

A door into the past opens Saturday as Westford Museum welcomes public

By GORDON B. SEAVEY
Sun Correspondent

WESTFORD - After many frustrations, the Westford Museum will open its doors to the public this Saturday for its initial showing of old treasures from local attics and barns.

Ready to greet the public will be members of Friends of the Museum, whose efforts have culminated in the near completion of the project started 13 years ago. They include chairman Lloyd Blanchard, vice-chairman Beth Shaw and Curator Kristin Szylvian.

The museum occupies the original Westford Academy building erected at the head of the Common in 1794 and moved to its present location, a few yards away at 2 Boston Road, in 1910. For 50 years it was used as the central fire station.

The two-story building is a copy of an earlier one at Phillips Andover Academy, now destroyed. It is considered one of the oldest wooden secondary school structures in the country. It is noted for its simplicity in design, a daintily-wrought cupola and impressive portico.

Many old objects

The lower floor is now filled with interesting and old objects donated by generous patrons.

They have been appraised by Mrs. E. F. Chambers, carefully catalogued and insured by the curator and her assistants, June W. Kennedy and Jane Hinckley.

The historic memorabilia covers a large range. There is the bell from the belfry of the second Academy building, old farm tools, early dresses, the weathervane from the dismantled Town Farm barn, school desks, numerous old records, pictures, books and trivia.

Of considerable interest is in the tin cup carried by Col. John Robinson all through the Revolutionary War. From this he dispensed a daily allotment of rum to his troops.

Since Robinson's original farmhouse burned a quarter-century ago, there is little physical evidence left of this unsung patriot other than the slate grave marker in the West Burying Ground, the cup and buttons from a waistcoat.

The museum was scheduled to open two years ago but was hit by lightning with more than \$15,000 damage. The second floor cannot be used at present because of questions of the need of a fire escape in the rear.

Using 1794 building

Thirteen years ago, to make use of the vacated fire station, Allister F. MacDougall proposed

a town museum in the venerable building. The idea took on slowly and the renovation work has dragged. Students from Nashoba Tech did much of the work.

But four years ago, Mrs. Shaw organized the Friends of the Museum. This push brought in a trickle of donations, then additional town support, and thanks to the Friends, Westford's first museum is about to open.

The opening is timed to be part of the annual Apple Blossom Day festivities, which include an early morning road race, a parade at 11, and Girl Scout activities on the Common from noon to 2 in

which all youngsters may participate.

The Westford Academy band will give a brief musical show at the museum starting at 10 a.m. before joining the parade.

The museum will be open from 10 to 4 and admission is free.

Speaking for the Friends, Chairman Blanchard has issued a warm welcome to all and hopes that some visitors will find excuses to part with a few of their old things for exhibition. An intricate burglar alarm system has been installed and all items are insured.