



PROJECT MUSE®

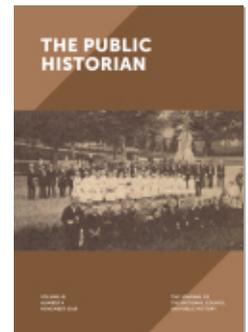
---

## Remembering Black Nashville at Fort Negley

Juliet Larkin-Gilmore, Kristina E. Lee

The Public Historian, Volume 41, Number 4, November 2019, pp. 100-111  
(Article)

Published by University of California Press



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/744235>

## Remembering Black Nashville at Fort Negley

---

*Juliet Larkin-Gilmore and Kristina E. Lee*

“Fort Negley”

You were built by the hands of the oppressed and some men free,  
your craftsmanship remains for future generations to see. Your  
foundation was built with stone, wood and railroad steel,  
as you majestically sit upon “St. Cloud Hill.”

Once a Union stronghold standing tall and bold,  
threw countless decades your remains became “tattered and old.”  
The sounds of the bulge rally the troops no more,  
just the echoes of a divided past we must not ignore.

You whisper silently from your once vibrant past,  
to make known your “treasure’s of history” that we humbly unmask.  
There is a rebirth in you now for the ages to see, handed down from  
our ancestors their “legacy to be.”

Your in our hands now, a task certainly not forsaken, for the  
“City of Nashville,” we all have gallantly taken.

You fortify our thoughts in your new beginning, leaving your mark for  
the future to see, once a “mighty fortress” in the heart of our city,  
a place called . . .  
“Fort Negley”

—Gary M. Burke, 13th United States Colored Troops living historian, member  
of the Friends of Fort Negley Board of Directors, and descendant of Peter  
Bailey, Company K, 17th United States Colored Troops<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The US Army mustered the first United States Colored Troops (USCT) in September 1862. A year later, a recruitment office opened in Nashville and eight others opened in the surrounding area. Several USCT companies were stationed at Fort Negley during the Battle of Nashville (December



“Nashville, Tenn., from Fort Negley looking northeast.” Photo by George N. Barnard, 1864. (Courtesy of Library of Congress)

In September 2017, the fate of Fort Negley, a Civil War era fort near downtown Nashville, Tennessee, seemed sealed. Mixed-use, private development—a ubiquitous feature in the “New Nashville”—would soon cast a permanent shadow over the star-shaped US military fort. That is, if the fort survived Cloud Hill Development Corporation’s dynamiting, demolition, and construction on twenty-one acres of the Fort Negley Park’s southern, eastern, and north-eastern slopes, replacing the now abandoned Herschel Greer Baseball Stadium. Spurred by an interest in Fort Negley’s history and this more recent development controversy, a group of Vanderbilt University graduate students, faculty, and staff planned a new project to document the fort’s legacy in Nashville, specifically as a site of Black history.<sup>2</sup> Naming ourselves the Fort Negley Descendants Project (FNDDP), we set out to capture what this place means to Black Nashvillians and to preserve and circulate mostly unpublished stories about the fort’s history to a city undergoing immense transformation.

Fort Negley rests on St. Cloud Hill, roughly a mile south of downtown Nashville. Almost within earshot of the sounds of Johnny Cash and Dolly Parton reverberating from the honky-tonk bars, Fort Negley Park’s sixty-four acres are a largely unadvertised feature of Nashville’s culture. But neglect is nothing new to

---

1864) including the 17th. Bobby L. Lovett, “Nashville’s Fort Negley: A Symbol of Blacks’ Involvement with the Union Army,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 16, 19.

<sup>2</sup> We capitalize the spelling of “Black” throughout this article to recognize Black people as belonging to a marginalized racial group holding significant demographic representation in the United States. See Kimberlé Crenshaw’s “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1991): 1241–99 and W. E. B. DuBois’s *The Philadelphia Negro* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1899) for reference.

Fort Negley. Built in 1862 in the wake of Nashville's surrender to the US Army, it was a symbol of Confederate failure with a legacy that few white southerners desired to preserve following the Civil War. The fort held special significance to Nashville's Black communities, however, as after the war, living areas on the hill and in nearby contraband camps formed some of the city's earliest free Black neighborhoods. Its association with emancipation and wartime US military presence also made it a target for both neglect and Ku Klux Klan rallies.

Fort Negley has struggled to remain a visible and accessible site of memory at the center of African American liberation in Civil War Nashville. Following the conclusion of the Civil War, many Black laborers and veterans established neighborhoods in the areas surrounding federal fortifications such as Fort Negley. However, the fort itself fell into disrepair during the postwar period. The city of Nashville purchased St. Cloud Hill in 1928.<sup>3</sup> In 1936, the Works Progress Administration began reconstruction of the fort and built segregated recreation fields at the base of the hill. The city kept the fort open until 1945 when officials deemed it too costly to maintain safely. The African American playground and single ball diamond at the base of the north side of the hill existed until the 1960s when urban renewal eliminated it and much of the neighborhood. This land was incorporated into Fort Negley Park but soon after leased to today's Adventure Science Center in 1967 to build a new facility. Meanwhile, the white baseball fields were used heavily until 1975 when the city leased those ten acres to build a minor league baseball stadium. Fort Negley reopened in 2004 following a two million dollar investment in the park and a visitors center opened in 2007. Through its many iterations, the fort has sat as a cornerstone to historically Black Nashville neighborhoods such as Wedgwood-Houston and Edgehill.

The idea for an oral history project to preserve and publicize Fort Negley's significance to Black Nashville began with Mona Frederick, director of Vanderbilt's Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities (Warren Center), in the spring of 2017. Frederick spent the previous year developing a close working relationship with the Fort Negley Park staff with the goal of increasing signage at Fort Negley to educate the public about the Black laborers who built the fort. After hearing that the mayor's office had decided to lease the abandoned stadium and surrounding land, Frederick decided to escalate the Warren Center's public history efforts at the fort.<sup>4</sup> As a Civil War site intimately linked to the history of African American enslavement, emancipation, and Black history in Nashville, the decision to privatize

3 As there was also an effort to create a national battlefield there the purchase was likely done with the anticipation of selling or giving it to the federal government.

4 Joey Garrison, "Greer Stadium Redevelopment Faces Pushback as Closed-Door Selection Process Nears End," *Tennessean*, May 15, 2017, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2017/05/15/greer-stadium-redevelopment-faces-push-back-secret-selection-process-nears-end/322329001/>; Tim Dukeman, "Secret Meeting Between Nashville Mayor's Office, Developer, And City Councilman Sledge Raises Questions About Fort Negley Development Deal," *The Tennessean Star*, 29 December 2017, <http://tennesseestar.com/2017/12/29/secret-meeting-between-nashville-mayors-office-and-top-campaign-fundraiser-in-fort-negley-deal-raises-collusion-questions/>.

part of the fort's surrounding area served as a poignant exemplar of Nashville's gentrification and the displacement facing its Black community.<sup>5</sup>

At the beginning of the 2017–18 academic year, Frederick brought her interest in Fort Negley's past and future to the attention of the Warren Center and Vanderbilt's Digital Humanities Center. A concerned group of graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, faculty, and staff responded to her call for a working group to publicize the fort's history and current endangered status. Beyond immediate concerns, it was apparent that Fort Negley represented an opportunity to create a bridge between the university and the surrounding city. With a variety of interests ranging from history to anthropology to digital humanities the Vanderbilt working group convened to brainstorm ways to meaningfully engage with Fort Negley and the issues surrounding its preservation. Through a series of biweekly meetings, members of the community engagement working group decided to proceed with the establishment of a public-facing project aimed at preserving memories of Fort Negley in order to ensure that its significance would not be forgotten.

The working group decided to create a digital archive. Building on the success of recent digital archive projects at Vanderbilt, such as Mona Frederick's *Who Speaks for the Negro?* and Jane Landers's *Slave Societies Digital Archive*, promoting and preserving stories from descendants of Fort Negley's Black laborers and defenders appeared to be the optimal way to contribute to preservation efforts. A digital archive seemed the best option for several reasons. First, university resources provided access to video equipment and freed the working group from securing outside funding to host a sustainable digital archive on Vanderbilt's servers. Second, by using digital media, interviews of descendants could be hosted online, where they would be accessible to the wider public on YouTube. Thus, the products of our efforts would be openly accessible to people beyond the Vanderbilt University community, especially those descendants at the center of the project.

As a private university, Vanderbilt is home to a wide array of resources, from media labs to software workshops and multimedia equipment rental services, which we were able to use to begin the process of navigating the project's execution. Working out of the Digital Humanities Center, we held many conversations with colleagues in Vanderbilt's library system who consulted on the process of hosting a digital archive through the university as a repository of videos that would be maintained by library staff into the future. This was an attractive option as it came at no cost to our burgeoning project and ensured relative security of our gatherings. When we decided to pursue audio/video recording for our interviews, we were able to turn to Vanderbilt's Student Media Center (and later, to

5 Learotha Williams, "Fort Negley, Long Hidden, is a Map to Nashville Black History," *Tennessean*, September 1, 2017, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/opinion/2017/09/01/fort-negley-long-hidden-map-nashville-black-history/104847032/>.

Vanderbilt Institute for Digital Learning) to use cameras and recording equipment, which are available to the university's students at no cost. A private training session with the Student Media Center prepared us in recording set-up and methods before our first interview and informed us of basic filming techniques, such as how to frame a shot or properly microphone an interviewee. We were aware that our affiliation with the university afforded us access to these resources and were determined to put them to work in service of a project we viewed as beneficial to a broader Nashville community.

Working from a list of contacts provided by Fort Negley Park staff, we began reaching out to Nashville community members who had previously worked with or at Fort Negley, those who had studied it, and long-time community members who had grown up in the Edgehill neighborhood where the fort is located. Team members Juliet Larkin-Gilmore and Kelsey Norris reached out by phone and e-mail to gauge interest in participation. In some instances, our contacts were not direct descendants of laborers and soldiers at the fort, but occasionally these phone calls provided us leads on other descendants or pertinent individuals with whom to speak. In other cases, contacts either did not express interest or could not be contacted. The product of these phone calls and e-mails was the compilation of an emerging network of individuals who held rich memories of the fort and varied connections to it.

The recollections of Fort Negley revealed a complicated history of the fort that had not been fully articulated. Learning of these stories surrounding the fort and its significance, the working group was faced with questions about how to focus the project. Should we collect all remembrances of the fort? Were some memories more pertinent than others? If we were interested in Fort Negley as a Black history site, how could we effectively center this project on descendants of its original Black builders and defenders? Who was the audience or the recipient of this work?

In October 2017, the Cloud Hill development controversy reached new visibility. Historic Nashville, Inc., a prominent historic preservation advocacy group, announced that in lieu of its annual list of nine local historic sites most in danger of demolition or neglect, they would only announce one: Fort Negley. Highlighting the threat facing the fort, *The Tennessean* reported, "Preservationists go all-in for Fort Negley."<sup>6</sup> Increased media coverage of the fort's contested fate reinforced the group's decision to record Fort Negley's Black history through descendant interviews. Whereas Historic Nashville, Inc., focused on what board member Robert Hicks described as "the precedent that's being set by the mayor's office to now focus on giving away parkland," our group felt that the term "parkland" did not begin to capture the significance of Fort Negley as central to Black history in

6 Joey Garrison, "Nashville Nine Now Just One: Preservationists Go All-In For Fort Negley," *Tennessean* October 6, 2017, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2017/10/06/nashville-nine-now-just-one-preservationists-go-all-fort-negley/739266001/>.



Fort Negley today. (Photo by Juliet Larkin-Gilmore)

Nashville.<sup>7</sup> Although Fort Negley is legally designated as a park under the Metro Nashville Parks and Recreation Department, we believed that emphasizing the history of the fort's early years would support our argument that it is hallowed ground, not simply a park. Thus, we came to understand the project as a contribution to a greater preservation effort, but we increasingly saw the need to emphasize that it illustrated the more general erasure of Black history in the city.<sup>8</sup>

We wanted to collect all remembrances, but our interest in Fort Negley as a Civil War site built by exploited African American labor and defended by the United States Colored Troops led us to prioritize Black descendants' stories of the fort's significance in Nashville. In this way, the project held two purposes: (i) the preservation of Black descendants' memories and connections to the fort, and

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Though Nashville has long highlighted its history as a bastion for country music, the city has failed to lend resources to recognize the history of Black Nashville with its rapid growth in the past decade. Nashville's claim as "Music City" often forgets the once-lively Jefferson Street, a street in Black North Nashville that hosted musicians such as Etta James and Jimi Hendrix in vibrant clubs. Additionally, the city is home to three historically Black colleges or universities: Fisk University, Meharry Medical College, and Tennessee State University, which were attended by major Black figures such as W. E. B. DuBois, John Lewis, and Oprah Winfrey. Further, Nashville was an important site for the civil rights movement. Woolworth's on 5th, a restaurant just off of boisterous Broadway, served as the location where young, Black freedom fighters staged sit-ins at lunch counters. These significant contributions have been relegated to street corner displays and easily bypassed signage that overlook importance of Nashville as a site of Black history.

(2) drawing attention to the fort's significance as an important facet of Nashville's history. Remembrances of the site were deserving of broader recognition—especially in a city with an increasingly marginalized Black population. The story of the fort and the significance of the Black contribution to the nation's Civil War are an invaluable aspect of Nashville's history.

After many meetings, numerous e-mail threads coordinating individual responsibilities, and attendance at various events related to Fort Negley over the course of a semester, we planned our first interview. Gary Burke, a member of the Friends of Fort Negley Park Board of Directors, 13th USCT living historian, and a proud descendant of a 17th USCT soldier stationed at the fort, was an obvious choice. We compiled a list of questions, drawing on the historical value of the fort as a Civil War site; the commemoration of Fort Negley's Black history; and the significance of remembering such a site given Nashville's changing landscape and demographics. When Burke arrived for his interview, we were surprised and moved by his connection to the physical place. Burke opened with memories of visiting Fort Negley on family picnics as a child, recollecting, "It was an area where a lot of families went, even though it was a closed fort."<sup>9</sup> He went on to discuss his own vested interest in preserving Fort Negley as an important Civil War site and a place that lent complexity to Black contributions to the United States.

Gary Burke provided us an auspicious start to the project. With one interview done, one team member began the diligent work of editing, splicing into the footage images of Fort Negley and the USCT that captured the significance of the site. We moved forward, planning our second interview with descendant Dr. Eleanor Fleming, a Vanderbilt University alumna from Franklin, Tennessee (twenty miles south of Nashville), who had recently learned of her own descendant connection to the fort through the Fort Negley's Twitter account. Each day from August 13 to December 7, 2017, Fort Negley Park's staff tweeted the names of the individuals who built the fort. One day, Fleming recognized some of her own family's surnames and came to discover that two of her ancestors had helped construct Fort Negley.

Our interview with Fleming coincided with the fort's remembrance ceremony held on December 2, 156 years to the month since the fort's completion. Fleming's interview and her speech at the ceremony illuminated three points for us. First, she highlighted the questionable ethics of gentrification by noting that at the time of her ancestors' enslavement, they were valued at the price of a month's rent for one of the apartment units Cloud Hill Development Corporation proposed to build. Second, she emphasized the violent inaccuracy of suggesting that the fort should hold the same recreational uses as a park. "I can't imagine [that on] the battlefields in Franklin, that someone would dare think to walk their dogs there, but for Fort Negley it's like, 'Hm, it's an open green space, why not?'" she told us in her

<sup>9</sup> Fort Negley was officially closed to the public for much of its history. It reopened in 2004 and the visitor's center opened in 2007.

interview. Third, she noted the glaring absence of Fort Negley in her childhood education in Franklin and reminded us that she had only learned of her ancestors' connection to the fort a few months prior to our interview.

Our first two interviews helped us shape the project. The process reinforced the path we had chosen but also made clear the difficulties we had begun to encounter with finding additional descendants and creating a digital archive. Although a digital archive initially seemed like an obvious choice, we soon learned that it came with its own challenges. Digital projects hosted online require maintenance: content would need to be migrated as university platforms changed, file types change over time calling for periodic content conversion, website subscription information would require updating, raw data would need to be stored in multiple stable locations—the list went on. Working with Vanderbilt library associates and communicating with Information Technology staff at the university, we learned that many of these issues could be addressed through maintaining a data repository at Vanderbilt that would be maintained by the library into perpetuity. Web hosting, however, produced another set of tensions. Web hosting platforms such as Squarespace offered full input over the design of the site and a more definitive domain name, but required a yearly subscription fee. Using Vanderbilt's web hosting services, we could avoid the subscription fee, but were required to use a more derivative domain name and link the project to the university itself, despite receiving no formal support. These decisions loomed over us as we moved forward with content collection.

Following an archeological survey which determined a high likelihood that human remains were buried under the stadium in January 2018, the Cloud Hill Partners pulled out of their agreement to transform Greer Stadium into mixed-use condos and retail space.<sup>10</sup> Given mounting pressure from preservationists and the potential need to excavate human remains, the developers acknowledged that the project was “more complex than anticipated.”<sup>11</sup> Once again, Fort Negley Park faced an uncertain future. Around this time, the working group began to plan for the premiere of the recorded interviews. We decided to host an event at the Fort Negley Visitor's Center in April 2018 where we could invite members of the greater Nashville community to listen to Gary Burke and Eleanor Fleming's interviews about their connections to the fort. By presenting the beginnings of the project, we

<sup>10</sup> Virgil R. Beasley III, principal investigator, Tennessee Valley Archaeological Research, “Historic Background Research and a Ground Penetrating Radar Survey Associated with the Greer Stadium Redevelopment Project in Nashville, Davidson County, Tennessee,” prepared for Nashville Metro Parks and Recreation, January 2018. The expert report identifies areas of the park “which likely contain human remains associated with the ‘contraband camps’ that were part of the building of Fort Negley.” Estimates by Bobby Lovett put the number of laborers who worked on Fort Negley and the other forts which surrounded Nashville at 2,771. Roughly 600–800 perished. Lovett, “Nashville's Fort Negley,” 12.

<sup>11</sup> Joey Garrison, “Cloud Hill Abandons Controversial Project for Nashville's Greer Stadium,” *Tennessean*, January 12, 2018, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2018/01/12/cloud-hill-abandons-controversial-proposal-nashvilles-greer-stadium/1029801001/>.

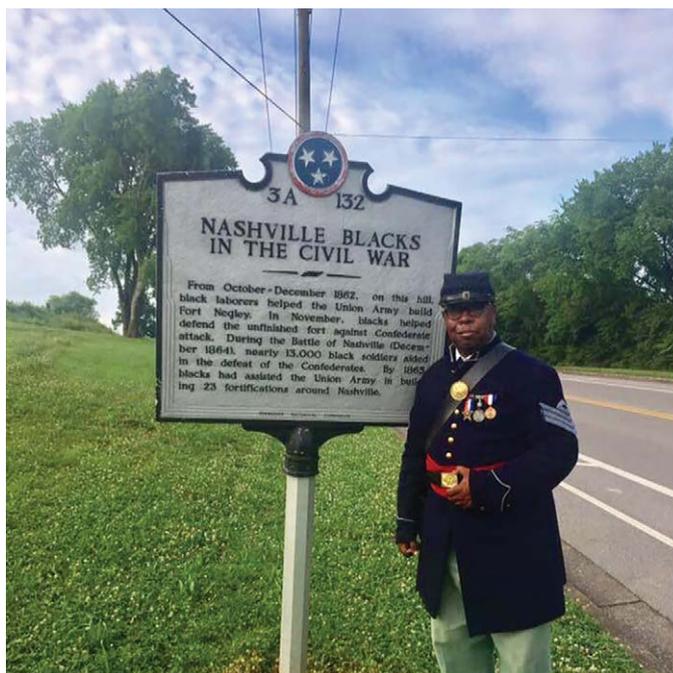
aimed to attract other descendants to the fort and encourage a broader Nashville community to engage with the site as a place of Black history. It was around this time that we were also prompted to decide on an official name for the working group in order to begin promotion for the project. Weeks of correspondence and a meeting later, we became Fort Negley Descendants Project: Nashville's Black Legacies of the Civil War. This name highlighted the priorities that had guided our interests in forming a working group and carrying out a project that could be of purpose for various communities in Nashville.

Following Mayor Megan Barry's unexpected and controversial resignation in March 2018, Vice Mayor David Briley replaced her. Despite his progressive voting record on the Metro Council, it was still a surprise when during his first week in office Briley announced that the city would fund the \$1 million demolition of Greer Stadium and reunify the land with Fort Negley Park. In a press conference on the park's renovation, Briley remarked on Fort Negley's significance as a place to "honor the sacrifice of the slaves who died building this fort while providing active park space in a growing neighborhood that will be enjoyed by residents for generations to come."<sup>12</sup> Advocates for the park, including the Friends of Fort Negley Park, rejoiced at the fort's suddenly bright—and secure—future. Of course, discussion loomed over how exactly to commemorate the possible mass graves at the site, and how to articulate the park within a larger greenway project throughout Nashville.

Mayor Briley's declaration provided a triumphant backdrop to FNDP's outreach efforts. We continued forward with a mission to build on the fort's newly gained attention to connect it to its significance as a site of Black history. Although the fort was functionally safe from destruction, we wanted to continue contributing to efforts to help the fort gain the recognition it deserved in Nashville history. We viewed our April 2018 event as the opportunity we needed to get more Nashvillians to the fort and to continue building a network of descendants whose histories were intimately linked to the site.

In order to publicize interview screening, the group compiled a spreadsheet of local preservation groups, partner historians and scholars from local universities, Vanderbilt centers and departments, librarians with the public library, churches in historically Black Nashville communities such as Edgehill, Wedgewood-Houston, and North Nashville, and members of the press who had previously covered Fort Negley. Emma Furman, one of the FNDP members from the Warren Center, designed a flyer to distribute. In addition to sending emails and making phone calls, Kristina Lee hand-delivered the flyer to stores, libraries, and a community center in the Hadley Park area, one of the most significant historically Black neighborhoods in north Nashville. The board of the Friends of Fort Negley

<sup>12</sup> Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, "Mayor Briley Announces Plan to Make Fort Negley Park Whole Again," March 13, 2018, <http://www.nashville.gov/News-Media/News-Article/ID/7327/Mayor-Briley-Announces-Plan-to-Make-Fort-Negley-Park-Whole-Again.aspx>.



Gary M. Burke, 13th United States Colored Troops living historian, member of the Friends of Fort Negley Board of Directors, and descendant of Peter Bailey, Company K, 17th United States Colored Troops at the Fort Negley site. (Photo used by permission from Gary Burke)

Park helped us promote the event on social media. We also worked closely with Fort Negley Park’s staff, Krista Castillo and W. Tracy Harris, who provided enthusiastic support for the project and the screening. Since we hosted the event in the visitors’ center, chairs, tables, and a projector were available for our use. The only problem, we learned, was that the theater’s audiovisual system is woefully outdated. The only way we would be able to show the videos was via laptop, but there would be no sound. Thankfully, once again we were able to tap into Vanderbilt’s technological wealth. The Curb Center for Art, Enterprise, and Public Policy answered our call for help and provided the speakers and technological expertise at the premiere.

Supplied with popcorn from Kernels, a Black-owned gourmet popcorn shop in East Nashville, that was purchased with funds from the Digital Humanities Center, and two large speakers from the Curb Center, the FNDP members set out to the visitor’s center on the day of the premiere. We had little idea of how many people would attend, but we were blown away when the theater filled to capacity and we ran out of seats. Although Eleanor Fleming was back home in Washington, DC, Gary Burke was able to attend the event, which added to its significance for us. Overall, the premiere was a success and a solid first step for the FNDP. We knew, though, that resources and support from Fort Negley and Vanderbilt made it possible for our officially unfunded working group to make it this far.

In the 2018–19 academic year, FNDP established partnerships in a number of new directions. Although several members of the original team left for other institutions, FNDP was able to obtain a small grant from the Curb Center which was used to bring artist Shayne Davidson to Nashville. She spoke at Tennessee State University, an HBCU in Nashville, about her art project “Seventeen Men: Discovering the Men of the 25th United States Colored Troops,” which was on display at Fort Negley from February 2 to November 16, 2019.<sup>13</sup> We also used the grant to hire Destiny Hanks, an undergraduate at Vanderbilt who is originally from Nashville. As FNDP’s research assistant, she has helped us to record and edit interviews. Hanks was on-camera for our interview with Taneya Koonce from the Nashville chapter of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society (AAHGS) about strategies for researching African American genealogy. Additionally, she helped FNDP interview Bill Radcliffe, a descendant of the USCT and one of the first promoters of the fort’s significance for Black history. We also interviewed four siblings who are descendants of a Fort Negley builder.<sup>14</sup> Those videos are now in the editing phase. The FNDP also partnered with Nashville Sites, a historic walking tour non-profit run by Mary Ellen Pethel and the Metro Historical Commission Foundation, to create an audio walking tour of Fort Negley. The tour is narrated by Gary Burke and is due for release November 2019.

This spring ushered in a number of momentous occasions for FNDP and Fort Negley. In April, the city began demolition on Greer Stadium, whose park lands were at the center of the 2017 development controversy. Additional archaeological investigations are planned before the city can move forward with a master planning process to reunify the park. On May 21, 2019, UNESCO Slave Route Project named Fort Negley a “Site of Memory,” thanks in large part to FNDP member Angela Sutton who wrote the application. This designation provides the fort with added attention and protection for its role in the history of slavery. In mid-July, Juliet, Destiny, and newest member Kayleigh Whitman met Eleanor Fleming’s aunt, Carolyn Bright Worthy, at Mount Ararat Cemetery, the oldest Black cemetery in Nashville. We went to remember and honor Fleming and Worthy’s Fort Negley ancestor, Ruffin Bright, who we know from burial records is buried somewhere on the grounds. Mount Ararat’s records and remaining headstones only record a small percentage of the people resting there. This fact only solidified the work Nashville still has to do to reconcile the relationship to its Black history. Overall, the development of FNDP shows how academic institutions can productively engage in community preservation efforts and promote public history as partners, bridge builders, and collaborators. It also makes clear the need for ongoing conversations with our interviewees, the staff at Fort Negley Park, and the wider Black community as well as to reach out to new members and organizations in order to maintain

<sup>13</sup> Jessica Bliss, “Black Civil War Soldiers Remembered in Treasured Portraits from Rare Historic Photographs,” *Tennessean*, April 9, 2019, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2019/04/09/black-civil-war-soldiers-fort-negley-nashville-seventeen-men/3289289002/>.

<sup>14</sup> After the war, he helped to build and guard Jubilee Hall at Fisk University.

continuity and ensure our future goals align with our partners' needs and wishes. We hope that through this digital archive the Fort Negley Descendants Project continues to promote a fuller narrative about Nashville, one which can inform development in and around significant sites of Black history.<sup>15</sup>

• • • • •

*Juliet Larkin-Gilmore* received her PhD in history from Vanderbilt University in 2019. She is now a Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellow in American Indian Studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She can be reached at [larkinj@illinois.edu](mailto:larkinj@illinois.edu).

*Kristina E. Lee* received her MA in anthropology at Vanderbilt University in 2018. She is now a PhD student in sociology at Northwestern University, where her work combines African Diaspora studies and comparative history. She can be reached at [kristinalee2025@u.northwestern.edu](mailto:kristinalee2025@u.northwestern.edu).

FNDP would like to thank Fort Negley staff Krista Castillo and W. Tracy Harris for their support over the past few years and for allowing us to use their facilities and to tap their immense knowledge of Fort Negley's history.

<sup>15</sup> The Fort Negley Descendants Project can be reached by email at [fortnegleydescendants@gmail.com](mailto:fortnegleydescendants@gmail.com), on Twitter at [@fortnegleydesc](https://twitter.com/fortnegleydesc), and on Facebook at Fort Negley Descendants Project. Our website is <https://wp0.vanderbilt.edu/fndp/>.