



Name of Property: Camp Nelson Historic and Archeological District
City, State: Nicholasville, Kentucky
Period of Significance: 1863-1866
NHL Criteria: 1 and 6
NHL Theme: II. Creating Social Institutions and Movement
2. Reform Movements
IV. Shaping the Political Landscape
3. Military institutions and activities
4. Political ideas, cultures, and theories
Previous Recognition: 2000 National Register of Historic Places
National Historic Context: VI. The Civil War
C. War in the West
E. Political and Diplomatic Scene
XXXI. Social and Humanitarian Movements
D. Abolitionism

NHL Significance:

- Camp Nelson is significant as one of the nation's largest recruitment and training centers for African American soldiers during the American Civil War.
- Camp Nelson is also significant as the site of a large refugee camp for the wives and children of the African American soldiers, who were escaping slavery and seeking freedom. Reactions to the November 1864 expulsion of Camp Nelson refugees led to official changes in US Army policy regarding the care of refugees at US Army posts, and assisted in the passage of a US congressional act which freed all wives and children of US Colored Troops. Events at Camp Nelson also influenced the policies and practices of abolitionists and health reformers.



- Camp Nelson is nationally significant for its excellent archeological integrity and for the ability of these resources to provide nationally significant data on questions related to Civil War era economic conditions, social relationships, settlement patterns, material supply, and the daily life of its racially and socially diverse military and civilian populations, as well as data on questions related to camp fortification, and building design and layout. The information gained from these archeological resources has the potential to add to our understanding of the transformation of African American families from enslaved to free, and the survival and persistence of these families and their culture in the face of tremendous adversity.

Integrity:

- The Camp Nelson Historic and Archeological District includes the well-preserved archeological remains and landscape of a large Civil War-era Union Army supply depot, recruitment camp, African American refugee camp, and the Camp Nelson National Cemetery. To date, archeological investigations performed in these areas have revealed a great variety of sites - including military and African American refugee encampments, a prison, a sutler store, the White House officers' quarters, fortifications, and industrial shops - all with a high degree of stratigraphic, midden, and feature integrity.
- The district includes one period building, the White House officers' quarters, 18 period structures, and two period cemeteries, all with a high level of integrity. The structures include earthen fortifications with connecting infantry entrenchments, an earthen ordnance magazine, bakery oven foundations, an ice house, a stone reservoir, and four original roads.
- The present landscape of the district is very similar to its appearance just before and after the Civil War, and presents a high degree of visual integrity. The most significant difference from the Camp Nelson period, when the camp was still mostly pasture and woods, is the absence of the Camp Nelson buildings. However, these buildings were intended as temporary structures by the Federal Army and were largely gone by the end of the Civil War period.
- The Camp Nelson National Cemetery also maintains a high level of visual and landscape integrity in its seven sections which contain Civil War graves.

Owner of Property: Jessamine County Fiscal Court, US Veterans Administration, James H. Frye

Acreage of Property: 600 acres

Origins of Nomination: The nomination was funded through a grant from the Kentucky Heritage Council (the SHPO) and the Kentucky African-American Heritage Commission, with additional support provided by the Jessamine County Fiscal Court.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- The designation of Camp Nelson as an NHL will bring national recognition to the role of

African American men, women, and children in the Civil War, as soldiers, freedom seekers, and families, as well as the complexity of African American recruitment and emancipation, especially in loyal slave states such as Kentucky.

- The NHL designation of Camp Nelson will also bring attention to the importance of archeological remains on Civil War and African American sites to making nationally significant contributions to American social and military history.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None known.

Landmarks Committee Comments:

Landmarks Committee Recommendation: Designation. Dr. Clark Hine moved, Dr. Allan seconded; unanimous approval.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of 11/08/12):

James H. Frye, Lexington, Kentucky (owner)

Lindy Casebier, Acting SHPO and Executive Director, Kentucky Heritage Council

Steve L. Muro, Department of Veterans Affairs, Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs,
Washington, DC (owner)

Gerald L. Smith, Vice-Chair, Kentucky African American Heritage Commission, Associate
Professor of History, University of Kentucky

The Honorable Steven L. Beshear, Governor, Commonwealth of Kentucky

George M. Crothers, Ph.D., Director, Associate Professor, University of Kentucky

Advisory Board Recommendation: