

Martha Jefferson Randolph, Jefferson's daughter

Reading Level: Middle School

Martha Jefferson (often called "Patsy") was born at Monticello on September 27, 1772. She was the oldest daughter of Thomas and Martha Jefferson. When she was ten years old, her mother died. Martha recalled that her father "kept to his room for three weeks. ..." He took long horseback rides to ease his grief. Martha shared her father's sadness and became "his constant companion."

Thomas Jefferson encouraged Martha to be well-educated. When she was eleven years old, she practiced music and read French and English. In a letter to her father, Martha wrote that she had "rawn five landscapes and three flowers . . . I go on pretty well in my history." In 1784, when Martha was twelve years old, she traveled with her father to Paris, France. She lived at a boarding school and studied literature, drawing and music.

In 1789, after returning from France, Martha married Thomas Mann Randolph, a third cousin. She gave birth to twelve children. One child died.

When Jefferson retired from the presidency, Martha, her husband and eleven children joined him at Monticello. Martha's daughter Ellen remembered her mother managing the household, including the slaves who often came to Monticello to "see and talk to Mistress . . ."

Jefferson called Martha "the cherished companion of my early life, and the nurse of my age." She helped her father run the household until he died and the family had to sell Monticello. Martha lived with her many children until her death in 1836 at the age of sixty-four. She was buried beside her father at Monticello.



Portrait of Jefferson's daughter, Martha Jefferson Randolph, by Thomas Sully