



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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Economic Development: West Cornwall Stirs

In an upbeat briefing by First Selectman Gordon Ridgway, we learned that the Wandering Moose space has been leased to Bob Ensign of Sharon. Bob ran a large construction company, but his new venture is something quite different. He will open Covered Bridge Electric Bike Rental there (coveredbridgebike.com) as early as Labor Day weekend.

We asked Bob how he came to pick this spot. "We live 15 minutes away, and we always enjoyed visiting West Cornwall and going to the Moose. It's a beautiful little community that needs a little life in it. It's also a great, safe spot to start your ride without having to travel on Route 7. I have the bikes, and we're ready to go."

According to Gordon, Bob watched the video of the water/septic town meeting and was encouraged by the vote supporting investment in West Cornwall.

The Pink House has been sold to two local residents; their plans are at a very early stage, but Gordon said that one option is a restaurant in the smaller barn on the property.

The selectmen also wrote to P&Z expressing concern with the town's housing and economy. They did not ask for any

specific changes in residential or business zoning but said: "regulations that inhibit housing options and employment/service opportunities need to be revised. Surveys clearly show resident support for innovations to our land-use rules to make Cornwall less exclusionary." —The Editors

Cornwall Bridge Turns Over

Cornwall citizens anxious about the "empty store" phenomenon in West Cornwall can hardly be pleased by word that two of the major businesses in Cornwall Bridge are currently for sale: the Cornwall Country Market and the Cornwall Inn.

Business is good at the Cornwall Inn according to Stacey Marcin and Mark Hampson, who have run the establishment for the past 15 years. That makes the present moment a good time to sell; a further factor is their son's departure for college.

Family reasons also play a role in the decision by James and Idella Shepard to put the Country Market up for sale. They are in no hurry to sell and plan to be selective in finding "special people who want a family business" to take over. Given the loyalty of the market's diverse and steady clientele and the extensive renovations undertaken by the Shepard family when they bought the business and building six years ago, pro-

spects for a smooth transition to new ownership are good. After six years of an unbroken daily grind, James talks about living in a place that offers "delivery, with me not doing the delivering."

For some Cornwall prognosticators the changes in Cornwall Bridge fit all too comfortably into the narrative of an aging town in economic decline. Disappointment about communication with town government, zoning overreach, and lack of local support is also common among local business people. The owners of both businesses now for sale are specific in calling for more town investment in infrastructure.

For James, building a water-septic system in West Cornwall should be only a first step for the town; he recalls discussion when he first moved here about slower and improved traffic flow at the intersection of routes 4 and 7; of crosswalks for pedestrians, and of a sidewalk from Bonney Brook senior housing to the market. As for Stacey, she notes that many towns and villages in the Northwest Corner are thriving, and doesn't see why Cornwall, with some effort, should be an exception.

Dusty Sandmeyer, whose father was a co-founder of Cornwall Bridge's Iron Bank and the hardware store that turned into today's lumberyard, likes to point out that

SEPTEMBER 2019

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 ♦ Labor Day Art Sale Noon-3 pm Library	2 LABOR DAY	3 ♦ Inlands Wetlands Agency 7 pm Town Office Bldg. ♦ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	4	5 ☾ 1st Q	6	7 ♦ Community Country Dance 7 pm Town Hall
8	9 ♦ What's the Word?! Group 11 am Library ♦ Free Blood Pressure Clinic Noon-1 pm UCC Day Room ♦ Region One Board of Education 6:30 pm HVRHS Library	10 ♦ Econ. Dev. Comm. 9 am Town Hall ♦ Monthly Senior Lunch Noon UCC Parish House ♦ WC Septic Comm. 5 pm Town Hall ♦ Planning & Zoning Comm. 7 pm Cornwall Library ♦ Park and Rec. Comm. 7:30 pm Town Hall ♦ Hous. River Comm. 7:30 pm CCS	11	12	13	14 ♦ Board of Assessment Appeals 9-10 am Town Offices ♦ Cornwall Agricultural Fair 10 am-4 pm ♦ Larry Master Artist Reception 5 pm Library
15 ♦ Deadline: October Chronicle Copy ♦ Debra Tyler Artist Reception 11:30 am UCC Parish House	16	17 ♦ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	18 ♦ Board of Education 4:15 pm CCS Library	19 ♦ Cornwall Conservation Commission 6 pm Cornwall Library ♦ Board of Finance 7 pm Town Hall	20	21 ♦ Annual Cornwall Clean-Up/Green Up Day 9 am CCT Office ♦ Betty Krasne Author Talk 3 pm Library
22	23 ♦ Series on Keats 10:30 am-12:30 pm Library ♦ Zoning Board of Appeals 7 pm Cornwall Library	24 ♦ Morning Coffee & Conversations 9 am UCC Parish House	25 ♦ Region One ABC Committee 7 pm HVRHS Central Office	26 ♦ Red Cross Blood Drive 1-6 pm UCC Parish House	27	28 ♦ Newcomers' Tea 4-5:30 pm CCT Office ♦ "Paint the Churches" Opening 5:30-7:30 pm Souterrain
29	30 ♦ Series on Keats 10:30 am-12:30 pm Library	Every Week This Month: ♦ Mondays: Mat Squad, 6:30 pm UCC ♦ Tuesdays: Pilates, 8:30-9:30 am Library; Zumba, 5:30-6:30 pm Library ♦ Wednesdays: Bend & Stretch, 10-11 am Bonney Brook; Tai Chi, 5-7 pm Town Hall call 672-0064; Tai-Chi, 5:30 pm and Qui-Gong, 6 pm UCC; Stitch 'n Spin, 7:15-8:30 pm UCC ♦ Thursdays: Pilates, 8:30-9:30 am Library; Meditation, 4-5 pm call Debra 672-0229; Zumba, 5:30-6:30 pm Library; Mah Jongg, 7-9 pm Library call 672-6874 ♦ Fridays: Yoga, 8:30-10 am Library; Toddler Play Group, 10:30-11:30 am Library ♦ Sundays: Yoga, 9-10:30 am Library; Meditation, 1 pm call Debra 672-0229; ASW Method Mat Class, 1-3 pm Library				

*Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

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Cornwall enterprises have always had to rely on out-of-towners in one way or another. Like West Cornwall's historic bridge, Cornwall Bridge's hiking trails and recreational river access should be potent lures for tourists from far and near. Perhaps a specific boost could kick-start business activity, such as the low-interest loan the state made after the 2015 fire that allowed the lumberyard to make a timely recovery, anchoring the nearby business area. Public support and a transition of strong ownership for the inn and the market in Cornwall Bridge should mean fewer worries about the larger town's long-term economic health.

—Paul De Angelis

Dawson's Fall, The Scars of Slavery

In the cool of the library on a hot July afternoon, our neighbor Roxana Robinson read from her recently published novel *Dawson's Fall*. It's her ninth work of fiction; that shelf includes both short stories and novels. Each book has invited the writer to make an imaginative leap, but none has demanded the particular imaginative risk of *Dawson's Fall*.

It's based on the lives and writings of Roxana Robinson's great-grandparents, Sarah and Frank Dawson of Charleston, SC. Young Frank Dawson had come from England to America, intent on helping the Confederacy. As a soldier he "had a good war," including Gettysburg and Pickett's Charge; after the war he became the editor of the *Charleston News and Courier*. His life was one of Southern privilege, but he was a progressive journalist, a fearless defender of African-American rights and of the rule of law in turbulent times.

Roxana Robinson's challenge was to imagine herself into the moral world of this complex man. The "fall" that ended his life came obliquely and without warning, at the hands of a lone obsessive with no regard for law, an antagonist whose amorality was grotesquely mismatched with Dawson's probity.

This drama is played against the background of the post-Civil War South: Reconstruction, the bitterness of defeat, vigilante "justice," and—inadaptable—the scars of slavery. It's hard not to see Dawson's fall as the emblem of a larger one: the triumph of brutish rage and injustice, the end of innocence in a divided nation. It speaks to our time.

Roxana Robinson is also a biographer—an earlier book was a life of Georgia O'Keeffe—and she'd considered making her Frank Dawson book a biography. There was certainly enough documentary material to support one. That it became a novel was, she said, an "intuitive" choice: the form she needed in order to explore the

questions that occupied her.

These questions ask particularly about moral heredity: as Roxana Robinson put it, how can one come to terms with the fact that one's own family members were complicit in the enslavement of others? Is it possible to be complicit in a societal outrage, and still be a good person? Can we think about our flawed ancestors "with malice toward none, with charity for all?" *Dawson's Fall* is a richly troubling novel, often painful to read, but true in pitch and equal to its enormous subject.

—Franny Talianferro



Is Your Vote Safe?

One thing is certain about the 2020 election: the country is evenly and bitterly divided, and so there will be many close results, some of which may be contested.

We need to pay attention not just to the outcome of elections but to their security, fairness, and technology.

Most of us know that our registrars of voters are responsible for maintaining an accurate list of voters. They conduct all elections and appoint a moderator, who must be certified and trained by the secretary of the state. We talked with Jayne Ridgway and Cara Weigold about their important job.

"When I was trained by Judy Gates our role was somewhat political, but now it's totally non-partisan," Jayne began.

"We have to be certified and undergo 22 hours of training plus attend conferences held by the secretary of state, most recently on cybersecurity," said Cara.

"After you slide your ballot into the optical scanner, the machine will read it and spit out a report at the end of the night. It keeps the paper ballots, which are removed to a secure bag in the vault. Results are totally offline. We like our system because it's electronic but has a paper trail that can be audited.

"On election night we send results three different ways. There is always a chance of hacking, but more difficult with three different forms of reporting."

Cara and Jayne supplied us with some data about recent and past elections.

- Voter turnout in municipal elections has dropped drastically in the last 20 years. Average turnout was 71 percent from 1971 to 1993. Average turnout fell to 47 percent from 1994 to 2017, reflecting the lack of contests for most boards.

- Turnout in presidential elections has held steady at 90 percent.

- In the 1970s, a majority of Cornwall voters registered Republican. This began to change in the 1980s and 1990s. Current numbers are: Democrats 478, Republicans 187, and unaffiliated 357.

- In the 2016 election, Donald Trump received 27 percent of Cornwall's vote and 55 percent of Litchfield County's.

The Senate Intelligence Committee recently concluded that Russia targeted all 50 states in 2016 and was in a position to delete

Welcome

Clarkson Abel Lane
to Megan (Cadwell) and Matt Lane

Congratulations

Jarlath Mellett and Frank Way

Land Transfers

Anna P. and Daniel E. Sofaer to Seth Price and Bettina Funcke, building only at 104 Barn Road for \$337,000.

Estate of George E. Labalme, Jr. to Jonathan Stein and Celina Carvajal, land with improvements thereon at 3 Hart Hill Road for \$640,000.

John Tauranac and Jane Bevans to Sean Quinn, land with all buildings and improvements thereon at 8 Sharon Goshen Turnpike for \$203,000.

Big Pink, LLC to West Cornwall Development Group, LLC, property with all improvements thereon at 417 Sharon Goshen Turnpike for \$125,000.

418 Main, LLC to Ian Ingersoll, land with improvements thereon at 418 Sharon Goshen Turnpike for \$120,000.

or change voter data in a few. We also know that electronic voting machines are easily hacked, even the offline ones used in Cornwall. The safest and simplest voting method is the paper ballot. So, yes, your vote in Cornwall is safe; it's in that secure bag in our vault.

(An election security bill requiring backup paper ballots recently passed the House but so far has not gone any further.)

Election administrators like Jayne and Cara play a crucial role in our democracy. They must conduct elections so that losing candidates accept the fact that they lost fairly.

If these concerns seem overwrought, think about this: 19 years ago George W. Bush lost the popular vote by a half million votes, but he was elected because he won Florida (after a recount) by 537 votes, giving him one electoral vote more than needed. Al Gore eventually accepted the results. If Trump lost a similar election, would he accept it? In the opinion of many, notably the speaker of the House, Trump would try to remain in office. What then? —Ed Ferman

Snappers

We have always had snapping turtles in Cornwall: they are prehistoric creatures. No one knows how long they live, because no one wants to own one for that long. But how long: some estimates are 40 years, some 100. And they can reach 20 inches long and weigh 40 pounds.

Mud-brown, cold-blooded and mean, it's hard to love them, even if you're a mom. Like the Unabomber, snappers lead solitary lives, limiting their social interaction to acts of aggression. They bite the heads off other

turtles, for reasons obscure to researchers—maybe to protect territory, maybe as an inefficient feeding method.

Many things about snapping turtles are obscure. They're hard to study: their favorite activity is lying underwater, concealed in the mud, only their heads exposed, waiting for prey. On the end of a snapper's tongue is a flexible worm-like protuberance. As he lies in the mud, the snapper opens his beak and wiggles his worm to attract fish. When a fish bites, the snapper snaps. Snappers will eat almost anything they can get their beaks around.

Unlike most turtles, the snapper can't draw his head and feet inside his shell to protect them. This means they are always vulnerable. To compensate, he has an aggressive personality. This, too, might cool off researchers. Snappers are said to be docile in the water, and rarely aggressive to humans, but on land they'll attack if threatened.

Snapping turtles stay mostly in the water, leaving it only to lay their eggs, in soft soil or sand. It's then they're most vulnerable, and, as is their wont, they express this vulnerability as aggression. Once, driving down a dirt lane beside a pond, I saw a big brown turtle making its slow way across the road. Being a good citizen, I stopped, got out, and picked up the poor turtle, to move it to safety. I nearly lost my hand.

Jim Fishman lives on Cream Hill Road and he's had snappers for years. Once he found a big one in his garden. He used a thick stick to prod the turtle, encouraging it to move along. The turtle swung his head around on his long neck and snapped the 3-foot stick like a straw.

He writes: "A few years later, Spencer and Bobby Klaw drove past our house and saw some snapping turtle eggs that momma turtle had deposited on the ground but hadn't covered them. The Klaws got out of their car and completed the turtle's job by burying the eggs. They called me to inform me of their "generous" act.

"For many years, when people asked what Cornwall is like, I said: 'It's the kind of place where if a neighbor sees exposed snapping turtle eggs on your property, they will bury them and think they've done you a great favor.'"

All God's creatures, of course. Only don't try to pick one up. And if you're swimming underwater, and see a worm wiggling in the mud, don't try to eat it.

—Roxana Robinson

A New Year at Cornwall Consolidated

While the summer months are typically a quiet time within the halls of CCS, there was great activity this summer with the announcement that Principal Michael Croft has resigned. This was a wrenching decision for Michael and disappointing for many faculty, students, families, and board members who respected his leadership over the eight years of his tenure.

Cornwall Board of Education Chair Catherine Tatge was adamant in saying that Michael's decision to leave had no basis in his relationship with the school. His capable leadership was sought by other schools. The move places him closer to his family, where he will serve as assistant principal at Shepaug Valley Regional School.

Catherine Tatge reports that the board has decided to postpone the search for a permanent replacement in order to allow time in the coming academic year for a thorough vetting of candidates. Patricia Corvello will serve as interim principal for four days of the week in partnership with Jennifer Law, who will work the remaining day. Michael was present over the summer to assist in the transition.

The board announced the hiring of English teacher Taylor Hurley. Clare Rashkoff will be the new school nurse, following Martha Bruehl's retirement after 30 able years at CCS.

School opened on August 26. Openings in recent years have renewed the over-arching concern of increasing student enrollment. The current enrollment is 82 students, with at least four additional students who may enroll. Of that 82, 12 are tuition paying out-of-district students. Combined classes remain in place this year. Grades K, 1, and 2 are combined, though instruction is separated into small groups by grade level. Grades 3 and 4 are also combined in the same manner. Grades 5 and 6 are separate with the exception of art, physical education, and music. Grades 7 and 8 are also separate for all classes except humanities and physical education.

A great deal of angst has been expressed concerning Cornwall's per pupil costs, reported recently as \$35,505, the highest in the state. An element of misunderstanding has surfaced about that cost. The cost that caused concern was based upon the year Cornwall's enrollment was at a worrisome 73 students. The per pupil cost for the academic year 2018-19 is \$33,427, over \$2,000 less.

Programs that make CCS an exceptional school will continue to be supported. "Bridges in Mathematics" has demonstrated state-wide improvement in student math comprehension. Six teachers at CCS are now trained in this curriculum with the anticipation that it will enhance math skills in the K-4 level. With Michael Croft's guidance,

sixth-grade students secured approval to implement the "Explorations Program" that will give students an opportunity to come up with a proposal, a budget, and a mentor in Cornwall with whom the student can pursue an independent academic interest. Monies for the program will come from the CCS Fund for Excellence.

Few would question that a good school is central to the wellbeing of a community.

It guides the profound decision of where we choose to live, work, and raise a family.

—Hugh Cheney



Cathedral of the Future

The changing forest landscape of Cornwall and the life cycles that have characterized the Cathedral Pines, are a subject of the current exhibition, "Blown Away: Remembering the Tornado of 1989," on view at the Cornwall Historical Society this summer.

Peter Del Tredici led a hike through the Pines to mark the anniversary of the tornado. Peter is a botanist and author well known for his critiques of discussions surrounding "invasive" species. Trends within environmentalism have popularized a disdain for non-native species, but Peter argues that contrary to this idea, plants we know as "invasives" can play important roles restoring the ecology of disturbed environments. "I just want people to remember that plant species have not created the problems we are now experiencing. We created these changes." While it may be easy to demonize plants that appear to be invasive, or spend all our time and energy attempting to remove them, Peter thinks these approaches are unlikely to succeed. In North America, it is western culture that has changed the ecosystems around us. As climatic conditions shift, so do trends in botanical life. Some species that were previously abundant—oaks, for example—now struggle to reproduce in soil with higher nitrogen content due to fossil fuels.

Peter brought his critical ecological awareness to a group of hikers of all ages. At the center of our discussion was forest regrowth since the storm. Today, black birch is a major player in the succession of the stand. "Typically, there are not a lot of black birch forests in New England. This is a new forest typology for New England. But, in all of old stands I've seen, white pine is coming up as the birches decline."

Black birch is a "disturbance-adapted" and quick growing species that may be a dominant force transforming the pines today, but it is also a relatively short-lived species. "Foresters like to pretend that succession is an orderly and predictable process, but when you have a catastrophic disturbance like the 1989 tornado, and a changing climate, the forest that emerges is not predictable. Ecology does not follow a trajectory. We don't know what the future of white pine

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CVFD Count for August

- 11 emergency medical
- 3 motor vehicle accidents
- 4 false alarms
- 1 water rescue
- 1 tree blocking the road
- 1 generator issue
- 1 mutual aid

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will be. Before the tornado, hemlocks dominated the understory of the Pines, and many Cornwall forests. But the hemlocks are out of the picture now because of the hemlock woolly adelgid. As they slowly die off, black birch is replacing them and when they decline, they'll probably be replaced by white pine."

The Cathedral Pines are far from lost. We can't predict their future, but if you can figure out a way to stick around a couple hundred years, you may be pleasantly surprised by a next generation of Cathedrals. —Paper Buck

Cornwall Briefs

• **West Cornwall Firehouse** is currently being renovated and altered to accommodate the new ambulance and a larger EMS team. There are now many more rescue calls than fire calls. Work should be completed this fall under the direction of John LaPorta, Jim Terrall, and architect Lisa Keskinen. Cost is \$165,000.

• **The Cornwall Food Pantry's** current wish list: cold cereal, canned beans, and tuna, pasta sauce, bottled juices, jams and jellies, kids' juice packs and lunch snacks, personal care items. Please bring donations to the UCC Day Room at any time and place in white cubicles near the pantry door. Patrons can stop by Mondays from 5:15 to 6:15 P.M. and Thursdays from 9 to 10 A.M. You can join the pantry's monthly donation mailing list at: cornwallfoodpantry@gmail.com.

• **Oil Spill:** A truck blew its motor and ran off Route 4 near Furnace Brook, spilling the oil in its tank into the brook. The fire department moved quickly to the scene and deployed booms, containing the spill until DEEP came to suck it out. Nice work guys!

• **Rummage Sale:** "Despite the fearsome heat, everyone rallied and we grossed almost as much as last year," Maggie Cooley, Cornwall Woman's Society president reported. Proceeds help Cornwall students and local nonprofits.

August Visitors and the Chronicle

While your August visitors marvel at the *Chronicle*, write us a check so we can amuse them next August.

• The Planning and Zoning Commission has been hard at work on a new Town plan for almost two years. A link to the first draft is now on the front page of the Cornwall website. P&Z welcomes all input from the public as this process continues and hopes to have it completed before the end of this year. Please send your comments/questions to cwlanduse@optonline.net.

—The Editors



and Paste" by Patrice Allison Galterio continues through September 22.

28th Annual Agriculture Fair: Saturday, September 14, on the Green from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. Rain date is September 15. (See insert.)

The Board of Assessment Appeals will meet Saturday, September 14, between 9 and 10 A.M. at the town offices for the purpose of hearing appeals regarding motor vehicles assessments. No appointment is required. There will be no other time for hearing such appeals.

Clean-Up Green-Up Day: Saturday, September 21 at 9 A.M., CCT office. See insert.

Red Cross Blood Drive: Thursday, September 26 from 1 to 6 P.M. at UCC. The Red Cross has put out an especially urgent plea for blood. Visit redcrossblood.org or call 1-800-RED CROSS for an appointment.

Newcomers Tea: Saturday, September 28, 4 P.M. at CCT office, Railroad Square. (See insert.)

Call for Artists: The Cornwall Association is hosting "Paint the Churches...or your sacred space in Cornwall" on Saturday, September 28. Create on the day of the event or bring your work a week prior to the Souterrain Gallery or the Wish House, 672-2969. For updates and location of Cornwall's churches please go to cornwallassociation.org

Paint the Churches Reception: Saturday, September 28, at 5:30 P.M. at Souterrain. The works will be exhibited through mid-November. (See insert.)

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THIS MONTH

Zejke Hermann, Illustrations
Ed and Audrey Ferman, Editors
Ben Gray, Jr. and Cara Weigold, Facebook Posts

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Events & Announcements

For updates, changes, and additions, check the online calendar at cornwallchronicle.org or cornwallct.org (it is the same calendar). And for reminders, see the *Chronicle* Facebook page.

At the Cornwall Library

Sunday, September 1: Last day of the Labor Day Art Sale, noon to 3 P.M.

Saturday, September 14, at 5 P.M.: Opening reception of Larry Master's photograph show "Wildlife of Cornwall and Beyond."

Saturday, September 21, 3 P.M.: Betty Krasne reads from her new novel *The Good Life?*

Mark Scarbrough will offer a seven-week program on Keats on Mondays, September 23 through November 11, from 10:30 A.M. to 12:30 P.M. Classes are free, but registration is required.

Bend & Stretch: A six-week program of gentle exercises designed to improve balance is offered Wednesdays from 10 to 11 A.M. through October 2 at Bonney Brook, 33 Kent South. RSVP to Heather Burns, 860-619-8184.

New England Country Dancing: Saturday, September 7 at 7 P.M., town hall. Called by Peter Stix. Music by Betsy's Band. Suggested donation: \$5-8/child, \$10-15/adult, \$25/family. Debra@Motherhouse.us or 672-0229.

Art in Cornwall

UCC Parish House: Debra Tyler's "Earth Scroll," 50 feet of calligraphy, block, and leaf prints. Opening reception on Sunday, September 15, at 11:30 A.M. Weekdays from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M., Sundays from 10 A.M. to noon, or by arrangement with Debra at 672-0229.

The Toll House Gallery: Paintings of Lennart Swede Ahrstrom, landscape photographs by Ian Ingersoll, and newly added work by Don Bracken. Monday to Friday from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. and Saturdays from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M.

Souterrain Gallery: The exhibit "Cut



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