

EXPLORE AREA ATTRACTIONS

Hope Schoolhouse

The main trailhead and parking area for the Zaleski State Forest backpack trail has been moved to the "Schoolhouse," named after the Hope Schoolhouse, which remains on the property. This schoolhouse is situated in Brown Township, which was named for a prominent family that lived in the area at the time. Vinton County and its townships were formed in 1850 from parts of Ross, Gallia, Jackson, Hocking and Athens counties.

This area was rich in raw materials for making iron. The Hope Iron Furnace was built in 1854 and supported a community of 300 to 400 people. Most people that worked at the furnace lived in one-room log homes with dirt floors. They were paid in company scrip, which was only good at the company store where merchandise was reportedly over-priced, a common practice back then. In addition to iron workers, the community included local farmers and tradesmen. The entire area was booming in the second half of the 19th century.

The school district around the area of the Hope Iron Furnace was named after the furnace. Although the furnace ended operations in 1874, the student enrollment of the school district outgrew the existing schoolhouse so a new school was needed. On June 9, 1883, the school district purchased a half-acre lot from Aaron Pinney for this purpose. The schoolhouse was built by a local craftsman named George Bell.

The school was a one-room schoolhouse where one teacher taught all grade levels. The first teacher in the new building was Winifred Lowry, and the biggest classes had about 20 students. While one grade level worked with the teacher, the others worked quietly on assignments. The children helped each other during these quiet periods, and as a result, several of them became interested in teaching as a career. Two students, Agnes Clifford and Mamie Shea, later taught at the Hope Schoolhouse. The teacher had to arrive early on school days to start a fire in the wood-burning stove, which heated the school. The students sat on plain wooden benches and desks that faced a black slate chalkboard. Students were also required to "stoke the stove" during class. The latrine outside the schoolhouse was a two-person outhouse. Additionally, in the 1920s and 1930s, the Hope Schoolhouse claimed one of the largest school libraries in Vinton County.

In 1931, a fire, possibly aided by the practice of using kerosene on the floors to keep the dust down, destroyed the old schoolhouse. The school was rebuilt in 1932 by Perry Pinney Sr. and teacher Raymond Knox. Student turnover rates were high as life was hard for the local populace, and families were very transitory. As the iron ore industry declined, so did the number of students enrolled at the school. Coal mining opportunities brought new people into the school district, but these jobs didn't last long. Hope School closed in 1941 when local elementary students started going to school at Zaleski Elementary. The Hope Schoolhouse was restored in 1998 and continues to serve the community as a place to hold local civic events.



The Hope Iron Furnace was one of several in the Hanging Rock Region that helped support a vibrant iron ore industry during the 1800s.



The Hope Schoolhouse served to educate the families of the community living near the furnace.



The Hope Schoolhouse was refurbished in 1998 and still is used by the community for local events.

Ohio Department of Natural Resources
ZALESKI STATE FOREST

