



# CORNWALL CHRONICLE



VOLUME 21 : NUMBER 7 AUGUST 2011

## Some Signs of an Upturn

The Great Recession officially ended in 2009, even though you might not guess that from the still poor condition of the U.S. housing market. Here in Cornwall, however, there are small but clear signs of an upturn.

In the past year, the number of sales here rose sharply. According to Assessor Barbara Bigos, there were 18 house sales in Cornwall between July 2010 and June 2011. To put that number in context, the most recent high point in Cornwall sales was in 2005 when 32 sales were recorded.

Barbara indicated that most of the recent house sales, especially those priced above \$750,000, were to prospective weekenders. Salisbury, where she is also the assessor, is doing better too. "These are very special places," she explained. "Not all the towns around here are seeing an upturn yet."

Priscilla Miller of Bain Real Estate told me that one of the recent Cornwall house sales was a whopper. It involved a property with two houses, greenhouse, and barn, with a brook and pond. Located at the high point on Whitcomb Hill Road in Cornwall Bridge, it sold for \$2.3 million. Admittedly, this was down a lot from its five-years-ago offering price of \$5.5 million.

The improving pace here may also be reflected in the ads for houses for sale. Realtor.com's website currently lists 33 Corn-

wall properties with asking prices that range from \$269,000 to \$3.4 million. Half of these properties are in Cornwall Bridge and most of the others are in West Cornwall. This website may provide yet another sign that the local economy is turning up; when I looked at it a year ago it listed 47 houses for sale here.

To see if the improving market for existing houses is also being reflected in new dwelling construction, I visited Building Official Paul Prindle. He told me that the past year (July 2010 to June 2011) saw the issuance of only one permit for construction of a new house in Cornwall. Even that was an improvement over the previous year when no such permits were issued. The most recent high point was back in 2006 to 2007 when permits were issued for construction of nine new houses.

The construction scene here still looks pretty bleak. But given the recent upswing in housing sales, the building official may soon be seeing more applicants for building permits. —David A. Grossman

## "Worthy of Preservation"

Ben Gray's letter in the July issue notes that only two Cornwall structures have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places and that one of them, Rumsey Hall,

is gone. Actually, the situation is happier: seven Cornwall sites have been included in the register, i.e., deemed "historic places worthy of preservation." Six are still in existence, although one has moved to Kent. Listed in order of designation, they are:

**Cornwall Bridge Station (1972):** This picturesque railroad station was built in 1886. It appears in James Thurber's charming story "The Lady on 142," published in 1943 in *The New Yorker*.

**West Cornwall Covered Bridge (1975):** Originally called Hart's Bridge — as was the town — it was built around 1864 to replace an earlier bridge. Hart's Bridge, the town, was renamed West Cornwall in the 1840s.

**Cream Hill Agricultural School (1990):** Founded by Samuel and Theodore Gold on their Cream Hill farm, the school was open from 1845 to 1869. In 1994, following years of planning, the Connecticut Antique Machinery Association dismantled the building and reconstructed it on its grounds in Kent.

**Red Mountain Shelter (1986):** Located north of Route 4, the Adirondack-style shelter is one of two open-front lean-to shelters built in 1934 by the Civilian Conservation Corps on a section of the Appalachian Trail that

(continued on page 2)

# AUGUST 2011

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 ◆ Bd of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	2 ◆ Inland Wetlands 7:30 pm Town Hall	3 ◆ Crabgrass Puppet Theater 6:30 pm Library	4	5 ◆ Rose Algrant Art Show Opening 5-8 pm CCS	6 ◆ Rose Algrant Art Show 10 am-5 pm CCS ◆ Community Country Barn Dance 7-10 pm Town Hall
7 ◆ "Morals in Medical Research" Talk 2 pm Library	8 ◆ Ag Comm Meeting 7:30 pm Town Office	9 ◆ P & Z 7 pm Cornwall Library CANCELED	10	11	12	13 ◆ Motherhouse: Yes, We Can Can 10:30 am-1:30 pm Local Farm ◆ Cornwall Assoc. Sharon Talk 1 pm Historical Society ◆ American to the Backbone, 4 pm Library
14 ◆ Carla Bigelow Reception 4-5:30 pm Library	15 ◆ Park & Rec 7:30 pm Town Hall ◆ Deadline: September Chronicle Copy	16 ◆ Bd of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	17 ◆ Biker Talk 6 pm Library	18 ◆ Bd of Finance 7:30 pm CCS Library	19 ◆ Motherhouse Round Sing 7:30-9 pm Local Farm	20 ◆ Cornwall Bridge Walking Tour ◆ Wolkowitz Bhutan Talk 4 pm Library
21 4th Q	22 ◆ ZBA* 8 pm Town Hall	23 ◆ Town Meeting 7:30 pm Town Hall	24	25	26	27
28 NEW	29 ◆ CCS Starts	30	31 ◆ CVFD Meeting 8 pm West Cornwall Firehouse	<b>Every Week This Month:</b> Tuesdays: Adult Volleyball, 7:30 pm CCS gym Wednesdays: Tai Chi, 6-9 pm CCS; Karate 6:30-7:30 pm CCS; Women's Basketball, 7:30 pm CCS gym Saturdays: Cornwall Farm Market, 9 am-1 pm Wish House Lawn Sundays: Meditation, 1-2 pm, call Debra for location, 672-0229		

\*Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

(continued from page 1)

then ran through Mohawk State Forest.

Rumsey Hall (1990): This Greek Revival building was built in 1848 as the Alger Institute, a boys' private school, and later housed the Housatonic Valley Institute. In 1901 Lillias Sanford moved her Rumsey Hall School into the building. After 1949, when the school moved to Washington Depot, the building gradually deteriorated until it was razed late last year.

Major General John Sedgwick House (1992):

This Italianate house on Hautboy Hill Road was built by Gen. Sedgwick in 1859 for a retirement he did not live to enjoy. He was killed in 1864 by a Confederate sharpshooter. His last words: "They couldn't hit an elephant at this distance."

Cornwall Bridge (2004): Officially named "Bridge 560," this bridge, built in 1930, is an outstanding example of open-spandrel concrete arch construction. An architectural historian writes, "Even today, the soaring arch ribs and tall columns of Connecticut's open-spandrel arches create surprise and delight when one comes upon them unexpectedly, and they command our admiration for the state engineers who created such bold designs." Cornwall Bridge residents take pride! When tourists ask for directions, remember that it isn't all about that other bridge in West Cornwall.

Could your house, your barn, your bridge take its rightful place in American history? If you are interested in pursuing National Register designation, which imposes no restrictions on owners (see: Rumsey Hall) and brings possible tax incentives with it, go to [ct.gov/cct](http://ct.gov/cct) and click on "Historic Preservation and Museum Division" for selection criteria, forms, etc.

—Julie Schieffelin

## Wetlands

This evening I attended a meeting of the Inland Wetlands and Water Courses Agency. I was quite amazed at the complexity of the issues discussed, not to mention the intricacy of the site plans reviewed. Apparently to be a successful volunteer, you have to learn about hydrological engineering, along with the numerous state regulations that protect Connecticut's wetlands.

I remember learning in college bio class (oh so long ago) that wetlands have among the highest biological productivity and diversity of any environment, comparable to tropical rainforests and coral reefs. As I discovered when I prepared my own application, Cornwall is full of wetlands. First of all, a definition: Wetlands are lands where water saturation is the dominant factor determining the nature of soil development and the types of plant and

animal communities living in the soil and on its surface. Examples of inland wetlands include swamps, marshes, bogs, and areas adjacent to rivers and streams.

Wetlands are enormously important to our environment. They act as fabulous filters, improving water quality before it eventually winds up in rivers, lakes, and reservoirs. The city of Phoenix actually created a wetland as an inexpensive alter-

native to a proposed upgrade of one of its sewage treatment facilities. Another important function that is especially salient just now, given all the flooding in other parts of the country, is that wetlands

act as huge sponges, storing water for future discharge during dry periods, slowing the speed of water flow and thus preventing erosion, and most critically, preventing flooding. One acre of wetland can store 1 to 1.5 million gallons of floodwater. When it comes to biological productivity, the Environmental Protection Agency says that 75 percent of commercially harvested fish and 90 percent of recreational fish are wetland dependent. Up to half of all North American bird species nest or feed in wetlands.

America has gradually lost about half of the wetlands that originally existed in the southern 48 states. Our draining, dredging, dam creation, and filling are part of the problem. Pollution with fertilizers, bulk animal waste, road salt, pesticides, and heavy metals is another aspect. And finally, grazing of domesticated animals, vegetation removal, and introduction of non-native plants have also contributed to the gradual degradation of our vital wetlands.

As a Cornwall landowner, you are very likely to have wetlands on your property. It behooves us all to learn more about the important functions of wetlands and to act as responsible stewards of this vital resource.

—Anna Timell

## About this Issue

We think of August as Art Month in Cornwall, what with the Rose Algrant Show, abundant landscape artists in the hillsides, valleys, and marshes, and the local and New York galleries showing the works of our friends and neighbors. To mark Art Month, the August issue of the *Chronicle* includes an artist's profile. Last year it was Amelia de Neergaard; this year we are profiling Robert Parker. He is an artist, yes, but many other things too.

For several years now we have printed poems by Cornwall poets in the August issue. The first time it was a haiku sequence by Anonymous. (Full disclosure: Anonymous was Hendon.) This year we are going

back to haiku with five haiku from the seventh-grade English class at CCS.

Editing the August issue is always fun, but this year our fun was tinged with sadness. When Julie Schieffelin died, she left one last *Chronicle* article. Normally we edit articles together with the author. We had to edit this article by ourselves. She was a loyal director of the *Chronicle*, an enthusiastic editor, and a superb writer. We will miss her. —Susie Ott and Hendon Chubb

## Congratulations

Victoria Betty Merli & Kurtis Ryan Whitney

## Good-bye to Friends

John Brecher  
Ruth Monroe

## Land Transfers

Ilyana Y. Adams, Trustee to Kristina L. Stufano  
& James Stufano, 3.023 acres on Cream Hill  
Road, for \$30,000.

## He Likes Doing It

I ask Bob Parker why he does his art. A simple answer: "I like doing it."

He started doing it when he was nine years old, when he had to spend a year in a tuberculosis sanitarium in New Mexico. There was no radio reception; the only way he could entertain himself was reading and drawing. In high school (he was expelled for hitting the principal with a well-made snowball) and later when he was drafted into the army, he was more interested in music than art. "I brought my clarinet but not my sketchbook." But after leaving the army he started studying art and painting.

His big break came with the movie *Lust for Life*, the film adaptation of Irving Stone's biography of Vincent van Gogh. Van Gogh's heirs refused to allow the filmmakers to use real van Goghs, so Bob, whose hands were being used when they needed a shot of van Gogh painting, was asked to paint "van Goghs." After that he was always able to support himself by teaching and painting.

He moved to Cornwall in 1982.

Among Bob's favorite subjects are aerial views and dogs, birds, and monkeys, but no cats – he won't paint cats. He also likes to paint abroad: Nepal, Africa, Central America.

Bob doesn't limit himself to what is conventionally called art: painting, etching, sculpture. If you go into his studio you see large models of airplanes (he loves flying, but only as a passenger) and colorful cabinets for kitchen staples, with the labels for salt, sugar, etc. in Welch and Irish Gaelic. And if you go to the Interlaken Inn on Saturdays you can hear him playing jazz drum.



He loves toy soldiers. He even used to cast them himself. Recently he sold most of his collection, but he still keeps a few around for old times' sake. And he loves to hunt; in the fall in the Cornwall area and every winter in Ireland.

So Bob likes doing a lot of things. And he likes helping other artists; he has certainly helped me. I think Cornwall was lucky when he moved here in 1982.

—Hendon Chubb

## A Cornwall Icon

W. Bradford Walker came to Cornwall in 1923 to practice medicine and remained here for the rest of his life, expanding his services to the region over the years to include many civic as well as medical responsibilities. He was our community's beloved doctor until he died in 1977. He served as a physician at Charlotte Hungerford Hospital from 1925 to 1977. He founded the local Visiting Nurse Association, and even served as justice of the peace and in other such respected positions.

Life in a small community was very different in the years between the world wars. Mobility and communication were limited so people depended more on each other to cope with many of their needs, but for health situations they turned to the doctor. How fortunate Cornwall was to have Brad Walker with his big heart, seemingly tireless energy, and well-stocked black bag right there in the village!

Of all the grown-ups I encountered as a child, outside my family and relatives, perhaps the person who comes to mind most vividly is Dr. Walker. I can still feel his awesome ruffled presence as he leaned over my small frame to peer down my throat. I can see the shock of white hair and kindly eyes, hear his raspy breathing and watch with fascination the cigarette dangling from his mouth. Having a needle puncture my arm was a dreaded event, but I don't think it occurred to me to make a fuss. There was no nonsense about what had to be done, whether it was stitching up a wound, taking a dose of milk of magnesia, or having one's tonsils removed. There was full trust in whatever Dr. Walker prescribed. I know he was a pillar of strength for my mother during those hard child-rearing wartime years.

The Cornwall Historical Society has mounted a marvelous exhibition honoring this remarkable man and touching on the changes in the medical profession during his lifetime. I hope everyone will give themselves the chance to visit the exhibit which runs through the 10<sup>th</sup> of October, and is open on Saturdays from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M., and Sundays and holiday Mondays from 1 to 4 P.M. For those of us fortunate enough to grow up under Dr. Walker's care, it is a real trip down memory lane with memorabilia well displayed and even activities for children.

—Lisa Nicholson

## Haiku from CCS

During the year just past, CCS seventh-grade English teacher William Vincent had the class keep journals. Twice during the year he asked them to write haiku, a Japanese poem form with five, seven, and five syllables. Here are five of the class's haiku. We wish there were room for more.

Dark forest shade  
Muffles the bird's quiet song.  
Gone are her warbles.

—Anna D'Alvia

Vigilant Pumas  
Ready to strike and kill prey,  
But today they stay.

—Malcolm Scott

The green, slimy frog:  
He is sly and camouflaged;  
He hides in the mud.

—Madison Frith

English is awesome.  
We have grammar on Tuesday.  
I enjoy reading.

—Jamie Murphy

The aquatic shark  
Monitors the ocean floor,  
Watching for good prey.

—Cian Kalmes

## Birds and Birding in Cornwall

Cornwall is a bird-rich environment. We're at the northern end of the breeding range of many mid-Atlantic birds and at the southern breeding-range extremity of northern species. Most of us are familiar with common colorful backyard birds such as robins, bluebirds, blue jays, and cardinals and even the more dully colored phoebes, catbirds, and song sparrows. Many of our most alluring birds, however, live in the woods and fields just beyond the borders of our backyards. Look a little further and you will quickly be rewarded by seeing a chestnut-sided warbler, a yellowthroat, an indigo bunting, a redstart and many more local residents that rival tropical birds in splendor.

With many of our birds, however, the only chance to enjoy their spectacular colors and textures up close is with a good pair of binoculars. The yellow-bellied sapsucker, a woodpecker common in Cornwall, may have a fussy sounding name, but watching one plying a tree up close through bin-



## Letter to the Chronicle

ARE THE DEER REALLY GONE?

Evidence appears to be mounting that the deer population has declined. Take the tiger lilies and the hosta for instance. These two plants are like ice cream to deer. For as long as we've been in our house on Pierce Lane, our lilies, and those on the bank across the street, have been eaten while they were in bud. Sometimes the town crew's mowing habits got the lilies too, but usually it was the deer.

This year? Everywhere you look the lilies are blooming unscathed. Since you are what you eat, even if you're a deer, is it safe to assume the deer are almost gone from Cornwall?

Will any of our wise naturalists comment?

—Lisa Simont



oculars is a memorable experience. Bird-watching combines the anticipation and excitement hunters feel in stalking and focusing on their prey with the stimulation collectors feel in adding an important object to their list. With a little work and time, you may even learn to identify the songs of many species, and you'll never again be alone while you walk or garden or sit on the porch. The sharply inflected "teacher! teacher! teacher!" call of the ovenbird and the sliding, gurgly song of the veery are unmistakable and ubiquitous, emanating continuously from the woods bordering our homes. Knowing these songs and the identity of their singers provides a special additional sense of place.

Cornwall is long on forest and field which support songbirds, but short on open-water wetlands and undisturbed grasslands. Ducks and wading birds in Cornwall took a hit during the past year with the demise of the once-picturesque open marshes at each end of Rattlesnake Road. Similarly, grassland birds, such as the bobolink, a yearly migrant flying 8,000 miles each way from Argentina and Brazil, need our protection, requiring that some open fields remain uncut until late July after their young have fledged. We owe it to these intrepid travelers to keep some portion of our land available to them to justify all that travel!

—Joe Ellis

## Cornwall Briefs

- **AG Fair:** Just a reminder that it's coming on September 10 and you should be watering your veggies for any chance to win a prize for the best eggplant or pepper. The competition is often fierce and one little blemish can spell doom. And while we're in a reminding mode, you might put aside a few bucks to play the CVFD's annual (and exciting) Cow Chip Bingo contest at the fair. After all, a plop is a plop is a plop!

• **Solar Settings:** We got it wrong last month and our own Queen of Green, Kate Freygang, let us know. We said that DCS Energy, which is sponsoring a solar leasing deal for municipal and nonprofit buildings, was the same company that installed the solar systems at CCS and the Town Office. No, said, Kate, that was PV Squared of New Britain and Litchfield Solar of Cornwall, respectively. Mistakes happen!

• **A Town Meeting** has been scheduled for Tuesday, August 23, at 7:30 P.M. in the Town Hall to approve spending up to \$380,000 to resurface portions of Great Hill and Great Hollow roads, moneys that would eventually be reimbursed by federal and state grants. And the previously reported oiling of roads in Cornwall Bridge is supposed to begin in mid-August, according to town officials.

• **Applications** for state grant money of up to \$8,100 for Cornwall businesses to renovate their facades are due this month. This would be a second go-round. About 20 local businesses participated in a similar offering several years ago.

• **Girls' Softball:** Somehow the *Chronicle* has failed to acknowledge the accomplishment of the CCS girls softball team that won the regional championship in a three-way tie and an 8-2 record. Nine of the 15 members of the team had never played softball before. Tricia Collins, their coach, was proud of their "teamwork and dedication."  
—John Miller



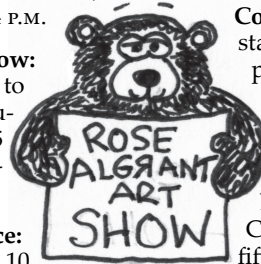
**Getting Away**

August is for vacations, the special trips we've been dreaming about all year. People who live in Cornwall go to the seashore and people who live by the sea in New York come to Cornwall. Wherever you are don't forget the *Chronicle*, which hasn't had a vacation in almost 21 years. Thank you!

**Events & Announcements**

**Cornwall Library Events:** Crabgrass Puppet Theater, "Smart and Small Conquers All," Wednesday, August 3, at 6:30 P.M. Christopher Webber on his book *American to the Backbone* on the first black abolitionist, Saturday, August 13, at 4 P.M. Reception honoring author Carla Stevens Bigelow, Sunday, August 14, 4 to 5:30 P.M. Rick Sowash on his new publication, *The Moderately Lazy Biker's Guide to Litchfield County (and just beyond)*, Wednesday, August 17, at 6 P.M. Barbara and Richard Wolkowitz will share their experiences teaching and living in Bhutan, Saturday, August 20, at 4 P.M.

**The Rose Algrant Show:** Friday, August 5, from 5 to 8 P.M. and Saturday, August 6, from 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. at Cornwall Consolidated School.



**Country Barn Dance:** Saturday, August 6, 7 to 10 P.M., Town Hall. Children \$3, adults \$5. Call Jane or Jim at 672-6101 for information.

**Cornwall Historical Society:** Wellesley professor Susan Reverby will talk about her 2010 discovery of a secret post-World War II syphilis study on Guatemalan men and women conducted by the U.S. Public Health Service. Sunday, August 7, at 2 P.M. at the Library. Cornwall Bridge walking tour, Saturday, August 20. Check the Society's website, [www.cornwallhistorical.society.org](http://www.cornwallhistorical.society.org) or call 672-0505 for time and meeting point.

**Grumbling Gryphons Theater Arts Camp:** Monday, August 8, to Saturday August 13. Children ages 5 to 14. August 13, 6:30 P.M., performance in Cornwall Town Hall followed by food and festivities on the Town Green. For more information call Leslie Elias at 672-0286.

**The Cornwall Association:** Two long-time Sharon residents will tell us all about Sharon, Saturday, August 13, at 1 P.M. at the Cornwall Historical Society.

**Motherhouse Events:** Canning workshop at Local Farm. Saturday, August 13, from 10:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. Preregistration required. Friday, August 19, 7:30 to 9 P.M. Round Sing at Local Farm. Contact Debra@Motherhouse.us or (860) 672-0229.

**Park & Rec:** Cornwall Day at Lake Compounce, Tuesday, August 16, from 11

A.M. to 8 P.M. (rain date Wednesday August 17). Cost is \$22.50 per person; no charge for children under three. Trip to Six Flags Amusement Park, Thursday, August 11. Teens entering grades seven to 12. Bus from Sharon Center School at 9 A.M., returning at 6 P.M. Cost is \$35 per person. Trip to beach at Rhode Island's Misquamicut State Park. Sunday, August 21. Bus from Cornwall Bridge (SCASCO) at 6:30 A.M., returning at 6 P.M., for \$15 per person. Reservations for all events required. Call Becky at 672-4071 or [emailprcornwall@gmail.com](mailto:emailprcornwall@gmail.com) with your name, phone, and number of reservations.

**Cornwall Child Center:** Fall program starting August 29. Three- to five-year-old preschoolers. Monday through Friday from 8 A.M. to 4 P.M. when CCS is open. Registration form with tuition information online at [www.cornwallchildcenter.org](http://www.cornwallchildcenter.org). After School Enrichment program, 3 to 5:30 P.M. for CCS students, kindergarten through fifth-grade. For more information, go to [www.cornwallchildcenter.org](http://www.cornwallchildcenter.org).

**Art in Cornwall:** Dick Frank's photographs continue at the Library through August 27. Artwork by Ed LaPorta will be featured at the National Iron Bank for the month. Hendon's rugs will be shown at the Wish House from August 12.

**The Cornwall Agricultural Fair:** Saturday, September 10, (rain date Sunday) from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. Judging help needed. Interested? Call Bill Dinneen at 672-0035 or email [ssbd5@optonline.net](mailto:ssbd5@optonline.net).

**The Cornwall Website Committee** is revising its Business and Marketplace pages and would welcome changes or corrections. Contact Anne Baren, [pbaren@optonline.net](mailto:pbaren@optonline.net), or Hendon Chubb, [garlic@aya.yale.edu](mailto:garlic@aya.yale.edu).

**CORNWALL CHRONICLE**

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