From the Jefferson Library’s Collections

Monticello’s Jefferson Library is a gateway to information on Thomas Jefferson’s life, times and legacy. The library’s collections include books, journal and newspaper articles, ephemera, unpublished research, websites, microforms, audiovisual materials, photographs, and full-text databases. Here are a few Jefferson-inspired advertisements and products selected from the lighter side of the library’s collections.

A 1940s-era ad for Ink-O-Graph pens takes some dramatic license in its description of the writing of the Declaration of Independence. However, it’s true that Jefferson often wrote with quill pens made with goose feathers. He used a variety of writing implements—a necessity for someone who wrote an estimated 19,000 letters during his lifetime.

A 1971 Norelco ad claims that Jefferson would have made much shorter work of the Declaration if he had the use of this machine. In actuality, the drafting process took 17 days.

This 1960s ice cream lid pays homage to Jefferson’s affinity for the dessert. He served it at the President’s House in Washington, helping popularize ice cream in America. Jefferson is also credited with the first known ice cream recipe recorded by an American.

At Monticello, beer was a “table liquor” served during dinner, and Jefferson’s earliest designs for his plantation included spaces for brewing and storing beer. But this 1948 Budweiser ad gets a few things wrong. Although Jefferson procured a “mould for making macaroni” from Naples (macaroni was a general term for pasta), he wasn’t the first to introduce pasta to America.