



William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

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**SECRETARY GALVIN PRESENTS 2017 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD
TO AMESBURY CHURCH**

Secretary of the Commonwealth William F. Galvin, Chairman of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, announces the selection of the Union Congregational Church in Amesbury to receive a 2017 Massachusetts Historical Commission Historic Preservation Award.

“The Massachusetts Historical Commission is proud to recognize the extraordinary accomplishments of this year’s awardees,” Secretary Galvin said. “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 preservation of Amesbury’s Union Congregational Church truly represents a community success story.”

The Union Congregational Church stands at the confluence of the Merrimack and Powwow rivers in the Point Shore neighborhood of Amesbury. For more than 180 years, the church has been a centerpiece in the development of Point Shore as well as a fine example of Greek Revival-style vernacular architecture. The church was formed in 1835, when the communities of Salisbury and Amesbury, in need of a meetinghouse, came together to form a substantial congregation. Constructed the same year, the rectangular-plan, 2½-story, wood-frame church is topped by a gable roof and three-tier steeple. In 1864, the church vestry was built, and in 1892 a wing with a small connector was added onto the main sanctuary in order to accommodate an expanding congregation.

More than a century later, in 2010, the historic church was in danger of being sold to a developer due to a shrinking congregation and growing upkeep costs. Concerned neighbors

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Carol and Joseph Finn gathered a core group of individuals to take on the challenge of rehabilitating the church. The Union Congregational Church Restoration and Preservation Alliance mobilized broad-based support for the building's preservation. As the word spread, many people throughout the community came forward to help in large and small ways, donating their time, money, and enthusiasm. House tours, road races, even a lemonade stand helped raise funds for the project.

The community's efforts enabled extensive repairs and much-needed improvements to the aging building. The first task funded by the Alliance was the restoration of sanctuary windows. The windows were removed, and mullions and muntins were repaired. Modern replacement glass was removed, historically appropriate antique panes were put in place, and the rope and weights system was restored. Another major undertaking was the restoration of the steeple. The three-tiered steeple holds a historic George Holbrook bell and has long been a Point Shore landmark. However, years of deferred maintenance created a desperate need for repair.

With the help of historic photos and documents, the steeple was repaired, repainted, and restored to its historical appearance. The restoration included the installation of historically appropriate replica wood railings with spires around the two levels of the steeple. The steeple itself is now topped by a restored octagonal lantern with copper dome roof and a replica gilded copper weathervane. Other exterior work included lead-paint removal and repainting, front stair repairs, and replacement of rotted clapboards and roof moldings. On the interior of the sanctuary, repairs were minor, involving only selective tin ceiling repairs and wall and ceiling repainting.

The Union Congregational Church not only embodies Amesbury's history, but it also stands as a demonstration of a successful grass-roots effort. Through the community's fundraising and volunteer activities, the church serves a reinvigorated congregation and the public.

This is the 39th 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.

Secretary Galvin will present the awards at an afternoon ceremony on November 2, 2017, at the Massachusetts Archives Building at 220 Morrissey Blvd., Dorchester. The Union Congregational Church, Amesbury, is one of 11 projects to be honored.

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