



THOMAS JEFFERSON'S *Poplar Forest*



## Poplar Forest and Monticello

*"While at Monticello I am so much engrossed by business or society that I can only write on matters of strong urgency. Here I have leisure, as I have every where the disposition to think of my friends."*

- **Thomas Jefferson**

December 5, 1811 [Age 68]

The rescue and restoration of Poplar Forest is integral to understanding Thomas Jefferson: a private retreat for the private man, situated far from the public scrutiny and demands of his time.

With his home at Monticello "considered as among the curiosities of the neighborhood," Poplar Forest became Jefferson's escape. His granddaughter Ellen Wayles Randolph Coolidge recollected, "My grandfather was very happy during these sojourns in a comparatively simple and secluded district—far from the noise and news—of both of which he got too much at Monticello...."

Using an odometer attached to his carriage, Jefferson measured the distance between Monticello and Poplar Forest at ninety-three miles. Poplar Forest was three days by carriage and two days by horseback from Monticello.

Activity at Poplar Forest and Monticello—agriculture, house construction and industry—was strongly linked. Wagons and carts carried goods back and forth between the two plantations for twenty years. Enslaved workers were sent to Monticello to learn a skill and then returned to Poplar Forest.

Poplar Forest supplied Monticello with butter, milk, meat, grains, peaches and other fruits. Livestock was often fattened at Poplar Forest and then driven to Monticello for butchering.

When British troops sought Jefferson, then Governor of Virginia, at Monticello in June 1781, he escaped with his family to Poplar Forest. While there he worked on *Notes on the State of Virginia*, his only book.

The first item in Jefferson's will was the bequest of Poplar Forest to his grandson Francis Eppes. Jefferson is buried at Monticello.

"I think you can feel Jefferson more at Poplar Forest. People who know and appreciate Jefferson need to visit Poplar Forest because it is the counterpoint to Monticello and the University of Virginia, and even the Virginia State Capitol. It's like only reading a person's public letters but not reading their private journal. That's the value of Poplar Forest."

- **Steve Thomas, The History Channel**

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