

## Back Bay Walk East

Use this map for all “BBE” sites

 = MBTA stop



# Back Bay Walk East

## “Educators, Artists, and Reformers”

The Back Bay, originally a mudflat, was filled in with gravel brought from suburban Needham by train between 1852 and 1890. The land is flat, with streets laid out in a straight grid. The cross streets are conveniently named alphabetically from A to H. This elegant neighborhood includes Commonwealth Avenue with its tree-lined mall of grass, center walking path, and sculptures, as well as the “uptown” shopping area with high-end stores, art galleries, and restaurants.

The Back Bay East Walk starts and ends at the Public Garden.

The sites highlight the work of women in the arts and in education, and women who led the way in environmental protection, suffrage, and peace.

**Time:** 1 1/2 hours

**Begins:** Boston Public Garden

**Directions:** Enter the Public Garden at the corner of Beacon and Charles streets.

### BBE1: The Public Garden and Fountains by Women Sculptors

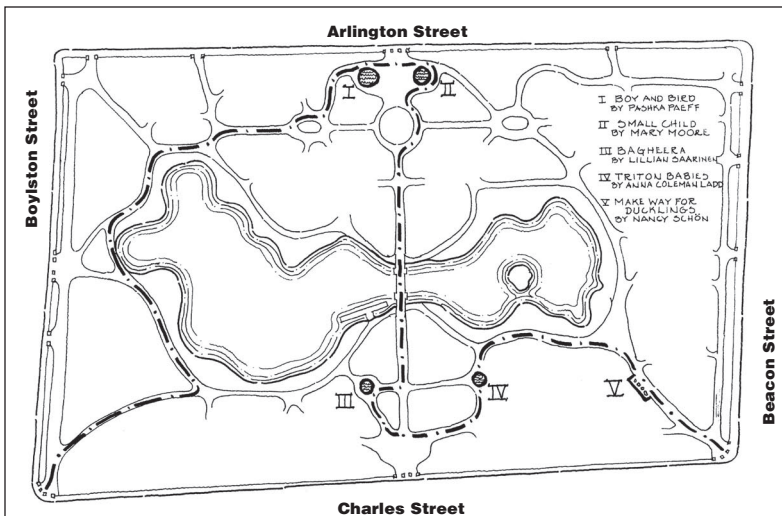
*Beacon, Charles and Arlington Streets*

The Public Garden opened in 1837 as a private space, but grew into a public park with its lagoon, swan boats, seasonal plantings, fountains, and sculpture.

The newest sculpture, *Make Way for*

*Ducklings*, modeled on the ducklings in Robert McCloskey’s book of the same name, is by local sculptor, **Nancy Schön**. Women also designed the sculptures for four fountains in the Public Garden. Using the map below, begin with the ducklings (V).

Map by Karen Tenney



Follow the path to the left to *Triton Babies* (IV) by **Anna Coleman Ladd** (1878-1939), given by **Elizabeth Sturgis Grew Beal**. Continue to *Bagheera* (III) by **Lillian Swann Saarinen**. Named for the panther in Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book*, it was given to the garden by friends of the sculptor. Cross the bridge over the lagoon to the Arlington Street entrance. On your right is *Small Child* (II) by **Mary Moore** (1881-1967), the gift of **Margaret Tenney Tozzer**. On your left is *Boy and Bird* (I) by **Bashka Paeff** (1893-1979), a Russian immigrant who studied at the Museum School and gave the sculpture to the Public Garden.

Note: Thomas Ball's sculpture of Charles Sumner. Although **Anne Whitney's** model won the blind competition, the Boston Arts committee rejected it when they learned that the sculptor was a woman, choosing Ball's instead. Whitney later installed her version in Harvard Square in 1902 (see B15).

🗺️ *Directions: Exit at Arlington Street. Turn left. Turn right on Commonwealth Avenue.*

## BBE2: Home of Amy Beach



28 Commonwealth Avenue

**Amy Beach** (1867-1944) is one of America's most noted composers. Her work, which has been revived in recent years, is enjoying a new popularity. She began her career as a concert pianist, but after her marriage to Dr. Henry Harris Beach, she turned her talents to composition. When her *Mass in E flat major*, which took three years to complete, was performed by the Handel and Haydn Society with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in February 1892, it was the first work by a woman to be performed by the Society. In the same year her aria for an alto soloist was the first work by a



Amy Beach



woman to be performed by the New York Symphony Orchestra. Her standing as a composer led her to be commissioned to write the *Festival Jubilate* for chorus and orchestra which was played at the dedication of the Woman's Building during Chicago's 1892 World's Columbia Exposition. Beach's *Gaelic Symphony* was performed by orchestras throughout the country. In 1900, she premiered her own piano concerto with the Boston Symphony and later performed it in Europe. In addition to her larger pieces, Beach composed choral works, piano pieces, and over 150 popular songs.

## BBE3: College Club



44 Commonwealth Avenue

Founded in 1890, the College Club is the oldest women's college club in the United States. It was founded by nineteen Boston women who were members of the National Association of Collegiate Alumnae (now the American Association of University Women). Their goal was to support higher education for women and to offer members a place to meet. The Club continues to provide scholarships for women.

🗺️ *Directions: At Berkeley Street, cross to the Commonwealth Avenue Mall.*



From left to right: Jane, Barbara, Diane, Maureen, Evelyn, Ginny, Mary Jane, Julie, Danielle, Fran, and parents Julia and Dan O'Neil at Boston's Easter Parade in 1953

**BBE4: Easter Parade,  
Julia Oliver O'Neil**

*Commonwealth Avenue Mall*

**Julia Oliver O'Neil** (1909-78) and her ten daughters became famous in the Commonwealth Avenue Easter Parade. Every year, between 1940 and 1959, she made matching outfits for her daughters. Their picture was printed in journals and newspapers all over the world.

*Directions: Walk down Commonwealth Avenue Mall. Cross Clarendon Street.*

**BBE5: Statues by  
Theo Ruggles Kitson**

*Commonwealth Ave Mall,  
near Clarendon Street*

Among the statues on the Commonwealth Avenue Mall created by women is the group honoring Mayor Patrick Collins created by **Theo Ruggles Kitson** (1871-1932) and her husband, Henry Hudson Kitson. The Collins statue is flanked by two women: one symbolic of Ireland, his birthplace, and the other of America. Kitson, who was known nationally for her Civil War memorials, including one of the

nurse **Mother Bickerdyke** in Galesburg, Illinois, also created the statue of Thaddeus Kosciuszko in the Boston Public Garden. The Kitsons maintained a studio in Brookline.

*Directions: Walk back to Clarendon Street. Turn left. Turn right on Commonwealth Avenue.*

**BBE6: Site of Simmons College  
Graduate School of Social Work**

*51 Commonwealth Avenue*

The Simmons College Graduate School of Social Work, founded in 1904, operated at this site for many years before moving to the college's main campus in The Fenway. It was the first school of social work to be affiliated with an institution of higher learning. When Simmons College was established as a women's college in 1899, Henry LeFavour, the first president, explained that the college hoped to prepare young women to earn their own livings. Recognizing that the college's goal was controversial, he explained: "Whether society ought to be constituted so that women should not need to earn

their own living is a debatable question, but it is evident that the trend of society is now in the other direction.” When the college opened, it offered training in household economics, secretarial studies, library science, and general science. The household economics course developed out of the Women’s Educational and Industrial Union’s School of Housekeeping (see C18). Social work was added next, followed by salesmanship and public health nursing. The salesmanship program—officially, the Prince School of Education for Store Service—also developed out of the Women’s Educational and Industrial Union. Founded in 1905 by **Lucinda W. Prince** (1862-1935), the program became so popular that Prince soon teamed up with Simmons College to offer teacher training courses for her instructors. By 1915, the program was given its own name—the Prince School of Salesmanship—and it was administered jointly by Simmons and the Union.



On the right, the former Simmons College Graduate School of Social Work at 51 Commonwealth Avenue. To its left is 49 Commonwealth, the site of the Prince School of Salesmanship in the late 1940s.

By 1918, Simmons assumed complete responsibility for the school which was located at 49 Commonwealth Avenue (next to the School of Social Work) in the late 1940s. The Simmons College main campus is located on The Fenway. It offers an undergraduate liberal arts program and twelve graduate programs, including the only women’s Master of Business Arts program. The MBA program is housed at 409 Commonwealth Avenue.

The School of Social Work building was owned by **Isabella Stewart Gardner’s** father-in-law, John L. Gardner, who willed it to his son George, who gave it to Simmons. He was influenced by his mother, **Eliza Endicott Peabody Gardner**, whose life-long interest in social work convinced her son that this was the most appropriate use of their family home.

*Directions: Continue down Commonwealth Avenue, passing No. 27. Formerly owned by the Massachusetts General Hospital and called Herrick House for its donor, Robert F. Herrick, the building was a residence for women who were student dieticians from 1942 to 1955.*

**BBE7: Emerson College buildings**

*21 to 23 Commonwealth Avenue*

Although Emerson College has moved to Boston’s theater district, its first buildings were at this site. Emerson College was established as a school of public speaking in 1880. In the early years, most of its graduates became teachers. With the introduction of radio production to its curriculum, Emerson began to expand its offerings to a wide range of courses and experiences in communication. One of its most distinguished graduates was **Elma Lewis** (1922-2004), a committed community activist. She founded the Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts in Roxbury in 1950 in order to bring arts



Elma Lewis

*“When I leave here, the body of my work will be all these wonderful people out there in the world, doing great things.”*

—Elma Lewis

to the African American community, especially to young people. She expanded her school to become the National Center of Afro-American Artists between 1969 and 1980. Her production of *Black Nativity* by Langston Hughes is still performed in Boston during the Christmas season. Emerson College awarded Elma Lewis an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree in 1968 (see BBW10).

**BBE8: Boston Center for Adult Education**



5 Commonwealth Avenue

Founded in 1933, the Boston Center for Adult Education was the first private, nonprofit adult education center in New England. It offers a range of courses in the humanities, arts, sciences, and professional development. One participant whose course at the Center led to a career in poetry was **Anne Gray Sexton** (1928-74). At the age of twenty-eight she took John Holmes’s poetry workshop. She began writing poetry as mental therapy,

but soon became well known. Suffering from mental depression, she once said, “Poetry saved my life.” She was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for her collection, *Live or Die*, in 1967. Although she committed suicide, many of her poems call out for life. She said, “I say Live, Live because of the sun,/ the dream, the excitable gift.”

**BBE9: Home of Sarah Choate Sears**

One Commonwealth Avenue

Artist and art collector **Sarah Choate Sears** (1858-1935) and her husband Joshua Montgomery Sears lived in this Boston mansion in the first decades of the twentieth century. A graduate of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Sarah Sears painted portraits and still lifes and later took up photography. A supporter of local artists, Sears was the only woman incorporator of the Society of Arts and Crafts (see BBW18). She also was active in the work of the Copley Society (see BBW16). Sears was a patron of post impressionist painter Maurice Prendergast, and collected paintings by the early moderns and impressionists. Among them was her acquaintance, American-born **Mary Cassatt** (1845-1926), whose paintings are treasured by museums worldwide.



*Regal Lillies,*  
watercolor  
by Sarah  
Choate Sears




 *Directions: Turn left on Arlington Street. Turn left on Marlborough Street.*

### **BBE10: French Library and Cultural Center**

*43 Marlborough Street*

Originally organized by members of French-American organizations working toward the liberation of France during World War II, the French Library and Cultural Center opened in 1945. Many women have been involved in creating and expanding the library. Led by **Belle P. Rand** (1869-1956), ten women and men, half French and half Americans, signed the articles of incorporation. Boston sculptor **Katharine Lane Weems** (1899-1989) donated her mansion to the Library in 1961. Under the leadership of **Edna Doriot**, an adjacent building was acquired in 1976. The goal of the center is to promote French language and culture. In addition to maintaining its library and archives, the French Library sponsors a film program, translation services, and cultural programs including a Bastille Day celebration with dancing on Marlborough Street.

 *Directions: Continue on Marlborough Street. Turn right on Clarendon Street.*

*“Busy all day with my address for woman’s suffrage meeting in the evening... Wendell Phillips made the concluding speech of the evening. He was less brilliant than usual, kept referring to what I had said. I thanked him for this afterwards, and he said that my speech had spoiled his own; that I had taken up the very points upon which he intended to dwell.”—Diary of Julia Ward Howe, January 28, 1881*

### **BBE11: Harriet Hemenway and the Massachusetts Audubon Society**



*273 Clarendon Street*

**Harriet Lawrence Hemenway** (1858-1960) lived here when in 1896 she founded the Massachusetts Audubon Society with her cousin, **Minna Hall** (1851-1941). They were protesting the slaughter of birds for feathers to ornament women’s hats. It was estimated that five million American birds of about fifty species were being killed annually for this purpose. Hemenway and Hall invited groups of women to tea and convinced about nine hundred of them to give up wearing feathered hats. Their next move was to invite some prominent men to join them to start the Audubon Society with a goal of protecting birds. Although national legislation took a little longer, by 1897 Massachusetts had passed a bill outlawing trade in wild bird feathers.

 *Directions: Continue on Clarendon to Beacon, turn left.*

### **BBE12: Home of Julia Ward Howe**



*241 Beacon Street*

**Julia Ward Howe** (1819-1910) moved to an apartment at this site in 1879 a few years after the death of her husband, Samuel Gridley Howe. During this period she served as president of the Massachusetts and New England Suffrage Associations and worked on the national level to negotiate the reunion of the two branches of the suffrage association that split in 1860 over the 15th Amendment. Active in the women’s club movement, she was a long time president of the New England Women’s Club and helped found the Association for the Advancement of Women and the newer General Federation of Women’s Clubs. In 1908 Howe was the

first woman to be elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. By the time of her death, she was revered as a Boston institution. Hundreds of people were turned away at her memorial service in Symphony Hall where four thousand people joined in singing *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, the hymn she wrote fifty years before (see also B2).

*Directions: Walk back down Beacon to Clarendon Street. Cross Beacon Street.*

*“...her people work as they feel she would have wanted them to do and the place must always remain live for that was the idea in the original conception [of Fenway Court] and in the execution of the idea, a living message of beauty in art to each generation.”*

—Olga Monks, Isabella Stewart Gardner’s niece, in a letter written shortly after Gardner’s death in 1924



Isabella Stewart Gardner



### BBE13: Site of Home of **Isabella Stewart Gardner**



*150-152 Beacon Street*

While she lived at this address, **Isabella Stewart Gardner** (1840-1924) created one of Boston’s most notable places, the Gardner Museum, a magnificent Renaissance Palace located in the Fenway. She called it Fenway Court. Opened in 1903, the museum houses a world-renowned permanent art collection. Her goal was to educate and provide pleasure for the public “forever.” Gardner first displayed her paintings in this Beacon Street building which, like Fenway Court, was always filled with flowers and where she was the center of a salon of early twentieth century artists, musicians, and writers. Considered an eccentric by some and a genius by others, Gardner was known for her independent attitude and support of the talent in others on her own terms.

*Directions: Continue down Beacon across Berkeley Street.*



### BBE14: **Gibson House Museum**

*137 Beacon Street*

When **Catherine Hammond Gibson** (1804-88) had her home built on Beacon Street in 1860, she was a pioneer in the settlement of the Back Bay which was built on newly-filled land. Her husband, John Gardner Gibson, a sugar merchant, had been lost at sea and so Catherine moved to the house with her son, Charles Hammond Gibson. Charles Gibson’s wife, **Rosamond Warren Gibson** (1846-1934), moved into the mansion in 1871. She had received the traditional education given to upper-class women in her day, learning French and taking dancing lessons from dancing master Lorenzo Papanti. When





Gibson House Museum

the Gibson House opened to the public in 1957, **Marjorie Drake Ross** (1901-97), a specialist on the decorative arts and author of *The Book of Boston* series, helped to acquire appropriate objects for the Gibson House and directed the cataloging of the collection. Today, museum tours include interpretive stories of life both “upstairs” and “downstairs” in Victorian Boston. The Victorian Society’s New England chapter has been based here since 1974. The society is an advocate for historic preservation, and offers walking tours and lectures on the Victorian era.

### **BBE15: Fisher College**

*102-118 Beacon Street*

Fisher College was founded in 1903 by Myron C. and Edmund H. Fisher to provide business education for women in a two-year program. In 1939 it moved to this site, the former home of Henry and **Alice Spaulding King**. The building is noted for its elegant features

including a marble hanging stairway. The curriculum has been expanded to offer courses in communication, criminal justice, early childhood education, fashion merchandising, and hotel management. Students come from all over the United States and twelve different countries. Except for continuing education programs, the college was open only to women until 1998.

*Directions: Continue on Beacon Street. Cross David Mugar Way.*

### **BBE16: The Winsor School, Schools for Girls**

*95-96 Beacon Street*

Boston’s tradition of establishing independent schools for girls is reflected in this site. The Winsor School, founded in 1886, was located in various Back Bay sites including this one until it moved to its present location on Pilgrim Road, near Boston’s Fenway, in 1910. The school grew rapidly under the direction of **Mary Pickard Winsor** (1880-1950), who served as its headmistress from its founding until 1922. Many of the students in the first class went on to college, fulfilling the school’s mission of college preparation for young women.

Several other independent schools for girls began in the Back Bay. The Haskell School for Girls was located on 314 Marlborough Street from 1903 to 1919. Conducted in the tradition of progressive education, the school was founded by **Mary Elizabeth Haskell** (1873-1964). Haskell was an activist in the Boston community of her day and in addition to running her school, nurtured the education of promising Boston immigrants, including poet Kahlil Gibran. Haskell became the head of The Cambridge School in 1919, which later became the Cambridge School at

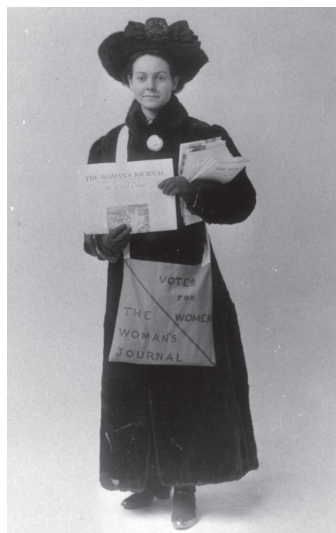
Weston. The Brimmer and May School, now located in Chestnut Hill, began in the Back Bay. It was made up of a combination of The May School, founded by **Mary May** at 339 Marlborough Street at the turn of the twentieth century, the Brimmer School, built in 1914 on Brimmer Street, and the Classical School for Girls.

*Directions: Continue on Beacon Street. Turn left on Brimmer Street and right on Byron Street.*

**BBE17: Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom: Florence Hope Luscomb and Emily Greene Balch**

*6 Byron Street*

Between World Wars I and II, 6 Byron Street was the office of the Massachusetts Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. **Florence Luscomb** (1887-1985) was executive secretary of the office from 1929-1933. An early graduate of MIT, Luscomb gave up her career in architecture to work full time for the women’s movement. After suffrage was passed, she was the executive secretary for the newly formed Massachusetts League of Women Voters and narrowly missed being elected to the Boston City



Florence Hope Luscomb

Council. She became involved in the labor movement and ran for governor in 1952, continuing her antiwar and civil rights activities until her death. During the time the WILPF office was here, **Emily Greene Balch** (1867-1961), the second American woman to earn the Nobel Peace Prize, served as national president. Balch was a native of Boston and a former Wellesley College professor. From 1919 to 1922, as first international secretary-treasurer of WILPF in Geneva, Balch launched the new organization and set up its guidelines. In 1946, Balch followed **Jane Addams** (1860-1935) when she earned the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of her efforts and the work of WILPF.



Emily Greene Balch



*Directions: Continue on Byron Street. Turn right on River Street to Beacon Street. Turn left to the corner of Beacon and Charles streets where the walk started.*

*“I see no possibilities of social progress apart from fundamental changes on both the economic and the political side...Peace is too small a word for this.”*

—Emily Greene Balch