

Then... and Now

Diamond Rock Schoolhouse

The octagonal Diamond Rock Schoolhouse in Tredyffrin Township was constructed in 1818 on land leased for “a Term of Nine hundred and ninety-nine years.” With a stove radiating heat from the middle of the one-room school, over sixty girls and boys were seated on benches at long tables facing the walls. In 1864, near the close of the Civil War, the old “Eight-Square” school house had become too small for the needs of the Great Valley. Two new schools were built, each about a mile away; the Walker School to the east, and the Salem School to the west. The old octagonal school slowly fell into near-ruin before its restoration between 1909 – 1918. The property was deeded to the Old Pupils' Association of the Diamond Rock School in 1932.



Looking northeast from the intersection of Diamond Rock (left) and Yellow Springs Roads (right), this is one of the earliest photographs of the ruined school, taken about 1902 by legendary Berwyn photographer Lucy Sampson. Notice the stucco and stone construction, the absence of telephone poles, and the mountain's new growth trees behind the school. Looking up Diamond Rock Hill, one notices the intermittent steps, called “thank you ma’ams,” which provided resting places for horse and buggy as they ascended the steep hill.



The octagonal schoolhouse and Diamond Rock Road on a quiet Sunday evening in the fall of 2011. Only faint evidence remains of the now-unnecessary “thank you ma’am’s.” The schoolhouse is living history, and as it fast approaches its 200th anniversary, this image shows the care now lavished upon this wonderful landmark.

Top photo by Lucy Sampson, courtesy of Tredyffrin Easttown Historical Society Archives. Bottom photo by Roger Thorne.