

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

VIRGINIA STATE CAPITOL

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Virginia State Capitol (name change)

Other Name/Site Number: Confederate Capitol

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Capitol Square

Not for publication:

City/Town: Richmond

Vicinity:

State: VA County: Independent City Code: 760

Zip Code: 23219

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: ___

Public-Local: ___

Public-State: X

Public-Federal: ___

Category of Property

Building(s): X

District: ___

Site: ___

Structure: ___

Object: ___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

4

1

1

1

7

Noncontributing

3 buildings

___ sites

1 structures

6 objects

10 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

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4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Government

Sub: capitol

Current: Government

Sub: capitol

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Early Republic: Early Classical Revival

MATERIALS:

Foundation: Brick

Walls: Stucco

Roof: Metal

Other:

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Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Virginia State Capitol building stands on a hill and was sited to over-look the James River in the center of the City of Richmond. Situated in the center of a larger park with trees and paved walks, the property is bounded by Bank Street, Governor Street, Ninth Street, and Capitol Street. The designated property includes buildings, structures, objects and sites that were not accounted for in the original nomination and are incorporated into this draft. Capital Square, as the area is known, slopes down toward the river (southwest) where it terminates on Bank Street. In 2004-2007 a portion of the hill was cut-away to accommodate the entrance to the new underground visitor's center. The retaining wall supporting this entrance consists of ashlar sandstone blocks capped by an iron railing. In the center is the entrance itself framed by a sandstone Doric portico- two columns in antis supporting a full entablature (non-contributing structure). The approach to this entrance is marked by a stone plaza with a medallion compass in the center. Surrounding the park are a mixture of nineteenth and twentieth century buildings, including the following historic buildings: Old City Hall (NHL) and the Virginia State Library (NR) on Capitol Street, St. Paul's Church on Ninth Street (NR), and the Custom House on Bank Street (NR) opposite the visitor's entrance.

Virginia State Capital (contributing building)Exterior: Summary

Jefferson's Capitol, modeled on the Roman temple form, is at the heart of the current Capitol complex. The 1904-06 flanking wings are set back from the original building, and are designed in a sympathetic Classical revival mode. One-story hyphens, constructed in the 1904-06 expansion to connect the wings to the main block, were expanded in 1962-64.

Exterior: Original Building

The original portion of the building, now the center pavilion of the complex, was constructed of brick and covered with stucco. It features a two-story cella seven bays deep and five bays wide with a hexastyle portico two bays deep, all of which rises from a high podium. The three bays near the northern edge of the east and west faces of the original building were obscured at the ground and first floors by the construction of the adjacent hyphens.

The ashlar-faced ground story of the central pavilion forms the podium for the original building. It features a plinth course capped with stepped freestone watertables (1816). An 1816 stone course caps the podium. The portico steps, constructed 1904-06, obscure the raised basement of the south elevation. The center bay of the ground level at the north elevation features one of two primary entrances to the original building.

The first, second (historically the mezzanine), and the third (historically, the second) stories of the central pavilion form the cella and portico, although only the first and third floors are expressed on the exterior. These three upper levels are unified by the use of giant orders, where Ionic columns or pilasters define each bay. The columns and pilasters feature concrete bases, stucco shafts, and terra cotta capitals. They support a stone frieze and terra cotta cornice.

The portico, five bays wide and two bays deep, dominates the south elevation. Stone steps extending the full width of the building lead to the portico, flanked by stuccoed cheek walls. At the top of the steps, Ionic columns line the portico. The original wood structure of the columns remains encapsulated within an outer layer of 1904-06 cladding, when the columns were given entasis. The columns feature 1904-06 concrete bases and terra cotta capitals and support a 1904-06 stone frieze and terra cotta cornice ornamented with dentils. The pediment is stuccoed. The floor features 1904-06 flagging, and the portico ceiling and soffit are paneled.

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Although all elevations of the building have been stuccoed since 1798, most, if not all, of the existing stucco dates from a later period. The stucco was repaired in 1816 and 1846, and replaced in 1904-06.

The roof has been replaced a number of times. A gable cement and shingle composition roof was installed at the end of the eighteenth century. In the 1840s, a new copper roof replaced the 1816 slate roof. When the building was renovated in 1904-06, a new tin roof was installed at the central block. Today, batten-seam, sheet metal roofing dating from 1962-64 covers the roof.

Exterior: Hyphen and Wings

Two-story wings were added to the east and west of the central pavilion in 1904-06. Each wing extends five bays in the north-south direction, and three bays east-west. Two-story hyphens, each one bay wide, connect the wings to the original central pavilion. Like the original building, the wings and hyphens are constructed of brick and covered with stucco.

Added in 1904-06, the wings and hyphens adopt the lines of the plinth and podium of the original building at the ground level. Similarly, the windows at the first story conform to the height established at the first story of the main building. As in the main building, a portico occupies the center of each of the three main elevations and pilasters mark each corner. The pilasters and columns are of the Ionic order. All elevations of the wings and hyphens have been stuccoed since their construction. Although most of the stucco on the wings dates from 1904-06, the stucco on the hyphens dates from 1963-64, when the hyphens were expanded.

When the hyphens and wings were originally constructed, red roof tile with tin gutters were used to cover the hyphens, asphalt roofing was used at the Senate and House roofs, and skylights capped the penthouses of the wings. Today, a batten-seam, sheet metal roof, installed during the 1963-64 renovation, covers the penthouses. The hyphens and wings were re-roofed with built-up membrane roofing in 2001.

Interior: Summary

The central block of the Capitol largely reflects the eighteenth century layout, although the entire interior, with the exception of the south end of the ground floor, was reconstructed in 1904-06. The basic arrangement of space within the Capitol conforms to this period of renovation, with minor modifications made in the 1960s.

The main public spaces within the central eighteenth-century block include the Rotunda, the Old Senate Chamber, and the Chamber of the House of Delegates. Public corridors lead east-west from the Rotunda to the 1904-06 Senate and House Chambers.

When the Capitol was renovated in 1904-06, the interior was gutted and rebuilt, essentially replicating the configuration of spaces. Although the floors and walls were new, original decorative elements were reapplied. The 1904 drawings and specifications called for the salvage of a number of elements of interior woodwork. Items to be reused included "trim of openings on the first floor of rotunda; door trim and arch trim, gallery balustrade and cornice on the second floor of rotunda; cornices at ceiling and around base of dome in rotunda; face of gallery, gallery balustrade, cornice and bases and caps of pilasters in Museum, pilasters and cornice from present Senate chamber in large committee room on first floor."¹

¹ "Specifications for Fire Proofing and Additions to the Virginia State Capitol, Richmond, Va.," Capitol Enlargement Correspondence Bills, and Receipts, 1902-1906. Virginia Governor (1902-1906): Montague), Executive Papers.36710. State Government Records Collection, Library of Virginia.

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The finishes of the eighteenth-century building were updated throughout the nineteenth century, resulting in an eclectic blend of decorative treatments by the turn of the twentieth century. As the interior was reconstructed in 1904-06, all eighteenth- and nineteenth-century plaster and paint was lost, and all plaster and finishes in place today date from this renovation or later. Since the renovation interior finishes have been applied in a piecemeal fashion, resulting in a patchwork of styles and periods.

Interior: Rotunda

The Rotunda, a triple-height space capped with an internal dome, is located at the center of the building. The focus of the space at the first floor is the Houdon statue of George Washington. At the first floor, a large doorway with flanking niches breaks each wall. A paneled soffit with supporting console brackets and an ornamental cornice defines the balcony area above.

The Rotunda gallery is located at the third floor. The east and west walls feature large arched openings, while the north and south walls hold three openings framed with architraves. The marble floor pattern and wainscot found on the first floor repeats at this level. The dome features twenty painted panels that rise in a rib-like pattern to the flat clear glass skylight above.

Interior: Old Senate Chamber

The room referred to as the Old Senate Chamber is the western portion of what was originally the Supreme Court Chamber. The existing configuration of the double-height room dates from 1904-06, when the room was renovated as a committee room, and a separate passage was provided from the Rotunda to the portico, making the room smaller. Square in plan, the room features two windows on the south and west walls and two doors at the east wall.

Interior: Old House of Delegates Chamber

The Old House of Delegates Chamber, partially reconstructed after the Capitol Disaster of 1870, was again reworked in the 1904-06 renovation when the stairs and galleries were reconfigured. The chamber retains its historic proportions. Windows and paired pilasters punctuate the north, east and west walls. The center of the south wall features a double-leaf door flanked by niches. Galleries overlook the room from the east and west walls. According to the 1858 Lybrock drawings, historically the galleries gently curved out toward the south wall. While the curved galleries were reconstructed after the 1870 collapse, in the 1904-06 renovations the galleries were widened and the curve eliminated. Prior to the renovation the stairs leading to the galleries were located outside the chamber. When the chamber was reconstructed in 1904-06, two spiral stairs were located within the chamber to provide access to the galleries. The gallery stairs were again reworked in 1927-29, when the space was returned from its function of the Old House of Delegates Chamber.

Interior: Senate Chamber

The Senate Chamber was built in 1904-06. Its configuration has remained largely the same since that time. The focus of the room is the Speaker's podium at the center of the west end of the room. The double-height space is entered through a pair of doors in the east wall, and windows punctuate the north, west, and south walls. A semicircular balcony overlooks the space, facing the west wall.

Interior: House Chamber

The House Chamber is similar in configuration and appearance to the Senate Chamber. Differences include the size of the first floor chamber, the curvature of the back wall, and the use of slender Doric columns that support the balcony.

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Interior: Governor's Suite

The Governor's suite was relocated from the northwest corner of the building to its current position in the southeast corner of the third floor with the 1904-06 renovations. The two western rooms of the suite have retained the 1904-06 configurations, while the plan of the eastern end of the suite, occupied by the Governor and his staff, reflects its 1956 configuration.

Interior: Corridors on the Ground, First, Second, and Third Floors

Two main corridors connect the main public spaces of the building and meet at right angles in the Rotunda. The structure of the corridors in the south end of the ground floor dates from the original construction of the building, but the finishes date from 1904-06 and later. The corridors in the rest of the ground floor and the entirety of the first, second, and third floors also date from this renovation.

Interior: Stairs and Elevators

There are four primary stairs in the building. A stair/elevator core is located on the north side of the east and west corridors within the main block of the building. These stairs date from the 1904-06 renovations and originally served the ground through third floors, with the western stair extending to the fourth floor (historically, the attic). Although the western stair historically wrapped around an elevator, the eastern elevator was not introduced until the 1962-64 renovation. The western elevator and the eastern stair were extended to the fourth floor with the 1962-64 renovation. The original elevator was an open cage.

Virginia Governor's Mansion (contributing building)

This Federal style mansion built in 1811-1813 was individually designated an NHL in 1988. The property includes the Kitchen (Guest House), 1811-1813, and nineteenth century Carriage House/Greenhouse, that are also contributing buildings. The formal garden, added in the 1950s, is a non-contributing site. The small guardhouse and gate, 1961, is a noncontributing structure. For a detailed description, consult the National Historic Landmark nomination.

Bell Tower (contributing structure)

The brick bell tower, built in 1824, was listed in the National Register in 1969. For a detailed description, consult the National Register nomination.

Virginia Washington Monument (contributing object)

This equestrian statue of George Washington was designed in 1849-1850 and completed in 1858 except for the subsidiary statues that were not completed until after the Civil War in 1869. This statue was listed in the National Register in 2003. For a detailed description, consult the National Register nomination.

Capitol Square Grounds (contributing site)

The landscape of the capitol grounds (1851-circa 1860) in the NHL boundary consists of a grassy lawn with curving brick sidewalks linking the various statues and fountains that originated in a design by John Notman in 1851. Notman's plan coincided with the plans for the Washington Monument, located at the Ninth Street entrance to Capitol Park. This drive circles the monument and extends behind the Capitoliol Building on axis to the Governor's Mansion (whose grounds were not part of the Notman plan). A twentieth century modification entailed expanding this driveway to envelope the Capitol Building, eliminating sections of curving walks

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established in the 1851 plan. South of the Governor's Mansion portions of the 1851 plan were also lost in the construction of the Virginia State Library (Hill) Building and the Washington Building.

The south and west sides of Capitol Park appear to retain much of the 1851 plan (as illustrated in the 1877 Beers atlas and the 1905 Sanborn Insurance map).² There are brick walks in a herringbone pattern that are laid in a curving pattern throughout the grounds. Two straight brick walks are on axis linking the Washington Monument a historic fountain in the southwest corner, and the Bell Tower. A second historic circular fountain is in the southeast corner in front of the Washington Building. These fountains are cast iron and surrounded by a low cast iron fence.³

The site plan prepared by the Historic American Building Survey in 1988 documented the plan of the walks, the locations of all buildings and objects, as well as the plant material.⁴ However, the construction of the underground Visitor's Center with its entrance on Bank Street in 2005-2007 resulted in excavations of the grounds between the front of the Capitol Building and Bank Street.

The following buildings and objects do not contribute to the NHL designation:Virginia State Library/Oliver Hill Building, 102 Governor Street (noncontributing building)

Constructed in 1892-93, enlarged in 1910, remodeled in 1929, this building was listed in the National Register in 2008. However, it is outside the period of significance for the Virginia State Capitol NHL nomination. For a detailed description, consult the National Register nomination.

Washington Building, 1100 Bank Street (noncontributing building)

Constructed in 1923-1924 as a state office building, this property is outside the period of significance for the Virginia State Capitol NHL nomination.

Bank Street Deck, Bank Street (noncontributing structure)

Constructed in the late twentieth century, this four-story parking garage was built on the site of North 12th Street where it intersected Franklin Street. The discontinued sections of these streets were never historically part of Capital Square and the parking garage is outside the period of significance of the NHL nomination.

Jefferson Building, 1218 Bank Street (noncontributing building)

Constructed in the late twentieth century, this office building occupies the northwest corner of Bank Street and Governor Street that was never historically part of Capital Square and is outside the period of significance of the NHL nomination.

Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson Statue (1875), Hunter Holmes McGuire Statue (1904), William Smith Statue (1906), Zero Milestone (1929), Edgar Allan Poe Statue (1959), Harry Flood Byrd Statue (1976) are noncontributing objects as they date outside the period of significance for the Virginia State Capitol NHL nomination.

² *Illustrated Atlas of Richmond, Virginia*. Beers, F. W., Richmond, VA: F.W. Beers, 1877; *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Richmond, Independent Cities, Virginia*. Sanborn Map Company, 1905, Vol.1, plate 7.

³ Although not documented in terms of construction, these fountains are stylistically mid-nineteenth century.

⁴ Historic American Building Survey, HABS VA-1254.

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Visitor's Center Entrance, Bank Street (noncontributing structure)

The Doric entrance portico and plaza provides access to the underground visitor's center. It was constructed in 2005-2007 and it outside the period of significance for the NHL nomination.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
 Nationally: X Statewide: Locally:

Applicable National

Register Criteria: A X B C X D

Criteria Considerations

(Exceptions): A B C D E F G

NHL Criteria: 1, 4

NHL Criteria Exceptions: N/A

NHL Theme(s):

III. Expressing Cultural Values
 5. architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design
 IV. Shaping the Political Landscape
 2. governmental institutions

Areas of Significance: Politics/Government, Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: 1785-1865 (1); 1785-1796 (4)

Significant Dates: 1785, 1861-1865

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Jefferson, Thomas

Historic Contexts:

VI. The Civil War
 E. Political and Diplomatic Scene
 XVI. Architecture
 D. Greek Revival (1820-1840)

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.Summary Statement of Significance

Designed by Thomas Jefferson with assistance from French architect Charles-Louis Cl risseau, the Virginia State Capitol houses the oldest legislative body in the United States. The Capitol is nationally significant under Criterion 1 as seat of the government of the Commonwealth of Virginia. It has served as the state capitol since it was first occupied in 1788, witnessed major events leading to the sectional crisis, and was the capital of the Confederacy from 1861 to April 1865. It is nationally significant under NHL Criterion 4 as the first Classical Revival Capitol built in America, one that set the stage for many to follow. As one historian has observed, Jefferson's choice of using a Roman temple as a model was an explicit departure from English Georgian precedents in the American colonies (such as Boston's Old State House, 1712-1713 (NHL), Independence Hall in Philadelphia, 1732-1752 (NHL), the second Williamsburg, Virginia capitol, 1753, and the Maryland State House in Annapolis, begun in 1772-1797 (NHL). Drawing from antiquity to develop the most up-to-date representation of architectural beauty (as interpreted by a French architect), Jefferson established a model for major public buildings throughout the country.⁵

The Virginia State Capitol was designated a National Historic Landmark on December 19, 1960, and placed on the National Register of Historic Places on October 15, 1966 (revised for National Register listing in 2005). This revised NHL nomination includes a name change from the "Confederate Capitol" to the "Virginia State Capitol". The reason for this change is that the primary basis for its designation is architecture and political history reflecting a broader period of significance than the relatively short period (1861-1865) in use as the capital of the Confederate States of America. Moreover, the early nomination made no attempt to discuss other buildings, objects or sites within the Capitol Square boundary. This revised nomination corrects that omission.

Thomas Jefferson's own observations on the design of the Virginal State Capitol include the following:

The Capitol in the city of Richmond ... is on the model of the temples of Erectheus at Athens, and of Balbec, and of the Maison quarre of Nismes, all of which are nearly of the same form & proportions and are considered as the most perfect examples of Cubic architecture, as the Pantheon of Rome is of the Spherical.

Thomas Jefferson, "An Account of the Capitol in Virginia"⁶

How is a taste for a chaste & good style of building to be formed in our countrymen unless we seize all occasions which the erection of public buildings offers, of presenting to them models for their imitation?

Thomas Jefferson to Edmund Randolph

20 September 1785⁷

There is, perhaps, no better summary of Jefferson intent for the Virginia Capitol than the one he provided himself. In his uncompleted "Autobiography" written in 1821, Jefferson recalled his involvement in the design of the Capitol, some thirty-five years earlier. He wrote:

⁵ William H. Pierson, Jr., *American Architects and their Buildings. The Colonial and Neo-Classical Styles*. Anchor Press/Doubleday: Garden City and New York, 1976, 297.

⁶ "An Account of the Capitol in Virginia," Papers of Thomas Jefferson, 1785, Series I, General Correspondence, 165I-1827, 1 August 1785, pp. 2956-2957 (images 1007-I008), microfilm and American Memory, Historical Collections for the National Digital Library online database, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C. (Hereafter cited as LC.)

⁷ Thomas Jefferson to Edmund Randolph, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Julian P. Boyd, et. al., (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1950-), 8:538.

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I was written to in 1785 (being then in Paris) ... to advise ... as to a plan, and to add to it one of a Prison. Thinking it a favorable opportunity of introducing into the State an example of architecture, in the classic style of antiquity, and the Maison Quarree of Nismes ... being considered as the most perfect model existing of what may be called Cubic architecture, I applied to M. Clerissault, who had published drawings of the Antiquities of Nismes, to have me a model of the building in stucco, only changing the order from Corinthian to Ionic, on account of the difficulty of the Corinthian capitals, I yielded, with reluctance, to ... Clerissault, in his preference for the modern capital of Scamozzi to the more noble capital of antiquity To adapt the exterior to our use, I drew a plan for the interior These [the model and the drawings] were ... carried into execution, with some variations, not for the better, the most important of which, however, admit of future correction.⁸

Jefferson and Architecture

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) is the first American architect of international stature. A great representative of the Renaissance tradition of the amateur designer, Jefferson taught himself how to create buildings because he had no other way of gaining access to the art of architecture in the hinterlands of Virginia. Jefferson wrote about his values, stressing two: durable brick and stone rather than wood for construction, and the Classical Orders of column for ornament. At an early point, he set out to reform the architecture around him in his native Virginia, and later he extended his attempt to this young nation. To spread his reform he relied on a powerful custom that later Americans have forgotten: in Jefferson's time it was an old and widespread custom for new buildings to imitate standing buildings, often as a matter of contract.

As interesting as Jefferson's domestic designs are, he owes his international status to his public buildings. Within this field he achieved his greatest results at the United States Capitol and the White House in Washington, but there his influence became obscured in mingling with the preferences of other men. Jefferson's University of Virginia is his masterpiece, but it remains a unique marvel. The impact of Jefferson as a designer on American civic architecture work rested on how he put traditional room-plans inside temple-shaped bodies. He did this first at the Virginia State Capitol, a building flawed externally by crude execution and defective stucco and not closely imitated. In a later and far more successful project, Jefferson united established courtroom planning and the temple body in a modest, Tuscan conception with red-brick walls and stucco only on the columns, a pattern that reshaped Virginia courthouses for a generation. The spread of this pattern was partly a by-product of his work at the University of Virginia. There Jefferson set models for construction and the Orders, trained craftsmen, and absorbed inspiration from the second American architect of international stature, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, whose influence decisively shaped the courthouse reform.

Designed by Thomas Jefferson with assistance from French architect Charles-Louis Cl risseau, the Virginia State Capitol houses the oldest legislative body in the United States. It has served as the state capitol since it was first occupied in 1788, and functioned as the capitol of the Confederate States of America from 1861 to April 1865. From a symbolic standpoint, the Capitol is a creation of sheer genius: a classical religious temple that personifies the official national architectural language of American government. Nationally significant as the first Classical Revival state capital building built in America, it set the stage for many to follow.

The Virginia Capitol: 1785-1798

The first capital of the colony had been Jamestown, where the General Assembly first met in the settlement's church in 1619. In 1699, the government moved to Williamsburg. Jefferson's desire for a new capitol for Virginia dates to 1776 when, as a member of the House of Delegates, he presented one of a number of bills

⁸ Thomas Jefferson, "Autobiography," in A.E. Bergh, ed., *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (Washington, D.C., 1903), I:68.

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proposing the removal of the capital from Williamsburg to Richmond. In 1779 during Jefferson's term as governor, the House of Delegates selected Richmond as the new capital, choosing Shockoe Hill as the site in 1780. They hoped that Richmond's inland position would provide better protection from British forces. As well, given Virginia's rapid westward expansion, Richmond was becoming in many ways the very center of Virginia. By the time the Assembly allocated funds aside for construction, however, Jefferson was already in Paris serving as Minister to France.

Jefferson specifically modeled the interior plan of his Capitol on the earlier H-shaped capitol in Williamsburg, with the court and the Delegates at either end downstairs, the Senate and meeting rooms above. In the central hall, Jefferson designed a two-story space with a balcony supported by enormous columns, a large skylight, and space for the marble sculpture of Washington commissioned by the Assembly.

One month before Thomas Jefferson was elected governor in May 1779, the General Assembly passed "An Act for the Removal of the Set of Government." In 1780, under threat of British invasion Jefferson, with the authority of this Act, officially moved the seat of government from Williamsburg to Richmond. The General Assembly established the Directors of Public Buildings to construct new buildings for the Virginia government. Jefferson was appointed a member.

Lacking financial resources, the Directors did not begin to consider plans for a new capitol building until 1784. In that year, Jefferson was appointed Minister Plenipotentiary, and sailed from Boston to France on July 5, 1784. In his absence his friend, William Short, kept Jefferson informed of the actions of the Directors. On July 28, 1784, Short wrote Jefferson that:

In order to begin building the buildings on the hill the directors have contracted with an undertaker, and Ry Randolph is to draw the plan. I wish them very much to send to some part of Italy for a designer and workmen. A good model I think would be of very great public utility, and the example of importing workmen would be unquestionably be followed and be attended with very good consequences.⁹

As a result of Ryland Randolph's death (prior to which he apparently produced no plans), James Buchanan and William Hay wrote Jefferson on March 20, 1785, asking him "to consult an able architect on a plan fit for a capitol, and assist him with the information of which you are possessed."¹⁰ Jefferson accepted the offer, and wrote on April 13, 1785, that it had taken time to find an architect, "The style of architecture in this capital" [Paris] "being far from chaste."¹¹

Capitol Square has been the governmental center of Richmond since Thomas Jefferson selected the site in 1780. Jefferson originally intended to erect three separate buildings, one for each of the three branches of government. This noble goal, however, proved to be beyond the reaches of the Commonwealth's more modest financial restrictions. As a result, the executive, legislative, and judicial branches were assigned quarters within the new Capitol.

Jefferson designed the Virginia State Capitol in 1785 and 1786 while Minister to France. He was deeply impressed with Maison Carree, a Roman temple in Nimes, France, and, in collaboration with French architect Charles-Louis Clérisseau, took that for his model as a point of departure.¹² The Capitol's construction marked

⁹ William Short to Thomas Jefferson, July 28, 1784, Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁰ James Buchanan and William Hay to Thomas Jefferson, March 20, 1785, Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

¹¹ Thomas Jefferson to James Buchanan and William Hay, August 13, 1785, Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

¹² The design for the state capital was a collaboration of Jefferson and the Frenchman. There is debate over the genesis of the design and the development of architectural details, but Jefferson initiated the project and solicited advice from Clérisseau. For this reason he can be credited as the principal architect.

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the first use of the temple form in a modern public building. Its awe-inspiring position on a hill overlooking the growing city and the untamed James River began a wave of similar buildings that was to spread across the nation.

A plan was drawn, a cornerstone laid, and construction began on a rectangular building in August of 1785. Friends of Jefferson who disliked the proposed plan wrote to him in France in March, and he responded by sending plans drawn by Charles-Louis Cl  risseau in January 1786. Cl  risseau was a great authority on antiquities, having published measured drawings of Roman buildings, and Jefferson sought him out to help articulate his ideas. Later in 1786, Jefferson sent additional drawings and an intricate plaster model. The model, crafted by master model-maker Jean-Pierre Fouquet, survives and has recently been restored and returned to public view.

Despite efforts to move the capital back to Williamsburg, the legislature raised the necessary funds for a Richmond structure and a cornerstone was laid in 1785. While construction was actually begun in that year, it was not until the following year that Jefferson's design was adopted, requiring alterations to the foundations, which had already been set.

The resulting building was rectangular in plan, measuring roughly 84' x 150'. Jefferson's Capitol was five bays wide and nine bays deep, fronted by a full-width portico. The building featured a central triple-height space, with the principal rooms to the north and south extending the full width of the building. The Supreme Court of Appeals was located at the south end of the first floor, and the House of Delegates at the north end, a pattern that Jefferson would have been familiar with from the second Virginia Capitol, in Williamsburg. The Senate was housed in a 30' x 30' room at the south end of the second floor, while the governor and the supporting offices were housed at the north end of that floor. A stair on the west side of the Rotunda provided vertical circulation.

Jefferson probably invested extraordinary significance into his choice of the temple form, deliberately choosing ancient, authoritative forms to inspire a new American art. The tremendous momentum of the desire for independence during the Revolution inspired patriots to believe that they were taking steps that would change the world. The Enlightenment mind revered rightness, logic, and geometry, as well as Athenian democracy and the Roman Republic. The hill on which the capitol would sit, overlooking the rugged beauty of the James River, provided a perfect setting for a temple to the mind, goodness, and morality of the American spirit and independence.

Construction of the Capitol, however, was a difficult and contentious process, as might be expected from such an unprecedented American endeavor. Many changes, later regretted by Jefferson, were made while he was still in France (resulting in his insistence upon close, personal supervision in later projects.) For example, Samuel Dobie, the contractor, adjusted the building to fit a foundation constructed before Jefferson's plans arrived, and placed a smaller, curved staircase on either side of the structure, rather than the imposing staircase in the front. Dobie continued the Ionic pilasters to the rear of the building, rather than ending them at the junction of the portico and the body of the temple. Inside, Dobie made one spectacular change, placing the balcony on brackets rather than columns, and inserting a dome above with an oculus covered by the skylight. The dome, completely concealed on the exterior of the building, created a space referred to as the rotunda within.¹³

¹³ Little is known about Samuel Dobie (d.1801), who supervised construction from 1786 until around 1794, but the evidence indicates he had the design skills of an architect trained in the classical orders, probably using English builder's guides. Fiske Kimball, *The Capital of Virginia. A Landmark of American Architecture*. Virginia State Library and Archives: Richmond, 1989, 69-70.

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By the completion of the building, a number of changes were made to Jefferson's design. The size of the building had been changed, and the proportions of the columns, the cornice, and the roof altered. On the exterior, pilasters had been added to each bay. The basement was raised to a full story with windows to provide offices for the Auditor and the Treasurer. This led, in part, to the omission of a monumental stairway planned by Jefferson for the South end of the building. In addition, Samuel Dobie, the Surveyor of the Capitol, erected a Baroque stair on the west side of the Capitol in 1793-94. The roof was also altered when the flat roof was replaced in 1789 by "a pediment roof ... covered with lead", which was in turn replaced by a cement and shingle composition gable roof in 1797.

The Virginia Capitol: 1800-1900

Occupation of the Capitol began in 1798 and, with the completion of the stucco covering in 1800, it was considered complete. Since then, however, the building has undergone a continuing series of repairs, additions, and renovations (up to and including the present renovations) to conserve and extend the life of this most important symbol of American democracy. If democracy is always unfinished business, so too is the business of housing democracy.

The nineteenth century saw numerous piecemeal alterations and repairs to the building, with a significant renovation in 1816 and additional alterations proposed in 1858. Some of these alterations resulted in the removal of structural elements and, as early as 1834, structural weaknesses had been noted in the building. These weaknesses led to the 1870 collapse of the second floor court room gallery and the subsequent collapse of the floor below into the hall of the House of Delegates.

Throughout the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s, the roof, skylights, and portico were frequently repaired. Additional changes made in 1846 included re-glazing, re-stuccoing, and re-painting the building, as well as constructing new stairs at the east and west elevations that ran perpendicular to the elevations.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, other minor changes were made to the interior of the building such as updating systems and installing new finishes. Building systems updates included the introduction of water supplied through iron pipes in 1832, the installation of waterclosets under the east porch in 1842, and the introduction of gas in 1851.

Programmatic changes in the first half of the nineteenth century lead to a series of changes within the Capitol. In 1829, the number of delegates in the Senate grew from 24 to 32, resulting in crowded chamber conditions. To provide more space for the delegates, the Senate moved to the south end of the first floor in 1840. The Court of Appeals and the General Court in turn relocates to the old Senate Chamber. New offices at the east end of the old courtroom accommodated Senate staff, and a new gallery at the east end of the Senate chamber provided a viewing area. At that time, a stair leading to the gallery and a passage connecting the portico and Rotunda were also introduced.

In 1801, arms were stored in the garret of the Capitol. A window was added to each pediment to light the space. Although these windows were mostly likely rectangular, their appearance were frequently altered throughout the nineteenth century, with the fanlight with quadrants introduced by the Civil War. In 1812, the exterior of the building was modified when repairs were made to the building's columns and pilasters and the plasterwork was renewed.

Among the most significant pre-Civil War changes occurred in 1816, when the French emigre architect Maximilian Godefroy - originally hired to design the landscape of Capitol Square -- straightened the curved

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exterior stairs on the side of the building. He also applied ashlar facing at the basement and altered two basement entrances. Stone watertables were added, as were exterior window moldings. Exterior walls were re-stuccoed and painted, and a new slate roof replaced the composition shingle gable roof. Interior changes included the replacement of moldings and the decoration of the dome, the replacement of pediments at the doors, and the replacement of woodwork in a number of areas, including the assembly room and the Senate Chamber. By 1857 the building was suffering from deferred maintenance and the effects of heavy use, but the cost of renovation was deemed too high and piecemeal repairs substituted.

Godefroy was also hired to prepare a landscape plan in 1816 for the site. According to one source, it was “a symmetrical system of terraces, drives, and cascades, which was probably never totally executed.” The same source documents that Philadelphia architect John Notman was hired to develop a new landscape plan in conjunction with the Washington Monument that was planned. A newspaper description at the time noted that, “The most beautiful feature of the contemplated alterations of the Square, however, will be found in the arrangement of the trees and shrubbery. Instead of planting these in parallel rows, like an ordinary orchard some attention will be paid to landscape gardening—groves, arbours, parterres, and fountains will combine to render the Square a place of delightful resort....”¹⁴ Work apparently proceeded slowly over the next decade before the outbreak of war.

As Notman’s biographer noted, many changes have been made to the original plan, including paving the walks and changes in the plantings. Nonetheless, the essential character of Notman’s plan is still in place, one of the earliest picturesque landscapes for a major public building, and perhaps the only one to survive in recognizable form for a state capital.

The surviving landscape, Governor’s Mansion, Bell Tower, and Washington Monument all contribute to the national significance of the Virginia State Capitol complex under NHL Criterion 1. This period of significance extends to 1865 as it includes the historical importance of the property as the Capital of the Confederacy.

In 1850-51, the size of the Senate again increased, growing to 50 delegates. In his report on public buildings in 1857, Governor Wise acknowledged that the existing building was too small to accommodate its growing number of occupants. He recommended constructing a fireproof building to house the archives, the library, and the executive branch, leaving the Capitol for use by the legislative branch. Due to financial constraints, the enlargement and improvements of the existing buildings was proposed instead. The governor commissioned Richmond architect Alfred Lybrock to produce measured drawings of the existing buildings and drawings reflecting the proposed enlargements and improvements.

Although Lybrock's proposed changes were not carried out, the drawings of the existing conditions are illuminating. Based on Lybrock's plans, the courts would be removed from the Capitol building and the library would occupy the south end of the second floor. The remainder of the second floor would hold a series of committee rooms and the governor's offices.

In 1861, Richmond replaced Montgomery, Alabama, as the capital of the Confederacy. Throughout the Civil War the state government shared the Virginia State Capitol with the Confederate legislature. Space was reallocated and minor modifications were made to the building to accommodate the new residents. During most of the Civil War, while the state legislature shared its space with the Confederate Congress, the building received little attention, although during the Evacuation Fire of April 1865, Federal troops surrounded the Capitol to protect it from fire and looters.

¹⁴ *John Notman Architect 1810-1865*. Constance M. Greiff. The Athenaeum of Philadelphia: 1979, 160-163. The newspaper cited was from the *Richmond Daily Times*, July 26, 1851, p2.

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After the Courts building burned in 1865, the Supreme Court of Appeals room was once again located in the Capitol on the second floor. On April 27, 1870, a heavily attended court case was held in the Capitol building. The third floor gallery in the courtroom collapsed beneath the weight of the crowd, and the court chamber in turn collapsed into the chamber of the House of Delegates below. Sixty-two people died and 251 were injured. Despite resolutions to demolish the existing Capitol and construct a new building, the existing building was repaired and the House of Delegates chamber was reconstructed, largely replicating its appearance before the collapse.

Throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century, Virginia experienced fiscal difficulties and changes to the Capitol were minor. During Reconstruction, modifications to the building were largely limited to incorporating necessary structural modifications, updating the systems, and making minor repairs. Notable technological alterations included the installation of telephones and appropriation of funds for an elevator in 1884 and, by 1892, the introduction of electricity.

While the onerous post-Civil War economy in Virginia did not encourage a complete rehabilitation of the Capitol, the nation as a whole was experiencing a boom in civic construction, fueled by economic expansion and a re-invigorated interest in the classical heritage of America called the American Renaissance. This enthusiastic interest, combined with growing government bureaucracy, meant that state capitols were being renovated, enlarged, or built completely new all over the country. Virginia's Governor Montague worried about protecting and preserving this important structure, whose historic value was growing by the year. By the turn of the century, the building was in such a state of disrepair that it was becoming an embarrassment.

The Virginia Capitol: 1900-1906

In 1902, a competition was announced, and five firms from around the country, including such architectural luminaries as McKim, Mead, and White and every significant Virginia firm, were invited to submit drawings to repair and enlarge the building. The committee received no out-of-state entries, having only offered one month for study, but they interviewed six Virginia firms about their plans. One of the competition entries continued to draw attention--that of John Kevan Peebles of Norfolk who designed two wings, with subdued but similar ornament, attached to the sides of the existing capitol by hyphens. After some redesign and negotiation, Peebles was hired along with Noland and Baskervill (Richmond) and Chesterman (Lynchburg). The project was started in August 1904 and completed by January 1906.

In 1904, a bill was passed charging that \$250,000 be expended to enlarge the Capitol through the addition of wings in accordance with Peebles' plan, and employing ornamental plans for the exterior as proposed by Noland and Baskervill and Chesterman and Frye. Under this plan additions were to be subordinate to and in the style of the Jeffersonian building. Although the building was gutted and the interior rebuilt, the architects replicated the configuration of the interior spaces and salvaged and reused interior finishes. Under this scheme, the grand stair leading to the portico was finally provided, and wings were added to serve the House and Senate.

Specifications called for the introduction of new ventilation slues, the addition of a fireplace and chimney in the governor's office, the introduction of a new entrance at the north end of the basement level, the replacement of the existing elevator, and the installation of two new stairs. The existing stucco was to be replaced and, except for those that could be repaired at the basement level, all windows and doors and their frames were to be replaced. Much of the interior woodwork was also to be replaced or relocated.

In 1904 the building was gutted, leaving only the exterior walls and columns in place. The side porches and all interior partitions, excepting the brick bearing walls, were removed. Structural steel and fireproofing were

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introduced. The columns of the portico were reinforced and modified, with entasis added, and the capitals, bases, and modillions were enlarged.

Stairs were finally added to the front portico, stretching the full width. The wings (smaller, lower, and set back to respect the importance of the central structure) were connected by hyphens as planned. Each boasted an Ionic portico. Two of the main reasons for the renovation, fireproofing and improving the structural integrity to preserve the historic structure for the ages, Ironically, renovations meant to preserve the building resulted in its evisceration. Though some select decorative features such as pilasters, cornices, and doorframes were retained and reused, only the exterior masonry walls and columns were left standing. The Senate moved into a new chamber in the west wing and the House of Delegates into theirs in the east wing.

The Virginia Capitol: 1907-1962

While most of the work undertaken in this period focused on maintenance and general repairs, two larger projects were undertaken. The Assembly restored the chamber of the House of Delegates to its nineteenth century configuration in 1926, followed by the old Senate chamber in 1954. The most recent refurbishment took place from 1962 to 1964 under the direction of the Richmond firm Ballou and Justice. The hyphens were widened and their exterior stairs removed, and the attic was finished for use as offices and committee rooms. Modernization included the installation of an elevator and updating all wiring and plumbing.

The Virginia Capitol: 1962-1964

The most recent major renovation was undertaken in 1962-64. Under the direction of Ballou and Justice, the hyphens between the original building and the wings were expanded to provide new stairs and office space. During this renovation, systems were upgraded throughout the building with improvements made to the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems. Work undertaken included the restoration of the historic chambers, the transformation of fourth-floor storage rooms into committee rooms and offices, the removal of rooms from under the south portico, and the widening of the hyphens between the original building and the wings. A new elevator was installed and the existing elevator extended to the fourth floor. The roof was replaced, and the skylights were closed and redesigned as luminous ceilings.

The Virginia Capitol: 1964-2004

With the exception of the 1988 renovation of the third floor offices by Hanbury Evans Wright Vlattas, the work undertaken in the last forty years has been largely confined to the updating of systems and general maintenance. Work undertaken included the construction of two new stairways in the House of Delegates Chamber and the conversion of the House cloakroom to a women's lounge.

Today, the Capitol in the midst of another exciting Renaissance, the most comprehensive and sensitive rehabilitation in its history, as once again the building receives the careful attention a landmark of its national significance deserves. When the present rehabilitation is completed, Jefferson's Capitol will face the new needs of the 21st century. As it takes generations and many diverse hands to build and perfect a democracy; likewise, it requires the efforts of many to build and perfect the buildings that house democracy. The Virginia State Capitol is more than Jefferson's Capitol. It is our Capitol.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

Previously Listed in the National Register.

Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.

Designated a National Historic Landmark. NR#72000203; Designated, May 19, 1972

Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #

Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State Agency

Federal Agency

Local Government

University

Other (Specify Repository):

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 14 acres

UTM References: **Zone Easting Northing**

NW18.284900.4157400

NE18.285190.4157210

SE18.285100.4156990

SW18.284760.4157220

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Verbal Boundary Description: The boundary follows the original NHL designation as shown on the accompanying map “Virginia State Capitol NHL Boundary (2016)” and extends inside the curb lines of Governor, Ninth, Bank and (former) Capitol streets as they converge to form Capitol Square.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary is identical to the original (1975) NHL designation, as well as the 2005 NR nomination.

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Bruce Clark Green, Architectural Historian

Address: Virginia Department of Historic Resources
2801 Kensington Avenue
Richmond, VA 23221

Telephone: 804-367-2323

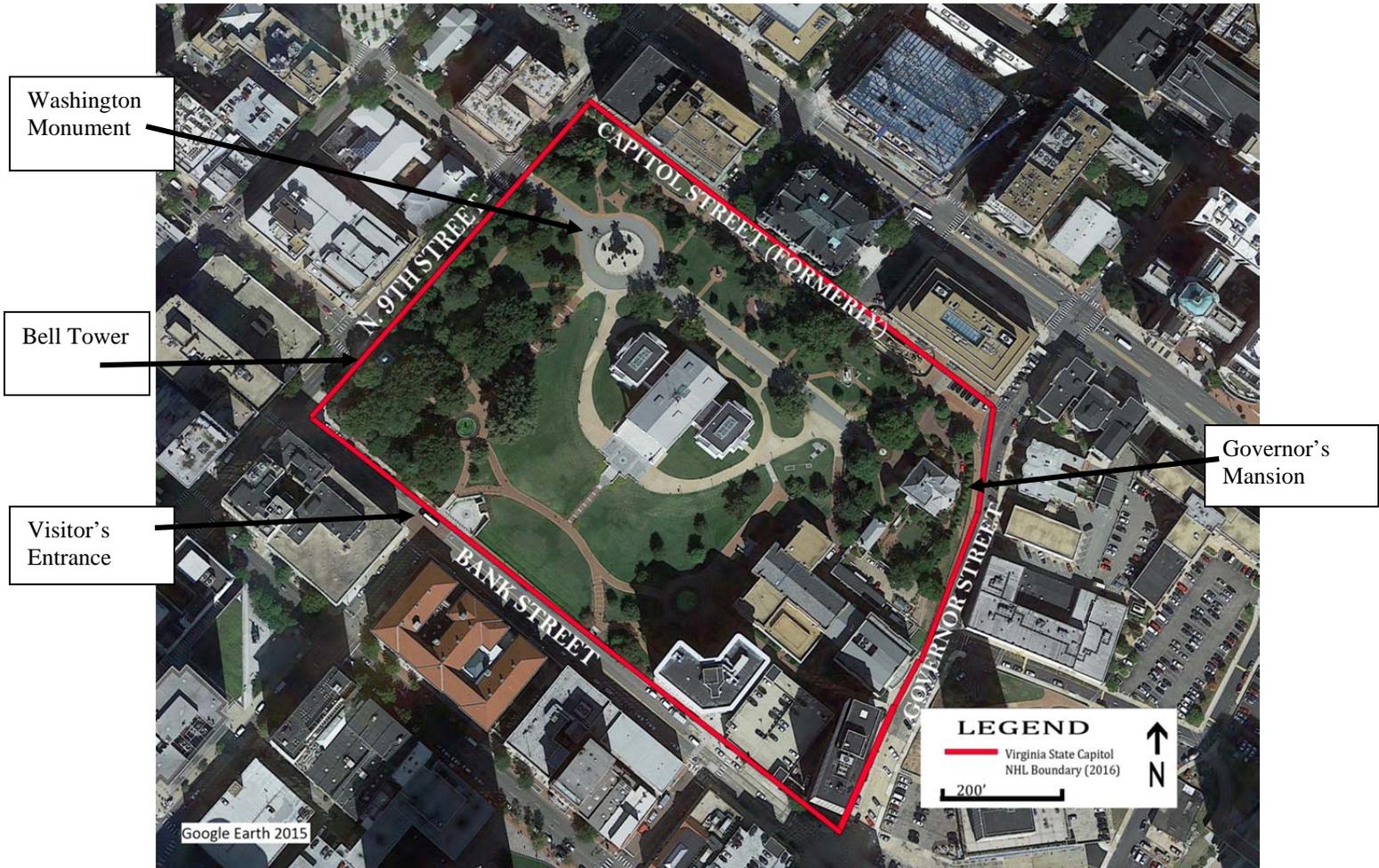
Date: June, 2004

Edited by: Roger G. Reed, Historian
National Park Service
National Historic Landmarks Program
1201 Eye St. NW (2280), 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20005

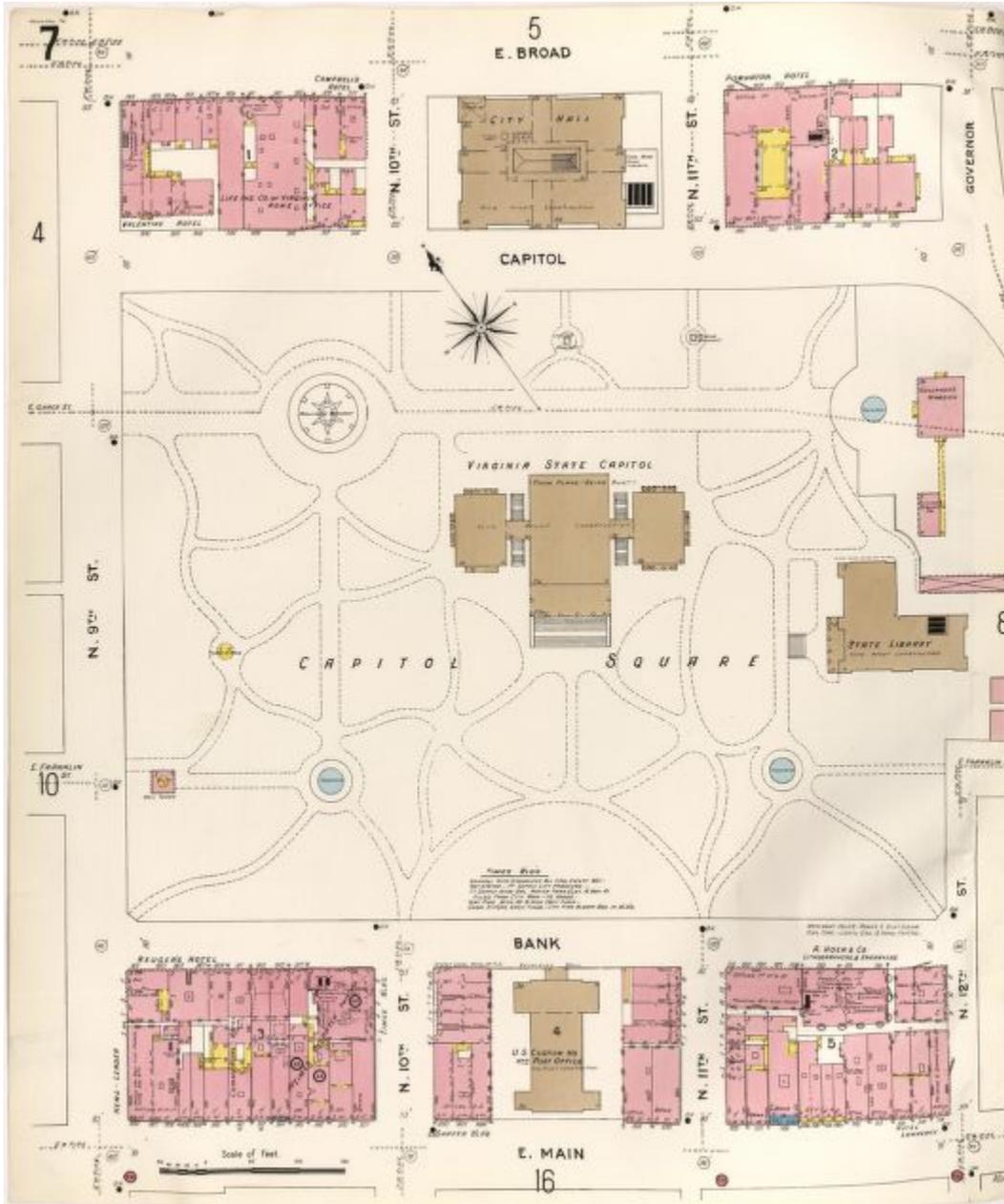
Telephone: (202) 354-2278

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS PROGRAM

March 9, 2016



Site map showing the existing NHL boundary (1975).



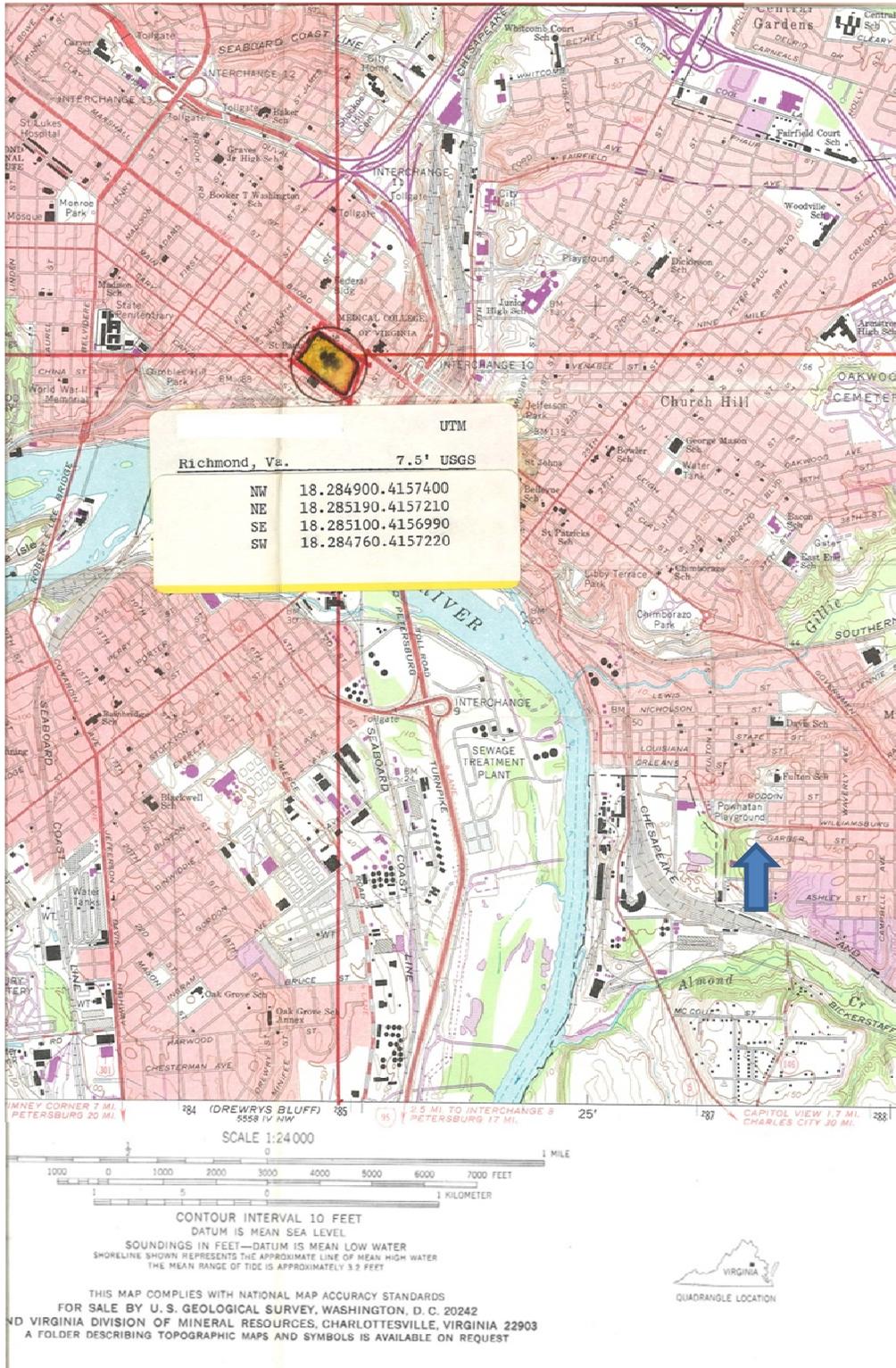
View of Capital Square in 1905 from Sanborn Fire Insurance Map
Richmond, Independent City, Virginia, Vol. I, plate 7 (Courtesy Library of Congress).

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USGS Map Richmond, VA Quad
Datum: NAD27

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Virginia State Capitol, looking northeast from Bank Street.
R. Reed photographer, 2016.



Virginia State Capitol Visitor's Entrance at bottom of the hill on Bank Street, looking northeast.
R. Reed photographer, 2016

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Virginia State Capitol, looking north with 1905-1906 wings and central staircase.
R. Reed photographer, 2016



Virginia State Capitol, view of restored House of Delegates.
R. Reed photographer, 2016

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George Washington Monument, Capital Square, Virginia
Courtesy Historic American Building Survey, 1988



Richmond Bell Tower, Capital Square, Virginia.
Courtesy HABS, 1936