



# CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 19 : NUMBER 10 NOVEMBER 2009



## Sweet Peet Gets Go-Ahead

The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) on September 21 gave a green light to Cornwall Land Use Clerk Karen Nelson to issue a zoning permit to Cream Hill Farm for its Sweet Peet venture. According to a letter from the DEP, "the storm water pollution prevention plan proposed for your composting facility has been reviewed and approved."

The letter and the permit are significant steps in the forward motion of the project. It is probable that these new developments will be reviewed by the group of Cream Hill neighbors objecting to the project and that a request for appeal could be submitted to the Zoning Board of Appeals for its September 23 meeting.

—Sharon Dietzel

## Open the Doors, Here Are the People

For more than 13 weeks this summer, the North Cornwall Meeting House was closed to its two worshipping communities and several weddings and town events.

Age has taken its toll on this historic Cornwall building, built in 1826 long before modern building codes were established. Last spring a steeple-painting project turned up problems that spurred a more serious

examination of the structural soundness of the church.

The building was constructed by the Second Congregational Church, and with the merger of two Cornwall churches in 1988 became the property of the United Church of Christ in Cornwall, Congregational. The Board of Trustees of that church decided to seek advice in determining the future of the only non-private building in North Cornwall.

A committee was formed to explore what needed to be done to maintain and fully utilize the building for the benefit of the entire Cornwall community. The Friends of the North Cornwall Meeting House engaged contractors to assess needs and to propose appropriate remedies.

The reports from the contractors indicated weakness in the structure of the steeple as well as concern for other sections of the church. As a result, on June 19, Cornwall Building Inspector Paul Prindle advised that the building be closed pending further examination and review.

Brian Neff, an engineer from Roxbury, used the remaining weeks of summer to conduct a thorough building examination. The committee received his report on September 24 and was pleased to learn that the church would be open again—except when winds

exceed 60 miles per hour. Neff's firm is presently developing a plan for structural reinforcement of the existing steeple and overall building stability.

The Friends of the North Cornwall Meeting House will review these plans and intend to do whatever is necessary to protect this beautiful Cornwall building.

Remember the steeple-painting project? Well, the painters began work October 15 but were driven away by the first snow of the season.

—Sharon Dietzel

## Obama Speech Free Speech?

President Barack Obama won the Nobel Peace Prize this year, but when he tried to talk to Region One school kids, he set off a war. Following the precedent of "Poppa" George Bush and other presidents, President Obama gave a televised talk to schools across the nation on September 8, welcoming pupils as they started the school year and offering them homilies on the importance of staying in school, studying hard, paying attention to their teachers, etc.

Strong stuff? Apparently a bit too strong for Region One, or at least for Superintendent Patricia Chamberlain. She sent a memo on September 4, before the speech, to the principals of the region's elementary schools and

(continued on page 2)

# NOVEMBER 2009

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>1</b> DAYLIGHT SAVING ENDS Artist Reception at Lady Audrey's Gallery 4-7 P.M. †	<b>2</b> Region One Bd. of Ed. 6 P.M. HVRHS Park & Rec. 7 P.M. Library Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Agricultural Comm. 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	<b>3</b> ELECTION DAY 6-8 P.M. Town Hall † Election Day Lunch 11 A.M.-2 P.M. UCC Parish House †	<b>4</b> Inland Wetlands 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> Pre-Dance Music Workshop 3-5 P.M. † Mystery Book Talk 3 P.M. Library † Community Contra Dance 7-9:30 Town Hall †
<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> Blood Pressure Screening Noon-1 P.M. UCC	<b>10</b> Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library P&Z 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	<b>11</b> VETERANS DAY Veterans Day - State Holiday Library and CCS Closed	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> Start Using 860 for ALL 860 Calls Antique Bird Carvings Talk 2 P.M. Historical Society †
<b>15</b> Deadline: December Chronicle Copy	<b>16</b> New Moon Gathering †	<b>17</b> Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> Bd. of Ed. 5 P.M. CCS Library Town Plan Public Hearing 7 P.M. CCS Gathering Room † Bd. of Finance 7:30 P.M. CCS Library VFW Post 9856 8 P.M. West Cornwall Firehouse	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> Town Plan Public Hearing 10 A.M. CCS Gathering Room † Artist Ellen Moon Reception 4-6 P.M. Library †
<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> CCS Early Dismissal 1 P.M. Parent Teacher Conference ZBA 7:30 P.M. Town Hall*	<b>24</b> CCS Early Dismissal 1 P.M. Parent Teacher Conference P&Z Workshop 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Cornwall Vol. Fire Dept. 8 P.M. West Cornwall Firehouse	<b>25</b> CCS Early Dismissal 1 P.M. for Thanksgiving Library Closes at 5 P.M.	<b>26</b> THANKSGIVING	<b>27</b> Annual Talent Show 7:30 P.M. Village Meeting House †	<b>28</b> Library Reopens 10 A.M.
<b>29</b>	<b>30</b> CCS Reopens	<b>31</b>	<b>Every Week This Month:</b> Mondays: Women's Adult Basketball, 7:00 P.M. CCS; Jam Session, 7:30 P.M. Call 672-0229 for Location. Tuesdays: Adult Volleyball, 7 P.M. CCS Gym. Wednesdays: Stretch Class, 5 P.M. Town Hall; Tai Chi, 6 P.M. CCS. Call 672-0064.			

\*Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

† Details in Events and Announcements

(continued from page 1)

Housatonic Valley Regional High School, advising them that they could tape the speech, vet it, and then show it to students later as long as their parents didn't object. To quote from her memo: "It makes little sense to force children to be addressed by the president against the wishes of their parents." She did admit, in the same memo, that "[none of the] advance information indicates that the president will be proselytizing the children of the country to support his legislative agenda, [or] to advance 'socialist' ideas...."

At CCS, Principal Robert Vaughan, after consulting with teachers and hearing from the Superintendent's Office, decided to tape the speech for later showing. CCS pupils in grades 5 to 8 were shown the president's speech three days after he delivered it; those in grades 1 to 4 saw it the following week. Vaughan says he received two protests against showing the president's talk, one by phone and one by email. Three students took advantage of the opportunity to "opt out" and thus were not exposed to the president's talk.

But that was only the beginning of local discussion. A letter of protest to the Region One Board of Education was circulated by Jackie Saccoccio, Marie Prentice, Valorie Fisher, and Bridget Lynch. It was signed by more than 90 Cornwall parents and residents. The letter read, in part: "We...do not support Superintendent Patricia Chamberlain's decision to deny our public school children the opportunity to participate in the live airing of President Obama's nationwide speech to all American children...." Jackie explained her role by saying that "...my primary concern with this issue...is that it's an example of how our children's civil liberties are being eroded, one poor decision at a time."

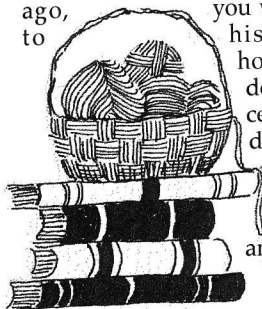
In addition, a flood of letters was sent to the *Lakeville Journal*, web chat sites, and this reporter differing sharply with the decisions of Region One and CCS not to show the president's broadcast live. Some protested the superintendent's warning against live viewing; others complained that parents were allowed to "opt" children out of hearing the president; still others argued that the whole matter was a policy decision that should have been made by the Region One board, not by its superintendent.

None of the Cornwall parents who decided to keep their children from viewing the president's talk identified themselves and could not be reached for comment.

—David A. Grossman

## Ring Up Then and Now

If you wanted to talk to someone 125 years ago, you walked or rode over to his house and yoo-hooed in at the back door. This required a certain allowance for deferred gratification unknown in these days of disposable cell phones, twitters, and tweets.



In the 1880's the first wires were strung to connect households in Cornwall Bridge and on Cream Hill. The telephone itself was a large wooden box with a hand crank that powered a generator. You lifted the earpiece and spoke down the mouthpiece on the box. Most people in the early years shouted down the phone, unable to believe that the fancy new thing would actually reach next door.

By 1881, according to *The Cornwall Star*, a line had been strung, tree-to-tree, from Cornwall Bridge to Cornwall Village. By 1922, The Rev. Starr reported that there were 180 telephones in town, and that by then almost every family had a car.

The main exchange in those days was in Falls Village. Cornwall had its own repairman, Leroy Johnson, who rode his mule around town fixing the wires.

The first switchboard was installed in 1912 in Cornwall Village. It was attended by, among others, Cora Sandmeyer and Florence Benedict, whose families still live in town.

In the 1940s when the present Medicare crowd was younger, it was endlessly interesting to pick up the receiver and hear someone say "number, please." I had no number to offer, but I remember asking where my grandmother was. "She's at Mrs. Woolsey's, dear," said the operator. She always knew!

Many stories are remembered from the old days of the party lines. These shared lines meant remembering your own series of rings and also restraining yourself from picking up when the rings weren't yours. Of course you could pick up very, very quietly whenever you liked. Thereby local gossip was nourished until the dial system and 672 came to town in 1953.

The Historical Society has several antique telephones, which certainly didn't play the opening bars of the Macarena to say "you've got a call!"

—Lisa L. Simont

*Editors' Note: Flash forward to 2009, November 14 to be exact, when callers will begin dialing 860 to make all local calls. Program your speed-dials and your address books! 911 and the other three-digit service numbers are unchanged.*

## Nature's Annual Striptease

I wonder if forest-hidden houses are embarrassed when the autumn leaves' striptease begins. Having had so much privacy for so long, are they shocked when, bit by bit through the thinning trees, they can begin seeing their neighbors and know that their neighbors can start seeing them unprotected and naked? Are they more startled to find acquaintances whom they had forgotten, or more relieved to find that they are not alone?

Probably none of this. Since we do sometimes impart personalities to our homes, it would not be too much of a logic leap to play games and pretend that homes have feelings. We are, ourselves, often startled when houses start appearing in mid-October, so it's not hard for us to imagine homes being similarly surprised.

The first hint of company is usually at night when a light appears where none is remembered. A camper? A stalled car? Then the low light of late afternoon's sun pinpoints a roof or a chimney that in just five months has been overlooked. Do the houses see the same? Do they ask if it is a new construction or an old friend whose name they can't recall?



If the houses have been painted during the summer, had a new roof installed, or a deck rebuilt, they could look forward to November as a beginning opportunity to show off. "Look at me. Like this latex? Feast your eyes on these gutters...real copper." Is there envy among houses? "A pool! You have a new pool!"

There are also the many older homes, in need of new gutters, in need of new paint. They are settled, mature, having character lines in the trim by their windows. A shutter or two might be hanging less than true. I think that houses are kind to one another, empathetic to the difficulties and capriciousness of their lives and the burden of shelter they must carry.

I like to think, too, that in November when they once again see these old friends emerge from the forests that they remark to one another how well they look and how capable they appear to be of facing the coming storms of winter.

—Jeff Jacobson

## Good-Bye to a Friend

Samuel Isaac Packard

## Congratulations

Ida Butts and Daniel Casey

Tamara Finstad and Donald Polk II

Dana Plikaytis and Ralph Jack Gulliver

## Land Transfers

Giuseppe C. Basili and Dean A. Ketchum to Peter K. Oliver and Sandra L. Gomez, land with buildings and improvements thereon at 77 Hollenbeck Road for \$261,500.

## Our Virtual Cornwall Library

Walking home from elementary school as a child, I read while I walked. Now I read by listening as I go—in the car, on the exercise machine. Audiobooks have gone from cassette tape to downloads at audible.com, but have always been pricey. I am truly excited now that our library has joined the Connecticut library consortium at <http://www.Bibliomation.com> (or use the link from the Library's home page).

How user friendly is the selection and check out process? It's easy to browse by subject or do an advanced search by author. The steps to check out a book seemed cumbersome only the first time. Once checked out, the Overdrive software is quite manageable, and even downloads to an MP3 player like my aging smartphone.

Three features many will appreciate: the ratings, your personal wish list, and the ease of putting a book on hold. Looking for a new book? What has five stars from other listen-

ers? Rate a book as soon as you finish, and it will remind you next year! The wish list is great once you have reached your five-book limit: come back in seven days and there's no need to browse again. Putting a book on hold is literally one click—and you automatically receive an email when the book is available for download!

One question: How can we make book requests? Given a limited budget at Bibliomation, selection may be the biggest challenge, as more and more of us discover the joys of listening to read. —Elizabeth Krentz-Wee

## Cornwall Briefs

**Cell Towers:** Connecticut's Attorney General Richard Blumenthal has suddenly become the new "best friend" of the opponents of proposed towers situated on or near Popple Swamp Road. In a letter to Cellco Partnership/Verizon Wireless, Blumey called the proposed locations "poorly sited" because of their "close proximity to a residential neighborhood." He added: "These sites are also unacceptable because they abut the Housatonic State Forest."

**Federal Stimulus \$\$:** A mile-long stretch of Great Hollow Road plus parts of Great Hill and Essex Hill Roads will be getting a new surface and guide rails next spring, thanks to a \$146,000 stimulus grant from the Feds. Cornwall pays for the work and then gets reimbursed. And that ain't all the Feds are gonna do. The town is getting a clutch of energy dollars—\$28,000—to fund an energy project of our choice. One possibility: a recycling building at the Transfer Station. If you have any questions about either project, call the Selectmen's Office at 672-4959.

**Visit Cornwall:** My goodness, still another grant for the town. The money keeps rolling in! These bucks are from the Heritage Partnership by way of the Upper Housatonic Valley Heritage Area. It amounts to \$4,150 to which Cornwall adds another \$4,050 and the total pays for a "visibility" program aimed at tourists. Among the benefits will be display racks for local businesses. The racks will hold brochures about Cornwall history, maps of Historical Society village tour routes, and flyers about places to go and things to do when visiting Cornwall. All this plus one big outdoor sign.

**One of Eleven:** The bi-monthly magazine Mother Earth News is out with its fourth annual "11 Great Places You've (Maybe) Never Heard Of," and guess who made the current list? That's right. We're there—between Rock Port, MO, and Sylva, NC—as one of the little places that have "raised the bar." And none other than Tim Prentice came out of his shell to talk to Mother Earth News. "It's not chic—people come up here to cool out," he said. "There are a lot of smart people in this tiny little town."

**Rumsey Hall:** No word yet from owner Andrew Hingson on plans to tear it down. We did learn that a lady named Susan Chandler from the Connecticut Historical Commission came over for a look and said the commission would not contest its demolition. When that time comes, First Selectman Gordon

# Letters to the Chronicle

## CORNWALL STANDS UP

When President Obama addressed the nation's school children, who would have thought Region One administrators would have cancelled a live airing of it and declared it needed vetting and parental permission before viewing?

That was a bad decision. It intruded into the classroom in a way that was both disrespectful of the President and ignored teachers' use of current events as a way to teach civics, history, and civil debate. With rare exception, Boards of Education were mute on this issue while many of us were mystified and angry.

Luckily we have the Cornwall Community Network (CCN) and, like Paul Revere spreading the word of the advancing British, the word spread about this outrage while members of our PTA stood up and started a petition. On September 14 at the Region One Board of Ed meeting, armed with a catalog of violated rights and fueled by righteous indignation, around 20 Cornwall residents confronted Superintendent Patricia Chamberlain. So far the public has received an apology from her that was based on how she was trying to avoid controversy and she didn't know about it until too late to have any meetings. Many policy committee meetings are now scheduled around the region as boards search for a policy that will still the fury.

But they don't need policy, they need common sense. At a Cornwall Board of Ed meeting October 15, one board member said she assumed the

speech would be shown until her child came home and said it hadn't. Our board wasn't consulted.

We need to be vigilant and active. Nothing less than free speech for our children and ourselves is at stake. —Norma Lake

## WHAT'S FOR DINNER?

Editorial inattention or Chronicle humor? "Cornwall for Locavores" (August 2009) included this information about what's available at the Scoville Farm: "...meat eaters should leave a message about their particular interest—pork or beef—and someone will return the call when the meat becomes available. (Prize barn kittens, however, are available now...)"

Kitty fritters! Yum, yum!  
Long live the Chronicle!

—Jane Duber

## ONE-WAY CONVERSATION

I received a postcard in the mail from cream-hillneighbors.com and went to their website. They have exerted considerable time and expense to defeat the Sweet Peet project, but their website has no e-mail address for any of us who want to respond. So they have set up what amounts to a one-way conversation with the rest of Cornwall.

I find it curious that they would single out a family that has for decades protected the area by not cashing in on the high value of the land.

—Dave Cadwell

Ridgway said, the town will make sure it is done "properly and safely." He indicated that at some point, if the owner does nothing, the town might have to step in because of the continuing safety factor. —John Miller

## In the Beginning...

Cornwall's roads, from the moment the first settlers walked over the Weatoug Trail from Litchfield until 2009, have taken up more time and cost more money than anything else in town.

In the spring of 1738, five of the first proprietors explored the town on foot and decided that three main roads were needed to connect Cornwall with the rest of the county. The first was built mainly along the roadbed of what is now Route 7 from Kent into Cornwall Bridge. An extension once ran along the east side of the river to West Cornwall but was closed in 1900.

The second was laid through the long valley from the Falls Village border (today Route 63) through Cornwall Hollow, above Cornwall Village and up to a point called the Crooked Esses near Warren.

The third highway is today's Town Street, all the way from its dirt road connection to Music Mountain Road to the old Cornwall Center at the intersection with Sharon-Goshen Turnpike.

By 1751 "a considerable network had been laid out," according to The Rev. Starr's history, for travel by foot and horseback.

There were no wheeled vehicles for another generation. By 1830 "quite a few" toll roads raised the funds to maintain the highways and to move commerce and the mail.

Roads had social uses as well. People got to church safely and visited other families all year round.

It's useful when thinking about how the roads were built to imagine the early settlers using a kind of eighteenth-century feng shui to find the best path through the terrain. But they wouldn't have called it that. Starr calls it good old Yankee ingenuity.

—Lisa L. Simont

## Quick, Get Me a Notary

Say you want to write your entire family out of your will and leave it all to your golden retriever. Or sell the back 40 to a condo developer from Miami. Whatever you have in mind, you need a notary.

The first notary in Connecticut set up shop in 1639. By 1800, there were 15 in the state, and by 2001 there were 59,000.

So why is it so hard to find a notary? Here are the notaries who have given their names to the Town Clerk in Cornwall: Ginger Betti, Anita W. Brean, Cheryl A. Cass, George T. Charleton, Elizabeth Dzenutis, Charles R. Ebersol, Jr., Joyce R. Hart,



Barbara E. Herbst, Anne H. Ingvertsen, Nancy J. Lacko, and Roberta D. Tyson.

Joyce Hart and Barbara Herbst work at the Town Offices and are available Monday through Thursday during working hours. Contact information for the remaining notaries on the list can be found in the phone book or by calling directory assistance.

—The November Editors

Events & Announcements

Art in Cornwall: Lady Audrey's Gallery will host a reception for British sculptor Christopher Stone on Sunday, November 1, from 4 to 7 P.M. Also featured in this show are architectural photos by Harry L. Colley II, hard-edge hardscapes by Phil Moncuse of Morris, photographs by Cathie Karpf, and original vintage prints presented by Stephen Sperduto of Housatonic Fine Art & Framing. Celtic harpist Julie Shrake will provide music, and hors d'œuvres will be served.

A reminder that the closing date for the Winter's Waltz art competition is December 1.

At the Cornwall Library, Ellen Moon's show, Landscapes and Time, a celebration of five years of daily painting, will continue through November, with an artist's reception held on Saturday, November 21, from 4 to 6 P.M. Bianca LaPorta will exhibit her pottery in the glass case.

Artwork by Hussein Helmy continues on display at the Wish House through November.

Cast Your Vote: Municipal elections will be held on Tuesday, November 3, at the Town Hall. Polls are open from 6 A.M. to 8 P.M.

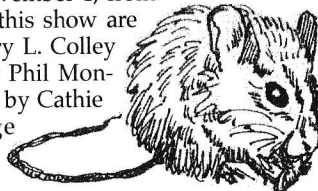
The Cornwall Town Plan is complete and ready for review. The Planning and Zoning Commission has set two dates for public hearings on the plan at the Town Hall: Thursday, November 19, at 7 P.M.; and Saturday, November 21, at 10 A.M. The plan has been posted at www.cornwallct.org. Color copies will be available for viewing at the Library, CCS, and the Town Hall. The public is encouraged to read the plan and comment at the public hearing or in writing to the commission at cwlanduse@optonline.net.

Keeping up Standards

The issue in your hands has much to say about free speech in a civic-minded Cornwall. The Chronicle has upheld that banner for almost 20 years, joined now by the online Community Network and the availability of email and a much-improved telephone system. Help us keep our standards flying; write a check today.

Election Day Lunch, sponsored by UCC, will be served from 11 A.M. to 2 P.M. on Tuesday, November 3, at the UCC Parish House. Cornwall voters are invited to enjoy homemade soups, bread, and desserts. Donations to benefit the Cornwall Food and Fuel Banks.

Mystery Writer Castle Freeman will be interviewed about his latest book, All That I Have, at the Cornwall Library on Saturday, November 7, at 3 P.M.



Motherhouse Activities: For information, location, ticket prices, and to reserve places, contact Debra Tyler at 672-0229 or Debra@Motherhouse.us.

• November 7, 3 to 5 P.M. Pre-Contra Dance Music Workshop with David Kaynor at the Town Hall.

• November 16. New Mo... in Northwest Connecticut. Call Ra... more information at 824-8404.

Family Contra Dance with David Kaynor calling, Saturday, November 7, from 7 to 9:30 P.M. at the Town Hall. Still the Homegrown Band playing. Admission \$3/child, \$5/adult. For information, call Jane or Jim at 672-6101.

Employment Opportunity: Cornwall's tax collector is looking for a part-time assistant to work in the office during busy collection periods in January through the first week in February, and again in mid-June to the first week in August. Applicants must be available during regular office hours as well as extra days when needed. For further information call Jean Bouteiller at 672-2705, or drop in to see her at the Town Office Mondays from 1 to 4 P.M., or Wednesdays from 9 to noon, and 1 to 4 P.M.

Scholarship: Family and friends of Sam Packard, who died in an automobile accident in September, have established a scholarship in his name at Housatonic Valley Regional High School. Donations can be sent to the HVRHS Faculty Association, 246 Warren Turnpike, Falls Village, CT 06031. Sam was a graduate of both Housatonic and the New England Culinary Institute.

The Annual Talent Show, to benefit the Cornwall Library, will be held on Friday, November 27, at 7:30 P.M. at the UCC Meeting House. Tickets are available from Amy Cady at the Library. See insert for details.

Cornwall Barns—2010: Next year's calendar with 13 new photos of barns by Alec Frost is available from the Cornwall Historical Society for \$15. Call 672-6191 for sales information and locations.

Birds Made of Wood: Joe Ellis will talk about his book Antique Miniature Bird Carvings and the Artists Who Made Them on Saturday, November 14, at 2 P.M. at the Cornwall Historical Society. The event is co-presented by the Sharon Audubon Society. Refreshments will be served.

Never Mind the Rain: The CCS Walk-a-Thon on October 9 raised \$9,000 to be split evenly between the Jane Lloyd Fund for cancer patients' families and the eighth-grade trip to Washington, D.C. Faculty, 120 students, staff, and community supporters walked or ran courses suited to age and strength. Sales of t-shirts and sponsor contributions may raise the total to as much as \$12,000, according to Bente Busby, the Walk-a-Thon's organizer.

The Cornwall Food Pantry moves to UCC on November 1. Anyone in need may pick up from 11

to noon Tuesday and Thursday; donations of food, 1 to 2 P.M. Friday or by appointment. Money donations go to Jill Gibbons at the Town Office. Contact Anne Scott at 672-0595 or cornwallfood@optonline.net.



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

NOVEMBER ISSUE

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DECEMBER ISSUE

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