

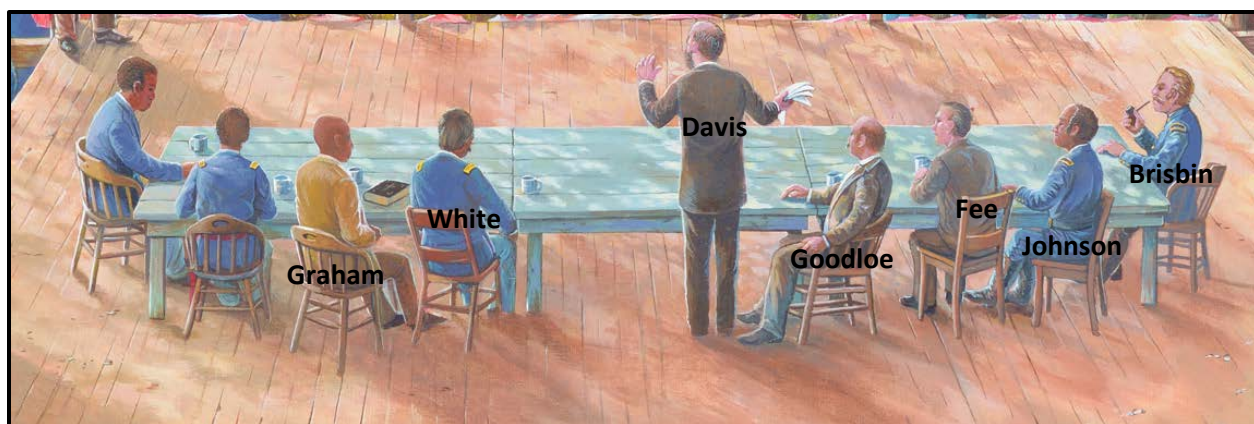
MEETING THE SPEAKERS ON THE PLATFORM BACKGROUND ESSAY

Based on an article published on July 8, 1867 in the newspaper, The Cincinnati Commercial, we know the names of several of the men who spoke at the July 4, 1867 gathering in Lexington. The paper listed them as:

Willard Davis, General D.S. Goodloe, Col. Johnson, Rev. John G. Fee, Col. White, Judge William Clinton Goodloe, General J.S. Brisbin, Rev. G.H. Graham, and Mr. Gunn.

Researchers who consulted both primary and secondary resources found information about three of the speakers: William “Willard” Davis, John Fee, and General James S. Brisbin, all known as civil rights advocates. It is possible that future research will provide more information about the other speakers.

William “Willard” Davis was a young attorney in Lexington who purchased 43 lots in Davis Bottom in 1865 and re-sold the lots to families, both black and white. It was unusual for property owners to sell to both black and white families at that time. Willard Davis is the man responsible for establishing Davis Bottom as an integrated community. He did make a profit on the land sales, but he seems to have been motivated by more than profit. In the speech he made on the 4th of July 1867, he spoke strongly in favor of civil rights and equality. Davis spoke against Kentucky state laws that denied African Americans the right to vote and to testify in court cases where a white person was involved.



John G. Fee, also a speaker on the platform, was another strong advocate for civil rights. He was the founder of Berea College, the first interracial college in Kentucky. Berea was an interracial college and community even before the Civil War.

General James S. Brisbin had been an educator and a lawyer before the Civil War. He enlisted in the Union Army as a private and rose to the rank of brigadier general by the end of the war. He remained in the military the rest of his life. Gen. Brisbin was the only speaker who called for *universal suffrage*, or the right for all citizens, including white and black women, to vote.