

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

**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

Francis Parkman House

AND/OR COMMON

Francis Parkman House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

50 Chestnut Street

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Boston

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Eighth

STATE

Massachusetts

___ VICINITY OF

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 checked="" 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mrs. Charles Townsend (Chestnut Trust)

STREET & NUMBER

48 Chestnut Street

CITY, TOWN

Boston

STATE

Massachusetts

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
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

The Domestic Architecture of Beacon Hill, 1800-1850

DATE

1958, reprinted 1973

 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Bostonian Society

CITY, TOWN

Boston

STATE

Massachusetts

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input 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 Francis Parkman House stands on the southern side of Chestnut Street (No. 50, about midway between the intersections of West Cedar and Willow Streets) in the predominantly residential Beacon Hill section of Boston. The lot, which spans the block between Chestnut and Branch Streets, contains the landmark house and a rear garden. The historic setting of the Parkman House has been effectively protected through the establishment of the Beacon Hill Historic District (also a national historic landmark district) by special act of the Massachusetts legislature.

Stylistically the Parkman House (1824) is typical of numerous small, brick row houses constructed on Beacon Hill during the 1820's. The building is three stories high above a full, granite-faced basement and has a moderately pitched attic roof broken by two interior chimneys (the shed dormer is probably a later addition). The recessed entrance is arched and banded with a line of incised granite broken by small impost blocks and a keystone. Within the paneled recess, the door is surrounded by a fan and sidelights with delicate tracery. Windows, which decrease in height from the first to third floors, are flanked by louvered blinds and topped by incised granite lintels. The interior of the building contains an open stairhall at the northeast corner, three major rooms on each floor, and a basement kitchen (the latter arrangement is typical of both large and small Beacon Hill houses). The room on the third floor front served as Francis Parkman's study.

The present owners of the Parkman House acquired the property in 1956 and the following year divided it into apartments, one on each floor and one in the basement. No change was made in the exterior appearance of the building. New heating and electrical systems and modern kitchens and bathrooms were installed for each unit but the stairhall and the major rooms are relatively unaltered. Original architectural elements include carved mantels, cornices and plasterwork medallions, and molded door and window surrounds. Both the structure and stylistic details of the building are in excellent condition.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1865-1893 BUILDER/ARCHITECT not known

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This three-story brick house, constructed in 1824 in Boston's Beacon Hill district, was from 1865 until 1893 the principal residence of the noted American historian Francis Parkman. The enduring reputation of Parkman's work is rooted in his penetrating and accurate research, his literary skill, and his responsiveness to the beauties of the physical world and the variables of human nature. Believing that historical writing is a romantic art, he used the techniques of the novelist to weave economic, social, and political facts into a dramatic fabric. Parkman's best known works are The Oregon Trail (1849) and the multivolume France and England in North America (1851-92), the major part of which was written at his Beacon Hill home.

In 1957 the present owners divided the Parkman House into four apartments. The exterior of the building is unchanged. New kitchens and bathrooms were installed but the original rooms are relatively unaltered. The house is maintained in excellent condition and is not open to the general public.

Historical Background

Francis Parkman, the descendant of an old New England family, was born at Boston, Massachusetts, on September 16, 1823. As a child he studied at John Angier's school in Medford (during a four year period when he lived with his maternal grandfather) and then at the private academy operated by Gideon Thayer, where he received particularly good instruction in English literature and composition. Following his admission to Harvard in 1840, Parkman undertook an extensive reading program in literature and history under the guidance of historian Jared Sparks. During college vacations, he made long excursions by canoe and on foot to wilderness areas throughout New England and Canada. Despite persistent illness, Parkman entered Harvard Law School after graduation from college, and received his degree in 1846. Though he never applied for admittance to the bar, his legal training was revealed in his careful sifting of facts and judicious appraisal of evidence as an historian.

In the spring of 1846, Parkman began an expedition across the Great Plains that took him from Independence, Missouri, westward along the Oregon Trail. Pushing beyond Fort Laramie to the basin of the Medicine Bow River, he lived for a time with the Sioux, then returned to Independence by way of Bent's Fort and the Santa Fe Trail. Though one purpose of the expedition had been to improve his health, Parkman suffered a complete breakdown on his return. During his convalescence, he dictated an account of the trip which was published serially in the Knickerbocker under the title "The Oregon Trail" (1847). The account was issued in book form in 1849.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Doughty, Howard. Francis Parkman (1962).
 Farnham, C.H. A Life of Francis Parkman (1900; contains extracts from Parkman's autobiography).
 Jacobs, Wilbur R., ed. Letters of Francis Parkman (2 volumes, 1960).
 Morison, Samuel Eliot, ed. The Parkman Reader (1955).
 Parkman, Francis. The Works of Francis Parkman (20 volumes, 1897-98).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,9	32,9	5,9,0	4,6,9	2,8,0	B					
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	ZONE	EASTING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		
C						D					

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the national historic landmark designation for the Francis Parkman House are those of the rectangular lot, numbered at 50 Chestnut Street, on which the building stands. Specific lines are defined as follows: beginning at the intersection of the southern curblineline of Chestnut Street and the western line of the residential property at 48 Chestnut Street; thence, southerly by said western line, 90 feet more or less, to the northern curblineline of Branch street; thence, westerly by said northern

(cont'd)

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 J. Walter Coleman, Historian, 12/6/72

ORGANIZATION _____ DATE _____

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

STREET & NUMBER _____ TELEPHONE _____

1100 L Street, NW

CITY OR TOWN _____ STATE _____

Washington

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 N/A National Historic Landmark

TITLE _____ DATE _____

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE 9/18/83

ATTEST: _____ DATE _____

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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CONTINUATION SHEET Francis Parkman ITEM NUMBER #8 PAGE #2
House

Parkman's first historical work, History of the Conspiracy of Pontiac (1851), a descriptive narrative of the English conquest of Canada and the great Indian uprising of 1763-64, was in part the product of his ethnological observations on the Plains. This was the first in the long series of volumes, on the struggle of the French and English for possession of the North American continent, which was to be his magnum opus. While the conspiracy was being written, Parkman suffered a severe crisis in his health, a combination of partial blindness and violent head pains. His marriage in 1850 to Catherine Scollay Bigelow marked the beginning of a brief period of recovery, but after she and his only son died within a year (1858), his attacks became more virulent. Unable to continue with his historical work, Parkman took up the study of horticulture, an interest which continued throughout his life. His success in that field resulted in his election as president of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society and his appointment in 1871 as a professor of horticulture at Harvard.

As soon as his health was slightly improved, Parkman returned to his histories and in 1865 published Pioneers of France in the New World. That book at once established his popularity and his reputation as one of America's leading historians. During the next 27 years, despite frequent periods of illness, Parkman completed his extensive series by writing six additional histories: The Jesuits in North America (1867), LaSalle and the Discovery of the Great West (1869), The Old Regime in Canada (1874), Count Frontenac and New France Under Louis XIV (1877), Montcalm and Wolfe (1884), and A Half-Century of Conflict (1892). In addition, he produced an autobiographical novel, Vassal Morton (1856), a number of magazine articles, and a attractive book on the cultivation of roses. Parkman died on November 8, 1893.

The enduring reputation of Parkman's work is rooted in his penetrating and accurate research, his literary skill, and his responsiveness to the beauties of the physical world and the variables of human nature. Believing that historical writing is a romantic art, Parkman used the techniques of the novelist to weave economic, social, and political facts into a dramatic fabric. He had the financial means (inherited from his grandfather, Samuel Parkman, a wealthy Boston merchant) to employ copyists who combed foreign archives for documentary material and he visited the site of every significant episode in his narrative. Though subsequent researchers have supplemented his work, they have not shaken the essential validity of his conclusions.

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Francis Parkman

CONTINUATION SHEET

House

ITEM NUMBER #10

PAGE #2

curbline, 25 feet more or less, to the eastern line of residential property at 52 Chestnut Street; thence, northerly by said eastern line, 90 feet more or less, to the southern curbline of Chestnut Street; thence, easterly by said southern curbline, 25 feet more or less, to the point of beginning.



FRANCIS PARKMAN HOUSE
Boston, Massachusetts
Photocopy of base map prepared by
Boston Redevelopment Authority
1972 Scale: 1" = 200'

National Historic Landmark
Boundary