

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

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Town “Failed” State Audit?

At the Special Town Meeting October 23, a member of the Finance Committee, David Hubbard, announced that the Town had “failed” its state financial audit. The audit referred to is a draft of the state audit of fiscal year 2016, which has yet to be officially presented to the town. *The Times* will report on that audit in our December issue. Our report on the Special Town Meeting is on page 3.

What “failing” an audit means is that auditors have issued an “adverse opinion,” stating that material weaknesses exist in the town’s record-keeping and needs to address those weaknesses. Town Treasurer Terry Spohnholz reports that the weaknesses outlined in the 2016 draft audit have already been addressed and that an audit for fiscal year 2017 would show significant improvement. 

Pipeline’s Aftermath: A Drone’s Eye View

This image was taken October 17 by drone aircraft filming the 3.8-mile length of Tennessee Gas Company’s nearly completed pipeline expansion across the Beech Plain. Depicting a section near Cold Spring Road at Lower Spectacle Pond, including the former Rowley farm (now part of Otis State Forest), the photo dramatically reveals the extent of the additional permanent scarring of the land. The 2-minute video, fascinating and well worth a view, provides a look at the pipeline track previously seen only by birds. Go online to <https://vimeo.com/238790488/70e79b89f9>.

Photo courtesy Craig Peyton/Earthflight.com and Ben Hillman.

What’s Happening with Yanner Park?

BEYOND LOGGING, THAT IS

By Seth Kershner

Upon his death more than twenty-five years ago, Mervin “Jack” Yanner, a long-time weekend resident of Sandisfield, left a large parcel of land to the town for recreational use. It was left to the town to come up with a plan – and the money – for the development of a park.

Years of organizing community breakfasts and lobster dinners by the Friends of Yanner Park eventually hauled in several thousand dollars in donations. The Friends group also worked with the Conway School of Landscape Design to come up with a detailed plan of how to transform

Cont’d p.6

Doggonit!

A LONG TIME BETWEEN RAISES

By Bill Price

It will cost a bit more next year to license your dog. \$5.00 for spayed or neutered dogs and \$15.00 if not spayed or neutered. This is a small step up from the \$4 and \$10 charged now.

Town Clerk Dolores Harasyko surveyed surrounding towns and learned that most charge \$5 for spayed or neutered and \$15 if not. What the increase does is bring Sandisfield in line with our neighbors.

The timing of the last increase in fees for dogs is unclear in the town's archives, but whenever it, according to Dolores, the fees have only been increased once since 1862.

Then, with the Civil War still having three years to rage, dog license fees in Sandisfield were male dogs \$2 and females \$5.

Anyone who licensed a female dog in 1862 must have loved that animal. A lot. According to some currency valuations, \$5 in 1862 is the equivalent of \$122 today. Historian Ron Bernard estimates that at the time \$122 was almost a year's salary for a school teacher. 🍷



Sandisfield in Early American Wars

Sandisfield residents have participated, sometimes at the cost of their lives, in every war that has involved America.

Local historian Ron Bernard will discuss the town's role in the earliest of those wars, particularly the Revolution and the Civil War, at the Sandisfield Historical Society, Saturday, November 11, at 2:15 p.m. The discussion will be followed by the Society's traditional year-end Wine-and-Cheese reception at Society headquarters, Sandy Brook Turnpike (Rte. 183) at South Sandisfield Road. For more information, contact Ann Wald, the Society president, at 413 258-4415. 🍷

Broadband Update

By Bill Price

In an October 23 front-page article, *The Berkshire Eagle* reported that the state-sponsored Massachusetts Broadband Institute is supporting the licensing plan put forward by Sandisfield, New Marlborough, and Tolland with Frontier Communications to bring broadband internet to the three towns. In addition, MBI has agreed to pay Frontier \$1 million over the amount already ear-marked for the communications company to design, build, and operate the "fiber-to-the-home" internet system, for a total of \$4.7 million.

This was good news to the broadband committees of the three towns because it kept Frontier at the negotiating table. It means, however, that the extra payment compels the state, under procurement regulations, to advertise the new funding level in order to provide visibility to the offer and to give other private companies the opportunity to make a new bid. This will cause an unspecified delay in the process and has the potential to introduce additional or new players. In any event, attorneys for the three towns still have to finish negotiating among themselves and with Frontier. Delay will come as no surprise

to those involved or aware of the complicated process of bringing internet fiber to small towns scattered across Berkshire County.

Jeff Bye, head of Sandisfield's Broadband Committee, told *The Times*, "There is a lot of back and forth, but the process is continuing. The state has worked hard to support the plan and is working with us to come to agreements among ourselves and with Frontier."

Jeff said that he looked forward to the state re-advertising the amount offered to Frontier. "If a better offer is made," he said, "it could be good for the towns. Competition is a good thing." 🍷



Finance Committee Fully Staffed

By Times Reporters

The Finance Committee, which helps ensure that the town has a balanced and fiscally sound budget, meets the third Wednesday of every month. Meetings are open to the public. The five members of the committee are:

Joe Gelinas, Chair, Professor Emeritus, Bentley University, Waltham, MA, from which he retired after more than 30 years teaching, doing research and consulting in the areas of accounting information systems, audition, and IT auditing. He previously served on the Finance Committee in the town of Walpole, MA. He and his wife Roxanne live on Lake Shore Drive in the Sandisfield portion of Otis Wood Lands.

Kathy Jacobs, IT Business Analyst with over 30 years' experience with customer service activities: accounting, actuarial, and wealth management products. She has wide knowledge of IRS and Department of Labor requirements and processes. She and husband Tom own and operate "Long Acre Farm" on Hammertown Road.

David Hubbard, a graduate of the Columbia University School of Law, worked many years in the legal profession for a wide range of corporate clients, owned retail and wholesale businesses, and currently provides legal and financial counsel to a select group of investors and hedge funds on a national and international basis. He and his wife Patricia live on Dodd Rodd.

Recently appointed:

Bogart Muller owns and operates RSE, LLC, a Sandisfield grounds-keeping service, which serves local residents, as well as maintaining cemeteries and municipal grounds for the Town. He sits on the Board of Directors at the Sandisfield Arts Center. He lives on South Main Street (Rt. 8) with his wife and son.

Roger Brown, a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania with over 30 years in the banking industry, serves as a managing director at J.P. Morgan Chase based in New York City. He and his family have maintained a residence in Sandisfield since 1980. They currently are located on West Street. 🍷

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Color in *The Times*

We hope you enjoyed the front-page color photo last month of the water blessing at Spectacle Pond by *Berkshire Eagle* reporter Heather Bellow. We hadn't intended to do color again for possibly a year, but when we got this photo from the drone flyover of the pipeline, well ... Color printing costs more, and we try to be good stewards of your contributions, which – along with subscribers and advertisers – are the source of all our income and what keeps us in the black every year. But we wanted to surprise you with that picture last month, and now this one.

The River's on Fire

Many of us in Sandisfield may not remember when the Cuyohoga River caught fire. It was in Cleveland, Ohio, after all, and in 1969, a long time ago. But I remember. The river was so polluted by industrial waste that *Time* magazine, as quoted on *Wikipedia*, described it as a river that “oozes rather than flows.” In the Cuyohoga, said *Time*, a person “does not drown but decays.”

This was not the first time the Cuyohoga had caught fire, but it helped spur the environmental movement. In 1970 Republican President Richard Nixon established the Environmental Protection Agency by executive order later ratified by Congress. It was a good idea at the time, and it's still a good idea.

Now a Republican president and Republican Congress

are in the process of dismantling many of the EPA's regulations and in effect the agency itself.

What business is that of ours in Sandisfield? The Clam River, the Buck, and likely the Farmington were once polluted. That crime that was not resolved by government regulation but by the slow deaths of the tanneries and mills that lined the rivers at the time. If the tanneries still existed, we'd have to find a way to clean our rivers or shut down the tanneries. Consider a river as close to us as the Housatonic and the still ongoing cleanup of the PCBs General Electric dumped into it.

We need the EPA to stop polluters and to advocate for cleanup. We need the EPA the way we need, say, the agencies that regulate traffic and impose rules for STOP signs and drivers' licenses and even for the eye tests to qualify for those licenses. Granted that the EPA – and traffic agencies – might overreach sometimes, but on the whole they're there to protect us. Gutting the EPA – as is happening now – is the equivalent of removing STOP signs, drivers' licenses, and eye exams.

Our Berkshire rivers – and our environment – belong to everyone and are ours to protect. Now and then most of us travel beyond the borders of Sandisfield. Wherever we go, I'm sure most of us would prefer not to find ourselves on a river that might catch fire.

Bill Price, West New Boston

The Story Behind the Poem:

On the bright morning of September 11, 2001, I was sitting with Charlie and his mother two blocks north of the World Trade Center. Charlie (the musician) yelled "Jet Plane!" as it screamed over our building and then we heard an unworldly noise as it struck. As we raced down the fire stairs ... in one of those absurd moments, Charlie sprained his ankle and he staggered out the front doors of our building and ... there it was.

NINE ELEVEN

If I close my eyes
I can see the great wound
On the side of the building.
Even after sixteen years
A crimson wash
Is there.

And we are broken once again
On a crisp September morning
In New York.

*Val Coleman
West New Boston*

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING

Emergency Funding Approved for Rugg Bridge

By Ron Bernard

Thirty-four voters (5.6% of electorate) turned out at the Special Town Meeting on October 23 to amend five articles that had passed at the Annual Town Meeting last May and to decide if and how local funds would be used to assure repair of the failing Rugg Bridge on Route 57.

Select Board Chairman John Skrip explained why voters were being asked to reaffirm certain previously approved articles dealing mostly with administrative costs such as salaries and expenses for the Town's administrator, treasurer, and website manager.

He said that “mistakes and errors that occurred under past Select Boards and persons led to \$33,000 of increased administration expenses to rectify the problems.” There were also, he said, “failures in budgeting and accounting.” The amount will be transferred from existing accounts so there will be no need for a tax increase.

New Town Administrator, Fred Ventresco, said that in his ten years of experience in five New

England towns he'd never seen special meetings called for relatively small sums. Selectman Skrip acknowledged that the Board needs to generally budget enough money to cover contingencies so that special meetings are unnecessary.

The articles were approved by obvious majority. However, David Hubbard, a member of the Finance Committee, explained that the \$33,000 was not a hard number but rather one based on estimates. He said that better tracking such as use of a time clock would give the Board better information. Hubbard has been a champion of this concept, which to date has not been embraced by the Town.

The most important order of business that evening was Article 6, a request for appropriation of \$420,000 to supplement the State's tentatively approved \$991,000 grant to repair the Rugg Bridge. The extra money is needed because the approved (re-bid) to repair the bridge (decking and sub-structure but not the trusses) was \$1.2 million, still well

above original estimates. Additional unplanned costs for engineering and related functions have to be worked in as well. The Board also asked for a 7 percent allowance for potential further overruns. The Board recommended drawing \$220,000 from the Town's stabilization account, diversion of \$100,000 from the Chapter 90 highway account, and \$100,000 from bonding, as recommend by the treasurer.

Selectman Skrip explained that the Town had no choice but to approve the money otherwise the State will withdraw its tentative grant which is unlikely to be revisited. “The State expects a call from us in the morning,” he said. Fire Chief Ralph Morrison was more dramatic. He said, “If we don't approve this tonight, the bridge will be closed tomorrow morning and indefinitely,” adding that traffic would be detoured to the already sub-standard River Road.

The article passed easily but not before David Hubbard objected to taking almost one-quarter million dollars from the stabilization account. He said that this was an unwise approach. He also suggested that bonding would be difficult and expensive because “the Town recently failed its audit.” (*See box on page 1*). 🗳️

From Your Select Board

By John Skrip, Chairman

We are still working on the broadband issue. Jeff Bye and I have had several conversations with Frontier as well as MBI and our town attorney. All I can really say is we are separated by a few sentences and their meaning. I had hoped to have more and better news by now but we need to be comfortable with the agreement, and we are not quite there yet.

We just had a Special Town Meeting to go over six articles. All of the articles involved money and basically dealt with the fact that we have overspent on the following accounts: treasurer, tax collector and accountant, and town administrator. This is due mainly to the fact that we had to hire individuals to help with the accounting for the town's fiscal management. We are still trying to get complete verifiable numbers. This process has taken much longer than we had anticipated.

Another area that needed correction was the web site maintenance contract as this was not properly budgeted. These first five articles account for \$33,127 in cost overruns and non-budgeted areas.

Our greatest problem lies in the reconstruction of Rugg

Bridge. Most of you are aware the town received a grant for \$991,650 from the Commonwealth. However, the bridge bid came to \$1,236,052 and added to this was the engineering cost of \$82,721. We have built in a 7 percent overrun for the bridge which we hope we will not need and have allowed for post-bid engineering costs of \$70,000. We are trying to lower this figure as your Select Board feel this is excessive. If you are following the math, you see we are approximately \$420,000 short. In order to account for this shortage, we plan on taking \$100,000 from Chapter 90 Funds, \$220,000 from the Stabilization Fund, and borrowing \$100,000 from a lending institution. The repayment to the lending institution should be approximately \$28,000 each year over a four-year period.

Other news:

Our annual bulk waste and medical waste pick up has been completed. Three large dumpsters with many mattresses were hauled away – I hope you are all sleeping better now. Approximately 45 pounds of discarded meds and syringes were collected in the medical waste pickup.

Bob O'Brien, DPW supervisor tells us that our trucks, sand, and salt are ready for winter. Now, we must prepare for the coming weather mentally – you can tell this is not my favorite season.

Our new town administrator, Fred Ventresco, has been getting to know the Town and its residents. He has been putting in time to familiarize himself with the computer system and has scheduled standing meetings with office staff as well as work sessions with the town selectmen. These sessions will be announced with posted agendas on the town website as well as the normal process for town postings.

A decision is still pending on two grant applications: a handicap accessible van for Sandisfield and to improve wayfaring signs, speed signs, road postings, and intersection refinement. Both grants are through the Mass-Dot Grants Program.

Selectman Mark Newman is developing a more transparent process with the DPW department regarding work schedules. He is in the process of building a system that will document what work needs to get done long-term and each week, and at the Monday Select Board reporting the accomplishments of the week. There will always be potential for problems as we cannot predict the future nor predict town emergencies or sick or vacation days.

I enjoy the calls I get from taxpayers and will follow up on each call and e-mail as promptly as possible. Please contact me or Mark Newman with your suggestions and support. 413-258-4788 or johnskripjr@gmail.com. 🇺🇸

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The First Annual Fall Harvest Bazaar

By Billie Pachulski

On a gorgeous Indian summer day on October 21, the Sandisfield Community Center Committee held its first Annual Fall Harvest Bazaar on the playgrounds behind the Library. The children enjoyed pony rides provided by Sunny Rose Farm while adults looked over unique craft items that would make any “early” Christmas shopper ecstatic.



With great silent auction and raffle items donated by local businesses and individuals, including a bake sale with mouth-watering delicious goodies – calories don’t count when they are part of community event – the event provided fun for everyone. Along with more than a dozen individuals, sponsors included MJ Tuckers, New Boston Crane, Villa Mia, CW Nelson and Looking Glass Gardens, Sunny Rose Farm, When Pigs Fly Farm, Domeney’s, P&R Construction, SteelConnect, A&M Auto, and the Berkshire Rehabilitation Center. Special thanks to the Sandisfield Fire Department for the loan of the tables and Laura Messina for donating to the bake sale. Officer Mike Johnson took time out from “Coffee with a Cop” at the library to direct traffic and lend a hand.

The Community Center will host different events throughout the year – so check The Sandisfield Times for coming events as well as those great town gathering places at the Transfer Station, the Post Office and, of course, the Sandisfield Free Public Library. 



Subtle Variations

A LOCAL AUTHOR’S SHORT STORIES

By Val Coleman

“SUBTLE VARIATIONS” INDEED!

Miriam Karmel’s new book is a crochet of short stories ... a beautiful fabric of the adventures of generations of Jewish families in and around Chicago over the last 75 years or so. The stories stand alone aesthetically, but are bound together by Karmel’s Proustian prose which glides along with the Frenchman’s delicate taste and touch.

The book opens with “The Queen of Love,” a paean of praise to Nonna, the ultimate arranger, everyone’s grandmother, who lectures her family “on matters of the heart” and dispenses her conviction that “Women are smarter than men. But they should never let on!”

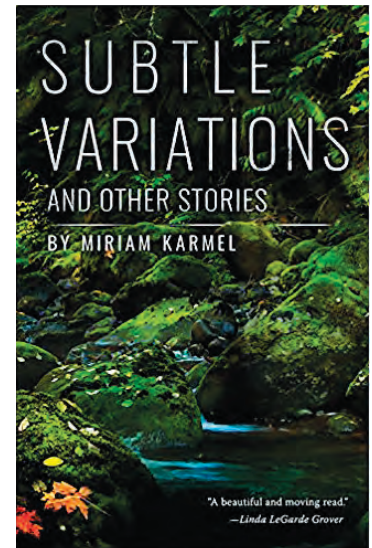
“You see,” says Sophie, the first person narrator, “love was Nonna’s stock-in-trade, something that pipsqueak rabbi completely overlooked when, years later, he eulogized her as a ‘housekeeper.’”

In the next story, entitled “Pocket Full of Posies” a new narrator kvetches about finding an appropriate place to stash her mother’s ashes while musing about the Catholic tradition of reliquaries. “If a church in Spain can display her (St. Avilia’s) finger bone ... why can’t I leave my mother on the mantle?” The memory of her own Nonna spices up her mourning but the most moving moment comes when the narrator heaps her mother’s clothes on the floor and rolls around in them, “soaking up her essence.”

Another story, “Place Cards,” relates a “royal” visit by relatives from Mexico (whose higher standing in the family is acknowledged by repeated mentions of one of them having posed for Diego Rivera and their ownership of the painting) in which the Chicago family pulls out all the stops. Their efforts to be gracious and welcoming are both funny and heartbreaking.

The final four stories are linked by the terminal cancer of Nora Hill, wife of William but complicated by her doctor, Lawr Marks, who has fallen in love with her. In “Subtle Variations” (the collection’s title story), Dr. Mark’s wife, Selma, an event caterer, refuses to organize a New Year’s Eve party for the dying woman but is captivated by her husband’s sensitivity to Nora’s dying hours.

In the final story, “Last Wish,” we meet Clara and Harry (Olympic champions of bickering) who end up at the “cheerless party.” Clara is the party-goer who makes the party work, who gently handles William and visits Nora upstairs before returning to the party. Miriam Karmel’s artful touch in the final paragraph:



[Clara] moves to the center of the living room, and lightly taps a spoon to the rim of a lipstick-stained glass. The room falls still, the guests lean in expectantly. Somebody coughs. Someone else clears his throat. The spoon slips from Clara’s hand and there is nervous laughter as she bends to retrieve it. Again she raises the glass, this time as if she means to offer a toast. When she can trust her voice, she says, “William had to leave the party early. He asked me to tell you ... Stay ...” her voice unsure. Then with greater conviction she adds, “That’s what William asked me to tell you. He wants you to stay.” They lean in, expecting more. “Oh yes, and he says have a good time.”

She raises the empty glass and offers a toast, “L’chaim!” 

Miriam Karmel, the author of *Being Esther* and now *Subtle Variations*, lives in West New Boston and Minneapolis.

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What's Happening With Yanner Park

Cont'd. from page 1.

the land – located about a mile up Town Hill Road from Route 57 – into a vibrant area of walking trails, a ballfield, a town gathering place, and more.

But by 2007, *The Berkshire Eagle* highlighted the “frustration” of Sandisfielders upset with the slow pace of progress. The Friends of Yanner Park disbanded soon thereafter.

Fast forward to 2017, and town residents are still waiting for their park. Today the park’s sign on the low stone wall parallel to Town Hill Road is hidden behind brush and the gates welcoming residents to the park are obscured by overgrown vegetation.

In the most visible sign that plans for the park are far from being realized, large portions of the land near Town Hill Road are now piled high with cut timber. According to Select Board Chair John Skrip, the town awarded a contract to an out-of-town firm – Jericho Valley Land Services of Stephentown, New York – after receiving lower bids from local loggers. Sandisfield has also hired a forester to oversee the logging of approximately 1,000 cords of ash trees.

The decision to pursue logging in the area was influenced by the trees’ “expiration date.” If not harvested, the trees would almost certainly fall prey to the dreaded emerald ash borer, which has devastated much of the ash in neighboring states and has been found in Massachusetts.

Proceeds from the tree-cutting in Yanner Park will go into the town’s general operating fund unless the select board votes on earmarking part or all of the money to turn the space into a proper recreational area. In a recent phone call, Skrip told *The Sandisfield Times* that the park is a “nice piece of property” and has real potential. But the Select Board chair emphasized that before the board can vote on what to do with the property someone from the town would have to present a concrete plan.

In fact, a plan already exists. Six years ago, park advocates revised the Conway School’s earlier designs for the property – which had been characterized by some as fanciful – and put forward a scaled-down proposal.

In its September 2011 issue, *The Times* outlined the scaled-down “Plan B,” which included reduced costs of \$2,000 for a softball field, \$2,000 for trails through the property, and about \$5,000 for benches, grading, and creating a parking lot. A small portion, actually, of the \$108,534.50 that the town will receive from the tree harvest.

The town’s newest Select Board member seems willing to support the park’s development. Before winning election earlier this year, new member Mark Newman told *The Times* that one of his goals was “to get Yanner Park working as a family recreation center for the town.”

Readers can find *The Times’* September 2011 articles about Yanner Park on our website at sandisfieldtimes.org, go to Library.

IT’S IN THE MASTER PLAN

“Revisiting past planning efforts for Yanner Park” is included in the Draft Master Plan for Sandisfield, prepared by the local Master Plan Committee and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. The Master Plan envisions “implementing new strategies for its use, and exploring [non-traditional] funding sources to better utilize and maintain this area.” Included also was the development of a trail network to integrate the park with “adjacent recreation areas, such as the Clam River Reserve and state lands to create seamless and contiguous spaces for outdoor enjoyment.”



Yanner Park ash trees, after harvest. Photos: Bill Price

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

The Larkins of Sandisfield and Great Barrington

A NEW FAMILY HISTORY JUST PUBLISHED

By Ron Bernard

Are you among the many who hope to write their family's history? Someday soon?

Count me in. An avid amateur genealogist, I love the subject and have binders and shoe boxes stuffed with old photos, family trees, and ageing documents. I will, no doubt, get around to preparing the story of my own family – one of these days.

Well, Mr. Fred Newman of nearby Winsted, did exactly that with his own family history, *A History of the Robinson and Larkin Families of Tuskegee, Alabama and Great Barrington, Mass.*

In hardcover and nearly 600 pages, Fred's family history was published in August 2017 as a limited edition. The book is not available for sale although copies have been placed in local libraries and with certain historical societies. See the note at the end of this report for contact information.

Fred's motivation for writing his family's history was a letter in 1964 from his mother's cousin that recounted the legacy of Larkins of Ireland who immigrated to America about the time of the Civil War. Among them was Patrick Larkin and his wife, Mary Quinn who married at Great Barrington in 1858. After the War they bought an existing farmstead in South Sandisfield where they raised nine children. Fred is their 2nd great-grandson.


Their story is interesting not only for people genealogically connected to the Larkins, but as a research tool about Irish immigration to this area in the 19th century. The Irish were the first ethnic group to settle in Sandisfield, joining the descendants of (English) pioneers from a century before.

Irish families moved in during Sandisfield's darkest economic period, in the early 1870s even as a proposed rail line failed to materialize, leaving many residents of the town in debt or destitute. Scores abandoned the land and Sandisfield. Yet the Irish were undaunted, bought land, and moved in.

It is difficult to imagine the hardships they faced.

Consider for example the plight of Mary Quinn Larkin. Patrick died in February, 1876, age 37, leaving nine young children and another on the way. And, between 1876 and 1878, Mary had to contend with the deaths of several of her children to diseases that were then rampant, like typhoid fever.

Thorough and well researched, Fred's book was documented over two years by professional genealogists. Larkin (and Robinson) descendants everywhere owe him gratitude for this tribute to their families' legacies. The family photos alone are a treasure trove.

For more information, contact Fred Newman at fwnewman@charter.net or at 860-379-5929. And I have a copy for reference. Contact me at ronbernard@aol.com. 



Mary Quinn Larkin, c. 1890s



The remains of the foundation of the Larkin house, South Sandisfield.

Photos: Fred Newman

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Sandisfield Historical Society



Holiday Fair, December 2

By Ann Wald, President

Another Apple Fest has come and gone. Thanks to all the members who donated their talents and time to make our fair a success.

A special thanks to the ladies of the Council on Aging for their wonderful pies and their generous donation. And another special thanks to Riiska Brook Orchards for the gift of two crates of their wonderful apples.

And thanks so much to Lynn and Steve Rubenstein for cooking, John Kuzmeh for making apple cider, Vicki Bakunis and family for running the tag sale, and Jo and Barry Freedman for taking care of our baked goods. Our 50/50 was won by a local resident.

On Saturday, November 11, Veterans Day, our local historian Ron Bernard will be our speaker. He will discuss the role of Sandisfield in our country's early wars. Ron is scheduled to speak at 2:15 p.m. Following his talk we will host our annual wine and cheese social.

As 2017 draws to a close the Society will be holding our annual Holiday Fair on Saturday, December 2 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m., at Firehouse #2. So far we have 29 vendors showing all types of products. Santa will be on hand between 11 and 1. Refreshments will be available, the Scholarship Committee will sponsor a penny auction, and we'll have raffles and crafts for kids. All are welcome to this special holiday event.

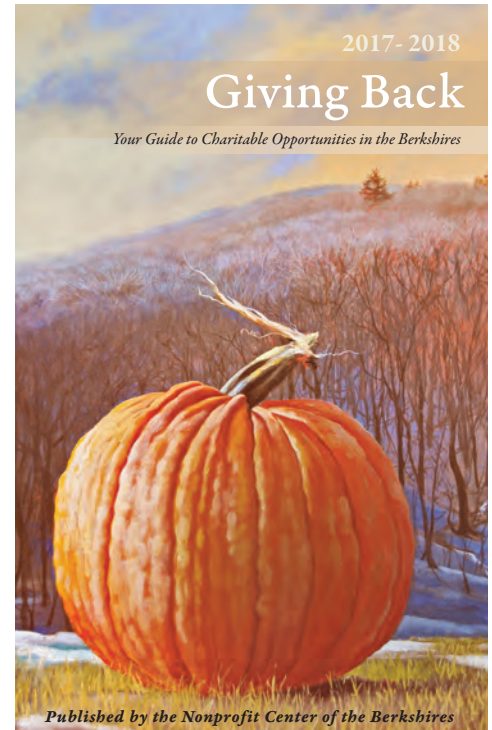
By early November residents should have received a letter inviting them to join our Society. We are soliciting funds to make it possible to connect both water and sewer – if we can locate exactly where each piece of plumbing is located to the building.

I really appreciate everything anyone has offered to help me with concerning the Society and our events. It's a good thing I am retired. I don't know how others have handled these affairs while working and running a house and raising children. Contact me at 413-258-4415 or annaw2@verizon.net.

OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS



Dr. Jeff and Laura Friedman of Hammertown Road buying eggs and cider at Riiska Brook Orchards in October.



Published by the Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires

The Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires, founded by former neighbor **Liana Toscanini**, has published the second edition of "Giving Back: Your Guide to Charitable Opportunities in the Berkshires," a directory of nearly 1,000 nonprofit organizations, including the Sandisfield Arts Center and *The Sandisfield Times*.



Fix It?

ACROSS FROM THE SILVERBROOK

During one of the windstorms late last summer, a limb of the ancient and distressed willow tree across from the former SilverBrook Café twisted off, hit the ground, and shattered into even more pieces. The chunks and brush are still there in West New Boston in a big unsightly pile near the bridge at the intersection of Silverbrook Road, Rt. 57, and South Beech Plain Road.

Will the brush eventually be picked up? By someone? Not likely the bank that currently owns the SilverBrook. Who? The Highway Department? 🙄



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MEMORY LANE

SANDISFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

The Big Willow

By Ron Bernard

Upwards of a million trees of many types and all sizes must cover Sandisfield. So it's easy to take trees for granted and even overlook certain majestic ones that help shape the character of Sandisfield neighborhoods.

One example might be The Big Willow, so called, that stands at the intersection of Rt. 57 and Silverbrook Road in West New Boston. It is near the bridge just across from the recently shuttered SilverBrook Café. This magnificent tree may have been planted by Montville resident blacksmith Levi King. His long-time smithy at this formerly busy spot was one of the last blacksmith shops to operate in Sandisfield.

Generations have appreciated the natural beauty of Big Willow. And how many have taken advantage of its protective shade on a hot sunny day or stopped to rest or chat with neighbors? Maybe you and some friends?

Alas, the grand willow, like its companion building across the road (originally a shingle mill, c.1853, then a Creamery co-op until 1919, then a series of taverns and restaurants until recently), has seen better days.

Both the building and the Big Willow are in sad states and in need of some major TLC. The hope is that the new owners of the building and this land, whenever they may emerge, will rejuvenate both important Sandisfield landmarks – before it is too late for either. It may already be too late for The Big Willow. ❖



An unidentified couple seated on a circular bench built around the willow tree, September 1981.



The Big Willow today, with an already dead leader-branch and a dead or dying neighboring tree.

Photos: Record/Sandisfield Times archives; Times photographer.

Mel Smells

By Tom Christopher

Mel Smells! is the title of a new book by local artist and Sandisfield Arts Center co-president, Sandy Parisky, and his daughter, Katherine, a science teacher at Birches School in Lincoln, Massachusetts.



Sandy Parisky and daughter Katherine, illustrator and author of "Mel Smells!"

If that doesn't pique your interest, then the subject matter should. It's the narrative of a fruit fly, Mel (which is short, one assumes for "melanogaster," the name of this species).

Fruit flies have, of course, been subjects of scientific study since at least 1908 when Thomas Hunt Morgan began to use them to uncover the rules of genetics. They continue to be important today – the 2017 Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine was awarded to three researchers for their foundational study of circadian rhythm in fruit flies. The Nobelists, incidentally, worked at Brandeis University where co-author Katherine did her post-doc.

Our authors use the fruit fly's story to introduce children to scientific concepts, including: smell, taste, and pollination. The conversational narrative is written to stimulate dialogue between reader and child, and to show that we have some surprising connections to the fruit fly.

In the story of *Mel Smells!* the reader follows Mel, a magnified and detailed rendering of the fruit fly, to a farmhouse. Illustrations move from the kitchen counter to compost pile as Mel describes the tastes he likes and dislikes. In following Mel through the kitchen, we learn about how he uses his senses to detect preferable juices.

Text and illustrations easily explain fruit fly behavior, making it a versatile science resource for elementary school teachers, nature educators, and parents. The narrative strikes a balance in covering scientific facts with a playful tone.

Presently, Katherine and Sandy are taking *Mel Smells!* to children book editors and publishing houses. ❖



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A Trip to the Orchards

Riiska Brook Orchards echoed with the laughter and hollering of young preschoolers from Farmington River Regional School one sunny morning in early October. Sixteen full-day and eleven half-day pupils, their siblings, and several of their parents spent the morning away from the coloring books and early math of preschool and learned instead about picking apples. They played catch in the Riiska's fields, counted pumpkins, and had a fine time on New Hartford Road in South Sandisfield. Barbara Riiska, shown surrounded by noise and laughter, gave each child a bag and said, "Go fill it up, honey." They did.

Photos: Dawn Lemon



Start Your Holidays with Joy and Laughter!

JACK AND THE GIANT BEANSTALK, DECEMBER 1, 2, AND 3

By Barbara Penn

The Sandisfield Players will present "Jack and the Giant Beanstalk" at the Sandisfield Arts Center's holiday presentation.

Be advised: This is not your ordinary "Jack and the Beanstalk." This adaptation is pure comedy, quirky, and hilarious. For example, an aria-singing harp, a chicken that lays a golden egg, the giant's wife who speaks in humorous rhymes. Based on Linda Daugherty's award-winning Dallas Childrens' Theater production, this version provides non-stop, side-splitting humor for the entire family.

As director Ben Luxon puts it, "This play is the nearest thing to pantomime in the British theater." He explains, "I was looking for a play for the holiday season, one for the entire family, a play everyone knows and one where I could have a great number of children on stage. And a play that would be just plain fun."

The cast includes seven children: Bleeker Coyne as Jack, and in other roles, Waverly Coyne, Baily Howard, Chloe Howard, Crosby Coyne, Mathew Folmer, and Claira Folmer. When I saw these young people at an early rehearsal of a sword scene (aided by Mr. Howard, father to two of the children and head of the Theater Department at the Berkshire School), the scene jelled perfectly as an absolute hoot.

The ten adults in the play are accomplished actors. Mary Anne Grammer (Jack's mother) and Jean



Atwater-Williams (the Giant's wife) always deliver with spot-on comedy and timing. Charles Fiddler as the Peddler is always an actor's actor. Ron Bernard, Steve Kopiek, Lauren Paul, Bib Baily, Laura Danehower Whyte, and John Funchion contribute greatly to the fun.

But worth the price of admission will be Ben Luxon as the golden egg-laying chicken. If for no other reason, come for this. You won't be disappointed.

As director Luxon points out, "One of the biggest challenges are the sets." Not to worry. Within the confines of the small Arts Center stage, Susie Crofut's sets create both an earthly village and a delightful magical kingdom in the sky.

Tickets are on sale now at sandisfieldartscenter.org for the three performances: Friday and Saturday, December 1 and 2 at 7 p.m., and a Sunday matinee on December 3 at 2 p.m. Adults, \$15; children 12 and under, \$5. Start the holidays with joy and amazement. 🍷

Harvest Flower Arranging class on Friday, November 17, at 2:00 p.m. at Old Town Hall. The cost is \$10. All the materials will be supplied. Please call 258-4816 to register so we will have enough for everyone.

We will also be getting ready for the Holiday Fair which will take place on Saturday, December 2. We'll have our usual Basket of Goodies as well as home-baked cookies. (See our ad on page 12.)

Remember we meet every Wednesday at the Town Hall Annex for a Pot Luck lunch. Everyone is welcome. We'd love to have you join us! A full list of coming events is available on the town web site. 🍷

Council on Aging

THE COA COMEDY CLUB

By Nina Carr

We've been a busy bunch for the last few weeks and have really enjoyed it.

Our Flu Clinic was a great success and, believe or not, the nurse who administered the shots said, "This is like going to a Comedy Club."

We also took part in the "Apple Fest" at the Historical Society and sold \$240 worth of apple pies. We will donate part of the profits to the Society. Thanks go to all of our wonderful pie bakers.

Coming up in November we will be having our

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SAT, NOV 4 8:00 PM \$20
GUITARIST JOEL BROWN

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& POT LUCK DINNER
1959 Alfred Hitchcock thriller
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FRI, DEC 1 7:00 PM
SAT, DEC 2 7:00 PM
SUN, DEC 3 2:00 PM

JACK AND THE
MAGIC BEANSTALK

Written by LINDA DAUGHERTY in 1996
Performed by the
SANDISFIELD PLAYERS and friends



These programs are supported in part by a grant from the Sandisfield Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

Fire/EMS/Police Logs

Police:

911 Calls by Sandisfield Residents

Submitted by Michael Morrison, Chief

South Main is Rt. 8 south of Tolland Road;

North Main is Rt. 8 north of Tolland Road.

September, 2017

- Sept. 1 Motor vehicle accident, Rt. 183
- Sept. 3 Tree down, North Main
- Sept. 4 Motor vehicle accident, North Main
- Sept. 6 Home alarm, Sandisfield Road
- Sept. 7 Home alarm, Lake Shore, Otis Woodlands
- Sept. 10 Medical call, Sandisfield Road
- Sept. 11 Home alarm, Hubbard Road
- Sept. 14 Keep the peace call, Hubbard Road
- Sept. 17 Motor vehicle accident, assist, Tolland
- Sept. 17 Home alarm, Sears Road



- Sept. 18 911 hang up, Beech Plain Road
- Sept. 19 Tree on wires, North Main
- Sept. 19 Home alarm, Lake Shore, Otis Woodlands
- Sept. 24 Tree on wires, North Main
- Sept. 25 Illegal burn, Sandisfield Road
- Sept. 16 Motor vehicle fire Town Hill Road
- Sept. 27 Medical call, Sandisfield Road
- Sept. 27 Disturbance, assist, Tolland
- Sept. 28 Tree in road, South Main
- Sept. 29 Animal call, Sandisfield Road
- Sept. 29 Disturbance, Hubbard Road

Fire:

September, 2017



- Sept. 1 Motor vehicle rollover
- Sept. 4 Motor vehicle accident
- Sept. 5 Illegal outside burn
- Sept. 17 Fire alarm, no fire
- Sept. 18 Fire alarm malfunction
- Sept. 19 Trees, power lines in road
- Sept. 24 Trees, power line in road
- Sept. 25 Illegal burn
- Sept. 26 Motor vehicle fire
- Sept. 28 Tree down in road

EMS:

September, 2017



- Sept. 1 Motor vehicle rollover
- Sept. 4 Motor vehicle accident
- Sept. 8 Medical call, transport
- Sept. 10 Medical call, transport
- Sept. 16 Medical call, Otis transported
- Sept. 16 Mutual aid to Otis
- Sept. 17 Mutual aid to Tolland
- Sept. 23 Mutual aid to Tolland
- Sept. 24 Tree on car, check for injuries
- Sept. 27 Medical call, transport
- Sept. 30 Medical call, transport



Annual Holiday Fair
 Saturday, December 2
 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Firehouse #2 on Rt. 57

Nearly three dozen vendors
 selling all types of products

Santa from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m.

Raffles, Children's Crafts,
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Just Married



Photo: Richard Migot

Jennifer Rudolph (right) and Kathryn Brenny of New York and Sandisfield were married on Saturday, September 30, at their home in Sandisfield Center. With party tents spread across the wide lawns at the former Sandisfield Center parsonage, some 175 guests enjoyed the weekend in the Berkshires at the pre- and post-wedding events. Jen's father, a retired judge, officiated. ♡



Letters to the Editor

We Like Letters Like This

Dear Editor: I just stumbled upon *The Sandisfield Times* and was blown away by the attractive layout, fonts, etc. What a beauty this is!

I do historical research and found your paper while assisting someone who had Jewish grandparents who had left NYC to come to farm, of all things, in West Stockbridge. I found an article that said many NYC Jews who took a similar route did it via the initiative of a philanthropist. The project was called Baron de Hirsch Project. Among the "results" that turned up in a Google search was a July 2017 article in *The Sandisfield Times*.

I know about Sandisfield because I drive through it on my way to White Flower Farms in Litchfield. I was surprised that Sandisfield had its own monthly newspaper, then I looked at several issues and saw how stunning it was! Absolutely everything is treated as if it was the most important article. The photography is brilliant, the reporting is concise, and the layout is awesome.

Your town is so fortunate to have such a group of skilled volunteers to provide them with such a beauty of a newsletter!

The obituary of Dora Oliverio reminded me of the story of Canadian painter, Maud Lewis.

I plan to put Sandisfield on my go-to list for the spring of 2018! I usually stop for lunch at the New Boston Inn on my way to Litchfield, but it's clear that I need to stop, check out your library and spend a day and find Spectacle Pond!

*Barbara Pelessier
Westhampton, Massachusetts*

An Evening Visitor

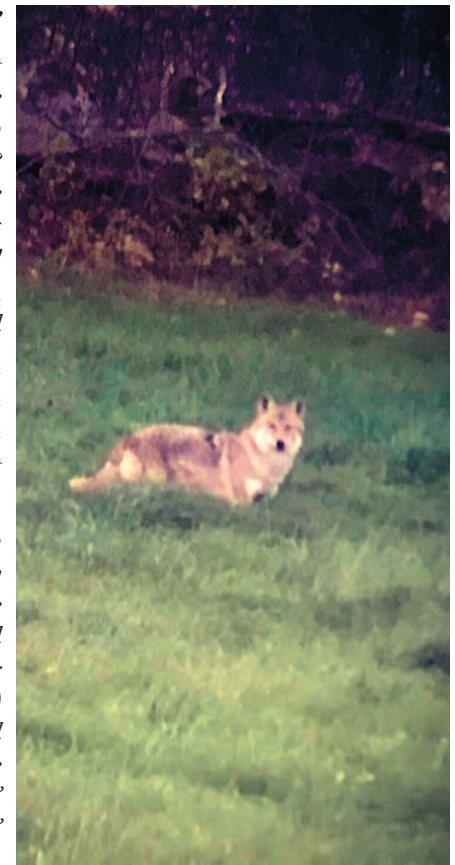
We had a visitor in our meadow at New Hartford Road at dusk October 12 and 14. Unfortunately this photo is the best I could muster as it was taken with an iPhone through binoculars at a distance of about 150 yards. Coyote? Wolf? Coywolf? On the 12th the visit was a surprise, but the second evening I had a feeling it was around as Maybelle's horses were spooked and, then, there it was!

*Alex Bowman
South Sandisfield*

Editor's note: We put the question to a Times subscriber in Vermont who is an expert on coyote behavior. In reply, Alan Boye wrote that the animal seems to be a classic Eastern Coyote. "The coloration is perfect. The size seems right: it looks well fed and getting a little shaggy for winter.

"The horses need not worry (tell that to THEM!). Although the Eastern Coyote by virtue of its wolf genes is more likely to chase healthy prey and to chase them in packs, horses are too much trouble. However, chickens, sheep, small pets, and other easier prey should take notice. The best way to deter these animals is noise (although they will get used to that) and by keeping open space between them and any potential food. If you have sheep, keep a good ten feet on either side mowed. Has your photographer heard the thing?"

Alan added: "Lovely photo."



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Now Hear This!

Edited by Laura Rogers-Castro. Please send notices for Now Hear This! to editor@sandisfieldtimes.org.

NOVEMBER EVENTS

Crafts for Kids with Lynn on Saturday, November 4, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Library, lower level. Story time at 9:30 upstairs, prior to crafting.

In the Gallery: Robin Thew Opening Reception on Saturday, November 4, at 2:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center at 5 Hammertown Road. The show will be on display November 4-25. For more information, visit sandisfieldartscenter.org.

Joel Brown on Saturday, November 4, at 8:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center at 5 Hammertown Road. Guitarist Joel Brown makes music that both soothes and excites. Online tickets are recommended to ensure a seat at sandisfieldartscenter.org. \$20.

Free Movie Night and Pot Luck Supper on Friday, November 10, at 6:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center at 5 Hammertown Road. Alfred Hitchcock's "North by Northwest" with Cary Grant and Grace Kelly. Tickets are recommended to ensure a seat at sandisfieldartscenter.org.

Wine and Cheese Open House on Saturday, November 11, at 2:00 p.m. sponsored by the Sandisfield Historical Society at the Old Meeting House on Route 183 at South Sandisfield Road. Local historian Ron Bernard will speak about Sandisfield's role in the country's early wars.

Church Service on Sunday, November 12, at 10:00 a.m. at the New Boston Congregational Church, Route 57. All are welcome. This month's service will feature guest speaker Bill Webster from Pittsfield.

Harvest Flower Arranging Class on Friday, November 17, at 2:00 p.m. at the Council on Aging, basement level of the Town Hall. Please call 258-4816 for information.

Blood Pressure Clinic on Wednesday, November 29, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Council on Aging, basement level of the Town Hall.

SAVE THE DATE



Jack and the Magic Beanstalk on Friday, December 1 and Saturday, December 2 at 7:00 p.m. and Sunday, December 3 at 2:00 p.m. Written by Linda Daugherty, directed by Ben Luxon, performed by the Sandisfield Players and Friends.

Annual Holiday Fair on Saturday, December 2, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m., at Firehouse #2 on Rt. 57. At least 30 vendors with all types of products. Santa will be present between 11 and 1. Refreshments available, the Scholarship Committee will conduct a penny auction, raffles, and crafts for kids. All are welcome.

NOVEMBER EVENTS IN SURROUNDING TOWNS

Community Yoga Class by Donation on Sundays from 5:00-6:00 p.m. at Lifeworks Studio, 50 Castle Street in Great Barrington. Join teachers in training for some movement, strengthening, and fun to wind down your weekend. For information, visit www.lifeworks-studio.com.



Ornament Weaving Workshop on Sunday, November 19 from 1:00-4:00 p.m. at the Monterey Community Center, 468 Main Road. Spend an afternoon learning to work with wheat straw to make a "Love Knot" and "Braided Heart." All material provided. \$40. Only 10 spaces in the workshop (adults only), so please call 413-528-5134 for a spot.



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Dear Reader:

We felt the photo on page 1 this month required color for our print edition. We felt the same way about last month's cover photo. We're not going to run color a third month in a row, for sure, and we won't do color often, since it is an additional cost and we try to be frugal with your donations. If you enjoy and value The Sandisfield Times, however, please donate as generously as possible to this year's Appeal. See the enclosed letter from our founding editor. Thank you for your support.

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.

Donations of any amount 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, the Library, and Town Hall. Copies are also available in Otis at Berkshire Bank, Katie's Market, Papa's Fuel, Otis Library, Farmington River

Diner, Otis Poultry Farm, Otis Woodlands (May-September), and the Laundromat. 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.

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