

CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 11: NUMBER 4 MAY 2001

## **A** Winter to Remember

A total of 103.5 inches of snow fell on Cornwall between October 29 and March 27. We have exceeded that amount before, but the difference this winter has been in the number of storms—29—resulting in 195 hours of road-crew overtime.

Foreman Don Reid and his crew members-Jim Vanicki, John Malahan, and Steve Clarke—had their hands full. On several occasions, Connie Hedden, Rick Stone, and Denny Frost had to pitch in with their snow removal equipment. One day, when CCS called for early dismissal because of the weather, a town truck drove ahead of each school bus, plowing and sanding as the bus dropped children off at their homes. The same procedure was used after an ambulance call. Town trucks led the way from Cogswell Road down Wright Hill Road to Route 128, then on to Route 125 until the ambulance turned right on Route 4 on its way to Sharon Hospital.

A big vote of thanks to our heroic town crew for many, many jobs well done!

—Carla Bigelow

# The Church and the Scouts

For many years the United Church of Christ sponsored a Cub Scout troop. In January the congregation adopted an Open and Affirming Statement welcoming gays and lesbians and rejecting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. In late March the Church Council voted with one nay and one abstention not to renew its annual charter with the Boy Scouts since accepting the Boy Scouts of America's ban on homosexuals would run counter to January's statement. The council's action touched off a controversy that made the pages of *The New York Times* and sparked letters from all over the country, the great majority congratulating the church on its stand.

Locally, the Waterbury Republican characterized the council's decision as "cultural fascism," and an example of the arbitrary actions of "the left." On the other hand, The Lakeville Journal asserted, "While the Cornwall church is taking heat for its decision, it is the right one. Anything else would be hypocritical."

Some church members maintain that the decision should have been brought to the congregation and others have regretted that the council couldn't find a way to reject the ban on homosexuality but keep the scouts. The cubs have found a home in the Fire Department, which says it is not making a statement on discrimination but does want the troop to have a home.

—Hendon Chubb

#### An Endowment for Cornwall

Voters at the town meeting on May 18 will be asked to approve a town endowment fund to

NIAV 2001

be managed by the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation.

Universities and churches have endowments, but why Cornwall? Currently, if people want to leave or give money to the town, it has to be put into a special town account like the Sidney Kaye Fund. But town money can't be invested in common stocks, so the Sidney Kaye Fund will be worth less and less over the years because of inflation.

The endowment run by the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation would be invested partly in bonds for income and partly in conservative stocks for income and growth. Once the fund reaches \$25,000, the income and some of the capital gains could be spent by the town. The rest of the capital gains would stay in the fund to help it grow.

It would be possible to set up sub-funds for particular purposes like the Fire Department or CCS. Other earnings could go to the general fund to reduce the mill rate or for special projects. A Cornwall resident has pledged \$15,000 to get such a fund started.

—Hendon Chubb

#### **Elbow Room**

One piece of good news to emerge from the current census is that Cornwall is first among the 26 towns in Litchfield County in providing space for its inhabitants. Due to a low population figure (1,434) and a generous (continued on vage 2)

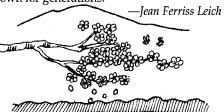
IVIAY 2001 - (continued on page						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	<b>THURSDAY</b>	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 Inland Wetlands 8 p.m. Town Office	2 Play Group 10–11:30 a.m. St. Peter's Church Soup and Video, Noon UCC Day Room Agricultural Comm. 7:30 p.m. Town Hall	3 School Building Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	Preschool–K Story Hour 10 a.m. Library	5 Spring Cleanup 1:30-4:30 p.m. (p.3)
Wildflower Walk 1:30 p.m. (p.4) Ram Miles Concert 4 p.m. UCC (p.4)	7 Region One Bd. of Ed. 7 Annual District Meeting 7 P.M. HVRHS Bd. of Selectmen 1 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Park & Rec. 7:30 P.M. CCS Lib. Agric. Comm. 7:30 P.M. Town Office	Region One Budget Referendum Noon-8 P.M. Town HALL Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	9 Play Group 10–11:30 a.m. St. Peter's Church Soup and Video, Noon UCC Day Room Friends of Cornwall Library 1 p.m. Town Hall	10	Preschool–K Music Together 10 A.M. Library	12 Bird Walk 7 A.M. (p.4) Bike-a-Thon (p.4) Benefit Bake Sale 9 A.M. Baird's & Berkshire Country Store (p.4) Compost Bin Distribution Day 9 A.M.—3 P.M. (p.4)
13 Mother's Day	14 Blood Pressure Screening 3–4 p.m. UCC Parish House P&Z 8 p.m. Town Hall	15 Deadline: June Chronicle Copy School Building Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library Democratic Town Comm. 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	Play Group 10–11:30 a.m. St. Peter's Church Soup and Video, Noon UCC Day Room	Honor Ed. 5 p.m. CCS Library Bd. of Finance 7:30 p.m. CCS Library	Preschool-K Story Hour 10 A.M. Library Town Meeting 7:30 P.M. CCS Gym (p.3)	Household Hazardous Waste Day (p.3)
20	21 Region One Bd. of Ed. 7 P.M. HVRHS Republican Town Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS	22 Bd. of Selectmen 9 A.M. Town Hall	23 Play Group 10–11:30 A.M. St. Peter's Church Soup and Video, Noon UCC Day Room Green Party 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	24	Preschool–K Music Together 10 A.M. Library Historical Society Art Exhibit (p.4)	26 Cornwall Association 9 A.M. UCC Day Room Cornwall Historical Society Annual Meeting 4 P.M. Town Hall
27 Bridge Dance 7–11 P.M. West Cornwall (p.4)	28 Memorial Day (Observed)  For Memorial Day Services See Page 4	Cornwall Vol. Fire Dept. 7:30 p.m. W. C. Firehouse ZBA 8 p.m. Town Office*	Play Group 10–11:30 A.M. St. Peter's Church Soup and Video, Noon UCC Day Room	31		

(continued from page 1)

spread of land (45.8 square miles), this works out to over 20 acres per person. As we all know, statistics never lie, and the ones cited here immediately conjure up a rosy picture of the fortunate few disporting themselves on 20 green acres apiece. The reality, of course, is not exactly like that, since much of Cornwall's acreage is more fit for rock climbers than ordinary people. Then, too, there are all those valleys and hills, which make a level plot of ground suitable for farming or building hard to find.

On the other hand, it must be said that the space available to us now is a lot more attractive than it was, say, in 1850, when Cornwall was an industrial boom town relatively speaking, with a population of 2,041 residents, well over the number it boasts today. By the turn of the century, so many trees had been cut down in this part of the state to make charcoal for stoking the ubiquitous iron furnaces that the hillsides hereabouts resembled nothing so much as the scene of destruction after a major battle. As the iron industry gave way to new methods required to make steel, many Connecticut residents gradually moved away to join the great migration out west, or to seek better job opportunities in the cities, or more fertile land for farming in other states. By 1920, Cornwall's population had dwindled to its all-time low of 834 souls.

Today, pioneer farmers and ironworkers have been replaced by a different set of people, many of them artists, retired executives, and city dwellers looking for a peaceful second home in the country. Once here, they are inclined to stay put, and join the families who have lived here and appreciated the town for generations.



# Farming on Cherry Hill

The history of farming on Cherry Hill is written in stones, small ones and large ones, stacked up in stone walls by my ancestors who are stacking up like cordwood on my genealogical chart. Apparently, Solomon Deacon Hart of generation six acquired much of Cherry Hill after owning large tracts of land in what was known as Hart's Bridge, later West Cornwall. His sons Elias and Titus were farming on Hart Hill in the early 1780s. Titus was followed by Nathan; Nathan Jr.; Charles Whittlesey, my grandfather; and Charles Whittlesey, my father, or Whit, as so many people who knew him still think of him today. Joyce and I live on the last of the three Hart farms on Cherry Hill. The Hedden and Cooley homes were homesteads of Horace and William Hart. A fourth Hart homestead was at the location of the house on Sharon-Goshen Turnpike now owned by Jack Richmond and Kevin Wilson.

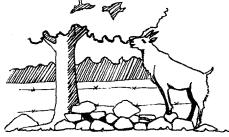
Early Hart farms produced a variety of crops for home use or sale. The present farm had three apple orchards, a peach orchard, cherry trees, and several types of pears. Tobacco was grown in the mid-1800s. Corn, oats, and wheat were common grain crops. Milk, cream, honey, eggs, and seasonal garden produce rounded out a diverse farm economy. This kind of diversity was later abandoned by many small farms in favor of milk production. Cheese was made and sold. The original ell on the present 1790-or-so homestead was added for cheese production according to Doris (Hart) Cross. Ice from the farm pond was cut in blocks and put in the icehouse. Mag Cooley still refers to my garage as the icehouse, which it was.

The history of farming at Hart Hill—later Cherry Hill-was hugely shaped by a continuous drama of unexpected events. In autumn 1916, my Grandfather Charles fell from an apple tree and broke his neck. He was brought by wheelbarrow to the house, lingered a while, and died in December. Whit returned prematurely from Cornell to help with the work of the farm. Eventually, he became the sole owner and developed a retail milk route. In August 1937, the large barn and dairy, which was across the road from the farmhouse, burned when lightning hit the hay rack. The last load of hay had just been put in for the season. All-tools, wagons, silo, equipment-was lost. The Cornwall Fire Department fought the blaze with 2,950 feet of hose run to Gold's Mill Pond (now Scotts'). It was the longest run of hose for them to that date. Their efforts saved the house although it was charred in front from the intense heat. Ralph Scoville remembers the herd, pastured at the time of the blaze, being driven from Hart Hill to the Scoville farm where Hart family farming continued until the completion of the new barn in 1938. Many in town still remember the barn dances held to benefit the Fire Department and also remember the surprise Whit Hart birthday party in October 1937 when friends gathered to give tools and equipment to replace losses from the fire. In June 1944, Whit broke his neck when an unloading fork of hay fell from the top of the barn to the wagon below and landed on top of him. No wheelbarrow was used this time. He walked to the house and Dr. Walker drove him to Torrington. During his five month's absence from the farm, family and volunteers continued the work. Ray and Cilla cut and raked hay. Volunteers, some with trucks that looked more than a little like state highway trucks, pitched and put in hay. The milk route continued, a route which included West Cornwall, Route 7 north, Lime Rock, the east side of the river, Yutzlers' and Bate's Markets. Volunteers during that difficult time are too many to mention but names which easily come to mind are Ralph Scoville, Fred Bate, John and Art Dutton, and Sid Kelley. Community kindness and support are clearly a part of the history of this farm.

The present Hart farm is haved by Fred

Scoville and family. The herd was sold in 1962, although there have been occasional bovine residents since. Presently, we produce apples, syrup, broiler chickens, cider, and garden produce. This is a mere shadow of former farm production but it still requires the same frenetic energy. The farm today stands in the spotlight of its own history but in the shadow of its future as the present owners ponder its place in the unfolding realities of our times.

—Philip Hart



Good-bye to a Friend
Philip Ulrich

#### Welcome

Zoe Machado Homer to Phoebe Prentice and Peter Homer

# Congratulations

Ceylan Borovali to Thomas H. Coffin Maryanne Smart to John W. Spring

## **Land Transfers**

Vivian Kimmelman to Todd Eberle and Richard Pandiscio, house and 24 acres at 198 Dibble Hill Road for \$530,000.

Benjamin S. Gray to Elise Pettus and Daniel Algrant, 23 Jewell Street for \$237,000.

Anne G. Coffin to Stephana Bottom, Theodore Beresford Webb, and Flora Grace Alberta Webb, house and 2 acres at Cream Hill and Scoville Roads for \$585,000.

Correction: The April issue reported that Adam and Deirdre Fischer had bought 18 acres of land for \$104,000. Actually they bought 35 acres for that sum.

#### Return of the Fisher 1

This small woodland mammal with a pointy nose, thick dark fur, and bushy tail has returned to our Northwest Corner after an absence of 100 years. Once common throughout the Northeast, fishers disappeared because of loss of habitat and excessive trapping. Reforestation and changes in land-use practices made it possible for the Wildlife Division of Connecticut's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to consider reintroducing this handsome native.

It all began when Maine's DEP, as part of a project to reintroduce the wild turkey, purchased a large flock from Connecticut. Money received for the turkeys was used to purchase 32 fishers.

In December 1988, 11 fishers were captured in box traps by trappers in Vermont and New Hampshire, transported to Connecticut, and held at Sessions Woods Wildlife

office in Burlington until their release in Mohawk State Forest in late February and early March 1989, just before their breeding season. The date was chosen in hopes that it would limit their wanderings since pregnant females would quickly choose a den site in a hollow tree or log and settle down, and males might stick around because fishers breed shortly after females give birth. Before release, each animal was equipped with a radio collar (batteries last about a year). By radio and snow tracking, biologists discovered that the fishers had a high survival rate and reproduced successfully.

The process was repeated in 1990. Twenty-one animals were released, 12 males and nine females, of which 16 were collared. DEP wildlife biologist Paul Rego, who has been primarily responsible for the recolonization of these animals, estimates that today the state's fisher population is close to 1,000, with the Litchfield County population in the hundreds.

Fishers—the males are between 30 and 40 inches long and weigh between 6 and 10 pounds-hunt alone over a range of three to 15 square miles. They are at home both on the ground and in trees. Their long retractable claws enable them to climb trees in pursuit of their favorite food, squirrels. Contrary to its name, the fisher doesn't eat fish. (Early settlers may have confused the fisher with the European polecat called fitchet.) In addition to squirrels, it also eats birds, mice, voles, rabbits, and frogs. It is also the only animal that preys on the porcupine. Fruits such as black cherries, blueberries, and beechnuts can form up to 20 percent of its summer diet.

Alert and secretive, it is rarely seen by humans. Rego tells us that the best chance we have is when snow is on the ground and we identify and follow fisher tracks.

"The fisher is one of the very wildest of wild animals," writes the author of my 1902 edition of *The Nature Library*. Still, I have hopes that in my woodland walks, I might spy one, as the author goes on to say, "taking a nap on the horizontal branch of a fir-tree, like a cat on a window-sill." —*Carla Bigelow* 

## **Events & Announcements**

The Annual Budget Town Meeting will be held on May 18 at 7:30 P.M. at CCS with seven items requiring approval. Among items to be voted on are: the proposed 2001 to 2002 school and town budget of \$4,593,377, a 9 percent increase over last year; the establishment of the Town of Cornwall Endowment Fund (see article p.1); budget transfers to cover cost of winter storms and repair of the drainage system around the Town Hall; discontinuing a portion of Clark Road; and changing the name of Val-

ley Road (see "Letters") and several smaller roads. Further details will appear in local newspapers and will be posted at the usual places in town.

# Letters to the Chronicle

SCHOOL TAX BURDEN

As a new homeowner in Cornwall I am disturbed that a few homeowners have the power to dictate a \$4,715,000 financial strain on 800 households. How unfair it is for folks like me who are uninformed about town issues to be saddled with a burden that offers us no benefits and increases taxes by 50 percent over the next five years. (Let's not forget the reassessment this spring!) How is it that a handful of parents can inflict this burden on the elderly, the disabled, and families that have absolutely no use for the proposed additions?

How can this neglectful act be justified when there are townspeople who cannot afford food, medical attention, and utilities to maintain a decent life? If new tax dollars were going to be used for these purposes, the quality of life for hundreds would improve. Parents' concern should be for the quality of their children's education, not for a new field house or a lunchroom, which have nothing to do with the classroom learning process. Parents should raise funds by means other than taxing the 90-plus percent of the population who either can't afford it or who will never benefit from it. They should imitate the folks who raised over a million dollars for the library improvements.

I advocate education at any level. However, when a small number of parents take advantage of an unsuspecting population and negatively impact the economic stability of 800 families, we should be heard. I urge others who feel as I do to write to our selectmen, boards of education and finance, to voice your strong opposition to this \$4,715,000 proposal.

—Arnold Leichtman



#### VALLEY ROAD FOREVER

We are disappointed to note that the withdrawn petition to change the name of Valley Road to Coltsfoot Valley Road has been reactivated for vote at the May 18 Town Meeting. This issue involves the entire town, not solely Valley Road residents. Allowing name changes, except for essential reasons, after our 911 system has been established sets a precedent for other name changes, with resultant problems for the system.

Additional reasons for opposing this change include: 1) "Valley Road" has been the historic name of this street for almost a century with no problems of identity for residents; 2) when automatic mail sorting comes, addresses must be accurate or mail will be returned to sender, and residents who receive their mail by rural delivery will be faced with the task of notifying a large number of people of this address change; 3) since "Coltsfoot" to most residents is synonymous with the mountain, renaming it "Coltsfoot Valley Road" is a contradiction in terms—"Mountain Valley Road."

Other long-time property owners, including Jill Bacon Bryant, are opposed to this change. Those attending the May meeting who have a commitment to preserving Cornwall's history and avoiding unnecessary precedents, are respectfully asked to vote against this petition. —Marion Blake

**Spring Cleanup Day:** Join Park and Rec. members on Saturday, May 5, in our effort to spruce up our town roads. We will have

gloves and bags donated by Northwest Lumber and a roadside route assignment for you at 1:30 p.m. in front of the Town Hall. Return with your trash for refreshments and prizes for the strangest, the oldest, the biggest, and the most trash. (Heavy items will be picked up by trucks.) Folksinger Sandy Lord will be at Hubbard Field from 3:30 p.m. on to help us celebrate.

Household Hazardous Waste Day will be on Saturday, May 19, 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. at the Falls Village highway garage. Pre-registration with the Selectmen's Office required (672-4959). No electronics drop-off this time; there will probably be a pick-up at the fall Household Hazardous Waste Day. Questions? Call Town Hall.

West Nile Virus: Selective testing of birds for WNV will begin throughout the state on May 7. If you find a ma-

ture dead bird, wear gloves to pick it up or simply use an inverted plastic bag. Report your find to the Torrington Department of Health (489-0436). Infected wild birds are a sensitive indicator of the presence of WNV in the bird-mosquito cycle. Crows seem to be particularly vulnerable and as we all know, we have a large, vociferous flock residing in Cornwall.

Art in Cornwall: At the Hughes Memorial Library, a retrospective exhibition of book illustrations and original watercolors and drawings by Marc Simont opens on Saturday, May 26, with a reception for the artist from 2 to 4 P.M. Refreshments will be served.

At the Cornwall Library, Ellen Moon's watercolors from the Nepal Himalayas continue through May 12. Beginning May 14, there will be an exhibit of photographs by members of the Empowering Young Women project. Young women in grades six through 12 were given cameras and asked to take pictures of things that are important to them.

Buddy Hurlburt will exhibit his photographs of Cornwall Hollow at the National Iron Bank in May.

The Tenth Annual Bridge Dance: This May tradition in Cornwall, a fund-raiser for training and equipping our Volunteer Fire Department, will be held on May 27. John Camp and his Timeriders with its mix of oldies, classic, and country rock and roll will be back. So will comedian/juggler Karl Saliter who will perform for the children of early arrivals. Roast beef, hamburgers, and hot dogs will be served from 6 P.M. on. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$5 for youths 10 to 15 years old; children under 10 enter free with a parent. Discount tickets are available from CVFD members and from many Cornwall businesses. No pets, please! Route 128 will be closed from 7 P.M. to midnight. Free shuttle buses will run every five minutes from parking at the Firehouse and from a lot on Route 7 about a half-mile north of the Covered Bridge.

Third Annual Spring Bird Walk on Saturday morning, May 12, will be led by Art Gingert, birder and photographer/naturalist. We will meet at 7 A.M. and be out walking and enjoying birds until 9:30 A.M. The 12<sup>th</sup> is also International Migratory Bird Day and Art will tell us more about some of our spring and summer visitors. Bring binoculars and wear waterproof hiking boots. Beginning birders are welcome. For further details and to reserve a place, call Carla Bigelow at 672-0283. Sponsored by Park and Rec.

Compost Bin Distribution Day will be on Saturday, May 12, between 9 A.M. and 3 P.M. at the Falls Village highway garage. The popular compost bins that were sold a year ago will be sold again at \$20 each.

Mother's Day Bake Sale to benefit Cornwall Extras for Kids will be held on Saturday, May 12, from 9 A.M. until the goods are gone at Baird's Store porch and Berkshire Country Store's picnic bench (weather permitting). Some of Cornwall's best bakers go all out with sweet treats for Mom.



# **Budget Time**

Here's how some relevant budgets compare this spring:

U.S.—2.2 trillion Town of Cornwall—4.6 million *Chronicle*—6.8 thousand

You can see that we run a lean operation here. But remember—our only revenues come from your donations, so please be generous with your support.

Three Little-Known Cornwall Artists of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century will be exhibited on Memorial Day at the Cornwall Historical Society on Pine Street. James Moser and Ben Foster were landscape artists whose favorite subjects were connected with Cornwall. Lydia Hubbard also painted landscapes but liked floral subjects as well.

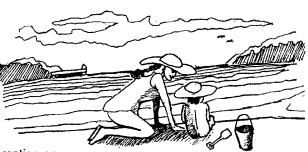
The exhibit will open at a reception on May 25 from 5 to 7 P.M. Hours thereafter: May 26, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.; May 28 (Memorial Day) 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.; May 29, 1 to 3 P.M.; June 2, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.

Spring Wildflowers in Cornwall: On Sunday, May 6, we will follow botanist Ronald Aakjar on foot and by car in search of spring wildflowers in their natural habitats, from woods to meadows and wetlands. We begin at the parking lot across from Nora's Nursery on Route 7 in Cornwall Bridge at 1:30 p.m. Call Carla Bigelow, 672-0283, to reserve a place. Rain date—May 13. Sponsored by Park and Rec.

Jubilee Visit: The Jubilee School will visit Cornwall from Thursday, June 7, until Monday, June 11, for five days of activities shared with Cornwall children and adults. A highlight of recent visits has been bed-and-breakfast overnights in Cornwall homes. Proceeds from the recent Arts Festival at the Congregational Church will fund the trip. People interested in hosting our guests for two to four nights are asked to call Peg Keskinen before May 15 at 672-6486.

Memorial Day: Each year, a week before Memorial day, members of VFW Post 9856 place flags at the graves of all of Cornwall's veterans. This year on May 29, Memorial Day observances will begin at 9 A.M. at the North Cornwall Cemetery with a service led by Charles Gold; please bring flowers to decorate the graves. At 10 A.M. the Seamen's Service will be held at the Covered Bridge. The Memorial Day Parade will start at 11 A.M. at the Town Green, followed by the traditional ceremony. (If it rains, the ceremony will be held at CCS.) The annual carnival hosted by UCC and the Cornwall Child Center will follow on the church grounds. There will be new games and contests along with the old favorites such as frog jumping. Bring your own frog.

**Sooner Than Expected:** Due to summer construction at UCC, the date of the 51<sup>st</sup> annual Woman's Society Rummage Sale has been changed to the unexpectedly early date of July 14 to 16. Donations may begin on June 25.



The Library Will Break Ground for its new building in a brief celebration Monday, May 28, following the Memorial Day commemoration in front of the old library. With snow and water gone, and construction plans complete, the project will be underway and sidewalk superintendents are welcome.

La Casa Project: June 23 will mark the beginning of a journey for 45 members of St. Peter's Lutheran Church, UCC, and our community to build three houses in northern Mexico. To raise funds for building materials, two events are scheduled: May 6 at 4 P.M., Ram Miles and his Swing Jazz Band will perform at UCC (for ticket information, call 672-6840); May 12, the third annual Bike-a-thon will be held with 30-to-50- and 100-mile rides through the tri-state area. To participate or to sponsor a rider, call Jim Whiteside at 672-6018.

Lincoln Seen and Heard: A benefit program for the Library, presented Hotchkiss on March 24, raised \$45,000. Some 600 people were in attendance to see the show, which featured a presentation by actor Sam Waterston of excerpts from Abraham Lincoln's famous speeches, accompanied by comments on the man himself by Harold Holtzer, Lincoln specialist at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

#### CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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