



UNIVERSITY of VIRGINIA

Walking Tours of Grounds

A set of thematically-driven walking tours, allow you explore the University of Virginia, including a tour focusing on the history of enslaved African Americans at UVA through places, people, and events.

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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.

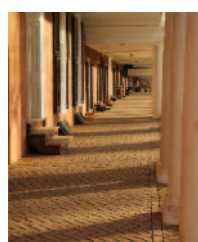
Key

- 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 Rotunda and Bricks in the Academical Village



One of the most overlooked legacies of enslaved labor are the bricks that cover the Academical Village. Enslaved workers dug the clay, fired the bricks, hauled them to Grounds, and laid them to build this university. The brick-making began in 1817 with a team comprised largely of enslaved men, but at least one woman and several children also worked in the brick yards. In 1823, an enslaved man named Charles was responsible for digging the clay and manning one of the kilns with the help of six enslaved boys rented out from John H. Cocke. Enslaved men Dick, Lewis, Nelson, and Sandy were also rented to the brickyard, and worked long hours by the kiln. That same year, 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. Enslaved workers also carved out the terrace levels on the lawn, creating the unique landscape that you see today. Many of the enslaved were highly skilled at construction, carpentry, stone cutting, and blacksmithing. They contributed to some of the more intricate design work seen in the details of the architecture on Grounds.

2 Enslaved Labor Plaque



In 2007, the University installed a slate memorial in the brick pavement of the cryptoporticus, the passage under the south terrace of the Rotunda. The plaque 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." After it was installed, students objected to its acknowledgement of the contributions of enslaved people from 1817 to 1865 as insufficient. Their awareness-raising efforts after 2007 paved the way for the birth of the President's Commission on Slavery and the University in 2013.

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, Mr. Martin was rented 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 mentioned in an 1890 letter to *College Topics*, a student publication that was planning to report on his life story. He would go on to work at UVA for over 50 years. 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. He died in 1915 and is buried in the Daughters of Zion Cemetery in Charlottesville.

4 Anatomical Theater



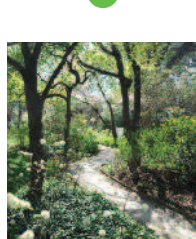
By 1824, Jefferson's vision for the university included a tiered anatomical amphitheater for observing dissections. The Board of Visitors approved Jefferson's design for the building in early 1825. It opened in 1827 and would remain in use until the early twentieth century. A separate student dissection lab nearby was added within a few years. Nineteenth century medical faculty and students commonly stole the corpses of recently buried African Americans from cemeteries for use in their classrooms. By the late 1840s, the University was competing for cadavers with 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 dozens of cadavers per session. The University rented an enslaved man named Lewis from carpenter George Spooner specifically to clean up after the cadaver experiments. On at least one occasion, Lewis was forced to grave rob locally. Because of these duties, the University community referred to him as "Anatomical Lewis." During his time at UVA, Lewis lived in an outbuilding in Anatomy professor John S. Davis's Pavilion VII garden. Lewis, after decades toiling as the Anatomical Hall attendant, died in 1857.

5 Hotel A



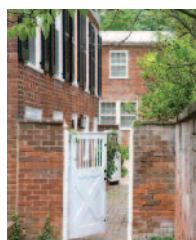
Hotels are interspersed among the student rooms on the East and West Ranges. They were rented to Hotelkeepers, each of whom owned or rented many enslaved people. The enslaved daily fresh water to the students, tended fires, clean rooms and public spaces, and prepared the meals that were served to students in the Hotels. In 1830, the Hotelkeeper here enslaved twelve people who may have lived in the basement and in garden outbuildings. The population of enslaved people in the Academical Village fluctuated between 90 and 150 or more annually in the decades before emancipation. University records document that students resulted to physical violence against enslaved people regularly.

6 The University Gardens



Over the decades, dozens of buildings—smokehouse, kitchens, privies, woodsheds, and enslaved living quarters—were added to these spaces. Enclosed by tall serpentine walls and largely hidden from view, the garden work yards 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 enslaved people worked, lived, and communed on University Grounds. By the twentieth century, most of those outbuildings were torn down. In the mid-twentieth century, the Garden Club of Virginia redesigned the gardens to their present appearance.

7 The Mews



The Mews, one of the few surviving original outbuildings, was erected in 1829 as a 1½ story kitchen with an attic garret that was used as quarters for the enslaved. The enslaved cooks and domestics who lived and worked at these buildings were integral to the University's community, providing meals and domestic service to the professors and their families. This building has since been enlarged and was renamed "The Mews" in 1923.



8 Mrs. Gray's Kitchen



Completed in 1830, this 1½ story Hotel E 'office' with two rooms was known as Mrs. Gray's kitchen. It served as both quarters and workspace for the enslaved. Mrs. Gray had the kitchen structure expanded in 1844, adding an "apartment for the lodging of servants." Records document that a dozen or more enslaved people resided at Hotel E.

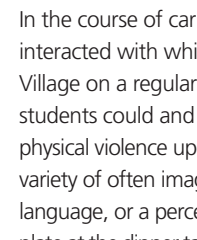
One was William, a young boy who worked as a dormitory and dining hall servant. In 1834, several students boarding with Mrs. Gray complained that William was "impertinent" and that he did not "attend well" at the rooms. Under pressure from the faculty, William was "withdrawn" from serving the student dormitories. In 1835, Mrs. Gray complained to the faculty that a student boarder had "struck her servant William in her presence" and that the student was rude. The student defended his behavior, stating that "he would do so [strike her servant] whenever it pleased him." Faculty sided with the student in concluding 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.

9 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 who labored there in support of Tucker's family. Tucker also rented enslaved people to the University as needed. In 1828, Anthony was rented out for five months performing labor for the University. In 1840, Isaac was rented for a month and assisted a stonemason while building walls surrounding the Academical Village.

10 Violence Against the Enslaved



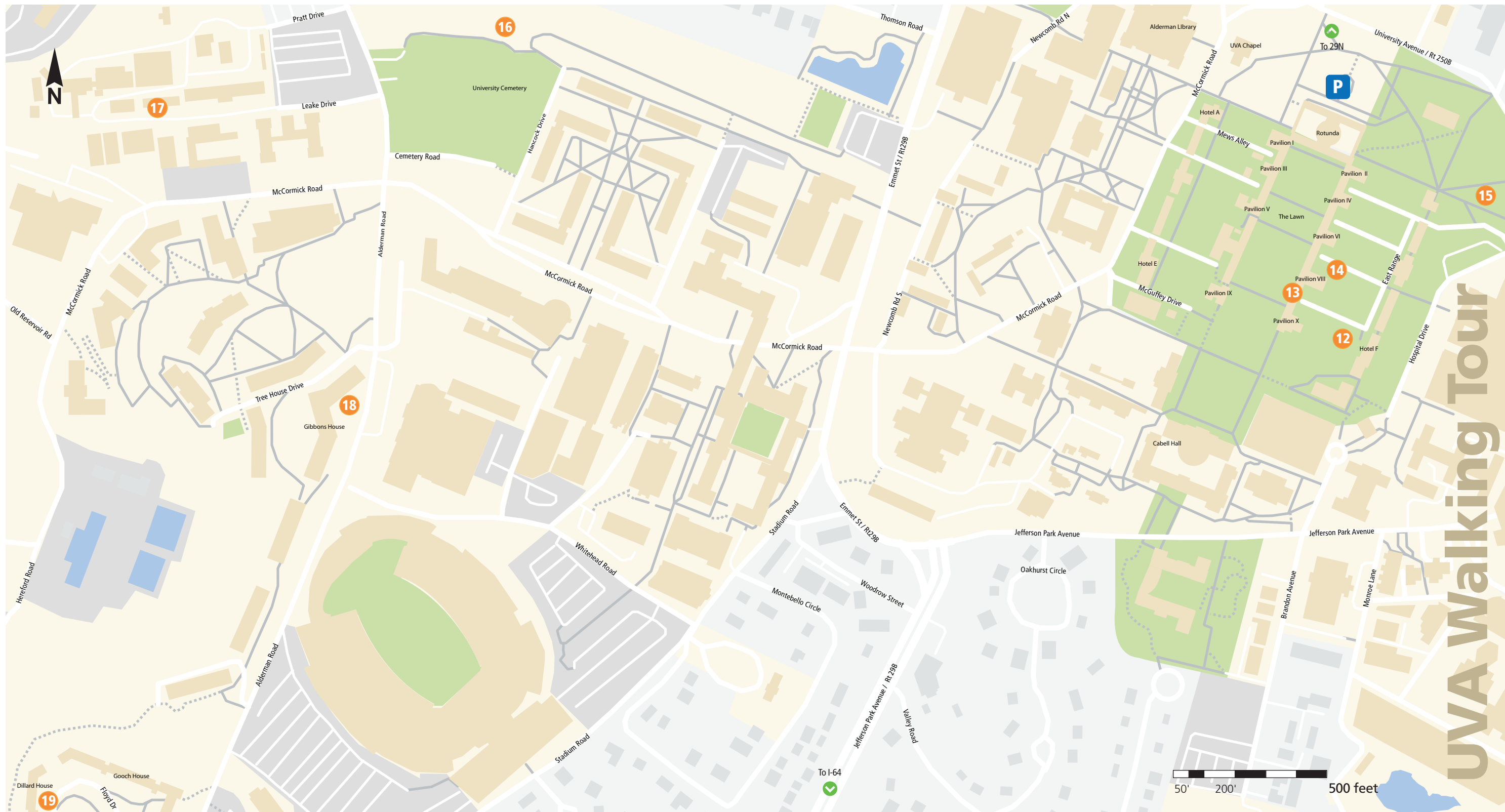
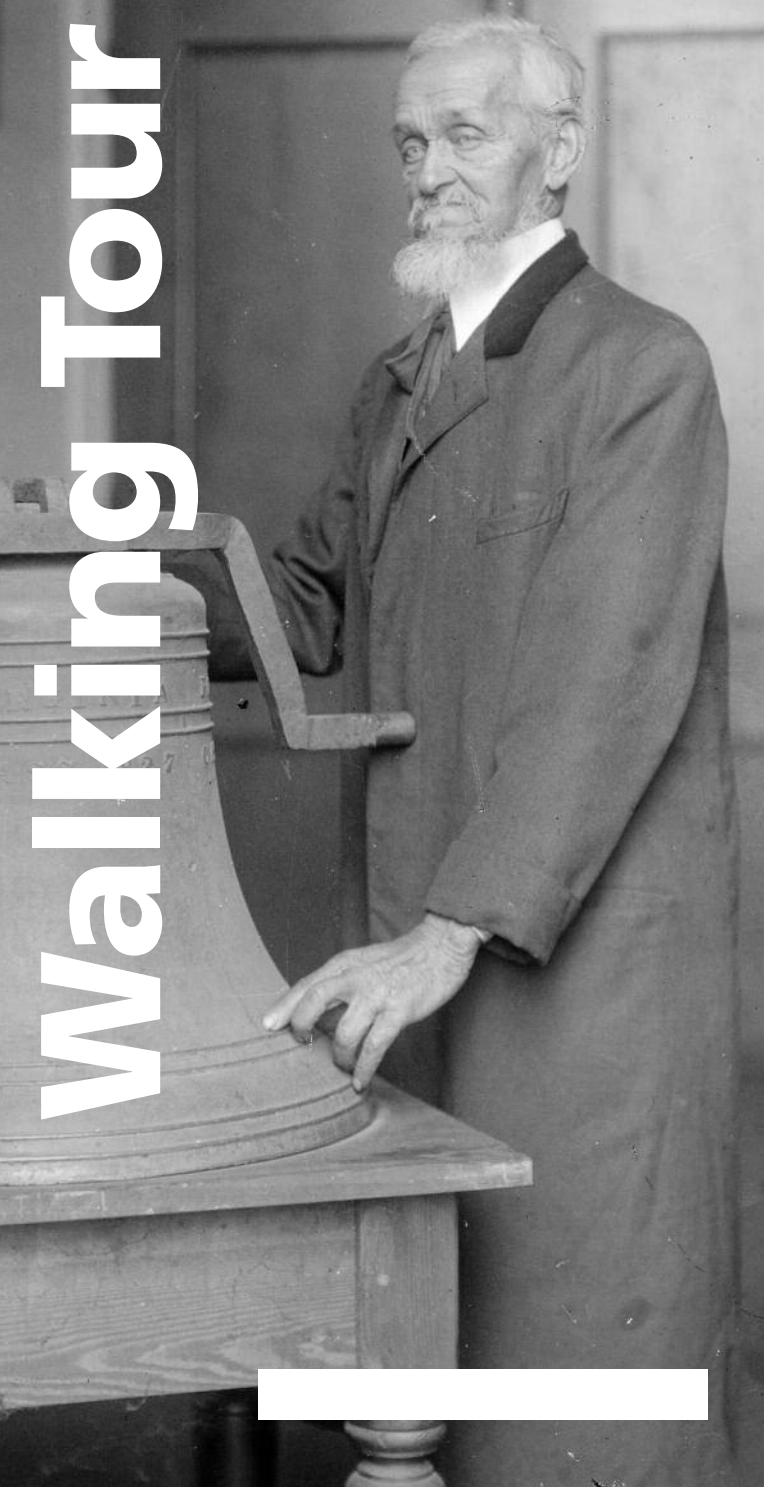
In the course of carrying out their responsibilities, enslaved people interacted with white students in spaces throughout the Academical Village on a regular basis. Unsurprisingly, those daily interactions with students could and did turn violent. Students resorted to inflicting physical violence upon the bodies of free and enslaved laborers for a variety of often imagined "offences," including insolence, impertinent language, or a perceived lack of attention to duties. Failure to change a plate at the dinner table or presumed 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. The slave system was upheld by both violence and the routine threat of violence.

At UVA, the enslaved endured beatings, whippings, and even sexual assault. As one student explained in response to his attack upon an enslaved child, "whenever a servant is insolent...he will take upon himself the right of punishing without the consent of the master" because "correction of a servant for impertinence...may be defended on the ground of necessity for maintaining due subordination." A complaint against an enslaved person 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 any meaningful punishment.

11 Catherine Foster Site



During the expansion of a parking lot east of Venable Lane in 1993, workers discovered several grave shafts. Subsequent research identified the historic parcel containing the graves as belonging to Catherine Foster, a free black woman who purchased the property in 1833. 32 graves were identified, as well as the foundation of 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 Catherine "Kitty" Foster and her descendants. During the postbellum period, the predominantly African American neighborhood became known as Canada. The 2½ acre parcel remained in the Foster family until 1906. The "Shadowcatcher" memorial designed by landscape architects Cheryl Barton and Walter Hood commemorates the history of the site. An exhibit in the 1st floor atrium of the Nau and Gibson Hall complex contains additional information and artifacts.



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

12 The Crackerbox

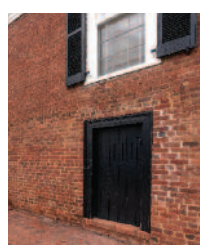


One of the few surviving outbuildings, the "Cracker Box" is a two-story structure erected in 1826 behind Hotel F. Like the Mews, the Cracker Box was originally constructed as a detached kitchen with second story dwelling space. Hotelkeeper John Rose brought his household, including 13 enslaved people and 3 free black women, to Hotel F in 1829.

A one-room addition was added to the north end, perhaps as additional living space for the enslaved.

Enslaved men James Munroe and Edmund, along with 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. The Roses left the University in 1834 and opened a boarding house for students on Main Street. It is likely that the people they held in bondage continued to serve students and the Roses at their boarding house establishment.

13 East Lawn Basement Rooms



The basement rooms had many different uses. Some were living quarters for enslaved people. 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. Many of these rooms show evidence of improvement to make them more habitable, including whitewashed walls and plaster ceilings. Despite those improvements, most of the rooms were barely habitable without floors, windows, ventilation, or fireplaces.

These rooms were sometimes rented out to businessmen such as Jack Kennedy, a member of Charlottesville's small Free Black community, who applied to use one 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, 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 pipes and trenches built by enslaved people. Two free black men, Thomas Farrar and his partner, Mr. Battles, maintained the water system for decades.

14 Pavilion VI and Garden



Pavilion VI was one place where William and Isabella Gibbons, both enslaved by different professors, persevered to maintain family connections and educate themselves. William was owned by Professor Howard in Pavilion III and later worked as a butler for Professor McGuffey in Pavilion IX. Isabella was owned by Professor Smith in Pavilions V and VI, where she worked as a domestic servant. Although their marriage had no legal standing, William and Isabella preserved their union and raised their children while held in bondage. The strong opposition of white Virginians also severely limited access to education for the enslaved. William learned to read by carefully observing and listening to the white students around him. Their daughter Bella recalled that she could not have learned to read and write, "unless my mother taught me secretly."

A one-room addition was added to the north end, perhaps as additional living space for the enslaved.

15 Memorial to Enslaved Laborers



The Memorial to Enslaved Laborers honors the lives, labor, resilience, and resistance of 4,000 enslaved people who lived and worked at UVA between 1817 and 1865. First proposed by students in 2010, the idea for a memorial garnered widespread support from students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the local community as the President's Commission on Slavery and the University brought that initial vision to reality.

Situated within the UNESCO World Heritage Site space northeast of the Rotunda, the memorial sits in the midst of what were originally fields cultivated by enslaved people. The memorial's design and location were deeply informed by a process of engagement with students, faculty, staff, and the local community. Howeler + Yoon Architects the team who designed the memorial, which was completed in 2020.

As people walk along the memorial's path, the interior granite wall rises to a height of eight feet. This wall bears memory marks—the inscriptions of the known and unknown names of the estimated 4,000 persons who worked on grounds. Current research has uncovered the names of nearly 600 enslaved persons. Running parallel to the wall of names, a smaller ring of granite incorporates a bench for individuals to rest and reflect. The smaller ring also hosts a water-table with a timeline of the history of slavery at UVA etched into the stone.

16 University Cemetery



In 2012, Archaeologists discovered 67 mostly unmarked grave shafts, which likely contain the remains of enslaved African Americans. In 2014, the cemetery underwent renovation and interpretive panels were installed, all without disturbing the graves. Although we do not know who was buried here, we do know they were people with families, faith, community, and cultural traditions. Thus, in 2014 and 2017, the PCSU organized memorial services that included evening vigils and libations led by renowned Reverend Almeta Ingram-Miller.

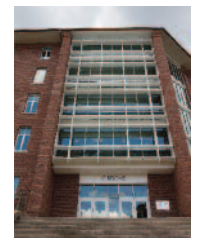
17 Skipwith Hall



Peyton Skipwith, enslaved by Board of Visitors member John Hartwell Cocke of Fluvanna County, was a master mason who quarried for use in construction at UVA. The site of this building is at the location of the University quarry where he labored. While rented to UVA, Peyton Skipwith extracted rock and cut stone for buildings, including the Anatomical Theater.

He literally carved the foundations of the Academical Village. Skipwith, as part of a Liberian colonization scheme, was emancipated in 1833 and deported by Cocke as a condition of being freed. The building, with thirty Skipwith descendants attending, was dedicated in summer 2017.

18 Gibbons House



In 2015, "Gibbons House" dormitory was dedicated and named after William and Isabella Gibbons, who were both enslaved at UVA. Later that same year, Gibbons family descendants were honored with a reception at the dormitory. Isabella and William Gibbons became esteemed leaders in the African American community locally after the general emancipation in 1865—William

served as a minister and Isabella taught in the Freedmen's School. The President's Commission on Slavery and the University (PCSU) installed exhibits honoring their accomplishments in an alcove on the first floor of the dorm and outside along the main walkway to Central Grounds.

19 Gooch Dillard Grave Site



The Gooch Dillard dormitory is located on what was originally part of Reuben Maury's 290-acre Piedmont plantation. With the exception of 1851, when UVA briefly took ownership of the property, Piedmont remained with the Maury family until UVA purchased it 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 construction of this dormitory complex in 1982, Maury descendant Alice H. Clark recalled the location of a cemetery containing the remains of enslaved people who lived and worked there. Archaeologists then conducted limited testing in the area. Although only nine graves were identified, it is believed that the cemetery could be larger. In 2019, Student Council, working with the President's Commission, installed interpretive panels documenting this history.

Photography

- Front cover Minor, Southall and Venable family photographs, 1860–1900, Accession #10100-4, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville va.
- 1 Bricks from the Anatomical Theater, Historical Collections & Services, Claude Moore Health Sciences Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville va.
- 2 UVA Magazine
- 3 uvmagazine.org/articles/unearthing_slavery_at_the_university_of_virginia
- 4 Holsinger Studio Collection, c. 2890–1938, Accession #9862, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville va.
- 4 Details: E. Sachse, Engraver. *View of the University of Virginia, Charlottesville & Monticello, taken from Lewis Mountain*, 1856. Casimir Bohn, Publisher, Richmond, Virginia. Broadside 1856. B64. Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville va.
- 5 "East Range." [It is actually West Range] RG-30/110.011. UVA Prints 01667. University of Virginia Visual History Collection. University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville va.
- 6 Anne Chesnut
- 7 Sanjay Suchak
- 8 Image courtesy of *Jefferson's University - The Early Life*, juel.iath.virginia.edu
- 9 Bottom: Image courtesy of *Jefferson's University - The Early Life*, juel.iath.virginia.edu
- 11 Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC (2005)
- Back cover Holsinger Studio Collection, c. 2890–1938, Accession #9862, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville va.
- 12, 13 Sanjay Suchak
- 14 Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC (2014)
- 15 Sanjay Suchak
- 16 Dan Addison
- 17, 18 Sanjay Suchak
- 19 Kirt von Daacke