



William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

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**SECRETARY GALVIN PRESENTS 2016 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD TO
RADCLIFFE INSTITUTE-AGASSIZ HOUSE IN CAMBRIDGE**

Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin, Chairman of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, announces the selection of the Radcliffe Institute-Agassiz House, Cambridge, to receive a 2016 Massachusetts Historical Commission Historic Preservation Award.

Secretary Galvin presented the award at a recent ceremony in the Massachusetts Archives Building, Dorchester. The Agassiz House is one of 12 projects, individuals, and organizations to be honored.

“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. The careful restoration of the Agassiz House will ensure its continued value to the students, faculty, staff, and visitors that it serves.”

The Georgian Revival-style Agassiz House, constructed in 1904, is named for Radcliffe College’s first president, Elizabeth Cary Agassiz, who cofounded Radcliffe in 1879 with her husband, Louis Agassiz, to offer the opportunities of collegiate life to women. Designed by Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow, Jr., the nephew of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the building is the focal point of Radcliffe Yard, and originally served as a student center with general classroom and office space. It contains Radcliffe’s first fully equipped theater, still in use, and now serves as the admissions office and visitor’s center for Harvard University.

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State House, Room 337, Boston, Massachusetts 02133

Agassiz House is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Prior to its recent rehabilitation and restoration, the building's monumental exterior columns were highly deteriorated and structurally inadequate. Plaster column capitals were covered in layers of cracked and peeling paint, which trapped moisture inside. The column bases had also deteriorated due to direct exposure to rain, and all column elements were affected by thermal expansion that caused joints to open and allow even more water infiltration. The wood roof deck had also rotted, and water was coming into the building from the roof and from leaking skylights.

The restoration team worked closely with the Cambridge Historical Commission to secure approval for all project designs, techniques, and paint colors. Two of the wood column bases were repaired, and two others were replaced in-kind. All column staves were repainted, and ventilation was added to the hollow column interiors to reduce thermal stresses and movement. The capitals, too damaged to be restored, were replaced based on a mold of the least-deteriorated capital.

Prior to the project, the roof's slate was in fair condition, with some missing shingles, and its copper was quite aged. Spot shingle replacement was done, and all copper accessories were replaced in-kind. The leaking skylights were replaced, as was masonry above the roof and on chimneys, with new metal caps added to safeguard masonry repairs and prevent moisture infiltration. All windows were stripped of lead paint, repaired, and restored. The masonry exterior required minimal repair, but was thoroughly cleaned. Waterproofing at the front porch, below-grade walls, and horizontal surfaces addressed leakage in the basement vault area. Additional work included door and hardware replacement, concrete repairs, steel fire-escape reinforcement, and modernization of the elevator, with the addition of a new, architecturally sympathetic roof vent over the elevator shaft.

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*L to R: Molly Parris, Robert Wilkin, Lester Gerry, Secretary William F Galvin,
Kate Loosian, Mark Verkennis, Mitchell Lowe*

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