

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

Tribunus



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May 2020

Living with Covid-19

INTERVIEWS WITH YOUR NEIGHBORS, HUNKERING DOWN

By Bill Price and Ron Bernard

Introduction: Following are comments – almost like snapshots – of some of your Sandisfield neighbors regarding the Covid-19 pandemic.

So far, Southeastern Berkshire County has escaped the worst of it, according to Roger Kohler of the Sandisfield Board of Health. He reported that a handful of local residents have tested positive with Covid-19, but that “all have recovered and are out of isolation.” For a report from the Berkshire Rehabilitation & Skilled Nursing Center in New Boston, see accompanying article on page 5.

Sadly, our neighbor Ray Stollerman of South Sandisfield died in New York after voting in Sandisfield on March 3 and being advised, “Don’t go back to the city. Stay up here.” But Ray had family responsibilities there, so he and his wife Kitty returned to the city. They soon fell ill with the virus. Kitty lived, but Ray died within a few

con’t p.4

Going Away, Dreaming of Fish – and Gold

By Simon Winchester

There was this convoy of wagons, six of them at first, pulled up outside a bar somewhere near Suffield, Connecticut. It was two hundred years ago, and the men were transporting gold for the fighters in the Revolutionary War. The wagon-drivers probably shouldn’t have stopped off at the bar – but Tony Melloni is certain they did, and that two of the carts then went missing and they and their gold bars are buried in a field near where the bar once stood and Tony, armed with his trusty metal detector, is determined to find them.



Tony’s last day at the transfer station was April 29. He will be missed.

Photo: Simon Winchester

“The thing about buried treasure is that there are two kinds,” he told me from the doorway of his little red hut at the Sandisfield Transfer Station. “One kind you *hope* is there. The other kind you *know* is there. I know where this gold is buried and I’m going to do my best to get it.”

Treasure hunting and fishing – Tony loves to go with his sons up to the cold streams of Maine and fish for as long the sun is in the sky – are the twin passions of the genial, kindly, best-beloved 69-year-old gentleman who for the last six years has run our best excuse

con’t p. 8

School Budget Presented

COSTS RISE, MORE STUDENTS

By Seth Kershner

In a recent meeting to discuss the Farmington River Regional School District’s draft budget for the 2020-2021 academic year, school committee members and district officials portrayed the \$4.93 million school budget as the leanest possible spending plan for the coming year.

District business manager Eric Jensen said during the April 22 video-conference call that he had found several ways to save in the budget, including the elimination of a bus route for next year.

In past years, cuts included a popular supplemental program for gifted-and-talented students. “We are always sensitive to the fact that it’s public funds that we are using,” Jensen said in response to a question from the public. “Whenever we can find ways to save money, we will do that.”

con’t p.8



DRIVERS: PLEASE WATCH OUT FOR TURTLES IN MAY!



Paying Those Darn Taxes

HAVING DIFFICULTY? DEADLINE EXTENDED ONE MONTH.

By Bill Price

The spring property tax deadline in Sandisfield was May 1. But if you couldn't pay up, you have an option.

If you've run into financial hardship – particularly due to situations arising from the Covid-19 pandemic – you may receive a one-month deferral of interest and penalties until June 1. **Notify the Tax Collector that you are unable to meet the due date. Call at 413-258-4711, ext. 4.** Office hours are Monday-Thursday, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

While several Berkshire towns extended property tax deadlines for three months because of the pandemic, the Sandisfield Select Board decided to extend the deadline for just a month for those in difficulty.

Local governments – with usually limited reserves of cash – need property taxes to be paid on schedule. They rely on those payments to finance essential services, maintain town interest payments, and to keep on a carefully prescribed path of town financing. Changing any of that can throw carefully balanced plans off center, as well as create a potential nightmare of paperwork.

This year new options were provided for paying real estate, personal property, and excise taxes. Taxpayers could pay online through UniPay. On the Town of Sandisfield homepage (www.Sandisfieldma.org), find the Citizen Action Center and click Pay Bills Online. Two options are presented, either by electronic check or credit card.

Town Treasurer Terry Spohnholz pointed out that she prefers to work individually with people who have missed the deadline. "We will be glad to work with anyone in that situation," she said.

Two reasons she preferred not to further extend the deadline, she said, was that "forty percent of property tax payments are made from escrow accounts and half of the property in town is owned by nonresidents who presumably can afford payments, even in a pandemic." ❧

New Dates, Jobs, Who's Running For What?

COVID-19 RAN AMOK THROUGH TOWN SCHEDULES

By Bill Price

The revised date for the Town Caucus is Wednesday, May 13 at 7:00 p.m. at Old Town Hall at 3 Silverbrook Road. Due to the Covid-19 State of Emergency, the meeting may be moved to the new DPW building at the same address, which will allow more room for social distancing.

The Town Annual Meeting will be Saturday, June 20, at 10:00 a.m. at the DPW building.

The Annual Town Election will be Monday, June 22. Hours not yet available because the time the polls are open may be shortened due to Covid-19.

Early voting by mail will be available. No reason is necessary and you can vote from home. The application is available on the town's website and at the post office or voters can call Town Clerk Dolores Harasyko and an application will be mailed to you. Simply fill out the application and return it by mail. When ballots are available, they will be mailed to you. If you choose this option, be sure to follow all the directions on the Early Voting Envelope and sign it when returning it.

TOWN HALL AND TOWN BUSINESS

Select Board meetings are being conducted by conference call. To participate remotely you can call either 855-855-9834 or 518-860-1995, and enter Meeting ID number 1151075430#. To see agendas, visit the Town website and go to Minutes/Agendas. You can also sign up to have notices of town meetings emailed to you.

Although the Town Hall Annex is closed due to the pandemic, the Town Clerk can be reached at 258-4711, ext. 2.

Residents are encouraged to transact business with town departments via telephone or email. Business can also be conducted via the drop box location outside Town Hall, where a secure depository for payments and paperwork has been provided at the rear door of the Annex building.

All Town Hall departments can be reached by calling 258-4711, and dialing the correct extension. Email addresses can be found on the town's website: www.sandisfieldma.gov. If you are unable to find a particular email address, please use townmanager@sandisfieldma.gov and your note will be forwarded.

The Transfer Station is open as usual, but the attendant will not assist you with your trash. All non-essential meetings of town boards and commissions are postponed until further notice.

JOBS, JOBS, JOBS

Job openings have been posted on the town's website for: Finance Committee Secretary, Conservation Commission Secretary, and Transfer Station Attendant. For more information, visit the Town website or contact Roger Kohler at the Planning Board, Kathy Jacobs at Finance Committee or Paul Gaudette at the Conservation Commission.

ANNUAL TOWN REPORT

The Annual Town Report, normally published before the Town Meeting and mailed to residents, will not be distributed as usual, if at all. The Town Clerk reported that gathering the necessary data is impossible this year. The FY2021 Warrant, which is required by law, will be published before the Town Meeting. All reports will be collected later, if time and workloads allow.

Town Hall says: "Be well. We are all in this together."

THE ELECTION IN JUNE

Following are the offices open for election and individual who have announced or submitted papers:

- Moderator, one year. Simon Winchester (at caucus)
- Selectmen, three years. Mark Newman incumbent
- Town Clerk, three years. Dolores Harasyko incumbent
- Assessor, three years. Steve Kopicic incumbent
- School Committee, three years. Nick DellaGiustina (at caucus)
- Board of Health, three years. Victor Hyrcvich incumbent
- Planning Board, five years. No candidate yet.
- Constable, three years. No candidate yet.
- Constable, three years. No candidate yet. ❧

THANKS TO OUR DONORS

We have been surprised recently by a number of unsolicited donations from readers. That so many have generously responded at this time is a most welcome development. One donor's special generosity set a new record for an individual's contribution.

But what is the reason for this unexpected spurt in donations? We are living in a time of isolation and extreme social disconnection. We believe that this response is recognition that the Times helps to fill part of that connection void.

Like all newspapers these days, advertising revenue for the Times is down. And like other non-profits we are concerned that 2020 donations will be impacted by economic uncertainty, new tax rules, and a depressed stock market.

To those who have responded without being asked during this crisis, thank you very much. And thanks in advance to anyone who may follow during the year with a donation in any amount. ❧

Moving Forward with Broadband

By Tom Christopher

With residents feeling isolated during this period of social distancing, the desire for broadband Internet service grows only more acute in Sandisfield.

In response to an inquiry from the Times, Charter Communications corporate headquarters in Stamford, Connecticut stated that it remained committed to finishing installation within 12 months of completing “make ready” work—the preliminary job of inspecting the relevant utility poles and obtaining the release of licenses to install its cable on the poles. This work is progressing, according to Jeff Bye, Chair of Sandisfield’s Broadband Committee.

Whether the original completion target, which was projected to be sometime between August and November of this year, will be met is uncertain, given the current shutdown of non-essential businesses in Massachusetts and the attendant economic confusion. For a more detailed report on the status of the work, readers are advised to refer to Jeff Bye’s news update of April 20th, “Bringing Broadband Internet Service to Sandisfield,” which is downloadable from a link on the Sandisfield town website home page: www.sandisfieldma.gov

In the meantime, those who need to avail themselves of a broadband connection and do not have one at home, can go to the Sandisfield Public Library at 23 Sandisfield Road, or the Town Hall Annex at 66 Sandisfield Road. A recent visit by Times staff found both facilities closed to the public but the Wi-Fi on, and accessible from the parking lots. A list of additional temporary “hot spots” being installed in surrounding towns is available at www.masstech.org/wifi

OTIS WOODLANDS MAKES A MOVE

One new development is a plan under consideration by the residents of the Otis Wood Lands subdivision, which includes approximately 120 residences located within the borders of Sandisfield. Sandisfield’s agreement with Charter Communications would not provide broadband connections to these houses. However, on April 25, the Otis Wood Lands (OWL) Board passed a resolution to install underground conduits and link up to Otis’ broadband network. In mid-May, according to Peter Geller—current president of the Board of Directors, Wood Lands Club, Inc.—the entire membership of OWL will vote on the resolution and whether to approve funding for this project. 🗳️

The Fire Chief Says ...

By Seth Kershner and Bill Price

The first thing Fire Chief Ralph Morrison said was that he wanted The Times to include a big “thank you” to all the front-line people in Sandisfield: the men and women of the fire department, EMS, and police department, “and,” he said, “that includes the people who work at the New Boston Nursing Home. They’re all on the front lines in this stuff that’s going on.”

“Other than that,” he told The Times in late April, “knock on wood, we’re in good shape, We are short EMTs, but so is every other town.”

As the town hunkers down during this rare pandemic (the last one like it being a century ago), residents should take some comfort in knowing that Sandisfield Fire and Rescue is prepared to handle any emergency. EMTs are well stocked with PPE (personal protective equipment) – masks, gloves, and fire gear – used whenever they make a call. The department’s defibrillators, critical pieces of life-saving equipment, recently received their routine maintenance from an outside contractor.

As reported last month, the Fire & Rescue Squad approached the Select Board earlier this year to request funding for a new fire truck, estimated to cost around \$450,000. The Board requested that the Chief come back with specifications. In the interim the coronavirus hit, and the request, said Morrison, went “on the back burner.”

Meanwhile, he says, his department is “actively applying for every grant that is available” and the department was recently awarded a state grant of \$5,000 to purchase a washer-extractor, a type of heavy-duty washing machine essential to any modern firehouse.

“The fire gear is the most important piece of equipment a firefighter has,” Morrison said. During any emergency call, the fire-resistant clothing, hoods, and other gear can be exposed to harmful contaminants. Due to the size and weight of the equipment, normal washing machines are not appropriate. “Washing the gear down with hoses in the yard at the firehouse, like we used to do,” said the Chief, “was never good enough. This will be a lot better.”

The department received an earlier grant for \$2,900 for fire gloves and hoods, now on order. 🗳️

Select Board Report

Select Board meetings are being conducted by conference call these days. The call-in number to participate is posted on the weekly agendas, found at www.sandisfieldma.gov.

We are still working on the Town budget. Numbers still need to be finalized, but we will need to withdraw funds from Free Cash in order to avoid a Prop. 2½ override increase in taxes.

We are also continuing to deal with the Covid-19 emergency. Town buildings remain closed to the public, and the website has become crucial for communicating information and directives to our citizens. Please consult the Town website, for the latest updates.

In other issues, we are discussing the ongoing Yanner Park logging; Chapter 90 road repair projects for this year; temporary suspension of real estate tax penalties due to the state of emergency; setting up a process for cemetery burials and recordkeeping; the ongoing harassment of the Town by a resident using multiple time-consuming and costly Open Meeting Law complaints; and several items for the Town Meeting Warrant, including an Enterprise Fund for the ambulance service, and a bylaw amendment.

Note that the Town Meeting is currently scheduled for Saturday, June 20 at the DPW Building; rain date June 27. Town Election is set for June 22, and Town Caucus will be May 13. 🗳️

*Mark Newman, Chair
Brian O'Rourke
George Riley*

A POEM FOR VAL

Sandisfield’s Poet Laureate
Has fallen ill, but
Is on the road to recovery.
Currently indisposed, he’s
Given us no new poem
For this month.
We hope for next.

*Bill Price
West New Boston*

Living with Covid-19 can't from p. 1

days. (please see obituary, p. 17)

The virus is taking an economic toll, too. Unless we're already retired or have jobs that we can do from home – even with Sandisfield's lame internet connections – we're mostly out of luck.

For some of us, work has in large part simply disappeared. We're on lines at the unemployment office or food bank, and at the same time trying to home-school our kids. Self-quarantining has pretty much put an end to calls for house-cleaning jobs. Landscapers will still be at work because, regardless of the human condition, grass continues to grow and trees need to be tended and roads cleared when trees block them after blowdowns.

KEEPING A BUSINESS GOING

John Field

John W. Field Tree Service
Rood Hill Road, April 10

"My firm has fourteen employees, and it's been a challenge to maintain our payroll. Fortunately, we are on call to provide essential services to towns after storms, and the crews are able to keep safe distances because the work is outdoors. Government loan programs may help us keep going, but I'm not sure for how long or if there is a catch in the rules about repayment down the road.

"The office staff can work from home because they live in towns with better internet service. But my wife, a teacher, struggles to assist her pupils remotely. You do the best you can."

LACK OF MEDICAL ATTENTION A HARDSHIP

Mary Anne Grammer

South Beech Plain Road, April 9

"The isolation is not fun, but living here is already isolated so at least for me, in retirement, it is not a dramatic change. I really miss my routines, like shopping, church, exercise classes. Zoom is not a satisfying substitute for doing things like that.

"The worst thing in our case is that we have a family member who requires medical attention and physical therapy, but the home health nurses have stopped coming to the house mainly because they are seeing Covid patients. It's a similar situation for the PT aides. So that has been a difficult problem.

"As for the future, I don't think life will return to normal very soon. And I worry about the virus coming back again. A vaccine is a way off, so we may be in this condition for some time."

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A NEW HOMESCHOOL TEACHER

Dawn Odell Lemon

South Sandisfield Road, April 20



"Homeschooling sucks," says Dawn Lemon, mother of Ethan, 9, and Olivia, 6, students at Farmington River Regional School now at home, for better or worse.

"The school has been incredibly supportive," Dawn said. "The classroom teachers are available and communicating and checking in via email every day. We alternate weeks and days with online classrooms and paper packets." With special teachers also emailing daily with suggested work and projects, "at times, the workload gets overwhelming."

Dawn had already been working at a full-time job from home before the shutdown. "Now, I'm working full time AND teaching the kids full time. Depending on the day, the struggle is real."

The lack of sufficient internet service adds to her difficulties. "With three laptops trying to load a webpage on an inadequate system, it is beyond frustrating for the kids and the parents."

Some days, she acknowledges, the kids don't accomplish all of the assigned schoolwork, "but life's lessons can be more intense, more powerful, and more real. We take walks and bike rides on good days to forget about the schoolwork, the abnormality and the unknowns of the epidemic. If the dirt roads are a mud pit and make a bike ride not so much fun for the kids, we turn to a new lesson for the day: "There are obstacles in life we have to overcome!"

In Dawn's opinion, the emotional and mental health of the kids is more important than staying up-to-date on schoolwork. Like other parents unused to homeschooling their kids, she worries that they will fall behind. "Then I remember we're all in the same boat. If my kids fall behind, so will most of the others." What helps, she said, are the support and constant group texts with other parents.

She acknowledges that she has it easy, that she was already used to working with computers and from home, and she has only two kids. She knows other mothers with more kids, some of whom know little about how to use a computer or have no internet service at all, or are single mothers facing a much harder burden.

"It's not all about the new home-schooling parents and how they struggle," she said. "More importantly, it's about the kids and how they struggle. The kids miss their friends, their classmates, and their teachers immensely, constantly asking when they can go back to school and when can they have friends over?"

Dawn believes that her kids will continue to learn something new daily, "even if it's not on the curriculum. Parents will have plenty of time to improve as home schoolers, since school will not be back in session until September. I'm confident I can speak for many parents when I say I believe that all of us – students and parents – will have a new appreciation and love for our schools and teachers and what they really do for us."

THE APPLE TREES ARE IN BLOOM

Bill Riiska

Riiska Brook Orchard
New Hartford Road, April 19

Immune to the coronavirus, fruit trees go on about their work – sap rises, blossoms attract bees for pollination, and the trees need to be pruned, sprayed, and watched over.



Their caretaker, Bill Riiska, has been following the advice of the experts, he said, and sheltering in-place since mid-March. He's kept his social interactions to a bare minimum, communing with his trees and planning what vegetables to grow again in his greenhouse.

"It's not been easy," he said. "It gets pretty lonely up on the farm." His dog, SadieJo, keeps him company. "We've been hunkered down for over a month, Sadie and me."

Bill's got his early vegetables started in the greenhouse, which he says, "I really enjoy. It gives me hope for the future and something to look forward to."

Bill is optimistic that things will start getting better soon and hopeful he will be able to allow customers to come up the hill and pick apples come fall.

GETTING BY WHILE HELPING OUT

Vicki and Pauline Bakunis
River Road, April 18

Vicki and her daughter, Pauline, have made dozens of face masks for people who requested them from their Etsy shop and for a few workers at the nursing home and the staff at Price Chopper in Great Barrington. Gratis, because Vicki and Pauline felt like helping out however they could.

They've added a local touch. "Since people have to wear them a long time," Vicki said, "we started crocheting 3-inch strips with buttons to use the back of the neck, which has to be more comfortable. And its homemade, so maybe it feels better."



Pauline, Assistant Town Clerk, has been keeping up with dog licenses and other work from home. "Dolores and I are in touch by phone and email," she said of her boss. "But I miss seeing everyone and being able to kid around with people who come into the office."

Often employed as a cleaner for second-home owners, Vicki has had no jobs all spring. "A lot of New Yorkers have come up to Wildwood in Tolland, but no one has called about house cleaning. Many of the individual second-homeowners just haven't come up yet and aren't sure when they will be. I'd be reluctant to go into a house to clean anyway. One of my Sandisfield clients has been in quarantine a month already and does not allow anyone in their home."

Vicki's husband, Ray, is still working construction, but Vicki said it's on a reduced crew and the workmen keep their distance from each other, as much as they can. Her son, Bill, who does yard work for clients is okay since his jobs are outside and he works on his own.

LIFE REALLY IS HOW YOU SEE IT

Barbara Penn
Life Coach and Tai Chi Instructor
Hammertown Road, April 19

Barbara said that even in what surely are "the worst of times" for so many people and families, "where for all of us, death is not a distant possibility but a shadow that looms large and just around the corner, I asked myself can I get out of my head and find some opportunity to do something to help and heal myself and others?"

She decided that she could. "When my classes and workshops were cancelled, I thought I could offer a free telephone 'meditation-play' hour each Tuesday at 11:00 a.m. where anyone who wanted to could attend online, listen to a few 'ways' I have learned over decades of Zen practice and other kinds of teaching, some ways to be OK even in the midst of fear and anxiety."

It isn't exactly what she likes to do. "What I like to do is hug my friends and students and family, see them face to face, touch. But I thought we could connect by sharing this little online Tuesday space ... and as I slowed down, I also became grateful for the beauty of Sandisfield which now stood out in sharp relief. Our mountains, rivers, tiny streams, and lakes, the animals hidden in the forest all around us ... the dirt roads (even the rocks in the dirt roads), the wildflowers popping up from the snow, and mostly the ancient trees which have weathered many, many storms and still stand and bloom."

RETIREES AT HOME

Clare and Gene English
Carpenter Lane, New Boston, April 18

"It hasn't been bad," said Clare. "Good thing we're used to staying at home."

But she's getting bored. "All my spring cleaning is done, some of it twice. Every room is spotless. We had a lot of jobs Gene and I didn't want to do for a long time. They're all done."

As for grocery shopping, she said, "We're wearing masks and gloves when we go anywhere. For groceries, we usually go to Katie's in West Otis. She's open now, but you have to call ahead and she will hand you your bag on the steps outside. You know they have the best meat anywhere."

"We went to the supermarket in Lee and only about 40 percent of the customers were wearing masks. The others didn't seem to care. A woman bumped into me with her overloaded cart, then sneezed and coughed on me. When we got home, Gene said, 'OK, take everything off and shower.' He washed all my clothes 'from stem to stern.' I think it's mostly the younger people who don't seem to get it."

And getting out of the house is a double risk. "We'd go for a walk by the reservoir, but can't now because the bears are out of hibernation. We're not going on walks and all my spring cleaning is done, so we've been doing a lot of reading. I always read two or three books a week anyway, so not much of a difference there. We play a lot of dominoes."

They are coping, but would rather be done with it. "It breaks our hearts not to be able to see our daughter in Boston," she said, "but we're just thankful to God we are well, have food and shelter, and, for me of course, that we have a working telephone." 📞

Stuck at home with computer woes?

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www.BizTechAssociates.com



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Contact Barbara at (516) 527-9627

At the Nursing Home

WORKING HARD TO KEEP COVID-19 AT BAY

By Bill Price

One patient at the Berkshire Rehabilitation & Skilled Nursing Center in New Boston tested positive for Covid-19 in early April, but was treated and, toward the end of the month, retested and cleared of the disease. Tim Brown, spokesman for Athena Health Care Systems, the nursing home's parent organization, said that as of the end of April no other patients were positive for Covid-19, and that tests are routinely conducted throughout the facility.

The building closed access very early in the pandemic, sequestering, in a way, the 57 patients and 80 staff members nearly two weeks before the state closed down. Since then, Ms. Andrea Bell, the facility's administrator, said that the home had been following strict guidelines from the Department of Public Health and the Center for Disease Control and that the facility is in touch with Roger Kohler of the Sandisfield Board of Health.

"Everyone is working incredibly hard here, under difficult conditions, and the patients

are cooperating 110 percent," she told The Times. "We're practicing social distancing."

She added, "Therapies are conducted in patient's rooms, using telemedicine for doctor visits." She said the procedure was new to her, "to have doctors on a screen." She said that patients have adjusted to the changes and work well with the staff to make the new guidances work.

Patients, whose families have not been allowed to visit since January, use Facetime and smartphones to keep in touch. The staff accepts packages sent to patients but opens them and disinfects the contents before passing them to the recipient.

"The staff here," Andrea added, "are dedicated hard-working individuals who, I think, truly define the word 'Team.' Heroes live and work at Berkshire." 🇺🇸

To Help Families Cope

By Nina Carr

Families in Sandisfield and Otis have been practicing "social distancing" for over a month now, and everyone with kids knows, whether they are toddlers or teenagers, there are many challenges. Fortunately, the folks at South Berkshire Kids know that too and are here to help.

Normally we offer two free playgroups a week in the area, at the Otis Town Hall and the Monterey Library. Now, with the new restrictions, we knew we'd have to reach out to our families to try and fill the gap.

Jess Maloney, our fearless leader/coordinator, came up with a great idea which fit our very rural area perfectly. Using supplies already on hand for the playgroups, we made up bags filled with arts and crafts supplies, as well as books, and delivered them to the families. It was wonderful to see how a new book or new crayons can delight a child. We were able to serve a total of 21 kids in 12 families in Sandisfield and Otis.

Don't forget the "Book Box." Families can always check out the "book box" in front of the Farmington River Diner in Otis. We will keep that stocked as well.

South Berkshire Kids is funded by the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) grant provided by The Department of Early Education. Contact us at 413-464-5095 or southberkshirekids@gmail.com. 🇺🇸

The "We Miss You" Parade

FRRSD WAVES HI TO THE KIDS

By Times Reporters, Photos by Dawn Lemon



The "We Miss You" Parade on April 15 was fun, heartwarming, uplifting, refreshing and full of nothing but love and affection.

Missing their students and everyone else, including each other, teachers and staff from the Farmington River Regional School – the public grade school for Sandisfield and Otis kids – hit the road in mid-April for a "wave-along" journey through both towns.

Starting at the school yard, and keeping their distance from each other, the paraders drove through Otis and across

23 to Town Hill Road and down it to Rt. 57, then east to Villa Mia where they turned around and headed back up Rt. 8 to East Otis as far as Papas parking lot, then back to Rt. 8 and the school.

Some had come from as far as Pittsfield and Westfield to show their love and support while the school is closed, now until next fall.

A parent who took part said not a few teachers and staff members and parents

shed tears of joy. With their vehicles decorated, drivers beeped their horns, yelled out "I miss you" and "hi" to students and their families along the roads, with kids and parents shouting back their love and "miss you a lot!"

Several neighbors not on the route wondered what was going on with all the sirens blasting. The sirens were caused by enthusiastic emergency personnel and others who had chipped in as drivers and guardians along the way: 🇺🇸

- Ralph Morrison, Fire Chief, drove Sandisfield car 1
- Mike Morrison, Police Chief, and junior firefighter Alec Morrison, drove the first police cruiser
- Daniel Hamill, Police Chief, drove the Otis police cruiser
- Gary Bottom, Sandisfield fireman, drove tanker #2
- Rico Sanchez, EMT, drove the Sandisfield ambulance
- Mike Johnson, police officer, drove the second police cruiser
- Eric and Matt Pachulski, Sandisfield Fire Department, drove engine #1
- Otis Fire Department: John Kennedy, Richie O'Brien, Rick Phair
- Gary O'Brien Property Management: Gary and Kristen O'Brien



Looking for Local Food Sources?


Among Hill Town food shops and restaurants, the Covid-19 crisis has had varying effects. In Sandisfield, New Boston Inn and Tucker's is closed for the time being. Open in Otis are Katie's (for groceries), and for take-out food orders Knox Trail Inn, the Grouse House (who tell The Times they're actually doing fairly well), and Fratelli's. In New Marlborough, Cantina 229 and Inn on the Green remain open on a limited basis for take-out and delivery. Potential customers should call ahead.

On April 24, the Berkshire Edge reported on the curious case of the Mill River General Store. Although it has not served food since a change of owners over the winter, the store will continue operating Monday through Saturday, 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., and Sunday, 7:00 a.m. to noon. For reasons of public health, full access to the store is temporarily restricted. The only item on sale? Newspapers, which are now located on the porch for purchase with a money receptacle.

FARMINGTON RIVER'S FREE FOOD PROGRAM

The Farmington River Regional School has food available for any child, 21 years and under, as well as for the elderly to keep them fed during the pandemic. At this time food is being donated by a variety of organizations, associations, local businesses, and private residents. Boxes of food may include canned goods, boxed and frozen food as well as milk, fruits, and vegetables.

- For families with young children, boxes of food are picked up and delivered every Monday.
- For seniors, boxes of food are delivered every two weeks. (The most recent delivery was April 28.)
- To sign up, contact **Kendra Rybacki: 413-717-7927, Krybacki@frsd.org**. Be sure to provide her with your last name and the number of children and seniors that need food.
- Pick up at Farmington River Regional School, 555 North Main Rd. (Rt. 8), Otis, MA 01253.
- Pick-up is preferred as volunteer drivers are very limited. If interested in volunteering to deliver food boxes in Otis or Sandisfield, please contact Kendra.

Please share this information with your neighbors. 



STORES WITH DESIGNATED SHOPPING HOURS

For those who do their shopping in Great Barrington, the following is a **list of stores with special shopping hours for immune-compromised and senior shoppers:**

- **Aberdale's**
(consistently well stocked with paper products)
1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m., 7 days a week
- **Berkshire Co-Op Market**
10 a.m. – 11 a.m., 7 days a week
- **Big Y World Class Market**
(all customers must wear masks)
7 a.m. – 8 a.m., 7 days a week

- **Big Y Pharmacy**
7 a.m. – 8 a.m., Monday thru Friday
9 a.m. – 10 a.m. Saturday and Sunday
- **Bizalion's Cafe and Market**
10 a.m. – 11 a.m., Sunday thru Thursday
9 a.m. – 10 a.m., Friday and Saturday
- **CVS Pharmacy**
8 a.m. – 9 a.m., Monday thru Friday
9 a.m. – 10 a.m. Saturday and Sunday
- **Price Chopper Market 32**
7 a.m. – 8 a.m., 7 days a week
- **Price Chopper Market 32 Pharmacy**
7 a.m. – 8 a.m., 7 days a week
- **Walgreen's (formerly Rite Aid)**
8 a.m. – 9 a.m., Monday thru Friday
9 a.m. – 10 a.m., Saturday and Sunday

Places to get food and take out in Otis

Fratelli's (Italian food)

Rte. 8, Otis Center
Monday and Tuesday closed.
Wednesday and Thursday,
3 p.m. – 8 p.m.
Friday, Saturday and Sunday,
12 noon – 8 p.m.
Food menu and pizzas, for pick up.
Call to order in advance 269-4900

Grouse House, Rte. 23, near Otis Ridge

Thursday – Monday, 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Order from full menu
Please pay with cash in envelope with your name.
269-4446 or text/call Jim at
413-329-2332 to order. Three-day advance reservations for food recommended.

Katie's Country Store

Rte. 23, E. Otis Road, E. Otis
Daily 7 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Call in orders between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. for curbside pick up
Receiving regular deliveries of groceries, fuel, butcher/deli items, beer, wine and liquor.
413-269-7485

Knox Trail Inn

Rte. 23, E. Otis Road, E. Otis
Tuesday – Sunday 4 p.m. – 8 p.m.
Complete menu for takeout
Beer and wine for takeout. Curbside only. Preferred payments by credit card.
269-4400.

Otis Poultry Farm, Rte. 8 North

Thursday – Tuesday 6:30 a.m. – 6 p.m.
May 1st will be open 7 days a week.
Grocery items, chicken pies, eggs, poultry, dairy items, toilet tissue and paper towels. Gallons of water and individual water, cold beverages.
269-4438.

Papa's Healthy Food & Fuel

2000 E. Otis Rd (Rte. 23)
Monday – Sunday – 7 a.m. – 8 p.m.
Have increased grocery inventory, fresh produce, drinks and snacks, both organic and traditional.
Offering food-to-go specials, plus lunch and dinner takeout meals for two. Gas prices under \$2 per gallon.
Curbside pick up and local delivery available. Call in orders at 269-7779, ext. 215, or deli at ext. 216, office at ext. 203 or 202, auto shop at ext. 201 or 204.

List reprinted (edited for space) with permission from the May 2020 issue of the Otis Observer.

**School Budget Presented
con't from p. 1**

"In order for us to provide education for our students there is a cost attached to that," Otis resident and School Committee member Carol Lombardo said. "As a committee, we try to keep the budget as low as we can without sacrificing educational quality."

Because schools have been closed due to the Covid-19 crisis, Jensen predicts further savings in the area of student transportation. He plans to discuss the details of these savings at the upcoming May 4 School Committee's meeting.

**WITH INCREASED ENROLLMENT,
ADDED COST**

In March, The Times reported that Sandisfield was facing an 8.9 percent increase in the amount it contributes to the regional district. While

spending rose across all areas, from student busing to health insurance for active and retired FRRSD employees, a major reason for the bigger bill was that a greater proportion of Sandisfield students are now attending FRRSD.

Sandisfield currently sends 99 students to the Farmington River Regional School, a K-6 school in Otis. Sandisfield's contribution is based on its share of enrollment, as well as a complicated state education cost-sharing formula based on three-year averages. As Jensen and others were careful to point out during the meeting, over the past several years Sandisfield's share of the student population has been increasing. According to data provided by Jensen, as recently as FY19 Sandisfield students accounted for 37 percent of district enrollment. For the upcoming fiscal year, Sandisfield's share of enrollment hovers around 41 percent of the total.

**Going Away, Dreaming of Fish – and Gold
con't from p. 1**

for a community center, the town dump. He is leaving us now, going back to his home on South Sandisfield Road and buying himself a new fishing pole and a new-fangled device for finding where metal has been left behind in places underground. "Beaches and fields, sure, wedding rings people have dropped, cufflinks. But that's chance stuff. Gold, now that's another matter." He heard tell of a man across in England who had been doing this for forty years and just last month had found a hoard of Saxon gold coins, and now he's about to become a millionaire. "That's my dream," said Tony.

Tony's forty years – he was born on a farm in Suffield and knows a thing or two about flowers and crops and birds and animals – were spent driving a forklift truck in the Hasbro warehouse, moving cartons of GI Joes and My Little Ponies and Monopoly sets. They cut him loose in 2014,

and then he saw the ad for a dump superintendent. "I never thought I'd get the job – but then they saw I'd been at Hasbro for all that time and was reliable. They hired me on the spot."

I told him how beloved he was. "Well, I tried my best," he said. And now he'll have time to try fishing again. "But most of all, there's the gold. I know just where it is. I think so, at least."

**REMEMBERING
OUR HEROES ON
MEMORIAL DAY!**

**ARE WE SPENDING MORE THAN
OTHER TOWNS?**

When it comes to education spending as a proportion of the total town budget, Sandisfield is well within the norm. Data made available during the meeting showed how much each municipality in Berkshire County spends on education as a share of total spending. In FY18, the most recent year for which data are available, Sandisfield's education expenditures represented around 43.12 percent of its total municipal spending, lower than the county average of 45.47 percent.

This data, along with other slides used in Jensen's presentation, are available on the FRRSD website: <https://frrsd.org/>

CLASSIFIED ADS

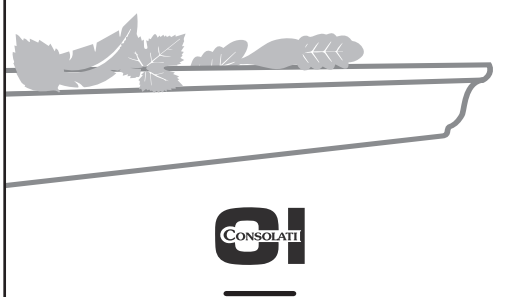
For sale. **Canoe.** Old Town Discovery 158, green, w/ paddles and two life jackets. \$450. Tom O'Gara, 258-4537 or torgara_5@hotmail.com.

LIVE FREE with local author. Val Coleman is **looking for a roommate. Rent free.** Spacious house. 5 Beech Plain road. Details: (413) 429-8139.

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THE MORE THE BEARIER

By Bill Price

Nothing to do while we're all in lockdown? In April you could drive around and look for bears. You still can.

Of course, for Pete's sake, we're always on the lookout for bears in Sandisfield. Especially at this time of year when they're coming out of hibernation with a hunger for something to eat.

But Lynn Ruby thought of another kind of bear hunt, one that might amuse home-bound kids and their parents and maybe just anybody.

She posted on the ConnectSandisfield Facebook page an invitation to a Bear Hunt.

"Goin' on a BEAR HUNT! Join the fun! If you'd like to participate, simply place a stuffed bear in a window of your home so when families go for car rides or walks during this quarantine, they can hunt for bears!"

Some of our neighbors did just that. The Times asked for pictures, and here are a few bears that were found and identified. 🐻



- *A bear and a moose watching for you to drive by. Justin Olson*
- *Two in the yard. Lynn Rubenstein*
- *A big bear in the doorway. Megan Smigel*

Complete the Census!

The 2020 U.S. Census will determine congressional representation, direct hundreds of billions in federal funding every year, and provide data that will impact communities for the next decade.

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You can complete your questionnaire online, by phone, or by mail.

The 2020 U.S. Census will ask a few simple questions about you and everyone who is or will be living with you on April 1, 2020.

Please note that if someone is staying with you temporarily on April 1 due to the COVID-19 situation, they should be counted where they usually live. This includes college students, who should still be counted at school, even if they are home early because of the COVID-19 situation. If they live in student housing, the college will count them. If they live off campus, they should respond for the off-campus address and include any roommates or other people living there.

If someone is staying with you on April 1 who doesn't have a usual home elsewhere, please include them in your response.

Please take a moment to complete your form online, by phone, or by mail when your invitation to respond arrives. Visit <https://my2020census.gov/> to begin. 🐻

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A Walk in Sandisfield and Otis

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Xenophobia: What a Difference It Made Being “Asian”

By Setsuko Winchester

In early March, as the virus began ramping up in this country and reports of anti-Asian attacks began rising, a friend here in Sandisfield sent me an email. She related an incident she witnessed back in February when people were still traveling. “At a wedding gathering in Michigan a few weeks ago,” she wrote, “the children were warned not to pop the bubble packaging that a few of the gifts were packed in because they contained ‘Chinese air.’ The racist undercurrent of this was palpable and reprehensible.”

While it seems innocuous, it shows how deep the fear of Asians as “other” goes. At the time, Italy was on its way to becoming Europe’s ground zero for coronavirus with the number of infections and related deaths eventually surpassing China. While folks were alarmed over possible bubble wrap air from China, we didn’t seem to have similar concerns over possible “Italian fumes” that might come out of a bag of imported pasta.

In March, President Trump—who originally called Covid-19 the “China virus,” as if it were not happening anywhere else in the world—had cleverly morphed the adjective to the more expansive and yet specific “Chinese virus” to stigmatize an entire diaspora of people.

By the end of the month, authorities and Asian American Civil Rights groups were reporting hundreds of anti-Asian attacks which ran the gamut from verbal insults, to being spat at on street corners, punched in the face in the subway, struck on the head with an umbrella on a bus—even the stabbing and attempted murder of a two-year-old Asian girl and her Asian family at a grocery store in Texas in mid-March because the assailant thought they were Chinese.

At this time, a friend active with the local chapter of the NAACP, the noted civil rights organization, contacted me asking if I was okay. She knew I am an outspoken and opinionated American and most relevantly Asian. She said it was a dangerous time to be outspoken and Asian and said I should be careful. She herself was upset because she had been the target of anti-Asian attacks on the Internet before and she said she had just received a disturbing message on her Facebook Feed. (See inset.)

More alarming to me was the Surgeon General’s recent use of the term “our Pearl Harbor moment” to describe an anticipated surge in cases of Covid-19.

Pearl Harbor is not a neutral term. It is loaded and used to inspire hate and fear against an Asian group and is code for the eventual suspension of individual rights, giving the military a free hand to do whatever

it “deemed necessary.” It is most often used in the following two ways: “The Japanese? They had to put you away ... Pearl Harbor.” The other one is a variation on the first, “They had to be nuked. They started it ... Pearl Harbor.” It’s a comment I have heard many times working on talk shows in NY City and Washington DC and even at dinner parties here in the Berkshires.

sweeping federal legislation targeting Asians or Asian Americans because they were considered “not White,” many in the media and public remained silent.

As the virus started to hit closer to home, with New York becoming the epicenter of the coronavirus for the nation and New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo’s own brother (CNN host Chris Cuomo) being affected by the virus, the disease and the fear ceased to be something way over there in China or something that only affects those with “slanty eyes, black hair, brown eyes and short stature.” The fear was here. It was real and expanding. Xenophobia, or “fear of the stranger,” now included all New Yorkers of whatever race or group as residents started to flee the city. Many headed to the Berkshires, some right here to Sandisfield, to escape to their second homes or rentals. As tensions grew between locals who felt vulnerable and ill prepared, a local public radio personality talked about feeling self-conscious even driving with a New York State license plate.

But in contrast to the relative silence over the President and his administration’s use of the terms “Chinese virus” or “Pearl Harbor moment,” there was indignant outpouring from the local media and politicians against any stigmatizing of New Yorkers during these difficult times. The contrast was noticeable and meaningful.

It shows why race and leadership matter. Race matters because if things become really critical, someone desperate could always change their license plate or rent a local car, but you can’t easily change your face. Leadership matters because if you had good and wise leaders, you hopefully wouldn’t have to contemplate doing either. 🇺🇸

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Covid 19 Warning Signs

- Fever**
- Dry Cough**
- Troubles breathing**
- Slanty eyes**
- Tiredness**
- Bad driving**
- Aching muscles**
- Nasal congestion**
- Short stature**
- Runny Nose**
- Good math skills**
- Diarrhea**
- Black hair, brown eyes**
- Difficulty breathing**
- Knows kung fu**
- Pressure in chest**
- Loves you long time**

For those who may take offense at this point, I would just like to add a historical note that most Japanese Americans at the time were US citizens and thousands went on to serve honorably overseas after either volunteering to serve or being drafted out of the US concentration camps. In addition, no American of Japanese ancestry was ever found guilty of any act of espionage or treason. And yet, just like in 1942, 1924, 1913, 1908, 1894, 1882, years when this country passed



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Police/Fire/EMS Logs

NOTE: North Main Street is Rt. 8 north of New Boston Bridge; South Main Street is south of the bridge.



POLICE

February 2020 Incidents

- February 2 Motor vehicle accident, Prock Hill Road
- February 2 Medical call, Tolland
- February 2 Burglar alarm, North Main Street
- February 5 Chimney fire, Tolland
- February 5 Assist citizen, Sandisfield Road
- February 6 Disabled motor vehicle, Town Hill Road
- February 7 Motor vehicle accident, Route 183
- February 8 Domestic dispute, Sandisfield Road
- February 9 911 call, hang up, Sandisfield Road
- February 10 Investigation, Hammertown Road
- February 12 Erratic motor vehicle operation, North Main Street
- February 12 Well-being check, South Main Street
- February 13 911 hang up, North Main Street
- February 13 Assist citizen, Town Hill Road
- February 13 Motor vehicle accident, South Main Street
- February 14 Assist citizen, River Road
- February 14 Medical call, Slater Lane
- February 14 Erratic motor vehicle operation, Sandisfield Road
- February 19 Burglar alarm Sandisfield Road
- February 20 Motor vehicle alarm, Fox Road
- February 20 Medical call, Slater Lane
- February 21 Investigation, Hammertown Road
- February 22 Medical call, Tannery Road
- February 23 911 call, hang up, North Main Street
- February 24 Medical call, South Beech Plain Road
- February 25 Medical call, South Beech Plain Road
- February 25 Well-being check, Sandisfield Road
- February 26 Well-being check, South Beech Plain Road
- February 27 Assist citizen, Shade Road

Police incidents for March were unavailable at press time.



FIRE

February 2020 Incidents

- February 1 Motor vehicle accident, car into tree
- February 5 Mutual aid, Tolland, possible chimney fire
- February 7 Motor vehicle accident, car off road
- February 13 Motor vehicle accident, car into guardrail
- February 14 Lifting assistance
- February 20 Lifting assistance

FIRE con't March 2020 Incidents

- March 3 Carbon monoxide alarm, check house, negative
- March 3 Motor vehicle accident, car over guardrail
- March 11 Fire alarm activation, no fire
- March 16 Illegal outside burn, homeowner extinguished fire
- March 17 Fire alarm activation, no fire
- March 18 Fire alarm activation no fire
- March 21 Possible structure fire, homeowner extinguished fire, Monterey FD also responded



EMS

February 2020 Incidents

- February 1 Motor vehicle accident, no transport
- February 2 Medical call, Tolland, transport to Noble Hospital, Westfield
- February 9 Medical call, no transport
- February 10 Medical call, Tolland, transport to Noble Hospital
- February 17 Medical call, Tolland, no transport
- February 22 Medical call, transport to Fairview Hospital, Great Barrington
- February 24 Medical call, no transport
- February 25 Medical call, transport to Fairview Hospital
- February 27 Medical call, Tolland, transport to Fairview Hospital

March 2020 Incidents

- March 2 Medical call, transport to Charlotte Hungerford Hospital, Torrington
- March 2 Medical call, transport to Fairview Hospital, Great Barrington
- March 2 Medical call, transport to St. Mary's Hospital, Waterbury
- March 3 Motor vehicle accident, transport to Berkshire Medical Center, Pittsfield
- March 6 Medical call, transport to Fairview Hospital
- March 11 Medical call, transport to Fairview Hospital
- March 14 Medical call, Southern Berkshire Ambulance, transport to Fairview Hospital
- March 21 Medical call, structure fire, no transport
- March 25 Medical call, transport to Fairview Hospital
- March 27 Medical call, transport to Fairview Hospital
- March 29 Medical call, transport to Fairview Hospital

WINTER SNOWFALL

2019-2020 to date, as measured/estimated at a Beech Plain back-yard weather station.

December—March	49.0"
April 13	2.0"
April 17	4.0"
April 21	1.0"
Total season	56.0"



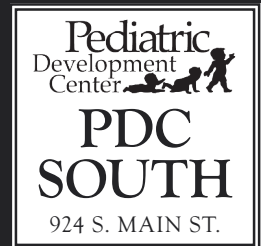
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A Wild Thing Among Us

As an historical researcher, Lorraine German knows where a lot of stuff is buried. While digging among yellowed and dusty (actually on microfilm) newspaper files in the Boston Public Library, she turned up the story below, in which Sandisfield's most famous stage driver plays a leading role.

From *The Boston Herald*, 1895



Stage driver John Hall with passengers, photographed at Monterey in 1902.
Photo: Sandisfield Historical Society/Sandisfield Then and Now

It Is A Full-Grown Gorilla Connecticut's "Wild Man" Is Known at Last

Stage Driver Hall Tries Gets a Shot at the Animal

But It Escapes, Uttering Awful Cries - It has Been Seen by Several Persons During the Past Three Years

WINSTED, Ct., Aug. 29, 1895. The Connecticut wild man, that has divided honors with the sea serpent, is a full grown gorilla.

John G. Hall runs a stage between here and Sandisfield, Mass. While he was passing through Colebrook yesterday a large animal crossed the highway on all fours and leaped a stone wall. Hall and his passengers at first thought it was the wild man.

The animal, when the stage approached, stood erect. Hall drew a revolver. The beast did not stir. Hall stopped his horses and was getting a good aim at the brute, when off it sped on four feet in to the "Injun meadows," uttering awful cries.

Mrs. Mushone and Miss Sadie Woodhouse of New York City, who are summering in Colebrook, also encountered the animal while they were driving to Winsted yesterday. The creature, when they espied it in the "Injun meadow," was standing upright. They are positive that Selectman Smith's "wild man" is the gorilla. They say that it has large, white teeth, black hair, a muscular form, and is about 6½ feet tall.

Lauren Smith and Burt Griswold left here this afternoon with their guns to hunt the gorilla. Selectman Riley Smith will offer a reward for its capture.

It is thought the gorilla made its escape from some circus, and has since made its home among the Litchfield hills. It has been heard from in Norfolk, East Canaan, North Goshen and Sandisfield, Mass.

The gorilla spent last winter in the southern part of Norfolk. Charles Benson of that town saw it jump from a tree. The brute chased him into the house.

A party of Norfolk people saw it enter a hole in the mountain last spring, and, after closing the opening with huge chains, they went to bed. In the morning they found the chains broken.

John Williams of West Norfolk met the gorilla three years ago while he was returning home one night. The ground was covered with snow, and the footprints of the animal were traced into the mountains.

A son of Richard Parson, a Sandisfield farmer, saw the gorilla steal one of his rabbits.

Mrs. George Marvin of South Norfolk saw the gorilla robbing her hen roost one morning last winter.

It became so hungry that nearly every farmer in the outskirts of Norfolk saw it prowling about his farm.

Carol Moore and Joseph Bruley shot at the gorilla last winter, but bird shot had no effect.

MEMORY LANE

SANDISFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

Answer to last month's Memory Lane question:



In April, we ran this DeMars photo taken somewhere in Sandisfield (probably taken in 1906) and asked readers to identify the location and historical name of the house associated with the property behind the wall. The answer of Thomas Shanklin, a childhood resident of Montville now retired in Columbus, Ohio, came closest.

Local historian Ron Bernard explains:

The impressive retaining stone wall today looks very much the same as it did 114 years ago. It is in front of the c.1847 Newton Phelps house (formerly and best known here as the Sandler place) along Sandisfield Road (Rt. 57) at the corner of Town Hill in Montville.

The Whitneys bought the property in 1906 and lived there for about 15 years. Mr. Whitney was a successful insurance agent in Winsted in the 1920s. The boy sitting on the stone wall, barely visible in the picture, is almost certainly Lloyd Ward Whitney, 7, son of Charles Whitney and Bessie Apley.

The house depicted in the background, situated very close to the road, was the former home of a beloved town physician, Dr. Henry Mellon (1810-81). The fate of that house is unknown but part of its foundation survives. Look closely next time you drive by. See *Sandisfield Then and Now*, p. 320 and p. 147.

Congratulations to Mr. Shanklin who has earned a one-year free mail subscription to *The Times*. 🏆

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Sandisfield Rocks!

By Gary T. Leveille

Present-day photographs by Jim Moore

Vintage photographs by Frank DeMars

Sandisfield probably has more than its share of giant glacial erratics—including perched rocks, tipping stones, and balancing boulders.

Geologists define a glacial erratic as a rock that was transported to its present location by a glacier and left behind when the glacier melted. An “official erratic” should differ from the type of rock on which it rests.

Over the past several years, your rockhound correspondent and his boulder-hunting companion, Jim Moore of Pittsfield, located several big Sandisfield erratics. Most were agreeable to having their picture taken.

One of the more elusive balancing rocks is located near the Roosterville section of New Boston. Captured by camera well over 100 years ago by itinerant photographer Frank DeMars of Winsted, so-called Tipping Rock had escaped detection in recent decades despite several searches. It was finally located just off Route 8 near Hanging Mountain. As shown in the present-day photograph, it is still “tippable.”

Is there a Big Boulder on West Street? Several years ago your correspondent received an email from a former Sandisfield resident claiming that a large rock could be found along West Street. So far, it has eluded capture by my camera. Perhaps an area resident can help.

Church Rock is nestled on a hill overlooking the New Boston Congregational Church. The vintage photograph shown here was taken in the early 1900s when the ridge was free of trees, revealing an incredible view looking south. The church steeple can be seen in the lower left. In the present-day photograph, Jim Moore sits atop the same rock—now deep in a hillside forest with no view at all.

The Legend of Abiel’s Rock is told in fascinating detail by Ron Bernard in the August 2013 issue of The Sandisfield Times. This colossal boulder is found in the Beech Plain section of town to the left of (northbound) North Beech Plain Road just before its intersection with Perry Road. Abiel’s Rock was mentioned as early as 1764 in a road survey along a military trail that connected Westfield with Albany. Some historians believe that the rock was named after Abiel Slayton, a six-year-old girl who died in the general vicinity.

Big Rock is located well behind the Town Hall Annex high atop a hill once known as Jones Knoll. The 1907 photograph shows the hilltop clear of trees. Big Rock is now surrounded by forest.

Roosterville Rock is perhaps the largest erratic in Sandisfield. Until a few years ago, it was hidden in a pine forest, but has now been revealed because of recent tree cutting on the property. It can be seen on the left along Route 8, southbound just below the Farmington River bridge. 📍



Abiel’s Rock, now



Roosterville Rock, now



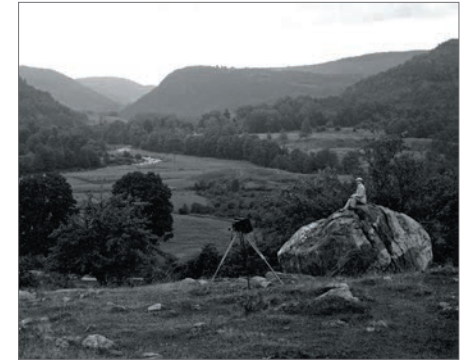
Big Rock, Jones Knoll, now



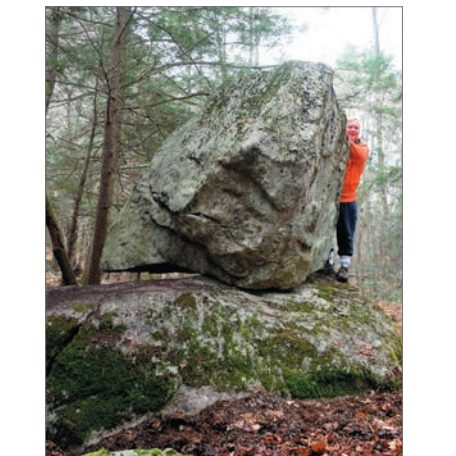
Big Rock, 1907



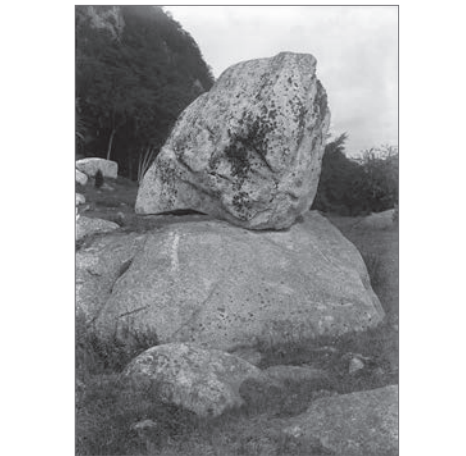
Church Rock, now



Church Rock, then



Tipping Rock, now



Tipping Rock, then

Gary Leveille is a local historian. Author of numerous books and articles about Berkshires history, he also writes the “Then and Now” column for The Berkshire Record. A resident of Great Barrington and president of the Great Barrington Historical Society, Gary enjoys exploring the Sandisfield wilderness with his friend and rock expert, Jim Moore. Both are big fans of the Town. RB



Moreover... Taxes, by George

THE INTRODUCTION OF A RADICAL PLAN

By Simon Winchester

It being tax time, I'm going to talk numbers. Two numbers. Well, maybe three. First of all, Sandisfield's annual budget, which is around, let us say, three million dollars. Secondly, Sandisfield's total land area, which is around, let us say, 39,000 acres. Third – if we take away the area of the land that is owned by one or other branches of government, let us then say we are left with around 30,000 acres of privately-owned land, total.

So, there are really only two numbers: a budget of three million dollars, and an area of thirty thousand acres. Uncannily and conveniently for this proposal, they are perfectly divisible.

For here then comes an idea. Not mine, by a long chalk. It is a very elegant and simple idea, and it goes as follows: if every single one of these privately-owned Sandisfield acres was taxed at a rate of one hundred dollars a year, whoever levied the tax – the town of Sandisfield in the case I'm suggesting – would receive three million dollars a year. And our little town would happily meet our budget needs, exactly.

The man who devised what is known as a Land Value Tax, or LVT, was once one of the most popular and best-known economic journalists in America: Henry George. The book in which he explains this simple-sounding but in fact not-quite-so-simple tax, *Progress and Poverty*, was published in 1880. His ideas were wildly popular, and so was he. When he died in 1897, New York was thronged with mourners, all flags flew at half-staff. They said it was the best-attended funeral in the nation since that of Abraham Lincoln.

The poor, in particular, agreed in their hundreds of thousands that his radically simple idea of taxing the unimproved rental value of land would solve income inequality, would end land speculation, would make for total transparent fairness in raising revenue, would bring in a plentiful supply of money and would, could and should be the only necessary tax.

All other taxes could be abolished: all revenue could come from the bounty that nature has given to us all, and of which no more is ever going to be made, and that is land.

How would LVT work here in Sandisfield? Well – and here I'm only talking about local taxes, though all this is scalable upward to deal with state and federal taxes too – it depends solely on how many acres you own. Perhaps most people who own a house own the quarter-acre plot on which it stands. Their tax bills would plummet – if the tax rate is a hundred dollars an acre, they'd pay \$25 a year. No property tax. No excise tax. No other local tax. Just \$25 in LVT.

On the other hand, I own 75 acres on Silverbrook Road. There'd no longer be any exemptions or deductions for me, none of this 61B malarkey, for instance – so I would pay, at that rate of \$100 an acre, a total of \$7,500 a year in LVT. It sounds a lot of money – but a quick back-of-the-envelope flurry of sums shows, given that the LVT would replace the property and other taxes I already pay, it would leave me a little poorer than usual.

But what of those who own three thousand acres of Sandisfield land – and there are two such owners, here unnamed. Well, each one of them would pay \$300,000 in annual taxes – and that, of course, would hurt. It might hurt sufficiently for them either to choose to improve the value of their land by building houses to rent or sell.

Either way the town would get its much-needed revenue and, crucially, by now giving everyone an incentive to improve the Town's land – by building on it, or farming on it, or drilling for oil on it (dream on!) – the potential rental value of Sandisfield's land would rise, and so next year's tax rate would go up and be set not a hundred dollars a year, but a hundred and ten, say.

And then the town would get even richer – Ralph Morrison could get his new fire engine, we could pay our EMTs a living wage, we could perhaps build a town hall, we'd not have to get our knickers in a twist about paying our share for the school up in Otis.

There'd soon be a sprinkling of new houses built in the woods. And maybe a store. Maybe a cafe. Maybe even a town center. In which case we'd have good reason to bless old Henry George, and if we ever opened a tavern, to call it George's Pub, in his lasting honor. I'd be the first in, knowing – because LVT was now the only tax – there'd now be duty-free beer. 🍺

JOHN FIELD

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OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS



South of town, **students from NCCC in Winsted**, part of a National Science Foundation grant project, are applying their technical skills and knowledge to create face shields for hospitals, nursing homes, and other medical operations. Known as the Print Platoon, the students use additive manufacturing technology, including 3-D printing at home, to manufacture plastic frames. The 3-D printed items are designed so a piece of polyethylene sheeting can be attached and provide a protective barrier between health care workers and their patients. **So far, through their dedicated efforts, 46 face shields have been distributed to seven northern Connecticut and local EMS systems.** 



The Arts Center: Maybe Penguins in August

By Hilde Weisert

FLASH – April 26, 2020: Unlike many Berkshire venues, our season goes past summer into fall and early December. Our Board voted today to basically cancel our summer season, all our events until late August, with the hope to re-open with the terrific jazz group, Release the Penguins, on Saturday, August 28. We'll decide in early July if that is truly possible and, if so, what a safe "re-opening" means for our audience, performers, and building.

When I returned to Sandisfield on March 8 after a winter in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, I expected to be dealing with virus-related precautions, but as a co-president of the Arts Center, I believed there were still decisions to be made.

How were we going to open? What could we put on the stage? How would we provide enough Purell


at the door for our attendees? What kind of cleaning to do between events to protect our audience and our performers?

Within a few days, we realized it wasn't up to us at all. The three co-presidents – Barbara Penn, Sheila Liberman, and me – concluded that we'd cancel through late August and consider longer as the situation may warrant.

But we also decided to invest during this time, to keep our two part-time contractors paid their usual in-season rate to do mailing list, database, and budget cleanup (bookkeeper) and small building improvements (house manager) that we never have time for during a normal season.

We also decided to offer something to the community by putting some of our past performances on our website and social media, as well as Earth Day activities and local performers who volunteered their time to sing or read poetry.

We're not the Boston Symphony or the Met, but without being wasteful, we want to offer what we can. 2020 was to be our big 25th anniversary year – now we're looking at 25 (+1) in 2021.

Please see www.sandisfieldartscenter.org for latest information and how you can join in on social media. 

Sandisfield Historical Society



Let's Get Started

By Ann Wald


Like everyone else, we're ready for things to get back to normal, whatever normal is.

We're anticipating that our first meeting will be on Saturday, May 9, at 11:00 a.m. at the Meeting House on Rt. 183, at the intersection with South Sandisfield Road.

We will hold our meeting and then share lunch. Everyone is welcome.

Thanks to a very large donation by one of our members and a large donation of time from neighbor Darryl Gillotte, repairs to the roof have been completed. Darryl also cleaned the mold on the interior and as well installed two fans. He was able to acquire a rather large donation of paint that we'll be using inside the building. If you would like to donate time and effort to help us paint, please contact me at 258-4415.

We are very grateful for the donations and for everything Darryl has done to make our meeting place a safer place. Our funds from last year, intended for our long-desired bathroom, had to go toward other repairs.

At our meeting we will be setting up our schedule for the rest of the year. Please join us to enjoy what should be a bright sunny Saturday morning on May 9 and help us take part in and save the history of Sandisfield. 

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All photos shown are the actual work of C.W. Nelson

Comings and Goings



RAY STOLLERMAN
1931-2020

STOLLERMAN--Ray. June 24, 1931-April 12, 2020. Of Covid-19. Beloved husband of Kitty, father of Steve and David. Adoring grandfather of Siena, Zac and Sky. Brilliant art director and advertising visionary, winner of numerous awards including Clio and Lion d'Or at Cannes. Warm, funny and bon vivant. Loved by so many friends in Paris, New York and the Berkshires. His legacy will live on through all of us.

The New York Times, April 20, 2020

Ray Stollerman was a legendary figure on “Madison Avenue” during the advertising industry’s golden age. Born and raised in the Bronx, N.Y., he graduated from Brooklyn College in 1953 and served for two years in the U.S. Army before embarking on an illustrious career as an award-winning commercial artist and as senior creative and art director at leading agencies in Paris and New York.

He learned the business and gained experience with various agencies before moving to Paris with his wife, Kitty, and their sons in 1964 where they lived for about 15 years. While in Paris he held important positions including at Campbell/Ewald; Wells, Rich, Greene, Europe; and McCann-Erickson. In 1974, he established the firm, Akjaly, Stollerman.

Kitty and Ray returned to New York in 1979 where he was Senior Art Director at Ogilvy & Mather, then Creative Director, Wells, Rich, Greene, and finally as Art Director at Northwest Ayer until retirement in 1987. He continued freelancing well into the 1990s.

In 1973, they bought their get-away place on Viets Road. For many years after their return to the U.S. they drove up almost every weekend. They usually spent entire summers at their cherished Sandisfield home. Son, Steve said, “my father and mother loved that place and time like no other except perhaps the Paris years.” The Stollermans had been married for almost 61 years.

In 1986/7, Ray joined with Roberta and Ron Myers, John Brock, Candace Campetti, and others to launch The Sandisfield Newsletter, the town’s first dedicated community newspaper. The Newsletter was published monthly until July 2007, an heroic 20-year run.

Roberta Myers, now of Monterey, California, said, “Ray was an asset to Sandisfield and such a good presence. Because of his kindness and talent, he produced amazing mastheads for the Newsletter, an ingenious set of Zodiac illustrations which changed every month. It was a very classy touch. He may have been a world-renowned art director, but in Sandisfield he was just a down-to-earth, wonderful man who loved our town.”



The Stollermans were avid readers of The Times and regular supporters. Viets Road resident Dr. Katherine Hein said, “I am deeply saddened by Ray’s death – he was a lovely person and a terrific neighbor.”

In a letter to family and friends, Steve described his father and his “extraordinary life” as “an advertising maverick and visionary whose body of work will live on” through his family. He also mentioned that the title of Ray’s memoir is *No Regrets*.





Letters to the Editors

THANK YOU

I was so pleased to see my mother, Lila Innes, “featured” in Comings and Goings (March 2020). Both she and my father did truly love their place in Sandisfield. I appreciate your acknowledging both of their passings. Thank you.

*Janet Innes Bumstead
Burlington, Conn.
South Beech Plain Road*

DON'T WANT TO MISS AN ISSUE

I am very early renewing my subscription for myself and (a friend). I don't want to miss an issue. I really enjoy reading The Times, especially the historical articles. Enclosed is money for renewals and a donation.

*Sally Daun
Norfolk, Conn*



Special Letter to Editor Hall's General Store

I read with great interest the piece in a recent edition about the passing of local general stores. One store not mentioned was Hall's General Store in East Otis. Granted it closed several years before these closings, but Hall's had a great history and very unique owners. The building still stands, across Rt. 23 from Katie's General Store.

My family has had a seasonal cottage on Otis Reservoir since the early 1950s, and I had the good fortune to have known Ida Hall, 5'1" if that, her hair always in a bun, her husband Bill, and son Arnold who took over the store when Ida and Bill passed on.

Ida ran the East Otis Post Office out of the store which was a real bonus in her competition with the general store across the road. Rumor had it that Ida once told the Nabisco salesman that if he delivered product across the way, he could forget about her business.

Ida was all business. If you asked for something you couldn't find, she'd say, "Wait a minute," disappear to the living quarters upstairs and look for what you were looking for. If it was, say, the morning

Springfield Union newspaper she'd sell you her copy, but you had to be careful and check the date. It might have been from the day before.

Her husband, Bill Hall, was a fine, easy-going gentleman with many hobbies. He was a trapper, a cartoonist, and a musician, besides helping to run the store. It is interesting to note that Bill Hall was interviewed during the depression by a reporter from The Berkshire Eagle and that interview along with that of fiddler Sammy Spring from New Boston now sit in the Library of Congress archives.

*Dave Modzelewski
Lands End Drive, Tolland*

The Times is grateful to Dave for the photo of Hall's, and for copies of the two wonderfully rich verbatim interviews with two local well-known individuals, Sammy Spring and Bill Hall. We will print each in full in future issues, possibly this summer.



Photo: of Dave Modzelewski





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NOW HEAR THIS!

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

MAY EVENTS

Please note: Be sure to check to see if the events are still scheduled as listed due to the uncertainty of the Covid-19 pandemic

Wednesday Weekly Gatherings from 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Council on Aging, basement level at the Sandisfield Town Hall Annex on Route 57. Cancelled until further notice.

Chair Yoga on Wednesdays at 2:00 p.m. at the Council on Aging, basement level at the Sandisfield Town Hall Annex on Route 57. Free. **Cancelled until further notice.**

YOGA with Ann Gadwah will be offered most Wednesdays from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. in the community room at Fire Station #1 on Route 8, south of the New Boston bridge. Bring a yoga mat or towel for this calming practice. Visit Connect Sandisfield on Facebook or contact the Recreation Committee or Library for dates and cancellations. \$5 **Cancelled until further notice.**

Sandisfield Town Caucus on Wednesday, May 13, at 7:00 p.m. at the Old Town Hall on 3 Silverbrook Road. Due to the Covid-19 State of Emergency, the Caucus **may be moved to the Department of Public Works building** at the same address or outdoors to comply with the social distance policy.

New Boston Church Service at the New Boston Congregational Church, Route 57 **will be back as soon as it is safe to do so!**

Bird Identification Walk (Tentative) on Saturday, May 30, from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. at Yanner Park on Town Hill Road. Rene Wendell of The Nature Conservancy for a walk to identify as many birds as possible. Last year, 29 different species were counted. Sponsored by The Yanner Park Committee. Free.

SAVE THE DATE

Annual Town Meeting on Saturday, June 20 at 10:00 a.m. at the Department of Public Works building on 3 Silverbrook Road.

Town Election on Monday, June 22. Hours to be determined.

NEW!! ONLINE EVENTS!

Free Guided Meditation with Otis Resident Heather Rufo Bilotta on Fridays, May 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, from 9:00 to 9:45 a.m. through **Zoom meetings. Registration is required, visit www.heatherbe.com.**

Many Berkshire Arts Venues with Videos and Audio Recordings online! Visit mahaiwe.org for audio recordings of Met Opera lectures or jacobspillow.org for videos and podcasts.

Wait 'Till Next Year!!



MEMORIAL DAY PARADE CANCELLED

By Times Reporters

This year, Covid-19 has forced Fire Chief Ralph Morrison and Commander Maria Domato, American Legion Post #456 to cancel their plans for Sandisfield's Memorial Day Parade.

"Schools are closed, so no bands," said the Chief. "And neighbors can't get together to build floats. And we should social distance ..." He was reluctant to call it off.

Tentative plans by the American Legion are in the works for a memorial service at the West New Boston Cemetery on Rt. 57 which might be held Memorial Day, May 25.

And local veterans John Burrows and Gene English will place wreaths and flags on the graves of veterans in all the Sandisfield cemeteries.



ATTENTION!

SPECIAL NOTICE FOR LOCAL READERS OF THE TIMES

For the month of May 2020 the Sandisfield Times will be available to the public at the following locations in Sandisfield and nearby towns as long as they remain open. The Times may be read on our web site, sandisfieldtimes.org (free). Copies are also available by U.S. mail (see order form on back page).

NEW BOSTON

- A&M Auto
- New Boston Crane & Sleds

SANDISFIELD ROUTE 57

- Transfer Station (Wed/Sat/Sun)
- Post Office (24 hours)
- When Pigs Fly Farm

EAST OTIS

- Katie's Store
- Papa's Healthy Food & Fuel

MONTEREY

- Fire Station (inside pavillion)

COLEBROOK

- Colebrook General Store
- Post Office

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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. Donations to The Sandisfield Times are deductible under section 170 of the Federal Income Tax Code. Donations do not include subscriptions. Subscriptions do not qualify as donations.

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Copies are also available in Otis at Berkshire Bank, Katie's Market, Papa's Fuel, Otis Library, Otis Rec Center, Farmington River Diner, Otis Poultry Farm, Otis Woodlands (May-September), Knox Trail Inn, and the Laundromat. Locations in Monterey include the Library and the Roadside Café. Also available at the Southfield Store in New Marlborough, at the general store and post office in Colebrook, and at the library of NW Connecticut Community College in Winsted. 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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*If internet accessible, all letters, news events and tips, ideas,
obituary and family announcements, photos (600 dpi if possible)
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