# CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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# Last Stop Cucamonga?

About 80 people attended an informational forum on April 5 at the Cornwall Consolidated School about possible resumption of passenger service by the Housatonic Railroad Company (HR). This project is spurred in part by a Mass. plan to rehabilitate track between Pittsfield and the Connecticut border to link the Berkshires with New York City. The proposed plan, which would take about three years to accomplish, is for HR to continue track improvements in Conn. for 37 miles south to New Milford where it would join Metro-North to Danbury, jog over to Southeast, N.Y., and head for the Big Apple.

Ed Greene, moderator for the host Cornwall Association, emphasized that the meeting was for information purposes only, not for debate. Gordon Ridgway echoed this: "The town has no position on the matter at this point, though it is an important issue and could have a large impact on the town. We need to hear from all sides about economic and environmental impact."

Todd Shearer spoke for the privately owned railroad, citing the need for rebuilding railroad bed and track to provide public transportation, increased safety, and

the benefits of tourism and economic development.

Mark Wilson, one of a number of homeowners attending who live near the tracks, said, "I have intimate knowledge of the railroad. Our house has suffered cracked foundations, cracked plaster; we have seen derailments, track fires, debris; trains run by here fast, and in the middle of the night. It is a dangerous operation: there are 12 grade crossings: six on public roads, six on private driveways. Is there a need? Bonanza bus stopped service for lack of ridership. Route 7 car traffic has stayed the same. But this proposal calls for five or six round trips per day.'

Comments from the floor echoed this concern. Jocelyn Ayer of the Northwest Hills Council of Governments responded that a "major reason" for the line would be

to bring New Yorkers out here, not just to get us to the city. Residents wondered about HR's business

plan ("Seems shaky," said one), its estimated costs, and its claim that the line would be financially self sufficient.

Extending the service is complicated, involving three states, three different owners of track, and the need for millions of dollars in grants and subsidies. Rail may indeed be the Green Way to Go, but many in the gym seemed to feel that Cornwall might be less green if the proposal went through. — Ella Clark

# A Certainty: That Other Thing and Taxes

Each April, the possibility of snowstorms recedes, but still blizzards of numbers cloud the eyes of town officials and board members as the end of budget season nears. This year, following a public hearing in April and the opportunity to review and discuss any questions, Cornwall voters get to judge the results of these efforts at a town meeting set for May 16.

How do things look as of mid-April, with further fine tuning still to come before

(continued on page 2)



#### **MAY 2014 SATURDAY** SUNDAY **TUESDAY** WEDNESDAY MONDAY THURSDAY **FRIDAY Every Week This Month:** ◆ Derby Day Child Center Benefit Mondays: Yoga, 8:30-10 am Library; Bend and Stretch, 11:15 am-12:15 pm UCC Parish House; Karate, 6:30–7:30 pm Town Hall ◆ Tuesdays: Diabetes Class, 10 am–Noon Library; ◆ Wednesdays: Tai Chi, 6–9 ◆ Senior Spring Luncheon Noon, Town Grove, Lakeville Woman's Society 4:30–7 pm West Cornwall ◆ Community 10 am UCC Parish House pm Town Hall; ◆ Thursdays: Pilates, 8:30–9:30 am Library; Toddler Play Group, 10:30–11:30 am Library; Country Dance 7 pm Town Hall Meditation, 4–5 pm call Debra 672-0229; Adult Volleyball, 7:30 pm CCS gym ◆ Fridays: Yoga, 8:30–10 am Library ◆ Sundays: Yoga 9–10:30 am Library; Meditation, 1–2 pm call Debra 672-0229 6 ◆ Region 1 Bgt. Ref. Noon–8 pm Town Hall 1stQ ◆ Housatonic River 9 4 8 10 • Spring Bird Walk ◆ Historical Society 7 am Location TBA • Farm Market Opening ◆ P&R Senior Trip ◆ Qigong Class 9:30–10:30 am UCC ◆ Qigong Class 6–7 pm UCC Annual Meeting 8:30 am 7 Pine Street • Region 1 Board of Ed 6 pm HVRHS Room #133 9 am–3:30 pm Yale University Art Gallery ◆ Town Meeting 7:30 pm Gathering Room ◆ The Heathen School 9 am–1 pm West Cornwall ◆ Get Your Goat & Sheep Workshop 10:30 am–1:30 pm ◆ How to Speak Baseball Comm. Public Mtg. 7 pm HVRHS + Board of Selectmen Park and Rec 7:30 pm Town Hall 7:30 pm Town Hall ♦ Inland Wetlands Book Signing 11:00 am–2 pm Wish House 7:30 pm Town Hall $\bigcup_{\text{FULL}} |\overline{15}|$ 11 12 14 16 ◆ Economic Dev. ◆ Fall Prevention Clinic 1–3 pm UCC ◆ Cornwall Keeping a 8:30 am Town Hall • Seniors' Luncheon 11:30 am-1 pm ◆ Qigong Class 9:30–10:30 am UCC ◆ Qigong Class 6–7 pm UCC ◆ Board of Finance Family Cow Workshop 10 am–1 pm Local Farm ◆ Artist's Reception: ◆ Family Movie: Babe 7 pm Library ◆ Town Budget Meeting Free Blood Pressure Clinic Conservation Comm. 6:30 pm Town Hall Deadline: June Chronicle Copy Noon-1 pm UCC Wandering Moose 7:30 pm Gathering Room Steve Foote ◆ P&Z 7 pm Library ◆ Housatonic River Commission 7:30 pm CCS CCS 4-6 pm Llbrary 7:30 pm CCS Library $\overline{19}$ 23 $\overline{24}$ 18 20 22 Oigong Class 9:30–10:30 am UCC Board of Education ◆ Book Sale am–3 pm Library ◆ Farm Market ◆ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall 4 pm CCS Library ◆ Qigong Class 6–7 pm UCC ◆ Dance Film 9 am-1 pm West Cornwall 7 pm Library 25 26 27 28 29 30 ◆ Farm Market 9 am–1 pm West Cornwall Memorial Day Activities ◆ Committee for Seniors 7 pm Library ◆ ZBA\* Wild & Scenic River Day 10 am–Noon Housatonic Meadows ♦ NW CT Health & Rec (See Announcements) Book Sale 7:30 pm Library 10 am-3 pm Library Kick-Off Sharon Town Beach

(continued from page 1)

presentation to the voters? The "bottom line," as numbers people like to say, is a town budget increase of about 5.6 percent over the current year.

The details? The Board of Selectmen section (which excludes debt service, capital expenses, and education) shows a 5.31 percent increase (approximately \$90,000) to \$1,785,500. Of this, 38 percent

is attributable to increased health and liability insurance premiums, 13.5 percent represents an increase in fire department funding, and 15.5 percent an increase in highway department operations line items. The balance of the increase is a result of small increases and reductions throughout the budget items, and includes increases in employee compensation averaging 2.75 percent, assistance to various organizations throughout town, and town offices expenses.

The education part of the budget is proposed to increase by 2.9 percent (\$117,500). Here, although Cornwall's share of the Region 1 budget is expected to decline by about \$44,000, the Cornwall Consolidated School budget is projected to increase by 6.3 percent, or approximately \$161,000. About \$95,000 of the increase is due to health insurance, and the rest primarily to contractual salary increases.

Capital expenses would increase by \$153,000, allocated among funds to replace a 16-year-old highway truck, a fund to replace the fire department tanker, and road improvement work mainly on Dibble Hill and Cream Hill roads.

Debt service on town bonds is expected to decrease by about \$4,000, to \$179,300; happily, \$145,000 of that goes to pay down principal.

On the income side, the grand list has increased a little over 1 percent-mostly with Trinity Conference Center going back on the tax rolls, and there is some construction going on here and there. The town also has some reserves-not needed last year-in excess of state guidelines, that can be employed to soften the impact of budget increases on the mil rate.

Ultimately, all is expected to be resolved this month among the boards of education, selectmen, finance, and the voters.

— Tom Barrett

# **Enslaved and Freed in** Cornwall

The remarkable research of its intern Ryan Bachman into the prevalence of local pre-Civil War slavery prompted the Cornwall Historical Society to have him present his findings to a full house at the library on Sunday April 6.

By chance, this date was also the wedding anniversary of his main subjects, Naomi and Obadiah Freeman, who were married in Cornwall 188 years ago.

According to Bachman, Obadiah was a black man born into slavery in Connecticut Obed and owned by Ebenezer

> Birdseye, who rented him out as a laborer and sometimes worked alongside him on jobs. A law passed by the Connecticut legislature in 1783, a compromise between slave owners and abo-

litionists, decreed slaves born after March 1, 1784 were to be freed upon reaching the age of 25. Even though Obed was born four years earlier, Birdseye set him free September 17, 1805 and Obed became Obadiah Freeman. Afterwards he was treated differently from other blackshis race did not appear alongside his name on purchase receipts, the customary practice of the time. He continued to work several months more for Birdseve on the family farm in East Cornwall until disappearing for the next 11 years. He turned up again in Cornwall and Pompey, N.Y. in 1818 as a laborer for Birdseye's sons Victory and Ezekiel, who had grown up with Obadiah and later joined the abolitionist movement.

Naomi Freeman was a black woman born free in Vermont in 1794 as Naomi Cain and brought to Cornwall as a child by Mr. and Mrs. John Sedgwick, who adopted and raised her along with their other children. Bachman referred to documentation showing she was vaccinated for smallpox in 1801 along with the rest of the family, as well as letters suggesting a warm relationship with the other Sedgwick children. Naomi married Obadiah in 1826. In 1828 they purchased a house in her name, possibly because she was literate and Obadiah was not. In 1830 they produced a daughter Sarah, who continued to live with her mother after Obadiah's death in 1853. Sarah married James West the same year and they became owners of the house in 1857 after Naomi's death. At some point the house was abandoned and collapsed in 1870.

Naomi's purchase was the 264- by 165foot "Curtis Farm home lot" and the site of an archeological dig by Bachman, assisted by Ann Schillinger. With GPS and a tape measure they systematically demarcated the property by plotting a grid across it. Sifting through earth within the foundation ruins, they were able to conclude where rooms typical to that period

were situated. Among the found artifacts were a metal bowl, wrought iron nails, a knife blade, shards of pottery, and a section of stem from a white clay pipe.

Bachman will continue his research on the subject and hopes to publish the final −Bill Goulet

### Welcome

Isabella Frost Cheney to Ted Cheney and Kathryn Lee

# Congratulations

Wayde Wolfe and Albaro Sis Morales Titus Welliver and Jose Stemkens

# Goodbye to a Friend

Claire Totten Gray

### **Land Transfers**

Sara E. Cousins to Philip Taaffe and Gretchen Carlson, six acres of land at 272 River Road for \$150,000.

Anne Whiteside, Karen Falcon, and James Whiteside to Frances Boswell and Caspar Luard, three parcels of land with all buildings thereon, at 40 Rexford Road, for \$335,000.

## **CCS Children Left Behind?** Hah!!

Have you ever wondered if dropping Alka Seltzer in warmer water would bring faster relief? Or which of the chemicals they're spreading on our winter roads will rot your car sooner? Have you pondered what type of cloth material to wear to better absorb all that sweat from summer activities?

You may think you know the answers to these questions, but can you back them up with science, or are you merely relying on some combination of your gut instinct and hearsay? Well, our sixth- and seventhgraders at Cornwall Consolidated School (CCS) posed these and many other interesting and eclectic questions to themselves, leading up to the recent Science Experiment Fair, and they came up with answers except that theirs resulted from adherence to rigorous scientific methods.

In a process that started around Thanksgiving, 33 sixth- and seventh-graders took up the challenge of teacher Kathy West: "Each of you come up with a question that can be answered using scientific methods of measurement, then follow those methods and demonstrate your conclusions with text, graphs, and an oral presentation." The results of much hard work were judged on April 1 at the school. For those unfamiliar with (read "liberal arts majors") or who have long forgotten scientific methodology, these are the steps the students took after their questions were approved for further inquiry: write a procedure to be followed with the experiment; conduct the experiments at home; bring in the data and graph it, and interpret the graph accurately; write up the results; and build a display board illustrating the steps taken, materials used, procedures followed, conclusions, and a discussion of the findings. Whew!

No one would envy the judges their task, but the following were the results of the fair: In sixth grade, Zy Huggan, first place; Haley Trapella, second place; Trevor Hampson, third place; and Juan Vanicky, honorable mention. In seventh grade Dean

Saccardi took first place; Mitch Kosciusko was in second place; third place went to Caroline Hurlburt; and honorable mention went to Ella Matsudaira. College admissions officers, take note!

— Tom Barrett

### Wild and Scenic

If the Housatonic River Commission (HRC) is successful in paddling into new water, the river will join a distinguished national registry of 145 or so rivers whose character of free-flowing waters and scenic and recreational attributes make it worthy of special protection. The HRC focus is on the 45 miles from the Massachusetts border in North Canaan to Boardman Bridge in New Milford. This river section flows through the seven towns that comprise the commission.

The Wild and Scenic designation and inclusion in a federal registry is an environmental initiative signed into congressional law in 1968 to protect river free-flows, water quality, and ecological resources. In Connecticut the upper Farmington and the Eight Mile rivers are so designated.

The Housatonic was studied in the late 70s for qualities that would make it worthy of designation. It was, and is. The qualifying process the HRC has chosen is through state government. Legislative representatives for each of the seven towns would gauge public sentiment and could thereafter seek a legislative resolution recognizing the special status of this river.

Our governor, concurring, would petition the Secretary of the Interior to review the request and, concurring, include the Housatonic in the registry. Inclusion in the registry could greatly complement and assist local control and management of proposals for large and disruptive projects on or near the river, the watershed, or essential tributaries.

The HRC anticipates an orderly process which will include a public information meeting on May 6 at 7 P.M. in Room 133 at Housatonic Valley Regional High School. Comments are welcome and needed. Our Board of Selectmen is interested in your views on this issue. The next HRC meeting is May 13 at CCS at 7:30 P.M., and the agenda always includes time for public comments.

— Phil Hart

#### The Heathen School

Many people in Cornwall may be vaguely aware that the town had a small mission school about 100 years ago. The school was established as part of a national evangelical fervor to spread civilization and Christianity to the far corners of the world.

The Cornwall Historical Society (CHS) has sponsored several events to raise awareness about the school, and the publication of *The Heathen School* by John Demos has provided a fascinating analysis of the school.

# Letter to the Chronicle

200TH ANNIVERSARY

According to Starr's History of Cornwall: 200 years ago in 1814 Eber Maxfield built the first stone house on West Road, west of the town green, which is now 14 Bolton Hill Road. It housed some noted residents, including Dr. Bolton, for whom the street was named, and four schools, foremost among them was the Foreign Mission School. Then the house was known as the Commons of "The Indian School" because students came from 15 native tribes, though students from 12 other nations also attended during its short tenure. One of the most famous students was Obookiah from Hawaii, and how he came here was fascinating. His journey is the story of a new nation: whaling ships and Yankee Clippers that beat British merchants at their trade, Dwight of Yale, Dr. Lyman Beecher, Rev. Prentice, Rev. Stone, Capt. Morris, Deacon Gold, and Dr. Calhoun, among many others. Another illustrious student of a later school who was taught here would become Gen. John Sedgwick of Civil War fame.

What really impresses me about the personal histories of this house is the great American love story that began here between resident John Ridge, the son of a Cherokee chief, who boarded

here at the Commons, and the steward's daughter Sarah Northrup. It is a tragic tale of love, education, devotion, and racism where effigies were burned on the village green; economic improvement for some with silk dresses and plantation slaves, the unconstitutional Treaty of New Echota that once President Jackson enforced became the Trail of Tears. This forced the relocation of tens of thousands of Indians off their ancestral lands with little or no compensation, and suffering, disease, and death along the way to Oklahoma Territory. John persuaded his father, one of many chiefs, to be the lone signatory to that infamous treaty, saying the Great White Fathers in Washington would do them no harm. Ironically, all three, John and his father and another Native American alumnus of the Foreign Mission School, Elias Boutinot, husband of Harriet Gold of Cornwall, (one of whose effigies was burned on the green), were all kissed by tribal retribution in Oklahoma.

It is a remarkable history that is readily accessible in Cornwall's library and historical society. I have enjoyed living, learning, and being the most recent steward of this house and celebrating its 200th anniversary. —Ben Gray

Demos places the establishment of the school within the context of the national interest in educating and converting "heathens" through mission work overseas and bringing heathens to study in the United States. While this may seem racist and patronizing today, the missionary efforts were progressive in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Cornwall was proud to be chosen by the national missionary body.

The school struggled to raise funds, recruit students and faculty, and it managed pretty well for several years. But it got caught up in forces beyond its control with very sad results. Demos describes these crises with great skill and sympathy. The book is very well written, describing local details within the complex national issues.

Demos will speak about his book on Sunday, May 4, at 2 P.M. at town hall.

- Jim Sheffield

### **Cornwall Briefs**

• Town Meeting May 9: Three important items will be brought to a vote: 1) Whether to appropriate \$10,000 from a fund known as the Larry and Judy Gates Bequest for the renovation of a building at the high school for offices for the Housatonic Youth Service Bureau. The bureau provides counseling services for students and their families. 2) An up or down vote on a mini

land transfer between the town and the Besozzi and King families. The town would get a right-of-way on the driveway that separates the soccer and baseball fields at Foote Field on Route 4 in return for a sliver of the driveway interior owned by the town. 3) A vote on a proposal to change the current method of choosing a Cornwall representative to the Region 1 school board. That person is currently appointed by the Cornwall Board of Ed. The vote is whether to change the appointment to election by town vote. Voting takes place at 7:30 p.m. in the Gathering Room at Cornwall Consolidated School (CCS).

one vote but it's a big one: the town budget for the upcoming fiscal year.
7:30 P.M in the Gathering Room at CCS.

- Seeking STEAP Grants: Cornwall is applying for a raft of the state grant money: \$120,000 to continue sprucing up local storefronts and businesses in town; \$100,000 toward the renovation of the North Cornwall Meeting House; \$50,000 for renovation work on the Calhoun Cemetery on Route 7 in Cornwall Bridge, and, finally, \$50,000 for renovating the recycling shed at the transfer station and adding solar panels to its roof.
- Fallen Soldiers to be Honored: Saturday, May 24, Cornwall's VFW chapter will take part in an observance on the Litchfield Green of the Civil War Battle of Cold Harbor, Virginia, when 20 soldiers from the area, including three from Cornwall, lost their lives. Jeff Jacobson %

of the historical society will read the names of Cornwall's fallen.

—John Miller

### **Onward Trinity Preserve**

As the Chronicle reported last month, the Cornwall Conservation Trust (CCT) was negotiating to purchase part of the property owned by Trinity Church Wall Street in West Cornwall. Now, in a major step forward, CCT announced on April 3 that it has entered into a contract with Trinity for that purchase of 317 acres for a price of \$715,000. The next step for the trust will be to raise the funds for the purchase, along with additional amounts to cover closing costs and a small stewardship endowment. Applications will be made for federal and state grant money, with the balance to be raised from private sources, a process that will take a number of months. Trinity retains the right to consider offers for the entire parcel. Stay tuned for updates.

Tom Barrett

### **Events & Announcements**

**Derby Day:** Benefit for the Cornwall Child Center, Saturday, May 3, 4:30 to 7 P.M. For tickets and information call Amy Bresson at 672-6989.

How to Speak Baseball: Book signing Saturday, May 10, from 11 A.M. to 2 P.M. at the Wish House. Sally Cook will autograph her illustrated guide to ballpark banter. Proceeds benefit the Cornwall Library.

The Heathen School: Talk and book signing by John Demos, sponsored by the Cornwall Historical Society, Sunday, May 4, 2 P.M. at town hall. Signed copies of the book available for purchase at \$30, cash or check only.

**Cornwall Historical Society Annual Membership Meeting:** Monday, May 5, 8:30 A.M. at 7 Pine Street. Members will elect the new board of directors, receive annual reports, and transact any other appropriate business.

Cornwall Farmers' Market: Saturday, May 10, opening day and weekly thereafter 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. on the Wish House lawn, West Cornwall. For more information email: info@cornwallfarmarket.org

# It Could Happen

It has snowed in May—sorry, but it's true. I remember brushing snow and apple blossoms off my car. We may hope that global warming has ruled this out. I wouldn't mind at all. Celebrate spring with a check to the *Chronicle* for which thanks!

**Motherhouse Events:** Come What "May" Old Time Community Dance, Saturday May 3, at 7 P.M. at the town hall. Suggested donation \$3–5/child; \$5–10/adult. Call Jane for more info at 672-6101.

Get Your Goat and Sheep Workshop, Saturday, May 10, 10:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. Potluck lunch. \$35/family. Call 672-0229 or email Debra@Motherhouse.us to register.

Keeping a Family Cow Workshop, Saturday, May 17, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M. at Local Farm. Potluck lunch. \$35/person or \$50/family of up to four. You MUST preregister. Call 672-0229 or email Debra@Motherhouse.us.

Referendum on the Region One School Budget: Vote at the Cornwall Town Hall on Tuesday, May 6, from noon until 8 P.M. Absentee ballots available in the town clerk's office.

Spring Bird Walk: 15th annual Spring Bird Walk led by Art Gingert and Jean Bouteiller, Saturday May 10, 7 A.M. Limited to 15 participants. Call Art at 672-0077 to register and for details.

Art in Cornwall: At the Cornwall Library: Rudi Wolf's exhibit Tulipmania continues through May 10. Opening Tuesday, May 13, through June 28, Home and Away, drawings and watercolors by Steve Foote. A reception will be held Saturday, May 17, 4 to 6 P.M. At the UCC Parish House: photographs by Becky Hurlburt, 2003: A Photo Perspective, May through June, Sunday through Friday, 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. Check in at the church office. At The Souterrain Gallery: Art Among Friends, through May 18. The Region 1 Lower and Middle School Student Art Exhibit, May 20 through 26.

### At the Cornwall Library:

Family movie night featuring *Babe*, Friday, May 16, at 7 P.M. Free. Refreshments provided.

Dance movie night, a film about choreographer David Parsons, Wednesday, May 21, at 7 p.m. Free.

Book sale, Saturday, May 24, 9 to 10 A.M. early bird opening (\$10 fee); open to public 10 A.M. to 3 P.M.; Monday, May 26, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.; \$5 bag sale, 1 to 3 P.M.

Summer camp for grades kindergarten to three focusing on life during the Civil War, June 24 to 27, and August 19 to 22, 1 to 4 P.M. Space is limited, \$10 fee per session. Sign up at the library.

**Senior Events:** Annual Spring Fling on Friday, May 2, at noon at the Grove in Lakeville. Buffet luncheon, music, door prizes. Reservations necessary. Call Mike

Beck at 860-435-5191 or email mbeck@ salisburyct.us.

Free Blood Pressure Clinic, Monday, May 12, noon to 1 p.m. at the UCC Parish House. For info call 860-567-6000 or email vnanw.org.

Senior Luncheon, Tuesday, May 13, 11:30 A.M. to 1 P.M. at the Wandering Moose Cafe. Fine buffet and stellar company at a great price. No reservations necessary.

Fall Prevention Clinic, Thursday, May 15, 1 to 3 P.M. at the UCC Parish House. Call VNA Northwest at 860-567-6000 or email jdunn@vnanw.org.

Park & Rec Senior Field Trip to Yale University Art Gallery, Friday, May 9. Bus leaves the UCC parking lot 9 A.M. and returns by 3:30 P.M. For reservations email prcornwall@gmail.com.

Make Cornwall Bright:
The National Iron Bank is raising funds for new solar equipment and lights that will bring sparkling glory back to the Cornwall Bridge holiday tree. Make contributions at the Cornwall Bridge office of National Iron Bank.

Northwest Connecticut Health and Recreation Summer Kick-Off Day: Saturday May 31, 1 to 4 P.M. at the Sharon Town Beach. Explore recreational opportunities available in our local towns.

Memorial Day Festivities: Monday, May 26, 9 A.M. commemorative service at the North Cornwall Cemetery led by Charlie Gold, parade and ceremony will begin at the town green at 11 A.M. High school senior Efraim Hermes will read several letters sent home from Cornwall's Civil War soldiers.

# CORNWALL CHRONICLE cornwallchronicle.org

THIS MONTH

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