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**DORCHESTER SOUTH BURYING, BOSTON, APPROVED FOR NOMINATION TO THE
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

Secretary of the Commonwealth William F. Galvin is pleased to announce that the Massachusetts Historical Commission recently approved the Dorchester South Burying Ground in Boston for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The nomination has been 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 Dorchester South Burying in the National Register will help to preserve a historically significant burial place that contains the graves of nearly 2,000 Dorchester residents.”

The two-acre Dorchester South Burying Ground, located in the Lower Mills section of Boston’s Dorchester neighborhood, is one of the city’s eighteen municipal cemeteries established between 1630 and 1892. These fall into three broad groups: Colonial-period burial grounds with small, irregular layouts and slate headstones, located primarily downtown; the larger, more rectilinear early 19th-century burial places, including Dorchester South; and three large, late 19th-century places of interment associated with the Rural Cemetery movement.

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Dorchester South Burying Ground was established in 1814 to provide new burial space in the southern part of Dorchester, as Dorchester North Burying Ground was becoming full. Unlike Boston's haphazard earlier burial grounds, Dorchester South was laid out in orderly rows with a loop road around the perimeter. The burying ground contains roughly 1,800 graves, with approximately 800 headstones and family monuments; its collection of tombs, monuments, headstones, and footstones exhibit a wide range of funerary styles and motifs.

The first burial at Dorchester South took place in 1814, and is marked by a slate headstone carved with the willow-and-urn motif typical of the period. One notable monument is that of the Reverend William A. Peabody, an eight-foot-tall, fluted brownstone column on pedestal and base, surmounted by a brownstone urn. Peabody was a professor of Latin at Amherst College, and died in 1850 at the age of thirty-four. The cemetery includes many veterans' graves, particularly veterans of the Civil War. The Baker family lot contains the graves of members of one of Dorchester's most prominent families, associated with the Walter Baker Chocolate Company. Edmund Baker, who served as the company's president from 1804-1823 and died in 1846, and Henry Lille Pierce, who owned the company from 1854 to 1895 and died in 1896, are buried in the lot.

By the 1980s, most of Boston's older burial grounds were in disrepair, so the city created the Historic Burial Grounds Initiative to document existing conditions in each of the twenty-one oldest burial grounds. This led to a large effort to restore the burial grounds, beginning with those located downtown, followed by those in outlying parts of the city. As part of these efforts, a master plan report for Dorchester South was prepared in the 1990s, followed by the restoration of headstones and improvements to the perimeter fence.

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.

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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).

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