

THE PUBLICATION OF JAMES MADISON'S MONTPELIER

PEOPLE

WE
THE

FALL 2025



James Madison's
MONTPELIER



OUT OF THE ASHES
AND INTO CALM P.8

RESTORING
THE TEMPLE P.5

WE'RE BACK—AND READY TO INSPIRE!

The Montpelier Team is thrilled to reintroduce *We the People*, Montpelier's signature magazine celebrating James Madison's life, legacy, and enduring influence. Through vivid storytelling and engaging features, the magazine offers a behind-the-scenes look at the people, projects, and ideas that bring Montpelier's mission to life. With each turn of the page, you will discover Montpelier's most inspiring moments—where history comes alive, curiosity is nurtured, and connections across generations take root.

Every issue will bring you stories that explore the full richness of Montpelier's history—from the Madisons' lives and leadership, to the experiences of the Enslaved Community who shaped daily life here, to the ideas of the U.S. Constitution that continue to guide our democracy. Through thought-provoking tours and engaging lectures to lively discussions and immersive experiences, Montpelier invites you to discover history in a way that is personal and meaningful.

We the People is more than a magazine—it's a window into Montpelier's mission: to illuminate history, spark purposeful dialogue, and connect the past to the questions and challenges of today. Every page reflects our commitment to sharing a complete and compelling story that inspires reflection, learning, and action.

We hope this issue excites your imagination, deepens your connection to Montpelier, and reminds us why James Madison's vision continues to resonate. Thank you for joining us on this journey and for supporting Montpelier's work to preserve, interpret, and share this extraordinary place for future generations.

Sincerely,



Krista Costello
Acting President and CEO
The Montpelier Foundation

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MONTPELIER ON TV!



LIGHTS, CAMERA, CONSTITUTION!

James Madison's Montpelier is coming to public television and primetime. Earlier this year, our team received an exclusive invitation from educational content creator *Empowered with Meg Ryan* to highlight Montpelier's role as a historic site and a modern forum for civic dialogue. The result: a short-form educational segment that offers a compelling look at the birthplace of American democracy—airing this fall!

After months of planning, the *Empowered* production crew filmed on site this summer, capturing dynamic footage of the historic House, beautifully maintained grounds, and surrounding landscapes. The finished piece will draw viewers into Montpelier's unique atmosphere, pairing vivid visuals with a powerful exploration of how America's founding principles continue to shape civic life today. Viewers will gain insight into how James Madison's meticulous study of political thought led to the creation of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Montpelier is honored to be featured by such a celebrated program as *Empowered with Meg Ryan* in sharing the enduring influence of James Madison and the U.S. Constitution. Over the next year, audiences across the nation can tune in to see this compelling story come to life—an invitation to reflect on our shared history, deepen our understanding, and take part in shaping the future of our representative government.



RESTORING THE TEMPLE

AN ICON OF LIBERTY FOR THE 250TH

The Montpelier Foundation is honored to announce that we have been awarded a \$552,204 grant from the Department of the Interior to restore Madison's iconic Temple. Preservation efforts for this treasured landmark began in 2015 with the generous support of Forrest E. Mars, Jr. As we look ahead to America's 250th anniversary in 2026, this grant ensures that we can restore and preserve one of our nation's most cherished symbols.

Dating to around 1810–1811, when James Madison was serving his first term as President

of the United States, the Temple has stood for more than two centuries. It is one of only two surviving structures at Montpelier dating back to Madison's lifetime. In the years ahead, preservation work will focus on stabilizing and restoring the Temple, reopening the original below-grade icehouse entrance, and creating ADA-compliant visitor pathways to expand access for all.

Stay tuned for updates on the Temple's restoration, as well as upcoming America 250 programs and events.



We extend our sincere gratitude to Hantzmon Wiebel for almost 20 years of distinguished service to The Montpelier Foundation and for their vital role in the return of *We the People*.

Celebrating 25 Years of Co-Stewardship

AT JAMES MADISON'S MONTPELIER

This year marks a milestone in the preservation and interpretation of one of America's most significant historic sites—the 25th anniversary of the co-stewardship agreement between the National Trust for Historic Preservation (Trust) and The Montpelier Foundation (Foundation). Under this agreement, the Trust transferred management of the Montpelier historic site to the Foundation, while retaining ownership and oversight of the site. With the Trust's support, the Foundation was established in 1998 as an independent nonprofit for the express purpose of preserving and managing Montpelier.

Since assuming management in 2000, the Foundation has transformed Montpelier into a dynamic memorial to James and Dolley Madison and the enslaved people who lived and labored here. From the outset, education on Madison's life and legacy—particularly his role as Father of the U.S. Constitution and Architect of the Bill of Rights—was central to the Foundation's mission. As extensive archaeological and historical research unfolded, the Foundation also became a leading voice in telling the full story of slavery in early America.

Over the past quarter-century, this commitment has produced remarkable achievements:

- **Preservation Excellence:** Restoration of the Madison-era Mansion and extensive archaeological work to uncover the stories of Montpelier's 2,650 acres.
- **Program Innovation:** Creation of exhibitions and events connecting Montpelier's history to modern conversations on democracy, leadership, and civic responsibility.
- **Educational Impact:** Establishment of the Robert H. Smith Center for the Constitution to host programs for students, educators, and scholars nationwide and from over 100 countries.
- **Inclusive Interpretation:** Telling the stories of Montpelier's Enslaved Community through award-winning initiatives such as *The Mere Distinction of Colour* and the reconstruction of enslaved housing near the Madisons' home.

As we celebrate this silver anniversary, we honor the vision of the Foundation and the Trust—and the countless staff, volunteers, donors, and community members who have shaped Montpelier's story. Together, we have shown that collaboration can preserve history, inspire dialogue, and deepen our shared understanding of the American experience.





Out of the Ashes and into CALM



Fire can be devastating. President James Madison and First Lady Dolley Madison experienced this firsthand: during their term, British troops set fire to the White House on August 24, 1814. While the Madisons survived, the event became a powerful symbol of the fragility of America's heritage and ushered in a period of mourning and rebuilding.

Fire destroys, but from the ashes can emerge hope, renewed energy, and focus. We experienced this at Montpelier when, in 2024, a fire destroyed the Archaeology Lab.

In that moment of loss, our sorrows and needs were met with an extraordinary outpouring of community support. From the destruction, new possibilities arose, culminating in CALM—the Community Archaeology Lab at Montpelier. The lab's name is a fitting acronym, reflecting both the community that rallied around us and the resilience that carried us forward from the ashes.

WHAT HAPPENED?

On the evening of April 8th, 2024, an electrical fire broke out in the archaeology offices, quickly spreading to the adjacent Archaeology Lab. Over 30 firefighters were on the scene for over four hours, working diligently to put out the blaze.

The lab housed over 200 archival boxes filled with archaeological artifacts. Thanks to the diligence and generosity of the firefighters, who stayed to help our Director of Archaeology and Landscape Restoration, Dr. Matthew Reeves, remove the collections, only 14 boxes suffered severe damage. Nearly every other box was soaked with water and covered in substantial soot, yet the quick response preserved the majority of our invaluable collection.



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RECOVERY:

After the fire was extinguished, our team worked tirelessly, suited in protective gear and respirators, to carry boxes of artifacts, paperwork, and samples out of the damaged lab. The most urgent priority was stabilizing the burned files, which were at the greatest risk of rapid deterioration. Fortunately, a 2019 Institute of Museum and Library Services grant had enabled us to digitize much of the material that was physically lost, ensuring that critical records and research were preserved despite the fire.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT:

We would not have remained standing, emotionally or physically, without the incredible outpouring of support from our archaeological colleagues, coworkers, volunteers, and the networks of friends and family who rallied around us after the fire.

From this moment of devastation came hope and concrete assistance. The Maryland Archaeological and Conservation Laboratory in Southern Maryland immediately helped conserve 14 boxes of damaged ceramics. Generous donors contributed over \$60,000, enabling us to replace lost supplies and begin fundraising for a new lab in a duPont-era building just across from Montpelier's entrance, laying the foundation for a stronger, more resilient Archaeology Lab.



MOVEMENT TO CALM:

We identified a structure on the property along Route 20, the major road to Montpelier, as an alternative home for the Archaeology Department. This historic structure, built during the duPont ownership, served as the Montpelier Supply Store and a former Esso gas station. It was later used as the Montpelier gift shop once the property was bequeathed to the Trust, but had mostly fallen out of use by the time of the fire.

During the duPont era, this space served as a hub and meeting space for the local community, including many duPont employees whose families still reside in the area. Interviews with local community members reveal childhood memories of bike rides to the store to purchase candy, conversations on the front porch and around the radiators, and its role as an affirming fixture within the community.

Its strategic location, strong structural integrity, and deep ties to community memory made this building the perfect candidate for our new archaeological home. We want to continue the community focus of our archaeological work and the Montpelier Supply Store, combining the two to create a new archaeology lab we will refer to as CALM: The Community Archaeology Lab at Montpelier.



COMMUNITY SUPPORT/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

With its prominent location on Route 20, the new Community Archaeology Lab at Montpelier is designed to be more accessible than ever. Our goal is to welcome neighbors, expedition participants, volunteers, and members of the descendant community back to Montpelier to continue the collaborative archaeological work that began over two decades ago.

Following months of renovations, CALM now offers a bright, inviting space for research and engagement. Large windows flood the main lab area with natural light, upstairs offices provide ample room for our entire team, and a spacious basement ensures plenty of storage for our growing collections.

CALM is more than a lab, it is a place filled with light and promise. Here, histories are uncovered, stories are shared, and connections are deepened through archaeology. It stands as a testament to the power of community relationships and the shared commitment to preserving and understanding our past. As we look toward 2026 and the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding, this story of destruction, rebirth, and unity reminds us that we do our best when we work together.





CONSTITUTION CORNER

The Robert H. Smith Center for the Constitution has had a remarkable summer of education and global engagement! The Center welcomed 112 educators from 19 states and Washington, D.C., for four immersive seminars on Reconstruction & Reaction, the Constitutional Convention, the Early Presidency, and the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Amendments. One participant, Kentucky teacher Debbie Napier, captured the spirit of the experience:

“What teacher wakes up on a Saturday morning wanting the hours to pass quickly until school begins on Monday morning – a teacher who just spent three days studying at Montpelier, the home of James Madison.”

The Center also expanded its reach with two Constitutional Foundations of Law Enforcement programs, including an inaugural seminar for Prince William County Police Academy graduates. Their visit underscored the enduring importance of the Constitution and Bill of Rights in the work they are sworn to uphold.



Our international engagement was equally robust. We hosted 20 judges from Ukraine, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, Vietnam, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Malawi. In May, the U.S. Department of State’s International Visitors Leadership Program brought a delegation from Iraq, and in June, the Center led an immersive constitution-building simulation for 23 Fellows from Sub-Saharan Africa.



SCAN QR CODE TO SUPPORT CONSTITUTIONAL EDUCATION

CONSIDER THE CONSTITUTION: A PODCAST FOR THE PEOPLE

Consider the Constitution, produced by the Robert H. Smith Center for the Constitution at James Madison’s Montpelier, is a unique podcast designed for everyone. Hosted by Dr. Katie Crawford Lackey, the show breaks down complex constitutional issues into clear, easy-to-understand conversations. Featuring interviews with constitutional scholars, policy experts, heritage professionals, and legal practitioners, it connects America’s founding principles to today’s challenges and debates. Whether you’re a student, educator, or curious citizen, this podcast invites you to explore how the Constitution continues to shape our lives and democracy.



SCAN QR CODE TO FOLLOW THE PODCAST





THE SOUTH YARD KITCHEN

In April 2025, James Madison's Montpelier celebrated the opening of the Kitchen, the final reconstructed building in the South Yard Complex. Begun in 2015 and supported by a generous gift from philanthropist David Rubenstein, this milestone completes a years-long effort to authentically rebuild the spaces where enslaved families lived and worked, offering visitors a powerful window into the daily realities of life at Montpelier.

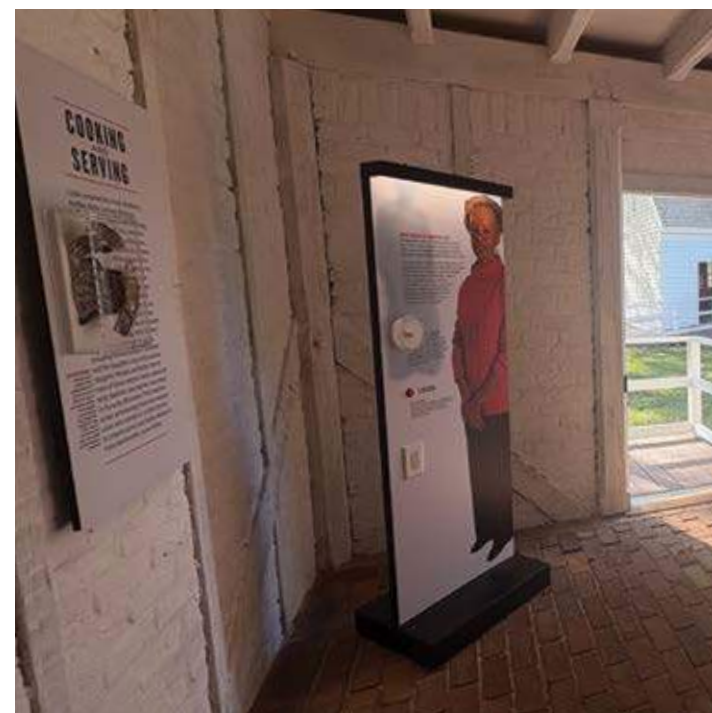
Archaeological, documentary, and architectural evidence indicate that the original structure was built as early as the 1750s as a "Planter's Cottage." At that time, it housed James Madison's parents and the young Madison himself while the main House—today known as Montpelier—was under construction. By the 1810s, the building had been remodeled into a working kitchen, where enslaved cooks labored to prepare meals for the Madison household.

Come visit Montpelier to learn more!

Top: View of the South Yard from the back lawn and the Kitchen on the far right.

Middle: Interior of the Kitchen looking toward the hearth.

Bottom: Interior of the Kitchen showing the exhibition panels.



IN FOCUS: MEETING THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Montpelier's Education and Visitor Engagement Department is dedicated to helping visitors make meaningful connections between the history of Montpelier and their own lives and experiences. With a team of 20 Historical Interpreters, along with a staff who design and support programs, the department brings Montpelier's stories to life through House and landscape tours, special events, and hands-on learning opportunities for students. One interpreter shared that his hope is to inspire guests to "dig deeper... and better understand the complex truth about Madison, the lives of the enslaved, and even our national heritage."

Montpelier is unique among historic sites—one is hard-pressed to find another site that highlights such a wide expanse of our nation's history. From Colonial America through the Revolution, the Early Republic, the Civil War, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow, our work peels back the layers of the American story, inviting visitors to reflect on the complexities of the past and the ways it continues to inform our democracy today.

Staff prepared for receiving arrivals in the House for the Constitution Day Celebration Open House.



STAFF SPOTLIGHT

As we reflect on 25 years of co-stewardship with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, one staff member has seen it all! Montpelier's very own Dr. Matthew Reeves has had a monumental impact on Montpelier as a historic home, site, and institution. As the Foundation's longest-standing employee, who has seen the property through restoration, reconstructions, expansion, and everything in between, we would like to honor his time spent making Montpelier what it is today and highlight all he has accomplished in 25 years of archaeological research at Montpelier.

Matt attended Syracuse University for graduate school, conducting his dissertation research in a rural Jamaican community, which sparked his interest and passion for community-based archaeology. Matt completed his Ph.D. in 1997 and, after working in the Mid-Atlantic for a few years, took on the role of Director of Archaeology and Landscape Restoration at Montpelier in 2000. Over the years, Matt has aided in the restoration of the main House and worked on every archaeological site excavated on the property from Mount Pleasant, the South Yard, the Ice House & Temple, and so much more. He formed public expedition programs and has partnered with countless community organizations since then to bring archaeological research to the

Top: Matt with restoration Masons Wayne Mayze and Jimmy Price looking at compass bricks recovered from the front portico around 2004.

Bottom: Matt, in red flannel, on a dig around 2000.

forefront of public, community, and descendant engagement at Montpelier.

Over the course of his 25 years at Montpelier, Matt is most proud of forging enduring relationships with the Montpelier descendant community. In 2001, he worked alongside descendants of the Gilmore family to excavate their family cabin and homestead, laying the groundwork for reunions, expeditions, and collaborations that continue today.

To know Matt is to know his enthusiasm and passion for sharing archaeological knowledge with the community. He can be seen riding his bike or Jeep around the property at any given time, wide-brimmed hat and sunny demeanor in tow. We are looking forward to the next 25 years of archaeology with Matt at the helm!



MEMORIALIZATION

In 2022, Montpelier received a \$5.8M Mellon Foundation grant to build a memorial to those who were enslaved at Montpelier. Since June, the Montpelier Memorialization Project has made significant progress toward honoring the lives and legacies of the Enslaved Community at Montpelier.

Earlier this year, The Montpelier Foundation and the Montpelier Descendants Committee (MDC) hosted a public design competition, ultimately selecting Studio Zewde, a nationally recognized landscape architecture firm based in New York City, to design the memorial.

The Memorialization Committee meets bi-weekly with Studio Zewde to refine the concept for the Memorial at the Burial Ground of the Enslaved, ensuring it reflects historical truth, cultural significance, and community priorities. Community engagement is at the heart of this work. A workshop on August 8 brought together descendants, The Montpelier

Foundation staff, and stakeholders for meaningful dialogue on design, interpretation, and visitor experience.

Archaeological investigations and site analysis are also guiding the design process, ensuring that the memorial honors both the physical landscape and the historical narratives it represents. The project is on track for the next phase of design development, with The Montpelier Foundation, MDC, and Studio Zewde working collaboratively to meet the Mellon Foundation's goal of completion in 2027. This memorial will serve as a powerful space for remembrance, reflection, and education.



Top: Montpelier Burial Ground of the Enslaved

Bottom: Henry Anglin, Larry Walker, Nick Gray, Curry Hackett, and George Monroe, Jr.; Front row - Joann Brock, Jessica Lock, Pandora Johnson, Malaika Temba, Allison James, and Madlynn Anglin

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

Thanks to a \$2.5M grant from Lilly Endowment Inc., Montpelier has embarked on a five-year project to create an innovative exhibition titled *James Madison and Freedom of Conscience*. This exhibition, slated to open in 2028, will explore how Madison's vision of religious liberty shaped the nation and continues to resonate today.

In the first year, the project will lay a strong foundation through research. A major milestone will take place in October 2025, when six leading scholars of American religious and constitutional history convene at Montpelier. Their dialogue will bring historical expertise and lived experience together in shaping the exhibition's direction, ensuring that it is grounded in the best scholarship while reflecting a wide range of voices.

This approach underscores Montpelier's commitment to both development of knowledge and public engagement. By combining rigorous research with inclusive collaboration, the exhibition highlights Madison's pivotal role in advancing religious liberty and invites visitors to reflect on the continuing importance of freedom of conscience in American life.

A CONSTITUTIONAL LIFE

If you visited Montpelier between 2004 and 2012, you may remember an exhibition called *James Madison: A Constitutional Life in Six Phases*. In honor of America 250, this visitor favorite is returning—reimagined for a new generation.

It's no simple task to re-constitute an exhibition (pun intended). In this case, many of the original panels had been repurposed for Montpelier's *War of 1812* exhibition. Additionally, the designer's early-2000s computer files were inaccessible (floppy disks, anyone?). The text needed fresh edits to reflect current scholarship. Even the images of James and Dolley Madison, which were privately owned in 2004, have since entered Montpelier's collection—opening the door to updated photographs and captions. Despite these challenges, Montpelier's team embraced the opportunity to preserve and refresh an important interpretation of Madison's life. Thanks to perseverance—and a generous gift from Joe Grills—*A Constitutional Life* will once again engage visitors with Madison's extraordinary contributions to the founding of the nation.



Announcement from The Montpelier Foundation 2004 Annual Report for the exhibition opening.

GOINGS ON

Member Corner

We love our Members! Whether you are an Individual member or part of the Madison Cabinet, your support keeps Montpelier's mission alive. Since 2000, the Foundation has relied on you, and we are expanding our membership benefits across all levels by launching new events, engagement opportunities, and programs.

Join us on December 5th, 4-8 PM, for our first-ever Winter Market & Member Evening in the David M. Rubenstein Visitor Center. Come experience candlelight tours of the House, arts and crafts vendors, food trucks, mulled wine and hot cider, live 18th century music by Ampersand, chocolate tastings, and kids' activities, and take your picture in front of our winter fireplace backdrop in the Grand Salon. Open to the public, Members free.

America at 250! Commemorating our Semiquincentennial

As we prepare for our nation's 250th birthday, Montpelier is joining historic sites across the country to commemorate this significant anniversary.

Check out our gift shop for new items such as glassware, clothing, and tote bags with Montpelier 250 branding.



Announcing Salon 1776!

In honor of the social gatherings once held at significant homes and institutions during the 18th century, Montpelier is launching a lecture series called *Salon 1776*. Come hear short lectures on research topics related to the history of Montpelier, followed by a cocktail reception. Launching in spring of 2026.

For a full list of our upcoming programs and events, visit Montpelier.org/events

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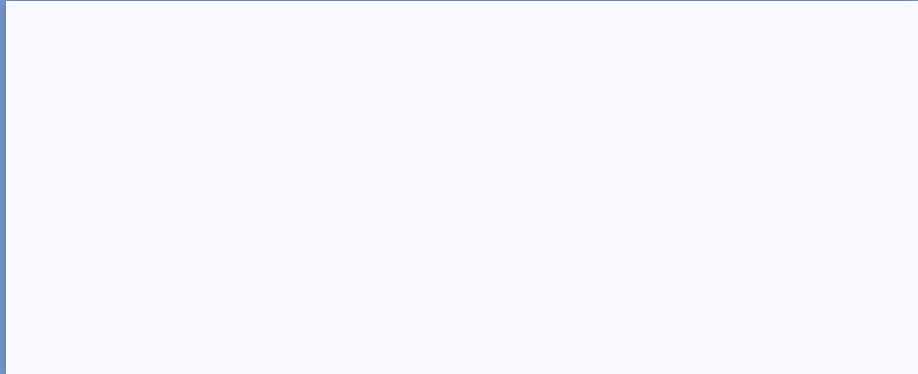
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SAVE THE DATE!

We want to hear from you!



November 28: Wreath Making Workshop
December 5: Winter Market/Member Evening
March 16: James Madison's Birthday
April 2: Salon 1776 Opening Lecture
April 11: We the Kids Day

Scan QR code to get details about upcoming events and to register.



HELP MONTPELIER CONTINUE ITS MISSION

James Madison's Montpelier is more than a historic site—it's a place where the ideas that shaped our democracy come to life. Every gift you make helps us preserve this extraordinary property, share the stories of James and Dolley Madison and the Enslaved Community who lived here, and create programs that foster dialogue on the enduring principles of liberty and justice. Your gift ensures that these stories are never forgotten and that Montpelier remains a source of inspiration and reflection for generations to come. Join us on this journey. Donate today!

