



**William Francis Galvin**  
Secretary of the Commonwealth

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**SECRETARY GALVIN TO PRESENT 2014 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD TO  
FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST – FIFTH MEETING HOUSE, LANCASTER**

Secretary of the Commonwealth William F. Galvin, Chairman of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, announces the selection of the First Church of Christ – Fifth Meeting House, Lancaster, to receive a 2014 Massachusetts Historical Commission Historic Preservation Award.

“The Massachusetts Historical Commission is proud to recognize the extraordinary accomplishments of this year’s awardees,” said Secretary Galvin. “The projects the Commission is recognizing this year are particularly diverse and represent the many creative ways that significant historic resources are being preserved across the Commonwealth. As the first property to receive the Stewardship award, The First Church of Christ – Fifth Meeting House sets an excellent example for its diligent and continuous maintenance, the high standards of research employed in its preservation, and the extraordinary steps that have been taken to ensure its place in our future.”

Designed by prominent American architect Charles Bulfinch and constructed in 1816, the First Church of Christ – Fifth Meeting House is widely recognized as a building of paramount architectural and historic significance. The church’s dedicated congregation has preserved the building and generously shared it with the public for nearly 200 years.

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A remarkable collection of records, dating from 1815 to the present, documents the building's upkeep in great detail, including the installation of an experimental furnace in 1827, an unsuccessful attempt to subdivide the sanctuary into two floors in 1869, and the restoration of the horse sheds in 1923 by preservation architect Joseph Everett Chandler.

More recently, two conditions assessments and a Historic Structure Report that was funded by a Getty Foundation grant have provided a roadmap for the congregation's preservation of the building's structure and fabric now and into the future. The congregation also sponsored a workshop on strategies for historic structures, which culminated in a consensus document, the Lancaster Resolution, providing recommendations for environmental systems in historic buildings.

First Church has worked to increase awareness of the building's significance and to secure support for the preservation of its historic fabric. The church was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1970. In 1986, the congregation entered into a preservation restriction agreement with the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Since that time, Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund grants have helped fund multiple restoration projects—most recently, comprehensive roof, window, and masonry repairs, as well as painstaking restoration of the cupola and belfry, with its Paul Revere bell.

In 2008, the Bulfinch Fund was established to provide an endowment for the church's ongoing maintenance and repair. The Bulfinch Fund's main objectives are to develop resources for the preservation and restoration of this building, and to educate the public about Charles Bulfinch through tours, educational programs, and publications. The fund raised more than \$320,000 for the cupola's recent restoration.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission recently added the Stewardship category to the Preservation Awards Program in order to recognize owners who have responsibly maintained their historic properties for a minimum of ten years.

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This is the 36<sup>th</sup> year of MHC's Preservation Awards program. Projects are considered annually for awards in the categories of Rehabilitation and Restoration, Adaptive Reuse, Education and Outreach, Archaeology, Stewardship, and Landscape Preservation. Individuals are considered in the categories of Individual Lifetime Achievement and Local Preservationist. Secretary Galvin serves as the chair of the 17-member Massachusetts Historical Commission.

Secretary Galvin presented the awards in an afternoon ceremony today, May 16, at the Massachusetts Archives Building, 220 Morrissey Blvd., Dorchester. The First Church of Christ – Fifth Meeting House, Lancaster, is one of 10 projects, individuals, and organizations to be honored.

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