



Name of Property: Virginia State Capitol (updated documentation and name change)
City, State: Richmond, Virginia
Period of Significance: 1785-1798, 1861-1865
NHL Criteria: 1, 4
NHL Theme: III. Expressing Cultural Values
5. Architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design
IV. Shaping the Political Landscape
2. Governmental institutions
Previous Recognition: 1960 National Historic Landmark
2005 National Register of Historic Places (revised documentation)
National Historic Context: VI. The Civil War
E. Political and Diplomatic Scene
XVI. Architecture
D. Greek Revival

NHL Significance:

- Designed by Thomas Jefferson, the Virginia State Capitol broke with Georgian architectural precedents by using a Roman temple as a departure for its design, establishing the Neo-Classical form and configuration for major public buildings in America. Monumentally sited on a hill above the James River, the Virginia State Capitol also contributed to the image of the temple of democracy in a prominent location.

- The Virginia State Capitol is also significant for its historic role in American history. Serving to house Virginia’s legislative bodies during the formative years of the Republic and the debate over slavery, the building’s early history culminated in its use as the capitol of the Confederacy from 1861-1865.

Integrity:

- During its long use as the state capitol, this building and its site have undergone numerous alterations. The most significant changes to the building occurred with the addition of wings in 1904-1906 that were designed in a Neo-Classical style and set back to preserve the character of the original building (including a grand staircase envisioned in Jefferson’s original design). The interior has been significantly altered, but the Rotunda Room and the House of Delegates were restored.
- The original grounds were first comprehensively altered with a landscape plan by John Notman in 1851. Within the NHL boundary, which encompasses Capitol Square, many buildings have been added, particularly on the east side. While the 1851 landscape plan has not been fully documented, the basic configuration with curvilinear walks and round fountains appears to be intact.
- The property also includes the Governor’s Mansion (NHL) and two properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Bell Tower and the Washington Monument, which were built within the period of significance.

Owner of Property: Commonwealth of Virginia

Acreage of Property: 14 acres

Origins of Nomination: The 1960 NHL designation, “Confederate Capitol”, does not fully reflect the significance of the property and the Commonwealth (through the SHPO) requested that the name be changed and the criteria clarified. Moreover, the visitors center constructed in 2005-2008, as well as other buildings, structures, sites, and objects within the boundary, were not accounted for or documented in the original nomination.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- Renaming this NHL and updating its nomination to better document its national significance, and discussing all of the resources within its boundary, will aid the public in understanding the broad importance of this property.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None is known.

Landmarks Committee Comments:

Landmarks Committee Recommendation: Table. Dr. Stevens moved, Dr. Allan seconded the standard motion. Mr. Hoyos moved to table the motion, Dr. Chen seconded; unanimous approval.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of):

Advisory Board Recommendation: