

Dear Ms. Spangler,

Forgive me for letting time slip. The last I thought of this task assigned to me by the ACS's National Historic Chemical Landmark Committee as a long-standing member of that committee was just as Hurricane Florence was aimed in your direction. I hope all your member institutions survived unscathed by the hurricane.

You are perhaps familiar with the landmarks program. Back in 2007 the NHCL proposed and the ACS Board accepted a landmark designation sponsored by the Virginia Section for "Origins of the American Chemical Enterprise: Jamestown". I myself attended the outdoor ceremony on a fine spring day preceded by a violent rainstorm.

The Committee's question is whether the Virginia Section would be willing to sponsor the naming as a landmark of the recently discovered (2015) remains of the chemistry teaching laboratory planned by Thomas Jefferson for the basement of the Rotunda at UVA. We assume that UVA members in your section would be critical as liaisons to the university administration.

For details of the Landmarks program, see

<https://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/education/whatischemistry/landmarks.html>

Once on the page, click "Learn More" and the "Take Action."

There is quite a lot of material out there on the discovery of the furnaces (which one historian calls "hearths") and the water supplies that served it. Here are some links:

http://uvamagazine.org/photo_essay/rotunda_renovation_discoveries

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/university-of-virginia-rotunda-jefferson-chemistry-lab-180956929/>

And here's a paragraph or two from the historian, Diana Waite, who did the historical (as opposed to the archeological) research on the remains. She was responding to a query from the NHCL committee on Jefferson's role in the laboratory. Diana, by the way, would be willing to help with your proposal.

Yes, Thomas Jefferson did design the Rotunda, the architectural centerpiece of the University of Virginia. In October 1824, when the Board of Visitors officially pronounced how the various rooms in the Rotunda were to be used, they stated that of the rooms in the basement, one was to be set aside for "a Chemical laboratory." There was also to be a lecture room. The first laboratory and lecture room was probably the small oval room at the north edge of the basement, in between the two large oval rooms.

However, when Dr. John Patten Emmet arrived at the university as professor of natural history in the spring of 1825 and began teaching chemistry, he found the small oval space set aside for the laboratory much too small and dark. He complained to Jefferson that "even a Small furnace" made his space "oppressively hot & myself even more so." He drew up for Jefferson's

consideration plans for a separate building for the teaching of chemistry, but Jefferson did not endorse it. However, the drawing clearly shows how Emmet thought a proper facility should be organized for successful teaching. Emmet was a strong proponent of students' performing their own experiments, not just watching the professor demonstrate. Emmet had trained for three years in the chemical laboratory of William J. MacNeven at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City, where students performed experiments.

Emmet finally convinced Jefferson, then in failing health, to make the two large oval rooms in the basement available to him, one for a lecture room and the other for a laboratory. Jefferson wrote in July 1825 that "Dr. Emmet can have both the large basement rooms & to be arranged as he pleases for his chemical purposes." So it was Emmet who was responsible for designing the chemical-teaching spaces. Emmet adapted many of the features of MacNeven's New York lab into the lab at the Rotunda, as well as his method of teaching, with students doing their own experiments.

In addition to the drawing of the separate building, there is a drawing by Emmet of one of the iron bars that was part of the chemical hearth, as well as that wonderful drawing of the equipment that he purchased for the laboratory (the drawing on my Christmas card).

Thank you for considering this matter.

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