

On February 24, 1838, two students severely beat Professor Bonnycastle's ten-year-old slave Fielding. Bonnycastle unsuccessfully attempted to stop the assault. Following this incident, Bonnycastle sought punishment of the students from the Faculty Committee. Multiple pages of testimony were taken from the students involved, witnesses, and Bonnycastle himself. Fielding was not questioned. The University referred action to the local authorities but the students were never punished.



Isabella Gibbons. Courtesy of the Boston Public Library

The Gibboses

William and Isabella Gibbons 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, author of the famous McGuffey readers. 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 at the University of Virginia.

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." After the Civil War, Isabella Gibbons became the first person of color to teach at the Jefferson School, a freedman's school in Charlottesville and, after 1871, part of the public school system. She taught there for more than twenty years. In freedom, William Gibbons became a prominent religious leader as minister at the First Baptist Church in Charlottesville and at Zion Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.

Henry Martin

Oral history tells us that Henry Martin was born at Monticello on July 4, 1826, the same day Thomas Jefferson died. He grew up in slavery on a farm belonging to the Carr family. At age nineteen, he was leased out to work at the University, first as a waiter at the

Carr's Hill dining hall and later as bell ringer and janitor. In the later job, he was responsible for cleaning the lecture rooms, library, and chapel. In freedom after the Civil War, he rang the Rotunda bell every hour from 4 a.m. to 10 p.m. for thirty more years. Martin made a strong impression on generations of students and was remembered as a man of "intelligence, firmness and diligence." In 2012, a plaque honoring Martin's legacy was laid near the Chapel.



The "Mews" as it stands today in Garden III. It served as a carriage house, kitchen, and slave quarters.

U.Va. During the Civil War

In February 1861, students raised a Confederate flag over the Rotunda in the dead of night, making it the first public raising of the Confederate flag in Virginia. Following Virginia's secession that April, many students and faculty left U.Va. to join the Confederate army. As a result, the student body shrank from over six hundred in 1860 to less than fifty over the five years of the Civil War. But the University remained open and many faculty served in military hospitals while military patients were housed on or near Grounds.

During the Civil War, the lives and duties of slaves changed. Some worked in the hospital assisting doctors with patients. Others continued their domestic duties to the families that owned them. A few were leased to work for the Confederate Army. With the help of their slaves, the Minor family was able to hide their silver and other valuables from the approaching Union troops. Still other faculty members were concerned that their slave property would seek freedom across Union lines. Mary Stuart Smith, owner of Isabella Gibbons, and many others were advised to sell their slaves while they could.

The University surrendered to General Custer, reporting to General Phillip Sheridan, on March 2, 1865. University Professor Socrates Maupin and Rector T.L. Preston convinced the General not to destroy U.Va. With the Civil War ending soon after, slavery was abolished throughout the United States. Freed blacks left their quarters on Grounds, but many stayed in Charlottesville to work on construction projects at the University or as paid servants for their former owners. Though it would be another century before African Americans would gain full access to attend the University of Virginia, they remained present as ever.

Conclusion

This brochure is the result of a student-led initiative to explore the existing scholarship concerning slavery at U.Va. and to make the information available to the public. Efforts are underway to continue the research and discovery of U.Va.'s past and to recognize the contributions of enslaved laborers. It is our hope that in the future, we know more about our past.

Acknowledgements

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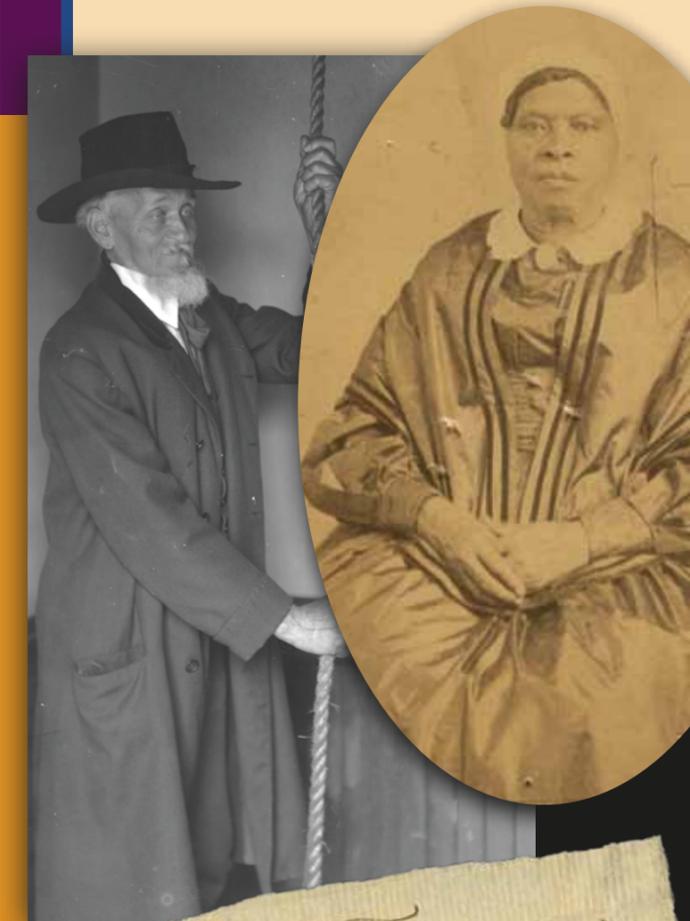
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Cover Images: Henry Martin, Sally Cottrell Cole, Monticello dispersal sale showing purchase of "Patsy" by Professor Bonnycastle. Courtesy of the Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia.

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Slavery at the University of Virginia

Visitor's Guide



Mrs. Bonnycastle
 1 Negro girl Patsy \$375.00



This plaque that lies on the south side of the Rotunda recognizes the labor that went into the original construction of U.Va.

Slavery at U.Va.

Introduction

The University of Virginia was officially founded in 1819 when the Virginia General Assembly approved its charter. Thomas Jefferson, the “father of the University,” viewed it as his “last act of usefulness.” Reflective of the United States in the early 19th Century, slavery was an integral component of the University starting with its construction and continuing into the Civil War. This brochure provides a sampling of the stories and experiences of enslaved men and women who lived and worked at U.Va. By no means a complete picture, the information included is meant as an introduction to the history of slavery at the University. Undoubtedly more will be learned as researchers seek to understand the role of slavery and the lives of enslaved people.

Construction, 1817-1826

Construction of the University began with the laying of the cornerstone on October 6, 1817. For the next decade, hundreds of laborers – free

and enslaved, white and black – worked to build the Academical Village. Slaves were assigned various tasks, ranging from hard manual labor to highly skilled positions like blacksmiths, carpenters, and stonemasons. One of the more strenuous tasks was terracing the lawn. In March 1819, a Board of Visitors member recorded the progress blacks had made in this endeavor. One of the skilled laborers, known only as “Carpenter Sam”, was tasked with tinwork and carpentry for the construction of Pavilions V and VII.

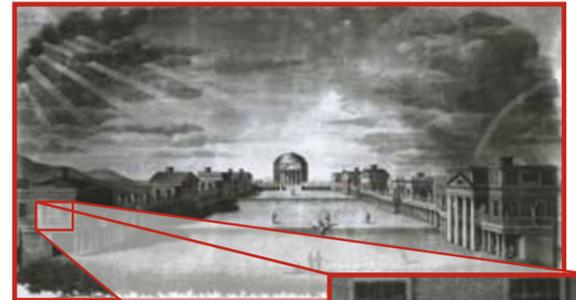
During the building period, local slaveholders leased slaves to the University to fulfill its need for labor. Construction supervisor Arthur Brockenbrough agreed to pay \$57.50 to Rezin Wheat for “a boy nam'd robert,” in April 1821. That year, the University paid a total of \$1,133.73 to slaveowners in exchange for the labor of at least thirty-two slaves. The leasing of enslaved laborers was critical in the University's construction as was the hiring of free black workers. Burwell Colbert, freed in 1826 by Jefferson's will, was hired by the University to do painting and glazing at the Pavilions.

Thrimston Hern

Thrimston Hern (b. 1799) was a second-generation enslaved skilled laborer at Monticello. Oral history tells us that Hern was one of the slaves that laid the cornerstone of the University in 1817. Three years after Jefferson's death, Hern was bought by Arthur Brockenbrough for \$600. Subsequently, Brockenbrough was paid for the stonework Hern completed at the Rotunda.

The Early Days, 1826-1832

After construction was completed and students began attending U.Va., the roles and duties of slaves changed but the University's need



The picture above is Henry Tanner's 1826 engraving of the Academical Village. On the balcony of Pavilion IX, a black woman stands holding a white child. Whether this woman was free or enslaved, real or fictional, her presence demonstrates the integral, if largely unknown, roles held by laborers during the early days at U.Va. Courtesy of the Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia.

for enslaved labor did not. In order to fulfill institutional duties, U.Va. continued to hire slaves from area slaveowners. In addition to building maintenance, slaves were now tasked with serving the students and faculty.

Before classes commenced, the Board of Visitors banned students from bringing their slaves to the University. Some students, unhappy with this policy, defied the Board of Visitors and housed their personal slaves off Grounds. There was no prohibition against faculty owning or leasing slaves. In fact, faculty and administrators depended on the work of enslaved laborers. However, not all professors came to the University with the idea that slaves were necessary. Professor John Patten Emmet, a New Yorker born in Ireland, arrived in Charlottesville as a non-slaveowner. Later he became dissatisfied with his hired workers and sought advice on how to purchase slaves. Professor Emmet owned nine slaves at the time of his death.

Lewis and the Anatomical Theater

The Anatomical Theater, a dissection lab, was once located in an area in front of Alderman Library. A slave named Lewis was assigned the responsibility of cleaning up after the students' cadaver dissections and experiments in this lab. Because of these duties, the University community referred to this slave as “Anatomical Lewis”. During his time at U.Va., Lewis was kept in several locations including behind Pavilion VII. Whether he left by death or by sale is unknown. But by 1860, Lewis no longer appears in University records.



The Anatomical Theater is shown here with Alderman Library in the background. Lewis was responsible for cleaning this building. Courtesy of the Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia.

Gardens, Hotels, and Slave Quarters

Behind every Pavilion is a garden, which was a central workplace for slaves and laborers during the first decades of U.Va. Hotels intersperse the East and West Ranges of dorm rooms and originally acted as boarding houses for students. Hotelkeepers provided meals, laundry, and cleaning services. Slaves were assigned much of this work. These Hotel slaves made up slightly less than half of the

slave population at the University from 1830-1860. During this time, the slave population on Grounds is estimated to have fluctuated between 108 and 182.

In U.Va.'s early years, as many as twenty-five outbuildings (including Pavilion and Hotel kitchens, privies, and smokehouses) occupied the gardens and rear Hotel yards. Additionally, given the increased presence of slaves on Grounds, new buildings were constructed as work and living spaces. For example, in 1828, Professor Robley Dunglison requested a new building be erected in Garden X. John Gray, the first hotelkeeper of Hotel E, constructed a kitchen and washroom the following year. In 1849, Professor Charles Bonycastle was granted the basements under Lawn Rooms 34 and 36 to board his slaves. Four years later, Mrs. John Gray made improvements to the 1829 structure behind Hotel E to increase the lodging capacity for her slaves. Many of the living and working conditions slaves faced were harsh, making them vulnerable to illness and disease.

Unknown Slaves and the Cracker Box

The “Cracker Box” is a two-story cottage named for its small size and rectangular shape. It was built between 1826 and 1840 in the yard of Hotel F. The antebellum structure is one of a few remaining domestic service buildings in the gardens. This space served as a kitchen and the cook's living quarters. However, we have no personal information about the enslaved men and women who worked in this building. In fact, the “unknown” slaves at U.Va. are far more numerous than the “known”.



The Cracker Box as it stands today to the rear of Garden X.

Violence Against Slaves on U.Va. Grounds

Today when we read about violence against slaves, we view it as an instance of person-on-person violence. However, in the 19th Century, these incidents were viewed as person-on-property violence with damages being paid to the owner of the slave but no thought given to the human victim. Two examples of violence against slaves at U.Va. follow.

On June 24, 1829, several students banged on the cellar door of Dr. Gessner Harrison and made “indecent propositions” to his female slave. The Faculty Committee expelled one of the students, William Carr, as a result. However, Carr was re-admitted a year later only to again be expelled for disorderly behavior and intoxication. He was re-admitted for a third time in 1831, finishing his education in 1832. Sexual harassment of and assaults on female slaves and free servants were not uncommon during this time.