

CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 18: NUMBER 1 FEBRUARY 2008



Fire in the Pink House

Good luck and some brilliant work by several dozen volunteer firefighters saved West Cornwall's historic Pink House on the first Monday of the new year. For one thing the temperatures, which had been in the single digits for several days, had risen above freezing, making water in the nearby brook and the Housatonic River easier to extract. And the air was calm—no "Santa Ana" wind to jump the flames to nearby trees and structures.

Patience Lindholm, on her way to work a little earlier than usual, spotted smoke and flames coming off the building's roof and called LCD (Litchfield County Dispatch) on her fire department radio. About the same time, next-door neighbor Tom Bechtle had what he described as an "eerie moment.... Something drew me to a window. It was dead quiet, but I noticed Phil Wolfe [Pink House resident] come out the front door and look up toward the roof. There were flames and a lot of smoke."

The first fire truck arrived in about ten minutes, and it took another three or four to get the hoses out. More trucks from Cornwall's two firehouses were arriving and, eventually, equipment from such faraway places as Goshen, Falls Village, and Lakeville. From Millerton came air tank support. From Kent and Canaan additional ambulances. Perhaps most valuable was the

ladder truck from Sharon, providing easier and safer access to the roof.

The Pink House's address is 417 Sharon-Goshen Turnpike, and it dates back to the 19th century. It was owned by Maura Smithies and her former husband until they signed it over to an organization called The Landmark Trust about ten years ago with the understanding that she could stay there during her lifetime. Mrs. Smithies had been living there with Wolfe. It was reported that most of their valuables were saved. However, they were not allowed back into the house because of extensive structural damage.

Smithies and Wolfe had been using the building's fireplace for heat. It is believed that the fire originated in the wall against the fireplace and quickly spread to the roof. Wood structures in rural settings rarely survive such fires, which makes the work of the volunteer firefighters an amazing example of brilliant teamwork.

During the blaze, the Cornwall ambulance and another from Kent stood by but were needed to take only two firemen to Sharon Hospital as a precaution. EMS personnel used the main room of the nearby Wandering Moose Café as a rehab center to monitor firefighters. And behind the counter at the Moose, Russ and Sharon Sawicki and several volunteers, the same Tom Bechtle

and Don Bachman, were serving breakfast and later lunch to the many hungry firefighters as they finished securing West Cornwall's landmark, seriously smudged but still pink.

—John Miller

Overmagnetized?

All life is continuously bombarded with unperceived low-level power charges from the earth and the sun. To this natural electromagnetic field (EMF) we have added EMFs from microwave ovens, televisions, computers, cell towers and phones, power lines or transformers. We presume that we are safe, but no public health research in the United States is exploring potential ill effects on living organisms. Biological research, mostly conducted in Europe and Asia, suggests that EMFs cause damage to animal and human cells, including DNA. This was the cautionary message of the panel of experts who spoke in Cornwall to advocate "Responsible Tower Siting" on January 12.

Former New York Times science writer Blake Levitt as well as the other speakers emphasized that, rather than trying to banish cell phones and towers, they aimed to raise awareness of risks to health and habitat and advocate reduced exposure. The evidence of detrimental EMF effects they cited was impressive. For example, breeding, nesting, and migration of bird populations are af-

(continued on page 2)

SATURDAY SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY Every Week This Month: 1 2 Mondays: Jam Session, 7:30 P.M. Vill. Mtng. Hse.; Men's Adult Basketball, 7 P.M. CCS Gym Tuesdays: Adult Volleyball, 7:30 p.m. CCS Gym Wednesdays: Stretch Class. 5 p.m. Town Hall: Women's Adult Basketball, 7:30 p.m. CCS: Tai Chi. 7 p.m. CCS. Library Chocolate Hour † Story Hour 1:15 P.M. Library Family Contra Dance Thursdays: Meditation for Mothers, 1:15 p.m. St. Peter's, call Debra Tyler 672-0229 to confirm 7 P.M. Town Hall † Fridays: Game Night at CCS, 6-8 P.M. † Saturdays: Free Family Skating, 7-8 P.M. Hotchkiss School † Sundays: Meditation Group, 1-2 P.M. Debra Tyler 672-0229 for location 5 Primary Election 8 3 **'** 6 а.м.-8 р.м. Region One Bd. of Ed. Motherhouse Old Style Town Hall (p. 4) 7 P.M. HVRHS Story Hour 1:15 P.M. Library Life Skills Workshop Park & Rec. 7 P.M 10:30 A.M.-1:30 P.M. UCC † Bd. of Selectmen Bd. of Selecting.. 7:30 p.m. Town Hall CCS Library Inland Wetlands 7:30 P.M. Town Office VALENTINE'S DAY Deadline: March 11 14 10 12 Lincoln's Birthday 16 13 15 Chronicle Copy '30s Cornwall Civilian Town Offices Closed **Blood Pressure Screening** CCS Closed **Conservation Corps** Agricultural Comm. 3-5 р.м. Library † Noon-1 P.M. UCC Songs of Peace & Protest 7:30 P.M. Town Office 7 р.м. UCC † Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library 17 19 22 Washington's Birthday 23 18 PRESIDENTS' DAY 20 21 CCS Closed Bd. of Ed 5 p.m. CCS Lib. Mother-Son Day CCS Closed Bd. of Fin 7:30 P.M. CCS Lib. Story Hour 1:15 P.M. Library 11 а.м.-2 р.м. P&Z 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Local Farm † Town Offices Closed Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall VFW Post 9856 8 P.M. W. C. Firehouse 24 25 27 28 29 26 President Jefferson & ZBA 7:30 P.M. Town Hall* Madison in Cornwall 1808 Story Hour 1:15 P.M. Library P&Z 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Cornwall Fire Department 3 p.m. CCS Travel Benefit Dinner Travel Benefit Dinner 8 P.M. W. Cornwall Firehouse (see insert) 5:30 & 7 p.m. 5:30 & 7 p.m. Wandering Moose † Wandering Moose †

^{*} Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

(continued from page 1)

fected, and bees may fail to return to the hive.

The impact of exposure is cumulative, but because of prolonged latency periods, the full impact of EMFs has not yet become apparent in humans. Children are especially vulnerable: it may be no coincidence that serious health problems are increasing in younger and younger populations. The risk of childhood cancer, for example, appears to rise or fall with distance from radio antennae or cell towers.

Connecticut is the only state with a centralized Siting Council in charge of granting cell tower permits. It was created under the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which according to the panel was largely written by advocates for the telecom industry. Telecommunications organizations see themselves as providing a necessary, consumer-driven service when applying for permits. The Siting Council is not required to conduct studies of potential hazards, and its rulings supersede local zoning laws. "Empty spaces in the air around us are literally up for sale," said environmental consultant Starling Childs.

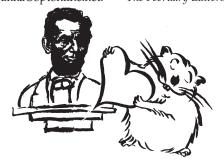
Federal oversight is also faulty, said the panelists. The EPA's statutory duty to protect the environment from force fields has been defunded by the government and oversight assigned to the FCC. Engineers and physicists at the FCC are concerned with mechanical functions and do not speak the language of biologists and medical researchers. As a result, said Columbia University professor Martin Blank, any EMF safety limits that the commission sets are bound to be inadequate.

The forum ended with a plea by attorney Whitney Seymour for consumers to educate themselves and their elected officials. Rulings of the Siting Council can be appealed in court, and citizens can file a petition. For quality information these websites were recommended: emrpolicy.org and bioinitiative.org.

—Ann Schillinger

Mini-Grant, Anyone?

The Cornwall Energy Task Force is seeking ideas from Cornwall residents to help them spend part of the \$5,000 grant received from the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund to "support public awareness and education projects on clean renewable energy." Any Cornwall residents who come up with a good plan to help the town figure out its carbon imprint or otherwise help move it toward a greater use of renewable energy may qualify for a mini-grant. If you're interested, contact Anne Zinsser at 672-6400 or akka@optonline.net. —The February Editors



Doing Business in Cornwall

A recent tour of Cornwall's two commercial centers offers a mixed picture for those hoping for more economic development. In West Cornwall, several empty stores are a reminder of its unfulfilled potential. The January purchase of the Bechtle-Bachman house by an area realtor, however, promises to bring in some foot traffic.

In Cornwall Bridge, on the other hand, businesses have been largely holding their own. At last June's Town Plan forum, several people mentioned the historic area under the 1930s bridge as a good place for non-retail businesses with a modest number of employees. In fact, one such business, In Pursuit of Tea, has been operating there for nearly two years, under the radar of most Cornwall citizens.

Cornwall friends Sebastian Beckwith and Alexander Scott, along with partner Frank Kwei, established the company in Brooklyn and moved with its four or five employees to Cornwall Bridge in February 2006. Personal connections rather than Cornwall's economic desirability were the critical factor in locating here. As an import, packaging, and re-sale business that sells tea over the Internet and provides tea service to such four-star restaurants as New York City's Daniel and Chanterelle, it can function equally well in nearly any location. In Pursuit of Tea does not do retail business, but its products are sold locally at Baird's and at Cornwall Bridge Pottery. Visited in the second-floor dormer overlooking the river, Sebastian Beckwith exulted in being able to run a global tea business while gazing upon the Housatonic's rushing waters.

Beth and Rick Cochran's Berkshire Country Store has not had so smooth a ride (despite a visit from Governor Jodi Rell to celebrate them as the state's first retail outlet for biodiesel fuel). A petition to change the zoning of the five-acre property from Residential to General Business generated an outpouring of conflicted response from the public at a twopart hearing in August and September. In late December, Beth and several of the younger Cochrans relocated out of state, and the family offered the business and property for sale. In January, Rick requested that the Planning and Zoning Commission consider reclassifying two acres of their property (as opposed to the entire five) as a rural business zone.

Rick Cochran plans to keep the store open during the P&Z review process and while seeking new owners. He does not ascribe the store's difficulties to any inherent problem with location and hopes that the town may come to a consensus that will allow "whoever winds up owning our store a little more freedom to offer different services."

—Paul De Angelis

HVRHS Looks Ahead

In early fall 2007 the Region One Board of Education formally approved a Long-Range Planning Committee. Its goal is to develop a five-to-ten-year framework to guide decision-making on all aspects of educational life at the high school. Among particular concerns are budgeting, curriculum and staffing issues as they relate to enrollment, and deficiencies



noted by a recent accreditation report.

A first meeting of the Central Planning Committee was to be held January 24. Cornwall members of the six-town committee are Phil Hart, Wynne Kavanagh, Anne Kosciusko, Catherine Tatge, and Jim Terrall. Your opinions are needed. —Phil Hart

Good-Bye to a Friend

Mildred H. Preston

Congratulations

Stephanie Ann Johnson and Shaun Douglas Rodger

Land Transfers

Hart Cherry Hill Farm, Inc., to Priscilla Hart Mauro, 2.108 acres and buildings thereon on Cherry Hill Road for \$10,000.

Arthur W. Strassle to Weantinogue Heritage Land Trust, Inc., a Conservation Restriction on 23.319 acres and a Conservation Restriction with retained agricultural rights on 3.033 acres at 195 Great Hill Road.

Lauren B. and Woodie J. Cyr, Jr., to Thomas Clifford, 1.143 acres on Mansonville Road for \$25,000.

Ira B. Shapiro and Jacqueline Dedell to Warren Land Trust, Inc., a Conservation Restriction on 64.1641 acres on Warren Hill Road, in the Towns of Warren and Cornwall.

Robert L. and Gerald T. Wilson to Sunset View, LLC, 1.5 acres on Furnace Brook Road for \$50,000.

Winter Needs

With only part of winter gone and severe cold still ahead, I decided to explore what support systems are in place for Cornwall residents.

Some of the most pervasive needs are addressed by Jill Gibbons, Cornwall's Director of Social Services. On a recent visit, her bright office felt welcoming, and the doors to the well-stocked shelves of the Cornwall Cupboard Food Pantry were wide open. "I am so grateful for the generosity of the people in this community," Jill stated, more than once. The typical post-holiday slump, suffered by so many food banks, is not an issue in Cornwall. There are current needs, however. Grocery gift certificates will provide for fresh vegetables, fruit, milk, or other perishable items. Gasoline cards (locally available at CITGO) help people get to the food pantry or to the supermarket. Highprotein canned goods and pasta sauce are short on supply, as are pet foods. Donations of cash, i.e., checks made out to the Cornwall Food and Fuel Bank, are of course the most versatile form of support. The Cornwall Food Pantry is open whenever the Town Offices are open. Residents are welcome to take

what they need, no questions asked.

Providing fuel support is another priority for Social Services. As a first resource, Jill helps residents apply for the Danbury-based Connecticut Energy Assistance Program. Households with children under six, the elderly, and the disabled receive special consideration. Compared to the real cost of heating fuel, awards are extremely low, and some 40 local households receiving between \$280 and \$600 may need further assistance to pay their heating bills throughout the winter.

The Northwest Corner Fuel Bank and the Cornwall Town Fuel Bank have become invaluable resources for responding to these unmet needs and to provide for families who do not meet federal eligibility criteria. As winter lingers on, requests for emergency support are known to increase sharply.

On Fridays from 9 A.M. to 4 P.M., Jill Gibbons works in her Town Hall office and can be reached at 672-2603. All requests for help and matters discussed are, of course, kept confidential. In her other part-time work, Jill is the Parent Education Coordinator for the Housatonic Youth Service Bureau, located next to the high school in Falls Village. HYSB provides a wealth of support services, recreational programs, and workshops for families and youth up to age 21.

There are other forms of help supplied in Cornwall winters. In case of snowstorms or power outages, our generous Cornwall Volunteer Fire Department members check on residents on the "stormlist." Call the Selectmen's Office at 672-4959 to be added to the list.

If you can't drive or don't want to challenge the gods in bad weather, and you don't have anyone else to get you to a doctor's appointment, there is FISH to help. Call Joan Edler at 672-6789. Volunteer drivers are also welcome to call.

Finally, Cornwall churches have quietly supported town residents, either directly or through the Social Services office, in ways such as providing food donations or Christmas gifts for local families.

Sometimes it's easier to give help than to ask for help. Thank you, everyone in Cornwall, for taking care of each other.

—Elisabeth Kaestner

Town Plan Update

The formulation of Cornwall's new Town Plan is beginning to pick up speed as four subcommittees—housing, natural resources, economic development, and cultural and community resources—hold monthly meetings to work out a consensus that will underpin the report to be written by town planning consultant Tom McGowan. The subcommittee chairs are Pat Hare and Chris Hopkins, housing; Dave Colbert and Rick Lynn, natural resources; Anne Kosciusko and Jamie La Porta, economic development; Emilie Pryor and Lynn Cheney, cultural and community resources. They anticipate finishing their drafts in June.

The process goes like this: on the fourth Tuesday of each month, the Planning and Zoning Commission convenes a special Town Plan workshop meeting at 7:30 P.M. in the Town Hall. There the larger group usually di-

Letters to the Chronicle

INDEPENDENT GAL

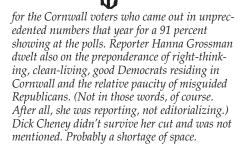
My Village herd of Milking Devons has surprisingly grown. One of my girls, who we didn't believe to be pregnant, produced a heifer calf on January 9. On her second day, after receiving her name (Coltsfoot Cottage's Cally Gal), she decided to display her independence by leaving the herd and spending four days on her own in the woods out back. On her third night away we had a Nor'easter. When Cally still hadn't returned by breakfast on the fourth day, I thought for sure that she had succumbed to the elements or some ravenous critter. Later, as I was having my lunch, I noticed Mike (the bull) looking curiously across the backyard. Lo and behold, here came the Gal, all of six days old, trotting through ten inches of new snow, obviously in search of her mother's teats. Before I could get halfway down the driveway she had found them and was latched on like there was no tomorrow. These American Milking Devons are indeed magnificent and hearty beasts. —Dan Gracey

TOWN OF STOICS?

The Chronicle issues of December 2000 and 2004 speak volumes on the sterling character of the disappointed, larboard-leaning voters of Cornwall. Stiff upper lip, and all that.

In the December 2000 edition John Miller took on, for him, the arduous task of reporting the gruesome congressional and presidential election outcomes of that year. He was able to get through the trauma only by devoting three quarters of his article to descriptions of the Election Day soups served at the November 4 community luncheon held at the UCC Parish House. In the few references to the election results in the remaining quarter of his piece, he managed to keep emotion in check by commending OK Republican Andrew Roraback's runaway victory for the State Senate and stressing Cornwall's backing of worthy Al Gore (though in a losing cause), along with VP candidate Joe Lieberman, maverick Ralph Nader, and Green candidate Audrey Cole. The names of newly crowned President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney were allowed to slip through the cracks, however. (A four-time three-letter man in college, John has stoically survived his share of pain in his life, but a Republican administration in Washington was more trauma than he could face in print over his name.)

Then, in 2004, the Chronicle reported the Bush reelection in passing but saved its praises



Perhaps 11 months off is a bit early to devote precious Chronicle space to a presidential vote, but with an anticipated Democratic sweep of congress and the presidency forecast, it is not too soon to begin to savor a complete political turnaround. Following that day, will we have a single joyous December edition, two-thirds devoted to election news? Or will it be a special extra, extra, supplemental to a more traditional dignified edition with Cornwall happenings only? To quote Lewis Carroll (sort of), "Oh frabjous day, kalloo kallay, they'll chortle in their joy."

—Scoville Soulé, Rep.

CORNWALL'S IRAQI FAMILY

Did anyone hear Chris George on NPR last week? He's the incredibly sensible head of IRIS, the refugee organization in New Haven to which the U.S. Government has directed two Iraqi families for settlement. The first of those families is being co-sponsored by the UCC Cornwall which means we give money towards their expenses and give whatever physical and emotional support we can muster long distance. Those first arrivals, Zahury and her three daughters and twin grandsons, had fled to Jordan after her husband and son-in-law were killed. Their English is still minimal, although IRIS has an amazing network of services including daily English lessons. The one possible breadwinner, the 25-year-old daughter who had been a teacher in Baghdad, has not yet been hired because of the language gap, and the family will have no government subsidy after January. If anyone would like to help please send a check to the UCC with the notation "for the Iraqi family." The entire amount will go to the support of that family. —Nita Colgate



vides into subcommittees to address individual tasks. (Sometimes a subcommittee may convene at a different time or location for special purposes.) All Town Plan meetings are open to the public. Times for special subcommittee meetings are posted on the "What's

New" page of the cornwallct.org website at least 48 hours in advance.

In just the past month the natural resources committee has begun to benefit from a new 200-page natural resources inventory report put together by the state- and federally-funded King's Mark Environmental Review Team. In addition to in-depth reports on Cornwall's soil, wetland, forest, and other resources, the report includes a plethora of maps and charts that make fascinating reading. (A copy can be consulted at the Town Hall.)

—Paul De Angelis

Connecticut's "Important" Primary

On February 5, Connecticut's Democrats and Republicans have the first opportunity in recent history to exert a palpable influence on the candidates their parties nominate for president. The Democrats' choices will be allotted proportional shares of most (48) delegates to the August national convention in Denver; 13 other "superdelegates" will go unpledged, no matter what the results. The Republicans' contest is a winner-take-all affair (27 of the state's 30 delegates go to the victor, with 3 unpledged "supers"). See the "Letters" section for one independent-minded voter's reaction to the *Chronicle*'s recent coverage of presidential elections.

-Paul De Angelis

Events & Announcements

The Housy Foreign Travel Club will host a fundraising dinner featuring 1950s-style food at the Wandering Moose on Monday and Tuesday, February 25 and 26, with seatings at 5:30 and 7 P.M. Cost is \$15 for adults and \$8 for children 12 and under. Make reservations early by contacting the Moose at 672-0178 or travelclub@thewanderingmoosecafe.com. Proceeds will benefit members in their trip to Italy and Greece this summer.

The Cornwall Assessor's Office will be accepting applications for the Homeowner's Tax Relief Program until May 15. Applicants are required by law to submit proof of their 2007 income (income tax return, if filed) and 2007 Social Security form 1099. Income limits for this year (Social Security and all other income) are: married, \$36,500; single, \$29,800. Homeowners on Social Security disability must show proof of their permanent disability status and meet income limits. Elderly homeowners must have turned 65 by December 31, 2007, to qualify. The Assessor's Office at the Town Hall is open Wednesdays from 9 A.M. to noon and Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 1 to 4 P.M. Questions? Call 672-2703.

Be Our Valentine

Valentines make our hearts turn lightly to love (or something like that). It's also a time to remember the *Chronicle*, a labor of love for its writers and editors from the time of its first issue. Since then, costs to produce the paper have multiplied by three. We do need to hear from you and your checkbook. Out-of-towners should send \$15 to keep their issues coming. Many thanks!

Motherhouse Activities

- Family Contra Dance with Bill Fischer calling and the Homegrown Band playing, Saturday, February 2, from 7 to 9 P.M. at the Town Hall. Suggested donation: \$5/adult, \$3/child. For more information call 672-6328 or 672-6101.
- Old Style Life Skills Workshop, *Bee-ginning with Bees*, Saturday, February 9, from 10:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. at the UCC Parish House. Buzz over the tools of beekeeping with Mark Moorman of Sprainbrook Apiary. Make beeswax candles and share a potluck lunch. \$35/family. Pre-register with Debra Tyler at 672-0229 or Debra@Motherhouse.us. Space is limited!
- Mother-Son Day, Saturday, February 23, from 11 A.M. to 2 P.M. at Debra's home in Cornwall. Enjoy gingerbread boys, jokes and riddles, paper airplanes, gentle jumping games, and a lunch of cheese fondue. \$35/mother-son pair. Call 672-0229 for information.
- Family Contra Dance with Paul Rosenberg calling, Saturday, March 1, from 7 to 9:30 P.M. at the Town Hall. See above for details.

The Civilian Conservation Corps in Cornwall in the 1930s will be the subject of a talk and slideshow by Marty Podskoch on Saturday, February 16, from 3 to 5 P.M. at the Library. Admission is free.

A Town Meeting with President Jefferson and presidential candidate James Madison will be held on Sunday, February 24, at 3 P.M. at CCS. Sponsored by the Cornwall Fund for Excellence. (See insert.)

Art in Cornwall: The Cornwall Free Library will continue to exhibit Ray Olsen's show of etchings and pastels entitled *New England Landscapes Plus*, while natural fiber baskets by Carol Hart will remain in the case through February.

The iO Gallery's show of rotating artists, Wall 2 Wall, also continues through February.

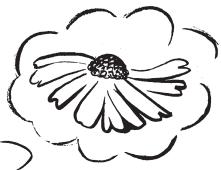
Songs of Peace and Protest, a Cornwall Iraq Moratorium Network's Third-Friday event, will take place on February 15 at 7 P.M. at UCC. Musicians and vocal artists from New York City and Great Barrington will join local performers in this free concert. For information call 672-6089.

Five Dogs out of the fourteen abandoned in Cornwall in October still need homes. They have been living at the Harwinton pound until space becomes available at the Little Guild of St. Francis. Potential adopters should call Rick Stone at 672-6230.

Hot Chocolate Hour, an after-school, readaloud program for third- to fifth-graders, will run every Wednesday from February 6 to March 12. Reading will be from the classic fantasy *The Last of the Really Great Whangdoodles*. Registration forms are available at CCS. The school bus will drop off participants at the Cornwall Library. For further information call 672-6874.

Park & Rec Activities

• Every Friday in February from 6 to 8 P.M. is game night at CCS. Bring a game to share



with others. Pizza, beverages, and snacks will be provided. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

• Every Saturday in February from 7 to 8 P.M.: free family ice skating at Hotchkiss. All skaters must wear hats.

CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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