



William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

Contact: Brian McNiff
Telephone: 617-727-9180

March 22, 2013

**WHEELER-HARRINGTON HOUSE, CONCORD, APPROVED FOR NOMINATION TO THE
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin is pleased to announce that the Massachusetts Historical Commission approved the Wheeler-Harrington House in Concord for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places at its March 20, 2013, meeting. The nomination will be submitted to the National Register of Historic Places at the National Park Service in Washington, DC, for final consideration and designation.

“The Massachusetts Historical Commission is dedicated to preserving the Commonwealth’s rich historic, architectural, archaeological, and cultural resources,” Secretary Galvin said. “Inclusion of the Wheeler-Harrington House in the National Register will help to preserve the oldest known building in West Concord.”

The Wheeler-Harrington House, 249 Harrington Avenue, is a two-story, center-chimney, wood-frame building with details and proportions characteristic of the Federal period. The house’s connection to the agrarian life of the west part of town began with its association with the large Wheeler family, original settlers of the rural “South Quarter.” Josiah and Mary Wheeler are believed to have built the house shortly after their 1742 marriage. The property exemplifies local and regional trends and patterns of development through various historical periods: like many 18th-century Concord farmers, Josiah Wheeler carried on a second occupation as a bricklayer; early in the 19th century, under Noah Wheeler, Jr., the farm entered a period of absentee ownership; and for thirty years in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the farm was one of a handful in Concord operated by a female farmer, Lucy Harrington. Waldo P. Lapham bought the property in 1912, dividing the land into 34 lots. Mother and son Theresa and Ralph LeBallister bought the farmhouse in 1924, and over the years, Ralph bought back many of the lots that Lapham had divided out of the old farm. When LeBallister put the property up for sale in 1973, a coalition of volunteer groups worked to persuade the town to buy the farmstead and more than fifteen acres of land.

With help from a government grant, in 1974 the town purchased 15.6 acres of the old farm, including the rundown farmhouse, to become Harrington Park. The principal purpose was to preserve open land for conservation and recreation. To that end, town staff began preparations to tear down the house. A grass-roots group of citizens approached the Concord Historical Commission, who secured a delay in the scheduled demolition of the house. In 1975, the group succeeded in passing a Town Meeting appropriation of \$6,800 to stabilize the building—an arrangement that included a promise of 619 hours of volunteer labor. Over that summer, local volunteers logged 649 hours of work, and the first tenants moved in later that year. In 1977, Town Meeting established a revolving fund for the upkeep of the house, to be administered by the historical commission. Since that time, the rental income from four successive sets of tenants has provided for the maintenance of the property, assisted by the devoted care of the tenant-caretakers themselves.

The Wheeler-Harrington House is one of 6 historic resources around the Commonwealth approved for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places by the Massachusetts Historical Commission at this meeting.

Secretary Galvin serves as Chairman of the 17-member board, which meets regularly and considers historic resources eligible for the National Register four times a year.

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 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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