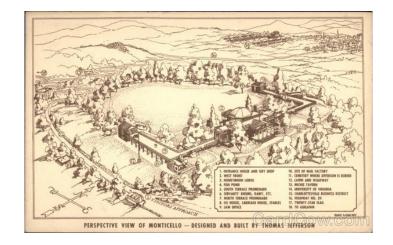


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# Such Is the Story That Comes Down to Me

My Hemings Family



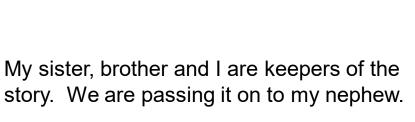


#### My Oral History Lesson

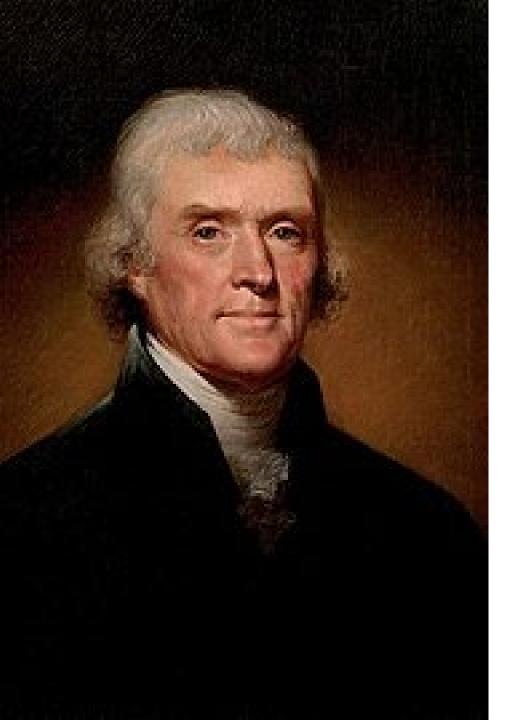
I can remember intently listening to the story of my maternal ancestors as told by my grandmother, great-aunt, and mother. In hushed tones they told my sister and I of our very special five-times great-grandmother. Her name was Sarah "Sally" Hemings. She had a secret relationship with a very prominent gentlemen named TJ. They had four children who survived their childhood, becoming thriving adults. I didn't realize until the third grade just how prominent TJ was. Imagine when I realized our TJ was the third president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson. The story did not dwell on the fact that Sally and her children were enslaved, but instead focused on their talents and skills that helped them survive. My task was to keep the story alive, to pass it on, to be proud of my roots, to make my ancestors proud.



Great-great-grandmother Emma Jane Byrd Great-grandmother Ella Mae Young Grandmother Emma Lee Cooper Mother Emma Jane Dalton







### Thomas Jefferson's Legacy April 13, 1743 - July 4, 1826

United States statesman, diplomat, lawyer, architect, and Founding Father who served as the third president of the United States from 1801 to 1809.

- Author of the Declaration of Independence
- Author of the Statute of Virginia Religious Freedom
- Second Governor of Virginia
- Minister to France
- First Secretary of State
- Second Vice President
- Founder of the University of Virginia

Thomas Jefferson wrote his own epitaph: HERE WAS BURIED THOMAS JEFFERSON, AUTHOR OF THE DECLARATION OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE, OF THE STATUTE OF VIRGINIA FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, AND FATHER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

But he was a public figure with a private family life ...

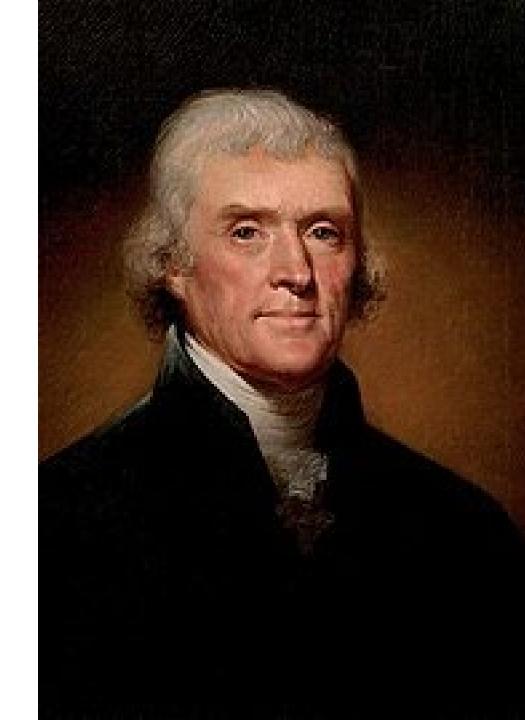
## Thomas Jefferson The Declaration of Independence

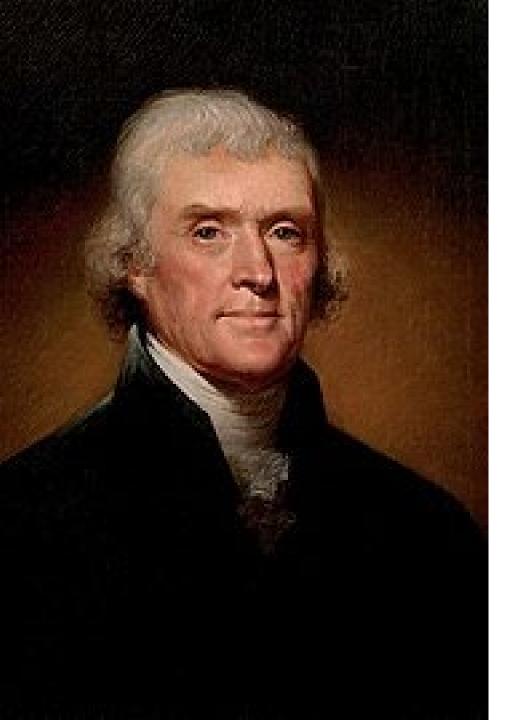
"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

... except for those we have enslaved.

#### The paradox:

- How could the author of the Declaration of the Independence enslave people?
- How could twenty percent of the population of the new United States, founded on the principles of liberty and equality, live in bondage?
- What was life actually like for enslaved people in the early republic?





## Thomas Jefferson Views on Slavery

Thomas Jefferson called slavery a "moral depravity" and a "hideous blot," but continued to hold human beings as property his entire adult life.

Although he made some legislative attempts against slavery and at times bemoaned its existence, Jefferson also profited directly from the institution of slavery.

Jefferson profited not just by the crops and products produced by his enslaved laborers but also from the value of the enslaved.

## Thomas Jefferson The Enslaver

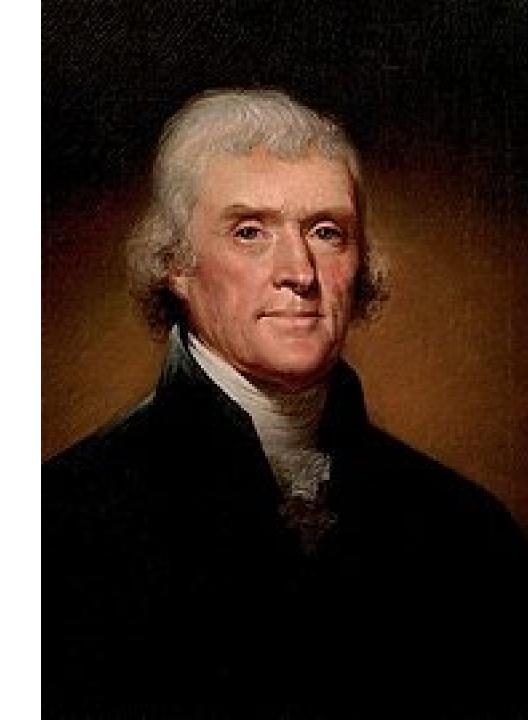
Thomas Jefferson enslaved over 600 human beings throughout the course of his life. At any given time, around 130 people were enslaved at Monticello. He only freed seven; some twenty runaways were never recovered.

He experimented with "new modes of governance" of enslaved people; however, brutal physical violence did take place.

Jefferson profited not just from the crops and products produced by his enslaved laborers, but also from the value of the enslaved. Jefferson did buy and sell human beings.

Several Monticello's enslaved could definitely read and write. Many members of the enslaved community at Monticello attended worship services. Many enslaved people at Monticello married.

Fossett, Gillette, Granger, Hemings, Hern, Hubbard, ...

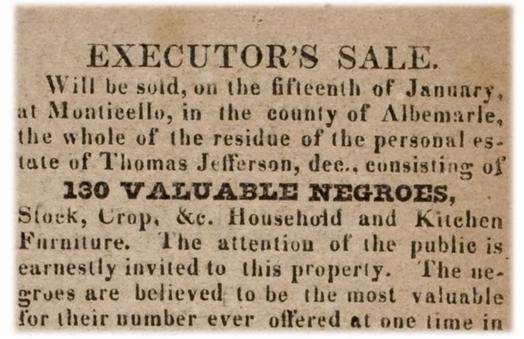


#### The Enslaved of Thomas Jefferson

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#### For Sale or Hire, A FIRST RATE FEMALE COOK,

Regularly bred to the business, young, and has two children.—Likewise, a very excellent plain Cook, who is a first rate Seamstress, Dairy-Maid and Washerwoman. They will be hired or sold to any one residing in the county. If sold a credit of twelve months will be given, bond with approved security required. Th: J. Randolph Nov. 17, 1820



Charlottesville Central Gazette January 15, 1827

Sale of MONTICELLO.—Monticello, the former residence of Thomas Jefferson, in Albemarle county, Virginia, was sold at auction on Thursday, under the sequestration act, for eighty thousand five hundred dollars—Benjamin F. Ficklin, purchaser. A negro woman and her seven children (all of the latter being under seven years of age) brought twenty-three thousand dollars. A negro man was sold for upwards of seven thousand dollars.

Published in the Richmond Daily Dispatch, November 22, 1864

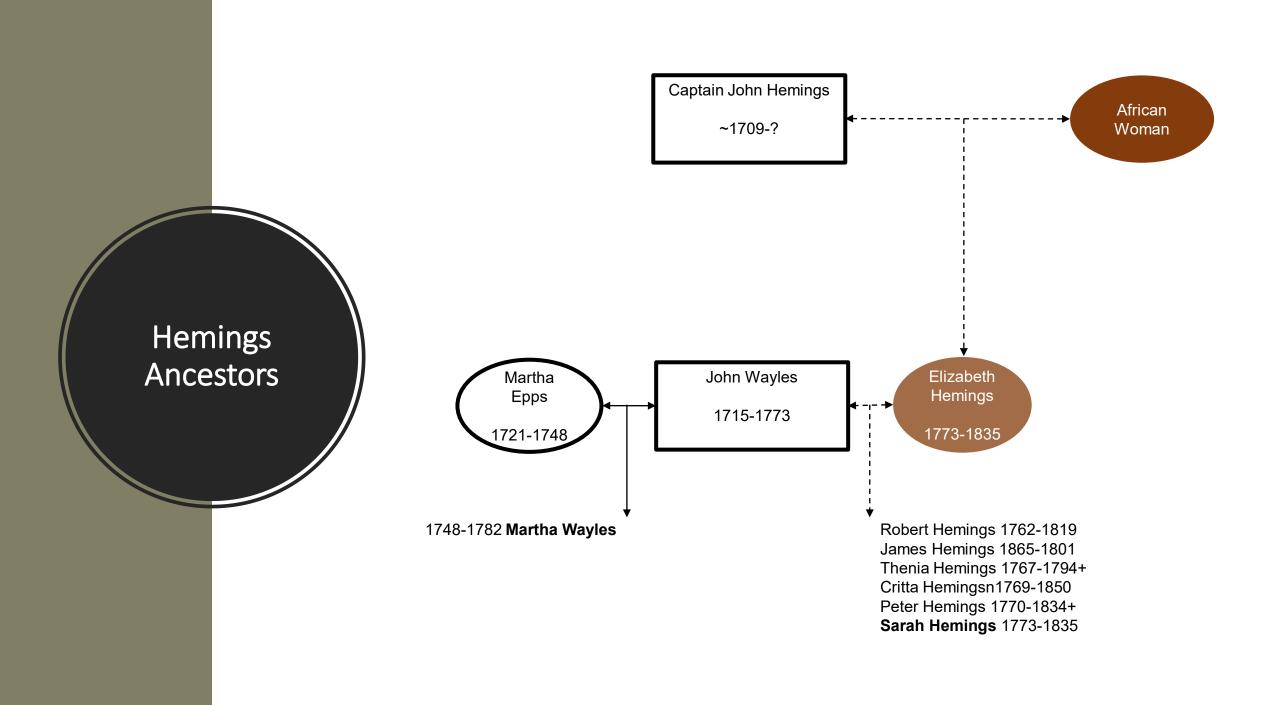
#### Sally Hemings Story as Told to Me

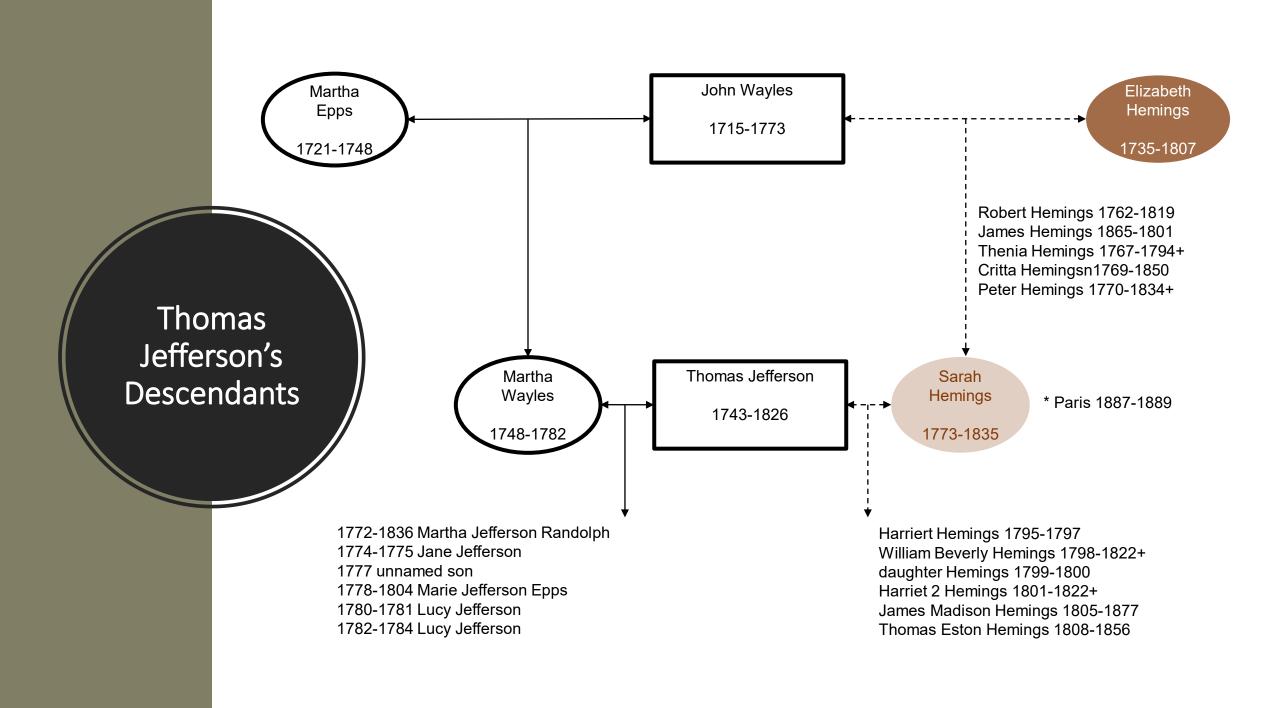
Sally Hemings' grandmother was a full-blooded African, Biabaye, and her grandfather, Captain Hemings, of an English trading vessel which sailed between England and Williamsburg, Virginia. Captain Hemings was visiting John Wales when Biabaye became pregnant by the Captain Hemings. The child was born Elizabeth Hemings. Captain Hemings wanted to take the child, but John Wayles heard the captain would try to steal the child and kept the mother and child in the "great house". Captain Hemings finally left never to return.

When John Wayles' wife was dying, he took in Elizabeth as his concubine. Six children were born to them; Sally Hemings was one of those children (all children took on the name of Hemings).

Thomas Jefferson visited the Wayles home one day and fell in love with John Wayles daughter, Martha; they soon married. When John Wayles died, Elizabeth Hemings and her children became the "property" of Thomas Jefferson. When Martha Jefferson died, Sally Hemings was to help take care of the two Jefferson daughters, Martha and Maria. Sally Hemings even cared for them when Thomas Jefferson went to France.

After experiencing two and a half years of freedom in France, Sally didn't want to return to Virginia. Thomas Jefferson "promised her extraordinary privileges and made a solemn pledge that her children should be freed at the age of twenty-one years" if she returned with him. Sally returned to Virginia. Sally gave birth to six children fathered by Thomas, four that survived childhood. Their names were Beverly, Harriet, Madison, and Eston. They all became free as agreed to by both parents.





#### **Thomas Jefferson's Black Descendants**

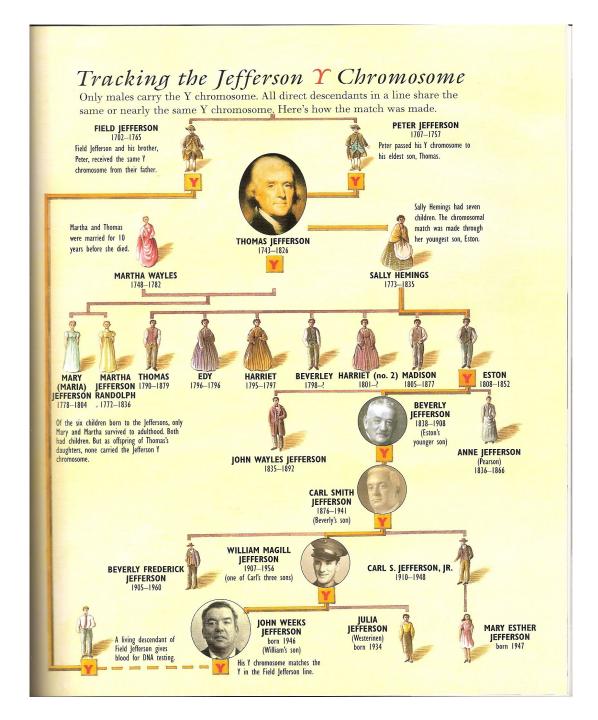
There were many generations of mixed-race people in the American southern states. In the later 18th and 19th centuries, they were often the children of white planter fathers and enslaved women. Among the most famous were the biracial enslaved children born to Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings from their long relationship after he became a widower. Betty Hemings was the daughter of a slave woman and an English sea captain; she became the longtime mistress of Jefferson's father-in-law John Wayles after he became a widower for the third time, and she had several children with him. Sally was one of their children, making her the half-sister of Jefferson's late wife Martha Wayles Jefferson. Sally Hemings was three-quarters white, as her mother, Betty, was half white.

In 1998, DNA studies showed that the descendants of Eston Hemings, Sally's youngest son, were related to the Jefferson male line. Most historians, the National Genealogical Society, and the Thomas Jefferson Foundation of Monticello believe that the weight of historical evidence suggests Jefferson was the father of Eston and all of Sally Hemings' children (who were thus seven-eighths European by ancestry and legally white under Virginia law at the time). Jefferson allowed the two oldest to escape in 1822 (freeing them legally was a public action he elected to avoid because he would have had to gain permission from the state legislature); the two youngest he freed in his 1826 will. Three of the four entered white society as adults, and all their descendants identified as white.

The historian Annette Gordon-Reed was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship in 2010 for her work on the history of the Jefferson and the Hemings families; she won a Pulitzer Prize and 15 other major awards for her work. She changed the course of Jeffersonian scholarship by showing how earlier historians had disregarded or discounted important evidence from enslaved families' testimonies.

Thomas
Jefferson's
Descendants

The results of DNA tests conducted by Dr. Eugene Foster and a team of geneticists in 1998 challenged the view that the Jefferson-Hemings relationship could be neither refuted nor substantiated. The study-which tested Y-chromosomal DNA samples from male-line descendants of Field Jefferson (Thomas Jefferson's uncle), John Carr (grandfather of Jefferson's Carr nephews), Eston Hemings, and Thomas Woodson--indicated a genetic link between the Jefferson and Hemings descendants. The results of the study established that an individual carrying the male Jefferson Y chromosome fathered Eston Hemings (born 1808), the last known child born to Sally Hemings.



#### **Historical Frame of Reference**

#### Legal historical reference

- Both the norms of plantation society and a preponderance of archival evidence
  - Detailed farm records maintained by Jefferson
  - Government records
- Generations of oral history
  - Discretely passed down by Hemings descendants

#### **DNA** reference

- Late 1990s genetic investigation
  - Controversial, technically pathbreaking
  - New strategy for coming to terms with the history of slavery
  - Unique, distinct Y-DNA comparison
    - two male descendants of Jefferson's uncle and a male descendants of Hemings' son
    - Shared Y-chromosomal Haplotype
    - Genetic marker so rare that "it has never been seen outside of the Jefferson family"
    - Paper published in *Nature* in 1998



Substantiates Jefferson's paternity of Hemings' children



## The First Reunion: Jeffersons Meet Hemings 1999



#### **The Monticello Reunions**



#### Sally Hemings Legacy

Leslie Greene Bowman, Monticello's president: "She should be known today not as Thomas Jefferson's concubine, but as an enslaved woman who - at the age of 16 - negotiated with one of the most powerful men in the nation to improve her own condition and achieve freedom for her children".

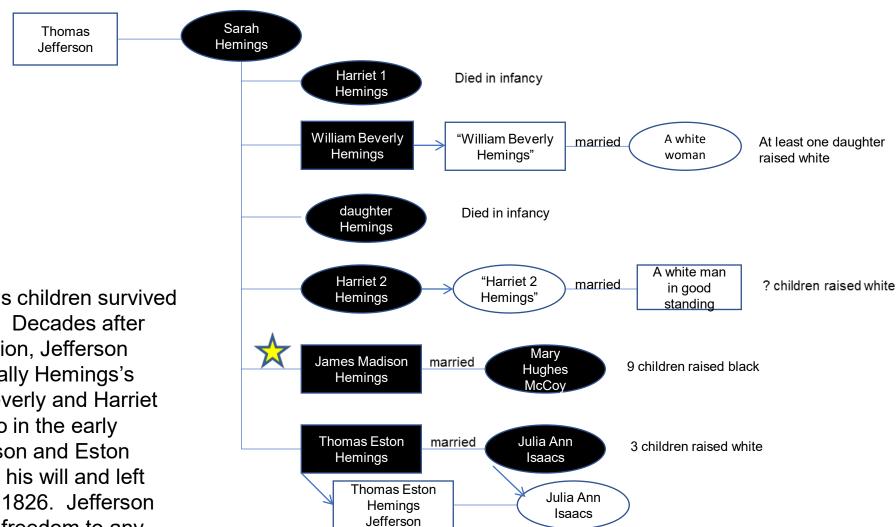
Madison Hemings' memoir as told in an Ohio newspaper in 1873 begins with "Such is the story that comes down to me ...". This is so indicative of the oral history as it was passed down to my generation.

According to Madison's memoir, Sally refused to return from Paris to America. "She was just beginning to understand the French language well, and in France she was free, while if she returned to Virginia, she would be re-enslaved. So she refused to return with him." It was after negotiating "extraordinary privileges" for herself and freedom for her future children did she agree to return. So years after her half-sister's death she bore six children fathered by Jefferson; four survived to adulthood and are referenced in the plantation records. And all four were granted their freedom by Jefferson as they reached adulthood, while Sally remained enslaved until Jefferson's death.

Annette Gordon-Reed: "Though enslaved, Sally Hemings helped shape her life and the lives of her children who got an almost 50-year head start on emancipation, escaping the system that had engulfed their ancestors and millions of others."

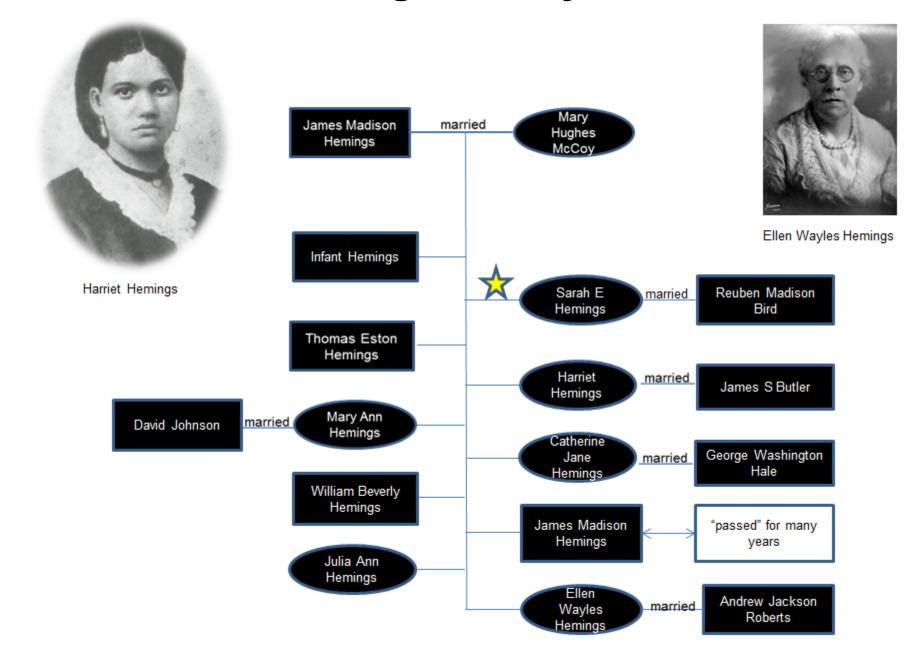
It was finally respect for Madison Hemings words, along with the previous DNA results, that led the foundation to accept Sally's relationship with Jefferson and the resulting children as a part of Monticello's history and affirming the Hemings legacy.

#### My Hemings Family



Four of Sally's children survived to adulthood. Decades after their negotiation, Jefferson freed all of Sally Hemings's children – Beverly and Harriet left Monticello in the early 1820s; Madison and Eston were freed in his will and left Monticello in 1826. Jefferson did not grant freedom to any other enslaved family unit.

#### **James Madison Hemings Family**



#### **James Madison Hemings Legacy**

James Madison Hemings, born January 19, 1805, was a skillfully trained carpenter from Virginia. He moved to Ohio in 1836 and settled in Pike County, near the border of Ross County, where he earned a living working as a carpenter and a farmer.

Madison Hemings' memoir was written based on his interview for the Pike County Republican newspaper in 1873. It was finally respect for Madison Hemings words, along with the previous DNA results, that led the Monticello foundation to accept Sally's relationship with Jefferson and the resulting children as a part of Monticello's history and affirming the Hemings legacy.

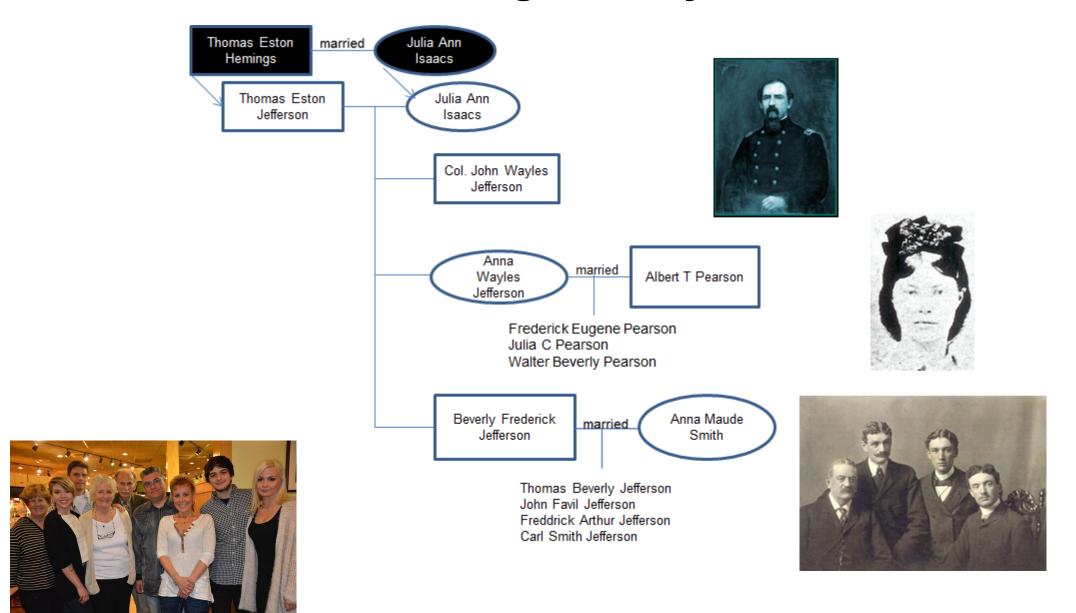
He is quoted as saying: "I also reconstructed the building on the corner of market and water streets from a store to a hotel for Judge Jacob Row." What was once thought of as a tale, had recently been confirmed by verifying his craftsmanship judged by the intact staircase.



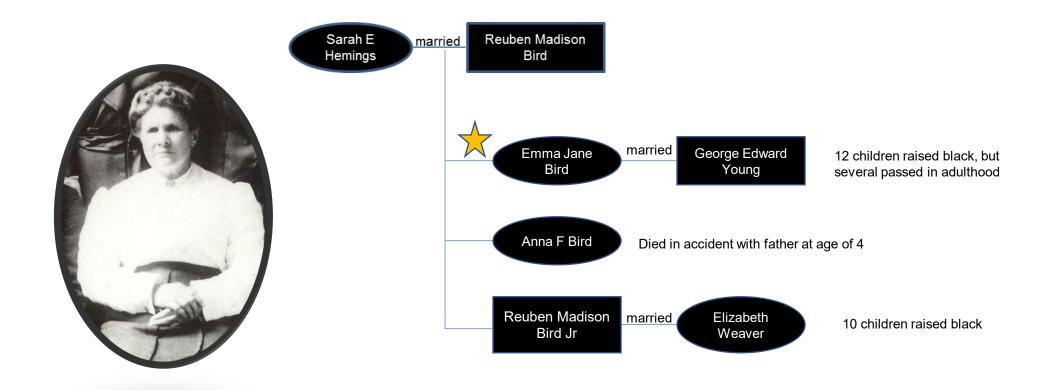
The staircase in The Grand Restaurant & Tavern in Waverly, Ohio built by Madison Hemings



#### **Thomas Eston Hemings Family**



## **My Bird Family**



### My Young Family

Emma Jane Bird

married

George Edward Young

James Robert Young ★ Ella Mae Young Martha Young (died in childhood) George Edward Young Jr Irvin Jerry Young (15 children) Homer B Young (1 child) Anna Elizabeth Young (4 children) Guy Young Nora M Young (5 children) Cora B Young (2 children, 1 "passed") Ida Mae Young (9 children) William Lloyd Young (died as infant)









## **My Cooper Family**



Ella Mae Young married

Robert Edward Lee Cooper

Emma Lee Cooper (4 children)
George Robert Cooper (1 child)
Esta Mae Cooper (2 children)
Anna Elizabeth Cooper
Mable Alve Cooper
William Edward Cooper (4 children)
Nana Louise Cooper (1 child)
James Arnold Cooper ("passed" with wife and 2 children)







#### **When Cousins Meet**





In August of 2014 I met Carol online. We exchanged family information and shared old photographs. We were connected as the result of DNA matching.

Carol McCracken is the daughter of Anna Bernice Young and Leroy McCracken. Anna was my grandmother Emma Lee's cousin. Anna's father Irvin was my great-grandmother Ella Mae's sister. Carol was raised white by her mother who "passed". Carol did not know she was black until her son took a DNA test and found out he was related to the Hemings of Monticello. Then she took a test and connected with me.

We kept in touch over the course of the next two years.

We met in person for the first time at Monticello on September 16, 2016! After hours together over the weekend we found out how much we had in common and were alike.





### Sally Gets Recognized

As of June 16, 2018, Monticello features a one-of-a-kind exhibit about Sally Hemings in the room where she is believed to have once lived with her children. Animation and Madison's words are used to tell her story.

#### My Dilemma

How does one love and respect an ancestor like Thomas Jefferson?

Did Sally know she would become involved with Thomas Jefferson?

What was Sally's thirty-seven-year relationship with Thomas Jefferson?

"It was her duty, all her life which I can remember, up to the time of father's death, to take care of his chamber and wardrobe, look after us children and do such light work as sewing." Madison Hemings



#### My Way Forward to a "More Perfect Union"

Preserve and share my family's oral history

- StoryCorps
- blog



The Getting Word Oral History Project at Monticello

• For over 25 years, Getting Word has been preserving the histories of the descendants of Monticello's African American community. Their stories highlight the legacies of freedom and slavery in this country.



#### Coming to the Table

 Working together to create a just and truthful society that acknowledges and seeks to heal from the racial wounds of the past, from slavery and the many forms of racism it spawned.



Learn the real history about slavery in the United States and work to ensure the sins of our fathers are not visited upon their sons

- Civil Rights trail
- 400<sup>th</sup> year commemorations
- 1619 projects



Travel to Africa's west coast



#### Sally Hemings Story

- Sally Hemings (1773-1835) was enslaved at Monticello; she came to Monticello as a toddler.
- She lived in Paris with Jefferson and two of his daughters from 1787 to 1789.
- Sally Hemings's duties included being a nursemaid-companion to Thomas Jefferson's daughter Maria (ca. 1784-1787), lady's maid to daughters Martha and Maria (1787-1797), and chambermaid and seamstress (1790s-1827) to Thomas Jefferson.
- There are no known images of Sally Hemings and only four known descriptions of her appearance or demeanor. (There are references to her closely resembling Martha Wayles, her half-sister.)
- Sally Hemings left no known written accounts. It is not known if she was literate.
- In the few scattered references to Sally Hemings in Thomas Jefferson's records and correspondence, there is nothing to distinguish her from other members of her family.
- Thomas Jefferson was at Monticello at the likely conception times of Sally Hemings' six known children. There are no records suggesting that she was elsewhere at these times, or records of any births at times that would exclude Jefferson paternity.
- There are no indications in contemporary accounts by people familiar with Monticello that Sally Hemings' children had different fathers.
- Sally Hemings' children were light-skinned, and three of them (daughter Harriet and sons Beverly and Eston) lived as members of white society as adults.
- According to contemporary accounts, some of Sally Hemings' children strongly resembled Thomas Jefferson.

#### Sally Hemings Story

- Thomas Jefferson freed all of Sally Hemings' children: Beverly and Harriet were allowed to leave Monticello in 1822; Madison and Eston were released in Jefferson's 1826 will. Jefferson gave freedom to no other nuclear enslaved family.
- Thomas Jefferson did **not** free Sally Hemings. She was permitted to leave Monticello by his daughter Martha Jefferson Randolph not long after Jefferson's death in 1826, and went to live with her sons Madison and Eston in Charlottesville.
- Several people close to Thomas Jefferson or the Monticello community believed that he was the father of Sally Hemings' children.
- Eston Hemings changed his name to Eston Hemings Jefferson in 1852.
- Madison Hemings stated in 1873 that he and his siblings Beverly, Harriet, and Eston were Thomas Jefferson's children.
- The descendants of Madison Hemings who have lived as black have passed a family history of descent from Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings down through the generations.
- Eston Hemings's descendants, who have lived as whites, have passed down a family history of being related to Thomas Jefferson. In the 1940s, family members changed this history to state that an uncle of Jefferson's, rather than Jefferson himself, was their ancestor.

### **Hemings Stairs**



Back stairs at Monticello



Stairs at Emmitt House and The Grand Tavern in Waverly, Ohio