

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC BOSTON ATHENAEUM

AND/OR COMMON Boston Athenaeum

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 10 1/2 Beacon Street

CITY, TOWN Boston VICINITY OF Eighth

STATE Massachusetts CODE 025 COUNTY Suffolk CODE 025

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Library

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Proprietors of the Boston Athenaeum

STREET & NUMBER 10 1/2 Beacon Street

CITY, TOWN Boston VICINITY OF Massachusetts

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

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

STREET & NUMBER Suffolk County Court House, Somerset Street

CITY, TOWN Boston STATE Massachusetts

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Inventory of Historic Assets

DATE in progress FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Massachusetts Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN Boston STATE Massachusetts

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Boston Athenaeum occupies an irregularly-shaped city lot on the southern side of Beacon Street (numbered at 10 1/2 Beacon) just east of its intersection with Bowdoin Street. Although there are no grounds associated with the building, its rear windows overlook the Granary Burial Ground, one of the oldest and most historic cemeteries in Boston. The Athenaeum has received regular maintenance and, while its support systems (plumbing, wiring, etc.) are not the most modern, the building appears to be in good structural condition.

The design for the original portion of the Athenaeum, the third home of the organization, is the result of a competition won by Edward Clark Cabot. Construction of the brown freestone building was begun in 1847 and completed two years later. The facade, modeled on a Palladian palace, gives the impression of a large-scaled, two-story building though there are three floors on the interior. A balustrade supported on low posts with inset panels masks two wells below the facade containing windows for a basement and sub-basement. The entrance, elaborate double doors topped by an intricate iron fan, is flanked by piers carrying a semi-circular arch with egg and dart band and Corinthian key-stone; above the arch is a modillioned cornice. On the first facade level rusticated piers alternate with blind arches containing square-headed windows, the whole topped by a belt course. On the second level Corinthian pilasters divide blind arches containing tall windows with pedimented caps. A full entablature with dentil band and a paneled parapet mark the original roof line.

Perhaps the outstanding interior feature of the Athenaeum was the Sumner staircase, named in honor of Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner, who served on the building committee. The massive structure--it took up nearly a quarter of the interior--was modeled on the Bernini staircase in the Vatican, which Senator Sumner greatly admired. Unfortunately, the need for additional space for the Athenaeum's growing collections forced its removal in 1888. A smaller staircase, one more functional in design, was installed at the western end of the building, and an elevator was added at the northwest corner at a later date.

The need for additional space led to the enlargement of the Athenaeum in 1913-14. The two-story Renaissance Revival addition was designed by Henry Bigelow with the assistance of his partner, Philip Wadsworth. The major elements of the new section are tall windows--square-headed on the first level, round-arched on the second--divided by Corinthian pilasters carrying a full entablature with dentil band; a belt course marks the fifth floor level. The front elevation of the addition is set back from the original roof line, giving the appearance of a taller, complementary building constructed immediately behind the old Athenaeum. No major alterations have been made since 1913-14; interior painting and modernization of support systems are projected for the near future.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Whitehall, Walter Muir. A Boston Athenaeum Anthology, 1807-1972 (1973).
 ----- Independent Historical Societies, (1962).
 Winsor, Justin, ed. Memorial History of Boston (4 volumes, 1881).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 9	3, 3, 0	1, 4, 0	4, 6, 9, 1	3, 6, 0	B					
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING				ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		
C						D					

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the national historic landmark designation for the Boston Athenaeum are those of the irregularly shaped city lot, numbered at 10 1/2 Beacon Street, which the building occupies. Specific lines (shown in red on the accompanying sketch map) are defined as follows: bounded northwesterly by Beacon Street 122 feet; northeasterly by the Craft Building at 8 Beacon Street 70 feet; southeasterly by an office building at 6 Beacon Street 50 feet; southwesterly by the Granary Burial Ground 35 feet; southeasterly by the Granary Burial Ground in sections of 15 and 48 feet; and southwesterly again by the Congregational House at 14 Beacon Street 100 feet.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Polly M. Rettig, Historian, Landmark Review Project; original form prepared by S. Sydney Bradford, Historian, 7/27/65

ORGANIZATION	DATE
<u>Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service</u>	<u>1/23/76</u>
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
<u>1100 L Street</u>	<u>202-523-5464</u>
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
<u>Washington, D.C.</u>	

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	DATE <u>1/31/79</u>
ATTEST: <u>Bill Labovich</u>	DATE <u>1/31/79</u>
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	

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building at 10 1/2 Beacon Street. The latter structure was begun in 1847, completed in 1849, and enlarged in 1913-14. The three lower stories are built of brown freestone with a facade modeled after a Palladian palace; the Renaissance Revival style of the two stories which were added complements the design of the original.