BIG CLEAN, SMALL DETAILS

Every year, Monticello’s curatorial and restoration teams undertake the “Big Clean” — a three-day project that gives the 11,000-square-foot house a thorough and careful cleaning. The house is vacuumed and dusted daily to prepare for visitors, but this annual effort reaches nooks and crannies that aren’t easily accessible on a regular basis. It also affords the teams with different vantage points that provide valuable insights into the condition of various architectural elements throughout the house.

Special vacuums with HEPA filters, brushes with horsehair bristles, soft sponges that won’t damage surfaces, microfiber cloths and extremely gentle cleansers are all deployed during the Big Clean. Scaffolding used to reach high ceilings is one of the most obvious signs of the project, but even the smallest objects around the house receive careful attention. One example: a miniature doll bed used as a prop in the Nursery upstairs. The bed’s tiny textiles are the perfect place for insects to hide and create damage, so it’s taken apart and thoroughly cleaned.

Jefferson Said It

BALL OF LIBERTY

By J. Jefferson Looney, the Daniel P. Jordan Editor of the Papers of Thomas Jefferson at Monticello

“this ball of liberty, I believe most piously, is new so well in motion that it will roll round the globe. at least the enlightened part of it, for light & liberty go together.”

— Thomas Jefferson to Tench Coxe, Monticello, June 1, 1795

Immediately after 1776, neither Jefferson’s authorship of the Declaration of Independence nor the transcendent significance of that document was recognized. However, both were inextricably linked by the time he became president, and just before his death Jefferson reaffirmed his faith in the ideals and universal applicability of the American experiment in words strikingly similar to those expressed above.