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**GRACE UNIVERSALIST CHURCH, LOWELL, APPROVED FOR NOMINATION TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin is pleased to announce that the Massachusetts Historical Commission approved the Grace Universalist Church in Lowell for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places at its December 8, 2010, 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 architectural, cultural, archaeological, and historic resources,” Secretary Galvin said. “Inclusion of the Grace Universalist Church in the National Register signifies the architectural and historical significance of this prominent structure.”

Grace Universalist Church, now known as the St. George Hellenic Orthodox Church, is located at 44 Princeton Boulevard. The church is a 2 ½ -story, asymmetrical, brick structure with a large central dome, a two-towered front façade, and an attached vestry. The building’s eclectic design incorporates Romanesque, Beaux Arts, and Classical Revival motifs. The seventy-foot-diameter masonry dome—the largest masonry dome in Massachusetts—was constructed of interlocking terra-cotta tiles, in Rafael Guastavino, Sr.’s patented Tile Arch System. An alcove above the choir gallery houses a ca. 1838 organ by well-known organ-builder George Stevens, of Cambridge. The church is also significant for its association with the Universalist Church, which was first introduced in Lowell in 1825, and took an active role in labor reform and improving the lives of mill workers. The church building was sold to the St. George Hellenic Orthodox Society in October of 1973. As part of the building’s conversion for use as an Orthodox church, iconography was added to the walls and dome by renowned iconographer George Filipakas.

The Grace Universalist Church is one of 7 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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