



**William Francis Galvin**  
Secretary of the Commonwealth

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May 25, 2012

**SECRETARY GALVIN TO PRESENT 2012 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD TO  
UNITY CHURCH OF NORTH EASTON**

Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin, Chairman of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, announces the selection of the Unity Church in North Easton, to receive a 2012 Massachusetts Historical Commission Historic Preservation Award.

“The Massachusetts Historical Commission is proud to recognize the extraordinary accomplishments of this year’s awardees,” said Secretary Galvin. “The projects the Commission is recognizing this year are particularly diverse and represent the many creative ways that significant historic resources are being preserved across the Commonwealth. The restoration and adaptive reuse of the Unity Church ensures that this landmark building will be a vital resource for generations to come.”

Unity Church, constructed in 1875, was a gift to the Unitarian Society of North Easton by Oliver Ames II. The imposing granite building was designed in the Gothic Revival style by Ames’s nephew, John Ames Mitchell, best known as the founder of *Life* magazine. Unity Church contains two of John La Farge’s largest stained-glass windows, as well as windows by Mitchell, William McPherson, and Charles Connick. Other works include a large, hand-carved oak screen by Johannes Kirchmayer, renovations by Henry Vaughan, sculptures and memorials by Truman Bartlett and H. H. Richardson, and a landscape design by Ernest Bowditch. In 2005, after numerous leaks had led to interior finish damage, the Unity Church Building Committee invested in a professional conditions survey, which found serious deterioration in original copper valleys and flashing, roof slate and nailing, and granite mortar joints, all leading to a destructive cycle of water infiltration. In addition, mortar had deteriorated to the point that joints were supporting healthy vegetation. Using a Massachusetts Preservation Project Funds grant, Community Preservation Act funds, and private donations, the committee embarked on a six-year plan to restore and preserve the building. Masonry was repointed and repaired, cracked or missing pieces of granite were replaced with stone quarried from original sources, and the roof was replaced with matching slate. The quatrefoil pinnacle’s seriously cracked 3,000-pound, carved granite base was replaced. New copper flashing was installed, and coping stones, cresting, finials, and exterior woodwork were all restored. Building Conservation Associates matched replacement mortar to the original buff color, and paint analysis determined the color for wooden sash. Sixteen stained-glass windows were removed for restoration; the windows now have a protective glazing and are vented to prevent lead deterioration. Accessibility, safety, and environmental concerns were addressed with new HVAC and accessible bathrooms. On the interior, plaster and intricate stencilwork, damaged by leaks, were repaired and repainted.

This is the 34<sup>th</sup> year of MHC’s Preservation Awards program. Projects are considered annually for awards in the categories of Rehabilitation and Restoration, Adaptive Reuse, Education and Outreach, Archaeology, Stewardship, and Landscape Preservation. Individuals are considered in the categories of Individual Lifetime Achievement and Local Preservationist. Secretary Galvin serves as the chair of the 17-member Massachusetts Historical Commission.

State House, Room 337, Boston, Massachusetts 02133

Secretary Galvin will present the awards at an afternoon ceremony on May 30, 2012, at the Massachusetts Archives Building at 220 Morrissey Blvd., Dorchester. The Unity Church restoration project is one of 12 projects, individuals, and organizations to be honored.

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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