

Statement from The Battle of Nashville, Trust, Inc., Trent Watrous Executor of the Estate of William C. Dorris, and Todd Presnell, Counsel to the Executor

The Battle of Nashville Trust, Inc. (the “BONT”), Trent Watrous, the Executor of the Estate of Charles William (“Bill”) Dorris, and Todd Presnell, counsel to the Executor, released the following statement today (December 7, 2021) regarding the Nathan Bedford Forrest statue along Interstate 65 in Nashville, Tennessee:

Charles William (“Bill”) Dorris passed away on November 24, 2020. Under Mr. Dorris’ Last Will and Testament (the “Will”), Mr. Dorris left his property on Hogan Road in Nashville containing the Nathan Bedford Forrest statue to the BONT. Mr. Dorris had no prior affiliation with the BONT and the BONT had no idea it was a beneficiary of his Will until well after Mr. Dorris passed away.

The BONT, in consultation and with the approval of Trent Watrous, the executor of Mr. Dorris’s estate, made the decision to remove the Nathan Bedford Forrest statue from the Hogan Road property that Mr. Dorris had left the BONT in his Will.

This decision was made for several reasons-each reason sets aside the contentious debate about Forrest as a person or as a Confederate general:

1. Forrest was not present at The Battle of Nashville.
2. The statue is ugly and a blight on Nashville.
3. It has been vandalized, is in disrepair, and is dangerous.
4. Having the statue in such a prominent location in Nashville distracts from the BONT’s mission and would be and has been divisive in the city we all cherish.

The Estate of William C. Dorris remains open in the Davidson County Probate Court, and no decision has been made regarding the statue’s disposition or location.

The Will also set up a separate trust where three distinctive segments of the Hogan Road property will be held in trust. These three distinctive segments are for property containing a pre-Civil War ice house, a pre-Civil War artisanal well, and a flag display of state flags of states that joined the Confederacy. These three items (the flag display, the ice house, and the well) will be preserved in trust, pursuant to Mr. Dorris’s wishes

We would also like to provide some additional context about the preservation of history, which is critical. The Nashville battlefield was one of the largest in the Civil War and the least protected. It spans from the Cumberland River near Charlotte Pike east to the other side of Nolensville Road and South from the hills just south of town all the way to Brentwood. The core battlefield covers most of Green Hills all the way east to I-65. The citizens of Nashville tried to protect some of the site as early as the 1920s but were unsuccessful. Development and time have made the battlefield virtually unrecognizable. However, the BONT, in conjunction with its partners including Metro Nashville, have been able to save some of the sites for all Americans. The interest in the Civil War and the battle here is huge. The BONT has had over a million visitors to our website from all over the country and the world. People want to know where their great great great grandfather fought

and his roots in time and history. The BONT is proud of what it has accomplished. The BONT's sites are hidden gems in the community-protected forever-for all to enjoy.

The battle here was perhaps the most decisive victory for the United States during the war and it ended major fighting in the western campaign. The largest attack of the war by African Americans -the USCT-occurred here on Franklin Pike near Battery Lane and their casualties were enormous. History is important. And it is all in our backyards. The Battle of Nashville was a pivotal moment in our nations bloodiest conflict. The Hogan Road property is not core battlefield land. It is a sliver of the retreat. Given the factors outlined above, the BONT, in consultation and with the approval of Trent Watrous, made the decision to have the statue removed.

James D. Kay, Jr., The Battle of Nashville Trust, Inc.
Trent Watrous, Executor of the Estate of William C. Dorris
Todd Presnell, Counsel to the Estate of William C. Dorris