

Department of Historic Resources

&

Virginia Capitol Foundation

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**Jefferson's State Capitol and Poplar Forest**

**Named as Sites On**

**"U.S. Tentative World Heritage List"**

*--Designation is first step toward possible inclusion on United Nations' World Heritage List--*

RICHMOND – World regard for Thomas Jefferson's architectural genius continues to grow, more than two centuries after his birth.

The **Virginia State Capitol**, recently restored, and **Poplar Forest**, Jefferson's rural retreat in Bedford County, are among 14 sites in the U.S. selected for inclusion on a new U.S. World Heritage Tentative List, Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne announced earlier this year.

Inclusion on the U.S. list is "the necessary first step" toward being considered for inscription on the United Nations' World Heritage List, "the most prestigious international recognition accorded to properties of global importance," Kempthorne said in his announcement.

The World Heritage List recognizes sites with outstanding universal value, chosen by an international panel and maintained by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

During the next ten years, the U.S. nominees—including a third Virginia landmark, **Mount Vernon**—will be under consideration for adding to the World Heritage List by UNESCO.

For a site to be eligible for the U.N. list, it must have been included on the nominating country's Tentative List for at least one year. Each member country may nominate only two sites per year.

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources, supported by the Capitol Square Preservation Council, and in coordination with the Corporation for Jefferson's Poplar Forest, drafted and tended the Capitol's nomination during the year-long and nationally competitive application process. Within the U.S. Department of the Interior, the National Park Service determines the U.S. Tentative List.

If the State Capitol and Poplar Forest are ultimately selected by UNESCO for the U.N. list, they will complete a Jefferson-themed multi-property listing, begun with two of Jefferson's other masterpieces previously listed as World Heritage Sites: Monticello and The Lawn (the central grounds) at the University of Virginia.

"The architectural works of Thomas Jefferson set a standard for the new nation and have since achieved international approbation. The Virginia State Capitol and the University of Virginia became models for public and institutional architecture. Jefferson's unique personal residences, Monticello and Poplar Forest, offer important insights into the mind of a man who influenced world history," said Kathleen S. Kilpatrick, director of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

"There are many compelling reasons to recognize the Virginia Capitol on the World Heritage List as an enduring symbol of American democracy," according to Susan Clarke Schaar, Clerk of the Virginia Senate.

Jefferson's Capitol, which relies on a "temple-form" design, was the first legislative building in the Western World that used architecture to symbolize the republican form of government.

Like all of Jefferson's famous buildings, the Capitol upheld the ideals of the Italian Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio, who advocated the principals of classical Roman architecture, including locating temples on the highest hill in a city, "*in the most noble, and most celebrated part of the city, far from dishonored places . . . whereby every part of the temple may be seen with its dignity, and afford devotion and admiration to whomever sees and beholds it.*"

Jefferson's Capitol design marked the birth of the Classical Revival movement in America and influenced the design of public buildings constructed in other cities throughout the U.S. for many decades.

"The Virginia Capitol has witnessed, and continues to witness landmark events that have shaped America's individual liberties, political institutions, judicial traditions, and social progress," said Bruce F. Jamerson, Clerk of the Virginia House of Delegates.

According to Viola O. Baskerville, Secretary of Administration for the Commonwealth, "One of the most compelling points cited in the Capitol's World Heritage application is that the building still retains its original 18<sup>th</sup>-century woodwork, which was unexpectedly

discovered early on during the Capitol’s three-year restoration project, completed last year.”

The woodwork was fully documented and restored during the three-year restoration completed in 2007 through a grant the Virginia Capitol Foundation obtained from the Cabell Foundation.

Poplar Forest is significant as a unique Jefferson design, revealing his fascination with octagonal architectural forms. He started it in 1806 and completed it before his death in 1826. The house was purchased by the Corporation for Jefferson’s Poplar Forest in 1984, which has meticulously worked to restore the house and grounds.

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*The Virginia Capitol Foundation is the independent, nonprofit, non-partisan, 501(c)(3) organization supporting the ongoing restoration, preservation, and interpretation of the Virginia Capitol, Executive Mansion, and Capitol Square.*

*The Capitol Square Preservation Council is an advisory body to the Governor and General Assembly on preservation issues related to the Capitol, its historic artifacts, the other historic State buildings on Capitol Square, and the landscape and archaeology of Capitol Square.*

*The Virginia Department of Historic Resources is the State Historic Preservation Office. Its mission is to foster, encourage, and support the stewardship of Virginia’s significant historic, architectural, archaeological, and cultural resources.*

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