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**BENSON'S NEW BLOCK AND THE MOHAWK CHAMBERS, GREENFIELD, 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 Benson's New Block and the Mohawk Chambers in Greenfield for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places at its December 11, 2013, 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 Benson's New Block and the Mohawk Chambers in the National Register speaks to their importance as well-preserved examples of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century commercial architecture, located in an area where other early and mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century buildings have been substantially altered and remodeled."

Benson's New Block and the Mohawk Chambers are two adjacent, masonry commercial blocks located at the northeast corner of Main and Wells streets in downtown Greenfield. Designed in the Classical Revival style and conceived as mixed-use developments, both buildings have been in continuous commercial use since their construction: the three-story, masonry and steel New Block in 1916, and the four-story, masonry and steel Mohawk Chambers in 1917.

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Benson's New Block was designed with a large storefront at street level and a separate entrance for office suites on the upper two floors. The Mohawk Chambers originally had three commercial spaces at street level, offices and meeting rooms on the second floor, and hotel rooms and apartments on the top two floors. Over the years, the buildings have housed several businesses including grocers, clothing stores, a deli, a tailor, a shoe repair shop, an electric shop, and the Mohawk Chocolate Shop. W. Edward Benson, a prominent local real estate developer, erected both buildings as part of the western expansion of Greenfield's central business district. This expansion was driven by technical advancements, such as movie theaters and automobiles, and by tourism, particularly the development of the Mohawk Trail (Massachusetts Route 2) as a popular automobile touring route in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Benson actively promoted the expansion of the downtown business district and the construction of new residential neighborhoods in Greenfield. Thomas J. Gass, a local contractor who worked closely with Benson on many of his developments in and around Greenfield, constructed both Benson's New Block and the Mohawk Chambers. Currently under separate ownership, both buildings have recently undergone restoration projects. Benson's New Block was privately restored in 2010, and now accommodates a furniture consignment shop on the ground floor and professional offices above. The 2011 rehabilitation of the Mohawk Chambers utilized state and federal historic preservation tax credits to create the Winslow Apartments. The building's two commercial spaces were completely rehabilitated, and the upper floors reconfigured to create thirty-five studio apartments with private bathrooms and kitchens, as well as a community space. An addition at the rear of the building provides 20 additional studio apartments, as well as elevator access to all floors.

The Benson's New Block and Mohawk Chambers nomination is one of 10 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.

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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)).

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