Job Description
Memorialization Public Historian
Postdoctoral Fellowship (part-time)
James Madison’s Montpelier
(30 hrs per week)
$50K Annual Contract Basis

Now through Oct 2026

Job Description
James Madison’s Montpelier seeks a Public History Postdoctoral Fellow for the Memorialization Project to join a dynamic team of descendants of enslaved laborers, the Senior Research Historian, landscape architects, archaeologists, anthropologists, interpreters, and other dedicated staff. In this contracted position, you will research, interpret, and preserve African American history at Montpelier and across Central Virginia to build on a database of over 2000 existing documents at Montpelier. This position is based on a 30-hour work week.

The Public History Postdoctoral Fellow will work closely with Montpelier Descendants Committee (MDC) members, the Memorialization Project Director for the MDC, and the Oral History Officer to build the historical foundation for a nationally facing monument that will honor enslaved people across the landscape at Montpelier. This person will lead an essential effort to make underrepresented histories of the African Americans who contributed to the building of the nation visible, through descendant engagement, research, interpretation, and project management. They will strengthen and deepen the Montpelier Foundation’s relationships with descendants of enslaved individuals, through working in small groups, facilitating workshops virtually and in-person, and through working with individuals and community organizations.

The Fellow will also assist in the development and support of public programming related to memorialization, including assisting with the planning of Juneteenth activities at Montpelier, to ensure that the MDC and TMF’s vision for engagement with a wider and more diverse public audience is realized.

Responsibilities
The Public History Postdoctoral Fellow will work closely with the Memorialization Project Director for the MDC, Senior Research Historian, the Oral Historian, Director of Archaeology and MDC members to connect and interpret historical documentation, materials and evidence about the African American people who were enslaved at Montpelier and the surrounding plantations. These histories are critical to the story of the US, and the Public History Postdoctoral Fellow will add to a database of historical archives, primary and secondary source materials, personal family artifacts (where granted permission). This person will be responsible for working with the interpretation team and descendants to help guide the interpretation of African-American history at Montpelier and regionally, virtually, and in-person.

The Fellow will work with the Senior Research Historian and Director of Education and Visitor Engagement at Montpelier to inform historical information for public tours; Plan, develop, and implement
programming that celebrates African American cultural contributions (historic and contemporary); Engage with the descendant community at conferences, symposia and community days; support the Memorialization Project Director by assisting with logistics for community outreach events around memorialization.

The Fellow will also assist with the planning and organizing of the Montpelier Juneteenth celebrations in partnership with local organizations.

**Required Qualifications**

- PhD in US History, American Studies, or African American studies, with a concentration in African American history, public history, historic preservation, museum studies, anthropology or a related field
- Experience with archival materials and primary source research
- Experience in the transfer of knowledge through storytelling, interpretation, exhibit and/or multimedia development
- Excellent writing and editing skills
- Background in and experience with developing and utilizing research methods
- Outstanding communication skills
- Strong ability to collaborate with a multidisciplinary team of descendants of enslaved communities, historians, interpreters, curators, historians, administrative staff and the public.
- Ability to create and manage organizational systems that include and protect sensitive data shared by descendant families
- Excellent computer skills

**Preferred Qualifications:**

- Experience with genealogy, African-American research preferred
- Experience with public speaking, presentation development, and effectively communicating with diverse audiences
- Ability to lead team members in research, writing projects, and genealogical research
- Experience with assisting in the planning, organizing, and implementation of large-scale events

Materials to submit: cover letter and resume by January 15, 2024

**About James Madison’s Montpelier:**

Montpelier is the lifelong home of James Madison, Father of the Constitution, Architect of the Bill of Rights, and fourth President of the United States. As a monument to James Madison and the Enslaved Community, a museum of American history, and a center for constitutional education, Montpelier engages the public with the enduring legacy of Madison’s most powerful idea: government by the people. The historic home and 2,650-acre grounds are open to visitors and student groups throughout the year, and the Robert H. Smith Center for the Constitution at Montpelier offers world-class residential and online educational programs. Montpelier is administered by The Montpelier Foundation, is a National Trust for Historic Preservation site, and works in full cooperative parity with The Montpelier Descendants Committee. To learn more, visit www.montpelier.org.

**About The Montpelier Descendants Committee (MDC):**

The Montpelier Descendants Committee is the first independent, Descendant-led organization to establish itself as an equal co-steward of a major historic site in America. The MDC is devoted to restoring the
narratives of enslaved Americans at plantation sites in Central Virginia, including but not limited to James Madison’s Montpelier, from the margins to the center of historical discourse. The MDC promotes a more accurate understanding of the lives of enslaved people based on broader, richer, and more truthful interpretations of American history. Through public programs, events, research, and communications the MDC seeks to demonstrate how the lives of enslaved persons made possible and informed the ideals of universal liberty enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, yet denied to them. To learn more, visit www.montpelierdescendants.org.

To apply, please send a cover letter and resume (or CV) to Krista Costello, Chief Operating Officer, Montpelier Foundation klcostello@montpelier.org and Allison James, Memorialization Project Director for the MDC ajames@montpelier.org.