

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **NOV 22 1983**
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Norwich Town Hall

and/or common Norwich City Hall

2. Location

street & number Junction Union Street and Broadway 2nd N/A not for publication

city, town Norwich N/A vicinity of

state Connecticut code 09 county New London code 011

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name City of Norwich

street & number City Hall, 100 Broadway

city, town Norwich N/A vicinity of state Connecticut 06360

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Norwich City Hall

street & number 100 Broadway

city, town Norwich state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1983 federal state county local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission

city, town 59 South Prospect St., Hartford state Connecticut

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Norwich Town Hall is a monumental red brick Second Empire building located in a prominent position on Jail Hill dominating Norwich's downtown core (Photograph #1). Norwich is a small industrial city at the head of the Thames Valley. Traditionally Norwich has served as a commercial center for eastern Connecticut.

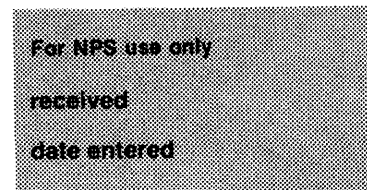
The building was designed by the local architectural firm of Burdick & Arnold and the work was superintended by Evan Burdick. The woodwork was executed by Gilbert L. Congdon and the masonry by Joseph A. Smith. The furniture was made to order by N. Gilbert & Sons of Norwich.¹ A wing was added to the rear c. 1909 by local architect Charles H. Preston.

This asymmetrically massed building is constructed in the shape of an L. The oldest section of the building fronts on Union Square and dates 1870-1873 and an early twentieth century wing executed in the same style as the main block was added to the rear c. 1909. The town hall's main block is nine bays wide and three stories tall. It stands on a raised basement of dressed granite blocks and the body of the building is constructed of red pressed brick laid in common bond. Elaborate granite trim and profuse ornament typical of this period and style of construction enhances the facade. The whole structure is crowned by a magnificent slate tile mansard roof. A central pavilion five bays wide projects from the main facade and on the southeast corner of the building stands an elaborate tower. The entrance is located on the first floor in the center of the projecting pavilion and is reached by a broad flight of stairs. The entry porch is three bays wide with a flat roof supported by scrolled brackets. The banded porch columns are separated by arches. The broad segmental arch framing the entry is flanked by two smaller round-headed arches. A richly ornamented iron balustrade stretches around the porch and forms a rail for the stairs. The rail makes a graceful curve at the bottom of the flight and documentary photographs show that it once extended around both side elevations of the building. The present rail was recast from sections of the original rail and was installed recently by the city of Norwich. The entry is massive with double doors, sidelights and a three-part transom. A broad segmental arch granite lintel with a keystone defines its vast height. Flanking the porch are segmental arched windows with robust granite lintels and a central keystone. On the first floor on either side on the pavilion are paired windows with three-sided polygonal heads with incised granite lintels. The fenestration of the second floor of the pavilion echoes the round-headed arches of the porch below. Three tall narrow windows are set above the entry and these are flanked by two wider windows of equal height. Smooth granite lintels with keystones enhance the elongated appearance of these windows. Paired segmental arch windows with incised granite lintels flank the pavilion on the second floor. Horizontal granite bands mark the division between the floors. Offices on the mezzanine are illuminated by paired windows with three-sided polygonal heads located in the main block flanking the pavilion. The heavily molded cornice is supported by paired curved brackets joined by a frieze of alternating circular and polygonal recessed panels.

The mansard roof is complex in design and ornamental motifs are liberally used. The roof is capped by a delicately molded cornice supported by small scrolled brackets. A massive dormer is centered above the entrance. The broad round arch of the dormer roof is outlined by a molded cornice supported by curved brackets and is defined by panelled pilasters which flank six round-headed arch windows. The incised granite lintels join the six windows. The dormer is surmounted by a plinth flanked by scrolled brackets. The square corner tower has a taller mansard than the main block and round-headed arch windows illuminate the attic. A panelled frieze is located below the cornice of the second stage. The second stage of the tower is formed by the clock. The second stage is square in section with

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clock faces in octagonal surrounds facing the four compass points. The corner pilasters of the second stage are enriched by recessed panels. Urns are set on the four corners of the second stage and turnip-shaped finials surmounted by smaller turnip-shaped drops point skyward. The third stage consists of an octagonal belfry. Narrow segmental arch windows alternate with banded pilasters. The peaked roof is finished with a bulbous turned finial.

The east elevation of the town hall faces Broadway (Photograph #2). The main block is eleven bays deep and three stories tall while the 1909 addition is six bays deep and two stories tall. The four central bays on the main block are recessed as are the six bays of the rear wing. Single, paired and triple windows are all used with a variety of surrounds on this facade and the patterns formed by the window groupings do much to enhance the texture of the facade. The cornice treatment throughout the building is consistent with that of the main facade, providing a unifying factor for a building with such variety of ornament and such an asymmetrical plan. Two inconspicuous entrances are located at the basement level. On the mansard a large square dormer is located above the three central bays of the main block. Paired pilasters mark the corners of the dormers. Rosettes surmount the pilasters and the dormer cornice is an extension of the main cornice. The broad plain frieze is set above four round-headed arches. A fine pediment with a robustly scrolled parapet and ball finials distinguishes the dormer. Smaller segmental arch dormers with panelled pilasters flank the square dormer. The smaller dormers have paired round-headed arch windows. The 1909 wing has a dormer similar to that of the main facade.

The Union Street elevation boasts an impressive trabeated entrance. The double doors have oval lights in their upper panels and the iron balustrade adds to the monumental quality of the entrance (Photographs #3 & 3A). The molded rail is supported by fluted balusters with scrolled bulbous foliate motifs. The massive newel post is panelled with a band of beading around the base. The fenestration of the Union Street facade differs from that of the main facade and the Broadway facade. The main block of the Union Street facade, like that of the Broadway facade, consists of single, paired and triple windows set in a variety of surrounds and arranged in a harmonious way while the fenestration of the 1909 rear wing is irregular. This apparent inconsistency is camouflaged by the fact that the 1909 wing is set well back from the street on a different plane from the main block. Surmounting the main block is another massive dormer, of yet a different design than those on the main facade and the Broadway facade. The dormer has a flat top with flared sides reminiscent of Egyptian Revival design. A pair of round-headed arch triple windows are set within the dormer.

On the interior the town hall retains much of its original appearance. The main entrance is particularly grand. The entry opens onto a vestibule of modest proportions. The side lights of the vestibule have glass panes set above panels with lunetted corners and roundels set within the lunettes. The double doors leading into the hall have arched lights set above similar panels. The central hall runs about one-third the depth of the building where it intersects with another corridor which runs from the Broadway elevation to the Union Street elevation. The central hall near the entrance is panelled with tongue and groove wainscot and eight-panel doors with transoms open off the hall at regular intervals. On the left side of the hall is a memorial commemorating the Seventh Regiment's visit to Norwich on July 10, 1868 (Photograph #4). The certificate commemorating the visit is set in an elaborate carved walnut frame with gilded and incised decoration. The arched frame is surmounted by crossed flags set behind a shield. Above the shield stands an eagle

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with its wings outstretched. Colonettes with Ionic capitals support plinths with urn-shaped finials. Carved figures of war and peace flank the colonettes. Below the certificate is a painting of the muster held in Norwich in 1868.

Off the transverse corridor running between Union Street and Broadway is the broad main stairway, set just to the west of the central corridor's junction with the transverse corridor. To the east of the main stair is another corridor running parallel to the east wall giving access to the 1909 wing. This corridor gives on the back stairs which serve the 1909 wing.

The basement plan is similar to that of the first floor in that it has a transverse corridor, however no entrance or corridor opens onto Union Square. A second transverse corridor is located in the 1909 wing with access via Broadway. The 1909 wing and the main block are not connected by a central corridor, and access can only be gained by going through the offices that lie behind the main stairway.

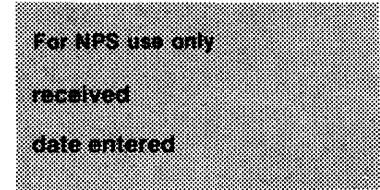
The front section of the second floor is divided by a transverse corridor. To the south of the corridor is the superior court room which looks out on Union Square. Just to the east of the main stair is a corridor leading to the 1909 wing, including the council chamber.

The mezzanine, because of the height of the ceilings in the superior court room, the council chamber and the other offices on the second floor, is confined to a rather small space. The transverse corridor runs only from the east stairwell to the main stairs and three small offices, one in the tower, and one each off the landing of the east stairwell and the main stairwell are the only open spaces on the floor.

Throughout the building the original pressed tin ceilings have survived and many of the ornate plaster ceiling medallions still grace the main corridors. Much of the original hardware (elaborate brass hinges, knobs, and ecutcheons, with raised foliate designs) is still in place. Although the furnishings of most of the offices have been modernized much of the original furniture remains in the building. The walnut Renaissance Revival chairs found throughout the building are probably those ordered from N.S. Gilbert's shop when the building was constructed. The dramatically curved main staircases with their turned balusters and panelled newels are another fortunate survival (Photograph #5). Least changed of all the interiors in the building are those of the court rooms and town hall. The present superior court room is marvelously well preserved. Leather-covered doors give access to a cavernous room at the front of the building with a high coved ceiling sheathed in pressed tin worked in a panel design. A lacey cutwork medallion is located in the center of the ceiling. Tall narrow windows illuminate the space from behind the judge's bench. The pine woodwork contrasts with the light walls and ceiling and panelled wainscot encircles the room. The massive judge's bench is of walnut with carved gilded columns on the ends and burl panels (Photograph #6). A walnut rail with bulbous turned balusters and newels divides the judge's bench from the public seating. Some walnut benches with trefoil cutouts and curved arms are set near the front of the room. A stepped platform with simpler benches fills the rest of the room. The council chamber in the 1909 wing is much less ornate room. The room is panelled in tongue and groove wainscot and a rail similar to that in the superior court room divides the room. The plain pine

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benches are contemporary with the wing, but the judge's bench is of more recent date.

¹For a contemporary description of the main block see John W. Stedman, Stedman's Directory of the City and Town of Norwich (Norwich: Norwich Printing Co., 1874).

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
..... prehistoric	..... archeology-prehistoric	..... community planning	..... landscape architecture	..... religion
..... 1400-1499	..... archeology-historic	..... conservation	..... law	..... science
..... 1500-1599	..... agriculture	..... economics	..... literature	..... sculpture
..... 1600-1699	XX architecture	..... education	..... military	..... social/
..... 1700-1799	..... art	..... engineering	..... music	..... humanitarian
XX 1800-1899	..... commerce	..... exploration/settlement	..... philosophy	..... theater
..... 1900-	..... communications	..... industry	XX politics/government	..... transportation
		..... invention		..... other (specify)

Criteria A & C

Specific dates	Builder/Architect
1870-1873	Burdick and Arnold

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Norwich Town Hall is significant in Norwich history because it has served as the seat of municipal and township government and as a county courthouse since its construction in the early 1870s (Criterion A). The Norwich Town Hall is probably the finest intact Second Empire town hall in the state (Criterion C).

The present Norwich Town Hall is a successor to an earlier courthouse. On April 24, 1865, a town meeting was held to discuss petitioning the state legislature to make Norwich the sole shire town of the county. At the same meeting a committee was appointed to select a suitable site for county and town purposes to replace the courthouse which had recently been destroyed by fire. The action of the legislature was adverse to the town's petition, but the citizens of Norwich continued to work towards the construction of a new courthouse in their town. Finally the General Assembly of 1869 passed an act giving the City of Nor-¹wich, New London County, and the Town of Norwich the power to combine to erect a building.

Early in 1870 a site was selected for the multi-purpose building. It should be noted that the courthouse functions for New London County have traditionally been shared by courthouses in New London and in Norwich. This dual courthouse system is unique in the state and has been successful as evidenced by plans to build new dual facilities in the future.²

A plan of the City of Norwich³ shows that prior to the erection of the Norwich Town Hall that the area was residential. The prominent site was a natural one for the committee to choose. Located at the junction of Union Street and Broadway facing Union Square, the site had the advantage of height and impressive neighbors. The hilly, rocky terrain of Norwich lends itself to the monumental quality of the Norwich Town Hall. The steep hill rising north from Union Square forms a sheer cliff northwest to the town hall site. From the hill, the ground falls either gradually or steeply away from the town hall site, making it the natural focus of attention when approaching the town from the south. The brick Greek Revival public library (c. 1843) facing north on Union Square in the fork of Broadway and Church Street, and the Broadway and Congregational Church (1855-1857) at the junction of Broadway and Chestnut Street were distinguished neighbors at the time the town hall was built.

By 1870 Norwich is said to have had more millionaires per capita than any other city in the state. The Norwich Town Hall represented one of Norwich's major late nineteenth-century building projects. It was designed by the local architectural firm of Burdick and Arnold and built by local contractor John W. Murphy.⁴ In 1870, when construction of the town hall was begun, Norwich's population was 16,653, up from 14,047 in 1860.⁵ Norwich was the fourth largest city in the state, boasting several textile mills, the Richmond Stove Company, and Hopkins & Allen, manufacturers of pistols, as some of the city's major employers and by 1876 two suburbs of the city had been established, and with the suburbs, the town's first street car line.⁶ When the town hall was completed in late 1873, the local paper reported that its cost had totalled \$315,000, a staggering sum for that period.⁷ The land cost totalled \$30,000, and the building \$250,000, with an additional

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property approximately 1 acre

Quadrangle name Norwich

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	8	7	4	3	5	6	0	4	6	0	1	1	2	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

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D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kate Ohno, Preservation Consultant - edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

organization Connecticut Historical Commission date January 8, 1983

street & number 59 South Prospect Street telephone (203) 566-3005

city or town Hartford state Connecticut 06106

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

date November 18, 1983

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


Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date

12/22/83

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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\$35,000 being paid in interest. The main block of the building, the paper reported, rose 58 feet in height and was dominated by an 87-foot tower. Construction on the town hall began in 1870 when the foundation was prepared by contractor John Murphy.⁸ The following spring, preparation of granite for the basement was put in hand by local stone cutter Joseph A. Smith.⁹ Smith is thought to have supervised the masons erecting the basement, but the bulk of the masonry work is said to have been done by masons from Philadelphia. Pressed bricks used in construction of the town hall were purchased from a Philadelphia firm, and masons skilled in using these bricks were imported at the same time.¹⁰ The tower is built on a frame of galvanized iron, and a large fireproof vault was an important feature of the tower.¹¹ The tower was also originally fitted with a bell, clock, and fire alarm made by the Howard Clock Company.¹² Mayor James Lloyd Greene devised a way of illuminating the clock face which is said to have been used in other cities.¹³ Thus, the town hall design incorporated several technical innovations recently come into use in the construction of public buildings.

Not the least of these innovations was the installation of a steam heating system utilizing boilers built by Baker Smith and Co. of New York.¹⁴ The plumbing and heating system was installed by the local firm of Pierce and Bard, Coppersmiths. The firm had begun in Norwich in 1829 under the title of Pierce & Roberts and in the year that construction of the town hall was begun, George F. Bard became a full partner in the firm, which flourished in Norwich until at least 1890.¹⁵

The interior appointments of this grand building were not neglected. G.L. Congdon, a local carpenter, produced the handsome woodwork. The floors installed were of yellow pine and the rest of the interior trim was executed in chestnut or black walnut. The Renaissance Revival furniture constructed for the building, much of which survives, was made by Nathan S. Gilbert of Norwich, the founder of the Gilbert Furniture Company. Gilbert's furniture factory was located at the corner of Chestnut and Willow streets. Tradition maintains that the courthouse furniture was made of logs brought from New York City by boat and sawn and cured in Norwich. A water closet on every floor was also included in the building's design.¹⁶

In early 1873 the finishing touches were put on the building and by June the police were able to occupy their offices in the basement.¹⁷ The first town meeting was held in the council chambers on November 3, 1873.¹⁸ From then on the functions of both the town and the city were carried out from the town hall, as well as half of the county court functions. Within a quarter of a century the dazzling facilities of the town hall were found to be inadequate. In 1905 the first step was taken to provide additional court facilities and on June 13, 1907, the General Assembly passed an act empowering the county commissioners, the City of Norwich and the Town of Norwich to erect an addition to the town hall to be used by all three governmental bodies.¹⁹ The architect of the new wing was Charles H. Preston of Norwich.²⁰ Preston was listed in the Norwich City directories before 1888 as a carpenter, and from 1888 until 1917 as an architect.²¹ The wing was erected c. 1909.²²

Except for minor improvements and repairs, the town hall stands today much as it did in the early twentieth century. Although the county court system has been taken over by the state, the building's courtrooms continue to be used in much the same way that they always have. The Town of Norwich and the City of Norwich still maintain offices in the building.

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End Notes

¹D. Hamilton Hurd, ed. History of New London County, Connecticut (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis & Co., 1882) pp. 317-318.

²Historic Resources Inventory, Connecticut Historical Commission, Norwich City Hall and Courthouse by John Plummer, January 1981.

³Plan of the City of Norwich, New London County, Connecticut, n.d., n.p. in the Town Clerk's Office in Norwich Town Hall shows a series of what appear to be dwellings on the corner now occupied by town hall.

⁴John W. Stedman, Stedman's Directory of the City and Town of Norwich (Norwich: Norwich Printing Co., 1874).

⁵Stedman, Directory of Norwich.

⁶The Day (New London), May 14, 1976.

⁷Norwich Bulletin (Norwich), November 24, 1974, quotes extensively from page 8 of the Norwich Weekly Courier of October 16, 1873, hereinafter cited as Norwich Bulletin, "Remember Back When?"

⁸Henry R. Armstrong, History of Courthouses and Jails in New London County (n.p. 1960).

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Norwich Bulletin, "Remember Back When?"

¹¹Stedman, Directory of Norwich.

¹²Norwich Bulletin, "Remember Back When?"

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Leading Businessmen of Norwich and Vicinity, Boston: Mercantile Publishing Co., 1890, 53.

¹⁶Stedman, Directory of Norwich.

¹⁷Armstrong, New London Co. Courthouses and Jails.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

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²⁰Original blueprints of the Town Hall c. 1907, now in the possession of the City of Norwich Director of Public Works' Office list Preston as the architect. The blueprints include the Broadway elevation and the basement and first story plans.

²¹Stedman, Directory of Norwich 1888-1917.

²²Historic Resources Inventory, Norwich City Hall and Courthouse.

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and Courthouse by John Plummer, January 1981.

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Leading Businessmen of Norwich and Vicinity, Boston: Mercantile Publishing Co., 1890.

Norwich Bulletin (Norwich), November 24, 1974.

Stedman, John W., Stedman's Directory of the City and Town of Norwich, Norwich: Norwich
Printing Co., 1861-1917.

Primary Source Material

Plan of the City of Norwich, New London County, Connecticut, n.d., n.p. available at
the Town Clerk's Office in Norwich Town Hall.

Original blueprints of the Town Hall c. 1907, available at the office of the City of
Norwich's Director of Public Works. The blueprints include the Broadway elevation,
the basement and first story plans.

Norwich town Hall
1" = 200'

