

# THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

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*Plebis*

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*Volume XII, Number 7*

*October 2021*

## Tuckers Lost to Fire

### FOR MANY, THE ONLY GAME IN TOWN IS GONE

*By Bill Price*

A kitchen fire that spread to the rest of the interior of MJ Tuckers Bar/Restaurant early Saturday morning, September 18, possibly has destroyed what for many was the center and soul of Sandisfield.

As of press time, co-owners Marty Cormier and Jeff Blacker had not decided whether or not to rebuild and restore the place. Personally, Marty said, "It's heartbreak to walk into the place. We don't know how we'll proceed until we hear about insurance and what portion of the building needs to be razed."

The dozen or so Tuckers' employees who are out of work are seeking solutions to the loss of their livelihoods. The fire leaves the New Boston Inn as the only surviving place for food and/or drink in Sandisfield.

In a ConnectSandisfield Facebook post, the Cormier family expressed appreciation for "the outreach of love and support that has come our way today. Unfortunately, the fire has caused severe damage and there is no foreseen time that we will even be reopening." They added, "Feeling emotional."

The 911 call, possibly made by a Rt. 8 motorist who saw smoke billowing out of the building, came at about 8:15 a.m. By the time both the Sandisfield and Tolland Fire Departments were on the scene, there was heavy smoke though flames were not visible.

The Sandisfield Fire Department, under the leadership of Temporary Chief Eric Pachulski, together with Tolland and the soon-arriving Otis Fire Department, coordinated efforts to contain and control the fire. After chain-sawing a smoke vent in the roof over the bar, the team was able to attack the interior fire and force the fire back into the kitchen area. Firefighters then cut a vent in the roof over the kitchen, which allowed heat and smoke to escape and within an hour completely extinguished the fire.

*Con't on p.2*



*The scene that greeted the first responding fire department.  
Photo: Dennis Olson*

## Steve Seddon elected Selectman at Special Election.

(page 3)

## Driving Sandisfield

(pages 10-11)

**Tuckers Lost to Fire**

*Cont'd from p.1*

Other fire departments arrived to supply manpower and support, including those from Norfolk, Colebrook, and Monterey. Firefighters from Riverton, Conn., were in charge of water supply. Granville Fire, according to a dispatch from Tolland, covered a motorcycle accident en-route to Sandisfield. Great Barrington Fire Chief Charlie Burger was on site, as well as the State Fire Marshall and the Tolland Police Department. Sandisfield Police Chief Mike Morrison was an active participant on site, as were nearly all of Sandisfield EMTs and fire personnel. Sandisfield Fire Chief Ralph Morrison was on vacation in Vermont at the time but was in touch by telephone.

**FOR MANY, THE CENTER OF SANDISFIELD**

In a Sandisfield Times profile of Marty Cormier and the restaurant in 2018, Tuckers was described as “easy-going 1970s country. Leave your smart phone and laptop at home. Forget about city life, technology, and all the craziness and come meet fellow Sandisfielders, have friendly conversations, and enjoy good service and food at local prices.”

The Cormier family in Sandisfield, first Barbara and Ray and then son Marty, operated the restaurant for more than 30 years after buying the place from Maurice “Tuffy” and Joyce Allan Campetti who opened “Allan’s,” in 1979. Marty said that “the Campettis had a good place, so my folks worked hard to build the business and to keep everything the same as it was. The place was hopping most of the time.”

About half of the customers were from Sandisfield and Otis, with many others coming up from Connecticut. After the closing of Villa Mia two years ago, Tuckers was the only restaurant in town except for the New Boston Inn. The place was a watering hole for passers-by on Rt. 8 as well as local loggers, writers, retirees, and many friends and neighbors.

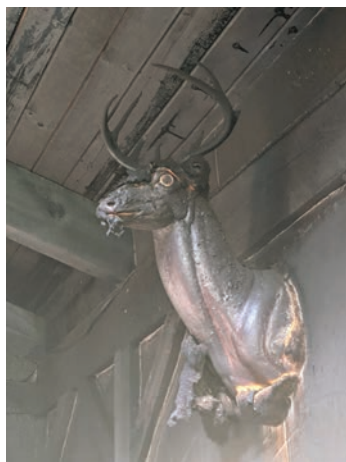
Tuckers hosted many local social events honoring anything worth celebrating, including wakes and memorial services. In summer motorcycle clubs like the Berkshire Trail Riders gathered there, and in winter snowmobilers often stopped by. Horseshoe tournaments were a long-time and serious tradition with clubs coming from as far away as Bristol, Connecticut. 🍷



*Owner Marty Cormier, second from left, with family, friends, and employees watch the firemen attack the fire.*



*Photos: Bill Price and, from Connecticut, courtesy of Dennis Olson and the Tolland Fire Department.*



*All that remains of Tuckers' mounted deer head.*



*Fire and police departments from surrounding towns.*

# Assessor's Report

## SANDISFIELD TAX RATE DROPS; VALUES RISE

By Jacki Bitso, Principal Assessor

The Assessor's values were approved by the Department of Revenue on August 31, 2021. The formal classification hearing was held on September 20 adopting a single tax rate. The Fiscal Year 2022 Tax Rate was submitted and approved at \$12.90 per thousand. Although the tax rate has decreased by 45 cents (from \$13.35, more than 3 percent from last year), overall the town's land and buildings values increased more quickly, according to sales data. As a result, most taxpayers will see a minimal increase in their tax dollar billed amount. 🗳️

# Report from Town Hall, September 2021

## BUSINESS GETTING DONE AT TOWN HALL

By George Riley

Select Board Chair, Acting Town Manager

A lot of time and effort has gone into our Town Manager search. The Search Committee – Barbara Cormier, Joanne Olson, and Rita Kasky – has done a tremendous and diligent job refining the job description, combing through 11 applicants, screening resumes, conducting remote or in-person interviews with four or five and recommending three candidates for Select Board interviews. As a result of this process, we made a job offer on September 23 to a candidate. Acceptance of this offer is conditional on salary negotiations, but if we can agree on this, we may have a new Town Manager by November 1.

Town Hall has been busy this month. Temporary Town Clerk Mary Kronholm worked diligently and extensively on the Special Election, in addition to her regular duties. She has been working with King Information Systems on the project of cataloging, organizing and archiving our Town records. She has also found and appointed an Assistant Town Clerk. Donna Fillion has been Town Clerk for the town of Granville, Mass. since 2015. She is also Assistant Assessor and Librarian in Granville. She will be a great asset to our Town Hall team.

In addition to compiling and posting agendas and minutes of Select Board meetings, Janey Beardsley has been answering phones, handling correspondence and creating warrant sheets for Town invoices. She was also instrumental in handling the arrangements for an important meeting with Mass. Department of Local Services (DLS) officials.

Laura Lee Bertram began as Interim Treasurer/Collector on September 6, and since then she has managed to get our weekly payroll done on time, and other Treasurer functions are proceeding smoothly. She knows the job well and is keeping up with the work, and even beginning to tackle some backlogged collection issues.

Our Accountant Margaret McClellan has been working with Janey on grant and invoice expense, and has caught up on reconciliations to June 30, so last fiscal year is now resolved.

Principal Assessor Jacki Bitso and Assessors' Clerk Kathie Burrows have been working on Assessors' values, tax rates and levy limits (ask them for an explanation of these terms) and have already submitted these to the State DLS and received approval. (See the Assessor's Report article.)

In my role as Acting Town Manager since June 15, I have been supervising the acquisition and use of a storage container for organizing and archiving Town records, a project which is now essentially finished; overseeing the use of CARES Act and ARPA funding; developing job descriptions for several positions; working with the Town Manager Search Committee; having conversations with other towns regarding Town positions and governance structure; setting up phone, voice mail, computer access and videoconferencing systems; working with banks to transfer signatories and account administrators; posting employment notices on various websites; and dealing with bank letters, printer problems, grant issues, and hundreds of phone calls, interruptions, emails and voice mails.

One of the most significant events this month was the visit to Sandisfield of some of the top officials of the State Division of Local Services on September 22. Concerned about the possible impact of our vacancies on the Town's ability to meet its financial reporting obligations, they made the trek out from Boston. There were six of us on the Sandisfield side: myself, Finance Committee Chair Roger Brown, Principal Assessor Jacki Bitso, Accountant Margaret McClellan, Treasurer/

# Select Board Whole Again

## SPECIAL ELECTION COMPLETED

By Bill Price



Steve Seddon and  
daughter Fiona

With the election of Steve Seddon at the Special Election held September 25, the Select Board is back to its three-member contingent. The workload, which did not change following the abrupt resignation of Marc Newman in July, will be spread more evenly among Select

Board Chair George Riley, Selectman Alex Bowman, and newly elected Seddon.

Of 162 ballots cast, Christopher Joyce won 47 and Seddon 115. Seddon was sworn soon after the election by Town Clerk Mary Kronholm.

Like a few other small towns in the Berkshires, Sandisfield is going through a transition of a series of financial irregularities and a significant number of new Town staff coming on board (see George Riley's Select Board report on this page).

Voters made their decision in large part based on Seddon's two years as a member of the Finance Committee, plus his 20 years of business experience.

In a statement in the Times before the election, Seddon said that while he believes he is well qualified for Selectman he "will still need to learn some of the procedures and responsibilities." He added that if he was elected he would "learn these as quickly and effectively as possible to be an efficient part of the Select Board of Sandisfield."

Steve lives on Town Hill Road with his wife Laurie and their sons Steven, 22, Aiden, 14, Hinter 3, and daughter Fiona, 6 months. 🗳️



Con't on p.4

**Report from Town Hall, September 2021**

*Cont'd from p.3*

Collector Laura Lee Bertram, and FinComm member Steven Seddon. Town Clerk Mary Kronholm also was available for input. Seven DLS officials participated, some via Zoom.

In a frank discussion, we shared our plans for organizing Town government and filling vacancies; the state of our financial management processes; our balance sheets and tax rate setting; and DLS' assessing directives. The DLS officials were impressed and relieved; they were pleasantly surprised to learn that our Principal Assessor had already submitted the FY 2022 Tax Rate documents, and the conversation soon turned to what they could do to help us in this transition period.

It was a very helpful and wide-ranging conversation, with a lot of useful information shared. I feel we impressed the six State officials through an open and honest discussion that demonstrated just what a competent team we have in Sandisfield.

Some days may feel stressful at Town Hall, but when important meetings like this go so well, we again realize just how good our people are. I am grateful to and proud of our team. 🍷



# Covid Cluster Closes School

*By Christine Nadelman Pincus*

Just when students were getting ready for the long-awaited start of this school year, the Farmington River Elementary School in Otis closed on September 3, due to confirmed positive cases of the Covid 19 Delta variant within the school district.

Prior to the beginning of classes that week, positive cases were already rising in the region, as well as reports of an outbreak among individuals who had attended the Otis Fire Department Steak Roast fundraiser on August 28. Kim Spring, Sandisfield's Board of Health chair, acknowledged there were 20 cases in Town. "So far they are all mild cases and no one has been hospitalized. That may change, but so far we've been lucky. Everyone needs to be cautious about this new Covid variant."

The elementary school was closed the following week for an additional three days due to a possible positive case or exposure within the district's school busses. While they waited for confirmation of those cases, parents of older students who attend high schools in Lee and Great Barrington were required to transport children themselves. 🍷



# Winsted College Awarded \$750,000 National Science Foundation Grant

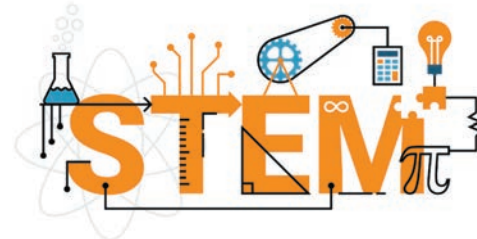
Northwestern Connecticut Community College's STEM department has been awarded a \$750,000 National Science Foundation Scholarships in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics grant to enable low-income, talented students to pursue degrees and careers in STEM fields. Over the next six years, this grant will fund \$450,000 in scholarships for low-income, full- and part-time students pursuing STEM degrees at NCCC. The grant will also provide funds for support programs for STEM students including mentors and tutors, as well as career and transfer exploration programs.

Sharon Gusky, Professor of Biology, will serve as the principal investigator on this project and Tara Jo Holmberg, Professor of Environmental Science, Doug Mooney, Professor of Chemistry, and Crystal Wiggins, Professor of Mathematics, as co-principal investigators.

"The STEM programs at Northwestern Connecticut Community College offer students a pathway into high paying STEM careers," Gusky explained. "This grant will provide the extra support students need to successfully complete their degrees and enter the workforce."

Northwestern Connecticut Community College offers a number of STEM degree programs including Bioscience, Computer Science, Data Science, Engineering Science, Natural Resources, and Technology Studies.

Scholarship Applications for students starting college in January 2022 will be available on the college's website in November. Berkshire County residents attending NCCC can qualify for affordable Connecticut in-state tuition rates. For more information about scholarships or STEM degree programs and careers, please email Professor Gusky at [sgusky@nwcc.edu](mailto:sgusky@nwcc.edu). 🍷





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# Good Government: a New Normal?

By Simon Winchester

After all the self-inflicted turmoil of the summer an abiding sense of calm and civility appears to be taking hold in town.

Nowhere was this more evident than at September's final Select Board meeting – the first for some few months to involve three fully engaged and active members – which for the ten residents in attendance seemed to have been a treat.



Our three legislators appeared before an in-person congregation with a handful more connected electronically – most notably among the latter being our temporary Town Clerk, Mary Kronholm, whose warm but no-nonsense style has done much to help stabilize the situation.

The amiable George Riley chaired the meeting, and first introduced Steve Seddon, a former Finance Committee member whose handy victory in the recent special election has given him a seat on the board until at least the election of May 2023. His contributions to the meeting were steady and non-confrontational – acting thereby as foil to Alex Bowman, whose now fully developed style has a more pugilistic, take-no-prisoners affect to it.

If the trio can manage to get along, then their three very contrasting approaches – which might be characterized as Confront, Compare and Compromise – stand a fair chance of bringing an admirable brand of government to a town badly in need of one.

As a test run the board meeting could not have been better chosen, it being as dull as administrative dishwater. Brad Curry – still basking

in the reflected sheen of his smooth new Route 57 asphalt – was grilled with some vigor over his preparations for the coming winter, the Selectmen wondering out loud whether his small fleet of plows and trucks was up to the task. A brand-new plow-truck will probably be a prominent warrant item for next spring – competing no doubt with the Fire Chief's always-costly wish-list. Fire and ice, eternally at odds.

Few other items excited much passion in the room. One upset resident had an issue with culverts under and beside her driveway until Chairman Riley demanded that Bowman and Curry visit the offending pipe and decide how best to repair it.

And Larry Dwyer of the Green Committee, who runs (and very well) our town website, offered the excellent news that all town buildings will soon be fully solar-powered, and that we have been given the funds to pay for the installation.

All told, two hours happily spent – following which a sense that all involved are rolling up their sleeves and getting on with running our little town way out here in the woods. ♣

**OUT ON A LIMB: OP-ED:**  
*Subjects should be enthralling to most of us and have a strong link to Sandisfield, written by and for Town residents. Address either PO Box 584, Sandisfield, or email editor@sandisfieldtimes.org*

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# Sandisfield Historical Society

## Apple Fest, October 9


By Ann Wald, President

I would like to thank everyone who worked so hard to make the town-wide tag sale so successful. We will do it again next year.

Our Annual Apple Fest will be Saturday, October 9, from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. Part of the fun will be an apple pie baking contest. Judges will taste each pie and award the winner with a \$25 gift certificate from Price Chopper. You also get bragging rights. Judging will take place at noon. Please join us at the Rt. 183 meeting house. We look forward to seeing you.

If you want to be part of the apple pie contest, please call Ann at 258-4415. Space is limited. Entrance fee is \$10.

We will also have apple pies for sale. There will be vendors and refreshments for sale. And a Book Sale. Come and take a look, we may have the book that you have been looking for.

At this time we still plan to hold the Christmas Fair at the Firehouse. Because of Covid we expect fewer vendors this year. We need your support in raising money to get a bathroom installed. 

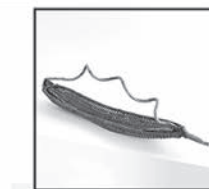


## The Coming of Broadband

*Three teams of Verizon employees were busy at the intersection of Silverbrook Road and Rt. 57 making ready the transformers and/or other gizmos to make sure that when Spectrum finishes wiring all the roads in town and turns on the show, the show next spring, the show works.*

Photo: Bill Price

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# \$18 Million, Just Down the Road

## ATWATER POND, FOR SALE

By Heather Bellow, *The Berkshire Eagle*,  
September 29, 2021

Reprinted with permission.

*Editor's note: "We can't write this better than Heather, so (\*courtesy of The Eagle) we decided not to try. The property is at the end of Sullivan Road, which is off Shade Road in Sandisfield Center. It was owned by Judi and Igu Friedman, long-time Sandisfield second-home owners from Canton, Connecticut. Judi and Igu had many friends in Town and were good neighbors until their deaths in 2016.*



SANDISFIELD — Move over, grand Berkshire cottages. Enter, low-key lake house complete with outdoor showers, miles of trails, a waterfall and an Airstream trailer.

And 321 acres of mostly forest, according to property records. There also is room for a helipad.

The rustic life, in this case, will run you **\$18 million**. But, will this place fetch it? Even with the coronavirus pandemic having sent South County real estate demand and prices skyward, this is near another galaxy — at least, compared with what is for sale in the Berkshires, according to the Multiple Listing Service, where it's the most expensive property.

In the context of pre-recession real estate pricing and the worldwide Sotheby's network, the price isn't too far afield, said listing agent Gladys Montgomery, of William Pitt Sotheby's International Realty in Great Barrington.


"When I talk to agents in LA, they say, "For 321 acres? Is that all?" Montgomery said of the price. She believes that the pandemic has brought Berkshire real estate back to this pre-recession pricing.

The compound on Sullivan Road is assessed by the town at much less: \$543,400, according to the Sandisfield Assessor's Office.

Montgomery says she has had two calls of interest from outside the Berkshires since placing the property on the market Sept. 10. The compound includes a seven-bedroom, 5½-bath home, built in 1970, a guesthouse, boathouse and multiple docks on the 33-acre, private Atwater Pond.

In this remote town in which half the 90 miles or so of roadway are dirt, budgets are close to the bone and internet is hard to come by, residents are watching. They wonder if it will sell at such a price, and don't rule it out, given their own reasons for living here and the easy access to New York and the interstate.

"We have no air, water, noise or light pollution, and now we have internet, and it's kind of like paradise out here," said resident Paula Kohler, whose family recently subscribed to Elon Musk's Starlink satellite-based internet, since townwide broadband won't be available until next summer.

"I have a feeling that we're going to see higher prices and more people coming to Sandisfield," she added. "It's a good place to hide." 



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# CRITTER CORNER

If you would like to send a picture for consideration for Critter Corner, you can email it to editor@sandisfieldtimes.org.



## Carl's Bear Farm

By Carl Nett

*It's not unusual for me to find pictures of bears on the trail cams I have set up around my 58 acres off Town Hill Road. However, for the last several years I've typically seen only one or two different (and distinct) bears criss-crossing my property each year.*

*In contrast, this year five different/distinct bears have been frequenting my place – a momma and two cubs, a juvenile (pictured here), and an enormous male.*

*This has me wondering if this year's count is simply an outlier or rather an early warning of looming overpopulation. I sincerely hope it is just an outlier!*



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# Recreation Committee News

## Visit a Dairy Farm and Enjoy Halloween Afternoon

By Lynn Rubenstein

As you turn the page on your calendar and realize, yes, summer flew by once again, don't put your muck boots away just yet.

Bring them, better yet, wear them to our "Coffee and Curiosity" being held on Saturday, October 9 (11:00 a.m. SHARP) at Joshua's Farm, 45 Dodd Rd. (Sandisfield's only dairy farm, owned and operated by Brigitte Ruthman.) Brigitte will introduce you to Delilah, Dollie, and Luftwaffe (their moms will be there, too). And newborn Wilbur. We will get to hear the how's and why's of small dairy farming. Any questions? Brigitte will answer any and all.

Moovooing right along towards the end of the month ...

In lieu of our planned trunk or treat/pizza party/interactive ghost story around the fire pit, we as a committee have decided "Better Safe than Sorry." We are inviting all families in town to sign up for "Sandisfield Safe Trick or Treating" to be held on Halloween afternoon (Sunday, October 31, 1:00 p.m.- 4:00 p.m.).

When you contact us we will enter you on the map, and provide you with a free lawn marker for your home (indicating your involvement) prior to Halloween. We are sure homeowners would like to have some idea of how many little witches and warlocks will be ringing their doorbells, so let us know that, as well. Either way, please contact us BEFORE October 20. Call 413-269-7357 or email Kowgirlruby@yahoo.com.

Come on, Sandisfield, with 92 miles of roadway (Thanks, Brad Curry!) this could be quite the Halloween trail. 🍷



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# Driving Sandisfield

*A new occasional series reporting on drives through the hills and dales of Sandisfield.*

**TO DRIVE** the longest, straightest stretch of Sandisfield's 92 miles of roads (or 81, depending on who you talk to), get yourself to Colebrook, Connecticut early some morning. You're plan is to pick up some breakfast at the Colebrook Store and drive gently north along 183, also known as the New Hartford Road and earlier as the Sandybrook Turnpike, into the heart of South Sandisfield.

You'll find Colebrook on your Rand McNally or maybe Siri will tell you how to get there. The Colebrook Store opens at 6:00 a.m., 7:00 a.m. on Sunday. Ask for a bacon/egg/and cheese on a toasted roll and coffee. Or whatever you want. The place has specials on the board. Whatever, get it to go, since you're going to eat as you drive.

While you're waiting for your order, take a look at the vintage Underwood upright against the wall. Think how hard secretaries and typists worked in the old days.

Advice: While you're in the store, don't whine about anything. A sign announces a \$5 fine for whining.

Back in your rig, fasten your seat belts. Open your sandwich from its butcher paper wrap, make sure the coffee cup is snug in the holder, then fire up the engine and you're ready to explore Rt. 183 (the old New Hartford Road) coming north into Sandisfield.

You start out on a sweet drive through a short piece of Connecticut on a well-paved, smooth-as-silk road.

Before you reach the Sandisfield line, you'll see:

On your right, in about a mile, the Rock School is one of the few surviving New England colonial school buildings in nearly its original condition. In use from 1779 until 1911, the school never saw electricity or running water. Wisely, Colebrook saved it, didn't gussy it up, and the Colebrook Historical Society now operates it as an active museum for school kids.

Back on the road, you've barely begun your breakfast. Enjoy it, but drive carefully, even though there isn't much traffic.

You're now driving parallel to Sandy Brook, through forest with a few houses back from the road. Lots of trees. Where the road crosses Sandy Brook, you'll pass the white, modestly steepled Church in the Wildwood where, summer evenings, vespers are read.

After a short bit, 183 intersects with the dirt road of State Line Road. Here you'll enter Massachusetts at Sandisfield. A small sign tells you that if you take State Line to the right you'll get to the Riiska Brook apple orchard.

Just north of here, on 183, the road makes a sharp right to cross Sandy Brook again.

You're in Sandisfield now. The mood of the road has changed. The smooth portion of 183 has ended and you're on a rough, sometimes pitted roadway.

By now you've nearly finished your sandwich, except for a few good corner pieces you're saving, and your coffee tastes really good.

In about a half mile you'll come to the intersection of the lower (southern) end of Rood Hill Road. A lot of Sandisfielders have lived for years on Rood Hill and there are now a few new homes as well.

But you won't take Rood Hill today.

Stop in the wide place in the road right here. The great house across 183 from Rood Hill Road is one of only three Sandisfield landmarks on the National Register of Historic Places.



This is the Philemon Sage House, built about 1799 with an 1827 extension, now owned and lovingly cared for by James and Nancy Remis of Florida. You can find a detailed history and description of the house on pages 408-410 of *Sandisfield Then and Now*. The house is particularly historic because it appears in a Daguerreotype image from c. 1843, one of the earliest American photographs to include a person.

Though the Daguerreotype is faded and unclear, the house in the photo looks not unlike it does today. It is something to be valued, respected, and honored.



*Extremely rare Daguerreotype image of the Sage house, c. 1843. Courtesy of Susan Prows, second great-granddaughter, as appeared in Sandisfield Then and Now.*



To the right of the house is a road that looks as if it will, as roads often do in Sandisfield, peter out into wetlands or somewhere you don't want to go. There is no identification of the road here, but it happens to be the lower end of one of Sandisfield's best-kept secrets – Norfolk Road.

Do not take Norfolk Road here. Instead, continue north on 183 for another mile or so to a large junction with a road leading west (left). This is the well-marked northern end of Norfolk Road. Since you're already touring around south Sandisfield and may not return soon, take the turn onto Norfolk Road.


It is one of Sandisfield's best-kept secrets because the owners of its half dozen or so houses do not advertise their presence. A few are year-round residents while others are weekenders or summer people. It's even more out-of-the-way than Cronk Road or East Hubbard. Take the short drive on Norfolk. Where Norfolk bears left, bear left with it. You'll emerge back onto 183 beside the 1799 house, on the unmarked driveway, where you just were.

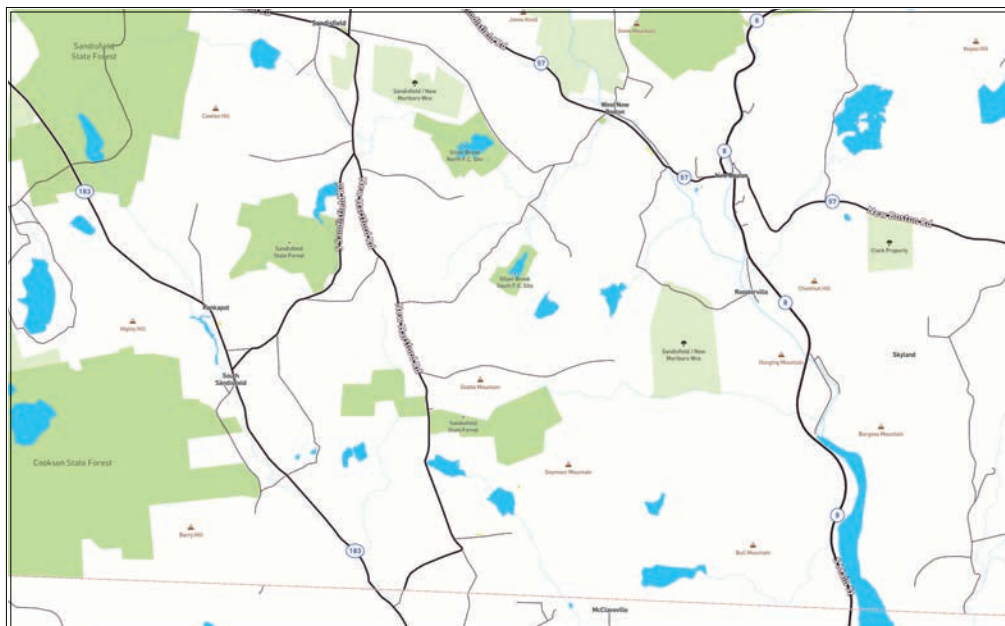
Turn left, back onto 183, and retrace your steps to the northern entrance to Norfolk Road.

This time, continue straight, easing around a gentle corner. The nicely appointed house on the right is graced with a huge, enviable woodpile.

Suddenly you'll recognize where you are.

You're at the intersection of 183 with South Sandisfield Road, which leads northeast toward Sandisfield Center. About fifty yards north on 183 is the familiar former church that now houses the Sandisfield Historical Society. On the right is TerMar Farm Stand.

Your tour of Lower 183 ends here. 



*On this Sandisfield map, Rt. 183, also known as New Hartford Road and the Sandybrook Turnpike, is the long stretch on the left. The second V coming north is where Rt. 183 joins South Sandisfield Road.*





## The Librarian's Corner

By Terry Spohnholz

### Library hours

**(Please note Thursday evening change):**

Monday and Tuesday, 9:00 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Wednesday, 2:00–5:00 p.m.

Thursday, 7:00–9:00 p.m.

Saturday, 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Phone: 258-4966

Email: sandisfieldlibrary@gmail.com



*"I notice that Autumn is more the season of the soul than of nature."*

—Friedrich Nietzsche

*"Summer dashed off, her sundress flowing with greens; while Autumn slipped into a gown with jeweled seams."*

—Angie Weiland-Crosby



## Library Events

### STORY TELLING

With the end of summer, we bid a fond adieu to Maxene and her wonderful stories. Thank you, Maxene, for adding fun to our summer this year.

Story Telling will have new hours with crafting fun every Saturday from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Beginning October 2, October will, of course, be Halloween-themed stories and crafts. Saturday, October 16, will be pumpkin decorating. The pumpkins will be on display at the library through the holiday.

### Davis Bates, "Songs and Stories for All Ages"

A lively inter-generation program for families and seniors to be presented at the Sandisfield Free Public Library. TBA – Originally scheduled in September, this event will be rescheduled. Refreshments afterwards to be generously provided by the Recreation Committee. The program itself is sponsored by the Sandisfield Cultural Council. Thank you, both sponsors.

### WHAT WE OFFER

We continue to add new and hopefully enlightening books to both the adult section (upstairs) and children's section (downstairs). The Children's section is replete with books, games, toys and a train set. We also offer notary service, public computer and printer availability, free wifi, and access to e-books from the Massachusetts libraries with your Sandisfield Library card.

If you have a particular author or book in mind, and the Sandisfield Library does not have it, we can borrow it from other libraries. It may take a week or two while the book winds its way across Massachusetts.

### NEW BOOK ARRIVALS

- *Enemy at the Gate* by Vince Flynn
- *The Burning* by Jonathan Kellerman
- *Stone's Throw* by Robert B. Parker
- *Santa Cruise* by Fern Michaels
- *Apples Never Fall* by Liane Moriarty
- *The Man Who Died Twice* by Richard Osman
- *The Jailhouse Lawyer* by James Patterson
- *A Darker Reality* by Anne Perry
- *Forgotten in Death* by J.D. Robb
- *The Wish* by Nicholas Sparks

In the **CHILDREN'S SECTION** we have the following:

- *Little Blue Truck's Halloween*



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*Crews worked through August and half of September in the Beech Plain section to remove trees deemed potential threats to the new broadband cables which were earlier installed several feet higher on poles.*



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# Women Win, 11-5

Notes about Sandisfield transcribed from an 1881 newspaper included the news that John Hubbard took the required oath as "Fence Viewer" for the ensuing year, that the same John Hubbard along with James Stewart took the oath for "Field-driver," and that Lyman Gaylord, chosen as a "Highway Surveyor," took the oath for that position. After 140 years, the names are mostly unknown and even the jobs can be obscure – "Fence Viewer?"

What is more interesting is that on the same day, Saturday, April 16, 1881, "The Town of Sandisfield voted to ask the Legislature to extend to women the same rights in town meetings that men have by a vote of Eleven (11) yeas to Five (5) nays."

*Bill Price, from a historical item submitted by Lorraine German*



## Coming & Going: Wilbur

*The morning of Saturday, September 18, as Tuckers was burning, Wilbur, a guernsey bull, was busy being born on Joshua's Farm.*

*Photo: Brigitte Ruthman*



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# Letters to the Editor

## MORE GOOD NEWS

I was very pleased to see an entire page in the September issue of the Times devoted to "The Good Sandisfield News." That said, I was expecting to see at least a small mention of the recent significant developments and progress being made regarding bringing broadband to our town. Indeed, regardless of where you live in Sandisfield, anyone who's travelled our roads the past several weeks, has to have seen the big spools of fiber being run on our town's utility poles by Charter Communications.

I'm aware there are folks who felt a Town-owned option was viable and for whatever reason, may not see this as the right solution for Sandisfield's pressing Internet and communication needs. Still, having had a front row seat to the long, complex, and at times, extremely difficult and politically fraught effort to bring broadband to Sandisfield, I am completely confident in my belief that Charter-Spectrum is the most technologically advanced, reliable, and affordable solution available and that our town made the very best possible decision regarding this important issue.

To not include in "The Good Sandisfield News" that there is an extremely high probability our town will be completely wired for broadband by June 2022, was in my opinion, a missed opportunity to share important and positive information regarding an issue that has been on the mind of Sandisfield residents for years. Hopefully, going forward, significant developments and "good news" regarding this crucial infrastructure upgrade that affects almost all of us will be accurately reported and not overlooked in The Times.

*Melissa Bye  
New Hartford Road*

*(The letter writer is the wife of Jeff Bye, Chair of Sandisfield's Broadband Committee.)*

*Reporter's Reply: The article last month featuring "good news about Sandisfield" focused on Town Hall. Had the article sought a broader perspective it would have included Spectrum's progress toward next June (or possibly as early as March), the expansion of the Clam River Trail, the continuing work at Yanner Park, and other good news from around Town. As Ricky Nelson told us, "You can't please everyone, so you got to please yourself."*

## FOR GREATER SCHOOL SCRUTINY

I struggle every month and with the help of my children I make payments on my taxes. Then I read the article that the school has an extra \$450,000. How did this happen? This town has a large group of seniors, we live on a fixed income and do not get raises. We have no one available to ask for a raise since my taxes have gone up again. Not only are the school finances out of line but their rating is close to the bottom. The ratio of children to teachers is crazy. I wonder how these teachers would fare in a town with twenty-five or thirty children to one teacher.

How many parents have pulled their children out of school to teach them at home?

I wonder how many children have fallen through the cracks.

Let us hope that this school issue is looked at very closely.

*Ann Wald  
West New Boston*

## Sandisfield News

*From the Berkshire County Eagle, September 5, 1930*

### STRANGE BIRD SEEN

Miss Ivy Strickland, librarian, reports that a strange bird came to her dooryard. It is similar to a duck but has no tail feathers nor web feet. It is about 12 inches in length, of white and grey color, and stands straight. When it flies its toes nearly touch the ground. The bird washes in a tub of water, likes to be petted, and is friendly with the pet dog, but refuses to eat anything.

Some think it must be what the hunters call the hell diver which are quite numerous in a nearby town.

### BURIAL OF MRS. EMMA WILLIAMS

The burial of Mrs. Emma E. Williams, 82, took place Thursday afternoon in the New Boston cemetery. She was born in Sandisfield, daughter of Levi and Caroline Pease. Until six years ago she spent her life in Montville. The town loses one of its oldest and most beloved and respected residents.



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# Comings and Goings



**BRIAN LITCHFIELD**

1971-2021

Brian R. Litchfield, 50, died peacefully at home on Sandisfield Road, August 30, after a heroic battle with cancer.

Born January 4, 1971 in Pittsfield to Patricia Dupont Litchfield Borelli and the late Leon E. Litchfield Sr., Brian grew up in Otis and attended Lee High School.

Always a hard worker, Brian started cutting firewood at age 13 for Ernie Beckwith at a lot near his childhood home in Otis. In his teens he worked as a dishwasher at the Olde Otis Inn and at 17 at Eisner Camp under his mentor and good friend Carl Runte'.

He then did carpentry work for some years, as well as delivering flowers for Dolby's Florist. He returned to work at Eisner Camp doing year-round maintenance and grounds work and operating their two pools during the summer season.

Brian enjoyed all of nature, skiing when younger, all-seasons fishing, deer hunting, camping, and the love of his many dogs past, Malikai and Zip, and his present trusted companion, Rudy.

Brian was predeceased by his father Leon and his loving stepfather, Peter T. Litchfield. He is survived by his wife of 23 years, Claudette Daigle Litchfield, his mother, Patricia Borelli, brother Leon E. Litchfield, Jr., and sister Brandi Page and her husband Hugh and many loved nieces and nephews and numerous aunts and uncles.

Per Brian's wishes are that there is to be no funeral service. Family and friends will hold a Celebration of Life at a later date. Expressions of sympathy in Brian's memory may be made to either Hospice Care in the Berkshires or St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in care of the Birches-Roy Funeral Home, 33 South St., Great Barrington, MA 01230. Condolences may be made through birches-royfuneralservices.com.



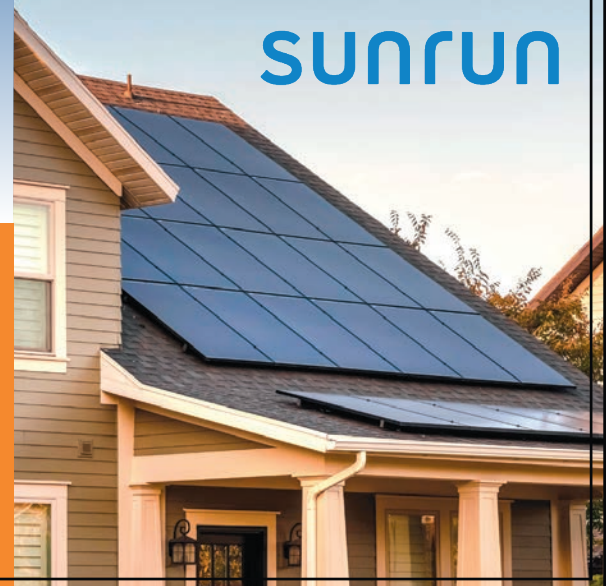
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# Comings and Goings



**BETTY  
ANNECHARICO**  
1932-2021

Betty E. Annecharico, 89, died September 13, at her home in Merrimack, New Hampshire, surrounded by her loving family.

Among many expressions of sympathy on the ConnectSandisfield-Facebook page, Clare English wrote, "We were friends for 45 years. She was a strong lady and handled life with grace." Another friend, Terry Margraf, wrote, "So sad that yet one more matriarch of Sandisfield joins the heavens, the great ladies of town are once again together."

Betty grew up in the Gilbert Home in Winsted, Connecticut, daughter of late William Benjamin Surdam and Margaret Jessie (Dietlin) Surdam. Settling in Sandisfield at age 19, Betty raised her families there until she recently relocated to New Hampshire.

Betty took much pride and pleasure from her family. She was a lifelong knitter, crafter, and enjoyed music. For many years Betty gathered with her friends at the Council of Aging in Sandisfield. She loved spending time with her grandchildren and great grandchildren, and travels with her daughter Wendy.

For many years Betty worked the voting polls of Sandisfield. She developed a passion for painting later in life and her artworks adorn the homes of many of her loved ones.

She is survived by brothers Benjamin Surdam, Irving Surdam, and sister Beatrice Jarvis. She was predeceased by her husband Rudolph Annecharico, daughter Wendy Slater, brother William Surdam, sister Florence Pisiakowski, and her ex-husband Frederick Slater.

Betty leaves behind eight children – Constance Slater (husband Dominic Campetti), Frederick Slater, Gregory Slater (wife Darnell), Irma Annecharico (fiancée Doug Detwiler), Robin Annecharico (fiancée Joe Durham), Rudolph Annecharico, Sonja Gray (husband Jeffrey), and Andrew Annecharico. She also leaves behind 18 grandchildren, as well as great- and great-great-grandchildren.

A service was held for Betty September 25 at Birches-Roy Funeral Home in Great Barrington, followed by a graveside service at Sandisfield Center Cemetery. Please consider donating to Home Health and Hospice Care, 7 Executive Park Drive, Merrimack, NH 03054, [www.hhhc.org/how-to-help/options-for-giving/](http://www.hhhc.org/how-to-help/options-for-giving/) or Hospice Care in the Berkshires, 877 South Street, Suite 1W, Pittsfield, MA 01201 or at [www.hcib.org/support-hospice-care-berkshires/](http://www.hcib.org/support-hospice-care-berkshires/).



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October 23, 2021 ~ Noon - 5:00 pm

*We would love for you to bring any photos or memorabilia you would like to share.*

*Masks are required.*



# NOW HEAR THIS!

*Edited by Laura Rogers-Castro.*

*Please send notices for Now Hear This! to [editor@sandisfieldtimes.org](mailto:editor@sandisfieldtimes.org).*



## OCTOBER EVENTS

**Sandisfield Select Board Meetings** are currently through Zoom and in-person. Please visit [sandisfieldma.gov](http://sandisfieldma.gov) or call 258-4711 for information.

**Playgroup** on Tuesdays from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. at the Otis Town Hall. Sponsored by South Berkshire Kids. Weather permitting. No pre-registration is necessary. Led by Nina Carr. Free!

**Storytelling and Arts & Crafts** at the Sandisfield Library with Maxene on Tuesday mornings from 11:00 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. for ages 2-5 and Wednesday afternoons from 3:30 to 4:15 p.m. for ages 6-8. All ages welcome but the subject will be geared for the select age group.

**Chair Yoga** on Wednesdays at 2:00 p.m. at the Old Town Hall on Silverbrook Road, sponsored by the Council on Aging. For more information, contact Nina Carr (258-3314). Free.

**Coffee Hour** sponsored by the COA. For location and more information, contact Nina Carr (258-3314).

**Farmer's Market** on Fridays from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the American Legion on South Main Street (Route 8) in Sandisfield. Vendors please call Joanne (917-686-1985).

**Gallery Opening and Reception: Paintings by Jess Cofrin** on Saturday, October 2, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at Sandisfield Arts Center, 5 Hammertown Road. Jess, an oil painter and printmaker, explores the psychology and physicality of being human. The exhibit will be on view through October. Free.

**Sandisfield Historical Society Apple Fest** on Saturday, October 9, on the grounds of the Sandisfield Meeting House on Rt. 183 at South Sandisfield Road. Time TBD. Also at our next meeting, October 9, we will be conducting an **apple pie baking contest**. Judges will taste each pie and award the winner with a \$25 gift certificate from Price Chopper. You also get bragging rights. The entrance fee is \$10.00. Judging will take place at noon. We will have apple pies for sale. There will be vendors and refreshments for sale. If you are interested in joining us, please call Ann at 413 258 4415. Space is limited.

**Coffee and Curiosity at the Farm** on Saturday, October 9 at 11:00 a.m. sharp at Joshua's Farm at 45 Dodd Road. Joshua's Farm, Sandisfield's only dairy farm, is owned and operated by Brigitte Ruthman. Hear the hows and whys of small dairy farming and be introduced to Delilah, Dollie, Luftwaffe, and newborn Wilbur!

**Joel Brown and Friends Special Performance** on Saturday, October 16 from 8:00 to 10:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center at 5 Hammertown Road. A classical guitarist, Joel has performed many times as a soloist and chamber musician. He will play some of his favorite classical pieces and then will be joined by Dave Maswick for a set of original songs that feature beautifully arranged harmony and intricate, finger-picking guitar work. Tickets are available at [sandisfieldartscenter.org](http://sandisfieldartscenter.org). \$25.

**Celebration of the Life and Work of Val Coleman**. Includes a film showing of Val's play, "The Stamp Collection." Sunday, October 17 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center. Free. Info at [www.sandisfieldartscenter.org](http://www.sandisfieldartscenter.org).

**New Boston Church Service** on Sunday, October 17 at 10:00 a.m. at the New Boston Congregational Church, Route 57. All are welcome!

**Veterans Fundraiser Tag & Bake Sale** on Friday, October 22, from 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., at the Berkshire Rehabilitation & Skilled Care Center, 7 Sandisfield Road. To benefit our veterans. Rain date: October 29. We hope to see you there.

**Music Like a Map – Zoe Lewis** on Sunday, October 24 from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center at 5 Hammertown Road. Zoe plays vintage jazz and world-beat grooves on anything from the piano to the spoons. Her show is perfect for all ages. Tickets available at [sandisfieldartscenter.org](http://sandisfieldartscenter.org). \$5-\$15.

**Halloween Party at the New Boston Inn**. October 30 from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. Buffet, Costume Party, Scavenger Hunt. Music and dancing. \$20 p/p. Info: 413-258-4477.

**Sandisfield – Safe Trick or Treating** on Sunday, October 31 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. sponsored by the Sandisfield Recreation Committee. Sign up (413-269-7357 or [kowgirlruby@yahoo.com](mailto:kowgirlruby@yahoo.com)) before October 20 to be a safe trick-or-treating house or let the Committee know if your child plans to participate so there is plenty of treats to go around. A map of participating homes will be provided.

## EVENTS IN SURROUNDING TOWNS

**Hike a Scenic Circle in Cookson State Forest** in New Marlborough on Saturday, October 2 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. A moderately difficult 3-mile hike on forest trails with members of the New Marlborough Land Trust. Meet at the Lake Boat Ramp on Hotchkiss Road. Registration is required ([nmlandtrust@gmail.com](mailto:nmlandtrust@gmail.com) or 413-854-8509). Free.

**A Walk through History on the Bidwell Grounds** on Saturday, October 2 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Join Rob Hoogs on an historical hike along old, rough colonial roads. See four cellar holes, a charcoal hearth, and beautiful old stone walls. Registration required ([bidwellhousemuseum.org](http://bidwellhousemuseum.org)). Free.

**Scary Stories Around the Fire on Saturday**, October 9 (7:00 to 9:00 p.m.) and Sunday, October 10 (4:00 to 6:00 p.m.) Robert Oakes, author of "Ghosts of the Berkshires," will share readings on Berkshire colonial-era history and ghost lore. Robert will lead a candlelit ghost walk around the Bidwell Museum House. Information and ticket information at [bidwellhousemuseum.org](http://bidwellhousemuseum.org).

**The Farm New Marlborough Harvest Festival** is scheduled for Sunday, October 10 from 12:00 to 6:00 p.m. Music, farm food, entertainment, farm contests and vendors. Bring your lawn chairs and blankets and plan to spend the afternoon. Five free farm tours with Farmer Tom and the Hay Wagon throughout the day. If you would like to be a vendor or musician or would like more information, call Jean Pollock (413-229-2933).

**SculptureNow at the Mount** through October 13. A new exhibition of 30 large-scale contemporary outdoor sculptures at The Mount in Lenox. The grounds and gardens are open from dawn to dusk. This exhibit was funded with support from the Sandisfield Cultural Council. Free.

**Notice Otis Cultural Event featuring Author Robert Oakes on "Ghosts of the Berkshires"** on Thursday, October 28 at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. Mr. Oakes has given ghost tours at The Mount in Lenox for more than a decade. To register, visit [www.optin.today](http://www.optin.today) or [www.townofotisma.com](http://www.townofotisma.com).



# Apple Picking Season Is Upon Us

## LIMITED CROP, BUT BOUNTIFUL DONUTS, AT RIISKA BROOK ORCHARD

By Thomas Christopher

A visit to Riiska Brook Orchard this fall will find lots of fruit in the apple “shack,” but only very limited quantities on the trees. According to Suzanne Riiska Avery daughter of founder Bill Riiska, the problem with this year’s crop was twofold. Last year’s crop was extra big, which tends to leave the trees depleted the following year. Then there was a late frost in spring of 2021 that caught the Riiska trees in bloom, killing many of the flowers and eliminating most of the harvest. A few trees escaped, so the orchard has had very limited picking of Macoun, McIntosh, Gala, and Cortland apples. To supplement this, the Riiskas have brought in apples from an orchard in Granville, Massachusetts that escaped the frost, so that their loyal clientele will have fruit to bring home from a visit. In addition to these imported (but still local) apples, Riiska Brook Orchard is continuing to press cider and make its ever-popular donuts. They will be open to the public on Saturdays and Sundays this fall, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. 🍷



Photo: Bill Price

## Ode to Riiska Brook Orchard

By Melissa Bye

Every time I drive back from Great Barrington, turn onto New Hartford Road, and go down the hill before entering my driveway, as soon as Riiska Brook Farm comes into view, I smile. Regardless the season, the rows and rows of Bill Riiska’s beautifully and carefully tended apple trees, always remind me of why my husband and I love Sandisfield and chose it to be our forever home.

In the Spring, the sight of the trees in flower is a comforting harbinger that warmer days are ahead. But of course, apple season is when the orchard is in its glory- trees laden with more varieties of apples than I could ever name, pumpkins perched on the property’s stone wall, and the cozy apple shack heated by a wood stove and manned by a member of the Riiska family ready to help the steady stream of locals and out-of-towners who are there to pick and buy not only apples, but also cider, pumpkins, maple syrup and of course,

donuts. While I wish apple season was longer, it is a good thing donut season is relatively short. If you’ve eaten a hot Riiska cider donut you know exactly what I’m talking about. If you haven’t, well ... you don’t know what you’re missing. Those donuts are truly decadent and an addictive taste of fall.

What makes Riiska’s so special is not just the delicious apples, blueberries and other products they sell, but the friendly people who work there. The much too soon loss of Barbara Riiska, the family’s matriarch, was a very sad day indeed. Still, I like to think she would be comforted to know her family is carrying on her legacy by making everyone, young or old, local or not, who visit the orchard and apple shack feel welcome.

That all of this comes with a beautiful Berkshire view makes my husband and me feel that we have our own little piece of paradise right across the road from this wonderful place. For me, Riiska Brook Farm is a daily reminder of why after decades of living in a hot, congested concrete jungle, I am grateful to call Sandisfield home. 🍷

**FALL TAG/BAKE & CRAFT SALE**

**PLEASE HELP US RAISE FUNDS FOR OUR VETERANS' CHRISTMAS FUND**

**OCTOBER 22<sup>ND</sup> 10 AM - 2 PM**

**(RAIN DATE OCT. 29TH)**

**BERKSHIRE REHABILITATION  
7 SANDISFIELD ROAD  
413-258-44791**



Photo: Jean Atwater-Williams

# THE SANDISFIELD TIMES



RELIABLE. REGULAR. RELEVANT.

P.O. Box 584  
Sandisfield, MA 01255  
www.sandisfieldtimes.org

*The Times is grateful to readers who  
contributed in September:*

*Steve Pincus & Christine Nadleman*

*Matthew Shur*



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