

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED MAR 18 1981

DATE ENTERED

APR 27 1981

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Municipal Building

AND/OR COMMON

Municipal Building

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

550 Main Street

__NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Hartford

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

__ VICINITY OF

1st

STATE

Connecticut

CODE

COUNTY

Hartford

CODE

3 CLASSIFICATION**CATEGORY** DISTRICT BUILDING(S) STRUCTURE SITE OBJECT**OWNERSHIP** PUBLIC PRIVATE BOTH**PUBLIC ACQUISITION** IN PROCESS BEING CONSIDERED**STATUS** OCCUPIED UNOCCUPIED WORK IN PROGRESS**ACCESSIBLE** YES: RESTRICTED YES: UNRESTRICTED NO**PRESENT USE** AGRICULTURE COMMERCIAL EDUCATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT GOVERNMENT INDUSTRIAL MILITARY MUSEUM PARK PRIVATE RESIDENCE RELIGIOUS SCIENTIFIC TRANSPORTATION OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

City of Hartford

STREET & NUMBER

550 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Hartford

STATE

Connecticut

__ VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Hartford Land Records, Municipal Building

STREET & NUMBER

550 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Hartford

STATE

Connecticut

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

State Register of Historic Buildings

DATE

1981

 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR

SURVEY RECORDS Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

Hartford

STATE

Connecticut

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Main Street in Hartford, Connecticut, runs north and south parallel to, and several blocks west of, the Connecticut River. A row of properties that are open to the public lines the east side of Main Street from Atheneum Square North to Pulaski Mall (1973), including the Wadsworth Atheneum complex (1842-1968), the Burr Memorial (1969), the Municipal Building (1915), Hartford Public Library (1957), and the Federal Building (1961). (See map and Photo 1.) The Municipal Building, a four-story, oblong, granite structure in the middle of this grouping, is a Beaux-Arts design, conceived and executed in the grand manner of the classic revival by Davis and Brooks.

The plot on which the Municipal Building stands was from 1915 to 1969 a full city block measuring 147 feet along Main Street on the west and Prospect Street on the east, and 357 feet along Atheneum Street, South on the north and Arch Street on the south. In 1969 Atheneum Street, South was converted to the Burr Memorial mall, designed by Dan Kiley. The Municipal Building measures 112 by 246 feet, leaving a space of 68 feet between the west front and Main Street that is treated as a plaza with granite fountains (Photo 2) and, originally, with tall, ornamental light standards, now removed. There is a space of 48 feet between the east front and Prospect Street, treated as a terrace for vehicle entrance (Photo 3). The building contains 55 rooms and has 50,000 square feet of office space.

Chief feature of the plan of the building is a great central court, or atrium, 25 x 150 feet at the first floor that rises up through all the floors. (See floor plans attached.) The atrium is articulated on the exterior by a gabled roof of glass, with masonry pediments. Pavilions with hip roofs extend in the front toward Main Street and in the back toward Prospect Street below the atrium's gabled glass roof (Photo 4). On the exterior the first story is a rusticated arcade of round-arched windows over a heavily rusticated basement. The second and third stories are grouped by a Corinthian order of pilasters and engaged columns. The wall surface of the sides, between the front and rear pavilions, is delicately rusticated. A low attic forms the fourth story of the central section, continued as a balustrade over the pavilions (Photo 4). The most-used entrance, on the Main Street facade, is framed by Tuscan columns on high pedestals under a heavy frieze of triglyphs and roundels. Within this enframingent the eight-panelled, two-leaf, bronze doors are flanked by bronze, cable-fluted pilasters. There is an additional entrance on each side of the building, the three entrances being at different levels. The south (Arch Street) entrance is at basement level; the west (Main Street) entrance is between the basement and first floor; and the north (Burr Memorial) entrance is at first floor level. The Burr Memorial has provided a park-like approach to the north entrance that is notable for the presence of Stegosaurus by Alexander Calder, Jr. (Photo 5).²

The elegance of the central court on the interior is enhanced by the fact that it becomes wider at each floor (Photo 6). At the first story level pedestrian traffic is on the floor of the atrium. At the second floor circulation is over the vaults of the first floor along an open gallery while on the third floor circulation is further set back behind arcaded walls (Photo 7). As a consequence, there is less office space on each floor.

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The two upper stories of the atrium have a Corinthian order, as the exterior does, with pilasters separating the arches of an arcade. The ceiling of the atrium is segmental in shape, made up of 1,700 glass lights. The floor of the atrium contains sections of frosted glass that transmit natural light to the basement lobby area.

There are several elements of sculpture and painting in the atrium. The ceiling is terminated at each end by segmental coffered vaults, in the tympana of which are sculptured panels designed by Davis and Brooks and executed by Louis Even³ of allegorical scenes of local historic interest. The panel at the east end depicts, on the right side, a view of the river with a hart crossing the ford and, on the left side, the Indian giving away to the religious and agricultural civilization of the early English settlers (Photo 8). The panel at the west shows the Revolutionary War period, Liberty, and the development of commerce and manufacturing in the modern city. Additional sculpture by ^{an} unknown artist is present in reliefs in the panels of each bay along the sides between second and third floor that symbolize the various departments of city government. In painting, there are trompe l'oeil plaques, made to look like stone carving at the east and west ends, third floor, setting forth the dates and dignitaries associated with the construction of the building, by F. Norton Gessner of Wethersfield. On the first floor there are two murals by Walter O. R. Korder of West Hartford. One is a scene of the arrival of the Massachusetts Bay Colony bark, Blessing, at Dutch Point in Hartford in 1634. The other shows the construction of John Talcott's house in progress in 1635. Both the trompe l'oeil panels and the murals were painted in the 1930's as projects of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration's Works of Art Project. A further embellishment of the atrium wall, honoring Hartford's first mayor, Thomas Seymour, who served from 1784 to 1812, is a tablet reproducing the Seymour coat of arms in color designed by John Howard Benson of Newport, Rhode Island, executed in the John Stevens shop,⁴ installed November 20, 1944, and dedicated June 20, 1945, the gift of a committee headed by Newton C. Brainard.

The grand staircase for the building is in a semi-elliptical space on the north side of the atrium. The marble stairs rise in a graceful curve and with a fine brass railing from the entrance off the Burr Memorial to the third floor where Corinthian columns are carried across the open space (Photo 7).

There are two rooms of architectural importance, on the second floor. One is the Mayor's Reception Room or Function Room at the west end of the building; the other, at the east end, is now used by the Common Council but originally was the City Court. Both are two stories high. The walls of the Function Room, 35 feet square, are embellished by a richly decorated Ionic order rising from a pedestal that serves as wainscoting. The canopy ceiling

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is a flat elliptical dome. The north and south walls have identical Adamesque fireplaces with large panelled and mirrored surrounds (Photo 9). The color scheme of white woodwork (now cream colored) relieved in Wedgewood blue, with red carpet and drapes (the drapes no longer are red) was the color scheme of the national flag. The figure of an eagle appears in the pediments of the over-mantels and in the four corners of the rug. The seal of the City is woven into the center of the rug and is embossed in the leather transom over the leather doors of the entrance.

The City Court Room at the opposite end of the atrium is 37 by 58 feet with a rectangular recess at the north end for the bench and an elliptical recess opposite. There is a high wainscot with coupled Doric pilasters. The vaulted ceiling is penetrated by exterior arched window heads on the east while the opposite wall has corresponding panels.

Several mechanical systems were built into the structure. A small elevator was installed in each of the four corners of the atrium. Two of them still have their original bronze doors, flanked by narrow engaged, bronze columns with a raised foliate pattern that support an entablature with swags and central oval escutcheon bearing the incised letter H. The boilers for the hot water heating system were located under the Prospect Street terrace. An ambitious scheme of ductwork was installed throughout the building to convey fresh heated air to all rooms. Fresh air from an intake at the northeast corner was passed through banks of cast-iron heating coils that were filled with hot water, in the sub-basement (Photo 10). Used air was expelled through three fan rooms in the attic by six-foot-diameter fans. The noise and vibration of the fans proved to be so excessive that the entire scheme was used only for several days. The idea of circulating fresh air was abandoned, and the burden of heating the building fell on radiators placed along the exterior walls with the initial purpose of offsetting the chill from the windows. The radiators were controlled by a thermostat system operated by air pressure. The metal tubes for conveying the compressed air are still in the walls. Another device chilled water that was conveyed to four drinking fountains on each floor. The drinking fountains of marble with glazed, colored terra cotta surrounds are still in place, but without their metal works.

Other features included a central vacuum system with outlets (still there) conveniently placed throughout the building. There is a fire service standpipe in each corner of each floor. Stations for recording the rounds of the night watchman were located throughout the building. The watchman inserted his clock in the station thereby activating a central record-keeping

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device. Guardian lions in stone were placed at the Arch Street entrance (Photo 11). Behind the lions were doorways to public rest rooms that were open 24 hours a day. Pipes were fitted throughout the exterior walls to make it easy to install a wash stand or sink anywhere on the periphery of the building.

One of the more ambitious schemes was a bank of 360 150-watt bulbs above the atrium ceiling in space below the wire-glass roof for the purpose of lighting the atrium at night. Each bulb was, and still is, mounted in its own glass shade. The glass shades are silvered and painted, to act as reflectors without the use of metal (Photo 12).

While on the exterior white Bethel granite greets the eye of the beholder, and marble on the interior, the fact is that both exterior and interior bearing walls are built of brick; the granite and marble are facing. On the interior, above the first floor, the atrium is faced with a stone-like, concrete aggregate, at the time called kapailo, that resembles granite's grey color. This material is hygroscopic, becoming darker in color as it absorbs moisture. Adjoining blocks take on different shades of grey color. After a humid summer, when it once again dries out, the kapailo discharges a white powder in sufficient quantities to require that it be swept up. The floors of the building are carried on steel beams and terra cotta arches (fireproof construction). Public floors are marble or tile, office floors concrete. Window and door surround moldings are cast plaster, brought to the job and installed at the time the wall plaster was wet. The sash are wood and inside doors are mahogany. All rooms on the first three floors have coved ceilings. The hipped roofs of the pavilions are concrete slabs supported by steel trusses and covered with standing seam copper sheathing (now with a layer of bitumen) similar to the neighboring Morgan Memorial roof. The backs of the balustrade pedestals are sheathed in copper; and the exterior of the steel framework of the glass roof is sheathed in copper.

The interior bronze lighting fixtures and the metal and mahogany furniture were designed by the architects. One room that has served from the beginning as the Engineering Library, has the original gold leaf lettering on the door, and original mahogany table, chairs, bookcases, and cabinets.

A proposal was put forward at the end of World War II to use the adjoining area to the south, between Arch and Sheldon Streets, for municipal purposes. Robert J. Ross, City Engineer, prepared a plan⁵ showing a building on either side of the Park River conduit that runs between the two streets with a connecting building over the conduit, and the whole connected to the Municipal Building. This enlarged city government complex was intended to house the Police Department, the Health Department, and other City offices.

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The design of the new structures was sympathetic to the Beaux-Arts feeling of the Municipal Building. This scheme came to nothing, and the area was used starting in 1954 for the Hartford Public Library, Schutz and Goodwin, architects.

No major structural difficulties have developed over the years in the Municipal Building. The roof leaks and some of the mechanical systems have been updated. Partitions have been moved around and room functions have changed, but these are minor modifications and in all essential respects the building exists today as it did upon completion of construction in 1915.

1. The Wadsworth Atheneum was enrolled in the National Register of Historic Places on October 6, 1970.
2. The Burr Memorial park and Calder's Stegosaurus are not part of the Municipal Building site and are not included in this nomination.
3. Contemporary newspaper accounts refer to Even as a member of the firm of Even and Neumann or Neumann and Even. Hartford city directories list several Neumanns, artists, but do not list Even or the firm. Standard directories of sculptors do not list Even.
4. John Stevens established a shop at 29 Thames Street, Newport, Rhode Island, in 1705 specializing in stone carving and lettering. His descendants continued the shop until 1927. Thereafter it was renovated by John Howard Benson, and is still carried on today by his son who continues to execute fine lettering for stone buildings and monuments. The John F. Kennedy Memorial in Arlington Cemetery exhibits a demonstration of his craftsmanship. See Herzan, pp. 8, 52.
5. The Hartford Courant, March 4, 1945.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1911-1915

~~BUKODER~~ ARCHITECT

Brooks and Davis

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Municipal Building is significant in Hartford history because the seat of government has lodged there and decisions for the welfare and future of the city have been taken there since 1915 (Criterion A). Architecturally, the integrity of the building is unimpaired as an example of the type of design taught at Paris' Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts and widely employed in this country during the decade before and the two or three decades after the turn of the century (Criterion C).

In 1827 Hartford built a typical Greek Revival building as City Hall at the corner of Market and Kingsley streets. In 1879 City Hall was moved to the Old State House (1796, Charles Bulfinch) which became available because in that year the State of Connecticut occupied a New State House (Richard M. Upjohn). After the turn of the century the City Hall/Old State House was found to be too small; various departments of city government had to be located elsewhere around town; and pressure mounted for a new City Hall building.

As these developments occurred, J. Pierpont Morgan (1837-1913), a Hartford native, had given the Morgan Memorial addition to the Wadsworth Atheneum, the country's oldest public art museum. He became concerned that the land just south of the Morgan Memorial, to Arch Street, might be put to a use unsympathetic to the museum. He therefore made it possible for the museum to acquire two-thirds of the land, and give it to the City. The City purchased the other third. The plot in question was bordered on the north by the museum, on the east by Prospect Street, on the south by Arch Street, and on the west by Main Street. The eastern half was a single parcel with a single, long brick building. The western half, along Main Street, was three parcels with a dozen frame and brick buildings of various sizes and shapes. The museum acquired the eastern half and the northerly Main Street parcel February 2, 1910 (Hartford Land Records, vol. 345, p. 706). The City purchased the other two Main Street parcels February 6, 1911 (Hartford Land Records, vol. 356, p. 681) (\$85,000) and February 25, 1911 (361/286) (\$70,000). The museum conveyed its purchase to the City June 28, 1911 (361/686). This deed provided that the northerly portion of the land given was to be used for a public street, and the balance "for some worthy municipal building or for a public square, at the discretion of said City, but for no other use." This activity resulted in the expected effect, and newspaper accounts indicate that the Morgan gift of the land motivated the City to go ahead with a new City Hall at this location.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet.

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

UTM NOT VERIFIED

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY One

QUADRANGLE NAME Hartford North

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A

1	8	6	9	3	4	3	0	4	6	2	5	8	2	0
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B

1	8	6	9	3	4	2	0	4	6	2	5	7	9	0
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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

1	8	6	9	3	3	0	0	4	6	2	5	8	0	0
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D

1	8	6	9	3	3	2	0	4	6	2	5	8	5	0
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E

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F

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H

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is described in the Hartford Land Records, 356/681, 361/286, 361/686.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

David F. Ransom, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

DATE

July 8, 1979

STREET & NUMBER

33 Sunrise Hill Drive

TELEPHONE

203 521-2518

CITY OR TOWN

West Hartford

STATE

Connecticut

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

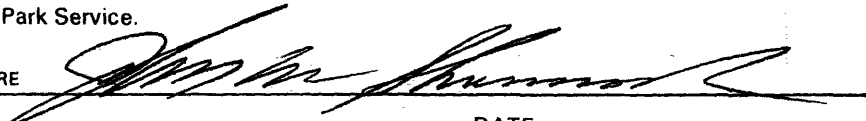
NATIONAL

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 March 4, 1981

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Delores Byers
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Entered in the
National Register

DATE

4/27/81

ATTEST:

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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A decision was made not to call the new building City Hall on the grounds that in the public consciousness City Hall was the Old State House. Therefore, the new structure was named the Municipal Building. In 1952 it was discovered that nowhere on the facade did the name appear, and the present 15 foot-high, gold-colored, steel lettering, "MUNICIPAL BUILDING," was installed at a cost of \$500.

At the time the new Municipal Building was contemplated John M. Carrère (1858 - March 1, 1911), was architectural consultant to the City. His firm of Carrère and Hastings completed a City Plan for Hartford in 1912, one of the earliest in the country. Carrère attended the Ecole des Beaux-Arts as did his partner, and they designed many buildings in that idiom, notably the New York Public Library (1897-1911). Carrère laid down the rules and conducted the competition for the Hartford Municipal Building. Even before the competition, however, tentative plans were prepared, presumably at his recommendation, by Brocklesby and Smith of Hartford. (William C. Brocklesby, 1848-1910, the son of a Trinity College professor, received his early training in the Upjohn office in New York. H. Hilliard Smith, 1871-1948, continued the firm's practice for several decades with Roy D. Bassette, 1883-1965). These initial plans set the style and general scheme for the new building. The date and other details concerning these initial plans are not at hand.

Soon thereafter the formal competition was conducted with the understanding that all entries would conform to the already agreed general outline. Only the Beaux-Arts, called "Georgian" by the protagonists, was acceptable. Such a position was then being taken from one end of the country to the other. Carrère no doubt felt that he was giving good advice, and the city fathers no doubt felt that they were making a sound decision in line with the best practice of the times. The absolute exclusion of any alternative style nonetheless is of some interest. The rationale for the style selection included reference to the city's heritage. It was said that Georgian was Hartford's characteristic and traditional style. The 19th century was ignored. Common features in the designs of the old City Hall (Old State House) and the Municipal Building were stressed, e.g., a rusticated basement supporting a first story with rusticated arcade surmounted by two stories coupled by a colossal order. The differences in plan, scale, and materials, and the great elaboration of architectural detail in the Municipal Building were not mentioned. Two competition designs included a lantern similar to that added to the Old State House, c. 1827.

Ten architects, or architectural firms, participated by invitation in the competition, six from Hartford and four from out of town. Their names and some of their principal work follow.

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Smith and Basette. Associated with Paul P. Cret (1876-1945) in the Connecticut Superior Court Building, 1929; drawings of this building were displayed at the 1976 Museum of Modern Art, New York, exhibition of Beaux-Arts drawings. The firm also did the Steiger Building, Main and Pratt Streets, 1926, the State Office Building, 165 Capitol Avenue, 1930, and rehabilitation of the Old State House, 1930.

Charles O. Whitmore (1857-1930). First Congregational Church Church House, corner of Gold and Lewis Streets, 1908. Lewis Fox House, corner of Fern Street and Prospect Avenue, 1905.

Francis E. Waterman (1878-1947). Graduated from the Columbia School of Architecture in 1904, was a member of the American Institute of Architects, and maintained offices in both Hartford and New York.

Davis and Brooks. Won award, as discussed below.

George Keller (1842-1935). Hartford County Jail, Seymns Street, 1873. Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Arch, Bushnell Park, 1882-84. Hartford Public High School, 1883, 1897. Garfield National Memorial, Cleveland, Ohio, 1885-1890.

Edward T. Hapgood (1866-1915). Scottish Union and National Insurance Company, 75 Elm Street, 1913. Rossia Insurance Company, Broad Street at Farmington Avenue, 1915. Simsbury High School, 1915.

Donn Barber (1871-1925), of New York. State Library and Supreme Court Building, 1906, Edward T. Hapgood, associated architect. Aetna Building, 18 Asylum Street, 1912. Travelers Insurance Companies, 1910.

LaFarge and Morris, of New York. Benjamin Wistar Morris (1870-1944) was the son-in-law of the Rev. Francis Goodwin who was president of the Wadsworth Atheneum Board of Trustees at the time. Morris designed a number of buildings in Hartford including the Colt, 1905, Avery, 1932, and Morgan, 1910, memorial buildings at the Atheneum. In New York one of his major works was the Cunard Building on lower Broadway, 1921.

Peabody, Stearns and Andrews, of Boston, successors to H. H. Richardson (the Cheney Block, Main Street, 1875) and architects of the Hartford Union Station, 1889.

Andrews, Jacques and Rantoul, of Boston. Robert Day Andrews (1857-1928) was a Hartford native. The firm designed the Hartford Club, 1903, and the East and West Wings of the Massachusetts State House, Boston, 1895-1913.

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The competition drawings, submitted with due anonymity, were subjected to a two-step review procedure. First, a jury consisting of Carrere, Cass Gilbert (1858-1934, G. Fox & Company, Main Street, Hartford, 1917; a complex of buildings in central Waterbury, Connecticut, 1913-1924), and H. Van Buren Magonigie (1867-1935, trained in the office of McKim, Mead and White, an artist as well as an architect, and designer of the seal of the American Institute of Architects). Again, only the influence of Beaux-Arts background and training was present in the jury. Second, the building commission examined the entries. Both the jury and the commission felt that the most suitable design was that submitted by Davis and Brooks of Hartford. The record shows that Palmer and Hornbostel of New York were associated with Davis and Brooks in the competition. It was not a new relationship, as Davis and Brooks had used the advice and counsel of Palmer and Hornbostel a year or two earlier in connection with their successful entry in the competition for the Broad Street addition to Hartford Public High School. For the Municipal Building, Davis and Brooks did the construction drawing and supervised the construction. (Original construction drawings are in the possession of the City Engineer.) It appears that the New York firm's role was limited to advice and counsel with respect to the competition drawings.

The award of the commission to Davis and Brooks was announced February 8, 1911. The cornerstone was laid July 9, 1912, and the building was dedicated November 4, 1915.

Davis and Brooks opened their office for the practice of architecture in New Britain, Connecticut in 1897, and removed to Hartford in 1900. F. Irvin Davis (1869-1944) was born in Wiscasset, Maine, attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was a member of the American Institute of Architects, and practiced with Brooks from 1897 to 1918, then withdrew and opened an insurance agency, but by 1924 established the Davis Travel Agency that continued for many years, and in the 1940's worked as a clerk at the Cushman Chuck Company. His contribution in general to the firm of Davis and Brooks, and specific influence, if any, on the design for the Municipal Building are unknown.

William F. Brooks (1872-1950) was born in New York City, attended the Columbia University School of Architecture and spent "two years abroad studying architecture," and worked in the New York office of Ernest Flagg (1857-1947), brother of Hartford artist, Charles Noel Flagg, graduate of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, architect for St. Luke's Hospital, Morningside Heights, New York, 1893, and Immanuel Congregational Church, Farmington Avenue and Woodland Street, Hartford, 1899. His education and training were in the proper Beaux-Arts mold of the times. The firm and then Brooks practicing by himself did a great deal of work in Hartford. They carried out an early example

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Municipal Building
Hartford, CT

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of historic preservation in 1914 when they removed the Corinthian portico and Gibbsian steeple of the Fourth Congregational Church, Main Street (1848, S. M. Stone of New Haven) to the new Bushnell Congregational Church at the corner of Albany Avenue and Vine Street. Other work included the Orient Insurance Company, 20-22 Trinity Street, 1905, and the small but exquisite Baroque brick and marble office building at 31-33 Lewis Street, 1928. Brooks is remembered for his unusual, for the times, policy of insisting that contractors on his buildings employ only union workers.³

The City appropriated \$300,000 in 1910 with the intent of building a small building on Main Street for departments then housed in leased quarters for lack of room at City Hall. After the competition, a contract was entered into with Norcross Brothers of Worcester, Massachusetts, the firm who had developed a national reputation for the many buildings they had constructed to the plans of H. H. Richardson. Norcross, for \$251,220 (they were actually paid \$408,073) were to build the Main Street pavilion (the part in front of the atrium) pursuant to this scheme. Norcross started work in 1912. Later in that year the City appropriated a further \$1,100,000 to build the balance of the structure, i.e., the atrium and Prospect Street pavilion. The successful bidder for the additional work was P. J. Carlin Construction Company of New York at \$623,667 (they were paid \$658,032). A picture exists,⁴ presumably taken toward the end of 1912 although there is no snow on the ground, that shows the Main Street pavilion nearing completion and work just getting under way at Prospect Street. The two crews joined up their work with remarkable fidelity. The only known imperfection indicating the point where the two sections came together is a row of half (rather than full) tiles in the front of the second story atrium floor.

Total cost of the building came to \$1,670,000, \$170,000 for land, \$1,400,000 for construction and \$100,000 for furnishings. The architects received \$98,183 as their fee, indicating a rate of 6%. Crown Metal Furniture Company, Jamestown, New York, supplied the metal furniture, W. & J. Sloane of New York the general furnishings, including the carpet for the Function Room. This floor was bare at the time of the dedication because the carpet, woven in Scotland, was aboard the Lusitania when it was sunk in May, 1915. A second carpet was manufactured and delivered in January, 1916. Granite was furnished by the New England Granite Works of Westerly, Rhode Island, a firm started by James G. Batterson of Hartford that supplied granite for the Library of Congress. The doors, mantels, and wainscottings (interior wood trim) came from Kertscher and Company of Elmira, New York, and the decorative grilles and registers for heating and ventilating from Tuttle and Bailey Manufacturing Company of New York -- all to the designs of Davis and Brooks.

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The two murals in the atrium were all that resulted from an ambitious 1934 plan for eighteen 4 x 9 foot paintings and two 8 x 9 foot panels that were to run along the full length of both sides of the third floor, depicting the history of Hartford. Only the two large paintings were executed. The sky in both is painted in stripes that together form a V. A committee was charged with insuring that the paintings portrayed their historic subjects with complete accuracy down to the smallest detail of costumes, tools, and weapons. The initial contact of Englishmen from Massachusetts Bay with the Dutch forces who already were on the site and the construction of an early house are duly recorded.

The lions on Arch Street (Photo 10) formerly adorned the Phoenix Bank Building on Main Street across from the Old State House. They appear in an undated picture of the bank, resting on top of two low wings that were added to the building in 1827. When this structure was replaced by the 1873 building (George Keller, architect), the lions were moved to street level and placed on either side of the entrance. In 1912 they were removed from the sidewalk on the grounds that they were an undesirable interference with pedestrian traffic. They are on loan to the City for embellishment of the Municipal Building under an agreement whereby if the City "mistreats" the lions they revert to the Connecticut Bank and Trust Company, successor to the Phoenix National Bank. The sculptor is unknown.

The Municipal Building was recognized as being important by the contemporary professional press. Architecture in 1916 printed a three-page description and 19 plates of plans and photographs.⁵ The American Architect and Building News⁶ and Architecture⁷ also gave coverage to the competition.

Whether the design is an artistic and functional success has been the subject of lively controversy from the beginning. The pivot of the disagreement is the dominant feature of the interior design, the atrium. As early as January 6, 1915 in the Courant the Rev. Dr. Rockwell Harmon Potter, pastor of the Center Congregational Church, deplored the "thin veneer of offices around a gilt-edged atrium of vacuum." In later years, when the entire Beaux-Arts approach to architecture had passed out of fashion, the Courant on May 20, 1951 said, "...no one can deny that City Hall's most conspicuous feature is the gaping yawn of a three-story high atrium." Reflecting the great change in thinking that had occurred by mid-century, the Courant continued, "...modern conceptions of public buildings are that they should be planned in a functional rather than an ornamental basis." Thus, the issue is joined. J. P. Morgan's purpose was to protect his Morgan Memorial from a functional, commercial development in favor of an artistic structure sensitive to its neighbor and designed to enhance the elegance of the street. No

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doubt the Municipal Building is ceremonially felicitous and functionally difficult. Whether or not it is good urban design can be debated. It does seem self-evident that in satisfying the purpose of the planners and in expressing the Beaux-Arts aspirations of the architects the Municipal Building is successful.

1. Carrere included the provision that the building should harmonize in scale and character with the Morgan Memorial. It is sometimes said that the J. P. Morgan benefaction was conditional on this specific point, but the wording of the deed from the Wadsworth Atheneum is far more general.

2. Hartford in 1912, p. 232. Where Brooks studied in Europe is not spelled out.

3. Letter, May 25, 1977, from Anna Harris, long-time secretary to Brooks, to the Hartford Architecture Conservancy, in possession of author.

4. The Hartford Courant, October 11, 1964, Magazine, p. 7.

5. Architecture, v. 33 (1916) pp. 25-28, plates 19-38.

6. American Architect and Building News, v. 99 (1911) no. 1938.

7. Architecture, v. 23 (1911) pp. 36-39.

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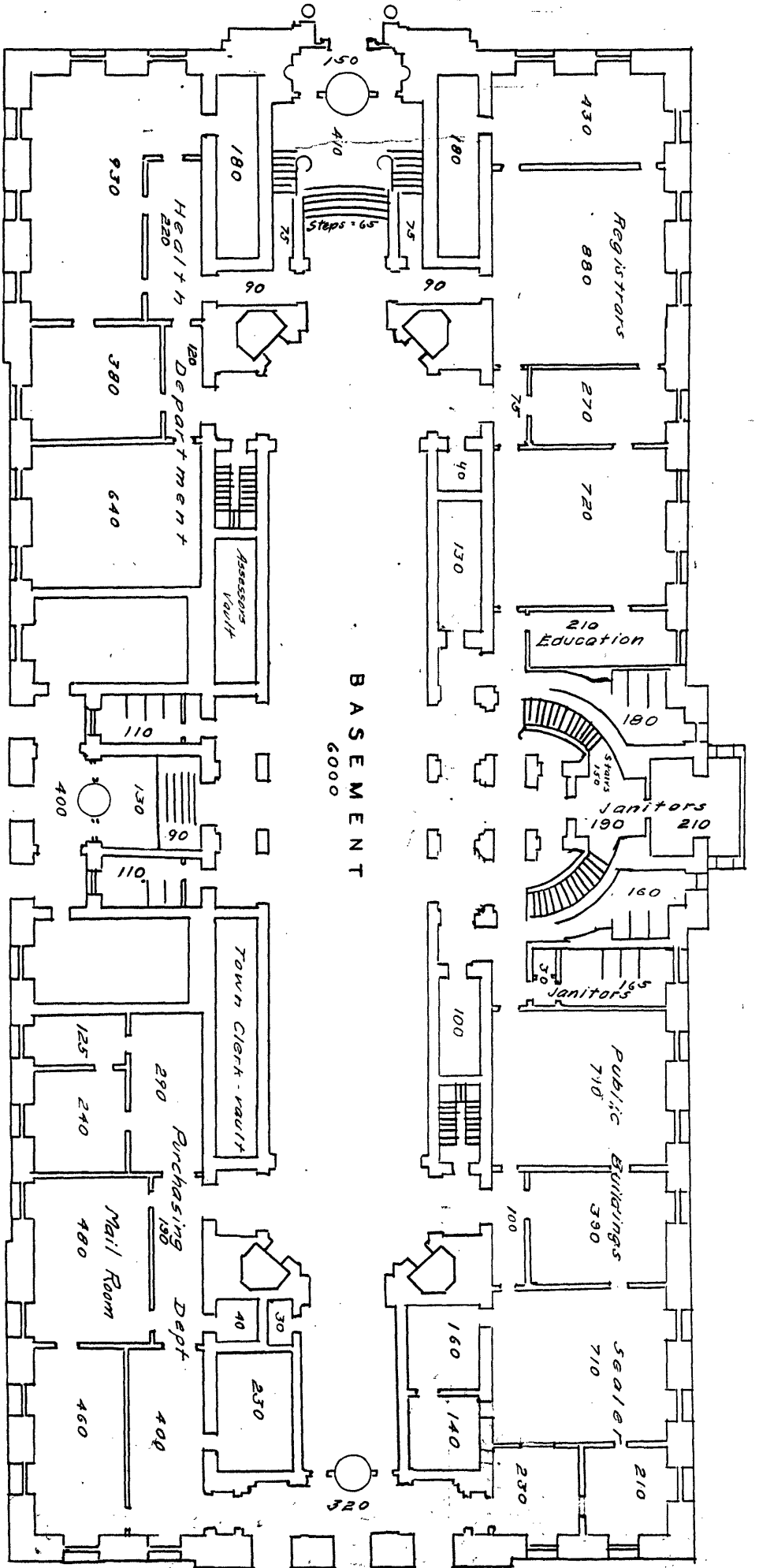
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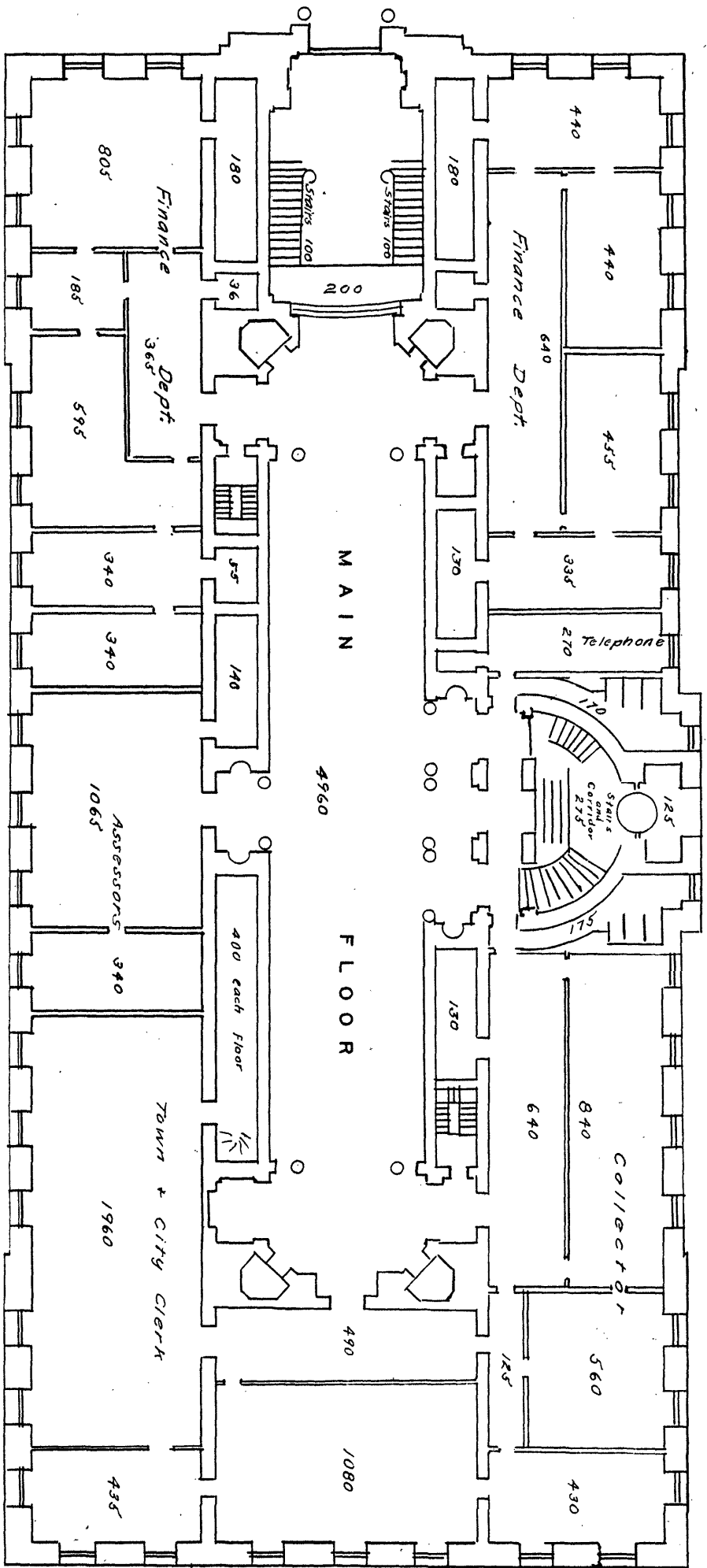
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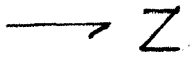
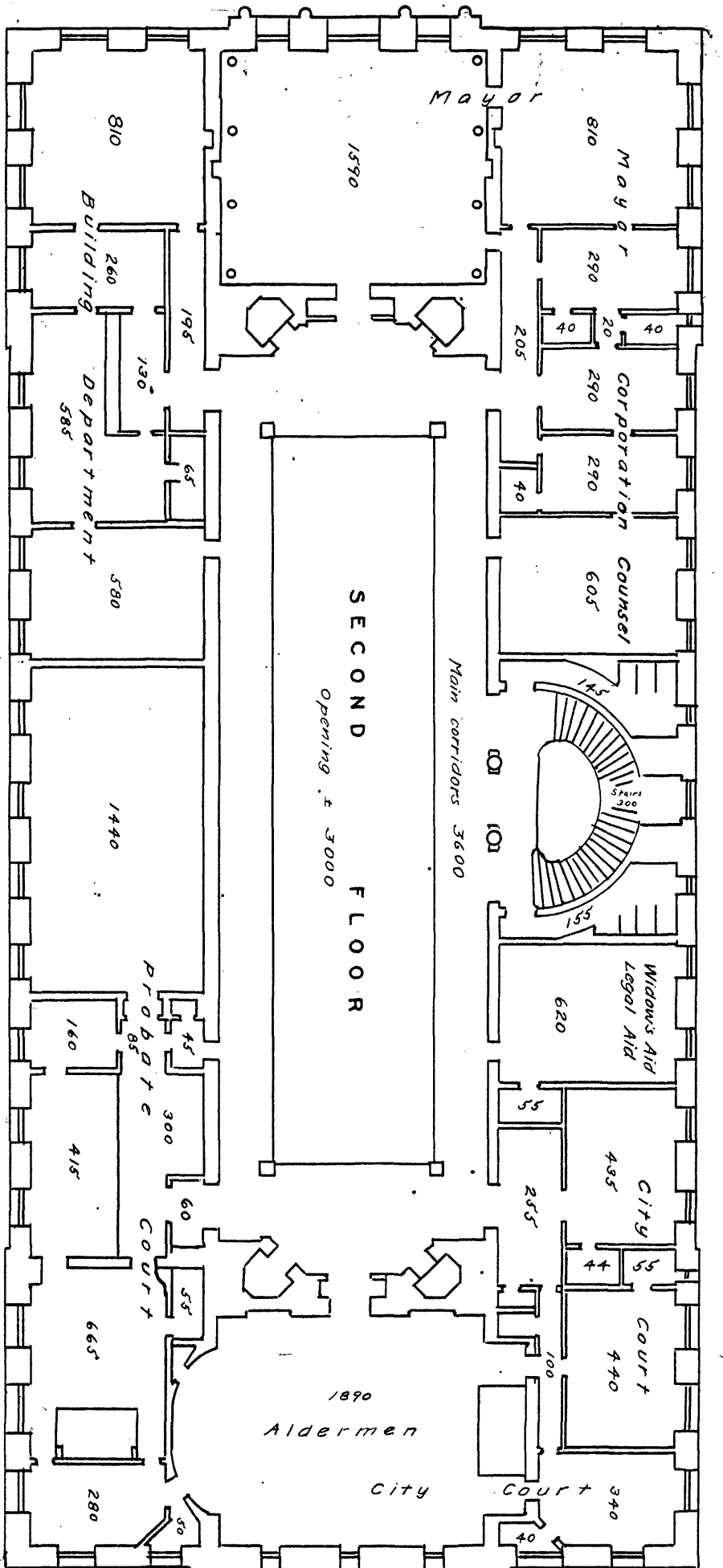
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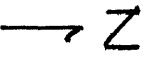
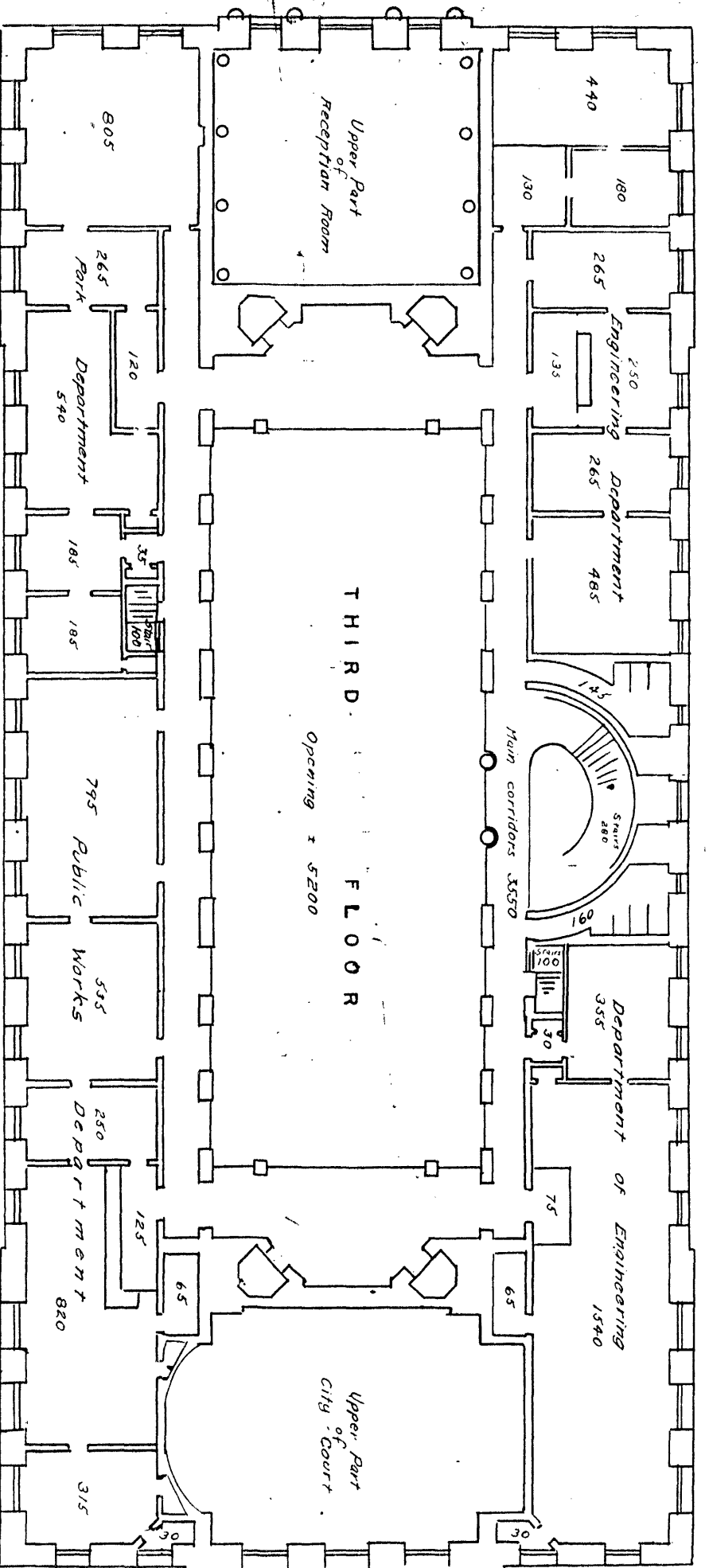
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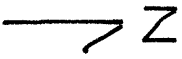
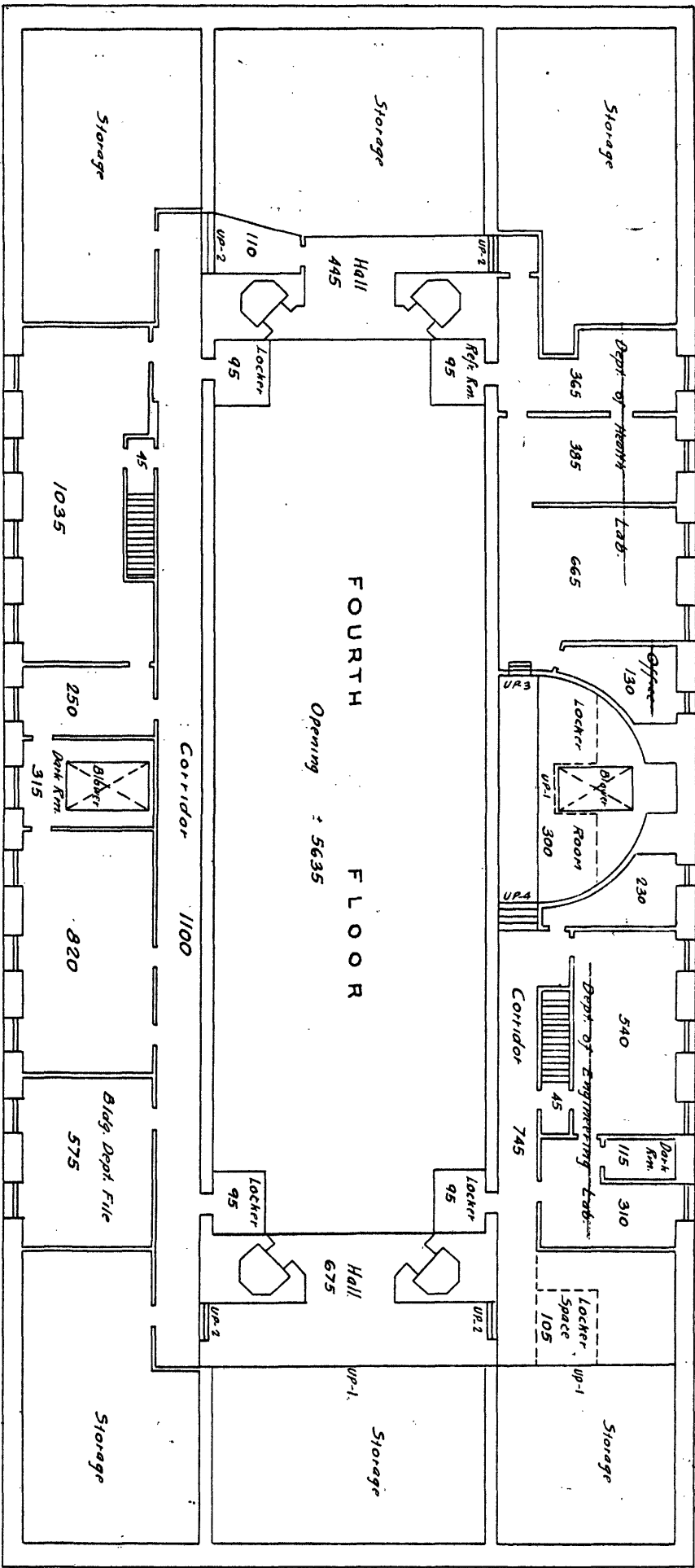
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PEARL STREET

CENTRAL ROW

CEMETERY

CENTER CHURCH

JEWELL STREET

WELLS STREET

STREET

ATHENEUM SQUARE NORTH

WADSWORTH

ATHENEUM MORGAN MEMORIAL

BOUR MEMORIAL

MUNICIPAL BUILDING

ARCH

HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY

SHELDON STREET

FEDERAL BUILDING

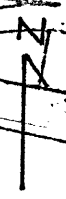
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Municipal Building
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Scale: 1" = 200'

PULASKI MALL

Pulaski Mall



30-51

16

46

26

26

46 42 32
46 47 45

2E

1E

11-25

2E

1D

1D

390-96

265-91

407-15

717-35

718-5

521

755

014

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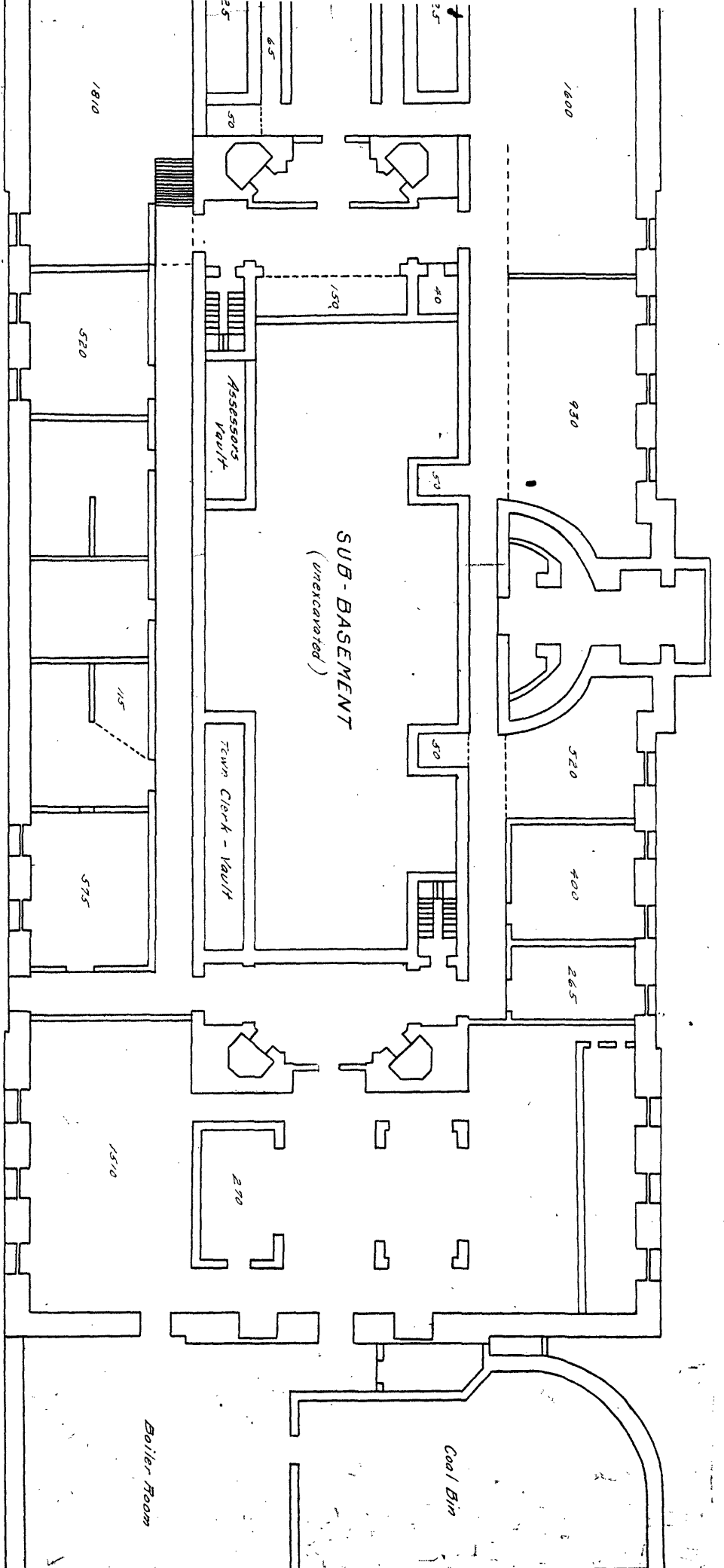
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*Hartford, Department of Engineering
 Plan of Municipal Building
 Applied from Architects Blue-Prints, etc.
 Scale 1/2" = 1'*

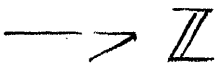
Daybook No. 07182

1938

Scale: 1" = 25'

*Note: Figures show approximate floor areas of
 various rooms calculated from scaled dimensions*

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