

JOSIAH HULET - EARLY SANDISFIELD SETTLER

By: Ron Bernard

Sandisfield, Massachusetts was named in honor of Lord Samuel Sandys who was a member of the “Privy Council” and the newly appointed first Lord of “Trade and The Plantations.” To this point the land was part of the “Housatonic Township No. 3” and was sparsely populated by a few intrepid settlers who trickled in over the previous 25 years or so. “Proprietors” who lived in Worcester County owned most of the land. By the 1750s these large landholders had divided the original nine “Meadow Lots” into home lots typically of about 60 to 80 acres. They made plans to lay out settlements, open up roads, construct bridges and to attract settlers.

Town Clerk George Sheppard’s wonderful 1885 historical account of the town states that... ”(Sandisfield) was incorporated March 6th, 1762. The first town meeting called after the incorporation was by virtue of a warrant issued by Joseph Dwight, Esq., of Great Barrington, justice of the peace, April 7th, in the ‘second year of the reign of George the Third of Great Britain, 1762.’”¹

New families trekked in mainly from crowded and over worked farming communities in Connecticut and central Massachusetts. They were hardy and determined to say the least. Imagine what they faced. For starters a vast hilly forested wilderness with granite boulders everywhere. Long, cold, unforgiving winters followed by very wet, muddy growing seasons. No roads. Lurking forest creatures. Horrible epidemics every few years. No welcoming committees and government handouts, that’s for sure.

What were they like? Why did they come to these parts? How did they fare? What is their legacy to us, today’s inhabitants?

In 2001 I purchased an old Federal style farmhouse on Cold Spring Road near Lower Spectacle Pond. I was looking forward to an enjoyable retirement in a safe, quiet and clean environment with friendly, plain living neighbors. Ah, the great outdoors. Winter sports! What a change from the hectic pressured everyday world of the New England city/suburb. I hoped to make some new friends. I planned to support community activities. Hartford might as well be a thousand miles away.

The old homestead was so charming and inviting. More than 210 years old, it retained much of its original fabric-- unusual even in New England. Gas lights. Old fireplaces, one still with its sturdy iron crane to hold cooking pots. Original “12-over-12” windows. A cute little privy -- a two-holer no less! A pair of tremendous gnarled apple trees, probably older than the house. Eternal sentries in the back yard, refusing to yield their ground to time or the elements or animals. Beautiful, massive sugar maples gracing the front. “Thank goodness those frugal Yankees refrained from ‘improving’ the place”, I thought. Man, you gotta respect something which was built by pioneers’ hands using nearby trees and stones with few nails and crude tools. It has withstood countless storms and the perils of pests, fire, and falling trees. What about the wear and tear by country families for some two centuries? How many folks were born – and died – in here? If only the walls could talk. Awesome.

That was the first day.

On the second day I notice that the barn is collapsing, the 3-layered roof is leaking and the heating system is completely shot. The privy is falling apart. It's like a rain forest in the basement. Stinks down there. How come they didn't replace the floor in that room a hundred years ago? And you know, those nifty retro gas lights do not seem to be so safe or all that useful actually. A surrounding wooden deck dating to the 1900s is suffocating the foundation. It's got to go. Soon. Those big rocks all over the yard – were they always there? Black flies? Yikes! What do you mean there's no Town trash pick up? There's an interesting bat colony in the attic, over there by the mother of all bee hives. The kitchen was installed when? 1938 – you're kidding, right? Mice, probably hundreds, are forming war parties to protect their ancestral homeland. Chipmunks have engineered impressive earth works leading into the foundation. So that's why they call it a mudroom. What's that funny smell and what the hell is a septic system anyway? Help!!

Like the settlers of the 18th century, I had discovered Sandisfield by following the Farmington River north, traveling the same road into town. For some of the same reasons too. And like them, I was committed. No turning back. Besides, all I had to do was fix the place, not build something from scratch in the woods while also farming to survive. What could possibly go wrong?

Actually, everything. But my neighbors became my friends and were very encouraging. I hired as many local tradesmen as possible. They threatened to charge me more if I helped with the work. After two years repairs and improvements were completed. We succeeded in not damaging original fabric and historical details – a main objective. Now the place is restored, revitalized and happy.

The renovations forced me to become intimately acquainted with every detail, every nook and cranny. After a while it seemed that I even knew the original farmer-builder. It was fun to imagine some tradesmen, and the family and neighbors, probably, constructing it and then living and working there. They scratched some dates and inscriptions for future dwellers to ponder. They built the house to last and for their own generations. I am grateful for that. They would be proud to see their house today, pretty much original, and relieved to know that there were good caretakers through the years and at the right times.

By the mid 1800s so many Berkshire families were emigrating, lured by the promise of an improved life. So with plenty of good, cheap fertile land and grasses out there they headed west...many to New York State and to the "Western Reserve" in Ohio. Old settler-family names disappeared, gone, except inscriptions in the cemeteries and the land records. Typically a farmstead was passed down to one son who somehow kept it going while also minding ageing parents. Subdividing already marginal, difficult land was pointless. His brothers moved on. But some remained to do 'lumbering' or "smithing."

It was part of the classic national expansion pattern. Surely the old clans from Sandisfield's Beech Plain section were involved. Spring, Hawley, Wentworth, Clark, Jones, Fuller, Allen, Strickland, Belden, Judd, Wilcox, Pease, Adams and others. Today, a few of these names are still common; others are unfamiliar in town.

I purchased a copy of local historian Anne Hoffman's informative town history.² It got me to wondering about all this. What ever happened to the **Hulett's** who lovingly built my old farmhouse in the Beech Plain? I inquired of the neighbors and old timers. I checked with local historical societies. I poured through town records. Senior members of the previous family,

owners since 1921, drew a blank. Are there any descendents in town? Nearby? Did anybody know anything about the Hulett's?

Genealogical accounts of the family's beginnings in America are varied and unclear. But it is possible that John **Howlett**, b.1645 in Ipswich, was the son of Thomas who landed in Boston as early as 1630 from England. Researchers have found the name in nearby Charlestown as well as in Ipswich and Newton. **Michael Howlett** was born to John and Abigail Powell in 1679, probably in Boston. In 1704 he married Experience Newton in the town of Newton. They removed by 1709 to Killingly, Windham County, Connecticut Colony.

Michael and Experience -- don't you love that name! -- had at least eight children: Josiah b.1707 in Boston or Newton; Daniel b.1709 in Killingly; Nathaniel (or possibly Nehemiah) b.1713; David b.1715; John b.1716; Michael b.1717; Oliver b.1718; and a daughter, finally! -- Experience -b.1721. It was among these sons that the family name evolved to **Hulet**. Today it is most commonly found as Hulett as well as Hewlett, Hulit, and other variations. More importantly the grandsons of Michael from northeastern Connecticut are the progenitors of thousands of Hulett's around the country today.

Their first son, Josiah, lived his entire life in Killingly and probably inherited the homestead. He and his wife Lydia (-?-), had 12 children. The daughters were: Abigail b.1730/1; Lydia b.1731/2; Experience b.1740; Abigail 2nd b. 1751 and Eunice b. 1755. Their sons were: Michael (1734-1825); Obadiah b.1736; Jacob b.1738; **Josiah "II" (b. about 1743 – d. 1834 Sandisfield)**; John b.1745; Daniel (1748-1838) and Elam b.1758.

By the 1760s Connecticut farming communities were crowded with big families on shrinking farms. Their land was also tired. In Killingly the records show that people speculated on land. If they were shrewd, they could make money ...and possibly secure a better future. For the Hulet's opportunity lay to the west but still relatively close to their roots. So, several of Michael's grandsons packed up and headed for the Berkshires and Vermont to establish new farms.

I found a land record dated December 27, 1777 whereby Phillip Hopkins of the Rhode Island Colony sold to Josiah Hulet and his wife Elizabeth a "tract of land of 80 acres in Killingly" for the sum of "two hundred forty pounds of lawful money." Less than two years later, on November 13, 1779, Josiah re-sold this parcel for "1000 pounds lawful money to Simeon Wheaton of Swansea of the Massachusetts Bay." Josiah signed his name while Elizabeth made her "X" mark. With this tidy profit (indeed!) I believe that Josiah and his growing family immediately set out to join uncle John who'd settled in Tyringham about ten years earlier.

We quickly find Josiah in the Berkshire County land records, November 14, 1780, where he and Lemuel How(e) of Great Barrington sold to David Chapman of Norwich, Connecticut a tract of land in Great Barrington for 480 pounds. The circumstances and relationship of Josiah and Lemuel Howe are unknown but the record definitely establishes his presence in the area by 1780.

On April 19, 1784 Amos Hutchinson of Sandisfield sold to "Josiah Hulet of 'Newmalbrow'" a lot of 65 acres in the "Beach Plain" for "one hundred fifty pounds lawful money". This was the homestead lot. In 1796 Josiah purchased an adjacent parcel from Waite Robbins of Wethersfield, Connecticut for "one hundred fifty dollars cash" thereby expanding family farm to at least 120 acres.

The previous owners told me they had a professional laboratory analysis done on some of the “cut” nails taken from the Josiah Hulet house. The results suggest that it was built by 1790. Believe it or not, old nail date analysis is quite accurate. Machine-made nail technology was introduced in the late 18th century. New machines and processes and improvements were frequent, quickly making existing nails obsolete. A company in Boston keeps busy analyzing samples from architectural historians. Imagine hundreds of years from now when historians are trying to precisely date the crude late 20th century personal computers for their museums. What will they do? Why, refer to the Intel Company records for the various Pentium chips, of course. It is the same with old cut nails.

With the aid of his considerable extended family and his adult son, Obadiah, Josiah built his house on the east side of Cold Spring Rd., then a narrow dirt path albeit an important passage for farm wagons in the Beech Plain. Just across the street, in the clearing, are remains of several mid-19th century structures and two old wells. By a stand of extremely old sugar maples there we find an interesting, unnatural rise in the land. Clearly this mound and the rubble stones poking up around the perimeter represent an early structure. Had this been their first “dwelling house,” so-called, in 1784? Perhaps an archaeological dig one day will reveal the answer

Josiah and Elizabeth had seven children, a typical number for the times. The girls, Selah and Phoebe, and a boy - Obadiah, were all born in Killingly by 1775. Daughter Percis (“Percy”) was born in New Marlboro in 1782. The Sandisfield births were Azuba (“Ruba” -1785), Betsey (“Eunice” -1787) and finally in 1791 the third in a line of Josiah’s.

Genealogists have been unable to trace the lives of these girls, except possibly for Betsey who is thought to have died in Vermont in 1857. Massachusetts vital statistics provide no clues about them. Selah and Obadiah were members of the Sandisfield Baptist church. We know they were all alive in 1828 when Josiah Sr. made out his will. Otherwise, so far, they have truly ‘disappeared’. Could they have joined communal sects such as the Shakers, which were growing fast in the early 1800s? On the other hand, the record is rich with information about Josiah Sr. (1743-1834) and his sons, Obadiah (1774-1855) and Josiah Jr. (1791-1889).

Everyday life in the early 1800s Berkshire farming communities was arduous to say the least. The forest was their best friend -- a typical farm family consumed 20 cords of wood per year! But the forest was also a formidable foe. They were constantly attacking it to clear farming land. Did you ever wonder how they managed to fell all that old growth with crude tools? It was by “girdling” or simply removing a ring of bark and letting the tree die in place for subsequent felling although limbs would be removed. Large stumps were left to decay or were burned or hauled to the perimeter and set atop rubble stonewalls to form a livestock fence. New England farms were not pretty places in these days, resembling battlefields, actually.

One of the first things early homesteaders did was to plant an apple orchard, usually right out the back door. And although trees bore crabbed fruit of little value, the apples were good enough for home use, especially for “hard cider”, a beverage consumed routinely by all family members.³ Some families even gave their trees names.⁴ It is interesting to observe the many little orchards scattered around town today -- probably legacies of the early settlers.

As for the people, they became like their hard, rocky land – rugged and serious. The farmer, unpretentious in his uncomfortable and ill-fitting clothes, was nevertheless very dignified. He was always exhausted from never ending tilling and planting, haying, woodcutting, stone removal and countless other demands. They weathered physically just like their buildings

and land. Children became like their parents. Sundays, however, were strictly reserved for church and rest. Work was taboo. The people were very honest and reverent and devoted to their church, which played an important role in community life.

A young woman of the early 19th century could expect to have a wretched life of drudgery, working from early morning to late night six days a week. Many women bore ten or more children and usually saw some of them die young. Death in childbirth or because of epidemics was not uncommon and the bereaved had to remarry quickly. There wasn't much time for romance. Survival was at stake.

This was the reality for the Josiah Hulet family in the Beech Plain. But their work ethic, thriftiness and very hard labor began to pay off. Hulet land holdings were substantial and their comfortable house was certainly better than average by standards of the day. The 1810 US Census indicates that Josiah's eldest son, Obadiah, 34, was living "next to" his father, alone. One can imagine that he preferred living in the family's first cabin than in the main house with five sisters and a mother!

In nearby Tyringham, Josiah's likely sponsor, uncle John and his four sons -- all Revolutionary War veterans -- pulled up stakes and headed west. Obadiah, who had been essential in the establishment of the farm in Sandisfield, followed the lead of his cousins and in 1829 went to Alabama where he married and purchased various parcels totaling 400 acres by 1832. He also purchased 400 acres in Mississippi in 1841 but seems to have been an absentee landlord there because he removed with family to the Republic of Texas by 1835. He and his son James served in the Texas militia. He died there in 1855 at age 81. Obadiah's sons, James and William, served in the Confederacy.

In April 1828 Josiah Sr. made his last will and testament, which was witnessed by George Hull, Josiah Sage and Roswell Heath. He bequeathed "*...to my son Josiah, a real and personal estate except my bedding and household furniture, including Land, Buildings, neat stock of farming utensils conditioned that he furnish myself and my beloved wife Elizabeth with a decent and comfortable maintenance and support in health and sickness during our natural lives; and that he pay the following legacies I bequest within two years from the time of my decease, provided I survive my present wife, or, if she survives me, then, within two years from the date of her decease -- That is to say - to each of my two sons Obadiah and Silas (?? Must be nickname for Josiah Jr. – RB) or their heirs One Hundred and Fifty Dollars – To my daughter Phebe One Hundred and twenty Dollars; To each of my daughters Sela, Eunice, Percy and Ruba or their heirs Sixty Dollars and to Horace Hulet Twenty Dollars. I give and bequeath all my bedding and household furniture to be equally divided among my five daughters or their heirs. I hereby appoint my said son Josiah Hulet my sole Executor of this my last will and testament.*"⁵

Only four months after the will had been written, Elizabeth died at age 82. Josiah Sr. died in Sandisfield on March 4, 1832 at age 91 having lived a long and industrious life. Unfortunately there is no known record of their burial place. The homestead then passed to Josiah, Jr.

In 1815 Josiah sought his bride, Mary, also 25, from the neighboring Henry Spring Jr. family. Although they were likely childhood friends, like most marriages of the era it was probably family-arranged. They were married on July 4, which in those days was THE holiday. A young America celebrated this day like no other, so we can imagine that a Hulet-Spring

wedding then would be exceptionally festive. Times were good and the future looked bright for the hard working residents of Sandisfield's Beech Plain.

The Springs owned most of the land just east of the Spectacle Ponds. This is a very early Massachusetts family, which arrived via Brookfield and before that in the 17th century traces to Weston and Watertown. Henry Spring Jr. (1733-?), son of Capt. Henry Spring (1712-62) settled in town right after the Revolutionary War. The record suggests that Housatonic Plantation land had been promised to Capt. Spring for meritorious service in the colonial militia. Somehow the family wound up with some inferior hilly and rocky lots around the ponds. But, they made the best of it, operating a successful hotel, or tavern as they were called, together with a stable to accommodate as many as 20 horses. According to Shepard (1885), the Spring place was "crowded with customers most of the time." Today the buildings are gone and the road is a ghost. A casual hiker would never conceive that this humble little trail in the deep woods was once a section of the "great Boston-Albany road."

The Henry Spring Jr. family consisted of five girls and two boys including yet another Henry, (b.1761 Brookfield – d.1832 Sandisfield) who became the next head of the Sandisfield clan. Let's call him Henry III. *(Author's note: The Spring family causes fits for genealogical research because a "Henry" heads four of the first six generations of the ancestral line to Sandisfield. Eighteenth and 19th century records are often incomplete or unclear and confusing, especially land records when two or more people in the area have the same name. There were at least three Henry Springs here at this time.)*

Henry III and first wife Orpha (-?-) introduced seven children between 1784-92 including our Mary A. who married Josiah Hulet. Orpha died in Sandisfield in 1794 and Henry immediately took another wife -- Phoebe (-?-), aka "Fear". They produced five more children between 1796-1806. Unfortunately the maiden names of his wives are still unknown and town records and cemetery notations confuse the two. Phoebe's first daughter was also named Phoebe. She married David Waters. Can you picture Jay Leno with this one? "Ladies and gentlemen --- the **Spring-Waters** wedding!"

Josiah and Mary Hulet had four children: Emily A., born 1818; Marcia Ann, born 1823; George H., born 1826; and Giles Spring, born 1834. Emily and Marcia married neighbors, Wentworth brothers, William and Orsen in 1838 and 1843 respectively. Both girls were only 20 on their big days.

Family research often reveals long forgotten but really poignant incidents. Marcia Ann Hulett's story is one of these. Only eight months after marrying her William, not yet even 21, she died tragically of "typhus fever." And only two years later older sister Emily died of an unknown cause at age 26. It appears she left two little children, William and Warren. So much sadness in the Hulett and Wentworth families in the 1840s. Both girls gone. I kept thinking about it. So, I went to town records to try to learn more. Mid 19th century record keeping by Berkshire town clerks was not especially good. But thanks to Sandisfield's former long time town clerk, Flora Rhodes, there is at least an account of death causes for most of the years in the 1843-56 period. The reports of causes of death and fatal diseases were informal and probably voluntary -- thus possibly not terrifically accurate. Yet the overall picture presented certainly gives pause for thought – and thanks – from our safe 21st century vantage point.

SANDISFIELD DEATHS 1844-45 & 1848-56														
CAUSE	1844	1845	~	1848	1849	1850	1851	1852	1853	1854	1855	1856	TOTAL	%
"Consumption"	3			2	4	2	8	6	8	6	3	5	47	0.21
"Old Age"				2		3	9	4	1	1	7	5	32	0.14
Typhus	12	3						2	3	4			24	0.10
Scarlet (fever)	10	2						1			1		14	0.06
"Dropsy" / brain	2				1		1	1	1	2	5		13	0.06
Fever		1		2	2	2		1		1			9	0.04
Typhoid		1							2		3	3	9	0.04
Pneumonia/Lung	1	1				1	2		2		1		8	0.03
Liver				1	3			1	1	2			8	0.03
"Fits"				1			1		2	2	1	1	8	0.03
Accidents							1		3		3		7	0.03
Heart Condition						1	1	1		1	1		5	0.02
Diabetes				2		1			1				4	0.02
Cancer				1	1			1	1				4	0.02
Dysentery/diarrhea		1						1			1		3	0.01
Cholera				1							1		2	0.01
Child birth									1				1	0.00
None indicated	1			3				2			1	1	8	0.03
All other (9)	1	3				3	2	5	1		7	1	23	0.10
TOTAL	30	12		15	11	13	25	26	27	19	35	16	229	1.00

Source: Sandisfield Vital Statistics

At least 229 Sandisfield residents died in 1844-45 and 1848-56. Probably one-half died from infectious diseases that are virtually unknown today. Most startling is that about one-quarter died from tuberculosis, or as it was known, “consumption”. And it was not epidemic; there were continual victims. Poor Marcia Hulett died in a vicious typhus outbreak in August 1844, which claimed at least 12 people in this small town. Typhoid, dysentery, cholera – dreadful diseases - were frequent visitors. Malaria was no stranger either. Before widespread vaccination became available in the 19th century, New England experienced horrible epidemics of smallpox nearly every decade. Country residents were typically hit harder than city dwellers because their acquired immunological protection was less. Moreover, sanitary conditions on farms were appalling. Poorly designed outdoor privies and carelessly discarded household and animal waste polluted wells and streams. People also did not understand that these practices attracted countless flies and fleas which carried deadly pathogens. Personal hygiene was not good. Louse-borne illnesses were common. Medical understanding was poor and treatments

were largely useless, often worsening conditions. Children died in disproportionate numbers. Few families were unaffected. As if farm life was not tough enough!

Perhaps such atrocious conditions and misery combined with his sister's deaths motivated the Hulett's last child, Giles, to study medicine. Although only 26 at the time, the 1860 census notes his occupation as "physician." Shortly thereafter he married Salome Amelia Parker, only about 18. She came from a prominent family in Wyoming County in western New York. The couple moved to nearby Alford and had four children there. Giles and Salome were no strangers to tragedy: three of their four children died young in Alford. They moved to Arcade, New York, Salome's hometown, by 1880 surely relieved to leave that unhappy place and start anew. Dr. Hulett practiced out of his home until his death in 1907.⁶

Surviving son Frank Hulett was studying law in Ohio in 1880.⁷ He returned to eventually own and publish the lively *Arcade Leader* newspaper. Mother Salome was chief editor – with reputation for an caustic pen - until her death in 1908. Meanwhile, George Hulet remained in Sandisfield to care for his parents and maintain the family's interests.

Josiah died on January 19, 1889 of "general debility" in the house where he'd been born 98 years earlier. Mary Spring Hulet, his wife of 74 years, died that December at 99 of "old age". George laid his parents to rest in the New Boston burying ground. Did his only close relative, his brother, physician Dr. Giles Spring Hulett and wife Salome, now prominent citizens of the town of Arcade in far off western New York state, attend the funerals? We wonder if word of the passings could reach them and trips could be arranged in time? Family funerals of parents whose children had moved far away and who could not get back in time had to be extremely sad affairs. Likewise, consider their reactions upon the news of family deaths back east that had occurred weeks or months before. No last good byes for so many. The national expansion movement and its family separations of the 18th and 19th century came with a price, didn't it?

Born on December 16, 1826, the first recorded mention of George is the 1850 census where, at age 24, his occupation is listed as a "peddler"- the 19th century term for salesman. We can only speculate about George's product line: perhaps output from the Hulet farm? So-called home-industry shops were ubiquitous among New England farms at the time. Housed in converted barns or similar structures or in the basement, a shop was a natural extension of a farm's production. With the aid of an apprentice or two a resourceful Yankee farming family could make and sell products and services resulting from, say, blacksmithing or coopering, wood work, wagon making and repair, numerous leather goods and so on. Various farm shops began to specialize in certain functions. And these activities sometimes evolved into distinct new businesses such as gun making or tanning or, later, mechanical products and repair. Did our young George purvey farm shop goods? Maybe so.

Although of age, George apparently did not serve the Union in the Civil War although many men from Sandisfield were drafted under the town's quota and 22 died in the conflict. By 1862 his brother had moved to Alford in western Berkshire and his parents were 72 years of age. George was probably managing the farm. Perhaps he was granted an exemption or performed alternate public service. The country and the Union Army badly needed productive northern farms. Possibly he paid someone else the (legal) going rate of \$300 to take his place in the ranks. Yet, one can imagine that by 1863 men who did not go to the war were not too popular among families that had sent sons, and most from here did. Could this be a reason why George hadn't by then, and never did, marry? We'll leave this delicate area for further research.

George did eventually achieve high standing in the community, teaching school for almost 20 years and performing duties of a justice of the peace. According to a colorful news account of the man in his later years, he had an affinity for the law and became a rather effective “country lawyer”, the closest thing to a real attorney that most folks in Sandisfield had.

Starting with the purchase of parcels of land from Artemas Spring in 1850 and Daniel Spring in 1852, the Berkshire county land records include numerous transactions involving George Hulett as well as individual transactions by his father Josiah Jr. and his mother, Mary. George however was especially active, buying and mortgaging nearby properties in the Beech Plain section in 1862, 1864, 1867 and 1870. Some of these transactions jointly involved his mother, but by the 1870’s it is clear that family finances were in his hands. But not all the deals worked out. In 1871 Caleb Tufts foreclosed on property George had acquired a year before. In 1877 the Town foreclosed on George and Mary for back taxes (only \$24.27!) on a parcel near their farm. These were very hard times. A difficult post war recovery led to the severe recession of the 1870s. In Sandisfield a much anticipated railroad line by-passed the town; as a result taxes increased and land values declined even more. The south Berkshire farming towns were definitely on the down swing. Maybe struggling families like the Hulett’s tried to earn some money from land transactions, just like their grandparents had done a hundred years earlier in Connecticut before moving away from their own declining local economies.

In October 1885 when Mary was 95 years old, she signed a quitclaim on the Hulett land holdings to son George for \$100. We assume that husband Josiah, 94, although still sharp according to Shepard’s account that year, was by then uninvolved. Town Clerk Shepard recorded the deed with annotation indicating that Mary was blind but in full understanding of the proceedings.

So, now it is 1890. George, 65, is living alone, probably, on the old farm, certainly a much-reduced enterprise. We imagine that the next 15 years are unremarkable, as he grows old, tending to his gardens and various properties. Then an amazing event: George gets a letter from a young woman purporting to be his daughter! In the Sandisfield town files I found an undated but probably 1904 draft of an article obviously intended for a local newspaper. Here it is:

LOST THIRTY YEARS

Father, Aged 80, and Daughter Happily Re-united

Father and daughter, after a separation of nearly 30 years, and each early giving the other up as dead, found each other last Saturday just at night. Some time during the past winter a letter was received by parties in Sandisfield, Mass., from a lady in Tarriffville, Conn., making inquiries for one George H. Hulett, saying her name before marriage was Georgie A. Hulett, and that she was the daughter of George H. Hulett and that she had been trying for a long time to locate her father, if living. She said she was born in Berkshire County, Mass., in 1874 or 1875, and that her mother’s name before marriage was Julia Wood. She says when about one year old she was taken and was brought up by one W.C. Neumann. Since then she has never seen her father or mother and never knew where they were. She says she has written to several towns in the county, but got no trace. She had been told that her father was at one time a prominent lawyer in the county. Her name is now Mrs. E. F. Converse and she lives, as stated above, in Tarriffville, Conn.

After writing the above, or making the above inquiries, she was informed that George H. Hulett lived in Sandisfield and was well and doing well and that his post office was Montville and that she had best correspond direct with him, which she did. It has resulted in her finding her father and he finding a long lost daughter, for Saturday, when the stage arrived in Montville from Winsted, she, with her husband was aboard and on the way to George H. Hulett's. Gordon Stratton took them over to Mr. Hulett's, a distance of about three miles. There was great joy in the Hulett household when they arrived. Her old and somewhat feeble father, who is nearly 80 years of age, nearly broke down with joy to think that after so many years of separation they should at last see each other. May they live to enjoy each other's society for years to come, is the wish of everyone.

A later reviewer – probably the devoted and energetic Town Clerk Flora Rhodes (1972-95) noted: “No record of Georgie’s birth – No record of Julia Wood. On George H. Hulett’s death record it says he is single. Although the Converse’s came to live in Sandisfield there is no mention of them in town files.”

What a discovery! It turns out that Georgiana and her husband, Willis or William Converse actually moved to Lenox and not Sandisfield. They are clearly there in the 1910 census with two children, Franklin, 5, and Carlyna, 3, both born in Massachusetts. Georgiana lists her age as 37. Willis, 50, hailed from Connecticut. But what about her mother, the elusive Julia Wood? I found her in the New Boston cemetery, besides Wood family members from Sandisfield. Her tombstone indicates she ... “Died Jan. 25, 1879 age 26 ys.” Although neither Julia’s birth nor death was recorded by any Massachusetts town, one Daniel Wood of Lee reported the birth of a girl on February 23, 1853. Good enough.

The unfortunate Julia died only five or six years after her child was born and placed into adoption. Sketchy records hint that hers was struggling, hard luck family. Daniel Wood married twice. Did Julia’s mother die in childbirth or while Julia was a child?

George Hulett drafted his last will and testament on May 5, 1904, apparently soon after the reunion with Georgiana. He died alone at the house in which he’d been born, on November 19, 1907 -- “found dead” at age 81. Lewis Shepard was appointed executor and arranged for George to be buried next to his parents, per his wish. His considerable real estate was estimated then, amazingly, at only \$602 and his personal property at \$423. Holdings included the main house and farm and a variety of lots in the Beech Plain, typically 30 to 60 acres with numerous buildings. His assets included the “White store in Montville” -\$100. George’s explicit wishes were...”*to my brother Giles S. Hulett, nothing. My nephew, William Wentworth – had his share and split it. To my nephew Warren Wentworth – nothing. To Myron Spring, I give the farm of 150 acres including the “library” and 1 set of cane seat chairs and my best goose feather bed and bed stand. To Mary A Griswold wife of Lyman Griswold, \$25. To Mrs. Georgiana Converse, \$25. All the rest to Clark (?) A. Clafin of Sandisfield to use in trust to support Laura Allen and at her death any residue to Myron Spring.*”⁸ It seems that George remembered the people who’d been kind to him in his later years.

The main Hulett property was eventually sold by court administration through several owners and finally in 1921 to the George Etzel family of Connecticut. Several generations enjoyed the place for 80 years. George Hulett’s passing certainly marked a melancholy and anti-climactic end to the vital Hulett family story in Sandisfield. Such families had arrived in

the 1780s to a wild and difficult land with dreams and determination to make better lives. I wonder if our society today can imagine the heroic self-denial and just how hard previous generations worked to establish this nation and consequently our own amazingly comfortable way of life. They seem super human to me. They deserve to be remembered with our total respect and gratitude.

The Huletts' experiences and contributions certainly mirror those of so many of our early families. Their legacy is not only marvelous old houses, enchanting stone walls and hardy apple orchards, but also their values – iron will and respect for labor, family, church and community ...those special ideals that formed the foundation of American society. And so, to them, I say:

“ Thank you. You are not forgotten.”

If you have information about the Hulett's or Spring's in south Berkshire, I would appreciate hearing from you. Please contact me at: Ronbernard@aol.com

¹ Child, Hamilton: *History of Berkshire County*, 1889 Ch. 26, p 496

² Hoffman, Anne: *Sandisfield: Biography of a Town*, private printing 1998

³ Larkin, Jack: *The Reshaping or Everyday Life 1790-1840*, Harper & Rowe, NY 1988 p 172

⁴ Arr, E. H. *New England Bygones: Country Life in the 1840's*, Berkshire Traveller Press 1883 p 178

⁵ *Last Will and Testament of Josiah Hulet*, Probate Records, Berkshire County Courthouse, Pittsfield, Massachusetts

⁶ Douglass, Harry S.: *Progress with a Past*, Arcade Sesquicentennial and Historical Society, July 1957 p 113

⁷ U.S. Census, Bowling Green, Wood County, Ohio

⁸ *Last Will and Testament of George Hulet*, Probate Records, Berkshire County Courthouse, Pittsfield, Massachusetts