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At the Omni Charlottesville Hotel, John H. Works Jr. explains the aims and intentions of the new Thomas Jefferson Foundation Inc.

## New Jefferson foundation unveiled

By ADRIENNE SCHWISOW  
Daily Progress staff writer

Claiming the organization that owns Monticello has succumbed to political correctness at the expense of scholarly historical study, a descendant of Thomas Jefferson announced Saturday that a new foundation will take a serious look into previous conclusions that Jefferson likely fathered children of one of his slaves.

The new group will take into account information that it alleges a study last year disregarded, such as denials of an affair from Jefferson's granddaughter and his confidante, James Madison. Representatives of the group said they will fill the gap left when the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation Inc.'s "shallow, shoddy scholarship" concluded that Jefferson likely fathered slave Sally Hemings' children.

The new Thomas Jefferson Foundation Inc. disputes findings by another group concerning the third president's relationship with his slave Sally Hemings.

"The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation wants to weigh oral history from the Hemings family more seriously than eyewitness accounts from the time," charged John H. Works Jr., president of the new group, the Thomas Jefferson Foundation Inc., and a sixth generation grandson of Jefferson.

But the two foundations disagree about more than history.

The memorial foundation took legal action Friday to prevent the new group from using the name "Thomas Jefferson Foundation," alleging that it is too similar.

"We are seeking ways to persuade the other group to choose a name less duplicative and confusing," said Daniel P. Jordan, president of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, Inc., in a statement Saturday.

The two groups will face off in federal court in Charlottesville on Monday.

This weekend marks the annual meeting of the Monticello Association, made up of descendants of Jefferson's two daughters. The association announced last week that it is not yet ready to make a recommendation regarding whether Hemings' descendants should be allowed into the association.

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# Jefferson

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As at last year's event, descendants of Hemings' children are attending as guests, but not family members.

Excluded from Saturday's news conference at the Omni Charlottesville Hotel, several Hemings descendants charged Works' new foundation as being racist and creating division in the family.

"Our country's history was written by white men who played down the roles of slaves and women," said California resident Mary Jefferson, a descendant of Eston Hemings, one of Sally Hemings' sons.

"It's time for us to add on to it, correct it and clear it up."

DNA test results released in November 1998 linked descendants of Jefferson's uncle, Field Jefferson, to descendants of Eston Hemings.

Scientists compared the Y chromosome, which passes virtually unchanged from father to son.

In January, the memorial foundation released its conclusions that Jefferson likely fathered one, if not all, of Hemings' children.

While the tests indicated that Jefferson could have fathered some of Hemings' children, Works said, they do not prove it wasn't any of seven other Jefferson men. Even if DNA was taken from the third

president himself, he added, it would not be conclusive.

It would take finding written evidence from Jefferson's hand, Works said, to conclude paternity definitively.

Works said Herbert Barger, a Jefferson family historian, had located the Kansas grave of one of Hemings' grandsons.

The foundation wants to test that DNA, Works said, but charged that Hemings descendants won't allow it because they are scared of the results.

"These people are knocking on the door of the association here today with their oral histories, but where is the science? It's in the grave in Kansas," Barger said.

But Hemings' descendants argued that the new foundation wants to use DNA selectively so that it can eliminate people from the family, but won't use it to include people.

If Jefferson's DNA was compared directly with DNA from Hemings' children, including Madison and Eston Hemings and Thomas Woodson, paternity could be conclusively established, said Woodson descendant Michelle Cooley-Quille.

"We don't establish paternity in this country by comparing seventh generation relatives," she said. "But our oral history that's been handed down generation after generation tells us what happened."