

Th. Jefferson MONTICELLO

Monticello's South Pavilion

The South Pavilion, probably begun in the summer of 1770, is believed to be the first brick building completed on Monticello mountain. It has two rooms, one over another. When Thomas Jefferson moved to Monticello in November 1770 he occupied the upper room of the pavilion, which at that point was a free-standing building. By the time he brought his bride, Martha Wayles Skelton, to Monticello in January 1772, the lower level had been finished as a kitchen and new furnishings had been acquired for the upper room, including a large bedstead and expensive bed hangings. The bed with its expensive curtains added a measure of privacy as well as color to this small, multifunctional living space.

The reinterpretation and refurnishing of the South Pavilion's upper room will allow Monticello visitors to view the space as it may have appeared in the months following the Jeffersons' marriage in 1772.

While there is no known inventory of the contents of the upper room at that time, the documentary and archaeological evidence suggest a number of furnishings that were quite likely used. These include a the large bedstead with fashionable hangings, a crib, Venetian blinds, side chairs, a library chair, a slip-covered easy chair, a secretary bookcase, a dressing table or bureau table, fireplace equipment, a dining table, pewter and cream ware table wares, and brass candlesticks.

In particular, new research suggests that Jefferson spent a very large sum on bed hangings from upholsterer Joseph Kidd in Williamsburg. The textiles in the restored room – vibrant printed cotton lined with green silk – are designed to represent fashionable and expensive choices for Virginians of the early 1770s. The new reproduction mahogany bedstead in the room is based on a surviving 18th-century Virginia bed in the collection of Carlyle House Historic Park in Alexandria. Its large proportions derive from recently interpreted notations in Jefferson's Memorandum Books, in which where he recorded the measurements for his own bedstead using a code. Furthermore, a recent reassessment of a three-sided crib in Monticello's collection revealed that it has a solid family provenance; paint evidence indicates that the crib dates to the last quarter of the 18th century, suggesting that it is a rare survival of utilitarian furniture from this period.

The restored interior of the South Pavilion's upper room will be viewable from its doorway on the South Terrace.



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