

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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

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

For HCERS use only

received DEC 27 1982
date entered

1. Name

historic Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum

and/or common Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum

2. Location

street & number 280 The Fenway N/A not for publication

city, town Boston N/A vicinity of ~~Congressional district 8th~~

state Massachusetts code 025 county Suffolk code 025

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
☐ district	☐ public	☒ occupied	☐ agriculture
☒ building(s)	☒ private	☐ unoccupied	☐ commercial
☐ structure	☐ both	☐ work in progress	☐ educational
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ entertainment
☐ object	☒ in process	☒ yes: restricted	☐ government
	☐ being considered	☐ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial
		☐ no	☐ military
			☒ museum
			☐ park
			☒ private residence
			☐ religious
			☐ scientific
			☐ transportation
			☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Trustees of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum

street & number 2 Palace Road

city, town Boston N.A. vicinity of state Mass

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number Pemberton Square

city, town Boston state Ma

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Inventory of Historic Assets of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date November 2, 1979 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Massachusetts Historical Commission

city, town Boston state MA 02109

7. Description Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 280 The Fenway, Boston, Mass.

Condition		Check one	Check one	
☐ excellent	☐ deteriorated	☐ unaltered	☒ original site	
☒ good	☐ ruins	☒ altered	☐ moved	date <u>N/A</u>
☐ fair	☐ unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum faces north on the Fenway, across this roadway from the Muddy River section of Frederic Law Olmsted's "Emerald Necklace" park system. It is in the Fenway neighborhood of Boston which dates from the first decade of the twentieth century and consists largely of attached apartment buildings plus many of the city's cultural and medical institutions including The Museum of Fine Arts, Symphony Hall, and various colleges, art and music schools, and hospitals.

The Gardner Museum property consists of almost an entire block. The Museum Building proper occupies the northern portion, and the walls of the building and gardens enclose the entire property. A coach house (now apartment) faces south, mid-block, set into the inner garden wall. It looks toward an outer rear garden and modern greenhouses. Behind the greenhouses at the southeast corner of the property is the Museum staff parking lot. It abuts a privately owned early-twentieth-century apartment building at the southwest corner of the block, which is not part of this nomination.

The Gardner Museum, constructed 1900-1902, is a large but unpretentious building on the exterior, turned inward toward gardens and a central courtyard. The four-story masonry building is an Italian palazzo in form with buff-colored brick walls and a red-tiled hip roof surmounted by a gabled glass skylight. The front is a narrow side of the basic rectangle, six bays across. At the east side it is extended by a two bay wide, two-story, flat roofed wing. A two-story, gable-roofed office annex, extending back along the west facade, is the building's only addition (constructed 1933). Several tall chimneys add to the lively skyline. Structurally, the granite foundation is built on wood pilings, and the first floor is reinforced by steel beams and brick vaulting.

The front (north) elevation is symmetrical and fairly stark. Rectangular windows are large and dominant at the second and third floor level; smaller windows are located at the sidewalk level and under the eaves. A taut skin is created by shallow window reveals, narrow limestone sills, and simple brickwork. The wall plane is broken at the center of the facade, at the first floor, by a small flat-roofed stone entrance portico with a carved relief of St. George and the Dragon over the open doorway. It is flanked by a pair of white marble lions. The decoration above is highly personalized: an exterior chimney rises in a "Y", which Mrs. Gardner took as her initial in later years, and it is set with a stone date plaque and another carved tablet with the hostess' motto, "C'est mon plaisir" and a phoenix rising. An angled oriel is cradled in the branching chimney shafts, at the fourth floor. Simple wrought iron work provides a front fence and some window grilles. There is a plain porticoed entrance where the east wing joins the main block.

The west elevation abuts the sidewalk. It is approximately twice as long as the front but similarly detailed with symmetrical fenestration, exterior chimney shafts, and a bit of wrought iron for fourth floor balconies. There is a closed entrance portico toward the rear of this wall, and the office addition is stucco-walled and windowless on this side.

The other facades are less formal and more interesting, as they face in on the gardens instead of out on the streets. The east elevation has multi-paned floor-to-ceiling expanses of windows at the first floor and fourth floor, and a four-part Venetian window at the second story level. The south wall has a scattering of Venetian, round, and round-arched windows which hint at Mrs. Gardner's eclectic collection of architectural fragments inside.

8. Significance Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 280 The Fenway, Boston, Mass.

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
☐ 1800–1899	☐ commerce	☐ exploration/settlement	☐ philosophy	☐ theater
☒ 1900–	☐ communications	☐ industry	☐ politics/government	☐ transportation
		☐ invention		☐ other (specify)

Specific dates 1900 – 1902

Builder/Architect Willard T. Sears

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (originally called Fenway Court) possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and association. Its chief significance is two-fold: association with a woman who contributed greatly to the cultural and civic life of Boston during her lifetime, and early representation of an American residence dually designed to house a substantial museum collection. It meets criteria A, B, and C of the National Register.

Isabella Stewart was born in New York City in 1840, and married John L. Gardner of Boston shortly before her 20th birthday. Mrs. Gardner contributed greatly to the cultural and civic life of Boston during her lifetime. She awarded prizes to citizens for efforts to beautify their neighborhoods. She supported cultural institutions, young artists and musicians, local hospitals and social service groups. She sponsored benefit plays and concerts for such causes as Italian earthquake victims and Russian refugees. She entertained such international figures as Sarah Bernhardt, Pablo Casals, Lady Gregory, William Butler Yeats, and John Singer Sargent.

Her greatest contribution, however, was her museum, built on Boston's Fenway at the turn of the century. Built after her husband's death, as a home for herself and setting for her works of art, it is significant as such and is reminiscent of an Italian palazzo design, incorporating the collection of architectural and sculptural fragments brought home by Mrs. Gardner from her several trips abroad.

The Gardner Museum preceded, by a few years, other notable house/public gallery efforts including New York's Frick (1913–14) and Gloucester's Beauport (1907). Mrs. Gardner's museum also was the first of several cultural and educational institutions to choose as its site the reclaimed Fens area in Boston, much of which was converted in the 1880's by Frederick Law Olmsted from mudflats into parkland.

The collection itself is small and unusual in its quality and diversity. Spanning thirty centuries it includes examples from art of Egypt, classical Greece and Rome, the Far and Near East, Europe and North and South America, and contains sculpture, furniture, stained glass, ceramics, metal work, textiles, rare books, manuscripts, prints and drawings. The collection is best known for its paintings, including works by the Italian and Dutch masters. A patron of contemporary artists, Mrs. Gardner collected works by Whistler, Sargent and Degas, of which the Sargent Collection is particularly notable. She owned the first painting by Matisse to become part of an American collection. Her collection of Medieval and Romanesque sculpture was the first of its kind to be brought to this country.

As architect, Mrs. Gardner commissioned Willard T. Sears. From before the Civil War to c. 1890, Sears (1837–1920) was a partner in the active Boston firm of Cummings (Charles A.) & Sears. Among their most notable Boston buildings are the New Old South Church in the Back Bay and the Bedford Building, downtown. Both are superb examples of High Victorian Gothic Revival design and are listed in the National Register. The New Old South Church and Parsonage buildings (1872–1875) are particularly Venetian Gothic in derivation, and it's very likely Mrs. Gardner chose Sears due to her own fondness for Venetian architecture.

On Fenway Court, the architect was closely supervised by the owner. Building design is treated as a frank backdrop for Mrs. Gardner's eclectic and highly per-

9. Major Bibliographical References

Carter, Morris, Isabella Stewart Gardner and Fenway Court, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co. 1925
Willard Sears' Diary - ISGardner Museum Archives
Stout, George, Treasures from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, New York, Crown Publ. Inc. 1969
Tharp, Louise Hall, Mrs. Jack, Boston, Little Brown and Co., 1965

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 76,193 sq. ft. 1.7

Quadrangle name Boston South

Quadrangle scale 1:25,000

UMT References

A 19 327020 4630240
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

Verbal boundary description and justification

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum is bounded by Palace Road to the west, the Fenway to the North, Evans Way to the east, and Tetlow Street to the south. On the same block, but excluded from the nomination is an apartment complex at #11 Tetlow St. corner of Palace Rd.

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

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Hope Coolidge, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum Judith McDonough
Candace Jenkins, Registration Dir., Mass. Hist. Comm Boston Landmarks Commission

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date September 1982

street & number 294 Washington St telephone 617/727-8470

city or town Boston state MA

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Valerie Ann Talmage

title Executive Director, Mass. Historical Commission date December 15, 1982

For HCRS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 1/27/83

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

Isabella Stewart

Continuation sheet Gardner Museum

Item number 7 and 8

Page 1

The central courtyard measures 45' x 65', under the clear glass skylight. Its pink stucco walls are bejewelled with carved stone treasures including Venetian windows and columned arcades. The floor has an Italian mosaic and rich changing horticultural displays from in the Museum greenhouses.

The coach house is another of Mrs. Gardner's gems. Its parapeted, vaguely churriqueresque south wall and single-pitched, red-tiled roof match the court for personalized dramatic effect.

Additions and alterations to the complex are few and unintrusive. The 1933 office annex compatibly closes in the rear inner garden with buff brick walls, simple rectangular fenestration, and a red-tiled roof. The modern lancet arched greenhouses and paved staff parking lot were completed in 1972 on land purchased the year before and cleared of its former building, the Leland Powers School. The sliding-glass doored cafe opening on a patio at the rear of the east wing was created in 1978-79 from a conservation laboratory.

8. Significance (cont'd)

sonalized collection, and specifically as the setting for the gems of architectural fragments. The centerpiece is literally the interior court, a homage to the Venetian Doges' Palace.

Today, Mrs. Gardner's tradition of music continues along with that of flowers. Concerts are given three times a week, except in summers. The museum is open six days a week. Financing is largely provided by an endowment, and management is partially governed by the provisions of Mrs. Gardner's will.

ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER MUSEUM
Boston (Fenway), Massachusetts

1" = 100'

UTM = 19/327060/4689290

Source: Assessor's Map
1980



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Gardner, Isabella Stewart, Museum
Suffolk County
MASSACHUSETTS

Working No. 12/27/82-3296

Fed. Reg. Date: 2.7.84

Date Due: 1/27/83 - 2/10/83

Action: ☒ ACCEPT 1/27/83

Entered in the ☐ RETURN

National Register ☐ REJECT

Federal Agency: _____

- ☐ resubmission
☐ nomination by person or local government
☐ owner objection
☐ appeal

Substantive Review: ☐ sample ☐ request ☐ appeal ☐ NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria _____

Reviewer _____

Discipline _____

Date _____

☐ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: ☐ technical corrections cited below
☐ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Description

Condition	Check one	Check one
☐ excellent	☐ deteriorated	☐ original site
☐ good	☐ ruins	☐ moved date _____
☐ fair	☐ unexposed	

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- ☐ summary paragraph
☐ completeness
☐ clarity
☐ alterations/integrity
☐ dates
☐ boundary selection

8. Significance

Period _____ Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates _____ Builder/Architect _____

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

- _____ summary paragraph
- _____ completeness
- _____ clarity
- _____ applicable criteria
- _____ justification of areas checked
- _____ relating significance to the resource
- _____ context
- _____ relationship of integrity to significance
- _____ justification of exception
- _____ other

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acres of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

UMT References _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

_____ national _____ state _____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature _____

title _____ date _____

13. Other

- _____ Maps
- _____ Photographs
- _____ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: 202 272-3504

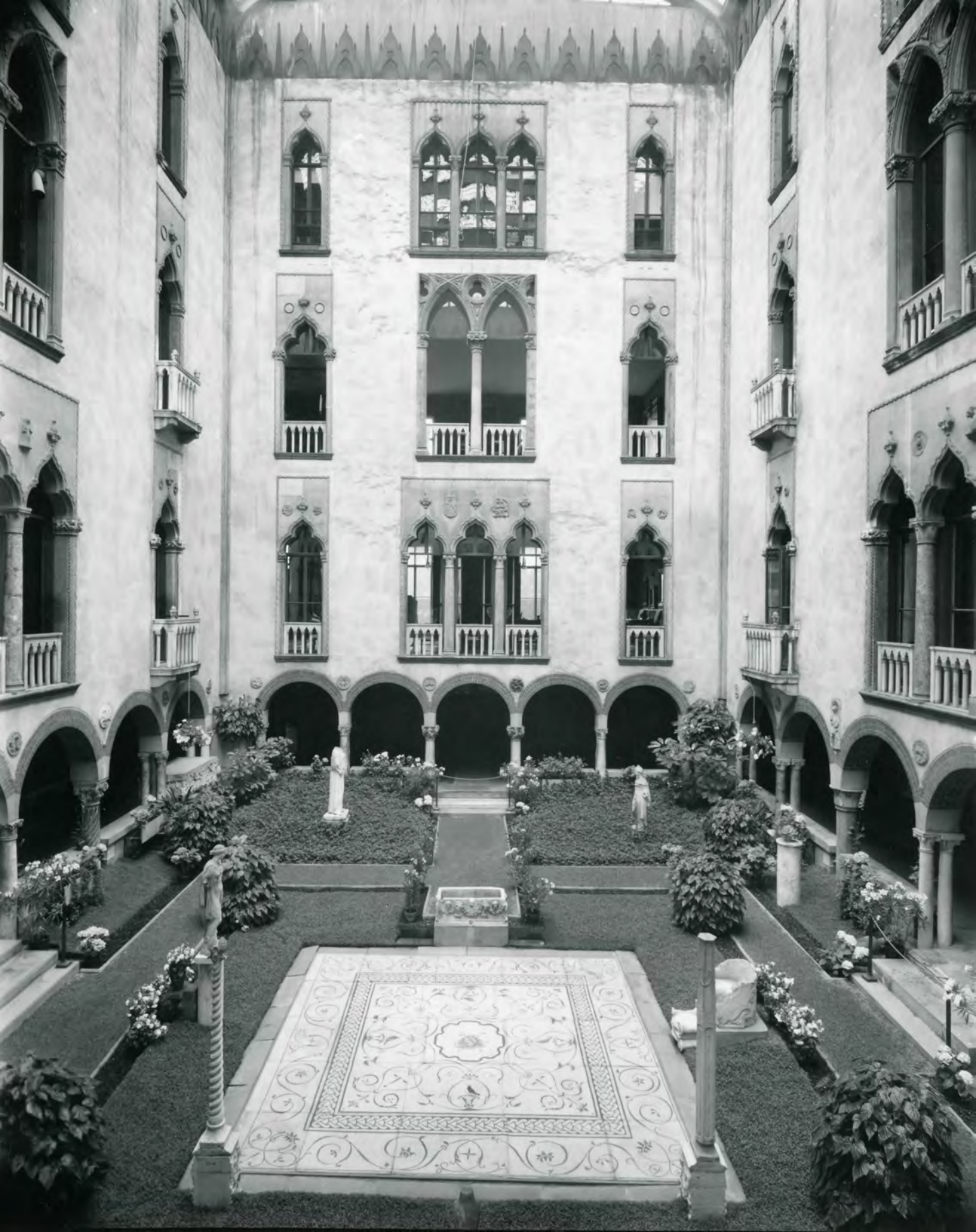
Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet



Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
280 The Fenway
Boston
Suffolk County, Massachusetts

Photo credit: Ellen Lipsey
Negative filed: Boston Landmarks Commission
Date: April 1981
Identification: Coach House, south elevation

Photo #1019



ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER MUSEUM

2 Palace Road, Boston 15, Massachusetts

Photograph No. B1908 Date 26-VT-73

Artist _____

Subject The Court, north

This print is supplied for private use only.

Specific permission is required for its publication
or public display.

Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
280 The Fenway
Boston
Suffolk County, Massachusetts

Photo credit: Gardner Museum
Negative filed: Gardner Museum
Date: 1973
Identification: Interior Courtyard

photo #2 of 9



Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
280 The Fenway
Boston
Suffolk County, Massachusetts

Photo credit: Ellen Lipsey
Negative filed: Boston Landmarks Commission
Date: April 1981
Identification: East ^elevation(left) and
north elevation (front facade), from
The Fenway

photo #3019



Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
280 The Fenway
Boston
Suffolk County, Massachusetts

Photo credit: Ellen Lipsey
Negative filed: Boston Landmarks Commission
Date: April 1981
Identification: West elevation with office
annex to right (south elevation above it),
(looking northeast) *photo #4019*



Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
280 The Fenway
Boston
Suffolk County, Massachusetts

Photo Credit: Ellen Lipsey

Negatives filed: Boston Landmarks Commission

Date: April 1981

Identification: Looking west from the Fenway-
Coach House, left; Museum, right

photo #15019



Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
280 The Fenway
Boston, Suffolk County, Massachusetts

Photo Credit: Ellen Lipsey
Negative filed: Boston Landmarks Commission
Date: April 1981
Identification: East elevation

photo #6 of 9



Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
280 The Fenway
Boston
Suffolk County, Massachusetts

Photo credit: Ellen Lipsey
Negative filed: Boston Landmarks Commission
Date: April 1981
Identification: East wall, looking north

photo #7cl9



Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
280 The Fenway
Boston
Suffolk County, Massachusetts

Photo credit: Ellen Lipsey

Negative filed: Boston Landmarks Commission

Date: April 1981

Identification: Office annex, east elevation
(portion of south elevation of Museum to
the right) *photo #B019*



Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
280 The Fenway
Boston
Suffolk County, Massachusetts

Photo credit: Ellen Lipsey
Negative filed: Boston Landmarks Commission
Date: April 1981
Identification: Portion of greenhouses, looking
east

photo #9019

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

BOSTON SOUTH QUADRANGLE
MASSACHUSETTS
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER MUSEUM
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
UTM REFERENCE: 19/327060/468920



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey
Topography by planetable surveys 1943. Revised from
aerial photographs taken 1969. Field checked 1970
Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC&GS Charts 246
and 248 (1971). This information is not intended for navigational
purposes
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system,
mainland zone
1,000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid,
zone 19
Boundaries in tidewater areas from information supplied
by Massachusetts Department of Public Works
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

UTM GRID AND 1979 MAGNETIC NORTH
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

SCALE 1:25,000
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100

CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET—DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUMS IS VARIABLE
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE ON 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, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of
the National or State reservations shown on this map
Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with the State of
Massachusetts agencies from aerial photographs taken 1975 and other
source data. This information not field checked. Map edited 1979



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Primary highway, hard surface
Secondary highway, hard surface
Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Unimproved road
Interstate Route
U. S. Route
State Route

BOSTON SOUTH, MASS.

N4215—W7100/7.5

1970
PHOTOREVISED 1979
AMS 6768 I SE—SERIES V814



ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER MUSEUM

RECEIVED

JUN 21 1979

Boston Landmarks Commission
City Hall, Room 944
One City Hall Square
Boston, Mass. 02201

June 21, 1979

To the Commission:

I hereby request that the Boston Landmarks Commission nominate the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum for the National Register of Historic Places. I am enclosing a description and statement of significance, two black and white photographs of the museum and a rough map that indicates its location.

Please feel free to call me, Hope Coolidge or Deborah Gribbon, if you have questions or need other materials.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Linda V. Hewitt
Assistant Director



**MASSACHUSETTS
HISTORICAL
COMMISSION**

**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
Office of the Secretary of State**

294 Washington Street
Boston, Massachusetts
02108
617-727-8470

MICHAEL JOSEPH CONNOLLY
Secretary of State

December 15, 1982

Ms. Carol Shull
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20243

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed you will find the following nomination forms:

✓ Boston - Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (national)

Colrain - Arthur A. Smith Covered Bridge (state)

Concord - Colonel Roger Brown House (local)

Tisbury - William Street Historic District (local)

All have been voted eligible by the State Review Board and have been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. Owners were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 30-75 days before the meeting and were afforded the opportunity to comment. Comments received to date are attached to the nomination forms.

Sincerely,

Candace Jenkins

Candace Jenkins
Registration Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

CJ/pg

