

# Old-time Governor Was Academy Principal

By Gordon B Seavey

WESTFORD — While a notable group of men and women is listed among the alumni of Westford Academy, some former members of the teaching staff became reknowned in the outside world, too

In politics, John Davis Long was among the top. He was governor of Massachusetts from 1880 to 1882, the Bicentennial Committee reminds us.

Right out of Harvard College at the age of 19, this native of Maine was elected "preceptor" of Westford Academy in 1857, to serve two years. For many years thereafter, he was loyal to the institution.

In arranging his salary maybe there was a bit of over-the-table bargaining before reaching a mutual agreement but old trustee records simply said that he was to be paid \$300 for the year, of which \$150 was to be at the close of the second term and the balance at the termination of school year, late in June.

In addition and in lieu of a first term salary, he was to get "all the tuition from the pupils." That amounted to

about \$5 per pupil per term — and it was to his credit to attract as many students as possible through his popularity and ability as an instructor. The students supplied their own books and tools, the trustees the building and the firewood for the long-piped stove on each floor of the two-room building at the head of the common.

His diary at the J V Fletcher Library reported that during the first month "there are five new scholars making the whole number of names seventy-four. More are coming so that I shall probably have a larger school than has been known here for many years."

By today's standards, his salary was meagre. But his living expenses were not great. He roomed with the Hamlin family next door to the academy for 50¢ per week. He appreciated this home as he wrote, after returning from the Thanksgiving recess: "I find my little room the cosiest place in the world, with a new carpet."

The new preceptor was given \$300 to pay the full year salary of an assistant, who was Miss Harriet B Rogers of Billerica.

He was further allowed "to make any arrangement with the Hiring Committee that they may deem necessary for an additional assistance" in the school. Long had a free hand, apparently in running the Academy although still a teenager.

But Westford and the job, although he loved both, were too small for this energetic and brilliant person. He resigned to study law and was admitted to the bar in 1862. Then he got the political fever. He was elected to the House of Representatives in 1875, named its speaker for the next three years, and then became lieutenant governor in 1879. The next year he was installed in the governor's chair at 42.

His ambition and drive caused him to abandon state politics for he became a U.S. congressman from 1883-1889. He

was secretary of the Navy under Presidents McKinley and Roosevelt.

He kept his touch with Westford and the people who gave him a start in his long and useful career. He was elected a trustee of the Academy in 1869. He often returned to graduation exercises.

As governor (and also president of the trustees) he gave the principal address at the 100th anniversary of the Academy on June 17, 1892. His picture, in a large oak frame, hangs in the school department headquarters. It will probably be placed in the old academy building when it becomes the town museum in the fall.

Long received LL.D. degrees from Harvard and Tufts

College, he wrote books and poems and he remembered his birthplace, Buckfield, with the Zadoc Long Free Library.

His assistant, Miss Rogers, became interested in the deaf. She was the first in this country to introduce a system of teaching deaf mutes to read from the lips, instead of using the sign language. She later became principal of the Clarke Institution for Deaf Mutes at Northampton, the place where Grace Coolidge once taught.

An earlier preceptress, Miss Margaret F. Foley of Lowell, became a sculptress, and her medallion of "A Roman Girl" which for many years hung in the Fletcher Library, is now on exhibition at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington.