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Secretary of the Commonwealth

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**SECRETARY GALVIN TO PRESENT 2012 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD TO  
WILBER SCHOOL, SHARON**

Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin, Chairman of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, announces the selection of the Wilber School in Sharon 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 and adaptive reuse of the Wilber School saved a long-vacant and severely deteriorated building from the brink of ruin, reinstating it as a valuable resource to its community.”

The Wilber School was designed in the Colonial Revival style by Boston architects Monks & Johnson, and built in 1922. Ralph Harrington Doane and Edward S. Holland designed a 1929 addition in the Georgian Revival style with ornate details, such as arched windows, fruit ornaments, cast-stone swags, and a wood balcony with a balustrade. The Wilber School is by far the largest and most imposing example of the Colonial Revival style in Sharon. Closed in the early 1980s, the building sat vacant for over a quarter of a century, with its windows boarded up, its façade overgrown with vegetation, and rot and water steadily destroying it. The school was nearly demolished a number of times, but ultimately the town decided it needed to preserve this important building. After several redevelopment attempts proved unsuccessful, Beacon Communities and Frontier Enterprises took on the adaptive reuse project. The rehabilitation of the school included restoration, or replacement in-kind, of all exterior ornamentation and detailing, including the wooden balcony and its balustrade. Masonry was repointed, and historically appropriate windows were installed. Restored or rebuilt interior features include: double French doors, trophy cases, and architectural details in the 1929 addition’s entry hall; original chalkboards, which were incorporated into apartments; and trim, which was replaced in-kind as necessary. The original dimensions of all corridors were preserved. Original classroom doors and lockers were removed, stripped of lead paint, and reinstalled in their original places, preserving the look and feel of the hallways. A new addition was designed to complement the existing historic building without replicating or overpowering it. The LEED Gold, EPA-certified Energy Star rehabilitation project, which utilized state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credits, now provides mixed-income housing.

This is the 34<sup>th</sup> 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 Wilber School 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](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc)).

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