# National Register of Historic Places
## Inventory – Nomination Form

### 1. Name
- **Common:** Bristol County Court House
- **And/or Historic:**

### 2. Location
- **Street and Number:** High Street
- **City or Town:** Bristol
- **State:** Rhode Island

### 3. Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category (Check One)</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Accessible to the Public</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>Building</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Public Acquisition:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>In Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td></td>
<td>Park</td>
<td>Unoccupied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Present Use (Check One or More as Appropriate):**
- Agricultural
- Commercial
- Educational
- Entertainment
- Government
- Industrial
- Military
- Park
- Religious
- Private Residence
- Religious
- Scientific
- Transportation
- Other (Specify)

### 4. Owner of Property
- **Owner's Name:** State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
- **Street and Number:** State House, 90 Smith Street
- **City or Town:** Providence
- **State:** Rhode Island

### 5. Location of Legal Description
- **Represents:** Courthouse, Registry of Deeds, Etc:
- **Bristol Town Clerk**
- **Street and Number:** Court Street
- **City or Town:** Bristol
- **State:** Rhode Island

### 6. Representation in Existing Surveys
- **Title of Survey:**
- **Date of Survey:**
- **Depository for Survey Records:**
- **Street and Number:**
- **City or Town:**
In 1816 a contract was made by the town of Bristol to have constructed a new court house, this to be of stone laid in mortar and faced with brick. It was so built, with dressed stone quoins, lintels and other trim, though now the brick walls are covered with stucco and the stone trim is painted a pink-tan.

In its central portion the building is a gabled one (the ridge running east and west), three bays wide and of three storeys—the third storey of much diminished height; its main entrance is on the west. The building, however, extends to north and south in two two-storey portions (appearing like wings but not actually being such), each of which carries a hipped roof halved and terminated against the sides of the higher gabled centre section. Surmounting this centre section is a square wooden tower of two stages, each railed, supporting an octagonal belfry or cupola with arched, louvred openings and a concave conical, or pagoda-type, roof.

The building may have been designed by Russell Warren, who worked much in Bristol, and it is a modest example of the Federal period. It has not suffered from exterior alteration except for the stucco, which is scarcely disfiguring. The main entrance, apparently originally unsheltered, now has a shallow wooden porch added within recent years, which in fact enhances the building; it is (by Wallis Howe) of sympathetic and carefully considered design. This porch occurs beneath the main original decorative feature of the west façade, a large, modestly rusticated arched window opening subdivided by wooden colonettes and interlaced "Gothick" mullions. Louvred window shutters or blinds are hung outside the other windows. Perhaps there were such blinds originally, but the present ones are obviously modern replacements of thin mill-work and, moreover, are hung inside-out. The building's exterior is well maintained and has a crisp, clean appearance.

Internally, the building is intact except for minor changes required for convenience or for official procedure as, for example, in 1836, when the ground floor was used for town offices, and in 1870, when the judges' bench was shifted from one side of the court to the other, causing a fireplace to be closed. The west entrance leads into a vestibule and large hall which open to offices at the rear and sides of the ground floor. Two staircases at the front corners of the hall lead to the courtroom occupying, unobstructed, the entire second floor. The ceiling of this large room is supported only at the sides within the room, but is otherwise held up by a trusswork of heavy beams in the attic. The "third storey" of the centre portion of the court house contains only that trusswork, and no rooms, in spite of its windows. The interior of the building has always been notably lacking in forms of adornment, having only the simplest of mouldings in necessary places.
This is one of the five court houses or "state houses" in which, up to 1855, the General Assembly of Rhode Island met in prescribed rotation. The Assembly first met in Bristol in 1785, thus asserting that town's importance as a county centre (the area had been annexed from Massachusetts in 1747). Though not really large and not known to have been a background for great legislative or judicial events, personalities or decisions, the court house was evidently from the beginning intended to provide Bristol with a public building of some visual importance and the legislature and judiciary with dignified accommodations.

It remains a part of the state's history and of Bristol's, as well as being a fine example of Federal architecture and an adornment to the town common.
9. **MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**


10. **GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corner</th>
<th>Latitude</th>
<th>Longitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NW</td>
<td>41° 39' 66&quot; N</td>
<td>71° 16' 17&quot; W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NE</td>
<td>41° 39' 66&quot; N</td>
<td>71° 16' 17&quot; W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>41° 39' 66&quot; N</td>
<td>71° 16' 17&quot; W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW</td>
<td>41° 39' 66&quot; N</td>
<td>71° 16' 17&quot; W</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**APPARENT ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:** Less than one acre

11. **FORM PREPARED BY**

- **NAME AND TITLE:** Richard B. Harrington, Consultant
- **ORGANIZATION:** Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission
- **DATE:** January 1st, 1971
- **STREET AND NUMBER:** State House, 90 Smith Street
- **CITY OR TOWN:** Providence
- **STATE:** Rhode Island, 02903
- **CODE:** 04

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 [ ]

**Address:**

**Name:**

**Title:**

**Date:**

13. **NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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

**Signature:**

**Address:**

**Name:**

**Title:**

**Date:**

**ATTEST:**

**Signature:**

**Address:**

**Name:**

**Title:**

**Date:**
## National Register of Historic Places

### Property Map Form

*(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry Number</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>FOR NPS USE ONLY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry Number</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1. Name

**Common:** Bristol County Court House

### 2. Location

**Street and Number:**

High Street

**City or Town:**

Bristol

**State:**

Rhode Island

### 3. Map Reference

**Source:**

U. S. Geological Survey

**Scale:** 1: 24,000

**Date:** 1955

### 4. Requirements

**To be included on all maps:**

1. Property boundaries where required.
2. North arrow.
3. Latitude and longitude reference.
**PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM**

*(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. NAME</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COMMON:</td>
<td>Bristol County Court House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AND/OR HISTORIC:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. LOCATION</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STREET AND NUMBER:</td>
<td>High Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CITY OR TOWN:</td>
<td>Bristol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STATE:</td>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
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<tr>
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<td>RI.94</td>
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<td>COUNTY:</td>
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<tr>
<td>CODE:</td>
<td>001</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. PHOTO REFERENCE</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHOTO CREDIT:</td>
<td>Rhode Island Development Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE OF PHOTO:</td>
<td>c. 1969</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEGATIVE FILED AT:</td>
<td>Rhode Island Development Council, Roger Williams Building, Naves Street, Providence Rhode Island, 02908.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. IDENTIFICATION</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.</td>
<td>main entrance on west façade, showing surmounting window</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**1. NAME**

- **COMMON:** Bristol County Court House
- **AND/OR HISTORIC:**

**2. LOCATION**

- **STREET AND NUMBER:** High Street
- **CITY OR TOWN:** Bristol
- **STATE:** Rhode Island
- **CODE:** 1
- **COUNTY:** Bristol
- **CODE:** 001

**3. PHOTO REFERENCE**

- **PHOTO CREDIT:** Clifford M. Renshaw, III
- **DATE OF PHOTO:** 1971
- **NEGATIVE FILED AT:** Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, State House, 90 Smith Street, Providence, R. I., 02903

**4. IDENTIFICATION**

- **DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.:**
  
  West elevation.