



William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

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**OLD BURIAL HILL, PLYMOUTH, 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 Old Burial Hill in Plymouth 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 Old Burial Hill in the National Register will help to recognize and preserve this exceptional historic resource, which contains the graves of some of the earliest English settlers of Plymouth Colony and their descendants.”

Old Burial Hill, a 5.12-acre burial ground, was part of the original Pilgrim village established by the passengers of the Mayflower. From 1620 to 1676, the hill was known as Fort Hill, and was the site of the Pilgrim fort and meetinghouse. Once the hill was no longer needed for military purposes, it became the town’s primary burial ground and remained an active burial place for nearly 300 years. The cemetery contains roughly 2,269 primary gravestones; the oldest is dated 1681, and the most recent burial was in 1957. There are 139 veterans’ graves, including 79 Revolutionary War veterans. Old Burial Hill is one of the oldest and best-preserved burial grounds in New England. Distinctive features of the early burial ground, such as setting, topography, spatial organization, and paths, remain largely intact. The headstones and monuments reflect multiple artistic and social traditions extending over nearly three centuries, and represent the work of many New England carvers, including a large number from Plymouth. In the second half of the 19th century, a major theme at Old Burial Hill was commemoration of the past: several monuments erected in this period honor Plymouth colony’s earliest residents. In the late 1890s, Ernest W. Bowditch designed a new entrance gate and steps leading up into the cemetery. Since the 1950s, there has been a renewed effort at Burial Hill to document and preserve extant headstones and monuments, especially the earliest, many of which were badly deteriorated. Nearly 400 years after the arrival of the Pilgrims, there are few visible reminders of the early settlers, but Old Burial Hill remains the most tangible site of the early years of Plymouth colony. The nomination of Old Burial Hill to the National Register is a fitting recognition as the town of Plymouth begins its plans to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the founding of Plymouth Colony.

Old Burial Hill 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.

State House, Room 337, Boston, Massachusetts 02133

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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