

Form 10-300  
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

STATE:	Connecticut
COUNTY:	New Haven
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	

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

(NATIONAL  
LANDMARKS)

(Type all entries complete applicable sections)

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Othniel C. Marsh House, Marsh Hall

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Othniel C. Marsh House

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
360 Prospect Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
New Haven

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
Third

STATE: Connecticut CODE: 09 COUNTY: New Haven CODE: 009

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<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
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____
			Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**OFFICES OF FORESTRY DEPARTMENT**

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
Office of the President, Yale University

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Woodbridge Hall

CITY OR TOWN:  
New Haven

STATE:  
Connecticut

CODE:  
009

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
New Haven Town Hall, Hall of Records

STREET AND NUMBER:  
200 Orange Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
New Haven

STATE:  
Connecticut

CODE:  
009

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Historic American Buildings Survey (4 photographs and description)

DATE OF SURVEY: 1967  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Division of Prints and Photographs

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Library of Congress

CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington

STATE:  
District of Columbia

CODE:  
11

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Othniel Charles Marsh, pioneer paleontologist and Yale professor from 1866 to 1899 commissioned J. Cleveland Cady, in 1875, to design this fortress-like mansion on Prospect Street where he lived alone for the last twenty years of his life. In his will he left this house and its ample grounds and botanical gardens to Yale University.

Cady built the house, today called Marsh Hall, between 1875 and 1880. The exterior was completed in 1878, but the interior was not finished until three years later. The building cost Marsh about \$30,000, as did its furnishings. Marsh's favorite room was the octagonal reception room which he called "The Wigwam" and filled with mementos of every kind.

Cady was a prominent New Haven architect of the time and he designed many buildings for Yale during one of Yale's major building periods. Nearly half of these are gone today. The Marsh house was one of the city's fine mansions in its day. With its neighbors around it, notably the house across Prospect Street that is now the Culinary Institute, it crowned the hill at the edge of the then fashionable part of town.

The Marsh house, built of beautifully cut red sandstone, rests solidly on a sloping hill, overlooking a wide lawn and in the midst of large trees and abundant plantings. The mixture of colors and textures, the massing and the asymmetrical plan of this eighteen-room, three-story house suggest both Queen Anne styling and an early Jacobean revival character. The variety and detail of the tall molded brick chimneys, the sculptured colored tile roof, the arches and towers and turrets and porches and windows of various shapes and sizes all fit comfortably and effectively against the warm reds of the sturdy sandstone.

The Yale School of Forestry occupies the building presently. Although the rooms are used as offices, classrooms and library, the interior features such as the carved and polished fireplaces, stairways, corner cupboards and dark, heavy woodwork are intact and maintained.

Boundary Description

As indicated on the tax assessment map of the City of New Haven, this national historic landmark is located on a block with the Greeley Memorial Laboratory, botanical gardens, greenhouses, garages and storage buildings, also a part of the Yale School of Forestry. On the northeast the Marsh House is bounded by other property of Yale University identified as the Esplanade Apartments at 386 Prospect Street and Married Student Housing at 291 and 311 Mansfield Street.

The Othniel C. Marsh House is set on a pronounced elevation about 60 feet back of Prospect Street and it overlooks the other Yale buildings to the north and west. However, they are down a perceptible slope to the rear of the mansion and the tall trees and shrubs which surround Marsh Hall screen

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**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) **1876-1899**

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

The stupendous skeleton of a Brontosaurus Excelsus Marsh in the Hall of Invertebrates at the Peabody Museum of Natural History in New Haven dwarfs human beings. This gigantic sauropod dinosaur lived eons ago, and it has been only within the last century that knowledge of it and other archaic creatures has been augmented. Much of the credit for our familiarity with antediluvian animals belongs to Othniel Charles Marsh, after whom the brontosaurus in the Peabody Museum was named. Moreover, Marsh not only discovered and studied an incredible number of vertebrate fossils, he pioneered in reconstructing the skeletons of ancient beasts, reptiles and birds. He, more than any other American, startled both the scientist and average citizen into a greater awareness of the significance of the primeval animal world.

In 1876, while busily engaged in western collecting trips, Marsh began this building at 360 Prospect Street. The large, three-story brownstone mansion was completed in 1878, although finishing its eighteen rooms took until 1881. A bachelor, Marsh lived alone in the house until his death in 1899.

Biography

Marsh, who became the New World's first professor of Paleontology, developed a passion for fossils in his youth. Born on October 29, 1831, he collected minerals and fossils as a boy. After entering Yale University, he traveled in New York, New England and Nova Scotia during his summer vacation, searching for fossils. His second trip to Nova Scotia produced the fossil of an unknown vertebrate, and this discovery confirmed his determination to follow a scientific career. Marsh won his diploma in 1860, and for the next four years he pursued advanced work, both at Yale and abroad. The university then appointed Marsh Professor of Paleontology.

Marsh pursued his academic calling with great energy, but he was also known for his steel-like will, which propelled him on an individual course in his work with ancient vertebrates and caused him to disdain cooperating with others. A celebrated feud with a rival paleontologist, Edward Drinker Cope, resulted. The two resolute specialists, like embattled dinosaurs, fought each other fiercely, to their discredit and the disadvantage of science. At the same time, Marsh spent his own funds in

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**INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)

Othniel C. Marsh House (Continuation Sheet)

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7. Description

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the view of the other buildings quite well. The side of the Marsh House facing Prospect Street is about 45 feet wide and the south, or main entrance facade with its porte-cochère, is 60 feet long and faces Hillside Place, with a wide tree-lined lawn in between.

Beginning at the northwest corner of the intersection of Prospect Street and Hillside Place, the boundary follows the northern curb of Hillside Place for about 320 feet, then in a northerly direction for about 175 feet, then in a northeasterly direction, in between the complex of university housing and the rear of Marsh Hall for about 225 feet, then easterly for 120 feet to Prospect Street, then south for about 360 feet along the western curb of Prospect Street to the beginning point.

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8. Significance

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a lavish manner on his work. Moreover, he induced his wealthy uncle, George Peabody, to establish the Peabody Museum at Yale, now one of the nation's major museums of natural history.

Soon after joining Yale's faculty, Marsh inaugurated his collecting. He led the first Yale Scientific Expedition to the West in 1870, largely underwriting its costs. The thirteen members of the group, plus its military escort, roamed in Nebraska, northern Colorado, Wyoming and California. Because Marsh encouraged Indians to bring in bones, he became known as the "Bone-Medicine man." This trip and later expeditions in the 1870's produced quantities of bones and led to some major discoveries. Fossils of birds with teeth (heretofore unknown), of dinosaurs or sea serpents, and of winged reptiles, toothless pterodactyls, were found. Although these fossils startled America, the Country was little prepared for the massive flow of dinosaur bones to New Haven that began late in the 1870's.

Marsh, who had not originally intended to concentrate on dinosaurs, became enamored with them in 1877. When he received in that year a letter describing deposits of dinosaur bones in Wyoming, Marsh sent an assistant to investigate. And when the assistant wrote that at Como Bluff, Wyoming, dinosaur bones lay in tons over a seven mile area, Marsh became a modern victim of the long-dead reptiles. Under his direction, digging at Como Bluff lasted until 1892. He insisted upon extreme care and thoroughness in collecting, with the result that bones reached New Haven in excellent condition. Moreover, Marsh's demand that nothing be overlooked, produced remarkably complete specimens. As box after box of bones reached Yale, the rapturous Marsh was able to describe one new dinosaur after another, until at the end he had written of eighty new kinds of dinosaurs and thirty-four new genera.

Fascinating as they were in themselves, the fossil birds, reptiles and animals that Marsh dug from the ground also gave incontrovertible support to Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. A convinced believer in evolution himself, Marsh's discoveries dismayed many an opponent of Darwin's revolutionary theory. Darwin's foes, for example, had pointed to the difference between reptiles and birds in discounting evolution. But Marsh's finding of cretaceous birds in 1872-73, with their teeth and other reptilian characteristics, had illustrated the genetic similarity between the two families. In addition, the paleontologist's amazing collection of fossil horses illustrated the evolution of the horse from about the size of a fox to that of an ass.

Marsh's tremendous energy did not fail him until his death on March 18, 1899. Because of the overwhelming collection of bones at Yale and his other activities, he did not publish as much as he had hoped to do. Nevertheless, his contributions to paleontology guide his successors in the scientific world today.