



# Hampton

CONVENTION & VISITOR BUREAU

**Media Release**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Contraband Historical Society Hosts Candlelight Vigil May 24** *Remembers first Contraband on anniversary of decision*

**Hampton, VA-** Join the Contraband Historical Society as they memorialize Frank Baker, James Townsend and Sheppard Mallory, as well as thousands of other freedom seekers who escaped slavery during the Civil War. The Annual Contraband Memorial Candlelight Vigil will be Friday, May 24 from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Fort Monroe National Monument's Cannon Park, 3 Ruckman Road.

Fort Monroe was the site of the famous Contraband Decision during the American Civil War. On May 24, 1861, Frank Baker, James Townsend and Sheppard Mallory, escaped from enslavement and sought sanctuary at Union-controlled Fort Monroe. The post commander, General Benjamin Butler decided that these men were being used as

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“contraband” by Confederates in the war effort. This event marked the first occurrence during the Civil War that U.S. officials did not return people escaping their enslavement to those demanding their return. Following the Contraband Decision, tens of thousands of enslaved men and women traveled to Fort Monroe to gain their freedom over the course of the war.

Partially bordered by the Hampton Roads harbor and Chesapeake Bay, Hampton, with the 344,000 sq. ft. Hampton Roads Convention Center and the award-winning Hampton Coliseum, is located in the center of Coastal Virginia and the Hampton Roads metropolitan area. Hampton is the site of America's first continuous English-speaking settlement, the site of the first landing of Africans in English North America, and is home to such visitor attractions as the Virginia Air & Space Center, Fort Monroe National Monument, Hampton History Museum, harbor tours and cruises, Hampton University Museum, The American Theatre, among others.

During 2019, Hampton commemorates the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first African landing in English North America at Hampton’s Old Point Comfort on Fort Monroe National Monument. In addition to honoring the men and women who arrived in 1619, the city will also celebrate the contributions of African Americans have made to our city, state and nation. A commission has planned events across the entire year to recognize and celebrate African American impact, including a three-day long Commemoration event, August 23-25.

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