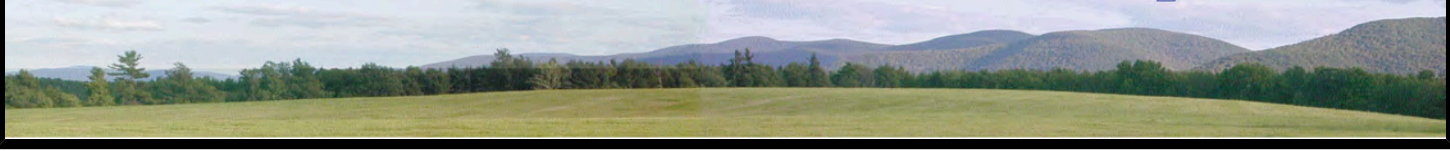


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Owlsville Schoolhouse

Kristen V.H. Wyckoff

We think the Owlsville Schoolhouse was built in 1858, and we have maps dating back to 1866 showing Schoolhouse District #2. It is located on the corner of Flat Creek Road and Kingsley Road (Kingsley Road was originally Owlsville Road).

The Gilboa-Conesville Central School was built in the 1920s, and therefore the small local schools were closed and the land given back to the original owners. The Wyckoffs had kept a good roof on it and used it for storage, and that is probably what saved it all these years. It was reborn last year when we renovated the Owlsville Schoolhouse so our daughter and son-in-law had a place to live.



The Owlsville School as it appeared before restoration. Photo by Kristin Wyckoff

Doris Steinhardt, a member of our historical society, had told us that they would put old shoes in the foundation of buildings to keep out witches, and she had brought in a pair of shoes found in the old Manorkill Church while having the structure moved. It was very interesting. As superstitions are handed down from generation to generation (and the Gilboa area was well known for its folklore and superstitions), I was of course on the lookout while my nephew and daughter were crawling around underneath the building trying to get plumbing hooked up. I was not surprised when they found old shoes in the foundation of this schoolhouse—they found a big sole to a shoe and then a whole bunch of little shoes!

I wanted to put these historical little shoes in the Gilboa Museum and this is where we had a disagreement. My husband, Walter Wyckoff, felt they should go back under the foundation because that's where his ancestors had put them, and probably for a good reason! Remember, I told you earlier that the Gilboa area was well known for its folklore and superstitions.

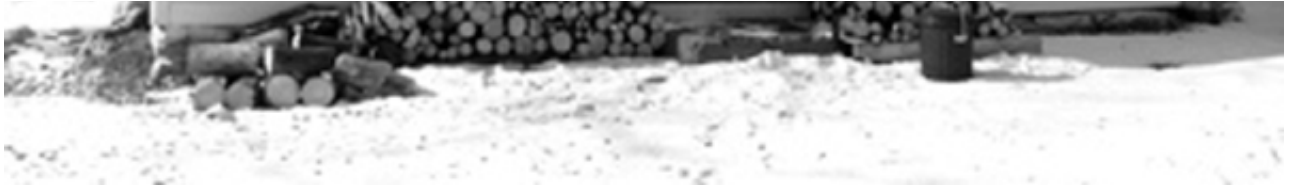
My daughter and nephew agreed with him that they too wanted to keep out the witches. I was lucky to get the schoolmaster's worn-out sole because all the rest remained in the foundation.

I spoke to Mildred Wyckoff Kelley and Rosemary Wyckoff Richtmyer (recently passed away) about going to school there before the "big" school was built; they both recollected sleighriding down Wyckoff Road to school in winters. They both vividly remembered having a sleigh crash at the bottom of Wyckoff Road and ending up in the creek! Fortunately a neighbor was going by Flatcreek Road and heard the screams and came to their rescue. The bridge at that time was just a couple of planks and was hard to steer the sleigh over. Helen Wyckoff (their aunt) was their schoolmaster at the time. Helen Wyckoff Carson went on to teach kindergarten at Gilboa school for the next 40 years.

Previous schoolmasters that I found were Clarence Cornell in 1900 and Arthur Southard, 1904. Thelma Serrie Terrell mentions in a video taped recollection that her mother was one of the students and later taught school there. Among the students names were many Wyckoffs, Lewises, Spragues, Baileys, and a Daniel Ellarson.

It also stated a Floyd Baker was teacher in 1904. He was paid \$236 for the whole year. That year the roof needed repair of nine squares totaling \$36.00—Cyrus Stilwell and Lev Baker did the work.





The Owlsville School in its new life as a cottage home. Photo by Trista Wyckoff

So far, no one can tell me why it's called Owlsville. I know of no Owl family (that is, Owl with a capital O). I suppose if you use your imagination and had been on that dark and twisty road on a stormy night, you might well believe something Owly to have happened!

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