



Staff Photo

This is how Westfield Academy appeared shortly after it closed.

...and how it appears today after expansion and renovations.

Renovated Former Academy to Be Auctioned

By Arlene Edwards

Staff Reporter

WESTFIELD — Almost anyone in Westfield can tell you that the two-story frame house that Lee and Linda Vincent live in was once the Westfield Academy.

But few of them can tell you much more than that.

Most of the history of the academy was lost as the people in Surry and Stokes counties who knew it died off, one by one.

Even Linda Vincent, who is the third generation of her family to live in the house, can't tell exactly when the academy began operating, when it stopped, who was taught there or by whom.

I don't know the name of even one teacher, she lamented recently.

And, she says, what little she does know is "— just a miracle."

She found what few records are available on

the academy in a little metal candy box that was tucked away in the back of a closet "behind a lot of other things" a few years back.

Among the yellowed papers that were in that box is a hand-written "article of agreement" to establish "a graded school" on three acres donated by Mrs. Vincent's great uncle, T.A. Sarles.

The agreement was signed on Jan. 9, 1883 by Sarles and six other men in the community and the amount of money each was to pay to get the school started was scribbled in beside his name.

Sarles and J.L. Smith (Mrs. Vincent's great-grandfather) were each supposed to pay \$125; J.H. Lowe, \$62.50; James M. Jessup, S.M. Flippin and J.H. Hunter, \$31.25 apiece; and J.T. Scott, \$25.

The money — all \$431.25 of it — was to be used to build a two-story structure 18 feet wide by 24 feet long.

Other papers show that James Scott was the

builder and that he used \$315.42 worth of materials and charged \$250 for his labor.

There aren't any papers available, however, to show when the first term began, how many students attended, what their ages were or where they came from.

Mrs. Dellie P. Ownes, a local teacher and amateur historian, thinks the academy was probably limited to students of high-school age since a special tax district had been set up many years earlier to support an elementary school in the area.

By 1902 — and probably several years before that — the academy was no more.

Mrs. Vincent's grandmother, Mrs. Etta Smith Simmons, bought it that year from her sister, and her sister had bought it some time before that, when it was no longer being used as a school.

Mrs. Vincent's mother, Mrs. Ethel Simmons

Pell, inherited the house. And Mrs. Vincent, an only child, in turn did, too.

Mrs. Vincent had lived there all of her 49 years.

But she and her husband are going to be moving soon, to be closer to his business in Mount Airy and to their farmland near the old White Sulphur Springs resort property.

And they're offering the old academy — with the bay windows and front rooms and porches that have expanded it — for sale at public auction Saturday.

The auctioneer, Garson McMillian, is scheduled to start selling off some of the treasures — round top trunks, crank telephones, corn shellers, dough boards and the like — at 10:30 a.m.

The house itself and its three-acre site at the intersection of N.C. 89 and the Pilot Mountain Road are to be sold at noon.