# THOMAS JEFFERSON'S

Monticello

Th. Jefferson
MONTICELLO
Thomas Jefferson Foundation

*(Pages ii–iii) Monticello's southwest front. In 1787 Jefferson wrote to George Gilmer, "I am as happy no where else and in no other society, and all my wishes end, where I hope my days will end, at Monticello. Too many scenes of happiness mingle themselves with all the recollections of my native woods and fields, to suffer them to be supplanted in my affection by any other."*

*(Pages iv–v) Vineyards in winter. Because of documentary evidence that grapevines at Monticello were "espaliered," a permanent structure based on an eighteenth-century American grape trellis was constructed. Today, the vineyards feature several Jefferson-related European varieties grafted on hardy, pest-resistant native rootstock.*

*(Pages vi–vii) Jefferson's Greenhouse, or South Piazza. Margaret Bayard Smith said of the just-completed room in 1809: "The arched piazza beyond, was ultimately sashed in glass, and converted into a flower conservatory, so that the windows and glass doors of the library opened upon both its beauty and its fragrance."*

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H G F E D C

# Thomas Jefferson's *Essay in Architecture*

In March of 1809 Thomas Jefferson was at long last liberated from what he called the "splendid misery"[1] of the presidency of the United States, free to begin the evening of his life in retirement at Monticello. The event coincided with the essential completion of a house he had begun more than forty years earlier and transformed, beginning in 1796, from an eight-room to a twenty-one-room dwelling. The finish joinery, plastering, and painting alone took more than ten years of steady work to complete. What Jefferson created—for he was indeed its architect—was unlike any other house in the United States, and not just because it was the first house in this country to have a dome. It was unusual in both plan and elevation. Jefferson himself acknowledged that it ranked "among the curiosities of the neighborhood,"[2] and apart from its setting, which few could fault, apparently many who saw the house found it too idiosyncratic to be pleasing or even comprehensible. One visitor, some thirteen years after Jefferson's death, called it "a monument of ingenious extravagance … without unity or uniformity, upon which architecture seem[s] to have exerted, if not exhausted, the versatility of her genius." The critic went on to state: "We will venture to say that Mr. Jefferson had no distinct conception of any design when he commenced building, but enlarged, added and modi-

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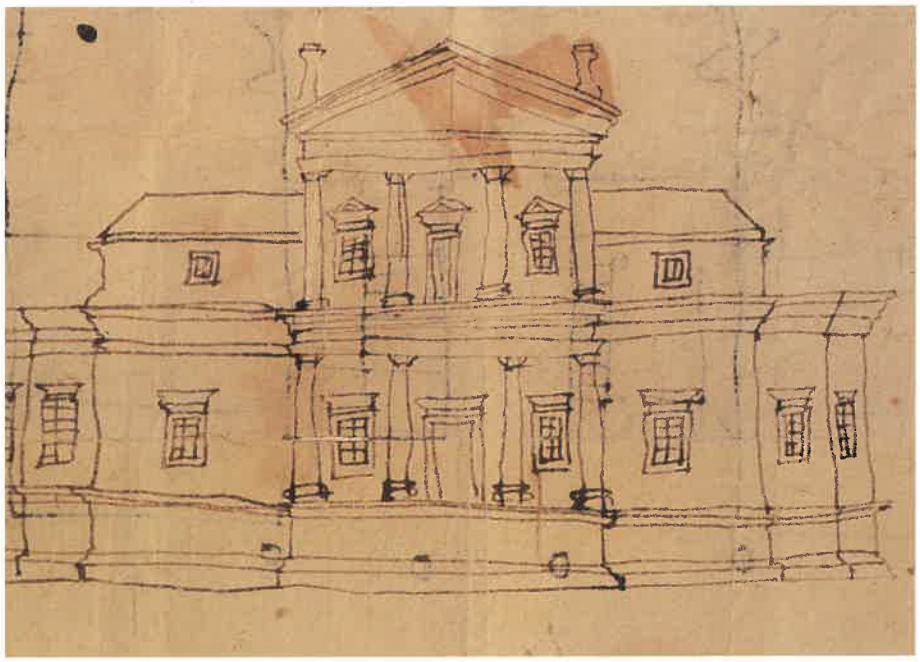
*by William L. Beiswanger, Robert H. Smith Director of Restoration at Monticello*

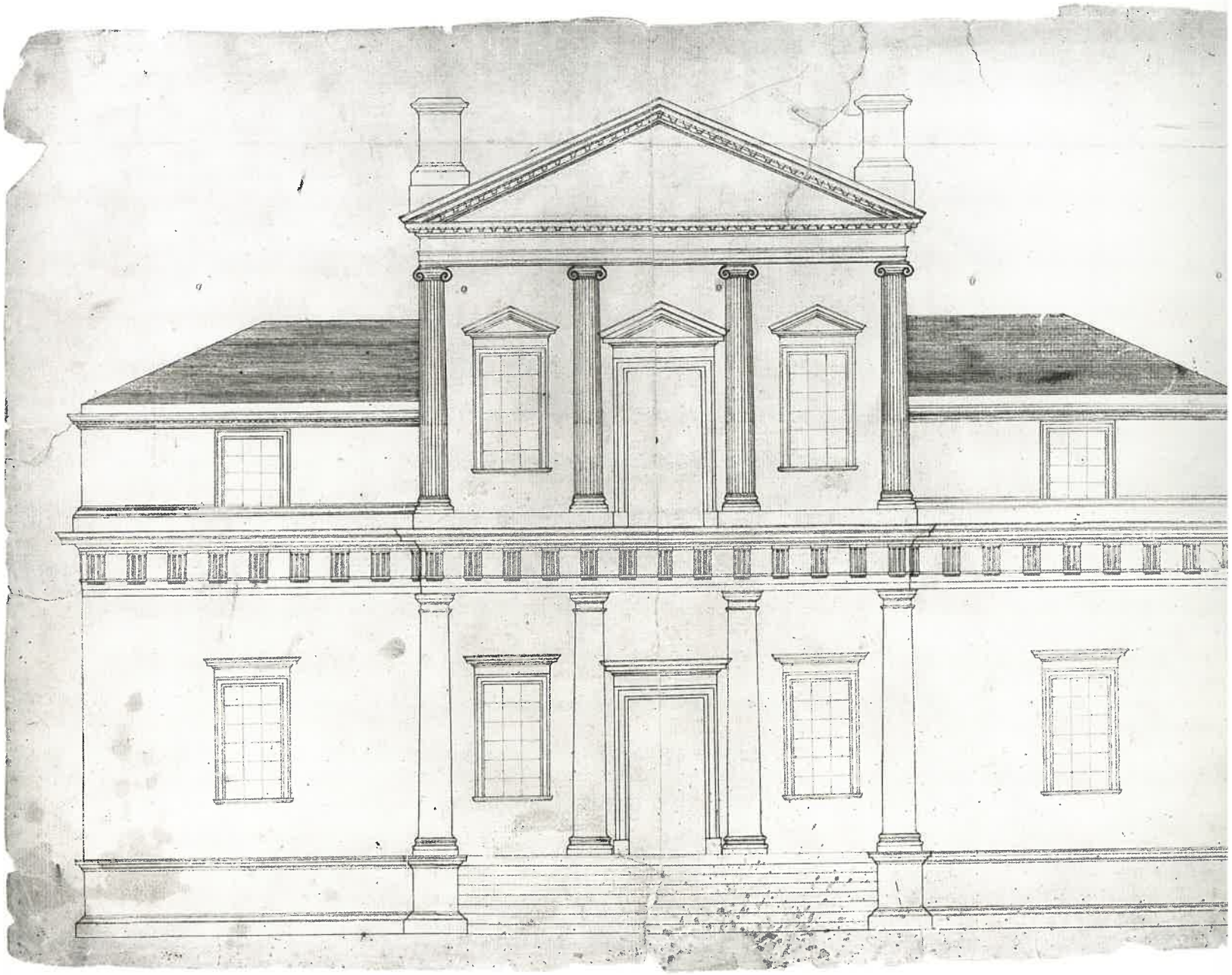
fied as his ingenuity contrived, until this incomprehensible pile reached this acme of its destiny in which it stands at present, still indeed unfinished."[3] It is true that Monticello lacks the purity and geometric simplicity of Jefferson's other buildings, such as the Rotunda at the University of Virginia or Poplar Forest, his octagonal retreat in Bedford County, Virginia. By contrast, Monticello showed all the signs of a modified and evolving plan, which is perhaps why he called it his "essay in architecture."[4]



*Jefferson's freehand drawing of Monticello shows the north and south bows that were added to the house c. 1777. The sketch could date from his years in Paris (1784–89), when he began thinking about enlarging the house. On the verso is a plan for adding two first-floor rooms.*

He began the essay in 1768 at the age of twenty-five, the year he contracted with a Mr. Moore to level an area 250 feet square at the northeast end of the mountaintop.[5] It is clear from Jefferson's surviving drawings and notes that even in this early period he served as his own architect. In this art he was self-taught, gaining knowledge and inspiration from books and close observation. Monticello was, as far as we know, the first of his many architectural projects and, as it turns out, the most richly documented. Of the more than seven hundred architectural drawings and notes in Jefferson's hand, nearly half relate to the house and plantation at Monticello.[6]

For the most part, Jefferson rejected the architectural tradition established in Virginia. Compared even to dwellings elsewhere in the American colonies at that time, his drawing of the elevation of the house reveals a stricter—almost academic—application of classical sources and the Roman architectural orders. In one sense the façade of the first Monticello was a mathematical exercise in the use of the classical orders, and in this regard the young architect was guided principally by Andrea Palladio and his *Four*



*The marquis de Chastellux, who visited Monticello in 1782, said that the house "resembled none of the others seen in this country," and that Thomas Jefferson was "the first American who has consulted the Fine Arts to know how he should shelter himself from the weather."*

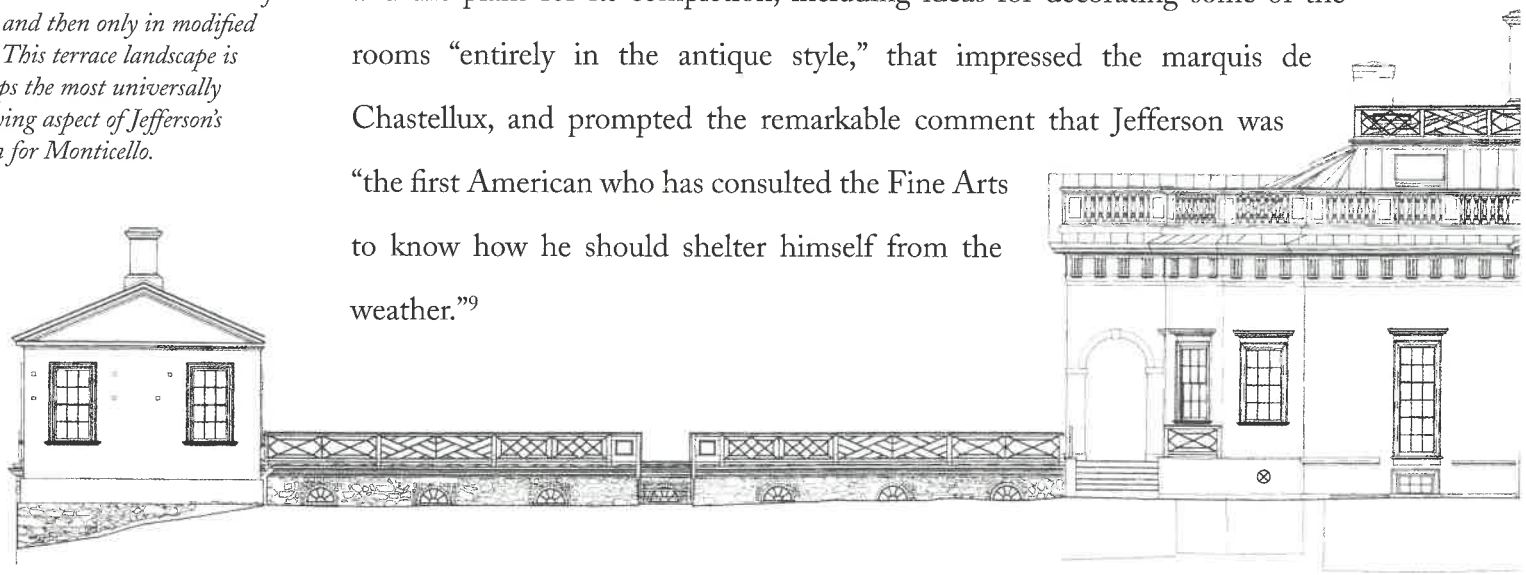
*Jefferson's drawing of the house from the early 1770s reflects his rejection of the architectural tradition in Virginia and his interest in a stricter application of classical form as he understood it from the published works of the sixteenth-century architect and theorist Andrea Palladio.*

*The South Pavilion, completed in the fall of 1770, was the first brick building at Monticello. Below the chamber was a kitchen, later moved to the angle of the Southeast Terrace. The pavilion was remodeled in 1808 at which time the doorway leading to the terrace was added.*

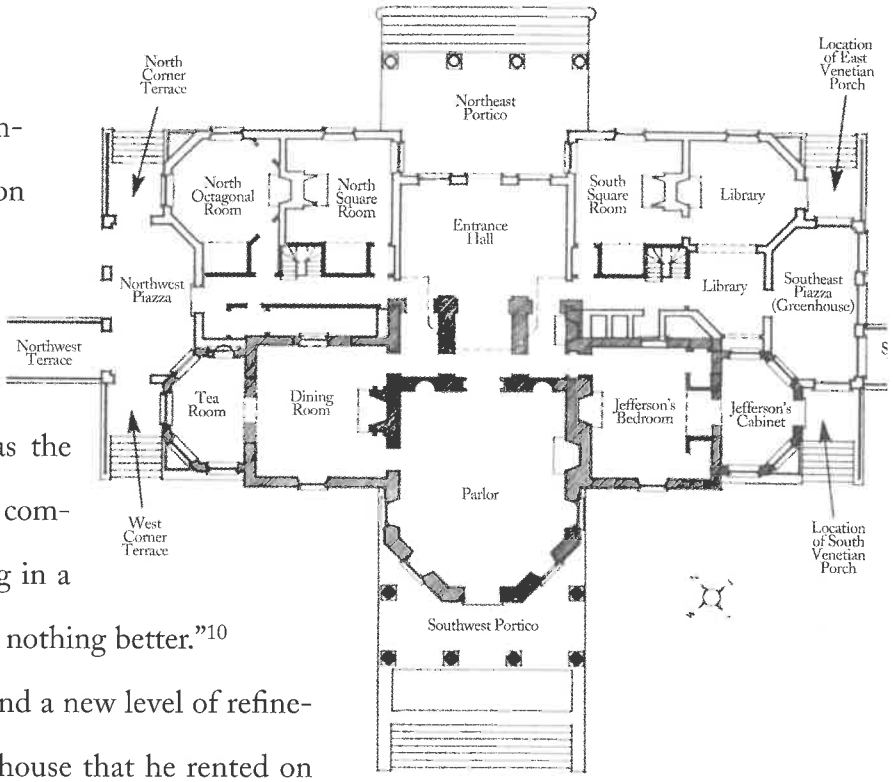
*(Below) Although the scheme for the L-shaped terraces that link the pavilions to the house dates from the 1770s, it was not executed until after 1800, and then only in modified form. This terrace landscape is perhaps the most universally satisfying aspect of Jefferson's design for Monticello.*

*Books of Architecture*, first published in 1570.[7] When the marquis de Chastellux saw the house under construction in 1782, he went so far as to announce its uniqueness to the world, stating unequivocally that it "resembled none of the others seen in this country."[8]

Jefferson began by first constructing a rather modest six-room house. On the first floor was a parlor flanked by a chamber and a dining room, and on the second level, two bedrooms and a lofty study to house his growing library. It was about 1776 that Jefferson's propensity for alteration first surfaced in a significant way. He modified the already existing southwest (garden) front by adding a two-story canted bay projection to the parlor and study, and added one-story rooms, also of a partial octagonal shape, to the dining room and chamber. During the period of the 1770s he also devised a scheme for linking an impressive array of support rooms (dependencies) to the cellars of the house by L-shaped wings concealed in the hillside. This scheme, however, was not constructed until after 1800, and then only in a modified and greatly curtailed form. But it was this eight-room house and the plans for its completion, including ideas for decorating some of the rooms "entirely in the antique style," that impressed the marquis de Chastellux, and prompted the remarkable comment that Jefferson was "the first American who has consulted the Fine Arts to know how he should shelter himself from the weather."[9]



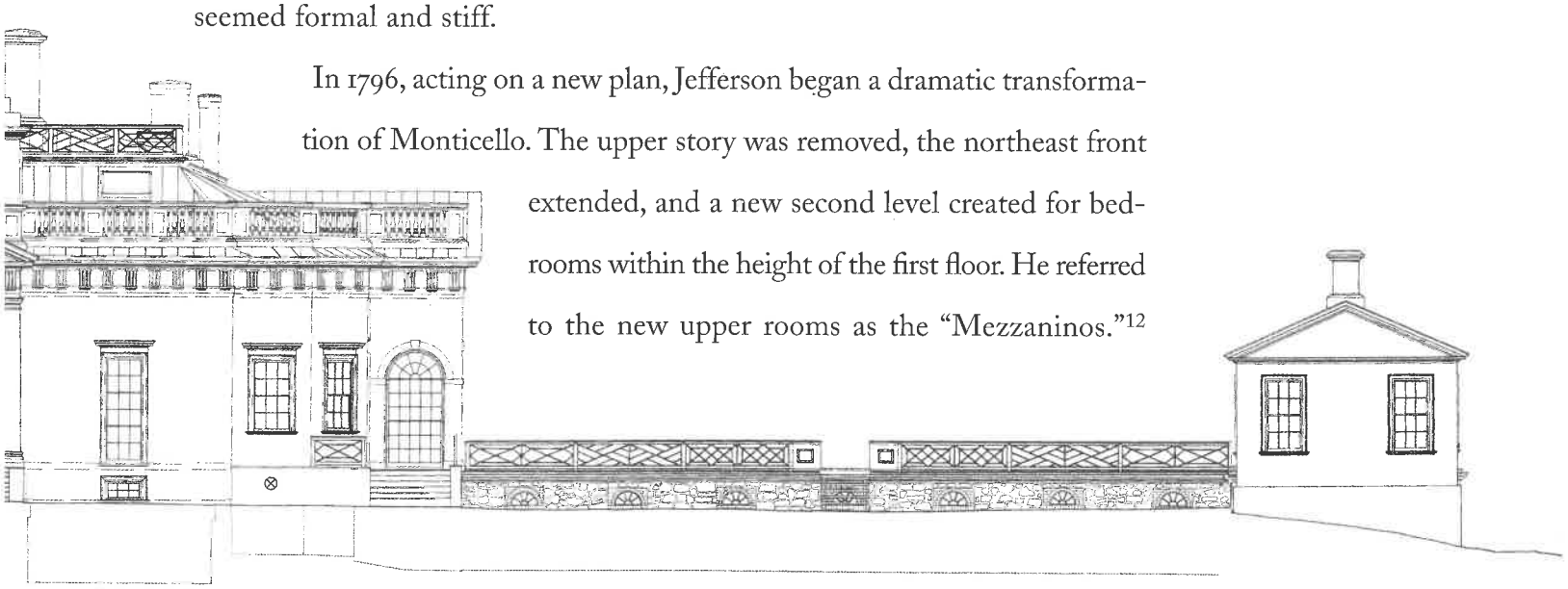
The shell of the house was basically completed—certainly habitable—by 1784, when Jefferson departed for France on what would become a five-year diplomatic mission. The evidence suggests, however, that he had not completed—perhaps not even begun—the interior finish work such as the moldings and plastering. This might explain his comment to George Wythe in 1794 that he was "living in a brick-kiln … my house, in it's *[sic]* present state, is nothing better."[10]




*Plan of the first floor of Monticello as remodeled, beginning in 1796, and completed by 1809. The superimposed plan of the earlier house is indicated by the hatched walls.*

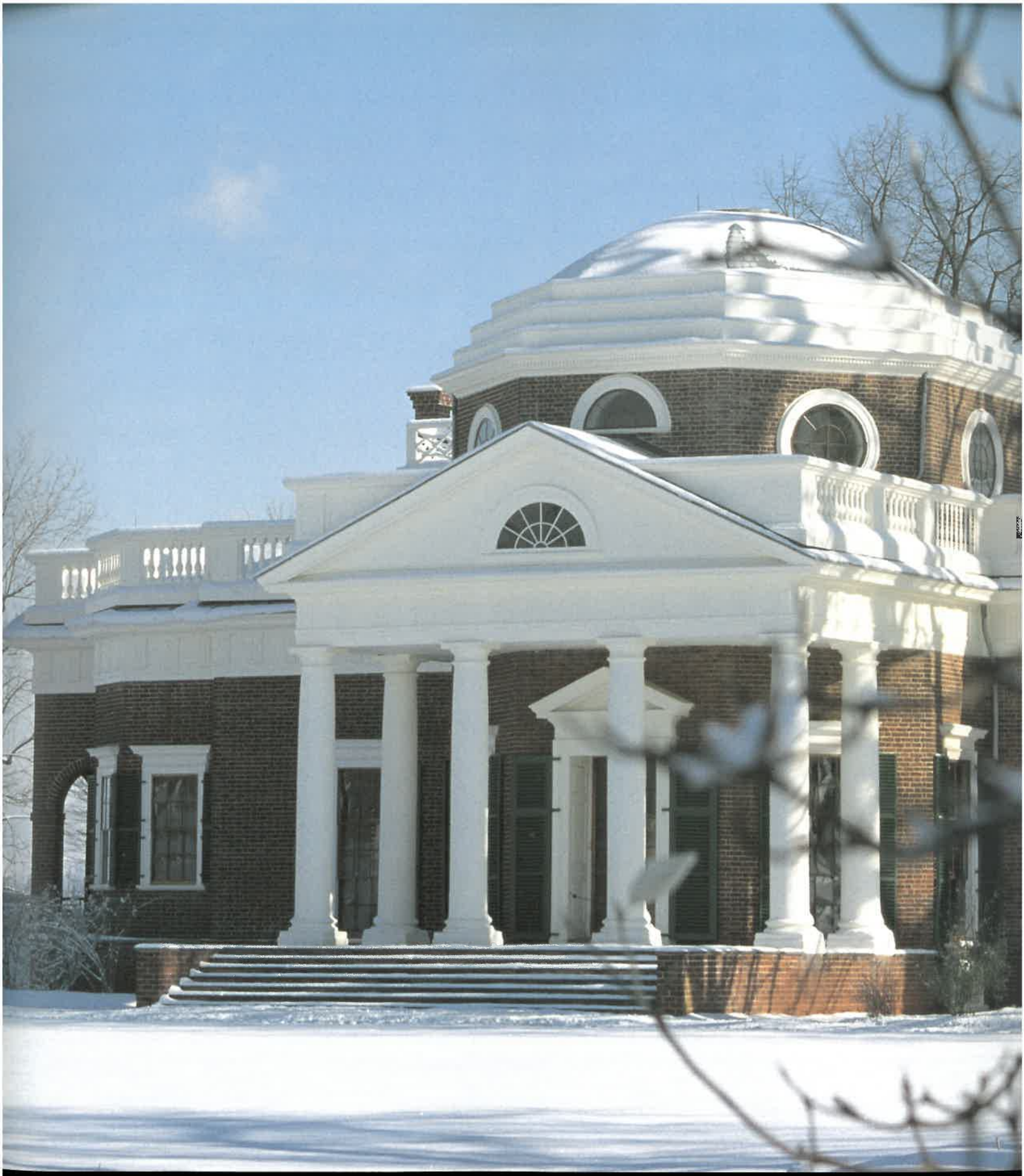
While living in Paris, he experienced firsthand a new level of refinement in domestic architecture. The elegant townhouse that he rented on the corner of the Champs-Elysées and the rue de Berri had modern conveniences such as flush toilets and skylights that transformed spaces with diffused light.[11] There were the requisite formal "rooms of entertainment" and also a variety of private and intimate spaces that greatly enhanced comfort and convenience. The grouping of these spaces to form what could be called apartments was particularly an eye-opener for Jefferson. By contrast, the plan of the house he left behind in Virginia must have seemed formal and stiff.

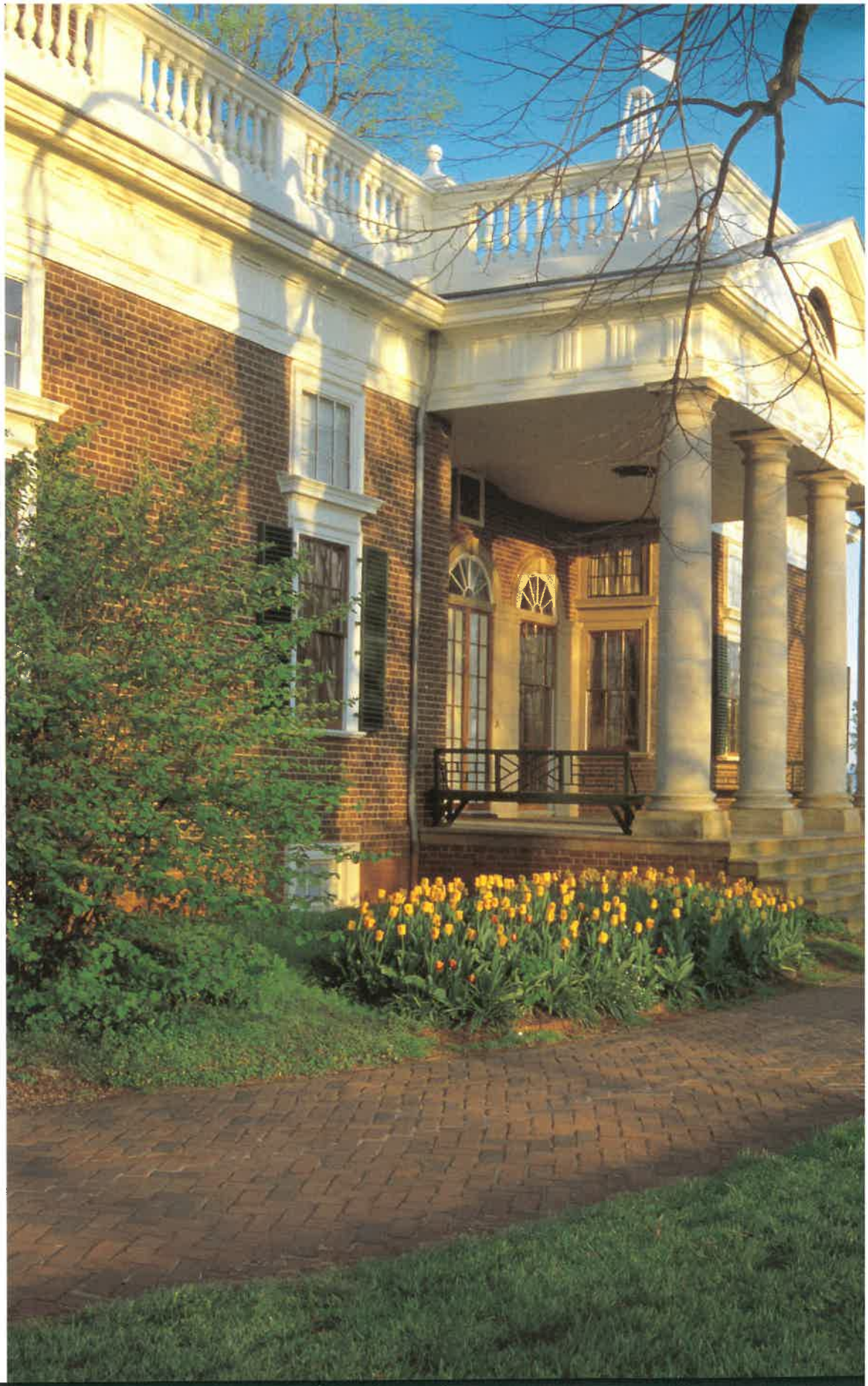
In 1796, acting on a new plan, Jefferson began a dramatic transformation of Monticello. The upper story was removed, the northeast front extended, and a new second level created for bedrooms within the height of the first floor. He referred to the new upper rooms as the "Mezzaninos."[12]



*In 1796, acting on a new plan, Jefferson began a dramatic transformation of Monticello. The upper story was removed, the northeast front (shown above) extended, and a new second level created within the height of the original first floor. The appearance suggests a one-story house.*

*(Opposite) The dome, constructed in 1800, was the first on a house in America. Jefferson based the proportions on the ancient Temple of Vesta in Rome. Although the portico and the dome are the central feature of the southwest (garden) front, the unifying elements are the entablature and balustrade carried around the perimeter of the building.*





*The Northeast Portico frames a recessed arcaded wall. The piers between the doors and windows are actually wood over brick, sand-painted in imitation of finely tooled sandstone. The stone columns date from the early house and were reused when the house was enlarged in 1796.*

The square windows for this mezzanine level are compressed between the main entablature and the cornice of the window below. Inside, the sills are only seven inches above the floor. On the third floor, three additional bedrooms are concealed in the northeast attic and lighted by skylights. The overall exterior appearance suggests a one-story house—an idea consistent with the progressive French thinking on domestic architecture so much admired by Jefferson.

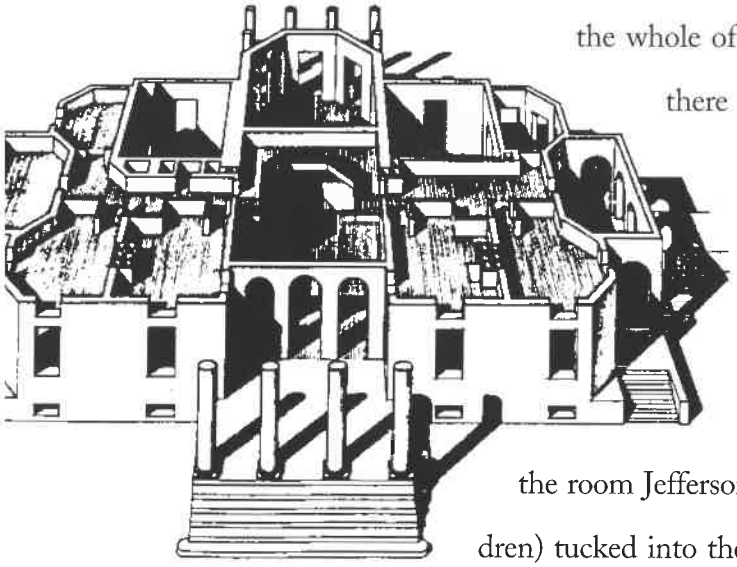
*Glass doors and triple-sash windows, which also serve as doorways, connect the spacious Entrance Hall to the Northeast Portico. The linkage of these two spaces is further suggested by the floor and glossy floorcloth, both painted grass green at the suggestion of the portrait painter Gilbert Stuart.*

For the west front he lowered the height of the second-floor study by eight feet and over it constructed a dome inspired by the Temple of Vesta at Rome illustrated in Giacomo Leoni's handsome edition of Palladio's *Four Books of Architecture*. By necessity, Jefferson had to adapt the circular form to an octagonal plan, but the proportions of the dome (one-third of a circle) and the rise and projection of the three steps at its base were preserved.[13]

The Doric portico and dome are the central focus of the façade, but the unifying horizontal elements of this neoclassical essay are the Doric entablature and balustrade carried around the perimeter of the building. Jefferson's use, however, of a Chinese lattice railing on top of the house seems to challenge the hierarchy if not the primacy of the classical orders.

Jefferson's plan called for retaining the rooms on the main floor that ranged along the southwest front and for advancing the northeast front to accommodate a large entrance hall/museum, a library, and three bedrooms. The old and new spaces in the wings were to be organized around lateral passageways off the Entrance Hall. He rejected the

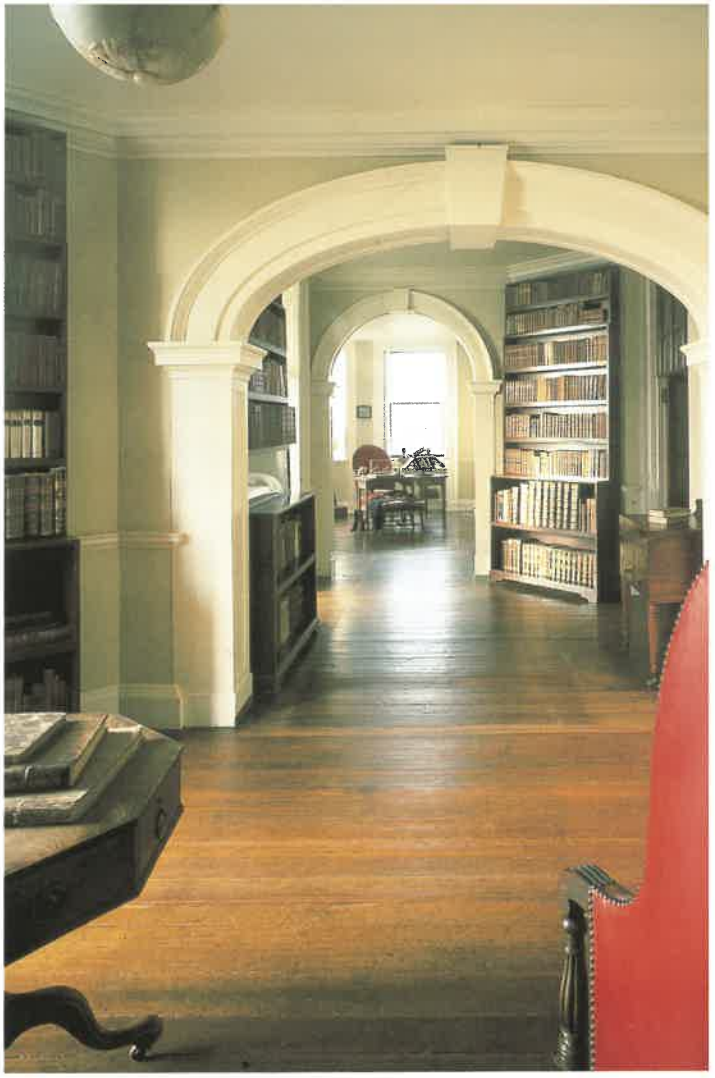
idea of a great staircase in the Entrance Hall and instead provided a much smaller one in each of the passageways. He reasoned that "great staircases … are expensive & occupy a space which would make a good room in every story."[14] But it was also consistent with his view that the merely ceremonial should be avoided. Jefferson's apartment occupied most of the south end of the house while two guest bedrooms were on the north side. The chamber on the south side was used as a family sitting room and schoolroom, although it has an alcove for a bed, as do the two guest chambers. Jefferson summarized his approach for reorganizing the house in a letter to John Brown in 1797: "In Paris particularly all the new & good houses are of a single story, that is of the height of 16. or 18. f. generally, & the whole of it given to the rooms of entertainment; but in the parts where there are bedrooms they have two tiers of them of from 8. to 10. f. high each, with a small private staircase."[15] In following the logic of the French *parti*, Jefferson created an asymmetrical distribution of high-ceilinged rooms for the main floor. The result was the irregular plan of the second level. Four chambers, each with bed alcoves, ranged along the northeast front. Over the Cabinet was the room Jefferson called the "Appendix," and next to it a nursery (for grandchildren) tucked into the low-ceilinged room above the Greenhouse.[16] The cantilevered gallery in the Entrance Hall connected the north and south spaces.



*Jefferson's asymmetrical distribution of high-ceilinged rooms for the main floor resulted in the irregular plan of the second level. This asymmetry is not evident, however, when one views the southwest (garden) front.*

It is remarkable that Jefferson, a widower since 1782, would see a need to more than double the size of his house. When he began the enterprise he wrote a friend, "I am uncovering & repairing my house, which during my absence had gone much to decay." However, he went on to explain, "I make some alterations in it with a greater eye to convenience than I had when younger."[17] Convenience, one could argue, was largely self-centered. Even so, when his family joined him in 1809, the house apparently functioned well.

In that first year of his retirement there were living at Monticello his eldest daughter Martha, her husband Thomas Mann Randolph, and six of the eight Randolph children, ages ranging from eight months to twelve years. In time three additional children would be born, and Jefferson's sister Anna Scott Marks would join this domestic scene. His apartment, for indeed it could be called that, occupied the width of the southeast side of the house and about one-third the length of the long southwest (garden) front. At its core were the Bedroom, Cabinet (study), and Book Room. Although the first two rooms existed in modified form in the pre-1796 house, the Book Room was an addition. Its incorporation into the apartment marked a significant change from the earlier version of Monticello, where the library above the parlor was probably the second most impressive architectural space in the house. Its elimination when Jefferson decided to spread out all his principal rooms on the ground floor shows how far he had come to value convenience over ceremony and architectural display.



*A bed alcove was first planned where the elliptical arch is now. But Jefferson changed his mind and decided to extend his Cabinet and Book Room the full width of the building. Margaret Bayard Smith found the "numerous divisions and arches" in Jefferson's apartment disappointing, and thought that one large room would have been more impressive.*

Jefferson's suite is L-shaped and the spaces are connected in such a way that one hesitates to call them three separate rooms. Besides conventional doorways, features such as a bed in an alcove open on both sides, and arches—one broad and elliptical and the other narrow and semicircular—are employed as transitions from one space to another. Variety is introduced by changes in ceiling heights and in the amount and quality of natural light admitted. The Bedroom, for example, is nearly nineteen feet high and flooded with light from a large skylight and a triple-sash window. To moderate the light and heat in summer, Jefferson designed a louvered blind with movable slats to close over the skylight.

*The climax of the Jefferson's apartment is the Chamber. This nearly nineteen-foot-high space is lighted by a skylight and a triple-sash window. Above the bed alcove is a closet vented and illuminated by three elliptical openings and reached by a steep stair or ladder in the closet to the right of the alcove.*

*Jefferson chose for his own chamber the Ionic entablature from the Roman temple commonly known as Fortuna Virilis (Manly Fortune). The source was Jombert's edition of the* Parallel de l'Architecture Antique avec la Moderne. *The frieze, however, was based on Desgodetz's* Édifices Antiques de Rome, *which depicts with greater accuracy and detail the combination of bucrania, putti, candelabra, and swags.*

*The bed alcove, which dates from the remodeling of the house in 1796, replaced a narrow doorway that separated the Chamber from the Cabinet. Beyond the alcove is the fireplace with the frieze repeating the form chosen for the room entablature. Jefferson provided his joiners with a full-size drawing of the fireplace moldings (shown in background).*

*Glass doors lead from the Book Room to the Southeast Piazza, another space in Jefferson's apartment.*

*(Opposite) In writing to William Hamilton on March 1, 1808, Jefferson observed, "My green house is only a piazza adjoining my study, because I mean it for nothing more than some oranges, Mimosa Farnesiana & a very few things of that kind." The piazza was also to house an aviary for Jefferson's pet mockingbirds.*

In his scheme, he stated, "my blinds open back on hinges as in the winter we want both the light and warmth of the sun."[18] The two other spaces in Jefferson's suite (above which are the family bedrooms on the second floor) are ten feet high and lighted by more conventional windows and glass doors.

The irregular layout of the apartment was noteworthy for its time in a country where symmetry and balance were so highly esteemed. Margaret Bayard Smith, who was otherwise an ardent admirer of Jefferson, sided with the critics, confessing, "I own I was much disappointed in its appearance, and I do not think with its numerous divisions and arches it is as impressive as one large room would have been."[19]

Mrs. Smith referred to the apartment as Jefferson's "sanctum sanctorum."[20] There he spent the morning hours until breakfast, after which he visited his gardens or rode off to inspect his plantation. His granddaughter Ellen Wayles Randolph Coolidge remembered:

> *As the day, in summer, grew warmer he retired to his own apartments .... Here he remained until about one o'clock, occupied in reading, writing, looking over papers, etc.*
>
> *My mother would sometimes send me with a message to him. A gentle knock, a call of "come in." and I would enter, with a mixed feeling of love and reverence, and some pride in being the bearer of a communication ....*[21]

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the apartment was the integration of three outdoor rooms that added greatly to Jefferson's comfort, convenience, and pleasure. Each is basically a porch and each is directly connected to the apartment by folding glass doors. In square footage the three spaces equal nearly half the area of the Bedroom, Cabinet, and Book Room. Isaac Weld, who was at Monticello the year before

the remodeling of 1796 was underway, alluded to at least one of the outdoor spaces when he observed: "A large apartment is laid out for a library and museum, meant to extend the entire breadth of the house, the windows of which are to open into an extensive green house and aviary."[22] The museum was ultimately established in the Entrance Hall; the greenhouse and aviary were planned for the arcaded loggia that Jefferson called the Southeast Piazza, which projects from the center of the southeast façade. This neatly plastered room is nearly twelve feet high and has window sashes on three sides that can be raised to doorway height. Above it on the second floor is a child's nursery.

*(Following pages) Longitudinal section through the southwest-front rooms rendered in watercolor by Floyd E. Johnson in 1986. The narrow space above Jefferson's alcove bed was for out-of-season clothes. The second-floor room above Jefferson's Cabinet was granddaughter Ellen's bedroom. The Venetian Porch, adjoining the Cabinet and recreated in 2000, is not shown.*

*Windows that double as doorways appear throughout the first floor of Monticello, including this one leading from the Greenhouse to the Southeast Terrace. In this version, the two lower sashes can be raised to the height of a door.*

Although there was sufficient light and ventilation, the piazza was apparently not heated, and its success as a greenhouse was limited. However, with the addition of a workbench it functioned admirably as a shop, in which, we are told, Jefferson made models and other small things of wood and metal.[23]

Weld's comment could be interpreted to mean that the aviary was to be a separate room, yet an entry by Jefferson in his building notebook indicates that the piazza was the intended location: "S.E. Piazza. from impost to top of architrave an Aviary to occupy breadth of recess only."[24] From his note it appears that the floor of the cage was to be aligned with the base of the arched portion of the windows (the imposts)—hence high enough to walk under. The top of the cage was to be level with the top of the window architrave, which in this case is at ceiling height. "Breadth of recess only" is a little more puzzling but very likely it refers to the back area of the piazza between the side arches and the Library. Although nothing remains of an aviary at Monticello, it is almost certain that somewhere within his apartment he housed his pet mockingbirds. He had three of them in Washington. Mrs. Smith described one:

> *In the window recesses were stands for the flowers and plants which it was his delight to attend and among his roses and geraniums was suspended the cage of his favorite mocking-bird, which he cherished with peculiar fondness, not only for its melodious powers, but for its uncommon intelligence and affectionate disposition, of which qualities he gave surprising instances. It was the constant companion of his solitary and studious hours. Whenever he was alone he opened*

*Glass doors connect the Cabinet to the South Venetian Porch. Granddaughter Ellen recalled, "His summer study, where he remained all the morning hours of the fine season, was under a room which was for a long time my own chamber, and, the windows being open, I heard him frequently thus singing the old Psalm tunes, or the Scotch melodies in which in spite of his love for Italian music, he always took great pleasure." Whether the reference is to the Venetian porch or the Cabinet is uncertain.*

*the cage and let the bird fly about the room. After flitting for a while from one object to another, it would alight on his table and regale him with its sweetest notes, or perch on his shoulder and take its food from his lips. Often when he retired to his chamber it would hop up the stairs after him and while he took his siesta, would sit on his couch and pour forth its melodious strains.*[25]

The birds were shipped to Monticello when Jefferson left Washington in 1809, and on April 25 he was able to send the reassuring word, "My birds arrived here in safety and are the delight of every hour."[26]

Flanking the Southeast Piazza are small enclosed terraces that could be entered from the piazza or the adjoining Cabinet or Library, whence one could descend to the lawn. Jefferson sometimes called them "Porticles," a word that suggests small porches or porticos.[27] And he also called them his Venetian Porches—a clear reference to the jalousies (louvered blinds) that constitute the walls.[28] Although they were removed about 1893, they were recorded in early artists' views and photographs, and recreated in 2000 based on those views and Jefferson's plan for the South Venetian Porch.[29] This plan, which details his scheme for door blinds, probably dates from 1805, when he was ordering similar exterior louvered shutters for the Southeast Piazza.[30] Within each doorway there were to be two tiers of double bi-fold blinds with movable slats, each tier four feet high. These were to be the same thickness as the walls: three and one-half inches. The blinds were to be hinged so that when not in use they could swing clear of the arches and fold compactly against the piers. Nowhere does Jefferson mention the function of the Venetian Porches. Privacy might have been a consideration, but more likely they were valued as cool retreats from the sun—a view consistent with his claim that "under the beaming, constant and almost vertical sun of Virginia, shade is our Elysium."[31] It is easy to imagine the pleasure of step-

*Interior of the South Venetian Porch. The light inside the "porticle" can be modulated by adjusting the angle of the slats in the door blinds or by folding back the double-tier doors in a variety of combinations. One can even remove the lunettes within the arches.*

*(Opposite) The Venetian Porches flanking the Southeast Piazza (Greenhouse) served as cool retreats from the sun. Jefferson could justify them by his belief that the design of the house should be "subordinated to the law of convenience." That he struggled to balance convenience and aesthetics is evident in his response to his joiner's query whether there should be a railing on each roof. Jefferson responded, "I do not propose any Chinese railing on the two Porticles at the doors of my Cabinet, because it would make them more conspicuous to the prejudice of the Piazza & it's* [sic] *pediment as the principal object. The intention was that they should be as obscure as possible that they might not disturb the effect of their principal."*

*The scheme for uniting the house and dependencies in L-shaped wings is not unlike examples of villas designed by Andrea Palladio and known to Jefferson from books. The distinction, however, is that the dwelling in a Palladian villa is typically at the head of a courtyard enclosed by the service buildings. But at Monticello Jefferson took advantage of the sloping site and constructed the dependencies in the hillside, thereby providing access to the service rooms at ground level while preserving uninterrupted views of the landscape from the windows of the house. In short, what he created—unique in American architecture—was a Palladian scheme turned inside out.*

ping from the Library or Cabinet into either of these enclosures—perhaps the east one in the morning and the south in the afternoon. The South Venetian Porch might have been, in fact, Jefferson's Summer Study. Ellen, whose room was above his Cabinet, remembers overhearing her grandfather in his apartment:

> *His voice continued wonderfully sweet and unbroken even to the last years of his life. He had the habit of singing low or what is called humming in the intervals between his various employments, when he rose from his writing table or reading chair and walked about his rooms. His summer study, where he remained all the morning hours of the fine season, was under a room which was for a long time my*

*own chamber, and, the windows being open, I heard him frequently thus singing the old Psalm tunes, or the Scotch melodies in which in spite of his love for Italian music, he always took great pleasure.*[32]

Regardless of whether the South Venetian Porch or the Cabinet was the Summer Study, Ellen's account reveals her grandfather's habit of seasonal changes within his quarters.

The final component of Jefferson's extended apartment is the raised terrace that leads from the Southeast Piazza to a two-story outchamber known as the South Pavilion. A similar terrace arrangement is found on the northwest side of the house. Both terraces are L-shaped, and beneath the nine-foot-wide deck that leads from the piazzas to the angles are passages that link the cellar of the house to dependencies located under the much broader section of terraces. The scheme is not unlike that of some Palladian villas, where the dwelling is flanked by service buildings forming a U-shaped courtyard. However, at Monticello, Jefferson minimized the sense of courtyard and opened views of the landscape from the house by concealing the dependencies in the hillside. In short, what he created was a Palladian scheme turned inside out. Although these terraces were not constructed until the first decade of the nineteenth century, the initial idea dates from the 1770s and recalls a suggestion made by Lord Kames in his essay "Gardening and Architecture" in the *Elements of Criticism*, a work known to Jefferson by 1771. Kames had proposed an artificial walk elevated high above the plain—an airy walk that would extend and vary the prospect and elevate the mind.[33] From Jefferson's elevated walkway there are views of the gardens and impressive vistas of the plain to the south and east. The design was unique for its time not only in this country but also perhaps in Great Britain and Europe, where

*View of the Southeast Terrace from the piazza. This terrace was an extension of Jefferson's private apartment.*

terraces connected to buildings were usually raised on much higher platforms. Jefferson's walkways are only about four feet above grade and are more intimately connected to the landscape. The sense is that the main floor of the house extends into the garden. This is perhaps the most universally satisfying aspect of the design of Monticello, and one has only to step from the house onto the wooden terrace and hear the sound of footsteps to experience it. Yet for all its humanism, the image that comes to mind is also patrician, for beneath the walkways, buried in the hillside and therefore out of sight, are the activities of those who labored in his service.

*The Northwest Terrace. Granddaughter Ellen recalled, "From this northern terrace the view is sublime; and here Jefferson and his company were accustomed to sit, bare-headed, in the summer until bed-time, having neither dew nor insects to annoy them. Here, perhaps, has been assembled more love of liberty, virtue, wisdom, and learning than on any other private spot in America."*

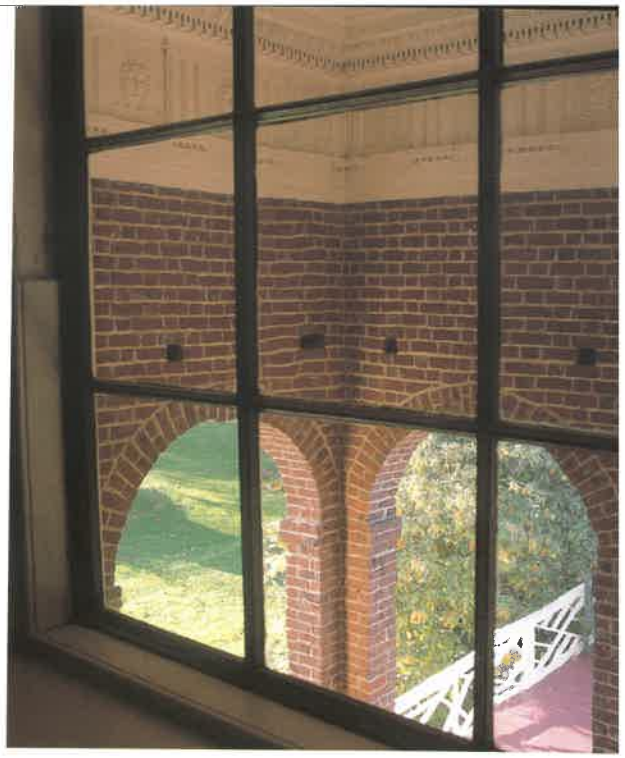
Although Jefferson's apartment best demonstrates the breadth of his thinking about extended living spaces, there are similarly conceived areas on all sides of the house. Projecting from the northwest end of the building is another piazza that outwardly resembles the Greenhouse in its arched openings, exterior entablature, and pediment. However, it is not enclosed with sashes nor is it plastered; it is a true open loggia. The ceiling is also much higher, owing to the absence of a second-floor room. Embellishing the otherwise stark interior is a Doric entablature based on one from the ancient Roman Baths of Diocletian, where the face of the sun god is repeated in the metopes.

Flanking the piazza are two small terraces with stairs leading to the lawn. Although basically similar to their southeast counterparts, they were never enclosed. The four corner terraces are probably what Jefferson called the "Angular Portals," for each provides a secondary entry to the house through raised triple-sash windows or

French doors. Another feature of each corner terrace is a built-in planting bed that fills the triangular void between the stairs and the canted wall of the house. We are told that violets grew within the triangle outside Jefferson's Cabinet window.[34]

The raised walkway that leads from the Northwest Piazza to the pavilion was known as the "public terrace," which implies that the southeast one was reserved for the family or perhaps for Jefferson alone.[35] Edmund Bacon, a longtime overseer, recalled, "Mr. Jefferson was always an early riser—arose at daybreak or before. The sun never found him in bed. I used sometimes to think, when I went up there *very* early in the morning, that I would find him in bed; but there he would be before me, walking on the terrace."[36] Later in the day, according to Ellen, Jefferson would reemerge from his rooms "before sunset to walk on the terrace or the lawn, to see his grandchildren run races, or to converse with his family and friends."[37] So important was this ritual to the aging man that when the snow fell, according to Ellen's sister Virginia, "we would go out, as soon as it stopped, to clear it off the terraces with shovels, that he might have his usual walk on them without treading in snow."[38]

No doubt it was the Northwest Terrace that many had in mind when they mentioned "a favorite promenade in the evening and in damp weather."[39] From here there are views of the village of Charlottesville, the valley, and the Blue Ridge Mountains beyond. Ellen remembered it well: "From this northern terrace the view is sublime; and here Jefferson and his company were accustomed to sit, bare-headed, in the summer until bed-time, having neither dew nor insects to annoy them. Here, perhaps, has been assembled more love of liberty, virtue, wisdom, and learning than on any other private spot in America."[40]



*Glimpse of the Northwest Piazza from the second-floor north passage window. Outwardly, the piazza resembles the Greenhouse in its arched openings, exterior entablature, and pediment. Within it is a very different space: it is a true open loggia with a much higher ceiling owing to the absence of a second-floor room. The only embellishment to this stark brick interior is the massive Doric entablature based on an example from the ancient Roman Baths of Diocletian where the face of the sun god is repeated in the metopes.*

*(Following pages) View of the house from the angle of the Northwest Terrace.*

The two remaining outdoor rooms at the perimeter of the house are the Northeast Portico (the carriage entrance) adjoining the Entrance Hall, and the Southwest Portico adjoining the Parlor and overlooking the flower garden. Jefferson's plan for making these more livable spaces involved suspending louvered blinds between the Doric columns. The solution was particularly apt for the Southwest Portico, where the afternoon sun is intense. Jefferson considered several schemes, unfortunately none of them dated. The final idea appears to be for two folding blinds suspended between each pair of columns.[41] The lower half can be folded up and secured to the upper half by hooks, or both folded and raised to the ceiling. Nowhere, however, does Jefferson describe the pulley system necessary to raise and lower the blinds, nor has any physical or documentary evidence yet been found to prove that any were installed in either of the porticos. Furthermore, his mention of "Venetian blinds for the Porticos" in a September 24, 1804, list of work for his slave joiner John Hemings leaves it unclear whether Jefferson is referring to fabrication or installation.[42]

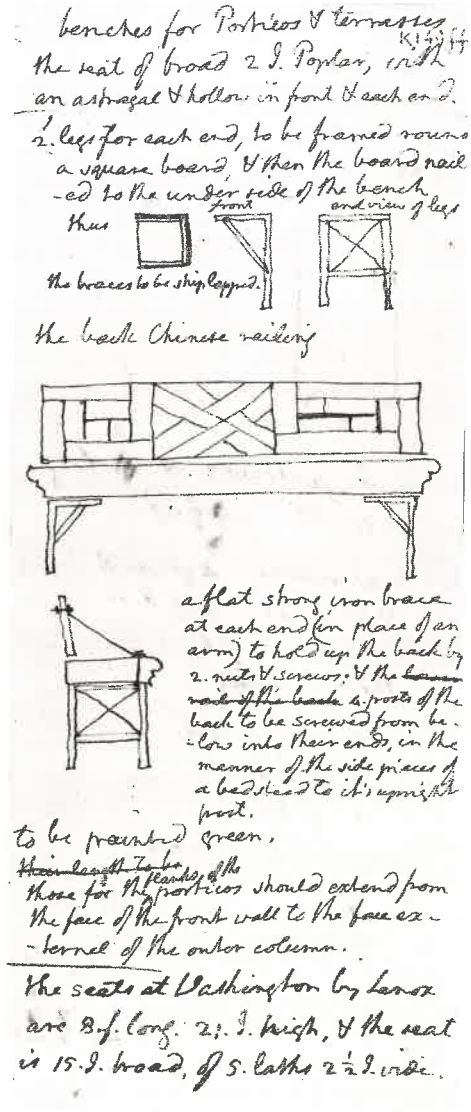
*Jefferson planned to make the Southwest Portico a more livable space by providing benches and suspending folding louvered blinds between the Doric columns.*

Four benches, each six feet long, were to furnish the Southwest Portico.[43] Although Jefferson does not specify their placement, one likely plan has two of the benches facing each other along the sides of the portico (between the rear and forward columns) and the other two benches positioned between the front columns and facing the house. This U-shaped arrangement leaves the area between the two middle columns open as a walkway. With the addition of louvered blinds, the portico would have been transformed into an inviting outdoor living room.

Very likely the two eight-foot-long benches planned for the Northeast Portico were to be placed along the open sides of the porch, facing each other as their modern versions do today.[44] But there is also an inventory, taken after Jefferson's death, that lists twenty-eight "black painted [Windsor] chairs" in the adjoining Entrance Hall. No doubt many of these were frequently moved outside.[45]

Both porticoes are connected to a spacious room by glass doors and triple-sash windows that function as doors. With the sashes raised and the doors open, the two worlds are wonderfully joined. The linkage is further suggested in the Entrance Hall by the floor and glossy floor cloth, both painted grass green at the suggestion of Gilbert Stuart.[46] Although it is easy to imagine Jefferson and his family and friends moving freely in and out of doors on a summer evening, we are told that this idyll was frequently marred by

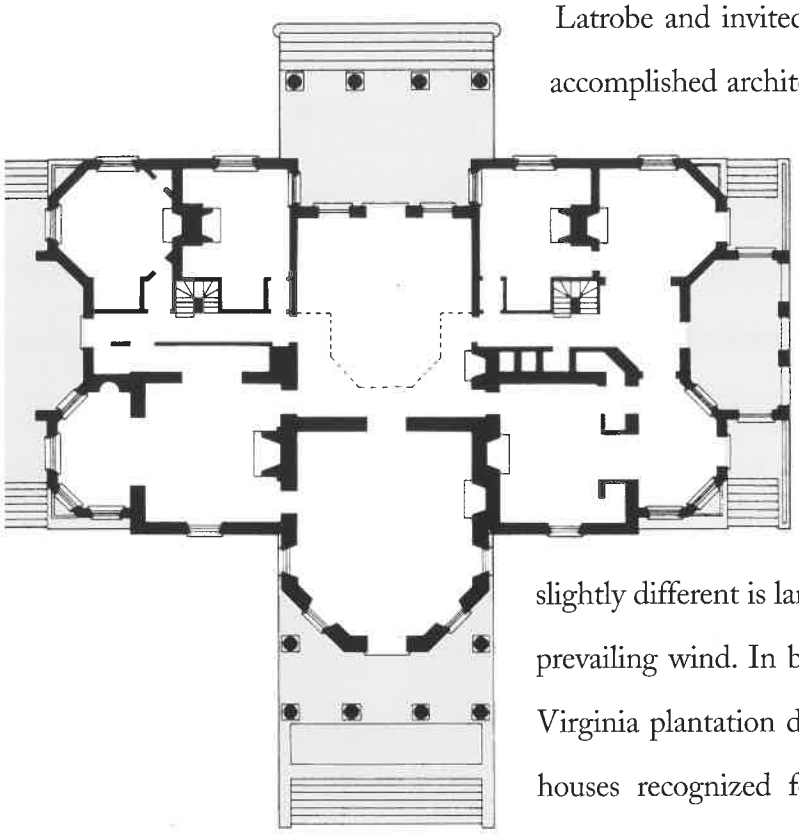
> *the swarms of impertinent gazers who, without introduction, permission or any ceremony whatever, thrust themselves into the most private of Mr. Jefferson's out-of-door resorts, and even into his house, and stared about as if they were at a public show .... When sitting in the shade of his porticoes to enjoy the coolness of the approaching evening, parties of men and women would sometimes approach within a dozen yards, and gaze at him point-blank until they had looked their fill, as they would have gazed on a lion in a menagerie.*[47]


benches for Portico's & terrasses
the seat of broad 2 I. Poplar, with
an astragal & hollow in front & each end
2 legs for each end, to be framed round
a square board, & then the board nail
-ed to the under side of the bench
front
thus
end view of leg
the braces to be shiplapped.
the back Chinese railing
a flat strong iron brace
at each end (in place of an
arm) to hold up the back by
2 nuts & screws. & the
rails of the back & posts of the
back to be screwed from be-
-low into their ends, in the
manner of the side pieces of
a bedstead to it's upright
post.
to be painted green.
those for the porticos should extend from
the face of the front wall to the face ex-
-ternal of the outer columns.
The seats at Washington by Lenox
are 8. f. long. 21. I. high, & the seat
is 15. I. broad, of 5. laths 2½ I. wide.

*Jefferson's design for Chinese-lattice benches for the "Porticos & terrasses" at Monticello.*

The visitor to Monticello in 1839, quoted at the head of this essay, arrived thirteen years too late to come and gaze at the great man and quiz him about his "monument of ingenious extravagance." Jefferson, who is reputed to have said, "Architecture is my delight,

and putting up, and pulling down, one of my favorite amusements," was well aware that what he created was subject to criticism.[48] In the fall of 1809 he wrote to Benjamin Henry Latrobe and invited him to come see his "essay in architecture." Thinking this accomplished architect might accept the offer, he apparently felt obliged to confess that his essay "has been so much subordinated to the law of convenience, & affected also by the circumstance of change in the original design, that it is liable to some unfavorable & just criticisms."[49] This "law of convenience" justifies the open-air living spaces at the perimeter of the house, which, by square footage alone, equal nearly half the area of the main-floor rooms. The fact that each space is slightly different is largely owing to its function and its relationship to the sun and prevailing wind. In breadth and openness the house goes far beyond the typical Virginia plantation dwelling that Jefferson would have known from his youth—houses recognized for their compactness and inward orientation. Monticello embraces the landscape and to a certain degree becomes part of it.



*The shaded areas summarize the variety of open-air living spaces at the perimeter of the house. By square-footage alone, they equal nearly half the area of the first-floor rooms.*

In a sense, at Monticello, Jefferson made permanent the experience of outdoor living that he described during the summer of 1793, when he rented a house on the Schuylkill River to escape from the yellow fever in Philadelphia. With him was his daughter Maria, then enrolled in school, who, Jefferson wrote: "passes two or three days in the week with me, under the trees, for I never go into the house but at the hour of bed. I never before knew the full value of trees. My house is entirely embosomed in high plane trees, with good grass below, & under them I breakfast, dine, write, read and receive my company."[50] Life under the trees ultimately found its venue on the porticoes, piazzas, and terraces of Monticello.

*In breadth and openness the house goes far beyond the typical Virginia plantation dwelling that Jefferson would have known from his youth—houses recognized for their compactness and inward orientation. The porticoes, Venetian porches, piazzas, and terraces that comprise the open-air living spaces at the perimeter of the house (visible in part in the photograph to the left) show the extent to which Monticello embraces the landscape and, to a certain degree, becomes part of it.*

*(Following pages) The southwest (garden) front of Monticello from the fishpond.*

# Architecture

## "One Of My Favorite Amusements"

*The Roman architectural orders were the basis of much of Jefferson's thinking about proportion and architectural detail. Shown here is Palladio's Doric order used at Monticello.*

*Jefferson's appreciation of neoclassical form is evident in this coffee urn that he acquired in France. A Jefferson drawing that closely resembles it is thought to be the basis of a* fontaine à café *that he commissioned as a gift to the French architect Charles-Louis Clérisseau, who assisted him with the design of the Virginia State Capitol.*

Thomas Jefferson said "Architecture is my delight, and putting up, and pulling down, one of my favorite amusements." Influenced by ancient and modern architectural writings, Jefferson gleaned from both his readings and from his observations in Europe, creating in his architectural designs a style that was distinctively American.

Along with Monticello, Jefferson the architect is best known for his plans for the University of Virginia. Dubbed the "father of our national architecture" by architectural historian Fiske Kimball, Jefferson planned the Virginia State Capitol and was influential in the design of the Federal City in Washington, D.C. In addition, he designed several Virginia houses for friends, as well as his retreat, Poplar Forest. On a larger scale, he planned cities and landscapes. On a smaller scale, he turned his attention to the details of a home, designing clocks, curtains, and a coffee urn.

Since his death, Jefferson's contributions to our national architecture have grown in estimation. In 1987, Monticello and the "academical village" of the University of Virginia were named to the World Heritage List, a United Nations compilation of international treasures that must be protected at all costs. In 1993, on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of Jefferson's birth, the American Institute of Architects posthumously granted him its Gold Medal for "a lifetime of distinguished achievement and significant contributions to architecture and the human environment."

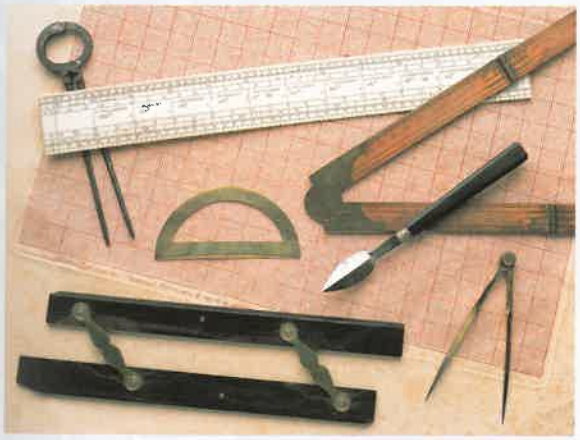
—B.L.C.

View of the City of Richmond from the Bank of James River *by Benjamin Henry Latrobe, 24 May 1798. The Capitol designed by Jefferson (assisted by Clérisseau), stands out on the hillside overlooking the James River. The temple form is largely based on the Maison Carrée at Nimes, France—a building that Jefferson called "the most perfect and precious remain of antiquity in existence."*

*(Opposite) "Rotunda" at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia. The heart of Jefferson's "academical village" served as the University's first library. The form is derived from the Pantheon at Rome.*

*(In background) The University of Virginia was Jefferson's last and greatest achievement as an architect. He conceived it as an "academical village" of buildings and open spaces unified by colonnades, arcades, and serpentine walls.*

*Wind vane and gong house on the roof of Monticello. A Chinese gong operated by the "Great Clock" in the Entrance Hall sounds the hours. The louvered housing is capped by a Tuscan cornice and finial.*



*A collection of Jefferson's drafting instruments is shown on a sheet of the French coordinate paper that he preferred for many of his architectural drawings.*

# Decoration

## Simple yet Elegant

Relying primarily on examples from books, Jefferson produced drawings for many of the architectural details at Monticello. They were prepared for his joiners, principally James Dinsmore, assisted by two of Jefferson's slaves, John Hemings and Lewis.

The joiners were responsible for the finished woodwork and produced all the door casings, the base moldings, chair-rails, and entablatures required for each room. The primary exceptions to the use of wood were the frieze ornaments and other fine details, such as the egg and dart, rosettes, and acanthus leaves that were applied to the woodwork. These were made in Washington from a material called composition—a mixture of whiting, linseed oil, hide glue, and rosin, heated and pressed into molds. The exceptions are the sun-god faces made of lead for the North Piazza.

Jefferson chose the Roman architectural orders, exhibited in their hierarchy, as the basis of the "simple yet regular and elegant" decorative scheme noted by the duc de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt. Palladio's version of the Tuscan order (the least elaborate of the orders) was chosen for the low-ceilinged rooms: the Library, Cabinet, and secondary bedrooms. The Dining Room, Tea Room, and the North Piazza represent three versions of the Doric, and the Entrance Hall and Jefferon's chamber, two different examples of the Ionic. Palladio's Corinthian order (the most ornate of the orders used at Monticello) was reserved for the Parlor.

*Even excluding most of the sashes, which were made at Philadelphia, and the doors, made at Richmond, the finishe woodwork at Monticello took ten years to complete.*

*Jefferson's drawing of stair balusters for Monticello date from the 1770s. In the coloni at that time, the usual form baluster had a set of turning that separated the column fr the vase. Jefferson chose to simplify the form and merge the column and vase.*

*The entablature in the Dining Room is the same Doric form used on the exterior of the house except that the frieze is embellished with alternating ox sculls and rosettes.*

*The frieze ornaments for the Entrance Hall, Parlor, and Jefferson's Chamber are copied from Roman temples illustrated in Antoine Desgodetz's* Édifices Antiques de Rome. *The engraving (left) is from the Temple of Jupiter the Thunderer, and is the source for the Parlor. It depicts the symbols of sacrifice.*

*erson, who once remarked that "Roman taste, genius, d magnificence excite ideas," turned to antiquity for piration in designing the dome at Monticello. His source s an illustration of the ancient Temple of Vesta—the st sacred shrine in Rome where Vestal Virgins tended re, symbolic of the hearth as the center of Roman life.*

*e geometry of the dome and the proposed method of struction are recorded in two pages of notes and in s drawing, both from Jefferson's building notebook.*

# Monticello's Dome Room

Up a steep narrow stairway and halfway down an attic hallway is Jefferson's Dome Room, or as he sometimes called it, the Sky Room. There is nothing in the approach that would lead anyone to expect such a glorious space. Margaret Bayard Smith, visiting Jefferson in 1809, remarked that it was a "noble and beautiful apartment." She noted that it was not, however, furnished, nor was it used, "a great pity, as it might be made the most beautiful room in the house."

Jefferson's inspiration for the first dome on a house in America was the ancient Temple of Vesta at Rome. The room is filled with light and the walls brightly painted with a mars yellow distemper. The floor was originally painted green. Looking about, one sees the quirks that make the room so distinctive. The plan of the room is not a regular octagon; the circular windows facing the house are raised to the cornice and contain mirrored glass to hide the visible portions of the sloping roof. Then there are the enormous base moldings that seem arbitrary and out of context. But from Jefferson's notes one learns that they represent a classical parapet proportioned not to the room but to the overall height of the building.

The crowning feature is the oculus, the circular opening to the sky, four feet in diameter and twenty and one-half feet above the floor. To cover it Jefferson ordered glass fifty-four inches in diameter—about as large as could be blown at that time. The present installation of a single sheet of blown glass dates from 1989.

*In one sense the interior of Monticello—like the Dome Room—is an essay in architectural juxtaposition. Startling effects are achieved by contrasting scale and by the intersection and even collision of moldings, all of which, when judged as independent features, appear to be proportioned rationally.*

# Monticello's Restoration

Though the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation acquired an aging Monticello in 1923, it was not until 1938 that attention turned to the kind of serious and scholarly restoration that has ever since marked the stewardship of this World Heritage site.

The driving force behind early restoration at Monticello was Fiske Kimball, a Jefferson scholar and Trustee of the Foundation, along with Milton L. Grigg, from the Charlottesville architectural firm of Grigg & Johnson. The first undertaking in 1938 was the rebuilding of the northwest dependencies, followed by the restoration of the southeast dependencies, including the South Pavilion, and the recreation of the gardens about the house, through the efforts of the Garden Club of Virginia aided by Edwin Morris Betts.

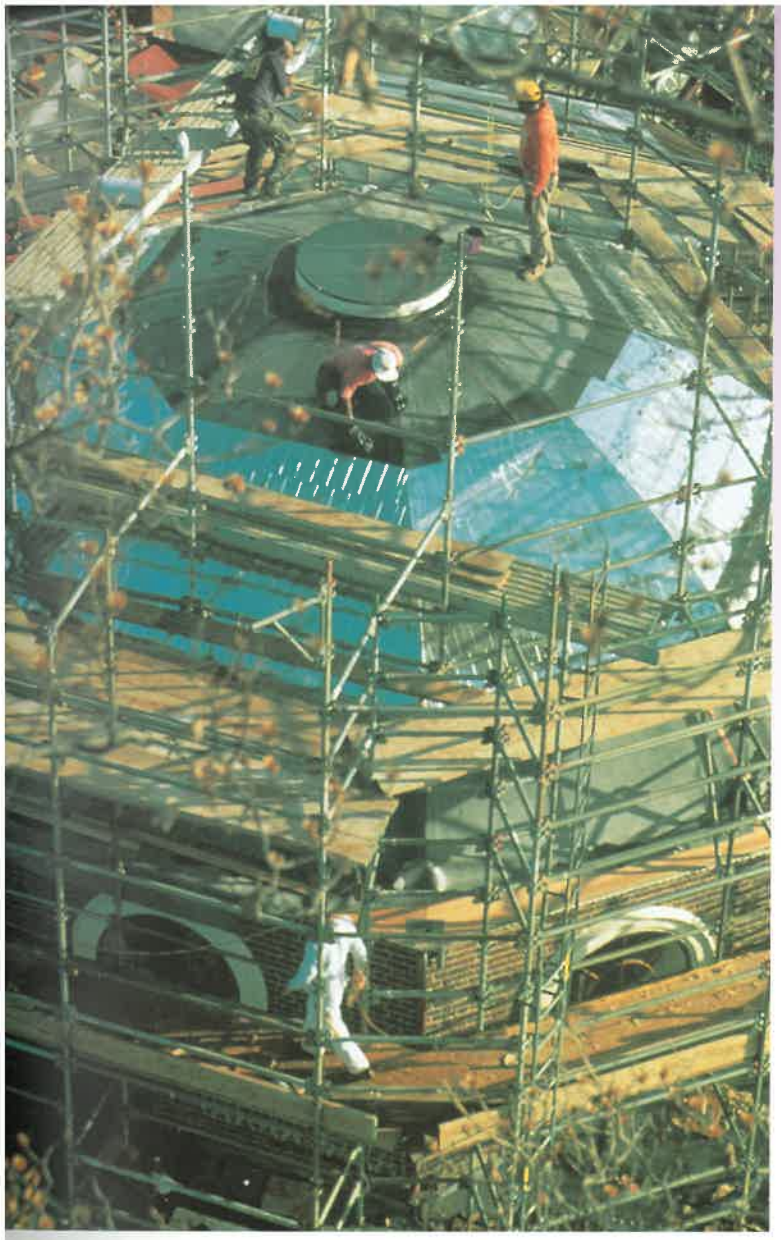
This scholarly vision of restoration was continued by Monticello Curator and Director James A. Bear, hired in 1955. Restoration during Bear's thirty-year career focused on the recreation of Jefferson's Grove, Orchard, and Vegetable Garden terrace, including the stone retaining wall and the Garden Pavilion, as well as the roads within the landscape.

Perhaps the most brilliant restoration occurred in 1991-92 under the leadership of Foundation President Daniel P. Jordan. Plagued by failing roofs, the Foundation faithfully restored what was probably for its time the most complex roof on a house in North America. Perhaps the boldest restoration to date was the installation of Venetian Porches—the louvered enclosures that flank the Greenhouse. For the first time in more than one hundred years, visitors are now able to experience the remarkable variety and quality of space that Jefferson created as part of his private suite.

*The southeast wing of dependencies was restored in 1941.*

*Although the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation replaced the roof in 1924, one year after acquiring Monticello, serious restoration based on scholarship would not be undertaken for more than a decade.*

*Restoration during the period 1938–55 was directed by Fiske Kimball (right), chairman of the Foundation's restoration committee, and the architect Milton Grigg (left).*



*Stainless-steel shingles coated with tin were used in the 1992 restoration of the dome to replicate the appearance of Jefferson's tinned-iron shingles.*

*Documentary and archaeological evidence were the basis of the recreation of the Garden Pavilion in 1983.*

*In 1953-54 a heating and air conditioning system was installed in the house and a major structural renovation undertaken. The first-floor level was reinforced from below with steel and the deteriorated and badly deflected second-floor joists were entirely removed (such as seen here in the Library) and replaced with steel. The original flooring was then carefully re-laid.*