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**RIVERSIDE VILLAGE HISTORIC DISTRICT, GILL, 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 Riverside Village Historic District in Gill for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places at a recent 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 Gill’s Riverside Village in the National Register will help to preserve the buildings and streetscapes of this historic area.”

Riverside Village, in the southernmost section of Gill, is located on both sides of Route 2. Primarily a residential historic district, its present-day appearance reflects the village’s associations with both agricultural and industrial activities. The majority of the district’s historic buildings are on a peninsula formed by a curve in the Connecticut River on the south side of Route 2. There, a collection of mostly 19th century houses on small lots recall what was once a neighborhood of mill workers. Larger parcels north of Route 2 reflect the district’s agricultural roots.

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The earliest extant house in the district is a five-bay Cape, the Howland Tavern, located along a stretch of Route 2 known as the French King Highway. The property was farmed for more than 200 years, beginning around 1760 when the house was built. It was operated as an inn and tavern by three generations of the Howland family, serving travelers on the nearby Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike as well as riverboat crews who were traversing the Connecticut River. Chickens, pigs, and dairy cows were all raised in Riverside Village, and from the 1890s to the 1950s, people with smaller lots raised honey bees and grew vegetables that they took to market.

The development of Riverside Village was directly related to its location on the Connecticut River. Log drives brought wood down the river from Vermont and New Hampshire, and planed lumber crossed the river at Riverside to be used in house construction in the rapidly growing company town of Turners Falls, in nearby Montague. In 1872, the Turners Falls Lumber Company was formed in Riverside Village, along with a kindling mill that turned waste wood into fire starters, and a fiber company that produced fiber from the wood pulp that was a byproduct of the lumbering operations.

A devastating fire in 1903 destroyed the lumber company, and its site along the Connecticut River is now a park. Another feature of the village that is now gone is the Red Bridge, once the longest suspension bridge in New England, that connected Riverside Village to Turners Falls, and was the means by which many Riverside Village residents travelled to work; the bridge was turned into scrap during the Second World War, but its anchorage still stands in Riverside Village.

The Riverside Village Historic District is one of five historic resources in 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.

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The National Register is the nation's official listing of significant historic resources. In Massachusetts, there are more than 75,000 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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