

## Jefferson's Two families Intro

Good Morning President Dave, Fellow Members of the SAR and Guests. When I Dave called on me to do a speech, I accepted not knowing the amount of time I would put into this subject. I knew immediately what the subject matter was going to be and that was Jefferson's two families. I had read *Annette Gordon-Reed's book **The Hemingses of Monticello*** shortly after its publication in 2008. I had just randomly picked it off a bookshelf partly because it was a bestseller and winner of the Pulitzer Prize in history. I have always loved to read history as it is always a learning experience and of course Monticello is one of the most famous houses in this country. I reread this book in its entirety again and realized that I had to read and research many other books on this subject to get a complete and true picture on this complicated subject. I ended up reading all of or parts of 9 books, many on-line sources such as Monticello.org etc., watching several documentaries, The Oprah Winfrey Show as well as part of a complete movie done on this subject. I will occasionally veer off the subject matter slightly but only because it was well connected to Jefferson himself. He was an innovative man, talented and accomplished in many areas not just government. In doing this research and writing it up I ended up with well over a one-hour speech so in consultation with Dave I am splitting this speech into two parts – today Part I and January's meeting will be Part II. Now for Jefferson's two families Part I.

## THOMAS JEFFERSON'S TWO FAMILIES

Two-part SAR speech given 11-13-2021 and 1-8-2022 by Thomas Bowen. Speech given at two regular meetings of the Withlacoochee Chapter of the SAR.

There are thirty distinct works on Thomas Jefferson, at least ten books on Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings and numerous mentions of Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings in other histories of the time. TJ himself was a bibliophile and in his lifetime owned between 9 and 10 thousand books. When the British burned the US Capital in 1814 and all the books that were stored there, he sold his entire collection then numbering 6500 to Congress. He then began to replenish his collection. He once wrote John Adams "I cannot live without books" I say this in opening as history – our history as well as world history is contained in books, newspapers, and other written materials. TJs history as well as his history with Sally Hemings is well documented.

Let's talk about Thomas Jefferson's legal family especially his wife and father-in-law. His wife to be Martha Wayles Skelton. He married her in 1772. She was a childless widow - daughter and heiress of John Wayles a leading lawyer of Virginia and a well know slave trader. He was also a debt collector. Since he had lower class origins and due to his debt collecting and slave trading, he was not one of the "gentries" of Virginia. He was accused of lying in a sensational murder case where he was defending the murderer who had killed a man in a tavern brawl. He was accused of lying in a sworn deposition about this case with even a poem written about him in the Virginia Gazette and I quote

See manners beam, from ill-bred Wayles

See Manners fraught with fairy tales

The bastard of St Judas!

God send that Manners, praising Manners

And all who follow Folly's banners

Were banished to Bermudas

Wayles sued the newspaper but lost.

Wayles was married three times and outlived all three wives with which he had a total of 5 children. After his third wife died, he took Betty Hemings his mulatto slave as a concubine and over 11 years had six children with her. Betty Hemings was the product of a sea Capt. John Hemings and an unnamed African woman. John Wayles apparently gave the unknown African woman as a bed partner to Capt. Hemings when he was in port and the product of this relationship was Betty Hemings named by John Wayles. Capt. Hemings acknowledged that the child was his daughter and offered to buy both her and the African woman, but Wayles declined. The Capt. then vowed to return and steal both but Wayles learning of this kept the mother and daughter in the main house under his protection.

Betty had an original relationship with a slave called Abraham and had 4 children with him. After his third wife died Wayles took Betty as his concubine and had 6 children with him. After Wayles died in 1773 Betty had a third relationship with a slave and produced two more children. When Wayles died his daughter Betty her children and a total of 135 slaves became the property of TJ and Martha. These children would now be classified as "Quadroons" which was one quarter black and three quarters white. This was known in the south as *miscegenation* which is the mixing of white and black blood mostly through a white man and black woman. The word was invented by a reporter that wrote a pamphlet on race mixing in 1864. Jefferson was aware of race mixing as he had leased Mary Hemings – Sally's oldest

sister - to a prosperous white merchant, Thomas Bell, in Charlottesville. Mary was allowed to take her three children with her, and she and Bell began a relationship that lasted until his death in 1800. When Jefferson returned from France in 1790 Mary asked Jefferson to sell her to Bell. Bell had two children with Mary, and he recognized the children as his and when he died he left the house to her and their children. the community treated her as a common law wife of Bell during and after his death.

This race mixing was a common occurrence in the south primarily by slave owners and their sons or overseers with female slaves. It was typically politely ignored by white society. There was also a financial incentive to produce mixed race children as they were typically trained as house servants, chambermaids, tradesmen, seamstresses carriage drivers etc. Their value also increased dramatically as the percentage of white blood was increased.

This was also the beginning of the African American middle and upper-class society as these slaves of mixed blood had a better life than field slaves. These folks, many of them freedmen in southern society pre civil war, had the ability to make a living with their skills acquired on a plantation and several had been freed by their white fathers. Some of them purchased their own freedom by doing side work and they would also purchase the freedom of their wives. Shortly after the civil war ended colleges and universities began that were all black and these folks most of whom could read and write became the first entrants to these schools. This was the basis of the black middle and upper class. Spike Lee understood this phenomenon and made a movie called "**School Daze**" which highlighted the differences between African Americans with mixed blood and darker African Americans. Lee plays the part of Half Pint and is pledging a fraternity where all the actives

are light skinned. Another group on campus are darker skinned and there is a lot of conflict between the two groups.

We will return to the story of Jefferson's first family. After his marriage to Martha in 1772 she had six children and only two survived into adulthood. Child mortality was epidemic in this century as children died from a variety of childhood diseases. Martha suffered this loss even more than typical women of this time. Women were also at great risk of mortality during or after childbirth. Women experienced childbirth at their home and if they had assistance, it was a midwife. Handwashing was unknown and so both mother and baby were at great risk of death. It was a known risk with even a name – childbed fever. After each child Martha had she became increasingly weaker, and it took longer for her to recover.

It was not till the 1847 that a German, Dr. Semmelweis discovered that simply washing your hands especially with a chlorinated lime solution could reduce the mortality rate of mothers to less than 1%. He was known as the “savior of mothers”. Unfortunately, he was mocked by fellow doctors who were offended at the suggestion that they should wash their hands and got him committed to an asylum where he died after being beaten by guards.

After the birth of her last child Lucy Elizabeth in May 1782 named after another child who died shortly after being born, Jefferson wrote to James Monroe announcing the birth as well as advising Monroe that Martha's condition was “dangerous”. Martha was bedridden for five months while being cared for by Betty Hemings daughters. When the end was near in early September 1782 all the Hemings women were in attendance at Martha's bedside. During her final hours Martha gave 9-year-old Sally Hemings a handbell as a memento. Remember that all

these Hemings women were her half-sisters - so family - even though not publicly acknowledged.

Jefferson, very distraught, sat by her bedside while Martha told him of things she wanted done. When it came to her children Martha held up four fingers and told TJ that she could not die happy if her four children were ever to have a stepmother over them. Holding her hand TJ promised to never marry again. Martha could not remember her own mother as she had died within two years after giving birth to her. Her stepmother died when she was 12. This event was witnessed by Edmund Bacon and the Hemings women. Bacon, an overseer, was impressed at this as he noted that Jefferson was "*quite a young man and very handsome*" and could have remarried very well. Every house needed a "mistress" – the woman of the house that ran the house - while the husband ran the plantation. Men lost wives and remarried quickly as they needed a mother for their children as well as a mistress for the house. Many times, the man would remarry a sister or other relative of their wife as it would keep both families happy because everyone was known to each other. That Jefferson at age 39 promised not to remarry was extraordinary. The fact that Martha had a 24-hour vigil by both TJ and members of the Hemings family was very common in that day. It is less common now.

Jefferson was very distraught by his wife's death and by all accounts loved her dearly. He was so distraught that he destroyed all his wife's letter to the dismay of future historians. He experienced several months of extreme grief. During the late stages of his wife's pregnancy TJ had an extensive visit from the Marquis de Chastellux a French Soldier-Philosopher who marveled at the unfinished Monticello Jefferson's constant work in progress. He was constantly tearing down and then rebuilding his house. He made a famous quote on Monticello "*Mr. Jefferson was the first American who has consulted the fine arts to*

*know how he should shelter himself from the weather.* “Jefferson was a man with numerous hobbies and interests. He had an intense thirst for knowledge. He was the builder and architect of his beloved Monticello. While supervising the construction of the University of Virginia he took a workman’s hammer and chisel and demonstrated how to put a proper volute on a capital. Woodworking was a hobby and he carried his tools to France and back to America.

Ten weeks after his wife’s death he wrote the Marquis advising that he was “*emerging from that stupor of mind which has rendered me as dead to the world as she*”. The catastrophe had altered his scheme of life at Monticello. He had essentially been in retirement and expected to fill his life with domestic and literary bliss. In November of that year, he received word that Congress had appointed him as the plenipotentiary to France and he was to join Franklin John Jay and John Adams in Paris to conclude the peace negotiations with England. The action to appoint Jefferson to this position was according to Madison a result of Martha’s death that Jefferson may have changed his mind about leaving public life. Jefferson confirmed this in one of his letters to the Marquis. He wanted to accompany the Marquis on his trip back to Paris but learned as he about to embark in December of that year that the treaty had been signed and his services were no longer needed. He had no choice except to return to his bleak memory ridden Monticello.

The following June Virginia sent him to Congress and in May of 1784 Congress appointed him as plenipotentiary to France along with Franklin and Adams. France was obviously the strongest ally and friend that the new country had and so the best and brightest were sent there to negotiate trade treaties and other business. On July 5, 1784, TJ and

his 11-year-old daughter Martha called Patsy, his personal valet and slave James Hemings left from Boston for Europe.

Jefferson was smitten by Paris. Paris was amid a building boom and by comparison with America's crude cities Paris was a large old city with lots of architecture and wide avenues. It was also in the early stages of the French revolution with impromptu speakers in public places railing about the injustice of being a Frenchman. The change of scene to the vibrant and the very social life of Paris of the late 1700s brought the dispirited widower back into the social scene. He could not avoid this as it was expected that he, Adams, and Franklin would work together. TJ was amid several negotiations such as the problem with Tripoli pirates, the dilemma of interest on British loans prior to the war of independence and opening world markets for American agricultural commodities. He thought that with unlimited land that agriculture and the trades that promote agriculture such as carpenters, blacksmiths, masons etc. should be the province of America and "for the general operations of manufacture, let our workshops remain in Europe."

There was some tension between John Adams and Franklin. Adams was not happy with Ben Franklin complaining in writing about how late he slept and that "The life of Dr. Franklin was a scene of continual dissipation." A side note here was that Ben Franklin loved the ladies of France and they loved him. During the very busy social scene in Paris Franklin was always surrounded by French women. Even though he was far from good looking he had great wit and social charm. Adams complained about this as Franklin was frequently unavailable for consultation. Franklin did accomplish a great deal in his 8 ½ years in France but when Jefferson arrived Franklin at 79 years old was exhausted and suffering from Gout and had little energy to shepherd TJ



into this unfamiliar world. It was thought that Franklin would shortly retire from his work.

Jefferson enrolled his daughter Patsy in a fashionable convent school and he generally in his early days in France socialized at the Adam's house. Jefferson did reduce the friction between Adams and Franklin with his quiet steady presence. Abigail Adams formed a friendship with Jefferson, and she considered Jefferson "one of the choice ones of the earth". The Adams moved to England in 1785 and Mrs. Adams missed Jefferson's company. She was a woman well educated in world affairs and letters between the two reflected this.

Jefferson missed his younger daughter Polly and had written his family in America several times requesting that she be sent to him in France. Polly Jefferson's 8-year-old daughter arrived in England with Sally Hemmings as her companion and attendant in June of 1787. Abigail was surprised as was Jefferson that a 14-year girl had been sent as the traveling companion. He had requested an older woman be sent as chaperone. Sally was the brother of James Heming, Jefferson's valet who had come over two years previously. Abigail mothered Polly for over two weeks until Jefferson sent a French servant to escort them both to Paris. Polly was immediately enrolled at the Convent school where her sister was also enrolled.

Jefferson had avoided becoming friendly with any females until 1786 when he met a British woman - Maria Cosway and became infatuated with her. Maria was a married woman. Her portrait in 1787 shows a gorgeous woman described by a contemporary as "*golden haired Anglo-Saxon graceful to affectation and highly accomplished in music*".

Looking at her portrait she was not only gorgeous but self-confident and accomplished in music and art. She was also deeply religious probably a result of when she was young a mad nurse killed three of her brothers and sister out of the six of them. The mad nurse thought she was dispatching the children to an early heavenly reward. They exchanged letters and took walks in various gardens together. Garden areas were considered at the time where a couple could be together with some privacy. Jefferson was also attracted to several other ladies and maintained a correspondence with them but there is no evidence that any of these relationships were carried further than letters and social interaction. It was obvious that Jefferson missed women a great deal but having made a death bed promise to his wife not to marry again he probably backed off from these relationships.

Meanwhile James and Sally Hemings were also enjoying France. Sally accompanied TJ's daughters to social events as a lady in waiting and learned French as she was tutored along with TJ's daughters in French. Sally also had a skill-sewing- and she received a salary for this while in France. TJ viewed sewing as one of the foundations of a woman's domestic life and advised his daughters that resort to the needle would be necessary for the smooth running of their households once they became married women providing vital services to their families even as it relieved their own ennui. I had to look up the definition of ennui and it is "*a feeling of listlessness and dissatisfaction arising from a lack of occupation or excitement*". Jefferson believed that sewing for women was even better than reading. Sally was paid at the highest rate of any French female servant. She was also TJ's chambermaid for his personal quarters. She began to be paid only in January of 1788. The author of **the Hemmings's of Monticello** - Annette Gordon-Reed suggests that being paid for her work would have been empowering to Sally to the point of considering herself a free person.

On a side note, there was no slavery in France apart from French colonies. If a French colonist brought any slaves to France to serve as a valet or chambermaid, they could petition the French court for their freedom. There were French attorneys that specialized in gaining freedom for slaves. James and Sally Hemings would know of this as there was a small black community in Paris of freed slaves and their progeny. James and Sally would have known that they did not have to return to America with Jefferson as this community of freed slaves would have informed them many times over the years of this option.

Annette Gordon-Reed goes into extensive detail of the wooing of Sally Hemings by Jefferson. He cites examples out of his carefully kept journals of clothing bought for Sally and the exact amounts almost as much money as he spent on his two daughters. He was by then paying her a regular salary for being his chambermaid. As a matter of course there would have been regular contact with each other as his chambermaid and therefore a familiarity with each other. There was also the matter of her smallpox vaccination by Dr. Sutton.

This is another side story about Jefferson. He was a firm believer in smallpox vaccinations. He was such a believer that he had all his slaves, his entire extended family and his neighbors in Virginia inoculated for smallpox. Smallpox was a dreaded disease in the 1700s. The fatality rate was almost 15% of those that contracted it. Even if you survived it the scars were horrific. For young women the scarring of your face meant that you may never be married because your beauty was irreparably damaged. Smallpox vaccinations had been around for centuries in other countries, but it was dangerous. It was initially done by taking a small amount of pus from a current victim and applying it in a small incision in a patient's skin. The patient would be sick for several weeks recovering from a mild case of smallpox. It was still dangerous with about a 2% fatality rate.

General Washington so believed in inoculations that in 1777 he ordered the Surgeon-General Dr. Shippen to inoculate his entire army. The Continental Congress had prohibited smallpox inoculations in 1776 so Washington lost his patience and ordered it done in 1777. In the winter camp in Valley Forge, he ordered all remaining soldiers to undergo inoculation. Historians have credited these decisions for saving the army and the revolution.

Dr. Daniel Sutton and his six sons in England had perfected the vaccination procedure around 1763 in England and called it the **Suttonian Method**. He had done extensive research by using patients to test various theories. His father Robert Sutton was the one that found that a tiny stab just through the skin with a sharp lancet was enough to cause a mild case of smallpox. They also took the live virus from an inoculated patient to reduce the severity of the disease. The Sutton family reduced the death rate to less than one percent. They established franchises in the US., Europe and England. They were expensive vaccinations for the upper class, but they inoculated poor people for no cost. Jefferson paid the Sutton's to come to Paris and inoculate Sally. The disadvantage of the vaccination was a mild case of smallpox which lasted for about two weeks. The Sutton's had developed a strict regimen for the recovering patient of certain foods, moderate exercise in fresh air and medicines for purging. The Sutton's had an inoculation house in the outskirts of Paris where Sally would have recovered.

We will go back to the story of TJ and Sally. The author *Annette Gordon-Reed* postulates several things about Jefferson and Sally. They were in close personal contact daily. By 1789 she was late 15 or early 16-year-old certainly in the full bloom of womanhood. Even though Jefferson had had several unconsummated interests in Maria Cosway and Angelica Church it was clear that he never took it any further than

flirtations. Jefferson near the end of his stay in France contrasted American Angels with European Amazons. Jefferson clearly preferred women that were very domestic who believed that her place was in the home. An American Angel let men take the lead and make important decisions affecting their lives. European Amazons were women who sought fulfillment outside the home challenging men in what was supposed to be a male domain. Remember that Sally Hemings was his wife's half sister and most likely bore a resemblance to her. She was also a very attractive, sweet natured sewing Virginia farm girl and described by contemporaries as "very light skinned, almost white with long black hair" and as "mighty good looking". Interracial sex was also a given in especially tidewater Virginia. Being the owner of slaves gave men the right to engage in sex with their female slaves. Their slaves had no right of consent. The inevitable result was children being born of these relationships. There was also a financial incentive for slave master's and their sons to engage in sex with their female slaves. A child born from this kind of relationship was obviously much lighter skinned and would have some European features and these children were classified as mulattoes – half white – half black. If one of these female mulattoes became pregnant by a white man that child was classified as a "quadroon"  $\frac{3}{4}$  white and  $\frac{1}{4}$  black. Sally Hemings was a quadroon. One step further and the child was classified as an "octoroon" –  $\frac{7}{8}$  white and  $\frac{1}{8}$  black.

These terms were used commonly in slave holding societies to classify mixed blood slaves. These slaves became much more valuable as it was felt that the infusion of white blood made them better looking and more intelligent. These folks were commonly used as house slaves and had better food, dress and lives than field slaves. Most of the men were taught trades such as blacksmith, carpenter and coopers or took care of carriages or horses. Women were taught to sew, weave, and

cook. They had much more “freedom” and many could read and write although it was illegal to teach slaves to be literate. Their speech was also like whites as they essentially grew up in white households. Many of these folks learned from the children of slave holders their ABCs. Because of their skills light skin and European looks they commanded much higher prices if they were sold.

Gordon-Reed calls the situation at Jefferson’s Hotel in France as incendiary as Sally was his wife’s half sister and most likely resembled her physically, and possibly in tone of voice. Sally and TJ also lived in close proximity on a daily basis. Since Sally had spent her childhood with Jefferson’s daughters her manner of speaking was probably similar. All the Hemings acquired from Jefferson’s father-in-law when he died were all house slaves for Jefferson and were several steps above field slaves. They did not work in the fields and Jefferson prohibited his overseers to punish them in any way. Jefferson had also been without the physical and emotional love of a women for about 7 years. All the above items conspired to push them closer together.

The inevitable happened and when the Jefferson’s and Hemings left for American in 1790 Sally was pregnant. There is extensive discussion that Sally, and James Hemings did not want to return to American as they could be free in France. Jefferson persuaded James Hemings that if he would train someone at Monticello as a chef, he would gain his freedom shortly thereafter. James Hemings agreed to this.

Several authors have hypothesized that knowing her brother was returning to America, knowing that she was pregnant with Jefferson’s child and that fact that she would have no family support if she stayed in France was able get a similar agreement that whatever children she had with Jefferson would be freed at 21 years of age. Sally Hemings would have also known that if she kept this relationship alive that her

future and her children's future was assured also. This in fact happened as two of Sally's surviving children were freed at or shortly after turning 21 by being allowed to "run-away" and the other two were freed in TJ's will. The fact that Jefferson had taken a mistress would have been no cause for comment from anybody including William Short TJ's secretary who himself was having affairs with two different married women during his time in Paris.

Interracial liaisons and sex were not uncommon in Tidewater Virginia. It was something that was gossiped about privately but not publicized. In the genteel society of Virginia situations such as this were politely ignored. An interesting fact was that all the female Hemings inherited from Jefferson's father-in-law John Wayles had long standing relationships with high status white males, workers, or married household servants from other plantations except one.

The baby that Sally was carrying died either at birth or shortly thereafter in 1790. Sally's next child Harriett was born on Oct. 5, 1795, and her last child was born on May 21, 1808. She had in all 7 children with Jefferson four of whom survived into adulthood.

Things went smoothly for TJ and Sally except for a man named James Callender. He was a newspaper man who had left Scotland to avoid an arrest for treason. He was a muckraking newsman and considered a despicable character and looked for salacious items to print on public men. Jefferson at first trusted him and fed him items confidentially but after he was arrested and convicted of sedition, he distanced himself from *Callender*. After he served a year in jail and his fine was paid by Jefferson and Jefferson pardoned him, he regained employment as a newspaper man. He had heard rumors of Jefferson's liaison with Sally Hemings and made inquiries after his release. He also demanded an appointment to Postmaster of Richmond as he believed that that would

be a reward for his journalistic services in support of Jefferson's election to the Presidency.

He was also adamantly opposed to miscegenation the sexual mixing of blacks and whites - a word not invented till the 1860s. He published an article in his newspaper stating on September 1, 1802, in the **Richmond Recorder** *"It is well known the man whom it delighteth the people to honor, keeps and for many years has kept, as his concubine one of his slaves. Her name is Sally. The name of her eldest son is Tom. His features are said to bear a striking though sable resemblance to those of the president himself..."* He continued to publish additional

information until he was found drowned in three feet of water in 1803. **James Akin** a political cartoonist published one of the most famous political drawings in the last several hundred years. It was a drawing of a male chicken with Jefferson's head and a smaller female chicken with Sally's darker head staring adoringly at Jefferson with a typical wrapped headdress that slaves wore. The drawing was titled **"A Philosophic Cock"**.

There is one detail of Callender's accusation that has historians still in discussion. Callender implied that this Tom was Jefferson's son and in fact a Tom Woodson did exist and supposedly after the scandal broke, he was sent to live with the Woodson family. A Woodson descendant Byron Woodson Sr wrote and had published a book titled *"A President in the Family"* in which he makes the claim that Tom Woodson was the Jefferson's first child that in fact survived and did not die. The only problem is the DNA testing done around 20 years ago accepts the fact that all the descendants of Sally Hemings are in fact descendants of a male Jefferson but not Tom Woodson

She lived at one of two rooms described as "servant's quarters" in the south wing of Monticello according to Monticello.org the outfit that



runs Monticello. This organization as well as another Jefferson historical organization have accepted the reality that all of Sally Hemings children had Thomas Jefferson as their father. Sally Hemings former quarters have been excavated and there is a display featuring Sally Hemings at Monticello. Jefferson had multiple entrances to his personal quarter both outside and inside Monticello. This would have been an acceptable situation in the Jefferson Monticello household as Martha (Patsy) Jefferson Randolph moved in with her 12 children and her husband Thomas Randolph after he her father left the presidency. Patsy did not have a happy marriage and even commented after her 9<sup>th</sup> child she expressed the hope that this would be her last. There was no birth control in these days and divorce was almost unheard of especially for prominent families. The eldest son Thomas Jefferson Randolph described his father as “more ferocious than the wolf and more fell than the hyena” Bacon – Jefferson’s overseer recalled an incident when the senior Randolph caned his adult son publicly. At some point in his life Jeff Randolph repudiated this accusation and attempted to rehabilitate his father as his father apparently apologized on his deathbed. Jefferson loved having his daughter and grandchildren close to him. Jefferson’s long-term relationship with Sally Hemings would have also been very acceptable to Patsy Jefferson Randolph as she would have been the undisputed mistress of the household. This was an important position for women of this era in the household of one of America’s most famous founders and former president. She would have lost this position if Jefferson would have remarried as any new wife would immediately assume this position. Sally Hemings and her children who were still slaves until freed by Jefferson were absolutely no threat to Patsy Randolph and were a guarantee that even though her marriage was unhappy, she could have fulfillment as the Mistress of Monticello.

Jefferson freed Beverly (his male son) and Harriet in 1822 just after Harriet's birthday. He set them free by giving them luggage, a horse and carriage and \$50 about \$1200 in today's dollars and allowing them to leave Monticello. He noted in his Farm Book that they had "*run-away*". He put out no alert on them. Remember they were 7/8s white and only 1/8 black so essentially were white and would have easily "passed for white" since they were dressed well and were literate. It is hypothesized by most historians that they would have married white and kept their history a secret. Their descendants are unknown today and they were lost to history. His two other surviving children were freed in his will when he died. Three of the remaining Hemings inherited from Wayles were freed by Jefferson also either formally or by giving them "their time". This was an informal system that slave owners would unofficially free long standing and loyal slaves. They would essentially go into retirement at the plantation they worked at and be cared for into old age. After Jefferson's death Madison, Easton and their mother Sally moved to Charlottesville, purchased a lot, and built a house. They both married local free women of color. Sometime in the late 1830s after their mother's death in 1835 they both moved to Ohio. Easton Hemings moved to Wisconsin in mid century and passed into the white world. Madison Hemings lived in Pike County Ohio and at the age of 68 gave a famous well documented interview to a reporter from **the Pike County Republican** published on March 13, 1873. Madison was named Madison after a request from James Madison's wife when Sally Hemings was pregnant with Madison.

He gives a detailed description of his life at Monticello and a very favorable insight of his father Thomas Jefferson. He described TJs temperament as "*smooth and even*" and that he was uniformly kind to all about him. He advised the TJ spent most of his time in his office, reading, writing, and engaged in correspondence. He advised the TJ

has "***hale and hearty***" and walked erect at 83 with a stately tread. He tells the story of his marriage to Mary McCoy and her family. Her grandmother was a slave and lived with her master Stephen Hughes as his wife. She was manumitted by him which made all her children free. This is another example of the number of white men that had a black woman as a "significant other" as we call it today and produced children with them. This was especially common when older white men became widowers and were considered too old to marry again. Typically, these men were not high-status men as high-status men were always marriageable even into their 50s, 60s and 70s. You see that today with actors and high-status political figures with much younger wives.

Now that we know the story of Jefferson's two families let's closely examine the controversy then and now. When Callender broke the story in his newspaper other papers picked up the story especially Federalist newspapers. Remember that Jefferson served as the third President of the United States from 1801-1809 and the expose published by Callender was published in September 1802 early in TJ's Presidency. Callender was relentless in his attacks and anytime he picked up another tidbit thought to be from TJ's neighbors he would publish again. Callender stated that he would be willing to meet the President in a court of justice with a dozen witnesses "***as to the black wench and her mulatto litter***". The *Frederick Town Herald* was shocked "***that such a man should have lived in the habitual violation of the seventh commandment with one of his own slaves!***" This newspaper must have forgotten that Jefferson's wife had died some 20 years ago. The *Virginia Gazette* scolded Jefferson on November 3, 1802, that his daughters "***had the mortification to see illegitimate mulatto sisters and brothers, enjoying the same privileges of parental affection with themselves***" and "***Why have you not married some***

***worthy women of your own complexion***". The fact was that Jefferson never showed any affection to his children by Sally as he knew that this would be a problem. These affairs were generally ignored by Southerners if fathers kept quiet about them and did not indicate in any way these children were his offspring.

There were ballads written about his affair one of them appearing in the *Philadelphia Port Folio* of October 2, 1802, that truly displays the vitriolic nature of this situation. If I can do it justice, it is to the tune of Yankee Doodle.

Of all the damsels on the green  
On mountain, or in valley  
A lass so luscious ne'er was seen,  
As Monticellian Sally

Yankee doodle, who's the noodle?  
What wife were half so handy?  
To breed a flock of slaves for stock"  
A blackamoor's the dandy

Search every town and city through  
Search market, street, and alley  
No dame at dusk shall meet your view  
So, yielding as my Sally

When press'd by loads of state affairs  
I seek to sport and dally  
The sweetest solace of my cares  
Is in the lap of Sally

Yet Yankee parsons preach their worst  
Let Tory Whittling's rally!  
You men of morals and be curst,  
You would snap like sharks for Sally

She's black you tell me- grant that she be-  
Must colour always tally  
Black is love's proper hue for me  
And whites the hue for Sally

What though she by the glands secretes.  
Must I stand shil -I- shall-I  
Tuck'd up between a pair of sheets  
There's no perfume like Sally

You call her slave – and pray were slaves  
Made only for the galley?

Try for yourselves, ye witless knaves

Take each to bed your Sally.

Yankee Doodle, who's the noodle?

Wines vapid, tope me brandy

For still I find to breed my kind

A negro-wench the dandy

Boston and Philadelphia papers depicted TJs daughters as "***weeping to see a negress installed in the place of their mother***" There were numerous ballads, poems and other materials appearing various newspapers and pamphlets on TJ and Sally.

There was some defense of Jefferson by other newspapers such as the *New York Evening Post* who attacked Callender as "*a reptile, treacherous and deceitful*".

How did Jefferson deal with this public attacks? He dealt with it as modern politicians deal with accusations. He never in his lifetime "*confirmed or denied*" these attacks. This was also an era that reporters did not question public figures. This was also an era that many folks were not literate, and newspapers had very small circulations. Not content with attacking Jefferson Callender began throwing brickbats at other former benefactors notably George Hay who had been Callender's defense attorney at his sedition trial. He accused Hay who was the son in law of James Monroe of withholding evidence in a local court case. Hay armed himself with a cudgel, followed Callender into a store in Richmond and beat him about the head and shoulders leaving him with serious injuries with Callender claiming he "*lost four pounds of blood*". This was a form of caning

where the person doing the caning was the aggrieved party. There was a famous example of this caning when in 1856 Southern Congressman Brooks caned Northern Senator Sumner for a two-day speech he gave regarding slavery in Kansas. He was caned during a session of the Senate and almost died as a result of this caning. It was also a less lethal way to maintain your honor instead of challenging someone to a duel.

Beating up editors was commonplace in this time and the practice was rarely penalized. Hay was given a vote of thanks by 15 members of the Virginia Legislature for beating Callender. Callender denounced Hay in his newspaper as an assassin and murderer. Hay in turn took Callender to court and the judge ordered both parties to pay \$500 as security to not attack each other. Callender refused to pay and was sent to jail where he continued to write articles for his newspaper. The attacks on Jefferson mostly ceased when the prime generator of these attacks was found drowned in three feet of water on July 17, 1803. He was known to be a heavy drinker.

The scurrilous campaign by Callender had no effect on the presidential election and TJ was elected by a landslide in 1804. The electoral college elected him by a vote of 162 to 14 for his 2<sup>nd</sup> term.

This controversy continued for the next two hundred years but at a relatively low level. Jefferson's legal white family continually denied the Jefferson Hemings relationship throughout the 1800s and 1900s.

The modern-day controversy started when Fawn Brodie's 594-page book was published in 1974; **Thomas Jefferson – An Intimate History**. Fawn Brodie was a well-known historian and was the first tenured female professor at UCLA. She lived from 1915 to 1981 and prior to writing the Jefferson Biography she had written three previous biographies on Sir Richard Burton, Thaddeus Stevens and Joseph Smith

the Mormon Prophet. She herself was born a Mormon. Her maternal grandfather was president of Brigham Young University. I am going to give you her full biography as she was a remarkable, brilliant historian.

Her 1974 book on Jefferson was a best-selling book and was the first modern examination of evidence that Jefferson had an extensive intimate relationship with Sally Hemings and had fathered children with her. Her book was extensively researched and had over 1500 footnotes. Her Index was 23 pages of small type. Fawn Brodie was a precocious child. She memorized and recited lengthy poems at age 3. Her mother home schooled her older sister and Fawn listened in so at age 6 she advanced to the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. At 14 when she graduated from High School, she was the salutatorian. She was teaching English at her college at age 19. After she received her master's degree at the University of Chicago, she privately lost her faith in Mormonism. After she published her book on Joseph Smith "*No man knows my history*" which was a very unflattering book on Smith she was excommunicated by the Mormon Church. She published two other biographies the second on Sir Richard Burton a noted British explorer and soldier which was a critical success.

She became a full professor of History at UCLA and as one of her courses she taught was the U. S. from 1800 to 1830, Jefferson was a natural subject. She understood that she could not compete with **Dumas Malone** who was completing a 6-volume work on Jefferson, so she decided to concentrate on the "private man". Malone had relied on the Jefferson family oral history that two Randolph grandchildren had named his Carr nephews as the father of Hemings children. Malone and another Jefferson biographer **Merrill Peterson** discounted the oral history of the Hemings descendants. She used Malone's extensive documentation of Jefferson's stays at Monticello to prove that Hemings never conceived children when Jefferson was **not** at



Monticello. This was during the time that Jefferson was away from his beloved home for months at a time.

Prior to publishing in 1971 she presented a summary of her arguments to the *Organization of American Historians* which is the largest professional society dedicated to the teaching and study of American History. She also published an article in the *American Heritage* magazine a magazine dedicated to publishing American History titled “*The Great Jefferson Taboo*” about her conclusion that the Jefferson Hemings relationship existed. In a change from the magazine’s usual practices, they published all her footnotes to show the sources of her conclusions. These are essentially peer reviews which is exposing your work to other experts. When she finally published in 1974 her book on Jefferson was the spring selection of the *Book of the month* club. She was interviewed on the **Today Show** and the book was an immediate commercial success. It was on the N. Y. Times bestseller list for 13 weeks and sold a total of 350,000 copies netting her royalties of \$350,000 adjusting for inflation around 1Million dollars in today’s money.

In 1997 Annette Gordon-Reed an African American female, graduate of Harvard, an attorney and a professor of law and history at New York Law School and Rutgers University published a book **Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings an American Controversy**. which further cemented the Jefferson Hemings relationship. She noted the bias of the Jefferson historians in accepting the oral histories of the Jefferson family while ignoring the oral histories of the Hemings family. She also noted the **Malone** data that Jefferson was at Monticello during the conception period for each of Sally’s children. Annette Gordon-Reed published another book in 2008 **The Hemings’s of Monticello which** at 802 pages is the longest book published on this issue.

She won the National Book Award and a Pulitzer Prize in history for this work. She had over 1150 extensive footnotes which took up 67 pages and another 61 pages of bibliography and index all in very small lettering. In all the other works I read on this subject Fawn Brodie and Annette Gordon-Reed were the most extensively quoted authors.

To attempt to resolve this controversy in November 1998 14 DNA tests were conducted with male descendants of Jefferson as well as additional testing of descendants of Jefferson's male neighbors.

Testing was also done with descendants of Thomas Woodson – the alleged first child of Jefferson with Sally. There was a DNA match with the Easton Hemings descendants but not with the Thomas Woodson descendant. Dr. Foster who conducted the testing concluded that any one of 8 Jefferson's either Thomas, his brother Randolph or his five sons and a Cousin George could have been the father of Hemings children. The historical evidence going back to who was in residence at the time of Sally's conceptions indicates Thomas Jefferson as the father. He was always in residence during the times that Sally would have conceived. The other 7 Jefferson's were not. Remember that that the historical evidence is substantial as historians have access to 19,000 letters that Jefferson wrote to his friends and associates in which he made a copy of every letter he wrote. How did he make these copies? Two Englishmen Hawkins and Peale invented a machine called a Patent Polygraph #57 – not the machine of today that detects if you are telling the truth or not. This was a complicated machine that had two separate ink pens connected by a system of levers, springs and joints. The user used one to write on a piece of paper and the other ink pen which was immediately next to the writer would exactly duplicate the handwriting on a separate sheet of paper. When you dipped your pen in your inkwell the other pen would duplicate your motion and dip the other pen in the inkwell also. It took years to perfect this device and as

the inventors improved it Jefferson would buy the new one owning 12 of these devices in his lifetime starting in 1806.

In January 2000 a 9-member research committee commissioned by the Thomas Jefferson Foundation which operates Monticello concluded in part with several points: 1. That *“Dr. Foster’s DNA study was conducted in the manner that meets the standards of the scientific community, and its scientific results are valid”*. 2. That there was *“...probability a high that Thomas Jefferson fathered Easton Hemings and that he most likely was the father of all six Hemings children appearing in Monticello records...”* – **Jefferson’s famous “Farm Book”**. A moment here to talk about his Farm Book. Jefferson’s Farm Book was an extensive written documentation of everything that happened on his plantations; slaves born and died, all vegetables planted and when they sprouted, a complete inventory of all domestic animals, what date flowers bloomed, fruit trees planted, the weather, fish planted in his ponds, rations and bedding issued to individual slaves etc. etc. In 1781 he had extensive documentation of his material losses to the British down to farm animals, barrels of corn, bushels of wheat etc. and his slave losses where they fled to the British, joined, died or returned. **Back to the story**. There were two more minor points having to do with Thomas Woodson and that further research should be explored on Hemings and Jefferson. Since 2018 exhibits and tour commentary have been revised to reflect Jefferson’s paternity of all Hemings children with a display of Sally Hemings shown as a shadow as there is no portrait or drawing of her. Most academics have agreed with this consensus. There is a competing organization that carries a lot of weight – The Monticello Association founded in 1913. This organization owns and operates the graveyard on Monticello grounds. If you are a lineal descendant of Thomas Jefferson, you can be buried in this graveyard. Dues are \$40 per year.

After the DNA study was made public a member of this association Lucian Truscott met with Gordon-Reed and some of the Hemings on the Oprah Winfrey Show and he invited them to the annual meeting of the Monticello Assoc. The president of the association did not allow a vote regarding allowing the Hemings family to be honorary members of the Association. They did vote to allow additional studies on the question.

In the fall of 2001, the *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* reported that the weight of historical evidence and the DNA study were sufficient to conclude that Jefferson had a long relationship with Hemings and fathered all her children. The National Genealogical Society was founded in 1903 and is the gold standard of genealogical research.

The newly formed Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society in 2000 got the job from the Monticello Association to examine if in fact Thomas Jefferson fathered Sally Hemings children. This society was formed specifically to dispute the growing historical consensus that Jefferson fathered Hemings children. This society accuses the Monticello Foundation of bowing to political correctness and is opposed to the Hemings displays at Monticello. They commissioned a "Scholar's Commission" to investigate the Jefferson Hemings connection and this commission decided that there was no connection between Hemings and Jefferson.

A past president of the Monticello Association John Works Jr and current member of the Heritage Society stated in a written memo on 5/30/2002; *"Those who want to bulldoze a kinship where none was likely to exist are the real liars, frauds, and hypocrites"*. He later sent a letter of apology on April 7, 2003, to Truscott although Works called Truscott misguided in his letter. Truscott responded in two weeks with his own bristly two-page letter to Works chastising him for the

Monticello Associations attempt to exclude Hemings from their annual meeting by a new rule limiting the number of guests at the annual dinner – meaning Hemings family members – and to hold these guests at the door until vouched for by the actual member – was clearly an attempt to reduce the amount of Hemings attending. Works was also chastised by Truscott from banning all guests on Sunday from the graveyard – another new rule.

Works responded with his own three-page letter in a week complaining that the Hemings in last years meeting had claimed to the Press outside the meeting that that the Scholars Commission was funded by the Klan and that the meeting had been secretly tape recorded. He further implied that this behavior had damaged any future attempts to admit the Hemings family to the Association. This was answered by a short letter from Truscott saying essentially that Works and his friends had taken over the organization and they were going to “*do whatever they want to do from here on out*”.

The controversy continues today but a very low ebb and without the vitriolic debate which I enumerated above. In researching the web, I found an interview done by CBS news on February 14, 2019 (Presidents Day) in which the correspondent is interviewing Lucian Truscott the white Jefferson 6<sup>th</sup> great grandson in the company of a Hemings cousin Shannon Lanier another 6<sup>th</sup> great grandson of Jefferson. It was a well-done interview done at Monticello and showing many views of Monticello as well as a picture of them in front of Jefferson’s monument in the cemetery. Lucian is still the prime defender of the right of the Hemings family to be granted burial rights in the Jefferson cemetery but the Monticello Association who owns the cemetery has not budged on that issue.

When Jefferson died in 1826, he wrote his own epitaph. Unfortunately for his slaves Jefferson had a huge debt of \$107,000 which is the equivalent of \$2M in today's dollars. He loved good food and only the best French wines. His wine bill during the time he was president was equivalent to \$150,000 in today's dollars. His grandson a Randolph was forced to sell Monticello, all the furnishings and all his slaves except 7 from the Hemings family which were freed in his will. Sally was not freed by his will but was "given her time" by Patsy Jefferson and lived out her life till 1835 in Charlottesville with two of her adult children.

The interesting part of Jefferson - who was the original writer of the Declaration of Independence - was a lengthy paragraph in the original draft which Jefferson in part says when referring to the King of England: *"He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the person of a distant people who never offended him captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither"*. He goes on to say more about the abomination of slavery, but this passage was too controversial for the other founders, many of them slaveholders so it was stricken from the completed version of our Declaration. He was one of our greatest founders and President but also a very complicated man. In all the literature I have read in researching this speech he is always treated with great respect by his biographers. In the end result he was a man who needed the companionship of a woman after his wife died and fortunately found one at his beloved Monticello.

Tom Bowen

7112 Crown Oaks Dr.

Spring Hill, Fl. 34606

[capttcb@windstream.net](mailto:capttcb@windstream.net) 440-387-8733

Books and other materials read and researched for this speech.

The Garden and Farm Books – Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson – An Intimate History by Fawn Brodie

The Hemingses of Monticello – An American Family by Annette Gordon Reed. New York Times Bestseller, Winner of the Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award Winner.

Sally Hemings – An American Scandal by Tina Andrews

The Paris Years of Thomas Jefferson by William Howard Adams

Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings – An American Controversy by Annett Gordon-Reed

Sally Hemings: An American Scandal – A TV miniseries -CBS

Jefferson in Paris – A film

Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings – Monticello.org

Oprah Winfrey Show 1998

CBS News This Morning in their series “A More Perfect Union”

CBS Sunday Morning “the Duality of Thomas Jefferson”

