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Forks in the Road Schoolhouse Status Report

Linda Stratigos

The Forks in the Road Schoolhouse District was formed 180 years ago in 1827 as District #7 in the Town of Blenheim. The Schoolhouse, which is located on the fork of South Gilboa and Lumber Roads, was built 168 years ago, in 1839. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places four years ago. Ray Smith, the field rep for the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, has said that it is the most intact one room schoolhouse that he's ever come across.



Forks in the Road Schoolhouse, courtesy Linda Stratigos

The building, which is in good condition thanks to the efforts of the Forks in the Road Committee, which was made up of local residents who cared for it from the time it closed sometime around 1935 until the 1970s, is exactly as it was 168 years ago. It contains one wainscoted room which has many of the original desks in it. The well-worn wood floors carry the patina of children's footsteps and the washstand with the children's cubby holes are still in the small front hallway. There are lithographed roll-up maps on the walls with the names of countries such as Siam, Rhodesia, and Burma. The outhouse, out back, still functions. Three years ago, thanks to a grant from the O'Connor Foundation and funds from the Town of Gilboa which is the current owner, the roof was replaced and minor repairs were done to the foundation. Two years ago, James Orlando took on the clean up and organization of the building as his Eagle Scout Project. With the help of the Gilboa Girl Scout troop, his parents and some friends, they washed down and repaired the desks, catalogued the old books there, built new cabinets, and cleaned up the interior so that it shines. And last year, Gerry Stoner and Ellen Thorn gave part of it a quick coat of paint.



The new whitewash, courtesy Linda Stratigos

Many of the old attendance books, treasurer reports, minutes from Board of Director's meetings as well as old text books survive. They have been temporarily removed for protection.

For many years the building was used as a polling place by the residents of South Gilboa. Unfortunately, the building is not handicap accessible so voting was moved to Town Hall. Since that time, the building has seen little use.

We have long thought that the building should be opened for local schools to tour and for at least a couple of days for the general public . . . how different schools were 150 years ago! We're hoping that someone in the community would like to join a Forks in the Road Schoolhouse Committee so that it can be shown off as the important building that it is.

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