

# BUILDING: Reopening set for Sunday afternoon

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reopening of Washington Hall on Sunday from 1 to 3 p.m. The public is invited.

The event will allow the public to admire Washington Hall's unique features, historic architecture and meticulous restoration, said Claire Walsh, president of the Groveland Historical Society.

Washington Hall was built in 1874 by Esekiel J. M. Hale as a community center for the people of South Groveland and for his mill workers who came from England and Ireland to work in the South Groveland Mills.

Hale, a business tycoon and philanthropist, also helped bring a hospital to Haverhill, along with its first public library.

Ownership of Washington Hall was transferred to the town of Groveland in 1939 by the Veasey family, along with 17.5 acres. The land is now known as Washington Park.

Walsh said the contents of the Hale Library, which were part of the community center, were transferred to the Langley-Adams Library with an endowment in 1939.

After the transfer of ownership, Washington Hall was used by the American Legion and other groups over the years. The building fell into severe disrepair and was boarded up for about 20 years. It was placed on the state's most endangered building list in 1999 by the Groveland Historical Commission.

With a great deal of planning and financial support from the Community Preservation Act and the Groveland Historical Society, the building has been restored to its original condition by the Groveland Historical Society and brought up to current building codes.

Missing original molding was replaced and original broken doors, and several original damaged or deteriorated windows and original missing and damaged interior shutters were repaired

or replaced. All knob and tube wiring was removed and replaced to meet current electrical codes.

The electrical fixtures consist of 23 refurbished historic-style school house lights, which replaced fluorescent fixtures throughout the building, as well as eight fans with lights in the second-floor meeting room.

Some foundation repair was necessary. A complete alarm system which connects to the police station was installed. A handicap lift, handicap bathroom and wheelchair ramp were also installed to make the entire building accessible. The heating system was replaced with seven gas heaters, which allows independent control of heat in each room.

The exterior of the building was stripped, repaired and primed for painting with period colors of milkweed and cream. The interior of the building received many repairs and was also painted with period colors of soft chamois and heather.

"A very exciting event happened last month when the original benches were returned to Washington Hall from Veasey Park after being completely repaired, prepped and painted to match their original color by members of the Historical Society," Walsh said.

She said the Groveland Historical Society became interested in restoring the building in Groveland in 1999. The Community Preservation Act was passed in Groveland in 2004, allowing a locally controlled way to raise money for its restoration. The act contains provisions for historical preservation, open space, affordable housing and recreation.

"Because CPA was new and did not have a lot of money available in its beginning years, funding had to be applied for in smaller increments than we currently see today," Walsh said. "Therefore, this restoration project has taken longer than previously expected."