



William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

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**SECRETARY GALVIN TO PRESENT 2012 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD TO
WASHBURN SHOPS, WORCESTER**

Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin, Chairman of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, announces the selection of the Washburn Shops at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), 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 Washburn Shops ensures that this historic educational building will continue to serve Worcester Polytechnic Institute’s students for generations to come.”

Ichabod Washburn, one of the founders of Worcester Polytechnic Institute, funded construction of the Washburn Shops in 1868 to house a “Department of Practical Mechanism” that would educate student mechanics in the practical applications of design and manufacturing. Prominent local architect Elbridge Boyden designed the building in the Second Empire style, and additions in 1880 and 1892 substantially expanded its footprint. The devastating hurricane of 1938 tore the central cupola from the Washburn Shops, dropping it through the roof of the building. Although it was reconstructed shortly thereafter, the cupola was reattached insecurely, such that by 2011 it was loose enough to be easily pushed out of place. In addition, in 1984, when the attic was converted to conditioned space, roof leaks were caused by winter ice dam formation, leading to warping of the roof deck, which in turn displaced slate shingles. The resultant gaps admitted still more water, causing further damage. Because the roof had sustained irreversible damage, repair was not a viable option. Instead, the slate was replaced, and ice/water shields were incorporated into the roof’s assembly. To maintain stability while restoring the cupola, tower corners were taken apart and reconstructed in sections. Concealed anchors improve structural stability without compromising the building’s aesthetic or historic integrity. Salvaged brick from the original structure was interspersed with replacement brick at the tower’s corners. Additionally, rotting woodwork was replaced, and dormers and surrounds were rebuilt to resonate with the lines and ornamentation of the later, composite building. Historically appropriate divided lights replaced 1980s-era aluminum windows. The arm and hammer weathervane, a 1977 replica of the original and a symbol of WPI, was also restored. Continuously in use for engineering education since its construction, the Washburn Shops now houses the Material Science and Engineering Program, the Manufacturing Engineering Program, and the Management Department, as well as the Milton P. Higgins Lecture Hall.

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.

State House, Room 337, Boston, Massachusetts 02133

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 Washburn Shops 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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