Top Five Relic Boxes That Slipped Your Eye

By KATE O'DOWD and ABBY SCHAEFFER

The relic boxes of Stuyvesant High School are nothing new to its students. They are located not only in the hallways of Stuy, but are scattered throughout the stairwells and classrooms as well.

"When the Stuyvesant building was being considered, a part of what was thought about was what was going to be in the hallways. We thought about it, and two things were done," said Principal Stanley Teitel. "Some artifacts were put in, either brought from around the world or things from the old building, and there's a block for every class going up to [the year] 2009." Upon graduation, each class collectively decides what will fill this "time capsule" forever. Despite the fact that the boxes have been present in the new Stuyvesant building since it was first constructed in 1992, they never cease to heighten appreciation for certain aspects of Stuy culture.

1. "New Zealand"

This box lies near room 729. Inside there are two sections of sheep wool. The first section is identified as "Romney Ewe; 36 microns; cut April 4, 1992; Burnt Hill Farm; Oxford, South Island." The second section is identified as "Merino Ewe; 22 microns; cut April 4, 1992; Ashley Gorge Farm; Oxford, South Island." Due to the box’s almost hidden presence, few people know of its origin, let alone that it exists.

However, this box seems to be preserved in the walls of the Stuyvesant building because, as sophomore Jared Rosen put it, "Sheep wool is a major export of New Zealand and we have to represent all cultures in our Stuy community."

2. "Data 1960"

This box by the fourth floor elevator is one of a peculiar nature. It is packed with shredded-up numbers that are leftovers of the 1960’s version of floppy disks. "Around then, before we had hard drives and computers, Stuy used data cards," said Assistant Principal Biology Elizabeth Fong.

The process of preparing the "floppy disk" can be compared to punching holes in a paper for school with a hole-puncher. Instead, the cards were punched out into rectangular holes, around one-twentieth of an inch by one-eighth of an inch.

"You would have a stack of punch cards and feed them into a punching meter. That’s how you would program your computer," said school aide Jan Siwanowicz. "It basically would be a physical representation of a typed up document."

3. "Fire Bell; Old Stuyvesant"

On the ninth floor outside the doors to the Hudson staircase, one can catch a glimpse of Stuyvesant history. This relic box contains an unusual bell from the old Stuyvesant building.

"When the old building was first put up it was run on gas," said Teitel. "There was no electricity." Teitel also believes that the bell could have been used "to start Stuyvesant before [they had] electricity in the old building. The bell was probably used to start or end classes in some way."

If you happen to make it past the swarm of students at the sixth floor bar towards the English office, this box is sure to catch your eye. Inside, according to history teacher Phil Scandura, is "the brass ending of a stairwell [rail] in the main lobby of the old [Stuyvesant] building."

4. "Thousands of Stuyvesant Students Have Touched This"

At first glance, the contents of the box may not look like the end of a stairwell rail at all. Sophomore Connie Liu thought it was "a shiny horn in the wall." In addition, the label on the relic box can lead on-lookers to believe it contains something other than what it really is.

Another box situated between the third and the fourth floor in the West staircase is recognizable as a trident to most students. In Hinduism, Shiva is known as the destroyer of evil.

Teitel had another opinion. "You know when you have a marching band and you’re holding the trumpet and you have a music stand on top of it?" said Teitel. "That’s what this looks like to me."

Each relic box of Stuy has its own story and with each person, a different interpretation. No matter how strange or arbitrary any box may seem, they all add a little something to Stuyvesant culture. As Fong put it, "I enjoy looking at the boxes because not only are they a part of our culture, but they’re also snapshots of past events."