

Trustees push Wright name for Westford middle school

By GORDON B. SEAVEY

WESTFORD — With the new \$5 million high school complex to be opened in the fall, the present Westford Academy building on Depot Street built in 1956, will become the town's second middle school and needs a new name.

Several name changes have been proposed for the present academy building, some of which are quite appropriate.

The trustees of Westford Academy, however, has unanimously approved transferring the name "Westford Academy" to the new buildings on Patten Road and re-naming the present building the "Zaccheus Wright Middle School."

As explained by former President Allister F. MacDougall, Zaccheus Wright was the leader in the founding of the first secondary school in town, in 1792, which was immediately named Westford Academy.

He, along with two others, started the local educational system with a donation of 30 pounds, and later gave 300 pounds in real estate.

Even though he had no children, his interest in education continued for many years and he was president of the trustees until 1808. He also helped organize the first library system, in private homes, in his native town.

LONG AFTER HIS death in 1811, his name continued to be mentioned with respect as one of the best and most public-spirited men that Westford had produced.

He is said to have been a man of uncommon size, weighing perhaps 250 pounds, yet active and agile, constantly superintending his farm (now the home of the Aldrich family at Chamberlin's Corner) and "capable, when occasion called, of chasing a flock of sheep as nimbly as the most lithe and youthful of his hired men."

Among other names presented to the school committee include the Indian name Tadmuch,

which through the years had been applied to two sections of the town as well as the hill on which the center of the town is located. The name is variously spelled in old documents as Tadnoc, Tadnick and Tadnuck and the derivation of the word has been lost.

THE FAMILY NAME of Abbot has also been mentioned. Ensign John Abbot was among the founders and all through the years, some member or members of the Abbot family have served as a trustee, and most of them as treasurer.

Mattawanakee Middle School is another name offered but has no meaning whatsoever. It is a concocted word traced to an early land developer at the turn of this century who apparently thought his lots would sell better on the shores of Forge Pond if an "Indian" named were attached to the area.

History shows there were no Indians of that name, that it was unknown before around 1900 and that it had at least three meanings. One was "smiling blue waters," another, "good fishing here," and thirdly which was probably the developer's interpretation, "everyone welcome here!"

The school committee plans to make a decision on the re-naming in August.

