

**Town of Butler Agricultural & Comprehensive Plan
South Butler Public Forum – September 15, 2008**

Presentation by Dorothy Wiggins, Town Historian

BUTLER FORMS

Before 1800, Indians of the Iroquois Confederacy lived in this area. General John Sullivan's expedition of 1779 broke the power of the confederacy and opened the land to settlers. The first permanent white settler was Peter Mills who was given a land grant for his service as a Revolutionary War Captain. This land was in the Butler Center area. Many settlers came from New England.

ORIGINAL LAND GRANT

This area was originally part of a land grant given to Henry Impson for his service in the Revolutionary War. It was part of the military township of Sterling which included the town of Wolcott. The Town of Wolcott included present day Butler, Rose, and Huron. The Town of Butler was formed from Wolcott on February 26, 1826.

THE MAIN STORE

Until 1839, south Butler was known as Harringtons Corners. Residents had to go to Auburn (then called Hardenburgs Corners) for groceries and supplies. Roads were passable only by ox teams or horses. Early buildings were of log construction, erected without nail or sawed lumber. William Shedd opened a small store in 1830. Orman King took over the store and it became Kings Corners. When a post office was established it became South Butler (around 1840). In 1846 the store was owned by Henry Graves. He sold dry goods, hardware, groceries, drugs, books, furniture, seed, shoes and boots, tools, meat and many other items. From records we learned that eggs sold for 9¢ a dozen and oats were 50¢ a bushel. He also had a livery service and rented horses, wagons and buggies. He had a milling and drilling service, sold blank deeds and mortgages, loaned cash and repaired watches, stoves, and shovels. Taxes were paid at the store. Henry Graves was an important figure in the town. He was Supervisor of Butler several times and served in the New York State Assembly. The post office was in the store for many years and in 1849 Henry's brother, George S. Graves was the postmaster. In March 1877, George R. Wilson bought the store. In 1919 George W. Wilson, son of George R. Wilson, became the owner. In partnership with his son-in-law, he conducted a delivery service throughout the countryside. The store closed in 1937.

CASH REGISTERS / WINDOW SHADES

On Rural Street, the John Hough Creamery was located in the 1880's. In 1892, Azel Hough, son of John, obtained a patent for a cash register and built an addition on the creamery for manufacturing registers. The company was sold in 1896 to the National Cash Register

Company. In 1898, Henry Wetmore showed Azel Hough the porch curtain he had made from wood splints used in the production of Wetmore Fruit Baskets. Azel Hough built a hand powered loom to produce the wood slat porch shade. The loom was set up in the building of the former cash register manufacturing plant and thus was born the Hough Shade Corporation, yielding the first woven wooden porch shade ever made. In 1901 the plant moved to Worcester, Massachusetts and then in 1902 to Janesville, Wisconsin.

In 1920 Leslie Candee opened a repair garage in the old Hough Shade factory. The building was demolished in the 1970's.

ANTOINETTE BLACKWELL / HENRY WARD

On West Main Street was the Baptist Church where Antoinette Brown Blackwell was ordained on September 15, 1853, becoming the first woman to be ordained a minister in the United States. She was accepted as minister of the Congregational Church across the street. Ordination was held in the Baptist Church as the other church had a leaky roof. The Congregational Church would later become the place where a black minister, Henry Ward, would preach, becoming the first black minister to serve a white congregation.

BUTLER GROWS EVEN MORE

On the southwest corner of the intersection, on the other side of the Wilson Store, was a boat and shoe store run by Ezra Hubbard in 1876. Then Charks Taylor had a jewelry business there and had his Town Clerk's office there. In 1888 a meat market occupied the building. A barbershop was added in the back in 1893. The building was torn down in 1935 for the first South Butler Firehouse. In 1965 the present firehouse was built and the old one was moved to the corner of McCann and Butler Center Road in Butler Center.

Across from the Wilson Store was the Pasco Hardware. In 1900 Mr. Paso started an undertaking business upstairs over the hardware store. In 1942 the undertaking business was sold to John & George Robertson and Wolcott-Rollo Cox took over the building and conducted a plumbing and heating business. The building was town down in late 1970's.

Across from the present Marvin and Rosanne Stewart home was a small gas station and grocery store owned by Ernest Dratt Hasenjagers alongside the creek on the same side of the road.

William Walkers Blacksmith shop, Butler Tub, Cheese Box and basket factories were also located on the south side of the creek, on the east side of the now Route 89. All were owned by Jerome Hibbard. Mr. Hibbard served as a surgeon in the Civil War. He devised an improved farm gate and a new style fence. But it was his basket manufacturing that brought him world-wide fame. Some of those baskets can be seen in the Butler Church Museum in Butler Center. The basket business ran until the early 1930's. All the buildings were eventually torn down.

PRESIDENT JAMES GARFIELD

In 1844 the First Church of Christ was built a little farther south on the left side of the road. In 1861 a larger church was built north of the 4 corners. James A. Garfield preached a service there when he was in town visiting a friend. James Garfield would later become the 20th President of the United States. The Dratt Crate Mill was also on the left side of the road. It was built in the late 1800's. It was destroyed by fire in 1941 and rebuilt. Pearl Dratt was killed in an accident at the mill in 1957 and the mill closed. It was later torn down.

Clark Foster had an evaporation (dry house) on the other side of the road. On the southeast corner of the intersection was the South Butler Hotel. Abram Dratt bought it in 1860. He was killed in 1877 when he was run over by a train in Lyons. Upon his death, his son John took over and ran it until 1925. It was then purchased by Leslie Candee. Mr. Candee was the postmaster and the post office was in the hotel until Royal Stewart became postmaster and moved it to his business across the street.

On the northwest corner John Dratt built a store for his son. In 1860 John Hough bought the store and sold dry goods, groceries, hardware, medicines and clothing. A gas station and hardware store was run by Kenneth Park and in 1945 Ken Hill sold feed and farm implements there. After 1966, the building was vacant and was badly damaged by fire. It was eventually torn down. The Antoinette Brown Blackwell Historical Marker now stands on the vacant lot.

The present South Butler Post office was in 1878 the home of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. In 1908 it was rented by 2 ladies who sold baked goods, .5¢ and .10¢ items and groceries. There was a Millinery and dressmaking shop in the back of the store.

Across the street was the Grange Building, built before the 1870's. Grange was held there until 1969. In the 1970's there was an antique business but it has been vacant for many years. On the southwest corner was a Methodist Episcopal church built in 1853. During the winter of 1869-1870 it was moved by ox team to Savannah to the site of the former Savannah United Methodist Church. Across the intersection, on the site of the present Lighthouse Fellowship Kids Church, was the Church of Christ Disciples, erected when the congregation outgrew the building south of the bridge. The church was built in 1861 and destroyed by fire in February of 1916. In June of the same year the cornerstone of the new church was laid. The Methodist Church across the street was built in 1881.

Next to the Methodist is the former John Hough home, purchased from Ron Dratt in 1857. It is rumored to have been a stop on the Underground Railroad – John Hough was a very prominent man. He owned and managed several farms as well as a general store. He was twice the town Supervisor and served in the State Assembly.

On East Main Street next to the hotel was the Oddfellows Hall, erected before 1909. It was struck by lightning and burned. In 1910 a new building was erected.

The South Butler Brick Schoolhouse District #12 was built in 1868 on the south side of East Main Street. It was condemned in 1900 and town down. A new wooden structure replaced it. It was torn down in 1950 to make room for the Ken Hill's home. Also on the south side of East Main Street was a creamery. It was sold in 1883 to AB Maynard who turned it into a roller skating rink.

Admission was .05¢ and skate rental was .10¢. It later became a dance hall and was torn down in 1930. The Elgrin Creamery and Cheese Factory was on the north side of the street and was in operation from 1898-1915.

Across the street from the hotel was the Davis Drug and Grocery Store, often called the Opera House. On the upper floor was a theater with a wooden stage and elaborate stenciling on the ceiling and walls. It was built in 1884. It passed through several hands until Leon Bennett bought it in 1937. In 1957 Samuel Sorenson became the owner. It closed in the 1970's. The building was sold by Nancy and David Reed to the Genesee Country Museum in Mumford, New York and moved there in 2001.

At one time, there were 3 creameries, several saw mills, cooper shops, blacksmith shops, grist mills. In 1877, laundry bluing was invented by Thomas Law. A pea vinery operated just west of the village. There was a library and reading club and a harmonica club. Two carpet looms operated making carpets out of old clothing. A tombstone business was here in 1870.

There were tobacco curing sheds during the last quarter of the 19th century. The census of 1880 listed 2,158 persons in Butler Township

South Butler had a baseball team and a marching band.

You can see South Butler was once a thriving place.

To find out more, read the book *Butler Revisited* written by the Butler Historical Preservation Society.