



William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

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**SECRETARY GALVIN PRESENTS 2015 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD TO
ADELAIDE CROMWELL**

Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin, Chairman of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, announces the selection of Dr. Adelaide Cromwell of Brookline for a 2015 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. “I am delighted to recognize Adelaide Cromwell with an Individual Lifetime Achievement Award. Dr. Cromwell has brought her vast knowledge, her keen intellect, and her passion for historic places to the Massachusetts Historical Commission for more than twenty years. Because African American historical sites are often more vulnerable than others to being lost or forgotten, Dr. Cromwell’s dedication to identifying, documenting, and saving them has been a priceless asset to the city of Boston, to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and to the nation.”

Secretary Galvin presented the award recently at the Massachusetts Archives Building, Dorchester. Dr. Adelaide Cromwell is one of 11 individuals, projects, and organizations to be honored.

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For almost seventy years, Dr. Adelaide Cromwell has made significant contributions to the study of African American history, particularly the previously neglected history of African Americans in Boston. Over her long career, she has been instrumental in the documentation and preservation of historic places and buildings associated with this history. Dr. Cromwell holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Smith College, a Master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania, a certificate in social casework from Bryn Mawr College, and a Ph.D. in sociology from Radcliffe College.

She also holds honorary degrees from Southeastern Massachusetts University, George Washington University, Boston University, and, most recently, her alma mater, Smith College. In 1954, Dr. Cromwell became the first African American professor appointed at Smith, and then served for more than thirty years on the sociology faculty at Boston University. While teaching at BU, Dr. Cromwell co-founded the African Studies Center in 1959 and in 1969 was appointed director of the new African American Studies program, a position she held until 1985.

When Dr. Cromwell arrived in Boston in the 1940s, the African Meeting House on Beacon Hill stood abandoned, and there was no indication that a thriving black community once populated this prominent neighborhood or the nearby West End in the 18th and 19th centuries. Dr. Cromwell's scholarship and her advocacy throughout her career have concentrated on raising awareness of African American contributions in Boston.

To address the lack of information about Boston's black history, Dr. Cromwell and fourteen other black women formed the Heritage Guild in 1975 to document, preserve, and commemorate the city's historic black presence. Dr. Cromwell serves as the president of the Heritage Guild, which identifies sites associated with historically significant African American men and women, and seeks to honor them by placing plaques at these sites.

The Heritage Guild has placed fifteen markers so far, at sites including those associated with abolitionists Lewis Hayden and William C. Nell; Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, founder and president of the National Federation of Afro-American Women; Maria Stewart, an abolitionist, journalist, and one of the earliest African American public speakers; Jessie Gideon Garnett, the first African American graduate of Tufts Dental School; and Butler R. Wilson, founder of the Boston branch of the NAACP and one of the first African American members of the American Bar Association.

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She has also been instrumental in helping to increase recognition of Camp Meigs in Boston's Hyde Park neighborhood, training field for Massachusetts' famous 54th Regiment during the Civil War, and the 17th-century Boston site of the house of Zipporah Potter Atkins, the first African American to own property in the city.

Since 1993, Dr. Cromwell has served on the Massachusetts Historical Commission as the representative of the Museum of African American History. During twenty-two years of service as a commissioner, she has reviewed hundreds of National Register nominations, volunteered for numerous subcommittees, listened to countless staff presentations, and brought the benefit of her knowledge, expertise, and lively intelligence to the monthly commission meeting's discussions and decisions.

Dr. Cromwell has also served on the executive council of the American Society of African Culture, the American Negro Leadership Conference in Africa, as President of the National Center of Afro-American Artists, the Board of the African Scholarship Program of American Universities, and many other boards and councils. She is a member of the Council of Foreign Relations, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the African Studies Association, the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), and the American Sociological Association.

She has been the recipient of many awards and honors, including the Smith College Medal, a citation from the National Order of Cote d'Ivoire, the African Freedom Award, the Aggrey Medal, and the Carter G. Woodson Medal from ASALH. She has authored many papers and books, including a book on her aunt, Otelia Cromwell, the first African American graduate of Smith College, and *The Other Brahmins: Boston's Black Upper Class 1750-1950*, based on her dissertation.

This is the 37th 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.

State House, Room 337, Boston, Massachusetts 02133



(left to right): Secretary William F. Galvin, Dr. Adelaide Cromwell, MHC Commissioner James Crissman. (photo by Wyeth Lilley)

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