

VLR-4/18/78 NRHP-11/16/78

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

U. S. Customs House and Post Office

AND/OR COMMON

Petersburg City Hall (Preferred)

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

129-141 North Union Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Petersburg

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Fourth (Robert W. Daniel, Jr.)

STATE

Virginia

VICINITY OF

CODE

51

COUNTY

Petersburg

CODE

730

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

YES RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME City of Petersburg c/o City Manager

STREET & NUMBER

Petersburg City Hall

CITY, TOWN

Petersburg

VICINITY OF

STATE

Virginia 23803

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Petersburg City Hall

STREET & NUMBER

129-141 North Union Street

CITY, TOWN

Petersburg, Virginia 23803

STATE

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS (3) (see Continuation Sheet #1)**

TITLE

(1) Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory

DATE

1959

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR

SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D. C.

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<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 DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Situated on the corner of Tabb and Union Streets, the Petersburg City Hall is a rectangular (46'x 100'), three-story building, eight bays by three bays, three bays having been added to the south wall in 1908. The building is faced with Dinwiddie granite over brick core walls and is exemplary of the Italian Renaissance Revival style, as designed by federal architect Ammi B. Young.

The front (west) entrance is approached by four stone steps leading to a granite stoop at the front entry. The stoop projects 4½ feet from the wall and is flanked on each side by a 10-foot, cast-iron lamp pole with a glass-enclosed, cast-iron lamp on the top. The north entry is similarly approached and is also flanked by cast-iron lanterns, which are attached to the wall. The front (west) entrance is comprised of two single doors, each with twelve lights. Above each door is an arched transom of six lights blocked off by plywood paneling. The north exterior entrance consists of a double doorway with a six-light, arched transom above the entry. According to the original specifications and early photographs, several alterations have been made to the exterior doors. The north elevation originally consisted of three double doors, which have been replaced with windows.

All the windows are identical for each respective floor. The first-floor windows are treated as an arcade and are single-hung with only the bottom sash moveable, each total window being four lights by five high. The top of the window is framed in a stone arch, terminating at a molded spring projecting belt course which extends the perimeter of the building. The second-story windows are double-hung, 6/6 sash. A stone pediment caps each window; the jambs and sills are of molded stone. Below each sill are two scrolled iron brackets, also found on the third floor. The third-floor windows are similar to the second but lack the pediments.

A large stone denticulated cornice extends the entire perimeter of the building, broken by four chimneys--two on the front and two on the rear. The building is covered by a small hipped roof.

The interior floor plan has been altered several times, leaving almost no evidence of the original Customs House plan. The first floor is primarily a large open public area containing municipal service areas. The second and third floors are divided into city offices. A centrally located stairway serves the entire building. Cast-iron columns with ornamental composite capitals survive in varying states of preservation throughout the building. Some interior trim may survive from the original plan on the second floor.

RCC

# 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/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1856-9; addition 1908-10 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Ammi B. Young

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Petersburg City Hall stands as a superb example of mid-19th-century Renaissance Revival architecture. Constructed between the years 1856-1859, the building was designed by Ammi B. Young, then "Supervising Architect of the U. S. Treasury Department". Erected to serve as the U. S. Customs House and Post Office, the dignified granite "palazzo" is a commanding symbol of both federal authority in architecture and the city's antebellum economic prosperity.

On April 7, 1856, the Petersburg Daily Express contained the following notice:

The New Custom House. We omitted to state on Saturday morning that the Hon. Mr. Guthrie, Secretary of the Treasury, has appointed our townsman, James Minetree, Esq., superintendent of the construction of the new custom house about to be reared at the corner of Tabb and Union streets. The compensation has been fixed at \$6.00 per day; Sunday included, and the appointment is one that will render very general satisfaction.

The newspaper announcement is informative, not only for its pertinence to Petersburg but also as a commentary on governmental building practices of that time.

When Ammi B. Young was appointed "Supervising Architect of the U. S. Treasury Department", the office was created with the intention of efficiently centralizing governmental building activity within the Department of the Treasury. Prior to this time, buildings were constructed under the supervision of local commissions, generally utilizing local architects and superintendents, sometimes of dubious talent.<sup>2</sup> This method made for rather inconsistent building practices, with little or no federal control. Under the new office, concentrated architectural responsibility was given to the Department of the Treasury, with local superintendents acting on the construction level. Built during a two-and-a-half-year period, the Petersburg structure reflects Young's success as federal architect and the growing commercial importance of the city. The Petersburg building is one of a series of U. S. Customs Houses designed by Young and shows the architect's versatility in design. Two other Young customs house exist in Virginia : Richmond and Norfolk.

By an act of the General Assembly of March 16, 1850, Petersburg, with a population of 14,010, became the third independent city in Virginia.<sup>3</sup> It was during the 1850s that the city's tobacco factories expanded, with wholesale and commission houses flourishing. Cotton factories and iron foundries also boomed at this time. Prosperity was reflected in changes in the municipal streetscape, resulting from a surge of building activity. Tabb Street was cut at this time from Union to Market Street. The new Customs House was proudly sited at the southeast corner of the intersection of Tabb and Union.

(see continuation sheet #1)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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Petersburg City Hall, Petersburg, Virginia

CONTINUATION SHEET #1

ITEM NUMBER 6 & 8 PAGE 1

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

- (2) Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey  
1967, 1975, 1978 State  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission  
221 Governor Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219
- (3) Historic American Buildings Survey  
1968 Federal  
Library of Congress  
Washington, D. C.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

It is unfortunate that the city's economic prosperity was to be halted by the Civil War.

The Customs House served as a federal building for only a short period, becoming the headquarters of the Confederate Army for the duration of the conflict. During the seige of Petersburg, the building was used as a signal station, to view the fighting on the city's eastern front. On April 3, 1865, the day of the city's surrender, the Second Michigan Sharpshooters raised the U. S. flag over the building, bringing an end to one of the longest battles of the War.

In 1870, the federal government appropriated \$10,000 for repairs and improvements to the building, with Richmond builder John Gibson, Jr. acting as superintendent. Further work on the building occurred between 1908-1910, when a three-bay addition was added to the building's south elevation. The addition provided for an extensive remodeling of the interior but was most sympathetic to the exterior, which it duplicated. By 1936, the Post Office was moved to Franklin Street, and in 1938 the building became the Petersburg City Hall, a function it continues to serve.

RCC

<sup>1</sup> The Daily Express. Petersburg. April 7, 1856. A complete listing of newspaper extracts may be found in the HABS report of 1959.

<sup>2</sup> George N. Lamphere, The U.S. Government: Its Organization & Practical Workings (Philadelphia, 1881), pp. 92-95.

<sup>3</sup> James G. Scott and Edward A. Wyatt, Petersburg's Story - A History (Petersburg, Va., 1960).

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Lamphere, George N. The U. S. Government: Its Organization and Practical Workings. Philadelphia, 1881.
- McRae, John M. & Randall J. Biallas - "Petersburg: Old United States Custom House and Post Office." Historic American Buildings Survey Report, National Park Service, 1968, copy on file at Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission.
- Scott, James G. and Edward A. Wyatt. Petersburg's Story - A History. Petersburg, Va., 1960.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre  
 UTM REFERENCES

A	1 8	2 8 6 6 0 0	4 1 2 2 8 6 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property being nominated consists of approximately 1/3 of an acre and comprises a city lot measuring approximately 150'x99'.

### 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

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff  
 ORGANIZATION

DATE

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission  
 STREET & NUMBER

March, 1978

221 Governor Street  
 CITY OR TOWN

TELEPHONE

(804) 786-3144

Richmond

STATE

Virginia 23219

## 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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Tucker Hill, Executive Director  
 Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE APR 18 1978

### FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

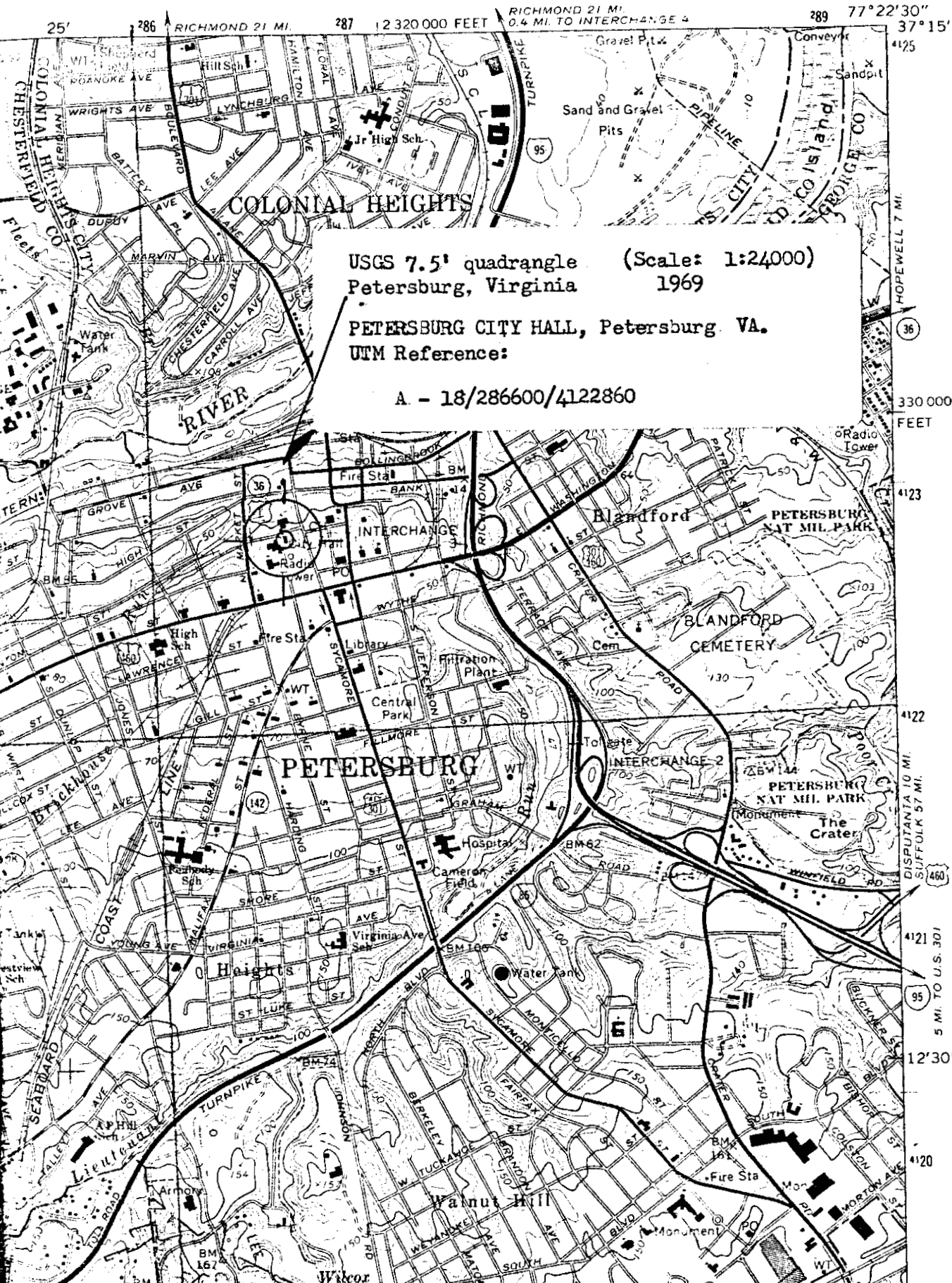
DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

PETERSBURG QUADRANGLE  
VIRGINIA  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

NW/4 PETERSBURG 15' QUADRANGLE

5598 IV SE  
(HOPEWELL)



USGS 7.5' quadrangle (Scale: 1:24000)  
Petersburg, Virginia 1969

PETERSBURG CITY HALL, Petersburg VA.  
UTM Reference:

A - 18/286600/4122860

37°15'  
4125  
HOPEWELL 7 MI.  
36  
330 000  
FEET  
4123  
4122  
DISPUTANTA 10 MI.  
SUFFOLK 57 MI.  
460  
4121  
5 MI. TO U.S. 301  
95  
12'30"  
4120

RICHMOND 21 MI.  
0.4 MI. TO INTERCHANGE 4

RICHMOND 21 MI.

77°22'30"

25'

286

287

12 320 000 FEET

289

37°15'

4125

HOPEWELL 7 MI.

36

330 000  
FEET

4123

4122

4121

12'30"

4120