

2019

Humanizing the Enslaved of Fort Monroe's Arc of Freedom

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, William R. Jr. (2019) "Humanizing the Enslaved of Fort Monroe's Arc of Freedom," *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies*: Vol. 6, Article 12.

Available at: <https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/jcas/vol6/iss1/12>

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Cover Page Footnote

The author would like to thank Robin Reed, Phyllis Terrell, Bob Kelly, Cherilyn Widell, and John Weaver for their mentorship. He'd also like to acknowledge Patrick Connelly and Grace Schultz of the National Archives at Philadelphia and Joan Charles of Hampton, VA. He would like to thank Katherine Kelly for her essential editorial feedback.

Humanizing the Enslaved of Fort Monroe's Arc of Freedom

In 1619, the first Africans were brought to the English North American colonies as captives, along the shores of Point Comfort. This event represents the beginning of slavery in the future United States of America.¹ In 1861, amid the onset of the American Civil War, slavery began to unravel on the very same peninsula. Three enslaved men known as Frank Baker, James Townsend, and Shepard Mallory escaped the Confederate Army in Norfolk, Virginia, and bravely voyaged across the Hampton Roads harbor to the Union stronghold of Fort Monroe.² The fort's commander, Major General Benjamin Butler, did not return the men to slavery but instead classified them as contraband of war.³ By 1865, well over 10,000 formerly enslaved men, women, and children had sought refuge at the fort. As a result of Butler's "Contraband Decision," Fort Monroe earned the nickname "Freedom's Fortress." Inspired by these events, President Barack Obama proclaimed Fort Monroe a national monument on November 1, 2011. President Obama concluded that the site of Fort Monroe "marks both the beginning and end of slavery in our Nation."⁴ Reflecting on this powerful statement, Fort Monroe Authority's Casemate Museum has recognized that the complex history of the site can be succinctly expressed as the "Fort Monroe Arc of Freedom." The museum interprets this history within the stone walls of the fort today.

While 1619 and 1861 denote the beginning, and the beginning of the end of slavery in America, there is a lesser-known story that involves the enslaved who helped build Freedom's Fortress. Enslaved people performed a paradoxical role: they labored to erect a fort designed to defend American freedom. During the Civil War the irony came full circle when Fort Monroe became a refuge and gateway to freedom for African Americans. In order to develop exhibits and new perspectives on the fort's role in slavery and emancipation, the Casemate Museum is investigating primary source documents related to the Fort Monroe Arc of Freedom. As the museum historian, I was sent to the National Archives and Records Administration in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania with the hope of discovering documents to humanize the enslaved and contrabands who labored at the fort.

Record Group 77: Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers was the logical collection to examine knowing that the United States Army Corps of Engineers supervised all construction at the fort. Encompassing the years 1815 to 1917, this collection holds meticulous records documenting everything from orders of stone and brick to the daily accounting of labor. Within

¹ James Horn, *1619: Jamestown and the Forging of American Democracy* (New York: Basic Books, 2018), 87–88, 109.

² Oral tradition holds that Frank Baker, James Townsend, and Shepard Mallory were the first contrabands declared by Major General Butler on May 24, 1861. While this tradition is generally accepted by scholars, it is not based on any known primary source. Union and Confederate Army correspondence from May 24 identifies the three men as slaves, "belonging to Col. Charles K. Mallory" (United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* [Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894], 2:1:752–53).

³ Chandra Manning, *Troubled Refuge: Struggling for Freedom in the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016), 32.

⁴ Barack Obama, "Establishment of the Fort Monroe National Monument, Proclamation 8750 of November 1, 2011," Presidential proclamation, *Federal Register* 76, no. 215, 68625–68629, November 7, 2011, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2011-11-07/pdf/2011-28926.pdf>.

Record Group 77, the following entries were examined: Entry 1103—Register of Work Done by Slave Labor at Fort Monroe; Entry 1066—Letters Sent to the Chief of Engineers; Entry 1080—Press Copies of Reports of Operations at Forts Calhoun, Wool, and Monroe, and Reports of Civilians Employed at Fort Monroe; and Entry 1105—Time Books and Payrolls Relating to Forts Monroe, Calhoun, and Wool.

This paper will share preliminary results from research within Record Group 77. Section 1 will focus on the slaves who worked at Fort Monroe during its early construction. Documentation was found showing the first and last names of enslaved people, names of slave owners, their rates of compensation, and the specific tasks that slaves completed. Section 2 will focus on the Civil War era and the formerly enslaved, known as contrabands, who worked at the fort. Research revealed the first and last names of contraband laborers, their rates of pay, and the types of labor they performed. Also, records were discovered offering clues about one of the first slaves declared as contraband at the fort. Section 3 will outline future initiatives intended to improve access to archival records pertaining to the enslaved and contraband laborers at Fort Monroe. Once completed, this project will expand our understanding of the Fort Monroe Arc of Freedom, simultaneously inspiring additional research and fresh interpretations about slavery, agency, and emancipation.

Section 1: “Black laborers [are] the only ones serviceable in this climate . . .”⁵

Lieutenant Colonel Charles Gratiot
Fort Monroe Engineer Office
November 7, 1820

Designed by French engineer Simon Bernard in 1818 and operational by 1834, Fort Monroe was intended to protect the Chesapeake Bay and Hampton Roads harbor.⁶ Bernard’s plan called for a massive six-sided, bastioned fort with impregnable masonry walls, surrounded by an eight-foot-deep wet ditch. According to one engineer’s drawing, the sixty-three-acre fort was capable of mounting 412 different pieces of ordinance.⁷ The construction of Fort Monroe was an immense undertaking requiring large numbers of skilled craftsmen and general laborers.

Newspaper advertisements seeking hundreds of laborers for the project were published throughout Virginia in early 1819. Both male and female slave owners living throughout the region recognized an opportunity for economic gain and began leasing their slaves to the United States Army. As a result, the engineers maintained registers to record the hours and days slaves worked, in order to accurately compensate slave owners. Housed within Record Group 77 is an extraordinary example: Entry 1103—Register of Work Done by Slave Labor at Fort Monroe.⁸ Encompassing the years 1820 to 1824 and collected in two volumes, this 300-page register is particularly significant because it notes both the first and last names of slaves almost fifty years

⁵ Lt. Col. Gratiot to Col. Armistead, November 7, 1820; Vol. 1, 03/25/1819–07/07/1821, p. 247, Letters Sent, Entry 1066, RG 77, National Archives and Records Administration-Mid Atlantic Region (PA).

⁶ “Reconnoitering of Chesapeake Bay, 1818. Board of Commissioners,” drawn by “W. T. Poussin, Capt. Top. Eng.” (Sht 5, Dr 57, RG 77, National Archives and Records Administration-College Park [MD]).

⁷ “Plans, sections, and elevations of Fortress Monroe, c. 1831,” drawn by George O’Driscoll (Sht 34, Dr 57, RG 77, National Archives and Records Administration-College Park [MD]).

⁸ “Register of Work Done by Slave Labor at Fort Monroe,” Entry 1103, RG 77, NARA-Mid Atlantic Region (PA).

before African Americans are recorded in a United States Census.⁹ Additional information in adjacent columns includes the names of slave owners, the number of days slaves worked each month, rates of pay, and a final column for "Remarks." While not often populated, the "Remarks" column occasionally includes words such as "Absent," "Sick," "Discharged," "Deserted," or "Died."

134	Geo. Williamson	J. Williamson	24	9 12
135	Dan. Williamson	J. Williamson	19	7 22
136	Pleasant Bell	Rich ^d . Bell	25	9 50
137	Rich ^d . King	Martha King	22	8 36
138	David King	do	4	1 52

Figure 1. Photograph showing a portion of one page from Entry 1103, vol. 2, during June 1822. The first three columns left to right: "No.," "Name," and "By whom owned." The remaining columns correspond to days worked, wage, and total compensation for the month. Recorded as Number 137, for example, Richard King was owned by Martha King and worked twenty-two days, earning her \$8.36. Photograph by author.

The register's fragile and faded pages include name after name of enslaved people: John Ingram, Phil Martin, Robert Mosely, Amos Smith, Daniel Williamson, and George Whitehead.¹⁰ After photographing both volumes, an initial examination has already revealed approximately three hundred slaves belonging to more than fifty different slave owners. Many of the slave owners listed have names that remain common in Tidewater Virginia, including William Armistead, John Day, Thomas Herbert, Sarah Ingram, Martha King, and Samuel Watts Jr.¹¹ Some of these surnames are recognized near Fort Monroe today as well. The roadways Armistead Avenue, Herbert Avenue, and Watts Drive, for example, are each named after families with past associations to slavery. Presented to provoke thought, and not intended to demonize those from the past, these examples demonstrate the lasting legacy of slavery.

The Entry 1103 register also provided insight regarding the economic motivation for slave owners to lease their slaves to the United States Army. With slaves earning an average of \$0.38 per day, an owner received approximately \$9.00 per month for each slave they had working at the fort. A majority of the slave owners listed had fewer than five slaves working per month; however, there are recorded instances of some owners sending dozens of their slaves to work for the army. In January 1822, for example, it is recorded that John Tabb Smith had twenty-five slaves employed at the fort.¹² During that month, Smith's slaves earned him \$200.24. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index, \$200.24 in 1822 is equivalent to the purchasing power of \$4,313.51 in 2019.¹³ This represents significant income and demonstrates

⁹ The 1870 US Census is the first census that records the first and last names of African Americans.

¹⁰ "Register of Work Done by Slave Labor." The names listed are recorded in various months.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., January 1822.

¹³ US Consumer Price Index inflation calculator, accessed January 5, 2019, <https://www.officialdata.org/us/inflation/1822?amount=200.24>.

the interdependence that developed between slave owners and the United States Army at Fort Monroe.

In addition to this register, the Record Group 77 collection contains multivolume record books that incorporate letters, reports, drawings, and orders issued by the Army engineers. Oversized and leather-bound, the record books document many aspects of the fort's construction, including details about the tasks laborers were expected to complete. Found in Entry 1066—Letters Sent to the Chief of Engineers, is an order issued on June 3, 1820, by Captain Frederick Lewis of the Fort Monroe Engineer Office: “On Monday the 5th inst. a detachment of men will be organized into an excavating party under Wm. Anderson—they will proceed to deepen the front ditches, as much as the depth of water will admit.”¹⁴ Simple wooden shovels and wheelbarrows were the tools of choice as free, enslaved, and military convict laborers moved tons of dirt and sand to excavate the ditch. Additionally, laborers hauled bricks and stone and operated rope-and-pulley cranes to move building materials around the site. There is also evidence that enslaved laborers engaged in highly skilled tasks as well, including roofing, plastering, masonry, carpentry, cutting stone, and serving as boatmen.

The best-documented evidence of skilled slave labor at the fort involves brickmaking and masonry work. In the summer of 1818, the engineers contracted Bolitha Laws to provide masonry services.¹⁵ Census data from 1820 shows that Laws was responsible for an entourage of seventy-nine people, including twenty-nine slaves.¹⁶ A May 10, 1820, report in Entry 1066 included the names of sixteen people described as “Black Labourers belonging to Bolitha Laws.”¹⁷ Joseph Reed, Emmanuel Bancroft, Moses Williams, Ned Jennings, and Barnaby Armistead are among the slaves listed. Contemporaneous engineer records confirm that these men and the other enslaved laborers belonging to Laws were manufacturing 800,000 bricks per month, erecting casemates, and building structures within and around the fort.¹⁸ The enslaved serving as brickmakers and masons exemplify one of the most significant ironies of the Fort Monroe Arc of Freedom: slave labor physically built Freedom's Fortress brick by brick.

Also included in Entry 1066 are details about the daily work schedule laborers were required to endure. On April 1, 1820, Army Engineer captain Frederick Lewis issued orders that “the work bell will be rung at day break; The breakfast, at 7 o'clock, The dinner at one o'clock; an hour will be allowed for each meal, at sun set, labour will cease, supper be served immediately

¹⁴ Capt. Frederick Lewis, Orders, Engineer Office, Fort Monroe, June 3, 1820, Vol. 1, 03/25/1819–07/07/1821, p. 33, Letters Sent, Entry 1066, RG 77, NARA-Mid Atlantic Region (PA).

¹⁵ “Agreement with Bolitha Laws of Alexandria, Virginia to Furnish Bricks,” August 5, 1818, Box 1, Vol. 1, 03/07/1819–9/31/1828, pp. 12–13, Register of Contracts Relating to Forts Monroe and Calhoun 1817–1828, Entry 1094, RG 77, NARA-Mid Atlantic Region (PA).

¹⁶ 1820 US Census, Elizabeth City County, VA, population schedule, Ft. Monroe, p. 13, USGenWeb Archives, accessed November 21, 2018, <http://files.usgwarchives.net/va/elizabethcity/census/1820/pg14.txt>.

¹⁷ Capt. Frederick Lewis, Orders, Engineer Office, Fort Monroe, May 10, 1820, Vol. 1, 03/25/1819–07/07/1821, p. 28; Letters Sent, Entry 1066, RG 77, NARA-Mid Atlantic Region (PA).

¹⁸ Lt. Col. Charles Gratiot to Col. Armistead, Chief of Engineers, October, 15, 1819, Vol. 1, 03/25/1819–07/07/1821, p. 77, Letters Sent, Entry 1066, RG 77, NARA-Mid Atlantic Region (PA); Lt. Col. Charles Gratiot to Col. Alexander Macomb, Chief of Engineers, November 11, 1821, Vol. 2, 07/10/1821–02/24/1824, pp. 69–72, Letters Sent, Entry 1066, RG 77, NARA-Mid Atlantic Region (PA).

thereafter, and at nine the retreat bell will notify all to retire to rest.”¹⁹ While much construction progress had been made by 1824, the work schedule remained just as rigorous. On July 30, 1824, superintending engineer Lieutenant Colonel Charles Gratiot recorded that workdays at Fort Monroe would begin fifteen minutes before sunrise and conclude fifteen minutes after its setting.²⁰ There were small increments of time built in for meals and breaks, but during the summer months, the workday approached fifteen hours.

Due to the strenuous tasks and long days, illness and severe injuries were common among laborers during the construction era. Crushed appendages, head injuries, and flesh wounds were frequent as laborers hauled, hoisted, cut, and installed massive stones, bricks, and timbers. There is also evidence that laborers were killed while in service to the engineers. The story of Amos Henley epitomizes the dangers experienced by laborers working at the fort. Identified as an enslaved laborer and member of a “barge crew,” Amos Henley first appeared in the engineers’ records on May 10, 1820.²¹ Owned by William Henley of Norfolk, Virginia, Amos is later recorded within the Register of Work Done by Slave Labor at Fort Monroe in February of 1821.²² During that month, Amos worked sixteen and one-half days. It is recorded that he worked twenty-seven days in March, fourteen in April, and twenty-seven in May. His service as an enslaved laborer continued through the summer until tragedy struck. In September of 1821, the register recorded that “Amos Henley was killed the 19 inst by windlass crank.”²³

The *American Beacon And Norfolk & Portsmouth Daily Advertiser* captured the essence of the Amos Henley tragedy on September 20, 1821:

We regret to state that a negro lad named Amos, about 23 years of age, the property of William D. Henley, Esq. of this town, was killed at Old Point Comfort [Fort Monroe] yesterday about noon, by a blow on the head from the windlass crank, while engaged with several others in raising heavy stone. His body was brought up to town last evening in the Steam-boat Hampton, and interred.²⁴

The Amos Henley story is a sobering reminder of the hardships that all laborers faced while building the fort. Henley’s death evokes great sorrow, yet decades later, his story inspires research with the hope of humanizing many more of the enslaved who labored at Fort Monroe. Henley’s contributions, like those of all the laborers from the fort’s construction era, paved the way for future generations of enslaved people to experience Fort Monroe not as a labor camp, but as Freedom’s Fortress.

¹⁹ Capt. Frederick Lewis, Orders, Engineer Office, Fort Monroe, April 1, 1820, Vol. 1, 03/25/1819–07/07/1821, p. 21, Letters Sent, Entry 1066, RG 77, NARA-Mid Atlantic Region (PA).

²⁰ Lt. Col. Charles Gratiot to Col. Alexander Macomb, July 30, 1824, Vol. 3, 02/07/1824–09/01/1832, p. 28, Letters Sent, Entry 1066, RG 77, NARA-Mid Atlantic Region (PA).

²¹ Capt. Frederick Lewis, Orders, Engineer Office, Fort Monroe, May 10, 1820, Vol. 1, 03/25/1819–07/07/1821, p. 26, Letters Sent, Entry 1066, RG 77, NARA-Mid Atlantic Region (PA).

²² “Register of Work Done by Slave Labor,” February 1821.

²³ *Ibid.*, September 1821.

²⁴ “Norfolk,” *American Beacon And Norfolk & Portsmouth Daily Advertiser*, September 20, 1821.

Section 2: Fort Monroe becomes Freedom's Fortress

By 1834, the main portions of Fort Monroe were completed.²⁵ However, the engineers' work was not finished, as repairs and alterations continued through the mid-nineteenth century. As 1860 approached and sectional conflict became increasingly likely, the army focused on preparing Fort Monroe for war. During the winter and early spring of 1861, the fort was resupplied and the army mounted additional cannon. On April 30, 1861, the commanding general of the United States Army, Brevet Lieutenant General Winfield Scott, noted, "Fort Monroe is by far the most secure post now in the possession of the U.S."²⁶

The Army Engineers continued wartime preparations as Virginia inched toward secession, ultimately separating from the Union on May 23, 1861. For slaves and slave owners living near Fort Monroe, life changed on the very next day. On May 24, 1861, Union commander Major General Benjamin Butler refused to return three fugitive slaves to their owner, instead declaring them contraband of war.²⁷ Within days, word spread and hundreds of slaves began appearing at the Union stronghold. On June 8, 1861, just fifteen days after Butler's "Contraband Decision," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* reported that approximately five hundred contrabands were at Fort Monroe and that "General Butler has made the best possible use of an evil, and employed the able-bodied to work at the entrenchments while the women have been set to washing, cleaning, &c."²⁸ This statement suggests that at least some of the contrabands were working for the engineers who were responsible for building and maintaining the entrenchments at the fort.

As the number of contrabands laboring at the fort increased, the army made efforts to formalize the rapidly evolving situation. General Order No. 34, issued by the commander of the Department of Virginia on November 1, 1861, specified that contrabands working for the army at Fort Monroe were to be compensated and provided food and basic clothing.²⁹ To ensure their accurate compensation, the engineers began keeping detailed records of the hours and days contrabands worked. Because it contained this data, the next collection examined was Entry 1080—Press Copies of Reports of Operations at Forts Calhoun, Wool, and Monroe, and Reports of Civilians Employed at Fort Monroe. Recorded monthly, the reports document the names of engineer officers at the fort, the number of "Hired Men," their rate of pay, and their total compensation. Corresponding precisely with the issuance of General Order No. 34, the first recorded contrabands working for the Army Engineers appear in their November 1861 report. During that month, the engineers noted that thirty-one of the fifty-three "Hired Men" at Fort Monroe were contraband laborers.³⁰ An analysis of the data from November 1861 to September 1862 confirmed that contrabands were consistently employed as "Hired Men" at the fort. Beginning in October 1862, the monthly reports incorporate less information about the labor demographic and more detail about the specific tasks the laborers completed. During the fall of

²⁵ Richard P. Weinert Jr. and Robert Arthur, *Defender of the Chesapeake: The Story of Fort Monroe* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane, 1989), 36–37.

²⁶ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion*, 1:2:612.

²⁷ Richard F. Engs, *Freedom's First Generation: Black Hampton, Virginia 1861–1890* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 14–15.

²⁸ "Negroes Taking Refuge at Fort Monroe," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, June 8, 1861, 55.

²⁹ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion*, 2:1:775.

³⁰ "Press Copies of Reports of Operations at Forts Calhoun, Wool, and Monroe and Reports of Civilians Employed at Fort Monroe," November 1861, p. 147, Entry 1080, RG 77, NARA-Mid Atlantic Region (PA).

1862, for example, laborers worked at the fort's redoubt and were busy receiving and moving construction materials.³¹ While Entry 1080 provided details about the number of laborers and their tasks, it did not include their names. Entry 1105—Time Books and Payrolls Relating to Forts Monroe, Calhoun, and Wool, was then examined in hopes of finding the names of contrabands employed at the fort.

The twenty-eight volumes of Entry 1105 include time books and payrolls from Forts Monroe and Calhoun during the years 1827–1872 and 1905–1908. A review of the Fort Monroe Civil War-era collection showed that the payrolls listed the names of over forty individuals classified as laborers employed by the engineers.³² While not identified specifically as contrabands, when the names were cross-referenced with pre-Civil War records, it was discovered that most, if not all, were previously enslaved. The discovery of a familiar name, Washington Fields, served as additional confirmation that those listed were former slaves.

In *Come On, Children*, an autobiography written by one of Washington Fields's eleven children, George Washington Fields describes the cruelties of slavery that included the separation of his family members.³³ Fields also details the pivotal events that led to the family's flight to freedom during the Civil War. According to the autobiography, his father, Washington Fields, followed Union soldiers and arrived at Fort Monroe on June 11, 1864.³⁴ The records in Entry 1105 substantiate Washington Fields's arrival at the fort and list him as a laborer. During July 1864, it is recorded that Washington Fields worked twenty-four ten-hour days, and was compensated \$28.80 by the Army Engineers.³⁵ His name consistently appears in the records, as it is documented that he worked at the fort through July 1866. The entire Fields family was eventually reunited at Fort Monroe, and their story provides important background on what many slaves experienced as they journeyed to Freedom's Fortress.³⁶ Within the context of the harrowing and courageous stories recounted in *Come On, Children*, discovering Washington Fields in Entry 1105 was a profound experience. Reflecting on his story within the context of the Fort Monroe Arc of Freedom, Entry 1105 is much more than a payroll; it is a list of freedom seekers each with an important and inspiring story to tell.

While not originally within the scope of this project, the time books and payrolls of Entry 1105 relating to Fort Calhoun were reviewed as well in the hopes of discovering additional names of laborers. Fort Calhoun, which remained a Union stronghold throughout the Civil War and was later renamed Fort Wool, was intended to complement Fort Monroe in the defense of the Chesapeake Bay.³⁷ The payrolls of January 1863 revealed the first and last names of over 150 individuals recorded as laborers. Many surnames were familiar, including Jones, Latimer, and

³¹“Press Copies of Reports of Operations,” November 1862, 226–27.

³² “Time Books and Payrolls Relating to Forts Monroe, Calhoun, and Wool,” Fort Monroe, Entry 1105, RG 77, NARA-Mid Atlantic Region (PA).

³³ Kevin M. Clermont, *The Indomitable George Washington Fields: From Slave to Attorney* (N.p.: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), 47–89.

³⁴ Clermont, *George Washington Fields*, 89.

³⁵ “Time Books and Payrolls,” Fort Monroe, July 1864.

³⁶ Clermont, *George Washington Fields*, 89.

³⁷ Fort Calhoun, now known as Fort Wool, is located in the middle of the Hampton Roads harbor, one mile from Fort Monroe.

Selden, having previously been identified as “Slave” or “Colored laborer” in Entry 1105.³⁸ The discovery of the name Shepard Mallery was further evidence suggesting that the individuals listed in January of 1863 were black laborers.³⁹

Figure 2. Photograph of Entry 1105, Time books and Payrolls Relating to Fort Calhoun during January of 1863. Photograph by the author.

Figure 3. Close-up of Number 137: Shepard Mallery. Mallery worked at Fort Calhoun, January 5–13 of 1863, earning \$5.04. Photograph by the author.

Long-standing oral tradition holds that Shepard Mallory, spelled with an “o,” along with Frank Baker and James Townsend, were the first three slaves to be declared as contraband of war at Fort Monroe by Major General Butler.⁴⁰ While not identifying them by name, Union and Confederate Army correspondence from 1861 confirms that the three men Butler refused to return were slaves, “belonging to Col. Charles K. Mallory.”⁴¹ Is the Shepard *Mallery* listed in Entry 1105 simply misspelled, and is this the same Shepard Mallory from the contraband oral tradition? The 1850, 1860, and 1870 United States Census records from Elizabeth City County, the county adjacent to Fort Monroe, were reviewed in an effort to gain clarity on these questions.⁴² The census records document at least forty-four people with the surname Mallory, and it is noteworthy that the name *Mallery* does not appear at all.⁴³ Additionally, the 1870 census provided a remarkable find: the name Shepard Mallory.⁴⁴ He is described as thirty-seven years old, “Mulatto,” and married to Fanny Mallory, aged twenty-seven. The census shows that they had three sons: Shepard, aged seven, William, aged five, and Frank, who was less than a year old.⁴⁵ Based on these records, the Shepard *Mallery* recorded in Entry 1105 is likely a misspelling

³⁸ “Time Books and Payrolls,” Fort Calhoun, August–December 1860 and August 1864.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, January 1863.

⁴⁰ Joseph T. Wilson, *Emancipation: Its Course and Progress* (Hampton: Normal School Steam Power Press Print, 1882), 45–46.

⁴¹ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion*, 2:1:752–53.

⁴² Elizabeth City County was adjacent to the fort from 1634 until 1952, when it became part of the City of Hampton.

⁴³ 1850, 1860, 1870 US Census, Elizabeth City County, VA, population schedule, Familysearch.org, accessed November 19, 2018, <http://familysearch.org>.

⁴⁴ 1870 US Census, Elizabeth City County, VA, population schedule, Wythe Township, p. 46, Familysearch.org, accessed November 19, 2018, <http://familysearch.org>.

⁴⁵ 1870 US Census, Elizabeth City County, VA; Adam Goodheart, *1861: The Civil War Awakening* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 305–6.

and could very well be the same individual listed in the 1870 census. For over 150 years, the names Frank Baker, James Townsend, and Shepard Mallory have only been passed down through oral tradition. If indeed a misspelling, this is the first primary source produced that confirms that someone with the name Shepard Mallory worked for the United States Army within the environs of Fort Monroe during the Civil War years. This research brings us closer than ever to confirming the identity of one of the three original contrabands, and with further investigation, it may be possible to confirm the contraband oral history in its entirety.

Section 3: Preliminary Findings and Future Research Initiatives

The preliminary findings from this project confirmed that enslaved people and contrabands associated with Fort Monroe can be identified and humanized through military archival records. This research approach could be applied to identify enslaved people who labored at numerous US Army forts and military installations during pre-emancipation America. Due to the meticulous records of the Fort Monroe Army Engineers specifically, hundreds of names have already been discovered, and we are just beginning to understand the full scope and complexity of the Fort Monroe Arc of Freedom. The Amos Henley story and the discovery of the names Washington Fields and Shepard *Mallery* is evidence that supports the need for the Casemate Museum to continue this research.

In partnership with the Fort Monroe National Monument, the Casemate Museum is responsible for developing exhibits and programming in the Fort Monroe Visitor and Education Center. Slated to open in August 2019, the Visitor and Education Center is a Legacy Project of the Virginia 2019 Commemoration and will feature exhibits pertaining to the Fort Monroe Arc of Freedom. One exhibit will include several pages of Entry 1103—Register of Work Done by Slave Labor at Fort Monroe, featured in an interactive display. Visitors will be able to view and explore this primary source using touch-screen technology and high-resolution magnification. In addition, the museum is transcribing Entry 1103 in its entirety with the goal of creating a searchable database that will become a research collection available to the public. For African American families specifically, access to this source that includes first and last names may facilitate genealogical connections that were previously impossible to validate.

Another goal is the continuation of research in Entry 1105—Time Books and Payrolls Relating to Forts Monroe, Calhoun, and Wool. The *Mallery* and Mallory discoveries are significant. Further research in Entry 1105 may clarify the spelling discrepancy and substantiate that these names correspond to the same individual. Additionally, the initial discoveries from this entry suggest that those who were declared as contrabands at Fort Monroe may have had ancestors who worked as slaves constructing the fort. It is also possible that those declared as contraband may have themselves worked as laborers constructing Fort Monroe. Now aware of these potential connections, the museum intends to photograph and transcribe Entry 1105 to create an additional database. Once Entries 1103 and 1105 are digitally accessible, genealogical links between families from the fort's construction era and the Civil War may be revealed.

The vast number of names identified in the Fort Monroe Army Engineer records suggests there may be additional slaves and contrabands listed within other military records at the National Archives. For example, Civil War–era correspondence indicates that the Fort Monroe Army

Quartermaster Department was responsible for issuing clothing to contrabands.⁴⁶ Did the Quartermaster Department maintain detailed records like the Army Engineers, and if so, do they include the names of contrabands under their care? Additionally, within Record Group 105, there is a series named, “Census of People Helped by the Government at Fort Monroe, Virginia, ca.1863–ca.1865.”⁴⁷ Once this collection is examined, what additional clues about the contrabands will be discovered?

The United States National Park Service and the Fort Monroe Authority of the Commonwealth of Virginia jointly manage Fort Monroe. The fort is now open to the public, the history is interpreted at the Casemate Museum, and new exhibits in the Fort Monroe Visitor and Education Center will be unveiled later this year. It is hoped that improved access and understanding of archival records will inspire visitors to reflect on what freedom meant in 1619, 1861, and what freedom means today. When completed, this research project has the potential to reveal thousands of names previously lost to history, enabling us to humanize and commemorate the countless individuals associated with the Fort Monroe Arc of Freedom.



Figure 4. Aerial photograph of Fort Monroe, Virginia.
Photograph by the National Park Service, 2015.

⁴⁶ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion*, 2:1:775.

⁴⁷ “Census of People Helped by the Government at Fort Monroe, Virginia,” ca. 1863–ca. 1865, RG 105, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

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