

# Milestones

in the Research and Interpretation of Slavery at Monticello

The history of Research and Interpretation of Slavery at Monticello stretches back to the 1950s. See some of the groundbreaking milestones in the timeline below.

## Timeline

1923

### ○ 1950s

Archaeologists begin to use Thomas Jefferson's 1796 Mutual Assurance Plat, an insurance document detailing all of the storehouses, workshops, and dwellings on Mulberry Row, as a guide to understanding slavery at Monticello. Using this plat, Harvard graduate student Oriel Pi-Sunyer uses a trenching technique to conduct archaeological excavations along the western half of Mulberry Row. Pi-Sunyer locates three buried structures – the “blacksmith and nailer’s shop” (building D), an “addition” to the nailery (building j), and a “store house for nailrod and other iron” (building l). He also excavates the remains of the “joiner’s shop” (building C).



### ○ 1967

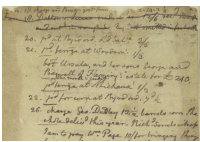
Then Monticello curator, James A. Bear, Jr., edits *Jefferson at Monticello: Recollections of a Monticello Slave and a Monticello Overseer* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press), which contains recollections by Monticello overseer Edmund Bacon and enslaved blacksmith Isaac Granger Jefferson. Granger's memoir was one of 4 memoirs published by former Monticello slaves. Peter Fossett, Israel Jefferson, and Madison Hemings also recorded their memoirs in the late 19th century.





## ○ 1970s

Monticello's Executive Director, James A. Bear, Jr., and researcher Lucia Stanton begin transcribing and annotating Jefferson's account books, known as his Memorandum Books. Although not completed until 1997, Bear and Stanton's extensive research greatly enhances Monticello's understanding of the work, locations, families, and lives of enslaved people, as well as their relationship with Jefferson. Stanton goes on to devote the next 40 years of her career at Monticello to studying the lives of the 607 people owned by Jefferson in his lifetime.



## ○ 1980s

Relying on the earlier excavations of Pi-Sunyer in addition to Jefferson's 1796 plat, Dr. William Kelso begins more extensive excavations of Mulberry Row using a cross-trenching technique. Kelso locates nine additional structures on Mulberry Row, including the remains of 3 slave dwellings not detailed on Jefferson's original plat. Serving as Director of Archaeology from 1979 to 1993, Kelso explained his Mulberry Row findings in *Archaeology at Monticello* (Monticello Monograph Series, 1997).

**LEARN MORE ABOUT MONTICELLO'S ONGOING ARCHAEOLOGICAL EFFORTS** [\(https://www.monticello.org/research-education/for-scholars/archaeology-daacs/\)](https://www.monticello.org/research-education/for-scholars/archaeology-daacs/)



## ○ 1993

Monticello staff historians Lucia Stanton and Dianne Swann-Wright launch the Getting Word African American Oral History Project, a groundbreaking project that has preserved and recorded interviews with nearly 200 descendants of Monticello's enslaved community. The oral histories of Getting Word become an integral part of the Monticello slavery tours, also launched in 1993. Slavery at Monticello Tours are offered daily on the mountaintop. Nearly 100,000

people take these tours each year.

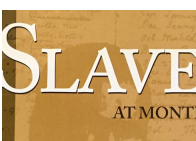
**SLAVERY AT MONTICELLO TOURS** (<https://www.monticello.org/visit/tickets-tours/slavery-at-monticello-tour/>)



○ 1996

Monticello publishes "Slavery at Monticello" (Monticello Monograph Series) by Lucia Stanton, the first monograph to illuminate African American life on Jefferson's plantation.

**BOOKS ON SLAVERY IN AMERICA IN OUR ONLINE SHOP** (<https://www.monticelloshop.org/books-slavery-in-america.html>)



○ 1997

Over 100 descendants of the enslaved community who also participated in the Getting Word oral history project gather on the Monticello mountaintop to celebrate their ancestors.

**GETTING WORD AFRICAN AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT** (<https://gettingword.monticello.org/>)



○ 1998

DNA tests conducted by Dr. Eugene Foster and a team of geneticists establish a genetic link between male-line descendants of the Jefferson and Hemings families. Foster and his team publish their finding in the scientific journal Nature.



○ 2000

Monticello publishes "Free Some Day: The African-American Families of Monticello," by Lucia Stanton. Stanton's book illuminates the previously little-known lives and community of the Hemings, Hern, Granger, Gillette, and Hubbard slave families. The "Report of the Research Committee on Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings," published by a panel of Monticello staff, concludes that based on oral and written historical documents, statistical studies, and DNA evidence, it is highly probable that Thomas Jefferson was the father of Sally Hemings's children.

**GO TO THE REPORT ON JEFFERSON & HEMINGS** (<https://www.monticello.org/slavery/jefferson-slavery/thomas-jefferson-and-sally-hemings-a-brief-account/research-report-on-jefferson-and-hemings/>).

## ○ 2000

Monticello's Archaeology Department launches the Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery (DAACS) initiative and website. DAACS standardizes the cataloguing of archaeological artifacts relating to slavery at sites across North America and the Caribbean.

**VISIT DAACS** (<http://www.daacs.org>).



## ○ 2003

The Cook's Room in the South Dependency is restored. Originally completed in 1802, this room was first home to Peter Hemings before being occupied by chief cook Edith Fossett, her husband Joseph, and their children.

**LEARN MORE ABOUT THE COOK'S ROOM** (<https://www.monticello.org/exhibits-events/exhibits-at-the-house/south-wing-exhibits/cook-s-room/>).



## ○ 2005

Monticello's post-1809 kitchen is restored. In this state-of-the-art kitchen, enslaved chefs trained in the art of French cookery, including Edith Fossett and Frances Hern, prepared sophisticated cuisine for the Jefferson household.

**LEARN MORE ABOUT THE POST-1809 KITCHEN** (<https://www.monticello.org/exhibits-events/exhibits-at-the-house/south-wing-exhibits/post-1809-kitchen/>)



○ 2007

The Monticello Community Gathering, which brought together about 250 descendants, both white and African American, is held at Monticello.



○ 2009

The museum and introductory film, “Thomas Jefferson’s Worlds,” open at the new David M. Rubenstein Visitor Center. All of the museum exhibitions -- “Making Monticello: Jefferson’s ‘Essay in Architecture,’” “Monticello as Experiment: ‘To Try All Things,’” and “Thomas Jefferson and ‘the Boisterous Sea of Liberty,’” -- highlight the role of slavery and enslaved people at Monticello.

○ 2010

Monticello opens the Crossroads Exhibition in the cellar of the main house. Life sized-figures of enslaved workers and white Jefferson family members demonstrate the constant interaction between free and enslaved members of the Jefferson household.



○ 2012 - 2014

Monticello publishes Lucia Stanton’s “Those Who Labor for My Happiness: Slavery at Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello” (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press). Stanton’s book combines previously published essays on the enslaved families of Monticello with new work based on

Getting Word oral histories that describe lives and experiences after slavery. To coincide with the publication of Stanton's work, the Getting Word website is launched. Monticello also co-sponsors a major exhibition, "Slavery at Jefferson's Monticello: Paradox of Liberty," with the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC). The exhibition, which synthesizes over 40 years of research on slavery at Monticello, attracts 1 million onsite visitors and 1 million virtual visitors. It then travels from Washington to museum venues in Atlanta, St. Louis, and Philadelphia.

**VISIT THE PARADOX OF LIBERTY WEBSITE** [\(https://www.monticello.org/slavery/online-exhibitions-related-to-slavery/paradox-of-liberty/\)](https://www.monticello.org/slavery/online-exhibitions-related-to-slavery/paradox-of-liberty/)



### ○ 2013

Monticello hosts a two-day symposium, "Telling the History of Slavery: Scholarship, Museum Interpretation, and the Public." The conference focuses on how new innovations in slavery research impact academic scholarship and public interpretation at museums.

**VIDEO OF THE CONFERENCE** [\\_ \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZvI0EEE9cU&list=PLjRnhUjPwbM1qG6weHeNZpKorvow0dZ2q\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZvI0EEE9cU&list=PLjRnhUjPwbM1qG6weHeNZpKorvow0dZ2q)

### ○ 2015

Monticello unveils the transformation restoration of Mulberry Row, which includes the recreation of two slave-related buildings, the "storehouse for iron" and the Hemmings cabin. In May, over 100 descendants of enslaved families participate in a tree-planting ceremony to commemorate these new buildings. In August, Monticello hosts the Slave Dwelling Project – an initiative that seeks to preserve and call attention to slave dwellings – for slave descendants, many of whom sleep overnight in the dwellings of their ancestors. Featuring the voices of many Getting Word participants, Monticello also launches the Slavery at Monticello app, which garners several awards.



## ○ 2016

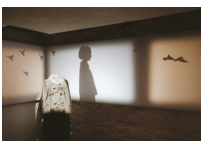
Monticello, along with the National Endowment for the Humanities and the University of Virginia, hosts a public race summit for thousands on the West Lawn of Jefferson's famous home. "Memory, Mourning, Mobilization: Legacies of Slavery and Freedom in America" featured leading academics like Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Annette Gordon-Reed, artists like Nikki Giovanni, activists like Bree Newsome, descendants of Monticello's enslaved families and community members who joined us in a discussion about learning from the past and grappling with issues that face us today.

**WATCH VIDEO OF THE EVENT** [\\_\(https://www.monticello.org/site/blog-and-community/posts/video-public-summit-memory-mourning-mobilization-legacies-slavery-and\)](https://www.monticello.org/site/blog-and-community/posts/video-public-summit-memory-mourning-mobilization-legacies-slavery-and)



## ○ 2017

Work begins on the restoration of the Textile Workshop and remaining spaces in Monticello's South Wing, including Sally Hemings's room. Monticello's interpretation of slavery garners national coverage, including stories in the Washington Post, on NPR's All Things Considered, and on the CBS Evening News.



## ○ March 2018

Monticello, the University of Virginia, and the United States Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (US/ICOMOS)—in collaboration with the United National Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Slave Route Project: Resistance, Liberty, and Heritage—host a two-day international conference in Charlottesville, VA, on "New Approaches in Interpreting and Representing Slavery in Museums and Sites"

**WATCH ONLINE** [\\_\(https://www.monticello.org/research-education/for-scholars/conferences-and-symposia/international-conference-new-approaches-in-interpreting-and-representing-slavery-in-museums-and-sites/\)](https://www.monticello.org/research-education/for-scholars/conferences-and-symposia/international-conference-new-approaches-in-interpreting-and-representing-slavery-in-museums-and-sites/)

## ○ June 2018

On June 16, in conjunction with national Juneteenth events, Monticello unveils LOOK CLOSER with exhibitions and newly restored spaces, including the opening of the South Wing and Sally Hemings' quarters. This landmark conclusion of a major restoration initiative at Monticello also commemorates 25 years of the Getting Word oral history project. Monticello welcomes the largest reunion of descendants of Monticello's enslaved families in modern history and hosts an original copy of the Emancipation Proclamation, generously loaned by David M. Rubenstein.

**WATCH THE CEREMONY** [\(https://www.monticello.org/thomas-jefferson-foundation/mission-and-vision-statement/look-closer-opening/\)](https://www.monticello.org/thomas-jefferson-foundation/mission-and-vision-statement/look-closer-opening/)



## ○ 2021

Monticello launches digital version of the Paradox of Liberty exhibition—26 of the 36 interviews in the virtual tour are new interviews with descendants of Monticello's enslaved community.

**VIEW THE PARADOX OF LIBERTY VIRTUAL EXHIBITION** [\(https://www.monticello.org/paradox/\)](https://www.monticello.org/paradox/)



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