



MENOKIN | KEY MESSAGES 2023

- Menokin, the home designed for Francis Lightfoot Lee—a signer of the Declaration of Independence—is a National Historic Landmark and one of the best documented 18th century houses in the United States.
- The Menokin Foundation is pioneering an unprecedented new approach to the historic preservation and interpretation of the 1769 house, which had fallen into ruin over the decades, and is sited on 500 acres of woodlands and waterways.
- Menokin’s “Glass House Project” will preserve and protect the remaining portions of the building, while replacing missing walls, floors, and sections of the roof with glass. Visitors will be able to enter the house and physically explore both the original structure and the new glass spaces.
- This new model for historical preservation is the only project of its kind in the world.
- Menokin’s approach to preservation and interpretation allows for something unusual at historic sites: the flexibility to evolve the stories that Menokin explores, both uncovering the evidence of the past and addressing the contemporary issues
- Menokin will continue to develop new preservation techniques that evolve with the changing times to continuously connect past stories to the present in relevant ways.
- One example is the Remembrance Structure, a pavilion at Menokin that stands above the archaeological traces of an 18th-century field slave dwelling. The pavilion’s wood framing demonstrates colonial timber-building techniques and is wrapped in a translucent agricultural fabric. The mix of contemporary and archaic elements act as a literal and metaphorical platform to open conversations about the role that slavery played in early colonial plantations.
- REID Architecture is the designer of the Remembrance Structure. REID is known for its focus on light, material, and site to create sensitive interventions that enhance the human experience of place and provides solutions with both new and existing structures.
- The National Endowment for the Humanities awarded a major grant for the Menokin project in 2019, as part of NEH’s mission to protect the nation’s history, historic sites, regional traditions, and cultural institutions, and support the advancement of learning and sharing of knowledge.
- Machado Silvetti is the architect for the Glass House Project. The firm is internationally recognized for its work on: the Getty Villa; the Alamo Museum; and Gio Ponti’s only U.S. building, the Denver Art Museum’s Martin Building. Machado Silvetti’s research-based design process merges contemporary aesthetics with complex cultural and historic contexts.
- While traditional restoration methods cover up evidence of the human story that historic structures present, the Glass House project emphasizes the deconstructed architectural elements of the house, revealing insights into the people who built, lived, and worked at Menokin.
- Fingerprints are visible in the handmade bricks, the evidence of hand tools is etched on the timbers, and the successes and failures of the builder are brought to light.

- Views out onto the surrounding landscape through the glass walls continually connect visitors to the pristine natural environment and the marks of the tobacco plantation that once stood on the site.
- This interplay of interior and exterior, historic past and modern-day design, allows a layered and complex look not only at the house itself, but people who have lived on the site over the centuries.
- Francis Lightfoot Lee and Rebecca Tayloe Lee risked their fortune and their lives for a new concept of liberty and representative government. The Menokin Foundation tells the story of origins of the United States, using the fragments of Menokin's ruins and the landscape as a lens to examine the soaring ideals and dark contradictions that built America.
- Archaeological discoveries from the site will help tell the story of those who are often overlooked in historic accounts – the plantation's enslaved laborers and the Rappahannock Tribe who lived on the land for centuries.
- The project will link together the sweep of history—the Native American experience, the arrival of the English in North America, the story of chattel slavery and privilege, the colonial period and the revolutionary war, the Civil War and civil rights, economic decline and expansion—to our own time.
- Menokin is committed to leading the national conversation on the complex issues and challenges that we still face today, and encourages visitors, students, and researchers to question who and what represents America's history.
- The Glass House Project literally gives a transparent view into history—of the home itself and the social, political, and economic dynamics on the site and in the nation, revealing how these forces have shaped our world.
- The Menokin Descendant Collective was formed in 2022. The members are direct Descendants and those related to the enslaved persons at Menokin. The Menokin Descendant Collective's mission statement reads, "As Descendants of the people enslaved at Menokin, we will be a voice for our ancestors. We will preserve their memories by seeking the truth, filling the gaps in our history and accurately telling the stories of their struggles, resilience and accomplishments. Our ultimate goal is to recognize the impact the enslaved people had on shaping our lives and the Nation."
- Menokin strives to tell the stories of all those who inhabited the land, past, present, and future to shape a more complete story of the landscape and its relation to the history of the region.

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