

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES



RELIABLE. REGULAR. RELEVANT.

Volume VI, Number 6

September 2015

Where We Stand

By Bill Price

The Town faces two daunting projects: the bridge and the pipeline. Both are coming toward us as if on a freight train and we're holding hands in the middle of a long dark tunnel.

But some glimmer of light is at one end of the tunnel. It is made up of the work and good will and creativity that will be required to get the Town through both projects and allow the Town to emerge somehow into the sunlight.

Updates on the projects given August 24 at the Special Town Meeting and the Select Board meeting are outlined below. Meanwhile, other Town work is continuing.

The Select Board is looking at coordinating more of our work and equipment with neighboring towns. (See At Town Hall column, page 3.) Previous Boards have made similar efforts, but this time support is coming from the Lt. Governor's office and has a name: Community Compact.

The Town is closer to writing a Master Plan, which will provide opportunities for serious grant applications. Results of the Planning Board's Master Plan Survey will be released soon. Happy Banga has received approval from the state for curb cuts for his proposed gas station/convenience store and, according to Selectman Jeff Gray, can proceed at his discretion.

Repairs to the Town Hall Annex roof began at the end of August and should proceed quickly. Repairs to New Hartford Road are proceeding well, so far on budget. Paving was expected to begin the first week in September. A review of the Town's website is underway; currently few agendas or minutes are posted.

The Select Board has changed its schedule for September. Regular meetings will be Mondays on the 7th and 21st. Working sessions on Wednesdays, the 16th and 30th. All are welcome to attend Board meetings and sessions at Town Hall Annex.

Bridge

The Town seems to be getting used to the Rt. 57 bridge, now reduced to one lane. No accidents have been reported there since the bridge was restricted. Maybe the stop signs act as a safety improvement. Since it is "our bridge," maybe we should keep it to one lane?

We're not the only town having bridge problems. The West Oxbow Road Bridge over Wilder Brook in Charlemont, after

Cont'd p.3

Pipeline

Agreements have been reached between the Town and Kinder Morgan, the energy giant that proposes an expansion of their existing gas pipeline across a 3.8 mile swath of the Beech Plain section, said Alice Boyd, Chairman, at the August 24 Special Town meeting.

Terms of the agreement could not be announced as it had yet to be signed, she told the audience of about 20 residents, but

Cont'd p.2



A Walk in Our Woods BUILDING A TRAIL TO HAMMERTOWN ROAD

By Tom Christopher

Designing a hiking trail, says Mike Leavitt, is an "interesting puzzle."

Trails and Outreach Coordinator of the Berkshire Natural Resources Council, Leavitt has spent a large part of the last two summers making the 550 acres of BNRC's Clam River Preserve in Sandisfield more accessible to the public.

Last summer's project was the design and construction of the "Lollipop Trail," a loop at the Reserve's southern end that includes exceptional river views, and passes two vernal pools. This summer he has been working to improve a mile and a half of an old abandoned road that bisects the property, building a trail that will enable

Cont'd p.10

Where We Stand: Pipeline

(cont'd from p.1)

she added that the terms were favorable to the affected landowners.

Article 3 of the Town Warrant was to allow the Town to appropriate \$25,000 for legal services regarding the pipeline issue. The chairman added that the legal help had been invaluable during the bargaining process and should the expansion be built Kinder Morgan would pay the Town's legal expenses.

The agreement would only take effect if the pipeline expansion is approved by state and federal regulating committees and the project goes through. It would have to be approved by voters at Town Meeting.

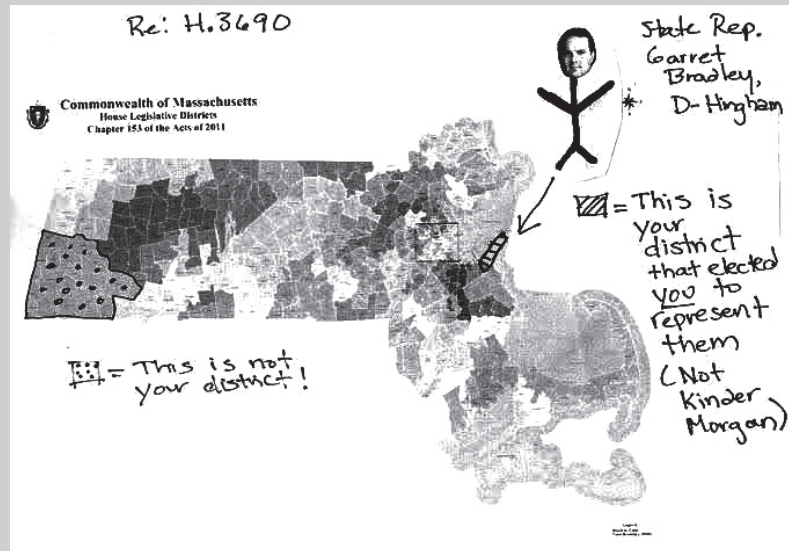
Meanwhile, abutters to the pipeline expansion were informally told that the main construction period would begin around June, rather than March as originally planned and announced following the KM meeting with the Conservation Commission in June. The timing of the construction is important because it is expected to take 3 to 4 months to complete, and the line has to be ready by November in order for KM to fulfill their contracted gas deliveries.

A second meeting with the ConCom and KM on August 18 drew a large crowd to Old Town Hall.

Opponents to the expansion were surprised that State Representative Garrett Bradley, Democrat of Hingham, introduced a bill to transfer the Article 97 lands at Spectacle Pond out of the article's protection for the purposes of the project.

It is unusual for an out-of-district legislator to submit "emergency" legislation in another district, especially when the local legislators are in opposition. Bradley's district is about 140 miles east of Sandisfield; it is unknown if he has ever set foot in our Town. (See accompanying map).

The law that designed Article 97 was intended to keep land out of the reach of construction and/or business profits. Negating the article's provisions would seem a betrayal of the public trust with consequences for protected land beyond Sandisfield. Bradley's bill has provoked an outcry from pipeline opponents, land conservationists, and environmentalists across the state. Many are worried that if the legislature waives protection for Sandisfield's Article 97 land, then some 100 other protected parcels along the route of the proposed northern pipeline will also be at risk.




Opponents of pipeline project suggest that residents write to Representative Bradley to express their opinions of his intrusion into Sandisfield's business. His mailing address is Representative Garrett Bradley, State House, Room 479, Boston, MA 02133. His phone is 617-722-2520; email is Garrett.Bradley@mahouse.gov. Telephone for his district office is 781-749-3331.

Map: Audrey Greene, Windsor, Mass. Used by permission.

During a 2014 tour of the pipeline with representatives from Kinder Morgan and from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Sandisfield's then Select Board Chairman Patrick Barrett said that if the state approves this proposal, "the conservation program is a joke." He published a letter in the Berkshire Eagle that "the state would be setting precedent in which conservation land in Massachusetts really isn't conserved."

Local resident Sandy Parisky, who is involved with several land trusts, agrees, adding that if the waiver is approved it "could ultimately undermine State land conservation protection including future donations."

Berkshire representative Smitty Pignatelli fought to keep the bill from reaching the Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight, which has jurisdiction over Article 97 land, but he eventually had to relent. The bill passed a House committee without opposition. When the bill reaches the Senate, it is expected that Senator Ben Downing will oppose it.

After Labor Day, a public hearing at the State House will be announced where individuals and groups can testify or submit written comments. A link to the committee and chairmen and how to reach them is online at malegislature.gov/Committees/J25. 

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MARIA DOMATO
COMMANDER, POST 456

Where We Stand: Bridge

(cont'd from p.1)

inspection by the Massachusetts Dept. of Transportation, has been closed indefinitely. A 3-mile detour will be in place during the closure, and the state encourages caution as the detour is a narrow dirt road with steep inclines.

Other one-lane bridges seem to be doing fine. A bridge on I-391 over the Connecticut River is down to one lane because of a damaged expansion joint. Closer to home, a one-lane bridge seems to work fine near the Southfield Store on Norfolk Road, though it doesn't get the traffic we experience on Rt. 57.

At the Special Town Meeting August 24, the Town voted to appropriate \$10,000 to cover costs incurred for the bridge repairs so far. Nearly \$6,000 has already been spent. Electronic warning signs had to be rented (soon to be returned). The town had to buy a metal plate to cover the "hole" in the bridge, one-lane ahead and detour signs, and the poles to attach all the signs.

Other expenses have been some \$3,500 for an engineer to consider our options, including whether a full bridge replacement would be required or a partial repair allowed. The Town is still waiting for a full state inspection report.

Realigning the bridge is a possibility if a full repair is necessary, which would avoid the sharp turns at each end which have caused accidents on the approaches.

The Town has applied for a STRAP grant to help pay for the bridge repair, and, Chairman Boyd said, the Board members are "making a lot of noise in Boston. We've invited a lot of representatives out here to walk across our bridge and see for themselves."

Selectmen have been assured that when the bridge was built in 1992 that the Town did not officially "accept" the construction. The state had used an untested surface and our Highway Superintendent at the time said he "didn't think it would work." It didn't. 🍷



Photo: Setsuko Winchester

Around Town Hall Love Thy Neighbor

By Alice Boyd, Select Board Chairman

I'm writing this article from a cabin in the North Woods of Ontario, fourteen hours from Sandisfield. Every August my husband and I load up the car, make room for our dog, and head north for a break.

This is our time, an opportunity to "disconnect" from work, family, obligations, and commitments. It's a time to step away and think without distraction. And it's a time to lazily look up at the night sky, jump into the bracingly crisp water, and dream.

This summer I'm dreaming about Sandisfield.

I've had some outrageous dreams and some very productive ones. Getting away brings clarity. I can sort through the emotion then examine our challenges under a spotlight, undisturbed.

How can we move forward without changing who we are as a town? Can we stay the same but be better at it? That's my hope for our town. To become better at what we do, solve problems without creating too many new ones, and keep taxes down without sacrificing safety while improving quality of life.

This week I've been increasingly thinking about ways to get more done with less. As I sit in an austere cabin, no electricity, phone, or running water, I think about how well this all works. Stripped down. Simplified yet very productive. Could Sandisfield follow this pattern?

Regionalization may be the answer. We currently share a piece of Highway Department equipment with four other towns. We have regionalized our Schools and we rely on the State Police to subsidize our part-time police force. We share our Building Inspector and we purchase through a State Bid List. We're working with Selectmen from four towns to "give back" Route 57 and with five other towns to increase revenues.

What else can we do regionally?

I've worked with towns that share staff: good for the town and for the employee. We share our Building Inspector so now as our exceptional Tax Collector Edna Leavenworth moves toward retirement can this position be shared? The advantage of bringing in an experienced part-time person from another town makes great sense.

This past month Sandisfield submitted a "Community Compact" to our new governor. This document reflects goals for our town including a focus on "Best Practices" and "Regionalization." With the acceptance of the Community Compact Sandisfield will gain extra points on grant applications and will have the opportunity to work with other communities to solve some of the larger problems that we face.

So let's love thy neighbor. Sandisfield would save money by sharing more staff, equipment, and financial burdens. I will speak with my fellow Selectmen about hosting a meeting between our Board and Selectmen from neighboring towns.


Let's go back to basics, find ways to improve what we do while keeping taxes down and sharing resources. 🍷

Training With Fire

When the owners of the Sandler property on Town Hill Road at Rt. 57 were ready to be done with two older buildings, they called Fire Chief Ralph Morrison. Ralph said, "We'll burn them down for you."

But, Ralph said, "We just can't burn things whenever they need burning, not anymore." A series of DEP permits needed to be applied for and approved, and that took time. Once approved, scheduling had to be coordinated with Tolland Fire Chief Eric Munson and his volunteers. "You don't want to waste a training opportunity," said Ralph.

Finally the day came, the end of July, not too hot, not too humid, slightly rainy and misty. The Chiefs assembled 25-30 of their volunteer firemen and EMTs from both towns and set the buildings on fire. The training exercise was for "interior and exterior fire attacks," "ventilation," and "finding a rural water supply."

The ambulance squad evaluated the firemen as they emerged from the burning buildings, making sure they had plenty to drink, checking blood pressure and respiration and ensuring no one became dehydrated. It was hot enough – the teams went through four cases of bottled water. 



Photos: Alec Morrison, Jr. Fireman, and John Burrows


**1873 East Otis Road
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THE SANDISFIELD LIBRARY

The Sandisfield Library Trustees are pleased to announce that we have a new librarian, Theresa Spohnholz. Theresa is very qualified and has been a resident for about two years.

We will be back on our regular schedule as of September 8, 2015. Monday/Tuesday, 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Wednesday, 6:30-8:30 p.m. (April through October), Thursday, 2:00-5:00 p.m., and Saturday, 9:00 a.m.-noon.

Thanks to all our faithful patrons for their patience and a very special thanks to Kathie Burrows and Vicky Bakunis for stepping in and keeping the library running for the past two months. 

New books ordered for September

- Starlight at Willow Lake/Susan Wiggs
- Keeper's Reach/Carla Neggers
- Murder/James Patterson
- Undercover/Danielle Steel
- Corridors of the Night/Ann Perry
- Flesh and Blood/Patricia Cornwell

Night and Day at the Sandisfield Center Cemetery

By George Wheeler

Astronomers had marked August 12-14 as the prime viewing dates for the Perseid meteor shower, so my wife and I headed up to the Sandisfield Center Cemetery at about 9:30 the night of 13th.

Laying out a blanket next to three 18th century slate grave markers, we faced down the slope of the hill and were surprised at the strong band of residual light of sunset. Looking west and low in the sky is not the ideal direction or angle for the meteor shower but after a few minutes my wife shouted, "Did you see that?!"

Not long after I spotted another bright arc streak to the left and just below the Big Dipper. As we lay back – looking straight up in the quiet (almost bugless) night – we heard the persistent hooting of a great horned owl float up the hill from somewhere in the woods across 57.

After spotting a few more "shooting stars," we headed home.

Late morning the next day, we threw our bikes into the back of our truck and parked near the old center of town for a ride through New Marlborough, up 183 and back.

Wanting to take a look at the grave markers in daylight, we drove over to the cemetery – and there they were – the Sandhill cranes in the field



Our blanket lay next to Amos for a view of "shooting stars."

heading up to the markers – just as our bird-watching advisor, Margaret O'Clair, told us they would be.

How lucky we are to live in this time and place with such good people. ♡

Cultural Council

By John Skrip

TIME IS NOW TO APPLY FOR A 2016 GRANT

The Sandisfield Cultural Council is calling for grant applications for the 2016 season. The Council supports public programs in the arts, humanities, and interpretive sciences in Sandisfield. In 2015 the Council awarded 14 grants totaling over \$4,000 to local individuals and organizations.

Applications are available online at www.mass-culture.org. Applications are also available on paper at the Town Hall Annex, the Sandisfield Post Office, and the Town Library. All mailed applications should be postmarked on or before October 15, and sent to:

Sandisfield Cultural Council
PO Box 84
Sandisfield, MA 01255

The grant applications will be reviewed at the Council's fall meeting, October 21, 7:00 p.m., at the Town Hall Annex. The Council will be restructured at that time.

The Sandisfield Cultural Council meets about three times a year and is of great benefit to the town. Please consider becoming a member. To learn more, speak to any Council member: Connie Canty, Anina Carr, Clare English, Peter Levine, or John Skrip.

John can be reached at 258-4788. ♡

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SAT, SEPT 19 4 PM

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Hilde Weisert
(A book signing will follow)
\$10

SAT, SEPT 26 10 AM

Sandisfield's Woodlands:
A Talk with Forester
Tom Ryan
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Roberta Visits Home



Roberta Myers and her husband (as of March 7) Robert Evans hosted a concert at the Sandisfield Arts Center on August 15.


Roberta said the purpose of the event was three-fold:

First to celebrate the long Sandisfield residence of Roberta and her late husband, Ronald E. Myers, and their association with the Arts Center.

Second, to treat Sandisfield friends to a concert by the NYC musicians, the Gaiden Quartet, which includes Brendon Randall-Myers, Ronny and Roberta's grandson, Fay Wang, his wife, Paul Kerekes, and Ben Wallace.

And third, to introduce Bob to Roberta's home town and the unity of Sandisfield.

Bob grew up in the Los Angeles area and was a swimmer and sailor. He became an aeronautical engineer, working in aircraft design. Then he taught engineering and mathematics in southern California. As a third career, Bob was a publisher of science educational software for college faculty and students. He still teaches math at Monterey Peninsula College. Bob and Roberta live in Monterey, California.

Roberta said, "It was a delight seeing so many friends. We were thrilled at the concert and the classy reception." 

Easy Ridin' Papas in Sandisfield

By Mary Anne Grammer

The joint was definitely jumping. What a busy weekend for the Arts Center.

First an opening reception for artist Robin Tost: "Not your Grandmother's Quilt-Fabrications in Metal." Then a forum by Bill Cohn on American Culture and Wartime Propaganda. Then the Easy Ridin' Papas slid into town.

All this from a town of approximately 915. This is definitely the little town that could.

"The Papas" brought with them all the sophistication and talent they are known for. Will Conklin of Sheffield and Adam Brown of Sandisfield performed music from the early part of the 20th century, drawing from western swing, country blues, jazz, ragtime, gospel, as well as a few compositions of their own.

Will was on trumpet, ukulele, kazoo, whistle, vocals, and comic asides. Adam played vintage




Adam Brown, left, and Will Conklin.

archtop and parlor guitars. Adam's sweet voice combined perfectly with Will's deep, resonant vocals.

A few of my favorites were *Down by the Lazy River*, *Tennessee Waltz*, *Sweet Sue*, *Harvest Moon*, and *Peach Pikin' Time in Georgia*.

Adam and Will thanked the Sandisfield Cultural Council for the opportunity to play at the Center and were thrilled that a town this size was eager to sponsor the arts.

We thanked Adam and Will for their music. If you walk by the Arts Center, you just might still hear music coming from the rafters and all those feet tapping. 



View from the Arts Center UNEXPECTED GIFTS

By Marcella Smith, President


A gift is something given voluntarily without payment in return, as to honor a person or an occasion or to provide assistance; a present.

An all-volunteer non-profit like the Sandisfield Arts Center depends on the generosity and support of its community and audience as it continues to present music, theater, lectures, and workshops of all sorts. Normally donations are generated by fund-raising activities, but every now and then someone is moved to make a donation by an experience they had while attending an event at the Center or in honor of the memory of a friend.

Last year, Rosemary Snyder was a member of the cast of "A Christmas Carol" and she was bitten by the theater bug. She loved being at the Arts Center. She determined that in preparation for her Bat Mitzvah this year, she would devote her tikkun olam to the Center. On Saturday evening, August 8, at the Steak Roast, she donated a generous check to the Arts Center for the Sandisfield Players.

After hearing Val Coleman recount his years working for CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) in the early 1960s, Irving Levine came back to the Arts Center as we were cleaning up. He wrote a check in honor of the life of Sandisfield resident and colleague of Val's, Sidney Pinsky, stating that Sid's "generosity and friendship for us (Irving and Marion) and many others knew few bounds. He brought us to Sandisfield over 60 years ago, and the lives of our family have benefited greatly."

On the last day of July, Mr. and Mrs. Donald Parker of Virginia sent a check to honor the life of their friend, former resident Dr. Marion Dragoon.

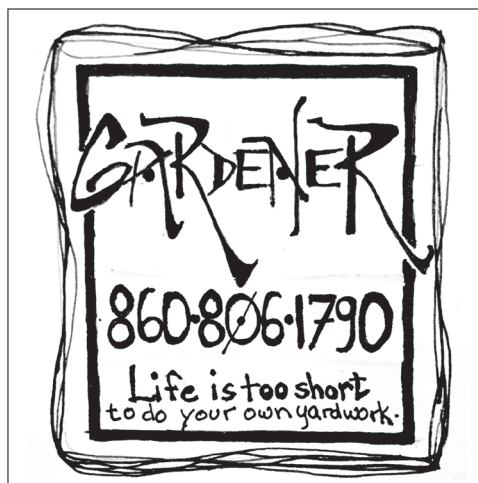
Some aspect of an experience with the people or the spirit or the history the Arts Center represents touched the individuals who decided to make these generous gifts, and we are grateful. 

To benefit the
Sandisfield Players
to perform in ENGLAND in 2016!!!
Sat., Oct. 10 - 10^{AM} - 4^{PM} (Oct. 11 rain date)
The **TOWN GREEN**, corner of
Rt. 57 & New Hartford Rd.
Mark your calendars, clean out your attic and
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Call 258-4994 to volunteer or for info.



A beaver munches on shoots in a pond near Shade Road.

Photo: Sandy Parisky



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Freeman's Petition

A REQUEST FOR RELEASE FROM BONDAGE

By John Kuzmecz

It is unusual for any town to have original handwritten records from the 1700s. But Sandisfield does.

Buried within Sandisfield's earliest town minutes are details of daily life in a small town struggling to form itself in a wilderness. Most are mundane records of road building, debts, family issues, and tavern permits.

But two particular paragraphs are a rare treasure – two entries from 1777 that provide a poignant and jarring reminder of the development of the United States as a free country and predate the Mum Bett case.

Mum Bett, otherwise known as Elizabeth Freeman, is an important national figure in African American history. She was the subject of the earliest court case (1781) that began the end of slavery in Massachusetts. Enslaved to a Sheffield family, Mum Bett successfully sued for her freedom in Stockbridge under the 1780 state constitution.

The two 1777 entries in the Sandisfield town records relate to a petition by Paul Freeman, a local "servant," asking that he be freed under an apparent agreement with his late owner. The petition reads:

The petition of Paul Freeman, servan (sic) to Capt. Jacob Brown, deceased:- "To the Town of Sandisfield, assembled in Gen'l town meeting:- Gentlemen you are doubtless the most of you sensible of the unhappy condition to which your poor petitioner is reduced by my late master's decease – A life of slavery is to the Last Degree Dreadful and if possible (sic) to be avoided. It is to avoid that horrid chain that you are now venturing your lives and fortunes. I have borne arms in your cause, my late master in his life time was so kind as to give me a promise of freedom but his death left me still in slavery, but his administrators being sensible of my late masters design, have agreed that I shall be free upon the payment of a sum of money and means are found for the payment of the money, nothing now labors but security against my coming to cost. Now Gentlemen, my humble request is that you will condescend to indemnify the heirs on that account, then shall I, by your means, emerge from slavery to that freedom without which life is of no value. And you will lay an indispensable obligation on your humble petitioner. Paul Freeman, His Mark "X". Sandisfield, 10th day of March 1777.

Freeman is referred to in the records as a "servant," but his petition clearly states that he is "in slavery" and Brown was his "master." It seems clear that he

Paul Freeman's petition, as recorded in Town minutes, 12 March 1777.

was a slave, and not an indentured servant, which was also common in the 18th century.

His use of the phrase "...borne arms in your cause..." refers to his Revolutionary War service and suggests that he understood he was an outsider. But what did he and his owner do in the war?

From pg. 628 of Volume 2 of "Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the War of the Revolution," Captain Jacob Brown of Sandisfield "was the captain of a company in Col. John Fellows' regiment, which marched April 21, 1775 in response to the alarm of April 19, 1775. Service 1 month 3 days."

The short time frame suggests that Brown, with Paul Freeman by his side, may have marched near Boston, providing military support, and then marched home. A rather motley deluge of irregular militia rushed to help George Washington after Lexington and Concord, but his newly forming army was quickly overwhelmed feeding and managing them all. Many were sent home. Brown's company seems to have been one of them. Paul Freeman himself was not named in these archives.

Another observation is that Paul Freeman himself was most likely not the author of the petition. Most people at the time, particularly slaves, were illiterate and an "X" was used in lieu of a signature. An unnamed citizen sympathetic with Paul Freeman probably wrote this eloquent petition for him.

Both Mum Bett and Freeman adopted the same last name.

In his petition, Freeman asked the town to indemnify Brown's heirs and this word is key to our interpretation of what happens next. The dictionary meaning of indemnify is "to give someone money or another kind of payment for some damage, loss or injury."

Back to the town records for the response. Two days following Freeman's petition the town leaders decided:

Voted to indemnify the est. of Capt. Jacob Brown, deceased, from any cost and charge that shall arise by

Paul Freeman, servant to the deceased, being set free after sd. Servant has paid the price of his redemption to the heirs of the sd. deceased."

The response does not seem exactly clear. Was the unclear nature of this entry intended to obscure the avoidance of paying?

It seems that the phrase "after said servant has paid the price" suggests that the Select Board weakly honored Jacob Brown's agreement, yet it does not say the town would actually pay the debt. Instead, it seems to put the payment of that debt back upon Mr. Freeman.

It may be that the town did in fact approve the funds to pay off the heirs, but recorded the vote awkwardly in the minutes.

More than 200 years later, what ultimately happened to Freeman is unknown.

According to vital statistics supplied to me by Town Clerk Dolores Harasyko, four Freemans lie buried under headstones from around that time. But not Paul.

One of those stones is for a wife of Manson Freeman. But her stone is placed backwards. The reversal of the stone stands out from all the others at West New Boston. Placing a stone backwards near the back of the cemetery suggests she was a pariah or slave.

Like Elizabeth Freeman (formerly Mum Bett) of Sheffield, Paul Freeman of Sandisfield deserves recognition as an important figure in the early efforts of American slaves to become free American citizens. 🏹

Thank You Many Times Over

We owe a succession of over 200 years of Town Clerks an unpayable debt for their having hung onto and saved these handwritten records. Several years ago, current Town Clerk Dolores Harasyko had the books which contain them cleaned and preserved.

Council on Aging



By Susan Galik

The COA held a safety-in-the-home seminar at their July 29 meeting. This was a trifecta production: Police, Board of Health, and the COA.

A blood drive was held in honor of Edna Leavenworth's late daughter, Louise. The goal was to replace the 12 units used, and the drive surpassed that with 28 units. Our condolences go out to the Leavenworth family

Another member has reached the 90th year mark. Congratulations to Alice MacMullen.

Home modification for accessibility: On September 11, Friday, 6:30 p.m., we will repeat our home modification seminar. If you are a contractor interested in installing ramps, railings, walk-in tubs/showers, or any other modifications to a home, you need to attend this information session. If you or a relative needs to do some remodeling so that you or a

relative can stay longer and more safely in your home, you need to come to this meeting. You could qualify for up to \$30,000 for a modification loan. We are scheduling this session in the evening, so that those who work during the day can attend. Tell your contractor to attend, so they can learn all the ins and outs of processing this loan.


QiGong is back. Beginning September 14, Monday, 11a.m. to noon at the Old Town Hall. \$2 per class. We will hold seven classes, the last being Oct 26. We will probably start again after the holidays. QiGong is a sitting form of Tai Chi. It is wonderful for those who are mobility impaired. You can choose to sit through the whole class, get up and do the movements, as the will and the body allow.

In October, flu shots will be available, and a fire extinguisher safety class will be held. Watch the signboard for dates of these two events.

We plan to sell apple pies at the Historical Society Apple Fest on October 10.

Please stop by our booth at the Apple Fest to buy tickets for our annual Christmas Basket. We plan to have the Christmas Basket drawing at the Christmas Bazaar, December 5. Proceeds will benefit the Alzheimer's Association. For

those wishing to take part, the Alzheimer's Association is sponsoring walks to end Alzheimer's. The closest walks to Sandisfield are in Cheshire, September 19, and Holyoke, September 27.

We meet each Wednesday and have a potluck lunch at noon, followed by Bingo. Two cards for 25 cents, a bargain. 



A goldfinch taking his breakfast from a window feeder. Photo: Bill Price



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Saturdays at 4:30

September 5

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Stage and cabaret star Karen Akers

September 12

Les Amies Carol Wincenc, flute;
Cynthia Phelps, viola; Nancy Allen, Harp
Music by Ibert, Bax, J. S. Bach, Ravel, Devienne,
Fauré, and Debussy.

September 19

Harold Lewin Memorial Concert
Musicians of Aston Magna
An all-Bach program featuring works by
J.S. Bach and C.P.E. Bach.

September 26

Lydian String Quartet
Classical and contemporary quartets by
Mendelssohn, Philip Glass, and J. Brahms.

October 3

Award-Winning Authors
Host Simon Winchester talks with other
expatriate writers, Madhur Jaffrey, Peter Godwin,
and Masha Gessen, about their adopted country.

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A Walk in Our Woods

(cont'd from p. 1)

passage from the parking lot at the Town Hall Annex all the way to Hammertown Road at the Reserve's northern tip.

Trail design began, says Leavitt, with many days of bushwhacking, of wandering the ups and downs of the preserve identifying scenic views and features such as interesting rock formations, outstanding trees, and, in this case, a particularly well-preserved, dry-stack house foundation.

Then came a game of connect-the-dots, of figuring out a route that connects all the attractions while still providing a path that's easy enough to suit hikers "ages 8 to 80." Respecting nature is also part of the equation: in several places the trail was rerouted away from the road to protect traffic-vulnerable wet areas.

All of this, Mike Leavitt is quick to point out, would not amount to more than a string of red flags through the woods if it weren't for his teenage work crews.



Mike Leavitt, BNRC Coordinator

Paid for with a grant from the Recreational Trails Program of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, these crews have been supplied by two non-profits: "Greenagers," an environmental group based in Great Barrington, and the Appalachian Mountain Club.

The trail volunteers on August 10, the first day.



Enthusiasm is the prime asset of these teams, where boys and girls, often high-schoolers, work side by side under the supervision of their own team leaders and Leavitt's three BNRC interns. After removing downed trees and saplings that block the trail route (mature, healthy trees are typically avoided rather than cut), the teams use hand tools – mattocks, picks and shovels – to excavate the "treadway" down to the level of stable mineral soil, grading the path to drain downhill at a 2-5% slope to minimize erosion. Impinging boulders are levered out of the ground and off the trail with digging bars.

The rocky mass such primitive methods can handle are considerable when combined with youthful energy: four crew members were sufficient to shift the largest such impediment, a four-foot monster weighing over 1,000 lbs. The craters that the boulders leave behind are filled with "crush," stone broken up to golf-ball size with sledge hammers, and then topped with mineral soil hauled in by the bucketful by the seemingly tireless crews.

After construction, the trail treadway is carefully "brushed in." Leaves and woodland duff are raked to the edges of the treadway to reduce soil erosion and restore the natural seed bank that will repopulate the trailside with volunteer seedlings.

All that remains when this is completed will be the construction of foot bridges over the streams that feed the Clam River. These will be spanned by hemlock stringers cut on the site – hemlock being a locally abundant, rot-resistant timber – and then decked with locally harvested hemlock planking.

The benefits of this program to the local community are obvious, but equally important, and an intentional part of the process, are the benefits to the trail crew. Leavitt himself began his trail building in the same capacity, first as a volunteer in Acadia National Park in Maine and then as a team leader with the Appalachian Mountain Club.

The experience of living and working out of doors, he points out, is entirely new to many of the young people who volunteer in this fashion. Some have never slept in a tent before and many have no experience of physical labor.

Beginning the week as a miscellaneous group of individuals – the Greenagers are all local, but the AMC teams are drawn from all over the United States, with even some foreign youths participating – the volunteers finish it as a team, and can see a tangible record of their



Time for lunch. From left, Michael Storace, Michael Leavitt, Jesse Samdhal, Irina Scully.

efforts in a length of trail completed – all by hand.

The sense of accomplishment and the friendships formed, Leavitt believes, are why so many of the participants of this program return as volunteers for a second year and even graduate to become trail building leaders in their own right.

The trail to Hammertown Road will be completed next summer, but the Clam River Loop Trail is completed and marked. Parking for both Clam River trails is at the Town Offices Annex lot beside the “dog pound.” In addition to hiking and dog walking, the Reserve is open for hunting (in season) and fishing.

Come and enjoy the gift that Berkshire Natural Resources Council and its teenage teams have given our town. 

For a map of the trails, see following page.

Photos: Mike Leavitt and Bill Price



The second day it rained all day, but everyone, including Carly Sorenson, kept working.



A magnificent white pine towers above the trail.

The Clam River Reserve and Its Trails

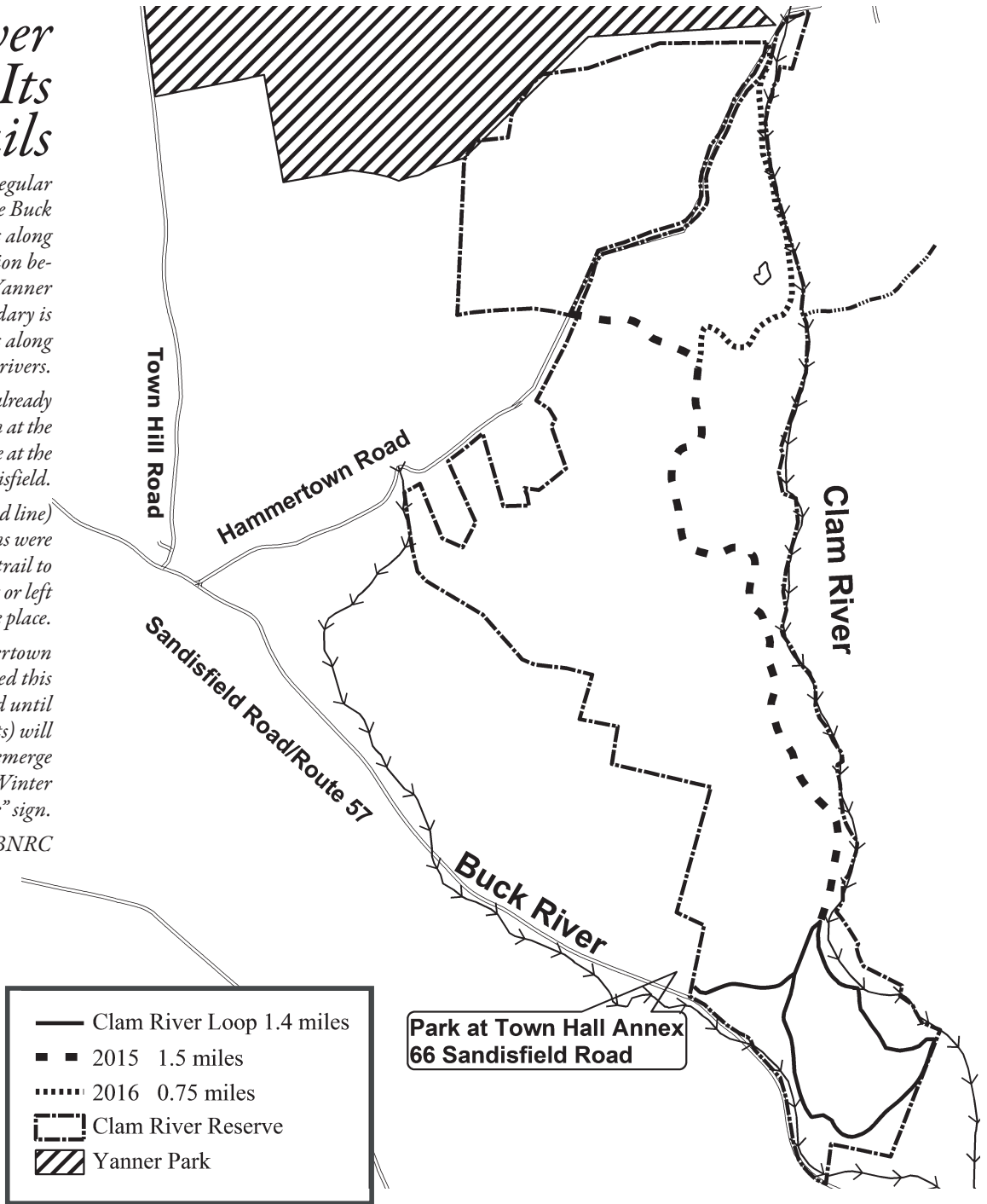
The BNRC Reserve forms an irregular triangle between the Clam and the Buck Rivers. The northern boundary is along Hammertown Road, with an extension beyond the road. The extension skirts Yanner Park in two places. The eastern boundary is along the Clam; the western edge lies along the hills and slopes between the rivers.

Both the new Hammertown and the already completed Clam River Loop trails begin at the Town Hall Annex. Parking is available at the Annex, courtesy of the Town of Sandisfield.

The Clam River Loop Trail (solid line) opened last year. Directional signs were installed this spring. After an initial "trail to the trail," the Loop circles either right or left (hiker's choice) and returns to the same place.

The longest section of the Hammertown Road Trail (dashes) will be completed this fall, though signs may not be installed until spring. The remaining portion (dots) will be completed in 2016. The trail will emerge on Hammertown near the "No Winter Maintenance" sign.

Map provided by the BNRC



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Sandisfield Resident Helps Local Cancer Patients



Photo: Peter Levine

A press release from the American Cancer Society in August mentioned local volunteer and activist Ellen Croibier.

Ellen has been involved with the Society for over six years. She was first touched by the disease when her mother died from uterine cancer. She continues to fight back in many ways.

Her involvement with the Society began after she attended a local Relay For Life event. "I was blown away," she said. It was there that she learned about the Society's Look Good...Feel Better program.


Look Good...Feel Better is a free, 2-hour, non-medical program that helps patients going through treatment deal with the appearance-related side effects of cancer by teaching them how to deal with changes in their skin, hair, and nails. Volunteer beauty professionals and hairstylists teach patients techniques ranging from using makeup to simulate eyebrows and eyelashes, to using wigs and head coverings to hide hair loss. Even those who never wear makeup benefit from the camaraderie and support of their fellow program participants.

As a former makeup artist, Ellen already possessed the skills and experience to be a successful volunteer for this program. She has worked with more than 50 local cancer patients through the Look Good...Feel Better program and has participated in the Society's

premier breast cancer awareness event, Making Strides Against Breast Cancer.


"I love being with other volunteers and the cancer survivors," she said. "My inspiration to continue fighting back comes from them."

The American Cancer Society's Making Strides Against Breast Cancer of Berkshire County will be held this October 15 during Third Thursday in Pittsfield. Registration for this noncompetitive, inspirational event begins at 5:00 p.m. and the walk starts at 6 p.m. Last year, 200 walkers in Berkshire County helped to raise more than \$17,000.

Additional information on the Look Good...Feel Better program can be found on cancer.org or by calling 800-227-2345. 

OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

The September issue of the New Marlborough Five Villages newspaper included an interview with local author **Simon Winchester**. Simon has become moderator for the Award Winning Authors series in the Music & More program, following Mike Levitas who served as moderator for 20 years. The first event "Why America?" will be held October 4 at the New Marlborough Meeting House.

The rest of us might not have one, but our neighbors in South Sandisfield have the **Colebrook Store**. Drive south on Rt. 183 and keep going until you find it. You'll be glad you did. Fine breakfast and lunch sandwiches, homemade baked goods and deli salads, Sunday papers. **Jodi Marinelli** reopened the store in December and says business is good. She even has a modest selection of groceries. 



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Growing Up in Sandisfield, Not That Long Ago

BILLY RIISKA: HOW IT WAS

By Bill Price

At 73, Billy Riiska is too young to be an old-timer. Yet, despite his relative youthfulness, Bill was a good choice to be a guest of the Historical Society's oral history series in June.

Except for a tour with the 101st Airborne in Vietnam and a short spell nearby in Otis, Billy has lived all of his life in Sandisfield, and he has made a living for his family working Sandisfield forests and land. His "interviewer" at the Society was his daughter, Bethany Riiska Perry.

School Days

Some of Bill's earliest memories are of the West New Boston schoolhouse and his



Billy in grade school.

teacher, Mrs. Poole, who taught eight grades in one room. When the new school, now the Town Hall Annex, consolidated Sandisfield schools in 1950, Billy suddenly had about 50 schoolmates. "Mrs. Welch and Mrs. Poole were the teachers, and they had two rooms, with grades 1-4 in one room and 5-8 in the other. Some years there was only one graduate from the 8th grade."

Schools were different then. "You got dressed up to go to school. We couldn't wear dungarees or engineer boots. No T-shirts. My father took us down to Pope & Company in Winsted, and we got gabardine pants, penny loafers, shirts. The whole outfit for school cost about \$13 or \$14. You had to look nice, going to school."



Billy, lower left at age 2, with his sister, his Riiska grandparents, and his mother and father.

For entertainment when he was 10 or 12 years old, Billy said, "I'd walk up to Bill and Gert Klinger's every Saturday afternoon. They had all the cowboys on."

Good Days, Working Days

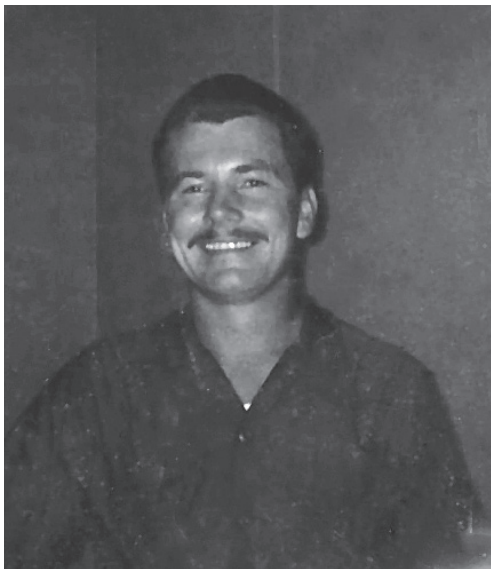
"Nobody had any money," Billy said, "but everybody had an old car. The only person I knew with a new car was Dr. Erbe. If you weren't born by Dr. Erbe you were from New York City or someplace."

Billy got his driver's license at 16. "My first car cost \$20. To insure it was about \$26. You only went out on Friday or Saturday night. We went to dances all over. Riverton, Otis. Sled parties. Skating parties."

Where Billy's Riiska Brook Farm is now was known then as Corn Hill. "That's where my parents grew all the corn. It's amazing how people come from a foreign country and in a matter of 10-15 years have quite a bit to show for it. My father had a dairy, raised pigs and

A Riiska/Pottingin family picnic. Billy standing at lower left.





Billy, early 1969.

beef cattle. We had chickens and sold the eggs, I think, for 30 cents a dozen. We had a blueberry patch, and my mother paid me 6 cents a quart to pick them. She'd clean them up and sell them for 13 cents a quart at the A&P and First National in Winsted. The stores were getting something like 19 or 20 cents a quart for them."

Billy's father, William Kasper Riiska, held onto the farm during the Depression. Bill remembered, "My father said they never really noticed it. All they needed was some gasoline because they had a tractor. They still had horses that could do a lot of the work. My father said you'd see guys walking up the roads asking for something to do in return for food. Men worked on my grandfather's farm for a plug of tobacco and some clothes and a warm place to stay. But even with all that there was no crime. It was a different way of life then."

Poor people, but . . .

"Everybody in Sandisfield took in deer hunters. We always had seven to ten deer hunters in the house during hunting season. Room and board was \$1 a day, and they'd stay six or seven days. Usually the same bunch from Quincy, Boston, near there. The Berkshires was the best place to hunt deer. Us kids lost our bedrooms for a week. We'd all move in with mom and dad.

"We were all poor people, but we all lived within our means. Anybody back then who didn't have a job was lazy. There was so much work then. If you needed a job, even the town would hire you. Snowplowing. I worked for the town for 38-40 cents an hour. A

handshake would be good. Now you need a signed contract. I bought a lot of wood lots on a handshake."

He said, "Everybody helped. Once we were putting up hay in the front lot. A thunderstorm came up. People going by got out of their car and came to help. The women went into the house, and these people in their white shirts worked with my father to make sure we got in the hay. We didn't even know them. That's how it was. Everybody was used to that.

"They were good days. I enjoyed myself growing up. I had a lot of fun."

And then came ...

And then there was the Vietnam War, coming home, starting a family, working as a logger, returning to the family farm. Read Bill's reflections on life in Sandisfield after the 1960s in the October issue of The Sandisfield Times.


Riiska Brook Orchards will open for apple season in mid-September. Call ahead (258-4761) or check their website. First ready: McIntosh and Cortlands.



At the Historical Society in June, Billy, his daughter Bethany and grandchildren, Valerie Perry, 7, and William Perry, 1½.

Photo Credits: The Riiska family

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Thank You from the Sandisfield Fire Department

The Sandisfield Volunteer Firemen would like to thank everyone who attended the Steak Roast in August, as well as those who contributed but could not attend.

They also thank the John Band of New Haven for providing excellent music, and the Sandisfield Scholarship Fund for serving ice cream bars for dessert.



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Comings & Goings



HUGH DEMANBEY

JULY 13, 1959 – JULY 28, 2015

The deManbey family regretfully announce the passing of Hugh deManbey

A skilled master carpenter, Hugh worked on the rejuvenation of many of the older homes in Norfolk, Conn., churches, and other homes in surrounding towns. He took great pride in his work and tried to produce quality craftsmanship in all of his work. He and his wife, Tina, raised their family in Sandisfield, where they lived for the last 25 years.

Hugh was born and raised in Norfolk, residing with his parents Lyndsay and Claire deManbey, and six siblings on Litchfield Road in Norfolk. He attended Botelle grammar school, Indian Mountain, Cranwell, and Portsmouth Abbey, while residing there. He also attended Saint Michael's College and Central Connecticut State University, where he earned his Bachelor's Degree in Philosophy, and met his wife.

Hugh is survived by Tina, his brothers David and Daniel deManbey, and his sisters Corky and Mary deManbey, Diane Duebber, and Donna Boynton, as well as numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins. Hugh was the father of seven children: Hope, Cassandra, Samantha, William, Christian, Lyndsay, and Maria deManbey. He became the grandfather of baby girl Camilla in June. He was a loving husband and father and will be greatly missed.

A memorial service was held August 29 at the Immaculate Conception Church in Norfolk, followed by a reception in the church hall.

Sandisfield Historical Society



By John Kuzmecz

At our August meeting, Dr. Charles Russell spoke to us about his research on the travels of a Norwegian immigrant "Wilhelm" to the New England of North America. Thanks, Dr. Russell, for your entertaining presentation and slide show.

Our speakers' stories are informal, enjoyable, and informative. We encourage everyone to come out and join us.

Our Oral History project will continue in September. Our last guest, in June, was Billy Riiska. A profile of Billy begins on page 14 of this issue of the Times.

Next up, we will hear from a female elder in our community.

Rosemary Allen, 90, will be our guest at the September 12 meeting. A veteran of World War II, Rosemary told me she will need to clean up those anecdotes for a family audience. She is a great grandmother of four

and has lived in Sandisfield since she was a usually-behaved teenager, when she arrived here to live with a cousin.

She has lived 60 years on Tannery Road, behind the former New Boston Store, and been witness to a lot of changes. Rosemary worked alongside her friend Mary Margraf during a 37-year career at the New Boston Nursing home. Come hear her stories. Rosemary may even show us a tattoo.

Stay after Rosemary's presentation and be our guest of a potluck lunch. September 12, 11 a.m., at the South Sandisfield Meeting House, Rt. 183.



Freedman/Friedman

An editor's error in the August issue of The Times resulted in confusion between two families who support the Historical Society and The Times. The paper should have credited Barry and Josephine Freedman with their long-term support for the Historical Society. Rather, the paper credited Lou and Judi Friedman, who have supported The Times for several years. Apologies to all four of our friends and neighbors, all of whom stand tall in our estimation.



Farmington River Elementary School Bulletin

By Mary Anne Grammer

Back to School

Farmington River Regional School Calendar (Sept-Oct)

- 9/2 First day of school
- 9/7 Labor Day holiday
- 9/10 Back to School Night
- 10/9 Professional Day, **NO SCHOOL**
- 10/12 Columbus Day holiday

On the School Bus

The FRR School Committee has approved the purchase of a 10-passenger Ford Transit Van for the use of the Otis and Sandisfield students. The anticipated date of delivery is early October. The bus company will be using a smaller bus for transportation over the weight-limited Route 57 Clam River Bridge for our elementary school students.

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NOW HEAR THIS!

Edited by Laura Rogers-Castro.

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

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Gallery Opening Reception on Saturday, September 5, from 2:00-4:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center, 5 Hammertown Road. The Gallery will feature Works by Vera Pavlisova: The Mandala in Countless Forms. The exhibit is on display September 5-27 and open during performances and each Sunday from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

The Belle of Amherst, Performed by Mari Andrejco on Saturday, September 12, at 8:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center. \$20. Information at www.sandisfieldartscenter.org.

Historical Society's oral history program on Saturday, September 12 at 11 a.m., features Rosemary Allen as guest speaker. Followed by potluck luncheon. South Sandisfield Meeting House, Rt. 183.

Poetry Literary Launch with Antonia Lake and Hilde Weisert on Saturday, September 19, at 4:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center. \$10.

Turkey Roll on Friday, September 25, at 7:00 p.m. at the American Legion Pavilion on Route 8. Roll the dice for prizes. Raffles and 50/50.

Sandisfield Woodlands: A Talk with Forester Tom Ryan on Saturday, September 26, at 10:00 a.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center. Free.

EVENTS IN SURROUNDING TOWNS

Geoffrey Coelho will be exhibiting his photography during the month of September at the Otis Library. Geoffrey is the former Sandisfield Postal Clerk.

Tag Sale on Sunday, September 6, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Monday, September 7 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Hevreh of Southern Berkshires, 270 State Road, Great Barrington.

Spaghetti Dinner on Saturday, September 12, from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Otis Town Hall. A fund-raiser for Cystic Fibrosis. \$10 for adults; \$8 for seniors, \$5 for kids under 12.

Vintage Sled and Tractor Show, Swap Meet, and Tag Sale on Sunday, September 13, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Izaak Walton League field on Tannery Road in Otis. Sponsored by the Knox Trail Sno-Riders Snowmobile Club. For info, call 413-269-0243, then press 2.

Miss Paula and the Twangbusters on Saturday, September 26, at 7:30 p.m. at the Knox Trail Inn, Rt. 23, East Otis. Free concert sponsored by the Otis Cultural Council.

SAVE THE DATE

October 4. Award Winning Authors, "Why America?" on October 4, 4:30 p.m., at the New Marlborough Meeting House on the Village Green. Host Simon Winchester talks with other expatriate authors, Madhur Jaffrey, Peter Godwin, and Masha Gessen, about their adopted country.

October 10. Apple Fest Fair of the Sandisfield Historical Society. Saturday, October 10, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the South Sandisfield Meeting House. Tag sale, baked goods, raffles, and vendors. If you would like to be a vendor, contact John Kuzmecz at 258-4906.

October 10. Community Tag Sale, Saturday, October 10, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., corner of Rt. 57 and New Hartford Road. Benefit for the Sandisfield Players 2016 performance in England. Rain date: Sunday, October 11. Call 258-4994 to volunteer, donate or for info.

ONGOING EVENTS

Select Board, Select Board, during September, will meet for regular meetings on Monday the 7th and 21st. On Wednesday the 16th and 30th, the Board will meet at 2:30 p.m. in working session. All are welcome to attend Board meetings and sessions at 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 Monday of the month, 7 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 Rd.

Sandisfield Public Library Hours: Monday/Tuesday: 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Wednesday: 6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m., Thursday: 2 p.m.-5 p.m., Saturday: 9 a.m.-noon.

Historical Commission: First Wednesday of the month, 7 p.m., Town Library.



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Donations of all sizes are needed to ensure the continuation of this newspaper. Please send checks to: *The Sandisfield Times*, P.O. Box 584, Sandisfield, MA 01255 or donate online at our website: www.sandisfieldtimes.org.

Copies of *The Sandisfield Times* are available in Sandisfield at A&M Auto, the Arts Center (in season), the Transfer Station, Post Office, the New Boston Inn, New Boston Sleds, Villa Mia, MJ Tuckers, When Pigs Fly Farm and Town Hall. Copies are also available in Otis at Berkshire Bank, Bruce's Hardware, Katie's Market, Papa's Fuel, Otis Library, Farmington River Diner, and Otis Poultry Farm. Locations in

Monterey include the Library, the Store, and the Roadside Cafe. Available also at the Southfield Store in New Marlborough. Back issues are available for purchase.

The Times can be mailed to your home by paid subscription (see form below left) or you can read it (free) online as a PDF document at www.sandisfieldtimes.org.

We welcome submissions, comments and suggestions, including letters to the editor **BY THE 15TH OF THE MONTH PRIOR**. We may edit for space, style or clarity. We will try to publish Public Service Announcements when we have room, with priority given to Sandisfield organizations. No portion of the *The Sandisfield Times* may be reproduced without permission.

Editorial Staff

Editor: Bill Price

email: w.billprice@gmail.com or cell 413.429.7179

Advertising/Subscriptions: Ron Bernard

Graphic Design: Tina Sotis

Website: Jean Atwater-Williams

Now Hear This!: Laura Rogers-Castro

Founding Editor: Simon Winchester

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Advertising questions: . . . advertising@sandisfieldtimes.org

Entries for calendar of events: . . . calendar@sandisfieldtimes.org

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