

# Old Town Hall gets new cupola

By Ryan Jockers  
Staff Writer

A 2.5-ton cupola hung by wire from the end of a 100-foot crane yesterday morning as workers standing atop the old Town Hall building on Greenwich Avenue waited to guide it into place.

The scene attracted the attention of passersby, who filled the avenue on a sunny Saturday, the first day of June. It was a fine day for the re-coronation of one of the town's most regal public buildings.

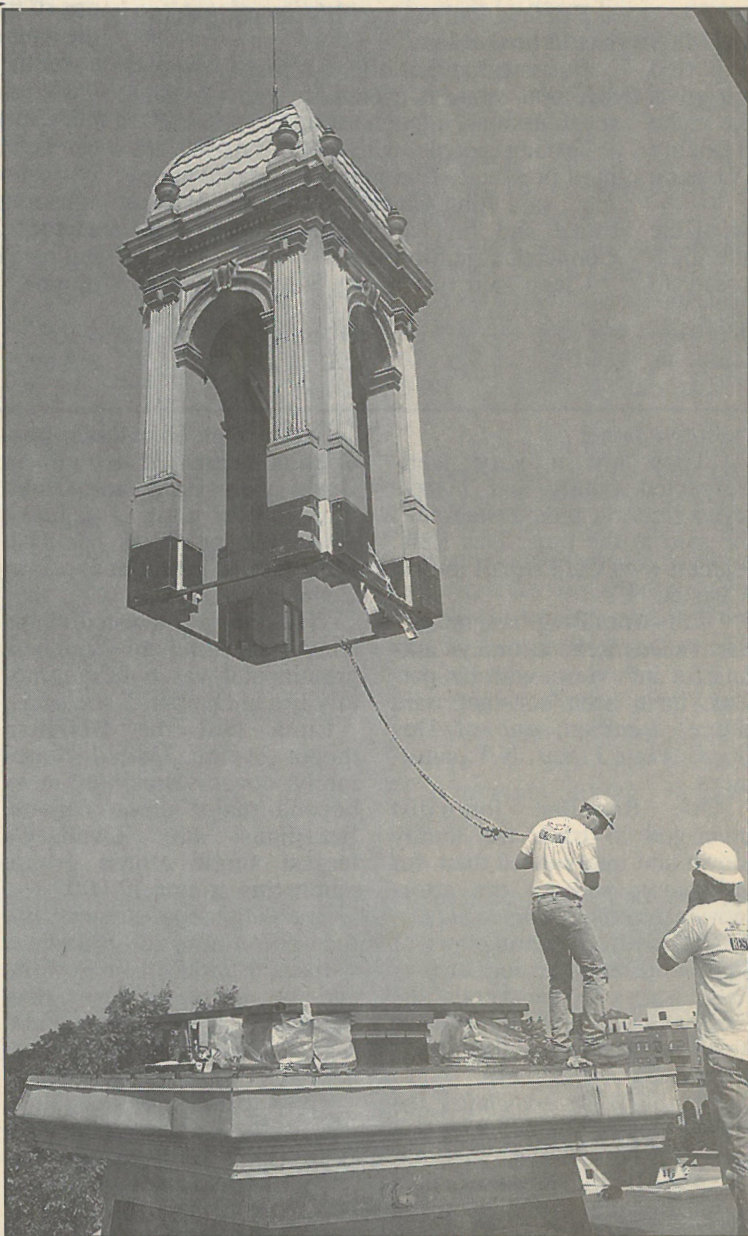
"She's the queen of our facilities," the town's public works commissioner, Marcos Madrid, said after the cupola had been secured to the top of the building, which is undergoing a \$2 million renovation.

The cupola arrived yesterday on a flatbed truck in two pieces. It came from Toronto, where a copper works company built it — a replica of the ornamental structure that previously graced the 97-year-old building, which is on the state and national registers of historic buildings.

After workers assembled it, the cupola was lifted high above the roof of the old Town Hall — where it seemed to hang motionless for several moments, its copper exterior gleaming against a blue morning sky — and was then slowly lowered onto its base, a few minutes past 10:30 a.m.

In a similar fashion, a flagpole was lifted and lowered onto the top of the cupola, and then an American flag — the one that had been draped in front of Town Hall on Field Point Road since Sept. 11 — was fastened to it. Catching the west wind, it was the first time a flag had flown from the building in three years.

Alan Monelli, the superintendent of building construction and maintenance division of the Department of Public Works, said placing that specific flag atop that building seemed appropriate, particularly in light of the completion



Bob Luckey Jr./Staff photo

**Don Ruel, of Kronenberger & Sons Restoration Inc. of Middletown, guides the new cupola into place yesterday as it is lowered by crane atop the Senior/Arts Center. At right is project supervisor Pete Hansen.**

of the cleanup of ground zero a few days ago.

"It belongs up there," Monelli said. "This is the centerpiece of Greenwich Avenue."

The building's restoration is nearly complete, with the addition of the cupola being the last major component of the project. The copper on the beaux-arts-style building was redone and the brick was washed, giving the building a polished look. Windows still need to be replaced and the roof on a few sections of the building need to be fixed.

The deteriorating condition of the building came to the attention of town officials in 1996 during an inventory of

town-owned buildings. Officials noted that water was seeping through the roof and that bricks were loosening as mortar crumbled.

The cupola was deemed structurally deficient three years ago and town officials imposed a moratorium on flying a flag from its flagpole.

The building, given to the town by Robert Bruce, a cotton merchant whose former residence is now the Bruce Museum, served as the Town Hall until 1977. Four years later it was converted into a joint center for seniors and the arts.

Monelli said the renovation should be completed in a few weeks.