

Media Clips

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-nws-northam-on-fort-monroe-20140418,0,5183222.story>

**Lt. Gov. Ralph Northam joins Fort Monroe board**

By Robert Brauchle, [rbrauchle@dailypress.com](mailto:rbrauchle@dailypress.com)

5:55 p.m. EDT, April 18, 2014

HAMPTON — During a discussion thick with jargon and minutia about the difficulties of transferring the remaining portions of **Fort Monroe** from the Army to the state, Lt. Gov. Ralph Northam walked in, sat down and adjusted his blazer.

With little fanfare, the lieutenant governor had landed Thursday at Fort Monroe and was participating in discussions about the state's ownership of the historic property.

Northam — who sits second highest on the state's executive power hierarchy — lobbied to be placed on the Fort Monroe Board of Trustees this past February as he settled into the office he was elected to last November.

"Fort Monroe is a very important part of the commonwealth," Northam said. "There are a lot of puzzle pieces that still need to be put together in terms of the land transfer, and I'd like to help move that process forward."

The lieutenant governor's interest in the board came in February when board chairman John Lawson II asked to remove members of the governor's cabinet from the authority board because they were frequently absent or sending staff members in their place.

At the time, Lawson said he would prefer to have local board members who could be active and engaged in discussions.

Within 15 minutes of arriving, Northam was asking questions to authority staff.

"It certainly is something the governor is very interested in ... and I'm very enthusiastic about being able to provide input and to be a part of what's happening here," the Norfolk-based Democrat said after the meeting.

Northam fills the seat previously held by the John Harvey, secretary of Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security. The remaining members of the governor's cabinet remain on the board, including former Hampton Mayor Molly Joseph Ward, who is now the secretary of natural resources.

*Brauchle can be reached by phone at 757-247-2827.*

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-nws-fort-monroe-authority-move-20140418,0,4891234.story>

## **Fort Monroe renovation of historic building begins Authority moving to former post office**

By Robert Brauchle, [rbrauchle@dailypress.com](mailto:rbrauchle@dailypress.com)

*5:57 p.m. EDT, April 18, 2014*

HAMPTON — In the basement of Building 83 on **Fort Monroe**, a problem percolates when the ground can no longer absorb rain water.

Flooding is a semiregular occurrence on the historic property, and it causes damage to the inner-workings of some buildings. Now that the state owns more than 150 homes and a million square feet of commercial real estate, those repairs are now a pricey issue the Fort Monroe Authority must fix.

One of those buildings is the former post office at Ingalls and Fenwick roads. The authority hopes to renovate that structure — Building 83 — by year's end and have it function as a public space and authority headquarters.

The authority now resides in Old Quarters I, also known as the Lincoln House because it was where **President Abraham Lincoln** stayed in 1862 to help oversee the attack on Norfolk.

The large white building visitors see when entering the fort's east gate was the first permanent set of quarters at Fort Monroe. It will eventually be turned over to the National Park Service.

"It's becoming more of an issue now that we're beginning to look at transferring Old Quarters 1 to the National Park Service," Executive Director **Glenn Oder** said.

Renovating the former post office will cost close to \$340,000, according to authority staff. The bulk of that money, \$250,000, will be used to secure the building from wind and water and to install elevated tankless water heaters, update electronics, make sump pump improvements, repoint mortar and repair the roof.

The remaining \$90,000 will be used to renovate the building making it suitable for authority headquarters, Deputy Executive Director John Hutcheson said.

The authority is also making those structural repairs to Building 100, along Ingalls Road. While there are no specific plans for the building designed by famed German architect Paul Pelz, the master plan calls for the colonial revival structure to have a mixed use with a focus on employment.

The money to pay for the structural repairs comes from the Virginia Department of General Services. The authority expects to receive about \$6.5 million during a three-year period, and the funds can only be used for structural repairs for buildings owned by the state.

The former post office still includes the original oak-trimmed post office vestibule with bronze boxes and grills. The vestibule's pressed tin ceiling is also visible, according to the National Register of Historic Places.

The post office first floor will be renovated so bathrooms, kitchen and conference center can be available to the public.

"We want the first floor to support the activities in Continental Park," Oder said. "A bride should be able to get ready (in Building 83) and walk to her wedding in the gazebo."

Now, bridal parties must drive to ceremonies held in the nearby park that overlooks the waters of **Hampton Roads**.

"About 25 percent of the building will be used by the public, with the remainder as FMA headquarters," Hutcheson said. "We're excited about the project, and we think it will help."

At a glance

Buildings on Fort Monroe

### **Old Quarters 1**

Address: 151 Bernard Road

Significance: The first permanent set of quarters of the property. An oval dome ceiling echoes the curvature of the stairs and is painted sky-blue and ornamented with 27 gold stars. President Abraham Lincoln stayed in the building in 1862.

Plans: The building will eventually be turned over to the National Park Service.

### **Post Office**

Address: 20 Ingalls Road

Significance: The building served as the property's post office and customs house for merchandise entering from steam ships landing at the wharf. An octagonal clock tower sits on the northern side of the building.

Plans: The building will be renovated as the Fort Monroe Authority headquarters and for public facilities.

## Building 100

Address: 90 Ingalls Road

Significance: This colonial revival building is one of the largest structures outside of the stone fort. The building initially had 30 apartments on the lower two floors for bachelors. It was renovated numerous times and is now office space. The building was designed by architect Paul Pelz, who also designed the **Library of Congress** in Washington, D.C.

Plans: The authority plans to perform structural repairs including repointing brick, repairing the roof and installing elevated tankless water heaters. The master plan calls for the building to be used for "mixed use with an employment focus."

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<http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-nws-candidates-forum-phoebus-partnership-20140417,0,48304.story>

### **Hampton City Council candidates highlight Phoebus Hampton election is May 6**

By Robert Brauchle, [rbrauchle@dailypress.com](mailto:rbrauchle@dailypress.com)

*8:45 p.m. EDT, April 17, 2014*

HAMPTON — Facing a couple dozen residents, business owners and a theater scattered with red plush chairs, City Council candidates were asked what they can do to help guide improvements in **Phoebus**.

Their opinions differed greatly.

"We could definitely guide some of the funding we have used for some of these other failed economic projects," mayoral candidate Frank Ottofaro Jr. said. "This area has been left out of that loop."

George Wallace, who is the acting mayor, sees it differently.

"I'm not going to play one section of the city against another," he said. "That's not what this community is about. We've made significant investments here, all you have to do is look at the streetscape improvements in the past 15 years."

Phoebus, a neighborhood that sits at the foot of the **Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel** entrance, has struggled for years while the Army slowly pulled personnel out of **Fort Monroe**.

The post was decommissioned in 2011, and President **Barack Obama** named a portion of the property as a National Park Service monument in November 2011.

The president's decision is expected to draw a flurry of tourist activity to Fort Monroe and Phoebus.

"We can't deal with Phoebus and Fort Monroe as one entity because Fort Monroe isn't owned by the city," city council candidate Gaynette "Gay" LaRue said. "But they are certainly intertwined. As for Fort Monroe, Phoebus is going to be the beneficiary of the fort's success."

City Council candidate Tom Rokicak said the city creates too much red tape for funds to become available for small business owners .

"I have seen a lot of property bought, torn down, roads partially started, I'd like to see this area improve," said Rokicak, a Phoebus business owner. "I'm looking at four or five business owners who would like to see things happen here."

May 6 City Council election

**What's next:** At 6 p.m. Thursday, the Northampton Civic League hosts a forum at the Northampton Community Center, 1435-A Todds Lane.

For more campaign coverage, visit <http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton>.

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<http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-nws-1619-funding-20140425,0,5402627.story>

### **Hampton area groups want larger role in 1619 commemoration**

By Robert Brauchle, [rbrauchle@dailypress.com](mailto:rbrauchle@dailypress.com)

*7:21 p.m. EDT, April 25, 2014*

HAMPTON — Talks taking shape about how best to commemorate key historic moments from 1619 have so far left out representatives from **Hampton** and **Fort Monroe**, even though one of those events took place at Old Point Comfort.

In February 2013, the General Assembly directed the **Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation** to organize activities commemorating the 400-year anniversary of a series of events that include the landing of a Dutch ship at present-day Fort Monroe with a cargo of Africans brought against their will for the first time in the fledgling colonies' history.

But when the foundation organized a task force last October with representatives from more than two dozen groups to begin discussing how best to recognize the anniversary in 2019, the Fort Monroe Authority and the city of Hampton were not invited.

"The General Assembly needs to make the 1619 Commemoration Committee more representative of the communities associated with the 1619 history," Project 1619 creator Calvin Pearson wrote in a letter to legislators. "The General Assembly should appoint more historians to the committee and less politicians."

Pearson hopes to raise enough money to erect a monument at Fort Monroe marking the landing of those Africans through Project 1619. He believes more representatives from Hampton, Fort Monroe and **Charles City County** should be on the task force.

While the arrival of Africans to the English colonies shaped what would become the enslavement of millions of African people in America for the next 245 years, the 1619 commemoration will also recognize:

- The first assembly of 20 "burgesses" in the church at **Jamestown**. The group is the predecessor to today's General Assembly.
- Single women began arriving in Virginia after being recruited in England to help bolster the colonial population.
- The first recorded Thanksgiving at Berkeley Hundred in **Charles City** County.

Such commemorations, while rooted in history, drive millions of state and tourism dollars to the places they are held.

### **Events drive tourism**

The foundation requested and received \$326,525 in the state's 2013-14 biennial budget for planning and support.

The 400-year commemoration of Jamestown's creation in 1607 generated \$1.2 billion in sales for state businesses and produced more than \$28 million in state and local sales tax revenue, according to an economic impact study performed after the events.

Prior to the commemoration, the state also funded numerous infrastructure improvements to help show off the settlement and the area surrounding it.

As Fort Monroe transforms from a decommissioned Army post into a state-owned civilian community, the authority overseeing that conversion is doing so with a list of more than \$20 million in capital improvements to address.

"We have to catch a train that has already left the station," Fort Monroe Authority Executive Director **Glenn Oder** said during an April 17 Board of Trustees meeting.

Oder said he would ask the members of the authority's board of trustees — including retired **Colonial Williamsburg** Foundation president Colin Campbell and several members of Gov. Terry McAuliffe's cabinet — to help Fort Monroe become more involved with state-sponsored 1619 events.

### **Hampton plans alone**

In February, the city of Hampton created a 1619 Commission to create a "plan to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the August 20, 1619, arrival of the first Africans on the North American continent at Point Comfort."

Those Africans and their descendants "were integral in the development of Hampton and their cultural and spiritual beliefs impacted the United States as a whole," according to the city resolution.

The City Council also noted it would be "appropriate" for the city to host the commemoration for the 400-year anniversary and to "welcome national and international visitors" for the event.

Mayor George Wallace said the city is still in the process of identifying a core group of individuals for the city commission that will plan 2019 events.

Regardless of the state's involvement, Wallace said the city should organize and host its own events.

"We're a vibrant community that celebrates its history," the mayor said. "While (the state) is focusing on the full spectrum of events, we want to focus on Hampton. And we're part and parcel a component of Virginia. ... We're the third leg of this historic tripod. While we're admittedly just getting on board, we have just as many historical elements" as Jamestown and Yorktown.

### **Inclusiveness promised**

Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation Executive Director Philip G. Emerson said in a statement forwarded through a spokesperson that the group's goal is "to be inclusive, involving as many organizations as are interested in participating."

The foundation also intends "to expand the 2019 Commemoration Task Force to include representatives of other organizations," Emerson said.

To date though, none of the 21 Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation Board of Directors are from Hampton or Fort Monroe and neither is anyone from the 2019 Commemoration Task Force.

Task force co-chair and House Majority Leader **M. Kirkland Cox**, R-**Colonial Heights**, was too busy Friday to comment on the topic, a staff member said. State Sen. Thomas K. "Tommy" Norment, R-James City, did not return a call seeking comment.

"How can Hampton and Fort Monroe be excluded from the state-sponsored 1619 Commemoration?" Pearson wrote in his letter to legislators. "Hampton should be a focal point of the Commemoration and should also receive a portion of the designated commemoration funds for planning."

He continued, "The arrival of the first Africans in English North America is a global event that changed the social, economic, and political structure of the United States. As Virginia invites people from around the world in 2019 to Commemorate 1619 the stakeholders in the planning process need to be in agreement on the true story to be told."

*Brauchle can be reached by phone at 757-247-2827.*

1619 Commemoration

### **Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation**

#### **2019 Commemoration Task Force:**

House Majority Leader M. Kirkland Cox, R-Colonial Heights, Co-chair

State Sen. Thomas K. "Tommy" Norment, R-James City, Co-chair

Gordon Angles, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation member

L. Ray Ashworth, former state delegate

Frank Atkinson, chairman of the federal **Jamestown 400th** commemoration commission

John Casteen III, former University of Virginia president

Stuart Connock, chairman of the Jamestown 2007 steering committee

H. Benson Dendy III, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation chairman

Sue Gerdelman, former chairwoman of the **William and Mary** Foundation

Ann Gray, Jamestown-**Yorktown** Board of Directors

State Sen. **Janet Howell**, D-Fairfax

**Rep. S. Chris Jones**, R-**Suffolk**, House Appropriations chairman



Ervin Jordan Jr., University of Virginia Library research archivist

Paul Koonce, Dominion Virginia Power chief executive officer

Rep. Christopher Stolle, R-Virginia Beach

State Sen. **John Watkins**, R-Powhatan

**Project 1619:** <http://project1619.org/>

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<http://hamptonroads.com/2014/05/engineer-cared-about-regions-past-future>

## **Engineer cared about the region's past, future**

By [Gary Ruegsegger](#)

Virginian-Pilot correspondent

© May 10, 2014

### NORFOLK

Louis L. Guy Jr., a civil engineer with a passion for history, died Thursday after a brief illness.

He was 76.

A former president of the Norfolk Historical Society, Guy worked to preserve local historic sites, including Fort Norfolk in his hometown and Fort Monroe in Hampton.

Guy graduated from Virginia Tech in 1959, served as an Army officer at Fort Eustis, and spent 31 years as an engineering consultant, helping municipal clients throughout Virginia with water and wastewater problems.

In 1993, he returned to Norfolk as the city's director of utilities, and he retired in 1999.

"Louis cared deeply about Norfolk and the region. He had great appreciation for our history and a desire to improve our future," Mayor Paul Fraim said.

"Louis remained in the civic life of the community to the end and will be sorely missed."

Caroline Doonan of the Ocean View Station Museum served with Guy on the Norfolk Historical Society board.

"He was always sure that the shy girl from Ocean View got to speak," she recalled fondly. She described him as a tireless advocate who was also modest. "When factual questions of history

came up, he would just smile that special smile and give others a chance to chime in with the answer."

Guy lent his voice to the debate about Hampton Roads' future on many occasions. In April, he wrote a column for The Virginian-Pilot urging faster progress on high-speed rail linking Norfolk to Washington, D.C. "We must have visionaries who see the possibilities, and we must also have can-do people who will persevere over the obstacles," he wrote.

During his final illness, Guy asked his wife, Suzanne, for his credit card. He wanted to make sure she had flowers on Mother's Day. Guy is survived by his wife, three sons, and two grandchildren. Funeral arrangements are being handled by H.D. Oliver Funeral Apartments.

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-nws-fort-monroe-bazaar-20140509,0,5505117.story>

### **Shopping rules at Fort Monroe bazaar Weekend event seen as success for fort**

By Robert Brauchle, [rbrauchle@dailypress.com](mailto:rbrauchle@dailypress.com)

*7:00 p.m. EDT, May 9, 2014*

HAMPTON — They left **Fort Monroe** with rings, watches, knives, personalized trinkets and accessories for their homes.

Shoppers — close to 8,000 of them — flooded the three-day Bodacious Bazaar last weekend to visit the 210 vendors, artists and entertainment set up between the stone fort and boardwalk.

The event marked the first time the Fort Monroe Authority allowed a retail-based event on the property since the former Army post was decommissioned in September 2011.

The authority oversees the state-owned portions of the property and has spent close to two years drawing up ideas that benefit both the organizer and authority while helping to increase awareness of the property's history.

The bazaar did just that, Fort Monroe Authority Executive Director **Glenn Oder** said.

"This is something we pledged to do this year — to create special events that create revenue for us," Oder said.

Sandra Gardner organizes the Bodacious Bazaar and holds the event each fall at the **Hampton Roads** Convention Center.

"This was a huge success for us," Gardner said. "We knew Fort Monroe would be a big draw. Why not hitch onto something that is already taking off?"

Oder said the authority will receive a net profit of \$12,000 for hosting the May 2-4 show and the Fort Monroe Foundation – a non-profit fundraising arm of the property – will receive an unspecified donation.

"This was our first test at this type of event," he said.

Oder and Gardner said future bazaars could include more historical elements, including re-enactors, period-based demonstrations and property tours.

The pair also point to the motorists who passed through Phoebus to get to the fort and the hotel rooms booked by out-of-town vendors. The event likely injected dollars into areas surrounding Fort Monroe.

"This was an exploratory event for us, and we consider it a success," Oder said

Bodacious Bazaar

What: Three-day shopping event at Fort Monroe

When: May 2-4

Outcome: Fort Monroe Authority and event organizer benefited

What's next: The authority will likely schedule another bazaar next spring

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[http://articles.dailypress.com/2014-05-22/news/dp-nws-fort-monroe-building-renovate-20140522\\_1\\_fort-monroe-authority-mortar-brick](http://articles.dailypress.com/2014-05-22/news/dp-nws-fort-monroe-building-renovate-20140522_1_fort-monroe-authority-mortar-brick)

## **Fort Monroe brick and mortar repairs begin**

### **Contractor hired to repair walls, restore historic building elements**

**May 22, 2014** | By Robert Brauchle, [rbrauchle@dailypress.com](mailto:rbrauchle@dailypress.com) | By Robert Brauchle, [rbrauchle@dailypress.com](mailto:rbrauchle@dailypress.com)

HAMPTON — In the bowels of Building 83, a group of men crouch on a basement floor, working their tools into mortar that is nearly a century old.

For the first time since taking ownership of a significant portion of the property, the Fort Monroe Authority is using its state-earmarked dollars for brick and mortar repairs to historic buildings.

Some of that work will replace poor matching patches done by the Army on a building face, and another project is the bowels of a building that soon will become the authority's headquarters.

Fort Monroe will receive about \$6.5 million from the Virginia Department of General Services during a three-year period for capital projects that will have lasting impacts on buildings and infrastructure.

"We have special issues here that need special attention," said John Gillespie, Fort Monroe historic preservation officer.

Here are the main projects the authority is working on with those state dollars:

### **Fire hydrants**

The authority is replacing fire hydrants built to federal standards with hydrants that area fire departments can connect to. Without the work, each city fire truck would need to carry special adapters to allow the hoses to connect to the hydrants.

As a contractor digs into the ground at each site, workers must pay particular attention to any items that are not soil or roots. An on-site archaeologist stands nearby and maps the materials crews encounter at each site.

A whole ceramic bottle dating back to about the 1860s was found intact at a site. A brick with the maker's mark stamped into one side was found at another location.

While the bottle will be cleaned, cataloged and handed to the Casemate Museum, the brick likely will be used as a teaching tool because it has less historic significance.

Finding such artifacts creates questions for Gillespie and preservationists interested in Fort Monroe. How does a bottle close to 150 years old end up in soil near a water line installed in the 1900s?

### **Building 83**

The former post office at Ingalls and Fenwick road will become the authority's headquarters by year's end. Renovations will cost \$340,000, including \$250,000 to secure the building from wind and water and to install elevated tankless water heaters, update electronics, make sump pump improvements, repoint mortar and repair the roof.

Currently, mortar work is being performed by W.E. Bowman Construction, of Richmond, in the basement.

Without repairs, the existing mortar would continue to crumble and could compromise the building's structural integrity, Bowman senior project manager Brendan Fagan said.

### **Building 100**

Down Ingalls Road sits Building 100, a colonial revival structure most recognizable by its black railings, detailed cornices and its unique architecture.

The contractor is repairing — and in some cases replacing — bricks and mortar on the building's exterior that have been damaged or eroded over time.

W.E. Bowman and the authority picked one of 40 vendors to supply the odd-shaped bricks needed for the building.

"We're working with historically accurate compounds and materials so the existing structure interacts accordingly with the work," Fagan said.

For Gillespie and the authority's staff, this work won't always be noticeable to the untrained eye, and that's the point.

"The work we're doing affect the durability and the resale value and if it's done wrong it could detract from the building's appearance," he said. "We're dealing with work that was done 15 years ago and as far back as 115 years ago, so there's some technical difficulty to it."

Fort Monroe work

**What's happening:** Contractors are repairing bricks and mortar on specific buildings.

**Where:** Buildings 83 and 100, both on Ingalls Road

**Why:** Without being repaired, the mortar can crumble, compromising the strength of the building.

### **Digging at Fort Monroe**

Visitors are prohibited from using metal detectors or attempting to excavate any objects on the property because of state and federal laws protecting the property. If you do come across something that could be of historic importance on the property, you're asked to report it to the Fort Monroe Authority, 757-637-7778.

If the object appears to be dangerous, call emergency personnel.



<http://www.dailypress.com/news/opinion/letters/dp-nws-edt-letsthu-0529-20140528,0,4342588.story>

### **May 29 Letters: Fort Monroe, reporting violence Don't forget chapel**

While we fully appreciate building restorations, upgrades, and repairs that the **Fort Monroe** Authority will earmark the \$6.5 million from the Virginia Department of General Services for building # 83 and building #100, let's not forget to trickle down some of those public funds to upgrade and repair the Historic Chapel of the Centurion.

This beautiful historic sanctuary one of the oldest on base desperately needs upgrades, repairs and pipe organ restoration just as much as those secular buildings. Let's hope and pray that a few of those dollars will trickle down to this gorgeous Chapel of the Centurion before it's too late.

*R. L. Addison*

[http://www.theroot.com/articles/history/2014/05/how\\_did\\_fort\\_monroe\\_become\\_freedom\\_s\\_fort.4.html](http://www.theroot.com/articles/history/2014/05/how_did_fort_monroe_become_freedom_s_fort.4.html)

# The Black Roots of Memorial Day

100 Amazing Facts About the Negro: How three runaway slaves created the momentum toward emancipation.



BY: HENRY LOUIS GATES JR.

Posted: May 26 2014 6:01 AM



*Slaves Entering Sally Port of Fort Monroe*

FRANK LESLIE'S ILLUSTRATED NEWSPAPER, JUNE 8, 1861 (LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

*Amazing Fact About the Negro No. 81: What was "Freedom's Fort," and how does it relate to Memorial Day?*

Memorial Day, set aside to honor the brave men and women who sacrificed all while wearing the uniform of our country, is considered by many to be the unofficial start of summer. To me, it also should be commemorated as the unofficial start of emancipation, or at least the beginning of the end of slavery in the early days of the American Civil War. I say this not only because Memorial Day has its roots in the war, as Drew Faust describes in *This Republic of Suffering*, or because its **first solemn celebration** at Arlington Cemetery in 1868 anticipated, by a few weeks, final ratification of the 14th Amendment guaranteeing all Americans equal protection under the law.

No, emancipation's connection to Memorial Day runs much deeper than that, beginning at a place known as "Freedom's Fort," at the mouth of the James River in Virginia, on the night of May 23, 1861, the same day Virginia officially seceded from the Union. That evening, three slaves who had been forced into building battlements for the Confederate Army at Sewell's Point on the Norfolk coast risked their lives in a daring escape to Fort Monroe, the Union stronghold that beckoned them from across the waters of Hampton Roads. It was a memorable night, one of the most memorable of the war. And the momentum the three slaves created would give far greater meaning to Memorial Day when the fighting, still in its infancy, was over.

Their names were Frank Baker, Shepard Mallory and James Townsend. Rowing in the dark, they didn't know whether they would survive the crossing, be shot dead when they landed, be returned to their master, Confederate Col. Charles K. Mallory, or, as punishment, have their families sold in their stead. What they did know was that if they stayed, they would be transferred deeper into Dixie to the Carolinas, where still more battlements would have to be built to defend slavery using their slave labor. A line had to be drawn, and they drew it.

In seeking refuge with the Union Army, Baker, Mallory and Townsend unofficially ignited the movement of slaves emancipating themselves with their feet—the contraband movement—which would extend the aim of the war from maintaining the Union at all costs to a war for union and the *freedom of the slaves*. That last aim was the ultimate revenge on the South's rebel government, formed, as it was, on the bedrock notion that one person had the right to own another person, *for life*.

On the Union side, the unsuspecting general about to receive the trio of slaves was Benjamin F. Butler, Fort Monroe's new commander and a slippery Massachusetts Democrat who had supported the pro-slavery candidate against Abraham Lincoln in the presidential election just a year before. What Butler would do was anyone's guess.

Still, Baker, Mallory and Townsend rowed on.

### **Fort Monroe, or 'Freedom's Fort'**

The fort in the distance was laced with meaning. As Eric Foner writes in his 2011 masterpiece, *That Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery*, Fort Monroe "stood near the spot where twenty slaves had been landed from a Dutch ship in 1619, marking the beginning of slavery in England's North American colonies." Completed in 1834, the fort was named for James Monroe, the nation's fifth president and the fourth Virginia slaveholder to



occupy the White House. Covering 63 acres with walls stretching over a mile around, Fort Monroe stood watch on the tip of the Virginia Peninsula at Old Point Comfort near Hampton. As with so many of our early landmarks, slaves had helped built it, and one of the former officers stationed there was Robert E. Lee. Yes, Fort Monroe was laced with meaning.

Yet on the night of May 23, 1861, none of that history mattered. For Baker, Mallory and Townsend, the decision was personal—so, too, the risks. It had been a month since the firing on Fort Sumter in Charleston, S.C., and there had already been a **small skirmish** between the guns at Fort Monroe and Sewell's Point. Meanwhile, in the euphoria of those early days, the people of Virginia were distracted celebrating their so-called independence from the North. Up in Washington, President Lincoln had made clear in his first **inaugural address** two months earlier that he would refrain from interfering with slavery where it already existed. Still, the three men rowed on toward their best chance for avoiding slavery deeper in the South. Baker, Mallory and Townsend—to me, they are the **Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego** of the Civil War.

After the escaped slaves arrived at Fort Monroe, Butler learned that two of them had wives and families in nearby Hampton and that he was to be their judge and jury. Here was his problem: Before the Civil War, runaway slaves were called fugitive slaves, and according to federal law, Union officers were required to return them without question. But things were different now, weren't they? Even though President Lincoln denied it, the Confederates insisted they were citizens of a new foreign country, independent of U.S. law. Butler, looking for every advantage against the feisty rebels, decided to hoist them on their own logic.

### **'Contraband of War'**

The next morning, Butler rode out to meet Confederate Major John B. Cary, acting as an agent for Col. Mallory, the slaves' owner. Under a flag of truce, Cary insisted that Baker, Mallory and Townsend be returned—*no harm, no foul*, so to speak. Improvising, Butler gave Cary his terms: If Mallory swore his allegiance to the Union, Butler would give his "property" back. Not surprisingly, the offer was refused. In the face of such defiance, Butler declared Baker, Mallory and Townsend "contraband of war," no different than other armaments lost from one foreign country to another in the heat of battle.

There was a certain logic to it: Why should Butler be compelled to return to the Confederates the arms or the armament makers that would help them kill Union troops? With that, Foner writes, "Butler had introduced a new word into the political lexicon." Although being named "contrabands" was far from a guarantee of freedom, it wasn't exactly slavery either. Baker, Mallory and Townsend had, with their escape, opened up the middle ground and, with it, the possibility for momentum.

It is important to see slaves like Baker, Mallory and Townsend as pivotal in their own emancipation rather than passive recipients bowing in the marble friezes of history. At once, they had both hurt the Confederate cause and given Butler the opportunity to bolster the Union's. But the logic was not bulletproof, Foner cautions. Right away, he says, "Butler's legal reasoning broke down further as escaping slaves who had not

labored for the Confederate military, including women and children, joined male fugitives.” In fact, just five days after Butler, Mallory and Townsend had arrived, 47 more runaway slaves knocked on the door of Freedom’s Fort, including a 3-month-old baby.

“They came despite rebel rumors that the Yankees would eat them, sell them into slavery in Cuba, process them into fertilizer, or make them pull carts like oxen,” Eric Wills writes for [Preservation](#) magazine. So much for the apologists of slavery claiming that the slaves of the South were happy toiling as another man’s chattel! The Civil War’s first major battle in the East had yet to be fought at Bull Run, but already the slaves of Virginia were winning another kind of battle—for their own labor in the waging of civil war. As Wills relates: “ ‘They have obtained in the camps, and wherever they have been,’ wrote a Union provost marshal in Louisiana, ‘a spirit of independence—a feeling that they are no longer slaves.’ ” No one handed them that feeling; they grasped it for themselves before any official ruling in Washington was decreed.

But what to do with the African Americans now that they were contraband? Send them to colonies in Africa or Central America? Sell them back to owners to pay for war debts? Put them to work? Keep only the able-bodied and discard the sick and old? Or maybe just keep the slaves owned by those active in the rebellion and reject those belonging to masters still loyal to the Union? As the parlor debate advanced, the slaves of the South kept advancing the issue, crossing rivers one at a time, wherever and whenever they saw bluecoats.

“Everybody felt that Slavery, and its relations to the contest, would prove to be one of the most embarrassing features of the struggle, unless it was managed with rare prudence,” the New York Daily Tribune wrote on May 29, 1861. The Tribune was far from an abolitionist press. In fact, it regarded the “runaway negroes in Virginia” as no different from “runaway horses.” Both had the potential to defeat Union troops, which was why, to the paper’s editors, Butler had done only what was necessary to gain a military advantage while leaving the door open to exploiting the “contraband” (“commodities”) as laborers, “trophies” or “sable minstrels” who would sing for bored Union troops. After all, they were still property, the paper argued, so that if the runaways “should become troublesome,” Butler could “point them to the north star, and tell them to march!” or, if forced to abandon them in a retreat, “spike them, *as property*, so that they would be good for nothing to the foe.”

The only difference, of course, the paper qualified, was that after the war, the slaves, unlike horses and canons, would need to “be compelled to take care of themselves like other people.” Effortlessly, the editor, like Gen. Butler, glided over the contradiction between personhood and property at the heart of the piece. The battle was engaged, and still the slaves rowed on.

## **Confiscation**

In the meantime, President Lincoln had a humanitarian crisis on his hands: Runaway slaves were the refugees of the Civil War. Improvising, Lincoln drew the line up to, but not including (for now), emancipation. Butler could have his “fugitive slave” law at Fort Monroe, but more activist generals like John Fremont in Missouri, who tried to emancipate runaway slaves outright, would be slapped down. Lincoln was buying time

as the word had spread among the slaves of the South that “Freedom’s Fort” was an actual place and that whatever a contraband was, it wasn’t a slave!

By the end of July 1861, 850 slaves had escaped to Fort Monroe. “Where are we drifting, I cannot see,” wrote the abolitionist Lydia Maria Child of Massachusetts, “but we are drifting somewhere; and our fate, whatever it may be, is bound up with these ... ‘contrabands.’ ” Even if slaves couldn’t vote (they weren’t even citizens), they were voting with their feet. To deal with them, on Aug. 6, 1861, Congress got into the game by passing the first of two **Confiscation Acts** allowing military commanders to declare “all such property ... to be lawful subject of prize and capture wherever found.” Who was forcing their hands? The slaves who kept rowing.

But fleeing the Confederacy was only the first part of the battle for the refugees, to be sure. After all, Congress’ order didn’t *require* the bluecoats to welcome every ex-slave who came knocking. Given the strange concept of human contrabands, some soldiers exploited the ex-slaves, a few killed them outright and some even profited off illegal trades on the black market back to the enemy. “ ‘The suffering from hunger and cold is so great,’ wrote a Union commander in Tennessee, ‘that those wretched people are dying by scores ... sometimes 30 per day die and are carried out by wagon loads, without coffins, and thrown promiscuously, like brutes, into a trench,’ ” Wills writes in *Preservation* magazine. Still, the slaves of the South rowed on, determined to taste even a watered-down version of freedom “until the real thing came along,” to quote the great **Fats Waller**. Anything, it seemed, was better than helping their Confederate masters beat the Yankees.

### ‘An Army in Themselves’

Here’s what Donald Yacovone and I wrote in our 2013 book, ***The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross***:

As the war progressed and federal troops moved deeper into the South, increasing numbers of slaves abandoned the plantations and made their way to Union lines, often arriving in family groups composed of several generations. Many of the new refugees ended up in the growing contraband camps hastily erected by the Union army. By the summer of 1862, what had begun as a trickle of refugees had turned into a flood. The thousands of slaves who abandoned the plantations dramatically helped to transform the aim and meaning of the war.

As military success remained elusive, Lincoln’s rhetoric about saving the Union broadened to address the pressing issue of slavery in explicit terms. As a generation of historians has asserted, black initiative forced the question of slavery upon a very reluctant administration and pushed President Lincoln down the road toward emancipation. The conduct of the war and the horrific casualty lists also forced the president to rethink the use of black troops, something that previously only black activists and their white allies had insisted upon.

And, according to Wills, “many runaways contributed valuable military intelligence, reporting on Confederate troop movements when they arrived at Union lines. George Scott, who escaped to Fort Monroe, became a spy and bragged that he could ‘smell a

rebel further than a skunk.’ Harry Jarvis, one of the early arrivals at Monroe, had predicted that African Americans would serve on the front lines. He had asked Butler to enlist him in the army but was told ‘it wasn’t a black man’s war.’ Jarvis responded that ‘it would be a black man’s war before they got through.’ He eventually joined the 55th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment and lost a leg in the battle of Folly Island.”

With their interim status as contraband, men like Baker, Mallory and Townsend forced the issue of emancipation, and with Lincoln’s issuing of the official Emancipation Proclamation on Jan. 1, 1863, came the pledge of enlisting and **arming black troops**. “By the end of the Civil War,” according to National Archives teacher-training materials, “roughly 179,000 black men (10 percent of the Union Army) served as soldiers in the U.S. Army and another 19,000 served in the Navy.” And you can draw a straight line from them straight back to Baker, Mallory and Townsend’s arrival at Freedom’s Fort and forward from them to the first Memorial Day, which is why I believe strongly that it is time for us to claim the contraband of the Civil War as veterans of the struggle for freedom and as heroes to be honored on this and every future Memorial Day.

With this in mind, I was particularly moved reading the quote in Wills’ Preservation piece from an Army chaplain, who, observing the contrabands, described how African-American slaves “ ‘flocked in vast numbers—an army in themselves—to the camps of the Yankees,’ likening the influx to ‘the oncoming of cities.’ ” We may never know all of their names, or how many died trying to escape, but the varied resting places of the contraband men and women of the Civil War are a virtual tomb of unknown soldiers who won an important moral and material victory that transformed the war.

As the New York Times put it on Aug. 13, 1861, more than a year before Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, “... we begin to see now the stupendous fatuity of Secessionism, which under the color of protecting Slavery by dissolving the Union, is causing Slavery to melt from the land as snows under a summer’s sun.” I wish I knew more about what happened to Baker, Mallory and Townsend after their fateful night rowing to Freedom’s Fort at the start of the war, but for sure I know we are indebted to them for helping those “snows” of slavery to melt.

### **‘Their Final Resting Place’**

Ironically, after the Civil War ended, the Confederacy’s president, **Jefferson Davis**, was imprisoned at Fort Monroe. The surrounding city of Hampton became the site of **Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute** (later Hampton University), which trained the freedmen and gave rise to Booker T. Washington and other leaders. Today, **Fort Monroe**, or Freedom’s Fort, offers visitors a chance to reflect on this powerful legacy. Other markers honoring the contraband of the Civil War include the first safe haven for runaway slaves in North Carolina—“**the Hotel De’Afrique**” along the Cape Hatteras National Seashore; the **Freedmen’s Colony** of Roanoke Island, N.C.; the **Contraband Camp** of Corinth, Miss.; and **Freedom Park** in Helena, Ark.

Especially touching is the recently rediscovered **Alexandria Contrabands and Freedmen Cemetery**, where some 1,800 African Americans were interred in the Civil War years. A short distance from Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia, the Contrabands and Freedmen Cemetery originally included 75 black contrabands-turned-

soldiers of that war until hundreds of their fellow African-American troops convalescing at a nearby hospital learned what was going on and demanded that they be moved. As Wills relates, their 1864 petition declared: “ ‘We are not contrabands, but soldiers of the U.S. Army. We are now sharing equally the dangers and hardships in this mighty contest, and should share the same privileges and rights of burial in every way with our fellow soldiers, who only differ from us in color.’ ”

And you know what? They *were* moved to Arlington National Cemetery, incidentally the former estate of Robert E. Lee, now an integrated cemetery where so many of the fallen soldiers of the United States now rest. If you're interested in visiting, the black soldiers of the Civil War are buried in sections 23 and 27. With them in section 27 are the graves of 3,800 Civil War contrabands, many of whom occupied “Freedman’s Village” on the confiscated Lee estate at Arlington during and after the war. The veterans’ graves (including three Medal of Honor recipients) “are marked with the Civil War shield and the letters U.S.C.T.,” according to [the official Arlington website](#), while the contrabands’ “headstones [are] marked with the words ‘Civilian’ or ‘Citizen.’ ”

May we keep them and all the departed contrabands of the Civil War in our hearts today, especially Frank Baker, Shepard Mallory and James Townsend, the heroes of Freedom’s Fort who, rowing their way out of slavery at the start of the war, helped elevate the Civil War’s meaning in advance of the first Memorial Day.

**As always, you can find more “Amazing Facts About the Negro” on *The Root*, and check back each week as we count to 100.**

*Henry Louis Gates Jr. is the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and founding director of the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard University. He is also editor-in-chief of **The Root**. Follow him on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).*

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Fixing Fort Monroe

Fort Monroe’s vulnerability to rising seas needed national attention. But so does the ill-conceived plan to build homes within the 100 acres separating one part of the new national monument from the other.

**By STEVEN T. CORNELIUSSEN**

WHEN THE Union of Concerned Scientists ignited a climate-wars skirmish recently, Fort Monroe got more national attention than in 2011, when the president declared two unconnected parts of the retired Army post a national monument.

Good. Fort Monroe’s vulnerability to rising seas needed highlighting. But so does the ill-conceived plan to build homes within the 100 acres separating one part of the new national

monument from the other. Fixing the work of Virginia's overdevelopment-obsessed leaders will likely require the shaming that national attention can bring.

The scientists' group, which warned that sea rise threatens dozens of cherished sites around the country, missed a special threat to Fort Monroe, most of which was designated a national historic landmark a half-century ago:

Only the moated stone fortress and another piece of land facing the Chesapeake Bay have been elevated to national monument status. The remainder is in the trust of a state panel, the Fort Monroe Authority. It plans "historically compatible" development in the bayfront gap between the two parts of the national monument — hundreds of homes that will destroy Fort Monroe's Chesapeake Bay sense of place.

The scientists didn't know that Virginia's leaders, by making their controversial development plan official in December, began cementing a costly sacrifice of precious public land to private interests and Hampton parochialism. They missed a chance to shine a national spotlight on this textbook case of coastal-overdevelopment folly.

But the scientists nailed one instructive fact: In 2003, Hurricane Isabel brought low-lying, ocean-facing Fort Monroe \$100 million in damage.

Wetlands Watch, a Virginia nonprofit, warns that the politicians' development plan "envisions significant new residential development investments on an increasingly fragile and potentially dangerous landscape." On its blog, the group calls the plan "stupid."

No one calls for parkland on the side of Fort Monroe facing the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel. But the divided bayfront landscape is to the fortress as Monticello's hillsides are to Thomas Jefferson's house: the setting, the "viewshed," the sense of place.

Yet Virginia's leaders have so far refused calls to unify the split national monument. They ignored Pilot editorials warning against a "degraded" and "squandered" Fort Monroe. They refused to listen when the National Parks Conservation Association exclaimed: "We can't let this happen." They spurned economic common sense.

So it'd be great to see national attention to this overdevelopment plan that also hobbles national memory.

And it'd be great to see more national attention to Fort Monroe as the historic landscape where the first captive Africans landed in 1619 en route to Jamestown — and where, a quarter-millennium later, once the shooting and dying had started in the Civil War, brave escapees from slavery set into motion political events that led to emancipation. Civil War historian Edward Ayers once called those events "the greatest moment in American history."

It'd be nice to learn why only the two elected officeholders on the Fort Monroe Authority — the only members directly accountable to the public — voted against the development plan.

Were they distancing themselves from the moneyed interests that regularly trump the public interest?

Virginia has a nationally ambitious new governor and a new lieutenant governor who asked to serve on the Fort Monroe Authority. The state's secretary of natural resources, former Hampton mayor Molly Ward, is in a position to help fix what she helped engineer: the fake, split national monument.

In 2012, Ward and the Hampton City Council passed a feeble, uncertain green-space resolution concerning the national monument's glaring gap. Maybe these new state leaders will elevate that resolution into something commensurate with 1 Corinthians 14:8: "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"

We need a solid, sensible plan for unifying the national monument.  
Sound the trumpets.

Steven T. Corneliussen, of Poquoson, writes a media column for Physics Today Online. He started advocating for Fort Monroe in 2005. [www.FortMonroeNationalPark.org](http://www.FortMonroeNationalPark.org) .