

Old Westford schoolhouse has seen many occupants

By GORDON B. SEAVEY

WESTFORD — A school bell that has been silent for 66 years will ring out again this fall when the old Westford Center elementary school building on Boston Road will open its doors to observe its 100th anniversary.

The sturdy two-room building served only 34 years to educate young children living in the center, but nevertheless has been in more or less continuous use since. The white clapboard square-frame building with its graceful mansard roof sits on a tiny quarter-acre lot, also square, on Boston Road. It is much the same today as it was a century ago, both in and out, excepting the desks and chairs have been removed.

Students in the first four grades used the lower floor room, with one teacher for all four grades. The upper four grades occupied the top floor in a similar fashion. The boys hung their clothes on one side of the entrance, the girls on the other. Plumbing was lacking and the "necessary" or outhouse, also divided, was in a rear corner.

The new William E. Frost School, double in space, was opened in 1908 at Depot and Main Streets, as still serves as the center's elementary school.

A CELEBRATION denoting the passing of a century for the building is being planned by the Tadmuck Club, the present occupants. The organization is a social woman's club with state and national affiliations.

Chairman of the event in October is Mrs. Austin D. Fletcher, who as Eleanor Colburn attended the old school one year. She recently concluded two years as president of the club and will supervise the display of antiques, pictures of old classes and groups, and other memorabilia to be on exhibit during an afternoon and evening program.

There are many people in the area who remember attending the old school, which also received a small number of pupils from the sparsely populated North End of town. These came in a horse-drawn "barge," or walked.

When the school was closed, it was purchased by a well-known area military unit, Troop F, First Squadron Cavalry, Massachusetts Volunteer Militia which had been functioning since Civil War days. It was comprised of men from Westford, Chelmsford and Dunstable, but by 1907 it had degenerated into mostly a social and sporting group. Because it had "fallen below the standard of efficiency," it was ordered disbanded by the Adjutant General of the Commonwealth.

UNDAUNTED BY the dismissal, the group, still active socially, became incorporated to "foster, develop and perpetuate the bond of friendship and encourage the spirit of good citizenship. For a name they chose Troop F, Spalding Light Cavalry, and for headquarters they purchased for \$750 the just-abandoned Center schoolhouse.



WESTFORD CENTER SCHOOL 100TH

... home of Tadmuck Club will observe 100th anniversary of its construction. It was formerly Westford Center grade school.