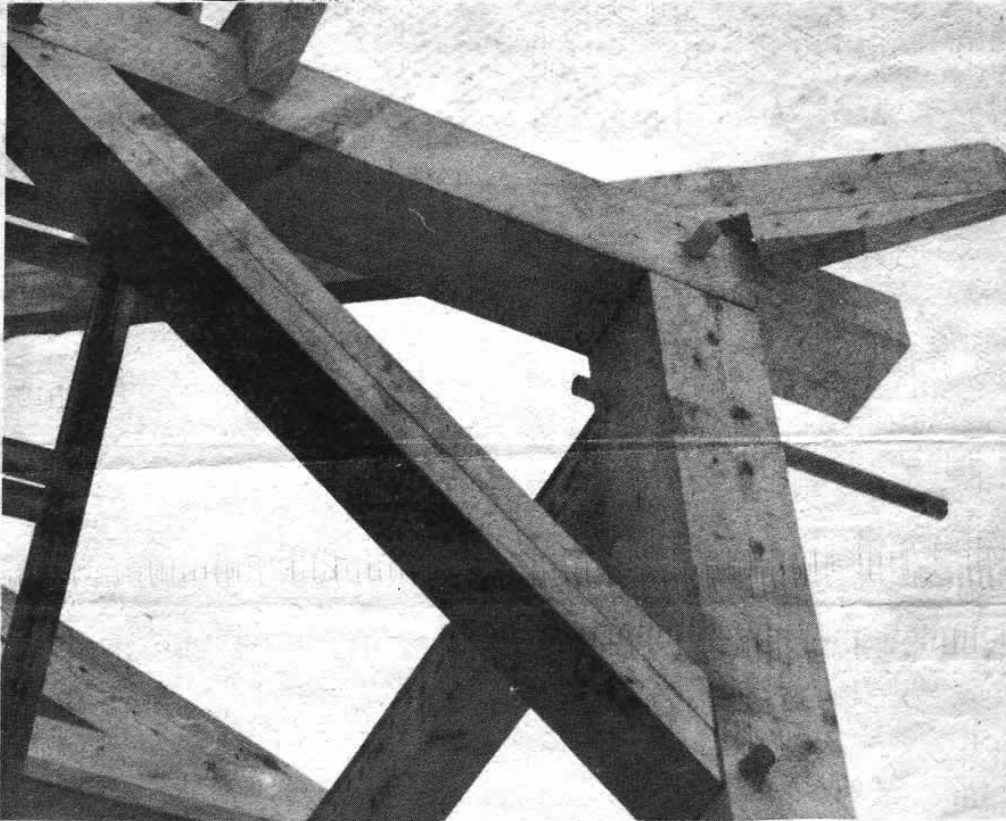


# Whitneyville Library Taking Shape

By Robbie Dirsa



**The upper corner of the Whitneyville Library's new cupola shows the old time craftsmanship which is going into the duplicate. Mortise and Tenon joinery of large beams made today's 2 x 4's look like toothpicks. Notice the pegging of the joints rather than using nails. (Dirsa Photo)**

The Whitneyville Library's cupola no longer is the crumbling structure it once was. It is being replaced by an exact duplicate created and constructed by the Steeple People of Machias.

As one rides down the Kennebec Road the new cupola is a prominent feature in Belden Morse's back field. Its yellow colored pine makes it stand out in the snow and for those who have been up close the old world craftsmanship certainly gives a lasting impression.

When Belden Morse and Bill Hudson said they were making an exact duplicate one wonders to what extent were they referring. They said that the building would be exact even down to nailing and pegging. Bill Hudson said, "Where they used nails, we use nails, where they used pegs, we use pegs."

"This is the first steeple we have actually removed but we have repaired a lot where they sit," explained Belden. He added that the company enjoys this type of historically accurate work and hopes to do more in the future.

Steeple tools haven't changed in a hundred years, Bill Hudson said. I am using my grandfather's tools for this project. This cupola was built with the old fashioned mortise and tenon joinery and then pegged. This type of joinery is all done by hand. The only part where we will be using power tools to any extent will be in cutting the trim to length.

They estimate the actual building of the cupola will take about 160 manhours to complete. The inclusion of the removal and replacement of the structure will bring the total to about 260 manhours.

In the spring the Steeple People hope to build a 26' x 46' shop building to house future projects of this nature. They also hope to have a custom milling operation where they can duplicate old ornamental pieces. Belden Morse says there seems to be a growing demand for this type of duplication especially of Victorian era ornaments. He thinks the current interest in re-vitalization has brought a lot of interest in restoration.

For those who miss the cupola on the library, spring will bring it back to its proper place. The townspeople should be looking at this one at least as long as they enjoyed the original.

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