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Secretary of the Commonwealth

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**EAST CHARLEMONT DISTRICT SCHOOL, CHARLEMONT. 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 East Charlemont District School in Charlemont for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places at its September 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 East Charlemont District School in the National Register will help to raise awareness of this remarkably intact historic schoolhouse.”

The East Charlemont District School stands along the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway, Route 2. Built in 1828, it operated as a school for 116 years and is one of the few remaining early 19th century, one-room schools in western Massachusetts to be built of brick. It stands in contrast to the more typical wood-frame schoolhouses of the period. The well-preserved Federal-style school is 1 ½ stories tall under a side-gable, slate-covered roof. A one-story, wood-frame equipment shed was added to the east side elevation ca. 1874 and a privy was added ca. 1920. The school has its original entry doors, hardware, and transom, as well as an intact interior plan, which consists of a cloak room and classroom. Slate blackboards, beaded-board wainscoting and ceilings, as well as narrow oak floorboards, date to the late 19th century.

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The school never had running water and has always been heated by a wood stove. The lighting dates from 1943. The building is flanked by low stone walls and surrounded by fields that give way to woodland in all directions, reflecting its original setting.

The East Charlemont District School's early history is typical of schools in western Massachusetts—an ungraded school where neighborhood children and adolescents gathered in one room to learn reading, writing, and arithmetic, often for fewer than eight months a year. Teachers, usually single women, generally had a 12th grade education. Gradually, the duration of the school year was extended, as were the range of subjects taught and the educational preparation of the teachers, reflecting the standards set by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. While educational standards rose, the physical facility remained largely that of the 19th century—an economic fact that was true for many of the small rural, agricultural communities of western Massachusetts.

The school closed in 1944, but the building remains in town ownership. Furnished with period-appropriate wood and cast-iron student desks, a teacher's desk, and a wood box, it serves as a community meeting space and a field-trip destination for Charlemont's school children.

The East Charlemont District School is one of six 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 more than 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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