

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

Tribunus



Plebis

RELIABLE. REGULAR. RELEVANT.

Volume V, Number 9

December 2014

Now They Know Where We Are

PIPELINE PROJECT “INTERVENERS” HEAR FROM THE FOLKS

By Times Reporters

For at least a couple of generations Sandisfield’s claim to fame has been, ironically, its obscurity.

Apart from neighboring communities and perhaps local employees of the Tennessee Gas pipeline company and some hunters, few outsiders were aware of Sandisfield.

We are tucked away in the western hills, far from population centers and the place is not that easy to find, sometimes even with GPS. Nothing much ever happens here and that’s fine with most of us. A few years back someone, with tongue-in-cheek probably, or else seriously, decided to recognize the obvious by distributing bumper stickers that read, “Where The H--- is Sandisfield?”

Cont’d on p.2



Sandisfield in Winter was the backdrop for the town’s Christmas Extravaganza at the Arts Center

Farewell, “Sandisfield in Winter”

By Ron Bernard

Here’s a question to all you “transplants” out there – former weekenders turned full-time residents, retirees who’ve discovered the serenity and beauty of these hills, or relative newcomers who have moved here for lots of good reasons. A question also to former residents who stay connected through these pages every month.

What sticks in your mind as an early impression of this town’s quintessence?

For me, it is the stage backdrop known as “Sandisfield in Winter” used for almost ten

years by the Sandisfield Arts Center for the Christmas Extravaganza.

There is something – *je ne sais quoi* – about that canvas mural done in the nostalgic atmosphere, folk-art form popularized by Anna Mary Robertson, best known as “Grandma Moses.” She called her scenes “old-timey New England.” Maybe that’s it. Painters Susie Crofut, Tina Sotis and Kate Millonzi, in “Sandisfield in Winter,” captured the iconic essence of rural Sandisfield with our meandering streams and quirky roads winding through the hills and dales.

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Roberta, It Won’t be the Same Here Without You

By Judy Goldsmith

The title sums up the sentiment expressed by a house full of good friends at a going-away party for Roberta Myers at the Goldsmith’s place on November 16. It’s so true.

Cont’d on p.6

NOW THEY KNOW WHERE WE ARE

Cont'd from p.1

We don't take ourselves too seriously and so the motto is appropriate.



But these days there is something important happening and a lot more people across this state and elsewhere are becoming aware of Sandisfield. The controversial proposed gas pipeline expansion by energy giant Kinder Morgan has seen to that. And this is a big deal.

Last spring a series of meetings to inform the public about the proposed expansion plans were well attended by skeptical, restive audiences. A packed house at the annual Town meeting in May unanimously passed a resolution opposing the expansion. Lawn signs everywhere, plenty of newspaper and radio publicity, and a bunch of pesky opponents kept the issue in front of the public through the summer and fall.

On October 29, a panel from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the ultimate permitting authority for this interstate project, held its required "scoping" meeting to hear first-hand from an estimated 85 residents, activists, and town and state agency officials gathered at the Arts Center. That important meeting was followed on November 5 by a similar assembly, also at the Arts Center sponsored by the Massachusetts Energy Facilities Siting Board.

The day before that the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission devoted almost two hours to considering the so-called Connecticut Expansion Project and its impact and implications for Sandisfield. Several residents and the Town Administrator attended.

Both the BRPC and the Siting Board are registered with FERC as "interveners," a term meaning individuals (often representing groups) and government agencies at any level who have significant interest or a stake in a project. Interveners submit opinions and questions to FERC according to certain protocols.

The Siting Board is an independent review agency associated with the state Department of Public Utilities. The Board has jurisdiction over

construction of energy facilities, including permitting and licensing of power plants. Its interest extends to new electric or energy transmission lines including large gas pipelines. In this case the Siting Board will represent the Commonwealth as an Intervener before FERC.


About 50 interested participants, mostly in opposition, attended the Siting Board meeting. There were familiar faces representing local and regional grass roots organizations, landowners, a variety of interested citizens, the Town, several state agencies, and trade unions. As at previous meetings Kinder Morgan had a team on hand to answer questions.

Fourteen speakers addressed the Board who heard a by-now-familiar litany of concerns. This time the dominant themes included construction, safety, and environmental impact, especially to Spectacle Pond.

A member of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission said that the BRPC (whose members are well schooled in analyzing proposed capital projects that may impact Berkshire communities) has poured over the company's Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and found it seriously wanting in detail. He said that in his 20 years of experience he has not seen an EIR with such level of deficiencies. The Commission has many concerns about what may happen at Spectacle Pond, state conservation land protected by Constitutional Article 97.


Another aspect that troubles the Commission concerns the impact of heavy construction equipment on local roads. "Your roads are going to be destroyed," he said categorically.

The company is estimating that transport just of the new pipe segments will require 176 deliveries in vehicles that when loaded will weigh 47,000 to 52,000 pounds. This is comparable to what some cement mixer-trucks weigh. This represents only a portion of the equipment that will be using the roads, making wide turns, parking on shoulders, churning up dust, grit, and mud. Construction will proceed up to 10 hours a day, six days a week for about one year starting next winter with logging to clear an expanded right-of-way over 3.8 miles across the Beech Plain. Actual construction begins in Spring, 2016.

The equipment center piece is a monster trenching machine. It will be accompanied by five excavators, two tractors, 15 bulldozers, 22 cranes, a number of boring machines, many dump trucks, and countless support vehicles. Much of this will be hauled in and around on flatbed trailers back and forth across already marginal, fragile roads, day after day. Are you ready for this? 



Finance Committee Short-Handed

Any resident of Sandisfield who is interested in serving on the town's Finance Committee should send a letter of interest with a short resume to John Skrip, Town Moderator, at PO Box 544, Sandisfield, MA 01255, or call John for an interview at 413-258-4788. 

JOB POSTING

Part-Time Website Maintenance Position Town of Sandisfield

Self-directed individual needed to manage and perform updates to the Town of Sandisfield website in a timely and efficient manner.

- Must liaise with town officials, employees, board and committee members to ensure accurate and up-to-date content.
- Review website structure and content and revise as necessary to maximize value to citizens and stakeholders.
- Experience in website management preferred.
- Familiarity with Word Press and html desired.
- Familiarity with municipal government a plus.
- Attention to detail and good computer and communication skills a must.
- 4 hours per week at \$10.00 per hour.
- Training provided to right individual.

Position to start January 1, 2015.

Please submit letter of interest with qualifications to:

Technology Committee
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Our Thanks to All of You

The Times is grateful to donors who have responded so far to our 2014 appeal. Don't forget to send your tax-deductible donation before the end of the year. We extend to all our readers the best holiday wishes and an excellent 2015.

Bill Price
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*Donations received as of publication time.
All contributors will be acknowledged in our January/February combined issue.*

The Crèche

When I was ten
It was sufficient
On a Christmas night in Illinois
(When the giving was complete)
To light the crèche
And dust the Kings
And set the plastic shepherd
On his feet.

I didn't know
That Kings and shepherds
Would come alive this year
And gather war
Instead of dust
And enwrap the crèche in fear.

*Val Coleman
Town Hill Road*



Nursing Home Proposal Moving Quickly

PUBLIC HEARING THIS MONDAY, DEC. 1

By Bill Price

Athena Health Care of Connecticut has applied for a special permit to construct a large skilled nursing facility in Sandisfield. You can attend the public hearing for the permit but HURRY. It is THIS MONDAY at Old Town Hall.

The proposed site is the William Bures property across Sandisfield Road from Firehouse #2. The preliminary plan is to offer short-term rehabilitation, with a section set aside for long-term care. Detailed plans can be viewed at the Town Hall Annex.

The proposal is a for-profit venture, fully taxable by the town. The firm making the proposal already operates the Berkshire Rehabilitation & Skilled Care Center near the New Boston Inn.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE


In accordance with the requirements of Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40A and the Sandisfield Zoning Bylaws, the Sandisfield Board of Selectmen will hold a public hearing on December 1, 2014, at 7:00 p.m. at the Old

Town Hall, 3 Silverbrook Road, Sandisfield, MA, on the applications of Athena Health Care for zoning relief in the form of a special permit in accordance with Section 7 of the Sandisfield Zoning Bylaws, codified as Chapter IX of the Sandisfield Bylaws, as follows:

- A special permit under Section 5.B.7 of the Bylaws to build and operate a 62,000 square feet, 84-bed skilled nursing home facility.

The subject premises are owned by William Bures, located on Sandisfield Road (Route 57) in Sandisfield, and are shown on the Sandisfield Assessor's Map 201, of Lot 6.

Plans for the proposed development are on file in the office of the Sandisfield Board of Selectmen and may be inspected by the public during normal business hours, Monday-Thursday, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Any person interested or wishing to be heard should appear at the time and place of the public hearing. 

Where are the Deer?

ANIMAL PREDATORS HAVE NO SEASON

By *Brigitte Ruthman*

Shafts of early morning light press a pillow of cold against the land and cut through piney autumn forests. Showers of colorful leaves sift through the dim light, reflecting from the airy pool, shimmering to a song of winds that rise from a whisper to a roar.

November can be even more fickle than March's lions and lambs, yet graceful at winter's door and entertaining. There is always, even on warm gifted days, a sense of foreboding and rush to prepare for something as the curtain of light draws shorter. Dormancy is imminent, and the rut is on.

It is mating season for deer. The rut that begins in November will last into December. Antlers won't drop until all the does have been bred. But in Berkshire County in the past few years, there have not been many.

Extirpated in the 18th and 19th centuries by hunters and farmers who cleared the woods to create pastures, orchards, and croplands, deer made their way back in the early 1900s as farmland was abandoned. By the 1970s their numbers had not only returned to previous levels, but exceeded them.

And now there is another shift. Governments limit how many deer a hunter can take. In Connecticut, where the season runs from September 15 until the end of the year, hunters buying archery, rifle, and muzzle-loading tags can take eight deer. In Berkshire County, the tags are limited to two bucks for a season that runs from mid-October until end of December. This means that as the herds gradually diminish, the does that provide offspring are now given greater protection.

But it doesn't control the wild predators.

Hunters find ample room to park along Route 57 and New Hartford Road to reach state land. Private landowners give hunters written permission. But few deer are taken and this year even fewer seen.

The woods, still lovely, dark, and deep, have changed. There is an eerie, barren silence in the deep woods here now, not unlike the feel of lakes in the high peaks of the Adirondack Mountains in the 1980s when acid rain neutralized life within them.

Hunters who can only carry bows and arrows until gun season opens December 1 recall a different forest of the 1980s and '90s when deer approached with a heart-pounding shuffle

through the dry leaves before they could be seen. Now, in their place, are coyotes, bobcats, bears, and moose.

Deer hunters are finding themselves in competition with other predators. And moose are competing for the same food sources as their smaller cousins.

In Connecticut, biologist Andy LaBonte has tracked two dozen fawns every year for the past two years in Salisbury and Sharon. He came up with what hunters predicted – of 23 fawns tagged at birth, just one or two survived. The rest succumbed to animal predators.

The woods, still lovely, dark, and deep, have changed.

In the woods where I live at the door to the Sandisfield State Forest, older hunters recall a time when deer seemed to flag their white tails at every turn of a woods trail. Trucks lined up at access roads to state land and hotel rooms were booked. There were plenty of deer to go around. In cooler temperatures, successful hunters had plenty of time to remove a deer from the woods. Today, the coyotes at their heels will steal a carcass in the time it takes to retrieve a tow rope from a pickup truck.

The old tree stands built in the 1980s are still testaments, like sentries, to those days. One of them is in the ravine behind my barn. A plastic green folding chair – the kind my mother used to bring to the beach with itchy webbing – remains perched and in perfect condition on its rotting wooden platform. No deer have passed below the tree stand in years, and no hunters have been lulled to sleepiness by the gentle sway of trees in the wind.

The abundance of deer then kept hunters happy, but caused damage to agriculture, vehicles, and delivered deer ticks that carried Lyme Disease. No one complained when the herd shrunk, except the hunters who wondered what had become of the meat they used to stock their freezers with and the elusive big-antlered bucks they used to boast



about and pursue. State officials worry now that the diminished "hunter satisfaction" level will cause permit profits to dip.

Bears, creatures that made their way back in the 1990s, are legal to hunt in Massachusetts but not Connecticut. They find their way back across the state line after Connecticut environmental police deliver problem animals to Colebrook and Barkhamsted. Bobcats, often mistaken for more ferocious and mysterious mountain lions, are also back and also legal to hunt in season in Massachusetts, but not Connecticut.

A new breed of canine, descendants of coyotes that cross-bred with wolves on their way back through the Great Lakes, are pack animals capable of taking down adult deer. They are also legal to hunt, in Connecticut as well as Massachusetts, and as nuisance animals year round. In Salisbury, coyotes killed a cow at Grasslands Farm that had recently calved, attracted to the new mother by a dangling placenta. A farmhand at Grasslands said "we hunt coyotes now."

And on Indian Mountain in Salisbury an entire herd of deer has all but vanished. A caretaker found nine carcasses of adult deer chased one at a time over a period of months last winter into thick barberries where a pack of coyotes harassed them until they died. Biologists are slow to realize that adult deer are also falling victim, in addition to fawns.

A few nervous does and secretive bucks remain, quick to move from feeding ground to hiding places. In both states, deer now favor backyards and gardens where they are safer from wild things.

Coyotes love venison, chickens, and newborn calves. I have seen the cows circle their young as coyotes circled the field, their haunting howls at night alerting others in the pack to a fresh kill. Four bold daytime attacks have been halted by gunfire.

Sunset draws quickly now. The poetry of the first quiet snowfall reveals the story of lurking creatures in the prints they leave behind. The few cloven prints of deer are followed by soft paws that carry cold eyes and hungry jaws.

Brigitte Ruthman of Sandisfield farms and hunts in Massachusetts and Connecticut. 

Getting in the Spirits


DO OPEN "A CHRISTMAS CAROL" BEFORE CHRISTMAS!

By Barbara Penn



family from Egremont.

Start a tradition this year and take part in the joy of transformation from greed to generosity as Scrooge comes to see the wonder of life through the innocent spirit of childhood. Laugh, be scared, and delight in this perfect beginning to the Christmas season. Intended as a holiday present to the community, the play is affordable first-class theatre priced so that you can bring the whole family. Come either of two nights, Friday, December 12 or Saturday, December 13 at 7 p.m., or Sunday matinee, December 14 at 3 p.m. Admission: \$15 adults; \$5 for children under 12.

Tickets can be bought online at www.sandisfieldartscenter.org or by calling 413-258-4100. You can also buy tickets at the door, if available, but we recommend you buy as early as possible – this production is likely to sell out. At The Arts Center, 5 Hammertown Road, Sandisfield (just off Route 57). 



Give yourself and your family a pre-Christmas gift. Don't miss the Sandisfield Players in their fourth and most ambitious production to date, Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol."

Everything about this fully staged local production of Dicken's marvelous story is special and unique, from the original stage adaptation by Ben Luxon to the hand-crafted set design with a broad panorama of the London skyline. The period costumes are authentic; the ghosts imaginatively enter and exit.


And it's multimedia – not seen in any other production is the added fun of the intricate and authentic Roger De Coverley dance, a forerunner of our own country's Virginia Reel, plus a live band and songs.

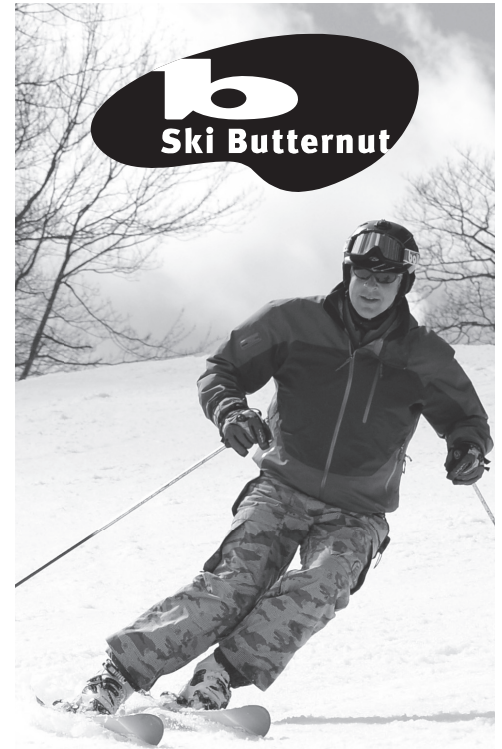
Drawn from the greater Sandisfield community, the Sandisfield Players includes six children (one third of the cast!) and actors whose ages range from 6 to 82. This is a true community family production, with multiple members of three families participating – the Lassors from Sandisfield, the Brozman/Westcott family from Otis, and the Whyte

Monterey Artists Tour

Spend a day driving through wintry Monterey – next door to Sandisfield – stopping at studios of local artists to see what they've been creating: pottery, fine art, basketmaking, blacksmithing, silversmithing, woodworking, prepared foods, llama yarn, and more. Over a dozen stops on the tour.

Each studio will offer an opportunity to warm your heart and senses, and get you all set for the gift-giving season. Or even purchase a gift for yourself. Visit any one or all of the more than a dozen stops on the tour.

Saturday, December 6, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Pick up a map at the Roadside Café, the Monterey General Store, or the Monterey Library/Knox Gallery. Or visit www.MontereyMaCC.org for more information. 



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"SANDISFIELD IN WINTER"

Cont'd from p.1

There's the Arts Center in Montville (former Jewish synagogue, 1922, former Baptist church, 1839) and the SilverBrook Café, (continuously operated tavern since 1933, former co-op creamery, 1886-1919, former mill, c. 1852); old-style houses with chimney smoke dotting the snow-covered countryside; in South Sandisfield the 1909 chapel-now-Historical Society; the new firehouse; the consolidated post office (1980); the Old Town Hall in West New Boston with highway department dump truck; a couple of cows roaming Hryckvich's Beech Plain farm.

Look more closely and there's the transfer station ... and what else? It's "Dixie," the friendly black Lab who for years greeted every car there until she died in June 2011. Down in New Boston see the Little Brown Church, the old Inn, Pete's store and Villa Mia restaurant. It's enough. That's us.

"Sandisfield in Winter," which has also been used as artwork for greeting cards, coffee mugs, calendars, and probably a bunch of other stuff, exists no longer. The Extravaganza, a wonderful family venue that marked the end of the Arts Center's season all these Decembers, has given way to a new holiday tradition – performances by Ben Luxon's local company, The Sandisfield Players.

It was time. Sadly, the "Sandisfield in Winter" canvas had to be sacrificed for the backdrop for Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" to be performed December 12-14 (see "Getting in the Spirit," page 5).

I just loved that mural-scene and I'm really going to miss it. But at least I still have some of the greeting cards, a mug and an old calendar. And the memory of it.

ROBERTA, IT WON'T BE THE SAME HERE WITHOUT YOU

Cont'd from p.1

For 40 years this smart, dignified lady, mother to a blended family of nine, selflessly and tirelessly worked to make life better for everybody in this community.

One and after another of the guests told how Roberta touched their lives, for example, making newcomers welcome while also recruiting them for her projects. "How can you say 'no' to Roberta?" one friend said.

Others had stories about the days of rolled-up sleeves working alongside her to transform the old synagogue into a new Arts Center. There was much appreciation for Roberta's roles as a founder and then publisher of the former Sandisfield Newsletter for about 15 years, and her service on the Sandisfield Select Board, the first woman elected to the board.

Roberta and her late husband, "Doc" Ron Myers, loved to sing. So at the going-away party she was appropriately serenaded with old favorites like "Let Me Call You Sweetheart," "So Long, It's Been Good to Know Yuh," and "Happy Trails."

Besides a legacy of community service with her "Ronnie," Roberta leaves a legion of friends and a ton of memories for the new life chapter she calls "my next adventure."

Now it is on to Monterey, California, seaside, to be near her children and husband-to-be, Bob. "I'll miss you all very much. It is also hard to leave my Cold Spring Farm, but it is time to go," she said to many not-so-dry eyes.

Happy Trails, Roberta. Keep in touch. 

Orchid Blossom Healing Arts

Lauren Paul, Dipl. Ac

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Acupuncture and Shiatsu

Roberta's Hike

By Bill Price

In late September, Roberta Myers took a sentimental hike into Sandisfield's "Grand Canyon," where she and her kids hiked and played for most of the 40 years they lived on Cold Spring Road. There is no real trail anymore, and the canyon is found by heading a long way downhill through the back woods and finding a stream. The "canyon" is either upstream or downstream. Be prepared to get lost on the way back up.

Roberta was accompanied on her hike by two friends, writer Alan Boye, author of *Walking the Hills of Vermont* and *Sustainable Compromises*, and by the editor of this newspaper. Alan and I had a great time and, for the most part, kept up with Roberta. Reporter Larry Dwyer told all about the trail, the canyon, and Roberta's stamina in our September 2011 issue, (available online at www.sandisfieldtimes.org, see "Library").

Roberta has been a great friend of this newspaper and we expect her to remain so after her move to California. 



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Letter from the Selectmen

By Patrick Barrett

The Sandisfield Board of Selectmen welcomes Jordan Arnold as the newest member of the Highway Department. We were fortunate to have a strong pool of candidates.

With a Class A license (Tractor Trailers), Jordan will be able to haul the big trailer the department uses to move equipment around town. Jordan has an impressive background in snowplowing and experience using a big truck with a wing attached. He will be putting his skills to work keeping Route 57 safe during the winter season. We are happy to have such a qualified candidate working for the town and look forward to many years of dedicated service from Jordan.

The Strategic Planning Committee has been doing some wonderful work in planning for a new town hall complex. The plans include offices for all town boards, a police department, a senior center, library, and a commercial kitchen that could serve as an emergency shelter.

There is still a lot of work to be done, such as identifying an appropriate location and financing, but the committee has made an impressive start. With plans in place the community is in a better position to apply for grants to help offset construction costs. We thank this committee for their hard work.

In November, Massachusetts State Forester Tom Ryan gave a presentation to the Select Board regarding an application for a grant to create a comprehensive timber assessment at Yanner Park.

Creating a forest management plan for the park will benefit the town on a number of fronts. With the Emerald Ash Borer eventually killing all the ash trees, the town could harvest some of the wood to get a return on this lumber. Some of the logging roads in the park could be used to finish the hiking trails planned for this area. We will keep the community notified as this process evolves.

Regarding the Pipeline, we would like to thank all our community residents who actively opposed the Connecticut Expansion Project. This proposal

threatens to negatively impact many of our residents' land, as well as putting stress on state protected properties. Community residents professionally stood up to giant corporation Kinder Morgan, and we can proudly say our voices were heard.

Longtime Sandisfield resident Roberta Myers is moving to California to be closer to her family. The first woman selectman in Sandisfield, Roberta also served on many town boards and committees. She is a talented individual whose passion for this town made her a wonderful ambassador and activist. Some of her finest and most effective work on behalf of Sandisfield has been the most recent, her opposition to the Connecticut Expansion Pipeline Project. We thank Roberta for her many years of dedicated service and wish her all the best. Roberta, you will be missed!

OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

Katrina Rock, enrolled at Salem State University near Boston, was awarded the Hyman S. Kramer Memorial Scholarship as well as the Luke and Mary Moore Wood Scholarship in October. Both scholarships are awarded to a student enrolled in the university's School of Nursing.



Sandy and Flora Parisky are glad to be coming back to Sandisfield after Flora's heart surgery at the University of Connecticut John Dempsey Hospital at the end of September. She is continuing her recovery and rehab here and in Hartford and thanks friends and neighbors for their support and well wishes.

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Our Town: A Personal Essay

Sandisfield, November 2012

At the Burial of a Citizen Neighbor

By Hilde Weisert

We gathered on a cold, bright New England November day, twenty, thirty, then fifty, a hundred people from this town. Enough of them wore long black coats, here on the cemetery hill, that it could have been a group of church elders from the 1700s, the founding of the town.

But there are also children in bright orange and fuschia parkas, and men in hunting jackets, and women in down vests and jeans. This is a working town, but also – a dash of colorful scarf, a red beret – an artsy town in the mountains a few hours above New York City. Many of the heads are white-haired, and of those, some walk with canes, or a walker, or the arm of a friend. A town where people have grown old together.

On three sides, the cemetery crest looks out on the Berkshire hills. On the fourth is the Town Dump right at the bottom of the long driveway, where in fact I've just been (whatever their destination – church, a concert, a run for hay -- no one here passes the dump during Sunday open hours without a load of trash).

This cemetery hill is as close to a perfect place to have one's grave as I can imagine, especially for a man who worked the soil almost every day for decades, moved the rocks back into the fine,

orderly walls they'd been a hundred years ago, and who rests now in a pine box at the bottom of a grave hole beside which are piled other soil and rocks that will soon be returned, by his mourners, in shovelfuls and handfuls, with a gentle toss or an angry thrust, back to the empty space on top of their husband, brother, father, grandfather, neighbor, friend.

Not exactly any of these to me, Ron, but a figure in a town I love, where I live half the year. Who Ron was was the dentist who came 37 years ago with his wife Roberta and their seven blended-family children to make a homestead in the rambling old red farmhouse on the Cold Spring Road curve, raise and tend sheep on the rocky hills, endlessly ride across and tend those fields in his tractor. A rugged, hawk-nosed man in a farmer's cap.

This is a town where you can be that sheep farmer and a political activist, arts board member, dentist, college professor, Mr. Fix-It for neighbors ... I could almost say this town was classless, the way famous authors and wealthy New York socialites, working farmers and struggling artists, retired teachers, and stockbrokers, Russian housecleaners, and young biotech entrepreneurs mingle on this hill, waiting for the service to begin, watching out for anyone arriving who needs a hand, talking in quiet tones about the latest bear sighting, or when they got power back after the storm, or what

a shame it is that Terranova's Market finally closed – but there is one class differentiator: When you came. Almost no one at the service here today was born here, most coming in fifteen, twenty, thirty years ago. When Thelma – asked by someone meeting her for the first time – says forty-five years, and then corrects to fifty (when they first saw the farmhouse they'd buy a few years later), someone else has to say, actually, I came to camp here in 1943.

The valued currency is the connection between the place, its memories and people, houses, lakes and rivers and dams. At the mention of the Flood when Route 8 washed away, do you think of Irene last year, or '55 when the pigs floated into town?

a perfect place to have one's grave..."

My connection, originally, was Thelma and the 200-year-old farmhouse she rented out in the first years after her husband's early death. I get some of the 30-year authority through that, though my own house only went up 10 years ago. And anyway, today, for me, is not really a time to talk about who I do or don't outrank based on how many generations of the store I shopped in in the years before Terranova.

Today is a time to stand behind the slightly rickety wooden folding chair (brought by Thelma from her barn) that I am holding steady for Nancy, our friend, one of the white-haired elders, chic as always but hobbled by some neurological assault I don't know the name of. Eighty-three, she sits directly in front of the open grave in a spot closer than she wanted, but insisted on by Ron and Roberta's family so that she would not have to walk far nor have her chair rock on uneven ground.

It's a time to be glad to be Thelma's friend, as Ron was, and to think in loving respect about her long friendship with that couple, Ron and Roberta (almost one word), begun at the Spectacle Pond lakeside, young parents on beach chairs watching their children run in and out of the water, hearing their children's voices screaming with pleasure and discovery, fear and bravery. I drive by that empty spot every time I go to town. It is easy to see them there, Thelma and Roberta, Thelma in the years after her husband died, single parent to her girls; Roberta, solid friend beside her. Ron likely not there but on his tractor clearing brush, maybe back at Thelma's place.



Sandisfield Center Cemetery, November 2014

Photo: Good Eye, Sandisfield

The minister's talk is short. There are three things, he says, to say: One, the man has returned to the earth he came from. This is right, we all will, and the next people will come, are in fact the young people around us (OK, but I do hope it doesn't have to be today or even next month, not for me or my white-haired friends). Two, we are here to comfort and care for Roberta and the family. (All nod.) Three, we are here to honor the man Ron, though at the family's request, not to keep people standing out in the cold very long; the eulogies will come down the hill at the Arts Center, after this.

Then the Kaddish, spoken by a little boy of 11 or 12, with a handful of people, including the Jewish half of Ron's family, joining in. Then it's done; the minister nods to Roberta. She fills the shovel, turns a clod of dirt into the hole, along with a red rose, and a paper model clock. I learn what everyone else knows, Ron loved clocks. Then the sister, and the children, with more representations of the humble objects that characterize the man – a paper model, very accurate Stihl chainsaw, a tractor, an actual rusty hinge from the barn. Then the friends, some crying, some shaking their heads.

The hole filled, people return to their cars and the cars proceed down the hill, not to church but to "SArC," the Sandisfield Arts Center. Actually, it began as a church, built for the early Baptists, then when the population changed and the Russians came up from New York at the turn of the 20th century,

become a synagogue; and then in the '90s, the Jewish congregation now having mostly passed on, the remaining few gave the building to a new community group.

I am not a part of this, so after helping Nancy into Thelma's car, I head home.

But the cemetery hill was beautiful. To stand there among these people on this particular, lovely New England November day, among the rocks and the soil and the stones old and new, some with inscriptions fading and some yet to be written on, honoring someone I knew only as the friend of my friend, was a privilege. ♡

Postscript: Since this was written two years ago, I have come to know Roberta as my own friend through our work together against the threatened pipeline expansion, and to gain a small sense of what she has meant to the life of our town in her time here.

Sandisfield Historical Society



By John Kuzmech

At our November meeting, we had our largest crowd to date with guest speaker Francis Deming. A profile of Francis with stories he told us will be in the Jan/Feb issue of the Times.

As our Society closes its doors for the winter season, I want to thank all of our active members for volunteering and keeping the Society vibrant and relevant.

In December we sponsor the Town's Christmas Fair. It is December 6th from 10-2 p.m at Firehouse # 2. If you would like to be a vendor,

call Marcia at 413-258-2898 who is organizing the event. Space at the Christmas Fair is limited. We estimated 500 visitors last year, and it's only \$15 per table. There are food, crafts, tag sale, and bake sale. We are still seeking good tag sale items (call 258-4906 for pick up).

We will still have one more meeting scheduled on December 13th at 11 a.m., with no speaker on the agenda. We will brainstorm and decide priorities for the future, as well as plan speakers and events for the 2015 season. We will then have a potluck meal as usual. If you come, bring a modest gift for the Yankee Gift Swap. Our meetings are at the Meeting House on the corner of Rt. 183/Sandy Brook Turnpike and South Sandisfield Road.

If you have ideas/thoughts about the Society and can't be at our meeting, please call me at 413-258-4906. ♡



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historia (Greek) - "inquiry, knowledge acquired by investigation" The discovery, collection, organization, and presentation of information about past events.

A Tale of Two Cottages

Article and Photos by Ron Bernard

Sandisfield is still dotted with summer cottages, a legacy from the period roughly between the World Wars when land was cheap and the Berkshires offered weary city factory workers or Depression-era families with some financial means a place of refuge from their travails.



The Flint Cottage, No. 144, last October, before demolition.



Good-bye Old Cottage. The disappearance of No. 144.

Time has blended such places into the landscape. They are hardly noticeable, tucked away on back roads, enveloped by the forest and deteriorating, out of sight and mind for the most part. But humble summer cabins are a significant part of town history in the 20th century. They shaped community life and generated cherished

memories from countless family gatherings and reunions.

Up here in my Beech Plain neighborhood two examples have been astride Cold

Spring Road for almost nine decades. One has reached its end while the other is being rehabilitated for full-time living by new owners.

For almost 15 years I have wondered about them. Both cottages, Nos. 144 and 150, sit close to the road, directly opposite one another, a juxtaposition oddity considering all the space available to construct little get-away places. Architecturally and historically these houses are unremarkable and so did not make the cut for *Sandisfield Then and Now*.

But who built them and when? They *must* be related, somehow. I'd been meaning to get around to finding out, but "meaning to" never translated to "did."

Then, one day in October, an excavator appeared in front of deteriorated No. 144, the cottage on the north side of the road. Uh oh.

It turns out the cottages *were* related. They were built by the same family, the Johnsons, one circa 1924 and the other in 1930.

Their stories start in 1922 when Alvin Johnson, a Swedish immigrant then living in the New Haven area, acquired from Edmund Strickland two sprawling former farms on Beech Plain Road. Johnson was primarily interested in harvesting lumber, and it is very likely that he'd been introduced to the Beech Plain by Michael Etzel of New Haven. Etzel was also acquiring large tracts of re-forested land for his lumber company (including the old Hulet homestead, currently my residence). A few years later Alvin transferred his substantial holdings, including the eventual cottage lots, to his son, Carl E. Johnson.

The Johnsons were a very large extended family. Carl and his cousins, Victor and Arthur, had built No. 144 by 1926, the year Carl deeded 9.4 acres to them "together with all personal property on the premises" (suggesting the existence of a structure). The family used this place until 1943 when they sold to Paul & Grace Lyle of New York. The Lyles were followed by Anthony & Maria Zupa, then by George Tomao. The Charles Flint family of Otis arrived in 1971.

The Flint name extends back locally at least to the early 19th century. Charles' father, Lyman,

(1882-1966) is widely remembered, especially in the Beech Plain section, as a very good carpenter and mason. Charles' sister, Alice, who married Joseph O'Brien of West New Boston, is proudly claimed today as grandmother to many O'Briens in town. Daughter Cynthia Flint Ragusa of Otis has a boatload of fond memories about her family's many years here, a place they lovingly called "the camp" with its quaint outhouse.

"Dad was an outdoors type," Cynthia said. "He loved nature and was handy. The house wasn't much and so he eventually upgraded it for example with bedrooms and plumbing." Later, for a few years in the early 1980s, she resided here full-time. "It was like living in another century. Very basic lifestyle, but I loved that time," she recalled.

The cottage is now gone and the property owned in conservation by the Massachusetts Audubon Society.

Meanwhile, across the street, a different future is store for No. 150 which was built by the Johnsons in about 1930. Long-time resident Nick Hryckvich, 92, recalled, "I was eight or nine when it went up. I hung around and helped work on it. I went to grammar school with some of the Johnson kids."




Jennie and Walter Bator, pictured here in 1983, lived in No. 150 full-time for nearly 30 years.

Photo courtesy of Cynthia Ragusa

In 1936 Carl Johnson sold the 13-acre, mostly wetlands lot with the cottage to Hilda Natri of Connecticut. She owned it until 1954 when weekenders Robert and Verna Allen took title. They were followed in 1967 by Walter and Jennie Bator who lived here full-time for about 30 years.

The Bators are remembered as nice, quiet folks. A young Cynthia Flint loved spending time watching Jennie bake her specialties. Later, when she was living on her own across the street, the Bators were supportive. Roberta Myers recalls the Christmas caroling tradition when Cold Spring Road families serenaded their neighbors. "Jennie loved that," Roberta said. "She always insisted we sing her favorite, 'The Twelve Days of Christmas.'"

Myrtle Anderson was the next resident of No. 150 for several years, followed in 2006 by current owners, Bob and Mary Ann Gacek of Waterbury. By that time however No. 150 was almost in as bad shape as its mate across the street. Fortunately the Gaceks, undaunted, saw the potential and were confident of their skills. After several years of rehab weekends, the rebirth is nearly complete and the couple looks forward to moving here full time.

So, the moment is bittersweet. One beloved cottage has departed the scene after 90 years while the other has been given a new life, a familiar story in the history of Sandisfield. 



October 2014.

Rehabbers Mary Ann and Bob Gacek plan to move to No. 150 full time.



THE SANDISFIELD LIBRARY

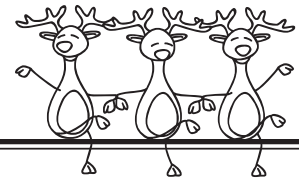
By Laurie Foulke-Green, Librarian

The library has a new email address: library@sandsifield.info.

NEW TITLES

Ho-Ho-Homicide/Kaitlin Dunnett
Revival/Stephen King

Flesh & Blood/Patricia Cornwell
The Job /Janet Evanovich
Blue Labyrinth/ Preston & Child
The Escape/David Baldacci



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Info: Marcia 413 258-2898



TOWN BUSINESS

Select Board, November 3, 2014

Attending: Patrick Barrett, Jeff Gray, Lisa Blackmer, Steve Harasyko. Absent: Rosario Messina, Dolores Harasyko. Townspeople: Gary Bottums, Ben Campetti, Walter Linkovich, Bogart Muller, Ron Pachulski.

Snowplow contract for three consecutive years awarded to P&R Construction, \$44.00 per hour. Two other bids came in at \$44.95 per hour. Contract for delivered road sand was awarded to Donovan Trucking for \$13.45 per ton. Only other bid was for \$19.50 per ton. Steve estimated we would use between 1,500-2,000 tons this winter.

The truck driver position was narrowed down from eight to two finalists, both very qualified. The selectmen wanted reliability, attention to detail, proper experience, and someone who would be okay with all different types of equipment, including a shovel. Candidate Jordan Arnold has an impressive resume with wing-plow operation experience, attention to detail, knowledge of local roads, and a focus on safety. John Derryberry, with many years of trucking experience, has very good mechanical skills, is not afraid to get his hands on any piece of equipment, and is a quick learner. After input from townspeople Jordan Arnold was hired. This was not an easy choice as it was felt that both candidates would have performed well.

Walter Linkovich asked that his driveway be repaired, stating that town trucks used it as a detour when fixing a culvert and wrecked his nice gravel. Steve said it would be fixed in two weeks' time.

A resident on Sandy Brook Turnpike claimed a speeder passes his house every morning and afternoon. He has pinned down the times this person goes by and wants a patrol car to nab them. Jeff said he would look into it now that he has a time reference.

Select Board Agenda, November 10, 2014

1. Tom Ryan, Service Forester for the Dept. of Conservation and Rec. in to discuss forest management of Yanner Park.

2, 3 and 4. Snow plow and winter sand contracts to be awarded. Highway Department updates.

*Editor's Note: The Times is trying something new. We asked resident **Bogart Muller** to attend Select Board meetings and report back. To cover meetings Bogart can't attend we will reprint agendas or, if available, summarize from Town Clerk Dolores Harasyko's official minutes.*

5. CORI policy approval. (Criminal Offender Record Information regarding town employees)

6. Discussion to pursue an agreement with Berkshire Regional Planning Commission regarding the proposed pipeline across the Beech Plain section.

Select Board, November 17, 2014

Attending: Patrick Barrett, Jeff Gray, Lisa Blackmer, Dolores Harasyko. Absent: Rosario Messina and Steve Harasyko. Townspeople: Walter Linkovich, Bogart Muller, Ron Pachulski, and Doug Segrin.

Berkshire Regional Planning Committee contract extended to help oversee the bidding process for the New Hartford Road project.

The budget process was reviewed. There was discussion about applying for grants to pay for town buildings, which could, including a new garage and town hall, run as high as \$6 million.

Vicki Bakunis was appointed to the cemetery committee. Cemetery committee member Ron Pachulski is concerned that meetings were taking place without his presence.

Doug Segrin complained about the lack of information on minutes and agendas on the town website. Patrick explained the person responsible had been donating their time for the Select Board meetings only, and when every other board laid the job onto that same person the person stopped doing it.

The Massachusetts Recycling Facility contract was signed, which allows the Town to collect money for the recyclables twice a year. The income each time is about \$4,000 from glass and plastic alone.

Minutes from various past meetings were lost due to tape malfunctions and accidentally erased minutes.

Pat is interested in a grant to build trails at Yanner Park and would like to see the Berkshire Natural Resources Trail connect to the park by utilizing the "greenagers" program. Doug Segrin suggested logging the area and making money at the same time.

Detailed agendas and minutes are available at the Town website, www.sandisfield.info. Minutes can also be reviewed at Town Hall during business hours.

And Walter Linkovich ... his driveway is still in terrible shape even after two promises that the damage caused by the town trucks would be fixed. Walter joked that he was asking for a third promise. Patrick said he would see to it personally that the work would be done ASAP.

Select Board, November 24, 2014

Attending: Patrick Barrett, Jeff Gray, Dolores Harasyko, Steve Harasyko. Absent: Rosario Messina, Lisa Blackmer. Townspeople: Walter Linkovich, Bogart Muller, Ron Pachulski

Steve reported that all snow equipment is ready for the winter. New employee Jordan Arnold started work November 24 and returned on the 25th. Steve is using a bagged material for cold patches to fill potholes. He tried some at the end of South Sandisfield Road and says it's holding up quite well.


Business licenses were reviewed and signed for the 2015 calendar year. A new license was granted to the Hillside Garden Inn at the foot of Tolland Road. Because of the loss of the Silverbrook Café and the New Boston Store, revenue from business licenses has decreased considerably.

The COA was granted its annual amount of \$4,000, to be used for transportation, flu and blood clinics, and senior activities.

Happy Banga is on his way to the registry of deeds with his special permit granted from the town. He is not yet applying for a liquor permit but the town anticipates he will in the near future.

There is some Fire Department paperwork voicing some concerns about the proposed nursing home on Route 57. The selectmen could not comment until letters handed out by Dolores could be fully read and understood.

Terry Ignace complained to Patrick in a phone call about the speeding driver on Route 183. Just as Patrick was listening to the message in his car, the speeder passed him at about 70 mph. He got the license plate, reached Police Chief Mike Morrison, and the perpetrator was nabbed later the same day.

Walter Linkovich was not happy with the repairs to his driveway. He says the town used the wrong material and half of it got dumped on the lawn instead of the driveway. Steve will do his best to make Walt happy again, but will be tough with snow soon to arrive. 

Strategic Planning Committee

Town Building Project

Committee members visited Tolland and Becket town halls to see what worked and what didn't. Other town halls were discussed. Kathy Jacobs will look into touring the Granville town hall and will speak with them about document storage.


Anina Carr has been researching the existing town library and looking for renovation grant possibilities. There are current concerns regarding possible flooding in the building, no handicap access, mold issues, and possibly the septic system.

Ralph Morrison spoke with Alice Boyd to determine grant possibilities. She said there are senior and library grant, but she wasn't sure about grants for town halls.

There was a discussion whether a financial advisor would be necessary, particularly regarding the IRS and filing forms. John Burrows asked whether Tolland used a financial planner while building their recent complex.

Master Plan Project

Kathy worked with the Planning Board on reviewing the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of New Marlborough.

The next meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee will be Wednesday, December 17, 7 p.m., at Firehouse #2 on Rt. 57. All town residents are invited to participate. 



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RECOVERING AT HOME

There are many miles of land in Sandisfield, and we don't all necessarily live right next door to each other, but when I returned home in early November from an 11-hour spine operation and four days in intensive care in Boston I felt as if I was slipping into a warm and nurturing envelope of caring and generous friends and neighbors. While my recovery is slow, the energy I gain from simply looking out the window at whatever nature offers is worth a million dollars.

So when the surgeon asked me if I felt I needed to go to a rehab program or could manage with help from the Visiting Nurse Association, I headed right home. Bill Cohn schlepped me from Boston on a cold and windy day, stopping along the way to let me move around a tiny bit, and now I'm nestled

at home surrounded by friends and neighbors in houses all over town who are making my recovery more palatable.

In spite of the town's difficulties staying financially afloat, and aside from the fact that it is difficult right now for me to be driven anywhere in town because the roads just aren't suited to my physical needs, there's no place I'd rather be.

Thanks to all of you – and there are many of you – for being here for me. And most especially to Bill, without whom I could not have undertaken such a monumental operation. His love and loyalty carry me each day.

Happy holidays,
Rita Kasky
Silverbrook Road

WELL, NOT EXACTLY.

I would like to correct the Select Board agenda for October 14 as listed in the Times. The "Vote to accept revoked All Alcohol Beverage License from the Silverbrook Café" was incorrect. The agenda item should have read "vote to accept the surrendered All Alcohol Beverage License from the Silverbrook Café." Thanks. It's an important distinction to me.

Connie D'Andrea,
Silverbrook Café



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NOW HEAR THIS!

Edited by Laura Rogers-Castro.

Please send notices for Now Hear This! to calendar@sandisfieldtimes.org.

DECEMBER EVENTS

Public Hearing on Monday, December 1, at 7:00 p.m. at the Old Town Hall, 3 Silverbrook Road. This Hearing is on the application of Athena Health Care for zoning relief in the form of a special permit in accordance with Section 7 of the Sandisfield Zoning Bylaws.

Council On Aging Meeting on Wednesday, December 3, at 10:30 a.m. at the Town Hall basement.

Sandisfield Christmas Fair on Saturday, December 6, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Firehouse #2 on Route 57. This holiday event features many special treats including crafts, homemade baked goods, lunch, a penny auction to benefit the Sandisfield Scholarship Fund, a basket raffle to benefit the Council on Aging, Christmas trees for sale, a 50/50 raffle to benefit the Sandisfield Historical Society. Come join the fun!

Sandisfield Historical Society Meeting on Saturday, December 13, 11 a.m. Help brainstorm priorities for next year, plan speakers and events for 2015. Potluck. Bring a modest gift for the Yankee Gift Swap. Meeting House, corner of Rt. 183 and South Sandisfield Road.

Sunday Service on Sunday, December 21, at 10:00 a.m. at the New Boston Congregational Church. Services will resume in April.

A Christmas Carol, a play by Charles Dickens on Friday, December 12 at 7:00 p.m., Saturday, December 13 at 7:00 p.m., and Sunday, December 14 at 3:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center, 5 Hammertown Road. \$15 adults, \$5 children under 12. Tickets available online at www.sandisfield-artscenter.org or by calling 413-258-4100 or by mail at SARc, PO Box 31, Sandisfield, MA 01255.

Winter Concert on Wednesday, December 17, at the Farmington River Regional School. For additional information, contact the school.

Council On Aging Meeting on Wednesday, December 17, at 10:30 a.m. at the Town Hall basement.

DECEMBER EVENTS IN SURROUNDING TOWNS

Sixth Annual Monterey Makers Studio Tour on Saturday, December 6, from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. throughout Monterey. Visit www.MontereyMaCC.org for more information or see page 5.

Holiday Shopping at Whiting Mills on Saturday and Sunday, December 6 and 7, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Semi-annual open studios, shops, and artists. F.H. DeMars Historical Images Collection. Photos of Old Sandisfield are matted and 25% less than on-line. Save shipping costs. 100 Whiting Street, Winsted.

Stockbridge Main Street at Christmas Re-creation on Sunday, December 7, from noon-2:00 p.m. Main Street becomes a magical New England village in honor of Norman Rockwell's painting. Over 50 antique cars parked along the street and festive activities to delight everyone. Commemorative buttons offering admittance to Sunday's Main Street activities are \$5 per person. Under 12, free.

Holiday Stroll on Saturday, December 13, from 3:00 to 7:30 p.m. in Downtown Great Barrington. Holiday shopping, caroling, food, tree lighting, fireworks and more!

ONGOING EVENTS

Select Board: every Monday at 7 p.m., Town Hall Annex.

Farmington River Regional School District, first Monday of the month, 7 p.m., Farmington River Regional School, Rt. 8, Otis.

Planning Board, second Tuesday of the month, 6 p.m., Old Town Hall.

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

Conservation Commission, third Tuesday of the month, 7 p.m., Town Hall Annex.

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

Council on Aging, every Wednesday, 11 a.m.-2 p.m., Senior Center, Town Hall Annex. Pot luck lunch at noon, bingo at 1 p.m. Free blood pressure screening every fourth Wednesday.

Finance Committee, second Saturday of the month, 9:30 a.m., Sandisfield Library.

Strategic Planning Committee, third Wednesday of the month, 7 p.m., Fire Station #2 on Sandisfield Road.

Sandisfield Public Library Hours: Monday and Tuesday, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m.; Thursday, 2-5 p.m., Saturday, 9 a.m.-12 noon. Phone: 258-4966.

Historical Commission: New venue and hours. First Wednesday, 7 p.m. at Fire House #2, Rt. 57. Next meeting, Dec. 3.



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Power Line Down	1
Assist EMS	2
CO Detector Alarm	1
False Alarms	5

EMT

Medical calls	10
Motor Vehicle Accident	1

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The Sandisfield Times is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization staffed by volunteers from the Sandisfield community and funded by individual and business sponsors. Its mission is to connect the community through reliable, regular, and relevant information. The paper is published 11 times each year, with a joint January-February issue and monthly issues thereafter.

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