

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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MIKE SANDS AND HIS ISETTA 300



This photo taken by Bill Monacelli thirty-five years ago shows Mike Sands and his car by a large pile of snow on East Bank Street in Albion. This little light green Isetta 300 was owned and used by Mike up through the mid 1960's. It seems that Mike Sands and Don "Deke" Mansell went into business with each other in 1958 when they established an Isetta dealership known as Wee Motors. This was located on the north side of Ridge Road east of the Eagle Harbor-Waterport Road in the Town of Gaines.

They had a little building in the corner of Gilbert Francis, Jr.'s front yard where they sold Isetta 300's and Isetta 600's. As neither Sands or Mansell depended on this venture for a livelihood, they simply had fun doing it for several years.

The Isetta 300 was indeed a wee car as plainly seen in this photo. It had a one cylinder, air cooled BMW motorcycle engine. Thus it operated at 12½ horse power. It had one door which opened on the front of this two passenger car and a steering wheel on a universal joint connected to the door which swung out of the way when getting in or

out. It had a four speed transmission, an exhaust manifold heater, two headlights (one shows here), a luggage rack and got over 40 miles per gallon of gas. It was shifted with the left hand.

On streets with parallel parking, Mike often pulled in directly up to the curb and stepped out on to the sidewalk. You see, the car was no longer than most were wide. Note the 1960 plate in the photo and the chains on the rear tires. The rear wheels on this car did not track directly behind the front wheels. Hence, in winter driving conditions with deep snow the rear wheels were always running in the slush. It was, in fact, not recommended for winter driving, but Mike drove his year round.

These little cars were considered to be well built and cost \$1385 without the sun roof and \$1485 with the sun roof. We see that Mike's car had a sun roof which was simply canvas that was pulled open by a lever.

My thanks goes to Ozzie Francis for many details contained in this article and who tells me that Mike and Milly Sands currently reside in Wilmington, N. Carolina.