

CLINTON'S LANDMARK BUILDINGS

CHS Landmark: 2486 Salt Point Tpk



Former Clinton Corners Schoolhouse c.1848.

CLINTON CORNERS' ONE ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE LIVES ON

By Craig Marshall

From 1922 to 1930, Maud Talleur Bartles attended grade school in a small wood frame school in Clinton Corners. Used as the hamlet's post office since 1963, the building looks much the same as it did when newly built as a schoolhouse in 1848 and as a result, it has Landmark status granted by the Clinton Historical Society. Its simple design echoes that of all eleven one-room schools that once flourished in Clinton. If you squint your eyes when driving by, you can imagine the single room inside where kids of all sizes, from first graders to eighth graders, were taught by one courageous teacher. Students came to this "District 8" school from Washington and Stanford as well as from Clinton, since districts did not follow town boundaries. Maud's first teacher in 1922 was a Miss Bennett, who boarded at a nearby farm. When Maud was in the 7th

grade, a new teacher, Ruth Woodin, took her place. Other teachers over the years included Julia Nucci and Evelyn Tompkins.

Maud remembers that she and the other students brought their own books, paper, crayons and other supplies. The gold stars pasted on the bulletin board to reward high grades were furnished by the teacher. A high point each year was the posting of school papers in the upstairs of the Grange Hall during Community Day, where ribbons were awarded to those judged "best." For many, the low point was studying for the New York Regents exams; it was as anxiety provoking then as it is today.

But student's duties included more than just studying: they were assigned to

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bring wood in from the woodpile for the pot bellied stove and to haul pails of water from the neighbor's well next door. Winters were harsher then, but school was rarely cancelled and the wood stove kept everyone reasonably warm. Maud and the other girls wore dresses even in cold weather, but wore warm cotton stockings underneath. The boys wore galoshes with felt liners; they removed the galoshes at the door but wore the felt liners all day. In winter, jackets were needed for a bathroom break. There were two separate out-houses, one for boys and one for girls.

Students were expected to do their work, but there was plenty of time for fun too. Maud and other children hooked up their sleds to the wagons of farmers who brought milk to a creamery that stood across from what is Friends Park today. There were visits to the schools at Prospect Hill and Pleasant Plains by hay wagon, where games like baseball, "May I?", and "Prisoners Space" were played and races were held. Maud recalls one recess game in which boys lined up on one side of the schoolhouse, the girls on the other, and a ball was tossed over the roof. The catcher would run to the other side and tag someone. Every Christmas, the students made decorations for the school tree and parents came to admire the handiwork.

Maud's classmates included three Germond families (Helen & Emily, Homer and Beatrice, and John), Robert and James Hancock, Ford Harper, Emily Travis, the Fitzharris's, the Burdicks', and the two Barnhart sisters. Maud's father was a photography buff and came to the school every year to take a class picture. Today, they are among Maud's treasures.

Two decades later, in 1950, Mary Jo Nickerson had just moved to Clinton with her family from Staatsburg, where she attended first and second grades in a modern brick school building with multiple classrooms and indoor bathrooms. She recalls having "culture shock" when she started attending the Clinton Corners Schoolhouse, which at that time offered only grades one through six (grades seven and eight had been moved to Pine Plains). "It was like a major step back in time! One

room, six grades, and one teacher." Not to mention the bathrooms. There had been improvements since Maud attended the school. Now separate bathrooms were attached to the rear of the school. But there still was no plumbing. Mary Jo explained: "There were china bowls with seats with a hole in the bottom. They were mounted on a concrete cylindrical platform and tank. The tanks had to be pumped out from time to time. During hot days, few children chose to 'sit a spell'!"

When Mary Jo arrived, she found her teacher to be Ruth Woodin White! "She was the most wonderful woman," Mary Jo said. "She played the piano as the children sang after reciting the Pledge of Allegiance." Each fall and spring, she took the classes on outings, hiking along the railroad tracks and adjoining stream, pointing out crayfish under rocks, identifying all of the wildflowers by name, along with any and all wildlife that was encountered. "She was the writer, producer and director of the annual play that was conducted outside, with parents as the audience and with each child having a part. She also coordinated school lunches."

Mary Jo remembers that her teacher
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Students at Clinton Corners School c. 1957



*Back row - l-r; Perry Webster,
Toby Ricciardelli,
Jane Schulhoff*

*Front row - l-r; Zip Guernsey,
Bill Mc Morran,
Patty Kenney*

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(Ruth) assigned all children to bring in a certain food on certain days, so a group lunch could be prepared. "Perhaps Wednesday was tomato soup day, Thursday was baked potato day, and we all contributed to the hot lunch cooked on the pot belly stove."

Local schools were consolidated in the 1940s and '50s and the last class to attend the Clinton Corners School graduated about 1960. First as a school and then as a post office, the landmark building has served the community for over 150 years. Current owner Don Bowman says "the existence of the building today is due to the thoughtful and considerate planning and operation of dedicated people in the

school district." They included District 8 trustees such as Anna Germond, Oscar Burkowske, Charles Talleur, Robert Chalker and Claude Burdick. With continued planning and preservation, the building will continue to serve many future generations in Clinton.

Editor's note: Maud Talleur Bartles is donating many vintage photos to the Society's archives. They include valued images from the 1920's on of Community Day floats and events, school buildings and classes, and local scenes and families. The Society is grateful to receive these in its newly upgraded repository, and encourages other residents to consider such donations or permission to copy. Call Bill McDermott at 266-3819.



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