

ENSLAVED AFRICAN AMERICANS
at the University of Virginia

Walking Tour



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Mobile Web App
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President’s Commission on Slavery and the University

UVA Walking Tour
Enslaved African Americans at the University

The University of Virginia utilized the labor of enslaved African Americans from the earliest days of its construction in 1817 until the end of the American Civil War. Most of the University's first enslaved laborers were rented from local slave-owners and worked alongside whites and free blacks in all the tasks associated with constructing the Academical Village. When the first students arrived in March 1825, enslaved African Americans worked in the pavilions, hotels, and the Rotunda; maintained classrooms, laboratories, and the library; and served the daily needs of the students and faculty, especially in providing cooking and cleaning services. This self-guided tour is an introduction to some of the significant people, places, and events that shaped the early history of African Americans at the University of Virginia. For further information see slavery.virginia.edu.

Key

- Site open to the public
- Exterior viewing only, building not open to the public
- Historic location only
- Historic marker
- Parking

Front cover: Sally Cottrell Cole was an enslaved maid and seamstress who labored for Professor Thomas Hewitt Key in Pavilion VI (site 9) between 1824–1827. Professor Key arranged for her manumission upon his departure from the University in 1827. Cole remained in Charlottesville until her death in 1873.

Back Cover: Henry Martin

1 The Rotunda
and Bricks on the Lawn



One of the most overlooked legacies of enslaved labor are the bricks that cover the Academical Village. Enslaved laborers dug the clay, helped fire the bricks, hauled them to Grounds, and laid them to build this university. The brick making began in the summer of 1817, and the enslaved laborers working on this task were a diverse group of mostly men, but included at least one woman and several children. An enslaved man named Charles was responsible for digging the clay and manning the kiln with the help of six enslaved boys rented out from John H. Cocke in 1823. Enslaved laborers named Dick, Lewis, Nelson, and Sandy were also assigned to the brickyard, and worked long hours by the kiln. Enslaved



laborers also carved out the terrace levels on the lawn, creating the unique landscape that you see today. Many of the enslaved laborers were highly skilled at construction, carpentry, stone cutting, and blacksmithing, who were forced to work alongside free black and white laborers, contributed to some of the more intricate design work seen in the details of the architecture on grounds. In 1823 as part of Rotunda construction, free man of color Robert Battles hauled over 176,000 bricks and a few tons of sand to the University during a five-month stretch. For his Herculean efforts, he was paid \$170.

2 Enslaved Labor Plaque



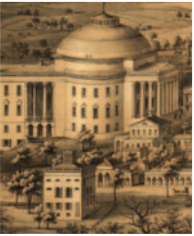
In February of 2007, the University's Board of Visitors approved the installation of a slate memorial in the brick pavement of the passage under the south terrace of the Rotunda. The memorial reads: "In honor of the several hundred women and men, both free and enslaved, whose labor between 1817 and 1826 helped to realize Thomas Jefferson's design for the University of Virginia." The memorial was part of an effort led by President John Casteen III to honor the University's "original labor force," which included enslaved workers.

3 Henry Martin



According to oral history, Henry Martin was born at Monticello on July 4, 1826—the day Jefferson died. He was sold to the Carr family at Jefferson's estate sale in 1827 and until 1847 remained enslaved at a property in Albemarle County. In 1847, the Carrs hired out Mr. Martin to Mrs. Dabney Carr, who ran a boarding house just north of the University. Until the general emancipation in 1865, Martin hauled coal, delivered wood, and worked as a domestic laborer at her boarding house. In freedom, he took a job with the University as janitor and bell ringer, which he wrote about in a letter to *College Topics*, a student publication that asked to report on his life story. Martin routinely awoke at 4 a.m. to tend to his responsibilities. It was Martin who rang the bell to spread the alarm when the first wisps of smoke were spotted in the Rotunda fire of 1895. "I was as true to that bell as to my God," Martin said in a 1914 interview. By his retirement in 1909, Martin had become a UVA icon. The student newspaper commented, "He was known personally to more alumni than any living man."

4 Anatomical Theater



Following a complaint from Pavilion X resident and professor of medicine Robley Dunglison that his front room was an "unacceptable venue" for dissecting cadavers, Jefferson designed a new building in 1824 (featuring a tiered amphitheater for observing dissections) that stood for a period of time in front of where Alderman Library is today. A student dissection lab was added later. Nineteenth century medical faculty and students commonly stole the corpses of recently buried African Americans from nearby cemeteries for use in their classrooms. By the late 1840s, the University was competing for cadavers with two other medical schools in the state. Professional grave robbers known as "Resurrectionists" were hired in Richmond, Alexandria, and Norfolk. These men primarily targeted African American burial sites to meet the University's demand for 25 or more cadavers per session. An enslaved man named Lewis was hired by the University from carpenter George Spooner specifically to clean up after the cadaver experiments. Because of these duties, the University community referred to him as "Anatomical Lewis." During his time at UVA, Lewis lived in several locations including behind Pavilion VII. It is unknown whether Lewis left by death or by sale, but by 1860, Lewis no longer appears in University records.

5 Hotel A



Hotels intersperse the East and West Ranges. These buildings were rented to Hotelkeepers, each of whom owned many people who were expected to prepare meals and provide cleaning for the students. On a daily basis, the enslaved would bring fresh water to the students and tend their fires. They regularly cleaned the rooms and public spaces of the

Academical Village. In addition, in the basements and gardens, they prepared the meals that were served to students in the Hotels. This work required an extensive labor force. In 1830, the Conways who operated Hotel A owned twelve people who may have lived in the basement and in outbuildings in the gardens. At any time, the population of enslaved people living and working in the Academical Village was between 90 to 150 in the decades before emancipation. In the course of carrying out their responsibilities, free and enslaved African Americans interacted with white students in the hotel dining halls, student dormitory rooms, and throughout the Academical Village on a regular basis. On occasion, these daily interactions could and did turn violent. Faculty records document that students resulted to physical violence upon the bodies of free and enslaved laborers for a variety of "offences," including insolence, impertinent language, or a perceived lack of attention to duties. For example, Mr. Rose complained to the faculty when a student kicked one of his enslaved workers and Col. Moon objected when a student threw a knife. Even when students were judged by faculty to be at fault, their actions very rarely led to suspension.

6 The University Gardens



Over the decades, dozens of buildings were added to these spaces including: smokehouses, kitchens, privies, woodsheds, and quarters. Enclosed by walls and thus largely hidden from the university community, these spaces provided a place to butcher hogs, cook, do laundry, and perform the many other tasks expected of the enslaved community. These were the primary spaces where the enslaved community worked, lived, and communed while tucked away from the view of the central Lawn. By the twentieth century, most of these buildings were torn down and only a few remain. In the mid-twentieth-century, the Garden Club of Virginia redesigned the gardens to their present appearance.



7 The Mews



The building now known as the Mews was built around 1830. It is one of the few surviving original outbuildings. Built as a detached kitchen, it also provided accommodations for some of the professor's enslaved laborers. These kitchen quarters were modeled after plantation kitchens, which were usually detached and situated near the main house.

These buildings and the enslaved cooks and domestics were integral to the formal functions of the University's community, providing meals and domestic service to the professors and their families. The building has since been enlarged and was renamed "The Mews" when Professor Pratt moved here in 1923.

8 East Lawn Basement Rooms



The basement rooms served many different purposes over the decades. Some were living quarters for enslaved African Americans owned by professors. Pavilion occupants occasionally annexed these rooms by breaking through common walls, which allowed a direct passageway from the basement to the inside of the pavilion. In these cases, the basement rooms could be used as auxiliary work spaces.

Many of these rooms show evidence of improvement to make them more habitable. All were whitewashed and some had plaster ceilings. Despite those improvements, most of the rooms still had dirt floors, but no windows and no fireplaces.

Some rooms were rented out to businessmen such as Jack Kennedy, a member of the Charlottesville Free Black community, who applied for one of the cellar rooms to be used as a barber's shop for the accommodation of the students. The faculty approved because they hoped the students would have fewer reasons to go to town. In another room (under Room 24), enslaved laborers constructed a large cistern, which was once a vital part of the University's water supply and fire protection system. The cistern was connected to wooden pipes and trenches, all of which were constructed and maintained by enslaved laborers and, in later years, Thomas Farrow and Robert Battles, free black tradesmen.

9 Pavilion VI and Garden



Pavilion V and VI were places where William and Isabella Gibbons, who were both enslaved at UVA, lived and labored. Owned by different faculty, they were able to maintain family connections and become literate despite the constraints of slavery. Mr. Gibbons was owned by Professor Henry Howard and later worked for Professor William H. McGuffey in Pavilion

IX. Mrs. Gibbons was a domestic servant in the household of Professor Francis Smith in Pavilions V and VI. Although their marriage had no legal standing, William and Isabella Gibbons preserved their union and raised their children while living in slavery. Legal restrictions and the strong opposition of white society severely limited access to education for Virginia's slaves. William Gibbons learned to read by carefully observing and listening to the white students around him. His daughter Bella recalled that she could not have learned to read and write, "unless my mother taught me secretly."

10 The Crackerbox



One of the few surviving outbuildings within the Academical Village, the "Crackerbox" is a two-story cottage named for its small size and rectangular shape. Built between 1825–1826 the structure stands today in the rear yard of Hotel F. Like the Mews, the Cracker Box was originally constructed as a detached kitchen with residential space in its upper story. Hotelkeeper John N. Rose brought his household, including 13 enslaved people and three free black women, to Hotel F in 1829. The Board of Visitors approved the construction of a one-room addition to the north end of the Crackerbox, perhaps to accommodate his large enslaved labor force. Others living within Rose's household were Edmund, an enslaved man owned by Rose's son William, and James Munroe who belonged to Rose's wife, Mary. Edmund and James Munroe, and the other people owned by Rose, likely served one of two capacities: as hotel servants preparing, serving, and cleaning up student meals; or as dormitory servants providing services to students and cleaning their rooms. On occasion, Rose leased his slaves for short periods of time. Edmund was hired to Professor George Blaetterman in 1832 for a period of two months. Rose and his family left the University in 1834 and opened a boarding house for students on Main Street. It is likely that the people they owned continued to serve the Roses at their boarding house establishment.

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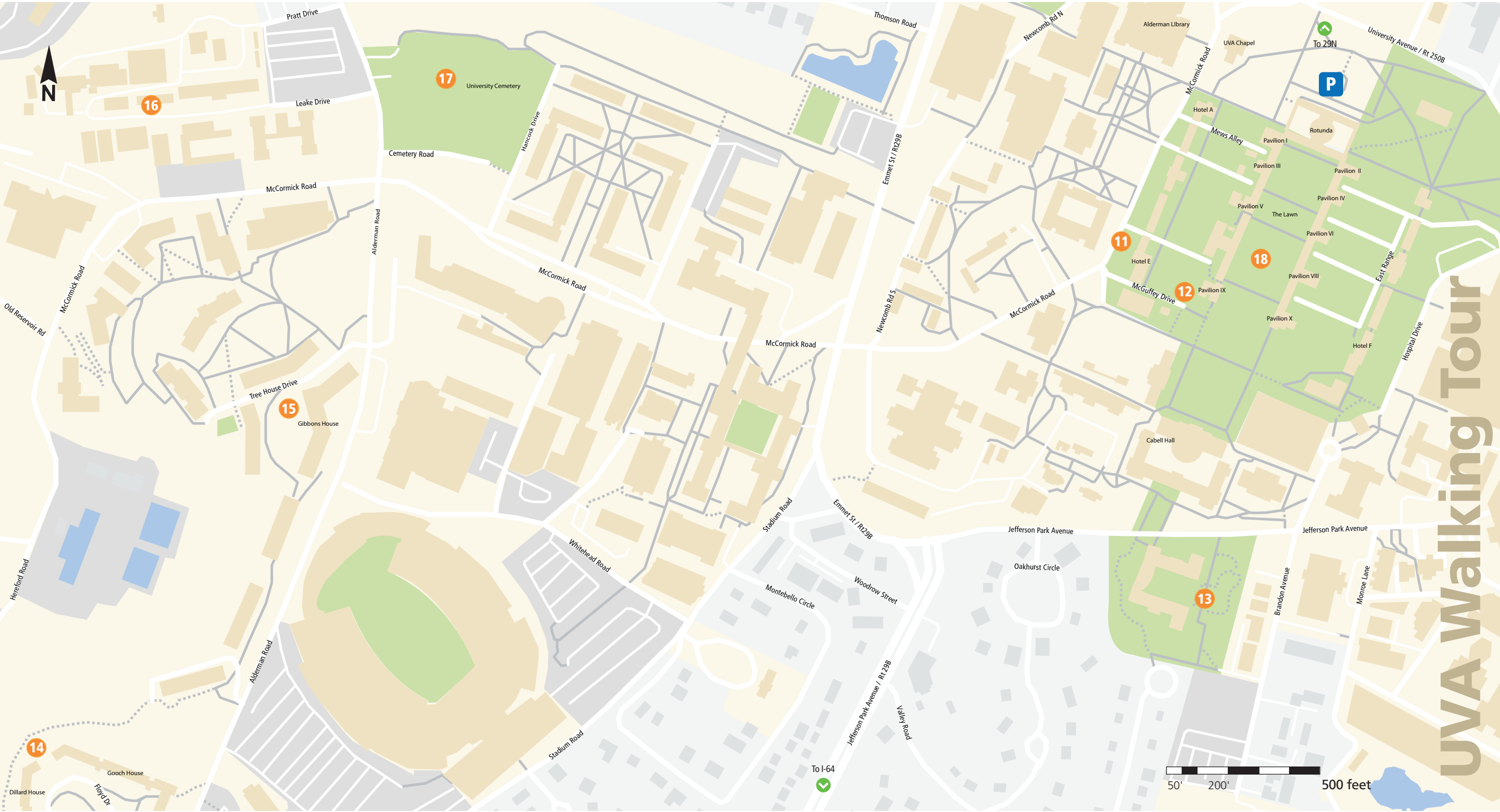
Walking Tour

This self-guided tour introduces some of the people, places, and stories related to early African American life at the University of Virginia. Between 1817 and 1865 the University relied on the labor of enslaved African Americans, whose presence was undeniably central to the building and functioning of the University of Virginia. This walking tour is an initiative of the *President's Commission on Slavery and the University*, a group committed to acknowledging and memorializing the lives and legacies of enslaved laborers at UVA.

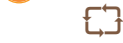
To learn more visit
slavery.virginia.edu



President's Commission on Slavery and the University



11 Mrs. Gray's Kitchen



In 1829, the Board of Visitors approved the construction of a one and a half story 'office' with two rooms to the rear of Hotel E. Built between 1829–1830 and referred to as Mrs. Gray's kitchen, this structure would have served as both residence and work space and was operated chiefly by enslaved laborers. Mrs. Gray expanded the kitchen structure when she

added an 'apartment for the lodging of servants' in 1844. John and Cornelia Gray operated the hotel between 1825–1845, providing food and services to students in adjacent dormitories.

Census records document that a total of 13 enslaved individuals resided in the Gray household in 1830. One of these individuals was the dormitory servant William, a young boy. In early 1834, several white students boarding with Mrs. Gray had complained that William was "impertinent" and that he did not "attend well" at the rooms. Under pressure from the faculty, William was "withdrawn" from serving the student dormitories. In late 1835, Mrs. Gray complained to the faculty that a student boarder, William W. Harris, "struck her servant William in her presence" and that Harris behaved in a very rude and insulting manner to her. Harris replied stating that "he would do so [strike her servant] whenever it pleased him." Faculty reviewed the complaints and testimonies and concluded that William was "highly offensive in manner, & impertinent in language to Mr. Harris & is habitually as in his conduct to others." William was subsequently removed from any attendance on the students.

12 McGuffey Cottage



McGuffey Cottage is all that remains of a row of outbuildings located to the west and rear of Pavilion IX. These were built as work and residential spaces, including one built as early as 1831 for the 'accommodation of domestics.' George Tucker, a professor of Moral Philosophy, was the first resident of Pavilion IX, occupying it between 1825 and 1845. Census records document that he owned two men and two women in 1840. In addition to supporting his own family, Tucker also rented out his slaves to the University as needed. In 1828, Anthony was rented out by Tucker for five months performing labor for the University. In 1840, Tucker's slave Isaac was rented for a month and assisted a stonemason while building walls surrounding the Academical Village.

13 Catherine Foster Site



University staff discovered several grave shafts during the expansion of a parking lot east of and adjacent to Venable Lane in 1993. Archival research identified the historic parcel containing the graves as belonging to Catherine Foster, a free black woman who purchased the property in 1833. Subsequent archaeological research conducted on the property identified a total of 32 graves as well as an early nineteenth century house and landscaped yard. As free laundresses and seamstresses, owning property adjacent to the University during the antebellum period was a significant asset for "Kitty" Foster and her daughters and grand-daughters. During the postbellum

period the area surrounding the Foster residence became known as Canada, a predominantly African American, owner-occupied neighborhood. The 2 1/8 acre historic parcel remained in the Foster family until 1906. The memorial adjacent to the South Lawn complex commemorates the Foster residence, the larger landscape, and the cemetery believed to contain members of the Foster family and adjacent Canada community.

14 Gooch Dillard Grave Site



The land upon which the Gooch Dillard dormitory stands was originally part of Piedmont, a 290-acre plantation acquired by Reuben Maury in 1809. Piedmont was passed down through the Maury family until its acquisition by the University in 1947. As Maury's plantation holdings grew, so did the number of enslaved people he owned. In the decades between 1820 and 1860, Maury owned between 25 and 62 enslaved individuals.

Prior to the construction of the Gooch Dillard dormitory Mrs. Alice H. Clark, a Maury descendant, recalled the location of a cemetery containing the remains of enslaved who lived and worked on the Piedmont plantation. In 1982 University archaeologists conducted limited testing in the area adjacent to the proposed dormitory construction site. Although only nine graves were identified, it is believed that the cemetery is much larger and may contain the graves of many more individuals.

15 Gibbons House



The Board of Visitors voted in March 2015 to name the new first year dorm building "Gibbons House" after William and Isabella Gibbons. The President's Commission on Slavery and the University (PCSU) established an educational exhibit in an alcove on the first floor of the Gibbons House dormitory to teach first year students about the namesakes of the building and the larger history of slavery at UVA. The building was formally dedicated in summer 2015 and later that same year, descendants of Isabella Gibbons were honored with a reception at Gibbons House.

16 Skipwith Hall



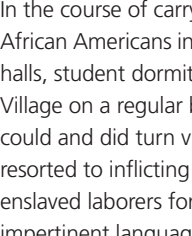
Peyton Skipwith, 1800–1849, was an enslaved master mason who quarried stone for use in construction at UVA. Mr. Skipwith was owned by John Hartwell Cocke, a member of the Board of Visitors. The site of this building is believed to have been the location of the University quarry where Mr. Skipwith was a laborer.

17 University Cemetery



In 2012, Archaeologists discovered 67 mostly unmarked grave shafts, which likely contain the remains of both enslaved and newly freed African Americans. The graves were left undisturbed. In 2014, the PCSU organized a formal service at the First Baptist Church, followed by an evening vigil led by renowned Reverend Almeta Ingram-Miller and a choir singing the gospel song, *Walk Together Children, Don't You Get Weary*. Ingram-Miller led the community in a libation ceremony to celebrate, honor, and remember those buried in the cemetery.

18 Violence Against Enslaved Individuals



In the course of carrying out their responsibilities, free and enslaved African Americans interacted with white students in the hotel dining halls, student dormitory rooms, and throughout the Academical Village on a regular basis. On occasion, these daily interactions could and did turn violent. Faculty records document that students resorted to inflicting physical violence upon the bodies of free and enslaved laborers for a variety of "offences," including insolence, impertinent language, or a perceived lack of attention to duties.

In particular, enslaved individuals working for hotelkeepers in the dining halls and dormitories faced the greatest threat. Failure to change a plate at the dinner table or perceived negligence in preparing a dormitory room or changing bed linens could result in a violent interaction. Enslaved individuals who did not speak to white students with respect and deference were also putting themselves at risk of violence. Student-on-slave violence at the University included strikings and beatings, as well as threats of whippings and even sexual assault. This physical punishment was carried out with or without the assent of the master. Complaint against a slave for an offense could lead to their removal from duties, or even from the University. Furthermore, even when students were judged by faculty to be at fault, their actions were only reprimanded and very rarely led to suspension.

Photography

- Front cover Minor, Southall and Venable family photographs, 1860–1900, Accession #10100-d, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville va.
- UVA Magazine uvmagazine.org/articles/unearting_slavery_at_the_university_of_virginia
- Holsinger Studio Collection, c. 2890–1938, Accession #9862, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville va.
- Details: E. Sachse, Engraver. *View of the University of Virginia, Charlottesville & Monticello, taken from Lewis Mountain*, 1856. Casimir Bohm, Publisher, Richmond, Virginia. Broadside 1856. B64. Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville va.
- 'East Range' [It is actually West Range] RG-30/1/10.011. UVA Prints 01667. University of Virginia Visual History Collection. University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville va.
- Anne Chesnut
- Kelley Dietz
- Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC (2014)
- Kelley Dietz
- Back cover Holsinger Studio Collection, c. 2890–1938, Accession #9862, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville va.
- A 'Jefferson Statue': Rufus W. Holsinger, April 4, 1914. Holsinger Studio Collection, Call #MSS 9862. Retrieval ID – X0316484. Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville va.
- C Top: Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC (2005) Bottom: The Catherine "Kitty" Foster Family and Canada Community Park, Photo: Jane Haley
- E Bottom: Isabella Gibbons, n.d. Courtesy Trustees of the Boston Public Library
- F Top: 'Cemetery, University of Virginia.' Rufus W. Holsinger, March 9, 1917. Holsinger Studio Collection, Call #MSS 3862. Retrieval ID: X0490948. Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville va.
- Middle: Benjamin Ford, principal investigator at RivannaArchaeological Services, explores the dig north of the University Cemetery. Photo: Cole Geddy
- uvmagazine.org/articles/unearting_slavery_at_the_university_of_virginia Bottom: Dan Addison