

# Historical documents given Westford library

By GORDON B. SEAVEY

WESTFORD — Two historical documents of considerable importance were added to the town's slowly growing collection of old official papers when Mr. and Mrs. Allister F. MacDougall presented them to the J. V. Fletcher Library.

One is the warrant calling for a town meeting in March, 1729, the year Westford was incorporated, and the other a contract for the purchase of a pew in the meetinghouse, dated November 13, 1794.

The warrant begins with the usual introduction of the time: "Middlesex SS, George the second by the grace of God of Great Britton, France and Irland, King Defender of the faith..."

It calls for the "freholders and other inhabitants qualified according to law to vote in town affairs and meet at the Meetinghouse in Westford on the first Monday in March" at ten.

The men were to "chuse" and elect selectmen, a town clerk, constables and other officers. The highways came under scrutiny as money had to be raised for repairs and that "every man have the liberty to work out his rate."

## Keep Hogs at Home

Always a standard problem that disturbed the citizens, similar to leash laws for dogs today, was to "see if they will shut up swine or let them go at large."

The warrant was signed by Joshua Fletcher as town clerk. In the handwriting of Constable Joseph Fletcher, whose prowess was not spelling, at the end appears: "by vertu of the with in retten warrent i have warned the free holders & the other in habintence to apeare at time & Place."

## Proof of Purchase

The bill of sale for the pews in the new meetinghouse is nicely printed with spaces left to be filled in for the buyer. The townspeople in 1794 were erecting a third edifice, replacing the second which had been completely destroyed by fire.

To finance the project, John Abbot, described as "Gentleman," and Moses Thomas, "Houfewright," were the agents. They were to sell at "Publick Vendue" the various pews to the highest bidders.

The document presented by the MacDougalls shows that Josiah Boynton, Jr., was the highest bidder for his choice, a wall pew No. 54, for \$23. With his deed came the certification that "neither the faid Inhabitants, nor any Perfon, or Perfons, whatfover, fhall Moleft him, the faid Josiah, his Heirs and Affigns, forever, in the quiet ufe and enjoyment of the fame..."

Abbot and Thomas affixed their signatures to the paper, which was witnessed by Zaccheus Wright and John Raymond.

Mr. MacDougall, who has been delving in local history for many years, has located and preserved scores of priceless documents and artifacts which could have been lost forever. He also has done considerable writing, relying on his keen memory as well as gleaning information from old records and documents.