

24 Eureka Schoolhouse

140 Charlestown Road, Springfield, Vermont



Over two centuries ago, the Springfield, Vermont area was undeveloped frontier. In 1759, construction of the Crown Point Military Road began, connecting Fort No. 4 in Charlestown, New Hampshire with Fort Crown Point in New York on Lake Champlain. While the military road would become a major route used by settlers to expand into the frontier, Springfield became the access point to Vermont. In 1785, Springfield residents began building a one-room schoolhouse, under the supervision of William Bettergneau. Bettergneau had settled in the area as a beaver trapper during

the French and Indian War, and, with the help of four families, he built the school. Constructed with hewn timber and pine board siding, the building was built square with a pyramid-shaped roof. The pine siding was scored in such a way to make it look like it was built of stone blocks rather than wood.

David Searle, Eureka's first teacher, was a graduate of Yale University and arrived in Charlestown, NH to seek employment at Fort at No. 4. After learning of the newly built schoolhouse in nearby Springfield, and their need for a teacher, he traveled from the Fort along the Crown Point Military Road. Upon reaching the village settlement and seeing the new schoolhouse, he exclaimed, "Eureka!" meaning "I have found it" in Greek.

When the schoolhouse went out of use in 1900, it sat vacant until 1958 when a group of citizens, led by Anna Hartness Beardsley, recognized its historical significance. They carefully dismantled the building, documenting it for reassembly. Under the supervision of Architect Andrew Titcomb, the building was restored using many of its original pieces in order to resemble its original appearance. The reconstruction was completed in 1968 with help from the Eureka Schoolhouse Committee and the Vermont Historic Sites Commission, with a dedication to Mrs. Beardsley, who died shortly before its completion. Today, the schoolhouse showcases many antiques from the time period, as well as some original books and school desks that were used in the building, stands as the oldest surviving schoolhouse, and one of few remaining 18th century public buildings in Vermont.

Driving east along Route 11 in Springfield, Vermont, visitors will see the Eureka Schoolhouse before reaching Route 5 and Interstate 91. The location was chosen to create more exposure for the historic site, and in 1970 the Baltimore Covered Bridge was moved nearby to create a historic park. The Eureka Schoolhouse and the Baltimore Covered Bridge are both owned by the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation and are operated by the Springfield Chamber of Commerce. The Eureka Schoolhouse was added to the National Register of Historic Sites in 1971.

Sources:

Pinney, William B. "Eureka Schoolhouse: National Register Nomination Information." Vermont Board of Historic Sites. 1969. Web. Accessed July 2, 2013. <http://www.crjc.org/heritage/V07-6.htm>

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