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Secretary of the Commonwealth

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**OLD CHURCH-YARD CEMETERY, CHESHIRE, 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 the Old Church-yard Cemetery in Cheshire for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places at its September 14, 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 historic, architectural, archaeological, and cultural resources,” Secretary Galvin said. “Inclusion of the Old Church-yard Cemetery in the National Register will help to protect this significant early burying ground, which dates from the first Baptist settlement in Massachusetts.”

The Old Church-yard Cemetery, Jenks Road, is associated with the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century settlement of New Providence plantation by Anabaptists from Rhode Island, after the organization of the Baptist Church. The settlers of New Providence were the first Europeans in the area. The cemetery is the only surviving landscape feature on the summit of Stafford Hill, once the heart of New Providence, and is one of five cemeteries in Cheshire associated with the settlement. The cemetery contains gravestones dating from 1785 to 1848, including the graves of seven Revolutionary Minutemen and stones with surnames of 21 families who were members of the original Baptist church. Many of the gravestones are plain with flat, square tops; the primary stone material is white marble taken from several local quarries. Most of the early gravestones contain only text, rather than text and images typical of New England gravestone iconography; however, some stones dating from 1812 through 1830 have willow-and-urn and architectural motifs, which were popular in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The last burial in the Old Church-yard Cemetery was in 1848; today, the cemetery is owned by the town of Cheshire.

The Old Church-yard Cemetery is one of 7 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](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc)).

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