

## Architecture and Democracy

By Allan Greenberg

*Editor's Note: The following speech was delivered on March 18, 2008 as part of the Ashbrook Center's Spring 2008 Major Issues Lecture Series.*

“**W**hat is the role of architecture today in our society?” Despite its far reaching import, this subject isn't much explored in the profession or among critics. This may be because it appears to be a more or less universally accepted truism that architecture is about self-expression. Few examples of this are as challenging as the proposed new library planned for the ancient city of Prague. [illus. 1] This strange, octopus-like design is so oblivious to the surrounding architecture it raises an interesting question: If you live or work in an adjacent property, or own one of the buildings, are you entitled to expect that the new library would somehow relate to your building or the surrounding city? The architect of the winning scheme, as well as the jurors who selected him, would answer: “No.” But many who love this beautiful city don't concur and are protesting against the design. The architect is presenting himself as a martyr in the cause of free expression and unfettered creativity and is soliciting support. But he believes his point of view entails no responsibility at all to the citizens of Prague or to the city's character, history, and architecture.

The belief in architecture as a vehicle of personal creative expression is a relatively new phenomenon. It is partially rooted in European modernism of the 1920s and its preoccupation with a new architecture completely divorced from the past. Inspired by the



[illus. 1] Competition winning design for the new Prague Library designed by Future Systems of London, designer Jan Kaplicky, in 2006-07



[illus. 2] View of the Gamla Stan (old Town) in Stockholm

successful revolution in Russia with its goal of creating a socialist society with a new economic order, new social relationships, and the so called “new man,” it envisaged a parallel architecture, together with new forms of towns and cities. Its flowering in Europe prior to 1939, however, was muted by its powerful communitarian focus.

Modern architecture immigrated to the United States in the 1930s but only grew deep roots after the Second World War. It differentiated itself from earlier, pre-war, European modernism by an ever increasing preoccupation with architecture as a vehicle for personal expression and with a total lack of concern for urban integrity. In this regard, it represented a more complete break with the past and is the true source of the ideas that gave birth to the proposed Prague Library. It is a state of mind and a view of architecture completely unknown to those who, over centuries, created London, Paris, Florence, Venice, Stockholm, and the other beautiful cities of Europe we love to visit. [illus. 2]

The older buildings that form these magical urban matrices are all different, yet easily discernable as civic, residential, commercial, or religious structures. They appear to be part of a family of buildings that make up a greater urban whole. The architects who designed these buildings, the builders who realized them, and the owners who commissioned them, all defined their tasks in a more comprehensive and more challenging way than mere unfettered creativity: they strove to create structures with an individual and recognizable identity that were also related to the surrounding

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neighborhood. New public and religious buildings, as well as residences and commercial facilities, added a new and richer dimension of interest to the city, but they did this without violating its dense and urbane character.

Unlike modern architects, the architects who created cities like Venice and Amsterdam did not reject history and used a vocabulary of architectural forms that encompassed the realm of the symbolic. To illustrate this, I will relate a true story about a young graduate of the Yale Architecture School, in New Haven, Connecticut in 1976. In 1969, the State of Connecticut arranged to lease four prefabricated wood trailer-type structures to temporarily house the Juvenile Court in New Haven. [illus. 3a] Placed between the monumental County Courthouse (1909) and Public Library (1908) facing the historic New Haven Green, the structures provided two courtrooms with judge's chamber, conference rooms, bathrooms, and a waiting area. While alleviating the court's serious lack of space, the result for the citizens of New Haven was a visual eyesore situated across the road from the city's most important public space.

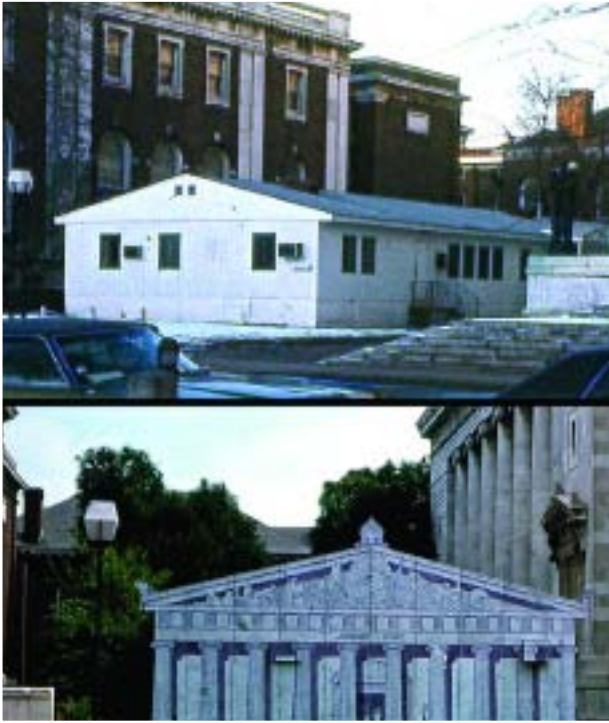
At 3 a.m. on the morning of the nation's Bicentennial celebration, Carl Wies, a former student of mine, nailed a new facade onto the temporary structure. [illus. 3b] Painted on Styrofoam boards, the facade showed an oddly proportioned Greek temple adapted to the shape of the end of the trailer facing the Green. The result was a magical transformation of an ugly trailer structure into a civic building. Later that morning, crowds on the Green were captivated by the new facade and three beautiful, brightly colored air balloons that landed on the Green. A number of citizens offered to pay to have the facade recreated on plywood using waterproof paints. Needless to say, the State's Public Works Department refused these offers, worried that the new painted facade might generate a movement to preserve the temporary structure. Such is the power of a symbol that even an obviously temporary painted facade on Styrofoam suggested permanence and significance – despite the air conditioners that remained sticking out of the windows.

The power of symbols, and the relevance of the messages they project onto a community, is a key to understanding American architecture. When I studied architecture in South Africa

and later, for a short while, in England, I was taught that most pre-1950s American buildings were only shadows of better English ones. This is true for the earliest houses built here in the 17th century; understandably, the first settlers adapted their ideas about dwellings from the homes they left behind in England. But as they began to accommodate these architectural prototypes to the very different climate and resources available in the various parts of the eastern seaboard, a slow process of evolution commenced that led to the creation of a distinctly American house form.

This phenomenon was facilitated by the degree of social and economic mobility with which the settlers of British America found themselves blessed by the late 17th and early 18th centuries. They were the freest people in the world. They expressed that birth of freedom and their growing confidence in the opportunity to flower as individuals in their architecture. In Massachusetts we see this in the simple New England saltbox type of dwelling and, 250 years later, in a house I designed in 1984. [illus. 4] Between these houses is an unbroken line of development of an aesthetic idea and its adaptation to changing social mores and economic circumstances. Both houses are box-like forms, symmetrical in the arrangement of windows and front door, and with a big roof. The single special feature is the entrance door, surmounted by a pediment that may have pilasters on either side of it. A more eloquent, late 18th century version of this same basic idea is the Lady Pepperrell House in Maine, which has a pediment that is integrated into the roof and supported by pilasters. [illus. 5]

The common feature shared by these houses is the pediment. What does the presence of a pediment mean? The pediment originated on the ancient Greek temple. It was the architectural form used by the Greeks for what they believed was the dwelling of a god. Thus the Parthenon on the Acropolis in Athens is the home of the goddess Athena, whose shield protects the city. The ancient gods determined the destiny of the people who lived in the city-states of the Peloponnesus. For the ancient Greeks, the temple and its triangular pediment signified the house of a god who determines the destiny of peoples. The symbolism of the pediment was adopted by the Catholic and



*[illus. 3a-3b] New Haven Temporary Juvenile Court, original structure and with a new facade on July 4th 1976*



*[illus. 4] House in Greenwich, CT, designed by Allan Greenberg, 1984*

Protestant Churches to articulate the deity's authority and by European kings who, like James I of England, believed that "The king sits upon God's throne in Earth, and even by God himself, kings are called gods." Aping the monarch, the nobility also adopted pediments for their palaces and country estates. [illus. 6]

English colonists in America felt free enough to use the pediment for its aesthetic impact and its symbolism. It allowed them to say to their fellow colonists: We decide our own destinies. By doing this, they were, in fact, merely extending a recent English

precedent to unexpected groups of the population. Since the Glorious Revolution of 1688 in England brought William of Orange to the throne, the power of the king was further circumscribed and the use of the pediment was adopted for the manor houses of the local gentry to express their function as local magistrates.

This process was propelled even further by the experience of the American Revolution and the creation of a federal republic governed by a constitution. The pediment remains the key feature of the Hammond-Harwood House [1784] in Annapolis, but it is more scholarly in design and refined in form and execution. [illus. 7] The entrance door is one of the most beautiful in the United States. It is a combination of pediment, supported by pilasters set within an arch. The arch was an ancient Roman symbol of transition used to differentiate between the realms of the living and of the dead as well as between important architectural spaces. This door communicates a powerful message: like the gods of the ancient world and the kings and aristocrats of Europe, the owners of this house, John and Jane Citizen, have the rights and the prerogatives to determine their own destinies. This archway distinguishes between the private realm of the citizen, which is inside the house, and the public realm, which is outside; what goes on inside is not the concern of the government. Only when it has a search warrant, signed by a judge, can the government enter into this house. That is why doorways like this are a statement of our American identity.

The radical nature of this architectural idea is seldom appreciated today. Books and television programs about the Founding are often somewhat undermined by a lack of appreciation of the enormous power and authority of kings. Louis XIV said, "L'État, c'est moi" – "I am the state" – and he answered to no one. The English



*[illus. 5] Lady Pepperrell, House, Kittery, Maine*



[illus. 6] Louvre, east facade, Paris, designed by Claude Perrault

king's authority was somewhat circumscribed in comparison, but he was nonetheless venerated as if he were a god.

These monarchical notions were inverted by the United States Constitution, which asserts that "We the People" constitute the government, and that the elected president and members of



[illus. 7] Main door of the Hammond Harwood House

Congress are our servants.

This idea was best understood by our two greatest presidents, Washington and Lincoln, who frequently described themselves as servants of the people. Thus, "We the people," may be the three most revolutionary words in the history of architecture and of politics. Herman Melville aptly described this inversion of power relations:

*This august dignity I treat of, is not the dignity of kings and robes, but that abounding dignity which has no robed investiture. Thou shalt see it shining in the arm that wields a pick or drives a spike; that democratic dignity which, on all hands, radiates without end from God, Himself.*

Today we appear to have lost any sense of elected officials as public servants and our presidents surround themselves with more pomp, ceremony, and luxury than any European monarch could ever have imagined.

In the United States, because the people are the government, our houses are the equivalent of the king's palace. Our major public buildings, including the White House, the Capitol, governors' mansions, and statehouses, are really houses of the servants of the people. Because the house was so important to our identity, we dignified our public buildings with the suffix "house." Thus we have statehouses, courthouses, townhouses (present day city halls), schoolhouses, and firehouses. Even the original name of the Capitol in Washington was the "Congress House." The Maryland Statehouse is the home, for the purposes of legislation, of all the state's citizens [illus. 8]. The suffix "house" denotes that courthouses and schoolhouses are homes where citizens seek justice and learning. And all these "houses" were built to look like versions of the local dwellings.

The architectural belief that our public buildings should look like local houses was changed by Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson was captivated by Roman architecture and thought that the most perfect building he had ever seen was the Roman temple, the Maison Carrée, in Nîmes, in France. In 1784, while he served as the new nation's representative in Paris, he used this building as the model for the new statehouse planned for Richmond, Virginia. He called it the "Capitol," following the example of the Roman senate that met on the Capitoline Hill. Why, we may ask, was Jefferson so fix-



[illus. 8] *Maryland Statehouse, Annapolis, MD*



[illus. 9] *View of Richmond (1793) by Benjamin Henry Latrobe.*



[illus. 10] *Fairmount Waterworks, Philadelphia, PA*

ated on the temple form? He believed the temple form itself, rather than just its pediment or even its portico, was a stronger expression of the political ideals of the new nation. Moreover, the Greeks and Romans, respectively, invented the political systems we call democracies and republics. The home of an ancient god was used to give a clear and recognizable form to the legislative “home” of the government, the citizens, of Virginia.

The Virginia Capitol is still in use although its design has been compromised by later additions, including side wings and an underground entrance. But we may see the building as Jefferson must have imagined it as he stood at his desk in Paris in 1784 in a watercolor painted by Benjamin Henry Latrobe in 1793. Richmond was a town of wooden buildings and log cabins set upon a bluff overlooking the James River. In the center, beautifully sited just below the hilltop, but nonetheless dominating the skyline, sits Jefferson’s beautiful white temple. [illus. 9]

Soon after, architects following Jefferson’s example cast a wider net and adopted the Greek temple as a model for public buildings. The Fairmount Waterworks in Philadelphia (1819-1822) is an engineering facility on the Schuylkill River. It was used to pump water to from the river to the reservoir on top of the hill behind the works. [illus. 10] As the river became more polluted, the reservoir was eventually abandoned and was replaced by the Philadelphia Art Museum (1919), a place for all the citizens of the city to enjoy art. Perhaps the most eloquent statement of this Jeffersonian approach to architecture is the University of Virginia (1817-1825). Our third president founded the school, designed and supervised its construction, created its curriculum, served as its first president and hired its faculty. Jefferson’s architectural vision is still alive and developing in the 21st century, as may be seen on the campuses of some great universities.

The new Capitol in Washington, D.C., was not only an important representation of Jefferson’s architectural ideas; it was also the quintessential realization of President Washington’s vision of a new architecture for the new nation. Washington conceived of the “Congress House” as a building with a large dome – a dome so beautiful that it would excite the admiration of European visitors – atop a building that equaled the greatest works of architecture in Europe. The first dome, designed by Latrobe, whom Jefferson appointed as the first architect of the renamed Capitol, was modeled after the ancient Roman Pantheon. The second dome, designed by Thomas U. Walter, was much taller and dramatic. [illus. 11] The new and taller superstructure and dome were built of cast iron. President Lincoln insisted that the construction of this dome continue throughout the Civil War as a symbol of the survival of the Union.

Why was Washington preoccupied with a domed central space? Throughout history the dome was a symbol of the cosmos. Christian altars were placed underneath domes and palace architects appropriated it as a symbol of the divine right of kings. But the Capitol’s dome was conceived as a space under which nothing happened. Why, we may ask, is the most important space in the

United States Capitol, the conceptual center of the nation, empty? Sadly the name given by Jefferson to this noble space is forgotten, even though it answers the question. On Latrobe's beautiful water-color plan, the space under the dome is labeled the "Hall of the People." Thus the central space of the Capitol belongs to "We the People." Appropriately its walls are lined with paintings telling the story of the creation of the nation. Located at the cross axis of the building, and at the center of the Federal City, it was planned as a place for citizens to gather to discuss legislation to shape the future course of the nation. The Senate and House chambers are in secondary locations on the cross axis, on either side of the Hall of the People. The President isn't even in the building, but is located in the "President's [now White] House" down on Pennsylvania Avenue at 16th Street. This arrangement is carefully calculated to invert the European monarchical notion of the divine right of kings to rule their subjects, and to express the fundamental ideals enunciated in our Constitution.

Washington also imagined the Congress House, with its great dome dominating the skyline, set in the new capital city. He believed that one day it would be a great city as large as London. The original ten-mile-square plan of Washington, D.C., was approximately the area of late 18th-century London, which had a population of nearly one million people. If our first president was to see the city today, he would be the one Founder who wasn't surprised by its size – though I suspect he would be appalled by the mediocre architecture of the past six decades.

By way of comparison, a 19th century European public building like the Palais de Justice in Brussels floats above the city like a great ship [illus. 12]. The scale of this Court speaks of the king's law and the royal prerogative; it is not a building belonging to the citizens, who may come to resolve their legal disputes. It totally dominates the city and its skyline and is quite different from the Capitol. It offers no experience comparable to the birthright of every American: to walk up the east steps of the Capitol, through the great center portico, and to stand in the Hall of the People under the great rotunda. It is the single most profound political-architectural statement we have. Sadly, the Congress will soon deny us this experience and compel everyone to enter the Capitol through an underground visitors' center. To reach the Hall of the People, it will be necessary to walk down a ramp into the ground, across a vast exhibition area, undergo a security check, and, finally, take an elevator to main floor. The front door of the Capitol will be locked! It will only be opened to admit dead Americans en route to lying-in-state under the rotunda. Congress appears to be under the misguided judgment that this is their building. It is not. It is our building. And it is a sad reflection on the state of this republic that we have allowed Congress – our servants – to sully the most fundamental expression of American political ideals with barely a whimper of protest.

What other important reasons drove Washington, Jefferson, Latrobe, and other architects of the Founding period to look to Antiquity as a source for a new architecture?

The architecture of the Greeks was anthropomorphic: it was



[illus. 11] U. S. Capitol in Washington D.C. showing the new dome and side wings, designed by Thomas U. Walter



[illus. 12] Palais de Justice, Brussels, Belgium designed by Joseph Polært

based upon our sense of who we are as human beings, both physically and psychologically. This idea is expressed in the single architectural text we have from that period written by the Roman engineer-architect Vitruvius. His Ten Books of Architecture inspired architects of the Italian renaissance like Francesco di Giorgio, who illustrated anthropomorphic ideas in architecture with eloquent drawings. He shows how the Greeks imagined that every column was a person. Thus for the Greeks, the Doric colonnade of the Parthenon was seen not as a row of columns but as a row of Athenian citizens supporting the house of their patron goddess. At the Lincoln Memorial, the colonnade is formed of citizens of the states of the Union. In ancient and renaissance architecture the facades and plans of buildings were also based on the proportions of the human body. [illus. 13] Architects of the Renaissance believed that the proportional perfection found in the human body was a reflection of God's perfection. They strove to embody

these divine ratios in their architecture. This focus on the human being's body and scale was of fundamental importance to the Founders and to their dream of creating a stable anthropocentric democratic-republic.

The ideals of a human-scaled architecture were so fundamental that nearly a century-and-a-half later, when Cass Gilbert designed the gothic inspired Woolworth Building in Lower Manhattan – then the tallest building in the world – he carefully designed the 57-story high facade in five-story increments, divided by strong horizontal bands. This made it possible to stand across the road and easily calculate exactly how tall the building is. Until the advent of modernism in the United States, architects were preoccupied with how people use their buildings, how they experience them in both inside and outside.

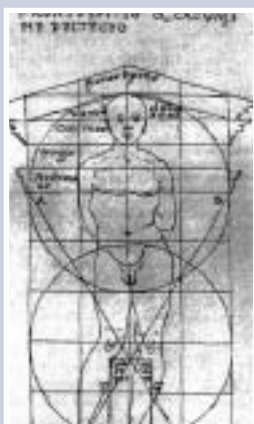
Part of American civic-humanism is a strong sense of harmony, both political and architectural, that allows us to transcend political and religious differences. This ideal is eloquently articulated in the New Haven Green [illus. 14]. The plan of New Haven consists of nine equal squares. It was laid out in 1639 by a group of English Puritans who planned this as a reflection of their highest religious and civic hopes. The nine squares fit exactly into a large square and the central one was called the Common. They built their first meeting house in the approximate center of the Common and it looks as if it was also a square in plan. Over time,

the first meeting house was replaced by Center Church and a breakaway group later established a second church to one side of it. The Anglicans then built a third church on the opposite side. Later a Statehouse was built behind the row of three churches and in front of the growing campus of Yale University across the road from the Common, or Green, as it is now known. Not only is each building of a different architectural style – with the statehouse distinctively Greek revival – but the profound Puritan commitment to education is manifested by the prominent placement of the university. The beauty of the architecture of the New Haven Green shows the institutions of a city – statehouse, three different churches, and a university – coexisting harmoniously at the center of the town.

These civic and architectural ideals have been under heavy siege for the last 50 or 60 years. We see this in the design of the new Legislative Building (1963) of North Carolina by Edward Durrell Stone. It is a different vision of a statehouse, one that does not resemble earlier statehouses. It could be a university building, convention center, or corporate headquarters. It represents a divorce between our notion of what a government building should look like and architectural expression.

And our cities have also disintegrated. Every city now imitates New York. Much of Chicago looks like a bad dream of New York City in the 1920's. But we forget that until World War II, Chicago had a completely different appearance. The Board of Trade was the tallest building and was surrounded by other buildings that all conformed to the city's height limit. All this is gone, and this could be any city in the United States, in fact any city in just about any part of the world. The buildings in it have nothing to do with cultural, civic, regional, architectural, or political traditions, or even climate and resources. Whether we are building near the Arctic Circle, the desert, or the tropics, architects appear to be driven by a near total absorption in self-expression. They are buildings that are totally divorced from the societies they should be serving and from the cultural and geographical condition of the place where they are built.

This is a tragedy for the United States. As the Israeli scholar A. B. Yehoshua said, speaking as an Israeli: "It still seems for us [that] democracy is like wearing a suit of clothes after trying on various other styles, while for America, it is more than a suit or a coat. It is like the very skin of their body." That is because the United States is the only nation in the world whose national identity is almost genetically related to Democracy. Our national independence was forged at birth within the world of democratic principles and suppositions. It is a truth that architecture shows who you are as a person and as a society. At its best, great architecture makes great ideas visible, as the Founding fathers and mothers ably demonstrated. Looking at our architecture today, especially in our capital city, and at the Capitol itself, we have to ask ourselves: What ideas has it made visible, and are we proud of them?



[illus. 13] Francesco di Giorgio's drawing of a building facade based on the proportions of the human body.



[illus. 14] A 19th century view of the New Haven Green showing the three churches, the statehouse, and, in the background, the buildings of Yale College.

# A Delightful Inheritance

By Christopher C. Burkett

*Editor's Note: The following speech was delivered on December 16, 2007 as part of the Ashland University Baccalaureate Service.*



*Christopher C. Burkett*

This is a day for giving thanks to the Lord for the good that you have received through your education, and a day for reflecting on the great challenges that lie ahead in your lives. Our Scripture reading for this morning, from the Book of Psalms (Psalm 1:1-3,6a and Psalm 16:5-9,11), deals with these very things, for it tells us something about how to find happiness, despite the uncertainty and trials of life. The first part of the Psalm tells us that to attain happiness we must refuse the counsel of the wicked. But the “delight” of the blessed or happy man is in meditation, particularly meditation on the “law of the Lord.” It is through the contemplation of the nature of God and His design and purpose for human beings that the happy man, like a well watered tree, yields fruit in all that he does, and his happiness never withers. But it is not simply the meditation or the seeking of knowledge that leads to life’s greatest pleasures. For the blessed man also “does” – knowledge must be accompanied by works.

All of these things – wisdom, work, and the happiness that can be achieved by them – are part of what King David calls in the Psalm the “delightful inheritance” that we receive from the Lord. And it is these things – the good things that we have “inherited” – to which I will direct our attention this morning. We should not take this inheritance for granted, though the temptation is such that, often, we do. It is part of the challenge of life, and the great task with which God has charged us all, to appreciate the things we have inherited and to make the most out of them.

## Work and Happiness

The ability to attain happiness is itself one of the greatest gifts that men have inherited from God. Scripture is emphatic on this point, but so were many of the greatest thinkers on human nature. Happiness, Aristotle tells us, is the highest good and the ultimate purpose of human life. Every human action aims at promoting happiness. But he also tells us that happiness does not consist solely in the pursuit of physical pleasure or in the accumulation of wealth. Some degree of both (in moderation, he says) obviously is important to the life of the blessed man. But in this respect, happiness becomes somewhat subject to chance, and we deceive ourselves if we believe we can account always for her whims or even, in satisfying them, find the full meaning of happiness. Instead, he says, happiness is found mainly in activity itself – not just physical activity but also the activity of the soul and the work of the mind. Aristotle tells us, acting well or acting ill is a reflection of the activ-

ity of the soul. A sound mind and a good soul will produce good works, and it is the goodness of our activity – our work – that will contribute to or detract from our felicity. Thus we learn also from the Book of Ecclesiastes, *“I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion.”* (Ecclesiastes 3:22)

The very ability to work, therefore, and to derive happiness from our work, is part of the delightful inheritance that we have received from the Lord. To continue from Ecclesiastes, *“Every man to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God. For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answers him in the joy of his heart.”* (Ecclesiastes 5:19-20) In other words, if you delight in your work because it is good, the happiness you experience throughout life will make all of the troubles and hardships you have endured seem trivial.

## Liberty and Happiness

Along with the gift of work comes the gift of liberty, the ability God has given us to choose our actions freely. But with liberty we also inherit great responsibility, for the use we make of our freedom can lead to benefit or to harm, to justice or to injustice, to virtue or to vice, and thus also to happiness or to misery. God has given us liberty as the means to winning happiness, but in His goodness He has left us free to merit, by our own actions, either happiness or misery. In this sense, the choice between happiness and misery is in our hands in the same way that the choice between success and failure is also in our own hands.

God charges us with great responsibilities. The first is that we must make the fullest use of our liberty in the choice of our work and our actions. We will be judged according to whether we squander our liberty or make use of it in our lives. The second charge is that we defend our liberty and not surrender it to the “counsels of the wicked.” As Paul tells us in his letter to the Galatians, *“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”* (Galatians 5:1) Finally, we must be ever careful to avoid following freedom down the path of licentiousness, for as Peter tells us in his first epistle, *“So is the will of God, that with well doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.”* (1 Peter 2:15-16)

In America, especially, we should never take for granted the liberty with which we have been blessed. Most of you know that liberty was the watchword during the time of the American Founding and the cause for which we fought the Revolution. For more than a hundred years before our Revolution, American preachers taught that liberty was a gift from God and that it must

be used in accordance with His designs for our felicity – that is, liberty is the means by which we can do good works, and is not intended to be used for evil ends. The Reverend Samuel West instructed Americans in his congregation on the true meaning of liberty, saying, “If we consult our happiness and real good, we can never wish for an unreasonable liberty, viz., a freedom to do evil... To have a liberty to do whatever is fit, reasonable, or good, is the highest degree of freedom that rational beings can possess.”

### Knowledge and Liberty

It is here that we begin to see the importance of learning and knowledge. For, without these, one is less likely to make the proper choices in life, and more likely to squander or abuse the gift of liberty. As we heard in the Psalm, the blessed man seeks knowledge, and “even at night,” he says, “my heart instructs me.” He is, therefore glad in his heart, for meditation and learning have shown him the “path of life.”

But knowledge and learning are not by themselves enough to lead us to happiness; knowledge for its own sake is good but incomplete. If knowledge is not employed to improve our works and our actions, especially in relation to our fellow human beings, it can be an empty blessing. As George Washington famously wrote to his sixteen-year-old nephew who was about to begin college, “A good moral character is the first essential in a man...It is therefore highly important that you should endeavor not only to be learned but virtuous.”

Knowledge applied to our actions, as Aristotle says, is what we call wisdom. For wisdom tells us the kind of good things for which our actions ought to aim in this life, and also informs us of the bad things we ought to avoid. If we are lacking in wisdom concerning what is just, beautiful, and true, our actions will be directed at bad ends and will, therefore, reflect the unjust, the ugly, and the false. For such a person, true happiness will remain elusive. Thus, as the Bible repeatedly tells us, wisdom is invaluable for happiness:

*Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed.*  
(Proverbs 3:13-18)

This is why this morning’s Psalm tells us that the blessed man finds delight in meditating on the law of the Lord. In contemplation of God’s nature and His design for creation, we acquire a kind of wisdom that elevates us and increases our awareness of our duties to God and man. As another early American preacher, Samuel Kendal, said in an 1804 sermon:

*Contemplation of God provides a clearer view “of the divine character, and of the duty and destiny of man; and furnishes the strongest motives to virtue by inspiring new and more sublime hopes...It introduces into the mind the idea of goodness, or grace, as the connecting link between men and their Creator; by*

*which they may rise to a resemblance of the great standard of moral excellence...It enforces every precept of virtue by the consideration that present behavior will affect our future condition; that God is the witness, and will be the judge of our conduct...It forbids the indulgence of the selfish passions, and encourages a generous philanthropy...[It] enlightens the mind and improves the heart.”*

### Knowledge and Education

Our most direct and obvious path to knowledge, and – one hopes – wisdom, is our education. And this makes the particular kind of education you have had at Ashland University one of the greatest gifts one can inherit. I am speaking specifically of what we call a liberal arts education or, sometimes, just “liberal education.”

# onPrinciple

John M. Ashbrook Center for Public Affairs

401 College Avenue • Ashland, Ohio 44805  
419-289-5411

*On Principle* is a publication of the John M. Ashbrook Center for Public Affairs at Ashland University. The Ashbrook Center teaches the meaning and significance of America through educational programs for students, teachers, and citizens – programs directed to the scholarly defense of individual liberty, limited constitutional government, and civic morality.

#### WEB SITES:

**Ashbrook Center**  
ashbrook.org

**Master of American History and Government**  
mahg.ashland.edu

**Resources for Social Studies Teachers**  
www.TeachingAmericanHistory.org

**Presidential Academy for American History and Civics**  
www.PresidentialAcademy.org

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It is called “liberal” for two reasons. Liberality is a classical virtue akin to generosity, and a liberal education is one that is “generous” in the array of fields and courses that students have the opportunity to take. But the word “liberal” also comes from the Latin word for liberty or freedom. The goal of such an education is to create free human beings, in the sense that they are liberated from blind opinion and narrow prejudice. This is accomplished by allowing students to take courses in a number of different fields, thereby broadening and deepening their understanding of God and His creation, including man. This broad array of coursework, when taken together, is meant to expose one to the heights of human excellence and accomplishment, and to enrich one’s appreciation of God’s generosity.

It is true that your education has helped to prepare you for a professional career; but it also ought to have prepared you for life. In other words, a liberal arts education ought to provide you with the knowledge that is the foundation of wisdom and which, in turn, allows you to make good use of the liberty God has intended for men.

A liberal education ought to challenge your opinions and provoke you to question those things you think you already know about the world. Even if you are leaving this University with the same opinions you brought here four years ago, you should – at least – have a better understanding of what is good or true in those opinions. Perhaps the greatest thing you should have inherited from your liberal arts education is the ability to think for your-

selves and freely to contemplate what is just, beautiful, and true. This capacity to think for oneself is the essence of liberty – it is the essence of what it means to be a free human being. Moreover, it is the great defense against falling prey to the enslaving “counsels of the wicked.”

As a means to wisdom, liberty and virtue, a liberal arts education is among the greatest treasures one can inherit. Reverend Samuel Kendal knew this when he said: *“To remain free, a people must be enlightened and virtuous; and in order to promote this, they must cherish institutions calculated to promote knowledge and virtue.”* This is good advice, and we should heed it. On this I can speak with some authority, for the liberal arts education I received from this very university – many years ago – is one of the greatest gifts that I have inherited.

In closing, I would like to leave you with the advice Peter gave to his friends in his second epistle:

*Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God...through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue...Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:2-9)*

Amen.

## Do You Receive the Free Ashbrook Email Update?

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <http://www.ashbrook.org/>. The page header includes navigation links: scholar program, publications, audio archive, donate, and about us. The main content area features the Ashbrook Center logo and a search bar. A prominent section titled "Renewing America's Purpose and Promise" describes the center's mission to renew civic education in America. To the right, there is a "Subscribe to Our Email Update" section with a text input field and a "Go" button. Below that, an "Upcoming Events" section lists events such as "Mark Hullung on the Social Contract" and "Amity Shlaes on How 1936 Gave Us 2008".

The Ashbrook Email Update is sent weekly. To receive your free subscription, please go to our web site at [ashbrook.org](http://ashbrook.org) and enter your email address in the Subscribe to Email Update section at the top right.

# Ask the Chairman of the Master in American History and Government Program

The Master of American History and Government degree program at Ashland University was established in 2005. This summer, over 400 middle and high school history and government teachers from all across our nation will travel to Ashland to study in this unique program.



**Peter W. Schramm**  
Chairman of the Master in American History  
& Government Program

## Why is this program significant?

*The truth is that most high school teachers want to do a better job of teaching both the principles of our country and our history. They know that each generation of citizens has to be taught about our past and the reasons for our actions. And this is important not only for today but for our vast future also. This Master's program helps equip teachers to do this and prepares them to accurately and passionately convey our rich history to students across the country. Our program is influencing thousands of students now and will influence many generations to come. We are breathing new life into the study and teaching of America, and the students leave our program more knowledgeable about our history and with a deeper love for it. They become better teachers.*

## What is unique about the program?

*This graduate program is the only one of its kind in the nation. Our intensive week-long courses are only offered during the summer and the benefits of this are twofold. First, it is convenient for teachers to attend. Second, noted scholars from colleges and universities from across the nation are also available to teach in the graduate program. While the program is designed for teachers, the program's coursework is in the substance of history and government rather than in teaching methodology.*

*The courses emphasize a specific instructional strategy: the use of original documents. In every class, students read and study these documents, including diaries, state papers, speeches, and letters, as well as autobiographies and works of literature and philosophy. These are the materials from which we build historical understanding. Confronting them directly is the best way to improve our understanding.*

## Are the courses only open to degree-pursuing teachers?

*No. The program is perfect for any professional with an interest in developing a deeper understanding and appreciation of our nation's history. In fact, we have had others who are not teachers take our classes, including a lawyer, a banker, a congressional staffer and a museum curator.*

## How can I find out more?

*You should visit our web site at <http://mahg.ashland.edu> or call us at 419-289-5411.*



# Close Up...Ashbrook Alumni

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## Andrea Muldoon - From JAG to In-House Counsel at Battelle

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Andrea Muldoon

Andrea Muldoon graduated from Ashland University in 1996 with majors in Political Science and Philosophy. In 1999, she earned her Juris Doctorate Degree from New England School of Law.

Andrea served as a member of the United States Air Force Judge Advocate General Corps from 1999-2004. For her first assignment, she was stationed at RAF Lakenheath, United Kingdom, where she served as an Assistant Staff Judge Advocate to the 48th Fighter Wing. She represented the government as a prosecutor in court-martial proceedings and provided legal assistance to airmen and their families. Her second assignment was to the Contracts Dispute Resolution Directorate, Air Force Material Command Law Office, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, where she served as a trial attorney representing the Air Force in contract matters before the Armed Services

Board of Contract Appeals (ASBCA).

Since 2004, Andrea has been working as in-house counsel at Battelle Memorial Institute, Columbus, Ohio, an international technology and research institute where she practices primarily in the areas of contracts, export, and employment law.

*The Scholar Program enhanced my critical thinking skills, introduced me to the writings of history's great political philosophers, and provided me with the opportunity to meet contemporary political figures and commentators. The ability to analyze issues and "think outside the box" was invaluable for law school and is necessary in the practice of law. The Program's lecture series and often lively discussions between scholars and invited guests helped to shape my views on society and my responsibilities as a citizen. It's also pretty exciting to flip on the television and recognize people I've either met or interned for...*

—Andrea Muldoon, '96

## Michael McFall - IHUM Postdoctoral Fellow at Stanford University

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Michael McFall

Michael McFall graduated from Ashland University in 2001 with majors in Philosophy and Political Science, and a minor in History. In 2007, he earned his Ph.D. in Philosophy at Syracuse University, where he specialized in political philosophy and ethics. He is currently an IHUM Postdoctoral Fellow at Stanford University. His current research examines the ethical and political implications of love, families, and child abuse.

*Upon contemplating what role being an Ashbrook Scholar played in my life, the first thing that moves me is regret for not taking full advantage of the many opportunities that the Center provided. Despite this, I have benefited enormously from being an Ashbrook Scholar.*

*The Center seeks to educate principled leaders, and I cannot imagine a better way to do this than by pushing students into the most difficult classes with the best professors teaching original texts. I have taught college students across the country without taking any education classes. I did not need to, as I learned*

*how to teach by observing great teachers in action. That education provided me with all the lessons I needed to be a successful teacher.*

*My transition to graduate school was odd. I initially felt unprepared because I was suddenly reading contemporary political philosophers. Yet, I had not confronted any 20th century political theorists as an undergraduate; the most recent that I studied was Lincoln! However, two things became clear quickly. First, despite not having read any contemporary political philosophers, I had already been exposed to the arguments that they employed, though packaged differently. Some arguments were clearly ones used in Athens during the 5th century B.C., others from 18th century France. Without having read anything from the 20th century, I already knew the foundations of the arguments put forth as "new," as well as knowing their strengths and weaknesses. Second, I, unlike many of my fellow graduate students, had actually read and struggled with Locke, Madison, Hamilton, and Lincoln; I did not simply receive a crude (and usually negative) caricature of these great thinkers. After realizing the importance of these two things, graduate school was quite easy. In any case, it was far less difficult and less rewarding than my time as an Ashbrook scholar.*

One of the most notable aspects of the Ashbrook Center is its ability to provide students with valuable internships. Whereas many of my fellow Scholars sought to exercise civic leadership in public policy while in Columbus or Washington, D.C., my interests were different and led to a different path. Dr. Schramm asked me where I would like to do an internship. I responded that I was not sure, but I was fairly sure that I did not want to go to Washington. He then suggested London. I asked him what I could do and learn there. Immediately after uttering my words, I knew that I had said something remarkably stupid. And Dr. Schramm made sure to expose my ignorance by explaining what was wrong with my question. He explained that just being in London, smelling it, talking to people, and observing was an invaluable education itself. While I ended up interning at the Institute of United States Studies at the University of London, it was clear that Dr. Schramm was correct about simply being in London.

The most lasting gift from the Ashbrook Center has been being provided with the tools to engage any text or problem carefully. This comes naturally after reading original texts instead of watered-down summaries of dubitable quality. In addition to understanding what the text says, Ashbrook Scholars are challenged to ponder deeply whether what is said is correct. The latter step is of the utmost importance, but it is often ignored at many other universities. When this careful process is applied to thinkers such as Plato or Shakespeare, a further benefit is gained. One then learns about life and begins to unearth eternal truths. Not satisfied with having mere theoretical knowledge, the scholars are pushed to ask how this knowledge relates to the real world and how the ideas studied are alive with profound policy implications. As a teacher, my Ashbrook education forces me to try to keep the great ideas alive, despite the fact that students have been taught otherwise for most of their lives.

—Michael McFall, '01

## Peter Schramm Speaks at The Villages

Peter Schramm was well received by an audience of over 250 when he spoke on Abraham Lincoln at a luncheon event in Florida at The Villages. The Villages, located midway between Ocala and Leesburg, is one of Florida's fastest growing retirement communities, spanning three counties.

Peter's Lincoln talk was serendipitously held on Washington's Birthday. Both in his talk and the conversation that followed, Peter

attempted to show that Abraham Lincoln – facing a crisis as great as that faced by George Washington – relied both on his deep understanding of the American cause and his own steely determination to save the Union and make it worthy of the saving.

*If you would like us to bring an event to your part of the country, please call Sally Blair at 419-289-5411.*



# Director's Club Members Discuss the Election, Environmental Trends, and Politics

Peter Schramm and Andy Busch, Associate Professor of Political Science at Claremont McKenna College, hosted a conference call the day after the Presidential primary election in Ohio, Texas, Rhode Island, and Vermont with members of the Director's Club. The conversation was lively as Peter and Andy discussed the primary results and even made predictions about the outcome of the Presidential election.

On Earth Day, Peter and Steven Hayward, Senior Fellow at the Pacific Research Institute and Weyerhaeuser Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, hosted another conference call. Steve is widely recognized as the conservative expert on environmental issues. He is the author of the annual *Index of*

*Leading Environmental Indicators*, released each year on Earth Day. In this report, he tracks environmental trends in the U.S. and around the world. Steve and Peter, as well as those calling in, discussed what the new data tells us about what is actually happening – whether things are getting better or getting worse.

*Many thanks to the generous donors who are members of the Director's Club and support the Ashbrook Center by giving an annual gift of \$1,000 or more. If you are interested in becoming a member of the Director's Club so you can take advantage of benefits like the regularly scheduled conference calls, please call Sally Blair at 419-289-5411.*

## Ashbrook Scholars Attend CPAC



*Ashbrook Scholars at the Ashbrook Center's CPAC Booth*

Fourteen Ashbrook Scholars attended the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Washington, D.C., from February 7 – 9, 2008. Students, activists, politicians, and citizens from across the country converge for this annual event. The conference offers both a trade show setting where organizations, including the Ashbrook Center, promote their purposes as well as speeches from esteemed political figures. Among those who spoke at this year's conference were President George W. Bush, Newt Gingrich, John McCain, and Ann Coulter.

*The opportunity to attend CPAC was one of a lifetime. As I study speeches and look at the ideals of different thinkers from the past, I have never really thought about those who were in attendance when the orations were given. Yet, as I was driving back to Ashland, I realized that it could be quite possible that someday students will study one of the speeches*

*given at CPAC in 2008 when I was there to hear it. The concept of witnessing history, for me, is empowering!*

*As an Ashbrook Scholar, I have engaged political dignitaries in discussions in the Ashbrook Center. At CPAC, I had the opportunity to engage people of similar character 'on the field of battle' and outside of the classroom setting. One can study and regurgitate information, but the implementation of what is learned is vital to a complete education. At CPAC, I practiced what I am learning as an Ashbrook Scholar. Knowing that I have the capacity to hold my own, so to speak, with educated men and women of the political society gives me great confidence and encouragement. The CPAC experience was priceless.*

*—Brad King, Senior Ashbrook Scholar*

# Ashbrook Scholars Defend Statesmanship Theses

The Ashbrook Scholar Program will graduate 16 seniors this May. One of the most challenging aspects of an Ashbrook Scholar's senior year is the writing of their Statesmanship Thesis. The Statesmanship Thesis is an opportunity for a student to demonstrate his or her knowledge in a particular area of learning. It is the culmination of their entire education as an Ashbrook Scholar and an expression of what they are capable of intellectually. It is a work students can carry with them as they begin their careers or continue their education in graduate school.

Each Ashbrook Scholar is required to complete a thesis on a subject of their choosing and works closely with a faculty member to research and write what results in a 35-100 page paper. After they write their thesis, Scholars publicly defend it before an audience of professors, fellow students and family members.

Each year, a graduating senior from the Ashbrook Scholar Program is honored with the Charles Parton Award for the best thesis. The award is named for the late former director of the Ashbrook Center who originally conceived the Statesmanship Thesis program.

The following is a sampling of the Statesmanship Theses written this year by our graduating seniors:

- *John Adams and the Constitutionality of Religion*  
by Lauren Conn
- *Justice in Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War*  
by Caitlin Poling



*Amy Proulx defends her thesis: Anarchism, Liberalism, and the Political Implications of Natural Rights*

- *The Place of Virtue in the American Founding*  
by Andrew Keller
- *The Morality of Killing in Self-Defense: A Christian Perspective*  
by Jonathan Spelman
- *American and German Airborne Forces in World War II*  
by Lauren Thompson
- *Elena's War: Russian Women in Combat*  
by Samantha Vajskop

## Alumni Offer Guidance to Current Scholars About Law School

On February 28, 2008, five Ashbrook Scholar alumni returned to Ashland to discuss their experiences in law school and in the practice of law. Three of the alumni, James Kresge, Melissa Hansford, and Clint Leibolt, are currently in their first year of law school. Another, Fred Bills, is in his final year of law school at The Ohio State University and has begun to work part time with the Franklin County Prosecutor's office. Finally, Andrea Muldoon is a graduate of the New England School of Law, and, following a stint in the Air Force as a JAG, she is now serving as in-house counsel for Battelle in Columbus, Ohio.

Over 25 Ashbrook Scholars attended a discussion with these alumni in the lounge at Mishler House. Peter Schramm and Jeff Sikkenga moderated the discussion. The alumni shared their experiences in law school, gave tips on how to be successful on the Law School Admission Test (LSAT), and answered questions. Those in attendance, many of them only a few months or years from entering law school themselves, were grateful for the opportunity to learn more about what law school is really like and how to be successful there.



*Left to right – Clint Leibolt, Melissa Hansford, Andrea Muldoon (behind), James Kresge, Fred Bills*

One of the great benefits of the Ashbrook Scholar Program is the camaraderie between not only the current Scholars, but also between current Scholars and alumni.

# Stealing Leisure



*Peter W. Schramm*  
Executive Director, Ashbrook Center

A dramatic and good thing happened on an inconvenient day in early April. The sun came out for the second day in a row. This being north-central Ohio and “spring” being more a description of a coiled wire than a season in these parts, you will note the reason for the drama. This dramatic appearance of the sun happened on a Tuesday. As days go, a Tuesday is no

better and no worse than the other days of the week. But Tuesday is also a work day and, as work days go, Tuesday is generally my busiest. Yet, the long unseen sun – producing, as it did, just enough warmth to remind the weary body of a long neglected part of the soul – turned the mind (to say nothing of the heart) toward a cause that may be just as worthy as yet another day laboring for the common good of mankind. The sun and the warmth reminded me of my iron horse, Isabella, and how much I like to ride.

Now, there is much good talk in the preceding pages of architecture – thoughts on the best and most fitting construction of buildings, houses, regimes, and even souls. A home should reflect the soul of its occupant; public buildings the soul of the regime; and a good soul should reflect good order and justice. Yet, sometimes it might seem that this talk is too austere, maybe even severe. Let me just say that I don’t want the edifice to be off kilter, to be tilted in a direction from which it cannot recover its balance, so I add my own art to the effort of righting the building. I am reminded that a well ordered soul needs some release from its toils. It needs, as Winston Churchill famously noted, a hobby.

So when confronted with this glorious day in April, I called the office and told them that because it was so lovely, and because I was feeling especially good and healthy, I was not coming to work. I told them to do things as well they could without me and, having a fine staff, I labored under no pretensions of indispensability. I further said that if anyone asked where I was or what I was doing, they should just tell them that I was stealing time from a deep place. They knew, of course, that this meant I would take the first ride of the season, and God only knew where I would go and when I would return.

I opened the cold garage and, discarding Isabella’s winter blanket, I gently rolled her out and cleaned her up. It was good to see her. Although she was strikingly beautiful even in her sleep, I was worried that she wouldn’t fire up right away. I was wrong. Immediately, she began to purr, the V-Twins quietly throbbing. I do like that sound, especially after four quiet months. As she warmed up, I threw on my riding clothes and dropped a cell phone, a good book, and a couple of candy bars into the saddle bags. Then I headed southeast.

I felt the warm air meet the cold, smooth road as she collected herself and then stretched out. She started moving. If she was

remarkable in her stillness, she became exquisite as she started to express herself fully, her power resonating through the quiet morning air. The only sounds I heard on the gentle, curved, rural Ohio roads were the whistling air and her large cylinders working, all at a fine languid pace. Everything was right with the world, and the soul felt refreshed, rejuvenated, and alive.

We had no destination. We were moving through the air, not in some box or cage where one only sees still snapshots of a world floating past. We were engaged with the world but always moving. Everything became connected and of a piece. It felt as if we were floating in both natural and in man-made beauty. We saw forests here and soon to be cultivated fields there, a beaver here, a domesticated creature over there, a lovely house here, a schoolhouse there, and a courthouse in the town square. There was nothing out of place, everything in balance, everything in that symmetrical and simple American way, the shape of both things and men. Nothing unnatural, nothing unnerving or monstrous was encountered anywhere. Even the work of art I was riding was simple, symmetrical, and balanced. Now, as I crawled out of my own long hibernation, we fit, and it felt wonderful.

When I have no destination, when I ride for the “thing-in-itself” or, for the sheer good of the thing, I always head southeast. I aim her somewhere between Marietta and Gallipolis, and I never go wrong. I take a road, and then fade east, then west, then toward the river again. I follow the good rolling roads, and I never get lost. The roads are smooth and under used and the creeks are clean and the birds are loud and I look for deer that are inclined to share a road that was made only for me.

At some point I began heading back. I don’t remember what inclined me to it, but I was ready. And so I finished my version of what Thomas Jefferson (the architect) called his “roundabout,” his planned walks in Monticello, a place he designed and constructed for his own leisure and reflection. My roundabout is longer, and I need Isabella’s help, but it has the same effect. It rests a mind and body usually at work, not through idleness or in stagnation, but by exercising other parts of itself in something other than the usual activity.

I returned home as the sun began also to move toward other horizons. I remembered that I had my Lincoln class to teach that evening. Happy now to turn my thoughts to something else, I arrived refreshed and led the students in conversation covering Lincoln’s understanding of the Union and why it was worthy of the saving. It was the perfect ending to a perfect day – balanced, measured, and even exacting in its precision. The students would never have known that I had played hooky all day if I hadn’t told them. But, seeing something good and even useful in it, I did tell them. I talked with them further about why I always thought about becoming an architect (but couldn’t quite do it) and on how work and leisure are connected, and about the difference between a good that is earned and a gift.