

Belmont Mill 'miracle' commemorated with marker

The Belmont Mill, and the tireless work by residents to preserve it, has been recognized with a New Hampshire historical highway marker, recognition which town leaders say also shines on residents who worked to save it.

BELMONT — The Belmont Mill, and the tireless work by residents to preserve it, has been recognized with a New Hampshire historical highway marker.

Acquired through a 60-year-old statewide program managed jointly by the N.H. Division of Historical Resources and N.H. Department of Transportation, marker No. 235 was placed earlier this month near Route 140.

The text reads, "Mostly abandoned in the 1970s, the mill suffered a devastating 1992 fire. In 1995, the mill was on the verge of demolition when citizens fought to explore re-use options. After a charrette conducted by Plan NH, federal funding restored the roof to its 1830s design, and helped rehabilitate façade and interiors. Press rededication reports in 1998 called the new era as town and community center the "Miracle on Main Street."

The Belmont Heritage Commission successfully petitioned the state and applied for the marker, a cast iron sign that features the state seal. Last year marked the 20th anniversary of the devastating Aug. 14, 1992, fire that most thought was the end for the Mill.

Belmont Historical Society president Wallace Rhodes, who led the effort to save the mill and acquire the marker said, "Gratitude is due Belmont residents for preserving this strong emblem of pride in community heritage for those that follow."

Since its 1998 re-dedication, the Belmont Mill has been honored with more than a dozen regional and statewide awards. The New Hampshire Preservation Alliance cited it as one of New Hampshire's most significant and challenging preservation projects of the last quarter century. The mill was most recently distinguished with an award from the Victorian Society in America, New England Chapter two years ago.

In the coming months, the new marker will be added to a statewide map highlighting all historical markers and shown by town and GPS coordinates.

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