



THE HISTORY OF THE DUNCANVILLE SCHOOL HOUSE

Washington County once had 38 one-room school houses. These schools were built from the mid-1800s through the early 1900s. It was quite common for the one-room school houses to serve as the community church for Sunday worship.

Teachers were paid by the parents of the students or by the school board. During the school year the teacher would frequently live with some of the parents in the community. Male students were sometimes paid a small allowance to build a fire in the pot belly stove and carry a bucket of drinking water into the school room. These chores were to be completed before the school day began.

On April 3, 1889 Henry Duncan, who settled in Poor Valley in 1853, deeded a parcel of land near his residence to the Trustees of the North Fork District for the purpose of establishing a school for the area children. Henry had a total of 18 children, nine by each of his two wives. However, not all of the children survived long enough to attend the school. The land was donated under the condition that the land would revert back to the Duncan family if the building ceased to be used as a school. During the 1954 process of school consolidation in Washington County, the Duncansville One-Room School was returned to the ownership of the Duncan family. In 2000 the Duncan family donated the Duncansville One-Room School House to the Washington County School Board with the provision that the board would maintain it as a museum.

E. B. Stanley, former superintendent of the Washington County Schools, was responsible for consolidating many of the small county/community schools. It was his long-time dream that the Duncansville School be moved to school property in Abingdon. His dream became a reality through the efforts of May Jo Craig. For many years May Jo served as secretary in the Washington County School Board Office. She also dreamed of having the one room school museum. Ms. Craig donated \$5,000. to help to achieve her goal. She challenged the county and private contributors to help fund the moving process. The Washington County School board contributed \$2,500 toward the project and the Washington County Board of Supervisors donated \$2,500. These contributions amounted to \$10,000, the amount needed to move the school and add a new roof. The moving process began after securing various permits from nearly every government agency in the area. In March of 2000 the school, along with one of the original outhouses, was moved to Abingdon where it now stands on Stanley Street between the Coomes Recreational Center and E. B. Stanley Middle School.

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The Duncansville School Museum was dedicated on July 29, 2000. Ms. Craig worked tirelessly to find period student desks to fill the room, a period teacher's desk and period books. She also collected kerosene lamps, a water bucket and dipper, an old pot belly stove as well as a coal bucket and shovel. By researching well-kept records from the school Ms. Craig compiled a list of teachers, the number of students served each year, and what textbooks were as well as what equipment the school owned.

Today teachers are encouraged and invited to bring their students to spend a day in the classroom. Arrangements for a field trip can be made through the Washington County School Board Office. The museum is open to the public Saturday and Sunday afternoons during the Virginia Highlands Festival. Members of the Washington County Retired Teachers Association serve as hosts during those open days.