



## THE OLD LINER



### **25th Annual Appomattox Court House NHP and Longwood University Free Civil War Seminar- February 3, 2024**

December 15, 2023

Patrick Schroeder, NPS

Appomattox, Va— Join the National Park Service and Longwood University at the annual free Civil War Seminar on Saturday, February 3, 2024, located in the Jarman Auditorium at Longwood University, Farmville, VA. Noted scholars will present a series of thematically related programs upon “Lesser Known Engagements and Some Civil War Photo Sleuthing.”

This seminar is free and open to the public. No reservations needed. Parking is available on Longwood University campus. Lunch is available at the Longwood University Dining Hall.

The program schedule is as follows:

8:30 a.m.- Doors open

9:00 a.m.- Introduction by Dr. David Coles

9:10 a.m.- James Morgan: Six Miles to Charleston, Five Minutes to Hell: The Battle of Secessionville- The June 16, 1862, Battle of Secessionville was an afterthought to the unsuccessful James Island campaign which began in early June of that year. The actual attack was poorly planned by the Federal commander, Brig. Gen. Henry Benham, though his men came very close to success. Had that happened, it is entirely possible that Charleston itself might have fallen within a matter of weeks, thereby changing the entire tenor of the war. The program covers the background of, and lead-up, to the campaign as well as the final battle itself. It is based on the author’s tactical study of the fight titled Six Miles to Charleston, Five

Minutes to Hell, published by Savas Beatie in 2022.

10:15 a.m.- Zachary Pittard: “One of the most brilliant affairs of the war:” The Battle of Staunton River Bridge and a Reevaluation of the Wilson-Kautz Raid- While often overlooked, the 10-day June 1864 Wilson-Kautz Raid serves as a signature feature in the opening operations of the Siege of Petersburg. This reevaluation intends to rekindle the importance of the raid and its impact on the war in Southside Virginia.

11:30 a.m.- Kurt Luther: Civil War Photo Sleuthing: Past, Present, and Future: People have struggled to identify unknown soldiers and sailors in Civil War photos since even before the war ended. This talk traces the 160-year history of Civil War photo sleuthing, showing how the passage of time has magnified some challenges, but also unlocked exciting new possibilities. The program will show how technologies like social media, facial recognition, and digital archives allow us to solve photo mysteries that have eluded families and researchers for a century and a half. Specifically, the speaker will focus on two projects developed by his research lab at Virginia Tech. Civil War Photo Sleuth ([www.civilwarphotosleuth.com](http://www.civilwarphotosleuth.com)) combines community expertise and facial recognition to help users identify unknown soldiers in Civil War-era photos. The site has about 20,000 registered users and 50,000 Civil War-era photos and has been featured by TIME magazine, Smithsonian magazine, and The History Channel. Civil War Twin ([www.civilwartwin.com](http://www.civilwartwin.com)), developed in partnership with the American Battlefield Trust, allows users to take a selfie and find Civil War soldiers and civilians who look



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like them, while learning about both Civil War history and artificial intelligence.

12:30 p.m.- Lunch

1:45 p.m.- William C. Davis: Little Battles that Changed the Big Valley: New Market and Piedmont- Though similar in size and not far apart in time or distance, these two engagements had vastly different outcomes. New Market is better known than Piedmont, but did Piedmont bring more significant results? Strategy, battlefield movements, soldier exploits and primary source accounts will provide insight into the events on these hard-fought battlefields.

2:45 p.m.- Keith Harvey: Forgotten Glory: The Campaign and Battle for Lynchburg- In June of 1864, the City of Lynchburg, Virginia became a primary objective for Union forces launching an offensive into the heart of the Confederacy. This program will use a variety of primary sources to provide a greater understanding of what soldiers on both sides experienced during the Campaign and Battle for Lynchburg. The stories of these soldiers illustrate often overlooked deeds of daring and sacrifice that deserve to be told.

Schedule is subject to change. Directional signs will be posted on the Longwood University Campus. For directions to the campus go to [www.longwood.edu](http://www.longwood.edu). For more information contact Dr. David Coles at 434-395-2220 or Patrick Schroeder at 434-352-8987, Ext. 232.

This annual seminar is sponsored by: Appomattox Court House National Historical Park; The Department of History, Political Science, & Philosophy, and the

Center for Southside Virginia History at Longwood University; and Eastern National Bookstores.

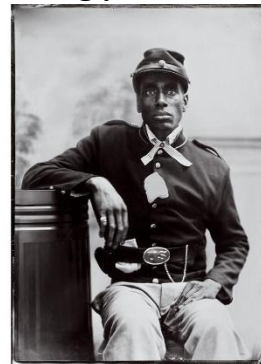
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About Appomattox Court House National Historical Park: On April 9, 1865, the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia in the McLean House in the village of Appomattox Court House, Virginia signaled the end of the nation's largest war. The stories of Appomattox Court House go far beyond the final significant battles of this nation's Civil War. Learn more at [www.nps.gov/apco](http://www.nps.gov/apco).

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### **Descendants of Black Civil War Heroes Wear Their Heritage With Pride**

**A bold new photographic project asks modern-day Americans to recreate portraits of their 19th-century ancestors in painstakingly accurate fashion**



*Jared Miller poses as his ancestor Richard Oliver, a soldier in the 20th Colored Infantry, at Penumbra Tintype Portrait Studio in New York City./Drew Gardner*

Photographs by Drew Gardner, Text by Jennie Rothenberg Gritz, Smithsonian Mag., January/February 2024

Neikoye Flowers was in second grade when he came home and asked his mother about



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his ancestors. His classmates had been sharing family stories—perhaps they were Irish, or Italian, or descended from Native Americans. Neikoye’s mother, Janisse, wasn’t sure what to say: “I told him, ‘I know bits and pieces, but I can’t give you a full rundown, aside from: We’re Black.’”

So she was taken aback a year later when a British man named Drew Gardner called and informed her that she was descended from a member of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, the all-Black Civil War unit featured in the movie *Glory*. “It seemed like a scam,” she says. A bit of research confirmed that Gardner was who he claimed to be—an award-winning British photographer who has spent nearly 20 years tracking down descendants of notable people and asking them to pose for recreated portraits of their famous ancestors.

Janisse studied the sepia-toned photo Gardner had sent of her great-great-grandfather, David Miles Moore Jr. When Moore enlisted in April 1863, he gave his age as 16, but he was likely younger. The photo showed him with a baby face, holding a drum almost a third of his height. He looked a lot like Neikoye.

Now it’s a warm day in 2023, and 9-year-old Neikoye is sitting on a couch wearing a dark blue Civil War uniform, playing iPad games with his twin sister, Judah. People of various ages are milling around the room looking like time travelers. There’s a college soccer player from Alabama, dressed in the same type of uniform as his ancestor Lewis Douglass. There’s a medical researcher from Upstate New York having her hair styled so she can recreate a portrait of her great-great-aunt Harriet Tubman.

Even the camera looks like a visitor from another era. Gardner always goes to great lengths to recreate the original portraits, hiring prop specialists to track down furniture and fabrics from earlier centuries and having wigs and costumes specially made. But this is the first time he’s chosen to use period technology for a Descendants shoot. The room where everyone is gathered today is the Penumbra Tintype Portrait Studio in Midtown Manhattan, one of the rare studios that specialize in the kind of wet-plate collodion photography used during the Civil War.

When it’s time to take Neikoye’s picture, Gardner calls out in his British accent, “Quiet on the set, please! Complete quiet!” The conversation stops, and everyone turns to watch Gardner slip a lacquered slide into the camera. He takes off the lens cap, fixes his eyes on a stopwatch and counts out loud to seven—then pulls out the plate and rushes downstairs to the darkroom. He and Sam Dole, an instructor and portrait maker at Penumbra, watch intently as the image of the drummer boy starts to appear in the photo tray. “That looks good,” Gardner proclaims with relief. “Yeah, we smashed it.”

Gardner started photographing American descendants a few years ago, partly because he was losing interest in British ones. He’d already recreated portraits with descendants of Charles II, Oliver Cromwell, Charles Dickens, Horatio Nelson, the Duke of Wellington, William Wordsworth and Napoleon Bonaparte. “At a certain point,” he says, “I looked at all the portraits I’d shot and realized they were nearly all of white men.”



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*David Miles Moore's 1863 Army enlistment record lists him as 16 years old and 5 feet tall. He stayed in the service until 1870. Carte-de-visite album of the 54th Mass. Infantry Regiment / NMAAHC*



*The descendant of David Miles Moore whom Gardner photographed is Neikoye Flowers, an elementary school student in Atlanta. Drew Gardner*

In 2020, *Smithsonian* commissioned a U.S. installment of Gardner's project, featuring descendants of Frederick Douglass and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, as well as a Black descendant of Thomas Jefferson. "I really loved doing it," Gardner says. "Then I started to think, 'Well, it's all very well and good that I'm telling stories about people who are well known, but what about the people who aren't well known but have played an amazing part in American history?'"

As a white Englishman, Gardner has his own connection to America's origins: His country abducted about three million Africans, chained and forcibly transported them across the Atlantic to labor in British colonies. Gardner started thinking about the descendants of these enslaved people and how he could help bring their stories to light. "The starting point for these Descendants shoots is usually, 'Are they descended from people the public would know?'" he says. "This is the first time I've flipped the project to say, 'These are people you *should* really know about.'"

He and his researcher, Ottawa Goodman, decided to look for descendants of Black Civil War heroes. It wasn't hard to locate relatives of Harriet Tubman, a figure widely known for ferrying enslaved people to freedom but less known for her role as a spy during the war. It was likewise easy to find descendants of Lewis Douglass, a sergeant major in the U.S. Army who wasn't famous in his own right but was the son of the famed Frederick Douglass. After that, the task got much more challenging.





Lewis Troutman was a member of the 108th Regiment of the United States Colored Infantry. The unit, formed in Kentucky, was composed mainly of formerly enslaved. Black men. Thomas Harris Collection



Troutman's descendant Christopher Wilson says the U.S. Army "very purposefully and strategically" put his ancestor's unit in charge of guarding Confederate prisoners. "The visuals were really important," he says. Drew Gardner

White Americans more often know when they're related to anyone even slightly



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remarkable. Many white genealogy buffs can trace their family trees all the way back to Huguenot rebels or Scottish chieftains. The information they're seeking—such as names, dates, places of residence and family connections—is often available in the form of birth and death certificates, immigration records, marriage licenses, baptism records or U.S. census listings. Because so much of this information is easy to access, a white ancestry-seeker might go out looking for information and find pre-existing trees created by distant relatives.

But Black families tend to know far less about their ancestors, and what they do pass down within families often isn't published online. [Emmaline MacBeath](#), a genealogist at the collaborative genealogy website [WikiTree](#), says there are far fewer user-generated family trees for African Americans than there are for white people. One reason is that records of enslaved people are hard to navigate. "You have to be creative to find things using many different spellings, different birthdays," she says. "And you have to study entire communities at a time. On slave schedules, there were just tick marks on a page—there were no names. So, how do we take this list of 200 ages, with no other information, and turn it into a list of actual people?"

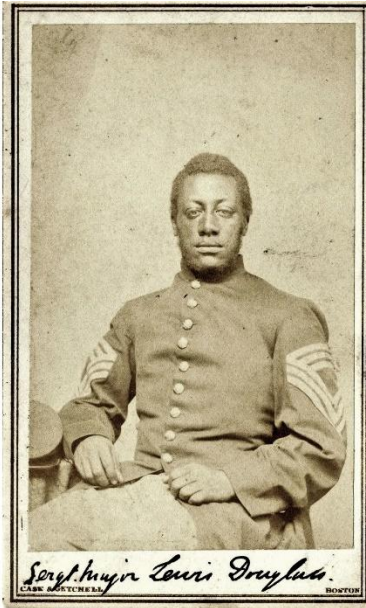
There's also the fact that many African Americans haven't publicized their family trees because they preferred to keep that information private. When Janisse mentioned Gardner's message to an elderly aunt, she discovered that her aunt knew all about their Civil War ancestor. But she'd never said a word about it. "Back when my aunt was growing up, it wasn't something to brag about," Janisse says. "It was something



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that put a red flag on you, made you stand out in a way.” Like many African Americans, her aunt had internalized the message that life is safest for Black people who live quietly and humbly, without attracting attention or challenging the ways white people choose to think about the past.



*Frederick Douglass's son Lewis Douglass, a sergeant major. Lewis joined the military as part of a wave of Black men who sought to prove, as his father said, that they were not the "craven cowards, without soul, without manhood, without the spirit of soldiers" that Confederates slandered them as. National Park Services*



*Austin Morris, a college soccer player in Alabama, was always aware that he was descended from the great American writer and orator Frederick Douglass. But the Descendants project gave him a deeper sense of connection to Frederick's son Lewis Douglass, one of the first African Americans to enlist in the Civil War. Drew Gardner*

“These are families who have always been told, ‘American history has nothing to do with you,’” Gardner says. “No one talks about the price their families paid, not only for their own freedom but for the future of America itself.”

In the case of the Flowers family, Gardner and his researchers started out with David Miles Moore Jr. They were able to find records that included a filing for a military pension, dated October 18, 1897, and a mention in the U.S. census from 1900. That information helped them identify his offspring. As they worked their way down the family line, obituaries helped them find the names of grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Once the researchers found Janisse's name, it wasn't hard to find pictures of her family. She and her husband, Neiko, hosted a radio show and regularly



featured their children on their public Instagram feed.

Janisse and Neiko talked things over for a while before they agreed to let Neikoye take part. “He was the right age, the right height,” says Janisse. “Let him recreate that photo. Let him have this experience. He wanted to know about his history. So let’s do a deep dive into it.”

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When the Civil War began in April 1861, the U.S. didn’t allow Black men to join the armed forces. Fredrick Douglass published an essay in his publication *Douglass’ Monthly*. “Why does the government reject the Negro?” he wrote. “Is he not a man? Can he not wield a sword, fire a gun, march and countermarch, and obey orders like any other?” Excluding Black men seemed to Douglass like a concession to the enemy. “The national edifice is on fire. Every man who can carry a bucket of water, or remove a brick, is wanted; but those who have the care of the building, having a profound respect for the feeling of the national burglars who set the building on fire, are determined that the flames shall only be extinguished by Indo-Caucasian hands, and to have the building burnt rather than save it by means of any other. Such is the pride, the stupid prejudice and folly that rules the hour.”

The Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, opened the way for Black men to enlist. The proclamation ensured that the military would “recognize and maintain the freedom” of African Americans and do nothing to stand in the way of “any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.” With that, the U.S. military went from

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excluding Black men to actively recruiting them.

Douglass played an enthusiastic role. In March 1863, he published a broadside titled: “Men of Color, to Arms! Now or Never!” He wrote that slaveholders had made Black men out to be “craven cowards, without soul, without manhood, without the spirit of soldiers.” The only way to prove them wrong was to join up: “If we are not lower in the scale of humanity than Englishmen, Irishmen, white Americans and other races, we can show it now.”

This was one reason the Confederates didn’t want to enlist Black men (along with the obvious potential repercussions of arming the people they’d been enslaving). In the last few desperate weeks of the war, the South did enlist a few thousand Black soldiers, but only after much debate. “I think that the proposition to make soldiers of our slaves is the most pernicious idea that has been suggested since the war began,” the Confederate politician and military leader Howell Cobb wrote in a January 1865 letter to the Confederate secretary of war. “If slaves will make good soldiers, our whole theory of slavery is wrong.”

This was exactly what Douglass wanted to prove. All over the North, Black men rushed to answer the call. By the end of the war, 179,000 African Americans had served in the U.S. Army, making up 10 percent, and another 19,000 had joined the Navy. Douglass’ sons Lewis and Charles were among the first to enlist.

At the studio in Manhattan, Austin Morris, a 20-year-old Division 1 soccer player at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, is



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getting ready to recreate a portrait of Lewis Douglass. Morris has always known he was descended from Frederick Douglass, though he keeps a low profile about it. “I’m never going to be like, ‘Oh, look at me,’” he says shyly. “I tell my close friends, but I don’t really like all the attention.”

It felt different to dress up like Lewis. “I was looking at his picture, thinking: I’m 20. He was in his 20s when the picture was taken. He fought in the war, and he was one of the first Blacks to sign up for it. That’s crazy. I couldn’t imagine doing that.” Wearing a uniform like his ancestor wore, its sleeves marked with the insignia of a sergeant major, Morris reflects on his own ambitions. “It makes me feel like I need to make them proud, to carry on their legacy,” he says, “to do things that will honor our family.”



*To recreate this photo with descendant Deanna Walz, the photographer enlisted the help of a Netflix costumer. Tubman owned a few elegant pieces, including a lace shawl from Queen Victoria that’s now in the Smithsonian’s collections. Drew Gardner*



*Famed liberator Harriet Tubman also spied on the South during the Civil War. On June 2, 1863, she led U.S. troops to a spot in South Carolina where they set fire to plantations, allowing hundreds of enslaved laborers to flee. Library of Congress*

None of the men in uniform today has ever served in the military, but many of their relatives have. Charles and Joan Miller are here with their adult son, Jared, who is dressed like his Civil War ancestor Richard Oliver. Jared wears a slouchy dark blue Civil War forage cap on his head. Charles wears a baseball cap with the words “Thomas Edison 64 Vietnam.” “I went to Edison High School in Philadelphia, and we had the highest casualties of any school in America,” Charles says. The 64 refers to the number of boys from his almost entirely African American school who died in a war many of them saw as irrelevant to their lives. Charles himself tore up his paperwork from the Selective Service when it first arrived, but after the police spotted him in the park singing doo-wop songs with his friends, they loaded the young men into a police van and brought them before the draft board. With



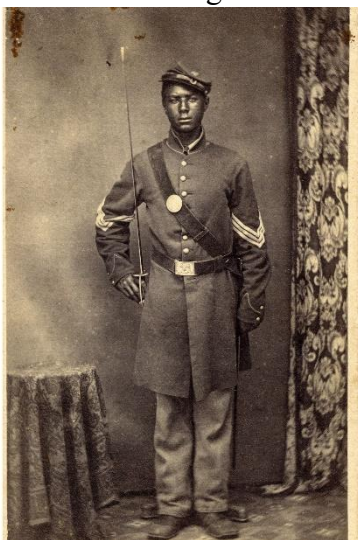


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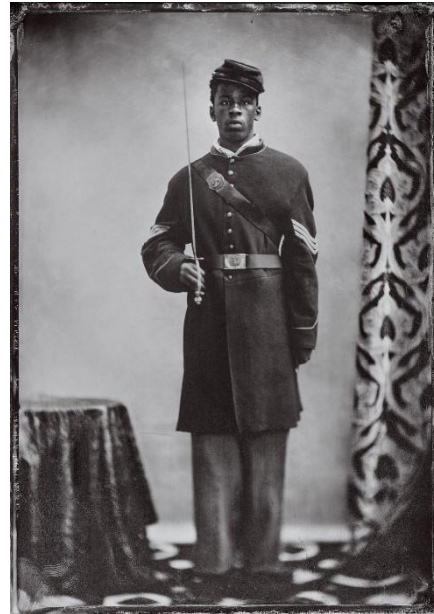
help from a family friend, he was able to enlist in the Navy instead of the Marines, and he spent the war years serving in the Caribbean instead of Southeast Asia. Nobody had to draft Richard Oliver into the Civil War. The 31-year-old Black laborer from Upstate New York volunteered the day after Christmas in 1863, leaving his wife and two children and traveling south with the 20th Colored Infantry. Although Oliver survived the war, he died of malaria on the journey home and never saw his family again.

A framed portrait of Oliver made its way down through the generations until it ended up in the hands of Charles' wife, Joan. No one in her family knew the identity of the young man gazing earnestly into the camera. Eventually, the Millers connected with a local historian and learned that the man was Joan's great-great-grandfather. A local newspaper covered the story. "I feel humbled by it, really," Joan says. "Because I didn't know who the soldier in this picture was. And when I found out it's like—wow. You know? I can trace back to him. What a wonderful feeling."



*Civil War hero Andrew Jackson Smith was awarded a posthumous medal of honor for*

*risking his life to carry a fallen American flag during the 1864 Battle of Honey Hill. State Library of Massachusetts*



*"My granddad has the medal at his house," said Smith's descendant Kwesi Bowman. "I wish he was here, but he just had surgery, so he couldn't make it. I'm doing this for him." Drew Gardner*

Christopher Wilson is marching around the room with a replica of an 1853 Enfield rifle in the crook of his right arm. "I actually grew up with one of these. We had one over our fireplace in Detroit. And every time my parents weren't home," he adds, "I'd take it down and play Civil War in the living room."

Wilson is the director of experience design at the National Museum of American History, but he's here today because he's the great-great-grandson of Louis Troutman, a private in the 108th Regiment of the U.S. Colored Infantry. The unit, formed in Kentucky in 1864, was made up mostly of formerly enslaved Black men.

Wilson's main associations with the military came from his father, a veteran of World



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War II. While his father was training at Fort McClellan in Alabama, he and a few friends crossed paths with the local sheriff, who was riding around with some military personnel. The sheriff pointed a Thompson submachine gun at the young Black men. “Now, I know you boys are new here,” the sheriff said. “I don’t want to see any of you walking in groups of more than two down my streets.” Wilson’s father never forgot that moment. “He’s an American soldier, potentially about to give his life for his country,” he says. “I think he was really tempered by that.” Wilson has given a lot of thought to the way Americans talk about military history. He notes that the tradition of referring to one side in the Civil War as “the Union” and the other side as “the Confederacy” makes the two seem equivalent, like sports teams in different jerseys, instead of a sovereign nation fighting a group of insurgents. And while the war did set brother against brother—“One wore blue and one wore gray,” as the song goes—the institution of slavery did far more to tear families apart. MacBeath, the genealogist, says assembling Black family trees often leads to painful revelations. “Just yesterday, I came across a family that had been sold away in pieces,” she says. What’s more, the DNA of enslaved Black people and white slaveholders is closely intertwined. Such discoveries can be very emotional for descendants of both groups, says MacBeath. “Because what does that ultimately mean?” she says. “That somebody got raped. We have a lot of people who are just starting to realize this is what it is and they need to accept it, and that’s how they get a full family tree. And then there’s people who are still very traumatized by it and don’t want to talk about it.”

Descendants of the Black Civil War hero Andrew Jackson Smith have always known they had a white slaveholder in their family, a Kentucky landowner named Elias P. Smith (also listed in some places as Elijah or Elisha Smith). In his last will and testament, Elias asked his son Harrison to care for two of the women he’d enslaved, Susan and Hilary—to “treat said Negroes differently from other slaves and keep them each comfortable and with all the necessaries of life as long as they shall live.” Susan was Andrew Jackson Smith’s mother, and it was common knowledge among both Black and white members of the family that Elias was Andrew’s father.

When Elias’ white son William was serving in the Confederate Army, he planned on bringing his enslaved half-brother into battle with him. But Andrew managed to escape to the other side, joining a U.S. regiment. He fought in the Battle of Honey Hill, a failed attempt to block the Charleston and Savannah Railway. When Andrew Jackson Smith saw the U.S. color-bearer fall, he risked his life to take up the battle flags and carry them on through heavy enemy fire.



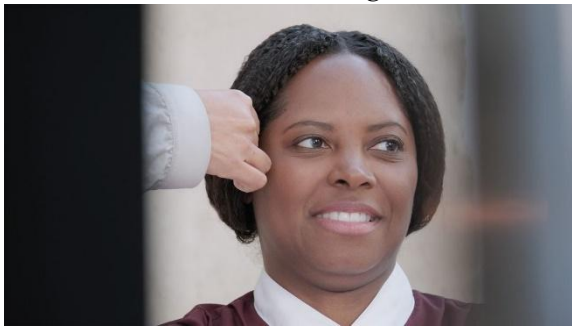
*Drew Gardner behind the wet-plate colloidal camera at Penumbra Studios. Gelatin-coated dry plates mostly replaced this technology in the 1870s. Diego Huerta*



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*Jared Miller arrived at the Manhattan studio with a beard but agreed to shave it so he could more closely resemble his Civil War ancestor. Drew Gardner & Diego Huerta*



*While the men posed in uniform, Walz spent hours having her hair styled by a beautician to recreate the appearance of her ancestor, Harriet Tubman. Drew Gardner & Diego Huerta*

In 1916, someone nominated Andrew Jackson Smith for a Medal of Honor. But the process stalled until his grandson, Andrew Bowman Sr., made it his mission to complete it. On January 16, 2001, President Bill Clinton invited Smith’s descendants to the White House, where he finally awarded Smith’s posthumous medal. “It was probably one of his last acts before he left office,” says Andrew Bowman Jr., who attended the ceremony with his father. He was moved that the president had taken the time to learn his ancestor’s story: “When he spoke about him, it was like he knew him.”

Andrew Bowman Jr.’s 21-year-old son Kwesi is posing as Andrew Jackson Smith today. Kwesi was born after his family

visited the White House, and he says it’s strange to be celebrated in this way. “I feel like a lot of Black Americans don’t really know what they are,” says Kwesi, who is a student at the University of Houston-Downtown. “I’m kind of jealous of people who do. I have friends who are Moroccan, Senegalese, Mexican—they’re all so proud of it. They’re *representing*, you know?”

Kwesi pulls up the results of a recent genealogy test on his phone. About 80 percent of his genetic material comes from Africa: Nigeria, Cameroon, Benin, Togo, Ghana and the Ivory Coast. Most of his remaining DNA comes from Scandinavia and the British Isles. Andrew Jackson Smith’s white father is in there somewhere. As Kwesi talks, a longtime Civil War re-enactor named [Calvin Osborne](#) is busy sewing a patch onto his sleeve. Osborne got interested in Black Civil War history after seeing the movie *Glory*. He is part of the District of Columbia’s re-enactment group, [Company B](#), and has been doing re-enactments for the past 30 years. In 2020, he found out that one of his own ancestors, William Lacy, fought in the war after escaping slavery as a young teenager.

Osborne has supplied all the costumes and accessories for the *Smithsonian* photo shoot. The uniforms, crafted by a company in Mississippi, belong to Osborne’s fellow re-enactors. “This will be worn next week in Virginia,” Osborne says, adjusting Kwesi’s jacket. He points out the thickness of the wool. “If it’s cold you’ll be happy to have that coat on, but when it’s hot, not so much. They would march for about nine hours a day.”





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The 30 or so Black men in Osborne’s re-enactment group are on friendly terms with the white men who face off against them in mock battles. When asked what inspires the Confederate players to take part, Osborne says simply, “You’d have to ask them.” He adds, “Not all of the Confederate soldiers were slave owners. Some of them were fighting because somebody attacked their family. There’s lots of reasons people go to war, even today.”

Osborne’s Black regiment generally has to surrender to the Confederates. “Oftentimes, Black regiments were given the toughest duty,” Osborne says. For instance, in the Battle of Fort Wagner in July 1863, depicted in *Glory*, the U.S. Army sent the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry to breach a Confederate outpost guarding the Charleston Harbor. The Black men knew going into the fight that they’d suffer the heaviest casualties, while white soldiers would bring up the rear. Of the 650 Black men who took part in that battle, more than 270 were killed, wounded, captured or presumed dead.



*Mary Yacovone of the Massachusetts Historical Society shows an ancestral relic to the Flowers family—from left: Neiko, Judah, Neikoye, and Janisse. Drew Gardner & Diego Huerta*



*The relic: Moore’s commemorative lapel pin. The center features Fort Sumter, South Carolina, where the war began. The four sides list battles in which Moore’s unit fought. Drew Gardner & Diego Huerta*

Is it demoralizing for Osborne and his fellow re-enactors to play out scenes of fallen Black heroes over and over again? “It isn’t,” Osborne says. “Because we’re giving honor to them.”

As the men mill around in their uniforms, Deanna Stanford Walz, a medical researcher, is getting her hair done. Her great-great-great-aunt Harriet Tubman almost certainly never spent hours at a salon, but Gardner wants Walz’s hair texture to resemble Tubman’s in a photograph from the late 1860s. Gardner also hired a costume designer from the Netflix show “The Crown” to recreate the blouse Tubman wore in the original picture.

Tubman is famous for ferrying enslaved people to freedom, but she also played a crucial role in the Civil War. She slipped behind enemy lines and gathered information from enslaved people that could help the U.S. war effort, and on June 2, 1863, she put that intelligence to use. She led U.S. troops to the Combahee River in South Carolina, where they burned infrastructure and set fire to plantations. During the chaos, hundreds of enslaved laborers fled into the





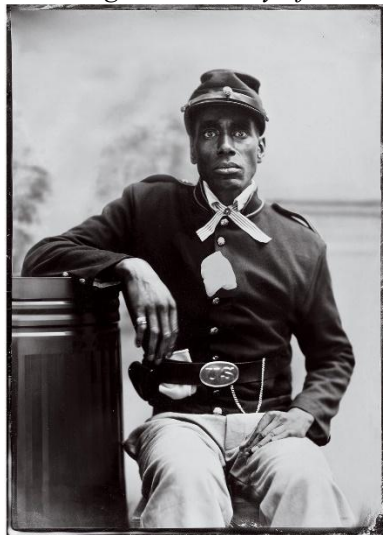
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gunboats. Tubman said later, “They reminded me of the children of Israel coming out of Egypt.”



*Richard Oliver, a 31-year-old Black laborer from Upstate New York, volunteered to join the 20th Colored Infantry the day after Christmas in 1863. Oliver survived the fighting in the South, but he died of malaria on the journey home and never saw the wife and two children he left behind again. Courtesy of the Miller Family*



*Jared Miller is not the first member of his family to dress up as his ancestor Richard Oliver (left). His son once dressed as a Civil War soldier for a Black History Month project. Miller is glad to have both of these photos “to pass on to my children and my grandchildren, for them to*

*see what we did for the country.” Drew Gardner*

Walz grew up in Auburn, New York, where Tubman lived out her later years. “We definitely spent more time talking about her than other school districts,” Walz says. “But I wasn’t really like, ‘Oooh, this is my heritage!,’ even though I did know at the time that I was related to her.” As an adult, Walz has a deeper appreciation for all the different things Tubman was able to do—she could navigate across different types of landscapes; she could work as a nurse or a cook; she could disguise herself as an old woman or as a man. “She did so much, and I guess I have that in me, too. It’s in my DNA.”

Gardner says these kinds of reflections have made this one of the most meaningful photo shoots of his career. “There was a moment where I looked to the other end of the room and I saw all the descendants together,” he says later. “They were all asking, ‘Who were you related to?’ All these people were talking about their histories. It made me think about how much it would help society in the United States if more people could come together and have a better understanding of their shared history.”

Before the Flowers family leaves for the day, Gardner tells them he’s invited a curator from the Massachusetts Historical Society, Mary E. Yacovone, to take the train down from Boston and tell them more about their ancestor. Yacovone knows a great deal about the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, a unit of Black men from throughout the United States. “There were big free populations of color but not enough to fill all the Massachusetts regiments,” Yacovone



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says. “So people just came from all over because they were so ready to serve.” She steps forward and holds out a gloved hand. “This is one of the most precious objects in our society’s collection,” she tells Neikoye and his parents. She holds out a small lapel pin that Moore had made for himself after the Civil War. There were no medals given to young men like Moore at the time, but private jewelers filled the gap and advertised custom-made mementos in newspapers. Yacovone points a careful finger toward the lapel pin. “It’s got his name and his regiment and the dates of the battles where he fought.” After the Civil War, Moore continued his military career. The 1870 U.S. census showed him serving with the 25th U.S. Infantry at Fort Clark in Texas.

Neikoye and Judah put on white gloves so they can hold their ancestor’s memento and think about the pride he must have felt when he spent his own money to have it made. “They’re going to remember everything about this trip,” Janisse says, watching her 9-year-old twins. “And hopefully it turns that page in history where they can brag about this to their kids and grandkids.” When they do, they’ll have the pictures to go with it.

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*Credits: Emma MacBeath, WikiTree US Black Heritage project; Ottawa Goodman, research and coordinator; Sam Dole, Penumbra Foundation; Elizabeth Zuck, set design; Calvin Osbourne, props and costume; Angela Huff, hair and make up; background prints by Fujifilm USA*

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*Correction, December 15, 2023: An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated the U.S. regiment that Andrew Jackson Smith joined. While he worked as a servant to a*



*major in the 41st Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment, he ultimately enlisted in the 55th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, with whom he fought in the Battle of Honey Hill. The article also misstated that it was Smith’s father who wanted to bring him into battle; in fact, it was his half-brother.*

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## A Photo Story of the Ponder House in Civil War Atlanta

James Ponder Sessums, Jr., December 15, 2023, [blueandgrayeducation.org](http://blueandgrayeducation.org)

As a quick introduction and to explain my connection to the following photos, my name is James Ponder Sessums, Jr. My middle name was my grandmother’s maiden name.





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These two black-and-white photos were taken by George N. Barnard of the siege lines around Atlanta shortly after it fell to General Sherman. Of particular note is the white house as seen in the siege lines photo and close up. For years, the house was incorrectly called the “Potter” house but is in fact the “Ponder” house. A mispronunciation I have personally experienced. Owned by Ephraim G. Ponder (my grandmother’s great uncle), it was used by Confederate sharpshooters and is the reason it is so damaged. It burned down shortly after Sherman left the Atlanta area for his march to the sea.

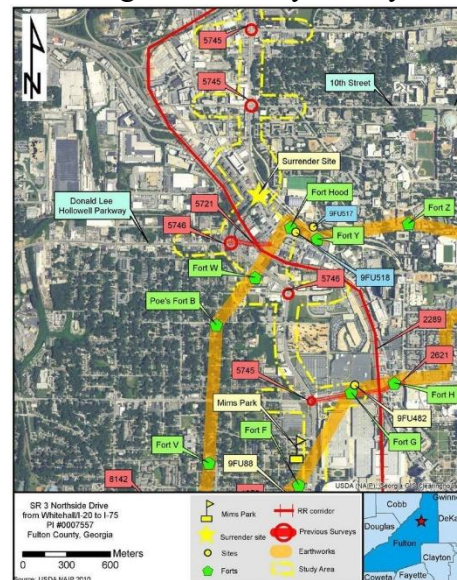
### Who were the Ponders?

According to a March 2018 article in the NASIG newsletter written by David Bradley, "Ephraim [Ponder] made his fortune elsewhere and moved to Atlanta to enjoy his retirement. In 1857, at the age of 47, he bought 26 1/3 acres on the Marietta Road. ... He built a home and moved in with his wife, Ellen. ... In October of [1861], Ephraim filed for divorce on the grounds that his wife had been unfaithful, going back to their wedding day, that she stayed drunk, that she threatened her husband with a loaded

revolver and that she abused him. ... Brokenhearted, Ephraim returned home to Thomasville, Georgia, to await the final divorce decree."

As Sherman's forces approached Atlanta, only Ellen and their enslaved individuals were living at the Ponder estate. But Ellen soon fled for Macon. So, when the Union soldiers arrived, "management of the property was formally assumed by the man who'd been doing it for years, anyway, a slave named Festus Flipper. He's described by historian Franklin Garrett, as a 'skilled carriage-trimmer and shoemaker.'"

An "estimated ton of shot and shell was fired into or dropped onto the Ponder Mansion." The house itself was destroyed by fire shortly after Sherman and his army left. Ephraim Ponder built an almost identical house at 324 N. Dawson St., Thomasville, Georgia (which is still there), and lived there for some time. He died in 1874 in Florida according to the family history I have.



### The House's Location





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The exact location has been disputed within about a two-block area, but it seems the most agreed-upon of those whom I have asked, is that it sits on the site of the parking garage for the Georgia Tech Student Center (current address: Smithgall Building, 353 Ferst Dr. NW, Atlanta, GA 30332). The house would have been right about where the yellow circle marked by the blue rectangle marked "9FU517" ( I am not sure what the marker is for; maybe the parking garage I mentioned), just above Fort Y. You can see Bobby Dowd football stadium along the right edge of the picture. Again, this is on the Georgia Tech campus, in the northwest part of Atlanta.



*The author standing at the house's current site  
Photos courtesy of the author.*

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