



VIRGINIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Story of Virginia

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***The Private Jefferson* Exhibition Held Over through January 22, 2017 at Virginia Historical Society Sponsored by Altria Group**

Richmond, VA — On October 15, 2016, the Virginia Historical Society (VHS) will present *The Private Jefferson: From the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* in the Virginia Sargeant Reynolds gallery. The exhibition is sponsored by Altria Group with additional support from the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation and the Elmon T. Gray Fund for Virginia History. The exhibition was to be on display through January 15, but has been extended through January 22, 2017. Admission to the exhibition is free for VHS members and free for children twelve years of age and younger.

In 1898, a large collection of Thomas Jefferson's private papers was given to the Massachusetts Historical Society (MHS) by the president's great-grandson, Thomas Jefferson Coolidge of Boston. *The Private Jefferson* exhibition is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to view in Richmond papers that left Virginia nearly one hundred fifty years ago, following Jefferson's death and the marriage of his granddaughter Ellen Wayles Randolph to Joseph Coolidge of Boston.

Jefferson gave to the world the American vision that "all men are created equal" and are entitled to the "inherent & inalienable" rights of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Visitors will be able to read the words in Jefferson's personal handwritten copy of the Declaration of Independence, as well as in a draft of the Declaration handwritten by John Adams, and in a printed copy issued in Philadelphia in 1776. All three documents are extremely rare and are among the most important in American history.

Various artifacts on loan from The Monticello Foundation will be on display, including a pearlware tea mug, a nail rod binder, and a bone toothbrush that were used by Jefferson's slaves. Jefferson hated slavery, which he called a "moral depravity," and in 1784 he almost succeeded in passing in Congress a ban of slavery in the territories. But he continued to hold slaves at Monticello. *The Private Jefferson* provides a window into his personality and motivations.

In addition to the exhibition, the VHS will screen the film, *Jefferson's World*. The film illuminates Jefferson's vital role during America's revolutionary struggle for independence and his political contributions afterwards. The film and Monticello's artifacts highlight Jefferson's many interests and hobbies, along with his controversial personal decisions. *Jefferson's World* will screen on the hour, beginning at 10:30 am, for the duration of the exhibition.

William Rasmussen, Lead Curator and Lora Robins Curator at the VHS, says, "Jefferson was interested, it seems, in everything—from the sciences to the cultures of Native Americans, from religious beliefs to gadgets at Monticello. He spoke five languages. What I find so extraordinary about him is the breadth and brilliance of his intellect. In architecture, for example, few Americans to this day have matched Jefferson's accomplishments."

VHS members receive complimentary admission to all special exhibitions. Admission for nonmembers is \$10 per person. *The Private Jefferson* is organized by the Massachusetts Historical Society.

The Virginia Historical Society (VHS)—a privately funded nonprofit organization—collects, preserves, and interprets the Commonwealth's history, linking past with present to inspire future generations. The VHS is located at 428 North Boulevard in Richmond's Museum District. Hours are Monday – Sunday 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. for the galleries and museum shop, Monday – Saturday 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. for the library. For more information about the VHS call (804) 358-4901, visit vahistorical.org, or connect with the VHS on Facebook and Twitter.

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