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SWAMPSCOTT CEMETERY, SWAMPSCOTT, 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 approved the Swampscott Cemetery for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places at its December 12, 2012, 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 Swampscott Cemetery will help to preserve this important link to the town’s early years, which is also its only burial place.”

Swampscott Cemetery, 440 Essex Street, was established as one of the Town of Swampscott’s first actions after its incorporation in 1852. The nomination includes three sections of the cemetery—designated sections A, B, and C—that were developed between 1852 and 1960. The pre-1960 sections include a total of 20.2 acres. Charles Vernon Burgess designed the Andrews Memorial Chapel, the cemetery’s most distinctive feature. The chapel, located in Section B, was completed in 1924 using a bequest from Mrs. Ellen T. Andrews in memory of her late husband, Isaac H. Andrews. Another important built feature of the cemetery, the perimeter wall, is of local stone and varies in height from about thirty inches to six feet. Sections were added to the wall over time as the cemetery grew, resulting in variation of style and building materials. The most recent section of wall was constructed in the 1930s by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and Emergency Relief Act (ERA) programs. The cemetery has developed over nearly 160 years, evolving in response to changing funerary styles. Earlier monuments reflect the sentimentality of the Victorian era in their expression of natural and classical forms, flowery epitaphs, and marble materials. Later lots reflect changing technology and the more impersonal times associated with the machine age. These lots feature more uniform granite monuments. A few headstones pre-date the cemetery, one of the earliest of which commemorates an infant who died in 1844. The majority of Section A, developed between 1852 and 1880, is comprised of large family lots, as

well as a paupers lot set aside for indigents and victims of epidemics. Section B, developed between the 1880s and 1910, is a smaller, transitional area reflecting the trend away from large family lots to individual and double graves. Section C, developed between the 1920s and 1960, is more heavily vegetated than other sections, with large numbers of trees and extensive plantings of shrubs and flowers in focal areas, such as the Veterans Lot. Swampscott Cemetery continues to serve as a burial place. Recent preservation efforts include repairs in 2010 to the structure of the chapel to prevent water infiltration and repair long-term damage.

The Swampscott 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).

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