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Gale School eligible for National Register of Historic Places

BELMONT — The town and the school district have been told that the historic Gale School, which has been the subject of at least one salvage attempt over the years, is considered eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The school, which was built in 1894, sits on a hill behind Belmont Middle School and hasn't been used for anything except cold storage since 1985 when the Belmont Elementary School was constructed on Gilmanton Road.

The school was named after Napoleon Bonaparte Gale, a local benefactor who gave the town

\$30,000 for the library in 1896 and for whom Laconia's public library is named. Its status has come up repeatedly at school district meetings over the years.

Several times in the past decade, "Save the Gale School" committees met to try to come up with alternatives for the building.

"But each year, just as the wrecking ball seems ready to hit, it gets a reprieve by the voters," said Ken Knowlton, a town historian. "People don't want it torn down. My grandmother went to school there and my mother went to school there, so I personally don't want to see it torn down. But we have to come up with some options." A new committee has been formed to study the potential uses of the building, which represents "irreplaceable architectural detail and historic import to the town," said Nadine Peterson of the New Hampshire Division Of Historical Resources in a letter to the town of Aug. 16.

"More importantly, the Gale School was determined to be individually eligible for the National Register," Peterson wrote.

Knowlton said his committee has conducted an independent study on reutilizing the building, "which had a positive result" that Knowlton said he will make public in the weeks ahead. "We have an opportunity to preserve something here," he said. "We have to do more with it,



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The Gale School in Belmont hasn't been used for anything but storage since 1985. (COURTESY)

though, than to just keep saying we don't want it torn down.”

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