Enslaved and Free Laborers of the US Army in Civil War Nashville: Supplemental Materials and Claims-Making, 1862-1879

Peer-Reviewed Dataset Article

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Description

In the first months of 1867, John Lawrence, Superintendent of the Freedman's Bureau of Davidson County, Tennessee, sent a letter to George Burroughs, the Lieutenant of Engineers who had been assigned to the Headquarters at the Department of the Cumberland in Tennessee. In this letter were thirteen claims for payment that were initiated by the descendants of deceased Black laborers who had constructed Fort Negley for the Union in Nashville during the Civil War.[1] The thirteen cases were all submitted by African American women who made claims for post-wartime payment, gave official oaths to military officers, and provided witnesses for their signatures. The women represented in these claims all detailed their personal relationships with the Black laborers – they were mothers, wives, and daughters to them. Henrietta Smith made a claim for her son, Thomas Smith, Jeney Hewitt for her husband, Miles Hewitt, Nancy Scruggs for her husband, Allen Scruggs, and Susan Paul for her father, Julius Paul, to name just a few examples. Martha McGavoc made two claims, for her sons Lazarus McGavoc and Albert Smith.

Together, these cases illuminate how early-Reconstruction era Black women strategically accessed and navigated local federal offices to make claims for payment on behalf of their deceased relatives who constructed and defended Fort Negley during the Civil War.[2] These labor payment cases are among many new sources comprising the newest dataset for inclusion in the forthcoming *Builders & Defenders: A Black Nashville Civil War Database* (buildersanddefenders.org) that gives fresh perspectives into the experiences of Black Union laborers, soldiers, veterans, and neighbors in and around Nashville during and after the war.[3]

This dataset contains information from a wide range of primary sources concerning Black labor for the Union military. This dataset represents historical data from a combination of 1) aggregated lists or ledgers and 2) data from correspondence and letters. First, the collection of labor indexes, the roll of laborers remaining unpaid, the list of non-payments to laborers on carts, drays, and wagons, and the roll of laborers on the Nashville North-West Railroad were originally compiled in 1862 and 1863.[4] Military officials documented individuals in the form of a list or ledger in each of these documents and noted identifying personal details about the laborers. Second, the collection of documents of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers contains correspondence documents that were originally compiled during and in the immediate years after the war. These letters and clerical papers detail a wide range of themes relating to African American laborers at Fort Negley and Nashville during the war and include military discussions and decisions on Black laborer's payment claims. Further, this dataset also includes all of the entries from the original labor rolls in order to reflect the many overlaps and connections between the new supplemental labor data and the original labor rolls, which were a compiled

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[1] George Burroughs, Corps of Engineers Correspondence (1863-1867) Microfilm #1910, reel 1, pages 105-109, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN.

[2] It is assumed the laborers were deceased at this point, though it is not stated specifically. It could be possible a child was a minor and needed a parent to make a claim on behalf.

[3] Angela Sutton, "Enslaved and Free Black Builders of Nashville's Civil War Fortifications, 1862-1863: A List from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers," *Journal of Slavery and Data Preservation* 2, no. 3 (2021): 9-16, https://doi.org/10.25971/CDYH-CR03.

[4] In the case of the labor indexes, these were originally compiled during the war and, later, in 1879 P. Clarke, E. A. Welsh, and A. Grimes indexed and compared them.

ledger created by General Morton and accounted for just over half of all laborers. The team chose to merge this set of datasets with the first labor roll dataset for ease of comparison and to highlight the overlapping nature of Civil War military bureaucracy. Simply put, several names of laborers appear on more than one list in the primary sources from which the data was pulled, and the team felt that a complete list of all of the laborers and datasets together (with the overlapping names indicated) would be more useful to researchers than two separate datasets they would have to move back and forth between. For this reason, this data article speaks to the new additions of details about the laborers. The accompanying dataset itself merges this new data with the original, first labor dataset to create one new and comprehensive set related to Nashville's Black Federal labor force.[5]

These new supplemental labor sources come from the Tennessee State Library and Archives (TSLA) and three main microfilm collections: Microfilm 1797 (reels 1, 2, and 3); Microfilm 1910 (reels 1, 2, and 3); and Microfilm 2009-074.[6] The volume start and end dates range from August 1862 at the earliest to July 1879 at the latest. These documents shed new light on important themes surrounding African Americans and the construction of Nashville's defenses and wartime infrastructure. These datasets complement and further enrich the project's first published dataset about the Fort Negley labor rolls, "Enslaved and Free Black Builders of Nashville's Civil War Fortifications, 1862-1863: A List from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers."[7]

Many of the sources informing this dataset illuminate the identifying personal information about the laborers and their impressment at and construction of Fort Negley and the regional network of related fortifications, redoubts, trenches, railroads, and other Federal wartime infrastructures. One collection of such sources comes from eight US Military indexes that were "indexed, compared, and etc. by J.P. Clarke and E.A. Welsh, and A. Grimes" in June and July of 1879. These indexes are a compilation of individuals who were listed on the original labor rolls of Brigadier General Morton and Lieutenant George Burroughs from August 1862 to December 1864.[8] They indicate laborers' enrollment numbers and were originally organized into categories that denoted if the laborers listed were dead, paid, not paid, had certificates given, and/or were enlisted. Another source is titled "List of Negroes Employed on Nashville Fortifications, Remaining Unpaid," and offers additional insights into the labor rolls. This volume ranges from August 1, 1862 to April 1, 1863 and lists laborers who remained unpaid. This source provides categories of information such as time employed, rate of pay, total amount due, signatures,

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[5] For further information on the first dataset, the original labor rolls, please see: Sutton, "Enslaved and Free Black Builders of Nashville's Civil War Fortifications, 1862-1863."

[6] These sources were acquired by the Tennessee State Library and Archives (TSLA) in microfilm format from the US National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) . The original sources appear to be housed at NARA in original and microfilm formats. For more information on the TSLA and NARA collections of these sources, please see the TSLA finding aids for these collections, such as this one compiled for the "Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, 1862-1869:"
https://tnsla.ent.sirsi.net/client/en_US/search/asset/20183/0

[7] Ibid.

[8] The dataset with the original labor rolls containing nearly 3,000 laborers can be accessed at Sutton, Angela, 2021, "Enslaved and Free Black Builders of Nashville's Civil War Fortifications, 1862-1863: A List from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers",
https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/UTPZMZ, Harvard Dataverse, V1.

witnesses, and remarks. In addition, a further set of sources includes two single page ledgers titled "Roll of Non-Payment of Carts, Drays, and Wagons Employed in Hauling on Fortifications at Nashville from Commencement August 1862 to April 1st 1863." These volumes list laborers' equipment such as "two mule carts," time employed, rate of pay, total amount, and remarks.

Alongside the above lists about labor at the Fort Negley fortifications, a ledger of laborers who were impressed by the Union army and forced to construct the Nashville North & Northwestern Railroad also appears in the dataset. The ledger collates a roster that was filled out by hand on a pre-printed form titled "Roll of Negroes Impressed for Service on the North-Western Railroad." It includes 241 adults and children, ranging in age from eleven to sixty-six. There are at least thirty entries of laborers who were minors under the age of eighteen and at least twenty entries over the age of fifty (fifty being the youngest and sixty-six the oldest). Unlike the other lists in the dataset, this ledger also includes additional personal identifying information such as height and "Complexion" (laborers were designated either "Black" or "Yellow"), as well as the names of enslavers and additional remarks. In the remarks category of this ledger, details emerge about some of the laborers' broader experiences; several were also "at work at Fort Gillem" in Nashville (of the present-day location of Jubilee Hall at Fisk University) and some had artisan occupations and were "retained as [a] carpenter" and "[a] blacksmith," for example. Further, this source offers a broad geographic scope and highlights the interconnected Northwest Tennessee region to Nashville, as well; Black laborers on the railroad came from places like Clarksville, Tennessee to Trenton, Kentucky (both of which were near the border between the two states).

Another collection of sources in this dataset represents a wide range of military correspondence that specifically related to Black laborers at Fort Negley. These documents are found in the collection of "George Burroughs, Corps of Engineers Correspondence (1863-1867)," include 165 individuals, and range in genre from letters and clerical papers to military decisions and day-to-day correspondence. The correspondence provides insight into the work of African American laborers and how their construction of Fort Negley shaped a military discourse around their roles during the war and their subsequent non-payment. Their non-payment, of course, calls into question the legal rhetoric around the concept of personhood in the age of emancipation.

These sets of correspondence include a large number of labor payments claims by laborers and their descendants during and after the war, as well. Throughout and in the years following the end of the war, many laborers remained unpaid and, assisted by the Freedmen's Bureau, they made cases and claims to George Burroughs and other military officers for their payment. If a laborer had passed away at some point during the construction of Fort Negley, the Battle of Nashville, or after the war, their nearest-living family member—such as a partner, parent, or child—would make a claim on their behalf. For the most part, these claims by family members were by women—several widows made claims, as well as numerous mothers and daughters, for their deceased loved ones. In total, there are around 50 payment claims represented in these correspondence sources.[9] Although these cases are brief, they nonetheless provide a fuller

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[9] The collection of documents does not have the actual claim included in the source, but rather the correspondence between military officials about the claims and sometimes decisions reached about

picture of the laborers' family relationships and kinship networks, as well as occasionally details into their wartime work, injury, and payment claims. While many cases were denied or outcomes not stated, when read together with U.S. Pension Records, we can better understand how laborers and their families strategically navigated these military structures in attempts at redress to non-payment during and after the war.[10]

In addition to laborers' work, non-payment, and their payment claims, these correspondence sources also give insight into military protocols and operations and show how the dataset can offer a lens into studies of military bureaucracies and political institutions through the lived experiences of the fort's laborers. For example, some letters show correspondence about payment and recruitment of Black soldiers with Major General Stearns, the Commissioner for the Organization of the USCT in Middle and East Tennessee. Others discuss the Union's impressment of African Americans from the state penitentiary at the prisons for labor at forts.[11] Also in the correspondence are payment list schedules kept by Burroughs of all the specific officers who were present at Fort Negley and would have had interactions with the laborers from August 1862 to December 1864. These white officers were included in the dataset to serve in the reconstruction of enslaved and free Black laborers' social networks during the war. Taken together, the ledgers documenting a variety of labor roll data and the collection of correspondence volumes in this dataset gives us a fuller picture of the laborers and their experiences. For example, the first group sheds light on laborers and their identities at the construction of Fort Negley, and nearby regional networks of forts such as Fort Gillem, and additional wartime infrastructure projects like the Nashville Northwest Railroad. The second group shows us how military correspondence can offer a lens into the lived experiences and claims-making practices of the laborers and their descendants during and after the war, as well as some of the political dimensions and military operations around Fort Negley.

These sources offer exciting new entry points and connections to the wider scholarship around Black claims to wartime payments, military labor and rights, and citizenship in the Reconstruction Era South and the wider Atlantic World. As we saw with the thirteen claims by Black women in 1867 to the local Davidson County Freedmen's Bureau, and numerous others represented in these sources, Black men and women claimants strategically and tenaciously navigated military offices and government structures to attempt to gain their rightful wartime payments. Although many claims were never attempted and most attempted claims were denied, while other outcomes remain unclear, their cases nonetheless offer a lens into the links between military labor and service and subsequent cases to a broader scholarship around

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them, offering additional data fields. It appears that the thirteen claims at the beginning of this article are an exception to this and that the original claims are included.

[10] Trevor K. Plante, and United States National Archives and Records Administration, *Military Service Records at the National Archives* (Washington DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 2009).

[11] The Tennessee State Penitentiary upheld white supremacy by removing from society Black people who threatened the racial order. After the Civil War, many of the laborers and soldiers who had collaborated with the Union--voluntarily or not–were imprisoned there. A future dataset and data article will document formerly enslaved African Americans imprisoned in the Tennessee State Penitentiary in the periods shortly before and after the Civil War and this retaliatory process.

African American political engagement and, in turn, citizenship claiming in the 1860s.[12] Their claims invite us to think about how African American men and women engaged and interacted with military and federal offices to claim payments and recognitions that were inherently political and tied to citizenship via their military labor and service.

From this point of departure, we can start to link these cases to a broader area of historical research – Black claims-making for the recognition and payment of military labor and service, as well as citizenship and subjecthood, to political institutions in the wider African Diaspora of the Atlantic World. For example, long-established historiography has examined the many ways that Black soldiers made military claims in the colonial-era Caribbean and the Spanish Atlantic and used their military labor and services to gain political and social rights. Take for example the African and African descended individuals in late-eighteenth-century colonial Spanish Florida who built and defended Fort Mose, the claims Black Spanish militia soldiers and auxiliary troops made during and after the Haitian Revolution, and the long-standing practice of enslaved and free Black soldiers making direct petitions to the King of Spain to recognize their military labor and service and, in turn, subjecthood.[13] In the late-eighteenth-century British Atlantic, Black loyalists claimed political and financial rights to the British empire after their service and labor in the American Revolution.[14] These earlier Atlantic examples help to situate the African American claims from mid nineteenth-century Fort Negley into a longer historical and international pattern of diasporic claims-making to political institutions vis a vis military labor and service. This transnational perspective brings nuance to Black military history. In short, the sources in this database project connect Black military labor and service and the claims they and their descendants made during and after the Civil War in a larger history of continued and comparative Atlantic practices of negotiations for rights and freedoms between Black people and the powers which subjugated them.

Dates of Data Collection

2018-2022

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[12] For a broad list of examples of wartime and Reconstruction-Era African American political and/or military claims-making, please see: Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Glymph, *The Women's Fight: The Civil War's Battles for Home, Freedom, and Nation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019); Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (Yale University Press, 2017); W. E. B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction: an Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935); Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

[13] Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1999); Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[14] Alan Gilbert, *Black Patriots and Loyalists: Fighting for Emancipation in the War for Independence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

Dataset Languages

English

Geographic Coverage

Middle Tennessee

Temporal Coverage

1862-1868

Document Types

Register
Correspondence

Sources

Documents of the US Army Corps of Engineers, Microfilm #1910, reels 1, 2, and 3, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN.

George Burroughs, Corps of Engineers Correspondence (1863-1867) Finding Aid, Microfilm #1910, reels 1, 2, and 3, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN.

List of negroes employed in Engineer Department at Nashville, Tenn, from August 1, 1862 to April 1, 1863, who are noted on original roll (No. 1) of Lieutenant George Burroughs, as "dead" or "paid," Documents of Lieutenant George Burroughs, Microfilm #1797, Reel 3, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN.

List of negroes employed in Engineer Department at Nashville, Tenn, from Aug. 1, 1862 to April 1, 1863, who are noted on non-payment roll No. 2 of Lieut. George Burroughs, as paid, dead, certificates given, Documents of Lieutenant George Burroughs, Microfilm #1797, Reel 3, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN.

List of negroes employed on the defenses of Nashville, Tenn., from April 1, 1863 to November 1, 1863, who are noted on Lieut. George Burroughs' original roll (No. 3) as dead, paid, enlisted, and those to whom certificates were given, Documents of Lieutenant George Burroughs, Microfilm #1797, Reel 3, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN.

List of negroes employed on fortifications at Nashville, Tenn., during November and December 1863, copied from Captain George Burroughs' original roll (No. 5) as paid & c., Documents of Lieutenant George Burroughs, Microfilm #1797, Reel 3, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN.

List of negroes employed in Engineer Department at Nashville, Tenn. From November 1863 to June 1, 1864, who are noted on original roll (No. 6) of Capt. George Burroughs, as "dead,

"paid," &c &c, Documents of Lieutenant George Burroughs, Microfilm #1797, Reel 3, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN.

List of men employed in Engineer Department at Nashville, Tenn., from June 1, to December 1, 1864, who are noted on original roll (No. 8) of Capt. George Burroughs as paid &c., Documents of Lieutenant George Burroughs, Microfilm #1797, Reel 3, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN.

List of negroes employed in Engineer Department at Nashville, Tenn. From Nov. 1, 1863 to June 1, 1864, who are noted on Capt. George Burroughs' Roll (No. 7) as paid, Documents of Lieutenant George Burroughs, Microfilm #1797, Reel 3, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN.

Index to non-payment roll defenses of Nashville August 1, 1862 - April 1, 1863, Documents of Lieutenant George Burroughs, Microfilm #1797, Reel 3, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN.

List of Negroes Employed on Nashville Fortifications, Remaining Unpaid, Documents of Lieutenant George Burroughs, Microfilm #1797, Reel 2, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN.

Roll of Negroes Impressed for Service on the North-Western Railroad, 1863, Microfilm #2009-074, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN.

Roll of Non-Payment of Carts, Drays, & Wagons Employed in Hauling on Fortifications at Nashville from commencement August 1862 to April 1st 1863, Documents of Lieutenant George Burroughs, Microfilm #1797, Reel 1 and 2, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN.

Methodology

The project team, Dr. Angela Sutton, Jessica Fletcher, and Dr. Jim Schindling, worked together in 2021 and 2022 with members of the Advisory Board (comprised of descendants Eleanor Fleming, Jeneene Blackman, and Gary Burke, secretary of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society Taneya Koonce, Professor of African American History Leorotha Williams, and former curator of the Fort Negley Visitors Center Krista Castillo) on defining goals for cleaning the data, importing and organizing it into the database software Spatial Historian (a historical database software created by Schindling), interpreting the data, and making it searchable. Our advisory board have helped determine the scope of the project and its real-world impacts – such as the terminology we use, what descendants are looking for with this database, and how it can help in reconstructing Black ancestry. Indeed, it is the descendants–who have been so often denied participation and engagement with these sources and histories in academic institutions–who are the nexus of this project and its findings.[15]

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[15] In this vein, we would like to point out how vitally important the Black descendant community of Fort Negley in Nashville is to the wider project. Their viewpoints and oral histories have shaped our approaches and determined the datasets used in the *Builders and Defenders* database. A majority of Black laborers and soldiers and their families who self-emancipated and built and defended Fort Negley

Natalie Goodwin, Project Archivist at the Tennessee State Library and Archives, transcribed the majority of these documents in 2017 and 2018 using funding secured by Fletch Coke of the Nashville City Cemetery Association and shared with the Fort Negley Visitors Center and the Friends of Fort Negley. Krista Castillo, Museum Coordinator of the Fort Negley Visitors Center, shared important historical context and research about the document sets.

After cleaning the data and importing it into the database software *Spatial Historian*, the information was exported and compiled into five separate spreadsheets titled "Person," "Event," "Snapshot," "Place," and "Source."[16] Each spreadsheet category records different types of information regarding the dataset. For example, the "Person" spreadsheet presents information about the people extracted from the sources in the dataset–mainly including identifying characteristics such as name, birth and death date ranges, sex, color, status, occupation, and more. When information about the individuals is unavailable in the documents, it is left blank or specified as "unknown." Each person in this spreadsheet is also given a unique person identifier in the form of a number and aids researchers in identifying individuals who appear multiple times across different documents. The "Person" spreadsheet also has information about the documents in which individuals were referenced, any relationships recorded (such as family and kinship networks or enslaver relationships), and events in which they were present at or participated.

Further, the "Person" spreadsheet includes additional notes associated with the individuals in the column titled "Description." For instance, in the case of the lists and ledgers of supplemental labor rolls, we have added notes about individuals from the sources about enrollment numbers, the amount of time they work, if they received pay or not, any equipment they used, age, height, residence, any notes, signatures, or remarks provided by the original creator of the ledgers, and any notes or remarks by the transcriber or the data team. These notes vary by individual and source and, while the majority of entries have notes, not every entry does. Overall, these notes help add further context to the experiences and personal details of the individuals in this dataset. For example, the enrollment number in the notes is helpful because it shows us that many people listed on multiple labor indexes have different enrollment numbers each time, indicating a larger process whereby people likely worked as laborers and left for short times and came back and received new enrollment numbers, possibly because they were supervised by different officers or at different locations, as several of these lists would have been compiled from all over the city. It is our hope that in the future scholars will find which locations these

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settled in Nashville after the Civil War. In doing so, they created and joined some of the earliest post-emancipation free Black communities in the city. In turn, many Black Nashvillians can trace their ancestry to Fort Negley.

[16] Spatial Historian is an emerging technology and database software created by Dr. Jim Schindling that allows us to organize, ingest, and analyze historical information and spatial patterns of people in sources. For more information, see Schindling, "The Spatial Historian: Building a Tool to Extract Structured Information from the Slave Societies Digital Archive," in Paul E. Lovejoy, Henry B. Lovejoy, Érika Melek Delgado, and Kartikay Chadha, eds., *Regenerated Identities: Documenting African Lives* (Trenton: African World Press, 2022).

numbers correspond with to get a better understanding of which laborers worked together, and for how long at each site.

The "Event" spreadsheet denotes information about various events recorded across the datasets, such as the name and type of event – such as a shared participation event at the construction of Fort Negley or a monetary claim event when laborers or their descendants made non-payment claims during and after the war. The shared events indicate that multiple people participated in a collective event – such as the construction of Fort Negley or the construction of the Nashville Northwestern Railroad. For example, Solomon Gupton has two events listed for him – Gupton was a laborer at Fort Negley and has a shared participation event for "Fort Negley Construction." He later made a monetary claim in March 1866 through his lawyers "Buck and McMullen" in Clarksville, TN to the Office of George Burroughs so he also has a monetary claim event, as well.[17] The column names for these Event Type categories include "Event Name," "Event Location," "Event Start Date," and "Event End Date." In the case that an individual has more than one event, there are additional columns for "Event 1," "Event 2," and so on.

For the thirteen sources we have in this dataset, there are a variety of events that took place, which include: monetary claims, deaths, participation events, and participation in the shared event of the construction of Fort Negley. Participation events are always related to participation in a shared event – such as the construction of a fort or other project. Most individuals in this dataset–specifically the Black laborers–have participation events linking them to the construction of these projects and, in turn, we can see connections of people based on their shared experiences. For overall clarity and transparency, we also gave white officers who were at Fort Negley shared participation events in the fort's construction. This shared event designation specifically indicates their presence at the fort and their possible connections and relationships with the laborers and does not mean that they were building the fort. In most cases during military construction projects, officers were responsible for administrative work and overseeing the construction of the fort.

Finally, the "Source" spreadsheet provides further information about where researchers can find the sources in this dataset – including the citations, locations, archives, dates, and languages of the primary documents. All of these descriptions of the spreadsheet categories are detailed further and can be found in full in the accompanying "Data Documentation" paper that serves as a guide for how to navigate the datasets.

As the team worked on cleaning and importing the data, we discussed goals for interpreting and approaching the information and any archival or technical challenges that arose. For example, in 2021 our team worked to clean and ingest the data from the Morton's main labor rolls, which were originally produced in the 1860s by white Union officers. In discussions with Krista Castillo, we learned that in addition to the main ledger, different Union officers also kept multiple lists of laborers throughout the construction of Fort Negley at various times. These are newly included in this dataset as the labor indexes, the ledger of laborers remaining unpaid, the ledger of laborers working with carts, drays, and wagons, and the laborers from the payment claims in the

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[17] George Burroughs, Corps of Engineers Correspondence (1863-1867) Microfilm #1910, reel 3, pages 28-29, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN.

correspondence. Castillo and the Visitors Center volunteers had transcribed these datasets into spreadsheets in 2018 and then our team began cleaning and importing this linked labor data into the project and connected them with the original labor rolls.

Joining these datasets together helped to give a fuller history of the laborers than we previously knew. The original labor rolls compiled by Morton accounted for roughly 2,800 people. When we imported the additional labor rolls, we found that a large number of people overlapped with the laborers we already imported based on same-name matches – approximately 2,140. Given that primary source documents from the war estimated that there were between 3,000–4,000 laborers, we chose to merge individuals with same-name matches within the new supplemental labor data and the original labor rolls. For example, the entries for the name "Robert Anderson" were all merged because this name appeared on page 2 of the original labor rolls, page 2 of labor index no. 3, page 3 of labor index no. 9, and page 3 of the ledger of laborers remaining unpaid. Likewise, the entries for the name "George Ray" were merged because this name appeared on page 12 of labor index no. 1, page 16 of labor index no. 3, and page 27 of labor index no. 9. Given that we based these merges off of primary source number estimates and same-name matches, it is possible that there may be merged individuals who were in fact separate people. To be as transparent as possible, we have recorded all notes and relevant information about each individual and have listed all of their primary source references so that researchers in the future can further trace the laborers across their respective archival documents. Further, the team chose to include all of the entries from the Fort Negley labor rolls in this dataset, as well, to fully show all of the relationships, connections, and citations of the merged individuals. When exporting the new supplemental labor data, the team found out that some connections of the merged entries were incomplete without the inclusion of the original labor rolls. To highlight all possible links, we included the original labor rolls in this export.[18]

We chose not to merge individuals who we could not match in order to avoid archival erasure. This includes instances when names in the new labor data did not match, if there were multiple name matches in the original labor rolls who we could not narrow down, and entries for the laborers listed in the remaining unpaid ledger. For example, there were many names from the supplemental labor data who matched with entries in the original labor rolls who we were unable to merge because there were two or more same names in the labor rolls who we considered distinct people based on related information (such as different enslavers, or overlapping work times, as one person could not work at two sites at the same time). While it is likely that there are still many same-person duplicates within this group, to preserve as much data as possible we chose not to merge these individuals.

Overall, the number of new people we added (including possible same-person duplicates who we were unable to merge) was approximately 2,386. This analysis takes the overall maximum number of laborers (based upon both the original labor rolls and the new supplemental data) to roughly 5,173. These numbers cannot be totally exact given the complex ways they were originally recorded and the possible duplicates remaining, but nonetheless they help to provide a

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[18] Sutton, "Enslaved and Free Black Builders of Nashville's Civil War Fortifications."

rough estimate and fuller picture of the enslaved and free Black laborers whose work on Nashville's wartime forts and infrastructure assured the Union's victory.[19]

It is important for us to acknowledge that the source material is naturally riddled with gaps and shortcomings. These are primary source records that were created by white military officers during the Civil War about formerly enslaved and self-emancipated Black men, women, and children. The initial purpose for the record-keeping was solely economic, while the purpose of our dataset is social and genealogical. The lived experiences of the Black laborers and their families of Fort Negley cannot be truly understood through these sources given that their voices and perspectives were left out of the documents and instead filtered through the viewpoints of white military officers. In an effort to de-center the white structures of power that originally created these sources and to re-center the Black lived experiences at its core, we have curated this data intentionally and carefully to reflect only the information and data that relates to the Black laborers, their families, and their relationships. For example, we chose to only incorporate data from these sources that involved Fort Negley and the Black laborers rather than to include all letters, papers, and correspondence from their collection. Further, the Black laborers and their relationships are the center of the people in the *Builders & Defenders* database and white officers largely only appear in relation to a Black laborer or family member. Through navigating and acknowledging these biases in the sources, we have re-centered Black experiences as much as possible despite the archival structures of power that existed in these collections.

Date of Publication

March 2023

Data Links

Project Website: https://www.buildersanddefenders.org/
Dataset Repository: Harvard Dataverse https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/JFSURG
Linked Data Representation: Enslaved.org Summary Visualization

Acknowledgments

Cite this Article

Sutton, Angela and Jessica Fletcher. "Supplemental Materials and Claims-Making of Enslaved and Free Laborers of the US Army in Civil War Nashville, 1862-1879." *Journal of Slavery and Data Preservation* 4, no. 1 (2023): 48-60. https://doi.org/10.25971/tyda-9n03.

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[19] To clarify, 5,173 is the number of people in the dataset given to Enslaved.org. It reflects the total laborers, which number between 4,500 and 5,000 depending on how duplicates are treated, in addition to the white Union officers and soldiers who worked with them and recorded their information. For more information about the sources outlined in this article, the broader reach of the database as a whole, and interactive database searching, please visit www.buildersanddefenders.org.

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