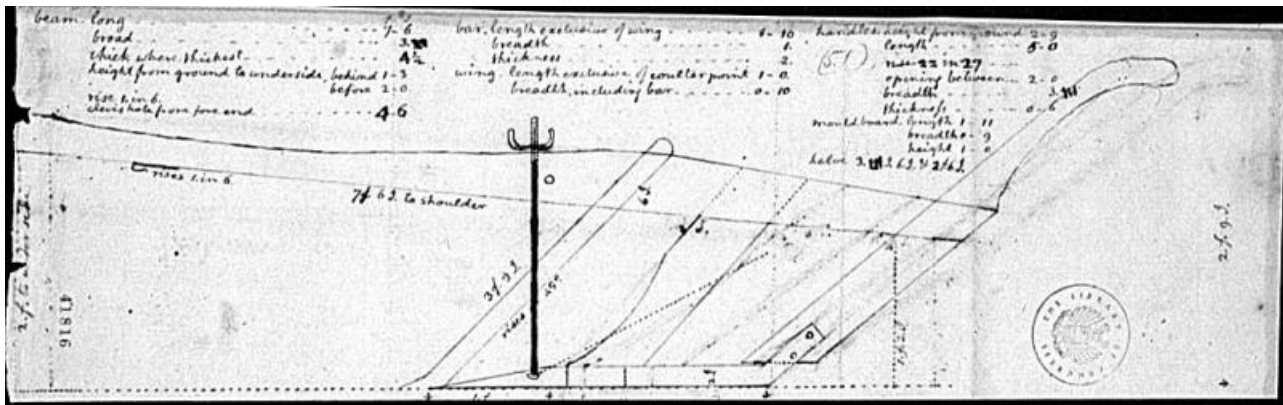


Thomas Jefferson's design for a plow

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Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), one of Virginia's largest planters, considered agriculture to be "a science of the very first order," and he studied it with great zeal and commitment. Jefferson introduced numerous plants to the United States, and he frequently exchanged farming advice and seeds with like-minded correspondents. Of particular interest to the innovative Jefferson was farm machinery, especially the development of a plow which would delve deeper than the two to three inches achieved by a standard wooden plow. Jefferson needed a plow and method of cultivation that would help prevent the soil erosion that plagued Virginia's Piedmont farms. To this end, he and his son-in-law, Thomas Mann Randolph (1768–1828), who managed much of Jefferson's land, worked together to develop iron and mould board plows, like the one shown here, that were specifically designed for hillside plowing, in that they turned the furrow to the downhill side. As the calculations on the sketch show, Jefferson's plows were often based on mathematical formulas, which helped facilitate their duplication and improvement.



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