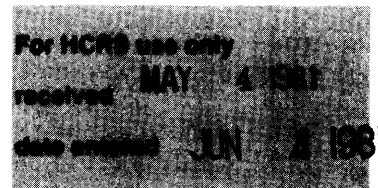


**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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 Connecticut State Library and Supreme Court Building

and/or common Connecticut State Library

## 2. Location

street & number 231 Capitol Avenue \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Hartford \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district 1st

state Connecticut code 09 county 003 Hartford code

## 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 checked="" 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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input 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
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: library

## 4. Owner of Property

name State of Connecticut, Connecticut State Library

street & number 231 Capitol Avenue

city, town Hartford \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state Connecticut

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. City and Town Clerk's Office, Municipal Building

street & number 550 Main Street

city, town Hartford \_\_\_\_\_ state Connecticut

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1981 \_\_\_\_\_ federal  state \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission

city, town Hartford \_\_\_\_\_ state Connecticut

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Connecticut State Library and Supreme Court Building is a major state government building erected between 1908 and 1910 in the Beaux-Arts style. Part of a complex of state office buildings and facilities, the building faces the Connecticut State Capitol to the northeast across Capitol Avenue. Designed to house three disparate functions- library, museum, and Supreme Court- the building plan forms a T, each arm of which is devoted to a different use. Two recent additions to the rear house expanded facilities. Masonry construction is supported by a steel frame. The facade and side elevations are faced in coursed granite ashlar, the rear of the building in buff-colored brick. Two stories in height, the State Library and Supreme Court Building rests on a raised basement and has a copper mansard roof of low pitch. (Photograph 1)

The Capitol Avenue facade consists of a central pavilion approached by monumental entrance stairs, flanked by wings of 6 bays each. The central pavilion is divided into three rounded arches by monolithic columns derived from the Roman Doric order. Each arch contains an entry door with hood supported by brackets. The central door is a revolving door of bronze and glass. Mounted above the door is a cartouche bearing the heraldic device of the State of Connecticut. The arches in which the doors are set are glazed with fixed glass panes. On either side of the entrance arches, paired columns support extensions of the entablature and cornice. These serve as pedestals for paired monumental figures representing Art and Science, History and Justice, by French sculptor M.L.Tonetti. Inscriptions in the frieze of the entablature correspond to the three divisions of the building: State Library, Memorial Hall, and Supreme Court. The tripartite division of the central pavilion thus reflects the internal organization of the building itself. Above the cornice, the attic story contains three panels bearing the inscriptions Knowledge, History, and Justice, corresponding on an abstract level to the legends on the entablature. (Photograph 2).

The wings to either side of the central pavilion have a raised basement story of rusticated granite ashlar. Set into the basement are windows with paired, double-hung sash. A granite belt course divides the basement story from the smooth, coursed granite ashlar of the story above, which extends two stories in height to the entablature and cornice. Window openings are two-story with molded surrounds. Underneath each window opening is a balustrade which rests on the granite belt course. Within these openings, upper and lower casement windows with transoms are divided by iron plaques electrolytically plated with bronze, bearing griffins supporting a central shield. (Photograph 3). The entablature and cornice of the central pavilion is continued above the windows, marking the transition to the attic story. The frieze is decorated with a fret or Greek key pattern. The attic story repeats the theme of the balustrades under the first floor windows.

The side elevations to the west and east continue the facade treatment. The central portion of each side elevation projects to form a pavilion analogous to the central pavilion of the facade. Two-story window openings are framed by plain Doric columns which support the entablature. The corners of each pavilion are defined by square pilasters. (Photograph 4). Doors are set into the raised basement. Above each door is a hood surmounted by a balustrade. All exterior door are of Beaux-Arts design and are constructed of bronze.

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Item number 6

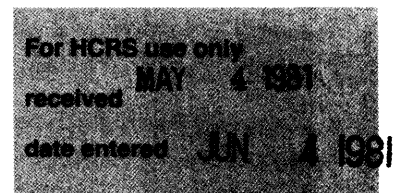
Page 1

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Hartford Architecture Conservancy Survey, 1975  
Stowe-Lay Foundation Library  
77 Forest Street  
Hartford, Ct.

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Transoms above doors are protected by ornamental bronze grills. (Photograph 5).

The facade of the State Library and Supreme Court Building has not been altered appreciably since construction was completed in 1910. Major additions to the rear of the building, however, have enveloped that portion completely, affecting the appearance of the east and west elevations. A library and museum addition, designed by the Hartford architectural firm of Jeter and Cook, was erected between 1965 and 1968. This addition is notable for its sensitive design in relation to the East elevation. The articulation of window openings and the scale of the addition harmonizes well with the original building. (Photograph 6). The addition to the State Supreme Court portion of the building is less fortunate. Constructed in 1974-1975, the addition was curved to accommodate a highway exit ramp never built, contrasting sharply with the rectilinear plan of the main building. Division into three floors with square window openings accentuates the contrast. (Photograph 4). As this addition fronts a minor side street and is not visible from either Capitol Avenue or Washington Street, its visual effect is minimal, however.

The organization of the interior of the State Library and Supreme Court Building reflects that of the exterior. (see Floor Plan). The Entrance Hall corresponds to the central pavilion and is divided by paired Ionic columns into three arches supporting a coffered, vaulted ceiling. (Photograph 7). Huge gilt chandeliers of ornate foliate design are suspended from this ceiling. (Photograph 8). From the entrance Hall, arched openings lead to the three divisions of the building: the Memorial Hall, the State Supreme Court, and the State Library.

The Memorial Hall is located directly behind the Entrance Hall, from which light is admitted through three monumental glazed arches. (Photograph 9). The central arch contains the doorway in its lower section. The other arches contain niches in which valuable documents and memorabilia are displayed. On the opposite wall from the entrance is a vault designed to receive the Charter granted the Colony of Connecticut in 1662 by King Charles II. The walls have a panelled dado above which they are covered in fabric. Corbels mounted on the walls support arches which intersect at the ceiling to form groined cells. Spandrels are decorated with lavish gilt foliate designs. The skylight of colored glass which once admitted natural light to the room has been replaced with translucent panels lit by florescent fixtures. Electric light fixtures designed by Donn Barber are still present, although supplemented with new recessed lighting. No external windows or openings were present when the hall was constructed, perhaps to maximize the amount of display space available or to reduce direct sunlight, which has a deleterious effect on paintings and paper documents. When the library and museum addition was built, 1965-1968, openings were cut into the walls on two sides to allow entrance to the new exhibit spaces created in the addition. These have been carefully designed and do not detract from the appearance of the

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hall. As with the other major public spaces, the Supreme Court Room and the Reading Room of the State Library, the Memorial Hall occupies the full vertical space available, having no second floor above it.

The State Supreme Court Room and offices are located to the right of the Entrance Hall. The courtroom has a panelled dado of light stained oak embellished with the state seal in gold leaf. Furniture and the judges' benches match the panelling. (Photograph 10). The original carpeting, decorated with the grape vine motif of the state seal, was removed recently. Allegorical murals by Alfred Herter are set in the ceiling and above the judges' bench. Original lighting fixtures remain, although supplemented with recessed lighting. A corridor along the side and back of the courtroom permits access to offices and attorneys' rooms, of which there are two floors accessible by stairs behind the courtroom. Fireplaces and mantelpieces remain in many of these rooms, together with original furnishings and lighting fixtures. The interior of this wing is more intact than much of the remainder of the building.

To the left of the Entrance Hall are located the facilities of the State Library. These are dominated by a large Reading Room with a mezzanine level balcony. An intermediate level with bookstacks placed in the center of the room was removed in 1968, due to the creation of more shelf space in the addition. This has had the effect of improving the appearance of the room by opening it up visually. Bookcases and wainscotting are of grained sheet metal panelling, a fire prevention measure. The balcony has a metal railing of Renaissance inspiration. The upper level also features a glassed arched opening looking out onto the entrance hall. A frieze surrounding the room has panels with gilt ornament. The coffered ceiling has a recessed arched vault from which are suspended gilt lighting fixtures. The overall impact of the room is striking.

The bookstacks on seven levels, are separated from the Reading Room by a fireproof wall and metal fireproof doors. Construction is of steel, with metal bookcases and translucent glass floors, the primary consideration being protection from fire. The State Librarian's Office was located at the angle between the Reading Room and the Memorial Hall, access being afforded to both. The basement level of the building, reserved for archival storage is constructed of fireproof glazed tile.

Despite two additions in 1965-69 and 1974-75, the Connecticut State Library and Supreme Court Building retains most of its original interior and exterior fabric. New lighting fixtures have been placed in such a way as to minimize their visual impact, and are difficult to discern. The retention of the original lighting fixtures contributes to the integrity of the structure. Other interior details have also been preserved in context: doors, panelling, and even furniture. The exterior has changed little as viewed from Capitol Avenue, the major public road. Additions to the rear of the building have had little impact on the appearance of the building.

## 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1908-1910 **Builder/Architect** Donn Barber

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The State Library and Supreme Court, important governmental functions of the State of Connecticut, are housed in the State Library and Supreme Court Building. During the late 19th- and early 20th centuries, the State Library in particular expanded its role to become an important repository of local and state archival material, and a reference library for legislators and the public. The growth engendered by this changing role necessitated construction of a specialized facility providing a centralized, secure location for archival and reference materials. An ancillary function, the display of critical documentary material, oil paintings and artifacts, was provided for in the Memorial Hall. (Criterion A). The Connecticut State Library and Supreme Court Building exemplifies the Beaux-Arts style of architecture as articulated by Donn Barber, a leading exponent of the style. Barber, a New York architect, was trained in a classical vocabulary and favored traditional solutions to architectural problems. In the design of the Connecticut State Library and Supreme Court Building, he was influenced by the demands of its intended use, the relation of the building to the State Capitol, and contemporary library construction elsewhere, notably the New York Public Library. Barber's success in meeting this challenge and in creating a major governmental structure to complement the State Capitol is indicative of his skill as an architect. (Criterion C).

The Connecticut State Library had its origins in a collection of books in the possession of the Secretary of the Colony, later the Secretary of State. Not until 1854 was this collection consolidated with other volumes in various State departments under the rubric of a State Library. The collection was housed in the Old State House in Hartford. Approximately 3,000 volumes were represented. Published and manuscript materials of the State of Connecticut were only partially available. Much material had passed into private possession. The latter years of the 19th century were occupied by the re-acquisition by the State of much of this lost material and its incorporation into a growing library collection. On completion of the Connecticut State Capitol in 1878, the State Library was designated space within the building.

George Goddard, the third State Librarian, was aggressive in expanding the library's collection and in recovering state papers. Concerned with the inadequacy of the quarters available in the State Capitol, and the danger of fire, he consistently argued for the inclusion of space for the library's needs in a new state office building to be constructed. Goddard's perceptions of the needs of the State Library were crucial in determining the present form of the Connecticut State Library and Supreme Court Building. The provision of adequate storage space for expanded collections encouraged the development of the State Library as a central repository for local as well as state archival material. In 1909, the State Legislature enacted that any any State, county, or town official, or other officials, could deposit for permanent preservation in the State Library, any official books, records,

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Barber, Donn. Detailed Plans, Elevations, & Specifications of the State Library & Supreme Court Building, Hartford, Connecticut. 8 Volumes. (Bound manuscripts in archives of Connecticut State Library).

Barber, Donn, "The Work of McKim, Mead and White," The Architectural Record (Oct. 1916). vol. 40, pages 393-396.

# 10. Geographical Data **UTM NOT VERIFIED**

Acreeage of nominated property 4.76

Quadrangle name Hartford North

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A 

18	69125610	416257910
Zone	Easting	Northing

B 

Zone	Easting	Northing

C 

Zone	Easting	Northing

D 

Zone	Easting	Northing

E 

Zone	Easting	Northing

F 

Zone	Easting	Northing

G 

Zone	Easting	Northing

H 

Zone	Easting	Northing

### Verbal boundary description and justification

A map of the boundary with legal description is on file at the Engineering Department, City of Hartford, 525 Main Street, Hartford, Connecticut, Map Number 37.

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

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dale S. Plummer, National Register Nominations Consultant

organization Connecticut Historical Commission date 5/09/80

street & number 59 South Prospect Street telephone 5663005

city or town 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

date April 23, 1981

For HCERS use only

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

Entered in the National Register

date 6.4.81

for  Keeper of the National Register

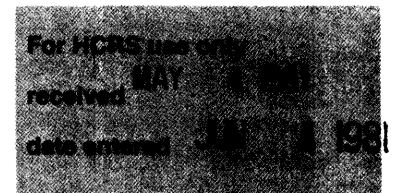
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
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documents, papers, or files not in use. The resulting deluge of material eventually exceeded the capacity of the building, creating the need for the addition of 1965-68 and the provision of storage facilities in Rocky Hill.

A State Commission empowered to make repairs to the State Capitol and, if necessary, construct a new state building began its sessions in 1904. It soon became evident that the State Library and the Supreme Court, then housed in the Capitol, required a separate building, which would also free space in the Capitol building for legislative functions. Five architects were selected to submit designs for the new building, submissions to be placed in numbered envelopes until after selection. Among the architects requested to participate in the design competition were Edward T. Hapgood of Hartford, who had been responsible for the repairs and fireproofing of the Capitol, and Carrere and Hastings of New York, architects of the New York Public Library, then under construction. McKim, Mead & White of New York were designated as alternates if Carrere and Hastings did not respond. 2.

Considerations which the committee felt were of great importance were the height of the new building above the sidewalk; the design of the building with reference to the Capitol, to be considered as the leading feature; a design which would be amenable to additions or extensions, particularly of the library; and a building with enough capacity for the State Library collection. 3. In July, 1906, the various architects met with the committee to discuss their concerns with them prior to the submission of entries. At this meeting, it was also decided to locate the center line of the new building on a line perpendicular to Capitol Avenue and passing through the center of the south front of the Capitol building. At this meeting, Hapgood introduced Donn Barber of New York as his associate in the competition. 4.

In October, 1906 the submitted plans were examined and in consultation with Judge Frentice of the State Supreme Court and George S. Goddard, State Librarian, the design submitted by Hapgood and Barber was selected. 5. In the nearly two years which followed prior to the commencement of construction, the design was changed and the interior details refined under the guidance of the commission and the State Librarian and Judge Frentice. In November 1907, the Commission directed that the length of the building be reduced to 300', reflecting perhaps concern over costs and the desire to subordinate the building to the State Capitol by reducing its scale. Unfortunately, the minutes are not detailed enough to reveal the reasoning of the commissioners in this matter. 6.

An overriding concern of Godard was the safety of the State Library's collection of books and archival material. A great amount of attention was given to fireproofing the building, particularly the library wing, where metal bookcases and wainscotting grained to give the appearance of wood were used. A recent description of the library as "literally a fortress for books" is apt and pays tribute to Godard's obsession with the safety of the materials entrusted to his care. 7.

The design submitted by Hapgood and Barber seems to have been entirely the



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work of Barber, for the frequent consultations of the commission with their architect make almost no mention of Hapgood after the design selection. As originally conceived, the design owed much to Barber's Beaux Arts training. An elevation of the Capitol Avenue facade done in January, 1907 reveals a monumental colonnade extending along the entire length of the wings, together with a more elaborate treatment of the windows. (Photograph 12). Although differing in detail, the massing of elements and the overall impact of this design bear a striking resemblance to the New York Public Library of Carrere and Hastings, the New York firm with which Barber had been associated early in his career. 8. A modified section of this original design is still evident at the East and West ends of the building, (Photograph 4) where window openings are framed by columns. The design changes effected by the Commission were to simplify the facade and reduce the length of the building to its present size (224' 8"). The Commission insisted, however, on the use of monolithic granite columns for the central pavilion and white Bethel granite for the facade. The cooperation of the Commission and the architect resulted in a building which, while Beaux Arts in nature, has a relatively simple and dignified facade, the horizontality of which acts as a foil to the verticality of the State Capitol with its wealth of ornamentation. 9.

Donn Barber was responsible for a number of other distinguished buildings in the Hartford Downtown: the Travelers Tower of 1906-1918, the Hartford Times Building of 1919-1920, the Hartford-Aetna Building of 1912, and the Travelers Insurance Building of 1921 on Grove Street. 10. As an architect, Barber displays a capacity to adapt resourcefully to the needs of the project at hand while drawing on a classical vocabulary and scheme of organization. His philosophy is summed up in a retrospective article on the work of McKim, Mead & White written by Barber for the Architectural Record:

"... the modern architect has two extreme choices of procedure open to him: he may produce buildings that are an adaptation to modern conditions of traditional European types of architectural forms; or completely ignoring traditional forms, he may choose to design buildings which represent a free solution of the present-day social and economic standards based on modern physical needs. The artist who begins by accepting tradition almost invariably becomes a slave to tradition; whereas he who ingenuously rejects tradition usually becomes the victim of his spirit of revolt. A wise and safe course must surely lie somewhere between these two extremes." 11.

In the design of the Connecticut State Library and Supreme Court building, Barber carefully avoids a rigid adherence to the European standard: the result is a building of great beauty and utility. His skyscraper designs, however, while still rooted in tradition, display even greater freedom of design. It is interesting to compare with Barber's own words:

"Our unprecedented achievements in trade and industry have their possible appropriate architectural expression and unusual possi-

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bility of conception in the design of huge warehouses, terminals, factories, and, of course, primarily, the skyscraper. The structure of such practical buildings can properly demand, today, a wholly original treatment. Classic precedents would seem to hinder, rather than aid, the architect in such work. 12.

Hartford is fortunate in possessing a number of buildings designed by Barber, which provide an opportunity to study the application of his principles to a variety of situations. The significance of the Connecticut State Library and Supreme Court Building lies not only in its Beaux Arts design, but in the willingness of the architect to meet the requirements of site and the demands and tastes of the local Commission, an adaptability mirrored in other buildings of his design.

## Footnotes.

1. Collins, Marcia D., et.al. "Conservation of the Connecticut State Library: Past, Present, and Future," paper prepared for L.S. 576, Preservation of Library Materials, at Southern Connecticut State College, December, 1979, pages 1-4.
2. Connecticut State Library and Supreme Court Building. Records of the Building Commission, June 15, 1904- February 10, 1914. Volume 1, page 41, May 28, 1906. (Typewritten manuscript in archives of the Connecticut State Library).
3. Ibid, Vol. 1, pages 37-38, Feb. 16, 1906.
4. Ibid, Vol 1, pages 45-46, July 23, 1906.
5. Ibid, Vol 1, pages 49-50, Oct. 3, 1906.
6. Ibid, Vol.1, pages 72, Nov. 11, 1907, 74-76, Nov. 15, 1907.
7. Collins, Maria D., op.cit., page 4.
8. Barber, Donn. Detailed Plans, Elevations & Specifications of the State Library & Supreme Court Building, Hartford, Connecticut, Vol. 2, page 67. (Bound manuscripts in 8 volumes, Hartford, 1919).
9. Records of Building Commission, Vol. 1, pages 144-146 (Sept. 11, 1908), page 181 (Oct. 14, 1908)
10. Hartford Architecture Conservancy Survey. Hartford Architecture, Volume One: Downtown. Hartford: Hartford Architecture Conservancy, 1978, pages 60-61, 63, 68-69, 70, 118.
11. Barber, Donn, "The Work of McKim, Mead and White," The Architectural Record (October, 1916), page 395.
12. Ibid, page 395.

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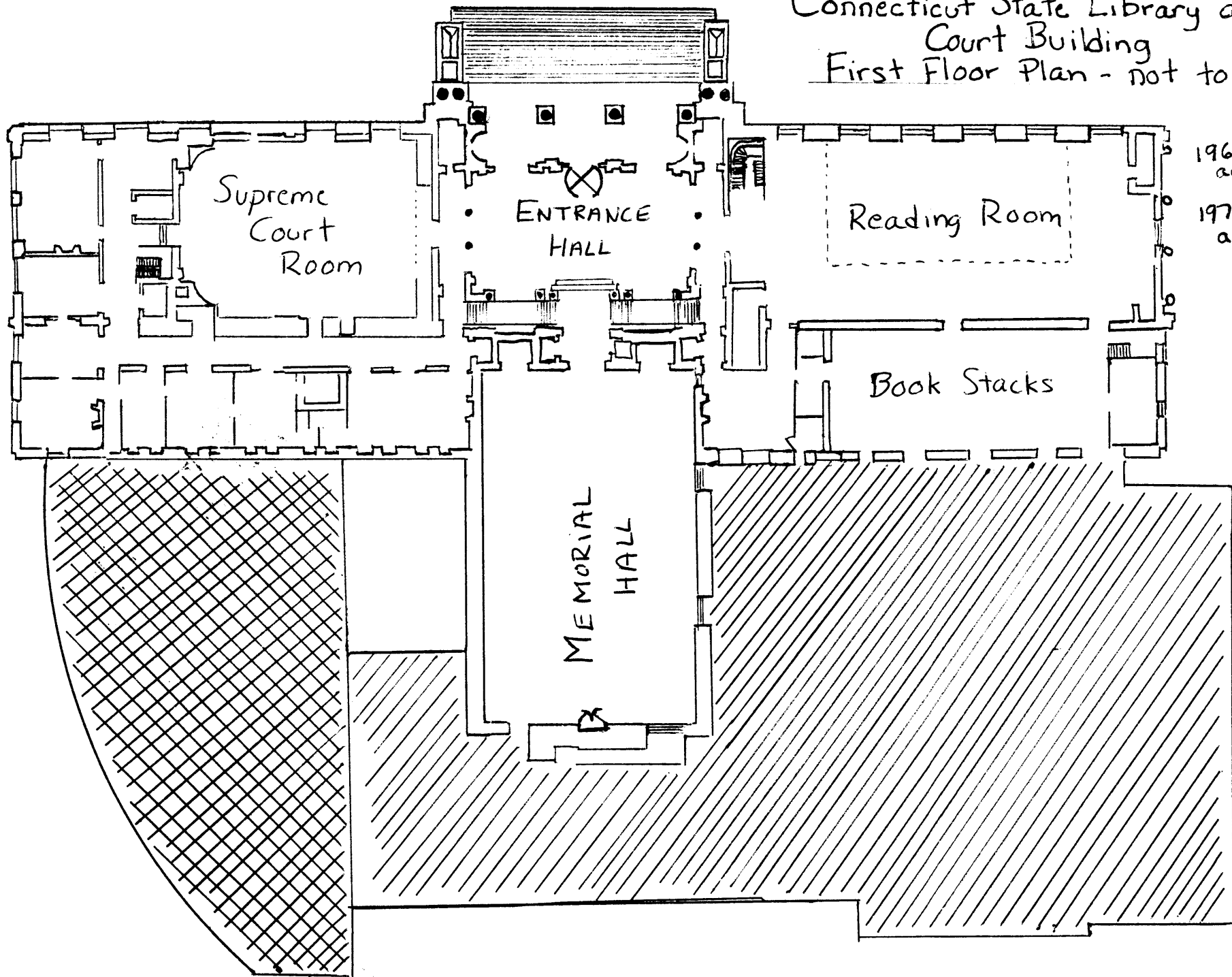
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- Barber, Donn, "Some Recent Work in Hartford, Connecticut," Architectural Forum, Vol. 34, pages 115-122 (April, 1921).
- Collins, Marcia D. Tinkham, Nancy J., and Woodbridge, Kristin O., "Conservation of the Connecticut State Library: Past, Present and Future," L.S. 576, Preservation of Library Materials, Southern Connecticut State College, December, 1979, typewritten manuscript.
- Connecticut State Library Collection. Picture Group 220. 3 boxes of photographs in archives of Connecticut State Library, Hartford.
- Connecticut State Library and Supreme Court Building. Records of the Building Committee, June 15, 1904- February 10, 1914. Three Volumes. Hartford: Connecticut State Library, 1948 (Typewritten manuscripts in Record Group 60, Archives of Connecticut State Library).
- Hartford Architecture Conservancy Survey. Hartford Architecture, Volume One: Downtown. Hartford: Hartford Architecture Conservancy, 1978.

Connecticut State Library and Supreme Court Building  
First Floor Plan - not to scale



1965-68  
addition

1974-75  
addition

Supreme  
Court  
Room

ENTRANCE  
HALL

Reading Room

Book Stacks

MEMORIAL  
HALL