

One-Room Schoolhouses

in Monmouth and Ocean Counties



The classroom display at the Giffordtown School House Museum in Tuckerton features the original desks, books, and chalkboards from the the Giffordtown School.

several one-room schoolhouses have survived and can be found throughout Ocean and Monmouth counties. Many date back to the late 1800s and have maintained their original design elements.

MONMOUTH COUNTY

GEORGIA ROAD SCHOOL HOUSE, FREEHOLD

Corner of Jackson Mills and Georgia Roads, Freehold

www.oakleyfarmmuseum.org/west-freehold-schoolhouse

The Georgia Road School House is one of two original schoolhouses still standing in Freehold Township. The school was originally established by a royal charter of King George II in 1735. A stipulation in the original deed states that the property must always be used for education. The school operated continuously from 1735 until 1935. The first school building on the site was a log cabin that was replaced in 1842. However, a fire destroyed that building twenty years later, and it was replaced by the current schoolhouse building. A woodshed and outhouses on site were built in 1993 by Kiva High School, Monmouth County Vocational School, for the Freehold Township Centennial Project 1693-1993. Today, it is a historic landmark and main-

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Picture, if you will, a medium-sized room with tall windows, wood walls, a pot-bellied stove in the middle, and a chalkboard near the front. You scamper into the room after hearing the teacher ringing the bell to signal the beginning of the school day and take your seat on a hard wooden bench that is anchored to the floor. As you prepare to learn reading, writing, and arithmetic, you inhale the musty odor created by the combination of chalk, dust, and dirt and wish for a drink from the pail of water—so fresh from the stream it is still chilled.

These were normal conditions students encountered more than a century ago in New Jersey's one-room schoolhouses. Through the early to mid-1900s, in stark contrast to today's schools, boys and girls would enter through separate doors and use separate cloakrooms and outhouses as well. Female teachers at the time were prohibited from marrying or keeping company with men and from wearing dresses more than two inches above the ankle. Teachers' lessons had to be relevant to students of all ages regardless of ability since

students were taught together in the same room. Much to the dismay of today's student, school was rarely, if ever, cancelled for inclement weather, and the old adage of "I walked a mile through a foot of snow to get to school" appears to have been, at one time, true.

From after the Civil War through the early twentieth century, the design of one-room schoolhouses evolved from an octagon shape, to mirroring the rigid, rectangular construction of meeting houses and churches, and eventually to the fronts featuring a porch and gable and the sides featuring large, single-frame windows to allow in enough light.

As towns grew, students were consolidated into larger districts and multi-room, newly built school buildings, thus rendering the one-room obsolete. Yet



Georgia Road School House in Freehold.

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