

ROTTERDAM

History unveiled through school's time capsule

Current Schalmont students make their contributions to future

BY JUSTIN MASON
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Norma Gardiner scanned through a brittle stack of mimeographed pages listing the names and numbers of the staff members who worked at the Jefferson Elementary School more than a half-century ago.

With a smile, the school's former secretary noticed the area population was small enough that the bright blue phone numbers she had diligently copied had only five digits. And when she typed the list, along with a history-to-date of Jefferson, she sat in a painfully cramped room on the second floor of the former school building on Princetown Road.

"It was so long ago," the 76-year-old retiree reminisced. "We used to sit desk to desk."

On a rainy day in November 1951, Gardiner's work was among the contents of a copper box that was encased in the cornerstone of the school's new building, where it remained until last week. She had all but forgotten about her handiwork until being contacted by Jefferson Principal Joby Gifford earlier this year, with an invitation to come see the contents of the small box as part of Schalmont School District's 50th anniversary

celebration this week.

School officials displayed a collection of historical documents pulled from the cornerstone during a ceremony Monday morning. Among them were census data, an abridged history of Schenectady from 1798 to 1948, Gardiner's history of the school, notes from the architects that built the school and a newspaper article clipped from *The Schenectady Gazette* announcing the school's construction.

Much has changed since that time, Gardiner recalled. Six years after the capsule was buried, Jefferson joined a collective of five smaller schools to form the Schalmont Central School District.

"I don't think I realized how special it is until I realized it's 50 years later and I'm still a part of it," she said. "I was young then and you don't think too far into the future."

Current Jefferson students dedicated a number of items from their own time to a new capsule, which will be buried near the school's flagpole. School officials anticipate the 3-foot-tall plastic cylinder to be exhumed during the district's centennial celebration



HANS PENNINK/GAZETTE PHOTOGRAPHER

Jefferson Elementary School Principal Joby Gifford (left), and student Sarah Faltermeier watch first-grader Liam Barnes place a music recording into a time capsule at the Jefferson Elementary School on Monday.

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50 years from now.

Student contributions ranged from pictures of Jefferson's fifth-grade class to a copy of a kindergarten report card. The Jefferson third-graders included a collection of acrostic poems, while the second grade contributed a list of their favorite books.

"I hope you treasure today's contributions, because you too

have become part of Schalmont's legacy," Gifford told the young students.

First-graders Liam Barnes and Sarah Faltermeier dropped an audio tape of their class singing songs into the capsule. The two then giggled as they tabulated how old they'll be when its next opened and how their counterparts of the future might react to their singing.

"They'll be wondering what grade sang it," Liam said.

Fourth-grader Ian Randall felt

honored to be the one to stuff a small green-and-white tiger Beanie Baby into the cylinder. He speculated the chamber of gifts might give the Jefferson students of the future a chance to pause and think about what life was like in 2007.

"They'll think about it as a special gift from us to the future," he said.

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