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**GRIDLEY STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT, BOSTON, 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 Gridley Street Historic District in Boston (Downtown) for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places at its September 10, 2014, 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 Gridley Street Historic District in the National Register will help to preserve a unique collection of commercial buildings that illustrate the redevelopment of Boston’s Central Business District following the Great Fire of 1872.”

The Gridley Street Historic District is situated at the edge of Boston’s Financial District, roughly midway between Post Office Square and the Fort Point Channel and comprises a small group of low- and mid-rise commercial buildings, clad in brick and stone and constructed between 1873 and 1930. The historic district is distinct from adjacent areas due either to building demolition for mid-20th-century highway construction or high-rise development undertaken from the late 1960s to the 1990s. The district is significant for its inclusion of important examples of masonry mercantile buildings constructed in the aftermath of Boston’s Great Fire of 1872, which had destroyed many buildings in the downtown area, as well as an important example of a steel-frame, Art Deco-style office tower, rare in the area.

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All twelve buildings in the historic district contribute to its historic integrity, and nine of the buildings together constitute the Richardson Block, which was individually listed in the National Register in 1986. Occupying the east side of Gridley Street, the Richardson Block was built between 1873 and 1885 and designed by architect William Gibbons Preston to be a unified block in the Neo-Greco style. The ninth building in the block, however, departs from Preston's scheme with its red brick and Victorian Eclectic styling, designed by architect George W. Pope. On the west side of Gridley Street stand three attached commercial buildings: the Romanesque Revival-style Bradley and Woodruff Building (1889), designed by Cabot, Everett & Mead; the Victorian Eclectic, red-brick Henry Willis Building (1874), the architect of which has not been identified; and the Western Union Telegraph Company Building, the only 20th-century commercial block in the district, and one of relatively few Art Deco-style buildings in downtown Boston. The Stone & Webster Engineering Corporation designed and constructed this 12-story, U-shaped, brick building with cast-stone trim.

The commercial buildings in the area immediately south of the Gridley Street Historic District were removed in the 1950s for construction of the elevated John F. Fitzgerald Expressway. Known locally as the Central Artery, this six-lane highway eventually carried Interstate 93, US Route 1, and State Route 3 in a three-mile corridor throughout Boston. The Fitzgerald Expressway, along with a ramp and a surface road immediately south of the district, were demolished in the 1990s and replaced with an underground system during the Commonwealth's massive Central Artery/Tunnel Project. The Rose F. Kennedy Greenway, a mile-long path of linear parks situated between downtown Boston and the waterfront neighborhoods on Boston Harbor, replaced the former elevated and surface highway corridor, and opened in 2008.

The buildings in the Gridley Street Historic District, which now overlook the Greenway, are unique survivors of decades of transportation-related demolition and construction in this area. The Henry Willis Building recently underwent rehabilitation assisted by state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credits, and is currently occupied by the Consulate General of Brazil.

The Gridley Street Historic District is one of 8 historic resources around the Commonwealth approved for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places by the Massachusetts Historical Commission at this meeting.

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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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