

HOW DID THEY DO THAT?

This is the most frequent question asked by visitors to the Schoolhouse Museum, once they discover that the building was moved a distance of two miles.

This one-room structure, known as "Franklin District School -No.12", was built in the early 1800's. It was abandoned in 1931. In 1987 it was donated by Stella and Susan Close to the Genoa Historical Association along with a \$2000 matching grant toward the cost of restoration. The only stipulation was that it had to be moved from its location between King Ferry and Aurora. A year passed before a spot of land could be acquired for its relocation. The lot where it now stands was donated to the Historical Association by Gene and Scott Shaw Farms.

C. J. Reynolds assisted me in an inspection of the building to determine if it could be moved without falling apart. With hammers in hand we crawled underneath, hitting the sills and floor joists to determine the soundness of the basic frame. We found it to be in much better condition than that suggested by its first appearance.

The question then became one of how to move it a distance of two miles with limited funds. I telephoned a retired rigger and mover of buildings for advice. His reply; "I know there are a lot of smart people in Southern Cayuga but this is a job better left to professionals." He gave me the names of two such firms. Both were asked to submit bids. They came in at \$7500 and \$9000 with the stipulation that the Association would have to negotiate with the Utility companies for handling the overhead wires in a way that would allow a building 18' in height to be moved beneath them. The quoted price, in writing, from the telephone company was \$25,000.

As President of the Historical Association, I discussed this dilemma with the Directors. Lorie Fessenden, then Secretary-Treasurer, suggested I talk the matter over with John Binn. I went to see him and explained the problem. His reply; "I'll think about it." In the meantime I went about exploring other moving options. C.J. Reynolds thought it might be possible for his crew to load it on their flat bed trailer. For several reasons this was not a viable option.

"Randy" Nash who had disassembled the Ebert's house was at this time reconstructing it off Route 90. He suggested that we do as he had done with that house; take it down piece by piece, transport the parts, and reassemble it at the new location. "How much would this cost?" I asked. His knowing reply was that "you probably couldn't afford it."

Several carpenters were approached about the take-down and put-back-up suggestion. No takers, so back to John Binn, not once, but several times during the summer of 1988. Finally,

and probably exasperated by my frequent visits, he looked me straight in the eye and said, "You get the foundation in place where the school is to go. I don't know right now how we're going to move it but I'll get together some guys and we'll do it!"

Louie DeLap, Jr. surveyed the lot and laid out the lines for the foundation. Mike Barnhart brought in his backhoe and dug the 3' foot trench for the footer and block foundation. Bob and Scott Rafferty laid up the cinder block.

And so, as stories go, it came to pass. On October 1, 1988, John Binn and friends removed and discarded the old leaky roof and ceiling that had been ruined over the years by raccoons. The attic area had been their home. One week later, about dusk on a Saturday afternoon, the strange looking roofless building appeared on the site of its new home. It had been skidded there on four forty-foot beech logs donated by James "Slats" Mahaney from their woodlot. A powerful tractor from Turek Farms had dragged it to its new location. Another week passed as many wondered how this desolate looking part of a building could be elevated 2' to clear the new cinder block foundation. On the next Saturday morning Binn and Company arrived followed by a bulldozer operated by Dave and Maurice Reynolds. By mid-afternoon the old shell of the school was placed majestically on its new foundation awaiting restoration work.

With winter weather closing in a new roof was hurriedly installed by Bob Franklin, John Fessenden, and Ed. Dinkle. Ward O'Hara supplied some rafter replacements for those no longer useable. The old six pane window sashes were replaced with look-a-likes by Floyd Stoker. Interior restoration was carried out during the winter months by a number of volunteers that made the mistake of stopping in to see what was going on. I remember John Fitzgerald donating several hours to the dusty job of removing old paint. Bob Franklin was the working Supervisor of the entire restoration. Joe Phillips painted the building inside and out. Ron DiSanto spent a week sanding and treating the hardwood floors. Don Powers made and installed the wall bench seats that he replicated from an original section found in the building. John & Shirley Dunkle donated the lumber.

On Memorial Day 1989, the bicentennial year of the Town of Genoa, the Schoolhouse Museum was opened to the public. Ithaca Gun Company donated the prototype for 200 engraved bicentennial sporting guns. Genoa Furniture donated a hand crafted case for this gun, made from native walnut wood donated by Hans Peter Pecher and Mr. & Mrs. Herman Bartnick. A Photo Album documenting this restoration project up to the present is at the Museum. Here also are the names of all who donated money, materials, and labor to this project. Thanks to Lorie Fessenden & Monica Norris for assembling and displaying the names of the many people that made a nice thing happen.

Gordon Cummings, Town Historian