

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Arnold Arboretum

AND/OR COMMON

Arnold Arboretum

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER Arborway (Route 203)

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Boston (Jamaica Plain)

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Ninth

STATE

Massachusetts

CODE

025

COUNTY

Suffolk

CODE

025

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: <u>arboretum</u>

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY** (by direct title and lease from the City of Boston)

NAME

President and Fellows of Harvard College for the Arnold Arboretum

STREET & NUMBER

Office of the President, Massachusetts Hall

CITY, TOWN

Cambridge

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Massachusetts

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Suffolk County Registry of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

Suffolk County Court House

CITY, TOWN

Boston

STATE

Massachusetts

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

none

DATE

\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 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		

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Arnold Arboretum covers some 265 acres of rolling land south of Centre Street (Route 1) and west of Arborway (Route 203) in the Jamaica Plain district of Boston. Within the grounds are examples of over 6,000 varieties of trees and shrubs from all over the North Temperate Zone. The plants are grouped by species and within species by family; each is labeled with scientific and common names, origin, and date of planting. In addition, the Arboretum staff maintains complete records on the location of each plant and the progress of its development.

The original ground plan for the Arboretum was prepared by noted landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted in conjunction with the facility's first director, Charles Sprague Sargent. Olmsted's work is still evident in the artificial ponds at the eastern edge of the Arboretum, the pattern of roads and paths which wind through the grounds, and the location of some plant types. Olmsted's plan has been maintained where possible but some relocation of species has been necessary (because of Olmsted's limited knowledge of plant materials and the conditions under which they could be grown successfully). Moderate widening of the roads about 1960 has also covered most of the cobbled gutters which originally lined them. The most prominent land features in the Arboretum are Bussey Hill (190 feet) and Peters' Hill (237 feet), each of which is topped by a scenic overlook.

Several buildings are included within the Arboretum boundaries (see visitor's map attached) but all are situated in such a way that they do not constitute intrusive elements. The administration building stands just inside the main gate (located on Arborway just south of its intersection with Centre Street). Erected in 1890, it is a brick building, 2 stories above a raised basement, with a hipped roof broken by jerkinhead dormers; intricate bands of corbelling surround the building below the second floor windows and at the eaves. The 4-story brick herbarium at the rear (north) is a later addition. Just east of the Centre Street gate are a series of greenhouses and the bonsai house, a hexagonal wood and concrete structure of oriental character. Four modest houses on the edges of the Arboretum serve as staff residences. Those on Walter Street and the south side of South Street are brick, 2 stories, and appear to date from the 20th century; those on Centre Street and the north side of South Street are frame and clapboard, 2 stories, and pre-date the establishment of the Arboretum.

Of the properties surrounding the Arboretum, only one, the newest building within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Biologic and Diagnostic Laboratory complex, is now directly intrusive (see photo #4). Begun in the 1930's, the complex stands on high ground at the intersection of Arborway and South Street. The newest building, erected about 1970, is eight stories in height and readily visible from the low-lying portions of the Arboretum along Arborway.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input 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		

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SPECIFIC DATES	1872	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	landscape architect: Frederick Law Olmsted
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Arnold Arboretum, located in the Jamaica Plain district of Boston, is recognized as the pre-eminent institution in the United States for the study of ligneous (woody) plants. Established in 1872 through a bequest from the estate of James Arnold, the Arboretum has since more than doubled in size (from 120 to 265 acres) and has assembled a collection of over 6,000 varieties of trees and shrubs from all over the North Temperate Zone.

Much of the Arboretum's growth is the result of the work of its first director, Charles Sprague Sargent, who during his 50-year tenure in that position gained a reputation as one of America's foremost silviculturists. It was Sargent who involved noted landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted in the early development of the Arboretum. The library, herbarium, and publications which Sargent initiated still prove invaluable to scientists.

The major portion of the Arnold Arboretum is now owned by the City of Boston (Department of Parks and Recreation) but is administered by Harvard University under a 1,000-year lease. Two areas--the Walter Street Tract and the South Street Tract--are owned directly by Harvard. With the exception of those two areas, the Arboretum grounds are open to the public from sunrise to sunset daily.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

James Arnold, a successful and public-spirited merchant of New Bedford, Massachusetts, provided the means for creating the Arboretum. Upon his death in 1868, Arnold bequeathed \$100,000 for study and research in either agriculture or horticulture. Two of the trustees of Arnold's estate, both of whom deeply appreciated the beauty and value of trees, thought that the bequest should be used to establish a tree farm, where the scientific study of trees could be pursued. Through their efforts, Arnold's fund was presented to Harvard University on March 29, 1872, with the understanding that the university develop a tree farm, to be called the "Arnold Arboretum."

The development of the Arboretum proved to be a more difficult task than had been anticipated, and without the work of Charles Sprague Sargent much less might have been achieved. When Harvard appointed the young man (then aged thirty-two) as director of the Arboretum on November 24, 1873, he appeared to possess no particular qualifications for the job. Sprague had graduated

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Huth, Hans. Nature and the American (Berkeley, Calif., 1957).  
 Humphrey, Harvey B. Makers of North American Botany (New York, 1961).  
 Morison, Samuel E., ed. Development of Harvard University Since the Inauguration of President Eliot, 1869-1929 (Cambridge, Mass., 1930).  
 Trelease, William. "Charles Sprague Sargent", Biographical Memoirs (National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C., 1929).

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 265

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>19</u>	<u>325220</u>	<u>4686030</u>	B	<u>19</u>	<u>325600</u>	<u>4685000</u>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	<u>19</u>	<u>324680</u>	<u>4683960</u>	D	<u>19</u>	<u>323890</u>	<u>4684470</u>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the National Historic Landmark designation for the Arnold Arboretum are those of the full 265 acre complex as owned and/ or administered by Harvard University; specific lines are indicated in red on the attached map (included in the visitor's guide distributed by the Arboretum).

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 3/13/64

ORGANIZATION	DATE
<u>Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service</u>	<u>6/13/75</u>
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
<u>1100 L. Street, NW.</u>	<u>202-523-5464</u>
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
<u>Washington</u>	<u>D.C.</u>

**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

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

DATE

*Conrad W. Williams*  
 Designated 11/27/65  
 Boundary Commission 8/11-76

TITLE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Chief, Hist. & Arch. Surveys

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Director, OAHPS Acting

8-11-76

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from Harvard in 1862, served in the Civil War, traveled in Europe, and then did some additional studying. He had not impressed others with his scholarship, nor had he published any scientific papers. However, Sprague obviously had found his calling in his appointment to the Arboretum and quickly displayed rare skill both as an administrator and as a scholar.

Sargent said of his early years with the Arboretum, that no one had at first realized the challenge facing them, especially "the man selected to carry out the provisions of this agreement (Arnold's legacy)". Sargent soon realized that the income from the trust would not be sufficient to develop and maintain the facility. The imaginative director then turned his eyes toward the City of Boston. Fortunately, Frederick L. Olmsted, the creator of New York's Central Park, was then working on the Boston Park system, and he and Sargent joined forces in a campaign to gain the city's help in establishing the Arboretum. Olmsted, spurred by his unflinching vision, conceived of an artistically designed arboretum as forming the esthetic highpoint of the city's park system.

The two men fought for nine years. Finally, an agreement signed by Boston and Harvard on December 30, 1882, signified their triumph over the opposition of "town and gown," and public apathy. According to the pact, Boston received the title to the land in Jamaica Plain intended for the tree farm and then leased it back to the university for a thousand years, for a rental of one dollar a year. Looking to the future, Harvard reserved the right to renew the lease for another thousand years when the original period expired. The city also agreed to install walkways and drives, and Harvard agreed that the Arboretum would form part of the city's park system and would be open to the public.

With the conclusion of this agreement, Sargent was able to concentrate on actual development of the Arboretum and its collections. In this he was guided by Harvard University's desire that the collections include a specimen of every kind of tree and shrub that could be grown under the climatic and soil conditions of eastern Massachusetts. Through purchase and exchange many specimens were gained, but it soon became evident that Sargent would have to seek out plants for the Arboretum. As a result, travel in search of woody plants carried Sargent and his staff throughout the United States and the Far East. It was in the Far East in particular that they found numerous plants which could be grown at the Arboretum, and expeditions to Japan and China supplied numerous varieties for the tree farm. Laborers planted the specimens in groups of species, and within species by families. As the farm's varied landscape, which included hills, meadows and brooks, was planted, Sargent also made every effort to make the Arboretum esthetically appealing.

While creating the Arboretum, Sargent never forgot its research aspect. He began to test woody plants immediately in order to determine which were suitable

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ITEM NUMBER

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for the climate. By the time of his death in 1922, the farm had grown 1,286 plants for the first time in eastern Massachusetts. As the years passed, Sargent also built up a library, using his own botanical collection as a start. He also developed a herbarium, now of inestimable value in research. Moreover, in the course of his directorship, Sargent produced scores of articles and several monumental works. His Silva of North America stands as his masterpiece. This work, issued in fourteen volumes, describes and illustrates every species and variety of tree known to exist in North America north of Mexico.

Despite the scientific value of his publications, Sargent's real achievement is the Arnold Arboretum. The original 120-acre facility had already grown substantially by the time of Sprague's death in 1922 and since then has reached 265 acres; the present collections include over 6,000 varieties of trees and shrubs, ranging from mature oaks to miniature bonsai. The greater portion of the Arboretum is still leased to Harvard by the City of Boston but two areas-- the Walter Street Tract and the South Street Tract--are owned directly by the University. With the exception of the two tracts named, the Arboretum is open to the public from sunrise to sunset daily (automobiles may be used within the Arboretum on weekdays by special permit).