

After delays, one-room schoolhouse moved to new site

By CINDY MURPHY
Courant Staff Writer

HEBRON — After an aborted attempt last week and a couple of delays, a local institution achieved liftoff Monday afternoon.

Burrows Hill Schoolhouse, the oldest one-room schoolhouse in town and possibly the oldest standing one-room schoolhouse in the state, was lifted by crane and moved from Burrows Hill and Schoolhouse roads to a new site 40 feet away on Schoolhouse Road.

"Isn't that marvelous," said Henrietta Green, a member of the Hebron Historical Society, as she watched the crane swing the schoolhouse toward its new foundation. "Can you imagine that? It's like a little toy box."

Members of the historical society, fearing increased traffic on Burrows Hill Road, had been trying for the past several years to move the school from the intersection.

Organizers had canceled the lift originally scheduled for Dec. 16 because the crane broke down. On Monday, the painstaking procedure took place, but only after several minor delays.

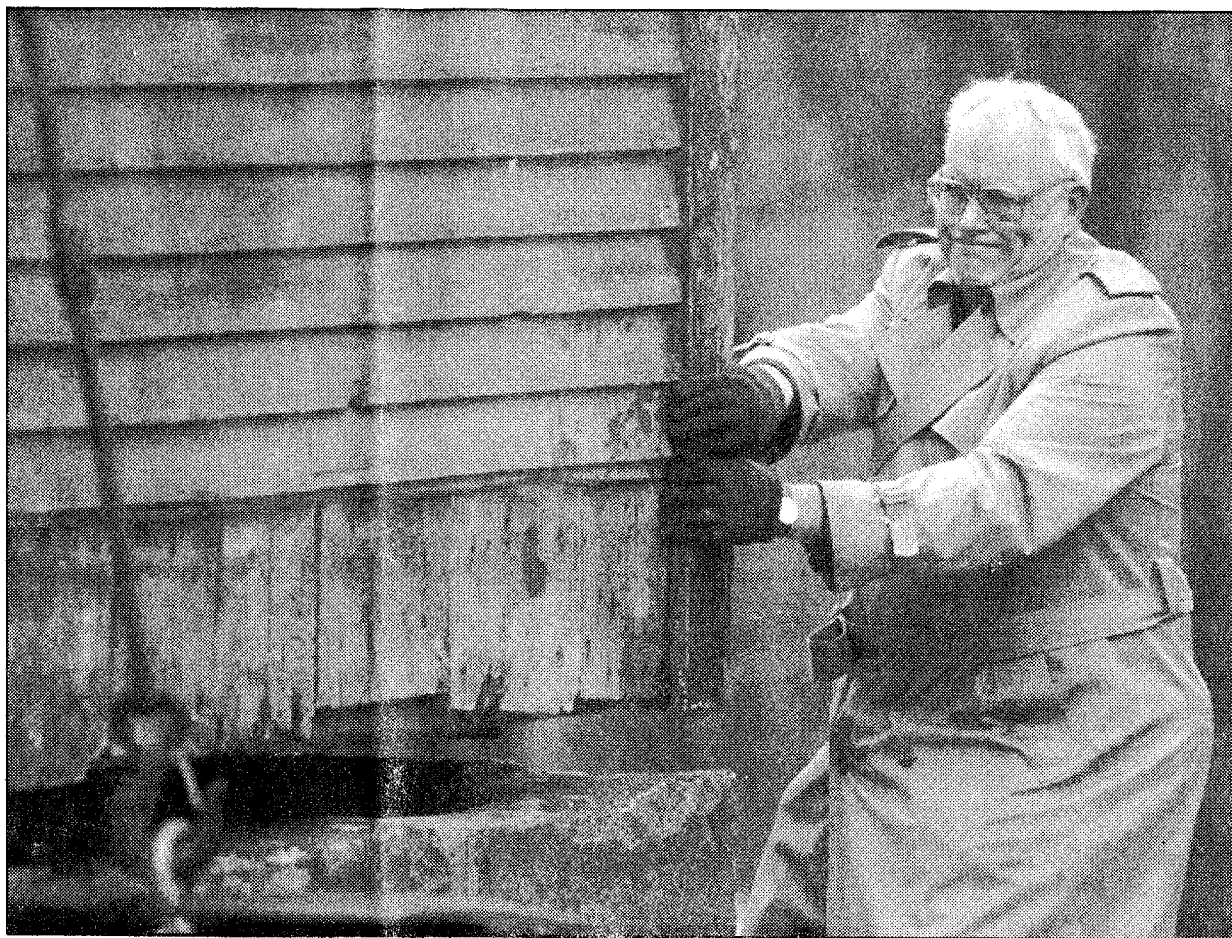
Crews waited until larger holes were drilled into the I-beams under the school to accommodate the crane's hooks.

The crane also had to be moved before the schoolhouse could be set on its new foundation. But when the workers set the schoolhouse down to reposition the crane, the 12-ton school shifted off one of the I-beams.

It took about two hours to lift the schoolhouse, reposition the crane and schoolhouse, then set the school on its new foundation.

Members of the society raised between \$6,000 and \$7,000 to move the school, and hope to raise more for its restoration. So far, they have received \$500 from a local family with ties to the school.

"My aunt Edna [Smith] was the last teacher when it closed in 1909,"



Tom Brown / Special to The Courant

■ Don Robinson, Hebron Historical Society member, helps to line up the Burrows Hill Schoolhouse on its new foundation 40 feet away. The one-room schoolhouse, which is the oldest in Hebron, was lifted by crane to its new site on Schoolhouse Road.

said Marie Smith Billard, whose family donated \$500. Edward A. Smith, Billard's father and a former student at the school, cared for the school from the time it closed until the historical society took over its maintenance in the 1960s.

Local historical society members said they believe the school was built between 1725 and 1735, but no one is sure whether it is the oldest standing schoolhouse in the state.

According to an article that appeared in a December 1957 issue of

"The Lure of the Litchfield Hills" magazine, the oldest standing schoolhouse was the Little Boston School in East Lyme, built in 1734. However, this is disputed by Florence S.M. Crofut in "The Guide to History and Historic Sites of Connecticut," who argues that Hebron's was first, having been built in 1712.

Burrows Hill is one of three, free-

standing one-room schoolhouses in town. The Gull School, on Route 85 near the Colchester line, and the original Gilead Hill School, on Porter Road, still stand. The other one-room schools in town — Hebron Center School, Amston School, the White School, Jones Street School, the Jagger School and the Lord District School — all have been converted into houses.