

Taking a bow for the bandstand

Belmont Village Bandstand volunteers honored with Outstanding Preservation Achievement

By Linda Frawley (Belmont Heritage Commission) | May 19, 2015

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COURTESY Steve Booth Photography

THE COLORFUL Victorian-era Bandstand of Belmont Village received statewide recognition from the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance recently. From left are Elizabeth Durfee Hengen, whose namesake award was presented for only the fifth time since 2000; restoration contractor J.R. Graton of Northfield; Linda Frawley, who accepted on behalf of the Heritage Commission and serves as chairman; and Jennifer Goodman, New Hampshire Preservation Alliance executive director.

BELMONT — Fourteen projects across the Granite State have been recognized for outstanding achievements by the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance. The organization has saluted innovative preservation for 26 years, and announced recipients as part of National Preservation Month activities.

The historic Belmont Village Bandstand was distinguished with the Elizabeth Durfee Hengen award.

"The high quality of planning and execution, combined with Belmont's commitment to public education and advocacy, make the bandstand project a perfect fit for this honor," said Alliance Executive Director Jennifer Goodman.

The award was created in 2000, as a tribute to the historic preservation consultant's exceptional and strategic leadership as New Hampshire Preservation Alliance board chairman.

Hengen presented the award to Linda Frawley, Belmont Heritage Commission chairman, in Concord, at the historic City Auditorium theater on May 12. Benjamin Wilson, Director of the Bureau of Historic Sites, Division of Parks and Recreation, Department of Resources and Economic Development read a citation, accompanied by project photographs.

"This little structure, built with citizen and business contributions in 1908 has survived floods, neglect, vandalism, a nearby fire and four moves," Wilson said. "More than a hundred years after its construction, citizen and community support has again made its exemplary preservation possible."

"In 2008, the Belmont Heritage Commission launched an effort to properly restore the deteriorating building, carry out further research, and preserve the landmark for its second century," Wilson said.

Architectural historian James Garvin, who assisted with research, called this "one of the most elaborate and best-preserved structures of its type in New Hampshire."

Voters endorsed a \$20,000 appropriation that was then matched with \$10,000 and donated services from the Heritage Fund.

The state Division of Historical Resources and the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance helped with a conditions assessment and technical services.

Stabilization and critical repairs were completed in the summer of 2013, after start was held during Village infrastructure and sidewalk improvements. Phase 2 was spurred by a challenge grant from the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program and other contributions, including the Bank of New Hampshire and John M. Sargent Fund. State Sen. Jeanie Forrester, who serves on the LCHIP board, attended the awards program with congratulations.

Contractor JR Graton, of Northfield, and historic painting expert John Thompson, of JLT Painting in Alexandria, were the core project consultants responsible for what Frawley termed a restoration that was "part science and artistry, and more than a little magic from a first-rate and dedicated team."

She publicly thanked Heritage Commission colleagues for their contributions and the Board of Selectmen for encouragement and support.

The vintage bandstand will see final updating these next weeks as updated electrical service is installed along with energy efficient lighting. A revival of performance and programs is slated to begin June 6, and further information is at www.historicbelmontbandstand.org.

This year's awards also included the \$26 million Cotton Mill Square adaptive reuse rehabilitation led by The Stabile Companies, Binnie Media/NH1 for reuse of the historic Walker School in Concord, a multipurpose rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the Notre Dame High School/George E. Burgess School in Berlin, revitalization of Lancaster Main Street buildings, and stewardship of the Joseph T. Sleeper House, slated for demolition.

The U.S. Forest Service, White Mountain National Forest Heritage Program Manager Sarah Jordan accepted honors for the Fabyan Guard Station restoration, Amherst and Nelson were recognized for rehabilitation and revitalization of their Town Halls, Sugar Hill for Sunnyside Cemetery fence restoration, and Campton for rehabilitation of the Blair Covered Bridge. Arnold M. Graton was a principal partner of the bridge project, adding another Graton generation to the program, as father of JR, who restored the Belmont bandstand. Other projects cited included restoration of the Hallsville School Clock and Tower by the City of Manchester and its School District, and milestone achievements by the New Hampshire Farm Museum and the Franconia Iron Furnace.

For Belmont, the Hengen award is the third major preservation recognition by the Preservation Alliance. In 2000 Wallace Rhodes, Historical Society president, accepted an achievement award for the Belmont Mill. In April 2011 the Belmont Mill was among a distinguished list of the Alliance's 25 of New Hampshire's greatest preservation achievements of the past 25 years.

Belmont Heritage Commission includes Selectmen-appointed members Frawley, Rhodes, Priscilla Annis, Shayne Duggan, Alyce Jewell and Vicki Donovan. Ronald Cormier represents Board of Selectmen.

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