

This Week in Saratoga County History – BHBL School Fire of 1930

Submitted by Rick Reynolds, April 2, 2020

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Picture from Robert Speck archives, BHBL School District

With all the growth and additions that the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake School District was experiencing in the first half of the twentieth century, the community was shocked when a fire of unknown origin consumed most of the oldest portion of their only school building and badly damaged the new section. Starting at 3:30 AM on March 30, 1930, despite the best efforts of the Ballston Lake Fire Department, the building was a total loss in the end. Classes were subsequently moved into local churches and homes, the Odd Fellows Hall, and the Ballston Lake Country Club, where education continued for the next year while the building was rebuilt.

In these alternate educational sites, students from that time remember the cold walks to the outhouses in the winter and the single tin cup that was often used for all to drink from the wells at those locations.

The building was rebuilt in time for the class of 1931 to graduate from the newly-constructed building and, to this day, one can see in the basement of the current building, the burnt timbers from the fire, the structurally-sound timbers upon which the new building was built. The building was supplemented in future years by many other buildings in the school district, all built to house the students as the area grew by huge numbers in the 1950s-1970s. That growth was fueled by the growth of General Electric in Schenectady and the desire of people to live in the suburbs, rather than in the city.