

TOWN OF BELMONT NEW HAMPSHIRE

Annual Report 2012

Preserving Province Road Meeting House for Future Generations

Belmont, New Hampshire Annual Town Report 2012

PRESERVING PROVINCE ROAD MEETING HOUSE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

In the summer and fall of 2012, Belmont's historic Province Road Meeting House underwent extensive repair which included leveling and rebuilding the foundation, repairing and replacing sills, clapboards, and shingles, re-glazing windows, and painting the exterior. These repairs were funded in part by a \$50,000 grant from the **New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program** (LCHIP), with the balance of the total expenditure of \$117,000 coming from Belmont Historical Society fundraising, a \$15,000 appropriation from the Town of Belmont, and contributions from the Sargent Fund.

Written records of the meeting house's construction have long ago disappeared, but according to local tradition, the building was constructed in 1792 as a meeting place for the rapidly-growing population in the northern and western parts of the Town of Gilmanton. A deed to the property dated 20 June 1793 transferring the site to *The Committee, Owners and Proprietors* of the meeting house helps validate the 1792 construction date. In its early years, the meeting house served as a community meeting place and was not the sole property of any one religious group.

The building was originally built in the style of a typical meeting house of the period with a center entrance on the south side, a high pulpit and window on the north side and galleries on three sides. Only a few examples of these structures still exist in New Hampshire and other parts of New England. Most such structures underwent major renovations or were replaced by what were considered a more modern nineteenth century concept of what a church structure should look like. The Province Road Meeting House remained in its original configuration until 1835 when, because of its evolution into a community church serving a small population, the galleries were removed and the roof was lowered. A second major remodeling took place in 1854 when the building was turned so that the gable end faced the road, the entrances relocated and new windows installed. At this point the building took on the appearance it still has to this day, except for the addition of the belfry in 1910.

By 1981 the membership of the Third Free Baptist Meeting House Society, which had occupied the meeting house since the 1830s had dwindled to three remaining members. In the hope that the building could be preserved, the property was deeded to the Belmont Historical Society. This was both a blessing and a curse for the society which has been burdened with finding the resources to keep the building in repair. The 2012 exterior repairs are the culmination of over 30 years of fundraising and maintenance efforts.

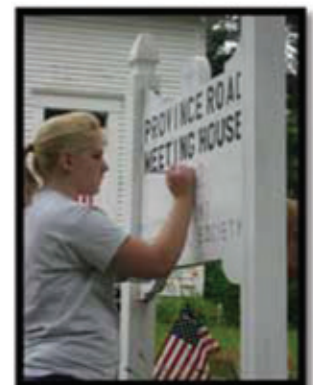
The long-term goal of the Belmont Historical Society is to restore the building to its appearance after the 1850s remodeling. The Belmont Historical Society is presently looking to raise sufficient funds to renovate the interior. Once work is completed, the society plans to offer the meeting house for public and private functions. If you are interested in assisting with this project, please contact Belmont Historical Society members Wallace Rhodes or Christine Fogg.



The 1792 Province Road Meeting House was one of the first places of worship in the Lakes Region. Although the exterior has been renovated, the interior still needs work to make the building useable. The Belmont Historical Society's long-term goals are not only to preserve an important part of our past, but also to provide a meeting place for the community.



After the east-end shingles were removed, original window locations were revealed at the Province Road Meeting House. The newly restored landmark on the historic Province Road represents over three decades of care, fundraising, and maintenance by the Belmont Historical Society.



Belmont Historical Society members and community volunteers have donated much time and effort in maintaining the meeting house property. Over recent years, hostas, daylilies, and spring-blooming daffodils have been added to the grounds, as well as Christmas boughs and wreaths.

Town of Belmont New Hampshire

ANNUAL REPORT 2012

The Belmont Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator's Office would like to thank all of the contributors to this year's Annual Report. A special thank you is extended to Shayne Duggan and Wallace Rhodes for their collaborative efforts and hard work on the layout and design of the cover.

The Town of Belmont is very proud to announce that once again we were awarded 1st place in the Local Government Center's Annual Town Report Contest.



3rd Place 2009

2nd Place 2010

1st Place 2011

1st Place 2012

Dedication

We recently learned that Commander Bob Stevens is planning to step down from his position as Post Commander of the Charles Kilborn Post 58 American Legion in Belmont this year and we felt it would be most appropriate to dedicate this year's Town Report to him and the members of Post 58. For many years this small post has donated funds and services to the community such as annual donations to the local food pantries, the Boys and Girl Scouts of Belmont, Veteran gravestone markers, funds have been donated to the Belmont Police Explorer Post Little Helper's Fund, donations to the local senior center, benches were donated and installed in front of the Library and at Penstock Park and they have implemented new scholarships and programs in our Belmont Schools. In 2012, Commander Stevens spearheaded fundraising efforts to purchase street banners for the Town of Belmont and with the generous support of many volunteers, the banners were purchased and a plaque recognizing the volunteers was presented to the Board of Selectmen in May 2012. The banners have been installed thanks to Bob and Woody Fogg and are a welcome addition to the community. Bob has coordinated our annual Memorial Day event held at the Town Monument and has continued the tradition of providing Jordan's Ice Cream certificates to benefit all the children who attend the festivities. In closing, we thank you Post 58 for your service to our Country and for your generous contributions to the Belmont community.



Citizen, May 17, 2012



Laconia Daily Sun May 8, 2012



Winnisquam Echo May 31, 2012





The **Province Road Meeting House** represents the evolution of a regional meeting house to a country church. The building changed along with the needs of the community rather than being replaced with a new structure. Since the congregation was never large or wealthy, most changes after the reconstruction of the 1850s were modest in nature, and often took advantage of the ability to "recycle" materials.



The above photographs of the **Province Road Meeting House**, archived with the Laconia Museum and Historical Society, were taken in 1911, shortly after the bell and belfry were donated by members of the Lamprey family.



Belmont's Province Road Meeting House has been listed on the **New Hampshire State Register of Historic Places** since 2003. Its inclusion in the **National Register of Historic Places** is pending.



The **Upper Province Road School House** was located near the meeting house. The school house was last used in 1928 and later moved to Hoadley Road where it was converted into a house. The area in the vicinity of the junction of Province Road and Durrell Mountain Road was a small, but vibrant community within Belmont in the 19th and early 20th century, with its own church, school house and grange hall. In the 1960s, the former Lamprey property at the junction of Province Road and Durrell Mountain Road was the location of the first vineyard and winery in New Hampshire.

If your family scrapbooks hold any photographs of the Province Road Meeting House, or related memorabilia, the **Belmont Historical Society** will appreciate your loan to digitally scan and build its Province Road archives.

Photo Credits: Wallace Rhodes, Linda Frawley, Angela Hanson, Belmont Historical Society, Belmont Heritage Commission, and Laconia Historical and Museum Society. Historical data sourced from the Individual Inventory completed in 2002 prior to the property being listed in the State Register of Historic Places.