

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Boston Public Garden

and or common

2. Location

street & number Beacon, Charles, Boylston, and Arlington Streets not for publication

city, town Boston vicinity of

state Massachusetts code 025 county Suffolk code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Recreation

(botanical garden)

4. Owner of Property

name City of Boston

street & number City Hall

city, town Boston vicinity of state Massachusetts

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Suffolk County Registry of Deeds

street & number Pemberton Square

city, town Boston state Massachusetts

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Boston Landmarks Commission Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1969 federal state county local

depository for survey records Boston Landmarks Commission, City Hall

city, town Boston state Massachusetts

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## 7. Description

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<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

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### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

#### SUMMARY<sup>1</sup>

The Public Garden has existed within virtually its present bounds since the land was definitively dedicated to the purpose in 1859 by a 60-1 vote of the citizens of Boston, although a 40-foot strip along the south was absorbed by Boylston Street in 1914 for subway and street construction.

The principal feature of the Public Garden is a free-form 6-acre pond, crossed near the middle by an iron footbridge and plied in summer by the pedal-powered Swan Boats. The pond and the walks still closely adhere to the Meacham plan of 1859, as may be observed by comparing the historic and modern-day plans that accompany this study. Because of the botanical and horticultural origins of the Public Garden, the plantings are especially important.

Set amid the Garden's landscape are a number of monuments, particularly statues. The most prominent is an equestrian statue of George Washington, at the Arlington Street entrance opposite the Commonwealth Avenue mall. Also important is J.Q.A. Ward's Ether Monument. Surrounding the Public Garden on three sides (the Boylston Street side is missing because of the 1914 subway-street construction) is a handsome, though deteriorating, Victorian cast-iron fence. Except for the sculpture, the Garden is little changed from the mid-19th century.

#### HISTORIC FEATURES OF THE PUBLIC GARDEN\*

##### Granite Basins with Fountains (A) (1861)

By Ebenezer Johnson.

##### Equestrian Statue of George Washington (B) (1869)

The artist was Thomas Ball. This statue is well-known sculptor-painter Ball's best-acclaimed work.<sup>2</sup>

##### Japanese Lantern (C) (1905)

This 16th-century object, from the palace of Gen. Toyatomi Hedeyoshi, was a gift by Bunkio Matsuki.

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\*As indicated by letters and numbers on the accompanying plan of the Public Garden.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion
1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science
1500-1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture
1600-1699	architecture	education	military	social
1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	commerce	exploration settlement	philosophy	theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	communications	industry	politics government	transportation
		invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
				Recreation
<b>Specific dates</b> 1839; 1859	<b>Builder Architect</b> John Cadness; George V. Meacham			(botanical garde

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

#### Summary<sup>1</sup>

The Public Garden was the first public botanical garden in the United States. Over the years, it has become a showplace for important sculpture. And it is known far and wide for the Swan Boats that ply its pond. As Walter Muir Whitehill has noted:

the municipal gardeners have been both careful in their work and conservative in their tastes, so that the Public Garden's gaudily brilliant flower beds, like its swan boats, irresistibly recall a French park of the Second Empire.<sup>1</sup>

#### History

West of the Boston Common until the 1830s were marshlands, the nearer parts of which were granted by the town to ropemakers in 1794. This ropewalk property was repurchased by the City in 1824 and reserved for public use, although debate raged for 32 years over title to the property, what the bounds of the area should be, and exactly to what purposes it should be put.<sup>2</sup>

In 1839 the City granted a group of 17 horticulturalists, headed by Horace Gray, permission to establish a botanic garden on this land. Gray, who had a collection of camellias and various varieties of hothouse grapes, envisioned on the site a botanic garden similar to those in European cities. Gray and his group imported an English landscape gardener, John Cadness, to supervise the work of ornamenting the grounds.

The group built a greenhouse and set out various ornamental trees and plants. A large circus building, just north of Beacon Street and west of Charles Street, was converted into a conservatory for plants and birds and was a great attraction until fire destroyed it.<sup>3</sup>

The Botanic Garden formed the nucleus of the present Public Garden, but the effort was hampered by the Back Bay landfill projects under way in the area just to the west. Financial reverses caused the group to return the Garden to the City. No trace of the Cadness garden remains.

During the 1860s, the Garden was finally landscaped, according to a design by George V. Meacham in 1859. By 1880, there were 1500 trees and 90,000 bedding plants.<sup>4</sup> The Swan Boats, designed by Robert Paget, began operation in 1877.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 24

Quadrangle name Boston South

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 

1	9
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3	2	9	5	2	0
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4	6	9	1	1	8	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B 

1	9
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3	2	9	5	6	0
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4	6	9	0	7	5	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C 

1	9
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3	2	9	4	0	0
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4	6	9	0	7	0	0
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D 

1	9
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3	2	9	2	5	0
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4	6	9	0	0	0	0
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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

The plot bounded by Beacon Street on the north, Charles Street on the east, Boylston Street on the south, and Arlington Street on the west.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title James H. Charleton, Historian

organization History Division, National Park Service date November 1985

street & number 1100 L Street, NW telephone (202) 343-8165

city or town Washington state DC 20013-7127

# 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 \_\_\_\_\_

title \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

For NPS use only

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

date \_\_\_\_\_

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

6

Page

2

Representation in Existing Surveys

Title: National Register of Historic Places

Date: 1974

Federal

Depository for survey records: National Park Service, 1100 L Street, NW

City, Town: Washington

State: DC

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

7

Page

2

Statue of Edward Everett Hale (D) (1913)

The artist was Bela L. Pratt. Mr. Hale, a noted preacher and writer, and author of "The Man Without a Country," was chaplain of the United States Senate in 1903-09.

Ether Monument (E) (1867-68)

The sculptor was John Quincy Adams Ward, "the sculptor-laureate" of the late 19th century.<sup>3</sup> The monument, an early example of Ward's work, was a gift to the City by Thomas Lee to commemorate the early use of ether at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston in October 1846.

George Robert White Memorial (F) (1924)

The artist was Daniel Chester French, "America's leading sculptor" (best known for the seated Lincoln in the Lincoln Memorial).<sup>4</sup> The architect was Henry Bacon. The memorial is a female figure in bronze casting "bread upon the waters." George Robert White left \$5 million in trust to the City "for creating works of public utility and beauty for the use and enjoyment of the inhabitants of the City of Boston."

Statue of Rev. William Ellery Channing (G) (1903)

The artist was Herbert Adams of New York, and the statue was given to the City by John Foster, a member of the Arlington Street Church. Mr. Foster directed that the statue be placed in the Garden across from the church because Channing, the "Father of American Unitarianism," had been the pastor of the Federal Street Church, the predecessor of the Arlington Street Church.

Statue of Charles Sumner (H) (1878)

Thomas Ball also sculpted this statue. Long-time U.S. Senator Sumner was a champion of emancipation and a supporter of Horace Mann's efforts to improve public education in Massachusetts.

Statue of Kosciuszko (I) (1927)

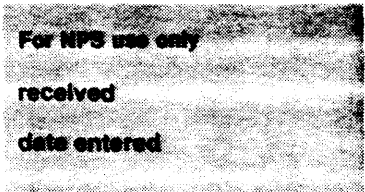
The artist was Mrs. T.A.R. Kitson. Thaddeus Kosciuszko was born in Poland in 1746. He joined the United States Army in 1776, and General Washington made him a colonel and his adjutant in the American War for Independence.

Statue of Thomas Cass (J) (1899)

The artist was Richard E. Brooks. Cass organized a regiment of Irish volunteers and was colonel of the 9th Massachusetts Infantry, the "Fighting Ninth," during the Civil War; he died at Malvern Hill, Virginia, on July 1, 1862.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number

7

Page

3

Statue of Wendell Phillips (K) (1915)

The artist was Daniel Chester French. Phillips was a follower of William Lloyd Garrison in the anti-slavery movement. After the Civil War he aided prohibition, women's suffrage, and various penal and administrative reforms.

Flagpole (L) (1922)

Set in a bronze base designed by A.E. Austin.

Iron Fence (1865)

Restored according to the original design in 1978.

Bridge (1869)

This structure is of stone and iron.

Swan Boats

Designed by Robert Paget in 1877, they are still operated by the Paget family. The oldest in use dates from 1918.<sup>5</sup>

Fountains

The 20th-century fountains are by Anna Coleman Ladd, Bashka Paeff, and Mary E. Moore.

NOTABLE TREES IN THE PUBLIC GARDEN <sup>6</sup>

- |                           |                            |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. American Beech         | 2. European Beech          |
| 3. Pyramidal Beech        | 4. Rivers' Purple Beech    |
| 5. Weeping European Beech | 6. European White Birch    |
| 7. Western Catalpa        | 8. Kwanzan Cherry          |
| 9. Kentucky Coffee        | 10. Tea Crabapple          |
| 11. Pink Dogwood          | 12. American Elm           |
| 13. Belgian Elm           | 14. Camperdown Elm         |
| 15. English Elm           | 16. Rock Elm               |
| 17. Scotch or Wych Elm    | 18. Thurlow Weeping Willow |
| 19. Maidenhair Tree       | 20. Sentry Ginkgo          |
| 21. Goldenchain Tree      | 22. Goldenrain Tree        |
| 23. Sweetgum              | 24. Common Horsechestnut   |
| 25. Katsura Tree          | 26. Japanese Larch         |
| 27. Amur Maackia          | 28. Saucer Magnolia        |
| 29. Silver Maple          | 30. Norway Maple           |

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

7

Page

4

- |                              |                          |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 31. Red Maple                | 32. Bur or Mossycup Oak  |
| 33. Pagoda Tree              | 34. Weeping Pagoda Tree  |
| 35. Van Geert Poplar         | 36. Dawn Redwood         |
| 37. Giant Sequoia            | 38. Yellow Wood          |
| 39. Wisconsin Weeping Willow | 40. Redstem White Willow |

CONDITION:

The statuary, fountains, and iron fence of the Garden have suffered from environmental pollution, but considerable progress has been made in their treatment and protection.

There are today some 125 different kinds of trees in the Garden, among them many mature and handsome specimens of great age. Many are elms, a species now endangered by Dutch elm disease, but all of the Garden's trees -- oaks, ginkgos, beeches, catalpas, even the great Pagoda Tree, one of the finest in the country -- suffer the effects of pollution and constant foot traffic.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>This description, except as noted, has been adapted and edited from the National Register of Historic Places joint nomination of the Boston Common and Public Garden prepared by Robert Rettig in 1974.

<sup>2</sup>"Thomas Ball," p. 25, in George C. Groce and David H. Wallace, The New-York Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America, 1564-1860 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957).

<sup>3</sup>"John Quincy Adams Ward," p. 661, in ibid.

<sup>4</sup>"Daniel Chester French," Concise Dictionary of American Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), p. 317.

<sup>5</sup>Paul Paget, "The Story of the Swan Boats," p. 6, in The Promenade (Boston: Friends of the Public Garden, 1982).

<sup>6</sup>From the list in "The Public Garden, Boston, Massachusetts" (Boston: Friends of the Public Garden, 1985), an interpretive leaflet.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

They are unique boats that utilize bicycle propulsion principles. They were inspired by the "Schwanboot" in Wagner's Lohengrin. The oldest in service dates from 1918, the newest from 1958. Adm. Richard E. Byrd was a particularly avid passenger. Shirley Temple drew quite a crowd in 1938 on her first ride.<sup>5</sup>

Beginning with fountains in 1861, the Garden became a showplace for public sculpture (inventoried in the Description section of this study), including works by Thomas Ball, Daniel Chester French, and John Quincy Adams Ward. It also still contains an excellent collection of trees (also inventoried in the Description).

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Walter Muir Whitehill, Boston: A Topographical History (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 156.

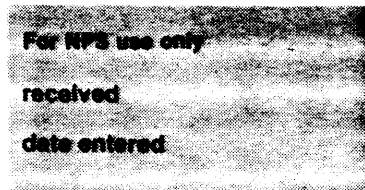
<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 98, 142-145, 156.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 144-145.

<sup>4</sup>"The Public Garden, Boston, Massachusetts" (Friends of the Public Garden, 1985), unpaginated leaflet.

<sup>5</sup>Paul Paget, "The Story of the Swan Boats," pp. 5, 6, in The Promenade (Boston: Friends of the Public Garden, 1977).

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet Item number 9 Page 1

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Groce, George C., and David H. Wallace. The New-York Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America, 1564-1860. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1957.

Howe, M.A. DeWolfe. "Washington Mounted," pp. 9, 11, in The Promenade. Boston: Friends of the Public Garden, 1977.

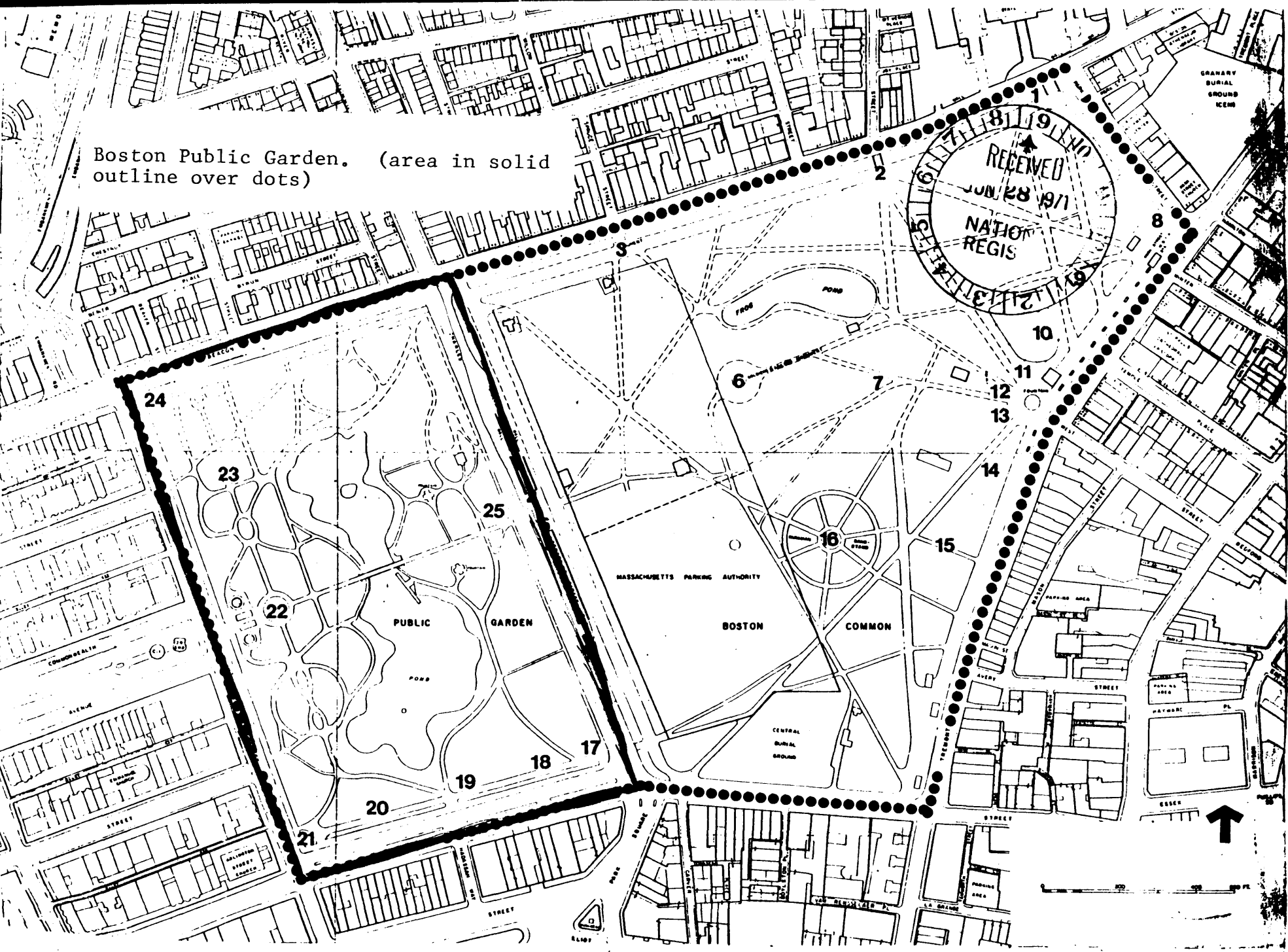
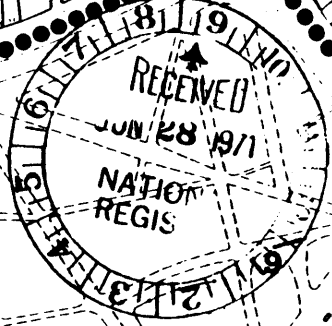
Lee, Henry. "Citizens at Arms," pp. 17, 20, 22, 25, in The Promenade. Boston: Friends of the Public Garden, 1977.

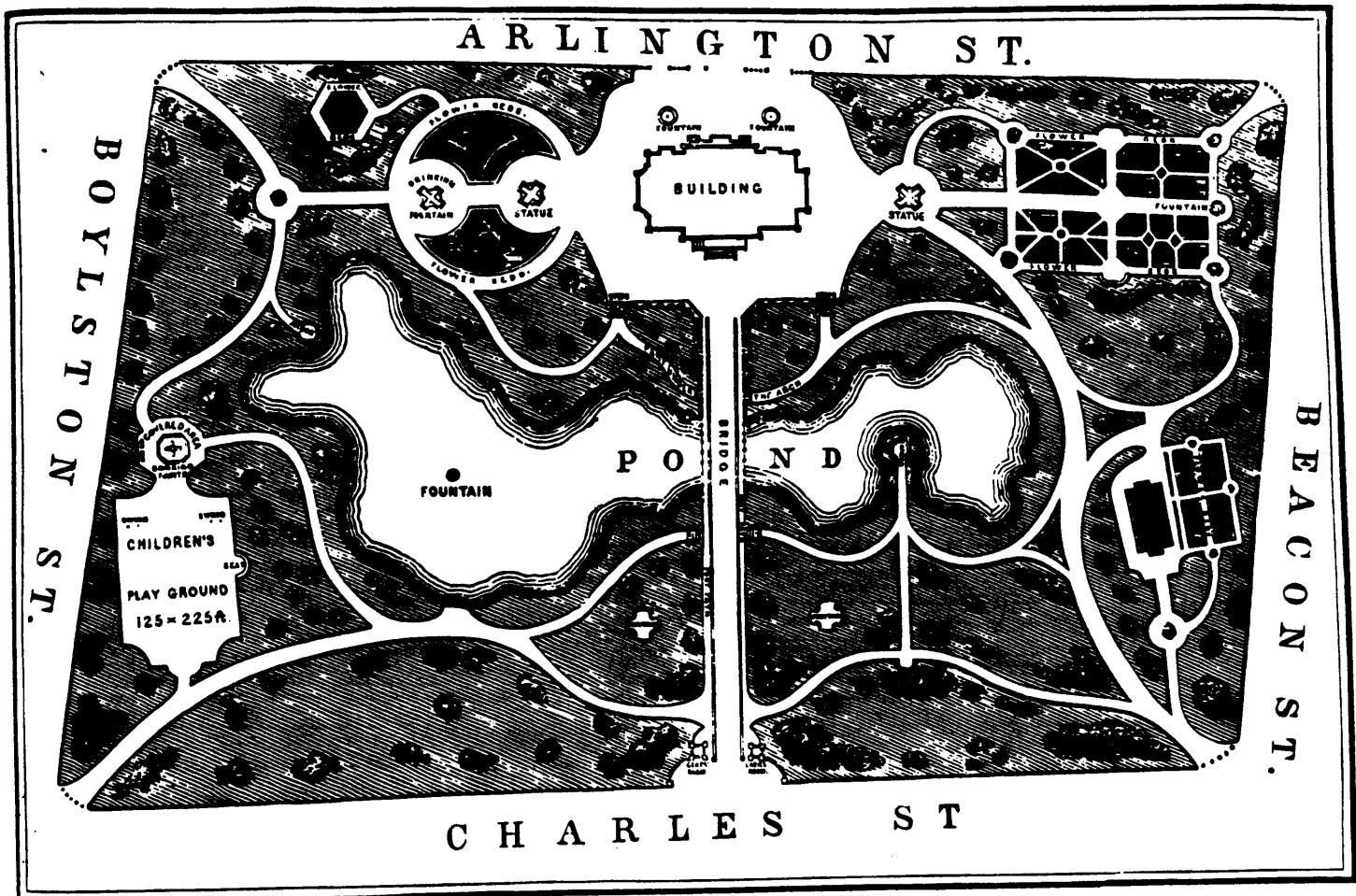
"Mr. Meacham's Garden," Boston Evening Gazette (November 12, 1859), reprinted at pp. 10, 13-14, in The Promenade. Boston: Friends of the Public Garden, 1982.

Paget, Paul. "The Story of the Swan Boats," pp. 5-6, in The Promenade. Boston: Friends of the Public Garden, 1977.

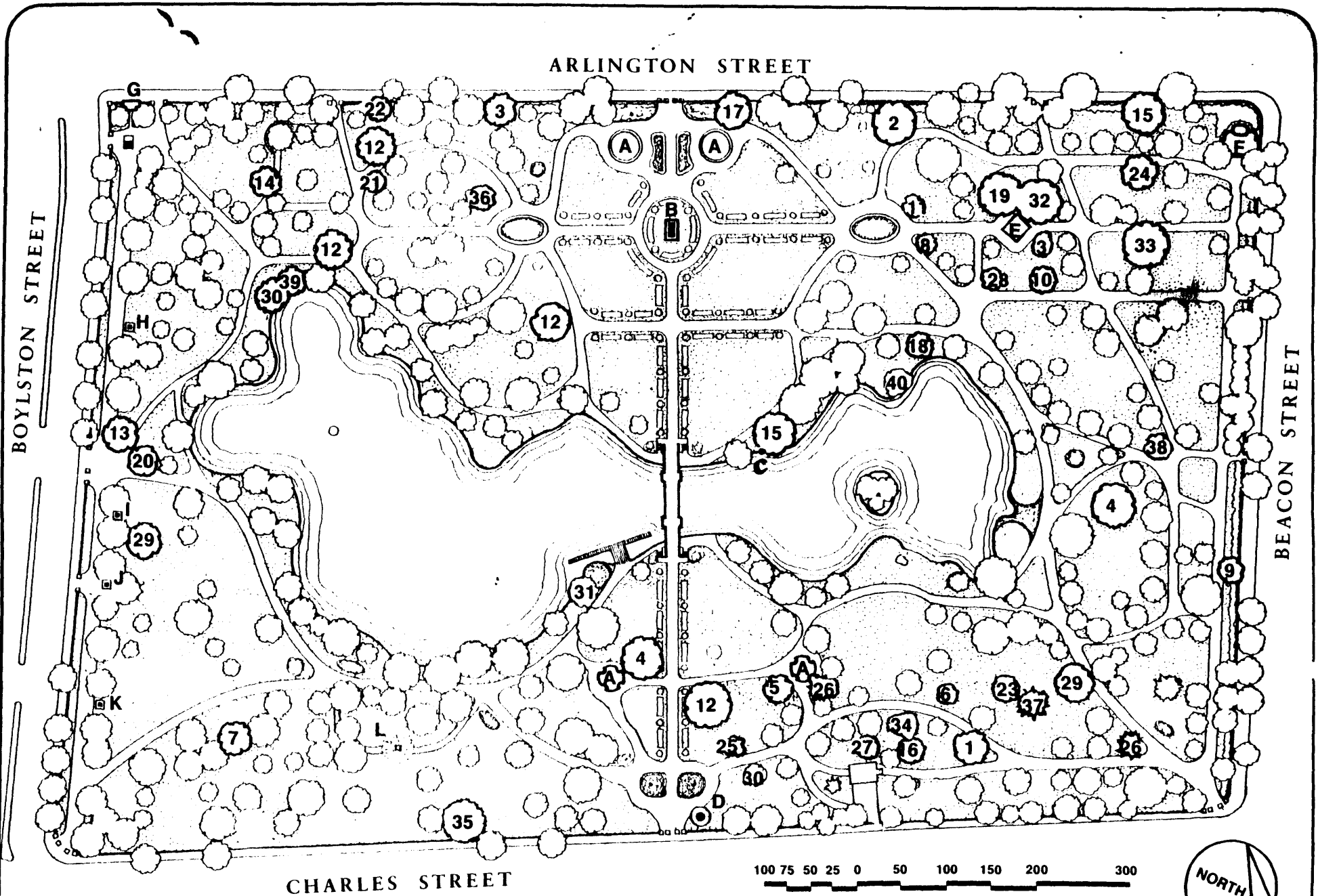
Whitehill, Walter Muir. Boston: A Topographical History. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968.

Boston Public Garden. (area in solid outline over dots)





Meacham Plan, Boston Public Garden, 1859.



Current plan of the Boston Public Garden.  
 (From interpretive leaflet published by  
 Friends of the Public Garden, 1985)