Chronicle Receives Grant for Website

The Chronicle is happy to report that a website is in design and production and should be up and running by early spring.

Each month the theme of current will appear online. The website will feature a searchable archive of more than 250 back issues, along with other pages that will make it easier to contact the paper. News about upcoming events may now be posted to the Chronicle’s Calendar Editor Louise Riley. (See page 4.)

The website project was made possible by a generous grant from the Cornwall Foundation, now in its tenth year of supporting local institutions. —The Editors

The Year of the Dragon

When Cornwall began 2012 the town was still recovering from the smash-up named for the hoopsters—the Cornwall Coyotes. One of the smaller schools in the Region 1 league, Cornwall beat Sharon 52 to 42 in the finals to take home the championship. Later in the year a naming contest for CCS mascot produced a new name for the hoopsters—the Cornwall Coyotes.

On the winter sports scene, Mohawk Mountain Ski Area celebrated its 65th year of operation during a nearly snowless winter. Manufactured white stuff made up some of the difference. The Town of Cornwall, however, was pleased to know that $25,000 in snow removal funds went unspent.

The Cornwall Library found itself in the midst of an uproar as the town reacted to the late June dismissal of Amelia de Neergaard from her job as children’s librarian. Her supporters filled the chat room at yahoo.com with comment and letters of support. The library’s trustees, limited by law and ethics, said little. Bart Jones, president of the board, commented, “We have focused on fundraising and delivering programs and not enough on personnel.” In late July the trustees announced that de Neergaard would rejoin the staff as children’s program coordinator working fewer hours.

Another anniversary! The Yelping Hill Committee was 90 in 2012. Ground was broken October 17 for the Bonney Brook Senior Housing project, the outcome of more than a decade of planning and organizing by the Cornwall Elderly Housing Corporation. Located next to the Cornwall General Store, the new facility promises its ten or more residents a village setting and lots to do.

Storm Sandy showed up almost exactly (continued on page 2)
Evaluate and Save

Winter, with its higher heating bills, tends to concentrate the mind sharply on where energy savings might be found. The Cornwall Energy Task Force’s Katie Freygang hopes that you will have your home evaluated for energy usage by one of the two firms she has vetted to work with Cornwall residents.

I attended the evaluation of Pastor Micki Nun-Miller’s home last month. Two evaluators came with their equipment, which included a huge fan and a door-sized frame. They drew the air out of the house, creating a 20-mile-an-hour wind; feeling around the window frames or doors you could immediately determine where the drafts and leakages were. They checked Pastor Micki’s furnace for CO venting and proper functioning. They looked in the attic, basement, and closets for proper ventilation and insulation.

The evaluators use sophisticated programs to determine how tight your house is and what more is needed to tighten it for maximum savings. While they work in the house, the evaluators will change your incandescent bulbs to compact fluorescents, weatherstrip around doors and windows, insulate vulnerable pipes, and change showerheads and sink aerators to save water. Pastor Micki had at least 25 light bulbs replaced, for a two-thirds saving over what it costs to run incandescent.

At the end of the visit, the evaluators will sit down and have a “kitchen table wrap-up,” where they recommend specific steps you can take in your own home to save even more energy. They then send you an eight-page report, in which they set out the cost of their recommended improvements versus the eventual savings to you. If you need the services of insulation contractors, for example, they will recommend reputable firms around the area.

Katie Freygang points out that if you had to pay for this four-hour house checkup it would cost $750, but you pay only $75. CL&P actually is taking money out of your bill for these evaluations so you definitely should get what you’ve paid for.

I’ve had my house done. You do have to put aside four hours and endure two people looking through your closets, but it’s well worth it. To sign up for the program: http://bit.ly/cornwallhes. To find out more about energy conservation in Cornwall: www.cornwallctenergy.org. —Jill Cutler

Gallery Hopping

Cornwall is known for its abundance of artists and writers, and recently two new galleries have opened to enrich the artistic community here. The Wish House unveiled Souterrain Gallery on Thanksgiving weekend in the freshly renovated space below the store, with a show of colorful works by Jane and Nan Bevans. Bianca and Richard Griggs, owners of the Wish House, have regularly shown local artists in the store. In the new downstairs gallery space, they will have room to show more artwork, as well as hold art workshops and demonstrations. According to Bianca, in her native Germany, basement space is called “souterrain”—French for underground.

The Griggses plan to have about four exhibitions a year, centering on the major holidays. The next show will feature the paintings of Shawn MacDavid and Polly Cook, and will open February 16.

Cornwall Bridge Gallery opened in mid-November in the former Insider/ Outsider Gallery at routes 7 and 45. After a substantial facelift, the new space is clean and bright, a minimalist background to the striking abstract and contemporary artworks on view.

The gallery, vacant for several years, was bought by David Meharg of Litchfield last year. Meharg, who grew up in a family of artists, is new to the gallery business. Trained as a landscape architect, he has a particular interest in outdoor sculpture. He sees Cornwall as being “an artist-driven community” and was impressed with the preponderance of artists on the town website.

Last August Meharg teamed up with Jessica Jane Perkel, a Litchfield artist. Together they assembled a group show of works by accomplished artists with ties to the area. The exhibiting artists helped curate the show, fulfilling the owners’ aim to create an “artist-directed, community-based” art center, with local and professional guest artist curators.

They hope to eventually provide framing and photography services for artists, and to offer a place for concerts, lectures, and artist talks. In the planning stages for the spring is a scholastic art show of work by students from several area high schools.

Both galleries are open Thursday through Sunday from 11 A.M. to 5 P.M. Please see their websites: wishhouse.com and cornwallbridgegallery.com.

—Amelia de Neergaard

Land Transfers

Vivian Marie Gordon to Matthew Mejia and Annette W. Doskow, land with all buildings and improvements thereon, at 379 Town Street, for $695,000.

Grant Hanessant and Anne Schwartz to Maureen A. Katz and Fred B. Glass, dwelling, all systems, and improvements thereon, known as 72 Barn Road, for $300,000.

Estate of Natasha Eilenberg to Cornwall, LLC, property together with all improvements thereon at 104 Pritchard Road, for $305,000.

Hunting—the Art and Practice

According to long-time hunter Tom Wolf, Cornwall has a rich history in hunting. Once plentiful, the deer population declined as the land was cleared for farming and charcoal manufacturing. Now, with more and more land under conservation, and second-home owners preferring to keep their acreage forested, deer habitat has increased. Despite this, Jean Bouteiller reports that “it is getting harder and harder to get a deer... Perhaps we can attribute this to the increasing coyote and bear population.”

When asked why they hunt, the hunters’ unanimous answer was “to put food on the table.” It also seems that they genuinely enjoy being in the woods. Wolf described it as a “spiritual” experience. He prefers bow hunting as “it’s more challenging, more immediate, and more humane.”

Deer and turkey hunting is no easy task nor is it inexpensive. In the beginning you have to learn the craft. Most hunters and huntresses learn from their fathers starting at an early age. First and foremost they learn weapon safety. Then there’s woodcraft, then more weapon safety, then tracking and an understanding of the wild woodland animals and their habits. Then still more weapon safety.

You need to know what to do when encountering a bear or a mountain lion or a moose—throw up your hands and shout loudly—or run like hell. Or, I suppose, creep under a rock. And which to do for what.

As to weapon safety, the state weighs in that. You must take a hunter safety education course and get a firearms hunting license before you can buy a deer and turkey hunting license. Weapons are restricted to rifles, shotguns, muzzle loaders, and bows and arrows.
Hunting for deer and turkey is between September 15 and December 31, generally speaking, and from just before sunrise to sunset. These are just some of the rules and regulations. There are many more.

As to expense: a good rifle with scope or a good bow can easily cost $1,000. Jim Vanicky told me other necessities, such as blinds or tree chairs, and efficient clothing and camouflage, plus licenses could cost up to another $1,000.

In the woods before dawn it is usually uncomfortably cold. Once you get to your station, whether in a tree or a ground blind, or on a warming pillow leaning up against a tree as Bouteiller does, you sit quietly for hours and freezing hours. Hunters know when the deer move and where. Vanicky also knows when the sun will move around his property and relaxed can he take a shot.

When deer are finally harvested they have to be dressed in the field. That means skinned, and eviscerated. The offal is buried and Vanicky puts the remaining unwanted parts on top of the mound in the transfer station for any wild animal (or Coby, transfer station Manager Steve O’Neil’s dog) to find and eat. Vanicky says the meat from one doe “fills a grocery bag about three-quarters full. It feeds a family of four for about 15 days.”

The Town of Cornwall issues about 30 hunting permits a season. The hunters, largely unseen, appear to be responsible, ethical, and they serve us well.

—Celia Senzer

What’s To Do with Trinity?

West Cornwall’s Trinity property could become the town’s sale of the century—that would be the 21st century—and we asked for some thoughts on the subject from several interested parties.

We are referring to 464 acres, a long stretch of riverfront, lovely wooded trails and hills, a large conference center, several homes, and camp-like cabins. All this plus a little stone chapel that Tim Prentice suggested could be turned into “a cozy bar” whose patrons could “pray for redemption in the next life.” (More from Tim later.)

One must keep in mind that the owner, Trinity Episcopal Church on Wall Street, has not yet put the property up for sale or even indicated it is planning to do so. Trinity is apparently considering several options and we don’t yet know what they are. With all this in mind, we looked for ideas from members of the community, and

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our first thought was talking to Maggie Cooley who heads the Cornwall Housing Corp.

Maggie called it "a wonderful opportunity." She said, "most of the acreage is difficult-to-develop raw land due to slope and access and the fact that it's bordered on several sides by state and land trust holdings that should become permanently protected open space available to the public." She added that money to purchase the land could be sought from state and local conservation organizations.

What about the conference center and its immediate surroundings? Maggie suggested this could be developed as a retirement community like Geer Village "or better still, a mixed-income establishment. The existing single-family houses could be given or sold cheaply to Habitat or the Cornwall Housing Corporation."

More from Tim Prentice: "The irony is that the most logical use for the complex is as a conference center. Other options would be a seasonal camp or training center of some kind. It suggests a small size version of the Omega Institute which is a yoga retreat near Rhinebeck, N. Y."

Bart Jones, who chairs the Cornwall Conservation Trust, said his group would like to see Trinity protect most of the undeveloped property "for wildlife habitat, water quality, public recreation, and river scenery." Bart said CCT was prepared to "lead an effort to purchase that undeveloped land at a reasonable price."

He said he hoped the balance of the property "can be put to good use that would support the economy of Cornwall."

Deb Tyler, owner of Local Farm and director of Motherhouse, came up with a long list of interesting ideas such as putting the property to use as a home base for teaching old-style life skills, developing alternate energy sources, as well as summer camp projects involving types of farming, animal husbandry, art classes, or recycling projects.

Soon, we hope, Cornwall will hear from Trinity. We will not be short of ideas.

— John Miller

Events & Announcements

Art in Cornwall: At the Cornwall Library the photograpic exhibit, "Faces of India," by Jane Worthington-Roth continues through January 26. An artist's reception will be held on January 5 from 4 to 6 p.m.

On January 29 an exhibit of watercolors and oil paintings by Edward Boulton, 1866-1927, (grandfather of Cornwall's Emily Whitford) will go up and run through March 9.

At the Souterrain Gallery, an exhibit of works by Jane and Nan Bevans in oil, acrylic, and multi-media continues through February 10.

The National Iron Bank is hosting a show of photographs by Martha Louotti in January. At the Cornwall Bridge Gallery a show of contemporary art titled "Caravan" continues through mid-February.

The Board of Assessment Appeals will hold hearings by appointment in March 2013. Applications to schedule a hearing will be available at the town clerk's office beginning January 2, 2013. Applications must be received by February 20, 2013. Applicants will be contacted to schedule hearings during March.

Monthly Senior Luncheon: Come on down to the Cornwall General Store on Tuesday, January 8, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. for a delicious lunch special. Amy Cady will talk about library senior services. No reservations necessary! Questions? Call Jane at 672-6101.

At the Cornwall Library

A puppet workshop will be held on Saturday, January 12, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. with Joe Brien of Lost Art Workshops. It is for children 6 years and up accompanied by an adult. Brien will instruct participants in the art of whimsical puppet making followed by a scripted performance. The workshop is limited to 12 children, so please register early by calling the library at 672-6874 or the Housatonic Youth Service Bureau, which is co-sponsoring this family activity, at 860-824-4720.

Family Movie Night will feature October Sky, starring a young Jake Gyllenhaal and Laura Dern on Friday, January 18, at 7 p.m. The film is rated PG for minimal teen-age misbehavior. Popcorn and drinks will be served. Donations welcome.

Heifer Project Supper on February 2 will be served from 5 to 7 p.m. at the UCC Parish House. Donations will be accepted and 100 percent of the proceeds will benefit the Heifer Project. Menu: pasta (including gluten free) with a variety of sauces (including vegetarian), salad, bread, dessert, and beverages. For more information call the church office at 672-6840.