



STAFF PHOTO/JACK HALEY

Heidi Kistler cleans photographs before hanging them on the newly plastered walls at Dayton's Corner Schoolhouse, which celebrates its 150th anniversary this weekend.

A school that has outlived many

Dayton's Corners Schoolhouse celebrates 150 years Sept. 9

By **AMY CAVALIER**
Messenger Post Staff

The walls of Dayton's Corner Schoolhouse contain history, literally.

When Mike Dube of Dube Plastering and Stucco in Palmyra began doing interior work on the one-room Dayton's Corners Schoolhouse, he uncovered signs of the 150 years of history the building has played host to.

Horse hairs are embedded in the plaster. The hairs bound the material. The old chalkboard was painted on, using charred potato skins and egg whites, a testament to the days when Penfield was an agricultural community.

An expert in historic restoration work, Dube says the schoolhouse was very well built.

"A lot of times they were built by the farmers," he said of one-room school houses. "The knowledge wasn't there. Here, that wasn't the case."

Dube said most of the one-room schoolhouses in Monroe County have been bulldozed for development or the buildings are being used in some other fashion. Dayton's Corners Schoolhouse has survived, and each year more than 2,000 fourth-graders in Monroe County visit to get a feel for what it was like to attend school long ago.

On Sept. 9, the community is invited to help celebrate the school's 150th anniversary. The event runs from 12:30 to 4 p.m. and will include free pony rides, live music, demonstrations with scrub boards and blacksmithing, crafts and games and tours of the school, among other activities.

"It's a special building," said Dayton's Corners Schoolhouse coordinator Nancy Zinn. "It's the last one-room school house in Monroe County that's still functioning as a school."

Built in 1857, the school house was used for regular education until the 1960s. Several grade levels were taught

at once at the school by one teacher, according to Zinn. According to records, in the 1890s, 40 children attended the school. Back then, the farm took precedence over school, "so attendance was sporadic," said Zinn.

The school was also used as a neighborhood community center, for potluck suppers and holiday parties, and to host Scout meetings and other gatherings.

Dayton's Corners Schoolhouse was officially owned by the Webster School District until 1991, although Penfield Recreation took over maintenance of the building in 1976.

A former Town Board member Maggie Hession helped negotiate the purchase of the schoolhouse from the Webster School District.

"Each year, we were putting \$5,000 into it (the school), but we didn't own it," she said.

So, Hession and the town historian

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Maude Frank met with the superintendent of the Webster schools and negotiated a price. From there, the Rochester Women's Club and volunteers from the town began restoring the building.

"It was a hands-on project for the town," she said.

Zinn has been coordinator for eight years. She schedules classes, lines up volunteers and teaches at the school. The Friends of Dayton's Corners School provides volunteers and some financing. About 20 volunteers run the programs. There's no fee for classes visiting the school, but Zinn said many give donations. School days run from about 9:30

A glimpse at Dayton's Corners' history

- The building was erected in 1857. A deed recorded in 1839 shows the first reference to a schoolhouse.

- James Royce purchased land around the school house from Charles Milliman in 1855. Two years later, Royce entered into a lease with the trustees of School District No. 9.

- In 1927, the Penfield School District No. 9 purchased approximately 2 acres of land surrounding the school house from Har-

a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and students learn the three R's — reading, writing and arithmetic. There's also a spelling bee and a lesson on punishment

vey and Mettie Dayton for \$1.

- In 1948, five one-room schoolhouses, including school No. 9, became part of the Webster Central School District. Dayton's Corners was used as a schoolhouse until the 1960s.

- In 1966, the Spry Yorkers Club in the Webster school district, began restoring the school.

- In 1971, the building opened on a limited basis to area school classes for reenactments of school days in the late 1800s.

- In 1985, the town of

in the old days.

"I think it's a piece of history that we need to preserve and promote and take care of," said Town Board mem-

Penfield took interest in the schoolhouse and, at the behest of town officials, the Women's Club of Rochester undertook restoration of the schoolhouse as a two-year, community service project.

- The school house was designated a Penfield Landmark by the Penfield Historic Preservation Board in 1983. Ownership of the property was transferred to the town in 1991.

- In 2002, the schoolhouse was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

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