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GREENLAWN CEMETERY, SALEM, 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 Greenlawn Cemetery in Salem 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 Greenlawn Cemetery in the National Register will help to preserve and raise awareness of a property that has served as Salem’s primary public place of burial for more than 200 years.”

Located in North Salem, Greenlawn Cemetery evolved from a 2.5-acre burial ground, laid out in 1807, to a 55-acre cemetery. The earliest portion of the cemetery contains slate stones with early 19th-century motifs such as willows and urns, as well as marble markers. The early burial ground also featured two public lots, where the graves of the indigent, transients, and victims of epidemics were buried in unmarked graves. It is estimated that about 250 unmarked graves existed in the burial place by the 1870s. By the late 19th century, the cemetery had been expanded by nearly 30 acres, with a new, curvilinear circulation system and a water feature, known as Fountain Pond. This emphasis on creating a picturesque burial site reflects the ideals of the late 19th-century Rural Cemetery Movement. The Sons of Veterans erected a white-bronze Soldiers’ Memorial in 1886, and an iron fence and gate were erected in the cemetery in 1887.

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The most prominent architectural feature in the cemetery is the Dickson Memorial Chapel, designed in the Gothic Revival style by Newton architect George F. Meacham, commissioned by Walter Scott Dickson in memory of his wife, Georgia, and constructed in 1894. Although an attached iron conservatory was removed in the 1980s, the chapel remains intact. At the time of his death in 1900, Walter Scott Dickson left a bequest of \$53,000 for Greenlawn Cemetery. In 1928, this endowment funded the construction of the concrete Dickson Bridge across Fountain Pond.

The cemetery also includes a small, brick cemetery office, constructed in 1932 to designs by local Salem architect Philip Horton Smith. That same year, cemetery commissioners retained Harlan P. Kelsey, a nationally prominent landscape designer, to provide a master plan for the cemetery. Though lacking formal education in landscape architecture, Kelsey was well versed in the work of Frederick Law Olmsted, and enjoyed a close working relationship with the staff of the Arnold Arboretum in Boston. Under Kelsey's direction, Works Progress Administration (WPA) workers created the exceptional landscape that Greenlawn is known for today. WPA projects at the cemetery included work on the avenues, sodding, and the planting of 214 conifers and deciduous trees, 120 flowering trees, and more than 600 shrubs.

Today, Greenlawn features more than 150 species of unusual trees and shrubs. The cemetery remains in active use and contains about 22,000 burials, including the graves of veterans of several American wars. A neighborhood group, The Friends of Greenlawn Cemetery, was founded in 2013 with the goal of restoring, beautifying, and maintaining the cemetery. The Friends group and the City of Salem are currently working toward the restoration of Dickson Memorial Chapel.

Greenlawn Cemetery 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.

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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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