



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 18 : NUMBER 12 JANUARY 2009



Cornwall Façade Improvement Program

Cornwall has been awarded a \$125,000 Small Town Economic Assistance Program grant to facilitate the Cornwall Façade Improvement Program (CFIP).

CFIP will rebate 80 percent of the cost of the first \$10,000 of approved exterior building façade and site improvements for a commercial Cornwall property. Rebates apply to the cost of materials and wages for a renovation project.

Owners or tenants of existing commercial structures located in Cornwall are eligible to apply for CFIP funding.

The focus of CFIP is to improve and enhance the exterior appearance of existing commercial buildings. Funding priority will be given to commercial buildings that are historically or architecturally significant or both.

Eligible expenses include improvements to the front, rear, and side façades that are visible from a public street or parking area. Eligible work might include carpentry, store-front construction, awnings, painting, signs, masonry cleaning and repair, window repair/replacement, doorways/entryways, lighting, Americans with Disabilities Act improvements in conjunction with façade work, roof repair/replacement (when roof is a distinctive element of façade), and other work deemed appropriate by the local CFIP com-

mittee. Site improvements are also eligible.

Members of the CFIP committee include Rick Lynn, Cara Weigold, Paul Prindle, and Gordon Ridgway. The CFIP program is expected to encourage use of local workers and supplies.

CFIP applications will be available beginning January 15 at the Selectmen's Office, where design guidelines and more information can also be obtained. —Asher Pavel

Time to Buy a House?

Hank Paulson would like you to buy a house. Now. And maybe you should listen to him.

We can't tell you that the housing market has reached bottom, but we can report a few things about Cornwall's real estate market.

As of mid-December there were 38 properties on the market, 13 under \$500,000. There are two foreclosures for sale: a two-bedroom ranch with outbuildings on seven acres on Great Hollow Road for \$229,000, and a three-bedroom colonial on Kent Road for \$159,000.

Mortgage rates are low—well south of 6 percent for 30-year fixed—and there are reports that Hank and his pals are set to push them even lower.

Lenders have money available for you if you can put 20 percent down and have a good credit score. Above 720 gets you best

rates; check it (free) at annualcreditreport.com.

For first-time buyers, this is probably the best time to buy a house in town since the early 1990s. —Ed Ferman

Let There Be Lights!

Among its other distinctions, Cornwall can now claim to be home of the largest solar-powered Christmas tree in Connecticut. The electrical system and lights on the tree on the Cornwall Bridge Green needed replacement and upgrading. Instead of paying for a new power pole, hook-up, and electricity from Connecticut Light & Power, we decided to try a solar alternative system.

Many local elves have contributed time, skill, and material, including Cornwall Electric, the Cornwall Highway Department, Root Tree Service, Northeast Builders Supply, and Solar Wrights of Warren. The result has been 1,200 energy-efficient bulbs powered by a solar battery system.

We may be reading too much into this simple project, but perhaps the Cornwall Bridge tree is a symbol of how our community should proceed in this dark time. By working together, using local businesses and expertise, we were able to overcome the seasonal darkness in a uniquely Cornwall way. And we had fun doing it! Happy Holidays!

—Gordon Ridgway, Richard Bramley, K. C. Baird

JANUARY 2009

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Every Week This Month: Mondays: Jam Session, 7:30 P.M. Village Meeting House; Men's Adult Basketball , 7 P.M. CCS Gym Tuesdays: Adult Volleyball, 7 P.M. CCS Gym Wednesdays: Stretch Class, 5 P.M. Town Hall; Women's Adult Basketball , 7:30 P.M. CCS; Tai Chi , 6 P.M. CCS Gathering Room Thursdays: Meditation for Mothers, 1:15 P.M. St. Peter's Saturdays: Ice Skating, 7-8 P.M. Schmidt Rink, Hotchkiss School Sundays: Meditation Group, 1-2 P.M. 672-0229 to confirm				1 NEW YEAR'S DAY Annual Pancake Breakfast, Benefit 9 A.M.-NOON UCC †	2	3 Family Contra Dance 7-9:30 P.M. Town Hall †
4 	5 CCS Reopens  Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	6 Park & Rec. 7 P.M. CCS Library Inland Wetlands 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	7	8	9 Story Hour 1:15 P.M. Library	10  Stitchin' Time 10:30 A.M.-1:30 P.M. Location TBA † Art Opening Reception 4-6 P.M. Library †
11	12 Blood Pressure Screening Noon-1 P.M. UCC Democratic Town Comm. 7:30 P.M. Library	13 Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library P&Z 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	14	15 Deadline: February Chronicle Copy Bd. of Ed. 5 P.M. CCS Library Bd. of Finance 7:30 P.M. CCS Library VFW Post 9856 8 P.M. W. Cornwall Firehouse	16 Story Hour 1:15 P.M. Library Art Opening Reception 7 P.M. Library †	17  Chili and Duck Soup 6:15 P.M. Library †
18 David Rovics Benefit Concert 2 P.M. UCC †	19 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BIRTHDAY	20  Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	21	22	23 Story Hour 1:15 P.M. Library	24
25	26  ZBA 7:30 P.M. Town Hall *	27 P&Z 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	28	29	30 Story Hour 1:15 P.M. Library	31

* Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

† Details in Events and Announcements

For additions and updating, visit www.cornwallct.org

101 in 01/09

Keeping up with Cornwall's two lady centenarians—Florence and Helen—is our unique Town Hall, which was completed in October 1908. The stone structure of classical-revival style was the gift of John E. Calhoun, who provided sketches for the design as well as the funds. Tuscan columns frame the central doorway, and a pair of high-arched windows presents a venerable face toward the Village Green. The stone was cut from nearby Quarry Hill. The woodwork inside—doors, wainscoting, balcony railing, ticket office—is local chestnut. However, the original wooden shingles were of red cedar from Everett, Washington. All this impressive construction was done for \$25,000.

Mr. Calhoun named it the Cornwall Library Building, and the south half was to house the library that had been across the Green in a small outbuilding. Library minutes of October 6, 1908, record "grateful appreciation of the provision made," and later minutes report 3,626 books moved in, beginning December 15. Then "there was a reception to which nearly the whole town were invited on Friday evening January 29 from 7–11 o'clock."

From the annual Town Meeting minutes of October 5, 1908: "Voted:...that the town hall be established in the Cornwall Library Building and all elections and meetings shall be in the main hall." The main hall, the north portion of the building, was constructed not only as a meeting room; a raised stage with dressing-room space below provided for entertainment and plays and musical presentations by local groups. Traveling performers were engaged as well. A mezzanine increased audience space, and a ticket counter was built into an apparent closet door in the hallway.

Up the central stairway and opposite the mezzanine entrance was an office for the Town Clerk, complete with a cement-walled vault for storage of vital records. At first the building was heated by coal, but oil furnaces were later installed for each portion of the building. Electric lights and plumbing also were later additions. In 1962 the Library conceded it could benefit by having a telephone. By 2002 the Library needed more space than Mr. Calhoun's gift could provide, and the books moved next door to a new building. The Selectmen's Office settled into the vacated space, changing it very little but adding electronic equipment as needed.

Today the building is entering its 101st year. It has been adapted for change within, but the handsome stonework and sweeping arches convey a sense of Cornwall's stability with a flair of originality. —Ginny Potter

Cornwall's Scouting Hiatus

In years past Cornwallian parents have provided leadership to activate strong Cub Scout packs for our boys. But 2008 has not

been one of those years. Scouting in Cornwall is experiencing a dry spell—it is hoped temporarily so.

In the forefront of Cornwall scouting is the Levy family, whose interest is a prominent part of their persona. The family includes an Eagle Scout, two camp counselors, leaders of both girl and boy troops, and leadership of training programs. The most dedicated of this family, undeniably, is patriarch Jim Levy, who recently was awarded a formal state certificate for his 50 years of active participation.

In his efforts to renew scouting in Cornwall, Jim has secured the sponsorship of the Cornwall Fire Department, meeting space from the United Church of Christ, and the admiration of all those aware of his efforts. Among the latter are former adult leaders K. C. Baird, Dominique Lasseur, Pat Mulberry, Daphne Naylor, Gordon Ridgway, Juliann Russ, Susan Simons, and Denny Frost, who recruited Jim to participate locally after retirement from Becton Dickinson.

Those who would lend their support to revive scouting in Cornwall are urged to contact Jim at 672-6377. —Scoville Soulé

Hey, Hay!

Here's a question for the non-farmers among us: Whatever happened to the old-fashioned bale of hay? It used to be that "hay bale" meant only one thing: an oblong mass of compressed hay, rectilinear, and light enough for a husky person to toss onto a truck.

Then things changed. Not long ago, the old bales started to morph up into huge cylindrical objects—gigantic sections of Tootsie Roll. Often they were left on the roadside edges of fields. Then, more recently, some of these cylinders appeared to be wrapped in gorgeous white: rows of enormous marshmallows plopped down here and there like decorations on the cake of Cornwall.

So what's the story? I asked Ralph Scoville, and, as usual, he straightened me out. The round bales (yes, that's what they're called, though it sounds rather like circling the square) were common on the Great Plains before they reached New England. The cylinders are formed with a rolling motion, so that the grain of the grass follows the direction of the roll. This means that when fully formed and secured with string, the bales will repel water, something like a thatched roof.

All is not perfect, however. The round bales (containing as much as 20 conventional bales and weighing up to 1,000 pounds) can be moved only by a forklift or payloader. The bottom six inches, in contact with the ground, usually rot before the bale is used. The top six inches, too, can appeal to cattle only on the verge of starvation.

This is where the pretty white wrappers

come in. The most modern (\$75,000!) machinery—in my neighborhood owned by Dan Cain's Hedgerows Farm—not only forms and ties a round bale but hermetically secures it in white plastic.

"No air," Ralph Scoville said, "means no rot." In fact, the grass can even be baled up green, soon after cutting. If the white package remains airtight, the final product is "pretty nearly the equivalent of good grass silage."

A related comment: The adjective "haywire" has long outlived the actual use of wire to bale hay. Apparently something in our minds needed to retain that apt metaphor for the tangled, confused messes our minds can create. Another example of language gone haywire!
—Bob Potter

Welcome

Jasper Hildalgo to Sarah and Maurice Oyanadel
Sophia Marie to Carrie-Ann and Jason Beeman

Good-bye to a Friend

David Griggs

Congratulations

Richard C. Sachs and Daniel Bernard Eshom

Land Transfers

Hector P., Erica C., Alexander, Marida, and Olivia Prud'homme to Cornwall Conservation Trust, Inc.,
18.776 acres on Town Street.

Celia Gay Frost to Cornwall Housing Corp.,
buildings and improvements at 33 Pierce Lane
(excluding land) for \$193,000.

Predictions for 2009

Ridgeline of Taradiddle Mountain becomes a giant windmill site, supplying free energy to all West Cornwall residents.

SCASCO discovers oil under the Village Green, will supply Cornwall residents with 1,000 gallons each of free gasoline at the Cornwall Bridge gas station.

Cornwall Consolidated School students lead nation in independent studies, leading to world peace declaration, asserts Dr. Fitz. Nobel Peace Prize sure to follow.

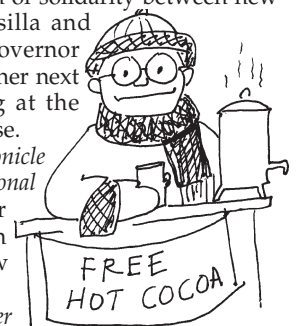
Gordon Cavanaugh saves General Motors by giving his indestructible car/truck design for immediate production. Runs on hot air over land and sea, never needs repairs.

John Miller and Anne Chamberlain astound the theater world with their new musical production, *The Republic of Cornwall*, starring Dave Cadwell and Nicole Kidman.

In recognition of solidarity between new sister cities Wasilla and Cornwall, the governor of Alaska holds her next cabinet meeting at the Wandering Moose.

Cornwall Chronicle sells out to *National Enquirer*. Buyer declares wealth of scandal now covered up.

—Priscilla Miller



Following Up on 2008

Chronicle readers followed stories in 2008 that intrigued, engaged, and almost exhausted them.

Let's take the fatigue part first. The Hughes Library renovation and the Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) plan for a recreation area at river's edge both ground on and on—"sometimes forward, sometimes sideways," according to First Selectman Gordon Ridgway. The Library's permanent easement, needed from Connecticut Light & Power, which owns the land the Hughes septic system must occupy, has at last been granted, Gordon said. Engineers are at work, but now the Department of Environmental Protection wants a 500-year flood plain map drawn of West Cornwall Village.

Similarly, the boat ramp and handicapped fishing facility proposed by HVA on land south of the Library is caught in the toils of the state and federal agencies that must choose projects for General Electric's PCB-damage money. So not much news there, either, according to Elaine La Bella, HVA's director of land protection.

On the bright side, the Cornwall Energy Task Force has led our town to the top of the list of Connecticut municipalities using green power sources. The state goal is 20 percent by 2020; Cornwall has reached that level, and the Task Force is aiming for the town to be the first community to reach 30 percent. The prize is a 5kW photovoltaic system for CCS that will save half of the building's energy cost. Only 14 more households are needed to make this happen, reports Task Force leader Katy Freygang. Call her at 672-6010 if you'd like to sign on.

Finally, the mystery of Leila T. Delzell, whose gold coins and 1900-era folding money were found in an old sock by David Colbert as he vacuumed in Tim and Marie Prentice's barn. John Miller's story explored many possibilities, but little else has been discovered since August when the story was first published. Marie:

"We're saving the few gold coins (of small denomination) to buy a crust of bread if and when the bottom drops out of the stock market and everyone stops buying sculpture." So the mystery remains, inviting each of us to make up our own version of "The Mystery of the Golden Stash."

—Lisa Lansing Simont



Letters to the Chronicle

BENEFITS LOST

The Little Benefit Shop located in Railroad Square has closed its doors after a long run of over 30 years. The shop, a thrift boutique run by volunteers like Liz Locke to aid in the support of our area's well-known animal shelter, The Little Guild of St. Francis, closed on Saturday, November 29, after a two-day bag sale. Bags were sold for \$3.00, and shoppers came and filled them to the brim, going home with treasures of clothes, books, knick-knacks, and anything else that wasn't nailed to the floor or walls. This is a \$12,000 annual loss which in view of veterinary bills and food for our animals is a significant loss. The railroad station that has housed the

Benefit Shop all of these years is up for sale and was the rent-free gift of Mr. and Mrs. Donald Hart. We are bound and determined to find another home. Our thrift shop needs a shelter, and we'd love to hear from anyone with ideas for space they can offer.

—Jim Lussier, Executive Director
The Little Guild of St. Francis

PROMOTION QUESTION

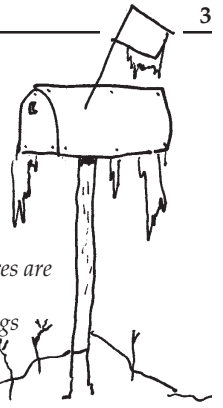
There is something that is lingering on my mind that was printed in this month's [December] edition. This is a commentary on the call for help by the Friths [an Event & Announcement that unwrapped new toys and Target/Wal-Mart/gas cards were being collected for distribution by Cornwall's Social Services Administrator].

Question: Why is it that we promote in our town internal paper the Big Box Stores instead of keeping it neutral and including the Local Businesses as sources for Gift cards/certificates? Isn't the purpose of such event helping each other, strengthening our local economy and community, keeping the money in town, raising awareness, making people feel that they are part

of the community and also let us not always assume that because people are in need for help that the Big Box Stores are their preferred resource?

—Bianca Langner Griggs

Editors' note: The December Chronicle printed a 52-line piece, "Holiday Shopping in Cornwall," that described nine local businesses and referred to the Cornwall website listing of businesses.



WILD (?) ANIMALS

I used to live on Cream Hill. Our house, at the end of what is now Rexford Road, was called Lane End. We were surrounded by wildlife, but I never saw bears or turkeys, which apparently are in the area now.

Cows were everywhere, and although they are not classified as wild animals, they were in wild country, roaming all through the woods and fields, eating whatever appealed to them. Sometimes their milk tasted of wild onion.

Many animals made themselves at home in our house, co-existing but not mingling with our cats. There were squirrels in the attic eaves, a woodchuck in the cellar, a possum in the woodshed. One hot summer day, a skunk walked in the front screen door, which must have been ajar. My great-uncle followed it quietly through the house and courteously opened the dining room door to let it out. The skunk took the hint and left without leaving behind the dreaded stink-spray.

We often saw lots of crows and all the other birds that are familiar to everyone, as well as Canada geese that, I hear, have changed from being migrators to round-the-year settlers. Pheasants aiming to drink or splash in the bird-bath in sub-zero weather would slip and stagger across the ice-crusted lawn like drunkards or novice skaters.

So many wild creatures shared our Lane End home.

—Pilar Sureda Sabater
Palma de Mallorca, Spain

Stone Walls or Status Symbols?

Let's say you're a developer. You buy a piece of land in Cornwall and put up a million-dollar house. A driveway weaves its way between weathered boulders. But something is still missing: a roadside wall for that just-right "New England look." Before long, load after load of quarried rock rumbles off trucks, and the building begins.

The building soon ends with a sharp-shouldered, smooth-sided wall laid out in geometric precision. Neighbors shake their heads: "That doesn't look like a Cornwall wall to me." A columnist mutters, "imported stone...laid by imported workers." A local wit scoffs: "What's this? Stone walls with hospital-bed corners!"

Of course, these walls are the very defini-

tion of Thorstein Veblen's "conspicuous consumption." As in Robert Frost's famous poem, there is nothing to "wall in" or "wall out." No one could believe that the stones were pried from the stubborn soil behind them by the calloused hands of subsistence farmers, then hauled to the wall on a stone boat pulled by oxen. No, those walls are put there strictly for show.

This reporter, an inveterate cynic in such matters, has been trying to cure his love for the term "hospital-bed corners" by looking on the other side of the wall, so to speak.

Firstly, in Cornwall, stone walls have long been status symbols. In the mid-19th century, the more prosperous farmers vied with each other in rebuilding their roadside walls. Former Town Historian Michael Gannett

quotes an 1855 Agricultural Society report: "The irregular walls on Theodore S. Gold's Cream Hill Farm were 're-built in six years, in straight lines, at the rate of half a mile a year.'" All over town, it seems, walls were putting their best and rebuilt faces forward.

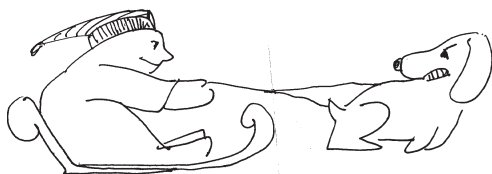
Secondly, the walls we are criticizing today are brand-new walls. Quarry cuts show. Perfect alignment prevails. But what will these walls look like in another hundred years? Lichen and moss will have softened their surfaces. The ground swells of winters will have toppled their stones, to be haphazardly replaced. Look, for instance, at the stonework at 7 River Road South, or at the artwork of the man after whom Cogswell Road is named. Walls like these are a venerated part of Cornwall today, but at the time they were built—brand new!—did people mutter about "quarried stone" and "not for Cornwall"?

Finally, consider an unpleasant alternative. All over Connecticut, according to UConn geologist Robert M. Thorson, woodland and abandoned stone walls are being vandalized for their best stones, or even removed entirely and rebuilt in front of some pricey property. Thorson, considered New England's authority on the subject, has written three books on stone walls and stands behind a website everyone should visit (www.stonewall.uconn.edu).

In fact, I love Professor Thorson. For years I have been embarrassed about our 200 yards of stonewall-sprawl facing Town Street. Now this authority tells me that what I own are truly heritage stones, an honored piece of history, even "archeology." Forget about rebuilding, he advises. Hands off! Which agrees with the advice of First Selectman Gordon Ridgway, who regularly reminds us all that half of every stone wall on a town road usually belongs to the town. Persons who removed or altered said walls have been ordered to restore them to original condition. "Hands off!" says Gordon.

That's fine with me.

—Bob Potter



Resolution

With this issue, the *Chronicle* ends its 18th year of publication. As far as we know, that's an all-time record in our area for longevity. We never could have done it without the donations sent in by our readers. Reward what you value as the *Chronicle* continues to make history. Send a check today. Thank you!

Events & Announcements

The Tenth Annual Pancake Breakfast for the benefit of La Casa will be held in the UCC Parish House on January 1 from 9 A.M. to noon. Enjoy sausage and buttermilk pancakes served with Cornwall maple syrup. All contributions will benefit the La Casa Project, building homes for the very poor in Northern Mexico.

A Contra Dance will be held at the Town Hall on Saturday, January 3, from 7 to 9:30 P.M. Well-known David Kaynor will be calling along with Still the Homegrown Band. Suggested donation: \$5/adult, \$3/child. Contact Rachel Gall at 672-6328 for additional information.

A New Bread Co-Op has been formed by the West Cornwall Farmers' Market, Motherhouse, and Bantam Bread. Place orders by Tuesday for Saturday pick-up at the Wish House. For more information call 672-2969, or contact wishhouse@optonline.net or maryleeclark@msn.com.

A Stitchin' Time, a Motherhouse Activity: January 10, 10:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M., location TBA. Work as a family to create a handy apron. Learn about patterns, hand stitching, embroidery, and quilting. \$35/family. For information call 672-0229 or contact Debra@Motherhouse.us.

Taxes Due: The second half of real estate and personal property tax bills is due January 1; also supplemental motor vehicle bills are due. Payments must be postmarked by February 1 to avoid interest of 1.5 percent per month including January. No additional bills are mailed; use bills that were mailed in July. The tax office is open Mondays from 9 A.M. to noon and Wednesdays from 9 A.M. to noon and 1 to 4 P.M. Call 672-2705 for further information.

The Board of Assessment Appeals will hold hearings by appointment in March 2009. Applications to schedule a hearing will be available at the Town Clerk's Office beginning January 2. Applications must be filed by February 20, following which applicants will be contacted by a board member to schedule hearings.

Art in Cornwall: The Cornwall Library will host a reception and slide show for David Colbert's exhibit of sculpture and photographs, *Findings in Light*, on Saturday, January 10, from 4 to 6 P.M. The show continues through January 12. *Make Art, Not War*, a group show, will open on Friday, January 16. (See separate E&A below.)

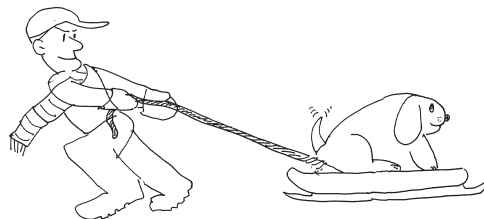
Northern Exposure Photographic Gallery's show *Photographer's Choice* continues through January. The gallery is open only on weekends for the winter.

Kelly Futerer, energetic owner of the iO Gallery and enthusiastic supporter of many of our local artists, is closing the gallery so that she can represent several of her artists around the country. She will be missed.

Make Art, Not War, an Iraq War Moratorium exhibition featuring anti-war works by area artists, will open at the Cornwall Library on Friday, January 16, at 7 P.M., with a reception for the artists and the community. For information call 672-0183.

Duck Soup at the Cornwall Library will be served up after a chili dinner starting at 6:15 P.M. on Saturday, January 17. The Marx Brothers' piece of socio-political insanity is one of their best. \$10/person, \$15/couple. Call 672-6874 for reservations.

A Children's Concert: David Rovics, internationally known musician, will entertain kids with songs for the benefit of the La Casa Project at UCC on Sunday, January 18, at 2 P.M. Suggested donation: \$5/child, \$10/adult. Go to concert@lacasaproject.org for information.



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