

Heritage Commission 2013 Annual Report

“...The Town recognizes its potential for growth and is committed to the protection of its unique natural resources, history and recreational opportunities...” *Belmont Master Plan Vision Statement, adopted by the Planning Board in 2002*

Media attention, milestones for the Bandstand restoration and community partnerships were prominent in 2013. Three photographs summarize accomplishments more effectively than 3000 words: Selectmen at the New Hampshire Highway Historical Marker unveiling; author Fritz Wetherbee recounting Village history for WMUR-TV; and Girl Scouts celebrating Belmont history at Old Home Day.



Photo courtesy of Vicki Donovan

HISTORICAL SIGNAGE

The community's first historical marker, a project initiated by Wallace Rhodes in cooperation with the N.H. Department of Transportation and Division of Historical Resources, was installed and unveiled on Depot Street/ N.H. Route 140. Number 235 in the statewide system, its arrival at no local taxpayer cost was greeted by the Board of Selectmen and Commission members, and commemorated *"Saving the Belmont Mill."* The cast iron marker is also seen by an estimated 8000 vehicles nearing the Town Center through N.H. Route 140, and increasing seasonally with tourism and nearby NASCAR events at the New Hampshire Motor Speedway.

Other signs figured visibly in the year's endeavors. Vintage photos from Belmont Historical Society collections and text for the series of new Village signs was researched and written by Mr. Rhodes. Additionally the Commission paid tribute to the restored exterior of the Province Road Meeting House by helping to install newly designed signage at the venerable 1792 structure – long a landmark for N.H. Route 107 travelers. And finally, a sign for the Belmont Library, noting its listing by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985, was commissioned for the 85th anniversary of the classic colonial building.



HERITAGE COMMISSION

MEDIA

Regional, statewide, national and international media coverage about Belmont history and heritage projects continued to be extensive. A visit by author and storyteller Fritz Wetherbee and his staff for WMUR-TV “*Chronicle*” was a highlight, and daylong filming for a future *Travel Channel* program, among others.



Photo courtesy of Donna Rhodes – Winnisquam Echo

Statewide and regional publications were generous with interest and space for events including the September 11 Bandstand relocation – featured on several front pages, the *Boston Globe* and nationally via *Associated Press* – and sponsored activities, as the award winning Old Home Day parade entry of the Girl Scouts and first Bandstand performances in December.



Photo Courtesy of Linda Frawley



HERITAGE COMMISSION

Reminiscences of the 50th anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy brought a local historical saga to light. The heroic role played by Belmont Postmaster Thomas Murphy was widely credited as thwarting an earlier attempt. The *Smithsonian Channel* and *New York Times* cited the 1960 incident, with the former producing an hour-long feature for their cable television channel. Mrs. Thomas “Polly” Murphy, kindly loaned her time, patience and memorabilia from her late husband’s career, to a press briefing hosted by the Library and organized by the Commission. Another well-known resident, Earl Sweeney, former Belmont Police Chief and current Assistant Commissioner of the New Hampshire Department of Safety also helped greatly recalling the facts for future generations.

MILESTONES:

BANDSTAND RESTORATION BEGINS & GRANT AWARDED

Historic restoration specialist JR Graton of Northfield worked to stabilize the 1908 Bandstand, rebuilding the undercarriage, crafting wooden balusters between original rails, and repairing decorative trim of the Victorian-era landmark. By year’s end most of the first phase work was complete, including flooring that replicated the original design.

The Bandstand showcased musical talent of the Belmont Elementary School Vocal Ensemble, Belmont High School Band and costumed Dickens Carolers from Just Love to Sing! In December performances organized by the Commission, with support from the John M. Sargent Fund.



Photo Courtesy of BJ Eckardt

News of our successful application for a Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) grant for the second phase of Bandstand rehabilitation came December 18. The competitive process awarded \$15,000 and was one of 39 distributed statewide for conservation and preservation. This is the third LCHIP grant received for Belmont, following two successful efforts of the Belmont Historical Society.



HERITAGE COMMISSION

The Bandstand has been a priority since 2009. Upcoming work includes full repainting and replacement of the octagonal cedar shake roof. Last major repairs to the structure were nearly 40 years ago and most capably by Neil Witcher. His care reproducing original architectural features and saving an original baluster was critical to its historical integrity. The late Mrs. Whitman “Beth” Ides also played a pivotal role as chairman of the Bandstand Committee in the 1970s, fundraising and grant writing, besides spearheading documentation for a 1980 nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The Heritage Commission remains grateful for all who have worked to preserve this unique treasure.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

During New Hampshire History Week in October, Community Heritage Awards again recognized local excellence. Honorees for this third annual event saluting efforts to improve Belmont’s quality of life included:

- ❖ **Busby Construction – Outstanding Service to Village Revitalization** - *accepted by Recardo Segalini for his crew*
- ❖ **Girl Scouts – Excellence in Youth Volunteerism** - *accepted by Troop #21532 representatives and Volunteer Co-Leaders Diane Cleveland and Judy Hayes on behalf of all Belmont Girl Scouts*
- ❖ **Rolfe Farm Preservation – Preserving Agricultural Traditions** – *accepted by Joe and Cindy Rolfe for their efforts on the Laconia Road historic farm*

Suggestions of businesses, individuals, organizations or projects deserving commendation are welcome. The awards program and presentation is a partnership with Selectmen.

With gratitude, the founding service of Margaret Normandin, an original 2004-5 appointee and longtime Secretary is noted. Her guidance, community and N.H. Legislative experience was always an asset. Also departing the Commission was Kelly Rolfe, whose ideas were prodigious. New appointees are Priscilla Annis and Vicki Donovan and we are delighted with their enthusiasm, experience and longtime civic interests.

We appreciate the interest and support of the Belmont community as we start our 10th year of service as a Town Commission in 2014.

Linda Frawley

Linda Frawley, Chairman

Wallace Rhodes, Vice Chairman

Shayne Duggan - Alyce Jewell - Priscilla Annis - Vicki Donovan

Ronald Cormier, representing Selectmen

