



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

30th Anniversary



The Man Who Invented the Chronicle

It's history, the invention of the *Cornwall Chronicle*, that is. The inventor was the late, great Tommy Bevans, not a writer himself but a very creative guy when it came to design and ideas. After all, Tom was a natural, having designed books and book jackets for years at the publishing giant Simon & Schuster.

Before I get to the *Chronicle*, let me tell you about Tommy, the athlete. I'll tell you about his tennis, but first a memorable touch football game. Former Cornwellian Neal Hurwitz was calling the plays. "Tommy you go left. John go right. Go about three yards and crisscross." Well, folks, we did just that and collided. Except Tom was much shorter and tougher than I. Down I went in rib pain. Out of the game for a week or two. Tough Tommy went on playing. He may have been relatively small, but he was short and strong.

Now to Tom, the racquetman. He was not a gifted tennis player, but boy, was he inventive. One invention was adding four inches to his conventional racquet. And was he proud of those four inches. He may not have been accomplished, but he held his own by hitting crazy forehand chopshots that broke me up when I first saw one. "What's so funny?" he asked. I was so dazzled I broke into laughter and couldn't hit a return.

So now, my introduction to the *Chronicle*. I stopped by one day at the Bevans' abode on Cream Hill. Tom left the living room and came back with a dummy of the CC. It looked almost exactly like the town monthly we've come to love now for three decades. My reaction: loved it, but who's going to have time to edit it? Turned out a lot of us made time. Margaret Bevans, for one, a professional editor. People like John Zinsser, head of *Readers Digest Condensed Books*, known as "Johnny Scissorhands" by *Chronicle* writers because he often trimmed their stories.

Also Charley Osborne, a writer and editor for *Life*, Ed and Audrey Ferman, who edited and owned *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, and yours truly, who wrote for the *Miami Herald* and NBC. Then other early contributors like Lisa Lansing, Bob and Ginny Potter, Scoville Soule, Ken Keskinen, George Kittle, Ella Clark, Phil Hart, and Hendon Chubb. Meanwhile, Tommy and Margaret did all design and

production, work now handled by paid professionals.

When Tommy and Margaret could no longer continue, Bobby and Spencer Klaw became the heart of the paper for many years. Spencer had been editor of the *Columbia Journalism Review* and Bobby was an editor of *American Heritage*.

And let's not forget all the talented artists who contributed, led in the early years by Marc Simont, Tim Prentice, Cynthia Kirk, Ellen Moon, Erica Prud'homme, Bill Beecher, Don Bracken, Bob Parker, and many others.

But it was Tommy who started it all. Bless him and our memories of him.

—John Miller



Old Cornwall

What connects you to a place are family stories. My mother was a storyteller and so was her mother. Alice Scoville Barry was born in 1911, and Katharine Trumbull Scoville in 1876, so their stories hark back awhile.

Cousin Niles Scoville was a sexton at the North Cornwall Church. When he heard that the opera singer Jenny Lind, the Swedish Nightingale, was coming to New York, he decided to go down to see her. His wife, Maria, disapproved. "If you go down to listen to that sinful show lady," she said, "I'll never speak to you again." Niles went to see Jenny Lind, and Maria never spoke to him again, though they spent the next 30 years in the same house. When Niles was dying, Maria handed him a note, but he shook his head and closed his eyes. Family stories are important because of the way they're told: the meaning is in the delivery. My mother ended this with a somber look and a slow headshake. It was a warning,

though I wasn't sure if it was against foolish promises or opera, or family bullheadedness.

My grandmother Katie married "Lawyer Sam" Scoville, who was the cousin of "Farmer Sam" Scoville. Once a name gets into the Scoville family, it has a hard time getting out. Samuel and Jonathan, Ralph and Fred, Roxana. Except for Woodchuck. I know of only one Mrs. Woodchuck Scoville. She lived up on Yelping Hill, and had the misfortune to drive her mare past Cousin Sam's farm on a day when his stallion was having lustful thoughts. He broke through the fence, and Cousin Sam had to go out after them both.

One day Katie and Lawyer Sam were with Cousin Sam in his buggy, going down the steep part of Golds' Hill. Suddenly the "holdback" on the harness broke, and the buggy rammed into the horse's rump. The horse bolted. Cousin Sam tried to slow him as they careened downhill; all Katie could think of was the sharp turn at the bottom, and the rocks beyond. But just before they reached Rattlesnake Road, the horse stopped dead. The rim had come off the wheel, and the weight of the buggy had driven the spokes into the ground like stakes. It was over.

My mother had a favorite story about the Covered Bridge. Her beau, George Cadbury, and his brother Chris came visiting. Alice's cousin Nana—Roxana Scoville (Hammond) made up a foursome. The Cadburys took the girls out driving. The girls insisted on sitting in back, so the boys were in front as they headed for the bridge. Just before they entered, Alice and Nana decided to slip off and hide, imagining the boys' surprise at the other end. As the car lumbered slowly through the dark, the boys also decided to slip off, imagining the girls' surprise as they rode past. Instead, they saw an empty car bump slowly towards Sharon. When she told this story, my mother shook with laughter.

When I was little, West Cornwall was a hotbed of commerce. Yutzler's was run by Arlie and Fred, who wore clean white aprons tied around their waists. Arlie ran the register. He was kindly, wiry, and energetic. He wore glasses and tucked a pencil behind his ear. Fred was stout and taciturn, dark haired, red faced. He lifted the glass bell and cut wedges from the huge round of Cooper's cheese, and wrapped them in heavy white paper. We bought our grocer-

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ies from them, but we bought our meat from Fred Bate, who was lean and handsome, with bright blue eyes and lank blond hair. He wore a pink-stained white apron and held a gleaming cleaver.

Down the street was the dry goods store, and below that, of course, was the Covered Bridge.

Every time I drive through it, I remember my mother's story, the empty car bumping slowly through the dark.

—Roxana Robinson

How We've Changed

We often remark that the design of the *Chronicle* has scarcely changed since the first issue. However, the content and editorial direction of the first years are very different from current issues.

To explain this, I need to go back to the decade before we began: the distant 1980s. There was little or no media coverage of town affairs, no town website, no Richard Griggs videos, *no internet* (didn't happen until the early 1990s). In short, no one knew what was going on, sometimes even members of town boards. I served on two zoning boards in those years. The chair of ZBA was a genial man who looked at meetings as an interval between cocktails—several apparently—and dinner. Our sessions were short and confused. The P&Z board was often more like a sitcom than a board meeting. The chair had narcolepsy and sometimes fell asleep, pauses filled in by a long-winded oldtimer who told personal stories about the owners of every property on our agenda. Somehow, we muddled through and got essential business done.

Our brilliant friend and founder, Tom Bevans, noted this darkness and confusion and came up with the idea of a town newspaper. Although Tom was primarily a designer, he and Margaret also set the editorial tone, which was: "cover the news."

There was no fancy writing and few feature stories in those early issues. We published mostly short, factual pieces about town board meetings, budgets, municipal elections, fees for bulky waste, and other useful stuff. Board members often wrote about their own activities, something strictly forbidden by current guidelines.

What would Tom and Margaret have done with a long story counting all the chickens in town (May 2003) or an electrifying piece about the love affair between Wendell Willkie and Irita Van Doren (February 2019)? The chickens might have flown, but the love affair might not have. Margaret Van Doren Bevans was Irita's daughter.

As the years went by, the paper's team

of editors and writers grew more numerous and varied. The town website offered minutes of meetings and eventually videos. And so our content moved away from covering routine business toward more feature stories of lasting interest: profiles, articles about our history, our social and natural landscape, and of course our animals, wild and domestic. More than routine business is covered in a fairly new section, "Cornwall Briefs," and important stuff like referendums and zoning changes gets our full attention.

If you go to our website archive and scroll through the early years, you'll see one feature that has largely disappeared: letters, in some issues a full page of them. It's not entirely clear why we no longer receive these, but it's probably due to the growth of social media. Who has the patience to write a letter and wait weeks for it to appear in print when a comment can appear instantly on the Cornwall Community Network or Facebook (soon perhaps to become Nosebook, Eyebook, and Earbook).

And so we roll along, reliably if not so merrily last year, changing somewhat with the times, but staying with our original mission to publish a monthly non-partisan independent paper about the town we love.

—Ed Ferman

Winter Clothes: The Warm Bottom

My six-year-old visiting granddaughter brought her clothes to my room to dress in the morning. On went a pair of underpants, six square inches of flowery cotton; a pair of jeans; and a T-shirt emblazoned with the warning "I'M HOT." The entire dressing process took three minutes.

Rather too many years ago, when my sister and I were her age, we lived under the dictates of Dr. Holt's *Care and Feeding of Children*. He advocated the warm bottom. So, when the November winds swept up Cream Hill, our winter underwear appeared and was placed on chairs beside our beds. In the morning chill, we began at the top of the heap and worked our way down.

First, we pulled over our heads a long-sleeved cotton undershirt, three buttons at the neck. Then came the Ferris waist, a vest-like garment hung along the bottom with rows of bone buttons, some on tapes. To this armament we attached in the following order: a pair of long underpants of the same heavy cotton, then a wool flannel petticoat over which we hauled bloomers that matched the stiffly starched dress that was to cover our bulging selves. Often an-

other petticoat, white cotton embroidered along the bottom, added a touch of elegance to those bloomers. Then came the hand-knit stockings, worked painfully over the long johns and up over the knees. High shoes, buttoned or laced (we alternated each year), were guaranteed to create a scratchy condition that was only relieved each night when we restored circulation by rubbing our lacerated ankles. The dresses that covered this sartorial munificence could scarcely be buttoned around our buried waists.

My granddaughter doesn't know the meaning of that T-shirt message. WE WERE HOT.

—City Lansing 1911–2002

Editors' Note: The author, Lisa Lansing Simont's mother, wrote this in 1994 about a time around 1917. The sister mentioned is the late Lydia Wolf

Last Milk Run at Scoville Farm

On Saturday, September 9 [2006], as children ground corn and tumbled over hay bales down at the Ag Fair on the town Green, Ralph Scoville rode along with the last load of cows to a dairy in Farmington. "I wanted to see where they were going," he told me the next day. "I'm glad I went. It's a good farm. I could tell just from the outside. If the outside's sloppy, inside will be sloppier. This place was neat, the white of the cows was white. And the man brought me peaches. Our cows couldn't have gone to a nicer place."

A hundred years ago, Theodore Gold cited the dairy in Cornwall as furnishing "a product which would allow of transportation and which, with beef and pork, has continued to be the main reliance of our farmers for supplying their outside wants." Commercial dairy farming in Cornwall soon surpassed beef and pork production.

Scovilles have been dairying here since 1780. In the old days, farms had been more diversified, Ralph told me. "They usually had a few sheep, as well as the milk cows, and some pigs, maybe a beeper. They had orchards, raised their own vegetables. Everyone had barrels of cider."

Ralph and Thalia went into dairying with two horses and two cows, and gradually built up the herd to over 40. "There were about 17 small dairies in Cornwall then, down from the 40 or so of our grandparents' day." It was back-breaking work, particularly in the beginning, not the least of which was the cutting and hauling of heavy chunks of ice to cool the milk in 40-quart cans. The farm, along with Thalia's work as a night nurse, put their children through college. "The



kids always helped out," said Ralph, "doing farm chores before and after school. And Fred and his family have always been faithful. But there hasn't been any money in dairying for some time."

The demise of the small dairy in the Northeast has been in part due to a biological phenomenon: cows that produced 3,000 pounds of milk annually in 1900 now produce 17,000. This, coupled with the need for economies of scale, has driven many cows west, especially to California. Three dairies remain in Cornwall: Hautboy Hill, Local Farm, and Stone Wall Farm, all of which produce specialty dairy products in the form of raw milk or ice cream.

"We took the low milk prices as long as we could," said Ralph's son Fred, who graduated with a degree in animal husbandry from the University of Connecticut. "With about 45 milkers at our peak, we couldn't compete with the big farms. We'll still be baling hay and cutting corn and raising pigs, and we'll be going into beef cattle more—Angus and Simmental. But the real money around here now is in landscaping."

At one o'clock on Sunday afternoon, September 10, the milk truck came for the last time to the Scoville Farm. The white hose writhed with sucked milk. "You must see a lot of farmers getting out of dairy," I said to the affable Agri-Mark driver.

"Yes," he said. "We see far too many of them." He looked toward the barn and finished coiling the hose. "Couldn't ask for nicer people."

—Ella Clark

Editor's Note: This article is reprinted from the October 2006 issue of the Chronicle. Of the three farms mentioned in the article, the former Stone Wall Farm remains as a working dairy farm, under new ownership as Calf & Clover Farm. Fred's son Frederick Ralph Scoville III owns and runs his own landscaping business. Frederick Ralph Scoville IV, age 1+, is too young to contemplate career choices.

Be It Ever So Humble

Humor from the archive: November 2008

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a married man in possession of a growing family is in want of a real estate broker. Hoping to spread out a bit, find a place with room to stash all our junk, I asked Priscilla Miller of Bain Real Estate to delve into her Cornwall listings. Square footage, I stressed, was key. She came up with just the place for a guy who feels cramped in his current digs: Hill House, a swanky shack built by a tennis player who had hoped to put in a golf course but couldn't swing the permits. I figured I could pick it

Letters to the Chronicle

A DOVE IN THE HAND (May, 2000)

With the coming of spring there is increased activity among the birds outside the kitchen window. Our lunch was interrupted the other day by a loud thump, which left a wet spot on the glass and a dove with a broken neck on the lawn. As I was heading for the woods with a shovel in one hand and the still warm dead bird in the other, I recalled a time at the Goshen Fair when I watched a chicken judge evaluating a small hen. I could see the breast feathers move as the judge palpated with experienced fingers. The hen gave soft muffled squawks, and the old man had a far-away look. I put aside wicked thoughts when I realized he was checking her for the pot and trying to decide what color ribbon to give her. I was about to put my dead dove in the hole I had dug when I noticed how easily the feathers came off. To make a long story short:

In a small pan over medium heat put olive oil, chopped onion, and carrot. Put in bird and brown on both sides. Reduce heat to low, add red wine and chicken broth. Cover and simmer until tender, adding wine and broth as needed to keep from sticking. Serves one small person.

—Marc Simont

A CREAM HILL LAKE MONSTER?

Random reports of animal sightings (bears, catamounts, bats, coyotes, etc.) in and about Cornwall seem to bespeak the need for an inquiring association to organize the growing body of research. A cogent argument for such a society is

up for peanuts.

Space-wise, it seemed adequate: ten bedrooms; thirteen-and-a-half baths; in-door and outdoor pools; a home for my cat (the six-stall horse barn); garages for eight vehicles; needless to say, a tennis court; not needless to say, an inside basketball court; and 680 acres to keep pesky neighbors at arm's length.

Reminding Priscilla of the plummeting market, I asked for the best price. "25 million," she said casually.

Some quick calculating warned me that this would increase my monthly mortgage payment to a bit over \$200,000, which is significantly more than I am currently paying. I inquired about renting it, a Lendl-lease plan, but no dice—dough up front only.

"I can struggle along without 16-foot ceilings, faux marble, cherry paneling. I just need space. Don't you know of a big barn of a place?"

Her face lit up like a neon Lotto sign. Pinnacle Farm was the perfect property: a 65,000 square-foot horse barn on 140 acres. No house, but 50 deluxe stalls. That would mean everyone in my family would get 12 stalls to store their junk. Room beyond our wildest dreams.

"40-foot ceilings, one of the largest post-

and-beam structures around," she agreed.

"I guess we don't really need beds, just some fresh straw," I reflected.

"There's a complete caretaker apartment," she explained. "No need to sleep in the stalls."

"Did they change the price after the real estate bust?" I asked.

"Yes, by ten million."

"Wow, that's for me! A barn reduced by ten million. It must be down to almost nothing."

"No, actually it recently went up from 25 million to 35 million."

"Well, I'll think about it," I lied, stealthily tearing up my change-of-address post cards.

—Matt Collins

Members of a prospective Cornwall Cryptid Sighting Sodality, when not tracking down bear scat and bobcat spoor, could begin to investigate the possibility that an orm—naturally much smaller than its Canadian or Scots kin—might be hiding among the fronds deep in Cream Hill Lake. Naming this creature could be a challenge: Ogotopogo comes from native legend; Nessie is a kind of British endearment. "Creamie" seems demeaning, somehow. Any ideas?

—Charles Osborne (January 1993 issue)

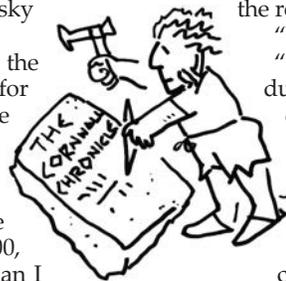
A FINAL NOTE

My brother-in-law left me this note last Thursday:

"Dear Tommy,
I can explain everything.
Spencer."

This is the best offer I've had in a long time. Unfortunately, I've been unable to reach him by deadline. Details in the next issue.

—Tom Bevans (February 1991 issue)



A Cornwall Companion

Editor's note: Lest our offerings this month seem to be bragging about our writers' abilities, here's an "unbiased" review reprinted from the January 2005 issue.

I confess to feeling a certain skepticism on learning that the *Cornwall Chronicle* had seen fit to publish (between hard covers no less) an anthology of its best articles and

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drawings. Don't get me wrong. I've always enjoyed the *Chronicle*, and never more so than now, when we live 2,991.6 miles away from Baird's (according to MapQuest) and even further from the dump. Cornwallians turn out not to be the most assiduous letter writers, alas, so the *Chronicle* has become our primary source of Cornwall news. (All it's missing is a gossip column—Lib? April?) These days our local newspaper is the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and anyone who's tried to read that windy rag knows it can't hold a candle to Cornwall's *Chronicle*.

But still, an anthology?! Even the most devoted students of Cornwallia—even Jim Terrall or David Grossman—couldn't bear to relive the Rumsey Hall saga, or the CCS expansion saga, or—my personal favorite—the gravel-pit-on-Route-7 saga. The *Chronicle's* coverage of these stories was unbeatable, it's true, but these are some soundly sleeping dogs you definitely don't want to poke. And yet if you left out such world-historical Cornwall episodes, would there be anything left to anthologize?

Plenty, it turns out. A *Cornwall Companion* is an unexpected delight. The editors—Spencer Klaw and Ed Ferman—wisely stepped over the sleeping dogs of past controversy, settling instead on pieces that capture the rhythms of Cornwall life (and wildlife) both now and then. The volume offers up a wonderful trove of Cornwall history—Phil Hart's superb entries gradually build up a detailed sepia picture of the town's agricultural heyday—and by the time Ken Keskinen's final page of doggerel has rolled around, you have a portrait of a small New England town at the end of the 20th century changing in response to muffled offstage forces, as slowly as it possibly can.

The fatal tendency of small-town journalism has always been toward nostalgia and gushy nature writing, neither of which, thankfully, the *Chronicle's* editors have ever displayed much patience for. The *Chronicle* has always preferred to traffic in fact rather than sentiment, whether the subject is rocks, gnats, black bears (these last two topics receiving easily as much ink here as all the selectmen combined) and mountain lion spottings (a subject on which Hendon Chubb steadfastly refuses to let wish get the better of verification). Facts generally prove sturdier than sentiment, which probably helps to explain why this anthology holds up as well as it does.

That said, for the expat Cornwallian like myself, reading *A Cornwall Companion*—which is to say, reading Phil Hart and Carla Bige-

low, Lisa Simont, and George Kittle, and all the many bylines with "Scoville" at one end or the other, is to risk a dizzying descent into homesickness. You can hear the very creak of the floorboards at Baird's in these pages, and I'm reminded just how sorely I miss the place.

—Michael Pollan

Beaten by a Century

Cornwall's first paper, the *Cornwall Star*, was a weekly, later a bi-weekly, published in 1880 and 1881 by Joseph Ernest Whitney while home on vacations from Yale, and by Edwin Dennis Cole, a Cornwall job printer. An issue consisted of four 5 1/2 x 7 1/2 pages devoted to social notes, humor, some news, and one page of advertising. Among topics appearing with some consistency were: the First Church, baseball, and the Cornwall-Cornwall Bridge telephone line, Cornwall's first. Examples of its humor:

"There was a small boy had some powder.

And in trying to make it go louder

He succeeded so well

That his friend couldn't tell

His remains from a dish of clam chowder."

"After watching archery practice, Mrs. Malaprop innocently remarked that the ladies were getting very arch with their bows."

—Michael Gannett (March 1991)

Going to Hell on Dibble Hill

There is an old story that on Dibble Hill, that region of wonders, there was a remarkable cave, situated "somewhere back of Ann Delaney's." Near one corner was a hole of unfathomed depth. Many efforts had been made to find bottom there, but all experiments seemed to prove the uselessness of the attempt. A stone dropped into the opening could be heard bounding and rolling for an indefinite distance, at first producing a series of sharp metallic sounds, culminating in a prolonged roar. Some believed this to be an opening to the infernal regions, and wild stories were told of strong blasts of sulphuric air blowing out of the place and extinguishing torches, of strange and fiendish shrieks heard there at midnight, and strange apparitions appearing and vanishing in this place...The majority of our townspeople have always believed that his Satanic Majesty had private communication between Dibble Hill and his headquarters...

—a note from the past
The *Cornwall Star*, October 1880

Now, where do you suppose that hole might have been? Readers' suggestions encouraged.

EARLY CHRONICLE ARTIFACTS

Half-Stein

An Odic Ruminant
On the Workings of a Cow

Sing Ho the Cow! (of genus *Bos*)—
for her this verse I now compose!
Her awkward frame has special parts
that challenge all creative arts.

Here my portrait has implied
the hidden stomachs beneath the hide.
The first compartment's called the "rumen"
(you won't find it in a human)
where bovines drop their mouthful grassy;
and when they feel both gross and gassy,
they begin to eructate,
and so the cud regurgitate.
Again they chomp the bolus lumpy
and send it down the channel bumpy.
Through stomachs (four!) it now will pass;
transformed, it finally plops on grass.
(For cows require no water closets
for all their various deposits.
They wear no dresses, pants or girdle,
and, tail high, make pastures fertile.)

Behold each bag, so plump an udder—
the source of milk, ice cream, and butter,
Now when each cow emits her calf,
it also longs for half-and-half.
Well licked and nudged, it staggers up
on spindly legs to sip and sup.
Will it grow up? Will business zeal
see better bucks in cuts of veal?
Will agribusiness now take off its
calves and produce just for profits?

Oh, gone are Wordsworth's pipes and tabors,
and milkmaids who, at cowshed labors
on shiny stools, with fingers tug
at every friendly dripping dug.

Now cows with flat triangle faces,
with flicking ears, with soulful gazes,
with swishing tails and well-tongued noses,
are hooked up snug to lengthy hoses.
With a hum and a thump and a quiet beat,
the machines suck milk from each greased-up teat.
Yet cows still have those vital parts—
stomachs, uteri, bags and hearts.
They give us food, they keep us fed—Oh
joy to see them munch the meadow!

Sing Ho the cow! Sing Ho! Come boss!
It's she we praise for her super sauce!
Sing Ho the Guernsey! Ho the Jersey!
Sing Ho the Holstein!
End of versey.

—Ken Keskinen (1923-2011)

Editor's note: This poem originally appeared in
the November 2008 *Chronicle*.

