

The Fox House

The town of Sand Lake was notified that the Albert R. Fox House has been accepted and listed on the state and national Historic Registers. The Fox house is the first property in the town of Sand Lake to be nominated to the registers.

The Fox House, also known as the doll museum, is a Greek Revival style residence built by Albert R. Fox in 1847. It is considered one of the finest Greek Revival style residences in Rensselaer County, and was one of the buildings chosen for the 1965 book Architecture Worth Saving in Rensselaer County published by Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

Peter Shaver from the New York Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation, Peebles Island, wrote the history of the Fox House using records from the Sand Lake Historian's Office, the Rensselaer Glass Factory research, and Fox family bible records. Mr. Shaver also conducted other research into the Fox family's history.

The two-story frame house has all the hallmarks of Greek Revival style, including two-story pilasters framing all five bays on the facade and a stylish one-story porch with Ionic columns supporting a heavy entablature that extends across the front onto symmetrical one-story flanking wings. The Fox House has been meticulously maintained and old photographs show that very little has been changed over the years. Although the huge Elms that lined the road are gone, and so are the barns, the house has been lovingly preserved and stands as a testament to time.

Albert Fox is descended from Isaac Fox, who purchased the Sand Lake Glass Factory in 1819, with partners Nathan Crandall and V. P. Gregory. This was a short-lived partnership, but Isaac Fox continued on the glass making business with Richard Knowlson.

During the financial Panic of 1837 Saddler and Rush, subsequent owners of the Glass Factory, failed in their business, and the property was purchased by Albert R. Fox and Samuel H. Fox.

Under their supervision, the Glass Factory entered into its most successful period. In 1845 the brothers bought Dewitt Stevens new glass house in Durhamville, Oneida County. Half of the Sand Lake factory workers were relocated to the new business, and traveled with their families by canal boat to Durhamville. Letters that survive written by a young couple from Sand Lake travelling to their new home thank family and friends for the sawdust packed barrels of preserves. The Durhamville factory went on to become the largest manufacturer of glass for its time in the United States. The glass factory at Sand Lake burned December 25, 1852. All stock, tools and wagons were moved to Berkshire County MA where Albert Fox accepted the superintendence of the Berkshire Glass Company. Mr. Fox stayed in Berkshire for three years; he then turned his attention to the Troy area where one of his enterprises was a flour company. Albert Fox's interests were many. He was a graduate of the early Rensselaer School, the forerunner of present day RPI.

Albert Fox House

For years stories about the Fox house being part of the underground railroad were told. A tunnel was supposed to be thier hiding place. Both the home and its barn were used to shelter the runways. No trace was ever found of the tunnel .

In 1979 avery elderly woman was brought into our store she asked for me. Would I asked the owners if she could see the house? We tried no one was home. She also wanted to see the warehouse. Ann Neizele was glad to show it to her. After her tour, they again stopped to see me. As child she had played in the Fox House, she also mentioned they played hid and seek in the old tunnel. What old tunnel? The tunnel in the celler was her answer. Question after question she answered has long as she had time. Then it was time for thier flight to Denver, I sorry to see her go.

from Judy Rowe, town historian