

## Center School in Colebrook

The site of this schoolhouse has remained the same since the first building was erected in 1829. The dwelling located at 11 Schoolhouse Road represents the third and last school that served Colebrook carrying the name "Center School".

From 1779 until 1786, two schools, the North and South, filled the requirements of the small community. The few residents of the Center went to the North School, serving the school district named the Sandisfield Road District, then situated directly in front of the large boulder across the road from the present location of the Rock School. With increasing numbers, however, expansion was necessary, and on October 20, 1796 the inhabitants of Colebrook were called to a meeting for the purpose of forming a school society. The result of this meeting was the formation of seven school districts. It did not, however, call for a schoolhouse in or around the Center; the scholars in that village continued to attend the North School.

The first indication of a change concerning the establishment of a new school came in October 1805, when the Sandisfield Road District was broken up into three districts. The residents of the southern section of the old district were given liberty to set up a school and draw their proportion of public money for the ensuing winter school. It is significant to note, however, that nothing was said about "setting a stake" for the anticipated new building. This meant that school was to be held in a private home for the time being. What happened was that no building was erected until apparently 1829. The reason for hesitancy on our part is that the wording of the School Society record book is quite clear, and there are no omissions or missing pages. Their November 2<sup>nd</sup> 1829 meeting appointed Dr. George O. Jarvis district committee. Only new districts, or districts that had had serious legal or administrative problems had board members appointed for them.

A new ledger book entitled "Center School Record Book 1829-1903" began with the first entry describing the November 2<sup>nd</sup> 1829 meeting that was held "at the schoolhouse". As no mention had ever been made concerning the setting of a stake, or other reference to a new or preexisting schoolhouse, we are left with the conclusion that a school had been built on private land and any problems that might arise from that decision would be dealt with at a later date. This is what happened, as future events would prove.

On September 16 1839, the Center District voted to build a new schoolhouse that was to be completed one year hence. This building turned out to be a two-storied structure. (The floor plans are drawn on the inside of the front cover of their record book.) The location chosen was not to change for the duration of the existence of the Center School. (See Colebrook Town Records, vol. 10, page 507 and Town Records, vol. 13, page 47.) Only the ground floor was used as a school. It is interesting how we came to know this. In the minutes of a meeting soon after the erection of the new building, it was voted that the school would not be used for community or other purposes during school hours. This is confirmed further by the floor plans penciled inside the front cover.

By 1881 this building began to show the wear and tear of the passage of time and a new building was authorized to be constructed at the same site; the old building to be sold. While no specific date for pupil use was noted, the completion date may be

ascertained by the fact that the School Committee held their 1882 meeting in the basement of the Congregational Church and the 1883 meeting in the schoolhouse. It was insured for \$800.00

The school continued to sit on rented land until October 1854, when the previous owner, who had steadfastly refused to sell, died and the subsequent owner, feeling differently about the situation, sold a 60x60 foot plot of land to the school district.

On September 24 1914 the school committee voted to make the Center School a model school, meaning that it was considered to be highest on a list of priorities than the other schools. Two years later, when the students from the South School were united with the Center School, it became obvious that an addition was needed. A 36x12 addition was added to the back of the school, followed almost immediately by another addition on the east side to house two water closets (read that as an indoor backhouse) and a stack, or woodshed. It is interesting that they used the term “water closet”, when the only piped-in water the school ever had was a drinking fountain that was the lower end of the gravity feed from the parsonage at the top of the hill. The addition at the back left the school as a one-room school still; the partition creating a two-room schoolhouse was not put in until 1927.

The elimination of Colebrook River by the construction of the reservoirs in addition to the dictates of the requirements of living during the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century marked the end of one and two-roomed schoolhouses. Therefore, on May 28, 1946, the voters of Colebrook passed a resolution to build a new public school building. 1948 was the last year that students attended the Center School.

The town was authorized to make preparations for the sale of the Center and Forge schools in 1949. The Center School building was appraised at \$2,100.00. It sat unused with a “For Sale” sign on it until finally being sold to Dr David Luchs on January 17 1961, for the sum of \$625.00.

After serving as Dr, Luchs’ office for several years prior to his retirement, he sold the building to its present owner, Mark Burgess.