

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

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

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Historic Downtown Hartford
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Footguard Hall

Description

Footguard Hall is a rectangular brick and brownstone building of 75 x 150 feet facing east on High Street at the northwest corner of High Street and Footguard Place. The structure consists of two parts. The front part houses offices and meeting rooms, and is the source of chief architectural interest for the building. The rear part, much larger, is a simple, utilitarian drill and meeting hall, with high gable roof.

The front of Footguard Hall is dominated by a central, square, 3-story tower with pyramidal roof. Two-story, stepped back sections flank the tower. The tower and flanking sections have identical parapets, ramped at the corners, at their roof lines that serve as a unifying design element for the three sections of the building.

The two flanking sections have large, round-arched apertures in their second stories, each divided by three brick mullions into four tall, narrow windows. Beneath them, at the first floor, are four tall, narrow, rectangular windows. This 2-story scheme of fenestration reads as a unit, although on the north the lower halves of the first-floor windows have been lost to alterations. The round arches of the apertures in the flanking sections are repeated on three sides of the 1-story, flat-roofed porch that projects from the central section of the building and is approached by broad brownstone steps. Above the porch there are three windows in the second floor and in the third floor of the central tower, with 12-pane transoms above the third-floor windows.

While the chief building material is brick, the brownstone trim is important in the design of the building. The foundation walls are quarry-faced ashlar, with dressed water table. The sills of the first-story windows extend as a belt course that continues into the porch. There are additional smooth belt courses below the brick dentil courses at the roof lines of the flanking sections, the porch and the central tower.

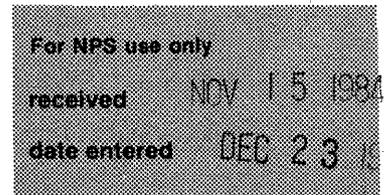
Significance - Criteria A and C

Criterion A - History

Footguard Hall houses a military organization of long standing in the state. The First Company Governor's Footguard had not had an armory of its own prior to construction of this building in 1888, but it had been in existence since 1771, created by act of the General Assembly for the purpose of attending upon and guarding the Governor and the General Assembly. Members have seen active service in all wars over the centuries but now are primarily a ceremonial unit. There are also a Second Company Governor's Foot-

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guard based in New Haven and a First and Second Company Governor's Horse-guard.

The 1888 building was constructed on land purchased from the estate of Charles M. Pond, who bequeathed Elizabeth Park to the City. Building cost of \$60,000 was defrayed in part by a gift of \$5,000 from Junius S. Morgan, father of Hartford's most famous native son, J. P. Morgan. In the 1890s, Footguard Hall was advertised in city directories as the largest public hall between Boston and New York. In the 20th century it was used as a sports arena, to a limited degree, and now is largely unused except by the Footguard itself.

Criterion C - Architecture

Footguard Hall is an instructive example, in a good state of preservation, of late 19th century architectural styles adapted for a military use. The medieval or Romanesque influence is present in the imposing square tower and pyramidal roof and in the broad arch of the porch. The massing is simplified, however, showing regard for the current resurgence of interest in classical precedent. The large, round-arched windows appear to be Dioclesian in inspiration although they have three vertical mullions instead of the usual two. The absence of extensive exterior surface decoration also speaks to the developing taste of the times. Victorian busyness and Queen Anne detail do not appear in this building, in sharp contrast to what is found at the Judd & Root Building constructed only five years earlier two blocks south on the same street.

The office of John C. Mead drew the plans for Footguard Hall. John C. Mead (1840-1889) was a builder/architect. He had a shop turning out mill-work that employed 60 men and he employed architects. Footguard Hall was constructed the year before Mead's death at which time the chief designers in his office were Charles Cook and Melvin Hapgood. Melvin Hapgood was a well-trained, sensitive and innovative architect, and it is possible that Footguard Hall was the product of his drawing board. After Mead's death the firm continued as Cook, Hapgood & Co., then Hapgood & Hapgood, followed by Edward T. Hapgood and finally Cortlandt F. Luce. Mead's was one of the few 19th-century Hartford architectural firms to survive until well into the 20th century. Mead is probably best known for his extravagant Stick Style Vanderbilt Mansion at West Hill in West Hartford. Cortlandt F. Luce, Mead's final successor, did most of his Hartford area work in development of the Vanderbilt grounds as the West Hill subdivision, after the house was torn down in 1918.

Geographic Data

Acreage: Less than one acre
UTM Reference: 18/692820/4625580
Boundary: City map No. 12, parcel No. 244