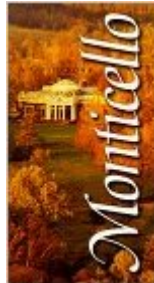


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Monticello: A Guidebook



Synopsis

Thomas Jefferson's Monticello is an international treasure. The only residence in America on the United Nations' World Heritage List, it ranks with the Great Wall of China and the pyramids of Egypt as an irreplaceable historical site. *Monticello: A Guidebook* is a fully illustrated guide to the house, gardens, and plantation, with authoritative information on Jefferson's extraordinary life and career. Senior members of the Monticello professional staff have prepared this guidebook especially for visitors to Jefferson's mountain.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A good guidebook, doing what such a book should do: (1) be an introduction to the subject, not too scholarly, not too dumb; (2) have good pictures, maps, and diagrams; (3) explain what you're seeing; and (4) keeping you entertained and intrigued. It is a good overview of Jefferson's career and life, especially focused on his home life at Monticello. The focus on Monticello's building, gardens, plantation, and home life are all covered quite well. The slaves are also discussed perfectly, describing their life without excoriating Jefferson as a slaveowner, but also not portraying slavery as some ante-industrial idyll. All well-balanced, interesting, and well-portrayed. However, only the late historian Merrill D. Peterson falls into the political mire by trying to tell us what Jefferson means today. Listen to these progressive-liberal gems (p. 124): "Some of Jefferson's political and constitutional doctrines fall short of the standards of modern democracy and would, if firmly adhered to, defeat the liberal ends he had in view." Well, this assumes his views are liberal in the modern

sense; that he thinks government should achieve these ends; and that democracy is a good thing. Indeed, liberal for Jefferson meant respecting freedom of the individual, not progressively democratic-socialist; he believed people themselves, not the government, should enlighten themselves; and that we had republic precisely because democracies could devolve into mobcentric tyrannies. Peterson continues: "His advocacy of the strict construction of the written constitution, for instance, has often been wielded as a weapon by conservative interests to hold back the exercise of governmental power for benign purposes." Wow! First, conservatives wield the constitution as a weapon? No.

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