

PLEASE VOTE TO SAVE THE GALE SCHOOL AT SHAKER VOTING ON MARCH 4

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To The Daily Sun,

Approximately 20 years ago, I received a phone call from Sue Roberts, a longtime resident, teacher and historian in Belmont. My only encounters with her before this call were at past school district meetings. (You could say we had differing viewpoints and opinions on many school projects proposed back then.)

Imagine my surprise when she asked if I would join her and others in Belmont to save the old mill from the wrecking ball. Long story short, I did and we saved the mill.

After, Sue and I found that we had a number of things in common, one of which was a love of history. In the coming years, we spoke together of the preservation of the Gale School on several occasions. Again, we agreed on the importance of preserving this piece of history as we did the mill.

Like the mill, the Gale School has been pretty much abandoned, ignored and eventually judged not to be worth saving by school officials. The people who comprised previous school boards, and those today have lost sight of what the Gale School once was, see it only as it is presently, and have no vision of what it could be. They have failed as custodians of the building, allowing the foundation to be undermined by the weather and the passage of time. The outside to become shabby and unattractive, until finally they found it "in the way." Yet our group the Save Our Gale School Committee hired structural engineers found the building to be SOUND despite the years of neglect.

The Save Our Gale School Committee has remained loyal to the idea of restoration and reuse of the building. We have tried for years to convince the various school boards of its historical significance and potential. We have managed to delay the demolition for many years. However, this will be our last "at bat." We cannot do it alone, yet we have done so much over this past year.

Should the people vote "yes" to preserve it, we will continue to work with the school district to find grants, donations of money, time, work and materials to restore it. With

the money the school board has proposed that it would use to demolish and take it away, (\$70,000-plus) we could replace the foundation and start the restoration process where it presently stands. They also are prepared to use another \$30,000 of unexpended funds to erect a new storage building in the approximate location that the Gale School currently occupies.

Why should we spend this much money to take down a perfectly sound, historically significant structure and replace it with, what?

My choice is to leave it where it is and to replace the foundation ... it has been there for over 100 years, and will last 100 more. The school board told us that it doesn't have to abide by the voters' choice should they choose to preserve the building. This will be a grievous mistake on their part. We will fight such a decision by them.

Please — vote to save the Gale School at the district meeting on March 4. Take pride in your history and preserve what is left of it.

Ken Knowlton

Belmont