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Secretary of the Commonwealth

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**MYLES STANDISH BURYING GROUND, DUXBURY, APPROVED FOR NOMINATION TO THE
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

Secretary of the Commonwealth William F. Galvin is pleased to announce that the Massachusetts Historical Commission approved the Myles Standish Burying Ground in Duxbury for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places at its December 10, 2014, 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 Myles Standish Burying Ground in the National Register will provide recognition for Duxbury’s prominent role in the earliest history of the United States, and for the value that its citizens have long placed on preserving their local heritage.”

Established in the early 1630s, the Myles Standish Burying Ground occupies a roughly L-shaped site at the corner of Chestnut Street and Pilgrim By-Way, near the Hall’s Corner section of Duxbury. The nominated property occupies nearly two acres of land and is the oldest of Duxbury’s five public cemeteries and burial grounds. Most likely established soon after the first permanent European settlement of the town in 1632, Standish Burying Ground stands near the heart of the original settlement and served as the town’s only public burial ground until 1787. The property contains the graves of many of Duxbury’s founders as well as leading citizens in the town’s early development, including the centrally located 1656 gravesite of Myles Standish, which is located within a late 19th-century rectangular enclosure of fieldstone walls surmounted by cannons.

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Standish, one of the best-known *Mayflower* settlers and the military leader of the Plymouth Colony, was active in the political and diplomatic activities of the colony and served in several prominent governmental positions. The burying ground contains the graves of two other *Mayflower* settlers: John Alden and Priscilla Mullins Alden, whose courtship Henry Wadsworth Longfellow memorialized in his well-known epic poem, *The Courtship of Miles Standish*. As many as 500 to 1,000 people are thought to have been buried here, although only 128 markers survive today. The last known burial was in 1831, with the earliest existing gravestone dating from 1697, and the last original gravestone dated 1804.

The property also contains the sites of Duxbury's first two meetinghouses, which served both religious and civic functions in the early life of the town. After a period of neglect in the 19th century, when even the location of Standish's grave was forgotten, the Myles Standish Burying Ground has subsequently been well tended by the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society and the town. In 2012, a professional conservator removed the disfiguring and in some instances damaging, copper frames around many of the stones; they were cleaned and straightened at the same time.

The Myles Standish Burying Ground 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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