

History on the Rocks: Gadsby's Historic Ice Well

Mr. Madison's Ice Well

Ice Well Temp: 41: Alexandria Temp: 49

This weekend in Alexandria, most people will be thinking of and consuming many icy drinks of the green hue for the St. Patrick's Day Parade. Hopefully they also will be buying raffle tickets and checking out the ice well. As a tip of the hat to a Virginia president with some Irish in him, I give you Mr. Madison.



Montpelier

James Madison lived at [Montpelier](#) in Orange County, Virginia. If you have not visited recently, make time. The building has literally been transformed from early 20th century estate to a place Mr. Madison would actually recognize. The logo for Montpelier is a lovely Grecian Temple. Located in the north yard, it would have been an inspiring sight for guests to enjoy. This classical throwback served a purpose - yes, the [Temple](#) covered Mr. Madison's Ice Well.

The original design was created by William Thorton, architect of the Capitol, in 1802. Eventually it was built 8 years later with a little help from Mr. Madison's buddy, Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson recommended two carpenters, one of whom was "[James Dinsmore](#), an Irish joiner who created most of Monticello's woodwork. Mr. Madison's ice well is two stories deep and local bricks were used to build it. The Temple's columns are made of this brick and covered with stucco, helping to create an illusion of marble. The ice well was served by a number of ponds on the property.



Mr. Madison's Ice Well

So enjoy your weekend, visit our ice well, buy a raffle ticket, and have a green drink to honor Mr. Madison.