

State Register of Historic Places adds Belmont Mill

Site becomes third town landmark to gain state or federal recognition

By MICHAEL WEISS | Nov 21, 2015

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Photo by: MICHAEL WEISS/CITIZEN

THE BELMONT MILL has been listed on the State Register of Historic Places.

BELMONT — For 182 years, the Belmont Mill has been the heart and soul of commerce in Belmont and now it's drawing acclaim after having been added to the New Hampshire State Register of Historic Places.

The New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources announced earlier this week that the mill, built in 1833 and a key supplier to Belmont's economy for much of the 20th century, has been added to its list of historic properties.

The Belmont Mill is the third landmark in Belmont to be recognized by state or federal authorities and joins the Belmont Public Library and the Province Road Meeting House, said Linda Frawley, chair of the Belmont

Heritage Commission.

"Belmont's put a great deal of effort and care into the revitalization of the village area," said Candace Daigle, Belmont's Town Planner. "This designation is an important factor in that."

Daigle praised the work of the Belmont Heritage Commission, which was founded in 2004, as having largely spearheaded the Belmont Mill's renovation process.

"The Heritage Commission is very active in village preservation," said Daigle.

According to the Heritage Commission's website, Belmont NH Heritage (belmontnh.homestead.com), the Belmont Mill is 80 feet long, 40 feet deep and is built on a granite foundation.

It was constructed in 1833 by the Gilmanton Village Manufacturing Company, with the ownership of the mill changing periodically for decades while remaining open for business until 1970.

"It's certainly a building with a storied history," said Frawley.

In 1992, a fire broke out in the mill, causing what Frawley referred to as "a horrific mess."

The Mill was acquired by the town of Belmont in 1995, where it was in danger of demolition, she said.

However, thanks to the efforts of Belmont citizens, and in particular Wallace Rhodes, who is now the Town Historian Emeritus of Belmont, the mill was saved and restored, Frawley said.

Since then, the Belmont Mill has received numerous awards from historical societies across New Hampshire, including a Preservation Award from the Victorian Society in America/New England Chapter, she said.

Frawley quoted a New Hampshire historian named James Gavin, who spoke of the Belmont Mill as “a monument in the preservation history of New Hampshire.”

Eileen Gilbert, director of the Belmont Public Library, called the Belmont Mill “a great piece of work that shows the dedication of the Belmont Heritage Commission.”

A warrant article calling for its renovation was overwhelmingly defeated by Belmont voters in March.

The proposal called for \$3,357,250 to refurbish the mill building and moved town hall offices there.

Of that money, \$2,957,250 was to be raised through the issuing of bonds and another \$400,000 would have come from the Municipal Facilities Capital Reserve.

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