the rest of the camp, the cemetery land was turned into lots and sold, but there is not any mention of the cemetery in land transaction records. Historian Ashley Towle states that the refugee cemeteries where Freedmen had buried their loved ones “continued to be of great importance to them in freedom”, but in the case of the Clarksville refugee cemetery, Towles observation presents a problem: there is no recorded evidence of the cemetery’s continuing use after the camp land was sub-divided.¹¹⁷ In contrast to the other parcels that became part of the early Black community around the camp, the Hannum parcel (where the camp and cemetery were located) was primarily sold to white individuals and then rented to Freedmen. The act of sub-division deprived them of access to the refugee cemetery. Though many of those lots later came under Black ownership, the refugee cemetery was never mentioned in a single record after 1866. The community shifted its focus to the other two Clarksville cemeteries noted by Union officers, the “African Burial Ground” in South Clarksville and what is now called the Green Hill cemetery in New Providence.¹¹⁸ (see figure 7)

¹¹⁷ Towle, Ashley. *African Americans, Death, and the New Birth of Freedom: Dying Free during the Civil War and Reconstruction*. (Lexington Books: 2023), 19

¹¹⁸ *Clarksville Weekly Chronicle*, 2 October 1868.

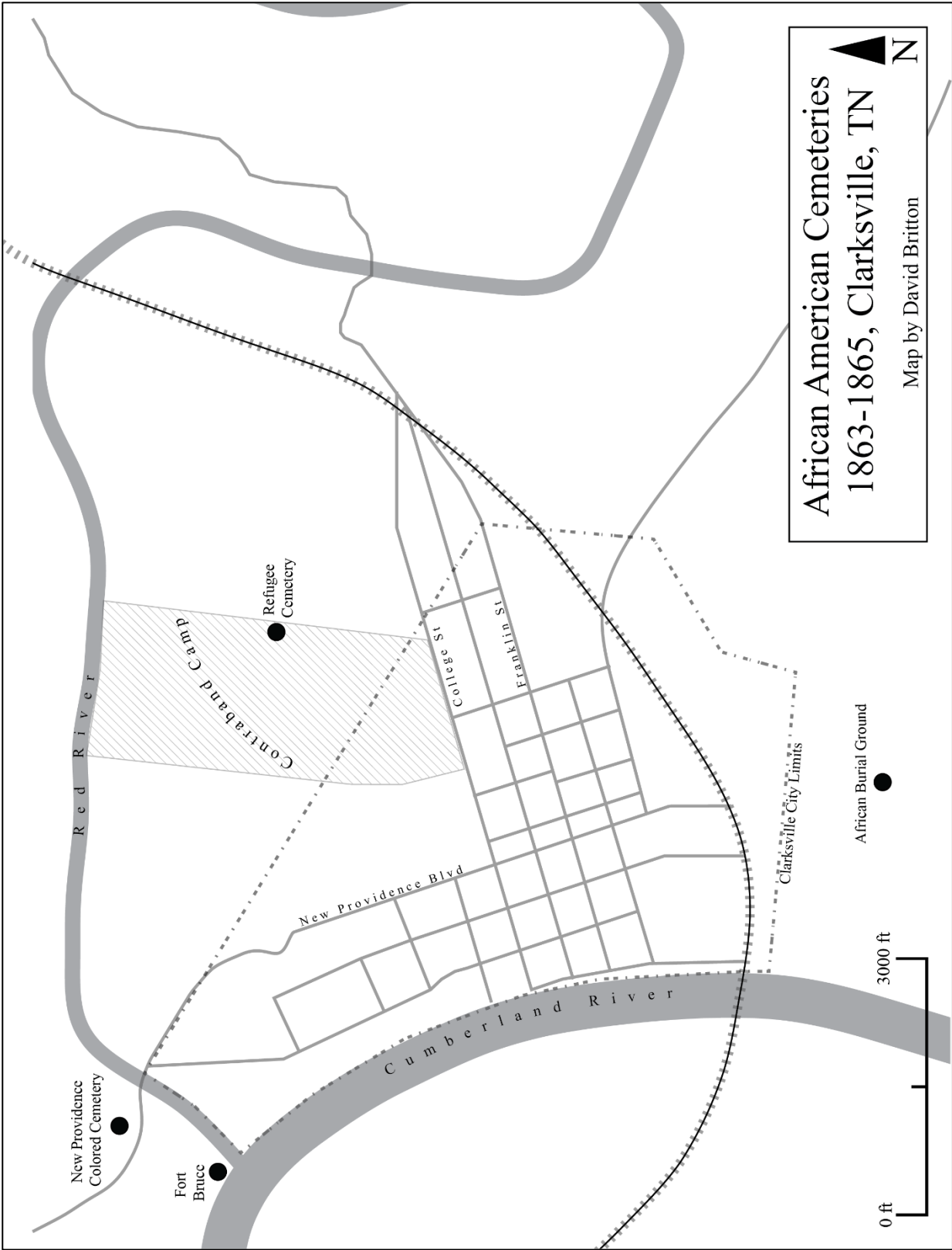


Figure 6. African American Cemeteries, 1863-1865

The Black community's focus on improving these two cemeteries, which were both deeded over to Freedmen control, and lack of meaningful access to the refugee cemetery meant that it was forgotten. The community prioritized Black-owned and operated cemeteries because, as Towle notes, they “became powerful places of security, community building, political organization, and memorialization.”¹¹⁹ According to historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot's ideas about history and power, this is not a simple case of forgetting, but an active decision by the community to focus on one story over another.¹²⁰ Their forging of new community became a more important and meaningful part of their history than the difficult memory of the refugee camp. However, some memories resist being forgotten: there is an alley running north/south through the space where the cemetery was, eerily named “Shinbone Alley”.¹²¹ (see figure 8)

¹¹⁹ Towle, 19

¹²⁰ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. (Beacon Press:1995)

¹²¹ 1867 Division of Hannum land. Plat 1. Montgomery County Chancery Court records. Plat Book 1. Montgomery County Archives, Clarksville, TN.



Figure 7. 1867 Hannum lands division relative to the contraband camp.

As the war approached its conclusion, the Clarksville contraband camp continued to expand, reflecting the ongoing exodus of enslaved people seeking freedom. By January 1865, the camp's population had reached 1,300. This upward trend was further supported by observations in March 1865, estimating around 2,000 individuals, suggesting the camp was a bustling and densely populated hub. However, as the war concluded, reports in May indicated a slight dip to 1,259 people. The Clarksville camp's population reached its zenith by the end of June 1865, when it housed 1,365 individuals.¹²² This figure significantly surpassed any other camp in middle Tennessee at the time by several hundred, emphasizing the camp's role as a critical nexus for displaced Freedmen in the region and underscoring the immense scale of the humanitarian crisis in Clarksville. Driving home the point, Col. R.W. Barnard reported on 1 July that the Freedmen's Bureau provided meals for 1,319 of those refugees.¹²³ By 7 August 1865, an inspection report listed 900 people in the camp, indicating a notable decline due to Freedman's Bureau efforts to close the camp.

Congress established the Freedmen's Bureau on 2 March 1865 to supervise all efforts at providing care for and integrating former slaves into free society. By early summer, Gen. Oliver Otis Howard, appointed Clinton Fisk as the Assistant Commissioner over the Bureau's operations in Tennessee. Circular No. 2 from Fisk and the new Bureau specifically noted that Freedmen's camps were to be "discontinued as speedily as recipients of relief can obtain

¹²² R.W. Barnard to J.H. Grove [1865], Consolidated Report of Freedmen Camp the District of Nashville for the Month ending June 30th, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Tennessee, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1869, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 1, A – D, RG 105, NARA.

¹²³ R.W. Barnard to Jno. H. Cochrane, Report of Freedmen Fed at different Camps in Sub Dist Nashville July 1st, 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Tennessee, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1869, Unregistered Letters Received, Unregistered Letters Received. RG 105, NARA.

employment.”¹²⁴ All over Tennessee, new Bureau offices slowly absorbed the command of contraband camps with the intention of bringing them to a close. On 23 July, Fisk ordered Clarksville Post Commander Lt. Col. Henry G. Davis of the 101st USCT to assume command of the Freedman’s Bureau operations in Clarksville.¹²⁵ In a letter to Davis, Fisk emphasized that he was to “be earnest in [his] efforts to reduce the number of Refugees & Freedmen, now subsisting at the expense of the Government.”¹²⁶

By August, the Bureau's efforts to close the Clarksville contraband camp were in full swing. A 12 August letter from Jacob S. Willets, a representative of the Indiana Freedmen's Aid Commission, to Gen. Howard, highlighted the commission's extensive involvement in, and concern for the area. Willets expressed alarm after learning from Captain Brunt that there were "imperative orders that the Camps must be broken up forthwith, and no rations can be issued after the 15th of August". Willets pleaded with General Howard to countermand these orders, arguing that the camp was "near self-sustaining" and that a sudden closure would lead to great suffering for the inhabitants and financial losses for the benevolent societies that supported it. He also mentioned that many freedmen were being forced to return to their "hard masters in Kentucky.”¹²⁷

Fisk was unsatisfied with the speed with which the Clarksville contraband camp was being closed. On 16 August, Captain R.E. Farwell was sent to Clarksville to report on the state of

¹²⁴ Circular No. 2, Duties of the Freedmen’s Bureau, 24 July 1865, as published in 4 August 1865 Clarksville Chronicle, Clarksville, TN.

¹²⁵ Special Order 14, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Tennessee, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1869, Issuances, Special Orders and Circulars Issued, Vol. 1 (AGO Vol. 23), RG 105, NARA; Davis turned over the command of the Post at Clarksville to Lt. Col. John F. Grill of the 143rd Indiana Volunteer Infantry

¹²⁶ Fisk to Davis, 24 July 1865, Fisk to Davis, 24 July 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Tennessee, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1869, Press Copies of Letters Sent, Vol. 1 (AGO Vol. 6), RG 105, NARA.

¹²⁷ Jacob S. Willets to O.O. Howard (1865). *Oliver Otis Howard papers*. George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine.

the camp. While Farwell's report cannot be located, Captain Brunt later wrote to the Bureau's Nashville headquarters, complaining that Farwell's report did "the camp, the freedmen, and all connected, injustice". Brunt stressed "I have only to say that all is being done, that can be done, to disband the Camp."¹²⁸ Like Willets', Brunt's concerns went unattended as by 26 August, Fisk wrote to Gen. Howard that he was working "diligently" to close the camp. Forcing the issue, Fisk ordered four companies of the 101st USCT to leave Clarksville and relocate to Nashville, leaving only Company D to guard the contraband camp.

Unable to depend on Clarksville Freedman's Bureau officers to close the contraband camp, Fisk ordered Farwell to Clarksville to complete the work. In Special Order no. 36, Fisk noted that Farwell's orders were to be "obeyed in all particulars as the orders of the of Asst. Commissioner [Fisk] in person." Brunt, the 101st, and everyone connected to the camp were to afford Farwell "every facility" for the "reduction and dispersion of said camp."¹²⁹ The final orders for the camp's closure were issued on 13 September with Special Order 45, which instructed Captain Farwell to relieve Brunt and close the camp "as consistent with humanity". On 15 September, Fisk relieved Brunt of his command over the contraband camp, appointing Farwell in his place. Rations for Freedmen were to be suspended on 18 September and Farwell proceeded with liquidating government property.¹³⁰ The command transition was formalized on September 16, when Captain Brunt officially replaced H.G. Davis as the Freedmen's Bureau agent in Clarksville, and Davis was ordered to report back to his regiment. The camp was

¹²⁸ William Brunt to H.C. Miller, 2 September 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Tennessee, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1869, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 1, A – D, RG 105, NARA.

¹²⁹ Special Order no. 36, 2 September 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Tennessee, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1869, Issuances, Special Orders and Circulars Issued, Vol. 1 (AGO Vol. 23), RG 105, NARA.

¹³⁰ Special Order no. 45, 13 September 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Tennessee, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1869, Issuances, Special Orders and Circulars Issued, Vol. 1 (AGO Vol. 23), RG 105, NARA.

ultimately to be closed within five days of October 3, at which point Farwell was to report to Nashville.¹³¹

Captain Brunt's resistance to the camp's closure and his criticism of Farwell, quickly led to Brunt being accused of embezzling camp funds and property. After his acquittal, Brunt continued to seek assistance for Freedmen from northern aid groups, all while continuing his public frustration with Farwell. Brunt told the Freedmen's Aid Commission that Farwell closed the Clarksville camp without empathy, "making no provision for [the freedmen]." Frustrated with Brunt's retaliation, Farwell remarked to Fisk in December 1865 that "I don't like to be vilified by a humbug" and that "his regiment would be a first rate place for him".¹³² On 1 January, Brunt submitted his resignation to Maj. Gen. George Thomas. Brunt told Thomas "...my experience [with freedmen] has been such as to justify me in the belief that I can be useful in the capacity as a private citizen in reforming and educating the negro character."¹³³ Brunt relocated to Georgia where he became the president of the Board of Registration in Savannah for the 1867 election. He added to his unpopularity when he joined the U.S. Department of Treasury as the Assistant Assessor of Internal Revenue. He was assassinated in Blackshear, GA in January 1870.¹³⁴

Brunt's criticism of the closure was well-founded. The closure of the Clarksville contraband camp was poorly planned and left scores of Freedmen without minimum care for

¹³¹ R.W. Farwell to C.B. Fisk, 3 October 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Tennessee, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1869, Unregistered Telegrams Received, Unregistered Telegrams Received, RG 105, NARA.

¹³² R.W. Farwell to C.B. Fisk, 26 December 1865, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Tennessee, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1869, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 1, E – L, RG 105, NARA.

¹³³ William Brunt to George Thomas, 1 January 1866, Capt. William K. Brunt, 16th USCT, Co. D, Service Record, Compiled Military Service Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served with the United States Colored Troops: Infantry Organizations, 14th through 19th. RG 94, NARA. Accessed via Fold3.com

¹³⁴ 1 February 1870, *Daily Columbus Enquirer*, Columbus, GA. The nature of Brunt's death, murder or suicide, was hotly debated in newspapers. Those who claimed murder believed it to be a politically motivated death.

survival. Just after the camp closed, over 3500 Freedmen were living within the bounds of Clarksville and neighboring New Providence, a large number when considering that the 1870 overall population of Clarksville was 3200 people.¹³⁵ An outbreak of smallpox within the Freedmen's community intensified the dire situation. White Clarksville, however, was glad for the closure. Newspaper articles over the preceding two years expressed the community's frustration with the refugee presence in town.¹³⁶ After learning that camp rations were to be cut off, the Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle reported if the Freedman's Bureau agent would ensure the "lazy, worthless negroes, who do nothing but lounge about the corners" were sent outside the city to work, the agent would "receive the unanimous thanks of the community."¹³⁷

However, the end of the camp did not mean the end of the new Freedmen community that emerged from the camp. Perhaps to the chagrin of white Clarksville, the landscape that was once the plantations of the wealthy few, was profoundly changed by the Black experiences forged there by the blood of hundreds of refugees and USCT soldiers. That former place of enslavement was now a cradle of unprecedented opportunities for Freedmen, even if it was simultaneously a grievous time in the lives of many refugees. The former contraband camp reminds us that both transcendent hope and deep grief are not mutually exclusive. But this transformation of the figurative, and physical, landscape was not by the military's hand alone – to the contrary, refugees found both very personal and shared paths toward their freedom there, weaving new stories in the midst of Army oversight and pragmatism. Each and every refugee story is unique, but thousands experienced these events together.

¹³⁵ Joshua Cobb to Clinton Fisk, December 24th, 1865. Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, Press Copies of Letters Sent, Vol. 2 (AGO Vol. 7), Oct. 2–Dec. 30, 1865, Part 2, RG 105, NARA; 1870 Federal Census, Montgomery County, TN.

¹³⁶ Clarksville Chronicle, 20 October 1865. Clarksville, TN; The 83rd Illinoisian, 19 May 1865, Clarksville, TN.

¹³⁷ Clarksville Chronicle, 4 August 1865. Clarksville, TN.

While their personal experiences were transformative in their own right, the refugee's collective experiences in the camp gave rise to a real and tangible Freedmen's community. Some refugees did leave this landscape in their past, a steppingstone to the rest of their own story. However, others stayed and reclaimed the land, just as they did with their own stories. Louisa Harper explained to the pension examiner on that day in 1900 that after her husband died, she "continued living there on that place where he died until I bought this place. That was in 1866."¹³⁸ She stated her current address to the examiner: 112 Brooks Ave – less than one mile from where she had first lived as a free woman with her husband, Green, at the contraband camp.

¹³⁸ Louisa Harper, widow pension application no. 87,423; service of Green Harper (Pvt., Co. D, 101st USCT, Civil War); Civil War and Later Pension Files; Department of Veterans Affairs, RG 15, NARA

Chapter 2. “I came down here and have been here nearly ever since”: The Clarksville Freedmen’s Village and Permanent Black community.

Mary Ann Shelby sat across from Special Pension Examiner F. M. Lowe in a room in the Arlington Hotel in downtown Clarksville. Built twenty-one years after Federal soldiers left Clarksville, the three-story, forty-two-room building was imposing, nearly as imposing as Lowe’s inquiry about the last thirty years of Mary’s life. Lowe was a stranger to Mary Ann and starting on 20 December 1893, Lowe interviewed Mary Ann about her story: what was her age? How many times had she been married? Why did those marriages dissolve? Did she have any children? In addition to providing answers, Mary Ann gave Lowe a list of names of people who could verify her story, and Lowe interviewed them too over the next several days. Most of Mary Ann’s testimony was the normal stuff of life, but to begin her story she reflected on the last time she sat across from a white man for pension purposes – the day she was notified of her first husbands’ death in the service of the U.S. Army on April 5th, 1865. Mary Ann remembered aloud her story with Pvt. Jackson Balthorpe of the 16th regiment United States Colored Troop (USCT): how they were married for ten years before the war but were enslaved on different plantations; how they fled together to Clarksville after Fort Donelson fell; how Jackson secured her a house – her first house that was *hers* - while he remained in the 16th regiment’s camp; how she then moved to the newly formed contraband camp outside Clarksville, and perhaps most distressing, how the couple buried all of their children in the contraband graveyard located at this camp. “I came down here and have been here nearly ever since” Mary Ann said to Lowe. At 221

Carpenter St., she lived just over a mile from where she sat in the Arlington Hotel and within mere yards of the old contraband camp where her story as a Freedman began.¹³⁹

For Mary Ann and thousands fleeing slavery like her, Clarksville was a city of refuge, which they found in the military contraband camp. While the camp was in operation and the U.S. Army was present, refugees worked out their quasi-citizenship vis-à-vis the presence and protection of the U.S. Army. As Chandra Manning argues, former slaves lived under a new form of citizenship where they focused their efforts on autonomy and community building, rather than political rights or even citizenship per se. Their liminal state was because of and eventually facilitated by the Army after the contraband camps were made.¹⁴⁰ With an existence dependent on the U.S. Army, the closure of the contraband camp in the fall of 1865 amplified the urgency for Freedmen autonomy and for the anchoring of permanent Black community in Clarksville, which, as Amy Murrell Taylor suggests, required Freedmen to own land.

After the contraband camp closed in the fall of 1865, refugee war widows, white abolitionist lawyers, and a post-war economic downturn converged in Clarksville to create an unprecedented opportunity for Black land ownership. While the argument that contraband camps became later black communities is not new, scholars have said little about the process by which this happened.¹⁴¹ Landownership was key, as Amy Murrell Taylor notes. The critical ingredient

¹³⁹ Mary Ann Shelby, widows pension application no. 126,703; service of Jackson Balthrope (Pvt., Co. D, 101st USCT, Civil War); Civil War and Later Pension Files; Department of Veterans Affairs, RG 15, NARA.

¹⁴⁰ For more on this, see Manning. *Troubled Refuge* and Taylor, *Embattled Freedom*.

¹⁴¹ All of these works address the argument that contraband camps facilitated the creation of permanent community but most focus on the ways camps provided opportunities for community and organization. None address the technical processes by which communities were allowed by white populations to remain where they did. My research explains that process in Clarksville, TN. See, Amy Murrell Taylor, *Embattled Freedom: Journeys through the Civil War's Slave Refugee Camps* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018); Chandra Manning, "Working for Citizenship in Civil War Contraband Camps," *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 4, no. 2 (2014): 172-204; Kristin L. Bouldin, *Contraband Camps and the Freedmen's Bureau during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (PhD diss., The University of Mississippi, 2020); Katherine Chilton, "'City of Refuge': Urban Labor, Gender, and Family Formation during Slavery and the Transition to Freedom in the District of Columbia, 1820-1875" (PhD diss., Carnegie Mellon University, 2009); Gavin Gerard Harrell, "Arlington's Freedmen's Village: Becoming Untethered" (PhD diss., Liberty University, 2022); Zachary C. Lowe, "Meanings of Freedom: Virginia Contraband Settlements

was capital: bounty paid to USCT veterans and widows drawing pension on their deceased veteran husbands. Any payments made to Freedmen were unprecedented, but lump sums provided by these systems were a true paradigm shift, especially for those who chose to live in community with each other.

These neighborhoods were made possible by Freedmen purchasing land, which was facilitated by abolitionist lawyers and Freedmen's bureau agents. Post-war economic crisis forced white landowners into selling and the wholesale disposal of land by a county chancery court with a year's long backlog, however, provided an avenue for land acquisition by Freedmen through a complicated process of buying and reselling land disposed of in chancery court cases.¹⁴² Freedmen settlements on the site of former camp and home farm areas provided white Clarksville comfort and control by partitioning the new Freedmen community away from white Clarksville and onto the periphery of the city limits. Though initially rare, white land sales to Freedmen became a way to regulate the post-war landscape and entrench segregated communities that persist in Clarksville to this day.

In the wake of the U.S. Government closing the Contraband Camp in October 1865, the Freedmen, and Clarksville, were at a crossroads. While thousands of Freedmen were processed through the camp during the previous eighteen months, hundreds still lived at the site of the old camp and in dozens of warehouses and homes seized by the government. For Freedmen that

and Wartime Reconstruction" (MA thesis, The College of William and Mary, 2003); Abigail Cooper, "'Lord, Until I Reach My Home': Inside the Refugee Camps of the American Civil War" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2015); Katherine Erica Seeber, "Addressing Community Erasure with Community-Based, Participatory Research at Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park, Hilton Head Island, SC" (PhD diss., Binghamton University, State University of New York, 2024).

¹⁴² Chancery courts are courts that specialize in case involving equity. This can be divorces, estate settlement, contract litigation, debt, and guardianships, among others. The specific role of chancery courts varies from state to state. The kinds of cases this research is especially concerned with is estate settlements, where large tracts are subdivided by survey and plat and then sold at auction to satisfy judgements from the court.

chose not to live in the camp, they most often found temporary residences in the abandoned houses and tobacco warehouses of absent Confederate sympathizers. But the withdrawal of the Army in early 1866 saw the eventual return of those structures to their private owners. Many Freedmen, especially the destitute, orphans, and elderly, were left trying to find permanent homes. White Clarksville preferred they were “sent beyond the lines” to find permanent residence.¹⁴³

When the camp was closed, Joshua Cobb had just taken his seat as the new mayor of post-war Clarksville. After the local courts reopened, he was immediately tasked by the wealthy, white elite to do something about the new Black presence. In December 1865, Cobb wrote to the newly elected Montgomery County State Representative, William Wines, about what Cobb described as a humanitarian and logistical issue: about 1,500 men, women, and children were living inside the corporate limits of Clarksville and were “living hand to mouth in miserable huts.”¹⁴⁴ The former contraband camp, though now closed, was still occupied by hundreds of Freedmen without legal land title, as the estates the lands belonged to had not yet been processed through chancery court. The result was a straggling “contraband village”, an area white citizens avoided.¹⁴⁵

Cobb believed the new Freedmen’s Bureau was ineffective so far. Established in March of 1865, and its local office since mid-summer, the Bureau was still relatively new. For all the limited effectiveness of the Bureau, it proved to be an essential part of the Black experience in the South, as it often acted as a buffer between Freedmen and white southerners’ intense vitriol

¹⁴³ *Clarksville Weekly Chronicle*, 20 October 1865; 4 August 1865.

¹⁴⁴ Joshua Cobb to William Wines, December 4th, 1865. Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Tennessee, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1869, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 1, M – T. RG 105, NARA.

¹⁴⁵ *Clarksville Weekly Chronicle* 27 July 1866. A pursuit of two Freedmen escaped from the city jail ended at the edge of the contraband village.

toward the new post-war dynamic.¹⁴⁶ Former contraband camp commander William Brunt was appointed as the new Freedman's Bureau agent after the camp's closure. Cobb was not impressed and told Fisk that the city government's budget was stressed and had already accommodated significant expenditures towards a modicum of care for the refugees.

Citing the rising cases of smallpox, Cobb implored Representative Wines to find aid for the local government and the Freedmen. Emphasizing the crisis in Clarksville, Cobb wrote "I am constrained for humanity." Cobb's letter to Representative Wines quickly made its way to the Gen. Clinton Fisk, the Assistant Commissioner of the Tennessee office of the Freedmen's Bureau, who wrote to Cobb on Christmas Eve, "I am glad there is one Mayor who seems to understand this business and has a heart and conscience for the great work of organizing society, relieving the distressed &c." Fisk pledged \$1,000 to help, noting the influx of refugees from the neighboring Kentucky counties had indeed made Clarksville a "city of refuge."¹⁴⁷ Fisk must have been impressed with Cobb because after Brunt resigned his position on 1 January 1866, he appointed Cobb as the new Clarksville Freedman's Bureau agent.

Fisk's observation about Clarksville was correct. Like all cities and towns across the South where a contraband camp was established, Clarksville was a city of refuge. But, as both Cobb and Fisk noted, Clarksville wasn't only receiving refugees from slavery in Montgomery County; Clarksville was the objective for many refugees fleeing from Todd, Logan, Christian, and Trigg counties in Kentucky. At the height of the camp, estimates range from 2,500 to as high as 4,000 people in the refugee camp. In Cobb's estimation, there were still 3,500 people after the camp closed, which was a serious concern for white Clarksville. Despite Cobb's seeming visage

¹⁴⁷ Clinton Fisk to Joshua Cobb, December 24th, 1865. Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, Press Copies of Letters Sent, Vol. 2 (AGO Vol. 7), Oct. 2–Dec. 30, 1865, Part 2, RG 105, NARA.

of care, he is demonstrative of the post-war dilemma for Black Clarksville. While we cannot know his convictions or moral compass, we do know that Cobb was a former Confederate home guard officer and enslaved nine people.¹⁴⁸ Cobb's appointment as Freedman's Bureau agent was vehemently opposed and protested by local abolitionists and freedmen. After his appointment as Bureau Superintendent in early 1867, allegations of fraud and his Confederate past surfaced. Ultimately, a petition from 248 Freedmen helped convince General Fisk to remove Cobb from the position that April.¹⁴⁹

The Army's closure of the camp in September 1865 left hundreds of Freedmen with few options for permanent housing. One of the objectives of the camp was to discharge able-bodied people into employment on local plantations or to enlist in the Army in one of the various USCT regiments. The Freedmen Bureau maintained similar, though more concentrated efforts after the establishment of the Clarksville office in July 1865, though few understood the gravity of removing the organized camp. The period from when the camp was closed in September 1865 through late 1867/ early 1868, when the camp and home farmlands were surveyed and sold in Chancery court represents a transitional period for the proto-Black community. Those who remained on the lands of the camp were now more or less squatters but as the land was still virtually abandoned there was no private or military authority. Amy Murrell Taylor argues that the

¹⁴⁸ Entry for Joshua Cobb in the 1860 Federal Census Slave Schedule, North & East of the Cumberland, Montgomery County, TN. Pg. 44. I could not locate any service record for Cobb, but this may be due to his service in home guard and militia units as opposed to the Confederate Army, which is detailed in the local newspaper. Cobb was first elected as a captain in a Clarksville home guard unit in 1861, and then later became a colonel of the newly reactivated 91st state militia. After the U.S. Army's victory at Fort Donelson in February 1862, Cobb managed the Confederate hospital at the Clarksville Female Academy, following the Confederacy's abandonment of the city, "The Independent Guards," *Clarksville Chronicle*, 25 May 1861; "Election Notice" and "Militia Election," *Clarksville Chronicle*, 16 Aug 1861; "Special Order No. 7," *Clarksville Chronicle*, 13 Dec 1861. Cobb's service in the 91st is noted in a letter to General Fisk from local Union men, refuting Cobb as Freedman's Bureau agent, Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 2 and 3, A-C, 1867, Part 1, RG 105, NARA.

¹⁴⁹ Petition to remove Dr. Joshua Cobb as Freedman's Bureau agent. Enclosure in John L. Roberts to Major General Fisk, 18 May 1866, Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 1 and 2, N-S, 1866, Part 3. RG 105, NARA.

development of contraband camps followed military necessity, so it stands to reason that when the military left Clarksville, the remaining community was left without the structure, provision, and protection the Army provided.¹⁵⁰

As the Freedman's village coped with their existence in Clarksville without the Army, the familiar scourge of disease only exacerbated the Freedman's tenuous grasp on permanence. The *Clarksville Weekly Chronicle* first reported on the smallpox outbreak in November 1865, stating there were forty cases in the Pest house. The paper encouraged readers to take precautions, though it noted that, so far, it was confined to the Black population and "it is difficult to control amongst them, because of their proverbial improvidence, and because of the accessions to that class of population constantly flowing in from the country." The article also warned of hiring out any Freedman unless everyone in the household was vaccinated.¹⁵¹ The newspaper provided regular updates on the quantity of cases and with each report advised the reader to get vaccinated. Each update emphasized that the cases were predominately among the Freedman population. In February 1866, Cobb used the newspaper to update white Clarksville citizens about the smallpox ravaging the village:

...being for the most part, occupants of miserable huts – many crowded together in one small hut, men, women, and children. Many dying daily, having to be sent to the pest-house, there to be nursed, nourished, and watched over by a Physician, and in in the case of death to be buried, all of which, owing to circumstances not now necessary to mention, devolved upon the city authorities for the time being.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Taylor, 216

¹⁵¹ *Clarksville Weekly Chronicle*, 24 November 1865

¹⁵² *Clarksville Weekly Chronicle*, 16 February 1866.

While there are no records of how many Freedmen were killed by smallpox in the winter of 1865 and 1866, the records of the 101st USCT Infantry regiment provide a good indication. Between November 1865 and January 1866, the 101st lost fifty-four soldiers, predominately from company D, which was previously assigned to the camp. The regiments barracks were immediately next to the contraband camp. The Regiment was an invalid regiment, which provided opportunity for soldiers not fit for full field service, but not so bad off to be discharged. Companies of the 101st provided labor and security for the Clarksville contraband camp as well as the camps in Nashville and Gallatin.

When Eliza Nance applied for her widow's pension, she told the pension agent of how her husband Leftwich of Co. I in 101st Regiment had died of smallpox, just weeks after his discharge from the army. "...mighty nigh his whole regiment had the smallpox", Eliza said. The rest of her story is harrowing: Leftwich was brought to the smallpox hospital, which was located just outside the contraband camp, and placed in a small cabin to die. G.W. Baker, a 101st USCT, Co. A veteran recalled how Leftwich's death was "impressed upon him." Baker and one other had survived smallpox and volunteered to bury Leftwich, who had been dead for a few days. When the men opened the house where Leftwich was, they found that rats or dogs had eaten parts of his face off. The two men remembered how cold that February was and told of how they had to keep a fire while they dug Leftwich's grave.¹⁵³ In all, the 16th and 101st regiments lost 200 soldiers to smallpox in Clarksville.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ Eliza Nance, widows pension application no. 126,703; service of Leftridge Nance (Pvt., Co. D, 101st USCT, Civil War); Civil War and Later Pension Files; Department of Veterans Affairs, RG 15, NARA.

¹⁵⁴ This number derived from records of death in the regimental books. Regimental Descriptive, Letter, Endorsement and Order Book, 101st USCT Infantry, Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations, entry 112-115, RG 94, NARA; Regimental Descriptive, Letter, Endorsement and Order Book, 16th USCT Infantry, Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations, entry 112-115, RG 94, NARA.

If sickness and loss bonded the USCT war-widow community though common experience, so did shared new beginnings and family creation. While the camp experience was imbued with loss for all widows, they forged community with each other by witnessing each other's applications for pension and providing deposition to the claim agents to prove the widows were married to their enlisted spouses. The web of relationships weaved by these widows is intricate and complex. The existence of these relationships is only discernable by thorough examination of depositions in widows pension applications. The existence of these communities can be difficult, if not impossible, to prove without the words of the community themselves as found in among pension depositions. When a widow filed for her pension benefits, it required third parties to provide depositions to pension examiners. Most often, these depositions were provided by other widows seeking pension benefits or soldiers that served with the deceased husband. Some of these depositions reflect common experiences on the same plantation or in the same region. For instance, in the case of Albert, the minor heir of William and Betsey Ogden, depositions from family members and neighbors provide an intricate genealogy of siblings, marriages, and former enslavers names. Many widows recounted when they, or their husbands, were sold to other enslavers and the social structures around being married but living on two different plantations.

Most depositions provide insight into the new communities wrought by the contraband camp experience. Harrison Mayo told pension examiners that William, Betsey, and their son Albert all ran away from their enslaver in Logan County, KY to come to Clarksville. Harrison knew this information because he was there. They enlisted in the Army together, and while they were in their company camp, their families were cared for in the contraband camp. Harrison stated, "due to the circumstances, they were almost continually together except when on guard

duty or other camp duty” and that “[they] were in constant communication with the immediate neighbors and friends of the soldier’s wife.”.¹⁵⁵

Next to children’s deaths, the most recollected events in pension application depositions are marriages. Many couples were married “according to slave customs” without any legal standing.¹⁵⁶ Upon arrival at the camp, Capt. Brunt, the camp director, ensured all married couples were re-married and given a legal marriage license. Nearly every widow’s pension reflects both an original marriage date, as slaves, and then a re-marriage date, when performed by the Army and with a state license. Many of these marriages were performed in mass ceremonies, where an Army chaplain would marry dozens of couples at a time.

Betsey Green recalled how she witnessed the re-marriage of Betsey and William Ogden in the house of Capt. Brunt. She said there were so many people present that she could not get into the house.¹⁵⁷ Polly and Susan Majors were recounted how they were bridesmaids for Mahala Kirby, whose wedding was in the contraband camp.¹⁵⁸ Silvia Paine and Kitty McReynolds, both widows, stated they were both present for the marriage of Mary Jane and Preston Rascoe, which provided the required proof for Mary Jane to receive a pension after Preston’s death. Mary Kelly and Georgiana Majors stated they were present at Rachel and Nathan Hollands marriage in 1858, showing that pre-emancipation relationships persisted through the contraband camp and into the post emancipation community. Others were witness to general details about the applicant’s life. Malvina Fox was a witness for Adelina Crenshaw. Mary Tolliver was a witness for Mary Hunter.

¹⁵⁵ Harrison Mayo deposition in Betsey Ogden, widow pension application no. 118,143; service of William Ogden (Pvt., Co. D, 101st USCT, Civil War); Civil War and Later Pension Files; Department of Veterans Affairs, RG 15, NARA.

¹⁵⁶ This term is used in almost every pension application to denote marriage prior to the Civil War and without a license.

¹⁵⁷ Betsey Green deposition in Betsy Ogden pension application.

¹⁵⁸ Mahala Kirby, widows pension application no. 124,162; service of King Kirby (Pvt., Co. H, 101st USCT, Civil War); Civil War and Later Pension Files; Department of Veterans Affairs, RG 15, NARA.

Winney Coleman was a witness to Rachel Duke. However complex, these relationships are the foundation of the post-Civil War Freedman community in Clarksville and reflect an emerging community.

Depositions given by veterans for pensions applications over the thirty years after the war indicate the Freedman community in Clarksville was tightly knit. Veterans who served in the same companies and regiments acted as witnesses for each other and for widows in their pension applications. Some veterans, like Joe Farley, provided dozens of depositions for both widows and soldier pension applications and widow pension applications is that soldiers rarely talk about their post-emancipation homes. Soldiers' narratives in depositions tended to focus on military service together as that was the credential required for pension application approval. Memories of the contraband camp or homes in the contraband village rarely appear in soldiers' depositions, and when they do it is usually in support of widow pension applications. Conversely, widows told pension examiners of their fleeing to the camp with their husbands, their husband's enlistment, the people they knew, and the births and deaths of their children. Clearly, the time spent in the earlier contraband camp was a monument on the landscapes of their experiences, which anchored the new Freedman's community.

As the camp gave way to village, many widows made their homes on or near to the old refugee campgrounds. Of eighty-three widows' pensions filed in Clarksville in 1865 and 1866, thirty-four of them record their place of residence as "at the old Freedmen's Camp" or "near to the old Contraband Camp."¹⁵⁹ Nineteen widows listed their residences simply as Clarksville. Mary Ann Shelby was among pensioned USCT widows who made their permanent homes on the site of, and near to, the Clarksville contraband camp in the immediate years after the war. The

¹⁵⁹ See Appendix F.

remaining thirty listed their residences as other communities in either Montgomery County, or just over the state line in Kentucky.¹⁶⁰ Of all the places settled in the aftermath of the war, the site of the contraband camp is the most stated residence in pension applications, and it quickly became the most populous.¹⁶¹

The post-contraband camp village was rooted in more than just shared experience and relationships. Structures were already present, and in most cases, residents likely never moved once the camp closed. When the camp was officially established in April 1864, homes for soldiers' families were built near the contraband camp. Missionary Lyman Abbot observed in March 1865: "a little distance [from the camp], is a Negro village. The Negroes that are able to procure the lumber are permitted to put up their own houses, with little garden lots about them. The best class of Negroes do this. Most of these, however, are the families of soldiers."¹⁶² Abbot's observation is critical because it demonstrates a separation between the more transient camp life and the seemingly more formal, and permanent, arrangements of soldiers' families. Statements made by widows in various pension applications support this. Louisa Harper said her husband, Green, "...bought him a house up on the hill, like separate from the camp, and I lived over in that house while he was in the army, and did his cooking, and he would come there and take his meals."¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ These numbers are the total widow's pensions filed by widows of soldiers enlisted in the either 16th or 101st USCT regiments, both of which were stationed in Clarksville. These regiments seem to account for most of all widows and veterans living in Clarksville after the war. These numbers do not reflect the handful of widows whose husbands may have served regiments other than the 16th or 101st. See the 1868-1871 Bounty Claims book for Clarksville office of the Freedmen's Bureau for listing of all soldiers, widows, minors, and parents claiming bounty for US soldiers.

¹⁶¹ *Clarksville Weekly Chronicle*, July 2nd, 1890. 1,457 people lived there and only 107 were white.

¹⁶² Lyman Abbot "Reminisces", *Outlook Magazine*, 1914, p. 717

¹⁶³ Louisa Harper, widow pension application no. 87,423; service of Green Harper (Pvt., Co. D, 101st USCT, Civil War); Civil War and Later Pension Files; Department of Veterans Affairs, RG 15, NARA.

Families of soldiers weren't the only ones who built more formal houses. Records show that houses dotted the landscape near the contraband camp. Refugees could cut timber from the land and adjoining properties, then saw the lumber for a share. This created an extensive supply of lumber for construction.¹⁶⁴ After the contraband camp closed, the Montgomery County Chancery Court ordered the land where the camp was located to be auctioned for rent. At the public auction, the auctioneer used the presence of twenty-five cabins as an inducement for bidding. That same year, land on the southeast side of the camp, used as part of the home farm, was subdivided and sold.¹⁶⁵ A condition of the sale stipulated that freedmen could remove any houses they had built.

The record is clear on this: after the camp was disbanded, the site remained home for an unknown number of Freedmen. The journey of citizenship for refugees began here in this camp as they pivoted through the unpredictable process of emancipation and freedom. Regardless of individual experience, after the U.S. Army established the contraband camp in 1864, the landscape became a Black space, forever embedded with consequential Black experience. Mary Ann and other USCT widows' decision to remain at the Contraband camp poses several questions: why remain at a place seemingly connected to a traumatic experience? After all, many of these women buried their families at the camp. But at the same time, the camp experience could also be interpreted as joyous experience – the start of a new, free life. To ask it another way, were refugees anchored to the camp by their experiences there? Certainly, much could be said for the place as a site of memory for the post-war Black community in Clarksville. Yet, the seemingly forgotten refugee cemetery complicates the matter. Either way, the bonds developed in

¹⁶⁴ Claim file for Duncan Marr, Southern Claims Commission, Barred and Disallowed, 1871 Records of the Accounting Officers of the Department of the Treasury, 1775-1927, RG 217, NARA.

¹⁶⁵ Merrit and Fort vs Stewart, 1868. TN Supreme Court records, TSLA

the camp by USCT widows, and the physical landscape altered by the Freedmen, provided a foundation for a long-term Black community at the old contraband camp.

To create a long-term community, residents needed to own or rent land. However, the land where the contraband camp and village were located was owned by deceased or absent white Confederate sympathizers. Complicating the matter further, white Clarksville was averse to selling land to Black Clarksville. Doing so meant accepting the reality that the ever-changing racial landscape was permanent. In an inspection of the Freedmen's Bureau Clarksville office, Michael Walsh, Sub-Assistant Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau at Nashville found that from the close of the camp through mid-1867, "white prejudiced land holders" kept land out of Freedmen hands.¹⁶⁶

The solution to this problem required intervention by white lawyers. J.C. McMullen and J. Jay Buck were key to the pension application process for USCT widows. Both men were federal officers during the war and settled in Clarksville after their discharges. In 1865, they established a law practice in Clarksville as claim agents for veterans and widows filing for pension and pay for service. During roughly two years, McMullen was the attorney of record in some 200 cases in Clarksville. The cases ranged from veterans seeking compensation for their service, to parents seeking backpay for sons killed in service, to widows of deceased soldiers seeking pension. McMullen alone filed pension applications for at least eighty-three USCT widows. Pointing to McMullen, Walsh related to General Fisk that by June of 1867 nine USCT veterans had purchased small farms out in the county, six widows had new homes in town, and between fifty-five and sixty USCT veterans had purchased town lots. Walsh was impressed by these statistics and gave full credit to McMullen. Walsh remarked, "[McMullen's actions] broke

¹⁶⁶ Michael Walsh to W.P. Carlin, June 11th, 1867. Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, Reports on Operations and Conditions, Inspection Reports, Sept. 6, 1865–Mar. 12, 1869, Part 2. RG 105, NARA.

the monopoly of the prejudiced white land holders and fearing it would be done on a more extensive scale they have reconsidered further acts and sayings and are now disposed to sell to freedmen.”¹⁶⁷

McMullen and Buck’s strategy focused on lands processing in the county Chancery court, among which were land used by the contraband camp and farm. During the U.S. Army occupation of Clarksville, the county courts were shut down, resulting in an enormous backlog of cases after the courts reopened in late 1865. The Army Provost Marshal continued to handle criminal and some civil matters during the war, but matters of probate, equity, and property procession were paused. During the week of October 20th, 1865, there were over 400 cases on the Chancery docket in Montgomery County.¹⁶⁸ As debts accumulated and large-scale enslavers’ net worths were devalued by Black emancipation, the backlog of cases grew. Deaths during the war also resulted in new estates coming into Chancery court for probate. By 1870, the neighborhoods that evolved from the former contraband camp, assisted by Buck & McMullen, were Taylor’s Hill (which embraced the Hannum lands and former contraband camp, and much of the Poston farm), and Brandon’s Hill (which included the Brandon farm, and sometimes called Grattan’s Grove). Scufftown became the informal name for the small area between these two neighborhoods.¹⁶⁹ (See Figures 8 and 9)

¹⁶⁷ Michael Walsh to W.P. Carlin, June 11th, 1867. Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, Reports on Operations and Conditions, Inspection Reports, Sept. 6, 1865–Mar. 12, 1869, Part 2. RG 105, NARA.

¹⁶⁸ *Clarksville Weekly Chronicle*, 10/20/1865

¹⁶⁹ Buck & McMullen assisted with the creation of seven Black communities in Montgomery County. As Freedmen’s Bureau agent, McMullen assisted in various capacities with others. Each of these neighborhoods are deserving of its own essay.

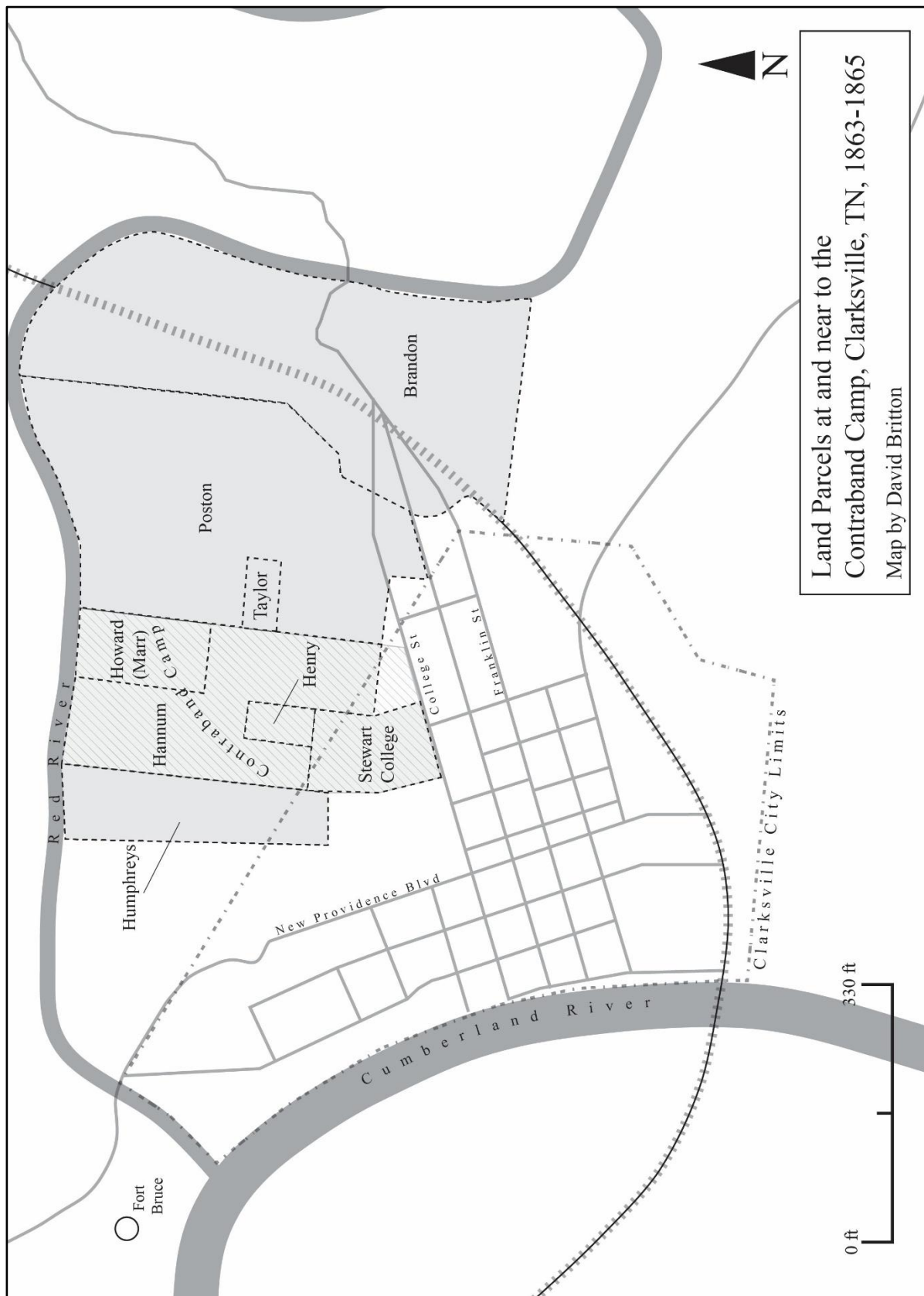


Figure 8. Parcels at and adjacent to the contraband camp

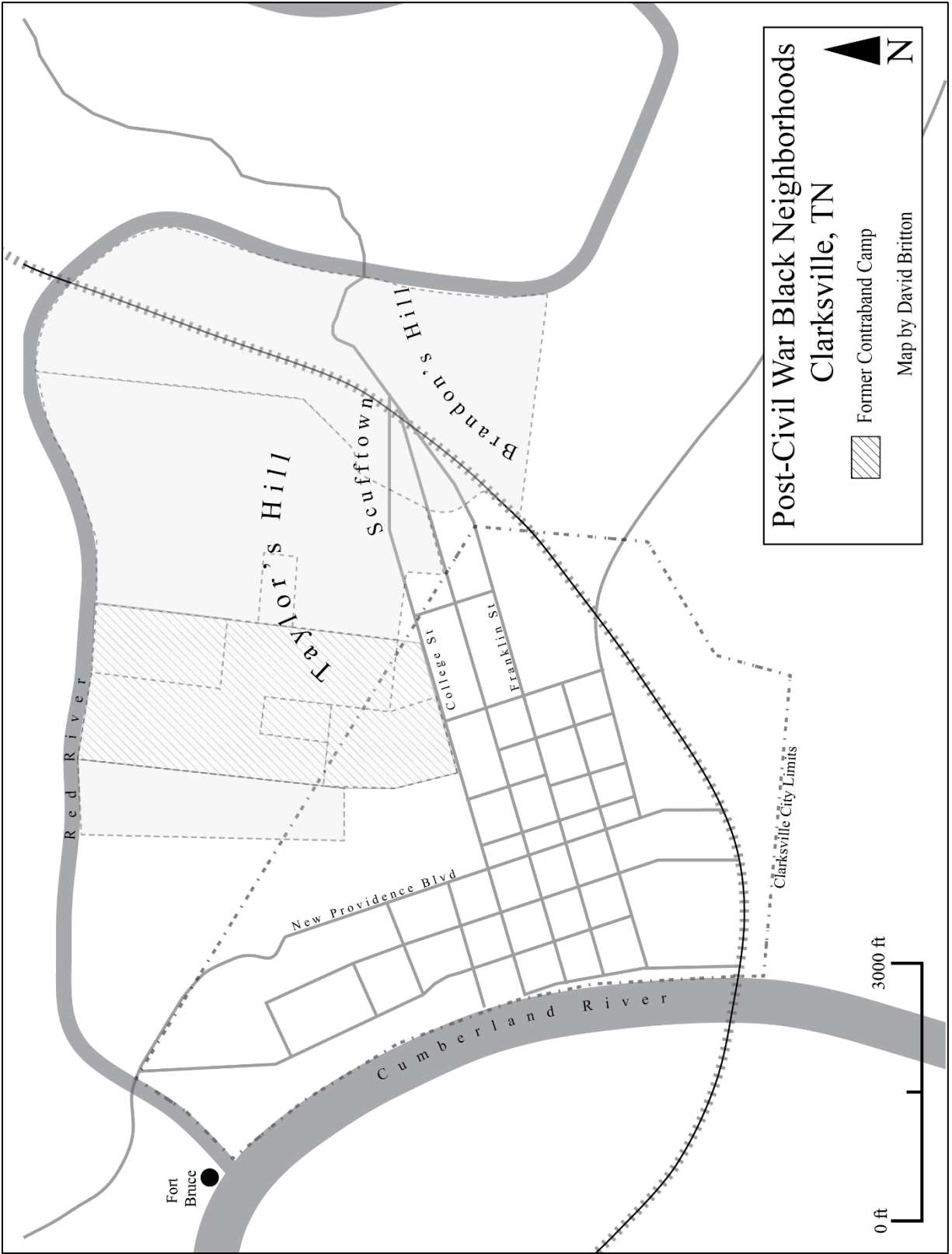


Figure 9. Black neighborhoods, late 19th century.

The Grattan Grove plantation and homeplace of Stephen and Mary Brandon was immediately southeast of the contraband village. (see figures 8 and 9) During the war, Captain William Brunt rented the Brandon land, around 200 acres, for farming by refugees for the support of the contraband camp.¹⁷⁰ Mary inherited part of the land from her father, and settling his estate required the land to process in the chancery court. In September 1866, the court ordered the land subdivided and sold at auction to fulfill estate needs. (see figure 10) On the day of the auction, all potential buyers were made aware that “certain negroes had built houses upon portions of the property sold, and that the houses and other improvements as made by the negroes were the property of the negroes under the contract of lease and that they had the right to remove them from the land during this year.”¹⁷¹ Freedmen likely built these homes during the preceding two years when the contraband camp was in operation. Unfortunately, no records exist to show which individuals built them.

¹⁷⁰ Smith & Pepper to Capt. R.E. Farwell, *November 16th, 1865*. Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Tennessee, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1869, Miscellaneous Records, Miscellaneous Records, RG 105, NARA; Smith & Pepper to General C.B. Fisk, *February 11th, 1866*. Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Tennessee, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1869, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 1 and 2, N – S, RG 105, NARA.

¹⁷¹ Brandon v Reynolds, Montgomery County Chancery book 5, p. 508, Montgomery County Archives, Clarksville, TN.



At the initial sale of Grattan Grove, forty-five purchasers bought ninety-three lots. Eighteen purchasers were Freedmen, seven are unidentified, and the remaining twenty-two were white. In April 1867, Buck & McMullen purchased four adjacent lots in Grattan Grove, approximately six acres, between Dodd Street and Cedar Street and resurveyed them into nine smaller lots. (see figure 11) These were then exclusively sold to Freedmen. Over the next two years, McMullen bought additional lots in Grattan's Grove and resold them to an additional twenty-two Freedmen, almost entirely to veterans and widows.¹⁷²

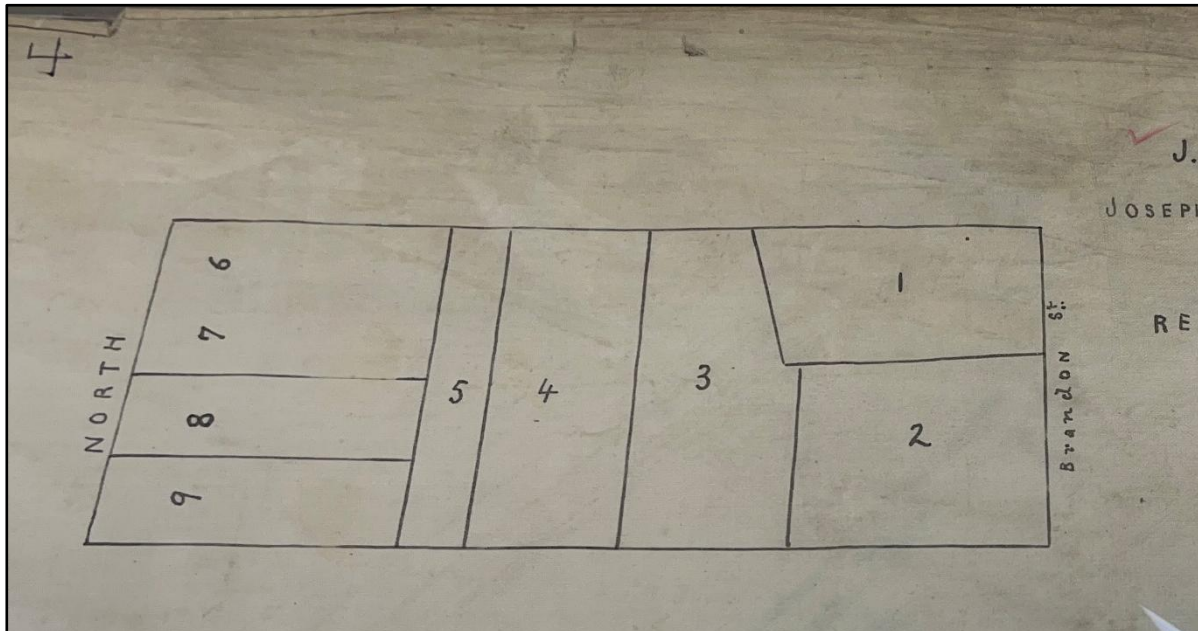


Figure 11. Lots in Grattan Grove McMullen & Buck had resurveyed to accommodate smaller lots. Montgomery County Plat Book 1. Montgomery County Archives, Clarksville, TN

The contraband camp and Freedmen's village were located on the plantation owned by Fisher A. Hannum. (see figure 8) Hannum was a wealthy tobacco magnate and was chair of the Clarksville Confederate military board. Hannum and his family fled to Huntsville, AL after the fall of Fort Donelson in February 1862, leaving his Clarksville residence and plantation

¹⁷² See Appendix G.

abandoned.¹⁷³ From close of camp in October 1865 through December 1866, the former camp and Hannum's lands were managed informally by Freedmen still living on the site. In the fall of 1866, the court ordered Hannum's former house and 100 acres be auctioned for rent for the year 1867 to generate income for the estate, as Hannum had died some years earlier. Charles Stewart made the winning bid, which was predicated on the presence of buildings associated with the Contraband camp. Among these were twenty-five cabins built by the U.S. government for the refugees. Freedmen were still living in the houses, and Stewart planned to collect rent from the occupants as a source of income. However, the Freedmen occupying these cabins understood that the government made the houses the sole property of the occupants, regardless of whose property the house was on. Much to Stewart's chagrin, the cabins were no longer there when he took possession of the property.¹⁷⁴

The question of possession of Freedmen's houses built while the contraband camp was operational created tension as white property owners attempted to deprive Freedmen of houses that were given to them by the government.¹⁷⁵ In early 1867, white landowner Eliza P. Drane attempted to prevent Phillip Bell from moving his house. During the war, and with Captain Brunt's permission, Bell built his house on Drane's land. After the war, Drane refused to let Bell move his house from her property, claiming it was her property. Like Bell hoped to do, the Freedmen who had houses on Hannum's land removed their homes from the land.

¹⁷³ Report of abandoned plantations within the jurisdiction of the military post at Clarksville, Tenn. 4 March 1864. War Department Collection of Confederate Records, Manuscripts 1861-1865. Entry 183, Box 8, File 850, RG109, NARA.

¹⁷⁴ Merritt & Fort v. F.A. Hannum et al, 1875. Tennessee Supreme Court Case. Tennessee State Library & Archives.

¹⁷⁵ In the case of *Eliza Drane v. Phillip Bell*. Bell built his house with lumber provided by the government, but camp officers unfamiliarity with property lines resulted in Bell building house off Hannum's lands and on Drane's land. Bell offered to move his house, but Drane refused. The Freedmen's Bureau ruled in favor of Bell, but not without substantial complaint and court proceedings from Drane and her son. *Phillip Bell to Maj. Gen. O.O. Howard, January 28th, 1867*, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Tennessee, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 2 and 3, A - C, RG 105, NARA; *R.W. Johnson to Joshua Cobb, February 16th, 1867*, *ibid*.

Later that year, the Hannum land was surveyed and subdivided into sixty-seven lots with ten streets. (see figures 12 and 7) After the failed attempt at renting the land, the Montgomery County chancery court ordered the lots to be auctioned on June 29th, 1867. In stark contrast to the land sales in Grattan Grove/ Brandon's Hill the same year, white buyers purchased most of these lots in bulk, presumably with the intent of renting to Freedmen tenants. Only four of the initial sales were to Freedmen, two of which were Black women. (see appendix D)

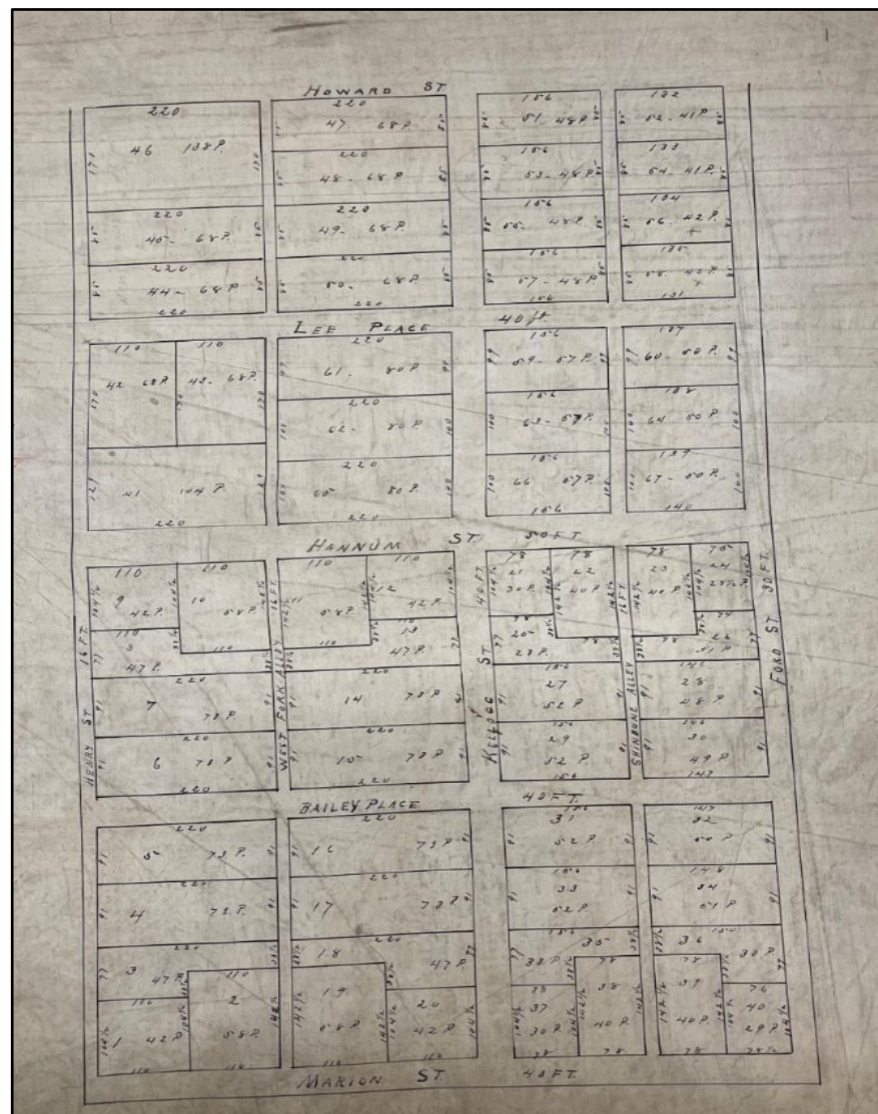


Figure 12. 1867 plat of Hannum's lands, plat no. 1, Montgomery County Plat Book 1, Montgomery County Archives, Clarksville, TN.

Immediately east of Hannum's land was the plantation of John H. Poston. Poston was an early merchant in Clarksville and built a large brick home near a substantial spring, called Poston's Spring, which was likely the primary water source for the Contraband camp. Poston died in 1848 and his widow, Nancy L. Poston, continued to manage the plantation. She rented acreage to the contraband camp for farming purposes in 1864 and 1865. Nancy died in 1867, and her estate went into chancery court and her land was divided into lots and sold. Her son-in-law, Zachariah M. Taylor owned two seven-acre lots on the west side of the plantation, which was on the eastern boundary of Hannum's land and the contraband camp. (see figure 14) He purchased these lots from Poston in the late 1850s. Taylor was a methodist minister and a doctor and in 1866 he was appointed over the smallpox hospital, near the site of the contraband camp. In 1866 he testified that he knew Winney Coleman, widow, and her children and that he had provided medical care to them while in the camp.¹⁷⁶ In March 1866 Mahala Kirby stated in her widow pension application that she lived on Dr. Taylor's farm.¹⁷⁷ This lends to the possibility that the cabins removed from the Hannum property were relocated to Taylor's property, only a few hundred yards away. In a few years, the combined settlement on Taylor's and Hannum's lands became known as Taylor's Hill. Several pension depositions reference living at Taylor's Hill.

¹⁷⁶ Isaac Barker, minor child pension application no. WC126002; service of Andrew Barker (Pvt., Co. E, 16th USCT, Civil War); Civil War and Later Pension Files; Department of Veterans Affairs, RG 15, NARA.

¹⁷⁷ Mahala Kirby, widow pension application no. WC87145; service of King Kirby (Pvt., Co. H, 101st USCT, Civil War); Civil War and Later Pension Files; Department of Veterans Affairs, RG 15, NARA.

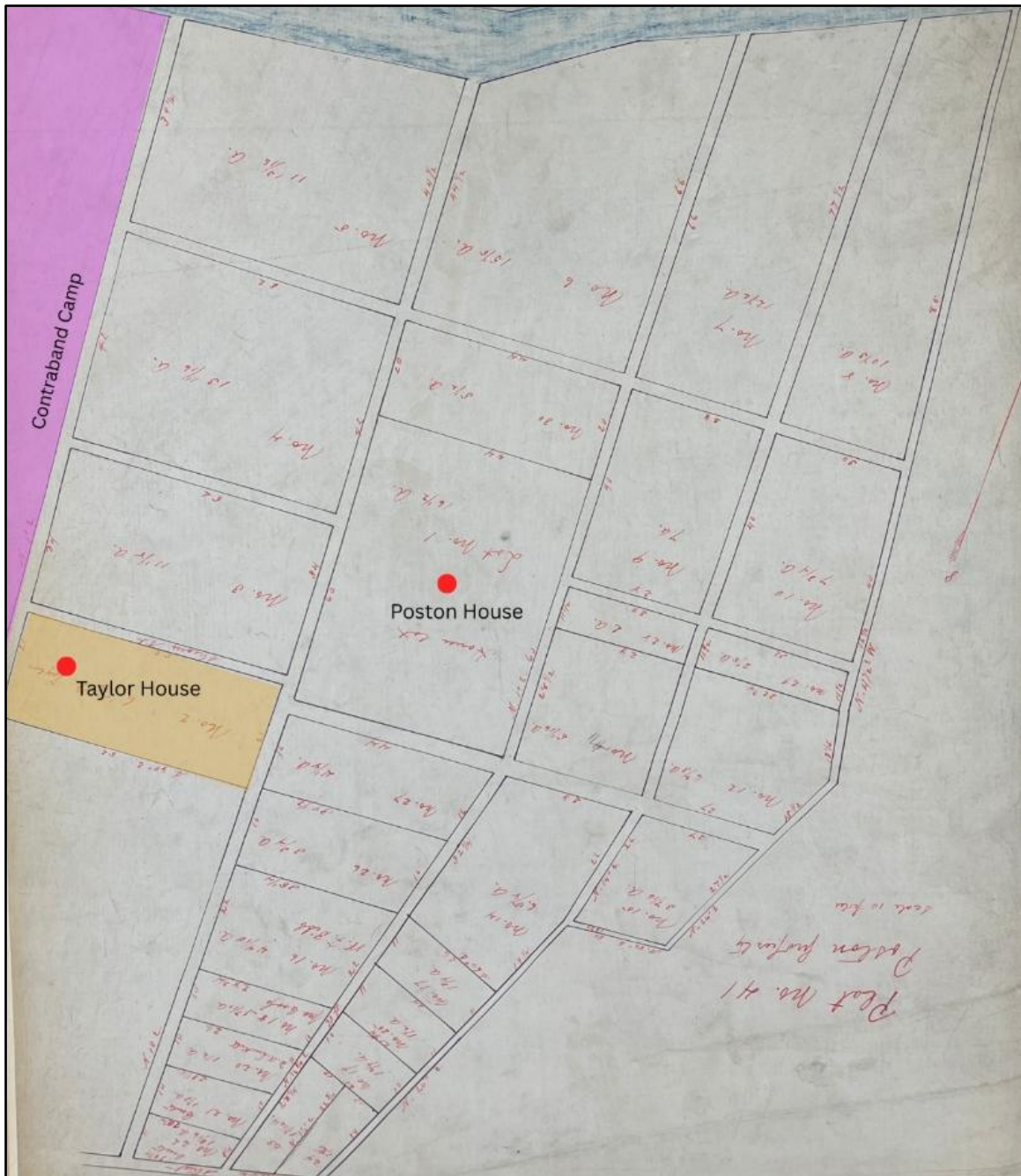


Figure 13. 1867 Subdivision of Poston Lands. Taylor's lot is shown in orange. The contraband camp is shown in purple. Plat in Montgomery County Plat Book 1. Montgomery County Archives, Clarksville, TN

Taylor started selling lots to Freedmen at least by November 1866. One newspaper article detailed a walk through the village and stated that a minister, who lived among the freedmen, sold them “in fee simple, the lands which they occupied.”, likely Taylor.¹⁷⁸ However, none of the early sales were recorded. By the end of 1868, Taylor had recorded his first deeds to Freedmen. Although no survey is on file with the county, he appears to have laid out lots and streets, as these street names are on the very first deeds. These lots ranged in size from 0.1 to 0.4 acres, with most being on the smaller end of this range. These sales continued through the 1880s. Tracking Taylor's sales has proven to be very difficult. He set up a four-year mortgage process for freedmen to buy lots and maintained a lien on any lot he financed. When payments were complete, Taylor executed a quit-claim deed, giving the buyer sole ownership. However, very few complete deeds were recorded. Between 1869 and 1880, Taylor recorded only twenty deeds to Freedmen, but examining delinquent tax lists in the newspaper shows that Taylor made sales to dozens more freedmen, but their inability to pay property taxes resulted in the loss of their property, either through tax sales or mortgage defaults. This dynamic reflects the challenges this community faced into the twenty-first century.

Where Freedmen made new Black neighborhoods in post-Civil War Clarksville was both pragmatic and decisive. On one hand, they purchased lands that were available – primarily lands associated with war-time refugee presence. On the other hand, Freedmen made these communities despite white Clarksville’s desire to see them evicted from the city altogether. These areas, including Taylor's Hill and Brandon's Hill, were on the outskirts of the city until the 1890s and were often the only places where Black residents could buy or rent land. By 1872, the area between the two neighborhoods, and sometimes the two combined, were given the

¹⁷⁸ “A Visit to the Celestial City”, *Clarksville Weekly Chronicle* 16 November 1866.

derogatory name "Scufftown" by white Clarksville. The local newspaper frequently published sensationalized reports about Scufftown, detailing fights, prostitution, and gambling for its white readers. The neighborhood's negative reputation was so strong that a pension examiner denied Harriett Fields' pension application simply because she lived there, assuming she was a prostitute. The examiner wrote in his official opinion that Harriett lived on Franklin Street, "in a section of the street called Scuff, occupied generally by colored women of immoral character".

By 1875, the *Leaf Chronicle Weekly* reported that "this city, state, and county is involved in a war against Scuff" and Scufftown became an embarrassment for the city's white elite.¹⁷⁹ As early as 1881, a newspaper called for the area's redevelopment, advocating for it to be "cleared of its present rubbish" to take advantage of its "premium building sites", eerily foreshadowing the Federal urban renewal projects of the 1950s and 1960s, which targeted nearly every Black Clarksville neighborhood for leveling and redevelopment. Only Taylor's Hill and Brandon's Hill remained unscathed by Urban Renewal, though it became the site of new federal public housing for Black families which were uprooted from razed neighborhoods.¹⁸⁰ The newspaper frequently reported on Black-on-Black crime in Scufftown and called for increased policing, with one article stating that "a little prompt punishment is all that is needed to make Scufftown an orderly suburb."¹⁸¹ H.C. Merritt even described the passenger depot in Scufftown as a "disgrace to the town". His solution was to disown and disavow the Black community, simply tell passengers arriving they were in Scuff, not Clarksville.¹⁸²

The next century brought rampant and recurring change to Scufftown. Black owners were often unable to pay property taxes, and the parcels were sold at tax auction where they were

¹⁷⁹ *Leaf Chronicle Weekly* 28 July 1875

¹⁸⁰ *Leaf Chronicle Weekly* 13 May 1881

¹⁸¹ *Clarksville Weekly Chronicle* 31 July 1875

¹⁸² *Clarksville Leaf Chronicle* 13 February 1913

often purchased by white landlords. These landlords resold some of the parcels, but most often they became rental properties. The cycle of ownership, tax delinquency, and white landlords repeated itself several times over the following century, each time deepening the disinvestment in the community, and plagues the black community at the site of the old contraband camp to this day. The view of Scufftown as a blighted area has continued into the 20th and 21st centuries. Since the 1950s, the Clarksville government has repeatedly attempted to use urban renewal programs to declare parts of Scufftown "blighted," with the most recent effort occurring in 2024.

This stigma also extended even to former white cemeteries located in Scufftown, as if the Black presence tainted the sacredness of the landscape. The Trinity Episcopal Cemetery, originally established by J.H. Poston in the 1830s, was the preferred choice of internment for affluent white families, instead of the older Clarksville city cemetery closer to the Cumberland River. To the chagrin of many, the post-war Trinity cemetery was in the heart of Scufftown and was in rough shape. In 1875, a newspaper article declared it "mortifying and humiliating for the friends of the dead to visit their place of burial" because of its location in the "most disreputable quarter of the town".¹⁸³ In response, the city and other groups purchased land south of town to create Greenwood Cemetery, a new white-only burial ground. The graves from Trinity were moved there, and the former cemetery site was sold to the Public Schools committee. The first African American public school in Clarksville not run by a missionary organization was built on this land.¹⁸⁴

While white Clarksville rejected former burial grounds in favor of new, further from the new Black community, Black Clarksville struggled to keep those established during the War.

¹⁸³ *Clarksville Leaf Chronicle Weekly* 24 November 1875

¹⁸⁴ *Clarksville Leaf Chronicle Weekly* 31 January 1878. History of Trinity Episcopal Church cemetery in *The Clarksville Leaf Chronicle* 5 June 1935.

The South Clarksville Black Cemetery, originally known as the Poor House/African burial ground, has a long and troubled history. Located on the southern end of the former Montgomery County Poor House property, this burial ground was distinct from the nearby pauper's cemetery, which was just a few dozen yards to the west. While the exact date of its establishment is not clear, it is possible that this was a segregated cemetery designated for Black people who died while under state care, whether they were indigent or enslaved by the local municipality. The Poor House facility itself closed just before the Civil War, with plans to relocate, leaving the cemetery to receive multiple USCT burials during the war.

In 1866, federal grave relocation efforts brought attention to the site, with reports indicating it held approximately 700 graves.¹⁸⁵ This large number of burials might suggest that the Poor House was also used as a hospital at some point. Although one report claimed only two U.S. soldiers were interred there, another report from Major W.G. Bond estimated the number to be between 50 and 60.¹⁸⁶ Ultimately, Federal cemetery crews removed 131 unknown bodies from the cemetery, though only one was identified as a U.S. Colored Troops (USCT) soldier, leaving behind any others.¹⁸⁷

Immediately after the chancery court subdivided and sold the refugee cemetery at the contraband camp in Clarksville, the local Freedmen community rallied to claim the South Clarksville cemetery burial as their own. In 1868, a local newspaper mentioned an upcoming meeting for the Freedmen community to raise funds to erect a fence around the African Burial Ground, demonstrating their commitment to honoring and preserving the site.¹⁸⁸ The following

¹⁸⁵ Entry for Poor House Farm, p. 27. Burial Registers of Military Post and National Cemeteries, ca. 1862-1960, Tennessee: Cumberland National Cemetery. Entry 627, RG 92, NARA.

¹⁸⁶ Maj. W. Bond list of cemeteries, cemetery # 69, p. 57, contained in Burial Registers of Military Post and National Cemeteries, ca. 1862-1960, Tennessee: Cumberland National Cemetery. Entry 627, RG 92, NARA

¹⁸⁷ Sheets 426-431. Burial Registers of Military Post and National Cemeteries, ca. 1862-1960, Tennessee: Nashville National Cemetery. Entry 627, RG 92, NARA.

¹⁸⁸ *Clarksville Weekly Chronicle*, 2 October 1868

year the Freedmen gave “several Tableaux entertainments” at the courthouse to continue their fundraising efforts.¹⁸⁹

Despite Freedmen’s efforts to maintain the cemetery, the pressure of white gentrification swelled. The land of the former Poor House property was subdivided in 1867 and most of it sold by 1874 (see figure 15). Records from this sale mention that the extreme southern portion of the tract had been "used as a burial ground by the colored people and for paupers for several years...It is now full of dead bodies and hogs have rooted into the graves, making it painful to look on."¹⁹⁰ Instead of taking responsibility for the cemetery's condition, the Poor House committee transferred the burden of care to the Freedmen community by deeding the land to them, officially making the Freedmen responsible for its upkeep. This act placed the burden of a public problem onto a marginalized community without providing them with the necessary resources to address it.

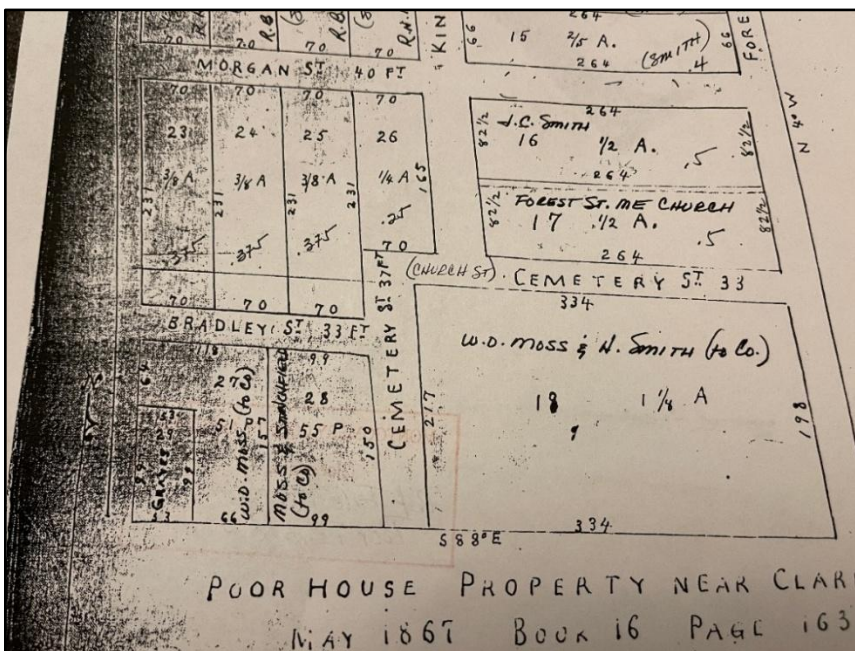


Figure 14. 1867 Plat of the Poor House property. Note the parcel that says 'graves' in the lower left (likely the poor house cemetery), and Cemetery Street (modern Church Street). Montgomery County Plat Book 1, Montgomery County Archives, Clarksville, TN.

¹⁸⁹ *Tobacco Leaf Weekly*, 8 July 1869.

¹⁹⁰ Montgomery County Court minutes, Book 28, p. 116. 6 April 1874

The tone of official records shifted dramatically in April 1877 when developers filed a petition with the county court to prohibit further burials of Black people at the site. The petitioners argued that there were "citizens now living in that locality who object to an extension of the burial grounds and because it tends to keep out others who would settle in that neighborhood." This statement reveals a clear desire for racial segregation. When the cemetery was established, it was well outside city limits, but by this time, it was "in the immediate vicinity of a number of the best citizens."¹⁹¹ This phrasing highlights a growing sentiment that the presence of a Black cemetery was undesirable, as it was perceived as a barrier to white settlement and economic development.

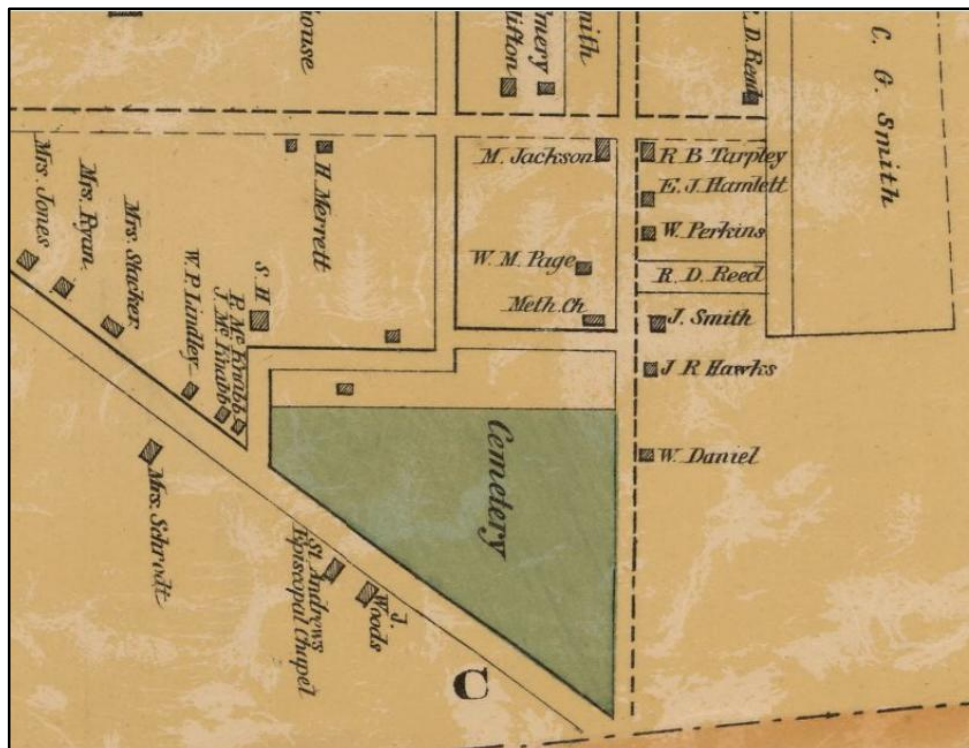


Figure 15. The South Clarksville cemetery as shown on an 1877 map of Montgomery County. D.G. Beers. Library of Congress

¹⁹¹ Montgomery County Court minutes, Book 28, p.553. 2 April 1877.

The motivation for removing the cemetery was not rooted in genuine concerns for its condition but rather in a desire to enforce racial boundaries and promote a segregated residential landscape. During the next two years, little action was taken. However, in April 1879, the inhabitants of South Clarksville again petitioned the court, but this time they used the pretense of "unsanitary conditions" to justify their request for the cemetery's closure. They claimed that shallow graves and a "terrible smell" created a public nuisance.¹⁹² While these claims may have had been true to some extent, they served as a convenient and socially acceptable reason to remove a Black community space that was now seen as a threat to a developing white neighborhood. The court responded by appointing a committee to inspect the cemetery, tasking them with filling in the graves. The court also offered a maximum of \$150 to purchase new property for a Black cemetery, a meager sum for such a significant undertaking. In a forced exchange, the Black community relinquished their rights to the old graveyard and covered the graves themselves in return for a new burial site. On 30 May 1879, the committee purchased 5 5/6 acres from W.M. Daniel to create a new cemetery adjacent to an existing two-acre Black cemetery.¹⁹³ This new, larger burial ground was named Mt. Olive. The county deeded the new cemetery to a group of trustees—Henry Roberts, Andrew Ewing, John Bailey, Henry Garvey, and George Vance. The trustees were given specific instructions to prevent new burials at the old site and to direct them to the new Mt. Olive cemetery.

Closing the cemetery failed to satisfy the new white neighborhood. Despite the official closure and relocation, Black Clarksvillians continued to try and maintain the old cemetery. In 1889, the trustees of both the old and new cemeteries sold an adjoining property, where there

¹⁹² Montgomery County Court minutes, 26 April 1879; *Clarksville Weekly Chronicle* 26 April 1879, 3 May 1879; *Clarksville Semi-Weekly Tobacco Leaf* 6 June 1879.

¹⁹³ Montgomery County Deed Book 18, p. 662-663.

were no graves to raise money for a new fence.¹⁹⁴ But by April 1897, a newspaper article declared the now reduced to one-acre lot, formerly used as the colored cemetery, a public nuisance. The County court agreed and ordered the old cemetery to be sold, with the proceeds to be donated to Mt. Olive cemetery. This action further permanently deleted Black ownership of the cemetery and Black presence from the landscape.¹⁹⁵

The disturbances continued past the turn of the century, revealing a persistent disregard for the burial ground. In October 1902, men working for the Tennessee Central Railroad unearthed an iron coffin while making a cut through the "Old Colored cemetery."¹⁹⁶ They reinterred the coffin in a different graveyard. In January 1903, another newspaper article reported that rock blasting occurred in the graveyard during construction. In August 1914, a water main installation on Church Street went directly through a grave. A newspaper article noted, "It is said many years ago, before that part of the city was settled, there was a colored cemetery in that vicinity, but seems to have been forgotten until this grave was opened."¹⁹⁷ This statement is particularly telling, showing how a conscious effort to segregate and remove the cemetery from the neighborhood had led to its complete erasure from public memory. Finally, in February 1934, sewer workers "discovered" the cemetery while digging on Church Street, finding bones.¹⁹⁸ Work was delayed, but only because of the weather, not out of respect for the remains. Today, this historic cemetery lies beneath multiple houses, lots, a church parking lot, a church building, and likely the street itself. It is unmarked, a physical manifestation of the historical attempt to bury not only the bodies of the dead but also the memory of their burial ground. However, some

¹⁹⁴ Montgomery County Deed Book 25, p. 102

¹⁹⁵ *Clarksville Daily Leaf Chronicle* 5 April 1897.

¹⁹⁶ *Clarksville Leaf Chronicle* 7 October 1902, 13 November 1902, 16 January 1903.

¹⁹⁷ *Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle* 18 August 1914

¹⁹⁸ *Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle* 27 February 1934

older property records still show the subdivision name as “old African Burying ground,” a subtle testament to its forgotten history.

Despite the ongoing challenges of gentrification, urban renewal, and decay, neighborhoods like Scufftown, Taylor's Hill, and Brandon's Hill still exist, though their names are no longer part of the landscape. They are a critical part of Clarksville's history as landscapes of freedom born from the chaos of Civil War. Black women, who were refugees from slavery, built these communities together, overcoming immense grief and despair. The establishment of these neighborhoods was also aided by white pension agents who helped widows secure pensions, which transformed the temporary contraband camp into a permanent settlement.

The story of the Clarksville refugee camp and Scufftown is a powerful example of how a community forged in the crucible of war and emancipation became a permanent settlement through shared vision and economic resources. Yet, it also serves as a stark reminder of how white resistance and systemic subjugation worked to shape the landscape and entrench segregation for generations. The residents' decision to remain at the site of the contraband camp, despite its traumatic memories, highlights the profound connection to a landscape that symbolized both immense loss and the beginning of a new, hard-won freedom.

Chapter 3. Reclaiming the Celestial City: Looking toward the future

On a snowy day in February 1867, a rabbit hunter with his gun and dog in tow returned towards Clarksville from a fruitless hunt near the Red River. The path, around two miles through cold snow took him through the Freedmen's village. Making the walk between that part of Red River and Clarksville would have been difficult not to encounter the village. His path "carried us by the University of the Celestial City" where he came upon a "merry bout of snow-balling" between students. He watched the students playing in the snow, males against females, all against teachers. The hunter then noticed that "the white gentlemen were placed opposite the colored fair ones and *vice versa*". The hunter did not know if it was intentional or not but saw that the children looked happy. He left the scene pleased, later writing "it was a charming picture of harmony between the races".¹⁹⁹ While rather idyllic, and certainly not a reflection on the coming century of Black and White relations in the South, the scene that hunter saw is a visceral reminder that even in the moment, the Celestial City was reclaimed from racist vitriol, even if only noticed by a rabbit hunter and his dog.

The Celestial City, daily under the feet of thousands of students at APSU, holds a dual legacy: on one hand, it was a sacred destination for those seeking refuge, a vision of heaven on earth. On the other, for all its symbolism to the self-emancipators during the American Civil War, the camp and village was seemingly forgotten. This is because of the ephemeral nature of the military created camps, but it is also in part due to late 19th century efforts to reframe the legacy of the Confederacy and the dominant Civil War narrative. Remembering the Celestial

¹⁹⁹ 1 February 1867, *Clarksville Weekly Chronicle*

City was not only unimportant to white Clarksville, the creators of the dominant narrative, it was critical to reinforce their desired social order.

Similarly, the Celestial City was also forgotten by the Black community, but for different reasons. The legacy of the camp and the immediate years afterward would seem to be a cornerstone to the local Black experience and story, yet it is not recorded anywhere or present in oral traditions. It is speculative, but it is possible that Black motivations for buying parcels in what was once the camp could be its own form of memorialization. Likewise, the Refugee cemetery was only vaguely remembered by the name of the alley laid out right through the middle of it: Shinbone Alley. Even this name has disappeared as the alley itself has disappeared. In 1868, the year after the subdivision of the camp, the Black community in Clarksville focused its efforts on the South Clarksville cemetery, which was contemporary to the refugee cemetery and contains the remains of Black ancestors today. Whether this was a conscious choice or forced is unclear. However, even the South Clarksville cemetery was forced from Black hands in the 1880s by white gentrification and local government. When generations of enslaved Black people lived by someone else's enslaving authority, convenient 'forgetting' becomes a coping mechanism for survival.

To preserve the site of the Clarksville refugee camp is to reclaim its true meaning and memory—not as a punchline in a racist harangue, but as a testament to the pilgrims who journeyed there and founded a community at the very gates of their own Celestial City. The ground itself tells the story of how enslaved Black people, through their own grit and determination, turned the tide of the American Civil War. By fleeing to Clarksville and enlisting in the U.S. Army, they forced a redefinition of their status from property into a liminal space

with a tangible pathway to freedom. This is a triumphant narrative of self-emancipation and community building that laid the foundation for Clarksville's permanent Black community.

But this reclamation is not without its challenges. At a time when Executive Orders from the White House are censoring and editing history in the public sphere, it is critical to emphasize the human elements of this story that are so universal and deeply connected to the ground at APSU. These are stories of newly enlisted soldiers running secret missions to the Kentucky border to escort self-emancipated Black people, fleeing from slave patrols and plantations.²⁰⁰ Or of Catherine Riley, who “covered with blood [and] [c]ould scarcely talk & was barely able to stand alone”, reported to U.S. Army officials how she risked her life to save her child from her enslaver.²⁰¹ Or of Lethia Ship who pled with Army officials to rescue her niece Louisa from their enslaver, who had already killed Louisa’s sibling by beating them to death.²⁰² These are stories of the grossest, and best, parts of humanity that can, and should, elicit emotional reactions from anyone who reads them. The Clarksville Freedmen were very real people, and their lives changed forever right where the campus of APSU stands today. To ignore this history would not only be a profound disservice to the descendants of these courageous individuals, but also a missed opportunity for APSU and Clarksville to lead in historical preservation and interpretation. By embracing this story, APSU can steward the memory of thousands of refugees for generations to come, while bettering the experiences of their student body and for the Black community that still lives in Taylor’s Hill and Brandon’s Hill.

²⁰⁰ Special Order 51, 23 November 1863. General Orders Issued, Records of the Post of Clarksville, entry 303A, RG 393, NARA.

²⁰¹ W.G. Bond to J. Cochran, December 19th, 1865, Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 1, A–D, 1865, Part 2. RG 105, NARA

²⁰² Lethia Ship, enclosed petition in J. Jay Buck to Andrew Johnson, May 29, 1866. Tennessee Assistant Commissioner, Registered Letters Received, Entered in Register 1 and 2, G–M, 1866, Part 1. RG 105, NARA.

The Challenges of Preservation

While scholars have long acknowledged that the Civil War did not occur exclusively on battlefields, refugee camps and the Black experience within them are woefully underrepresented on the preserved landscape of Civil War sites across the nation. Conversely, extensive planning, research, and funding have gone into the preservation of battlefields. According to the American Battlefield Trust's (ABT) 2024 annual report, they have saved over 60,000 acres of battlefields since their inception. In 2024 alone, they preserved lands associated with twenty-six battlefields in nine states, 178 acres of which were transferred to the National Park Service. The ABT spent over \$42 million on these acquisitions but was able to leverage member donations at a 13:1 ratio. Their 2024 total income was \$32,766,892 and their overall asset portfolio sits at \$222,823,255. On a smaller scale, the Tennessee Wars Commission has conserved over 8,000 acres since its inception in 1994. Between 1994 and the creation of the Civil War Sites Preservation Grant Fund by the Tennessee General Assembly in 2013, the Tennessee Wars Commission spent nearly \$3.2 million on preservation of battlefields in the state.

Comparatively, the scope of the Refugee camp phenomenon is immense, but there is a significant gap in their preservation; preservationists have extended little effort toward sites of Civil War Refugee camps and early Black communities. Outside of a few sporadic waysides and historic markers, the Refugee story in Tennessee is largely sidelined in favor of more traditional military histories. In terms of battlefield preservation in Tennessee, the National Park Service preserves Fort Donelson, Shiloh, Stones River, and Chattanooga/Chickamauga battlefields, while the State of Tennessee either directly protects or funds the protection of another dozen or so significant sites.²⁰³ Local municipalities or non-profits preserve another dozen or more historic

²⁰³ In Tennessee State Parks: Fort Pillow State Historic Park and Johnsonville State Historic Park are Civil War centric sites with portions of battlefield under preservation. In recent years, Johnsonville has extended its

sites across the state that highlight anything from soldier's homes and skirmish sites to railroad blockhouses.²⁰⁴



Figure 16. Unveiling of the Affricanna Town historical marker. Photo by author.

In Tennessee, only Fort Negley Historic Site in Nashville and Dunbar Cave State Park in Clarksville recognize their role in the larger Freedmen's story and engage in high-quality research and interpretation, but neither were formal contraband camps. (see figure 17) This holds true even on the National level: as of 2025, only six sites (outlined below) preserve Refugee

interpretation beyond the Battle of Johnsonville to include the story of the 13th USCT, and the African American community and cemetery that followed the war. The Tennessee Wars Commission directly holds under state ownership Parkers Crossroads Battlefield, Salem Cemetery, and Red River Blockhouse No. 1 (Fort Redmond). The Tennessee Historic Commission owns the Carter House, which is operated by the Battle of Franklin Trust. Many other state-owned sites are Civil-War adjacent in their interpretation themes, such as Port Royal State Historic Park, Dunbar Cave State Park, Cragfont State Historic Site, Wynnewood State Historic Site.

²⁰⁴ Non-profits make up a substantial part of Tennessee's preserved landscape. The Battle of Franklin Trust preserves the remnants of the Battle of Franklin battlefield as well as the Carnton plantation. They are also the managing partner for the state of Tennessee's Carter House. The Battle of Nashville Trust holds several smaller properties in Nashville. The Colonial Dames operate Travellers Rest Historic Plantation in Nashville, which was General Hood's headquarters in the Battle of Nashville. Other non-profits, like the Franklin's Charge, Inc. act as support mechanisms for fund-raising and property acquisition and turning over property to managing agencies like the National Park Service, TN State Parks, etc.

camp sites and/or provide high-quality interpretation to the public. A handful more are interpreted by historical markers only.²⁰⁵ These locations include parks, museums, visitor centers, or preserved landscapes where the public can experience the history of the contraband camps more extensively:

Contrabands and Freedmen Cemetery, Alexandria, Virginia: This is a reclaimed and preserved memorial park that honors the thousands of men, women, and children who escaped to Union-occupied Alexandria. The cemetery was established in 1864 to bury the residents of the city's contraband camps who died while seeking their freedom.

Reconstruction Era National Historical Park, Beaufort & Port Royal, South Carolina: This multi-site park interprets the "Port Royal Experiment," a large-scale societal rehearsal for Reconstruction. After the area's capture by the Union in 1861, the government and abolitionists worked to transition the 10,000 formerly enslaved residents to a free labor system. The park includes a visitor center in Beaufort, the historic Penn Center (one of the first schools for the

²⁰⁵ These are: Chattanooga, Tennessee *Contraband Camp*: A historical marker in Renaissance Park denotes the location of the camp on the north bank of the Tennessee River. It recognizes the community of liberated people who were required to live there while providing essential manual labor for the construction of Chattanooga's military infrastructure; Clarksville, Tennessee *Fort Bruce / Freedman's Camp*: This marker identifies the location of the contraband camp associated with Fort Bruce. It notes that many of the men who found freedom at the site enlisted in the U.S. Colored Troops and that the American Missionary Association established a freedmen's school there after the war. However, it wrongly interprets the camps location as being at Fort Bruce; Grand Junction, Tennessee *Contraband Camp*: This marker identifies the site of the first organized contraband camp in the Western Theater of the war. Established in the summer of 1862 under the direction of Union Chaplain John Eaton, its administrative structure became a model for how the Union Army managed the thousands of people seeking refuge; New Bern, North Carolina *Trent River Settlement*: This marker designates the site of a contraband camp that evolved into the large Trent River Settlement. Under the guidance of the Superintendent of Negro Affairs, it became a thriving community with hundreds of homes, multiple churches, and schools for over 1,500 children.; Point Lookout, Maryland *"Contraband" Camp*: A historical marker here describes the harsh conditions of the local contraband camp, noting how residents lived in semi-subterranean dens while seeking freedom and awaiting potential employment with the U.S. government.; Roanoke Island, North Carolina *Freedmen's Colony*: This marker commemorates the self-sufficient community of more than 3,500 formerly enslaved people who settled on the island. They built their own homes, schools, a church, and a sawmill, and many of the men enlisted in the U.S. Colored Troops.; Washington, D.C. *Duff Green's Row*: A marker identifies the site of what were originally private residences seized by the U.S. government. The buildings served as both a prison and later as a hospital for the thousands of "contrabands" who fled to the capital, highlighting the often overcrowded and difficult conditions they faced.

formerly enslaved), and Camp Saxton, the site where the Emancipation Proclamation was read to the 1st South Carolina Volunteers.

Corinth Contraband Camp, Corinth, Mississippi: Preserved as part of Shiloh National Military Park, this site commemorates a well-organized community that included homes, a church, a school, and a hospital. An interpretive quarter-mile walkway features life-sized bronze sculptures that depict the men, women, and children who lived there, farmed the land, and sold goods in a cooperative program.

Fort Monroe National Monument, Hampton, Virginia: Known as “Freedom's Fortress” this is the historic location where the Union's "contraband of war” policy originated in May 1861, establishing that escaped enslaved people would not be returned to their enslavers. This decision led to the creation of the Grand Contraband Camp, a large, self-contained community. The monument's visitor center and museum extensively interpret these important events.

Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park, Hilton Head Island, South Carolina: This site preserves what is considered the first self-governing town for formerly enslaved people in the United States. Established in 1862 by General Ormsby M. Mitchel, the planned community featured a grid of streets, an elected council, its own laws, and mandatory education for children. Today, the park is an active archaeological site and an open-air museum with replica homes and interpretive trails.

Cairo Contraband Camp, Cairo, Illinois: Located at the strategic confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, this camp was a critical destination for thousands seeking freedom. Historical markers note its role as a major recruitment center for the U.S. Colored Troops and a community that provided housing, a hospital, and schools. The site is part of the National Park Service's "Network to Freedom."

While the exact number of camps is difficult to ascertain due to their temporary and informal nature, historical records show they were numerous. Amy Murell Taylor's work and the Freedmen and Southern Society Project estimate that approximately 500,000 formerly enslaved people spent at least part of the war in these camps.²⁰⁶ The number of individual camps and places where they took refuge indeed runs into the hundreds, underscoring the scale of this history. Taylor has identified 299 distinct camps across the south. Historian Abigail Cooper has identified at least thirty-two camps in Tennessee alone, and this doesn't include non-military communities like Affricanna Town at Dunbar Cave State Park.²⁰⁷ These numbers suggest a vast, largely unpreserved landscape of emancipation.²⁰⁸ A lack of physical presence on the landscape further complicates the issue. Refugee camps were temporary places, erected with temporary materials. After the war ended and the camps disbanded, most structures were disassembled and often sold off by the quartermaster's office. The locations of these camps were returned to pre-war landowners and, due to their urban locations, were often absorbed into the urban footprint.

Similarly, academic historians only recently turned their attention to refugee camps. Amy Murell Taylor's *Embattled Freedom* and Chandra Manning's *Troubled Refuge* remain the most comprehensive studies of Contraband Camps as a whole during the Civil War. While Manning takes a broad approach to her analysis, Taylor leverages micro-histories to explore the larger Contraband camp phenomena. Both should be considered essential reading for understanding the broader implications of the Clarksville refugee camp. Katherine Seeber's "Addressing Historical Erasure" is arguably the strongest source on the built environment because it relies on cross-disciplinary work with archaeology. Seeber's primary goal is to understand the physical layout

²⁰⁶ Taylor, 3

²⁰⁷ Abigail Cooper dissertation p.

²⁰⁸ The Visualizing Emancipation project at Richmond University and funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, is a GIS project that captures

and structure of Mitchelville. It describes a unique, self-governed town where Freedmen owned land and built their own institutions. Seeber's work analyzes Mitchelville as a deliberately planned space designed for Black autonomy, making it a powerful case study of a unique built environment.²⁰⁹

Likewise, Gavin Harrell's dissertation, "Arlington's Freedmen's Village: Becoming Untethered" provides a detailed look at the logistics and daily functions of a large, government-administered settlement. Harrell discusses the physical layout of the village, the construction of barracks-style housing, hospitals, and the establishment of schools and churches. He analyzes how this federally planned environment shaped the lives of the residents in this examination of a government-built environment created for the formerly enslaved.²¹⁰ Both of these dissertations are great examples of the kinds of micro-histories still needed to better flesh out the Contraband Camp experience across the south.

Given the factors above, preserving Refugee camps may seem like a doomed proposition. I propose an alternative to the broad landscape preservation so often associated with battlefield preservation, where acreage and natural setting are key. At their core, the Refugee camps were communities brought together by varied destructive and constructive forces, as was their dismantling. For those that evolved into permanent Black communities, like Clarksville's camp, the longer story of that community's evolution through Jim Crow and Urban Renewal is just as critical. Preserving these spaces requires a process that understands the historical story as the foundation, rather than historical fabric or architecture. This kind of effort looks to preserve that story where it is able on a changed, and evolving landscape. It looks beyond traditional

²⁰⁹ Katherine Erica Seeber, *Addressing Community Erasure with Community-Based, Participatory Research at Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park, Hilton Head Island, SC*. Dissertation, Binghamton University, NY. 2024.

²¹⁰ Gavin Gerard Harrell, *Arlington's Freedmen's Village: Becoming Untethered*, Liberty University, 2022

preservation and understands space as ephemeral, leveraging this notion as a fundamental interpretive element. The changed landscape is therefore a key interpretive element. Public interpretation via well-designed programs is essential to this approach.

Through strategic planning, thoughtful stakeholder engagement, and quality research, the preservation of refugee camps can become part of the larger effort toward Civil War preservation and space interpretation. For example, besides an important narrative of resistance and determination, and the integration of Black stories into the Civil War meta-narrative, the Clarksville Refugee Camp and cemetery present opportunities to engage the public about the local collective memory of the camp and the Civil War. It can ask why this space was remembered, or not remembered, in the ways preserved in the local zeitgeist. The same can be said about any contraband camp across the south.

Preservation of the Clarksville camp will require a collaborative approach that involves actively collaborating with community members. Ideally, APSU should be at the helm of this effort. Collaboration is “one of public history’s most salient characteristics”, writes historian Bill Bryans.²¹¹ In the context of preservation, collaboration prioritizes the active involvement of all stakeholders, especially the people whose history and heritage are being preserved. It focuses on building trust and strong partnerships to ensure the preservation effort is inclusive, equitable, and reflective of the community's values and memory. This approach moves beyond simply informing the public and instead empowers the community to co-create and guide the preservation process.

In the direct collaborative practice of history, every project presents unique challenges. Following a number of basic principles, however, contributes significantly to successful

²¹¹ Bill Bryans. “Collaborative Practice.” *Parks Stewardship Forum* 36, no. 3 (2020): 437–41

partnerships. Engagement and communication are key, and all collaborators must fully invest in the project and willingly listen to and learn from one another. This ideally starts with planning a project and continues through its completion. Every stakeholder should involve themselves in formulating the goals and eventual management plan and mission. This ensures that all perspectives receive their due consideration. Similarly, the project timeline and the setting of benchmarks require mutual agreement. Throughout the course of a project, everyone involved needs to remain in touch with one another and discuss what changes, if any, might become necessary for the research design, timeline, or other project matters. This deliberative and ongoing methodology forms part of what Bryan terms “reflective practice.”²¹²

Multi-agency partnerships should be part of this as well as partnerships with citizens. For instance, the bulk of the camp is under APSU, but significant sections are also on private property, the Clarksville Housing Authority’s Lincoln Homes, and City of Clarksville properties. Providing a public experience around the APSU component is a massive start, but holistic interpretation and preservation will be incomplete without cooperation among all property owners via a managing partnership. Both Fort Monroe National Monument and Reconstruction National Historical Park employ a similar structure: site-specific preservation through a network of partnerships between various government entities and non-profits, all aimed at the preservation and interpretation of the Freedman’s story. The result is a cooperative effort that not only facilitates better overall preservation and interpretation but also allows for truly meaningful partnerships.

²¹² Bryan, 438

For APSU, this history provides an unparalleled, tangible resource for research and teaching across multiple disciplines, including history, sociology, archaeology, African American studies, and public history. It offers students hands-on opportunities to engage in archival research, oral history, and community-centered projects, preparing them for a world that demands a nuanced understanding of the past. Ultimately, with a well-designed interpretive plan, including a walking tour, a memorial, and a museum exhibit, the Clarksville Refugee Camp can become a significant cultural asset for APSU and Clarksville. This would attract heritage tourism and enrich the city's identity as a place that values and remembers all its history. In Tennessee, Heritage Tourism/ sightseeing ranks only below dining and entertainment.²¹³ Furthermore, acknowledging this history will build trust and strengthen the relationship between the university and the local Black community, particularly with the descendants of those who lived and died at the camp. This partnership is essential for authentic and respectful interpretation and will set a solid foundation for the future.

APSU is not alone in this endeavor. Other universities and institutions across the country have successfully embraced and interpreted similar histories, transforming sites of difficult memory into places of education and reconciliation. For example, the University of Virginia has invested heavily in acknowledging its history of slavery, including memorializing the enslaved laborers who built and maintained the campus (see figure 18). The Memorial to Enslaved Laborers is a powerful example of how a university can confront its past and create a space for healing and education.²¹⁴

²¹³ https://industry.tnvacation.com/sites/industry/files/component/pod/2025_Economic-Impact-8.29.25_Share.pdf.
Page 9.

²¹⁴ For more information about the University of Virginia Memorial to Enslaved Laborers, visit:
<https://mel.virginia.edu/>

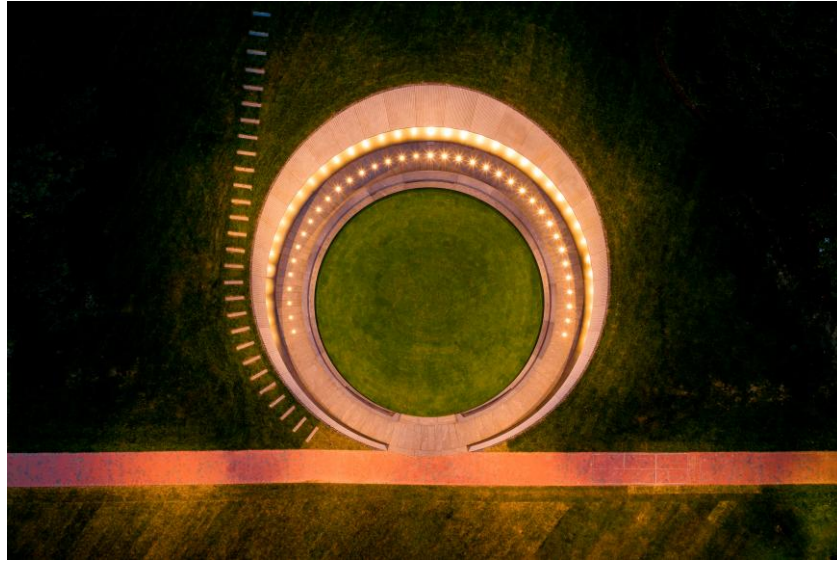


Figure 17. Memorial to enslaved workers at University of Virginia.

Furthermore, Georgetown University implemented a reconciliation plan as a result of facing its history of profiting from the sale of enslaved people. This plan includes a public memorial and a program to give admissions preference to the descendants of those who were sold. The Reconciliation Fund, inspired by a 2019 student referendum, sets aside \$400,000 annually for grants to community-based projects that aim to have a positive impact on communities of Descendants whose ancestors were once enslaved on Maryland Jesuit plantations.²¹⁵

While there are great examples of other universities or public spaces taking on the challenge of preserving and interpreting Civil War refugee camps, and there are several studies that help inform us on how to talk about these places in productive ways, this should not imply that this will be easy. Between the natural hurdles of partnerships and the complicated nature of polarizing politics, the journey to reclaiming the Celestial City will be fraught with obstacles.

²¹⁵ For more information see: <https://www.georgetown.edu/slavery/reconciliation-fund/>

The University of Georgia should stand as a cautionary tale. In 2015, the renovation of Baldwin Hall led to the “discovery” of over 100 graves on the campus. While university leadership initially described the graves as of European descent, this statement was made without any factual backing. Eventual archaeology by the University’s Anthropology Department determined that the graves were indeed the burials of enslaved African descent persons. The following several years were fraught with problematic actions by the University and protests by those who thought the University failed to clearly communicate the identity of the graves and failed to openly confront the University’s history of slavery. While UGA eventually built a memorial to the enslaved graves found near Baldwin Hall and produced extensive research reports, many still believe the University’s efforts are insufficient.²¹⁶

With careful planning, Austin Peay State University (APSU) can avoid the pitfalls of UGA by a mindful consideration of the history and potential archaeology at hand, clearly communicated to the Clarksville and academic communities. Accordingly, the rest of this chapter outlines basic steps toward the preservation and interpretation of the Clarksville Contraband Camp and the broader story of the city's Freedmen community. It is a starting point, intended to guide APSU and its partners in making informed decisions about resource identification, stakeholder engagement, and interpretive program development.

²¹⁶ https://www.redandblack.com/news/everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-baldwin-hall-controversy/article_fff28aa0-bf0a-11e9-9256-4f177f5f318c.html; www.chronicle.com/article/new-tensions-erupt-over-georgias-handling-of-presumed-slave-remains/;

Foundational Research and Resource Identification

Without a thorough understanding of what resources exist, preservation and interpretation efforts cannot proceed responsibly. All these records are critical for developing comprehensive exhibits and programs.

Archaeological and Historical Survey: Commission a comprehensive, non-intrusive survey of the campus to map the physical footprint of the camp. This will involve a team of historians and archaeologists working to identify the precise locations of the main camp on the former Fisher A. Hannum plantation and the adjacent freedmen's village. A preliminary inventory of cultural resources is included in Appendix A. The highest priority is to accurately delineate the boundaries of the unmarked Contraband Graveyard, which contains the remains of over 500 men, women, and children who died in the camp. The following text is an example of the kind of work needed here:

The Refugee Cemetery

Records of the refugee camp cemetery are limited, but various documents related to the relocation of Union soldiers' graves provide clues that help pinpoint its location. In 1866, the U.S. Army appointed E.B. Whitman to oversee the relocation of soldiers' bodies to the new National Cemeteries. Whitman's detailed journals provided an early description of the "Refugee Burial Ground," placing it "half a mile north of the College, across a plowed field, near some large trees, and about 50 yards west of Dr. Z.M. Taylors."²¹⁷ Taylor was a Methodist minister and doctor who managed a smallpox pest house connected to the camp and provided some medical care to residents. Another report from Freedman's Bureau agent Maj. W.G. Bond further

²¹⁷ *Journal of a Trip Through Parts of Kentucky, Tennessee, and Georgia for the purpose of locating the scattered graves of Union Soldiers, ca. 1866 (1 vol.)* (E.685), RG 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General. NARA. P. 247-249

described the "graveyard of the Contraband camp" as being near Dr. Taylor's residence on Maj. Hannum's land. Bond's report also noted the cemetery was 400 yards south of the Red River's south bank.²¹⁸

Initial Federal plans called for the Clarksville graves to be moved to the Cumberland National Cemetery at Fort Donelson. An inventory for this relocation noted the cemetery was "On the Drain farm, nearly north of Clarksville," and contained "about 15 graves of US soldiers...and some 500 freedmen buried."²¹⁹ However, the graves were ultimately relocated to the Nashville National Cemetery. The final records from this effort state the cemetery was "about WNW of Dr. Taylor's house on the lands of Major Gus Henry" and contained "17 graves in one row, Hds West, feet about 4 feet from Dr. Taylor's fence."²²⁰

The various inventories present different landowners for the cemetery site—Maj. Hannum, Drane, and Maj. Gus Henry. This inconsistency highlights the unfamiliarity of the surveyors with local geography and land ownership. However, it becomes clear that these men owned adjacent parcels. In fact, Maj. Hannum purchased his land from either Drane or Henry. The Freedman's Bureau records, which were often outdated, also contributed to the confusion.

The most consistent landmark across all accounts is Dr. Taylor's residence. Whitman placed the cemetery 50 yards west of Taylor's home. Bond noted it was near Taylor's home on Hannum's land. The final inventory described the soldiers' graves as being four feet from Taylor's fence. The Cumberland National Cemetery inventory, which placed the cemetery on the

²¹⁸ Maj. W.G. Bond report, p. 56-57, [1865]. Contained in *Burial Registers of Military Post and National cemeteries, ca. 1861-1960. Tennessee: Cumberland National Cemetery (Fort Donelson). Records Re: Cemeterial Functions 1828 – 1929, RG 92 Records of the Quartermaster General. NM-81/A-1 Entry 627*

²¹⁹ *Burial Registers of Military Post and National cemeteries, ca. 1861-1960. Tennessee: Cumberland National Cemetery (Fort Donelson). Records Re: Cemeterial Functions 1828 – 1929, RG 92 Records of the Quartermaster General. NM-81/A-1 Entry 627. p. 24*

²²⁰ Disinterred from Clarksville Tenn and Vicinity, Forwarded June 20th, 1868. Buried June 28th, 1868. *Burial Registers of Military Post and National Cemeteries, ca. 1861-1960, Tennessee: Nashville National Cemetery, RG 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, NARA.*

Drane farm, also aligns with this, as the Hannum property adjacent to Taylor's was purchased from William Drane. The furthest west for the location of Taylors fence would have been the actual western property line between Taylor and Hannum. If the row of removed soldiers were four feet from the fence, then locating the fence at the property line seems definitive. This property line is Ford Street today. This provides a location for at least part of the cemetery.

Today, the refugee camp and cemetery are located on or near the Austin Peay State University campus in Clarksville, with parts of the site on private land. It is likely that freed people continued to use the cemetery after the camp closed in 1865, but burials likely stopped after the land was subdivided and sold in 1867. The cemetery was not mentioned in land transaction records, but a subdivision plat shows an alley named Shinbone Alley running directly through the approximate cemetery location.

* * *

While this thesis has collected a large swath of available primary sources, there are certainly many more that help flesh out the picture of Freedmen in Montgomery County. The story of emancipation in Clarksville is still underdeveloped in the local narrative and in scholarship. These efforts can build databases can expedite both. Particular attention should be given to these records:

Military and Pension Records. Scour records from the National Archives, focusing on the 16th and 101st USCT regiments that were stationed in Clarksville, but also those regiments which had soldiers settle in Clarksville after the war. Pension applications from widows and veterans are rich with personal details, stories of camp life, and accounts of loss and community formation. The pensions application used in this thesis are excellent examples of the types of information to be found.

Local legal records: Examine Montgomery County court records and property deeds to trace land sales and ownership after the war. The 1868 plat for the Hannum land is a great example as it shows the location of "Shinbone Alley" near the refugee cemetery as is the Grattan's Grove plat, both featured in this thesis.

Newspapers and Diaries: Analyze local newspapers like the *Clarksville Weekly Chronicle* and diaries, such as that of Serepta Jordan, to understand contemporary white perspectives on the camp and its residents.

Efforts should be made to digitize and consolidate these records into a community-accessible database. Volunteer transcription projects and events can become community rallying points that also promote inter-agency cooperation, if the Montgomery County Archives or Tennessee State Library & Archives are involved.

Furthermore, building trust and establishing collaborative relationships is essential for the project's long-term success. In terms of university-community partnerships, the onus is on the university to foster partnerships that "transform neighborhoods, improve schools, and advance teaching, learning, and service."²²¹ That is to say, these partnerships must have designs and effects beyond the production of historical elements for public engagement. Collaboration implores and empowers putting history to "work in this world".²²² Joining in partnership with a community to unearth forgotten and side-lined stories requires investment in equitable practices. Suggested avenues are:

²²¹ Iva Harkavy, Rita A. Hodges, John L. Puckett, & Joann Meeks, "Toward Creating the Democratic, Engaged Urban University: Penn's Partnership with West Philadelphia as an Experiment in Progress", in *Engaging Place, Engaging Practices: Urban History and Campus-Community Partnerships*, ed. By Robin F. Bachin and Amy L. Howard. Temple University Press: 2023, pp. 42-69

²²² Carl L. Becker, "Everyman His Own Historian," *American Historical Review* vol. 37 (January 1932): 221–236

Formalize a Descendant Advisory Board: This board will be the primary decision-making body for the project's interpretive content and memorialization efforts. Its members, including descendants and community leaders, will guide every aspect of the project. This partnership ensures authenticity and respects the community's connection to the site.

Public Hearings: The University needs to hear what the current issues are that face the Black neighborhood that surrounds the campus. Cooperative endeavors should seek to answer these calls.

Oral History project: Oral history should be collected from families that live, or have lived, in the Black neighborhoods surrounding APSU. How the Black community remembers its own history is as important as the actual narrative. For instance, an interview with a Clarksville city councilperson whose ward includes this neighborhood, was raised there. The story they were told about the community's creation dates to the 1890s, when two lawyers sold the land to Black citizens. While not inherently wrong, it incorrectly remembers events from thirty years prior and removes Black community creation from the contraband camp experience. Under the supervision of a trained oral historian, this can become an incredible record and future source material while promoting collaboration and co-production of the evolving Black narrative around the campus. This is a critical step to ensure that the interpretive narrative reflects the community's own understanding of its history, traditions, and collective memory. Extensive research is necessary to determine who contraband camp and Freedmen's village descendants are, but anyone who has ties to the neighborhood should be included.

Partnership for Land Trust: Establish a land trust in partnership with the City of Clarksville and other non-profits to acquire and preserve additional historical parcels in the area. This would ensure that the history of Clarksville's Freedmen community is preserved beyond the confines of the university campus.

Affordable housing: This is critical. This neighborhood has experienced systemic disinvestment and gentrification for generations. Austin Peay and the City of Clarksville must not be the catalyst for further degradation of Black ownership in these neighborhoods. The protection and preservation of properties related to the camp must be kept in careful balance with the protection of Black land ownership. Partnerships with local non-profits with this mission as their focus is essential.

Interpretive Program Development and Implementation. Based on the research and partnerships from the previous phases, this phase will bring history to life for the public. While this is a later phase, some aspects of this can happen simultaneously to earlier phases as interpretation is what builds consensus and public buy-in. To that end, public programming on the front end is essential. Simple walking tours, student-led exhibits, and digital history projects can easily be implemented.

Walking Tour: There is a link below that provides a guided digital tour of the historical spaces mentioned in this thesis. This information can be used to quickly develop a standardized, guided walking tour.

https://earth.google.com/earth/d/1ShUa_X3RTQW_NWpzZ-pItmmyNR7a4mFG?usp=sharing

On-Campus Interpretive Trail: Design and install a self-guided walking tour with a series of high-quality interpretive panels that meet NPS guidelines for content, design, and durability. Each panel will feature compelling narratives derived from the collected documents and oral histories, along with maps and historical images. The tour would include a powerful stop at the site of the Contraband Graveyard, a peaceful memorial at the location of the Stewart College "castle" building, and other key sites. The plan must include a dedicated interpretive program for the campus community and new student orientations.

Off-Campus Wayfinding System: Extend the narrative into the city with a series of wayside panels in downtown Clarksville and the historic Black neighborhoods that emerged from the camp, such as Taylor's Hill and the area known as Scufftown. These panels would explain how these communities were founded through landownership enabled by USCT pensions and the efforts of lawyers like J.C. McMullen and J. Jay Buck and provide essential contextual information across downtown Clarksville.

Digital and Online Resources: Create a comprehensive website that serves as a central hub for the project. It will feature a digital tour, interactive maps overlaying historical plats onto current-day satellite imagery, a searchable archive of the digitized documents and oral histories, and a resource section for genealogists and researchers.

Cemetery Memorialization: In close collaboration with the Descendant Advisory Board, design and construct a permanent, respectful memorial at the site of the Refugee Cemetery. The memorial should not only honor the dead but also serve as a place of reflection and remembrance for the community, ensuring this tragic yet significant history is never forgotten. The project should be designed to respect the site's sanctity and

spiritual significance. Memorials can range from simple (see figure 19) to complex (see figure 20).



Figure 18. Alexandria, VA. Photo by Frederick Murphy.



Figure 19. Freedmen cemetery memorial in Alexandria, VA. Photo by Frederick Murphy.

Potential Land Acquisitions

As research progresses and key off-campus sites are identified, the university should explore opportunities to protect them for future preservation and interpretation, whether this is acquisition or working with partners for acquisition. This is a long-term goal that must be carefully considered and executed in partnership with the City of Clarksville and potential non-profit partners.

Contraband Graveyard: The documents state that while the majority of the camp is on APSU's campus, a portion of it is on private land. A critical step would be to acquire this remaining parcel of the Contraband Graveyard, which is a sacred landscape. This would allow the university to fully protect the burial ground and ensure its preservation.

Brandon's Hill and Taylor's Hill: These neighborhoods, which emerged directly from the camp, became known as Scufftown. As urban renewal and decay have taken a toll on these areas, and the city has attempted to declare parts of them "blighted", the university should consider acquiring key historic properties. Acquiring and restoring a representative home or lot could serve as a satellite interpretive site, telling the story of the post-camp community and the challenges its residents faced with land ownership and segregation.

M.M. Kerr Stemmary (The Warehouse, see figure 21): This structure is the only remaining tobacco warehouse in Clarksville that existed during the Civil War. The U.S. Army confiscated it and, in 1865, used it as a shop. While it's unclear if this warehouse was used for refugee housing, records indicate that nearly every warehouse in town was used for that purpose in 1864 and 1865. If properly conserved and restored, the structure could serve as a critical interpretive space as one of few remaining cultural material items. It could also serve as a location for exhibits and administrative offices for any non-profit or managing entity.



Figure 20. The M.M. Kerr Stemmary as it appears today.

The Celestial City is still here, buried under the landscape and deep in local memory. This thesis has uncovered the foundation of this story but more remains to be studied. However, much remains to be studied. For instance, while the Freedman's Bureau is integral to this thesis, there is still much research needed on the role of the Bureau as the mediator between Freedmen and white society in Montgomery County. Detailed work on the Bureau will be illuminating, not just for the neighborhoods discussed in this thesis but for the other predominantly Black communities in the county. Evidence used for this work suggests that Buck & McMullen also used the same processes of buying land at Chancery court and reselling to Freedmen to anchor these other communities as well.

The neighborhoods of Taylor's Hill, Brandon's Hill, and Scufftown should also be considered in detail though the era of Federal Urban Renewal and into modern day attempts at blight declarations. The long stories of these communities provide ample evidence that modern day disinvestment is systemic, beginning in 1865. As with anything, context is critical, and the story of the contraband camp, the following Freedmen's Village, and its evolution into permanent Black communities should remind us that the Celestial City has always been on hand, waiting for reclamation. This history presents an unprecedented opportunity for APSU to act, and even lead, in the preservation of such stories and landscapes. If history is to be put to work, let us do it here.

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APPENDIX A: CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

The following is a compilation of data relating to the locations of historic sites either on the APSU campus, or nearby in Clarksville. Part of long-term management of the cultural resources of the Freedman's experience in Clarksville is maintaining a database of archaeological and historical resources should be maintained. This list should only be a start to that effort. This inventory can be comprised of actual historical remains, or simply the site of a former building. A holistic view of the landscape is the result, and it allows for informed decisions about land acquisition, protection decisions, and interpretive decisions.

For reference, the site of the Clarksville Refugee camp is largely bounded on the south by College Street, the west by Drane Street and Robb Avenue, the north by Kraft Street, and the east by Ford Street. The campus of APSU occupies much of this described space. This inventory notes specific sites within these bounds, but also sites throughout downtown Clarksville that provide opportunities for interpreting the Freedmen experience in Clarksville from 1864-1870.

Sites on the Austin Peay State University Campus

	Site Name	Coordinates	Description
1	Stewart College: The Castle building	36°31'55"N 87°21'14"W	The primary building of Stewart College. It was used as US Army headquarters during Mason's tenure and served as a Refugee camp school and teachers' housing in 1864 and 1865.
2	Robb Hall	36°31'54"N 87°21'08"W	A Stewart College dormitory and a possible location for Refugee camp housing.
3	Rev. E.C. McKinney's homesite	36°32'07"N 87°21'09"W	The house site is approximate. McKinney purchased the 7-acre parcel, which occupies the Fortera Stadium site and grounds, in 1869. Its location in the midst of the camp strongly suggests it was a Freedmen's School location, as McKinney was the superintendent of Freedman's Schools in Montgomery County.
4	Refugee Cemetery 1 (cemetery 29)	36°32'05"N 87°21'05"W	The location is approximate, described as "North of Stewarts College, in the SW corner of Drane Farm". It contained fifty graves, but only six headboards were identifiable. These six were removed, but

			the rest remain. Maj. Bond's report states there are 25 graves, located about 400 yards north of Stewart College and 150 yards east of Rev. McKinney's house, on Hannum's land.
5	Refugee Cemetery 2 (cemetery 30)	36°32'15"N 87°20'57"W	The location is approximate, described as "On the Draine Farm, nearly north of Clarksville are about 15 graves of US soldiers". Only three were identified by headboards. This site also contains about 500 graves of freedmen. Maj. Bond noted the number of graves is unknown and that it is near Dr. Taylor's residence. A single grave of a 143rd IN soldier is located 400 yards north on the bank of Red River.
6	101st USCT headquarters/ I.W. Humphries house	36°32'07"N 87°21'24"W	This is the present location of the Dunn Center. The Humphries house was used as headquarters for the 101st USCT regiment, which was attached to the Refugee camp. Barracks for various companies were situated nearby. A TN State Historical Marker is present for this site.

7	Fisher A. Hannum residence	36°32'11"N 87°21'15"W	Very little information exists about this house. Identifying its site is useful for confirming other locations within the camp.
8	Smallpox Pesthouse	36°32'30"N 87°20'59"W	This is a general location inferred from records stating the Quartermaster provided cabins left by the 143rd IN Infantry, whose camp was at this location. Pension records suggest there may be an unrecorded cemetery nearby for smallpox victims.
9	Dr. Zachariah M. Taylor residence	36°32'12"N 87°20'54"W	Dr. Taylor owned property on the immediate east side of the camp. He attended to camp inmates and oversaw the Smallpox pesthouse. In 1868, he subdivided his property and sold lots to recently emancipated Black citizens, creating a community known as "Taylor's Hill".
10	J.H. Poston house	36°32'18"N 87°20'43"W	This house was where John Poston's widow, Nancy L. Poston, lived during the war. Her property was used for farming by Freedmen in the refugee camp.

Sites in Downtown Clarksville

11	Soldier's Cemetery (Cemetery 28)	36°32'04"N 87°20'21"W	Located next to the Clarksville & Nashville Railroad where it intersects with Franklin Street. U.S. soldiers buried here were later moved to the National Cemetery in Nashville, but all civilian and unidentified soldiers' graves remain.
12	African burial ground	36°31'03"N 87°21'23"W	Located in South Clarksville, about one mile south of the APSU campus. This cemetery predates the Civil War and was also the site of the Montgomery County Poor House in the 1850s. Dozens of 16th USCT soldiers who died of disease were buried here during the war.
13	Pork House	36°31'44"N 87°21'49"W	A warehouse property that the U.S. Army declared abandoned. It was managed by the Freedman's Bureau until late 1865.
14	S.O.W. Brandon house	36°31'51"N 87°20'11"W	This house was central to the Grattan's Grove plantation, which was subdivided and sold mostly to recently emancipated Black citizens after 1868. The area, which contained temporary Freedmen homes,

			became known as “Brandon’s Hill,” a predominantly Black neighborhood.
15	1869 Freedmen’s School & Church	36°32'02"N 87°20'56"W	A church and school established by residents of the refugee camp and village. It was later known as St. John’s Baptist Church and was built by its minister, Henry Wilcox.
16	M.M. Kerr Tobacco Stemmer	36°31'59"N 87°21'51"W	The only remaining tobacco warehouse in Clarksville from the Civil War era. The U.S. Army confiscated it in 1865 for use as a shop. While its use for refugee housing is unconfirmed, records show nearly all local warehouses served this purpose. It has potential as a critical interpretive space.
17	D.N. Kennedy lots	36°31'32"N 87°21'27"W	Identified as property held by the Freedmen’s Bureau
18	R.P. Glenn house and lot	36°31'39"N 87°21'37"W	Identified as property held by the Freedmen’s Bureau
19	Charles Bailey house	36°31'41"N 87°21'13"W	Identified as property held by the Freedmen’s Bureau

20	Robert House house (District headquarters)	36°31'34"N 87°21'28"W	Identified as property held by the Freedmen's Bureau. District Headquarters.
21	J.M. Quarles house	36°31'33"N 87°21'27"W	Identified as property held by the Freedmen's Bureau
22	W.A. Quarles house	36°31'28"N 87°21'33"W	Identified as property held by the Freedmen's Bureau
23	J.F. House house (possibly W.A. Quarles)	36°31'32"N 87°21'23"W	Identified as property held by the Freedmen's Bureau
24	George B. Fleece house	36°31'41"N 87°21'27"W	Identified as property held by the Freedmen's Bureau
25	James E. Bailey house	36°31'39"N 87°21'25"W	Identified as property held by the Freedmen's Bureau. This house was the Freedmen's Bureau Headquarters in Clarksville.
26	R.W. Thomas house	36°31'59"N 87°21'46"W	Identified as property held by the Freedmen's Bureau

APPENDIX B:
ABSTRACT OF WIDOWS PENSIONS
FILED IN CLARKSVILLE, TN

*indicates minor or mother's pension

Widow Last Name	Widow First Name	Soldier Last Name	Soldier's First Name	Reg't	Co.	Soldier's COD	Date of Death	Widow's residence at time of filing
Adams	Elsie	Adams	Cook	101st	K	Smallpox	1865-12-22	Lives at old contraband camp
Anderson	Catherine	Anderson	Charles	101st	D	Smallpox	1864-02-19	At the old Contraband Camp
Anderson	Jennie	Anderson	John	101st	D	Smallpox	1866-03-10	Todd County, but expects to return to Clarksville
Anderson	Emiline Bacon	Anderson	Robert	16th	G	Pneumonia	1864-05-16	Capt. Buckners in Christian County, KY
Andrews	Mary Jane	Andrews	Thomas	13th	E	Killed	1864-12-16	Clarksville
Balthrope	Mary Ann	Balthrope	Jackson	16th	B	Pneumonia	1865-04-06	Contraband camp
Barker	Ellen	Barker	David	101st	K	Consumption	1865-07-04	Near to Clarksville
Beasly	Clarissa	Beasly	Zachary	16th	H	Typhoid Fever	1864-08-28	Clarksville
Beaumont	Harriett	Beaumont	Henry	101st	D	Smallpox	1865-12-19	At old Freedmen's Camp
Bentley	Susan	Bentley	Israel	101st	H	Smallpox	1865-12-29	At the old Contraband camp
Bibbs	Mary	Bibbs	John	101st	H	Dropsy	1865-06-15	Near to old Contraband Camp
Bibbs	Minerva	Bibbs	Squire	101st	H	Diarrhea	1865-10-18	Clarksville
Calimese	Rachel	Calimese	Charles	101st	I	Smallpox	1865-11-15	Clarksville
Corneal	Rebecca	Corneal	Warner	16th	A	Disease	1864-01-21	On College St, in Clarksville

Carneal	Ann	Young	Richard	16th	G	Gunshot	1865-08-01	Clarksville
Carter	Millie	Carter	Benjamin	101st	K	Diarrhea	1865-07-19	Clarksville
Cheatham	Rhoda	Cheatham	Oscar	16th	B	Gastritis	1864-05-31	Clarksville
Clark	Jane	Clark	Butler	101st	D	Smallpox	1865-11-23	Near where Freedmen's Camp was
Coleman	Rachel	Majors	Wiley	101st	H	Pneumonia	1865-01-19	Lived in Camp
Coleman	Winney	Barker	Andrew	13th	E	Killed	1864-12-16	In Christian County
Collins	Susan	Collins	James	16th	K	Pneumonia	1864-04-14	Clarksville
Corneal	Jane	Corneal	Lewis	101st	C	Chronic Gastritis	1864-06-24	Lives at old Contraband Camp
Crenshaw	Catherine	Crenshaw	Richmond	101st	D	Congestion of the brain	1864-11-14	Contraband Camp (died)
Cross	Jane	Cross	George	16th	I	Dropsy	1866-01-20	Montgomery County
Davey	Dilla	Davey	Henry	16th	B	Pneumonia	1864-04-03	Old Contraband Camp
Duke*	Rachel	Duke	George	16th	A	Smallpox	1866-01-28	Clarksville
Edmonds	Sarah	Edmonds	Logan	16th	E	Piles	1865-07-20	At the old contraband camp
Edwards	Cady	Edwards	John	101st	H	Smallpox	1866-01-21	Near the old Contraband camp
Fort	Marinda	Fort	Richard	101st	D	Smallpox	1865-11-25	At Old Contraband Camp
Fort	Harriett	Fort	Nelson	16th	I	Smallpox	1865-07-28	Clarksville
Fox	Malvina	Fox	David	101st	D	Smallpox	1866-02-02	Clarksville

Garrett	Martha	Garrett	Andrew	16th	A	Pneumonia	1864-08-27	Clarksville
Garrett	Rose	Garrett	George	16th	F	Accident	1864-10-03	Clarksville
Gilmer	Sally	Gilmer	Samuel	101st	I	Diarrhea	1865-05-06	Near the old Contraband camp
Grady	Elisa	Grady	Thaddeus	16th	E	Smallpox	1864-05-10	Clarksville
Grady	Mary	Grady	Armstead	16th	F	Pneumonia	1864-04-30	Clarksville
Green	Dycie	Green	William	16th	E	Tuberculosis	1864-05-19	Near Clarksville
Griffey	Phyllis	Griffey	Granville	101st	D	Pneumonia	1865-01-07	Both died in Contraband Camp.
Griffey	Evelina	Griffey	Thomas	16th	A	Measles	1864-03-21	Clarksville
Hampton	Isabella	Hampton	Henry	16th	F	Erysipelas	1864-02-14	Hampton's Station
Harper	Louisa	Harper	Green	101st	D	Brain Fever	1865-01-22	Died in company camp
Harrison*	Harriett	Harrison	David	101st	I	Smallpox	1865-12-23	In the camp. Harriett died 12/29 of smallpox.
Holland	Rachel	Holland	Nathan	101st	K	Pneumonia	1865-02-05	Lives at Old Contraband Camp
Hunter	Mary	Hunter	Moses	101st	K	Smallpox	1865-11-25	At Old Contraband Camp
Kellis	Zurena	Kellis	William	101st	D	Smallpox	1865-12-03	Live at old Freedman's Camp
Kirby	Mahala	Kirby	King	101st	H	Consumption	1866-03-17	Lives on Dr. Taylors Farm
Praid	Harriett	Praid	John	101st	D	Congestion Chills	1864-08-24	Robertson Co.
Lessa	Nancy	Lessa	James	101st	D	Smallpox	1865-12-06	Near the old freedman's camp

Majors	Susan	Majors	Monroe	16th	G	Pneumonia	1865-01-16	Clarksville
McReynolds	Kitty	McReynolds	Julius	101st	D	Smallpox	1866-01-09	Near the Contraband Camp
Merriweather	Sarah Eliza	Merriweather	LaFayette	16th	F	Pneumonia	1865-11-25	Clarksville
Mobley	Mary	Mobley	Henry	101st	D	Smallpox	1865-12-17	Near the old Freedmen's Camp
Nance	Eliza	Nance	Leftridge	101st	I	Smallpox	1866-02-06	In New Providence
Nosworth	Maria	Nosworth	Andrew	16th	A	Pneumonia	1865-01-01	2 miles SE of Clarksville
Ogden	Betsey	Ogden	William	101st	D	Smallpox	1865-12-13	At place lately occupied by Freedmen's Camp
Outlaw	Judah	Outlaw	Hayes	16th	A	Pneumonia	1864-04-07	15 miles west of Clarksville
Paine	Sylva	Paine	Thomas	101st	D	Apoplexy	1865-10-30	Clarksville
Poor	Francis	Poor	Guy	16th	H	Disease	1864-04-10	Clarksville
Pride	Ann	Pride	Andrew	101st	H	Smallpox	1866-01-23	Lives near the old Contraband Camp
Rasco	Mary Jane	Rasco	Preston	101st	D	Smallpox	1866-02-13	Dickson County
Roberts	Margaret	Roberts	Joseph	16th	E	Pneumonia	1864-04-03	Hopkinsville
Rogers*	Jane	Rogers	Henry	101st	D	Smallpox	1866-01-26	Near the old Contraband camp
Rogers	Louisa	Rogers	William	16th	B	Chronic Diarrhea	1864-09-03	Clarksville
Sadler	Anachy	Sadler	Ben	16th	K	Pneumonia	1864-07-07	Clarksville
Sanders	Louisa	Riggins	Gilbert	13th	E	Smallpox	1864-12-23	Clarksville

Scott	Julia Ann	Scott	James	16th	B	Drowned	1864-09-12	Near old Contraband camp
Shammel	Rachel	Shammel	Jordan	101st	K	Smallpox	1866-01-23	Near old Contraband Camp
Stigger	Elizabeth	Stigger	Frank	16th	E	Pneumonia	1864-07-16	Pea Ridge, 5 miles from Clarksville
Terry	Josephine	Terry	January	16th	D	Pneumonia	1864-04-04	At Old Contraband Camp
Thweatt	Minerva	Thweatt	Albert	101st	D	Smallpox	1866-01-15	
Tolliver	Mary	Tolliver	Nicholas	101st	H	Pneumonia	1864-12-12	Near the old Freedmen's camp
Tolliver	Louisa	Tolliver	David	101st	H	Smallpox	1866-01-30	Lived at Old Contraband Camp
Tucker	Adaline	Tucker	Levin	101st	H	Pericarditis	1865-02-18	Clarksville
Walker	Mary	Walker	William	101st	D	Pneumonia	1865-02-13	Near the old Contraband Camp
Watkins	Millia	Watkins	Meredith	101st	H	Pneumonia	1865-02-19	Allensville, KY
Watt	Kitty	Watt	Washington	16th	G	Enteritis	1864-06-17	Clarksville
West	Caroline	West	Isaac	101st	D	Pneumonia	1865-06-23	At the Old Contraband camp in Clarksville
West	Patsey	West	Henry	101st	D	Smallpox	1866-01-02	Near to the old contraband camp
Wilson	Louisa	Wilson	Douglas	16th	C	Pneumonia	1864-06-20	Clarksville & New Providence
Wimms*	Purney	Wimms	James	101st	K	Smallpox	1866-01-10	At camp. Purney died 01/19 of smallpox

APPENDIX C: GRATTAN GROVE LOTS.

All purchasers are Freedmen, except as noted.

* Denotes USCT widow

** Denotes USCT Veteran

Purchaser	Reference DB = Deed Book CC = Chancery Court minutes	Description	Purchase Year	Purchased from Buck & McMullen
Anthony Gray	CC 5, 504	Lot 7	1866	
Fayette McReynolds	CC 5, 504	Lot 8	1866	
Lewis Moore	CC 5, 504	Lot 10	1866	
Henry Graves	CC 5, 504	Lot 24	1866	
Thomas Webb	CC 5, 504	Lot 13	1866	
James Webb	CC 5, 504	Lot 14	1866	
James Beaumont	CC 5, 504	Lot 16	1866	
Major Barker**	CC 5, 504	Lot 17	1866	
Tilford Thompson**	CC 5, 504	Lot 18 & 18.5	1866	
Abram Edwards	CC 5, 504	Lot 53	1866	
Jiny Bruin	CC 5, 504	Lot 54	1866	
Leander Webb**	CC 5, 504	Lot 56	1866	
James Rivers	CC 5, 504	Lot 20	1866	
James Wood	CC 5, 504	Lot 23	1866	
Richard Cross	CC 5, 504	Lot 25	1866	
Sam Cross	CC 5, 504	Lot 27	1866	
Martha Owen	CC 5, 504	Lot 29	1866	
Booker Johnson	CC 5, 504	Lot 72	1866	
Buck & McMullen	DB 10, 229	Lots 44, 45, 46	1867	X
JJ Buck	DB 10, 231	Lots 65 & 67	1867	X
Stephen Merritt**	DB 10, 196	Lot 44	1867	X

JC McMullen	DB 10, 352	Lots 35 & 41	1867	Freedmen's Bureau Agent. Resold to Freedmen.
Edmund McKinney	DB 11, 281	Lots 42 & 43	1868	Missionary. Resold to Freedmen.
Clark Coleman	DB 12, 381	Part of Lot 41	1869	X
Rachel Holland	DB 12, 498	Part of Lot 46	1869	X
George Tisdell* & Berry Carr	DB 12, 425	Part of Lot 35	1869	X
Allen Buckner	DB 12, 613	Part of Lot 46	1869	X
Beverly Tandy**	DB 20, 225	Part of Lot 41	1869	X
Salina Rollow*	DB 13, 47	Part of Lot 43	1870	X
Ann Carneal*	DB 13, 63	Part of Lot 45, 46	1870	X
Zelphia Meriwether	DB 13, 227	Part of Lot 41	1870	X
Henry Wilcox	DB 20, 228	Part of Lot 41	1870	X
Rhoda Cheatham*	DB 13, 352	Part of Lot 42	1870	X
Samuel Meriwether**	DB 13, 382	Part of Lot 41	1870	X
Ellen Faulkner	DB 15, 492	Part of Lot 44	1870	X
George Tisdale**	DB 14, 425	Part of Lot 35	1870	X
Maria Noseworthy*	DB 13, 383	Part of Lot 43	1870	X
James Read	DB 14, 155	Lot 44	1871	X
Gallen Waller**	DB 14, 178	SW of Tisdale	1871	X
Mary Wisdom*	DB 14, 180	SE of Cheatham	1871	X
Berry Carr	DB 14, 193	Part of Lot 35	1871	X
Martha A. Hines	DB 14, 548	SW of Nosweather	1871	X
Jane Johnson	DB 18, 263	Part of Lot 41	1871	X

APPENDIX D: HANNUM SUBDIVISION LOTS

All purchasers are Freedmen, except as noted.

* Denotes USCT widow

** Denotes USCT Veteran

Purchaser	Reference DB = Deed Book CC = Chancery Court minutes	Description	Purchase Year
Jeff McReynolds**	CC 6, 517	Lots, 32, 34, 36, 39, 40	1867
Clara Russell	CC 6, 517	Lot 57	1867
Ben Jones**	CC 6, 517	Lots 59, 63, 66	1867
Jno. Dabney & Sol. Gupton**	CC 6, 517	Lots 61, 62, 65	1867
Hester Cross	DB 11, 148	Lot 55	1868
John Boyd	DB 11, 281	Lot 1	1868
Henry Burton	DB 11, 243	approx. lot 35.	1868
Mary Craven	DB 11, 265	Between Shinbone & Kellog	1868
Sterling Campbell	DB 11, 271	Lot 25	1868
John Boyd	DB 11, 281	Implied Lot 29	1868
Adam Phelps**	DB 11, 293	Lot 31	1868
Ephraim Smith	DB 11, 299	Lots 45-50	1868
Henry Conrad	DB 11, 314	North 1/2 of Lot 67	1868
Bost Beverly	DB 11, 402	Part of Lot 35	1868
Scott, Louisa	DB 13, 160	Corner of West Fork Alley & Bailey Street	1869
Ephraim Smith to J. Jay Buck	DB 12, 600	On Kellogg st (8 th)	1869
Barry Gupton & Jefferson McReynolds **	DB 14, 73	Lots 32, 34, 36, 39	1871

Barry Gupton	DB 18, 251	Lots 59, 63, 66	1878
Morgan Carney	DB 26, 421	Lot 60	1892

APPENDIX E: TAYLOR'S HILL

All purchasers are Freedmen, except as noted.

* Denotes USCT widow

** Denotes USCT Veteran

Purchaser	Reference DB = Deed Book CC = Chancery Court minutes	Description	Purchase Year
Colored Baptist Church	DB 12, 279	East side of Ford Street	1869
Colored M.E. Church	DB 13, 161	Russellville Pike	1870
Crouch, G.W.*	DB 17, 575	East side of Taylor's St. Opposite School Alley. 150' x 150', Partial trade for carpentry work.	1870
Daniels, Jane**	DB 19, 309	North of Julia Knott's lot	1872
Duncan, Arthur*	DB 16, 533	East of Isaac Bibb's lot.	1870
Henry, Caleb	DB 13, 673	Between St. John's St., and School Alley. West of William Brown's lot.	1870
Hobart, John	DB 19, 67	Near Isaac Bibb	1873
Keel, Thomas*	DB 15, 629	East of James Morris' slaughterhouse lot. On College Street.	1874
Knott, Julia**	DB 13, 557	On Ford Street, N of Wilson Weed's lot.	1870
Lewis, Jack for wife, Martha and Children	DB 18, 374	West of Sterling Gant's lot on Carpenter St.	1871
Mobley, Mary**	DB 19, 560	South of Wesley Church. On 9th st.	1882
Moore, Nathan*	DB 13, 466	Russellville Pike, East of Nelson's store	1870
Ogburn, Thomas* & Alexander Settle	DB 14, 117	East of John Jones lot, on St. John's St.	1871

Ratcliff, Horace*	DB 19, 85	Jane Talley's line, on Taylor St.	1880
Rogers, Andrew*	DB 14, 121	East of Ogburn & Settle, on St. John's St.	1871
Shelby, William*	DB 13, 248	East of C.H. Roberts, on Carpenter St.	1869
Steele, Cubid*	DB 13, 21	On Franklin st./ Russellville Pk.	1870
Weed, Wilson	DB 13, 462	East of Ford St., 150' N of College St.	1870