

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	\$20,147.71
February 2006	<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.



Timeline of Activity - Continued

- 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

Timeline of Activity - Continued

- 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 ***

Timeline of Activity - Continued

- 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

Timeline of Activity - Continued

- 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)
excluded 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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