

edge of what would become the University of Virginia. By 1745, Benjamin Wheeler and others petitioned the new Albemarle County Court to open a road from "Wheeler's into the Four Chopt [*sic*] Road, to Wood's Gap." This route left the eastern edge of what is now the Academical Village and led south following Route 29. Wheeler's Road, later called Old Lynchburg Road and Fry's Spring Road, was the predecessor to what is now Jefferson Park Avenue bordering the south side of the Academical Village.²⁶

George Nicholas was a Revolutionary War veteran, practicing lawyer, Albemarle County representative to the Virginia General Assembly, and member of the Virginia Constitutional Convention. He purchased Abraham Lewis' 800 acres sometime prior to 1783. Although Albemarle County deed books do not record George Nicholas' purchase of the lands that would encompass the Academical Village, it is possible that this transaction was never recorded, or that it was purchased prior to 1745 when the lands were part of Goochland County. Nicholas likely continued the pursuit of tobacco agriculture on his Albemarle lands.

Albemarle County was described in 1779 by Thomas Anbury, a British officer held prisoner in the western portion of the county. His letters characterized the rural nature, agricultural practices, and labor system of the area.

The plantations are scattered here and there over the land which is thickly covered with timber. On these there is a dwelling house, with kitchen, smokehouse, and other outhouses detached, and from the various buildings each plantation has the appearance of a small village. At some little distance from the houses are peach and apple orchards, and scattered over the plantations are the negroes' huts, and tobacco barns, which are large and built of wood for the cure of that article. The houses are most of them built of wood the roof being covered with shingles, and not always lathed and plastered within; only those of the better sort are finished in that manner, and painted on the outside; the chimneys are often of brick, but the generality of them are wood, coated on the inside with clay; the windows of the better sort are glazed, the rest have only wooden shutters. ...Most of the planters consign the care of their plantations and negroes to an overseer; even the man whose house we rent has his overseer, though he could with ease superintend it himself; but if they possess a few negroes, they think it beneath their dignity; ...the whole management of the plantation is left to the overseer, who as an encouragement to make the most of the crops, gets a certain portion as his wages.²⁷

By 1789 at the latest, the 800-acres belonging to George Nicholas was acquired by James Monroe, in an exchange for land he owned in Kentucky. As previously, no deed recording this purchase was found in Albemarle County deed books. However a February of 1789 letter from James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson documented the acquisition. "It has always been my wish to acquire property near Monticello. I have recently accomplished it by the purchase of Col. G. Nicholas improvements in Charlottesville, and 800 acres of land within a mile on the R. Fish Gap."²⁸ By the end of the summer of 1789, Monroe and his family had moved to Charlottesville.

Monroe immediately began to plan and implement the development of what he called his 'lower plantation,' the 800 acres he had acquired from George Nicholas. Sometime between 1789 and 1800 Monroe had completed the construction of at least three dwellings. A fire insurance policy taken out in 1800 describes the three structures as two residences, each a brick dwelling with frame roof 20 x 26 feet, and a kitchen also of brick with a frame roof 20 x 28 feet.²⁹ Other agriculturally related structures,