

# FROM THE PRESIDENT

## It's All in the Details

Dear Friends,

I have always admired Thomas Jefferson's relentless pursuit of knowledge. Constantly learning, he was determined to push past existing boundaries of science and intellectual capability. He believed that education, bolstered by the exercise of reason and a free conscience, was the surest path to human progress. Jefferson expressed some of that passion in a letter to legislator William Munford in 1799, writing, "I join you therefore in branding as cowardly the idea that the human mind is incapable of further advances."

Jefferson's curiosity was famously broad, and he developed an impressive storehouse of knowledge about agriculture, science, weather, food, wine, politics, architecture and law – to name a few of his interests. He seemed to take a particularly keen interest in studying the details of the world around him. His prized collection of well-used scientific instruments featured an array of solar, botanical and compound microscopes.

For observations farther afield, he peered through his "perspective" glasses and "pocket telescopes." Several family stories describe Jefferson with spyglass in hand. With the construction of the University of Virginia visible from his mountaintop home, the spyglass would have been a likely addition to his walks on the north terrace of Monticello, allowing him to focus on the activity in the valley below.

In this edition, we're channeling Jefferson's attention to detail. You'll get a closer look at architectural features that illustrate his eye for detail and highlight some of his historic home's interesting features. These elements provide valuable insight into what life was like at Monticello during Jefferson's time. You'll learn more about enhancements we've made to an extensive resource that's always available, even if you can't be here in person – the online Thomas Jefferson Encyclopedia. We'll also look at Jefferson's relationship with his "great and dear friend" Benjamin Franklin.

On page 10, you'll get a guided tour of the Declaration of Independence. Anticipation is growing for the 250th



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anniversary of our nation's independence in 2026. And at Monticello, it should come as no surprise that Jefferson's Declaration is front and center as that milestone approaches. Starting this November, Monticello will open an exhibit featuring an original 1826 engraving of the Declaration of Independence by William J. Stone. We are committed to understanding the vow of freedom that Jefferson wrote in 1776 and how his words changed the world. We hope you will make plans to visit Monticello to see it.

On the topic of anniversaries, the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, the nonprofit organization that owns and operates Monticello, will soon celebrate its centenary (1923-2023). For a century, Monticello has been – and continues to be – a place where you can learn about Jefferson's significant impact on our history. Preserving and sharing this history is central to our mission. More than 32 million guests have visited since the foundation opened the house to the public in 1924. We are happy to report that in a recent survey, 95% of visitors reported having a positive experience at Monticello.

We hope you will enjoy this edition of the magazine. We invite you to experience Monticello for yourself soon.

Wishing you well,

Leslie Greene Bowman  
President

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