# Bates Observatory 119 Years Old and Counting . . .

1893





2012

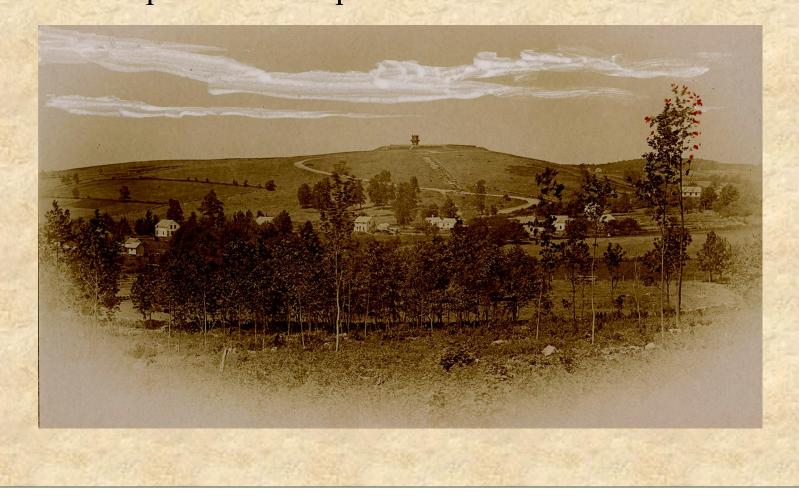
Meeting of the North Brookfield Board of Selectmen December 4, 2012

## The George H. Doane Bequest

October 2004 February 2006 \$20,147.71 <u>\$70,059.26</u> \$90,206.97

Specific:

"For the maintenance, restoration and upkeep of Bates Observatory" The Bates Observatory was a \$1,000 gift to the townspeople from Theodore C. Bates (an amount equal to \$25,641 today, adjusted for inflation). It opened to the public in November 1893.



 1942 — used for Civil Defense Air Spotting Service Location during World War II — at that time it was in a state of disrepair

 1985 — Town voted down request to support renovation

 1997 — impending construction for Water Treatment Facility at Bell Hill

 1998 — Historical Commission began activity to place the Observatory on the National Register of Historic Places

1999 — Town voted to pursue listing
\*\*\* The effort was abandoned \*\*\*

 2000 – Graves Engineering backfilled reservoir and stabilized Observatory – continued to be considered a hazard to public safety

 2002 — Fence installed by Water Department to secure the facility

 2007 — The Observatory was listed as a Scenic and Unique Environment in Town's Master Plan

 2008 – The Observatory was listed as Priority #4 on the Town's Heritage Landscape Inventory Priority #1 – Downtown Development District Priority #2 – Bates Farm Area Priority #3 – Coy's Brook Corridor

\*\*\* To date Priority #1 work is still in progress \*\*\*

#### **Timeline of Activity - Conclusion**

 2008 — The Historical Commission sought bids from area construction firms to assess renovation

> Most comprehensive bid (\$63,000) <u>excluded</u> windows, doors, stairs, the catwalk, concrete and brickwork

 Board of Selectmen requested clarification and price cap to confirm scope of work

**\*\*\*** The project was abandoned **\*\*\*** 

### Next Steps

 Solicit input from Water and Police Departments, Historical Commission and Historical Society (other groups?)

 Share detailed timeline of activities and identify or locate missing materials, if possible

## Sample Questions to be Considered by Groups

- Is \$90,000 enough to restore and maintain the Observatory?
- Who would be responsible for future maintenance and supervision (costs and manpower)?
- Are there any suggestions/alternatives that might serve to memorialize the gift at Bell Hill or elsewhere?
- Who would lead the project?

# Conclusion

 Retrieve public input BEFORE asking townspeople to decide on future a course of action

 Proposed timeframe for town vote/decision – Late Spring/Summer 2013

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