

This chimney and foundation are all that remain of the “joiner’s shop,” one of the first structures on Mulberry Row. From about 1775, free and enslaved workmen produced some of the finest woodwork in Virginia. Sawyers and carpenters felled oak, beech, cherry, poplar, walnut, chestnut, locust, and pine trees in the nearby forest and sawed them into timbers and planks at the “saw pit” to be put to use here. In the nearby “carpenter’s shop,” workmen dried and roughed out planks. Using an array of hand planes, chisels, saws, and lathes, joiners transformed the dried planks into doors, window frames, balusters, furniture, and carriages.

Buildings on Mulberry Row during Jefferson's era.



Arch in the Book Room. In 1799, James Dinsmore and John Hemmings “prepared & put up the oval arch in d^r (8. feet wide in 12. days.” They spent long hours sawing, planing, and bending tulip poplar wood for the arch between Jefferson’s study and library. Carol Highsmith, 2008

JOHN HEMMINGS

Highly skilled joiner John Hemmings trained with white craftsmen for 10 years; Scottish joiner David Watson taught him “to make wheels, and all sorts of work.” Hemmings became James Dinsmore’s apprentice in 1798, fashioning doors and windows, balustrades, staircases, cornices, and mantels. When Dinsmore left in 1809, Hemmings took charge of the “joiner’s shop,” producing fine furniture, carriages, and agricultural machinery. He also trained a younger generation of enslaved artisans, including his nephews, Eston and Madison Hemings.



Sawyer, The Book of Trades, Philadelphia, 1807. To saw wood into planks, the “pit man” stood under the timber while another sawyer positioned himself on the frame over it. Frank P. Amari, Jr.



Turner, The Book of Trades, Philadelphia, 1807. Joiners constructed intricate, fitted woodwork, including balusters and newel posts turned with a lathe. Frank P. Amari, Jr.



*both are house joiners of the first order.
they have done the whole of that work in my house, to which
I can affirm there is nothing superior in the US.*

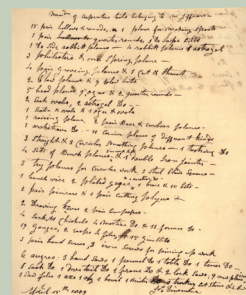
Thomas Jefferson, 1815

JAMES DINSMORE

Head joiner James Dinsmore worked on the dependencies and dome as well as on important interior finish work including cornices, shutters, and door frames. Overseer Edmund Bacon recalled that “Dinsmore...was the most ingenious hand to work with wood I ever knew. He could make anything.” During Jefferson’s presidency, Dinsmore managed Monticello’s operations. After 1809, this “very fine housejoiner” helped build James Madison’s Montpelier and the University of Virginia.



Saw fragment, iron.
Measuring device, copper alloy.
Wedge, iron.
Small hammer head, iron.



“Mem^{am} of Carpenters tools belonging to Mr Jefferson” by James Dinsmore, 1809, included over 185 hand planes, indicating the specialized nature of the work. Massachusetts Historical Society