

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES



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Plebis

RELIABLE. REGULAR. RELEVANT.

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WHITHER OUR POST OFFICE?

Magic machine's disappearing act

By Simon Winchester

It feels a little like death by a thousand cuts.

There has been a Post Office in Sandisfield for more than two centuries – not so long ago there were three. But bit by bit the services offered these days by our sole remaining USPS outpost are being withdrawn; and in consequence an ominous thought is being ever more widely offered: that soon we of Zip code 01255 may have no post office at all.

Were that to happen every one of us – the halt and the lame and those who dislike icy winter roads included - may be obliged, for the first time since 1807, to take our postal business to the great big city down the hill.

The latest cut, announced recently in a decree from Washington, relates to the big black box that stands in the service window between each Sandisfield customer and our indefatigable postmaster Karen Cooley.

The box, constructed by Lockheed Martin (a firm better known for making Hercules transport planes, ballistic missiles and bits for the space shuttle) is known as an Integrated Retail Terminal. Magically and uncomplainingly it has contrived, and for the last decade or so, instantly to compute the cost of sending anything from Sandisfield to anywhere.

Cont'd on p.2



Postmaster Karen Cooley

EDIBLE SANDISFIELD

ACROSS THE DIVIDE, THE CORN ABIDES.

By Adam Manacher

Last November I wrote about the main feature of the Thanksgiving table, the turkey. (You can find my article in the archives section at sandisfieldtimes.org.) This year I look at a more humble part of the feast, cornbread. It's a simple addition to the festive table that honors our relationship with Native Americans and the story of Thanksgiving. Thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans, Native Americans were using ground corn in many dishes including varieties of bread. Native American cuisine combined with European cooking and two hundred years of experimenting have given rise to endless recipes for cornbread. Today they are usually divided along North/South lines. Generally

Cont'd on p.4

FEMA Red Tape Forces Town to Borrow – First Time in Fourteen Years



Photo: Howard Levin

By Debbie Harris

When Tropical Storm Irene (it was no longer a hurricane by the time it reached Sandisfield) wandered over us on August 28, the Sandisfield Highway Department sought to repair our damaged roads. Then, reality set in.

FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Agency), only allows 70 hours of emergency “patch” work before their personnel come out to inspect the roads and estimate the cost of the damage. With this in mind, Highway Superintendent Steve Harasyko and his team managed to perform emergency repairs to keep our roads open.

Following an initial meeting, Sandisfield officials learned that only 75% of the \$750,000 FEMA inspectors estimated as the cost of repairing the roads would be reimbursed by FEMA; the remaining 25% is the Town's responsibility. To determine this \$750,000 figure Steve Harasyko accompanied FEMA personnel on a tour of every road in Sandisfield, and areas

Cont'd on p.2



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WHITHER OUR POST OFFICE?

Magic machine's disappearing act

Cont'd from p. 1

A love letter to be airmailed to Bolivia? A box of local apples to be sent as fast as possible to Toledo? A clutch of express parcels to London? Place the item on the flat black pad and have the our lady postmaster type in a formula on her keyboard – and presto!, the two screens (one facing the customer, the other for Ms.

Cooley) will announce whether it is the right size and shape, how long it will take to get to its destination, and how much you are to pay.

A splendid device, one would have thought. (Ms. Cooley does.) Well, at the end of the year, and on the order of cost-cutters down in the District of Columbia, it and its cathode ray screens and its attached postage meter are all to be taken away (a Harry Potterish wand that read bar codes has already been disabled and sits beside the IRT, impotently). In their place Sandisfield will be given merely a weighing scale, and all the information that used to take the black box seconds to calculate will now have to be written down and worked out by hand.

The prospect does not appeal. A fear is consequently growing, according to a postal officer who may not be quoted by name, that customers in a hurry will not wish to wait, drumming their fingers on the countertop, while Ms. Cooley does her best to work out the numberless intricacies of the postal rates. They will instead leave, sadly or in a huff, and head off with their packages to the immense city of Great Barrington – where by great good fortune the magic machines still exist. Or else they will call in UPS, or FedEx, and have the packages collected from home.

Were such to happen with a sufficient number of customers, if revenue drops further (five years ago Sandisfield's PO did \$50,000 worth of annual business; now it is below \$30,000), then Washington would have the perfect excuse to close the office down for good.

Postmaster Cooley – who began work here a dozen years ago, back when the Post Office was lodged inside the New Boston Store – urges everyone to do as much business with her as possible. “It is quite simple,” she allowed. “Use it or lose it. This is the hard fact of life in today's economy. I'll just have to work harder and faster, doing it all by hand, and hope that my customers, who have been wonderfully loyal in the past, stay tolerant.”

Postmaster Karen Cooley
and her soon-to-vanish IRT machine



Photos: Setsuko Winchester

FEMA Red Tape Forces Town to Borrow – First Time in Fourteen Years

Cont'd from p. 1

needing repair were mapped out with GPS precision.

FEMA requires the Town to put their 25% in a special account set aside for this road repair before any work can even be considered. Additionally, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is being silent about any funds they might provide to towns in this regard.

The 25% of \$750,000 (\$187,500) will be paid for out of Free Cash. While not ideal, as it greatly depletes our Free Cash account, this is just the type of emergency that Free Cash is there to absorb. The transfer of the funds from Free Cash to the required special account was unanimously approved by community members at a special Town Meeting on October 20, 2011.

Even before this special Town Meeting, town Clerk Dolores Harasyko began preparing the mountain of paperwork required for official FEMA approval. FEMA demands that each road (there are 31 that need repair) must be treated as a separate project. Thus, 31 sets of paperwork needed to be completed and submitted in short order. Dolores engaged in a Herculean effort (it took her 56 hours), and managed to meet all deadlines.

Then the next layer of bureaucratic reality began to set in. FEMA only reimburses upon proof that the work is completed and paid for. This means that the Town must front the money for each step of the repair work, and then submit the appropriate paperwork, including exacting details of the work done and proof of payment, and wait for reimbursement. We have learned that it will likely take 12-18 months after the paperwork is submitted before the Town will see a cent.

As each portion of a project is completed paperwork can be submitted for consideration. But the Town's initial expectation that it could do one project then wait for the reimbursement from that project before starting the next, is not practical given the lag time for FEMA to send the money. Besides, FEMA requires all work to be completed within 15 months of approval of the project.

Funding the repairs that need to be done before seeing any money from FEMA remains a major concern. Treasurer Claire English determined that we would not have enough cash on hand to both pay for road repairs and to pay our other bills as they come due. Tax bills will not begin to produce revenue until the beginning of December.

Therefore, it was decided that, as painful as it may be, the Town must take out a short term loan (1-2 years at 1-1½% interest) in order to meet its obligations. The loan being asked for is \$485,000, to be paid off as FEMA reimbursements are received.

Thanks to the prudent approach the Town is taking in this situation, and by not proceeding with repair work until FEMA gives its official approval, this sum is not more. FEMA keeps changing the rules, and their obligation is not firm until we have it in writing; relying on verbal communications is unreliable, as several neighboring towns have found out to their detriment.

Unfortunately, this means that the pace of starting the repair work is very slow. As of October 20 only four of the 31 roads have received FEMA approval. The Highway Department only has a few weeks until blacktop plants close down for the winter, so where possible they are giving our paved roads priority. It may be a bumpy winter for those of us who need to drive in Sandisfield.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



By Setsuko Winchester

Getting to the Bottom of the Bottom Line

Each year, one of the largest gatherings of Sandisfield residents is at the Town Meeting, held in May to vote, mainly on the Town's annual budget. Unlike the similarly well attended Steak Roast, where most of the townsfolk show up to eat and share contented smiles with neighbors, this year at the Town Meeting most were grim-faced and businesslike, expressing in large numbers their concern at the way the town's finances were heading. The old town hall was not only jam-packed, but aloud with questions and eager discussion on almost every item on the budget.

Ironically, and despite all the fuss and bother, every item on the warrant was passed - except for the school budget and a resounding "No" vote on the infamous Proposition 2 and half. This latter vote required the town to go back to the drafting table and draw up a new way to make ends meet, without raising taxes.

The only answer that town officials were able to come up with was last-ditch: we had to dig into the town's savings. It was short-term expediency, indeed. And while all acknowledged that it had to be done in order to keep the community

running, all agreed that this was not a solution that one would want - or would even be able - to revisit often.


In order to avoid a similar situation at next year's annual town meeting, the finance committee recently approached us, the eighteen-month-old *Sandisfield Times*, to ask if we would be interested in letting our readers know exactly where their money is going. They said they wished to do so, so that folks would have an opportunity to witness and understand the process - and with luck, offer their various views on spending and taxing priorities for the next financial year, while there was still time.

Naturally, we said yes. After all, what we hoped for when we first started this paper was, yes - to introduce ourselves to each other and help forge a sense of community, and, yes - to get a better understanding of our long and rather glorious history, but - most crucially - we hoped to try and provide information about the kinds of decisions that are being made by our community and its leadership, so that we can make ever better decisions and enact ever wiser policies for our future. What the Town proposed was, in other words, just what we hoped we could be useful for.

The way in which the town Finance committee hopes to accomplish this, and better educate the public in its monetary business, is simple. They have promised to provide us with a number of Budget Updates, listing just what is being spent and why, in the months before we next vote again in May 2012. The first article will appear in the *Times* starting next month, the December 2011 issue. There will probably be another one

in March and one more in April right before the vote. They are also working on getting an update on the school budget from the School Committee which we hope to provide if they are made available.

By doing this, the Finance Committee members hope to encourage interested residents to voice their concerns or questions they may have regarding what they read. They can do so at the Selectmen's Meetings, which are held every Monday night at 7pm at the Town Hall Annex. For those who cannot be at meetings, whether because they are weekenders or just can't make it at that time of night, we encourage you to get in touch with members of the Finance Committee (Kathy Jacobs, Chair; John Burrows, Rhee Kasky, Lisa Leavenworth and Ron Myers) or to write to the *Times* and we will try to get an answer for you. Access to public information is key to a well functioning democracy. But the information is nothing if not acted upon. We will provide the information. The rest is up to you. This is very much democracy at work - and at the grass-roots level. This is why the Town Meeting form of government is so very pure, so very old-fashioned, so very *New England*. And the financial debate that will, we hope, eventually result in the making of ever better governance for our small hill town begins right here, in the columns of this paper.

So keep your eyes open for this new feature starting here next month. Read it, digest it, consider the implications - and then if you have Views, stand up and speak out or write in. After all, this is what democracy - *government by the people, for the people and of the people, ...as someone so famously said, is all about.* 

FINDING PEACE: In This Veterans' Home

Val Coleman visits the Berkshire Rehabilitation Center and is deeply moved by what he discovers there.



Photo: Rhee Kasky

A few days after 9-11, I was asked to speak at the Congregational Church in Sandisfield. I'm sure you remember those days; it was a terrible time, and we were all numb and anxious. I was searching for something appropriate to say when I remembered the "nursing home" just across the street from the church, filled with brave veterans being cared for by a kinder America, so far from and so immeasurably unlike the horrors at Ground Zero. I was looking for evidence that the world worked.

Now, ten years later, I knocked on the front door of what is now called the "Berkshire Rehabilitation and Skilled Care Center" and rediscovered an astonishing place, a sort of "Brigadoon" of a nursing home. This is where 57 guys, most of them veterans of the cluster of wars we've been through in the past few decades, live and prosper in a well-staffed, well-nursed, physically clean and welcoming world. Each of these guys has some sort of medical challenge, ranging from stroke and cardiac illness to the management of pain, diabetes and the care of wounds. They are gathered here

Cont'd on p.4

ACROSS THE DIVIDE, THE CORN ABIDES.

Cont'd from p. 1

Northern recipes for cornbread tend to be lighter and sweeter using a finer grain of cornmeal and some sugar or molasses. Southern recipes use a more coarse meal and usually without sweetener making for a more dense and crumbly bread. Northern cornbreads almost always are baked in a baking dish while the Southern recipes often call for using a cast iron skillet and hot bacon drippings or butter to grease the pan for added



flavor.

Cornbread is classified as a quick bread; bread that is leavened with a leavening agent other than yeast. It is a perfect addition to the Thanksgiving meal because it is so simple to prepare. It can

be made the day before or at the last minute for those who like it fresh and hot out of the oven. And, as I highlighted in last year's column, the less stress around meal preparation the more fun for everyone. There are a few simple tips for making a successful cornbread or any type of quick bread. Be sure your baking soda and or baking powder are fresh. When they are old they lose their ability to leaven effectively (and sometimes they can give off an odd flavor). Mix the dry ingredients thoroughly so that the texture is even throughout the bread. Minimally mix the batter in order to avoid a tough texture in the finished product. Bake the dough or batter immediately. As soon as the leavenings get wet they begin to release the carbon dioxide essential for a successful rising of your bread.

Here are two recipes to try. Both recipes serve about 8 people.

The first is a southern style cornbread. Pre-heat the oven to 375 degrees. Place a 9 inch cast iron skillet in the oven to heat. In a bowl mix well together: 1 ½ c. cornmeal, ¾ c. flour, ¾ tsp. salt, and 2 tsp. baking powder and ¼ c. chopped jalapeno chili peppers (optional). In a separate bowl mix 2 whole eggs, ½ c. buttermilk, 1 c. milk, and 3 Tbsp. melted butter. Add the

wet ingredients to the dry. Do not over mix. Carefully remove the hot skillet from the oven. Add 2 Tbsp. oil, butter, or bacon fat to the heated pan. Pour the batter into the pan and return to the oven. Bake at 375 degrees for 25 minutes. A toothpick or metal tester should come out dry. Do not over bake.

The second recipe is a more northern or "Yankee" style cornbread. Pre-heat the oven to 400 degrees. Grease a 9x9 pan. If you are using glass reduce the oven temperature to 375 degrees. In a bowl mix well together: 1 c. flour, 1 c. cornmeal, 1/3 c. sugar, 4 tsp. baking powder, and ¾ tsp. salt. Have 2 eggs and 1 c. milk at room temperature. In a separate bowl mix the 2 eggs, 1 c. milk, and ¼ c. softened butter. Add the wet ingredients to the dry. Mix together just to get the dry ingredients thoroughly wet. Do not over mix. The batter may remain a bit lumpy. Spoon into the greased 9x9 pan. Into the oven and bake for 20 minutes or until the tester comes out dry.

Both these recipes can be cut up and served immediately or wrapped tightly and reheated in foil the following day. Nothing better than a hearty warm cornbread to mop up all the delicious gravy on your plate! Happy holiday. ♣



FINDING PEACE

Cont'd from p. 3

and served by an incredibly sensitive group of nurses, trained social workers, dieticians and therapists who administer programs of physical, occupational, speech and recreational therapy.

The boss is Administrator Rachel DeMaida, a soft-spoken young woman with a heart of gold. She reached over and wrote on my notepad "the residents of this program live a happy and meaningful life!"

It's a big, big operation. Outside, the two-story brick building is surrounded by a beautifully manicured lawn. Inside, the walls are alive with color, paintings, a beautiful quilt, a 6000 square foot interior courtyard and *none* of the sad, fatalistic atmosphere and countenances I've found at almost every nursing home I've ever visited. As a matter of fact, when I arrived, the first thing I saw was a group of ten gentlemen happily gathering their rods, flies and baskets on

their way to a fishing trip on the Buck River.

And that's not all. In charge of "activities" is the wonderful Brenda Bull. She presided over a cheerful room full of residents gabbing and gaming. I made a list of "recreations": movies, bus trips, Bingo, card games, scrabble, sudoku, chess and checkers to mention a few. There are classes in yoga, painting and photography. These classes, by the way, produced a 2011 calendar with twelve remarkable paintings by the residents published in full color. I was especially pleased with the library, a separate room full of books that are replenished daily. (If you want to donate some books, just box them up and bring them in.)

The Center tries to anticipate and serve *all* the needs of the residents. Family members and community visitors are most welcome. Church services and visits by ministers, priests and rabbis are available on request.

This is my favorite program: Rachel regularly hires a "Certified Pet Therapy" outfit that brings soft-hearted dogs to the center as gentle

companions to the residents, some of whom can still hear the echoes of war.

Here are some basics. The Rehab Center (that's the preferred name, "nursing home" has too much negative history) is funded by the Veteran's Administration, Medicare and Medicaid. It is owned and operated by Athena Health Care Systems, which manages 17 such facilities in Connecticut, 5 in Massachusetts and 3 in Rhode Island. Its fundamental mission is nursing folks back to health. There are 65 staff members serving 57 residents. The identity of the residents is carefully protected by a federal law called HIPA, so I can't talk about individual residents. But I can tell you that I met a lot of nice guys, some of whom left part of their lives in Korea, Vietnam and the Middle East and have found genuine peace and joy in the town of Sandisfield. ♣

THE BEECH PLAIN AND SPECTACLE POND:

In the Days When Beech was King

By Ron Bernard

"The Beech Plain lies in the northern section of the town, and joins Otis. It is an elevated plateau of land, located between Farmington and Clam Rivers, but no casual observer would think of calling it a plain. It was once heavily wooded with beech, which suggested its name. When first settled it was quite a business portion of the town, but its former glory has nearly departed."
--- George Shepard, *History of Sandisfield* (1885).

The north end of Beech Plain was settled before 1770 by families from Connecticut: Adams, Strickland, Jones, Crittenden and, a bit later, Hawley, Belden and Hulet. Even earlier, arrivals in the western part of the section around Spectacle Pond were the Massachusetts families of Spring and Dunham, followed by Downs. As a rule, the first families included grown male children, critical in establishing shelter and early mills and for land clearance and cultivation.

These families were attracted here for two main reasons – roads and water. Although rudimentary and little more than 17th century Indian footpaths, there were existing roads and riverside trails. The Royal Hemlock Turnpike, also called the Great Road and other names, was the only east-west thoroughway in this area. Today it is popularly known as the Knox Trail, named in honor of Gen. Henry Knox whose men used it in 1776 to transport British cannon captured at Fort Ticonderoga to Gen. Washington in Cambridge. Roads allowed Henry Spring, Richard Adams, Ichabod Crittenden, and probably James Belden to operate a cluster of taverns (inns). The

enterprising Adams family, who developed the most land for farming, also had a store near the intersection of Beech Plain and Cold Spring Roads. **(Probable site of former Crittenden tavern, later the Amen Farm, as seen in 1938. George Sokolsky Jr.)**

The availability of water especially for mills, was vital. The Farmington River runs along the eastern edge, while Spectacle Pond and a branch of the Saw Mill River (also called Spectacle Pond Brook, and now the Clam River) more or



Lower Spectacle Photo: Ron Bernard

less forms Beech Plain's western boundary. The Clam River took its name from fresh water clams that were found along its course, washed out from Spectacle Pond. Adams and Downs built a grist mill and a potash facility near the outlet of Lower Spectacle Pond. There were several saw mills and it is said that the river banks were home to numerous cider mills and distilleries.

The story in the 19th century is basically that of William Hawley (1827-1909). He bought the main Adams farmstead at the pond in 1855, and over the next 50 years added eight more contiguous farm properties to his holdings. Hawley established a saw mill on the Clam River that was operated until 1970 by his descendants, the Rowley brothers. Hawley was also known in state agricultural circles for his prize winning oxen. (In 2007 the family's 900 acres with pond were sold to the commonwealth and incorporated into the Otis State Forest). **("Prince Rosewood," 1903. Nancy Rowley Loring)**

There were other busy farms with large families on Cold Spring, Hammertown, upper South



Amen Farm


Photo: George Sokolsky Jr.

Beech Plain and Whitney Roads. Starting around 1820, the Porter & Carter turning shop at the end of North Beech Plain Road made furniture and elegant clock casings before switching to their final line – coffins. The Beech Plain may have been the most robust section of Sandisfield in terms of population size and agricultural output. At one point, three one-room school houses served the community (the last of which, on Cold Spring Road, closed in 1949). But a village or community nucleus never emerged because the families patronized facilities in West Otis or Otis center.

In relative terms, therefore, the section's decline in population and economic fortunes may have been the most profound of any in town. By the 1900s perhaps half of the roads had been abandoned. Remaining residents felt cut off from or poorly served by the Town. In 1905, William Hawley petitioned the state to "set off" the section to Otis. Hen Manley's Town News column in the Berkshire Eagle under the headline

"Wants to be Set Off" sounded the alarm:

"North Beech Plain people or at least some of them want to be set off to Otis. They think that as their business, post office, and church are all in Otis and as they live only a mile or two from the post office that they should belong there and expect to petition right away quick to that effect. Now we do not blame them for wanting to be set off to Otis as they are situated, and they can't blame us in the other part of the town for not wanting them to go. We can only hope they won't press the matter as we have no inhabitants to lose. Think well before you start in."

Today the land is mostly reforested and beech trees are again plentiful. Only about two dozen houses dot the landscape, occupied by an even mixture of full and part-time residents. Seven 18th century houses survive. Spectacle Pond, the largest body of water in town, remains virtually unchanged, as beautiful and serene as ever. 



"Prince Rosewood", 1903 Photo: Nancy Rowley Loring

CAN YOU ENTERTAIN US?



The 8th annual Extravaganza takes place Saturday, December 10 at 5pm at the Sandisfield Arts Center. This event packs the house as both children and adults, residents and guest performers share their talents with us. This fun and charming community gathering represents the true spirit of the season where each performance is a gift of sorts to all those in attendance.

We welcome our seasoned performers including dancers, singers, actors & readers, and hope to have some new acts as well. Silly or serious, solo or group, we'd love to have you on the stage. We also need all types of good food and drink for the crowd. Please call Liana Toscanini (413) 441-9542 if interested or email liana@communityaccesstothearts.org.

HISTORY BOOK PROJECT ENTERS FINAL PHASE

By Liana Toscanini

As of this writing, almost all of the research and writing of *Sandisfield Then & Now: 1762-2012* is done. 300 pages of old house histories have been written by Ron Bernard and professionally edited by local author and historian, Bernard Drew. Eighteen valiant proofreaders are currently reviewing the text. Soon, the graphic design phase will begin with Tina Sotis applying her artistry to aesthetically lay out every page. The book will hopefully go to the printer by April 1, 2012.

The most important task at hand is to raise the money for graphic design, editing and printing through advance book sales and sponsorships. You can support this historic project by making a tax-deductible donation in any one of three categories:

Silver Sponsor \$100 – your name will appear at the beginning of the book as a founding sponsor

Gold Sponsor \$200 – Your name will appear at the beginning of the book as a founding sponsor and you will receive a signed and numbered copy of the book.

Platinum Sponsor \$500 – your name will appear at the beginning of the book as a founding sponsor, you will receive a signed and numbered copy of the book and 40 limited edition Sandisfield .44 cents postage stamps.

Checks should be made out to the Town of

Sandisfield with a note specifying “history book donation.” Mail your donation to: Sandisfield Then & Now, PO Box 770, Otis, MA 01253. We are indebted to the Town of Sandisfield, The Sandisfield Historical Society, and the History Book Committee for providing assistance throughout this undertaking.

If you plan to purchase the book, just fill out the order form below. If you do so before March 1, you will save 12.5% off the cover price (or \$5 off the regular price of \$40). You will also soon receive a postcard with all of the information on this special offer.

The History Book Committee (Ron Bernard, Kathy Jacobs, Don Peet, Bethany Perry & Liana Toscanini) wishes to thank everyone who has

taken the time to speak with us and provide photos (There are over 500 photos in the book!!) as well as our volunteers and contributing writers including *Lorraine & Steve German, Ted Goldsmith, Laurie Green, Joanne Olson, Bob Royce, Brigitte Ruthman, Charlotte Westhead, Jean Atwater-Williams, and Richard Migot*. We salute our proofreaders: *Hannah Barrett, Thelma Esteves, Karen Fabrner, Jo Garfield, Judy Goldsmith, Jerry Herman, Sally Kahn, Patricia Hubbard, Miriam Karmel, Maxene Kupperman-Guinals Adam Manacher, Lauren Paul, Bill Price, Nancy & Jim Remis, and Bob & Jan Royce*.

For more information visit www.sandisfieldthenandnow.org or call (413) 441-9542.

I would like to purchase a copy of Sandisfield Then & Now: 1762-2012 and save \$5 off the regular price of \$40.

Please reserve _____ copy/copies @ \$35 each for a total of \$ _____.

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_____ Mail my book to me upon publication in June 2012 (Add \$4 per book for shipping). Enclosed

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Mail this form and your check to: Sandisfield Then & Now, PO Box 770, Otis, MA 01253.

This offer is good through March 1, 2012! Call Liana Toscanini (413) 441-9542 for info.

Thank you for your support!



AVIAN NOTES

A Force of Habit

By Margaret O'Clair

By now our summer visitors are all gone. Both the human and feathered kind have headed south for the warmer weather in their wintering grounds leaving us to cope with what has been predicted to be another brutal winter.

The where, when, and why of bird migration has intrigued man for centuries. In spite of the scientific and technological advances of recent years, much remains a mystery.

Where the birds go was relatively easy to find out. Early explorers, traders and scientists found familiar birds in far away places. Extensive banding programs from the beginning of the twentieth century told scientists more detail, and in the modern era micro chip and radio tracking reveal exact information about where the migrants go. The American Golden Plover, for example, leaves the Argentinian pampas in their autumn, heads directly north across South America, the Gulf of Mexico and straight up the Mississippi Valley

and then spreads out across all the northern tundra of Alaska and Canada. Their return trip in our autumn is not so straight forward. The entire population gathers in the Canadian province of Labrador, heads out southbound over the Atlantic Ocean, turns right at Brazil and back onto the pampas. The Arctic Tern, nesting in the Arctic and summering in the Antarctic, travels over 22,000 miles on its migration route.

The length of daylight hours plays a critical role in bird behavior as anyone who keeps egg laying chickens well knows. When the days shorten, the pituitary and adrenal glands start releasing hormones that stimulate the birds to start storing body fat under their skin for energy on their long flight. The birds become restless and some species start forming groups or flocks. Our Ruby Throated Hummingbird weighs four and a half grams at the time of migration, of which two grams are body fat, more than enough energy to sustain its flight of twenty six hours over the Gulf of Mexico.


Early research on how migratory birds find their way to their destinations was done by German ornithologists in the early nineteen hundreds. They found that daylight migrants, such as swallows, swifts, blackbirds, doves and many more, orient themselves to the angle of the sun. Caged migrants positioned themselves fluttering in the direction they would travel, when mirrors were used to deflect the angle of the sun, their fluttering altered to reflect that change. Night migrants, such as shore birds, herons and many songbirds appear to use the stars for navigation. In both instances, there is considerably less flying activity on cloudy days and nights. A hundred years ago, Avon Middendorf first suggested that birds were capable of detecting the earth's magnetic field and use it to navigate. This opinion is still the subject of investigation, as is the role of the moon on night migrants.

Topography is obviously important. Shore birds follow the coastline and water fowl follow rivers and large lakes using them for stop-overs to rest and refuel before moving on. Hawks and other large birds follow mountain ridge lines, soaring effortlessly on the updrafts. Weather plays an important role too. Migrating flocks have been known to turn around and fly in reverse migration if they encounter a surprise weather front. A major event like a hurricane may cause



havoc on migratory birds. We don't know yet if hurricane Irene has affected our migratory birds - we will find out next spring.

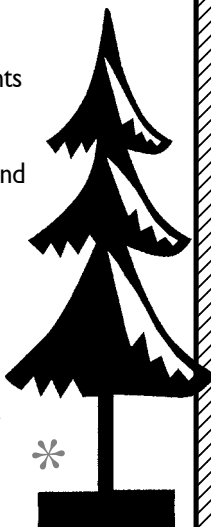
There are many theories about why birds migrate. There is more food available and a longer time to gather it and raise young when the days are longer. Migratory birds live in an endless summer and survival is a lot easier in a warm or temperate climate. There are arguments that migration evolved out of necessity caused by the advancing and retreating glaciers of the last ice age. The world was a very different place when the patterns of migration first began.

I am still puzzled why the Barn Swallows that nested over my kitchen window this spring did so. I understand that they had no choice, their DNA made them do it. They didn't come to the Berkshires for pleasure like our other summer visitors. It was strictly a business trip. Fly up, find a mate, build a nest, raise the young and go home. But why bother? Surely there are plenty of barns and bugs in South America. Why not evolve to stay put and avoid the dangerous risks of migration? Indeed, many Canada Geese are no longer migrating, much to the annoyance of golfers everywhere. Perhaps as our climate changes and a few generations of Barn Swallows encounter Katrinas and Irene on their journey home, they will adapt, stay put, leaving us to cope with the mosquitos. 



Ward's Holiday Decorating Center

- * * *
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TOWN BUSINESS

Edited by Debbie Harris
& Rhee Kasky

Board of Selectmen Meetings Summary

Meeting of August 22, 2011

Present: Selectmen Patrick Barrett, Richard Campetti and Jeff Gray; Road Superintendent Steve Harasyko; Administrative Assistant Dolores Harasyko

Road Superintendant, Steve Harasyko, received his six month performance review. The Selectmen are happy with his work.

Highway Updates: Repair of the culvert on New Hartford road is still awaiting the Army Corps of Engineers. There is ongoing discussion with Lane Construction regarding the materials they used to repair Route 183.

The Selectmen discussed how to determine the town's right of way with regard to tree removal.

Fire Chief Ralph Morrison received a request from the Town of Tolland for use of our town's tanker. Ralph will follow up with Tolland to determine exactly what is being requested.

Representatives from the Berkshire County Board of Health Association presented an inter-municipal agreement allowing towns to share services. This agreement creates no financial obligations on the town and is supported by our Board of Health. The Selectmen accepted the agreement.

Richard Lassar withdrew his application for a special permit.

Kathy Tryon is proposing a private nurse service for Sandisfield and surrounding towns. Her letter is being forwarded to the Board of Health.

Jeff will obtain quotes for repairing the Town Hall Annex where water is leaking in several places.

Doug Segrin of the Board of Health requested better lighting at the Old Town Hall. A licensed electrician will be asked to repair or replace the lights. In addition, Jeff requested that the lock on the door between the back of Old Town Hall and the main room be removed. Richard suggested replacing it with an eye hook type latch.

Richard will contact Town Council regarding a gate blocking Roberts Road.

Meeting of September 2, 2011

Present: Selectmen Patrick Barrett, Jeff Gray; Road Superintendent Steve Harasyko; Administrative Assistant Dolores Harasyko

Absent: Richard Campetti

Steve Harasyko, Dolores Harasyko and John Burrows have had several meetings with FEMA and MEMA. Estimated road damage from Storm Irene is \$750,000, of which FEMA, if it approves, will reimburse the town 75%. In order to cover the town's 25% of the cost the Selectmen agreed to apply to the Director of Accounts to allow us to deficit spend.

Meeting of September 6, 2011

Present: Selectmen Patrick Barrett, Jeff Gray

Absent: Richard Campetti, Stephan Harasyko, Dolores Harasyko

Bethany Perry was appointed to the 250th Committee.

Jim and Nancy Remis reported on damage to their property at Rood Hill Road and 69 Sandy Brook Turnpike. They asked to be kept informed as to a solution so this does not recur.

Theresa Bills, representing the Sandisfield Wall project for the 250th celebration, is looking for a way to reach everyone in town so that they can be included in the project. Debbie Harris suggested using the Sandisfield Times as a vehicle for requesting information.

Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Springfield wants to put a container for clothing at the transfer station. Proceeds from the container would go to Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Springfield and would not benefit anyone in Berkshire County. A decision was put off until Richard could be part of it.

The Selectmen will ask town council to issue a cease and desist order to Richard Lassar regarding the operation of his business in violation of the Town Bylaws.

With heartfelt sympathy the Selectmen recognize the passing of Angelo "Jappe" Campetti. They appreciate his many years of service and commitment to our town. He was our cemetery commissioner for many years.

Meeting of September 12, 2011

Present: Selectmen Patrick Barrett, Jeff Gray; Road Superintendent Steve Harasyko; Administrative Assistant Dolores Harasyko

Absent: Richard Campetti

Damage from Storm Irene was reviewed. All roads have had emergency work on them. The

restoration work will not begin until we have heard from FEMA for funding.

Direct deposit is up and running.

Meeting of September 19, 2011

Present: Selectmen Patrick Barrett, Jeff Gray, Richard Campetti; Road Superintendent Steve Harasyko; Administrative Assistant Dolores Harasyko

Steve, Dolores and John Burrows met with FEMA to enroll the town in the FEMA program.

Fall grading of roads will start next week.

The Selectmen ask for patience from the public regarding road repair work necessitated by Storm Irene. The work itself, as well as the FEMA application process for reimbursement is very labor intensive, and full restoration may take 6-12 months to complete.

Patrick suggested a bi-annual meeting with selectmen from surrounding towns to compare problems and solutions. We will send out an invitation for the first such meeting to be held on November 8, 2011 at 7:00 at the Town Hall Annex.

(Note: The complete minutes are public record and available for viewing at the Town Hall Annex.)



Finance Committee Minutes Summary

September 14, 2011

Attending: John Burrows, Kathy Jacobs, Rhee Kasky, Ron Myers. Unable to attend: Lisa Leavenworth

Committee structure: Kathy Jacobs elected chair; John Burrows volunteered as secretary

Posting of meetings: Meetings schedule will be posted on Town Website (John will send schedule to webmaster); Kathy will post notice at New Boston Store; John will email notice to Town Clerk for posting at Town Hall; a notice will be posted at the Post Office. Meetings to be held the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7pm at the Library.

Education: Discussed the need to educate the tax payers on how our budget is spent. Rhee will check with the Sandisfield Times to see if space will be available for budget updates. The first

Cont'd on p.12



Give help to the birds that stay here through the winter: they get cold, and hungry.

By Debbie Harris

It's beginning to get cold outside, and all the birds have migrated south, right? Well, no, many birds stay around here all winter. And those birds need help finding food.

We frequently put out our bird feeders in the spring and summer months to attract all of those brightly colored song birds to our windows so that we can enjoy them. But, in actuality, birds do not need additional help from humans in finding food in the warmer months. There are plenty of natural seeds and berries around for the birds to eat. But, in the winter those seeds and berries are not produced by the trees and shrubs, and that is when the birds that don't fly south need help finding food.

Birds are endothermal (often referred to as "warm blooded"), which means that, like you and me, they keep a constant body temperature in all types of weather. In colder weather this takes a lot of energy, which means that they need lots of energy-producing food. While in the warmer weather birds can easily exist on some of the lower energy foods like berries, in the colder weather they need foods that are full of fat and protein.



Bird feeders should be placed in an open space, but one that is out of the wind and near a sheltered area; a place where the birds can perch while feeding is also helpful. For some

birds, like sparrows and juncos, seeds can be placed directly on the ground. For other birds, like chickadees and nuthatches, a hanging feeder will do just fine.

The best winter foods for birds are oil sunflower seeds and suet. But, in the Sandisfield area, you should be careful in using these foods because they can attract bears (who are also on the prowl for food in winter). Corn, thistle, peanuts and pumpkin seeds are also quite attractive to many birds, but, again, care should be taken to prevent

the bears from getting to your feeder. Squirrels and raccoons also find bird feeders quite attractive, so be on the lookout for them, too. And, try to keep your cats away.

It is also very important to provide a source of water for the winter birds. A heated bird bath in an open area is a good place to start. However, a plastic dish with water can be just as good.

To make a suet feeder you'll need a plastic onion or potato sack, wax paper, string, scissors, bird seed, and, of course, suet. Cut an 8" x 10" piece of wax paper and sprinkle seeds on it. Roll the suet into a ball, which you should then roll in the seeds to completely cover it. Place the suet ball in the plastic sack, which has been cut to fit the size of the ball. Tie off the top of the sack with string, leaving a piece of string that is long enough to hang the sack from a tree. Then watch who comes a-calling.

You can also make a great bird feeder from a pine cone. In addition to the cone you will need wax paper, string, peanut butter (or shortening), a butter knife, bird seed and scissors. Spread the peanut butter or shortening inside the openings and around the center and bottom of the cone. Spread the bird seed on the wax paper. Roll the cone in the bird seed so that the seed sticks to the peanut butter or shortening; you can also sprinkle seed inside openings in the cone. Then cut enough string to hang down from a tree branch or bush. Tie one end of the string to the top of the pine cone and the other end to the tree or bush, and see who comes looking.

You can also be environmentally conscious by recycling completely clean, used household containers such as milk jugs and cartons, coffee cans and/or pie tins as bird feeders. Milk jugs and cartons are especially good because they are frequently made of plastic that may already have been recycled. Since plastic can only be recycled once, if you don't reuse it in some creative way it will just serve as more unusable waste. Note: a "5" in the recycle symbol means that the material has already been recycled once.

To make a bird feeder from a milk jug cut 2 or 3 holes in the lower middle of the side of the jug. The holes should be 2-4" wide; different size holes will attract different size birds. Then make smaller holes below these first holes and insert a rod or dowel into the smaller holes to serve as perches. Place seed on the bottom of the jug where your perching birds can get to it. Then hang your jug on a nearby tree and wait for hungry birds to arrive.

A final thing to remember is that you can't just put your feeder out and forget about it. You have to keep the feeder full because the birds will rely upon it as a food source. You should also keep the feeder clean and the seed as dry as possible, since birds can get sick from eating moldy birdseed. You can give seed feeders a shake before refilling them to dislodge compacted seed; wet seed clumps should be discarded.

Bon Appetite! 🐾

NOVEMBER



THE SANDISFIELD ARTS CENTER

5 HAMMERTOWN RD, SANDISFIELD, MA
413-258-4100

WWW.SANDISFIELDARTSCENTER.ORG

Sat., November 5 3-5 PM



"The Way Through" Tina Sotis ©2011

OPENING RECEPTION

TINA SOTIS
"YEAR OF GRACE"

ON DISPLAY THRU DECEMBER 10

Sat., November 5 6 PM \$5



OUR
"SANDANCE"

FILM FESTIVAL

Sat., November 12 8 PM \$10



PARADOCS
JAZZ TRIO

FARMINGTON RIVER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BULLETIN



By Tara Beardsley/
Mary Turo

School is now in full swing. There are a lot of great activities and events being offered at our wonderful little school, many of which you may be unaware of. I'd like to highlight some of them.

Our Art teacher, Ms. Catullo, has graciously begun an "Art Club" for our students who want to further develop their drawing and painting talents. There will be two classes. The first is for students in grades 1-3, and it begins on November 1st. Sessions will run from 3:00-4:30. The second session will be for grades 4-6, and will begin after Christmas break. The time and day for session 2 have yet to be determined. Students will meet in the Art room after school, and must be picked up promptly at 4:30.

Although registration is closed, I feel it necessary to thank the Otis Rec. Center for sponsoring Youth Dance Classes, which are being held free of charge to Farmington District children in grades K-6. Children are being taught the basic elements of dance, creative dance, jazz and yoga. What a great opportunity for our kids. Classes were filled quickly, and are being enjoyed by all attending!

Our Character Counts trait during November/December is Caring. We will be doing a school wide service project again this year and provide Thanksgiving Food Baskets to needy Farmington families. Students in Pre-K through grade six will be collecting food during the week of November 14th. The 6th grade students will organize and assemble the baskets for delivery on November 22nd. The Senior Lunch Program began on October 25th. All Otis and Sandisfield seniors are invited to enjoy lunch in our school cafeteria on Tuesdays through May, 2012 at 12:15 p.m. for a nominal fee of \$2.00. Any senior interested will need to call and make a reservation each Monday in order to attend that week.

CHP continues its "Playgroup" on Mondays from 9:30-11:00 a.m. The program is open to all area children from infants to age 4, along with their parents/guardians. What a great way for young ones to make friends and parents to get to know one another!

The Otis Library will be sponsoring a Veterans' Day Pancake Breakfast from 7-11 A.M. on Nov. 13th. All proceeds will help fund the Otis Library.

There are several group class/activities being held at our school which are open to area residents ages 16+ (unless otherwise noted). They are offered

free to Otis residents and for \$7.00 per class for all non-residents. Drops-ins are welcome.

Included are:

Zumba

Saturdays 7:45-8:45 a.m.
Mondays 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Yoga

Saturdays 9:00-10:30 a.m.
Tuesdays 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Women's Volleyball (free to all)

Wednesdays 6:30-8:30p.m.

Tai Chi (12+)


10:45 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.

Saturdays starting 11/15

As a reminder, the PTO will be holding monthly meetings on the 2nd Tuesday of each month in the school library at 3:15 p.m. Childcare is provided. We are currently looking for volunteers who are willing to help out during this year's Book Fair and Holiday Shop, being held in December. Please contact PTO President, Sherry DeCelle at frspto@yahoo.com if you are available to help out. We thank you in advance!

Lots coming up...mark those calendars!

- Nov. 10** PTO Meeting 3:15p.m.
Childcare available
- Nov. 13** Veterans' Day Pancake
Breakfast- 7-11a.m.
- Nov. 17** Character Counts Assembly
2:00 p.m.
- Nov. 23 -25** No School
Thanksgiving Break
- Dec. 5** Report cards sent home
- Dec. 5-9** Book Fair
- Dec. 7** Parent Teacher Conferences
- Dec. 15-16** Holiday Shop

Please call the school directly at 413-269-4466 or visit its *brand-new* website: frsd.org for more school information. 

WHAT WE WISH FOR

From Your Attic to Our Classroom

The PTO has called upon the teachers to develop a "Wish List" for items they would like to have for their classrooms. The list will be updated monthly.

Please contact the school if you are willing or able to donate any of the following:

empty paper towel rolls, card board, buttons, sequins, beads and fabric, sunflower heads, bones, feathers, rocks, shells, drying racks for art projects, books for the Kindergarten lending library, bags for sending home books, small toys to be used as prizes in grade 2, an easel, tri-fold science boards, headphones, mouse pads and small screwdrivers and other tools.




Clear the Fields and the Cows Will Come!

By Thelma Esteves

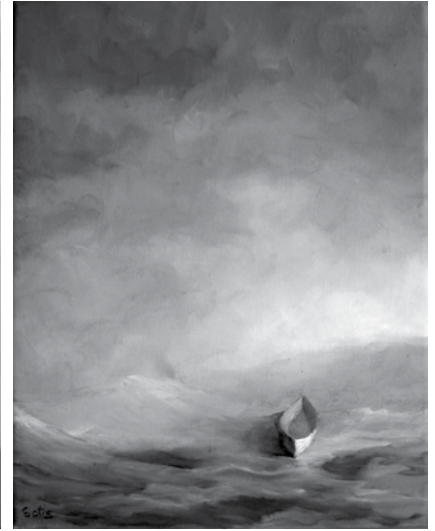
On Beech Plain Road, sometime before 1762, before there was a Sandisfield, fields began to take shape as people with a dream undertook the hard work of clearing the land of trees and stones. They dreamt of having fields for livestock. Those dreams must have sustained them through the great travail they suffered in that quest.

My recent research on the history of my home on Beech Plain Road led me to reflect on the many years families struggled with the difficulties inherent to the land. It was not surprising that, after generations of hard work, greener pastures called. Speculators then took over the abandoned property, leaving it neglected only to flipped it for profits more than a dozen times from 1902 to 1920. When people returned to reclaim these fields they found leaking barns, falling sheds, and a once proud house in shambles. The fields and orchard were overgrown. In 1920 Mary and Frank Hryckvich came, cleared the fields, farmed the land, raised their family, and saved the house from the fate of so many other homes on Beech Plain Road. When, in 1932, they sold the land to buy a larger tract up the road, they sold to farmers who continued to farm until I bought it in 1964.

This New York City native raised her children, did some organic gardening in the sixties and struggled with city-centered work, but always fought to keep those fields of dreams clear and accessible to feed animals. It is with sincere gratitude that I celebrate the recent return of the Hryckvich cows to grazing on my land. That is why these fields were created. I love seeing the cows. I wage a playful war to keep them out of my garden and off my lawn. Occasionally I do have to shovel excrement, but I did a fair amount of that as well in my city profession in the past. It is okay.

These fields, as much as I love them and marvel at their beauty, were not made for my enjoyment. However, it is a joy to see a mother cow with her baby nursing, a young steer challenge an older one, or to see cows gallop off when I blow a horn to get them to leave the lawn. The cows and I share custody of these fields. The fields were cleared and built. The cows come. I am content with my part in that dream. 





Photos: Tina Sotis

A Long and Lyrical Journey, by Land and Sea: The Paintings of Tina Sotis

By Sheila Weller

"All three boats are me: struggling, sinking, and, at last saving myself," artist Tina Sotis, says of the three very different vessels pitching wildly in a storm, in her lyrical, emotional, aquatic work *The Way Through*. "The way through," she continues, "is the only way to become the person you were born to be. I used to paint houses -- cubed, orderly structures -- all the time because they 'contained' me," she continues. "I was too afraid to let the world see me as who I was. But I have been through such transformation in the past several years..."

That whole, dazzling, thoughtful transformation -- the arc of Sotis's quest -- is captured in her lush, distinctive paintings, on view at the Sandisfield Arts Center. They are very much worth the visit. Fellow Sandisfield painter Sandy Parisky says, "I really admire Tina's work. She's an accomplished painter able to create dream-like images that are full of mood and mystery; they're haunting and beautifully provocative." Distinguished folk artist Larry Zingale, who recently had an Art's Center show and has had six one-man shows in New York, calls Sotis's work full of "purity and power." And another Sandisfield painter, Susie Crofut, praises Sotis's "unfailing use of color and soft brush strokes to present images from her extraordinary imagination, which both soothe and evoke."

Sotis's paintings are faintly reminiscent of Edward Hopper, Winslow Homer, Andrew Wyeth, Georgia O'Keefe, and Man Ray, but mostly they are uniquely hers. For the last several years she has produced beautiful wall calendars, and I use mine to mark the months in my own Sandisfield home. I particularly love the surreal image for September

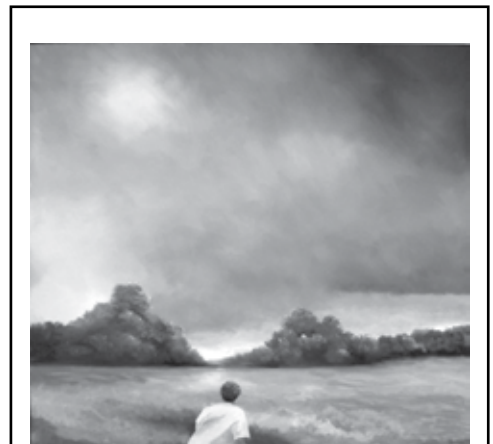
2010 -- a headless, armless mannequin in a pink gown fluttering over the dramatically black and white tiled floor of an empty suite of rooms. The image, *Napoleon and Josephine*, which sold long ago and is unfortunately no longer available, has that pause-inducing Tina Sotis hallmark -- a confounding mix of moods. There's a curious insouciance in that mannequin, despite the noir environs (and her decapitated state!), and it's that very question-begging quality (happy or sad? ominous or tranquil?) that marks so many of the other paintings in her show as well.

Tina Sotis, who has shown in galleries internationally, as well as in California, Oregon, Arizona, Florida and Connecticut, has lived in her woodsy home on Stump Road here in Sandisfield for the past 12 years, but plans to move somewhere close to the sea to live out her new passion as a deep-sea diver. The paintings in her show run the gamut of that quest. There are those "orderly, cubed" houses suffused with the feel of the Southern Berkshires. I particularly love the two neat, pink barns on golden grass under a startlingly pale sky in *Ode to Joy*, and the low-to-the-grass, delicately panicked birds in *Turbulence at the Boundaries*. As well, the solemn, white Adirondack chairs on grass surrounded by trees -- one, notably spectral and demonic tree -- in her *Some Evening Singing*. Rustic pastoral life is full of discordant emotions and dark, sharp longing; stasis and stillness that are rippling with about-to-burst disquietude is what these paintings seem to be saying. Never more so than in *Clarity* -- now, there's your shades of Wyeth! -- in which a shirt-sleeved young man seems about to hurl himself over a wide field under a giant sky. And in *The Little Prince* in which a lonely fold-up table is a stand-in for a lonely soul, set apart from an empty house so hugged and braced by clutching trees, you feel a hurricane coming on; you feel the house is a human, endangered by some epic force. The paintings of the "other side," where she comes

out into her love for the sea, are also beautiful. In *Sea Change* a gull sits atop a Sandisfieldian tree pointing to, perhaps, where she's ended up -- the shore. In *Isle De Las Tortugas*, a large white sea bird is framed by a Mediterranean window right on the sea. In *The Long Way* one of her "three boats that are me" is a lone craft bumping across the ocean -- the existential course of our yearning lives.

You will come away from the show enchanted, enriched and seconding the

Cont'd on p.15



"Clarity" Oil on Canvas ©2011 Tina Sotis

TINA SOTIS

New Paintings

"A Year of Grace"

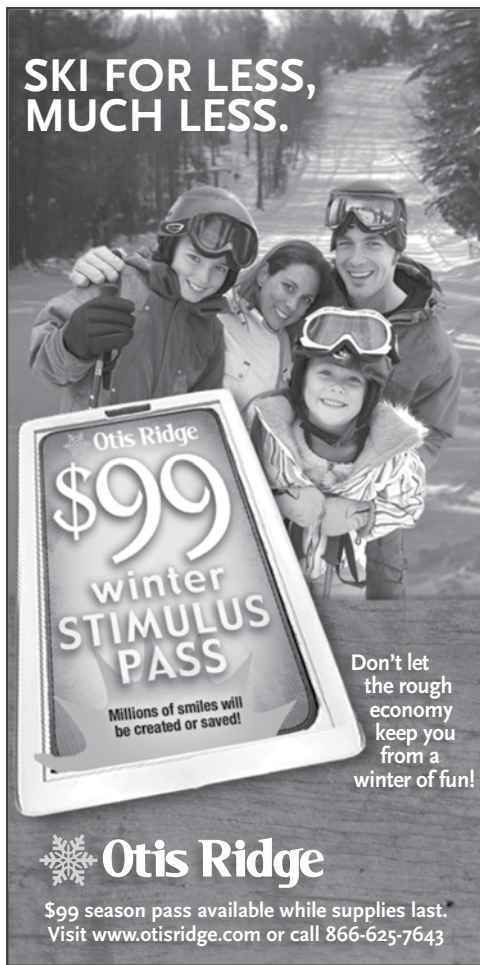
Sandisfield Arts Center

ARTIST RECEPTION

Saturday, November 5, 3-5PM



Exhibiting Nov. 5 - Dec 10



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MUCH LESS.**

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THE SANDISFIELD LIBRARY NEWS



Tara Beardsley, Library Trustee

The following books have been added to the library this month:

- "An O'Brien Christmas" by Sherryl Woods
- "Everything We Ever Wanted" by Sara Shepard
- "One Summer" by David Baldacci
- "The Best of Me" by Nicholas Sparks
- "Nightwoods" by Charles Frazier
- "The Dovekeepers" by Alice Hoffman
- A new "Betty Crocker Cookbook"

With the weather changing, please call the Library before coming down. 258-4966.

Laurie Foulke-Green
Librarian

SANDISFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

On Sunday, November 6th, 2011, the Historical Society will hold its annual wine and cheese party. This event will take place from 2 PM to 4 PM, at the meeting house on route 183 in South Sandisfield. This is a free event where everyone is welcome. Reserve this date to meet your neighbors, and to enjoy the delicious snacks and great wine supplied by the organization.

Another date to remember is the annual Christmas Fair, which will be held on Saturday, December 3rd, 2011 at Fire House #2 from 10 AM to 2 PM. Of course Santa will be there along with the sale of homemade baked goods, vendors selling jewelry, hand-made llama and alpaca items, and various Christmas gifts.

The cookbook, sponsored by the Historical Society, is almost ready to be sent off to the printer. The memoirs and personal pages have been reviewed and edited by Adam Manacher. The final review of the 270 recipes that were collected will be completed by the end of October. We have recently interviewed the New Boston Inn and the Silver Brook Café, and will also be including their recipes and stories in the book. We also have a custom front and back cover designed by Ron Modica, a graphic artist from Staten Island. We have collected some stories about old houses of recipe contributors, a sample of which follows:

House of Victoria Vaughn

"The Levi Pease House" (1843) is the finest example in town of the Greek Revival architectural style ("Temple" variation) which was predominant in Montville in the 1840s. Pease was the leading blacksmith, and he operated the "Pease Stove Pipe & Blacksmith Shop" next door.

"Joy in the simple things of life! Like gathering my own apples and making Apple pies and applesauce from "my very own apple tree"! The tree is located by the side of my barn and dates to about the time my house was built. There is such an intense feeling of connection to the land, the house and all the former owners." Victoria Vaughn

The advanced sale price of the cookbook is \$13.00. The book should be ready for distribution in March, 2012. We will be taking orders for the book at the wine and cheese party and at the Christmas fair. Make sure you get a copy of this keepsake by reserving it early.



Town News CONTINUED

Cont'd from p. 8

article will be for the December 2011 issue. We will also ask the Select Board to hold quarterly All Boards (heads of all town departments) meetings for timely updates on their activities and budget status. These meetings will be open to the public. The Farmington River Regional School District (FRRSD) representatives will also be asked to attend.

Finance Committee expenses: Approved \$126 dues for the Massachusetts Association of Finance Committees plus an additional \$40 for registration to attend their finance training session in Franklin, MA.

FRRSD: Need to obtain schedule of their meetings and have a Finance Committee representative attend. Possibly rotate members of the committee who will attend.

Other business: Discussed financial impact of Tropical Storm Irene on our town budget. Our Town Clerk, Highway Superintendent and Emergency Management Rep will be attending a FEMA/MEMA kickoff meeting on September 19 for further information. Will have more information for our next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:08.



Planning Board Meeting

August 8, 2011

Attending: Gary Bottum, Sr., Gene Riiska, Kathleen Segrin

Old business. Discussed Lot/Parcel: 412-0-16.03 on West Street for a special permit/variance (John W. Field Tree Service). Update from Town Clerk and Select Board concerning above: As of 8/8/2011 Town Council is working on it.

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission delegate from Sandisfield will be Gary Bottum and Kathleen Segrin will be the alternate.

The New business. Letter to Select Board requesting a copy of future Special Permits approved by Select Board for Planning Board records.

Sympathy card sent to Platt Family.

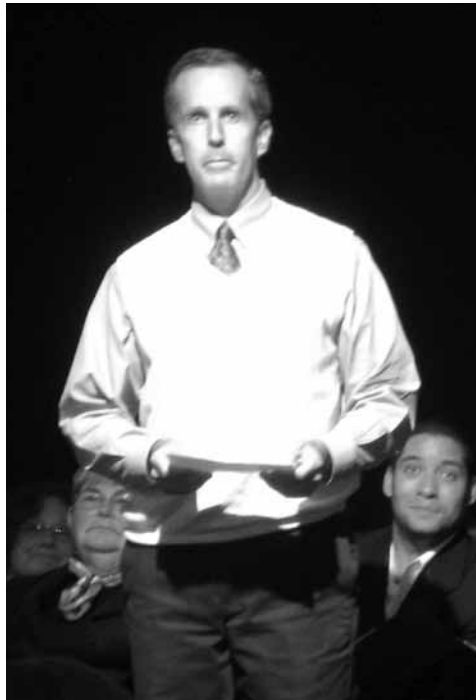
Bill of Rights Performance on Constitution Day

By Suzanne O'Connell

Despite all the public tributes paid to the United States Constitution, recent surveys have revealed that a large majority of Americans have never read our government's founding document, and that many young people today feel it is all right to violate the Bill of Rights (the first ten amendments to the Constitution) in the interest of national security. When he learned of these facts, Connecticut composer Neely Bruce felt deeply disturbed; he responded by setting the Bill of Rights to music as "Ten Amendments in Eight Motets"; in four-part a cappella harmony. On September 17, Sandisfield had the opportunity to enjoy this educational and aesthetic experience in a performance Professor Bruce staged in honor of Constitution Day at the Sandisfield Art Center.

The challenge of mounting such an event was considerable – Professor Bruce, who also teaches music and composition at Wesleyan University, had just four weeks to rehearse a chorus of 55 volunteer singers. Rehearsals were in Middletown, CT on Wednesday evenings and Sandisfield on Saturday mornings. The entire chorus met for the first time the morning of the performance. An added treat was provided by Allan Dean, a world renown trumpeter, Yale professor and Monterey resident. Professor Bruce composed special fanfares for his performance.

Community involvement is an integral part of this composition, and the Arts Center staff was given the job of enrolling Sandisfield residents who were willing to stand up in front of an audience to read some part of the Bill of Rights' text. A fine cross-section accepted the challenge: Amendments, in order, were read



State Representative Smitty Pignatelli; and Robin Campetti and Katrina Campetti (inset) read amendments.

by Patrick Barrett, Jean Atwater-Williams, Margarete Foster, Mike Morrison, Val Coleman, Thomas Christopher, Robin Campetti, Katrina Campetti, Connie Canty and Smitty Pignatelli. Each amendment was signed by John Basinger of Middletown, CT.

Dr. Bruce was clearly in his element, conducting from what had been the choir loft when the Arts Center was a Baptist Meeting House. A near-capacity audience responded enthusiastically to the piece, which is written in a style loosely based on "shape-note" singing, an early American choral tradition originally developed to help congregations (such as would have filled the Meeting House every Sunday) more easily learn hymns.

Following the performance was a supper provided by Arts Center volunteers during which singers, readers, and audience members could mingle over hamburgers, salads, cookies and cakes. Civil liberties and constitutional law did not seem to be the topic of many of the resulting conversations, but anyone who enjoyed this performance surely went home with a new appreciation of the beauty, as well as the power, of the Constitution's words. Legal language is notoriously dry and obscure, but not so our Bill of Rights. "The founding fathers knew how to write," Neely Bruce insists. "There's a wonderful cadence to the language."



Photos: Jerry Herman



Christopher J. Tryon
& Associates



Perc Testing

Septic Design

Sewer & Water System Design

Residential & Commercial Site Design

Drainage Design

Structural Evaluation & Design

Retaining Wall Design

Foundation Design

Construction Layout

Driveway Design & Permitting

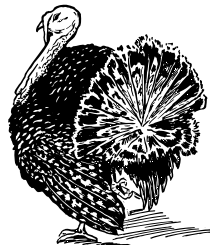
Scenic Mountain Act Permitting

Wetland Permitting

Field & Laboratory Testing of Construction
Materials (Concrete & Soils)

441 Main Road
P.O. Box 61
Monterey, MA 01245
413-429-4888

berkshiregeotech@gmail.com



History's Mysteries



In the late 19th century this was the home of Frank Rugg, b. Sandisfield 1863; married 1885 to Isa "Izzie" Clark. Rugg was a Selectman from about 1890-1910. Previously it was the Orlow Deming place and before that it was known as the Francis Baxter Farm. The house was federal style, probably built around 1790 by a Baxter. It stood on the south side of Sandisfield Road (Route 57) just west of New Boston village in an area where several newer homes are today. I am seeking any information about the Ruggs and the fate of this house. Contact Ron Bernard at 413 269-0012 or info@SandisfieldThenAndNow.org.

Photo courtesy www.DeMarsImages.com

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Henry David Thoreau*

Image: Tina Sotis ©2011

Letter From The Selectmen

By Patrick Barrett

The Sandisfield Board of Selectmen would once again like to thank all residents in town for the patience they have shown in regards to the current condition of our town roads. The highway department was able to get the roads passable after Tropical Storm Irene. Unfortunately, after this repair work was completed we received an additional four inches of heavy rain that caused our crews to have to start again from scratch. We have been delayed in restoring the roads to pre-Irene conditions due to waiting for clear guidelines from FEMA as to how to proceed with this process as well as coming to grips with how to fund this work before reimbursement monies become available. The extreme weather conditions we have faced over the past couple of months have delayed the fall grading and preparations for the upcoming winter season. Town crews, coupled with private contractors as need arises, will be working diligently into the fall in order to place our roads in the best possible conditions for the impending winter season. There is a lot of work that needs to be done throughout town in the weeks, months and years ahead and we look forward to fixing our infrastructure so that it can better withstand difficult weather conditions.

We would like to thank Sandisfield Highway Superintendent Steve Harasyko, Sandisfield Town Clerk Dolores Harasyko and Sandisfield Emergency Management Director John Burrows for the work they have put in dealing with FEMA guidelines and all the paperwork that entails. The bureaucratic red tape that comes as part of putting in claims to the federal government is mind-boggling. The work these dedicated officials have demonstrated in the past month on behalf of the town has been admirable and greatly appreciated. We would also like to recognize the hard work put in by Sandisfield Treasurer Claire English and Assistant Treasurer Teresa DellaGiustina in looking into ways to secure needed funds to pay for the work currently being done on town roads. The fallout from Irene has placed additional work on a group of people whose plates are already full. We are grateful for their services to the Sandisfield community.


The Sandisfield Board of Assessors has set the tax rate for the coming year at \$10.10 per thousand dollar assessment. This is an increase from last year's rate of \$9.41 per thousand. The rate hike is due to the fact that house assessments on average have dropped by 9% and in order to make up for the shortfall in monies needed to finance this year's budget, the tax rate had to be increased.

The Sandisfield Board of Selectmen has invited selectmen from Monterey, New Marlborough, Otis, Tolland and Tyringham to a regional meeting at the Sandisfield Town Hall Annex on Tuesday November 8th at 7:00 p.m. This

meeting offers the selectmen of our surrounding towns an opportunity to talk about issues facing our communities and to brainstorm possible solutions. It is our hope that this gathering will help to foster closer ties amongst the participating towns, improve services and help us to better navigate the difficult economic landscape facing every Massachusetts community.

We would like to recognize the wonderful gatherings hosted this summer by the 250th Historical Book Committee. The discussions led by Ron Bernard on various historical homes and sites throughout town have been extremely informative and a wonderful segue as we embark upon our 250th anniversary. Numerous historical photographs of Sandisfield are currently on display at the Sandisfield Arts Center. This exhibit is truly remarkable as the images help take one back in time and we hope residents can take advantage of this unique opportunity.

Emily Tarasuk has resigned from the Cultural Council. We would like to thank her for her years of service to this important board and wish her well in her future endeavors. We would also like to thank all of the contractors in town who put aside their various projects to help fix damage done to the town after Tropical Storm Irene. We are fortunate to have so many wonderful contractors in our community who are willing to respond at a moments notice to help Sandisfield in our time need.


Lately I have been reflecting upon the invaluable service provided to our country by our nation's veterans. Military personnel lay their lives on the line to protect the United States during times of crisis, in the process often experiencing and witnessing events that leave lifelong scars. As a nation we often take for granted the sacrifices these heroes make in protecting our freedoms and way of life. We as a nation tend to focus most of our attention and appreciation upon the members who have made the supreme sacrifice in the service to their country. Let us strive to make a new commitment to take care of our living veterans, whether that be forcing members of Congress to finally adequately provide proper lifelong medical and mental health services, pension benefits that keep up with and exceed the cost of inflation, or simply saying thank you, not just on Memorial Day or Veterans' Day, but every day. The Sandisfield Board of Selectmen would like to take this opportunity to thank the veterans of Sandisfield for the sacrifices they have made on behalf of our town and country. We are eternally grateful. 



The Paintings of Tina Sotis

Cont'd from p. 11

painter's (and these paintings') belief in the integrity of following dreams, in plumbing our unconscious for signs of what to do next. Also, if this isn't too much of a stretch, Tina Sotis's paintings feel, well, very Sandisfield. Even if she's planning on leaving this huge, under-peopled town of ours, with its massive swath of forest, its few long bumpy roads, its dozens of species of four legged creatures inhabiting their hidden alternate universe within the depths of our million trees, the evocative oddness of our town -- its elegance, solitude, and difficulty -- clearly affected her daily life and her nocturnal journeys and seems to have inspired these painted visions. And now that her new life is taking her under the ocean -- swimming with dolphins! hunting for coral! -- her breathtaking recording of primal dreams is bound to get even more witty, surprising, and bountiful.

Tina Sotis's paintings will be showing at the Sandisfield Arts Center at the intersection of Route 57 and Hammertown Road, from Saturday, November 5 (the Artist Reception, on the 5th, is from 3 to 5 p.m.), through December 10. 

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To all our friends in Sandisfield and Otis,

Deep gratitude and appreciation abound for your expressions of caring and support during the recent passing of my husband Barry. Your visits, cards, calls, donations and food have sustained us both physically and spiritually.

Words are somehow inadequate to express our thanks to you.

Warmly,
Anita Weinstein and Family



To the Editor:

In regards to the September 2011 Sandisfield Times article "A State Visit" written by Ms. Debbie Harris, I would like to make the following comments.

The Spectacle Pond property was not donated to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It was taken by the right of eminent domain from the Massachusetts Audubon Society and a private developer. The Town Selectmen voted to allow this taking as the state officials stated that the Town of Sandisfield would make out better.

There were several meetings with Town Boards in regard to this issue over a period of time. I attended some of these meetings and do agree that the state officials made statements that the Town of Sandisfield would be reimbursed in lieu of taxes.

I personally feel the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) should be ashamed that they have let such a beautiful tract of land deteriorate as it has. Prime example: the buildings have not been maintained and will eventually just fall down; the fields are not being cared for and will soon be just forest. There appears to be no plan for recreational development or proper property maintenance. The Commonwealth continues to purchase and acquire additional properties but fails to provide adequate resources to maintain the existing ones.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Nancy Loring

Dear editors,

The October Times had such fine print that my fiftyish eyes couldn't actually read it! I hope you can make the print larger.

Sarah Baily



To the Editor:



Here is a tribute to my mom, Linda Cormier:

Linda Fay Cormier was born March 29, 1951 to Marvin and Tillie Mirochnick. She was married to Dennis E. Cormier, and they had a daughter Aviva A. Cormier.

Linda was a nurse and she had a straight forward approach towards work as in life. She loved her houseplants, as well as her vegetable and herb gardens. She was an avid weather watcher and loved to cook. She always had a book in hand. She was a dedicated school committee member for many years. She was a proud mom.

Aviva Cormier



To the Editor:

To the Editor:

We returned late Saturday night 9-10-2011 from New York City in our ancient Chevy conversion van equipped with a wheelchair lift. As we prepared for Valerie Pinsky to get out with her electric wheelchair, to our horror the sliding door refused to open. We checked fuses, wires, pushed and pulled. No go. How to get Valerie out and to bed? What to do but call 911? Soon our neighbors, four local EMS volunteers, came and, after trying everything finally, carried her out the back doors, which fortunately did open.

We are grateful for the efficient, experienced and friendly help the 4 EMS volunteers gave us in a desperate situation. The next day Anastacio Ojeda, Valerie's partner and an experienced mechanic, rewired the door and got the electric wheelchair out. If he had not been able to fix it I would have had to drive to the dealer in New Jersey and spend hours waiting for them to do it. EMS and Ojeda saved the day. It was good to meet more of our helpful neighbors who are the backbone of our community.

Thanks to all,
Gertrud Michelson



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Henry David Thoreau





Comings and Goings



Albert Riiska
1949 – 2011

Albert Riiska, died unexpectedly on Wednesday, September 28, 2011. He was the husband of Carol (Jones) Riiska for 40 years. Born May 17, 1949 in Hartford; the son of the late Helge John Riiska and Irene (Kawttu) Riiska. Funeral services were held on Tuesday, October 4, with full Military Honors.

Al served in the U.S. Marine Corps during Vietnam, receiving the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star with Valor. He was a wounded disabled American Veteran. Al loved the outdoors and spending time with his grandchildren.

Albert was a gifted photographer and wrote poetry. Below is a poem he wrote on seeing the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial wall:

Stand Tall

*Stand tall in front of the wall
Reflect upon your respect
To the 58,000 plus that are the select
A memory all but forgotten
To those that were there
Unknown to many that are still here.
Still a large part of mystery and
Yet a larger part of history
Nothing they did was in vain
Yet they left us so much sorrow and pain.
Brothers and sisters here are their names
Was it a war or was it just a game?
A country divided and still today undecided.
Old photos fade that were taken those days
All of Vietnam's veterans are headed for graves
What they did should never be forgotten.*



Margaret Yaeger
1926-2011

Margaret Swan was born in Pompano Beach, Florida, in February of 1926. She lived in East Washington, Pennsylvania where she attended East Washington High School and, later, the University of West Virginia. She was granted a degree in English Literature by the University of Pennsylvania.

Margaret was a very private person. Her main interests were family, reading, poetry, philosophy, music, art, travel and tennis; these were never manifested in any visibility on the public stage.

Margaret was married in New York in 1947 to John Yaeger. The family lived in Bucks County, Pennsylvania until 1981, and then in Andover, Massachusetts until 2000, when they took up Residence on Sears Road in Sandisfield.

Margaret leaves her husband of 64 years, John Yaeger, sons John, Jr. of Charleston, South Carolina and Peter of Natick, Massachusetts, daughters Suzanne Cameron of Costa Rica, and Sarah Konstam of New York and Sandisfield, ten grandchildren and two great grandchildren. She was predeceased by a son, Alexander, in 2007.

Margaret was a longstanding member of the Sandisfield Women's Book Group, whose members have made a donation in her name to the Friends of the Sandisfield Library.



NOW HEAR THIS!

If you have an event that you would like to see listed here, please email calendar@sandisfieldtimes.org. We reserve space for those events that involve Sandisfield residents or that take place in Sandisfield and neighboring communities.

NOVEMBER EVENTS

Saturday, November 5, 3-5 PM, Opening Reception The Art of Tina Sotis, Sandisfield Art Center

Saturday, Nov. 5, 2011 American Legion fund raiser, spaghetti and meat ball dinner, Legion hall. Two seatings: 5 and 7 PM \$6.50. Please call Lisa 258-4992. New members welcomed.

Saturday, November 5, 6 PM, Our "Sandance" Film Festival, Sandisfield Art Center. Short films with young, independent Wesleyan University Filmmakers.

Sunday, November 6, 2-5 PM, Sandisfield Historical Society's Annual Wine and Cheese Party, South Sandisfield Meeting House, Route 183.

Tuesday, November 8, 7 PM, Regional Selectmen's Meeting Town Hall Annex. Selectmen from Otis, Tolland, Monterey, New Marlboro and Tyringham have been invited.

Saturday, November 12, 8 PM, The Paradoxs Jazz Trio, Sandisfield Art Center, classic acoustic jazz, \$10.

Monday, November 14, 7 PM, All Boards Meeting, Town Hall Annex.

Wednesday, November 16, 7 PM, Sandisfield 250th Birthday Celebration Committee Meeting, Sandisfield Library.

Council on Aging, every Wednesday, 11 AM -2 PM, Senior Center – Town Hall Annex. Pot Luck Lunch at noon, Bingo at 1 PM. Free blood pressure screening every fourth Wednesday.

Finance Committee, second Wednesday of the month, 7 PM, Sandisfield Library. Public welcome.

Farmington River Regional School District, first Monday of the month, 7 PM, Farmington River Regional School, Rte. 8, JoAnn Austin, Superintendent. Public Welcome.

Otis/Sandisfield Kiwanis every Wednesday, 6:30 PM, Otis Town Hall. 269-6060.

Farmington River Regional School; Senior Lunch Program, Tuesdays when school is in session, 12:15 PM, Call Lynette at 269-4466 on Monday to reserve a place

Children's Health Program play group, Mondays when school is in session, 9:30 – 11 AM, Led by Laura Mesina, Farmington River Elementary School music room. For more information please call 413-644-0104 extension 1159.

PTO, second Thursday of the month, 3:15 PM, Farmington River Regional School. Child Care provided.

Sandisfield Public Library Hours: Monday and Tuesday 9 AM-12:30 PM, Wednesday, 6:30-8:30 PM, Thursday, 2:30-5:30 PM, Sat: 9 AM-12 noon 258-4966.

ONGOING EVENTS

Town Meetings (Info call 258-4711)

Selectmen, every Monday at 7 PM, Town Hall Annex.

Planning Board, second Monday of the month, 6 PM, Old Town Hall.

Board of Assessors, second Tuesday of the month, 5 PM, Town Hall Annex.

Board of Health, first Wednesday of the month, 6 PM, Old Town Hall.

Boy Scouts, every Wednesday, 6:30 PM, Otis Town Hall, Elizabeth Kuzmech, Scoutmaster 258-4906 kuzmech5@verizon.net.

Conservation Commission, third Tuesday of the month at 7 PM, Town Hall Annex.

OF INTEREST

Annual Sandisfield Extravaganza is looking for seasoned performers including dancers, singers, actors, & readers, as well as new acts. Silly or serious, solo or group, are welcome. Also need all types of good food and drink for the crowd. For more information call Liana Toscanini (413) 441-9542, or email liana@communityaccesstothearts.org.

Sunday, November 13, 8-11 AM, Pancake Breakfast, Farmington River Regional School. \$4.99 all you can eat, Students and seniors \$3.99, Veterans and children under 5 free.



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AMBULANCE: 911 Non-Emergency: 258-4742

ANIMAL WARDEN / DOG OFFICER
Kim Spring: 258-4450

ASSESSORS OFFICE: 258-4701
Office Hours: Tu-Th 9:30 AM – 1:30 PM
Meets second Tuesday every month at 5 PM

BOARD OF HEALTH: 258-4053
Office hours Mon 11-3. Meets first Wed at 9 AM
Meets at the Old Town Hall, 3 Silverbrook Rd.

BOY SCOUTS (Local): 258-4460

BUILDING INSPECTOR Eric Munson Jr.: 258-4590

CONSERVATION COMMISSION: 258-4712
Meets third Tues, 7pm

CONSTABLES
Nazario Sanchez: 258-4705 Joseph Zeller: 258-4836

COUNCIL ON AGING
Mary Slater 258-4778
Wed: 11 AM – 2 PM Senior Center/Town Hall Annex

DUMP HOURS
Wed: 1 PM – 4 PM Sat/Sun: 9AM – 3 PM

FINANCE COMMITTEE Kathy Jacobs: 258-4487

FRIENDS OF YANNER PARK Robbin Campetti: 258-4615

FIRE DEPARTMENT Emergency: 911
Ralph Morrison, Fire Chief: 258-4742

FARMINGTON RIVER REGIONAL SCHOOL
North Main Street, Otis, MA
JoAnn D. Austin, Superintendent: 413 269-4466
FRRSD **SCHOOL COMMITTEES** meets first Mon, 7 PM

GIRL SCOUTS GS Council 1-800-462-9100 for troop & leader information

HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PO Box 513 Meets 2nd Saturday of every month
Norton Fletcher, President: 258-4520

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE
Elaine O'Brien: 258-4701 John Skrip: 258-4788

LIBRARY: 258-4966
Monday & Tuesday: 9-12:30
Wednesday: 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Thursday: 2:30-5:30, Saturday: 9-12:00

MA. POISON CONTROL CENTER 800 682-9211

OLD TOWN HALL, 3 Silverbrook Road - 258-4170

PLANNING BOARD
Meets second Monday every month @ 6 PM
Meets at the Old Town Hall, 3 Silverbrook Rd.

POLICE – LOCAL Emergency: 911
Michael Morrison, Police Chief
Non-Emergency: 258-4742
POLICE – STATE Lee Barracks: 413 243-0600

POST OFFICE: 258-4940
Window Hours:
Mon – Fri: 8 AM – 12:30 PM & 1 PM – 4 PM
Sat: 9 AM – 11:30 AM
Lobby Hours: M-F: 8AM – 4:30PM Sat: 8AM – 12 PM

ROAD SUPERINTENDENT: 258-4979 Steve Harasyko

SANDISFIELD ARTS CENTER
5 Hammertown Road
PO Box 31 258-4100 www.sandisfieldartscenter.org

SELECTMEN: 258-4711
Mon at 7 PM except July & August on alternate Mondays

STATE OFFICIALS
Benjamin B. Downing, State Senator: 413 442-4008
Email: Benjamin.Downing@state.ma.us
Smitty Pignatelli, State Representative.: 413 637-0631
Email: rep.smittypignatelli@hou.state.ma.us

TAX COLLECTOR: Edna Leavenworth: 258-4977
Mon – Wed: 9 AM – 12 AM

TOWN CLERK: Dolores Harasyko
PO Box 163 sandisfieldtownclerk@verizon.net
Town Hall Annex: 258-4075
Mon-Thurs: 8AM – 2PM Mon: 6PM – 7pm

TOWN GARAGE: 258-4979

TOWN HALL ANNEX: Mon – Thurs: 8 AM – 2 PM
Secretary: 258-4711; Fax: 258-4225

TOWN TREASURER: Clare English: 258-4712
Mon, Wed 9 AM – 3 PM

VETERANS SERVICES Laurie Hils
Great Barrington Town Hall: 413 528-1580
Mon – Thurs: 7 AM – 3 PM

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locations include the The Roadstore Cafe in Monterey, Monterey General Store (There is a box affixed to the front of the building containing *The Sandisfield Times*.) and the Southfield Store..

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