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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2018

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DONNA RHODES

Library director Eileen Gilbert (left) and Children's Librarian Katherine Bollenbach (right) showed some of the historic documents on display last Saturday, when Belmont Public Library celebrated their 90th anniversary of their building, which was donated to the town on Feb. 4, 1928.

## Belmont Library celebrates 90 years of service to the community

BY DONNA RHODES  
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**BELMONT** — The Belmont Public Library reached a landmark date on Feb. 3, when they cel-

ebrated 90 years of service to the community in a building that was donated way back then by George and Walter Duffy on the condition that the

town would continue to support the library and maintain the structure.

Besides providing books, periodicals and other educational ser-

vices, the library in Belmont has a "storied" history of its own.

According to the findings of the late town historian Wallace Rhodes, the Town Report on Feb. 15, 1894 stated that the library lent out 4,949 volumes that year, a record for the time.

Housed on the second floor of the Johnson Block, above what was then known as the Stevens Store, the library outgrew its space within a year however, and was eventually moved by the town to the second floor of what was known as the Fire Hose House on Main Street.

That space, too, was soon outgrown by the needs of a growing community, but on Feb. 4,

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### 90 YEARS

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1928, the owners of the Belmont Mill stepped up to help. Walter Duffy presented the town with the keys to a new library building he and his brother constructed, at the cost of \$25,000, along with "an annual income of \$500 towards the library's maintenance." On behalf of his then deceased brother George, Walter Duffy and his family also provided 5,000 new volumes to the library, Rhodes wrote in his 1969 volume of "Reminiscences of a New Hampshire Town."

Over the years, the library has been a vital part of the community of Belmont. Library Trustee Mary Charnley said that when the elementary school (now the site of the SAU offices) was being built, the library also became a temporary classroom for some of the children.

"Students actually came here for a year while the new school was being built," she said.

After the school was completed, the library invited folks at that time to take an old inkwell desk home; occasionally desks from that period are still discovered in the town to this day.

The Belmont Public Library has also been listed on the National Register of Historic Places for being one of the "finest examples of Colonial Revival architecture in the Lakes Region."

Last Saturday, Feb. 4, 2018, the 90th anniversary of the generous donation made by the Duffy family was celebrated through an open house at the library. As part of that day, old photos, town library reports and

lending records were placed on display as the library celebrated its historic past.

Library Director Eileen Gilbert and Children's Librarian Katherine Bollenbach each pointed out items from the library archives that were especially meaningful to them. Bollenbach selected scrapbooks and a 1901 catalog listing all the books found at the library in that day, while Gilbert chose handwritten lending records, many from the early days when "new" library was built.

"It's really interesting to look back and see how many books people borrowed way back then," she said as she paged through an historic ledger.

In her research for the anniversary, Gilbert also found a 1982 facilities report stating that the library had outgrown its latest facility; ironic, she noted, as trustees and supporters continue that quest to put an addition on the building that the Duffy's first donated 90 years ago.

Several people dropped by on Saturday afternoon to enjoy refreshments, tour the facility and learn more about the town library's past.

"I love this library. This building is absolutely beautiful," said Trustee Charnley. "I'm looking forward to an expansion now so we can provide another 90-plus years of community service and special events in the town."

For information on weekly, monthly or the special programs and activities held at the historic Belmont Public Library, please visit them online at [www.belmont-publiclibrary.org](http://www.belmont-publiclibrary.org).