



William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

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**SECRETARY GALVIN TO PRESENT 2014 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD TO
DEXTER PRATT HOUSE / CAMBRIDGE CENTER FOR ADULT EDUCATION**

Secretary of the Commonwealth William F. Galvin, Chairman of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, announces the selection of the Dexter Pratt House/Cambridge Center for Adult Education, Cambridge, 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. The Dexter Pratt House now stands as an oasis in the midst of bustling Harvard Square, illustrating and preserving the past while remaining a vibrant participant in the present.”

Built in 1808, the Dexter Pratt House and its blacksmith owners were immortalized in Longfellow’s poem, “The Village Blacksmith.” The Pratt House is one of Cambridge’s few extant examples of vernacular Federal architecture. The building is also significant for having been the home of Mary Walker, a fugitive slave who escaped from North Carolina in 1848 and whose family owned the house from 1870 to 1912. Soon after the Walker family left, the property became associated with The Window Shop, a gift shop, tearoom, and bakery that provided jobs and education for European refugees.

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Renowned for its European pastries, its outdoor courtyard, and its social mission, the Window Shop saw many visitors, including Eleanor Roosevelt, Hume Cronin and Jessica Tandy, Angela Davis, Elizabeth Taylor, and Julia Child. Since 1973, the nonprofit Cambridge Center for Adult Education has held classes and public programming here. The Pratt House was listed in the National Register in 1973 and became a local landmark in 1989. Well loved, the building saw considerable wear and tear over the years from heavy pedestrian traffic and deferred maintenance.

In 2010, heavy rains caused water damage so severe that the 1976 addition's roof required replacement. This event, along with the Cambridge Center's need to improve accessibility to the property, prompted a comprehensive examination of the whole property, keeping historic preservation in mind. Using partial funding from a Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund grant, historic windows were restored, drainage and moisture problems were corrected, and the building's exterior was made weather-tight. The wood balustrade was replaced, and the building was repainted after historic paint analysis. The longtime commercial kitchen became a teaching kitchen. The team made every attempt to save historic details, including some that had long been hidden. Two new, accessible ramps brought the property to ADA code. The 200-year-old building's rehabilitation and adaptive reuse have reinvigorated it. The project ensures that the building and its courtyard will continue to serve more than 10,000 visitors each year and act as a popular gathering spot for tourists and locals, while enabling the Cambridge Center for Adult Education to fulfill its mission of allowing people to explore their interests and nurture their talent and potential.

This is the 36th 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 this afternoon< May 16, in a ceremony at the Massachusetts Archives Building, 220 Morrissey Blvd., Dorchester. The Dexter Pratt House/Cambridge Center for Adult Education, Cambridge, is one of 10 projects, individuals, and organizations to be honored.

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