

# Old Academy documents readied for Town Museum

By GORDON B. SEAVEY

WESTFORD - Over the principal's desk at Westford Academy is a small, framed receipt dated June 30th, 1859, and signed by Principal John D. Long for the generous sum of \$4. It represented the tuition for "M's Helen Tower" for the final term of her schooling for that year.

In those days, the school year was divided into three terms, the first starting late August. At the end of November, there was a two-week break. The winter term ran to near the end of March when there was another similar vacation. School kept in session until mid-July, allowing for a six-week summer vacation.

Therefore, Ell Tower paid \$12 for daughter Helen's year at the Academy. Today, the cost of a year's education per pupil is in the vicinity of \$1,700 - and the taxpayer foots the bill.

The student enrollment at that time

over an extended period was 75, an all time high. Today the number is a thousand. For further comparison, Principal Long had one assistant, a woman teacher probably without a college degree. Principal Joseph F. Lisi today has a staff of seventy.

As a private school, the Academy's invested funds for general support amounted to \$18,000. These funds now amount to \$350,000 through prudent management and with additions made by private citizens and graduates. The money is entrusted to the Trustees of Westford Academy operating as a private charitable organization. The income is for scholarships (about \$12,000 yearly) plus expenditures for special items to benefit the entire student body.

## Old Diploma

Another Academy historical document is a diploma dated June 21,

1895, complete with a faded ribbon of the class colors. Its size 21 x 17 inches, draws immediate attention because of the amount of space it takes on Principal Lisi's wall.

This outsize document was indicative of the impression in that era of the importance of receiving a secondary school education. Although not things of artistic beauty, these diplomas were hung with pride usually in the parlor.

Today the Academy diploma has shrunk to one-eighth in size; it usually lands on a wall or a shelf in the graduate's bedroom.

This particular diploma, however, is of unusual interest. It was presented to Thomas Richmond Frost who had completed the Latin Scientific Course of study. His father was William E. Frost, beloved principal of the Academy for 32 years until his death in 1904.

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