

New Roof Slated for Historic Belmont Mill

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BELMONT A new roof will give the historic **Belmont** Mill an old look, virtually the same appearance it had in 1833 when it was built in what was then Gilmanton, a few hundred feet from the Tioga River.

The roof supports were removed by a crane last week and work crews from the Roads Corporation of Billerica, Mass., are now removing the brick walls down to the level of the fourth floor deck.

New rafters are expected to arrive within 10 days and a new sloped roof, which will feature six dormers, is expected to be in place by Jan. 6 according to Matt Upton, town administrator.

"We expect the top of the building will be weathertight by early next month," said Upton, who added that the entire \$1.35 million project is slated for completion by July.

He said that removal of the old roof and its support beams presented the biggest danger to the structure in the rehabilitation process and that one slip of the crane could have caused the entire structure to collapse.

The mill was severely damaged in a 1992 fire and was nearly torn down two years ago after the town's bid for a grant to rehabilitate the structure was turned down.

But a group of concerned citizens, led by Wallace Rhodes, president of the **Belmont** Historical Society, won a court injunction to halt the demolition.

Last year the town won approval of more than \$1 million in grant money to restore the mill and awarded the contract for the renovation project in September.

Upton said the town is pleased with the progress made to date on the renovation project and once the new roof is in place, the decking on the second and third floors of the structure will be replaced and other interior work will be completed.

The mill's cupola, which is featured on the town seal, will be removed sometime next spring and renovated. Saving the cupola necessitated a slight change from the original appearance, because it left room for only three cupolas on the front of the roof.

Upton said local organizations may take over the restoration of the cupola as a community project. He said that a \$92,000 budget shortfall which delayed awarding of the renovation contract last summer has only partially been met and that having an outside organization handle the cupola restoration will enable the project to be completed within the existing amount of funds available.