

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

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Volume XII, Number 10

January and February 2022

A Big Question, A Big Change

ELECTED OR APPOINTED?

By Simon Winchester

Our town is on the verge of upending more than two centuries of history, deciding whether to end the time-honored practice of electing one of the community's most crucially important officials, the Town Clerk.

The Select Board is now proposing that the clerk instead be appointed by the Town Manager, with the job description and salary publicly posted and open to applicants from across the state.

This proposed change, profound in its nature and certain to provoke argument, will first be raised formally at a Special Town Meeting scheduled for Saturday February 26. If it passes the scrutiny of those voters who attend it will then go on to the full Town Meeting due to be held in May, since accomplishing the change will require an amendment to the Town By-Laws.

The duties of the Town Clerk can best be described as super-secretarial. She or he maintains all official records, keeps minutes of various committee and other meetings, posts notices of forthcoming agenda items, administers the collection of fees, and has a detailed knowledge of the town's rules and regulation. The clerk acts as the interface between the public and the government, and for those residents who seldom attend Select Board or other public meetings, the clerk serves essentially as the public face of the administration.

This simple fact goes to the heart of the controversy that will erupt in any debate about whether the clerk should henceforward be appointed.

Elected clerks tend to stay in post for lengthy periods – more than twenty years in the case of the most recent, Dolores Harasyko – and acquire in doing so an

Con't on p.3

School District

Finds Savings

FEDERAL GRANT FUNDS NEW AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

*Jennifer Hibbins,
Sandisfield parent and
School Committee member*



As a result of both improved financial efficiency and reduced spending due to the Covid-19 pandemic, at its December 6 meeting, School Committee members unanimously voted to return unspent funds from Fiscal Year 2021 to the towns of Otis and Sandisfield. The funds are to be returned in the form of reduced assessment payments for the current fiscal year. Sandisfield's total Fiscal Year 2022 assessment has therefore dropped by nearly \$200,000.

The savings are partly due to the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, last year the district did not have to pay tuition for students to attend out-of-state special education schools at those schools that were closed. Additionally, the district applied for and received state assistance for purchasing Covid-related supplies and resources.

NEW AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

In other good news, the first session of the new afterschool program at Farmington River Elementary was a great success. Over half of the student population participated in the program, which ran from 3:00 to 5:00 pm, Mondays to Thursdays, November 15 to December 16, 2021. Children in Kindergarten through sixth grade received tutoring and homework assistance, and participated in activities such as arts and crafts, band practice and intramurals. "We're happy parents took advantage [of the afterschool program] and look forward to a successful second session," said Thomas Nadolny, Principal and Superintendent. "Our hope is to continue with this program into the future."

The next session of the afterschool program begins January 18 and runs through June 16 of this year on same schedule: Monday to Thursday, 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. New activities include a Minecraft (co-operative computer game) Club, Knitting Club, Lego Club and Spanish Club.

Con't on p.3

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Van Driver Wanted

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CORI checks and fingerprinting required for all positions

Please send resume or application with a valid Massachusetts Driver's License to: Teresa DellaGiustina, Assistant to the Superintendent, Farmington River School District at tdellagiustina@frrsd.org.

Building Commissioner Needed

The Town of Sandisfield is seeking qualified applicants for part-time Building Commissioner/Zoning Enforcement Officer.

Duties include enforcement of the state building code and local zoning bylaws, conducting plan reviews, issuing building permits, and investigating complaints, etc. Applicant must be proficient in computer applications and familiar with PermitEyes software. Must be certified as a local building inspector in Massachusetts with ability to obtain state certification as a Building Commissioner within eighteen months of appointment.

Employment application and complete job description available at www.sandisfieldma.gov under "Employment." Application review began January 1 and applications will be accepted until the position is filled. Submit application to: manager@sandisfieldma.gov. AA/EOE.



Special Town Meeting, February 26

Saturday, February 26, at 10:00 a.m. at the Old Town Hall on Silverbrook Road. Items include changing Town Clerk position from elected to appointed; accepting a local sales tax on retail cannabis products; property and road issues, and possibly salary account transfers to covered recent personnel changes. Warrant drafts will be posted on town website as they are developed.

Major Planning Board Meetings Regarding Bylaw Changes

CANNABIS BYLAW

Cannabis Bylaw Public Hearing

- A revision of the proposed bylaw that failed to pass last May.
- February 24, Thursday, 7:00 p.m.
- Old Town Hall, Silverbrook Road

THREE NEW BYLAW PROPOSALS

Public Hearing on three proposed new bylaws:

1. Accessory Dwelling Units
 2. Shared Driveways
 3. "Dark Sky" lighting
- March 9, Wednesday, 7:00 p.m.
 - Old Town Hall, Silverbrook Road

Town Directory Additions

NOTARY PUBLIC

John Skrip has relinquished his notary license. The two notaries in town are Theresa Spohnholz at the Town Library at 258-4966 and Joanne D. Olson, a local attorney and notary public in Massachusetts and New York at 413-258-4465 or 917-686-1985.

NEW LISTING: POLICE-LOCAL.

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(SEE PAGE 18)

School District Finds Savings

Cont'd from p.1

As Laurie Flower, technology and math enrichment teacher, explains: “Knitting and academics, especially math, are more closely related than they first appear. The Knitting Club will provide a unique opportunity for students to learn hands-on problem-solving skills in a way that is fun and interesting.”

In “Learning with Legos,” first and second grade students will learn social-emotional skills through brick-based counseling with school adjustment counselor Terri DiGrigoli. They will focus on friendships, self-esteem, growth mindset and emotional management.

Many families are looking forward to the Spanish Club, as foreign language has not been offered at the school for several years due to lack of staff. In this club, students will learn to practice speaking the Spanish language, while exploring the culture of Spanish-speaking countries through music and books. Sandisfield resident and fourth-grade teacher Bethany Mielke

will instruct students in two groups, with Kindergarteners through second graders meeting weekly from 3:00-4:00 p.m. and third through sixth graders 4:00-5:00 p.m.

Physical education and health teacher Jenna Daley will continue to lead the intramural sports program with new activities, including dragon ball, bean bag slide tag and a popular game called hula hut smashdown. Physical fitness activities run through the spring with pirate ball, a scavenger hunt, tag games, the popular “Kick the Can,” and plenty of outdoor fun. All guidelines regarding social distancing, limited sharing of equipment, handwashing and mask wearing will be strictly followed.

Town finances will not be affected by the new activities since funding for the afterschool program is made possible by a federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief. Parents and educators are hopeful that the afterschool program will have a positive impact on students’ academic performance and social-emotional learning. 🍷

A Big Question, A Big Change

Cont'd from p.1

immensely useful institutional memory. They are also usually local residents – men or women who are known to the community and know both the residents as well as the various foibles and eccentricities of the town.

But in recent years the state of Massachusetts has given town clerks a whole raft of new responsibilities – many of them quite technical, relating to such matters as voting rights, election laws and computer skills. And while within a larger community – a city like Springfield or Amherst, say – it be easy enough to find a suitably qualified person, it could be considerably more challenging to do so in a community as small – and in a way isolated – as ours.

Which is why the Select Board has for some months been mulling the notion of having the job made fully professional – with the post advertised statewide, the salary suggested and negotiated, the position filled on the basis of a formal contract, and the decision to hire and terminate this person taken away – after more than two centuries – from the whims of voting preferences of the people.

In other towns who have adopted this system the final decision is usually made by the Town Manager, who is the holder of an appointed position also. Sandisfield would likely follow suit, the appointment made by the Manager, on the advice of the Select Board.

The current Town Clerk, Mary Kronholm, is here on temporary secondment from the town of Blandford, following the raft of resignations from government last summer. She has said she will hold the fort in Sandisfield until a permanent successor is found, and will train and otherwise prepare for a smooth transition.

The question of whether her successor will be elected or appointed will be determined by next month’s special town meeting and then, finally, in a groundbreaking decision to be taken by the people in May. 🍷

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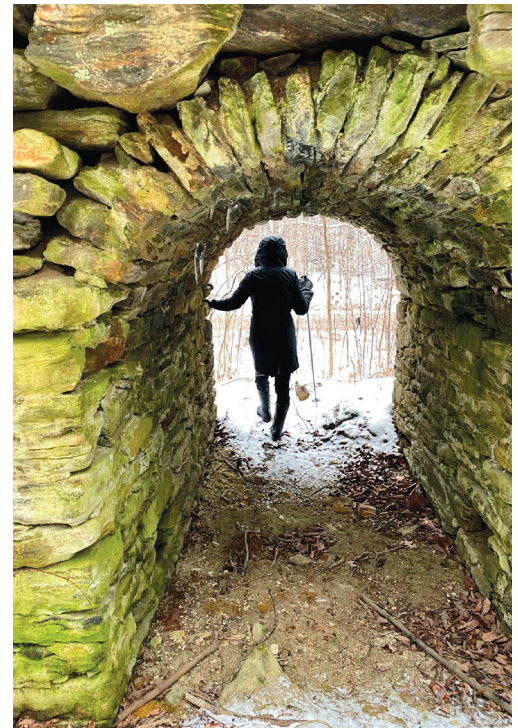
Stickers are available for 2022 and will be valid until; December 31. They can be purchased in person at Town Hall Monday, Tuesday, or Thursday from 10:00 a.m. until; 2:00 p.m. If purchasing by mail, send a check payable to Town of Sandisfield to Town of Sandisfield, PO Box 163, Sandisfield, MA 01255 and enclose a self-addressed stamped return envelope.

The fee is \$75.00. This is an increase of \$10 over last year, which will be used to partially cover the additional cost of a year-round bulky waste receptacle.

Each household must purchase a sticker if you use the Transfer Station. A second sticker may not be used for a separate household. An apartment in your home requires its own sticker. If you own more than one home in town, each home must have its own sticker. You must provide a valid license plate number and post the sticker in the driver’s side rear window.

If you will not be using the Transfer Station, your household must let Town Hall know how you will dispose of your trash. You can pick up a form at Town Hall, or email your explanation to the Sandisfield Board of Selectmen at jbeardsley@sandisfieldma.gov. List your name, address, and the reason you do not need to use the Transfer Station.

Any vehicle not displaying this year’s red sticker will be denied access to the Transfer Station. 🍷



Our forests hold remnants of the past which suddenly become visible in the winter. This ruin, the remains of an old mill, lies hidden for most of the year on Lower West Street.

Photo: Setsuko Winchester



Select Board Report

The Select Board has been working with Town Manager Kevin Flynn on the arrangements for the budget. This involved an All-Boards meeting to meet the Manager and to prepare the departments for budget meetings. There will be another All-Boards meeting in January, and the Town Manager plans to have such meetings regularly.

We worked with the DPW, Police and Fire departments to dispose of surplus equipment, some of which has been sitting around a long time.

Our new Treasurer/Collector Gina Campbell, after an initial trial by fire confronting a huge backlog of tax bills, has conquered that mountain and things are now beginning to go smoothly in that office.

We had a sad event in December with the passing of our Assistant Town Clerk (since August) Donna Fillion. She is missed in Town Hall. And we had another vacancy with the resignation of our Building Inspector Matt Kollmer, who left to take a position in Lee and Lenox. The Monterey Building Inspector Donald Torrico will fill in temporarily; meanwhile both positions have been posted.

The Select Board met with the Planning Board on January 11 and will meet with them again in February to discuss two proposed bylaws for the Annual Town Meeting: a revised Cannabis bylaw, and a bylaw on "Accessory Dwelling Units." Drafts of both these bylaws are now posted on the Town website. The public is encouraged to attend a Public Hearing on a proposed Cannabis Bylaw, February 24, at the Old Town Hall.

The Select Board, together with the Recreation Committee and the Council on Aging, co-hosted a Town Holiday Party, which was also a "meet and greet" for our newer Town employees. It was a festive and enjoyable event. Thanks to all who helped with this and to all who attended.

We also finished negotiations with the Union representing two DPW employees. There is a one-year contract in place to allow time for changes and new incentives.

We have also been working on the warrant for a Special Town Meeting on February 26. (Mark your calendars!) This will include changing the Town Clerk position from elected to appointed; accepting a local sales tax on retail cannabis products; some property and road issues; and possibly some salary account transfers to cover recent personnel changes. The warrant drafts will be posted on the website as they are developed.

The Select Board also met with the Town Manager to discuss goals for 2022. This was an excellent discussion, setting out priorities for the next year and beyond. It is exciting to be able to plan ahead rather than only reacting to problems. This is another indication of the quality team we have at Town Hall, and we are looking forward to continued progress! 🍷

Members of the Select Board

George Riley, Chair
Alex Bouman
Steven Seddon

Staying Safe While Keeping Warm

CHIMNEY SAFETY CRUCIAL

By *Christine Nadelman*

Winter is now upon us! The mild days and nights of this past holiday season are just a distant memory as temperatures plunge into single digits and the Berkshire countryside is blanketed by snow and ice. Across the wintry landscape, swirling smoke from chimneys show residents are trying keep their homes warm at a lower cost with fireplaces and wood stoves.

But don't let this Norman Rockwell moment fool you – without regular cleaning from a chimney sweep, your home could be vulnerable to a chimney fire.

With regular use, over time your chimney becomes lined with a substance called creosote, a highly flammable black or dark brown residue that is a by-product of combustion. If enough creosote builds up in the flue lining, and if the internal flue temperature is high enough or flames reach it, a chimney fire can result.

A chimney should be serviced, swept and cleaned once a year, preferably before the colder weather approaches. In our area few companies have continued the ancient craft of the chimney sweep. Among them are Jesse Taylor Cole of Bottoms Up Chimney Service (413-717-2065, bottomsupchimneyservice@gmail.com) and Steve Graves of Sweep 'n Scan (413-442-0201).

Schedule your chimney sweep today! Do that and when you walk in from outside with yet another armload of wood and settle back to enjoy the warm flickering flames, you can rest easy with peace of mind that your home is safe from the danger of a chimney fire. 🍷



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Sandisfield Historical Commission

National Historic District Approved by State Commission

NEXT STEP: FEDERAL RECOGNITION

By Ron Bernard

Sandisfield’s application of New Boston Village for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) was unanimously approved by the Massachusetts Historical Commission at a public Zoom meeting in early December.

Federal recognition by the U.S. National Park Service, the final step, is expected by the end of this quarter whereupon the nomination will be published in the Congressional Register and then in the State Register.

National Historic District listings confirm that a community has retained a substantial amount of historically and architecturally significant character – which is certainly true of New Boston Village.

Listing on the NRHP, however prestigious, is strictly honorary. Property owners are under no obligations or restrictions whatsoever.

There has been confusion about owners’ obligations. There are none in this case. The fact is that only local historic districts established under a town’s bylaws have a say concerning proposed physical alterations to portions of properties that can be seen from the street. And there are no local historic districts in Sandisfield.

A public information meeting for property owners and others interested was conducted by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) via Zoom on November 30.

WHAT DESIGNATION MEANS


One of the purposes of the Register is to raise awareness and pride within communities, something that usually creates interest in that community by visitors and potential property buyers. The Commonwealth is one of the leading states in terms

of participation and has a relatively high number of national historic districts.

Another benefit is that NRHP districts may qualify for extra review and protection in cases of intrusion by government projects such as bridges and road construction. Also, matching grants by the State are possible for improvements to government facilities in a listed district. An example is the Sandisfield Public Library which is in the New Boston Historic District and is therefore eligible for matching funds as available.

The town of Otis also received good news at the same meeting when the proposed NRHP historic district for Otis Center was approved by

the MHC. Having simultaneous approvals for historic districts in neighboring towns is a positive sign of State confidence that the communities’ residents and officials are aware and supportive of preserving their town’s characters.

Looking ahead, the next nomination seeks NRHP recognition of the Knox Trail, the 18th century “war road” which runs for five miles through Sandisfield forests and into Otis. The Otis and Sandisfield historical commissions shared the sponsorship of the application, but Otis provided all of the funding. The process is expected to take several years but has a good chance of success. 

Sandisfield Featured in House Tour

By Bill Price


Photo: Gary Leveille

Each December Berkshire historian/reporter Gary Leveille publishes an Annual Satirical House Tour in *The Berkshire Edge*. This year Sandisfield made the cut with this sideways historic structure along Rt. 8 in New Boston. In fact, we featured the building in our September issue.

The building, despite our title of “Going, Going, Gone,” still resists the pull of gravity. Gary described the building as one of the surviving structures of “Suicide Hill,” the precipitous ski jump that attracted athletes from around the world. Like reporters at this very newspaper have done from time to time, Gary made the whole thing up. The building was probably a garage having nothing to do with Suicide Hill. According to historian Ron Bernard, who knows



what he knows, the only surviving structure from Suicide Hill is a piece of the Villa Mia building.

Gary did, however, accurately report on the building’s current use. “Enterprising Sandisfield resident Sammy Slushski eventually chopped off the curved end of the ski jump and turned it into the undulated building shown here. Today the bent-roofed structure is used by a local entrepreneur to make parabolic-curve snowplows.” 

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It's Only Mortar, Right?

REPOINTING THE ARTS CENTER FOUNDATION

By George Wheeler

Last fall local mason Sam Mercier of Mercier Stone completed the repointing – the replacement of missing or deteriorated pointing mortar – of two elevations of the Sandisfield Arts Center.

Sam and his crew of gifted masons did an excellent job raking the joints of old mortar and reestablishing an attractive and watertight wall.



Overall repointing of one elevation of the Sandisfield Arts Center.

Because of its listing on the National Register of Historic Places as the “1839 Montville Baptist Church,” now the home of the Arts Center, the building has qualified for funding for projects at both the state and federal levels. The repointing process began several months earlier when board member Tom Christopher wrote a grant application to the 1772 Foundation, through Preservation Massachusetts, to support the work.

With some assistance from me, Tom included language in the application that indicated that part of the process of repointing would include an analysis of

the original mortar. Knowing the composition of the original mortar would be interesting both for understanding the history of the building and in the selection of the materials and performance criteria of the repointing mortar. Analyzing the mortar was the fun part of the whole process.

Through Tom’s efforts, the Arts Center was awarded a grant of \$8,250 for the project, and we got underway.

MORE ABOUT MORTARS

In simplest terms, mortars comprise an aggregate and a binder – something that fills up the space and something that holds it all together. For mortars, the aggregate is referred to as sand. We all typically understand sand as that stuff in the river or at the beach made up mostly of quartz, but to a geologist sand is a geological material in specific size range: 0.06 to 2 mm (more on the sand from the building below).

For the longest time, until the late 18th century, lime was the primary binder for mortars and continues to be used today. Over the subsequent centuries new binders were developed including hydraulic limes, natural cement, and, ultimately, Portland cement, named for creating materials with properties similar to the much-prized Portland limestone.

Returning to the Arts Center and its first life as the Montville Baptist Church, one can see from the above discussion of binders that the construction date of 1839 offered intriguing possibilities – lime, hydraulic lime, natural cement, or Portland cement. This led to the mortar analysis phase of the repointing project.

MORTAR ANALYSIS

Most information about a mortar and many other geological materials is gained by using a polarizing light microscope to look at very thin sections of a sample. The overall analytical process is referred to as petrography.

The sections examined are so thin that light passes through them revealing optical properties characteristic of the minerals and other materials present in the sample. The mortar from the Arts Center is seen in the accompanying photos.

Experienced petrographer John Walsh of Highbridge Materials Consulting detailed the features of the mortar seen in the image: the binder is pure lime.

Perhaps more interesting, and, in some ways directly related to the lime, is the sand. As mentioned above, sand to a geologist is a size designation as are gravel

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Detail of the repointing mortar

(larger than sand), silt and clay (smaller than sand). Most sand (over 99 percent) in mortars is quartz sand. What petrography revealed is that the sand for the Arts Center is crushed marble, and, specifically, a dolomitic marble sand similar to the marble formations in nearby Lee.

FORMULATING A REPOINTING MORTAR

One of the most important properties of a replacement mortar is that it looks like the original in both color and texture. The texture comes mostly from the sizes and types of aggregate and the color mostly from the binder.

A second consideration is to install a mortar that will last. A third is that it does not do damage to the surrounding stone.

For the repointing, a marble sand with a distribution of sizes similar to what is present in

the original mortar was employed. The binder that was selected was a modern hydraulic lime that is similar to the original lime binder but will last much longer without being too strong and impermeable that would damage the granite making up the foundation. A small amount of yellow ochre pigment was added to the mortar to adjust the color to be closer to the original.

Having a good mortar formula is helpful for building, but ultimately the success lies in the hands of the masons. In this case, Sam Mercier and his crew produced an elegant and long-lasting result.

George Wheeler of West New Boston is a materials scientist working in the field of conservation of sculpture, monuments, and buildings. His current work includes serving as science advisor for the conservation of the Alamo in San Antonio, Texas.

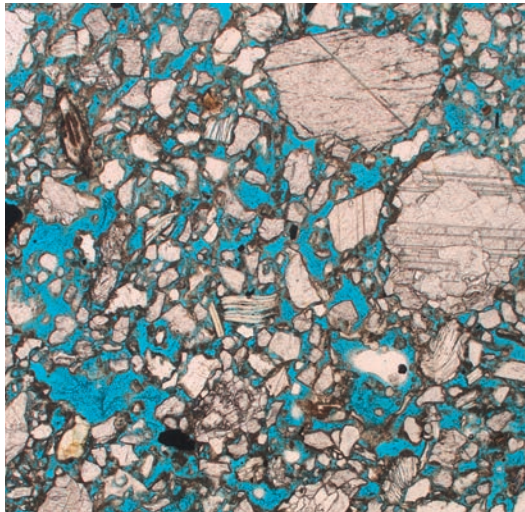


Image of the original pointing mortar using plane polarized light in a polarizing light microscope

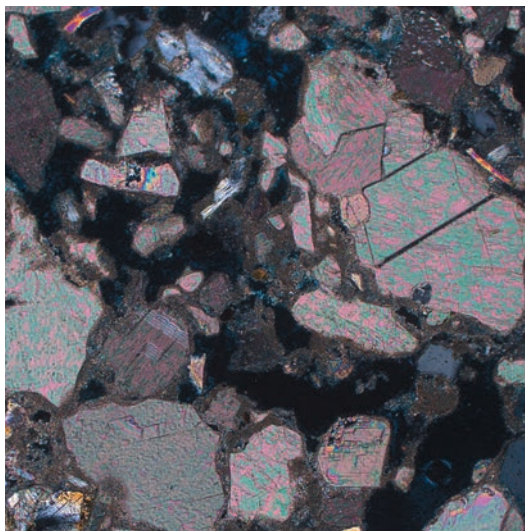


Image of the original pointing mortar using crossed polarized light in a polarizing light microscope and revealing the crushed marble aggregate



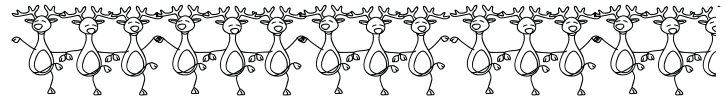
Lee marble quarry

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Annual Christmas Fair sponsored by the Sandisfield Historical Society.

Lower left: Clockwise from upper left: Lynn Rubenstein, Lisa Vaeth, Dawn Lemon, Nina Carr, Santa Claus, and Laura Ziegler.
Lower right: The Claus Band.

Photos by William Bakunis

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Sandisfield Census Underway

STAND UP AND BE COUNTED

By Times Reporters

The town's annual street list forms will be mailed to all households in January, said Town Clerk Mary Kronholm. Massachusetts General Law Ch. 51, sec. 4 requires the town to conduct this annual census.

It is critical that all residents return the forms to the Town Clerk's office promptly.

Failure to respond to this local annual census could result in removal from the active list of registered voters. According to the statute, "failure to respond to this mailing for two consecutive years shall result in removal from the active voting list and may result in removal from the voter registration rolls."

DON'T DO THIS

Residents should not use the census form for the purpose of voter registration. Anyone not registered to vote can do so with the town clerk by mailing the completed voter registration form to that office. The census form cannot be used to change political party affiliation, either. That also must be done with a voter registration form which is available online either from the Secretary of State's website or the town's website.

Parents of college students or members of the military cannot remove their family member from the census form if they are registered voters in Sandisfield. These names cannot be deleted on the form unless the student or armed forces

member has personally signed the form as well as the member of the household completing the paperwork.

DO THIS

Every member of the household should be listed on the form. Information regarding dependent children is not public record and is only used by the school district for enrollment purposes. Also, information collected regarding a person's status as a veteran "shall not be a public record and shall only be disclosed to the adjutant general, the secretary of veterans' services and local veterans' service officers," states the statute.

All forms should either be mailed back in the enclosed return envelope or dropped off at the Town Hall in the black box outside the rear entrance.

"Please use the return envelope only for the census form. Do not include tax payments or water payments," said Kronholm.

Anyone who has not received a 2022 census form or who has questions about the form should contact Town Clerk Kronholm at 413-258-4711, x2 and leave a message or at townclerk@sandisfieldma.gov.



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

The Goat Man

By Ron Bernard

It was the 1940s, a different, more innocent time.

One resident of the upper Montville-Lower West Street neighborhood was especially memorable. His name was Archie — nobody knew his last name — but he was called, simply, “the goat man.”



Nothing is known about Archie’s past or what brought him to Sandisfield. He lived alone in a shack on Lower West Street with his beloved goats. Children loved to run after his wagon and goats and try to get a ride on the mounds of hay he carted around.

One of his young fans was Maria Domato of Lower West Street. “The goat man, who could forget him?” she said.

“My little sister and my two cousins, Sherry and Butchie Soldan and I used to go to his house and ride in the hay wagon. We tried to ride his horse, Ned, but we got knocked off a lot. He used to make us cocoa with goat’s milk. I remember him making biscuits too. Sometimes he would walk

up to our house and borrow some flour from us. Once in a while he would come up and watch TV with us. But we had to spray air freshener after he left because of the strong odor of his goats.

“He was a kind old man,” Maria continued.

“I remember one particular dark night. I was walking home from a friend’s house in Montville and I was nervous about that. He let me borrow a kerosene lantern. I can still remember the relief when I got that light.

“His favorite goat was named Sara. When I got goats of my own one summer I named the mama Sara. Another favorite memory was the pungent goat cheese he brought to us. He had a grinding wheel, an old-fashioned peddle type, which he used to sharpen his scythe so he could cut hay.”

Michelle Sandler Lewis also had fond memories of the goat man.

She said, “He lived on Lower West Street in a shack he built himself and he had a lot of goats that were allowed in the house. His place was on a small dirt road just before West Street. He was a very nice person. He drove a horse and wagon for picking up hay.”



She added, “We thought he looked a lot like Santa Claus with his white hair and long beard.”

Others remember and appreciate that Archie the Goat Man could be counted on as a good neighbor when an extra hand was needed, for example to help on the chicken farms.

No one knows what ultimately happened to this gentle, colorful man but he touched the lives of Montville children and we are glad to know about him. 🍷

This article originally appeared in Sandisfield Then & Now: 1762-2012.

Photos: Sylvia German

**Sandisfield
Historical
Society**



By Ann Wald, President

The Historical Society ended our year with the annual Christmas Craft Fair and what a great day it was. A very nice group of vendor’s and absolutely wonderful items offered.

If you are interested in history and would like to join us, please call me at 258-4415. See you in the Spring. We will be back in business in April. 🍷

Recreation Committee

A Break, Followed by Chocolates



By Lynn Rubenstein


We hope everyone had warm and wonderful holidays.

The Recreation Committee will take a short hiatus from any programs during January, but we won't be knitting by the fire. We will be busy brainstorming new and exciting ideas and updating old ones.

Now is the time for you, the community, to let us know what programs and/or events you would like to see us offer in Sandisfield. Call or write to us at the phone and email below to let us know your ideas. We'll consider everything.

Plowing right along into February, (let's hope not), we will be making chocolates for Valentine's Day. We will meet you Sunday, February 13 from 10:00 a.m. to noon at Fire Station #1 on Rt. 8. This

program is free and open to all ages. Class size will be limited to 20 participants, so please register before February 1. Contact us at 413-269-7357 or kowgirlruby@yahoo.com.

Masks are mandatory at all our programs. 



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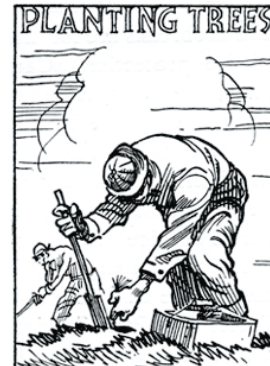
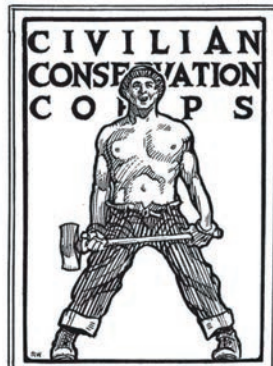
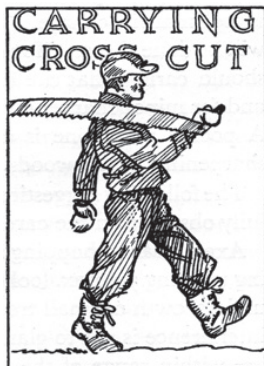


Kevin Titus (right), living history re-enactor who led the ceremony, stands by the monument with a fellow re-enactor and member of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation

A Quiet Forest Ceremony

Liana Toscanini attended a ceremony in Sandisfield State Forest on December 16, marking the 87th anniversary of the tragic deaths of five young men from the Civilian Conservation Corps, Camp S-72, 196 Company. The CCCs were based at this site in Sandisfield from 1933 to 1937.

On December 16, 1934, the five men died in a truck accident on Three Mile Hill in Great Barrington while traveling to a church service. A lone marble memorial stone inscribed with their names remains today in the state forest. It is believed to be the worst accident in the history of the CCC.



Council on Aging



Chair Yoga Returns; Coffee Hours on Back Burner

By Nina Carr

The Council on Aging is happy to report that Wendy Larsen, our wonderful Chair Yoga instructor, is back at “full strength.” The classes are held at Old Town Hall at the foot of Silverbrook Road on Wednesdays at 2:00 p.m. There are a limited number of spaces, so please let us know if you plan to attend. Call me at 258-3314. We are also trying to figure out how and when to resume our “coffee hour” gatherings. We were thinking of starting in the middle of January, but recently due to the uptick in Covid many senior centers are dialing back their programs. So we’ve currently gone on hold. We will post on ConnectSandisfield on Facebook and the Town website when we can get going again. We are still offering transportation to town for medical visits and shopping. Call Linda Riiska at 258-4816.

A great big thanks to Lynn Rubenstein for offering to help Sandisfield residents schedule their booster shots. Linda and I can help you contact Lynn if you’d like.

WE CAN GET THROUGH THIS TOGETHER! 



COA members enjoyed this year’s annual Christmas luncheon on December 15 at Mario’s Tuscany Grill on Main Street in Winsted. Nearly twenty members attended, ranging in age from around 50 to over 90. A lot of Sandisfield stories were told and retold.

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By Terry Spohnholz

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"The hard soil and four months of snow make the inhabitants of the northern temperate zone wiser and abler than his fellow who enjoys the fixed smile of the tropics."

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Winter is not a season, it's a celebration."

--Anamika Mishra

We continue to add new and, 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 ebooks 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 from one end of Massachusetts to our end.

In an effort to make room for new book acquisitions, we have begun weeding out old but in excellent condition fiction, non-fiction and children's books. These books are for sale at a nominal fee. \$2.00 for hardcover, \$1.50 for softcover. \$10 dollars gets you six hardcover books!

Enjoy the comfort of the winter season, in the glow of warm fires, friends and family. Curl up and indulge in a few reads, some laughter and the glory of being alive.

LIBRARY EVENTS

Story Telling hours with crafting fun has been cancelled until March 1st due to the recent outbreak of Covid19. We hope to restart again on the second Saturday of each month beginning March 12th at 11 AM.

NEW BOOK ARRIVALS

The Paris Detective
by James Patterson

Criminal Mischief
by Stuart Woods

The Midnight Lock
by Jeffrey Deaver



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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.



"Gimme that!" says the goldfinch as the tufted titmouse hangs on to hopes of a tasty snack.

Photo: Barbara Kershner



Bobcat
A bobcat passing through the Brown's backyard on West Street was caught on camera by Michelle Arnot Brown.



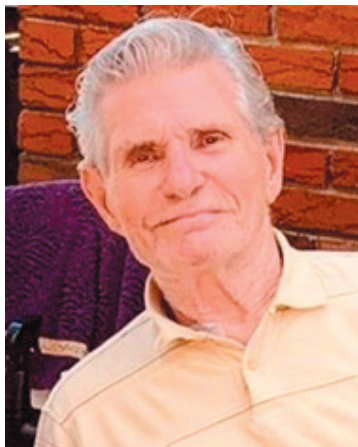
Looking out the window on a frosty winter evening, Jinxy the Cat presides over a holiday celebration in Sandisfield Center.

Photo: Christine Nadelman





Comings and Goings



FRANCIS ARNOLD

1936-2021

A Sandisfield resident since 1967, Francis Arnold, 85, died December 12 at Fairview Hospital in Great Barrington. He was the owner/operator of White Birch Flower Farm, a landscaping business on Sandisfield Road.

Francis was born October 15, 1936. Upon high school graduation from St. Augustine Academy in 1954, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy. He served as a boiler technician on the SS Northampton CCI, where in three years he traveled the seven Great Seas of the world – a magnificent journey for a 21-year-old. Following his honorable discharge in 1957, Francis became an apprentice brewer for Kueger Brewery in New Jersey, until it closed in 1963, when he joined his parents, Lothar and Charlotte Arnold, with their business on Staten Island.

Following the death of his father, Francis and his mother moved to their 9-acre Sandisfield property where he found pleasure raising chickens, ducks, and goats and became thoroughly in touch with nature.

After the birth of his two daughters, he started his landscaping business. In 1987 he was employed by Fairview Hospital as visceral supervisor. He met his future wife, Judi, there in 1989. They were married in 1990 at Our Lady of the Valley Church in Sheffield, by Reverend Fredrick Heberle. For the next 20 years they traveled throughout Europe, Canada, and the United States.

Following his retirement in 2006, Francis self-constructed greenhouses and opened White Birch Flower Farm. For many years, each August, family and friends gathered at Francis and Judi's home in Sandisfield for an outdoor Mass officiated by their dear friend Reverend Anthony Collen (Father Tony), in celebration of their anniversary, where beauty and love were shared. Francis was a humble, hardworking, energetic man with a witty sense of humor.

Francis is survived by his loving wife Judith Arnold, his daughters Bernadette Tyler (Michael Tyler) and Renee Lessard (Luc Lessard), grandsons Ashton Tyler and Lucas Lessard, and his extended stepfamily William Snyder, Melissa Allen, and several step-grandchildren.

Donations in his memory can be made to the Sandisfield Fire Department in care of Birches-Roy Funeral Home, 33 South St., Great Barrington, MA 01230. A funeral was held at Saint Mary's of the Lake Church in Otis, officiated by Father Brain McGrath. Interment followed at the Sandisfield Cemetery.



CORRECTION

The obituary for Mary Brock in the December Times stated in error that she died in Maine. Mary Brock died in Plymouth, Massachusetts. We regret the error.



Comings and Goings



DONNA FILLION

1962-2021

Donna Marie Fillion of Granville, who accepted a position as Sandisfield's Town Clerk Assistant only in August, died suddenly on December 3. She had been hospitalized for a short time with complications of diabetes. She was 59.

A loving obituary, published in the Springfield Republican, reported that Donna "loved people and would do anything for you even if a stranger. She touched countless lives."

She was serving as Town Clerk for the Town of Granville when she died and also working in the Assessor's office and as Librarian. Donna recently took the position in Sandisfield as Assistant Town Clerk, because, reported the obituary, "she wanted to help a town in need."

Donna is survived by her husband, Michael George Fillion and her children, Andre Michael Fillion and Celine Rose Fillion of Granville. A memorial service was held for Donna in Springfield.



JUDITH DAVIDOFF

1927-2021

Judith Davidoff, world renowned master of early stringed instruments of the Renaissance and Baroque periods, died on December 19 at the age of 94, at her home in Manhattan. A long-time summer resident of Sandisfield, Judith had a home in the Montville section. She will be remembered for her concerts on the rare, cello-like instrument, the viola da gamba, in the early days of the Arts Center.

Born in Chelsea, Massachusetts in 1927, she began studying music at age 7 and performed with the Boston Pops Orchestra, as a cello soloist, at age 18. Her father was a composer and musician and her mother a teacher. She married Sumner Rosen in 1949 but continued to perform under her own name. They had two children. Her husband predeceased her in 2005. In addition to her children, Judith leaves behind a sister, two grandchildren, and a great-grandchild.



NICHOLAS HRYCKVICH

Nicholas Hryckvich of Beech Plain Road died in December. At age 99, Nick was among the oldest of Sandisfield's citizens and, for sure, the one who had lived here the longest. Born and raised on a farm on South Beech Plain Road, he lived his entire life in Sandisfield.

The Times will print an obituary of Nick in our next issue, along with a memoir of her grandfather by Theresa Hryckvich.



Letters to the Editor

ANGELS ON CHRISTMAS EVE

I spent a few hours in the ER in Winsted on Christmas Eve.

I was taken by ambulance and that is when the angels appeared in my life: Zoe, Mary, and the Pachulski men. They spent their Christmas Eve taking care of me. I cannot thank them enough. They were so kind and thoughtful and professional.

We are very lucky to have these people who are willing to put their lives on hold to help others even on Christmas Eve.

*Ann Wald
West New Boston*

WE GET LETTERS

Thank you to the staff at the Sandisfield Times for providing such a professional, enjoyable and vital publication.

*Alexandra Tinari
Madison, NJ*

The paper continues to be a wonderful journalistic treasure of great reporting and local information regarding our fabulous small town in the county of Berkshire.

*Andrew McDowell
West Hartford, Conn.*

I love the Sandisfield Times! Your community is lucky to have one reliable source of information to rely on about their town, if only once a month.

*Barbara Pelissier
Westhampton, Mass.*

I enjoy reading every issue of The Times. My seasonal home is on New Boston Road in Tolland where I grew up summers since 1938. In the 1930s my grandparents owned abutting property (including the old dude ranch). Wishing The Times the best of luck.

*James Nugent
Bradenton, Florida*

Thanks to Our Generous Readers

The Times cannot succeed without your help.

We appreciate all who donated so generously to our 2021 Appeal.

(November donors were included in the December issue.)

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NOW HEAR THIS!

Edited by Laura Rogers-Castro.

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

JANUARY & FEBRUARY EVENTS



Sandisfield Select Board Meetings are currently through Zoom and in-person. Please visit 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. Meet outside behind the Otis Town Hall in the gazebo for stories and songs followed by creative crafts. For confirmation, please call Nina Carr (258-3314). Free.

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.

New Boston Church Service on Sunday, January 30 at 10:00 a.m. at the New Boston Congregational Church, Route 57. Weather permitting. All are welcome.

Chocolates for Valentine's Day on Sunday, February 13, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at Fire Station #1 on Route 8. The Recreation Committee will sponsor a chocolate-making activity for Valentine's Day. This is a free event and open to all ages. Class size is limited to 20 participants. Please pre-register (413-269-7357 or kowgirl-ruby@yahoo.com) before February 1.

Cannabis Bylaw Public Hearing on Thursday, February 24, 7:00 p.m. at Old Town Hall on Silverbrook Road. Discuss and vote on the Planning Board's revision of the proposed bylaw that failed to pass last May.

Special Town Meeting on Saturday, February 26, 10:00 a.m. at Old Town Hall on Silverbrook Road. Items include changing Town Clerk position from elected to appointed; accepting a local sales tax on retail cannabis products; property and road issues, and possibly salary account transfers to covered recent personnel changes. Warrant drafts will be posted on town website as they are developed.

New Boston Church Service on Sunday, February 27 at 10:00 a.m. at the New Boston Congregational Church, Route 57. Weather permitting. All are welcome.

SAVE THE DATE

Proposed Bylaw Hearing on Wednesday, March 9, 7:00 p.m. at Old Town Hall on Silverbrook Road. Three proposed new bylaws: (1) Accessory Dwelling Units, (2) Shared Driveways, and (3) "Dark Sky" lighting.

EVENTS IN SURROUNDING TOWNS

Beginner Snowshoe/Winter Hike at Housatonic Flats in Great Barrington on Saturday, January 22, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Join the Great Barrington Land Trust and the Berkshire Natural Resources Council for a 1-mile beginner winter hike. There will be a few pairs of snowshoes to loan for adults and kids. If there is no snow, it will be a winter hike. The program consists of a review of the basics of winter hiking, how to layer properly, and what to look for in the winter season. For more information and to register, email mauman@bnrc.org.

Native American history talk. Notice Otis, 2022 season opener. Thursday, February 10, 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. Historian Heather Bruegl to speak on Native American history in Berkshire County. Register on the Otis website, townofotisma.com. Sponsored by the Otis Historical Commission and Otis Preservation Trust. Learn about the indigenous people of our area from a member of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin.

Sheffield Winter Farmer's Market on Saturday, February 12, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Dewey Memorial Hall located on 91 Main Street in Sheffield. Local produce, meats, baked good, and crafts. Live music by local artists is included with this indoor market. Please wear a mask.

Moonlight Stroll on Sunday, February 13 from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. at Peoples' State Forest in Barkhamsted, Connecticut. Take a leisurely 45-minute stroll with members of the Friends of American Legion and Peoples State Forest and then enjoy hot drinks and a warm fire at the pavilion in Matthies Grove. Meet at the Matthies Grove Pavilion on East River Road. No registration is required and all are welcome to attend this free walk.

Berkshire Grown Winter Farmer's Market on Saturday, February 19, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Housy Dome on 1064 Main Street in Housatonic. Featuring locally grown and produced foods, including fruits and vegetables, cheese, meats, breads, and more.



WINTER SNOWFALL AND EXTREMES

2021-2022 Snowfall to date as measured/estimated at a Beech Plain back-yard weather station.

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| November 27 | 2.0 inches |
| December 9 | 2.0 |
| December 24 | 2.5 |
| December 28 | 1.0 |
| Total December | 5.5 |
| January 2022 | |
| January 7 | 2.5 |
| January 10 | 1.0 |
| January to date | 3.5 inches |
| Season to date | 11.0 inches |
| Extreme temp to date Jan 12 | -5 degrees |



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Donations of any amount are needed to ensure the continuation of this newspaper. Please send checks to: The Sandisfield

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in New Boston at A & M Auto, and the New Boston Inn. The Times is also available in West Otis at the laundromat, library, the Farmington River Diner, Fratelli's, and Otis Rec Center; in East Otis at Katies, Pappas, and the Knox Trail Inn. Also at the Monterey library (outside box) and in Colebrook at the post office and the general store. Back copies are available for purchase.

The Times can be mailed to your home (non-Sandisfield addresses only) by paid subscription (see form at left) or you can read it (free) online as a PDF document at www.sandisfieldtimes.org. Classified ads, 30 words or less, are free.

We welcome submissions, comments and suggestions, including letters to the editor by the 15th of the month prior. Maximum 300 words. 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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