



**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

August 21, 2020

Heather Lennon  
Chair, Lancaster Historical Commission  
701 Main Street, Suite 8  
Lancaster, MA 01523

RE: Bayard Thayer Estate, 679 George Hill Road, Lancaster

Dear Ms. Lennon:

The Massachusetts Historical Commission has evaluated the Bayard Thayer Estate, also known as Hawthorne Hill, 679 George Hill Road, Lancaster, at the request of the Lancaster Historical Commission. In the opinion of the MHC staff, the Bayard Thayer Estate is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C at the local level with a Period of Significance from 1903 to 1974. This eligibility opinion is for the entire 217 acre property, but could potentially include other land historically associated with the Bayard Thayer estate, such as the burial ground and greenhouse remains, if a sufficient case can be made for inclusion. The property may also be eligible as part of a potential estate district in south Lancaster, should the historic boundaries of the estates abut one another and possess sufficient integrity.

Under Criterion A, the property is eligible in the Area of Social History as a representative example of the upper-class estates that developed in Lancaster during the Gilded Age. The property would also be eligible under this Area due to its associations with the Boston Cenacle Society, which owned the property from 1953 to 1974. The property is potentially eligible under Criterion A in the Area of Agriculture if sufficient extant remnants of Bayard Thayer's horticulture activities survive.

Under Criterion C, the property is eligible in the Area of Architecture as an important early work of Guy Lowell and potentially for its associations with Ogden Codman, Jr. and Elsie de Wolfe, if their modifications to the property are extant. Additionally, the property would likely be eligible under Criterion C in the Area of Landscape Architecture for its designs of Robeson Sargent, Arthur Little, and Herbert Browne based on extant landscape features. The nomination's contributing resources should include the 1904/1953 mansion house, carriage house, storage building, gates, tea house, landscape features, and any other extant resources retaining historic integrity and dating to the Period of Significance.

A nomination process can now commence provided MHC receives a letter from property owner(s) in support of the nomination. MHC recommends that the services of a professional preservation consultant experienced in the preparation of National Register nominations be retained. A National Register nomination should provide context for the Thayer family in Lancaster and provide a comparative analysis of this estate to the others in the town in order to develop historic and architectural contexts. It should also discuss the occupation by the Boston Cenacle Society at the property and their uses/modifications. The nomination should document the history of and alterations to the mansion and associated buildings, structures, sites, and objects, and provide context for the house, gardens, and other relevant resources as they relate to the careers of those responsible for their creation.

Please see the enclosed broadsheets, which include additional information about the National Register program.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ben Haley". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the "Yours sincerely," text.

Ben Haley  
National Register Assistant  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Cc: Orlando Pacheco, Town Administrator

Enclosure: Effects and Benefits; There's a Difference