

Woodlawn's new exhibits aim to tell fuller story of site's history

April 25 marks the opening of two new exhibits at Woodlawn, the historic 126-acre plantation that once was part of George Washington's Mount Vernon.

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Bricks from Woodlawn's front portico (Credit: Woodlawn and Pope-Leighey House)

April 25 marks the opening of two new exhibits at Woodlawn, the historic 126-acre plantation that once was part of George Washington's Mount Vernon. For the staff at [Woodlawn and Pope-Leighey House](#), the exhibits also mark the debut of a new phase in which the historic site collaborates with all people

associated with the property — including indigenous people and descendants of enslaved people — to tell fuller and more inclusive stories.

Amanda Roper, Woodlawn's senior manager of public programs and interpretation, said the exhibits are the culmination of research, listening and trust building that began after her hire in January 2023.

"At the beginning, we had to build trust with community partners as there hadn't been interaction with them before two years ago," said Roper. "What was most exciting was working with descendants, community members and scholars to pull the exhibits together."

Roper said Woodlawn essentially started from scratch in telling the history of the site, which supports the National Trust for Historic Preservation's mission to preserve and interpret the full American story. By listening to people impacted by history, Woodlawn sought to take a different approach than the way other historic museums and sites present history, she said, calling the sharing of stories a "community effort" and "very collaborative."

One of Woodlawn's exhibits, entitled "Woodlawn: People and Perspectives," features text, images and objects around the mansion that highlight the contributions made by people with connections to the site. That includes the property's owners, the people they enslaved and the free Black families who built communities alongside the Quakers. The exhibit also explores the preservation of Woodlawn in the 20th century.

The other exhibit, called "Offerings for Tauxenent: Acknowledging Indigenous Place," was developed by public history students at George Mason University (GMU). The exhibit focuses on the Doeg people — Dogue Creek and Dogue Run Farm being namesakes — who were the original inhabitants of the land before being killed or expelled by colonizers. GMU students worked with community partners, including local tribal, intertribal and immigrant indigenous communities, to pull together the display of objects, remembrances and offerings for the Doeg people.

Roper said the GMU-Woodlawn collaboration is "hopefully the first in a long line of community-curated exhibits in the house."

A free opening reception for both exhibits will be held May 4 from 5-7 p.m., and community members are invited to [register to attend](#). The Woodlawn: People and Perspectives exhibit runs through Dec. 31 and is included in the price of admission to Woodlawn. The Offerings for Tauxenent exhibit runs through Aug. 30 and is free with a suggested donation.

Woodlawn and Pope-Leighey House's operating hours are Thursdays through Mondays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The site, part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, is located at 9000 Richmond Highway.



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