

PH0026760

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Massachusetts	
COUNTY: Suffolk	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Massachusetts General Hospital

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
South Building, Massachusetts General Hospital 34 6/4/85

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Fruit Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Boston

STATE: Massachusetts CODE: COUNTY: Suffolk CODE:

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<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"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) Hospital	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious		
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
Massachusetts General Hospital

STREET AND NUMBER:  
45 Milk Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Boston

STATE: Massachusetts CODE:

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Registry of Deeds, Suffolk County

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Pemberton Square

CITY OR TOWN:  
Boston

STATE: Massachusetts CODE:

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Historic American Buildings Survey (3 photos)

DATE OF SURVEY: 1941  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Division of Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Washington 20540

CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington 20540

STATE: D. C. CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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**7. DESCRIPTION**

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

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

Built of granite in coursed ashlar, the Massachusetts General Hospital is a long oblong structure, two stories over elevated rusticated basement, with a central projecting and pedimented giant Ionic portico, two wings, and a hipped roof. Above the pediment of the south portico rises a square attic story, with corner chimneys and crowned with a large saucer dome.

A description of the hospital, written in 1824, follows:

"This edifice is 163 feet in length, and 54 in its greatest breadth, having a portico of eight Ionic columns in front [on the south elevation]. It is built of white Chelmsford granite, wrought with uncommon labour, the columns and their capitals being of the same material. In the centre of the two principal stories are the rooms appropriated to the superintendent, the apothecary, and other officers of the institution. Above these is the operating theatre, lighted from the dome, and fitted up with semicircular seats for spectators. Beneath is the kitchen with its various appendages, the bathing room, wash room, laundry, &c. The stair-cases and floorings of the entries are of stone. The whole house is supplied with heat by air-flues from furnaces in the cellar, and with water by pipes and a forcing pump. Various modern improvements in domestic economy, conducive to cleanliness and comfort are introduced, together with such auxiliary apparatus for the sick as is found useful in the management of their diseases. The wings of the buildings, in the different stories, are divided into wards and sick rooms, which are fitted up in the neatest and best manner. The number of beds contained in them for patients is at present about a hundred..."

In 1844-46 the two original wings, each five bays long, were doubled in size by the addition of five-bay long extensions, constructed on the main axis, to their east and west ends. Built of granite and in the same Classical Revival style as the Bulfinch Hospital, the added wings made no significant change in the original design of the south (main) facade. The interior of the original hospital, however, was also modernized in 1844-46 and almost nothing original (prior to 1846) remains excepting the two stair halls with their fine cantilevered stone stairways.

The Bulfinch Building today is located in the center of a great hospital complex that presses in heavily upon it from every side. Huge modern hospital buildings now surround the original structure. The Bulfinch Building is in excellent condition, now largely used for clinical research, and portions of the structure are open to visitors.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century  
 15th Century |  17th Century |  19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

1818-23 September 30, 1846

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Science  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____                                    |
| <input 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

(The Either Dome portion of Massachusetts General Hospital was declared eligible for the Registry of National Historic Landmarks in 1965, under Theme XX, Scientific Discoveries and Inventions).

Designed by Charles Bulfinch in 1817 and erected by Alexander Parris in 1818-23, Massachusetts General Hospital is a superb example of a public building built in the Classical Revival style. Massachusetts General Hospital is also a major and rare example of an early 19th century large city hospital.

Although nearly doubled in size by the addition of matching wings in 1844-46, the exterior of the south (front) facade of the original center section of the existing structure, now known as the Bulfinch Pavilion has been preserved virtually unaltered. The interior of the hospital, however, has been greatly reworked and very little of the 1818-23 work remains.

History

On August 20, 1810 Doctors James Jackson and John C. Warren sent a circular letter to "a number of respectable gentlemen" of Boston pointing out the need for "a hospital for the reception of lunatics and other sick persons." Subsequently these functions were separated, with the insane confined in McLean Asylum (1816-18) in Charlestown and the sick receiving treatment in Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston's West End, on the bank of the Charles River. In February, 1811 a charter for the hospital was granted by the State legislature ~~but~~ the War of 1812 intervened, preventing further progress. In December, 1816 and early 1817, however, the sum of \$107,000 was quickly subscribed to build a general hospital. In December, 1816 the noted Boston architect Charles Bulfinch was sent to the middle Atlantic States to study the construction and administration of city hospitals in New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. In his report of March 15, 1817, the architect wrote:

"At the present I recommend that no wards of the infirmary should contain more ~~than~~ 20 patients, and that a larger number ~~than~~ usual of small rooms should be provided for the sick who wish to be retired. I am sensible that this may lead to the necessity of employing a greater number of nurses, but it will, in my opinion, be much more agreeable to the domestic habits of our people, to the feelings of the sick and of their friends.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Architecture, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Baltimore, 1963), 84.

Charles A. Place, Charles Bulfinch, Architect and Citizen (Boston, 1925), 64, 211, 233, 237-40.

Talbot F. Hamlin, Greek Revival Architecture in America (New York, 1944), 98-99.

Walter H. Kilham, Boston After Bulfinch, An Account of Its Architecture, 1800-1900 (Cambridge, 1948), 11.

**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 ' "		42 0 21 , 48 "	71 0 04 , 08 "	
NE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SW	0 ' "	0 ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1 acres

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
Charles W. Snell, Survey Historian

ORGANIZATION: Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service      DATE: 6/19/70

STREET AND NUMBER:  
801 19th Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington      STATE: D. C.      CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

**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 \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

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 \_\_\_\_\_

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8. Significance (1) Massachusetts General Hospital

The building must consist as usual, of a centre & wings; it will be a subject of your consideration, whether the centre shall be first erected, with rooms for the **keeper**, nurses and a few sick, or whether the wings shall be first undertaken; the state of the funds must influence your determination."

On November 3, 1817 the building committee offered a \$100 "reward for a plan of a hospital," the design to be governed by a Resolve of the General Court that the building be "of stone, and of that kind called granite," hammered and fitted in the state prison in Charlestown. On January 25, 1818 the plan submitted by Bulfinch was accepted, "with slight modifications." The construction, **supervised by Alexander Parris, began on July 4, 1818 and the center and east wing were occupied on September 3, 1821.** The west wing and portico were completed in 1823 and the hospital then had a capacity of 73 beds. The total cost of construction was only \$70,000 - a sum reflecting the low cost of stonework done at the state prison by convict labor.

As in all his architectural commissions, Bulfinch creatively used well known architectural formations and, in the case of the General Hospital, produced a structure designed in the mature Classical Revival style. His design for the hospital may have been based on Plate 15 of John Soane's Designs in Architecture (London, 1778) and also on **Robert Adam's Edinburgh Registry Office.** The concept of a clinical amphitheater under the dome was probably derived from the Pennsylvania Hospital, completed in 1805, which Bulfinch visited on his trip of 1816.

In 1844-46 Massachusetts General Hospital was nearly doubled in size by the addition of two five-bay-long granite wings, built on the main axis and in the Classical Revival style, to the east and west ends of the original structure. Designed by George Perkins, the new wings contained large wards with central fireplaces on each floor. Most of the interior of the original Bulfinch Pavilion was also heavily revised during the 1844-46 revision and further interior changes have been made since that date.

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General Hospital

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

9. Major Bibliographical References for Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston:  
Massachusetts, A Guide to Its Places and People (American Guide Series)  
(Boston, 1937), 83, 141.
- Henry-Russell Hitchcock, A Guide to Boston Architecture, 1637-1954 (New York, 1954), 5.
- Joseph E. Garland, Every Man Our Neighbor: A Brief History of the Massachusetts General Hospital, 1811-1961 (Boston, 1961).
- Harold Kirker, The Architecture of Charles Bulfinch (Cambridge, 1969).  
311-317.