



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 26 : NUMBER 12 JANUARY 2017



2016 in Review

If 2015 was the year of the big blaze that quickly took out most of the lumberyard in Cornwall Bridge, 2016 was about a little fire that took weeks to go out and did little damage. Apparently started by a lightning strike in a remote area called Peck Mountain off Flat Rocks Road, the fire was mostly underground. However, depending on the wind, the smoke could be seen and smelled in Cornwall Bridge and other parts of the Northwest Corner.

After many hours of hard work by state crews and firefighters from Cornwall and nearby towns, a five-inch November snowfall snuffed out the fire.

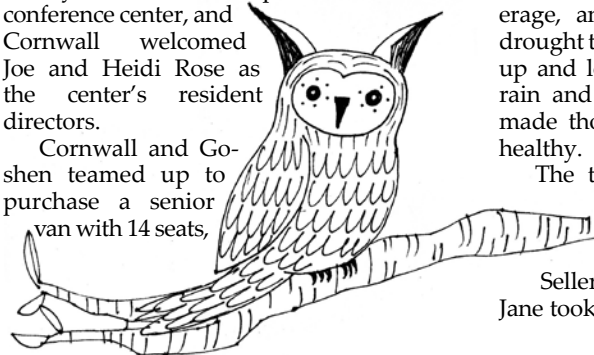
Early in the year a big blaze took out the Dolan family's hundred-year-old horse barn on Cherry Hill Road. Firefighters managed to save some of the animals and a hay barn 25 feet away, but more than 200 pigs perished. Not long after the fire, 300 people attended a potluck fundraiser, and the Dolan barn was quickly replaced by a new structure.

The community also engaged in a running debate over several months after the owners of the Cornwall Inn asked Planning and Zoning to address unfair competition from the dozen or so local Airbnb rentals. Many in the community immediately took sides. The Cornwall Inn

and similar hotel/motel businesses must comply with rules and regulations not required of Airbnbs. The inn's owners and their supporters wanted a level playing field, meaning regulations that applied to all parties. In the end, P&Z, citing challenges of enforcement, tabled the issue; however, the Connecticut legislature passed a bill placing a 15 percent tax on the short-term rentals.

The Cornwall Conservation Trust had a breakout year, securing two big tracts of land: 300-plus acres from Trinity Church Wall Street on the Housatonic and another 85 acres from the Cooley family on Cherry Hill. The cost of the land came at a modest price, much of it paid for by state and federal grants. More good news came when Trinity decided to reopen its dormant conference center, and Cornwall welcomed Joe and Heidi Rose as the center's resident directors.

Cornwall and Goshen teamed up to purchase a senior van with 14 seats,



plus two more for the handicapped. Its primary role is to take my fellow geezers to medical appointments.

We keep a nervous eye on our school population, which currently numbers 74, fewer than half of the 202 students at CCS in 1989-90.

2016 also saw major additions to the Mohawk ski area, including an expansion of the main lodge, a new ski shop, a new lodge called the Perch, and additional outdoor seating, including a heated lower patio.

We talked a lot about a very mild winter. The *Chronicle's* Jeff Jacobson wrote a piece titled "The Winter That Wasn't," in which he wrote that it was the warmest winter going back 110 years. Total snowfall measured 17.1 inches, well under the 30.7 average, and was followed by a summer drought that saw some of our brooks drying up and local wells running dry. Happily, rain and some snow by early December made those dry streams once again look healthy.

The town also saw a few important changes in personnel. We welcomed Jen Markow as director of Park and Rec and Jane Muir Sellery as social services administrator. Jane took over for Jill Gibbons, who retired

(continued on page 2)

JANUARY 2017

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| 1 ♦ New Year's Day Pancake Breakfast 9 am-Noon UCC Parish House | 2 | 3 ♦ Inland Wetlands Agency 7 pm Town Hall ♦ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall | 4 | 5 ☾ 1st Q | 6 ♦ STEAP Grants Town Meeting 7:30pm CCS | 7 ♦ James Woodruff Artist's Reception 5 pm Library ♦ Community Contra Dance 7 pm Town Hall |
| 8 | 9 ♦ Free Blood Pressure Clinic Noon-1 pm UCC ♦ Region 1 Bd. of Ed. 6:30 pm HVRHS ♦ Park & Rec. 7:30 pm Town Hall | 10 ♦ Econ. Dev. Comm. 9 am Town Hall ♦ Senior Luncheon 11:30 am-1 pm Wandering Moose ♦ P&Z 7 pm Library ♦ Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 pm CCS | 11 | 12 ☉ FULL | 13 | 14 ♦ Film: <i>Chariots of Fire</i> 7:30 pm Library |
| 15 ♦ Deadline: February <i>Chronicle</i> Copy ♦ Standing Rock Discussion 11:30am UCC | 16 MARTIN LUTHER KING | 17 ♦ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall | 18 ♦ Board of Education 4:15 pm CCS ♦ Bd. of Finance 7:30 pm Town Hall | 19 ♦ Cornwall Business Assoc. Mtg. 9:30 am Wandering Moose ♦ Knitting Group/Hats for Cancer Patients 10 am Library ♦ Cornwall Conservation 7 pm Library | 20 ♦ WC Water Septic Study Group Mtg 7:30pm CCS | 21 |
| 22 | 23 ♦ ZBA* 7 pm Library | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 ● NEW | 28 ♦ P & Z Special meeting 10am CCS ♦ Film: <i>Smiles of a Summer Night</i> 7:30 pm Library |
| 29 | 30 | 31 ♦ Committee for Seniors 7 pm Library | Every Week This Month: Mondays: Yoga, 8:30-10 am Library; Mat Squad at 6:30 pm UCC; Karate, 6:30-7:30 pm Town Hall ♦ Tuesdays: Zumba, 5:30-6:30 pm Library ♦ Wednesdays: Tai Chi, 5-7 pm Town Hall call 672-0064; Introduction to Fiction, 6:30-8:30 pm Library; Stitch 'n Spin, 7:15-8:30 pm UCC ♦ Thursdays: Pilates, 8:30-9:30 am Library; Toddler Play Group, 10:30-11:30 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; Adult Volleyball, 7-9 pm CCS gym ♦ Fridays: Yoga 8:30-10 am Library ♦ Sundays: Yoga 9-10:30 am Library; Meditation, 1 pm call Debra 672-0229 | | | |

(continued from page 1)

after 32 years of stellar service in that role.

On a very sad note, trouble at our wonderful Little Guild of St. Francis animal shelter sent the town into semi-shock. Two members of the guild staff were arrested after inspections turned up several cases of dogs being brought to the shelter from out-of-state without the required health certificates. The trouble was the result of staff's using their hearts rather than their heads in an effort to save just a few more animals at risk. The general reaction in town was that the state overreacted. As of the new year, the Little Guild is once again doing great work, has a new shelter manager, and is looking to hire a new executive director soon.

Cornwall had its usual high turnout on Election Day. Eighty-nine percent of the 1,068 registered voters showed up, which comes to 953. That was 65 more voters than four years ago.

We like to end these things on a positive note, so here are a couple of welcome 2016 items. The Algrant art show set a sales record (\$38,692) after it moved from CCS to the Trinity campus and was able to serve wine to its customers. And the annual rummage sale also set a new sales record (\$33,000), moving most of its departments to the expanded Mohawk lodge.

—John Miller

The Early Bird

If you read a daily newspaper in Cornwall, you likely either put it on hold at the Cornwall Country Market or have Joanie Thitchener deliver it to your doorstep in time for breakfast. Joanie is a gentle, smiling Cornwallian who has a discipline of rising early that I would dearly love to have.

Joanie's path to delivering newspapers began with her more than four decades of marriage to her husband Earl. Earl worked at the Torrington Company and, for 26 years, delivered newspapers, generally local papers such as the *Republican-American* and the *Register Citizen*. In 2004, Earl retired from the Torrington Company and took on additional delivery of New York papers, including *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The New York Post*. He was delivering up to 100 newspapers a day. Joanie said that in spite of protests from the family, Earl was always up shortly after 2 A.M. in order to complete his rounds to his satisfaction.

In late 2015, Earl fell sick, and, in February of 2016, as it became hard for him to continue, Joanie took over his route. When Earl passed away in May 2016, Joanie made the decision to continue his newspaper delivery rounds. Joanie said she currently delivers 75–80 newspapers a day, to homes in Cornwall, Lakeville, Salisbury, Falls Village, and Goshen, driving around

the hills of northwest Connecticut to all the homes of her clients. Joanie rises at 5 A.M., leaves the house by 5:20 A.M. to pick up the papers at West Cornwall Pottery, and then spends three hours delivering them. Joanie has used all methods of getting the papers to her customers, from placing them in letter boxes or on doorsteps, to throwing them onto the driveway as close to the house as possible, a method usually dictated by the weather.

Since she has taken on the task of ensuring that people have the news first thing in the morning, Joanie has not missed a day, except for a few days after Earl died, taking her responsibility and the trust of her clients very seriously.

Joanie said the dawn is a very special time for her.

The sunrise changes depending on the season, but the light in those early hours is wonderful, with colors more vivid than later in the day. Of course, being in Cornwall, Joanie has also come across many of the animal inhabitants of our forests at one time or another. She is particularly alert for bears, as their dark coats make them difficult to see. She has had her experiences braking for bear!

I agree with Joanie that Cornwall is a special place, and all of us who live here know it. It is people like Joanie who are an intrinsic part of the pattern of the Cornwall community, and our lives are that much richer for knowing them. —Terry Burke

Winter Looms

Almost everything facing farmers in the 1920s and '30s had to do with surviving the winter.

John Calhoun's father, Frank, was a dairy farmer in Cornwall, and John remembers the never-ending work. There was the daily grind of milking, feeding, cleaning up, and starting over. "After school we had to carry the milk buckets to the milk room, weigh them, record which cow produced how much milk, strain the milk, and then pour it into the milk tank." The milk was picked up every few days, and the Calhoun farm also sold milk to the villagers and the people who lived in the "hills" surrounding the village.

The Calhouns farmed 620 acres and milked almost 50 cows, day in and day out, in freezing cold or blazing heat. They grew hay, clover, buckwheat, rye, and alfalfa. In addition to feed, the grain crops were used as green manure to keep the land fertile and productive.

"The worst job on the farm was when we had to blow silage into the silo. You had to stand in there and keep spreading it as it was blown in, so you were covered with silage

Congratulations

Henry Jasper Hermann-Botto
to Iris Hermann and Rocco Botto

Jaina Raelynn Brown
to Jessica and John Brown

Goodbye to Friends

James A. Levy
Bob Potter

Land Transfers

James McComb Hayward and Martha D. Hayward to Aaron Kless and Rachel Kless, property with all improvements thereon at 142 Sharon Goshen Turnpike, for \$782,500.

Marjorie F. Whiteford to Bruce A. Whiteford, partial interest in two parcels with buildings and improvements thereon at 416 Sharon Goshen Turnpike, for \$163,154.

Susan Lynn Gerdes, Trustee of the Jean C. Finelli Revocable Trust to Marguerite W. Purnell, 3 acres of land on Popple Swamp Road for \$59,000.

Jeffrey T. Macaluso and Andrea Macaluso to Thomas P. Torrisi property at 252 Furnace Brook Road for \$385,000.

dust, and it smelled awful."

Aside from the daily work involved in farming, the constant reminder that winter was coming compelled the household to get ready for months of snow, ice, and cold. "The one job I really hated was weeding the vegetable garden. To this day I have trouble doing it," said John with a grin.

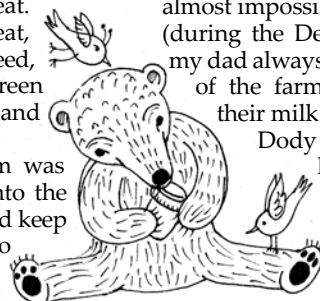
In the fall, pigs and cows were slaughtered and butchered, providing meat for the winter. "We always had hired help to run the farm, which meant we had to house our helpers and their families. So we had four houses to heat and maintain. We were cutting wood all year round."

John remembers when Dutch Elm disease hit the elm trees in the village in the 1950s. "We cut down every elm tree we could, cutting all the time, until they were all gone."

Brian Lorch, who grew up on the Lorch Farm now run by Chris Hopkins, remembers hearing about butchering time. "Pigs and cows were butchered, then hung in the woodshed, where they were smoked. The women would make soap from the fat of the butchered meat, mixing it with lye and wood ash."

Brian remembers his father getting milk to the Round Hill Dairy in Shelton. "It was almost impossible to get the milk delivered (during the Depression) to the dairy, but my dad always said Bill Clarke saved some of the farms around here by driving their milk to the dairy himself."

Dody Clarke Wolfe remembers hearing about the cooperation among farm families. "If someone had a tractor and someone else didn't, the farmer with the tractor



would always share his equipment and labor as much as possible. Haying was a communal effort, and still is today on many farms. Nothing was wasted. Farmers grew mangels and beets that were cured and then ground into feed. Huge gardens were planted, and what couldn't be stored or canned was fed back to the animals or shared with neighbors. They took care of each other."

Three seasons out of four, farmers were getting ready for the "fallow" season, and still having to deal with the jobs of milking, feeding, and—most importantly—waiting for that first snowflake to fall. —Jane Bean

Cornwall Briefs

•**Little Guild Update:** Former Director Heather Dinneen appeared on December 9 in District Court in Bantam and applied for accelerated rehabilitation, a form of probation available to first-time offenders. If she is eligible, after a one- or two-year period, her record will be clean. No admission of guilt is involved. Her next court date is January 20. Also at the guild, Brianna Dacey has joined the staff as shelter manager. She replaces Liz Sullivan, whose first court date is in January.

•**Valley Road Bridge:** Cornwall has pulled off another miracle bridge replacement, early and under budget. Honchoed by project manager Roger Kane, the Valley Road rehab began on a Monday in December and finished up the following Sunday afternoon. Precast box culverts arrived from New Hampshire, the old bridge was demolished, the brook was diverted, and the new culvert was dropped into place, all without disturbance to the six households on the far side of the brook. In fact, several neighbors brought home-baked cookies down to the work crew. Fire trucks and an ambulance were borrowed from other municipalities (including East Haven) in case a crisis developed. None did, and the Valley Road bridge joins the River Road bridge in the annals of amazing Cornwall bridge repairs. (There really aren't any annals, but it's still amazing!)

•**Herbicide:** The Connecticut DOT has told the selectman there's no evidence that the brush-clearing herbicide the Housatonic Railroad used two years ago was excessive. Whatever spray was used did a pretty good job of killing trees along the West Cornwall roadbed. The selectmen will invite the state DOT to return and look again.

•**Foreign Mission School Anniversary:** The FMS will have its 200th anniversary this summer. Mary Kathryn Nagle, a descendant of John Ridge, a FMS Cherokee student who married a Cornwall girl, has

Letters to the Chronicle

IN SUPPORT OF HEATHER DINNEEN

Cornwall is blessed with many fine public-spirited families, of which the Dinneens are right at the top. To see how Heather Dinneen has been vilified in the Waterbury Republican newspaper is astounding, with large bold-faced headlines, when real criminals get barely a line. It appears to me that she is being targeted for some reason.

I am one of those people who turn to mush when it comes to animals, especially wounded or abused animals, and I can understand why Heather may have abused a few bureaucratic regulations in defense of some animals in desperate situations.

The town of Cornwall has supported other local residents when in difficult situations. I would like to see something similar done for Heather. —Margaret Kane

LITTLE GUILD

Your December story on the Little Guild strongly implied that Heather Dinneen was dismissed from her role as executive director. As the story then went on to correctly state, it was her decision to leave. Any characterization to the contrary is not only wrong, but terribly unfair to Heather, who has led the Little Guild's renaissance and has shown selfless dedication during this transition.

An update: Brianna Dacey, who founded and ran Safe Haven Rescue in Boulder, Colorado, has joined the Little Guild as our interim shelter manager. She will be an excellent addition. Come meet her while meeting our adoptable cats and dogs! —John Guenther, President, The Little Guild of St. Francis

THE GIVING TREE

This year, DEEP marked its 36th year of the Connecticut Bluebird Project: providing housing for eastern bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*). This annual program has created tens of thousands of bluebird boxes and helped restore bluebird populations statewide for a species once limited to a handful of locations.

Rough-sawn, CT-grown eastern white pine for building bluebird nest boxes is available at no cost from DEEP to groups such as school, Scout, 4-H, and conservation organizations. Two such entities in Cornwall, Dark Entry Forest, Inc. (DEF), and the Housatonic Environmental Action League, Inc. (HEAL), reserved multiple eight-foot, bundled planks, cut the wood, and provided hardware to build the birdhouses.

One of Cornwall's newest residents, Joe Brien of Lost Art Workshops, donated his time, labor, equipment, and extraordinary teaching

skills to bring this woodworking project to fruition.

On a bright and windy Sunday afternoon in late October, at the base of the UCC's front entry stairs, Joe set up his portable workshop wagon to accommodate 12 woodworkers. Almost the entire Cornwall/Falls Village soccer team made bluebird boxes during the first of four sessions. Thanks to Joe's coordination with Habitat for Humanity of Northwest CT, the completed boxes will be installed at Habitat homes.

The other three sessions were filled with children and adults from 8 to 80. All proceeds were split between Cornwall's Agricultural Advisory Commission and UCC's fund for their annual service trip to Re-Member on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. Many thanks to everyone who contributed to this successful project. Be sure to introduce yourself to Joe Brien and give him a hearty Cornwall welcome. —Kim Herkimer, DEF, Audrey Cole, and Judy Herkimer, HEAL

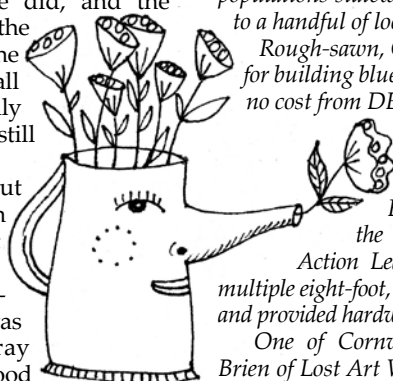
UPDATE ON CCS IMPROVEMENTS

The school colors are blue and gold, but the Building and Grounds Committee has been thinking green as we retrofit our 75-year-old building. In the past few years, we have replaced windows, installed LED lighting, downsized hot water storage tanks, added insulation above the gym and, for the first time, insulated all areas above the north wing. Automatic heating controls now make it possible to lower the heat in empty classrooms and when school is out. Solar panels at the front and rear of the school help keep energy costs down.

However, a recent Eversource audit has suggested other efficiencies, such as new motors, reducing ways that cold air can get into the building, and replacing the current steam boiler.

The committee administers the capital budget, which is distinct from the operating budget. The main source of revenue is an annual grant of \$40,000 from the town. Much of the routine work within the building is part of the operational budget, including classroom painting, air and water quality certification, heating and electrical costs, custodial fees, etc. The committee has begun replacing carpeting in lower grade classrooms, and this will continue as funding allows. Occasionally, the operational budget assists when the capital budget comes up short, and there is a healthy spirit of cooperation where possible between the two budgets.

Finally, the committee offers a special thanks to Ralph Dzenutis for advice about building issues and assistance with writing bid specifications. —Phil Hart, Chairman, Building and Grounds Committee



written a play about the school, to be staged here by the Yale Indigenous Performance Arts Program sometime next summer. And some of the relatives of Heneri Opukaha'ia (Anglicized as Henry Obookiah), a Hawaiian who studied at the school, will be in

town on January 21. Stay tuned for more on this.

•**Appointments:** The selectmen have reappointed members of town boards and commissions: Richard Bramley, Economic

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Development Commission; Mary Dzenutis and Peter Kalmes, Committee for Seniors; Kimberly Sullivan, NW Regional Mental Health Board; Tom Juliano, Torrington Area Health; and Richard Griggs, Conservation Commission. Seats yet to be filled include two spots on Economic Development; another on the Conservation Commission; one on the Committee for Seniors; an alternate seat on Inland Wetlands; one spot on Zoning Board of Appeals; another on the NW Regional Tourism District board; two alternate seats on Park and Rec; and an alternate spot on Planning and Zoning. Volunteers keep this community afloat, so step up and offer to serve! —Lisa L. Simont



the UCC Parish House. Proceeds go to the Cancer Care Fund of the Litchfield Hills in memory of long-time church members and much-missed pillars of the community Charlie Gold and Denny Frost. If you miss the breakfast, checks can be made out to the Cancer Care Fund of the Litchfield Hills and sent to the church.

Town Meeting regarding STEAP grants will convene on Friday, January 6, at 7:30 P.M. at CCS. This cycle of STEAP funding will include farm buildings. Applications are available at the selectmen's office.

Cornwall Contra Dance on Saturday, January 7, at 7 P.M. at the town hall. Caller will be Bob Livingston, with live old-time music by Still, the Homegrown Band. For more information visit motherhouse.us.

Free Blood Pressure Clinic on Monday, January 9, from noon to 1 P.M. at the UCC Day Room. For information contact VNA Northwest at 860-567-6000 or vnanw.org.

Senior Luncheon to be held Tuesday, January 10, from 11:30 A.M. to 1 P.M. at the Wandering Moose. No reservations necessary.

Art in Cornwall

At the Souterrain Gallery: Kathleen Love Mooney's exhibit "Cornwall—Little Compton" continues through January 16.

At the Cornwall Library: James Woodruff's show "Real Abstraction" opens on Tuesday, January 3, and runs through February 9. A reception will be held on Saturday, January 7, at 5 P.M.

Standing Rock Discussion: Sunday, January 15, at 11:30 A.M. at UCC, featuring social justice advocate Dennis O'Neil, who recently returned from the site of the Dakota Pipeline standoff. All are welcome.

The West Cornwall Water and Septic Study Group will hold a meeting Friday, January 20, at 7:30 P.M. at CCS featuring a presentation by Steve McDonnell, the consulting engineer for the proposed project. The floor will be open for questions.

Planning & Zoning Commission Special Meeting will be held on Saturday, January 28, at 10 A.M. at CCS (snow date: February 4) to review the progress of planning in Cornwall. Required by the state every 10 years, the update will address conservation and development issues, offer all commissions

and groups the opportunity to share their recent accomplishments and goals, and take a look at what can be accomplished in the next decade.

At the Library

The Winter Film Series begins Saturday, January 14, with *Chariots of Fire* and continues with *Smiles of a Summer Night* on January 28. Both films start at 7:30 P.M. Suggested donation: \$5/person.

Pilates at the Library with Alice Wolf on Thursdays, 8:30 to 9:30 A.M.

Beginning January 3, the library will begin a three-month trial of making available a paper copy of *The New York Times* in periodicals. If you like it, be sure to let the librarians know.



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THIS MONTH

Magaly Ohika, Illustrations
Kerry Donahue and Meg Tansey, Editors

NEXT MONTH

Paul De Angelis, Elisabeth Kaestner, and Jim Fishman, Editors
pdabooks@optonline.net, ekstudios@optonline.net, or
jfishman@law.pace.edu

MANAGING EDITOR Ruth Epstein

CALENDAR EDITOR Chris Gyorsok

calendar@cornwallchronicle.org

CIRCULATION Hunt Williams, Nan and John Bevans

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Events & Announcements

Annual New Year's Day Pancake Breakfast will be held on January 1, 9 A.M. to noon, at

Feeling SAD?

As we move into the shortest days of the year, the light-deprived among us may feel the effects of Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD. Research has shown that relief from this condition can be achieved by making a contribution to one's local newspaper, in this case, the *Chronicle*. Well, maybe not, but it's worth a try, no?

THE CHRONICLE NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

We hope you enjoy this on-line edition of the Cornwall Chronicle. Remember that all our revenues come from readers like you, and we need your help to continue producing this electronic edition along with the print edition. If your contribution is \$15 or more, we'd be glad to mail the print edition to any out-of-town address. Please mail your tax deductible gifts to: Cornwall Chronicle Inc. PO Box 6, West Cornwall, CT 06796. Comments, letters and news may be E-mailed to the publishers at: info@cornwallchronicle.org