



DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Virginia's Capitol Front Door Gets A New Look ~ Historic Stairs Temporarily Removed to Make Way for Extension ~

RICHMOND, VA – Starting on Monday, August 16 the process of removing the historic stairs located on the south side of the Capitol will begin.

Work crews contracted by the Virginia Department of General Services will begin on Monday removing the almost 100-year-old stairs located on the south side of Virginia's Capitol building. The temporary removal of the stairs will allow construction of a 25,000 square foot underground extension to begin. The light posts and capstones on the walls located on both ends of the steps will be removed first. On the afternoon of Wednesday, August 18, removal of the granite sections which comprise the actual steps will start. The entire process will take approximately two weeks.

Made of granite, the 24 steps will be removed in sections. Each portion is estimated to weigh about 1,400 pounds and it is expected for there to be more than 250 pieces. Using a special type of tape and a numbering system, chips in the granite stairs were marked and recorded. The numbering system notes the order of the stone blocks which form the stairs. The granite blocks will be loaded on wooden pallets and stored temporarily off-site. Any chips, irregularities or damage will be repaired.

Construction of the Capitol building began in 1785, but the expansive stairs on the south portico were not part of the original construction. Originally designed by Thomas Jefferson, Virginia's Capitol building became fully functional as the seat of government in 1789. Although, Thomas Jefferson desired stairs to be built to the original structure, the present stairs were not installed until about 120 years later. As Jefferson wrote in his memoirs in 1821, he was not entirely pleased with the way the Capitol building looked in 1789, noting there were "some variations, not for the better, the most important of which, however, admit of future correction." Significant renovations to Virginia's Capitol occurred from 1904-to-1906 when the south portico stairs and the east and west wings were added. These renovations to the Capitol were designed by a University of Virginia trained architect named John Kevan Peebles.

Although the front stairs are being removed, employees and the visiting public will still have secure access on the west side of the Capitol. To learn more about Virginia's Capitol Restoration and Extension Project log on to www.VirginiaCapitol.gov. To find out more about the other renovation and construction projects in Capitol Square go to the related links page and click on *Capitol Square Improvements* or log on directly at www.DGS.virginia.gov.

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