



Montpellier
Burial Ground

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**Arc of Enslaved Communities Project
Community Engagement Strategy, Phase 1**

2025

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The Montpelier Descendants Committee (MDC) is committed to restoring and amplifying the narratives of enslaved Americans at historic plantation sites and sites of emancipation throughout Central Virginia, including the notable estate of James Madison, known as Montpelier. By shedding light on these often-overlooked stories, the MDC aims to cultivate a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the lives, struggles, and contributions of enslaved individuals and their descendants to the fabric of American history. This understanding is particularly vital in relation to the foundational ideals of liberty and equality as articulated in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

To achieve these goals, the MDC organizes a variety of public programs, educational events, and in-depth research initiatives designed to foster an inclusive narrative that honors the legacy of enslaved Americans and acknowledges their integral role in shaping the nation. A crucial part of this initiative is the ARC study, which has identified significant historical sites within this commemorative landscape and offers a detailed roadmap for documenting and preserving these essential narratives.

This comprehensive effort seeks to preserve the memories of our past and shape a future that recognizes and values the lessons learned from history. By doing so, the MDC fosters community engagement and promotes a more equitable understanding of American history, ensuring that the voices of those who were enslaved are heard and remembered for generations to come.

Forward.

George R. Monroe, Jr., Executive Director
Montpelier Descendants Committee

To learn more visit: www.montpelierdescendants.org



Panel 2 Black & Indigenous Histories of the National Capital
Moderated by Dr. April E. Holman
Panelists: Dr. April E. Holman, Dr. J. Morgan Kousser, Dr. J. Morgan Kousser, Dr. J. Morgan Kousser

UVA School of Architecture Center for Cultural Landscapes

Mission

- Elevating innovative public and scholarly work that meets at the intersection of culture, identity, land, and power
- Increasing awareness of the historical, ecological, and social value of cultural landscapes

External

- The TXFC Project
- Mallon - Outsider Preservation Initiative
- MDC - Arc of Enslaved Communities
- National Park Service
- Texas Historical Commission
- JB Jackson Book Prize
- NEH Summer Institute for College & University Faculty

Panelists

- Elizabeth R. ...
- Sara Shull ...
- Com ...
- CL ...
- D ...

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UVA SBS IRB #5460

All photos taken by CCL team members
as part of authorized research conducted
under UVA IRB#5460.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Arc of Enslaved Communities initiative is a groundbreaking effort led by the Montpelier Descendants Committee (MDC), aimed at fostering connections across a nine-county region surrounding James Madison’s Montpelier. This initiative seeks to honor and preserve Black heritage by linking historic places, amplifying descendant voices, and ensuring data sovereignty.

Ranging from cemeteries and churches to freedmen’s communities, these places hold stories of resilience, kinship, and cultural contributions of Black descendants that have shaped both the region and the nation.

This Community Engagement Strategy for this commemorative landscape summarizes the efforts undertaken by MDC in partnership with the University of Virginia’s Center for Cultural Landscapes (CCL) and the Institute for Engagement and Negotiation (IEN). It outlines lessons learned, identifies challenges, and provides actionable recommendations for sustaining community engagement.

From its documentation and analysis of listening sessions and participatory research with descendant communities, the CCL, MDC, and IEN team identified emerging themes, including:

- *How descendants define commemoration,*
- *The sites and histories they prioritize, and*
- *How descendants envision their role in shaping commemorative landscapes that honor their ancestors.*



This initiative seeks to honor and preserve Black heritage by linking historic places, amplifying descendant voices, and ensuring data sovereignty.



The key takeaways for MDC

- **Attitudes about the Arc are Diverse:** There are varied levels of interest and knowledge of the Arc of Enslaved Communities and the role of the MDC within the initiative. Education and rethinking the concept may be part of the next engagement phase to ensure buy-in and sustained participation in commemorative landscape visioning. Confusion over the concept inhibits people’s capacity to see themselves within the Arc.
- **There’s Not a One Size Fits All Engagement Solution:** Listening sessions, workshops, and outreach events have been pivotal in building connections and gathering insights on kinship networks and preservation strategies. Engagement varies based on how those communities define their descendant identity, the remaining features in the landscape, strengths, and priorities.
- **Private Property Access Presents a Challenge:** Many key sites are on private land, requiring innovative partnerships and protocols for accessing the land and then ensuring these places are documented and commemorated.
- **Capacity Building is Necessary:** Counties across the region vary in their readiness to support landscape stewardship and participate in design processes, emphasizing the need for tailored strategies to strengthen local capacities.
- **Collaboration Amplifies Impact:** Building partnerships among regional organizations, historical societies, and community leaders creates opportunities to share resources and expertise.
- **Respect Data Sovereignty:** Ensuring that descendant communities retain control over their shared information is critical to fostering trust and collaboration. Tools like the ArcGIS webmap integrate these principles by allowing communities to map and document their own histories.

This report provides suggestions and recommendations for scaling and sustaining the Arc of Enslaved Communities initiative, offering strategies to support healthy, equitable, and resilient commemorative landscapes that center descendant voices.

ROLES



Montpelier Descendants Committee

The Montpelier Descendants Committee (MDC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization representing the descendants of enslaved people at James Madison's Montpelier and descendants from across Central Virginia. The MDC is the first descendant organization to share equal representation and a collaborative role in governance on the Montpelier Board, serving as a formal representative body of the Montpelier descendant community. This model is based on "structural parity," ensuring the voices of descendants are central to Montpelier's governance.



The Montpelier Foundation

Montpelier is the lifelong home of James Madison, the Father of the Constitution, the Architect of the Bill of Rights, and the fourth President of the United States. As a monument to James Madison and the Enslaved Community, a museum of American history, and a center for constitutional education, Montpelier engages the public with the enduring legacy of Madison's most powerful idea: government by the people. The historic home and 2,600-acre grounds are open to visitors and student groups throughout the year, and the Robert H. Smith Center for the Constitution at Montpelier offers world-class residential and online educational programs. The Montpelier Foundation administers Montpelier, a National Trust for Historic Preservation site.



Center for Cultural Landscapes

The Center for Cultural Landscapes (CCL) advances research and develops innovative models for cultural landscape stewardship at regional, national, and global scales. It prioritizes involvement in projects and partnerships occurring at the intersection of land, power, culture, and identity. As an interdisciplinary collective of academics, planners, preservationists and designers, CCL collaborates with a broad network of professionals and organizations to achieve its mission. Our work emphasizes cultural landscapes' historical, ecological, and social value, integrating scholarly research, site documentation, fieldwork, planning, preservation, management, engagement and design.

Founded in 2015 by Elizabeth K. Meyer, professor and Faculty Director, UVA Morven Sustainability Lab with initial support from the UVA School of Architecture, the Center for Cultural Landscapes has undertaken impactful research projects and hosted events supported by various prestigious funders. These include the UVA Sara Shallenberger Brown Cultural Landscapes & Sites Initiative, the UVA Vice Provost for the Arts, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the National Park Service, the National Endowment for the Humanities, The Battersea Trust, the UVA Institute of the Humanities and Global Cultures, and the Jefferson Trust, an initiative of the University of Virginia Alumni Association. Through its work, the CCL continues to increase awareness and appreciation of cultural landscapes, fostering innovative and just approaches to their stewardship and preservation.



Institute for Engagement and Negotiation

The Institute for Engagement & Negotiation (IEN) is a nationally recognized leader in fostering collaborative change across a wide range of environmental, social, and economic challenges.

Founded in 1980, IEN's team of skilled facilitators and mediators works with organizations, agencies, industries, and communities to make bold, sustainable decisions. The Institute's work spans four core areas: sustainable environments, resilient communities, health, food, and social equity, and building capacity through training and leadership.

Over four decades, IEN has gained international recognition as a pioneer in environmental and public policy dispute resolution, contributing to over 600 projects of varying lengths and complexity. As the nature of its work evolved to reflect changing conditions and understandings, IEN expanded its focus beyond environmental sustainability to include environmental, economic, and social resilience. A renewed emphasis on social equity has shaped the Institute's commitment to bringing underrepresented voices to the decision-making table—not only in its external projects but also within its home institution, the University of Virginia.



INTRODUCTION

Initially conceptualized as an Arc spanning from Fredericksburg to Richmond, this initiative has evolved through the CCL's community engagement strategy into an effort to establish a network of historical sites that collectively tell a fuller story of slavery, freedom-seeking, and resilience in Virginia. While the project began with a focus on presidential sites, it now seeks to connect historic Black sites of memory across nine counties in Central Virginia: Orange, Albemarle, Greene, Madison, Louisa, Rappahannock, Spotsylvania, Culpeper, and Fluvanna. The Arc now aims to develop a heritage trail that attracts tourists and recreation while fostering education, reflection, and dialogue.

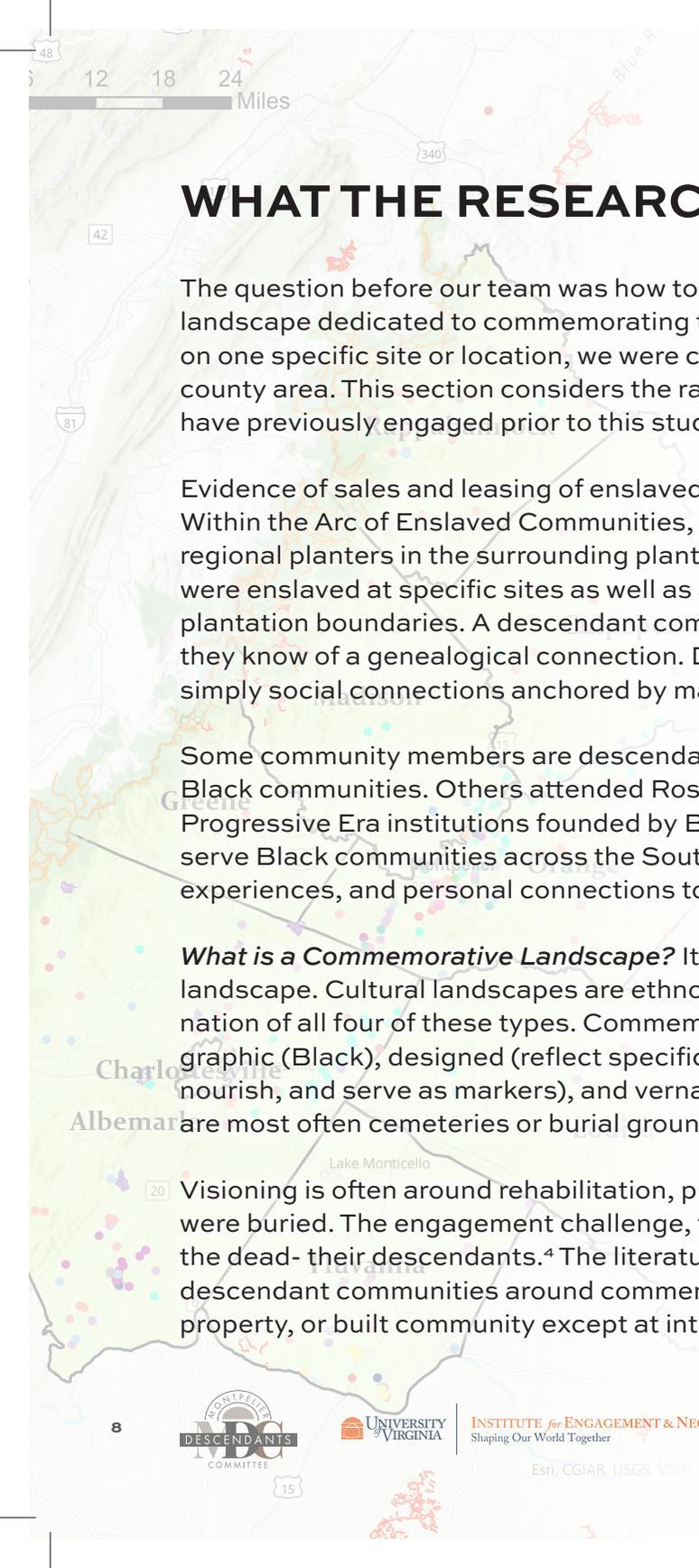
Montpelier, as a center of enslavement juxtaposed against its role in drafting the U.S. Constitution, serves as a focal point for the Arc's work. The concept emerged in early discussions around the Request for Proposals (RFP) process, where participants emphasized the need for a commemorative landscape honoring the burial sites of ancestors while actively engaging descendant communities in interpretation and memorialization. Through listening sessions, cultural asset mapping, and participatory research, this project redefines how sites of enslavement are remembered—not as static historical landmarks but as evolving spaces of acknowledgment, education, and engagement.

This report, through its documentation of listening sessions with descendant communities, highlights promising approaches to visioning and co-design of commemorative landscapes with the nine-county Arc of Enslaved Communities. Through these sessions and participatory research across a nine-county region, our team sought to understand

- how descendants define commemoration,
- what sites and histories they prioritize, and
- how they envision their role in shaping cultural landscapes that honor enslaved ancestors.

Additionally, we highlight insights from listening sessions that contribute to the evolving and expansive nature of descendant identity—moving beyond biological kinship to include ties formed through shared community histories, church membership, and collective cultural memory. Developed during the 2018 National Summit on Teaching Slavery, “Interpreting Slavery at Montpelier: A Rubric and Guide to Best Practices in Descendant Engagement in the Interpretation of Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites” was created to define and prioritize standards and best practices for interpretation, research, and involving the descendant community. Referred to in this report as the Rubric, the document emphasizes the importance of centering descendant perspectives in both historical interpretation and institutional governance. Montpelier's historic decision to establish structural parity with the Montpelier Descendants Committee (MDC) exemplifies this commitment.

This report, through its documentation of listening sessions with descendant communities, highlights promising approaches to visioning and co-design of commemorative landscapes with the nine-county Arc of Enslaved Communities.



WHAT THE RESEARCH TELLS US

The question before our team was how to best learn from descendants about what they would like to see in a cultural landscape dedicated to commemorating the lives of the enslaved. Unlike charettes that limit these conversations to designs on one specific site or location, we were charged with listening to descendant communities of varied types across a broad nine-county area. This section considers the range of descendant communities, their commemorative priorities, and the ways they have previously engaged prior to this study.

Evidence of sales and leasing of enslaved people across the region further expands and complicates the webs of kinship. Within the Arc of Enslaved Communities, descendency is broadly defined and may include those who were sold and willed to regional planters in the surrounding plantations. As a result, descendant communities can include individuals whose ancestors were enslaved at specific sites as well as across the broader region, reflecting how familial ties often extended beyond plantation boundaries. A descendant community can also welcome those who feel connected to the institution's work, whether they know of a genealogical connection. Descendant communities are often not exclusively rooted in a place but are also simply social connections anchored by marriage or shared memberships in mutual aid societies.¹

Some community members are descendants of individuals who built early homesteads or acquired land in self-determined Black communities. Others attended Rosenwald Schools established in the region between the 1920s and 1930s—Progressive Era institutions founded by Booker T. Washington in partnership with philanthropist Julius Rosenwald to serve Black communities across the South. Peoples' commemorative interests reflected a range of unique memories, lived experiences, and personal connections to place.

What is a Commemorative Landscape? It is essential to understand what a commemorative landscape is. It is a type of cultural landscape. Cultural landscapes are ethnographic, vernacular, designed, and natural.² Any given landscape is usually a combination of all four of these types. Commemorative landscapes associated with the formerly enslaved and enslaved are ethnographic (Black), designed (reflect specific burial practice and craftsmanship), natural (leverage trees and plant life to protect, nourish, and serve as markers), and vernacular (comprised of the ordinary and quotidian).³ These commemorative landscapes are most often cemeteries or burial grounds.

Visioning is often around rehabilitation, preservation, or conservation strategies of land upon which the formerly enslaved were buried. The engagement challenge, then, is how to speak to and for the dead and to find those most entitled to speak for the dead—their descendants.⁴ The literature covers various approaches, principles, and considerations for engagement with descendant communities around commemorating the dead, but less about remembering how those communities lived, owned property, or built community except at interpretive sites created by mainstream or white-run organizations.

How best to engage descendant communities in commemorative landscape visioning

The literature on commemorative landscapes often centers burial grounds as one of the earliest and most iconic forms of public commemoration, particularly in the post–Civil War era when patriotic organizations and governments sought to memorialize battlefields and honor the dead. These commemorative efforts largely focused on sites tied to national memory, such as those associated with patriotism, warfare, and civic sacrifice. In recent years, descendant-led organizing has broadened the understanding of commemorative landscapes to encompass a wider range of cultural memory—recognizing the lives, labor, and resistance of enslaved individuals and their extended kinship networks. The Cultural Landscape Foundation defines commemorative landscape as:



“A landscape set aside and marked by a culture to recall, celebrate, honor, or memorialize significant people, places, ideas, or historical events. Such landscapes can be designed, vernacular, ethnographic, or historic, and range in form and scale from a single object to a panoramic viewshed. They are often developed around culturally significant markers such as an anniversary, an important holiday, a significant spiritual experience, or an extraordinary event. Following the Civil War, for example, focused efforts to set aside and memorialize landscapes associated with individual battles became a central focus for many patriotic organizations and governments. Burial grounds and cemeteries were among the earliest and most iconic forms of public commemorative landscapes. Other examples include battlefields, presidential sites, gardens, ceremonial sites, and memorials. Together these places form an important physical expression of a culture’s shared memories.”⁵

An example in the Albemarle County region is the Memorial to Enslaved Laborers on the University of Virginia campus. Burial grounds, then, remain among the most immediate and recognizable sites of memory for commemorating the lives of enslaved individuals.⁶ Additional sites of memory are those burial sites associated with those held captive via slavery of another name, such as convict leasing. Such sites of memory are located across America from Richmond, Virginia to Sugar Land, Texas.⁷

FOUNDATIONAL TERMS

While descendant work had been ongoing at other sites—such as Somerset Place and Stagville in North Carolina—the African Burial Ground brought national attention to the role of descendants in shaping preservation and interpretation efforts.

Defining “Descendant”

One of the examples of the most complex construction of descendant identity at the African Burial Ground in New York City,⁸ The lessons from the African Burial Ground engagement with descendants based on cultural and diasporic identity informed the development of the Rubric, which examined how the outreach process further expands notions of who is entitled to shape the narratives and interpretations of commemorative landscapes.⁹ This diasporic notion of descendant identity requires a willingness to share, collaborate, and de-center one specific site, place, county, or community.¹⁰ The research posits that this example of expansive, complex descendants is more likely to catalyze engagement, reconnection, and recommitment to remembrance and preservation at sites related to the heritage of the enslaved.¹¹

The research tells us that the definitions of descendant identity are growing and changing with a basis expanding beyond biological kinship recorded by DNA to also consider kinship and connection through the pages of family bibles, funeral programs, and mutual aid Society archives and exhibits like those we saw in Madison County and far rural Albemarle County.¹² Descendants have been defined in our research process and from the literature based on church membership or kinship to those enslaved or laborers at presidential sites, universities, and railroads.

Descendant community-led efforts have proliferated around cemetery stewardship and conservation as presidential sites and highly developed areas have increased the likelihood of uncovering burial grounds. One of the most pivotal cases was the discovery of the New York African Burial Ground, which not only led to critical preservation efforts but is a key example of the emergence of the term “descendant communities” in public discourse. This foundational inquiry informed the development of the Rubric, a framework created to guide best practices in descendant engagement.¹³

The Rubric

While Dr. Blakey’s work at the African Burial Ground helped shape the conceptual foundation, the Rubric itself was developed through a deeply collaborative process in 2018. Over 48 hours of discussion, a diverse group of practitioners, scholars and descendant leaders collectively refined its principles, ensuring it reflected the shared priorities and lived experiences of descendant communities. The creation of the Rubric was the result of meaningful dialogue between descendants, cultural resource managers, and scholars, all working together to define best practices for engaging descendants in the interpretation of enslaved legacies at museums and historic sites.

The role of descendants in these projects has been that of historians, archivists/object salvagers, oral history interviewees, ritual practitioners, pastors, business owners, residents, cultural workers, church leaders, or archaeologists.¹⁴

Structural Parity

In an unprecedented step toward equity in public history, The Montpelier Foundation (TMF) voted to establish structural parity with the Montpelier Descendants Committee (MDC), ensuring descendants of those enslaved at James Madison’s Montpelier equal representation in the governance of the site. This historic collaboration makes Montpelier the first major U.S. historic site to share decision-making with descendant communities, offering a meaningful model for fostering inclusive governance and enriching historical interpretation.

However, structural parity is not just a policy shift—it is a commitment to redefining how history is engaged and interpreted in practice. The Arc of Enslaved Communities, an initiative designed by MDC, builds upon this foundation by advancing a participatory commemorative landscape that honors the histories of enslaved people while engaging descendant voices in shaping public memory.

The Montpelier Foundation (TMF) voted to establish structural parity with the Montpelier Descendants Committee (MDC), ensuring descendants of those enslaved at James Madison’s Montpelier equal representation in the governance of the site.

Commemorative landscape engagement also requires understanding the psychological support and infrastructure required for those being asked to unearth unpleasant memories or purposefully forgotten traumas.¹⁵ Much literature maintains that cultural resource management professionals (museum interpreters, designers, archaeologists, historians) must make available counselors and healers to those engaged in commemorative landscape work associated with captivity and violence.¹⁶ Those working in history and memory studies in Europe refer to these places as traumascapes or nervous landscapes.¹⁷ These characterizations also apply to landscapes associated with land dispossession, violence, and enslavement.

Participatory research principles, emphasizing relationship-building, ethical data stewardship, and descendant-led decision-making.

THE TEAM'S APPROACH

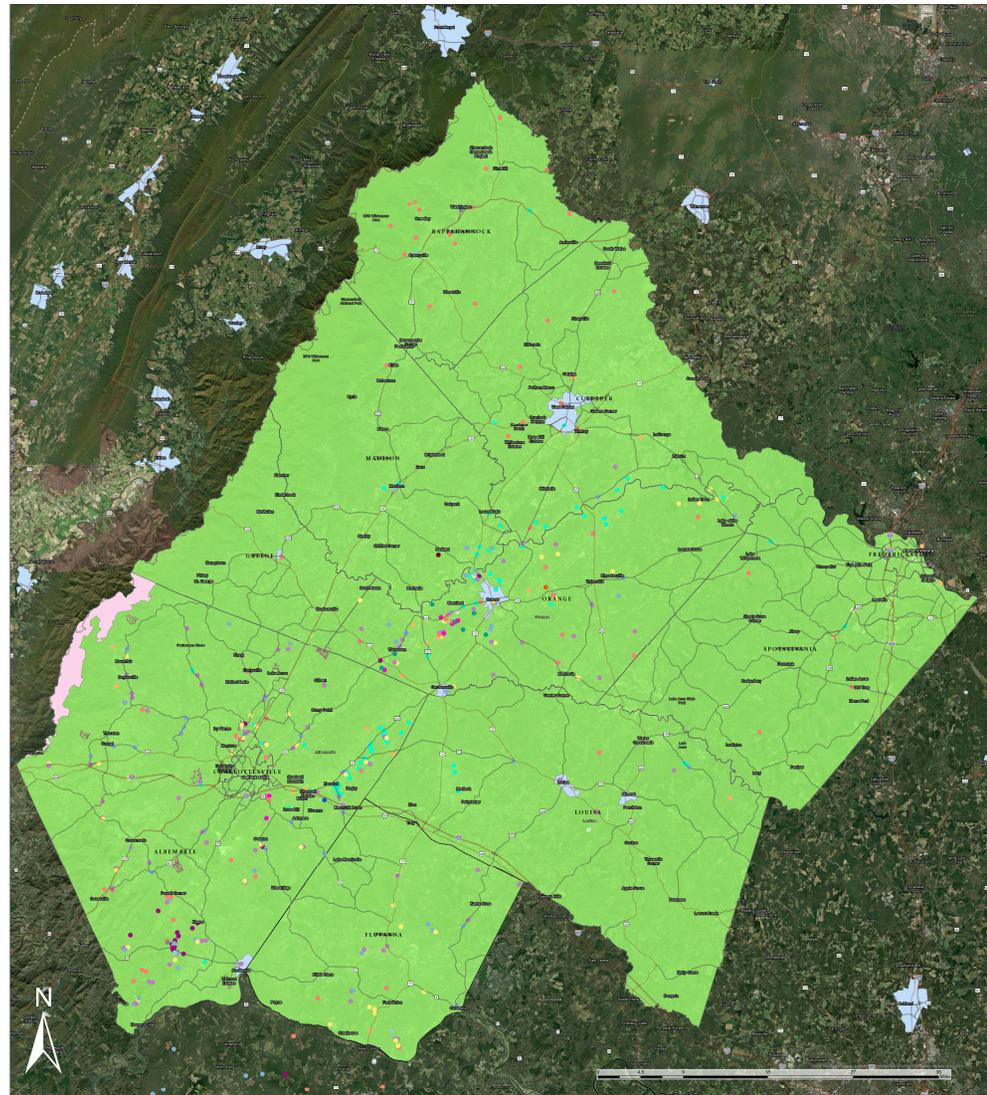
Guided by the proposal developed by the MDC, our team began work in February 2024, employing a community-centered methodological approach to engage descendants and gather their feedback on the Arc of Enslaved Communities initiative. This strategy was rooted in participatory research principles, emphasizing relationship-building, ethical data stewardship, and descendant-led decision-making. Through regular meetings and monthly reports (see Appendix B), we collaborated closely with the MDC board, leveraging their expertise and existing networks to expand outreach and ensure descendant perspectives remained at the forefront.

The engagement process began with Montpelier leadership in Orange County in February. When the Executive Director joined the MDC in June, we revisited our approach and, by November, developed new language reflecting our positionality and the desired role of descendants in the project.¹⁸



It progressively extended to Albemarle, Culpeper, Fluvanna, and Madison Counties (see page 16 for an overview of the project timeline and milestones). As reflected in the overview of events, many individuals we spoke with in one county had familial or historical ties to other counties, reinforcing the deeply interconnected nature of descendant communities across the region resulting in the nine-county Arc area of Albemarle, Culpeper, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, Madison, Orange, Rappahannock, and Spotsylvania Counties.

Listening sessions fostered trust, strengthened relationships, and commemorative landscape. These sessions allowed descendants to share their histories, express their concerns, and actively participate in shaping the vision for the Arc. This Community Engagement Strategy serves as a foundational roadmap for the Arc of Enslaved Communities initiative, providing a model for how descendant-led research and commemorative landscape development can be equitable, participatory, and reflective of the lived experiences of those whose histories have been historically marginalized.



MDC's Arc of Enslaved Communities Map

Center for Cultural Landscapes
 Institute for Engagement and Negotiation
 UVA School of Architecture

Created by Jennifer Saunders, MA
 Research Specialist, Center for Cultural Landscapes
 Data sources: Virginia Department of Historic Resources; Montpelier
 Department of Archaeology & Landscape Restoration; Wikipedia; Central
 Virginia Freetowns; Freetowns 2024; Albemarle County GIS



Data Ethics and Control

The UVA IRB, or Institutional Review Board, oversees all research involving people conducted at University of Virginia, including that in the Center for Cultural Landscapes. The singular study that serves as a research protocol for our work is “The Freedom Colony Project™: Ethnographic Study and Mapping of Informal Communities & Grassroots Preservation Practices,” IRB Study protocol UVA SBS#5460. This study explains the low or eligible risk incidents, confidentiality, and data security measures taken to protect all those conducting research with our center. Further, it explains the reflexive nature of our research approach, which is adaptive and responsive to the emerging needs of study participants.¹⁹

As part of the development of this Community Engagement Strategy, we engaged stakeholders and community representatives from the majority of the nine counties in the Arc of Enslaved Communities region to better understand local concerns related to data sharing, ownership, and ethical stewardship. For more information, see Appendix C for a summary of listening sessions and Appendix D for a table of stakeholders consulted.

In addition to IRB Study protocol UVA SBS#5460 (see Appendix E for material distributed to descendants), three organizations (see pages 16 - 17), inform our model for descendant data control and oversight. A timeline of the project milestones follows.

Timeline of Project Milestones

DECEMBER 2023

- Submitted response to the RFP
- First monthly meeting with MDC and TMF 12/23/23

JANUARY 2024

- Monthly meeting with MDC and TMF
- Met with Matt Reeves about publicly available data

MARCH 2024

- Monthly MDC meeting

APRIL 2024

- Montpelier Burial Ground event “Grace Under Fire: Disaster Recovery at the Archaeology Land and Office” 04/17/2024

JUNE 2024

- Descendants Day at Highland 06/08/2024
- Juneteenth MDC holds Oral History kick-off event 06/15/2024

JULY 2024

- Team began creating webmap with places found from public record
- Developed survey

AUGUST 2024

- Monthly status reports to MDC
- Project manager was hired
- Develop community outreach letter

SEPTEMBER 2024

- Monthly status reports to MDC
- Descendants Symposium and Descendants Day hosted by DEC - Virginia 9/13/2024
- Orange County African American Historical Society Board Meeting 9/16/2024
- Constitution Day at Montpelier 9/21/2024
- Webmap was updated to include Fluvanna County
- Finalized outreach material

OCTOBER 2024

- Descendants of Enslaved Communities - Virginia Board Meeting 10/17/2024
- Orange County African American Historical Society's Eclipse Banquet 10/19/2024

NOVEMBER 2024

- MDC's Oral History Workshop 11/9/2024
- Black History of Albemarle Symposium 11/9/2024
- Madison County African American Historical Society 11/12/2024
- Porter's Esmont - Yancey School Community Center 11/19/2024
- Woodberry Forest School and Tanner Community Oral History 11/23/2024

DECEMBER 2024

- “Right the Record” - Culpeper County 12/16/2025
- Updated survey
- Update webmap survey

JANUARY 2025

- Send first draft of the final report 1/31/2025
- Secured graphic designer

FEBRUARY 2025

- Presented final report at OCAAHS Annual Meeting 2/16/2025



Black Data and Descendant Control

The research informing our work is rooted in the work of The Texas Freedom Colonies Project™ and several other allied initiatives such as Who Owns Black Data, led by Jessica Marie Johnson, The Colored Convention Project founded by Gabriele Foreman, and Murkurtu created by Warumungu community members and archivists Kim Christen and Craig Dietrich. From Johnson's work, we have taken on specific questions about power, control and repair. These include:

- Who owns and controls the Black historical and cultural record?
- How do we answer the question of ownership and control in the context of today's hybrid record, both analog and digital?
- Should Black stakeholders be guaranteed a seat at the decision-making table in matters of the historical and cultural record of Black people?
- Should Black stakeholders be guaranteed a seat at the decision-making table in matters of the historical and cultural record of Black people?
- What happens when data about Black people and historical figures is created or curated by people who are not Black, as is the case of many if not most important, sources from the early modern period until the present?

These same questions animate the Arc initiative and other descendant-engaged work led by the CCL, specifically how to sustain descendant control over the data collected.

- **The Colored Conventions Project (CCP)** – The CCP is dedicated to recovering the history of Black organizing in the 19th century, focusing on the voices and agency of Black men and women through digital archives. The CCP is known for focusing on Black intellectual work and economic collectivities and making analysis and discoveries accessible to the public through its participatory, Black digital platform. Key principles of the CCP include centering Black agency, actively involving community members in research, transcription, and interpretation of historical documents, digital accessibility, inclusive representation, ethical data practices such as proper attribution and context of collected data and historical archival material including naming people when possible and creating teaching materials and curricula. <https://coloredconventions.org/about/principles/>
- **Mukurtu** – Mukurtu, a Mellon-funded digital humanities project, is an online platform for storing Indigenous knowledge. Indigenous communities control access to community records and allow exports in ways that retain the integrity of the data imported by descendants. The platform includes protocols allowing the community to determine “fine-grained levels of access to your digital heritage materials based on your community needs and values. Protocols make it possible to define a range of access levels for digital heritage objects and collections from completely open to strictly controlled, and it is easy to change a protocol with just a few clicks. Protocols change with you.” <https://mukurtu.org/about/>

While we remained fully in compliance and used methods and approaches recognized throughout the design and humanities fields as being innovative and centering descendant power, we endeavored to tailor our engagement to address the historic power imbalances that have led to distrust between descendant communities and some past research initiatives at UVA. While the UVA Gibbons Project and Center for Community Partnerships have been internationally recognized for their work with the Descendants of Enslaved Communities (DEC), we listened when the MDC expressed concerns about what data would be collected and what would happen to that data once collected from descendants. More specifically, we used our guiding principles from The Texas Freedom Colonies Project™ Atlas and Study to shape how we connect with descendants to collect and co-create new research that serves their needs.



The Texas Freedom Colonies Project's™ Principles ask those who engage with the data collected from public and interpersonal exchanges to

- Honor our commitment to center and uplift descendant communities and their stories. The “data” assembled through the project represent individual and communal histories of Black people, both living and deceased, and settlements, both active and historical.
- When validating the existence of a former or active historic Black landscapes and settlements, we must honor our commitment to curating archival and contemporary data found in memorial landscapes.
- Recognize the project’s goal of safeguarding historic Black landscapes and commit to exercising cultural humility when representing and humanizing these stories as a reader, researcher, policymaker, or advocate.
- Affirm that documenting the existence of historic Black landscapes and participating in descendants’ collective preservation practice is an act of resistance to white supremacy.
- Fully attribute those being cited within the study and the study itself.

The strategies deployed based on The Texas Freedom Colonies Project™ Atlas and Study included:

- **Critical Community Engagement.** The team actively involved descendants community members through oral history training, curation activities, and other means to capture their narratives and perspectives. The team infused capacity-building throughout meetings and listening sessions to ensure reciprocity and prevent extraction. For example, the CCL team provided oral history guides, instructional videos, and support for the MDC’s oral history workshop.
- **Participatory Countermapping.** Making Black places visible through counternarrative collection and countermapping based on those curated stories of place origination. The primary goal is to map and document the locations of historic Black sites associated with enslavement and freedom-seeking across central Virginia to create a database encompassing the absence and making room for fabrications and recollections of places no longer visible on maps. The intention



is to raise awareness of their existence and empower descendants to re-make maps to guide commemoration in the region.

- **Preservation Advocacy.** Use spatial data to highlight the need for preservation efforts and advocate for policies and resources to protect these communities from neglect and development pressures.
- **Participatory Counternarrative Development.** Present the stories of Black settlements, often overlooked in traditional historical accounts, to challenge dominant narratives.
- **Academic Rigor.** Integrate peer-reviewed research and scholarly methods while remaining grounded in community knowledge and experiences.
- **Educational Outreach.** Provide opportunities for students and the public to learn about historic Black settlements through an online Atlas or (ArcGIS webmap) and related educational initiatives.

Throughout our listening sessions, we were careful about our approaches to engagement, honored confidentiality when requested, and provided attribution when ideas or innovations were detected while in the field. The CCL team was careful to avoid appropriating the knowledge shared with the team members. Consistent with our participatory approach, our visits were also moments when we were given insights into other places or events we should attend. Through this snowball sampling, we identified events and new audiences to share the Arc. The CCL team was also careful to ask the same questions and represented the study consistently across study sites and participants. Finally, we performed educational outreach about the Arc, the definitions of descendant communities, and Black settlements, which made the Arc a more accessible idea that participants could see themselves reflected within. Finally, at every listening session, our team left behind information that would empower them to access funding, get involved with MDC, or their local county historical groups.

Compelled to operate in a nonextractive way with descendants at public events, we developed creative alternatives to collecting data at public events and listening sessions that did not require full completion of surveys that would have linked identifiable data to place histories. For example, the team developed three data collection protocols at a Descendants Day event in September that addressed these concerns. First, we created a sign-in sheet that was scanned and made directly available to the Executive Director of the MDC. An explanation of the study, our relationship with the MDC, and the contact information for raising questions or concerns about the survey were shared with visitors at our table where we remained for most of the day in accordance with UVA's research oversight guideline. Finally, we posted large easel pads on the wall where those passing by could mark up a map and add missing locations or landowners. On another easel pad, they could affix a sticker under a yes or no column to indicate their familiarity with the Arc of Enslaved Communities and the MDC concept. We also demonstrated the webmap containing the survey to suggest that we would make it available as a linked page to



the webmap available later. Throughout our engagement, we did not connect the data to individuals. It was not until late November that the CCL team was given official permission to collect data on the webmap using a survey. Our team looks forward to expanding and improving the survey platform to expand the body of knowledge about missing Black sites worth commemorating within region of the Arc of Enslaved Communities initiative.

Mapping the Arc in Community

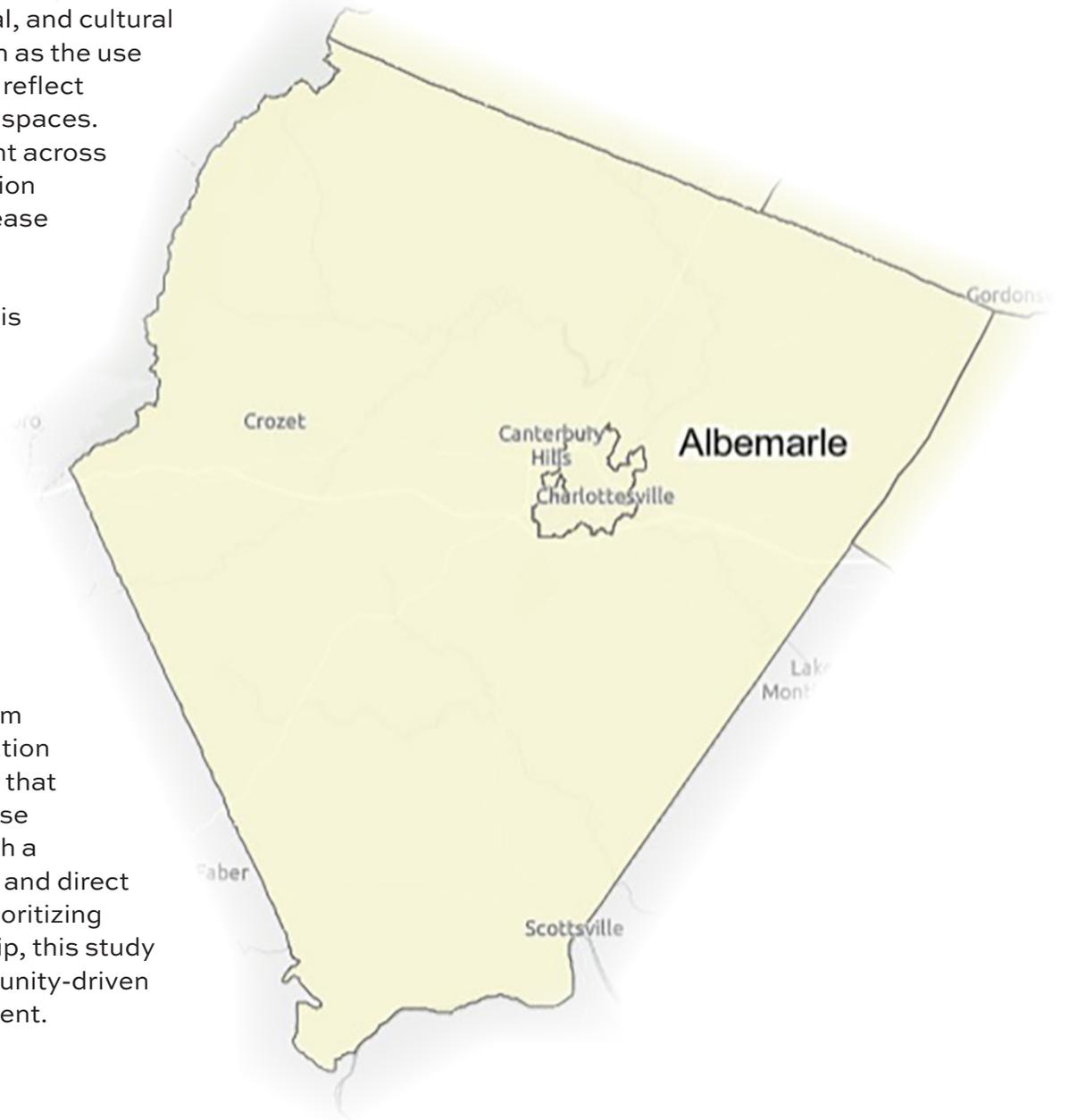
The research team conducted a comprehensive survey of historically significant Black sites across a nine-county region, identifying and documenting 421 locations (see **Appendix F** for individual county statistics). Data

collection efforts relied on existing datasets, archival research, and participatory mapping with descendant communities. To ensure accuracy and inclusivity, the research incorporated cultural landscapes, recognizing that commemorative sites extend beyond cemeteries to include homes, churches, schools, and economic hubs central to Black community life.

Findings revealed distinct geographic patterns in the distribution of recorded sites. Albemarle County contained the highest concentration of documented locations (179), while Greene County had the least (1). The most commonly recorded place types were single dwellings (147), cemeteries (72), and churches (55). A notable clustering of sites was observed along a southwest-northeast corridor stretching from Albemarle to Culpeper Counties, though this pattern may reflect historical survey biases rather than actual settlement distributions. In contrast, underrepresentation in counties like Greene, Louisa, and Spotsylvania signals the need for expanded outreach and documentation efforts.

Recognizing the limitations of standardized classifications, this study recommends co-creating a place classification system with descendants to better capture the social, historical, and cultural significance of sites. Current classifications—such as the use of “single dwelling” for former plantations—fail to reflect the lived experiences of those connected to these spaces. Additionally, disparities in descendant engagement across counties underscore the need to shift documentation efforts toward underrepresented regions and increase descendant-led initiatives.

The methodology also incorporated spatial analysis to identify key clusters of Black heritage sites, opportunities for connectivity through existing and proposed trail networks, and sites at risk of development pressures. GIS mapping tools were employed to visualize site distributions and inform strategies for future commemorative planning. The analysis revealed that Albemarle County, given its high concentration of documented places, offers a strategic hub for the Arc of Enslaved Communities initiative's broader commemorative efforts. Meanwhile, other areas, such as Louisa County, face immediate threats from land development, necessitating rapid documentation strategies. This methodological approach ensures that the Arc of Enslaved Communities is shaped by those with lived connections to these landscapes through a combination of archival research, spatial analysis, and direct engagement with descendant communities. By prioritizing participatory research and ethical data stewardship, this study lays the foundation for a more inclusive and community-driven approach to commemorative landscape development.



Constructing the Map: Data Sources and Tools

Data Sources

This analysis was performed using publicly available spatial data except for the data from James Madison’s Montpelier. Sources are as follows:

Albemarle County GIS

Albemarle County parks and park trail data, Shenandoah National Park boundaries available at <https://www.albemarle.org/government/information-technology/geographic-information-system-gis-mapping/gis-data>

Central Virginia Freetowns

Data on “Reconstruction-era settlements founded in rural areas by emancipated Black citizens.”²⁰ Collected by students in Lisa Goff’s (Assistant Professor, English/American Studies; Director, Institute for Public History) courses. Available through UVA Library.

James Madison’s Montpelier

Data relating to places associated with the enslaved community of Montpelier. Obtained through communication with Matt Reeves, Director of Archaeology and Landscape Restoration.

National Park Service

Trail data and Shenandoah National Park boundaries hosted on ArcGIS online and available at National Park Service: Official Service-wide Datasets - Overview and SHEN_BND_ParkBoundary_py

Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

Data on trails and trailheads under state jurisdiction available at VDCR Trails Collaboration.

Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR)

“Resources” (i.e. places) with a documented historically African American association. Obtained through communication with LaToya Gray, Community Outreach Coordinator; publicly available through VCRIS (Virginia Cultural Resources Information System)

Constructing the Map: Data Sources and Tools *continued*

Tools and Software

This analysis was conducted using products created by Esri, a private software company specializing in spatial data analysis tools. UVA Library has contracted with Esri to provide these tools to the University's students, faculty, and staff. Esri's suite of spatial analysis tools is called "ArcGIS." The following products were used to aggregate, analyze, and visualize the data referenced below:

ArcGIS Online

ArcGIS Online is a web-based platform that allows users to import datasets and visualize their spatial component (generally geographic coordinates) on a map. A dataset generally contains multiple fields of information. In addition to a field for coordinates, it may contain fields for information like place name, address, type of building – any information that may be helpful to current or future analysts.

ArcGIS Online allows the user to differentiate the categories in each field by color and/or shape. In CCL's analysis of the Arc, we have assigned different colors to different types of places (e.g. cemetery, church, school, and so on). More about these place types can be found in the nine-county Arc information sheet and in the Appendix F.

ArcGIS Pro

ArcGIS Pro is a desktop-based version of ArcGIS Online. It offers the same analytic capabilities as ArcGIS Online, and many others, especially ones that require more computing power. ArcGIS Pro was used to create the layouts for the large printed outreach maps and the map graphics.

ArcGIS Survey123

ArcGIS Survey123 allows the user to design surveys for data collection. If a survey is designed to collect spatial data, this spatial data can then be directly pulled into ArcGIS Online. ArcGIS Survey123 was used to design the descendant survey.

ArcGIS Experience Builder

ArcGIS Experience Builder is a tool for building web apps based on maps and their accompanying datasets. A web app can make a map easier to understand and navigate in a public-facing context. ArcGIS Experience Builder was used to create the "MDC's Arc of Enslaved Communities Map" webmap.

LESSONS: What We Learned Across the Arc

CENSUS OF 1860

No.	County	1860			No.	County	1860			No.	County	1860		
		White	Slave	Pop'n			White	Slave	Pop'n			White	Slave	Pop'n
1	Accomack	2,270	6,668	75.0	77	Montgomery	6,350	2,217	212	121	Wayne	6,694	1,43	2.1
2	Anne Arundel	2,894	7,667	72.0	78	St. Albans	21,537	5,677	29	122	Ballinger	3,291	57	1.7
3	Arden	2,956	6,703	68.5	79	Wythe	9,396	2,162	17.3	123	Wood	10,799	176	1.6
4	King William	2,389	4,325	66.1	80	Washington	15,090	2,558	13.3	124	Wise	4,516	66	1.5
5	Greenville	1,973	5,167	67.9	81	Alleghany	5,643	890	15.8	125	Taylor	7,399	112	1.5
6	Powhatan	2,589	5,403	67.6	82	Frederick	13,042	2,259	16.7	126	Tucker	1,396	20	1.5
7	Sussex	3,118	6,385	67.2	83	Kanawha	13,787	3,185	13.7	127	Gilmer	3,665	52	1.4
8	Essex	3,285	6,896	67.0	84	Berkeley	10,406	1,630	11.6	128	Roane	3,399	72	1.3
9	Charlotte	5,981	9,236	62.0	85	Greenbrier	10,409	1,335	12.7	129	Clay	1,392	21	1.2
10	Brunswick	4,983	9,158	65.7	86	Alexandria	9,638	1,366	12.3	130	Buchanan	2,762	30	1.1
11	Mecklenburg	6,711	12,519	65.7	87	Tazewell	8,677	1,202	12.2	131	Barbour	8,729	85	1.1
12	Prince Edward	5,089	7,351	65.5	88	Craig	3,106	520	11.9	132	Monongalia	12,907	101	0.8
13	Prince George	2,918	4,996	62.1	89	Smith	7,255	1,037	11.8	133	Boakridge	5,168	34	0.7
14	Lunenburg	6,166	10,183	62.3	90	Giles	6,651	779	11.8	134	Jackson	8,250	53	0.7
15	Roanoke	4,547	7,305	62.2	91	Hartly	6,521	1,073	11.2	135	Wirt	3,720	23	0.6
16	Charles City	1,806	2,957	62.0	92	Page	6,825	850	11.0	136	Ritchie	6,899	38	0.6
17	King & Queen	3,801	6,152	61.8	93	Russell	9,630	1,089	10.9	137	Pleasants	2,926	15	0.5
18	Southampton	3,814	6,139	61.7	94	Moore	9,326	1,115	10.3	138	Prison	13,183	67	0.5
19	New Kent	9,166	3,375	61.1	95	Bedfordham	30,545	2,387	10.1	139	Morton	17,636	63	0.5
20	Caroline	6,959	10,672	66.6	96	Highland	3,280	502	9.5	140	Cathans	2,582	9	0.4
21	Warwick	682	1,018	69.6	97	Potomac	5,701	560	9.2	141	Ohio	22,196	100	0.5
22	King George	2,313	3,673	61.8	98	Hampshire	12,540	1,213	8.9	142	Brook	5,523	18	0.3
23	Burke	6,041	8,811	68.3	99	Lee	10,183	825	7.5	143	Tyler	6,348	18	0.3
24	Stafford	1,988	2,889	62.0	100	Grays	7,433	547	6.7	144	Webster	1,322	3	0.2
25	Orange	5,497	6,111	62.1	101	Peachamta	3,688	259	6.4	145	Marshall	12,306	29	0.2
26	Calverton	5,964	6,675	67.4	102	Floyd	7,745	478	5.8	146	Wetzel	6,691	10	0.1
27	Halifax	11,068	15,897	57.4	103	Shenandoah	12,829	753	5.5	147	McDowell	1,535	0.0	0.0
28	Northampton	2,895	3,872	56.4	104	Mercer	6,528	882	5.3	148	Hancock	4,542	2	0.0
29	Madison	1,886	2,372	58.0	105	Plyette	3,218	371	4.5					
30	Gloucester	5,103	5,239	53.9	106	Harrison	33,185	382	4.3					
31	Hanover	7,508	9,495	53.8	107	Mason	8,522	106	4.2					
32	James City	2,166	2,386	55.4	108	Scott	11,530	486	4.1					
33	Albemarle	12,205	13,916	53.3	109	Powhatan	5,873	244	4.0					
34	Appomattox	5,115	5,600	52.8	110	Cabell	7,489	366	3.8					
35	Westmoreland	3,786	3,793	52.3	111	Randolph	4,786	188	3.7					
36	Surry	2,964	2,513	51.6	112	Roane	4,461	168	3.3					
37	Spotsylvania	7,710	7,166	50.2	113	Carroll	7,719	262	3.3					
38	Madison	5,264	4,397	50.2	114	Nicholas	4,570	155	3.3					
39	Fauquier	10,457	10,555	50.0	115	Logan	4,789	158	3.0					
40	Fluvanna	5,102	4,895	49.3	116	Lewis	7,236	236	2.9					
41	Nelson	5,712	5,381	48.8	117	Upshur	7,065	212	2.9					
42	Nelson	6,658	6,238	48.1	118	Morgan	3,683	94	2.5					
43	Southampton	5,537	5,048	47.4	119	Wyoming	2,297	64	2.2					
44	Dinwiddie	13,655	12,774	46.3	120	Braxton	4,485	104	2.1					
45	Clarke	3,797	3,325	47.3										
46	Northumberland	3,871	3,529	47.0										
47	Amherst	7,170	6,278	46.7										
48	Campbell	13,563	11,369	46.0										
49	Pittsylvania	17,105	15,340	45.6										
50	Chesterfield	10,018	8,555	45.5										
51	York	2,353	1,925	45.0										
52	Mathews	3,083	3,090	43.0										
53	Elizabeth City	3,109	2,173	43.2										
54	Henry	6,718	5,018	42.3										
55	Princess Anne	5,335	3,186	42.4										
56	Bedford	15,280	10,176	41.5										
57	Isle of Wight	5,633	3,370	41.4										
58	Richmond	3,918	3,220	41.2										
59	Richmond	3,570	2,589	40.9										
60	Stafford	4,922	3,314	40.2										
61	Greene	3,089	1,985	39.6										
62	Henrico	37,984	20,041	34.5										
63	Roanoke	5,256	2,643	33.5										
64	Franklin	12,642	6,351	31.8										
65	Accomack	10,607	4,507	29.6										
66	Patrick	3,814	1,589	29.4										
67	Prince William	5,689	2,356	29.3										
68	Jefferson	10,692	3,960	29.2										
69	Richmond	8,047	3,117	27.9										
70	York	21,543	9,860	27.9										
71	Lancaster	12,620	5,386	26.8										
72	Bath	2,652	964	26.3										
73	Warren	4,586	1,572	25.6										
74	Bedford	8,554	2,769	25.7										
75	Bedford	12,645	3,985	25.7										
76	Patrick	7,159	2,070	22.4										

Census Office, Dep't of the Interior,
Washington, Sept. 9th 1860

After a careful examination of this very interesting map I am prepared to state that it not only illustrates the existence of great care in its preparation, but can be relied on as corresponding with the official returns of the 9th Census.

J. G. Kennedy,
Superintendent

MAP OF
VIRGINIA
Showing the distribution of its
SLAVE POPULATION
from the
CENSUS OF
1860

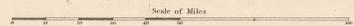
Washington, June 13th 1861

	Area	White	Slave	Population	Per Cent
VIRGINIA (before Secession)	61,332	1,097,373	657,026	1,754,399	31.1
KANAWHA	16,470	272,739	6,694	279,433	2.5
VIRGINIA (in August 1861)	65,002	824,614	1,66,312	1,490,926	37.8

Every county having less than five per cent of slaves is unshaded.

Sold for the benefit of
the sick and wounded of the U.S. Army

Presented to General Ruffin,
with the compliments of
his old and true friend
Henry S. Graham



Map of Virginia: showing the distribution of its slave population from the census of 1860 by Henry S. Graham, 1861 from The Library of Congress <https://www.loc.gov/item/2010586922/>

LESSONS: What We Learned Across the Arc

Data Sovereignty and Community Ownership Address Erasure and Appropriation

Across the nine counties, robust descendant narratives have been erased, misrepresented, or appropriated in mainstream historical records. Ensuring data sovereignty in descendant-led projects is critical to correcting these injustices and preventing further exploitation.



Key Insights from Listening Sessions

Community Ownership of Data Builds Trust. Interviewees from communities expressed concerns about who controls historical data and how it is used.

Participatory Mapping Supports Descendant Control over Data.

The Arc of Enslaved Communities initiative “webmap” or database is designed as a community-controlled resource, allowing descendants to contribute information on their terms. *Example:* During listening sessions, community members suggested adding oral histories and cemetery locations directly to the map, ensuring their data is represented accurately and respectfully.

Recommendations for Strengthening Data Sovereignty

Informed Consent and Transparent Data Policies. Establish clear guidelines for collecting, storing, and sharing descendant data.

Community-Led Data Collection. Ensure descendants' families and local organizations control how their histories are documented.

Seek Funding to Address Regional Disparities in Resources and Infrastructure. Different counties across the Arc of Enslaved Communities initiative have varying levels of organizational resources, infrastructure, and readiness to engage in preservation efforts. Some areas have well-established historical societies; others lack formal structures for descendant-led initiatives.

Opportunities to Build Capacity through Local Organizations

Listening sessions revealed that building descendant capacity through partnerships with trusted local organizations is essential for preserving community histories and sustaining long-term engagement across the region.

Key Insights from Listening Sessions

Share Unique Strengths Across Region. MCAAHA (Madison County African American Historical Association) maintains a building where archives are stored and shared with the public. Descendant groups in other counties often lack accessible meeting spaces for heritage conservation or, in some cases, lack organized descendant groups altogether.

Serve as an Empowerment Hub for Community-Led Efforts. *Example:* The Yancey Community Center has become a focal point for local history and could serve as a model for descendant-led initiatives.

Provide Workshops and Training to Strengthen Local Capacity. *Example:* MDC’s “Train the Trainer” workshops provided community members with tools to collect oral histories, filling documentation gaps at the local level.

Recommendations for Strengthening Capacity

Develop Local History Hubs. Partner with institutions like MCAAHA, the Yancey Community Center and Dunbar School to train community historians and build local archives.

Provide Tools and Training. Partner with universities and historical societies to create “Train the Trainer” workshops to ensure descendants have the skills and resources to document and preserve their histories.

Sustain Long-Term Community Engagement. Encourage cross-county collaboration to share resources and develop leadership networks among descendant communities.



Engaging Descendants and Non-Descendants: Bridging Resources to Create New Strategies

Effective collaboration among descendant communities, landowners, and historical organizations depends on trust and shared goals. While some counties have strong networks, others struggle with resistance from landowners or a lack of institutional support.

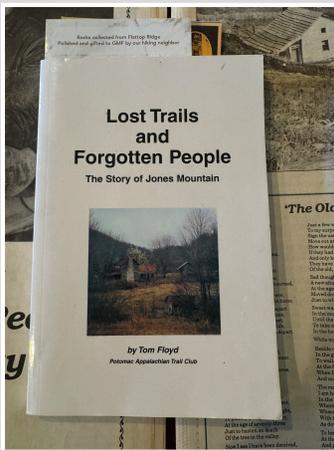


Key Insights from Listening Sessions

Success Stories: Partnerships That Worked. In Madison County, landowners worked with community members to grant access to cemeteries on private property. Cross-county relationships formed at the Culpeper gathering, where participants discussed common challenges in cemetery preservation.

Challenges: Resistance and Unwelcoming Practices.

Some landowners were hesitant to allow cemetery access due to concerns about legal implications. At outreach events in Orange County, community members expressed frustration at the difficulty of accessing historical Black burial sites on private land.



Recommendations for Strengthening Collaboration

Foster Relationships Between Descendants and Landowners.

Create clear protocols for cemetery documentation and access that balance landowners' concerns with preservation needs.

Encourage Cross-County Networking.

Host regional descendant gatherings to share strategies and strengthen connections.

Address Resistance with Education and Advocacy.

Develop resources for landowners on the historical and legal importance of Black cemeteries. Make the public aware of existing state laws and rights and responsibilities of land owners and descendants.

continued **LESSONS: What We Learned Across the Arc**

Black Cemeteries as Sites of Memory and Research

Cemeteries are sacred landscapes that preserve kinship, resilience, and land ownership histories. However, many Black burial sites remain undocumented, overgrown, or inaccessible due to private landownership and inconsistent stewardship. Ensuring the protection of these cemeteries is a critical act of historical justice essential for creating commemorative landscape landmarks and wayfinding.

Key Insights from Listening Sessions

Descendants Want Access. In October 2024, the DEC – VA board invited our team to speak about tools to document cemeteries. From the conversation, we learned that there is an opportunity to support existing interests in cemeteries to build capacity and collaborative research.

Landowners Want Guidance.

At Constitution Day at Montpelier, attendees expressed surprise at how many Black cemeteries remain undocumented on private land. *Example:* At “Right the Record” in Culpeper, a white landowner admitted, “I have no clue what to do,” regarding a burial ground on her property. This reflects the need for legal guidance and community-led preservation support.

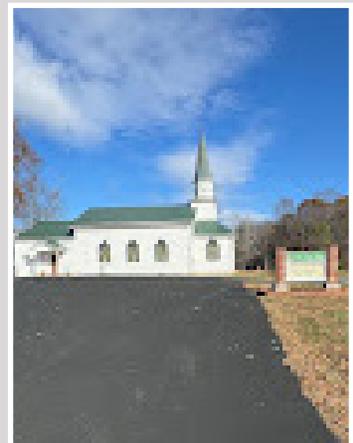
Successful Collaborations for Cemetery Access. In Madison County, MCAAHA successfully worked with landowners to gain access to historic burial sites, demonstrating the potential for collaborative cemetery preservation efforts.

Recommendations for Enhancing Regional Efforts to Document and Protect Black Cemeteries

Expand Cemetery Mapping and Documentation. Use the webmap to track historic Black burial sites and provide communities with accurate records.

Develop Resources for Private Landowners. Provide legal guidance and educational materials on how landowners can protect burial sites. Establish protocols for cemetery access agreements that respect both descendants’ rights and landowners’ concerns.

Strengthening Public Awareness and Advocacy. Partner with historical societies and descendant communities to ensure cemeteries are properly recognized, maintained, and legally protected.



Faith-Based Institutions as Conductors for Connections

Churches have long served as centers for community organizing, cultural transmission, and historical documentation. Many Black churches house valuable archives, oral histories, and records that are absent from mainstream historical narratives. Examples follow which show the ways churches provide a neutral and trusted space for descendant communities to gather, exchange knowledge, and strengthen intergenerational ties.



Key Insights from Listening Sessions

Churches are Community Anchors. At Mt. Pisgah Church in Orange County, a community oral history event allowed descendants to share personal narratives and histories, demonstrating how faith-based spaces facilitate memory work. The “Right the Record” event in Culpeper was held at Culpeper Baptist Church, the venue provided space for fellowship following the event program. Several attendees mentioned that it was their first time in the space.

Church Leadership Can Catalyze Involvement in Oral History Initiatives. MDC’s “Train the Trainer” workshop was attended by church leaders who were deeply invested in preserving local history. Their participation increased interest and created a new network among descendant communities.

Churches as Repositories of Local History. While discussing the webmap in Culpeper County, community members shared information about Antioch Baptist Church, one of the region’s oldest Black churches. They noted landscapes and places missing from publicly available historical data—highlighting the need for more documentation.



Recommendations for Strengthening Church-Based Preservation Efforts

Recognizing Churches as Sites of Public Memory. Use churches as spaces to convene discussions on the history of enslavement, freedom, and Black resilience.

Developing Church-Based Oral History and Documentation Initiatives. Engage church leaders in oral history collection and archival projects to ensure that stories of Black congregations are preserved. Provide technical assistance and training for churches to document records, burial sites, and historical artifacts digitally.

Leveraging Churches as Gathering Spaces for the Arc of Enslaved Communities Initiative. Host public programs, heritage talks, and community listening sessions in church spaces to promote their role in commemorative efforts. Strengthen partnerships between church leaders and historic preservation organizations to integrate church histories into larger cultural landscape projects.

continued **LESSONS: What We Learned Across the Arc**

Economic and Educational Hubs as Anchors of Black Community Life

Black business districts and educational institutions have historically provided economic opportunity and cultural resilience, but many are underrecognized or at risk.

Key Insights from Listening Sessions

Economic Districts Were Essential to Black Prosperity. The Davis Street Black Business District (Culpeper County) once thrived but has since declined due to migration and the presence of land developers.

Schools as Centers of Black Community Life. The Yancey School (Albemarle County) and Dunbar Schoolhouse (Fluvanna County) played key roles in educating Black youth and serving as community centers.

Recommendations for Incorporating Historic Districts and Sites

Document and Map Historic Black Economic and Educational Institutions. Integrate these sites into the Arc of Enslaved Communities initiative’s webmap through topic-focused “Train the Trainer” workshops.

Strengthen Oral History Efforts. Work with former business owners, educators, and alumni networks to document histories.

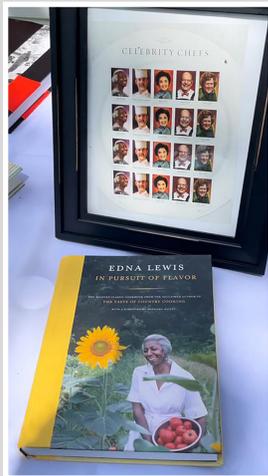
Promote Public Awareness and Historic Recognition. Install historical markers and exhibits at former Black business districts and schools.



LESSONS: What We Learned Across the Arc *continued*

Agritourism and Foodways

Agriculture and culinary traditions have played a central role in Black self-sufficiency, yet trauma and collective grief have severed this natural relationship with the land, resulting in a decline in Black land retention and access to dense nutrient food. Descendants emphasized the role of foodways as a form of cultural memory. These lessons help inform how commemorative landscapes can be grounded in everyday practices and ancestral knowledge.



Key Insights from Listening Sessions

Preserving Black Agricultural Traditions. Edna Lewis' legacy in Orange County has inspired renewed interest in Black foodways and agritourism. Carter Farms and Sweet Vines Winery demonstrate how Black farmers are reclaiming land and cultural food traditions.

Legacy and Heirs' Property. In listening sessions, individuals have expressed the challenges of navigating legal, emotional, and financial hurdles.



Recommendations on Incorporating Foodways and Culinary Traditions into the Arc's Work

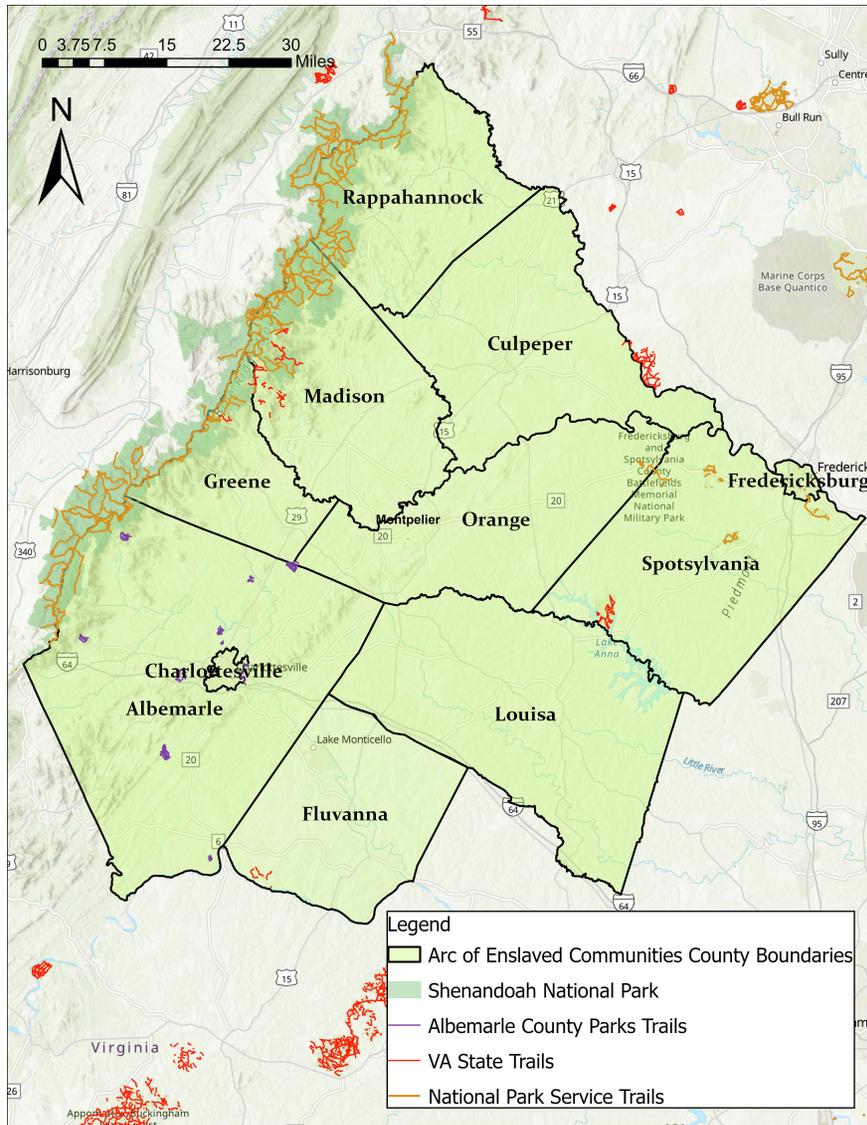
Center Health and Wellness in Commemorative Engagement. Recognize the importance of physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being in descendant-led preservation efforts. *Example:* Highlight community-led spaces—like gardens, churches, and schools—that have historically provided healing, nourishment, and gathering places, and integrate wellness practices such as storytelling, walking trails, and cultural foodways into commemorative programming.

Promote Agritourism and Cultural Foodways. Develop educational programs on Black farming traditions.

Expand Public Awareness and Economic Opportunities. Feature Black farms and the rich culinary legacy in MDC's storytelling and engagement strategies. Connect descendant farmers and families interested in heirship and legacy property management with resources for land preservation and sustainable agriculture.



Additional Recommended Strategies For Future Phases



Integrating Area Trails and Historic Black Sites

To fully integrate the Arc of Enslaved Communities initiative into a broader commemorative landscape, it is essential to align this initiative with existing regional planning and tourism strategies. Most of the trails we have examined are developed under the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, which includes all counties in the Arc except Madison and Rappahannock. Creating an integrated system that links historically significant sites with existing heritage corridors will enhance visibility, accessibility, and long-term sustainability.

Additionally, collaboration with the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) and local Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) is critical to ensuring the success of the Arc initiative. Orange County’s DMO played a central role in developing the Edna Lewis Menu Trail, demonstrating how tourism-driven partnerships can elevate Black heritage narratives. MDC’s efforts will require strategic alignment with state and local tourism entities to maximize impact, as trails in Virginia are largely developed through coordinated government and tourism efforts. VTC has a wealth of resources that can support this work, including the 2020 Black Travelers Study and regional tourism research. Virginia has also adopted a “hub-and-spoke” tourism strategy, where anchor destinations are leveraged to create interconnected visitor experiences. Ensuring that the Arc is positioned within this framework will provide the necessary infrastructure and visibility for descendant-led initiatives.

As stated in the original MDC call for proposals, these efforts are planned for phases two and three. The next stage of work involves a comprehensive analysis of how existing trails

intersect with historically significant sites identified on the webmap. This analysis will provide a foundation for integrating descendant-identified places into the broader heritage tourism landscape. The lists of trails which follow should be considered in this expanded approach.

Trails of the nine-county region

Albemarle

Biscuit Run Park Trail	https://www.albemarle.org/government/parks-recreation/trails
Chris Greene Lake Trail	https://www.albemarle.org/government/parks-recreation/trails
Darden Towe Park Trail	https://www.albemarle.org/government/parks-recreation/trails
Humphris Park Trail	https://www.albemarle.org/government/parks-recreation/trails
Mint Springs Valley Park Trail	https://www.albemarle.org/government/parks-recreation/trails
Old Mills Trail	https://www.albemarle.org/government/parks-recreation/trails
Patricia Ann Byrom Forest Preserve Park Trail	https://www.albemarle.org/government/parks-recreation/trails
Preddy Creek Trails Park	https://www.albemarle.org/government/parks-recreation/trails
Totier Creek Trail	https://www.albemarle.org/government/parks-recreation/trails
Walnut Creek Trail	https://www.albemarle.org/government/parks-recreation/trails
Saunders-Monticello Trail	https://www.monticello.org/visit/the-saunders-monticello-trail/
Northtown Trail Project	https://tjpd.org/reports-archive/northtown-trail-project/
Rivanna Trail Loop	https://www.rivannatrails.org/Guide
River North Trail	https://www.rivannatrails.org/Guide
Crozet Connector Trail	https://crozettrailscrew.org/
James River Loop	https://dwr.virginia.gov/vbwt/piedmont-trail/pjr/
Monticello & Rivanna Loop	https://dwr.virginia.gov/vbwt/piedmont-trail/pmr/

Trails of the nine-county region continued

Culpeper

Lenn Park Trail <https://web.culpepercounty.gov/parksrec/park/lenn-park>

Culpeper Loop <https://dwr.virginia.gov/vbwt/piedmont-trail/PCU/>

Spilman Park Trail <https://web.culpepercounty.gov/parksrec/park/spilman-park>

Preddy Creek Trail Park <https://www.alltrails.com/parks/us/virginia/preddy-creek-trail-park>

Fluvanna

Village of Palmyra Self-Guided Walking Tour <https://www.fluvannacounty.org/parksrec/page/village-palmyra-self-guided-walking-tour>

Pleasant Grove Park Nature Hike
(Fluvanna Heritage Trail) <https://www.fluvannacounty.org/parksrec/page/pleasant-grove-park-natural-experience>

Eastern Trailhead - “Dog Park” <https://www.fluvannacounty.org/parksrec/page/eastern-trailhead-dog-park>

James River Loop <https://dwr.virginia.gov/vbwt/piedmont-trail/pjr/>

Greene

Entry Run Trailhead https://greenecountyva.myrec.com/info/activities/program_details.aspx?ProgramID=30908

Historic Stanardsville Walking Tour <https://greenehistoryva.org/historic-walking-tour>

John's Rest Trail https://greenecountyva.myrec.com/info/activities/program_details.aspx?ProgramID=30908

Blue Ridge Barn Quilt Trail <https://exploregreene.com/explore/barn-quilt-trail>

Trails of the nine-county region continued

Louisa

Trevilian Battlefield Trails and Park

<https://www.louisacounty.gov/1261/Parks-Public-Spaces?imgoing-place=trevilian-battlefield-trails-and-park-6196cb62f6ec5411f036439c>

Buckner-Bumpass Park Trails

<https://www.louisacounty.gov/1261/Parks-Public-Spaces?imgoing-place=buckner-bumpass-park-62d963a24273121013b60294>

Lake Anna State Park Trails

<https://www.louisacounty.gov/1261/Parks-Public-Spaces?imgoing-place=lake-anna-state-park-5f80b11d4fce87410608e197>

Betty Queen Center Fitness Trail

<https://www.louisacounty.gov/406/Fitness-Trail>

Christopher Run Campground Nature Trail

<https://www.louisacounty.gov/1876/Nature-Trails>

Greene Springs Loop

<https://www.louisacounty.gov/1876/Nature-Trails>

Small Country Campground Trail

<https://www.louisacounty.gov/1876/Nature-Trails>

Louisa Town Park Trail

<https://www.louisacounty.gov/1876/Nature-Trails>

“Give Me Liberty” Digital Trail/Tour

<https://www.louisacounty.gov/1871/Give-Me-Liberty-Digital-Trail#:~:text=When%20you%20set-out%20on%20this%20NEW%20digital%20trail%2C,for%20liberty%20and%20justice%20through%20Louisa%20County%E2%80%99s%20History>

Civil War Trails

<https://www.louisacounty.gov/1865/Civil-War-Trails>

Madison

Staunton River Trail

<https://www.alltrails.com/us/virginia/madison>

Graves Mill Trail

<https://www.alltrails.com/us/virginia/madison>

Rapidan Road Loop

<https://www.alltrails.com/us/virginia/madison>

Double Top Trail

<https://www.alltrails.com/us/virginia/madison>

Tween Rivers Trail

<https://www.virginia.org/blog/post/wanderlove-a-road-trip-through-madison-county/>

Blue Ridge Whiskey Wine Loop

<https://www.blueridgewhiskeywineloop.com/>

Trails of the nine-county region continued

Orange

Edna Lewis Menu Trail	https://visitorangevirginia.com/the-edna-lewis-menu-trail-in-orange-county-va/
Montpelier Wine Trail	https://visitorangevirginia.com/event/montpelier-wine-trail-wine-festival/
Mine Run Battlefield Trail	https://www.battlefields.org/visit/battlefields/mine-run-battlefield
James Madison's Montpelier Trails	https://www.montpelier.org/visit/trails/

Rappahannock

Traces Trail	https://www.komoot.com/guide/1795033/hiking-in-rappahannock-county
The Peak Trail	https://www.anyplaceamerica.com/directory/va/rappahannock-county-51157/trails/
Bluff Trail	https://www.anyplaceamerica.com/directory/va/rappahannock-county-51157/trails/
Big Devils Stairs Trail	https://www.anyplaceamerica.com/directory/va/rappahannock-county-51157/trails/
Gravel Springs Trail	https://www.anyplaceamerica.com/directory/va/rappahannock-county-51157/trails/
Pole Link Bridge Trail	https://www.anyplaceamerica.com/directory/va/rappahannock-county-51157/trails/
Little Devils Stairs Trail	https://www.anyplaceamerica.com/directory/va/rappahannock-county-51157/trails/
Piney Branch Trail	https://www.anyplaceamerica.com/directory/va/rappahannock-county-51157/trails/
Piney Ridge Trail	https://www.anyplaceamerica.com/directory/va/rappahannock-county-51157/trails/
Beahms Gap Trail	https://www.anyplaceamerica.com/directory/va/rappahannock-county-51157/trails/

Trails of the nine-county region continued

Spotsylvania

Battle for Virginia Trail	https://dwr.virginia.gov/vbwt/piedmont-trail/pbv/
Wilderness Battlefield Trails	https://home.nps.gov/frsp/planyourvisit/wildernessbattlefield.htm
Ni River Trail and Salamander Loop	https://www.spotsylvania.va.us/2332/Hiking-Trails
First Day Chancellorsville Trail	https://www.battlefields.org/visit/battlefields/chancellorsville-battlefield
Lake Anna State Park Trails	https://www.spotsylvania.va.us/2332/Hiking-Trails
Loriella Park Trails	https://www.spotsylvania.va.us/387/Trails
Patriot Park Trails	https://www.spotsylvania.va.us/387/Trails
Spotsy Nature Trail	https://www.alltrails.com/trail/us/virginia/spotsy-nature-trail
Rappahannock River Heritage Trail	https://www.fredericksburgva.gov/1562/Rappahannock-River-Heritage-Trail
Virginia Central Railway Trail	https://www.fredericksburgva.gov/1563/Virginia-Central-Railway-Trail
Fall Hill Trail	https://www.fredericksburgva.gov/1564/Fall-Hill-Trail
Cowan Boulevard Trail	https://www.fredericksburgva.gov/1561/Cowan-Boulevard-Trail
Canal Path	https://www.fredericksburgva.gov/1560/Canal-Path

Additional Recommended Strategies For Future Phases *continued*

Mapping & Memorializing Enslaved Communities through Genealogical Research, Oatlands Plantation - Loudoun County, VA

Genealogical research is familial and personal, but it has also been a catalyst for developing commemorative practices and creative memorialization. At the center of many descendant engagement initiatives is the location of names of the enslaved located through historical research meant to not only prove institutional ties to slavery but to enable those trying to reconstruct their family histories to overcome the “1870” wall which makes it difficult to locate descendants who were once in slave schedules and unnamed. DEC – VA has employed Dr. Shelley Murphy, an internationally known high-profile genealogist. Dr. Murphy is charged with locating and verifying the name of everyone enslaved by the University of Virginia (and at its properties) as well as their descendants. This name identification is a cornerstone of their commemorative landscape work, with the names etched in stone at the Memorial to Enslaved Laborers, read aloud at annual events, and made part of a reparative justice project.



Locating names in the historical record is time consuming and ongoing, even when conducting it one institution or one county at a time. Take Loudoun County for example. Oatlands Plantation, owned by George Carter, a descendant of King Carter who owned over 1,000 people across hundreds of thousands of acres, has become a hub of county and plantation-based genealogy. Dr. Roberts engaged with descendants of Oatlands, where she is an advisory board member, in Loudoun County, VA. On the National Trust property, she not only interacted with descendants but also identified scholars and local historians engaged in mapping the sales of the enslaved in the county and how that, in turn, led to certain kinship and settlement patterns that define the enslaved and free Black communities in the county.

While not located in the nine-county region, there are familial ties to other planters in the Arc. A subset of Loudoun County’s enslaved held captive, sold, and left in wills to planters throughout Loudoun County share the last name Carter. The Carter family spans the state of Virginia and holds the original land grant upon which multiple presidential properties were

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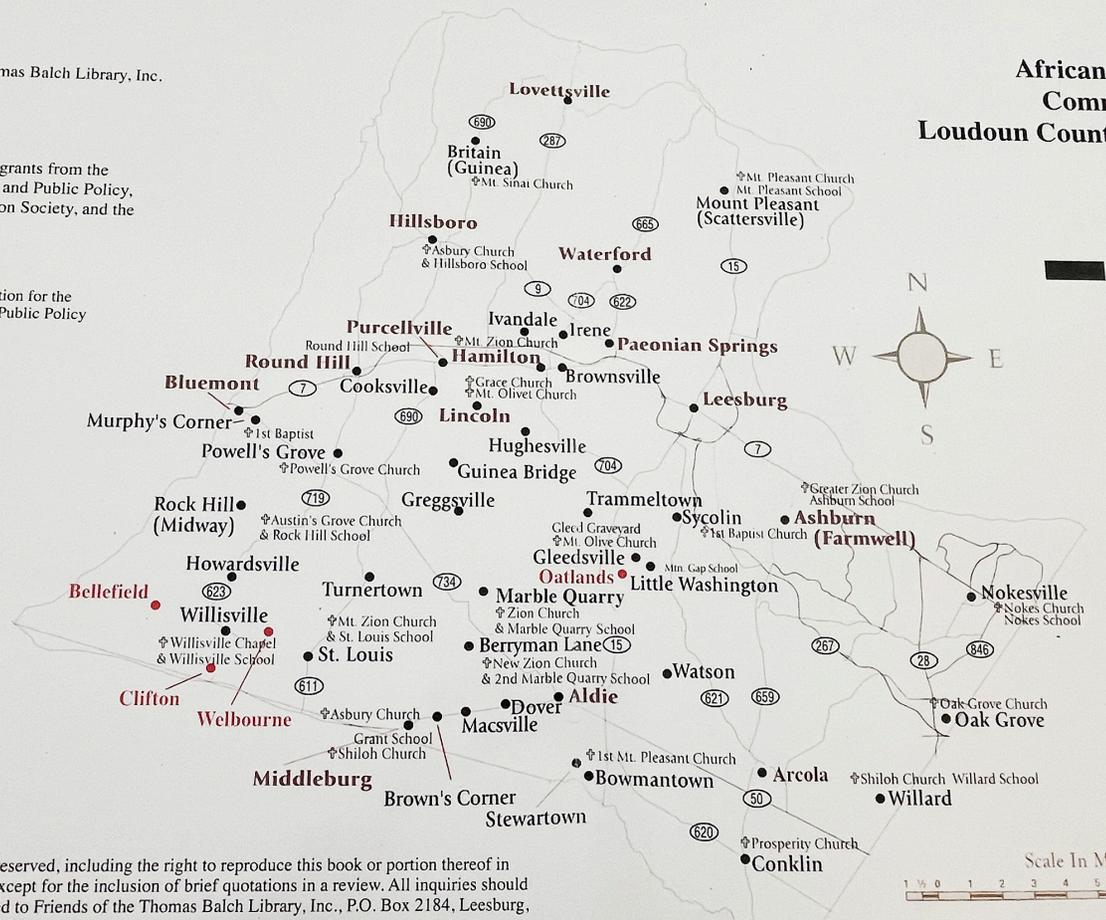
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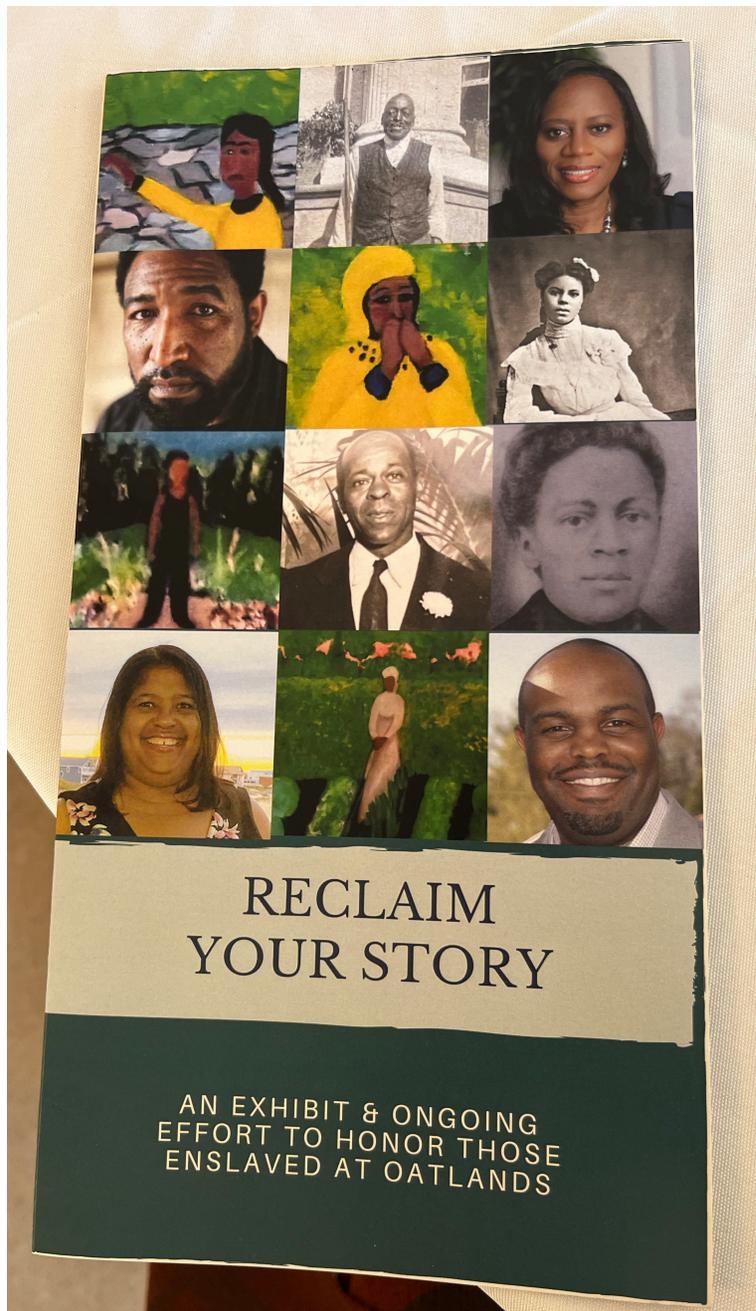
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African American Communities of Loudoun County, Virginia

Key:

■ Biracial
 ■ African American





built in Albemarle County. This means several of the enslaved people sold and leased among the Carter and in-laws in Loudoun might very well be related to those at other Carter properties. Several Carter properties in the Arc region create an opportunity to collaborate on active memory work across county boundaries. Notably, their mapping of Black settlements, sales of enslaved people, and kinship networks required 16 years of research focused on sales in one county.

Local librarians, Carter descendants, and the descendants of those enslaved by the Carters collaborated to create materials that honored the names of individuals held captive at Oatlands. These names were featured on bookmarks and brochures, which descendants were encouraged to share within their communities. Further, the Oatlands descendants' brochures and pamphlets were notable examples of materials the MDC could develop to promote the Arc initiative as more than a concept but a way to visualize the individuals that make up enslaved communities.

The MDC might consider using these materials as a guide for developing mockups that contain images of descendants as well as lists of names of the enslaved and family surnames. The CCL team highly recommend a discussion on the development of printed collateral and a workshop with the Oatlands researchers on the enslaved community-based research approach.

We also recommend the creation of notecards with family names or institutions that could be disbursed along with project flyers at events. Notably, the Oatlands case teaches us paradoxically that simple interventions such as notecards can be catalysts for connection and commemoration but that the research and depth of inquiry required is lengthy and requires patience.

The Oatlands approach provides a valuable perspective on how to set goals and mark progress considering the time required for just one county.

Additional Recommended Strategies For Future Phases

Turtle Island: Partnering with Indigenous Leaders to Design Commemorative Landscapes in Central Virginia

Arc of Enslaved Communities initiative must actively engage Indigenous leaders to ensure that commemorative landscapes are inclusive and reflective of the region's complex histories. Establishing collaborative partnerships with Indigenous communities is essential, beginning with outreach to tribal governments, cultural organizations, and scholars with ancestral ties to the nine-county region. Indigenous historians and knowledge keepers should be consulted to provide oral traditions and historical context that illuminate the shared experiences of Black and Indigenous communities. Formal partnerships will help ensure Indigenous voices are integral to shaping the Arc's vision rather than being included as an afterthought. Our team strongly recommends working with Kody Grant (pictured on page 45), UVA's Tribal Liaison, whose expertise and networks within regional tribal communities can help facilitate these partnerships.

Recognizing Indigenous land histories in commemorative narratives is another critical step. The lands where the Arc is being developed were once Indigenous territories, and many were taken through forced removal and broken treaties. Interpretive materials, exhibitions, and signage should acknowledge these histories, highlighting the intersections between Black and Indigenous experiences of land dispossession, forced labor, and resistance. Including Indigenous place names and languages in public-facing materials will also serve as a recognition of the original stewards of the land. During the Constitution Day outreach event, our team connected with an individual from the Smithsonian's Indigenous initiatives, further reinforcing the potential for collaboration and knowledge-sharing with experts in Indigenous history and public interpretation.

Indigenous knowledge should also be integrated into the design and stewardship of commemorative landscapes. Indigenous land stewards should be directly involved in planning efforts, ensuring that traditional ecological knowledge informs land management strategies. The use of culturally significant plants and traditional land-use practices can honor the relationship Indigenous peoples have maintained with the land for centuries. Additionally, existing Indigenous burial sites, trails, and landmarks should be identified and preserved in tandem with Black commemorative spaces, reinforcing the interconnectedness of these histories.

Engaging in cross-community dialogues between descendant and Indigenous groups will further strengthen this initiative. Listening sessions and facilitated discussions can create space for descendant communities and Indigenous leaders to explore their shared histories, including narratives of intermarriage, cultural exchange, and resistance movements. Joint storytelling initiatives and educational programs should be developed to center the voices of both communities, fostering



a deeper understanding of their historical and contemporary relationships. Events such as workshops, cultural heritage days, and public discussions can provide meaningful opportunities for collaboration.

Ethical data stewardship and representation must be a priority in this process. Indigenous leaders should have a say in documenting and sharing their histories, ensuring that cultural knowledge is not misrepresented or exploited. Data sovereignty principles must guide research efforts related to Indigenous sites, and commemorative projects should align with cultural protocols set by Indigenous communities. Scholars, artists, and cultural workers from Indigenous backgrounds should be invited to contribute to exhibitions, performances, and public memory initiatives in ways that respect their traditions and values.

By centering Indigenous voices and knowledge systems, the Arc of Enslaved Communities initiative can create a commemorative landscape that more accurately represents the histories of those who lived on and shaped these lands. This approach not only acknowledges historical injustices but also fosters pathways for healing, solidarity, and long-term collaboration between descendant communities and Indigenous nations. The initial connections with UVA's Tribal Liaison and the Smithsonian's Indigenous initiatives mark important steps in this process, laying the foundation for sustained engagement and shared leadership in commemorative efforts. UNC Land Back/ Abolition Project²¹ is an example of a restorative justice project that employs a collaborative model of engagement between descendant and indigenous to address the history and present impact of the university.



CONCLUSION

The work of engaging descendant communities in the visioning and co-design of commemorative landscapes requires a shift in power, perspective, and practice. This report has outlined key findings from listening sessions, historical research, and participatory methodologies that inform the Arc of Enslaved Communities initiative. What emerges is a clear call for descendant-led decision-making, data sovereignty, and a broader, more inclusive definition of commemoration—one that honors not just the deaths of the enslaved but their lived experiences, resilience, and community-building efforts.

The research underscores that descendant identity is dynamic, shaped by kinship networks that extend across plantations, churches, mutual aid societies, and historically Black settlements.

Recognizing this complexity is crucial in ensuring that commemorative landscapes reflect the lived realities of those they honor. By learning from successful engagement models—such as the African Burial Ground, the Rubric, and regional mapping projects—this initiative has the opportunity to create an ethical, inclusive, and transformative participatory framework.

Montpelier's historic decision to work in parity with the MDC marks an important precedent for how historic institutions can progress beyond symbolic gestures. This initiative not only empowers marginalized voices but also guarantees them an equal role in the decision-making processes, promoting a culture of true collaboration and inclusivity.

The Arc of Enslaved Communities initiative embraces this approach by centering descendant voices and fostering cross-county collaboration to reclaim, document, and preserve Black heritage sites. Advancing and sustaining this effort will require ongoing trust-building, capacity development, and meaningful investment in descendant leadership.

As this initiative moves forward, the challenge will be to sustain engagement and ensure that the commemorative landscape reflects the stories, values, and visions of those most connected to this history. By grounding this work in participatory research, community stewardship, and an expansive view of memory and place, the Arc of Enslaved Communities initiative can serve as a national model for descendant-led heritage preservation. This is not just a project of the past—it is a commitment to shaping a future where Black histories are fully recognized, Black landscapes are protected, and Black communities are empowered to define their own narratives of remembrance.



Appendix A Reading List and Bibliography

Recommended readings are a terrific resource to include on MDC's website, to build community among its membership, and inspire further study. The collection of books listed below provides both a historical and a personal perspective on the legacy of slavery at Montpelier, as well as the ongoing efforts to preserve history and honor the descendants of those who lived and worked there.

***Madison's Gift: Five Partnerships That Built America*
by David O. Stewart**

This book explores the life of James Madison, but it also provides insights into the relationships and partnerships that shaped his legacy, including his involvement in the system of slavery. It offers a broader understanding of Madison's life in the context of his time.

***The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*
by John W. Blassingame**

A classic work of scholarship on the lives of enslaved people in the American South, this book gives context to the lives of the men, women, and children who worked on plantations like Montpelier.

***The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family*
by Annette Gordon-Reed**

While this book focuses on the Hemings family at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, it provides deep insights into the lives of enslaved people in Virginia, many of whom have similar experiences to those at Montpelier. Gordon-Reed's work sheds light on the broader historical and familial dynamics that inform the Montpelier context.

***Montpelier: The Story of James Madison's Home* by Ivor Noël Hume**

A detailed history of Montpelier, this book provides background on the estate and its inhabitants, including enslaved individuals, offering context for the work of the Montpelier Descendants Committee.

***In the Shadow of Liberty: The Hidden History of Slavery, Four Distinctive Stories from America's Past* by Kenneth C. Davis**

This book shares stories of slavery at four historic American sites, including Montpelier, and serves as an accessible entry point into the complex history of slavery in Virginia.

***Slavery at Montpelier: A Documentary History of the People and Work of the Madison Plantation* by Mary V. Thompson**

A key work specifically about Montpelier, Thompson's book, is a collection of documents and research detailing the lives of the enslaved individuals at Montpelier and their work on the plantation.

***Remembering Slavery: African Americans Talk About Their Personal Experiences of Slavery and Emancipation* by Ira Berlin, Marc Favreau, and Steven F. Miller**

While not directly related to Montpelier, this oral history collection captures the voices and experiences of those who lived through slavery and emancipation, offering valuable context for understanding the experiences of enslaved people like those who worked at Montpelier

***The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925*
by Herbert G. Gutman**

This foundational book looks at the structure of African American families under slavery, including how families maintained resilience and unity in the face of separation and oppression, which is crucial to understanding the social dynamics of Montpelier's enslaved people.

Appendix A Reading List and Bibliography *continued*

***African American Genealogical Research: A Guide to Tracing Your Ancestors* by Gwendolyn E. Hall**

For those interested in tracing their family history, this book is an excellent resource for understanding the genealogical research process, particularly for African Americans whose ancestors were enslaved.

***The Invention of the White Race, Volume 1: Racial Oppression and Social Control* by Theodore W. Allen**

Allen's work explores the creation of racial categories to justify systems like slavery, which directly relates to the racial dynamics at Montpelier.

***James Madison and the Making of America* by Kevin R. C. Gutzman**

This biography of Madison sheds light on his political role and his ownership of enslaved people.

***Slave Labor in Virginia* by A. J. K. Hough**

This book examines the economic role of enslaved labor in Virginia, offering important context for the MDC's research into how enslaved people contributed to the operation and wealth of Montpelier.

***The Other Madisons: The Lost History of a President's Black Family* by Bettye Kearse**

This is a powerful memoir and historical reclamation that traces the author's journey as a family griotte uncovering her lineage as a descendant of President James Madison and an enslaved woman, while confronting the systemic erasure of Black voices from American history.

***Reclamation: Sally Hemings, Thomas Jefferson, and a Descendant's Search for Her Family's Lasting Legacy* by Gayle Jessup White**

In *Reclamation*, Gayle Jessup White recounts her decades-long journey to confirm her family's oral history connecting her to Thomas Jefferson and Peter Hemings, offering a powerful reflection on race, identity, and the enduring struggle to claim one's rightful place in American history.

***An African American History of the Civil War in the United States* by James Stokes**

Stokes' book provides context on African American experiences, many of whom were descendants of enslaved people at Montpelier, helping the MDC understand the broader impacts of slavery on future generations.

The Legacy of the Montpelier Enslaved (Exhibition Catalog and Educational Materials)

Directly connected to the MDC, this exhibition catalog documents the history and stories of Montpelier's enslaved people and is an essential resource for understanding the committee's ongoing work.

African Americans in Culpeper, Orange, Madison and Rappahannock Counties (Images of America)

This book highlights the history of African Americans in the region around Montpelier, offering context for the lives and descendants of the enslaved people at Montpelier.

We Were Always Free: The Maddens of Culpeper County, Virginia: A 200-Year Family History

It traces a local family's history from slavery to freedom, providing insight into the experiences of descendants of enslaved people, like those of Montpelier's enslaved.

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MAD

DESCENDANTS

COMMITTEE

Appendix B
MDC's Arc of Communities
Monthly Project Status Reports



Introduction

To maintain transparency and track progress, the MDC team produced monthly status reports detailing key activities, research developments, and community engagement efforts related to the Arc of Enslaved Communities initiative. This appendix includes status reports covering the period from August 2024 to November 2024. As the initiative progressed, the focus shifted toward drafting the final report, which replaced the monthly reports beginning in December 2024. These drafts culminated in the completed final report, submitted in February 2025. The reports included here provide insight into the initiative’s evolution, highlighting successes, challenges, and the foundational work that informed the final report’s findings and recommendations.

AUGUST STATUS REPORT *MDC's Arc of Communities*

Project Summary

The Arc of Communities project aims to connect descendant communities across Central Virginia. This is starting with the Montpelier Descendants Commiflee (MDC) who received a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to create a community engagement strategy to start this process. MDC contracted the University of Virginia’s Center for Cultural Landscapes to create this *Community Engagement Strategy*.

“This Community Engagement Strategy will serve as a roadmap to inform the development of the Arc of Communities commemorative landscape that will incorporate the unrecognized contributions of the enslaved across all 2600 acres at Montpelier, the enslaved and free, historically Black communities in the surrounding counties. The Community Engagement Strategy will outline a plan for TMF [The Montpelier Foundation] and MDC [Montpelier Descendants Commitee] to engage with descendant communities to connect historic African American sites of memory across eight counties including and surrounding James Madison’s Montpelier (situated in Orange County, Virginia): Albemarle, Greene, Madison, Louisa, Orange, Rappahannock, Spotsylvania, and Culpeper.” *(from the RFP)*

Work Narrative

During the last month, the project team has been hard at work finalizing the GIS map and survey that will be used at community events to collect information about locations and groups that may not be currently listed (see links below). The survey and map have been shared with strategic partners to gather feedback and edits have been incorporated. Spatial data has been gathered on sites of enslavement and of freedom-seeking across the eight counties of the Arc and added to prepopulate the map. Plans are underway for several events in partnership with community partners in September and October (see below for dates). Team members met with MDC executive director, George Monroe, to learn more about an updated vision for the Arc of Communities project. Capacity issues are being solved by a permanent CCL project manager who has been hired and will be starting in early September. During this phase we are in dialogue with the new Executive Director about how to deepen authentic descendant engagement as the project continues to develop.

AUGUST STATUS REPORT *MDC's Arc of Communities, continued*

Community Partners

Staff at CCL have gathered a list of organizations that we may reach out to in our efforts to create opportunities for MDC to talk about the Arc of Communities and for UVA IEN-CCL to invite participation in the survey.

- Madison African American Historical Society
- Orange County African American Historical Society, Bruce Monroe
- Carver High School
- Carter Farms, Orange VA, Michael Carter Jr.
- Boys and Girls Club of Orange
- Orange High School
- Central Virginia African American Chamber of Commerce (CVAACC)
- USBC US Black Businesses Director
- The Burley Varsity Club (Charlottesville)
- 100 Black Men of Central Virginia
- NAACP local branches: <https://naacpva.org/branches/>

If MDC board members have relationships with any of these organizations or feel there are organizations missing from this list, please email Meredith Keppel (mkeppel@virginia.edu).

Below is a sample letter that we have drafted for your review. This letter will be sent to the identified partners explain what the Arc of Communities project is and invite future participation with MDC.

Hurdles

No project manager

- o Meredith Keppel from IEN is temporary supporting and CCL hired someone permanent to start in September

Next Steps

Finalize the survey and map



o MAP LINK: <https://uvalibrary.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=cad888940dae4ae487000186e64814ef>

Note: Standardize visual language (symbols), establish filter for site type (e.g. home, school, church)



o SURVEY LINK: <https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/2e994a3959ac462292b5458cd853144e>

Note - fields to provide more information will appear if respondent selects “Yes” to “Would you like to tell us about a site?”

- Identify more outreach events (with MDC input!)
 - Finalize plans for community outreach and who is able to attend at:
 - o September 13: DEC conference at UVA - confirmed
 - o September 16: Orange County African American Historical Society Board Meeting - pending
 - o September 21: “Fun Day” at Carver 4-County Museum/Constitution Day at Montpelier
 - o October 3 & 4: Montpelier's Archaeology Program at the Burial Ground / Memorial Site - pending
 - o November 9: Oral History Workshop
- ** would like an MDC representative at each event to explain their vision for the Arc project.
- Create outreach material and attend events!
 - o *iteratively adapt as events occur and we receive feedback*

Appendix B Monthly Project Status Reports

AUGUST - Updated Timeline

Deliverables	Status	Notes	Assignee
RESEARCH: Gather data about descendant groups and the ways they currently engage (key organizations and contacts at those organizations, events, etc.)	DONE	Spatial data has been gathered on sites of enslavement and of freedom-seeking across the nine counties of the Arc and added to the GIS map.	Jennifer Saunders
GIS (SURVEY & MAP): Map descendants' historic site /place location using GIS software (StoryMap) and create survey for use at engagement events to solicit input on Arc & gather missing engagement data.	ONGOING	StoryMap and survey form are completed. Now, includes Fluvanna County. However, they will be iteratively adapted based on feedback at community events.	Jennifer Saunders
REPORT: Gather and aggregate impressions about the Arc and how it should approach engagement at events from the survey and map into an engagement strategy report.	ON HOLD	We are still collecting the data that will be in the final strategy report. We have collected impressions using methods that do not identify informants.	Dr. Roberts /Dr. Dukes

Project Partners	Reporting Period
Center for Cultural Landscapes (CCL): Dr. Andrea Roberts - Project Lead Jennifer Saunders - Research Specialist	Current Reporting Period: August 1 - 31, 2024
Institute for Engagement & Negotiation (IEN): Dr. Frank Dukes - Project Consultant Meredith Keppel - [temporary] Project Manager	Expended Funds (to date:)

AUGUST STATUS REPORT *MDC's Arc of Communities, continued*

Letter of Invitation: Descendant Engagement Research Project

Dear [Recipient's Name],

We are reaching out to invite you to participate in an important project focused on honoring and preserving the history of enslavement and freedom-seeking in the Piedmont region of Virginia. As a descendant of enslaved persons, your voice and perspective are vital to this work. Our goal is to ensure that the trails and landmarks we create in our 8-county region reflect the full history of the communities that shaped it.

Regional Descendant Engagement

We are committed to making sure the local trails and historical sites that have too often been forgotten or hidden in our area tell the stories that matter. To do this, we need to gather data and insights from you about what should be recognized in the landscape. We want to know:

- **What places, people, or events should be included?**
- **Where are they located, and what are their names?**

Your input will guide us in ensuring that the histories of enslavement and resistance are made visible and honored across our region.

The Arc of Communities

We are working on behalf of the Montpelier Descendants Committee [MDC], which is developing a concept called the “Arc of Communities.” This Arc highlights various locations across the Piedmont region that are significant to the histories of Black life, freedom-seeking, and community-building. We are eager to hear your thoughts on this concept, and we welcome your feedback on:

- **How should the Arc of Communities be defined?**
- **Are there locations, stories, or people that we may have missed?**

We encourage you to explore the Arc through the map (linked below) and share any additional information about plantations, churches, presidential homes, or Reconstruction-Era freedom settlements that should be included in this framework.

Ensuring Inclusive Engagement

One of our primary goals is to make sure that the full range of voices and experiences is reflected in this project. We want to ensure that **everyone** within the Arc of Communities is represented. If you feel that we have left out important individuals, groups, or locations, we invite you to share that with us. Your contributions will help ensure the inclusiveness and accuracy of this project.

Data Ownership and Ethics

We want to emphasize that any information you share with us **belongs to you** and the descendant community. The data you provide is yours to control, and you can choose to share or withdraw your information at any time. This research is intended to help MDC stay in touch with you and ensure that you are a part of future events and discussions.

Thank you for considering this invitation to participate in this vital project. We deeply value your insights and look forward to collaborating with you.

If you would like more information about the MDC or your rights regarding your participation, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Best,
CCL Team



ALBEMARLE HISTORIC LANDMARK

James Elias "J.E." Simpson

March 30, 1875 - December 12, 1951

We are going back to that beautiful history, and it is going to inspire us to greater achievements.

— Carter G. Woodson, Ph.D., American Historian, Founder of Negro History Month



James Elias Simpson's story begins with his grandparents, Elijah and Linda Simpson, parents of George Simpson. George married Elizabeth Reed, and James Elias "J.E." was born on March 30, 1875. J.E. was married twice, first to Lelia Bolden with whom he had four children. They built a home in Porters Precinct community of Esmont. Lelia died of tuberculosis on November 30, 1912. Later J.E. married Ela Virginia Copeland, with whom he had two children. Ela died on January 6, 1945.

J.E.'s brother, Coleman Simpson, was instrumental in getting J.E. started in land acquisition in Porters Precinct. It has been verified that J.E. owned at least forty acres in the immediate area. J.E. built a two-story white house with green shutters that sat prominently where the entrance to Simpson Park is today.

One of many pillars of this early African American community, J.E.'s land holdings included a general store on Porters Road near Route 6. This information tells us that, like many Black Americans of the time period, J.E. established a commercial enterprise to make a living and meet the needs of his community. Several others also successfully realized this goal in Porters Precinct through owning various businesses.

J.E. was a faithful member of New Green Mountain Baptist Church. He was also a friend and colleague of Benjamin Franklin Yancey. The Yancey and Simpson families were neighbors. In later years, he remained in contact with Harriett Yancey who had moved to New Jersey in the years following her husband Benjamin's death.

The history of Albemarle County's Simpson Park reflects the history of race and land ownership in the Commonwealth of Virginia and throughout the United States. In the decades following the Civil War, during the Reconstruction period, and thereafter, freed slaves and their descendants

purchased at least 19 million acres of land. This was especially true of Black farmers, whose land ownership steadily increased in the late 1800s when 14 percent of farm owner-operators were Black Americans. The Emancipation Proclamation freed most enslaved individuals, and it wasn't until the protections of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution and the Civil Rights Act of 1866 that Black Americans were allowed to acquire the land of former slave owners. Between 1910 and 1970 many Black Americans migrated to northern states in the era of oppressive Jim Crow laws for a safer life and in search of economic opportunities. In this Great Migration, a significant amount of the farmland Black Americans had accumulated systematically diminished. In addition to systemic institutional discrimination, Black American landowners faced the lasting pervasive racism of many of their neighbors in the South. In some cases, this resulted in the forcible, violent taking of their land. The story of J.E. and the Simpson family is situated within this larger and more complex history of Black land ownership in America. The beautiful ending to J.E.'s story is that his descendants successfully owned his land until 1999 when his granddaughter, Patricia White Suher gifted nine of their remaining acres to the County of Albemarle. Over the next year, two more parcels were added totaling the thirteen acres that comprise Simpson Park today. A great number of his acres had already been sold to Habitat for Humanity to build the homes located on Simpson Lane, just across from the southernmost tract of Simpson Park.

Just as many others did during the Great Migration, some of the Simpsons moved northward, mostly to New Jersey, for more economic and educational opportunities. Other descendants remained in Porters Precinct and surrounding areas. J.E.'s story is only one of many that reflect Black Americans' history, inspiring us to even greater achievements, Woodson predicted.

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SEPTEMBER STATUS REPORT *MDC's Arc of Communities*

Project Summary

The Arc of Enslaved Communities project is a Montpelier Descendants Committee (MDC) initiative which aims to connect descendant communities across Central Virginia. Funded by a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the MDC will make a community engagement strategy focused on the counties in the Arc. The MDC contracted the University of Virginia's Center for Cultural Landscapes (CCL) and Institute for Engagement and Negotiation to create that **Community Engagement Strategy**.

This Community Engagement Strategy will serve as a roadmap to inform the development of the Arc of Enslaved Communities commemorative landscape that will incorporate the unrecognized contributions of the enslaved across all 2600 acres at Montpelier, the enslaved and free, historically Black communities in the surrounding counties. The Community Engagement Strategy will outline a plan for TMF [The Montpelier Foundation] and MDC [Montpelier Descendants Committee] to engage with descendant communities to connect historic African American sites of memory across nine counties including and surrounding James Madison's Montpelier (situated in Orange County, Virginia): Albemarle, Greene, Madison, Louisa, Orange, Rappahannock, Spotsylvania, Culpeper and Fluvanna. Fluvanna County was included in early September by the recommendation of George Monroe.

Work Narrative

For September, the project team finalized the GIS map to include the new addition of Fluvanna County. CCL hired project manager Justice Madden. In her role, she will coordinate and attend events on the team's behalf. This addresses a concern stated in the previous report. Second, after discussions with the MDC concerning data "ownership," we clarified that all data on the ArcGIS platform is presently on an Esri server licensed at UVA. However, we have not crowdsourced any data. We also comply with university research standards and operate under an IRB, and data principles are consistent with Texas Freedom Colonies Project work. Our IRB is SBS-UVA #5460. Regarding data ownership, all the data belongs to the MDC and TMF. However, because we are not crowdsourcing data with identifiable informants, we are losing some data that could enrich the final engagement strategy. We are open to developing an MOU or other agreement that makes MDC comfortable with our work. Despite putting collecting crowdsourced data on hold, we have still developed a strategy to receive feedback that allows us to respect research participants' data sovereignty using posters, stickers, and inviting participants to write directly on maps without leaving their names. Our team has continued to engage community partners outlined by MDC and CCL. At each event, a representative from MDC is present, the objectives of the Arc of Enslaved Communities are clearly stated, and an electronic and printed version of the map is present. Before soliciting feedback, we make it clear that all data belongs to them, and we are operating as researchers using publicly available data. We hand out flyers during events and invite individuals to answer the following questions on posters: 1. Have you heard of the Arc of Enslaved Communities? 2. Do you see yourself and your community in the Arc (mapped Black sites)? If not, what's missing? and 3. What do you think about the idea of the Arc of Enslaved Communities? Individuals were invited to fill in the map with missing information. Initial learnings from the DEC Descendants' Symposium provided the names of historically Black towns, descendant cemeteries, and churches. Team members have continued coordinating with MDC executive director George Monroe to organize outreach efforts in each of the nine counties.

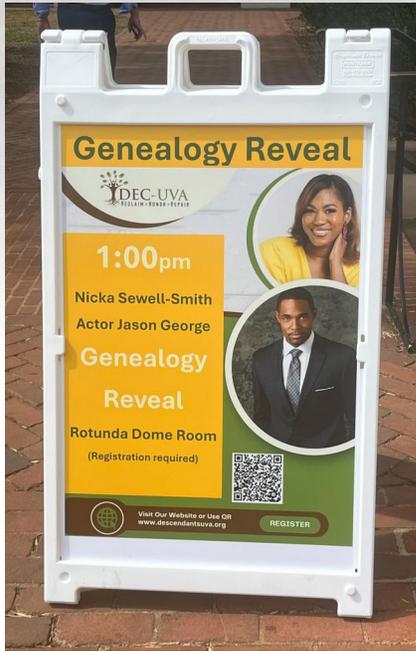
Appendix B Monthly Project Status Reports

SEPTEMBER - Updated Timeline

Deliverables	Status	Notes	Assignee
RESEARCH: Gather data about descendant groups and the ways they currently engage (key organizations and contacts at those organizations, events, etc.)	DONE	Spatial data has been gathered on sites of enslavement and of freedom-seeking across the nine counties of the Arc and added to the GIS map.	Jennifer Saunders
GIS (SURVEY & MAP): Map descendants' historic site /place location using GIS software (StoryMap) and create survey for use at engagement events to solicit input on Arc & gather missing engagement data.	ONGOING	StoryMap and survey form are completed. Now, includes Fluvanna County. However, they will be iteratively adapted based on feedback at community events.	Jennifer Saunders
OUTREACH: Attend an average of two to three descendant-led or events suggested by MDC. The outreach efforts are tailored to the prospective audience, county, and event schedule.	ONGOING	Attended three outreach events. With a MDC representative, we provided an overview and objectives of the project. Additionally, we solicit anonymous feedback.	Justice Madden, Dr. Roberts /Dr. Dukes
REPORT: Gather and aggregate impressions about the Arc and how it should approach engagement at events from the survey and map into an engagement strategy report.	ONGOING	We are still collecting the data that will be in the final strategy report. We have collected impressions using methods that do not identify informants.	Dr. Roberts /Dr. Dukes

Project Partners	Reporting Period
Center for Cultural Landscapes (CCL): Dr. Andrea Roberts - Project Lead Justice Madden - Project Manager Jennifer Saunders - Research Specialist	Current Reporting Period: September 1 - 30, 2024
Institute for Engagement & Negotiation (IEN): Dr. Frank Dukes - Project Consultant Meredith Keppel - [temporary] Project Manager	Expended Funds (to date:) <div style="background-color: black; width: 100px; height: 15px; margin: 5px 0;"></div>

SEPTEMBER STATUS REPORT *MDC's Arc of Communities, continued*



Community Events Update

Staff at CCL have attended a total of three community events:

1. Descendants Day Symposium on September 13th, 2024;
2. Orange County African American Historical Society on September 16th, 2024; and
3. Constitution Day on September 21, 2024.

Each event was tailored based on factors such as: the time allotted; event structure; and the expected attendees. During every outreach opportunity, CCL shared MDC's objectives of the project and provided a tutorial of the GIS map. Several individuals have contributed their sites of memory that were not reflected in the map and/or offered to host events with descendants to invite their feedback for the project. Over 15 names have been signed up to learn more about the Arc of Enslaved Communities project. Additionally, Justice met with Michael Carter Jr. following the Orange County African American Historical Society to discuss holding community events in Culpeper to invite feedback on the map.



Upcoming Events Calendar:

- October 09: Eclipse Awards Banquet hosted by Orange County African American Historical Society – pending
- October TBD – Meeting with MDC and/or George Monroe Jr. about engagement opportunities.
- November G: Oral History Workshop

Appendix B Monthly Project Status Reports

Community Partners

CCL and MDC have gathered a list of organizations that we may contact in our efforts to create opportunities for MDC to discuss the Arc of Enslaved Communities and for UVA IEN- CCL to invite participation in the initiative.

- Madison African American Historical Society
- Orange County African American Historical Society, Bruce Monroe
- Carver High School
- Carter Farms, Orange VA, Michael Carter Jr.
- Boys and Girls Club of Orange
- Orange High School
- Central Virginia African American Chamber of Commerce (CVAACC)
- USBC US Black Businesses Director
- The Burley Varsity Club (Charlottesville)
- 100 Black Men of Central Virginia
- NAACP local branches: <https://naacpva.org/branches/>
- County libraries

If MDC board members have relationships with any of these organizations or feel organizations are missing from this list, please email Justice Madden (jmm3ah@virginia.edu).

On page 71, see a sample letter that we have drafted for your review. This letter will be sent to the identified partners explaining the Arc of Enslaved Communities project and inviting future participation with MDC.

Hurdles

- Data sovereignty continues to be critical to building trust and engaging feedback. CCL has integrated an anonymized system to prioritize privacy and MDC ownership over any descendant contact information shared at events.
- Previous hurdle addressed: dedicated staff for project.

Next Steps

MDC has a robust network in Orange and Albemarle County which is reflected in the outreach efforts. The coming months require outreach and events in other counties, including those hosted by church officials and county genealogists .

- We have been thinking about solutions that might include developing an MOU between UVA, a community-based archive, and MDC.
- Incorporate feedback from outreach events to the GIS map.
- Continue outreach in the nine counties area.



o MAP LINK: <https://uvalibrary.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=cad888940dae4ae487000186e64814ef>

Note: Standardize visual language (symbols), establish filter for site type (e.g. home, school, church)



o SURVEY LINK: <https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/2e994a3959ac462292b5458cd853144e>

Note - fields to provide more information will appear if respondent selects “Yes” to “Would you like to tell us about a site?”

- Identify more outreach events (with MDC input!)
- Finalize plans for community outreach and who is able to attend at:
 - o October 1Gth: Eclipse Awards Banquet hosted by Orange County African American Historical Society
- ** *would like an MDC representative at each event to explain their vision for the Arc project.*
- Create outreach material and attend events!
 - o *iteratively adapt as events occur and we receive feedback)*

OCTOBER STATUS REPORT *MDC's Arc of Communities*

Project Summary

The Arc of Enslaved Communities project is a Montpelier Descendants Committee (MDC) initiative to connect descendant communities across Central Virginia. Funded by a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, this MDC initiative is focused on developing a community engagement strategy for the counties in the Arc. The MDC contracted the University of Virginia's Center for Cultural Landscapes (CCL) and Institute for Engagement and Negotiation to create that Strategy.

This Community Engagement Strategy will serve as a roadmap to inform the development of the Arc of Enslaved Communities commemorative landscape that will incorporate the unrecognized contributions of the enslaved across all 2600 acres at Montpelier and the enslaved and free, historically Black communities in the surrounding counties. The Community Engagement Strategy will outline a plan for TMF [The Montpelier Foundation] and MDC [Montpelier Descendants Committee] to engage with descendant communities to connect historic African American sites of memory across nine counties including and surrounding James Madison's Montpelier (situated in Orange County, Virginia): Albemarle, Greene, Madison, Louisa, Orange, Rappahannock, Spotsylvania, Culpeper and Fluvanna.

Work Narrative

Throughout October, the project team attended several events to gather valuable feedback on the Arc of Enslaved Communities. As we've participated in more outreach activities, we've adapted our strategy to suit various event formats, allowing us to present the initiative effectively. This tailored approach ensures the objectives of the Arc of Enslaved Communities are clearly communicated with accessible visuals and printed materials. Many events this month incorporated a conversational approach to encourage feedback on the webmap, leading to future opportunities for listening sessions at upcoming gatherings. As we continue updating the webmap based on feedback, we've also noticed that users find the zoom and filter feature easy to navigate, enhancing accessibility and engagement with the map.

Following the September Descendants' Symposium, Dr. Roberts was invited to give a 10-minute presentation to the DEC-VA board members on her work with descendant communities in Texas, especially strategies for documenting cemeteries. Much of the feedback from the DEC expressed interest in using the Texas and MDC webmap platforms to locate cemeteries and organize events to access and learn about these sites. The team continues to foster relationships with individuals and organizations across the nine-county region. It has connected with individuals in Albemarle, Culpeper, and Orange counties as we plan future listening sessions. Through recent conversations, we've learned that many community events in the region are typically held in the spring.

Appendix B Monthly Project Status Reports

Additionally, our team is committed to data sovereignty, ensuring that all data remains under the ownership of contributing individuals and organizations, rather than solely UVA. This approach opens a dialogue with the Montpelier Descendants Community (MDC) on how best to acknowledge the contributions of those who help shape and enrich the webmap. In support of this goal, we are considering hosting a dedicated event at Montpelier, featuring a concert with the Carter Legacy Choir and a nature walk. Such an event would foster meaningful connections and create a welcoming space for community members to contribute to or enjoy gathering. Looking ahead, we have begun drafting the final report for the National Trust for Historic Preservation and have scheduled two listening sessions in November in Madison and Orange counties.

While not located in the nine-county region, Dr. Roberts engaged with descendants of a Carter plantation of which she is an advisory board member called Oatlands in Loudoun County, VA. On the National Trust property, she not only interacted with descendants but also identified scholars and local historians engaged in mapping the sales of the enslaved in the county and how that, in turn, led to certain kinship and settlement patterns that define the enslaved and free Black communities in the county. These scholars are happy to demonstrate their approach to researching slave sales and mapping. Further, several Carter properties in the Arc region create an opportunity to collaborate

on active memory work across boundaries. Notably, their mapping of Black settlements, sales of enslaved people, and kinship networks required several years of work focused on one county. Our team is happy to make the workshop or discussion with researchers occur virtually or in person at Montpelier or our new Charlottesville offices.

Further, the Oatlands descendants' brochures and pamphlets were great examples of materials the MDC could develop to promote the Arc. We are happy to make copies of these materials available to the MDC and discuss possible mockups that contain images of descendants as well as lists of names of the enslaved and family surnames. We highly recommend a discussion on the development of printed collateral and a workshop with the Oatlands researchers on the enslaved community research approach. We also would like to discuss the creation of notecards with family names or institutions that could be disbursed along with our project flyer at events.



OCTOBER STATUS REPORT *MDC's Arc of Communities, continued*

Community Partners

CCL and MDC have gathered a list of organizations we may contact to create opportunities for MDC to discuss the Arc of Enslaved Communities and for UVA IEN-CCL to invite participation in the initiative. Our Project Manager Justice Madden will send outreach letters to the remaining contacts on this list during November.

- Madison African American Historical Society - see outreach events for November
- Orange County African American Historical Society, Bruce Monroe - See October events and upcoming event in February 2025
- Carver High School
- Carter Farms, Orange VA, Michael Carter Jr. – Have made an outreach attempt
- Boys and Girls Club of Orange
- Orange High School
- Central Virginia African American Chamber of Commerce (CVAACC)
- USBC US Black Businesses Director
- The Burley Varsity Club (Charlottesville)
- 100 Black Men of Central Virginia
- NAACP local branches: <https://naacpva.org/branches/>
- County libraries

If MDC board members have relationships with any of these organizations or feel organizations are missing from this list, please email Justice Madden (jmm3ah@virginia.edu).

On page 71 is a sample letter that we have drafted for your review. This letter will be sent to the identified partners explaining the Arc of Enslaved Communities project and inviting future participation with MDC.

Hurdles

We contacted church officials and county genealogists but have not yet received responses. We will continue our efforts to engage these contacts, some of whom were made available through MDC members. Hosting listening sessions in partnership with these communities to help foster connections across the nine counties is what we will continue to propose.

Previous hurdle addressed: we continue addressing data sovereignty concerns by building trust and engaging feedback. Incorporating an anonymized system has been mediated. We have also found that when discussing cemeteries, descendants are ASKING us to help them devise ways to capture, secure, and make publicly accessible information about them. This is the opposite of their concerns about data ownership expressed earlier in the project.

Next Steps

We have been thinking about solutions that might include developing an MOU between UVA, a community-based archive, and MDC. Incorporate feedback from outreach events to the GIS map. Continue outreach in the nine counties area.



o MAP LINK: <https://uvalibrary.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=cad888940dae4ae487000186e64814ef>

Note: Standardize visual language (symbols), establish filter for site type (e.g. home, school, church)



o SURVEY LINK: <https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/2e994a3959ac462292b5458cd853144e>

Note - fields to provide more information will appear if respondent selects “Yes” to “Would you like to tell us about a site?”

Identify more outreach events or listening sessions like the one we had with the DEC-VA this month (with MDC input!)

- Update outreach materials for:
 - o November 9th: Oral History Workshop
 - o February 16th: Orange County African American Historical Society Annual Meeting (details forthcoming)

** would like an MDC representative at each event to explain their vision for the Arc project.

- Create outreach material and attend events!
 - o *iteratively adapt as events occur, and we receive feedback*
 - o *see Oatland Examples.*

Appendix B Monthly Project Status Reports

OCTOBER - Updated Timeline

Deliverables	Status	Notes	Assignee
RESEARCH: Gather data about descendant groups and the ways they currently engage (key organizations and contacts at those organizations, events, etc.)	DONE	Spatial data has been gathered on sites of enslavement and of freedom-seeking across the nine counties of the Arc and added to the GIS map.	Jennifer Saunders
GIS (SURVEY & MAP): Map descendants' historic site /place location using GIS software (StoryMap) and create survey for use at engagement events to solicit input on Arc & gather missing engagement data.	ONGOING	StoryMap and survey form are completed. Now, includes Fluvanna County. However, they will be iteratively adapted based on feedback at community events.	Jennifer Saunders
OUTREACH: Attend an average of two to three descendant-led or events suggested by MDC. The outreach efforts are tailored to the prospective audience, county, and event schedule.	ONGOING	Attended two outreach events and have held follow-up conversations with individuals to learn about future opportunities to hold listening sessions. With a MDC representative at events, we provided an overview and objectives of the project. Additionally, we solicit anonymous feedback.	Justice Madden, Dr. Roberts /Dr. Dukes
REPORT: Gather and aggregate impressions about the Arc and how it should approach engagement at events from the survey and map into an engagement strategy report.	ONGOING	We are still collecting the data that will be in the final strategy report. We have collected impressions using methods that do not identify informants.	Dr. Roberts /Dr. Dukes

Project Partners	Reporting Period
Center for Cultural Landscapes (CCL): Dr. Andrea Roberts - Project Lead Justice Madden - Project Manager Jennifer Saunders - Research Specialist	Current Reporting Period: October 1 -31, 2024
Institute for Engagement & Negotiation (IEN): Dr. Frank Dukes - Project Consultant Jordan Murphy - Project Associate	Expended Funds (to date:) <div style="background-color: black; width: 100px; height: 15px; margin: 5px 0;"></div>

NOVEMBER STATUS REPORT *MDC's Arc of Communities*

Project Summary

The Arc of Enslaved Communities project is a Montpelier Descendants Committee (MDC) initiative to connect descendant communities across Central Virginia. Funded by a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, this MDC initiative is focused on developing a community engagement strategy for the counties in the Arc. The MDC contracted the University of Virginia's Center for Cultural Landscapes (CCL) and Institute for Engagement and Negotiation to create that Strategy.

This Community Engagement Strategy will serve as a roadmap to inform the development of the Arc of Enslaved Communities commemorative landscape that will incorporate the unrecognized contributions of the enslaved across all 2600 acres at Montpelier and the enslaved and free, historically Black communities in the surrounding counties. The Community Engagement Strategy will outline strategies for TMF [The Montpelier Foundation] and MDC [Montpelier Descendants Committee] to engage with descendant communities to connect historic African American sites of memory across nine counties including and surrounding James Madison's Montpelier (situated in Orange County, Virginia): Albemarle, Greene, Madison, Louisa, Orange, Rappahannock, Spotsylvania, Culpeper and Fluvanna.

Work Narrative

Over the past month, the project team engaged with several individuals and communities to gather feedback, strengthen relationships, and inform the development of the Arc of Enslaved Communities initiative. This included meetings and listening sessions with the and participation in MDC's "Train the Trainer" workshop, Madison County African American Association (MCAAHA) to access two large African American cemeteries on privately-owned land in Madison County, a site visit to the Yancey Community Center in Esmont, VA, and an oral history event centering the experiences of the Tanner Community's memories and family stories about attending and/or working at Woodberry Forest in Orange, VA. Each of these engagements provided valuable insights into local histories, genealogical research, potential training opportunities, and strategies for commemorating the region's Black heritage.

MDC "Train the Trainer" Workshop

A key highlight during this period was the MDC's "Train the Trainer" workshop. This event served as a platform for the project team to introduce the webmap as a dynamic tool for oral history research. By demonstrating its features and potential applications, attendees were invited to consider how listening sessions could be incorporated into their own communities. The workshop facilitated direct engagement with participants, sparked discussions on

Appendix B Monthly Project Status Reports

best practices for gathering and sharing stories, and prompted inquiries about holding future listening sessions. This interactive approach not only helped build awareness of the Arc project's resources but also laid the groundwork for a decentralized network of community trainers who can help sustain and expand these efforts.

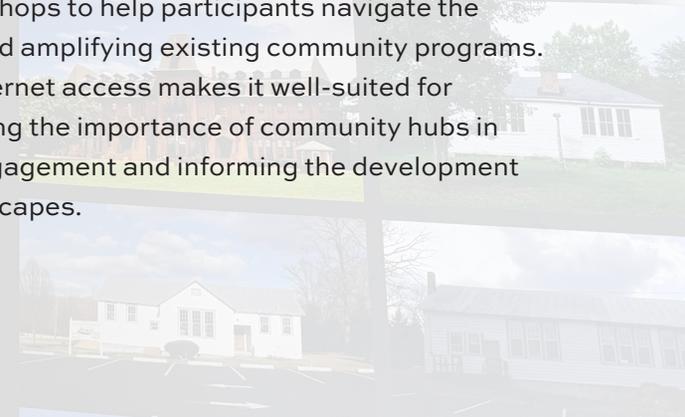
MCAAHA Engagement:

Madden and Roberts met with a group in Madison County following Dr. Roberts' spring presentation at Monticello on cemeteries as new civic commons. This group included a member of MCAAHA and local landowners who granted access to cemeteries on their estate. Preliminary research suggests this land may be part of a historic Black settlement. MCAAHA, which houses extensive archives related to local Black lodges, secret societies, war veterans, educators, and a Madam C.J. Walker product distributor and salon owner, could serve as a hub for Arc project activities. Strengthening ties with MCAAHA may help the MDC and project team gather and interpret gravesite records, document descendant cemeteries, and honor the stories of enslaved individuals. To ensure respectful and equitable collaborations between private landowners and descendant communities, the team is considering establishing protocols, guided by "the Rubric," to shape discussions around

land use, memory work, and commemoration. Feedback from these sessions underscores the value of cemetery mapping as a tool for building public commemorative landscapes, and developing printed materials (like bookmarks listing family names, as used by Oatlands) could support these efforts.

Yancey Community Center and Esmont Community Visit:

The project team also visited Simpson Park in the Porter's Esmont area and the Yancey School Community Center in Albemarle County. Simpson Park's trails, signage, and facilities celebrate Mr. Simpson's legacy and the Esmont community's rich history. At the Yancey Community Center, which preserves oral histories and commemorates the school's role in African American education, the coordinator expressed interest in partnering with the team to use the webmap as a teaching and training resource. Future activities might include supporting their food distribution initiatives, hosting "Train the Trainer" workshops to help participants navigate the webmap and surveys, and amplifying existing community programs. The Center's reliable internet access makes it well-suited for these efforts, emphasizing the importance of community hubs in sustaining long-term engagement and informing the development of commemorative landscapes.



Clockwise from top left—Virginia Cleveland Hall at Hampton University, 1913; Douglas Reynolds, 2013; Pine Grove Rosenwald School, Cumberland, VA. Niya Bates, 2013; Esmont School, Albemarle, VA. Niya Bates, 2013.

NOVEMBER STATUS REPORT *MDC's Arc of Communities, continued*

Tanner Community and Oral History Initiative:

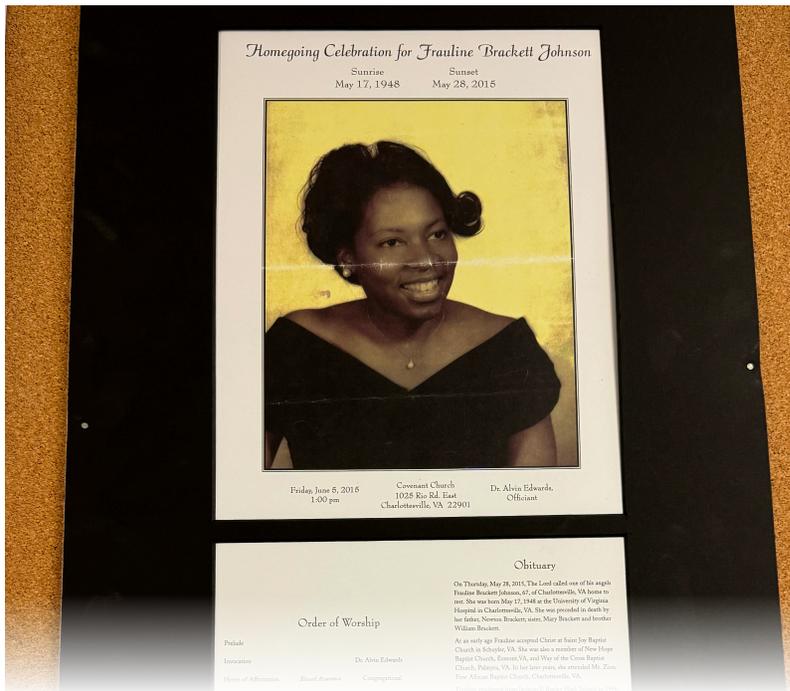
Later in the month, Justice attended an oral history event in Madison County focused on gathering stories from the Tanner Community about experiences at Woodbury Forest School. Originally the estate of William Madison and now on the National Register of Historic Places, the school's history intersects with African American communities and the legacy of enslavement. Held at Mt. Pisgah Church—founded in 1879 and rebuilt in 1898 after a fire— this listening session, initiated by a Woodbury student, exemplifies how youth-led oral history projects can offer fresh perspectives, deepen community engagement, and potentially inspire similar initiatives within the Arc project.

Emerging Themes and Next Steps:

Across all feedback sessions, themes have emerged around commemorating kinship networks. These patterns, shaped by work, education, and familial visits to living relatives and ancestral cemeteries, reflect deeply rooted connections to the landscape. Additionally, there is a deep concern about development across the counties and the history of Black land ownership in the region. These insights are invaluable for understanding how to honor and sustain these connections through the Arc of Enslaved Communities initiative.

Following recent discussions with George, the team will now capture personal information at future listening sessions with the MDC's stance on informed consent and data sovereignty in mind. The survey will be updated to reflect these principles, ensuring that participants retain ownership and control over their contributions.

As the project team continues to conduct listening sessions and proceeds with drafting the final report for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, a key question arises: What role does the MDC want to play in writing sections of Community Engagement Strategy? Clarifying MDC's level of involvement will help ensure that the final documentation and recommendations reflect their priorities, values, and leadership in commemorating the histories of descendants and their communities.



Appendix B Monthly Project Status Reports

Community Partners

CCL and MDC have gathered a list of organizations we may contact to create opportunities for MDC to discuss the Arc of Enslaved Communities and for UVA IEN-CCL to invite participation in the initiative. **Our Project Manager Justice Madden will send outreach letters to the remaining contacts on this list in December and follow-up with registrants from MDC's "Train the Trainer" workshop.**

- Madison African American Historical Society - **see outreach events for November Community Partners**
- Orange County African American Historical Society, Bruce Monroe - **See upcoming event in February 2025**
- Carver High School – **Have made an outreach attempt**
- Carter Farms, Orange VA, Michael Carter Jr. – **Have made an outreach attempt**
- Boys and Girls Club of Orange – Have made an outreach attempt
- Orange High School – **Have made an outreach attempt**
- Central Virginia African American Chamber of Commerce (CVAACC) – **Have made an outreach attempt**
- USBC US Black Businesses Director
- The Burley Varsity Club (Charlottesville)
- 100 Black Men of Central Virginia
- NAACP local branches: <https://naacpva.org/branches/>
- County libraries

If MDC board members have relationships with any of these organizations or feel organizations are missing from this list, please email Justice Madden (jmm3ah@virginia.edu).

On page 71, see a sample letter that we have drafted for your review. This letter will be sent to the identified partners explaining the Arc of Enslaved Communities project and inviting future participation with MDC.

Hurdles

A key challenge for the project is building outreach and engagement in counties such as Culpeper, Spotsylvania, and Fluvanna, where community connections and feedback have been more limited. While progress has been made in establishing relationships in other parts of the Arc region, these areas require additional efforts to identify key stakeholders, establish trust, and raise awareness about the Arc of Enslaved Communities project. To address this, Justice will reach out to registrants and attendees of the two oral history workshops attended this month to foster connections and gather insights from individuals who may have ties to these counties.

Previous hurdle address: the listening sessions this month helped to foster connections with church officials and genealogists from surrounding counties.

Justice is following up with those individuals to host learning sessions and showcase the webmap.

Next Steps

Finalize the survey and map



- o MAP LINK: <https://uvalibrary.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=cad888940dae4ae487000186e64814ef>

Note: Standardize visual language (symbols), establish filter for site type (e.g. home, school, church)



- o SURVEY LINK: <https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/2e994a3959ac462292b5458cd853144e>

Note - fields to provide more information will appear if respondent selects "Yes" to "Would you like to tell us about a site?"

- Identify more outreach events or listening sessions for December and January month **(with MDC input!)**
- Update outreach materials for:
 - o February 16th: Orange County African American Historical Society Annual Meeting (30- minute presentation)
- ** would like an MDC representative at each event to explain their vision for the Arc project.
- Create outreach material and attend events!
 - o "Train the Trainer" workshop with webmap hosted at Yancey Community Center
 - o Protocol for using the Rubric to facilitate
 - o Host an event in late January or February

NOVEMBER STATUS REPORT *MDC's Arc of Communities, continued*

Community Events Update

Staff at CCL have attended four community events:

1. Oral History Workshop on November 9th, 2024
2. Madison County African American Historical Society on November 12th, 2024
3. Porter's Esmont Yancey School Community Center on November 19th, 2024
4. Woodberry Forest School and Tanner Community Oral History event on November 23rd, 2024

Each event was tailored based on factors such as: the time allotted; event structure; and the expected attendees. This month, the sessions were meetings to receive feedback on how the Arc contributes to and learn about opportunities to collaborate on events. During every outreach opportunity, our team emphasizes MDC's goals and objectives for the Arc. From these conversations, we are coordinating opportunities to attend events and receive additional input feedback from throughout the region. Our team has been maintaining connections and we continue to seek new outreach opportunities.

Upcoming Events Calendar:

- February 16: Orange County African American Historical Society Annual Meeting where we will provide a 30-minute presentation and invite interest in listening sessions.

Appendix B Monthly Project Status Reports

NOVEMBER - Updated Timeline

Deliverables	Status	Notes	Assignee
RESEARCH: Gather data about descendant groups and the ways they currently engage (key organizations and contacts at those organizations, events, etc.)	DONE	Spatial data has been gathered on sites of enslavement and of freedom-seeking across the nine counties of the Arc and added to the GIS map.	Jennifer Saunders
GIS (SURVEY & MAP): Map descendants' historic site /place location using GIS software (StoryMap) and create survey for use at engagement events to solicit input on Arc & gather missing engagement data.	ONGOING	StoryMap and survey form are completed. Now, includes Fluvanna County. However, they will be iteratively adapted based on feedback at community events.	Jennifer Saunders
OUTREACH: Attend an average of two to three descendant-led or events suggested by MDC. The outreach efforts are tailored to the prospective audience, county, and event schedule.	ONGOING	Attended four outreach events and have held follow-up conversations with individuals to learn about future opportunities to hold listening sessions. With a MDC representative at events, we provided an overview and objectives of the project.	Justice Madden, Dr. Roberts /Dr. Dukes
REPORT: Gather and aggregate impressions about the Arc and how it should approach engagement at events from the survey and map into an engagement strategy report.	ONGOING	We are still collecting the data that will be in the final strategy report. We updated the survey to collect personal information at the discretion of the participant.	Dr. Roberts /Dr. Dukes

Project Partners	Reporting Period
Center for Cultural Landscapes (CCL): Dr. Andrea Roberts - Project Lead Justice Madden - Project Manager Jennifer Saunders - Research Specialist	Current Reporting Period: November 1 - 30, 2024
Institute for Engagement & Negotiation (IEN): Dr. Frank Dukes - Project Consultant Jordan Murphy - Project Associate	Expended Funds (to date:) <div style="background-color: black; width: 100px; height: 15px; margin: 5px 0;"></div>

Appendix C Overview of Listening Sessions

The outreach period for the Arc of Enslaved Communities initiative was marked by a series of events that engaged descendant communities, local organizations, and individuals across the nine-county region. Below is an overview of the listening sessions and the emerging themes from the discussion:

Montpelier Burial Ground “Grace Under Fire: Disaster Recovery at the Archaeology Land and Office” (April 17, 2024)

Cemeteries serve as an emotional and educational hub attracting descendants to gather at Montpelier. The Montpelier Burial Ground is also a regional touch point when developing the future integrated cultural and natural trail system envisioned by the Arc.

Descendants Day at the Highland (June 8, 2024)

Descendants Day at Highland empowered descendants to test and evaluate our webmapping survey tool before being used at future events. During the event descendants critiqued questions and the staff answered questions about data collection and use.

MDC Juneteenth and Oral History Kick-off (June 15, 2024)

This event served as a kick-off for the MDC’s Oral History “Train the Trainer” initiative. By building capacity around oral history collection more landscape and place histories can be collected which explain the connections between people, land, and kinship.

Virginia Descendants Day Symposium (September 13, 2024)

At the DEC Virginia Descendants’ Symposium, the team implemented a strategy to engage descendants by distributing physical maps of the nine-county region. Participants were invited to fill in the maps with missing information, leading to the identification of historically significant Black towns, cemeteries, and churches.

Orange County African American Historical Society Meeting (September 16, 2024)

During this meeting, the team gave a presentation to the society’s board to introduce the webmap and explore opportunities for hosting feedback events. This session established connections for future collaborations.

Constitution Day at Montpelier (September 21, 2024)

Although not focused on descendants, this event offered an opportunity to engage the broader public. Local landowners shared valuable information about cemeteries on their properties, contributing to the project’s data collection.

Appendix C Overview of Listening Session *continued*

DEC Virginia Board Meeting Presentation (October 17, 2024)

Following the September symposium, Dr. Roberts presented it to the DEC Virginia advisory board, discussing strategies for documenting cemeteries based on her work in Texas. The board expressed interest in using webmap to locate cemeteries and support genealogical research, while also noting concerns about hostility from local landowners and officials.

Black History of Albemarle Symposium (November 9, 2024)

This symposium connected the project team with local historians and educators, fostering opportunities for future collaborations.

Meeting with Members of Madison County African American Historical Association (November 12, 2024)

A meeting with members of MCAAHA and local landowners highlighted potential partnerships for accessing cemeteries and documenting gravesites. MCAAHA's extensive archives could serve as a vital resource for the Arc initiative.

Yancey School Community Center and Simpson Park Visit (November 19, 2024)

The visit to the Yancey Community Center emphasized the importance of community hubs in advancing commemorative landscapes. Discussions focused on using the webmap as a teaching tool and hosting workshops to deepen engagement.

Woodberry Forest School and Tanner Community Oral History Event (November 23, 2024)

Held at Mt. Pisgah Church, this listening session gathered stories from the Tanner Community about their connection to Woodberry Forest School. The event, initiated by a Woodberry student, highlighted the potential for youth-led oral history projects to enrich the Arc's efforts.

“Right the Record” / Culpeper Event (December 10, 2024)

This commemorative event honored the lives of three men lynched in Culpeper and fostered cross-county connections. It included discussions about Black economic districts, burial grounds, and migration patterns. A landowner expressed interest in addressing burial grounds on their property, demonstrating the importance of collaborative approaches to preservation.

Appendix D Stakeholders by Counties

County	Name	City	Organization
Albemarle	Peggy Scott	Esmont	Yancey School Community Center
	Edward Brooks	Esmont	Yancey School Community Center
	Andi Cumbo	Crozet	Albemarle Historical Society
	Lorenzo Dickerson	Ivy	Maupintown Media
City of Charlottesville	Sara Bon-Harper	Charlottesville	James Monroe's Highland
	Jessica Harris	Charlottesville	DEC - Virginia
	Niya Bates		
	Bertha French		
		Charlottesville	Highland's Council of Descendant Advisors
	Dr. Andrea Douglas	Charlottesville	Jefferson School African American Heritage Center
	Jordy Yager		
	Elizabeth Shillue	Charlottesville	Beloved Communities C'Ville
		Charlottesville	Vinegar Hill Magazine
		Charlottesville	The Burley Varsity Club
	Charlottesville	100 Black Men of Central Virginia	
	Justin Reid	Charlottesville	Charlottesville Area Community Foundation
	Ty'Leik Chambers	Charlottesville	Getting Word African American Oral History Project, Monticello
Culpeper	Zane Nelson	Culpeper	"Right the Record"
	Kaleb Hackley	Culpeper	NAACP Culpeper Branch
	Shelly Tutt		Culpeper African American Historical Society

Appendix D Stakeholders by Counties *continued*

County	Name	City	Organization
Fluvanna	Joseph Creasy	Fork Union	NAACP Fluvanna County Branch
	Horace Scruggs Nadine Armstrong	Palmyra	Fluvanna Historical Society
	Hannah Scruggs	Palmyra	Public Historian
	Carmen Smith	Fork Union	Paul Lawrence Dunbar Rosenwald School
Greene	Jeanne Rexroad		Greene County Historical Society
Louisa	Deborah A. Coles	Louisa	NAACP Louisa County Branch
	Gerald Evans		Louisa County High School
Madison	Mesha Jones Nancy Garnett Williams	Madison	Madison County African American Historical Society
	Kemp Hill	Madison	Graves Mill Farm
	Taaj Davis	Woodberry Forest	Woodberry Forest School
Orange	Rev. John Reid	Orange	NAACP Orange County Branch
	Angie Oakey	Orange	Boys and Girls Club of Orange
		Orange	Orange High School
	George Monroe Jr.	Orange	Montpelier Descendants Committee
	Matthew Reeves	Orange	The Montpelier Foundation, Archeology and Landscape Restoration
Rappahannock	Marie Davis Roman	Amisville	
Spotsylvania	Pastor Mozett Petway	Spotsylvania	NAACP Spotsylvania Branch

Appendix E Outreach Materials



UVA IRB-SBS #5460

MONTPELIER DESCENDANTS COMMITTEE'S ARC OF ENSLAVED COMMUNITIES INTEREST FORM

The Arc of Enslaved Communities is a project of the Montpelier Descendants Committee (MDC). The Arc includes an 9-county area surrounding Montpelier. Sign up below to stay informed upcoming events and updates about MDC's Arc project.

#	NAME	ORGANIZATION	AFFILIATED INSTITUTIONS (CHURCHES, SCHOOLS, ETC.)	PHONE	EMAIL	CAN WE CONTACT YOU TO FOLLOW UP ABOUT THE ARC PROJECT? (Y/N)
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						

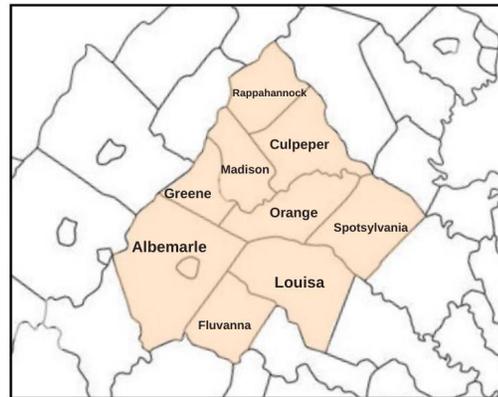
For more information on MDC's Arc of Enslaved Communities project, visit their website: <https://montpelierdescendants.org/thearc/>

THE ARC OF ENSLAVED COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

The **Montpelier Descendants' Committee's (MDC)** "Arc of Enslaved Communities" initiative is dedicated to building relationships with descendant networks in a 9-county region surrounding James Madison's Montpelier in Orange County. The Arc encompasses an area with one of the highest concentrations of enslaved Americans during the formative years of the United States. The MDC's goal is to identify ways to collaborate with descendant communities to develop a more complete commemorative landscape in the Arc. The Center for Cultural Landscapes (CCL) and the Institute for Engagement & Negotiation (IEN) are providing research and engagements support to the MDC.

Join our effort! We are asking descendants to:

- **Share your thoughts:** Tell us what you think of the idea of the Arc of Enslaved Communities.
- **Search the maps:** Search for your community's schools, churches, cemeteries, and sites of enslavement (plantations) within Arc boundaries online here: <https://tinyurl.com/mdcarc>
- **Add to the map:** Tell us which places are missing. Leave comments on the map or poster.
- **Join the Arc Project:** Join MDC's contact list. Learn about future listening sessions and help update the database. Let us know if your organization wants to co-host a future Arc event!

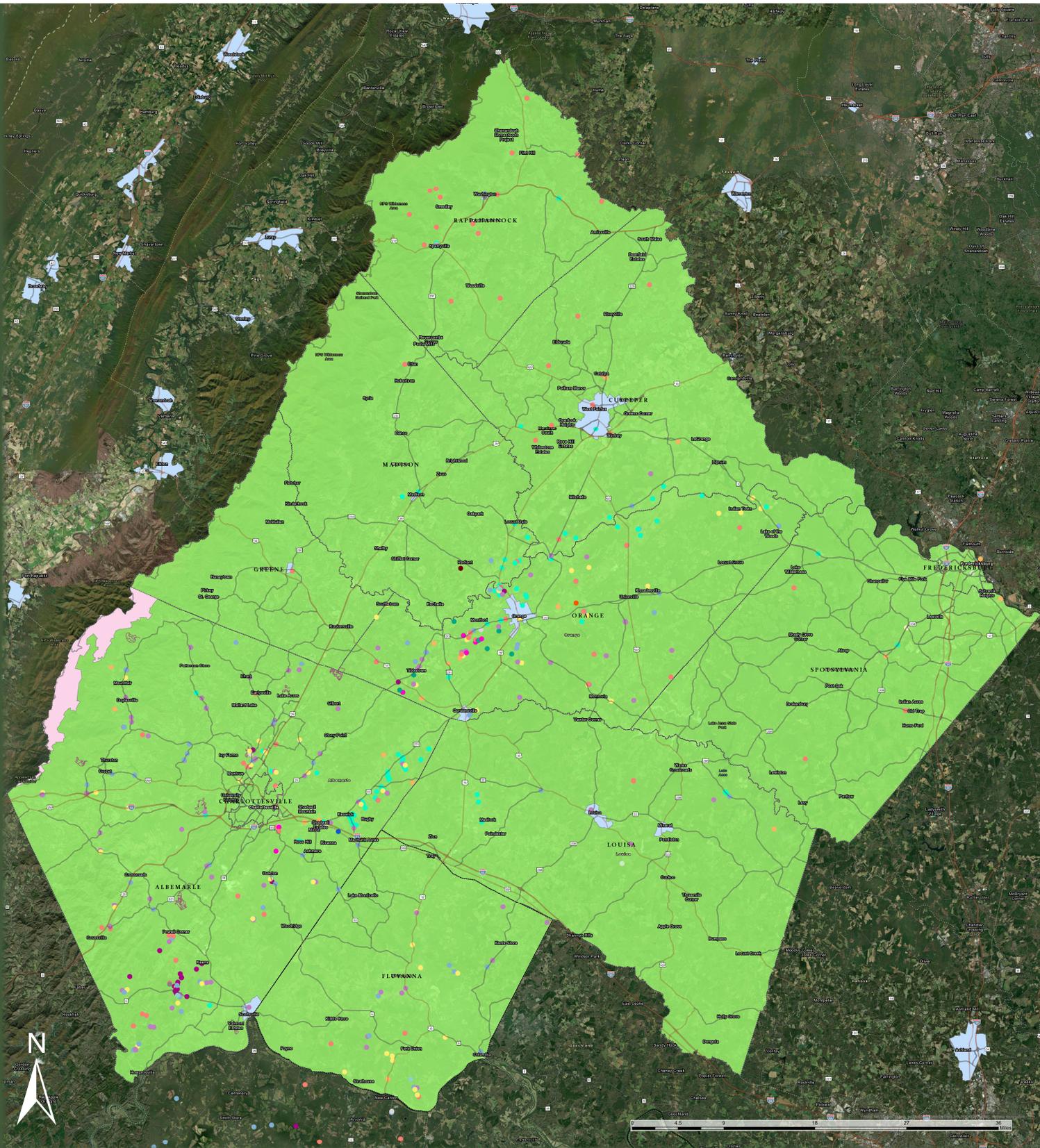


To explore the web map,
scan the QR code or visit
tinyurl.com/mdcarc



Questions or interested in hosting a listening session?
Email us at CCLEvents@virginia.edu

Find out more about the Montpelier Descendants Committee and their goals at: www.montpelierdescendants.org/thearc



MDC's Arc of Enslaved Communities Map

Center for Cultural Landscapes
Institute for Engagement and Negotiation
UVA School of Architecture

Created by Jennifer Saunders, MA
Research Specialist, Center for Cultural Landscapes

Data sources: Virginia Department of Historic Resources; Montpelier Department of Archaeology & Landscape Restoration; Wikipedia; Central Virginia Freetowns; Freetowns 2024; Albemarle County GIS

Appendix F Spatial Analysis of the Arc of Enslaved Communities Region

Legend

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| — Albemarle County Park Trails | ● Courthouse | ● Lodge | ● School |
| ■ Shenandoah National Park | ● Enslaved Community | ● Main House | ● Secondary/Tenant |
| ■ Towns | ● Fraternal Lodge | ● Mobile Home/Trailer | ● Settlement |
| ■ Arc Counties | ● Freedmans' Farm | ● Personal Property | ● Single Dwelling |
| ● Archaeological Site | ● Freedmans' Settlement | ● Plantation | ● Slave/Servant Quarters |
| ● Battle Site | ● Historic District | ● Post Office | ● Store |
| ● Business | ● Jail | ● Presidential Home | ● Tavern/Ordinary |
| ● Cemetery | ● Land | ● Residence | ● Other |
| ● Church | | | |



Appendix F Spatial Analysis of the Arc of Enslaved Communities Region

This section provides an overview of the information gathered from a spatial analysis across the nine-counties. From public available data, the webmap includes a total of 421 places that related to histories of Black life in the Piedmont region.

OVERALL

County with most places: Albemarle (179)

County with least places: Greene (1)

Most common place types: “Single Dwelling” (147), followed by “Cemetery” (72) and “Church” (55)

RECOMMENDATIONS

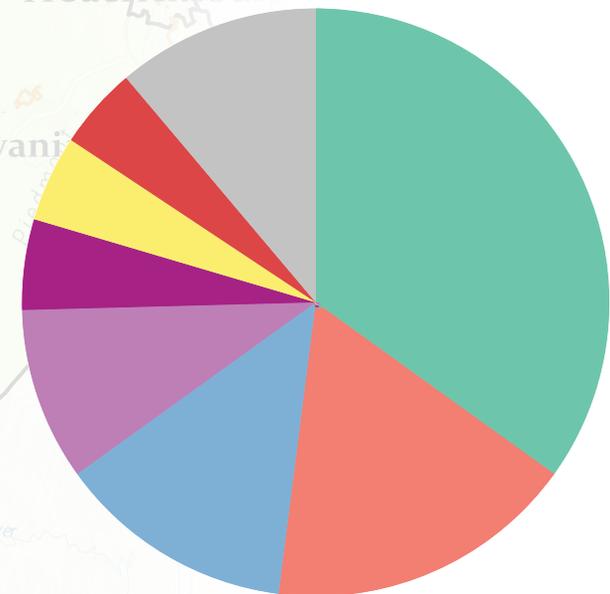
- Develop descendant-created place classification scheme to eliminate multiple names for same kind of place (e.g. “Lodge” and “Fraternal Lodge”) and reflect descendant relationship to place
 - o DHR terminology may obscure full history of place – see Madison County, where “Single Dwelling” classification is used for plantations
- Shift focus from Albemarle, Orange Counties to outlying counties in Arc area (Greene and Madison to northwest, Louisa and Spotsylvania to southeast)
 - o Center and dispersion analysis, however, shows ideal center of commemorative efforts in NE corner of Albemarle County

PATTERNS

- Concentration of recorded places in SW-NE line through Albemarle, Orange, Madison, and Culpeper Counties
 - o This may be sampling bias, as Albemarle and Orange Counties are home to the greatest number of recorded places

Legend

- Single Dwelling 34.9%
- Cemetery 17.1%
- Church 13.1%
- School 9.5%
- Business 5.0%
- Settlement 4.8%
- Plantation 4.5%
- Other 11.2%



QUICK STATS

- # of places recorded: 179
- % change in African American population 2010-2020: -0.88%²²
- Most common place types: “Single Dwelling” (83), followed by “Cemetery” (20)

RECOMMENDATIONS

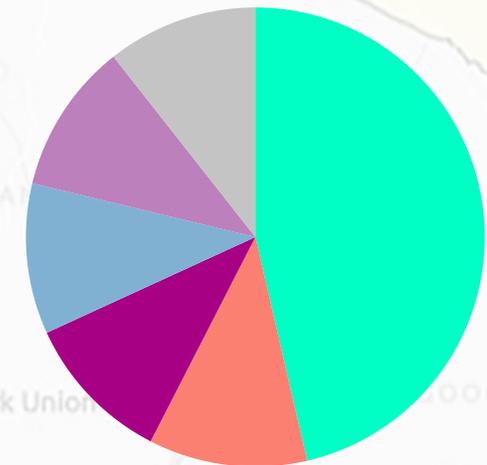
- Empower descendant organizations and encourage descendant-led initiatives rather than UVA-led ones
 - About 31% (55) of this data comes from UVA sources
- Connect home sites in northeast to families – most of these points are DHR-recorded and focus on the building(s) rather than the people
- Albemarle is only Arc county to have GIS trail data available; a good starting place and good example for putting together a larger commemorative network

PATTERNS

- Documented homesite cluster in northeast near Orange County, Louisa County borders along Rt. 231/Gordonsville Road (Keswick, Cismont, Cash Corner)
 - Runs along base of Southwest Mountains
- Documented business cluster in south around Esmont
 - Covered in DHR 002-5045 Jefferson-Carter Rural Historic District/ Southern Albemarle Rural Historic District
- Parks & Rec-run trails exist near Ivy Creek Carr-Greer homestead/Hydraulic/ Hydraulic Mill and Webbland/ Union Ridge Baptist Church. The Charlottesville Reservoir trail is proximate to an unnamed schoolhouse and a house along Rt. 600.

Legend

- Single Dwelling 46.4%
- Cemetery 11.2%
- Business 10.6%
- Church 10.6%
- School 10.6%
- Other 10.6%



Appendix F CULPEPER COUNTY

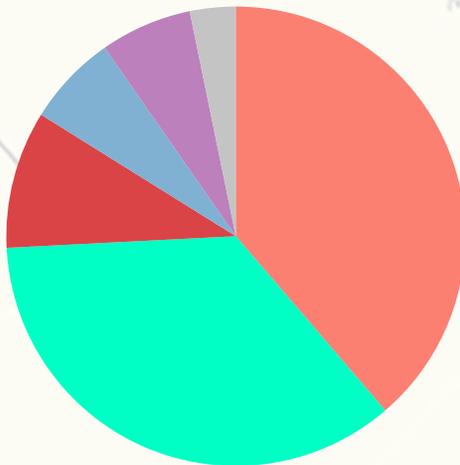
Spatial Analysis of the Arc of Enslaved Communities Region

QUICK STATS

- # of places recorded: 39
- % change in African American population 2010-2020: -3.17%
- Most common place types: “Cemetery” (12), followed by “Single Dwelling” (11)

PATTERNS

- Concentration of places along Orange County boundary
 - Possible explanations include survey bias, social historical (e.g. African Americans pushed to county edges), political/economic (differences in county administration)
- Dwellings along county line vs. cemeteries in northern half of county
 - May also represent survey bias
- Few recorded places in far eastern portion of county



Legend

- Cemetery 38.7%
- Single Dwelling 35.5%
- Plantation 9.7%
- Church 6.5%
- School 6.5%
- Other 3.2%

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Seek out, partner with any preexisting cemetery documentation and preservation groups
- Cemeteries likely have associated churches – connect with these social networks
- Consider likelihood of communities surrounding Salubria, Catalpa plantations

Spatial Analysis of the Arc of Enslaved Communities Region

Appendix F FLUVANNA COUNTY

QUICK STATS

- # of places recorded: 37²³
- % change in African American population 2010-2020: -1.77%²⁴
- Most common place types: “Settlement” (12), followed by “Church” (11)

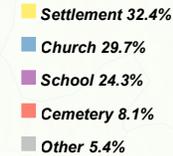
PATTERNS

- Concentration of places in southern half of county
 - o Includes Bremo Historic District
 - o Includes Paul Lawrence Dunbar Rosenwald School

RECOMMENDATION

- Collaborate with Dunbar School on cultural and health education programming

Legend



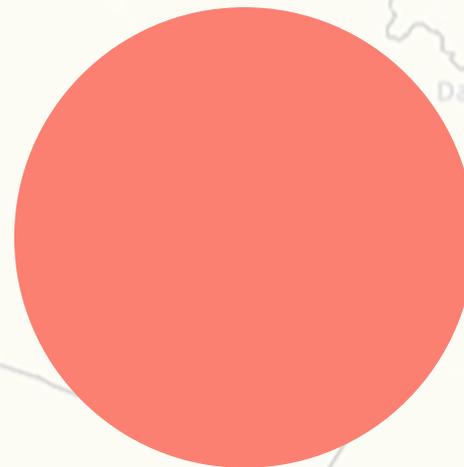
Appendix F GREENE COUNTY *Spatial Analysis of the Arc of Enslaved Communities Region*

QUICK STATS

- # of places recorded: 1
- % change in African American population 2010-2020: +0.72%
- Most common place type: “Cemetery” (1)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Connect with churches - source of stories and family archives
 - May also have associated cemeteries
- Consider likelihood of additional significant places along the James River, Albemarle County border
- Search historic maps and archives, Census data for potential African American home sites, businesses, churches, and other places
 - Contact Greene County Historical Society
- Consider likelihood of settlements around plantations and Register-listed properties, e.g. Locust Grove (DHR 039-0035), Powell-McMullan House (DHR 039-0034)



QUICK STATS

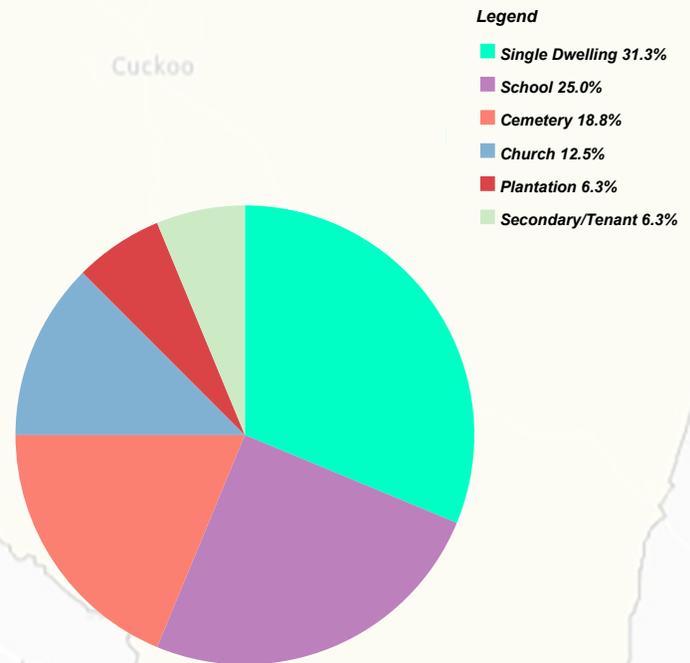
- # of places recorded: 16
- % change in African American population 2010-2020: -3.32%²⁵
- Most common place type: “Single Dwelling” (5), followed by “School” (4)

PATTERNS

- Documented places concentrated in northern half of county
- Cluster around Centreville near Lake Anna
- Cluster of documented dwellings off Rt. 15

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Explore social, geographic connections originating in Centreville, perhaps through Laurel Hill Baptist Church
- Develop rapid documentation strategy in advance of development encroachment, corporate land grab attempts.
 - o Amazon data center construction²⁶ mentioned by MDC’s Executive Director in 12/10/24 meeting.
 - o This would be second in Louisa (first is near Lake Anna)
 - o Approximate area of Cuckoo School’s location; recommend concentrating preservation efforts here.



Appendix F MADISON COUNTY *Spatial Analysis of the Arc of Enslaved Communities Region*

QUICK STATS

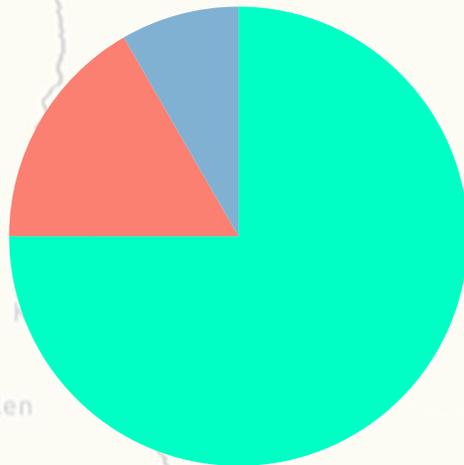
- # of places recorded: 12
- % change in African American population 2010-2020: -2.07%²⁷
- Most common place types: “Single Dwelling” (9), followed by “Cemetery” (2)

PATTERNS

- Documented places clustered in the southeastern part of county along borders with Culpeper, Orange Counties
 - At least three of the “Single Dwellings” recorded are plantations (Meander, Hartland Hall, Prospect Hill)
- Few documented resources along Blue Ridge Mountains/Shenandoah National Park boundaries/western county border
 - Consider who may have been “relocated” and where during creation of National Park

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Look for information on enslaved communities surrounding the “single dwellings” referenced above.
- Explore two documented cemeteries (Thomas Family Cemetery, Royal Lane Cemetery)



Legend

- Single Dwelling 75.0%
- Cemetery 16.7%
- Church 8.3%

QUICK STATS

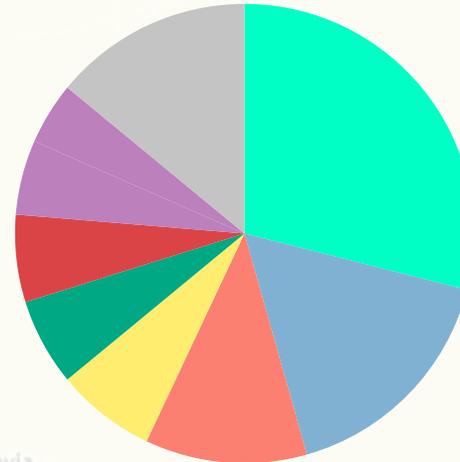
- # of places recorded: 114
- % change in African American population 2010-2020: -0.69%²⁸
- Most common place type: “Single Dwelling” (33), followed by “Church” (19) “Cemetery” (13)

PATTERNS

- Concentration of documented places surrounding Montpelier
 - Some duplication: Montpelier itself included 3 times as “Main House,” “Presidential Home,” and “Plantation.”
- Clusters: Jacksontown, Tibbstown, Nasons, along the border with Madison County west of Rt. 15, along border with Culpeper County east of Rt. 522

RECOMMENDATIONS

- As noted in Arc overview datasheet, develop descendant-created classification system to eliminate multiple categories for same place. This will also generate conversation about how descendants want to name, talk about, and commemorate these places.
- Consider possibility of linking with NPS trails (battlefields) near Spotsylvania border in northeastern part of county
- Balance heavy documentation in western half of county with further documentation in eastern half of county



Legend

- Single Dwelling 28.9%
- Church 16.7%
- Cemetery 11.4%
- Settlement 7.0%
- Main House 6.1%
- Plantation 6.1%
- School 5.3%
- Freedmans' Settlement 4.4%
- Other 14.0%

Appendix F RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY

Spatial Analysis of the Arc of Enslaved Communities Region

Shenandoah
Homesteads
Project

QUICK STATS

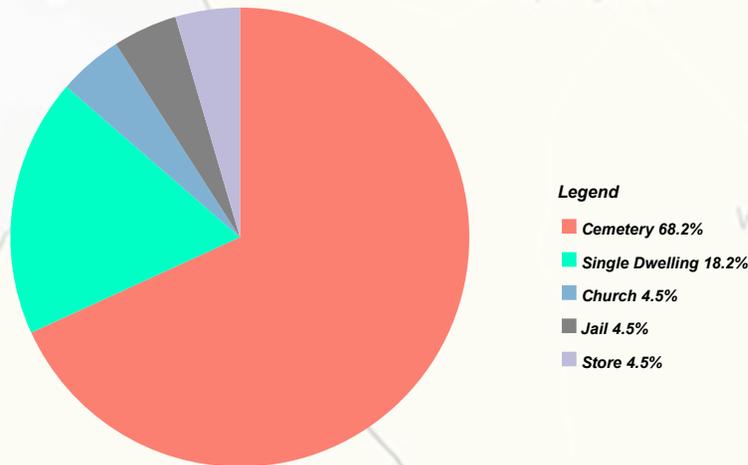
- # of places recorded: 22
- % change in African American population 2010-2020: -1.62%²⁹
- Most common place types: “Cemetery” (15), followed by “Single Dwelling” (4)

PATTERNS

- Concentration of documented cemeteries along Blue Ridge Mountains/Shenandoah National Park boundaries/western county border
 - Compare to Madison, Greene, and even Albemarle Counties, where documented places are concentrated in the eastern half of county
- Line of three documented cemeteries along the border with (non-Arc) Fauquier County

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Pursue a partnership with any preexisting cemetery documentation and preservation groups
- Cemeteries likely have associated churches – connect with these social networks.
- Connect concentration of western places to Shenandoah NP trails



QUICK STATS

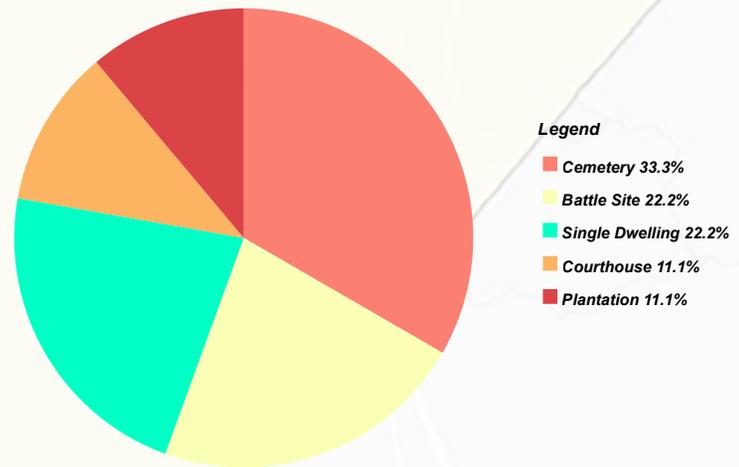
- # of places recorded: 9
- % change in African American population 2010-2020: +1.07%³⁰
- Most common place type: “Cemetery” (3), followed by “Single Dwelling” (2) and “Battle Site” (2)

PATTERNS

- Documented places spread across county
 - Exception is small cluster surrounding Spotsylvania Court House Historic District
- No documented places on the eastern side of Lake Anna
 - Compare to Louisa County’s Centreville cluster on the western side of Lake Anna

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Leverage already-protected battlefields and historic districts
 - Amend/expand extant Register listings
- Cemeteries likely have associated churches – connect with these social networks



NOTES

1Roberts, “Count the Outside Children! Kinkeeping as Preservation Practice Among Descendants of Texas' Freedom Colonies”; Acker, Daniel, “African American Mutual Aid Societies in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries”; Smith, R.L., “To Their Own Homes: Work of the Woman's Barnyard Auxiliary of the Farmers' Improvement Society of Texas”; Roberts, “The Farmers' Improvement Society and the Women's Barnyard Auxiliary of Texas:African American Community Building in the Progressive Era.”

2Birnbaum, Charles A., “Preservation Brief 36: Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes.”

3Alderman, “Place, Naming and the Interpretation of Cultural Landscapes”; hooks, bell, “Black Vernacular”; Birnbaum, Charles A., “Preservation Brief 36: Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes,” 101.

4LaRoche and Blakey, “Seizing Intellectual Power: The Dialogue at the New York African Burial Ground”; Leone, LaRoche, and Babiarez, “The Archaeology of Black Americans in Recent Times”; Blanks et al., “Preservation at the Intersections: Patterns of Disproportionate Multihazard Risk and Vulnerability in Louisiana's Historic African American Cemeteries”; Alexandra Jones, “Stop Destroying African American Cemeteries”; Galland, Love Cemetery : Unburying the Secret History of Slaves; City of Austin, “Parks and Recreation Board (PARB) Cemetery Working Group Session 3, Northwest Recreation Center”; Roberts and Biazar, “Black Placemaking in Texas.”

5Commemorative Landscape | TCLF.

6Montpelier, “Engaging Descendant Communities in the Interpretation of Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites: A Rubric of Best Practices Established by the National Summit on Teaching Slavery”; Blakey, “The New York African Burial Ground Project: An Examination of Enslaved Lives, A Construction of Ancestral Ties”; Franklin and Lee, “African American Descendants, Community Outreach, and the Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Project.”

7<https://www.styleweekly.com/excavating-the-past/>; Brumfield, “Excavating the Past.”; Smith, “Disappearing the Enslaved.”; Sugar Land 95/Final Report.

8Blakey, “The New York African Burial Ground Project: An Examination of Enslaved Lives, A Construction of Ancestral Ties”; Blakey, “Sharing Power and Voice with Descendants.”

9Montpelier, “Engaging Descendant Communities in the Interpretation of Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites: A Rubric of Best Practices Established by the National Summit on Teaching Slavery.”

10Skipper, “Saving St. Paul: Race, Development, and Heritage Politics in Dallas, Texas.”

11Silliman and Ferguson, “Consultation and Collaboration with Descendant Communities.”

12Carolyn J. Rosenthal, “Kinkeeping in the Familial Division of Labor”; Roberts, “Count the Outside Children! Kinkeeping as Preservation Practice Among Descendants of Texas' Freedom Colonies.”

13Montpelier, “Engaging Descendant Communities in the Interpretation of Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites: A Rubric of Best Practices Established by the National Summit on Teaching Slavery”; Roberts, “A Texas City Discovered a Mass Grave of Prison Laborers. What Should It Do with the Bodies?”

14Montpelier, “Engaging Descendant Communities in the Interpretation of Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites: A Rubric of Best Practices Established by the National Summit on Teaching Slavery”; Blakey, “The New York African Burial Ground Project: An Examination of Enslaved Lives, A Construction of Ancestral Ties”; Franklin and Lee, “African American Descendants, Community Outreach, and the Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Project.”

15Silliman and Ferguson, “Consultation and Collaboration with Descendant Communities”; Blakey, “Sharing Power and Voice with Descendants”; Franklin and Lee, “African American Descendants, Community Outreach, and the Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Project”; Roberts, “Performance as Place Preservation: The Role of Storytelling in the Formation of Shankleville Community's Black Counterpublics”; Roberts and Kelly, “Remixing as Praxis: Arnstein's Ladder Through the Grassroots Preservationist's Lens”

16Franklin, “Defiant Spirituality: Care Traditions in the Black Churches”; McAuley, “History, Race, and Attachment to Place among Elders in the Rural All-Black Towns of Oklahoma.”

17Alexander and OUP., “Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity”; Tumarkin, Traumascape: The Power and Fate of Places Transformed by Tragedy; Moore, “Addressing Community Trauma through the Framework of Controversial Monuments and Monuments of Oppression.”

18November 19, 2024: Email describing desired language for surveys. See changes requested in Appendix B. “The position of the MDC is that the provision of data is entirely voluntary, and participation in the survey is at the discretion of each individual, provided they are fully informed of the following points: Individual descendants and participants retain ownership and control over the information they contribute to the MDC's ARC project. Participants retain the right to opt out at any time to prevent their information from being used for other purposes. Participation in this project indicates that the information provided may be used as potential data inputs for other projects or organizations with similar objectives and aims as the ARC, particularly concerning UVA as a research institution.”

19Chiseri-Strater, “Turning in upon Ourselves.”

20Goff, Lisa. Finding Virginia's Freetown. ESRI ArcGIS StoryMap. <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/2ed8b8912e4e-4653aa633f07090d9882>

21Digital South, Land Back Abolition Project, University of North Carolina, accessed 2/27/2025, <https://digitalsouth.unc.edu/project/land-back-abolition-project/>

22https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albemarle_County,_Virginia#Demographics

23Due to late addition of Fluvanna County to Arc area, GIS data from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources was not obtained. The Department's publicly accessible database of historic resources, VCRIS, lists 669 documented places in Fluvanna County; however, public access does not indicate the historical ethnic affiliation of these places.

24Fluvanna County, Virginia - Wikipedia

25Louisa County, Virginia - Wikipedia

26Amazon slated to build second data center in Louisa County; Amazon files for 3.8 million sq ft data center campus

27Madison County, Virginia - Wikipedia

28Orange County, Virginia - Wikipedia

29Rappahannock County, Virginia - Wikipedia

30Spotsylvania County, Virginia - Wikipedia

