

BELMONT MANSION

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**AUTHOR JOHN F. BAKER, JR. TO PRESENT AT BELMONT MANSION ON
THE WASHINGTONS OF WESSYNGTON PLANTATION:
STORIES OF MY FAMILY'S JOURNEY TO FREEDOM**

Sunday, February 16, 2025, John F. Baker, Jr., will be telling the story of his ancestors, who were enslaved on Wessyngton Plantation owned by the Washington family, as well as the story of hundreds of other African Americans connected to the plantation for more than two centuries. It is a story of family, faith and community.



Image: Emmanuel, Henny, Allen and Granville Washington at Wessyngton Plantation. Library of Congress.

Details:

Event: *The Washingtons of Wessyngton Plantation: Stories of My Family's Journey to Freedom*

Presented by John F. Baker, Jr.

Dates: February 16, 2025

Time: 4:30 to 6:30 P.M.

Ticket Price: Free and Open to the Public. Reservations Needed.

Ticket Reservations: <https://www.belmontmansion.com/events>

Venue: Belmont Mansion

Address: 1900 Belmont Blvd, Nashville, TN 37212

GPS: Belmont Mansion Visitor Parking

Wessyngton Plantation was founded in Robertson County, Tennessee, in 1796 by Joseph Washington, a distant cousin of America's first president. By 1860, Wessyngton covered 13,000 acres and held an enslaved population of 274 African Americans (the largest number in the state of Tennessee) whose labor made it the largest tobacco plantation in America, and the second largest in the world.

In addition to collecting information from his own family members, Mr. Baker has had the honor of interviewing more than twenty-five children and grandchildren of former Wessyngton slaves (ranging in age from 80 to 107). They shared many first-hand accounts of life on the plantation, before, during and after the Civil War, told by their ancestors who were enslaved at Wessyngton. He has also interviewed descendants of the plantation owners.

The main source of his research was the Washington Family Papers, housed in the Tennessee State Library and Archives. This collection documents the plantation from its origins in 1796 to the 1960s and contains more than 11,000 records and is one of the best documented plantations in the south.

Mr. Baker's research is ongoing as people from all over the country reach out to him to learn about their ancestors from Wessyngton.

In 2009, Simon & Schuster published his book [The Washingtons of Wessyngton Plantation: Stories of My Family's Journey to Freedom](#), which details his years of research and discovery.

Myers Brown, Executive Director of Belmont Mansion — "Belmont Mansion is thrilled to be hosting

About John F. Baker, Jr.

Genealogy Expert John F. Baker Jr. has lived his entire life just a few miles from Wessyngton Plantation, a town populated by hundreds of descendants of its slaves. In seventh grade he discovered the story of his ancestors by accident when he saw a photograph of four former slaves in a social studies textbook. Months later he learned that they were his grandmother's paternal grandparents, Emanuel and Henny Washington, who had been enslaved on Wessyngton Plantation. **For more than thirty years, he has been using his research to unravel his family history and others.**

Kirkus Reviews calls John Baker's book *The Washingtons of Wessyngton Plantation* "riveting" and *The Library Journal* describes it as "Fascinating...[A] moving story". A descendant of Wessyngton slaves, **John has written the most accessible and exciting work since *Roots***. He has not only written his family history but has unraveled a part of American history that is valuable to us all.

John has been a keynote speaker around the country and has helped numerous individuals discover their lineage. He has conducted seminars on tracing American and African American genealogy at universities and institutions.

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For more information or to schedule an interview with John F. Baker, Jr., please contact Myers Brown at (615) 460-5459 or myers.brown@belmont.edu.