

## Honoring a Sacred Space

“When we came from Virginia we brought one daughter with us, leaving the dust of a son in the soil near Monticello.”

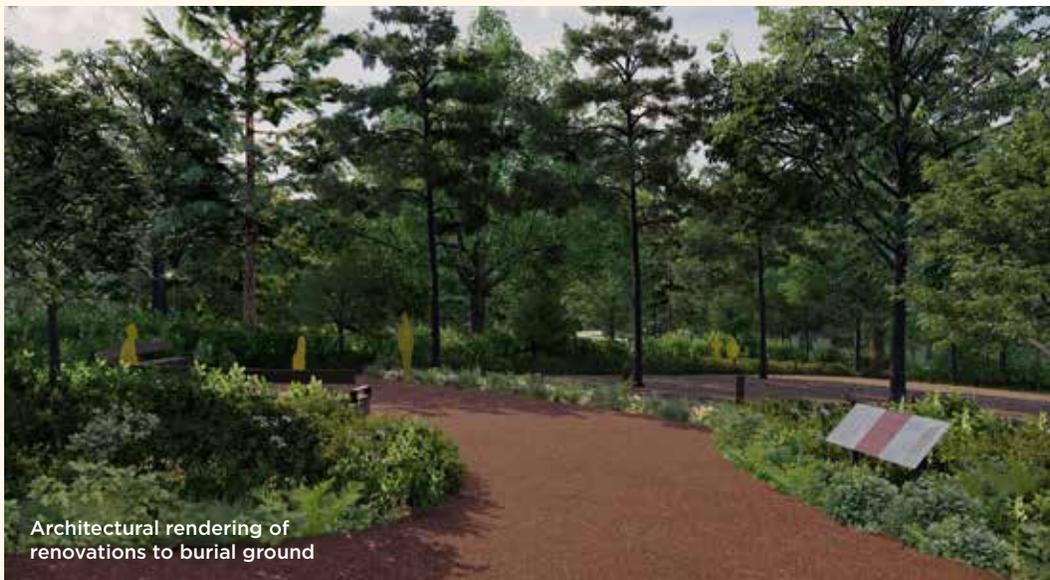
*Madison Hemings, 1873*

Separation of families during slavery and migrations after the Civil War prevented people from caring for graves or remembering their locations. As a result, the locations of many burial grounds for enslaved and formerly enslaved people remain lost. But those sites that are known reveal deep family connections that have withstood the horrors of slavery and the passage of time.

Monticello’s Burial Ground for Enslaved People is one of the places that has endured. Long after the end of slavery, descendants of people buried here, African American employees of Monticello, and other community members protected this sacred space by remembering its location.

Among those buried here are some of the more than 400 men, women and children who lived in slavery at Monticello from 1770 to 1827. Today, the burial ground is a place of pilgrimage for the descendants of those who were held in bondage at Monticello.

In 2001, the Thomas Jefferson Foundation formally recognized the burial ground and took initial steps to preserve the site. Archaeologists have identified 20 of the more than 40 graves thought to exist, carefully recording all visible grave depressions, documenting the burial shafts, and establishing the burial ground’s boundaries. No graves were disturbed during the excavations.



Architectural rendering of renovations to burial ground

This year, a major renovation of the landscape surrounding the burial ground has been completed and the Burial Ground for Enslaved People will be rededicated in a ceremony during Juneteenth weekend. The project included installing new paths, plantings, seating and signs to enhance this sacred space while maintaining its solemn atmosphere.

The foundation worked closely with descendants of Monticello’s enslaved community to preserve and honor this hallowed ground. Monticello also engaged Peter Cook of HGA Architects, one of the designers for the National Museum of African American History and Culture, to lead the preservation efforts. Cook is a descendant of Alethia Browning Tanner, an enslaved woman who was a servant in the President’s House during Jefferson’s presidency. Cook was assisted by Thomas Woltz of Nelson Byrd Woltz Landscape Architects, who is internationally recognized for integrating history and placemaking into landscape.

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## A New Chapter Begins at the Jefferson Library



Gabriel Zahab

Endrina Tay, who joined the Thomas Jefferson Foundation in 2002, has been named the Fiske and Marie Kimball Librarian at the Jefferson Library. She succeeds founding librarian Jack Robertson, who retired in 2020. Prior to her appointment, Tay worked at the library in various capacities, focusing her research on Thomas Jefferson’s libraries and on reconstructing and understanding Jefferson’s reading universe.

Working with Binghamton University special collections librarian Jeremy Dibbell in 2008, she discovered a Jefferson booklist that documented the library that George Wythe bequeathed to Jefferson in 1806 while Jefferson was president of the United States. In 2011, together with Monticello scholar Ann Lucas, she located more than 80 previously unknown extant volumes from Thomas Jefferson’s library at Washington University in St. Louis.