



## The Laconia Daily Sun

### Belmont Mill on list of greatest NH preservation achievements of the last 25 years

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MANCHESTER — Imagine our cities and towns without their old town halls, historic libraries, granges or old mills. The preservation and re-use of these irreplaceable landmarks connects us with our history, defines the unique character of our state and contributes to our local economic vitality.

At its 25th Anniversary Conference on April 8, the N.H. Preservation Alliance unveiled 25 of New Hampshire's greatest preservation achievements of the past 25 years, and explored what these successes mean for our state. The list of 25 includes rescues of two grand hotels, two town hall preservation efforts, mill revitalization, a museum's stewardship of a modern building, and two bridge "saves." "This list also illustrates the work that's being done every day to preserve New Hampshire's heritage, and, in the process, create jobs, support tourism, conserve existing resources, and strengthen community connections," said Jennifer Goodman, executive director, N.H. Preservation Alliance.

The list includes several preservation milestones in the central part of the state:

— Citizens of Belmont reached out for help in 1995 to prevent the demolition of their signature textile mill. With a report from James Garvin and legal advice from Carolyn Baldwin, Wallace Rhodes led the Belmont Historical Society to gain an injunction to halt demolition. The Belmont Mill Community Center opened in 1997 after complete rehabilitation, funded by \$1-million in CDBG grants, town appropriations, and private contributions.

— The 5,500-acre mountain-top retreat of shoe magnate Thomas Plant was a struggling tourist attraction when the Lakes Region Conservation Trust purchased it in 2003 after a three-year fund-raising campaign. The Castle Preservation Society began a multi-year plan to restore Castle in the Clouds, Moultonborough, to its former grandeur by 2014, the Castle's 100th anniversary. The repair and restoration work is exceptional for its scale and quality.

— After four years of study and debate, a town-appointed committee recommended that the \$1 million rehabilitation cost for the Plymouth Town Hall could not be justified. A strong preservation response and a pared-down budget led to reconsideration and town meeting approval. Rehabilitation was completed in 1996 and included renovation of the former courtroom wing into 2 levels of meeting and office space.

— Beloved home of statesman Daniel Webster, and later one of America's first rural orphanages, Elms Farm in Franklin was slated for development with 60 homes on 140 acres in 1994. An ambitious partnership of preservation and conservation advocates led by the Trust for Public Land garnered national "Most Endangered" listing and major funding from LCHIP, then placed conservation and preservation easements on the property, and sold the historic buildings for use as a residential recovery center.

The New Hampshire Preservation Alliance solicited nominations for the 25 Preservation Milestones in 2010. A panel of experts judged local favorites and well-known landmarks alike on their significance, challenges overcome, innovation, public support, and ability to serve as a model for others.

