

CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 9: NUMBER 12

JANUARY 2000



As the Chronicle went to press, the following letter was received, addressed to CCS students and their parents:

"By now you have probably read or heard that I will be leaving my position as Supervising Principal on January 28, 2000. I have been offered and accepted the position of Director of Curriculum for the Bethany School District.

"In order to provide a smooth transition for the next administrator and provide time to select the next principal, an interim principal will be selected by the superintendent to finish out the remainder of the school year.

"It has been my pleasure to work within the Cornwall community as an educator and principal for the past 29 years. I hope everyone in the Cornwall community will continue to support the school with the same strong effort as in the past. —William Oros"

Property Values: On The Rise

Is the value of your house going up? The answer seems to be yes. Selling prices reported in the *Chronicle* over the past fiscal year indicate a substantial rise in the market value of the typical Cornwall residence—an increase of about one-fifth since 1992 and 29 percent since the mid-'90s.

In 1992, when the town's properties were last re-assessed, the assessors followed state law and tried to set all assessments at 70 per-

cent of market value. That year, the assessed value of the *median* residential property in Cornwall was just over \$138,000, or 70 percent of its estimated market value of \$197,000. (*Median* means that half the properties were worth more, half less.)

By the middle of the 1990s, as the Connecticut economy staggered from defense industry cutbacks, house prices fell across the state. The drop shows up clearly in data gathered by the state's Office of Policy Management (OPM) on Cornwall's 125 house sales from 1993 to 1996. OPM's data show that in these years the average ratio of assessed value to selling price rose to 76 percent. If this sample reflects what was happening to the median house, it indicates that the median market value in Cornwall had dropped by about 8 percent since 1992-to about \$181,600. To the owner of the median residence, that meant a shrinkage in potential sales value of over \$15,000.

Now for some good news: a recent review of the residential sales listed in the *Cornwall Chronicle* from July 1998 to June 1999 shows rising market values. There were 29 sales listed during that year where I could identify the assessed value as well as the selling price. For these sales, the ratio was only 59 percent—much less that the 70 percent that was the assessors' target back in 1992. If these re-

cent sales reflect conditions in our local market-

place, median house values in Cornwall have risen sharply. They are now up about 10 percent over 1992 and up a strong 29 percent over the depressed 1993–96 period. To the owner of Cornwall's median house, that could mean a potential gain in market value of more than \$36,000 since 1992 and a whopping \$52,000 gain since the market bottomed in the 1993–96 period. It's hard to be certain, but it's my best estimate that most owners have probably benefited proportionately from these rising market values.

Of course, the only way you can truly test the validity of my analysis is by putting your house up for sale—or perhaps by applying for a bigger mortgage and seeing what the appraiser says your house is now worth.

—David A. Grossman

Power to the People

Last year, 200 circuits across Connecticut were identified by the Department of Public Utility Control as being unreliable, both in terms of outages and the length of time it took to restore power. Out of those 200, according to a CL&P spokesperson, Cornwall was "one of the top ten worst performing circuits for CL&P." As a result Cornwall is getting a \$1.1 million upgrade, which will include replacement of poles, wire, and equip

IANUARY 2000 ______ (continued on page 2)

SUNDAY	MONDAY 6	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				12hg	January Art in Cornwall: National Iron Bank Artist of the Month—Ed Fales Wish House Art Exhibit by M. I. Cake Cornwall Library—Group Show of Masks (p.4)	1 New Year's Day Pancake Breakfast 9 A.M.–1 P.M. UCC Parish House, Benefit La Casa Project (p.4)
2 Stretch Exercise Every Sunday 10 a.m. Town Hall	Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 p.m. Town Hall	Inland Wetlands 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Park & Rec. 7:30 P.M. Town Office	5 Play Group 10–11:30 A.M. Every Wed., St. Peter's Ch.	6 School Building Comm. 7:30 p.m. CCS	7 Farm Forest Open Space Group, 5 p.m. CCS Library (p.4)	8
Gornwall Land Trust 3 p.m. Town Hall	Blood Pressure Screening 3-4 p.m. UCC Parish House P&Z 7:30 p.m. Town Hall	11 Repub. Town Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Democratic Town Comm. 7:30 P.M. Town Hall (p.4) CCS PTA 7 P.M. CCS Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	12 Cub Scout Parent Meeting 7 P.M. UCC Parish House	Cornwall Housing Corp. 4:15 p.m. Kugeman Village Green Party 7:30 p.m. Town Hall	14 Preschool–K Story Hour 10 A.M. Library Cornwall Website Group 6 P.M. Town Hall (p.4) Park & Rec. Game Night 7–9 P.M. W. Cornwall Firehouse (p.4)	15 Deadline: February Chronicle Copy Cornwall Association 4 P.M. Town Hall
16	17 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY	18 No School—Teacher Workshop Day Bd. of Selectmen 1 9 a.m. Town Hall School Building Committee 7:30 p.m. CCS	19	Bd. of Ed. 5 p.m. CCS Library Bd. of Finance 7:30 p.m. CCS Library	Preschool–K Story Hour 10 A.M. Library Cub Scout Pack 15 Pinewood Derby 6:30 P.M. CCS	22
23	ZBA 7:30 P.M. Town Office	25	26 Cornwall Vol. Fire Dept.	27 Library Trustees Quarterly Meeting 4:30 p.m. Library	28 Preschool–K Story Hour	29
30	31 .		8 р.м. W. C. Firehouse	Green Party 7:30 p.m. Town Hall	10 a.m. Library	

(continued from page 1)

ment along Routes 125 and 128, as well as on Lower River, Wright Hill, Cogswell, and Cream Hill Roads.

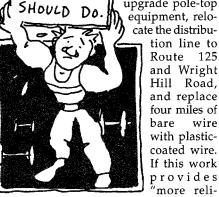
Since trees are the "number one cause of power outages," judicious pruning is scheduled. Bartlett Tree Company will be asking property owners for permission to do any necessary tree work. Kathy Ferrier, CL&P arborist, hopes that residents will respond to these requests, which will be made in person or in the form of a card on the front door knob.

According to Roselyn Wimbish of CL&P, 177 power poles, which are 40 to 50 years old, "have served their time," and will be replaced with new poles from Alabama and

THINGS I

South Carolina. The company will upgrade pole-top equipment, relo-

wire



ability and quicker restoration efforts for customers," Cornwall may happily drop off the –Ēlla Clark top ten list.

The Stones of Cornwall

At the Christmas Fair on December 4, one creative vendor was offering about a dozen quite undistinguished pebbles for \$3. "Stone Wall Seeds" they were called, and they came with meticulous directions for planting, care, and nurture.

Perhaps only in our town would such an offering tempt a second glance. In Cornwall, mention either gnats or rocks at a gathering, and you've got an audience. I'm reminded of the rhyme of a very early Cornwall chronicler which, as I remember, goes like this:

The Lord, from out of his infinite store, Threw rocks together, and did no more.

That's one story. The other comes from geology, a subject which, but for its impenetrable vocabulary, I find of interest. The first rule, apparently, is not to "take anything for granite." True granite, an igneous rock with a salt-and-pepper, unlayered look to it, is hard to find in our area, except by poets. Not metaphoric but metamorphic processes have produced the rocks that form Cornwall's 600 miles of stone walls and are usually not granite but gneiss (pronounced nice). Schist, marble, quartzite, and other rock types are also common in certain places.

Cornwall is of interest to geologists because of the many exposed examples of basement gneiss, commonly called bedrock or ledge, that splotch the top of Mohawk and some other high hills. Dating back about 1.2 billion years, these are the oldest rocks not only in Cornwall, but in a much wider area. Boulders and smaller stones are typically the same substances after eons of warping and folding of the earth's crust and then a twomillion-year ice age. Now that everyone's talking in millennial language, it's interesting to note that only 21 millennia ago glacial ice a mile thick covered Cornwall, scouring out valleys, rounding off hills, and grinding millions of rocks together like so much sand. Not till about 13,000 B.C. did the ice finally retreat, leaving the field for Native Americans, gnats, and New Yorkers.

So much for science. To me, there is something far more significant about my relationship with Cornwall stones than science can provide. Some kind of metaphysical bond, perhaps. A love-hate magnetism. True, for years I've cursed the things. Level your lawn, and every year they keep popping up, rising above the surface on their way toward some final levitation. Put them down as stepping stones, and they do just the opposite, start sinking in the first year and disappear in ten. Fighting with stones, I've strained my back, bloodied my knuckles, and turned the air purple.

But I'll admit that when away from Cornwall, in some such place as central Florida, I really miss the stones. Empty landscape, empty life. I have local geologist Ed Kirby to thank for pointing out that Homo sapiens and the stones we see around us emerged out of the dim, dark past at about the same time. So we've shared a kind of co-evolution. And the stones may have done much better, since now, quite obviously, the rocks bother me much more than I bother the rocks.

Enough speculation. Back to facts. We have it on good authority that one day back in the 1920s, a couple of young whippersnappers from the big city were riding around Cornwall in a Model T Ford. In a plowed field they found an old farmer laboring with a team of horses and a stone boat.

"Hello, old man, what are you doing?"

"Eh? What's that?"

"What are you doing in that field?"

"Just clearing my land of some stones."

"Well tell me now, just where did all those stones come from?"

"Why, the glacier brought 'em."

"Well then, what happened to the glacier?" "Gone back to get more stones."

And so it goes. —Bob Potter

Building Committee Gears Up

The first meeting of the newly appointed School Building Committee, held on November 19 at CCS, elected Anne Kosciusko and Phil Hart as co-chairpersons. The other members are Alec Frost, Bill Hurlburt, Ian Ingersoll, Brian Kavanagh, Jane Giddens-Jones, Roger Kane, and Jim Terrall. The committee's charge is to formulate plans that address the building and site issues at CCS in as practical a way as possible.

A meeting on November 30 led to serious discussion on visits by committee members to other schools with new gyms: How might these projects best illustrate the direction

Cornwall should take? A motion to investigate the availability of state grants to relocate Cream Hill Road for reasons of safety was

On December 7, dates for future meetings were set: the first Thursday and third Tuesday of every month. Discussion on defining needs was assisted by a presentation by Principal Bill Oros on our current student population, state space requirements (square feet per student), and utilization of present instructional and storage rooms. Further discussion concerned ways to assemble a list of possible architects and the use of a service to help select one. —Richard McCarty

Welcome

Emily Erika to Michael and Brigitte Geyselaers

Caleb William to John and Bethany Thompson

Good-bye to Friends

Michael A. Brean Barbara I. "Bobbi" Clark Monique S. Euvrard Florence Rondinone Stanley E. Shirk

Land Transfers

Harvey Offenhartz, Tr., to Denise M. Covert, house and 5 acres at 277 Sharon-Goshen Turnpike for \$81,000.

Thomas J. and Meredith A. Brokaw to Anne A. Hubbard, house and 13.6 acres on Dibble



Our House II

(This is the conclusion of Ann Schillinger's story about life as a teenager in what was once the old parsonage next to the North Cornwall Meetinghouse.)

Life in the house had always been connected to the North Cornwall Church next door. Many years before a path had been left through the lilac hedge for the minister. Recently we were told that former owner Amy Barnes' two sons had turned their garden hose one Sunday on a churchgoer heading for services. Their victim turned out to be Ted Gold, who nipped through the hedge with determination and collared them. We were not churchgoers either, so our family's relationship with the congregation was one of strained cordiality. They pumped our well water for their flower arrangements. On warm Wednesday evenings with the windows open we listened to the organist practicing (Doris Hart is the one I remember); on Sundays in summer the congregation endured our loud voices, the slammed screen doors, and the comings and goings of our car. We for our part were pretty sure how they felt about all this.

But secretly my brother and I knew the church well because we had learned how to squeeze through the cellar window and climb up into the steeple through the narrow door in the balcony. The stairs twisted upwards in that dim interior through a maze of beams, and years later we would show our own children our initials cut into one beam. At the top we would push the trap door aside and wriggle out under the bell to sit behind the balustrade. There as we looked dreamily out over the roofs of the nearby homes, my younger brother sometimes smoked. During the first hour of rejoicing when Japan surrendered in August 1945, we actually clambered up the steeple while the bell was ringing, and down all the roads we could see cars approaching and the little figures of people running from their homes, all converging on the church. Celebrating, we all took turns pulling the rope until the bell jammed facing upward.

While we were making changes on the house and its grounds, living there was changing us. Our parents became enthusiastic gardeners and we had garden chores. My mother learned canning and preserving and our winter meals leaned heavily on cut pole beans and stewed tomatoes. The vegetables flourished in the former stableyard where we dug horseshoes out of the soil for years. For privacy, our mother set in a new hedge along the road front which in time almost hid the place, while the willow sapling she planted by the old chicken house eventually grew to be immensely larger than the building. Meanwhile my father also developed his skill with home repair tools. My brother became an enthusiast for the local wildlife and bugs, and one summer our outside lights shone all night so he could collect the giant insects off the screen doors in the morning.

Quite a few family milestones passed during our years in that house. The earliest was the dark day when our cocker spaniel died after a leap for freedom from the gable window of the attic. The last was the 1995

> wedding reception of my daughter Susan and Greg Choa. They were married in the North Church where our marriages and funerals over three generations had finally established a sort of family alle-

Right after that event, my mother's estate sold the place and I cleaned it out after 50 years of occupation. The house by then had its third septic system since we'd been there. The porch had been expanded. All the doors worked perfectly. A new wing had replaced our old kitchen. And somehow the house possessed five bathrooms. The attic, where

Letters to the Chronicle

INCIDENTAL INTELLIGENCE

One might ask, for which Cornwall and what purpose was the word "Cornwall" cut into the face of an old stone fence post recently installed fronting the Historical Society on Pine Street.

Answer: It is a mystery. Pat Hare first spotted the post 15 years ago mounted in a Washington, D.C. town house garden. He recently saw it at the same site, now a parking lot, but in discard and broken in two. He brought

the pieces here and gave them to the Society. Gary Heaney mended them, and set the post in –Michael Gannett place.

LIBRARY: YEAR ONE RESULTS

Taking stock at the end of the first year of a three-year campaign to build and endow a new library, the trustees are pleased and grateful and humbled by the scope of the work yet to be done. That's a long way of saying thank you to everyone in the town who gave time, talent, and dollars to the capital campaign.

To date we're raised about \$825,000—or 80 percent of our goal—to add to the \$712,000 we've received from the state and the town. Next we enter a phase of architect's drawings, bids, and a decision about when to start building.

Fund-raising will continue because we must endow the new library that donors have trusted us to build. Look out for another great dance, and some new events we'll all enjoy.

This has been an amazing year for the Cornwall Library. The Talent Show brought in \$5,400 to support the annual budget. And the years to come will be even better, thanks to all of you who've helped. –Lisa Simont, President Cornwall Library Trustees

YOU CAN HELP

Did you notice the improvement in the lights on the Cornwall Bridge Christmas tree?

Special thanks to Brent Prindle at Cornwall Electric who contributed the manpower for rewiring the electrical hookup; to Dusty Sandmeyer and Northwest Lumber who donated all new light strings; and to Scott Monroe/Monroe Tree Service who charged a substantially discounted rate for the bucket truck his men used to re-string all the lights.

Actually we business owners in Cornwall Bridge pay for the street lights that brighten the intersection of Routes 4 and 7 and also decorate the large evergreen on the green.

In the past, the lights have been left strung year 'round. Strong winds and bad weather take a toll on the decorations and the District

would like to take the lights down after the holidays and rehang them seasonally. This could be financially feasible if Cornwallians would consider a small donation to The Cornwall Lighting District. Donations can be sent to the District c/o National Iron Bank, Cornwall Bridge, CT 06754.

—Joanne Wojtusiak

THANKS TO ALL

On December 3, 50 Cornwall Girl Scouts (grades one to eight) spent the

night in the CCS gym. It was a good old-fashioned slumber party with a pajama fashion show, Twister championship, scavenger hunt, and plenty of food. It could not have happened without the adults who helped me and gave up their Friday nights and warm beds to be there. I want to thank Joyce Hart, Diana Holmes, Tracy Gray, Patience Lindholm, Anju Patel, Maureen Donahue, Marie Gold, Sharon Sawicki, Valerie Hurlburt, Heidi Kearns, and Nancy Lacko. My special thanks to Martha Bruehl (our pizza delivery elf) and our guardian angel, Conny Sterzl.

Yes, we have a small gym at our school, but on that Friday night and Saturday morning it was filled to the roof with fun. —Tricia Collins

LAND IN TRUST

I read with interest Anne Zinsser's article on the Cornwall Land Trust. I did indeed give ten acres to the Trust last year. This land was part of the late Jonathan Scoville's property and is, as Anne states, very beautiful.

I have heard that land trusts sometimes receive valuable property that could be used for housing or other development and I want to point out that the land I gave is landlocked except for a narrow access path and undevelopable with ledge so close to the surface that it failed the drainage test performed by Denny Frost some years ago.

It gives me much pleasure, especially living so far away from Cornwall, to think that the land both Jonathan and I loved so much will remain forever untouched. -Sarah Paul

P.O. WOES?

If you are having difficulties at your Post Office with P.O. box deliveries, missing magazines, your letters or magazines being returned for "Insufficient Address," or any other matters, here is a number to call, in Hartford, to reach Mr. Bill Cournoyer, who is in charge of postal operations in Connecticut: (860) 524-6326. His assistants, Lynn and Roxanne, have been very —Jacek Galazka helpful whenever I called.

we used to sit and listen to the rain, was gradually emptied of trunks and clutter. Down in the cellar I found a pile of our old anthracite, and at the end of the day, what was left of the mysterious cannel coal I took along home with me. —Ann Schillinger

...And Did You Know?

Back in October 1998, the Chronicle published an article about Cornwallians who do unusual things. At the end of the story, we appealed for more of the same. Here's a small

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sample of what we're received so far.

From her Cream Hill home, Joan Thitchener produces Sweet Talking, the bimonthly newsletter of the Connecticut Icing Artists. (This CIA is concerned with cake icing, not international skullduggery.) Joan does it all—the editing, the typing, the layout-and oversees the printing. The sprightly eight-page publication "dedicated to the sharing of ideas and information in the field of sugar arts" goes out to nearly 100 subscribers in at least four states.

Down at the other end of town, Clay Carlson commutes five days a week from his Warren Hill home to wherever his job as a marine diver takes him: the pilings of Boston Harbor, the Erie Canal, the underwater substructure of the FDR Drive on Manhattan's East Side. Clay works as part of a three-man team. He is the diver, down under as much as 120 feet of water in a waterproof suit and a helmet that keeps him in radio contact with two others who direct his work and assure his safety. When trouble is found, Clay is ready to do underwater concrete, steel, and timber fabrication. This means "pouring" cement and welding under water!

Back up on Cream Hill, David Williamswell, one might say he's gone south for the winter. Few do this with David's thoroughness. He's now spending his second winter-or summer?-in Antarctica. David works as a general assistant at McMurdo Station, the largest U.S. base in the continent and the corridor for virtually all traffic in and out. This time of year the temperature is usually in the 20s, David reports, and it never gets dark. (In fact, only toward the end of his stay last year did the sun dip below the hori-



zon.) McMurdo's population balloons to 1,100 during this warm season, and the many young people create something like a college atmosphere. There are

Saturday night parties and organized

Forecasts for 2000

We blew last year's prediction (blizzard: didn't happen), and we're feeling a bit tentative this time. Nevertheless, here are our forecasts for the winners of three big events in the coming year. For your amusement, they're disguised as anagrams.

World Series: try new smoke Pres. Election: dribble ally

NCAA hoops: sun tan for diversity You can believe in everything else you read in the Chronicle, so please continue your essential financial support as we move into the new year. (If you're stuck for answers, see below.)

dances, hikes, and other activities. David has observed killer whales from a Coast Guard icebreaker, and on icy land, managed to get ten feet from a seal and a short yard from a penguin.

Community Profile Update

The five groups that spun out of the Community Profile have all met and started on their respective tasks. The Economic Development Committee is well organized, as befits such a group, and has a meeting recorder, specific goals, and follow-up actions. According to its mission statement, the group hopes to create a more favorable economic climate and increase local job opportunities, increase/redistribute the tax basis, help existing businesses to grow, and identify and communicate the skills and capabilities of both our present businesses and our existing labor pool.

The Website group agrees on the benefits (economic and otherwise) of getting Cornwall on line, and is investigating different structural approaches as well as how other towns have gone about this process. (Next meeting: January 14, 6 P.M., Town Hall.)

The Farm Forest Open Space people are researching what other related organizations are already in place in town, and plan to focus especially on water quality and supply, agriculture (particularly community supported), and education. Like the Economists, they see the website as a potential means of accomplishing some of their goals. (Next meeting: January 7, 5 P.M., CCS Library.)

The Community Centerists have a philosophical, even a metaphysical task: How do we create a center with a physical space? How do we track the need for such a center? Members have been dispatched to connect with and listen in on school gym task force meetings, as well as to centers in other towns. And the Volunteers, true to their "Let US do it for you!" nature, have generously provided an insert in this issue, showing us how we, too, can get involved. —Ella Clark

Events & Announcements

New Year's Day Pancake Breakfast: Y2K will be pancake ready on January 1 from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. at the UCC Parish House. Make your first breakfast of the new millennium a truly delicious one. Come with friends, or to meet new friends. Donations for the meal will benefit the La Casa Project-volunteers building houses for very poor people in northern Mexico. Last year's goal of a "Cornwall House"—one built entirely by Cornwall people—was realized. In June 2000, local volunteers will again travel to Mexico to build a house, the material for which cost about \$3,500. Volunteers pay for their own transportation and meals.

Recycling Changes: Holiday wrapping paper (nonmetallic only, and folded please!) can be put in the paper bin at the dump, as well as non-corrugated cardboard such as cereal boxes and six-packs. (Flattened, please.)

New Name, New Management: Cafe by the Bridge—formerly Cadwell's Corner and then the Station House-is now under the management of Bob Laigle, and is open for breakfast every day (on Sundays, it's brunch), and for lunch and supper every day except Sunday and Tuesday. The new cafe has a wine and beer license, and a television set for sports fans, and will soon have a pizza oven, Laigle reports.

Taxes: Tax Collector Helen Migliacci reminds us that the second installment of property taxes, for which no notice is sent, is due January 1 and must be paid before the end of the

Office Hours Change: Wednesdays at the Town

Office will be the time to do business with P&Z, ZBA, or the Inland Wetlands Commission. Vera Dinneen will be available from 9 A.M. to noon, and Ruth Mulcahy from 1 to 4 P.M. Saturday hours have been discontinued.

Art in Cornwall: At the National Iron Bank January's artist of the month will be Ed Fales. At the Cornwall Library the group show of masks entitled Spirits for a New Millennium continues until the end of January. At the Wish House M. I. Cake's exhibit of photo-collages continues through January.

Game Night at the West Cornwall Firehouse, sponsored by Park and Rec., will be on Friday, January 14, from 7 to 9 р.м. Bring your own games or use ours. Refreshments. Call Skip Kosciusko (672-3169) if weather threatens or you need a ride.

The Cornwall Democratic Party will hold a caucus on January 11 at 7:30 р.м. at the Town Hall for the election of members of the Cornwall Democratic Town Committee. All Cornwall registered Democratic voters are invited to attend and eligible to vote.

CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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