

Mud Mills District #3 Schoolhouse
HISTORY SHEET
General Information & References

Name of Structure: Mud Mills District #3 SH
Address: ~6337 Mud Mills Rd at RT 88 (NE)
Tax ID: (542089) 68112-00-763184

Atlas: Dist 3, Lot 25
1853: "School", 1858, 1874: "SH", 1904 unlabeled

When Built and Mason: 1836, mason unknown

Extant: No

Disposition: Razed Summer 1890

Reason: New modern school desired¹

In 1889 the district trustees condemned it. An appeal was made and denied and a new schoolhouse was built and was open for the start of classes in 1890.

Original Use: Schoolhouse

Pictures: None known

Description:

No renderings or descriptions of the schoolhouse have survived.

"The cornerstone of the new school was laid in July 1890 and deposited under the stone was a historical sketch of the old cobblestone building along with a copy of the GAZETTE."²

Information Provided by Cynthia Russell³, 5/21/2022

Mud Mills District #3 located on the northeast corner of Route 88 and "the road across the Garnargua". It was built about 1835 and "it was said to be the finest school in the district". Condemned in 1889 by the school commissioner, the building was demolished and replaced by a white clapboard school on the same site around 1890-91. Unfortunately, no photos exist of that cobblestone schoolhouse. The clapboard school closed in 1951 and the building was moved and converted to a residence when Route 88 was widened and re-routed..

¹ A number of cobblestone schoolhouses were torn down during this period of expanding populations in favor of modernized schools; this was not uncommon.

² <http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn88074454/1890-09-24/ed-1/seq-6/> Arcadian Weekly Gazette, 9/24/1890

³ Past Board member and President of the Newark- Arcadia Historical Society

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NOTE: There are conflicting dates of construction in the cited references. We'll accept W.H.McIntosh's date, 1836, as the correct year.

[http://fultonhistory.com/newspaper%20/
Newark%20%20NY%20Arcadian%20Weekly%20Gazette/
Newark%20%20NY%20Arcadian%20Weekly%20Gazette%201888-1891%20pdf/
Newark%20%20NY%20Arcadian%20Weekly%20Gazette%201888-1891%20-%200580.pdf](http://fultonhistory.com/newspaper%20/Newark%20%20NY%20Arcadian%20Weekly%20Gazette/Newark%20%20NY%20Arcadian%20Weekly%20Gazette%201888-1891%20pdf/Newark%20%20NY%20Arcadian%20Weekly%20Gazette%201888-1891%20-%200580.pdf)

Arcadian Weekly Gazette, 1/8/1890

"School Commissioner Finley has over-ruled the action of the Mud Mills district, and ordered a new school house built next season."

[https://fultonhistory.com/newspaper%20/
Newark%20%20NY%20Arcadian%20Weekly%20Gazette/
Newark%20%20NY%20Arcadian%20Weekly%20Gazette%201890-1891%20pdf/
Newark%20%20NY%20Arcadian%20Weekly%20Gazette%201890-1891%20-%200376.pdf](https://fultonhistory.com/newspaper%20/Newark%20%20NY%20Arcadian%20Weekly%20Gazette/Newark%20%20NY%20Arcadian%20Weekly%20Gazette%201890-1891%20pdf/Newark%20%20NY%20Arcadian%20Weekly%20Gazette%201890-1891%20-%200376.pdf) or
<http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn88074454/1890-05-14/ed-1/seq-6/>

Arcadian Weekly Gazette, 5/14/1890

5/21/1890: "The last meeting of the Ganargua Valley Home Circle was held at the old stone school house near Mud Mills for the purpose of saying farewell to the building which is to be replaced by a more modern structure. The meeting was of special interest as the members have passed the greater part of their school days there, and it was to them as if parting with a real friend. The program consisted of recitations, an original poem, a story of fact and imagination, and a very complete "history" of the building, all of which were prepared especially for the occasion. The school house was built in 1830."

<http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn88074454/1890-07-02/ed-1/seq-5/>

Arcadian Weekly Gazette, 7/2/1890

"The new school house at Mud Mills built under the direction of Trustee Foster is up and enclosed. The corner stone was laid with suitable ceremony and into it were put the names of the builders, the name of Joel Soverhill the oldest person in the district, a copy of the sketch read at the last meeting of the Ganargua Literary Society, and a copy of the ARCADIAN WEEKLY GAZETTE. The building is on a high foundation built of cobblestones from the old house."

<http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn85026908/1890-09-20/ed-1/seq-3/>

Newark Union, 9/20/1890

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The new school house at Mud Mills is completed ...

<http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn88074454/1890-09-24/ed-1/seq-6/>

Arcadian Weekly Gazette., 9/24/1890

... The corner stone of the institution was laid the last of July, the Mud Mills Literary Society participating in the ceremonies, and depositing under the stone a historical sketch of the old cobblestone building and a copy of the GAZETTE ... The school opened this week.

<https://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%202/Newark%20NY%20Union/Newark%20NY%20Union%201907-1908%20pdf/Newark%20NY%20Union%201907-1908%20-%200211.PDF>

Newark Union, 9/7/1907

"School Reunion—Unique Gathering of Mud Mills Former Pupils — Teachers and Pupils Who Were Identified With the Mud Mills School Prior to 1860 Met at Home of James Soverhill — One of the most interesting and unique reunions ever held in the town of Arcadia was the gathering at the residence of Mr and Mrs J Soverhill in school district No 3, popularly known as the Mud Mills District, Saturday afternoon, August 31st. The occasion was a meeting of the teachers and pupils identified with the school before 1860. There was a large representation ... The old Mud Mills school building was the first in the town of Arcadia, having been built about 1806 ... The stone school house, which most of those present remember, was built in 1836 on the site of the present school house."

<https://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn85026906/1914-07-23/ed-1/seq-6.pdf>

Newark Courier-Gazette, 7/23/1914

THE SETTLEMENT OF ARCADIA

"The following account of pioneer days in Arcadia is taken from *History of Wayne County*, by W.H.McIntosh, published in 1877.

"Samuel Soverhill came out on foot from New Jersey in search of a farm and chose a spot upon the hillside above the creek flats, by a fine spring ... he purchased 140 acres ... price \$589.50. ... Originally large school districts had been formed, and what now constitutes district No 3 is but a small portion of the early area of the district. The original school building in all this vicinity was erected in 1810 upon a site given by Soverhill. The house raised was a hewed-log structure, in dimensions 24 by 40'. A huge fireplace at each end of the room maintained the proper temperature in winter, while slab seats—an outer and an inner row, the former with a board next to the wall for writing, the inner for smaller children—gave no curved back against which to lean, but each sat doubled and held his book in hand. ... Desiring a place in which to hold religious services, it was proposed to enlarge the school-house and use it on occasion. ... In time churches were erected, and the old frame was removed, and in 1836 the present cobble-stone school-house was constructed."

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Directly quoted from: http://www.libraryweb.org/~digitized/books/History_of_Wayne_County_1877.pdf

History of Wayne County New York, W.H.McIntosh, © 1877.

p 63: Early Settlers — Soverhill

<https://fultonhistory.com/highlighter/highlight-for-xml?altUrl=https%3A%2F%2Ffultonhistory.com%2FNewspaper%252024%2FRochester%2520NY%2520Democrat%2520Chronicle%25201949-1970%2FRochester%2520NY%2520Democrat%2520Chronicle%25201962%2FRochester%2520NY%2520Democrate%2520Chronicle%25201962%2520A%2520-%25201434.pdf>

Rochester Democrat & Chronicle, Wed 9/5/1962

School District Budget of \$135? That's Mud Hills' Total in 1877

"NEWARK — Minutes kept at annual meetings in old country schoolhouses—now absorbed by centralized districts—contain some fascinating tidbits.

The final entry of the Mud Mills School book was made in May 1955 by Harry VanderMortel, the last clerk of the school which has been converted into a residence. The entry related to a special meeting called for the disposition of the building which had been closed by vote in 1951 when the pupils went to the Newark schools.

The clerk's book covers the history of the old school. It has recorded the minutes of annual meetings from Oct 9, 1877 to May, 1955. Beech and maple wood was purchased at \$6.40 a cord at that 1877 meeting which also favored using old textbooks rather than go into the expense of buying new ones. A new stove was bought for \$35 the next year—bringing the total school budget for the year to \$135.

A trustee, George Hoeltzel, tendered his resignation in 1884 because he did not feel himself qualified to figure the complicated rate bill to raise funds for operating the school. In 1889 the district scanned the erection of a new building and named B.P.Foster, George Hoeltzel, Marvin A. Soverhill, Frank See, and F. Schoenenthaler to study the matter.

The schoolhouse was condemned the following month and \$800 was voted to build a new structure." ...

NOTE: No mention was made of razing the school building nor building the new schoolhouse.

<http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn88074234/1969-11-27/ed-1/seq-20/>

Newark Courier-Gazette THR 11/27/1969

Mud Mills Once Known As 'Gateway for Pioneers'

By Cecilia B Jackson

The hamlet of Mud Mills, once known as the gateway for the pioneers, was a thriving community 150 years ago with stores, mills and industries. It was described in a "History of Mud Mills" written in 1894 by Ida Reeves Stearns as a "wonderful city".

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At Joel Soverhill's corner by the brook (corner Ryder Rd and Route 88) there was a shoe shop and another blacksmith shop. Where the Soverhill house now stands was the site of the old school."

McIntosh *History of Wayne County* states that the original school was erected on land given by Soverhill and made of hewed logs measuring 24x40'.

Finally Joel Soverhill's father bought the schoolhouse of the district and built his residence. (The house still stands on the corner of the Ryder Rd and Route 88.)

The stone school house was built on property donated by the Soverhill. There is some disagreement as to where the site was but the 1874 atlas shows the school on the northeast corner of Route 88 and the crossroads. The stones were gathered on the Foster Farm by Deacon Pliny Foster and B.D. Forster who was then large enough to give a helping hand (1835).

When the stone schoolhouse was completed it was considered one of the finest school houses around. The desks, Mrs Stearns records, were the first of its kind introduced in this part of the country.

The district clerk's book does not tell of a fire at the school, which older residents mention, but it does tell of debates at the annual meeting whether to repair or rebuild the school. In 1889 the school commissioner settled the problem by condemning the 53-year old stone school and the white clapboard building was erected. When this was done is not on record. Older residents, former teachers and those who eventually bought and remodeled the clapboard school for a residence cannot recall the date on the front of the building.

Mrs Stearns' story was written in 1894 and she states: "And now that cherished building is laid low (the stone school) and replaced with another structure. This would indicate that the building was erected sometime during the period from November 1889 and 1894.

The last schoolhouse was in use until 1950 when the district voted to close the school and send its children to Newark. It was not until 1954 that a committee was appointed to investigate the proper method of disposing of the school. The building was finally purchased and for a few years it was an attractive residence with the grounds landscaped with flower beds and a small vegetable garden. Then Route 88 was improved and widened and the house was sold, again, and moved to a spot on the Ryder Rd.

<https://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn88074234/1983-09-01/ed-1/seq-5.pdf>

Newark Courier-Gazette, THR, 9/1/1983

"No 3 — Mud Mills School ... In 1955 after all districts were centralized, the property was sold and the building converted to a residence ... It was then sold and had to be moved when Route 88 was enlarged and rebuilt ..."

This article speaks of the replacement SH for the cobblestone. The significance of the report is that the original site was altered beyond recognition when Rte 88 was enlarged. Therefore, today it is not possible to pinpoint the footprint of where the cobblestone once sat.

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Also: George Washington Cowles, Landmarks of Wayne County, p 365.

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=loc.ark:/13960/t1jh49v0n&view=page&seq=417>

Landmarks of Wayne County, New York, edited by Hon. George W. Cowles , © 1895

"Samuel Soverhill donated a site upon which a log school building was erected in 1810... The settlers desired a place to hold religious services, and this school house was enlarged by an addition twenty feet in length, making it 60x24... Finally the old frame was removed and in 1836 a cobblestone school house was erected."