

## ALL ABOARD!

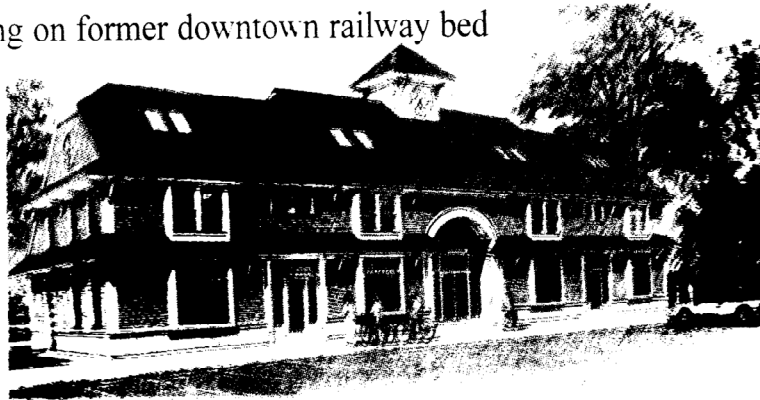
'Topsfield Station' in the making on former downtown railway bed

by Faye Raynard

**T**he last train through Topsfield may have ceased operation in the early 1980s, but that won't prevent property owner Brian Woodland from building a facility reminiscent of the railroad era in town. A new building will take shape along the former railbed tracks as crews hired by property owner Brian Woodland begin work on Grove Street.

Contractor Richard Thompson Sr. and son were busy preparing the site last week where the Essex

■ Station. Page 11



**Topsfield Station \ An architect's sketch of the proposed building to be constructed on Grove Street. It will house retail business on the first floor and office space on the second floor.**

The barn on Grove Street being dismantled.

photo by Faye Raynard

## 'Topsfield Station' is on right side of tracks

From Page 1

County Coop grain sheds once thrived.

General Contractors Peter Rakip of Boxford and Steve Knight of Danvers will be in charge of erecting the new retail/commercial building. First, another former coop barn owned by neighbor Jen Collins-Brown will be moved to her property next door on Grove Street.

An architect has designed the new 2-story building to resemble an old railway station, according to Rakip. It is appropriate, since the former railbed fronting the property is being eyed for development of a 'rails to trail' conversion. The first floor will be used for retail space and the second story for office space.

"The Bicycle Shop will be a tenant," according to Woodland. Plans are to move the Main Street business to the new facility once it opens. The owner of New Meadows Market next door to the existing bicycle shop plan to expand their business into the Bicycle Shop site on the Main and Central Street corner.

To make way for the construction on Grove Street, the first barn on Grove Street was dismantled piece-by-piece, to be stored in a trailer and eventually rebuilt elsewhere in town, Rakip said. It is all being done with the approval of the town's Historic Commission, according to the general contractor. After the second barn on the site, owned by Collins-Brown, is moved closer to their home, construction will begin on the new building.

It will equal the footprint of both of the former grain barns, according to the builder. The new structure will be handicap acces-

sible and include an elevator.

The plan is to call it "Topsfield Station", said the builder.

Rakip said he has every confidence that this venture will be an asset to the town. He had worked for Woodland when he rebuilt and expanded the former Evans and Evans property on 56 Main St.

"This building will have parking in the Village Shopping Center parking lot and also have access from Grove Street," said Rakip. "There will be a lot of wide overhangs on the building with a clock tower on the top."

"It is going to be a fun project—a great thing for the town," said Rakip.

### Last train to Topsfield

Contractor Thompson engaged in the site work told *Village Reporter* that the last train he saw go through Topsfield "was about 1980." A severe storm took out part of the railbed near the Danvers line and after that the railway ceased operation in town. Thompson remembered that a prospective businessman once brought three freight cars and a caboose to the railway siding near the freight barns on Grove Street.

"He intended to set up little shops in those rail cars, but that didn't work out with the shopping center nearby," according to Thompson. Eventually these railcars deteriorated and became an eyesore. They were crushed and taken away, with the exception of the caboose, which ended up on a flatbed and was hauled away for some anxious buyer.

If the project remains on schedule, occupancy in the new Grove Street 'Topsfield Station' could occur early next spring, Rakip said.