



The New York Times/Jim Estrin

Probate Court room in Stamford's Old Town Hall with mural by Delos Palmer showing justice as a blind woman.

Stamford's Old Hall May Have a Future in Art

Continued From Page 1

would bring to life the historical and cultural era when an artwork was developed."

Mayor Serrani said the museum's concept would be broad.

"Besides being a first-class art museum, we also plan an 'Eye on Stamford' series which would feature artists from the Stamford area, changing shows relating to the city's ethnic heritage and industry and perhaps a 'Hall of People' that would include memorabilia relating to famous people who have lived in Stamford."

The Mayor said that various municipal boards had been receptive to the museum concept and that a panel was being appointed to follow

'I felt it was a perfect building for a museum.'

through. No decision has been made as to whether to charge admission to the museum.

In Enfield, the former Town Hall is a seven-year-old museum featuring artifacts relating to Enfield's old carpet industry, its onetime Shaker religious community and other aspects

of the town's historical past. The hall, a Greek revival structure, was built in 1774.

"What we offer is a collage of Enfield history," said the president of the Enfield Historical Society, Tony Secondo. Since 1987, the building, which served as the Town Hall from 1849 to 1890, has also housed the nation's first Purple Heart Museum, which is dedicated to wounded veterans, though there are plans to have a separate building for this museum.

In Morris, the former Town Hall has displays that include tools, dolls and ice-harvesting exhibits. The building, a 128-year-old Gothic frame structure that served as the Town Hall from 1861 to 1932, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It was the town's first firehouse before it was converted to a museum in 1961, said Walter France, the president of the Morris Historical Society.

Both the Enfield and Morris museums are closed during the winter.

In Chester, theatrical productions, concerts, lectures, town meetings and high school graduations are among the activities that have been held in the 196-year-old building that served

as the Town Hall from 1848 to 1960. Originally a Congregational Church, as were many such meeting houses, the building was restored through the efforts of the Chester Historical Society in 1971.

"We're booked weeks in advance," said Edmund Delaney, who along with his wife, Barbara, is a president emeritus of the society. "There's something going on in that building almost every day."

In Norwalk, not everyone is happy with plans by a developer to use space in the city's old City Hall as part of a projected 10-story hotel complex. The developer, Katz Realty, has proposed using the 77-year-old City Hall, which was vacated last year, for retail shops, a restaurant, office space and a health club.

In Stamford, though, no opposition is expected to the plans to convert the Old Town Hall into a museum. "It's almost as if the architect, in drawing plans for the building in 1904, conceived it as a museum," Mr. Pacter said. "We think it's the best possible way to preserve what is undoubtedly our most cherished building."