



Juneteenth Family Days 2026

- A** Visit the Family Hub to learn more about how individuals at Mount Vernon and beyond sought emancipation before the Emancipation Proclamation
- B** Storytime Programs and Foundations of American Music Program (in the Greenhouse)
- C** Character performances in the Interpretive Center.
- D** Encampment Programs
- E** Foodways demonstrations
- F** Commemoration Ceremony at the Slave Memorial and Archaeology program

- G** Oxen Look-and-Learns
- H** Sheep and Horse Look-and-Learns
- I** Hog and Turkey Look-and-Learns
- J** Lives Bound Together Exhibit
- K** Meeting point for Enslaved People of Mount Vernon tour
- L** Spinning (in the Spinning House) and Smithing (in the Black Smith Shop) Demonstrations

Descendant Audio
Tour



SCAN ME

Juneteenth Family Day Adult Guide

Silhouette of Caroline Branham



Slave or Enslaved Person?

The shift from using the word "slave" to "enslaved person" began in academia and is now making its way to museums, classrooms, and beyond. Using the word "enslaved" as an adjective as opposed to "slave" as a noun highlights that slavery was something that was done to enslaved people, not who they were as their identity.

Talking about slavery with young learners

- Center the stories of enslaved people and emphasize shared humanity (they were mothers, fathers, children, siblings, friends, etc.)
- Explain in terms of fair versus unfair (it is unfair that they could not choose what they wanted to do, when they wanted to do it, etc.)
- Explain that even in the face of injustice and unfairness, enslaved people had families, transmitted culture, and affected the world around them.
- Use character traits familiar to them to talk about enslaved individuals (Hercules Posey was brave, smart, strong, etc.)

Frequently Asked Questions:

How many enslaved people lived at Mount Vernon?

At the time of Washington's death, there were 317 enslaved people that lived across Washington's five farms: Mansion House Farm, Dogue Run Farm, River Farm, Muddy Hole, and Union Farm. This land totaled almost 8,000 acres.

What happened to these individuals after Washington's death?

In Washington's will, he included the emancipation of the enslaved individuals he owned upon Martha's death, except for William Lee who was freed immediately. However, this did not apply to the enslaved individuals that were part of the Custis Estate and who came with Martha after her first husband's death. Therefore, 123 people gained their freedom. 194 people remained enslaved. After Martha's death, families were split up across D.C., Virginia, Maryland, and Louisiana.

How were enslaved people treated at Mount Vernon?

Slavery was a brutal system that meant long and hard working conditions; inadequate food, clothing, and shelter; severe punishment; and the knowledge that a person could be ripped away from their families and sold at any moment. All of those things occurred at Mount Vernon. Adult daily rations consisted of 1 quart of cornmeal and 5 to 8 ounces of salted fish. Washington sold multiple individuals as a form of punishment. Enslaved individuals were punished for resistance. In 1793, Washington wrote, "if...any...of the Servants will not do their duty by fair means - or are impertinent, correction...must be administered." Nevertheless, enslaved people at Mount Vernon resisted, built families, and exercised agency in the face of this unjust system.

What was daily life like for an enslaved person at Mount Vernon?

Daily life depended on many factors, including a person's assigned work, their age, and the season. To learn more about the lives of specific individuals, ask a Mount Vernon staff member or visit Mount Vernon's website.

How do we know what we know about these enslaved individuals?

Many enslaved individuals at Mount Vernon could not read or write and did not leave behind written records. Washington, however, left behind extensive records that we can use to identify who was enslaved at Mount Vernon, their roles, their ages, and their families. Archaeology is also a valuable tool in teaching us about the enslaved communities at Mount Vernon. Finally, oral histories and working with the League of Descendants of the Enslaved at Mount Vernon are invaluable tools in piecing together this history.

Discussion questions:

- What does Juneteenth mean to you today?
- What's the most impactful thing you saw today?
- Who is someone new you learned about today?
- How has being at Mount Vernon changed or reinforced your beliefs about slavery?
- What does freedom mean to you?
- What is a change you would like to see in the world?
- How does the past influence the present?



Silhouette of Kate

