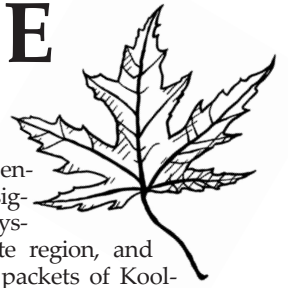




# CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 30 : NUMBER 9 OCTOBER 2020



## Out of My Census

Locusts swarm every 13 to 17 years. For census takers, the cycle is every ten years. From their hidden burrows in our midst, they burst forth with voracious appetites to devour your information. Don't pin this one on Mother Nature. It is actually mandated by the Constitution.

This is the third time I have taken part in various roles and I find many differences from prior years. Most notably, I see an unfortunate increase in hostility from household members, ranging from, "Sorry, pal, not interested," to foaming-at-the-mouth rage. Ten years ago, I encountered only two or three hostile refusals during the whole period I canvassed. This time I sometimes get that many in a day. Besides a vague hostility to the government, this may be Covid related. Many folks are not eager to chew the fat with strangers, even if they are wearing masks and standing five yards apart. Dare I say also, the migration of plague-wary city dwellers (name of city will be provided on request) to their weekend residences may, in some cases, have imported an urban xenophobia to our friendly little town.

The character of the census-takers' approach has also changed. They now bear, like an ankle bracelet, a special-purpose cellphone which tracks their location and

prompts them with the exact wording of questions they must ask, no deviation tolerated. Those questions have changed, too:

- everyone must be asked what their sex is, regardless of appearance;
- there is a new recognition of same-sex partners;
- national origins (e.g. English, French, Italian, etc.) are asked, as well as race (White is the new Caucasian);
- a separate question seeks to know whether you are Hispanic/Latino;
- children are differentiated as biological or not;
- Proxy interviews are a 2020 innovation. After numerous failed attempts to interview a resident, information is sought from his neighbors.

The cellphone's GPS is supposed to help in navigation from address to address



but, since it is dependent on a decent signal, it is generally mystified in our remote region, and about as useful as packets of Kool-Aid powder for a trek across the Sahara.

Face masks add a cumbersome dimension to interviews conducted at acceptable social distance. "Is that name 'Bean,' like Boston Beans, or 'Dean' like the guy who makes the sausages?" Another Covid complication: so many people are not living where they usually do. They complain that they have already filled out the form in the above unnamed city, and object to doing it again. The reason, you must explain, is that it is a census based on dwellings. If you have two, you need to file twice.

All in all, 2020 was definitely far from a census-friendly year, but snoop we must. The decennial ritual is critical to our state. Every Connecticut resident not counted, reportedly costs the state around \$18,000 in federal aid over the ten years between censuses.

—Matthew Collins

## Gran Paradiso

Tommy Eucalitto leads me into the root cellar at the head of Coltsfoot Valley, a barrel vault with stone walls a foot thick dug 38 feet into the hillside, an underground

(continued on page 2)

## OCTOBER 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>Every Week This Month:</b> Saturdays: ♦ Co-op Farm Market 9am–12:30pm Until closing; ♦ West Cornwall Farm Market 10am–1pm Until closing ♦ Cornwall Historical Society "Women's Right To Vote" 10am–4pm through 10/17			Event Online Event In Person	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12 COLUMBUS DAY	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

\*Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

(continued from page 1)

shrine to farmers' labor, and once used to store sugar beets for Calhoun cattle. "It should be about 51 degrees and damp in here," Tommy says. "Renovations will bring it to around that climate." The outer section will be for neighbor Jed Gracey's vegetables; the deeper 16-foot inner sanctum will be the cheese cave for aging raw milk Gran Paradiso, a cheese unique to the valley.

Tommy believes that "we must honor what came before." Coltsfoot Valley Farm, in this particular place between the valley and the town, "will carry on the tradition and preserve the valley as agricultural space." He saw how this worked when he apprenticed on farms in the Italian Alps and Sardinia.

A number of fortunate circumstances led Tommy to Cornwall. He did not grow up on a farm, but Gordon Ridgway, in whose fields he worked one summer, showed him around our town and encouraged his agricultural leanings. After Europe, and a stint milking at Debra Tyler's, Tommy heard unexpectedly from Jon Old, who had already helped out with Gracey's cattle pasturage. Perhaps Tom could use his dairy buildings?

Jon and Constance Old, who own the barns and land, are entirely supportive of this effort to reclaim the dairy center of the town. They had preserved the barn and outbuildings for possible future farm use, so the expansive ground level of the barn/house (which Tommy will not be using) is still intact: stanchions, gutters, reinforced beams, barn swallows, its huge sliding doors that open onto the lush meadows to the south. The spring house is in pretty good shape, but Tommy has needed to modify the old spaces, like the root cellar and the small barn, which now has room for up to ten or so stanchions. He works together with Jed Gracey, Jon Old, and Alex North.

It will be a while before we can get our hands on that cheese; it needs to age for two to three months. And he needs to increase his herd; he has two Jerseys and a Holstein and three calves. "We need Jersey milk for the cheese, and Holsteins to provide milk for the Jersey calves." Meanwhile, Tommy experiments with cheese processing at home, which is just across the street, and was built for the Calhouns' chauffeur. It came Tommy's way fortuitously through Cornwall Housing's Parcel Program.

"There's no rush," says Tommy. "I milk at sunrise and sunset; we work on the buildings. My real home is the barn. For me, this is heaven." His paradiso.

—Ella Clark

## Hubbub Central

It was an April day in 2011 when the popular local email mill, the Cornwall Commu-

nity Network, went through one of its weirdest moments. One member posted an announcement that an active CCN fellow had passed away from a heart attack. David Becker, the man in question, had grown up in Cornwall, but left to become a truck driver traveling all over the country.

Condolences came in promptly. One writer expressed a common sentiment, saying that he "disagreed with him most of the time" in uncounted debates. Becker was remembered as a "great character" who would "certainly leave a hole on the CCN wall."

Just a few hours later though, Becker sent upbeat greetings from a truck stop in North Dakota, which he puckishly dubbed "the land of the living dead." He was fine.

After his CCN resurrection, Becker, who lives in Georgia, kept writing his missives (with his typical touches of cynicism, self-deprecation, and a prickly political attitude). But a few weeks ago, he hauled himself off the site. Not that he died this time. He simply had enough of a town, as he framed it, that had "become a pseudo-Berkelyesque, no differing opinions allowed imitation of a place that used to embrace reasonable discussion." He complained about a "toxicity exhibited here lately, just as in the world in general."

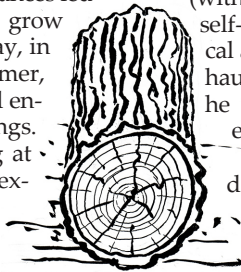
So far, Becker has refused all entreaties to return. A heated discussion ensued about censorship and what constitutes an appropriate topic for the Cornwall Community Network, then died down.

In the middle of the hubbub, Gary Steinkohl, president of the Cornwall Association, now in charge of the CCN platform after it was moved to a new web-hosting company, issued a stern admonition. It read: "The CCN is a forum for Cornwallians about Cornwall. If you want to have divisive diatribes, bullying, name calling, demeaning postings then YOU take them elsewhere."

All of this might be a sign of the times, reflective of a site which in a period of social-distancing regulations had become more active.

There are some potential elsewhere, including a new Facebook page launched by Richard Griggs, the man who has taped countless videos of local events and posted them on YouTube. He named it "Cornwall ct." The site has some advantages over the CCN. It can handle photos and videos and organizes comments in a steady flow within every topic raised. But experience indicates that its discussions don't go very deep. And the practices and reputation of Facebook, the billion-dollar company in the background, have raised many eyebrows.

At the same time, the Cornwall Association is working on a redesign of the website [cornwallct.org](http://cornwallct.org), which fills a hole that exists



## Welcome

Inga-Marie Buck Hawkins to Charlotte Buck and Hayden Hawkins

## Good-bye to Friends

William Gerald Coll  
Cynthia Lane Parkinson  
Kenneth P. Strobel

## Land Transfers

Corinne J. Levy to Matthew G. and Caroline Brigham, land with buildings thereon standing at 25 Reed Brook Road, for \$519,000.

JPMorgan Chase Bank, NA to Alexander and April Neubauer, 10.91 acres of land on Valley Road, for \$58,000.

William and Caitlin Evans to David Downey, 10.27 acres of land on Cornwall Hollow Road, for \$75,000.

Margareta Hasselberg-Roepcke to Andrew T. Alburn and Ashley N. Miles, real property at 13 Day Road, for \$420,000.

William E. Schweizer, III and Alison M. Schweizer to Brittany S. McAllister and Tyler H. Cheney, land with all buildings thereon at 159 Dibble Hill Road, for \$500,000.

Kevin T. Wilson to Andrew and Laura Harris, land with all buildings and improvements thereon at 316 Sharon Goshen Turnpike, for \$750,000.

Jeffrey A. Ward and Kathryn Sandmeyer Ward to Tatiana Kotchoubey, land with improvements thereon at 45 Pierce Lane, for \$420,000.

Catherine H. Noren and Brian Thomas to Jack S. Shanewise and Phillis M. Levin, real property with all improvements thereon at 30-38 Rattlesnake Road, for \$750,000.

because the town never created its own site for official business. Clearly, well-organized digital communication has become essential. And as a "very Cornwall thing," as Rocco Botto, the designer of the new website puts it, it was "started as a grassroots effort" and "is administered by a group of dedicated volunteers."

"The goal is to have the new site launched by the new year," Rocco said. Judging from a first glimpse, it will be a great improvement. —Juergen Kalwa

## The Aftermath

It's been almost two months since Hurricane Isaias laid waste to Cornwall's roads and trees on August 4, knocking out power to every home in town for as long as eight days.

Now the lights are back on. The roads reopened. But the after-effects linger.

Electric and cable lines still snake lazily alongside roads and loop between poles as if a permanent feature of the Cornwall landscape.

## Letters to the Chronicle

"You could hang out your laundry on them," said Susan Romeo, whose daily walk takes her past several "clotheslines." Internet service is still spotty. Eversource vans prowled the roads for weeks, picking up defunct transformers. Optimum vans are still around attending to individual problems, but there appears to be no rush to get the downed lines taken care of.

There's political fallout, too. Eversource won a rate increase that took effect in July, only to be suspended less than a week before Isaias showed up. Customers were upset by big August bills, but the company said it resulted from high air-conditioning usage during a hot spell, not the suspended rate hike. Utility rates are complicated, so it's hard to be sure.

The Connecticut Public Utilities Regulatory Authority has initiated an investigation into Eversource's preparation and response to Isaias and Gov. Ned Lamont is arguing that its rate of return should be tied to the amount of time it takes to restore power during outages.

First Selectman Gordon Ridgway said that he is working with state officials and the leaders of other Connecticut towns to improve Eversource procedures and communication when the next storm arrives. He is also working with Optimum and Frontier to iron out continuing problems.

Homeowners are trying to think ahead too. Brad and Erin Hedden of Hedden Electric report a small increase in the demand for generators, "although not nearly as many as in the freak snowstorm of 2011," Erin explained, adding that "it is becoming increasingly hard to find them, with delivery times up to 12 weeks."

More storms are surely coming, so it makes sense to prepare however you can. The August *Cornwall Chronicle* included an emergency prep flyer. It makes sense to keep it handy.

—Brenda Underwood

### Saving A Turtle

The coronavirus pandemic has been hard on everybody in Cornwall, even wildlife. It's not that the bears are catching Covid-19, but more people in town means more traffic on the roads and more wounded animals.

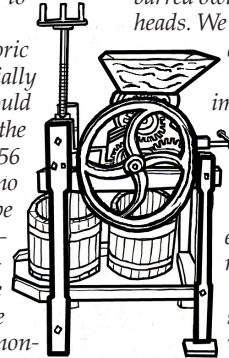
In July, Brad—who is both my husband and the town's animal control officer—found an injured wood turtle on Route 125. The shell was split behind the creature's head and along the left side of its body and a jagged square of shell was nearly severed. There was blood on its rear left leg. But the membrane that separates the insides from the shell was intact, and the turtle was breathing and its heart was beating. It wasn't moving much at first, but by the time we were on our way to Sharon Audubon, it was quite active.

Upon arrival at the Audubon, I placed the tote that held the turtle on a counter in a

### BUILD BETTER BRIDGES

Recent repairs of bridges on Cogswell and Ford Hill roads took a lot of Cornwall residents by surprise. Including me. Historic bridge guardrails and related wood and cable approach rails were transformed, not for the better, by the introduction of shiny aluminum beam rail, more commonly found on large highways and parking lots. At Cogswell Road, we lost a pair of stately concrete parapets dating from 1935. At Ford Hill Road, a diminutive metal railing, installed after the 1955 flood, was covered up, leaving a clumsy and harsh contrast to the surrounding landscape.

Any modification to a defining historic man-made feature of our town, especially ones driven by safety and economy, should not come as a surprise (even though the word bridge appeared on town agendas 56 times over the last four years, almost no one knew this work was planned), but be part of a public process that values history, considers things like siting and material quality, and seeks to incorporate funding and expertise that is available through various state programs and non-



profits. Our town must demand and cultivate leadership in this area or the destruction of things we all value (and that ultimately drive people to settle here and contribute to our tax base) will continue.

—Tobie Cornejo

### UNINVITED DINNER GUEST

Reading Roxana Robinson's "The Question of Barred Owls" in the September Chronicle, I couldn't help but think about a recent experience. Having dinner a short while ago on the porch of friends, we were buzzed twice by a barred owl. Buzzed means he flew just above our heads. We were finishing dinner, but it was soon evident that he had not had his yet. He landed on a nearby tree and almost immediately dove to the ground. We saw him grab and swallow a vole.

His return trip from the grass to the woods was just above our heads—even closer to us than before. We saw every stripe in his body. And his big round eyes.

We did have, but didn't need, dessert at that dinner party. What a treat we had had already.

—Anne Zinsser

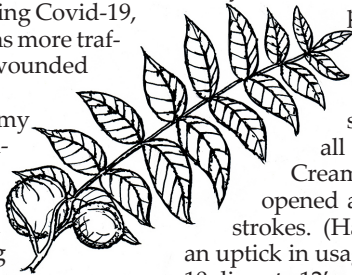
garage, filled out a required form, and headed home. Three weeks later, I received news that the turtle was alive and continuing to receive care.

Wood turtles are in the genus *Glyptemys*, which includes only one other species, the bog turtle. Both are endangered. They can live as long as 40 years, and they mature to five to ten inches long. They are, like all turtles, beautiful and beneficial to the environment. As of yet, I have not heard any new updates about the recovery of the turtle. I hope that no news is good news.

—Erin Hedden

### Living the Pandemic

Throughout the first six months of the pandemic, Cornwall has seemed both a relatively safe and fulfilling place to live. Our population mostly learned to wear a mask, stay distant, conduct business and social life via Zoom, and sometimes self-quarantine, all without going crazy. At Cream Hill Lake the beaches opened and swimmers got in their strokes. (Hammond Beach even saw an uptick in usage, despite its division into 10 discrete 12' x 12' socially distanced spaces.) Camp Mohawk pulled off a first-ever co-ed day camp with 32 children from Cornwall, despite some momentary disquiet when two staff members were diagnosed with false positives. Of course the warm weather helped. The next six months may prove more of a challenge as schools reopen, the weather cools, and we are forced to adjust to a new norm of distanced indoor activity.



For some reflection on what Cornwall might expect, I turned to Denis Nash, an epidemiologist who spent these last months at his house in Cornwall. He is executive director of the epidemiological research institute, the ISPH at City University of New York. Six months ago his institute launched a large national cohort study that traces the relationship between infection by Covid-19 and such environmental factors as mask wearing, large gatherings, and contact tracing; more recently it has begun another national study of K-12 teachers.

Denis helped develop the summer protocol for Covid protection at the Cream Hill Lake Association and is sanguine about creating "culture change without too much disruption in people's experience" as long as one provides clear guidelines and relies on gentle persuasion rather than chastising or shaming. He pointed out that although there's been little transmission in Cornwall so far, the positive case found in a CCS staff member right before school opened reminds us we're not isolated, that such individual cases are likely to happen again, and identifying them is essential to getting a handle on the disease.

Staying outdoors as much as you can, ventilating with open windows, and wearing masks indoors are all essential when you socialize as the days get colder, according to Denis. He also encourages people to think about forming "quarantine pods," small groups outside your family with whom you agree on a certain set of rules for keeping the group safe. With enough planning, it's also possible to gather safely a small, widely dispersed group for special occasions like a birthday or Thanksgiving; everyone should

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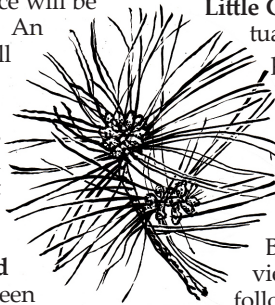
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quarantine for two weeks in advance, and be cautious about how they get to wherever they're going (drive, don't fly).

In the short term, Denis expects we'll get more help from frequent, rapid-result antigen tests that require neither labs nor healthcare providers than from any vaccine. And those, he maintains, we could maybe have by the time you read this article. For the complete interview with Denis Nash, check our website. —Paul De Angelis

### Cornwall Briefs

- **Energy upgrade:** Town will be fixing up some buildings, most importantly at the town office, where the oil furnace will be replaced by cleaner propane. An emergency power generator will also be installed.
- **No Halloween at town hall:** The first selectman recommends no door-to-door visits, but Park and Rec and school will see to it that Cornwall kids are "properly Halloweened." (See website.)
- **The Cornwall Planning and Zoning Commission** has been meeting virtually twice a month with planning consultant Janell Mullen to discuss updating zoning regulations. Salient priority items include land-use provisions that invite more jobs and housing options to town. (Details to follow.) —Ella Clark



**Little Guild's Run & Wag** has gone virtual! Run, walk, or wag at your own pace and schedule. Just complete a total 5K between now and October 31. Register at [runandwag5k.com](http://runandwag5k.com).

#### At the Cornwall Library

On Friday, October 2, at 5 P.M. Bill Bakaitas will give an overview Zoom lecture on mushrooms followed by a Covid-safe walk-talk by Dave Paton on Sunday, October 4, at 1 P.M. (rain date, October 11 at 1 P.M.), at Welles Preserve on Town Street. Register for lecture at [CornwallLibrary.org](http://CornwallLibrary.org) and walk at [CornwallConservationTrust.org](http://CornwallConservationTrust.org).

Author Sally Cook and a special cohort from CCS present "Hey Batta" trivia show to test your baseball knowledge on Saturday, October 3, at 4 P.M. via Zoom. Family fun!

Wallace Stevens: The Transient Transcendentalist series with Mark Scarbrough continues Wednesday mornings through October. Register at the library.

**Empty Bowls:** Local potters' donation sale at Cornwall Village Farm Market on October 3 to benefit Torrington Community Kitchen.

**Conquering the Green Alien!** On Saturday, October 3, at 2 P.M., come to the west bank of the Cornwall Covered Bridge to see a native riparian restoration designed to conquer the insidious invasive Japanese Knotweed. Public invited to observe or participate.

**Hazardous Waste Collection Day** will be Saturday, October 10, from 9 A.M. to 2 P.M. at Torrington Middle School, 200 Middle School Road (Rt. 183) in Torrington. For ticket call Jonathan at 672-4959.

**Cornwall Village Improvement Society (CVIS)** annual meeting (private) to be held

on Saturday, October 10, at 10 A.M. at the Cornwall Library.

**West Cornwall Sewer and Septic:** Zoom meeting October 13 at 5 P.M. (See website.)

**Online forum about generators** is being hosted by the Cornwall Association on Wednesday, October 14, from 7 to 8:30 P.M. Hear from experts about generators and alternative energy sources, with time for Q&A. For Zoom link and questions email [info@CornwallAssociation.org](mailto:info@CornwallAssociation.org).

**Senior Flu Clinic** will be held Friday, October 16, at town hall. Sign up with Jen Markow, Cornwall Park and Recreation, at [prcornwall@gmail.com](mailto:prcornwall@gmail.com), or call/text 860-480-0600.

**The Cornwall Historical Society** exhibit on women's right to vote and what it meant to Cornwall is open Saturdays until October 17 at 7 Pine Street.

**Art in Cornwall:** Bevans Quartet exhibit at the Souterrain Gallery continues through October with sculpture from sister Lee Apt joining in. Open Thursday through Saturday, from 11 A.M. to 5 P.M., Sunday, from 11 A.M. to 4 P.M., and by chance.

**Cornwall Reads Cornwall returns!** Cornwall readers will share selections from notable Cornwall writers on Saturday, November 28. Also: entries from two winners of a special contest. For a chance to be included, submit your short/sweet/humorous/delightful story of life in 2020. Contact [carla.e.herman@gmail.com](mailto:carla.e.herman@gmail.com) for details.

Check our website for "Kindness in the Time of Covid" about the Cornwall Food & Fuel Fund, our interview with Denis Nash, and other web-only features

### Events & Announcements

During this time of social distancing on account of the Coronavirus, the Chronicle will be posting important updates, information about online events, and reflections on the moment on our Facebook and Instagram feeds. Readers can also find our Web-exclusive reports posted directly on our website at [cornwallchronicle.org](http://cornwallchronicle.org).

**Food Pantry donations:** The weekly wish list is posted on CCN. Drop off non-perishable

### Elect the Chronicle

Vote by mail with your contribution to your nonpartisan, independent community paper. We welcome small donors and large.

#### Yes! I want the Chronicle to continue!

My tax-deductible contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed.

Please mail the Chronicle to the out-of-town address below (a \$15 contribution is appreciated for this service).

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