

Th: Jefferson

MONTICELLO

SPRING 2014

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VOLUME 25, NUMBER 1

U.S. PRESIDENT Barack Obama AND FRENCH PRESIDENT François Hollande PAY A HISTORIC VISIT TO MONTICELLO

“Thomas Jefferson’s residence...remains one of the most beautiful symbols of the ties that unite us.”

— PRESIDENT FRANÇOIS HOLLANDE

Since Thomas Jefferson’s time, United States presidents, foreign heads of state and key international figures have visited Monticello seeking inspiration and knowledge about the Enlightenment philosopher who shaped our new nation.

“This was the first time that a sitting U.S. president accompanied another head of state to Monticello,” said Thomas Jefferson Foundation President and CEO Leslie Greene Bowman, who led the tour of the house, noting it was also the first time either president visited Jefferson’s “little mountain.”

As President Obama remarked following their tour, “I thought this was an appropriate way to start the state visit because what it signifies is the incredible history between the United States and France. As one of our Founding Fathers, the person who drafted our Declaration of Independence, somebody who not only was an extraordinary political leader but also one of our great scientific and cultural leaders, Thomas Jefferson represents what’s

best in America. But as we see as we travel through his home, what he also represents is the incredible bond and the incredible gifts that France gave to the United States, because he was a Francophile through and through.”

On the tour, Bowman pointed out the many visible traces of Jefferson’s affection for France. “Thomas Jefferson was not only the Enlightenment philosopher; he was also a scientist, architect, gardener, epicure, politician, diplomat and Francophile. He brought both substance and style to the new nation, much of which he absorbed from his five years in Paris as minister to France,” she said.

In Paris, Jefferson was entranced



President of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation Leslie Greene Bowman with French President Hollande and President Obama in Jefferson’s Cabinet at Monticello.

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by the construction of the Hôtel de Salm, a new palace for the Prince de Salm facing the Seine, and today the headquarters of the Legion of Honor. Jefferson rented a chair in the Tuileries across the river and watched the construction “almost daily.”

More than any other building, the Hôtel de Salm influenced his redesign of Monticello in the 1790s and inspired

Presidential Visit to Monticello

his construction of the dome. When Jefferson returned to the United States, he arranged for 86 crates of his belongings to be shipped from Paris to Philadelphia, including 48 chairs, an architect's desk, an obelisk clock and footed silver goblets made to his design.

On their tour, President Obama and President Hollande were surrounded by reminders of Jefferson's five years in France. Stepping outside to the West Lawn they viewed Monticello's iconic dome, and under the south terrace they explored Jefferson's kitchen where meals were said to be prepared in "half-Virginia" and "half-French" style.

Both President Obama and President Hollande mentioned the Monticello visit on Feb. 11 at the Arrival Ceremony, and later that

evening during their toasts at the State Dinner. "Yesterday, we were in Monticello, the residence of Thomas Jefferson – a great American statesman, once ambassador to France – who remains one of the most

.....
"... so ask the traveled inhabitant of any nation, In what country on earth would you rather live? – certainly in my own, where are all my friends, my relations, and the earliest & sweetest affections and recollections of my life. – which would be your second choice? – France."
.....

—THOMAS JEFFERSON

beautiful symbols of the ties that unite us," said President Hollande. "Today, we stand united and we have built a model of friendship – a friendship that is the best recipe for a better world, a world such as the one that was dreamt of by Thomas Jefferson and Lafayette."

"It was a singular honor to welcome President Obama and President Hollande to Thomas Jefferson's Monticello," said Bowman. "Jefferson's enthusiasm for the culture and intellectual vibrancy of France is visible throughout his home, and we were so grateful to share this historic moment at Monticello."



Thomas Jefferson Foundation President Leslie Greene Bowman with French President Hollande and President Obama.

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A portrait of two presidents.

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