



William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

Contact: Brian McNiff
Telephone: 617-727-9180

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OLD NORTH BURYING GROUND, TRURO, 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 Old North Burying Ground in Truro 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 Old North Burying Ground will help to preserve the earliest burial place in Truro, which continues to thrive as a central focus of the community.”

The Old North Burying Ground, also known as the Old North Cemetery, is situated on the east side of US 6. Laid out in 1713, four years after the town’s incorporation, the Old North Burying Ground was the town’s only cemetery until 1799 and the only cemetery for the Congregational community until ca. 1827, when a new burying ground was established around the Third Congregational Meeting House in Truro Center. The North Section, the oldest area of the burying ground, which encompasses about 2.7 acres, was laid out in proximity to the site of Truro’s earliest recorded meetinghouse, which is no longer standing. A 19th century receiving tomb is the cemetery’s only structure. The cemetery was expanded southward twice: in 1928 and in 1974. These areas are known as the Center and South Sections, respectively. Today the entire cemetery encompasses 5.6 acres and contains more than 1,200 burials, the earliest of which dates from 1713. Graves in the central core of the north section weave across the landscape, indicating the lack of attention paid to plotting burial locations. Slate headstones within this central core exhibit significant gravestone art attributed to some of New England’s best-known carvers, including Nathaniel Emmes, William Codner, Nathaniel Holmes, Lemuel Savery, the Geyers of Boston, and the Lamson family of Charlestown.

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In 1984, in conjunction with Truro's 275th anniversary, the town established the Old North Fund, the income of which was designated for the preservation of the 18th-century portion of the North Section. No significant alterations have occurred in the cemetery, other than the removal of some granite coping enclosing plots and the replacement of the historic white picket boundary fence with a granite and metal fence in 2011. Burials are still conducted in the cemetery today.

The Old North Burying Ground 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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