

After 13 years on the boards

Town Museum set to reopen this Sunday

By Gordon B. Seavey

A project which has been on the boards for 13 years, the establishment of a town museum, will come to fruition this Sunday when townspeople will have an opportunity to view its new home. It is in the original Westford Academy building at 5 Boston Road, next to the Common.

It will be an informal open house according to Mrs. Robert Shaw, chairman of the Friends of the Museum, "with no speeches nor a set program, just a 'look-see' afternoon from two to five." Light refreshments will be served.

Work on the renovation of the venerable building was started under the direction of Edward F. 'Chick' Chambers, chairman of the Westford Historical Commission, and continued off and on over the years.

Erected in 1794, the building is said to be the oldest wooden secondary school building in the Commonwealth. It was renovated in 1856, then remodelled on the first floor in 1916 for 50 years of use by the Central Fire Station.

The two-story edifice now sports a pine panelled interior with twelve-over-twelve windows and is painted in two shades of green, "similar to the meetinghouse in Chelmsford. The architect's plans have been lost but the design was copied from an earlier building at Phillips Andover Academy.

Of solid construction, 33 feet wide and 44 feet deep, the ground floor was used as a classroom and the upper, also a classroom later, as an exhibition hall.

Today plans are for a permanent display on the second floor, using the first for rotating exhibits.

There is still more landscaping to be done and the Junior Women's Club is planning an old-fashioned herb garden on the property.

Only two weeks ago the rebuilt cupola was swung into position, one of the single most expensive projects. This work was necessary because lightning hit the structure 18 months ago, causing damage of over \$10,000, shattering the cupola and damaging the electrical and heating systems.

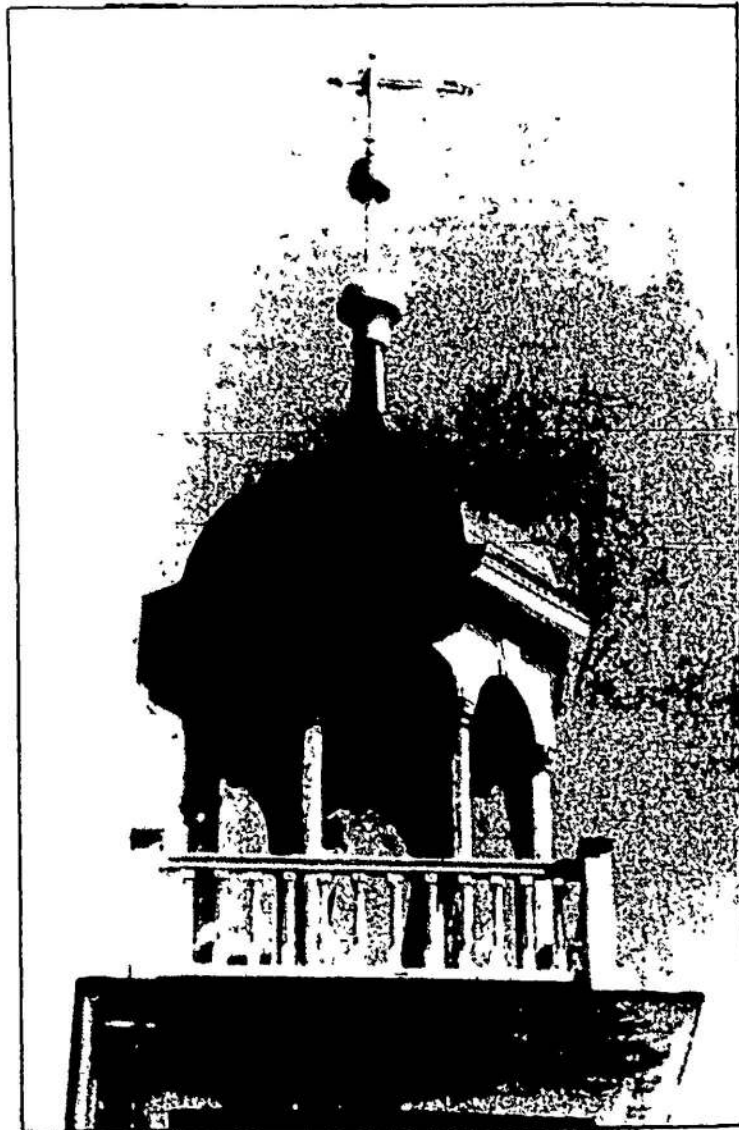
The building originally stood across from the head of the Common on a spot now indicated by a special marker. After being vacant for 15 years, it was moved behind what was then the Congregational Church.

Some of the display cases have been installed and a small number of artifacts just moved in will be on exhibit. Most of the restoration and renovation work was done by students of Nashoba Technical High under the direction of Robert Adam.

The idea of a town museum was the brainchild of Allister F. MacDougall, now 91 years old and long interested in the town's history. He advocated using the old building when the Fire Department moved next to a new structure eight years ago.

The project has run into difficulties causing many delays over the years. The lightning damage used much of the money collected by the Friends who had planned for the use of the funds for the museum itself. The work

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The new cupola and weathervane atop the Town Museum on Boston Rd. will stand as a sentinel, welcoming visitors at the reopening on Sunday. (Photo by Mariene Bryant)