



# CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 23 : NUMBER 8 SEPTEMBER 2013



## November Matchup

Since winning the race for Cornwall's top spot in 1991, First Selectman Gordon Ridgway has traveled a fairly uneventful road to re-election. Directly challenged by only four candidates in his 11-term career—Dick Dakin, Ray Augustyn (twice), Roger Kane, and, most recently, Becky Hurlburt—and endorsed by both parties in five of the last seven local election cycles, Ridgway comes into this year's race with a two-decades-plus résumé of service to the town.

But this fall he will face a challenge from five-term selectman KC Baird, the choice for first selectman of a reinvigorated Republican Town Committee, in what promises to be a spirited contest. In explaining his decision to run for first selectman, Baird says: "Now that the store has been sold [the former Baird's in Cornwall Bridge], I have more time to devote to the job. I realize that the job is 24/7, and if I'm elected I will make myself available for any issues the townspeople may have. I plan to spend one entire weekday and two evenings a week at the selectmen's office." Baird adds that he offers a contrasting managerial style to Ridgway's and perceives issues differently. He would "delegate more tasks to the other selectmen and improve the lines of communication

with the electorate."

For his part, Ridgway states: "The job has become increasingly complicated, and experience matters. Big and small issues need to be addressed on a day-to-day basis, and no two days are the same. We were able to fix the bridge [on Lower River Road] quickly after Hurricane Irene in 2011 because we knew exactly who to call to make things happen." Ridgway also points to his long experience in interfacing with various town boards and service organizations, but adds: "KC Baird is a good friend, and whatever happens, that won't change."

Look for a lively campaign between now and November 5! —Tom Bechtle

A full list of candidates will appear in the October issue.

## Core Challenges at CCS

With the mandate for implementation of the Common Core State Standards shaking up the American education system, CCS opened August 26 with 105 students enrolled (up by three), a new English teacher, Stephanie Magyar, and a combined fourth-fifth grade.

The federally driven, state-adopted Common Core, according to the Aspen

Institute, "represents a seismic shift in the teaching of K-12 English Language Arts and math." It aligns differing state curricula to ensure that all students become independent, active thinkers through rigorous engagement with increasingly complex reading material (especially non-fiction), deep inquiry and analysis, evidenced-based communication, and justified problem solving.

CCS Principal Mike Croft acknowledges these standards may be "kind of an abstraction for most people." But he said that his staff has prepared concretely to help students meet the demands. "We've worked on the speaking and listening standards in team and faculty meetings, and the region held a curriculum re-write session this summer." Croft admits, "We're not as far along with reading and writing as with math," though he has purchased new books to address the text-complexity requirements.

In math, teachers had professional development with Brennan Glasgow, coordinator for Region 10, and Region 1 adopted the learning program *Investigations*. Croft noted a renewed emphasis on independence in classes last year. Teachers understand "they can't be helicopter educators intervening too quickly when

(continued on page 2)

# SEPTEMBER 2013

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3 ♦ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall ♦ Inland Wetlands 7:30 pm Town Hall	4	5 ♦ Red Cross Blood Drive 1 pm–5:45 pm UCC	6 NEW	7 ♦ Agricultural Fair 10 am–4 pm Town Green ♦ Talk: From Farm to Market 2 pm Library ♦ Cornwall Ass'n Mtg Newcomers Tea 4–6 pm Library ♦ Family Country Dance 7 pm Town Hall
8	9 ♦ Region 1 Board of Ed 6 pm HVRHS Library ♦ Park & Rec 7:30 pm Town Hall	10 ♦ Economic Development 8:30 am Town Hall ♦ P & Z 7 pm Library ♦ Housatonic River Commission 7:30 pm CCS	11 ♦ Senior Homecoming Luncheon 11:30 am–1 pm UCC	12 1st Q	13	14 ♦ Roadside Clean Up 9 am ♦ BAA Auto Tax 10–11 am Town Offices ♦ CCT Picnic 12:30–2:30 pm Lower River Rd. W. Cornwall ♦ Artist Roptn Geneviève Simont Ireland 4–6 pm Library
15 ♦ Artist Reception: Alden Weigold 11:30 am UCC Parish House ♦ Deadline: October Chronicle Copy	16	17 ♦ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	18 ♦ Board of Education 3:30 pm CCS Library ♦ Film: <i>Sacred Monsters</i> 7 pm Library	19 ♦ Cornwall Conservation Commission 7 pm Town Hall ♦ Board of Finance 7:30 pm CCS Library	20 FULL ♦ Movie: <i>Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs</i> 7 pm Library	21 ♦ Family Cow Workshop 10 am–1 pm Local Farm ♦ Author Talk: Adam Van Doren 4 pm Library
22 ♦ Social History of St. Bridget Church Walk 1 pm ♦ Of Course, Women Do Deliver 2 pm Town Hall	23 ♦ ZBA* 7:30 pm Library	24 ♦ Cornwall Committee for Seniors 7 pm Library	25 ♦ Medicare Options 4–7 pm Library	26 4th Q	27	28 ♦ Reading: Peter von Ziegeler 4 pm Library
29	30	<b>Every Week This Month:</b> Mondays: Yoga, 8:30–10 am Library; Yoga, 5:45–7 pm CCS; Karate, 6:30–7:30 pm Town Hall ♦ Tuesdays: Adult Volleyball, 7:30 pm CCS gym ♦ Wednesdays: Tai Chi, 6–9 pm Town Hall; Women's Basketball, 7:30 pm CCS gym ♦ Thursdays: Pilates, 8:30–9:30 am Library; Toddler Play Group, 10:30–11:30 am Library; Yoga, 5:30–6:30 pm Library ♦ Fridays: Yoga, 8:30–10 am Library ♦ Saturdays: West Cornwall Walks, 12:30 pm Wish House ♦ Sundays: Yoga 9–10:30 am Library; Meditation, 1–2 pm, call Debra for location, 672–0229; West Cornwall Walks, 12:30 pm Wish House				



(continued from page 1)

kids struggle." Students now must dig deep and persevere in solving given problems—individually or in small teams. Lessons involve some teacher coaching, but *students* do the intellectual work. "They may ask clarifying questions, sometimes receiving an answer, sometimes not;" teams develop, show, and defend their various solutions for the class to analyze.

To further support the struggle to meet Core requirements, CCS has been offering practice on an array of pilot tests. But with our own principal's admission that "the kids thought they were hard;" with New York reporting that "the number of students passing state reading and math exams dropped drastically" (*NY Times*); with the possibility of lower scores for our own students on the official "Smarter Balanced Assessments" looming in 2014-15; questions over this national effort to retool school could mount. Digging deep for more information ([www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)) should add to our understanding of not only the challenges and potential pitfalls, but also the fertile learning opportunities for *all* of us at the core of the Common Core.

—Catharine Clohessy

## WHICH Old House?

Whoever sets out to identify the oldest house in a town like Cornwall, full of old houses and their fans, steps into a world of myth. Everybody has a favorite candidate for the crown, and these allegiances are strong; documentation, though, is scarce. The assessor's records have a date for every house in town—those are the official "approximate year built" (AYB) dates used in real estate ads. But they cannot be verified because there is no research to back them up. Some may have been educated guesses, but the earliest ones are just plain wrong.

Here are some of the popular candidates, with their official AYBs: the Miller house, 28 Todd Hill Road (1700); the McKenna house, 127 Kent Road (1735); the Wedge house, 156 Kent Road (1740); the Bardot house, 9 Pine Street (1780); the Bryant house, 99 Valley Road (1790); the Ellen house, 76 Popple Swamp Road (1800); the Klaw house, 280 Cream Hill Road (1803); and I may have missed some.

The earliest dates are fables. In 1716, this was a tract of unsurveyed wilderness, purchased by the Colony of Connecticut from Chief Waramaug of the Wyentenock tribe. Cornwall was not surveyed until 1738, and in 1740, the town of Cornwall was finally incorporated. Three years later it opened a town office to record land transactions. But in 1750, life in Cornwall was still one of severe hardship from cold and hunger; it was a time with no worked roads, when traveling was done on the river, trails, and paths; a time before

there were saw pits for sawing boards, when settlers lived in log cabins. We can dismiss any house dates before 1740, and even 1740 is probably a stretch.

Later, building a timber-framed house was a major community effort requiring skills with wood, earth, and stone. Tim Prentice points out: "We have to count the start of actual construction as a house's date. That would be after the stones had been cleared from the site, after the foundation had been placed—that took a long time."

Estimating a dwelling's age by its method of construction is tempting to old house mavens, but it's not reliable. Some building techniques popular in the 1700s were in use right up until the 1850s, so old-time methods like accordion laths, wooden pegs holding mortise and tenon joints, and pig bristles or horsehair in the plaster are not infallible clues. Old iron nails, so costly that they were passed down to heirs, don't date a house; if a building burned down, they were saved and reused elsewhere. What's left for estimating age may be to search the beams and walls for saw cuts and chisel marks. Paul Prindle, Cornwall's building inspector, says, "You've got to get inside a wall to know how old it is."

Our lack of solid information is a dilemma. Starr's *History* (1926) and Timothy Stone's manuscripts (about 1831) don't date early buildings. Then how are we to identify our oldest dwellings, short of uncovering a trove of original documents or doing title searches going back 225 years or more? We'll probably miss what we're after if we look only for complete buildings, because the oldest part may be concealed by extensions, or the whole structure may even have been altered. Poverty is a great preserver of old houses.

In line with this, we have information on two dwellings in East Cornwall that make them serious candidates.

The Moche house, 191 Great Hill Road (AYB 1810), sits on land bought in 1745 by Samuel Brownson. There is no evidence of when he built it. But he must have had a substantial building on that land for his family at least by 1765, when his first Cornwall daughter's birth was registered in town. The house has undergone some changes, but Harriet Clark's *Supplement to the History of East Cornwall* describes the original plank house as including the "living room, front hall, downstairs bedroom, bathroom, and almost half of [the] sewing room."

The other building is on the former Yale Lands. In 1732, the Colonial Legislature assigned 300 acres each in Cornwall, Canaan, Goshen, Kent, and Norfolk to Yale College for income. After the town of Cornwall had been surveyed in 1737, its proprietors handed over land in its southeast corner to Yale, which promptly started renting out this property. The Cornwall Historical Society has one of these leases from 1784 to Azariah Borden, for



land and buildings that are now the Tyson place, 128 College Street (AYB 1806). Its barn, oldest part of the extended structure, encloses early living quarters under its back roof; now used as a shed, this small space is the remains of a one-room dwelling, 12 feet by 20 feet, set on a foundation over a root cellar. Wide elm wood boards make up the floor and others lie over the beams for a ceiling 6 feet 4 inches at its lowest. The original fireplace is gone and the eastern wall has been repaired, but some of the horizontal rabbeted paneling has survived; the original door is a heavy batten door with two layers of boards, vertical and horizontal.

We don't know the date. But over many years the men who rented these acres from Yale had to have a place to live, however cramped and crude. The quarters are older and more primitive than either the main house, built in 1812, or the old saltbox that was fitted between that structure and the barn, and they are evidence of an earlier life—isolated, long on grueling hard work and short on comforts. Not knowing more, we can be sure of that. —Ann Schillinger

*The Chronicle welcomes any histories, data, or documents that could expand the knowledge of our oldest houses.*

## Congratulations

Elizabeth Saccardi to Garrick Dinneen

Jessica Savan to Michael Poling

Stephanie Paulsen to Adam Labelle

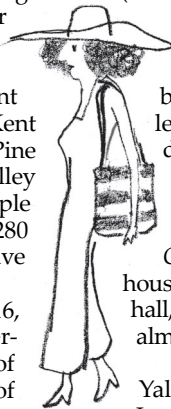
## Land Transfers

Estate of Georgiana Reynolds to Blaise Frederick and Jake Frederick, dwelling and personal property known as 16 Windy Way, for \$25,000.

Estate of Ellen Berner-Lorch to Didi M. Skaff and Robert V. Re, 31.778 acres on Kent Road, for \$60,000.

Adrian P. Selby & Margaret N. Selby to Alison M. Trotta and Ian C. Johnson, land with dwelling and improvements thereon at 103 Whitcomb Hill Road, as well as four surrounding parcels, for \$654,370.

Estate of Bernard William Nimkin to Michael R. Carano and Marilyn H. Carano, two parcels of land with two dwelling houses and all other buildings and improvements thereon at 15 Swifts Bridge Road, for \$500,000.



## Interview With Our Animal Control Guy

Brad Hedden has been Cornwall's animal control officer for close to 20 years, first as an assistant and now as head person. I sat down with him recently to find out more about his job.

CC: What are the qualifications and training for the ACO?

BH: Training is pretty much on the job; qualifications are that I like animals and want to help them.

CC: What animals do you and your family have?

BH: Two miniature donkeys and a horse, 20 chickens, three dogs, two cats, and three fish.

CC: I guess having a zoo qualifies you. What's the most common kind of call?

BH: Stray dogs and cats. Or lost dogs. One odd call was from the Falls Village librarian, who lost her Lab walking near River Road. Five days later a woman heard a dog barking in the area and called. We found the dog trapped in a well, got a ladder and rescued him. Luckily there was only a little water in the well and so the dog survived.

CC: Have you ever been in a dangerous or threatening situation?

BH: Not really, I've been bitten but never attacked.



CC: If not with animals, how about their owners?

BH: More likely. I was involved in a nasty confrontation between two neighbors feuding about a dog, but I'd better say no more about that. I also had a call recently from the State Police about a dog locked in a car at Kugeman Village on a very hot day. I had to use a Slim Jim to open the door and rescue the dog. We got him to Sand Road in time to save him. The police charged the owner with animal cruelty.

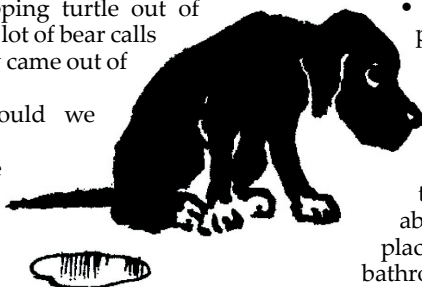
*(Interview interrupted by barking noise from Brad's pocket; turns out to be incoming call on his iPhone.)*

CC: Are most calls about domestic animals rather than wild ones?

BH: Yes, but I also deal with rabid raccoons and just took a snapping turtle out of town hall. And I had a lot of bear calls in the spring after they came out of hibernation.

CC: How much should we worry about coyotes?

BH: They can be dangerous to your pets and are clever enough to lure a dog into the woods where



a pack will attack him. They're classified as varmints and can be hunted anytime.

CC: How do you handle a call to get rid of a bat?

BH: I squeeze the bat between two badminton rackets; I try not to kill them.

CC: There must be one animal you can't stand.

BH: Snakes. I don't do snakes.

—Ed Ferman

## Budget Defeated Again

No. Yes. No. Yes. Yes. That's how Cornwall voted on the five high school budget referenda. And who can blame voters for being inconsistent or confused, since the issue was not just dollars but also personality conflicts and deep misgivings about the performance of the school, its top administrators, and the school board.

At its August 8 meeting, the Region 1 board cut a \$94,000 appropriation for iPads. Superintendent Patricia Chamberlain offered to give up the last year of her contract and donate the amount of her 2 percent raise to a school scholarship fund if the budget passed.

In an apparent effort to counter the negative stance toward the budget taken by online and other media, five of the six first selectmen signed and circulated a letter expressing concern about the difficult atmosphere caused by the budget defeats and hope that "residents might support the budget in the next referendum."

In Cornwall, First Selectman Gordon Ridgway hosted an August 11 meeting at which Chamberlain, CCS Principal Mike Croft and high school Principal Matt Harnett offered positive presentations about successes and challenges at their schools. The audience was small but supportive.

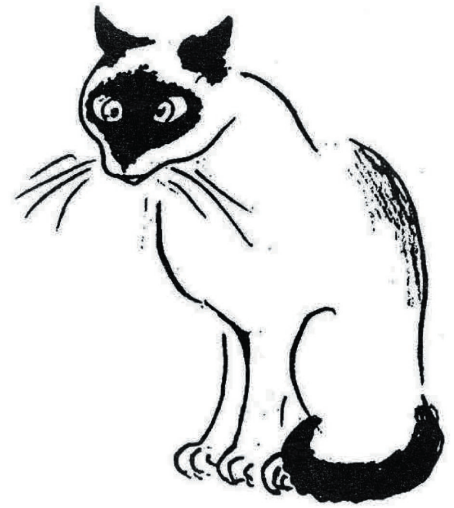
Then, in a surprising development just four days after the meeting, Harnett tendered his resignation to accept another position. Was his departure caused or hastened by the budget problems? One can only speculate, but its dismal timing could only deepen the unease about leadership at the high school.

In the wake of these events, the budget failed again in an August 20 vote. The final count was 530 yes, 674 no; Cornwall voted 98 yes to 97 no.

—Ed Ferman

## Cornwall Briefs

- **Progress Report:** When we poked our head inside the Cornwall Country Market in mid-August, new windows were in place and a handsome new front door was installed—the next day. In fact just about everything about the place will be new: two bathrooms, an art gallery, a



community area, 12 to 15 seats for those who choose to stay and eat, and all the items you expect on the shelves of a general store. Idella and James Shepard are the new owners and will live in the apartment above the store. If not for some unexpected asbestos in the basement, the store would have opened earlier. Idella said they are hoping to open for business by Labor Day weekend.

On we went next door to the Bonney Brook elderly housing complex. Workers outdoors were busy building sidewalks, landscaping, and finishing work on a pump house. We got a look at an apartment, one of four on the ground floor. Cozy, I'd call it: a living room with kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom. To reach the six apartments on the second floor there's a sort of grand staircase with an elevator to its right. The second floor will also have a common room and media room.

"We're in the final crunch stage, so every day shows progress," says Cheryl Evans of CEHC. "The builder is determined to make their completion date of October 1."

- **Speed Signs:** The ones we've anxiously been anticipating in West Cornwall and Cornwall Bridge. Where the hell are they? My friend Richard G. wants to know! The town office has a verbal OK but needs paperwork from the state before it can put the sign work out to bid. We're told "any day."

- **River Road Parking:** An area long used by fishermen to park has been claimed by the owner of the adjacent farm, who has put logs in place to block off all parking. The town office has received complaints and has ordered a survey, which is problematic on this old road. The first selectman is trying to negotiate a compromise that will allow for some parking.

- **In Other News:** A task force is in the works to look into the health (water quality) of Cream Hill Lake. Some state grant money left over for storefront improvement will be used to build a handicap ramp in front of the Cornwall Country Market.

—John Miller



## Events and Announcements

**A Red Cross Blood Drive:** Thursday, September 5, from 1 to 5:45 P.M. on the SAVE-A-LIFE BUS at the United Church of Christ. Registration and refreshments in the Parish House. Note that this drive is at the UCC and not the library.

**Cornwall Association Annual Meeting and Newcomers' Tea:** Saturday, September 7, from 4 to 6 P.M. at the library. First Selectman Gordon Ridgway will speak, followed by updates from heads of town organizations. Terry Burke, a 2012 newcomer, will talk about his experience coming to Cornwall. Refreshments.

**22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Agricultural Fair:** Saturday, September 7, 10 A.M. to 4 P.M., Village Green, dedicated by the Cornwall Agricultural Advisory Committee to the memory of Ralph Gold. New this year: a display of antique cars and trucks joins the antique tractors. The ag committee will provide food. Volunteer Fire Department cow chip raffle, exhibits, crafts, lots more. See insert for details. Questions/want to help: Bill Dinneen, 672-0035.

**Farm Market** will be at the Ag Fair on Saturday, September 7, back in West Cornwall other Saturdays through October.

### Motherhouse Events:

Family Dance: September 7, 7 P.M., Town Hall. Caller Peter Stix, music by Still, The Homegrown Band. Info: Jane Prentice 672-6101.

Family Cow Workshop: September 21, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M., Local Farm. Learn to milk a cow, make cheese and butter. \$50/family, preregister with Debra Tyler, 672-0229.

### At The Cornwall Library

Dan Horan, CEO of Five Acre Farms, will talk about bringing local farm products to

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 See an art slide show  
 Send us a letter or comment  
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supermarkets. Saturday September 7, 2 P.M.

Alice Wolf will resume her dance movie series with *Sacred Monsters*, a film that brings together two pre-eminent dancers. Wednesday, September 18, at 7 P.M.

The family movie *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* will be offered Friday, September 20, at 7 P.M.

Artist and author Adam Van Doren will talk about his latest book, *An Artist in Venice*, Saturday, September 21, at 4 P.M.

Louise Riley, who received training as a Medicare specialist, will answer questions about Medicare, Wednesday, September 25, from 4 to 7 P.M.

Filmmaker and author Peter von Ziegesar will read from his memoir *The Looking Glass Brother* Saturday, September 28, at 4 P.M.

**Senior Homecoming Luncheon:** Wednesday, September 11, 11:30 A.M. to 1 P.M. at the UCC Parish House. As a special twist on the monthly luncheon, the Chore Service, Wandering Moose, and Cornwall Committee for Seniors invite all Cornwall seniors, as well as Cornwall seniors residing at The Kent, Sharon Health Care, Noble Horizons and Geer. Reservations by September 5 to Jane Prentice, 672-6101 or [cornwalltseniors@gmail.com](mailto:cornwalltseniors@gmail.com)

**The Board of Assessment Appeals** will meet Saturday, September 14, 2013, 10 to 11 A.M. at the Town Offices (rear office building) for the purpose of hearing appeals regarding motor vehicle assessments. No appointment is required. There will be no other time for hearing such appeals.

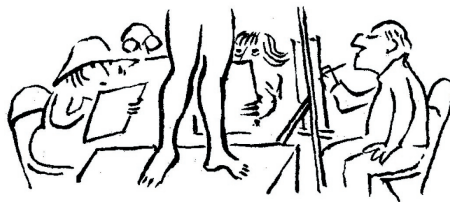
### Cornwall Conservation Trust Events:

Saturday, September 14, Road Clean Up, 9 A.M. Meet at town garage.

Also September 14: Family Picnic and Skyhunters, a bird of prey demonstration, 12:30 to 2:30 P.M., Lower River Road adjacent to Hughes Library. Hamburgers and hot dogs (local meat). Bring a side dish. Suggested donation: \$10 for individual, \$20 for family. Reservations: please email [picnic@cornwallconservationtrust.org](mailto:picnic@cornwallconservationtrust.org)

### Art In Cornwall

At the library: Cornwall Afternoons, plein air paintings by Kathleen Love Mooney,



through Friday, September 6.

Geneviève Simont Ireland: A Retrospective, oil paintings by the sister of Marc Simont, will be on display from September 10 through October 26. Reception Saturday, September 14, from 4 to 6 P.M.

The National Iron Bank will be exhibiting works by Richard Griggs

At the Souterrain Gallery: Covered Bridge Code, computer generated art by Mark Wilson, will continue through September.

At the UCC Parish House: Works by Alden, photographs by 10-year-old Alden Weigold opens September 15: reception at 11:30 A.M.

**The Irish & The Iron Industry:** A Social History Of St. Bridget Parish: Sunday, September 22, 1 P.M. Join historians Pat Conroy and Ellen Paul for a walk to hear about the landmarks and origins of St.

Bridget. Meet at St. Bridget Church parking lot. Registration requested, 860-868-7138 or email [pconroy@snet.net](mailto:pconroy@snet.net)

**Cornwall Historical Society** presents Jill Sheffield, Sunday, September 22, 2 P.M., at Town Hall. Her talk, "Of Course, Women Do Deliver," will include what Cornwall women (and some men) have recently delivered in Kuala Lumpur—and why they delivered.

**The Cornwall Library** invites you to make a tax-deductible donation of good pieces from your attic to our Great Stuff Sale, scheduled for October 18 to 20. For questions or to donate, contact the Great Stuff committee at [CornwallLibrary@biblio.org](mailto:CornwallLibrary@biblio.org) with a description of your item and a digital photo.

## CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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