

Westford plans for Bicentennial set

By GORDON B. SEAVEY

WESTFORD — A varied series of programs, spaced over a period of 20 months, has been suggested by the Westford Bicentennial Committee to commemorate the town's participation in events which led to the start of the American Revolution.

In preparing its report to the selectmen for the year-end, the local Committee has proposed half a dozen major programs, the first to start in April, 1975, and to end at Thanksgiving a year later. They hope to obtain town-wide participation in the planning and execution of appropriate observances.

The suggestions made include a religious observance marking of the original

trail over which the local Minutemen fought common to the North Bridge at Concord; a historical pageant; the restoration of the original Academy building; a fact booklet on local life up to and during the Revolution, and the enlargement of the present company of Minutemen.

ACCORDING TO Allister F. MacDougall, general chairman, the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission already has designated Westford as a bicentennial community and the town soon will be given a flag and a charter honoring the town.

Colonel John Robinson, supported by Captains Oliver Bates, Jonathan Minot and Timothy Underwood, led 103 Westford men to Concord ear-

ly in the morning of April 19, 1775, along a dirt road to participate in the skirmish at the bridge. The route taken is the same which is now used to link the two communities, with the exception of about one-half a mile which skirted a swamp near Route 27.

Plans are to mark this route, which starts from the Common, with the designation the "Colonel John Robinson Trail." Local Boy Scouts, together with other interested persons, are planning to hike this trail on April 19 to start off the town's 200th observance.

As the old First Parish Church and the town were as a single unit at the time of the Revolution, appropriate religious observances will

take place during the period designated, in the First Church United.

Preparation will soon start on an educational booklet, for distribution to the schools and to the townspeople, which will describe Westford's lifestyle which led up to the march to Concord, its leaders and those who left that memorable day for the fight. Most of the men were farmers, poorly trained and ill-equipped, but inspired with the desire for freedom. Later many went on to other

battles before peace was finally declared. This souvenir booklet would probably contain a general program covering all events.

THE WESTFORD Players have already indicated an interest in presenting a pageant of historical nature, from the late 1700's to the present. It would be staged probably outdoors, and would include large numbers of townspeople in the cast.

One of the most difficult projects to undertake would

be the restoration of the original Westford Academy building, erected in 1792, and now in generally poor condition. Presently in use as the Central Fire Station, it will be vacated in the spring on completion of the new fire station next to the Town Hall.

The Academy trustees are supporting the proposition of making the building into a historical museum but do not wish to deflect too much of their funds, mostly tagged for scholarships and loans, to the

reconstruction. They are asking the Academy alumni and the Historical Society to spearhead a committee to secure funds, when needed, throughout the town.

For the occasion, it is expected that the troop of Minutemen will be greatly strengthened so that they may participate in larger numbers during the events to come. A colorful unit, it is seeking new members of all ages.

CHAIRMAN MacDougall stated, "The expense for all these projects should be met by volunteer contributions of both money and labor, so that all citizens will feel a sense

of pride in being a part of the 200th anniversary celebration."

Long interested in Westford history and local affairs, MacDougall reactivated the old disbanded in the late 1800's to become its new president. Because of his particular historical interest, he was chosen by the selectmen to head the bicentennial committee. He is a native of the town.

Other members include Jack Dimond as secretary, Barbara Brewer, Bruce Brinkow, Arlene Diamond, Theodore W. Engel, Bette Hook, Charles S. Kennedy and Gordon B. Seavey.