



William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

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**POLLY HILL ARBORETUM, WEST TISBURY, 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 Polly Hill Arboretum Historic District in West Tisbury for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places at its March meeting. 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 Polly Hill Arboretum in the National Register will help to preserve a significant historic place on Martha’s Vineyard that has, over 350 years, been a farm, then a summer retreat, and, for almost 60 years, an arboretum now open to the public.

Located in West Tisbury on Martha’s Vineyard, Polly Hill Arboretum is significant for its history – first as a Colonial-era farmstead, then as a sheep farm, and finally as a summer residence. The property was first established circa 1670, and was used for sheep farming from the 19th century through the early 20th century. The earliest extant resources on the property are the circa 1750 Barnard Luce House and the Far Barn. The south end of the Far Barn dates to circa 1750, and the north end was added between circa 1860 and circa 1920.

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Margaret and Howard Butcher, Jr. acquired the farm in 1926 and used it as a summer residence for their family. They converted the cow barn, constructed ca. 1860-1870, into additional summer housing in the 1930s. Also included on the property is a slaughterhouse constructed sometime between 1860 and 1920. Margaret and Howard's daughter, Polly Hill, inherited the property and developed an extensive arboretum within the former agricultural landscape beginning in 1957.

Although not initially open to the public, the non-profit Polly Hill Arboretum, Inc., has operated it as a public arboretum since 1997. A visitor center, constructed in 1998 and designed by Thompson & Rose Architects, is unobtrusively sited at the northern edge of the property, away from the historic buildings. In 2002, Polly Hill Arboretum acquired the adjacent Samuel Washington Adams House, constructed in 1844. Like the Luce House, the Adams House is a five-bay Cape, and it is also included in the National Register nomination. The Arboretum uses the Cowbarn Residence as a library and guest apartment, the Adams House as staff housing, and the Far Barn for education and programming events.

The Polly Hill Arboretum 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 more than 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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