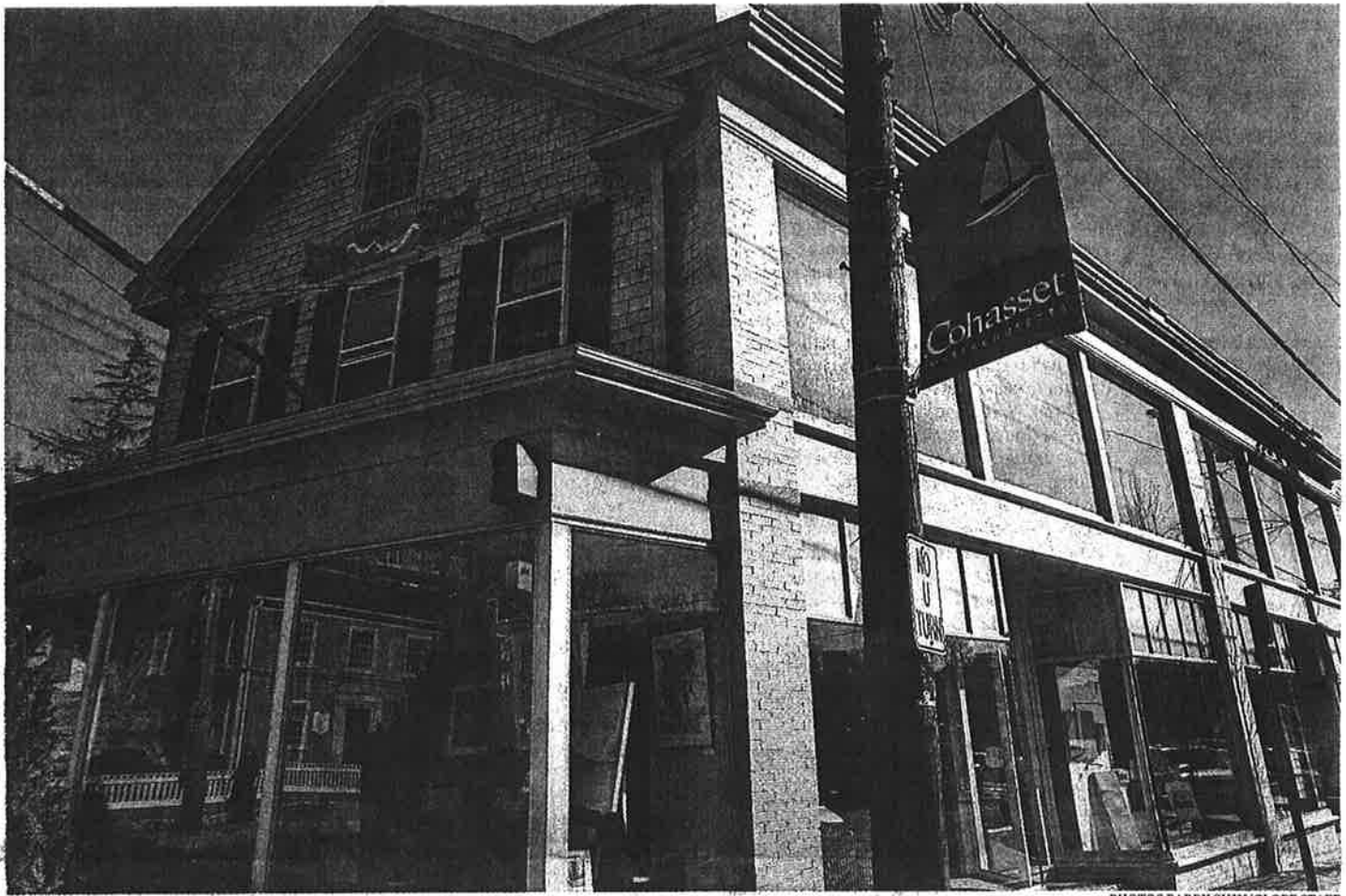


Symbol of N.E. charm, building gets new life

THE BOSTON GLOBE

A local bank buys an icon twice used on movie sets, plans to keep vestiges of old Cohasset Hardware

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PHOTOS BARRY CHIN/GLOBE STAFF

Cohasset Hardware, which opened in 1849 and closed in 2007, has been purchased by Pilgrim Bank. (Above) Frank Campbell, president of the bank, said it plans to honor the building's historic past and brushes with cinematic fame, by exhibiting mementos of its past.

By Johanna Seltz
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

COHASSET — When movie scouts went looking for the quintessential New England village for the 1987 screen adaptation of John Updike's "Witches of Eastwick," they chose Cohasset for its picturesque common, its historic meetinghouse, and its handsome homes.

They also loved the town's vintage hardware store.

Cohasset Hardware, which also charmed its way into the 1992 Goldie Hawn movie "The HouseSitter," closed in May 2007 and had been emptied for

sale, its future uncertain. But it now looks like the building will retain its old New England essence, as its new owners promise to honor its historic past and brief moments of cinematic fame while renovating for office and retail space.

"An important factor of [our] purchase is to maintain the historic integrity of the building and display the artifacts associated with it," said Frank Campbell, president of Pilgrim Bank, a small local bank that recently bought the 5,000-square-foot landmark in Cohasset Village for \$800,000.

"This [building] is an icon on Main Street," Campbell said.

Cohasset Hardware was originally opened as a

tin shop in 1849 and expanded eight years later into a full hardware store specializing in fashionable kitchen parlor stoves, according to records kept by the Cohasset Historical Society. It remained a hardware store until competition from the big chains forced it to close, said Tina Watson, whose family ran the business for more than 150 years.

Watson remembers the movie scouts who came to her family in the mid-1980s to ask about using the store in "Witches of Eastwick," a comic horror fantasy about three dissatisfied women living in a fictional Rhode Island town.

"We had to close the business for a couple of

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Vintage hardware store to get a new lease on life

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days, but it was fascinating," she said. "Of course, our store wasn't air-conditioned, so they blew air-conditioning in through the back door.

"And they didn't like how the floor squeaked and they wanted to spray the floor boards with water so they would swell up and stop squeaking. We said no, and they lived with it."

Watson said her father sold the filmmakers \$3,000 worth of summer furniture, which was featured prominently in the scene where Jack Nicholson is blown out of the meetinghouse and down Main Street past the hardware store.

"They had these big fans going and blew [the furniture] down the street with Jack Nicholson," Watson said. "My father was freaking out, but I said don't worry about the furniture — it's theirs now."

The filmmakers replaced the wooden "Cohasset Hardware" sign with a similar one that read "Eastwick Hardware," and left it behind as a memento of the film, which costarred Cher, Susan Sa-

randon, and Michelle Pfeiffer, as well as Nicholson.

A few years later, the makers of "The HouseSitter" also chose to shoot some scenes in Cohasset for the romantic comedy, starring Goldie Hawn and Steve Martin, which was based in the fictional Massachusetts town of Dobbs Mill.

"They came to us and said, 'We want to use your building, but we don't want people to think it's the same building as in "Witches of Eastwick,"' " Watson recalled. "So they totally changed the outside of our building. The big windows upstairs they made into little windows. And then they had to put it back the way it was. The money they spent!"

Once again, the Cohasset Hardware sign was replaced, this time with "Dobbs Mills Hardware." And once again, the filmmakers left the sign as a souvenir.

Watson, an artist whose paintings are still exhibited in the street-level windows of the building, also left behind all the signs for the bank to display, as well as an old scale used to weigh nails, the old iron safe, and rolling wooden ladders used to reach



PHOTOS BY BARRY CHIN/GLOBE STAFF

Frank Campbell, Pilgrim Bank president, inside the Cohasset Hardware building, which still has the signs created for the two movies in which it appeared and an old scale (below).

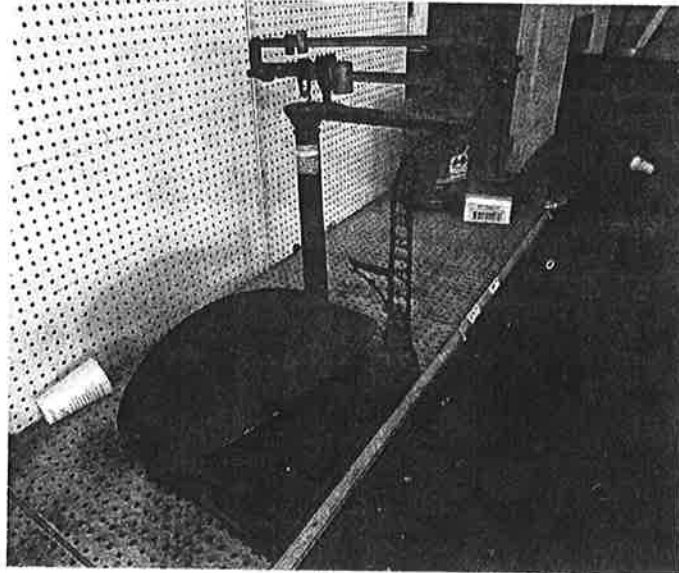
stock on the highest shelves. There's also a kerosene pump that's still bolted to the floor and connected to an underground tank. A sign on it reads: \$2 a gallon.

"It would be nice to have a little tribute," Watson said. "It's always going to be the hardware store to people in town."

Campbell said he's not sure how the historic items will be incorporated into the building's renovation, but they'll be there. The building's history is an important part of the decision to buy it, he said.

He said Pilgrim Bank is growing and wanted to stay in Cohasset Village. The community bank's headquarters is next door to Cohasset Hardware and shares a common wall. The bank, which has assets of \$160 million, saw a 16 percent growth in deposits in 2008 and 9 percent last year, Campbell said.

"The bank was born and raised here; we've been a hometown bank in Cohasset since we were formed in 1915," he said. "Most of the board members are Cohasset residents and many grew up in town. They're excited



that the bank acquired the building and can grow and expand and not have to think about leaving Cohasset Village."

Campbell said the bank, which has another branch in town on Route 3A and one in Marion, has not decided exactly what to do with the building, but expects to occupy part of it and rent the rest for offices or retail use.

"We're hoping by revitalizing the hardware store, it will contribute to the vibrancy of the village," he said.

The building needs to be brought up to modern building code, Campbell said. And it needs a thorough cleanup. Though the bank has hauled away dozens of bags of discards, it has hardly dented what's left inside — everything from a giant

stuffed dog and a Christmas elf, to bags of "lawn food," scores of old paint cans, and piles of repaired windows and screens, some with the owners' names still attached.

"Structurally, the building is in great shape," Campbell said. "The way the structural engineer described it to me was that it had very good bones."

Lynne DeGiacomo, executive director of the Cohasset Historical Society, said her organization is thrilled at the bank's plans.

"It's a key building," she said. "It was sad to see the hardware store go, but it will be nice to have [something] operating there again. And it will be nice to see the building preserved."

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