

PRESS RELEASE

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November 4, 2022



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ORANGE ARMORY LISTED ON THE 2022 MASSACHUSETTS MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC RESOURCES LIST

Western Mass community rallies to preserve a historic National Guard armory and community center

Orange, MA – Orange Armory has been named one of Massachusetts Most Endangered Historic Resources. Since 1993, this list has been compiled and published by Preservation Massachusetts, the statewide nonprofit historic preservation advocacy organization.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2020, the Armory building was dedicated in 1913 as a home for Company E, 2nd Regiment Massachusetts Volunteer Militia. The men of the 2nd Regiment served with distinction in the Spanish-American War and the First World War. Today, the Armory serves not only as a memorial to Massachusetts' citizen soldiers, but also as a community gathering space to be enjoyed by residents of Orange and the surrounding area. Since ownership of the building was transferred to the Town in 1975, the Armory has served a variety of purposes for the community, including a senior center and events space. A roller rink business utilized the space from 1940 until 2020. The Town continues to host a farmers' market in the Armory's parking lot.

Unfortunately, the Armory was closed to the public in 2021 due to a number of structural issues discovered after a building inspection. In 2022, the Town of Orange issued a Request for Information for the Armory, hoping to raise awareness about the building and solicit ideas for its reuse. The Town's Historical Commission and Office of Community Development hope that listing on the Most Endangered List will help bring statewide attention to the Armory, raising much needed funds for its preservation and allowing it to reopen its doors for the community once again.

Erin Kelly, President of Preservation Massachusetts feels strongly that the Armory needs to be preserved. "It is clear that the community of Orange appreciates and cares about the future of the Armory. One only needs to see the wide array of uses and services the building has housed, especially since the town acquired it in 1975. From roller rinks to Harvest Balls, town offices and a youth center – this was a building for the community. There is still a farmers market held in the parking lot, despite the building's closure. Its inclusion on our 2022 Massachusetts Most Endangered Historic Resources List isn't merely an affirmation of its history and the real challenges it faces today. It is about what is possible, for the Armory and for the town."

Sandra Fawn of the Orange Historical Commission spoke to the continued importance of the Armory for the town. "I am thrilled that the Orange Armory has been selected as one of the 2022 Most Endangered Historic Resources! In addition to being a significant veterans' memorial building, the Orange Armory has served as a vital and

beloved community center for decades. We hope this recognition, this honor, will raise awareness of the status of the Orange Armory, and ultimately help the Town stabilize and preserve our valued historic property.”

The other endangered resources listed in 2022 are: Weston Railroad Station (Weston), White Cliffs Mansion (Northborough), and Isolation Hospital (Springfield).

The 2022 Massachusetts Most Endangered Historic Resources List will be celebrated throughout the month of November during Preservation Massachusetts' Most Endangered Historic Resources Month. For more information on the Massachusetts Most Endangered Historic Resources Program, visit www.preservationmass.org or call 617-723-3383.

About the ‘Massachusetts Most Endangered Historic Resources’ List

Since 1993, the Massachusetts Most Endangered Historic Resources Program has been key in identifying endangered historic resources from across the Commonwealth and discovering ways in which to work collaboratively with partners toward positive preservation outcomes. It is one of the first steps in focusing statewide attention on the resources, their challenges, and their community importance, and can serve as a catalyst for preservation opportunities. The theme for the 2022 Most Endangered List is “Planning for Community,” and Preservation Massachusetts is proud to highlight resources that are not only historically significant, but also emphasize continued importance and possibility for their communities.

More than 220 historic resources have been designated as endangered since the list’s inception, and of those, 91 have been classified as saved, 31 have been lost, and many more are either progressing or continue to face threats.

This year’s list was chosen by a committee from nominations submitted by groups and individuals concerned with local preservation issues throughout the state. Submissions were(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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