

Th. Jefferson MONTICELLO

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WHAT'S UPSTAIRS?

When Thomas Jefferson died on July 4, 1826, there were 13 family members in residence at Monticello—ranging in age from two months to 71 years. After a period of extensive study and restoration, visitors can now venture up the narrow staircase to explore family stories.



SNEAK PEAK • THE NURSERY

Imagine growing up at Monticello...

Twelve surviving grandchildren spent time on the mountaintop, six of whom were born in the house. Manuscript evidence indicates that Jefferson specifically designated space for a nursery in his designs for Monticello II, the rendition of the house familiar to modern visitors. This was an uncommon practice for the time period, and suggests Jefferson's intention to keep his daughter's growing family nearby.

Today, the Nursery is a focal point of Monticello's new Behind the Scenes tour, interpreted as a crossroads for interaction between enslaved nursemaids and members of the Jefferson family. Priscilla Hemmings, referred to in family letters as "Aunt Priscilla" or "mammy," helped raise Jefferson's grandchildren. Granddaughter Cornelia wrote that Aunt Priscilla "took charge of all the children that were not in school. If there was any switching to be done, she always did it."



A view into Monticello's newly restored Nursery



The Nursery was altered in form and function after Jefferson's death, making restoration particularly complex. In 2014, staff began to peel back the layers of history, removing 1885-era insulation and cement plaster. They uncovered an exterior brick wall from the first Monticello, circa 1770-1796, which has been left exposed for visitors to see and discuss.

Once the physical restoration was complete, curators scoured family documents—inventories, letters and notes—to identify furnishings installed in the original nursery.

On the new Behind the Scenes tour, visitors can interact with objects in the North Bedroom