

New library at West Point features Jefferson

THE U.S. Military Academy was born March 16, 1802, when President Thomas Jefferson signed the Military Peace Establishment Act, directing that a corps of engineers be founded and “stationed at West Point in the state of New York, and shall constitute a Military Academy.”

Nineteen years later, the academy’s superintendent, faculty members, officers, and cadets showed their gratitude by commissioning a portrait of Jefferson by Thomas Sully, a full-length version of which has been at West Point since 1822.

Over subsequent decades, however, Jefferson’s role as the founder of the academy was, if not obscured, certainly not trumpeted at West Point.



Jefferson as painted by Sully (detail).

That’s no longer the case. On Sept. 24, the academy formally dedicated Jefferson Hall, the new USMA Library and Learning Center, a \$62 million, 148,000-square-foot facility located in the historic central area of the scenic campus on the Hudson River. In addition to bearing Jefferson’s name, the library features a life-size bronze statue of Jefferson on the first floor of its entry rotunda and a re-creation of his Cabinet, or study, at Monticello on the second floor.

The Thomas Jefferson Foundation commissioned the making of replica furnishings for the Cabinet display in Jefferson Hall, a project coordinated by Bob Self, architectural conservator at Monticello.

The revolving chair, revolving table, long chair, and side table were made by David Tyler at the Tyler Joinery in Crozet, Va. Tyler also assembled a replica of the lap desk owned by the Smithsonian Institution on which Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence from a kit made by Bartley Classic Reproductions, Ltd., of Denton, Md.

The task of making the polygraph machine for the display was taken on by Norman Lamonde of Hingham, Mass., while Kenneth Treese of Williamsburg, Va., replicated Jefferson’s riding boots and the Monticello Museum Shop provided the replica revolving bookstand.

The display is placed on a floor platform of heart pine supplied by Mountain Lumber Co. of Ruckersville, Va., and fabricated by Gaston & Wyatt, Inc., of Charlottesville.

A delegation representing the Thomas Jefferson Foundation traveled to West Point to participate in the Jefferson Hall dedication ceremonies. The group included Alice W. Handy,



The Monticello Cabinet display is on the second floor of Jefferson Hall, West Point’s new library.

chairman of the Board of Trustees; Howard P. Milstein, the board’s vice chairman and treasurer; John Charles Thomas, a board member who was instrumental in initiating the relationship between Monticello and the academy; and Thomas A. Saunders III, a former board chairman, who provided funding for the making of the replica furnishings in the library display.

Thomas Jefferson
MONTICELLO

Monticello is a newsletter published twice each year by the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Inc. The Thomas Jefferson Foundation is the private, nonprofit corporation that has owned and operated Monticello since 1923. Its mission is preservation and education.

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