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FENWAY PARK, BOSTON, LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin is pleased to announce that Fenway Park in Boston has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) approved Fenway Park for nomination to the National Register at its December 2011 meeting, and the 100-year-old ballpark was added to the National Register on March 7, 2012.

“The Massachusetts Historical Commission is dedicated to preserving the Commonwealth’s rich historic, architectural, archaeological, and cultural resources,” Secretary Galvin said. “Listing Fenway Park in the National Register will help preserve this exceptional place for future generations to enjoy, and recognizes its 100th anniversary this year.”

Built during the “Golden Age of Ballparks,” the Fenway Park property—24 Yawkey Way and 2-4 Yawkey Way, 64-76 Brookline Avenue, and 70-80 Lansdowne Street—is the nation’s oldest operating major-league baseball stadium. Fenway Park has long been the home of the Boston Red Sox. The ballpark—named for the Back Bay Fens, part of the Emerald Necklace system of parks designed by Frederick Law Olmsted—will celebrate its centennial in 2012. Construction began on September 25, 1911; the ballpark opened seven months later with a seating capacity of 24,400. Boston mayor John Francis “Honey Fitz” Fitzgerald threw the ceremonial first pitch of the first official game on April 20, 1912, before a crowd of 27,000. Over the years, Fenway Park has been associated with a number of significant major league baseball players, including Ted Williams and Babe Ruth. In their first year at Fenway Park, the Red Sox won the 1912 World Series.

While Fenway Park has been altered over the years to upgrade the facility and improve the quality of the baseball experience for fans and players, its appearance today is remarkably similar to that of decades ago. The first significant renovation of Fenway Park took place in 1934 under the ownership of Thomas Yawkey; costing an estimated \$1.25 million, the project enlarged the grandstand and replaced wooden bleachers with concrete and steel structures. In January 1934, in the middle of expansion, a four-alarm fire destroyed the 25-foot left-field wall. It was replaced with an enormous, 37-foot wall, later dubbed the “Green Monster.” The scoreboard in this wall, still operated by hand, is one of the two oldest manual scoreboards in the country (the other is at Wrigley Field in Chicago). The ballpark’s Yawkey Way façade is a good, intact example of the Tapestry Brick Style, characterized by walls laid in decorative brick patterns. Fenway Park also retains its original two-story façade, single-deck grandstand, general configuration of the original playing field, and urban setting, and changes from 2002-2011 have respected the character-defining features of the ballpark. The exterior elevations of the structure were originally designed by James E. McLaughlin and constructed of red brick with cast-stone trim; within the exterior walls, the structure, including the original stands and subsequent 1933-34 expansion, was designed by Osborne Engineering, Cleveland, Ohio’s oldest civil engineering firm and one of the nation’s foremost designers of major league, municipal, and collegiate stadiums and ballparks.

Once the largest ballpark in the major leagues, Fenway Park is now one of the smallest, which contributes to a feeling of intimacy that has come to be highly valued by baseball fans. In spite of its popularity and cultural importance, however, the historic ballpark by the 1960s was under threat of demolition. In the latter half of the 20th century, many favored a new stadium, built either in the suburbs or South Boston, as part of a megaplex that would include a field for the Boston (now New England)

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Patriots. In the 1990s, when the threat of demolition intensified, a group called Save Fenway Park! was organized to raise awareness of possible preservation solutions for the historic ballpark. The Red Sox and Fenway Park were acquired in 2002 by New England Sports Ventures, the first change in ownership in 68 years, ending the Yawkey era. The new ownership was open to the possibility of preserving the ballpark, and elected to take on a ten-year improvement program springing from Save Fenway Park!'s ideas. The project rejuvenated the ballpark and love of baseball in the region, and the Red Sox went on to win the World Series in 2004, for the first time in eighty-six years, and again in 2007.

The National Register is the nation's official listing of significant historic resources. In Massachusetts, there are over 70,000 properties listed in the National Register. The Massachusetts Historical Commission has been administering the National Register of Historic Places program in Massachusetts since 1966. The Massachusetts Historical Commission meets regularly and considers historic resources eligible for the National Register four times a year. Secretary Galvin serves as chairman of the 17-member board.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission is the office of the State Historic Preservation Officer and the State Archaeologist. It was established in 1963 to identify, evaluate, and protect important historical and archaeological assets of the Commonwealth. Visit our website to learn more about the Commission's programs (www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc).

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