

JUNETEENTH

NORTH CAROLINA

CELEBRATE FREEDOM

2025 TOOLKIT

The North Carolina

African American

Heritage

Commission

The North Carolina African American Heritage Commission (NCAAHC) works continuously to celebrate and share the art, history, and heritage of African Americans. It is our mission to preserve, protect, and promote North Carolina's African American history, arts, and culture for all people.

This is a resource guide that will assist you in celebrating the Juneteenth holiday. Also known as "Freedom Day," Juneteenth is a uniquely American holiday that commemorates the June 19, 1865 announcement that slavery would be abolished in Texas. North Carolina joins in the celebration of this national holiday and commemorates the emancipation of enslaved African Americans throughout the former Confederacy.

We encourage you to interact with this resource by clicking on corresponding links for items that have been curated to encourage awareness and enthusiasm for Juneteenth.



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JUNETEENTH

A Celebration of Freedom



What is Juneteenth?

Juneteenth is an annual holiday, celebrated on June 19th, that commemorates the freedom of the enslaved in the United States. The name Juneteenth is a combination of the words "June" and "nineteenth." Also referred to as Emancipation Day and Freedom Day, Juneteenth is the oldest commemoration of its kind in the United States.

Why do we celebrate Juneteenth?

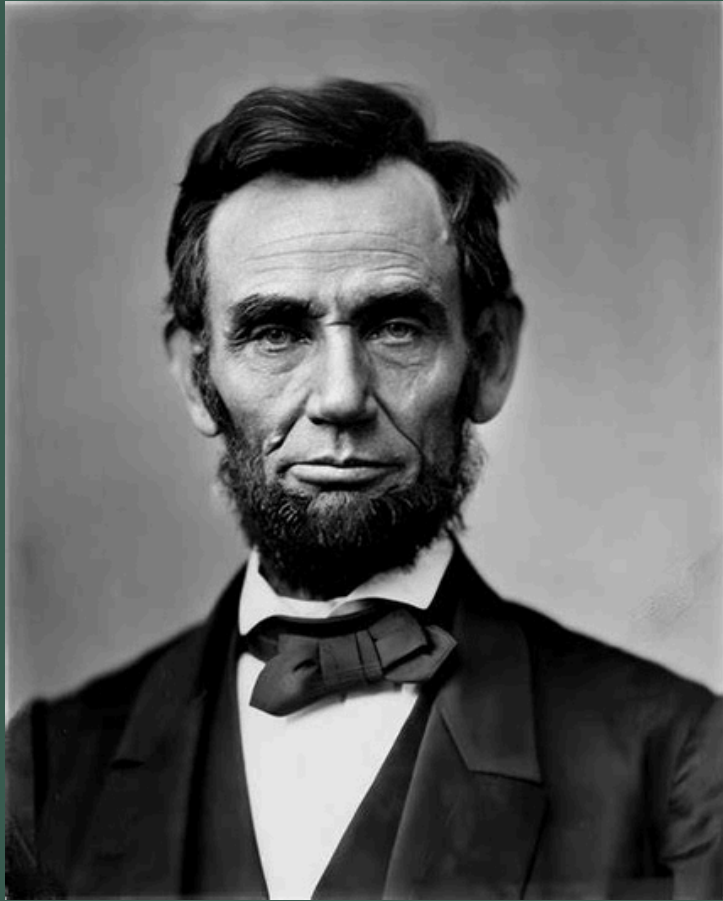
Juneteenth has become not only a time to commemorate Black liberation from the institution of slavery, but also an acknowledgment of resilience, solidarity, and culture of the Black community. Juneteenth allows us all to join together to celebrate the freedoms and lives that generations before have fought bravely to secure.

The History of **JUNETEENTH**



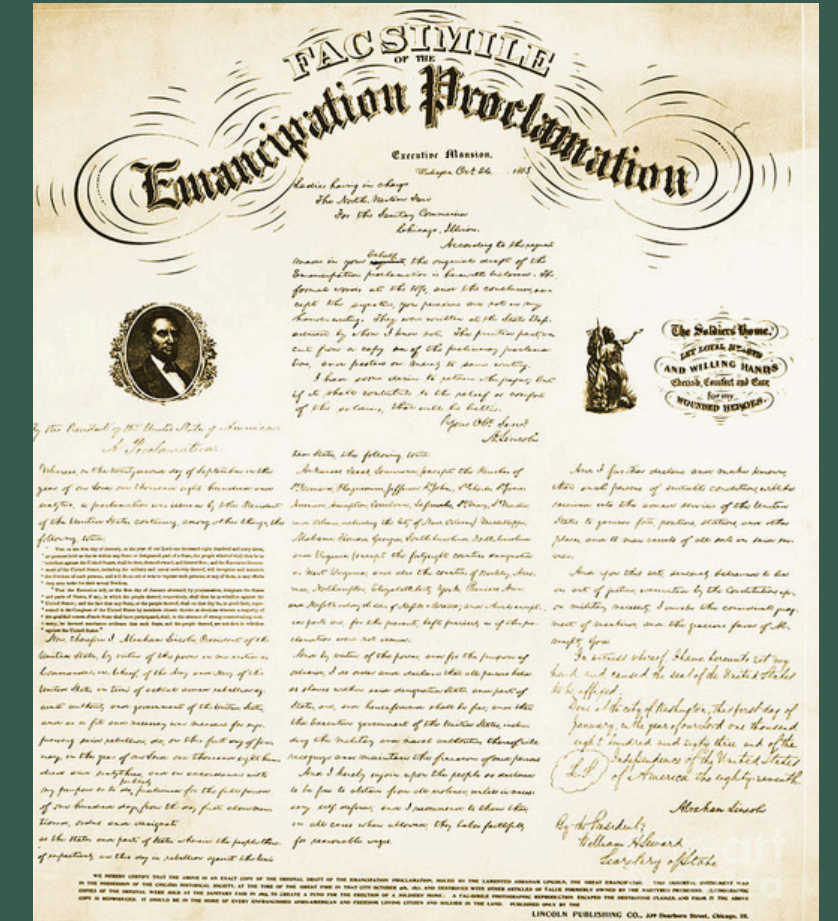
During the American Civil War (1861 - 1865), emancipation was implemented in different places at different times. Emancipation became a well-known cause of celebration across the United States.

Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862 and it went into effect on January 1, 1863. The proclamation freed persons who were enslaved in "rebellious states."



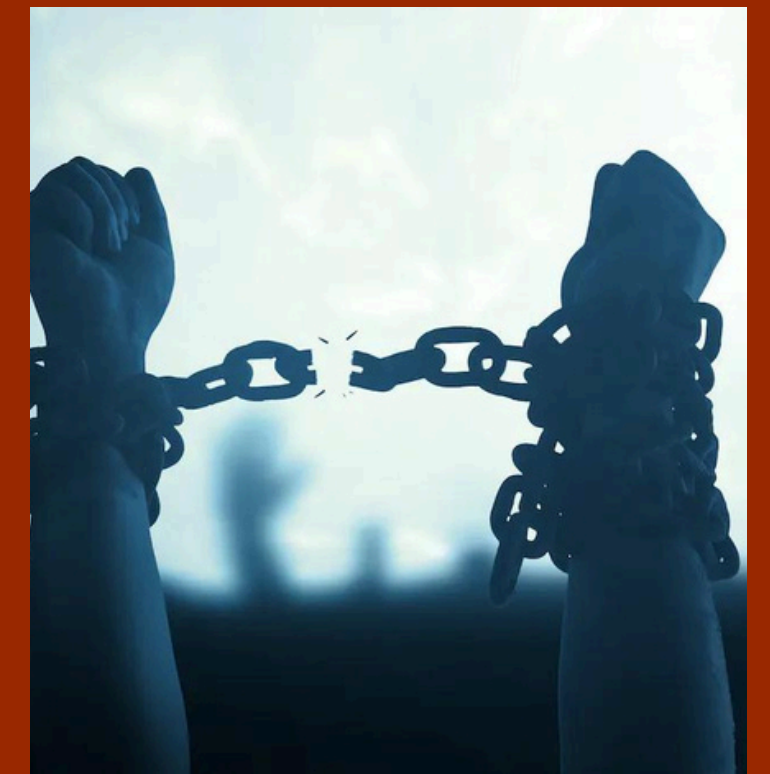
It was not until June 18, 1865, two and a half years after the signing of the proclamation was issued, that the Union army arrived in Galveston, Texas.

The next day, on June 19, 1865, Union soldiers issued General Order No. 3, which informed Texans that enslaved persons were free.



The news was met with celebration, but also defiance. Those who were formerly enslaved went to great lengths to claim and maintain their freedom in the days following the announcement.

Juneteenth has been celebrated annually since then and is recognized as one of the longest-running holidays established by African Americans. The holiday spread throughout Texas and spread to other states, honoring the end of slavery in the United States.



QUICK FACTS

Liberation in North Carolina



On this day, we can honor formerly enslaved people who were able to achieve emancipation and claim their freedom.



In North Carolina, African Americans were liberated from slavery in diverse ways over time.



African Americans created new lives in freedmen's communities like Hotel de Afrique and Roanoke Island Freedman's Colony on the Outer Banks and James City in New Bern.



Emancipation celebrations in NC began occurring as early as January 1, 1864. Therefore, African Americans in North Carolina have a tradition of celebrating freedom even before Juneteenth.



On January 1, 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation provided a pathway to freedom for enslaved African Americans in communities like Beaufort, Elizabeth City, Plymouth, and New Bern.



Other enslaved North Carolinians claimed their freedom in April 1865, and the months thereafter, after Confederate troops surrendered in Durham. U.S. Colored Troops witnessed this surrender.



6,000 African American men from North Carolina served in the Civil War as U.S. Colored Troops; they fought for liberation and played a major role in emancipating African Americans across the South.



In North Carolina, we can use Juneteenth to explore how liberation and emancipation played out in our local communities; and to honor the rich communities and institutions that were created as a result - like Shaw University (Raleigh), Princeville, and St. Peter A.M.E. Zion Church.



Some of our state's earliest Juneteenth festivals were established in Rocky Mount, Charlotte, Winston-Salem, and Greensboro. Stagville State Historic Site also has a long tradition of honoring and celebrating Emancipation.

North Carolina's Liberation Stories

Bennett Place & NC State Capitol

The NCAAHC 2025 toolkit features two NC State Historic Sites. This year, NCAAHC partnered with Bennett Place and NC State Capitol to present a few of our state's unique liberation stories.





Bennett Place Historic Site Liberation Stories



Photo credit: Bennett Place State Historic Site

Address: 4409 Bennett Memorial Road Durham NC 27705

For more information about the site you may contact via phone or email:

Phone: 919-383-4345

Email: bennett@dncr.nc.gov



Brief History: Bennett Place

In April 1865, U.S. Army Major General William T. Sherman met with Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston to negotiate Johnston's surrender. They met at the farmhouse of James and Nancy Bennett near Durham's Station in what would become Durham, NC. Sherman and Johnston reached an agreement that would have ended the Civil War completely, paroled all remaining Confederate troops, and outlined terms of peace.

This Agreement, reached April 18, 1865, needed approval from both the U.S. and Confederate governments because it went beyond terms of military surrender. Confederate President Davis's cabinet agreed to the terms, recognizing the Agreement's language made no mention of abolishing slavery. Newly sworn in President Johnson's cabinet made similar observations and rejected the deal. While politicians in Washington disagreed on terms of reconstructing former Confederate states, all agreed that abolition of slavery was a necessary consequence of the war. Sherman and Johnston returned to Bennett Place and reached a military surrender of Johnston's Army of Tennessee on April 26, 1865, marking the largest surrender of Confederate forces.

Today, Bennett Place commemorates the importance of the Bennett Place surrender in helping end the Civil War. The site also explores how the uneasy peace & Reconstruction era that followed shaped the lives of all North Carolinians. The stories provided are results of what took place at Bennett Place.

[For information on events happening at Bennett Place click here.](#)



Levin Cole

In mid-March 1865, U.S. and Confederate soldiers clashed on farmland during the Battle of Bentonville. Enslaved people like Levin Cole remained on the land while weaponry and soldiers cried out around them. Through this violence, Levin received his freedom as the Confederates retreated west.

Levin remained in Bentonville, continuing to work on nearby farms for pay. In 1866, he married Harriet Morris – whom he likely knew and cared for before he gained his freedom, but was unable to officially marry beforehand. They had three children together by 1870. Levin saved enough money to purchase land near where he had been enslaved and build his family a home that was truly theirs. The house still stands and is now the oldest home built by a formerly enslaved person in Johnston County. The history of the Battle of Bentonville is interpreted at Bentonville Battlefield State Historic Site.



Photo credit: Bennett Place State Historic Site

Millie Henry.

When Millie Henry was about ten years old, her enslaver separated her from her elderly grandmother on his plantation in east North Carolina and forced her to travel west with him. He learned of the approaching U.S. Army and, rather than accept the end of slavery, fled to Raleigh. Once there, he hired out Henry several times.

Despite General Robert E. Lee's surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia on April 9, 1865, the Civil War continued. Millie remained enslaved. Four days later, on April 12, Millie drew water from a well on Fayetteville Street. She watched as U.S. cavalymen rode into town, the first federal soldiers to enter Raleigh. With her city now under control of the United States, Millie Henry was now free. She remained in Raleigh, eventually owning a home in town with her husband.



Photo of Millie Henry at age 82
Photo credit: Library of Congress





North Carolina State Capitol From Naming to Knowing

Address: 1 East Edenton Street Raleigh, N.C.

For more information about the site you may contact via phone or email:

Phone: 984-867-8340

Email: state.capitol@dncr.nc.gov



Photo courtesy of the NC State Capitol



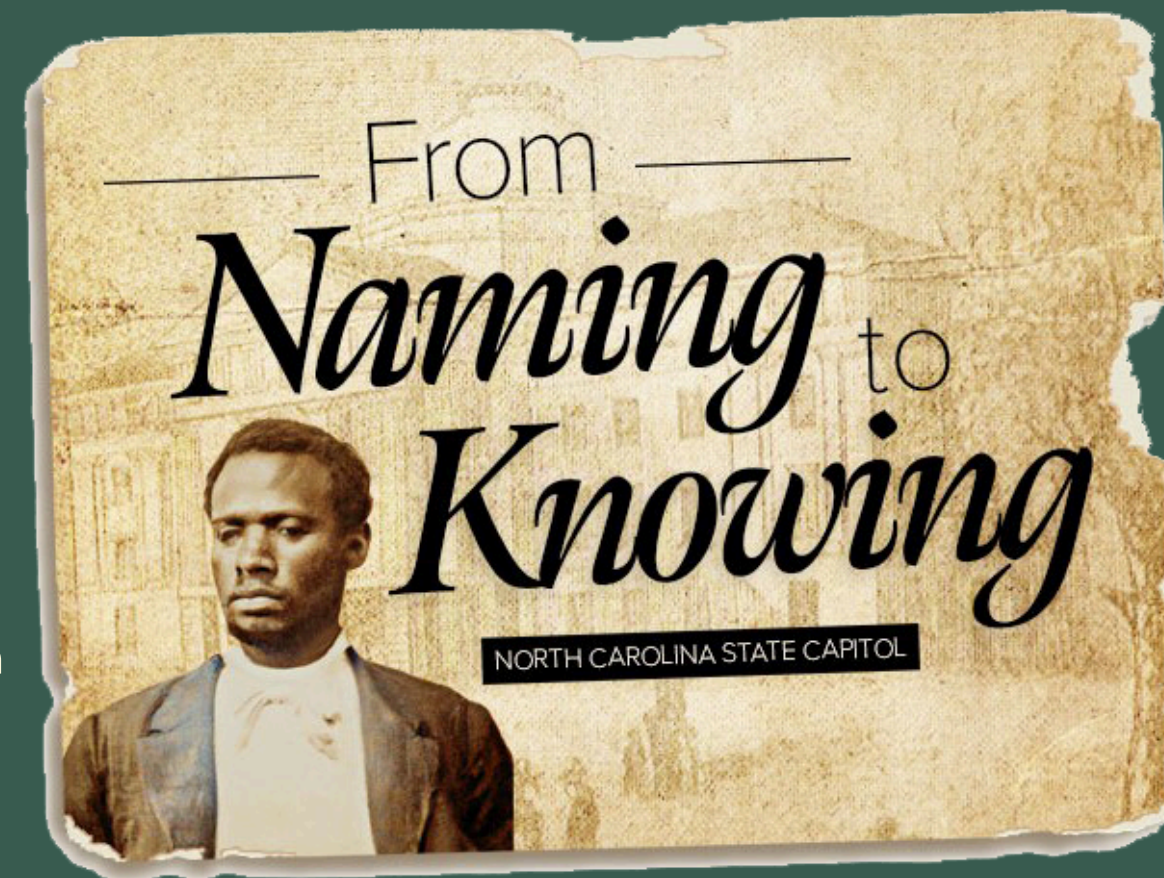
Brief Background: From Naming To Knowing

The "From Naming To Knowing Project" is an ongoing research and interpretation project that staff at the North Carolina State Capitol began in December 2019. The mission of the project - to name, research, and document the enslaved men and women who were connected to the Capitol's construction and maintenance - is centered around the acknowledgment of the humanity of every individual who had an impact on the Capitol.

Prior to the current enslaved African American-centered narrative and interpretative focus, the Capitol's historic interpretation centered mainly on architecture and an antebellum and Civil War narrative. The interpretation at the Capitol has evolved over the past fifteen years to become more inclusive of the experiences of enslaved people, but more research is still needed. Through the use of various historical documents in the State Archives and other sources, this project continues to further name and acknowledge the many enslaved people who helped build the North Carolina State Capitol.

The following stories are a small fraction of the many individuals of the formerly enslaved people who helped to build and care for the North Carolina State Capitol. To read the full stories and additional information please click on the link.

[For more information about the "From Naming To Knowing Project" click here.](#)



Junius Brickle

Junius Brickle was probably born around 1806 to Bill Holmes and Nancy Brickle. In the 1830s, he worked as a laborer at the Capitol's construction site. His enslaver, Martha Brickell, hired Junius out and profited from his labor. Martha frequently requested that Junius be able to pick up his compensation when working at the Capitol, but it is unknown if Junius was able to keep any of the money his labor generated.

In state construction records, among the names of enslavers signing to pick up the wages of enslaved laborers, Junius made his own mark to pick up compensation. An example of this is shown on the following slide. Below the red arrow is an "X" made by Junius. Around the x is written "his mark" and "Junius Brickle." At this time, it was illegal for an enslaved person to read and write.

When Martha died in 1852, her will did not mention Junius, so it's unclear what happened to him after the Capitol's construction or in the decade that followed. However, Junius was listed in the Raleigh Register's call for letters on June 1, 1855, indicating he still lived locally. Following Emancipation, the marriages of previously enslaved individuals became legally recognized. Though he could have been married earlier, a North Carolina marriage record lists Junius' marriage to Delia Leach on May 2, 1878 when he was 72 years old.

[For more information
click here.](#)



Photo courtesy of the NC State Capitol

Primary Sources - Junius Brickle

1878	BRICKLE JUNIUS	WAKE CO	72	J E C PARHAM	JUNIUS BRICKL
1878	DELIA LEACH	WAKE CO	20	MINISTER	

This 1834 Report shows Junius' name listed among the names of Commissioners that were appointed to superintend the re-building of the State Capitol.

Mr West will please pay Junius
his wages for November,
M Brickell

November 30, 1837

This note from the N.C. State Capitol Construction Records is of Martha Brickell requesting payment for Junius' labor in the Capitol project. It reads "Mr. West will please pay Junius his wages for this November, M Brickell November 30, 1837."

25 J H Stone
50 James J Terrell
25 Delia Williams. R. M.
00 Junius Brickle M
50 Junius Brickle M
00 In masonper J Hicks
19 R M Ashton
69

This N.C. State Capitol Construction Record shows where Junius made "his mark" next to his name on the of enslavers signing for their enslaved people's compensation.

Friday Jones

Most of what is known about Friday Jones comes from his 1883 autobiography *Days of Bondage: Autobiography of Friday Jones, Being a Brief Narrative of his Trials and Tribulations in Slavery*.

Friday was born enslaved in Wake County, North Carolina in 1810. Of his early years, he wrote, "My first remembrance of my life begins when I was from 8 to 10 years of age. I was born in North Carolina in 1810, the property of Olser Hye, within 15 miles of the capital of the State -- Raleigh. My mother's name was Cherry and my father's Barney. I was taken from them when I was small and hired out to Sim Alfred, who lived about two miles from where I was born. My mother was traded for a tract of land and sent to Alabama. My father died about this time."

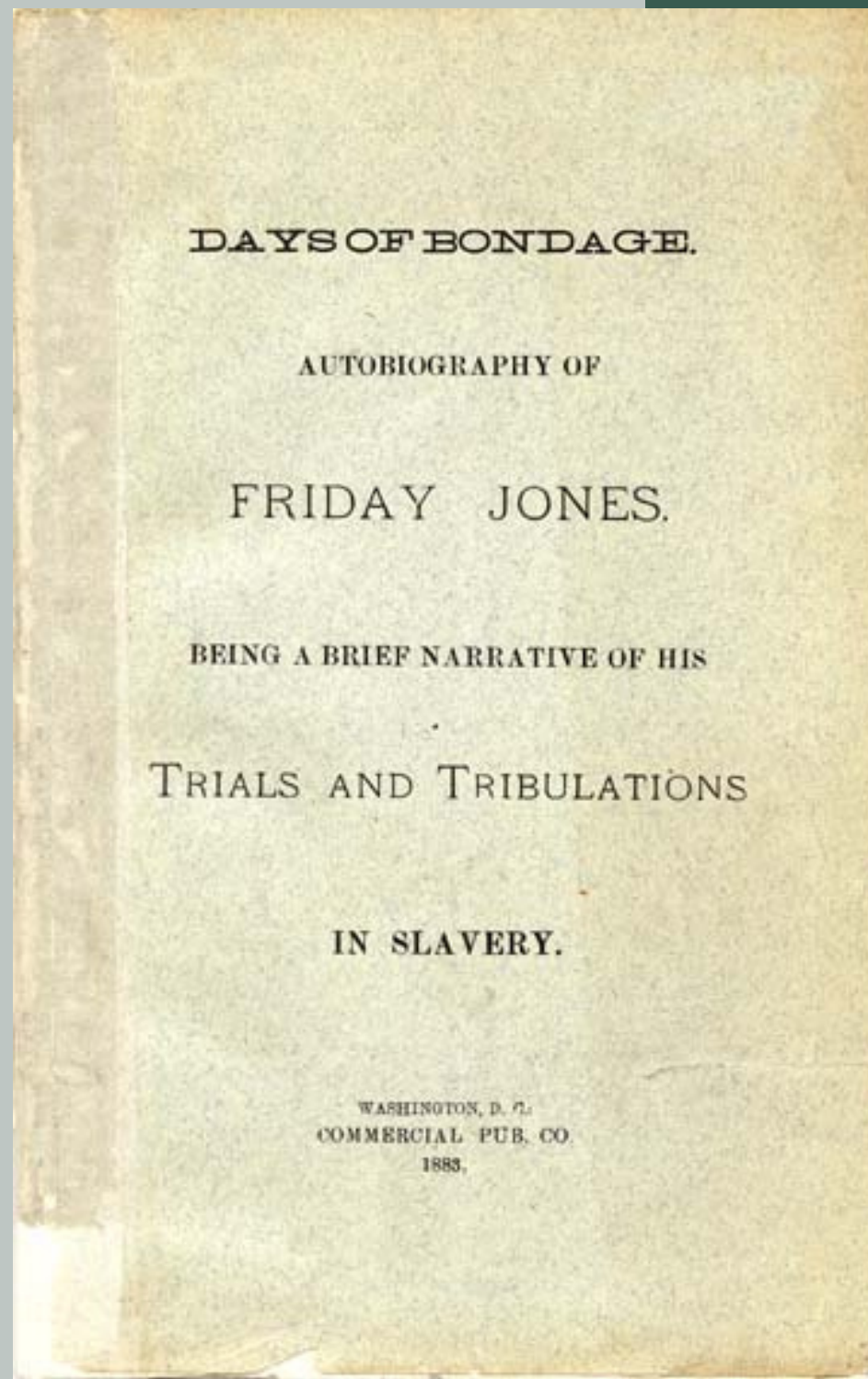
Friday was one of the enslaved men who worked to construct the Capitol, and about this time in his life he wrote, "I was out of [Jones's] employ for four years, working for the Government of North Carolina, after which I fell back in his hands, working on his farm and on the Raleigh and Gaston R.R. He set out to part my wife and I, as he had threatened to do so." Friday repeatedly sought to self-emancipate from slavery, running from his enslaver Colonel Tignel Jones, who tormented him and threatened to sell Friday's wife and children.

[For more information](#)
[click here.](#)



Photo courtesy of the NC State Capitol

Primary Sources - Friday Jones



Friday and his family were eventually emancipated. After the Civil War, he worked at the Capitol as a night watchman. He was a founding member and trustee of the First Colored Baptist Church in Raleigh. He left Raleigh in his early seventies, moving to Washington, D.C. to work at the United States Capitol and publish his autobiography. After his death in August 1887, the Raleigh News and Observer ran his obituary. The article noted that Jones "had been quite prominent among his race as a politician," and "was at one time watchman at the capitol."

This record displays the title page of Friday Jones' autobiography, *Days of Bondage: Autobiography of Friday Jones, Being a Brief Narrative of His Trials and Tribulations in Slavery*, published in 1883.



North Carolina Freedom Park

Freedom Park, a historic green space nestled in the heart of downtown Raleigh, is the first park in North Carolina dedicated to honoring the African American struggle for freedom and an evergreen homage to the universal ideals of liberty, resilience, and equality.

Please come and visit this state treasure the next time you visit the NC State Capitol!

FREE AND OPEN TO ALL

218 N Wilmington Street, Raleigh, NC



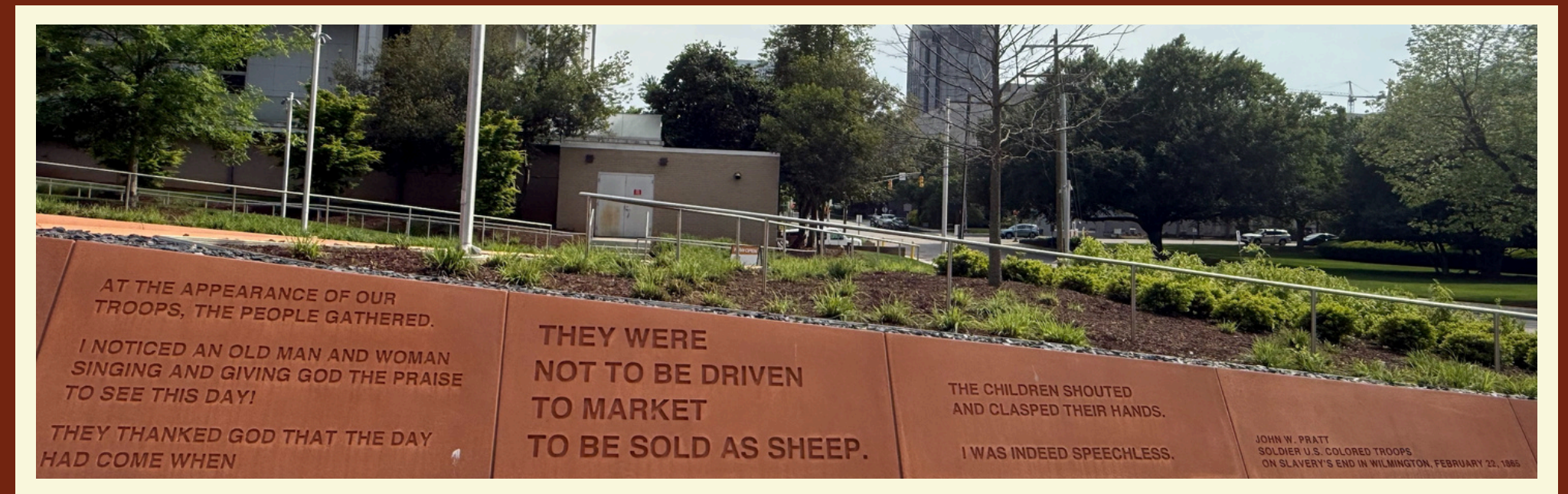
[For more information about Freedom Park](#)
[click here.](#)



Photo courtesy: The Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

The Voices of Freedom in Freedom Park

The Voices of Freedom is an inspiring compilation of quotes that resonates with the enduring spirit of African American North Carolinians who emerged as trailblazers in the pursuit of equality, civil rights, and societal transformation. This collection encapsulates the powerful and eloquent words of visionaries who, against the backdrop of adversity, emerged as leaders and change-makers in North Carolina's history.



"At the appearance of our troops the people gathered. I noticed an old man and woman singing and giving God the praise to see this day! They thanked God that the day had come when they were not to be driven to market to be sold as sheep. The children shouted and clasped their hands. I was indeed speechless."

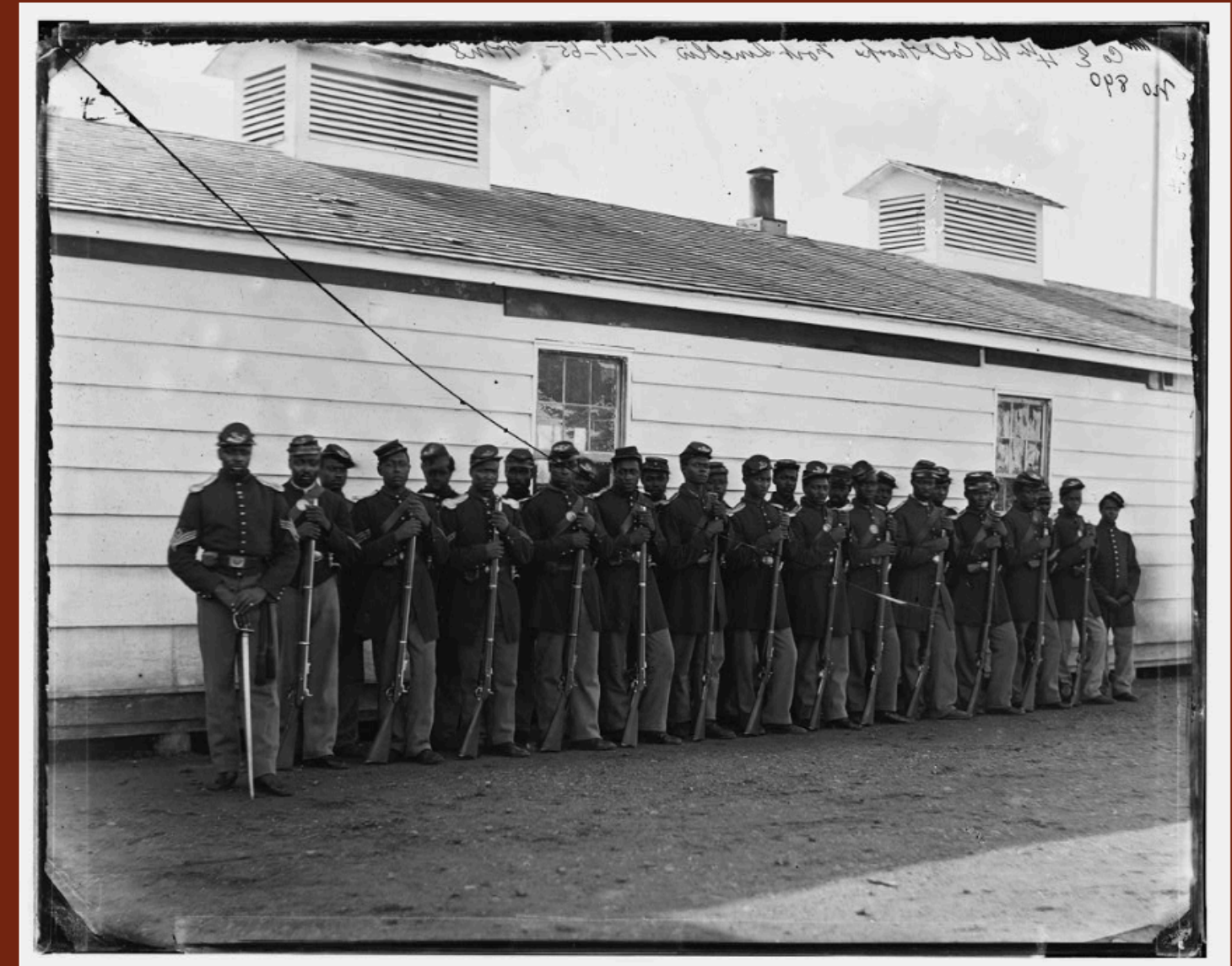
-John W. Pratt

[For more information](#)
[click here.](#)

Highlighting John W. Pratt

One of the “Voices of Freedom” represented in Freedom Park is that of John W. Pratt. John W. Pratt was a Sergeant in the Union Army during the Civil War. Sergeant Pratt fought with the Company E, 30th Regiment of the United States Colored Troops. Sergeant Pratt’s regiment was tasked with moving through Wilmington, NC and sharing the news of the end of the war and emancipation of enslaved people.

Sergeant John W. Pratt’s quote in Freedom Park highlights the moment when formerly enslaved people were made aware of emancipation after the Civil War. This quote is taken from a letter Sergeant Pratt wrote to the Christian Recorder Newspaper where he describes what he saw, heard, and felt on that impactful day. Pratt recalled the celebration and hope that people felt hearing that news.



District of Columbia. Company E, 4th U.S. Colored Infantry, at Fort Lincoln
Photo Credits: Library of Congress

[For more information
click here.](#)

VOICES OF FREEDOM WALKING TOUR



**** lucky participants may have a chance to win a NCAAHC swag bag at the end of each tour ****

**Start @ NC State Capitol
1 E Edenton Street
Raleigh NC, 27601**

**June 14, 2025
*11:00 AM
* 1:00 PM**

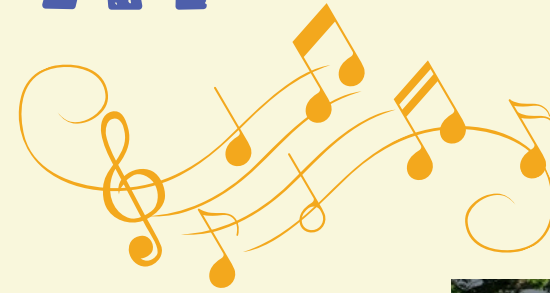
**End @ NC Freedom Park
218 N Willmington Street
Raleigh NC, 27601**



For more information:
Use the QR Code or Visit
AAHC.NC.GOV/EVENTS



SONGS OF LIBERATION AT NC FREEDOM PARK



June 21, 2025
2 PM

NC FREEDOM PARK
218 N WILLMINGTON ST,
RALEIGH NC, 27601



NC Freedom Park featuring:
MARY D. WILLIAMS



For more information:
Use the QR Code or Visit
AAHC.NC.GOV/EVENTS



Community Calendar

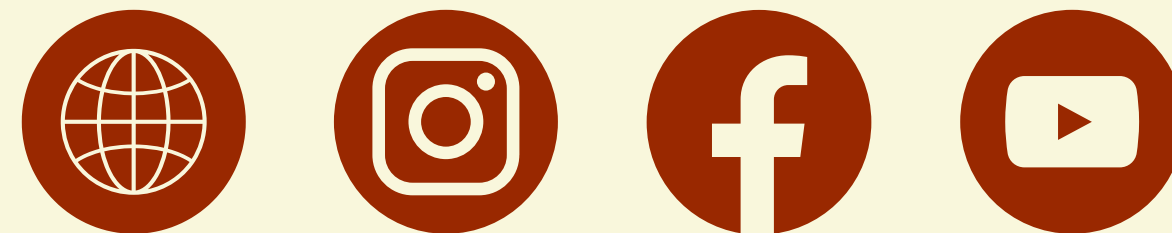
[Calendar](#)

Looking for ways to celebrate in the community? Take a look at our Community Calendar and find out about celebrations taking place across the state!



Our Mission

The North Carolina General Assembly created the North Carolina African American Heritage Commission (NCAAHC) in 2008 to work across the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources to achieve the mission of preserving, protecting, and promoting North Carolina African American history, art, and culture, for all people.



Let's stay connected!

The North Carolina

African American

Heritage

Commission