

Thomas Jefferson

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From the President

Monticello's Hall.

TJF/Robert C. Lautman

AS YOU'LL READ in the cover story of this issue, we are engaging audiences far beyond the mountaintop in many exciting ways.

Of course, this is nothing new here in Mr. Jefferson's neighborhood. From Paris to the far reaches of this continent, Jefferson's life unfolded on a global scale. He read five foreign languages—Greek, Latin, Italian, French, and Spanish—and avidly collected samples of American Indian languages. He wrote to Edmund Randolph in 1794: "I make it a rule never to read translations where I can read the original."

In 1784, at the age of 41 he made his first voyage abroad, sailing to England and then on to France. Serving first as trade commissioner and then as U.S. minister to France, he worked to advance the new country's interests in France, Holland, Prussia, and Morocco. He immersed himself in European culture and sent home to Monticello books, seeds and plants, paintings and other works of art, architectural drawings, and scientific instruments. He admired French cuisine, English landscape gardening, Italian olives, and European wines.

Jefferson brought his cosmopolitan view to his neighborhood and tried to create what he called "a society to our taste." He invited the Abbé José Correa da Serra, a Portuguese naturalist, to live at Monticello. He gave an Italian friend, Phillip Mazzei, 193 acres of land near Monticello as an inducement to introduce

Italian wines and vegetables in Virginia. No small part of Jefferson's prolific correspondence was devoted to acquiring seeds and plants for his "revolutionary" garden at Monticello. As Dumas Malone wrote: "He had seeds from everywhere ... from Philip Mazzei in Italy; from Lafayette's aunt, Madame de Tesse; and Andrew Thouin, director of the Jardin des Plantes in Paris."

Jefferson's vision extended not only east to the Old World but to the American West. In 1803 he sent Lewis and Clark on their "Voyage of Discovery" to establish trade with Native American peoples and find a water route to the Pacific.

Embarking on his last great public service at age 75, Jefferson founded the University of Virginia. He spearheaded the legislative campaign for its charter, secured its location, designed its buildings, planned its curriculum, and served as the first rector. It was an international endeavor from the beginning: Jefferson corresponded with scholars here and in Europe, seeking the best minds for the school's faculty. In 1824 Jefferson honored the Marquis de Lafayette, the French hero of the Revolutionary War, with a dinner for 400 in the new Rotunda. Today, not surprisingly, Mr. Jefferson's university attracts outstanding students from around the world.

This holiday season, there are so many reasons for you to make your own pilgrimage to Monticello. I invite you to experience the house festooned with seasonal greenery, to explore our beautiful Museum Shop, to make a holiday visit an annual tradition.



We are grateful to friends and neighbors like you who provide support for our Jeffersonian stewardship on the mountaintop and beyond. As you can imagine, the costs of maintaining Monticello and over 2,500 acres of Jefferson's plantation are substantial. Admission revenues cover a portion of these expenses, but for the rest we rely on private donations. I hope you will play a part in the history of Monticello by making a gift to support its operation.

Warmest wishes for a happy holiday season.



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