

Old Murdock Senior Center

The Old Murdock name has been synonymous with the support of education in Winchendon since its beginnings. Ephraim Murdock bequeathed the Winchendon Academy (formerly located at the triangle of School and Front Streets) to the town. His son, Ephraim Murdock Jr., through his will, bestowed a trust fund to be used for the establishment of a school to serve the population of Winchendon over ten years of age. Murdock became the Town's first public high school.

Murdock School was ceremoniously dedicated on June 21, 1887 and opened for the education of Winchendon's youth on August 31, 1887. Constructed of pressed brick and finished in quartered oak, the architectural quality was considered outstanding and, at the time of dedication, it was the finest and best equipped building in Massachusetts. The building contained four 'recitation rooms', a library, art studio, physical and chemical laboratories, cloak rooms, basement, assembly hall, trustee and committee rooms and a principal's office.

The Class of 1961 was the last graduating class at Murdock, leaving the building in June. In September of that same year, students entered the newly constructed Murdock Junior-Senior High School across the street from "Old Murdock". While no longer a high school, Old Murdock remained in use as an educational facility for students over age ten in 1995, when it was closed. While vacant, the building fell into such disrepair that demolition was considered. Voters rejected this idea, but the building continued to fail. By 1998/1999, Old Murdock had become one of the Ten Most Endangered Buildings in Massachusetts.

The Community Development Commission sought funds for repairs to the building through Community Development Block Grants, the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the Robinson-Broadhurst Foundation and the Town of Winchendon. From this funding, the roof was re-slatted and the clock tower restored to its glory by James Abare. The building housed the Top Fun Aviation Museum on the first floor. In October 2005, The Town of Winchendon assigned use and control of Old Murdock to the Council on Aging for use as a senior center. An architectural study done that same year concluded that the building was in good structural condition. The Winchendon Council on Aging moved into the building in December 2005. Through the funding from the above mentioned groups, this majestic building continues to implement the dream of Ephraim Murdock in the education of Winchendon's citizens over age ten.

Part of the Old Murdock's charm is this historical significance to the town. Many of our current seniors attended Murdock at some point in their educational careers. The ability to re-enter Old Murdock now give our seniors a sense of "coming home". To see this grand building still in use, invokes a continued feeling of pride for the town and its elders. The staff of the Center take great joy in sharing the history both the history of the building and showing off its glory.

Taking Old Murdock from "near demolition" to the grandeur of today, several considerations were taken to retain as much of the character as possible, to ensure both historical accuracy and safety. Great care has been take both inside and outside. In continuing the building's maintenance, further care will be taken to keep the building safe while maintaining historical integrity as much as possible.

The Old Murdock Senior Center addresses many issues facing our seniors such as how to live on a fixed income, dealing with the rising costs of housing, medicine, and health insurance premiums, transportation, food and fuel. Many programs dependent on state and federal funding are faced with lowered available funds. Transportation is a big issue for many seniors – being able to provide safe and reliable transportation has been a long time goal of the Center. We need to plan ahead for our seniors' needs. A large percentage of our elders want to remain in their homes as long as possible. Seniors expect a certain level of town resources to be available to them. While it is impossible for the Center to address every need, we strive to be a one stop resource for our seniors and offer assistance with those needs and services.

We want to continue providing this level of service to our seniors now and for generations to come. Currently the Old Murdock Senior Center provides on-site meals, meals on wheels, medical transportation, insurance counseling (including Mass Health and Medicare), applications for fuel assistance and SNAP (food stamps). We also provide resource information (nursing home care, in-home care and housekeeping services), health screening (blood pressure clinics), fall prevention classes, and seminars on elder law, financial planning and preparing for retirement. We also have a food pantry and clothes closet available.

While our focus is on the seniors of Winchendon, as a service-oriented group, we have provided needed services for members of our community. We have provided emergency medical transportation, food pantry, and meals to those in need, as well as housing for homeless individuals.

The Old Murdock Senior Center is a nationally registered historic building. It would be a great loss to the town and its residents if funding is unavailable.

Please ... help us keep the Old Murdock building available for seniors now and for generations to come. Plan to attend the **Town Meeting on Monday September 28th at 7:00p.m.** in the Murdock High School Gym. We need your support to continue supporting our seniors!