

Charlotte L. Evarts Memorial Archives, Inc.
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Number 24

Lee's Academy



Lee's Academy about 1920 when it stood behind Hand Academy

Lee's Academy is Madison's most peripatetic building, having been moved four times. As one of Madison's most historic buildings, it enhances the green and the character of the center of town. It's difficult to know what Madison would be like without this enduring and charming building.

Its original location was at the corner of the Post Road and Neck Road. Constructed in 1821, it was directly across from the home of Captain Frederick Lee, for whom the academy was named. Captain Lee was the prime mover in a plan to build a private school to prepare students for admission to college. Captain Lee also receives credit for suggesting that Madison be so named in honor of the fourth president of the United States.

The building was constructed at a cost of \$1,200, which was divided into fifty shares, with stockholders becoming joint owners. Lee's Academy opened in November 1821 with eighty- two students, each of whom paid tuition of \$3 for English studies and \$5 for classics and mathematics. The first principal was Samuel Robinson.

Ten years after its completion, the Academy was moved eastward and placed

on the westernmost portion of the green. The building was moved again in 1839, coming to rest very near where it now stands but facing south. At that time the Center School District purchased the lower floor for use as a district school.

The academy still used the upper floor. Miss Gertrude Nash was the Lee's Academy's last teacher. The preparatory school closed in 1884 with the opening of Hand Academy.

When Memorial Hall was built in 1896, the Lee's Academy building was moved again, to a site near where the Academy Elementary School gym now is. Its lower floor was occupied by young pupils until 1922 when Hand Consolidated School opened. It had completed 100 years as an educational institution.

In 1923 the Madison Historical Society assumed responsibility for the Lee's Academy building, and it was moved to its fifth and present location. In 1941 the town deeded the building to the historical society, leasing to the society the land on which the building stood for a term of 99 years.

The Lee's Academy has housed a variety of nonprofit organizations, including the Red Cross, which had once space here during World War 11. Church groups have gathered here for worship services, clubs and community groups have rented it, and public school students have come here to relieve over- crowded classrooms. In recent years businesses have rented it for once space.

It is presently a historical museum run by the Madison Historical Society.

Directions: From center of Madison drive west toward Guilford. Continue past the traffic light at the intersection of Route 79 and Route One. Take the next right onto Academy Street. Immediately turn left onto Meetinghouse Lane. Follow Meetinghouse Lane past Memorial Hall on the left. Lee's Academy is the next building on the right.