

Timeline

- 1773 Thomas Jefferson and his wife, Martha, inherit the 4,819-acre Bedford County, Virginia, plantation known as Poplar Forest and the 11 enslaved men, women and children living and working there from the estate of her father, John Wayles.
- 1781 Thomas Jefferson retreats to Poplar Forest for the first time, when he and his family flee Monticello to elude capture by the British. They spend six weeks staying at an overseer's house. Jefferson compiles much of the material for his only book – Notes on the State of Virginia – during their stay.
- 1805 While serving his second term as president, Thomas Jefferson begins plans for a villa at Poplar Forest.
- 1806 Thomas Jefferson travels from Washington, DC, to supervise the laying of the foundation for his octagonal villa. Work continues on Poplar Forest for almost 20 years.
- 1810 Thomas Jefferson confides to a friend, "It [Poplar Forest] is the most valuable of my possessions and will become the residence of the greater part of my family."
- Poplar Forest produces wheat and tobacco, and is eventually home to 94 enslaved men, women and children.
- 1814 Thomas Jefferson adds a 100-foot service wing to the east side of the villa. The addition contains a kitchen, smokehouse and other service rooms.
- 1816 Jefferson begins bringing several grandchildren with him when visiting Poplar Forest. His granddaughters Ellen and Cornelia Randolph are his most frequent companions.
- 1823 Thomas Jefferson makes his last trip to Poplar Forest, settling his grandson, Francis Eppes and his wife, Elizabeth, on the property.

- 1826 Thomas Jefferson dies on July 4; he bequeaths 1,074 acres of the plantation to Francis Eppes.
- 1828 Francis Eppes sells Poplar Forest to a local man, William Cobbs.
- 1841 William Cobb's daughter, Emma, marries Edward S. Hutter; the couple takes up residence at Poplar Forest with her parents.
- 1845 After a devastating fire, the Cobbs-Hutter family rebuilds Jefferson's villa as a farmhouse in the Greek Revival style.
- 1865 The Civil War ends; the 13th Amendment abolishes slavery in the United States. Poplar Forest is worked by tenant farmers.
- 1946 The Hutter family sells the property to James O. Watts, Jr., of Lynchburg, Virginia, who renovates the villa in the Colonial Revival style.
- 1979 The Watts family puts the house and surrounding 50 acres up for sale.
- 1980 Dr. James A. Johnson, the last private owner of Poplar Forest, purchases the property.
- 1984 The nonprofit Corporation for Jefferson's Poplar Forest purchases the house and 50 acres of surrounding land, initiating the rescue of the National Historic Landmark.
- 1984 250 additional acres of the original estate are purchased.
- 1989 The restoration of Thomas Jefferson's villa begins with stabilization.
- 1990 The archaeological investigation to find out what the villa and ornamental grounds at Poplar Forest should look like begins.
- 1995-96 The restoration of the original brickwork begins; the roof over the central room, including Jefferson's 16-foot skylight, is reconstructed.
- 1998 Exterior work reestablishes, for the first time since 1846, the true appearance and character of Jefferson's villa.

- 2000 Restoration of the Wing of Offices begins.
- 2004 By this time, The Corporation for Jefferson's Poplar Forest has acquired a total of 617 acres of Jefferson's original plantation holdings.
- 2008 Poplar Forest makes the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List.
- 2009 The Wing of Offices is completed; the full exterior of the Poplar Forest villa is returned to its Jefferson-era appearance.
- 2010 Restoration of the interior finishes (trimwork) begins.
- 2014 The Poplar Forest Parkway project begins with an exhaustive archaeological survey and the launch of a major capital campaign; construction gets underway in March 2021.
- 2021 Restoration of the ornamental landscape on the north side of the villa is complete, returning it to its Jefferson-era appearance.
- 2022 Restoration of the interior finishes is complete, including all entablatures and ornaments in the dining room, and the parlor entablatures.
- 2022 Poplar Forest's new 2.2-mile entrance, the Poplar Forest Parkway and trail system open to the public.

New interpretive exhibits along the Poplar Forest Parkway and at the Jefferson-era Quarter Site enhance the story of the enslaved men, women and children who lived and labored at Poplar Forest.