

Landmark School Purchases Former Windham Site



Marilyn Jackson

VIEW OF THE SCHOOL — Putney Selectman Peter Shumlin holds a painting of the former Windham College for Dr. Charles Drake, (left foreground) president of the Landmark School, to see. Others in the photo are, from left, attorney Potter Stewart Jr., Putney Town Manager John Bagge and the newly named president of the planned college for dyslexic students, James Olivier. The Landmark School finalized purchase of the former Windham College site Friday.

BY MARILYN JACKSON

PUTNEY — Landmark School finally officially owns the Windham College campus.

Two hours of signing papers and passing checks at Vermont National Bank in Brattleboro Friday signified the end of a year-long attempt by the Beverly, Mass., school for dyslexic students to acquire the campus as the site of the nation's first college for dyslexics.

At the same time, Landmark

announced Friday that it has appointed James Olivier, 33, of Massachusetts to the post of president of the new Landmark College.

The final cost to Landmark was \$604,991.30. The school paid the U.S. Department of Education \$400,000 for the campus buildings — except for the Fine Arts Building, which is still privately owned. The department had foreclosed on the mortgage for

the buildings when Windham College went bankrupt.

The four good Samaritans (George Heller, William Graham and Earl Stockwell of Putney and Edward Dodd of Westminster) who bought the land last fall from New Yorker Donald Wheeler sold that land for what it cost them, plus their expenses — a total of \$204,991.30.

Putney Town Manager John

Bagge, who has worked for five years to try to get the campus occupied again, said he was "at a loss for words" after the transactions. Bagge said that after the ups and downs the project had gone through in the past year, having Landmark sign the final ownership papers for the college was "anti-climactic."

Putney Selectman Peter Shumlin presented Landmark Headmaster Charles Drake with a painting depicting the Windham campus as it might have been in happier days. The painting formerly hung in the college president's office and was bought by

Nat Darrow when college property was auctioned off, Shumlin said. The painting shows a few more buildings than exist at the campus.

Shumlin was the prime mover behind getting the land from owner Wheeler so it could be sold to Landmark.. Wheeler, who bought the land for \$80,000 in an auction in October 1981, several times changed his mind about details of the land sale during months-long negotiations.

Dr. Drake said as soon as weather permits, Landmark will begin working on the roofs of the buildings at the college quad. Drake said the flat roofs, which leak, will not be replaced with peaked roofs, since the school has found a company that can restore and recover them so they will be tight.

The college still hopes to open with a few buildings ready in September 1985, but the Town of Putney's failure to get a state grant that might have paid for for much of the needed replacement of the sewer system may delay that opening somewhat, Landmark officials said.

Landmark will seek other funding for the sewer project.

Landmark College's new president, James Olivier (pronounced Oliver), is a Middlebury

College graduate who is also a Boston attorney. Oliver has worked at Landmark as a teacher and supervisoroff and on for years, and his wife, also a Middlebury graduate, works there now.

"There is absolutely everything to do' to start up the new college for dyslexic students, Oliver said Friday. He is in charge of developing the entire college, or "seeing to it that it comes to life," he said. Oliver added that he and his family expect to move to the Putney area within the next year.

After the papers were all signed, the group of about a dozen people involved went off to have a celebratory lunch in West Brattleboro.

"The beginning is all over, and it's very exciting," said Landmark's Assistant Headmaster, Charles Harris.