

Odd Fellows' Gazebo Park

Main Street, Thompson Falls, Montana

A HOME AT LAST- The cupola from the historic Boys Dormitory roof has found a place to rest. The journey has been long with many twists and turns, but it is finally over.



It began when the City of Thompson Falls provided dormitory housing to the students that came to Thompson Falls from several surrounding states and other Montana towns. Because weather and road conditions would restrict travel and many students could not make the daily trip to and from school, it was ideal for the families and students alike. These students would spend most of the school year in Thompson Falls and made the dormitories their temporary home. The dormitories were in use from 1909-1946. The boy's dormitory, completed in 1939, is one of two buildings remaining of the original 7 buildings that made up the campus. It now houses the Superintendent's office, the Kindergarten classes and the music room. By 1946 the postwar economy made it impossible to financially support the dormitories. Several of the buildings were converted into apartments and others were torn down entirely.

In 2006 the roof of the dormitory building which is located north of the Thompson Falls Junior High building, originally the High School, was strengthened and a new steel roof installed. What remains of that remodel is the cupola roof. It would have originally included a louvered paneled frame that stood four-five foot tall. This structure provided ventilation for the massive roof and was a signature element on all the roofs on the campus.

Through the help and foresight of Sherry Hagerman-Benton, vice president of the Sanders County Historical Society and the Superintendent of schools; Dr. Jerry Pauli the Society has preserved this unique piece of history for posterity. To raise the necessary funds the Society put on fund-raiser dinners in 2006 & 07. The proceeds were earmarked and set aside until the right place and support structure could be found. In the mean time the roof was stored first in Neil Carman's shop, then in the back yard of John Hagerman and finally in a barn owned by Sam and Patti Bernhardt where it remained until just days ago.

Finally the right person came along and a gazebo, built by Dave Swartzentruber of Belknap, was erected to support the cupola. The weathervane that is the crowning touch was refinished with a powder coating by COLORTUFF. The original copper roofing remained in tact and still has the original classic green patina, enhancing its true character.

The gazebo resides in the grassy park area owned by the Odd Fellows, it is located between to the IOOF building and Plants Galore.

For more information about these historic buildings and the students that lived there, see the book *"Home away from Home-life in the Dorm"* by Jim and Celia Freed, available through the Old Jail Museum or call 827-4630.

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