

News

Shelly One Room School enters '4th Dimension'

The Richland Township school became a set for the \$100,000 supernatural thriller

By Toni Becker
Of The Free Press

One look at the Shelly One Room School on Richlandtown Pike, Richland Township, and Daniel Kalai said he knew he wanted to film there.

"Just look at it," the producer of the upcoming film "The 4th Dimension" said. "It's just an amazing set."

On Feb. 24 and 25, the small one-room schoolhouse and the surrounding land became one of the sets for the super-natural thriller.

"It's nice to have something like this done," Richland Township Historical Society President Victor Stevens said.

The schoolhouse, which is the headquarters for the Historical Society, as well as a museum, was built in 1855 and served as a school until 1957.

The Historical Society has worked to preserve the building and to keep it as authentic to 1855 as possible, including a picture of then United States President Grover Cleveland and an American flag bearing the amount of stars for the states at the time.

"It's such a landmark," Kalai said. "It's timeless to the point where you walk through the door and it's like a blast from the past."

The film, written and directed by Tom Mattera and Dave Mazzoni, will be shot throughout March at various locations.

The Shelly School was discovered when the crew, who are all primarily out of Philadelphia, were scouting for locations.

"It spoke to us," Kalai said. "We had to make it work."

Stevens, along with his wife Lois, a Historical Society volunteer, were on set for both days of filming.

The Shelly One Room School is open throughout the year for tours and offers visitors the opportunity to learn about its history and one-room schoolhouses in general.

"It's a really cool site for people to come and see what one-room schoolhouses were like," Kalai said.

It was the authenticity of the schoolhouse that attracted the crew to the Shelly One Room School.

"To preserve history is one of the goals," Stevens said, of the Historical Society.

So far they've done just that.

"To translate that to film is integral to production," Kalai said, of the authenticity.

The scene that was filmed at the Shelly One Room School is set sometime around the turn of the century, although Kalai said

the intent is to keep the film timeless, so an exact date is not identified.

Actor Miles Williams plays the child version of the main character Jack – played by Dave Mazzoni – a genius, who begins to experience supernatural events, leading to an obsession with analyzing time and searching for a connection between the two.

The scene in the one-room schoolhouse depicts Jack's childhood.

Shannon Lambert-Ryan, who was in M. Night Shyamalan's "The Village," is also featured in the film.

"To get a location like this is phenomenal," Kalai said, of the Shelly School. "If you're going to do something, do it right. This makes our film world a reality."

Though filming is now completed, Kalai said he's thankful to Stevens, the Historical Society and the surrounding area.

"We're extremely appreciative of the town and the Richland Historical Society," Kalai said.

To find out more about the "4th Dimension," visit the Web site at www.the4thdimension-movie.com.

To schedule a tour of the Shelly One Room School, please call 215-536-7564.

Toni Becker is a reporter for The Free Press. She can be reached at tkbecker@berksmont-news.com.