Form 10-300
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

STATE: Connecticut
COUNTY: Hartford
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY – NOMINATION FORM

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

(Type all entries complete applicable sections)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: The Old Hartford State House

AND/OR HISTORIC: The Old Hartford State House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: Main Street at Central Row

CITY OR TOWN: Hartford

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 001

STATE: Connecticut — CODE: 09

COUNTY: Hartford — CODE: 003

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP		STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
☐ District ☒ Building ☐ Site ☐ Structure ☐ Object	☐ Public ☐ Private ☒ Both	Public Acquisition: ☐ In Process ☐ Being Considered	☒ Occupied ☐ Unoccupied ☐ Preservation work in progress	Yes: ☐ Restricted ☒ Unrestricted ☐ No

PRESENT USE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

☐ Agricultural	☐ Government	☐ Park	☐ Transportation	☐ Comments
☐ Commercial	☐ Industrial	☐ Private Residence	☐ Other *(Specify)*	
☐ Educational	☐ Military	☐ Religious		
☐ Entertainment	☒ Museum	☐ Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: The City of Hartford (The State House is administered by the Connecticut Historical Society, Thompson Harlow, Pres.)

STREET AND NUMBER: One Elizabeth Street

CITY OR TOWN: Hartford

STATE: Connecticut — CODE: 09

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Record Room, City Hall

STREET AND NUMBER: 550 Main Street

CITY OR TOWN: Hartford

STATE: Connecticut — CODE: 09

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Historic American Buildings Survey (18 sheets and 6 photos)

DATE OF SURVEY: 1934,1936,1937 ☒ Federal ☐ State ☐ County ☐ Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: The Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER: Division of Prints and Photographs

CITY OR TOWN: Washington, 20540

STATE: D.C. — CODE: 011

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	☐ Excellent	☒ Good	☐ Fair	☐ Deteriorated	☐ Ruins	☐ Unexposed
	(Check One) ☒ Altered ☐ Unaltered			(Check One) ☐ Moved ☒ Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL *(if known)* PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Following the authorization by the General Assembly in May 1792 for the construction of a new State House for Connecticut, Charles Bulfinch designed the structure standing in Main Street which was built between 1793 and 1796. Important exterior changes were made in 1815 and 1825-1827, but few others have been since that time. Very extensive interior changes were made between 1879 when the building became the Hartford City Hall and 1918 when a restoration program was begun.

The three-story block building with tripartite open arcades in the pavilions of the east and west fronts, derives its overall form from the Liverpool Town Hall (1748-1755) designed by John Wood. The rustication, pavilions, and open arcade may be traced to the very influential work of Sir William Chambers, Somerset House, in The Strand.

In the Hartford State House, we see the shell of a building which has hardly changed from the early nineteenth century, but it should be noted that changes were made early on to the original eighteenth century elevation. The wooden ballustrade at the roofline was added in 1815 as a safety device in case firemen should have to work on the roof, and a major addition was made in 1825-1827, when the cupola was added, a copy of the one on New York's City Hall. In 1854, the open arcade on the ground floor which extended through the center of the building to connect the east and west pavilions, was enclosed at each end, forming one large room between.

The building is constructed of brick and stone, with a low-hipped slate roof. The twenty-foot-high ground level is articulated through the use of Middletown (Connecticut) sandstone, and through the arcuated theme which begins in the pavilion but continues in the round-arch window surrounds. Round windows occur in the center of the proticoed east facade creating a dramatic lighting effect in the east end of the upper part of the stair hall. Otherwise, all windows are rectilinear, the square ones in the third floor adding extra light to the Senate and House chambers from the upper story.

Clearly, the east facade is the most elaborate front, where the Doric portico emphasizes the center of the building from which addresses were made to people gathered in the square further east of the State House. The pediment has a modillioned gable, and the modillion is then carried around the rest of the building at the cornice line. The seventeen-foot-high stuccoed brick columns are topped by an architrave with triglyphs, but without metopes.

The remaining two floors of the 120' x 50' building are of brick, laid in a flemish bond, with a belt course articulating the expected floor-level of each of the upper two stories. In fact, however, the upper floor of the Old State House is a two-story space, the "third story" windows simply adding extra light to the very high ceilinged (28') rooms. Only in the west pavilion where the north and south walls are bricked in do we find a room in the third level. At the second floor is the Secretary of State's office

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Having expanded beyond the modest limits of the Old State House, the Connecticut State Government moved across town to the new State Capitol building in 1879. At that time, title to the old building was transferred to the City of Hartford, and it became the Hartford City Hall. The building was so extensively changed in the following forty years, that when the government of the City of Hartford had itself expanded beyond the limitations of the Old State House by 1920 and moved elsewhere, hardly more than the outer shell needed less than extensive reconstruction. A program was undertaken to do this between 1918 and 1921. From ground level to the roof, practically the whole of the interior had to be either restored or reconstructed.

The room with the most original woodwork remaining is the Senate Chamber on the upper floor. The walls are decorated by fluted pilasters representing a combination of Ionic and Corinthian orders supporting the cornice and gallery-ballustrade. These capitals were originally uncarved, but were worked this way during the 1918-1920 restoration. This finest of the rooms in the Old State House also has two original fireplaces, while the overmantels are reconstructions.

The other two rooms on this floor are the 42' x 46' x 28' House of Representatives on the north side, and the Secretary of State's office in the west pavilion. At the north end of the office of The Secretary of State was a free-standing, cylinder type spiral staircase constructed by Asher Benjamin in 1795. Lost sometime during the nineteenth century, this stair, which Benjamin believed to be the first in New England with a circular rail, was not reconstructed in 1920.

The broad double staircase on the ground floor becomes a single run at the landing and enters the upper floor that way before a handsome Palladian window.

The stair hall is a broad, twenty-five-foot-wide space which originally connected the open arcade at the east and west ends of the building. Closed in 1854, these walls have never been re-opened.

The Supreme Court room on the ground floor had been so completely changed during the nineteenth century, that the reconstruction of the room during the 1918-1920 project was largely conjectural, imitating the details of Bulfinch's Doric Hall in the Massachusetts State House (1795-1798).

BOUNDARY INFORMATION

Situated at 800 Main Street, Hartford, between State Street and Central Row, the State House has historically commanded the elliptical piece of ground immediately east of the building. Views as early as 1834 confirm this, and the site is that chosen for the first Meeting House in Hartford in the seventeenth century, replaced by the Bulfinch State House in the 1790s. The town square, and then State House Square, was a space with undeniable ceremonial and symbolic purposes. As such it is an integral part of the Landmark, as inviolable as the structure itself.

The boundary extends from the eastern edge of Main Street, east along the northern edge of Central Row on the South, and east along the southern edge of State Street on the north, to a point approximately forty yards east of the State House where the two roads converge. Aside from the small War Memorial standing east of the State House, not part of the Landmark, this boundary includes only the one structure, The Old State House. Although dominated by high-rise development on all sides, this acre or so of land serves to protect some of the dignity of the environment of this most dignified of public buildings.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

- [ ] Pre-Columbian
- [ ] 15th Century
- [ ] 16th Century
- [ ] 17th Century
- [x] 18th Century
- [ ] 19th Century
- [ ] 20th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) *(If Applicable and Known)*

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

- [ ] Aboriginal
  - [ ] Prehistoric
  - [ ] Historic
- [ ] Agriculture
- [x] Architecture
- [ ] Art
- [ ] Commerce
- [ ] Communications
- [ ] Conservation
- [ ] Education
- [ ] Engineering
- [ ] Industry
- [ ] Invention
- [ ] Landscape Architecture
- [ ] Literature
- [ ] Military
- [ ] Music
- [x] Political
- [ ] Religion/Philosophy
- [ ] Science
- [ ] Sculpture
- [ ] Social/Humanitarian
- [ ] Theater
- [ ] Transportation
- [ ] Urban Planning
- [ ] Other *(Specify)*

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Hartford State House was designed by Charles Bulfinch in 1792, and constitutes the first of the series of great public buildings built by this noted architect. Followed by more ambitious works like The Massachusetts State House and The Court House, both in Boston, this is a prototype of the Adamesque-Federal style which acquires, through Bulfinch, a new level of dignity and bearing. The Hartford State House was the site of the famous Hartford Convention of 1814, one of the earliest debates concerning the sovereignty of the States versus the sovereignty of the nation.

Although extensively reworked on the interior, the exterior of the Old State House has been little changed from its early nineteenth century appearance. Maintained in good condition by The Connecticut Historical Society which administers the building as a museum for The City of Hartford, The Old State House has been regularly open to the public for a small admission charge since 1921.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Newton C. Brainard, The Hartford State House of 1796 (Hartford, 1964).
Charles W. Snell, Report for National Historic Landmarks, 1970
Charles A. Place, Charles Bulfinch, Architect and Citizen, (Boston, 1925).
Talbot Hamlin, The American Spirit in Architecture (New Haven, 1926).
Talbot Hamlin, Greek Revival Architecture in America, (New York, 1944).

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				
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds		
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	UTM	
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"	18.693420.4626200	
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"		
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"		

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: one

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: James Dillon, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION: National Landmarks, Landmark Review Project

DATE:

STREET AND NUMBER: 1100 L Street

CITY OR TOWN: Washington

STATE: D. C.

CODE: 011

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 (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Title

Date (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date

Landmark Designated: Dec. 19, 1960 date

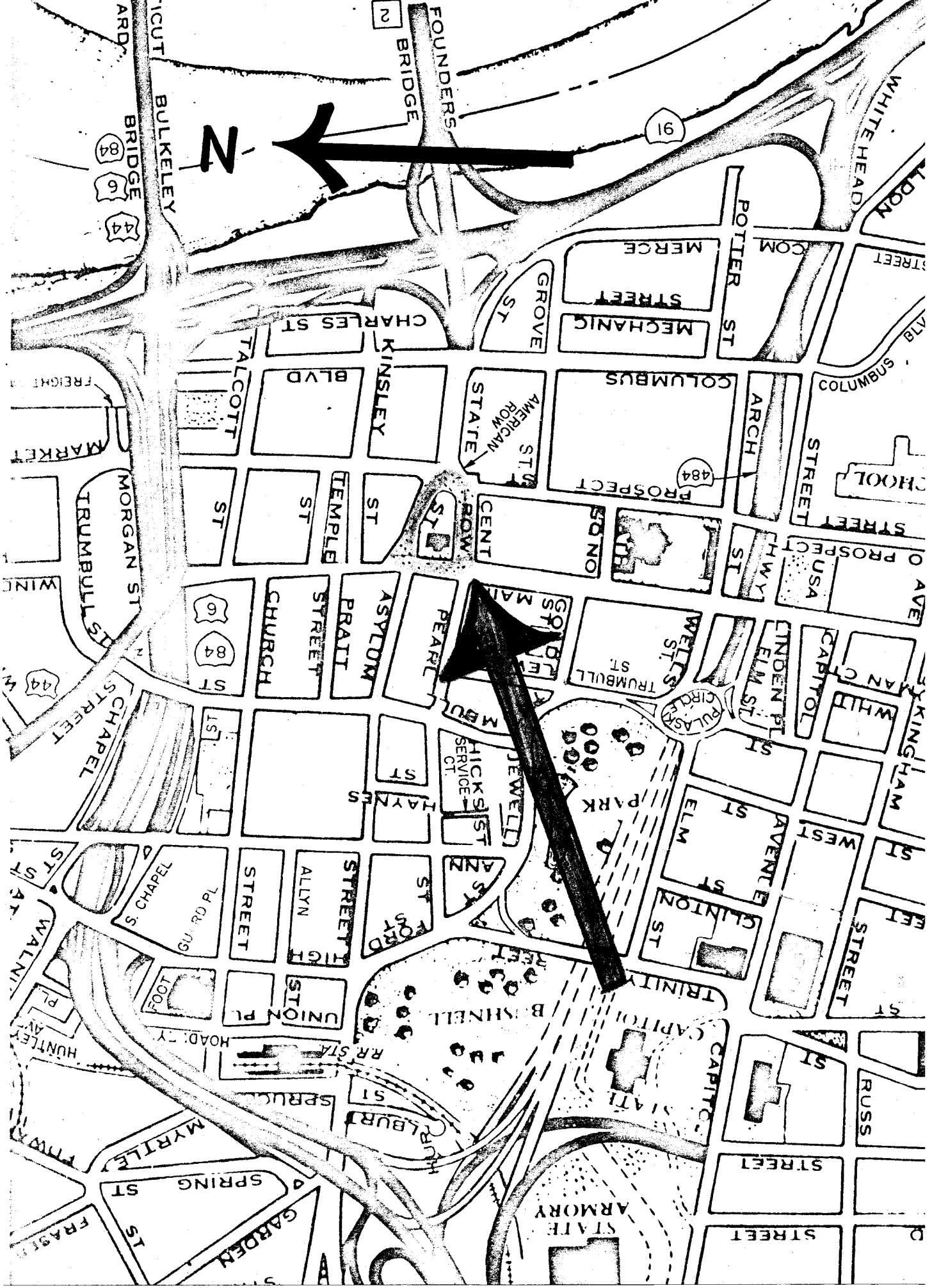
Nomination Certified: Cornelius W. Heine date

Nomination Affirmed: 9/7 date

Director, OAHP

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

☆ U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1973-729-147/1442-3-1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FOUNDERS BRIDGE
BULKELEY BRIDGE
WHITE HEAD
POTTER ST
MERCE
GROVE ST
MECHANIC STREET
CHARLES ST
KINSLEY BLVD
TALCOTT
COLUMBUS
ARCH
STATE ST
AMERICAN ROW
PROSPECT
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MORGAN ST
TRUMBULL ST
TEMPLE ST
CENT ROW
CHURCH STREET
ASYLUM
PRATT
PEARL
WELLS ST
TRUMBULL ST
PULASKI CIRCLE
CAPITOL
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