

# Historical Highlights

Sand Lake Historical Society

Volume 23, No. 1

Fall 1996

## Supervisors of the Town of Sand Lake

*Sidney Gallant & Joe Warren*

By Bob Lilly

History is not just the distant past. Yesterday is also history! So this, the second in a series on Supervisors of the Town of Sand Lake, recognizes two past Supervisors that are still living in the Town of Sand Lake. It is especially fitting since, between them, they have devoted over 55 years of service to the Town. Many of us know them, and newcomers or younger residents should recognize them as they pass them in the post office, Miller's Market or town functions. We are talking about Joe Warren, Supervisor in 1968-69, and Sid Gallant, Supervisor from 1970-79.

### Joe Warren

Mr. Joseph H. Warren, a native of our town, was born in 1911 in West Sand Lake. Joe's mother was born in Ireland and the family lived in Stephentown and Lebanon before coming to Sand Lake. Later his family moved to the Averill Park area and he attended District School 7 in Averill Park (now The Veterans Hall). After grade school, Joe worked for Faith Mills in Averill Park and Thermo Mill in West Sand Lake for 2½ years. Then he continued his schooling.

When Joe started grade school, the Averill Park Central School District had not yet been organized. As a result, when he graduated young Joe had to take the KLWM Bus to attend Troy High to study in an Industrial Shop course. (Do you remember the KLWM bus line — Glass Lake to Troy — operated by Knap, Larkin, Wendel and McNary, local Sand Lake businessmen?) He again left school and returned to work for Faith Mills. Once again, Joe returned to high school, this time at the new Averill Park High School (now the Sand Lake School). Joseph Warren graduated in the first graduating class, class of 1932, as president of the class.

In 1933, Joe Warren married Mildred Fitzgerald of Troy, who just happened to be the niece of Joseph Fitzgerald, Town Supervisor from 1952-67. They had three

sons, one of which lives in West Sand Lake, the others in Nassau and Colonie.

After graduation, Joe worked as a clerk at the A&P store in Averill Park for 10 years and during the war years with General Electric Co. At that time he became an agent for Prudential Insurance Company, from which he retired after 27 years.

### Sidney Gallant

Sid Gallant was of French descent and his family came to the States through Canada. He was born February 12, 1917, in Burlington, Vermont. Early in his life the family moved to Albany where he attended Albany High School. After high school he attended Troy Business College. Upon graduation in 1938, he was employed by Montgomery Ward.

For a time, Sid worked for the Civilian Conservation Corps and helped set up camps in the area, including one camp in the Alps, Nassau.

Sid was drafted in 1944 and joined the U.S. Marines. Because of his background in merchandising at Montgomery Ward, he was assigned to the Quartermasters branch.

Mr. Gallant married Doris I. Bailey. They raised a son and a daughter.

### Town Board

The political careers of Joseph Warren and Sidney Gallant ran parallel during their years in office. When asked where they first met each other, another story of town history emerged. It seems that Joe was a second baseman on the St. Henry's baseball team while Sid was outfielder for the Sand Lake Presbyterian Church team. And who was in the league? None other than Elroy Face, a Sand Lake sports hero who later played for the Pittsburgh Pirates. The teams were part of a local



league, with teams from the churches and fire departments in town.

Joseph Warren was elected Town Clerk in 1948, when Raymond Miller was Supervisor. In 1950, Joe Warren ran for Supervisor against Joe Fitzgerald and lost. Sid Gallant ran for Justice of the Peace and won. The following election year — 1952 - Joe was elected Town Clerk and Sid was reelected Justice of the Peace.

Prior to 1956, the Town Board was composed of the Supervisor, four Justices of the Peace and the Town Clerk. In 1956, when the Board was changed to two Justices of the Peace and two Councilmen, Sid was one of the latter and retained that position until 1971. During the following years, Sid was Town Councilman, and Joe Warren was Town Clerk. In 1968, Joe Warren was elected Supervisor for one term, and Sid remained on the Board as Councilman.

During this time there was no Town Hall. Meetings of the Town Board were usually held at an office space in Joe Warren's home. When special topics created general interest and a greater number of attendants, it was moved to the school or Veterans Hall.


In 1970, Sid Gallant was elected Supervisor and held that position for 10 years. At the same time Joe Warren was elected to the County Legislature and served two two-year terms. Joe returned to the Town Board as Councilman in 1980-83.

During the period that Sid Gallant and Joe Warren were active in Town Government two major projects were started and developed

— town roads and town sewers. Town roads at the time were mostly dirt construction. The State Legislature passed the "Irwin Town Road Bill" providing State aid, and the town board took advantage of it with a road construction program. The town roads of today are a result of Joe and Sid's backing. One interesting point is that in 1952 the Town purchased its first bulldozer, thus changing the highway work from pick and shovel to the mechanized age.

The need for a modern sewer system for West Sand Lake and Averill Park was recognized. In 1964 the Town Board approved a sewer facility study, which was completed by Kessler Engineers. As a result of this study, the Town was able to take advantage of Federal Funding. It so happened that when funds became available, New York City had not completed its study for a \$200 million grant. Sid Gallant and other members of the board meet Federal and State officials at the Department of Conservation Office and arranged for a \$40 million grant for the Town of Sand Lake.

Sid Gallant was also responsible for buying the former Presbyterian Church and remodeling it into the Town Hall, as well as securing the donation 13½ acres of land from the H.H. Butler foundation for use as a town park. The 1976 Bicentennial observance was held. During Sid's 10 years as supervisor he was Chairman of the Town Supervisors Association.

And so we see that these two men have served the town well, from 1948 through 1983. They have experienced many changes: from rural schoolhouses to a large central school district, from a small rural town with mostly dirt roads to a modern residential town with good roads and a modern sewer district, from a population of 3,254 in 1950 to 7,022 in 1980. So thank you to Joseph Warren and Sidney Gallant, for yours of devoted service to the Town of Sand Lake. We salute you! 



The photograph above was taken on the arrival of an elephant for Fox's Wild Animal Farm, located for many years on what is now County Route 55, just west of Route 150. *L-R: an airline hostess, Sid Gallant, Joe Warren.*





## From the President

Several weeks ago, in an attempt to educate myself more fully concerning the duties of the president of the Sand Lake Historical Society, I began a cursory search of the organization's file cabinets in the town hall. Time flew by as I became engrossed in a deeply moving trip into the past — so many smiling, wonderful faces and events depicted there recalled a way of life locked forever in the 19th and 20th centuries.

I remembered reading a recent quote by a photographer. When queried regarding what is lost today with videotape documenting of history vs. the days of still photography, he answered: "Photography freezes one instant in time....the photographer has the ability to look into a person's soul and can bring out the personality of a human being. The video camera just records everything....it is a document with no personality." The truth of these words stared up at me from those faces, long gone, which touched my heart so deeply.

Many of today's children no longer have the intimacy of the available older generations who so love to reminisce. What occurred "only yesterday" in our recollections are, indeed, "the older days" to a young generation. Photographs, diaries, recollections and other fascinating memorabilia are all part of the legacy which the Sand Lake Historical Society seeks to perpetuate. The very fact that several 5th and 6th grade students have joined and attended meetings during the past year substantiates their interest in the past.

My acceptance of the office of the president was motivated by my sincere desire to keep alive another year this organization whose founders have worked so hard to preserve the past as a beacon to the future. Without the support of a capable Board of Trustees and other interested friends I could never have undertaken such a responsibility. My sincere gratitude to Dianne Freeman as outgoing president for her valiant attempts to educate and share with me her vast experience and knowledge. As my inadequacies become apparent her past competences in the Presidency will become even more appreciated. I find comfort in the knowledge that she remains an active member whose expertise is available to us.

A new community Center with promised space for a small museum and archival records will help to generate future dedication and public interest.

I look forward to seeing you all — with a friend or friends — at our program meetings during the coming months. Contents of the program are widely publicized and the general public is heartily welcome. Refreshments are served, memories are shared with old and new friends, and it's *FUN!* Please join us!

Berenice Danks, President

## WANTED!

### writers and editors

We are in dire need of writers to furnish articles for *Historical Highlights*. These can be your own stories that would be of local interest. Or we can supply you with a topic as well as some background information. The pay is poor. So if you ever thought you would like to be an author, here is your chance. Editorial help is needed, to edit and arrange future issues. Give us a call, let's talk it over. Call Bob Lilly at 674-3430.

## Cemetery records

Four years of hard work by Clara Radz, coordinator, and Donald Radz as her assistant, in addition to the work of many volunteers in the cemetery census of 1975-84, have resulted the completion of *Cemetery Records — Sand Lake — Rensselaer County, New York, USA*. This new census contains records taken from the headstones of 15 cemeteries in the Town of Sand Lake. A copy of this book was presented to the town at the March Town Board meeting. It is available to anyone interested at the Town Clerk's office.

Many thanks are due to Clara and Donald, both members of our Society, for their efforts in researching and coordinating this work.

## Upcoming Meeting Programs

**Tuesday, September 10, 8:00 p.m.** [NOTE: this meeting will take place at the Sand Lake Baptist Church, Rt. 43, opposite the Averill Park Post Office and American Legion Hall.]: two Averill Park houses and the families that lived in them. *The Gregory House* — Bob Jewell, the present Innkeeper, will trace the history of the house and past owners. *The Averill House* — Joan Fuess will review the history and occupants of this historic home on Schumann Road. Joan and Allen Fuess are the present owners of the house.

**Tuesday, October 8, 8:00 p.m.** [at the Sand Lake Town Hall]: *The Streeter Centennial Hike*. Ms. Doree Cox, a member of the Taconic Valley Historical Society, will tell the story of a hike that Samuel Streeter took in 1895, at age 75. One hundred years later in 1995, a group of his descendants took the same hike. The program includes Streeter's original written record and narration and video by the present generation who retraced his steps.





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### Summerfest raffle a success!

The Society wishes to thank *Chet Gavryck* for handcrafting the doll house, the first prize in the Summer Raffle; *Linda Ormsby* of Marty's Liquor store for the basket of cheer; *Miller's Market* for the \$50 in groceries and the printing of the raffle tickets; and the *Gregory House* for a night's stay — all handsome prizes that were drawn at this year's Summerfest. The Historical Society expresses appreciation to all its members and to all in the community who participated in this effort. The winners of the Summerfest Raffle are:

- 1st: Doll House — Melodie Lord of Averill Park
- 2nd: Basket of Cheer — Stewarts of Averill Park
- 3rd: \$50 groceries — Paul Weiss of Averill Park
- 4th: Overnight stay at Gregory House — Tina LaDuke of Rensselaer

### Sand Lake schools project

There is still a lot to do before we will know the full story of all of the Sand Lake schools. Four of the five members of the group behind this project are handicapped in their efforts — they aren't natives of the town. They can't identify unknown pupils in photographs. They can't produce report cards, diplomas or anything from the schools' past. They can't recall from their memories of school days in the Town of Sand Lake.

But we will help to collect old pictures and items that former pupils might have around. We want to reproduce your picture(s) and return the original(s) to you. We want to photograph other items you might have. We want to learn when and where you attended school, who your teachers and classmates were. Then we will have a full "History of the Town of Sand Lake Schools."

Help if you can. Call one of us. Make an appointment to talk about your school days. We could meet in Town

Hall or in your own home — whatever is convenient for you. Please call: *John Allendorph* — 283-4838; *Ross French* — 674-5710; *Marge Larsen* — 674-3209; *Bob Lilly* — 674-3430; or *Rosemary Supkis* — 674-5172.

### 1996 SLHS scholarship awards

Each year, the Sand Lake Historical Society presents awards to two members of the Averill Park High School graduating class. Selections of one girl and one boy are made by members of the High School teaching staff and are based on proficiency and interest in history. This year's winners were *Filomena Riganti* and *Stephen de Wall Malefyt*.

*Filomena* is the daughter of Michael and Marilyn Riganti of East Nassau. This fall, *Filomena* will continue her education at Vassar College, where she plans to study biology. During her years at APHS, *Filomena* was active in student government and the History and Wilderness Clubs. She also was a member of the Music Department's Wind Ensemble.

*Stephen*, son of James and Sandy de Wall Malefyt of Poestenkill, intends to study liberal arts and science at Hudson Valley Community College. During his undergraduate years at APHS, he took part in cross-country running in both indoor and outdoor track. He was elected to the National Honor Society. *Stephen* took an active part in cable access Channel WATH, which televises morning announcements throughout the high school.

This year's awards were given in memory of Madolyn Carpenter, member of the Sand Lake Historical Society and former Sand Lake Town Historian.

Congratulations to both of these fine young people. —  
*Marge Larsen*





## DUES ARE DUE!

Have you paid your dues for the year 1996-97? Dues run from the annual dinner in May of each year to the same time the following year. To check your status, look at the upper right-hand corner of the mailing label on this newsletter. It will indicate the year you last paid your dues. Dues are only \$5.00 per person and are a main support of our society. Is the mailing address correct? If not please let us know.

**A thought: when you finish with your copy of  
*Historical Highlights*, why not pass it on to a friend?**

### News of the past

It was noted in the Saturday, November 17, 1866, edition of the *Troy Daily Times* that the work of enlarging the Glass House Lake to double its original size had just been completed to the satisfaction of the Water Association. Note that the clipping reproduced here concerns the discovery of a body in the sand bank at the rear of Silas Sliter's house. Could it be that this sand bank was the source of gravel for the Glass Lake Dyke?

SANDLAKE is "muchly" excited over the remains of a human body which have been discovered in a gravel bank, just in the rear of Silas Sliter's house, by some workmen who were engaged in drawing gravel from the bank. They are said—we know not with how much truth—to be those of a negro who accompanied a circus which passed through the place some years since. He is said to have been injured by a kick from a vicious horse, and, dying from the injury, was secretly buried in the night by some of the company. The hair is still in a good state of preservation, but the flesh has decayed from the bones. The remains were properly cared for by Deputy Sheriff Sliter.—John Horton recently met with a very narrow escape here by the bank sliding down and completely covering him up. By the prompt exertions of his fellow workmen he was rescued from a living grave. A week since Mr. H. lost a valuable horse in this same bank in a similar manner.—The work of enlarging the Glass House Lake to double its original size has just been completed, to the satisfaction of the "Water Association."





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*FORWARDING/ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED*

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**Historical Highlights**

Bob Lilly, Editor  
Andrew Mace, Publisher

*Please note change of location for  
September 10 meeting:  
Sand Lake Baptist Church.  
Details on page 3.*



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