



The west front of the Thomas Jefferson Visitor Center and Smith Education Center during the latter stages of construction. On the left is the Museum Shop; the Welcome Pavilion is to the right.

Grand opening of visitor center April 15

THE DOORS OF the 21st-century gateway to Thomas Jefferson's timeless Monticello will officially swing open on April 15, 2009.

Located at the base of the mountaintop, the Thomas Jefferson Visitor Center and Smith Education Center will transform the visitor experience at Monticello. While providing a range of enhanced amenities, the center will feature new interpretive aspects that will allow visitors to explore Jefferson and his legacies in multiple ways.

These new elements – four innovative exhibitions, a powerful introductory film, and a hands-on discovery space – will highlight Jefferson's accomplishments, his ideas about liberty and their global relevance today, the wider community of people – free and enslaved – who lived and worked on the plantation, and the remarkable house and landscapes of Monticello.

"We will be working hard the over the coming months to complete work on all the new spaces and exhibitions," said Ann

"We're extremely pleased that we will be able to offer our valued visitors not only a more comfortable experience but also fresh perspectives on this unique place and its complex, ever-fascinating owner."

LESLIE GREENE BOWMAN

H. Taylor, executive vice president of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation and director of the visitor center project. "What visitors can expect in April is an interactive and customizable experience that will allow them to get better acquainted with Jefferson and Monticello on their own terms."

Though the official grand opening, which will include the unveiling of the major interpretive features, will take place next April, Monticello began visitor-service operations at the new center on Saturday, Nov. 8. The center's Welcome Pavilion, Monticello Museum Shop, Café at Monticello, and classrooms in the Carl and Hunter Smith Education Center were opened open to

the public following a brief ceremony. This "soft" opening will give Monticello ample time to test critical facilities and procedures prior to the grand opening.

"On a wide range of fronts, the Thomas Jefferson Visitor Center and Smith Education Center will truly represent a new era at Monticello," said Leslie Greene Bowman, who became the Thomas Jefferson Foundation's president on Nov. 1. "We're extremely pleased that we will be able to offer our valued visitors not only a more comfortable experience but also fresh perspectives on this unique place and its complex, ever-fascinating owner."



With a construction cost of \$43 million, the Thomas Jefferson Visitor

Continued on next page.

COMMENTS?
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Th. Jefferson
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Visitor center

Continued, Page 2.

Center and Smith Education Center is the largest capital project in the 85-year history of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation. The 42,000-square-foot facility is located on the site of Monticello's former ticket office and shuttle bus station, which was in use for more than 30 years.

Designed by Ayers/Saint/Gross Architects + Planners of Baltimore, the new center consists of five pavilions organized around a central courtyard. The center's three levels follow the contour of the hillside, so the complex of buildings sits lightly in a wooded landscape.

Natural materials such as local fieldstone, cedar, and brick are prominent in the construction, and Monticello is pursuing Gold level certification in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), a consensus-based national standard for high-performance, sustainable buildings. The center's sustainable features include a geothermal heating and cooling system, two "green" roofs, advanced storm- and waste-water treatment methods, and recycling protocols.

"Right from the start, we wanted to build an environmentally sensitive facility at Monticello that would enhance our visitor services and advance our educational mission without competing with or detracting from the house and mountaintop in any way," said Daniel P. Jordan, who as president of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation through Oct. 31 of this year oversaw the development of the visitor center from its inception. "Thanks to the generosity, hard work, and dedication of so many people both within and outside the Foundation, that original vision is becoming a reality."



The majority of Monticello's guests approach the Thomas Jefferson Visitor Center and Smith Education Center on a pedestrian "greensward" that extends through the visitor parking area from Monticello's African-American



JTF / Bob Kirckman

Graveyard. On the new center's courtyard level, visitors encounter three facilities that in terms of space, amenities, and offerings mark dramatic improvements over what Monticello has provided to date.

In the climate-controlled Welcome Pavilion, visitors can either pick up their reserved tickets or purchase same-day tickets at a counter that allows for easy, direct communication with Monticello personnel, who are able to detail the full array of available tour and service options and provide customized, customer-driven itineraries.

The Café at Monticello provides a comfortable, convenient location to enjoy lunch, a snack, or a beverage. The menu includes sandwiches, salads, soups, pastries, picnic fare, box lunches, hot and cold drinks, beer, and wine, and the restaurant will be open year-round, with operating hours paralleling those of Monticello. There is seating for approximately 100 people at indoor tables and on the courtyard Café Terrace and the Woodland Terrace, a wooden deck offering views of the surrounding forest.

The new Monticello Museum Shop

offers visitors an expanded collection of quality retail items in a spacious store with distinct departments. The book section contains more than 250 titles – one of the most comprehensive selections of Jefferson-related books available anywhere – and comfortable reading chairs. Other areas of the shop are devoted to exclusive Monticello reproductions, educational games and toys, home-decor pieces, gourmet food products, Virginia wines, posters and prints, collectibles, and souvenirs. The new space also features an all-season, indoor-outdoor garden shop offering Monticello's popular heirloom plants and seeds plus a wide range of garden accessories.

"In light of what we've had for many years – outdoor ticket windows, a rustic food stand, and a garden shop open only seasonally – these facilities truly represent a quantum leap in our amenities," Taylor said.

The courtyard itself has a number of visitor-friendly aspects, making it an ideal place to gather and relax. An

Continued on next page.

Visitor center

Continued, Page 3

open area with covered walkways along its perimeter, the courtyard features the Lockhart Entrance Terrace, a glass- and wood-roofed space with a wayfinding kiosk; the Joanne B. Robinson Garden and Walther Garden, each with planting rows based on those in Monticello's Vegetable Garden; four honey locust trees to provide shade; the Halsey Water Garden, which evokes the West Lawn's Fish Pond; and a three-dimensional, 9½-foot by 5½-foot bronze scale model of Jefferson's entire Monticello plantation.

Located one level down from the courtyard, the three classrooms in the

Smith Education Center allow Monticello to greatly expand the number of students it can accommodate on its curriculum-related Study Tours (more than 14,000 in the 2007-08 academic year) while also providing venues for workshops, talks, and other educational programs.

"The classrooms in the Carl and Hunter Smith Education Center are a vital component of this project," Jordan said. "Education is absolutely critical to the Foundation's mission, and replacing the one small, off-site classroom that we've had for more than 20 years with these extraordinary facilities will enable

us to reach many more teachers and young people in a great variety of ways."

The lower level of the Smith Education Center also include a reservation, ticketing, and reception area exclusively for student and youth groups.



Artist's rendering of the exhibition *Making Monticello: Jefferson's 'Essay in Architecture.'*

Coming Attractions

The major interpretive features of the Thomas Jefferson Visitor Center and Smith Education Center that will open in April 2009 are:

- **Thomas Jefferson's World**, a new, 14-minute introductory film that will dramatically present Thomas Jefferson's ideals and accomplishments and illustrate Monticello's central importance to his life and work.
- **The Words of Thomas Jefferson**, an innovative exhibition in which quotations by and about Jefferson will be projected in light.
- **Thomas Jefferson and 'the Boisterous Sea of Liberty'**, an exhibition tracing the development and ongoing influence of Jefferson's

ideas about liberty through an interactive presentation on a wall of high-definition screens.

- **Monticello as Experiment: 'To Try All Things,'** an exhibition that will explore Jefferson's use of Monticello as a laboratory for his belief that "useful knowledge" could make life more efficient and convenient.
- **Making Monticello: Jefferson's 'Essay in Architecture,'** an exhibition covering the architectural origins, construction, and 40-year evolution of the iconic Monticello house.
- **The Griffin Discovery Room**, a hands-on space offering numerous ways for young visitors to get in touch with Jefferson and life at Monticello through self-directed, fun activities.

Facts & Figures

ARCHITECT Ayers/Saint/Gross Architects + Planners, Baltimore, Md.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT Michael Vergason Landscape Architects, Alexandria, Va.

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER CVM Engineers, Wayne, Pa.

CIVIL ENGINEER Rummel, Klepper & Kahl, Baltimore, Md.

MECHANICAL/ELECTRICAL/PLUMBING ENGINEER Mueller and Associates, Baltimore, Md.

CONSTRUCTION MANAGER Barton Malow Company, Southfield, Mich.

PROJECT CONSULTANT Matthews Development Corp., Charlottesville, Va.

THOMAS JEFFERSON FOUNDATION PROJECT DIRECTOR Ann H. Taylor, executive vice president

THOMAS JEFFERSON FOUNDATION PROJECT MANAGER Mike Merriam, director of construction management

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS Reinforced concrete and steel framing; fieldstone and cedar cladding; copper and organic roofing; wood doors and window frames; brick, bluestone, and granite paving (courtyard).

HEATING AND COOLING Ground-source heat pump system

GROSS SQUARE FOOTAGE 42,000

PROJECT COST \$43 million

START OF SITE WORK August 2006

START OF CONSTRUCTION February 2007

OPERATIONAL OPENING November 8, 2008

GRAND OPENING April 15, 2009