



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 7 : NUMBER 1 FEBRUARY 1997



Remembering Harriet

Our friend and neighbor Harriet Clark died on January 7. Before Christmas she had celebrated her 102nd birthday just a few miles from the Clark homestead where she was born.

Harriet left a strong imprint on us and we were lucky in her friendship. Her knowledge of her native landscape was so intimate that it found its way into our legal documents. On the official survey of my property on Great Hill Road, a note reads, "This 18-inch maple with old wire in it was indicated as a property corner by Harriet Lydia Clark, January, 1968." She could tell us where the copperheads wintered in their dens, where the cardinal flowers bloomed along the brook and the mint spread in the marsh, and the old, true names for the bridges and settlements of the town. She remembered the childhood term for each rise and bend in the roads she used to walk and the names given to the hillside lots between her house and her neighbors.

She also had a long memory for Cornwall's inhabitants. She knew the school visitors appointed to the town's one-room districts at the turn of the century (they gave oral tests to the pupils and were held in fear), where to unearth interesting data on the town right back to its early years—and what to look for—and which families settled in Cornwall when, and how their descendants in the town had turned out.

On the morning of the day she died, I visited her in the Sharon Health Care Center. She lay awake but mostly silent, with noise all around her—the humming of the oxygen machine, the chatter of the TV, the nurses' voices in the hall. Suddenly she asked, "Is there a hawk out there?" I peered out the window, which overlooks the farmlands below the Center, and sure enough a pair of hawks were circling over the nearest trees. I told her. She said, "I could hear it."

—Ann Schillinger

Making Haste Slowly

As a result of their December 3 open meeting, the Library Trustees and the Board of Selectmen have been meeting regularly in executive session to work out together the mechanics of what would be involved in either the town's or the library's moving to the Monroe/Bodkin building on the former Marvelwood campus.

The first item of business was to find out if the trusts established in 1908 by John E. Calhoun could be broken or altered. In a letter to First Selectman Gordon Ridgway, Town Attorney Perley Grimes said, "The Library Association or the Town could transfer its interest in the building to the other party upon reasonable terms and conditions. For the Town to do so would require approval by

a town meeting; for the Library, its own bylaws would suffice."

Both town and library are exploring costs. The selectmen had only to dust off Alec Frost's year-old assessment of the estimated cost of renovating Monroe/Bodkin for town use (around \$200,000). They have also engaged Jane Giddens-Jones to make sketches and layouts showing how the Library Building could be used by the town. As for the library, Board Vice-President John Calhoun said the trustees had no figures yet but that by the time of the February informational meeting (see below) he hopes they will have "at least a ballpark figure" on the relative costs of moving into Monroe/Bodkin or expanding the present building.

Matters still being negotiated include, most importantly, how much the departing party should be compensated. There's also the question of how long Monroe/Bodkin will remain an option, and at what price. First Selectman Ridgway believes that as long as the Cornwall Limited Liability Company sees progress being made, it will keep the option open.

Gordon admits that "there is not necessarily agreement on the Board of Selectmen" about what should be done, nor is it news that the library trustees are, in John Calhoun's words, "far from unified." Still, both groups are resolved to stay focused on

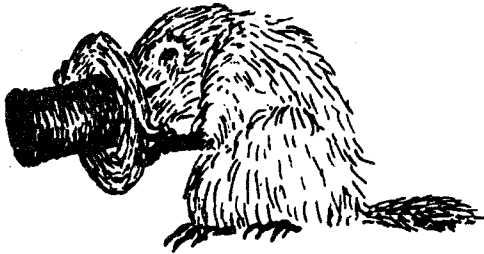
(continued on page 2)

FEBRUARY 1997

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 Veterans' tax credit forms available at Assessor's Office (p.4)
2 GROUNDHOG DAY	3 Ice skating 6-7 P.M. Salisbury School rink (all other Mondays skating at Salisbury is from 7:30-8:30 P.M.) Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	4 Inland Wetlands 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Park & Rec. 7:30 P.M. Town Office	5 Play Group 10 A.M. St. Peter's Lutheran Church W. Cornwall Merchants Assoc. 10 A.M. Hedgerows	6	7 Internet tutorials 10-noon Library (p.4) Park & Rec. Game Night 7-9 P.M. W. Cornwall Firehouse	8
9	10 Preschooler Activity Day 10 A.M. Hughes Library Art Show, David Bean Paintings, 2/10-3/5 Library P&Z 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	11 Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library Democratic Town Comm. 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Republican Town Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS	12 LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY Play Group 10 A.M. St. Peter's Lutheran Church CCS PTA 7 P.M. CCS Library	13 Cornwall Housing Corp. 4:30 P.M. Kugeman Village	14 VALENTINE'S DAY Preschooler Story Hour 10 A.M. Library Park & Rec. Game Night 7-9 P.M. W. Cornwall Firehouse	15 Deadline for March Chronicle copy Cornwall Association 4 P.M. Town Hall
16	17 PRESIDENTS' DAY CCS closed though Feb. 18	18 Bd. of Selectmen 9 A.M. Town Hall	19 Play Group 10 A.M. St. Peter's Lutheran Church Jump Rope for Heart 11:40 A.M.-2:40 P.M. CCS Gym (p.3)	20 Assessment Appeals deadline (p.3) Bd. of Education 5 P.M. CCS Library Bd. of Finance 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	21 Preschooler Story Hour 10 A.M. Library Internet tutorials 10-noon Library (p.4) Park & Rec. Game Night 7-9 P.M. W. C. Firehouse Town Meeting on Town Offices/Library space 7:30 CCS (pp.1, 2)	22 WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY
23	24 Region One Bd. of Ed. 7 P.M. HVRHS Library Conservation Comm. 7:30 P.M. Town Office ZBA 8 P.M. Town Office	25	26 Play Group 10 A.M. St. Peter's Lutheran Church Cornwall Fire Dept. 8 P.M. W. C. Firehouse	27	28 Preschooler Story Hour 10 A.M. Library Internet tutorials 10-noon Library (p.4) Park & Rec. Game Night 7-9 P.M. W. C. Firehouse	Note: Jubilee School benefit concert March 2, 5 P.M. UCC (p.3)

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the nuts and bolts, and expect to have some solid facts to present at the informational town meeting scheduled for February 21 at 7:30 P.M. in the CCS gym. —George Kittle



Photos Lift the Spirit

Nick Jacobs' photos, on exhibit at the Cornwall Library, tell an uplifting story. Jacobs, a professional photographer, traveled recently to Ukraine for a photojournalistic tour of oncology clinics. The patients: children suffering with cancer from the Chernobyl nuclear accident.

What Jacobs expected to record were depressing scenes of sick, deformed, and dying young people. What he found instead were vibrant scenes of life and joy. That vibrancy is reflected in the children's faces—smiling, jubilant, excited, mischievous. At the Library through February 8.

—Alfred Bredenbergh

The Marrying Kind

Quick! What do Don Dardot, Bill Beecher, Carla Bigelow, Phil Bishop, Denton Butler, Scott Cady, Hendon Chubb, Tricia Collins, Dick Dakin, Nick Edler, Jane Giddens-Jones, Monty Hare, Don Hedden, Ken Keskinen, Barbara Klaw, City Lansing, John Leich, Phyllis Nauts, Marie Prentice, Julia Scott, Steve Senzer, Ann Schillinger, and Pauline Sobotka have in common?

Give up? They're all Cornwall Justices of the Peace, all 23 of them. And that's not all: we're entitled to 19 more. But who cares? They don't cost us one cent.

Justices of the Peace, who date back to colonial times, used to have considerable power, administering summary justice in minor state courts, quelling riots, etc. Over the years, though, they've been defanged, declawed, and stripped of their judicial powers. So what *can* they do? Well, they can administer oaths, sign affidavits, take depositions and acknowledgments, and issue subpoenas and tax warrants. And PERFORM MARRIAGES. In fact, that's why many choose to become J. Ps in the first place.

What's the attraction of joining people in matrimony? Surely not the money, \$50 at most. No doubt there is satisfaction in uniting two people in a state that one hopes will be happy, fruitful, and long lasting. Monty Hare, who has been a J. P. longer than probably any currently serving ("twenty-five years anyway"), remembers only one marriage that didn't last. Of the twenty-some couples Ken Keskinen has united only two have split. Bill Beecher, who probably holds the current record (40) for knots tied, says, "I always have a great

time, and meet new people."

While a beginning J. P. might stick to the script provided in the official manual, the pros like to branch out. Monty enjoyed the ceremonies he performed at Yelping Hill because he could include lots of poetry, from the Bhagavad-Gita to e. e. cummings. Ken, who helps the prospective bride and groom shape their ceremony, which might include music or poetry, will, for a \$50 contribution, write a nuptial sonnet, but so far has had no takers. Dick Dakin was once given at the last minute a handwritten poem to read which was totally illegible. "It could've been Sanskrit. Now I ask to look at it first."

The settings tend to be al fresco, and sometimes unusual. The late Helen Walker, who is said to have married a couple on horseback and another on an island in a pond, no doubt inspired some of today's J. Ps.

Dick Dakin has married people on the Cathedral Pines Rock, atop the Mohawk stone tower, and in the Covered Bridge. Ken united a Waterbury couple in the Covered Bridge one November morning. (The traffic was light.) After they kissed, there arose a cheer from the regulars at Cadwell's, and Dave then treated the newlyweds to a wedding breakfast. Bill Beecher still retains in his painter's eye a certain "lovely pond ringed with fringed gentians" long after forgetting whom he married there.

How do our justices drum up trade? Stereotypically, J. Ps are sought out by couples who need the thing done quickly, quietly, and cheaply. Dick recalls one such wedding: "The bride was 17, the groom was 16, and then there was the baby." Getting started can be hard, but soon the word spreads. "Connubial Ken," who averages four or five weddings a year, says that with the increase in J. Ps, "the competition has become more keen." Phyllis Nauts will perform her first marriage this summer. And newly appointed Marie Prentice, who hopes to be asked to marry someone soon, says, "We need more people to get married!"

—George Kittle

Keeping the Cupboard Full

As winter's grip tightens its hold on Cornwall our thoughts turn to those of our neighbors who are both cold *and* hungry. Church and state are collaborating in dealing with this problem. In the Cornwall Town Hall the hungry can draw on the Cornwall Food Pantry by calling on Jill Gibbons, the town's Public Assistance Officer (Mondays through Thursdays, 9 to 4); or they can go to the Torrington Community Soup Kitchen in the basement of the Episcopal Church, on the corner of Prospect and Water Streets, where Mrs. Velma Whiting serves up to 180 full meals at noon on every day in the week. Two Cornwall churches, the Congregational

(UCC) and the Lutheran (St. Peter's) regularly contribute donated food to the Torrington Soup Kitchen. St. Bridget's Catholic Church sends its food collection to the Cornwall Food Pantry at the Town Hall. There are no bureaucratic requirements in connection with these services. The Cornwall Food Pantry also has a collection box in the National Iron Bank and seasonally at Baird's General Store. The demand at the Soup Kitchen and the Food Pantry is always greater than the supply, so be generous in your donations!

—John Leich

Welcome

Ethan Estern Jadow to
Victoria and Jonathan Jadow

Good-bye to Friends

Tatiana C. Bouteneff
Harriet L. Clark
Sarah J. and Sandy L. Swaller

Congratulations

Hilary Wyss to James Truman

Land Transfers

Charles O. Schwarz III to Theodore A. Hein,
Lots 1 and 2 on College Street for \$71,000.

Gil Robinov to Karam S. Kalsi, house and
9.2 acres at 71 Pierce Lane for \$215,000.



Legislative Challenges

The current session of the state legislature is going to be dealing with four issues that will have an important impact on the budgets of small towns, according to First Selectman Gordon Ridgway.

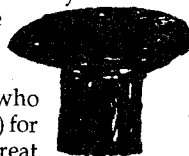
The first of these issues is education reform. The State Supreme Court decision in

Sheff v. O'Neill requires remedial legislation to remove the inequities between the school systems in Hartford and the rest of the state. The legislation will have to deal with funding, school districting, bussing, and other means of correcting the "racial isolation" that the court found in the Hartford system.

Conflicts over tax policy will also occupy the session. Governor Rowland wants to decrease or even abolish the state income tax. Some smaller towns would prefer a decrease in property taxes. Most people would like a cut in the gasoline tax. The smaller towns would also like to see a change in the way the gasoline tax revenues are distributed. They complain that they must maintain two-thirds of the total mileage of the state's roads with only five percent of the revenue.

There is a move to consolidate probate courts into larger districts. This would deprive small towns of tax revenues.

Finally there will be an attempt



to have the legislature reverse a recent State Supreme Court decision that makes towns liable in the case of accidents on town property or at town functions.

Gordon urges everyone to be alert to these issues as they come up and to make our sentiments known to the governor and to our state legislators.

—John Leich

Events & Announcements

Assessment Appeals Dates Set: Application forms for Board of Assessment appeals hearings next month are available now from the Town Clerk or the Assessor's Office and must be filed at the Town Hall by February 20. The hearings will be held at the Town Hall or the Town Office on these dates: March 4, 1 to 4 P.M.; March 5, 5:30 to 8 P.M.; March 6, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.; and March 8, 10 A.M. to 12:30 P.M. Appellants will be notified by mail or phone of their hearing time. The board asks that any information relevant to making a decision (e.g., maps, comparative property data, realtor appraisals, etc.) be brought to the hearing. For further information call 672-6141 or 672-6704.

PTA-Sponsored "Choices" Programs this spring for adults and children will include introductory and advanced classes in computer skills, beginning by early March. Exact dates will be determined by enrollment. For further information, please call Cheryl Thibault, 672-2537, or David Samson, 672-6797.

Women's Open Court at the CCS gym will start on February 4 at 6:30 P.M. and will offer space for basketball, volleyball, or whatever court activity the group desires on Tuesday evenings throughout the school year. Call Susan Gallo, 435-4913.

Also, evening classes continue at the gym in Tai Chi Chan, Mondays at 6:45 P.M. (call Martha Cheo, 914-677-0304) and in Aerobics, Monday and Thursday at 6 P.M. (Elise Meneshin, 672-6001).

Eight classes in Beginner's Drawing for high school students and adults will be held in the CCS art room from February 25 to April 15, 7 to 8:30 P.M., with possible outdoor sketching to be offered in the spring (Terry Triompo, 491-8640). A modest fee is charged for each of these PTA choices.



Jumpers Alert! CCS pupils in grades five through eight will raise money for the American Heart Association by taking part in a "Jump Rope for Heart" program, which will include jump-rope contests and a "Jump-a-Thon" during gym periods. The opening event will be held at the school on Wednesday, February 19, between 11:40 A.M. and 2:40 P.M. The youngsters will seek sponsors for their program and those present who feel sufficiently able-bodied will be invited to jump along with them. If that seems a bit strenuous, just sit back and watch the fun.

Letters to the Chronicle

CALHOUN'S VISION

It seems to me that our friends who oppose revising the Library Trust, so as to permit a move to a new building, are making some unflattering assumptions about the wisdom of John Calhoun, who in 1908 established the trust for the library building.

Mr. Calhoun was obviously a generous and public-spirited man, with much practical experience. It is difficult to believe that he would inflexibly resist an alteration in a legal instrument if that appeared in Cornwall's best interest because of changed circumstances.

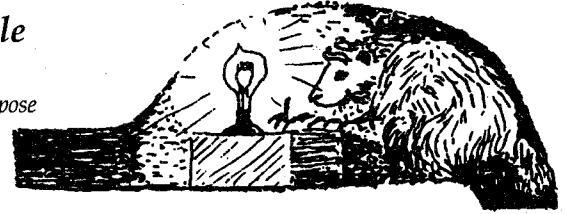
Even the most sacrosanct documents—the U. S. Constitution for example—have been amended when called for by new realities. Just as amendments to the Constitution do not negate the purpose of its brilliant creators, an amendment to the Library Trust would fulfill John Calhoun's valued contribution to our town. Indeed, it would permit his vision to be realized in the context of our age. —Norman Dorsen

BUT WHAT WOULD IT COST?

Everyone agrees that the Cornwall Free Library has to expand, and almost everyone would like it to expand on its present site if possible. But we need to take a realistic look at what that would cost.

The selectmen say the town should pay the library \$200,000 to move from the Calhoun building. The voters will certainly expect the library to pay the same if the town is going to move. The library would also have to buy the present town offices. I would be astonished if a town meeting would be willing to accept less than another \$200,000. The library's plans for expanding on its present site call for another 2600 square feet. Figure \$520,000 for this, at \$200 a square foot, plus another \$100,000 for remodeling the present space, and it appears the library would have to raise over a million dollars to induce the town to move and to create a suitable space for itself on the present site. But that's not all. The town has been paying about \$25,000 a year for heating, repairs, and insurance on the Calhoun building. If the town moves, the library will have to assume these costs. There is no way an annual fund drive could come up with this kind of money. The library would have to find another half a million dollars for an endowment.

So we're talking about a million dollars to move and a half a million more for an endowment. Where would the money come from? By contrast, if the library moves to Monroe/Bodkin, it will be in a building that needs little immediate renovation and would be much cheaper to heat and maintain. The money the town would pay the library to relocate, plus



other money that friends of the library have indicated could be raised for the move, would put the library in good financial shape. My heart says, "The library shouldn't move." My head says, "It doesn't have a choice."

—Hendon Chubb

PLAY LONGER, EAT FASTER?

The kids in my class were rather upset about getting only 20 minutes of recess when we moved into the upper grades. We know it has been like that for many years, but we would like to change it. We have good reasons.

The lower grades get twice as much recess time as we do. We believe it is twice as hard in the upper grades as it is in the lower grades. Therefore, we should get at least 30 minutes for recess.

Another reason is that recess is good for you. Instead of letting all our energy out in the class, we can let it out at recess. The more recess we get, the less energy we will have in the classrooms and we wouldn't be so rowdy.

We know the teachers probably wouldn't want us to take up another ten minutes of the day, so we thought of an idea. We would have the first twenty minutes of recess as usual, but the first ten minutes of lunch would be optional. We could have either twenty minutes of recess and twenty minutes of lunch, or we could have thirty minutes of recess and ten minutes of lunch. This would also give the staff and teachers thirty minutes of lunch, instead of twenty. Some of the teachers have mentioned that they don't have enough lunch time. This plan would benefit both students and teachers.

I hope the staff at CCS read this letter and consider my idea. —Luke Root, sixth grade

THANK YOU, TOM

We are very close to the natural world here in Cornwall. This was made clear on a cold December Friday just after Christmas when Tom Walker read for the Friends of the Library in the candlelit North Cornwall Church. He read two chapters from The Wind in the Willows in which two personable small animals are lost at night in a snowstorm very like the one we all had lived through three weeks earlier. As Tom's lovely voice read those fearful words, the setting sun lit the western sky a warning shade of red. It was nice to be warm and indoors, safe and sound.

Thank you, Tom, for making a wonderful story so real. —Lisa Lansing

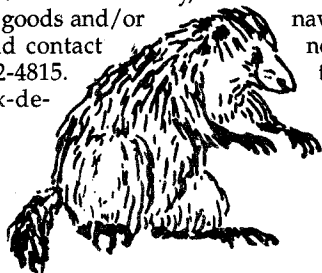
Save the Date! It's none too early to order your reservations for a benefit concert on Sunday, March 2, 5 P.M., at the United Church of Christ, Cornwall, for the fourth annual UCC-sponsored trip to our town in June by the Jubilee School of inner-city Philadelphia. Performers will be the New Haven-based Salt and Pepper Gospel Singers, an interra-

cial, non-denominational group that has given concerts throughout the Northeast, including performances at Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center and on NBC's *Today Show*. Suggested donations are \$12 for adults, \$5 for children under 12. For reservations call the church office, 672-6840.

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Auction Items Wanted: Donations are being solicited for the Cornwall Child Center's annual benefit auction, to be held on Sunday, April 27. Anyone with goods and/or services to give should contact Jamie Monagan at 672-4815. All donations are tax-deductible.



The Seven-Year Pitch

This issue heralds the seventh year of the *Chronicle*. Seven! Who'da thunk it? Well, Tom Bevans would'a—and he did, in 1990. The first *Chronicle* appeared in February 1991, financed by gifts from the Democratic and Republican Town Committees and the Cornwall Association.

A lot of people have been involved since then. The all-volunteer effort has created 40 down-home editors who, under the guidance of Tom and Margaret Bevans and later of Barbara and Spencer Klaw, have produced 288 pages of articles, letters, announcements, and calendars. During these six years, 116 different writers have contributed more than 720 stories, 150 people have written 338 letters, 22 artists have drawn pictures, and a lot of unidentified folks have submitted announcements. Letters averaged five per month, with a high of eight in three issues. However, in March 1993, only one letter appeared (about the Cream Hill Lake monster), apparently written in desperation by the President of the *Chronicle* himself!

Special inserts have provided detailed information about elections, ag fairs, town officers and services, housing, rabies dangers, historic districts, and library acquisitions.

What topics have gotten most coverage since 1991? In first place is the P&Z Commission; its deliberations resulted in 56 articles and letters.

Who gets the *Chronicle*? Of the January issue (1,353 copies), 981 local folk got their free copies in the mail or at pick-up points in town. Subscriptions (370 at \$10 apiece) have been sent to such distant places as Africa, Germany, France, California, Minnesota, Arizona, Florida, and New York City.

To print and mail each issue now costs about \$500 (and going up!). Over the years we've had 1590 contributions, most of them repeat gifts from enthusiastic supporters. Our seven-year pitch is to all of you who have welcomed the *Chronicle* each month for the past six years to send in your contributions. While you're at it, write us a letter!

—Ken Keskinen

Cornwall Afghan: No, it's not a local canine breed—it's big (48" x 65"), made of double, pre-washed cotton, has pictures of Cornwall all over it, and comes in cranberry, green, or navy on a natural background. Available now to benefit the Cornwall Child Center. Send a \$50 check made out to CCC at 8 Cream Hill Road, West Cornwall, or call 672-6989 for more information.



Fruit for the Children, the PTA's program to supply fruit to CCS students, is looking for contributions. The PTA has already raised enough for a couple of days a week; they're hoping to be able to make it every day. Call Dave Samson, 672-6797, to learn more.



Rotary Scholar Becky Clarke Wolfe, a junior at HVRHS, has been approved by the Salisbury Rotary Club as an applicant for a student and youth exchange scholarship, provided that a family in the area can be located who will agree to host a teenage foreign student in exchange during the 1997-98 school year. Any family that would like to do this for from one to eight months should call Becky as soon as possible at 672-0183, or John Leich at 672-6193.



Second Poetry Slam: Get those poems in shape for the Second Annual Poetry Slam, March 15, 8 P.M. in the Town Hall. Poets of all ages are urged to start creating now, and to call Phyllis Nauts at 672-6608 to sign up. Sponsored by the Friends of the Cornwall Library.

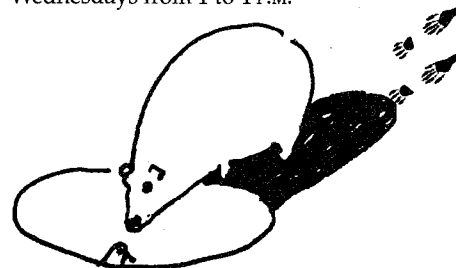


Library Computer Classes will continue into the spring, building on the success of Wallace Harding's popular Friday morning sessions about the Internet. Organized by the Friends of the Cornwall Library, the classes offered by Wallace will continue on the following Fridays: February 7, 21, and 28; and March 14 and 28, all at 10 A.M. to 12 noon. There will also be evening sessions on Wednesdays from 6 to 8. Please check out the sign-up sheets at the Library.



Tax Credits: Cornwall homeowners who were 65 or older on December 31, or who are receiving Social Security disability payments, may be eligible for credit on their property tax. The property must be their principal residence and their total income, including Social Security, must be less than \$22,400 for singles or \$27,500 for married couples. Application for credit starting in July may be filed in the Assessor's office until May 15.

Persons currently receiving a veterans' exemption may be eligible for an additional reduction if they meet the above income requirements. Veterans in this category who wish to apply for the 1997 Grand List should do so between February 1 and October 1. There is no age requirement for the additional exemption. All application forms are available from Barbara Johnson's office Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9 A.M. to noon, and on Wednesdays from 1 to 4 P.M.



A Cornwall Calendar: If you're planning a town function, fund-raiser, party, whatever, and worry that some other magnificent event might be planned for the same date, call Lisa Lansing at 672-2707. She has a complete Cornwall calendar of events on her computer.

CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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