



William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

Contact: Brian McNiff
Telephone: 617-727-9180

June 8, 2011

SEARLES CEMETERY, PHILLIPSTON, APPROVED FOR NOMINATION TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin is pleased to announce that the Massachusetts Historical Commission approved Searles Cemetery in Phillipston for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places at its June 8, 2011, meeting. The nomination will be submitted to the National Register of Historic Places at the National Park Service in Washington, DC, for final consideration and designation.

“The Massachusetts Historical Commission is dedicated to preserving the Commonwealth’s rich architectural, cultural, archaeological, and historic resources,” Secretary Galvin said. “Inclusion of Searles Cemetery in the National Register will help to protect this historically significant burial ground.”

Searles Hill Cemetery, located on Searles Hill Road in the southern end of town and established around 1777, is the oldest-known burial place in Phillipston. Rectangular in shape and punctuated with rows of simple, tablet-style markers, the cemetery typifies the design and layout of a late 18th-century New England burial ground. The cemetery covers 3.3 acres and includes many distinctive gravestones, several reflecting the work of local artisans. The burial ground predates the incorporation of the town by 10 years and contains the graves of several Phillipston war veterans, farmers, and individuals who helped establish the town. Stone walls rim all sides of the property, which is bounded on the north, east, and west by dense woodlands. The burial ground contains a total of 98 grave markers, constructed largely of slate and marble, and many display intricate carvings. The last burial at the cemetery took place in 1915. The Town of Phillipston Cemetery Commission, a three-member board, volunteers its time to mow lawns, trim around gravestones, and perform fall and spring clean-ups of the cemetery. The overall condition of the property is very good; however, the Town is concerned about the long-term health of the cemetery, and about future development of private property bordering the cemetery to the north and across Searles Hill Road to the west. By nominating Searles Hill Cemetery to the National Register, the Town aims to bring greater public awareness about the cemetery’s importance, and in so doing, secure ongoing public funding for conservation and care.

Searles Cemetery is one of 6 historic resources around the Commonwealth approved for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places by the Massachusetts Historical Commission at this meeting.

Secretary Galvin serves as Chairman of the 17-member board, which meets regularly and considers historic resources eligible for the National Register four times a year.

The National Register is the nation’s official listing of significant historic resources. In Massachusetts, there are over 70,000 properties listed in the National Register. The Massachusetts Historical Commission has been administering the National Register of Historic Places program in Massachusetts since 1966.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission is the office of the State Historic Preservation Officer and the State Archaeologist. It was established in 1963 to identify, evaluate, and protect important

historical and archaeological assets of the Commonwealth. Visit our website to learn more about the Commission's programs (www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc).

-End-