

11-15-2000

Murray Mills

This week's photo, which was probably taken before 1910, shows a large wooden building known as Murray Mills.

This was located in Murray, once known as Sandy Creek. The picture, looking south, shows the Groth Road and a small bridge where it crosses the east branch of Sandy Creek, south of Ridge Road. It appears that this mill was derelict when the photo was taken.

The map from the 1860 Niagara-Orleans County Map shows Sandy Creek. Just about in the center, Murray Mills can be seen where the mill race joins back into the east branch of Sandy Creek. This little hamlet is the oldest in the town of Murray dating back to 1815 or before. It began to assume the

appearance of a village in 1815 when Isaac Leach built and opened a store. A post office was established here in 1814 under the name of Murray but the little community was known as Sandy Creek for many years.

The mill shown here was built in 1836 by Southworth, Frisbie and Adams and served as a grist mill. The business directory on the map lists O.K. Downs as a miller and Major J. Downs as Constable and milling business.

This was not, however, the only mill ever built as Sandy Creek. The first was as far back as 1816 and a second mill was erected in 1828 and used until 1850. There also was a carding and fulling mill from 1819 to 1830 as well as a saw mill and a distillery. All these businesses of course,

were making use of the water power from the creek.

To date I find no information on O.K. Downs but I do find the following information on Major Judson Downs who was born in Scipio, N.Y. in 1797.

He moved to Clarkson in 1809 and Sandy Creek in 1819. He was a tanner and shoe maker as well as having an interest in the milling business. With the outbreak of the Civil War, in spite of his 64 years, he raised a company of cavalry of which he was captain. He also had served in the war of 1812 and had been an active officer in the militia with the rank of major, which was why he was called Major Downs.

By the time the 1913 Orleans County Atlas was printed there is no indication of this old grist mill from early pioneer times.

