

Glenclyff Elementary School

Thank you to all the past and present contributors to this history, including: Sally Quinn, Connie Nadas, Mary Anne Mangano, Clark Wilson and Kristine Wilson

Built in 1956, Glenclyff School serves children from the towns of Glenville and Clifton Park, thus the name, "Glenclyff." Each section of these two towns had its own schoolhouse prior to becoming part of the Niskayuna Central School District. In 1843, Alplaus School was located at the intersection of Alplaus and Maple avenues. Then in 1879, a larger, one-story school was built on the lot just west of the first; in 1907, the last

Alplaus School was created. The original school sign is still attached to that building, which is now an apartment house on Maple Avenue. The first schoolhouse in Rexford was built in 1833 on the site of Stewart's of Rexford. This school had the distinction of having Chester A. Arthur, a man destined to become the 21st President of the United States, as a substitute teacher for a short time. In 1905, this structure was moved and converted to a home, which still

exists in the neighborhood. It was replaced by a two-room wooden building that served as the Rexford School when the district became centralized in 1953.

Although this school originally went to grade six, due to increases in enrollment, it could only accommodate students through grade four at the time of its closing in 1956. Families had to choose from Schenectady, Scotia or Burnt Hills schools for the children's remaining

education, and the Niskayuna School Board paid their tuition.

In 1951, discussions began regarding the merging of the Alplaus and Rexford schools. Concerned that the Rexford School (Clifton Park District #1) might become part of the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake School District, citizens of Alplaus and Rexford independently consulted with the New York State Education Department on other options available, and voted to consolidate with other local schools to form the Niskayuna Central School District.

Following that formation, ground was broken for Glenclyff School on April 7, 1955. It was completed, at a cost of \$381,116, for the September 1956 opening of school. At that time, there were 162 students in seven classrooms and the building capacity was 189 students. In addition to using parts of the names of the two towns, the old schoolhouse bells were given an honored place in the front hall of the new school. The blending of the names and the placement of the bells were efforts to create an atmosphere of belonging to the communities. Also located nearby is a wall plaque commemorating Florence Sexton, a highly regarded teacher in the former Rexford and new Glenclyff schools.

Nature trails begin

In May 1960, plans were formulated to develop a natural science study area. The seasonal marsh in the



Alplaus School (1907-1956), circa 1930s



Rexford School (1905-1956), circa 1930s



Board of Education members preside over the April 1955 groundbreaking ceremony for Glencliff. Pictured, from left: Schenectady County Schools Superintendent John Fink, Board members John Youngblood and Clark Wilson, Assistant Principal for Business William Louis, and contractor Ansel Sweet.

field facing the school dried up in early summer because of fast drainage of water toward Riverview Road. By creating a dam to stem the flow of water, the marsh became much larger and remained wet, thereby attracting more wildlife. The area was named after John F. Youngblood, a member of the Alplaus Board of Trustees who also served as president of the centralized school district. Clem Habetler was asked to lead a group to plan the trails through the woods. Old trails were used where present and new ones were blazed where needed. Nancy Young and her family made and placed attractive signs at the entrance to each trail. Over the years the sanctuary has been enhanced by plantings of trees, shrubs, flowers and grains.

Building expanded

To meet the space needs of a growing student body, two class-

rooms were added in 1960 and three more in 1963. In 1989, an expanded gymnasium, new library, computer lab, resource room and four classrooms were added to provide for increased enrollment and changes in the academic program. Finally, in December

1996, a new wing opened, consisting of two additional classrooms and two offices, one for speech and

one for the school psychologist and guidance counselor to share. By adding the wing, a courtyard was created. The kindergarten room looks out onto the courtyard and the kindergarten teacher and her classes have created a colorful bird and butterfly habitat. On the other side of the new wing, a butterfly garden was created to honor the retirement of teacher Judy Loucks. With easy access from the library, children can read on a bench there.

Variety of activities

Glencliff has always been viewed as a unique, special place by its staff, students and community. The serenity of the setting contrasts with the excitement for learning and innovative ideas that fill the school. Successful learning strategies find their way



Each elementary school received wireless laptop computers in 2003 as part of the District's \$12.7 million construction and technology bond passed in 1999. In this 2003 photo, Glencliff Computer Lab Support Personnel Meg Bucci (left) helps fifth-grader Carolyn Pearson with one of the computers.



Glenclyff students and staff formed a giant conga line around the school's parking lot as part of the school's "stay cool" celebration in spring 2001. 'Staying cool,' – i.e. staying calm in stressful situations – was one strategy students learned to avoid using putdowns, part of Glenclyff's character education.

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from one classroom to another in the school, as with the literature-based integrated language arts program that is tailored to meet individual student needs. To enhance student experiences, the school participates in a range of programs, including the STAR Book-It program initiated by the librarian and sanctioned by the International Reading Association; peer tutoring and cooperative learning programs; and computer-based research and network programs, including construction of Web pages. In addition, each year, several musical productions involving one or more grade levels are presented and the physical education program culminates in the All School Field Day, which stresses good sportsmanship, effort and cooperation. Art teachers have many colorful, changing displays of creative artwork throughout Glenclyff, and they have

participated in and supervised the painting of murals in the intermediate wing.

Good Morning Glenclyff

Once a month, the whole school gets together for "Good Morning Glenclyff," an assembly in which children from each grade level present information, and students sing. Fifth-grade students play vital roles as emcees, and sound, light and staging "engineers." Yearly school themes such as Rainbow of Friends, Manners, Million Minutes Reading, and Heroes and Patriotism are tied into "Good Morning Glenclyff." These assemblies bring the school community together and build a positive climate.

Glenclyff PTO

The PTO at Glenclyff has maintained a high level of commitment

and activity throughout the school's history. There were 76 members attending the first general meeting of the Glenclyff PTO on September 18, 1957. PTO scrapbooks show that the PTO has been continuously involved in curricular, educational and social issues.

Parent and community involvement have always been an important part of Glenclyff. A two-year fund-raising effort culminated in the building of "Glencastle," a playground built by parents and members of the community. Other fund-raisers have allowed the purchase of trees, bushes and flowers, and new curtains for the stage and large windows in the auditorium. The Jenkins Award, started here in 1959 and originated from the National PTO, goes to one Glenclyff staff or community member each year; his or her name is placed on a plaque in the lobby.

The strong network of children, parents and community volunteers is evidence of the great pride with which Glenclyff is viewed. To all of the terrific people, named and unnamed in this brief history, who have contributed to this wonderful school: THANK YOU.

Glenclyff Principals:

Mabel Rickert Bourdon,
1956-1964

Robert Estes,
1964-1968

Martin E. Davis,
1968-1989

Frances J. Reinl,
1989-present