

## THE MONTICELLO TEXTILE FACTORY

In 1812 cloth manufacturing at Monticello was expanded and mechanized. Jefferson hired William Maclure to build spinning and weaving equipment and to train his slaves in its use. Work in the new "factory" (which was across the Rivanna River from Monticello on the Lego farm) began on the arrival of a twelve-spindle spinning machine Jefferson had purchased from Oliver Barrett of Troy, New York. Jefferson "thought it a duty to my neighbors to take on myself the risk of disappointment" in finding a spinning machine suitable for plantation manufacture.

After numerous experiments, he eventually settled on the spinning jenny patented by James Hargreaves in 1770. Maclure evidently made the jennies (with twenty-four spindles each) and two looms fitted with James Kay's 1733 invention, a fly shuttle. A hand-operated machine for carding cotton was soon added (there was a water-operated woolcarding mill nearby).

Jefferson's annual goal was 1,200 yards of cloth woven from purchased cotton and wool and hemp produced on his farms. He never sought to make fine cloth; coarse cloth for the summer and winter allotments for the 130 slaves on the Monticello plantation was his only ambition.

After William Maclure's departure in 1814, Jefferson's "small spinning and weaving establishment" was moved to Monticello and was carried on by his slaves. Dolly and Mary were the weavers, several women and young girls were spinners, and young boys did the carding. As Jefferson said, "[We are] able to clothe our own people by the labor of a few of the less useful of them."

The daily task of the Monticello textile workers varied with the season and the tools they used. Charts in Jefferson's Farm Book show a spinner's task varying from 6 ounces of cotton in a nine-hour day in January to 9-1/3 ounces in a fourteen-hour day in June. After the introduction of spinning jennies the task increased to an average of two ounces per spindle.

1812 June 28: "My household manufactures are just getting into operation on the scale of a Carding machine...which may be worked by a girl 12. years old, a Spinning machine...carrying 6. spindles for wool, to be worked by a girl also, another...carrying 12. spindles for cotton, and a loom, with a flying shuttle, weaving it's 20. yards a day." (Jefferson to Tadeusz Kosciuszko)

1813 Mch. 5: "Maria is becoming a capital spinner. She does her ounce and a half a day per spindle on a 12. spindle machine and will soon get to 2. ounces which is a reasonable task." (Jefferson to Jeremiah Goodman)

1813 May 27: "We have in our family (including my daughter's) three spinning Jennies agoing, of 24. and 40. spindles each which can spin 11. pounds of coarse cotton a day, and our looms fixed with flying shuttles, which altho' they do not perform the miracles ascribed to them, do, I think, double the effect of the common loom." (Jefferson to Richard Fitzhugh)

1815 June 16: "I make in my family 2000. yds. of cloth a year, which I formerly bought from England, and it only employs a few women, children and invalids who could do little in the farm." (Jefferson to James Maury)

1815: Jefferson memorandum of laborers in the cloth "factory":

"Cretia [age 36]	spin cotton
Harriet [age 14]	wool
Aggy [age 17]	} hemp
Nanny [age 15]	
Isabel [age 15]	
Johnny [age 15]	} carders
Randal [age 13]	
Isaiah [age 15]	
Israel [age 15]	
Dolly [age 21]	} weavers
Mary [age 35]	
Eliza [age 10]	quiller
Kitty"	

(Farm Book, p.152)