Thomas Jefferson’s private suite, or Sanent Sanctum as a friend described it, is the focus of a research campaign culminating in a major reinstallation in spring 2019. Monticello’s team of curators and restoration staff have been examining letters, invoices, packing lists and account books, searching Monticello’s collection to identify original objects and finishes, and acquiring objects.

Books, prints, maps, scientific instruments, additional furniture, wallpaper and curtains will make for a livelier interpretation—and some surprises.

Through research and scholarship, we have developed a more nuanced understanding of how this series of rooms was used over time. For example, the private suite originally included the South Square Room; Jefferson housed books there until they were sold to Congress in late 1817. The room then served as Martha Randolph’s Sitting Room in early 1816. Much of Jefferson’s original furniture for the Book Room and Cabinet survives in Monticello’s collection. The revolving chair will continue to anchor the iconic reading and writing arrangement in the Cabinet but the octagonal “Writing Table,” a generous long-term loan of the Massachusetts Historical Society, will become a focal point in the Book Room.

Many more scientific apparatus will convey an idea of Jefferson’s scientific experiments. An hourglass and air pump, designed to conduct an extensive series of experiments with vacuums, will join existing instruments such as the orrery and circumferenter.

Among the upcoming changes in the Cabinet are green wallpaper and a “folding frame” made to Jefferson’s exacting specifications and installed in the Cabinet side of Jefferson’s bed alcove in 1816. Its two hinged wings were “covered with paper on each side” so that Jefferson could close off the alcove.

The restoration, interpretation and endowment of the rooms in Jefferson’s private suite are made possible by support from David M. Rubenstein, Grady and Lori Durham and family, David and Susan Goode and family, and Christopher J. Toomey.

Explore Jefferson’s Private Suite and learn more about our latest discoveries at an upcoming TOM Talk. See page 8 for complete details.

Thanks to recent gifts from different descendants who wish to remain anonymous, the obelisk clock and a round marble table are now part of Monticello’s permanent collection. Designed by Jefferson, the obelisk clock daily.

Monticello. In 1844, visitor Daniel Webster noted that “Mr. J. rises in the morning, as soon as he can see the hands of his clock (which is directly opposite his bed)... Jefferson relied on the obelisk clock daily.

We are thrilled that Monticello’s guests can now enjoy these objects in perpetuity.

The MountainTop Project is made possible by a transformational contribution from David M. Rubenstein. Leading support was provided by Fritz and Claudine Kundrun, along with generous gifts and grants from the Sarah and Ross Perot Jr. Foundation, the Robert H. Smith Family Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. John H. Birdsell, Mr. and Mrs. R. Grady Durham, the Goode Family Foundation, the Mars family, the Richard S. Reynolds Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, Charlotte Moore and Barry Friedberg, Christopher J. Toomey, the Joseph and Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation, the Mary Morton Parsons Foundation, the Manning Family Foundation, the Cabell Foundation, the Garden Club of Virginia, and additional individuals, organizations and foundations.