



William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

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**SECRETARY GALVIN PRESENTS 2015 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD TO
AMES SHOVEL WORKS, EASTON**

Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin, Chairman of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, announces the selection of the Ames Shovel Works, Easton, to receive a 2015 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. In a remarkable achievement of public and private partnership in Easton, the restoration and adaptive reuse of the Ames Shovel Works repurposed eight historic buildings, formerly considered one of the country’s most endangered places, into 113 units of mixed-income rental housing.”

Secretary Galvin presented the award recently at the Massachusetts Archives Building, Dorchester. Ames Shovel Works is one of 11 projects, individuals, and organizations to be honored.

The Ames Shovel Works, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, features stone, brick, steel-frame, and wood-frame buildings constructed between 1852 and 1928. At the height of its success in the 1870s, the Oliver Ames & Sons Company controlled 60% of the world market for shovels, producing more than a million shovels annually and creating one of the country’s first great industrial fortunes.

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State House, Room 337, Boston, Massachusetts 02133

Ames shovels were instrumental in the creation of the Transcontinental Railroad, the Panama and Erie canals, the Statue of Liberty, the New York City subway, and Mount Rushmore. During the Civil War, Ames shovels were standard issue for the United States military, and the company continued to supply shovels for every conflict through Korea. The Ames family fortune also funded several significant architectural works in the factory's immediate area, including designs by luminaries such as H. H. Richardson, Frederick Law Olmsted, and Louis Comfort Tiffany.

In 2009, the National Trust for Historic Preservation named Ames Shovel Works one of the country's most endangered places, after the owner at the time proposed demolition of significant portions of the complex for redevelopment. The town of Easton and its residents rallied to save the site, showing overwhelming support for its preservation and reuse through the imposition of a demolition delay, the creation of a local historic district, and the allocation of significant Community Preservation funds to support financing of an historically appropriate rehabilitation. The restoration of the complex and its adaptive reuse as housing, aided by state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credits, required careful study of the buildings, their historic significance, whether and how they should be preserved, and their structural conditions.

The site's most prominent and historically significant feature consists of several long, narrow buildings erected for the company's pioneering production-line manufacturing methods. Adapting these buildings for housing presented a significant challenge, which the design team met by introducing sensitively designed dormers and skylights on interior-facing facades, and extending the second-floor apartments into the historic roof trusses to create two-floor units. With a footprint too narrow for double-loaded corridors, the team created direct-entry apartments, accessed via vestibules created by extending the existing historic window openings to grade.

The site had been retrofitted with numerous loading docks in the 20th century, leaving behind challenging holes in the remaining historic fabric. The largest of these is now filled with a glass façade for the management and leasing office. Portions of the Business Offices building and the Storehouse had been built without adequate foundations, and other buildings' foundations did

not meet current structural standards. Extensive excavation and shoring was performed where necessary.

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Rather than trucking huge piles of stone offsite, the team screened the excavated soil and reused rocks and boulders as landscape features. The site's history is visible to residents and visitors, with factory artifacts displayed onsite and interpretive signage describing original manufacturing processes housed in the buildings. The project achieved LEED for Homes Silver and Gold certification, and altogether repurposed eight historic buildings into 113 mixed-income rental housing units. In keeping with the spirit of public and private partnership that saved the complex from demolition, community uses integrated at the site include office, gallery, and studio space for the Easton Chamber of Commerce and the Easton Shovel Works Town Cultural District Art Co-op, as well as 1.6 acres of publically accessible open space.

This is the 37th 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.



*(left to right) David Colton, Town Administrator, Town of Easton; Colleen Corona, former Chair, Easton Board of Selectmen; Secretary William F. Galvin; David Ames; Josh Cohen, Development Director, Beacon Communities
(Photo by Wyeth Lilley)*

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