

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

Form 10-300 (Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>Massachusetts</b>
COUNTY: <b>Plymouth</b>
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

1. NAME

COMMON: **Cole's Hill**

AND/OR HISTORIC: **Cole's Hill**

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: **Carver Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **Plymouth** CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: **Twelfth**

STATE: **Massachusetts** CODE: **025** COUNTY: **Plymouth** CODE: **023**

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____
Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No			

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: **Pilgrim Society (Lawrence Geller, Director)**

STREET AND NUMBER: **Pilgrim Hall, 75 Court Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **Plymouth** STATE: **Massachusetts** CODE: **025**

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: **Plymouth County Registry of Deeds**

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: **Plymouth** STATE: **Massachusetts** CODE: **025**

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: **Alvin P. Stauffer, "Historic Sites in or near Plymouth, Massachusetts Relating to Pilgrim History"**

DATE OF SURVEY: **1941**  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: **National Park Service**

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **District of Columbia** CODE: **011**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: **Massachusetts**

COUNTY: **Plymouth**

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ENTRY NUMBER  
DATE

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Cole's Hill, bounded by Carver, North, Water and Leyden Streets, stands at the eastern edge of the central business district in Plymouth, Massachusetts. From a broad plateau running north-south along Carver Street, the hill slopes steeply down to Water Street and the curving shore of Plymouth Bay. On the shore at the foot of the hill lies Plymouth Rock, the traditional landing-place of the Mayflower Pilgrims.

Cole's Hill was given much of its present appearance in the early 20th century in preparation for the celebration of the Massachusetts Tercentenary; at that time, its owner, the Pilgrim Society, cleared the hill of existing buildings and landscaped it for use as a public park, creating a grassed open space with scattered trees and low shrubs. Wooden benches are set at intervals along the hard-topped walkway which circles the hilltop. A simple granite staircase with a center railing of iron runs from the walkway down the seaward slope to Water Street. At the foot of the staircase is a wooden sign carrying a brief history of Cole's Hill.

Several memorials are located on Cole's Hill. The simplest are two stone seats set facing seaward. At the center of the plateau, also facing seaward, is Cyrus Dallin's statue in honor of Massasoit; an heroic bronze mounted on a rough-cut granite base, the composition is approximately 12-feet in height overall. Toward the southern end of the park stands a massive sarcophagus holding what is believed to be the remains of the colonists interred on Cole's Hill during the winter of 1620-1621. The polished granite structure is surrounded by a low hedge. On the seaward side of the sarcophagus is a list of those who died during the first winter at Plymouth; on the landward (Carver Street) side is the following inscription: "In weariness and painfulness, in hunger and cold, they laid the foundations of a state wherein every man . . . should have liberty to worship God in his own way."

Boundaries of the National Historic Landmark: beginning at the intersection of the inside curblineline of Carver and North Streets; thence, along the inside curblineline of North Street, 195 feet more or less, to its intersection with the inside curblineline of Water Street; thence, along the inside curblineline of Water Street, 600 feet more or less, to its intersection with the inside curblineline of Leyden Street; thence, along the inside curblineline of Leyden Street, 115 feet more or less, to its intersection with the inside curblineline of Carver Street; thence along the inside curblineline of Carver Street, 630 feet more or less, to the point of beginning.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |  |                                       |                                       |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century            | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1620-1621**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal     | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric    | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic       | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | <u>English exploration and settlement to 1700.</u>  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture    | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture   | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art            | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce       | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation   |   |  |   |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Although some historians have attempted to minimize the significance of the Plymouth Colony of 1620, for most authorities the role of the Pilgrim settlers continues to loom large in any interpretation of the 17th century settlement and development of New England. Their importance was accurately emphasized by the scholar who called the Pilgrims the "spiritual ancestors" of all Americans (Samuel Eliot Morison, By Land and By Sea). Unfortunately, virtually all of the historic sites relating to the earliest period of Plymouth settlement have lost their original character and convey little impression of the 17th century colony.

An exception is Cole's Hill, traditional burial place of those Plymouth colonists, Pilgrims and others, who died in the first grim winter of 1620-1621. Despite the passage of centuries, Cole's Hill has retained its character as a dominant landmark of the Plymouth settlement. Now a public park owned by the Pilgrim Society, the hill affords a sweeping view of the bay into which the Mayflower sailed and the shore on which its grateful passengers landed.

Historical Background

Cole's Hill rises above the curving shore of Plymouth Bay near the foot of Leyden Street, the first street laid out in the original Plymouth settlement. Here, in an abandoned cornfield, whose Indian owners had perished not long before in a mysterious epidemic, the colonists buried those, both Pilgrim and others, who died in the "general sickness" during the first grim winter of 1620-1621. According to local tradition, the dead were buried at night and the graves disguised to keep secret from the nearby Indians the dangerously weakened state of the survivors.

In later years, the colonists occasionally mounted cannon on the hill to ward off possible attacks from the sea.

In an early assignment of land tracts, Cole's Hill became the site of the home of Deacon Samuel Fuller, the Mayflower Pilgrim's "physition & chirurgeon." Cole's Hill took its name from James Cole, the tavern keeper who for many years after 1645 maintained a popular establishment on the hill overlooking the bay.

About 1820, Cole's Hill was acquired by the newly established Pilgrim Society, a private historical organization preserving artifacts, documents, and information relating to Pilgrim history. During the early 20th century,

(continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Davis, William T., Ancient Landmarks of Plymouth (Boston, 1889).  
 Morison, Samuel Eliot, Builders of the Bay Colony (Boston, 1930).  
 . By Land and By Sea (New York, 1953).  
 Pilgrim Society. Arthur Lord Collection. Joseph Stickney Trust Papers.  
 Usher, Roland, The Pilgrims and Their History (New York, 1918).  
 Willison, George F., Saints and Strangers (New York, 1945).

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY		<b>O R</b>	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES	
CORNER			UTM	
NW		19.362200.4646180		
NE				
SE				
SW				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **approximately 1.25 acres**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: **Polly M. Rettig, Historian, Landmark Review Project; original form prepared by Charles E. Shedd, Historian, 1/15/60**

ORGANIZATION: **Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service**      DATE: **12/10/74**

STREET AND NUMBER: **1100 L Street NW**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington, 20240**      STATE: **District of Columbia**      CODE: **011**

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National       State       Local

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)**

**(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)**

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

*[Signature]*  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 12/12/76

ATTEST:

*[Signature]*  
 Keeper of The National Register  
 Date 12/6/74

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

*(Continuation Sheet)*

STATE Massachusetts	
COUNTY Plymouth	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

*(Number all entries)*

8. Significance: (1) Cole's Hill, Plymouth

in preparation for the celebration of the Massachusetts Tercentenary, the Society transformed the hill into a public park. Existing buildings were removed and walkways and appropriate planting installed.

A number of memorials were erected on Cole's Hill at the same time. A granite sarcophagus, given by the General Society of Mayflower Descendants, was dedicated on September 8, 1921. In a crypt beneath the sarcophagus are bones uncovered during excavations on the hill in the 18th and 19th centuries. As no burials are known to have been made on the hill subsequent to those of the first winter, it may well be, as tradition affirms, that these remains are those of the unfortunate ones who braved the terrors of the ocean passage only to die in the first weeks and months of the colony's existence.

Also on the hill is the heroic statue of Massasoit, the Wampanoag chief whose friendship shielded the struggling colony from Indian attack in its early years; the work of Cyrus Dallin, it was erected in 1921 by the Improved Order of Red Men. Other memorials include two stone seats, one presented by the Pennsylvania Society of New England Women, the other by the Society of Daughters of Colonial Wars, Commonwealth of Massachusetts.