



William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

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**SECRETARY GALVIN PRESENTS 2015 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD TO
BETSY DOUGLAS, LEVERETT**

Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin, Chairman of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, announces the selection of Betsy Douglas of Leverett 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. “The well-preserved buildings and landscapes of Leverett reflect local preservationist Betsy Douglas’s commitment to historic preservation, and safeguard their place in the community’s future.”

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

For fifty years, Betsy Douglas has worked to shape the preservation of cultural landscapes and the historic built environment, as well as traditional crafts. Thoughtful, informed, dedicated, and always pragmatic, she has volunteered in various capacities, all aimed at recognizing and preserving the narrative of American history in Leverett, Massachusetts, and the surrounding Connecticut River Valley. From 1965 to 1975, Ms. Douglas worked with fellow local historian the late Annette Gibavic in extensive research and documentation on Leverett’s historic houses, completing numerous inventory forms. She served on the Franklin County Planning Board, now the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, in the 1970s.

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While on the Leverett Planning Board from 1970 to 1990, Ms. Douglas helped facilitate creation of Aquifer Protection districts, as well as subdivision requirements and zoning bylaws developed with historic preservation in mind. With the Leverett Historical Society, of which she is a longtime member, Ms. Douglas documented the town cemeteries. Ms. Douglas has served on the Leverett Historical Commission since 1988, and was the commission's chair from that time until 2013. Under her leadership, the commission worked tirelessly to raise awareness of the community's historic resources, researching and documenting Leverett Center, North Leverett, East Leverett, and Moore's Corner, which led to the creation of four National Register historic districts in these villages.

During her tenure, the commission also enacted a demolition delay bylaw, created a publication documenting Leverett's industrial history, documented seven now-defunct schoolhouses, and facilitated the publication of Ruth Ellen Field's book, *A History of Leverett, Massachusetts with a Genealogy of its Early Inhabitants*. She has also been on the Leverett Community Preservation Committee since 2006, and formerly served as the committee's secretary and chairperson.

Some of the projects supported during her time with the committee include the preservation of the Leverett Town Hall and North Leverett Sawmill, rehabilitation of the former Beamen & Marvel Box Manufacturing building, now Leverett Crafts & Arts, preservation of the Moore's Corner Schoolhouse as the Leverett Historical Society museum, and the restoration of North Cemetery and Moore's Corner Cemetery.

In a town of fewer than 2,000 residents, the expenditure of more than \$350,000 on these preservation projects is due in no small measure to the enthusiastic support Ms. Douglas receives from residents, town officials, and the Leverett Historical Commission and Leverett Historical Society.

Ms. Douglas is also highly knowledgeable about historic crafts techniques, including stenciling and embroidery, and she has particular expertise in early needlework. Using these skills, she worked with a group of volunteers to embroider reproductions of the bed hangings at the Ashley House in Historic Deerfield. She has served as a docent and interpreter at Historic Deerfield for decades.

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As a tireless historical volunteer with a can-do attitude, Ms. Douglas has helped to ensure the preservation and appreciation of Leverett's architectural treasures, as well as the continuation of historic arts and crafts practices. In addition to continuing her work with the Leverett Historical Commission, Community Preservation Committee, and Historic Deerfield, Ms. Douglas is currently immersed in a project to restore an historic portrait of the town's namesake, Governor John Leverett. Betsy Douglas has spent her adult life volunteering in many capacities to preserve the common heritage of her community. She continues to be an important voice and a wealth of institutional memory.

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.



(left to right) Secretary William F. Galvin and Betsy Douglas (photo by Wyeth Lilley)

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