

Heritage Commission – 2011 Annual Report

**It is a privilege to serve the community's future,
in part, by celebrating its past.**

The year was notable for new undertakings, major regional and state awards for Belmont landmark preservation efforts, and continued contributions to Village revitalization and community events. All efforts supported our founding purpose, *“To promote the proper recognition, use and protection of the unique historic and cultural resources of Belmont, and also integrate preservation planning as a partnership with individuals, businesses, Town boards and other appropriate groups...”*

In April, the Belmont Mill was named one of New Hampshire's greatest preservation achievements of the past 25 years. Its “significance, challenges overcome, innovation, public support and ability to serve as a role model for others,” were cited by the *New Hampshire Preservation Alliance*. Our best-known community project joined a list of 25 statewide honorees including two grand hotels, several historic town hall renovations, and bridges, among others.

That tribute was followed in June by an invitation from the *Victorian Society in America*, to tell the Mill story at a Boston meeting of the New England Chapter. It was an honor to accept their annual “Preservation Award” - and all accolades this year – on behalf of Belmont citizens.

New legislation creating “New Hampshire History Week” in October was another occasion of 2011 awards. Belmont High School sophomore Holly Smith was nominated by the Commission and C.A.R.E. (Community Arts Resources for Education) as an outstanding young preservationist, and recognized at official ceremonies held in the New Hampshire Historical Society Tuck Library.



Young Preservationist Holly Smith with longtime New Hampshire Architectural Historian, author and preservation expert, James Garvin (Linda Frawley photo)

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We created the “Community Heritage Awards” this year and along with the Board of Selectmen, proudly recognized five exemplary initiatives that fostered Belmont heritage. First year recipients were:

Holly Smith – *Youth Leadership*

The Ferguson Family – *Renovation Excellence, Private Residence*

Garden Artisans – *Business Leadership, Municipal Beautification*

Ken Knowlton – *Volunteer Leadership, Penstock Park*

Lakes Region Community College-Culinary Arts Program – *Community Partners & Special Events*



Community Heritage Award Recipients (Gretta Wilder photo)

A second major community event was added to the Belmont calendar this summer, spearheaded by Heritage Commission Selectman representative, Ron Cormier. The first annual “Cruisin’ the Village” car show registered more than 40 vehicles, dating from the 1925 classic era through muscle machines of the 1970s. First District Executive Councilor Ray Burton – who arrived in his vintage Oldsmobile convertible – and road music from local band “Routes 56” were highlights of the day. Local support and participation was outstanding, including Belmont-Gilford Boys Hockey Program youth and parents, Belmont Firefighters Relief Association, and Village District businesses.

“Cruisin’...” combined with December’s fourth “Deck the Village” festival brought more than 500 residents and friends of all ages to historic venues, including the Mill, Library, Corner Meeting House and Bandstand. The Christmas season celebration continued to grow with exceptional volunteer support from residents, talented students and staff of our schools, and community organizations. In all, some 100 individuals generously donated time and expertise for needs ranging from decorating and baking, to musical performance and photographing visits with Santa and Mrs. Claus.

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Heritage Commission members continued contributions to Village revitalization featuring the following:

- ❖ *New energy efficient LED lights were turned on outside the Mill, capping more attractive ornamental poles, reminiscent of earlier Village times. Sargent Park lighting was also redesigned for better distribution and conservation, by replacing 1000 watt bulbs with 400 watt illumination. Upgrades included the entrance, complementing recent recreational equipment purchased for Belmont’s youngest citizens. Lighting projects were funded from a \$95,100 federal grant successfully sought by the Commission and awarded to the Town in 2010.*
- ❖ *Building awareness of Belmont heritage was a focus, and widespread publicity was generated throughout the year. Besides generous media attention in Lakes Region and Central NH media, publications- including the Boston Globe and USA Today – recorded our community preservation milestones, awards and activities. Additionally, LRPA-TV again aired several cultural and historical programs, earlier developed by the Commission and produced an original 30-minute Mill feature for “Lakes Region Spotlight” 2012 airings.*
- ❖ *Participation by three members in ad hoc committee reviews throughout the summer, to help select project engineers and professional team designing the next Village improvements. Commission members also served on the Belknap County Economic Development Council, Belmont Historical Society, Old Home Day Committee, Sargent Fund, and Village Revitalization Committee, among others. Attending New Hampshire Preservation Alliance meetings and workshops at UNH, Concord and Moultonborough – to keep current on impacts and opportunities in federal historic preservation standards, funding and incentive programs, and New Hampshire legislation. Regular contact with the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources staff was maintained, and their professional staff located key information from their files on the Bandstand.*

We close this year with grateful thanks to voters for 2011 support of \$20,000 to stabilize and repair the 1908 Bandstand. Moving this unique and historic structure – for a second time – has been discussed since 2009, and a decision is anticipated this upcoming year. The Bandstand was first relocated in the 1920s to make room for the new-at-the-time Library. Deciding its next location must be carefully balanced with Village infrastructure projects, future Library expansion, and preserving eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places.

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Please contact us at any time with comments, questions or suggestions.

Our sincere appreciation,

Wallace Rhodes

Wallace Rhodes, Chairman
Linda Frawley, Vice Chairman
Margaret Normandin, Secretary
Shayne Duggan, Member
Ronald Cormier, representing Board of Selectmen



Executive Councilor Ray Burton was a special participant at the successful June 4th car show, and trophies were awarded to 10 classes