

Th: Jefferson

MONTICELLO

WINTER 2009

www.monticello.org

VOLUME 20, NUMBER 2

International outreach: Monticello takes global view

FEW WOULD DISPUTE the notion that Thomas Jefferson maintained a global outlook.

“My affections were first for my own country, and then generally for all mankind,” Jefferson himself wrote in 1811.

It is not surprising, then, that Jefferson—largely for his timeless ideas about liberty—stands on the world stage today as one of the best known, most frequently cited, and most respected figures from American history.

“In a very real sense, his legacy is most at home abroad,” historian and prize-winning author Joseph Ellis wrote in a 2000 essay, “Why Jefferson Lives.”

The Thomas Jefferson Foundation takes Jefferson’s international standing, and Monticello’s place on the World Heritage List, very seriously. While most of its activities are naturally centered at Monticello, the Foundation’s efforts are by no means limited to the mountaintop—or the United States.

“Jefferson ideas have such resonance and relevance that we consider it our responsibility to ensure they are accessible everywhere,” said Leslie Greene Bowman, the Foundation’s president. “Engaging a global audience in a dialogue about Jefferson’s ideas and establishing relationships with people around the world—whether in person, through

the Internet, or by other means—is a major part of our vision, and we’re making some great strides in that direction.”

Monticello’s international outreach has many facets, from conducting archaeological digs in the Caribbean to playing host to foreign dignitaries. What these diverse activities share is the Foundation’s commitment to a core element of Jefferson’s philosophy: the free exchange of ideas.



As its name would indicate, the Robert H. Smith International Center for Jefferson Studies is the hub of Monticello’s global programs. Established in 1994, the Center takes a multidisciplinary approach toward its mission of fostering Jefferson scholarship and disseminating its findings. Two of the Smith ICJS’ activities serve to

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Monticello’s William L. Beiswanger making a point to visiting experts from Beijing’s Forbidden City.

TJF/Stephanie Gross



This terrestrial pocket globe from Monticello’s collection, made by John Newton and William Palmer in London in 1783, approximates one purchased by Jefferson for nine shillings at a London shop on March 21, 1786.

TJF/Edward Owen

COMMENTS?
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International outreach

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connect Jefferson and Monticello with the world on a direct level.

The Center's residential fellowships offer researchers from abroad the opportunity to work on projects related to Jefferson's life, times, and legacies with access to Monticello's resources as well

By the numbers

85,615

THE NUMBER OF VISITS to Monticello's Web site from abroad during the first three quarters of 2009. Canada (15,411) was the No. 1 home country of these virtual visitors, followed by the United Kingdom (10,915), Ireland (4,904), Australia (4,325), and Germany (4,297).

8,740

THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE from the United Kingdom who visited Monticello during the first nine months of 2009, making it the top source of international visitors during the period, ahead of Canada (5,141).

707

THE NUMBER OF FOREIGN ADDRESSES on this newsletter's mailing list. The United Kingdom has the most subscribers, 148. Next on the list are Canada (115), France (52), Australia (27), and Pakistan (24).

292.4

THE APPROXIMATE WEIGHT IN TONS of the soil excavated from 2,005 shovel-test pits during field work led by Monticello archaeologists on the Caribbean islands of Jamaica, Nevis, and St. Kitts.

95 & 24

THE NUMBER OF SCHOLARS from abroad who have had fellowships at Monticello's Robert H. Smith International Center for Jefferson Studies and the number of countries they've come from. More than a third of these scholars — 33 — have been from the United Kingdom.

10

THE NUMBER OF FOREIGN COUNTRIES in which the Robert H. Smith International Center has conducted, organized, or co-organized a conference, symposium, or other scholarly gathering. In alphabetical order, they are: Australia, Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

as those at the University of Virginia. To date, 95 professors, teachers, and students from 24 nations have brought their perspectives to Monticello and carried newly gained insights back to their homelands under this program.

"The resources and research conditions are truly excellent," said István K. Vida, assistant professor in the Institute of English and American Studies at Hungary's University of Debrecen, who completed a two-month residency in October. "It was great to work with basically all sources, primary and secondary, within arm's reach.

"The ICJS fellowship was recommended to me by a colleague, a former fellow himself, and I would definitely encourage others to apply."

The Center also works to increase international interest in and understanding of Jefferson through academic meetings abroad. Since 1999, the Smith ICJS has organized or co-sponsored conferences, symposiums, and other sessions in 10 different countries. These gatherings have covered subjects ranging from the Louisiana Purchase (Paris, May 2002) to Jefferson's relevance in the 21st century (Sydney, April 2009).

"The advantage to holding a conference abroad is that it encourages different outlooks," said Andrew J. O'Shaughnessy, Saunders Director of the Smith ICJS. "The active involvement of foreign scholars is important, while Americans often take a more comparative perspective when discussing their subject in a foreign country.

"But the less-formal symposiums and workshops are also valuable, as they reach wider audiences, including students and members of the public."

While the Sydney symposium was the Center's first international venture



Jamaican schoolchildren getting introduced to archaeology by Brian McCray during Monticello fieldwork at the Stewart Castle slave site. T.J.F

outside Europe, plans include a conference in Cuba and a return to Australia, and there is interest in conducting programs in the Middle East, India, and China.

"It's worth emphasizing that we are distinctive, perhaps unique, among our peer institutions in our commitment to international outreach," O'Shaughnessy said. "Our activities have allowed us to build excellent relationships abroad through a network of institutions and former fellows, relationships that have proven beneficial to all involved."



Monticello's international outreach also reaches underground, through the activities of the archaeology department, a component of the Smith ICJS. Since 2006, the Monticello-based Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery has conducted fieldwork and other research at former slave sites on the Caribbean islands of Jamaica, St. Kitts, and Nevis in collaboration with the University of the West Indies, the Jamaica National

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International outreach

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Heritage Trust, England's University of Southampton, and the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool, England.

DAACS is an Internet-based initiative that fosters inter-site, comparative archeological research on slavery throughout the Chesapeake region, the Carolinas, and the Caribbean. Its Web site — www.daacs.org — currently contains standardized, downloadable data from 39 slave-quarter sites, including 11 at Monticello.

"Wide-ranging comparative research of this type definitely improves our understanding of Jefferson and Monticello," said Fraser Neiman, Monticello's director of archaeology. "Only through it can we begin to glimpse which aspects of the Monticello plantation were unique to Jefferson and which were the result of processes at work on a larger scale in the Atlantic world of the time."

Cooperation is key to the work in the Caribbean, where the Monticello archaeologists' activities have included teaching at UWI, presenting papers at history and archaeology conferences, and consulting on artifact identifications.

"We benefit tremendously from our collaborators' knowledge of the region and artifacts. We bring the scientific survey methods we've developed and provide training not regularly available on the islands," said Jillian Galle, the DAACS project manager. "We make the data collected available through the Web so scholars and students in the Caribbean can quickly see the results of our collaborative research. Through this, we have developed access to and credibility with an international audience that otherwise might never encounter Monticello and Jefferson."



Collegial interaction with museums, historic sites, cultural institutions, and other organizations overseas is another way the Foundation promotes foreign exposure for Monticello and Jefferson.

A current example is Monticello's involvement with Les Ponts du Coeur, a French nonprofit organization, and the U.S. Embassy in Paris in a celebration of Jefferson as a "bridge to liberty" and a symbol of French-American friendship. The tribute, which coincides with the 220th anniversary of the French Revolution, includes the ceremonial installation of plaques at approximately 40 locations visited by Jefferson during his time in France as U.S. minister (1785-89) and the issuance by France's postal service of five "ready-to-mail" commemorative envelopes, each of which features a likeness of Jefferson and a photo of Monticello.



The Foundation also shares its knowledge and expertise on a global basis. In September, for example, a delegation of six experts from the Forbidden City (Palace Museum) in Beijing and two from the World Monuments Fund staff in China visited the mountaintop to gain insight into Monticello's conservation methods and interpretation programs.

Monticello's practices in these areas were of keen interest to the members of the Chinese group because their ongoing project is restoration of a site that dates to the same period as Jefferson's home — the Qianlong Garden, a two-acre complex with 27 structures inside the Forbidden City that was built in the 1770s as a private retreat for the Emperor Qianlong. The Palace of Tranquility and Longevity, as it was known, was abandoned in 1924 and stood neglected until restoration work began in 2002.

The visit was part of a technical mission to the United States arranged by the World Monuments Fund, a



An envelope issued by France's postal service commemorating a site visited by Jefferson. La Poste

New York-based preservation organization that is a partner in the Quianlong Garden restoration.



But not all international visits to Monticello are project-related. Over the years numerous foreign dignitaries, including heads of state, have made official and informal visits to the mountaintop. The guest list includes such significant figures as Margaret Thatcher, Mikhail Gorbachev, the Dalai Lama, and Japan's Emperor Akihito. Just this year, Monticello has welcomed the ambassadors to the United States from France, the United Kingdom, and China, plus the 79th grand master of the Order of Malta, the successor organization to the Knights Hospitaller of St. John of Jerusalem, a community founded in the 11th century to provide care for pilgrims to the Holy Land.

There are also plenty of "regular" visitors from abroad. In the first nine months of this year, more than 34,000 people from other countries visited Monticello, accounting for approximately 9 percent of the total visitation during the period. Though Monticello's various tours are conducted only in English, free informational brochures are available in Spanish, French, German, Italian, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean.

The Internet, not surprisingly, is the

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International outreach

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No. 1 path of access to Monticello for people outside the United States. From Jan. 1 to Sept. 30 of this year, www.monticello.org attracted 85,615 virtual visitors from more than 200 nations and territories, or nearly 7 percent of the site's total traffic during that time.

"The number of hits from abroad has increased steadily over the years," said Chad Wollerton, Monticello's webmaster. "It's worth noting that of the foreign users this year, more than three-quarters were first-time visitors and about half were from English-speaking countries."

The Web is obviously a powerful vehicle the Foundation can employ in

extending its international outreach, but it's not the only one.

"Not too far down the road, we see a time when at least sections of our Web site are in other languages," said TJF President Bowman. "But we also envision using other technologies to connect with people overseas, having Monticello 'ambassadors' in countries around the world, making our publications available in translation, and pursuing other initiatives with far-reaching impact.

"After all, Jefferson was a citizen of the world and Monticello is a World Heritage site. Those are two strong reasons for us to think and act globally."