

Heritage Commission

2015 Annual Report

“...This little structure, built with citizen and business contributions in 1908, has survived floods, neglect, vandalism, a nearby fire and four moves. More than a hundred years after its construction, citizen and community support has made possible its exemplary preservation. In 2008, the Belmont Heritage Commission launched an effort to properly restore the deteriorating building, carry out further research, and preserve the bandstand for its second century. Architectural historian James Garvin, who assisted with research, has called this one of the most elaborate and most intact structures of its type in New Hampshire. ...”

Excerpt from New Hampshire Preservation Alliance award citation presented at the Concord Civic Auditorium for the Belmont Village Bandstand restoration ~ May 2015

Recognition headlined the year with accolades for *Community Heritage Award* recipients, addition of the Belmont Mill to the *New Hampshire State Register of Historic Places*, and honor to the Heritage Commission for outstanding achievement by the *New Hampshire Preservation Alliance*.



Photo courtesy of Tim Camerato

On May 1, 2015 a replica finial and sphere was mounted on the original tin crown, which has topped the historic Bandstand since September 17, 1908. The long hidden artifact was discovered by restoration contractor Arnold M. Graton, Jr. with handwritten signatures of A.A. Smith and W.J. Barrett; both local businessmen who may have helped fund the Bandstand’s construction over a century ago.

Fittingly, on the first day of National Historic Preservation Month, a letter from Town Historian Wallace Rhodes and news articles of the day were encased as a time capsule for future generations.



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A final Bandstand investment for energy efficient lighting was approved at Town Meeting and installed in time for a new “Heritage Series” of concerts. More than 400 residents and visitors enjoyed live performances of vintage brass, jazz, classic marches and contemporary ballads. Sponsored in part by the John M. Sargent Fund, *Friends of the Bandstand* helped organize and promote the series, offered monthly from June through September.



Photo courtesy of Vicki Donovan

Community Heritage Awards were presented for the fifth year, with Board of Selectmen and chair Ruth Mooney presiding. It was a privilege to publicly thank three dedicated citizens for longtime contributions, greatly enhancing our quality of civic life. Citations were received by *Jennifer Shaw - Educator and Cultural Ambassador; Wallace Rhodes - Town Historian Emeritus; and Earl Sweeney - Exemplary Leadership.*



Photo courtesy of Donna Rhodes – Winnisquam Echo



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New Hampshire History Week activities grew with collaboration from community partners. Officials including State Senator Jeanie Forrester, Legislative representative to the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) and Executive Director Jennifer Goodman of New Hampshire Preservation Alliance (NHPA), visited the Bandstand with a plaque from LCHIP, and noting Belmont’s statewide distinction for Preservation Achievement, honored with the Elizabeth Durfee Hengen Award.

The Heritage Commission gratefully acknowledges presence, participation and support for History Week activities from all – and including volunteers of Belknap County Conservation District, Belknap County Restorative Justice Program, Belmont Historical Society, Belmont Elementary School fourth grade students, State Representative Mike Sylvia, and Belmont Public Library staff. We are proud to have marked this important week annually, since founded in 2011 by the New Hampshire Legislature.



Photo courtesy of Heritage Commission

Our rural Town has many historically significant features – from buildings and stone walls, landmark structures and neighborhoods – all holding footprints of the past. Some are well-known and still others deserve further research, documentation and preservation. On the 1969 occasion of Belmont’s 100th year, the Centennial Committee planned a year-long celebration. Among commemoratives was a collectible plate highlighting six historic treasures of the “Best Town by a Dam Site.” Three have benefited from care, rehabilitation and restoration to varying degrees: the Belmont Mill and waterway dams, the 1792 Province Road Meeting House that centuries ago served both church and government, and the Bandstand built by citizens in the early 1900s.



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The new Bandstand chapter was built on 10 years of effort in the 1970s, led by Mrs. Whitman “Beth” Ide who chaired Belmont Beautification and Bandstand Committees. Then determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Properties, it was reroofed and meticulously repaired by Neil Witcher and community volunteers. In 2003 the Meeting House was added to the New Hampshire State Register of Historic Places, and subsequently received two LCHIP challenge grants funding stabilization and exterior rehabilitation. Those initiatives happened from efforts of Wallace Rhodes for the Belmont Historical Society.

The continuing Belmont Mill saga included a devastating 1992 fire, followed by award-winning adaptive reuse efforts aided by \$1Million from federal Community Development Block Grant monies and private donations. With great pride, the Heritage Commission successfully submitted the Mill for State Register inclusion this year and will finalize Bandstand application for possible designation in 2016.



Photo courtesy of Linda Frawley

Belmont Centennial plates, still prized and displayed in many local homes, featured three other special places. The Gale School and the Benjamin James Jr. house on Main Street were included, and the original wooden Mosquito Bridge. As the Sesquicentennial nears – Belmont’s 150th year in 2019 – one can only wonder what will remain for historic commemoration.



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Heritage Commission goals continue to build awareness of historic resources and possibilities. We applaud initiatives including the Barn Preservation and Community Revitalization Tax Credits and incentives of New Hampshire laws RSA 79-D – 79-E, LCHIP and Moose Plate grant funding, Preservation Alliance programs, and technical expertise of the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources, among others.

Community interest and support since 2004 has been essential to any progress and is most sincerely appreciated. As always, we invite your comments on heritage priorities and opportunities.

See you at the Bandstand!

Linda

Linda Frawley, Chairman

Wallace Rhodes, Vice Chairman

Priscilla Annis, Secretary

Shayne Duggan

Alyce Jewell

Vicki Donovan

Ronald Cormier, representing Selectmen



Photo courtesy of Alan MacRae

