

Nearly 100 gather for Belmont Bandstand salute

By BOB MARTIN | Sep 28, 2014

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BOB MARTIN/CITIZEN

THE BELMONT Middle School and Canterbury Elementary School choruses performed 'You're a Grand Old Flag' and 'God Bless America' at the Historic Belmont Bandstand Community Salute on Sunday.

BELMONT — Nearly 100 people gathered at the Belmont Bandstand on Sunday afternoon, where residents of the town, governmental figures and members of the Heritage Commission saluted the restoration of the historic bandstand.

The event began with a ceremonial ringing of the 1833 Belmont Mill bell by Wallace Rhodes, who is the town historian and president of the Belmont Historical Society. Boy Scout Troop 65 led the presentation of colors, and the Belmont Middle School and

Canterbury Elementary School choruses sang “You’re a Grand Old Flag.”

There were a variety of speakers that followed, including Belmont Historical Commission Chair Linda Frawley. She explained that when the bandstand was built in 1908, popular songs were “Take Me out to the Ballgame” and “Shine on Harvest Moon.” Opening bandstand concerts were favorably reported in newspapers like the Laconia Democrat, and she said like many New Hampshire small towns, the bandstand was a source of pride and tradition — something that she hopes can continue once the finishing touches are done to the bandstand.

Executive Councilor Colin Van Ostern, who brought his family along to enjoy the fantastic weather outside of the revamped bandstand, spoke favorably about Belmont’s projects and offered congratulations from the state of New Hampshire.

“To me it is great to see so many kids and young people here,” said Van Ostern, who added, “Family so often is one of the things that brings us together. Our neighbors, our community. Standing in front of a bandstand like this reminds me we have such rich past in New Hampshire, but also our future is promising.”

State Representative Leigh Webb said that he wanted to voice his continuing support for the Land and Community Heritage and Investment Program. He said that LCHIP not only works to preserve heritage in New Hampshire, but also works as an economic engine by attracting people to the state.

Also speaking was Plymouth State University adjunct professor and retired architectural historian James Garvin, who said that the Belmont bandstand may be one of the most beautiful he has encountered.

“I must say that my conclusion is that this is the most beautiful bandstand in New Hampshire,” said Garvin. “It’s not the earliest, it’s not the biggest and it’s not the most massive in terms of being built with masonry. But it is tremendously beautiful.”

Also speaking was Jennifer Goodman of the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance, and Amy Dixon of LCHIP and the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources presented a new plaque to go with the bandstand to the members of the Heritage Commission.

The restoration has been made possible through taxpayer and LCHIP Funds, with work being done by JR Graton, a restoration expert, and restoration painter John Thompson. The last major restoration of the bandstand was done in 1977, and this restoration has paint colors that like what was on the original bandstand.

Creating the colors involved field work using a 20 X binocular microscope to find evidence of the original colors. The colors were matched by architectural conservator Brian Powell with currently available paints from Sherwin Williams.

Work began last October with stabilization and repairs by Graton, which continued in May with a \$15,000 challenge grant from LCHIP. In total the restoration project has cost about \$60,000. The painting has been done, and much of the restoration work is complete. Additional work needs to be done on the roof and there will be electrical work done in the coming months. Frawley hopes to have concerts in the band stand by spring.

For more information about the bandstand, log onto <http://www.historicbelmontbandstand.org>.

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