



Craig Cyr of the Hebron Historical Society helps guide the Burrows Hill schoolhouse onto its new foundation Monday as the historic building was lifted off its old moorings and moved to a new and

safer location. Crane operator and owner Jim Barillaro at the controls just inches the building along from his seat in the cab.

Fran Funk

It was moving day for Burrows Hill school

By DEAN R. JACOBOWITZ
Chronicle Staff Writer

HEBRON — Local history buffs no longer have to fear the traffic on Burrows Hill Road.

The Burrows Hill School, a one-room schoolhouse at the corner of Burrows Hill and Schoolhouse roads, was gently lifted off its original dirt-and-stone foundation Monday and swung to a new, concrete foundation about 40 feet away, placing it out of harm's way.

"The day has arrived, and a

great day it is," said Henrietta Green, one of several residents who labored for several years to bring Monday's relocation project to fruition. She said it couldn't have come any sooner for the 250-year-old school, which had precariously stood four feet from the road's edge.

"Do you know just the other day someone was coming down the road and hit a tree, and that stopped them from hitting the school?" she recounted Monday while waiting for the Barillaro Crane Service opera-

tor to ready his equipment. "I was so afraid that would happen before we moved it. You know how those things are."

Also breathing a sigh of relief Monday morning was Marie Billard, whose personal ties to the school are unmatched by any other town resident.

If it weren't for her father, Edward A. Smith, the historic schoolhouse likely wouldn't have survived this long intact. Smith, who attended the school as a boy and whose

mother and sister taught there, took it upon himself to care for the school after it was closed in 1909.

"He sort of just kept an eye on it over the years," said Billard. "He was very active to see that if a window ever got broken, it got repaired right away.

"If the building got run down, it would look like it was abandoned and he felt it wasn't abandoned," she continued.

Billard said her father would

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LEFT: Hebron Historical Society member David Morrison helps guide the Burrows Hill School into place on its new foundation, about 40 farther from the edge of Burrows Hill Road where it stood for some 250 years. RIGHT: The crowd of townspeople and other onlookers are fascinated by the process by which the old schoolhouse is moved to its new location.

LEFT: Hebron Historical Society member David Morrison helps guide the Burrows Hill School into place on its new foundation, about 40 farther from the edge of Burrows Hill Road where it stood for some 250 years. RIGHT: The crowd of townspeople and other onlookers are fascinated by the process by which the old schoolhouse is moved to its new location.



LEFT: Marie Billard holds a donation box from the 1950s that was made for the school. Edith Smith of Hebron looks on with her cousin, Robert Smith of Norwich and Albert Billard. Marie Billard and Smith share a grandmother who taught at the school in the late 1870s. RIGHT: Susan Morrison, Virginia Peterson, Herrick Peterson and Don Robinson, members of the historical society are among the onlookers Monday.





LEFT: Marie Billard holds a donation box from the 1950s that was made for the school. Edith Smith of Hebron looks on with her cousin, Robert Smith of Norwich and Albert Billard. Marie Billard and Smith share a grandmother who taught at the school in the late 1870s. **RIGHT:** Susan Morrison, Virginia Peterson, Herrick Peterson and Don Robinson, members of the historical society are among the onlookers Monday.

Moving day for schoolhouse

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even play tour guide at the school once in a while, showing it off to younger generations.

Smith eventually turned the care of the school over to the Hebron Historical Society, which was established in 1968. He died later that year.

About two decades before he gave up his chosen assignment as the school's caretaker, Smith had constructed a small

collection box so people who stopped by the school during his occasional tours could donate funds for the building's upkeep.

Billard, who found the old box in her attic last week, brought it along Monday morning to show it off to the dozens of residents who braved the cold December air to witness the special event. By the time the school had been moved three hours later, Billard had

collected a number of donations ranging from \$1 to \$10.

That money, plus \$500 she donated herself, will be used toward a restoration project which society members will now undertake for the historic building. The society is eventually hoping to turn the school into a living museum — where students of today can get a peek into the education system as it existed during colonial times.

Green and Billard said the relocation project wouldn't have been possible at all had it not been for Hebron resident Clifford Wright, who gave the town the small parcel of land next to the venerable schoolhouse. The town, in turn, conveyed the property to the historical society, which then began preparing the land for the school's relocation.

"We were pleased to be able

to cooperate in this venture," said Selectmen Chairman Kevin Connors, who stopped by Monday morning to watch the event unfold.

To keep the appearance of the building unchanged, society members have moved the original granite blocks from the old foundation to the top of the new. Once grading and landscaping are complete, the modern foundation will not be visible.

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Even the school's blackboard — literally, a board painted black — was intact.

Also inside the school —

nailed to the floor near the doorway — was a bright red piece of wood. Green said it was put there to cover the old "tobacco hole," where colonial students — many of whom used chewing tobacco or snuff — would be required to dispose of their chew before coming to class.

Once the crane lifted the school off its old foundation, historical society Vice President Craig Cyr played the role of rigger, guiding the building slowly toward its new home as the crane operator swung his equipment around.

"For three years we've been waiting for some car to hit it and destroy it," Cyr said of the school, which is believed to be one of the oldest surviving colonial schoolhouses in Connecticut. "I'll feel better when it's there."

After more than an hour of careful work, Cyr and the others had their reason to feel better.