

Cornwallville News

CORNWALLVILLE DAY SET FOR AUGUST 25



PROGRAM FOR CORNWALLVILLE DAY

11 am Karen R. Rivers, author of a recent history of Cornwallville, will talk on the 1800s: From farms to boarding houses. Firehouse

12 noon Dan Clifton, former town historian, will talk on the Borthwick family, one of Cornwallville's leading families for many years. Firehouse

1 pm Ken Mabey, retired history teacher, will talk on Selah Strong, a Cornwallville pioneer, and his descendants. Firehouse

9-3 Paula Lalala Mvsevm open. Former church hall

11-3 Lemonade stand open. In front of cemetery

11-3 Used books stand open, as well as stand selling books by local authors. In front of cemetery

9-4 Durham Task Force community-wide yard sale. Maps on sale for \$1 at the Mvsevm.

5-7.30. Community picnic. RSVP required. Details on p.4.

Free history talks, events planned

The first-ever Cornwallville Day will take place on Saturday, August 25, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. There will be history talks at the firehouse in the village center on County Route 20, a lemonade and cookie stand, a sale of used books and books by local authors, and a chance to visit the Paula Lalala Mvsevm. The day will end with a community picnic.

The celebration (rain or shine) will be on the same day as the annual Durham Task Force community-wide yard sale and artists' open house. If you'd like to be on the Task Force map, or to apply for a yard sale spot near the post office, see information on page 4.

Residents are encouraged to bring their old Cornwallville photos and memorabilia to the history talks. Each talk will be followed by a question-and-answer period and a chance to share items.

Volunteers are needed. Please contact Elizabeth Winslow (elizabethwinslow@icloud.com; 512-568-1815) if you can help out with cookie-making or other jobs. If you're a local author with a book to sell, contact Esther Cohen (bookdoctor@rcn.com; 518-239-6265).

Three spaces in the village center will be available to Cornwallville residents who want to sell sandwiches or other home-made food. To reserve a spot (first-come basis, \$10) contact Lee Lange (leontina3d@gmail.com, 239-4764). Note: there will be no electricity or water available and you will need to bring your own table.

Proceeds from the used book sale and the lemonade stand will go toward future Cornwallville Day activities. Cornwallville Day is being organized by village residents inspired by the example of Oak Hill Day.



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HOW A SETTLEMENT IN THE WILDERNESS BECAME CORNWALLVILLE

By Karen R. Rivers

By the end of the Revolutionary War, the American economy was in disarray, with trade and manufacturing having been severely disrupted and huge debts (including to those who had fought for independence) incurred. For many returning soldiers, there was little land to be had and little money, even reduced in value as it was, to buy any.

Beginning in the decade of the 1780s, many of these veterans and their families began to move west in search of affordable land and a better life. A few of them from in and around Durham, Connecticut, bought land in what is now the town of Durham, New York, of which Cornwallville is a part. Among them was Daniel Cornwall, who had served three stints in the Connecticut Militia, according to genealogist Sylvia Hasenkopf, and would later be named a captain in the Greene County Militia.



At that time, Cornwallville was an outlying part of the newcomers' central settlement, which was on Meeting House Hill, a site, later abandoned, off what eventually became Route 145. Cornwall's first house was a log cabin, located on a site probably just west of the center of the village. According to Hasenkopf, Cornwall was a furrier and a hatter—beaver hats being much the rage in Europe at the time.

Virtually from the beginning, the area around Cornwall's house became known as Cornwallsville, later shortened to Cornwallville. The most likely explanation of the name is that Cornwall was universally respected for his military service and his service to the community, including frequent terms as Moderator of the annual town meetings. Cornwall died in 1843 at the age of 84, and is buried in the Cornwallville cemetery along with his wife Rachel, who lived to be 99. One of their sons was the first postmaster of the village, beginning in 1826.

Life in early Cornwallville was harsh and the weather unforgiving. In an historical sketch that appeared in the *Catskill Examiner* in 1881, writer Joshua G. Borthwick thus describes the experience of the family of one early settler, Capt. Asahel Jones, who had served in the Revolution before joining the movement west:

“The first winter he and his family spent in their new home was very severe; they were compelled to drive their cattle into the woods to browse on the tender twigs of the trees; and finally they were obliged to take the straw with which their beds were filled and feed it to the starving brutes.”

In another sketch that same year, Borthwick describes the coming of the first member of the Hull family, John Hull, in about 1785.

“Knowing the need of a plentiful supply of provisions in the new country, he brought, among other necessities, a barrel of pork from his native town; and the manner in which he carted it from Catskill was rather primitive. He took two long poles, and, putting cross-pieces some distance from the ends, he made a conveyance which the Roman H would represent somewhat. Attaching his horse to one end of this ‘dray’, and loading on his pork and other articles, he made his way through the woods from Catskill to Durham.”

One of Hull's descendants continued to own a farm at the corner of Cochrane Road and County Route 20, on the border between Cornwallville and Durham hamlet, well into the 21st Century.

This article is an excerpt from the recently-published In the Shadow of the Catskills: An Illustrated History of Cornwallville, NY, written by Karen R. Rivers. It is available for \$12 at the Durham Reading Room in East Durham, the I.U. Tripp store in Oak Hill, and other locations, as well as on Amazon. It will be available on Cornwallville Day at the special price of \$10.

Those old photos in the attic...

Jonathan Palmer, the archivist at the Vedder Research Library in Coxsackie (part of the Greene County Historical Association) says he'd welcome inquiries from people with old photos and memorabilia that they're interested in donating. He can be reached at archivist@gchistory.org, or at 518-731-1033. The Vedder Library is a wonderful treasure trove of local history. You can learn more about it at www.vedderresearchlibrary.org.

Homesteading as a lifestyle

CONNECTING WITH THE EARTH IN CORNWALLVILLE

By Aurora Manuel (aumanuel@me.com)



Aurora Manuel with her goat Rainbow.

My grandfather, Jummere, had a passion for gardening. That was in the bayous of Louisiana. I only vaguely remember spending our weekends with our cousins on their farm. But what remains vivid is sitting on the back steps of our aunt's farmhouse cutting up squash, with chickens running around for the peels and peacocks spreading their wings.

Perhaps it's from these southern roots of mine that I experienced my first exposure to farming and love of nature.

When I was in my twenties, I moved to Florence, Italy, and remained there for a good portion of my life. The countryside was easily accessible. Within fifteen minutes, on my old beat up Vespa 50, I could ride those winding Tuscan roads, through vineyards and ancient olive groves.

It was there that I was able to access a small plot of land to start my first vegetable garden. Next to me was another vegetable garden run by an old Italian guy, Mr. Farcilli. From him I learned an old school way of growing tomatoes and brassicas. I still tie my tomatoes with bamboo poles as I learned from him.

After 30 years, I returned to New York and a year later my partner Angelica and I moved to Cornwallville. Before closing on what would be our new home, I planted a tomato seedling behind the house in what seemed like it had once been a vegetable patch. It was for a *buona fortuna*—for good luck. And it worked! From then on we have been growing most of our own vegetables, adding new varieties each year.

On the property, which we call Wild Thyme Homestead, there was a small coop attached to a shed. In our second year we decided to purchase four hens. The result: Fresh eggs,

tick eaters, and great fertilizer! Each subsequent year we have added more hens to our flock, including a few guinea fowl.

We next started keeping bees. There is plenty of honey for the bees and us. We sell what we don't need, along with some of our extra vegetables and eggs.

We started successfully inoculating tree trunks to encourage the growth of shitake mushrooms and are expanding on that this year. We will also plan to start growing a delicacy mushroom, *pioppini*.

From early on I started talking about getting dairy goats—so much that it seemed likely it would never happen. But last year we brought home two baby Oberhasli goats, Rainbow and Lidia. They were a few days old and we raised them starting with bottle-feeding. A few weeks ago Lidia gave birth to a boy, Kobe. We had to learn how to be midwives, and now we're learning how to milk Lidia and teaching her how to be milked.

Soon we'll be experimenting with some fresh cheeses until we can move on to other, more complex types of cheese.

At moments it's quite a struggle. But homesteading, which to me means trying to live off the land and be independent of processed food, is one experiment after another, one learning experience after another.



Honey for sale at Wild Thyme Homestead.

Cornwallville is beautifully set in a rural area. We are always moved by the view of rolling hills. Our efforts are about being aware of, and learning from, what is around us, and about participating in this natural world. There is a symbiotic connection in all this life. A postcard or photo of a meadow, a hill, a sunset, or an animal prancing in the distance gives only a small part of the picture.

We try not to impose too much on the land. We have always loved foraging wild food in Italy, and now, every year, we are learning what the land has to offer: we have experimented with wild liqueurs, syrups, and the like.

Homesteading is certainly a hard but rewarding endeavor.

DUNIX NAMED TO REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES



Dunix, on Cornwallville Road, as it appears today and as it looked during the time that the Matthews family owned it.

Anyone who's ever driven up or down Cornwallville Road has probably wondered about the house and several outbuildings near the top of the hill. They look like they are meant more for fun than for serious farming or other activities, and in fact that is the case. The property was acquired in the mid-1800s by John Matthews, known as the "Soda Foundation King" because of the immensely successful water-carbonating equipment he invented, and was used by the family over much of the next century as a summer retreat. In time it came to include a freestanding water tower, a highly ornate privy, and a building used as a casino, as well as the original, much enlarged, farm house. Late last year, the property, known as Dunix, was named to the State and National Register of Historic Places. Located at 593 Cornwallville Road, it's now owned by Jayme Kuhn, who specializes in the restoration of historic sites.

COMMUNITY PICNIC: All Cornwallville residents are invited to a community picnic from 5-7.30 pm on August 25 at the home of Karen and Bernard Rivers at 2973 County Rte 20. The picnic will be held in the big meadow behind the house, which has a spectacular view of the mountains. Bring your own food and drink and a blanket.

Because of insurance requirements, the picnic is just for residents of Cornwallville and their families. If you are likely to attend, please let Bernard and Karen know your name and the approximate size of your party, either by email (bernard.rivers@gmail.com) or by phone (239-4598).

Follow the signs up the farm track to the left of the house, across the upper lawn and through the woods. There will be a designated parking area. If you live nearby and can walk, it's only a three-minute walk from the road.

This first edition of the Cornwallville News was edited by Karen Rothmyer Rivers (karen.rothmyer.rivers@gmail.com)

Durham Task Force 12th Annual Durham-wide Community Yard Sale * To be held on the same day as Cornwallville Day
Saturday, August 25, 2018 Yard Sale: 9 am-4 pm**

Want to put extra cash in your pocket? Want to support the work of the Durham Task Force, which organizes the July 4 parade and runs the Reading Room in East Durham among other activities? If so, cut off and fill in the form below, write a check to "Durham Task Force," for \$10 and mail the form and check to: Durham Task Force, PO Box 1, East Durham, NY 12423. **DEADLINE: AUGUST 15.**

Your address will be listed on a map that will be on sale for \$1 on August 25 at the Firehouse in East Durham and at the Paula Lalala Mvsevm in Cornwallville. Artists can also use this form to have their open houses or open studios included.

If you want to reserve one of six yard-sale spots in the center of Cornwallville (available on a first-come basis) instead of participating at your home, email or call Lee Lange (leontina3d@gmail.com, 239-4764) **by August 15.** You will need to bring your own table.

Questions? Email or call Linda Sutton (tomswife2009@hotmail.com; 518-239-4571).

Request to be included on the Durham Task Force Yard Sale map (Be sure to include your \$10 check.)

Name: _____ If you are an artist, please put an X here: _____

Street Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____