

# Restoration work resumes at old Westford Academy

By GORDON B. SEAVEY

WESTFORD — The sound of hammers and whine of electric saws echoed through the 181-year-old Academy building last week as students from the Nashoba Valley Technical High School, after a summer vacation, resumed the restoration of the sturdy building which has been a Westford Center landmark for nine generations.

As a project of the town's bicentennial committee headed by Chairman Allister F. MacDougall, it is to be turned into a town museum. It will bring together for the first time many priceless and interesting articles from earliest Colonial days to the present under one roof.

Enough of the exterior work was done last spring to give an impression of what the restoration, when completed by next year, will represent. The two-story building is about 32 feet wide and 44 feet deep and originally stood at the head of the common. It now rests at the rear of the parish house of the First Parish Church United, where it was moved 70 years ago.

Work is being done under the direction of Robert A. Adam, instructor in restoration and cabinet-making at Nashoba Tech by students as a training project. Closely associated is Thomas Lafionatis, superintendent-director of the school, who has a background of restoration work as well as building trades.

In an up-dating meeting last week of representatives of historical and alumni groups especially interested in the project, it was decided to enter Phase 2 of the program as sufficient and anticipated funds were available for the new budget of \$10,939 for materials.

PREVIOUS TO THE MEETING, a preview of the reconstruction was held on the site. One of the

more serious problems was the revelation that when the building had been remodelled sometime in the 1800's to give the interior a "Victorian" appearance, and later when altered for use as a fire station, the carrying timbers holding the second floor had been severed in the front.

To replace these supports and strengthen the upper floor would require the removal of the preceptor's platform and closets installed probably during the first alteration, according to Adam. It is possible during this period that the old twelve-over-twelve glass windows were removed and the windows in the rear were blocked off. It is planned that new windows, to match the originals, will be installed.

All the plastering will have to be replaced after the insulation, the wiring for electric fixtures and outlets, and an alarm system are installed. The heating plant is in good condition but baseboard radiation must be installed, Adam reported.

PLANS WILL INCLUDE toilet facilities and a kitchenette, but not of the 1974 vintage. Otherwise, the "new" building should from all appearances hark back to the time when the first classes entered.

In addition to MacDougall, Lafionatis and Adam, present at the conference were President H. Arnold Wilder of the trustees, Edward Chambers, Jr., of the Historical Commission, Mrs. Ethel Shea and Mrs. Bernice Picking of the Daughters of the American Revolution and Theodore W. Engle of the Minutemen headed delegations from these groups.

The selectmen sent their E. Kennard Fletcher, to express their views.



Sun Staff Photo by DICK HUNT

## Work continues

Exterior work is apparent at former Westford Center Fire Station which is being restored by Westford Bicentennial Committee to its

original state. It was, in former times, the first Westford Academy and will, after restoration, be the town's museum.