

THE NORWICH TIMES

Good People ∞ Good Places ∞ Good Things Happening

Norwich, Vermont 05055

Summer 2026

Est. September 1997

*“The further
backward
you can look,
the further
forward you are
likely to see.”*
~ Winston Churchill



Overheads, finesse and playing off the screens.

Norwich's Diamond in the Rough

Marion (Mimi) B. Simpson

Tucked behind Fogg's Hardware on Route 5 is one of Norwich's hidden gems — the Norwich Racquet Club (NRC). Now celebrating its 50th anniversary, the Club is proudly honoring its humble beginnings and its aspirations for a bright future.

Conceived as a startup in the early '70s, entrepreneur Bruce Colley (former Quechee Lakes CFO) purchased the land from Tony Farrell (of Farrell Farms) for \$13,000 and proceeded to convince the Norwich Planning Board not only that the enterprise was a worthy endeavor, but also that it wouldn't disrupt the neighborhood. Red pines (now 80 feet tall) were planted by hand to shield nighttime court lights, a quaint outhouse was dug, and the log cabin-style warming hut was built;

all of it was inspected by the town and approved. Two paddle tennis courts were delivered: people came, they played, they subscribed — the business was born!

The Chess of Racquet Sports

Paddle tennis is a highly social game of finesse — some call it the chess of racquet sports. It involves a spongy ball, a small court, and the use of the wire mesh fencing to keep the ball in play. It is usually played as a doubles sport and enjoyed in the colder months, thanks to heaters that melt ice on the court surface. The early years of the club attracted some of the area's most enthusiastic transplants, including a paddle tennis champion from New Jersey, who got the word out to the Upper Valley. Within a few years, two clay tennis courts were added.

Continued on page 8



Greater Good
MEDIA



Kimo Griggs and Ron Nollet, a tool and die maker and clockmaker.

For Norwich's Community, the Bell Tolls

Bill Cooper

It takes a town to make a clock chime. This is especially true when it comes to the repair of the Norwich Congregational Church, first reported on in Demo Sofronas' My newsletter "about Norwich" Substack in his article "The clock was ticking and now the Bell is ringing once again also." Over seven months, through a set of small-town connections, including a police officer, an award-winning clockmaker, a church caretaker, and a clock winding team, the bells in Norwich ring once more.

It started with a bit of curiosity from Norwich resident Kimo Griggs. Though he's "not a clock repair person," he's always been "handy" and over the years has fixed several "machine tools, mechanisms, and wind-up toys." He also has an interest in clocks, owning several that he's brought to a clockmaker to have repaired. Because of these aspects, Griggs has always wondered about the clock at Norwich Congregational Church. One day last year, he brought it up to Priscilla Vincent during his crossing guard duties. By late August of 2025, Vincent connected him with Dan Goulet, the church caretaker, self-described as a "helper."

Continued on page 14

Plant Biodiversity is Essential for Ecosystems



Evening Primrose



A bumblebee on Beebalm



Green-fringed Bog Orchid



Yellow Lady's Slipper

Lynnwood Andrews

According to the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, Vermont has “over 2,800 plant species. Most of these are flowering plants, but this also includes conifers, ferns, graptophytes, clubmosses, horsetails, quillworts, spikemosses, and bryophytes — mosses, liverworts, and hornworts.” Of these, 1448 are native, and 137 are natives to other regions of the US and have been introduced here. We have over 600 rare and uncommon native plants including 163 on the threatened and endangered list.

Recent research has shown that biodiversity is vital to ecosystem functioning and stability. Ecosystems with higher biodiversity are more resilient to weather and climactic

extremes, as well as other major disturbances. Decreases in biodiversity, therefore, raise alarm about the future functioning of our ecosystems and their capacity to recover from extreme events.

Plants are foundational to all ecosystems. They shape hydrological systems, put oxygen in the air, recycle nutrients, form and conserve soil, regulate the climate, and provide habitat for animals. As a primary energy base through photosynthesis, they are the base of food chains for all animals.

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) reported that declining biodiversity is a global problem, occurring at an unprecedented rate. Significant declines in plant biodiversity are being

documented in Vermont's forests, fields, and wetlands, as well. Recent forest health reports from the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation show increasing stress from drought, invasive pests, and poor regeneration — clear signs that the state's ecosystems are under mounting pressure. The drivers of the biodiversity decline in Vermont include climate change, habitat loss, non-native invasive species, deer overbrowse, declining insect populations, and simplified forest structure (even-aged stands).

Climate change, by virtue of rising temperatures, changing rain patterns, and more intense weather events, imposes serious threats to plants. According to the Vermont Climate Assessment, (2021) the state is already

experiencing warmer winters, heavier downpours, and longer summer dry spells — conditions expected to accelerate ecological change. Warmer winter temperatures decrease winter snowpack, and may eventually eliminate it altogether. Vermont is forecast to have the climate of North Carolina by 2070. Winter snowpack insulates plant roots from ice and heaving. Warmer nighttime temperatures during the growing season prevent plants from recovering from daytime heat stress. Warmer temperatures allow pests and diseases to flourish. Vermont is predicted to lose many plant species due to climate change, especially Sugar Maple.

Recent US Forest Service research indicates invasive species are now a primary driver in biodiversity loss; they



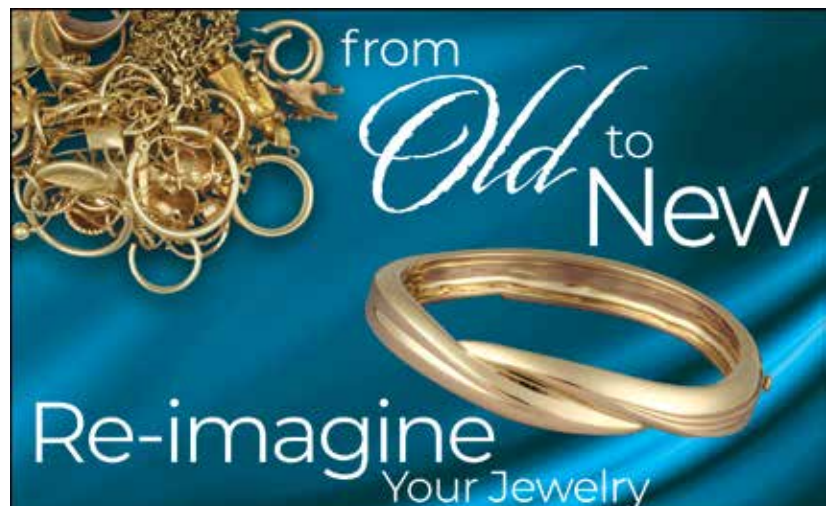
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interact with climate change to accelerate ecosystem disruption. In Vermont, for example, invasive worms are changing soil composition and reducing leaf litter, pests like Emerald Ash Borer and Hemlock Wolly Adelgid are killing trees, and plants like Japanese Knotweed are creating vast monocultures.

According to the University of Vermont, the state loses about 5000 acres per year from development, fragmenting forest blocks. Even where total forest acreage remains relatively stable, recent mapping shows increasing fragmentation and parcelization, which reduces habitat connectivity and biodiversity. The Native Plant Trust estimated that "on average, rare plant species have lost 67% of their known range in the region."

Deer populations have been allowed to grow to the point where they are eating forest understory, and posing a serious threat to forest regeneration.

Research from the Xerces Society and the University of Vermont confirms that pollinators themselves are declining across the Northeast, with disruptions in timing between flowering plants and pollinator activity, as a result of climate change, further threatening reproduction.

What can you do?

1. Plant native plants. Replace non native plants, and remove invasives like Japanese knotweed, burning bush, butterfly bush, garlic mustard, buckthorn, Oriental Bittersweet, etc.
2. Convert as much of your lawn as possible to native plants.
3. Support policies and actions to tackle climate change ASAP.
4. In the fall, do not cut down plants. Leave them standing until June to protect pollinators.
5. Allow hunters to take deer on your property. Support efforts to reduce Vermont's deer numbers.
6. When fishing, do not release live worms.
7. When gardening, do not dump horticultural products in or near the woods.
8. As much as possible, buy bare root plants.
9. Do not move firewood from elsewhere.
10. Keep your lights off at night. Install motion sensing outdoor lighting.
11. Do not use pesticides. There is no such thing as a pesticide that does not kill beneficial insects. ■

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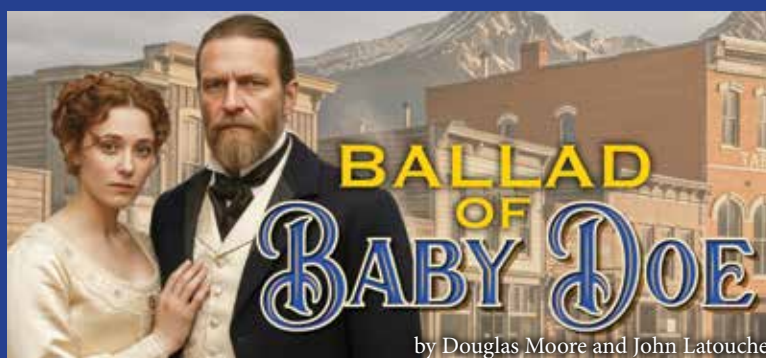


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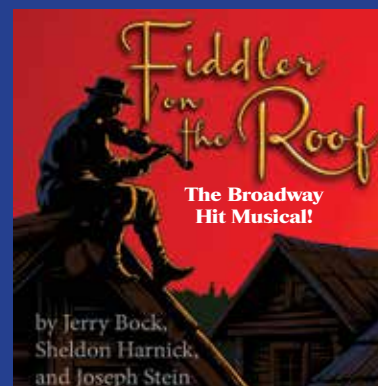


by Douglas Moore and John Latouche

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Have a Good Day

A hhhh, the good old days! I don't know about you, but seeing the photo essay in the last issue about "Norwich in the '90s" and in this issue about Dan and Whit's turning 70, has me pining for the early 2000s when my daughters were at MCS and life was good!

But, that is exactly the point of these lookbacks.

Chances are, I had many life challenges happening, and the Norwich listserv was lighting up with heated digital debates, or at least fiery opinions. I don't even dare think about where we were as a small town in a small state in the grand scheme of things. It was all good in my mind... in hindsight.

And that is the point, again!

In my humble opinion, Norwich does a tremendous job staying true to itself and holding fast to the things that make Norwich such an incredible place to live... and to just drive through. Its commitment to maintaining the historic integrity keeps it aesthetically charming and uncluttered. And caring for the varied and breathtaking natural beauty makes it truly picture-postcard-worthy.

But, even more importantly, Norwich's MO is a strong shared and immutable belief in doing good for the greater good — both at home and in the world. And that has allowed us all to look back and truly know that those were, in fact, the "good old days" and that today, too, is a good day. When we have a foundation as solid as Norwich's, built on serving each other, the good old days are daily.

Happy Summer! ■

~ Jen MacMillen

EDITOR'S NOTE

Making History

This issue of the *Norwich Times* is filled with history.

From the Norwich Historical Society, we have a timeline featuring 200 years of milestones in shopping at the location of Dan & Whit's General Store. You'll learn about the evolution of the Norwich Racquet Club as it celebrates its 50th anniversary. And, thanks to some dedicated volunteers, the Norwich Congregational Church's historic clock tower has received some much-needed repairs. (Special thanks to Demo Sofronas, who introduced us to this story in his newsletter "about Norwich.")

Understanding the past is essential to navigating the present. Learning more about the history of our communities can provide us with a deeper understanding of our roots and an appreciation for those who laid the foundation for a brighter future.

As always, if you have ideas for stories about good news in the Norwich community, neighbors you think we should highlight, or events you'd like us to share, please contact us at editor@greatergoodmedia.com. ■

~ Lisa Lance



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Your generous support of our 2026 Annual Appeal—and our other fundraising efforts, like the Nearly New Sale—has allowed us to award **\$38,000 in need-based scholarships** and fund **nearly \$26,000 in community project grants** to help our neighbors improve our community. We couldn't have done it without you!

WHAT'S NEXT?

- ✧ **May 31**—First summer concert on the green, and Ledyard Award for the Norwich Citizen of the Year
- ✧ **June 10**—NWC Annual Meeting and summer party
- ✧ Check our website soon for more information about our second summer concert in August!

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The Family Place Honors Unsung Heroes

Jason Hilder was recognized as the 2026 Unsung Hero recipient for the northern Windsor County region.

Officer Ryan Clark was recognized as the 2026 Unsung Hero recipient for the southern Windsor County region.



Unsung Heroes and speakers

The Family Place honored two local community members as Unsung Heroes on April 8, Springfield Police Officer Ryan Clark and Jason Hilder from the Hartford office of the Vermont Department for Children and Families.

Officer Clark was recognized as the 2026 Unsung Hero recipient for the southern Windsor County region. "Officer Clark has shown sincere dedication to serving the youth and families of Springfield, and approaches all cases with care, perspective, and precision," said Lowry Newswanger, program manager for the Child Advocacy Centers (CAC) of The Family Place and the Windsor County Special Investigations Unit (SIU). "He is deeply appreciated for his attitude,

work ethic, and compassion, and it is truly an honor to work with him."

Jason Hilder was recognized as the 2026 Unsung Hero recipient for the northern Windsor County region. "Since I started working with Jason in my role at The Family Place, team camaraderie has significantly improved," said Lillie Kaempfe, multi-disciplinary team coordinator and forensic interviewer for the CACs and SIU. "I truly appreciate the time Jason puts into each family, the ability to rely on each other, and the joy that he brings to the people he works with."

Each year, The Family Place honors two members of the Windsor County SIU's multi-disciplinary team as Unsung Heroes for their dedication

and commitment to protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and families. Voted by their team members as individuals that go above and beyond in their roles, these team members were honored at the Shield Our Children From Harm Conference, which provides professional development for social workers, law enforcement members, medical professionals, and other community members in supporting families impacted by sexual and physical abuse. This annual conference is a collaborative effort between the Child Advocacy Centers of the Child Protection Program at the Children's Hospital at Dartmouth Health, and the Child Advocacy Centers of the Family Place. ■



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Every Dog Has Its Day

Mark Lilienthal

The Maple Dog, our yellow Labrador, turned three years old in April. For those keeping track, he (yes, he) has now been cheerful for over 1,100 consecutive days. While the 05055 overflows with grateful optimists, Maple's run of happiness is a streak that even the sunniest Norwichian would find hard to beat.

How is he in the morning? Cheerful. At noon? Cheerful. When night falls? Cheerful. Heck, even in the hardest moments, he's in a good mood. Pitch black in February? One thousand degrees with 1,000,000% humidity in August? Cold and rainy in November? Got neutered? Cheerful, cheerful, cheerful, and, you guessed it, cheerful.

We have a morning routine where we walk in a field behind our home before we get breakfast. As the days are getting warmer, the routine gets more enjoyable. Instead of hat, gloves, flannel shirt, pants, socks, boots, and parka, I can roll with shorts and a t-shirt, making sure to stuff one pocket with a variety of treats. Though our sons claim the Big Man [one of Maple's many nicknames — others include Honey Penny, Piggy, Curly, Shanny (he's prone to shenanigans), and Porky] would be equally happy if we offered him only the same small dry biscuits ad nauseum, I know better. This 90-pound wonder requires diversity in his diet: duck jerky, cubed ham, little marrow bites resembling a Combo, smelly moist pebbles of processed animal bits,

pot roast flavored "Crunchy O's" which, I admit, strongly resemble Cheerios that have been bathed in beef flavoring, and bits of chicken skin that I keep just for him. I alternate between throwing them three to four feet off the ground for our dog to leap and catch and tossing them ahead of our path, giving him a chance to exercise his superlative sniffer as he hunts down salmon-flavored nuggets in the growing green grass.

Now, reports of the Big Man's good behavior have been wildly exaggerated. We estimate he has caused north of \$1,000 in damage to sunglasses alone (more than one friend has learned the lesson of leaving a nice pair at snout level), and our baseboards, furniture, rugs, cars, blankets, floors, and dish cloths all bear the unmistakable signs of intense interactions with our canine buddy. No unsupervised shoe or slipper is safe. He shreds books, magazines, and paper bags with unfettered glee. "Come" has not wiggled its way into his vocabulary. It never occurred to me that dog ownership would require a significant increase in our tin foil budget. (Our new couch is lined with the shiny stuff when we're not sitting there to dissuade him from moving in; we say he's "been foiled.") One could weave baby blankets from the hair he has shed inside our home.



The cheerful Maple Dog.

Additionally, he is a bit of a scofflaw. Despite abundant signage to the contrary, he has been known to run "at large" in a town cemetery. He walks the Montshire Trails even though it clearly says he is not welcome and, besides, trails are only for paying guests. (One of his many faults is that he never has any money.) A friend texted us one evening around 11 to

let us know that he was in the middle of Beaver Meadow Road going to town on an almost-midnight snack of roadkill squirrel. He's reliably unreliable, which makes every day an adventure.

Happily, Maple Dog has many gifts. When he encounters other dogs, his default tends to be to lie down — a "beta male" as my wife calls him. He has an all-time ear flap when he sticks his head out the window of a moving car. When he has had a long walk on one of our town's many trails — Cossingham, Parcel 5, Ballard, and Heyl are in steady rotation — and slaked his thirst afterwards, he tends to lean against one of us. We think it's his way of expressing gratitude.

Of course, when we're giving a rib rub to the most cheerful resident in the town of Norwich, we can't help but realize that if anyone is grateful, it's the ones who walk on two legs. ■



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Men's tennis singles players take to the court.

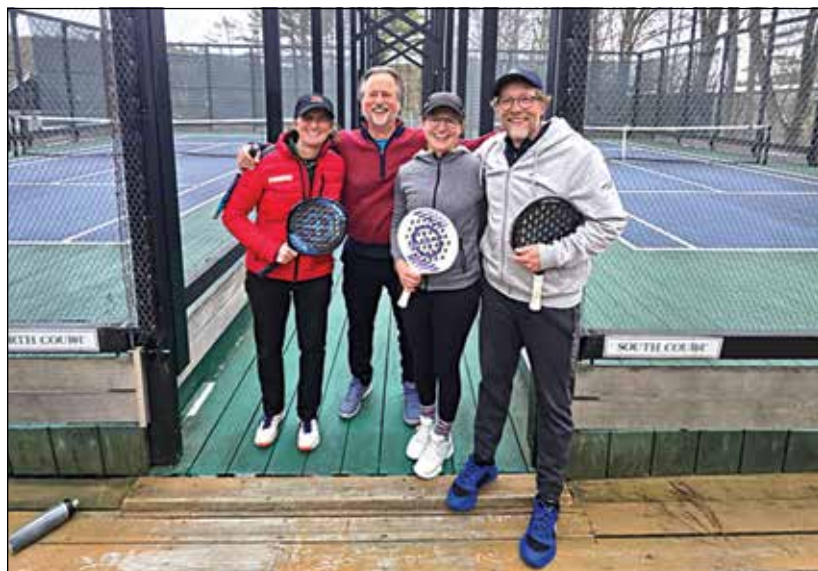
Then around 1980, due to his job relocation, Colley and the shareholders sold the business to subscribers, at which point it became a club.

The NRC continued its humble existence as a member-run, no-frills concern. One highlight of this era was the establishment of the Green Mountain Open, an APTA men's, women's, and mixed doubles tournament. Lovingly organized by Dave Barlow for the past 20 years, this tournament attracts the best players in New England. As to longevity, a fun-loving, if somewhat notorious, Tuesday night men's group has been playing year-round since around Y2K, according to one Norwichian, who will remain anonymous to protect the guilty.

With the arrival of COVID, the club witnessed a surge of new energy. What



Chatting in the cozy warming hut.



2026 Nina Webb mixed doubles winners.

better way to be active and connected while social distancing outdoors? It was at this time that some of our most accomplished players (and a curious on-duty police officer!) discovered the sport.

Fast-forward to 2026: Paddle tennis is seeing an uptick in popularity with Sugar Genereaux's Monday Ladies Lessons, Sunday afternoon Open Paddle Mixers, and Norwich Rec's new Introduction to Paddle taught by APTA pro Mason Astley. This year's annual Nina Webb club tournament attracted new enthusiasts seeking the fabled "fun zone" and the grand prize — a jug of maple syrup. Although the

Continued on page 10

A Norwich Tradition For Over 90 Years



This Norwich home, nestled in a pastoral setting, enhances the natural beauty of its surroundings. The builders worked with Smith & Vansant Architects on this project.



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Sugar Genereaux's Monday lessons.

sport usually winds down after March, the club will continue its Sunday and "40's and Under" mixers through May, after which tennis season begins in earnest.

Springing to Action

Come April, Norwich Racquet Club members spring into action to prepare the clay tennis courts for play. As a member-run club, NRC has turned its spring cleanup into a social ritual. Tasks include rolling courts, picking up orphaned paddle balls, retrieving nets, and hanging wind screens (presumably after, not before, a menacing wind).

This summer, in recognition of its 50th anniversary, the Club is partnering with Upper Valley tennis pros to offer some new activities and provide additional court space for



Mother and son team in competition.

high-demand programs in the area. Some of the programming will even be open to non-members, including Friday "Doubles with a Pro" organized by Storrs Pond Pro Billy Pontious, and Thursday clinics and lessons organized by independent pro Tammy Arado. The Club will start an intermediate (3.0+) men's round-robin on Saturday mornings for members, and host its inaugural summer season opener (potluck, of course) with tennis and paddle activities for people of all ages and abilities. With so many of the Upper Valley's public courts under construction or unavailable this summer, the Norwich Racquet Club offers something truly unique for its members: two clay tennis courts, great parking, and easy online reservations. New memberships are always accepted

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The Norwich Racquet Club is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

via the website: norwichracquetclub.com.

For half a century, this quirky, home-grown organization has represented the best of Norwich: unpretentious, social, and physically active with some friendly competition. If you are interested in racquet sports, want to get out on dark winter nights, and meet new people, Norwich has a “diamond in the rough” just waiting to be explored. ■



Paddle racquets are available to borrow.



Mason Astley and Dave Barlow behind the scenes at the Nina Webb tournament.

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There has been a store at the Dan & Whit's location since 1829.



Message in a Bottle

While researching the history of the property where Dan and Whit's currently resides, we found a newspaper article relating a story from the day after the 1889 fire when the building burned. According to town legend, when the corner stone of the hall was laid, a bottle containing some kind of fermented liquor, together with a paper on which was recorded the date of the event, had been enclosed in the brick and mortar.

On the morning after the fire, a group searched the ruins of the foundation for the hidden bottle and found it. Inside was a note: "This bottle contains New England rum, and was deposited here on the 24th day of June, 1829, by John Wright who built this building."

1829

John Wright first developed the block in 1829, which was known as Franklin Hall. The Norwich Bookstore, located at the south end of Franklin Hall, was also an apothecary. Downer and Burton operated a general store in the north end of the building.

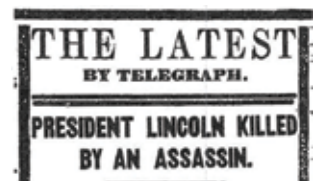
Upstairs, Franklin Hall hosted dinners, cotillions, and other social events, many of which were associated with the American Literary, Scientific, and Military Academy.

The store building is on the far left in the photograph. In the 1860s there were at least three businesses in the store building on the first floor.



1865

On the day the news arrived in Norwich that Lincoln had been assassinated, "old men in the village stood in front of the store unashamedly weeping."



1889

In 1889 Union Block, as it was called, was destroyed by fire. There E.W. Olds had been operating a post office, dry goods store, and grocery. "Everything in the building was lost, post office and the entire



contents of a heavily stocked country store, excepting the ledger which was in the safe and was preserved." Farmers who were about their chores saw the fire or heard the bells and came running to help. The college bell was rung and the Hanover Engine came. Several wells were run dry as they worked to save the hotel and neighboring house.

1891

The Newton Inn and general store building were re-built soon after the fire.

1914

Arthur Henry Merrill and his wife, Ada, purchased the store in 1914. Leon and Florence Merrill became the owners in 1948.



1932

In an interview with Whit Hicks, he shared: "I went to work at Merrill's General Store in 1932 and Dan Fraser came a year later. We used to run a delivery cart. That is, we used to go up to different houses in the morning, and take orders. We'd sit in the kitchen and talk to the lady of the house and we'd tell her what specials might be on ... After taking orders all morning, we'd go to the store and put the orders up and then deliver them that same afternoon."

1955

Leon Merrill sells the business to Dan Fraser (employee since 1933) and Whitney "Whit" Hicks (employee since 1932). Wood heat replaces the coal and oil furnaces.

1957

Fraser and Hicks buy the property. The store name changes to Dan & Whit's after Fraser and Hicks decide to stay open until 10:00 and sell beer, wine, and guns. Merrill was opposed to these practices and insisted they change the name.

Bunny Fraser would roll a shopping cart down the road to the bank to make the nightly deposit because the coins were so heavy.

1963 and 1968

The store expands with a checkout area, meat and hardware departments, and

loading dock. The house next door was razed to expand the parking lot.

"I have read that your average hardware store has a total of 25,000-35,000 items. That's of course



1963-1968



1972

counting every screw and bolt and washers and nail sizes. I don't know just exactly what we have, but my guess is that we have something over quarter of a million." ~ Jack Fraser

1972

Whit retires and Dan Fraser buys Hicks' interest in the business. Frasers' General Store, Inc. was formed.

Sons George and Jack Fraser end their careers in the U.S. Army and enter the family business. A third addition to the back was built.

1973

Vermont's bottle deposit law causes Dan & Whit's beer sales to drop 55% as sales shift to New Hampshire.

"This is a family business. It means a lot to us to keep it running, but, you can't keep it running if you can't keep viable. If you pay too much out in taxes and that kind of thing, all of a sudden you can't compete in wages for your people and you can't compete on price. It's a challenge.

We try to be very careful to treat people well, to help people, to make sure when they leave, they have a feeling that they came here for help and they got the help and not some smart answers or brush off. Because, that's probably our means of survival." ~ Jack Fraser

1996

Jack and George Fraser are honored by the Vermont Grocers Association as Retailers of the Year.

2013

Dan Fraser begins 19 Days of Norwich to benefit the Upper Valley Haven.

2020

Dan & Whit's is a community leader during COVID-19. ■

~ Sarah Rooker, Director
Norwich Historical Society



1996



2013



2020

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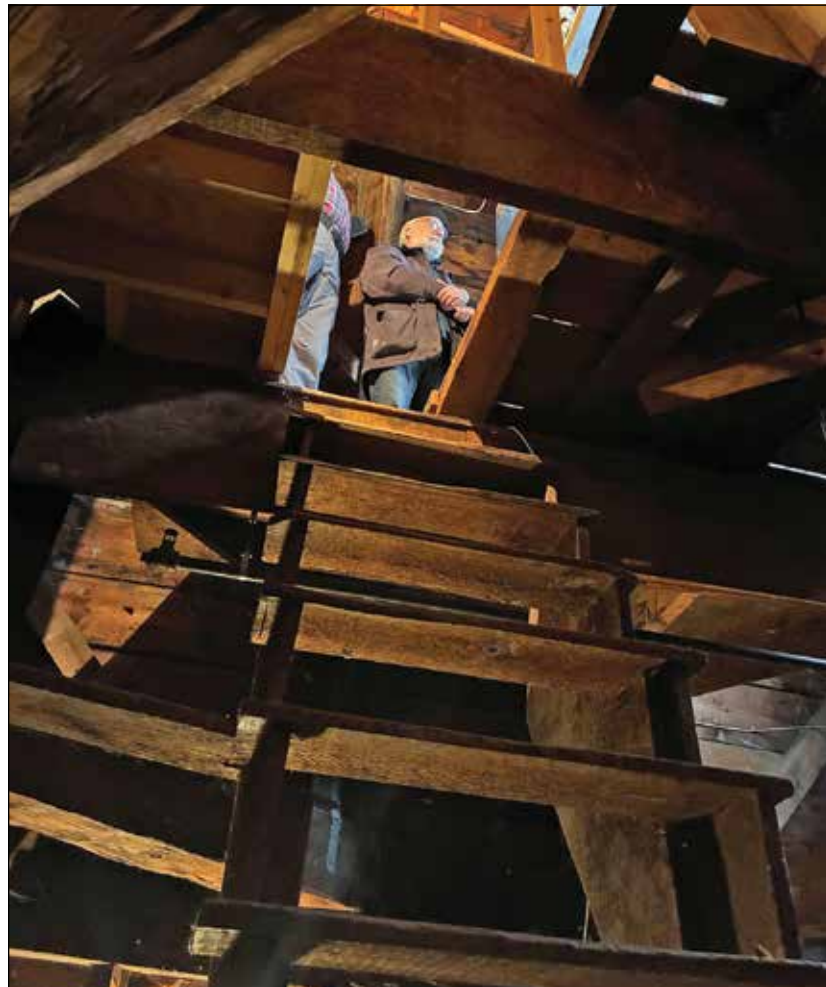
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Up high in the bell tower is where all the action is.

When Goulet first introduced Griggs to the clocktower, Goulet remarked on Griggs' fascination. "Most people don't know what they're looking at," he said. "But he was like a kid on Christmas morning."

Griggs' passion became a volunteer job in September 2025, when he joined the church's team of winders to help wind the clock. Though it's an eight-day clock and should only have to be wound once every eight days, the church was moved from Norwich Green to Church Street in 1852, which doesn't have wells dug around it. This means that the counterweights that operate the clock can no longer descend their full distance. They stop every three to four days, which requires the clock to be wound twice a week. Griggs does the mid-week winding, while another winder, Chipper Ashley, performs the task earlier in the week. Goulet fills in when needed.



Mike Rebentisch, Kimo Griggs, Ron Nollet, and Demo Sofronas.

All photos courtesy of Demo Sofronas and Kimo Griggs.

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The gears that make it tick.

Goulet expressed that the task is “quite a chore.” When he was younger, Goulet explained, he “used to be able to wind it with one hand...,” but now it requires two hands and his “shoulder gives out halfway through.” Thus, he and Ashley were happy to have help. Ashley said he’s been winding the clock since the mid-’80s. He agreed with Goulet that the task has gotten harder as he’s aged, and he was glad Griggs stepped in.

Over time, Griggs noticed the bell no longer rang. When he called his regular clock repair contact, though, he wasn’t interested. Griggs explained that working on tower clocks like the one at Norwich Congregational Church is niche work, and Ashley elaborated that, although they’ve had people come in the past to make regular repairs, it’s difficult to find consistent help.

As Griggs went weekly to wind the clock, he kept looking at the clock mechanisms, which he thought looked relatively simple. Because of the clock’s nature, the mechanical parts are wholly visible, and by November Grigg had deduced that the bell issue was an alignment problem and could be a simple fix. He brought up the repair proposal to Ashley.

Continued on page 16



Kimo Griggs and Ron Nollet in front of the Norwich Congregational Church.

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First, the decision was made by the congregation, and then Ashley brought the request to the church council and the Ministry of Building and Finance during the annual meeting in January 2026. "And they were fine with it," he said. By February 11, he let Griggs know he could proceed.

Back in January, while still waiting for the church's decision, Griggs was again performing his crossing guard duties. He spoke to Norwich police officer Mike Rebentisch, who himself has a fascination with old clocks. Coincidentally, his stepfather, Ron Nollet, is an award-winning clockmaker.

When Griggs explained his theory of why the clock wouldn't chime, Nollet visited on March 11 and agreed with Griggs' assessment. Griggs explained that "all it needed was two washers, really." He described the process as simple as breathing; he "took some things off, applied a little oil here and there, put the washers on, and Bob's your uncle, the bell's back in action."

Griggs fixed it on March 13, and the bells rang at noon on that day. Though Ashley said the church considered making the clock electrical but "never got around to it," Griggs said it's good the church kept the original clock mechanisms, so he could easily fix it.

Preservations like this have helped make the clock a piece of history. In "The Paul Revere Bell Rings again and again but How?...," another post on Sofronas' Substack, he recounts that the Norwich Congregational Church bell is a Paul



Scoping it all out to find the problem.

Revere bell, meaning it was formed in the Boston North End bell foundry of Paul Revere. Norwich's specific bell, Sofronas wrote, is "the earliest in Vermont and the only one cast during Revere's lifetime." He further explained that it was "presented to the church in 1817 by Thomas Emerson" and is "one of six Revere bells remaining in Vermont."

Sometimes, this history makes the church a destination spot. Ashley said every so often the church gets a call from someone out of town interested in the clock. "There's a group of people out there that are clock aficionados, and they are aware where these clocks are located."

Goulet also tells a tale of Minnesota visitors, with whom he brought up the clocktower, "and they were just gaga." Three days later, the church received a note from them, along with King Arthur baked goods, explaining it was the highlight of their trip.

Despite Ashley's experience that "you have to be physically able to climb through the trapdoor," he said the view from the clock tower is worth it, especially in the fall. "October is great when the foliage is out, and you stand up in the clocktower...you got a 360-degree view of the hills...it's pretty neat."

What's even neater is that after a few hundred years, the clock continues to tick and chime thanks to the help of several members of the community. Through chance encounters and willing volunteers, the Norwich Congregational Church's unique clock continues to move forward, and more importantly, still rings. ■

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NPL's Library of Things has items and kits, conveniently packaged, for all

ages to get outside. There's jump rope, hula hoops, resistance bands, slacklines, frisbees and boomerangs, pedometers, and much more. In partnership with the American Heart Association, the Library now has a blood pressure checking station, as well as two blood pressure monitor kits (cuffs) available for checkout.



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For kids, specifically, NPL has a STEAM Kit from ECHO, Leahy Center for Lake Champlain, called Rain and Shine Backpackactivities, which is all about the science behind weather. We also offer an American Girl Doll Science Kit for collecting and analyzing samples with a microscope.

In conjunction with NPL's monthly Memory Cafe and the new Memory Friendly Bookshelf section, NPL has four new memory kits: Avion Adventures, Artistic Endeavors, Views of Vermont, and Trains, Treks, and Trails. These backpack kits are

designed for use by patrons experiencing dementia and other forms of cognitive impairment and their caregivers.

Finally, the library has museums, Vermont historic sites, and Vermont state parks passes that provide either free or discounted admission to the numerous sites across the state.

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~ Isaac Lorton
Community Engagement Coordinator
Norwich Public Library



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The Prouty: A Commitment to a Cause

Frank Orlowski

For those nurses who decided to bike the Upper Valley in honor of their patient Audrey Prouty almost five decades ago, seeing what that initial endeavor turned into must be beyond satisfying. The 2026 Prouty marks the 45th edition of this annual event, dedicated to raise funds for research and patient services at the Dartmouth Cancer Center. Known as the largest fundraising event in northern New England, this year the Friends of the Dartmouth Cancer Center, which organizes the event, anticipates 4,500 participants and 750 volunteers to take part, with a goal of raising \$12 million.

Those 4,500 participants come from the Upper Valley and beyond. Some participants take part virtually, biking, hiking, rowing, or doing other sporting activities around the nation and even worldwide. Most though, bike, walk, row, or golf right here in the Upper Valley, taking part locally in the event that is The Prouty. And for many, that commitment to this benefit runs strong and deep.

Not surprisingly, Norwich residents have always generously supported The Prouty through participating, volunteering, and donating. One such resident is Julie Stevenson, principal at Hanover High and head coach of the Hanover High rowing team, who has long been involved with the rowing efforts for The Prouty. Though not as visible as the



Julie Stevenson with daughter Eliza Daigle. The boat above named the Janne R. Piper was named after the late wife of one of the Hanover coaches. The team dedicated their Prouty efforts to her during a recent Prouty.

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*The 2026 Prouty takes place
in the Upper Valley on Saturday, July 11.
This year marks the 45th year
for The Prouty.*

cyclists and walkers who participate during The Prouty, the rowing crews on the Connecticut make up a strong contingent of Prouty participants.

"I have participated in the Prouty for as long (as) the Friends of Hanover Crew and my rowers have participated in the Prouty," said Stevenson. "The years blend together these days...a long time!" A side note, Stevenson was instrumental in organizing the Friends of Hanover Crew.

When asked about her initial involvement in The Prouty, Stevenson credits one person in particular.

"The initial reason for my involvement in the Prouty and the team's (Hanover High) involvement in the Prouty is a special person named Jane McLaughlin. She approached me in the early years of our program and said she would like to get young people involved in philanthropic events. She believed if we started with them a pattern of involvement, raising money and giving early, this pattern would carry on to their adult lives. She believed we could do this with our team and also harness the size and power of the team to raise money for the Norris Cotton Cancer Center," she said.

Over the years, many of her rowers and coaches have been affected by cancer directly, and indirectly, driving home the importance of The Prouty and its goals.

"Throughout the years of being involved we have had very special people to our program and to us need to use the Center. Cancer has touched children and spouses of our coaches, our coaches themselves, parents, siblings and other family members of our rowers. Some are still with us on earth and some are not. Many were supported by the wonderful health care and services at the Center. One of those people is Blair Brooks, who I miss at practice every day."

Blair Brooks was a beloved coach of Hanover High rowers, and a past president of the Friends of Hanover Crew.

The Prouty conjures up great memories for all involved. As a cyclist in past Proutys, the memories of friendly camaraderie stand out for me, as well as the band, and the cheers while climbing that last hill on Route 10. Stevenson has fond memories of assisting her rowers at a river rest stop.

"My most memorable experience were the days when I helped catch boats at the McLaughlin's house (a rest stop). We would keep the eights on the

water while people got out to stretch and eat a 'four course' — not really — breakfast cooked up by Julia Griffin. I would be soaking wet holding on to oars so boats didn't float away and witness all the joy of people doing something meaningful and breaking bread together. It was so fun!"

Being a part of The Prouty is like being on a team — a really big team. It's not surprising then to hear Stevenson describe her efforts in Prouty rowers' success as just one of many, with so many more worthy of accolades.

"It feels a little strange to be the one interviewed for this article because the heavy lifting for this event has really been from 'team captains' along the way — Heidi Lange, Erika Dade, currently Eli and Helah Snelling," she said. "On the Friends of Upper Valley Rowing side, Carin Reynolds. I do my part, but these people put in so much time and energy — it is inspiring and I am so thankful. I am just a cog in the wheel."

The 2026 Prouty takes place in the Upper Valley on Saturday, July 11. This year marks the 45th year for The Prouty. Money raised during the event goes toward research and patient services at the Dartmouth Cancer Center. Those interested in participating, volunteering, or donating to a participant may still do so online. ■

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SELECTBOARD CORNER



Kimo Griggs

Thoughts from the New Chair

I was deeply honored (and slightly terrified) to be elected chair of the Norwich Selectboard earlier this spring. The Board has five excellent, thoughtful, and equal members who work well together.

Our regular business includes appointing members of boards and committees, signing warrants that allow bills to be paid, making sure liquor licenses are approved, and working with our town manager. There are interesting challenges now and then, but the work is generally predictable and work-a-day, requiring only that we pay close attention, carefully consider the interests of our constituents, and be reasonable.

Our irregular business varies widely, including responses to things such as citizen concerns, damage from weather events, legal complaints, changes in State law, long-term planning and changes to personnel. It is a common observation that government, including the Selectboard, can be slow to act even when compassion and a clear interest are evident. I can't act alone, but my personal goals for the Board include new policies that promise to speed our response time.

A typical current scenario for a citizen concern (potholes, speeding, etc.) might go like this: A concerned citizen speaks with a member of the Selectboard or our Town Manager. They might be advised to write to the Selectboard so their concern is recorded in a packet for a Selectboard meeting. The Selectboard currently sees the packet only after it has been assembled in full and made public — satisfying Open Meeting Law. By the time the Selectboard sees the packet on a Thursday the agenda has been set for the following week so the concern can't be addressed on that agenda despite having been voiced earlier. By the time of the next Selectboard meeting a week, or possibly two have passed.

During the meeting for which the letter is in the packet, the Selectboard will note the letter but may not discuss it, as it must first be on an agenda and warned! This effectively means it can take a full month or more before a citizen concern sent in writing to the Selectboard might be considered. I hope a new policy might dramatically shorten that time by allowing the Selectboard and the Public to see letters as they come in. The Selectboard might get items on an agenda within days, rather than weeks, with solutions proposed as soon as the same meeting in some cases.

To further speed response times, we recently passed a motion allowing Working Groups focused on individual topics to produce reports for the Selectboard in a short period of time. This is meant to allow deep public engagement of timely issues outside regular Selectboard meeting. The first working group is looking at what the future of Tracy Hall might look like, with the goal of ensuring that any money spent now for maintenance and restoration fits longer-term priorities and plans. Further Working Groups might be formed to look at DPW projects, Communications, Policies, Article 36, Sidewalks, etc.

I appreciate all of you, especially those who somehow find time and energy to give to Norwich, and I thank you for your trust. See you at the crosswalk! ■

~ Kimo Griggs, Chair of the Norwich Selectboard

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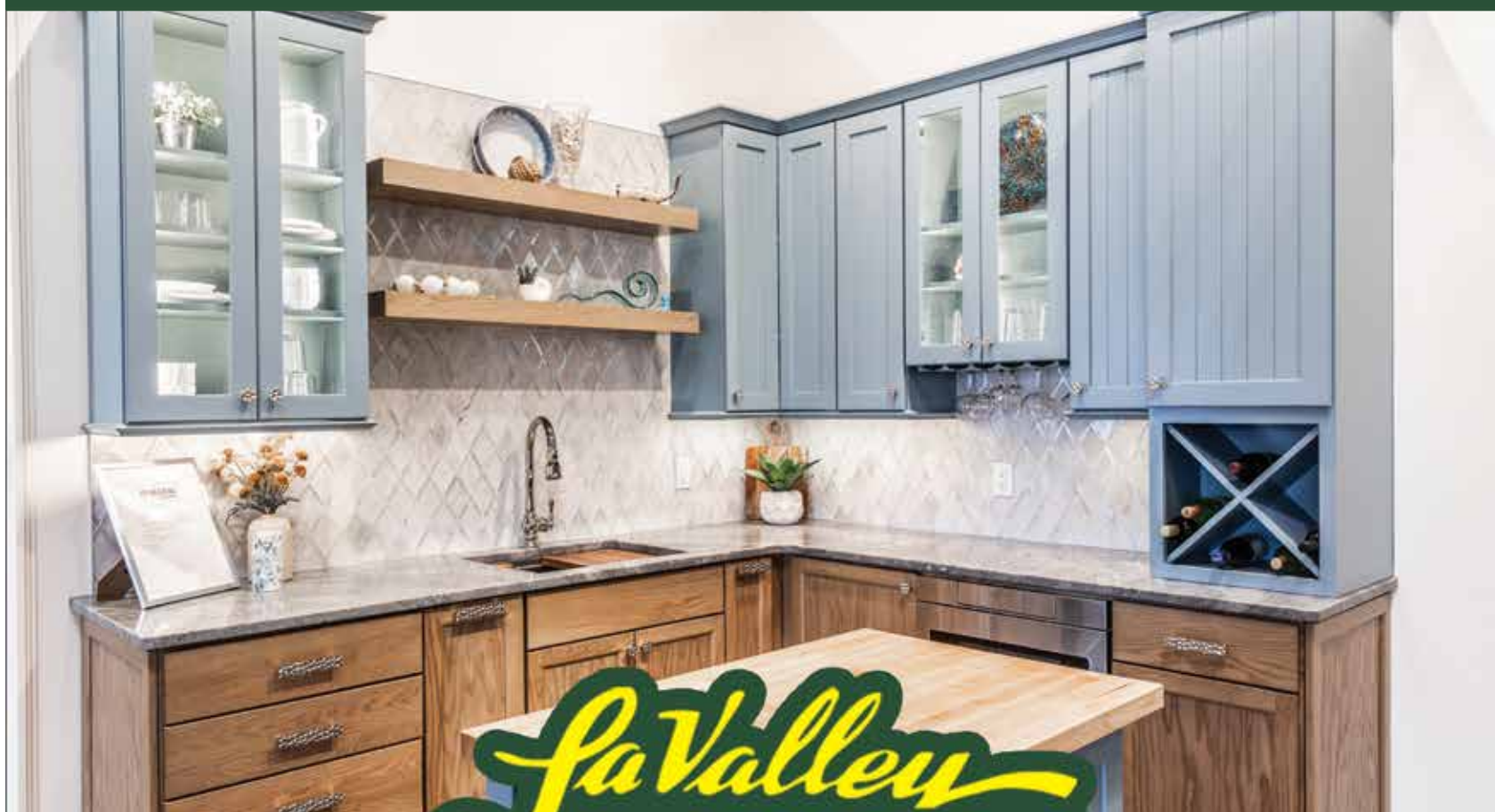
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