

# Needy in town benefit from oldest charity fund

By Gordon Seavey  
Eagle staff

One of the oldest charitable organizations in Westford is making an appeal for funds, following its annual meeting last month. It is named the Whitney-Herrick fund and has been administered more than 70 years by a committee from the First Parish Church, United, as the originators intended.

According to the by-laws, income from the fund is for the "relief of the needy, unfortunate citizens of Westford." All that is required of recipients is that they be residents of Westford and are in particular need.

It is administered in a quiet, unpublicized and confidential manner. This past year the board voted \$1,000 to send an adolescent to a special camp, \$175 for a family food certificate and \$204 toward a back brace for a child.

Currently, the fund amounts to a bit more than \$12,000, so its current income in modern times scarcely enables the trustees to spread much aid and cheer.

A member of the board recently said, "It is a matter of simple arithmetic to realize that with today's inflation the income from these funds produces a pitifully small amount for the Board to dispense. Our frustrations increase as it becomes more evident that we are unable to make

a reasonable response to a need which often cannot be serviced by other community resources."

The Whitney-Herrick Fund had its beginning 70 years ago when three active women in the community, all members of either the Ladies Sewing Society or the Women's Branch Alliance of the Unitarian Church established a charitable fund to specifically aid any Westford family or person in need with funds available. The fund was established in 1918 through the wills of Elizabeth Whitney and Eliza Herrick. M. Aurille Wright's will later added to the fund, as did others.

In 1910, Mrs. Whitney donated the Whitney Playground between the Roudenbush Center and the Frost School. She lived in the large colonial homestead at the junction of Main and Leeland Streets. Miss Herrick made her home in the brick-end house still standing opposite the Westford Nursing Home and once part of the Abiel J. Abbot estate. The initial sum was \$10,000.

President of the board overseeing the fund today is Jean Downey. Margaret Blanchard is vice president and Susan Smith is treasurer. Other members are Jane Reeve, Gertrude Morton, Norma Treat, Barbara Lamson, Diane Fisher and Maddie Sambito.