

Passing Of Area Landmark Recalls Many Memories

By MARION ERICKSON.

"If the walls could only talk!" It's an old lament and a trite one but the lover of old houses uses it over and over again as he strives to look back across the years an old house has known. So it is with the Butt residence at Sand Lake.

Soon this lovely landmark will have disappeared and in its place will stand a bright and shiny gas station, symbol of the Twentieth Century and of a way of life undreamed of when Squire Butts built his white frame dwelling at the cross roads in Sand Lake.

In recent years passers-by have paid little attention to this historic building which dates back more than a hundred years, for it sat by the roadside shabby and neglected, with only slight suggestions of its architectural beauty still evident.

Today, however, as the wreckers go about their business, many motorists have stopped their cars to look around the plaster-strewn interior of this house that dates back beyond the memory of any living man.

Despite its age, the structure is

still strong and sound. Great hand-hewn beams arch across the attic and two of the main rafters still are covered with bark. The wide boards in the floor, measuring 18 inches in width, and the huge fireplace with its Dutch oven in the cellar attest the great age of this disappearing landmark. The tiny-paned windows and the window-paneled main door contained glass believed to have been made at the old factory at Glass Lake. It, along with the sunburst details over the windows, have been purchased by Harold Tiff, historian of the Town of Sand Lake.

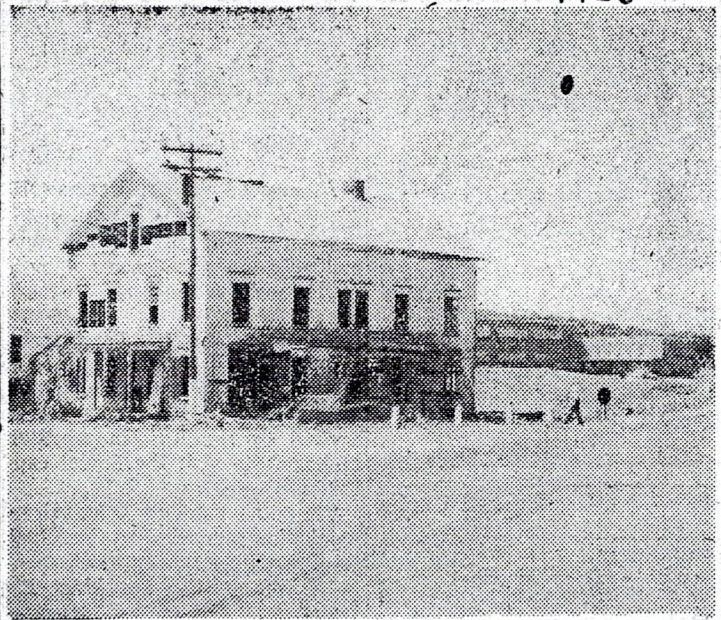
Hayner's "History of Troy and Rensselaer County" list William Butts as one of the first settlers in the town. William came to Sand Lake from Providence, R.I., at the close of the Revolutionary War in which he had served. He located in Sand Lake in 1790. Of

his nine children only one, Gideon, stayed. Whether the house was built by William or by his son, Gideon, is not certain. Farming and lumbering were Gideon's main interests. While demolish-

ing the building, workmen came upon a contract 123 years old, whereby one, Horace Huntington, was given the right to take standing wood and timber from "lot 168." The contract bears the date of Dec. 15, 1832. Sellers of the standing timber were Richard L. Knowlson, Gideon Butts and George Horton. The signatures are attested by John Wilkinson.

Sand Lake folks know the house as the "Bee Hive." During its many years, a cross section of Rensselaer County rural life has passed its doors. Anti-renters from Alps, who sped down the highways in the dark of night in their conspiracy against the patron system, charcoal burners from the Taborton mountains, urging their sleepy teams across Miller Hill in the pre-dawn hours to reach the city markets at an early hour, farmers from Stephentown with their barrels of produce making a heavy haul over narrow, rutted roads; the stage coach with its weary travelers, who welcomed a refreshing pause at Cris Crape's Hotel across the road from the Butts House.

Familiar sight to many a senior citizen who spent his early years on a farm, is the old pump which stands in the front yard. Painted in the faded blue-green which seems to have been standard color for this essential part of rural life, the pump at the "Bee Hive" like most of those that once dotted the rural leandscape, was made by Robert Hoes at Malden Bridge.



—Photo by Carl Erickson

PASSING LANDMARK—The old "Bee Hive" at Sand Lake will soon make way for a gas station. Shabby and neglected in recent years, the house, one of the oldest in the village, was once a picturesque spot, surrounded by a picket fence and shade trees. Photo shows demolition work under way.



This is the Butts House, in Sand Lake Village at the 4 corners. This old house used to stand on the corner of Miller Hill Road and the main road (Routes 43 & 66), where at the present time a new concrete block building is being built for a store. The old Presbyterian Church, which is now our Town Hall, can be seen in the background. 1976.

This house was built by Gideon Butts in circa 1824. It had Masonic Rooms on the top floor. William Butts and his family arrived in Sand Lake about 1790 from Providence, Rhode Island and Dutchess County. William served in the Revolution. He had 9 children; 6 sons and 3 daughters. Gideon the eldest was the only one to remain in the Town of Sand Lake. Gideon was born in 1779. He married and had 4 children, and one of these, Miranda, married Dr. Eber W. Carmichael, an early Sand Lake Doctor. Dr. Carmichael and Miranda had a family of six children, of whom but two were living in 1880. One of their children was Julia F. Carmichael, who married Sylvester M. Lester, and was a well known Sand Lake resident for many years. Gideon Butts was Julia Lester's grandfather.

William Butts, father of Gideon, made a sizeable fortune in the lumber business on Taborton Mountain in association with Col. Richard Knowlson. Gideon Butts later on was also associated with Knowlson, Butts and Horton, who were lumber business pioneers in the town.

The woman who loaned me this picture to be copied was the Great Granddaughter of Gideon Butts, Mary Esther Butts Steucke.

This beautiful old home was torn down in 1956. Today the building that is there houses the Cumberland Farms Store and the Sand Lake Post Office. (1980)