

# *Th. Jefferson* MONTICELLO

## Exhibition: Monticello's 'Crossroads'

The cellar level of the Monticello house was a horizontal and vertical crossroads. There, enslaved domestic workers, Jefferson family members, slaves accompanying Monticello visitors, waggoners delivering supplies, and any other people using Monticello's "service entrance" all crossed paths and interacted.

Motion was constant. Cooks and their assistants made frequent trips along the cellar passage to the ice house and back. Before meals, kitchen workers carried food down the passage to the preparation areas at the bottom of the north stairway and returned with used platters. Housemaids carried water and laundry and other supplies upstairs and carried soiled linen and wastewater back down. Teen-age boys carried firewood up and ashes down. As Monticello's housekeepers, Jefferson's daughter Martha and granddaughters went downstairs to instruct slaves and to lock and unlock cellars containing foodstuffs, household supplies, and table wares. An enslaved butler, Burwell Colbert, who also carried the keys to locked spaces, supervised various activities, both upstairs and down. Jefferson himself reportedly visited to the Kitchen once a week to wind the clock there.

A new exhibition to be installed in the central cellar space directly beneath the house's entrance Hall will give visitors a sense of this buzz of activity and introduce them to some of the people who worked to sustain the Jefferson household.

A large introductory panel containing a three-dimensional house plan on one side and informational text on the other will orient visitors to the space and explain the concept of the horizontal and vertical crossroads.

Life-sized figures will "present" some of the people who performed major roles in the space: enslaved butler Burwell Colbert; Jefferson's daughter Martha Jefferson Randolph; Priscilla Hemmings, chief nurse to Jefferson's grandchildren; Israel Gillette, a teen-age house servant; and an older, unnamed enslaved woman with an enslaved girl. Each figure will be accompanied by a museum case of archaeologically-recovered objects representing items they may have worn, carried in their pockets, or used in their jobs. These include shoe buckles, buttons, a pocket knife, beads and earrings, thimbles, scissors, pins, and an iron.

In addition to the figures, the new exhibition will contain interactive components. One will give visitors the experience of climbing the narrow stairs in the Monticello house while carrying supplies or wearing a long skirt. Another will explain the bell system that was employed to summon domestic workers and allow visitors to ring a bell.



The Kitchen (above) is connected to the main house by the South Passage (below)

