United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 Public Garden

and or common

2. Location

street & number Beacon, Charles, Boylston, and Arlington Streets ___ not for publication

city, town Boston __ vicinity of

state Massachusetts code 025 county Suffolk code

3. Classification

<table>
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<th>Category</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Present Use</th>
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<td>___ agriculture</td>
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<td>___ private</td>
<td>___ unoccupied</td>
<td>___ commercial</td>
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<tr>
<td>___ structure</td>
<td>___ both</td>
<td>___ work in progress</td>
<td>___ educational</td>
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<tr>
<td>___ site</td>
<td>Public Acquisition</td>
<td>___ in process</td>
<td>___ entertainment</td>
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<tr>
<td>___ object</td>
<td>___ in process</td>
<td>___ being considered</td>
<td>___ government</td>
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4. Owner of Property

name City of Boston

street & number City Hall

city, town Boston ___ vicinity of state Massachusetts

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Suffolk County Registry of Deeds

street & number Pemberton Square

city, town Boston state Massachusetts

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Boston Landmarks Commission Survey

has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes ___ no

date 1969 __ federal __ state __ county X local

depository for survey records Boston Landmarks Commission, City Hall

city, town Boston state Massachusetts
DESCRIPTION

The Public Garden has existed within virtually its present bounds since the land was definitively dedicated to the purpose in 1859 by a 60-1 vote of the citizens of Boston, although a 40-foot strip along the south was absorbed by Boylston Street in 1914 for subway and street construction.

The principal feature of the Public Garden is a free-form 6-acre pond, crossed near the middle by an iron footbridge and plied in summer by the pedal-powered Swan Boats. The pond and the walks still closely adhere to the Meacham plan of 1859, as may be observed by comparing the historic and modern-day plans that accompany this study. Because of the botanical and horticultural origins of the Public Garden, the plantings are especially important.

Set amid the Garden's landscape are a number of monuments, particularly statues. The most prominent is an equestrian statue of George Washington, at the Arlington Street entrance opposite the Commonwealth Avenue mall. Also important is J.Q.A. Ward's Ether Monument. Surrounding the Public Garden on three sides (the Boylston Street side is missing because of the 1914 subway-street construction) is a handsome, though deteriorating, Victorian cast-iron fence. Except for the sculpture, the Garden is little changed from the mid-19th century.

HISTORIC FEATURES OF THE PUBLIC GARDEN*

Granite Basins with Fountains (A) (1861)

By Ebenezer Johnson.

Equestrian Statue of George Washington (B) (1869)

The artist was Thomas Ball. This statue is well-known sculptor-painter Ball's best-acclaimed work.²

Japanese Lantern (C) (1905)

This 16th-century object, from the palace of Gen. Toyotomi Hdeyoshi, was a gift by Bunkio Matsuki.

*As indicated by letters and numbers on the accompanying plan of the Public Garden.
8. Significance

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<tr>
<td>X 1839; 1859</td>
<td>Builder Architect: John Cadness; George V. Meacham (botanical garden)</td>
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Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Summary

The Public Garden was the first public botanical garden in the United States. Over the years, it has become a showplace for important sculpture. And it is known far and wide for the Swan Boats that ply its pond. As Walter Muir Whitehill has noted:

the municipal gardeners have been both careful in their work and conservative in their tastes, so that the Public Garden's gaudily brilliant flower beds, like its swan boats, irresistibly recall a French park of the Second Empire.\(^1\)

History

West of the Boston Common until the 1830s were marshlands, the nearer parts of which were granted by the town to ropemakers in 1794. This ropewalk property was repurchased by the City in 1824 and reserved for public use, although debate raged for 32 years over title to the property, what the bounds of the area should be, and exactly to what purposes it should be put.\(^2\)

In 1839 the City granted a group of 17 horticulturalists, headed by Horace Gray, permission to establish a botanic garden on this land. Gray, who had a collection of camellias and various varieties of hothouse grapes, envisioned on the site a botanic garden similar to those in European cities. Gray and his group imported an English landscape gardener, John Cadness, to supervise the work of ornamenting the grounds.

The group built a greenhouse and set out various ornamental trees and plants. A large circus building, just north of Beacon Street and west of Charles Street, was converted into a conservatory for plants and birds and was a great attraction until fire destroyed it.\(^3\)

The Botanic Garden formed the nucleus of the present Public Garden, but the effort was hampered by the Back Bay landfill projects under way in the area just to the west. Financial reverses caused the group to return the Garden to the City. No trace of the Cadness garden remains.

During the 1860s, the Garden was finally landscaped, according to a design by George V. Meacham in 1859. By 1880, there were 1500 trees and 90,000 bedding plants.\(^4\) The Swan Boats, designed by Robert Paget, began operation in 1877.
9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 24
Quadrangle name Boston South
Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

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<tr>
<td>H</td>
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Verbal boundary description and justification
The plot bounded by Beacon Street on the north, Charles Street on the east, Boylston Street on the south, and Arlington Street on the west.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>state</th>
<th>code</th>
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</table>

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James H. Charleton, Historian
organization History Division, National Park Service
date November 1985
street & number 1100 L Street, NW
telephone (202) 343-8165
city or town Washington
state DC
state 20013-7127

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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature
title date

For NPS use only
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
date

Keeper of the National Register
date

Chief of Registration
Representation in Existing Surveys

Title: National Register of Historic Places

Date: 1974 Federal

Depository for survey records: National Park Service, 1100 L Street, NW

City, Town: Washington State: DC
Statue of Edward Everett Hale (D) (1913)

The artist was Bela L. Pratt. Mr. Hale, a noted preacher and writer, and author of "The Man Without a Country," was chaplain of the United States Senate in 1903-09.

Ether Monument (E) (1867-68)

The sculptor was John Quincy Adams Ward, "the sculptor-laureate" of the late 19th century. The monument, an early example of Ward's work, was a gift to the City by Thomas Lee to commemorate the early use of ether at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston in October 1846.

George Robert White Memorial (F) (1924)

The artist was Daniel Chester French, "America's leading sculptor" (best known for the seated Lincoln in the Lincoln Memorial). The architect was Henry Bacon. The memorial is a female figure in bronze casting "bread upon the waters." George Robert White left $5 million in trust to the City "for creating works of public utility and beauty for the use and enjoyment of the inhabitants of the City of Boston."

Statue of Rev. William Ellery Channing (G) (1903)

The artist was Herbert Adams of New York, and the statue was given to the City by John Foster, a member of the Arlington Street Church. Mr. Foster directed that the statue be placed in the Garden across from the church because Channing, the "Father of American Unitarianism," had been the pastor of the Federal Street Church, the predecessor of the Arlington Street Church.

Statue of Charles Sumner (H) (1878)

Thomas Ball also sculpted this statue. Long-time U.S. Senator Sumner was a champion of emancipation and a supporter of Horace Mann's efforts to improve public education in Massachusetts.

Statue of Kosciuszko (I) (1927)

The artist was Mrs. T.A.R. Kitson. Thaddeus Kosciuszko was born in Poland in 1746. He joined the United States Army in 1776, and General Washington made him a colonel and his adjutant in the American War for Independence.

Statue of Thomas Cass (J) (1899)

The artist was Richard E. Brooks. Cass organized a regiment of Irish volunteers and was colonel of the 9th Massachusetts Infantry, the "Fighting Ninth," during the Civil War; he died at Malvern Hill, Virginia, on July 1, 1862.
The artist was Daniel Chester French. Phillips was a follower of William Lloyd Garrison in the anti-slavery movement. After the Civil War he aided prohibition, women's suffrage, and various penal and administrative reforms.

Flagpole (L) (1922)
Set in a bronze base designed by A.E. Austin.

Iron Fence (1865)
Restored according to the original design in 1978.

Bridge (1869)
This structure is of stone and iron.

Swan Boats
Designed by Robert Paget in 1877, they are still operated by the Paget family. The oldest in use dates from 1918.5

Fountains
The 20th-century fountains are by Anna Coleman Ladd, Bashka Paeff, and Mary E. Moore.

NOTABLE TREES IN THE PUBLIC GARDEN 6

1. American Beech
2. European Beech
3. Pyramidal Beech
4. Rivers' Purple Beech
5. Weeping European Beech
6. European White Birch
7. Western Catalpa
8. Kwanzan Cherry
9. Kentucky Coffee
10. Tea Crabapple
11. Pink Dogwood
12. American Elm
13. Belgian Elm
14. Camperdown Elm
15. English Elm
16. Rock Elm
17. Scotch or Wych Elm
18. Thurlow Weeping Willow
19. Maidenhair Tree
20. Sentry Ginkgo
21. Goldenchain Tree
22. Goldenrain Tree
23. Sweetgum
24. Common Horsechestnut
25. Katsura Tree
26. Japanese Larch
27. Amur Maackia
28. Saucer Magnolia
29. Silver Maple
30. Norway Maple
CONDITION:

The statuary, fountains, and iron fence of the Garden have suffered from environmental pollution, but considerable progress has been made in their treatment and protection.

There are today some 125 different kinds of trees in the Garden, among them many mature and handsome specimens of great age. Many are elms, a species now endangered by Dutch elm disease, but all of the Garden's trees — oaks, ginkgoes, beeches, catalpas, even the great Pagoda Tree, one of the finest in the country — suffer the effects of pollution and constant foot traffic.

Footnotes

1This description, except as noted, has been adapted and edited from the National Register of Historic Places joint nomination of the Boston Common and Public Garden prepared by Robert Rettig in 1974.


5Paul Paget, "The Story of the Swan Boats," p. 6, in The Promenade (Boston: Friends of the Public Garden, 1982).

6From the list in "The Public Garden, Boston, Massachusetts" (Boston: Friends of the Public Garden, 1985), an interpretive leaflet.
They are unique boats that utilize bicycle propulsion principles. They were inspired by the "Schwanboot" in Wagner's Lohengrin. The oldest in service dates from 1918, the newest from 1958. Adm. Richard E. Byrd was a particularly avid passenger. Shirley Temple drew quite a crowd in 1938 on her first ride.\(^1\)

Beginning with fountains in 1861, the Garden became a showplace for public sculpture (inventoried in the Description section of this study), including works by Thomas Ball, Daniel Chester French, and John Quincy Adams Ward. It also still contains an excellent collection of trees (also inventoried in the Description).

Footnotes


2Ibid., p. 98, 142-145, 156.

3Ibid., pp. 144-145.

4"The Public Garden, Boston, Massachusetts" (Friends of the Public Garden, 1985), unpaginated leaflet.

Bibliography


Friends of the Public Garden. "The Public Garden, Boston, Massachusetts" (Boston: Friends of the Public Garden, 1985.


Boston Public Garden. (area in solid outline over dots)
Meacham Plan, Boston Public Garden, 1859.
Current plan of the Boston Public Garden.
(From interpretive leaflet published by Friends of the Public Garden, 1985)