

TJ-Wiki provides expansive range of information on Jefferson's life, times

THE THOMAS Jefferson Wiki – a quick-reference guide to all things Jefferson – is online and growing.

The TJ-Wiki was launched in July with approximately 300 articles. Sixty entries were added in its first two months of existence, and that pace could continue, according to Thomas Jefferson Foundation Librarian Jack Robertson, who directs the project.

The rate of growth will largely depend on how many resources will eventually be devoted to the site.

“We’re hoping to recruit input and editorial contributions from not just

Monticello staff members but selected Jefferson scholars,” including fellows who come to the Robert H. Smith International Center for Jefferson Studies, Robertson said.

Delivering scholarly expertise on the life, times, and legacy of Jefferson to the public is the goal of the project. In the TJ-Wiki’s first two months of existence, it attracted more than 6,700 individual users.

The content of the site is truly eclectic. The TJ-Wiki’s pages include, for example, a list of crops grown at Monticello, an article on the Embargo of 1807, the story of the guitar Jefferson bought for his granddaughter Virginia in 1816, and Jefferson’s own ice cream recipe – the first known American recipe for the much-loved dessert.

The site – accessible through Monticello’s Web site (monticello.org) and at <http://wiki.monticello.org> – employs MediaWiki, the same free, open-source software that’s behind by the popular Wikipedia site. Unlike its famous counterpart’s entries, however, all TJ-Wiki articles are vetted by Foundation staff members or respected scholars.

Members of the public can join the site’s online community by creating an account and accessing the “Discussion” pages, where they can submit questions



The TJ-Wiki includes information about the cittern, or English guitar, that Jefferson purchased for his granddaughter Virginia in 1816.

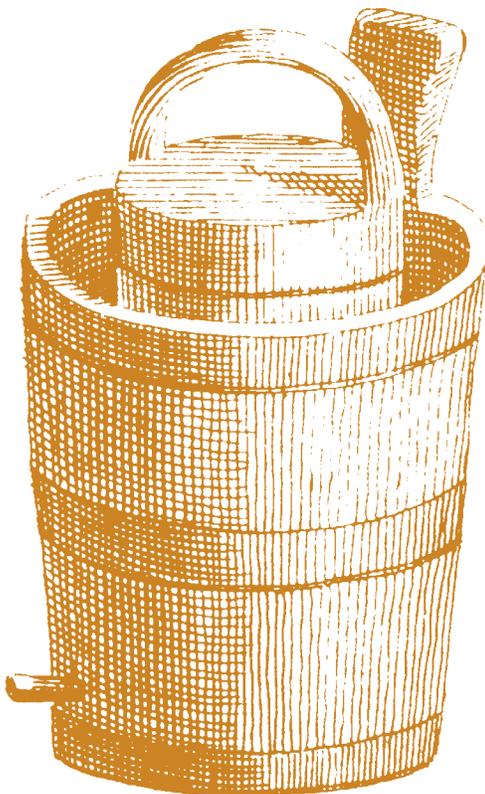
TJF / Edward Owen

or suggest changes. Account holders also can sign up for notification of new articles and when changes they suggested are made.

In addition to having generated more than 41,000 page views in its first two months of existence, the TJ-Wiki has drawn responses from people all over the world.

“We have had comments from scholars and people who are very well-versed in history who have pointed out errors or things that they think should be different, and that’s great,” Robertson said. “That’s what we want it to be.”

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A drawing of a Jefferson-era ice cream maker. Jefferson’s own recipe for ice cream can be found on the TJ-Wiki.

COMMENTS?

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