1. NAME
COMMON:
Poplar Forest
AND/OR HISTORIC:
Poplar Forest

2. LOCATION
STREET AND NUMBER: 2 mi. N of Timberlake, .9 mi. S of Rt. 661, .5 mi. S of intersection of Rt. 661 and Rt. 460.

3. CLASSIFICATION
<table>
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<th>OWNERSHIP</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC</th>
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<td>Site Object</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Unoccupied</td>
<td>Restricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Preservation work</td>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
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PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate):
- Agricultural
- Commercial
- Educational
- Entertainment
- Government
- Industrial
- Military
- Private Residence
- Religious
- Park
- Museum
- Transportation
- Scientific
- Other (Specify)
- Comments

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY
OWNERS NAME:
Mr. and Mrs. James O. Watts, Jr.

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Bedford County Court House

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 950

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS
TITLE OF SURVEY:
Historic American Buildings Survey
DATE OF SURVEY: 1941
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Library of Congress
STREET AND NUMBER:
CITY OR TOWN: Washington
STATE: D.C.
CODE: 08
Poplar Forest is a brick one-story building, octagonal in shape, set on a high basement with tetrastyle pedimented Tuscan porticoes, on low arcades, on the entrance and rear facades. As a result of a fire in 1845, only the walls, chimneys, and possibly the columns are original. From a drawing, circa 1820 (now in the Alderman Library, University of Virginia), by Thomas Jefferson's granddaughter, Cornelia Randolph, the original design of the exterior can be reasonably determined. The drawing shows the house crowned by a deck on an octagonal hipped roof surrounded at its base by a balustrade. Below the balustrade is a Tuscan cornice which encircles the entire house.

The original interior plan of the house is intact, and consists of four elongated octagonal rooms around a square central hall which was originally lighted from above. Two of the rooms were divided in the middle by bed alcoves, similar to that in Jefferson's bedroom at Monticello. Unfortunately, there is almost no evidence indicating the appearance of the original woodwork.

Jefferson refers to an office wing, 110 feet long "...in the manner of those at Monticello, with a flat roof in the level of the house." While no trace above ground remains of this wing, a kitchen and smokehouse still stand. On either side of the house, the two original octagonal privies are discreetly hidden by artificial mounds.
**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Poplar Forest was designed and built by Thomas Jefferson on his Bedford County plantation as a "pleasant retreat" from the social pressures of Monticello. Construction on the house began in 1806 and continued as late as 1819. Jefferson visited Poplar Forest as much as four times a year, often remaining there as long as a month. Originally designed for Jefferson's daughter, Maria, to be built in Albemarle County, but she died in 1804. Although burned and substantially rebuilt, Poplar Forest ranks among the most important of Jefferson's architectural designs. In it he was able to indulge his fancy for compact forms and geometric shapes, and stated that it was "inferior only to Monticello."
9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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<tr>
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LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

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<thead>
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<th>STATE:</th>
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11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:

Staff, Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, James W. Moody, Jr., Director

ORGANIZATION

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE

June 2, 1969

STREET AND NUMBER:

Room 1116, Ninth Street State Office Building

CITY OR TOWN:

Richmond

STATE:

Virginia

CODE

45

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National [X] State [ ] Local [ ]

Name

Dr. Edward P. Alexander, Chairman
Title Virginia Historic Landmarks Comm.

Date 10-7-69

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date

ATTEST:

Keeper of the National Register

Date 10-23-69
6. Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory
   1958 Federal

   Library of Congress
   Washington, D. C. Code: 08

   Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Report #09-27
   1968 State

   Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission
   Room 1116, Ninth Street State Office Building
   Richmond, Virginia 23219 Code: 760
Statement of Significance

Thomas Jefferson displayed throughout his life a fascination with unusual architectural shapes and volumes. In this he shared an interest with the professionally trained architects of his age. Both the oval rooms in the rotunda of the University of Virginia and octagons and semi-octagon incorporated into the final version of Monticello are fine examples of this.

Between 1806 and 1819 a fully mature Jefferson decided to build a retreat in the rural seclusion of Bedford County Virginia. He named his hermitage Poplar Forest. In its design he gave full reign to his fancy and planned a one story octagonal house over a raised basement. In plan the house has four perfectly symmetrical principal spaces in the shape of elongated octagons arranged around a large square central room lit by a central skylight. In planning the grounds Jefferson was also his most fanciful and created minature hills in the garden to screen the view of the octagonal out-houses from the main house.

Poplar Forest was completely gutted by fire in 1845 and immediately repaired. However no attempt was made to recapture the original decoration. Only the basic shapes of the rooms remain. The roof was reconstructed without the skylight or the original balustrade.

In spite of the fact that Poplar Forest is an intensely personal example of Thomas Jefferson's architectural taste and, in that regard, is second only to Monticello, the 1845 fire and subsequent rebuilding have significantly reduced the buildings importance.
Poplar Forest property description:

Beginning on New London Road approximately 1950 feet from the intersection of New London Road and Waterlick Road, and following the road for approximately 1490 feet; Thence S 49° 12' E, 190 feet; thence N 64° 18' E, 370 feet; thence N 23° 12' W, 480 feet; thence N 18° 18' W, 23 feet; thence N 42° 27' W, 52 feet; thence N 31° 3' E, 555 feet; thence N 58° 42' W, 200 feet; thence N 21° 42' W, 255 feet; thence S 31° 3' W, 515 feet; thence N 12° 20' W, 750 feet; thence N 37° 20' W, 515 feet; thence N 31° 3' E, 750 feet; thence following the Norfolk and Western Railway Local Grade Belt Line approximately 5100 feet; thence about N 28° W, approximately 1200 feet; thence S 67° 19' W approximately 1050 feet; thence S 14° 39' E, 218 feet to North Fork of Tomahawk Creek; thence S 8° 21' E, 2957 feet to Up Branch Creek; thence following Up Branch and the South Fork of the Tomahawk Creek approximately 1315 feet; thence S 23° 36' W, 725 feet; thence S 75° 54' E, approximately 1115 feet; thence S 28° 6' W, approximately 1200 feet; thence approximately N 78° W about 1800 feet; thence N 22° 40' W, 530 feet; thence S 47° 20' W, 116 feet; thence N 16° 10' W, 1089 feet; thence N 17° 28' W, 963 feet; thence N 62° 12' W, 641 feet; thence N 67° 49' W, 761 feet to beginning.