UNITED STATES DEPARTMEN. JF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE U.V.Y

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 ATHENAEUM

AND/OR COMMON Boston Athenaeum

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN			NOT FOR PUBLICATION CONGRESSIONAL DISTR	ІСТ
Bos	ton	VICINITY OF	Eighth	
STATE		CODE	COUNTY	CODE
Mas	sachusetts 02	25	Suffolk	025
CLASSIFIC	ATION			
CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRES	ENT USE
DISTRICT	PUBLIC		AGRICULTURE	MUSEUM
X BUILDING(S)	PRIVATE	UNOCCUPIED	COMMERCIAL	PARK
STRUCTURE	BOTH	WORK IN PROGRESS	EDUCATIONAL	PRIVATE RESIDENC
SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	ENTERTAINMENT	RELIGIOUS
OBJECT	IN PROCESS	X_YES: RESTRICTED	GOVERNMENT	SCIENTIFIC
			(1) 0 10 701 11	
	BEING CONSIDERED	YES: UNRESTRICTED	INDUSTRI&L	TRANSPORTATION
NAME	PROPERTY	NO	INDUSTRIAL MILITARY	
NAME Pro		NO	-	
NAME Pro	F PROPERTY prietors of the Bosto	NO	-	TRANSPORTATION
NAME STREET & NUMBER 10	PROPERTY prietors of the Bosto 1/2 Beacon Street	NO	MILITARY STATE	
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DATE		x
in	progress	FEDERALSTATECOUNTYLOCAL
DEPOSITORY FOR		
SURVEY RECORDS	Massachusetts Historical	Commission
CITY, TOWN		STATE
	Boston	Massachuset



C	ONDITION	CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE	
EXCELLENT XGOOD FAIR	DETERIORATED RUINS UNEXPOSED	UNALTERED X_ALTERED	X_ORIGINAL SITE MOVED DAT	E

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 keystone; 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.

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
<u>x</u> 1800-1899	COMMERCE	EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	PHILOSOPHY	TRANSPORTATION
<u>x</u> 1900-	COMMUNICATIONS	INDUSTRY	POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	OTHER (SPECIFY)
		INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1807; 1847;1913-14		BUILDER/ARCHITECT Edward Clark Cabot-1847
SPECIFIC DATES	180/; 184/;1913-14	Henry Bigelow-1913-14,
STATEMENT OF S	GNIFICANCE	and Philip Wadsworth

The Boston Athenaeum is the largest and most influential of the early proprietary libraries still extant in the United States. Founded by private individuals in 1807, long before the rise of the free public library, the Athenaeum remains a leading cultural institution in Boston and a research center for scholars throughout the nation. The Athenaeum's present home, located at 10 1/2 Beacon Street, is a brown freestone structure modeled after a Palladian palace. The original three stories were begun in 1847 and two stories were added in 1913-14. While the general public is not encouraged to visit the Athenaeum, researchers or persons with a particular interest in the building are accomodated.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Boston Athenaeum grew out of an earlier organization, the Anthology Club, founded in 1804. The Club established an Anthology Reading-room and Library which, in 1807, became the Athenaeum. The new organization received the support of prominent individuals, who contributed both books and funds, and by 1820 had acquired some 20,000 volumes. Despite the Athenaeum's private nature (the number of its proprietors--or shareholders--is fixed by its charter), its liberal adminstration quickly made the organization a leading cultural institution in Boston, one intended to serve both the scholar and the general reader. In addition the Athenaeum served as the city's first art gallery, assembling a collection which later formed the nucleus of Boston's Museum of Fine Arts.

Today the Athenaeum views itself primarily as a humanities library, emphasizing American and English literature, history and biography, and fine and decorative arts. In addition to 1049 proprietors and 1500 cardholders (who pay an anual entrance fee), as many as 10,000 independent researchers make use of the institution's resources each year.

The Athenaeum's collections now total more than 600,000 items. Included in the printed works are numerous rare items, among them large parts of the personal libraries of George Washington and John Quincy Adams. The collection of early pamphlets and tracts, which run into the tens of thousands, is of unquestioned value to the student of American history. The Athenaeum also possesses unusually strong newspaper collections and owns more Confederate imprints than any other institution in the United States.

Since its founding the Athenaeum has had several homes. It was first located on Congress Street, then in a house on Pearl Street, and finally in its present

9 MAJOR BIBLIOG APHICAL REFERENCES

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

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY <u>less than one a</u>cre UTM REFERENCES

A 1 9 3 3 0 1 4 0 4 6 9 1 3 6 0	
ZONE EASTING NORTHING	ZONE EASTING NORTHING
VEDDAL DOUNDARY DECONDITION	

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	
	Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service	1/23/76	
STREET & NUMB	ER	TELEPHONE	
	1100 L Street	202-523-5464	
CITY OR TOWN		STATE	
	Machington D.C.		

Washington, D.C.

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 NATIO	DATE //3/59	}
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION ATTEST: BUO KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	DATE 13(29	

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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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.