

NEH Application Cover Sheet (HAA-263818)

Digital Humanities Advancement Grants

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INSTITUTION

University of Georgia Research Foundation, Inc.
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APPLICATION INFORMATION

Title: *Freedom's Movement: Mapping African American Space in War and Reconstruction*

Grant period: From 2019-01-01 to 2019-12-31

Project field(s): Cultural History

Description of project: "Freedom's Movements" brings together three extant projects--(1)

Visualizing Emancipation, (2) African American Civil War Soldiers, and (3) Last Road to Freedom. Project Directors for this grant began collaborations in 2015, each project director providing feedback and their expertise in extending the work of the other projects, driven by the complementary nature of their work. By 2017, it became clear that a partnership between these projects could be beneficial. This Level I proposal is the first fruit of that more robust partnership.

BUDGET

Outright Request	39,021.00	Cost Sharing	0.00
Matching Request	0.00	Total Budget	39,021.00
Total NEH	39,021.00		

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**Freedom's Movement:
Mapping African American Space in War and Reconstruction**

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**Freedom's Movement:
Mapping African American Space in War and Reconstruction**

List of Project Participants

Samantha Blickhan, Zooniverse

John Clegg, University of Chicago

Hollis Gentry, National Museum of African American History and Culture Library, Smithsonian
Institution

Patrick Lewis, Kentucky Historical Society

Alisea McLeod, Rust College

Scott Nesbit, University of Georgia

Robert K. Nelson, University of Richmond

Joshua D. Rothman, University of Alabama

Fred Smith, Athens Area Black History Committee

Angela Walter-Raji, Unaffiliated author, researcher, and genealogist

Freedom's Movement: Mapping African American Space in War and Reconstruction

A. Enhancing the Humanities

In 1863, Daniel Williams, slave of William Hull of Marshall County, Mississippi, left the state and headed to occupied Memphis. There he enlisted in the 63rd USCT commanded by John Eaton, Jr. His wife Nancy and their four children, Samuel, Robert, Walker, and Mary, found shelter at Shiloh Contraband Camp, along with thousands of other former slaves. The movement of the Williams family and so many others quickly overwhelmed the capacities of the U.S. government around Memphis. Memphis citizens and the military leadership in the city complained to president Lincoln about the “5,000 men and women, of all ages, supported by the government” who had entered Union lines there, while ignoring the contribution these migrants made to saving the Union and ending slavery for their own communities.

Much of our knowledge of the Williams family begins with two sets of Union Army records: the military service records of the United State Colored Troops (USCT) and the registers of contraband camps. A service record exists for every soldier and is rich with information that helps map geographic movement. In Williams's case, his birthplace was listed as Spotsylvania, Virginia, and his enlistment place as Memphis. Added to these locations are his wartime movements, which tell an observer something of the function of the Black garrison unit to which he belonged, in the Department of Tennessee, as well as the landscapes he navigated as a teamster. In the case of previously-enslaved men, the cover page of the soldier's record mixes the old identity with new ones--soldier, teamster, freedman. [Williams's record](#), studied by itself, provides a view of Black mobility in the context of war never before available to the public. Through study of soldiers' records one can witness movement of thousands of African American men from city or farm to Union stronghold. Over 200,000 Black men served in the Union army or navy in America's Civil War, and we estimate that seventy percent had been enslaved at the start of the war. The [African American Civil War Soldiers](#) project, which is currently transcribing all 200,000+ records, will create rich data for the study of early African American population shifts. Just as importantly, service records list physical characteristics, place of birth, and health, information which is rarely available for formerly enslaved people, a vital source of information not only for historians, but also for demographers, social scientists and genealogists.

Like the service records, contraband registers, logs of formerly enslaved people who crossed into Union lines, offer both broad and close-up views of African American wartime movement and identifying information not available in any other record set. Ordered by more than one entity, in compliance with developing policy concerning Black movement during the war, these peculiar records vary in style and substance, a fact which may shed light on the specific quality of “military emancipation” in different departments. [The Last Road to Freedom](#) project has identified forty-seven registers, containing names and personal information, including former residence and former master or mistress. Contraband registers are essential to viewing freedpeople within actual wartime contexts. The Last Road to Freedom, making widely available for the first time personal identifying information within its context, has potential to broaden the audience of these registers beyond

interested academics to include descendants of those recorded in them. The context in which this family found themselves in their transition out of slavery, and the route by which this context found its way to the president's desk, is found within the records of the Visualizing Emancipation project.

As the example of the Williams family demonstrates, individual African American families caught up in the maelstrom of war left traces across a number of archival sources. For the African American Civil War Soldiers and Last Road to Freedom projects, the existence of these individual and relational linkages has generated an interest in building Linked Open Data protocols that we hope will allow us to connect not only our databases, but also those of other digitization projects covering African Americans in the Civil War era. At the same time, the geographic information on mobility contained in both the USCT and contraband camp records lends itself to the tools of GIS visualization that have been developed by the Visualizing Emancipation team. We thus hope to also link our databases as points and layers on an online map that tells the story of African American mobility during the War.

We thus propose a Level I Digital Humanities Advancement Grant to begin the work of extending and integrating three existing digital humanities projects--Visualizing Emancipation, African American Civil War Soldiers, and the Last Road to Freedom--while bringing together a larger group of scholars and genealogists to help plan this work from the ground up. This planning will happen through a meeting of ten experts in the fields of emancipation studies and genealogy and two documents: a white paper discussing what we learned and a blueprint outlining the next steps for our collaboration. The end result will be a project that actively engages scholarly and genealogical audiences, and one that is useful both to teachers and students at the high school and college level and to specialists in the field.

B. Environmental Scan

Digital humanities projects on slavery have moved beyond the phase of experimentation and have entered a new phase in which questions of sustainability, access and integration are now paramount. Pathbreaking early projects, such as Ed Ayers' [Valley of the Shadow](#), have given way to a world of linked data and advanced visualizations techniques. David Eltis' original Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database is now part of the [Digital Library on American Slavery](#). The North American Slave Narratives have been included in [Doc South](#), a corpus with encoded text for data mining. Michigan State University recently received a \$1.5 million Mellon Grant to incorporate [Slave Biographies](#) (which includes Gwendolyn Midlo Hall's original Louisiana Slave Database) into a [larger network](#) of linked open data. The several runaway slave databases (there are currently 9 for the US) are also in talks about how to best integrate their data. Meanwhile, Richmond's Digital Scholarship Lab has recently included innovative visualizations of the domestic slave trade in their far-reaching [American Panorama](#) project.

Digital history projects on the Civil War and Reconstruction also have great scope for integration. In addition to the projects initiated by the three groups behind this application, there is the [Freedmen's Bureau Project](#) led by the National Museum of African American History and Culture, and the [Colored Conventions](#) project at the University of Delaware. Both of these have considerable areas

of overlap with our own. The Freedmen's Bureau records contain references to many of the individuals in the USCT and Contraband Camp registers. The Colored Conventions project is transcribing the minutes of conventions that were organized by African American Civil War soldiers. The [Union Army Data](#) project, funded by the NIH/NBER, has collected pension records for 10% of the African American soldiers, and they have expressed interest in collaboration across the social science/humanities divide. [The Nineteenth Century Digital Cooperative](#), a Mellon-funded project to create a sustainable linked open data network of 19th century biographies, currently brings together The Civil War Governors of Kentucky with the Papers of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. Finally, the [Last Seen](#) and [Lost Friends](#) sites, which collect advertisements from formerly enslaved people searching for family members lost through slavery and war, may also be mapped as another indicator of African American mobility during and after the Civil War. We expect that representatives from a number of these projects--some of whom have already committed to attending--will contribute their insight to our meeting.

C. History of the Project

"Freedom's Movements" brings together three extant projects--(1) [Visualizing Emancipation](#), (2) [African American Civil War Soldiers](#), and (3) [Last Road to Freedom](#). Project Directors for this grant began collaborations in 2015, each project director providing feedback and their expertise in extending the work of the other projects, driven by the complementary nature of their work. By 2017, it became clear that a partnership between these projects could be beneficial. This Level I proposal is the first fruit of that more robust partnership.

Visualizing Emancipation is an interactive map of the end of slavery in the American Civil War, funded by a Digital Start Up grant in 2010 by the National Endowment for the Humanities. It brings together two datasets--50,000 approximate, date-stamped locations of United States Army regiments; and 4,300 'emancipation events,' location-and date-stamped documents taken from select newspapers and a full survey of the 160-volume *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*, indicating sites where slavery was changing, either through law or through action in the field between 1861 and 1865. This work was first published in 2012. Since that time, Nesbit and his students at the University of Georgia have steadily gathered additional wartime advertisements for fugitives from slavery.

The African American Civil War Soldiers website is a collaboration between the African American Civil War Museum, a number of interested scholars, and several thousand volunteers. The project, which launched in March 2018, aims to transcribe the military records of over 200,000 African American soldiers, and it is currently 11% complete. Scans of the records, provided by the National Archives, are displayed to volunteers using the Zooniverse crowdsourcing platform. The site's discussion forums have resulting in a thriving community of research into the lives of individual soldiers. The final database will be made freely available on the Museum's homepage, and will contain detailed information on each soldier's enlistment, place of birth, previous occupation, demographic characteristics, health and wages received. In addition to the database the project will generate interactive visualizations to map the process of enlistment, wartime mobility, and the soldier's strike for equal pay.

The Last Road to Freedom website, developed by Rust College professor Alisea McLeod, colleagues, and students, had its start eight years ago as a locus for transcribed registers of people entering into refugee camps during the Civil War. Between 2010 and 2017, ten registers were transcribed and published to the site, and students participated greatly in the work of annotation. The costs of site maintenance and the work of the students have already received private donor support. Two tables list other registers that have been transcribed and published to LastRoad, and forty-eight additional registers, whose transcription is included in work proposed by this project.

D. Work Plan

Our project will be executed over the course of 12 months and involves three phases: a pre-meeting phase, the June 2019 meeting, and a post-meeting phase. The pre-meeting phase will consist of two principal activities: recruiting the remaining participants and collecting data from extant registers of freedmen, data critical to the meeting activities. The meeting itself will be structured around four aspects of our work together: Existing projects; Collaboration between scholars and descendants; Narratives; and Sustainability. During fall 2019 participants will gather virtually for a debrief and planning session and the co-project directors will write a white paper explaining the results of the meeting and roundtable. A full work plan, including a detailed meeting agenda, is attached in the appendix.

E. Final Product and Dissemination

The results of this project, should it be funded, will be 1) the meeting itself; 2) a public white paper; and 3) an internally shared blueprint outlining our next steps. In December 2019 we will release a white paper describing the state of quantitative and qualitative data relating to the end of slavery in the American Civil War and pointing to analytical possibilities using this data. We will publish this white paper online, on a website introducing our work together. In addition, we will send copies of this white paper to all project participants as well as key institutions, scholars, and projects identified in the environmental scan above who would find our work of note. During fall 2019 we will also compose a blueprint for future work that will trace the outlines of an open access, online project that builds on what we have learned.

Appendix: Work Plan.

Pre-Meeting:

January-June 2019: We will advertise a request for proposals via social media, pertinent listservs, and a few targeted emails to parties we may believe are interested in participating. We believe that the meeting will be most effective if we have twelve participants. In addition to the three project co-directors, we have received letters of commitment from two nationally-recognized genealogists with expertise in Civil War-era sources; representatives from three projects, American Panorama, Freedom on the Move, and the Kentucky Civil War Governor's project, which will lend insight into their experiences with mapping, collaborative data collection, and Linked Open Data; and a local historian and potential user of the project, with a keen interest in slavery and emancipation in the area in which the meeting will be held, whose insight will be critical to understanding the needs of users of our work by non-academic members of the public. We have elected to reserve three spots for additional partners who could bring valuable datasets and points of view to the meeting. The three additional partners will be selected by mid-February 2019 by a committee made up of the co-project directors.

In April 2019, Dr. Alisea McLeod will travel to Washington, DC in order to scan the remaining extant Registers of Freedmen. This core planning activity will be useful for gauging the scope of work to be done in future phases of the project.

Meeting:

The meeting will take place in Athens, Georgia over two days in June 2019, and will include four focused sessions

Day 1, Session I: Existing projects

During this session, each of the participants will give ten minute presentations on the data models used in their projects. Discussion will revolve around what each dataset reveals, the limits of each dataset, and the degree to which data might be combined in coherent ways. The objective of this session is to ensure all participants are familiar with the relevant documents and data on the end of slavery in the American Civil War, both from contributing projects and existing outside those projects.

Day 1, Session II: Collaborations

Our session on collaboration will bring into focus the ways that 1) our datasets might talk to each other, and 2) the ways in which different users might be able to take advantage of our data. We expect that the possibilities for Linked Open Data for Civil War-era sources will be a current running through much of this session. At the same time, we will take part of this session to explore the needs of local users from the public, genealogists, and teachers when working with our site.

Day 2, Session III: Narratives

Session III will begin to ask what narratives are possible to tell about Civil War and emancipation using the various project data. We expect that discussions will revolve around spatial narratives and how those are expressed in an online environment. We will especially explore tensions between linearity and interactivity in digital humanities projects, and between exploration of a map and textual narrative.

Day 2, Session IV: Sustainability

In Session IV we will discuss the various needs that the digital projects represented at the meeting have had over their life-cycles. We will explore how data management has worked in the projects represented, and the ways in which choices to pursue Linked Open Data affect data management and sustainability.

Post-Meeting

In the early fall 2019 available participants will gather virtually for a debrief and planning session, in which we decide whether to begin building the project about which we met in the summer. It is not expected that all participants will desire to continue working on the project, or that many will do so only in a limited capacity, on an advisory board. In fact, one potential result of the process could be that a large-scale collaboration on this topic will yield only limited gains, and project partners decide not to seek funding for further work.

During fall 2019 the co-project directors will write a white paper explaining the results of the conference. This white paper will be made available on the project website and submitted to the NEH in December 2019. Using this white paper as a starting point, we will also compose an internal document that will serve as a blueprint for future work, indicating the data, analytical tools, principal narratives, and affordances of a future project. If project partners decide to proceed in seeking funding for such a project, we anticipate identifying relevant funding programs and beginning work on funding applications during the post-meeting phase of the project.

Appendix: Last Road to Freedom

Williams Nancy	William	Wall	Marshal de Mily		
Williams Bath	"	"	"	"	"
Williams Robert	"	"	"	"	"
Williams Mary	"	"	"	"	"
Williams Walker	"	"	"	"	"
Wood Martha	Robert Wood	Polinar Tenn			
Wood Ellen	Robert Wood	Polinar Tenn			
Wood Mildred	"	"	"	"	"
Wood Ida	"	"	"	"	"

Figure 1: Page from Register of Freedmen, a record housed in the Freedmen's Bureau (Pre-bureau) Records, RG 105.

The Last Road to Freedom website was created to make accessible to the public contraband registers, logs of African Americans who took refuge behind Union lines during the Civil War. The website is home to the Eaton-Bailey-Williams Digitization Project (EBW), an initiative that has transcribed ten registers which, taken together, identify nearly 4,000 freedpeople. Partly through volunteering and partly through small private donations, EBW has employed two transcriptionist-editors and additional data entry personnel including the project founder. In 2019, the proposed collaboration will add nearly 3,000 more names to the growing list of registrants.

Figure 1 displays a page from The Register of Freedmen (ROF), a detailed log created during consolidation of Camp Holly Springs and Camp Shiloh in Memphis, Tennessee. The two entries that appear here are family groups, the upper that of Daniel Williams, whose narrative introduces this grant application. Table 1 is the corresponding database for the transcribed ROF. Following the model of the two associated projects that make up the proposed collaboration, each individual will be given a unique id, and, in addition, each individual and family group will be associated with a place (former residence), site of contact with Union forces, former owner, and age(s). Doing so will allow researchers associated with this grant project to make possible connections between soldiers and registered contraband. Transcribed registers will retain all other fields including health and labor classifications (see far right columns in green/white). Through digitization of scanned originals (microfilm), users will be able to view actual documents, an opportunity for researchers of Civil War and emancipation to study peculiarities in the fifty-eight registers to be published by this project.

LastNameFP	FirstNameFP	MiddleFP	LastNameOwn	FirstNameOwn	MiddleOwn	TitleOwn	City/County	State	Occupation	Age	C1M	C1F	C2M	C2F	C3M
Abnatha	Nancy		Marancy	Canoah			Milliken's Bend	LA	House	70					
Abananth	Kinarah		Marancy	Canoah			Milliken's Bend	LA	Farm	18				x	
Adkins	Mary		Waller	Richmon			Lafayette	TN	Farm	17				x	
Alexander	Lizzie		Alexander	Calvin			Marshall Co	MS	Cook	37		x			
Armstead	Catherine		Armstead	Fountain			Franklin Co	AL	Housework	53					
Armstead	Lucy		Armstead	Fountain			Franklin Co	AL	Farm	40		x			
Armstead	Loiza		Armstead	Fountain			Franklin Co	AL		13					
Armstead	Spencer		Armstead	Fountain			Franklin Co	AL		8					
Armstead	Sarah		Armstead	Fountain			Franklin Co	AL		6					

Table 1: Database of Transcribed Register of Freedmen

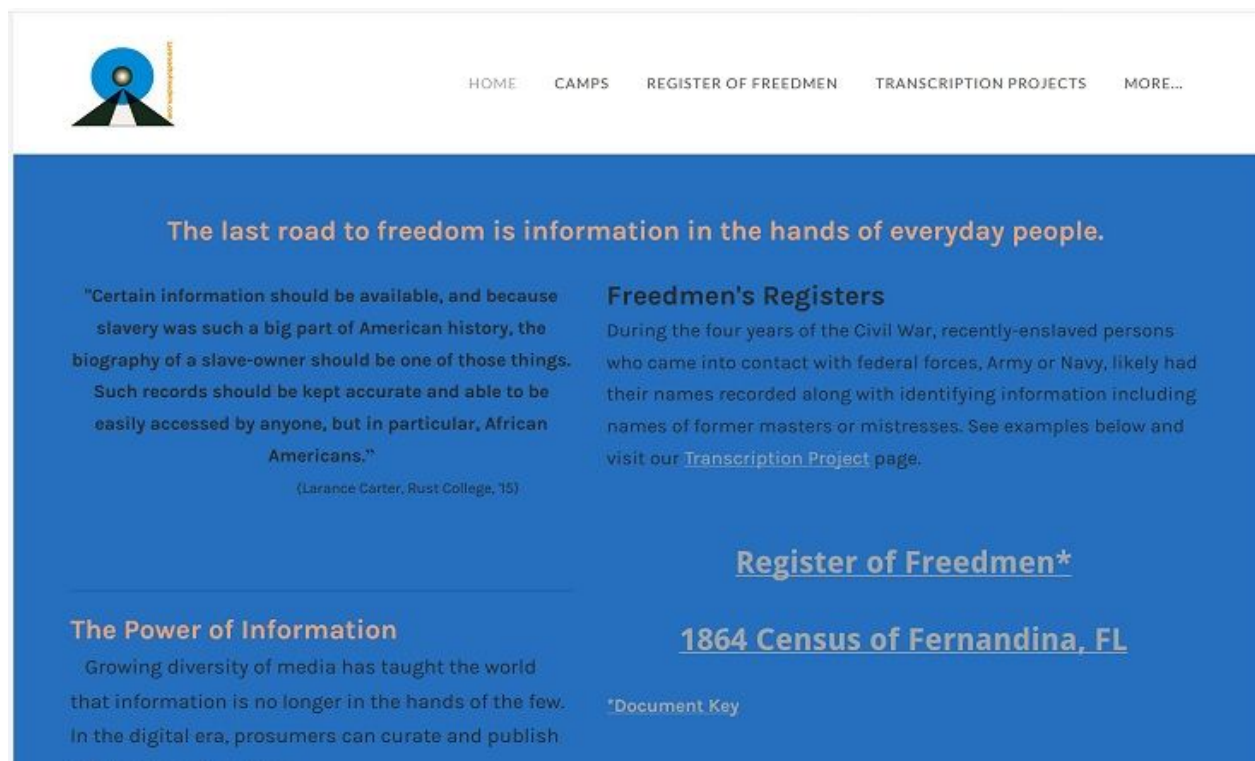


Figure 2: Homepage [Last Road To Freedom](#) website.

Last Road to Freedom has had a continual presence since 2010, and, in that time, has attracted a variety of users including genealogists, students, and academics. The site most often has been found through name and place searches both within and without the context of slavery. Transcription and digitization will resume under the proposed project, leaving Last Road as a site for discussion of related records not under the purview of the proposed project.

Appendix: African American Civil War Soldiers: Transcription and Data Structure

W. | 63 | U.S.C.T.

Daniel Williams

....., Co. *K*, 63 Reg't U. S. Col'd Inf.

Appears on

Company Descriptive Book

of the organization named above.

DESCRIPTION.

Age *37* years; height *5* feet *7* inches.

Complexion *Dark*.

Eyes *Dark*; hair *Black*.

Where born *Spotsylvania Va*

Occupation *Farmer*.

ENLISTMENT.

When *Dec 15th*, 186*3*.

Where *Memphis Tenn*

By whom *Capt H.B. Hay*; term *3* y'rs.

Remarks: *Mustered out*
of the U.S. Service
Jun 9th 1866

Dickerson

(383g) Copyist.

Figure 1: Company Descriptive Book of Daniel Williams, 63rd USCT

The African American Civil War Soldiers project is transcribing the complete military services records of over 200,000 Black soldiers who fought for their freedom in the American Civil War. The project uses the Zooniverse crowd-sourcing platform to transcribe individual entries in a series of forms contained in each soldier's file. Each record is transcribed three times to minimize transcriber error.

Figure 1 displays the company descriptive book of Daniel Williams, the soldier discussed at the beginning of this grant application. Table 1 displays the entry corresponding to this form in the final database. Each soldier is associated with a unique id, which allows us to link together the transcribed information from all their records. This id will be crucial to linking soldiers across databases using Linked Open Data Protocols. We will also create a unique family id that will allow us to link soldiers to their wives, parents and children in the contraband camp register. The process of estimating and verifying such external links will begin when the soldier database is complete.

The columns in our final database (compiling all records associated with each soldier) include: Name, Rank, Company & regiment, Height, Hair and eye color, Complexion, Previous occupation, Period of enlistment, Army wages received, Bounty payments received, Weapons kept at discharge, Slave status at enlistment and Official remarks, as well as the date and geocoded place of: Birth, Enlistment, Wartime stations, Battles fought, Hospitalizations, Injuries, Honors, Promotions, Court martials, Desertions, Discharge, and Wartime death.

Soldier id	name	Regiment	Company	Age	Height	Complexion	Eyes	Hair	Birth place	Enlistment date
0239570	Daniel Williams	63rd USCT	K	37	5'9"	Dark	Dark	Black	Spotsylvania, VA	12/15/1863

Enlistment place	Officer	Enlistment term	Remarks
Memphis, TN	Capt. H. S. Hay	3 years	Mustered out of the US Service June 9th 1866

Table 1: Transcribed Company Descriptive Book from Daniel Williams (Figure 1)

The screenshot displays an online transcription tool. On the left, a historical document is shown with handwritten entries. On the right, a digital form replicates the document's structure with dropdown menus and text input fields.

Document Text (Left):

45 U.S.C.T.
Richard Duncan
 Co. G., 45 Reg't U.S. Col'd Inf.
 Appears on
Company Descriptive Book
 of the organization named above.
DESCRIPTION.
 Age *17* years; height *5* feet *10* inches.
 Complexion *Black*
 Eyes *Black*; hair *Wavy*
 Where born *Culpepper Va.*
 Occupation *Leather*
ENLISTMENT.
 When *July 23*, 186*4*.
 Where *Chambersburg*
 By whom *Capt. Eyster*; term *3* y'rs.
 Remarks: *Substitute for Henry Monks.*

Digital Form (Right):

TASK | **TUTORIAL**

You can type new entries in any of these fields just remember to hit "enter"

Complexion: Select...

Eyes: Select...

Hair: Select...

Where born :

State / Nation: Select...

County / Parish / District: Select...

Town / Place: Select...

Occupation :

select or type: Select...

Back | Next → | ⚙️

Figure 2: Screenshot of online transcription process.

Appendix: Visualizing Emancipation

Visualizing Emancipation juxtaposes the approximate locations of United States Army regiments with “emancipation events,” date and time-stamped documents that describe the changing nature of slavery and freedom during the American Civil War. The web mapping interface allows users to explore this history in geographically and temporally precise ways that were novel when it made its appearance in 2012, remain useful today, and can be improved by connecting the underlying data with other datasets.

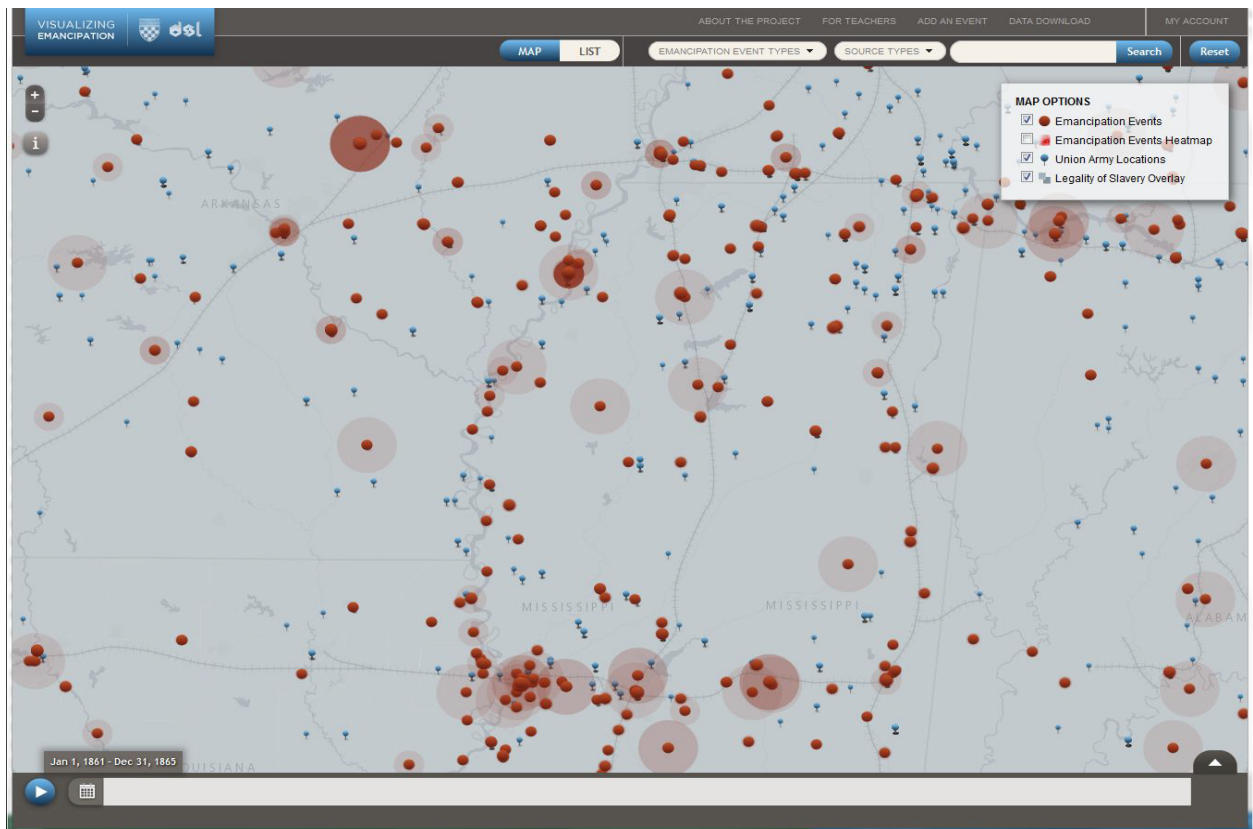


Figure 1. Visualizing Emancipation Screenshot, showing the Mississippi and the rail lines extending through central Mississippi and eastward from Memphis.

The Army regiments data (represented in blue on the map) includes data scraped from the Perseus Digital Library version of Frederick Dyer’s *Compendium of the War of the Rebellion*, with some light hand correcting. Though the dataset still contains errors, it may be the most comprehensive interactive map of where the U.S. Army was at any given point in the war. It contains fields detailing the name of the regiment, its organization place and date, and the place and date where it served at a particular point in time, all data that can be linked with Clegg’s African American Civil War Soldiers dataset.

Emancipation Events are the mapped locations of changes in slavery on the ground, as those changes come to us through the documentary record--principally fugitive slave advertisements and military correspondence collected in the Official Records of the War of the Rebellion. They include a wide range of changes, from the escape of one slave to the enlistment of hundreds in the U.S. Army; and from the entrance of dozens of women and children into refugee camps to the Confederate forces' attempts to re-enslave those same refugees. While often the documents mapped fail to record the names of the black southerners implicated in them, taken together they tell the story of the ebb and flow of freedom over the five years of the Civil War. For each event, the Visualizing Emancipation team and its collaborators collected information on how many black southerners were involved, the event type, the date and place of its occurrence, the names of enslaved southerners, slave owners, or other individuals involved, and the level of precision to which we know what happened where. For each event, we also collected metadata detailing how we know what we know: where and when the document was written and published, what kind of document it was and the identity of its author. The below event recorded the Union Army's position on families like the Williams' who had made their way to occupied Memphis by 1863.

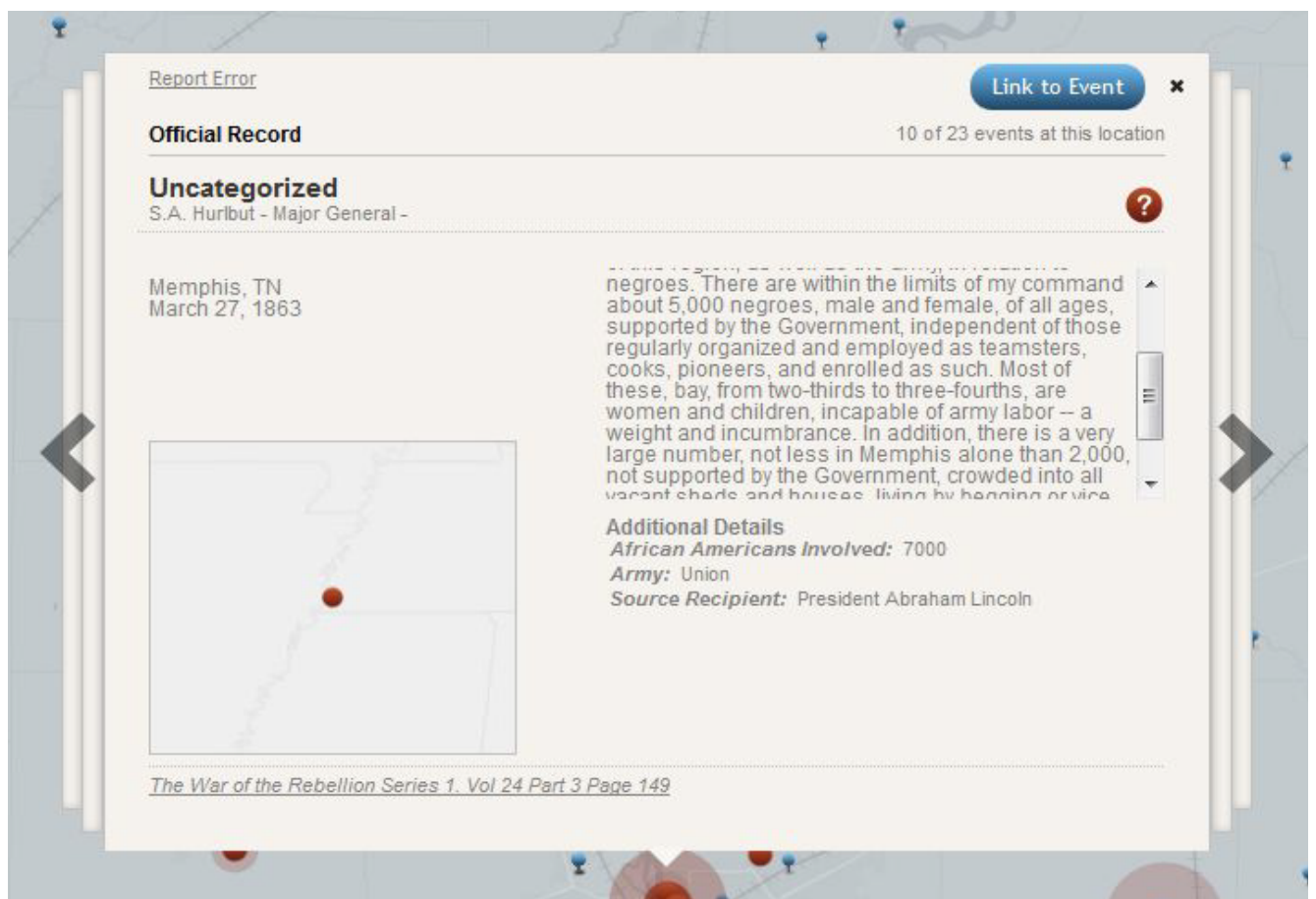


Figure 2. Visualizing Emancipation, S.A. Hurlbut to Abraham Lincoln, March 27, 1863.

Data Management Plan

We do not expect this Level I grant, which is devoted to planning purposes, to generate data in any traditional sense of that word. This project builds on three extant projects, each of which have implemented their own plans for managing data with their respective partners and host institutions.

We anticipate that data management for future work will be one significant point of discussion during the funded meeting, and that the creation of a tentative data management plan for this future work will be one outcome of this grant, a plan that will be included in the white paper which we will submit to the NEH Office of Digital Humanities at the conclusion of the grant period. The ideas generated at the grant-funded meeting will be encapsulated in the white paper, which will be shared widely, and will be particularly shared with the leaders of projects listed in the Environmental Scan section of this proposal. In addition, a copy of this white paper will be deposited with the University of Georgia Libraries Institutional Repository.