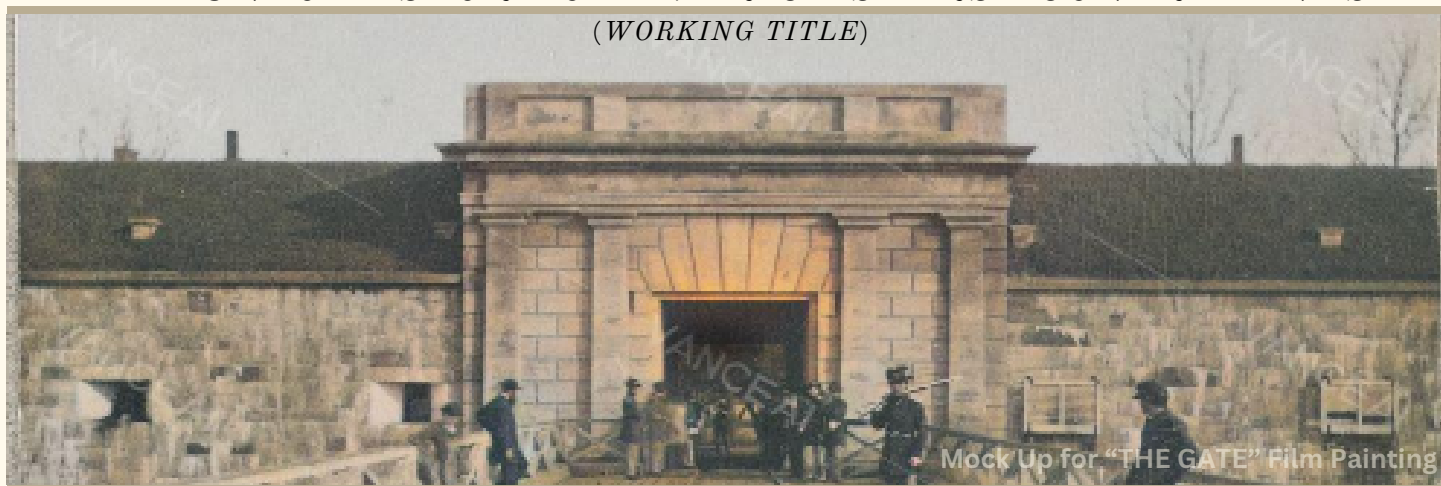


THE GATE

THE UNTOLD STORY OF AMERICA'S FIRST CONTRABANDS

(WORKING TITLE)



Fortress Monroe moat entrance circa 1864, Hampton, VA

Pamela, Tim, and Ajena, descendants of enslaved people, explore the oral histories of their ancestors who bravely escaped to “freedom” and became part of the first Contraband community in the United States.

This PBS documentary, **THE GATE: The Untold Story of America's First Contrabands** follows descendants, Pamela, Tim, and Ajena, as they share their gripping ancestral stories of enslavement and self-emancipation during the early days of the Civil War. Featuring the family's first-hand accounts, their forefathers find refuge by joining America's first “Contrabands” at Fort Monroe in Hampton, Virginia. The film begins in 1861 with the genesis of the Contraband movement and community at the Fort. As a result, the Confederates burned the town of Hampton to the ground because they didn't want it occupied by “negroes” and Union Troops.

These descendants recount their ancestor's dangerous escapes, wartime struggles, and post-war accomplishments. They pay homage to the first three Contrabands, Frank Baker, Shepard Mallory, and James Townsend, who paved the way. They also establish meaningful connections with descendants of key historical figures including Fort Monroe's Gen. Benjamin F. Butler.

We'll film them as they meet previously unknown white, mixed-race, and black relatives, attend neglected burial sites, and broaden the meaning of family.



Cousins Tim, Pamela & Sara meet for the first time

This film concludes as our descendants grapple with the big questions of our time: restitution, reconciliation, and reparations. While doing so, they explore ways to reach common ground amid societal division. Over the next two years, we will be filming their journey.

THE GATE: The Untold Story of America's First Contrabands will be the first feature-length documentary and educational program on this subject.



A Seltzer Film & Video Production
featuring members of the Contraband Historical Society
[Click Here to Support this Film](#)