

**Summer Internship Report 2017**

**Kate Barlow, C'18**

Hometown: Charlottesville, Virginia



**The Thomas Jefferson Foundation  
Charlottesville, Virginia**

**Provide an overview of the organization/research project and a summary of your responsibilities, tasks, and/or projects.**

I spent this summer working on a little mountain in Charlottesville, Virginia called Monticello. The Thomas Jefferson Foundation, a private, nonprofit corporation, bought the historical home of our third president from the Levy family in 1923, which is now a National Historic Landmark and UNESCO World Heritage Site. The home was opened to the public in 1924 and the Foundation has instituted many research and educational programs, as well as major restoration and renovation projects over the years. The Foundation's goal is twofold: preservation and education, and this summer I learned firsthand that the Foundation is exceeding at their mission.

Charlottesville and the surrounding area has been home to me for most of my life, so working on the mountain immediately felt as though my colleagues were neighbors and friends, and many of them actually were. Over my eleven weeks, I split my time as an intern between the marketing and curatorial departments, working on some projects specific to each, others overlapping between the two departments. Working in two different offices helped me to gain a broader perspective of the Foundation. The staff that keeps the house and grounds open nearly every day of the year is highly specialized and every member of each department plays an integral role in preserving, interpreting, and sharing Monticello to the public. Luckily, I caught glimpses into several departments and learned the importance of communication within a staff of so many that is spread out around the circumference of a small mountain.

**During your internship, what did you accomplish or how did you make a difference? In what ways did you grow in your professional and technical skills?**

My time spent with marketing was hands-on and eye opening. One of my first days on the job was spent accompanying a camera crew and TV show host around the house and grounds while they filmed for an upcoming series about our Founding Fathers. I learned about public relations policy and protocol, while simultaneously finding out more about our nation's history. Monticello holds dozens of events throughout the year from winemaking workshops to a worldwide broadcasted Fourth of July naturalization ceremony. I spent some time promoting these programs with the public by posting the events to community calendars on the web and "guerilla" marketing around town, hanging up flyers on community boards.

**Describe a problem that you helped to solve at your internship. What skills or knowledge from your education at Sewanee helped you address the problem?**

What would a summer internship be without a few hiccups along the way? Halfway through the summer, The Thomas Jefferson Foundation experienced a ransomware attack, taking the system down for several weeks. With very limited access to digital files and minimal staff-wide communication, I witnessed how a large corporation reacts to a problem like this. We went old school for a bit and dug through old paper files and tattered books to conduct research, a skill that has been aided by the Web for most of my education. While it was a challenge to work without access to the Internet, I learned skills that will help in collegiate research and hopefully beyond. Aiding photographers and film crews around the house before and after hours was an experience I will never forget; it is rare to see the sunrise and sunset from this mountaintop home.

**In what way were your teamwork skills strengthened?**

The curatorial department is a fascinating, knowledge filled place to work at Monticello. An office filled with intelligent and hardworking women made my internship empowering and insightful. This past spring the curators completed a huge project restoring the rooms in the house known as the private suite, so my task was to share the exciting news of the drastic renovations at Monticello with the public. I drafted blog posts to go on the Monticello website spotlighting some of the new additions to the house, outlining their importance in how we interpret Monticello and ultimately form a clearer image of Thomas Jefferson. This is where my work in the two separate departments meshed perfectly. I was exposed to past and present research with the curators and was able to publish that work on the website as a marketing piece.

**How did your internship affect your career plans?**

On my final day as an intern, I took a field trip with one of the curators to UVA's special collections library on a search for original TJ drawings. While there I was able to look into my family's past and our long history in Charlottesville. A large box held my family's letters, photographs, account books, and other memorabilia, items dating back to the Civil War. Most importantly, I found the original letter that Thomas Jefferson wrote to my ancestor, who was living in London, asking him to teach at his newly founded university in Charlottesville, Virginia. My internship came full circle and I felt a strong sense of purpose working at the home of a man who shaped our country, my hometown, and even my family.

**In what ways did your internship cause you to encounter people of different backgrounds from your own? What steps did you take to communicate effectively with such persons? What did you learn from such persons' perspectives?**

Monticello holds a spectacular naturalization ceremony on the Fourth of July where people from all over the world convene on this mountaintop to celebrate our country and welcome new citizens. My work that day began early in the morning when the citizens were arriving on site to check in and get

ready for the ceremony. Several people had agreed to speak with the media after the celebration, so my job was to meet them and introduce them to the reporters and newscasters who covered the ceremony. The morning was truly remarkable, from the performance of a colonial fife and drum band to the emotional swearing-in of these new citizens in such a historical place. It was truly special to meet many of these citizens and hear about their journey to the United States. This ceremony is unique to Monticello and working the event was not only a pleasure, but an honor.

**Words of thanks to your internship funding donors:**

Thank you so much for allowing me to work with a foundation that is so central to my hometown and personal history. I learned more than I could have ever imagined about Thomas Jefferson and his life on his little mountain. The times I spent inside the home before and after hours were truly irreplaceable and unforgettable. I worked with the most driven women I have ever met in their curatorial department and as a result I not only had an informative and edifying summer, but also an empowering one!