



Worlds of Thomas Jefferson At Monticello

Susan R. Stein

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Thomas Jefferson was, by any reckoning, one of the most remarkable men ever to have crossed America's political stage. In 1776 he drafted the Declaration of Independence, and throughout the Revolution and in the posts he held thereafter - governor of Virginia, minister to France, secretary of state, vice president, and president - Jefferson's responsibilities were enormous and his accomplishments profound. Yet during those years he also was able to design his own house, Monticello, the magnificent Palladian mansion in central Virginia, and later to establish the University of Virginia and to plan its principal buildings. And, through all this, Jefferson made purchases for a lifetime. Needing to furnish not only Monticello but also the ministerial residence in Paris - the Hotel de Langeac - and the President's House in Washington, Jefferson bought with consummate taste and an extraordinary eye for the newest in American, English, and French styles. Fascinated by science and the growing field we now call "technology," Jefferson procured or had built devices for copying letters, telescopes for exploring the stars, and even dumbwaiters to minimize dependence on servants at mealtimes. He was keenly curious about his native land and devoted to promoting its virtues, and he acquired examples of its fossils, flora, and fauna and studied its indigenous peoples. Determined that the former colonies should both enjoy their cultural patrimony and preserve their own history, he purchased original paintings and had copied what could not be bought. He commissioned busts of his intellectual heroes, as well as of the heroes of the American struggle for independence. The Worlds of Thomas Jefferson assembles more than 150 of the objects Jefferson acquired - the first time they have been seen together since the contents of Monticello were dispersed at his death. This astonishing collection reveals the limitless range of his curiosity and the acuteness of his taste, portraying not o

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