



William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

Contact: Debra O'Malley
Telephone: 617-727-9180

November 1, 2017

**SECRETARY GALVIN PRESENTS 2017 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD
TO THE MERRICK-PHELPS HOUSE IN SPRINGFIELD**

Secretary of the Commonwealth William F. Galvin, Chairman of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, announces the selection of the Merrick-Phelps House in Springfield to receive a 2017 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. With this project, the Merrick-Phelps House will now be an important contributor to Springfield’s economic future.”

Constructed in 1841, the Merrick-Phelps House is one of Springfield’s most significant historic buildings. The house was built by Solymon Merrick, inventor of the monkey wrench and a key player in Springfield's history of industry and innovation. The house was then sold in 1847 to Ansel Phelps, who later became the city’s mayor. Many residents still refer to this as the “Mayor’s House.” After Phelps’s death in 1860, the building continued to house families of the Springfield elite well into the 20th century.

The Merrick-Phelps House is situated on the corner of Maple and Union streets, a gateway into downtown Springfield and one of the city's most heavily traveled areas. The Greek Revival-style, two-story, single-family house features a low hipped roof and an elaborate two-story portico with fluted Corinthian columns. A one-story porch on the Union Street elevation was added in 1890. The primary entrance on Maple Street is accentuated by a Greek Revival-

-More-

style door surround and a pair of glass-and-wood-panel doors. The windows are all original wood windows. Notable interior features include a grand center hall with a curved staircase along the wall, a large parlor and dining room with decorative trim, and five original fireplace mantels. The Merrick-Phelps House stands out as one of Springfield's most notable historic houses and is an anchor to the surrounding Lower Maple Historic District.

Toward the end of the 20th century, the house began to show signs of neglect; it was abandoned in 2007. When the current owners, DevelopSpringfield, purchased the house in 2013, it had been vacant for several years and was in an advanced state of deterioration, exacerbated by the 2011 tornado that caused significant damage in the area.

The first step in the rehabilitation process, which used state and federal tax credits, was the restoration of the exterior, including the porches' distinctive columns and capitals. The rehabilitation also included repairs to the original slate roof, repair and reconstruction of the original chimneys, and restoration of all 31 original windows as well as three sets of interior shutters. The next step in the rehabilitation process was the conversion of the interior into professional office space. Even though the house was in poor condition, the interior retained a large amount of original material and detailing. The interior renovation was sensitively done, retaining as much of the original material as possible. The house retains its original layout, as well as the historic plaster walls, hardwood floors, wood detailing, doors, staircases, fireplaces, and mantels. Modern HVAC, electrical work, plumbing, and sprinkler systems were carefully woven in without altering the historic fabric. The building now serves as the headquarters for DevelopSpringfield and for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampden County, housing 11 employees and attracting numerous visitors and volunteers.

Situated on a prominent corner near the downtown core, the rehabilitated Merrick-Phelps House stands as a shining example of historic preservation. The investment into the Merrick-Phelps House has spurred the development of adjacent houses, which together will form the commercial campus known as the Lower Maple Business Park. The Merrick-Phelps House is once again a proud symbol of Springfield's rich historic and architectural heritage.

This is the 39th 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.

-More-

Secretary Galvin will present the awards at an afternoon ceremony on November 2, 2017, at the Massachusetts Archives Building at 220 Morrissey Blvd., Dorchester. The Merrick-Phelps House in Springfield, is one of 11 projects to be honored.

-End-