

VLR-4/17/73 NRHP-5/14/73

123-45

Form 10-300
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries . complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Virginia
COUNTY:	Petersburg (in city)
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	

1. NAME

COMMON:
Petersburg Court House

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Court House Square

CITY OR TOWN:
Petersburg

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
Fourth, Robert W. Daniel, Jr

STATE: Virginia CODE: 51 COUNTY: (in city) CODE: 730

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	court house	
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
City of Petersburg

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
Petersburg

STATE: Virginia CODE: 51

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Hustings Court

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
Petersburg

STATE: Virginia CODE: 51

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory

DATE OF SURVEY: 1959 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
Washington

STATE: D. C. CODE: 11

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Virginia

COUNTY: (in city) Petersburg

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DATE

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 Courthouse, constructed between 1838-1840, after a design by Calvin Pollard of New York, is best described as a classical revival structure with Greek and Roman detailing. It is a structure in which design improvisation plays a major role.

Oriented toward the southwest, the Courthouse sits on a hill in the downtown area of Petersburg. As there are no high-rise structures in its immediate vicinity, the building still dominates the Petersburg skyline as it was intended to do. Courthouse Avenue lies on an axis approximately 100' from the portico of the building. At this point, there are large stone pillared gates through which one passes to get to the series of steps that lead up to the embankment directly in front of the portico. There are two small nineteenth century brick structures located to the south and southwest of the Courthouse. The walkways from Courthouse Avenue are brick and there are large shrubs that seem to frame the vista to the north and south of the facade.

The tower was not anticipated in the original design and is positioned in an unusual manner on the plan. Its graceful double-tiered bell and clock tower looms high above the ridge-line of the facade's pediment. Parts of the tower are modelled, in a modified octagonal form, after the choragic Monument of Lysicrates in Athens and employing the Ionic and Tower of the Winds orders. Generally, when a tower was built on a temple-type building, the tower base projected onto the portico, giving the effect of supporting the tower. Being set back from the pediment, the Courthouse tower appears to be supported by the roof. It is surmounted by four circular clock faces and a symbolic figure holding the scales of justice.

After the completion of the tower, no major work was performed on the structure until 1877 when extensive repairs and interior alterations were carried out. A thirty foot addition was constructed in 1965 and was designed in keeping with the traditional architecture of the building. An extensive restoration and renovation was carried out at this time.

The structure itself is rectangular in shape measuring 93' x 57'. It is two stories in height on a granite foundation. There are two exterior entrances, one at the front and one at the rear on the first floor. A third doorway opens onto a second floor balcony above the main entrance under the portico. The main entrance has double doors, each one having six recessed panels. There are two large panels above the door and the door moldings consist of a granite frame and lintel. It is curvilinear in shape and rises to a peak in the center, the entire doorway being approximately 15' in height.

There are no windows on the west (front) facade. The first floor windows on the north and south sides are double hung with

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six lights per sash, granite sill, and set back in the wall about 9". The second-story windows are similar but smaller and have four lights per sash.

The west facade, pedimented and hexastyled, is a raised portico approximately 10' in depth and runs the entire length of the facade. Five granite steps, framed on each side by granite podii lead up to the porch level, the ceiling of which is handsomely coffered. At the west edge of the porch are six columns supporting a Greek Corinthian pediment. The shafts of the four circular central columns are fluted Doric and the capitals are in the Tower of the Winds order. The proportions of the columns are unusually slender. The square end columns have ornately detailed Doric capitals. At the corners of the front wall directly behind each of these square columns is a pilaster, identical in size and detailing.

Above the capitals on the west facade and extending around the building is an ornately molded projecting cornice. The roof is gabled and covered with tin. All walls, exterior and interior of the original building are brick bearing walls. The roof structure is a system of large wood trusses, each member being about 4"x12". The roof pitch is shallow, 4 or 5 feet in 50'. Wall construction of the 1965 addition is concrete block, stuccoed and scored to simulate ashlar stone in a similar fashion to that of the original structure.

The basement of the building is approximately 20'x50' and is located directly under the portico. It is divided into two sections each 10' wide and separated by a brick wall, pierced by a doorway, which acts as support for the front exterior wall of the building. This area serves as a storage space and is accessible from the front foyer. The first floor, about 3' above grade was originally divided into three rooms, two on either side of a corridor which extended halfway through the structure and a third large room at the rear. This large room has now been partitioned off into four small rooms. The original building has a front foyer area at the front, a large courtroom (50'x50'), and two small anterooms at the rear. The 1965 addition provided a library stack room, a boiler room, an extension of the hallway and a rear stairway on the first floor, and on the second floor a jury room, a conference room, judge's chamber, a hallway and an elevator.

There are two stairways in the front foyer of the building on either side of the main entrance which lead to the second floor. All of the floors in the Courthouse are of wood, except that of the basement which is concrete. All floors were replaced during the renovation in 1965. The walls and ceilings throughout

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the building are painted plaster, except the basement which has brick walls and an exposed wooden joist ceiling.

All plaster work in the structure is new with the exception of the courtroom ceiling which has been restored. The courtroom itself was completely remodelled in 1965. Substantially the same, however, is the magnificently detailed hung plaster ceiling with its large circular dome at the center. Fanning out 360° from the central dome are twenty recessed panels. The core of this central dome is highly modelled with elaborate Adamesque detailing. The ceiling is a slight four-way arch, the ends of which come into the four corners of the room. In each corner, in a triangular space formed by the circular fan and the corner of the room, there is more ornate detailing and molding, the principle of which is a large anthemion. On the east end of the courtroom there is a curved apse behind the judge's bench area. Six pilasters, which were added during the renovation, grace this area. The bench area itself is now rectangular in shape and projects from the apse into the courtroom. Previously, the judge's bench was curved but projected into the chamber in a similar fashion.

In spite of the addition and renovations to the fabric of the Petersburg Courthouse, the original architectural character has been successfully retained and incorporated into the newer section. The structure is a pleasing and unique architectural composition and possesses the integrity of Pollard's 1838 design.

8. 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/Phi- | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | losophy | <u>history</u> |
| <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

The Classical Revival structure, designed by Calvin Pollard of New York, architect of many prominent buildings including mid-nineteenth century New York townhouses, the National Theatre in New York (1833), and St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Petersburg, Virginia (constructed in 1838 and burned in 1854), is of both architectural and historical importance to the City of Petersburg and to the State of Virginia. Pollard's design improvisations on and combinations of different classical motifs on the exterior of the building are unique in the area. The clock and bell tower combination and location is most interesting architecturally and the hung plaster ceiling in the second floor courtroom is noteworthy.

Historically, the courthouse played a major role during the 1864-1865 seige of Petersburg. Union troops used the tower for a sighting mark and spared the structure from the bombardment. Both sides relied upon the clock in the tower as an accurate timepiece. The Petersburg Courthouse houses one of the five remaining hustings courts in Virginia and, for that matter, in the entire United States. These courts, the local circuit courts and the Supreme Court of Appeals form the judicial system of Virginia.

J. F.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Scott, James G., & Edward A. Wyatt, IV, Petersburg's Story - A History. Petersburg: Titmus Optical Co., 1960.
 "The Courthouse of the Hustings Court of Petersburg, Virginia", September, 1966.
 Files of Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	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	0 . "	0 . "		37° 13' 50"	77° 24' 11"	
NE	0 . "	0 . "				
SE	0 . "	0 . "				
SW	0 . "	0 . "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than ten acres.

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

ORGANIZATION: Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission DATE: December 1977

STREET AND NUMBER:
Room 1116 Ninth Street State Office Building

CITY OR TOWN: Richmond STATE: Virginia CODE: 51

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 _____
J. R. Fishburne, Director
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission
 Title _____

Date _____

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

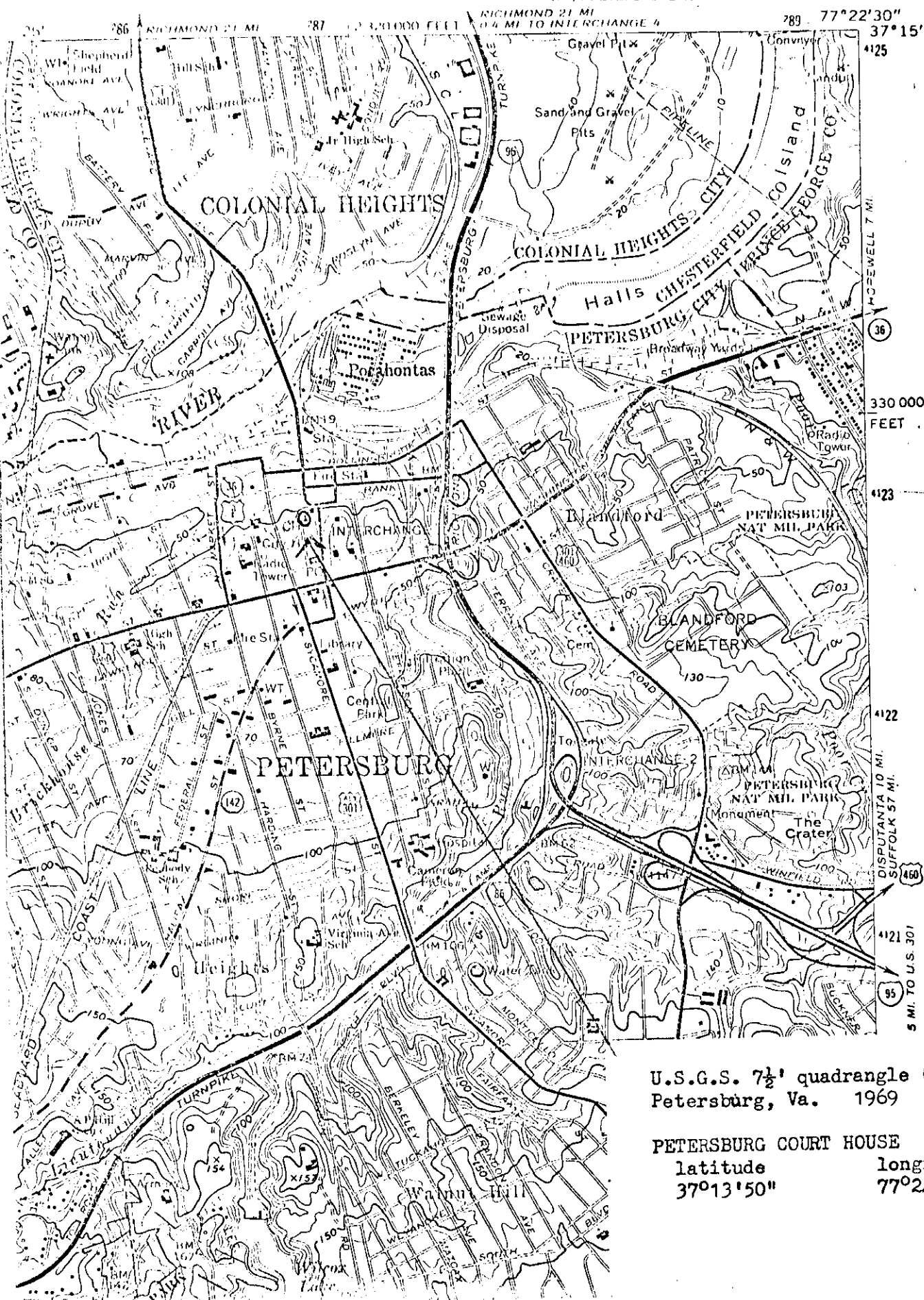
 Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

PETERSBURG QUADRANGLE
 VIRGINIA
 7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)
 NW/4 PETERSBURG 15' QUADRANGLE

5558 IV SE
 (HOPEWELL)



U.S.G.S. 7½' quadrangle (scale:1:24000)
 Petersburg, Va. 1969

PETERSBURG COURT HOUSE
 latitude 37°13'50"
 longitude 77°24'11"