



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 3: NUMBER 2 MARCH 1993



A Historic Vote

Rumsey Hall: honored historical relic or disposable shell? Suitable for renovation as town offices or destined to be replaced by a new town office building? Or none of the above? These issues, freighted with political and emotional importance to local residents, were presented as a single question to voters at a Feb. 20 referendum: Shall the Town of Cornwall construct future Town Offices on the Rumsey Hall site by EITHER of the tentative plans developed by the Municipal Building Committee and designed by Amster, Woodhouse & MacLean (i.e., renovate Rumsey into Town Offices — or demolish Rumsey and replace it with new Town Offices)? The voters' decision — non-binding — was:

- 160 yes
- 334 NO - result:

 1. The Rumsey Hall site and the Town Offices do not need to be intertwined.
 2. A less expensive and less extensive plan, probably involving the present Town Office, could be developed to solve space needs.
 3. If Town Office needs can be satisfied in #2 above, Rumsey Hall would be available for alternative uses.

The Feb. 6 town meeting that adjourned to referendum reflected some long-standing concerns familiar to most people in attendance. These included the current storm-battered condition of Rumsey Hall, its usefulness or unsuitability as town offices, and its status as a listed historic structure.

But perhaps the most pervasive concern — the costs of renovation or new construction, estimated at between \$1.5 and \$2 million — was colored by a troubling new sense that the overall financial condition of the town had changed, certainly for the worse, and perhaps for the long term. Dave Williamson, presenting a statement by the selectmen, thanked the Municipal Building Committee (MBC) and its Chairperson Rita Quinn for its "countless hours of meetings over two years." But the selectmen's statement sharply questioned the need for town office space. Recommending a "no" vote on the question, the statement stressed the recent crippling reductions in state aid to the town, and the likelihood of further cuts.

Under this pressure, Williamson pointed out, commitment to repayment of bonded construction costs is risky, because debt service is irremovable from the budget until paid down. Finance Board Chairman Ralph Gold, answering questions about tax

increases necessary to absorb indebtedness, estimated an average hike of six to eight per cent in the first year.

The selectmen stressed that the "no" vote they favored would leave Rumsey's options open — though what they would be was unclear. Several voices pointed out that a negative outcome on Feb. 20 would require some expenditure to maintain the building until its fate is decided.

Much support for a "yes" vote came from arguments defending the town's need to plan for office space (even if not built immediately). Will Calhoun, in a letter read by Paul Baren, cited careful studies by the current MBC and its predecessor; both defined immediate office needs at around 6,000 square feet. Peter Hammond, citing a need for planning despite the town's grim financial prognosis and urging a "yes" vote, looked to future binding votes as chances to control building expenses and trim other costs by reusing such assets as furnishings. Hammond also touched on collateral space needs such as those of the library; he echoed an urgent call by library board member Phyllis Nauts for expansion into the large room in the library building now used for municipal meetings. *(continued on page 2)*

MARCH 1993

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 7pm Town Hall Final Skating 7-8pm Salisbury School	2 Park & Rec. 7:30pm Town Office Agri. Adv. Comm. 7:30pm CCS (p.4) Inland Wetlands 7:30pm Town Hall	3 HVRHS Bd. of Ed. Public Budget Workshop 7:30pm West Cornwall Merchants Ass'n 10am Cadwell's Corner Bd. of Tax Rev. (p.4)	4 Bd. of Tax Rev. (p.4) Reg. Band & Chorus Concert 7:30pm HVRHS Every Thursday: Sr. Citizen lunch & shopping trip	5 Bd. of Tax Rev. (p.4)	6 Tag & Bake sale for ecology 10am-4pm CCS (p.4) Bd. of Tax Rev. (p.4)
7 Selendy talk & film 11:20 UCC* (p.3)	8 P&Z 7:30pm Town Hall	9 Hous. Riv. Comm. 7:30pm CCS Library Dem. Town Comm. 7:30pm Town Hall	10 Rep. Town Comm. 7:30pm Town Hall Bd. of Tax Rev. (p.4)	11 Bd. of Finance w/Selectmen 7:30pm Town Hall Cornwall Housing Corp. 7:30pm UCC* Bd. of Tax Rev. (p.4) Sr. Citizen trip	12	13 Bd. of Tax Rev. (p.4) Poetry Reading 8pm Cadwell's Corner Bottle & can collection 9am-1pm W. Cornwall Firehouse (p.4)
14	15 7pm Town Hall Bd. of Tax Rev. (p.4) HVRHS Bd. of Ed. 7:30pm HS Lib. Paintings by Ed Fales Cornwall Lib.	16	17 ST. PATRICK'S DAY Playgroup, every Wed. 9:30-11:30am St. Peters (p.4)	18 Bd. of Ed. 4pm CCS Lib. Board of Finance with Board of Ed. 7:30pm CCS Library Sr. Citizen Trip	19	20
21 Child Center Auction 2-4:30pm Marvelwood (p.4)	22 Z.B. of Appeals 7:30pm Town Hall* (if necessary) Conservation Comm. 7:30pm Town Office*	23	24	25 Sr. Citizen trip	26	27
28 Four Hands piano concert 3:30pm Cornubia Hall (see at right)	29	30	31	Four hands piano concert by Anne Chamberlain & Kerri Miller, March 28, Cornubia Hall. Benefit of Housatonic Center for Mental Health. \$10 per ticket.	FQ 1 FM 8 LQ 15 NM 23 FQ 31	

*Check time and place at Town Office. † United Church of Christ

(continued from page 1)

Many at the Feb. 6 meeting, held on a memorably cold night in the frigid CCS auditorium, were preoccupied with the historical status of Rumsey Hall itself. Rita Quinn, speaking as a member (but not as chairperson) of the MBC, declared indifference to the historic character of Rumsey — feeling that its columned facade on Bolton Hill Road is mere "street architecture." Rick Wolkowitz, architect and MBC member, differed strongly enough to reject the choice offered in the referendum question. Defending Rumsey's Greek Revival architectural value with a reference to Thomas Jefferson (notable adept in the style), Wolkowitz emphasized its simplicity and directness, symbol of its era's faith in democracy. Remarking on the similar costs for renovation and new construction, he saw "no way that demolishing Rumsey would be 'reasonable.'"

Listed on state and national historic registers, the building may not be "unreasonably" demolished. Jack Shanahan, representing the Connecticut Historical Commission at the meeting, gave the legal definitions of "unreasonable" as the existence of a "feasible and prudent alternative" to demolition. "Dollars," said Shanahan, "would figure in the evaluation. The costs [of the two projects] are close." Shanahan added, "there are many good examples of mothballing for future use."

— Charles Osborne



Bottom Line Burdens Selectmen

The concerns of the Board of Selectmen during February were many and varied, but most centered on a single problem: how to come up with a reasonable budget in a year of increasing costs and state mandates, coupled with decreasing state aid. The problem is so severe that First Selectman Gordon Ridgway twice felt compelled to testify before legislative committees in Hartford, once on the impact of unfunded state mandates on small towns, and once on the proposed elimination of grants for 911 service.

Furthermore, the problem abounds in unfortunate ironies and apparent inconsistencies that reach beyond the town. For instance, in a year when Cornwall's school aid (already the lowest in the state) will be cut still further, the largest increase in the governor's budget is for prison construction and guards. Also, Ridgway noted that a decrease in state aid for our roads, from \$99,000 to \$66,000, hardly seems appropriate at a time of a much-ballyhooed "stimulus package" to jolt the economy. Virtually all the \$33,000 the town stands to lose would have gone to contractors in Torrington and other nearby towns, an immediate employment plus in the area.

"Regardless of what happens, we will see a decrease in state aid," Ridgway sum-

marized at the Feb. 8 meeting. The proposed state budget completely eliminates about \$280,000 to help support Litchfield County Dispatch, the organization that provides emergency 911 service to Cornwall and 18 other towns. If this cut withstands legislative scrutiny, the whole burden of this state-mandated and vital service will have to be picked up locally. Also, insurance and other necessary costs are all up. For instance, state mandated physicals for fire and rescue personnel will require \$5,400, unless the least active of the 54 can be deferred to future years.

In other business, the selectmen discussed at length the town's role in the possible disinterment of Henry Obookiah for reburial in Hawaii. Robert T. Beers, the town's representative to the Torrington Area Health District, researched the matter and provided a useful outline of the necessary and legal functions of the Town Clerk's Office, the Judge of Probate, the Cornwall Cemetery Association, and the TAHD itself. The hurdles are many, starting with the fact that the town has no official record of Obookiah's death and burial in 1818 — and ending, perhaps, with sad proof of the opinion that exhumation of a body buried 175 years ago in a simple pine coffin would yield, at the most, a molar or two.

On Feb. 8 the selectmen voted to amend transfer station fees to include vans in the "Lo-Boy" category at \$20 a load, and to allow landfill personnel some discretion in determining what constitutes a "load." This action should alleviate complaints by some businesses about the inconvenience and messiness of storing waste material until a full "load" was ready at the set price.

— Bob Potter

Budget Warmup

Will a distribution from Governor Weicker's slot machine deal offset a \$40,000 drop in state grants? The Board of Finance was unable to get a firm handle on this at its Feb. 18 meeting, which was devoted to the revenue side of the 1993-94 budget.

There was some discussion about increasing revenues such as fees, but little expectation of any significant new dollars. The board also expressed reluctance to again transfer much from savings in order to pay for capital projects or to keep the mill rate down.

It was clear that the giant share of revenues would be provided, as usual, by the property tax. Just how much your bill will increase will be determined in the process described below.

Early Budget Input, Please

The Board of Finance (BOF) urges every concerned taxpayer to participate in the early stages of budget preparation. It's not much help to anyone when an angry voter takes the floor in May to give us information which might have helped make a decision in March. Write the board if you can't make meetings.

SCHEDULE OF BUDGET MEETINGS

March 11, 7:30 Town Hall: BOF meeting; Bd. of Selectmen presentations.
 March 18, 7:30 CCS Library: BOF meeting; Bd. of Education presentations.
 April 1 & 8, 7:30 Town Hall & April 22, 7:30 CCS Library: BOF meetings with Bds. of Selectmen and Education to negotiate budget changes.
 April 28: Copies of budget will be available to public at Town Office.
 May 7, 7:30 CCS: Public meeting on the budget, followed directly by a special BOF meeting to vote on budget to present to the Town Meeting.
 May 21, 8:00 CCS: Town meeting vote on budget, followed immediately by BOF meeting to set the mill rate. — Lisa Lansing

Goodby to Friends

Richard J. Kavanagh
 Daniel A. Meyers
 Dorothy Van Doren

Land Transfer

Ronald M. and Anne L. Novak to Robert M. and Marie A. Murphy, house on College Street.

Zoning Z-Z-Z's

The Planning and Zoning Commission enjoyed a peaceful period of winter rest at its Feb. 8 meeting. The only new business was a tool-shed application. Old business was the renewal of municipally-operated indigent housing. An amendment to the private street regulation, allowing possible design modification where wetlands would be seriously impacted, was heard before empty audience chairs. All the above were approved.

— Ginny Potter



CHC Forges Ahead

After a final feverish flurry of paperwork, Jachimowski Construction Company has been given the go-ahead from the Department of Housing to begin construction at Kugeman Village. Bulldozers have been preparing the earth for the pouring of foundations. The project is to be completed by October, with occupancy to follow immediately.

Lottery winners have chosen their parcels on which to build their own homes. The Housing Corporation has created a subcommittee, chaired by Will Calhoun, to plan an on-going series of meetings with the home-builders in order to provide guidance, for those who need it, on such matters as financing, site design, and construction. Members of the subcommittee noted that they were new to this kind of program and were finding out things as they went along and making changes accordingly. Sometimes that results in delays, they admitted, but they hope their experience can

be helpful to other communities wishing to start similar programs.

"After all the red tape, research, revisions, and revisions," said Ken Keskinen, interviewing himself, "we seem to be finally getting something concrete to show for our efforts. The CHC Board is looking forward with special eagerness to the dedication of Kugeman Village this fall."

— Ken Keskinen



Think Globally — Act Globally

Cornwall reaches out with global concern through several citizens, but the longest reach and firmest grasp certainly belong to Janine Selendy. Her Horizon Communications, founded in 1976, documents what can be done to protect the environment and improve the quality of life around the world. The information is disseminated through films, a computerized data bank, internship programs, and conferences. Effective approaches to problems from water supply to waste management, from energy production to family planning, come from over 70 countries, most of which have been visited by Janine herself.

Janine's film "One Second Before Sunrise" has been shown on PBS and to some 52 million persons around the world. So if you want to hear first-hand about working solutions, come hear her talk (with parts of the movie) at 11:20 a.m., Feb. 28 and March 7 at the United Church of Christ in Cornwall Village.

— Jack Forster

Proposed Eyesore

The Housatonic River Commission heard a report from First Selectman Gordon Ridgway who had met with Peter MacDonald of Litchfield Cellular. If car phone users prevail, their 250-foot tower will stand candy-striped and lighted on the side of Mine Mountain, a conspicuous part of the river vista on the east side of the Housatonic River north of Housatonic Meadows. The HRC will study the issue, keep you informed and act appropriately. Everyone has a stake in this, and there is even room for a little bitter humor: If you are driving along Route 7, holding a phone in one hand, a coffee cup in the other, while using your knee to adjust the tuning on your fading radio station, what's left over to steer with?

— Phil Hart, Secretary

We Are Flattered!

Your editors regularly visit Box 246 in the West Cornwall Post Office, hoping to find \$10 contributions, vital articles, smaller contributions, poignant letters, larger contributions, etc. So imagine our pleasure when we recently opened a hefty manila envelope to find a first edition of *The Chronicle Jr.*, billed as "a special annual CCS sixth grade newspaper."

Like many juniors, this one is far more

sprightly than its staid parent. *The Chronicle Jr.* is a peppery mixture of news stories, movie and book reviews, cryptic personals, puzzles, classifieds ... even an advice column and teacher news (Victoria Muni and Joel Nelson to be married June 26.) Virginia Snowden and her sixth grade journalists have made the progenitors proud indeed.

Along with the student newspaper came a copy of *Our Song*, this year's collection of poetry, prose, and art by CCS students. Another winner. Both publications deserve a long look. You can see them at the Cornwall Library.

— Bob Potter

The Jumping Wilsons

Cornwall's ski-jumping Wilsons — Webster and Seth — triumphed alternately at the Salisbury Winter Sports Association competitions at Satre Hill on the weekend of Feb. 6-7. On Saturday Seth, 22, soared into first place with two jumps of 59 meters each in the Salisbury Invitational competition. Web, 20, placed third. On Sunday, the brothers' roles were reversed. In the U.S. Eastern Ski Jumping Senior Division Championship, Web's total score was 174.7. Seth came in second by a whisker — with a score of 174.4. Snow conditions at Satre Hill were great for the jumpers, but frigid for the foot-stamping but enthusiastic spectators.

— Barbara Klaw

Two Art Awards to CCS

Two eighth grade students from Cornwall Consolidated School, Sara Calhoun and Kara Lugar, won Place Awards in the Scholastic Art Awards competition this year. Sara won in the painting category with her watercolor entitled "Christmas Cheer," a study of poinsettias in a basket. Kara won in the crafts category with her stitchery entitled "Self-Portrait." Her piece consisted of images that reflect the artist's personality applied onto fabric. The new art teacher at CCS said, "It's wonderful being recognized our first year in the competition!"

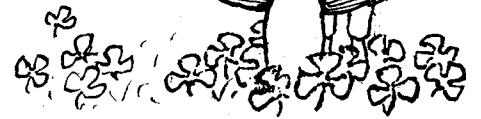
— Cynthia Jerram

Hanlon Talks R.R.

With gas taxes expected to go into orbit and new highways costing millions of dollars per mile to build or widen, the Housatonic Railroad is working to provide us with alternative transportation. John Hanlon, president, said he expects to be able to offer a Pittsfield to New York City commuter rail service within the next two years if he can stir up enough Department of Transportation interest. The DOT not only controls the necessary funding for track improvements, but also has some passenger cars and locomotives which are idle much of the time and which Mr. Hanlon would like to put to use. "We are not talking a great deal of money here," he said.

Currently, the Housatonic Railroad is an increasingly successful freight line with a small, residual excursion-tour business on the side. Mr. Hanlon says he is moving

Letter to the Chronicle



MONSTER MEMORIES

Yes, Charlie Osborne, there is a Cream Hill Lake Monster. About ten years ago, Cal MacCracken and I saw the creature swimming across the lake on a sunny watersports day. That winter, on separate visits to the Century Club in New York, we saw the monster again — this time in photographs and fragments displayed in a glass case on the landing of the crossover staircase. Some club members were amazed and confounded. I was delighted, and Cal says he was, too.

I can't locate any photos, so this sketch is from memory. In honor of the loch's early name (c. 1800), let's call it the North Pond monster, or just "Northie." — Tom Bevans



at a rate of 6,000 to 8,000 carloads per year. At any one time, he said, he will typically have two trains traveling the track. He has three train crews, and his total employee count is around 22. Hanlon believes his rail line is now the most active freight line coming into Connecticut.

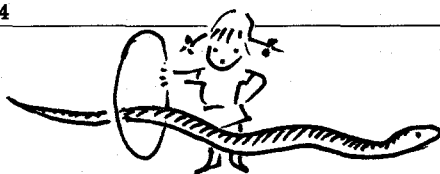
Mr. Hanlon estimates his road crews can upgrade track between Pittsfield and New Milford to enable passenger trains to move at 50 miles per hour at a cost of \$50,000 per mile. The recently acquired track between New Milford and Danbury that will make commuting possible will probably cost a bit more to fix, he said.

A misconception that dies hard, he said, is that commuter lines cannot make money. By themselves, commuter lines are often losers, but when operated in conjunction with freight, they can turn a good profit. He is convinced the Northwest Corner is ready for an NYC commuter train as it has proven to be ready for rail freight.

As proof of the general reliability of railroads in today's world, Mr. Hanlon stated that UPS depends in great part on the train system to preserve its vaunted reputation for efficiency. UPS is Conrail's largest single client.

Mr. Hanlon said he expects to limit his excursion business this year to a few trips during the fall foliage season. "I just have too many things going on," he said. He said he is also trying to eliminate night runs when he can, both for economic reasons and to disturb home-owners along the track as little as possible.

— Scoville Soulé



Extras for Kids

There's a new group in town called Extras for Kids. Its aim is to provide funds for a broad range of activities for kids through high school. These might include, but by no means be limited to, school trips, music and art lessons, soccer camp, science projects, sports equipment, both remedial and advanced tutoring, chess groups, summer experiences, inviting children from other backgrounds and cultures to visit — the list goes on. An advisory board will help plan and run activities, and the group has filed for non-profit status.

The officers of Extras for Kids are Scott Cady, President, Robin Ullman Freyberg, Secretary, and Todd Aichele, treasurer. Also on the Board are Alice Cadwell, Lisa Lansing, Sabina Lietzmann, James Longwell, Phyllis Nauts, Cindy Robbins, Karen Stevens, and Susan Williamson. Please call Scott Cady at 672-0143 with ideas for activities or projects you would like to see funded, or would like to offer yourself.

We will start distributing funds this summer, and need money immediately. Please send checks, payable to Extras for Kids, to Todd Aichele, Treasurer, 263 Town Street, West Cornwall, CT 06796. Thank you!
— Phyllis Nauts

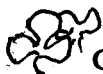
Orrell Paintings at Library

David Orrell includes three self portraits in his current show of mostly landscapes at the Cornwall Free Library. Persona number one wields a paintbrush in a Renaissance-like setting; a master obviously, of his craft and his culture. In persona number two he appears, back coyly turned to his audience, as he skinny dips among the goldfish; he is here the stuff of myths and legends. The third incarnation, however, titled "Intimidating Self Portrait," sheds his past and scrutinizes intensely his very present self. In turn, those shrewd gimlet eyes are focussed pointblank out on you.

A former resident of Cornwall, Mr. Orrell taught art at Cornwall and Sharon Schools and at HVRHS for 28 years.

Until March 13.

— Brigitte Hanf



Good News, Bad News



The bad news is that your income tax will be due on April 15. The good news is that all the contributions you made to the *Chronicle* last year are deductible. So don't forget that all the contributions you make this year will be deductible next year, Special bonus! If you contribute now, you won't have to fill out the coupon. Your name and address on your check or envelope will do it all.

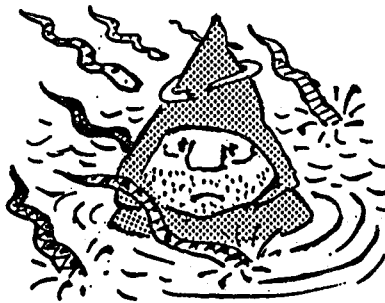
A \$10 contribution will get the *Chronicle* mailed to an out-of-town address. Note name and address.

Crazy Coon

A recent issue of the *Chronicle* reported a raccoon's visit to Mabel Engisch's garage. Since then, just across the river from Mabel, a more daring raccoon entered Debra Tyler's house and joined her in bed.

About 2 a.m. Debra was awakened by her cat's loud hissing, after which she felt a thump at the foot of her bed, and heard some strange uncatlike noises. Turning on the light, she saw a raccoon on her bed. Although she screamed, the raccoon approached without hesitation. Debra fled the room and called the Canaan Police barracks. They sent an officer and also dispatched a call to Canine Control, which sent Pete Begley to the rescue. Pete snared the raccoon, took it outside, and shot it. Laboratory results show that it was rabid.

Debra was warned that she would probably see more, since raccoons move in groups of two or three. Sure enough, two nights later another raccoon was ramming its head against her door. This one is still at large. Debra's raccoon entered through the cat door. All of you with cat doors, BEWARE!
— Bee Simont



Events & Announcements

Rabies Risks: It is state law that all dogs, cats, and livestock be vaccinated. This is the only protection against infection. Avoidance of abnormal wild animals is important. As the above story testifies, cat/dog doors can admit a rabid raccoon.

The selectmen have appointed Rick Stone as town animal control officer, or dog warden. He can handle situations with rabid animals. Call 672-6256 or 672-6313.

Agricultural Advisory Committee: Every Thursday during March members will give "hands-on" classes on maple syrup production to older CCS students. The regular meeting on March 2 at 7:30 p.m. in the CCS conference room will begin planning for the August fair. Ed Kenniston urges all interested persons to attend or phone their ideas to any committee member.

Board of Tax Review: This board has set the following times in March to meet with citizens — Wed. Mar. 3: 3-5; Thurs. Mar. 4: 1:30-4:30; Fri. Mar. 5: 1:30-4:30; Sat. Mar. 6: 9:30-1; Wed. Mar. 10: 1:30-3:30; Thurs. Mar. 11: 4:30-8; Sat. Mar. 13: 9:30-1; Mon. Mar. 15: 4:30-8. Call selectman's office (672-4959) for appointment. Additional dates will be made available if necessary.

Sale for Ecology: The rainforest and its endangered animals will be getting some help from the fifth grade at CCS. Students are holding a tag-and-bake sale Mar. 6 from 10-4; profits will be sent to the animals and the forest, c/o the National Wildlife Federation.

Auction Alert: The Cornwall Child Center has collected an enticing array of goods and services to be sold at auction for the benefit of their New Building Fund on Mar. 21 at 2-4:30 in the Marvelwood Dining Hall. Silent auction items will be available for open bidding. Dave Cadwell and John Miller will wield wit and the gavel over other major attractions. As previously noted in the *Chronicle*, an anonymous donor has indicated the probability of matching all auction proceeds. Admission is \$10 per person with complimentary wine and hors d'oeuvres. Free child care will be provided to those who register with Martha Bruehl, 672-6373, by Mar. 14.

Bottle Collection: Saturday, Mar. 13, from 9-1, returnable bottles and cans may be dropped off at the West Cornwall Firehouse. This will help the Junior Girl Scout Troop raise the money for a trip to Hershey, Pa., in June. Or Leader Vera Dinneen (at 672-6740) can arrange pickup at your house.

Cornwall Playgroup: Local infants, preschoolers, and their adults continue to meet Wed. mornings 9:30-11:30 in the basement fellowship room of St. Peter's Lutheran Church on Bolton Hill Road. There is always room for more, and those seeking socializing are invited. Vera Dinneen (672-6740) and Denise Bate (672-0205) can tell you more about it.

CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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