

Form 10-300  
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

|                               |      |
|-------------------------------|------|
| STATE:<br>Virginia            |      |
| COUNTY:<br>Richmond (in cit.) |      |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY              |      |
| ENTRY NUMBER                  | DATE |

1. NAME

COMMON:  
City Hall

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Richmond City Hall

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Bounded by Tenth Street, Broad Street, Eleventh Street and Capitol Street.

CITY OR TOWN:  
Richmond

|                   |            |                      |             |
|-------------------|------------|----------------------|-------------|
| STATE<br>Virginia | CODE<br>45 | COUNTY:<br>(in cit.) | CODE<br>760 |
|-------------------|------------|----------------------|-------------|

3. CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY<br>(Check One)                                                                                                                                        | OWNERSHIP                                                                                                                                          | STATUS                                                                                                                                                              | ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> District<br><input type="checkbox"/> Site<br><input type="checkbox"/> Object                                                          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public<br><input type="checkbox"/> Private<br><input type="checkbox"/> Both                                    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied<br><input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied<br><input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress                       | Yes:<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted<br><input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted<br><input type="checkbox"/> No |
| PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural<br><input type="checkbox"/> Commercial<br><input type="checkbox"/> Educational<br><input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment | <input type="checkbox"/> Government<br><input type="checkbox"/> Industrial<br><input type="checkbox"/> Military<br><input type="checkbox"/> Museum | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park<br><input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence<br><input type="checkbox"/> Religious<br><input type="checkbox"/> Scientific | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)                                            |

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
City of Richmond

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Richmond

|                    |            |
|--------------------|------------|
| STATE:<br>Virginia | CODE<br>45 |
|--------------------|------------|

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
City Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Richmond

|                    |            |
|--------------------|------------|
| STATE:<br>Virginia | CODE<br>45 |
|--------------------|------------|

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Report #127-3

DATE OF SURVEY: 1968  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Room 1116, Ninth Street State Office Building

CITY OR TOWN:  
Richmond

|                    |            |
|--------------------|------------|
| STATE:<br>Virginia | CODE<br>45 |
|--------------------|------------|

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

|                    |                               |              |      |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|------|
| STATE:<br>Virginia | COUNTY:<br>Richmond (in cit.) | ENTRY NUMBER | DATE |
|                    |                               |              |      |

1511

7. DESCRIPTION

|           |                                               |                                               |                               |                                       |                                                   |                                    |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| CONDITION | (Check One)                                   |                                               |                               |                                       |                                                   |                                    |
|           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> Good                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Fair | <input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> Ruins                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed |
|           | (Check One)                                   |                                               |                               | (Check One)                           |                                                   |                                    |
|           | <input type="checkbox"/> Altered              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered |                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Moved        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site |                                    |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Richmond City Hall occupies an entire downtown block, bounded on the west by 10th Street, on the east by 11th Street, on the south by Capitol Street, and on the north by East Broad Street. Its ground level measures 170 feet by 140 feet and the clock tower rises 195 above the pavement. The city hall joins other important structures such as Ammi B. Young's Customs House and Thomas S. Stewart's St. Paul's Church in framing the broad green square occupied primarily by Jefferson's Capitol.

Supporting the City Hall's floors and mansard roof are some two million cubic feet of exterior stone walls and five million bricks in the interior walls, supplemented by cast iron columns and wrought iron beams and trusses. Floors are of flat-arch clay tile construction supported on wrought iron rafters, beams and trusses.

Although each facade maintains a basic formal symmetry with its central Gothic-style porch entrance and paired bays to either side, the end pavilions are varied in roof treatment utilizing pyramidal and conical capping. The dominant feature in the building's design is the clock tower at the northeast corner with its small spires rising from buttresses below to frame the clock faces and the pyramidal roof. Sub-themes in the motif include the window clusters of two and three openings spaced by short unfluted Gothic columns with voluted capitals enriched with foliage. Segmental-pointed arches as well as lancet and straight arches span door and window openings. The rich textures of the stone surfaces vary from the rough hewn blocks with their smooth finished edges to the moulded belt courses and corbeled cornices. Gabled porches frame deeply recessed entrances on each facade and carved oak doors lead into the central four-story gallery and skylight that dominates the interior. Against a background of pilasters and paneled wall surfaces on the outer walls of the gallery, are placed inner arcades of lancet and four-centered arches supported by Gothic columns resting on circular and rectangular pedestals. At each level, the cornice, pierced iron balustrading and plaster spandrels have their individual treatment, and this pattern, when combined with the feeling of height created by the shortening of column height from bottom level to top, forms a rich spectacle matched by few interiors in the country. Just east of the gallery and forming a visual background to it on entering the building from the west is a broad cast iron stair with iron railing pierced in a quatrefoil pattern. The stairway rises in a single flight to the second level and is repeated on every floor. A considerable amount of golden oak paneling, used in the gallery as well as in most of court rooms and offices, has been painted over but enough remains in certain areas to capture the feel of its original appearance. The moulding and trim in these rooms that surround the open gallery is less ornate than elsewhere and the interest here is more on the existence of original filing cabinets, elaborately detailed radiators, electrified gas fixtures and especially on the survival of original marble sinks and brass fixtures in some of the baths.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century  
 15th Century |  17th Century |  19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

1886 - 1894

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |                                                  |                                      |                                         |                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education   | <input type="checkbox"/> Political      | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi-  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry    | losophy                                 | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention   | <input type="checkbox"/> Science        | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture      | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | Architecture                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human-  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature  | itarian                                 | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Military    | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater        | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            | <input type="checkbox"/> Music       | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Richmond's City Hall stands on the site of three notable buildings which were either moved or demolished in the early 1870's to make way for the new structure: Richmond's first City Hall, built in 1818 from plans by Robert Mills and Maximilian Godefroy and demolished because it was thought to be structurally unsound; First Presbyterian Church, built in 1853 by John MacArthur, Jr. of Philadelphia and moved to another site in 1873; the Edmund Randolph House, built circa 1800 and one of Richmond's octagonal-ended Houses. But it was not until 1883 that the competition for the new City Hall was held and not until 1886 that Elijah E. Myers plans were finally accepted. Groundbreaking ceremonies were held in that year and by 1894, when the new building opened, the costs had risen from an original estimate of \$300,000 to \$1,318,349.19. With hints of graft and several investigations completed, the Richmond Dispatch noted on 2 February, 1894:

"Indeed, by many travelled people, Richmond's new City Hall is pronounced one of the handsomest and most conveniently-arranged public buildings of its character in the country. It can never cease to be a matter of regret that in order for its erection, it was deemed necessary to sweep out of existence the old City Hall! Whatever may be said about the cost of City Hall and the time it has taken to erect it, there is no question that it was built to stay."

The selection of Myers for the City Hall was a natural choice for Richmond as he was one of the most successful architects of his day in competition for public buildings. He was architect of the State Capitols of Michigan, of Colorado, of Texas, of Idaho, of the old Capitol of the Territory of Utah, and winner of the international competition for the Parliament Buildings in Riode Janeiro. Desiring a symbol of "Richmond's progress, growth and ambition," the City Council turned to this nationally-recognized architect.

The City Hall owes its designation as a prime example of the High Victorian Gothic style to the characteristic solidity expressed in the rough hewn stone of its facades and to its lively silhouette achieved by the variety of ornamental gables, dormers, finials and chimneys. In fact, its kinship to this style relies on these two major characteristics since it ignores the popular polychrome treatment often seen on structures of this period and emphasizes instead the intricacy possible in manipulating materials into textures and Gothic shapes. The great central light well with tiers of enriched columns, spandrels, railings and brass fixtures must rank as one of the most impressive municipal interiors in the nation.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Arts in Virginia, Vol. II, #3 (Spring 1962), article by Carroll Meeks.  
Historic Preservation, Vol. 13, No. 4 (1961).  
Richmond Dispatch: February 2, 1894 "Our Fine City Hall"  
Times Dispatch: August 29, 1954; January 15, 1961; June 6, 1962; January 26, 1967; November 8, 1967; January 16, 1949; May 13, 1962, article by Al Coates.  
News Leader: April 4, 1953; February 12, 1962; April 23, 1962.  
City Hall Study, Feasibility and Use Study. Lee, King and Poole, Architects.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

| LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES<br>DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY |                         |                         | O<br>R | LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES<br>DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY<br>OF LESS THAN ONE ACRE |           |         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| CORNER                                                                           | LATITUDE                | LONGITUDE               |        | LATITUDE                                                                                               | LONGITUDE |         |
|                                                                                  | Degrees Minutes Seconds | Degrees Minutes Seconds |        | Degrees                                                                                                | Minutes   | Seconds |
| NW                                                                               | ° ' "                   | ° ' "                   |        | 37°                                                                                                    | 32'       | 23"     |
| NE                                                                               | ° ' "                   | ° ' "                   |        | 77°                                                                                                    | 25'       | 59"     |
| SE                                                                               | ° ' "                   | ° ' "                   |        |                                                                                                        |           |         |
| SW                                                                               | ° ' "                   | ° ' "                   |        |                                                                                                        |           |         |

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

| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |
|--------|------|---------|------|
|        |      |         |      |
|        |      |         |      |
|        |      |         |      |
|        |      |         |      |

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
Staff, Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, James W. Moody, Jr., Director  
 ORGANIZATION: Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission DATE: June 2, 1969  
 STREET AND NUMBER:  
Room 1116, Ninth Street State Office Building  
 CITY OR TOWN: Richmond STATE: Virginia CODE: 45

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name: Dr. Edward P. Alexander  
 Title: Virginia Historic Landmarks Comm.

Date: June 2, 1969

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

James W. Moody, Jr.  
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: July 8 1969

ATTEST:

William J. Madryga  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date: July 8 1969

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(Continuation Sheet)

|                    |      |
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| STATE              |      |
| Virginia           |      |
| COUNTY             |      |
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| ENTRY NUMBER       | DATE |
|                    |      |

(Number all entries)

8. Statement of Significance: (1) Richmond City Hall

The Richmond City Hall was built between 1886 and 1894 from designs by Elijah E. Myers (1832-1909). The building occupies an entire city block at the rear of the Virginia Capitol grounds. Of monumental scale, the City Hall measures 170 feet by 140 feet, its rugged silhouette culminating in a corner tower which rises to a height of 195 feet. The solidity of its construction; in which stone, brick and iron are the principal materials; is noteworthy and is equalled in quality by the excellence of its workmanship and finish. Stylistically, the Richmond City Hall represents a later phase of the 19th-century Gothic Revival, its exterior effect achieved by contrasting textures rather than by polychromatic materials. The most notable interior feature is an impressive skylighted central court surrounded by arcaded galleries. Maintenance has been excellent, and almost all the original fixtures remain intact. Among American municipal buildings of its size and style, the Richmond City Hall has no superior in similarly unaltered condition.

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(Continuation Sheet)

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8.

Carrol Meeks notes the importance of such a structure to a community and a region:

"But a City Hall, like a national Capitol, has a symbolic function. It is architecture made art by the expression of mood, feeling, desire and ambition, as was correctly stated of this building in 1894. That vast central hall, those giant's staircases, those sumptuous rows of columns and arches still perform their original function. These features say 'this is no ordinary building, this is what we, the people of Richmond, think of ourselves. We are proud people, we glory in our democracy, and we can afford to build a beautiful, glorious palace to say so.'"