



**William Francis Galvin**  
Secretary of the Commonwealth

Contact: Brian McNiff  
Telephone: 617-727-9180

October 27, 2015

**BERKLEY COMMON HISTORIC DISTRICT 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 Berkley Common Historic District in Berkley for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. 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 Berkley Common Historic District in the National Register will help to protect a number of historically significant buildings in a rural landscape that evokes the town’s rich agricultural heritage.”

The Berkley Common Historic District is a civic and residential neighborhood in a predominantly rural setting, and has served as the religious and political center for Berkley since the town’s founding in 1735. The historic district includes Berkley Common, established in 1756, and all the properties facing it, located along four Colonial-era streets—North Main, South Main, Locust, and Porter. This approximately 240-acre area includes not only the buildings clustered along these roadways, but also their rural landscape of open hayfields and woodlands behind the buildings.

-more-

Two historically significant civic buildings stand on the common: the Town Meeting House and the Berkley Public Library. Constructed in 1849 by local carpenter Alpheus Sanford, the Town Meeting House is a front-gabled, 1½-story, wood-framed building with clapboard siding and Greek Revival-style architectural details.

The Berkley Public Library is a single-story brick building with a full basement below. Designed by architect Edwin Ford Tirrell in the Craftsman style, the library building was financed by millionaire philanthropist Andrew Carnegie.

The sculptor Louis L. Leach of Taunton designed Civil War memorial tablets that hang in the front vestibule of the library. Eighty-five men from Berkley fought in the Civil War, and four are known to have died in it.

Also located on the common, the Berkley Congregational Church is the fourth church building on this same site, the first of which was constructed in 1736. The present church consists of two church buildings that were originally located elsewhere on the common. The smaller of the two was the Trinitarian or Second Congregational Chapel, built in 1848. The larger building was erected in 1875 as the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Both were moved to this site, joined together at their corners, and rededicated as the Berkley Congregational Church in 1904. The church retains its 1835 organ, believed to be the oldest Hook church organ in existence, which was part of the Methodist church and moved with that building.

Houses in the Berkley Common Historic District date from the 18<sup>th</sup> through the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and include Cape Cod vernacular houses as well as Georgian, Federal, Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, and Colonial Revival-style residences. The oldest house in the district, the Georgian-style Crane Homestead (ca. 1746), 4 Locust Street, was home to many generations of the Crane family. It also served as a boardinghouse in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The district also includes a number of agricultural outbuildings, the most prominent of which is the two-story, wood-framed Burt Barn (1895 or earlier), a landmark on the northeast corner of the common.

-more-

Perhaps the most exciting discovery to arise from the nomination process is a new understanding of the Berkley Common Cemetery, which makes up the northwestern corner of the district. Established in 1758, the cemetery's earliest stones date to the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, and it includes the works of a number of early stone carvers, including the Soule family of Plympton and Cyrus Deane of Taunton. There are also seven rare examples of the work of Newport carver John Bull, which he carved as a teenage apprentice. Most notably, there are at least thirty stones attributed to Berkley resident and blacksmith Deacon Ebenezer Winslow. Still in use today, the 4.4-acre cemetery is surrounded by a dry-laid stone wall of local stone dating from around 1850. It is the largest and most elaborate of the many distinctive stone walls in the district.

The Berkley Common Historic District is one of five 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](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc)).

**-End-**