

Cornwallville News

CORNWALLVILLE DAY SET FOR AUGUST 29

This year features notable one-time residents and expanded yard sales



A service in the former Cornwallville church, now at the Farmers' Museum

A LINK TO OUR PAST

BY KAREN R. RIVERS

Sitting quietly at one end of the recreated old village at the Farmers' Museum in Cooperstown, the Cornwallville Church seems comfortable in its adopted home. After being dismantled and moved to the Museum in 1964, the church became part of a group of buildings that together convey a strong sense of what life was like in rural upstate New York in the 1840s. It was a time when both religious services and church social events were a major part of everyday life.

"People love that church," says Katie Boardman of Cooperstown, who has played music at the church for candlelight evenings, weddings, and other services for more than forty years. She also organized a community choir that used to sing period music at the church. "It has lively acoustics and it's small enough to be intimate," she says. "It's a great place to sing and to gather people."

For Cornwallville residents who still remember when the

(Continued on page 2)

Cornwallville Day this year will be a more modest affair than usual, owing to the coronavirus, but there will still be opportunities to have fun and to explore the history of the village.

The big event of the day will be a chance to learn about some of Cornwallville's most notable residents by visiting the Cornwallville Cemetery between 10 am and noon. (Please observe social distancing even if the lockdown rules have been lifted.) The cemetery, which was listed on the National Historic Register in 2017, includes the grave of Daniel Cornwall, who gave his name to the village. Ten graves will be marked as being of special interest. Guides and informational sheets will be available. See page 4 for more details.

The cemetery is located next to the post office in the village center. Free bottles of water will be on offer, as well as chairs for those who would like to take a rest, outside the cemetery gates.

We hope many more people than in the past will hold yard sales, not just as a way to make a bit of money but also as a way to greet neighbors and friends whom they haven't seen recently because of the virus. And we urge all artists and craftspeople who live in Cornwallville or nearby, as well as those with items like eggs and garden plants to sell, to set up stands in their front yards or welcome people into their studios.

As a special this-year-only inducement, there will be no fee to be included on the yard sale map. Details of how to get on the map are on page 4. Maps will be on sale for \$1 in front of the cemetery from 9 am until noon.

Cornwallville Day will take place rain or shine.

MEMORIES OF A RURAL LETTER CARRIER
by Floyd Parks p. 3.

DURHAM'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN p. 4.

A LINK TO OUR PAST

(continued from page 1)



The Cornwallville Church at the Farmers' Museum. To the left is the Bump Tavern, relocated from Ashland.

church sat in the center of Cornwallville, the closing of the church in the early 1960s owing to a declining congregation was a sad event. But the Farmers' Museum, which had been seeking a church for its farming village, heard about its availability and offered a new life for the church in Cooperstown. There followed a painstaking dismantling of the building, its transport to Cooperstown some 70 miles away, and its re-construction and restoration.

Cornwallville retired farmer Jerry Cunningham, who recalls church suppers and the fall ritual of chopping enough wood to heat the church through the winter, says he regretted seeing the church go. But, he says, "It was probably a good thing because there was so much deterioration." He also remembers helping to extend the cemetery into the space formerly occupied by the church. "People were just waiting to get in there," he jokes. "It was a very popular spot."

Patrick MacGregor, the head of interpretation at the Museum, says that when the church was being reassembled, the builders discovered remnants of the original, more Gothic version of the church built in the 1790s. (The frame was constructed in East Durham, moved west to the settlement known as Meeting House Hill, and then moved to Cornwallville in 1821.) But it was decided to keep the later federal style.

Still intact are original aspects such as the wooden pews, the well-worn round doorknob on the front door, and the creaky wooden floors. MacGregor says people often ask about the church's lack of a steeple, and are told that like many other churches of the time it never had one, though it does have a bell.

The view out of tall, clear-glass windows is one of fields, bushes and an occasional cow—not so different than the one people in Cornwallville would have seen.

Even after the church was fully reassembled, however, it had not found its final home. That came in the 1990s, when the church was moved from the far end of the museum property to a more central spot. "Now it's much more a part of the town," MacGregor says. One of its immediate neighbors is the Bump Tavern which, like the church, was moved from its original location.

These days, visitors don't ask many questions about religion, and interpreters generally emphasize the church's architecture and historical events like the church-centered temperance movement rather than dwelling on religious themes. "We're dealing with visitors from all backgrounds" says Todd Kenyon, the head of marketing and communications for the Museum, by way of explaining the approach.



The church being moved on rollers to a new location.

Whether people will remain interested in "living history" museums like the one in Cooperstown, which offers visitors a chance to see people going about their lives as they would have in the 1840s—from farming to weaving to working the blacksmith's bellows—is uncertain. In the mid-1990s, the Museum got close to 90,000 visitors a year, Kenyon says; in more recent years it's been about 60,000.

But for the visitors who do come, the Cornwallville church offers a connection to a more community-focused time. And for visitors from Cornwallville, it's comforting to see that "our church" is still a living institution. "It's in good hands," says Katie Boardman.

The Farmers' Museum is open April through October. Karen R. Rivers is the author of In the Shadow of the Catskills: An Illustrated History of Cornwallville, NY, available in local shops and on Amazon. All photos courtesy of the Farmers' Museum.

MEMORIES OF A RURAL LETTER CARRIER

By Floyd Parks

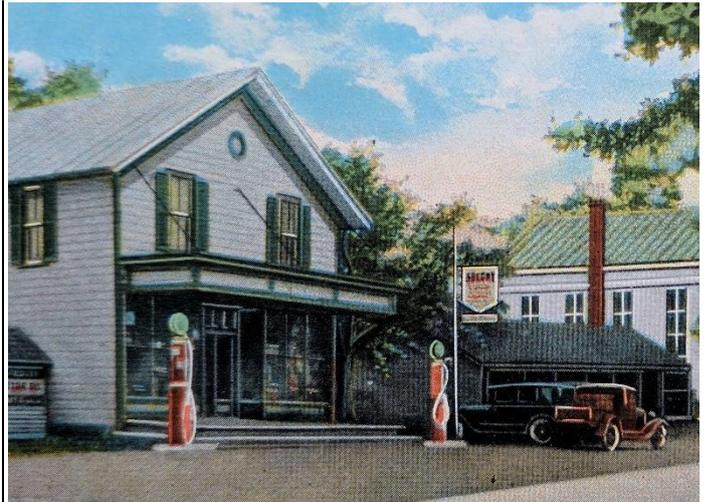
Below are slightly edited excerpts from an article written by the late Floyd Parks of Cornwallville. He began work as a rural mail carrier in 1926.

At the Charles Goff farm in Wright St. in the winter when the roads were bad, the farmer would come out to meet me, unhitch the horse, and feed and water him, while I warmed up and ate in the kitchen. Back in those days, you got to know the patrons, in a personal way, and their problems became your problems.

Of the morning of my first trip on the route we had 14 inches of new snow on the ground, it was 18 above, and I had 28 miles to travel. It was a long hard trip, and on the way round I encountered my first tragedy. Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Strong were coming home from Durham, and on the way the sleigh partly tipped over, and the horse ran away. Mrs. Strong was thrown, hit her head against a tree, and was killed.

I had a patron on the route by the name of Agnes O'Neil. She ran the Georgetown Day School in Washington, DC. This school catered to the children of people in government service. She brought many of them up here in the summer [to the house on Stone Bridge Road known as Redbrick]. Agnes was quite a friend of Mrs. Roosevelt, and we used to get quite a kick out of delivering mail on the White House stationary.

One day in mid-winter, as I stopped at a box, I thought someone was screaming at me. The wind was blowing at gale force, and as I looked around I could not see anyone. Then I happened to look up on the roof, and there was the lady of the house, clinging to the ridge pole, and begging me to get her down. The roof was of composition shingles, and the wind had gotten under some and they were flying around in the air. She had thought that she could get up there and nail them down, as her husband was at work, and the wind had blown the ladder down. It was a bitter cold day, and if I



The Cornwallville general store and post office in the 1930s

had not come along, she would have been in a bad way.

More recently, I came up to a house and was surprised to see the lady of the house leaning out of the attic window, waving a scarf, and calling to me. It seems that she had decided to hang the wash in the attic as it was a cold day. The door to the attic had one of those spring locks on it, and somehow it swung round [and locked her in]. A telephone man came along, and she called to him, but he just waved and passed on. Then some road men came by on a truck, and she called to them, but they just waved and drove away. So she was quite excited by the time I drove up.

We are a nation of bargain hunters, and the greatest that you can get today is a US postage stamp. A letter is a bridge between father, mother, and their grown children. Across the bridge flows news, some good, some bad, some merely routine. The basic strength of this bridge is the Post Office Department and the efficient and trustworthy service it guarantees. It is the one service of government that daily touches the lives of most people.

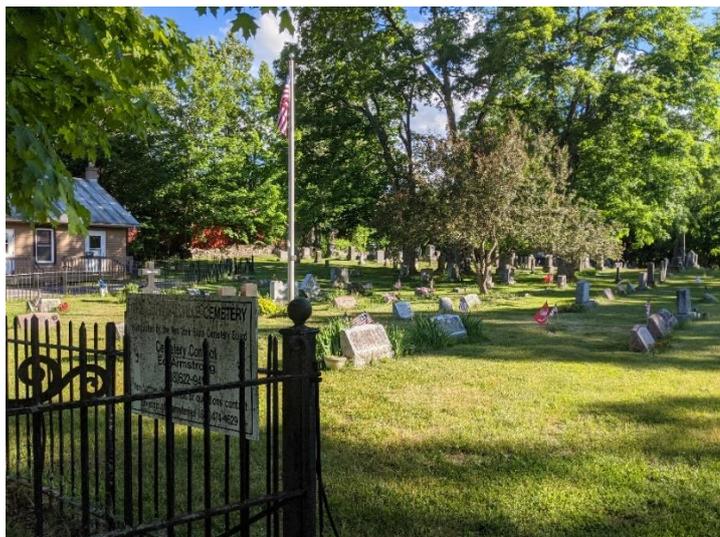
Putting Their Stamp on the Post Office

By Theresa Becker (Postal service employee in the Cornwallville Post Office)

Mary Katherine Goddard was the postmaster of the Baltimore Post Office from 1775 to 1789. But it wasn't until 1939, well over 100 years after the Cornwallville post office was established, that the village got its first female postmaster: Sarah A. Smith. This is hardly surprising, because for many years after Goddard's time the US Postal Service, like most institutions, believed that men should play the leading roles in society. The Civil War opened career opportunities in the postal service to women since so many men were in the army, and federal legislation authorized the appointment of female clerks in 1873. Full equality was slow in coming, however. The *Postal Record*, a magazine for letter carriers, reported that in 1895, "Feminists and suffragettes demanded that women be allowed to work as letter carriers." The 1919 passage of the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote, helped women to begin to rise to top jobs in all professions, including the post office. A new stamp commemorates that event.



The Cornwallville Cemetery: Nearly 200 Years of Service



The Cornwallville Cemetery, located next to the post office.

The Cornwallville Cemetery has been an important part of the village since its earliest days. The first burial there is believed to have been that of Esther Austin, daughter of early settler Moses Austin, in 1824. Other early graves include those of Daniel Cornwall, a Revolutionary War veteran; his wife Rachel, who died at the age of 99 in 1855; and his son Daniel, the first postmaster.

War veterans in addition to Cornwall include Anson Strong, who served in the War of 1812, and ten Civil War veterans. There are also eight WWI veterans and twelve WWII veterans, along with veterans of the Korean War and other more recent conflicts.

More than 100 members of the Smith family are buried in the cemetery, all related to Thomas Smith, an early settler. There are also 30 members of the Strong family. John Jerome, along with his wife and eight children, are buried in the cemetery, and in a history of the church written in 1921 it's recorded that some of his great-great-grandchildren were then members.

The Cornwallville Cemetery Association oversaw plot

sales and upkeep until 2019, when responsibility was turned over to the town of Durham. The earliest gravestones are simple tablets but later in the 19th Century obelisks became popular.

Notable people buried in the cemetery include: **Moses Austin**, an early settler; **Calvin Borthwick**, Civil War veteran and diarist; **William S. Borthwick**, chair of the County Board of Supervisors; **Daniel Cornwall**, village namesake; **Jeremiah Cunningham**, stone bridge builder; **Charles Dornbusch**, publisher; **Bonnie Greer**, model turned homesteader; **Floyd** and **Eva Parks**, active community members; **Clarence A. Smith**, World War II veteran; and **Wilbur F. Strong**, who died in the Civil War.

LOOKING TOWARD DURHAM'S FUTURE

The town of Durham, of which Cornwallville is a part, has adopted a new Comprehensive Plan that emphasizes ways to build on the area's rural beauty while seeking to eliminate the major obstacle to its growth: inadequate broadband service.

The plan's recommendations are: provision of more information through a town newsletter and other means; more community activities, e.g. hiking trails and a farmers' market; development of a critical mass of businesses, in particular healthcare, in the town; provision of cell phone service and affordable broadband service to all residents and businesses; improved property maintenance to enhance the beauty of roads and buildings; and a unified approach to historic preservation.

Town Board deputy supervisor Joan Breslin and resident Bernard Rivers have been named to lead the Implementation Committee. Anyone interested in volunteering for one of the working groups being set up to implement each recommendation can contact them at copic@durhamtogether.com.

Annual Community Yard Sale *** Saturday, August 29, 2020 9 am-4 pm

If you would like to participate in this year's FREE OF CHARGE yard sale, cut off and fill in the form below and mail it to: Lee Lange, 275 Flinn Road, Cornwallville, NY 12418. Or you can email the information to her at leontina3d@gmail.com. **DEADLINE: AUGUST 15**. Your address will be listed on a map that will be on sale for \$1 in front of the cemetery in Cornwallville from 9 am until noon on Cornwallville Day. Questions? Contact Lee Lange at 239-4764.

Request to participate in the annual community yard sale

Name: _____ If you are an artist or craftsperson, put an X here: ____

Street Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____