

# Railroad display at Westford Museum

By Gordon B. Seavey

An exhibit of railroad memorabilia featuring the early days of the Stony Brook Railroad, is now the major display at the Westford Museum.

This short line was a most important connecting link for freight coming from the west, heading for Maine and lower New Hampshire. Its 10.5 miles ran along the Stony Brook Valley from Ayer to North Chelmsford. There were four combined passenger, freight and express stations in Westford.

The formation of the Stony Brook Railroad was backed by several affluent local citizens including the Abbots, who purchased stock in the new enterprise. The year was 1848.

H. Arnold Wilder, a well-known local railroad buff, arranged this exhibit, most of which is from his own extensive collection. He has designed a display showing that at one time there were three railroad lines passing through Westford territory.

In addition to Stony Brook, the New Haven ran from Concord Junction through the south

ern part of town to Lowell. The Nashua, Acton & Boston started at Concord, came through the western part of town, passing alongside the present Westford Academy grounds, to Dunstable, then Nashua. Interestingly, this line, abandoned in 1925, never touched an established community, no matter how small, on its run of 24 miles. This line was called the "Red Line" because traffic was so limited that the rails always showed rust.

A locomotive bell used on an engine traversing the Stony Brook line, old porcelain Westford station signs, often the target of boys with stones, and numerous photographs and framed railroad posters are included in the elaborate exhibition.

According to curator Beth Shaw, the museum is open each Sunday from 1-4 p.m. and Wilder will be on hand, ready to enlighten visitors about the days of steam engines chugging up and down Stony Brook Valley. Admission is free.