



William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

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**WILLIAM H. MCELWAIN SCHOOL, BRIDGEWATER, 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 William H. McElwain School in Bridgewater for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places at its September 12, 2012, 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 McElwain School in the National Register will help to protect this excellent, well-preserved example of early 20th-century public school construction.”

The McElwain School, 250 Main Street, is a two-story brick building, standing on two acres of land just northwest of the town’s historic central business district. The school was named for prominent local industrialist William H. McElwain. In 1894, at the age of 27, McElwain founded the W. H. McElwain Company, which manufactured shoes and was Bridgewater’s leading employer during the first decade of the 20th century. By the early 20th century, the town’s rapid industrial growth had led to a population boom that overwhelmed the public school system, necessitating a larger, modern school building. McElwain’s family donated the land for the school in his memory, and it was constructed in 1912. The building was designed in the Classical Revival style by the Boston firm Loring and Phipps, one of the most prominent architectural firms in Massachusetts at the turn of the 20th century. The school was constructed in 1912 in response to the town’s rapid industrial growth, which had overwhelmed its public school system. The building served continuously as an elementary school for more than eighty years, and experienced little alteration during that time; it has never been enlarged, its interior is little changed, and it is the most intact Loring and Phipps-designed school identified in Massachusetts to date. The school closed in 1997, after the completion of the George H. Mitchell Elementary School at 500 South Street. Although the town still owns and maintains the school building, it has been vacant since its closure. The town replaced the building’s roof in 2002, and in 2009 issued a request for proposals to convert it into market-rate senior housing; as of the present time, no adaptive reuse project has been approved, but the town continues to support the preservation of the building and is optimistic that it will continue to serve an important role in the community.

The McElwain School 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).

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