

# COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY

RICHMOND

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## **Virginia's Capitol Receives Updated National Historic Landmark Designation**

– National Historic Landmark is highest honor bestowed on a Historic Site –

**STATE CAPITOL, RICHMOND, VA** – The United States National Park Service (NPS) today announced that it has approved a revised National Historic Landmark designation for Virginia's Capitol. To more fully reflect the wide array of resources and their abiding national significance, the name and categorization of the Capitol property has been updated by NPS from "The Capitol of the Confederacy" to the "Virginia State Capitol."

"The strong and sensible stewardship of this national treasure is a high priority for me and all Virginians," said William J. Howell, Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates. "The Virginia State Capitol is the home of the oldest elected representative law-making body in the Western Hemisphere, going back to 1619 and the Virginia House of Burgesses. Designed by Thomas Jefferson, the Virginia State Capitol is a world-class architectural masterpiece that set the model for public architecture here and across America."

"It is fitting that this designation update comes as we prepare to commemorate our 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019," said Senator Ryan T. McDougle, Chairman of the Senate Rules Committee. "Our Capitol is an incredible resource that connects visitors to history, educates citizens about the vitality of our Commonwealth, and inspires people of all ages to be active participants in our shared and ongoing experiment in self-government."

Historically, the Capitol houses the oldest legislative body in America. The building marks the beginning of America's Classical Revival movement in architecture. The cornerstone of the Capitol was laid during the administration of Gov. Patrick Henry in 1785. Another founding father, Thomas Jefferson, designed the Capitol with the assistance of French architect Charles Louis Clérisseau. His inspiration for the Capitol was a Roman temple, the *Maison Carrée*, located in Nimes, France. The Capitol became the home of the General Assembly of Virginia in 1788 after the removal of the seat of government from Williamsburg to Richmond.

Among many notable events, Virginia's Capitol saw the ratification of the U.S Bill of Rights in 1791 and the famous trial of Aaron Burr in 1807. The Executive Mansion was completed in 1813 and it remains the nation's oldest Governor's residence in use. In 1816, French immigrant Maximillian Godefroy designed a landscape park around the Capitol. Two years later, the cast iron fence was added creating the current 12-acre Capitol Square. Between 1861-1865, the building served as the Capitol of the Confederacy. In 1906, the original Jefferson-designed Capitol was added to with the construction of wings and hyphens, which provided enlarged chambers where the House of Delegates and Senate of Virginia now meet. In 1990, the Virginia Capitol hosted the inauguration of L. Douglas Wilder as the nation's first elected African-American Governor. And, between 2005-2007, the historic Capitol interiors were restored to their appearance when the wings were added in 1906. A 27,000 square foot underground extension also was added while preserving the exterior beauty of Mr. Jefferson's Capitol.

The nomination for the updated National Historic Landmark designation was prepared and submitted jointly by the Capitol Square Preservation Council and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

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