

# The Story of a Nashville Neighborhood: Brooklyn Heights Community Garden

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## Introduction

Brooklyn Heights Community Garden is a registered 501(c)3 on a .56 acre plot of land in the Northeast Nashville neighborhood of Brooklyn Heights. Founded in 2009 by Miss Nella Pearl Frierson, the garden community has been a place for intergenerational learning about food and nutrition, holistic healing practices, and healthy relationship building. It serves a historically Black and low-income neighborhood. There are no grocery stores within a mile of the garden, and public transportation is not adequate for residents with no other form of mobility (Brooklyn Heights Community Garden, 2022).

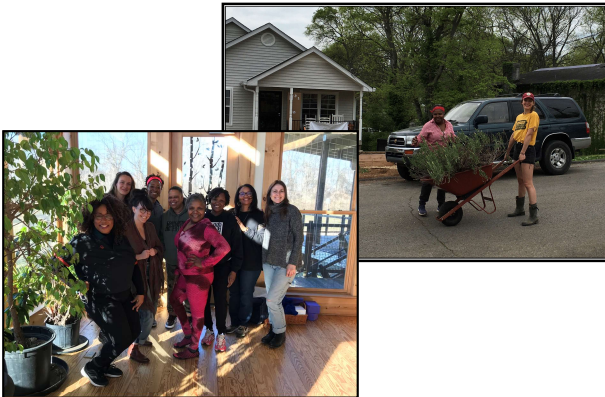
This Digital Humanities project contributes a StoryMap that combines photographs, historical maps and plats, contemporary maps and geospatial information, autobiography, audio recording, interviews, and text to the Brooklyn Heights Community Garden. They will host this StoryMap on their website.

As a geography of growth, healing, relationship-building, work, art, and play, this community garden needed a way to share the long tradition they are a part of and the significance of a historically Black place in Nashville, TN. The neighborhood is changing quickly with the rest of Nashville's development and gentrification. Conceptualized within a longer tradition of colonialism and racism, story-telling and memory-keeping is particularly important for this community and neighborhood. This map aims to begin a long-term process of documenting this neighborhood's history and contribution to Nashville's artistic, cultural, and urban farming landscape.

## Methodology and Tools

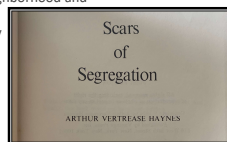
Community-engaged research

- Starting with what I have learned from being in relationship with the community garden and the needs of the organization.
- Ethnographic approach to history that incorporates oral history and moving through the contemporary urban space (Adelusi-Adeluyi 2019)



Data collection

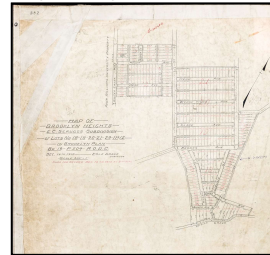
- Collecting photographs that members of the organization have
- Metro Nashville Archives for drawings and plats of the neighborhood and region, news articles
- "Founder" Reverend William Haynes's son's autobiography



## Methodology and Tools (cont.)

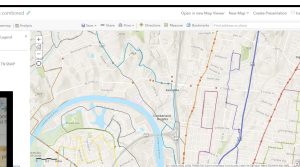
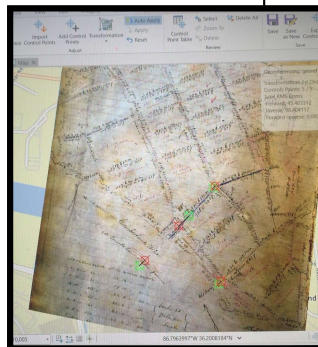
ArGIS StoryMap

- Thinking through the presentation of the past and present of this neighborhood to highlight the contributions and elevations that the garden's community is fostering.



ArcGIS Pro

- Georeferencing historical maps and drawings onto contemporary coordinate systems
- Playing with tools to locate for SNAP retail locations, bus routes, walking and public transportation time



## Preliminary Findings

History

In March 1855, Mr William C Brooks splits the land that is now Brooklyn Heights into plots of land for sale. It registered and named as "Brooklyn" and known as "the Village of Brooklyn." Brooks sells the land that year to Cyphrus C. Vance.

In 1924, the EC Scruggs Subdivision of Brooklyn Heights sold to Jim C Haynes, the father of Reverend William Haynes. (Book 492, page 428, Register's office for Davidson County)

Rev. William Haynes's father was a plantation-owner in Murfreesboro and his mother was a woman who was enslaved. Rev. Haynes was formally educated and deeded the land by his father in the 1920s. I am still working through details about this specific neighborhood in relation to Whites Creek Road and the Haynes Heights region.

Rev. William Haynes was involved with several key Black Baptist churches in Nashville, the Publishing Board, and a Black-run bank.

In his son's autobiography, Arthur Vertrease Haynes emphasizes the importance of play, the arts, farming, and food for children and Black communities. Arthur Haynes also mentions the authoritarian role his father played in the household stemming from the slave system: "With many of the values my father possessed coming down to him through slavery, our family reflected, in many ways, the life style of a plantation" (1974, 5).

This area has long been Black neighborhoods involved in collective organizing for public goods such as paved roads and street lights. This area has also considered cooperative food options to feed themselves and their neighbors (Tennessean 1985).

## Preliminary Findings (Cont.)

Learnings

StoryMaps is a way of sharing

- Spatial changes across time
- Continuities and disruption of cultural practices in a place

Story-telling

- "Order" of the telling when moving back and forth between past, present, and future
- Working with organization and community-members to tell this story

Online exhibit and curation

## Future plans with this project

I plan to continue to develop and manage this StoryMap this summer and upcoming year. I want to learn more about analysis in ArcGIS that we can use to make arguments about community needs.

I will visit Metro Nashville archives to collect more details on the region of Haynes Heights and Brooklyn Heights.

I hope to work with other local researchers on some of the industries nearby. There is suspicion within the neighborhood that these industries have posed environmental health risks to the community.

I would like to record informal interviews with residents and garden community-members on their experiences in the neighborhood and with the garden's programming. I also plan to record soundscapes of the garden, laughter, bees buzzing, cars honking hellos, and singing, to have in the background of the StoryMap.

Finally, I plan to build an Omeka collection of photographs from garden programs such as art projects, vegetables, and flowers.

The garden will be connected with Vanderbilt's license to use the StoryMap technology regardless of my connection with the garden or VU.

## References

Adelusi-Adeluyi, A. (2020). Mapping old Lagos: digital histories and maps about the past. *The Historian* (Kingston), 82(1), 51–65. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00182370.2020.1734725>

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Haynes, A. V. 1974. *Scars of Segregation*. Vantage Press. New York: New York.

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## Acknowledgements

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