

CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 19 : NUMBER 8 SEPTEMBER 2009

Lots of Balloons But No Party

On August 5 and 7, people could be seen driving up and down Popple Swamp Road and as far away as East Street in Sharon searching the horizon for balloons. Those were the two days that Verizon launched preliminary balloon floats to gather information for its application to build a cell tower on property owned by either Matt Collins on Popple Swamp Road or Ralph Gulliver on nearby Bell Extension Road.

According to Mike Koperwhats, a planner for Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc., of Middletown, Connecticut, and the person who oversaw the launches, it was a little hazy on August 5, and he knew that photos from the red and black balloons wouldn't be clear. So on August 7 he floated two larger ones that were bright yellow. From his point of view, it was a success.

Less positive were the reports from opponents of the cell tower. Victoria Montifiore, who lives on Popple Swamp Road, wrote, "We could see a balloon on Matt Collins's property from our kitchen and front door." She didn't think that an area with a swamp and river ecosystem was an appropriate site for a tower.

Her neighbors Kathleen Mooney and Fred Thaler agreed, adding that Verizon is ignoring a plan put forward by First Selectman Gordon Ridgway that involves putting repeaters on

phone poles to facilitate coverage and that explores other sites for the tower. Ridgway also has concerns that a road to the tower in this location could be very steep and could wash out during a storm. Ridgway is not opposed to a tower; he noted that Cornwall no longer has any public pay phones, and cell phone coverage needs to be improved.

Matt Collins is for the tower. He doesn't think that the concern some have about the emission of electromagnetic fields is warranted, because the tower sends a weak signal. He says that most people in town would like better cell coverage.

Skip Kosciusko, captain of the Cornwall Rescue Squad, agreed. "For us, the more coverage we have, the better." Recently his squad had two rescues in an area north of the Pine Knob Loop on the Appalachian Trail where radios didn't work but cell phones did. Cell phones are also the only direct communication his team has with the state police. Kosciusko looks to a time when Cornwall ambulances might have a cardiac monitoring device that will transmit information via cell phone to a hospital.

The balloon test data and photos were to be presented at an August 20 public meeting. After September 21, Verizon can apply to the Connecticut Siting Council, which makes the final decision on the application. —Norma Lake

Sweet Peet Continued

Over 75 people packed the Town Hall on the evening of July 27 to hear the appeal of Kathleen O'Flinn before the Zoning Board of Appeals, hoping to get an answer to the question of whether the Sweet Peet project proposed for Cream Hill Farm by Charles and Ralph Gold is "farming" and whether it should be allowed to go forward. But they will have to wait for further developments before this key issue is determined.

The ZBA, on advice of counsel, Perley Grimes, voted unanimously that the appeal was premature, as there was no final decision of the Planning and Zoning Commission to review. Final action by P&Z will require prior approval of the site plan by the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), which has not been received. As DEP has approved other Sweet Peet operations in Connecticut, the Golds expect approval to be granted.

The O'Flinns represent a group of 10–15 Cream Hill Road residents who object to the application of the Golds to lease three acres of Cream Hill Farm to Sweet Peet for the production of mulch from horse manure and straw bedding. As reported in the August *Chronicle*, P&Z had approved the Golds' application on the ground that the proposed use fell within the zoning regulations' defini-

(continued on page 2)

SEPTEMBER 2009

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 Inland Wetlands 8 P.M. Town Office	2	3	4	5 Community Contra Dance 7 P.M. Town Hall †
6 Bridges Opening Reception 3–7 P.M. Lady Audrey's Gallery † Aleigh Lewis Talk 4 P.M. Library †	7 LABOR DAY	8 Park & Rec. 7 P.M. CCS Library P&Z 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Bd. of Selectmen 8 P.M. 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library Agricultural Commission 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	9	10	11	12 First Aid/CPR Class 8 A.M.–Noon W. Corn. Firehouse † Bd. of Assessment App. 9–10 A.M. Town Offices † Ag Fair 11 A.M.–4 P.M. Village Green (See Insert.)
13 Making a Milk Stool 10 A.M.–4 P.M. Local Farm Barn †	14 Blood Pressure Screening Noon–1 P.M. UCC Democratic Town Committee 7:30 P.M. Library	15 Deadline: October Chronicle Copy Red Cross Blood Drive 1:30–6:15 P.M. UCC Parish House †	16	17 Last Day to Order Benefit Lobsters † Bd. of Ed. 5 P.M. CCS Library Bd. of Finance 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	18 Diabetes Program 3–5 P.M. Library †	19 ROSH HASHANAH Cornwall Plains Tour 10 A.M. Historical Society † Cow Chip Bingo 3 P.M. Cornwall Village † Artist Reception for Joel Schapira 5–7 P.M. Library †
20	21	22 FIRST DAY OF AUTUMN P&Z 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	23 Western CT Agency on Aging 6 P.M. St. Bridget's †	24	25 Story Hour 1:15 P.M. Library †	26
27	28 YOM KIPPUR ZBA 8 P.M. Town Hall *	29	30 Cornwall Vol. Fire Dept. 8 P.M. West Cornwall Firehouse	Every Week This Month: Mondays: Jam Session, 7:30 P.M. Call 672-0229 for Location; Men's Adult Basketball, 7:30 P.M. CCS Gym Tuesdays: Adult Volleyball, 7 P.M. CCS Gym Wednesdays: Stretch Class, 5 P.M. Town Hall; Women's Adult Basketball, 7:30 P.M. CCS; Tai Chi, 6 P.M. Call 672-0064 Sundays: Meditation Group, 1–2 P.M. 672-0229 to confirm		

* Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

† Details in Events and Announcements

(continued from page 1)

tion of "agricultural use."

The O'Flinn appeal takes the position that the making of mulch from off-site raw materials to be sold off-site is not within the definition of agricultural use because it does not involve the "raising or nurturing" of "living things."

According to a project update prepared by the Golds dated July 20, the DEP has limited the size of the project, determining that the amount of material that can be trucked into the site cannot exceed 5,000 cubic yards per year. Originally, the plan had anticipated up to 10,000 cubic yards. The Golds say that this will reduce the number of truck deliveries, a source of objection by some Cream Hill Road residents.

Peter O'Flinn claims, however, that it is not only the number but the size of the trucks used to deliver material that creates an issue. He says these are large container trucks that present a significant safety hazard on narrow, winding Cream Hill Road. He believes that a public hearing is required to develop all the facts before a final decision can be made.

While some settlement discussions have taken place and will continue, neither the Golds nor the O'Flinns had any comment to make on the talks as of the *Chronicle* deadline. —Harriette Dorsen

Snakes in the Grass

The fear most people have of snakes is probably primal. Zoo-bred monkeys that have never seen a snake will show fear when confronted with one, and we are not all that different from zoo-bred monkeys. Cable TV confirms this.

Both humans and simians have good evolutionary reasons to avoid snakes, as sometimes they can kill us. You will avoid this problem, however, as long as you stay in Cornwall. Michael Klemens, a local herpetologist and the author of *Amphibians and Reptiles of Connecticut and Adjacent Regions*, has never been able to confirm the presence of either rattlesnakes or copperheads in Cornwall. Neither have I, and I have been looking hard for more than 30 years. Rattlesnakes in Salisbury, Canaan, and Sharon, yes. But neither one in the Cornwalls.

Here are the snakes you might find, starting with the two that are most likely to be confused with those two poisonous species:

The northern water snake is a large, stout-bodied snake, usually dull brown and sometimes nearly black. Its head is not much wider than its neck, and it is rarely far from water. Young ones have a blotched pattern, vaguely suggestive of a copperhead. If it is in Cornwall, however, it is not a copperhead.

The eastern milk snake more plausibly resembles a copperhead, having a pattern of reddish-brown blotches. But it is much more slender, and it does not have the triangular head of a copperhead, nor the rattle of a rattlesnake. Also it is in Cornwall, so relax. It is our only constrictor, killing its prey

(mostly mice) by squeezing.

Both the milk snake and the water snake are common but, like most snakes, seldom seen. The snake you are most likely to see here is the garter snake. Our local variety is easily identified: a light stripe, usually pale yellow, runs the length of its back. Less visible stripes are along its sides; the background color is black.

Probably just as common, although mostly out of sight under rotting logs or rocks, are the ring-necked snakes. These are small, secretive animals that have, as you might have guessed, a yellow ring around the neck. (Well, you might not have guessed the yellow part.) The belly is also yellow, and the rest of the snake is a shiny, gunmetal gray.

The other two snakes that Klemens lists for Cornwall are the Dekay's snake and the red-bellied snake. No doubt he is right, but I've never found either one under any of the thousands of rocks and boards and logs I've turned over through the years. The Dekay's snake is a small, brown, inoffensive animal that wants only to be left alone. The brown phase of the red-bellied snake looks very much like a Dekay's, aside from the bright red belly. There is a gray phase locally, too, as I know from finding one on the top of Bear Mountain last year.

Bottom line, then: no legless, scaled creature that you come across in Cornwall is going to hurt you unless you mess with it. So don't mess with it. What did it ever do to you? —Jerry Doolittle

[Go to <http://badattitudes.com/MT/> for photos of Cornwall's snakes.]

CHS Doors Open on a New Age

A spanking new Cornwall Historical Society opened its doors during the first weekend of August to flocks of donors, visitors, and small children.

The donors were thanked at a special Friday-evening reception; the visitors came two days later to see what has emerged after more than a year; and the children...well, they might have been there for the ice cream and Roger the Jester.

The renovation of the Society's building, which began life as a carriage barn, was carried out by architect Richard Wolkowitz and United Construction and Engineering of Torrington. The goal was to preserve the several lives of the structure, which, in the middle of the past century, was the home of Cornwall's librarian, Miss Emily Marsh.

The real challenge was to transform the warren of rooms, which had served Miss Marsh as a home, into a workable museum, with the storage, study, and workspace so badly needed by the Society.

What visitors saw was a bright, inviting place. The removal of an old chimney opened up the center of the structure and has made it seem that the little building has taken a big, deep, and happy breath. Removing the chimney allowed room on the roof for a cupola modeled after photographs of the

original on the old carriage house.

There are long stretches of pristine wall space for display, study areas on both the ground level and the basement, and, on the second floor, a large room for curatorial and research activities.

The Society, according to Board President Ginny Potter, will move its collections back into the building slowly and carefully so that everything finds its proper place and location records can be updated. Plans for an inaugural exhibit and an opening day are underway. —Lisa L. Simont

Good-Bye to Friends

Ann S. Peterson

Congratulations

Alyssa Ackerman
and Christopher Crawford

Land Transfers

Paul S. and Joan M. Rogala to Mark D. and Joy P. Marino, 18.3 acres with improvements thereon on Johnson Road for \$250,000.

Ian Ingersoll to John D. McLaughlin, land and improvements thereon at 11 Railroad Street for \$200,000.

Candyland Farms, LLC, to John D. and Catherine C. McMahon, 90 acres at 226-246 College Street for \$1,750,000.

Ralph I. and Thalia Scoville to Yelping Hill Association, Inc., .806 acres on Town Street for \$100,000.

Family Stuff

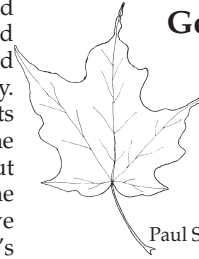
In 1928 my grandparents built a summer house on family land in North Cornwall. The house is now in my hands, and after a long renovation, my husband and I are finally moving into it.

May 30, 2009: A weekend unpacking boxes. We're in the final stretch: books on shelves, the kitchen mostly done, furniture in place. Now we're hanging pictures.

I've been looking for a watercolor, a landscape that my husband bought. Up on the third floor, I open a big cardboard carton labeled "pictures," but I can see at once, my heart sinking, they aren't watercolors. Three big 19th-century photographs, one framed, the others mounted on heavy battered board. The framed one is a studio portrait of my great-great-grandfather. The second shows him in a posed family portrait on the lawn. The third is a landscape: a farm on the side of a rocky hill. I recognize the farm, it's right near this house. It's still in family hands. Like everything else.

I recognize my great-great-grandfather, too, of course: the big, wide-spaced, froggy eyes, the jowls, the sideburns. It's Henry Ward Beecher. The family group is him and his wife Eunice, their grown children and spouses. My great-grandfather Samuel Scoville, with his black hair and pale skin and dark eyes, standing on the lawn behind his wife, the Beecher daughter. In the third picture, the farm looks dim and distant, light-stunned, set unevenly on the shoulder of the hill.

All this family stuff. Photographs, jour-



nals, published and unpublished books, china, furniture—nearly everything in the house is freighted with meaning and tribal loyalty. My mother called Harriet Beecher Stowe “Great-Aunt Hattie.” I feel responsible toward her, toward Henry Ward, all of them. Toward everything in the house, not just the objects but about the people they represent.

Henry Ward Beecher, the patriarch, his coat jacket open, the gold watch fob across his chest, sitting portly and distinguished among his children. Of course, in the family we don’t think he was guilty of adultery. There’s evidence supporting his innocence, but no one’s written it up. When I think about this I feel guilty myself, because why haven’t I written about it? Why haven’t I rescued my great-great-grandfather from public contumely? I should at least frame his photograph.

Opening all these boxes, dusting off furniture, looking at photographs, I’ve been thinking about what things are lost, what kept. Much happens by chance: things left behind, thrown out by accident. Precious ribbon-tied letters discarded, their emotional charges finally spent.

In the house where I grew up was a little framed pencil drawing. It’s an interior, done by another great-grandfather, Henry Clay Trumbull. He was a chaplain for the Union during the Civil War, and captured by the Rebel soldiers. He was put in Libby Prison: that’s where he did the drawing. It’s of his cell.

When my mother said “Libby Prison,” the words were full of dread and fear. For the family, the picture represents darkness, an anguished intersection between private and public history. But how long should those feelings reverberate around this little faded drawing? Should it be thrown out? I can’t imagine throwing it out, but if everyone kept everything we’d drown. These stiff photographs, the women with big leg-of-mutton sleeves, the men with thick curtains of whiskers. That’s Pater, my mother said affectionately, of the tall bearded man, her grandfather. Henry Clay Trumbull. I know who he is. How can I throw him out?

My friends have bright pictures on their walls, things they’ve chosen themselves. I’m jealous of their wall space. I wonder where their ancestors are.

We have a huge framed formal photograph of Pater, his little pale eyes nearly engulfed by the long, thick, silky beard. I know whiskers were fashionable then, but I don’t consider a beard handsome, no matter how silky and combed it is. Actually, the silkier the worse.

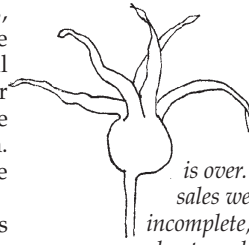
I’m not going to throw out Pater. I’ll take his photograph up to the attic, where it can lean against the wall until my daughter finds it. If she doesn’t remember who he is she can throw it out.

—Roxana Robinson

[First appeared in the *New York Times Book Review* blog, “Paper Cuts.”]

Campaign ‘09

Well, election ‘09 anyway. It’s not likely that there will be any campaigning for the November 3 town election. There are no con-



Letters to the Chronicle

RECORD RUMMAGE

Rummage Sale 2009

is over. The quality was high and sales were brisk. Final figures are incomplete, but this year should be about our best ever. Did you ever wonder what happens to the leftovers? They don’t end up in the dumpster! Blankets and clothes went to the Soup Kitchen, Dress for Success, Goodwill, Social Services, and to an outfit in Torrington which gives clothes to school children. Baby and other furniture and household items were given to Social Services, Habitat for Humanity, the Salvation Army, and Goodwill.

The majority of our budget goes for educational aid to Cornwall students. We also give to 16 other charities.

With the tireless help of many volunteers and the community’s generous support, we are able

to continue the work of more than 59 years.

—Elizabeth Kenniston and Thalia Scoville
Co-chairs

FIFTY YEARS AND GOING STRONG

This year’s Rose Algrant Art Show celebrated the joint reappearance of two exhibitors from its very first year, Marc Simont and his sister Jenny, as well as the remarkable organizing skills of Bee Simont. Thanks to Bee’s indefatigable spirit and hard work (and her helpers), the show has taken place every single year since 1959; its opening nights, meanwhile, have become legendary as a meeting place for Cornwall art lovers. Sales from this year’s early August exhibit were about \$14,000. After expenses are deducted, several thousand dollars will be donated to the Cornwall Housing Corporation.

—Elisabeth Kaestner and Phyllis Nauits

tested offices and several cross endorsements. This has become common in Cornwall; most of us are apparently satisfied with our town government.

Here are the candidates chosen at the July party caucuses.

Democrats: First Selectman, Gordon Ridgway; Selectman, Richard Bramley; Town Clerk, Vera Dineen; Treasurer, John Green; Tax Collector, Jean Bouteiller; Board of Finance, Earl Brecher, John LaPorta, Celia Senzer; Board of Education, Philip Hart, Irene Hurlburt; Park & Rec., Margaret Cooley, Rebecca Hurlburt; Zoning Board of Appeals, Nancy Calhoun, Betty Spence; Planning and Zoning, James LaPorta.

Republicans: First Selectman, Gordon Ridgway; Selectman, Kenneth C. Baird; Town Clerk, Vera Dineen; Treasurer, John Green; Tax Collector, Jean Bouteiller; Board of Finance, John Camp, John Preston; Board of Education, Rachel Matsudaira; Park & Rec., Steven Saccardi, Ronald Laigle; Board of Assessment Appeals, Charles Gold; ZBA, Marsha Bobalik Smith; P&Z, Heidi Kearns.

Noteworthy are two names that don’t appear above: Barbara Gold, chair of the Board of Education, and Annie Kosciusko, P&Z chair. Both are stepping down from two of the more demanding volunteer jobs in town. The boards will choose new leaders when they reorganize after the election.

—Ed Ferman

Cornwall Briefs

• **Derailment:** In mid-July, two freight cars of the Housatonic Railroad went off the rails and overturned on River Road. It was the second derailment in Cornwall in two years. Although there have been no injuries to date, the train occasionally hauls ethanol,

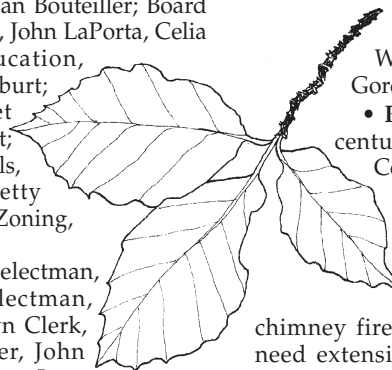
which would present a serious hazard if an accident occurred. The Selectmen’s Office has been urging the railroad to upgrade the ties and railroad bed as soon as possible, and in the meantime to stop carrying dangerous materials, including ethanol.

• **Honoring World War II Vets:** Along with Falls Village and North Canaan, Cornwall will honor veterans of World War II at a program to be held in Falls Village in October. If you are a World War II vet, please contact Gordon Ridgway at 672-4959.

• **Pink House:** The historic 19th-century house in downtown West Cornwall is on the market. Well, sort of. The Landmark Trust owns the property and has listed it with Bain Real Estate. But—and this is a big BUT—it has been unoccupied since a chimney fire in January 2008 and would need extensive renovation. If renovated, would former owner Maura Smithies have the right to move back in? She and her ex-husband gave the property to Landmark with the understanding that she would have the right to live there for the rest of her life. She currently lives in a barn behind the big house. Priscilla Miller of Bain said that what happens next is up to the courts, and she indicated a sale was unlikely if the court ruled in Ms. Smithies’s favor.

• **Dzenutis Fund:** A special account has been set up at the National Iron Bank for those who want to help the Ralph Dzenutis family rebuild their Cornwall Bridge home, which suffered huge damage from a fire on July 31. The *Chronicle* asked about a report that Ralph, upon detecting the fire in his garage, ran the half-mile on foot to the Cornwall Bridge Firehouse and brought a pumper back to his house. Not true. Ralph, a captain in the Cornwall Volunteer Fire Department, drove to the firehouse.

• **School Opening:** When CCS opened its



doors on August 31, new principal Robert Vaughan welcomed 122 students and one new staff member, Linda Massucci, who will teach Title 1 reading.

• **Junior Tennis Team Triumphs:** Cornwall Roadkill, Cornwall's 14-and-Under Junior Tennis Players, returned triumphant from the United States Tennis Association-sponsored Connecticut Junior Team Tennis tournament. They beat five other division winners from the 2008/2009 indoor and outdoor leagues. As 2009 state champions, Cornwall—with resident team members Zack Busby, Zack Zuckerman, Sam Green, Charlie Van Doren, Audrey Ellen, Lee Pryor, Connor Elwell, Dan Melcher, Jake Ellen, and coach Todd Piker—was scheduled to compete later in August as Connecticut's entry in the USTA's New England Sectional Championship.

—Norman Dorsen and John Miller



Events & Announcements

Community Contra Dance: Saturday, September 5, 7 to 9:30 P.M. at the Town Hall. \$3/child, \$5/adult. Call Jane or Jim, 672-6101.

The Board of Assessment Appeals will meet Saturday, September 12, between 9 and 10 A.M. at the Town Offices for the purpose of hearing appeals regarding motor vehicle assessments. No appointment is required. There will be no other time for hearing such appeals.

Motherhouse Activities: For more information, location, ticket prices, and to reserve places, contact Debra Tyler at 672-0229.

Make a Milking Stool with Joe Brien. Sunday, September 13, from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. Must pre-register.

Meditation: Sundays.

The Turn of the Year

Spotting that first wispy maple branch turned red still shocks the summer-minded among us. It's time to make plans for the cold months. But before you turn your attention to the price of oil, grab your pen and write the *Chronicle* a check. It'll warm you right up!

The Farmers' Market will be held at the Ag Fair on Saturday, September 12, at 9 A.M., and in West Cornwall all other Saturdays through October.

A Blood Drive will be held on Tuesday, September 15, from 1:30 to 6:15 P.M. at the UCC Parish House. Blood is very much needed. Call 1-800-GIVE BLOOD to make an appointment, or just walk in.

Lobsters to Go! A sale to benefit the CCS eighth-grade class will be held on Saturday, September 19, from 4 to 6 P.M. at CCS. Prices of the 1 1/3-pound lobsters will be determined closer to sale. Pre-paid reservations only, must be made by September 17. Contact Debbie at 672-2121, 672-1220, or ccslobstersale@yahoo.com.

Guided Tour of Cornwall Plains: Walk around the Village Green and hear about life since the 1800s, including the story of the controversial Foreign Mission School. The tour and a descriptive map are sponsored by the Cornwall Historical Society. Meet at the Society building, 7 Pine Street, at 10 A.M. on Saturday, September 19.

Art in Cornwall: At the Cornwall Library, Aleigh Lewis's show of photographs continues through September 12. She will speak about her work in Cuba and the United States on Sunday, September 6, at 4 P.M. Beginning September 15, the Library will exhibit paintings by Joel Schapira entitled "thank you dean mary richardson—hee nay nee." An artist's reception will be held on Saturday, September 19, from 5 to 7 P.M.

Lady Audrey's Gallery will host a reception with music and refreshments for the artists of the "Bridges" competition on Sunday, September 6, from 3 to 7 P.M. On display will be the artists' many interpretations of the word "bridges."

At the Wandering Moose Café, photographs, watercolors, prints, and artist's proofs depicting scenes from the world-wide travels of members of the Haydock family are on exhibit.

Services for the Elderly, a presentation by the Western Connecticut Area Agency on Aging (WCAAA), will be held on Wednesday, September 23, at 6 P.M. at St. Bridget's Parish Hall on River Road in Cornwall Bridge. Call Louise Riley at 672-0222 to arrange transportation.

At the Library:

• **Diabetes Outreach:** Management for Seniors, led by Kristin Bott, RN, of New Milford Hospital. Friday, September 18, from 3 to 5 P.M.

• **Children's Story Hour** for three- to five-year-olds begins Friday, September 25, at 1:15 P.M.

• **Needed:** new and gently used books for the annual Columbus Day Book Sale to be held the weekend of October 10. Please, no textbooks, encyclopedias, or magazines.

Cow Chip Bingo: Saturday, September 19, at 3 P.M. in the field next to the Town Hall. Buy your cow chip ticket from a local merchant or from a CVFD member or at the Ag Fair on September 12. \$2 for a \$300 prize!

First Aid and CPR Class: Saturday, September 12, from 8 A.M. to noon at the West Cornwall Firehouse, sponsored by Park & Rec. and taught by Dave Cadwell. Free for ages 14-21 or anyone who has volunteered as a coach, ref, or ump in the last year; \$10 fee for others. Participants will leave with their first-aid and CPR cards. Reservations by September 10: Bethany Thompson, 672-4070, or cornwallparkandrecreation@yahoo.com.

The 18th Annual Cornwall Agricultural Fair will be held on the Village Green on Saturday, September 12, from 11 A.M. to 4 P.M. (See insert in this issue.)



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

SEPTEMBER ISSUE

Nancy Calhoun, Illustrations
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OCTOBER ISSUE

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