

Belmont Heritage Commission 2009 Annual Report

“...It has been said that, at its best, preservation engages the past in a conversation with the present over a mutual concern for the future ...” *William Murtaugh 1923-2004 – First Keeper of the National Historic Trust, who helped shape the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act – and for 50 years, the historic preservation movement*

The Heritage Commission believes Mr. Murtaugh would have approved our 2009 goals and projects. While we coordinated the centennial year celebration of the historic Town Bandstand – members also advocated for Village Revitalization. And both initiatives were helped by other community organizations and citizens of all ages, continuing goals of building awareness and collaboration.

The year brought special recognition to Belmont’s historic Village, as hosts of a March *Community Preservation Workshop* in partnership with the N.H. Division of Historical Resources (DHR) and the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance. Nearly 30 Heritage Commission members from throughout the state heard the story of saving the Belmont Mill at Corner Meeting House presentations, along with a walking tour featuring the Library, Bandstand and Sargent Park. Wallace Rhodes presented two Mill champions, Meredith architect Christopher Williams and Deputy Director Linda Ray Wilson of the DHR, with framed photographs of the Mill bell tower, along with appreciation for their continued support. The successful day was capped with fine hospitality by Lakes Region Community College (LRCC) students and staff of the Culinary Arts program. In December, PlanNH marked its 20th anniversary at Canterbury Shaker Village and featured our community as one of its successes. Linda Frawley gave a progress report on Village revitalization since the 1996 PlanNH charrette first designed a Mill-based vision for Belmont’s Main Street.

Two new community events for fall and winter seasons, *Make A Difference Day* and *Deck the Village* were coordinated for a second year and both beautify our Town. To date the October national volunteer service project has added over 1500 spring-blooming daffodils at the historic Province Road Meeting House and special places in the Village, including Sargent Park, the National Register listed Library, and Veterans Monument at the base of Church Hill. Parks and Recreation, along with Girl Scouts, Belmont Historical Society, Master Gardeners and the American Legion were sponsors this year along with several local and national businesses.

Deck the Village offered indoor and outdoor activities for all ages, with some 65 volunteers creatively decorating for the holidays. The theme was nature, featuring spruce boughs, pinecones and winterberry branches - with peanut butter pine cone treats for winter bird-feeding a popular activity. Twelve hundred low energy lights brightened the Christmas tree, along with lights and garlands at the Bandstand and Mill. The Fire Department, Old Home Day Committee, Rotary, Senior Center, LRCC Food for Thought Café and Belknap County Restorative Justice youth were some of the major “elves” helping other community friends and neighbors, in the spirit of the season.

Since 2004, the Heritage Commission has worked “To promote the proper recognition, use and protection of the unique historic and cultural resources of Belmont, and also integrate preservation planning as a partnership with individuals, businesses, Town boards and other appropriate groups.” We were proud to have an early-in-the-year opportunity to report on our goals and programs at a Planning Board meeting including Belmont Selectmen and Shaker School District representatives, among others. A recommendation to establish a Selectmen-appointed citizen group to develop short and long term



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Village Revitalization plans was well-received, with a committee and preliminary report completed by November.

A true highlight of the year was Saturday, October 3rd. Quoting the front page headline of that week's Winnisquam Echo, "Bandstand Centennial a day to remember in Belmont." As Executive Councilor Ray Burton, said in his congratulations from the State of New Hampshire, the historic Bandstand "is a reminder of community care and heritage ... in its setting near the Tioga River and the Belmont Mill, it remains a symbol of identity and pride in the very fabric of your Town." The Commission remains indebted to the many residents and groups that helped us with the celebration, including Belmont High School Music department, Boy and Girl Scouts, Community Arts Resources for Education (CARE), Lakes Region Community College Student Hospitality Club, National Junior Honor Society, Parks and Recreation Committee and Senior Center. We were honored to have the participation of all Selectmen and grateful for financial support from the John Sargent Trust Fund.

Please visit the Town website at www.belmontnh.org to learn more about Belmont heritage initiatives and continue your support to the Belmont Historical Society, which saw a milestone 40th anniversary in 2009.

With appreciation,

Wallace Rhodes, Chairman

Linda Frawley, Vice Chairman

Margaret Normandin, Secretary

Shayne Duggan, Member

Ronald Cormier, representing Board of Selectmen

