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Belmont Mill added to state register of historic places

BELMONT — The Belmont Mill is one of seven properties statewide which have been added to the New Hampshire State Register of Historic Places.

Built in the 1830s and a central economic fixture in Belmont well into the 20th century, the Belmont Mill is the only surviving building associated with the Gilmanton Village Manufacturing Company; it serves as a reminder of manufacturing's importance in the town's economic development. After a 1992 fire, community efforts to save the building resulted in a 1996-98 renovation.

Its listing follows the initiative of the Belmont Heritage Commission, which culled research and records acquired by Town Historian Emeritus Wallace Rhodes over the years, the professional assistance of architectural historian Mae Williams, and approval of the Belmont Selectboard to include the municipally-owned building on the State Register.

For Belmont, it is the third landmark recognized by state or federal officials. The Province Road Meeting House - owned by the Belmont Historical Society, with a recently rehabilitated exterior funded with support from the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) - was the first community landmark listed on the NH State Register in 2002. And the Belmont Public Library was distinguished with inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985.

The Mill has been honored for preservation, rehabilitation and its 1998 adaptive reuse by the Victorian Society of America, New England Chapter among others. In 2011 the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance included the 1830s structure in its 25 "Milestone Preservation Projects" of a quarter century. The New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources announced that the State Historical Resources Council added six other properties to the New Hampshire State Register of Historic Places, including three library buildings, a town hall, a one-room schoolhouse and a movie theater.

The three libraries that have now been added to the State Register are all from a period of time when philanthropists funded the building of dozens of public libraries throughout the state.

Greenland's Weeks Public Library, an example of the Colonial Revival movement in architecture, was built in 1897 and designed by Portsmouth architect Charles Hazlett using funds donated by Caroline A. Weeks. Originally a Baptist church, the Hampton Falls Library was renovated in 1901 by John T. Brown and donated to the town for use as a public library. A majority of the building's finishes and decorative detailing date to the 1901 conversion, including a frescoed wall and ceiling paintings.

The Classical Revival Rye Public Library was donated by local resident Mary Tuck Rand in 1911 when Rye was one of only a few towns in the region without a library. Unlike the wealthy philanthropists who funded many town libraries, Rand was a single woman of modest means who wanted to share educational opportunities with her community.

Other recent additions include :

Conway's Bolduc Block, widely known as the Majestic Theatre, was built in 1931 on Main Street, continuing a 19th-century tradition of including a theater with shops and retail under one roof. A fire in 2005 damaged the theater's interior, but the building's exterior still has many of its Art Deco details and the theater's recessed entrance, making its past easily identifiable.

The Little Red Schoolhouse is Danville's last intact one-room schoolhouse. Built in 1834 when New Hampshire communities began to develop more formal plans for public education, it served the community as a school until 1901. Just one story high and only 18 feet square, it has been preserved as a valuable reminder of the community's early educational history.

Hampton Falls Town Hall is an example of Italianate architecture that was popular in New Hampshire after the Civil War, easily identified by paired scrolled brackets under the eaves and arched window sashes. The fourth building to serve as the center of town government, it has also been a major site for social and cultural events in town since it was built in 1877.