

VLR-12/2/69 NRHP-4/17/70

Form 10-300
(July 1969)

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: Norfolk (in cit.)	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:
Customs House

AND/OR HISTORIC:
United States Customs House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
101 E. Main Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Norfolk

STATE Virginia	CODE 45	COUNTY: (in cit.)	CODE 710
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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"/> Building <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	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
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) _____ _____
Comments		_____	

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
United States Government, Bureau of Customs

STREET AND NUMBER:
101 E. Main Street

CITY OR TOWN: Norfolk	STATE: Virginia	CODE 45
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5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
City Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Norfolk	STATE: Virginia	CODE 45
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6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory

DATE OF SURVEY: 1958 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Washington	STATE: D. C.	CODE 08
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STATE: Virginia
COUNTY: Norfolk (in cit.)
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DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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 type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The following description of the design of the Norfolk Customs House is quoted from William S. Forrest's Historical and Descriptive Sketches of Norfolk and Vicinity (1852) and is appropriate today:

The design is by A. B. Young, Esq., Government Architect. The building will front on Main, running back one hundred and thirty-five feet to Broad Water Street, and will be three stories high. The front basement is to be used for a post-office, the entrance to which will be on each side of the main entrance to the first story, which, together with the rest of the building, will be used for a custom-house. A porch extending the whole width of the building and supported by six columns will ornament the front, in the centre of which the main entrance will be. On each side of this entrance, there will be an entrance to the post-office. The structure is to be of granite and is to be finished in a plain and substantial manner, but when completed according to the plan will be one of the most imposing and showy buildings in the city.

In general form the building is in the shape of a Roman temple with a pedimented Roman Corinthian portico on the facade and Corinthian pilasters around the other three sides. The whole sits on a rusticated base which acts as a podium. All the column and pilaster capitals are of cast iron. The description failed to mention one of the most impressive features of the building's interior which is a double staircase of open-work cast iron located at the end of the long central hall. The plan of the building is based on a modular grid with cast iron columns or pilasters at the grid intersections on all three levels.

Except for some minor alterations, mostly on the ground floor, the building survives in good condition.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

3. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1852-1859**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input checked="" 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

In 1850 a general appropriation bill passed by the United States Congress provided fifty thousand dollars for the construction of a new customs house in the city of Norfolk, a building greatly needed "in consequence of the dilapidated condition of the old one, and the anticipated increase in the commerce of the port." In 1852, when construction was about to begin, the appropriation was increased to one hundred thousand dollars. The designs for the building were supplied by Ammi B. Young (1798-1874), one of the most prominent and prolific American architects of the period. Young had been appointed Supervising Architect of the U. S. Government Office of Construction in 1852, and in the eight years he held the position he supplied designs for some seventy important government buildings throughout the country. His style ranged from the Greek Revival through the Italianate and to a more purely classic style which recalled the Palladianism of eighteenth-century England. The Norfolk Customs House is probably the most characteristic and ambitious example of Young's latter style. As with most of Young's buildings, the Customs House, with its free and imaginative use of stone and metal, is an early essay in fireproof construction.

Virtually unaltered since its completion in 1859, the Norfolk Customs House is a major architectural landmark for the city of Norfolk by an architect of national prominence.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Forrest, William S., Historical and Descriptive Sketches of Norfolk and Vicinity. Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1853.
 Hamlin, Talbot, Greek Revival Architecture in America. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1944.
 O'Neal, William B., Architecture in Virginia. New York: Walker & Company, Inc., 1968.
 Wodehouse, Lawrence, "Ammi B. Young, 1798-1874," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Vol. 25, No. 4 (December 1966).

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 0	0 0 0		36 0 50	76 0 17 35	
NE	0 0 0	0 0 0				
SE	0 0 0	0 0 0				
SW	0 0 0	0 0 0				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **Less than 10 acres.**

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:
 Staff, Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, James W. Moody, Jr., Director

ORGANIZATION: Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission DATE: November 7, 1969

STREET AND NUMBER:
 Room 1116, Ninth Street State Office Building

CITY OR TOWN: Richmond STATE: Virginia CODE: 45

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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 _____

Dr. Edward P. Alexander, Chairman
 Title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

Date: _____

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

 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

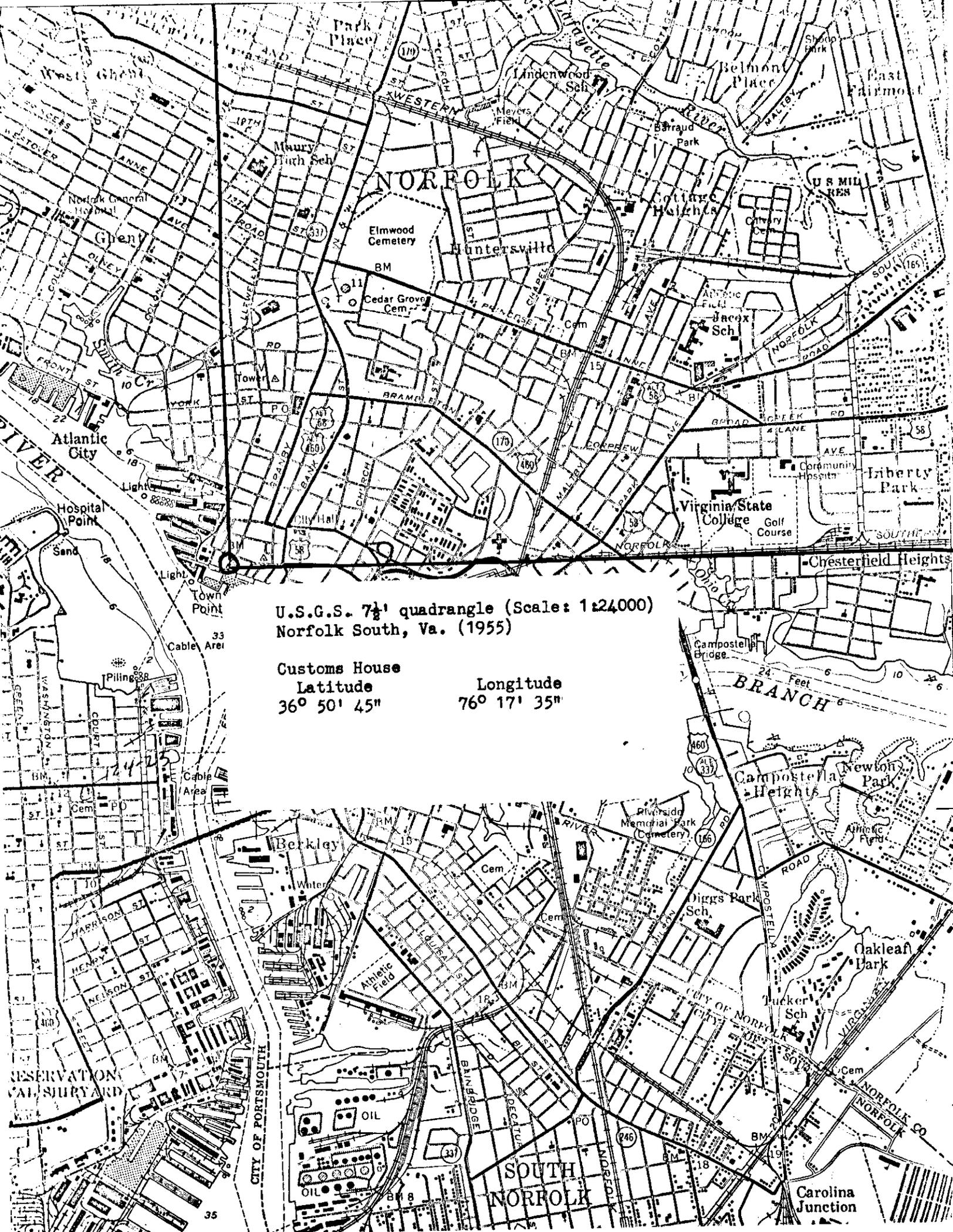
Date _____

ATTEST:

 Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



U.S.G.S. 7½' quadrangle (Scale: 1:24,000)
 Norfolk South, Va. (1955)

Customs House
 Latitude
 36° 50' 45"

Longitude
 76° 17' 35"

RESERVATION
 CAL SHURDART

CITY OF PORTSMOUTH

SOUTH
 NORFOLK

Carolina
 Junction

NORFOLK CO
 NORFOLK