

*Considering Sustainability
&
Thinking about the Future*

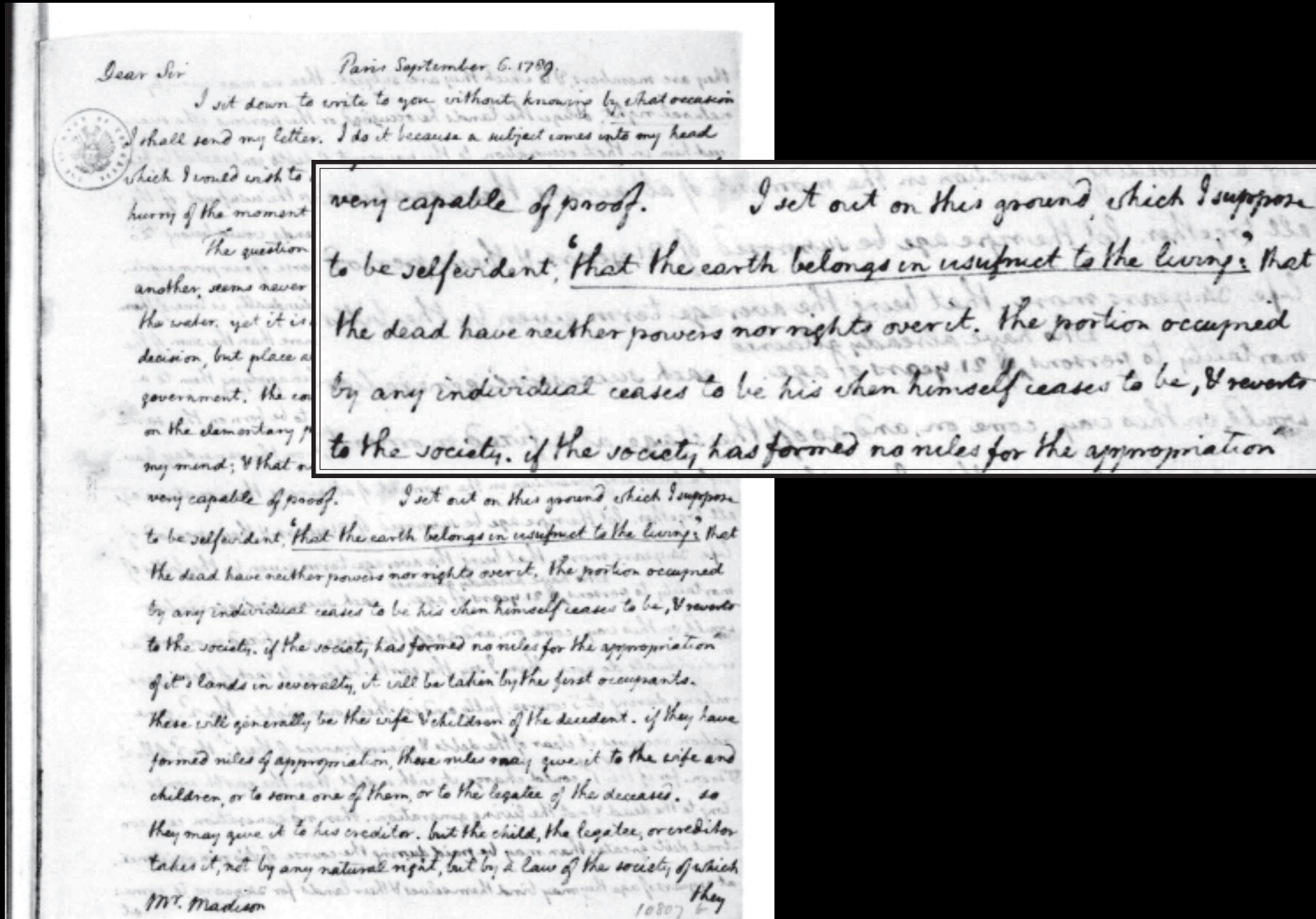
Throughout this presentation, the phrase “paradigm shift” has referred to historical events whose material consequences reflected a new way of thinking among participants. The concepts underlying Sustainable Design today challenge us with another shift in our own society’s basic values.

Nevertheless, even at our Nation’s beginning, some writers proposed similar points of view.

J. Kargon, Architect Homewood and the City

Geography, Ecology, and Infrastructure

52



In a well-known letter to James Madison, Thomas Jefferson considers “[t]he question Whether one generation of men has a right to bind another,” a question which goes to the heart of Sustainable design. Jefferson, in this letter, continued:

I set out on this ground... “that the earth belongs in usufruct to the living”: that the dead have neither powers nor rights over it. ... [N]o man can, by natural right, oblige the lands he occupied, or the persons who succeed him in that occupation, to the paiment of debts contracted by him.

The legal term “usufruct” is the “right to use something that belongs to another, provided that the thing itself is not altered or damaged.” An analogy with our contemporary society’s stewardship of the environment is easily made, but such an analogy might also be extended to the subject of this essay: *Homewood and the ecologies of which it is a part*. In our discussion of this unique architectural artifact, we might well consider changing the “paradigm” with which we celebrate its technical features and its artistic merits. For Homewood’s own story confirms Jefferson’s view that today’s institutions maintain stewardship here, in a moral sense, *only in usufruct*.



Without a doubt, the Johns Hopkins University's renovation and maintenance of Homewood Mansion has contributed to this kind of longitudinal awareness. Nevertheless, taking seriously our concern for Sustainability suggests that we should discard words like "preservation" or "restoration" and all such defensive terms which imply a kind of removal from the future's material and intellectual needs.

Here is where we need the paradigm shift: Homewood's role within our community must be its own example, for the City of Baltimore, of that material continuity which underlies each succeeding generation's possession of this place, and of its *genus loci*.

The symposium "Green Homewood" is, in fact, a significant step, since today's theme makes clear the value of that continuity and of those qualities which have all too often — unSustainably — been lost to us and to our descendants.

The End