



Kitchen Project: Return to 1809

Monticello's Kitchen is currently undergoing its most thorough reinterpretation and physical restoration since the present furnishings



Brick mason Henry Cersley at work on the rebuilding of the Kitchen's fireplace wall.

were installed in the middle of the 20th century. As a highlight of the overall dependencies restoration, the cooking room under the South Terrace is being architecturally reconfigured to bring it in line with both documentary evidence and extant examples of kitchen details associated with Jefferson's builders.

Work to date has included the re-facing of and other alterations to the fireplace wall, to suggest

how it appeared after 1809, when the kitchen was relocated from the space under the South Pavilion to its current site. The bake oven has been reconfigured in order to function properly. By moving the flue from the inner, domical baking space to the chamber preceding it, radiant heat can now be contained inside when the wooden oven door is closed. The heavy wooden lintel once situated over the hearth has been replaced with a shallow, iron-supported arch, in keeping with other Jefferson designs. The few remaining sections of Jefferson-era masonry, useful in deciphering the original configuration of the fireplace wall, can still be seen to the left of the fireplace opening and in the back wall of the hearth.

Once the Kitchen's southeast door is moved approximately one foot toward the all-weather passageway (by altering

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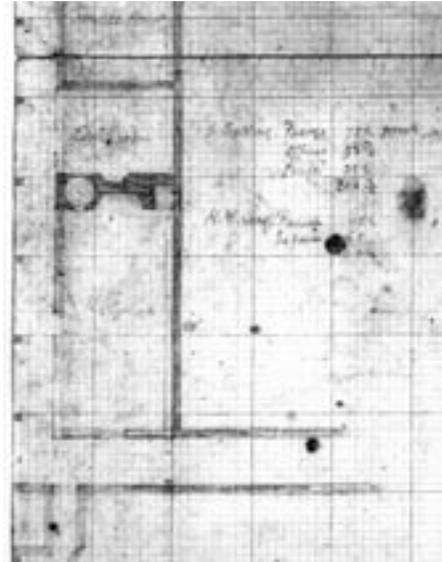
Kitchen Restoration

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the existing wooden partition wall), its placement will more accurately align with Jefferson's plan and provide the necessary space for a copper set kettle and eight-hole stew stove to be built beneath the existing window, between the door and fireplace wall.

The current brick floor, laid in 1967, will be replaced with bricks laid on edge, as seen in archival photographs showing the original floor surface. Finally, the brick-masonry stew stove and fireplace wall will be uniformly plastered.

The Kitchen ultimately will be furnished to reflect its appearance and patterns of use circa 1809. A dresser, or working countertop, and extensive built-in shelving will house a re-creation of the Kitchen's extensive inventory, including many pieces of copper cookware made in France.



Massachusetts Historical Society

**Detail of
Jefferson's
plan for
kitchen.**

- JUSTIN A. SARAFIN

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COMMENTS? newsletter@monticello.org