



## **HSF CREATES YOUTH GUIDE ENSLAVED JOURNEY PROGRAM FOR DAVENPORT HOUSE MUSEUM**

**SAVANNAH, GA – June 27, 2022** – Historic Savannah Foundation’s Davenport House Museum (DHM) has added a new program to its slate of offerings, which include in-person and virtual tours, historical re-enactments, educational special events and local collaborations. The most recently added feature, a Youth Guide program, is a youth-engagement activity that allows visitors to complete a “journey” as one of the home’s enslaved residents.

The intention of the DHM’s Youth Guide program is to provide younger online guests and the virtual community with a more accurate depiction of the Davenport family household, as well as the lives of enslaved people in a 19th century Southern port city. The legacy of the enslaved people – not only in the Davenport House, but also throughout Savannah – is critically important to the history of the city. It is because of enslaved people that much of the city exists as it does, from buildings and trades to traditions and experiences.

Thirteen documented enslaved people lived and toiled in the Davenport House in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, playing an essential role in the family’s existence. That is why it is important that the story of the enslaved household members be included in the story of the Davenports. While the museum’s docents and tours do verbally acknowledge these household members, the ability to tell the full story of this part of history previously had been limited. However, thanks to extensive research by Kelly Westfield, a former Davenport House graduate student intern, those limitations have been significantly reduced. Westfield, who earned a master’s degree in 2018, used the Davenport House enslaved people as the basis for her thesis.

“Kelly is a very gifted researcher. Her work has a legacy much longer than just the credit she received from her university. She has continued to do work on the biographies and narratives of the individuals who were enslaved here long after her academic work was completed,” Davenport House Museum Director Jamie Credle said. “Even today, she continues to do research on the house. She is seeking a doctorate degree using this information as a basis for her dissertation. That was a gift to us. Kelly has been very generous with her time. Her work has made everything possible – her research is the basis

for all this expansion – the Youth Guides, the upcoming Urban Enslaved Exhibit, our docent-led tours interspersed with new information, and interpretations. It has been extremely important.”

Using a \$5,000 matching grant from National Trust for Historic Preservation, the DHM hired the Nobis Project to create the Youth Guide program. The Nobis Project is a local non-profit educational organization, founded in 2008, whose mission is to inspire purpose, pivot mindset, and activate agency. It supports and collaborates with educators in developing community-engagement experiences that prepare student leaders to create a more just, sustainable, and equitable world.

The Youth Guide activity was developed with children ages 8-15 in mind, and it has a full interactive component that allows visitors to experience it online. Credle said the museum might eventually add an in-person aspect as well. While the program is always useful and relevant, its availability will be especially meaningful when the Urban Enslaved Exhibit, currently under construction, is complete and can be included in an enslaved person's Journey.

Development of the program began in mid-2020 when the demand for digital resources was soaring.

“At the time, everything was virtual, so it seemed like a good time to do it. We didn’t know what the world would be like, post-COVID, and everyone was looking toward the virtual experience. Along with the Nobis Project’s efforts, we did the creative work of finding actors and getting a designer to design it on the website using virtual tour footage,” Credle said. “The actors, people of color, created some content for the Journeys. They liked being creative and adding that component to the whole project.”

The project, which is free to all, is located on the Davenport House Museum’s website, [davenporthousemuseum.org](http://davenporthousemuseum.org), under the “Visit” tab on the drop-down menu. Credle said, “It’s easy to find and is very user-friendly, with each Journey lasting about 30 minutes, depending on how long users study the information.” She hopes the Youth Guide program will be used as an educational tool.

“I hope teachers or educators looking for resources on this particular aspect of 19th century history will be able to use it as something that fits with or accents their curriculum. It’s a learning tool that is content-rich and specific. It offers something concrete that someone can learn as opposed to learning a concept or piecing together a story you’re just guessing at,” Credle said.

Historic Savannah Foundation, a leading nonprofit preservation and cultural institution, saves buildings, places, and stories that define Savannah’s past, present, and future. Following its formation in 1955, the organization started a Revolving Fund to save endangered historic properties, now totaling 410 buildings throughout several of Savannah’s historic districts. HSF continues to build capacity within its

operations, secure new financial resources, improve its image and visibility, and increase public policy efforts to protect Savannah's historic districts.

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