



William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

Contact: Brian McNiff
Telephone: 617-727-9180

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**SECRETARY GALVIN PRESENTS 2015 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD TO
ALVAH KITTREDGE HOUSE, BOSTON (ROXBURY)**

Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin, Chairman of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, announces the selection of the Alvah Kittredge House in Boston's Roxbury neighborhood, 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 projects the Commission is recognizing this year are particularly diverse and represent the many creative ways that significant historic resources are being preserved across the Commonwealth. This successful restoration and adaptive reuse project brought new life to a beloved neighborhood treasure in Roxbury.”

Secretary Galvin presented the awards recently in a ceremony at the Massachusetts Archives Building, Dorchester. The Alvah Kittredge House is one of 11 projects, individuals, and organizations honored.

Listed in the National Register of Historic Places both individually and as part of the Roxbury Highlands Historic District, the Alvah Kittredge House is one of only a few surviving high-style Greek Revival mansions in Boston. Prominent businessman and Roxbury alderman Alvah Kittredge built the house in 1836. Notable Boston architect Nathaniel J. Bradlee purchased the house in 1871, and lived there until his death in 1888. In the late 1890s, Bradlee’s heirs removed several wings of the house and reoriented it 90 degrees to face Linwood Street.

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The building's significance to the neighborhood continued when the Roxbury Action Program (RAP) purchased it as its headquarters in 1975. Co-founded by activist Lloyd King in 1968, RAP endeavored to build a model community for African Americans encompassing economic stability, physical development, and social responsibility. The neighborhood organization provided affordable housing, social services, and youth programs.

RAP made repairs to the Kittredge House in the 1970s and obtained funding for upkeep from the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) in exchange for a preservation easement, but by 1991 it could no longer afford to maintain the building. The house subsequently sat vacant for twenty years before the BRA took ownership by eminent domain. Historic Boston Incorporated (HBI) watched the building's deterioration with growing concern, first stepping in to provide scaffolding to save the front portico from collapse, and finally acquiring the building in 2011.

Prior to the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse project, which utilized state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credits, HBI performed significant testing and research to plan for saving as much historic fabric as possible. The two-story front portico's six colossal Ionic columns and its entablature were severely deteriorated, and a pediment visible in a late 19th-century photograph was gone. Three of the original four sidewall chimneys remained, but they were in poor condition, and damage from roof leaks jeopardized the house's structural integrity. HBI repaired and reinstalled two of the front columns and created four new wood columns to match the originals.

Also restored were the front entrance door, hood, elongated windows, and the flushboard siding, believed to be original. Paint analysis informed the change of exterior paint from stark white to a warmer color matching the original. The entablature was rebuilt based on historic photos, which were also used to reproduce the missing pediment. Additionally, the width of the house was extended with an inconspicuous bluestone plinth to meet code and minimize drop-off—a graceful solution that eliminated the need for railings along the front of the building and between the columns.

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The building's interior, although altered, retained significant historic features, such as an elliptical stair and original marble and slate floor in the central hall. The hall's late 19th-century ceiling of ornate, marbled painted glass remained, and several glass panels that were missing or broken were repaired. Interior fabric was restored, with missing elements reproduced. A mural by African American artist James Reuben Reed was carefully removed and donated to the Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists in Roxbury. The successful adaptive reuse and rehabilitation of the Alvah Kittredge House created five elegant dwelling units, two of which are affordable.

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) Jeff Morgan, Historic Boston Incorporated; Leslie Donovan, Tremont Preservation Services; David Amory, Amory Architects; Paul McDonough, Historic Boston Incorporated board; Secretary William F. Galvin; Kathy Kottaridis, Historic Boston Incorporated; Andrea Gilmore, Building Conservation Associates; John Wathne, Structures North; Lisa Lewis, Historic Boston Incorporated (Photo by Wyeth Lilley)

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