

# Retrospective look at preceptor

By Gordon B. Seavey

**J**ohn Davis Long, a native of Maine, became preceptor of Westford Academy in 1857, the year he was graduated from Harvard University. Although he served as principal for only two years, it was the beginning of a long association with the town and the school.

He retained a deep interest in Westford affairs until his death in 1915. It was said that he "cherished the memories of his early experiences in Westford. His loyalty and love for Westford Academy and a deep interest in its welfare never grew cold." He was named a trustee in 1869.

Both Harvard and Tufts honored him with doctorates. A lawyer, he was speaker of the

House of Representatives (1875-78) and was governor from 1880-82. He was elected a U.S. Congressman in 1883 and later became secretary of the Navy under Presidents McKinley and Roosevelt. Harvard named him president of its Board of Overseers.

In his closing remarks at the centennial observance of the Academy, he said, "To me, Westford is a poem more beautiful than verse. To write it would require a touch on every chord that sings to the human heart."

"The breath of apple blossoms is in it. It is to me the poem of that morning of the world which is as eternal as the spirit of youth."

*Gordon B. Seavey is a Westford native and the former publisher of the Belmont Citizen.*