

CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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A Decade of the Chronicle

With this issue, the Oughts leave the stage and the Teens step forward. I've been asked to survey the last 120 issues and choose a couple of items from each year that seem important, interesting, or otherwise worth mention. Here goes:

2001: A year that can't be mentioned without thinking of September 11. In Cornwall, construction begins on our new library.

2002: After countless committees, meetings, and referendums, a school expansion plan is finally and decisively approved, 447 to 176. April Stevens wins best comedy award at first Corndance Film Festival.

2003: Real estate prices soar; median house price reaches \$450,000. No one believes there is a bubble. Ken Keskinen completes his count of Cornwall chickens: 549!

2004: Charlie and Ralph Gold sell development rights to 190 acres of Cream Hill Farm to the state. Bente Busby organizes first CCS walk-a-thon.

2005: Gordon Ridgway defeats Becky Hurlburt for his eighth term. Prince Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles schedule visit to Cornwall (reports John Miller).

2006: Last milk run at Ralph and Thalia Scoville's farm. Town buys Lorch farm, preserving 100 acres on Route 7.

2007: Cornwall Housing Corporation buys

nine acres in Cornwall Bridge for its affordable housing program. Florence Gomez, Helen Tennant, and Mildred Preston celebrate their 100th birthdays.

2008: Obama beats Hillary 201 to 82 in Democratic primary. Fire damages Pink House. Sam Neubauer spots moose in Coltsfoot Valley.

2009: The newly renovated and expanded Historical Society opens its doors with ice cream social. Michael Pollan preaches to big crowd at CCS: "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants."

2010: Scoville barn burns. Rumsey Hall demolished. The good news? Undeclared girls' hoop team wins league championship, and the *Chronicle* celebrates its 20th birthday. We look forward to bringing you the news in the years to come. —Ed Ferman

P&Z Hears, Approves

It was cold and windy on the evening of December 14, but more than 50 Cornwall citizens turned out for a Planning and Zoning Commission hearing on an amendment to the regulations requested by the Cornwall Housing Corporation (CHC) to change from six to 10 the number of units per building permitted for town- or non-profit-sponsored affordable multi-family housing.

Speaking for the proposal was Maggie Cooley, CHC president: Although the amendment would be applicable to a project anywhere in town, currently it would benefit the housing project planned for Cornwall Bridge. Not only would the configuration of apartments and shared areas be more efficient, the upper plateau would be accessible from the second floor level. The two stories would allow for a smaller footprint and permit a deeper setback from Route 7 with better traffic buffering.

Joanne Wojtusiak spoke in opposition: She expressed the view that the large size of the proposed housing was not consistent with the Town Plan, which stresses maintaining the rural character of Cornwall. Calling the CHC "developers" and their proposal a "monstrosity," she voiced distrust of their plans. John Harding questioned the siting and very big size of the structure.

Discussion continued regarding other aspects of the project. CHC members said it was early yet to know how the building would look. Permission for the 10 units under one roof was an early step. They will be back to the public and the commission when design details and site plans are more fully developed to reflect the rural village location.

(continued on page 2)

JANUARY 2011

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Every Week This Month: Tuesdays: Adult Volleyball, 7:30 pm CCS gym Wednesdays: Tai Chi, 6-9 pm CCS; Karate 6:30-7:30 pm CCS; Women's Basketball, 7:30 pm CCS gym Fridays: Pre-school Story Hour, 1:15 pm Library Saturdays: Skating, Beginning Jan. 8; 7-8 pm Hotchkiss School Sundays: Meditation, 1-2 pm, call Debra for location, 672-0229						1 ♦ New Year's Day Pancake Breakfast 9 am-noon UCC Parish House ♦ Community Contra Dance 7-9:30 pm Town Hall
2	3 ♦ CCS reopens ♦ Reg. One Bd of Ed 6 pm HVRHS ♦ Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall ♦ Park & Rec 7:30 pm Town Hall ♦ Ag Commission 7:30 pm Town Office	4 ● NEW ♦ Inland Wetlands 7:30 pm Town Hall	5	6	7 ♦ Cornwall Child Center Open House 3:30-5:30 pm ♦ Friends of the Library Meeting 4 pm Library	8 ♦ Cornwall Association 9 am UCC Day Room ♦ Chair Massage 11 am-1 pm Library ♦ The Rocking Horse Winner 7:30 pm Library ♦ Camera Club Reception 4-6 pm Library
9 ♦ Elderly Housing Site Tour 2 pm Cornwall Bridge	10	11 ♦ P & Z 7 pm Library ♦ Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 pm CCS Library	12	13	14	15 ♦ Deadline: February Chronicle Copy
16 ♦ Stress Management Yoga 2-3 pm Library	17	18 ♦ Bd of Ed 4 pm CCS Library ♦ Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	19	20 ♦ Bd of Finance 7:30 pm CCS Library	21	22 ♦ Italian Dining & Dancing 7-9 pm Library
23	24 ♦ ZBA* 7:30 pm Town hall	25	26	27 ♦ Cornwall Volunteer Fire Dept. 8 pm W.C. Firehouse	28	29 ♦ Children's Beading Class 11 am-noon Library ♦ Earthwork film 7:30 pm Library
30 ♦ Art Reception 4-6 pm Library	31					

Bear Facts

There were quite a few bear sightings reported in these pages last year but no helpful hints on what to do if one actually meets a black bear face to face. Now, however, we have all the answers, thanks to Ben Kilham of Lyme, New Hampshire, who gave an authoritative talk on the subject at the annual meeting of the Cornwall Conservation Trust this past winter.

According to Kilham, one should keep firmly in mind that black bears hardly ever attack people. What may look like danger signs to us – snorting, swatting the air with a paw – are actually defensive behavior and indicate that this essentially timid animal doesn't want to fight. Relax, and stand your ground. Don't turn your back or run away or crouch down on the ground – all signs of weakness. Don't shout or scream, though you may say a few quiet words from time to time just to show the bear exactly where you are. Eventually, we are assured, he/she will just amble off. Of course, if you're out walking in the woods you can whistle or sing to warn bears off. And if you want to keep them away from a particular place around your home, electric fencing is very effective. Don't ever leave food where bears can get it, or provide any incentive for them to mix with humans. And, finally, don't try to be a friend to bears; leave that to experts like Ben Kilham.

—Jean Ferriss Leich (1997)



(continued from page 1)

The commission closed the hearing and moved the CHC item up in its regular meeting agenda. After discussion, in which members listed Town Plan recommendations for affordable housing as well as keeping rural character, the vote was unanimous to approve the amendment.

—Ginny Potter

Town Offices Go Part Solar

In case you haven't seen it, there sits outside Karen Nelson's window in the Town Office Building a small but handsome chunk of carpentry that is home to 24 solar panels. The panels are providing power to light the lamps and power the computers for Karen, Town Clerk Vera Dinneen and their office neighbors.

The facts: The money, \$29,200, was federal stimulus dollars that filtered down to Cornwall through a state Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant. All the state's towns, cities, and tribes got grants of varying amounts, totaling \$33 million. (We got the minimum). The builder was Litchfield Hills Solar LLC, presided over by Cornwall's own Jim LaPorta. The panels came from a factory in Waltham, Mass. and will produce around 6,500 kilowatt hours annually, which is just about what the building uses. Next door, the stone Town Hall will still rely on CL&P. We were told that to provide



solar power for the whole town office complex would take another rack approximately half again bigger and another grant to pay for it. But don't despair, our first selectman has shown a remarkable talent for finding grant dollars for a variety of projects.

All of this is adding to Cornwall's reputation as the greenest town in the universe - or is it just Connecticut? No matter. CCS is buzzing along with its two racks of solars (annual savings of about \$2,500) and Housatonic Valley Regional High School just got a grant of \$190,000 to renovate its old Ag Center to make it more energy efficient. —John Miller

"New England's Oldest Private Bank"

(Note: This is the fourth in an informal series about longstanding Cornwall businesses.)

Cornwall residents might dispute which local business is the oldest. In one sense, there's no argument: it must be the National Iron Bank, founded in 1847. Yet the Cornwall branch dates only to 1963, when the late Ralph Sandmeyer, Sr., a prominent Cornwall businessman and a director of the bank, persuaded his fellow directors to open it. First

located in a small office on the west side of Route 7, the branch moved in 1976 to the north end of the Cornwall Bridge Green after Bill Dinneen, Sr. and Ralph "Dusty" Sandmeyer, Jr. created the site by leveling the top of a steep hill that plunges down toward Mill Brook. Remember the hill, which figures later in this story.

For the 213 years before 1963, Cornwallians had to travel to neighboring towns to do their banking. Dusty Sandmeyer, now vice-chairman of the National Iron Bank's board of directors, recalls that residents typically went to the bank's Falls Village branch or the Torrington Savings Bank for mortgages and the now-gone Brooks Bank & Trust Company for loans.

The National Iron Bank, founded in Falls Village at the height of the iron industry, prints "New England's Oldest Private Bank" on its checks. "Private" means that the bank is owned only by its shareholders and is not publically traded. At its 163rd annual meeting in February 2010, the bank reported a profitable year with no nonperforming loans.

Perhaps the most dramatic incident in the short history of the Cornwall Bridge branch occurred in May 2009, when a singularly inept couple attempted a robbery. One carried the money as he rushed to his partner's getaway car. In the process, he fell down the steep embankment mentioned above, breaking his leg and

dropping all but \$2 of his swag. The pair found their way to New Milford Hospital for treatment, then returned to Cornwall Bridge. They climbed the embankment after dark to try to find the rest, unaware that the police had already retrieved the money and were simply waiting until the perpetrators returned to the scene of the crime to arrest them.

—Julie Schieffelin

Welcome

Mya Jaylenn Weed
to Mary Shaw and Chad Weed
Austin Allen Ward
to Kate Sandmeyer and Jeff Ward
Ava Teresa Hubbard
to Ania and David Hubbard

Good-bye to Friends

Robert Boyd Wilcox
Sharon Lake Dietzel

Land Transfers

Christopher S. Smith to Shamir Shah, property and improvements thereon, at 52 Valley Road for \$350,000.

Edward & Laurie Shelasky to Conor M. Brady and Nina I. Mazuz, land with buildings thereon at 12 Town Street for \$385,000.

Caryn Johnson to Douglas S.T. Green and Kathryn R.H. Green, 27.829 acres on Cream Hill Road for \$231,000.

Our "Monuments of Disgrace"

The update of *The Schools of Cornwall* (Cornwall Historical Society), is notable, first of all, for its photographs, taken about 1900. A primitive building, a teacher, a potbellied stove, and a couple of privies – that seems to have been it for most of the town.

In this connection, an interesting document has turned up in the CHS files. It is an unsigned article by a Cornwall writer printed in *The Newtown Bee* on April 13, 1900. The writer fulminates at great length on "school houses that, perhaps with one exception, are monuments of disgrace to a civilized community."

Facts push this outrage forward. A newly constituted school board had recently surveyed the buildings serving the town's 236 children. Board members – leading citizens all – were appalled. They called for a special town meeting to take an important first step, the construction of suitable school buildings in West Cornwall and Cornwall Bridge.

"Never in the history of the town has there been such an out turning to a town meeting called for a special purpose," the writer states. "Seventy-six teams" came from "the uttermost parts of town" to the meeting hall. The distinguished school board made its presentation – to no avail. The measure was voted down, 90 to 60. The more enlightened and prosperous citizens whose taxes would support most of the

construction were outvoted by men "who never paid a dollar's worth of taxes" and "cannot even read or write their own names."

Almost at once, the school board altered its plea and called for another meeting, another vote. This time the request was limited to West Cornwall. The one-room schoolhouse had become overcrowded, so the town had rented an additional building, a small room "opposite the post office... situated over a brook running through the village and under which the water is stagnant for a number of months in the year." Into this 12 x 20-foot space were crowded 26 children and all school equipment.

This school was located "in close proximity to the highway with only a few feet on two sides of it for a playground... Rain pours in through the roof and erases the work placed upon the black board by the teacher. It has become necessary during heavy rain to move pupils to different portions of the room. The outhouses are so close to the building that the odor arising from the effluvia is so strong that it is impossible to open windows..., particularly during the warm months."

At this second town meeting, a sweetener was added. A supporter had offered to buy the old school building for \$400, more than it was worth, thereby reducing the true cost of a new two-room structure to \$1,100. For over an hour, proponents of the new building made their case and answered every question. Then came the vote: a resounding NO. This time 125 men (again, apparently no women) "stood pitted in the way of every attempt to educate the rising generation."

At this point the writer waxes with indignity that nearly ignites the page. Who were these 125 men "who have violated every bond of moral responsibility to their town? Men, who have disgraced the flag for which their fathers fought and bled. Men, who violated both the duty and obligations which they owe to their town, their state, their country and their God. In the ignominy of oblivion may they rest..."

"Let us hope that Cornwall will see her mistake and 'ere too late place herself solidly upon the side of a system of education that will mean the uplifting and the broadening of the minds of our future men and women."

Let us hope we have. The next time you pass our school, you might take a deep breath and think something thankful.

—Bob Potter

Food Bank? Pantry? Or What?

If that headline seems confusing, it is meant to be so. A lot of us seem confused about the food assistance programs in town. If people want to help, what can they do? And if others need help, where do they find it?

Cash donations are handled by the town's Social Services Administrator, Jill

Letters to the Chronicle

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Sharon has now passed its Incentive Housing Zone plan, which will allow 32 houses in two sites for people of low income – a far cry from the refusal by Cornwall P&Z to even consider such a plan. A letter in the December Chronicle sets forth at least two reasons for opposing affordable housing even for senior citizens. Apparently, people with less than \$31,000 yearly income would not be acceptable in Cornwall nor would "populations outside Cornwall." I wonder what income level is acceptable? And are people from out of town acceptable? Or are we limited to wealthy families who already live here?
—Anne Baren

Gibbons. Checks should be written to the Cornwall Food and Fuel Bank at P.O. Box 97, Cornwall, CT 06753. Write FOOD on the memo line. These donations are converted into food cards accepted by Stop and Shop and the Big Y in Torrington. The Social Services Office lists hours from 9 A.M. to 4 P.M. on Fridays and by appointment (672-2603).

According to Jill Gibbons, numbers are way, way up from earlier years. Last year 163 people were served in 59 households. Measured in food-card dollars that passed through the office: \$10,375. "We must thank the wonderful donors in Cornwall," Jill states. "None of this would have been possible without their help."

The Food Pantry, in contrast, deals not in cash but in kind. It is an ancillary arm of the Social Services Office and is managed by volunteer Anne Scott. In November 2009, it moved from the Town Office Building to the Day Room (downstairs, back entrance) of the United Church of Christ to afford more privacy to both donors and clients. The Food Pantry is not sponsored by, or affiliated with, the UCC; the town is grateful for the offer of a low-profile space that would otherwise go unused on weekdays.

According to Anne Scott, "Traffic is up substantially since the move." When asked for numbers, Anne replied, "Well, on average, about 20 individuals per week." Donations are encouraged from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. on Mondays and Fridays. Almost all nonperishable foods are needed, with ongoing shortages of such things as pasta, pasta sauce, coffee, and cooking oils. Canned vegetables are not accepted. Nonfood needs (not covered by the federal food-stamp program) include toilet tissue, soaps, and detergents. Most donations come from individuals – many of them regulars – with significant contributions from local farms – Hurlburt, Ridgway, Stone Wall, and others. St. Bridget's Church and the Woman's Society have long been supporters.

Clients will find the Food Pantry open from 11 A.M. to noon on Tuesdays and

NOW OFFICIALLY CERTIFIED

Having reached the required time of three years serving as a tax collector, having taken 93 hours of class time in four different classes on CT Tax Collection Administration and Law (Parts 1 and 2), Finance and Management, and State and Local Government, taken and passed the four exams for those classes, as well as one big comprehensive exam, your tax collector is now a Certified Connecticut Municipal Collector. Whew.
—Jean Bouteiller, CCMC



Thursdays. If these hours are inconvenient (and for donors also), Anne welcomes by appointment times. Contact her at 672-0595 or cornwallfood@optonline.net.

—Bob Potter

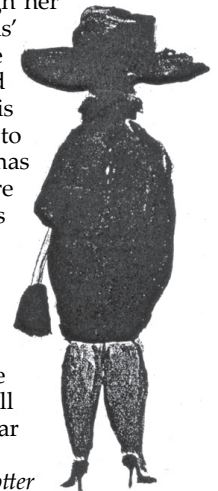
Make Your Dates with Erin

Keeping track of the Cornwall calendar is not that big a step up for Erin Hedden. She's been a good organizer of her family, and she considers Cornwall to be not that much different, just more folks.

A native of Kent, Erin has now lived in Cornwall for 18 years. She is married to Brad, who is responsible for much of the electrical wiring in town. Her daughter Reilly, six-and-a-half, has been introduced to responsibility through her EggStand at the Heddens' driveway near the junction of routes 4 and 125. Quinn, just five, is looking forward to Quintessential Christmas Trees; 50 small trees are already planted for this future enterprise.

Outdoors Erin likes to hike, garden, fish, and coach soccer for Park & Rec. Inside she likes to bake. The Chronicle is glad she will add keeping the calendar to her activities.

—Ginny Potter

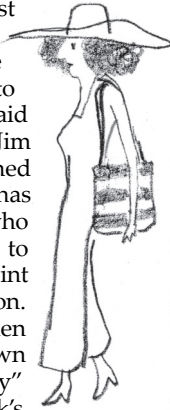


Cornwall Briefs

- Rumsey Demo Costs: The word "Demo" here stands for demolition. Rumsey is gone save for a neat pile of bricks and some large stones. The cost was \$43,000 and some have been asking if Cornwall taxpayers will have to foot the bill. The answer to that question, when it was put to the first selectman, was "no, the town attorney has put a tax lien on the property and we hope to recover the money within a year." He added that if it ever becomes a contest between the town

and the bank holding owner Andrew Hingson's mortgage, back taxes always come first.

• **Town Crew Story:** Last month we reported that Cornwall was looking to hire a new town crew chief to replace Rick Stone who we said had resigned. Since then Jim Vanicky has been named interim crew chief and Rick has gotten himself a lawyer who said his client was forced to resign and filed a complaint rescinding said resignation. The Board of Selectmen promptly authorized the town attorney to deal "vigorously" with the complaint. Rick's attorney says his client was accused of using town funds without authorization.



—John Miller

Events & Announcements

The Annual Pancake Breakfast 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. This year all contributions will benefit the Cornwall UCC building project in April at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota.

The Board of Assessment Appeals will hold hearings by appointment in March 2011. Applications to schedule a hearing will be available at the Town Clerk's Office beginning January 3. Applications must be filed by February 21. Applicants will be contacted to schedule hearings during March.

Cornwall Child Center Plans Open Houses: On January 7, from 3:30 to 5:30 P.M., and succeeding first Fridays of the month, the Center invites the general community to meet the staff, see the program in action, and enjoy refreshments. There are openings in the toddler and preschool sessions for children ages one to six; call Director Sandy Gomez at 672-6989 for information.

Warding Off the Chill

As winter deepens and the world grows cold, it's warming to cast one's mind back to the summer. Sort last August's photographs and post an image from those lovely, toasty days on your desktop. Sending a check to the *Chronicle* produces similar kindly affects. Why wait? Thank you.

Art in Cornwall: At the Cornwall Library, a reception for the show of photographs by the Housatonic Camera Club will be held Saturday, January 8, from 4 to 6 P.M., and can be seen through January 22. A show of photos by Nick Jacobs titled, *A Few of My Favorite Things*, begins January 25, with a reception held Sunday, January 30, from 4 to 6 P.M.

Gail Jacobson's artwork will be at the National Iron Bank for the month of January.

At the Library:

Chair massage by Nancy Opgaard. No appointments needed, just walk in Saturday, January 8, 11 A.M. to 1 P.M. \$1/minute.

The Rocking Horse Winner, 1949 classic film, will be shown at 7:30 P.M. on Saturday, January 8. Suggested donation \$6 for one, \$10 for two.

A free yoga class will be offered by Nancy Opgaard from 2 to 3 P.M. on Sunday, January 16. Give it a try!

A music and movement series of eight classes for children two to five, with a parent/caregiver, led by Leslie Elias, will start on Thursday, January 20, from 10:30 to 11:30 A.M. Cost is \$72, or \$10 per class. Limited to 10 children; call the Library, 672-6874, to register.

Dine on Italian fare and dance with Ram Miles and the Parental Units to benefit the Library's children's programs. Rock to '60s and '70s tunes on Saturday, January 22, from 7 to 9 P.M. \$15 per person. Call the Library, 672-6874, for reservations.

A beading class to make a zipper pull or bracelet will be led by Jennifer Markow on Saturday, January 29, from 11 A.M. to noon. Materials fee: \$5. Limited to 12 children ages eight and up; please call to register or e-mail abuck@biblio.org.

Laura Kirk, Cornwall's independent film director and actor, will introduce her award-winning film *Earthwork* on Saturday, January 29, starting at 7:30 P.M. Suggested donation \$6 for one, \$10 for two.

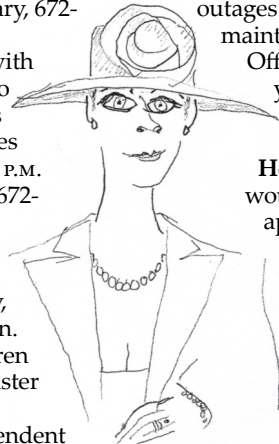
Site Walk: The Cornwall Housing Corp. will explain the siting of its Elderly Housing project Sunday, January 9, at 2 P.M. Meet in Cornwall Bridge between Baird's and the Firehouse. See cornwallhousingcorporation.com for more details.

Skating: Park & Rec. will offer skating at the Schmidt Rink, Hotchkiss School, for eight consecutive Saturdays, from 7 to 8 P.M., beginning on January 8.

Taxes Due: The second half payment 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 on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9 A.M. to noon and Wednesdays from 1 to 4 P.M. Taxpayers also have the option to pay online at www.officialpayments.com, but there is a 3 percent charge for this service. Payments may be sent by mail to Cornwall Tax Collector, P.O. Box 97, Cornwall, CT 06753.

Winter Parking: The Board of Selectmen reminds all concerned that a parking ban on town roads is in effect until March 30. Cars and trucks should be at least six feet off the road. Snow plowing can occur at any time, even set-back plowing in clear weather. State law empowers the town to remove vehicles parked in violation. Phone the Town Garage (672-6230) or Selectmen's Office (672-4959) with any questions.

Check-On-List of persons wishing to be contacted in emergencies such as power outages or severe snowfalls is maintained in the Selectmen's Office. Call 672-4959 to check your status or request listing.



Help the Town: The selectmen would like to re-energize three appointed committees that have become inactive (or nearly so): The Senior Committee (new name), the Economic Development Committee, and the Conservation Commission. Call the Selectmen's Office to volunteer, 672-4959.

CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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