

STATE: District of Columbia	
COUNTY:	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
 INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
 District of Columbia Courthouse

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
 District of Columbia City Hall

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
 451 Indiana Avenue, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN:  
 Washington

STATE: District of Columbia      CODE:      COUNTY:      CODE:

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
 United States Government

STREET AND NUMBER:  
 451 Indiana Avenue, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington      STATE: District of Columbia      CODE:

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
 Recorder of Deeds

STREET AND NUMBER:  
 6th and D Streets

CITY OR TOWN: Washington      STATE: District of Columbia      CODE:

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
 Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1935       Federal     State     County     Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
 Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:  
 \_\_\_\_\_

CITY OR TOWN: Washington      STATE: District of Columbia      CODE:

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7. DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The old District of Columbia City Hall was reconstructed in 1916 along exterior lines closely resembling those of the original building. Approximately 25% of the original fabric was retained, however the interior of the building was completely redesigned. Originally a masonry structure of brick covered with stucco, it was rebuilt of brick, reinforced concrete, and steel faced with stone. The building is E shaped in plan with the wings facing South. The central projection is an imposing hexastyle pedimented Ionic portico 55' wide. The columns are of limestone three feet in diameter and 27' high. The East and West wings are further advanced from the main facade than the central portico and are terminated with monumental two story distyle-in-antis elevations with parapets. The building is 240' wide, 176' deep and 60' high. The basement story is 11'-8" high, the principal story 21'-0" high and the attic story is 9'-6" high. The building covers 42,420 square feet of ground area and accomodates 69,902 square feet of floor space. The interior of the building contains eight court rooms and extensive office space. The impressive entrance hall is trimmed with marble decoration and contains an imposing stairway with an elaborate cast iron railing with classical motifs.

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**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)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The old District of Columbia City Hall at 451 Indiana Avenue, N.W., was designed by George Hadfield and commenced in 1820. Because of a series of financial difficulties, the building remained unfinished for an extended period of time and was not completed until 1849. The design of the South front of the building was much admired for the dignified grace of the central Ionic portico and the flanking advanced wings with their monumental distyle-in-antis elevations. Serving originally as a city hall and then as a courthouse the structure's past is rich in historical associations. The old District of Columbia City Hall was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1960 under the theme, Political and Military Affairs. However, the virtual reconstruction of the building in 1916 and the resulting change in building material from stucco to stone on the exterior has irretrievably compromised the building's integrity as an example of 19th century architecture.

History:

The old District of Columbia City Hall has had a turbulent history akin to the old story about the man who prided himself on the use of his grandfather's axe even though it had had two new blades and three new handles. In 1820 the District of Columbia city government announced the winner of a competition for the design of a new city hall. The man was George Hadfield, who had come to Washington in 1795 from England and whose career in the new Federal city never quite realized the expectations of its early promise. Hadfield had drafted a preliminary set of plans for the city hall in 1818 but they had been too elaborate for the budget. It was a scaled down version of these plans that won the competition. The building was begun in August of 1820 but because of a chronic lack of funds and general mismanagement it was not finished until 1849 and remained without its stucco finish and central portico for many years. In addition to its function as a city hall, space was rented out for a variety of purposes in order to raise needed construction funds. In 1863 the Federal Government occupied the building, and shortly thereafter purchased it for use as the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia. In 1881 the North portion was added. Finally in 1916 the building was reconstructed at a cost of \$842,525.86. It was further altered in 1935, and again in 1966 when the building, once again the property of the District of Columbia, became the Court of General Sessions.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Architecture, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Baltimore, 1963), 167; Wayne Andrews, Architecture, Ambition, and Americans (New York, 1955), 13; James G. VanDerpool, "Historical Development of Architecture in the U.S.A., 1632-1912," (N.P.S. Ms., 1966), ; Hugh N. Jackson, ed., A Guide to the Architecture of Washington, D.C., (New York, Washington, and London, 1965), 52; Washington, D.C., A Guide to the Nation's Capitol (American Guide Series) (New York, 1937), 299-300; F. Regis Noel, The Court-House of the District of Columbia, (Washington, 1939).

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		38° 53' 43"	77° 01' 04"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

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 AND TITLE:  
**W. Brown Morton III**

ORGANIZATION **Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service** DATE **2/8/71**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**801 19th Street, N.W.**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE **District of Columbia** CODE

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

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 \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation*

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Keeper of The National Register*

Date \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS