Roudenbush Communi Center refurbished

The sturdy Victorian building which for 59 years was the second home of Westford Academy, and now the Roudenbush Community Cen ter, is still the grand old lady, albeit primped with a new dress and a gener ous coating of paint and powder

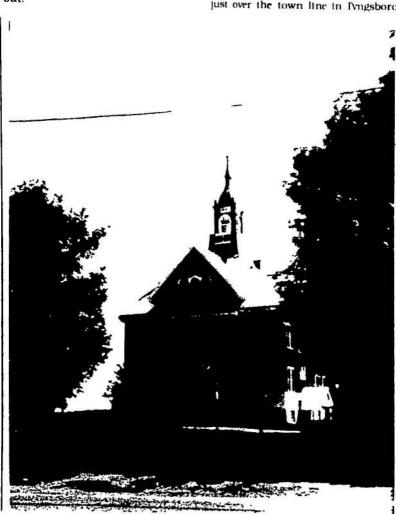
She won't be as cold and drafty as formerly for beneath her new stained cedar shingles she wears a garment un heard of when built in 1897 a thick layer of insulating cellulose

Her many windows which now in clude storm sashes, have been reglazed and painted, and washed inside and

served lor 25 years, was a gentle man, he nevertheless was a good disciplinarian and highly Subsequent respected whoopers were treated expedition

Needless to say particularly on cold days, the building was draity but the students were well prepared for the ri gors of winter Students who walked to school or rode in horse drawn "barges and later Reo Speedwagons, were well dressed in preparation for the victssi tudes of Westford weather and the Academy's heating system

Members of the Connell family living just over the town line in lyngsboro



The Roudenbush Community Center, formerly the second Westford Academy 1897-1956, has recently been refurbished. (Photo by Gor don Seavey)

All her fancy trimmings have been scraped and repainted Workmen found several decayed boards, all of which have been replaced. The floor of the bell tower which over the years, had rotted so much that a high wind on March 31 1977 tipped the ornate steeple at a crazy angle, is all new

funds righted the leaning Private tower at that time The bell, a gift of a member of the Abbot family remains in storage waiting for the opening of the Town Museum Incidentally the fate of this museum is in limbo but a home is almost ready for same the original Academy building erected in 1794 To defy nature screening has been

placed in the tower louvres as an at tempt to discourage pigeons while the bees found under the eaves were exterminated Old graduates will remember when

the building had three classrooms, two on the first floor and a single room hold ing about sixty desks, on the upper floor the gymnasium, such as it was, was in the attic The basketball court was nowhere near legal size and be cause of the shape of the roof players would bounce the ball off the sloping ceiling and hopefully into the hoop Three Classrooms

Now the building is divided into sev eral additional rooms for the various projects and functions of the busy Com munity Center it has made use of much of the basement previously used only for a locker room and totlets, one side for boys, the west side for girls, with separ available.

ate entrances Hot water was not The old heating system was the best obtainable four generations ago a coal burning hot air furnace Whenever the janitor stoked the hungry fires, the sounds of the clanking doors, grates and nuggets of rolling anthracite coal penetrated all three classrooms. When dared, a student might open a gate in the basement and send up a whoop through the same system, causing

another type of disturbance. Although Principal William C Roudenbush, who

often walked to school If they hurried they could make the trip in an hour When the farm horse was available they drove stabling it in a nearby barn. of which there were and still are several in the vicinity of the school

Project Cost 938,000

Funds for the restoration and im-provements came through the town s annual appropriation in May in the sum of \$36,500 In addition the Rou gave Associates denbush through gifts and proceeds from their annual auction. The latter sum was used to insulate the area between the second floor and the attic This is to conserve more energy and not to dim the sound of pounding feet and bounc ing balls of basketball players who long

ago took their play elsewhere

The William (Roudenbush School" sign, which was placed in 1957 above the main entrance of the building when it was converted to other school pur poses, has been removed

Hidden behind the sign. workmen found a single white pine board about 16 inches in width upon which, in block letters leafed in gold on a black background, was the 22 foot long name plate of the school when it was first opened These two signs also are des tined for a home in the town museum

Mrs. Ellen Harde chairman of the Community Center and who had much to do with the improvements, said that the committee chose to have the new letters denoting the buildings purpose as the Roudenbush (ommunity (enter painted in maroom with gray shadings. the school's colors for nearly two

centaries. "For the first time in 83 years," she said, "the building should be really warm and at not too exorbitant a price for gas.

Located on Main Street, adjacent to the Whitney Playground and the Wil liam E. Frost School (named for another Academy principal) this rather ornate building on a sturdy base of cut West ford granite is once again a showplace of the community at large