



Tour to Focus on Life During Winter

As the arrival of winter alters the views from Monticello, a seasonal tour will change the way visitors experience the interior of the house.

Beginning Dec. 1, house interpreters will present "The Monticello Fireside," an updated version of the popular Winter Tour of three years ago.

Focusing on what life was typically like at Monticello during the winter months of Thomas Jefferson's years on the mountaintop, the tour will recount family events, methods for keeping warm, holiday traditions, and other topics.

Several rarely seen items, including a red single-breasted coat Jefferson may have used as a bed jacket and a display of faux food, will help create a more complete picture of how the house and its inhabitants would have fared during the cold months.

A time of limited travel, winter afforded Jefferson the opportunity for a welcome retreat into domestic seclusion with family and close friends. His letters include many affectionate references to "the fireside," a term he used for this inner circle of loved ones. The marriages of daughters Martha and Maria, as well as the births of several grandchildren, took place at Monticello in the wintertime, expanding the tight-knit group.

Winter could, however, be a trying time for Jefferson, who despised the



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MONTICELLO



Winter Tour

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cold and lamented the delays in construction and renovation projects brought about by harsh temperatures and inclement weather. In an 1822 letter to John Adams, he wrote, “I shudder at the approach of winter, and wish I could sleep through it with the Dormouse, and only wake with him in spring.”

Even the simplest of tasks were often hindered by the chilly conditions, as when Jefferson wrote in 1797: “It is at this moment so cold that the ink freezes in my pen, so that my letter will scarcely be legible.”

Examples of available defenses against plunging temperatures, including a cast-iron stove believed to have been used at Monticello and a reproduction of Jefferson’s fur-lined greatcoat, also will be featured on the Winter Tour, which will run through Feb. 28.



TJF / Colonial Williamsburg

A red single-breasted coat worn by Jefferson during winter at Monticello.

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