

Th: Jefferson

MONTICELLO

WINTER 2010

www.monticello.org

VOLUME 21, NUMBER 2

Mulberry Row and the Landscape of Slavery at Jefferson's Monticello

By Susan R. Stein

Richard Gilder Senior Curator and
Vice President for Museum Programs

Thomas Jefferson is one of our nation's most influential figures; his complexity and contradictions embody the paradox of his time – the promise of liberty in an age of slavery, a challenging topic for historians and the general public. As Professor Ira Berlin writes, "... American history cannot be understood without slavery. Slavery shaped America's economy, politics, culture, and fundamental principles." Through the active interpretation of Mulberry Row, the Thomas Jefferson Foundation will enhance understanding of Monticello while making a major contribution to the national understanding of slavery. A recently awarded National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant for \$380,000 and a matching gift from trustee Fritz Kundrun and his wife Claudine will help support one of TJF's most important and exciting initiatives.

Mulberry Row and the Landscape of Slavery at Jefferson's Monticello is the first part of a multiyear project. The multifaceted approach is designed to help "real" and "virtual" visitors understand the complex world of Monticello, the 5,000-acre plantation occupied by Thomas Jefferson and his family, hired workers, and about 130 enslaved people in any given year. Jefferson's detailed recordkeeping, coupled with extensive archaeological and historical study, make Monticello the



**New
Mulberry
Row project
will uncover
plantation history.** TJF

best-documented plantation in America.

Mulberry Row occupied a critically important position between the agricultural quarter farms of the plantation and the main house. A center of domestic and industrial activity, it was located just 75 feet south of Jefferson's own quarters. Most of the buildings were wood and have not survived; the remains of only four stone structures are visible today. The absence of most of the structures makes it difficult for visitors to

imagine Mulberry Row and the hum of plantation activity.

Mulberry Row and the Landscape of Slavery at Jefferson's Monticello will change how visitors perceive the crucially important plantation and its people. Seventeen mini-exhibitions or interpretation stations at key sites along Mulberry Row will reach millions of people. The stations will be enhanced by sound (e.g., the sounds of nailmaking near the nailery), audio and visual

Mulberry Row

podcasts, and two nearby interactive computers with an animation conveying the evolution of Mulberry Row's buildings. All of the new Mulberry Row materials will be accessible on our website, thus expanding the audience.

Drawing on decades of research, an interdisciplinary team of TJF staff archaeologists, historians, educators and curators will develop the content for the exhibition. Visitors to Monticello will learn more about individual workers, their families and the specific operations of the plantation from nailmaking to spinning, as well as the broader aspects of plantation life and the institution of slavery.

Future components of the phased Mulberry Row project will include the restoration of Jefferson's mountaintop roads – especially the Kitchen Road – and two original structures, the Stable and the Weaver's Cottage. We also plan to reconstruct a few of the lost buildings; the reconstruction will be carried out carefully and selectively as is fitting for this sensitive landscape.



The Kundrun Challenge

Thomas Jefferson Foundation Trustee and longtime Monticello supporters Fritz and Claudine Kundrun have matched the NEH grant for the *Mulberry Row and the Landscape of Slavery at Jefferson's Monticello* project. They have also issued a challenge to all who want to help interpret this important part of the mountaintop's history, and will match gifts up to \$3 million in support of the interpretation of Mulberry Row.

"It is our responsibility to preserve this piece of American history as well as to educate others about Monticello as the entire plantation, where enslaved men and women worked and lived. Join us in supporting a truly remarkable project," said Mr. Kundrun.

For more information on how you can contribute to the restoration and interpretation of Mulberry Row and the Landscape of Slavery at Jefferson's Monticello, please contact Principal Gifts Officer Kirstin Fritz at 434.984.9825 or kfritz@monticello.org.