

**Webster Historical Commission  
Meeting Minutes, May 25, 2021**

A meeting of the Webster Historical Commission was held on Tuesday, May 25, 2021 via remote participation / Zoom in accordance with Governor Baker's emergency order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c.30A, §20 due to the public health emergency relating to the Corona virus pandemic.

**Present:** Chairman Ted Avlas (joined the meeting at 12:12 p.m.), Clerk Elaine Davies, Members Curtis Cleaves and Olivia Mason.

**Absent:** Member Kelly Baldarelli.

**Also Present:** Ann Morgan, Director of Planning & Economic Development; Ted Tetreault, Building Commissioner.

1. Mr. Cleaves called the meeting to order at 12:04 p.m. Attendance of the Board was taken by roll call: Ms. Davies – Present; Mr. Cleaves – Present; Ms. Mason – Present.

**2. Action Items**

a. **Draft Meeting Minutes – February 23, 2021, March 23, 2021.** Ms. Morgan noted that Mr. Avlas had submitted edits which have been made. Mr. Cleaves asked if there were any additional edits. Ms. Davies noted two edits of the March 23<sup>rd</sup> minutes. There were none. Motion to approve the minutes of February 23 as drafted and the minutes of March 23 as drafted and edited made by Ms. Davies, seconded by Mr. Cleaves. Motion passed unanimously, 3-0 by roll call vote (Ms. Davies – yes; Mr. Cleaves – yes; Ms. Mason – yes)

**3. Old Business**

a. **Tercentenary Marker – Relocation Plans:** This item was tabled.

b. **Membership Update:** Ms. Davies noted that the Commission still needed members. Mr. Cleaves noted that getting people to volunteer for boards can be difficult. The Commission will keep trying to encourage people to join.

**4. New Business**

a. **Schedule Workshop:** Dates and times for a future workshop were discussed. The workshop would be open to the public. A Saturday morning was suggested. Ms. Davies noted that there might be rules regarding weekend meeting dates and recommended that the Town Committee Handbook be reviewed for guidance.

Mr. Avlas joined the meeting at 12:12 p.m.

The Commission continued its discussion about scheduling a workshop. Saturday, June 26<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. was determined to be the best option assuming that a Saturday meeting date would be allowed. Several ideas for a location were discussed. The Library Large Meeting Room was preferred as a first choice and the Local History Meeting Room as a second choice. Ms. Davies stated that she would contact the Library to schedule a room.

Mr. Avlas noted that the agenda for that workshop should include regular business meeting items such as meeting minutes and other quick updates. Ms. Davies suggested that the Commission place an announcement in the Webster Times inviting the general public to come and participate in the workshop. She volunteered to take the lead on drafting the announcement and placing it in the paper.

Ms. Morgan was asked if she would be facilitating the workshop to which the answer was yes. She would work with Mr. Avlas to develop an outline and develop advance materials for members to review prior to the day of the workshop.

- b. **World War II Volunteer Air Observation Station – Memorial Athletic Field:** Ted Tetreault, Building Commissioner, joined the meeting. Ms. Morgan displayed pictures of the existing conditions.

Mr. Tetreault reviewed the condition of the structure noting that it is in extremely poor condition including significant rot throughout the foundation, roof and interior. He noted that the structure was a public safety hazard. It's likely to cost more money to repair it than to demolish it. Ms. Davies asked about the costs. Mr. Tetreault stated that it would cost about \$5,000 to \$6,000 to repair it and about \$500 to demolish it. Mr. Cleaves asked where the funding would come from to which Mr. Tetreault stated that he didn't know but that the Commission could ask if there were funds available through various programs managed by the Town. Ms. Davies asked if there was anything inside the building to which Mr. Tetreault stated no.

Mr. Cleaves asked if building replica and moving it to another location would be feasible. The Commission recognized that moving the existing structure wasn't a possibility given the extreme deterioration. Building a replica at another location was discussed. It was suggested that the old Armory site, now being developed into the Samuel Slater Experience, would be a good location as it right across the street. Mr. Cleaves pointed out that funding would need to be found to build a replica but there would be ongoing maintenance costs as well. Mr. Tetreault pointed out that there would also be ongoing security issues as well to keep the building from being vandalized or broken into.

Mr. Avlas asked who was responsible for the structure. Mr. Tetreault noted that a veteran's group had expressed interest in renovating the structure, had developed a plan, but had recently decided not to proceed with the project. Ms. Morgan displayed the concept that was submitted to the Town Administrator from the Veterans Agent. The proposed work would be completed by Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School under the supervision and direction of the veteran's group. Mr. Avlas stated that he would reach out to Paul Brodeur, Veterans Agent, to get a better understanding of the issues and see if the group would be interested in partnering with the Commission. The Commission could seek funding through a Town Meeting warrant article in October. Mr. Tetreault recommended that the structure be fenced off to protect the public and prevent vandalism.

The Commission discussed the possibility of developing and installing a commemorative historic panel showing pictures and providing information about the Station as an alternative to building a replica or trying to repair the existing structure. It was noted that a replica wouldn't be historic but that rebuilding the structure was difficult. The Armory grounds might be a good location as it across the street and a memorial was already on site. This could be incorporated. Mr. Avlas noted that he had reached out to John Mrazik who told him that the last surviving person to have manned the Station, Norman Deptula, is still in living Webster. Mr. Deptula could provide more information about the Station which could be incorporated into an interpretative panel. Mr. Avlas stated that he would reach out to him.

5. **Staff Report:** Ms. Morgan noted that the Governor's emergency orders regarding public meetings will be lifted on June 15, 2021. The Commission discussed the options for going forward given the various schedules of each member. Ms. Mason noted that she could meet any time after 4:30 on a weekday.

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6. **Other:** Ms. Davies noted that Town Meeting had recently approved a \$5,000 budget for the Commission. That money could be used towards moving the Tercentenary Marker sign to Memorial Beach. Another suggestion would be to use those funds towards hiring an intern to assist in the updating of the Historical Survey. Ms. Mason stated that many interns are unpaid as they are working towards college credit. There are several colleges in the area that might offer such internship programs. She offered to look into the matter.
  7. **Next Meeting Date:** June 26, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. to include regular business and a workshop. Location to be determined.
  8. **Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Ms. Davies, seconded by Mr. Cleaves. Motion passed unanimously, 4-0 by roll call vote: Mr. Cleaves - Yes; Ms. Davies - Yes; Ms. Mason - yes; Mr. Avlas - yes. The meeting was adjourned at 12:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



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Ann Morgan, Recording Secretary

#### EXHIBITS

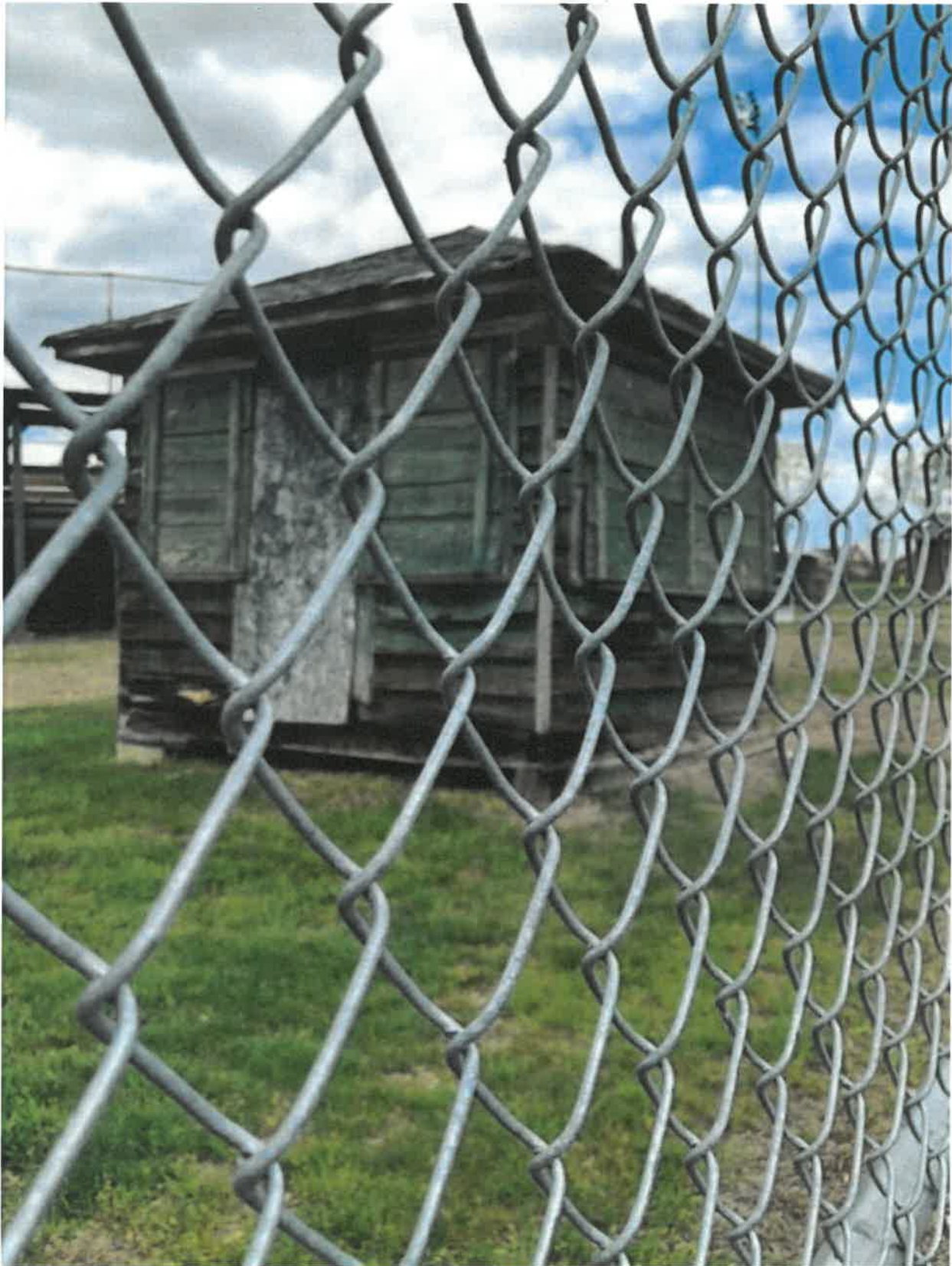
- Civil Defense Structure Sector 3C Webster - Restoration Concept Plan; no date; 3 pages.
- World War II Observation Station, Corner of Ray Street and Memorial Park Drive; color photos taken by Town Hall staff; May 13, 2021; 6 pages.

World War II Observation Station  
Corner of Ray Street and Memorial Park Drive  
Site Photos—May 13, 2021





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World War II Observation Station  
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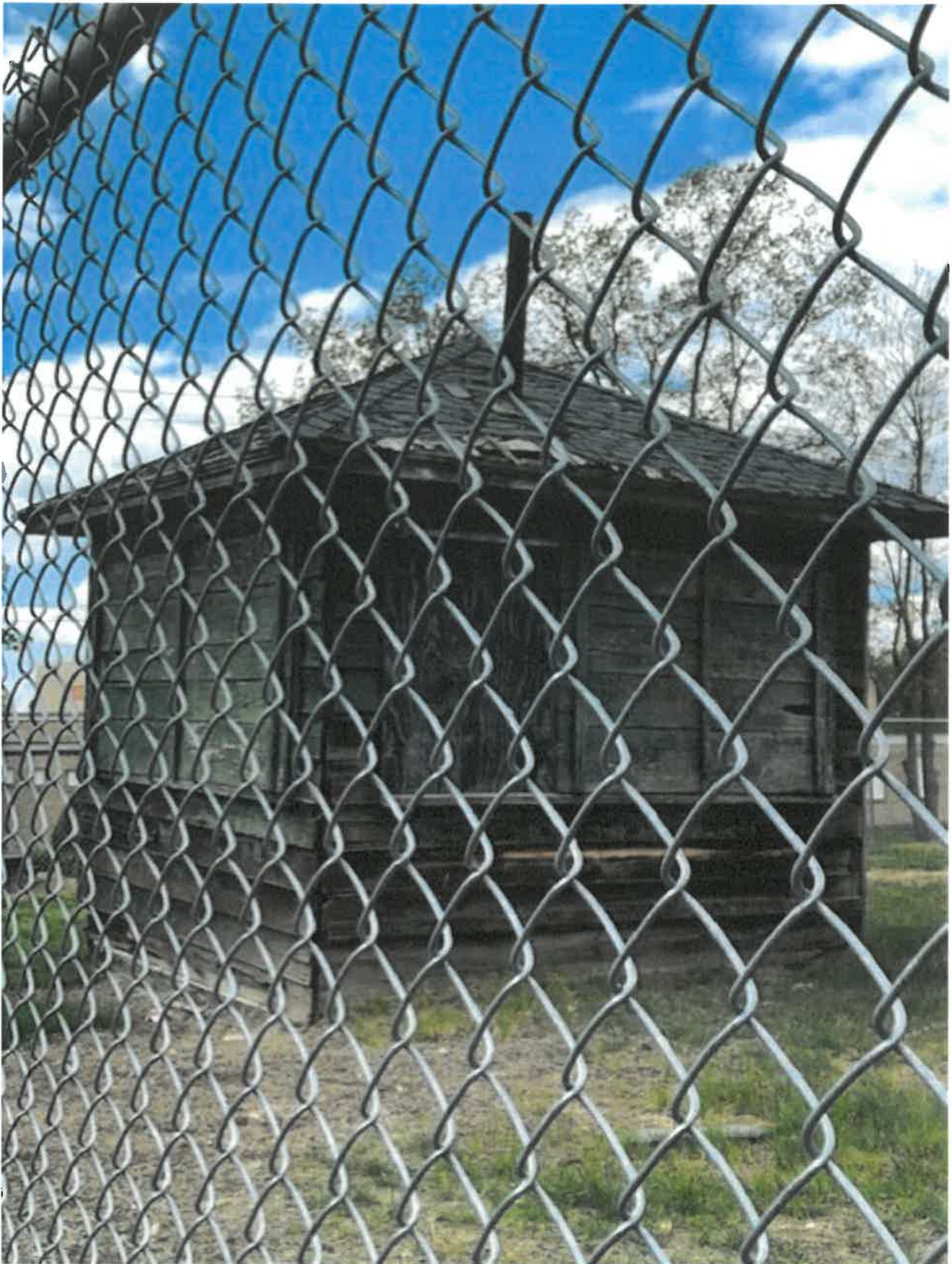


World War II Observation Station  
Corner of Ray Street and Memorial Park Drive  
Site Photos—May 13, 2021





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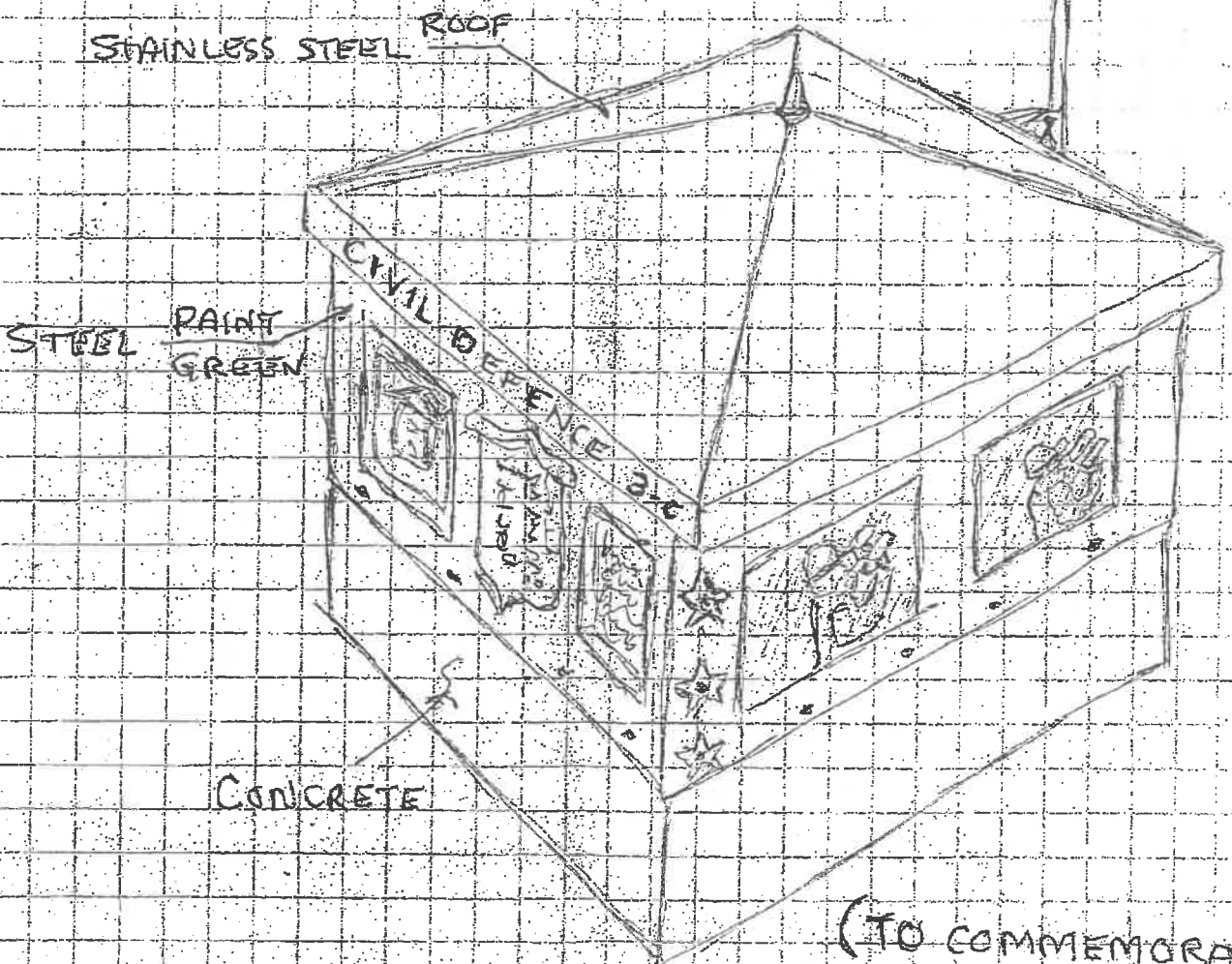
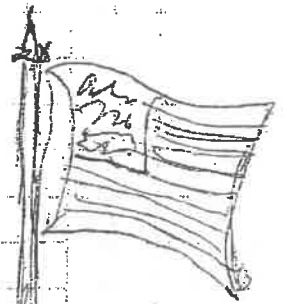


# CIVIL DEFENSE STRUCTURE

## SECTOR - 3C WEBSTER



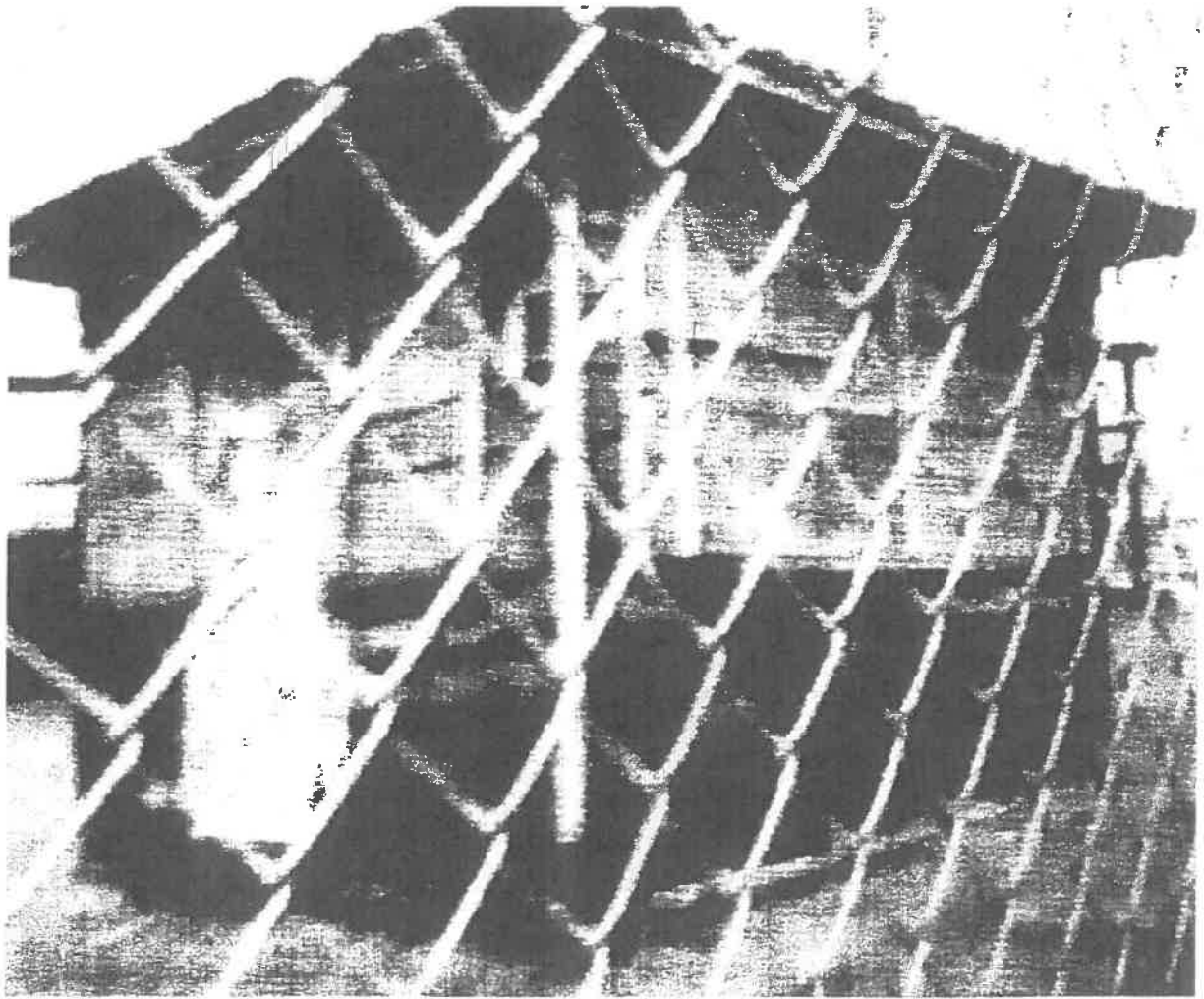
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INSIDE





## Pro Patria

This small unassuming building located at the intersection of Dresser and Ray Streets, was the site of Webster's Aircraft Observation Post which was manned twenty-four hours each day for the duration of World War II, (1941-1945).

Regardless of the weather, Webster's Army Air Forces, Warning Service Observers, including a cross section of Webster's citizens plus many World War I Veterans would scan the skies during daylight and listen for the sound of large aircraft during darkness. If a suspicious aircraft was detected, they would phone the pertinent information (altitude, direction of flight, etc.) through a "hot line" to a regional office where the data was readily recorded.

At times, it was difficult and inconvenient to search the skies for enemy aircraft that never made the foray from occupied Europe to New England but it was definitely worth the effort because it was "For Our Country, Pro Patria!