

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NEWS

By Christine Mathieson

**The following property is a sample of nominations submitted to the Keeper since the September 2014 meeting of the State Review Board**

### Brown Farm

The Brown Farm is located in the community of Lamar, Tennessee approximately seven miles southwest of Jonesborough, the seat of Washington County, at the confluence of the Cherokee Creek tributary and the Nolichucky River. The integrity of the 120 acre landscape is intact, representing a rural historic landscape, significant to the history of early residents of Appalachian Tennessee for its contribution to agriculture and industry from 1775 to 1950. The property, part of the Nolichucky Settlement, was acquired by Jacob Brown from the leaders of the Overhill Cherokee in 1775. The property comprises an array of buildings, including the Greek Revival farmhouse built by Brown's grandson, Byrd, circa 1845, which retains a high level of integrity. In addition to Byrd Brown's farmhouse



Figure 1. Byrd Brown House façade



Figure 2. Byrd Brown House Stair hall

(circa 1845), contributing buildings include Brown's Mill (1820), the May Day Post Office (1883) a springhouse (circa 1845), a smokehouse built circa 1845, and two barns dating to circa 1900. Also within the farm is a contributing site, the Brown Family Cemetery (1785).

The Brown Farm was nominated for listing in the National Register under Criterion A and C. It is significant in the area of Settlement at the State and Local levels, in the area of Industry at the Local level, and for Architecture at the Local level. The Brown Farm is associated with the origins of democracy in Tennessee through Jacob Brown (1736-1785) and the Watauga Association. The history of Brown Farm reflects the increasingly diversified economy of the Upland South, as industry advanced agricultural endeavors. The Nolichucky River tributary, Cherokee Creek, traverses the Brown Farm and fostered industry for two centuries. The Brown family (and later Swingles) successfully leveraged agricultural and industrial profits to shape the rural historic landscape of the Nolichucky River Valley. The Byrd Brown House, the central architectural feature of the property, is nominated to

**Brown Farm** *cont. page 2*



**Brown Farm...continued from page 1**



Figure 3. Brown Farm landscape

the National Register under Criterion A for architectural significance at the State and Local levels. The vernacular Greek Revival building represents a local interpretation of national architectural trends in the antebellum backcountry. The Greek Revival Byrd Brown

House stands today as testament to this Appalachian community built upon networks of trade and kinship throughout Tennessee by generations of Browns and Swingles. The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) State of Franklin Chapter in 1936 installed a lasting tombstone within the Brown Family Cemetery to memorialize Jacob Brown's role in the nation's settlement.

*The National Register nomination for the Brown Farm was prepared by Amber Clawson of the Middle Tennessee State University Center for Historic Preservation, Rocky Swingle, and Ron McCall.*

Since the last issue of The Courier there have been four new entries to the National Register of Historic Places from Tennessee.

The properties are the following:

**Richland, Grainger County**

Mount Pisgah Missionary Baptist Church, Henderson County  
Leadvale Coaling Station and Cut-Off, Jefferson County

In addition to the above, the United States General Services Administration had the Cookeville Post Office/Federal Building listed in the National Register. The Johnson City Warehouse and Commercial Historic District boundary was decreased due to demolition of a portion of the buildings with the boundary. (Boundary Decrease)

Removed from the National Register were the H.L. Bruce House in Henry County and the Thomas Williamson House in Rutherford County because they no longer exist.

There are now 2,120 entries in the National Register from Tennessee including 278 districts for a total of 42,285 resources now listed.

## NEW COMMISSION MEMBERS



Toye Heape

Gov. Haslam has recently appointed two new members for five year terms to the Tennessee Historical Commission. Toye Heape of Nashville was appointed on October 1, 2014, and replaces Norm Hill of Murfreesboro. A resident of Nashville for over 25 years, Mr. Heape works in the Information Technology industry. From 1998 until 2001, Mr. Heape served as executive director for the

Tennessee Commission of Indian Affairs. Mr. Heape is a co-founder and officer of the Native History Association, which works to promote and educate the public about Native American history. The organization has located a segment of the Trail of Tears in Rutherford County, as well as the remaining pier of a c. 1823 bridge in Nashville that was traveled by the Cherokee on the Trail of Tears in 1838. Both sites are now recognized on the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail. Mr. Heape

serves on the Board of the Tennessee Ancient Sites Conservancy, and is the webmaster for the Tennessee Chapter of the Trail of Tears Association.

Yolanda "Loni" Harris of Jackson was appointed on October 14th, 2014. Mrs. Harris replaces Tim Sloan of Covington. Mrs. Harris is a master gardener who is interested in historic horticulture and historic gardens. Following the devastating tornado of 2003, she served on the restoration committee for St. Luke's Episcopal Church. She currently serves on Bishop and Council for the Diocese of West Tennessee. Mrs. Harris is a member of the Tennessee Preservation Trust, the Tennessee Historical Society, and the Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities. She is married to Madison County Mayor Jimmy Harris.



Yolanda Harris



# Restoration Work Completed at Burra Burra Mine State Historic Site

By Martha D. Akins, Historic Sites Program Director

The Burra Burra Mine State Historic Site is located in Ducktown in southeastern Tennessee. Copper ore was extracted from this location from 1899 to 1958. When the mine was closed, the headframe was demolished, but almost all of the original buildings and structures—sixteen, to be exact—remain today. Burra Burra, named for the famous mine in Australia, is the only historic copper mine site open for visitation in the southern United States. Purchased by the State of Tennessee in 1988, no major restoration work has been on the site until now.



Plate Shop before restoration

For fiscal year 2013-2014, a complete site restoration project for \$3,550,000



Before the Clinic restoration

was requested. However, only a portion - \$550,000—was approved. Upon determining the most critical buildings and the number of buildings that could be completed within the allotted amount, the exact scope of work was determined. Based on restoration estimates, the Clinic, the Hoist House, the Plate Shop, and the Powder House could be restored. Hefferlin and Kronenberg of Chattanooga was the architectural firm on the project.

Interested contractors submitted their qualifications to perform historic preservation work. From those

**Burra Burra** *cont. page 4*



**Burra Burra...continued from page 4**

submittals, three contractors were deemed qualified and invited to bid on the project, with Wieck Construction of Nashville securing the winning bid at \$419,500.

The Clinic, constructed circa 1910, served as the doctor's office for the mine workers. Once a hospital was built nearby, the function of the building



Clinic After Restoration

changed to the Service Office. Then with Title IX of the Higher Education Act of 1965, a place was needed to accommodate women workers and visiting women geology students. It then became the Women's Change House. A concrete floor was poured in a part of the building to serve as a shower floor. Some non-historic alterations, such as inexpensive paneling, were added. The restoration process included the removal of all non-historic material, stabilization of the structure, and repairing (and replacing when necessary) the building components. Several hidden items were found: modest air flow vents near the tops of the walls for air circulation, original plaster, two

wood tongue and groove walls, and a higher ceiling in the bathroom. The discovery process was very exciting.

At 5,700 square feet, the largest structure slated for restoration

project was the circa 1901 Hoist House. This structure once housed the hoisting engines powered by steam. They raised and lowered workers and equipment into the shaft and hoisted ore to the surface. The Powder House (circa 1905), an all brick structure, held powder and blasting caps. The Plate Shop built in 1940 was used during the fabrication of structural steel, wear plates, and other steel needed for the mines.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Burra Burra Mine Historic District, the site is open for tours year round at various times and days depending on the season. Call 423-496-5778 or visit the website [www.ducktownbasinmuseum.com](http://www.ducktownbasinmuseum.com) for more information.



Plate Shop exterior after renovation

## HISTORICAL MARKERS

At its meeting on October 24, 2014 the Tennessee Historical Commission approved seven historical markers: Clinton High School, Anderson County; Louis Philippe's Visit, Blount County; John McPherson, Bradley County; Nashville Sit-Ins, Davidson County; Ruben Ross, Montgomery County; Birthplace of Lester Raymond Flatt, Overton County; and Cordell Hull Memorial Bridge, Smith County. Those interested in submitting proposed texts for markers should contact Linda T. Wynn at the Tennessee Historical Commission, 2941 Lebanon Road, Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0442, or call (615) 770-1093.



## SOLVING THE MYSTERY OF THE “SULPHUR GUM” AT WYNNEWOOD STATE HISTORIC SITE, CASTALIAN SPRINGS, SUMNER COUNTY, TENNESSEE

Kevin E. Smith and Rick Hendrix

### Report prepared for the Tennessee Historical Commission

References in Wynne family correspondence referring to the main mineral spring at the Castalian Springs resort as the “sulphur gum” have puzzled us for some time. Now preserved at Wynnewood State Historic site, the spring runs from a buried pipe beneath the gazebo in Lick Bottom and is still productive except in dry years. Recent research has clarified something of the history and meaning of this reference. Initial North Carolina land grants in Middle Tennessee reserved 640-acre tracts around salt springs as public property, pending their identification as suitable for commercial production of the valuable resource of salt. Relatively quickly, the mineral springs at Bledsoe’s Lick were acknowledged as not containing sufficient salt for major production and the tract was released to private ownership in 1789. Nonetheless, later private owners continued to pursue the potential for commercial production of salt from the springs. On 4 Oct 1819, Henry Belote and James Winchester began running an advertisement in the <sup>2</sup> Nashville Whig:

SALT WATER. WANTED TO EMPLOY, A PERSON who understands boring for Salt Water, and can be well recommended for industry and perseverance. Such a one will meet with good encouragement upon applying to the subscribers near Bledsoe Lick. HENRY BELOTE, JAMES WINCHESTER.

Although we cannot currently connect those ads to an 1823 reference, we suggest that the advertisements did end in the installation of a mineral “well” sometime between late 1819 and 1823.

At Bledsoe’s Lick in the county of Sumner, in making way by digging into the earth to sink a gum for the collection of water, and to separate it from the black mud at the lick; after digging some distance the workmen came to the

**Sulphur Gum** *cont. page 6*

<sup>1</sup> Kevin E. Smith, Professor of Anthropology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37132; Telephone: 615-898-5958; Email: Kevin.smith@mtsu.edu; Rick Hendrix, Director, Wynnewood State Historic Site.

<sup>2</sup> Nashville Whig, 10 Nov 1819. The ad is dated 4 Oct 1819 and was paid to run 6 times. The same ad was found in the 20 Oct 1819 edition.

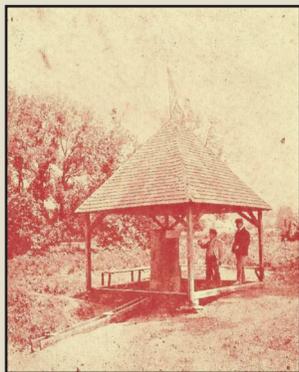
<sup>3</sup> John Haywood, 1823. *The Natural and Aboriginal History of Tennessee, up to the first settlements therein by the white people in the year 1768*. Nashville: Printed by George Wilson. Pg. 59. Emphasis added.



**Sulphur Gum...continued from page 5**

tusk of some huge animal, between two and three feet in length. Also grinders, eight or nine inches wide at least. The tusk was bent like that of a hog, but not as much so, in proportion to its size...

Generally, the reference to sinking a gum has been overshadowed by the striking reference to the discovery of



**Figure 1** Gazebo Vernacular Construction Technique

portions of a mastodon. Examination of the collection of historic photographs at Wynnewood State Historic Site, seemingly solves the mystery of the “sulphur gum” reference. Workers apparently selected a large diameter hollow gum tree as the body

for the well. At least two known historic photographs illustrate this vernacular construction technique (Figures 1 and 2). From the photographs, we estimate the tree trunk is three-four feet in diameter and extends perhaps five feet above the then current ground surface (Figure 1).

Given the relatively unambiguous reference to discovery of mastodon remains while placing the gum in 1819-1822, this suggests the trunk extends well below the current ground surface. Modern archaeological testing in Lick Bottom to

the west of the sulphur well suggests that the Pleistocene ground surface is buried some eight to nine feet below the modern surface – and some six to seven feet below the nineteenth century ground surface. Depth of the current pipe for the existing sulphur well is at least sixteen feet, although we have no way of ascertaining whether that is comparable to the original well depth.

Could this ca. 1900 tree trunk be the same “sulphur gum” installed sometime almost a century earlier between late 1819 and 1823? Although it is plausible that it was replaced at some point, we think the answer is potentially “yes.”



**Figure 2** Salt Lick Gazebo today with concrete and metal pipe configuration.

Excavations at the adjacent prehistoric mound site have documented the preservation of at least one large uncarbonized cedar post that dates to A.D. 1150 (based on radiocarbon dating) preserved by immersion in the same mineral waters. While the documentary record is silent on when the roof was first installed over the sulphur well and we can only confidently assert that it was in place by

**Sulphur Gum** *cont. page 7*

**Figure 1.** Photograph of the gazebo over the main sulphur well at Castalian Springs, ca. 1898. (Wynnewood State Historic Site Photographic Archives).

**Figure 2.** Sulphur Well, 1975. The “sulphur gum” has been replaced with concrete basin and metal pipe (view to west; Photograph by Samuel D. Smith).

**Sulphur Gum...cont. from page 6**

1898 (the second boom of the mineral springs resort), we suggest that the main well was almost certainly roofed during the first boom of the resort in the 1830s as a convenience for those earlier patrons. We also suggest that it is plausible that the well was roofed from its first installation to prevent freshwater contamination of the saline resource. Roofed and constantly saturated with mineral waters, we suspect that a tree of that diameter might well have survived for more than a century – and became a landmark known to the Wynne family as “the sulphur gum.” While the gazebo remains in the same locale, it was at some unknown point replaced with a concrete and metal pipe configuration (Figure 2). The presence of enormous gum trees in the vicinity can still be attested currently, as there are several in the Lick Creek bottom even today.

Research to date suggests that this “tree trunk springhouse” is a vernacular creation unique to Castalian Springs. Inspiration for this particular creation may be related to other vernacular uses of hollow tree trunks, including a widespread practice dating back to the colonial period of housing bees in hollow sections of gum trees (and others). Black gum is especially prone to natural decay from the heartwood outward, but due to the interwoven nature of the wood fibers the surviving “rind” of living wood is highly durable. This apparently common practice led to the term “bee gum” as a reference to hives in hollow tree trunk sections. Certainly the sulphur gum is not the only vernacular use of hollow trees in the vicinity. In local oral tradition, an enormous hollow sycamore known as Spencer’s Tree was the residence of Thomas Sharp Spencer during the winter of 1778 – and was located in the immediate vicinity of the sulphur gum. Whether the presence of that famous hollow tree within sight of the “sulphur gum” might have served as an additional inspiration will also have to remain in the realm of interesting speculation.

<sup>4</sup> *Some local long-time residents of “The Lick” continued to refer to the sulphur spring as the “sulphur gum” into the 20th century. Based on ages of informants, we suspect that the sulphur gum was removed sometime in the late 1920s to early 1930s and replaced with something like the current structure.*

<sup>5</sup> *Tammy Horn, 2006. Bees in America: How the Honey Bee Shaped a Nation.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.



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**Public Comment Solicited**

*The Tennessee Historical Commission is again soliciting public comment and advice on its administration of the National Historic Preservation Act. Especially, we are seeking input on such matters as geographic areas or classes of properties which should be a priority for survey and/or registration efforts, criteria and priorities which should be established for restoration grants, and ways and means through which local efforts at preservation of historic properties can be most effectively assisted. Comments and advice on other areas and issues of a more general nature are also encouraged. Activities carried out by the Commission under the mandate of the Act include efforts to survey and inventory potentially-historic properties across the state and to nominate the most significant to the National Register of Historic Places. Other activities involve programs to protect and preserve properties once they are identified by reviewing Federal projects to determine if they will adversely affect historic properties and wish to earn the investment tax credits which are available; awarding and administering grants for the restoration of National Register properties; and providing technical assistance and advice to local governments which are attempting to establish local programs and ordinances to protect historic properties. Besides the restoration grants program, some of these activities are carried out in part by the provision of grant support to local groups and agencies. These grant funds are federal funds which are appropriated under the authority of the National Historic Preservation Act to assist states in carrying out the purposes of the Act. The comments received will be used to structure the annual application to the National Park Service for these funds. The Tennessee Historical Commission expects to solicit applications for grants-in-aid in June of this year for the 2015 Fiscal Year (10/01/2014-9/30/2015). The public input and advice which we are soliciting now will help to set both general office objectives and to establish priorities and criteria for the review of grant applications. Comments are requested by April 15, 2014, and may be addressed to Claudette Stager, Assistant Director for National Register Programs, Tennessee Historical Commission, 2941 Lebanon Road, Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0442.*

*This program receives Federal funds from the National Park Service. Regulations of the U.S. Department of the Interior strictly prohibit unlawful discrimination in departmental federally assisted programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, age or disability. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility operated by a recipient of Federal assistance should write to: Director, Equal Opportunity Program, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20013-7127*

*Tennessee Historical Commission, Authorization Number 327324, 8,000 copies promulgated at a cost of \$0.23 per copy, 011/10.*



## PUBLICATIONS TO NOTE

By Linda T. Wynn • Assistant Director for State Programs & Publications Editor

Publications of The University of Tennessee Press, 600 Henley Street, Conference Center Building, Suite 110, Knoxville, Tennessee 37996-4108 include:

The University of Tennessee Press has published Volume XII of the *Correspondence of James K. Polk*, the eleventh President of the United States and the second person from Tennessee to serve in the nation's highest office. This volume covers the first seven months of 1847. Edited by Tom Chaffin and Michael David Cohen, a research professor of history and an assistant research professor of history respectively at the University of Tennessee, it documents a critical seven months in one of America's most transformational presidencies. Numerous letters in Volume XII give an account of Polk's prosecution of the Mexican War, a war that, along with his 1846 acquisition of what is today's Pacific Northwest, increased by one-third the size of the United States. Perhaps one of "least known consequential presidents," the letters, most of them unpublished until now, correspondingly exposes the personal life and business affairs of one of the most private men ever to occupy the presidency. Polk's correspondence also discloses his often-overlooked foreign-policy interests, including Hawaii and Cuba, as well as the administration's concern with European affairs. The eleventh president took a personal interest in the famine ravaging Ireland and in March 1847 placed two naval ships into civilian hands for transporting to Ireland foodstuffs donated by private charities. Correspondence concerning business affairs of his Mississippi plantation documents Polk the businessperson, intimately involved in the trading of slaves. Other letters, to family members and old schoolmates, reveal the publicly hard-nosed president as a doting husband, son, uncle, and friend. Cloth, \$75.00.

Another work published by the University of Tennessee Press is Tom Chaffin's *Met His Every Goal? James K. Polk and the Legends of Manifest Destiny*. While examining primary-source materials as editor of the *Correspondence of James K. Polk*, the author discovered that a central defining anecdote of the Polk presidency hangs by the weakest of evidentiary strands. Based on the declaration that the President elect's administration would be dedicated to "four great measures" that included acquiring the Oregon Country and California, reducing tariffs, and establishing an permanent independent treasury, Professor Chaffin illustrates how the narrative has become widely accepted as truth because it was repeatedly quoted. Intended for a general audience, students, and specialists, *Met His Every Goal?* presents a different text on Polk and a revisionist view of much of the scholarship concerning the eleventh President of the United States and his time. Drawing on published scholarship as well as contemporary documents—including heretofore-unpublished materials—this tome brings to the forefront a new study of a mysterious autocrat. Moreover, in Chaffin's examination of an oft-repeated anecdote long accepted as fact, readers witness a case study in how historians use primary sources to explore—and in some cases, shatter—established understandings of the yesteryear. Paper, \$19.95.

Publications of Vanderbilt University Press, Vanderbilt University, PMB 351813, 2301 Vanderbilt Place, Nashville, TN 37235-1813.

Vanderbilt University Press has published Andrew Maraniss' *Strong Inside: Perry Wallace and the Collision of Race and Sports in the South*. This well-written tome tells the story of Perry Wallace, a 1966



graduate of Nashville's Pearl Senior High School and one of two Pearl graduates (the other was Walter R. Murray, Jr., who later became the first African American to serve on Vanderbilt's Board of Trustees) to enter Vanderbilt University's freshman class in the same year. A straight-A student, valedictorian of his class, and a high school All-American athlete, Wallace, a much sought after academic and basketball star, casted his lot with Vanderbilt and its basketball team becoming the first African American to desegregate the Southeastern Conference (SEC). He came of age during the Modern Civil Rights Movement. He began his educational trek as a kindergartner in 1954, the same year that the United States Supreme Court enunciated its unanimous decision in the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* case that overturned the infamous "separate but equal" doctrine put forth in the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision. As an adolescent, he witnessed Nashville's sit-in movement conducted mostly by students from American Baptist College, Fisk and Tennessee A & I State Universities, as well as Meharry Medical College. He and his classmates entered Pearl Senior High School the week after the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his now iconic "I Have a Dream" speech at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. By the time they earned their PHDs (Pearl High Diplomas) Wallace and his fellow students witnessed the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The same year that the Voting Rights Act passed, Wallace and his fellow "Tigers" played in Nashville's first desegregated high school basketball game when Pearl High went against Father Ryan at the Municipal Auditorium. Known for his signature "slam dunk," in March of 1966, Pearl High School's Boys Basketball Team won the first desegregated Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association (TSSAA) State Basketball Tournament. Maraniss, a first-time author and a partner at McNeely Pigott & Fox Public Relations in Nashville, first became interested in the pioneering

Southeastern Conference (SEC) basketball player in 1989 when he was a sophomore at Vanderbilt University taking an African American history class from Dr. Yollette Trigg Jones, now Associate Dean College of Arts and Science at Vanderbilt University. In this, the first book-length biography that details Wallace's journey as the first African American basketball player to desegregate the SEC, the author through more than eighty interviews unveils the travails and racist maltreatment Wallace faced on and off the basketball court. Although an alumnus of Vanderbilt, Maraniss pulls no punches when it comes to the university's administrators or coaches during the 1960s. On campus and on the basketball courts across the South, he experienced hostile environments. "He was spit upon and pelted with Cokes, Ice and coins." Even in his home state at the University of Tennessee, "fans dangled a noose near the Vanderbilt bench." (p. 250) Following his first year, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) implemented the "Lew Alcindor [Kareem Abdul-Jabbar] rule", which negated Wallace's signature move, the slam-dunk. Through all of the abuse, Wallace stayed the course and completed his tenure with the team. However, on March 7, 1970, he ended his last game with an illegal dunk that referees Reggie Copeland and Julius Snead let count. (p.350) As Wallace's biographer states . . . the dunk had been Wallace's 'freedom song,' a provocative, forceful, and in its own way [a] violent statement against the forces that threatened to tether him to a lifetime of emasculated anonymity." Two months later, Perry Wallace was graduated from Vanderbilt University with an engineering degree. Andrew Maraniss' *Strong Inside: Perry Wallace and the Collision of Race and Sports in the South* has brought Wallace from the echelons of anonymity to the ranks of others who pioneered in breaking America's color line. This work will appeal to those who have an interest in sports, biography, civil rights and higher education history of the South and the United States. **Cloth, \$35.00.**



# The Tennessee Contraband Conundrum: 1862-1865. A Documentary Narrative.

PART 3 OF 5

BY JAMES B. JONES, JR. ©

In early August, 1864 a notice appeared in the Nashville which promoted a mass meeting of all Negroes in the city. The advertisement, a column long, gave a clear indication that Negroes, including contraband, were demanding their rights as “citizens” and read in part:

## GREAT MASS MEETING OF COLORED CITIZENS.<sup>1</sup>

By invitation of the citizens of Nashville, John M. Lanston, Esq. the patriot and eloquent orator, of Oberlin, Ohio, will address them on the leading questions of the day, at “Fort Gillem,” on Monday, August 15th, 1864, at 11 A. M

The citizens and public generally are invited to attend. Let every man, woman, and child come and spend one day in the cause of HUMAN FREEDOM [sic] and POLITICAL EQUALITY. Let every one [sic] who values the glorious future of OUR COUNTRY-and the future freedom of our race-turn out and honor the distinguished orator. Come one, come all. Let us have a grand rally for our country, for the enfranchisement of our race, and FOR LIBERTY.<sup>2</sup>

The “Meeting of Colored Citizens” was held after a long procession weaved its way through the city. According to a press report, the meeting was “very largely attended.” The procession passing through the streets of Nashville was likewise “very large, composed in part of a great number of hacks, filled with well dressed [sic] people....The assemblage at the grove was immense.”<sup>3</sup> The mass meeting demonstrated that contrabands and free Negroes understood the nature of politics, and expected to obtain the right to exercise the ballot.

“Another Negro Celebration” on March 25, 1865, was a demonstration echoing the procession of 1864 and the abolition of slavery in the Volunteer State.

The negroes old and young, of every hue, shade and color, turned out yesterday to ratify the amendment to the State constitution abolishing slavery in Tennessee.” Forming on Capitol Hill, at about 10 o'clock...”[it] came down Cedar street with streaming banners, headed by a brass band, discoursing sweet strains to the slow and measured march of the ‘regenerated contrabands.’ A dense cloud of dust enveloped the procession and it was only visible at intervals...

The soldiers were in the van, followed by the “Order of the Sons of Relief,” wearing “yaller [sic] regalias.” Next came the “free American citizens of African descent,” in their Sunday clothes, followed by the female portion of the colored procession. The juvenile darkies [sic] brought up the rear of this moving panorama, and at intervals the air resounded with shouts of glory from the enthusiastic crowd. The Marshals of the day were mounted, and highly decorated with all the colors of the rainbow. Among the devices or mottos [sic] born aloft, we noted the following:

“Will Tennessee be among the first or last to allow her sable sons the elective franchise?”

“United we stand, divided we fall.”

“Nashville Order of Sons of Relief.”

“We ask not social, but political equality.”

“We can forget and forgive the wrongs of the past.”<sup>4</sup>

“We aspire to elevation through industry, economy, education and christianity [sic].”

After marching through the principal streets of the city, the procession wended its way to Walnut Grove, in the western environs of the city, where they were addressed by several orators. The principal theme of the different speakers was the elective franchise, which right they emphatically claimed, and would petition the Legislature for it at its first session. If it was not granted by that body, they would thunder at the doors of the Capitol until their voices were heard, and the desire for political equity of their race established.<sup>5</sup>

Aside from such naysaying, the growing urban contraband community in Knoxville and Nashville, at least, began to congeal to the point that social events were held. In Knoxville it was reported in the Knoxville Monthly Bulletin that: “[the]Yankees have given several concerts in Knoxville. The front seats are consigned to the wenches of the city, who are escorted to and to places of amusement by Federal soldiers and officers. balls are frequent, in which the belles are Ethiopian damsels, and Federal officers the gayest gallants.<sup>6</sup> Another “Negro Ball a month earlier drew the attention of the Knoxville Daily Bulletin.

Colored Ball-Quite a brilliant and recherché affair came off among our Knoxville “citizens of African descent” last night at Ramsey’s Hall. It was really a most admirable imitation of similar efforts at Terpsichorean amusements of the part of their Caucasian brethren. The beauty and fashion there

**Contraband...continued from page 10**

collected was rather admirable; gay belles of every tint, from pearly white to sooty, vied with their male gallants in white kids, gorgeous dresses, and the pretty amenities of fashionable life. The music was excellent, and all went smoothly and gaily on until the small hours. The lobby glittered with envious shoulder straps, who, not being able to participate, could only admire.<sup>7</sup>

It was no different in Nashville, where such dances were not uncommon. The following article appeared in a Nashville paper dated March 6, 1863. The lengthy story explained that black church attendance was low because many of the contraband “boys and are afraid to [go to church] on Sunday, because many of them had been pressed into Government service in their Sunday clothes and compelled to work in them.” Nevertheless the contrabands congregated at church on Sunday. Contraband couples would promenade in the city, where “[h]undreds of [them can] ... be seen upon the streets all day Sunday, when the weather is fine; and when rainy they may be found congregated in the various lodging places, devoting the day to dissipation, debauchery, gaming, etc.” It was the job of the provost marshal and negro preachers to keep the congregations morals at a high standard:

According to the article, however: They being religious and regularly attending does not necessarily deprive them of innocent amusements-indeed, it adds to their ability to enjoy rationally the social gatherings they so much delight in-their balls and parties, which were formerly conducted in the most unobjectionable manner by our Nashville boys, [sic] ... but many of which have the past winter degenerated into places of assignation, drunkenness and general disorderly conduct. So low, indeed, had they become, as we are

credibly informed, that few of our Nashville girls and boys [sic] would attend them.

On Wednesday last [4th] we were informed that the gentlemen of Nashville were to give a ball on that night at the City Hotel, to which no “disreputable” contrabands or soldiers were to be admitted and we determined at once to be there to see how things went on. The following is a copy of the neatly printed ticket:-“Cotillion Party, to be given at the City Hotel, on Wednesday, March 4th, 1863... No Ladies admitted without a Gentleman. Admission, \$1.

The bell had just tolled the hour of 9 p. m. as we wended our way across the Square, and in fifteen minutes thereafter we introduced ourselves to Mr. Thomas, whom we found guarding the entrance. Bill Porter had just seated himself upon his elevated seat, and while tuning his violin (a valuable one, by the way,) was informing an impatient youth that no fashionable ball commences before 9 or 10 o'clock. Bill had two assistants-a second and base, and discoursed music sweet, eloquent, and spirited, and all being in readiness for the dance Bill called out-

“Gents will please take of dar has, and put ‘em in dar pockets, or somewhar else. Better put ‘em in yer pockets; I see some white gentlemen here. [Bill has considerable native humor in him, which he occasionally dispenses gratuitously.]

The sets were formed, and all stood looking at Bill with eager anxiety, waiting for the command-“First four right, and left-Back to your places-Bal an ce [sic]-Turn your partners - Swing corners and do it good-Ladies chain-Half promenade,” etc. to the end of the chapter, when Bill told them to “Promenade all,” but before he had well got them in motion, he

called out-“Swap partners, an’ get better ones,” adding, “You mustn’t dance all night with one lady bekas shes putty. [sic]

During the dance and afterward, we had an opportunity of seeing and observing nearly all in the room. There were nearly one hundred present, male and female being about equally represented; all, or nearly all, were dressed in their best, and all [sic] were clean. The boys [sic] were generally neatly attired; only one being clad in that extravagant style so universally adopted by representatives upon the stage; the one alluded to had on a neat black suit, with a full bosom ruffled shirt of the largest dimensions, extending out in front several inches, and flapping upon the right of his breast, on the left lappel [sic] of his coat he wore a white satin ribbon, of large dimensions, not less than sixteen inches in diameter. The girls [sic] wore dresses of every conceivable variety, but white skirts prevailed, with bodies (or waists [sic], or whatever they may be called) of all shades, from drab to black, and generally of silk. Some two or three wore their hats, and one wore a wreath of artificial flowers...the best dancer was Lizzie Beach; she was dressed in white muslin, without any ornaments but a neat pin, she is tall, graceful, and danced an infinite variety of steps-enough to astonish an Elsaler, but all in good time, and modestly executed. She had for a partner a boy [sic] in military overcoat, who seemed well up in the Terpsichorean art, but was scarcely a match for Lizzie, we would like to see them with the floor to themselves, and would expect a rich treat.

Time wore on, and several steles [sic] were danced, when Bill requested the boys [sic] to “Treat

**Contraband** *cont. page 12*

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your partners, all you boys that's got money; and you that hasn't, run you face [sic] Them that hain't got no money, nor a good face, can try if there's a lady that'll have pity on 'em, and dance the next [sic] quadrille. The aristocracy then retired to supper, and the remainder kept up the dance.

The refreshment table was extremely neat, and well filled with all the delicacies the market affords, and up to the hour our leaving, there was naught but incessant mirth prevailing, echoed by the "had-had, ha-a-a-hui!"<sup>8</sup> [sic]<sup>9</sup>

Not all were amused by the newspaper story on the "colored ball." The complaint was that after 11 o'clock the party had become disreputable and not a mere innocent pastime. It had "become so disreputable that no having a particle of self-respect would attend them, because, as we said in the article alluded to, they were made up exclusively of soldiers, contrabands, and prostitutes."<sup>10</sup> Thus some contraband had established their own community in Nashville no doubt having gained a new social status as a result of contraband camps. Such "culled [sic] balls" were an indication of growth of a small but cohesive African-American community at least in Nashville and Knoxville.<sup>11</sup>

The contrabands likewise formed churches and had formal weddings and funerals, at least in the cities. One small notice, entitled "Scene D'Afrique," was printed in the Nashville Daily Press, and what it lacked in racial sensitivity it partially made up in description of a contraband wedding party. The description indicated a strong contraband identity had developed in the city by 1863:

We yesterday saw what we never before beheld in Nashville—a nigger [sic] bridal party, in carriages, inaugurating the honey-moon by [an] ostentatious drive through the streets. The pageant was attracted great attention, and especially did strolling contrabands gleefully

show their ivory masticators at the immense "spread" their newly-spliced African brother and sister were making. Of course we took a peep at the veiled bride, and we thought she was the Queen of Blackness [sic] incarnate. She and her lord sat in the front carriage in all their native modesty and lovely blackness doubtless exchanging many sweet syllables in the Ethiopian vernacular: "Peace go wid dem niggers [sic]."<sup>12</sup>

A comment on a contraband funeral was similarly flawed, yet again demonstrated the strong black community was evolving in Memphis. According to the notice entitled "A Contraband Funeral,"

We were forcibly reminded on Saturday last [19th] of the uncertainties of life by observing a contraband funeral passing solemnly down Front Row. The hearse was a light spring wagon, the body just long enough for half of the body in the coffin, on one end of which was the driver. Behind the hearse walked seven men, and in their rear, seven women. We could scarcely forbear quoting the lines of Horace, so appropriate[:] Eheu Posthume, Posthume!" as the lugubrious procession moved on. "There is no hard work for poor Uncle Ned.

He has gone where the good niggers [sic] go."<sup>13</sup>

John Hill Ferguson, a private in the 10th Illinois Volunteer Infantry, took a Sunday to visit three churches in Nashville, Catholic, Presyterian and contraband. On the latter he left this description:

we went down through the negro camp they were just commencing [sic] meeting out in the hot sun. I got up on a wagon [sic] close by where I could hear them. I must say they had good ideas and seemed to understand the new Testemant [sic] in the proper light. Still they had an odd way of expressing themselves they lack both in stile [sic] and

education, of what our white preaching have. Still I believe they are more sincere then our own ministers are....<sup>14</sup>

In July 1863 the city of Nashville was heavily populated by prostitutes. They were a threat to soldiers who were contracting venereal disease at an alarmingly high rate. The "Cyprians" were summarily rounded up and sent north aboard the steam boat Idaho. [sic] only to be replaced by hundreds of contraband prostitutes who were making Nashville "a Gomorrah."<sup>15</sup> Miscegenation was not unknown as newspaper stories mentioned.<sup>16</sup> A similar system was initiated in Memphis in September, 1864.<sup>17</sup>

Regrettably, disease was rampant in contraband camps and posed a serious public health enigma. For example, at a meeting of the Nashville City Council the report of Spencer Chandler, the City pest house agent was received. It was learned that the small-pox was on the decline—the white patients being reduced from 18 to 7, and the black from 18 to 16. These figures would be a cause of congratulation were it not for one fact, "namely, that the slight reduction of cases among the negroes [sic] is rather accidental than as indicative of any real check to the progress of the disease." Mr. Chandler, however, was seriously concerned there would be "an increase not only of small pox, but of other diseases, among the contrabands, unless measures were adopted by either the military or civil authorities, or both, to place the contrabands in salubrious encampments, with "guards and overseers to see after their health and morals."<sup>18</sup>

In July, 1863 Chandler maintained the situation was critical.

These contrabands are scattered over the city and suburbs, and are crowded together by dozens and fifties [sic], many of the men living in idleness, some by thieving, a large number of the women by prostitution, and all in filth,

**Contraband...continued from page 12**

breeding disease, which will spread like wildfire over the city. So barefaced are these black prostitutes becoming, that they parade the streets, and even the public square, by day and night. An order has just been received notifying all the white prostitutes to leave town immediately. Why not issue a similar order against the blacks? If military necessity demands the removal of the first, it certainly will require the latter, if the police and our own eyes are to be believed.<sup>19</sup>

Leaving morality out of the equation Chandler looked at the problem from a public health standpoint. He quizzed the City Council that whenever he found a case of small pox among the contrabands' crowded conditions he asked himself:

How many of these inmates of a filthy den have contracted the disease? Among how many others will they spread it? How long [a]

time will elapse before it breaks out in camps, or in hospitals?- many of the occupants of these dens spend their days in hopitals [sic]. These are questions to be reflected upon seriously by our City Fathers, if they would preserve the health of the city<sup>20</sup>

Chandler had already consulted with Gov. Johnson on the subject of consigning all contrabands in a healthy local camp, and was informed the Chief Executive looked favorably upon the subject, and Chandler recommended that such measures be taken.<sup>21</sup>

A good description of a small pox hospital comes from a volunteer nurse on her first day at work in Nashville. The small pox hospital was:

...about a mile out from the city, and near Camp Cumberland. It consists of tents in the rear of a fine, large mansion which was deserted by its rebel owner. In these tents are about 800 patients-

including...contrabands... Everything seems done for their comfort which can...be, with the scarcity of help. Cleanliness and ventilation are duly attended to; but the unsightly, swollen faces, blotched with eruption, or presenting an entire scab, and the offensive odor, require some strength of nerve in those who minister to their necessities. There are six physicians each in charge of a division. Those in which I am assigned to duty are in charge of Drs. R. & C. There is but one lady nurse here, a side [sic] from the wives of three surgeons,-Mrs. B., the nurse, went with me through the tents, introduced me to the patients and explained my duties.<sup>22</sup>

**END PART 3****END NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> The free and contraband Negroes were not yet legally citizens. Yet their use of the term gave their meeting a sense of dignity and showed they were well aware of the future they could help create through participation in the political system, even though had no claims to any protection of their persons and property. This would remain true until the passage of the 14th Amendment in 1866.

<sup>2</sup> Nashville Daily Press & Times, August 16, 1864.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Guerrillas attacked the Wessington Plantation (in the Springfield environs) in December, 1864. Mrs. Jane Washington Smith wrote to her son in Toronto, Canada, telling him of the horrid details. Near the end of the debacle she wrote: "The fencing caught...fire and but for the prompt exertions of Sergeant Jackson (a negro) the whole place would have been consumed." Surely Sgt. Jackson's action was an example of such an attitude. TSL&A, Civil War Collection, Correspondence by Jane Smith Washington, Letter, December 18, 1864.

<sup>5</sup> Nashville Dispatch, March 25, 1865.

<sup>6</sup> Macon Daily Telegraph, October 26, 1863.

<sup>7</sup> Knoxville Daily Bulletin, September 16, 1863. See also: Macon Daily Telegraph, November 27, 1863.

<sup>8</sup> The meaning of this exclamation is not known. Perhaps "let the good times roll."

<sup>9</sup> The Daily Dispatch, March 6, 1863

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. March 10, 1863.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Nashville Daily Press, June 29, 1863.

<sup>13</sup> Memphis Bulletin, September 22, 1863.

<sup>14</sup> John Hill Fergusson Diary, Book 3. May 3,

1863

<sup>15</sup> Nashville Dispatch, July 3, 1863; Nashville Daily Press, July 9, 1863. [In the end the white prostitutes were returned to Nashville and a system of legal prostitution implemented by the U. S. Army. See: James Boyd Jones, Jr., "A Tale of Two Cities: The Hidden Battle Against Venereal Disease in Civil War Nashville and Memphis," Civil War History, September 1985, Vol. 31, No.3, 270-276.]

<sup>16</sup> Memphis Appeal, October 22, 1861; Nashville Dispatch, August 4, 1864.

<sup>17</sup> United States Surgeon General's Office, The Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion, vol. 1, pt. 3, ed Charles Smart (Washington, DC: GPO, 1888), pp 894-895. Also: Jones, "A Tale of Two Cities," pp. 275-276; and New York Times, October 3, 1863.

<sup>18</sup> Guards were most likely posted to keep the contraband in and so limit the spread of small pox.

<sup>19</sup> Nashville Dispatch, July 9, 1863

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Nashville Dispatch, July 9, 1863

<sup>22</sup> Powers, Pencillings, p. 42 Nashville Dispatch, July 9, 1863