



THOMAS JEFFERSON'S

Poplar Forest

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**Mr. Jefferson's Salon Series Returns to Poplar Forest with
a Look at Religious Freedom: Now and in Jefferson's Time**
September 22

Forest, VA: Mr. Jefferson's Salon Series returns to Poplar Forest on Thursday, September 22 at 6:30 p.m. to explore America's first freedom. This frank and illuminating discussion will look at what freedom of religion meant to the Founding Father, who drafted the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom in 1777; trace the evolving relationship of church and state from Jefferson's day to our own; and consider why the statute continues to be relevant today. Join University of Virginia law and religion professor Douglas Laycock, one of the nation's leading authorities on the laws of religious liberty; Andrew Seidel, an attorney with the Freedom from Religion Foundation; and award-winning author, lawyer and historian John Ragosta inside Thomas Jefferson's retreat, as they present their perspectives on the topic and engage the audience in conversation. The program concludes with a reception of wine and light hors d'oeuvres.

Much like the salons Jefferson himself attended in France, these salons are designed to encourage the exchange of ideas on issues or topics that were of interest or a challenge to Jefferson in his time and on why they continue to matter today. For this second Salon Series program, "Religious Freedom: Now and in Jefferson's Time," Poplar Forest has invited three prominent experts on religious liberty law to join Jeffery Nichols, Poplar Forest's President & CEO, in setting the stage for the conversation.

John Ragosta's first two books—*Wellspring of Liberty: How Virginia's Religious Dissenters Helped to Win the American Revolution & Secured Religious Liberty* and *Religious Freedom: Jefferson's Legacy, America's Creed*—focus on the development and meaning of religious freedom in the United States. Professor Ragosta has taught history and international law at the University of Virginia and George Washington University, and history at Hamilton College, Randolph College and Oberlin College. He has been awarded fellowships by the International Center for Jefferson Studies at Monticello and the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities.



One of the nation's leading authorities on the law of religious liberty, Douglas Laycock has taught law and religion for over 30 years—at the University of Michigan Law School, University of Texas and University of Chicago before joining the faculty of the University of Virginia in 2010. The 2009 winner of the national First Freedom Award from the Council for America's First Freedom, Professor Laycock has argued many cases



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before the courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court, and frequently testified before Congress. His books include the recently published *Religious Liberty, Volume I: Overviews and History* and *Volume II: The Free Exercise Clause*, the first two volumes of a four-volume series, and the leading casebook *Modern American Remedies*. Professor Laycock has written numerous articles on religious liberty for leading law reviews and served as co-editor of a collection of essays, *Same-Sex Marriage and Religious Liberty*.

The author of a book on international human rights law, Andrew Seidel serves as a constitutional consultant for the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), a national membership organization established to promote the constitutional principle of the separation of church and state. Mr. Seidel graduated from Tulane University with a BS in neuroscience and environmental science and magna cum laude from Tulane University Law School, where he was awarded the Haber J. McCarthy Award for excellence in environmental law. He studied human rights and international law at the University of Amsterdam, and completed his Master of Laws at Denver University Sturm College of Law in 2011. His 2010 essay on the role of religion in government earned second place in FFRF's graduate student essay contest.



Mr. Jefferson's Salon, "Religious Freedom: Now and in Jefferson's Time," will take place at Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest at 1542 Bateman Bridge Road, Forest, Virginia, on Thursday, September 22 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. For directions, please visit poplarforest.org/visit/directions.

Reservations are suggested due to limited space inside the house and can be made by calling the Museum Shop at 434.534.8120. Admission is \$15 for adults (ages 18 and up) and \$10 for college students (must show ID).

For more information about Mr. Jefferson's Salon, or to view a complete calendar of events, visit poplarforest.org/events.

Pictured (top to bottom): John Ragosta, award-winning author, historian and lawyer; Douglas Laycock, professor of law and religion at the University of Virginia; and Andrew Seidel, human rights lawyer.

High-resolution images are available upon request; please contact Susan Morgan.

About Poplar Forest

One of only two homes Thomas Jefferson designed for his personal use, the Poplar Forest retreat was the place where Jefferson "came to indulge in the life of the mind and renew his personal creativity." Jefferson and his wife, Martha, inherited the Bedford County plantation known as Poplar Forest from her father in 1773. When his presidency ended in 1809, Jefferson visited the retreat three or four times a year, often staying for several months at a time during planting seasons.

Designated a National Historic Landmark by the Secretary of the Interior, and nearly lost to development, Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest plantation in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains was rescued in 1984 by a group of local citizens who sought to preserve it for the cultural and educational benefit of the public. Poplar Forest was opened to the public for the first time in 1986, in its "before restoration" state. Today, the neoclassical architecture of the octagonal

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house has been returned to Mr. Jefferson's design. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has recognized the meticulous research and restoration efforts with its highest award, and the plantation has been nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A visit to Poplar Forest offers a unique opportunity to observe a "live" archaeological dig and historic restoration in progress, as efforts to reveal and restore Thomas Jefferson's vision for his personal retreat continue.

Poplar Forest is open winter weekends starting January 16 through March 13 from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. (last tour leaving at 3:00 p.m.). Poplar Forest will be open daily starting March 14 through December 30 (closed on Easter, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day) from 10:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Admission includes a guided house tour and self-guided exploration of exhibits in the lower level of the house, the wing of offices, the ornamental grounds and the slave quarter site. Guided tours of the octagonal house begin at 10:00 a.m. and run every half hour, with the last tour of the day beginning at 4:00 p.m.

Admission is \$15 for adults; \$13 for seniors (ages 65+) and active military (must show ID); \$7 for college students (must show ID) and youth ages 12–18; \$3 for youth ages 6–11; and free for members and children under age 6. Admission for members of the military and their families is free (with ID) starting Memorial Day through Labor Day as part of the Blue Star Museums programs. Tours for groups of 20 or more are available by appointment at a discounted rate.

For more information about Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest, visit poplarforest.org or call 434.525.1806.

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