



# CORNWALL CHRONICLE



VOLUME 20 : NUMBER 10 NOVEMBER 2010

## CHC & HUD (A Continuing Story)

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CHC President Maggie Cooley related the history that led to the current project for subsidized housing for seniors. When an appropriate location in Cornwall Bridge became available, the price was such that only by a grant could the land be acquired (bonding would have added the cost of interest). The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) 202 program will provide \$1.5 million plus and, with other grants, the project will impose no cost on the town budget.

The use of HUD monies means, of course, that HUD's rules apply and that the budget is closely watched. A new Cornwall Elderly Housing Corporation will be created to oversee the project (the CHC is looking for persons interested in serving on this board).

Residency requirements were explained by board member Ella Clark: independent, 62+ seniors, fitting income guidelines. The housing will consist of 10 540-square-foot one-bedroom units with common-use areas. The units are limited in size but not

design; the construction will be of good quality and buffered from Rt. 7 traffic. Although a schematic was prepared for the HUD application, the actual layout will be redesigned. Member Will Calhoun described the site layout for the HUD units on the flat land between Baird's Market and the Firehouse.

In the second half of the session, moderated by Norman Dorsen, questions and comments came from all points of view, including origin of residents, cost overruns or burdens to the town, configuration of the units, number of bedrooms, aesthetic and health issues.

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A lien covering these expenses will be placed on the property; it will have priority over any existing mortgages, and so the town will likely recover the costs when the property changes hands. In addition, the town previously got \$150,000 from owner Andrew Hingson which went into the Municipal Reserve. It's still there.

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## High Over Cornwall

Earl Brecher's Piper Archer takes off from the field in Great Barrington, soars to 2,500 feet, and heads south above Route 7 at 120 knots. It's mid-September, late afternoon, and the eastern flanks of Mount Everett and Tom's Hill are in shadow. Farther west loom the Taconics; east and south rise the gentler Litchfield Hills—on all sides a rolling ocean of green. Though the sky is clear, a light industrial haze ("from across the Hudson," the pilot says) pearls the western horizon.

Leaving the B & D water tower off our left wing, we catch the shimmering ribbon of the Housatonic River, the cleared fields around the high school, and then, suddenly ("Look! River Road!") Cornwall. Coming upon this small, known landscape in the vast panorama is like spotting a lover's face in a crowd: remarkable and familiar, it takes the breath away. Music Mountain, Hough Mountain, and Tarradiddle press against the curves of the river, now slashed by the flamboyant red of the covered bridge at West Cornwall. A sprinkling of town roofs sweeps under us as we hum south over Mine Mountain. The flung white span of Cornwall Bridge, arching over trees and banks, seems, unlike the covered bridge, unrelated to river or terrain.

Earl tells me that air is as sensitive to the earth's contours as water is to a river bottom, so pilots do not, for safety's sake, travel at low altitudes. But Cornwall seems very close to us as we float east over Coltsfoot Mountain to Cornwall Plain, the only flat stretch for miles, it seems, and a veritable metropolis with its roads, houses, church spires, hulking Rumsey Hall, Marvelwood, and Polly Calhoun's house by the toppled hillside of Cathedral Pines.

Heading northeast now, we leave the village behind us, and pass Cemetery Hill, the long red chicken house at the Hopfs, Mohawk Ski Area. Suddenly, from its clearing on a distant eastern hillside, Ivan Lendl's mansion shouts up at us like a Gulliver in Lilliput. It's a shock, too, because, except in the three villages, we've seen virtually no houses on our flight, camouflaged as they are (for the moment) by woods. Forest-locked fields of Scoville corn (hidden from the ground, like other secret meadows) bloom bright green below, Cream Hill Lake gleams black, and swamp maples in the North Cornwall beaver ponds are turning mauve. Low rays of the sun gild the spire of the North Cornwall Church behind us, and the land opens up briefly on Cream Hill, quilted with corn and pasture. As quickly it closes in again. When Earl points, "There's Hunt and Becky's," I strain to see, and catch only a hint of their road, a patch of roof, and then the woods take over again, the constant hills.

The plane purrs north. The sun's gone down.

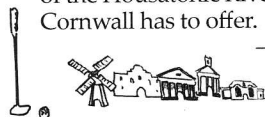
—Ella Clark (1994)

(continued from page 1)

hydrant and an area for the Fire Department to have better access to launch boat rescue.

These improvements, coupled with the new face given to the businesses of West Cornwall under the Facade Program, will provide incentive for both residents and visitors alike to come and enjoy the beauty of the Housatonic River and all that West Cornwall has to offer.

—Brenda Underwood



## All Aboard! In Five Years or So

Cornwallians of a certain age will remember the two-car "Toonerville Trolley" train that came through the West Cornwall and Cornwall Bridge stations en route to Danbury and New York City. I vividly recall my aunt waving a red flag on the platform to signal the engineer to stop for me. This service ended 39 years ago and there have been no passengers on the line since the Housatonic Railroad Company (HRRC) operated a short-lived excursion train in the 1990s. There is a daily freight train.

Now HRRC has announced that a recent survey of 2,567 people to determine potential ridership on the Housatonic line was positive enough to justify the next steps in restoring passenger service on the Housatonic Railroad: developing a financial plan for the estimated \$200 million needed to restore every inch of track between Pittsfield and Danbury; identifying and purchasing land for new passenger stops in areas where the old stations are not available after decades of private ownership or lack of parking space; creating raised platforms for passengers to board, and acquiring additional train stock. HRRC has consulted with Gordon Ridgway and other local selectmen for their input.

Commuters, weekenders, train buffs, tourists and mass transit advocates will be watching with anticipation while understandably wondering how the \$200 million investment can ever be recouped, given the flourishing Metro North service just across the New York

state line. HRRC executive Colin Pease recently told *The Lakeville Journal* that financing will come from a combination of public-private sources and that the company foresees the development of related businesses near the stops. Station depots in the old-fashioned sense are not planned, but Zipcar rentals, coffee shops and newsstands, for example, may spring up.

In five years, will there still be printed newspapers to sell

at those newsstands? Tellingly, perhaps, HRRC plans to offer Wi-Fi on its passenger cars—one component of this intriguing combination of 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup>-century technologies and concerns.

—Julie Schieffelin

## Cornwall Briefs

- On the green front, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has named Cornwall a Green Power Community, one of 30 nationwide and the only one in Connecticut. We save the equivalent of the electricity needed to power 60 average homes annually. The emissions avoided amount to the CO<sub>2</sub> output of more than 90 cars a year. A program and a celebration of this news will be held November 15 at 6 P.M. at the Town Hall.

- Cornwall has snared its fifth STEAP grant which will continue funding renovation projects by town businesses. Traffic calming is also in this grant.

—Lisa L. Simont

## Welcome

Linsey Grace Biondino  
to Yurian and Paul Biondino

Nathan James Young  
to Wendy McFarlane and James Young

Sonja Elona Kirschner  
to Lesley Gyorsok and Jonathan Kirschner

## Land Transfers

Patricia Hong to Mark Zielke, 16.187 acres and improvements thereon at 109 Dibble Hill Road, for \$180,000.

## Cornwall Recycling Up by 19 Percent

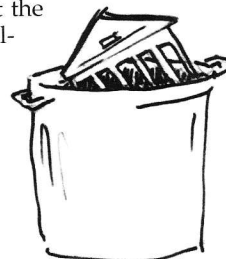
In the 2009-2010 fiscal year, Cornwall continued to recycle more of its municipal waste and dispose of less. Two years ago the Town disposed of 635 tons; this past year it was only 514 tons—a dramatic decrease of 121 tons and a clear indication of Cornwall's dedication to recycling. The numbers are:

- 93 tons of mixed paper/cardboard
- 59 tons of commingled
- 90,940 lbs. of scrap metal
- 6,278 lbs. of electronics
- 2,346 lbs. of automobile batteries
- 275 gal. of waste oil
- 143 lbs. of rechargeable batteries
- 140 automobile tires

—Steve O'Neil

## On the Surface

"What's with all the sand on the road?" asked one of my neighbors on Dibble Hill Road when he arrived for the weekend. Earlier in the week I had watched the oil and sand trucks go up the hill and could



tell him, quite authoritatively, that this is how Cornwall maintains its roads. The goal is to seal the cracks to prevent them from getting too big. For several weeks, I had been watching the progress of this quadrennial rite. First, the men with the cans of white spray paint came to hunt down and circle those pesky potholes. Then came the trucks of hot asphalt to patch and press and, lastly, came the facelift.

Two trucks, like a fast-moving millipede, flash by spraying oil and sand. It is a sight to behold, especially when you realize the sand truck is backing up all the way.

To get the real nitty-gritty (excuse the pun) I went to First Selectman Gordon Ridgway.

Cornwall is divided into four quadrants for road improvement and repairs, Ridgway explained, which means every four years your road will receive asphalt patching and a coating of oil and sand. If you live on one of the 15 streets covered in Group 1, this would have been your year.

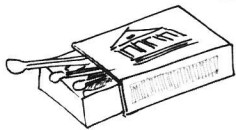
How to maintain rural roads is an ongoing dilemma for small towns. It has to be cost effective as well as do a good job. This year's cost to repair 12.5 miles of road totaled \$222,000: \$100,000 for asphalt; \$90,000 for 31,035 gallons of oil, \$24,000 for 1,803 tons of sand, and \$8,000 to hire trucks.

For the first time an environmentally friendly water-based oil emulsion was used which gave better results than last year, "because it hardened up better," said Rick Stone, Cornwall's road engineer. The town is also looking into a product called chip seal which uses a layer of heated asphalt into which small chips of stone are imbedded.

"Most towns use a combination of both processes to seal their roads," said Bob Loucks, Sharon first selectman, who has recently contracted to repave 27.7 miles of Sharon roads at a cost of \$5.3 million. To put that into perspective, this year Cornwall patched just one mile with asphalt for a cost of \$100,000; if the entire 12.5 miles had been patched, the cost to the town would have exceeded a million dollars. The product used also depends on the state of the roads. "Oil and sand is the smart way for Cornwall to go," said Loucks.

I was also able to tell my neighbor that the town, with an eye toward conservation, recaptured 1,000 tons of sand which will be recycled for winter road maintenance.

—Brenda Underwood



## The Art And Business Of Furniture

(Note: this is the third in an informal series about longstanding Cornwall businesses.)

In 1969 a young Lakeville native, back from military service in Vietnam, built a house high above West Cornwall and began an

# Letter to the Chronicle

## BOTOXING CORNWALL'S ROADS

The annual oil and sanding of our roads is complete. Cogswell Road resembled a long sandbox. I've always assumed this approach to road maintenance was drummed up by a divorce lawyer seeking to increase business. I'm sure I'm not the only one who invariably steps in the oil and sand, tracks it into the house onto a rug, and is then subjected to harsh comments about my lack of intelligence.

Presumably the oil and sand fill the cracks in the roads. Does this botoxing of the roads actually work? After a few rains the sand is on the side of the road; the cracks reappear. A few small stones and sand remain in the cracks. After subsequent rainstorms, snow, and ice, might the stones and sand actually exacerbate the erosion in the cracks? Would an increase in patching and repaving be a more efficacious approach, less wasteful, and in the long run perhaps no more costly or even cheaper? Until there are some credible answers to these questions, I say keep the sand for the beaches.

—Jim Fishman

## DENIAL AND OUR CARBON ADDICTION

With a sense of urgency, people gathered on

apprenticeship in furniture making. He had no cabinetmakers to study with because furniture as a craft was all but unknown in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century America. Design-conscious consumers might seek out Danish Modern, for example, but the pieces were mass produced in factories.

The young man thus turned to the best available source of inspiration, Brother Robert Wagan (1833-1883) of the Mount Lebanon Shaker community. At the Hancock Shaker Museum he studied Wagan's chairs and taught himself how to put them together and recreate their elegantly simple lines. In 1975 he began to sell his own Shaker-inspired work. In 1980 he opened a showroom in the Toll House next to the covered bridge. The business grew rapidly, especially after the Whitney Museum's groundbreaking 1986 Shaker exhibition sparked a craze for Shaker style. Ian Ingersoll Cabinetmakers now employs around 10 people.

Today Ian Ingersoll ships furniture around the world, though Shaker designs now comprise only 15 percent of sales. He increasingly produces custom work for major design firms. In hard economic times, with fewer individual customers, he is glad to have capital projects in such locales as Las Vegas and the Mohegan Sun. China may be on the horizon.

A generation later, it is Ian Ingersoll's work that is being collected by museums. He regrets one unintended consequence of this success—the young craftspeople of today will not enjoy the open opportunities



October 10 at Fred and Joelle Sanders' house in West Cornwall to discuss what to do to reduce our use of carbon. After talking about the nature of denial in all of us, we discussed what we could do individually to cut back our carbon footprints. Fred and Joelle ended their denial when they lost water for the first time since moving to West Cornwall.

We also decided to invite a speaker from an international organization such as TransitionNetwork.org to build a larger critical mass of Cornwallians in this effort. Anyone interested, please contact Fred Sander at fredmsander@aol.com.

—Anne Zinsser

## NEW WEBSITE

It appears that erroneous information about the Cornwall Housing Corporation's plans is going around. By the time you read this, our website will be up and running. Please visit us at [www.cornwallhousingcorporation.com](http://www.cornwallhousingcorporation.com) to learn what we are hoping to accomplish.

—Maggie Cooley, for the Board

he had as a pioneer in his field. On the business side, he remembers the Salisbury banker who gave him a \$16,000 start-up loan pretty much on his own say-so and says, "You couldn't get that now." But Cornwall is fortunate that this distinguished cabinetmaker was able to make his start here and develop a business that has flourished for 35 years.

—Julie Schieffelin



## The Right Side Of The Tracks

Readers of *The New York Times* Home Section on June 17, 2009, could hardly miss the photograph of a graceful yellow house spread across the first page. Cornwall Bridge residents in particular would have said, "I know that place!" But wait! There's a second object in the photograph, a large train engine that is passing the house at what appears to be almost its doorstep. That would be the once-or-twice daily freight train operated by the Housatonic Railroad Company only 20 feet away. The photo is illustrating an article titled "The Unfortunate Location", describing attractive houses that come with significant drawbacks.

When Kathleen Hulser, public historian at the New York Historical Society and co-owner with her brother Michael, is asked, "Why did they put the house so close to the tracks?" she replies, "Why did they put the tracks so close to my house?" The house was built in 1839, two years before the track was laid. The location offered





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