

# FORT NEGLEY WIG WAG

A Semi-monthly publication of Fort Negley Park  
Metro Parks

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## BIG DAY OF SERVICE GETS NEEDED JOBS DONE

Fort Negley received a little TLC from approximately 30 volunteers from Kentucky and Tennessee on Saturday, May 4. The volunteers were participating in “The Big Day of Service”, a national movement aimed at encouraging kids to get involved and make a difference. In addition to cleaning the benches and interpretative panels, the volunteers repaired the gravel path at the fort and replanted the flowerbeds with native plants provided by proceeds from the Friends of Fort Negley Gift Shop. With the assistance of the Cumberland River Compact and Rain Gardens for Nashville, volunteers constructed an eco-friendly rain garden behind the visitors’ center.

May 4th was a cold, cloudy, rainy day, but this group of dedicated volunteers didn’t let a little thing like that stop them. They worked until their assigned jobs were finished, pausing occasionally to have a cup of hot cocoa and warm up in the visitors’ center. Between work sessions they held devotionals and had prayer. A more dedicated, inspiring and effective group could not have been hoped for.

Stop by and check out all of the improvements taking place!



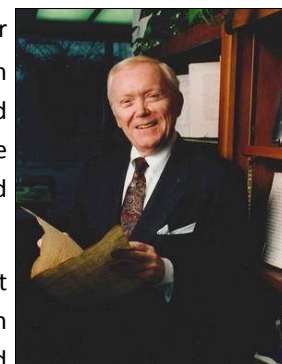
## MEMORIAL DAY SERVICES A MOVING EXPERIENCE AT FORT NEGLEY

Memorial Day services were held on Saturday May 25 at the fort this year. Complete with a laying of the wreath and twenty-one gun musket salute by United States Colored Troops re-enactors, made for a truly moving ceremony. Attending veterans were recognized by Brig General, Bert Chalfant (retired). Dr. Sam Gant worded the invocation. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilwoman, Sandra Moore and the wreath was laid by veterans and Dr. Tommie Morton-Young. Dr. Carole Bucy, Davidson County Historian, brought a moving and inspiring keynote address. Dr. Clay Bailey, President of Friends of Fort Negley, welcomed the group of about 35 and made closing remarks before the colors were retired. All in attendance agreed it was a fitting remembrance of those who have given their all for the freedom of our great United States.



## ALL OF TENNESSEE WILL FEEL THE LOSS OF WALTER THOMAS DURHAM

Walter Thomas Durham, lifelong resident of Gallatin, state historian for the past decade, and author of 24 books on Tennessee history, died on Friday, May 24 at the age of 88. Mr. Durham was a Gallatin business man and a walking encyclopedia of Tennessee and Sumner County history. He was appointed state historian in 2002 by Governor Don Sunquist. He had already served as president of the Tennessee Historical Society, founding president of the Tennessee Heritage Alliance, later renamed the Tennessee Preservation Trust, and chair of the Tennessee Historical Commission.



Bill Puryear, longtime friend and fellow historian said, "Walter was always a gentleman, very modest and courteous in his demeanor, religious about getting his facts right on history. If he wrote it down and testified to it, you could count on it being accurate. He explored aspects of history, both local and Tennessee, in areas where nobody has ever gone before. So his books will stand as reference for hundreds of years." Though Walter Durham is no longer among us, his years of work in researching and recording history will be used and enjoyed for years to come. Historians everywhere will miss him.



## FORT NEGLEY: MUCH MORE THAN A CIVIL WAR SITE

In an effort to better understand Fort Negley and St. Cloud Hill's complex history, we are currently gathering any information relating to Fort Negley and we need your help!

For more than 150 years, Fort Negley's significance has been primarily viewed through the lens of the Civil War. Although arguably the site's most dynamic era, Fort Negley's past encompasses so much more. Prior to the war, St. Cloud Hill, owned by John Overton, served as a popular picnic spot shaded by a grove of oak trees. Following the war, contraband camps flanking the hillside transformed into thriving African American communities. In 1928, the city, moved by the site's historical significance purchased St. Cloud Hill from Overton's descendants. Less than a decade later, Fort Negley, rebuilt and reinvigorated by the Works Progress Administration, opened as a public park. By the early 1950s, the city declared the decaying park unsafe and closed the site to the public. The addition of baseball and softball diamonds, where Greer Stadium stands today, offered a generation of children opportunities to discover the crumbling structure shrouded in weeds. For years, scores of Civil War enthusiasts and thrill seekers, undeterred by fencing and warning signs, explored the old fort. Homeless and transient people found refuge within the stone walls well into the early 2000s.

The above paragraph barely scratches the surface of the site's rich and diverse past. While records and reports provide facts and figures, these documents rarely capture human emotions. I often struggle with convincing visitors that their memories and participation are a part of Fort Negley's legacy and story. In many ways, we were taught that history is stagnate and that everything about the past has been discovered. We learned that only famous people are important and that understanding the past is merely a matter of memorizing dates and facts. In reality, history is just the opposite. History is ever-changing and evolving. History is about discovering and remembering not memorizing. Through the study and analysis of history, the voiceless find voices and faceless regain identities. In striving to preserve Fort Negley's walls we must remain conscious of the binding element of humanity. Help us restore the human element to St. Cloud Hill.

Did you or someone you know work for the Works Progress Administration, the National Youth Administration or the Civilian Conservation Corps in Nashville? Do you have memories or images of the baseball and softball diamonds once located at Fort Negley Park? Did you explore the fort's ruins before it reopened to the public? Did you grow up in the African American neighborhoods around St. Cloud Hill? Did you attend Fall School? If you are interested in sharing your memories and photographs of Fort Negley, please contact the visitors center at 615-862-8470 or [fortnegley@nashville.gov](mailto:fortnegley@nashville.gov).

## FIRST ANNUAL JUNETEENTH AT FORT NEGLEY

Juneteenth or Emancipation Day, June 19th, is a holiday celebrating the end of slavery in the United States. It began in Texas when news of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation (effective Jan. 1, 1863) finally reached Galveston on June 19, 1865. Union Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger read a general order to the assembled people stating that "all slaves are free," and Texas thus became the last state to learn of the Confederate surrender and the freeing of the slaves. The announcement sparked immediate celebration in the local black community, and the following year the date was again commemorated. It has since become a perennial event and is the largest event celebrating the Emancipation Proclamation.

This year the Juneteenth celebration was held at Fort Negley. The program began at 10:00 a.m. with Dr. Tommie Morton-Young as the keynote speaker. Dr. Morton-Young has been instrumental in coordinating and leading Juneteenth celebrations in several states over the years. A musical program was given by the "Princely Players" and "The MET Singers." President Abraham Lincoln, portrayed by Denise Boggs, shared a moving speech highlighting The Emancipation Proclamation. The 13th U. S. Colored Troops performed military honors.

Following the auditorium portion of the program, the remainder of the day's activities took place outside. Taking advantage of a beautiful day, families made banners and sashes for the children's parade around the fort led by Mr. Lincoln and the 13th United States Colored Troops, enjoyed picnic lunches, and displayed family photographs and albums. Through it all the real meaning of the celebration was not forgotten; it was a memorial to freedom.

Mayor Karl Dean was in attendance and joined in the festivities and fellowship. The day was a great success and we look forward to renewing the celebration next year.



The MET Singers directed by Ms. Margaret Campbelle Holman



President Abraham Lincoln presented by Dennis Boggs

## PAUL SMITH RETIRES

For the past five years, Paul Smith has been a fixture around the Fort Negley Visitors Center. His knowledge of history and attention to detail have made him a go-to guy for all things Fort Negley. Recently, during a vacation trip to the Pacific Northwest, Paul decided he wanted more time to pursue his bucket list and so he has tendered his resignation. His service to Fort Negley and Metro Parks has been excellent. While we're sad to see him go, we wish him an enjoyable and rewarding retirement. Without question, he will be missed.

**Everyone is invited to help give Paul a good send off with a retirement party,  
Wednesday, July 10 at 10:00 a.m.**

## FORT NEGLEY SUMMER HOURS

The Fort Negley Visitors Center will be open from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday through the month of August. The last day of summer hours will be August 30. Fort Negley Park is open daily from dawn until dusk. When visiting, please secure all valuables left in vehicles out of sight.

## Nashville Civil War Roundtable



**FORT NEGLEY**

Join us on the third Monday of each month at Fort Negley Visitors Center at 7 pm for an exceptional lineup of speakers and presenters.

### July

Dr. Mark Lause, University of Cincinnati, "Price's Missouri Campaign."

### August

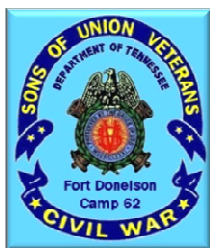
Brian Allison, Historian

Topic TBD

Although all programs are free and open to the public, the group encourages membership. Annual dues along with proceeds from the silent auction support programming and local preservation causes. For more information, please visit

<http://nashvillecivilwarroundtable.wordpress.com/>

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**Fort Donelson Camp No. 62, Sons of Union Veterans**, meet at Fort Negley Visitors Center on the fourth Tuesday every other month. The next meeting is scheduled for July 23, 2013. The business meeting begins at 6 p.m. followed by the program at 7 p.m. All programs are free and open to the public. For more information, check out the web site at <http://www.tnsuvcw.org/>.

## Upcoming Events In and Around Nashville

**Paul Smith Retirement Party:** Wednesday, July 10 at 10:00 a.m. at the Visitors Center.

**Nashville Civil War Lecture Series:** "The Homefront" presented by Mark Brown July 16 at Belmont Mansion, 1900 Belmont Boulevard from 4:30—6:00 p.m. [www.nashville.gov/Historical-Commission.aspx](http://www.nashville.gov/Historical-Commission.aspx)

**Tunes, Tales & Treasures:** Saturday, July 13 from 1—4 p.m. at the Tennessee State Museum. One person play about famed Abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe with Civil War era music. The program is free and open to the public. [www.tnmuseum.org](http://www.tnmuseum.org)

**Battle of Nashville Preservation Society Model Show** will be held at the Fort Negley Visitors Center Saturday, July 27 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Categories will include (1) American CW Infantry (Union or Confederate), (2) American CW Mounted or Artillery (3) Dioramas (open—any era), (4) Toy Soldier Collection (Any era), (5) Open (all other eras, mounted, foot, ordnance, armor/military vehicles). Admission is free and open to the public. [www.bonps.org](http://www.bonps.org)

**Nashville Civil War Lecture Series:** "The Sick and Wounded" August 20 presented by Dr. Lisa Pruitt, August 20 at Belle Meade Plantation, 5025 Harding Pike from 4:30—6:00 p.m. [www.nashville.gov/Historical-Commission.aspx](http://www.nashville.gov/Historical-Commission.aspx)

### Interested in Joining Fort Negley's Email Events List?

Please contact Fort Negley Visitors Center at 615-862-8470 or at [fortnegley@nashville.gov](mailto:fortnegley@nashville.gov).



*Fort Negley* 

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<http://www.nashville.gov/Parks-and-Recreation/Historic-Sites/Fort-Negley.aspx>

