

and *An Inquiry into the Distinctive Characteristics of the Aboriginal Race of America and Crania Aegyptiaca* in 1844. In his writings, “for the subsequent history of racial science, Morton argued that he had demonstrated the presence of significant differences in cranial capacity—and therefore, intelligence—among the races, with ‘Mongolians’ and Caucasians heading the list, and ‘Americans’ and ‘Ethiopians’ bringing up the rear,” (American Philosophical Society). Largely, the population of the United States approved of Morton’s scientific studies, especially “pro-slavery advocates [and] Gliddon and the Alabama physician, Josiah Nott, who developed his own, highly elaborated polygenic theory as an apologetic for slavery,” (American Philosophical Society). Among those who did not support Morton’s views were those who felt that his assertions contradicted the Book of Genesis.

Morton married Rebecca Pearsall, daughter of Robert and Elizabeth Pearsall, on October 23, 1827. They had eight children. He died on May 15, 1851, following several illnesses including “severe pleurisy and pericarditis,” (Wood, p. 16). He was survived by his widow and seven children. Soon after his death, he was remembered as “modest in his demeanor, of no arrogant pretensions, and of a forgiving temper; charitable and respectful to others, yet never forgetful of self-respect,” (Meigs, page 48).

### **James St. Clair Morton**

James St. Clair Morton, son of Samuel George Morton and Rebecca Pearsall, was a Union engineer during the Civil War. He engineered Fort Negley in Nashville, Tennessee and was killed just before the Battle of Petersburg on June 17, 1864.

Morton was born on September 24, 1828 in Philadelphia. He enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania at the age of 14 and then was accepted into the United States Military Academy at West Point where he graduated second in his class of forty-two in 1851. Prior to the outbreak of the Civil War, Morton worked on the construction of fortifications for the Corps of Engineers at Fort Sumter, Fort Jefferson and Fort Delaware. From 1855 to 1857, he taught mathematics and military engineering as an assistant professor at West Point. The Treasury Department then appointed him engineer and superintendent of the New York light-house district, at which point he wrote several “memoirs” regarding the defense of New York City. He served as chief engineer for the Sandy Hook lighthouse in New Jersey and was then “selected by the Department of the Interior as chief engineer of the Potomac Water-Works and charged with the duty of superintending the finished portion of the Washington Aqueduct,” (*Annals of the Army of the Cumberland*, page 181). The Navy Department, in 1860, assigned Morton to “lead an expedition to Central America to explore the Chiriquí area for construction of a railroad or canal,” (West) through the isthmus. During this trip, Morton first contracted malaria which affected him from time to time until May 1862 when he was assigned Chief Engineer of General Don C. Buell’s Army of the Ohio.

From June to October 1862, Morton was “busily engaged in superintending the building of bridges, stockades and other defenses upon railroads and pikes between Nashville and Huntsville,” (*Annals of the Army of the Cumberland*, page 182). After October, he designed and oversaw the building of Fort Negley: “the complex work of polygonal shape [and] the largest inland masonry fortification of the Civil War,” (BONPS). According to John Fitch, provost judge of the Army of the Cumberland, “he pushed forward their construction most vigorously, employing the soldiery, and ‘pressing’ the negroes of Nashville and vicinity, and teams of all kinds, without stint or scruple. The colored population of that city have probably not yet forgotten the suddenness with which his men gathered them in from barber-shops, kitchens, and even churches, and set them at work upon St. Cloud Hill, where was then a combination of