



CORNWALL CHRONICLE



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Highway Crew

Many Cornwall old timers can remember from childhood how worried people were when a big storm came on; how often people got injured in skids and stranded in snowdrifts; and how grateful they felt toward those who worked round the clock clearing the roads.

Cornwall resident the late Joe Choiniere cleared roads in the northwestern part of the state. He started working for the Connecticut State Highway Department half a century ago. In an interview I conducted in 1990 with Joe and his daughter Lorraine Choiniere Hammond, Joe told me, "During the winter work, the sand was spread on the highways by shovel originally. There would be two men standing in the corner of each truck, and the truck would go along and the men would take turns in swinging so that they didn't get in each other's way and they would spread the sand so that it covered the entire road."

Lorraine recalled, "My mother would be left with two girls and a farm. It was a lot of responsibility for her when he was gone, and he could be gone for 24 hours at a pop. A lot of uncertainty was raised when there was a storm coming in and it was very dangerous for him and my mother was frightened by that."

The snow meant overtime pay for the

highway crew. Joe told me, "The fact that the men then were able to get enough money to pay their bills lent itself to the saying that when it began to snow, for the guys on the highway crew it was pennies from heaven. And while it was literally pennies, because the pay was so low in those days for those old timers, it did help. The men went along with it—they were glad to get the pennies, although coming from heaven, they certainly had to work for it."

Joe recalled a particularly rough snow-storm. "By the time we got away from the garage we could hardly manage to travel at all. We had our plows on and we couldn't plow out our roads because the reports kept coming into the barn from every direction we went: trees were down, power lines were down, and it was really quite devastating...It was rough. Oh yeah, those storms can be tough."

Joe's daughter Lorraine, a noted folk-singer, dulcimer player, and songwriter, wrote a song about his experience called Highway Crew.

Pennies from heaven, when the snow started falling
The jokers at the general store teased the highway crew
Like my father you might find it hard to join the laughter
After you had done battle with a blizzard or two.

Pennies from heaven, don't you smell the snow coming?
Did you look up last night, see haze on the moon?
Pennies from heaven, a blizzard by morning.
Mount the plows, load the sanders, it'll be snowing soon.

Joe observed, "A lot of those people worked for very low wages. Of course low wages were common for that day. But then just about the time that these people would retire—they worked as long as they could in order to avoid retirement because the pay was so small—and when they did retire was about the time that wages began to go up and prices began to go up, inflation set in, and their retirement pay was quite inadequate and many continued to work at whatever jobs they could find after retirement. Few lived long enough to enjoy retirement." As Lorraine put it in the last verse of Highway Crew:

Country people are used to hard work and low wages,
For the crew every storm brings the chance for more pay,
But the true cost of pennies from heaven is frozen
In lines on their faces that will not melt away.

[Highway Crew appears on Lorraine and Bennett Hammond's CD *Opal Ring* which is available, along with the lyrics of the song, at their website, greatacoustics.org]

—Jeremy Brecher



MARCH 2015

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2 ♦ Region 1 BOE Meeting 6 pm Rm 133 HVRHS	3 ♦ Red Cross Blood Drive 1-5:45 pm UCC Parish House ♦ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	4	5 FULL ♦ Cornwall Woman's Society 10:15 am Library	6	7 ♦ Pasta Bonanza 5-7 pm UCC ♦ Community Contra Dance 7 pm Town Hall ♦ Winter Film Series: <i>High Sierra</i> 7:30 pm Library
8	9 ♦ Free Blood Pressure Clinic Noon-1 pm UCC Day Room ♦ Park & Rec 7:30 pm Town Hall	10 ♦ Economic Dev. Comm. 9 am Town Hall ♦ Senior Luncheon 11:30 am-1 pm Wandering Moose ♦ P&Z 7 pm Library	11	12	13	14 4th Q ♦ Beeginning with Bees 10:30 am-1:30 PM Taghannuck Grange, Sharon ♦ Future of Media & Communications 5 pm Library
15 ♦ Deadline: <i>April Chronicle Copy</i>	16	17 ♦ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	18 ♦ Board of Ed 4 pm CCS Library ♦ Board of Finance 7:30 pm CCS Library	19 ♦ CCC 6:30 pm Town Hall	20 ♦ Family Movie: <i>The Adventures of TinTin</i> 7 pm Library	21 NEW ♦ Grow Your Own Meadow 10 am-Noon Taghannuck Grange, Sharon ♦ Winter Film Series: <i>Symphony Pastorale</i> 7:30 pm Library
22	23 ♦ ZBA* 7:30 pm Library	24	25	26	27 1st Q	28 ♦ Wine Tasting 5:15-7 pm Sunset Meadow Vineyard
29	30	31 ♦ Cornwall Committee for Seniors 7 pm Library	Every Week This Month: Mondays: Yoga, 8:30-10 am Library; Karate, 6:30-7:30 pm Town Hall; Men's Basketball, 7-9pm CCS gym ♦ Wednesdays: Meditation, 4-5 pm call Debra 672-0229; Tai Chi, 5-7 pm Town Hall ♦ 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; Mah Jongg, 7-9 pm Library; Adult Volleyball, 7:30 pm CCS gym ♦ Fridays: Yoga, 8:30-10 am Library ♦ Saturdays: Skating, 7-8 pm Hotchkiss Schmidt Rink ♦ Sundays: Yoga 9-10:30 am Library			

*Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

For additions and updating, visit www.cornwallchronicle.org

School Board Issues

When the six towns in northwestern Connecticut joined together in the 1930s to create the first regional high school in New England, they wanted to keep their own elementary schools subject to the town boards of education rather than governed by a regional body. At a public forum at the high school on January 21, Region 1's Attorney Gary Brochu advised that, based on state statutes created after Region 1 was formed, a joint employment agreement of the superintendent must be written and approved in writing by all six local boards of education as well as Region 1. He says the current agreement is between the superintendent and the Region 1 board and not the local elementary schools.

The joint employment agreement could be written to reflect current policies and practices, but changes have been recommended and this has given rise to controversy. The question that looms largest is how the superintendent's salary should be allocated. Currently the cost is allocated proportionally on a per-student basis. The Region 1 board is considering a change which would divide the cost of that salary among the six towns and the Region 1 board itself for a one-seventh split. The changed plan was suggested by the North Canaan board member in an effort to reduce that town's costs. Cornwall, being a smaller town in the region, would see an increase of about \$12,000 this year if this system is implemented.

The Cornwall board has agreed that the town receives an equal (as in one-seventh) share of the superintendent's time, attention, and expertise. Since the superintendent does not deal directly with students, it is felt that using a formula based on their numbers is not fair. All the other towns of the region except Falls Village agree, as does CCS Principal Mike Croft.

Details have not all been determined as the boards and committees are still meeting. For example, will the one-seventh cost result in an equal vote on issues relating to the superintendent? The payment formula is not stipulated in Connecticut law, just that each school must have a superintendent. It was also made clear that this contract is only necessary for the superintendent, as all other central office staff are optional, not required by law.

A second set of questions regards who should hire and supervise the superintendent. The Region 1 board, made up of elected or appointed members (as in Cornwall), currently handles these responsibilities with the recommendations of the All Boards Chair (ABC) Committee. This committee includes board of education chairmen from each town and the Region 1

board and all have equal votes in advising the Region 1 board. A suggestion has been made to transfer the hiring and supervision of the superintendent to the ABC Committee. Some town members have been asking why this committee, an advisory group, is better suited to handle the tasks than the Region 1 board.

Much of this public conversation and questioning is taking place in letters to the editor, in news articles, on the Cornwall Community Network, and informally. Some citizens think it would help to have our board of education hold a public meeting to answer questions. There has been almost no attendance at board meetings nor direct engagement of members through emails, letters, or phone calls. Contact information and meeting schedules are available on the school's and the region's websites. The precise language, structure, and timing of these proposed changes and whether they will impact next year's school budget are still to be determined. Once this is resolved, then we can focus on providing quality education for our children.

—Ann Gold and Margaret Haske



10-Year Plan Review

The Planning and Zoning Commission met on January 31 for an annual review of progress on the Town Plan of Conservation and Development. Collaboration and public-private partnership were the catch words of the day.

There were about 20 attendees including representatives of 12 town commissions or committees that reported. This state-mandated 10-year plan often rests on a shelf in other towns, but clearly in Cornwall it is an active document that forms the rationale for P&Z action.

Chairman David Colbert started by highlighting the recently revised regulations that ease requirements for accessory apartments and strengthen protections for the Housatonic River. The new Bonney Brook senior housing is now fully occupied and home to folks all with Cornwall connections. Mag Cooley spoke to the need for affordable housing; rental accessory apartments and division of large houses could help encourage new workers and new jobs.

New Chair Janet Sanders of the Economic Development Commission highlighted accomplishments which include the creation of energetic commercial center groups for Cornwall Bridge and West Cornwall with 100 percent participation by business owners, and the good news that a state grant will fund professional consultants to eight towns, including Cornwall,

to implement village center vitality. The Park and Recreation Commission has made multiple efforts to reach out to adults as well as children. Speaking for the Conservation Trust, Bart Jones reported full funding was in place for the proposed purchase and conservation of the 317-acre Trinity Forest.

Rick Lynn, executive director of the Northwest Hills Council of Governments, (formed by the merger of the Northwestern Connecticut COG with the Litchfield Hills Council of Elected Officials) reported on advantages of regional initiatives and coordination in such areas as shared economic development, transportation, conservation, emergency management, and government efficiency—everything from purchasing road salt to sharing a road sweeper.

First Selectman Gordon Ridgway noted a changed and different world in recent years: there are fewer, and older, people, and deeper economic pressures. On the other hand, the Country Market and the Berkshire Store are adding new energy. To be addressed are village center traffic, water supplies, abandoned roads, poverty pressures, and school population. It was evident that all the reporting groups are actively at work trying to improve the quality of life in Cornwall. Although "plenty has been done," there is still "plenty to do." That pretty well sums up the meeting.

—Anna Timell

Goodbye to a Friend

James Douglas Gold

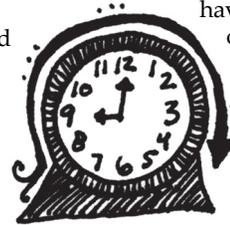
Cornwall Beard Oil

It's been one of those winters—so cold you just want to wrap yourself in down quilting and wait for spring. Or maybe, if you can, just grow a great bushy beard. But beards are hair and our dry winter air wreaks havoc with hair. Women have a slew of potions to tame their mane, but men and beards? Enter Cornwall Beard Oil.

Tommy and Briana Juliano created their company Cornwall Soap Company in November 2013. Originally city folk (New Haven), they moved to the country and Cornwall seeking a more natural way to live and work. They started making their home cleaning and personal care products from all-natural organic ingredients sourced locally.

Tommy's own major beard inspired them to find an oil blend that would condition, smooth, and maintain a healthy beard and benefit the skin, all while keeping a neutral-to-natural New England scent. And so was born Cornwall Beard Oil, and eventually their mustache oil.

They are doing something right, because their sales just keep growing. Whole Food Markets in West Hartford and Glastonbury



Letters to the Chronicle

recently started carrying the products. Two Cornwall merchants carry both oils. Ryan Craig, owner of Berkshire Country Store, thinks it's a timely product given the beard craze among hipsters and country guys. When he has a beard he appreciates the beard oil's natural, woody scent. No designer perfumes for him. Smooth shaven James Shepard, owner of Cornwall Country Market, says the niche product has a following, including an avid customer, a woman, who buys it for her "buddy's" beard and for friends to whom she sends it. "Seriously," she posted on Facebook, "what more could anyone ask for from a market?"

Dave Dolinsky, who has had a full beard for over three decades, tried the beard oil and now uses it daily, crediting it with making his beard softer and more manageable.

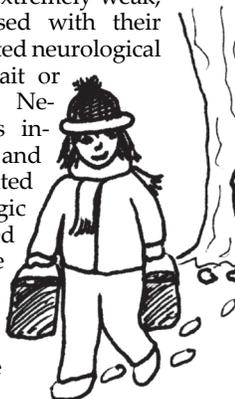
Cornwall Soap Company has several new soap products in the pipeline, including a natural spruce-scented beard and body shampoo bar. (It helps that Tommy continues to work as the pastry chef at Community Table in Washington: he has a useful source for beef fat [a.k.a suet] for his soaps.)

Ladies, if you lament not being able to use beard oil, you can always get a Cornwall Beard Oil T-shirt. Or wait for the soaps.

—Honora Horan

Butterfield Farm Goats

Mid-December Brad Hedden, animal control officer (ACO), was called to investigate animal neglect on Hautboy Hill at a barn rented by Tara Bryson and Michael Hearl of Butterfield Farm. The barn is owned by Buddy and Irene Hurlburt. Donald Betti, another renter of the barn, registered the complaint. Brad realized the situation met the criteria to consult state animal control officers. Based on the findings of state officers and the animal livestock division, the owners were ordered to seek veterinary intervention, improve bedding, feed, and care. Multiple visits to the site found dead goats, unsanitary conditions, and inadequate feed. Reported in a civil action filed January 22, inspectors found "The majority of the goats were in poor body condition, emaciated, weak and shivering. Some were extremely weak, lethargic, and depressed with their heads down and exhibited neurological signs like abnormal gait or unstable body stance. Necropsies of two goats indicated muscle wasting and loss of fat stores and stated that the neurologic abnormalities observed in the goats were the result of weakness due to a poor nutritional state." On the January 16 visit 74 goats were



ALMOST HUMPTY DUMPTY

If there was ever a correct alignment of my stars, the afternoon of December 22nd was the date. As I felt myself being catapulted into the air from the back of my horse, all nine lives that I may have been granted flashed before my eyes...used up....

But it was not my day to be Humpty Dumpty, thanks to the immediate and capable response of the Cornwall Ambulance team. I don't think half an hour passed before I was being whisked off to Sharon Hospital and then to surgery in Hartford. The doctors were unanimous in their praise of the fast and professional action of this team of dedicated volunteers.

Five generous members of the Cornwall Ambulance squad had stopped whatever they were doing that afternoon to come to the rescue of another Cornwall calamity.

—Debby Bennett & family

AU CONTRAIRE

As a Cornwallian since birth, I eagerly await my copy of the Chronicle each month, delivered to my home in the lovely Philadelphia neighborhood of Mt. Airy, a leafy, politically progressive, racially integrated, food co-op shopping, bicycle-riding place where a five-bedroom house costs less than a one-bedroom apartment in Park Slope (Shout-out here to fellow Cornwallian Olivia Prud'homme, who just moved down the street with her family, fresh from the borough of Brooklyn.)

In December, I grabbed my copy and read with interest of the move back to Cornwall, from

seized. The goats were sent to a rehabilitation facility in Niantic. The civil action suit was filed in Hartford Superior Court to obtain temporary custody and permanent ownership of the goats. A hearing is scheduled for the end of February. Criminal investigations continue. —Jayne Ridgway

Cornwall Briefs

•**Calling for Help.** The old saw "any port in a storm" is a fine idea but there's no such thing as "any phone in a storm." As many in town know, if the power goes out the base power supply of a cordless phone goes out too. If cable goes, so does cable phone service.

Help is not far away. For less than \$10 you can buy a phone that links to the old copper wires strung up on the poles and provides landline service in emergencies. A Google search produced very inexpensive Vtech, Uniden, and AT&T trimline phones available online or at Walmart and Target. You just plug the clip at the end of the phone line into the back of one of these babies and you're back in touch with the world. Between storms, these compact phones can be tucked away in a drawer. A

my adopted hometown, of Peter Bishop and his wife, who have decided to raise their young children in the rural loveliness of Cornwall—nothing wrong with that—because of "the deteriorating situation in Philadelphia." Wait a minute! Deteriorating? Could this be the same city I see out my window, where suburbanites are flooding into Center City to live and artists are colonizing the warehouses like so many honey bees? That was ranked third (after Milan and Cuba) in the New York Times Travel Section's "52 Top Places to Go in 2015," touted as a city transformed into an "urban outdoor oasis?" That Conde Nast Traveler just named the No. 2 shopping destination in the world, behind only Barcelona and ahead of Hong Kong? And what about the new Barnes museum, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Mummies, Rittenhouse Square, Reading Terminal Market, Will Smith, The Roots, Thomas Eakins, Jose Garces, Ben Franklin, Ben Franklin, and Ben Franklin (we see a lot of him here) and every type of person, food, art, music, religion, culture, and language you can imagine?

I mean no offense to Peter Bishop and family. There are certainly trade-offs between life in a small town vs. a big city, and the Philly public schools can be tough to navigate (or expensive to work around), for sure. But please, dear Chronicle readers, don't write us off as "deteriorating!" Come visit and let us give you a tour. You'll like what you see. And if you're really lucky, we may even take you to the Rocky statue and buy you a cheesesteak.

—Margaret Klaw

good reason to keep the old landline working.

•**Historical Society.** A shout-out to the local historians who've been awarded a place in the hotly contested StEPs (Standards of Excellence Program), a professional development curriculum. For 26 months staff, board members, and volunteers will attend workshops in six areas of museum "best practices" developed by the American Association for State and Local History. CHS will have access to special funding offered by the Connecticut Council for the Humanities to organizations which have completed the StEPs program.

All this from the people who brought us that terrific Civil War exhibit and a summer full of related activities in 2014. This coming summer CHS will offer an exhibit on dairying and cows in Cornwall.

•**2015-2016 Budget.** Work progresses on the budget for the fiscal year starting July 1. The good news is that health insurance costs are expected to go up 5 percent instead of 21 percent (the current year's increase). More sobering is the capital budget which comes in at \$500,000, most of it going to road repairs and a new fire department tanker truck. (The funds for the tanker have been accumulated over several years.) No

(continued on page 4)

(continued from page 3)

reimbursements from state or federal sources will soften the blow.

• **Job Well Done.** Becky Hurlburt, director of Park and Rec, has handed the selectmen notice of her retirement. Anyone qualified who would like to apply for the job is urged to write to the selectmen or email a resume to cwselectmen@optonline.net.

—Lisa L. Simont



Events & Announcements

A Blood Drive will be held on March 3 from 1 to 5:45 P.M. at the UCC Parish House. For an appointment please call 1-800-733-2767 or visit redcrossblood.org.

Kindergarten registration for the 2015-2016 school year will be held on March 4. Any child turning 5 on or before December 31, 2015 is eligible. Parents should call the school office at 672-6617 to schedule a time for their child to visit the school. Parents need to bring their child's official immunization record and birth certificate with them.

The Cornwall Woman's Society monthly meeting will be held Thursday, March 5, in the Cornwall Library at 10:15 A.M. Ellen Moon will present her art and creations.

Cornwall Community Contra Dance will be held on Saturday, March 7, at 7 P.M. at the town hall. Calling by Dudley Laufman and music by Still, the Homegrown Band. For information call 672-6101.

Getting to Summer

The word "summer" seems freighted with hope as this awful winter grinds on and on. If you're looking for a way to amuse yourself as the minutes tick by, you might write a check to the *Chronicle*. Thanks!

A Food Drive for the Little Guild of St. Francis, sponsored annually by the National Iron Bank, is now taking place until the end of March. Please drop off name brand food, hot dogs, pet treats, or blankets at the bank or at the Berkshire Store.

Pasta Bonanza Dinner to benefit a freshwater well project of the church school children's choice will be held on Saturday, March 7, in the UCC Parish House. The buffet-style dinner will be served from 5 to 7 P.M. For more information please call the UCC office at 672-6840.

Free Blood Pressure Clinic will be held Monday, March 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 will be held Tuesday, March 10, from 11:30 A.M. to 1 P.M. at the Wandering Moose Cafe. More than you should eat at less than you should pay. Questions? Bob Potter at 672-6191.

Motherhouse Events:

Beginning with Bees will be held on Saturday, March 14, from 10:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. at the Taghannuck Grange in Sharon. Complete details are at the Motherhouse.us website or 672-0229.

Grow Your Own Meadow with Kathy Connelly on Saturday, March 21, from 10 A.M. to 12 P.M. at the Taghannuck Grange in Sharon. Register for this free seminar on using native plant species to support wildlife at the Motherhouse.us website.

Winter Wine Tasting to benefit a UCC work trip to Pine Ridge Reservation will be held at Sunset Meadows Vineyard, 599 Old Middle St., Goshen, on March 28 from 5:15 to 7 P.M. Five different wines will be served, as well as hors d'oeuvres and soda/seltzer. Cost is \$25 per person. The event is sponsored by the UCC. For details visit Cornwallucc@aol.com or 672-6840 to reserve tickets.

Art in Cornwall

Recent Work, an exhibition of paintings, drawings, and objects, by Jessica Jane, a Bantam-based artist, which opened February 24 will continue at the Cornwall

Library. The National Iron Bank will be exhibiting works by Sandy Sandmeyer.

At the Cornwall Library:

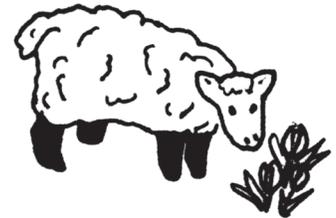
The Winter Film Series continues with *High Sierra* on Saturday, March 7, at 7:30 P.M. and concludes with *Symphony Pastorale* on Saturday, March 21, at 7:30 P.M. \$5/person is the suggested donation.

On Saturday, March 14, at 5 P.M. there will be a discussion of the future of media and communications by two people who should know: Jonathan Landman, editor-at-large at Bloomberg News' Bloomberg View section, and Henry Blodget, co-founder, CEO, and editor-in-chief of Business Insider, a business and tech news site, and host of Yahoo's Daily Ticker video show.

Family Movie Night on Friday, March 20, at 7 P.M. will feature *The Adventures of TinTin*.

Debbie Devins' creative writing class starts April 1 at 6:30 P.M. and runs for six consecutive Wednesdays. The fee is \$50. No writing experience necessary. Please preregister as the class fills up quickly.

For the upcoming April **Cornwall Child Center Auction**, donations of goods and services are being sought. Please contact the child center for further information. Call 672-6989 or email amy.bresson@cornwallchildcenter.org.



CORNWALL CHRONICLE
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