

HISTORIC SCHOOL ADDED TO RELICS OF EAST HAMPTON

One-Room Schoolhouse Where John Howard
Payne Learned to Read, In Historical Society
by Eunice Telfer Juckett

A one-room schoolhouse in which the author of Home Sweet Home learned his letters will soon become part of the East Hampton Historical Society's permanent exhibits.

The former East Hampton schoolhouse and one-time Town House, built in 1731, which originally stood on Main Street but in recent years was located behind the Methodist Church, has this week been returned to Main Street.

It is now set up next to Clinton Academy, the first institution of higher learning in the State and now the headquarters for the Historical Society's museum.

"We hope to have this historic building renovated and open to the public by summer," said a spokesman for the society. "It will be furnished with old school desks, slates, old school books and maps, and an early primitive music stand with pewter candle holders."

The 227-year old landmark served as East Hampton's school from 1739 through 1845, with Jonathan Stratton as its first schoolmaster. Originally it stood in the corner of the yard of the Gardiner property.

Records show that in 1770 John Cook from Springfield, N.J., was invited to "keep school." Then, Dame Phoebe Filer and Fanny Huntting served from 1772 to 1807.

John Howard Payne, who was born in 1791, learned to read and write there. From 1807 to 1826 the teachers were Lavinia Filer, Maria Isaacs, Ruth Hand, Hetty Hedges, Sophia Tillinghast and Mary Miller, all well known East Hampton names even today.

From 1826 through 1845 the teachers were Emeline Filer, Maria Barnes, Sophia Tillinghast and Hannah and Hetty Hedges. In 1845 Syvanus Osborn conducted a primary school and after that Amanda Mulford, mother of S. Gardner Osborn of East Hampton, taught there through the 1880's.

In addition to regular classes for East Hampton young folks, in the 1830's a singing school was conducted in the old building, and school sessions and trustees meetings were held in it for over 125 years.

The old schoolhouse, which in recent years has been a meeting place for East Hampton's Girl Scouts, was moved by flatbed truck to its new location by Robert Kennelly movers.

The plan was started two years ago by a committee from the Historical Society who raised the funds necessary to purchase the property on which the building has been set up and pay for the moving expenses.

It was given by the East Hampton Town Trustees who have maintained ownership of the building since it was built, to the Historical Society.