



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE  
**Humanities**

DIVISION OF PUBLIC PROGRAMS

## **Sample of a Successful Implementation Application**

This document contains the narrative and walkthrough of a previously funded grant application. Every successful application is different, and this application may have been prepared to meet a slightly different set of guidelines. Each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations, as well as the requirements in the current notice of funding opportunity (NOFO). Prospective applicants should consult the current Public Humanities Projects NOFOs at <https://www.neh.gov/grants/public/public-humanities-projects> for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Public Programs staff well before a grant deadline.

The attached application is incomplete. Portions may have been deleted to protect the privacy interests of an individual, and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information, and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: *The Owens-Thomas House: Interpreting the Dynamics of Urban Slavery in the South*

Institution: Telfair Museum of Art, Inc.

Project Director: Shannon Browning-Mullins

Grant Program: Public Humanities Projects, Historic Places Implementation

### Abstract

Telfair Museums seeks a \$400,000 NEH Historic Places implementation grant to reinterpret its Owens-Thomas House and Slave Quarters, transforming this National Historic Landmark through interactive exhibits on the slave economy, gender dynamics, and the impacts of urban slavery in the South. Scheduled to take 1.5 years to complete with a total budget of \$872,706, this reinterpretation plan builds on more than 20 years of humanities scholarship, including Telfair's national-award-winning project *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah*, which launched one of the country's first full-scale attempts to tell the story of urban slavery in the South. Through this grant, Telfair Museums will employ hands-on education galleries, interactive exhibits, audio recordings, historical artifacts, and original documents to engage students and families in an honest exploration of how urban slavery informed social, domestic, and economic relationships in the South, and how the legacy of slavery influences the nation today.



## The Owens-Thomas House: Interpreting the Dynamics of Urban Slavery in the South

### NATURE OF THE REQUEST

Telfair Museums in Savannah, Georgia, seeks a \$400,000 NEH Historic Places implementation grant to cover partial costs associated with a complete reinterpretation of the Owens-Thomas House (OT House) and Slave Quarters, transforming this National Historic Landmark through interactive exhibits on the slave economy, gender norms, the complex relationships inherent in domestic slavery, the dynamics of architecture and technology as expressions of power, and the impacts of urban slavery in the South. Scheduled to take 1.5 years to complete with a total budget of \$872,706, this reinterpretation plan builds on more than 20 years of scholarship across the fields of history, literature, anthropology, and art, supported by institutions and programs such as NEH planning grants (2005 and 2006), IMLS (2011), the Yale Public History Institute (2013), and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (a 2016 partner institution). In 2014, this scholarship culminated in Telfair's national-award-winning project *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah*—a publication, exhibition, and citywide symposium that launched one of the nation's first full-scale attempts to tell the story of urban slavery in the South.

Through this grant, the OT House will incorporate this successful scholarship into hands-on education galleries, interactive technology stations, audio recordings, historical artifacts, and original documents to engage students, families, and 70,000 annual visitors in an honest exploration of how urban slavery informed social, domestic, and economic relationships in the South in the 1820s and 1830s—as well as how the legacy of slavery influences the nation today. This project has the following **interpretive goals**:

1. Engage audiences in the history of the OT House and its people—from its wealthy white owners, to urban enslaved families, to famed houseguests and staunch abolitionists such as the Marquis de Lafayette—through interpreter-led tours, interactive exhibits, and hands-on education galleries.
2. Demonstrate how urban slavery shaped the social and cultural landscape of Savannah, and how this legacy continues to fuel the city's income inequalities, educational inequalities, and sociopolitical environment today.
3. Create national awareness of the stories of the enslaved men, women, and children of the OT House and how life in this home reflected broader paradigms of life in the South.
4. Broaden public understanding of architecture, artifacts, and decorative arts and demonstrate how these elements can function as unique lenses into the lives, histories, and complex relationships between classes and cultures.

Although slavery is central to the history of Savannah, the topic of urban slavery is virtually absent from museum interpretations and is rarely mentioned in scholarly discussions in Georgia and the South. As the caretaker of one of the best-preserved urban slave quarters in the Southeast—as well as the winner of state and national awards for its work on *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah*—the OT House is uniquely qualified to bridge this glaring historical gap. Through this project, the OT House will create a new interactive **Orientation Gallery** in its historic carriage house; fully reinterpret its **Slave Quarters** to engage audiences in the lost narratives of enslaved families; host a citywide **Legacy of Slavery symposium**; create **comprehensive education programs** throughout Savannah's public schools, including lesson plans, school field trips, and a year-round Georgia History School Tour Program for every eighth-grade class in Chatham County; and finally, convert the OT House Basement (which was primarily occupied by enslaved workers, and only half of which is currently accessible to visitors) into **interactive learning galleries** on topics of historic preservation, gender history, the roles of specific individuals within the household, the slave

economy, and enslaved life. The format of this project will include audio recordings, touch screens, text panels, digital projections, video, excavated artifacts, letters, primary documents, decorative arts, and guided tours (one interpreter-led tour beginning every 20 minutes), creating an immersive experience for all ages and learning styles.

### HUMANITIES CONTENT

When most people visit Savannah (a city that welcomes 13 million tourists each year), they are greeted by romantic images—a backdrop of lush squares and live oak canopies, of horse-drawn carriages and Southern charm and the elegant wealth of antebellum homes. They experience almost nothing, however, of the black labor that contributed to its founding and growth, or of the struggles for black freedom that surged through the city long before General Sherman’s historic March to the Sea. With few opportunities for visitors to experience this underrepresented history—compounded by limited research and poor documentation of the lives of the enslaved—a fundamental aspect of Savannah’s cultural fabric remains hidden, much like the objects and records of the enslaved workers themselves, whose lives often are rendered invisible and anonymous from the vantage point of today.

As one of the only historic house museums exploring the impacts of Southern urban slavery and how African American labor, culture, and systematic oppression played a key role in Savannah’s development, the OT House seeks to reshape the narrative of Savannah by incorporating African American history and the history of urban slavery into the city’s public record. Through the lens of a National Historic Landmark site, this project explores how the most powerful and least powerful people in Savannah lived together in the 1820s and 1830s—from the complex emotional relationships, to the strict power dynamics, to the blurred lines of family and property—providing audiences with a broader understanding of how slavery impacted urban life both in and beyond the home, and how it affected both young and old, black and white, enslaved and free.

Through interactive galleries and interpreter-guided tours, guests will explore how enslaved people formed the backbone of life in the OT House as well as the Southern economy, playing intricate roles in their diverse communities while at the same time living under an oppressive socioeconomic system. The process to determine the subjects, interpretive approaches, and themes of this reinterpretation plan are supported by more than two decades of research, scholarship, and design consultations, including:

- The writing and original scholarship of 30 professors and historians from throughout the United States and England, all of whom specialize in topics relating to the Southern slave economy, urban slavery, and the politics of race in Savannah, and who contributed to the 2013 national award-winning *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah* publication and 2012 symposium (funded by IMLS).<sup>1</sup>
- A series of 2005 through 2006 roundtable discussions, funded by NEH Planning and Consultation Grants, that united a diverse group of 16 professionals from throughout the country, including

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<sup>1</sup> Scholars and academic contributions to this project include **Dr. Daina Ramey Berry**, “An’ They Never Said a Mumblin’ Word?” *Reconstructing Enslaved Life through the Owens-Thomas House*; **Dr. Daina Ramey Berry and Leslie M. Harris**, *Slave Life in Savannah: Geographies of Autonomy and Control*; **Dr. Jonathan M. Bryant**, “We Defy You!” *Politics and Violence in Reconstruction Savannah*; **Dr. Bobby J. Donaldson**, “The Fighting Has Not Been in Vain:” *African American Intellectuals in Jim Crow Savannah*; **Dr. Leslie M. Harris**, *Slavery in Antebellum Savannah: Control & Resistance*; **Dr. Jacqueline Jones**, *Wartime Workers, Moneymakers: Black Labor in Civil-War-Era Savannah*; **Dr. Timothy Lockley**, *The King of England’s Soldiers: Armed Blacks in Savannah and Its Hinterlands During the Revolutionary War Era, 1778–1787*; **Dr. James McMillin**, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade Comes to Georgia*; **Dr. Susan O’Donovan**, *At the Intersection of Cotton and Commerce: Antebellum Savannah and Its Slaves*; **Dr. Janice Sumler-Edmond**, *Free Black Life in Savannah*; **Dr. John Michael Vlach**, *Slave Housing in Antebellum Georgia*; **Dr. Jeffrey Young**, *To Venerate the Spot of Airy Visions: Slavery and the Romantic Conception of Place in Mary Telfair’s Savannah*.

history and humanities professors, authors, conservators, museum consultants, and preservation experts to assist in assessing and redesigning the interpretive treatments of African Americans at the OT House and incorporating the stories of free and enslaved workers who lived and worked onsite.

- A 2006 audience research study (funded by an NEH Planning Grant) conducted by Jeff Heyward of “People, Places and Design Research,” an organization that has served museums and cultural institutions for 32 years and has contributed to seven of the American Alliance of Museums’ “Best Exhibit of the Year” award-winning projects.
- Detailed consultations from faculty and graduate students at the Yale Public History Institute in July 2013, for which the OT House was selected as one of only five institutions across the United States to participate in this weeklong discussion of slavery and its interpretation, held at Yale University’s Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition.
- The creation of a 2014 exhibition, *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah* (inspired by the successful symposium and publication of the same name), which experienced a glowing reception from the community, including visitor reactions such as, “Once again, I see what an amazing resource the Owens-Thomas House is in bringing the American experience to life,” and, “This exhibit was the most exciting thing we’ve done. As a black man, my awareness was touched.”
- A 2014 design charrette, facilitated by Deborah L. Mack, Associate Director for Office of Strategic Partnerships at the National Museum of African American History and Culture, that brought together 24 stakeholders and humanities consultants—including history professors, museum directors, curators of education, historical interpreters, and representatives from local advocacy groups—to create the final tour and exhibition design plans.

Together, this new humanities research, original writing and scholarship, design consultations, audience research, and museum exhibitions inform the final implementation strategies for the OT House covered by this NEH Historic Places grant. Beyond the significance of the research and the esteemed qualifications of its contributors, this project also bears enormous significance for the city of Savannah. As the only historic house museum in Georgia and one of the few museums in the country to focus on the lives of urban enslaved workers and to harness their stories to illuminate broader historical concepts such as the intricacies of the Southern economy, the influence of urban design and development, and the complexities of racial and gender relationships in the antebellum South, the OT House will bridge a gap in our cultural dialogue, providing new historical awareness for Savannah’s local community and the museum site’s 70,000 annual visitors.

In fact, a central outcome of this project is to present a historical experience that is immersive, relevant, and appealing to visitors of all demographics, both locals and tourists alike. According to an independent study conducted as part of Telfair’s NEH-funded planning for this project, the current demographics of OT House visitors are largely homogenous, with 94% of visitors identifying themselves as white, non-locals, and only 3% under the age of 25. Although proud of this broad national audience (the OT House is consistently the most-visited museum in Savannah), this data presents an immense opportunity for growth, particularly among members of the local community, youth audiences, and African Americans. Given that 55% of Savannah’s population is African American (2010 US Census), and 37% of Savannah’s children are living in poverty (an epidemic more prominent in the city’s historically black communities, with poverty rates soaring to more than 65% in neighborhoods mere blocks from the museum), Telfair believes it is not just valuable but absolutely critical to offer a cultural experience that honestly investigates our African American heritage. Through hands-on exhibits, education galleries, interpreter-guided tours, multimedia stations, and expansive educational outreach, the OT House will raise new

questions for our students and visitors, addressing the effects of urban slavery on the city's racial and economic stratification both historically and today.

In addition to its local significance, this project also addresses a larger trend in museum interpretation and scholarship nationwide. Especially with the groundbreaking opening of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture earlier this year (a 2016 partner institution, whose current Associate Director for Office of Strategic Partnerships has served as part of the OT House advisory committee and design boards from 2005 to 2014), humanities scholars and museum professionals throughout the country have devoted greater resources to reclaiming the lost and overlooked histories of African Americans, as well as to articulating their inexorable contributions to U.S. culture, wealth, infrastructure, and identity. The reinterpretation of the OT House speaks directly to this national cultural and educational movement, while remaining specific to the lives linked to the OT House and Savannah.

In the spirit of advancing this larger conversation, Telfair's OT House will embrace specific elements of its social history, domestic technology, historic preservation, and personal stories to explore themes that illuminate the relationships between enslaved workers and their Southern environment, while also creating broader connections to American history and serving as a microcosm for larger topics such as the slave economy, preservation, domestic roles, and the relationship between free and enslaved people. To achieve this, the OT House will launch an immersive, multimedia platform of interactive exhibits and guided tours to investigate the following **humanities themes and ideas**:

**Theme I: Urban slavery forced free and enslaved people into intimate and complex relationships distinct from those experienced by enslaved workers on plantations.** As home to the most powerful and least powerful people in Savannah, the Owens-Thomas House, including its design and artifacts, provides an extraordinary lens through which visitors can explore, experience, and question this rarely interpreted aspect of Southern history and identity. For example, with enslaved people and their masters living and working under the same roof, how did this close proximity blur the lines between family and property, person and subject? Imagine, for instance, the strange power dynamics that existed between enslaved nannies and the white children they raised—the simultaneous feelings of intimate affection and deep division, of helpless infant yet cultural “superior.” Additionally, how did the bustling urban environment inform the lives and experiences of enslaved workers? Built on a prominent Savannah square, with windows opening directly onto busy city sidewalks, the location of the Slave Quarters would have allowed enslaved people—men, women, and children—to interact with individuals outside the home on a regular basis, including free people of color. How would these exchanges have shaped their views and their connection to ideas of community, economy, freedom, and faith? And in what ways would these views have differed from those of enslaved workers on plantations? Through a complete reinterpretation of the Slave Quarters and the Main House basement, including the incorporation of recorded slave narratives and documents written or associated with specific enslaved individuals of the home, this reinterpretation project reincorporates the histories of individuals who formed the backbone not only of the OT House, but also the lifestyle and wealth of the South and without whom neither would have existed.

**Theme II: The design of Savannah and the placement of the Owens-Thomas House within that design influenced how people in this house functioned in society and connected with their community.** As a crossroads for wealthy elites and other prominent citizens, the OT House would have exposed enslaved workers to a variety of debates, ideas, and questions about their very position as slaves. For example, the home's first owner, Richard Richardson, was a slave trader and slaveholder, as well as an advocate for free people of color, illustrating the complexities of wealth and slavery in Savannah. Additionally, for two nights in March 1825, the structure famously housed the Marquis de Lafayette, a vocal abolitionist and one of America's most celebrated heroes. Rumored to have addressed an eager crowd from the home's

south balcony, Lafayette’s visit not only marked a significant moment in the OT House’s history—contributing to the site’s National Historic Landmark status—but also spotlighted his antislavery views in a city inextricably indebted to the slave-based economy. In fact, Savannah slaveholders and local politicians (usually one and the same) banned enslaved people and free people of color from parade routes associated with Lafayette’s visit. Yet Lafayette was not deterred from visiting an enslaved man who had been assigned as his assistant during the American Revolution, an action that would have sent a controversial message to the white ruling class and to people of color throughout the city.

The home’s subsequent owner, George Owens, virulently opposed any discussion of abolition. As the owner of 340 enslaved people, Owens represented the top 1% of slaveholders in the nation. Their forced labor enabled his extraordinary wealth, affording his family all the luxuries of urban life. From 1834 to 1839, Owens served in the House of Representatives, and in his first speech to Congress he argued:

*“That, in the opinion of this House, the question of the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia ought not be entertained by Congress. And be it further resolved, that in case any petitions praying the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia be hereafter presented, it is the deliberate opinion of this House that the same ought to be laid on the table without reading.”*

In so doing, Owens introduced the first notorious Gag Rule, a resolution passed repeatedly in various forms in subsequent years preventing any discussion of slavery’s abolition on the congressional floor.

At the same time, prominent and influential free black churches had formed throughout the city, including the First African Baptist Church: the oldest black church in North America and an important stop on the Underground Railroad. Just a few blocks from the OT House, this church and its pastor played a vital role in leading Savannah’s local African American community, the ideas of which, given the condensed urban environment, would have traveled easily to the enslaved workers of the OT House.

Telfair’s implementation plan sheds light on these many viewpoints, inviting visitors to consider how the city’s meticulous urban design played a role in uniting and dividing cultures and faiths, while also informing the perspectives of enslaved workers and the ideas they encountered. For example, through an interactive touchscreen and projection of a historical map of Savannah, visitors will explore firsthand the urban environment of the OT House during the 1820s and 1830s, making connections between the city’s layout—including details about relevant historical events—and its effects on the free and enslaved families who lived onsite. At the end of the tour, audiences will also be urged to consider the cultural and economic divisions that are still present in the city today, and the role that history has played in shaping these divisions.

**Theme III: The themes and symbolic motifs of the architecture, art, and literature of the period served as reference—and sometimes justification—for how the wealthy class viewed their society and their relationship with enslaved people.** Built in the English Regency style by ambitious young British architect William Jay (his first and perhaps most noteworthy U.S. commission), the OT House was designed not just to function, but to awe. Reflecting the architecture of European elites, with flourishes of Greek influences and looser adaptations of ancient Roman forms, the house’s design provides insights into the views of the slaveholding class, who perhaps saw themselves not as oppressors, but as inheritors of an old and dignified history, a “birthright” of power, culture, and prestige. Upon entering the Main House, visitors are greeted by a stunning grand staircase, complete with brass inlaid risers and cast-iron balusters with gilded accents, as well as two fluted columns topped with gilded Corinthian capitals that delineate the public and private areas of the home. This opulence contrasts with the areas occupied by enslaved workers, suggesting notions of self-aggrandizement among its white owners, especially the families of



Richard Richardson and George Owens. As another example, flanking the grand staircase are two busts of Lord Byron and Sir Walter Scott, both owned by Owens. As prominent male figures of the Romantic literary movement—boasting quixotic notions of chivalry, masculinity, and a passionate life—these tributes suggest the ideals of Owens himself, who may have seen his wealth and power as an expression of these romantic ideas, while allowing him (and other elites like him) to ignore perhaps the less romantic system of brutality and oppression that kept his wealth in place.

In many ways, this romanticizing of slavery still persists in Savannah today, with cultural tourism overwhelmingly focused on the city's attractive squares, architectural preservation, historical rumors, and lives of wealthy white residents, while skirting the horrific issues of enforced black labor and generational enslavement that sustained its wealth and beauty. Through this grant, the OT House will be the only house museum in the city to engage audiences in a comprehensive understanding of urban slavery in Savannah, bringing this important topic into the public eye for the first time.

**Theme IV: The technology and decorative arts of the home held different meanings for different groups of people; the owners of the house saw a representation of their elevated place in society, while the enslaved household saw items to maintain and use in the service of others.** The thousands of decorative art objects and artifacts on display at the OT House and in Telfair Museums' permanent collection provide profound insights not only into the personal lives of OT House residents, but also the social and economic fabric of Savannah. For instance, the expansion of global trade and the value of Savannah's port can be seen in the house's furnishings, which originate from a variety of places all around the world. From the home's famously innovative indoor plumbing system (boasting plumbing on all floors even before the White House), to its exquisite silver collection owned by the Owens family, this reinterpretation plan uses objects not merely as stage props for a historical setting, but as characters in an overarching story, bringing to life their relationship with the home's various occupants. The guided tours and exhibits will call attention to the unique disparities between use and ownership, and how even though enslaved workers would rarely have been able to afford such luxury items for themselves, they were tasked as the polishers, handlers, and repairers of the home's most valued objects and technologies—though often under a scrutinizing gaze.

At the same time, a great deal can also be interpreted from objects that do not exist. For example, while the slaveholders of the Main House kept meticulous records of their possessions—including receipts, inventories, and wills—all the belongings of enslaved servants have been lost to obscurity, much like the lives of the oppressed people who used them. Similarly, in contrast to the living quarters of the Main House which have been fastidiously preserved, the areas occupied by enslaved servants—namely the Slave Quarters and basement—had been allowed to deteriorate over time. Why were some areas of the home permitted to deteriorate while others were not? Rather than ignore or cover up this absence, the OT House will highlight it, providing a poignant visual for the stories of the many enslaved lives that have been lost to the course (and sometimes the revisionist nature) of history.

#### **PROJECT FORMATS**

Telfair Museums' Owens-Thomas House will employ the most current and best practices of museum exhibition, as well as emerging scholarship, interpretation, and technology, to create an immersive experience for visitors of all ages and backgrounds. Using an array of multimedia and tactile approaches to supplement tours led by professional interpreters—including touchscreens, audio recordings, digital projection, video, original documents, and historic artifacts and replicas that visitors can manipulate—this implementation plan will engage a variety of learners and learning styles, emphasizing key themes through interactivity.



This grant allows for the interpretation of three major areas of the OT House site: 1) the Carriage House, which will become a state-of-the-art **Orientation Gallery**; 2) the **Slave Quarters**, which will be reinterpreted to include a richer experience of the lives of the enslaved; and 3) the **Basement**, which will become a self-guided space with interactive exhibits and education galleries on topics such as the slave economy, historic preservation, gender history, and the roles of different people within the household. Specific project formats and exhibitions incorporated in each of these spaces are outlined below.

### **Orientation Gallery**

Formerly the Carriage House and gift shop, the Orientation Gallery will be free and open to the public year round, providing an introduction to the house, its people, and the humanities themes discussed on the tour. Featured exhibits include:

- *Touchscreen Map of Historic Savannah*: Providing context for the house’s history and how the people who lived onsite related to their surrounding community, this installation features an interactive display of a historic map of Savannah. As visitors touch different areas on the map, information about the sites and their inhabitants will appear on screen. A large monitor on the wall duplicates these images, allowing multiple users to watch, read, and interact while one user guides the information on the touch panel.
- *Memorial Column of the Enslaved*: This installation compiles the recorded names of the 450 enslaved people owned by the Owens family. Although these people did not live onsite, their labor and enslavement afforded the white family all the luxuries of urban life, including living in such a grand home. Positioned in the center of the room and resembling an architectural support, this Memorial Column serves as a metaphor for the enslaved men, women, and children who formed the backbone of the Southern economy and who made life in a home like the OT House possible. The names will spiral upward into the column, and as guests enter the spiral, the names will literally surround them, providing a physical reminder that the opulence of the OT House and the privilege of its owners did not exist in a vacuum.
- *Timeline and Family Trees*: Circling the gallery, guests can explore a running timeline of events and key historical figures associated with the OT House—from the founding of Georgia to the opening of the museum—introducing the individuals who will appear on the tour.

### **Slave Quarters**

With only one floor of the Slave Quarters currently interpreted for the public, this implementation plan opens the second floor, creating a more complete experience of the space and a deeper connection to the people who occupied it.

- *Recorded Slave Narratives* (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Floors): After the interpreter’s overview, visitors will explore the Slave Quarters while actor-recorded excerpts of slave narratives echo throughout the building. Bringing life to the space, these recordings are designed to give a representative voice to the enslaved people whose voices have been lost or obscured from most historical records.
- *Period Rooms* (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor): Curators will design three separate installations of living scenarios of enslaved workers—including tables, bed rolls, blankets, and personal items. Interpreters will guide guests to consider how property ownership and furnishings in the slave quarters provided white slave owners with further opportunities to wield power over the people they controlled.

## **Basement**

After passing through the garden and touring the Main House, tours will conclude in the basement, which will become a self-guided space of hands-on exhibits, videos, interactive installations, and education galleries expounding on topics discussed on the tour. Only half of the basement is currently interpreted and accessible to the public. This implementation plan allows for the interpretation of the entire space and a restoration of its historical authenticity through installation of an innovative, state-of-the-art HVAC system that relocates ductwork currently intruding throughout the rooms. Interpreters will be on hand to answer questions as visitors explore topics such as African American churches, guardianship, the interaction between free and enslaved people, and race relations in America today, in addition to the following select exhibits.

- *Interactive Cellar Cabinet*: A reproduced cabinet with locked doors will give guests an opportunity to dive deeper into the specific domestic roles of free and enslaved people. Using keys labeled with titles such as “Lady of the House,” “Master of the House,” “Butler,” and “Cook,” guests can attempt to open the doors of the cabinet (storing things like coffee, alcohol, sugar, and tea) to discover who would have had access to which items. Once the door is opened, information about the role of the key’s owner will be displayed inside.
- *Voice Panels*: Guests will be invited to don headphones and listen to recorded readings of documents and letters written by or about individuals associated with the OT House, including enslaved people and significant historical figures, bringing these individuals to life.
- *Touch Panels / Historic Preservation Gallery*: This hands-on gallery will give guests a tactile experience of how concepts of preservation and restoration have informed the conservation and interpretation of the OT House over time. Panels will allow guests to manipulate building materials used onsite, such as tabby and coquina.
- *Digital Projection of Enslaved Woman*: Guests will discover a projection of an enslaved woman doing laundry alongside a soundscape of water and humming, illustrating the day-to-day rigors of her tasks.
- *Platforms and Models Exploring Domestic Technology*: Glass bridges will allow guests to walk over the intricate system of drainage pipes in the home’s bathing room. To learn more about the plumbing system (cutting edge for its time), guests can explore a miniature replica of the entire house illustrating the plumbing components. Related text panels will emphasize the role of enslaved workers in maintaining this intricate system.
- *Video about the Marquis de Lafayette*: A short video will describe Lafayette’s abolitionist leanings and his visit to the OT House, paired with objects related to this important houseguest and his controversial views on slavery. For example, a silver snuffbox owned by the Lafayette family will be displayed. Its decorative motif reflects an abolitionist theme.
- *Discovery Cabinet*: Featuring multiple drawers, each divided in half, this cabinet features different artifacts associated with the house (e.g. marbles excavated near the Slave Quarters), which are then paired with modern equivalents or reproductions for children and adults to touch and handle.
- *Interactive Writing Desk*: This replica of a desk owned by the Owens family will feature quill, ink, and parchment for use by visitors, as well as drawers containing laminated reproductions of original documents related to running a plantation. Documents include letters between Sarah and George Owens, which reference her service as his proxy as well as instructions on slave management—delving into themes of gender norms and the slave economy.

In addition to these featured exhibits, the OT House will connect to audiences through **guided tours by professional historical interpreters**. All interpreters are certified through the National Association of Interpretation (NAI) and will attend a site-specific Certified Interpretive Guide workshop in 2017 led by Shawn Halifax, a humanities consultant for this project and a central figure in the interpretation of the McLeod Plantation in Charleston, S.C.—a model for the interpretation of slavery in the United States.

The OT House will also launch a variety of **Education Initiatives** as part of this implementation grant, including traveling trunk programs to Savannah-Chatham County public schools, published lesson plans and free trainings made available to local teachers, and a Georgia History School Tour Program for every eighth-grade class in Chatham County, bringing 3,000 students to the site free of charge. Additionally, this project will culminate in a citywide symposium and scholarly publication in the summer of 2019, focused on the “Legacy of Slavery in Savannah” and the many ways in which the effects of slavery still resonate in the city today.

### **PROJECT RESOURCES**

In addition to the scholarship and academic research contributed to this project by 30 professors and historians throughout the United States and England, a major part of the OT House’s story will be told through the objects and artifacts of the house itself. Of the nearly 7,000 pieces of art that make up Telfair Museums’ permanent collection, more than 4,750 are decorative arts and historic objects—a brimming historical reservoir encompassing the past three centuries of Southern life. Including silver, glass, ceramics, textiles, toys, documents, and household accessories, these objects originated primarily in America between 1725 and 1900, with many of the furnishings and decorative pieces on display bearing a direct lineage to the families associated with the OT House. A strength of the museum, Telfair’s decorative arts objects align closely with the history of our sites and Savannah. Visitors can find clay pots made by enslaved workers; ceramics collected from Europe by the Telfair, Richardson, Owens, and Thomas families; and a large collection of silver designed by Savannah silversmiths. These holdings illuminate various aspects of the American South—from the social lives of Southern gentry to the relationships between free and enslaved people who brushed elbows under the same roof. Additionally, this project is benefited by the historic value of the OT House itself, which contains one of the best-preserved urban slave quarters in the southeast, as well as one of the finest examples of English Regency architecture in North America.

Other resources include the Georgia Historical Society’s archives, which hold three boxes of Owens and Thomas family papers, including wills and correspondence from the people who occupied the home.

### **PROJECT HISTORY**

This project is informed by more than two decades of research, scholarship, interpretive planning, and historic preservation work conducted by Telfair Museums and noted historians throughout the United States. Beginning in 1992, the museum launched a three-phase preservation project that included the adaptive reuse of the Carriage House and the conservation of the original Slave Quarters, which led the museum to discover the original “haint” blue paint on the ceiling—evidence of the site’s original occupants. Upon further excavation, the original layout of the site was revealed, along with a few artifacts that suggested specific relationships between enslaved workers and their urban environment.

It was immediately clear that the site was in need of further interpretation, and in 2005 Telfair received a \$10,000 NEH Consultation Grant to fund two roundtables with scholars and experts in public interpretation and on issues relating to the African American experience in the South and the social complexities of free, nominally enslaved, and enslaved people in urban communities. Expanding on these discussions, Telfair received a \$40,000 NEH Planning Grant in 2006, which allowed the museum to focus

its efforts on researching and presenting information about the lives and labor of documented enslaved people who built, maintained, and serviced the OT House. This grant also funded audience research, as well as a community advisory committee of 21 professors, authors, archivists, and museum consultants to oversee Telfair’s future interpretive work on the subject of urban slavery.

In 2010, the Institute of Museum and Library Services awarded Telfair Museums a \$112,953 grant for *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah*, a publication, exhibition, and citywide symposium that received state and national awards for its work in launching one of the country’s first full-scale attempts to tell the story of urban slavery in the South. From the Haitian soldiers who fought on behalf of American freedom, to the men and women who struggled to preserve their citizenship in the hard decades following the Civil War, to the enslaved and free black ministers who established visible congregations that survive today, *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah* united scholarship across the fields of history, literature, anthropology, and art to paint a broad portrait of urban slavery through the lens of Telfair’s historic homes. The project received numerous awards, including:

1. **Leadership in History Award:** a national award from the American Association of State and Local History, considered its most prestigious achievement for preservation and interpretation.
2. **Award for Excellence in Documenting Georgia’s History:** a state award from the Georgia Historical Records Advisory Council, celebrating the publication.
3. **Excellence in Public History:** an award from the Coastal Museums Association, recognizing exceptional education and cultural programming in the greater Savannah region.
4. **Lilla M. Hawes Award:** a state award from the Georgia Historical Society, recognizing the best book in Georgia local or county history.

*Slavery and Freedom in Savannah* also enjoyed praise from the local community, with visitor feedback including, “I’m really proud of the OT House for taking such a significant lead in this research and bringing broader awareness of an important issue,” and, “I went to the Owens-Thomas House and saw the Slave Quarters with new eyes. I think it’s marvelous what the museum is doing.” Additionally, in his critical review of the project, Jeff Eley, the Professor of Architectural History and Chair of Historic Preservation at the Savannah College of Art and Design wrote, “I believe *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah* has provided more insight and critically important value to our local history as any project I can recall during my 32 years living in Savannah,” illustrating the project’s impact in both public and academic circles.

Following the success of *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah*, Telfair organized a design charrette with 24 stakeholders and humanities consultants in 2015, facilitated by Deborah Mack of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. This two-day event laid the foundation for the final exhibition and interpretation strategies at the OT House, and in August 2016, Shannon Browning-Mullis, Curator of History & Decorative Arts and the Project Director for this implementation, gave a presentation on the value of incorporating the history of enslaved people on museum tours at the Association of African American Museums’ conference in Riverside, Calif., placing the OT House in the context of interpretive work nationwide. Although institutions across the country are starting to come together in reclaiming lost narratives of African Americans and adding these stories to our historical record, very few organizations—especially in the South—are focusing specifically on the area of urban slavery, making the OT House a vital resource in contributing to this broader national discussion.

#### **AUDIENCE, MARKETING, AND PROMOTION**

Telfair Museums’ Owens-Thomas House welcomes more than 70,000 people annually, 94% of them tourists to Savannah. Given our mission to bring widespread awareness to the complexities of urban

slavery in the South, the museum will maintain this broad, national audience through targeted publicity in tourism publications both regionally and nationally, including the annual *Visit Savannah Visitor's Guide*, *Georgia Travel Guide*, *Discovery Map*, *Group Tour Planner* magazine, quarterly *TravelHost*, bimonthly *Savannah Scene*, and more. The museum will advertise in publications and calendar listings in Atlanta, South Carolina, and Jacksonville to appeal especially to larger Southern audiences, with additional international marketing in the annual Guide published by *Art in America* magazine (distributed to the top international art fairs).

Expanding on these strong national tourism statistics, the OT House plans to attract a larger and more diverse local audience by launching a major initiative to make the OT House **free to all residents of Chatham County year round**, eliminating the financial barriers for Savannah citizens. Additionally, the museum will host educational outreach to local schools through traveling trunk programs, as well as a new Georgia History School Tour Program aimed specifically at eighth-graders across the community. These initiatives will be paired with an expansive local ad campaign, including features on local TV stations such as WTOG, WSAV, WJCL, and FOX, as well as a diverse range of grass roots marketing and print and broadcast media, including *Savannah Morning News*, *Connect Savannah*, *La Voz Latina*, *The Savannah Tribune*, *South* magazine, *Savannah Magazine*, Georgia Public Broadcasting, numerous urban radio stations, and WRHQ, among others. Telfair also maintains partnerships with and conducts outreach to more than 30 community centers, health and wellness centers, churches, and nonprofits throughout the city that primarily serve African Americans, ensuring opportunities to attract a more diverse local audience in both age and ethnicity.

#### **EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT'S IMPACT**

This reinterpretation plan has been informed by evaluations from visitors, community members, and humanities consultants and scholars at every stage of its development. In 2006, "People, Places and Design Research" conducted an in-depth study regarding the demographics of visitors to the OT House, their reasons for visiting, their impressions of the tour, and a preference for what they would have liked to hear more about. This feedback encouraged the museum to incorporate more stories about the enslaved workers who lived onsite, as well as to interpret the site from the perspective of all the people who lived there—black and white, enslaved and free. In 2014, this movement for reinterpretation culminated with a workshop and comprehensive design report assembled by Andrew Merriell & Associates, gathering feedback from more than 20 museum professionals, scholars, community members, and consultants. Participants overwhelmingly agreed that the experience of the OT House lacked a consistent, unifying theme to tie together the disparate stories of the many different families and time periods, which led to this finalized design.

To maintain a thorough level of evaluation throughout the course of the project's implementation, Telfair will partner with local graduate and undergraduate classes in Savannah College of Art and Design's Museum Studies Department to conduct independent testing and audience surveys during each phase of the project. In addition to collecting detailed data about the visitor experience, the museum will also track zip codes and audience demographics to ensure the project is fulfilling its goal of reaching a broad and diverse local audience. Humanities consultants will likewise weigh in on all exhibition design, text, and new scholarship throughout the grant period, and local focus groups will be invited to tour the exhibitions before opening to the public.

#### **ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE**

The first public art museum in the South, one of the oldest museums in America, and the first in the United States founded by a woman, Telfair Museums paved the way for all other art and cultural

institutions in Georgia. Founded in 1886 at the bequest of Mary Telfair, the museum emerged during a period of rampant cultural reform in the United States—on the heels of some of the country’s very first art institutions—forming the bedrock of fine arts education below the Mason-Dixon Line and the first gateway between the Old World of Europe and the American South.

Today, Telfair blends this rich history with interactive art and education programs in Savannah all year round, including world-class exhibitions, 330 free outreach workshops and art classes for youths and underserved communities (nearly one each day!), and daily Drop-In Studios so guests of all ages can practice skills with professional local artists every day of the week. Combined with a variety of other free activities, including school tours, art festivals, teen internships, historic tours, Free Family Days, and our nationally acclaimed PULSE Art + Technology Festival, Telfair helps people not only view art and learn about history, but engage with both on a personal level, becoming active as both makers and creative thinkers.

In this way, Telfair Museums balances its role as both a community organization and a thriving cultural center. Comprising three distinct museums—the Telfair Academy, the Owens-Thomas House, and the Jepson Center—Telfair Museums stewards two National Historic Landmark sites and serves 190,000 people annually (70% from outside Georgia). Telfair Museums is not only the most-visited museum in Savannah; for many residents, it is their only resource for engaging firsthand with renowned visual art. As a local Visual Arts teacher noted, “Because of the high rate of poverty among our school populations, many students would not have access to such a culturally significant facility if it were not for the programs that Telfair provides.”

With an annual operating budget of \$5 million and a full-time staff of 60 people, Telfair promotes artistic and historical excellence throughout the region, initiating programs that unite diverse audiences and achieve national recognition in the fields of art and humanities. Our mission is to offer compelling expressions of visual culture—embracing three unique buildings and three distinct collections that bridge three centuries of art and architecture. The museum develops awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the arts and serves as a dynamic cultural center connecting people of all ages and backgrounds.

## PROJECT TEAM AND HUMANITIES CONSULTANTS

### *Key Staff:*

**Shannon Browning-Mullis, Curator of History and Decorative Arts.** Shannon Browning-Mullis will serve as Project Director, overseeing the reinterpretation process and consulting with other team members as necessary. She holds an MA in History, as well as certifications in interpretation. She has overseen the interpretation and tour programs for the Owens-Thomas House and Telfair Academy for the past two years, bringing increased awareness of the lives of enslaved people at both sites.

**Jessica Estes, Registrar and Collections Manager.** Jessica Estes will oversee the installation and handling of all related exhibits and decorative art objects. She has an MFA in Historic Preservation and has managed the storage, care, and display of Telfair’s permanent collection—including cataloguing, inventorying, and condition reporting—for 10 years. As an Architectural Conservator, she restored some of Savannah’s most famous historic homes and monuments, including Harper-Fowlkes House, Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace, Mercer House, Andrew Low House, and Forsyth Park’s Confederate Monument.

**Sonja Wallen, Buildings Curator.** Sonja Wallen will oversee all renovation and preservation activities related to this implementation plan. For six years, she has managed the maintenance, conservation, restoration, and preservation of all three Telfair sites. She has an MA in Public History, and in 2015, her restoration of the Telfair Academy received a Preservation Award from the Historic Savannah Foundation. She has been contracted for numerous preservation projects throughout the United States.

**Douglas Mund, Exhibition Designer.** Doug Mund will help develop the memorial column, interactive map, and discovery cabinet. He has made museum planning, architecture, and exhibit design his exclusive practice for 35 years, designing exhibitions throughout the country. Mund’s building designs have received regional and national AIA awards for design excellence, and his exhibition designs have been recognized by The National Association of Museum Exhibition, the American Alliance of Museums, the Virginia Museum Association, and The New England Museum Association.

Humanities Consultants:

**Daina Ramey Berry, PhD.** Dr. Berry will review each phase of the project, including all text, images, and other interpretive materials. A co-writer, editor, and researcher of the publication *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah*, Dr. Berry is an Associate Professor of History and African Diaspora Studies and is the George W. Littlefield Fellow in American History at the University of Texas at Austin. She is the author of *Swing the Sickle for the Harvest is Ripe: Gender and Slavery in Antebellum Georgia*, and is Editor in Chief of the award-winning *Enslaved Women in America: An Encyclopedia*. Her current book project, “The Price for Their Pound of Flesh,” is a comprehensive study of slave valuation in the South.

**Leslie M. Harris, PhD.** Dr. Harris will review each phase of the project, including all text, images, and other interpretive materials. A co-writer, editor, and researcher of *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah*, Dr. Harris currently serves as Professor of History at Northwestern University. She is the author of the award-winning *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626–1863* and coeditor with Ira Berlin of *Slavery in New York*, which accompanied the groundbreaking New York Historical Society exhibition of the same name.

**Shawn Halifax, Cultural History Interpretation Coordinator.** Shawn Halifax will review each phase of the project, including all text, images, and other interpretive materials. Serving on the Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission, Shawn Halifax is a professional interpreter and educator of natural and cultural history, including 19 years as an interpreter, interpretive planner, manager, and director. Halifax holds a BA in History and multiple interpretation certifications.

**Christopher Mercer, MA History.** Christopher Mercer will review each phase of the project, including all text, images, and other interpretive materials. He is the current Social Studies Program Manager for the Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools System. He has 17 years of teaching and administrative experience, and will be a key figure in designing the Eighth Grade Georgia History Tour Program at the OT House, as well as other educational outreach related to this project.

**Jonathan Bryant, PhD.** Dr. Bryant will review each phase of the project, including all text, images, and other interpretive materials. A co-writer of *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah*, he is a professor of history at Georgia Southern University. He also authored *How Curious a Land: Conflict and Change in Greene County, Georgia, 1850–1885* and *Dark Places of the Earth: the Voyage of the Slave Ship Antelope*.

Contributing Scholars and Writers (The scholarship these experts contributed to our 2014 Slavery and Freedom in Savannah project will inform the new reinterpretation efforts, including text panels throughout the museum. They will not be involved in the project in a hands-on fashion.):

**Timothy Lockley, PhD.** Dr. Lockley is Director of Humanities at Research Centre and Associate Professor of History and Comparative American Studies at the University of Warwick. He has published widely on topics of race relations, slavery, and poverty in the antebellum South, with major publications including *Lines in the Sand: Race and Class in Lowcountry Georgia, 1750–1860*; *Welfare and Charity in the Antebellum South*; and *Maroon Communities in South Carolina*.

**Hilary Green, PhD.** Dr. Green is an Assistant Professor of History at Elizabeth City State University, where she teaches undergraduate courses in African American History, the American Civil War, Reconstruction, and World History. Her publications include *The Urban South During the Civil War Era* and works focusing on the development and legitimization of African American public schools.



**Gregory Mixon, PhD.** Dr. Mixon is the author of *The Atlanta Riot: Race, Class, and Violence in a New South City*. He has published articles in three journals and has a new book project examining Georgia's black militia companies, 1865–1905. He is an Associate Professor of History and is affiliated with the Africana Studies Department at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

**Felicia Bell, PhD.** Dr. Bell received her PhD from Howard University and has led programs for the US Capitol Historical Society as well as the Coastal Heritage Society. She currently serves as Director of the Rosa Parks Museum at Troy University.

**Paul Pressly, PhD.** Dr. Pressly is Director of the Ossabaw Island Education Alliance, a partnership between the Georgia Board of Regents, the Department of Natural Resources, and the Ossabaw Island Foundation. He holds a Doctorate in Philosophy from the University of Oxford and is the author of *On the Rim of the Caribbean: Colonial Georgia and the British Atlantic World*.

**Tracey Jean Boisseau, PhD.** Dr. Boisseau is Director of Women's Studies and Associate Professor of US Women's History at Purdue University. She is the author of *White Queen: May French Sheldon and the Imperial Origins of American Feminist Identity* and the coeditor of *Gendering the Fair; Feminist Legal History*; and "New Orleans: A Special Issue on Gender and the Politics of Place and Displacement" for the *National Women's Studies Association Journal*. Additional research appears in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*; *Gender and History*; and *Women's History Review*.

**Christina Snyder, PhD.** Dr. Snyder is Associate Professor of History and American Studies at Indiana University. She is the author of *Slavery in Indian Country: the Changing Face of Captivity in Early America*, which won several awards, including the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians Book Prize, the James H. Broussard Prize, and the John C. Ewers Prize. Her recent book project, supported by an ACLS Fellowship, is a transnational study of race, class, and sovereignty in the era of Indian removal.

## WORK PLAN

2017			
Month	Description of Work	Completion Time	Project Team
Jan.	Reinforce floors/steps in Carriage House; interpreters move into new offices on second floor.	2 months	Sonja Wallen
Jan.	Research/write text for Lafayette video; choose items for Lafayette case and exhibit.	5 months	Shannon Browning-Mullis, Jessica Estes
Feb.	Select items for 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor Slave Quarters; research cellar cabinetry; choose items for cellar cabinet exhibit; restoration of education gallery; research for education gallery panels; NAI training for interpreters.	5 months	Shannon Browning-Mullis; Sonja Wallen; Jessica Estes
Mar.	Write text for Orientation Gallery.	5 months	Shannon Browning-Mullis
Apr.	Gather images for Orientation Gallery; gather names of the enslaved for Memorial Column exhibit; finalize information for historical touchscreen map.	6 months	Shannon Browning-Mullis
June	Write text for Slave Quarters; gather images for Slave Quarters.	6 months	Shannon Browning-Mullis
July	Write text and gather images for kitchen panels.	5 months	Shannon Browning-Mullis
Aug.	Choose readings for Slave Quarters; write text for education gallery panels; <b>grant period begins.</b>	4 months	Shannon Browning-Mullis
Aug.	Provide Lafayette info to videographer; choose furniture	1 month	Shannon Browning-

	maker to reproduce desk for education gallery		Mullis, Jessica Estes
<b>Sept.</b>	Send Orientation Gallery text to <b>Humanities Consultants</b> for feedback; incorporate feedback.	2 months	Shannon Browning-Mullis, Daina Berry, Leslie Harris, Christopher Mercer, Jonathan Bryant, Shawn Halifax
<b>Oct.</b>	Design Memorial Column; design touchscreen map; * research and design discovery cabinet; gather house dimensions for historic preservation and cistern exhibits.	2 months	Shannon Browning-Mullis, Douglas Mund
<b>Nov.</b>	Update HVAC in Basement to remove modern ductwork for historical accuracy and to allow for new Education Galleries; send Slave Quarters readings to <b>Humanities Consultants</b> for feedback; incorporate feedback.	3 months	Shannon Browning-Mullis, Sonja Wallen, Daina Berry, Leslie Harris, Shawn Halifax, Christopher Mercer, Jonathan Bryant
<b>Dec.</b>	Design text panels; send 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor Slave Quarters text and education gallery text to <b>Humanities Consultants</b> for feedback; write text for discovery cabinet; send plans to designer for historic preservation and cistern exhibits; gather text and images for bathing chamber.	3 months	Shannon Browning-Mullis, Daina Berry, Leslie Harris, Shawn Halifax, Christopher Mercer, Jonathan Bryant
<b>2018</b>			
<b>Jan.</b>	Fabricate Memorial Column and touchscreen map; * select voice actors; design kitchen touch panel; send text for kitchen panels, bathing chamber, and discovery cabinet to <b>Humanities Consultants</b> for feedback; incorporate feedback.	3 months	Shannon Browning-Mullis, Douglas Mund, Daina Berry, Leslie Harris, Shawn Halifax, Christopher Mercer, Jonathan Bryant
<b>Jan.</b>	Design physical and digital models for cistern; gather images for cistern panels *	2 months	Shannon Browning-Mullis; SCAD
<b>Jan.</b>	Produce Lafayette video; produce project video	12 months	Videographer Michael Jordan
<b>Feb.</b>	Produce voice recordings; design AV for Slave Quarters; produce projection of enslaved woman; complete laundry soundscape design; write text for cistern panels; contract designer for glass bridge in bathing chamber; review completed Orientation Gallery panels.*	4 months	Shannon Browning-Mullis, Douglas Mund; Sonja Wallen
<b>Mar.</b>	Fabricate physical and digital model s for cistern; design discovery cabinet; design kitchen panels; design rail panels for Slave Quarters. *	2 months	Douglas Mund, SCAD
<b>Mar.</b>	Fabricate touch panel in preservation gallery*	4 months	Douglas Mund
<b>Apr.</b>	Install exhibits in Orientation Gallery; open Orientation Gallery to public.	1 month	Douglas Mund, Jessica Estes
<b>Apr.</b>	Review design for 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor Slave Quarters; contract designer for cistern; stabilize cistern; send cistern text to <b>Humanities Consultants</b> for feedback; design bathing chamber panels.	1 month	Shannon Browning-Mullis, Daina Berry, Leslie Harris, Shawn Halifax, Christopher Mercer, Sonja Wallen

<b>May</b>	Clean and repaint Slave Quarters; review kitchen panels.	1 month	Shannon Browning-Mullis, Sonja Wallen
<b>May</b>	Fabricate discovery cabinet. *	3 months	Douglas Mund
<b>June</b>	Install artifacts/exhibits/AV in 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor Slave Quarters; laminate original documents for desk; review designs for laundry, cistern, and bathing chamber; send voice panel readings to <b>Humanities Consultants</b> for feedback.	1 month	Shannon Browning-Mullis, Jessica Estes, Douglas Mund, Daina Berry, Leslie Harris, Shawn Halifax, Christopher Mercer, Jonathan Bryant
<b>July</b>	Install panels in kitchen; install touch panel in preservation gallery; order ipads and mounts	1 month	Jessica Estes, Douglas Mund
<b>July</b>	Fabricate glass bridge; design/fabricate voice panel. *	3 months	Douglas Mund
<b>Aug.</b>	Install laundry AV; clean cellar; review cistern panels; install books in reading nook.	1 month	Shannon Browning-Mullis, Jessica Estes, Douglas Mund
<b>Aug.</b>	Produce recordings for voice panel.	3 months	Douglas Mund
<b>Sept.</b>	Install digital models on ipads; clean bathing chamber; install cistern floor; install discovery cabinet.	1 month	SCAD, Sonja Wallen, Jessica Estes, Douglas Mund
<b>Oct.</b>	Install cistern panels; install house model; install ipads; order screen for Lafayette video	1 month	Jessica Estes, Sonja Wallen, Shannon Browning-Mullis
<b>Nov.</b>	Install bridge; install bathing chamber panels	1 month	Jessica Estes, Sonja Wallen
<b>Dec.</b>	Install education gallery panels; install desk; install artifacts in discovery cabinet; install items in Lafayette case; install Lafayette AV; <b>open to public in 2019.</b>	1 month	Jessica Estes, Sonja Wallen, Shannon Browning-Mullis
<b>* All exhibition fabrication includes biweekly meetings between the Exhibition Designer and Project Director.</b>			

## FUNDRAISING PLAN

In addition to this NEH grant, Telfair will seek support for this unique project from a combination of local individual and corporate donors, and other major grant funders, such as the Robert Woodruff Foundation and the Tull Charitable Trust, which are both currently considering funding in support of the capital portions of the OT House reinterpretation project. In early 2017, Telfair will launch a large-scale fundraising campaign, as well as a professionally produced video, to garner additional support for the project and begin to build interest in the new tour design among the local and regional community.

With commitments already totaling \$90,000, Telfair's staff leadership and board of trustees is confident the museum will be able to reach its goal of fully funding all parts of the project by the end of 2018. In addition to balanced \$5 million budgets for the past five years, recent fundraising successes include a \$5 million endowment campaign, *Securing the Future*, which commenced in 2014 and was successfully concluded in September 2016. This followed a highly successful and popular exhibition campaign that raised \$1 million to fund the exhibition cycle for three years, from 2011 through 2014. The board of trustees of Telfair Museums has a history of exceptional fundraising ability: together with leaders of the city, the museum raised \$40 million to fund the now 10-year-old, Moshe Safdie-designed Jepson Center for the Arts. Fundraising for the planning, design, construction, and operation of this state-of-the-art building began in the 1980s and continued through 2006, when it opened. The OT House project, deeply rooted in Telfair's mission and vision for the future, is a similarly vital priority.

## Project Walkthrough

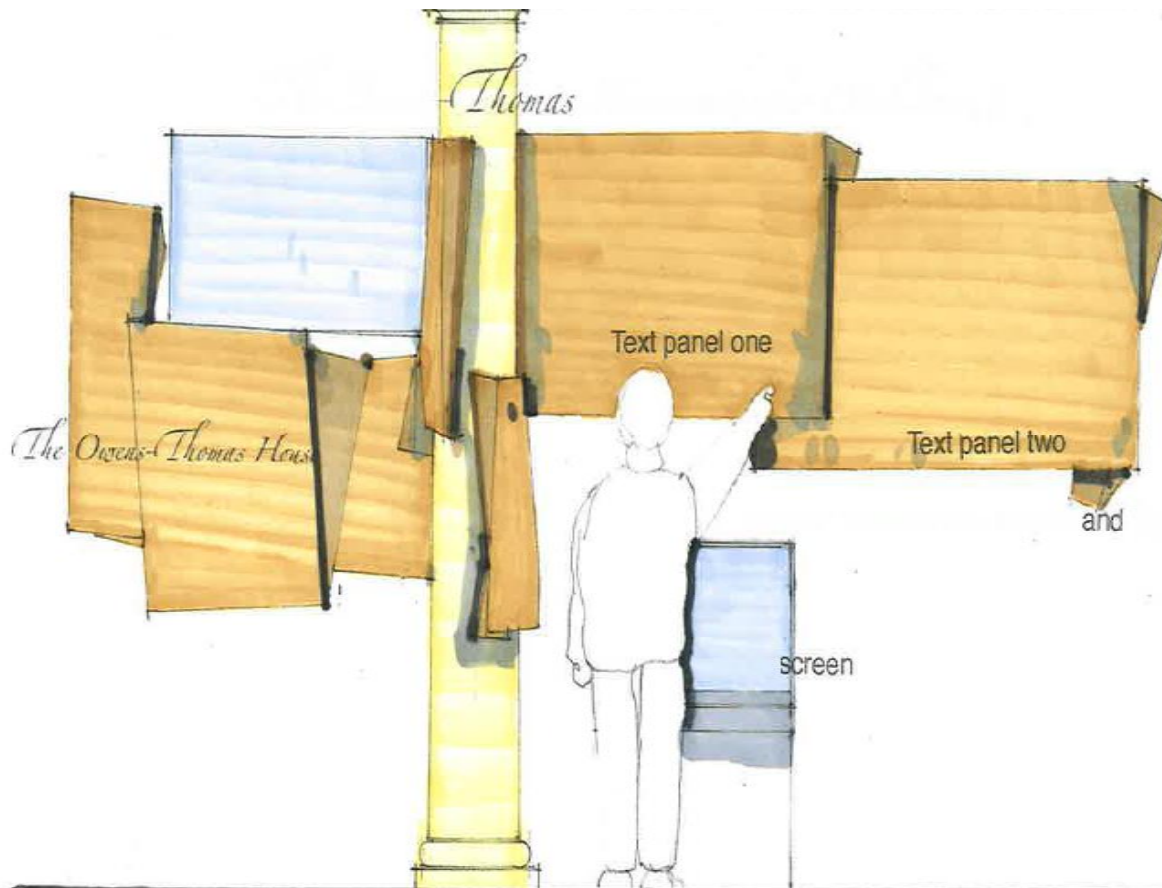
The following Project Walkthrough for Telfair Museums' reinterpreted Owens-Thomas House and Slave Quarters provides a detailed layout for a new, expanded visitor experience—one that engages audiences in an interactive story about the free and enslaved people who lived and worked at the site. Delving into the lives of the women, men, and children of the house, this project offers a unique opportunity to explore the dynamics of urban slavery through the lens of a historic site that captures the relationship between the most powerful and the least powerful people in Savannah in the 1820s and 1830s.

Employing interpreter-led tours as well as self-guided experiences, this project will immerse visitors in an honest investigation of larger themes such as the early 19<sup>th</sup> century slave economy, gender history, domestic technology, and the complex relationships that arose as lives intertwined between the main house and slave quarters. In this way, the Owens-Thomas House provides a rare snapshot of American history and how urban life changed in the decades following the War of 1812. Building on new research published in the award-winning book *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah*, this reinterpretation project will tell distinct stories about the free and enslaved residents of the Owens-Thomas House, expressed through preserved artifacts such as furnishings, paint finishes, architectural elements, archeological remnants, and original documents. This site-specific model will enable the museum to present narratives from diverse perspectives, allowing visitors to make deeper connections between our past and present.

Major grant-funded projects include the new multimedia Orientation Gallery in the original carriage house, the reinterpreted Slave Quarters, and the interactive Education Gallery in the Owens-Thomas House basement—with hands-on exhibits, learning activities, tangible artifacts, and digital documents for both children and adults.

### **ORIENTATION GALLERY (GRANT-FUNDED)**

Visitors will enter the site through an iron gate **(1)** toward the rear of the property, near the Carriage House. After purchasing tickets from a ticket booth **(2)**, visitors will begin their experience in the new **Orientation Gallery (3)**, housed in the former Carriage House and stables (most recently home to the gift shop). The Orientation Gallery is designed to give visitors a framework for the information they will receive on the tour and will introduce the historical landscape of Savannah and the people who lived and worked at the site. In addition, the exhibit will provide a timeline of events and a visual introduction to power dynamics. Experienced through touchscreen maps, visuals, and interpretive wall text, the themes introduced in the Orientation Gallery will recur in more depth throughout the guided tour. This multifaceted approach allows people with a variety of learning styles to engage with the material as both listeners and active participants.



For example, in the Orientation Gallery, visitors will encounter a section describing house guest Marquis de Lafayette's antislavery views, which will also be addressed verbally on the guided tour, and later expounded in the Education Gallery through related artifacts, primary documents, and an educational video. This layering of information will allow audiences to build upon and retain new knowledge throughout the course of their visit.

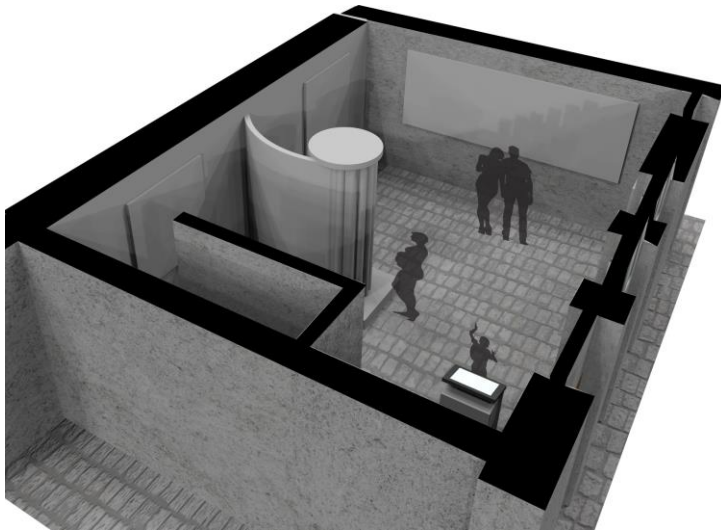
As guests enter the orientation gallery, they will face a free standing wall **(3a)** that expresses the main themes they will encounter during their visit. The panel will explain that the slave economy, gender norms, complex relationships, and architecture and technology will be used to explore power dynamics between the most powerful and least powerful people in urban Savannah in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: white landowners and their enslaved servants.

Circling the gallery, visitors will first encounter an interpretive text panel on the west wall titled ***People and Place (3b)***. This will familiarize visitors with basic details about the site and the house, including dates of the original construction and subsequent alterations, as well as an overview of its occupants. The text panel will also present information about the children and animals that lived on this site or others like it in the city. Free and enslaved children regularly interacted on the site and spent significant amounts of time together. We will ask children to consider what types of games they might have played. Archaeologists excavated 19<sup>th</sup> century marbles from the slave quarters courtyard, suggesting that the inhabitants played the game. These visuals will invite our guests, especially children, to imagine how people in this era spent their time—coupled with site-specific information from census records, court documents, estate records, newspapers,

and city ordinances, such as a citation Richardson received from the city of Savannah after his cow blocked a roadway, a unique piece of evidence for the existence and extent of animals on the OT House grounds.

Next, on the south wall, visitors will explore a large **Richardson Family Tree (3c)**, displaying dates and short biographies about the first owners of the home, the Richardson family. Here, they will learn about the house's architect, William Jay, who was related to the Richardsons by marriage, and about the 8 to 13 enslaved people who resided onsite with the Richardson family. The text will also describe Richardson's conflicting roles as both a slave trader and as an advocate for free people of color, introducing visitors to the complexities of wealth, slavery, and urban life in Savannah.

In the southeast corner, a panel will display information about boardinghouse entrepreneur Mary Maxwell and her most famous guest, the **Marquis de Lafayette (3d)**. Maxwell's story offers a fascinating glimpse into the life of a 19<sup>th</sup> century businesswoman, explored through her tenure at the Owens-Thomas House from 1824 to 1830. During that time, the Marquis de Lafayette made his final tour of the United States, stopping in Savannah in March 1825. By that time, he was the last surviving major general from the American Revolution and one of our nation's most celebrated heroes. His two-night stay in the Owens-Thomas House, known then as the Maxwell Boarding House, represented a significant moment in the house's history.



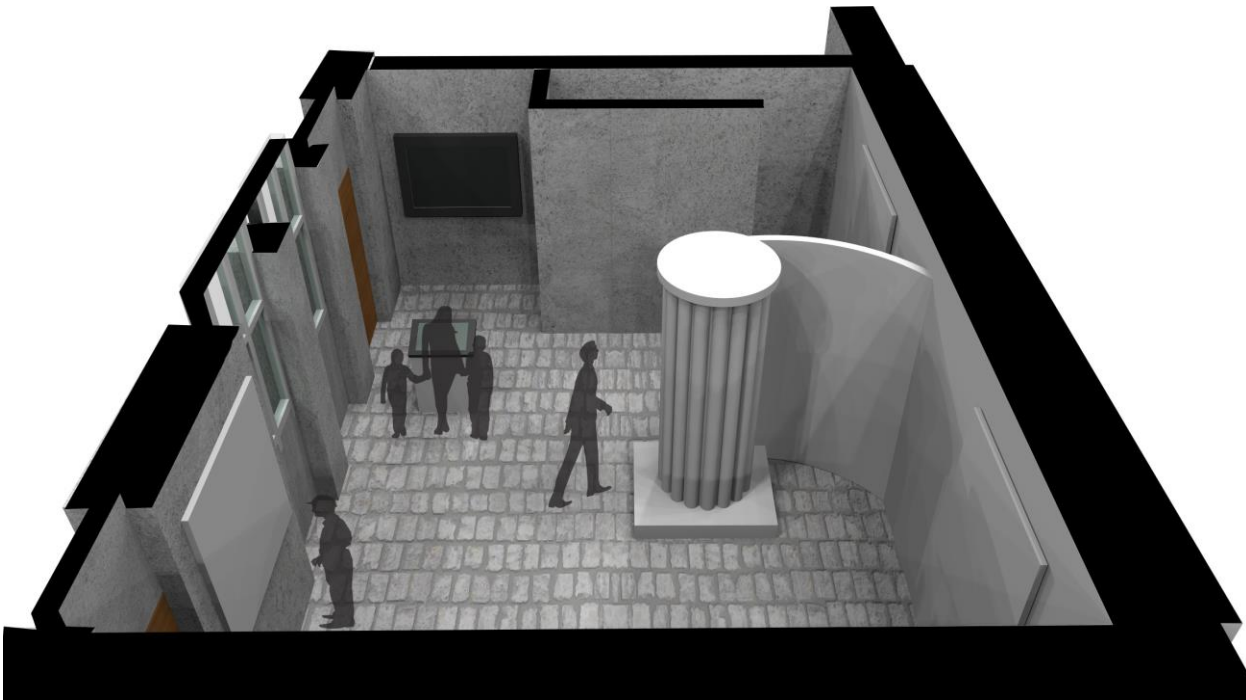
Continuing to the east wall, guests will encounter an **Owens-Thomas Family Tree (3e)** for the next owners of the house and the 9 to 14 enslaved members of their urban household. This wall will also feature a prominent list of names of the 340 enslaved people owned by the Owens family on their plantations. While these people did not live onsite, their enforced labor permitted the Owens family to live in such a

grand home, and their enslavement sustained both Savannah's economic system and the luxuries of urban life. Similar to the well-received wall of names displayed in the 2014 award-winning exhibition *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah*, these names will dominate the eastern wall and extend into a spiral column positioned in the center of the room. As guests follow the curving wall, they will literally be surrounded by the names of the people who were enslaved by the Owens family. Resembling an architectural support, this **Memorial Column** serves as a metaphor for the enslaved men, women, and children who formed the backbone of the Southern economy and whose toil made the lifestyle seen in the Owens-Thomas House possible, while simultaneously mirroring the classical architecture of the home. When visitors walk into the spiral, the names of enslaved people will provide a physical reminder that this type of wealth and privilege did not exist in a vacuum.



In addition to the family information on the south and east walls, a timeline that spans the founding of Georgia to the opening of the museum will cover the bottom third of the wall to allow visitors to put the events of the home into historical context.

Last, on the north wall, visitors will encounter an interactive **Touchscreen Map (3f)** with an enhanced reproduction on an attached monitor. This map, which will be a manipulated reproduction of an actual historical map of Savannah, will provide context for the history of the home by illustrating the geographic and chronologic confines of historic Savannah. For example, how large was the city when the yellow fever epidemic of 1820 killed a tenth of the population, or how many free people of color lived in the city? As visitors touch structures on the map, information about the site and its inhabitants will appear. For example, when guests touch the site of Andrew Marshall's home, they will learn how he fared financially as a free person of color under Richard Richardson's legal guardianship. Then they can touch First African Baptist Church to find out about Andrew Marshall's involvement and its role in Savannah's African American community. The larger monitor on the wall will duplicate each touchscreen image, allowing multiple users to watch, read, and learn while one visitor guides the information from the touchscreen. Interpreters can use this technology to introduce their guests to the city, or teachers can utilize it to bring Savannah history alive for their students. For example, an educator could trace the life of Andrew Marshall from slavery to freedom through the homes of his successive owners, to his own home after freedom as well as the church he pastored. This in-depth, visual access to neighborhoods and structures surrounding the house will enhance visitors' understanding of the people who lived and worked at the house and their place in the community.



#### **SLAVE QUARTERS (GRANT-FUNDED)**

Visitors will have 10-20 minutes to enjoy the exhibits in the Orientation Gallery before an interpreter joins them to begin the guided portion of the tour. After a brief introduction, the guide will escort their



audience next door to the **Slave Quarters (4a)**. With the exception of a few benches, the first level of the Slave Quarters will be empty. The interpreter will explain the layout of the space and note details about the architecture. For example, numerous windows provided ample light throughout the space, and also gave enslaved people opportunities to interact with people on the street outside the complex. This arrangement is in stark contrast to notable urban slave quarters in places like Charleston, South Carolina, where the model was to keep slaves confined and separate from one another. Interpreters will explore the differences in these cities and the background of this architect to encourage guests to consider the motivations for Jay's design. Interpreters will also explore how these architectural details affected the power dynamics and relationships on this site and in the city. After considering the physical space, guides will discuss the daily complexities of the lives of people who lived in this space, through the lens of the themes of the site. After the interpreter's presentation is complete, **recorded excerpts of slave narratives** will give a representative voice to the people who inhabited these Slave Quarters while people explore both levels of the space. These narratives were compiled through interviews done by the WPA during the 1930s. Our project will focus only on those interviews conducted in Georgia. Although we don't have oral histories from these particular people, voice actors will read narratives from enslaved people with experiences similar to those of Peter, Diane, Emma, Fanny, or Kate. For example, one woman describes the jobs she and her younger siblings performed while they were enslaved in Georgia as children. Fanny likely carried out similar duties at the OT House.

Like the first floor, the second level **(4b)** of the Slave Quarters no longer has internal dividing walls. Ghost marks on the floor, however, indicate the original layout of the rooms. In contrast to the meticulous records—including receipts, inventories, and wills—kept by the slaveholders in the Main House, belongings of the enslaved people remain largely unknown today. Due to a lack of documentation about the contents of this space, **three separate installations** will propose possible living scenarios. One room will include a small bed with a Spanish moss mattress and woven coverlet, table, chair, candle lantern, and a few other personal items that appear to have been handed down from the owner's family after they were discarded. Another room will include bed rolls and a few personal items. The third room will display only a worn blanket and straw for bedding. Providing three possible living situations gives visitors visual clues to imagine life in the Slave Quarters. Using the exhibits as examples, interpreters will emphasize the complexities of ownership for enslaved people and consider how the furnishings of the slave quarters are an extension of both the power dynamics of the people here and the complex relationships that affected those dynamics.

## MAIN HOUSE

The group will exit the slave quarters and enter the **Parterre Garden (5)**. Their interpreter will explain that the current garden was originally a work yard, and will detail the route that enslaved people took through this space to the Main House to begin their daily tasks. They will also describe the revisionist history that dominated the South in recent decades. Installations like formal gardens detracted from the original use of spaces for the enslaved, like work yards. Only recently have communities and museums begun to reincorporate their full history into public spaces. The group will ascend the rear stairs to the **Back Porch (6)**, where the interpreter will discuss the home's Regency architecture, including its sophisticated plumbing system, and William Jay, the home's architect. The innovative plumbing system and technology

will also be addressed. As visitors enter the back doors the guide will prompt them to consider who might have entered these doors, and who might have used the formal entrance at the front of the house.

Groups will enter the **Back Hall (7)**, then proceed to the **Master Bedchamber (8)** to the left of the Back Hall. This area included a separate bathroom with a flush water closet (**8a**) and a bathtub and sink (**8b**). The Marquis de Lafayette slept in this room for two nights in March 1825. After explaining the historical use of this space, interpreters will explore the Marquis' views on slavery, and how his abolitionist leanings affected his stay in Savannah. Savannah slaveholders and local politicians (usually one and the same) banned enslaved people and free people of color from parade routes and ceremonies associated with Lafayette's visit. Still, Lafayette could not be deterred from visiting with an elderly enslaved man who had been assigned as his servant during the American Revolution.

Crossing the Back Hall to the **Family Dining Room (9)**, visitors will see the area that served as the main living quarters for the resident families. Used as a multipurpose room, this is where families took meals together, children worked on lessons, and ladies attended to the business of running a household. In addition to the table used for family meals and lessons, the room will contain the desk that Sarah Owens used for daily business. Interpreters will describe some of the tasks she performed and how her decisions affected the lives of the enslaved people under her control. They will also consider how gender roles impacted Sarah's decisions and ability to serve as her husband's proxy in the business world.

The family dining room also allowed access to the **Butler's Pantry (10)**. Located to the east of the family dining room, the Butler's Pantry is the site's most recently restored room, and it prompts interpreters to lead a group discussion about the intricacies of running a household, including the complicated relationship between the woman of the house, the enslaved butler, and the master of the house. Visitors will explore how the butler's position might have alienated him from his peers. In many ways, the butler lived a privileged life among the enslaved. He enjoyed more comfortable accommodations, larger quantities of food, and greater access to financial resources; many slave owners, including George Owens, willed money to their butlers. Still, their position could not be seen as comfortable. By its nature, the role of the butler placed him above the rest of the enslaved household and in some ways aligned his authority with that of the master of the house. To other slaves, this authority was often seen as collaboration. While in this space, guests also have the opportunity to view original glassware and ceramics belonging to the families who lived here.

Groups continue their tour in the **Formal Dining Room (11)** at the front of the house, where a grand table is set for a formal dinner. Here, guides describe entertaining practices of the day, including the roles of enslaved workers. Three portraits on display in this room present important figures in the home's history: Robert and Sarah Bolton (parents of Frances Bolton Richardson, the first lady of the house) and Robert Bolton, Jr. (Frances's brother). The Boltons resided in a house across the square from the Owens-Thomas House and were closely connected to Richard Richardson. Robert Bolton, Jr., was Richardson's former business partner, and he relocated to Liverpool, England, to train in the ministry under the Reverend William Jay (father of William Jay, the architect). Bolton married Reverend Jay's daughter, Anne, which led to architect William Jay's first commission in the United States: the Owens-Thomas House. Jay went on to design many other private and public buildings in Savannah and Charleston, including the Telfair Mansion, now part of Telfair Museums' Telfair Academy. Interpreters will describe the wealth and business holdings

of the Bolton's, who were primarily shipping merchants, and consider how their wealth was connected to the slave economy.

Visitors will encounter a portrait of Jay's sister, Anne, and her two eldest children when they enter the **Drawing Room (12)**. This portrait, along with that of her husband in the previous room, was painted by William Etty, a well-known English painter and family friend of the Jays. In the Drawing Room, visitors will consider the roles of women in greater detail. Interpreters will discuss not only women's role in social engagements, but also their legal, financial, and societal limitations. For example, they will learn how Frances Bolton's brother arranged for Richard Richardson to sign a prenuptial agreement, and how Sarah Owens contributed to running her husband's plantations when George Owens traveled or served in congress.

The **Front Entrance (13)** to the house awes visitors, as was Jay's original intention. Here, busts of Lord Byron and Sir Walter Scott—both owned by George Owens—flank the staircase on marble consoles. The Southern slave owning elite was enchanted by the work of Byron, Scott, and other Romantic authors whose worldviews seemed to justify and glorify their way of life. In fact, the themes and symbolic motifs of the architecture, art, and literature of the period served as reference, and sometimes justification, for how the wealthy viewed their society and their relationship to the enslaved. Two fluted columns, topped with gilded Corinthian capitals, delineate the public and private areas of the house while also providing a framework for the stunning grand staircase, complete with brass inlaid risers and handrails and cast-iron balusters painted bronze with gilded accents. Interpreters will note that all members of the household, both free and enslaved, used the grand staircase to move between floors. As visitors ascend the staircase to the second floor, they will notice an arched bridge that connects the front and rear halls on the second floor. This unique feature completes the grand staircase, which interpreters will use to illustrate the creativity and innovation of the young architect.

Visitors will see two other bedrooms, a library, and remnants of former plumbing fixtures on the second floor. Here, interpreters reference how the house functioned as a family home, with multiple children (six each in both the Richardson and Owens families), other family, and friends living in the house, as well as the enslaved staff who cleaned and cared for these privileged people. Interpreters will invite visitors to consider where these people might have slept, and how their arrangements changed when guests visited. Toys on view recognize the presence of children, and a pallet rolled and tucked under a bed notes the presence of an enslaved servant sleeping nearby. Interpreters will lead guests in discussions about the relationship between the nanny, the children, and the rest of the family. Specific references to people who lived in the home will be included when possible, including Emma and Mom Kate—the nanny and wet nurse for the Owens family. George Owens' will, family correspondence, and census records reveal some details about these women. Audiences will consider the emotional relationships and power dynamics that existed between enslaved nannies and the children they raised.

In the **Upstairs Hall (14)**, which formerly included a water closet and sink, guides will explain the house's unique plumbing system and how that technology differentiated the house from others of the day. In a time when privies and chamber pots were the norm, Jay's innovative indoor plumbing system made the Richardsons' home a modern marvel. Some boards have been removed from the hallway floor and

replaced with glass to allow visitors to see the cistern and flushing mechanism that serviced the master bathroom below, giving a partial look at how the home functioned behind the walls.

The **Library (15)**, located in the northeast corner of the house, contains the congressional debate records from George Welshman Owens' tenure in congress. Owens served in the House of Representatives from 1834 to 1839. His first speech to congress took place on December 21, 1835, where he argued,

*That, in the opinion of this House, the question of the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia ought not be entertained by Congress. And be it further resolved, that in case any petitions praying the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia be hereafter presented, it is the deliberate opinion of this House that the same ought to be laid on the table without reading.*

Owens began the debate that resulted in the first notorious Gag Rule, a resolution that passed repeatedly in various incarnations in subsequent years. This rule, supported by a strong coalition of Southern congressmen, curtailed any discussion of the abolition of slavery on the floor of Congress. Interpreters will discuss this political move and finish the tour of the Main House with this examination of the larger national conversation about slavery and freedom in America.

#### **BASEMENT (GRANT-FUNDED)**

Visitors will follow their guide down the back steps and into the **Basement (16)**. The Basement will feature self-guided educational experiences in all its spaces. Interpreters will briefly introduce the space and its layout, and invite guests to explore at their leisure while guides remain available to answer questions and engage in continued discussion. Some benches will be available in the central hall of the basement to allow visitors to rest and reflect or wait for other members of their party to explore. In addition, a small nook under the staircase will be transformed into a reading nook for children, complete with cushions, pillows, and children's books related to topics discussed in the house like slavery and freedom, the Underground Railroad, and women and girls in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Going in a counterclockwise fashion, visitors will first enter the original **Kitchen (17)**, which will be used to interpret preservation and restoration. Interpretive panels will describe the original use of the space, including the remains of kitchen features like the bake oven. Other panels and hands-on activities will focus on the concepts of preservation and restoration and how these techniques have informed the conservation of the house over time. Visitors will note the distinct difference between preservation, used on the intact exterior of the house and the original features of the basement, and the restored walls and interior spaces on the upper floors. Text panels will guide visitors to reflect on why owners maintained certain areas of the house over the years, while neglecting other spaces. Touch panels with building materials used on the site—such as tabby and coquina—will give children and adults a tactile experience of the house, while protecting original surfaces.

Next, visitors will encounter the **Laundry Room (18)**. Furnished as though someone is currently doing the wash, with huge metal cauldrons heating water and wooden basins for washing, the room will feature a projection of an enslaved woman washing on one of the walls, while a soundscape of water and humming help to create the mood in this space.

Continuing into the **Cellar (19)** from the Laundry Room, visitors will learn how occupants of the home utilized the cellar for storage. As a focal point in the room, a reproduced cabinet with locked doors will hold typical items stored in the space, such as sugar, flour, alcohol, and tea. Using labeled keys attached to the cabinet on retractable cords, visitors will be able to access and open each lock. Labels on the keys will identify “Lady of the House,” “Master of the House,” “Butler,” and “Cook.” Children (and adults) must attempt to open the doors with various keys to see who would have access to the stored items. Once the door is opened, information about the role of the owner of the keys is displayed on the inside panel of the door.

Next, visitors will step into the basement **Cistern (20)**, located in the west central area of the basement, to learn more about the plumbing system. The cistern floor will be covered with a glass platform to allow visitors access and visibility to the entire space, while protecting fragile historic surfaces. Diagrams of how the plumbing functioned in the house, as well as other examples of plumbing from the period, will be displayed in this location. A small, translucent replica of the entire house will illustrate, via color elements, plumbing components, including lead pipes, terracotta pipes, flush water closets, cisterns, bathtubs, showers, and sinks. Digital models of the house will be available via iPads mounted to the model’s base. Visitors will also have the opportunity to view the ice chamber via a raised platform in this space. The availability of ice in this house in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century reinforces the modernity of the design, as well as the wealth and luxury of the owners.

The southwest room in the basement originally served as the family **Bathing Room (21)**, which contained two marble bathtubs and a standing shower. Today, the tubs are gone, and the original floor tiles have been removed to reveal the drainage pipes. Visitors will walk into the space on a glass bridge that allows them to examine the room’s features. Labels will explain the room’s original layout and the remnants of original features.



The **Education Gallery (22)**, the final room in the Basement, will feature multiple in-depth explorations of the themes presented and/or discussed elsewhere on the tour. Designed to access diverse learning styles, the gallery will broaden and strengthen visitors’ understanding of key topics—especially the slave economy—and look further at people associated with the site throughout the city. Interpretive stations will include a Discovery Cabinet, Voice Panel, and a reproduced Owens-family desk, as well as sections

focusing on The Marquis de Lafayette, The Plantation Economy, Free People of Color, and The Legacy of Slavery. Visitors may interact with these stations as they choose, but they will be positioned in the order presented, moving clockwise from the entrance of the room.

An unfinished-wood replica of an early-19<sup>th</sup>-century desk (**22a**) owned by the Owens family will give guests a chance to get the feel of the actual piece, which they will see during the tour upstairs. The writing surface of the desk will include a quill, ink, and parchment for use by visitors. The drawers will contain laminated reproductions of various original documents relevant to the running of a plantation and household, including letters between Sarah and George Owens, plantation account records, and Alexander Telfair's "rules of running my Thorn Island Plantation." A text panel to the left of the desk (**22b**) will explain gender roles, highlighting Sarah Owens' contributions to the household and plantation management. George Owens served multiple terms in political office, and his tenures in state and national government necessitated long absences from home, during which Sarah often served as his proxy or manager. Their letters talk of bales of cotton, prices for horses and carriages, dealings with other Savannah businessmen, and slave management. The panel on the right (**22c**) will feature a map of Georgia illustrating the location of the Owens family's plantations with the number of slaves held on each site. This panel will explore how the plantation system enabled the lifestyle enjoyed by the Southern elite and provided the economic fuel to urban areas like Savannah.

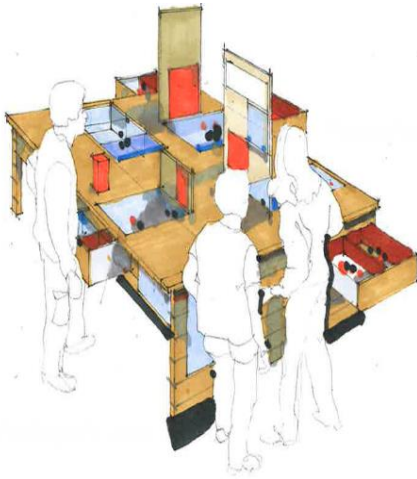
The next panel (**22d**) will consider the lives of African Americans in Savannah more deeply by exploring African American churches, free people of color, interaction between free and enslaved people, and the concept of guardianship. Andrew Marshall, First African Baptist Church's most important minister and a former slave who was later under the guardianship of Richard Richardson, will be the focus. African American churches and their congregations play a significant role in the history of Savannah and the local African American community. First African Baptist Church was a stop on the Underground Railroad, and the pastor of this church served as the unofficial leader of Savannah's African American community. Closer to the Owens-Thomas House, Second African Baptist Church played an important role in the Civil War, as the site where Sherman read the famous but short-lived field order No. 15, which later became popularly known as the promise of "forty acres and a mule."

In the center of the space, a 3-foot square vitrine (**22e**) will feature artifacts and decorative arts that are relevant to topics currently being discussed in temporary exhibitions at our other two sites. Examples include historic photographs during photography exhibitions and miniatures of Telfair family members during portrait exhibitions. This vitrine can also be used for small displays referencing significant occasions like Juneteenth, which Telfair celebrates annually in a family festival at the museums' Jepson Center.

The interpretive panels (**22f**) on the east wall will explore how the power dynamics of the slave economy continue to affect the legacy of slavery on race relations in America from the Civil War, through Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights Movement, to the current economic inequality and institutional racism our nation still struggles with today.

Expanding on the voices heard in the Slave Quarters, the **Voice Panel (22g)** on the south wall will feature recorded voices of individuals reading documents written by or associated with people connected to the site, including former occupants, enslaved people, and relevant historically significant figures, and which reflect on or expand understanding of our main themes. For example, a letter from George Welshman Owens to his wife, Sarah, in 1818 reads as follows: "I have received only two letters from you. I am engaged in the speculation for the purchase of Johnston's negroes but fear shall not succeed. If not and they are sold you will buy Smart's wife and Sampson's to comply with a promise I have made them. If

there is any other prime negro man also with any wife purchase for him also. If you have not money enough you can obtain it in bank and Mr. Anderson will endorse your note as my attorney.” Other letters will include the punishment of an Owens family slave at the local jail and the medical treatment of the enslaved nanny, Emma, in Philadelphia. The text that appears on the voice panel will invite guests to imagine the perspective of the enslaved person being discussed in the letter, but whose words were not preserved. Several headphones will be mounted on the panel for use by multiple visitors. This display will also include an audio port to allow visitors to use their own earbuds if desired.



The **Discovery Cabinet (22h)** will feature multiple drawers, each divided in half. One half of each drawer will contain an artifact from the house, protected by glass. The opposite side will contain a reproduction that guests are invited to touch. For example, one drawer will contain fragments of the original floor cloths. The other side of this drawer will contain a piece of the reproduced floor cloths on view throughout the house, which visitors can touch and handle. Above the cabinet, an interpretive panel will tell the history of archaeological and architectural investigations on the property, including photographs and diagrams from these studies.

An exhibit featuring the Marquis de Lafayette will dominate the hearth on the western wall of the room **(22i)**. A short video will describe Lafayette’s abolitionist leanings, his correspondence with America’s founding fathers encouraging an end to American slavery, and his plantation for freed slaves in French Guiana. Built into the video case, shelves will house several items relevant to this important historical figure, including a silver snuffbox owned by the Lafayette family. The snuffbox is significant for its history of ownership and beauty, but more significantly, because the image on the box, which originates in Greek mythology, may have abolitionist connections.

Visitors will exit the Education Gallery through the relocated **Gift Shop (23)**, back into the garden, where they may linger and contemplate their new knowledge, and enjoy the atmosphere and the warm Savannah climate.



# Project Walkthrough Map

