

TAKING STOCK

Project sheds more light on Monticello's collections



Lining up seven French armchairs from a set in Monticello's Parlor, Curatorial Fellow Molly Martien looks for marks and variations, making notes on each chair's condition. Her painstaking scrutiny is typical of the attention Martien has given to Monticello's collection throughout a yearlong project. These chairs are among the 400 most significant collection objects she has assessed and cataloged, with the goal of adding them to an updated public database.

Her work is creating a more complete picture of Monticello's material culture by providing updated information on key artworks, furnishings and textiles. "This project reveals that every object in the collection has a story to tell; and once the database

is available, individuals will be better able to consider the historical significance of our diverse collection," says Martien, an art historian with master's degrees in art history from Yale University and in the history

of design from Parsons School of Design. Her fellowship is supported by generous funding from the Americana Foundation.



Jefferson Said It LONG-WINDED LAWYERS

By J. Jefferson Looney, the Daniel P. Jordan Editor of *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson at Monticello*

“I served with General Washington in the legislature of Virginia before the revolution, and, during it, with Dr Franklin in Congress. I never heard either of them speak ten minutes at a time, nor to any but the main point which was to decide the question. they laid their shoulders to the great points, knowing that the little ones would follow of themselves. if the present Congress errs in too much talking, how can it be otherwise in a body to which the people send 150. lawyers, whose trade it is to question every thing, yield nothing, & talk by the hour?”

— *Jefferson's so-called autobiography (January–July 1821)*



Although he spent his early adult years as a lawyer, Thomas Jefferson had little respect for the profession and was not shy about saying so. He preferred arbitration to litigation, once remarking when proposing the former: “I trust more to your good faith than to the law, which I abhor.” Himself a master of clear, concise prose, he writhed when subjected

to what he called “the eternal protraction of debate” — speeches endlessly extended by repetitious and garbled arguments. In his notes on his early career, Jefferson pointed to two men he particularly admired as public speakers, George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, as worthy of emulation for their mastery of lean, direct expression.