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Dark Heritage in the New South: Remembering Convict Leasing in Southern Middle Tennessee through Community Archaeology

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Abstract

Despite playing a central role in establishing our current racialized prison system, Southern convict leasing has been largely forgotten by American society. The Lone Rock Stockade Project is carrying out excavations at the site of an 1870s convict stockade in order to illuminate the depravity of convict leasing and acknowledge the sacrifices of the convicts who were forced to work without pay in Tennessee's industries. While the project works to identify descendant communities and manage the dangers of COVID-19, the project's public outreach is focused on establishing the site's narrative as dark heritage, rather than industrial triumph, within the local community.

Keywords Community archaeology · Dark heritage · Convict leasing · Tennessee

Introduction

Since 2019, researchers at the University of the South have been examining the history and legacies of convict leasing in the southern Middle Tennessee region. This work has been two-fold: it has illuminated the material and social conditions inside the stockade while identifying the individuals trapped by convict leasing and it has examined the cultural attitudes that allowed for the continuation of convict leasing into the modern day. In order to reach a broader audience, the project has employed public archaeology techniques, including tours, public excavations, public lectures, and a website. However, due to the ethical and legal restrictions created by COVID-19, the public archaeology efforts undertaken during the summer and fall of 2020 were largely focused on the local community – a community whose wealth was generated in part by convict leasing. This paper builds on current community

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archaeology approaches to introduce a type of community archaeology that confronts the systems that led to exploitation by enumerating the suffering caused by these racialized systems of oppression. Engaging with the beneficiaries of historical traumas as well as the victims can provide a means for promoting greater understanding and empathy in the present, thereby promoting a more just world for all. I propose that in addition to working with descendant populations of those who were victimized by structural and institutional racism, we can also use public archaeology to publicize the dangers of inaction and the long-term repercussions of engaging in exploitative and inhumane systems. The Lone Rock Stockade Project does not only seek to highlight historical injustice; it aims to use archaeology to change modern attitudes toward criminals and incarceration. This project demonstrates the ways that community archaeology can be wielded to encourage change and promote a more equitable society through confronting difficult pasts and learning from historical mistakes.

Between 1871 and 1896, thousands of African American and white men, women, and children were forced to work without pay in industries across the state of Tennessee. Outside of the protections of the 13th amendment, they were effectively enslaved as punishment for crimes. During the era of convict leasing, convicted criminals were leased by the state to private individuals who were free to work the convicts as they saw fit. African Americans, who were intentionally targeted by racists laws, were disproportionately caught in this system of enslavement. Although multiple well-known social influencers and authors, including Frederick Douglass and Ida B. Wells, expounded upon the racial biases of convict leasing, this period of Southern history remains underrepresented in modern heritage narratives. More concerning, however, is the fact that the legal structures that enabled convict leasing still exist, and convicts today continue to be coerced into working below minimum wage without the labor protections afforded to those outside the prison system. The Lone Rock Stockade Project is using public archaeology and outreach to not only highlight the realities of convict leasing, but to work to end the practice and the patterns of thought that enable it.

Public archaeology projects, particularly those that interpret sites of Black and African American abuse and exploitation, often develop strong relationships with descendant communities. In fact, since its roots in the 1990s, this approach has become increasingly embraced within the public archaeology of the African Diaspora (see Flewellen, this volume; Furlong Minkoff et al. forthcoming; Hartemann, this volume; Jenkins, this volume; La Roche and Blakey 1997; McDavid 1997; Reid, this volume). However, in the age of COVID-19, inviting non-local descendant populations to the site not only raises health concerns but violates institutional mandates. In response, this project integrates public archaeology strategies, such as a website and online lectures, as well as community archaeology strategies, such as small local site tours and small-scale community excavations, in order to reach people in a COVID-19 safe manner. While the Lone Rock Stockade Project eventually aims to connect with descendants of the convicts who were imprisoned there during the summer and fall of 2020, the project instead focused on educating the rural, local, predominantly white community, many of whom are descendants of individuals who directly and indirectly financially benefitted from the convict lease system,

about the realities of the system that generated their town's wealth. This project presents a new form of "descendant" public archaeology, one in which the perpetrators of violence are revealed and their transgressions are illuminated in order to dismantle the thought patterns that allow forms of convict leasing to continue today.

This paper begins with a discussion of late nineteenth-century convict leasing in the South with a special emphasis on the system's development in Tennessee. It then introduces the Lone Rock Stockade and provides the site's historical background. Following this discussion is an examination of public archaeology and the rise of activist-oriented interpretations. The paper then outlines the Lone Rock Stockade Project's public outreach efforts, including its current efforts to establish the site as dark heritage in order to prevent the site form being co-opted. One form of public outreach, the archaeological tours of the stockade and the industrial landscape, are described in more detail. The paper ends with a review of the results of exits surveys completed by tour attendees and a discussion of future directions for public engagement and collaborative interpretations at the site.

Convict Leasing

For nearly five decades following the Civil War, Southern states' prisons largely sat empty. The prisoners were to be found in the far-flung corners of these states working on anything from turpentine farms to cotton and sugar plantations to brickyards to coal and iron mines (Mancini 1996:1). These convicted criminals were forced to work without pay for the duration of their sentence as part of the convict lease system. While the Thirteenth Amendment, one of three Reconstruction amendments passed immediately after the Civil War, was intended to abolish slavery in the United States, its framers left one large loophole: slavery or servitude was not outlawed when used "as punishment for a crime" (US Const., amend. XIII, § 1). Pope (2019:1469) asserts that the amendment's framers intended this only as a form of punishment, but former slaveowners and Southern Democrats quickly redefined the law to its current interpretation: persons convicted of a crime are exempted from the law regardless of the intention of their servitude. This interpretation of the law, in which prisoners can be forced to work without pay for the duration of their sentence, continues to be used today and was upheld as recently as 2016 (Crain v. Director, TDJ-CID 2016).

The convict lease system was not just an economic lifeline for cash-strapped Southern states at the end of the war; it was a political tool that enabled wealthy and elite white Southerners to maintain the racial and economic systems Emancipation was intended to dismantle (Mancini 1996; Shapiro 1998). While white voters voiced their displeasure about the costs of building new state penitentiaries, they simultaneously voted to increase punishments for minor crimes (Crowe 1956). Ida B. Wells (1893:2) observes that: "the judges, juries and other officials of the courts are white men who share [racial] prejudices. They also make the laws. It is wholly in their power to extend clemency to white criminals and mete severe punishment to black criminals for the same or lesser crimes." Without funds to hire attorneys to

defend them and lacking the social capital to obtain pardons from the state governor, African Americans were effectively re-enslaved.

Convict leasing was first introduced as a means of solving the economic drain prisoners and prisons put on state coffers. As prisons populations grew in the early nineteenth century, states were forced to bear the costs of constructing new, larger prisons in addition to the rising costs associated with maintaining the prisoners. In some cases, these expensive new structures were outmoded after only a few decades as expanding prison populations led to overcrowded cells and overwhelmed waste management systems. To solve both the overcrowding and financial problems, convict leasing proponents advocated putting convicts to work by enticing private businesses to pay the state for the convicts' labor (Crowe 1956). In other instances, states forced convicts to carry out state construction projects, such as road construction and civic building construction. Convict leasing had been attempted in a few states prior to the Civil War, including in Kentucky, but after Emancipation, convict leasing took on a new and more aggressive form (Knepper 1995; Mancini 1996). Prison populations swelled in the South as formerly enslaved individuals, many of whom were unaware of the laws, were incarcerated at an unprecedented pace (Douglass 1896; Shapiro 1998). The introduction of "black codes," sets of laws that were used to intentionally restrict the freedoms of African Americans, made it easier to imprison them. Concerned more with political expediency and financial gain than rehabilitation or morality, laws enabling the leasing of convicts to private individuals for a set price swept the American South.

Convict Leasing in Tennessee

The first attempt to introduce private convict leasing in Tennessee occurred in 1865, prior to the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment. However, this initial attempt focused on maintaining convicts inside the Main Penitentiary in Nashville. The problems with this arrangement quickly became apparent; the first convict lease issued in 1866 was prematurely terminated by the state in 1869 after administration problems arose. The following year, the state began leasing convicts to various railroads to assist with line construction. However, the temporary employment and difficulty supervising convicts spread out across multiple construction locations led the state to reconsider their model once again. At this point, industrialist A.S. Colyar quickly emerged as the state's "strongest defender of the new prison labor policy" (Crowe 1956:132). Colyar secured a convict lease from the state on February 1, 1871, to work 300 convicts in the Tracy City and Battle Creek mines. Working convicts in coal mines, which ensured long-term employment and easier supervision, provided the state with the income it needed and Colyar with the labor he needed. Colyar would continue to use convicts leased from the state until 1896 when the practice was abandoned. While the lease rate increased over time, one consistency through the leases was the removal of liability from the lease for "escapes, sicknesses, loss of prisoner, fire or any other casualty whatsoever" (Crowe 1956:133). This clause effectively removing all responsibility for ensuring the health and wellbeing of the convicts would spawn the infamous phrase, "one dies, get another."

The lack of liability is what ultimately led Frederick Douglass (1896:11) to describe convict leasing as, "a worse slavery than that from which [African Americans] had been liberated." The impacts of this type of policy are seen most clearly in the patterns of abuse recorded at the Lone Rock Stockade (Fig. 1). The stockade held an average of approximately 400 convicts from 1872 to 1896, although the actual number fluctuated from 350 to over 500. Convicts served sentences ranging from one year for crimes such as petit larceny and burglary to life sentences for murder. Conditions in the stockade were deplorable: the sanitation issues that plagued the Main Penitentiary in Nashville were also present at the stockade. The annual mortality rate was just under 10% annually, with the majority of deaths caused by illnesses such as tuberculosis, typhoid, and diarrhea. Although the stockade had a full-time physician, the physician's primary job was physically evaluating convicts upon arrival and deciding who would be assigned to the coal mines, the coke ovens, or sent to another TCI installation. Convicts were also killed or severely injured in mine accidents that were primarily caused by falling slate due to inadequately propped ceilings. A smaller number of convicts are reported to have died from gunshot wounds sustained during escape attempts or stab wounds inflicted by other convicts (Convict Records 1892).

While death was a constant threat, those who survived faced other perils. Convicts were given daily quotas to fulfill; failure to meet quota resulted in whipping. Even the state's own prison inspector's office was critical of the practice:

The evidence adduced before the committee clearly shows that in many cases the most severe and cruel, not to say the most inhuman and brutal, corporal
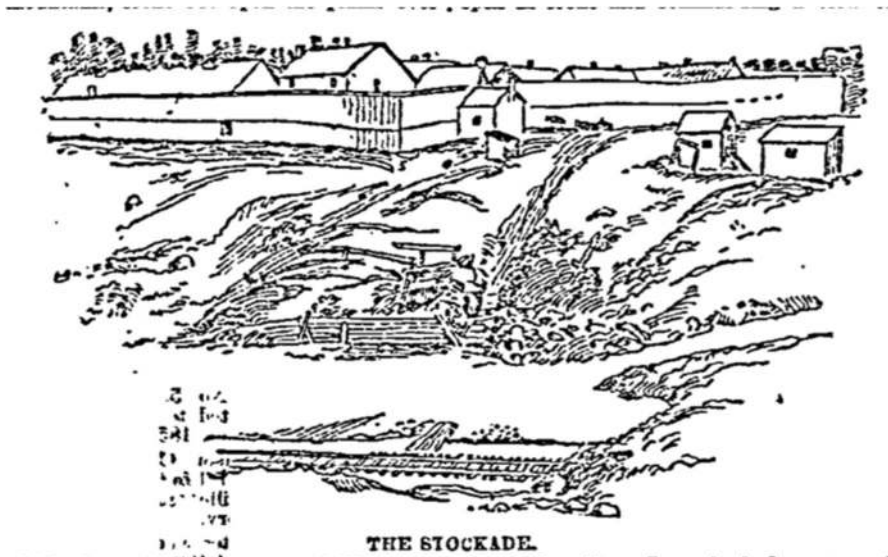
THE STOCKADE.

Fig. 1 The Lone Rock Stockade in 1891. Image by Anonymous. (1891). A Model Stockade. *Daily Inter Ocean*, Chicago, Illinois. November 22

punishment has been inflicted upon the convicts. They are stripped of their clothing and compelled to lie down upon a plank or slab while a guard or warden, or some strong man named by the warden, lays on the bare skin of the convict with a leathern strap with whatever strength he may see fit, from five to fifteen, and even as high as fifty lashes, in some cases blistering, and in other cases lacerating the skin of these convicts. The strap with which this whipping is done consists of two plie [sic] of sole or harness leather, and about twenty to thirty inches in length, securely sewed together and riveted to a wooden handle about eighteen inches in length, the whole weighing some two and one-half pounds. We belive [sic] this strap is entirely too heavy for the purpose for which it is used; that it would be cruel to whip even an ox with such a lash (Rogers and Hodges 1885:616–617).

Outside of the threat of physical violence, convicts also had to contend with a variety of other deprivations, including a lack of socks and blankets, inadequate food, and the ability to bathe only once per week (Moody 1889; Rogers and Hodges 1885). A small number of convicts, particularly females, were removed from the stockade and lodged in private homes in Tracy City where they were forced to work as domestic servants for high-ranking TCI employees (Looney et al. 1885). Prisoner-on-prisoner violence, including sexual violence, was rampant. The final major issue in the Lone Rock Stockade was convicts' food. Although state law outlined what types and how much food convicts were to be supplied, convicts consistently complained about a lack of vegetables (Moody 1889; Rogers and Hodges 1885). Malnutrition-related diseases were another leading cause of death within the stockade. In 1894, a group of 115 convicts revolted and barricaded themselves inside the Lone Rock Mine because of their unaddressed concerns about food (Anonymous 1894; Rogers and Hodges 1885).

The people of Tracy City interacted in a number of ways with the convicts in the stockade. The railroad to the Lone Rock Mine passed directly through downtown Tracy City, meaning railroad cars full of convicts arriving and leaving would have been a common sight for those in the town. Local people sold goods, particularly baked goods, to the convicts who were able to earn money by working on Sundays. Free men were often hired to carry out tasks such as carpentry in the mines alongside the convicts. The stockade became a landmark, with "Stockade Road" and "Stockade Lake" becoming place names for the local community. These place names would remain until well into the first decades of the twentieth century (Partin 2016).

Public Archaeology and Descendant Communities

Although archaeology has a long history of engaging with the public (Bradley and Williams 1998; Moshenska and Schadla-Hall 2011; Moshenska and Zuanni 2018), public archaeology as a distinct, formalized mode within archaeological research can be traced primarily to the work of Wheeler (1955) in the United Kingdom and McGimsey (1972) in the United States. While the definitions of public archaeology

and community archaeology continue to be the subject of debate (see Marshall 2002; Simpson 2008; Smith and Waterton 2009; Thomas 2017; Waterton and Smith 2010; Westmont and Clay, this volume), this paper draws on Schadla-Hall's (1999:147) definition of public archaeology as "any area of archaeological activity that interacted with or had the potential to interact with the public." Public archaeology's dual-origin has led to unique traditions of public archaeology in the two geographical contexts with scholars from each location often trading methods and perspectives (Marshall 2002). In both locations, however, public archaeology has significantly developed beyond its original boundaries. The "public" has increasingly transformed from an anonymous body for whom archaeological resources must be preserved (under the supervision of professionals) into a key stakeholder in the archaeological process (Merriman 2002, 2004). Public involvement in archaeological projects and museums has soared as the political ramifications of archaeological interpretations have become more apparent and more impactful, especially its implications for citizenship (Comer 2012; Henson 2004; Westmont and Antelid 2018), ethnic identity (Brooks 2007; Funari 2001; Jones 1997; Singleton 1997), and nationalism (Atkinson et al. 1996; Díaz-Andreu 2008; Dietler 1994).

As the stakes continue to rise, public archaeologists are continuing to refine their methods in ways that center ethical considerations. These ethical considerations are intended to protect both archaeologists and their living stakeholder communities as the work that archaeologists carry out increasingly "moves into the real world of economic conflicts and political struggle" (Ascherson 2000:2; González-Ruibal 2018). Chief among these considerations is the recognition that the publics' fascination with archaeology can be leveraged in ways that promote civic engagement, inclusive and multivocal perspectives of history, and a sense of ownership of the past (Little 2012; Little and Shackel 2007; Merriman 2004; Shackel 2005). One popular way of using archaeology and the past to transform modern communities has been through collaborations with descendant communities in the co-creation of knowledge in order to challenge long-held and embedded notions of "who owns the past." Collaboration committed to decolonization with descendant communities is increasingly becoming an encouraged ethical practice in archaeological research (Agbe-Davies 2010; Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008; Smith and Wobst 2005) as well as in cultural resource management practices (McDavid and McGhee 2010; Stottman 2016). Others have sought to move beyond simply collaborating by instituting a de-centered, co-creative approach to public collaborations. This requires archaeologists to relinquish authority over narratives to non-professionals in order to craft truly co-created, novel intellectual contributions (Bollwerk et al. 2015; McDavid 2003).

One form of decolonizing collaborative archaeological practice is by enacting activist approaches in public and community archaeology contexts (Atalay et al 2016; Battle-Baptiste 2011; Bruchac et al. 2010; Gnecco and Hernández 2008; Watkins 2000). Although the approach is known by many names, including activist, applied, transformative, and action archaeology (Wurst and Mrozowski 2014), the subfield as a whole ultimately stems from Fritz and Plog's (1970) observation that archaeologists need to make archaeology useful to the modern world or risk being left behind. Activist archaeology takes public archaeology a

step further by using archaeology as a springboard for creating "positive change to help solve modern problems" (Stottman 2010:3). At the heart of this movement is a focus on serving the needs of communities (Atalay 2006; Atalay et al. 2016). Activist archaeologists accomplish this by not just collaborating with the public, but by "affect[ing] change within an activist agenda" through the design and products of the archaeology project (Stottman 2010:8).

While collaborative, co-creative, and activist projects can build trust and mutual understanding between communities and archaeologists, these types of approaches are not without risks. Such approaches can be costly and as expectations change, projects can be forced to shift course (Bollwerk et al. 2015; Connolly 2015). Most importantly, however, is the fact that good intentions do not always result in good collaboration and can, in fact, hurt descendant communities (Funari 2001; McDavid 2007; Pyburn 2003). In the case of activist archaeological projects, archaeologists must be "vigilant and continually self-critical and questioning about the types of changes we advocate" (Little 2010:158). Keeping communities' well-being centered is central to an ethical public archaeology practice. Achieving this in practice, however, oftentimes requires overcoming decades of ingrained social hierarchy. Blakey (1997:141) observes that, "while the institution of slavery may be a thing of the past on which to reflect, white racism continues to antagonize the already wounded relationships between European and African Americans." Any public archaeology of the African Diaspora must also take into account the modern racial politics surrounding sites today and do its utmost to protect descendant communities from further harm.

Activist public archaeology work at the Lone Rock Stockade is further complicated through the site's dark history. As visitors interact with the site and become more aware of its history, the site inevitably becomes identified as a site of dark heritage, or a site that "encompasses the presentation and consumption (by visitors) of real and commodified" death, disaster, and atrocity (Foley and Lennon 1996:198). Durkin (2003) suggests that visitation to such sites is possible only in the postmodern world where death and danger have become neutralized and mediated, although others (e.g., Seaton 1996) have noted that the human fascination with death is ancient. Sites of slavery (Dann and Seaton 2001; Rice 2009; c.f. Alderman et al. 2015; Yankholmes and McKercher 2015) as well as prisons (McAtackney 2014; Wilson 2008) have been identified as instances of dark heritage that members of the public have an interest in visiting. However, reconciling these histories can be difficult or painful, leading visitors to reckon with the past in their own ways (Koskinen-Koivisto and Thomas 2017). The power of such sites, however, can also be mobilized as soft power to achieve aims in the present day (Clarke et al. 2017). In this project, the dark heritage of convict leasing at the Lone Rock Stockade was leveraged as soft power within the framework of activist archaeology in order to reveal the damage caused by convict leasing, encourage the descendants of the historical beneficiaries of the system to renounce convict leasing altogether, and to advocate for a permanent end to convict leasing in the United States today.

Framing Heritage Narratives at the Lone Rock Stockade

As a white woman engaging multiple stakeholder communities at a multiracial, yet primarily African American, site in the rural South, mediating the power differentials inherent not only between professional and public communities, but within the various stakeholder communities, is a key concern and a major obstacle to an ethical public archaeology project of convict leasing. Since the Civil War, Grundy County's African American population has dropped precipitously. In 1860, there had been 280 total free and enslaved black individuals in the county; by 1870, there were only 137 black residents accounting for just 4.2% of the county's population (Sherrill 1996: x). In 2010, Grundy County had just 37 black residents accounting for just 0.27% of the county's population (Census-Viewer n.d.). Inviting African Americans to a county, one that is overwhelmingly white and had an active Ku Klux Klan presence through at least the 1970s, to collaborate on a site where primarily African American men were re-enslaved after the Civil War presents major ethical and safety questions. Given the site's status as a sticking point in a long and tense racial history of the area and the immense amount of time still needed to transcribe and identify the convicts' descendants, I chose to begin the project's outreach work by focusing on bringing the history of the site and the realities of the convict leasing system to light within the local, primarily white, community in order to build empathy and break down potential notions of industrial pride that might be associated with the site. By reframing the site as dark heritage and re-centering conversations on the stockade's history to focus on the historical and ongoing victims of racist legal and incarceratory systems, this project adopts an activist approach that seeks to eventually change attitudes in the wider community.

The Lone Rock Stockade Project is currently in the process of naming, identifying, and tracing descendants of the thousands of individuals who were forced to work, sometimes to death, to generate profit for the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company and its shareholders. However, before descendant communities can safely be brought to the stockade, a clear condemnation of the site's history must be established within the local community. While denouncing the heritage of a site connected to the exploitation and abuse of men, women, and children for nearly a quarter of a century might seem like an easy task, the reality is more complicated. TCI, the company responsible for building and operating the stockade, continues to hold a storied reputation as a major force in the town's and the region's development; for many, TCI's greatest sin continues to be its relocation to Ensley, Alabama, in 1904, which effectively deprived Tracy City of its largest employer.

In re-introducing the site to public memory, especially for younger generations who had not previously known about the stockade, balancing pride of place with dark heritage can be delicate. As the site had been left mostly undisturbed and unmarked for over a century, it had largely faded from the area's and the nation's collective memory. Work by scholars such as Shapiro (1998) had highlighted the site's history, but the site's identity as cultural heritage that holds meaning

for modern society is being established in part by this project. In postindustrial contexts, such as that of coal mining Tracy City, families that remain after the closure of industry often experience a contradictory sense of place attachment. Mah (2009:289) identifies the root of this contradiction as stemming from the fact that the places people have become attached to are "devestat[ed], but also home." In the US context, Mah (2009:306) found that post-industrial communities were often imbued with a "sense of nostalgia for lost social structures of family and work" and suffered from "the long-term experience of…exclusion." In other words, postindustrial communities often develop deep connections to industrial landscapes and a positive connotation of the industrial past as being a brighter and more prosperous time for their community (Langhorst and Bolton 2017; Shackel and Westmont 2016). This can make highlighting dark heritage that contradicts that rosy interpretation difficult.

Although this site had tremendous implications for the history of African Americans in the United States, engaging the largely white residential community in heritage-making processes at the site can also have fruitful outcomes. Firstly, it can help to deter lay excavations or "looting" while encouraging locals to protect the site from vandals. Secondly, it can illuminate the lived experiences of place that both residents and historical convicts would have encountered. This helps individuals to "empathize with the experiences of the [previous] inhabitants" which can help residents "gain an appreciation for the heritage resources under their feet" (Wright 2015:219). In this early phase of the project's long-term public outreach plan, we sought to build a greater appreciation amongst the local population for the site and the people that were harmed by it that was grounded in the *reality* of the site's history. This step – defining the site with the local community as a place of shame that serves to "contrast [the] meaning and value systems between the past and present" (Nauret 2017:16) – is necessary in order to make the site safe for non-white descendant communities to play collaborative and co-creative roles in the site's future interpretation.

Coincidently, this decision to focus on illuminating the site's dark heritage for the local population while we worked to identify the convicts' descendants coincided with the 2020 COVID-19 outbreak. Practically, even if we had already identified and been in contact with descendants, we would not have been able to host them at the site. Because the stockade prisoners were sent from the State Penitentiary in Nashville, the prison population represented every county in the state with the majority of individuals coming from Shelby County (Memphis) and Davidson County (Nashville). However, the 1880 census reveals that many convicts were not from Tennessee at all, but simply had been convicted of crimes while in Tennessee. Given the prisoners' wide geographic range of origin and subsequent migrations, such as the Great Migration, out of the South, efforts to invite descendants to the site would not be possible until COVID concerns are alleviated. Until it becomes safe to invite long-distance descendant communities to the site, we are continuing to work to build empathy and a truthful account of the history of the stockade within the local geographical community.

Public Archaeology at the Lone Rock Stockade

As archival research into the site progressed, a pattern emerged. While the convict lease system had been lobbied for and initiated by the wealthy white elite in Nashville, and ultimately made policy by politicians and bureaucrats in Nashville, the day-to-day operations of the stockade were largely managed by working and middle class individuals in and around Tracy City. Contracts to feed and clothe the prisoners were given to local farmers and seamstresses, while those who worked as prison guards and coke oven bosses – those responsible for enforcing convicts' daily forced labor regime – were largely from the local community (Shapiro 1998). While these individuals directly benefitted from the presence of the convicts, much of the town was dependent on Tennessee Coal and Iron, either through direct or indirect employment. In 1880, TCI's coke ovens were the largest (free) employer in the county. In that same year, TCI also owned a lumber and saw mill operation, a brick yard, and a railroad car production shop in Grundy County – all of which were staffed by free white men – in addition to their coal, coke, and railroad ventures. Other businesses, such as book and shoe stores and flour and grist mills, opened in order to supply TCI's workers (Sherrill 1996). This thriving community was only possible through the financial surplus generated by TCI's convict laborers. Emphasizing the community's debt to convicts for enabling the town's historic success became a primary focus of the public outreach message.

Public Outreach Methods

Outreach methods began in the typical ways, namely public tours, free public lectures, participatory excavations, and a website. A series of tours were scheduled and advertised during the summer and fall of 2020. The tours will be discussed in more detail below. These tours were further expanded through one informal and two formal lectures intended to reach a wider audience. The lectures incorporated more documents and a discussion of the long-range history of the stockade, including some of the more personal and impactful stories and circumstances from the convicts. The informal lecture was given virtually to Sewanee's incoming freshman class and emphasized difficult histories and the long-term repercussions of seemingly innocuous historical events. The two formal lectures were given live to a small, socially distanced audience with simultaneous virtual streaming. A brief question and answer period followed both lectures. The first lecture was given in Tracy City, the location of the stockade, and the second lecture was given in Sewanee at the University of the South, which sponsors the project.

In-person volunteer archaeological excavation opportunities were also offered. This was not initially part of the public outreach plan, but after several visitors on the tours requested opportunities for their children to have a more hands-on experience, especially with schools being closed due to COVID-19, the public excavations were added (Fig. 2). These were unbelievably successful, with adult participants returning multiple times and offering unique interpretations (e.g. that railroad spikes

Fig. 2 Volunteers sift for arti-
facts at a community excavation
event at the Lone Rock Stock-
ade. Photo by author

found inside the prison barracks might have been used as weapons) that demon-
strated a deep interest in the historical context and materials.

The final outreach method employed by this project is a website I built with two
Sewanee students as part of a public archaeology internship. The website explicitly
connected the Lone Rock Stockade and convict leasing in Tennessee to broader con-
versations about prison labor, racialized incarceration, and criminal justice reform
today. The website's content is social justice-oriented. The website was highlighted
in the two formal lectures and is featured in other scholarship about public archaeol-
ogy at the stockade.

Utilizing the methods just described, the public archaeology component of the
project began speaking truth to the local community about the realities of convict
leasing. Notably, the local historical society (the Grundy County Historical Society)
has several panels dedicated to the topic in their room on TCI and Arthur S. Col-
yar. These panels provide facts but stop short of passing judgment on the system.
Additionally, conversations with local residents revealed that many individuals had
gone to the historical society on a school trip as a child or teenager and had never
made additional trips as an adult. The historical society's website also features a
long-time resident's personal reflection on convict leasing and the Lone Rock Stock-
ade. This account is currently the first result for internet searches on the stockade.
However, the account is factually incorrect on many key points, including the year

the stockade ceased operations, and the account makes significant claims with little to no corroborating evidence. While these two public interpretations of the stockade provide some information on the site, I suggest that additional, research-derived public interpretations, particularly interpretations that ground their critique of the system in historical fact, are needed. The tours were the primary means of communicating these facts and interpretations with the public. I will discuss the tours in more detail because we were able to conduct exit surveys with participants and the tours had the greatest number of in-person attendees.

Archaeology Tours at the Lone Rock Stockade

The tours began at the former site of the Lone Rock Mine tipple next to the remaining coke ovens. The tour began with a brief history of TCI and its role in Grundy County history. Next, a basic description of the industrial landscape operations, including the connections between the mine, coke ovens, and stockade, was presented. Once the industrial history was described in full, the tour turned entirely to the topics of convicts and the convict leasing system. The parallels to slavery, particularly as reflected in the racial and economic patterns of convict leasing, are discussed in great detail with the tour visitors. The introduction of Black Codes in the South, generally, and "Zebra Laws" in Tennessee, specifically, as well as the concurrent increase in sentence lengths for minor crimes, are shown as tools used by wealthy white Southerners to both replace their enslaved workforce and to maintain social control over the African American population (Shapiro 1998). At this point, the group walked to the stockade site (about 0.1 miles or 160 m) utilizing the path that the convicts would have travelled between the coke ovens and the stockade, and a specific discussion of the Lone Rock Stockade architecture and interior conditions were presented. The conditions prisoners experienced were emphasized. Tour attendees were told about the lack of sanitation and the various diseases convicts died from; about the quota and whippings; about the lack of hygiene, lack of clean clothes, and lack of blankets; and the dangers convicts faced working in the coal mines or at the coke ovens. After this discussion, tour attendees were invited to "enter" the stockade, and an 1890 map of the structure was produced to show visitors where they were on the historic landscape as they moved from the exterior of the stockade into the barracks. The tour narrative then turned toward archaeology, and tour attendees were invited to examine an excavation unit that had been left open for that purpose. The differences between the strata dating to the preindustrial period (a yellowish brown silty clay), the industrial period (a dark greyish brown silty loam), and the postindustrial period (a black silt loam) were striking and helped to illustrate the importance of soils for understanding archaeological sites and land use. Tour attendees were also shown the various efforts made in the stockade to improve sanitation, including drainage ditches, a cistern, and a layer of macadam present across the entire site. The tour also highlighted the impact of industrial activity on the environment: none of the trees at the stockade site are more than 50 years old, and the distribution of species and growth patterns indicate that the soil had become so compacted and depleted that it took the forest over 50 years to begin

regenerating on that site. At this point, visitors had time to walk around and examine the area more closely or ask questions. Once all of the questions had been answered, tour attendees were brought back to the parking lot and shown some of the more common artifact types recovered from the stockade: broken pieces of stoneware, window and bottle glass fragments, and architectural elements, as well as items from clothing and pieces of mining equipment. Attendees were asked to form basic interpretations of these objects (e.g., Where did they come from? Who purchased them? Who used them? What do they tell us about the site? What do they tell us about the people at the site? What types of objects are missing?) and many attendees correctly placed the artifacts within the social context of the stockade. After that, the tour was complete and attendees were asked to complete an exit survey. Tours typically took approximately two hours.

Tour Exit Survey Results

The exit surveys revealed that visitors to the stockade were fairly homogenous; however, this homogeneity is reflective of the demographics of the local community. Surveys were offered to all attendees over 18 years old; however, only one survey was typically completed per family. The survey featured a total of 21 questions intended to capture basic demographic data, motivations for attending the tour, and impacts of the tour for visitors. The survey used was adapted from a visitor survey developed by the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art (JSMA 2018). In total, 78 visitors attended the tours and 42 surveys were at least 50% completed. Several individuals failed to complete the demographic information section but did complete the other sections; the parts of those surveys that were completed are included in these results. Overall, the survey indicated that while the tours are encouraging local individuals to understand and appreciate the site, the connection between the site and modern racial issues as well as the site's status as shared history needs further development.

The majority of tour attendees were between the ages of 51 and 64 (30.6%) or over 65 years of age (38.9%) and had either never visited Grundy Lakes before (27.8%) or visited Grundy Lakes between one and five times per year (38.9%). The majority self-identified as Caucasian (94.3%) with Hispanic/Latino (2.9%) and Native American (2.9%) tour attendees as well. Approximately 75.0% of those surveyed live within 12 mi (19 km) of the stockade site while over 83.0% of attendees live within 20 mi (32 km). Nearly all (94.4%) of those surveyed lived in Tennessee. When asked why they visit historical sites, 85.0% reported that they visit sites in order to "improve my own knowledge or understanding, to satisfy a personal/academic/professional interest in a subject." A total of 22.5% of visitors responded that "stimulate my own creativity, to reflect and contemplate, to escape or recharge." Although one of the primary goals of the public engagement project with the local community was to inspire empathy towards the convicts and be emotionally moved to protect the site, less than one fifth (17.5%) agreed that they visited historical sites "to be moved emotionally, to experience fascinating or beautiful things, to feel a strong sense of personal connection." Only 7.5% reported that they visited historical

sites to "spend time with people in a nice place, to visit a major attraction in the area."

Interestingly, archaeology was not the leading motivation for visitors to attend the tour (Table 1). Instead, all visitors indicated that an interest in local history was a motivation, followed by personal fulfillment as indicated by 40% of those surveyed. Spending time with family and entertaining visitors were less common motivations. Visitors were given the option to explain "other" motivations for visiting the site. One visitor wrote "Just watched Ava Duveray's 13th," referring to a film about racialized incarceration in the United States released in 2016 and made free for viewing during the summer of 2020 following the national unrest caused by the deaths of African Americans at the hands of police. The fact that visitors were connecting the stockade site to national conversations about racial incarceration on their own, and that this was a motivating factor in choosing to visit the stockade, indicates that there could be a wider audience for this message moving forward.

The survey also indicated that visitors learned something while on the tour. In particular, 100% of visitors indicated that they learned something about archaeology and local history; interestingly, not all visitors indicated that they had learned something about state or national history (Table 2). As the Lone Rock Stockade was the largest private convict stockade in the state at the end of the nineteenth century and is emblematic of a national scheme that is still in force today, this is surprising. It also demonstrates that more explicit connections between local and state and national history will need to be made, not only in future tours of the site, but also in future interpretive narratives.

Questions related to the importance of the site, both at a personal level and a societal level, indicated that visitors mostly found the site and its industrial history to be important (Table 3). The one point on which some visitors marked "unsure" was the question about whether the Lone Rock Stockade was heritage. The term was not defined for visitors, as we had hoped visitors would define heritage for themselves in answering the question; however, this might have led to confusion. Although there was nearly unanimous agreement that the history discussed was relevant to the visitor and that the site was an important historical site, there was at least one visitor who was still unsure about these points at the end of the tour.

Finally, the last set of questions sought to better understand how visitors connected to the themes presented on the tour of the Lone Rock Stockade. In particular, the questions sought to better understand visitors' thoughts related to preserving the site, the fact that the site is related to African American history, the site's relationship to modern prisons, and that the past can be used to better understand

Table 1 What motivated you to visit the site today? Check all that apply (95.3% response rate)

Interest in archaeology	58.1%
Interest in local history	95.3%
Personal fulfillment	44.2%
Spend time with family	11.6%
Entertain visitors	4.7%
Other	13.9%

Table 2 How much do you agree with each of the following statements? (95.3% response rate)

	Agree or Strongly Agree	Unsure	Disagree or Strongly Disagree
I enjoyed my visit to the archaeological site	100%		
I learned something new about archaeology	100%		
I learned something new about local history	100%		
I learned something new about state/national history	97.7%	2.3%	

the present (Table 4). The answers here were somewhat surprising. Although tour attendees remarked that the tour had at least somewhat influenced their understanding of all of the themes mentioned, visitors' understandings of the history of prisons in America and their perceptions of how the past shapes the present were the themes most affected by the tours. Also exciting was the finding that over 90% of the respondents stated that the archaeological site had "very much" influenced their appreciation for storytelling and shared cultural heritage. This shows that storytelling, which became a primary means for invoking empathy among visitors, and the concept of a shared cultural heritage can be vital aspects of a community archaeology that seeks to expose the truths of dark histories in a way that promotes empathy and understanding.

Discussion

The results of the tour exit surveys revealed that while the tours were impacting visitors' understandings and perceptions of the history of the stockade, these lessons were unevenly distributed. Although all of the visitors surveyed indicated that they believed the Lone Rock Stockade was heritage and that the history of the site was important to them, some visitors were unsure that is was an important historic site. Further, although all visitors surveyed indicated that the tour had somewhat or very much influenced their understandings on several of the themes related to the project, that fact that more visitors did not gain an appreciation for shared cultural heritage is concerning. As that is the primary goal of the first period of public engagement, more efforts to emphasize that the site has multiple

Table 3 Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (97.7% response rate)

	Agree or Strongly Agree	Unsure	Disagree or Strongly Disagree
The history discussed today is relevant to me	97.7%	2.3%	
The Lone Rock Stockade is an important historical site	97.7%	2.3%	
The Lone Rock Stockade is heritage	93.0%	7.0%	
Coal mining and industrial history is important	100%		

Table 4 Did touring the archaeological site influence your: (81.4% response rate)

	Very Much	Somewhat	A Little	Not at All
Understanding of what archaeologists do?	85.7%	14.3%		
Idea of what is worthy of preservation?	85.7%	14.3%		
Understanding of the history of prisons in America?	91.7%	8.3%		
Appreciation for storytelling and shared cultural heritage?	91.7%	8.3%		
Perception of how the past impacts the present?	91.7%	5.6%		2.8%
Interest in local African American history?	91.7%	8.3%		

stakeholders and that descendant groups will eventually play a major role in the interpretation of the site will need to happen.

Admittedly, this survey features several constraints. The small participation size (less than 100 people) and the self-selected audience create a skewed representation of the wider community. However, by reaching those with an interest in local history, the project successfully reached the people who would be most likely to interact with the site in the future. Additionally, due to academic schedules and COVID restrictions, tours could only be offered on Friday afternoons and weekends, and tours had to be limited to ten participants. In the future, we intend to film the tour and make it available online for a wider audience. Making the tour available online will also make the tour accessible to people who cannot manage the physical requirements of the tour and those who have scheduling conflicts. Additionally, because some groups chose to only complete one survey (rather than one survey per group member), we have no record of what percentage of visitors are actually represented by this survey data.

These survey results will not only guide further public outreach efforts among the local community but will also help prepare us for future conversations and collaborations with the descendant community. This survey gathers basic data about the penetration of the themes that we have pursued; once the descendant community becomes involved, we will be able to show how our work with the local community thus far has prevented the site's narrative from becoming co-opted into modern white supremacy, such as has happened at former plantation sites (Fidel 2020). Once the site has been acknowledged as a site of pain and suffering, particularly for late nineteenth-century African Americans in Tennessee, we will be able to work towards pursuing narratives that are of interest to the descendant community.

Conclusion

At dark heritage sites that have largely been forgotten to history, setting the narrative on the site early can be vitally important for ensuring members of the descendant community can eventually act as collaborators. Due to COVID-19 restrictions and being in the project's early phases, the project's initial public

outreach efforts focused on the local community, some of whom are descendants of the individuals who profited from the convict lease system. This article has reviewed the public outreach methods utilized in this project so far and shown that the public tours, in particular, are helping to educate the local community about the realities of convict leasing, the site's role in the state's African American history, and the continuing legacy of convict leasing. As the project moves forward, we hope to institute a truly collaborative project that features descendant archaeology as a leading force.

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