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## 15 Ledgers Recording the Government of the Town of Sand Lake, 1813-1919

These ledgers, most leatherbound and all in reasonably good condition with even their laid-in documents still in the correct location, were collected by Harold C. Tift.

For the Town of Sand Lake, these ledgers are remarkable because many of them document the very first business of that incorporated body. In 1812, Sand Lake was separated in two chunks from the Towns of Greenbush and Berlin, and town government began in 1813. Here are recorded the first deliberations of all the arms of town government: the town meetings, the judgments of the Justice of the Peace, the overseers of the poor, the overseers of the highways. The record of all of these functions are complete through the Civil War, and thereafter there are some gaps but still the record persists in some areas into the 20th century. There are also some ledgers which document unusual functions of town government which only existed for a while: the record of fires in the town reported to the State Fire Marshal, a mortgage recorder, a Board of Health.

For any town, these ledgers are remarkable because most early records were discarded as soon as it was legal to do so. Some functions of town government reveal especially detailed glimpses of 19th century life during this early period: the very personal aspects of taking care of local paupers, the local landmarks used to delineate road districts, etc. While these ledgers may be used for research, what they more importantly invite is a close, individual, reading. As texts they can reveal much that was peculiar to the Town of Sand Lake, and what was typical of small New York towns in general.

Were we asked, as professionals, to appraise this collection we would assess a fair market value of \$2,500. However, it is our wish that the Town of Sand Lake be able to acquire these volumes and add them to their own holdings, and we therefore set a price of \$1,250 for their acquisition by the town.

The following is a list of the ledgers, with a brief description and some highlights.

### (1) Sand Lake By-Laws 1813-1851

This ledger records the very beginning of the town and the type of government voted in. Basically the by-laws were to be the same as in Greenbush, with the addition that now horses or swine were not to be at large November to April.

Recorded here are the minutes of the board meetings, as well as the cases that came before the Justice of the Peace until separate records were kept starting in 1834, see ledger #8. (e.g. 1817 John Upham swears before Silas Willmot that he lost his pocket book, and the promissory note within but that he had discharged the debt.) Most of the cases involved depositions by residents that stray animals had invaded their property and needed to be removed.

Other depositions include: in 1819 the Overseers of Poor certify that Betsey Leberdure, wife of Frances Leberdure a slave of Johonius Kentors appears to be under the age of 45 years & of sufficient ability to maintain herself.

In April 1819 changes in school districts were recorded, with the names of the pupils shifted.

The town voted each year for five fence viewers, earning 50¢ day, raised to 75; in 1827 it was voted that a fence to be legal had to be 4 1/2 feet high.

In 1846 a special meeting established a licensing board; then the board granted tavern licenses to 5 men.

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(2) Sand Lake Sales of the Poor 1813-1863  
(& town accounts 1869-1891)

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These are the signed yearly examinations of the Overseers of the Poor, with an overview of what they have done during the year. The record begins with an agreement with a resident that four year old Polly Shepherd was to be kept for a year for \$20, provided she never again be a burden on the town.

The ledger includes record of disbursements to casual laborers, e.g. for lettering of street signs (guide posts) as well as for various jobs involving the poor: \$2.25 to John Rockinstyre in 1823 for removing paupers to the poor house in Troy (later called House of Industry); \$12.75 in 1824 for keeping Sylvanus Greenman, a County pauper, in the poor house; \$1.06 1/2 for John Rockinstyre to build a necessary for Seth White; \$1.75 in 1825 for John Johnson to make a coffin for an Indian, a County charge.

(3) Sand Lake Overseers of the Poor 1813-1890

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These are the records of income and outlay kept by the Overseers of the Poor. At the 1813 beginning, Stephen Gregory received money from excise taxes, donations, fines & \$24.50 from Town of Greenbush. The first expense is \$13 for keeping Polly Shepherd.

Typical entries involve the keeping of a pauper locally for a fee, or to pay another town for keeping a Sand Lake pauper there: 1819, Joel Bristol \$9 in part payment for keeping the widow Sanders the ensuing year; 1825, \$56.76 to Town of Schaghticoke for keeping R. Nerington.

Extra expenses were for firewood for widows, or for burying paupers: 1849, 3 different expenses for digging grave, grave clothes, and coffin for a pauper (the grave dug in warm weather before the death in the winter).

An unusual fee: 1867, \$3 paid for costs to Wm. M. Horton in a suit of Bastardy against Sanford Carpenter.

(4) Sand Lake Road Districts 1813-1841

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For every year, each road district is given a number and described by boundaries. Then are listed the land-owners living within the district and the number of days work on the roads that they have been assessed. These records will be particularly valuable in reconstructing the changes in roads, bridges, and other routes. Even certain buildings appear as landmarks in the descriptions.

(5) Sand Lake Road Districts 1842-1847

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(6) Sand Lake Road Districts 1848-1867

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1848 was the year that Poestenkill was taken from Sand Lake, so the road districts have been re-numbered.

(7) Sand Lake Road Districts 1868-1887

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Laid in are four receipts for road repairs.

(8) Sand Lake Justice Court 1834-35 & School Commission 1896-1908

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Each appearance before the court is given a verbatim report. A separate index laid in front refers to pages # 1-40 covering 18 Jan 1834 to 2 Feb 1835, 73 cases. e.g: for \$50 damages claimed in an accident to a wagon, jury awards \$1.75; for \$50 damages claimed because a horse represented fraudulently, jury awards \$.06 damages.

In the second half of the ledger are records of the School Commission, including: "Commissioners Certificate of Apportionment" each showing quota given per district compared to aggregate days of attendance; a notices of bonding of collectors for the several school districts and of the filing of their reports.

In the beginning most district schools operated for a single quarter receiving \$100 (districts 2 & 7 operated 2 quarters and received \$200) plus increment according to aggregate days of attendance. In 1903-04, quotas changed, raising stipends.

(9) Wm. Averill, Sand Lake J.P. 1834-1840

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Each appearance before Averill is recorded verbatim, often with the subpoena glued in. Most judgments were under \$10, the long depositions (pp38-40; 80-81; 147-8) are about animals:

Litigation over horse trade because the animal has glanders. Defendant said to plaintiff: "he did not trade as boys do if we trade we will take them for better or for worse as a man does his wife."

James Westfall vs Robert Brown & others which the defendant refuses to identify. Drive-by shooting of dog 4 July 1835. "near 12 o'clock heard the report of a gun heard the sound of shot strike the house found one of the shot near the door saw the smoke it appeared to be from the carriage thinks the carriage was 5 rods from the plaintiff's door going east says he saw the dog about half an hour ago he is very lame and stiff has as many as 9 or 10 shot holes in him thinks the probability is he will die" \$12 damages same day.

Ezra W. Haskins vs William Sears, dog theft. Argument whether or not the dog would follow a man without a gun. Haskings awarded \$10.

(10) Sand Lake Supervisor's Accounts 1856-1892

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The following is a listing by Supervisor of date of first transaction, with some notable points:

Orlando Horton	30 June 1856 ("joint district No. 7 of Sand Lake & Schodack" Library & School \$)
Philander H. Thomas	1 April 1858
William Stevens	15 March 1861
Joel B. Peck	22 March 1862

1863 sole tabulation of uncollected taxes: \$58.47 from 15 names variously noted "Poor / removed / dishonest / refused" incl. Wm. P. Van Rensselaer \$27.10 "refused" on \$5,892 rents. Dog fund (from 1863) detailed mostly allowed to recompense sheep lost to dogs.

Burton A. Thomas	30 March 1866	\$115 raised in 1867 for the Hall of Military Record in Albany.
Joel B. Peck	30 March 1868	
Milo Robison	2 March 1870	
Sylvester M. Lester	12 March 1872	
John H. Bonesteel	15 March 1874	
John H. Akin	6 March 1875	
David Horton	17 March 1876	
Milo Robison	21 March 1877	
Arthur M. Peck	2 May 1881	
A.J. Smart	1 April 1882	
Arthur M. Peck	24 March 1883	
A.J. Smart	5 April 1884	
Wm. Moul	13 March 1885	
A.J. Smart	21 May 1885	A Road Fund was named and set up in 1886.
Wm. Upham	7 March 1887	
A.D. McConihe	9 March 1888	
Sanford B. Horton	23 March 1889	(dog fund pays \$100 to J.K. Averill)
Crist Crape	4 May 1891	(town indebted to Central Bank of Troy, payable 15 Feb 1893)

Perhaps the most valuable part of this record is an official register of the teachers in the district schools.

#### (11) Sand Lake Tax Roll 1867

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This is an oversize, leatherbound, thin ledger containing a listing of residents with their properties described, the assessment, the tax, & how many dogs (to be taxed @ \$.50.) e.g.: James Akins, factory on 4 acres assessed at \$4,000 + Taber place on 13 acres \$2,000 + wood lot of 31 acres \$150; Eugene Merwin & Co, paper mill on 87 acres \$4,500; George & Wm. Uline: factory on 6 acres \$1,000; mill on 50 acres \$2,400; & houses. Hotels owned by Frances Burdict \$550; F.W. Benjamin \$450; Joseph Gabler \$400; Coon H. Hulsapple on 21 acres \$750; James M. Mosher \$450; Samuel D. Seymour \$700; Harmon Westfall \$500. Then properties owned by non-residents; the property and improvements of the largest landholder, the Winantskill [sic] Improvement Assoc.

#### (12) Sand Lake Town Elections 1896-1914

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Poll listing of the electors in the town, including whether they paid their town tax, excise tax, and whether they attended the annual town meeting held at Henry Tillsons Pavillion. Formally entered are the election results, and the results of any special polling (for instance, in 1909 there was a four question vote on the sale of liquor in the town, and residents voted yes to all four.) On pages 16 and 17 are glued in the actual ballot for each political party; on page 80 the town adopts its own emblem, a clover, to represent its slate of officers.

#### (13) Sand Lake Board of Health 1883-1919

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A record of meetings, deliberations, transactions by the Board of Health which includes: p. 4 - 1883: complaints of odors from a dead dog, a water closet, a pig sty; p. 11 - 1884: dead dog in warp & thread mill pond, \$.50 to remove; p. 19 & 21 - 1885: the Board passed a resolution that permits be needed for any burial followed almost immediately by an investigation into the burial of dead baby; p. 99 - 1909: deliberation over transients with TB. From laid-in report: "It appears to be the habit of the Troy and Albany physicians to send their cases of tuberculosis to Sand Lake to die. These cases are reported to be cases of Nervous Prostration, or Over Work, or to be cases that need to have a rest, and they come into the different boarding houses and mix with the other boarders exposing all the occupants to the contagion, and when they die, or remove to other resorts, the rooms that were occupied by them have to be fumigated at the expense of the town. Your Health Officer has taken the liberty to threaten these boarding house people with quarantine if they continue to take this class of boarder."

#### (14) Sand Lake Fires 1912 - 1914

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Each fire call is given a full page report according location; date & time; class & description of structure; owner & address; estimated damage; insurance carried; where fire originated; cause of fire. There are interesting examples of fires starting with automobiles being started in barns during winter's cold (perhaps with ether): p. 12 to 25 - Gabler barn fire at Glass Lake caused by auto spread to church & Nellie Sharp's house; p. 45 & 46 - auto explosion in garage spreads; p. 55 - steam locomotive fire in barn. The fire officers also performed inspections: p. 40 - inspection of Cosack's movie house; p. 42 - notice & inspection of McClaren Knitting where fire alarms are installed, which then alerted them to a boiler fire p. 57 which only caused \$500 damage.

#### (15) Sand Lake Mortgages Book 1853 - 1901

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A listing of the town clerks' recording mortgage transactions between individuals, as little as \$25, marking them discharged or transferred. e.g. p. 7 - James Aken borrowed \$10,700 from Nelson P. Aken 1875 & renewed; the largest single mortgage; p. 160 - 1900: first non-personal loan from the Troy Loan Company; p. 189 - 1901: from the National Cash Register of Ohio; p. 202 - 1901: Orin H. Wilkens \$1 to Averill Park Land Improvement Co., filed Sept, discharged Nov; p. 203 - Adelbert Wager, a West Sand Lake plumber, pays off \$200 to Martha Wager, Jan 1901, borrowed June 1900. with a note pinned in to that effect. Another pinned-in note: p. 186 (chattel mortgage) "Spencertown May 27th 1899, J.E. Martin Town Clerk of Sand Lake, Dear Sir, Please release the mortgage held by you in favor of us against the property of J.L. Sliter consisting of the stallion Coronal 4774 also two top buggies and a Frazier road cart as the same has been paid for in full to our satisfaction. James M. Lamphere, C.H. Niles."