

Timeline of the Boogersburg School ~ **1877:** Schoolhouse is built on land owned by Moses Thompson.
1952: School closes its doors to students and is purchased by Joseph and Sybil Barsky Grucci in 1953 to be used as her sculpting studio.
2001: School is purchased by Bob Struble and Susan Crary from Sybil Barsky Grucci.
2004: Bob Struble and Susan Crary gift schoolhouse to Centre County Historical Society.

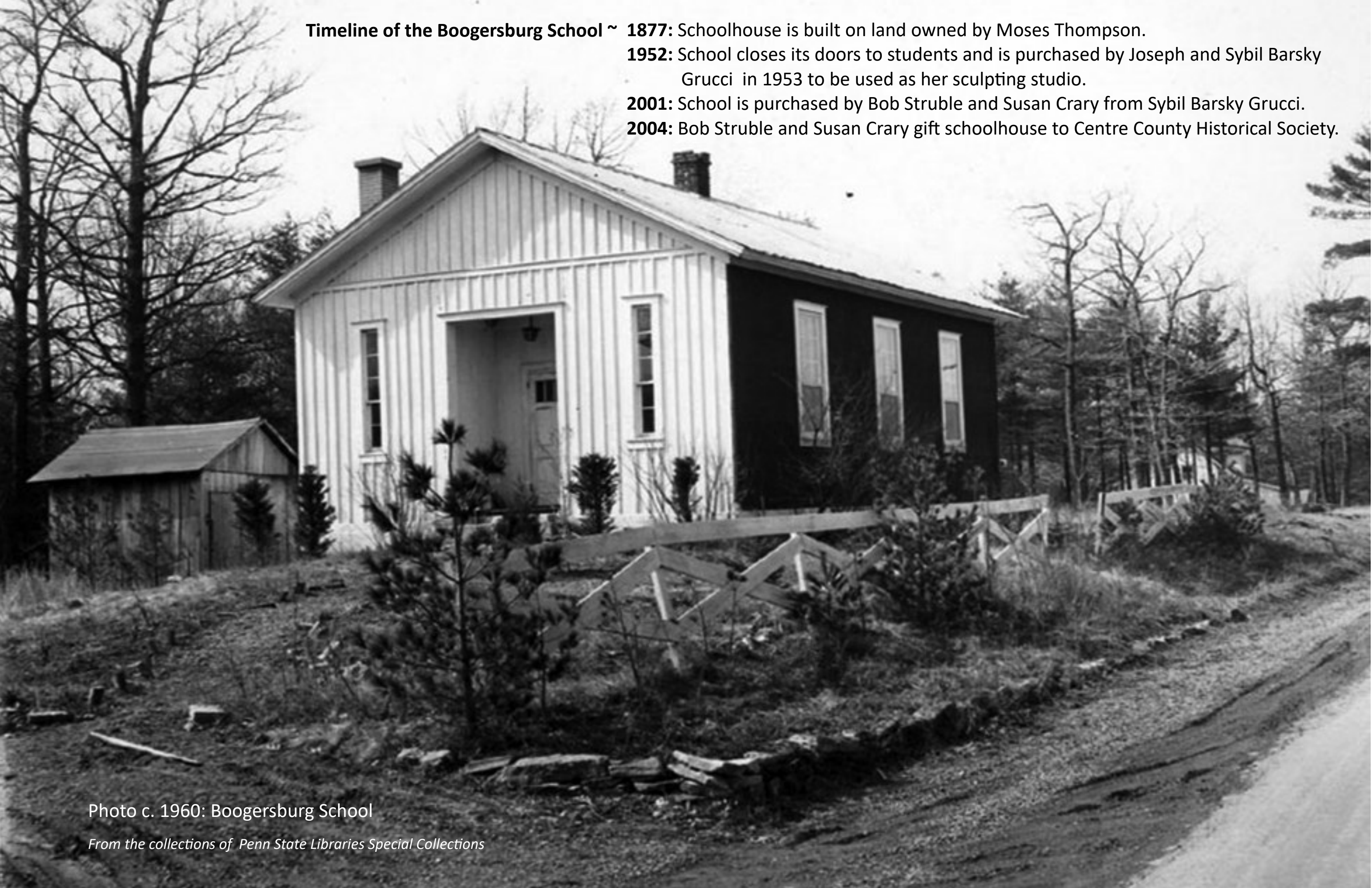


Photo c. 1960: Boogersburg School

From the collections of Penn State Libraries Special Collections

Architectural Elements~ Exterior



Pleasant Hill School, more commonly known as Boogersburg School because of a historic road junction close to the school, is a whitewashed vernacular Greek revival board-and-batten schoolhouse. The land for the school was donated to Patton Township by Centre Furnace ironmaster, Moses Thompson, to build a school for the children of his tenant farmers. Evidence suggests that the school was constructed by architect James B. Mattern, though is not confirmed.

The exterior of the school is board-and-batten **(1)** construction and originally would have been whitewashed. The base of the school is stone that has been overlaid with concrete **(2)**. The central entrance to the schoolhouse is a recessed nook providing a focal point on the façade and practical space for the two coatrooms on either side inside of the school in the rear. The front façade is a gable end and has a pediment-like look with a stringcourse running slightly above the door. One pane wide windows flank the door. **(3 & 4)**

Uniform throughout the building, the top sash of every window extends three panes high, while the bottom panel consists of only 2 panes. The roof features a central wooden bell tower **(5)** that is not original to the schoolhouse, but was constructed based on photographic evidence of what was original to the schoolhouse. The roof itself was originally constructed using cedar shingles (evidenced by scraps found in the attic), however, at some unknown point in time was converted to tin and remains in this condition today. Only minor restoration work has been done to Boogersburg and no significant alterations or additions were done after it closed its doors as a school in 1952.

By CCHS Intern Shannon Devlin 2013





Architectural Elements~Interior

A notable feature in the interior of the school is a “jack chimney” **(1)** suspended from the roof, thus freeing up floor space for the classroom. The chimney, made of brick and plaster, is held in place by an iron carriage that runs along the edges of the chimney underneath and on each side that braces the chimney to the beams in the attic and cradles the brickwork of the chimney. This iron carriage is supported by the two timbers **(2)** that are then bolstered by an excellent truss system in the attic capable of distributing the 500-700 pound weight of the chimney. The final support system for the chimney is a king post **(3)** which is, in this case, an iron rod that further distributes the weight of the chimney.

The ventilation system in the school consists of four square doors in the ceiling – one close to each corner – which are connected to a pulley system in the attic. The ropes connected to each ventilation door, as well as that for the bell, are located on the back wall **(4 & 5)**. This system would have allowed for airing out smoke from the stove or to create a breeze in the summertime in combination with opening the windows.

The plasterwork on the coved ceiling of the schoolhouse is original. The plaster was adhered using wood lath as the base to give the plaster something to grip to. After the lath was laid out, there would have been multiple layers of plaster placed over the lath to create a smooth surface. When looking at the plasterwork from the attic, the plaster “keys” **(6)** are created by plaster seeping through the lath. The keys are strong and have supported the plaster well, clearly the work of veteran plasterers.

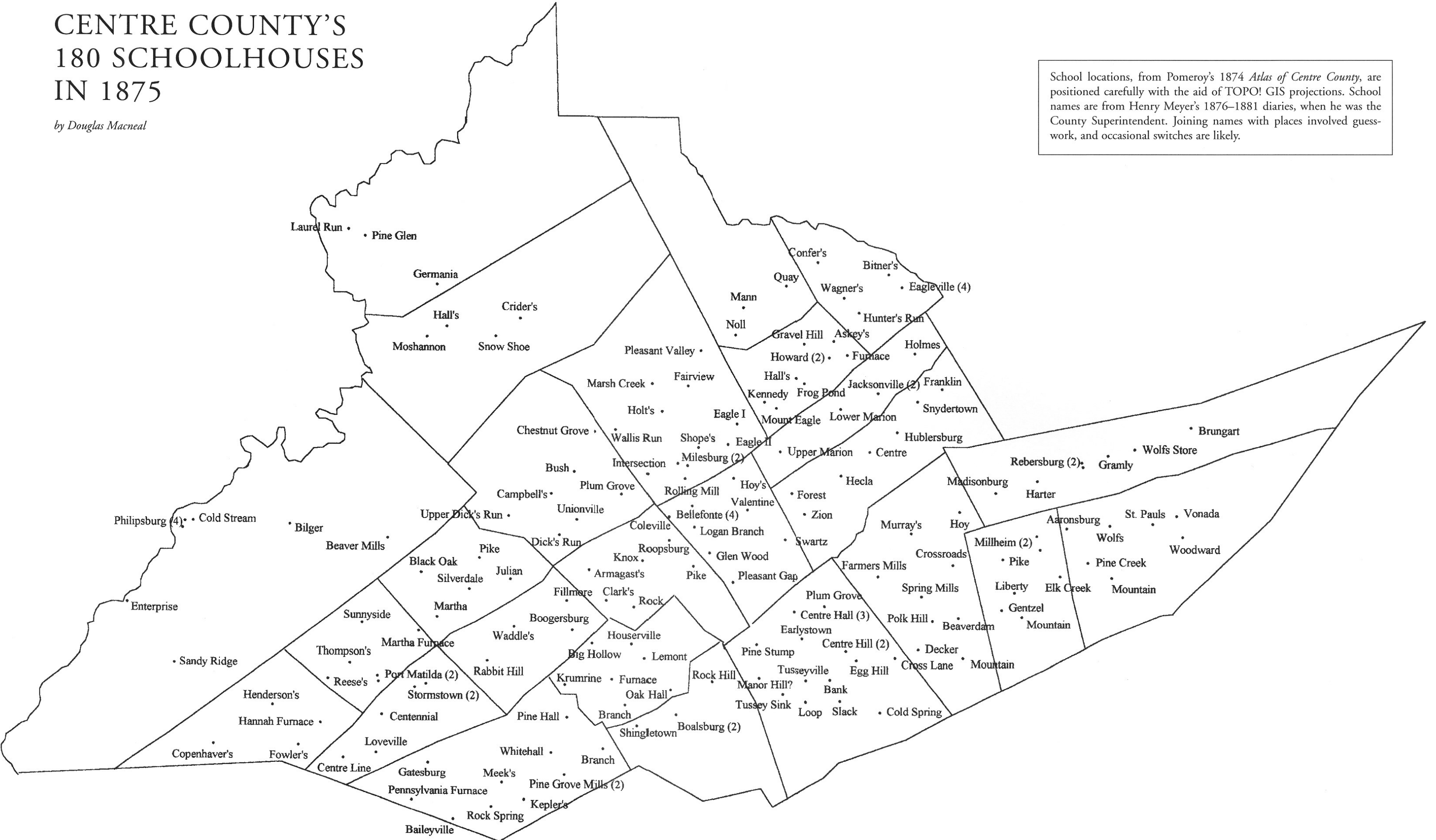
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CENTRE COUNTY'S 180 SCHOOLHOUSES IN 1875

by Douglas Macneal

School locations, from Pomeroy's 1874 *Atlas of Centre County*, are positioned carefully with the aid of TOPO! GIS projections. School names are from Henry Meyer's 1876–1881 diaries, when he was the County Superintendent. Joining names with places involved guesswork, and occasional switches are likely.





By Martha L. Berg, Archivist, Rauh Jewish Archives

Sibyl Barsky Grucci Papers

When Sibyl Barsky showed her sculpture in the mid-1930s, the *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph* headlined the 30-year-old as a “girl artist.” Born in 1905, Barsky came to Pittsburgh from Russia as a child of eight; when her parents died, she and her older sister took care of their four younger brothers. She studied painting at Carnegie Tech (now Carnegie Mellon University) but was self-taught as a sculptor, using kitchen knives, fingernail files, and needles until she could afford professional tools.

Beginning in 1933, Barsky exhibited her work with the Associated Artists of Pittsburgh. In 1934, she won the first sculpture award given in that show for a realistic portrait bust of Morris Rom, a local businessman. She also worked for the Pittsburgh group of the Federal Art Project, a program of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). For \$95 a month, each of the group’s six painters and sculptors was



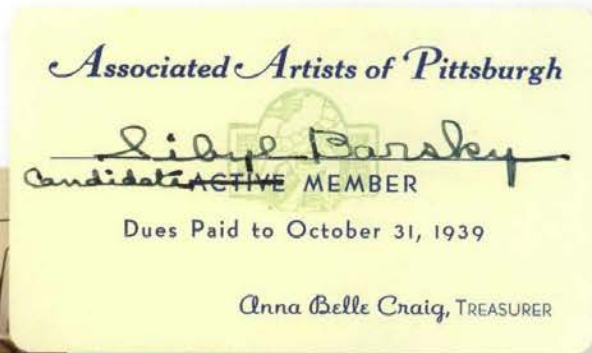
Sibyl Barsky Grucci repairing a bust this past summer.

Mark M. Rubenstein

provided with materials with which they created works of art for schools, museums, and other civic institutions.

In 1940, Barsky married Joseph Grucci, a poet and professor of English at the University of Pittsburgh and Penn State University. Sibyl Barsky Grucci worked in clay, plaster, wood, stone, and bronze, and her sculptures are in public and private collections throughout the country. One notable work is her bust of Fred Lewis Pattee, prominently displayed in the foyer of the Pattee Library in State College. “The Young Dancer,” a limestone piece first exhibited at the Associated Artists of Pittsburgh show in 1935, is in the Grucci Poetry Center, also at Penn State.

Another of Grucci’s sculptures, a bronze portraithead of Hyman Blum, can be seen on



Note the temporary status on this 1939 Associated Artists of Pittsburgh membership card.

History Center Archives, Sibyl Barsky Grucci Collection

the sixth floor of the Heinz History Center, part of a display of materials from the Blumcraft Company, a local architectural metalworking company with an international



Sibyl working on bust of Pearl Breskin Weinberger.

History Center Archives, Sibyl Barsky Grucci Collection

scope. Founder Hyman Blum helped Grucci in the 1940s by providing studio space and materials, and she sculpted him in return. The artist was not indicated when the Blum family donated their collection; it was Sibyl who identified herself on a recent visit. She subsequently donated her papers to the Rauh Jewish Archives at the History Center.

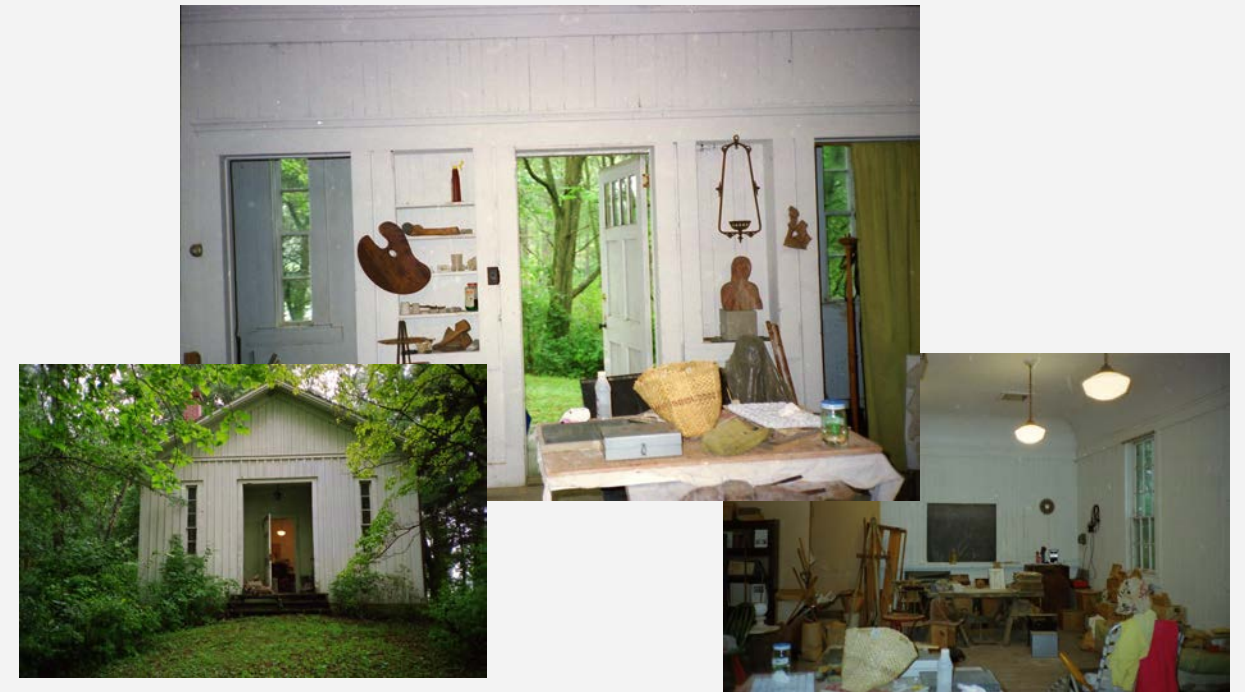
Two oral histories form part of the collection, and in them Grucci remembers her childhood spent in the Hill District and the East End. Later, while she was taking night classes at Carnegie Tech, she became friends with well-known Pittsburgh artist Samuel Rosenberg. An undated drawing of Grucci by Rosenberg is in the collection, along with some of Grucci’s own drawings and many photographs of her sculptures.

Sibyl Barsky Grucci recently moved to California. At the age of 101, she still spends time on sculpture, lately repairing some of her pieces damaged in transit.

The Library & Archives collects materials related to the history and culture of Western Pennsylvania. The L&A is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, or visit the Historic Pittsburgh website at <http://digital.library.pitt.edu/pittsburgh> for the online catalog and other useful tools.

Sibyl Barsky Grucci 1905-2007

Boogersburg School held its final school year in 1952 and in 1953, Joseph and Sibyl Barsky Grucci purchased the school at public auction. Mrs. Grucci used the schoolhouse as sculpting studio until 2001. Photos of the Schoolhouse from 1998:



Sibyl Barsky and Louis Pattee Bust at the Pattee Library, Penn State

Photo credit: Senator John Heinz History Center

