

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

DATA SHEET

RECEIVED

JAN 17 1978

DATE ENTERED

APR 20 1978

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts

AND/OR COMMON
same**2 LOCATION**STREET & NUMBER
19 Prescott StreetCITY, TOWN
Cambridge

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
8th MassachusettsSTATE
MassachusettsCODE
025COUNTY
MiddlesexCODE
017**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT
☒ BUILDING(S)
☐ STRUCTURE
☐ SITE
☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC
☒ PRIVATE

☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS
☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED
☐ UNOCCUPIED
☐ WORK IN PROGRESS
ACCESSIBLE
☒ YES: RESTRICTED
☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED
☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE ☐ MUSEUM
☐ COMMERCIAL ☐ PARK
☒ EDUCATIONAL ☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE
☐ ENTERTAINMENT ☐ RELIGIOUS
☐ GOVERNMENT ☐ SCIENTIFIC
☐ INDUSTRIAL ☐ TRANSPORTATION
☐ MILITARY ☐ OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTYNAME
President & Fellows, Harvard University

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
Cambridge

VICINITY OF

STATE
Massachusetts 02138**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Middlesex County Registry of DeedsSTREET & NUMBER
208 Cambridge StreetCITY, TOWN
CambridgeSTATE
Massachusetts**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**TITLE
Inventory of Historic Assets of the CommonwealthDATE
1967☐ FEDERAL ☒ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS Massachusetts Historical CommissionCITY, TOWN
BostonSTATE
Massachusetts

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☒ EXCELLENT
☐ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☒ UNALTERED
☐ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Carpenter Center, located between Prescott and Quincy Streets, is flanked by the buildings of the Fogg Art Museum and the Harvard Faculty Club. Its height and projections are carefully related to its neighbors but it strongly differs from them in form and material.

The center is a reinforced concrete building with basement, four main stories and a penthouse studio. All its roofs are flat. Its total usable area approximates 33,700 sq. feet. Its plan is organized around a central ramp (which traverses the third floor level), a staircase tower at the southwest corner of the building, and an elevator tower opposite in the southeast corner. The ramp in a very special way links the building to its surroundings into which it extends as in a welcoming gesture. It conducts visitors directly to the exhibition space without the need to pass through any other part of the building. With striking effect the ramp penetrates the building through a two-story open gallery and permits views into and through adjoining areas of the building.

The center in its basement houses a lecture hall, darkrooms and areas for work with film; on the other floors there are a large lobby, studios, a machine workshop, an exhibition room and several seminar rooms and offices. Some offices were created by unobtrusive later remodelings. The studios on the second and third floor are roughly mandolin-shaped in plan; they jut out on either side of a central portion of the building which is square in plan.

With two free-form studio wings protruding on either side of the central cubical volume (95x95x53 ft), the mass of the building is strongly modeled and has a powerful visual impact, all the more so because the central portion has been placed diagonally on its site. The building is dimensioned according to the "Modulor", a system of proportioning invented by Corbusier.

Round concrete piers are used throughout the building, and many parts of the center seem to hover atop their slender supports. Room heights are 12 ft. throughout except in the basement and in the lecture hall which, in its front portion, is two stories high. Facades are in concrete and glass, including glass-brick, and are articulated by sun baffles (brise-soleil), rhythmically spaced thin concrete mullions (ondulatoire) and narrow ventilating louvres made of painted wood.

All interiors have concrete floors, partly scored according to the Modulor, and now partly covered by wall-to-wall carpeting in certain areas. Ceilings are in concrete painted white. Walls are either left in concrete or covered by plaster-board (painted white, black, or bright primary colors) or by oak plywood siding. Several rooms are dramatically lit by skylights.

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/HUMANITARIAN	
☐ 1700-1799	☐ ART	☐ ENGINEERING	☐ MUSIC	☐ THEATER	
☐ 1800-1899	☐ COMMERCE	☐ EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	☐ PHILOSOPHY	☐ TRANSPORTATION	
☒ 1900-	☐ COMMUNICATIONS	☐ INDUSTRY	☐ POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	☐ OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		☐ INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1963

BUILDER/ARCHITECT LeCorbusier (Charles Edouard Jeanneret)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts is the only building by Le Corbusier on the North American continent. Since, regardless of one's like or dislike of Le Corbusier's architecture, there can be no doubt about his international stature as one of the leading architects of the twentieth century, the Carpenter Center, as his only structure in the United States, is of crucial historic and artistic significance.

The architect knew that this building was his only chance to demonstrate his architectural principles in the United States, and he was determined to take full advantage of this opportunity. As it happened, the Carpenter Center turned out to be one of the last buildings still to be completed entirely before Le Corbusier's death in 1965. The history of its design is very well documented because all relevant sketches and studies have been preserved.

The center shows Le Corbusier in full mastery of a rich vocabulary of forms and spaces, colors, textures, and light effects, utilized in a dynamic, yet disciplined composition. The resulting work of 'sculptural' architecture immediately became and continues to be a source of inspiration to architects. When completed in 1963, it attracted world-wide attention (see bibliography), and it is still searched out and photographed by a never ending stream of visitors. In 1964 the center was awarded the Harleston Parker Medal of the Boston Society of Architects for being the most distinguished building completed in the previous year.

The building has been the topic of numerous articles, of a Masters and Ph.D. thesis at Harvard University, and recently of a comprehensive monograph by E.F. Sekler and W. Curtis scheduled for publication in October 1977 by Harvard University Press.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

see continuation sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A 19 325880 4693160
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Robert G. Gardner, Director, Carpenter Ctr.
Professor Eduard F. Sekler, Harvard Univ.

Joseph R. Orfant, National Register Editor &
ORGANIZATION

December 23, 1977
DATE

Massachusetts Historical Commission
STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

294 Washington Street
CITY OR TOWN

617-727-8470
STATE

Boston

Massachusetts 02108

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

Elizabeth Red Amadon

TITLE Executive Director, Massachusetts Historical Commission DATE 1/10/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

ATTEST:

William H. Coile
William H. Coile
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

4/20/78

DATE

4-12-78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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APR 20 1978

CONTINUATION SHEET Bibliography ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

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- Atkinson, Fello, "Le Corbusier in America", The Listener, 60 (May 16, 1963)
- "Big Change on the Campus: Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts", Architectural Forum, March 1963
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- "Le Corbusier: Visual Arts Center, Harvard University", Arts and Architecture, December 1961

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CONTINUATION SHEET Bibliography ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

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Property

Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts

State

Mass.

Working Number

*1.17.78.2247**Middlesex*

TECHNICAL

Photos

3

Maps

1, Plan

CONTROL

*OK pl
1.19.78**of exceptional significance as "only" see
telephone report about VBD.*

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

*Jann Gilmore
3/9/78**Accept*

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

*Accept
H. B. B.
3/3/78*

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

HAER

Inventory _____

Review _____

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

*Of exceptional significance as work of
LeCorbusier conveying this architectural
concerns - vbd is irrelevant all adjacent
land owned by Howard**Accept
LeCorbusier
3/29/78*

BRANCH CHIEF

*of exceptional significance**Cole
4/12/78*

KEEPER

*Accepted
4/20/78*

National Register Write-up _____

Send-back _____

Entered *APR 20 1978*

Federal Register Entry

6.6.78

Re-submit _____

INT:2106-74



Carpenter Center
Cambridge, MA.
1974
Robert Frisbee
Carpenter Center
Harvard University
Cambridge, MA. 02138

APR 20 1978
Middlesex
County

JAN 17 1978

Photo #1 ⁹³
Looking west towards the east elevation

Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts
Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
seen from Prescott Street (East facade)

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Photo:

Robert Frisbee, 1974



Carpenter Center
Cambridge, MA.
1974

MIDDLESEX

County

APR 20 1978

Robert Frisbee
Carpenter Center
Harvard University
Cambridge, MA. 02138

JAN 17 1978

Center for the Visual Arts
University, Cambridge, Mass.
Quincy Street (West facade)

Photo #2 93

Looking east towards the facade

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Photo:

Robert Frisbee 1974



M: Halsey County

Carpenter Center

Cambridge, MA.

1974

Robert Frisbee

Carpenter Center

Harvard University

Cambridge, MA. 02138

APR 20 1978

JAN 17 1978

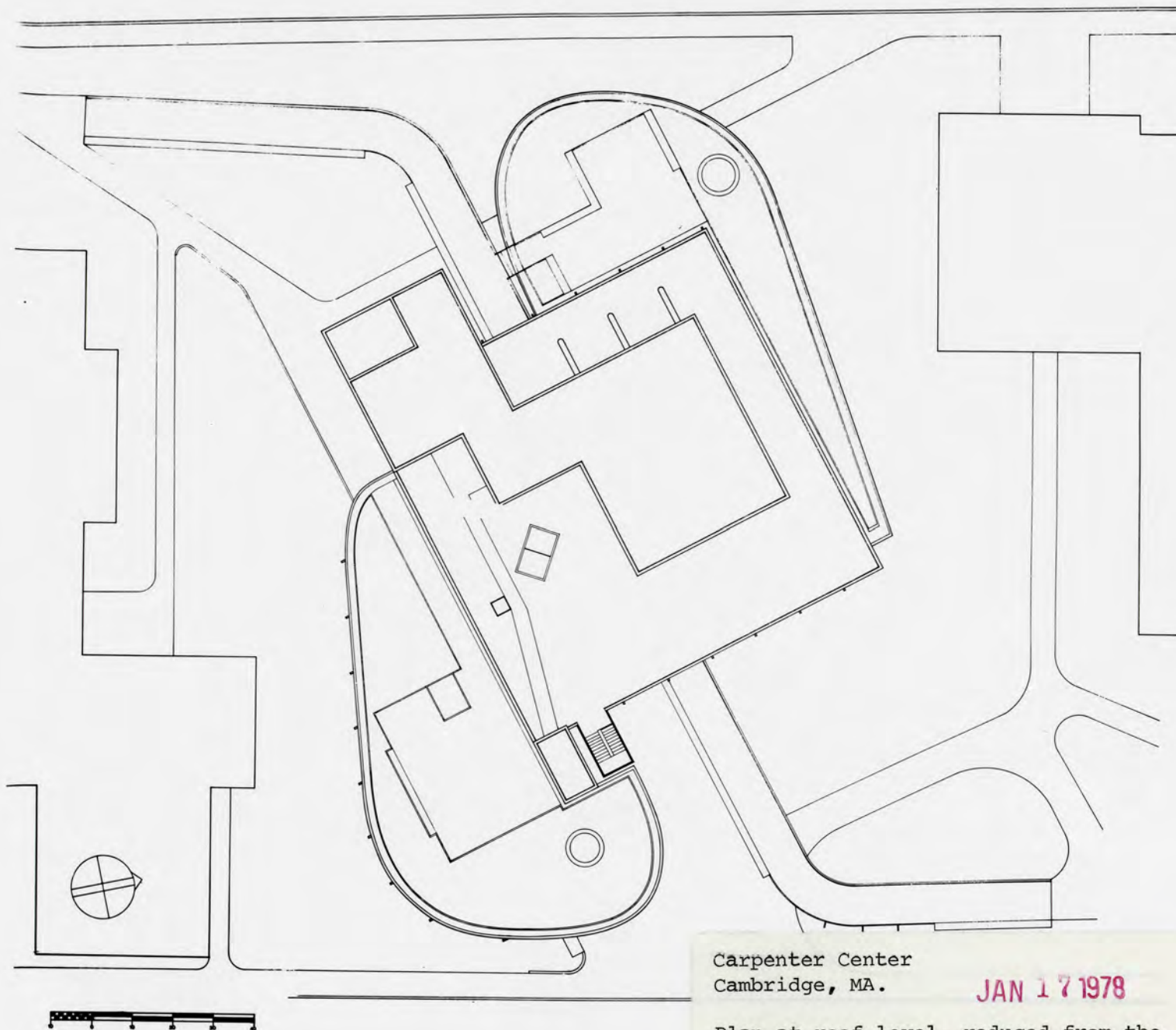
Photo #3 3

Looking north towards the south elevation

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Photo 3

Robert Frisbee



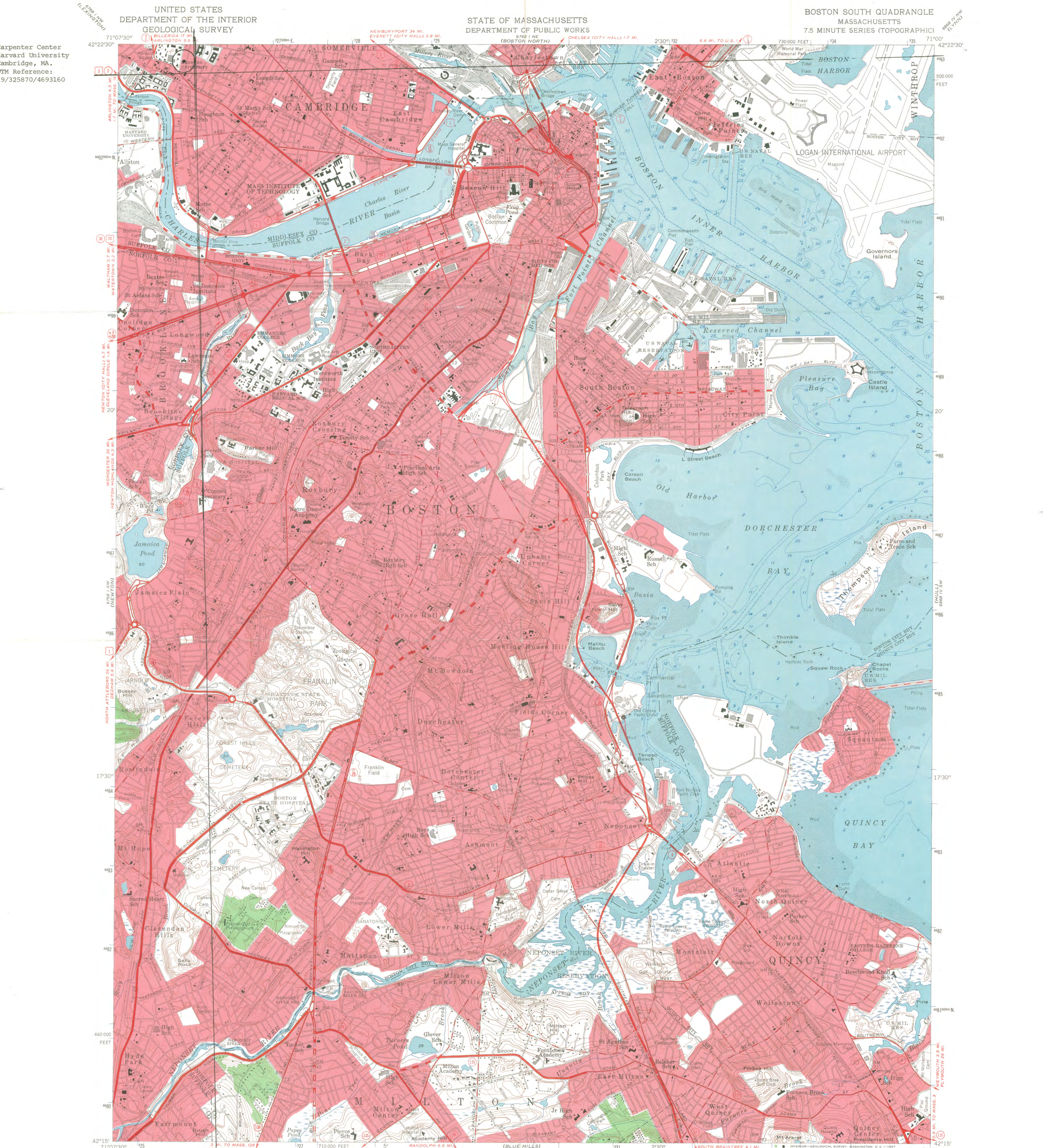
Carpenter Center
Cambridge, MA.

JAN 17 1978

Plan at roof level, reduced from the
original

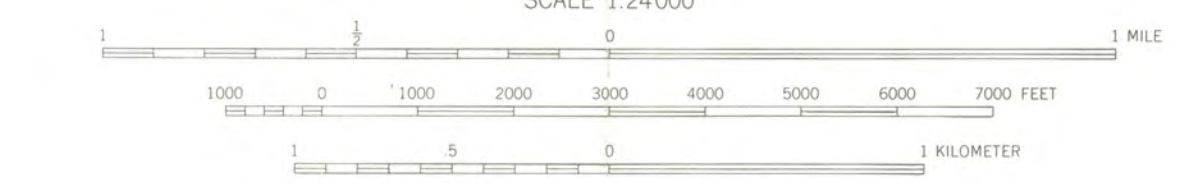
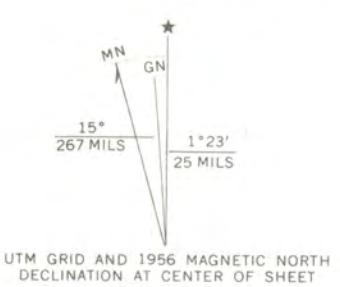
Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts
Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
Plan, roof level

Photo:
Todd Stuart



Carpenter Center
Harvard University
Cambridge, MA.
UTM Reference:
19/325870/4693160

Maped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, Mass. Harbor & Land Commission,
and Mass. Geodetic Survey
Topography by planetable surveys 1943. Culture revised by
photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1955
Field check 1956
Hydrography compiled from USC&GS chart 246 (1956)
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts (Mainland)
coordinate system.
1,000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 19, shown in blue
Boundaries in tidewater areas from information
supplied by Mass. Dept. of Public Works
Red tint indicates areas in which only
landmark buildings are shown



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET—DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER
THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 9.5 FEET

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———
Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt ———
U.S. Route ——— State Route ———

RECEIVED
JAN 17 1978
NATIONAL REGISTER

BOSTON SOUTH, MASS.
N 4215-W 7100/7.5
1956
AMS 6768 I SE-SERIES V81

APR 20 1978

TELEPHONE REPORT

DATE

3-9-78

TIME OF CALL

11:00

AM
PM

1. CALL ☒ TO: ☐ FROM (Name)

Joe Orfano

2. ADDRESS (Tel. No. if needed)

MASSACHUSETTS

617-727-8470

3. SUBJECT, PROJECT NO., ETC.

Carpenter Center - Harvard

4. DETAILS OF DISCUSSION

- called Joe for VBD - noting that other Bldgs. are in close proximity to Bldg. - notably Fogg Museum.
- Said Harvard did not want to nominate Because getting ready to Expand Bldg.
- Talked to LeBovich who has been familiar with possible nomination for two years and don't think we needed VBD.
- called Joe back - told him VBD wasn't necessary.

NAME OF PERSON PLACING/RECEIVING CALL

James H. Gilmore

TITLE

Architectural historian

OFFICE

OAHF

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE MASSACHUSETTS

Date Entered APR 20 1978

Name

Location

Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts	Cambridge Middlesex County
--------------------------------------	-------------------------------

Also Notified

Hon. Edward M. Kennedy

Hon. Edward W. Brooke

Hon. Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr.

NR

Mott 4/27/78

State Historic Preservation Officer
Mrs. Elizabeth R. Amaden
Executive Director, Massachusetts
Historical Commission
294 Washington Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

NATIONAL REGISTER DATA SHEET

1 NAME as it appears on federal register: Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts				2 OTHER NAMES:		3 date of entry: APR 20 1978		4 county code: 17																																																													
5 LOCATION street & number 19 Prescott St.		city / town Cambridge		vicinity of		state MA		county Middlesex																																																													
6 NPS REGION: NA																																																																					
7 OWNER ☒ PRIVATE ☐ STATE ☐ MUNICIPAL ☐ COUNTY ☐ MULTIPLE ☐ FEDERAL (agency name)				8 ADMINISTRATOR:																																																																	
9 EXISTING SURVEYS ☐ HABS ☐ HAER ☐ NHL				10 FUNDED? ☐ YES ☐ NO		11 CONGRESS. DISTRICT 8th		12 SOURCE of NOMINATION ☒ STATE ☐ FEDERAL																																																													
13 WITHIN NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT? ☐ YES, NAME ☐ NO				14 WITHIN NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK? ☐ YES, NAME ☐ NO		15 ACREAGE		☐ LOCAL ☐ PRIVATE ORGANIZATION																																																													
16 CONDITION ☐ deteriorated ☐ altered ☐ original site ☐ excellent ☐ ruins ☐ unaltered ☐ moved ☐ good ☐ unexposed ☐ reconstructed ☐ unknown ☐ fair ☐ unexcavated ☐ excavated				17 features: <table style="width:100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width:33%; vertical-align: top;"> INTERIOR ☐ SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-1 ☐ NOT INTACT-0 ☐ UNKNOWN-4 ☐ NOT APPLICABLE-7 </td> <td style="width:33%; vertical-align: top;"> EXTERIOR ☐ SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-2 ☐ NOT INTACT-0 ☐ UNKNOWN-5 ☐ NOT APPLICABLE-8 </td> <td style="width:33%; vertical-align: top;"> ENVIRONS ☐ SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-3 ☐ NOT INTACT-0 ☐ UNKNOWN-6 ☐ NOT APPLICABLE-9 </td> </tr> </table>						INTERIOR ☐ SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-1 ☐ NOT INTACT-0 ☐ UNKNOWN-4 ☐ NOT APPLICABLE-7	EXTERIOR ☐ SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-2 ☐ NOT INTACT-0 ☐ UNKNOWN-5 ☐ NOT APPLICABLE-8	ENVIRONS ☐ SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-3 ☐ NOT INTACT-0 ☐ UNKNOWN-6 ☐ NOT APPLICABLE-9																																																									
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18 ACCESS ☐ YES-Restricted ☐ YES-Unrestricted ☐ No Access ☐ Unknown				19 ADAPTIVE USE ☐ YES ☐ NO		20 SAVED? ☐ YES		IS PROPERTY A HISTORIC DISTRICT? ☐ yes ☐ no																																																													
21 AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE : <table style="width:100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width:25%;">☐ ARCHEOLOGY-prehistoric-2</td> <td style="width:25%;">☐ COMMERCE-6</td> <td style="width:25%;">☐ ENTERTAINMENT-26</td> <td style="width:25%;">☐ LANDSCAPE ARCH.-15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>☐ ARCHEOLOGY-historic-1</td> <td>☐ COMMUNICATIONS-7</td> <td>☐ EXPLORATION-12</td> <td>☐ LAW-16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>☐ AGRICULTURE-3</td> <td>☐ CONSERVATION-8</td> <td>☐ HEALTH-27</td> <td>☐ LITERATURE-17</td> </tr> <tr> <td>☐ ARCHITECTURE-4</td> <td>☐ ECONOMICS-9</td> <td>☐ INDUSTRY-13</td> <td>☐ MILITARY-18</td> </tr> <tr> <td>☐ ART-5</td> <td>☐ EDUCATION-10</td> <td>☐ INVENTION-14</td> <td>☐ MUSIC-19</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>☐ PHILOSOPHY-20</td> <td>☐ POLITICS/GOVT.-21</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>☐ RELIGION-22</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>☐ SCIENCE-23</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>☐ SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN-24</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>☐ SOCIAL/CULTURAL-30</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>☐ TRANSPORTATION-25</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>☐ RECREATION-28</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>☐ SETTLEMENT-29</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>☐ URBAN PLANNING-31</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>☐ OTHER (SPECIFY) _____</td> </tr> </table>				☐ ARCHEOLOGY-prehistoric-2	☐ COMMERCE-6	☐ ENTERTAINMENT-26	☐ LANDSCAPE ARCH.-15	☐ ARCHEOLOGY-historic-1	☐ COMMUNICATIONS-7	☐ EXPLORATION-12	☐ LAW-16	☐ AGRICULTURE-3	☐ CONSERVATION-8	☐ HEALTH-27	☐ LITERATURE-17	☐ ARCHITECTURE-4	☐ ECONOMICS-9	☐ INDUSTRY-13	☐ MILITARY-18	☐ ART-5	☐ EDUCATION-10	☐ INVENTION-14	☐ MUSIC-19			☐ PHILOSOPHY-20	☐ POLITICS/GOVT.-21				☐ RELIGION-22				☐ SCIENCE-23				☐ SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN-24				☐ SOCIAL/CULTURAL-30				☐ TRANSPORTATION-25				☐ RECREATION-28				☐ SETTLEMENT-29				☐ URBAN PLANNING-31				☐ OTHER (SPECIFY) _____	22 CLAIMS: explain 'first' ☐ 'oldest' ☐ 'only' ☐					
☐ ARCHEOLOGY-prehistoric-2	☐ COMMERCE-6	☐ ENTERTAINMENT-26	☐ LANDSCAPE ARCH.-15																																																																		
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			☐ RECREATION-28																																																																		
			☐ SETTLEMENT-29																																																																		
			☐ URBAN PLANNING-31																																																																		
			☐ OTHER (SPECIFY) _____																																																																		
23 functions WHEN HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT: CURRENTLY:				24 dates of initial construction: major alterations: historic events:				25 ETHNIC GROUP ASSOCIATION																																																													
26 architectural style(s):				27 architect:		28 master builder:		29 engineer:																																																													
30 landscape architect / garden designer:		31 interior decorator:		32 artist:		33 artisan:		34 builder/contractor:																																																													
35 NAMES give role & date PERSONAL: EVENTS: INSTITUTIONAL:																																																																					
36 NATIONAL REGISTER WRITE-UP																																																																					