



**William Francis Galvin**  
Secretary of the Commonwealth

Contact: Brian McNiff  
Telephone: 617-727-9180

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**A. H. RICE SILK MILL, PITTSFIELD, 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 approved the A. H. Rice Silk Mill in Pittsfield for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places at its December 10, 2014, meeting. 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 A. H. Rice Silk Mill complex in the National Register will help to preserve these important buildings associated with Pittsfield’s historic textile industry.”

The A. H. Rice Silk Mill is a complex of industrial buildings associated with the local manufacture of wool, silk, and specialty fibers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In its current configuration, the complex consists of five connected, masonry buildings constructed between 1874 and 1945, and one detached, wood-frame barn dating from about 1900. The buildings represent vernacular expressions of late 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century commercial and industrial architecture, including the Italianate and Classical Revival styles. Pittsfield developer George Wesley Burbank built the complex’s first building as a speculative venture in 1874.

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Burbank was born in Pittsfield in 1837, and after working in San Francisco and Michigan and fighting in the Civil War, he returned to Pittsfield to focus on a career in real estate development. The building was initially known as the Burbank Manufactory Building, but Burbank's decision to build the new steam-powered plant was ill timed: the Panic of 1873 triggered a long period of economic depression, and the Berkshire region was hit hard by a failing economy. After prolonged difficulty securing a tenant for the building, Burbank finally found a textile manufacturer to occupy the space in 1877, the Farnham and Lathers woolen mill.

Within four years of leasing the building, the company purchased the property from Burbank, but in 1866 Farnham and Lathers dissolved its operations and the local firm of A. H. Rice & Company purchased the mill. A. H. Rice & Company had been formed a decade earlier as Smith and Rice. A. H. Rice expanded the mill and operated it continuously until 2006, when the business was reorganized and the machinery was moved to a new plant in South Carolina. After the mill's closing, the complex remained vacant until 2010, when it was purchased by a new developer and completely rehabilitated for rental housing. The adaptive reuse and rehabilitation project utilized state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credits, and created 45 apartment units.

The A. H. Rice Silk Mill is one of 6 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 over 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)).

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State House, Room 337, Boston, Massachusetts 02133

