

leave.

Gradually, the Mount Pleasant plantation grows and prospers. Frances' son, James Senior takes it over and commissions the original Montpelier to be built. James Junior is a nine year old boy. So is Sawney, one of the Montpelier slaves. It is Sawney who accompanies James Madison to Princeton as a personal servant. And in later years, Sawney is made overseer of his own quarter, or portion of the plantation. The merchants at the docks at Fredericksburg seek out hogsheads of tobacco bearing Sawney's mark, for they know they contain the best leaf. Sawney is also remembered as the tottering white haired old servant who waited on "Mother Madison," who, by the way, lived to age 98.

According to Montpelier's Director of Education Beth Taylor, another slave, named "Billey," accompanied James Madison to Philadelphia in 1780 when Madison started his term in the Continental Congress. It is interesting to note that Billey did not return to Montpelier in 1785, and Madison is quoted as saying that Billey was "no longer a fit companion." Had talk of liberty in Philadelphia been overheard by the wrong ears? Had Billey been "infected" by this heady drug? In Pennsylvania, all slaves were to be free in seven years. Yet, rather than take Billey back and sell him in Virginia for more money, Madison sold him at a discount in Philadelphia with the full knowledge he'd be a free man in seven years time.

During its heyday, Montpelier was home to as many as 108 slaves. There is archaeological proof that some lived in the mansion cellar. James Madison was generally considered a kindly owner; he even told a Sunday visitor that "he could not have the servants

to wait upon him, as they made it a holiday." The big question is, at what point did Madison become, in Beth Taylor's words, "fully aware of the irony of owning slaves...that paradox of working on self governance and all he had to do was look out

So many stories...so many more that we'll never hear. From Mount Pleasant a winding path has been constructed to the unmarked graves of the slave cemetery. Beth Taylor points to the shallow depressions in the ground. She plucks a cruciform leaf cluster from a carpet of periwinkle...living proof that people are buried here. So far 41 graves have been identified. In this bucolic and peaceful setting she quotes Madison as saying that slavery was "a blot on our Republican character." Maybe this is where the issue of slavery should be laid to rest.

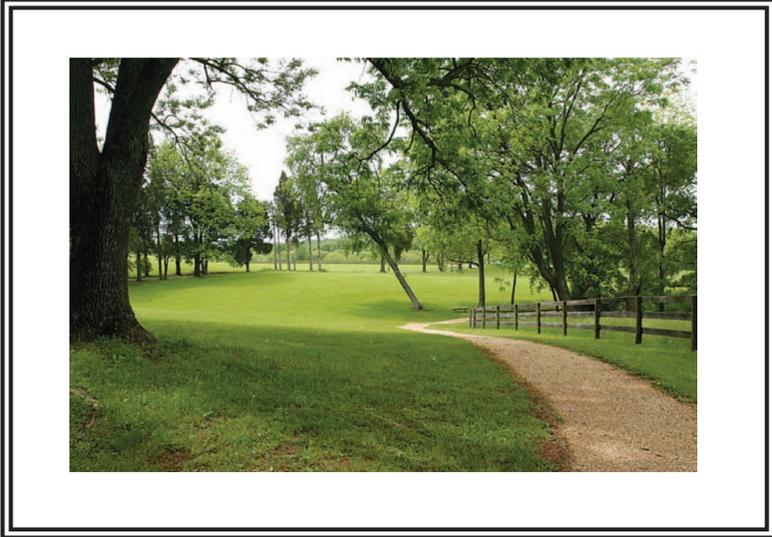
Just across Route 20 from the Montpelier entrance gate sits another monument to the para-

a freed slave and a soldier fighting to keep slavery, both warmed themselves at this same hearth? They just did it at different times. And just recently, Montpelier announced plans for a new exhibit that traces the journey of enslaved people from the plantation through Emancipation, Jim Crow and the Civil Rights era. It will be located in the old train depot, where segregated waiting rooms, "colored" and "white" will be preserved.

Meanwhile, archaeologist Matt Reeves points to the Madison mansion and to the excavation of the slave duplexes in the South Yard, commenting that the founding father was "trying to build this space to represent who he is as a person and what his values are. And right in the middle of that you've got the ideals of neo-classical architecture combined with plantation slavery...You've got Madison the Constitutional thinker, the idealist who came up with the model of citizenship that we enjoy today; that's his public life, but then in his private life, he's a slave owner. Slavery is what allows his existence as a politician, the money that supports his and Dolley's lifestyle."

Back at the Constitution Center, a member of the media asks Montpelier Foundation President, Michael Quinn if Madison ever held "a real job," one that required him to show up for work on a regular basis and draw a pay check. Quinn stood momentarily stymied by this seemingly simple-minded question.

Then everyone simultaneously realized the ultimate irony of it all. Madison never held a real job; he was supported by plantation income and the free (as in, doesn't cost any money) labor force of its slaves. It was slavery that afforded him the time and money to devote himself to the lofty principles that all men should be free. That's the paradox!



Above, the path leading from the slave cemetery to Mt. Pleasant. (Photo by Phil Audibert) Below, the exterior of George and Polly Gilmore's freedman's cabin. (Photo by Susie Audibert)

the window and see enslaved people."

Beth is researching the story of Paul Jennings, the slave who so eloquently describes Madison's last breath. Jennings was there at the White House when the British torched the place. Dolley took him to Washington with her after Madison's death, but was forced to sell him in 1846. He was then sold again, this time to Daniel Webster, who immediately set him free, as long as he repaid his purchase price. Jennings went on to become a landowner in northwest D.C.; he built a house, landed a job with the Department of Interior and became active in the Underground Railroad.

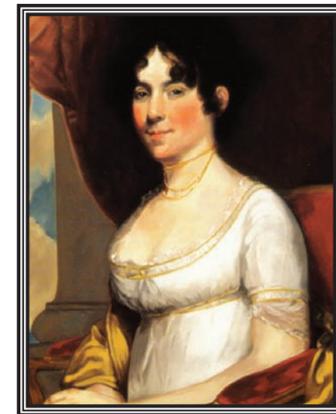
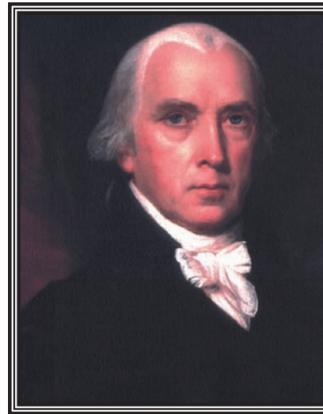


dox...George Gilmore's cabin. Once they were emancipated, he and his wife Polly built this place using a chimney from a Confederate encampment from the winter of 1863-64. Isn't it ironic that the men who embodied the very reason for the Civil War,



Montpelier Stories

Part II: James and Dolley—the Man and the Woman, The Paradox



Two weeks ago, we told you three stories about Montpelier... the redo, the document and the dig... now, it's time to tell the stories of the people...

JAMES AND DOLLEY—THE MAN AND THE WOMAN

"An unlikely looking leader."
—Montpelier Foundation President Michael Quinn

He stood 5'4". He did not have a booming orator's voice, and he was painfully shy. He did not seek public attention, and when he was called the Father of the Constitution, he

replied, "No, it was the work of many hands and many heads."

She on the other hand stood two inches taller. She was also 17 years his junior. Coming from plain and simple Quaker roots, she more than made up for lost time in her social life and dress after she married the man she described as "the great little Madison." At state dinners at the White House, it was she who sat at the head of the table, while he sat in the middle along the side. "Dolley's political and social flair coupled with her husband's intellect, position, and political skills, made the pair a force in Washington and in our nation's history," says a recent Montpelier press release.

Top photo, located on 2,658 acres, Montpelier is a formidable economic force in Orange County today, employing 140 full time workers and operating on a \$5 million annual budget. Visitation at the mansion is up sharply over this time last year. (Photo by Phil Audibert) Above left is a portrait of James Madison painted by John Vanderlyn. (Courtesy of the Montpelier Foundation.) Above right is a portrait of Dolley Madison by Alan Dordick, after Gilbert Stuart. (Courtesy of the Montpelier Foundation & Alan Dordick Studios)

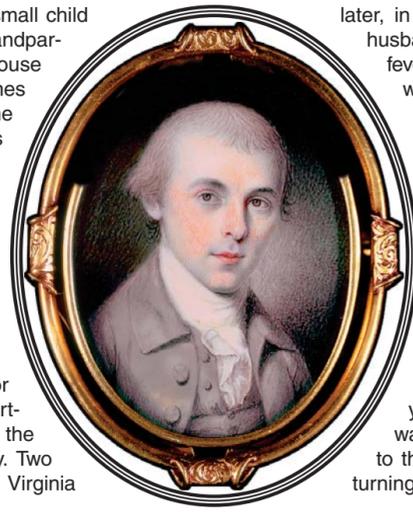
James Madison was raised as a small child in a modest farmhouse built by his grandparents called Mount Pleasant. This house was located just in front of where James and Dolley are buried today. By the time James was 11 years old, his father had become prosperous enough to commission the construction of a brick manor home. This was the core of today's Montpelier.

As a boy, Madison was sent to Tidewater to study for five years with a renowned Presbyterian minister. Later he graduated from Princeton in three short years. Not in the most robust of health, Madison made up for it with intellect. His political career started in 1774 where he was elected to the Orange County Committee of Safety. Two years later he was elected to the Virginia Convention to draft the state's first constitution. Soon after, he was elected to the Virginia General Assembly and in 1780 to the Second Continental Congress. In 1787, he traveled to Philadelphia to make his indelible mark at the Constitutional Convention.

Madison was not what you might call a ladies man. At the ripe old age of 32 he was dumped by his first intended, a woman by the name of Kitty Floyd. For the next 12 years, it seems he was so busy being the architect of the Constitution and the author of the Bill of Rights, that he had little time for social matters. The next woman he "dated" was Dolley, when he was 44 years old!

She had fallen on hard times. Born in North Carolina and raised a Quaker in Hanover County, Virginia, her father freed all of his slaves in 1783 and moved the family to Philadelphia where he promptly failed miserably as a merchant, retiring to his bed chamber a depressed recluse. The family had to take in boarders, one of them being Madison's Princeton classmate, Aaron Burr.

Meanwhile, Dolley had married an up-and-coming lawyer, John Todd who fathered two sons by her. Three years



later, in 1793, her in-laws, one child and her husband were all dead, claimed by a yellow fever epidemic. Dolley, at age 25, was a widowed single mother with a two-year-old son.

Madison asked Burr to introduce them, prompting her to write breathlessly to a friend, "The great little Madison has asked...to see me this evening." Apparently he was smitten, for they were married four months later.

In 1797, after completing his term as a U.S. Congressman, Madison arrived at his parent's home in Orange County with a bride, her younger sister and a stepson in tow. It was at this point that Madison added on to the Georgian home his father had built, turning it into a duplex, with the Madison Juniors living in the north half and his parents living in the south half. There was no interior connection between the two living quarters; they simply shared a common wall.

In 1801, James Madison was summoned to Washington to serve as Thomas Jefferson's secretary of state. In fact, he and Dolley briefly lived in the White House with the widowed Jefferson until they could find accommodations of their own. And Dolley pitched in as a hostess for the Jefferson White House, which, by the

way, set a few tongues clucking. When James Madison was elected President in 1808, Dolley made the scene at the inaugural ball wearing a turban accessorized by bird of paradise feathers. She was immediately dubbed the "Presidentess," while, Madison was described as looking "pale and exhausted." An opponent of his in the election commented, "I was beaten by Mr. and Mrs. Madison. I might have had a better chance had I faced Mr. Madison alone." It was during James' presidency that Dolley earned the title and carved out the role of a first lady. Recognizing that the White House was a public institution, she set about to decorate it in a style that would capture the idealistic

imagination of a young democracy. She hosted open houses and graciously accepted visitors to this "the people's house." Often she would intentionally seat political opponents next to or across from each other.

It was also she who organized the evacuation of the White House and saved the full length Gilbert Stuart portrait of George Washington when the British came visiting with torches in 1814.

Three years later, with the inauguration of James Monroe as the nation's fifth president, the Madisons retired to Montpelier. "Retired" is the wrong word because their social schedule was almost as hectic as it was when they were in Washington. Everybody dropped in to visit the "Sage of Montpelier." The Madisons even mounted a spyglass on the front portico so they could check out and screen the occupants of the carriages as they came up the drive. But Dolley took to the rural lifestyle her husband loved, commenting "I am less worried here with a hundred visitors than with 25 in Washington." One observer commented that the couple looked "like Adam and Eve in Paradise."

During the Madison presidency two single-story wings had been added to Montpelier, giving us the house we see today. James' mother, Nelly still occupied the south end of the house, as she would until she died at age 98! Dolley and James lived in the central and north side of the house. The two women's kitchens, at opposite ends of the house, testified to their style differences. While mother Madison's was stark and plain, Dolley's was full of the most modern early 19th century appliances, including what Director of Restoration John Jeanes calls the "Jenn-Aire," a wall oven that also served as a steamer and instant hot water source.

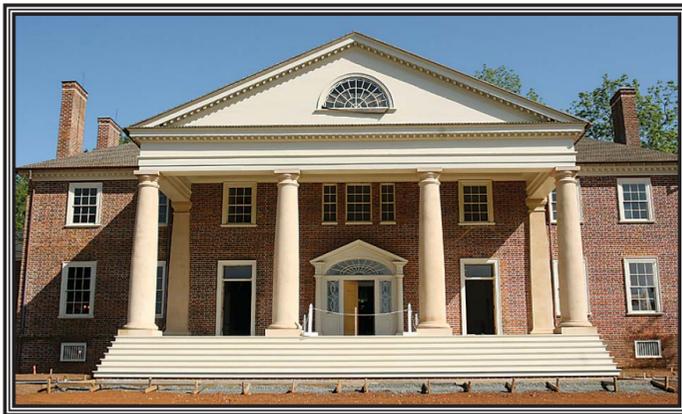
Dolley was also an aficionado of snuff; her silver snuff case is on display at the Grills Gallery. This mild addiction sparks the head shaking irony of a woman, raised in the simple and plain Quaker tradition, whose father freed his slaves, living on a plantation where slaves tend a crop from which this drug is derived.

In his waning years, James Madison suffered terribly from arthritis. It got to the point he couldn't climb stairs. He spent his time in his downstairs study on a day bed. On June 28th 1836, it was obvious that "the great little Madison," was on his way out. The doctors had already offered him drugs to keep him alive until July 4th, so he could die on the same memorable day as his friends and countrymen, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and James Monroe. But he said no.

His personal slave, Paul Jennings, tried to persuade him to swallow a bit of food. Dolley's niece, Nelly asked him what was wrong, and he replied, "nothing but a change of mind, my dear." Jennings, with the help of a ghost writer, later described the scene in a book, saying Madison's "head instantly dropped, and he ceased breathing as quietly as the snuff of a candle goes out."

James and Dolley never had children. She lived on, albeit in poverty, because her son by her previous marriage, Payne Todd, had racked up staggering gambling debts that had already taken their toll on Madison finances. She moved to Washington, still wearing "vintage" turbans and dresses, and she became Washington's grand dame of the social scene. She was granted an honorary seat on the floor of the House of Representatives. She witnessed the sending of the first telegram, and actually sent the second herself. In 1844, she sold Montpelier and most of its slaves.

Her death in 1849 was honored by the largest state funeral to date in Washington. By contrast, when her son Payne Todd died, his funeral was attended by a lone unidentified person, probably a creditor.



Top photo, although he looks like a teenager, James Madison was actually 32 years old when this water color on ivory portrait was painted by Charles Wilson Peale in 1783. (Courtesy of the Montpelier Foundation and the Library of Congress Rare Books and Special Collections Division) Above, this is the portion of the house, without the wings, that James and Dolley shared with his parents, starting about 1797. The wings would be added during his presidency. (Photo by Phil Audibert) Below, Montpelier Director of Restoration John Jeanes shows off what he calls the Jenn-Aire in Dolley Madison's thoroughly modern early 1800's kitchen. (Photo by Phil Audibert)



THE PARADOX

"...a blot on our Republican character."

—James Madison

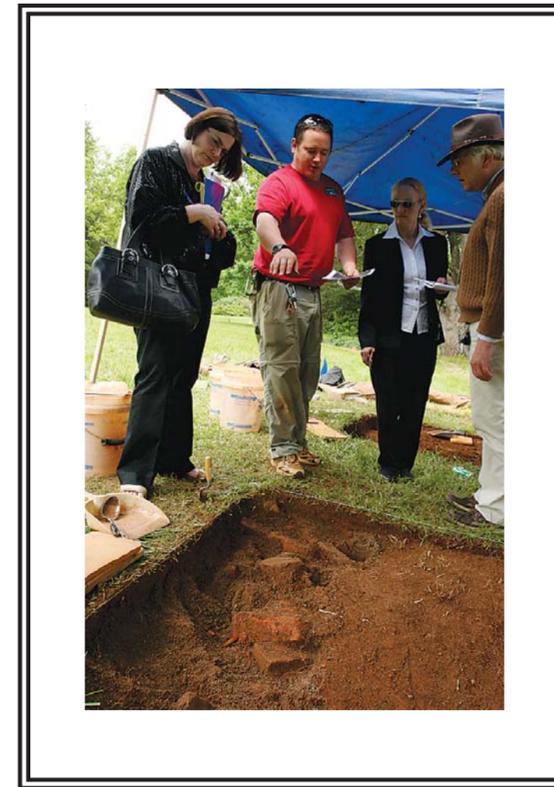
There is no doubt that slavery is our nation's worst sin. It was one of the issues that lead to the Civil War; it became the ultimate test of Mr. Madison's union, and we are still trying to get over it. But rather than sweep its ugly specter under the rug, Montpelier has embraced the challenge of telling this remarkable story.

The story starts at Mount Pleasant, just down the hill from the new Visitor's Center in front of the Madison cemetery. Mt. Pleasant was the homestead that was established in 1732 by James Madison's grandfather, Ambrose. He had sent a "gang" of 29 slaves ahead to "seat and plant" his portion of the Madison/Chew patent that would become Montpelier. In those days, if you didn't establish a modest building and plant some crops within a certain amount of time, your patent to that land lapsed and could be granted to someone else.

In the summer of 1732, Ambrose came up to check on the progress of the work. By August 27th, he was dead, allegedly poisoned by a slave named Pompey, who was either being rented from or being lent by another plantation.



Above, Beth Taylor, Montpelier's Director of Education, makes a point at Mount Pleasant, where the tour of the enslaved community begins. At left, Montpelier Archaeological Field Director, Mark Trickett explains the South Yard slave complex dig to visiting members of the media. (Photos by Phil Audibert)



Pompey was ultimately executed for the crime.

By the way, this not the only example of masters being poisoned by their slaves in Orange County. In fact, poison seemed to be the weapon of choice among the enslaved community. There are several reasons for this; slaves did not have access to firearms, and they were probably required to check in and out their farm tools (potential weapons?) every day with an overseer. Poison was about the only means left to them. There is also documentation of slaves bringing poison recipes, even a culture of poisoning, over from Africa.

At any rate, Ambrose was dead. Why was he poisoned?

We have no idea other than to speculate that his arrival at Mount Pleasant somehow sparked a deep resentment and rebellion in some members of his slave gang. Two other slaves, Turk and a woman named Dido, were implicated as accomplices and punished. And herein lies a rather amazing sub-story.

Ambrose's widow, Frances Taylor, the daughter of the first man to patent land in Orange County, Colonel James Taylor II, was now alone in the middle of nowhere. She was in charge of a small plantation surrounded by virgin forest and being worked by slaves, two of whom may have aided and abetted her husband's assassin. Her son, James Madison, Sr. is but a mere boy. Yet, this woman puts Turk and Dido back to work, for their names appear on future documents. Apparently, she does not fear the possibility of future attempts on her family's life because she doesn't