

Historical Highlight

Sand Lake Historical Society

Volume 21, No. 3

Spring 1995

The Saga of Sand Lake Village

Coul Westcott

At the turn of the century, Sand Lake Village was a drowsy country hamlet at a dirt crossroad snoozing in the Sunday sun to a choir of August locusts punctuated by a sacrilegious bang of a blacksmith's hammer — no chugging motorcars or trucks — an occasional horse and wagon clomping by — lofty elms swaying in the soft, summer breeze. A bright orange Monarch flutters among colorful hollyhocks. A rabbit hound sleeps on his back, paws in the air. The Village "Uncle Zachariahs" nap on veranda hammocks, batting errant flies with one hand and reflexively scratching fat bellies though sweaty undershirts with the other. Loveable "Aunt Bessies" sit in worn, stenciled Boston rockers and click their knitting needles. Even the young children are quiet, unseen, unfelt. The whole hamlet in somnolent bliss, time crawling on arthritic hands and rocky knees, the clock perceptibly stilled. The open windows of the nearby Presbyterian Church allow organ music to escape and wash out over the little community, healing the restless and sick, making the world right one more time. One would just know that the local undertaker would have no work this week. All is well forever in Sand Lake Village at the turn of the century....

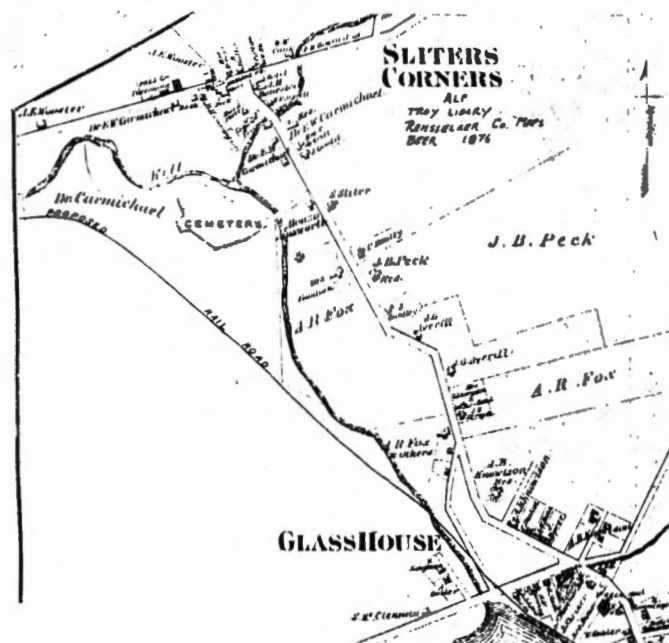
The area is a near-pristine land of lakes and people — originally Algonquian Mohican Indian people trailed too soon by the Dutch, the English and others. The lakes — glacial pustules, remnants from the last ice age 10,000 years earlier — are: Glass Lake, Crooked Lakes Crystal Lake and Burden Lake (formerly

Martin's pond). All four lakes were modified in the mid-1860s to flow additional water down the Wynantskill to energize the Burden Iron Work's giant water wheel in South Troy. The name Sand Lake derives from the natural soil make-up found in Western Rensselaer County. The township itself derives its name accordingly.

Averill Park hamlet was the "original" Sand Lake Village. The little jewel we know today as Crystal Lake was originally Sand Lake. Before 1882, what we know as Sand Lake Village was called Sliters Corners. The land bottoms of these four lakes are owned today by a successor to the Burden Iron Works; the company still pays real estate taxes to the town, county and school district and occasionally still raises legal tangles associated with this ownership.

Sliters Corners, or Sand Lake Village, grew at the intersection of roads leading east to Taborton, south to East Nassau, west to Averill Park village and north to Poestenkill (and Troy). Currently, it is the intersection of State Routes 43 and 66.

In earlier days, the names *village* and *hamlet* (the former, Norman French; the latter, English Saxon) were used somewhat interchangeably. Over time, a legal distinction became necessary whereby a village became a community unit with its own governing body. Today, the "village" Sand Lake would be considered a *hamlet*, as would the "villages" of Averill Park or West Sand Lake; the historical or traditional use of the term



traditional use of the term village will always blur the issue penny candy, along with old-time hardware, antiques, crafts and associated goods. *The Country Token* further promoted an air of warmth, peace and stability to the old crossroad even as an upstart traffic light emphasized the area's chronological disarray.

Back in 1882, the hamlet of Sliters Corners changed its name to Sand Lake, said name having been given up by Averill Park. The Averill name was handed down by the local land-owning Averill family. This was a flourishing rural community, boasting a balanced mix of commerce, farms and recreation along with a sprinkling of stately homes. Expansion brought an influx of residents from all parts of New York State. Access improved with the establishment of the Troy & New England Railway in 1895, providing daily trolley service to Troy. The line seeded and expanded a number of small neighborhoods along its route. The dramatic increase of popularity of the automobile signalled the demise of the trolley line in 1925, a sad end to a colorful 30-year contribution.

In its day, the trolley line provided a convenient and inexpensive way to transport people and goods to and from the area. Horse-drawn taxis met passengers at the Averill Park terminal and took them to one of the many hotels and boardinghouses or to the very popular Crystal Lake dance pavilion just up the hill from the terminal. (That terminal still stands at the bottom of Orient Avenue hill. Until recently the building, train shed since enclosed, housed Tremont Lumber.)

Of the many hotels, Crapes Hotel was one of the most sought after. Situated on the southeast corner of the Sliters Corners intersection, it was built as an area stage stop and tavern by Clement Sliter in 1800. The hotel restaurant cuisine was noted widely for its extra-fine country-style servings and was considered the best in the area.

Across the road from Crapes Hotel, a two-story frame building was erected in 1820; a general store occupied the first floor, living quarters the second. After several ownerships, Chester and Sarah Nash acquired the building in 1928 and ran it for over 50 years as a general store and post office. In 1978, the post office moved across the road to the northwest corner of the intersection, sharing a new brick building with a "convenience" store. About that same time, the adjacent Presbyterian church was acquired by the Town of Sand Lake for its Town functions — a handsome, sorely needed addition.

In 1980, Terry and John Tokryman purchased and refurbished the former Nash store, with the intention of business renewal. By now, the graceful, tall, old elm trees were long gone. So were the "Uncle Zachariahs" and "Aunt Bessies," many now at rest in nearby Union cemetery. The Tokrymans called their enterprise *The Country Token*, the building acquiring a "good old days" style accentuated by cracker barrels, pot belly stove and

The Country Token itself is now a memory, a vacant storefront once again. But the golden aura of Sliters Corners, née Sand Lake Village, lives on — as do we. 4

From the President

Twenty years ago this May, the Sand Lake Historical Society received its Provisional Charter — an important milestone in the life of our organization. Our charter members were fired with enthusiasm for the proper celebration of the 200th birthday of our nation's independence. SLHS stirred the whole town and its many organizations to do something very special in honor of the Bicentennial. Today we still enjoy the memorabilia, including the quilt and oil paintings that hang in Town Hall, and photos of the grand community parade and familiar faces in period costumes. (See our 1977 calendar.)

As SLHS President, motivations to act are a part of the job — a phone call, an article in a newspaper, a newsletter from another historical society, notices of special meetings, events, applications for awards and special funding — **opportunities**. In response, I press some of the right buttons, but certainly not all, mostly for lack of time. Perhaps it takes a very special event to stir us to "do the right thing."

Well, it's spring, and I should like to plant an idea: if each member makes the commitment to do something special for historic preservation in Sand Lake each year for the next five years, how proudly we can celebrate the **millennium**. We can have files of oral histories, focusing on our long-time residents; photographs and ephemera labeled and safely stored; genealogical data ready for sharing with family and community; personal histories on paper, audio or videotape; organizational histories gathered and transmitted to our archives; proper storage and display for artifacts precious to the history of Sand Lake. Let's all be *Scavengers for History*, and have fun while contributing to the record of our past for a special observance in the year 2000!

Looking forward to seeing you at the Annual Meeting, I'll have handouts of ideas you might like to incorporate in **your five-year plan**. — *Dianne Freeman*

East Greenbush, "Today and Yesterday" — On April 11 (8:00 p.m., Sand Lake Town Hall, Route 43, Sand Lake), Josephine Schweigert, past town historian in East Greenbush and a member of the DAR, will talk about the history of our neighboring town. As the Town of Sand Lake was established out of part of the original Town of Greenbush, the program should be of interest to all.



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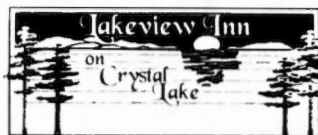
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Sand Lake Historical Society Annual Dinner Meeting May 9, 1995



Route 45 • Averill Park Center
New York 12018

The Annual Dinner Meeting of the Sand Lake Historical Society will be held at the Lakeview Inn on Crystal Lake (Route 43, "Averill Park Center") on Tuesday, May 9. A social hour (cash bar) begins at 6:30 p.m., followed by dinner at 7:15 p.m.

The program features *An Armchair Tour of Rensselaer County* with Kathryn Sheehan, Assistant Curator of the Rensselaer County Historical Society. In her nine years in this position, she has collected a great number of images illustrating both the new and old Rensselaer

County. Her slide presentation will take us back through the years and show us how times have changed.

Dinner will consist of a choice of Stuffed Breast of Chicken, Broiled Haddock or Sirloin Tips with Mushroom Gravy. Included are tossed salad, potato or rice, vegetable medley, rolls and a delicious Brownie Sundae.

Cost is only \$15.00. Please make your reservations by May 1. A reservation form is found elsewhere in this newsletter.

Trustees

At the Annual Meeting on May 9, there will be a very short business meeting for election of trustees. Special thanks to the nominating committee (Berenice Danks, Rosemary Supkis and Marge Larsen), who have come up with the following nominees.

For One Year — *Barbara Mohan*; for Two Years — *Winifred W. Edwards*; for Three Years — *E. Berenice Danks, Ross L. French, Chester Gawryck, Linda Ormsby.*

Membership

If you have not renewed your membership, now is the time to do it. Please fill in the application in this newsletter and bring it to the Annual Meeting or mail it to the Sand Lake Historical Society, PO Box 492, West Sand Lake, NY 12196.





SAND LAKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Box 492
West Sand Lake, N.Y. 12196

Community Tailgate Sale

DATE: Saturday, June 3, 1995, **Rain or Shine**

LOCATION: Sand Lake Town Hall parking lot (due West of the intersection of Routes 43 and 66) on Route 43

SPACE: Outside, 18'x20' — **must be reserved in advance**

SETUP TIME: 8:00-9:00 a.m.

SHOW TIME: 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. **Dealers may not dismantle display until 4:00 p.m.**

FEES: \$15.00 per space. Make checks payable to *Sand Lake Historical Society*

ADMISSION: **Free.** Show will be advertised in daily and weekly newspapers in the Capital District, via poster, and on TV and radio

OTHER CONDITIONS: No food concessions permitted for sale by vendors. Refreshments will be available for sale by the Kiwanis Club throughout the day. **All trash must be taken away by the dealers.**

The Sand Lake Historical Society will not be responsible for any loss, theft, or injury to dealer, vehicle and his/her agents or helpers and property before, during or after the show.

I AGREE TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS.

Check No. _____

Type of goods _____
(tools, household, etc.)

SIGNATURE OF DEALER

DATE

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

PHONE _____

Mail to: Alan R. Fuess, 65 Schumann Road, Averill Park, NY 12018

PLEASE KEEP A COPY FOR YOUR RECORDS.



"Tailgating" is fun!

What is a community tailgate sale? It's a fun day with your neighbors. We learn about other's hobbies and interests, while sharing our, such as candle-making, woodworking or collecting.

Everyone brings new or slightly used treasures to share with others, and perhaps finds some "new treasures" to take home. We visit with long-time friends, enjoy snacks from the Kiwanis Wagon and meet new people with interests similar to our own.

In an 18'x20' space, there is room for the car or minivan and tables or ground space for artistic and inviting displays. Everyone has some "extra stuff" that needs to be removed from the attic, cellar or storage areas. Someone else is looking for it and is willing to offer cash or trade.

Some collector already have been inquiring about buttons, metal toys, metal lunchboxes, canes, antique tools, clocks and bottles. Crafts, household goods, old-fashioned home remedies, postcards, books, china and

other collectibles will be displayed and available.

The Sand Lake Historical Society table will feature items donated by members of the community. Take advantage of this opportunity — meet your neighbors, sell and/or buy interesting items, enjoy the Kiwanis snacks, learn more about and support your local historical society.

Proceeds will be used to continue Sand Lake Historical Society activities, including: collection of oral histories; collection of books, audio and video tapes available in the Society's collection at the Sand Lake Town Library; publication of informational pamphlets; awards to two graduating seniors at Averill Park High School; historical house tours; genealogy training; and free public meetings.

Come join us on Saturday, June 3, at the Sand Lake Town Hall parking lot from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Make your \$15 reservation with Alan Fuess (674-2154), using the form opposite this page.

Reservation Form Sand Lake Historical Society Annual Dinner Meeting May 9, 1995

NAME(S) _____

NUMBER OF PERSONS _____ X \$15.00 PER PERSON = _____ TOTAL

I WOULD LIKE (check one):

STUFFED BREAST OF CHICKEN BROILED HADDOCK SIRLOIN TIPS

Make checks payable to *Sand Lake Historical Society*.
Mail to: Sand Lake Historical Society, PO Box 492, West Sand Lake, NY 12196

Sand Lake Historical Society 1995-96 Dues

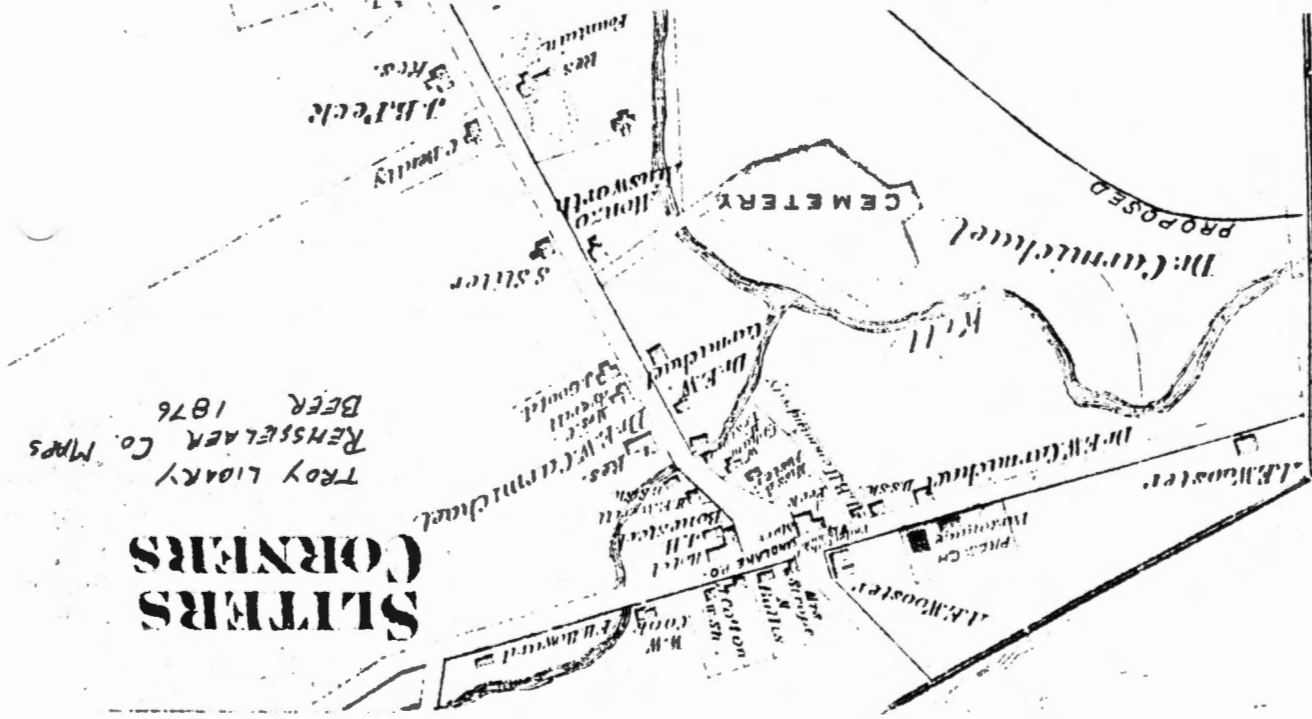
Complete this coupon and bring to the Annual Dinner Meeting or mail to:
Sand Lake Historical Society, PO Box 492, West Sand Lake, NY 12196.
Make check payable to *Sand Lake Historical Society*.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

Please give your new "9-1-1" rural delivery address if applicable.

Membership dues are \$5.00 per person.
Membership cards will be presented at the Annual Meeting or mailed to you.



SEE INSIDE FOR INFORMATION ON THE ANNUAL MEETING (MAY 9)!!!
 ALSO, PLEASE NOTE: THE BUS TRIP TO WEST POINT PLANNED FOR MAY 20 HAS BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL THE FALL.

FORWARDING/ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED
 Sand Lake Historical Society
 POB 492
 West Sand Lake, NY 12196

Historical Highlights
 Coulman Westcott, Editor
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FIRST CLASS MAIL