

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	BKL.911
Historic Name:	Sargent's Pond
Common Name:	
Address:	Sargent Rd
City/Town:	Brookline
Village/Neighborhood:	Sargent Estate
Local No:	331 4-5
Year Constructed:	c 1875
Architect(s):	Sargent, Charles Sprague
Architectural Style(s):	
Use(s):	Other Recreational
Significance:	Landscape Architecture
Area(s):	BKL.W: Brookline Multiple Resource Area
Designation(s):	Nat'l Register MRA (10/17/1985); Nat'l Register Individual Property (10/17/1985)
Building Materials(s):	



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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

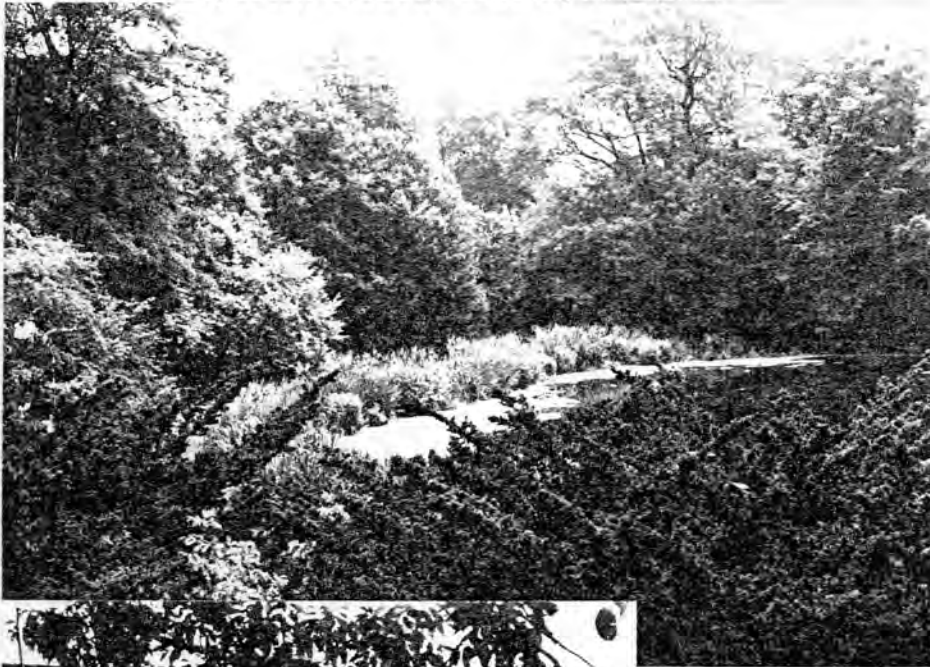
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NRIND NRMRA 10/17/1985

FORM H - PARKS AND LANDSCAPE FEATURES

Area <u>W</u>	Form No. <u>911</u> <u>331/4-5</u>
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MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
80 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116



Town Brookline MRA
Address Sargent Road
Name Sargent's Pond

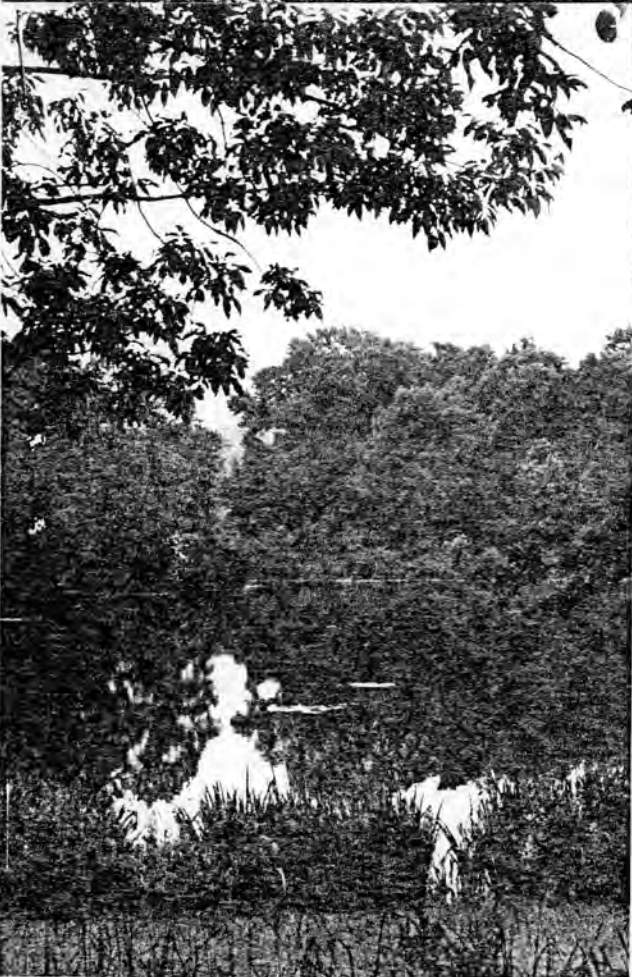
Ownership:

Public
 Private

Present owner Trustees of Sargent Estate

Type:

Park
 Green
 Training Field
 Boulevard or Parkway
 Other (Pond)



ation
s streets
ical features.

4. Description:

Date late 1870s
Size (approx. acreage) 3 acres
Architect (if known) Charles Sprague
Location of Plans (if known) ^{Sargent} NA

Setting In a residential area, 1930s and 1940s single family houses.

Current Condition Good

Recorded by Carla Benka

Organization Brookline Historical Comm.

Date May 1983

Newton Quadrangle

UTM Reference: 324640/4687380

Map #: 55

See attached map.

VISUAL ASSESSMENT Describe topography and layout. Note components such as structures (bandstands, gazebos, sheds) monuments & fountains; landscaping features (formal plantings, bodies of water).

Compare current appearance with original, if possible.

Sargent's Pond was designed to be a major focal point on the 150-acre Sargent estate, which was subdivided in the late 1920s. The houses in the immediate area are single-family homes set back from the street on predominantly one to two acre lots. The pond rests in a basin and is approached by a gentle downward slope; plantings around it, including irises, are informal and naturalistic. There is a small concrete maintenance building/pump house off to one side. According to sketches and photographs, there appears to have been more landscaping around the pond than exists now, and it seems that some of the original rhododendron have died or have been removed.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Discuss types of use, major period of use, evaluate importance within town.

Sargent's Pond was created in the late 1870s (according to an article by Marina Van Rensselaer) by Charles Sprague Sargent, who excavated a basin and supplied water to the pond by damming up a small, natural brook which seems to start around the lower part of Cottage Street. Sargent was the manager of Holm Lea, the country estate of his father, Ignatius, who between 1845 and 1873 purchased a number of smaller estates, including those belonging to the Cook and Lee families. The properties were united through the designs of both father and son, and the landscape was "altered, remodeled and virtually recreated." (Van Rensselaer)

Holm Lea consisted of open spaces of rolling fields for a landscape effect, which were then surrounded by a great variety of rare trees, both American and exotic (see attached list for some of the trees planted there.) Above all, there were the vistas, believed by Sargent, an advocate of the naturalistic school of landscaping, to be an essential component of the concept of beauty. This estate was famous for its size, variety of trees, shrubberies, and broad expanses of lawn and meadow, outlined by natural woods. So famous was this estate that 30,000 people would visit it on Rhododendron Sunday, at which time the Sargent family would open their showplace to the public.

As one observer wrote in 1903:

Every department of country life is here represented in due proportion without extravagance or faddism; all were blended into a beautiful and useful picture which is nothing short of exquisite.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Hazel Collins, "Landscape Gardening in Brookline," 1903. Brookline Library.
 Marina Van Rensselaer, "A Suburban Country Place," The Century Magazine, May 1897, Vol LIV, #1.
 Cynthia Zaitzovsky, Frederick Law Olmsted and the Boston Park System, Harvard University Press, 1982.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: Brookline	Form No: 227-14-5
Property Name: Sargent's Pond	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

Historical Significance

Cattle grazed peacefully in the meadows which were one or two city blocks long and twice as wide and bounded by masses of woods. Azaleas and rhododendron lined the pond's edge as did irises, while on the south side, the narcissus and Stars of Bethlehem grew in the grass. A rock garden hidden from view by tall shrubbery and partially concealed from the pond by willow trees, was full of Alpine flowers and other little plants. There were also a few flower beds in inconspicuous places as well as green houses, reserve gardens, and a "spring garden" of lilacs, irises, and peonies. It was a place "almost wholly artificial, yet looking like the work of Nature in one of her kindest moods: restful, and serene; nothing out of place, everything contributing to the general effect and each contributing to the effect of its neighbor; seclusive but not exclusive; each landscape formed and separate; harmonious in color, light, and shade, detail with detail." (Collins)

There were four entrances to Holm Lea: at Cottage Street; Chestnut Place; Warren Street; and Perkins Street in Jamaica Plain. Ultimately the estate was bordered by Walnut Street, along Warren; Cottage Street to the Boston line; Perkins Street in Jamaica Plain; the back lot lines of houses on Chestnut Street and Chestnut Place; and Warren Street between Walnut and Cottage. Today the Sargent Estate subdivision is private and a series of roads, some one way, wind through the area.

Charles Spargue Sargent

Sargent was born in Boston in 1841, the son of Ignatius and Henrietta Gray Sargent. He attended Harvard University and was graduated in 1862 at which time he entered the military and attained the rank of first lieutenant and aide-de-camp on the headquarters staff of the Department of the Gulf. He remained in the service as a staff officer until August 1865 when he was mustered out, having attained the brevet rank of major. After travelling in Europe for three years, he returned to the United States and in 1868, was placed in the full time position of manager of his father's estate in Brookline, Holm Lea. He lived in the old Thomas Lee house (see 209 Sargent Road information) which he remodeled in 1873 after it was purchased from Daniel Dwight in 1871. (Dwight bought it from the Lee family in 1868). John Muir, in a letter to his wife in 1893 described it as follows "This is the finest mansion and ground I ever saw. The house is about two hundred feet long with immense verandas trimmed with huge flowers and vines, standing in the midst of fifty acres of lawns, grass, wild woods of pine, hemlock, maple, beech, hickory, etc. and all kinds of underbrush and wild flowers and cultivated flowers. There are acres of rhododendron twelve feet high in full bloom, and a pond covered with lilies, etc.; all the ground, hill and dale, clad in the full summer dress of the region, trimmed with exquisite taste."

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: Brookline	Form No: 80/331- 45
Property Name: Sargent's Pond	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

Historical Significance - 2

Between 1872 and 1874 he was professor of horticulture at Harvard University, succeeding Francis Parkman, and during the same period he was one of four assistants to Asa Gray of the Harvard Botanic Garden. He became the director, although not a botanist and apparently "having no credentials for the job beyond his social position and a modest reputation as a gentleman landscape gardener." (Zaitzavsky, p.60) Although placing 88th out of a graduating class of 90 at Harvard, Sargent, under the tutelage of Gray, learned quickly. His responsibility as director of the Botanic Garden was to reorganize the seven acre collection. The job, however, "did not offer him enough scope for his energy and ambitions", (Zaitzevsky, p.60), and he took on the directorship of the Arnold Arboretum as well. In 1872, the Arboretum was "an operation with great possibilities but little money to realize them". Originally located on just the Bussey farm in Jamaica Plain, it did not offer space to accomodate anything more than a simple arrangement of tree collections. "Sargent, the landscape gardener only newly turned botanist, had ambitions that were as much aesthetic as scientific. He wanted the Arboretum to be as outstanding in landscape design as it would be in its collections." After eight years of negotiations between the City of Boston and Harvard, Sargent's original concept of the city purchasing the Arboretum grounds from Harvard, buying several acres of adjoining land; and leasing all the property back to Harvard for 1000 years while retaining responsibility for building and maintaining the roads and policing the grounds was realized.

Sargent, Frederick Law Olmsted, and the Olmsted firm which included Charles Eliot as well as Sargent's nephew, Henry Codman Sargent, collaborated on the design. According to Cynthia Zaitzevsky, there are many visual parallels between Holm Lea and the Arnold Arboretum. "Contemporary accounts and views and what remains of the state today show many groupings of trees and shrubs, treatment of vistas, and other landscape effects" which are strikingly similar. Zaitzevsky also states that Sargent, coming from "the amateur landscape gardening tradition... was capable of translating his personal aesthetic vision into a broader medium than the gentleman's country estate." (p.63)

Like his concept for Holm Lea, the design of the Arboretum was to be naturalistic and one that fitted with the topography and existing trees. Its design went one step farther, however, and grouped trees by family and genus according to the natural order, while presenting them in logical sequence; "a blend of the scientific and the picturesque." In the end, the Arboretum introduced more than one thousand trees and shrubs into this country, chiefly from Eastern Asia.

Sargent remained director and benevolent dictator of this institution until his death in 1927. In addition, he served as a special agent of the tenth census to investigate the forests of the United States; served as Chairman of a commission in New York state to recommend a plan for the acre of the Adirondack forest; chaired a committee formed to prepare a plan for the

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INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: Brookline	Form No: 80/331 4,5
Property Name: Sargent's Pond	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.
Historical Significance - 3

preservation and management of National Forests; and played an important role in the development of United States forest policy.

He was also a trustee of the Museum of Fine Arts; trustee and president of the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture; trustee of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Following in his father's footsteps, he was a director of the Boston and Albany Railroad from 1880 on, and a vice president of the Massachusetts Hospital Life Insurance Company. An editor of Garden and Forest from 1889-1897, Sargent was also the author of a number of books, including the fourteen volume, 740 plate Silva of North America.

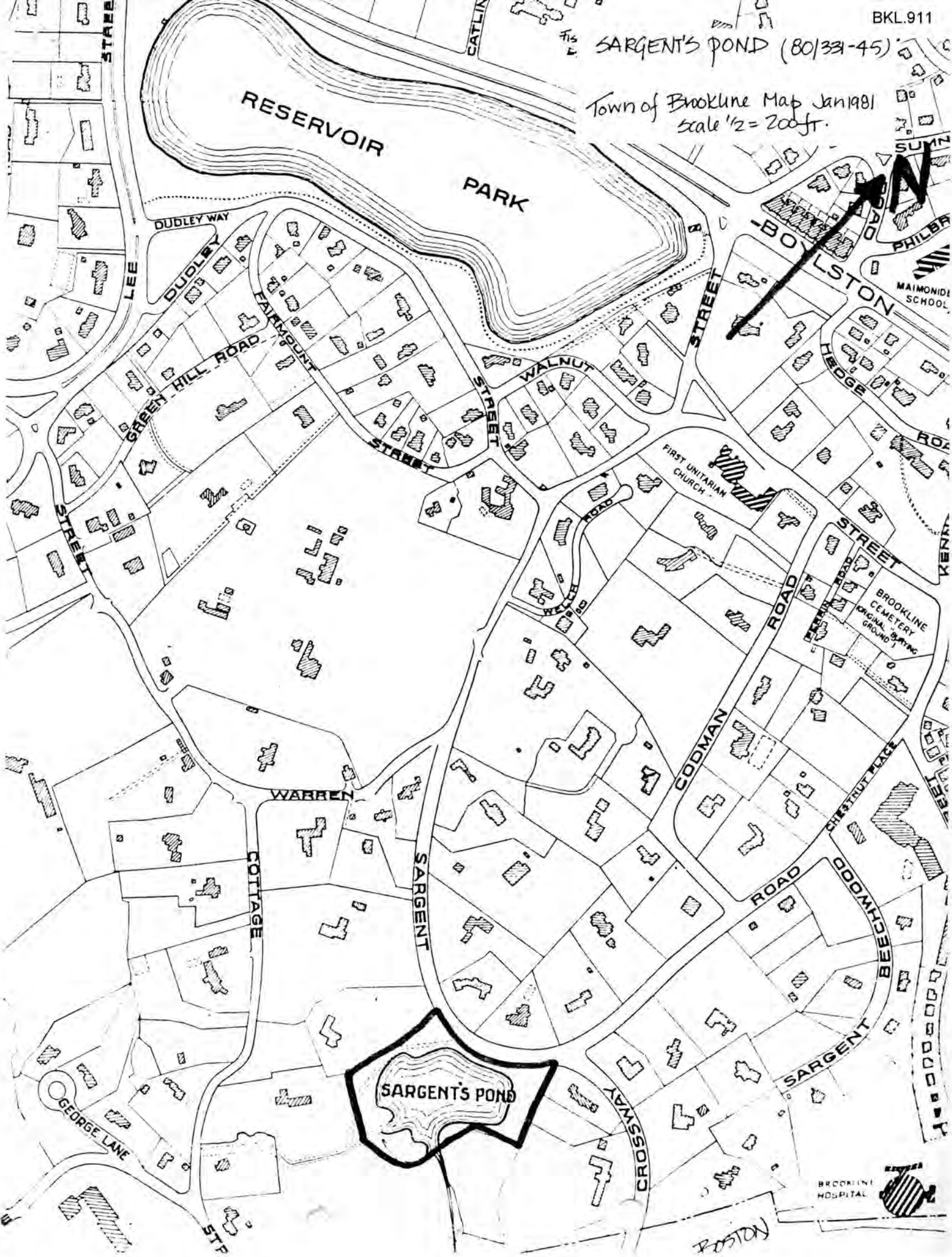
He married Mary Allen Robeson in 1873 and had five children. One married Guy Lowell, the architect, while another, Charles Sprague Sargent, Jr., became the trustee of Holm Lea and supervised its eventual subdivision in the late 1920's and early 1930's. Charles Sargent lived in Brookline for most of his life and served as a Trustee of the Walnut Hills Cemetery and as a Park Commissioner.

"By all accounts, Sargent was an unpredictable, difficult, and not very lovable man, and no one ever claimed that he was a genius. Yet he founded a remarkable institution, and he won the friendship and respect of many giants of his day, including Frederick Law Olmsted and Henry Hobson Richardson" (Zaitzevsky, p.63) who were also his Brookline neighbors (See 99 Warren Street and 25 Cottage Street, respectively.)

Sargent's Pond meets NR criteria A,B,& C, being one of the few remaining elements of the Sargent Estate, probably the most famous 19th century country estate for which Brookline gained so wide a reputation, and representing the spirit of the landscape philosophy of Charles Sprague Sargent, renowned horticulturalist and founder of the Arnold Arboretum.

SARGENT'S POND (80/33-45)

Town of Brookline Map Jan 1981
scale 1/2" = 200ft.



SARGENT'S POND



BOSTON