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Secretary of the Commonwealth

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**ROCKWOOD ROAD HISTORIC DISTRICT, NORFOLK 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 Rockwood Road Historic District, Norfolk, 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 Norfolk’s Rockwood Road district in the National Register will help to raise awareness of this remarkable historic area.”

The Rockwood Road district is a collection of buildings that extends north from the MBTA Franklin commuter railroad to Boardman Street, north of the center of the town. It is a linear district, consisting of nearly twenty buildings along both sides of Rockwood Road, and is the largest concentration of historic buildings near Norfolk’s town center, illustrating village development at the town’s core from the early 19th to the mid 20th century. The district preserves an historic village character, with most of its wood-frame buildings set close to the street. Though some commercial uses existed in the past, most of the principal buildings are now in residential use.

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The district includes the First Baptist Church of North Wrentham, also known as the Norfolk Grange Hall, which was individually listed in the National Register in 1989 and is now listed again collectively as part of the district.

The earliest buildings date to the early 1800s, with the Salmon Mann House at 16 Rockwood Road built circa-1806. As Norfolk moved away from a primarily agricultural settlement, a number of small businesses were located on Rockwood Road. Close by was the Norfolk County Railroad line, which was established in the mid 19th century, and was soon joined by a branch line from nearby Medway (now Millis). As the route to a busy railroad junction, Rockwood Road was also known as Railroad Street in the 19th century. Among the occupations of residents in the district was straw bonnet manufacturing. Many of the bonnets were created in a “carry-out” method, in which bonnets were manufactured in neighborhood homes and brought to nearby factories for finishing and shipping.

As 20th-century changes in transportation and manufacturing occurred, Norfolk became an outlying suburb of Boston, close to interstate highways, while still retaining features of small-town life. Late 20th-century construction changed the area near Rockwood Road, but the district itself has retained its historic character.

The Rockwood Road district is one of five 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 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.

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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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