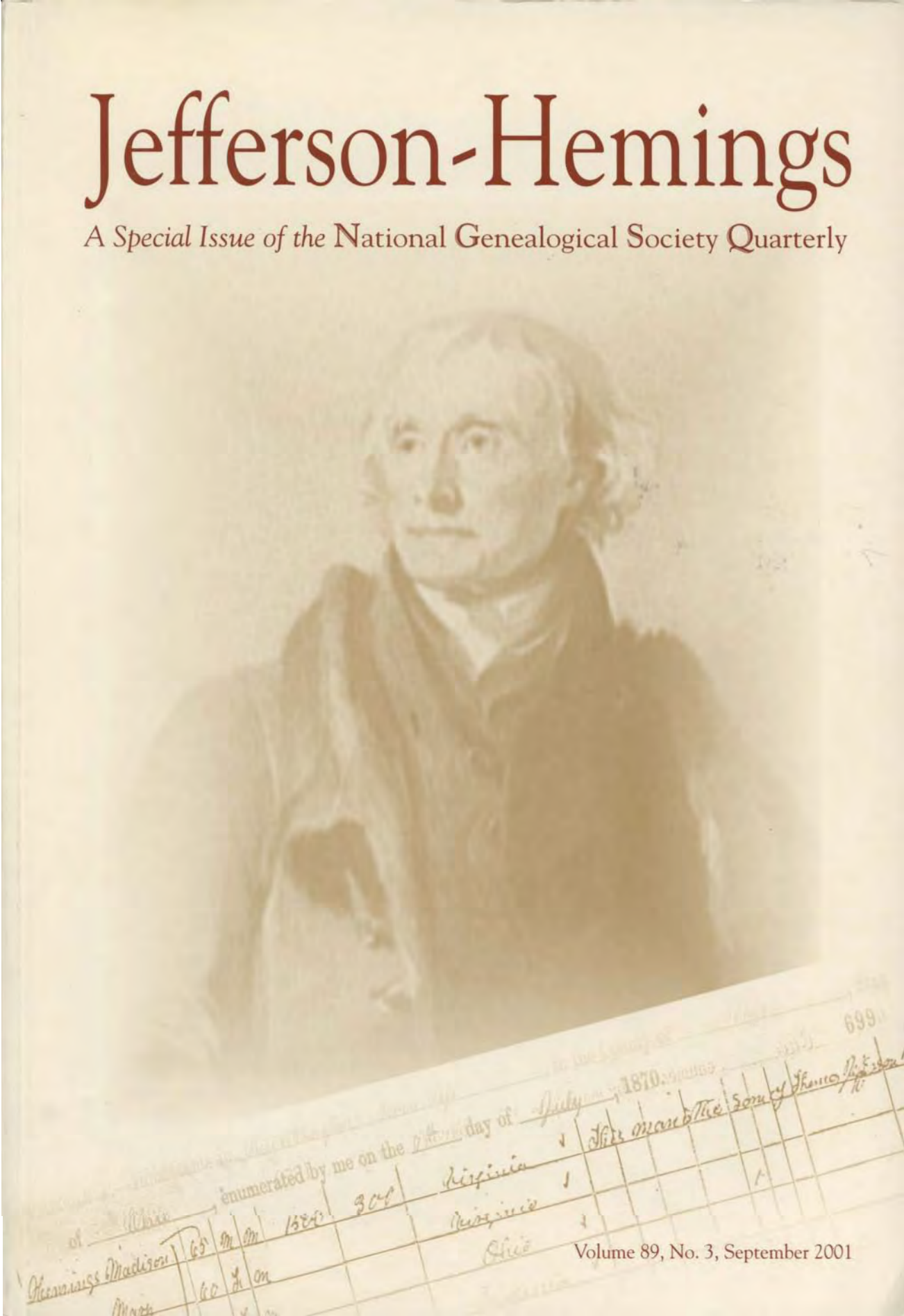
Jefferson-Hemings

A *Special Issue of the* National Genealogical Society Quarterly



Volume 89, No. 3, September 2001

The
National Genealogical Society

presents . . .

Faces of America

On the Cover:

THOMAS JEFFERSON (1743–1826)

Enigmatic? Conflicted? Or placid? The face of Thomas Jefferson has been likened to that of a sphinx. One tends to see there the reflection of what one seeks. His is a visage that has been shaped serenely by sculptors and painted voluptuously by artists, and a myriad of writers have been caught in its spell. More so than with any other American president, biographers have looked deep into Jefferson's eyes and drawn forth ideals, concerns, and biases that mirror their own.

The portrait by Thomas Sully, on the cover of this issue, captures Jefferson in the informal garb in which he was most comfortable. Scully's Jefferson is not the suave diplomat in Paris immortalized on the Houdon bust, nor the presidential model posed by Peale and engraved by Tiebout, nor the god wearing a laurel crown that Kosciuszko painted. Scully's Jefferson is simply a man caught being what he wanted to be—plain but proud, with no pedestal, no pretense, and no apologies for who or what he was.

Jefferson's confidence in himself and his conviction that the world did not need to know him beyond the face they saw and the words he chose to put on paper has kept him in the vortex of controversy for two centuries. The 1870 census entry that shares the cover with him was meant to answer the most enduring riddle of his life: Did he or did he not father the children of his quadroon slave, Sally Hemings? Writers in the present issue explore this man and this riddle.

Credits:

The portrait by Thomas Scully (1783–1872) hangs in the United States Capitol. The cover is rendered from a digitized image created by the Library of Congress from a black and white, glass, 8 by 10-inch negative of the painting donated in 1949 by the State Historical Society of Colorado. The image is part of the *American Memory Collection*, available online at the Library of Congress website <http://lcweb.loc.gov>. The negative is part of the Detroit Publishing Company Collection in the Library's Prints and Photographs Division, identified as call number LC-D416-9858 and reproduction number LC-D416-9858 DLC. For the census entry, see Madison Hemings household, 1870 U.S. census, Ross County, Ohio, population schedule, Huntington Township, p. 699, dwelling 49, family 49, National Archives microfilm M593, roll 1263. *Note:* The horizontal shrinking needed to fit the wide census entry into the available space has significantly reduced the legibility of the original document.

National Genealogical Society Quarterly

A Journal for Today's Family Historian

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EDITOR'S CORNER

The Past Is a Foreign Country

Family history earns a lot of good press these days, but the *Wall Street Journal* recently took a different tack. It hung a "Beware!" sign on the subject: "The potential for genealogy to go haywire is only growing, now that new technology, including do-it-yourself DNA screening, can fill practically every twig of the family tree." Warning that "families [are] complicated enough without digging skeletons out of the closet," the staff reporter rattles a number of bones she finds frightening—from family traditions that sink under the weight of evidence to modern researchers upset by what the records reveal. As one put it: "Who knows what happened behind bedroom doors?"*

NGSQ hardly needs to waste space defending the value of genealogical research. We'd be preaching to the "Amen" pew. But the *Journal's* reporter does raise a few matters germane to the subject of this special issue of the *Quarterly*.

Some sage named Anonymous laid the basic ground rule for genealogy a long time ago: *The past is a foreign country. They did things differently there.* No one who visits or invokes the past can afford to forget that.

Foreign travel is an adventure. We can expect to see sights we never anticipated. We are sure to encounter cultures that puzzle us. It's a given we will find habits and behaviors that are strange, perhaps frightening, even repulsive. And, human nature being what it is, we will likely have difficulty suspending our judgments, once our sense of rectitude has been affronted.

But foreign travel is an *education*. We visit, we discover, we experience, and we learn. *What we can't do is change what we find.* If we approach our encounters with an open mind, an eye for detail, and thoughtful appraisals, we come away with a richer understanding of human nature and a deeper appreciation for the society into which we have been born.

Visiting the past, via the records left behind, has all the same potential to surprise, upset, or enrich us. Over the course of our lives, we have all formed impressions of that foreign country named Yesteryear. Our families may even have told us about the inhabitants there—stories tinged by their own life experiences, their assumptions and, yes, their pride and their prejudices.

This special issue of *NGSQ* focuses upon one corner of that past. It is a land of some consequence to our nation. Yet its culture is so foreign that we truly struggle to understand it. It is a society that tempts us to form judgments based on passions and sensitivities, wishes and ideals. Monticello—ruled by the Jeffersons and populated by the Hemingses—is the symbol, if not the seat, of the world known as American slavery. It was truly a foreign country *and people did things differently there*. We may deplore its politics or its lifestyle. We may find the facts discomfiting. But we cannot change those facts.

Despite the concerns of the *Wall Street Journal*, genealogists do not visit the past to rattle skeletons. Just as geneticists study DNA with a vision of improving the human condition, the genealogist studies the past to map the heart, soul, and mindset of the people who spawned us. We may find genes and traits we do not like. We don't have to like them. But we do have to honestly and impartially report our findings, if we are to use our studies to improve the human condition.

— Elizabeth Shown Mills

NGSQ, SEPTEMBER 2001

*Elizabeth Bernstein, "Genealogy Gone Haywire As Searchers Take to Web," *Wall Street Journal*, 15 June 2001, copy posted at the *Journal*'s website <http://interactive.wsj.com/public/current/articles/SB992558970976621678.htm>.

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Sally Hemings's Children: A Genealogical Analysis of the Evidence

By Helen F. M. Leary, CG, CGL, FASG, FNGS

CREDIBLE EVIDENCE is presented honestly without trimming off uncomfortable bits that prevent its fitting someone's preconceptions. COMPETENT ANALYSIS views the evidence in terms of its own background context and its relation to ALL the rest of the evidence. GENEALOGICAL PROOF rests on an unbroken chain that ties the problem to its solution—not on a series of isolated links, any one of which is inadequate for the task. In this case, the chain of evidence securely fastens Sally Hemings's children to their father Thomas Jefferson.

Rumors that Thomas Jefferson, third president of the United States, was sexually involved with his slave Sally Hemings were circulating even before he assumed office in 1801.[1] The following year, James T. Callender, a Jefferson enemy for various reasons, published the rumors in an opposition (Federalist) newspaper. Attempting to generate outrage, and with overblown rhetoric, he alleged that Sally had a son he called "Tom," one who bore a "striking" resemblance to the president.[2] Succeeding generations of historians, biographers, and white descendants of Jefferson have defended him from what they, like Callender, have viewed as a reputation-destroying scandal. In addition to Jefferson's character and his often cited opposition to miscegenation, his "defenders" consistently

©Helen F. M. Leary; 103 Mainsail Drive; Cary, NC 27511-7502. Ms. Leary, a leading authority on early families of the Upper South, has served four terms as president of the Board for Certification of Genealogists. She is a fellow of both the American Society of Genealogists and the National Genealogical Society, has published frequently in major genealogical journals, and is the editor and primary author of both editions of the monumental *North Carolina Research: Genealogy and Local History* (Raleigh: North Carolina Genealogical Society, 1980, 1996). Leary was invited by the *NGS Quarterly* to evaluate the evidence not only because of her expertise but also because she has had neither a personal connection to the issue nor a preconception about it.

1. For a detailed overview, see Virginius Dabney, *The Jefferson Scandals: A Rebuttal* (1981; reprint, Lanham, Maryland: Madison Books, 1991), 10–11; and Thomas Jefferson Foundation, "Report of the Research Committee on Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings," January 2000, at the foundation's website, *Monticello* <www.monticello.org/plantation/hemings_report.html>, downloaded 17 May 2001; see particularly appendix F, "The Hemings-Jefferson Controversy: A Review of the Documentary Evidence," unnumbered p. 5.

Ed. note: This paper will cite download dates for authored manuscripts that may undergo revision, but not for historical, original documents that are transcribed or digitized at major archival sites.

Through the website's home page <www.monticello.org> one can also access three related documents: White McKenzie Wallenborn, "Thomas Jefferson Foundation['s] DNA Study Committee, Minority Report," 12 April 1999; Lucia C. Stanton, "Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Response to the Minority Report," April 2000; and Wallenborn, "Reply to Thomas Jefferson Response . . . ," June 2000.

2. James Thomson Callender, "The President *Again*," *The [Richmond] Recorder*, 1 September 1802; Callender's attack continued in subsequent issues of 15, 22, 29 September and 3, 10, 17 November. Transcribed extracts of the articles constitute appendix E of Jefferson Foundation, "Report of the Research Committee."

have cited and often quoted three "proof" sources: *(a)* Jefferson letters they interpret as denials of an affair with Hemings;[3] *(b)* statements by his grandchildren that his nephews Peter and Samuel Carr fathered children by Sally and Betsy Hemings;[4] and *(c)* the report of a devoted Monticello overseer that he saw someone other than Jefferson—unnamed, so the allegation cannot be tested—leaving Sally's room "on many a morning . . . very early."[5]

Modern researchers have added other evidence worth genealogical consideration: *(a)* proof that the conception of each Hemings child coincided precisely and exclusively with Jefferson's visits to Monticello;[6] *(b)* rediscovery of nineteenth-century assertions by Hemings's son Madison that Jefferson was his father;[7] *(c)* convincing demonstration that racial bias influenced the evidence evaluation made by prior historians;[8] and *(d)* a DNA study, undertaken to test paternity claims, which established a genetic link between Sally's youngest son Eston and a Jefferson male.[9] In light of this new evidence, the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, which owns and operates Monticello, reassessed its historic position that a liaison with Hemings was "morally impossible"[10] and issued a detailed, documented report of its research-committee findings, which states, in part:

> The DNA study, combined with multiple strands of currently available documentary and statistical evidence, indicates a high probability that Thomas Jefferson fathered

3. Particularly see vol. 6: 513–14 of Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, 6 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co.): vol. 1, *Jefferson the Virginian* (1948); vol. 2, *Jefferson and the Rights of Man* (1951); vol. 3, *Jefferson and the Ordeal of Liberty* (1962); vol. 4, *Jefferson the President: First Term, 1801–1805* (1970); vol. 5, *Jefferson the President: Second Term, 1805–1809* (1974); and vol. 6, *The Sage of Monticello* (1981).

4. See Thomas Jefferson Randolph's 1856 or 1857 interview recounted by Henry S. Randall to James Parton, 1 June 1868, and transcribed in Fawn M. Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974), 494–97; and in Annette Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy*, DNA-response ed. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 254–57. Also Ellen (Randolph) Coolidge to Joseph Coolidge, 24 October 1858, transcribed in Brodie at 498–501, in Gordon-Reed at 258–60, and by Richard E. Dixon in Eyler Robert Coates Sr., ed., *The Jefferson-Hemings Myth: An American Travesty* (Charlottesville: Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society, Jefferson Editions, 2001), 193–96.

5. Edmund Bacon's 1861 interview, published by Hamilton W. Pierson as *Jefferson at Monticello* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1862); reprinted with commentary by James A. Bear Jr., ed. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967). Pierson's chapter "Mr. Jefferson's Servants" is reprinted as part of "Jefferson's Blood," at the PBS website, *Frontline* <www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/jefferson/slaves/bacon.html>.

6. Although the correlation is pointed out in all post-1974 publications, the first historian to do so appears to have been Pearl M. Graham, "Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings," *Journal of Negro History* 46 (April 1961), 89–103, particularly 95. For a more detailed analysis, see Fraser D. Neiman, "Coincidence or Causal Connection? The Relationship between Thomas Jefferson's Visits to Monticello and Sally Hemings's Conceptions," *William and Mary Quarterly* 57 (January 2000): 198–210.

7. Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson*, 16, 471–76. Although Madison's statement is transcribed and analyzed in several books published since Brodie's, she was the first Jefferson biographer to elucidate its significance.

8. Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, throughout.

9. For a concise overview of the DNA evidence, in a genealogical context, see Thomas H. Roderick, "The Y Chromosome in Genealogical Research: From Their Ys a Father Knows His Own Son," *NGS Quarterly* 88 (June 2000): 134–36. For the original scientific report, see Eugene A. Foster et al., "Jefferson Fathered Slave's Last Child," *Nature* 396 (5 November 1998): 27–28.

10. Daniel P. Jordan, president, Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, 1996 PBS interview, quoted by C. Michael Moffitt, "A Monticello Guide's Insider View," Coates, *Jefferson-Hemings Myth*, 70–71. As of 30 July 2001, the web address given by Moffitt did not lead to the Jordan interview.

Eston Hemings, and that he most likely was the father of all six of Sally Hemings's children appearing in Jefferson's records.[11]

Opposition to this conclusion by the Thomas Jefferson Foundation resulted in formation of the Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society, which has sponsored the publication of a volume of essays by its members,[12] formed a "Scholars Commission" that has posted its opinions online,[13] and promoted similar activities.[14] Despite the society's *ad hominem* attack style and strident rhetoric, it has drawn attention to an 1807 invitation from Jefferson to his brother which, if it had been accepted, would have put Randolph Jefferson at Monticello when Eston was conceived and might account for the results of the DNA study.[15]

THE GENEALOGICAL STUDY

Because historical writers have focused primarily on Jefferson's politics and character (or on refuting each other's arguments), this study applies genealogical principles, sources, and analytical techniques to an examination of the paternity issue. It follows standard research procedure:

- analysis of the problem;
- identification of sources and design of a research plan;
- collection and evaluation of data;
- resolution of conflicting evidence, with additional research as needed; and
- compilation of findings and conclusions.

The standards by which genealogists collect, analyze, correlate, and evaluate evidence are well discussed elsewhere and are not repeated here.[16] Contrary to the opinion of one professor (not a practicing genealogist) quoted in an earlier issue of this journal, the objective of genealogical study is not to "*prove* that Mary is the daughter of John,"[17] but rather to *find out whether* "Mary's" father was John, Henry,

11. Jefferson Foundation, "Report of the Research Committee."

12. Coates, *Jefferson-Hemings Myth*. The society's website <www.tjheritage.org> includes a posting of one of the more significant chapters of this book.

13. Jefferson-Hemings Scholars Commission, for the Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society, *Report on the Jefferson-Hemings Matter*, posted 12 April 2001 <www.geocities.com/tjshcommission/>.

14. See, for example, the website of the Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society member Herbert Barger, *Thomas Jefferson–Sally Hemings DNA Study* <www.angelfire.com/va/TJTruth/>. Barger is said to be "Jefferson Family Historian" here and in a letter to Mark D. Davis posted at Davis's website, *The Vast Right-Wing Conspiracy Starts Here* <www.princeton.edu/~mddavis/barger.html> downloaded 12 July 2001. (The letter is undated but internal references indicate 1999 or later.)

15. The invitation is mentioned in Jefferson Foundation, "Report of the Research Committee," appendix J, unnumbered p. 2; by several essayists in Coates, *Jefferson-Hemings Myth*; and in numerous places within Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society, *Report on the Jefferson-Hemings Matter*.

16. See *The BCG Genealogical Standards Manual* (Orem, Utah: Ancestry Publishing, for the Board for Certification of Genealogists, 2000); and Elizabeth Shown Mills, "Working with Historical Evidence: Genealogical Principles and Standards," in *Evidence: A Special Issue of the NGS Quarterly* 87 (September 1999): 165–84.

17. "Editors' Corner," *Evidence: A Special Issue of the NGS Quarterly*, 163; emphasis added above.

William, or somebody else. Genealogists do not conduct research to "prove" *any* preconceived idea. Genealogical scholarship requires the researcher to find all evidence; to consider it all objectively; and to weigh it all against economic, legal, social, and other relevant contexts—and to make no decisions about parentage until and unless the *whole assembly* of the available evidence points overwhelmingly to one person. These are the mandates that underpin the present study.

ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

The genealogical problem at hand is clear cut: *Who was the father of Sally Hemings's children?* As with most research questions, however, this one is complex. Built into it are three other questions one must answer before addressing the paternity issue. *Who was Sally Hemings? Who were her children?* And, more specifically, *Did Sally's children include the man named Thomas Corbin Woodson?* This background study reinforces much of what is known, but disproves one major issue.

Who was Sally Hemings?

Sally Hemings was born in 1773[18]—probably at Guinea Plantation, Cumberland County, Virginia[19]—and died in 1835 in Charlottesville,[20] near Jefferson's principal plantation (Monticello) in Albemarle County. Her owner, John Wayles, died in the year of her birth. Then she, her mother, and her siblings passed to Wayles's daughter Martha, newly wed to Thomas Jefferson. Sally Hemings and Martha Jefferson were half-sisters: Martha's mother was Martha Eppes, Wayles's first wife;[21] Sally's mother was Elizabeth "Betty" Hemings, daughter of the Eppes's "full-blooded African" slave and one Capt. Hemings, an English seaman.[22] Betty, born about 1735, had been deeded to Wayles at age eleven as part of the Eppes-Wayles marriage settlement; about 1761, after the death of his third wife, Betty became his concubine. Between then and his death, she gave birth to six children of one-quarter African ancestry (technically *quadroons*, but called "bright mulatto" in various records), of whom Sally was the youngest.[23]

18. Unless cited otherwise, the source for data about Sally and her family is Jefferson Foundation, "Report of the Research Committee," appendix H, "Sally Hemings and Her Children: Information from Documentary Sources," unnumbered pp. 1–5, where her biography is neatly summarized and documented.

19. Robert C. Baron, *The Garden and Farm Books of Thomas Jefferson* (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum, 1987), 227. Here, a transcription of Jefferson's "Roll of the slaves of John Wayles which were allotted to T. J. in right of his wife on a division of the estate, Jan. 14, 1774," shows Sally's birth year and presence with her mother at Guinea. For a facsimile of the farm book (not always legible but more complete and more accurate), see Edwin Morris Betts, ed., *Thomas Jefferson's Farm Book, with Commentary and Relevant Extracts from Other Writings* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, for the American Philosophical Society, 1953). Betts augments his facsimiles with very useful biographies and place-name identifications.

20. Madison Hemings's 1873 interview, published as "Life Among the Lowly: Number 1," *Pike County* [Waverly, Ohio] *Republican*, 13 March 1873. For a facsimile, see E. M. Halliday, *Understanding Thomas Jefferson* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 93. Transcriptions, with minor inaccuracies, are included as appendixes in Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson*, 471–76; Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, 245–48; and Coates, *Hemings-Jefferson Myth*, 182–87 (where transcriber Rebecca Lee McMurry incorrectly "corrects" portions of Gordon-Reed's transcription).

21. James A. Bear Jr., "The Hemings Family at Monticello," *Virginia Cavalcade* 29 (August 1979): 78.

22. Madison Hemings's 1873 interview.

23. Bear, "Hemings Family," 78–87, passim.

Martha Jefferson died at Monticello in 1782. Two years later, Jefferson left for Paris as American envoy, taking with him his older daughter (also named Martha) and Sally's older brother, James Hemings. In 1787, Sally accompanied Jefferson's younger daughter, Maria, when the little girl was sent to join him. There Sally became lady's maid to both girls and appears to have trained as a fine-materials laundress, while James studied French and haute cuisine. Sally returned to Monticello with the Jeffersons and her brother late in 1789 and was still there when Thomas died on 4 July 1826. She was informally manumitted ("given her time"), presumably by Jefferson's executor, before the 1827 "great sale" of the rest of Jefferson's slaves and other property.[24] At that point, she moved into nearby Charlottesville with her youngest sons, Madison and Eston, where the three of them were classified as white and free by the 1830 census taker.[25]

Sally's civil status is a significant part of her story. She knew, as all slaves did, that an accident of birth placed her services, her person, *and her children* forever at someone else's disposal. She must have recognized that without decisive human or legal intervention they would be not just illegitimate but enslaved for life regardless of who their father was or how stable her relationship with him might become. *All* slave children in Virginia were illegitimate, because Virginia law did not recognize slave unions as marriages; and the children of slave women were also enslaved, because civil status derived from the mother, not the father.[26]

Hemings's master also understood the system, albeit from a radically different viewpoint. As a Virginia-trained lawyer, Jefferson well knew his colony and state's schizophrenic view of human property.[27] Slaves were, simultaneously, *(a)* realty

24. Jefferson's main executor was his grandson, Thomas Jefferson Randolph. Contingent executors were his "friends" Nicholas P. Trist and Alexander Garrett. Garrett was also a personal friend and executor of David Isaacs, whose daughter married Eston Hemings. A wealthy Jewish merchant in Charlottesville, Isaacs was prosecuted there in the 1820s after he began to live *openly* with the free quadroon by whom he already had grown children. See Joshua D. Rothman, "'Notorious in the Neighborhood': An Interracial Family in Early National and Antebellum Virginia," *Journal of Southern History* 67 (February 2001): 73–114, particularly 79.

Rothman's assessment of the David Isaacs–Nancy West affair well describes the double standard that their society applied: "It seems that so long as the couple kept their relationship a strictly illicit one and pretended that it did not exist, Charlottesville's white community was willing to let it go unchallenged" (p. 84).

25. Eston Hemings household, 1830 U.S. census, Albemarle County, Virginia, p. 259, National Archives microfilm M19, roll 197. The household consisted of two white males, 20–30 [Eston, 22; Madison, 25] and one white female 50–60 [Sally, 57]. The racial designation does not appear to have been accidental—also enumerated in the household was a "free colored" family.

26. A refusal to recognize slave marriages was a corollary to the legal definition of slaves as property. See William Waller Hening, *The Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia from the First Session of the Legislature in the Year 1619*, 13 vols. (1809–23; reprint, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, for the Jamestown Foundation, 1969), 2: 170 (1662). This law operated for two centuries, until the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation and the 1870 ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the U. S. Constitution.

27. Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (London: for John Stockdale, 1785), 222–40; selected digitized images online at University of Virginia Library, Special Collections website, *Digital Resources and Exhibitions* <www.lib.virginia.edu/speccol/tj/notes.html>. Also see digitized images of 1781–82 notes upon which the book was based, at Yale University Law School website, *Avalon Project: Notes on the State of Virginia* <www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/jeffvir.html>, particularly Jefferson's responses to Query XIV and Query XVIII. His discussions of both slavery and Virginia law demonstrate his exceptional grasp of these subjects, although his view of African Americans was decidedly different from twenty-first-century viewpoints.

that could be attached to land and conveyed or inherited with it; *(b)* personalty that could be bought, sold, or seized for debt; and *(c)* people who could be arrested, tried, and punished for crimes.[28] As owner of several plantations dependent on slave labor, Jefferson also realized the institution's economic benefits but nonetheless believed it was morally degrading for both master and slave.[29] Throughout his life he advocated abolishing slavery (albeit gradually) and proposed various complicated schemes for doing so. None was adopted.[30]

Who Were Sally Hemings's Children?

Hemings was the mother of seven children; six of them appear in Jefferson's records, and one (her firstborn) is the subject of controversy. All the children who lived to adulthood lived as "white" at various times and places—a point that speaks to the race of her children's father. Sally was one-quarter Negro; any children she bore of a white father would be only one-eighth Negro. Under Virginia law they were legally white.[31]

Considerable debate exists over the identity of her first child. The list of children supplied in 1873 by her son Madison[32] is generally accepted by researchers (regardless of their opinion on the Jefferson paternity issue) with one key exception: the identity of the first child. A family of the surname *Woodson*, rooted in distant Greenbrier County, claims her first child as its forebear;[33] and some past scholars have accepted the claim without an intense scrutiny. For reasons developed herein, this study finds Madison's identification of his own siblings to be the credible account.

In brief, the children of Sally Hemings were:[34]

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28. Hening, *Statutes at Large*, 4: 222–28 (1727). A 1748 effort to dispense with the real-estate definition was soon voided by the Crown. See ibid., 5: 432–35 (1748); 5: 567–68 (1752); and 6: 215 (1748–52). A series of laws passed during and after the Revolution ended entail and primogeniture and substituted equal distribution among all heirs; slavery then lost its land-based characteristics in practice if not in law. The present study found no *significant* redefinition of the law through 1808, when Hemings's last child was born.

29. Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 222–40.

30. For a thorough study of Jefferson's abolition proposals, see Peter S. Onuf, "Every Generation Is an 'Independent Nation': Colonization, Miscegenation, and the Fate of Jefferson's Children," *William and Mary Quarterly* 57 (January 2000): 153–70.

31. Hening, *Statutes at Large*, 12: 184 (1785).

32. Madison Hemings's 1873 interview.

33. The most detailed case by the family is laid out in Byron W. Woodson Sr., *A President in the Family: Thomas Jefferson, Sally Hemings, and Thomas Woodson* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2001). The first recording of the tradition appears to be that made by Mr. Woodson's mother, Minnie Shumate Woodson, *Woodson Source Book* (privately printed, place unknown, "late 1970s," with supplements dated 1984, 1986).

The Woodson story is provocative and remarkable in and of itself. However, *President in the Family* does not present evidence to rebut the DNA test results (outlined in figure 1 of the present article). It merely argues the family's disbelief in the accuracy of the results. In her foreword, the Woodson descendant Michele Cooley-Quille states, "We still puzzle over the inconclusive results of the DNA testing. . . . We know who we are. We have 100 percent certainty that our ancestors are Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings. We know this because the 'secret' has been transmitted from our parents' parents' parents" (p. xiii).

34. Unless otherwise stated, the children's data are from Madison Hemings's 1873 interview and from Jefferson Foundation, "Report of the Research Committee," appendix H (documented).

i. CHILD OF UNKNOWN GENDER, conceived in Paris during mid-to-late 1789 and born at Monticello in early-to-mid-1790; lived "but a short time," according to Madison.

ii. HARRIET HEMINGS, born 5 October 1795; died in December 1797.

iii. BEVERLY HEMINGS, born 1 April 1798; left Monticello in 1821 or 1822 and dropped from sight. According to Madison, he passed into white society; married in Maryland into a family "in good circumstances"; and had at least one child, a daughter.

iv. A FEMALE, born about 7 December 1799; died as an infant.

v. HARRIET HEMINGS (second of the name), born in May 1801; left Monticello in 1821 or 1822, possibly with her brother Beverly.[35] Madison reported that she passed into white society and "married a white man in good standing in Washington City." He last heard from her about 1863. She had several children, but nothing further is known about her or her offspring.[36]

vi. MADISON HEMINGS, born 19 January 1805; manumitted by Jefferson's will in 1826. He was considered white by the 1830 census taker[37] but married a free quadroon, MARY MCCOY, on 21 November 1831. Because interracial marriage was then illegal in Virginia,[38] Madison went before authorities in Charlottesville, shortly before his marriage, to register as a "free Negro." That document describes him as a "mulato" of light complexion, 5' 7 3/8" tall.[39] After his mother's death, Madison moved his family to Pike County, Ohio, where he worked as a builder in Waverly, the county seat. After retirement, he settled across the county line in rural Ross County, where he died 28 November 1877.

His children were (1) a son who died young in Albemarle County; (2) *Sarah*; (3) *Thomas Eston*, who died in a Confederate prison; (4) *Harriet*, who died in 1925; (5) *Mary Ann*, who married [—?—] Johnson; (6) *Catherine Jane*; (7) *William Beverly*, who joined the Union Army at age sixteen and died in 1910 at the military home in Leavenworth, Kansas; (8) *James Madison*, who moved into white society in Colorado; (9) *Julia A.*; and (10) *Ellen Wayles*, who wed an Oberlin College graduate, Andrew Jackson Roberts, and died in 1940 after seeing one son (Frederick Madison Roberts) serve twelve years in the California State Assembly.[40] An interview with

35. On an undated slave list, Jefferson wrote "run away '22" beside Beverly's name and "run '22" beside Harriet's (Betts, *Thomas Jefferson's Farm Book*, facsimile p. 130); but the names of both Beverly and Harriet disappear from the clothing and provisions lists after January 1821 (ibid., facsimile pp. 171ff).

36. Graham, "Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings," 98–101, provides a variant on Madison's account of Harriet. According to Graham, who reports personal contact with four women she believed to be Harriet's granddaughters, at least one of those granddaughters lived as "colored" and was a seamstress in the White House during the administration of Theodore Roosevelt. However, the women's accounts of their ancestry are contradictory, and Graham offers no proof for their claimed descent.

37. Eston Hemings household, 1830 U.S. census, Albemarle County, previously cited.

38. Hening, *Statutes at Large*, 5: 386–88 (1669) decrees that parties to an interracial marriage had to leave the colony "forever." Penalties for such unions were revised periodically, but the basic law remained in effect.

39. Albemarle County Minute Book, 1830–31: 123, entry dated 6 September 1831; quoted in Jefferson Foundation, "Report of the Research Committee," appendix H, unnumbered p. 12.

40. Fawn M. Brodie, "Thomas Jefferson's Unknown Grandchildren: A Study in Historical Silences," *American Heritage* 27 (October 1976): 28–33, 94–99. Brodie includes a photo of Ellen in her eighties, describing her as tall and big boned, with "a remarkable resemblance to Jefferson." For the information on William Beverly's death, see "William Hemings," at Herbert Barger's website <www.angelfire.com/va/TJTruth/wmhemings.html>.

Madison, which appeared in the 13 March 1873 *Pike County Republican*, is discussed in detail under "Witnesses' Testimony," later in this paper.

vii. ESTON HEMINGS (alias JEFFERSON), born 21 May 1808, is the son for whom DNA testing was conducted among male offspring, with a finding that they carry the Jefferson Y-chromosome. Eston was willed by Jefferson to John Hemings (Eston's half-uncle) as an apprentice until he reached twenty-one, but he was informally manumitted in 1826, three years early. Eston, too, was labeled white by the 1830 census taker in Charlottesville. However, on 14 June 1832, he wed the free octoroon JULIA ANN ISAACS and filed a "free Negro" registration that describes him as a "Bright mulatto," 6' 1".[41] After his mother's death, he moved to Ohio with his brother Madison but settled in Chillicothe, where he became a musician of considerable repute.[42] In 1852 he moved his family to Madison, Wisconsin. There they changed their surname to Jefferson and established their racial identity as white. Eston died in Madison on 3 January 1856.

His children were (1) *John Wayles Jefferson*, a lieutenant-colonel of a white unit in the Civil War; and later a wealthy banker and cotton broker in Memphis, Tennessee; (2) *Ann(a) W. Jefferson*, whose son Walter Beverly Pearson became the multimillionaire president of Standard Screw Company in Chicago; and (3) *William Beverly Jefferson*, who owned two hotels and an omnibus company in Madison.[43]

Eston was three times mentioned in Ohio newspapers—twice in "retrospective" articles about old Chillicothe and finally in an article focusing on his daughter Ann. All provide descriptive details in a similar vein:

> *Chillicothe Leader*, 26 January 1887
> "Eston Hemings, the Ben Hunter of that day, was a fine looking man, very slightly colored, of large size."[44]

> *Scioto* [*Chillicothe*] *Gazette*, 1 August 1902
> "About sixty years ago, there came from Monticello, Virginia, to Chillicothe, a remarkably fine looking colored man and his family. Eston Hemings was of a light bronze color, a little over six feet tall, well proportioned, very erect and dignified; his nearly straight hair showed a tint of auburn, and his face, indistinct suggestion of freckles ... decidedly intelligent ... [with] gentlemanly manners. ... So striking was the likeness [to Jefferson] that on one occasion the writer of this

41. Albemarle County Minute Book, 1832–43: 12, quoted in Jefferson Foundation, "Report of the Research Committee," appendix H, unnumbered p. 12.

42. Eston Hemmins household, 1850 U.S. census, Ross County, Ohio, population schedule, Scioto Township, Chillicothe (taken 29 July), p. 40/41 (overstamped numbers) or 81 (handwritten number), dwelling 644, family 544, National Archives microfilm M432, roll 725. Eston (who was born 21 May 1808, according to Jefferson's farm book) is cited on the 1850 enumeration as a musician, age 43. All household members are listed as "m[ulattos]," living in a middle-class white neighborhood of immigrants from Germany, Ireland, New York, and Pennsylvania, whose occupations were blacksmith, grocer, tailor, tanner, and so forth.

43. Standard Screw Co. is today Stanadyne Automotive Corp., see <www.stanadyne.com/svc/literature/Stanadyne%20Brochure.pdf>, downloaded 30 August 2001. For more on the grandchildren, see Brodie, "Thomas Jefferson's Unknown Grandchildren," 28–33, 94–99. Brodie includes photos of Eston's three children.

44. The article is partially quoted in Jefferson Foundation, "Report of the Research Committee," appendix H, unnumbered p. 12.

sketch in company with [four men, named] while going from Pennsylvania avenue to the White House, came upon the bronze statue of Jefferson, . . .'Gentlemen, who in Chillicothe looks most like that statute [*sic*]?' I asked. Instantly came the unanimous answer, 'Why, Eston Hemings!' The color of the bronze in the statue probably made the resemblance more perfect and striking. Some time after my return from Washington, happening to have some business with Hemings, I told him of the incident. 'Well,' answered Hemings quietly, 'my mother, whose name I bear, belonged to Mr. Jefferson,' and after a slight pause, added, 'and she never was married.'. . . Eston Hemings, being a master of the violin, and an accomplished 'caller' of dances, always officiated at the 'swell' entertainments of Chillicothe." The writer then recalled meeting one of Eston's sons (unnamed) who was a lieutenant colonel of a white regiment in the Civil War, and ends with the statement that Eston had left Chillicothe because of its "impassable gulf" between the races, "notwithstanding all [his] accomplishments and deserts."[45]

Scioto [*Chillicothe*] *Gazette*, 7 August 1902
[A letter from "Judge Sibley."] The Sketch of Eston Hemings, in your . . . issue of [last week] interested me not a little. . . . During the fall of 1849 I at-tended a 'Manual Labor School' at Albany, in Athens county, Ohio. It had some local fame as an 'Abolition School,' as students were received in it regardless of color. . . . There I met a beautiful octoroon in her early teens who was introduced to incoming students as "miss Anna (or Ann) Heming, the grand daughter of Thomas Jefferson." Her hair was kinky, but a rich dark chestnut in color, while her black lustrous eyes were far the finest that I then had ever seen. In her cheeks the vormil [vermeil] red did show Like roses in a bed of lillies—Fairer than the whiteish of her *mater* the transparent beauty of her complexion was the wonder and talk of both boys and girl[s]. I do not remember where she was said to have come from, and since leaving the school in 1850, never have heard of her, nor of anyone with like name until reading the sketch of Eston Hemings in the Gazette.[46]

Was Thomas Woodson a son of Sally Hemings?

Descendants of Thomas Corbin Woodson of Greenbrier County, West Virginia, reported in the 1970s that he was her firstborn son by Jefferson and was the slave "Tom" of Callender's 1802 articles.[47] The Jefferson DNA study found that

45. "A Sprig of Jefferson was Eston Hemings: The Gazette's Delver into the Past Brings up a Romantic Story," transcribed as part of "Jefferson's Blood," at the PBS website, *Frontline* <www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/jefferson/cron/1902sprig.html>. Given the article's timing, one can doubt that the "quote" attributed to Eston is *exact* (the article's writer appears to have been an octogenarian who had danced, in his twenties, to Eston's music); but it is likely that Eston's statement was phrased only as a hint.

46. "Beautiful Octoroon: Miss Anna Heming," reprinted as part of "Jefferson's Blood," at the PBS website, *Frontline* <www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/jefferson/cron/1902octoroon.html>.

47. The Woodsons are not the only other family with slave roots that has claimed descent from Jefferson. For example, *Ebony* in November 1954 published an article by Lerone Bennett, "Thomas Jefferson's Negro Grandchildren," that asserts a family's descent through Joe Fosset, a Monticello blacksmith born to Sally's sister Mary; but more credible evidence for the paternity points to one William Fosset, a white male apprentice employed at Monticello at the time of Joe's birth. For a brief synopsis, see Fawn M. Brodie, "The Great Jefferson Taboo," *American Heritage* (June 1972): 98, n. 5.

none of the tested Woodson descendants in the direct male line (the Y-chromosome line) carry the Jefferson Y-chromosome. (See figure 1.) In a subsequent spate of publications, some of those who deny Jefferson's involvement with Sally Hemings nonetheless promote the Woodson claim to descent from Sally, using the DNA results to argue that she had children by multiple men.[48]

The evidence speaks otherwise.

THOMAS WOODSON'S EVIDENCE

Woodson's own records show that he could not be Sally's child. She was, in fact, a child of only ten to twelve when Thomas Woodson was conceived. Consider:

- Woodson's census ages, appropriately correlated, place his birth at 1783–85, but center upon mid-1784. In 1820, for example, he headed a Greenbrier County household in which the oldest "free colored" male was 26–45, broadly placing his birth between 7 August 1775 and 7 August 1794.[49] In 1850, however, when the revised federal census attempted to report ages by the exact year, Thomas was said to be "66"—i.e., born between 1 June 1783 and 1 June 1784, if the census taker followed recording instructions correctly.[50] Similarly in 1860, when the U. S. census taker visited his household, he was said to be "75" (born 1 June 1784 to 1 June 1785).[51]

  Prior biographies of Woodson, however, cite his birth year as 1790 and match him to the child Sally Hemings bore that year. Doing so ignores the consistency of the

48. For example, Eyler Robert Coates, editor of *Jefferson-Hemings Myth*, writing online, unquestioningly identifies "Sally's first child" as "Thomas Woodson" and adds, "All of this suggests that Sally undoubtedly had children by at least two different men, and possibly more, but she was not truthful in identifying who the fathers were." See Coates, "Jefferson's DNA and Sally Hemings," at his website, *The Jeffersonian Perspective* <www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/7970/jefpnotg.htm>, p. 2; last downloaded 23 August 2001.

Similarly, Robert Turner, "Evidence Too Lightly Dismissed," chap. 10 of *Report on the Jefferson-Hemings Matter*, asserts, "There was nothing in the DNA tests to cast doubt on Woodson's status as the son of Sally Hemings" (p. 210)—a statement that is correct but misleading to those unfamiliar with the nature of DNA evidence. Because Y-chromosomes exist only in males, a Y-chromosome test cannot provide any evidence on maternity.

Critical of the Monticello Research Committee for "summarily eliminating Thomas Woodson as one of Sally Hemings' possible children" (ibid., pp. 209–10), Turner theorizes that "Hemings might have become pregnant in Paris by a man other than Thomas Jefferson" (p. 211) and concludes, "It is only when one ignores . . . the new DNA evidence about Thomas Woodson that it is possible to conclude that Sally Hemings could have possibly had a monogamous sexual relationship with Thomas Jefferson" (p. 212). Again DNA evidence is misleadingly invoked to imply that Sally's maternity of Woodson goes unquestioned.

49. Thomas Woodson household, 1820 U.S. census, Greenbrier County, Virginia, population schedule, p. 85-B, National Archives microfilm M33, roll 132. Thomas's wife Jemima was undoubtedly the white female in the same age bracket; their eldest son Lewis Franklin should be the male aged 14–26.

According to census instructions for that year, ages were to be recorded as of the official census day, the first Monday in August. See Bureau of the Census, *Twenty Censuses: Population and Housing Questions, 1790–1980* (Washington: Department of Commerce, 1979), 11.

50. Thomas Woodson household, 1850 U.S. census, Jackson County, Ohio, population schedule, Milton Township, p. 315 (taken 23 September), dwelling 1173, family 1173, National Archives microfilm M432, roll 698. All members of the household are said to be "m[ulatto]." In 1850–80, the official census date as of which ages were to be recorded was 1 June; see Bureau of the Census, *Twenty Censuses*, 14–22.

51. Thomas Woodson household, 1860 U.S. census, Jackson County, Ohio, population schedule, Milton Township, p. 1 (taken 4 June), dwelling 5, family 5, National Archives microfilm M653, roll 992. Jemima was 77, and all household members were "m[ulatto]."

earlier censuses in preference to an aberrational (and demonstrably unreliable) age given for him *solely* on the 1870 return. In that year, the elderly Thomas is said to be "80," and his son James is said to be "40." Both ages fail to track logically. James was "32" in 1850 and "42" in 1860.[52]

The accuracy of the 1850 and 1860 data (and the aberrancy of the 1870 data) is supported by known details for other family members. The ages shown for Woodson's wife Jemima and his daughter Sarah Jane on those 1850 and 1860 schedules agree with their birth dates: Jemima appears as "67" and "77" respectively, only a half-month off from the 13 May 1782 shown in family records. Sarah Jane, born 15 November 1825, was "24" and "35" on the 1867 and 1870 returns. (Because Jemima died on 18 March 1868, she was not present in the 1870 household.)[53]

In short, the insertion of "80" for Thomas and "40" for his son was just a typical case of the enumerator approximating the age—a situation that usually occurred when an informant, giving data on someone else, was not sure of an age exactly.

- Woodson's oldest child, Lewis Franklin, is said to have been born 28 January 1806 in Greenbrier,[54] indicating a conception in April 1805 and suggesting a parental marriage in early 1805. If Woodson himself was born in 1790 as alleged, he was fourteen or barely fifteen when he fathered Lewis (by the twenty-two or twenty-three-year-old Jemima)—a highly uncommon age for fatherhood in that society. But it would have been a truly remarkable age for a boy to establish a stable and lifelong marriage. As corrected by census evidence, Woodson's mid-1784 birth date produces a more credible male marital age of twenty to twenty-one.[55]
- A Greenbrier deed executed on 23 June 1807 lists "Tom Woodsen" as one of the adjoiners of a tract of land being sold by Robert and Latticia Renick on Sinking Creek.[56] Born about mid-1784, Thomas would have been twenty-three at the time,

52. Most writers have accepted the 1790 birth date without questioning its source. Monticello's researchers mentioned the censuses (without specifying which ones they consulted) in assigning a "1785–1790" birth. However, they do not appear to have weighed the schedules' relative credibility or to have considered the age instructions given to census takers. See Jefferson Foundation, "Report of the Research Committee," appendix H, unnumbered p. 6. For the original entry, see Thomas Woodson household, 1870 U.S. census, Jackson County, Ohio, population schedule, Milton Township, p. 243 (taken 27 August), dwelling 430, family 420, National Archives microfilm M593, roll 1226.

The 1870 error is common. Seldom did census takers find all residents of a dwelling to be actually on the premises, so that each could give his or her own data. Enumerators could take information from anyone in the dwelling and, if no one was home, they often took it from neighbors—near or far. Often, the persons who provided the data did not know exact ages of everyone they named.

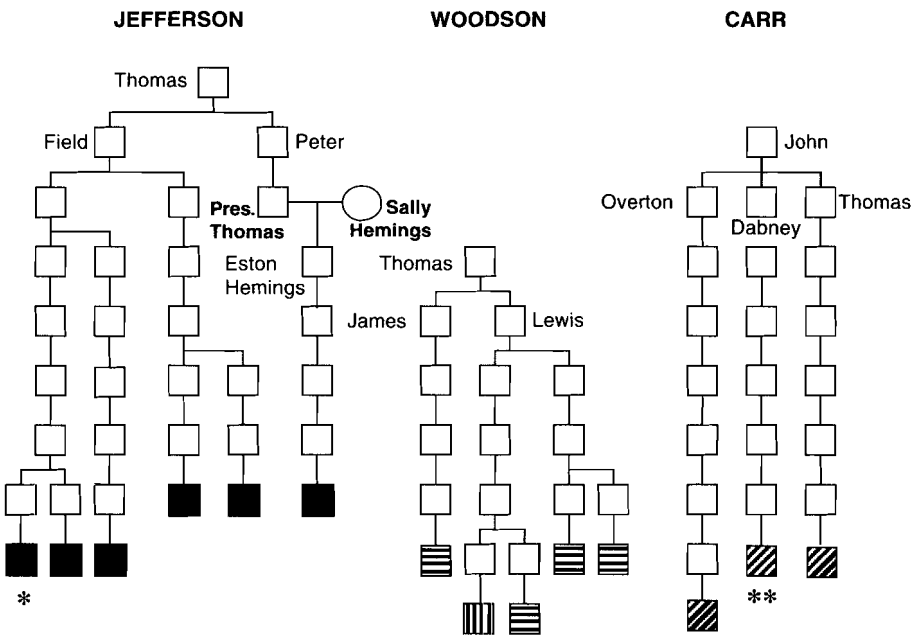
53. For the birth dates of Jemima and Sarah Jane, see Ronald A. Smith, "Internet Family Tree," *Thomas C. Woodson Family Web Site* <www.woodson.org/tree.asp>, keyword "Home Card," last downloaded 31 August 2001. The source of the dates, although not cited, appears to have been the *Woodson Source Book*, compiled in the 1970s. Jemima is said to have been the daughter of Samuel Price Sr. and his slave Hannah.

54. Smith, "Internet Family Tree," *Thomas C. Woodson Family Web Site*.

55. For a young freed slave to have any hope of escaping poverty, short of an extremely rare legacy from a parent, delaying marriage and fatherhood was essential. As a point of comparison, drawing from evidence already presented in this paper, Madison Hemings was 26 when he wed. Eston was 24. A marriage date is not known for their brother Beverly, but he was 23 and single when Jefferson permitted him to "run away." In none of these cases has anyone come forward with a tradition that Madison, Eston, or Beverly fathered children by Monticello-area slave girls before their marriage—much less in their early teens.

56. Larry G. Shuck, compiler, *Greenbrier County, (West) Virginia, Records*, 6 vols. (Athens, Georgia: Iberian Publishing Co., 1988–92), 5: 110.

Figure 1
Jefferson Haplotype Testing



Jefferson Family Y haplotype	0000001;15,12,4,11,3,9,11,10,15,13,7; (3)5,(1)14,(3)32,(4)16
Woodson Family Y haplotype	0000011; 14,12,5,11,3,10,11,13,13,13,7; (1)16,(3)27,(4)21
Not Woodson, Jefferson, or Carr Family Y haplotype; many discrepancies	
Carr Family Y haplotype	0000011; 14,12,5,12,3,10,11,10,13,13,7;(1)17,(3)36,(4)21
Not typed for Y chromosome DNA	
* One mutation	
** Two mutations	

The haplotypes containing 19 polymorphic markers include 7 biallelic markers, 11 short tandem repeats, and the minisatellite marker. The biallelic markers are: YAP-, SRYm8299, sY81, LLY22g, Tat, 92R7, and SRYm1532, where 0 is the ancestral state and 1 the derived or mutated state; short tandem repeat markers are DYS19, DYS388, DYS389A, DYS389B, DYS389C, DYS389D, DYS390, DYS391, DYS392, DYS393, and DXYS156Y, where the number of repeats is shown for each marker; the minisatellite MSY1.

Reprinted, with permission, from Thomas H. Roderick, "The Y Chromosome in Genealogical Research: From Their Ys a Father Knows His Own Son," *NGS Quarterly* 88 (June 2000): 134–36. Dr. Roderick's article contains a much fuller explanation of the technical aspects of haplotypes and their various markers.

Figure 1
(continued)

The Jefferson Y Chromosome
[Excerpted from Roderick, pp. 135–36.]

Genetic evidence, outlined in figure [1], supports the asserted genealogical relationship. E. A. Foster and his colleagues examined Y chromosome DNA of Y line relatives of Jefferson and found it identical to that of a Y line descendant of Eston Hemings, the last of Sally's sons. Figure [1] shows the pedigrees and the DNA analysis for the three key families under study: Jefferson, Carr, and Woodson (the latter being the surname of a freed slave, Thomas Woodson, whose family tradition asserts he was the oldest son of Sally by Jefferson). Because Jefferson had no sons through his wife, his Y line DNA was inferred via Y line descents from two sons of his uncle Field Jefferson.

The critical evidence that President Jefferson fathered Eston Hemings is a precise match of the Y DNA of Eston's Y line descendant with those of the Y line descendants of Field Jefferson's sons. Furthermore, the frequency of the Jefferson Y haplotype (less than 1 percent) is considered rare; it has not been seen in a sample of 670 European males or 12,000 males worldwide. The authors of this study admit that a Y line descendant of Field Jefferson *could* have fathered Eston, but no historical evidence suggests that possibility. The Carr family's Y haplotype seems well established from independent descent through three sons of John Carr; the results for all tested descendants are essentially identical and very different from the Jefferson haplotype. Among the tested descendants of Thomas Woodson, two independent Y lines have identical Y haplotypes and one is an exception—probably representing a non-paternity [outside paternity] event in that or the preceding generation. The Woodson Y haplotypes also are very different from the Jefferson haplotype. Thus, those present-day Woodsons whose DNA was analyzed are not of the Jefferson Y line, nor did their ancestor Thomas Woodson belong to this line. One is struck, however, by the similarity of the Woodson and Carr haplotypes. Both are European and of the same haplogroup, but are still too far apart for Thomas Woodson to have descended from the Carrs in Virginia.

Significantly for genealogy, the haplotyping of the Jefferson Y, which was found to be unique in all samples analyzed so far, may help in verifying the ethnic origin of the family. Jefferson himself apparently believed the family to be Welsh. The name does not have a Welsh form, but may be related to *Jeffries*, a Welsh name. If further analyses find the Jefferson haplotype or a very similar one among the Welsh, but not elsewhere, that finding would somewhat confirm ethnicity.

> a logical age for land proprietorship. If he had been born in 1790, however, he would have been only seventeen or so—an extraordinary age for a Virginia landowner of the period, unless he had inherited the property. A search for the tract's ownership origins reveals no will naming him as an heir and no deed or patent whereby he (or any other Woodson) had purchased, sold, or been granted land in Greenbrier. The area appears to have been well settled by 1807, so one cannot propose that he had taken up "squatter's rights" on the land. The only alternative left is a lease agreement—which means he had to have been twenty-one or older at the time. Minors could not enter into enforceable rent contracts.[57]

In short, arguing that Thomas Woodson was Sally's son requires us to accept the premise that Sally bore him at an extremely unlikely age (ten to twelve) or that Woodson himself made all the passages from boyhood to manhood at ages that range from virtually impossible to highly precocious.[58]

A conclusion that Thomas Corbin Woodson was not the son of either Sally Hemings or Thomas Jefferson is supported by other credible evidence drawn from original sources and primary informants.

THOMAS JEFFERSON'S EVIDENCE

Thomas Jefferson's slave records, standing alone, provide convincing evidence that Thomas Woodson was not Sally Hemings's son:

- The 1795 clothing list shows a slave named Tom receiving an *adult's* allotment of linen (seven yards).[59] If this were Tom Woodson, born in mid-1784, he should

57. It was a basic premise in common law that minors could not sue or be sued except through a parent, guardian, or "next friend." Therefore, a landlord could not be assured of collecting the rent if a minor defaulted.

The land-records search conducted for this assessment yielded two bits of information that may have contributed to the oral tradition of Woodson's descent from Sally Hemings and Thomas Jefferson:

- When Renick bought the land from Betsy Lewis in 1802, it adjoined the property of John *Wooden*—a name one might see as a variant of *Woodsen* or *Woodson*. John appears to have been a white man who had no taxable sons, slaves, or free blacks living with him at the time tax rolls were compiled in 1805 and 1810. (Thomas Woodson was not taxed either year, in his own name, nor was he in 1815, reinforcing the conclusion that he leased his land, rather than owned it.) The district where Wooden and Renick were taxed was also that of Samuel Price Sr., a white slave owner and the alleged father of Jemima. For the deed, see Shuck, *Greenbrier . . . Records*, 5: 77; for the tax rolls, see Shuck 2: 271 (1805), and 302 (1815), and Netti Schreiner-Yantis, *A Supplement to the 1810 Census of Virginia: Tax Lists for the Counties for which the Census is Missing* (Springfield, Virginia: Privately printed, 1971), E-8. Shuck notes the 1815 presence of one *John?* Wooden, adding the question mark to indicate that the first name was not completely legible.
- Also in that district was an extended Hennings family in which the given name *Thomas* occurred at least twice, as Jr. and Sr.; see Schreiner-Yantis, E-6 and E-9. Possibly someone in the distant past assumed this area family to be the same as Hemings.

58. Addressing a plethora of similar traditions common to genealogists of all times, places, and ethnic groups, the venerable Donald Lines Jacobus—first inductee into the National Genealogy Hall of Fame—warned: "Tradition is a chronic deceiver, and those who put faith in it are self-deceivers. This is not to say that tradition is invariably false. Sometimes a modicum of fact lies almost hidden at its base. The probability of its falsehood increases in geometric ratio as the lineage claimed increases in grandeur." See Jacobus, "Tradition and Family History," *Genealogical Research: Methods and Sources*, vol. 1, Milton Rubincam, ed. (Washington, D.C.: American Society of Genealogists, 1980), 13.

59. 1795, 1796, 1820 entries in Jefferson's farm book, University of Virginia Library, Special Collections website, *Digital Resources and Exhibitions* <www.lib.virginia.edu/speccol/tj/farm.html>.

have received the share of a ten-or-eleven-year-old (four yards); if he had been Callender's allegorical "Tom" born in 1790, he should have received a five-year-old's allotment (three yards). All Monticello children were listed with mothers, but no children appear for Sally.

- Jefferson's 1796 provisions list shows that the *adult* Tom was issued his own ration. Sally's daughter Harriet (first of the name) was a newborn, at breast, and not needing a share. But Sally was listed for two shares: one for herself and one for Isabel's nine-year-old daughter Edy, who was living with Sally as babysitter.[60] The other slave females with children under the age of fourteen or so received a portion for each child, and all the youngsters are meticulously listed by name.

In sum, the 1795 and 1796 clothing and provisions lists do not mention a *child* in *any* slave household named Tom, Tommy, or Thomas.

THOMAS TURNER'S EVIDENCE

One final point dissolves the credibility of the only "evidence" that Sally had a son named Tom. Both of the two Jefferson enemies who alleged the existence of a younger "Tom" also stated that they were speaking from rumor and did not personally know any of them.[61] In contrast, a close associate of the Jefferson-Randolph clan also named the children, and he cited no Tom at all. That associate, Thomas Turner, wrote the *Boston Repertory* on 31 May 1805 that Jefferson and the "black, (or rather mulatto) Sally ... have cohabited for many years, and the fruit of the connexion abundantly exists in proof of the fact. ... *The eldest son (called Beverly,)* is well known to many."[62]

The slave whom Callender derisively calls "president Tom" did not exist, at least not as a 1790-born son of Sally Hemings and Thomas Jefferson.[63] He may have existed as the child born in 1790 to Sally, who died shortly afterward. Or he may have existed as a redheaded almost-five-year-old named Beverly, who *was* at Monticello. SALLY and TOM typeset in all-capitals in Callender's explosive articles was an eye-catching and far more suggestive combination than SALLY and

60. Ibid. Edy, who had been born in 1787, was with Isabel on the 1795 clothing-allotment list. See also Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, 195, 219.

61. After Callender published his articles, with repeated derision of "our young MULLATO PRESIDENT" whom he called "TOM" (e.g., *Richmond Recorder*, 1 September 1802), a Georgia Federalist, Thomas Gibbons, wrote a political ally referring to "his [Jefferson's] children, to wit, Tom, Beverly and Harriot ... *tho I never saw any one of them.*" Italics added. Apparently he was copying Callender. The Gibbons letter of 20 December 1802, housed at the Clements Library, University of Michigan, is cited in "Assessment of Thomas C. Woodson Connection to Sally Hemings," in Jefferson Foundation, "Report of the Research Committee," unnumbered p. 1.

62. Letter of Thomas Turner, cited in "Assessment of Thomas C. Woodson['s] Connection to Sally Hemings," unnumbered p. 2. Italics added. Turner also raised political complaints against Jefferson in this letter. In response, Jefferson's private secretary wrote several items for the *Richmond Enquirer* answering the *other* charges. As to the "slave-paramour charge" (27 September 1805), Jefferson's secretary disdainfully skirted the issue, saying it was "below the dignity of a man of understanding." Quoted in Brodie, "Great Jefferson Taboo," 55.

63. The "president Tom" moniker attributed to Callender, but written in lower case, was the version published by the *Frederick-Town Herald*, 8 December 1802. Callender was actually uncertain of the boy's age, guessing "ten or twelve" in his first blast on 1 September 1802.

See also Michael Durey, *"With the Hammer of Truth": James Thomson Callender and America's Early National Heroes* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 158–63.

BEVERLY would have been—and Callender's style was gross exaggeration rather than outright invention.[64]

ANALYSIS AND CORRELATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The sum of the evidence points inescapably to Thomas Jefferson as father of all seven of Sally Hemings's children. This finding recognizes that conclusions based on the Genealogical Proof Standard,[65] as this one is, may need to be revisited if additional evidence emerges or major flaws are discovered in the underlying reasoning. But the same holds true for all genealogical and historical conclusions based on documentary evidence. The finding also recognizes that unsubstantiated claims of situations which *could* have happened or individuals who *might* have fathered children do not suffice to overturn evidence that does meet the Genealogical Proof Standard.

Because the evidence is vast and a journal does not have unlimited space, this report focuses upon key elements in the case and includes only analytical and correlative conclusions. These are marshalled below under "Participants' Testimony," "Witnesses' Testimony," and "Circumstantial Evidence."

PARTICIPANTS' TESTIMONY

Thomas Jefferson

Dumas Malone, whose nearly forty-year study produced the most extensive biography of Jefferson yet published, addressed and dismissed the Jefferson-Hemings story toward the end of his series. Responding to the furor created by Fawn Brodie's frank assessment of the "Jefferson Taboo," Malone argued that no Jefferson-Hemings liaison existed; and he supported his view partially by asserting: "He [Jefferson] denied the story in a private letter."[66] That letter is often cited and sometimes partially quoted as Jefferson's rejection of *all* opposition-party charges against him—only one of which was the Hemings allegation. Written 1 July 1805 to Attorney General Levi Lincoln, the letter was sent with a cover message to Secretary of the Navy Robert Smith to read before passing it on to Lincoln. Only the Smith cover survives.

64. Other evidence supports this characterization. Callender said (10 November 1802) that Jefferson had freed Sally's brother, who had something wrong with his arm and was selling fruit in the Richmond capitol. Jefferson did allow Hemings's brother Robert to buy his freedom, and Robert had lost his hand in a gun accident. However, he was owner of a lot, house, and *livery business* in Richmond when Callender printed the article. See Jefferson Foundation, "Report of the Research Committee," appendix E, p. 4; Bear, "Hemings Family," 80–81; and interview with Isaac Jefferson, digitized images online at University of Virginia Library, Special Collections website, *Digital Resources and Exhibitions* <www.lib.virginia.edu/speccol/tj/isaacp03.html>.

65. The Genealogical Proof Standard is defined and discussed in Mills, "Working with Historical Evidence," 180; and *The BCG Genealogical Standards Manual*, 1–2.

66. Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, 6: 513–14. Brodie's *Thomas Jefferson* came out in the same year as Malone's volume 5, but Brodie already had published an explicit (and fully documented) preview of her findings and conclusions in 1972; see Brodie, "The Great Jefferson Taboo," 49–57, 97–100.

The catalyst for the letter was the resurrection of earlier rumors of a Jefferson affair with Mrs. Betsy Walker, rumors that had already caused her husband to challenge Jefferson to a duel. The Walker-Jefferson intermediary, Betsy's nephew Henry Lee, preserved amid his own papers a copy of the Walkers' much-delayed (but remarkably colorful) series of complaints. Jefferson, allegedly, had pursued the reluctant Betsy from 1768 through 1779—i.e., into the early years of his marriage.[67] Lee, presumably, had discussed the charges with (or shown them to) Jefferson during negotiations that prevented the threatened duel. Jefferson had also explained his role in the Walker affair to the satisfaction of his senior cabinet officials in 1803; but, when the rumors resurfaced in 1805, Walker was incensed again. Thus, the Lincoln-Smith letters of 1 July 1805 attempted to satisfy Walker's renewed demand for Jefferson to clear Betsy's good name. Jefferson wrote:

> The inclosed copy of a letter to Mr. Lincoln will so fully explain its own object, that I need say nothing in that way. I communicate it to particular friends[68] because I wish to stand with them on the ground of truth, neither better nor worse than that makes me. You will perceive that I plead guilty to one of their charges, that when young *and single* I offered love to a handsome lady. I acknoledge [*sic*] its incorrectness. It is the only one founded on truth among all their allegations against me.[69]

Malone and some others contend that the word *their*, in the fourth and sixth lines above, applied to the opposition writers—all of them and all their varied charges. To the contrary, it applied to the Walkers—husband and wife. Consider:

- Jefferson's reference to his bachelorhood, coupled with the Walkers' multiple accusations that he had continued active pursuit of Betsy five years into his marriage, is clear indication of his intent within the missing enclosures. He was accepting responsibility for his behavior as a single man but rejecting "all their [the Walkers'] allegations" that he had persisted in it while married to his beloved Martha—as pointed out by the Jefferson biographer Virginius Dabney, who was a fierce critic of Brodie but still objectively evaluated the Smith cover.[70]

- In a later (1816) specific reference to Federalist charges, Jefferson wrote: "*As to federal slanders, I never wished them to be answered,* but by the tenor of my life, half a century of which has been on a theater at which the public have been spectators and competent judges of its merit. Their approbation has taught a lesson, useful to the world, that the man who fears no truths has nothing to fear from lies. I should have fancied myself half guilty had I condescended to put pen to paper in refutation of their falsehoods, or drawn to them respect by any notice from myself.[71]

67. Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson*, 75–76, which quotes the Walkers' accusations in full.

68. Contrary to Malone's characterization of this as a "private letter" (6: 513–14), a missive addressed to one person but circulated among multiple recipients, knowing that they would "discreetly" pass on the contents to others, is hardly a "private letter."

69. Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, 4: 222; also Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson*, 375, with "inclosed" rendered as "enclosed." Emphasis added above.

70. Dabney, *Jefferson Scandal*, 10.

71. Jefferson to George Logan, 20 June 1816, as quoted in Richard E. Dixon, "The Case Against Thomas Jefferson: A Trial Analysis of the Evidence on Paternity," in Coates, *Jefferson-Hemings Myth*, 140. Italics added.

Jefferson's words of 1816 directly contradict the position that he intended the 1805 letter as "refutation of their [the *Federalists*'] falsehoods." The 1816 letter and the many others like it describe Jefferson's policy of *not* responding to Federalist accusations. The allegation of adultery was the only one he ever specifically denied, and he condescended to do that only to satisfy Walker. The "truths" to which he referred in 1816 concerned opinions about public policy he had expressed in two previous private letters that his 1816 correspondent had published.[72] They had nothing to do with Sally Hemings, Betsy Walker, or any allegations about his private conduct.

One of the clearest expressions of Jefferson's approach to accusations by his political opponents is found in an 1808 letter to his sixteen-year-old grandson. Thomas Jefferson Randolph, at school in Philadelphia, was living away from home for the first time.[73] Jefferson knew that the youngster would encounter adversaries of his political activities and might hear the "Sally story" in support of their arguments. He advised his grandson at length to simply ignore them.

Within this letter, Jefferson mentioned the three mentors he felt had contributed most to his own development. Among them was George Wythe, signer of the Declaration of Independence, whom Jefferson described as "my antient master, my earliest & best friend."[74] Wythe was also Jefferson's role model in ways relevant to the issue at hand. After being twice widowered, Wythe was widely believed to have taken as his mistress the free mulatto who kept his house, Lydia Broadnax, and to have fathered by her a son, Michael Brown. In 1803, Wythe drafted a will generously providing for the son; and in 1806 both he and his son died from arsenic poisoning. All evidence pointed to Wythe's grandnephew, George Wythe Sweney, and a design to circumvent the will's provisions. That 1803 will also brought Jefferson into the controversy. Obviously convinced by Jefferson's stoicism in the face of Federalist pressures concerning the Hemings children, Wythe named Jefferson as executor and entrusted to him the responsibility for overseeing Brown's property and education. When a jury acquitted Sweney (who had been clearly indicted by circumstantial evidence—arsenic was found in his room, for example), Jefferson must have recognized a clear signal from the white community that open cohabitation across racial lines, and particularly acknowledgment of the resulting offspring, would not be tolerated.[75]

Other arguments against the possibility of a sexual relationship between Jefferson and Hemings focus on their relative ages and his supposed lack of sensuality.

72. Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, 6: 115–17.

73. Edwin M. Betts and James A. Bear Jr., *The Family Letters of Thomas Jefferson* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1966), 362–65.

74. Jefferson to William Duval, 14 June 1806, Thomas Jefferson Papers Series 1, General Correspondence, 1651–1827, digitized image at Library of Congress website, *American Memory* <http://memory.loc.gov>.

75. The Wythe murders are discussed at length by Brodie in *Thomas Jefferson*, 389–91. They are also mentioned by Lawrence M. Freidman in a discussion of Lydia Broadnax's inability to give testimony in the case because of the law that "no negro, mulatto or Indian shall be a witness" against a white person; see Freidman, *A History of American Law*, 2d ed. (New York: Touchstone Books, Simon and Schuster, 1985), 227.

Age: Sally was about fifteen or sixteen when she conceived in Paris in mid-to-late 1789; Thomas was about forty-six. Contrary to critics who appear to be unfamiliar with social mores of the period, the disparity in their ages would not cast Jefferson in the role of "a child molester and a rapist."[76] Sally was not a *child*. She was already of an age when large numbers of women married—Jefferson's daughter Martha, in fact, wed when barely seventeen—and concepts of statutory rape based on age were unknown at the time. A century would pass before an 1888 California law made the ages of sexual partners a matter of legal concern, setting *fourteen* as the statutory age for legal, consensual sex. At the time of the Jefferson-Hemings relationship, the common-law age of consent was *ten*,[77] and the age of contractibility for marriage was *twelve* for females (fourteen for males).[78] Further, Sally was raised in slave quarters that rarely encompassed more than a single room in which all activities took place, including those that led to the births of younger siblings. Her childhood understanding of where babies came from cannot be equated with modern viewpoints derived from nurture in dwellings with discreetly separated parental bedrooms.

Sensuality. The view that Jefferson's analytical, philosophical turn of mind and compulsive list-making reflect his "snow-broth blood"[79] is belied by ample evidence of his lifelong sensual response to certain types of beauty. During his Paris years, for example, although he was exposed to the severe logic of early Renaissance painters and the familial warmth of late-Renaissance Madonnas, the two works of art that particularly entranced him were voluptuously tactile representations of erotic themes.

In 1787, Jefferson wrote of being "in love" with "a delicious morsel of sculpture, by Michael Angelo Slodtz"[80] that portrayed a visit from the mythological goddess Diana to her lover Endymion (by whom she is said to have conceived fifty children—clearly not a platonic relationship!). The following year, Jefferson was entranced by an erotic painting in which the Biblical Sarah (fully clothed, allegorically his late wife Martha) gave Hagar, her exotic Egyptian maidservant (partially naked, allegorically Sally) to her husband Abraham (red-haired, also partly unclothed, and allegorically Jefferson) after the wife could not fill her husband's procreative needs. Jefferson again used "delicious" in describing his reaction to it and continued, significantly, "I would have agreed to have been Abraham though the consequence could have been that I should have been dead five or six thousand years."[81]

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76. This issue seems to have heavily troubled the "Scholars Commission" assembled by the Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society. On behalf of the majority opinion, the lawyer Robert Turner writes, "Like many Americans, I have serious moral problems with the idea of a forty-five year old man 'seducing' or permitting himself to be 'seduced' by a fourteen- or fifteen-year old child. . . . In my view, if the relationship began in Paris, as alleged, Thomas Jefferson was both a child molester and a rapist." See *Report on the Jefferson-Hemings Matter*, 49–50, n. 15.

77. Friedman, *History of American Law*, 586.

78. Walter George Smith, "Civil Marriage," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, online edition (1999), published at website *New Advent* <www.newadvent.org/cathen/09691b.htm>, unnumbered p. 1.

79. *Frederick-Town Herald*, reprinted in the *Richmond Recorder*, 29 September 1802, cited and quoted in Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, 120. Gordon-Reed presents convincing psychological arguments against the "snow-broth blood" characterization on that and succeeding pages.

80. Jefferson to Madame de Tessé, 20 March 1787, in Julian P. Boyd [and others] eds., *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 28 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950–2000), 11: 226, cited and quoted by Halliday, *Understanding Thomas Jefferson*, 76–77, which also includes a photograph of the sculpture.

81. A full-color image of the painting by Adriaen van der Werff is online at *Web Gallery of Art* <http://gallery.euroweb.hu/html/w/werff/adriaen/sarah.html>. Halliday, *Understanding Thomas Jefferson*, 99–102, in-

> One cannot state with assurance that Jefferson's response to art works translated to (or reflects) a sexual attraction to Sally Hemings. His wife Martha, however, had been dead for six years by 1788; and his relationship with her clearly included a hearty sexual element. She conceived six, possibly seven, children in the space of ten years, the first of which was born a bare nine months after she wed Thomas.

Throughout Jefferson's post-1802 career and retirement, he persistently flirted with the scandal—inviting further "Sally stories" by refusing to send away the Hemings children who so obviously looked like him.[82] Only if one assumes he believed a relationship with Sally to be so disgraceful it would negate everything he had done in his public life can one also assume that he feared disclosure of the *truth* of her role in his life. In that connection, Jefferson's writings about the law, when correlated with the Hemings issue, indicate that he was—and knew himself to be—innocent of *miscegenation*.

Jefferson's opposition to what he called "amalgamation" is well-documented, and it is usually presented as proof that he could not have had a liaison that would result in "mixed-blood" children. In forming and expressing his views on miscegenation, Jefferson was fully aware of Virginia's 1785 statutory definition of *mulatto*.[83] In an 1815 letter to attorney Francis Gray, he explained it thus: "Our canon considers two crosses with the pure white, and a third with any degree of mixture, however small, as *clearing* the issue of negro blood." He included an algebraic formula for determining racial mixtures, repeating the phrase "clears the blood."[84] From this viewpoint, because Sally was a quadroon, a Hemings-Jefferson relationship would not have been *miscegenation*; it would have been *clearing the blood.*

In a later portion of the Gray letter, Jefferson addressed the legal conundrum created when a quadroon mother was enslaved: her legally white children would be slaves according to one law, but as whites they could not be held in lifelong bondage.[85] In that same letter, Jefferson opined that such slaves should be freed, whereupon they would become "free white . . . citizen[s] of the United States to all intents and purposes."[86] Thus, one would expect him to have manumitted *all* offspring of Monticello quadroons who were most-likely fathered by white men. The "white" slaves were remarked upon by numerous visitors, so their appearance must

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cludes a good black-and-white photograph. The quote appears in Jefferson's 24 April 1788 letter to Maria Cosway, his alleged on-again, off-again mistress who had returned to her husband in England; transcribed online as "A Son of Nature," MS 1788042, Letters of Thomas Jefferson, 1743–1826, Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library's website, *Thomas Jefferson Digital Archive* <http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/JefLett.html>, and published in *Papers of Thomas Jefferson,* 13: 103. See also Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson*, 230–31.

82. See Thomas Jefferson Randolph's statement under "Witnesses' Evidence" and on p. 193.

83. Hening, *Statutes at Large*, 12: 184 (1785).

84. Jefferson to Francis C. Gray, 4 March 1815, quoted in Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson*, 433. Emphasis added.

85. Hening, *Statutes at Large*, 2: 170 (1662), 490–93 (1662). The first law is clear and specific; the second is a muddled "doublespeak" that says, in effect, a Christian [white person] brought into the colony was a servant-for-years but a "heathen" [black, mulatto, or Indian] was a servant-for-life, even if converted to Christianity. Subsequent laws concerning slaves were always careful to specify the race as "black, mulatto, or Indian."

86. Jefferson to Gray, 4 March 1815, quoted by Onuf, "Every Generation," 166.

have been obvious to Jefferson as well—he was an observant man. He did not free them all; but he did liberate all four surviving children of Sally Hemings.

Jefferson's release of these children, and the manner in which he accomplished it, is in marked contrast to his dealings with the six-hundred-or-so other slaves he is believed to have owned in his life.

An active slaveholder for more than six decades, Jefferson manumitted—formally and without compensation—*one slave*, James Hemings, his Paris-trained chef. American slaves in France could petition for and be granted their freedom, and James no doubt knew that if he remained there he could take that route. No known evidence states why he returned to Virginia and enslavement, but one might logically suspect a combination of the tumult in Paris[87] and a promise of freedom if he would pass on his expensive training to a successor. By 5 February 1796, James's younger brother, Peter, was Jefferson's chef and Jefferson had signed James's manumission deed.[88] (Two years earlier, he had signed a similar deed for Robert Hemings, another brother, but Robert was not gratuitously manumitted. Robert bought his freedom for £60 paid in his behalf by Dr. George Frederick Stras, who held the deed until Robert repaid the purchase money.[89])

Thirty years after freeing James, Monticello's master penned a codicil to his will, freeing five more slaves. Three of them were no doubt rewarded for longtime and special services: Burwell Colbert (forty-three) was Jefferson's majordomo and manservant; Joe Fossett (forty-six) was overseer of the Monticello smithy; and John Hemings (fifty-one) was Jefferson's trusted master carpenter. All were Sally's kinsmen.[90] Notably, Jefferson did not give these men their wives or their children. Nor did he release any of their siblings. He did give to John Hemings two *half-nephews*, the apprentice-carpenters Madison Hemings (twenty-one) and Eston Hemings (eighteen). The gift to John was peculiar if *John's benefit* was Jefferson's primary intent. Both apprentices were to be manumitted at age twenty-one; and Madison, as his master knew, was already that.[91]

Between manumitting James and signing his will's codicil, Jefferson permitted three slaves to leave his several plantations without making strenuous efforts to retrieve them. All three were from Monticello:

87. The bloody storming of the Bastille had occurred on 14 July 1789, amid ongoing riots, and the French Revolution would soon begin.

88. Virtually all the publications cited in this paper mention James's manumission deed. A digitized image is at the University of Virginia Library, Special Collections website, *Digital Resources and Exhibitions* <www. lib. virginia.edu/speccol/tj/deed.html>.

89. James A. Bear Jr. and Lucia C. Stanton, eds., *Jefferson's Memorandum Books: Accounts, with Legal Records and Miscellany, 1767–1826*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 2: 923, shows: "Executed a deed of emancipation for Bob, by the name of Robert Hammings. He has been valued at £60. which Stras is to advance." Stras owned Robert's wife.

90. For the offspring of Sally's mother, Betty Hemmings, see Bear, *Jefferson at Monticello*, 25–26.

91. Albemarle County Wills, 8: 248, codicil written 16 April 1826; the digitized image is online at University of Virginia Library, Special Collections website, *Digital Resources and Exhibitions* <www.lib.virginia.edu/speccol/tj/will.html>. The document is also transcribed by Richard E. Dixon, *Jefferson–Hemings Myth*, 189–92.

BEVERLY HEMINGS
HARRIET HEMINGS

Between January 1821 and early 1822,[92] a time when Jefferson was so deeply in debt he could not afford to pay his overseers or Charlottesville merchants,[93] he aided the escape of two very valuable slaves. The first, Beverly Hemings, was a twenty-three-year-old male, well trained as a carpenter, light-skinned, and in the prime of life. The second, his sister Harriet, was a nineteen-year-old female, presumably capable of bearing children and "nearly white and very beautiful"[94]—for both reasons very valuable.[95]

Jefferson's records do not provide enough information to determine whether the two Hemingses left together; but the timing of their departure is significant. By Jefferson's order, neither was issued a clothing allowance in December 1821; but his notation on the contemporaneous slave roll says they "ran away" in 1822. Both records were written in Jefferson's distinctive handwriting and demonstrate clearly that he was preparing for the Hemings children's absence *before* they actually left.[96] And neither slave could have moved on foot, in winter, through the mountains, without passes, with any hope of succeeding in such a dangerous venture.

Harriet's "flight," according to a Monticello overseer, Edmund Bacon, was accompanied by Jefferson's careful preparations for her safety, including travel out of Virginia by stagecoach with money to stay at respectable inns along the way.[97] Although Bacon did not mention Beverly's having been in the stagecoach, too, one must assume that Jefferson allowed him *some* means of transportation and sufficient funds for the trip north. Indeed, Beverly's presence is also likely because a "respectable" female of that era would not have traveled alone, without a male guardian (or at least a significantly older and formidable female companion).

JIMMY HEMINGS

The departure of Jimmy Hemings does not equate with that of his cousins Beverly and Harriet, eighteen years later. Jimmy ran away in 1804 after near-fatal beatings by an overseer. He was found a year later in Richmond by a former Monticello workman, and Jefferson made arrangements for his return. When Jimmy ran again on the eve of

92. On an undated slave roll, Jefferson wrote "run away '22" beside Beverly's name and "run '22" beside Harriet's; see Betts, *Thomas Jefferson's Farm Book*, facsimile p. 150. Beverly and Harriet last appear on a provisions-estimate list that seems to have been made out in January 1821 (ibid., p. 171); the list is at the bottom of a page figuring supplies "from 21 January 1821." They were not mentioned on the clothing list made out in [December] 1821 (ibid., p. 172), indicating that they had already left Monticello (or were about to leave). Neither appears on or in any further lists, accounts, or memoranda.

Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, 33, states that Harriet appears on an early-1822 list and cites Baron, *Garden and Farm Books*, 471, 479. However, Baron erred in reassembling the scattered pages of the farm book and positioned the second page of an 1815 list with the 1822 list. The Betts edition is correct.

93. Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, 6: 449.

94. Edmund Bacon's 1861 interview, in Bear, *Jefferson at Monticello*, 102.

95. Jefferson himself wrote, shortly before Harriet left: "I consider a woman who brings a child every two years as more profitable than the best man of the farm, what she produces is an addition to the capital, while his labors disappear in mere consumption." Jefferson to John Wayles Eppes, 30 June 1820, quoted in Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson*, 431. As for Beverly's value, it may be reckoned by an incident two years later, when Jefferson sent four field hands—all of them disciplinary problems—to New Orleans for sale, expecting to realize $2,000 to $2,500; Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, 6: 448–49.

96. Betts, *Thomas Jefferson's Farm Book*, facsimile pp. 171–72.

97. See discussion of Edmund Bacon's statement under "Witnesses' Testimony," later in the text.

leaving for home, Jefferson made no further efforts to retrieve him.[98] No incident like the one that prompted Jimmy's flight preceded the departures of Sally's children, whose lives at Monticello were described by their brother Madison as "measurably happy."

Jefferson's manner of releasing the two oldest Hemings children—sending them away without manumission papers to present to authorities if they were challenged—was hazardous; but it prevented their civil status and racial identity from becoming a matter of public record. He could have formally manumitted them as he had their uncle James in 1796, or he could have sold them their freedom as he had their uncle Robert in 1794. He did neither. By helping them slip away, he provided them the opportunity to quietly enter the white world, where his understanding of the law told him they belonged.

This analysis raises another question: if Jefferson released Beverly and Harriet, and later their siblings, because he knew they were white, *how* did he know—unless he was the white man who had fathered them or was liberating them in an agreement with their mother? Evidence contributed by Sally Hemings and her son Madison argues convincingly that he released Sally's children for both reasons.

Sally Hemings

Sally's evidence is indirect. She gave no interviews, sent no letters, and kept no diary; nor is she directly quoted by anyone. Still, her evidence is persuasive:

- Sally was the only slave on any of Jefferson's plantations who saw all of her children liberated. Although all the slaves freed in one way or another were children or grandchildren of Betty Hemings, they constituted just a small portion of Betty's issue.
- All of Sally's Jefferson-recorded children were conceived when he was in residence at Monticello. Meticulous work by several scholars during the past several decades, all correlating Jefferson's schedule with her pregnancies, demonstrates without question that all pregnancies after her return to Virginia began when he was at Monticello and that no conceptions occurred at any other time.[99]
- One of her children, Eston, is the DNA-proved son of a Jefferson male; and all of her children were likely offspring of the same man. If the children were begat by various men who visited her master, as some Jefferson defenders now contend, then one must believe that Sally was *promiscuous when Thomas was in residence* but became *inexplicably celibate whenever he left!* Such a scenario makes no sense, and none of the witnesses who knew her propounded it.[100]

All points considered, any arguments for the paternity of Sally's children must rest on one of three possible scenarios.

98. Jimmy Hemings is sometimes confused with Jamey Hubbard, a three-time runaway sold by Jefferson in 1812. Compare Jack McLaughlin, *Jefferson and Monticello: The Biography of a Builder* (New York: Henry Holt, 1988), 113–16, with Bear, *Jefferson at Monticello*, genealogical chart at p. 26.

99. Particularly see Neiman, "Coincidence or Causal Connection?" 198–210.

100. This proposal (multiple fathers) is a new one in Jeffersonian biographical history. It did not surface until after the Jefferson Foundation published its post-DNA "majority report" and the Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society was formed as an agency for rebuttal.

Scenario 1:
Sally was sent away to another Jefferson household whenever Thomas came home.

This proposal is illogical for at least three reasons:

- Jefferson kept meticulous financial records. They are so extensive, in fact, that their transcription in type slightly larger than the footnotes to this article covers more than 1,300 pages.[101] Between 1793 and 1826 he recorded travel expenses for numerous slaves but absolutely none for Sally.
- His accounts and letters, as well as the writings of his visitors, show that he was a lavish host. Even in the midst of Monticello's most-extensive reconstruction in the late 1790s, his hospitality included French wines and cuisine. Surely, such a host would not routinely send away so valuable a Monticello amenity as a French-trained lady's maid when upper-class ladies traveling without their own servants might arrive at any time.
- Sally must have been at Monticello when Eston was conceived in mid-to-late August 1807. Her mother was in her last illness or very recently deceased. Jefferson entered her death in his farm books as "07," and Madison (born in January 1805) recalled: "My very earliest recollections are of my grandmother Elizabeth Hemings. That was when I was about three years old. She was sick and upon her death bed. I was eating a piece of bread and asked if she would have some. She replied: 'No, granny don't want bread any more.' She shortly afterwards breathed her last."[102] Jefferson, who has been universally viewed as a kindly master, could not have sent Sally away at so crucial a time. Madison was there; Sally must have been.

Scenario 2:
Sally's Jefferson lover was one of Thomas's visitors.

With six recorded conceptions in twelve years, the Jefferson father had to have been a *regular* visitor; and because four of the children were conceived within a few days after Thomas's return, that "other man" likely arrived with him or within a day or two of his return. The "other man" scenario now put forth by Jefferson defenders argues broadly (and repeatedly) that there were at least seven, or ten, or "over two dozen" candidates in the Jefferson family; but their allegations focus upon Thomas's brother Randolph and Randolph's sons.[103]

The "two dozen" possibilities break down as follows:

GEORGE JEFFERSON JR.
This cousin was one of only two Jeffersons old enough and with sufficient reason to visit with any degree of regularity. (For the other option, see Randolph, below.) Between 1797 and 1812, George lived in Richmond, which was *seventy-or-so miles from*

101. Bear and Stanton, *Jefferson's Memorandum Books*. The count omits the index and front-matter pages.
102. Madison Hemings's 1873 interview.
103. See particularly Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society, *Report on the Jefferson-Hemings Matter*, 36, 46, 63, 66, 90, 142, 160, 164, 167, 181, 188, 213–28, 236–37, 254.

Monticello. As Thomas's commission agent, he "may have occasionally visited Monticello, although no reference to such visits has yet been found."[104]

RANDOLPH JEFFERSON

This brother of Thomas lived on his own plantation, Snowden, about twenty miles south of Monticello. In their era, travel between the two would have entailed a long half-day's ride by horse or a day by carriage—assuming the mountain roads were not impassable due to rain, ice, or snow. In the wake of the DNA evidence disproving the family claim that Sally's children greatly resembled Jefferson because they were fathered by a Carr nephew, some Jefferson "defenders" promote Randolph (and/or his sons) as the likely father (or fathers). The arguments put forth are basically these:

- On 11 August 1807, Jefferson issued an invitation to his brother: "Our sister Marks arrived here last night and we shall be happy to see you also."[105] No known record suggests that Randolph accepted the invitation. If he did and if he rode immediately to Monticello, he was there when Eston was conceived. On its face, this would seem to create a plausible possibility—but it does not.

  The quoted passage is taken out of context. It comes at the end of a letter that *(a)* enclosed twenty dollars to pay Randolph for seed he had bought and *(b)* conveyed Thomas's instructions about where and by what means the seed should be distributed. Thomas's enclosing the money rather than waiting a few hours or days to deliver it in person indicates he did not expect Randolph to appear.[106] The invitation is clearly not the letter's purpose and is included almost as an afterthought.

- The "Randolph Theory" argues that "given Randolph's known love for his sister [Anna Marks] and his established deference to his older brother . . . it would seem reasonable to treat the surviving letter as . . . presumption . . . of such a visit."[107] This image of "closeness" in the family turns grainy, however, when another series of letters is considered. Four years later, Jefferson *wrote* to tell Randolph (who lived just twenty miles away) *that their sister Martha Carr had died at Monticello three days before, after an illness of "two or three years," and was already buried*. He did not *ride* over to Snowden so he and Randolph could comfort each other in their grief, and a whole month went by before Randolph responded, saying, "Would of bin over but it was not raly in My power."[108] Then Randolph inquired about a puppy he had at Monticello, speculated that it might be nearly grown already (a point that speaks to the infrequency of their visits), and hoped that Jefferson would not

104. Jefferson Foundation, "Report of the Research Committee," appendix J, "The Possible Paternity of Other Jeffersons: A Summary of Research," unnumbered p. 1.

105. The invitation portion of the letter is quoted by Coates, "Research Report on the Jefferson-Hemings Controversy: A Critical Analysis," *Jefferson-Hemings Myth*, 90. See also Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society, *Report on the Jefferson-Hemings Matter*, 20, 46.

106. Jefferson to Randolph Jefferson, 11 August 1807. For a transcript of the full letter, see Bernard Mayo in *Thomas Jefferson and his Unknown Brother Randolph* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1942), 21. Anna (Jefferson) Marks visited Monticello often from her home in nearby Louisa County, usually stayed for weeks, and moved there permanently a few years later. There seems to have been little urgency in the wording of the invitation or in the context of Anna Marks's visit; Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, 6: 154.

107. Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society, *Report on the Jefferson-Hemings Matter*, 219.

108. Jefferson to Randolph Jefferson, 6 September 1811, and Randolph to Jefferson, 6 October 1811, in Mayo, *Thomas Jefferson and His Unknown Brother*, 19–20.

"forget to take care" of his dog. In January 1812, Jefferson wrote his brother again about Randolph's twin, Anna Marks—telling him that Anna's husband had died and she had moved to Monticello but was in bad health and scarcely able to walk. Randolph waited until February to pen a response (but did not send it until March), saying that if his own health and the roads improved he might be there at the end of March or early April—then he inquired again about his puppy.[109] On 13 April, Randolph penned yet another postponement of his promised visit—he might be there in May—but, of course, asked about his puppy.[110]

Not even five years had passed since Randolph allegedly dashed over to Monticello, with five grown sons in tow, simply because his sister Anna had come to visit. Had so short a time made so great a difference in Randolph's affection for Thomas and Anna? Or is the offhanded "invitation" of 1807 being given undue import?

- Two "oral history accounts of families from the Monticello area" are said to prove that Randolph was identified as the children's father *before* the DNA-test results were announced in 1998. Account A is a partially anonymous 1999 call to a radio talk-show, in which someone named "Diane" identified her father as an amateur historian who grew up near Monticello and stated, "My father told me right off the bat, that it was not Jefferson, it was his brother."[111] Account B is a 1 April 1999 affidavit by Rebecca Lee McMurry, a Jefferson Heritage Society member, saying that her mother had never mentioned the Monticello "yellow people" before Professor Brodie's 1974 book but "waxed indignant" thereafter, asserting "everyone knows it was his half-witted brother."[112]

  These reported statements imply but do not actually say that the stories are rooted in family history. Neither has the status of *tradition*. One is totally unverifiable because it was asserted anonymously, with no details about its provenance to add a whiff of authenticity. The other "everyone knows" assertion recites an ancestral line that had no known kinship or association with Jefferson or Hemings. In short, both are twentieth-century opinions by people without access to eyewitness testimony or down-the-line hearsay derived from participants in the affair.[113]

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109. Jefferson to Randolph Jefferson, 14 January 1812; Randolph to Jefferson, 8 February (which Jefferson noted "rec[d] March 2 1812," indicating that roughly a month elapsed between Randolph's writing the letter and his getting somebody to take it to Monticello); see ibid., 21–22.

110. Randolph to Jefferson, 13 April (received 15 April 1812); ibid., 23.

111. Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society, *Report on the Jefferson-Hemings Matter*, 219.

112. "Paternity of Sally Hemings[']s] Children: Statement of Rebecca Lee McMurry," at Herbert Barger's website <www.angelfire.com/va/TJTruth/mcmurry/html>, p. 1, last downloaded 30 August 2001.

McMurry's website posting identifies her as a descendant of John and Virginia (Graves) White, whose "connection" to Jefferson is stated to be only that "they married about the time of the 'great sale' at Monticello."

113. If opinions of Albemarle-area residents are to be invoked as proof, then a more reliable statement would seem to be that of Gen. John Hartwell Cocke, an intimate of Thomas Jefferson who helped him found his university. Cocke was writing privately in his journals, when he recorded his feelings about the lifestyle of his older friend, amid concern about the number of white males who fathered children by their slaves: "Nor is it to be wondered at, when Mr. Jefferson's notorious example is considered." Six years later, commenting upon the extent to which the "institution" of slavery encouraged bachelors to keep slave women "as a substitute for a wife," he swore, "In Virginia, this damnable practice prevails as much as anywhere—and probably more—as Mr. Jefferson's example can be pleaded for its defense."

See diary entries of 26 January 1853 (diary beginning 19 November 1852) and 23 April 1859 (diary beginning 25 March 1858), Papers of John Hartwell Cocke, 1725–1931, MSS 640, Alderman Library. Digitized images of the pages from which the above quotes are taken appear online as the "Papers of John Hartwell

- Randolph's 1809 second marriage, after an indeterminate period of widowerhood, is cited as the probable reason for Hemings having had no known children after 1808. *However, Randolph's unmarried status and relative proximity to Monticello prior to 1809 weigh in the other direction, because Sally conceived no children during Thomas's frequent and prolonged absences.* One conception, Eston's, occurred when Thomas was present and Randolph *might* have been. *No* conceptions occurred when Randolph had access to Sally and Thomas had none.[114]

  A more logical explanation for the end of Sally's pregnancies is the fact that Jefferson's daughter Martha and her family came back to live at Monticello in that year 1809—a long-cherished goal for Jefferson. The Randolphs made the move in March, bringing children aged one to seventeen and, presumably, some of their own servants. With the house now filled to capacity and Martha installed as chatelaine, continuing the liaison would have been problematic and dangerous, lest its discovery cause Martha to return to her own plantation, Edgehill.[115]

- Randolph is also proposed, by Jefferson defenders, to be the subject of a family tradition among descendants of Eston Hemings. This argument contends: "until they were persuaded by Professor Fawn Brodie in the mid-1970s that Thomas Jefferson was their ancestor," Eston's offspring claimed "his father was not Thomas Jefferson but an 'uncle'—or perhaps a cousin." That "older" tradition, it concludes, "is consistent with the theory that Thomas Jefferson's younger brother, Randolph, was Eston's father. . . . Brother Randolph was often referred to as 'Uncle Randolph,' because of his relationship to Thomas Jefferson's daughters."[116] In summary, this argument finds it peculiar that Eston would assert descent from "an uncle" rather than Thomas himself, given that "most Americans would take pride in being descendants of the famous President."[117]

  The argument is flawed on several counts. First, to avoid offending prominent white kin, many free families of color in the past claimed descent from an "uncle" or a "brother" or a "cousin," rather than assert that a common progenitor spawned both lines. Nor is it uncommon to find some lines of descent adhering to the subterfuge while others refuse to do so[118]—the situation found in the Eston Jefferson

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Cocke" component of "Jefferson and Hemings Sources," at the University of Virginia, Special Collection website, *Digital Resources and Exhibitions* <www.lib. virginia.edu/speccol/tj/images/>.

114. Neiman, "Coincidence or Causal Connection?" 198–210.

115. McLaughlin, *Jefferson and Monticello*, 242–43; Betts and Bear, *Family Letters of Thomas Jefferson*, 54–55, 319–20.

116. For the quotes, see Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society, *Report on the Jefferson-Hemings Matter*, 22; similar material appears on 160–68 and elsewhere.

117. Ibid., 28.

118. A well-known example is that of the Metoyers of Louisiana. White Metoyers claimed descent from the wealthy planter, Pierre; some of their mixed-race kinsmen of the same surname claimed descent from "Pierre's brother, Thomas." In reality both lines descended from a single progenitor, Claude-Thomas-Pierre Metoyer, who fathered ten children by a slave woman before he took a French wife. The claimed descent from Thomas, rather than Pierre, was most prominently published in Cedric Dover, *American Negro Art* (New York: New York Graphic Society, 1960), at plate 2. The reasoning for the subterfuge of claiming descent from a mythical brother was explained by Lee Etta Coutee, a Metoyer descendant through several lines, in a 13 December 1972 interview with Elizabeth and Gary Mills, agents for the Melrose Commission and the Association of the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches. For the full story of this master-slave relationship, see Gary B. Mills, *The Forgotten People: Cane River's Creoles of Color* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976).

line. Second, the contention that "any American" (including Eston, if he could) would be proud to claim descent from a president is insensitive to the reality lived by those who crossed the color line. A public claim to be, or descend from, a son of Jefferson would have automatically branded the claimant with black or slave ancestry. The fact that Jefferson had no white sons was simply too well known.

At least two children of Eston did tell the family secret; one told indiscreetly before any such risk existed and the other told in confidence. Eston's daughter Ann(a), sent off to school in her teens (1849), told her white schoolmates that she was Thomas Jefferson's granddaughter. The incident occurred, however, while the family was still living in Ohio as "mulatto" and her classmates understood her (correctly) to be an "octoroon."[119] Her brother Beverly, as a prominent "white" citizen of Madison, Wisconsin, confided the family secret to a friend. After Beverly's obituary was published by the *Chicago Daily Tribune* in 1908, that friend wrote the *Tribune* to inform readers that he was Jefferson's grandson.[120] Both of these accounts were published three generations or so before Eston's offspring met Fawn Brodie.

Like many "family traditions," the "Jefferson's uncle" story was a whitewashing of the truth, made necessary by the circumstances. The letter of Beverly's friend to the *Tribune* exposed the "secret" of the white Jeffersons of Madison, Wisconsin, creating a story the family then had to squelch. In 1933, Beverly's grandson and namesake, a Princeton graduate, married Margaret Dawes, granddaughter of Charles G. Dawes, the American financier and diplomat who served as U.S. vice-president under Calvin Coolidge—the same man who lent his name to history as creator of the Dawes Plan and then garnered the 1925 Nobel Peace Prize. For the young Beverly Jefferson, that marriage, his career, and the life for which his talents and education qualified him, all rested upon the ruse of his descent from "an uncle" of the president. In his era, as the descendant of the president himself by a slave, he would have found all those doors firmly closed in his face.[121]

RANDOLPH JEFFERSON'S SONS

Also problematic is the new contention that sons of Randolph were likely Sally's lovers. This theory (a frequent refrain in the latest publications) asserts that if Randolph came to visit Monticello at the time Sally conceived (a point of speculation itself), then he likely brought his grown sons (another point of speculation), which "would likely have added another four [elsewhere five] Jefferson males who, if for no other reason than the fact that they were in the prime of their sexuality, must be considered more likely [than Thomas] to have fathered" Sally's children.[122]

119. Judge Sibley, "Beautiful Octoroon: Miss Anna Heming," fully transcribed earlier in the text. Both of Ann's parents were octoroons; hence, she was also.

120. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 13 November 1908, p. 8, col. 5.

121. Brodie, "Jefferson's Unknown Grandchildren," 94–95; John D. Hicks, "Charles G. Dawes Biography," at the Grolier *Encyclopedia Americana* website, *The American Presidency* <http://gi.grolier.com/presidents/ea/vp/vpdawes.html>. For this line of Eston's see also Shannon Lanier and Jane Feldman, *Jefferson's Children: The Story of One American Family* (New York: Random House, 2000).

122. Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society, *Report on the Jefferson-Hemings Matter*, 36, 46, 63, 66, 90, 142, 160, 164, 167, 181, 188, 213–28; the quote is at 221–22. Virtually the same wording appears in Letter to the President of the United States, by John Hamilton Works Jr., President, Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society, 25 April 2001, posted online at the society's website <www.tjheritage.org>.

This "mighta'-coulda'" theory too-loosely stretches the bounds of human physiology, sexuality, and psyche. Isham, Randolph's oldest son, was under fourteen when Sally conceived her first recorded child in 1795.[123] At the other end of the spectrum, the allegation that "one of Randolph's boys" supplied Eston's Y chromosome in 1807 stretches credulity. The randy young sons of Randolph (if, indeed, that characterization fits) would not likely have bypassed Monticello's nubile young girls to force themselves upon a woman whose physical appeal had been bespoiled by birthing and nursing six babies—a woman, in fact, old enough to be the mother of most of them. Although the young Sally was fabled for her beauty, she did not "age gracefully." When Jefferson died, even though she was thirty years younger than he, his inventory described her as an "old woman," worth just thirty dollars.[124] She was only fifty-three.

OTHER JEFFERSON MALES

As for the assertion that some two dozen white, male Jefferson adults in contemporary Virginia might have fathered Eston, the reality is this: the closest, Randolph and sons, lived twenty miles away. The next closest, George, lived seventy miles distant. All the others "lived over a hundred miles from Monticello in Southside Virginia."[125]

Scenario 3: The Jefferson who fathered Sally's children was the one in residence at each conception—Thomas.

Sally's children looked like Thomas Jefferson. His own grandson, speaking of Monticello after Jefferson retired and Sally's sons became young men, reported, "the likeness between master and slave was blazoned to all the multitudes who visited this political mecca."[126] The grandson then hastened to add that Jefferson's sister's son, Peter Carr, was the source of that blood—a fact disproved, at least in Eston's case, by DNA testing. The resemblance was not slight. It startled guests, embarrassed Jefferson's daughter Martha, and led four Chillicothe, Ohio, residents of a half-century later to instantly recognize on Jefferson's statue the features of their friend Eston Hemings.[127]

Moveover, Sally was not merely "at Monticello" during Jefferson's return; she had the run of his private quarters. It was her "duty . . . to take care of his chamber and his wardrobe"[128]—that "chamber" being a bedroom and study which Jefferson's grandson later described as a "sanctum sanctorum [that] even his own daughters never sat in."[129]

The final piece of indirect testimony left by Sally is the set of traits that she

123. Jefferson Foundation, "Report of the Research Committee," appendix J, unnumbered p. 2.

124. As noted in Brody, "Great Jefferson Taboo," 99.

125. Jefferson Foundation, "Report of the Research Committee," 1.

126. Thomas Jefferson Randolph's 1856–57 interview.

127. Ibid.; *Scioto Gazette*, 1 August 1902.

128. Madison Hemings's 1873 interview. Jefferson's farm and household books do not detail the specific assignments given to women and they document few duties for the men.

129. Brodie, "The Great Jefferson Taboo," 56, citing Thomas Jefferson Randolph's broadside, "The Last Days of Jefferson." In the same vein, Mrs. Anna Maria Thornton, visiting Monticello in 1802, wrote in her diary that Jefferson's suite was "constantly locked." McLaughlin, *Jefferson and Monticello*, 20, remarks, "she learned what every guest at Monticello quickly discovered, that no one but Jefferson had access to his private quarters."

ingrained in her children. The two who left during Jefferson's lifetime moved successfully into white culture and married into families of means. Both had to have been thoroughly trained in "white" speech patterns, habits of dress and table, and manner of addressing equals (whites) and subordinates (blacks). Presumably both left Monticello in "white" clothes; in slave garb, without the requisite passes, they would have been marked as runaways.

Jefferson was not the only one at Monticello who prepared for Beverly and Harriet's departure—or for that of Madison, who was twenty-one and likely on the brink of leaving when Jefferson died. Sally had been getting them ready for years. Whatever her reasons were for her child-rearing tactics, they were effective and persuasive.

WITNESSES' TESTIMONY

Four witnesses who knew Sally Hemings testified that they also knew who fathered her children:

- Sally's son Madison named Thomas Jefferson as his (and their) father.
- Israel Jefferson, a fellow Monticello slave, said he knew Sally was Thomas's concubine and believed, therefore, that he was her children's father.
- Jefferson's grandson, Thomas Jefferson Randolph, named Peter Carr as the father.
- A Monticello overseer Edmund Bacon said the father was some man (unidentified) other than Jefferson.

None of these witnesses was at Monticello for all of Sally's conceptions; and the most-touted witness, Bacon, was there only for the child whose Jeffersonian paternity has been proved. All the witnesses were sixty-five or older when they testified; and all their data (with one exception) were recorded by interviewers, none of whose "handwritten notes covering [the] interview have ... been found"—a reason some give for dismissing Madison's testimony.[130]

The present genealogical analysis measures all testimony against the same bar, and it discards no evidence for reasons unrelated to the testimony itself. It is irrelevant to the genealogical issue whether a descent from Jefferson might qualify a line for ownership rights in the Monticello graveyard,[131] or whether a fact-based decision might be seen as "denigrating" Jefferson's genuinely momentous role in history.[132]

Madison Hemings

When the 1870 federal census taker visited Madison Hemings in Ross County, Ohio, and asked whether either of his parents was foreign born, Madison appar-

130. Wallenborn, "Thomas Jefferson Foundation['s] DNA Study Committee, Minority Report."

131. For this concern, see John H. Works Jr., "Genealogy, Slavery, and Slave Laws: Discussion of the Lack of Documentary Evidence of Paternity of the Hemings Family for Consideration by the Monticello Association," at Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society website <www.tjheritage.org/genealogy.html>, last downloaded 1 September 2001.

132. Bahman Batmangheudj, "Conclusion and Consequences," *Jefferson-Hemings Myth*, 163–76, expresses strident outrage at the Jefferson Foundation "Report of the Research Committee" on this basis.

ently replied that his father, Thomas Jefferson, was native born. The enumerator, William Weaver, wrote across the census columns, "This man is the son of Thomas Jefferson!"[133] Weaver, who had also taken Madison's 1860 data,[134] was clearly convinced. He did not write *claims to be* or *says he is*. He wrote *is*—an unambiguous statement penned in his own quite legible hand. Weaver was the only interviewer who was a government agent acting in an official capacity. His census-schedule notation ranks with Madison's name, age, birthplace, and real-estate value as primary information from an original source.

The fact that Madison waited until 1870 to make his assertion publicly does not damage its credibility. He had a compelling reason for keeping silent until after ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment earlier that year: his brother Beverly and sister Harriet were runaway slaves. Both of them—*and all of Harriet's children*—had been at risk of capture and re-enslavement had their identity been discovered. That possibility, however remote, was fearsome.

Madison reiterated his assertion when interviewed by editor Samuel F. Wetmore for the 13 March 1873 *Pike County Republican*.[135] At that time, he expanded his paternity account to include the four other children he knew about: Beverly, Harriet, Eston, and a child of unspecified gender, conceived in Paris and born in Virginia who "lived but a short time."

Madison's account is clear, straightforward, and unmixed with self-promotion or braggadocio. He claimed no special privilege or intrinsic merit because of the relationship, nor did he pretend to any "insider" knowledge of the former president's private life. There is no detectable evidence that the interview was Wetmore's fabrication. Certainly it was edited (editors *edit*—it's what they *do*); but the language is commensurate with Madison's background and training. He was undoubtedly brought up to enter the white world, as his brother and sister had done. His conversational model had been the discourse of an articulate orator and one of the most literate men this nation has produced. Wetmore's misspelling of *enceinte*, French for *pregnant*,[136] indicates that the word was not chosen by the interviewer but by the interviewee; it reflects his mother's Paris sojourn and the probable Monticello euphemism. French words had entered the vocabulary of Jefferson's slaves as far away as Bedford County by at least 1818 when Hannah, housekeeper at his Poplar Forest plantation, wrote him in decidedly hesitant English but with the French closing, *adieu*, correctly spelled.[137]

133. 1870 U.S. census, Ross County, Ohio, population schedule, Huntington Township, p. 699 (taken 7 July), dwelling 49, family 49, National Archives microfilm M593, roll 1263.

134. 1860 U.S. census, Ross County, Ohio, population schedule, Huntington Township, p. 410 (taken 14–15 June), dwelling 126, family 125, National Archives microfilm M653, roll 1031.

135. Madison Hemings's 1873 interview.

136. Brodie's and Gordon-Reed's transcriptions include the misspelling; McMurry's transcription silently corrects it (see *Jefferson-Hemings Myth*, 182–87). Dabney noted the misspelling but failed to equate the word's use with Madison's background and attributed it to Wetmore's education; see Dabney, *Jefferson Scandals*, 46.

137. McLaughlin, *Jefferson and Monticello*, 99, facsimile. The Poplar Forest house was built in Bedford County in the last years of Jefferson's presidency and first years of retirement.

Like all reminiscences, Madison's are a combination of primary and secondary data. For example, he gave his birth date as 19 January 1805—information that is clearly secondary (nobody can be a primary informant about his or her own birth) but nonetheless credible. Because he did not have access to Jefferson's farm records and could not have known they confirm the year and month,[138] the date's accuracy points to Sally as his informant. No doubt she was his source for other data he could not have known firsthand.

As memoirists often do, Madison began his story with a recapitulation of his ancestry, honestly identifying it as "such is the story that comes down to me." Jefferson's autobiography, in fact, begins the same way: "The tradition in my father's family was that their ancestors came to this country from Wales."[139] If one summarily dismisses Madison's tradition, one must also dismiss Thomas's.

A family's oral history is not automatically admissable or inadmissable. It must be carefully tested for its origins and for support or challenge from documentary evidence. In the Hemings case, its three-generation transmission is easily traced: *(a)* from Madison to Sally Hemings, with whom he had lived for thirty years; *(b)* from Sally to Betty Hemings, with or near whom she had lived for thirty-four years; and *(c)* from Betty to her African mother, with whom she had presumably lived for at least eleven years—long enough to hear and understand the story of her own lighter skin and the Hemings surname. Although the present project did not personally reinvestigate the documentary evidence for Sally's ancestry, those who have done so have found none that contradicts the Hemings-Wayles tradition related by Madison.[140] It is also germane to note that Eston also accepted the tradition as true—he gave his first son the name of his maternal grandfather, *John Wayles*.[141]

Large portions of Madison's statement represent primary data based on his own experience. In describing his and his siblings' lives at Monticello he said, "We were free from the dread of having to be slaves all our lives long, and were measurably happy." This statement was not hearsay; it was his own direct experience. The children knew they were slaves, however. Could they have been "measurably happy" if they did not have the assurance of someone they trusted implicitly (their mother) that the only man on earth with power to liberate them would actually do so? Obviously repeating his mother's explanation for her conviction, Madison said she trusted in a "solemn promise" Jefferson made in Paris that if she returned to Virginia and slavery he would liberate her children at age twenty-one. For whatever reason Thomas made that pledge, Sally relied upon it with sufficient faith to rear her children in its light.

138. "Roll of Negroes 1810 Feb. in Albemarle," in Betts, Thomas Jefferson's Farm Book, facsimile p. 128.

139. Thomas Jefferson, "Autobiography," transcribed at Yale University Law School website, *Avalon Project: The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* <www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/jeffauto.htm>.

140. Bear, "Hemings Family." A former curator of Monticello, Bear had full access to its records collections.

141. Jefferson Foundation, "Report of the Research Committee," appendix H.

Details of the Paris "treaty," as Madison called it, are ambiguous. Did Thomas agree to release *all* Sally's children, regardless of who their father was? Or all her children *by him* but not any others she might have by another man? Or all her children *provided he was the father of them all?* Or only the child she was then carrying, assuming she was pregnant at the time?[142] Whether the promise was made to induce Sally's return to Monticello or for other reasons she declined to discuss with her children, it appears to have been just what Madison said it was: a treaty—a contract, verbally made.

Despite Sally's youth (by modern standards), she was not a naive child on the subject of master-slave concubinage. She was the third straight generation in her maternal line to spend her life in that situation. It would be naive on the part of *researchers* to assume that she had not profited from the experiences of her mother and grandmother. It is also a pattern observable in both historical and contemporary life that girls raised in a particular environment tend to grow up accepting that familiar lifestyle as both the norm and their fate.[143] Some may accept it passively; but those with strength of character, whether innate or ingrained by their mothers, will bargain with their suitors to improve the lives of their offspring. The written contracts executed as an adjunct to the storied quadroon balls of New Orleans are but one case at point—and one likely known to Jefferson from his Parisian associates. Prior to such liaisons, the white suitors agreed to secure the future of the offspring, and the females of their desire promised faithful devotion.

Sally's part of the bargain, clearly, was her availability when he wanted her and her pledge to have no other sexual partner. This mutual agreement, scrupulously observed, is the only reasonable explanation for the subsequent behavior of both Jefferson and Hemings. He assisted the departure of Beverly and Harriet and provided for manumission of Madison and Eston, thereby freeing all her children. He was clearly confident that they were legally white—a confidence he could not have had except for his total assurance that she had no children by anyone else. Each clearly trusted the other; and Sally reared her children to leave not only servitude but also the onerous, even perilous, quasi-freedom of a manumitted slave.

Israel Jefferson

Wetmore also conducted an interview with Israel Jefferson, born Israel Gillett at Monticello. Israel's story is fascinating, but he was clearly a less articulate subject than Madison; and Wetmore's interference in the account is fairly obvious. Israel testified that his "intimacy" with Sally and Thomas convinced him that she was his concubine, and that he believed Jefferson had fathered Madison and his

142. The Paris-conceived child was *part* of the treaty story. If there was a promise (and the evidence is persuasive), then there was also a child and that child likely died soon after its birth, as Madison reported.

143. The mother-to-daughter lifestyle transmission is a phenomenon seen across many "unconventional" lifestyles—from the quadroon balls of New Orleans to the redlight districts portrayed in *Pretty Baby*, to the ongoing practice of polygamy recently thrown into the national spotlight by the case of another middle-aged man who wed young teens reared in the same polygamous lifestyle.

siblings.[144] Israel's evidence, although it does reinforce Madison's assertion, does not provide the strong support others have ascribed to it. Israel already knew what Madison had said (Madison's interview had been published nine months earlier), and he was unlikely to have contradicted it. It is reasonable to conclude, however, that Israel's observation of the Hemings-Jefferson relationship was one shared by virtually everyone in the slave quarters. Somebody tended Sally's children when she went up to the "great house" at odd hours; and everybody could count the months between their master's return and the birth of her new baby.

Thomas Jefferson Randolph

Jefferson's grandson and namesake, Thomas Jefferson Randolph (hereinafter called T. J. to avoid confusion) made three direct statements about the paternity of Sally Hemings's children.

- About 1856–57, he was interviewed by Henry S. Randall, who was neither a historian nor a biographer but an author of works on sheep breeding and a one-term politician. Randall apparently became interested in Jefferson because of the Monticello experiments in husbandry. His contacts with family members over a number of years led to his production of a biography heavily reflecting the image the family had planted and cultivated.[145] Notes from Randall's interview with T. J. do not seem to exist. In 1868, however, he wrote a few details of the interview to another writer.[146]

  According to Randall, T. J. described in vivid detail the close physical resemblance between Jefferson and some of his slaves (unnamed). To account for it, he identified the sons of Jefferson's sister as their father, stating that "Sally Hemings was the mistress of Peter [Carr] and her sister Betsy the mistress of Samuel [Carr]—and from these connections sprang the progeny which resembled Mr. Jefferson."[147] Randall also quotes him as saying that the Carr relationships were "perfectly notorious at Monticello" and

144. "Life Among the Lowly, No. 3," *Pike County Republican*, 25 December 1873, transcribed in Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson*, 477–82, and Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, 248–53.

145. Between 1848 and his 1876 death, Randall wrote at least four books on the subject of sheep husbandry and coauthored one on horses, all held by the Library of Congress. He also dabbled in several other fields: he studied law, but never practiced it, farmed for a "considerable" while, tried his hand at editing, was an unpaid "visitor" to common schools for the state of New York, held the superintendency of Cortland County schools for one or two years, and served one term as New York's secretary of state, before deciding to write a presidential biography. See H. C. Goodwin, *Pioneer History; or Cortland County and the Border Wars of New York* (New York: A. B. Burdick, 1859). For his Cortland County superintendency, see the reference to him on the title page of S[amuel] S[idwell] Randall, General Deputy Superintendent of Common Schools of the State of New York, *Mental and Moral Culture, and Popular Education* (New York: C. S. Francis, 1844).

For a sampling of the descriptions provided to Randall by Jefferson's offspring, all emphasizing the high-mindedness of Jefferson's character, see the three adulatory letters written to Randall by Jefferson's grandson-in-law, Nicholas P. Trist, the first pair dated 2 and 6 April 1856 and the third undated, all in Thomas Jefferson Papers, Series 6, Randolph Family Manuscripts, 1790–1889, at the Library of Congress website *American Memory* <http://memory.loc/gov>. Randall's biography appeared as *The Life of Thomas Jefferson*, 3 vols. (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1858).

146. Randall did not date the interview; but internal references seem to place it not long prior to his 1858 publication, and the letters from Trist attest that Randall was still collecting data in 1856.

147. Thomas Jefferson Randolph's 1856–57 interview. The author is not a trained geneticist, but she suspects that a man's sons are more likely to look like him than the *grandsons* of that man's *sister*.

that the brothers had tearfully confessed their guilt when he confronted them with a newspaper article about the Hemings offspring.

- In 1858, not long after the Randall interview, Ellen (Randolph) Coolidge asked her brother T. J. about a story recirculating in antislavery sources, that Jefferson had sold his slave daughter as a prostitute in New Orleans. Coolidge wrote her husband the following day to relate the conversation, saying T. J. had told her in confidence that he and a friend when "young men together, had heard Mr. Peter Carr say with a laugh, that 'the old gentleman had to bear the blame of his and Sam's (Col. Carr) misdeeds.'" From this, Ellen leapt to a conclusion—*Samuel* fathered Sally's children. Thus, she informed her husband: "there is a general impression that the four children of Sally Hemings were *all* the children of Col. Carr [Samuel],"[148] although that assertion, attributed to her brother, contradicts the assertions credited to him by Randall.
- Apparently in 1874, T. J. received a copy of the Ohio newspaper that published Israel Jefferson's interview, and he wrote the interviewer (Wetmore) a rebuttal. "To my own knowledge and that of others 60 years ago," he asserted, "the paternity of these parties [the Hemings children] were admitted by others."[149] His statement "60 years ago" would place the admission at about 1814, when he was twenty-two.

Of these three accounts, only the 1874 letter offers unfiltered testimony. In it, T. J. does not provide names for the "others" but he no doubt had the Carrs in mind, given that he had previously accused one or the other.

Of the two conflicting direct allegations, Coolidge's (written the day after she acquired certain details from T. J.) would normally carry greater weight than Randall's (written some twelve years after he interviewed T. J.). Both, however, contain numerous examples of the writers' strong bias; they were clearly refuting a connection between the Jefferson they admired and the Hemingses they did not. Both reports are in letters intended to influence a publication. Randall was responding to an inquiry from fellow biographer James Parton. Coolidge intended that her Boston-based husband show the first part of her letter to "Bulfinch"—a Boston writer known for popularizing ancient learning by mixing current events into his retelling of classic myths.[150]

Randall's account departs so often and so radically from facts provided by other records that his account must be viewed with extreme caution. He said, for ex-

148. The story that Jefferson sold his slave daughter in New Orleans first surfaced in the 1830s and was revived by publication of a popular novel in 1853; see Dabney, *Jefferson Scandals*, 15–21. Ellen Randolph Coolidge to husband Joseph Coolidge, 24 October 1858, quoted in Dixon, "The Case Against Thomas Jefferson," 193–96, citing Accession 9090, Special Collections, Alderman Library, University of Virginia. Emphasis used by Dixon.

149. Randolph to Wetmore, undated (but internal evidence suggests 1874) and apparently never sent. Portions were quoted in Dixon, "The Case Against Thomas Jefferson," 146, citing Accession 8937, Special Collections, Alderman Library.

150. Thomas Bulfinch's interest in Jefferson would not be surprising; his father was the Boston architect Charles Bulfinch, whose career coincided with Jefferson's design of Monticello. See Marie Sally Clearly, "*Miscuit Utile Dulci:* Bulfinch's Mythology as a Pedagogical Prototype," *The Classical World* 78 (July–August 1985), 591–96; abstracted at the website, *Thomas Bulfinch (1796–1867): His Life and Work* <www.fivecolleges.edu/mcleary/tbulfinch.html>, last downloaded 29 August 2001.

ample, the interview took place at "mouldering Monticello," although the estate did not begin to molder until confiscated by the Confederate government several years later. Its owner at the time T. J. granted his interview to Randall, Uriah Levy, had restored the home and gardens after purchasing them in 1836.[151] Whether other errors were Randall's or T. J.'s is debatable, but they are significant:

- Randall reported that "at the periods when these Carr [Hemings] children were born, he, Col. [T. J.] Randolph, had charge of Monticello." Then Randall arranged his narrative to imply that T. J. was also in charge when he confronted the Carrs while they were "lying not far off under a shade tree." However, T. J. could not have been Monticello's manager when the children were conceived *or* when the supposed confession occurred. Born 12 September 1792,[152] he was only six at Beverly's birth and sixteen at Eston's. He took over management of the Albemarle County farms in the spring of 1815—but not of Monticello itself until the overseer, Bacon, retired in 1822.[153] Meanwhile, Peter Carr died in February 1815[154] before any responsibility was given to T. J. for even the outlying farms.
- T. J. Randolph was *two decades younger* than Peter and Samuel Carr (born 1770 and 1771, respectively).[155] An untried youngster, regardless of how provoked by slurs on his grandfather's character, is unlikely to have confronted two well-established kinsmen twice his age, who had been close to his mother since their childhood,[156] much less have shamed them into the tearful admission related by Randall.
- Either Randall or T. J. erred in naming Samuel's mistress as Sally's "sister Betsy." Sally had a *half-sister* named *Betty* Brown, and a *niece* named *Betsy* Hemings. The niece was likely the one T. J. meant. However, Betsy was among the twenty slaves Jefferson gave his daughter Maria at her marriage in 1797.[157] Whatever relationship Samuel Carr had with her (if any), she and her children were slaves at Maria's home in Chesterfield County, not at Jefferson's home in Albemarle. Her children cannot have been among those at Monticello whose resemblance to his grandfather so disturbed T. J.
- Randall also reported T. J.'s account of his mother's instruction shortly before her death: he and his younger brother George should always defend their grandfather's name and character. Moreover, she had pointedly "reminded" them that Jefferson and Sally had been "far distant from each other" for fifteen months before the Hemings child (unnamed) who looked most like him was born.[158] The facts belie the instruc-

151. Marc Leepson, "The Levys at Monticello," website *Monticello* <www.monticello.org/tjf/levy.html>, downloaded 23 July 2001; the online article identifies itself as a reprint (no date) from *Preservation Magazine*.

152. Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, 6: 501–3, appendix I, "Descendants of Thomas Jefferson."

153. Ibid., 6: xv, 315.

154. Ibid., 6: 247.

155. Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, xxv–xxvii, 240–41.

156. Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, 6: 501–3, gives Martha (Jefferson) Randolph's birth date as 27 September 1772. The Carrs lived with the Jeffersons through Martha (Wayles) Jefferson's death in 1782 and left between then and Thomas's departure for France in 1784.

157. Bear, *Jefferson at Monticello*, 26. The dowry deed for twenty slaves is mentioned by several writers, but Bear is the only one who identified Betsy Hemings among the slaves itemized there. Her post-1797 absence from Monticello is verifiable from Jefferson's slave rolls, food and clothing distribution lists, and accounts. According to these records, Betsy had no Monticello-conceived children.

158. Thomas Jefferson Randolph's 1856–57 interview.

> tion. Both Thomas and Sally were at Monticello, together, when *all* of her children were conceived, although Thomas was often absent when they were born.

Is there any accuracy at all in Henry Randall's "recollection"? If so, where is it? The interview does appear to have taken place at Monticello; and Sally's room does appear to have been where T. J. said it was. Revisiting her quarters seems to have brought back vivid and painful memories. Randall reports his saying,

> There was a better excuse for it [the Sally story] than you might think: she had children which resembled Mr. Jefferson so closely that it was plain that they had his blood in their veins. . . . [I]n one case the resemblance was so close, that at some distance or in the dusk the slave, dressed in the same way might be mistaken for Mr. Jefferson.

The account clearly surprised Randall, who asked why Jefferson had not sent away such embarrassing evidence of a dalliance in the slave quarters. T. J. replied that his mother would have preferred to have them gone, but his grandfather appeared oblivious to the resemblance and "all venerated Mr. Jefferson too deeply to broach such a topic to him."[159]

T. J.'s description of the Hemings children was from his daily observation that they looked like his revered grandfather—while *he* did not;[160] and bitter candor is evident in his discussion of their appearance with Randall. His conviction that the Carrs were the cause seems to be sincere. Clearly, he exaggerated the confession story, but he does seem to have believed that Peter was the children's father.

The disparities between T J.'s accounts to Randall and his sister are not surprising. He knew Ellen would spot the falsity of his "I was manager" claim and the alleged confession of the weeping Carr men. Ellen knew better. Thus, the story he told her was likely close to the truth, at least as he perceived it. Possibly he *had* overheard a remark by Peter about "misdeeds" and "the old gentleman" and seized upon that as an explanation for the disturbing likeness. If his 1874 letter places the "confession" accurately, it occurred in 1814—after he returned in September from war-related duties with the Virginia militia. By then, Peter Carr, Jefferson, and others had become the board of Albemarle Academy (precursor to the University of Virginia). At meetings in Charlottesville and at Monticello, the subject under passionate debate was education;[161] and the men's own college experiences were much in their minds. Carr's laughing remark may have related his and Sam's lack of academic diligence—if not the typical antics and scrapes of college lads—all of which would have been deemed "misdeeds" by Jefferson, who financed their education and would likely have had to pay for their pranks that went awry.[162]

159. Ibid.

160. Edmund Bacon's 1861 interview included remarks to this effect (Bear, *Jefferson at Monticello,* 85, 116), and T. J.'s portrait reproduced in Brodie's *Thomas Jefferson* at pp. 192–93 confirms the dissimilarity.

161. Malone, *Jefferson and His Time,* 6: 241–50.

162. Ibid., 3: 176. Jefferson was clearly aware of the extent to which "taverns, drinkers, smoakers, and idlers and dissipated persons" could lure young students who found themselves "thrown on their own" without parental supervision. That was the essence of his letter of advice to his grandson T. J. in 1808, in which he "recollect[ed]

T. J.'s seeming penchant for leaping to a conclusion and holding it relentlessly supports this interpretation. Martha Randolph, writing to her father in 1808, said she detected in her son's character a tendency to "jealousy and *suspicion*," which she hoped his association with "good company" would eradicate.[163] A story told by Edmund Bacon is probably exaggerated in its details but illustrates the tenacity with which her son held onto his suspicions. Despite assurances to the contrary, Bacon said, T. J. became convinced that a runaway slave was hiding somewhere on the plantation and insisted on conducting a protracted and dangerous, although fruitless, search for the man.[164] Given this trait of T. J.'s, Peter's ambiguous remark may have grown in T. J.'s mind to the outright confession he related to Coolidge and Randall—and then, by 1874, to admissions by *both* Carr brothers.

Did T. J.'s mother know the truth? Undoubtedly. Martha was an intelligent woman, read the newspapers, could certainly count to nine, and saw the evidence before her far more clearly than T. J. did. But plantation mistresses also tended to turn a blind eye to the painful or embarrassing truth. As Mary Boykin Chesnut so famously said about similar situations within the planter class of her birth:

> The [mulatto children] were kept in full view. . . . [The master's] wife and daughters in the might of their purity and innocence are supposed never to dream of what is as plain before their eyes as the sunlight, and they play their parts of unsuspecting angels to the letter.[165]

Martha Randolph played her part. She apparently said nothing to her son at all on the subject until she foresaw her death in 1836. Even then, she tried only to deflect criticism from her father, in the event that her son might have made a connection between Jefferson and the Hemingses. If her deathbed remarks reinforced T. J.'s belief about the Carrs, it does not appear to have been her intention. She may not have known that he harbored such a suspicion.

Edmund Bacon

Hamilton W. Pierson, a Presbyterian minister,[166] interviewed Bacon in Kentucky in 1861 and published the interview the following year. Bacon's comments

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the various sorts of bad company with which [he, Jefferson, had] associated from time to time" in his teens. See Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Jefferson Randolph, 24 November 1808, "Education of a Grandson," MS 1808112, Letters of Thomas Jefferson, 1743–1826, Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library's website *Thomas Jefferson Digital Archive* <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu>.

163. Martha Randolph to Jefferson, 18 November 1808, transcribed in Betts and Bear, *Family Letters of Thomas Jefferson*, 360. Emphasis is in the original. T. J. was at school in Philadelphia and both Martha and her father appear to have been concerned that bad company and certain tendencies inherited from the Randolph side of the family would lead him astray. Jefferson's letter, "Education of a Grandson," was written in response to Martha's concern. His exceptionally long discourse to this grandson, cited above and in n. 73, also cautioned T. J. against believing or arguing about whatever he might hear about Jefferson's public or private reputation.

164. Edmund Bacon's 1861 interview in Bear, *Jefferson at Monticello*, 102–3.

165. Mary Boykin Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, C. Vann Woodward, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 169.

166. Details about Pierson, here and on the following page, are from *The Twentieth Century Biographical Dictionary of Notable Americans*, vol. 7, Rossiter Johnson, ed. (Boston: Biographical Society, 1904), *s.v.* Pierson.

on the paternity of Sally's children is part of a story about Harriet's departure from Monticello, although she is not named as the fleeing slave. It is often quoted, but most often out of context. In full, the paragraph is as follows:[167]

> Mr. Jefferson freed a number of his servants in his will. I think he would have freed all of them, if his affairs had not been so much involved that he could not do it. He freed one girl some years before he died, and there was a great deal of talk about it. She was nearly as white as anybody, and very beautiful. People said he freed her because she was his own daughter. She was not his daughter; she was ___ ___'s daughter. I know that. I have seen him come out of her mother's room many a morning, when I went up to Monticello very early. When she was nearly grown, by Mr. Jefferson's direction I paid her stage fare to Philadelphia, gave her fifty dollars. I have never seen her since, and don't know what became of her. From the time she was large enough, she always worked in the cotton factory.[168] She never did any hard work.

Bacon repeated this "never did any hard work" refrain twice more in his account of Jefferson's benevolence: "Mr. Jefferson had a large number of favorite servants that were treated just as well as could be," and "these women [the Hemingses] had very little to do." His tone is one of disapproval over his employer's favoritism.

Does the published interview contain evidence of bias? Pierson's final chapter ends with a revealing footnote: "Captain Bacon is a stanch Union man, utterly opposed to the whole secession movement."[169] Pierson had been born, reared, and educated in New York, as the son of a minister and descendant of an early New England cleric. At the time of the interview, he was president of Cumberland College in Princeton, Kentucky, but had held that post for little more than two years. Nonetheless, although he rearranged Bacon's scattered reminiscences under a series of subject headings and used Bacon's assurances of Jefferson's kindly stewardship to begin and end the chapter titled "Mr. Jefferson's Servants," one detects no overly enthusiastic editing of the stories themselves. He appears to have been a conscientious recorder of Bacon's testimony.

On the other hand, Pierson's footnote and Bacon's careful portrayal of his own humanitarian approach to slaveholding reflect *Bacon's* bias. The old overseer tried hard to impress Pierson with his rectitude and cast himself in a starring role in the Monticello story. Bacon's primary focus was clearly *Bacon* in account after account. *He* "knew just as much about Mr. Jefferson's business as [Jefferson] did himself"; and Jefferson was so fond of *him* that Bacon supposedly was invited often into Jefferson's suite, given leave to browse his library and to criticize his grandchildren, and was the subject of Jefferson's frequent praise and tearful goodbye.[170]

167. Edmund Bacon's 1861 interview, in Bear, *Jefferson at Monticello*, 102.

168. Researchers who value Bacon's account but discredit Madison's memoir might take note of a point here: Bacon verifies Madison's description of the way Jefferson employed Sally's children: "My brothers, sister Harriet and myself, were used alike. We were permitted to stay about the 'great house', and only required to do such light work as going on errands. Harriet learned to spin and to weave in a little factory on the home plantation."

169. Bear, *Jefferson at Monticello*, 103.

170. See, for example, ibid., 39, 84, 85–86, 105, 109, 115–17.

Bacon's descriptions of his intimacy with the president so directly contradict his own records, Jefferson's letters, Monticello's accounts, and T. J. Randolph's description of his grandfather's study as a "sanctum sanctorum" off limits to family members, that skepticism is justified over Bacon's involvement in Harriet's departure. One detects in its undertones that he may have only heard the "great deal of talk" about Jefferson's having freed her (one also wonders how anybody knew it) and that Bacon was one of those "people who said . . . she was his own daughter."

Other errors of fact add to the hazard of relying on Bacon's testimony:

- Bacon said he "went to live with him [Jefferson] the 27th of the December before he was inaugurated," which would have been 27 December 1800. However, Jefferson was not at Monticello in December 1800. This was the period of the famous tie election that was thrown into the House of Representatives. Jefferson left Monticello on 24 November for Washington and did not return until 4 April 1801.[171] In fact, Jefferson's account book contradicts him: the contract was made 29 September 1806 and included payment for work done in August.[172] Furthermore, if Bacon was born when he says he was, 28 March 1785, he turned fifteen in 1800—a minor. Even if he had been referring to Jefferson's *second* inaugural, Bacon was still a minor in 1804. Any contract for his services would have been with his father. There is no Jefferson record of one.[173]
- Harriet was conceived in August 1801, Madison in April 1804. Unless the teenaged Bacon was hanging around Monticello for reasons of his own "on many a morning . . . very early," his account cannot relate to any of the conceptions prior to Eston's.
- Eston is proved to have been a Y-line Jefferson descendant. If there is any truth at all in Bacon's account, the man he saw leaving the room of Harriet's mother would have to be a Jefferson. Bacon's "many a morning" phrase implies not only that he, Bacon, was a Monticello inhabitant but that the Jefferson male was also in residence—and the *only* Jefferson living at Monticello was Thomas.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE

Monticello's architecture

Monticello itself has evidence to contribute.[174] Its layout (see figure 2) and construction dates refute the testimony of T. J. Randolph, Ellen Coolidge, and Edmund Bacon.

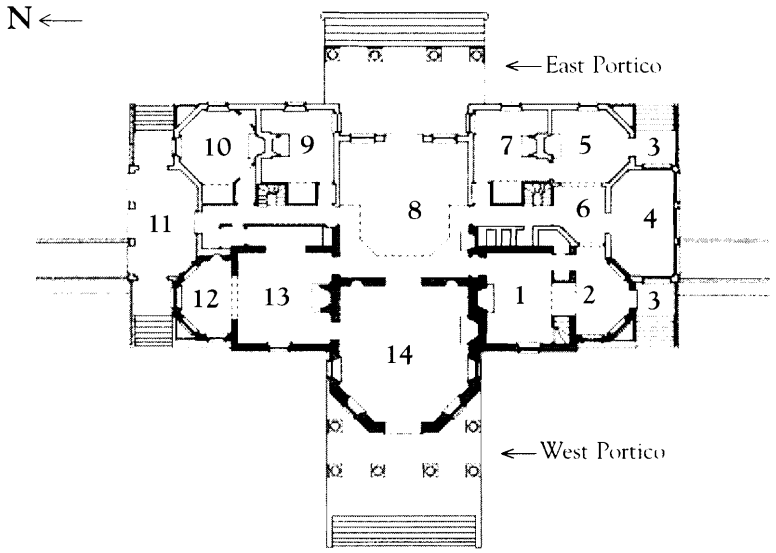
171. Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, 4: xxx; 5: xxiii.

172. Bear and Stanton, *Jefferson's Memorandum Books*, 2: 1186, 1189.

173. The error of fact here cannot be attributed to editor Pierson's pen. A biographical sketch of Bacon submitted to a county history a few years after Bacon's death (presumably by family, who also gave his birth date as 28 March 1785), made similar claims: "Upon [Jefferson's] election to the presidency, . . . notwithstanding [Capt. Bacon's] youth, he was selected for the difficult task [of managing Monticello] and during his twenty years in that position he was Jefferson's adviser in all things pertaining to his finances, and often went to Washington to consult him and he frequently received long letters from him. He moved Mr. Jefferson to the capital and at the expiration of his term of office, moved him back to Monticello." See W. H. Perrin, *History of Trigg County, Kentucky: Historical and Biographical* (Chicago: F. A. Battey Publishing Co., 1884), 281–82.

174. Unless cited otherwise, information is from McLaughlin, *Jefferson and Monticello*, chapter 8, 239–85.

Figure 2
Monticello's Main Level—Old and New



Jefferson's Suite

1. Bedroom
2. Cabinet (study)
3. Porticles (for privacy)
4. Greenhouse
5. Library
6. Library (overflow)

Other Rooms:

7. Sitting Room
8. Entrance Hall
9. Guest Bedroom
10. Guest Bedroom
11. North Piazza
12. Tea Room
13. Dining Room
14. Parlor

The sketch above is adapted from a digital image provided by Monticello/Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Inc. Darker shading on walls illustrates the original dwelling lines. On the second floor, no rooms are above Jefferson's "sanctum sanctorum." The house is 110' long by 87'9" wide.

- When T. J. told Henry Randall that he "slept within sound of [Jefferson's] breathing at night"[175] and when Ellen wrote in her memoirs that she heard her grandfather singing "generally Scotch songs but sometimes Italian airs or hymns" in early morning,[176] both implied that they would have heard any midnight visits by Sally because their rooms were either above or beside their grandfather's. There was no bedroom within sound of Jefferson's bedchamber (unless he was a thunderous snorer) and there was no room above it. Its ceiling is 18 ft. 8 in. high and pierced by a skylight.[177]

175. Thomas Jefferson Randolph's 1856–57 interview.

176. Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson*, 429, cites "Ellen Randolph Coolidge memoirs, MS 36, University of Virginia," and interprets the passage as "His granddaughter Ellen, who now [ca. 1809] *slept in the room above him* at Monticello, described him humming old tunes." Italics added here.

177. "The House: Jefferson's Bedroom," website *Monticello* <www.monticello.org/house/figures_bedroom.html>.

- Ellen wrote her husband that Jefferson's "apartment had no private entrance not perfectly accessible and visible to all the household. No female domestic ever entered his chambers except at hours when he was known not to be there and none could have entered without being exposed to the public gaze."[178] However, Ellen was about six years old (and residing at the Randolph plantation, not Monticello) when *two* hidden entrances to Jefferson's suite were constructed in 1802–3:

  UNDERGROUND PASSAGE
  Beneath the flat terrace outside Jefferson's rooms, a series of "dependencies" had been dug into the mountain from farther down its slope. They included quarters for house-slaves (including Sally), the kitchen, smokehouse, and laundry, *and* an underground passage into the Monticello basements. This was the entrance used by slaves. One of two enclosed, circular staircases led from the basements up to a hallway outside Jefferson's private library. Anyone using those stairs was hidden from the parlor, family sitting room, dining room, and both first-floor entrances.

  PORTICLES
  Outside the exterior entrances to Jefferson's *cabinet* (study) and library, carpenters had erected louver-sided verandas, called "porticles" by Jefferson,[179] to protect the interior of these rooms from view by strollers on the terrace walkways. Both porticles adjoined outside stairways down to the ground-level slave quarters. The porticles may not have been built specifically to facilitate Sally's nocturnal visits, but they certainly would have concealed them.

If the teenaged Edmund Bacon was, indeed, lurking about Monticello on a regular basis in 1801, whoever he saw coming out of Hemings's "room" was undoubtedly one of the carpenters working on interior partitions for what would become the slave quarters. Those accommodations were not habitable until some time in 1802–3, by which time Harriet was already born. Sally Hemings did not have a "room" in 1801 and is believed to have been living in a cabin nearby.

Neighborhood Rumors

Callender's 1802 articles were based on already-existing gossip in Jefferson's home neighborhood that linked him with *a particular slave, Sally Hemings*—not Betsy Hemings nor Betty Brown nor any of the other slave women at Monticello. It was not idle speculation connecting the area's most eligible bachelor with local ladies, and it was not generalized gossip of dalliance with "female servants." It was very specifically targeted. Contrary to many Jefferson defenders, Callender's articles did not *cause* the Tom-and-Sally scandal; his articles were the *result* of a preexisting scandal already in full flower. Callender certainly exaggerated it and spread it nationwide, but he did not create it.

178. "Coolidge Letter," Robert Turner, transcriber, *Jefferson-Hemings Myth*, 194. Gordon-Reed dropped a short part of this quotation from her transcription (*Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, 259), probably inadvertently; but the omission is viewed with dark suspicion at the Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society website; see "Coolidge Letter Transcription Discrepancy" <www.tjheritage.org/EllenCoolidgeLtr.html>.

179. These should not be confused with the *porticos* on the east and west facades.

Scandalous Timing

Beverly, Harriet, and the children who died in infancy were born before Callender focused attention on Jefferson's private life; but Madison's and Eston's conceptions defy political prudence, with understandable reasons.

- Madison was conceived as Thomas was recovering from the death of his daughter Maria, the girl Sally had accompanied to Paris and served during Maria's teen years and courtship. The four-year gap between the conceptions of Harriet and Madison broke the previous (and typical) childspacing pattern of about two years. That 1800–4 break in conceptions coincided with the Callender accusations. The evidence suggests that Sally and Thomas had agreed, amid the scandal, to end their relationship but that mutual grief over Maria's death brought them back together.
- Eston's conception was preceded by another overlong lapse, this one of two-and-a-half-years. It, too, occurred in an atmosphere of shared distress—Sally's mother was dying or had just died and Thomas's respect and affection for Betty Hemings were clear to everyone at Monticello. More important, Betty was Thomas's last link to the young Martha Wayles he had loved so fiercely. Other older slaves had known Martha as mistress of Monticello; but Betty was the only one left who had been with her as child, a teenager, and a bride. Eston may well have been the product of that shared grief and mutual need for solace.

CONCLUSION

Sally Hemings, her four children, and their father Thomas Jefferson were real people, not cardboard figures one can tailor to suit personal dreams, ideals, or prejudices. Although Thomas carefully hid his emotions and Sally failed to record hers, they were human beings whose actions were consistent with their times and with a sexual liaison neither could openly acknowledge. Whatever the precise nature of their emotional attachment or mutual promise, their relationship clearly bound them to the best interests (as each saw them) of their four surviving children. If their contemporaries sought another explanation in overheard jests—or if our contemporaries seek them in an old man's self-serving bombast—the careful genealogist will not follow that lead. There is, after all, a difference between direct statements (especially statements "for the record") and credible evidence.

Credible evidence is presented honestly without trimming off uncomfortable bits that prevent its fitting someone's preconceptions. *Competent analysis* views the evidence in terms of its own background context and its relation to *all* the rest of the evidence. *Genealogical proof* rests on an unbroken chain that ties the problem to its solution—not on a series of isolated links, any one of which is inadequate for the task. In this case, the chain of evidence securely fastens Sally Hemings's children to their father Thomas Jefferson.

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Review Essay

The "Scholars Commission" Report on the Jefferson-Hemings Matter: An Evaluation by Genealogical Proof Standards

By Thomas W. Jones, Ph.D., CG, CGL

Report on the Jefferson-Hemings Matter. Compiled by The Jefferson-Hemings Scholars Commission. Edited by Robert F. Turner. Sponsored by the Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society. Published online <www.geocities.com/tjshcommission/>, posted 12 April 2001. PDF format. iii, 371 pp.

Imagine, if you will, a group of genealogists attempting to solve an important economic, historical, legal, or political question, without credentials and expertise in those fields. In an inverse scenario, the Jefferson-Hemings Scholars Commission—an impressive panel of distinguished academics—has attempted to answer what is basically a genealogical question, without genealogical credentials or expertise.[1] As a result, the work is ineffective in answering the issue it addresses.

The Commission was established to examine allegations that Thomas Jefferson, before and during his presidency, fathered one or more children with his slave Sally Hemings. Sponsored by the Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society (described as "a group of Jefferson admirers" who were "convinced that Jefferson had not received a fair hearing") and supported by an anonymous donor, the Commission functioned as an independent entity "with complete intellectual freedom to pursue the truth" (p. 8). Although participants changed as the work evolved, thirteen eminent scholars signed the final report.

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1. The panelists who remained on the commission at the time of the final report represent the fields of biochemistry, economics, government, history (political and presidential), law, and political science; the report also includes the views of a playwright who has "had a personal interest in Thomas Jefferson for the past twenty years or so" (pp. 317–31). However, the panel (which included one woman and one African-American) did not include genealogists or scholars of social history with expertise in issues of family, gender, or race.

Appended to a 35-page overview entitled "Final Report of the Scholars Commission on the Jefferson-Hemings Matter" are 336 pages of "individual views," which readers are told "should not be attributed to the Scholars Commission as a whole" (p. 9). Of those 336 pages, 216 pages (10 chapters) represent a single set of "individual views" attributed to "Professor Robert F. Turner, joined by [several others named]." Yet, it, too, carries a caveat about responsibility. Turner, an attorney, claims sole authorship and states: "The scholars who have joined in this report have done so primarily on the basis of [an] earlier draft we discussed [in a meeting] at Dulles, and *thus should not be held accountable for specific facts or arguments in this expanded draft*" (p. 40, italics added). Turner appears to be the author of the "Final Report," as well.

Although the Commission's title and the credentials of its members imply that conventional standards of scholarship have been applied, the "Final Report" offers no source citations.[2] Only the disavowed "individual views" (the longest of which is lightly laced with sarcasm, innuendo, and gossip) give readers a sense of the type of documentation on which the panel relied and the scholarship it applied. The Commission grants liberal reproduction rights for the "Final Report," whose lack of documentation will prevent the public from testing its assertions; but it restricts dissemination or quoting from the documented portions of the report.[3]

The Commission feels that Jefferson's alleged paternity of one or more children by Sally Hemings is "by no means proven" (p. 33). It reports that "with the exception of one member," individual conclusions range from serious skepticism about the charge to a conviction that it is almost certainly untrue" (p. 33). The dissenting member reports that he "dissent[s] only in believing it somewhat more likely than not that Thomas Jefferson was the father of Eston Hemings" (p. 35).

This reviewer agrees that the Commission's report itself leaves the allegation of Jefferson's responsibility for the Hemings children "by no means proven." The report also leaves the allegation *by no means disproved*, because the scholars applied an inappropriate paradigm that led them to overlook prevailing standards for genealogical sources, methods, and proof—all of which are essential to answering genealogical questions with confidence and credibility.

THE PARADIGM

Whether Person X is the parent of Person Y—when both are deceased—inherently is a genealogical question, although other disciplines can contribute to the answer. The Commission, however, viewed the issue in contexts other than the genealogical methods and standards necessary to answer the fundamental question. In lieu of a genealogical paradigm, they applied a legal one (a better match to

2. The body of the report contains one explanatory footnote and generic in-text references to approximately a half-dozen published sources, none of which is fully cited.

3. Executive Summary and copyright statement, unpaginated. The only requirement for reproducing the undocumented "Final Report" for academic or educational use is that credit be given.

the chairman's expertise), as if Jefferson were charged with a crime and the Commission were a jury or appellate court responsible for convicting or exonerating him on the basis of evidence presented by prosecutors and witnesses for the defense.[4] The report repeatedly refers to the "case against Jefferson" (examples: pp. 13, 29, 31). And it applies the "preponderance of the evidence" standard used by juries to decide civil cases (pp. 13, 29)—a standard genealogists have rejected because it is insufficiently stringent.[5]

Ignoring the genealogical paradigm has caused the report to fall short of genealogical standards in crucial ways. It does not specify an appropriate objective. It was not based on a *systematic search for relevant records* not already rooted out and dissected by others. It does not use genealogical research methods to seek the best quality information. It did not use accepted standards for evaluating evidence. And its conclusion does not meet the Genealogical Proof Standard.

GENEALOGICAL METHODS AND STANDARDS

The more-stringent standard developed by genealogical scholars under the aegis of the Board for Certification of Genealogists (BCG) provides a blueprint for genealogical scholarship through all stages from research to the presentation of proof conclusions.[6] Articulated in *The BCG Genealogical Standards Manual*, the Genealogical Proof Standard consists of five elements:

- a reasonably exhaustive search for all information that may be pertinent to a genealogical question;
- complete and accurate citations of all sources used to support the conclusion;

4. In fact, the Commission reports voting on the question (p. 11), and Turner's "individual views" discusses the DNA test in terms of whether it was meant to "place Jefferson at a crime scene" or intended to apply the criminal-court standard "beyond a reasonable doubt" (p. 62).

5. Attorney Donn Devine, a director of the National Genealogical Society, has discussed in print the various standards used in the legal field—of which "preponderance of the evidence" is the lowest—and the applicability of each to genealogy. See his chapter, "Evidence Analysis," *Professional Genealogy: A Manual for Researchers, Writers, Editors, Lecturers, and Librarians*, Elizabeth Shown Mills, ed. (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2001), 327–44, particularly 330–31.

Helen F. M. Leary, writing during her tenure as president of the Board for Certification of Genealogists, concisely explained the problem with applying to genealogy the legal standard used by the Scholars Commission: "Th[is] legal standard [preponderance of the evidence] *has always been recognized as inexact when applied to genealogical compilations.* [It] requires that evidence be weighty enough to *only tip the scales one way or the other. In genealogy, the standard is stricter*—a statement is considered 'proved' when the evidence supporting it is of sufficient power to convince a reasonable, unbiased person. This does not mean 'beyond the shadow of a doubt,' the strict standard used in criminal cases. *The genealogical standard is now and always has been between [those] two legal extremes.*" See "Evidence Revisited: DNA, POE, and GPS," *OnBoard* 4 (January 1998): 1–2, 5. Italics added here for emphasis.

As Leary and Devine both point out, the feasibility of using "preponderance of the evidence" as a genealogical standard was given long and thorough testing before genealogical scholarship replaced it with a more appropriate paradigm.

6. Leary, "Evidence Revisited." For other aspects of evidentiary standards in genealogy, see Elizabeth Shown Mills, "Working with Historical Evidence: Genealogical Principles and Standards," in *Evidence: A Special Issue of the NGS Quarterly* 87 (September 1999): 165–84.

- analysis, evaluation, and correlation of the evidence gleaned from those sources;
- resolution of any conflicts in the evidence; and
- a soundly reasoned, coherently written proof conclusion.[7]

As articles in the *NGS Quarterly* and other scholarly genealogical journals have demonstrated for decades, genealogists applying such a proof standard can convincingly document parental relationships when extant sources fail to specify such connections;[8] when names have changed; when records are ambiguous, incomplete, erroneous, or conflicting; or when "cover-ups" have obfuscated the facts.

The BCG Genealogical Standards Manual also delineates fifty-six fundamental standards for data-collection, evidence-evaluation, and compilation of findings[9]—all of which contribute to the overarching Genealogical Proof Standard. The *Report on the Jefferson-Hemings Matter* fails to meet many of these standards, particularly in the areas of research objectives, scope of research, documentation, and use of evidence.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES
(cf. BCG Standards 5 and 37)

For genealogical research to be efficient and effective, it must begin with an appropriate objective. Typically, the objective is to identify the parent of a given ancestor. Such a goal frames the scope of the research, enabling the scholar to seek relevant sources; and it provides a context for evaluating the findings.

Although established "for the purpose of reexamining the *entire* issue" (p. 8),[10] the Scholars Commission explicitly eschewed the essential genealogical objective, stating, "We were not tasked with the job of identifying the father(s) of Sally Hemings' children, and that has not been a primary focus of our inquiry. Our mandate was to examine the case against Thomas Jefferson" (p. 31), a mission the panelists viewed as "trying to prove a negative" (p. 31).

This arbitrary limit on the Commission's purpose guaranteed a failed effort. In narrowly focusing their inquiry, the panelists touched on—but ignored the significance of—subsidiary genealogical questions, where additional research might have helped to solve the problem they were considering. These include tracing the descendants of Beverly and Harriet Hemings,[11] learning about Jefferson relatives who might be candidates for the father of the Hemings children—the Commission reported knowing "almost nothing about many of them" (p. 28)—and narrowing down the death date of Randolph Jefferson's first wife (p. 30).

7. Board for Certification of Genealogists, *The BCG Genealogical Standards Manual* (Orem, Utah: Ancestry Publishing, 2000), 1–2.

8. For a case in point involving the Jefferson family itself (a proof argument that Phoebe, wife of Alexander Clark of North Carolina, is the historically "lost" daughter of Field Jefferson of Virginia), see Elizabeth Shown Mills, "A Husband for Phoebe Jefferson," *The Virginia Genealogist* 29 (April–June 1985): 83–104.

9. In addition to these fifty-six standards, *The BCG Genealogical Standards Manual* includes eighteen teaching and continuing-education standards.

10. Italics added here for emphasis.

11. Several clues in the "Final Report" and elsewhere suggest avenues for tracing these descendants.

Genealogically the latter point would seem to be highly essential for the Commission since its main defense of Jefferson, in the wake of recent DNA findings, is a Brother Randolph Might Have Done It During His Widowhood argument. By conventions of genealogical scholarship, those who propose such counter-theories of the It Could Have Happened variety also bear the burden of devil's advocacy. Their counter-theory is expected to be accompanied by evidence that they have thoroughly explored all means of both proving and disproving the hypothesis they propose.

In fact, the deficiency of the core objective grows more evident in the "individual reports" of the commissioners. Many of the questions they raise, and leave unanswered, are ones that genealogists regularly undertake and solve. For example, in casting about for other potential fathers with a Jefferson Y-chromosome, Turner et al. point to two slaves Jefferson inherited from his father, saying these "were *thought to have been* fathered by a white man. If their father (or grandfather) was . . . Jefferson's father or grandfather . . . they would have carried the same Y chromosome" (p. 63).[12] The professors offer no details that can be pursued—no identity for the slaves, no statement of *who* thought those slaves were fathered by a white man, no citation of any sources for the "thought to be" allegation, and no evidence to suggest that the "white man" who is charged with paternity was even a Jefferson at all!

A responsible genealogical evaluation would require that this supposition be translated into a research objective—*Identify the fathers of these slaves*—before the supposition is used to deflect attention from valid evidence. However, here and throughout the report, the commissioners seem to take the stance that the identification of white fathers for slave-born children is impossible, a stereotype that diligent researchers have long since disproved.[13]

SCOPE OF RESEARCH
(*cf. BCG Standard 19*)

Principles of genealogical scholarship require researchers to "appropriately broaden . . . the search beyond the person, family, event, or record of most-direct impact on the project." Standard 19 also defines "reasonably extensive research" as "extend[ing] to *discovery of information* that does or might illuminate (or conflict with) the other items of collected data."[14] This breadth of research ensures that relevant sources are not overlooked, and it contributes to the credibility of the resulting "proof" conclusion.

By comparison, the Commission appears to have conducted very little original investigation. It cites virtually none of the mainstays of quality genealogical research, such as deeds, court records, and tax rolls from which direct, indirect, and

12. Italics added here for emphasis.
13. The "Notes and Documents" section of this issue provides a bibliography of sample cases.
14. *The BCG Standards Manual*, 8.

negative evidence can be gleaned. While individual commissioners randomly refer to a few censuses, none seems to have used them systematically. The Commission also seems to treat evidence not yet found as if it does not exist—a risky assumption when the scope of research is so narrow. Many pieces of the answer to the Jefferson-Hemings question may lie in obscure records of individuals who were, themselves, obscure throughout their lives—for example, Tom Woodson, who some commissioners continue to promote as Sally's child, and as evidence of "promiscuity" on her part, now that DNA evidence has disproved Woodson's male-line descent from Jefferson (example: p. 210). However, proof conclusions reached before records of those persons have been sought and applied are highly subject to error.

DOCUMENTATION

(cf. BCG standards 8, 39, 49)

Well-documented sources enable genealogists to review the work of others and replicate their conclusions—both essential components of research and scholarship in any discipline. However, as detailed in the introduction to this analysis, the "individual views" contain countless statements unsupported by evidence; and the 35-page "Final Report," whose widespread dissemination has been encouraged, is virtually devoid of "proof." Even its few references are highly deficient.

By way of example: in launching a new section that treats Sally's conception dates, the portion of the report whose dissemination is authorized begins: "None of us was impressed by the 'Monte Carlo' statistical study published in the *William & Mary Quarterly* and appended to the Monticello report" (p. 15). The ensuing discussion which explains this view provides no further identification of that "Monte Carlo" study. Readers without access to the more-restricted "individual views" would search in vain for a relevant "Monte Carlo" study in the named journal. Readers who carefully probe all of the individual views would eventually make a connection on p. 128, only to learn that the shortened name by which the "Final Report" identifies this study is not to be found in the actual title of the article under discussion. Instead, "the Monte Carlo study" is a nickname that the Commission itself gave to the article in the course of its meeting.[15]

The Commission admits deficiencies with regard to documentation. Chairman Turner, in a preface to his 217-page "individual views," writes: "I have simply not had the time to put this in final form, and there are incomplete and missing footnotes . . . for which I apologize" (p. 40). Time limitations are a problem faced by all

15. Turner's "individual views" offers a bit of background on the nickname: "Candidly, to borrow a term used by several of my colleagues during our Dulles session, the 'Monte Carlo' study strikes me as being 'junk science.' Another term that was used was 'GIGO'—computerese for "Garbage In, Garbage Out" (p. 128). However, the connection between the nickname and the study goes unexplained even there.

The referenced article (which is still incompletely cited in Turner's "individual views") is Fraser D. Neiman, "Coincidence or Causal Connection: The Relationship between Thomas Jefferson's Visits to Monticello and Sally Hemings's Conceptions," *William & Mary Quarterly* 199 (January 2000): 198–210.

writers. However, while attorneys often must meet court-imposed deadlines, historical researchers have the option (and scholars usually feel a responsibility) to delay publication until the compiled work meets standards of the field.

USE OF EVIDENCE

(cf. BCG Standards 7, 20–25, 28, 39, 42, 46)

Readers of the report will note considerable disparity between the Commission's evaluation of evidence and the principles that govern genealogical scholarship—principally in the following areas.

- *Overreliance on derivative sources* (Standards 20–24). Both the summary report and the "individual views" are mostly evaluations of the published writings of others. Frequent citations to relevant literature is to be expected, given the amount of research published on the Jefferson-Hemings matter over the past two centuries. However, genealogical scholarship emphasizes the need to *go beyond* derivative and interpretive works to reexamine the data in its original state. There, one can evaluate the characteristics of the evidence *before* it has been pruned or reshaped by the mindsets of others.[16]

- *Biased assessment of data* (Standard 25). The applicable standard requires researchers to fairly consider all data relevant to an issue; and it cautions that information cannot be "ignored because the finding is inconvenient for the researcher's purpose."[17]

  Briefly in the summary and at length in the "individual views," the Commission dismisses the value of oral history. It concludes, for example, "since Madison did not provide a source for his claim [to be Jefferson's son], it is difficult to establish whether it is true or not" (p. 21). To the contrary, most accepted tests of genealogical evidence would give credence to a person's identification of his or her *own parents*—especially when one spent the first twenty-one years under the parental roof. Decades of testing such assertions in sound genealogical studies have established a high level of accuracy for them. Several commissioners also criticize Madison's account of paternity because he was not an eyewitness to his own conception (pp. 107–8, 252). By that bar, no man knows his parents!

  Writing separately on this issue, David N. Mayer contends, "Family oral traditions really ought not to be called 'history' at all, for they are rather, quite literally, *myth*" (p. 285).[18] In contrast, genealogical scholarship requires researchers to recognize both the strengths and shortcomings of the sources they use. Census records, for example, do not specify a source for the information on each household, and they are arguably as vulnerable to error as oral history. In spite of such obstacles, researchers value

16. Standard 4 also stipulates that one's writing should acknowledge the published sources that pointed the researcher to original records or shed additional light on the matter. Hence, well-done genealogical accounts usually are a balance of both original and derivative material.

17. *The BCG Genealogical Standards Manual*, 10.

18. Specifically speaking of "the 'family myths' of the Madison Hemings descendants," Mayer presses the point (p. 286): "It would be like a historian today saying that a famous tribal leader among the Pacific Northwest First Peoples really was descended from a raven bird, because his family myth says so -- it must be true because it's a story people 'continued to tell their children and grandchildren'." However, Mayer does not apply this same standard to the "oral tradition" related by Jefferson's legal grandchildren (pp. 296, 298).

them in the context of the broader mandate: to determine and consider the evidentiary value of *all* relevant sources, including those with significant shortcomings.

Bias is clearly evident when a reader who has neither preconceptions nor vested interests[19] compares the Commission's assessment of the oral testimony provided by Sally's *son* with that provided by Jefferson's second- and third-generation offspring by his wife. The commissioners discredit Madison's published statements about his parents as "unsourced hearsay" by an "aging" individual who made those statements decades after Jefferson's death (pp. 25, 129, 264, 279–80). Yet they accept as "particularly credible" the *hearsay* of Jefferson's granddaughter Ellen (nine years older than the "aging" Madison) when she wrote her husband (decades after Jefferson's death) relaying details of what her brother supposedly had told her to exonerate their grandfather (pp. 24–25, 281)—a letter Ellen explicitly penned so her husband could convince a Boston writer that an interracial liaison was "morally impossible" for her grandsire.[20] The same double standard is seen in the Commission's continuous invocation of Martha Jefferson's denial that her father sired Sally's children. Martha surely was not present at their conceptions either!

Similarly biased assessments are evident in the Turner chapter, "The Alleged 'Extraordinary Privileges' Given to Sally Hemings and Her Children," and the conclusion that the Commission draws from it. The "Final Report" contends that "even had Jefferson given special consideration to Sally's children, this would not have been proof that he was their father" (p. 17). Yet it ignores the fact that a *lack* of special treatment (if the Commission's interpretation of the evidence there is correct) does not *disprove* Jefferson's paternity of the children. The overwhelming extent to which slaveowners did not acknowledge, manumit, or otherwise favor their slave offspring does not justify eliminating him from further consideration.

- *Distortion of evidence* (Standards 7, 25, 28, 39–42). These standards require researchers to collect data dispassionately and report the results precisely and unambiguously, resisting all temptation to "trim" or "tailor" the details to fit a preconception or bias.

  Yet both the "Final Report" and "individual views" contain many examples of wording that distorts the evidentiary significance of the contributing sources. For example, the "Final Report" asserts that a newspaper article was "*alleged* to be based on an interview with Madison" (p. 13), as if the fact of the interview were doubtful.[21] Yet it neither suggests evidence of fraud nor describes an effort to test its own implication of invalidity.

19. This reviewer did, indeed, undertake the review with no preconceptions or predisposition as to the paternity of the Hemings children, although (as a collateral relative and a namesake of Thomas Jefferson, as well as a specialist in colonial Virginia families) he was not unfamiliar with the controversy.

20. Explaining a crucial weakness in family accounts, Turner correctly writes: "There is a natural temptation . . . to embellish the family legacy to instill pride and confidence in the next generation" (pp. 166; also see 285). Clearly Jefferson's white granddaughter had as much, if not more, at stake than did Madison, where the Jefferson Legacy is concerned. For more on the "morally impossible" issue, see "individual views," p. 301.

21. The Commission does not apply this wording to similar testimony that it favors. For example, in its repeated promotion of the testimony of a former overseer—published by someone other than that overseer, thirty-five years after Jefferson's death—the Commission does *not* say, "The Bacon chapter of Pierson's book is *alleged* to be based on an interview with Edmund Bacon." Even Lance Banning, whose "individual views" are among the more balanced, displays the same double-standard in devaluing the account of Madison ("which is

In the same vein, the Commission reports, "There is no record that Sally Hemings or any of her other children [i.e., other than Madison] ever alleged that Thomas Jefferson was their father" (pp. 14, 252–53, 257). It is true that no such record has been found for the *one* other child whose adult whereabouts are known (Eston, who carries the Jefferson Y chromosome), but the commission apparently made no effort to locate the "missing" children in order to verify its declaration that those children left "no record." More seriously, the above-quoted statement totally ignores the fact that two of Eston's children *did* explicitly tell others that Jefferson was their grandfather—as early as the 1840s. The Commission is obviously aware of the identification made by at least one of those children, since a footnote to one "individual view" both reports it and dismisses it in the same half sentence as a claim by "one of his friends—of whose veracity we know nothing" (p. 153, n. 11).[22]

Elsewhere, the Commission invalidly invokes "recent scientific studies" as its authority for questioning whether Jefferson was able to father a child at age sixty-four (i.e., at Eston's birth). The "Final Report," in discussing male fecundity, *unqualifiedly* argues "recent scientific studies [*plural*]" as valid support for its position (p. 31). However, the particular set of "individual views" that discusses the issue in more detail has *only one study* to offer; and even that one carries a footnote caveat that the study, published in 2000, was conducted on *modern and young* men, whose data is of questionable applicability to a man of sixty-four living two centuries ago (p. 129).[23]

A related discussion of Sally's pregnancy history illustrates another problem common throughout the report: assertions made on the basis of "facts" that would not support the assertion even if the "fact" were documented. For example, the Commission argues that Sally Hemings did not get pregnant during Jeffersons absence because

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actually *a reporter's account* of an interview with him") while unquestionably accepting statements attributed to overseer Bacon (which exist, similarly, as *another writer's account* of an interview with Bacon) and to Thomas Jefferson Randolph (which, yet again, exist as *another writer's account* of an interview with Randolph). For Banning, see "individual views," pp. 264–67, 269.

22. The Commission appears not to have investigated the identity of the "friend" whose veracity it questions. That friend was Augustus J. Munson, a Chicago and Milwaukee publisher (cf., for example, Herbert Lee Barber's classic work, *Story of the Automobile, Its History, and Development from 1760 to 1917* [Chicago: A. J. Munson, 1917]) and author (for example, *Making a Country Newspaper: Being a Detailed Statement of the Essentials to Success in Newspaper Making*," 1899; and, in 1900 with Richard L. Metcalfe, *Victorious Democracy*, which offers biographies of William Jennings Bryan and Adlai E. Stevenson).

Germane to the credibility issue is the fact that, in identifying himself as Jefferson's grandson, Beverly Jefferson made no public grab for notoriety and (unlike Bacon) no bid for a permanent place in history. Beverly's disclosure was made privately to a friend. However, when Beverly died in Madison, Wisconsin, and the *Chicago Daily Tribune* published his obituary (12 November 1908), his friend was moved by a sense of justice to write the *Tribune* saying: "Beverly Jefferson['s] death deserves more than a passing notice, as he was a grandson of Thomas Jefferson. . . . [He] was one of God's noblemen—gentle, kindly, courteous, charitable. He was friendly to everybody in his home city, and he will be missed there quite as much or more, perhaps, than any other citizen." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 13 November 1908, p. 8, col. 5.

The account of the second grandchild, which the Commission does not mention at all, appears online under its original newspaper title, "Beautiful Octoroon: Miss Anna Heming," as part of "Jefferson's Blood" at the PBS website, *Frontline* <www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/jefferson/cron/1902octoroon.html>.

23. In the downloaded copy of this report, the pagination in and around p. 129 is erratic, resulting in more than one page randomly carrying the number 129. Amid the mix-up, there also appears to be some missing material relative to the study that is being invoked.

"Monticello was normally kept locked during [his] absence" (p. 15). However, evidence that Jefferson ordered the house locked in his absence (if it had been presented) would fail to explain how the locking of a house could prevent the pregnancy of a slave who lived outside its walls.

Pursuing this issue, the Commission writes of *birth* records as though they were *pregnancy* records. Both the "Final Report" and the dominant set of "individual views" question why Sally "became pregnant" only *some* of the times that Jefferson came home. Page 31 asks, "Why . . . did it take her more than five years to *conceive* a second child?" And p. 129 remarks: "during the time Sally was producing known children Thomas Jefferson visited Monticello more than twenty times . . . [during which] she does not appear to have *become pregnant*. . . . For someone who routinely seems to have *become pregnant* within less than two weeks after he returned home, what do we make of the scores of opportunities when they were both allegedly at Monticello and *she did not conceive* a child?" (p. 129).[24] Aside from such pregnancy-inhibiting factors as lactation and monthly cycles, another reality is ignored. Sally could have become pregnant any number of times for which there is no record. Stillbirths and miscarriages were a fact of life for women of childbearing age prior to the advent of modern medical care.

- *Deficient context* (Standard 24). Achieving reliable conclusions often requires researchers to investigate fields outside their usual specialty. Recognizing this, Standard 24 calls for a consideration of "the literature, laws, regulations, customs, and history of the area, time period, population group, and government or military jurisdiction."[25] Some key questions raised in the Commission's report could have been answered (and more reliable conclusions drawn) had related literature been investigated.

  The Commission's report specifically invokes "the absence of birth-control medication or devices," thereby exposing an obvious fault in its own context and reasoning. Birth control pharmacopeia, devices, and practices were very much in use in France during the years of Jefferson's stay, particularly among the elite circles in which he moved. Within the upperclass of the Paris Basin, "the art of cheating nature" was frequently practiced to avoid the consequences of illicit affairs—precisely the situation in which Jefferson would have found himself with Sally Hemings.[26]

- *Confounding the issue with irrelevant matters* (Standards 25 and 46). The Commission devotes a number of pages to issues that—even if they could be resolved—would not contribute to understanding the Hemings's paternity. By way of example: whether Jefferson had affairs with other women (p. 26); whether he deserves to be considered "both a child molester and a rapist" (pp. 49–50, 284); whether other presidents from Harding to Kennedy were guilty of "sex in the White House" (pp. 274–75); whether the timing of the release of the DNA tests was a political ploy to divert attention from

24. All italics in the quoted matter within this paragraph of the text are added for emphasis.

25. *The BCG Standards Manual*, 10.

26. As an introduction to the subject of contraceptive practices in France, see Etienne van de Walle, "Motivations and Technology in the Decline of French Fertility," in Robert Wheaton and Tamara K. Hareven, eds., *Family and Sexuality in French History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980), 135–78, which includes an extensive bibliography for researchers to explore.

President Clinton's impeachment trials (p. 283); or whether the current field of history is too steeped in PC-ism, multiculturalism, and postmodernism (pp. 287–90).

- *Ignoring the weight of the "body of evidence"* (Standard 26). A critical principle of genealogical proof is that "the sum of the evidence" is the deciding factor in a genealogical conclusion. Many individual records and statements of fact are quietly flawed. Individual pieces of evidence, assessed out of context, may be quite misleading. Contradictory evidence is a frequent problem that has to be resolved. Despite all these problems, thorough research within a broad range of independently created sources frequently can yield details that corroborate each other to create highly credible proof. A review of genealogical scholarship shows numerous cases in which bits of indirect and negative evidence accumulate to create convincing conclusions. Yet the Commission seems to argue the impossibility or implausibility of Jefferson's paternity on the basis of *each individual* source and the conclusions it draws from each in isolation of the others. Readers of the report are left with a sense that random imperfections of a nature common to records of their ilk are considered greater than the sum of the whole body of evidence assembled.[27]

SUMMARY

The presidential historian Lance Banning, one of the twelve adhering to the "majority opinion," asks a pertinent question in the title of his "individual view"—"*Case Closed?*" The answer must be *no*. The report fails to meet too many critical elements of the Genealogical Proof Standard. Indeed, it falls short of the Commissioners' own stated standard: "Our role as historians is to seek the truth on the basis of *all* of the available evidence" (p. 133, erroneously numbered "129," italics added).

In retrospect, one wonders two things. First, why some eminent scholars would agree to the placement of their names on a published document that, on the one hand, purports to be their views but, on the other hand, asserts that they "should not be held accountable for specific facts or arguments" because they had not seen and approved the "expanded" document (p. 40). And, second, why the Commissioners' summary report is captioned *Final*, since it appears to be the *first* report the commission has issued and it clearly is not the final word on its subject. Attempting to address an ambiguous and inadequate objective and to base a conclusion on deficient research, its conclusion is tentative at best. The Commission's eminent scholars could have applied decades of genealogical scholarship in their approach to a genealogical question. Instead, their report—rather than clarifying the question *Who fathered Sally Hemings's children?*—contributes to the plague of confusion. The only clear proof the *Report on the Jefferson-Hemings Matter* offers is that recognized achievement in one discipline does not make one an expert in another, even one that is related.

27. A notable exception to this overall impression is the balanced discussion presented by the lone dissenting member, Paul A. Rahe—who ultimately concluded, "I know not what to think. . . . What we do know, however, is damning enough" (pp. 370–71).

Review Essay

Can the "Character Defense" Survive? Measuring Polar Positions in the Jefferson-Hemings Controversy by the Standards of History

By Joshua D. Rothman, Ph.D.

Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy. By Annette Gordon-Reed. Published by the University Press of Virginia; 1997 (with DNA-response, 2000). xi, 288 pp. Appendixes, bibliography, genealogical charts, index. Softback, $13.45.

The Jefferson-Hemings Myth: An American Travesty. Edited by Eyler Robert Coates Sr. Published by Jefferson Editions, for the Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society; Post Office Box 4482; Charlottesville, VA 22905-4482; 2001. Appendixes, index, photographs. Softback, $11.95.

In 1935, W. E. B. DuBois devoted the final pages of his *Black Reconstruction in America* to what he called "an arraignment of American historians and an indictment of their ideals." Titling his concluding chapter "The Propaganda of History," DuBois charged the authors of the early histories of Reconstruction with purposefully distorting the realities of the past and demonstrated how most of what passed for scholarly treatment of the period could not properly be called scholarship at all. Rather than reflecting any systematic reading and reasoned consideration of available evidentiary materials, DuBois argued, historical accounts of the post-Civil War era primarily exposed the shared dedication of their creators to fashioning history as they wanted it to have been instead of how it was. Accepting black inferiority as a given, they filled their books with tales of lazy, ignorant, and corrupt freedmen and offered a mythological vision of the past that buttressed both white Southern dedication to the Lost Cause and national unity among whites

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across sectional lines.[1] Contemporary scholarship on Reconstruction has vindicated DuBois's specific argument, and his general admonition to scholars not to allow their own prejudices literally and figuratively to color their analyses remains among the fundamental principles that ought to guide the historian. Which makes both books under review here troubling, although in profoundly different ways.

Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy

Annette Gordon-Reed examines how prominent experts on Thomas Jefferson assessed the likelihood that the former president engaged in a sexual relationship with and had numerous children by an enslaved woman he owned named Sally Hemings. With a few notable exceptions, she argues, historians abandoned basic standards of fairness and consistency and replaced them with concerted efforts to dismiss even the possibility of such a liaison. When it came to evidence suggesting the relationship never existed, Gordon-Reed maintains, Jefferson scholars from Dumas Malone to John Chester Miller to Willard Sterne Randall too often shut what ought to have been critical eyes. Despite glaring discrepancies and contradictions, they accepted—practically without question—exculpatory stories told by Jefferson's avid admirers and white relatives. These same authors, meanwhile, treated historical actors who expressed belief in a Jefferson-Hemings relationship with attitudes ranging from extreme skepticism to outright contempt, despite the existence of extrinsic circumstantial evidence corroborating important aspects of their accounts.

Gordon-Reed does not argue that a thorough evaluation of the full range of historical evidence necessarily proves or disproves that Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings had an intimate relationship. She does convincingly insist that it leads to one inescapable conclusion: the relationship was very possible if not probable. Yet most scholars never undertook such an evaluation. Gordon-Reed acknowledges that authors such as Malone crafted works of history that are often insightful and perceptive. Thus, she finds that they let their vision and their judgment in the Hemings matter be clouded by preconceptions, by a desire to see and portray only a particular image of Jefferson, and (not infrequently) by racial biases. As a result, she concludes, they not only neglected their professional duties to be honest about what one can and cannot know about the past, but used their presumptive expertise to keep the American public from making its own fully informed decision about Jefferson and Hemings.

Such charges are extraordinarily serious, particularly coming from Gordon-Reed, who is trained as a lawyer and not as a historian. But perhaps only someone outside the historical profession could bring such a fresh and provocative perspective to a subject about which debate had stagnated. The persuasiveness of her case

1. W. E. B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935; reprint, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 711–29, quotation on 725.

ought to make those who doubted or denied the possibility of a Jefferson-Hemings relationship reassess their position. Viewing it in conjunction with the DNA tests performed the year after her published analysis certainly ought to (but, as discussed later, has not and apparently will not always) turn doubters into believers. Regardless of what one decides about the matter of Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings, Gordon-Reed's book has broader implications and offers important cautionary lessons to historians and to anyone interested in how conclusions about the past are drawn.

The first specific, public allegations about Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings appeared in 1802, detailed in a series of articles written by Richmond *Recorder* editor James Callender. By nearly all accounts, Callender was a loathsome man. Angry, vindictive, crude, cynical, and racist to the core, he specialized in attacking public figures and sometimes exposed scandalous elements of their private lives in the process. He made no secret of the fact that revenge motivated him to reveal the story about Jefferson and Hemings. Callender had supported Jefferson for several years but was infuriated when Jefferson, upon achieving the presidency in 1800, refused to reward his support with a patronage position. He hoped the Hemings revelations would ruin Jefferson's political career.

Jefferson scholars have routinely dismissed Callender's allegations out of hand, arguing that his motives and character made him and anything he wrote entirely unbelievable. Gordon-Reed points out that his personal repugnancy and malicious motivations—both valid reasons to view his articles with a skeptical eye—do not necessarily make him a liar or absolve historians of a responsibility to examine his claims. Indeed, Callender's biographer notes that over the course of this man's career he sometimes misinterpreted information but there "is little, if any, evidence of his purposeful invention of stories or falsification of facts."[2] Far from manufacturing the Jefferson-Hemings story, Gordon-Reed demonstrates, Callender knew some significant, verifiable details about the Hemings family that he probably acquired by talking to Jefferson's neighbors. The story had circulated for several years before he published it, and other newspapers claimed to have checked into the story and confirmed its essential soundness. Gordon-Reed's point is not to prove that Callender's accusations were true but that rejecting the message solely by attacking the messenger amounts to intellectual sleight-of-hand, not to a valid historical argument.

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The strategy Gordon-Reed labels "bad person equals bad story" (p. 75) has been used in disturbing ways to deny the Jefferson-Hemings liaison—particularly

2. Michael Durey, *"With the Hammer of Truth": James Thomson Callender and America's Early National Heroes* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 160.

in the treatment historians have given to both the narrative and the person of Madison Hemings, one of Sally Hemings's sons. In an interview published in the *Pike County* (Ohio) *Republican* in 1873, Madison identified Thomas Jefferson as his father and offered a highly detailed account of the Hemings family. He described the origin of the relationship between Jefferson and Sally Hemings, their lives at Monticello, and the unusual treatment accorded to Sally Hemings's children—including, most significantly, the fact that Jefferson freed them all.

Gordon-Reed shows that large portions of this memoir are confirmed by circumstantial evidence in Jefferson's own records and other outside sources. Yet most scholars have denied Hemings's narrative a legitimate hearing, treating the document instead "as something to be defeated rather than an idea that can be objectively considered" (p. 46). The methods by which they cast aside his statement vary. Some maintained that the language of the newspaper interview reflected a style and a vocabulary a former slave could not possibly have used and argued the account might not have come from him at all. Rather, the editor of the *Republican* (S. F. Wetmore, a former abolitionist) used Hemings and created the story as a piece of political propaganda. Others conceded that Hemings might in fact have given Wetmore the information but held that he lied about Jefferson being his father in order to garner fame and gain respect from nearby whites.

Refuting the suggestion that Wetmore created the story, Gordon-Reed shows that rumors about Jefferson's paternity of Madison and his younger brother Eston had circulated in Ohio for years before Wetmore published them. By presuming that the story could not have come from Hemings or that he was not telling the truth, she argues, supposedly fair-minded scholars abandoned analysis and resorted to racial stereotyping to explain away evidence. Such lines of argumentation assume (and in some cases, practically assert) that as a black man and an ex-slave, Hemings could not have possessed any level of linguistic sophistication, that he was so weak-willed as to let an invented story about his parentage be used as a political tool by a white editor, or that he was so desperate to ingratiate himself with whites that he would risk ridicule by claiming as his father the author of the Declaration of Independence. "These historians' words," Gordon-Reed laments, "betray no conception of slaves as human beings. . . . [T]hey were not thinking of the Hemingses as a set of people but as a set of slaves, with all the negative connotations and stereotypes that they associated with that label" (pp. 20–21).

Jefferson's white offspring faced no such obstacles to having their stories taken seriously. Indeed, their accounts came under so little scrutiny that obvious signs of problems went unnoticed or ignored by most historians. According to Thomas Jefferson Randolph and Ellen (Randolph) Coolidge, siblings and grandchildren of Thomas Jefferson, the father of Sally Hemings's children was one of Jefferson's nephews, Peter or Samuel Carr. Yet as Gordon-Reed points out, no external evidence confirms the accounts of Randolph and Coolidge—a situation that contrasts markedly with the specifics of the Madison Hemings interview or even the

Callender articles. The Randolph and Coolidge accounts do not even accord with one another. Randolph told an early Jefferson biographer, Henry Randall, that *Peter* Carr bore paternal responsibility for Sally Hemings's children. Coolidge wrote in a letter to her husband that responsibility lay with *Samuel* Carr. Randolph told Randall that he discovered the truth when he witnessed both Carr brothers tearfully confessing to having brought "disgrace" on their uncle. Coolidge wrote that her brother told her he found out about the sexual activities of the Carr brothers when he overheard Peter Carr laughing that their uncle was being blamed for their "misdeeds."

Still, nearly every Jefferson scholar accepted the Carr-brother stories at face value. Their suspicion was not aroused by inconsistency. They did not ask whether Randolph and Coolidge might lie to protect their grandfather's reputation, when the question of motivation was so central to their dismissing other evidence. And they did not consider whether a family's oral history, apparently so fraught with danger as an evidentiary source when it comes from former slaves, might be similarly suspect when it comes from Jefferson's white grandchildren. To Gordon-Reed, the double standard could not be more plain: "If oral history is not fact, it cannot be discarded for the Hemingses but accepted as fact for the Randolphs of the world. If it is going to be accepted, then it must be assessed and examined according to common ground rules. It should be what the declarants say, how they say it, and the amount of extrinsic evidence that exists to support their statements that counts, not their status, family background, or race" (p. 103).

Ultimately, Gordon-Reed argues, the biases with which Jefferson scholars read and interpreted evidence were as much consequences as causes of their conclusions. Even before considering the Jefferson-Hemings matter, most historians had already decided that they knew the "real" Jefferson; and their Jefferson was too gentlemanly, too much in control of his emotions and passions, too devoted to his white family, and too much a racist to have had a sexual relationship with a slave. By their reckoning, the proposal that Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings had children together was not just improbable. It was, quite simply, impossible.

Putting aside the arrogance implicit in the presumption that anyone can truly "know" a historical actor, the traditional "defense" of Jefferson presents a figure who is less a man than an icon, a brilliant set of ideas and values that happened to take human form. If it seems odd that the attributes used to preserve this iconic Jefferson include his racism, it should not. Americans have a long history of obsession with the notion of racial purity; and while Jefferson's own dehumanizing descriptions of blacks, his expressed abhorrence for racial intermixture, and even his ownership of slaves can be overcome by his supposed honorableness and his impassioned

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defense of liberty, the idea that he might have "defiled" himself by having sex with a person of African ancestry cannot be.[3]

Gordon-Reed does not hate Thomas Jefferson. On the contrary, she writes that she has been fascinated with the Sage of Monticello for much of her life and views him as an extraordinary individual. But she argues that Jefferson must be understood as a human being and in his proper context, not as a statue who somehow floated above his time and place. Sally Hemings must be similarly understood not merely as "a slave," but also as a person, and an unusual one at that. To those ends, Gordon-Reed provides a thoroughly credible alternative reading of Jefferson as a complex individual who was both in and of the American slave system. She discusses Sally Hemings as a woman known to be intelligent and attractive, whose family was held in great esteem by Jefferson, and who—having spent more than two years in France when Jefferson served as the American minister in Paris—was more worldly in some ways than many women of Virginia's gentry.

In the final analysis, Gordon-Reed contends, it is not only manifestly possible that Jefferson and Hemings had a sexual relationship, but a fair amount of evidence points to its probability. In addition to materials corroborating important elements of the accounts of Madison Hemings and James Callender, she notes that Hemings's children were known to bear striking physical resemblances to Jefferson, that the timing of her conceptions coincided precisely with Jefferson's presence at Monticello, that she never conceived a child in his absence, and that Jefferson allowed all her children to go free—something he did for no other enslaved woman. Hemings herself was protected from the auction of Jefferson's slaves that followed his death and was privately emancipated. Proof? No, not necessarily. But Gordon-Reed does amply prove that there has always been much more to the story of Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings than most historians have let on and that their "prejudices and individual desires to keep inviolate their particular image of Jefferson prevented a fair, hardheaded, and thorough presentation of all the facts" (p. 225).

Writing before the DNA tests were conducted, Gordon-Reed never absolutely denied the possibility that the Carr brothers fathered Sally Hemings's children. She did, however, view it with great skepticism, given the contradictions in the stories told about them, the fact that they lived near Monticello but cannot actually be placed at Jefferson's home plantation when Hemings conceived any of her children, and the oddity that the fecundity of the Carrs would be linked so closely to Jefferson's presence. If the Carr brothers could be somehow eliminated from the picture, Gordon-Reed observed, Hemings's children still looked like Thomas Jefferson, suggesting that "some other as yet undesignated Jefferson relative must

3. See Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, William Peden, ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), 137–43 and 162–63; the original manuscript was published in France in 1785. As Gordon-Reed writes, commentaries on the Jefferson-Hemings matter "carry a tone of outrage that implies that the commentators themselves believe that Thomas Jefferson is being charged with something on the order of bestiality" (p. 119).

be substituted, or Thomas Jefferson remains the most likely father. In the absence of any contemporary source suggesting that another relative might have been the father or any present-day indication that it might have been someone else, such speculation seems a desperate attempt to absolve Jefferson at the cost of all reason" (p. 218).

Which brings us to the contribution science makes to this controversy and to the second book under review. In November 1998, the highly respected British journal, *Nature*, published DNA test results demonstrating a genetic connection between the Jeffersons and the Hemingses. Specifically, the tests revealed a very high probability that a male Jefferson fathered Sally Hemings's last child, Eston. Just as significantly, the tests also showed the impossibility that either of the Carr brothers could have been his father.[4]

In light of these findings, which seem to confirm both the fundamental truth of Madison Hemings's statements and the fundamental falsehood of the stories told by Thomas Jefferson Randolph and Ellen Coolidge, most scholars who had doubted the sexual relationship attributed to Jefferson and Hemings have reversed themselves. Historians have largely moved beyond the question of whether the relationship existed to questions about its meaning and significance.[5] The Thomas Jefferson Foundation, which owns and operates Monticello, undertook its own study of the historical and genetic evidence and concluded, "The best evidence available suggests the strong likelihood that Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings had a relationship over time that led to the birth of one, and perhaps all, of the known children of Sally Hemings."[6] Not everyone, however, agrees that such a conclusion is warranted.

The Jefferson-Hemings Myth: An American Travesty

The authors of this series of essays edited by Eyler Robert Coates Sr. are among those who beg to differ. Collectively, they insist the notion that Jefferson and Hemings had a sexual relationship is a lie, foisted on the American public by those determined to tear down not only Jefferson's reputation but also every venerable principle he has come to stand for. Adapting the mode of argumentation used by Gordon-Reed, the authors maintain that proponents of the case for a relationship

4. Eugene A. Foster et al., "Jefferson Fathered Slave's Last Child," *Nature* 396 (5 November 1998): 27–28.

5. See, for example, Eric S. Lander and Joseph J. Ellis, "DNA Analysis: Founding Father," *Nature* 396 (5 November 1998): 13–14; and the variously authored essays in Lewis and Onuf's previously cited *Sally Hemings and Thomas Jefferson: History, Memory, and Civic Culture*.

6. Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, "Report of the Research Committee on Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings," posted January 2000, at the website, *Monticello* <www.monticello.org/plantation/hemings_report.html>, consulted 1 July 2001; the quote is from the introductory statement by Daniel P. Jordan, president. Since issuing the report, the foundation has dropped "Memorial" from its official name.

have pursued their own agenda rather than the truth and have misrepresented both historical and scientific evidence. In so doing, these essayists contend, Jefferson "detractors" fail to give serious consideration to the possibility (left open theoretically by the DNA test results) that individuals other than Thomas Jefferson fathered the children of Sally Hemings.

In stark contrast to Gordon-Reed's work, *Myth* is remarkable only for the extent to which it fails. The pieces in this collection are marred by bombastic and belligerent language and tone, bizarre conspiracy theories, hackneyed reactionary ideology, and evident hostility toward those with whom the authors disagree. Essays ramble and often repeat one another. Events, people, and pertinent facts are sometimes inadequately explained or introduced, which can hinder the ability of the reader to follow the authors' arguments. Numerous essays are inconsistent in their use of citations, and only two use formal endnotes—making many questionable assertions impossible to verify unless one is already familiar with the materials under discussion.

The deepest and most problematic flaws of *Myth*, however, go beyond overwrought rhetoric and sloppy editing. They lie in the pretenses of the authors to making historical arguments while in fact doing nothing of the sort. On one hand, they place the bar for demonstrating that Jefferson had an intimate relationship with Hemings so high that it surpasses all possibility of being reached by documentary and scientific evidence. Indeed, it soars to a level practically unreachable by any reasonable standard for historical proof. Simultaneously, they lower the bar for implicating someone other than Thomas Jefferson so drastically that it is somehow reached and cleared merely by not being impossible—despite a lack of documentary evidence that, if it existed, might elevate the involvement of others above the hypothetical.

By definition, the scholarly practice of history is grounded in revisionism. Historians present new evidence and offer new interpretations of previously examined evidence, deepening and enhancing our comprehension of the past in the process.

Using this approach, the authors of this collection of essays have accomplished the rare feat of building what purports, at least in part, to be a work of history on a fundamentally antihistorical foundation. If the standards for consideration of evidence used in this collection were to be extended to the practice of history beyond the matter of Jefferson and Hemings, we would be left with enormous gulfs in our knowledge of the past, as wholly conjectural explanations for historical events and relationships would be no less legitimate than explanations based upon the actual historical record. By definition, the scholarly practice of history is grounded in revisionism. Historians present new evidence and offer new interpretations of previously examined evidence, deepening and enhancing our comprehension of the past in the process. Speculation can be and sometimes is

a useful complementary analytical tool. But speculation itself is not evidence, and equating it with the documentary record as a source of evidence leads us out of history and into the realm of fiction. In that sense, *Myth* is less a credible examination of the relationship between Jefferson and Hemings than an exemplar of historical nihilism.

The volume was produced under the auspices of the Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society, an entity composed (in the words of its president, John H. Works Jr., who authored the preface to the collection) of "a group of concerned businessmen, historians, genealogists, scientists, and patriots" (p. 9). Created after the Jefferson Foundation announced the conclusions of its research report, the Heritage Society has dedicated itself to defending Thomas Jefferson's name and legacy, both of which its members feel are under siege. In their eyes, the notion that Jefferson and Hemings had a sexual relationship has nothing to do with evidence or scholarship. Rather it results from deceptive maneuverings carried out by familiar bugaboos: academics and the press. One purpose of *Myth*, then, as Works writes, is to "reveal the machinations that have occurred in the media and in academia which have distorted the evidence and misinformed the public concerning Thomas Jefferson" (p. 12).

Contributors to the collection cast a wide net in their search for suspects who have committed, in the words of one author, "a crime against our heritage" (p. 163). Several authors direct their anger at *Nature* for publishing the DNA test results under what they maintain was the misleading headline "Jefferson Fathered Slave's Last Child" and at Eugene Foster, the lead author on the *Nature* article, for not taking steps to have the headline changed before it appeared in print. Others express irritation that major newspapers and magazines treated the DNA findings as if they alone decisively proved the specific paternity of Thomas Jefferson, when in reality the scientific evidence, taken by itself, cannot lead to such a conclusion. Given that the DNA study demonstrates overwhelmingly that *some* male Jefferson almost certainly fathered Eston Hemings—and no author denies the point—it is not entirely clear what, precisely, about the *Nature* headline is inaccurate. That the press and its headlines sometime oversimplify a complex historical and scientific issue ought to surprise only those who have not recently read a newspaper or a magazine. The shortcoming here is more a failure to give due attention to nuance than a "machination."

The media could not have read the DNA study as confirming a sexual connection between Jefferson and Hemings had historians not generally concurred in that assessment.

In any event, the media could not have read the DNA study as confirming a sexual connection between Jefferson and Hemings had historians not generally concurred in that assessment. The authors of *Myth*, therefore, save their fiercest rhetoric for members of the academic community; and they direct their harshest criticism at the Jefferson

Foundation's research committee. Nearly every author addresses it, usually in terms that indicate not mere disagreement with but utter disdain for the body's proceedings and the conclusions of its report. The language of Coates, who edited the volume and wrote its single longest essay, can stand for the whole. In his words, the foundation's report is "an unprofessional, unscientific accumulation of bias and prejudice, and an offense to the memory of the great man that this foundation was chartered to memorialize" (p. 75). In keeping with the mood of the volume, Coates maintains that "the best evidence was suppressed or ignored" by the committee (p. 75) and that "there was a deliberate attempt to select and mold the evidence to fit a pre-selected theory and to avoid anything that might resemble genuine balance" (p. 76). Toward the end of his piece, Coates does write that "reasonable, intelligent people can take different sides" on the Jefferson-Hemings matter and that "one cannot hope to reach an intelligent conclusion by treating opposing views with contempt." One wonders, then, what to think about the arguments made by Coates and his fellow contributors when he asserts (surely with unintended irony) in the next paragraph that the foundation's report "is all poppycock" (p. 115).

One might also wonder why anyone would plot to cast Jefferson as the father of Hemings's children and just what interests might be served if the general public believed this was historical truth. The answers offered by the authors of *Myth* help to explain the intensity of their rancor. Broadly, they see efforts to demonstrate the existence of a Jefferson-Hemings relationship as a front for a larger agenda several refer to as "political correctness." Few terms in contemporary discourse are more trite and more devoid of actual meaning than this one, which is often employed as a coded epithet with sinister connotations. Here, it seems to mean two things. The forces of "political correctness," it is argued, want to use the Jefferson-Hemings relationship as a means of dignifying the historical experience of African Americans and as part of a program to undermine the very foundations of the United States.

A number of the authors in this collection note that the Jefferson Foundation released the findings of its research committee just a few days before the start of Black History Month. The essayists see the timing not as a coincidence but as an intentional effort to maximize the impact of the report's conclusions. They offer no evidence that a purposeful orchestration lay behind the timing, only a general tone that the "politically correct" are always up to something. Works, for example, sees a linkage between the Jefferson-Hemings story and the "propaganda that those who laid the bricks and plowed the fields were the real builders of this nation, not the man who wrote the Declaration of Independence" (p. 12). In a similar vein, Coates writes, "While we can understand the need to validate the black experience and to help all those men and women who were once discriminated-against [*sic*] feel they are an authentic part of American life, we nevertheless feel that to do this by destroying the honor and reputation of one of America's greatest Founding

Fathers . . . can do neither blacks, nor this country, nor the cause of liberty any good whatsoever" (p. 114).

Thomas Jefferson could have possessed the greatest mind on earth but would have lacked the learning, stature, and time necessary to write the Declaration of Independence without the labor of those who made his lifestyle possible. It hardly seems "propaganda" to maintain that the work performed by slaves was at least as central to building the United States as the undeniably critical intellectual contribution of Jefferson. But the larger issue here strikes at the heart of all that is significant to modern family historians: respect for one's identity, whatever it is. Given the justifiable pride many descendants of slaves already take in their past, it is patronizing and degrading to assume that black Americans would feel "validated" because an enslaved woman had sex with a revered white man. To suggest such is to implicitly impute to an entire race of people the desperate desire for "respectability" that scholars once attributed to Madison Hemings. Surely, a substantiation of the claimed relationship brings, as it ought, some gratification and vindication to the Hemings family, whose oral history had been largely denigrated for more than a century. But an insinuation that the Hemings family and millions of others *need* the story to be true in order to "feel they are an authentic part of American life" is insulting.[7]

The larger issue here strikes at the heart of all that is significant to modern family historians: respect for one's identity, whatever it is.

To the authors of *Myth*, however, the crux of the issue is the significance they believe it has for the legacy of Thomas Jefferson. By their account, if Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings had a sexual relationship, Jefferson's character itself would be destroyed; and if Jefferson's character were to be destroyed, the United States would be left a nation without values and one susceptible to collapse. Works, for example, asserts that the allegations concerning Jefferson's sexual life are "a frontal assault on him and his principles, and have as a stated purpose by many proponents the aim to throw out those principles and replace them with something new but as yet poorly defined" (p. 12). Bahman Batmanghelidj, in an overheated essay concluding the collection, maintains that those who argue in favor of the relationship are also attacking "the basic principles of democracy, of majority rule, of self-government" and look to "replace those principles with trash ideas based on deceit and deception." Unwilling to let such an assault continue, Batmanghelidj believes that "those of us who love this country and the principles of human liberty it has stood for . . . must resist these efforts to undermine and destroy the foundations that were laid in the past for the precious rights to life, liberty, and [the] pursuit of happiness that we now enjoy" (p. 166).

7. One essayist, David Murray, does fret over the implication "that blacks in America should somehow be pinning their standing in America's destiny on the outcome of DNA tests" and calls the idea "troubling" (p. 45), making it all the more unfortunate that several of his fellow essayists replicate the implication.

These arguments are unconvincing. The suggestion that being a "proponent" of the Jefferson-Hemings story somehow makes a person un-American and subversive is paranoid, although it does help explain why Works refers to members of the Jefferson Heritage Society as "patriots." As for Thomas Jefferson's character, it is unclear why a sexual relationship with one slave and freeing all of his children by her necessarily poses a greater threat to his reputation than the fact that he owned hundreds of slaves over the course of his adult life while professing to believe that slavery was unjust and immoral. For the sake of argument, however, let us assume for a moment that the worst fears of Works and Batmanghelidj come to fruition, that Jefferson's relationship with Sally Hemings irretrievably "destroys" him and makes it impossible to see him as anything other than monstrous. If the dedication of the United States to the ideals of democracy and liberty are truly so fragile that they are contingent on the reputation of one man, then the nation is already in serious trouble, regardless of Jefferson's standing in the public eye. Thomas Jefferson did not invent the ideals we justly admire him for so eloquently articulating. They predated him, they outlived him, and his historical standing, which will continue to ebb and flow as it always has, is ultimately irrelevant to their power.

If the dedication of the United States to the ideals of democracy and liberty are truly so fragile that they are contingent on the reputation of one man, then the nation is already in serious trouble.

Does America need flawless national heroes to sustain its ideals? Must forebears be turned into idols and a shield held before them to fend off anything that might place a chink in their armor? When the truth is unpleasant, are some things more important than the truth? These are the impressions left by *Myth's* authors who devote themselves to refuting the Jefferson-Hemings story by whatever means necessary. Their efforts to dismantle evidence supporting the existence of the relationship have far too many convolutions to detail them all here, but fundamentally they consist of treating the DNA test results and the documentary record as separate and unrelated information, then claiming that the documentary record pointing to Thomas Jefferson consists solely of unsubstantiated hearsay and gossip. Using these obfuscatory strategies, the authors maintain that genetic testing only narrows the list of possible fathers of Eston Hemings to any one of several dozen Jeffersons. Therefore, they conclude, with or without DNA evidence we are no closer to solving the mystery of who fathered the children of Sally Hemings than we were before 1998.

Such an approach is misleading. Worse, it displays basic misunderstandings of what historians consider evidence and how they appraise it for its value. Considering that the authors of *The Jefferson-Hemings Myth* clearly intended their collection to serve as a counterpoint to *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, they seem to have willfully ignored the arguments of the latter. As Gordon-Reed demonstrates, the fact that a historical document consists of what we might label "hearsay" does not

inherently disqualify it as a potentially accurate piece of information. Just as with a document offering "eyewitness testimony," it has the same potential to be true, false, or anything in between. Both types of records can and must be interrogated. Evidence must not only be analyzed for internal plausibility but also be placed in context alongside other relevant materials. If the weight of the available evidence indicates that an assertion in a document is most likely true, it is considered historically proven. In the case at hand, some historical actors have claimed that one of the Carr brothers fathered the Hemings children, while others have claimed that Thomas Jefferson did. The DNA test results—whose significance cannot be properly understood in isolation from the historical record—simultaneously strengthen the latter claim and reveal that the former cannot be true. Science rarely contributes to historical debates, but in this case it has raised the claimed relationship between Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings beyond the merely possible to the highly probable.

Evidence must not only be analyzed for internal plausibility but also be placed in context alongside other relevant materials.

Perhaps recognizing that the Jefferson-Hemings relationship has more than met the normal standards of historical proof, the essay of attorney Richard E. Dixon raises the ante. In his piece, which takes up nearly one-quarter of the entire volume, Dixon asks whether Thomas Jefferson's paternity of Eston Hemings could be proved in a modern Virginia courtroom. His opinion that it could not is both unsurprising and irrelevant to the historical question at hand, given the incomparability of the standards for historical proof and those for legal proof. One can only imagine how much of the past might be thrown out for insufficient evidence if historians had to make their case by the rules of the current legal system. Dead witnesses, after all, tell no tales. Whatever the historical testimony they may have left behind, cross-examination would be impossible.

The authors of *Myth* obviously know they must make some effort to explain the results of the DNA tests if they wish to continue to maintain that Thomas Jefferson was not the father of Eston Hemings—given that the story about the Carr brothers no longer carries any weight. To that end, they postulate many hypothetical alternatives. Perhaps the father was some other male Jefferson. Apparently, anyone other than Thomas would do, although the consensus seems to be that Jefferson's younger brother Randolph is the likeliest suspect. Then again, they suggest, Sally Hemings may not have been at Monticello at all when Eston was conceived. If she were elsewhere, then Thomas Jefferson could not have been Eston's father. Then, too, one need not assume that Hemings was monogamous. Perhaps she had children by different men.

All these speculations are theoretically possible, and all are entirely without support from the historical record. Coates writes that when Jefferson was at Monticello, the plantation was "swarming" (p. 79), "crawling" (p. 96), and "flooded"

(p. 101) with male Jeffersons. That's a lot of Jeffersons, but there is practically no record of which ones were ever at Monticello or when they were there. Randolph Jefferson lived relatively "near" Monticello (twenty or so miles away), and Thomas did offhandedly invite him to visit at a time when Eston Hemings could have been conceived. But there is no indication that Randolph accepted the invitation, and other correspondence between the Jefferson brothers reveals that on numerous occasions Randolph failed to manage the trip to Monticello even when he said he intended to, making the dates of his actual presence uncertain.[8]

Even if it could be conclusively demonstrated that Randolph or some other male Jefferson was present at Monticello when Eston Hemings was conceived, it would hardly prove any of them was his father or make them equally likely candidates for paternity as Thomas Jefferson. The fact remains that before the 1998 DNA tests ruled out the Carrs, no one ever publicly suggested that any Jefferson other than Thomas fathered the children of Sally Hemings or, for that matter, even knew her. Yet that point is irrelevant to the authors of *Myth*, who seem to believe that exonerating Thomas Jefferson is simply a matter of imagining some conceivable alternative.

On the contrary, the complete lack of historical reference to the involvement, sexual or otherwise, of any other Jefferson with Sally Hemings is critical. Thomas Jefferson Randolph and Ellen Coolidge confidently assigned paternity to the Carr brothers because the story provided a plausible explanation of why this set of Hemings children looked like Thomas Jefferson. We can easily imagine why Randolph and Coolidge might look to protect their grandfather, but reasons for them to protect Randolph Jefferson are far more difficult to fathom. The identities of the white fathers of multiracial children on Virginia plantations were rarely kept secret, despite the attempts those fathers usually made; and if Randolph or any other male Jefferson in fact fathered the children of Sally Hemings, Thomas Jefferson's grandchildren (or anyone else, for that matter) could have and surely would have blamed him. What Randolph and Coolidge could not foresee, however, was that the science of genetics would one day expose them for choosing the wrong relatives to cover for their grandfather's actions.

As for the matter of Hemings's location when she conceived her son Eston, there is no evidence whatsoever that she was any place other than Monticello. The very suggestion that she may not have been there contradicts the notion that Randolph Jefferson was Eston's father, and speaks to desperation among the authors of *Myth* to find some possible way to clear Thomas. If Randolph Jefferson was

8. In closing out an 1807 letter that focused on business matters, Jefferson mentioned that Anna Marks, Randolph's twin sister, was at the plantation and that they would "be happy" to see him, too. Light on the relationship between the brothers is further shed by other letters. In 1810, for example, Randolph wrote that he had been intending to visit Monticello but that his "gigg" (a two-wheeled horse-drawn carriage) was in need of repair. In 1811, Randolph wrote to Thomas apologizing for not making it to Monticello in time to see his sister Martha Carr before she died, while in 1812 he noted that poor road conditions kept him from visiting his brother. The full letters are transcribed in Bernard Mayo, ed., *Thomas Jefferson and His Unknown Brother* (1942; reprint, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1981), 21, 24, 27, and 30.

in fact at Monticello, it is hard to imagine him having sex with an absent Sally Hemings.

On its surface, the suggestion that Heming's children had different fathers seems irrelevant to the question of who fathered Eston Hemings, the one child to whom current genetic evidence speaks.[9] The implication comes across as a last-ditch effort to undermine the statement of her son Madison and preserve the possibility that Randolph and Coolidge might have told the truth. If Madison Hemings was wrong that Thomas Jefferson fathered all of his siblings, then perhaps he could still be wrong about Jefferson altogether. If some other male Jefferson fathered Eston Hemings, than perhaps one or both of the Carr brothers was still responsible for one or more of Eston's siblings.

Yet even the supposedly knowledgeable people who denied Thomas's responsibility—devotees, grandchildren, and biographers—never suggested that Heming's children had more than one father. Ellen Coolidge, whose full letter appears in *Myth*, specifically declared there was "a general impression" that Hemings's children *all* had the same father (p. 196, italics in the original). The current effort to separate them totally lacks historical foundation and offends the memories of them and their mother. Exactly how much more proof is called for to demonstrate that Madison Hemings told the basic truth about his family? What justification is there for saddling Sally Hemings with the old stereotype of the promiscuous slave woman?

The essayists are aware that the documentary record does not support their claim of multiple fathers. To blunt criticism, Coates writes: "When seeking the solution to a problem, the fact that people in the past did not anticipate a given solution is irrelevant and should not hinder people living today from reaching a reasonable conclusion just because it was not thought of before" (p. 106). This statement typifies how deeply Coates and the other authors of *Myth* misunderstand what it means to make a historical argument. Making a historical argument is about reading and interpreting the documentary record that exists, and locating the answers individuals in the past left behind. It is not about inventing other possibilities because we are uncomfortable with those answers. History now tells us that Thomas Jefferson had a sexual relationship with Sally Hemings which produced one, and probably all of Hemings's children. Such a reality is a "problem" only to those who feel they must make it one. There is no need to fear the truth and much to learn from it. Surely the republic will survive.

Making a historical argument is about reading and interpreting the documentary record that exists, and locating the answers individuals in the past left behind. It is not about inventing other possibilities because we are uncomfortable with those answers.

9. Oral history in a family surnamed *Woodson* claims that its progenitor, Tom Woodson of Greenbrier County, (West) Virginia, was the child Sally Hemings conceived by Jefferson in France in 1789 and bore in 1790. The DNA study also included the Woodsons and found no Y-chromosomal link between Jeffersons and the tested Woodson males, and no external documentary evidence links Tom Woodson to Sally.

Notes and Documents

Can Researchers "Prove" the "Unprovable"? A Selective Bibliography of Efforts to Genealogically Document Children of Master-Slave Relationships

Contributed by Gary B. Mills, Ph.D.

Short of DNA testing, which is still inapplicable to most historical and genealogical situations, how does one prove paternity? Writing in *The Jefferson-Hemings Myth: An American Travesty,* the volume's editor, Eyler Robert Coates Sr., points out a reality few people would argue with:

> Whenever anyone states the identity of a person said to be the father of a child, we must keep in mind that it is virtually impossible for them to assert this with absolute certainty, and we must evaluate what they say on the basis of how probable it is that they themselves observed what they are reporting and how likely it was that their interpretation of what they saw was valid.[1]

But of course, children are rarely conceived in the presence of eyewitnesses, a fact that prompted Coates to add:

> Many fathers ... are not sure that their legal children are actually their natural children. Persons outside the bedroom can only be even less sure of paternity. So, without some kind of accompanying explanation for why an outside person happens to "know" that some man is the father of some woman's child, the accusation cannot be taken as anything other than their own suppositions or the repeating of hearsay and gossip.[2]

As to the acceptability of hearsay, he continues:

> Statements [of a woman's son] concerning the parentage of himself and his siblings—facts that he could not possibly know of his own knowledge—should be viewed at most as evidence of what was believed by the speaker, and not as real evidence establishing the facts spoken.[3]

© Gary B. Mills; Department of History, University of Alabama; Post Office Box 870212, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0212. Professor Mills, associate editor of the *NGS Quarterly,* has studied black-white family relations in the South for three decades. His dozens of articles and monographs on the subject have appeared in forums ranging from *The Journal of American History* to the university presses and academic journals of most Southern states. He thanks Tony Burroughs, Henry B. Hoff, Barbara Vines Little, Dr. Joan K. Mitchell, and Dr. Christopher A. Nordmann for their assistance in surveying the literature of the field.

1. Eyler Robert Coates Sr., ed., *The Jefferson-Hemings Myth: An American Travesty* (Charlottesville: Jefferson Editions, for the Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society, 2001), 78.
2. Ibid., 103.
3. Ibid., 105–6.

According to this view of genealogical evidence, the burden is even greater when parents are not wed:

> It is not possible . . . to make an absolutely certain assumption about who is the father of an unmarried woman's child, unless the mother and father are living together openly, or the father acknowledges the child, or some certain evidence supports the claim.[4]

If these rules constrain *all* father-child relationships, what hope is there for genealogists or historians to ever "identify" the paternity of children born to slave women, given that legal marriage was not an option for most American slave women? Coates apparently sees the challenge as virtually insurmountable:

> In the case of an unmarried [slave] woman living on a plantation that has dozens of potential sexual partners also living there, and that is visited by hundreds of visitors in any given year, no person can be certain who might be the father of any child that woman has.[5]

Alex Haley, author of the controversial novel *Roots*, addressed the same issue in equally hopeless terms:

> Slaves were sold and shifted much like livestock, so records were sporadic, nor did records reflect things like children born from unions between white masters and black women.[6]

Experienced researchers, of course, know there are a considerable number of records that explicitly state such "things." Abstracts and family accounts published over the years in such forums as the present journal and the *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* are convenient examples,[7] and researchers in the church and judicial records of the French and Spanish colonies could cite a plethora of others. Still, the general premise stands: *Don't ask, don't tell* was the eleventh commandment in the Anglo-American slave regime.[8] Conscientious fathers might free their offspring if the law allowed, but rarely the mothers—that blatant act would offend public sensibilities.[9] They might make special provisions for them in their wills, but rarely with the words those offspring craved—*my son, my daughter.*

The unwritten rule was known to all: white men who openly acknowledged a miscegenous relationship were pariahs—or they were treated as insane.[10] Which is not to say that "public knowledge" did not exist in many cases. As the planter's wife Mary Boykin Chesnut wrote on the eve of the Civil War:

4. Ibid., 105.

5. Ibid., 77.

6. Quoted in Eliot Kaplan, "*Roots:* The Saga Continues," *Family Weekly* (2 August 1981): 18.

7. For example: "Baptisms in the Lutheran Church, New York City, from 1725," *Record* 98 (October 1967): 223.

8. As Marylynn Salmon and Bertram Wyatt-Brown have shown: "Married men who remained discreet and followed the rules in pursuing their sexual liaisons with slaves encounted no criticism. The problem was ignored in polite mixed society, and not perceived as a problem at all among men." See Salmon, *Women and the Law of Property in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 65 (for quote); and Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), 293–97, 300–8. For a well-known *don't ask, don't tell* master-slave situation in slaveowning New England, see George Waller-Frye, *Adam and Katherine Rogers of New London, CT* (Storrs, Connecticut: Spring Hill Press, 1977): 4–5.

9. A reading of colonial and early-state legislative acts is very instructive on this point.

10. For example, Ella Thomas, a Georgia planter's wife of the 1850s, wrote in her diary of a "slaveholder's son who carried a mulatto slave off to the North with him and passed her off as his wife. The local community

> Like the patriarchs of old, our men live all in one house with their wives and their concubines, and the mulattoes one sees in every family exactly resemble the white children—and every lady tells you who is the father of all the mulatto children in everybody's household, but those in her own she seems to think drop from the clouds.[11]

So where does this leave us in genealogy and history? If public knowledge is inadmissable hearsay, if "proof" consists only of direct statements by primary informants in written records, then an identification of the parentage for most slaves would be virtually impossible, no? No.

In reality, the situation is basically similar to that faced by all genealogists who work pre-twentieth-century cultures that did not have official registrations of birth. Only a small minority of males left wills naming their children, many named some but not all, and most failed to name the mothers of each child they did claim. Amid this void, the courts routinely accepted "hearsay" evidence for both paternity and whole lineages.[12] Hearsay offered by witnesses often was the deciding factor in bastardy or divorces cases, since the testimony of the two key parties usually amounted to *he said, she said*. Historical wills are replete with instances in which a testator makes bequests to "my sister's grandson," "my nephew," or other kin; and ancient legal suits abound in which individuals refer to relationships between people. Most such cases cannot be documented by the modern equivalent of marriage or birth records—or evidence that the testators or testes were witnesses to the conceptions of those individuals. Yet the courts have accepted the validity of those statements. They were not deemed "hearsay." They were considered "common knowledge" and the courts applied "common sense."

Genealogists face tough obstacles, regardless of race. But, as all the major scholarly journals of the field regularly demonstrate, those obstacles are surmounted time and again. Convincing cases are built on exhaustive research, careful documentation, and a skilled analysis and correlation of the evidence—*all types* of evidence: direct and indirect; oral and documentary; primary and derivative. One studies not just the individual pieces but the relationships of each to the other—putting all into the contexts of time, place, law, religion, and prevailing social attitudes. Most such cases can be labeled *circumstantial*. But that exigency has been well addressed by a leading genealogical authority on evidence whose profession was law: "Evidence is none the less effective because it is circumstantial, if it be consistent, connected, and conclusive."[13]

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condemned his action, but when he . . . attempted to marry the woman, his father tried to have him declared a lunatic." See Joel Williamson, *New People: Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the United States* (New York: Free Press, 1980), 68, who summarizes the diary entry. Or see the account of Robert Hairston, a Virginia-to-Mississippi planter who affronted society by living openly with his slave woman, laid out by Henry Wiencek, *The Hairstons: An American Family in Black and White* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1999), chaps. 7–8.

11. Mary Boykin Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, C. Vann Woodward, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 29.

12. For example, see *Elmore* v. *Harris & Pickett*, Records of the Chancery Court, 1830–39: 668–754, Montgomery County Records, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery; here, an Alabama court entertained testimony from many who "knew" the interracial ancestry of a witness born in South Carolina.

13. Noel C. Stevenson, *Genealogical Evidence: A Guide to the Standard of Proof Relating to Pedigrees, Ancestry, Heirship, and Family History*, rev. ed. (Laguna Hills, California: Aegean Park Press, 1989), 86.

Mixed-race slave genealogy is still a nascent field of scholarship. The following annotated bibliography is short and highly selective. It emphasizes case studies built on wide-ranging and well-rounded evidence, which have passed peer review in major, refereed journals. It is supplemented by several monographs and dissertations that do not lay out their "circumstantial" cases in genealogical form but appear to be based on exhaustive research, careful analysis of abundant evidence, and faithful reporting of the data. For the researcher who needs guidance, this "beginning reader" serves to illustrate what has and can be done—and where the bar of acceptability has been set by genealogical and historical scholarship.

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*These two monographs actually treat illicit miscegenation in the Reconstruction era but are equally instructive examples of how evidence has been maximized in the construction of convincing cases.

Reviews

ARCHIVAL GUIDES

Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Archives. Edited by Anne Brunner Eales and Robert M. Kvasnicka. Washington: National Archives Trust Fund Board (NATFB), for the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), 2001. Order from NATFB; Washington, DC 20408-0001; 2001. viii, 411 pp. Appendixes, illustrations, index, lists, photographs. Hardback, $35.00; softback, $25.00.

The long-anticipated update of the most-essential guide to research in the National Archives is well worth the wait—crisper and cleaner, more readable, user-friendly, and 34 percent larger.

Like its predecessor, its organization is by subject rather than by record group (the format used in NARA's 1995 three-volume archival guide*). The eighty-three records groups treated in the present volume are those deemed to contain the most "genealogical" information. Researchers should be aware, however, that NARA has 545 record groups and that much genealogical information can be found in those omitted groups as well. Thorough researchers will use *both* this "genealogical" guide and the archival guide that treats all of the record groups but provides considerably less detail.

Within each subject area, *Guide to Genealogical Research* describes record arrangement and content; sometimes it suggests research strategies. Overall, it treats a wealth of new microfilm publications created over the past seventeen years; but many passages, of course, are almost word-for-word discussions from the earlier edition—with the same document illustrations and photographs. A new introduction includes current addresses, phone numbers, and web URLs. Two appendixes list the record groups and microfilm publications treated within the work, for those who seek to access discussions from citations at hand. The index uses paragraph numbers rather than page numbers.

The major areas of expansion are those of immigration-naturalization records and African- and Native-American research:

- The immigration chapter expands upon border crossings as well as passenger-ship arrivals, detailing the most commonly used forms for Canadian and Mexican border crossings. Its lengthy Table 3 offers a handy list of both available and unavailable immigration lists at NARA. Two very valuable additions, closing out the chapter, are a discussion of Records in the Custody of the Immigration and Naturalization Service and a bibliography of reliable guides published elsewhere.
- Section C, which treats minorities and special groups of the American population (civilian government employees, civilians during wartime, and merchant seamen), adds a discussion and lists of microfilm publications with records of the Freedmen's Bureau and the Southern Claims Commission (SCC), describing their value when conducting African-American research. (Researchers with white Southern ancestry will find a briefer discussion of the SCC under Chapter 10, "Records of Civilians in Wartime," but they should also consult the African-American chapter at 12.5 for fuller background. By far, most SCC applicants and their witnesses were white.)

*Robert B. Matchett et al., comp., *Guide to Federal Records in the National Archives of the United States* (Washington: NARA, 1995).

Like most research guides, this one could be improved in future editions. Appendix 2, "List of Microfilm Publications Cited," provides no page numbers pointing to coverage of specific films. To locate information on the holdings of a particular regional archives via the index, one must add "NARA's" to the front of the name of the archives. For example, if one is interested in the Great Lakes Regional Archives, looking under "Great Lakes" reveals lists of records that contain the word Great Lakes in the title, but nothing relating to the holdings of the Great Lakes Regional Archives. An index search under "NARA's Great Lakes Region" will turn up the entries sought. The NARA web site <www.nara.gov> is a better place to locate data on the holdings of those regional facilities.

This reasonably priced guide has a wealth of information for every genealogist using federal records. It is, quite simply, as essential for the personal library as it is for public ones.

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A Guide to Local History Sources in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. By Jonathan Bardon. Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2000. Order in the U.S. from Dufour Editions; 124 Byers Road; Post Office Box 7; Chester Springs, PA 19425-0007. xii, 119 pp. Illustrations, photographs. Softback, $19.95.

No single guide could adequately describe the local history holdings of the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). Readers should not be surprised that this one is selective. They should be forewarned that it is quite basic.

Opening chapters suggest ways to begin a search in published local histories and explain Ireland's administrative divisions. Subsequent chapters focus on specific research subjects—diaries and journals, education, landed estate records, maps, etc. For each topic, the author provides a brief historical overview and cites examples of some of PRONI's pertinent holdings. The chapter "Transport," for example, includes a very short historical description of the development of roads, railways, and canals in Ulster, followed by a short list of examples of related records —e.g., "Petition for a new roadway by the inhabitants of Moy, County Tyrone, to magistrates and cess payers in 1842 (D/1806)." Most chapters include passages from actual records to illustrate the type of historical information one might find. But other chapters include only lists of related collections, creating an uneven treatment of subjects.

Barden is a historian. He recognizes that a knowledge of local history is important in practically every stage of genealogical research. That base not only helps one identify and locate records of potential value but also provides insight into what life was like in a given place and time. Thus, this volume—which was designed to be a companion to Ian Maxwell's genealogically oriented *Tracing Your Ancestors in Northern Ireland* (Edinburgh: The Stationery Office, 1997)—provides the historical introduction needed to select topics for local history research at PRONI. Bardon advises researchers to begin by looking for information that has already been compiled, interpreted, and published. As a result, for genealogists interested in exploring the raw materials historians use to reach their interpretations, this guide serves only as an introduction.

Researchers will certainly want to move beyond this beginning point. Bardon offers a floor plan of the Public Search Room and includes some details on landed estate records and church registers, for example; but the general reader will wonder how to proceed. Most will wish for an explanation of PRONI's classification system, calendars, catalogs, indexes, finding aids, and procedures for ordering records.

Despite these few shortcomings, the author has done a good job of highlighting the topics and records he feels most useful to anyone interested in an area of Northern Ireland.

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ETHNIC GUIDES

Black Roots: A Beginner's Guide to Tracing the African American Family Tree. By Tony Burroughs. New York: Simon & Schuster–Fireside, 2001. 464 pp. Bibliography, illustrations, index, lists, photographs. Softback, $16.00.

African Americans have a growing list of guidebooks to help them trace ancestry, and this is definitely another one worth adding. In fact, Burroughs—a well-known genealogical researcher, lecturer, and teacher—has written a book useful for any beginner tracing any ethnic group. He offers step-by-step procedures, with numerous examples from his own family research. He shows not only the strengths and weaknesses of sources, but also how to analyze the data.

The introduction clearly sets the limits of the work. It is not intended to be "a complete reference guide to researching African American family history" (p. 17). It emphasizes the twentieth century. After beginners have learned and applied the basic skills to get them beyond that point, Burroughs explains, then they can move on to more specialized advice elsewhere.

Burroughs clearly dispels one persistent myth: that there are "no records of African Americans" (p. 21). Once he proceeds past his introductory section on motivation and research management, he introduces readers to a wealth of materials: oral history, family records found at home, censuses and vital records, library materials, and contextual sources such as syntheses of African American history that genealogists need to trace their forebears properly. He introduces such legal records as probate files and deeds but does not delve into them on the premise that these lie past the beginning phase of research. His concluding section, "Stepping into the Future," offers chapters on technological advances, working toward the writing of a family history, and things to do before progressing into intermediate levels of research. Enhancements include a glossary, a directory of archives and associations, a list of "traps" discussed throughout the book, and a bibliography, as well as numerous photographs of actual documents and sample forms.

Black Roots achieves the author's objectives, but the work does have some limitations—the scant use of footnotes being particularly noticeable. Burroughs emphasizes the importance of recording and citing one's sources but, for some reason, even direct quotes are not properly cited. At least one recommendation in the bibliography, John Hope Franklin's classic *From Slavery to Freedom*, has a more recent edition than the one listed. Some broad statements should have exceptions noted—for example, the counsel that pre-Civil War censuses did not list slaves by name. Exceptions occurred—a case in point being 1840 Alabama. In the various indexes based on the original Accelerated Indexing Systems database one finds them grouped under the fictive "surnames" *Aslove* and *Slave*, followed by the appropriate given names.

Despite these minor shortcomings, *Black Roots* is an important guide for beginners and a good reference work for more-experienced researchers who want to sharpen their skills.

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Discovering Your Jewish Ancestors. By Barbara Krasner-Khait. North Salt Lake: Heritage Quest, 2001. Order from HQ; Post Office Box 540670; North Salt Lake City, UT 84054. xiii, 287 pp. Index, illustrations. Hardback, $49.95; softback, $24.95.

Despite statements in its publicity and foreword, this offering is *not* a step-by-step guide to Jewish genealogy. It is, more precisely, a "reader." In the author's words, it "focuses on the Jewish experience, its sources, meaning, and value" not basic research skills or "how to fill out pedigree charts and family group sheets ... use the computer or ... organganize your research" (p. xiii).

Basically, what Krasner-Khait offers is a collection of recent magazine articles she wrote for *Heritage Quest* (primarily), *Avotaynu*, and *Family Chronicle*. Most chapters repeat a

single article, with minor word changes. Several are enhanced by case studies—the personal experiences of other researchers. Different chapters focus on various Jewish cultural groups (Rabbinic lines, Sephardic Jews, colonial Jews, etc.) or on specific research areas (cemeteries, immigration, or the Internet, for example). The emphasis, of course, is on sources most used by Jewish genealogists to locate ancestral records. Two chapters are particularly helpful:

- "A Crash Course in Jewish History" tells of the wanderings and migrations of Jewish families across the centuries, with a useful time-line illustration.
- "Jewish Family Medical History," originally one article, has been expanded into two chapters that cover Jewish genetic diseases and steps for developing a medical pedigree. However, the diseases discussed are those that affect Ashkenazic (Middle and Eastern European) Jews. No mention is made of those that afflict Jews of Sephardic (Spanish and Mediterranean) descent.

Websites are mentioned throughout the book, but the chapter on the Internet consists almost exclusively of information located at <www.jewishgen.org>, the granddaddy of all Jewish genealogy sites. While one can spend weeks exploring its pages, other excellent sites should not have been ignored; and the single paragraph on *Avotaynu's* site barely scratches the surface of its research offerings. The chapter on Jewish genealogical societies lists the websites they maintain as merely part of their address and fails to distinguish those that contain research material (e.g., Argentina, Great Britain, New York) from those that merely list local activities.

Overall, the book appears to be addressed to the Jewish genealogist who has already done basic research in the United States and is familiar with Jewish cultural terminology. Although terms are defined in scattered sidebars and the index, a glossary would have been helpful—particularly for the secular Jew or non-Jewish researcher. The bibliography, subdivided by chapter, includes works that cover more than one subject, but each has been arbitrarily assigned to just one chapter. The small list of references on American Jewish history, surprisingly, includes none by Jacob Rader Marcus, the "dean" of American Jewish history, whose books include information about many individual families.

Krasner-Khait has a friendly style that is easy to read. But at least this one reader is disappointed she did not take advantage of the opportunity to add more depth to her previously published pieces and to expand her chapters beyond the length constraints of magazine articles.

Gladys Friedman Paulin
Winter Park, Florida

FAMILY HISTORIES

Six Columbiana County, Ohio, Pioneer Families: Family 6, Abel Lodge (1770–1839) and Tacy Bangham—Ancestors and Descendants. By William Brooke Fetters. Published by the author, 2001. Order from 12814 Brunswick Lane; Bowie, MD 20715-2403. xvi, 488 pp. Bibliography, charts, illustrations, index, maps, photographs. Hardback, $40.00.

Some genealogists are content with publishing one book about their ancestry. Fetters took on the task of publishing his paternal ancestry and has done so with not one, but six volumes. This one is the final installment in his endeavor to portray his forebears who settled in early Columbiana County.

Fetters has created an expansive family history that departs from the norm. It does not concentrate solely on the descendants of a particular couple, nor does it concentrate solely on all ancestors in a particular line. In addition to its treatment of the ancestry and descendancy of Abel and Tacy (Bangham) Lodge, it includes several generations of offspring for many Lodge and Bangham antecedents. The earliest generations in each chapter receive fairly extensive coverage. For later generations there is just basic data, sometimes only a birth date.

Fortunately for his readers, Fetters did not make up a numbering scheme to organize all

of these individuals. For ancestors in the direct line, he uses the Sosa-Stradonitz system. To track descendants, he uses a basic "indented outline" format rather than a standard genealogical system. The index appears to be very complete and includes entries for wives under both their married and maiden names. Maps give a good overall sense of the locations where families lived, and photographs of tombstones and signature samples are welcome additions.

Unfortunately, *Abel Lodge* has a significant weakness: its documentation. Fetters identifies his starting point as William Jacob Lodge's *Record of the Descendents [sic] of Robert and Elizabeth Lodge (English Quakers) 1682–1903*. He then spends the first three chapters sorting out three men who were possible candidates for the immigrant, a point on which he feels his predecessor erred. It is puzzling then, why that earlier book is the sole source of information for much of Fetter's "evidence."

Elsewhere, references are awkward and confusing. For example, one endnote reads in part, "Dr. Lodge's material regarding Jonathan's descendants has been supplemented by Columbiana Co. information from several other sources. (a) If the name of the person performing the marriage ceremony is stated, the source is Carol Willsey Bell, *Columbiana County, Ohio[,] Marriages, 1800–1870* (Youngstown, OH: Bell Books, 1990), if the wedding took place by 1870; if it occurred later, the source is Columbiana County marriages books 6–21, Columbiana County Probate Office, Lisbon" (pp. 378–79).

Careful editing and proofreading would have caught several mistakes and clarified some ambiguities in the data. For example, William Lodge is said to have died 20 June 1867 near Dayton, Ohio. Yet later on that same page he is reported to have paid a visit in 1864 to his brother Jacob in Montgomery County (whose seat is Dayton) and, while there, contracted pneumonia and died (p. 72). Did William have pneumonia for three years?

The sheer size of the volumes testifies that much work went into its compilation. With a wider variety of original and contextual sources to amplify, test, and correct his details and his interpretations—and with improvements in reference citations and editing—the result would have been a better representation of those efforts and a more-useful volume for other researchers.

Amy Johnson Crow, CG
Reynoldsburg, Ohio

MISCELLANEOUS GUIDES

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Online Genealogy. By Rhonda McClure. Indianapolis: Alpha Books–Macmillan, 2000. 398 pp. Glossary, index, reference card. Softback. $16.95 (plus shipping).

Can one tell a book by its cover? Not from the front of this one, although the back cover assures the reader, "You're no idiot, of course." This excellent instructional and reference manual is hampered only by a potential user's preconceptions of who might read it. The author and publisher target two markets: experienced family historians who wish to expand their research venue to the Internet; and computer gurus who have become curious about tracing their ancestors. Both groups find a comfort zone throughout. The volume guides its readers gently, and safely, by the hand.

McClure masterfully presents detailed instructions that will benefit all genealogists. She reviews tenets of research organization because, as she notes, even the experienced researcher tends to wander around the Internet without focus. She provides tools for finding online resources, rather than lengthy lists of transient Internet URLs. Her appendix contains Internet locations only for governmental agencies (domestic and foreign) and online library resources and directories. These relatively stable addresses, continually revised, point the reader to other useful sites.

Layout is user-friendly, with sidebar notes that assist both genealogical research and computerization. Definitions, in plain English, appear in both marginal notes and an excellent glossary.

No book that focuses on computers can be considered timeless, but McClure's *Guide* will have longevity—not just for novices but for all genealogists and computer users who desire to more fully explore the resources of both fields.

Nedra Dickman Brill, CG
Portland, Oregon

Medicine in Colonial America. By Oscar Reiss. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2000. Order from UPA; 15200 NBN Way; Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17214. xii, 518 pp. Bibliography, index. Hardback. $64.50 (shipping: $4.00).

It has been said that the average patient consulting the average physician stood a less-than-average chance of benefiting from the encounter until the twentieth century. Nothing in *Medicine in Colonial America* contradicts that assertion. It has also been said that the most dangerous sort of person is an idealist with a weapon. Dr. Reiss's book could be used to argue that a physician armed with a theory is even more dangerous to the public's health. The aggressive bleeding, blistering, and purging that colonial Americans underwent makes one wonder how any survived to leave descendants.

Reiss compiles a prodigious amount of information about medicine in the American colonies. More specifically, he focuses on orthodox medicine in the European tradition as practiced and taught in the seaboard cities of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. His concentration is on medical practice rather than the broader topics of health and disease. He describes the theoretical basis of practice, citing at length the works of such British physicians as William Cullen and Thomas Sydenham. America's Benjamin Rush is also quoted extensively, although Europeans are mentioned more often in the text than homegrown doctors.

Belying the title, the Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary periods are the best covered. Twenty- ight of the sources cited in the endnotes were written before 1775, while four times that many date from 1775 to 1800, and three times as many come from the nineteenth century. Except for some eighty brief dissertations by candidates for medical degrees, mostly from Philadelphia in the 1790s, the principal sources are published syntheses from the twentieth century.

Relatively few colonial Americans lived in cities, and many of those who did could not afford to patronize classically trained doctors. No one knows how many ordinary citizens outside the upper classes were cared for by orthodox physicians, by "quacks" (defined as "someone who treats with techniques and medicines that are not currently acceptable to the majority of physicians," p. 59), or otherwise. Reiss points out that the crackpot science upon which standard colonial medical practice was based could be considered quackery today; but he wisely counsels humility, since we do not know how the future will judge our current understanding and treatment of diseases.

The author makes little effort to equate the diagnoses of the time with modern ones, an admittedly difficult task. Folk medicine is little discussed, a short shrift one also sees for other ethnic traditions, such as those in areas of Dutch or German settlement. Improbably, Reiss states: "There was one aspect of medicine native to America—slave or Negro medicine" (p. 92), and he devotes two paragraphs to slave medicine that more likely originated in Africa. But he never mentions Native Americans, whose contributions to the pharmacopoeia alone were considerable. In fact, the first sentence of the first chapter avers, "The inhabitants of pre-Revolutionary America were predominantly of English and Scotch stock" (p. 1), a statement that would need great qualification to be true.

Since the author used no genealogical sources, he could not draw on their wealth of medical information. The extensive medical practice of Governor John[2] Winthrop of Connecticut goes unmentioned. Quotes and statements of fact are generally well documented, but the pattern of citations is idiosyncratic

and inconsistent. Either the author or the editor was notably confused about when to use *ibid.* and when to use *op. cit.* The former erroneously appears immediately after citations of the same work, while the latter is used to reference works cited earlier but not immediately before—which is actually the function of the former, although the modern convention is to use shortened titles in lieu of *op. cit.*

Better attention to detail would also have avoided calling the same person *Lindeboom* and *Lendeboom* (p. 469) and *Black* and *Block* (pp. 490–91). The first president of Harvard was Henry *Dunster,* not *Demster* (p. 26); the first Methodist bishop was Francis *Asbury,* not *Asberry* (p. 81). Nicholas Knapp of Watertown, Massachusetts, was fined in 1631 for selling "*a* water," a valueless fluid concoction, not "*plain* water" (p. 75) as a cure for scurvy. Overall, the book is sturdily bound but visually dense, with dark type, page-long paragraphs, and no illustrations.

The focus of *Medicine in Colonial America* is later and narrower than its title suggests. Within its narrow focus, however, it covers its subject in depth; and it provides a substantial bibliography that will be useful to other researchers in its field.

William B. Saxbe Jr., M.D., CG, FASG
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Nearby History: Exploring the Past around You. By David E. Kyvig and Myron A. Marty. 2d ed. Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press, 2000. xvii, 283 pp. Index, photographs. Hardback, $60.00; softback, $24.95.

This highly professional publication would have been perfect for inclusion in *Putting Family History into Context,* the December 2000 special issue of the *NGS Quarterly.* It is primarily a text book for students—not of "big picture" history, but of little things that lie beneath daily life and form the hidden foundation for all events, great and small. Without being able to place forebears within the milieu of their own time, place, and culture, researchers will never comprehend them as human beings. The authors clearly recognize the prevailing tendency to judge the past by today's views, not by its own.

Kyvig and Marty provide an excellent discussion of the reasons for and methods of collecting and analyzing this "nearby history." Separate chapters treat various types of documents (unpublished, oral, and visual), artifacts, buildings, and landscapes—dissecting information that can be gleaned from each. Other chapters treat essential corollaries: "Preserving Material Traces" and "Research, Writing, and Leaving a Record." Two chapters spoke particularly to this reviewer.

- "What Can Be Done Nearby?" provides thought-provoking lists of questions, broken into topical sections, to demonstrate how to refine one's focus. Any genealogist, amateur or professional, will benefit from a frequent review of this discussion.
- "Linking the Particular to the Universal." Though it sounds philosophical, it is down-to-earth, connecting the unique to the commonality of broader history. It extends the discussion to the evolution of historical study in the United States and points out both the benefits and pitfalls of written histories. The authors clearly remind us here that, when reading any synthesis of history, we are not students of just the era it portrays but also the era in which the book or article was written, because all authors bring their own agendas and their own backgrounds to their work.

One caution: the book relates more to the terrain upon which the family tree grows than to the roots, branches, and twigs of the tree itself. By reading *Nearby History* and following its suggestions, researchers will find sources that help to place forebears in their world. One should *not* expect many of these sources to point specifically to an individual ancestor or to isolate particular details of his or her life. This is not to say that on occasion, there in the wild and chaotic landscape, one may not find a prize acorn that has dropped from the tree, giving a new perspective or a new detail.

Debra L. Wiley, CG
Inglewood, California

Presidential Announcement

Expanding Benefits: A Partnership with the St. Louis County Library

Curt B. Witcher, M.L.S., NGS President

For nearly a century, the National Genealogical Society's core mission has been education. The NGS Board of Directors is dedicated to exploring all possible avenues of expanding member benefits while working to fulfill the society's central purpose as a service organization that leads and educates the national genealogical community.

The National Genealogical Society's circulating collection of more than twenty thousand volumes will have a new home by the end of this year. At its September quarterly meeting in Davenport, Iowa, the NGS Board of Directors ratified its interim decision to create a strategic partnership with the St. Louis County (SLC) Library.

Alliance with this superb mid-American repository means the long-awaited consolidation of NGS's circulating collection, which heretofore has been dispersed between four facilities—two of them off-site storage. The collection will be open to researchers by January 2002. In February 2002, it will become available in its entirety for interlibrary loan to all genealogists throughout the country, regardless of institutional or organizational affiliation.

Based on much study and deliberation, the board's action will create the nation's largest family- and local-history book-loan program. Through this partnership with the SLC Library, our society will continue to develop some of the most exciting growth opportunities for a loan collection the genealogical community has ever seen.

As specified by the agreement, all books the SLC Library receives from NGS must be made available for loan, making the entire NGS book-loan collection as close as your nearest public, college, community college, or university library. The two organizations have committed to meet at least yearly to review the status of the arrangement and modify the process, if necessary, to make the books as accessible as possible.

This partnership carries a number of significant benefits for the National Genealogical Society and its members.

- Loan requests will be serviced much more responsively. The SLC library will fill requests five days a week, rather than the once-per-week practice imposed by limitations at the NGS Library.
- Neither library will have to turn away patrons while interlibrary loan requests are processed. In the past, space constraints have required the NGS Library to close to perform loan functions.
- The SLC Library will not charge for book loans through the interlibrary loan system. In the past, the NGS Library has needed to charge $10 or more per book to cover costs.

- The SLC Library will market the collection in ways NGS has not been able to do.
- The SLC Library will enhance web access to the loan collection, creating pathfinders and use-aids for the collection as well as highlighting unique items.
- The SLC Library will assist NGS with reference questions that result from use of the loan collection.
- Housing the loan collection in St. Louis means that it will be in one place and in one consistent order, rather than its current division between two different facilities on the Glebe House grounds and two other remote storage facilities.
- Housing the book loan collection in a public library with ample room will allow for unprecedented growth of the collection—growth that both organizations are committed to—so that members can have a dramatically larger number of books available to them. Indeed, nearly a thousand volumes are already in the "pipeline" for the newly reconstituted NGS Book Loan Collection when the transfer is completed in February of next year.

The Special Collections Department of the St. Louis County Library brings notable strengths to this partnership:

- It has more than three times the professional staff of the NGS Library, significant support staff, and a separate interlibrary book-loan department.
- One of its professional librarians holds genealogical certification and all have many years of personal genealogical research experience, as well as skill and expertise in assisting others in doing family history research.
- Outstanding volunteer support for the library is provided by a very active local society, the St. Louis Genealogical Society, with more than 2,500 members.

Information about the St. Louis County Library Special Collections Department can be found at <www.slcl.lib.mo.us/slcl/sc/scgenpg.htm>.

The Special Collections Department also receives outstanding agency and public support for its genealogical-research environment. For example:

- It has a consequential annual budget to purchase new genealogical materials.
- It has raised nearly one quarter million dollars in private donations in less than two years to complement its genealogy acquisitions budget.
- It houses two outstanding special ethnic collections—the Julius K. Hunter African American Collection and the Yizkor Collection of Jewish Memorial Books.
- It has committed to building yet a third strong core collection—this one with a German focus.

In short, the SLC Library has a record of commitment and success. We have accepted its invitation to share in that success for the benefit of our members and the greater good of the genealogical community.

In addition to providing a much better way to conduct the society's book loan program, this partnership allows NGS to reorganize its Library and Information Services division in a manner that provides more member-centric services.

- The society's valuable manuscript collections—including the marvelous Richardson Dougall European Manuscript Collection—its archive of Bible records, the American Medical Association (AMA) membership files, and the Member Ancestor Chart (MAC) files will continue to be maintained at the Glebe House Library. Efforts can now be made to calendar, index, and provide access to the important information in those collections.
- The society is maintaining and enhancing the online databases available to its library, so greater assistance can be offered to members in finding important family- and local-history books worldwide. The society's online catalog will also be maintained, not only to catalog our many manuscript collections but also to provide a new

conduit of communication between library staff and members.

- The members-only lookup services of NGSearch in major reference works (e.g. *Germans to America, Italians to America,* etc.) will be maintained and expanded.

New members-only programs are also being explored and developed under the auspices of NGS's Library and Information Services. For example:

- A service to retrieve information and records from D.C. area repositories.
- A Help Desk to provide personalized guidance to researchers just getting started, those returning to genealogy after some time away, and those who have reached an impasse of some kind.
- Toll-free help lines, designated email addresses, and partnerships with other genealogical libraries to provide "24/7" reference assistance are all being explored.

Tailored to the individual needs of each researcher, these services will be a tremendous benefit to NGS members.

A great strength of the National Genealogical Society has always been the book donations made by its members. NGS will continue to value all contributions to both the reference collection maintained at Glebe House and the loan collection maintained in St. Louis. Books donated to the society will remain the base from which the *NGS Quarterly* chooses books for review; and all donations will be announced, as always, in the *NGS Newsmagazine*.

With its partner, NGS can now make these additional materials far more accessible. While the SLC Library will maintain its own core genealogy collection as non-circulating reference works for onsite use, the NGS circulating collection will provide the whole genealogical community with access to a significant and rapidly growing body of genealogical reference materials.

The length of the partnership agreement is ten years—with annual evaluations. If undue problems develop within the program, our society will know long before the conclusion of the contract and the collection will revert back to the NGS headquarters.

The length of the partnership agreement is ten years—with annual evaluations. If undue problems develop within the program, our society will know long before the conclusion of the contract and the collection will revert back to the NGS headquarters. If the program progresses well during the initial ten-year partnership period, genealogy book loan will be so inextricably intertwined with what the SLC library does in service to its patron populations that its continuance will be virtually assured and the NGS book loan collection will become the property of the host library.

From now into perpetuity, the collection will carry the name "National Genealogical Society Book Loan Collection." And each volume of the collection will have a bookplate—added at the expense of the SLC Library—identifying the book as part of this NGS collection.

For nearly a century, the National Genealogical Society's core mission has been education. It is committed to forming strategic partnerships that will increase benefits for its members as well as the whole genealogical community. This new alliance greatly increases important services, without duplication, at decreased costs.

The NGS Board of Directors is dedicated to exploring all possible avenues of expanding member benefits while working to fulfill the society's central purpose as a service organization that leads and educates the national genealogical community.

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Elizabeth Shown Mills, Editor



GENEALOGY—the search for "roots"—is a global obsession. The millennium has fueled curiosity about the past and our personal place in history, the Internet is erasing barriers to international communication and record access, and genetic science dangles promises of marvelous new ways to link peoples and cultures. A millennial survey by a marketing research leader found that nearly half of all Americans have created a "family tree," that more than a third have traveled to an ancestral place, and that nearly as many have written some form of family history. But, as *Time Digital* has cautioned, amid "the forest of genealogy software programs and websites . . . it's easy to go barking up the wrong family tree."

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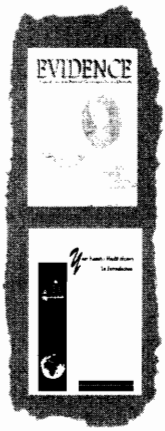
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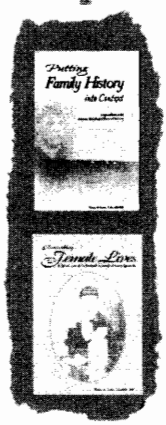
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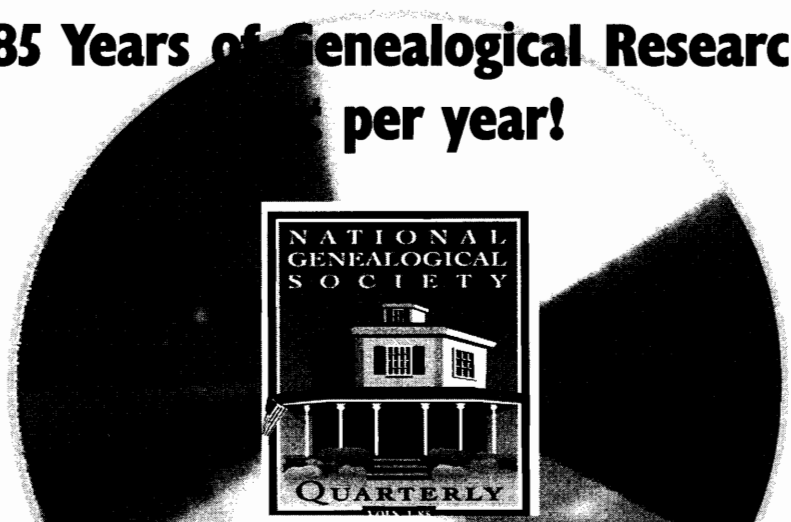


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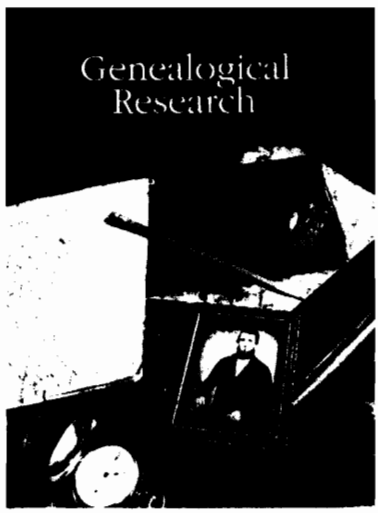
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