



William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

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**SECRETARY GALVIN TO PRESENT 2012 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD TO
WHEELER-MINOT HOUSE / THOREAU FARM, CONCORD**

Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin, Chairman of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, announces the selection of the Wheeler-Minot House in Concord, also known as Thoreau Farm, to receive a 2012 Massachusetts Historical Commission Historic Preservation Award.

“The Massachusetts Historical Commission is proud to recognize the extraordinary accomplishments of this year’s awardees,” said Secretary Galvin. “The projects the Commission is recognizing this year are particularly diverse and represent the many creative ways that significant historic resources are being preserved across the Commonwealth. The restoration of the Wheeler-Minot House, the place of Thoreau’s birth, allows this building to function as an educational resource, ensuring that it will continue to inspire and inform future generations.”

The Wheeler-Minot House is a center-entrance, two-story, timber-frame structure built ca. 1730 for John Wheeler and sold to Deacon Samuel Minot in 1756. Minot conveyed the property to his son James, whose second wife, Mary Jones Dunbar, was the maternal grandmother of transcendentalist author Henry David Thoreau. Thoreau was born in this house in 1817, and moved with his parents to Concord town center eight months later. The Minot farm subsequently went through several hands before becoming a tenant farm in the late 19th century. The house was moved a short distance in 1878. Although Thoreau lived at the farm only briefly, the site provided both inspiration and subject matter for his own writings, with his mother Cynthia’s memories of childhood on the farm finding their way into his journals. After Thoreau’s death in 1862, the house took on increasing significance as a destination for Thoreau enthusiasts and scholars, but remained inaccessible to the public until the Thoreau Farm Trust acquired the house and two adjacent acres in 2007. Following its acquisition, the Trust initiated a careful restoration and rehabilitation. Much of the building’s historic interior fabric, including a wall of 18th-century paneling in the Thoreau birth room, remained and was restored or replaced in-kind when necessary. Exterior decorative elements that had been lost over time were reproduced. All colors chosen for the house were documented to Thoreau’s time through paint analysis. A new ell accommodates accessible bathrooms, a chair lift, and mechanical systems. Because of Thoreau’s love of nature, the Trust chose to preserve the dooryard of the house, incorporate an organic kitchen garden, and return fields to agricultural use. The Trust leases land to Gaining Ground, a nonprofit organization that grows organic produce, engages children in farming activities, and donates all food to meal programs and food pantries. Thoreau Farm Trust operates the building not as a traditional house museum, but as a place of ideas. The property’s rich heritage presents many opportunities for programming related to New England history, architecture, and agriculture, as well as Thoreau-specific topics such as literature, philosophy, natural history, and conservation.

This is the 34th year of MHC’s Preservation Awards program. Projects are considered annually for awards in the categories of Rehabilitation and Restoration, Adaptive Reuse, Education and Outreach, Archaeology, Stewardship, and Landscape Preservation. Individuals are considered in the categories of

Individual Lifetime Achievement and Local Preservationist. Secretary Galvin serves as the chair of the 17-member Massachusetts Historical Commission.

Secretary Galvin will present the awards at an afternoon ceremony on May 30, 2012, at the Massachusetts Archives Building at 220 Morrissey Blvd., Dorchester. The Wheeler-Minot House restoration project is one of 12 projects, individuals, and organizations to be honored.

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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