



# CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 12 : NUMBER 11 DECEMBER 2002



## The Cement Plant

Many of us in Cornwall are troubled by the St. Lawrence Cement Company's proposal to build the largest coal burning plant in North America in neighboring Columbia County. Owned by the Swiss company Holcim, the plant would include 40 acres of buildings, a 1,200 acre open-pit limestone mine, a two-mile long conveyer belt and a 400-foot high smokestack that would emit some 20 million pounds of particles per year. Cement production is expected to expand from 600,000 to two million tons a year. The emissions from such a plant, its effect on fish in the Hudson River as well as the quality of air and life in general is a topic of rapidly increasing concern.

Hearings before the New York Department of Environmental Conservation in December will decide whether the St. Lawrence application should move forward. Final presentations will be made by the interested parties in April and May, 2003 for a decision to be rendered in November or December.

First Selectman Gordon Ridgway says, "The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has dropped the ball in choosing not to participate in the process." He and other town officials in our area are working with the Council of Governments to find ways of remaining in the process despite Connecticut DEP Commissioner

Arthur J. Raque's claim that "it is unlikely that the air quality impacts will have an appreciable effect in Connecticut."

Meanwhile, the Cornwall-based Housatonic Valley Association has hired Dr. Bruce Egan, a well-known meteorologist, to evaluate air quality implications of the plant in the Housatonic Valley. An expert on wind dispersal, Dr. Egan's findings were instrumental in helping defeat the recent Semper power plant proposal in New Milford.

The Federal Environmental Protection Agency has concluded that there is a strong link between the smallest soot particles (under 2.5 microns) and lung-related illnesses. The 400-foot smoke stack would be 31 miles by road from Salisbury but only 20 miles as the crow flies. Our prevailing winds, west and northwest, suggest that some emissions will affect Cornwall's air. —Carla Bigelow

## Inside CCS

It is no secret that the waters surrounding our school have been more than a little turbulent over the past two years. But it should be no secret that the school itself, the teachers, the students, and their day-to-day life and work, have weathered these times admirably. The teachers at CCS continue to strive toward making the school better yet. A few examples:

Mrs. Wadhams and Mrs. Burdick will be piloting a new math program for K to 1 in the coming months. Teachers from K through 5 will be attending workshops together in an effort to strengthen the writing program. And beginning in January, as an alternative to study hall, students in grades 6 through 8 who are not in band or chorus will be offered elective courses that have academic value.

A step through the doors of CCS (and everyone is welcome to visit) will show that its warmth and spirit have not diminished. From the vibrant artwork that covers the walls, to the sound of Mrs. Loi's whistle in what will now, at last, become the "old gym," to the wonderful teaching going on in many classrooms, our little school is holding steady. —April Stevens

## Bucking Trends

It appears that Cornwall doesn't march to anyone's drumbeat but our own when it comes to flicking those sweet little levers in (continued on page 2)



## DECEMBER 2002

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b> Teacher Workshop/ Craft Day at CCS 10 A.M.-Noon (p.4) Bone Density Testing 1-3 P.M. Goshen (p.4) Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	<b>3</b> Blue Mt. Satsang Every Tuesday 6:30-8 P.M. St. Peter's Church	<b>4</b> Play Group Every Wednesday 10-11:30 A.M. UCC Parish House Design a Gingerbread House 6:30-8:30 P.M. CCS (p.4)	<b>5</b> Meditation for Mothers Every Thursday 1:15-2:15 P.M. St. Peter's Church 60-Plus Wellness Screening UCC Parish House (p.4)	<b>6</b> Design a Gingerbread House 6:30-8:30 P.M. CCS (p.4)	<b>7</b> Rotary Meeting 8:15 A.M. Cornwall Lib. M. R. Cornwall Assoc. 9:30 A.M. Cornwall Lib. M. R. Christmas Fair 10 A.M.-3 P.M. UCC Peace Vigil 2-3 P.M. Cornwall Bridge Green Extra for Kids Benefit 4-6 P.M. Cornwall Arts Collection (p.4)
<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> Blood Pressure Screening 3-4 P.M. UCC Planning and Zoning 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	<b>10</b> Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	<b>11</b> CCS Early Dismissal 1 P.M. Friends of the Library Annual Meeting 4:30 P.M. Cornwall Library	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> Story Hour Party 10 A.M. Cornwall Library	<b>14</b> Rotary Meeting 8:15 A.M. Cornwall Lib. M. R. Peace Vigil 2-3 P.M. Cornwall Bridge Green Grandma's Attic Tag Sale 10 A.M.-2 P.M. CCS Gym Holiday Decorations Sale 11 A.M.-2 P.M. Baird's
<b>15</b> <i>Deadline: January Chronicle Copy</i> Annual Bird Count (p.4) Holiday Decorations Sale 11 A.M.-2 P.M. Baird's (p.4) Annual Tree Lighting and Carol Sing 5:30 P.M. Town Hall	<b>16</b> Region One Bd. of Ed. 7 P.M. HVRHS	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> Cornwall Fire Dept. 8 P.M. W. C. Firehouse	<b>19</b> Longest Night Service 7:30 P.M. Corn. Village Meeting House Bd. of Selectmen 9 A.M. Town Hall Bd. of Ed. 5 P.M. CCS Lib. Bd. of Fin. 7:30 P.M. CCS Lib. VFW Post 9856 8 P.M. W. C. Firehouse	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> Rotary Meeting 8:15 A.M. Cornwall Lib. M. R. Peace Vigil 2-3 P.M. Cornwall Bridge Green Family Ice Skating 1:30-2:30 P.M. Salisbury School (p.4)
<b>22</b> WINTER BEGINS Annual Christmas Pageant 7:30 P.M. UCC	<b>23</b> School Holiday Recess Begins ZBA 7:30 P.M. Town Hall*	<b>24</b> Annual Service of Lessons and Carols 5 P.M. & 8 P.M. North Cornwall Meeting House	<b>25</b> CHRISTMAS DAY	<b>26</b> KWANZAA BEGINS Annual Candlelight Reading 4:30 P.M. North Cornwall Meeting House (p.4)	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> Rotary Meeting 8:15 A.M. Cornwall Lib. M. R. Peace Vigil 2-3 P.M. Cornwall Bridge Green
<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b> Note: January 1 Pancake Breakfast 9 A.M.-1 P.M. UCC Parish House (p.4)				

\* Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

(continued from page 1)

our voting booths on Election Day.

This time we went pretty much our own way among the NW corner towns in the key races for governor and for representative in the newly configured Fifth Congressional District. While the other six towns were helping re-elect Republicans Governor John Rowland and Congresswoman Nancy Johnson by wide margins, Cornwall alone was supporting their losing Democratic opponents Bill Curry and Jim Maloney. Figure that? In fact, in all but one race, we supported Democrats. However, these Democrats, unlike Curry and Maloney, were victorious. They included State Representative Roberta Willis and Attorney General Richard Blumenthal.



There was one local contest where we bucked our own Democratic trend and enthusiastically supported a Republican. That, of course, was State Senator Andrew Roraback, whose apparent twin missions in life are never to miss a legislative vote and to take care of all constituent needs. Andy won 75 percent of our vote as he gained the second of what will probably be many future terms in Hartford. And if you're wondering about our turnout on Election Day, 691 out of 967 registered voters cast ballots, which comes to 71 percent, far from a record but tops this time in our corner of Connecticut.

One very nice Cornwall tradition of not putting up election posters seemed to take a vacation as Maloney and Roraback signs sprang up, mainly on Route 7 in Cornwall Bridge. We were starting to look like Kent. Ugly. Ugly. Ugly.

—John Miller

### Picture Book Still in Print

A year after publishing *Cornwall in Pictures—A Visual Reminiscence 1868–1941*, the Cornwall Historical Society is still offering the volume for sale. With text by Jeremy Brecher, life-long Cornwall resident and Connecticut historian, the book has a hardcover cloth binding with 224 pages; it contains more than 400 images, mostly photographs from the Cornwall Historical Society's extensive collection. *Cornwall in Pictures* was made possible, in part, by a grant from the Connecticut Humanities Council.

The volume, published in November 2001, sold out its original edition. Of 1,850 volumes issued in two printings, about 375 were still available this December 1.

The price is \$25. To buy the volume, check local retail stores or bookstores. You can also call Charles Osborne (672-6296).

—Charles Osborne

### Changes in the Legal System

Probate Courts in Connecticut oversee the settlement of estates and the management of trusts, and also monitor the affairs of chil-

dren and adults who need guardians or conservators. The court can also help you change your name or apply for a passport.

The system of 120 courts is funded from fees collected from its users. Now that the state succession tax is being phased out and probate procedures have been streamlined, the courts are losing their chief source of revenue, and the workloads of many smaller jurisdictions no longer justify the cost of training, paying, insuring, and retiring 120 judges.

While no one has yet been able to devise a plan of consolidation that satisfies everyone, judges in smaller courts are considering voluntary mergers with neighboring ones. Cornwall is the smallest court of all, so, as a probate judge, I feel pressure to seek the best way to deal with inevitable change.

If we choose to consolidate with other towns, key elements of a local court may be kept, while we economize by belonging to a larger unit. If we do nothing, there is a chance that choices will be made for us by people living far, far away. In view of all this, I have begun talking with our selectmen and the judges and selectmen of several neighboring towns to explore the possibility of an expanded district. Any decision must be made by the Board of Selectmen in each town, who in turn would present legislation to the General Assembly in 2003, for changes to take place in 2006. If you are interested in more detail, please call me at 672-6251.

—Maggie Cooley

### Who Are We?

Where do the residents of Cornwall come from? Some answers can be found in the U.S. Census for 2000. For example, the Census reveals that the great majority of us (94 percent) were born in the United States—but only 49 percent were born in Connecticut. The six percent born abroad came mostly from Europe (61 percent) and Asia (22 percent).

Cornwall's resident population of 1,434 people report that they share a total of 1,804 ancestries. Among the more commonly claimed origins are English (26 percent of the population) and Irish (19 percent). If you add in the Scotch, Scotch-Irish, and Welsh, residents with ancestries dating back to Britain and Ireland account for more than half (53 percent) of our total population.

Next most frequent is German ancestry (18 percent). Italian origins account for seven percent. French and French-Canadian ancestries together were claimed by just under seven percent. Russian ancestry came next, with five percent. Three Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Sweden, and Norway) together add up to another five percent.

Smaller percentages of Cornwall residents report Arab, Czech, Dutch, Greek, Hungarian, Lithuanian, Polish, Slovak, Swiss, Ukrainian, and West Indian origins. In addition, a catch-all category of "other ancestries" accounts for 15 percent of all the origins reported by our residents.

The only other national origin that ac-

counts for more than five percent of Cornwall residents is the good old USA, with six percent claiming no other origin. Does one assume that these are descendants of Amerindians? Or just that their families have been here so long they forgot where they came from in the first place? The Census doesn't say.

—David A Grossman

### Welcome

Gabriel Woolmington to Paul and Carol Woolmington

Hickory Wolfe Whelan to Becky Wolfe and Dennis Whelan

Jordan Christopher Shaw to Mary Eliza Shaw  
Isabella Regina to Maria Victoria and Richard A. Kling

### Good-bye to Friends

Bob S. Bury  
Edward J. Baird  
Jeanne R. Fiore  
Harry Holmes  
Irene Williams

### Land Transfer

Franklyn Kesl, Jr. and Richard E. Kesl to Clive and Diane Lodge, land on Kent Road for \$40,000.

### Tax Relief in Cornwall

For a long time town leaders along with the rest of us have recognized the importance of property tax relief for those in need. Although statutory programs are already in place to help the elderly, veterans, and the disabled, at the Annual Town Meeting of October 25 an ordinance was passed that, on the heels of the new property valuations and



other efforts, may begin to offer some lower-income taxpayers a measure of comfort.

Following a similar ordinance provided for by state law and recently enacted by the Town of Salisbury, residential property owners in Cornwall whose property taxes exceed eight percent of total income can now apply to have their taxes abated. Some less affluent households have had to spend a high proportion of their income on town taxes in past years, sometimes as much as 20 percent, compared with their higher-income neighbors, who may spend as little as two percent.

A statutory requirement of the new ordinance for property owners, however, is that abated taxes will not be forgiven but will rather accrue (plus six percent interest per year) and be due upon sale or transfer of the property. It makes the new ordinance a good first step but, according to First Selectman Gordon Ridgway, less than "the magic bullet" he would ultimately like.

Consequently, he is looking at other programs that will forgive a portion of property taxes entirely for those eligible, and he says he will be talking with legislators about removing a provision currently on the books requiring a public reporting of the names of those who apply.

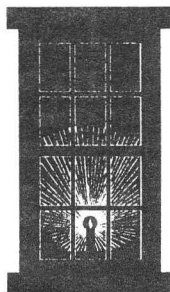
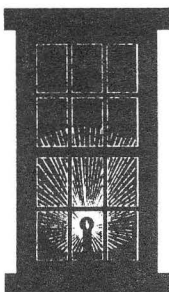
It should also be noted that recent property re-valuations have reduced the mill rate. For many households with stable or lower valuations, total taxes have gone down. The same holds true for commercial property values, so Cornwall businesses have also been helped. Taken together, these efforts may lessen the burden of a tax that, for some of us, hits very hard.

—Sandy Neubauer

### Time Is of the Essence

The Cornwall Conservation Trust continues to receive a steady stream of pledges of all amounts in its drive to preserve the Hart Cherry Hill Farm as permanently protected open space available to all. This is our first public fund-raising effort, and we have been energized by the process and are optimistic about the outcome in this generous, caring town of Cornwall. But, we still need more dollars in a very short time and we could use everyone's help to make this purchase a shared reality. Please take a drive along Cherry Hill and enjoy the view, talk to your friends, and encourage each other to get involved. Our deadline is December 15. Don't wait.

—Becky Hurlburt



## Letters to the Chronicle



THE PLAYGROUND THAT CORNWALL BUILT  
Ann and Tom Hubbard provided the land  
that holds

the playground that Cornwall built;  
\$19,800 were the generous gifts that funded  
the playground that Cornwall built;  
Bethany and Deirdre of Park and Rec. organized  
the playground that Cornwall built;  
Jim Vanicky's the one who dug and prepared  
the playground that Cornwall built;  
Wednesday's the day the little ones meet at  
the playground that Cornwall built;  
Impromptu gatherings of children and friends  
you'll find at  
the playground that Cornwall built;  
The children we know are most thankful to have  
the playground that Cornwall built.  
Hooray for the playground!

—Mary Kay Elwell

### A QUESTION OF LEADERSHIP

I am writing to express my disappointment over the Cornwall Consolidated Board of Education decision to reappoint Katherine Gannett to a four-year term on the Region One Board of Education. Although a "good faith agreement" to step down "within two years" is part of the record, it is non-binding.

Mrs. Gannett has served on the Region One board for eight years, during which time a New England Association of Secondary Schools evaluation called for the board and administration to work to improve their relations with students, teachers, and parents. It was also a period when community surveys conducted by the board revealed concerns about the unresponsiveness of both the board and administration in Region One.

Many of us in our six towns felt that these concerns should be addressed by new leadership on both the Regional Board of Education and in the administration. Mrs. Gannett is no longer an elected official. Only indirectly can we challenge her decisions as our representative to the high school board. While this may be perfectly legal, it is undemocratic in spirit. We traditionally elect our board of education members and they are directly accountable to us.

The high school is in need of academic leadership. Higher test scores, more college acceptan-

ces to first-tier institutions, aggressive curriculum revision, long-range plans for comprehensive professional development are only a few areas where comparisons with other secondary schools find Housatonic wanting. Cornwall must do its part to insure school improvement. The Cornwall School Board, by its recent action, has shown itself to be unresponsive to these challenges.

—Pamela Wilson

(Editor's note: A teacher at Housatonic Valley Regional High School for 22 years and Director of the school's Humanities Program for three years, Pamela Wilson is currently Chairman of the English and History Department, grades 6 to 12 at Shepaug Middle and High School in Region 12.)

### A LETTER OF THANKSGIVING

Debby, Barton, Peter, and Stuart Jones thank everyone in Cornwall for the kindness, love, sympathy, and courage shown by so many of you to us following Philip's climbing tragedy in Yosemite National Park in October.

A small sample of those, in no particular order, includes: Philip's Cornwall friends standing tall and speaking from their hearts at his memorial service. Handmade log boats with candles crafted by Litchfield buddies floating magically at night down the Housatonic. Food and comfort brought to our house by New England Caterers, the Local Farm, and caring neighbors. So many letters and cards, including one on behalf of the town from the First Selectman. Acceptance of a bench given by friends to the Housatonic Valley Association in recognition of Philip's love for the Housatonic River, her natural beauty, and bright fish. A robust, colorful, sweet sugar maple planted in our field by the Sunday afternoon Cornwall Ultimate Frisbee Players and Bard College classmates in memory of Philip's enthusiasm and open friendship.

The caring New England character of the people of Cornwall shone brightly through the gloom of our personal grief. Philip's values in life were very much a reflection of those around him in Cornwall more than any other place he lived.

The joy all of you and Philip have given us lives on and will carry us through to sunnier days.

—The Jones Family

### Senior Dine Program

New on the Cornwall horizon is the Senior Dine Program proposed by the Northwest Elderly Nutrition Project and the Wandering Moose. Negotiations are underway to offer all seniors, age 60 and above, the opportunity to purchase a Senior Dine Card which may be used for breakfast or lunch up to five times per week at the Moose. The cards re-

semble a credit card and must be presented when dining. The suggested donation is \$2.75 per meal but no one is turned away due to inability to pay. This new system gives seniors an opportunity to eat at a local restaurant with their friends instead of alone at home. Call Jill Gibbons at 672-2603 for more information and a registration form.



## Events & Announcements

**No Parking During the Winter Season:** Effective December 1 through March 30, all vehicles must park at least six feet away from the traveled or paved portion of the road 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Plowing can occur any time, including in clear weather. Vehicles in violation of this order may be removed by the Board of Selectmen.

**Annual Craft Day** for children in grades kindergarten through four on Monday, December 2 from 10 A.M. to noon in the CCS art room. Space is limited. To register, call Bethany Thompson at 672-6058.

**Screenings:** The towns of Goshen and Cornwall offer bone density testing December 2 from 1 to 3 P.M. at Camp Coch on Beach Street in Goshen. Call Dale Ives at 491-2284. Cornwall will hold a 60-plus wellness screening December 5 at the UCC Parish House. Call Jill Gibbons, 672-2603.

**Design a Gingerbread House** with Joyce Samson on Wednesday and Friday, December 4 and 6 at CCS from 6:30 to 8:30 P.M.; one adult accompanied by one child only. Fee \$18. Call 672-0616.

**The Christmas Bird Count** will be held on Sunday, December 15. The area covered by the Housatonic Audubon Society is from the Sharon side of the Housatonic River to Cream Hill Road and north just beyond Music Mountain Road. Anyone who wishes to help with the count for all or part of the day should call Celia Senzer at 672-6898.

## S. Claus Coming to Town

He knows if you've been naughty—he knows if you've been nice. And what could be nicer than sending donations to as many Cornwall organizations as you can, including the *Chronicle* of course. Happy holidays!

**Extras for Kids** will offer an Art and Wine Tasting Benefit on December 7 from 4 to 6 P.M. at the Cornwall Arts Collection, 7 Railroad Square, West Cornwall. Holiday ornaments made by local artists; wine tasting offered by Cornwall Package Store; hors d'oeuvres provided by the Wandering Moose. Tickets are \$15 per person, \$25 per couple and can be purchased at the door or at local businesses.

**Grandma's Attic Tag Sale** on Saturday, December 14 from 10 A.M. to 2 P.M. at the CCS gym to benefit the eighth grade class. Call Julie Russ, 672-3511.



**Storm Watch:** Would you like to be checked up on during winter storms? If so, call the Selectmen's Office at 672-4959.

**Candlelight Reading:** Tom Walker will read selections from *Charlotte's Web* by E. B. White on Thursday, December 26, at 4:30 P.M. at the North Cornwall Meeting House. This will be the sixth annual Tom Walker reading sponsored by Friends of the Cornwall Library. Admission free, everybody welcome.

**Art in Cornwall:** Don Bracken's exhibit of paintings as seen from his World Trade Center studio will continue through December 31 at the Cornwall Library. The show at the Cornwall Arts Collection, featuring works by Scott Zuckerman and Connie Steuerwalt, will continue through the end of December. Artist of the Month at the National Iron Bank will be Lazlo Gyorsok, who will exhibit photographs related to Cornwall.

**Town Clerk's Holiday Schedule:** The Town Clerk's Office will close at noon on Tuesday, December 24 and will reopen on Monday, December 30. It will close again at noon, December 31, and will reopen Thursday morning, January 2, closing at noon.

**Congratulations** to CCS's Tyra Lindholm for winning this year's Superintendents' Award. Tyra says she was quite surprised to receive the honor but has to admit it has made her feel very happy. She was chosen not only for her strong academic standards and athleticism, but also for her spirit and generosity.

**Holiday Decorations:** Unique, fresh greenery arrangements for sale at Baird's on December 14 and 15 from 11 A.M. to 2 P.M. Proceeds to benefit the Cornwall Child Center.

**Family Ice Skating** at Salisbury School Saturday, December 21 from 1:30 to 2:30 P.M. Open to all Cornwall residents. Free of charge. Sponsored by Park and Rec.

**Greet the New Year** with breakfast at the UCC Parish House. Buttermilk pancakes with Cornwall maple syrup, sausage, cereal, juice, and coffee will be served from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. Donations will once again benefit the La Casa Project.



## CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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Please mail the *Chronicle* to the out-of-town address above; a \$10 contribution will be appreciated.

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