

The MacDougall School

The MacDougall school, Fayette #14, was formed in 1823, with a building on the MacDougall road site first holding classes for three months in 1824. This was very early in the history of Seneca County and the common school movement. The nearby Erie Canal was just being completed, and Revolutionary War soldiers and their families were still in the process of settling on the military tract lands taken from the Iroquois Confederacy which came to be Seneca County and the surrounding area.

School was held continuously at Fayette # 14 until 1946 with several generations of local families receiving their grammar school education there. High school education was rare in the 19th century and “scholars” had to pursue such study in Ovid or Seneca Falls early on, with many students from the area taking the train to Geneva for high school in the latter part of the century.

At the close of World War I many schools were involved in the progressive centralization movement, including several from Varick, Romulus, and Fayette which formed the Romulus Central School in 1938. At the close of World War II, the MacDougall school joined the Romulus District and closed its doors. The building which housed the school was purchased by the Sorensen family and used for storage on their farm until 1997, when the family donated the building to the Romulus School for a restoration and relocation project.

Moving MacDougall The Schoolhouse Project

In the spring of 1997, a group of school personnel and community residents began planning an event to mark the 60th anniversary of the centralization of the Romulus School. As part of that planning, discussion began about relocating a former one-room schoolhouse from the District in time for the anniversary in July of 1998. The search for an appropriate building led the committee to contact Ralph and Carol Sorensen, the owners of the building which had housed Common School District #14 in Fayette, the MacDougall School. The Sorensens agreed to donate the building and to help plan the move and restoration. In October of 1997 the building was moved to a site on the lawn of the central school, traveling along back roads, passing through the fence of the Seneca Army Depot, and emerging on Main Street near the school grounds. The project is involved in continuing fundraising efforts to support the costs associated with the move, restoration and maintenance of the structure, part of which will be supported by the purchase of this commemorative item. The Schoolhouse Committee wishes to thank all those whose financial and moral support made this project possible.

The Diamond Jubilee

RCS@60 celebrates the 60th anniversary of the Romulus Central School, formed by popular vote of the local residents in November of 1937. Eleven common schools and the 12 - year old Union Free High School came together to form the new District as part of a State -wide centralization movement associated with the WPA of the 1930's. Ground was broken on the new central school district April of 1938, with the cornerstone laid in July. For sixty years the children of the communities which comprise the Romulus Central School District have enjoyed the benefit of a high quality, personalized education in a small school setting. The RCS@60 project celebrates that fact by bringing together all alumni in July of 1998 for the rededication of the original cornerstone of the 1938 building, including a new time-capsule, the introduction of a Wall of Fame of RCS graduates and a Valedictory Plaque, and culminating in the dedication of the restored MacDougall Schoolhouse on the central school campus. Recognizing sixty years of quality schooling in a rural environment and striving to preserve that quality in the face of changing times, helps us continue to be the *small school with the **BIG** idea.*

The MacDougall Schoolhouse Arranging a Visit

If you or a group of students would like to visit the MacDougall Schoolhouse, please contact the elementary office at Romulus Central School at 607-869-5391, ext. 317 or 327. We would be happy to schedule a time for the building to be open. This might make an exciting field trip for local elementary school classes from the Finger Lakes area. Trips might be combined with nearby Ainsley Schoolhouse in Bellona near Geneva, the Barrington #4 School at Dundee, the Eight Sided School near Ithaca, or the Genoa Schoolhouse in Cortland County.