

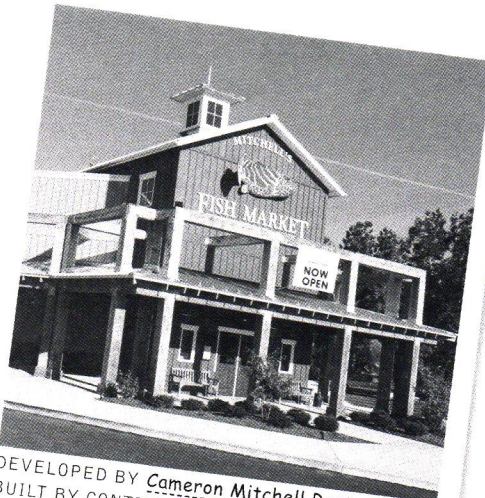
C O L U M N S



CHANGING THE DESIGN PROCESS: **The Pennsylvania Barrier Project**

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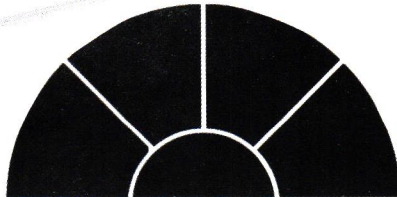
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Don't Forget What Your Good Book Said

By Tracy Certo



The first domed house in the country, and the only house today on the World Heritage List, Monticello boasts 13 skylights, dumbwaiters, automatic doors and the Great Clock, all designed by Jefferson.

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On the cover: Photo by Andrew A. Wagner

If you dream someday about writing

a book on architecture, you're in good company. As David Vater, AIA illustrates in his extensive article on architects as authors (p. 12), the list is long and illustrious, and that's just local. He also mentions historic figures such as the immensely prolific Thomas Jefferson—who authored the Declaration of Independence as well as a trove of 90,000 personal letters.

Coincidentally I had just returned from a trip to Monticello, Thomas Jefferson's estate in Charlottesville, Virginia. (Another coincidence: just as we entered the 500-acre plantation, Neil Young's "Southern Man" was playing on the car radio.) We headed south to see friends, and didn't expect such a wonderful trip, perfect for architects and historians.

To start with a bang: Monticello. I must confess that Jefferson was once my hero but his currency took a dive after I read McCullough's *John Adams*. So I'm happy to report that this visit renewed my appreciation for the man as an architect and landscape architect, philosopher and author. In his *retirement*, the prodigious statesman created the University of Virginia in nearby Charlottesville, designing many of the buildings including the now-restored Rotunda building.

High on a hill overlooking the historic town, Monticello is Jefferson's creation through and through, from its 40-year building history (Jefferson redesigned it after spending five years in Paris as a minister) to its Parisian furnishings and the many family portraits that line its 18-foot high walls. The first domed house in the country, and the only house today on the World Heritage List, Monticello boasts 13 skylights, dumbwaiters, automatic doors and the Great Clock, all designed by Jefferson. In one striking portrait, at age 78, he is featured wearing five layers of clothing. He was a man of many accomplishments but surviving winters in style wasn't among them. Detesting the cold weather, he wished to be like a dormouse, awakening each spring.

In his study, you get the best sense of the man, with the writing/copying machine he invented, his astounding book collection and the six-foot-three-inch alcove bed that splits the office from the bedroom. You can almost picture the 6' 2" Jefferson rising each morning—railing against his inner dormouse—to first dip his feet in a bucket of cold

water to ward off colds. It worked. He averaged one every seven years.

Jefferson's ambition and accomplishments were matched by his extravagant nature. If cold weather wasn't his thing, neither were finances. He died \$100,000 in debt, which is the equivalent of a million in today's dollars.

The tour is fascinating, but at 45 minutes, way too short. Outside, we walked the underground slave quarters (Jefferson as archeologist) and the famous gardens (Jefferson as landscape architect) as well as the private family cemetery.

After a hearty lunch at an authentic tavern, we headed to Richmond, straight to the signature Monument Avenue. With its grand statues of confederate heroes on horseback such as Robert E. Lee, (whose statue stands sixty-feet high) Stonewall Jackson and J.E.B Stuart, the street is as steeped in controversy as it is in history. Walk of shame or walk of fame? asks one Web site. As a native later informed us, the horses' rear ends tellingly all face north.

We hadn't noticed, entranced as we were with the mix of old Georgian and Tudor and Italianate houses that line this, one of America's Most Beautiful Boulevards. According to one local guide, it's the largest concentration of historical landmark houses in the country.

Nearby is the trendy Fan district, a historic neighborhood named for its shape, chockablock with row houses of varying architectural styles. Some are modest, some are knock-out and some look like the best of our own Allegheny West, blocks-long. The Fan is adjacent to Carytown, a charmer of a shopping area along the lines of Shadyside but bigger, and with more independent stores. On a late December day, it was sunny, nearly 60 and Carytown was humming with activity.

There's much to see in downtown Richmond, from the splendid Jefferson Hotel and quaint and pretty Canal Walk along the James River, to the restored tobacco factories of Shockoe Slip and Shockoe Bottom. Now they house elegant design shops and restaurants.

First impressions of a city matter, as noted in the article about the Pennsylvania barrier (p. 8). It's quite a story, of unique collaboration that resulted in a workable solution for all. And now, it's award-winning. Let's talk civic pride!