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Historic Bandstand topped off with decorative finial

By TIM CAMERATO | May 02, 2015

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TIM CAMERATO/CITIZEN

RESTORATION EXPERT JR Graton places a decorative finial atop the Historic Belmont Bandstand on Friday.

BELMONT — With a steady hand and some modern power tools, restoration expert J.R. Graton adorned the historic Belmont bandstand with its new green and gold finial on Friday.

Placement of the ornament marks some of Graton’s final work on the bandstand, which he began in the fall of 2013. Since then, he’s been responsible for reconstructing the structure’s roof, railing, stairs and other woodwork.

Graton said it feels great to see everything come together.

“That’s the first time that finial’s been up there for quite a while,”



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Graton said.

Linda Frawley, chairman of the Belmont Heritage Commission, said she believes the bandstand last had a top ornament in 1996, around the same time as the Belmont Mill’s renovation. She said Graton’s work is a great way to mark the beginning of National Preservation Month.

Restoration of the bandstand began shortly after it was moved to its current location between the Belmont Public Library and old Northway Bank building on Sept. 11, 2013. It was funded through a combination of taxpayer money, private contributions and a \$15,000 Land and Community Heritage Investment Program grant.

Graton wasn't alone in his work on the bandstand. Restoration painter John Thompson, of JLT Painting in Alexandria, researched the structure's original colors and gave it a much needed paintjob.

Graton built the finial and painted it by hand. To help him, members of the Heritage Commission supplied historical postcards and photographs of the bandstand.

Since they were all colorized by hand, Graton said he had to make a few educated guesses on the finial's dimensions and shape. Seeing a shiny ball at the top, he choose gold paint.

"I could tell what the size of it on the bottom should be by the tin hat there," Graton said.

The "tin hat" he spoke of is where Graton found the handwritten signatures of A.A. Smith and W.J. Barrett dated "Sept. 17, '08."

Town Historian Wallace Rhodes researched the names and found Barrett was a local plumber and tinsmith, while Smith was a grocery store proprietor of a store called Smith & Dearborn. The building where he sold groceries is still standing in the village and houses Lapointe's Barber Shop and the Carignan Watch Company.

Copies of historical ads from the two men, information on the bandstand's restoration and a timeline from historicbelmontbandstand.org were placed in the tin hat, which Graton also attached on Friday.

"In the next 50 or 100 years, hopefully people will be as pleasantly surprised as we were when JR found it," Frawley said. "Based on what you did today, in terms of restoring that metal or tin crown, it was almost a re-enactment of what could have occurred in Belmont Village Sept. 17, 1908."

"Except their lift was powered by oxen back then," Graton joked.

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