

## Former principal pleased with renovation

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SHARON — Mort Kaufman is one of many who once believed that the dilapidated Wilber School building should be torn down.

After a personal tour last week of the renovated ornate brick building, now an apartment complex, Kaufman realized he was wrong.

"It really does look very, very nice," he said.

The long-time Sharon resident said the company did a wonderful job restoring the building.

"I am happy to see this wonderful old building being used in such a positive way -- it is finally going to be used for people to live there and enhance the town," Kaufman said.

From 1965-1981, Kaufman served as the principal of the Intermediate School, which was housed in the Wilber School building at 75 South Main St.

Even after all the years, he said he still felt a bit of nostalgia when he walked the halls. He stopped into the new apartment that is in the "classroom" on the second floor where he once taught junior high science. He also visited his old office on the first floor, which is also now an apartment.

"It is very modern and very, very nice looking," Kaufman said.

He was particularly impressed with the row of lockers in the north wing.

The faces of the lockers were removed, refinished and reinstalled as part of the historic renovation of the building, according to a representative for the developer, Josh Cohen, development director for Beacon Communities.

The lockers are located in the halls of the north wing.

"It is a really cool effect," Cohen said.

An old fire door was also retained from the building. It is in the process of being refinished and will be hung in the lobby.

When they got into the building early last year, most items had already been removed, Cohen said. They did find some old textbooks and chairs, which were preserved and are on display both in the model apartment and in the clubroom.

The school's safe was still in the main office because it was too difficult to remove during other rehab procedures, Cohen said. Eventually the contractor was able to bring it outside and crack it open with an excavator, he said.

"There were lots of little Red Cross badges, some stop watches from gym class and some hall passes -- it was just a lot of little trinkets," Cohen said.

All of the items were saved and will be displayed in the new library/reading room, which will be renamed The Trophy Room, he said. The room is in the main entrance of the building where the school's trophies once were held. The trophy cases were all restored and will be used to display the items from the safe as well as other historical items found in the building.

For Kaufman, 81, the tour of the renovated building brought back memories of his final days in the school.

He said when the doors to the school finally closed, he had a combined feeling of sadness and celebration.

"We had a wonderful faculty and it was a very nice place to work," Kaufman said. "It was kind of special in many ways."

In 1956, Kaufman first came to Sharon to teach junior high science at the Pleasant Street School. In 1965, after running classrooms in three different locations in town, Kaufman was moved into the Wilber School and appointed principal. The school educated the town's fifth and sixth graders. When the school closed, Kaufman went on to serve as principal of the East Elementary School until his retirement in 1989.