



**William Francis Galvin**  
Secretary of the Commonwealth

Contact: Brian McNiff  
Telephone: 617-727-9180

July 2, 2014

**RAMSDELL LIBRARY, GREAT BARRINGTON, 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 recently approved Ramsdell Library in Great Barrington for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The nomination has been 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 Ramsdell Library in the National Register will help to preserve a building significant for its associations with the design, growth, and development of the Housatonic village of Great Barrington.”

Ramsdell Library is a 1½-story, Classical Revival-style building with tan Roman brick walls and marble trim, located on Main Street. Mill owner Theodore Ramsdell donated \$20,000 for construction of the library upon his death in 1903; initially privately funded, the library was turned over to the town in 1908. The Ramsdell Public Library is representative of private and public efforts to promote the welfare and enhance the lives of citizens of Housatonic and Great Barrington at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

-more-

The prominent Boston architectural firm of William H. McLean and Albert Hayden Wright designed Ramsdell Library, and were so pleased with the building that its design became the basis of two later libraries designed by the firm: the 1909-1919 Shedd-Porter Memorial Library in Alstead, New Hampshire, and the circa 1912 Weeks Memorial Library in Lancaster, New Hampshire.

The Pittsfield architectural firm of Harding and Seaver designed the library's sympathetic rear addition, constructed between 1928 and 1930. The interior of Ramsdell Library encompasses a rotunda, the east reading room (now the children's room), the west reading room, a reference room, and a stacks area. The building retains much of its elegant historic fabric, including the rotunda's multicolored tile floor, which features a Greek meander pattern, and oak woodwork. The town is currently considering installation of an elevator in the library to allow full accessibility, including a possible new elevator addition incorporating a side entrance and restrooms, but have not moved beyond preliminary discussions at this time.

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](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc)).

**-End-**