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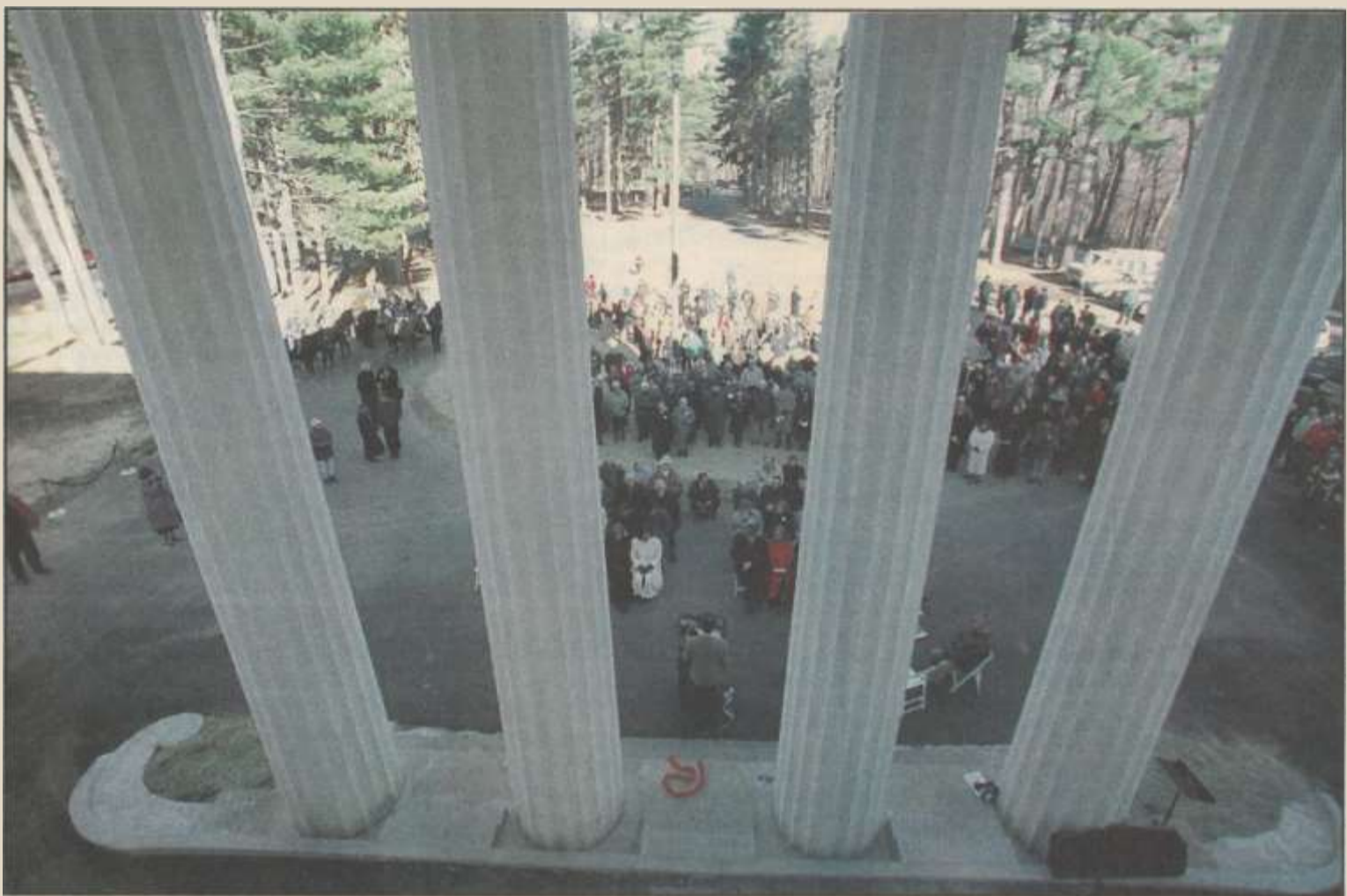
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THE HERALD PRESS



SPECIAL TO THE HERALD PRESS — BOB DOMBROWIK

Many braved Saturday's cold for the ribbon-cutting for Middletown's Long Hill Estate and Wadsworth Mansion.

At long last, Long Hill

Middletown opens refurbished banquet facilities to the public with a grand ceremony

By **JOHN CHRISTIE**
Staff Writer

MIDDLETOWN — After eight years and \$5 million worth of renovations, the Long Hill Estate is open and ready for business.

More than 100 officials and guests attended the mansion's ribbon-cutting ceremony Saturday, gasping at the splendor of the once derelict mansion.

The sun gleamed off the building's concrete walls and pillars, like the home of some Roman senator plunked in the middle of the woods.

An actor dressed as Col. Clarence S. Wadsworth, in a pea-green military uniform, stood hand in hand with an actress playing the colonel's wife, Katherine Fearing Hubbard Wadsworth. They greeted guests as they filed through the mansion's marble atrium.

The estate was built between 1908-17 for Wadsworth, a Middletown philanthropist, and

MANSION continues on A4



SPECIAL TO THE HERALD PRESS — BOB DOMBROWIK

Members of the Governor's Footguard are at attention Saturday during the ribbon-cutting ceremony for Middletown's Long Hill Estate and Wadsworth Mansion.

Middlefield fights fight to Rout

By **MARTY BODWICZ**
Staff Writer

danger
recons-
ment.

MIDDLEFIELD — The town One filed an appeal last week con- Branse testing the decision to issue a tence o permit allowing Route 66 to be the otl widened from two lanes to legal is four. and sal

"We're bitterly disappointed The and we think this is a wrong who is that needs to be righted," said propos Mark Branse, the town's attor- town's n e y . g e r e d

The state Department of amphit Environmental Protection's skink - proposed permit, which would the ski allow the Department of Branse Transportation to fill in wet- Yet lands along the Mount Higby ruled t Reservoir portion of the road, area al has two "alleged defects," study Branse said. Branse

Artificial wetlands would be The created nearby as 2.1 miles of _____ the road, which is considered

Cleric take ti

By **AMIRZIA**
Associated Press Writer

decade

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — A prominent Muslim cleric whom India freed to end the Indian Airlines hijacking has backed off his threats against the United States, saying he is no Osama bin Laden.

Maulana Masood Azhar partially retreated Friday from comments he made in a fiery speech two days earlier in Karachi, where he told thousands of people they should destroy the United States and India.

"I want Muslims to unite against Indian terrorism being inflicted on Kashmiri people," Azhar told The Associated Press in a telephone interview from his hometown of Bawalpur. "I am not Osama. I am just fighting for Kashmir."

He said India is the only tar-

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MANSION: Middletown opens Long Hill Estate with ceremony

Continued from A1
his wife. It was built in the neo-classical style, all the rage then for public buildings and mansions.

Now it has traded purposes; what was once a private mansion has become the city's banquet facility and conference center. Couples have already signed up to use it for weddings. The mayor has reserved it for a July concert so the public can appreciate it between its various private functions.

The public certainly appreci-

ated it Saturday. Guests wandered from room to room, many amazed at how far the building's come.

'It's so big you could get lost. I'm trying to decide which room to go to first.'

Jesse Wafts
Common Council member

"I'm ecstatic," said Joyce Kirkpatrick, chairwoman of the Wadsworth Building Committee.

"Everyone deserves a great pat on the back for this."

Common Council member Jesse Salafia said, "It's so big you could get lost. I'm trying to decide which room to go to first."

Assistant Director of Public Works Sandra Pasculano said, "The citizens have saved a won-

derful treasure for the city."

Pasculano said her favorite part of the building was the east dining room, which was laid out with a four-table-long spread of cheeses, fruits and cakes.

Council member Phrances Szewczyk remembered taking the New Year's Day tour of the estate with between 4,000 and 5,000 others.

"They were all impressed," she said. "Hey, I'm ready to move in."

The crowds gathered outside for the ceremony, where two companies of the Governor's Footguard — formed in 1771, it's the oldest military unit in the United States — stood dutifully at attention.

The first company hoisted the

flags, wearing red uniforms inspired by the British Army of the Revolutionary War era.

The second company wore bright blue and sat upon tall, brown horses.

Mayor Dominique S. Thornton had railed the arrival of the foot-guard a bit of a "reunion for the city." During Mid-dletown's colonial days, when the state had two capitals — Hartford and New Haven — two units of footguards would meet in the city and swap duty as escorts for the governor as he traveled from one city to the other.

One highlight of the ceremony was a reading of a poem called "Ghosts Come On," by an anonymous poet, which summoned the image of the building's former occupants looking down on the ceremony, including the self-styled "Prince of Sweden," a homeless man who lived in the mansion while it was abandoned.

The estate has a long and winding history. The mansion remained in the Wadsworth family until 1947, when it was sold to the Religious Order of Our Lady of the Cenacle. It remained an ecclesiastical center for 39 years until it was sold again and things went downhill.

From 1986-94, the estate went through multiple owners and fell into neglect, damaged by fire, water and vandals until it was almost unrecognizable.

The city bought the estate in 1994 and began the long process of renovation.

While the building is open for business, building committee member W. Lee Osborne said, those renovations will continue through June.

"On the inside there's a few little things, and on the outside there are some very big things to do," Osborne said.

Inside, workers from local restoration firm Kronenberger & Sons have to lay carpeting on stairs, put up draperies and finish the second floor for the business intending to lease the space.

"We will announce the occupant at the end of the month," he said.

Also, the original Wadsworth furniture will be brought up from storage in Washington, D.C., refinished and reupholstered for use in the mansion.

The biggest items remaining will be the landscaping of the mansion's yard and paving of the parking lots, which should be finished in April.

Thornton — as well as former mayors Sebastian Garofalo, Thomas Serra and Maria Madsen Holzberg — took up scissors with the building committee to cut the ribbon strung between two of the mansion's pillars.



SPECIAL TO THE HERALD PRESS

Mayor Domenique S. Thornton leads a crowd Saturday into the Wadsworth Mansion, a banquet facility refurbished and owned by Middletown.



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