Cornwall’s Other Bridge

West Cornwall has its justly renowned covered bridge. That other bridge, the one at Cornwall Bridge, is not generally considered worth a pilgrimage. But now, 75 years after its completion (it opened on December 31, 1930), it has gained recognition: along with four other open-spandrel, reinforced concrete Connecticut bridges, of which it is the longest, it has been added to the National Register of Historic Places. Officially bridge No. 560, it was, according to Town Historian Michael Gannett, “a noteworthy engineering project for its time,” and a contemporary newspaper called it “one of the finest specimens of modern architecture.”

Granted, from the top, it’s not much to look at. To appreciate its grandeur you have to go down below, where Cornwall Bridge village once was. There, looking up at the huge, graceful arches, the sheer massiveness is breathtaking. And if you go down River Road on the Sharon side you can get a good view of the whole bridge—the 180-foot arch spanning the river, with smaller arches on either side.

Built in 200 days at a cost of about $425,000, it replaced the one-lane covered bridge, built in 1845, which couldn’t handle $425,000, it replaced the one-lane covered arches on either side.

The same fate almost befell West Cornwall: in 1969 the Department of Transportation proposed a cement bridge spanning the town and river in much the same way. But the townspeople united against it, and the plan was killed.

—George Kittle

Businesses Change Hands

The new year opens with two of Cornwall’s most familiar businesses changing hands.

Northwest Lumber was purchased on November 22 by Northeast Builders Supply, which owns several Fairfield County lumber and hardware centers. Northwest will remain much the same; staff is expected to be unchanged. One difference for old customers will be access to Northeast’s product lines at the new locale: Mabel Coty’s Package Store, now owned by Richard Bramley. Merchant Harry Breen rebuilt his general store on the new location: Mabel Coty’s Package Store, now owned by Richard Bramley.

New Year’s Day, to Josh Tyson of East Cornwall. Denny will keep a hand in on a part-time basis “to help Josh get established and get to know” Denny’s customers. Josh has been working with Denny on projects over the past two years to prepare for the change.

—Lisa Lansing Simont

CCS Teacher Contract Signed

The Cornwall Board of Education and the CCS Faculty Association have agreed on a three-year contract effective July 1, 2006, through June 30, 2009.

Teacher salaries are determined by a schedule based on level of education and years of service, to which is added a negotiated general wage increase. The agreed-on (continued on page 2)
Selectmen’s Update

The newly elected Board of Selectmen (BOS) has been known to refer to themselves as the farmer, the grocer, and the vintner. They’ll have plenty to keep themselves busy, judging from a talk with First Selectman Gordon Ridgway about his evolving plans for 2006.

The list shows the wide scope of projects for the months ahead. Some are works in progress, some are state-mandated, some are financed with Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grants, and some are federally funded.

Here’s a summary: The BOS will decide by the end of January who will do the revaluation of property. Assessor Barbara Bigos has begun the data collection and market analysis for the revaluation and has set a timetable for the process. The new values will take effect with the Grand List of October 1, 2006. On-site inspections of exteriors will be done this spring, and notices of assessments will be mailed in November, followed by informal informational hearings for property owners. The Board of Assessment Appeals will meet in February to consider appeals and will mail its decisions in March 2007. The town budget and mill rate will then be set in May 2007, and tax bills based on the new values and mill rate will be mailed on June 30, 2007.

An Ethics Code for town employees and elected officials has been drawn up and will be distributed this month to those affected, to be followed by approval of the code at a special town meeting in February.

The selectmen and the Cornwall Volunteer Fire Department are surveying residences for compliance with the town’s 911 numbering system. Homeowners with missing or faded numbers will be getting a reminder of the importance of this system for emergency responders.

The Town Office will have a handicap accessibility ramp installed in the spring. Alec Frost’s design for the pavilion for the Route 4 ballfield (paid for under STEAP 1, $350,000) will be available for public comment soon and is scheduled for construction in early spring. The land adjacent to the Hughes Library in West Cornwall (needed for a septic system and other building improvements), is being surveyed, and purchase negotiations will follow (STEAP 2, $200,000). A decision on funding for the expansion of the Cornwall Historical Society’s building is expected by late February (STEAP 3, $250,000).

The Emergency Equipment Grant (federal, $20,000) will allow the town to update its communications system and obtain supplies for the emergency shelter facility at the CCS gym. These funds must be used by November 2006. —Audrey Ferman

Beyond Politics

There are always stories behind the cold numbers of election results, but they’re mostly predictable. Here’s one that’s out of the ordinary. It began when Rick Lynn, chairman of Planning and Zoning (P&Z), lost his seat. Democrats Lynn Cheney and Chris Hopkins were elected.

It was widely agreed that Rick had done a good job leading this important and sensitive board. He’s a professional planner and was viewed as a valuable asset for the revision of the Ten-Year Plan.

Why did he lose? He did no campaigning, says that he lives a quiet life with his family, and perhaps is not well known. He also graciously added, “Lynn and Chris are very competent and likeable, and they’ll be excellent members.”

Is there another reason for the outcome? Although an unaffiliated voter, Rick ran on the Republican line, “because years ago the Republican chairman asked me.” Election results reveal that, with the exception of Ralph Gold and Charlie Gold, no Republican or petitioning candidate came close to outpolling his Democratic opponent.

This, and the decline of the Republican organization in town is another interesting story—which we will leave alone except to observe that it almost certainly relates to the fact that many formerly active Republicans are repelled by the current national leadership.

So Rick lost, which is not quite the end of this story. Enter Doc Simont, a long-time Democratic member of P&Z. “I’d served for 12 years and was thinking of getting off, but it’s a good board that was running smoothly, and I stayed on. When Rick lost, I felt it would be a win-win deal for all if I stepped down in favor of Rick.”

And so in late November, the Board of Selectmen accepted Doc’s resignation and appointed Rick to fill the vacancy. —Ed Ferman

Town Plan Update

What lies ahead for Cornwall in 2006, 2007, or further into the future? The Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) will be working with town residents to revise and update our Plan of Conservation and Development, which the state requires every ten years.

According to P&Z member Rick Lynn, the commission has started developing the strategy. On Saturday, January 21, at 1 p.m. in the CCS Gathering Room, three professional planners will offer options for the process.
Clown School, where he majored in street theater, mime, and modern clown. By 1987 he was perfecting his still skills. Soon he was touring Japan and other countries. In 1991 he created the character he calls Lurk (“a twenty-first-century professional psychopath”), the stillwalking persona that has toured the globe from Europe’s largest nightclub to the huge Tokyo Dome. To all this activity add lecturing, directing, and extensive teaching assignments. Then add performances—at—in Ewen’s wry turn of phrase—“exceedingly high-end private parties.”

Persons interested in Martin Ewen should visit his website. Increasingly, he has been turning his elevated impressions, visions, and revisions into short written pieces. “I am merely a clown who has used stilts as a means to distance myself from people…. His life is “the search for what is laughable and ridiculous in man.” He sells T-shirts, mugs, wallet cards, and dead flies “contained inside a decorative plastic bubble with a signed, numbered identification sheet detailing the flys name, its favorite smell and a favorite pastime…. Admittedly, its pointless nonsense but then so are you.” (As are apostrophes, of course.)

Want to know more? There’s plenty at www.antigravitytheatre.com. —Bob Potter

Selectmen Appoint

At their recent board meetings the selectmen unanimously made the following appointments: Inland Wetlands and Water Courses Agency: D. Stevenson Hedden, William Hurlburt, Roger Kane, Celia Senzer, and alternates Adam Fischer and Andrew MacDavid; Park & Recreation: Ron Laigle, Jr.; Planning and Zoning: Richard Lynn and alternate Emilie Pryor; Zoning Board of Appeals alternate: James A. Levy; Cornwall Grange Trust Fund: Chris Hopkins; Regional Mental Health Board: Wm. Earl Brecher.

—The January Editors

Interview with Our Judge

In the last 80 years, Cornwall has had only three Judges of Probate: Katherine Walker, Dorothy Bouteiller, and—since 1986—Mar- garet Cooley. We sat down with Maggie to find out more about her job.

MC: Various family members are lawyers, and a grandfather was circuit judge of that county. What pointed you toward this job?

CC: Is there anything in your background that pointed you toward this job?

MC: We sat down with Maggie to find out more about her job.

CC: Is there anything in your background that pointed you toward this job?

No. IRAs and other retirement accounts pass directly to whomever is named as the beneficiary. Jointly owned property such as real estate also passes to the co-owners without going through probate. What is the cost of probate? There is a sliding scale, and spouses receive special treatment. Fees for an estate of $300,000 left to a spouse would be $640; if left to kids, it would double. The maximum fee for any estate is $12,500. What happens if someone objects to the will, and how often does this happen in Cornwall? Statutes allow only a few reasons for objecting to a will: if it’s improperly executed; if there’s evidence of undue influence or coercion; or if there’s fraud. Although folks in Cornwall have occasionally whined about a will, none has ever gone to the point of a contest hearing.

(continued on page 4)
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The stock market often goes up

at 10:30 A.M. The half-hour program is for 2-
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will feature board books, finger plays, and

music. Please call Amy Buck at 672-6874.

Prud'homme continues through January.

bracket artists through March.

Upstairs in the Gallery at

Cornwall Bridge Pottery Store (in West Corn-

wall) is a show entitled Pots from Paintings.

Featured are hand-thrown pots by Todd

Piker, which have been inspired by and fash-

ioned after pots and vessels found in paint-

ings by Cézanne, Caravaggio, Van Gogh,

Picasso, Pissarro, and Brueghel.

The Outsiders Gallery

will continue to display a show of rotating Connecti-
cut artists through March.

The January Effect

The stock market often goes up

in January, and the reason given

is this: People sell losing stocks in December

for tax reasons. Then, come January, they re-

invest, and the market goes up. So if you're

overcome with financial ebullience, please

share a little of your January effect with us.

The market goes up and down, but the

Chronicle is a sure thing. Thanks.

Shakespeare in Cornwall: The Town Hall

Players will present the following programs at the Town Hall:

language and voice techniques by Anne Jaffe and Nick Jacobs.
• January 21: “Work the Play,” scene study by Nick Jacobs and the Players.
• January 28: Techniques and exercises presented by the nationally acclaimed Shakespeare and Company of Lenox, MA.

Programs are from 1 to 4 P.M.; contributions are suggested. Call Fred Thaler, 672-0052, for more information.

Toddler Time, a new, eight-week program at the Library, will start Thursday, January 19, at 10:30 A.M. The half-hour program is for 2- and 3-year-olds and parent/caregiver and will feature board books, finger plays, and music. Please call Amy Buck at 672-6874.

Democratic Caucus will be held on January 10 at 7:30 P.M. at the Library to elect members of the Democratic Town Committee for two-year terms. All enrolled Cornwall Democrats are eligible to vote and are invited to attend.

Story Hour for 4- and 5-year-olds continues at the Library on Fridays at 1:15 P.M. Kindergartners may take the bus from CCS.

Motherhouse, Inc. is selling two created-in-Cornwall items: A Field Guide: Seasonal Observations from the Fields and Meadows of Cornwall, Connecticut, with watercolors by Ellen Moon, $25; and organic-cotton market bags with silk-screened pumpkins in black, $15. The proceeds will support Motherhouse’s project to acquire Cherry Hill Farm for use as an old-style, life-skills educational center. Call Debra Tyler, 672-0229, to purchase either item.

Cornwall Youth Safety Coalition will meet January 9 at 3 P.M. in the CCS Gathering Room to review plans for the youth/teen health fair and to hear and discuss health-class curriculum ideas received from parents.

An Award-Winning Documentary Film, Occupation: Dreamland, will be shown on Wednesday, January 18, at 7 P.M. at the Library. The film is a candid portrait of a squad of American soldiers deployed in the Iraq city of Fallujah in 2004. Hosted by the Friends of the Library. Admission is free, and refreshments will be served. For more information on the film go to www.occupationdreamland.com.

Expressions, a science-based after-school program, will be held at the Cornwall Child Center on Tuesday afternoons from 3 to 5:30 P.M., January 10 to February 14. Children in grades K–2 may ride the school bus to the center after school. The program will explore the world using magnets, microscopes, scales, test tubes, and magnifying glasses. Call Pam Brehn at 672-6989 to enroll.

Park & Rec Will Sponsor:
• Ice skating at the Hotchkiss Rink, Saturdays from 7 to 8 P.M. Skaters must wear hats.
• Adult basketball at the CCS gym, Mondays at 8 P.M.
• Adult volleyball at the CCS gym, Tuesdays at 7 P.M.
• Kids’ basketball at the CCS gym, Sundays 1 to 3 P.M.

Call 248-3009 to check on any cancellations.

Taxes Due: The second half of real estate, personal property, and motor vehicle tax bills is due January 1; payments must be postmarked by January 31 to avoid interest. No additional bills are mailed; use bills that were mailed in July. The tax office is open Mondays from 1 to 4 P.M. and Wednesdays from 9 A.M. to noon and 1 to 4 P.M. Call 672-2705 for further information.

The Cornwall Housing Corporation (CHC) would like to acquire a five- to fifteen-acre parcel of land suitable for the construction of senior housing. Details, including form of housing and number of units, depend upon the results of a survey to be conducted this winter. In order to obtain government funding for construction, CHC must own or have an option to purchase the land to be developed. If you own or know of a suitable site for sale, please contact Jim Levy at 672-6377 or j.levy@snet.net. More on this story will appear in an upcoming issue.

First Library Read-a-Thon: The Friends of the Cornwall Library invite children in grades 4 through 8 to this sleepover event on Saturday and Sunday, February 11 and 12. The event begins at 7 P.M. and concludes at 7 A.M. For details and information please contact Bridget Lynch at 672-1076 or Deirdre Fischer at 672-1123.

Art in Cornwall: At the Cornwall Free Library, the show of Cornwall portraits by Erica Prud’homme continues through January.

The Outsiders Gallery will continue to display a show of rotating Connecticut artists through March.

Upstairs in the Gallery at Cornwall Bridge Pottery Store (in West Cornwall) is a show entitled Pots from Paintings. Featured are hand-thrown pots by Todd Piker, which have been inspired by and fashioned after pots and vessels found in paintings by Cézanne, Caravaggio, Van Gogh, Picasso, Pissarro, and Brueghel.

THE CHRONICLE NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

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