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Massachusetts

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## **Ames Shovel Shops Complex listed amongst Massachusetts Most Endangered Historic Resources**

**Complex buildings threatened by insensitive development and  
demolition.**

The Ames Shovel Shops Complex in Easton has been named one of Massachusetts' "Most Endangered Historic Resources". Since 1993, this list is compiled annually by Preservation Massachusetts, the state's historic preservation advocacy organization.

The Ames Shovel Shops is an 8 acre site comprised of fifteen buildings that date from 1852 through 1928. The buildings are constructed of stone rubble, quarried locally in North Easton. The Ames family began manufacturing a simple but vital tool, the iron-bladed shovel around 1774 when blacksmith Capt. John Ames started his enterprise in West Bridgewater. His son Oliver established the more formal Ames Shovel works in Easton in 1803. The shovels made the Ames family and the town of Easton known world wide, from the Erie Canal to the Australian Gold Rush to the European trenches of WWI. The original shovel shops were destroyed by fire in 1851 and replaced with the present day stone buildings.

The Ames family continued to run the Shovel Shops throughout the 19th century and having prominent social, political and business roles. The company left Easton in 1953 and is now Ames True Temper based in Pennsylvania. The Easton complex is all that remains of the Ames shovel shops and only about half of the complex has been used since the 1950's for offices and a YMCA.

In 2007 the Shovel Shops were purchased by local developers who propose major changes in order to create an affordable housing development. There is serious concern that the development as planned would have adverse effects on existing historic structures, from complete demolition to engulfing historic fabric with new construction and inappropriate scaling and massing. The impact on the surrounding neighborhood, which includes five famous H.H. Richardson buildings, would be drastic.

Jim Igoe, President of Preservation Massachusetts feels strongly about the future of the Ames Shovel Shop Complex is not only an “important part of the rich architectural history of Easton, but important in the world. Cities and towns across Massachusetts can only dream of having the history of Easton. It would be a terrible shame to lose the historic integrity of this wonderful complex.”

The community hopes that listing the Shovel complex will encourage the developers to seek a more preservation focused development that will allow the community and tourists to see and appreciate the shovel shops and their importance to the expansion of America and the rise of industrialization. The site of the Ames Shovel Shops Complex is bounded by Main, Oliver and Sullivan streets and is located in the heart of the North Easton National Register district and the H.H. Richardson National Landmark District one of the town’s most important historic sites. The complex is deemed eligible for National Register listing.

The Tarkiln Community Center in Duxbury was also listed amongst 2008 Massachusetts Most Endangered Historic Resources List.

The other three endangered sites are: Paul Revere & Sons Copper Rolling Mill & Barn (Canton), Historic Working Farms/Arrowhead Farm (Massachusetts), Cliftex Mill #1 (New Bedford).

### **About the ‘Massachusetts Most Endangered Historic Resources’ List**

Celebrating it’s 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2008, the list of most endangered historic resources has become an effective tool for preservationists to focus statewide attention on the condition of individual historic properties and their importance to communities. Of the more than 130 historic sites designated as endangered since the list’s inception in 1993, fewer than a twenty have been lost.

This year’s list was culled from nominations submitted by preservation-minded groups and individuals throughout the state. Submissions are judged by several criteria, including their historic significance, the extent of the threat and the community’s commitment to preserving the resource.

Founded in 1985, Preservation Massachusetts is the statewide non-profit organization that actively promotes the preservation of historic buildings and landscapes as a positive force for economic development and the retention of community character.

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