



# University of Virginia: Charlottesville 1817-26 Thomas Jefferson (Architecture in Detail)

*Michael Brawne*

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Thomas Jefferson was a revolutionary statesman, lawyer, ambassador, farmer, third President of the United States, and also a highly influential amateur architect. He contributed to the introduction of a new concept of classicism to his country, based on Roman precedents. His Virginia State Capitol (completed 1796 with the assistance of Latrobe) set a pattern for official architecture in the USA. Jefferson's campus design for the University of Virginia was an entirely new concept in university group planning. The epitome of Jefferson's rational yet Romantic classicism, the campus demonstrates both his enthusiasm for Palladio and admiration for Ancient Rome, which enjoyed honorific status as the birthplace of republican virtue and the seat of a mighty empire. A project dear to his heart both academically and architecturally, Jefferson's "academic village" (his own phrase) purposefully exhibited a selected variety of Roman orders. Groups of porticoed houses are linked by colonnades in a formal plan, culminating in the great Pantheon-like rotunda at the end of the oblong composition. Along with his own house at Monticello, the University campus is recognized as Jefferson's greatest architectural achievement.

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