

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

THEME: Science and Invention

Form 10-300
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

STATE: Massachusetts
COUNTY: Middlesex
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM
(Type all entries complete applicable sections)

1. NAME

COMMON:
Asa Gray House

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Asa Gray House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
88 Garden Street (corner of Madison Street)

CITY OR TOWN:
Cambridge

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
Eighth

STATE:
Massachusetts

CODE:
025

COUNTY:
Middlesex

CODE:
017

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure 	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Mr. and Mrs. Gardner Cox

STREET AND NUMBER:
88 Garden Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Cambridge

STATE:
Massachusetts

CODE:
02138

CODE:
025

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Middlesex Registry of Deeds, Southern District

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
East Cambridge

STATE:
Massachusetts

CODE:
02141

CODE:
025

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY:
1969

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

STREET AND NUMBER:
10 First Street SE.

CITY OR TOWN:
Washington

STATE:
D.C.

CODE:
011

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Massachusetts

COUNTY: Middlesex

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Asa Gray House, designed by Ithiel Town, was erected in 1810 at the corner of Garden and Linnaean Streets, Cambridge, on the grounds of Harvard College's Botanic Gardens. The house, then consisting of a rectangular main block approximately 40 by 36 feet and a side wing approximately 24 feet square, was attached to a conservatory, also designed by Town. Though additions and minor alterations have been made to the house, the exteriors of the main block and the wing remain essentially as they were when constructed. Moved in 1910, the Asa Gray House now stands facing northeast at 88 Garden Street, corner of Madison Street, Cambridge.

Two stories in height, the house is set on a foundation consisting of squared granite blocks in the front and rubble masonry in the rear. The front elevation of the main block is covered with flush siding and carries fluted Ionic pilasters at each corner; the remainder of the building is covered with 4" clapboards. A dentiled cornice surrounds the main block; above this is a balustrade in which solid panels alternate with turned balusters. The hipped roof, covered with asbestos shingles, is broken by two interior chimneys. Windows in the main block are 6/6 sash; those in the wing are 6/9 on the first floor, 3/3 on the second.

Small porches cover center entrances on the front facades of both the main block and the wing. That on the main block replaces the original porch in this location but was built before the house was moved. Rectangular in shape, it is reached by five risers; square corner posts with beveled edges support a dentiled cornice and the porch roof. The wing entrance was originally reached by a single stone step but was glassed-in with a small porch about 1920.

At the rear of the wing (southwest) are two small additions of uncertain date. A covered walkway, erected in 1928, connects these additions with a larger and once separate structure further to the rear. Originally a wooden shed with gabled roof, this structure was brought to its present location when the house was moved. In 1924, it was enlarged, raised in height, and converted to a detached living room; a garage and furnace room were added to its southwestern end at the same time.

The interior of the Asa Gray House follows a standard four-room, center hall plan. The hall, containing both front and back stairs, is divided into two sections by a single door surmounted by a fanlight. The interior of the wing contains one large room on the first floor and four smaller rooms on the second. A significant feature of the former, which served as Gray's study, is the vertical museum cabinets, 17" deep and 12" or 24" wide, which line the southeastern wall. Interior decoration in the house consists primarily of simple cornice moldings, flared moldings around windows and doors, and paneled 2-wing shutters in the window reveals; fireplaces have simple wooden mantels with reeded surrounds or flanking Tuscan half-columns.

(Continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

6. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1810; 1842-1888**

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 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

This commodious two-story frame house, the earliest known work of the noted architect Ithiel Town, was built in 1810, the year in which its most famous occupant, Asa Gray, was born. Gray, who lived in the house from 1842 until his death in 1888, made outstanding contributions to the science of botany; he published the first complete books on North American flora, adopting the natural system of plant classification, and was one of America's leading defenders of Darwin's theory of evolution.

Moved to its present location in 1910, the Asa Gray House is used as a private residence and is not open to the public.

History

The Asa Gray House was built in 1810 by the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture as the home of zoologist William Dandridge Peck. The earliest known work of Ithiel Town, it then stood at the corner of Garden and Linnaean Streets, Cambridge, in Harvard College's Botanic Garden. Occupants after Peck included botanist Thomas Nuttall and Harvard Presidents James Walker and Jared Sparks. Asa Gray moved to the house in 1842 when he became Massachusetts Professor of Natural History at Harvard and lived there until his death in 1888. In 1910, the Asa Gray House was purchased by Allen H. Cox and moved to its present location at 88 Garden Street (corner of Madison Street).

Biography

Born of parents of English and Scotch-Irish background in Sanquoit, New York, in 1810, Gray acquired an interest in botany as a youth. Then, while attending a small medical college, he read The Edinburgh Encyclopaedia's lengthy article on botany during the winter of 1827-28. That article greatly stimulated his botanical interest, especially as it said that much needed to be done in North American botany. Gray's medical studies furthered his appreciation of botany, and before his graduation in 1831 he had already begun to collect plants. An established botanist, John Torrey of New York, learned of the young doctor's botanical work and asked Gray if he would like to be his assistant. Gray assented, and medicine lost a promising adherent.

(Continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- ✓ Dupree, A. Hunter. Asa Gray, 1810-1888 (Cambridge, 1859).
- Gray, Jane Loring. Letters of Asa Gray (Boston, 1894), 2 volumes.
- Humphrey, Harry Baker. Makers of North American Botany (New York, 1961).
- Irvine, William. Apes, Angels, and Victorians (New York, 1955).
- Morison, Samuel Eliot. The Development of Harvard University Since the Inauguration of President Eliot, 1869-1929 (Cambridge, 1930).
- Struik, Dirk J. Yankee Science in the Making (New York, 1962).

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			LATITUDE		LONGITUDE
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"

UTM 19.324770.4694290

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 0.32

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Polly M. Rettig, Historian, Landmark Review Project; original form prepared by S. Sydney Bradford, Historian, 3/17/64

ORGANIZATION: Historic Sites Survey DATE: 12/9/74

STREET AND NUMBER: 1100 L Street NW.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: D.C. CODE: 011

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

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 N/A
National Historic Landmark

Title _____

Date _____ (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Landmark Designated: Jan 12/1/76

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Paul H. Hine 7-2-75
Chief, Hist. & Arch. Surveys

Date _____

ATTEST:

Boundary Affirmed: 7/3/75

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(ALL PLACES OF HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Massachusetts	
COUNTY	
Middlesex	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

7. Description: (1)

Asa Gray House

The Asa Gray House stands close to the street on a roughly rectangular lot. The ample rear yard, screened from the street on two sides by the house and additions, has mature trees and shrubs and an arbor at its western corner. Both the house and grounds are in fair condition; the building itself needs repainting and some of the exterior woodwork appears to be decaying.

Boundary

Beginning at the intersection of the eastern sideline of Madison Street and the southern sideline of Garden Street; thence, along the southern sideline of Garden Street, 88.30 feet more or less, to the northwestern sideline of the property at 84 Garden Street, now or formerly owned by Katherine M. Day; thence, southwesterly along the line of said property, 134.72 feet more or less, to its intersection with the northeastern sideline of property at 7 Garden Terrace, now or formerly owned by W. A. and J. B. Johnston; thence northwesterly along the line of said property, 97.15 feet more or less, to its intersection with the eastern sideline of Madison Street, 135 feet more or less, to the point of beginning.

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INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Massachusetts	
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8. Statement of Significance: (1)

Asa Gray House

Gray made rapid progress in his new profession. Largely influenced by recent European developments in botany, Gray boldly adopted the natural system of classification. Briefly, this system sought to establish the relationship of plants according to the similarity of their various parts. He thus rejected the long-used Linnaean system, which identified plants by the number of stamens and styles that each had. In 1836, he published his first book, Elements of Botany. Two years later, in conjunction with Torrey, Gray published the first part of the Flora of North America. This volume, plus the succeeding volumes, gave America its most notable compendium of known plants in the travelled areas of the continent. In the same year that the first volume of the Flora appeared, 1838, Gray accepted a teaching position at the University of Michigan. Fortunately for him, the university sent him abroad for a year, where he visited botanists and botanical collections. While in England he met Darwin, but discerned no greatness in the British botanist at that time.

In 1842, three years after his return to America, Gray, then thirty-two, became Massachusetts Professor of Natural History at Harvard College, a position he held for forty-five years. Gray was not an inspiring teacher. Indeed, each student knew his routine, even to the point of knowing when and for what Gray would call on him. In Gray's early days at Harvard, some of his students enlivened classes by setting off firecrackers in the room.

Gray's years at Harvard witnessed his rise to eminence in botany. As expedition after expedition sent new specimens to Cambridge, Gray and his assistants classified them and gave them names. At the same time, Gray produced many books. His two-volume work, The Genera of the Plants of the United States, published in 1849, was a brilliant achievement. The work contained plates of plants by Isaac Sprague, which remain models of effective plant illustration, and descriptions of those plants by Gray. In 1858, he published How Plants Grow, a volume that sent many a child into the fields to collect plants. In addition, Gray established an acquaintance, by correspondence if by no other means, with as many American and European colleagues as possible and, in an unusually cooperative manner, readily shared his knowledge with them.

Perhaps Gray's most original contribution to the science of botany was his discovery of the relationship between the flora of eastern North America and east Asia, demonstrated in his Statistics of the Flora of the Northern United States, published in 1856. This discovery led to the rise of a new aspect of botanical study, plant geography.

Gray, in addition to his notable botanical work, ably served science in general when he led the defense in America of Darwin's bitterly attacked Origin of Species. Admirably equipped to do so because of his scientific standing, his personal leadership in his field, and his well-known religious feeling, Gray, who admired Darwin's willingness to acknowledge questions about

(Continued)

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LANDMARKS)

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Massachusetts	
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Middlesex	
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(Number all entries)

8. Statement of Significance: (2)

Asa Gray House

his work, spoke forthrightly in behalf of truth in science. Reviewing Darwin's book in The American Journal of Science in March, 1860, Gray emphasized the value of science for science's sake. He wrote as if science and religion had no relation to each other. Personally committed to most of Darwin's views, Gray really pled for scientific freedom. Gray began a series of articles in support of Darwin's theories in the Atlantic Monthly of July, 1860. The evolutionist valued Gray's efforts highly and praised his defense of the Origin of Species.

Because of his defense of Darwin, as well as because of his own work in botany, Gray remains one of America's notable scientists. His death on January 30, 1888, ended a chapter in our Country's scientific history that was rich in accomplishment and humanity.