



William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

Contact: Brian McNiff
Telephone: 617-727-9180

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**COMMONWEALTH SHOE COMPANY, WHITMAN, 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 the Commonwealth Shoe Company in Whitman 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 was designated on May 13, 2014.

“The Massachusetts Historical Commission is dedicated to preserving the Commonwealth’s rich historic, architectural, archaeological, and cultural resources,” Secretary Galvin said. “Inclusion of the Commonwealth Shoe Company in the National Register helps to preserve an excellent group of late 19th- and early 20th-century industrial buildings with strong ties to Whitman’s shoemaking heritage.”

The Commonwealth Shoe Company is a large, brick and wood-frame mill complex associated with much of Whitman’s long tradition in the shoemaking industry. The complex increased by increments, starting with the original part of Building 1, which was constructed circa 1864 by an earlier shoe company and became the nucleus of Commonwealth Shoe’s property. Founded in 1884, the Commonwealth Shoe Company’s success was largely based on its popular “Bostonian” shoe, which became nationally renowned as a high-quality dress shoe for men and is still manufactured today by another company.

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The property's two primary buildings – Building 1 and Building 2 – line both sides of Marble Street and are connected by an upper-story, enclosed connector that spans the street. Located on the west side of Marble Street and constructed mainly between 1864 and 1923, Building 1 features two elegant stairtowers – one in the Chateau style, and the other in the Colonial Revival style. Both towers are prominent features of the Whitman landscape. Building 2 is a more typical and vernacular example of a Victorian-era, wood-frame shoe factory.

The company made substantial additions to the buildings in 1891, 1893, 1919, and 1923. Boston-based architect J. Williams Beal designed the 1891 and 1893 additions, and most likely designed the 1919 addition as well. The successor firm, J. Williams Beal Sons, designed the 1923 addition. Also included within the complex is the former First Unitarian Church (1888), which was absorbed by Commonwealth Shoe in 1968 when the church closed. The fourth building on the property, a pool house constructed in 2011, does not contribute to the property's significance due to its age.

The Commonwealth Shoe Company remained under the ownership of founding president Charles H. Jones's family until 1959, when the family transferred ownership and operation to the company's management and certain employees. A substantial 2011 rehabilitation of the complex, which utilized state and federal historic preservation tax credits, created 127 residential apartments and fifteen commercial/retail spaces at the property.

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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