



William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

Contact: Brian McNiff
Telephone: 617-727-9180

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**ORIGINAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, WRENTHAM, 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 Original Congregational Church in Wrentham for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places at its June 11 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 Original Congregational Church in the National Register will help to preserve the home of a congregation that has been an important presence in the community since the Colonial period.”

The Greek Revival-style Original Congregational Church, overlooking the common at Wrentham’s town center, maintains its associations as the town’s first Congregational parish, established in 1692. The congregation now occupies its fourth consecutive house of worship at the town center, built in 1834 and the oldest extant church building in Wrentham.

The church’s sanctuary acquired much of its current configuration in the 1870s, during a renovation that removed the original side galleries and the high pulpit, lowered the rear gallery, added round-arched tops to the windows, and replaced the original box pews with bench pews. The congregation built the current steeple in 1939 as a replica of the original steeple, which fell during the Hurricane of 1938.

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State House, Room 337, Boston, Massachusetts 02133

The Austin Organ Company of Hartford, CT, built the church's pipe organ, *Opus 1457*, in 1926. Originally installed in the Strand Theatre in New Britain, CT, where it was played to accompany silent movies, the organ was modified and installed in the church in 1984. Boston architect Arland Dirlam designed the parish house, built in the 1950s as a rear addition incorporating a church office, pastor's study, Sunday School classrooms, and a church parlor or reception room.

Also included in this National Register nomination is the adjacent Whiston House, which the church acquired in 1960. The house and its owners were closely associated with the church from the early 19th century onward. David Anson Fisher built the house, and his family deeded the land for the construction of the present church; his son-in-law, Handel Pond, also lived in the house and served as the church organist and composer, as well as superintendent of the church school.

Named for a retired pastor of the church, the Whiston House currently accommodates an antique shop, the Wrentham Food Pantry, and an upstairs apartment unit. The property's barn cellarhole has served as an outdoor chapel. The Original Congregational Church of Wrentham has been affiliated with the United Church of Christ since the denomination's establishment in 1961, with membership currently around 200.

The Original Congregational Church 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.

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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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