



The facade comprises bricks handmade in Virginia to mirror those on the original Monticello. S. Prestley Blake's daughter painted the dome with wispy rococo clouds (below, top). The 400-square-foot kitchen (bottom) has a butler's pantry.

Neoclassic

MONTICELLO REDUX (SORT OF)

More than two centuries after the writer of the Declaration of Independence built his seminal home, a cofounder of fast-food outfit Friendly's declares his architectural dependence. BY GABRIELLA FULLER

In the 1700s, it took Thomas Jefferson 40 years to build Monticello, his iconic neo-Palladian plantation; 250 years later, it took S. Prestley Blake just 14 months to build his. Blake, a cofounder of the ice cream chain Friendly's, has long traded in Americana; for his 100th birthday, he wanted to leave his hometown of Somers, Connecticut, with a parting gift that guaranteed both its legacy and his own: a near-perfect replica of what he calls "the most prominent private home in Amer-



ica." Jefferson had time on his side; Blake had capitalism. "I told Bill LaPlante, the builder, if he finished the house before I died," Blake says, "I'd give him a \$50,000 bonus."

That incentive got Blake a 10,000-square-foot 18th-century mansion built to 21st-century standards. From the outside, it could be on the nickel: that Doric-columned portico, the octagonal dome. But the balustrades are forest-friendly polyurethane, the roof is a weather-resistant slate composite, and the home's energy is geothermal. Where Jefferson built cramped bedrooms, outdoor privies, and passageways to Sally Hemings, Monticello 2.0 has a light-filled open floor plan and a double-height foyer. Eleven artisans spent six months finessing 14 rooms' worth of crown molding, coffered ceilings, and mahogany-and-oak floors. "Jefferson was forever refining Monticello with an eye to convenience," says Blake's wife, Helen. "That gave us license to make changes; this home is the modern continuation of his work."

"Yeah," adds Blake. "And it has a three-car garage." At 732 Hall Hill Road, Somers, Connecticut; \$6.5 million; wpsir.com.