

# The Ridgefield Timeline

**This compendium of nearly 3,000 events during Ridgefield's first three centuries is completely searchable using "Command F" (Mac) or "Control F" (Windows). It is being regularly expanded and updated. This version is as of April 27, 2021 © 2021 Jack and Sally Sanders**

## 1697

1697 – Norwalk residents are planning to buy land to the north of their settlement, and the General Assembly appoints a committee to inspect a tract "lying about fourteen miles northward of the town of Norwalk to settle a plantation there."

## 1706

May 9, 1706 – Little has happened with plans for a plantation north of Norwalk until this day when the General Assembly appoints Captain Jonathan Selleck, David Waterbury and John Copp to visit the area. Complications arise and nothing happens.

## 1708

May 3, 1708 – Things are starting to happen. John Copp and John Raymond visit the territory north of Norwalk to inspect its worthiness for settlement. They may have camped at Settlers Rock at the south edge of today's Ridgefield Cemetery on North Salem Road.

May 10, 1708 – Copp and Raymond report on the five square miles they investigated. They "find it to be accommodated with upland considerably good & for quantity sufficient for thirty families, or more, and as for meadow & meadow land, something surpassing (both for quantity as well as quality) what is common to be found in many larger plantations." A petition is prepared for the General Assembly.

May 13, 1708 – The Copp-Raymond report, along with a petition signed by 26 people who want to settle a new plantation, is received by the General Assembly. The petitioners report they have negotiated with the local Indians and are ready to complete a deal.

May 18, 1708 – The Lower House of the General Assembly approves plans for the prospective settlers to buy land from the Indians.

Sept. 30, 1708 – "Catoonah, sachem of Ramapoo Indians and Associates within her Majesties province of New York in America," sells the first settlers an estimated 20,000 acres. The price is 100 pounds.

Nov. 1, 1708 – A Town Meeting in Norwalk appoints Samuel Keeler Sr., Matthew Seamer [Seymour], Joseph Bouton, and John Copp "to lay out the Town Plott,"

consisting of home lots at two and a half acres, plus five-acre lots to the rear of the home lots. "The said Committee is impowered to act their best skill and judgement to equalize the want of quality by adding or allowing the quantity to such home lotts & division of addition as they in judgement may find wanting."

Nov. 8, 1708 – The committee to design a Town Plott reports it needs more time to adjust lot sizes according to the value of the land.

Nov. 25, 1708 – The layout of the town lots is completed and the proprietors, meeting in Norwalk, have a lottery to distribute the 25 original home lots on Main Street.

Nov. 25, 1708 – The proprietors lay out "ye burying yard" on upper Wilton Road East near Main Street. At least 40 people are buried there before townspeople in 1735 decide to create a new cemetery at the north end of Main Street and bury people there instead.

## **1709**

March 1, 1709 – The Proprietors agree to name a committee to divide up "plow land" within a mile and a half of the center of town.

March 28, 1709 – The plow land committee recommends six acre lots, with some larger if the lot contains some marginal land.

April 22, 1709 – The proprietors agree to allow Ebenezer Smith of Milford to join their numbers. He is given house lot 26, now the site of the Ridgefield Library, and the family later operates a tavern there.

May 12, 1709 – The General Assembly instructs Major Peter Burr, John Copp and Josiah Starr to draw up a survey of the proposed new town between Norwalk and Danbury.

May 23, 1709 – Sarah Benedict, daughter of James and Sarah Benedict, is born. She is said to be the first non-native person born in what will soon be called Ridgefield.

Oct. 13, 1709 – The General Assembly, meeting in New Haven, officially grants the first settlers permission to form a town, and approves the name, "Ridgefield."

Oct. 13, 1709 – Matthew St. John marries Anne Whitne, said to be the first wedding in Ridgefield.

Oct. 31, 1709 – Joseph Benedict of Norwalk is admitted as the town's 27<sup>th</sup> landowner.

Dec. 23, 1709 – A Town Meeting is held, believed to be the first in Ridgefield. Previous Town Meetings had been in Norwalk. John Copp is appointed register or town clerk.

## 1710

Feb. 3, 1710 – John Copp is sworn in as town clerk. Although he holds this office, serves as a teacher and surveyor, there is no record of his ever having been a homeowner in Ridgefield. He did have a farm in what is now, however.

May 3, 1710 – A Town Meeting convened in Norwalk defines the Ridgefield-Norwalk town line [now Ridgefield-Wilton line] as to “begin at Spruce Tree known and standing by ye Hop Meadow Branch, and Runn three quarters of a Mile from Said Tree upon a North North West Course lacking one Degree and at ye Termination of said three quarters of a Mile to run the Cross Dividend line West South West and East North East lacking one Degree to ye East and West Division – between Norwalk and Fairfield and Norwalk and Stamford.” By the 1970s, the exact route of this line is still unclear, and Wilton and Ridgefield have many debates over it.

## 1711

July 9, 1711 – Benjamin Hickock, one of the original 25 home lot owners, sells his at the north corner of Main Street and King Lane to Thomas Rockwell, bringing a family here whose descendants are still in town in 2008.

## 1712

Feb. 14, 1712 – Uzziell Hyatt, son of Thomas and Experience Hyatt, dies. The three-year-old is said to be the first death recorded in the new town of Ridgefield.

May 6, 1712 – To entice a blacksmith to move to Ridgefield, the Proprietors offer Benjamin Burt of Norwalk a share in the new town and a lot at the corner of Main and Catoonah Streets [where the Carnall Insurance building is today]. He accepts, and establishes a family that remains a part of the community well into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

June 3, 1712 – Jonathan Stevens, one of the original home lot owners, has died and his mother, Mary Bouton inherits the land at the southwest corner of Main and Catoonah Streets. On this day, she sells the property to David Scott of Fairfield, establishing a Ridgefield family that still exists in town today. Sections of town – Scotland and Scotts Ridge – recall the family, too, and David Scott’s house is now the Ridgefield Historical Society.

June 12, 1712 – The Proprietors grant Milford Samuel Smith land lying on both side of “Peepunk Spring.” It is the first mention a little-known locality, named for the Indian word for a “sweat lodge” – the equivalent of a sauna. The Indians would heat themselves up in the peepunk, then cool themselves off in the spring.

Oct. 9, 1712 – The General Assembly establishes a church in Ridgefield by allowing the town to tax its residents “toward the settling and maintaining of the ministry.”

Nov. 12, 1712 – The Town Meeting defines the Meeting House Yard – the village green. Much of it is today the lawn of Jesse Lee Memorial United Methodist Church. Here many ceremonies are to take place, and the local militia will train.

## **1713**

Dec. 16, 1713 – The Town of Norwalk votes to create a road from there to Ridgefield.

## **1714**

April 1, 1714 – A Town Meeting agrees to appoint Ebenezer Smith and James Benedict as a committee “to rectifie highways, where they shall be found needful to be rectified to take from mens land where there is need, and to make it up to them again as well as they can to suit them.”

May 1714 – The General Assembly in Hartford assigns Ridgefield an official horse brand, which is an upside down heart.

May 22, 1714 – Representing Queen Anne of England, Governor Gurdon Saltonstall signs the patent officially declaring Ridgefield a town within the colony of Connecticut.

Dec. 13, 1714 – The Annual Town Meeting elects the Rev. Thomas Hauley, the town’s new minister, as its register or town clerk, to keep all the records.

## **1715**

March 18, 1715 – The Proprietors pay four pounds to “Tackora, alias Oreneca, Indian,” for land in the Scotland and Ridgebury areas, including the outlet of Lake Mamasasco.

## **1716**

Jan. 30, 1716 – For a share in the new town, Daniel Sherwood agrees to come to Ridgefield and operate a grist mill at the outlet of Lake Mamasasco, land that had been purchased the year before from Tackora. Sherwood’s homesite is in 2008 the building housing Planet Pizza and Dr. George Amatuzzi’s optometry office.

April 30, 1716 – The county surveyor surveys the Ridgefield-Danbury line, but only as far as Mopus Ridge. He “proceeded no further by reason of York Line not being run.” In other words, they do not know where Connecticut ends and New York begins.

## **1717**

Nov. 6, 1717 – The boundary between Ridgefield and Norwalk [now Wilton] is further defined.

Nov. 18, 1717 – The Proprietors distribute several one-acre parcels “lying all together on ye hill on ye east side of Horsepound Swamp, bounded north by Bedford Road...” The deeds suggest the settlers had already set up a pound for stray horses along Old South Salem Road near the New York line.

Dec. 24, 1717 – A town meeting votes unanimously to “send to Mr. Reed for advice in our present difficulties in ye publick affairs and to fee him therefor.” The “difficulties” are never explained. It may have been the first (of many) times town officials sought the advice of a lawyer.

## **1718**

Feb. 21, 1718 – The Town Meeting votes to compensate with equivalent land property people lost because of the creation of the new road to Norwalk [probably Route 33, Wilton Road West].

July 27, 1718 – John Sturtevant, one of the original settlers, dies before he is able to develop his Main Street lot. Twenty-two years later, the land is set aside for building an Episcopal church.

Dec. 18, 1718 – A Town Meeting appoints Ebenezer Smith the “tavern keeper.”

## **1719**

1719 – The Smith family is operating an inn on Main Street, where the Ridgefield Library is today.

April 21, 1719 – Mary Scott sues her husband David Scott in Fairfield County Court, apparently for abandoning his family, and is given three acres of land. The land is probably near Lake Mamanasco and she becomes the first Scott settler in a neighborhood that is to one day take her name, Scotland District.

May 11, 1719 – Ridgefield petitions the General Assembly for “ye grant and donations of a small tract or gusset of land lying between ye bounds of Danbury and Ridgefield; beginning at yet southwest corner of Danbury line, extending northward by Danbury line four miles – hence westward to York line.” Danbury objects, saying it will “suffer great loss and damage,” but eventually Ridgefield gets the land and soon after, it is returned to Danbury.

## **1721**

1721 – The town votes to spend “eight pounds for ye support of a school.” It is the first mention of schooling in the town records.

1721 – James Bennett of Fairfield moves to Ridgefield, buys a sizable tract, and lends his name to a large section of town called Bennett's Farm, and later to the Bennett's Pond and its park.

Feb. 15, 1721 – The Proprietors deed Ebenezer Smith "seven acres, three roods, lying on Titicus, north of Fort Hill." The mysterious name, never explained in histories, probably stems from an Indian fort that stood somewhere on the hill west of North Salem Road.

Feb. 21, 1721 – Main Street is officially laid out and defined as eight rods – 132 feet – wide.

Nov. 22, 1721 – The Proprietors complete the third purchase from the Indians, paying six pounds for a sizable tract on West Mountain bordering Round Pond and including land now in Lewisboro, N.Y., running north through the area around Ridgefield High School and Mopus Bridge Road and east to Barlow Mountain and North Street.

## **1723**

1723 – The Rev. Samuel Johnson, recently ordained in England, becomes the rector of the Episcopal Church in Stratford, and serves as a missionary priest to Ridgefield, which has about 20 families following the Church of England. He is considered the founder of St. Stephen's Church.

Dec. 19, 1723 – The Annual Town Meeting votes to build a "meetinghouse" on the green that is 34 feet wide and 40 feet long, "and 28 feet between the sill and the plate."

Dec. 20, 1723 – The adjourned Annual Town Meeting votes that "ye Rhode to Norwalk pass over ye Ball Hill, where it was laid out by ye jury." The final layout near the Wilton line will cause many problems in the next century.

## **1725**

May 1725 – The new town is suffering from poverty and asks the General Assembly to exempt it from colony taxes. The exemption is granted.

Dec. 13, 1725 – The Town Meeting agrees to pay the Rev. Thomas Hauley, minister of the church, 70 pounds a year for three years, and to add 10 pounds a year after that until his salary reaches 100 pounds, at which point it will be fixed. Mr. Hauley is able to enjoy the full 100 pounds for only eight years; he dies in 1738.

## **1726**

Sept. 26, 1726 – The Town Meeting votes to spend 147 pounds to finish construction of the Meeting House.

## **1727**

1727 – The Rev. Henry Caner of Fairfield becomes a missionary priest to the Ridgefield Episcopal congregation.

1727 – The General Assembly commissions Samuel Saint John of Ridgefield as captain of the company of trainband (militia) in Ridgefield.

Jan. 9, 1727 – “Ye white oak tree standing near Henry Whitne’s” house is designated the official town signpost, for announcing all town meetings. Whitne’s house is about where the First Church of Christ, Scientist, is now.

May 13, 1727 – Upset at the pending loss of town territory due to moving the Connecticut line nearly two miles to the east, Ridgefielders petition the General Assembly for a grant of land north of town running to the New Fairfield border. Approval comes five years later.

July 4, 1727 – The Proprietors complete the fourth purchase from the Indians, including Taporneck, Wett Hams, Moses, Richard and Samm and paying 18 pounds, two guns, and three bottles of rum. The land is now in Lewisboro and North Salem.

Oct. 29, 1727 – Ridgefielders join the rest of the Northeast in feeling the effects of a major earthquake (said to have been 5.5 on the modern Richter scale). Since it is on a Sunday, many ministers take advantage of the symbolism in their sermons.

Dec. 27, 1727 – Joseph Lees is appointed the town’s first “keeper of ye pound key.” The pound, used to hold captured livestock that had been roaming and lost, was located on the village green.

## **1728**

Dec. 9, 1728 – The Annual Town Meeting agrees that ear marks are to be kept “in ye Town Book.” Over the years hundreds of brands for horses and livestock are recorded in town record books.

## **1729**

March 7, 1729 – In the fifth purchase from the Indians, the Proprietors acquire more land now in New York State, from seven Indians, including Taporneck, Wett Hams, Crow, Moses, and Sam.

April 10, 1729 – The Proprietors complete the sixth purchase from the Indians, a sizable tract that includes much of today’s Ridgebury. The deed is signed by eight Indians, including Ah Topper, Mokens, Waw Sachim, Jacob Turkey and Captain Jacob Turkey.

## **1730**

Nov. 21, 1730 – The first survey of the Ridgefield-New York border is completed.

## **1731**

1731 – A new survey of the Connecticut-New York border is undertaken by Cadwallader Colden, a physician, botanist, and scientist who later becomes lieutenant governor of New York. He is also a Tory, who conveniently dies in 1776.

March 5, 1731 – The Town Meeting votes that in the Meeting House, “ye front gallery be seated, two seats in front, and the rest of said gallery shall be filled up with well proportioned pews, and the side galleries shall be furnished with seats throughout and the Town will bear ye charges therefor.”

May 14, 1731 – Based on Cadwallader Colden’s survey, Connecticut and New York commissioners agree to the transfer of the “Oblong.” Connecticut gives up a strip of some 61,000 acres, nearly two miles wide, on its western border in exchange for what is now Greenwich and Stamford, which Connecticut got many years earlier. Ridgefield loses a sizable chunk of its town, but soon gains land to the north.

June 1, 1731 – Governor Talcott signs the grant, giving Ridgefield the “New Pattent,” land it had recently purchased from the Indians and land that compensates the town for loses when the Oblong is ceded to New York. The New Pattent is bounded on the south by Ridgefield, east by Danbury, north by New Fairfield and west by the colony line. The patent gives Ridgefield’s Proprietors the rights to “all woods, timber, underwood, uplands, arable lands, meadows, pastures, ponds, waters, rivers, brooks, islands, fishings, fowlings, huntings, mines, minerals, quarries, and precious stones upon or within said tract...”

## **1732**

1732 – The list of all taxable properties in Ridgefield totals 5,419 pounds in value.

1732 – Benjamin Benedict is named captain of the militia in Ridgefield.

April 14-19, 1732 – The Danbury-Ridgefield boundary is surveyed.

## **1733**

April 10, 1733 – Officials of Norwalk and Ridgefield perambulate the border between the two towns, making sure markers are in place.

Dec. 3, 1733 – Deacon Smith records with town clerk Thomas Hauley the brand marks on his three-year-old white bull: “A crop on ye near ear, a slitt down yt crop, and a strep



ye undr side yd same, and a cross on ye off ear brnded O on ye near hip; and O.W. on ye near horn.”

## **1735**

1735 – The Rev. John Beach, Episcopal rector in Newtown, becomes a missionary priest to the congregation in Ridgefield.

Jan. 27, 1735 – The town votes to create a second cemetery, located at the north end of the main street – what is now the oldest part of the “Titicus Cemetery” or “Ridgefield Cemetery.” The first cemetery had been established earlier at the south end of Main Street.

March 14, 1735 – The town meeting votes to buy “powder, bullets, and flints” for the town militia or trainband. All men 16 to 60 are required by the colony to bear arms and train at least six days a year – in Ridgefield, training is on the town green, which today is the lawn of Jesse Lee Memorial United Methodist Church.

## **1736**

May 1736 – The General Assembly grants a petition to allow 310 acres in Ridgebury to be annexed by Danbury because all the landowners are Danbury residents. The land, on both sides of George Washington Highway, is eventually returned to Ridgefield [*see* May 26, 1820].

## **1737**

April 27, 1737 – Alexander Resseguie and Daniel Sherwood, among the founders of the Episcopal Church in Ridgefield, guarantee that the minister who serves the congregation will be paid 40 pounds.

Dec. 19, 1737 – The town votes to create a pound in Ridgebury near the meeting house.

## **1738**

Feb. 28, 1738 – The Proprietors complete the seventh purchase from the Indians, including land now in New York.

March 26, 1738 – Philip Burr Bradley is born in Fairfield. He comes to Ridgefield with his parents in 1759, a year after graduating from Yale. In 1770, King George the Third appoints him a justice of the peace, but he goes on to become Ridgefield’s highest ranking revolutionary soldier, who serves in many campaigns, and after the war, becomes the leading citizen of Ridgefield. President Washington appoints him the first marshal of the District of Connecticut.

Nov. 8, 1738 – The Rev. Thomas Hauley, Ridgefield's first minister, dies at the age of 49. He is also the first resident town clerk and had also been a school teacher.

## **1739**

Dec. 19, 1739 – The town makes the last of eight purchases of Indian lands, a huge tract that runs from Ridgebury to the New Fairfield line. Most of it was ceded to Danbury in 1846. The deed was signed by Betty, Jacob Turkey and Mokquaroose.

## **1740**

1740 – The Rev. James Wetmore of Rye, N.Y., serves as a missionary to the Episcopal congregation in Ridgefield.

Jan. 4, 1740 – The Proprietors agree to provide a parcel on Main Street on which a meeting house will be built for members of the Church of England.

Feb. 13, 1740 – David Scott sells Vivus Dauchy “a certain Negro woman named Dinah and a Negro boy named Peter to be servants or slaves during the period of their natural lives.” The price is 200 pounds.

May 8, 1740 – The Towns of Ridgefield and Litchfield are censured by the General Assembly for not paying state taxes. “This Assembly do sentence and doom the inhabitants of the Town of Ridgefield to pay into the publick treasury of this Colony the sum of 29 pounds, 15 shillings....”

July 1740 – The Rev. Jonathan Ingersoll becomes the second minister of the Ecclesiastical Society (now the Congregational Church).

## **1741**

Dec. 22, 1741 – The town votes that students help support their schools. “Each scholar shall find a third part of a cord of good sound wood, and there shall be allowed after ye rate of 18 shillings a cord out of ye scholars rate.”

## **1742**

1742 – The Rev. Richard Caner of Norwalk becomes the missionary to the Ridgefield Episcopal congregation, serving till 1744.

Dec. 13, 1742 – “The Town by a major vote do give Liberty to ye people living in ye New Patten, that they shall be allowed to have a meeting four months in a year for two years on ye Sabbath or Lord's Day among themselves to carry on religious worship, and to live and to hire a man to preach among them in ye sd. time so allowed to them, provided they do it upon their own cost and charge.”

Dec. 13, 1742 – The Annual Town Meeting also votes that “Madam Ingersoll shall have full liberty and equal privilege with Madam Hauley to sit in that pew ye Madam Hauley now sits in during ye town’s pleasure.” Mrs. Ingersoll was wife of the new minister; Mrs. Hauley was widow of the late minister.

Dec. 24, 1742 – At the “sheep meeting,” voters agree that in the future, money raised from loaning out the town-owned flock of sheep will be used for maintaining the town school. Twice a week, the town flock – said to be as many as 2,000 sheep – was loaned to the highest bidder to be kept at least overnight in his fields to take advantage of the manure the animals provided his crops.

## **1743**

1743 – The first Town House is built and is used for not only meetings, but school.

Dec. 6, 1743 – The Proprietors make their last purchase of land from the Indians. The deed is signed by James, Boans, Kipaster, Tapornick, Ammon, Crow, Old Mosos, Young Mosos, Tom Mosos, and Tom Pornick.

Dec. 19, 1743 – The Town Meeting allows residents of New Patent, later called Ridgebury, to have their own church services four months of the year, and to hire a preacher.

Dec. 19, 1743 – Ridgebury Cemetery is established by the town meeting.

## **1744**

1744 – The Rev. Joseph Lamson of Rye, N.Y., takes on missionary duties to the Episcopal congregation in Ridgefield, along with Bedford and Northcastle, N.Y.

Sept. 7, 1744 – The town has an auction to sell “the old school house” that had been replaced with the Town House the year before.

Oct. 22, 1744 – John Barlow is born in Fairfield. In 1769, he moves to Ridgefield and sets up a farm and blacksmith shop on a hill that now bears his name, Barlow Mountain. In 1802 he moves to New York State.

Dec. 13, 1744 – The Town Meeting orders the select men “to procure good and lawfull weights in yet town, that, so other weights in ye town may be proved and regulated thereby.”

## **1745**

1745 – The Rev. Jeremiah Leaming of Norwalk becomes the missionary to the Ridgefield Episcopal congregation, serving until 1762.

## **1746**

Dec. 17, 1746 – The Annual Town Meeting chooses John Smith and Ambrose Olmsted as fence viewers, charged with making sure fences keep livestock out of neighboring crop fields. The tax rate is set at two pence on the pound. The meeting also pays the Rev. Jonathan Ingersoll 200 pounds for “his work in the ministry for the year past.”

## **1747**

Jan. 23, 1747 – The list of all taxable property for 1746 is filed and totals 9,001 pounds.

March 18, 1747 – The Town Meeting votes that “two women schools be kept from ye first of April next till ye first of October ensuing.” One school will operate in the Town House and the other “at ye house that was built for that purpose a little northward of Jonah Smith.”

May 11, 1747 – Residents of New Patent have petitioned the General Assembly in Hartford for permission to have their own minister to preach to them six months of the year because it is so difficult to attend services in Ridgefield center. The meeting, perhaps fearing New Patent will wish to become its own town, votes to oppose the petition and sends Richard Olmsted Esq. to testify before the General Assembly in opposition.

Nov. 13, 1747 – The town fathers lay out two new highways in New Patent, which is apparently quickly being settled. It compensates for land taken for the roads by providing more land in other locations.

Dec. 22, 1747 – The “Anniversary Town Meeting” votes to pay the Rev. Jonathan Ingersoll 400 pounds for his ministerial services in the past year.

## **1748**

Feb. 10, 1748 – The selectmen order Richard Portman to leave town.

April 25, 1748 – “John Wooding and James Olgor was warned by ye select men of ye Town of Ridgefield to depart out of ye Town of Ridgefield as ye law directs.”

May 2, 1748 – A Town Meeting appoints Lt. Joseph Hauley “to go to Mr. Walker at Stratford for his advice with respect to ye aged Daniel Abbott, whether to be it ye case to oblige Norwalk to keep him, or whether they force ye Town of Ridgefield to support him.”

June 16, 1748 – David Scott files notice that his Negro man shall be set free upon Mr. Scott’s death.

Sept. 20, 1748 – The Town Meeting agrees to pay six pounds for “the powder and lead that was taken up by the soldiers that went from us to guard the upper towns” in the French and Indian War.

Dec. 6, 1748 – The Annual Town Meeting sets a tax rate of four pence on the pound, twice what it was two years earlier. The meeting also orders the Select Men “to stake out ye Burying yard near ... John Smith’s home lott, and fence ye same with a good rail fence, and also to procure two good shod shovels and an ax for digging graves, and all is to be done up ye charge and cost of ye town.”

## **1749**

April 17, 1749 – The Town Meeting authorizes the construction of a “Sabbath Day House” that is no larger than 12 by 10 in size. [Popular in New England, a Sabbath Day house was a small building with a fireplace where families could warm up and have a bite to eat during breaks in the all-day services Sundays at the unheated meeting house.]

Aug. 2, 1749 – Caezer, slave of David Scott 2<sup>nd</sup>, dies.

Nov. 25, 1749 – The list of all taxable property is filed and totals 10,255 pounds.

Nov. 29, 1749 – Joseph Broadbrook is told to leave town.

Dec. 18, 1749 – The Anniversary Town Meeting votes to give the Rev. Jonathan Ingersoll another raise, to 550 pounds, for the previous year’s work, but at the same time lowers the tax rate to three pence on the pound. It also votes to buy a “black Broad Cloth pall” for town use at funerals.

## **1750**

1750 – An Episcopal Church is erected in Ridgebury, near the intersection of Ned’s Mountain Road, about this time. Services end in 1775 as war loomed, and resume briefly in 1789.

Feb. 12, 1750 – The Select Men “warned Joseph Nickols to depart out of town with his family under ye penalty of ye law.”

April 26, 1750 – Jabez Rockwell, John Rockwell, Joseph Keeler Jr. and “others living in ye North part of Ridgefield,” continue to petition the General Assembly for their own church or ‘society.’” This was to include 12,000 or 13,000 acres in Ridgebury and the lands north to New Fairfield. The petitioners said they had land worth 3,550 pounds sterling and were able to support a society. The town continues to oppose and Samuel

Olmsted Esq. is named the town's agent to speak to the General Assembly in Hartford on the issue.

Dec. 10, 1750 – After electing the usual officials, the Annual Town Meeting votes that “ye tools provided for digging graves and ye Pall shall be lodged at the house of Sent. John Smith.” The tax rate is dropped to two pence on the pound.

Dec. 13, 1750 – The Town Meeting votes to put a new roof on the meeting house “to consist or be made of chestnut shingles.” A tax of three pence on the pound is set to pay for it. The meeting also votes to allow Peter Benedict and Lot Keeler to have seats in the meeting house. The two were living in the Oblong, which had been ceded to New York in 1731.

## **1751**

March 6, 1751 – The Ridgefield-Norwalk town line is perambulated.

Oct. 21, 1751 – For 19 shillings, 9 pence, Constable Caleb Lobdell sells Obadiah Wood five white sheep and one white lamb that had been impounded by Nathan Wilson, keeper of the pound.

Dec. 4, 1751 – The Annual Town Meeting elects town officials, votes to pay Minister Ingersoll 600 pounds old tenor for his work, and sets the tax rate at three pence, half penny on the pound. But the meeting also votes a separate tax of a penny and a half on the pound to repair the meeting house.

## **1752**

Jan. 20, 1752 – The adjourned Town Meeting votes that “a School Master shall be provided and shall keep a school, ye first three months from this time at ye Town house, and ye next 3 months at ye upper School house near Lt. Jonah Smith's, and ye next 3 months at ye Town house, and ye last 3 months at ye sd. upper School house. Also vote yt a woman school shall be kept in each of ye places above for keeping schools when ye man school is vacant.”

Jan. 20, 1752 – The Town Meeting exempts residents of New Patten [upper Ridgebury] from having to pay the tax to fix the meeting house since they by then have a meeting house of their own.

March 26, 1752 – The Town Meeting gives the Select Men the “power to allow as many women schools for six months within the several quarters of ye town, as ye Inhabitants shall stand in need of, so that they do not allow of a school where there is not twenty five scholars that can and do constantly attend the same, and the Inhabitants containing said

number of scholars shall be at the trouble of providing them their own Mistress, and the charge that shall arise for said Mistress's wages shall be paid out of ye Town Treasury."

Dec. 19, 1752 – The Annual Town Meeting gives the Rev. Jonathan Ingersoll a raise to 650 pounds old tenor for the year.

## **1753**

January 1753 – The listers [assessors] report that property in town is assessed at 11,681 pounds.

Jan. 19, 1753 – The Town Meeting agrees that, "upon ye request of Mrs. Burrel Betts and Joseph Betts of Norwalk, made to members of yet Meeting above, to shew their minds respecting setting up a Wind Mill in ye Town of Ridgefield, whereupon the Meeting by a universal vote manifested their willingness that the said Burrel Betts and Joseph Betts try the experiment of setting up or building a Wind mill in the town of Ridgefield."

Dec. 18, 1753 – The Rev. Jonathan Ingersoll gets a big raise, to 750 pounds old tenor a year.

Dec. 18, 1753 – The town votes to create a 30 by 25 foot pound on Catoonah Street.

Dec. 24, 1753 – The adjourned Annual Town Meeting votes "there shall be three school mistresses provided and put into schools the first of April next and continued therein until the first of October next, one of them to be kept in ye school house near Lt. Jonah Smith's, one of them in ye Town house, and one of them in or near Benjamin Rockwell's house."

April 20, 1753 – A gang of South Salem counterfeiters, including escaped convict David Sanford, sets fires in an attempt to steal back cattle confiscated by the government and kept at the Deforest homestead in Ridgefield.

## **1754**

May 1754 – Ridgefield petitions the General Assembly for help in protecting itself from the gang of counterfeiters who are still "distressing the people by fire and [who] keep lurking about the Borders of Ridgefield armed in Defiance of the Law." The outcome is unknown.

Dec. 4, 1754 – Jacob Smith and Timothy Street were elected "branders and tollers of horses for ye year ensuing." [Tollers collected taxes on horses.]

## **1755**

March 26, 1755 – James Brown, “a transient person,” was warned to depart out of ye Town of Ridgefield.”

June 24, 1755 – The Colony of Connecticut sent Ridgefield 48 pounds, 13 shillings, 8 pence, “it being in full of what is due from ye Colony Treasury to ye Town of Ridgefield for supporting ye school for ye year 1754.”

Dec. 7, 1755 – Benjamin Stebbins Jr. is chosen town “packer” for the coming year at the annual Town Meeting. [Packers packed meat and fish intended for market.] “Mr. John Benedict was chosen Collector of ye Excise on Distilled Spirituous Liquors ye year ensuing.”

## **1756**

May 28, 1756 – Vivus Dauchy, captain of the First Company of Train Band in Ridgefield, is drafted to fight in the French and Indian War. He never returns, and is believed to have been killed in battle. He may have been the first Ridgefielder to die in battle.

## **1757**

April 4, 1757 – The Town Meeting voted “that there shall be six men schools kept in the town.”

August 1757 – 22 men from Ridgefield serve under Capt. Perez Fitch of Stamford, organized for the “Alarm for Relief of Fort William Henry and parts adjacent.”

Dec. 4, 1757 – At the Annual Town Meeting, John Benedict is chosen “gauger of casks” for the coming year. [This town official inspected casks to make sure their measurements were as stated.] “Jacob Smith was chosen and appointed to receive ye Provisions or Country Produce that shall be brought in for payment of ye country rates now collecting.”

Dec. 17, 1757 – A tax of one farthing on the pound was voted to repair the meeting house.

## **1758**

March 27, 1758 – The Rev. Jonathan Ingersoll, the Ridgefield congregational pastor, begins a tour of service in the French and Indian War. Mr. Ingersoll is a chaplain under Colonel David Wooster in the campaign around Lake Champlain. Twenty years later, Wooster, then a general, is mortally wounded at the Battle of Ridgefield. Ingersoll remains in service until Oct. 8.

Dec. 14, 1758 – The Town Meeting votes to pay Mr. Ingersoll seventy pounds for his ministerial labors. [The amount is no longer labeled “old tenor.” In 1755, Connecticut



made a new issue of currency, known as “new money” replacing “old tenor” and “new tenor” currencies. A pound in this new money was worth many times more than a pound in the old tenor.]

## **1759**

April 9, 1759 – Samuel Starr, William Castle, and Thomas Stephens petition the General Assembly to have their land annexed to Danbury, and a Ridgefield Town Meeting votes to send representatives to the assembly to oppose the idea.

Dec. 19, 1759 – The Annual Town Meeting names Caleb Lobdell and Daniel Olmsted as constables, and when asked whether a third constable should be appointed, votes no.

Dec. 19, 1759 – The Town Meeting votes “that in case that Robert Farquhar don’t improve his time (for the benefit of himself and his family) better for ye future than what he hath of late done, that the Select Men appoint an Overseer or master to take care of him.”

## **1760**

March 1760 – Mary Welch, Thomas Lawrence, George Bartlett, Hezekiah Thayler with his family, and Nehemiah Sherwood with his family are warned “to depart the limits of the Town of Ridgefield.”

April 11, 1760 – John Gould Hauley, a grandson of the town’s first minister, dies at the age of 9. His gravestone in Titicus Cemetery reads: “From youth and vigor soon he fled/  
And here he rests among ye dead./ Uncertain here we draw our breath/ How soon we pass from life to death.”

Dec. 23, 1760 – The Annual Town Meeting turns down a suggestion that “sealers of leather” be appointed for the coming year. [A sealer of leather attests to the quality and quantity of leather being sold.]

Dec. 23, 1760 – The Annual Town Meeting votes to show “their willingness and free consent that the people that live within and northward of ye Military Line that runs a cross ye Township of Ridgefield should be made a Distinct Ecclesiastical Society, and that they apply to the General Assembly for that purpose.” The meeting also votes “liberty to Abraham Nash and Isaac Gregory the privilege of building a House for their comfort on Sabbath Days where ye Select Men think proper and to stand during ye town’s pleasure.”

## 1761

April 13, 1761 – A special town meeting appoints Samuel Olmsted Esq. Samuel Smith Esq., and Stephen Smith “to examine ye records of Ridgefield respecting ye Grist Mill at Mamenasqua, and the covenant relating thereto, and report their opinion respecting ye same to a meeting of ye town or Proprietors of Ridgefield for further determination relating to said mill affair.” Apparently, there is a dispute about ownership of the mill site, established in a 1716 agreement.

May 1761 – Responding to the latest petition from residents of New Patent, the General Assembly appoints a committee to determine whether the northern part of Ridgefield should have its own ecclesiastical society or Congregational church.

May 14, 1761 – “Man is made after a fearful and wonderful Manner, imbued with noble intellectual Powers, a social Creature, capable of moral Government; and formed for Society both civil and religious,” begins the Rev. Jonathan Ingersoll of Ridgefield in a sermon before the General Assembly in Hartford.

October 1761 – The General Assembly, on the recommendation of its committee and the petition of residents, creates a second ecclesiastical society in Ridgefield and calls it Ridgebury.

Dec. 15, 1761 – The Town Meeting votes “that the Select Men of ye Town of Ridgefield or an agent by them appointed make application to the honorable General Assembly in order to get the annexment taken off of a certain tract of land lying in ye township of Ridgefield, which ye General Assembly in time past saw fit to annex to ye Town of Danbury.”

Dec. 28, 1761 – The First Society of Ridgefield (the First Congregational Church) votes that notices of society events and actions be posted on various trees in the village.

## 1762

Oct. 19, 1762 – John Whitlock donates land for a church building in Ridgebury “for and in consideration of love and respect that I have and do bear unto ye Dissenting Society in Ridgebury and to promote ye same.” [It is the first time “Ridgebury” appears in a town record. The church group is called “dissenting” because it voted to break away from the First Society whose church is in the village of Ridgefield.]

Dec. 20, 1762 – The Annual Town Meeting fills its usual offices, including Richard Olmsted as keeper of the pound, and John Benedict as collector of excises.

Dec. 22, 1763 – The Town Meeting orders the Select Men “to procure a book in order for recording Grants and Deeds of land in for ye Town use and upon ye Town’s cost, and in a manner that may be most advantageous to the town.”

## **1764**

1764 – The Rev. Richard S. Clark of Salem [Lewisboro/North Salem], N.Y., becomes the missionary priest to the Ridgefield and Ridgebury Episcopal congregations.

Dec. 11, 1764 – The Annual Town Meeting votes that the Town House be repaired and that “ye Select Men set up a sign-post within ye compass of ye Meeting House yard, and the same there to continue during ye town’s pleasure.”

## **1765**

Dec. 4, 1765 – The Annual Town Meeting grants “to ye Inhabitants of Ridgebury Parish the liberty of making use of ye yard of Samuel Gates for a pound the year ensuing.” [This is the first use of the word “Ridgebury” in an official town record, though it appeared three years earlier in a deed.]

## **1766**

Jan. 1, 1766 – An adjourned Town Meeting votes to build a new Meeting House, and asks the County Court to find a location.

Dec. 15, 1766 – The Annual Town Meeting orders “a pound to be erected near the place where Matthew Seymour’s Trading Shop stood, and likewise another Pound to be erected in Ridgebury Society, between John Whitlock House and the burying yard in said society; and each of them to be built with timber, at ye discretion of ye Select Men; and Caleb Lobdell was chosen the keeper of ye first, and John Whitlock the keeper of ye second mentioned pound, ye year ensuing.”

## **1767**

Dec. 16, 1767 – Thomas Frost, David Rockwell Jr., Jonah Smith Jr., Daniel Olmsted Jr. are chosen tythingmen for the coming year. [Tithingmen were like police at church meetings, making sure no one dozed off, and also handled disorderly and drunken people in town, including unruly youths.]

Dec. 25, 1767 – The First Society votes to reject whatever site the County Court had selected for a new Meeting House [see Jan. 1, 1766].

## **1768**

April 11, 1768 – The Town Meeting votes to tell the General Assembly that Ridgefielders would greatly favor moving the Superior Court and county courts from Fairfield to Norwalk.

April 28, 1768 – The Ridgefield-Redding town line is perambulated. [It is the first time the “Redding” line has been checked. The year before, when the perambulation was run, it was the Ridgefield-Fairfield line, but the Redding parish of Fairfield has since become a town of its own.]

April 30, 1768 – Matthew Seymour dies at the age of 76. Tradition says he established the town’s first trading post, located on Main Street near #149.

May 26, 1768 – Epinetus Townsend of Salem (Lewisboro/North Salem), N.Y., becomes missionary minister to the Episcopal congregations in Ridgefield and Ridgebury. He remains until July 1776, when the churches in Ridgefield stop meeting because of the Revolution. [Townsend is the last of the series of missionaries that had served the Ridgefield congregation since its founding. During the war he ministers to British troops and, in 1779 while on his way to Halifax, N.S., his vessel sinks in a storm in Boston Bay. All on board are lost, including him, his wife and their five children.]

Aug. 23, 1768 – The ecclesiastical society in Ridgebury votes to build a new church, 46 by 36 feet, and stipulates it should be finished by July 1, 1769.

Nov. 23, 1768 – The Congregational Church in Ridgebury calls its first full-time minister, the Rev. Samuel Camp, a 1764 Yale graduate, at a salary of 75 pounds. [Mr. Camp remains minister until 1804, when he retires due to failing health, but he does not die until 1811. He is buried in the Ridgebury Cemetery, a few doors north of the church. Alongside his tombstone are the identically designed, but smaller headstones of the three wives he survived: Hannah, who died in 1777, aged 34; Lucretia, died 1782, aged 35; and Mary, 1800, aged 55.]

Dec. 20, 1768 – Ebenezer Jones is chosen by the Town Meeting as constable to “collect ye duty on goods and merchandises imported into this Government by foreigners.” [Although Jones is chosen constable a number of times before and after this year, it is the only time this particular task is mentioned in the records.]

## **1769**

Jan. 18, 1769 – The Rev. Samuel Camp is ordained and installed at the Ridgebury Congregational Church, which has 18 members.

Dec. 12, 1769 – A tax rate of a half-penny on the pound is set by the Annual Town Meeting.

## 1770

Sept. 24, 1770 – The town votes not to build a new Meeting House and instead, repair the old one.

Dec. 10, 1770 – Jonah Foster is appointed a representative from Ridgefield to the Fairfield County Court “in behalf of ye town in order to get the report of a committee set aside, (respecting a highway in Ridgebury Society).” [The nature of the highway dispute is not disclosed.]

## 1771

April 15, 1771 – A Town Meeting tells the Select Men “to pay out of ye Town Treasury the sum of one pound, two shillings six pence lawfull money to Samuel Jacklin as a reward for his keeping Mary Dimoral, an indigent person.”

April 15, 1771 – Ridgefield agrees to join Danbury, Newtown, New Fairfield, Redding, and New Milford in petitioning the General Assembly “that a new county may be made in this colony, and that said Danbury may be made a county town.” [Clearly Ridgefielders and others are tired of making long trips to Fairfield, the existing county seat.]

May 1, 1771 – The on-again, off-again Meeting House project is on again. Plans for a new First Society Meeting House, 58 by 40 feet in size, are approved. It will have a steeple.

Aug. 20, 1771 – The First Society votes that the new Meeting House be built with volunteer labor, but if that can’t be done, to “hire help.” [The church is not completed until early 1800.]

Dec. 7, 1771 – The Town Meeting votes “that the Select Men examine into the circumstances of Thomas Dowse, and if they judge he be able to pay off the bill of cost that hath been occasioned by reason of his and his wife’s sickness, last winter, that they use their best endeavours to get him to pay off the same, and if occasion require, that they commence a suit against him for that purpose.”

## 1772

Dec. 3, 1772 – “We the subscribers warned Gorham not to entertain John Adam on peril of suffering the penalties of the law.”

Dec. 13, 1772 – The Town Meeting votes a tax of a half penny on the pound to cover town expenses for the coming year.

## 1773

Dec. 14, 1773 – The Town Meeting votes that “swine shall be free commoners in this town for the future.” The vote means that pigs are allowed to roam free in town. [*See also* Dec. 4, 1786].

## 1774

March 14, 1774 – The Town Meeting appoints “Col. Philip Burr Bradley an agent to appear in the town’s behalf and attend a Congress proposed to be held at Middletown on the last Wednesday of instant March in order to consult proper measures to evade evils this colony is apprehended to be in danger of by reason of claiming and attempting to defend the lands supposed to be within the limits of Connecticut’s charter, lying westward of New York Government.”

Dec. 14, 1774 – The town votes unanimously not to have any “claim to or engage to defense the lands supposed to be within the Limits of Connecticut charter lying westward of New York government.” [Connecticut has title to more than 3-million acres in Ohio, the so-called Western Reserve. It is not until 1796 that Connecticut finally sells the land to developers.]

## 1775

1775 – Ridgefielders destroy all the known barberry bushes that had been imported from the Old World after it is found that a fungus, carried on the shrub, is causing a “wheat blast” disease that is ruining the local wheat crops.

Jan. 30, 1775 – With only nine dissenters, the Town Meeting votes to repudiate the Continental Congress. The meeting goes on to state, “We do acknowledge his most sacred majesty King George ye 3<sup>rd</sup> to be our rightfull Sovereign, and do hereby Publicly avow our allegiance to him and his lawfull successors, and that we will to the utmost of our power support his throne and dignity against every combination in the universe ... It would be dangerous and hurtfull to the Inhabitants of the Town to adopt said Congress measures and we do hereby publicly disapprove of and protest against said Congress and the measures by them directed to as unconstitutional, as subversive of our real liberties, and as countenancing licenciousness.” The meeting also votes “that the town clerk be directed to make out a true copy of the above votes and transmit them to one or more of ye printers in New York that they may be published to the World.”

March 7, 1775 – Another town meeting is called on the Continental Congress issue. It adjourns to April 10.

April 10, 1775 – At an adjourned Town Meeting, “The question was put whether ye Town will explain their resolves of ye 30 of January last? Resolved in ye Negative.”

May 1, 1775 – Despite the Town Meeting’s Tory leanings, Ridgefielders begin the fight for freedom. Captain Ichabod Doolittle of Ridgebury is commissioned and, in the wake of the Battles of Lexington and Concord and responding to an act of the Connecticut Legislature, organizes the 7<sup>th</sup> Company of the Connecticut Fifth Regiment. More than a dozen Ridgefielders join, and serve in northern New York.

May 13, 1775 – Hezekiah Hawley, a farmer from Florida District, enlists in the Fifth Connecticut Regiment and winds up serving throughout the war, being discharged at West Point in June 1783. His eight years of service is longest of any of the approximately 275 men who served from Ridgefield. He fought at Ticonderoga, at Montreal, at Monmouth, wintered at Valley Forge and at what is now Putnam Park in Redding.

Dec. 7, 1775 – Annual Town Meeting changes its mind on joining the revolution. “On motion made, whether said meeting upon reconsideration, do disannul the resolves enter’d into and passed, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of January, 1775, and adopt and approve of ye Continental Congress, and the measures directed to in their Association, for securing and defending the rights and liberties of ye United American Colonies? Resolved in the Affirmative. Nem. Con.” [Nem Con was short for ‘nemine contradicente,’ which means “without dissent.”] The town clerk is ordered to make a copy of the resolution and send it to New York newspapers for publication.

Dec. 7, 1775 – The Town Meeting approves the appointment of a “Committee of Inspection agreeable to the 11<sup>th</sup> Article of ye Continental Congress.” The committee is charged with enforcing the trade boycott of British goods. Named to the committee is a “who’s who” of leading Ridgefield citizens: Samuel Olmsted Esq., Col. Philip Burr Bradley, Daniel Coley Esq., Jacob Jones, Stephen Smith, Timothy Keeler, Capt. Jonah Foster, Nathan Olmsted, William Forrister, John Benedict, James Scott, Ebenezer Jones, Abraham Betts, Matthew Keeler, Timothy Benedict, Nathan Stevens, Samuel Gates, David Platt, Bartholomew Weed, John Jones, Daniel Smith, Ichabod Doolittle, Abraham Gray, Abraham Nash, Silas Hull, and Azor Hurlbut.

## **1776**

September 1776 – William Lee, a corporal in Captain Northrop’s company, dies at the age of 23.

Oct. 28, 1776 – Jared Hine, a soldier from Ridgefield in Wadsworth’s Brigade, disappears in the Battle of White Plains and is presumed dead.

Dec. 23, 1776 – A Committee of Inspection is again appointed. It consists of 12 people, mostly from the first committee, but now including David Scott.

## 1777

Jan. 1, 1777 – Philip Burr Bradley of Ridgefield is commissioned a colonel in the “Army of the United States raised for the defence of American Liberty.” The commission is signed by John Hancock, president of the Continental Congress.

March 1777 – Jack Congo, an African-American from Ridgefield, enlists in the Fifth Continental Line. He later dies in the war.

April 4, 1777 – At the request of the governor and his Committee of Safety, a special town meeting selects James Scott, Matthew Keeler, Timothy Benedict and Samuel Gates “a committee to provide for ye families of such soldiers as shall enlist into the Continental Army, with necessaries, at the prices stated by law.”

April 4, 1777 – The Town Meetings votes “that this Town will give to each man that shall enlist as a soldier into the Continental Service (for three years or during the war, being an inhabitant of this town, till the quota of the town to fill ye Continental Army be completed) six pounds lawfull money for every year they are in said service, to be paid as follows, viz., six pounds at the time of their enlistment, the next six pounds to be paid within the second year, and so on yearly during their continuance in service; and those that engage that have families, if they die in service by sickness or sword, be paid to their widow or children one year after their death.” The meeting also agrees to borrow money to pay the soldiers, and to tax townspeople to pay the debt.

April 13, 1777 – Rumors of a British invasion prompt many residents to leave the village and hide in more rural sections of town.

April 25, 1777 – Twenty-six British ships, including 20 transports, arrive off Compo Point in Westport, led by British General William Tryon. About 2,000 men land and begin marching north through Westport to Weston, where they encamp.

April 26, 1777 – The British troops move through Redding and Bethel into Danbury, where they burn food and other supplies stored by the local revolutionaries. Nineteen houses, more than 20 stores and shops, and the Meeting House are burned.

April 27, 1777 – British troops march from Danbury to Ridgefield and take part in several skirmishes with some 700 American fighters, led by Generals Benedict Arnold and David Wooster. Wooster is mortally wounded on North Salem Road while Arnold has his horse shot from under him on Main Street. The British encamp off Wilton Road West.

April 28, 1777 – The British troops set fire to the Episcopal Church, which had been used for military storage, heavily damaging the building. It is a Sunday morning. The troops then head south to Compo.



May 2, 1777 – General David Wooster, who had been wounded at the Battle of Ridgefield, dies in Danbury.

May 2, 1777 – James Rogers, taken prisoner by the British, lists in a letter other prisoners taken during the raid on Danbury and the Battle of Ridgefield. Among them are James and Benjamin Northrop, and John Smith, all of Ridgefield.

May 26, 1777 – The Select Men ask the General Assembly for compensation for local losses during the British transit through Ridgefield. The petition says that “the enemy... burnt the gristmill and saw mill of Mr. Isaac Keeler of said Ridgefield, six dwelling houses, two barns, and killed and carried off a number of horses and cattle.” When the British Army “took up their quarters in that town for a night, they plundered the inhabitants of almost all their provisions and of a great part of their clothing, etc. – by which means many are reduced to the greatest straits and such a number that said town are unable to make adequate provision for the relief of the sufferers.” The assembly appoints a committee to investigate.

May 30, 1777 – Congress grants General Benedict Arnold a fully outfitted horse to compensate him for the one killed at the Battle of Ridgefield.

Aug. 13, 1777 – The General Assembly in Hartford gives Capt. Ebenezer Coe of Stratford 60 pounds in compensation for “a wound by a ball shot by the enemy” in the Battle of Ridgefield that “destroyed his right eye.”

Sept. 8, 1777 – Phebe Birchard dies at the age of 28. Within 18 days, her gravestone in Ridgebury Cemetery says, three of her children are also dead, probably of small pox.

Nov. 17, 1777 – The town meeting names a committee “to procure cloathing for the soldiers in the Continental Army (that the Assembly of this state has required the town to provide for.)”

Nov. 21, 1777 – The Select Men meet with Cyphax to examine the 20-year-old slave of the Rev. Jonathan Ingersoll. Mr. Ingersoll wants to free Cyphax, and under a recent law of the General Assembly, the Select Men must make sure he won't be a burden on the community. They “do judge him an able bodied man and as likely to get a living as men in common in his condition are, and do therefore approve of his being liberated or set free, according to an act of the Assembly.”

Nov. 24, 1777 – The Rev. Jonathan Ingersoll frees Cyphax.

Nov. 27, 1777 – John Watrous, constable, receives six wandering sheep and put them in the town pound. At the end of 20 days, they are sold “at the Ridgefield Signpost at an

outcry, at the beat of the drum.” The town takes in 17 pounds, 10 shillings. [“Outcry” is an old word for auction.]

Dec. 5, 1777 – A committee investigating Ridgefield’s losses in the Battle of Ridgefield reports to the General Assembly that 65 people report damages totaling 2,625 pounds. The biggest loss is Isaac Keeler’s mills, totaling 291 pounds. It takes two years before the assembly, burdened with other war expenses, finally reimburses all the losses.

Dec. 15, 1777 – The Annual Town Meeting votes that “one of the places for setting up advertisements for the warning Town Meetings for the future be a button wood tree before ye door of Jesse Benedict’s house.”

## **1778**

Jan. 8, 1778 – At a town meeting, “The question was put to said meeting, whether the articles of Confederation and perpetual Union, drawn up and published by the Honourable Continental Congress, be approved? Resolved in the affirmative.”

March 3, 1778 – Probably to raise money for the war effort, the town decides to sell its stores of salt, a valuable commodity used more for preservation of meats than a flavoring. John Benedict Esq. and Timothy Keeler 2<sup>nd</sup> are appointed “a committee to distribute the salt belonging to this town, as follows, viz., one quart thereof to each person of ye several families of the men as that are inhabitants of this town that have taken the Oath of Fidelity to the State of Connecticut, and likewise to each person of the families of the widows in this town that are accounted friendly to the United States of America, and likewise to each person of the families of those men of this town that are in the Continental Army, and said committee are to take 6d lawfull money for a quart of the same, of the persons they deliver the salt to, and that said committee attend upon the business of delivering the salt, on the afternoon of each Thursday and Monday in this month, till the whole be delivered out, and also keep and render true accounts of their doings in the premises, to ye Select Men by the first day of April next.”

March 3, 1778 – The Town Meeting votes to spent money to care for the family of Sgt. Elisha Gilbert, a Continental soldier who froze to death at Valley Forge that winter.

April 2, 1778 – A proprietors meeting votes to undertake a suit to gain ownership of the grist mill at Lake Mamanasco, belonging to the Burt family, many members of which are Tories.

April 7, 1778 – The Town Meeting votes “That a copy of the Regulating Act, lately published respecting prices etc., together with doings of the authority and Select Men of this Town, be sent to the printer, and procure a number of them to be printed as to furnish each householder in this town with one, and to be brought and distributed accordingly and the cost to be paid out of the town treasury.” [A convention of representatives of

northeastern states had gathered in New Haven in January and, in an effort to curb inflation, set the prices of many wares and services.]

Oct. 2, 1778 – The Rev. Jonathan Ingersoll dies.

Dec. 14, 1778 – The Annual Town Meeting votes “to each soldier in the Continental Army (that counts for this town) the sum of six pounds LM, and the money to be raised by way of tax or rate, made on the list of 1778, and each soldier is to receive ye same by the first of March next.” The grand list in the First Society totals 11,708 pounds that year.

## **1779**

Feb. 4, 1779 – Edward Jones of Ridgefield, found spying on American troops in Westchester County, is sentenced to death by a Court Martial at General Putnam’s headquarters in Redding. He is executed by hanging two days later.

May 7, 1779 – Asked whether the present mode of taxation in this state be agreeable,” the Town Meeting votes no. Ridgefielders then vote that “a mode of taxation be adopted whereby each inhabitant be taxed in proportion to their property.”

May 9, 1779 – Elijah, son of Bartholomew and Sarah Weed, drowns. He is 17 years old.

May 30, 1779 – Brigadier General Samuel H. Parsons and his brigade of 150 troops encamps in Ridgefield, probably at the corner of Main Street and West Lane, on its way to reinforce American forces on the Hudson Highlands.

July 11, 1779 – British General Tryon, who led the Redcoats at the Battle of Ridgefield, attacks Norwalk. Among those killed is Jacob Nash of Ridgefield.

July 13, 1779 – Major General William Heath and his brigade encamp in Ridgefield on their way to Stamford to defend the coastline that the British had been attacking. He remains in town for some days.

July 14, 1779 – Brigadier General John Glover and his brigade encamp in Ridgefield at least until July 21. Colonel Stephen Moylan soon joins him with more troops.

July 28, 1779 – Major General Robert Howe, stationed at Peekskill, is ordered by General Washington to move his troops to Ridgefield and to take command of the various troops stationed here. “The primary object of this command is to cover the country, and prevent as far as possible the depredations of the enemy,” Washington writes.

Aug. 9, 1779 – A group of Ridgefield Tories is gathered up at night and taken to a river, where they are given a “prolonged ducking,” reports historian D. Hamilton Hurd. Earlier that day, the Town Meeting votes against a resolution, “whether any person that was an

inhabitant in this town, and hath absconded, and gone over to or joyned the enemy of the United States (and hath returned or shall return into the town) be admitted to dwell in the town, without the liberty and approbation of the town first had and obtained by such person or persons? Resolved in the negative.”

Aug. 9, 1779 – Times are getting tough. Samuel Olmsted Esq. and Robert Edmond are appointed delegates for the town to a County Convention at Redding April 10 “in order to consult and adopt suitable measures to prevent the further depreciation of the paper currency and raise its value.”

Sept. 18, 1779 – General Washington orders the various troops under Major General Howe that had been encamping here to move to Westchester County.

Dec. 27, 1779 – Benjamin Chapman of Salem, N.Y., signs an agreement with the town to operate the grist mill at the outlet of Lake Mamanasco.

Dec. 28, 1779 – The Annual Town Meeting votes a tax rate of one shilling on the pound.

## **1780**

1780 – Around this time, “the canker-worm” appears and destroys the town’s apple crops “to a very alarming degree,” reports the Rev. S.G. Goodrich in 1800. The infestation continues until around 1794.

March 26, 1780 — Negro man named Quash found dead in Ridgefield on the highway at a place called Blacksmith Ridge...A Superior Court inquest rules he was intoxicated. On evening of 25th attempted to travel home and died of exposure.

April 25, 1780 – The Ridgefield property of James Morehouse, who “hath absconded and taken side with the British Troops against the United States,” is sold by order of the General Assembly.

June 29, 1780 – The town grants 30 shillings a month to each soldier from Ridgefield. The money would come from a tax.

Aug 23, 1780 – The Town Meeting decides to send delegates to the General Assembly “requesting that for the future, the method of raising and procuring soldiers for the present war may be by classing and each class to procure a man for said service.” [Classing involved dividing the town into districts or classes, and selecting representatives of each district to serve on a townwide committee. Each district would be responsible for procuring its allotment of people to serve in the Army. Usually, that was one man per class. This system was apparently adopted; *see* Feb. 8, 1781.]

Oct. 2, 1780 – Major John Andre is hanged at Tappan, N.Y., as a British spy. Accompanying him to the gallows is Lt. Joshua King, his guard, who later becomes one of Ridgefield's most prominent citizens.

Nov. 20, 1780 – The Town Meeting selects Nathan Smith and William Forrister “to receive the salt necessary for putting up the provisions required of this town to be provided for the army, and to perform every part of service respecting said provision, agreeable to an Act of the General Assembly of this State in their last sessions.”

Dec. 21, 1780 – The Town Meeting appoints Lt. Ebenezer Olmsted, a Continental army veteran who served under Col. Philip Burr Bradley and who is married to the Rev. Jonathan Ingersoll's daughter, as constable “to collect the state tax for the year ensuing.” It is an appointment the townspeople would later regret for many years.

Dec. 21, 1780 – The town Meeting allows “inoculation of ye small pox to be practiced in this town from this time to the first of April next and to be under the restrictions and regulations as is by law provided in that case.” [It had long been common knowledge that anyone who had survived small pox became immune to the disease. In the late 1700s, “inoculation,” also called variolation, involved infecting people with small pox, usually from pustules of people who had had mild cases, in the hope that they would become immune. It was often not successful – *see* April 8, 1782.]

## 1781

Feb. 8, 1781 – Meeting voted “that the method for raising and producing five men for this state service, to serve as soldiers in Col. Beebe's regiment at Horseneck for the term of one year, be by classing the inhabitants into five classes, and that three of the classes be divided out to procure soldiers for filling up the Continental Army, be formed into one class and the three committee men living in the southern three classes that were appointed to class the inhabitants as above expressed be a committee for the class of the southern part of the town, and so successively through the town to the north end thereof. And Samuel Olmsted Esq., Nathan Olmsted, and Robert Edmond be a committee for the southern class, and John Benedict Esq. Benjamin Smith and John Jones a committee for the second classes, and Col. Bradley, Stephen Smith and Silas Hull a committee fore the third class etc..... up to fifth class. [See Aug. 23, 1780]

Feb. 8, 1781 – Nathan Smith and Ichabod Doolittle are chosen a committee to “receive, inspect and put up” the flour and Indian corn received of the town to be procured by the Assembly of this State, agreeable to an Act of said Assembly passed Nov. 29, 1780.” [The flour and corn will be used to feed the troops.]

Feb. 15, 1781 – The Town Meeting picks “William Forrister and Timothy Keeler Esq. to assist the town treasurer in bringing into the treasury the money due by law to the town

treasury on account of military delinquencies (supposed to be on the hands of military officers).”

Feb. 21, 1781 – Colonel Beardsley comes to the dwelling house of Daniel Smith “to muster the soldiers procured by the town for filling up the Continental Army.”

March 23 1781 – Meeting chose Capt. David Olmsted, Col. Bradley Ebenezer Olmstead, William Forrister, and Stephen Norris a committee “to procure soldiers to compleat the town’s quota for filling up the Continental Army and this state’s service.”

March 28, 1781 – New recruits for the continental army are to be delivered to the Select Men at the houses of Clements Smith and Daniel College, in order to be taken to Danbury to be mustered, and delivered to an officer and forwarded to the Continental Army.”

July 1, 1781 – Troops under Comte de Rochambeau, on their way to Yorktown to assist General Washington, encamp overnight at several locations in Ridgebury.

July 2, 1781 – In a field near the intersection of Ridgebury and Old Stagecoach Roads, attended by the French troops, the first Catholic Mass is said in Ridgefield.

## **1782**

Jan. 8, 1782 – Matthew Keeler frees his slave, Dick, in consideration of his long and faithful service. However, he adds a proviso: “If at any time the above said Negro slave Dick should become dissolute and idle in spending his time and earnings, and thereby likely in case of any misfortune to become a charge to me or my heirs, then it shall be lawfull for me or my heirs to again take said Negro slave into my or their service during his natural life.”

Feb. 19, 1782 – The Town Meeting votes to “raise or procure five soldiers for filling up the town’s quota of ye Continental Army.” Captain David Olmsted, Benjamin Smith and Stephen Norris were put in charge.

April 8, 1782 – Sarah, daughter of Bartholomew and Sarah Weed, dies “by the small pox by inoculation [sic],” her gravestone in Ridgebury Cemetery reports. She was 26 years old [See Dec. 21, 1780].

April 30, 1782 – The town meeting decides to “send a committee to the Town of Danbury to confer with their committee respecting preferring a memorial to the General Assembly, praying that ye town of Danbury may be made a half-shire town, for holding courts, for the County of Fairfield.”

## 1783

1783 – The King and Dole Store is established on Main Street, and is many years later called Old Hundred. The store evolves into the D. F. Bedient Hardware store at the corner of Main Street and Bailey Avenue, which remains in business until 1998. The original King and Dole store is now the second floor of the offices of the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum.

Dec. 2, 1783 – Stephen Smith is chosen both town clerk and town treasurer at, what seems from the minutes, a quiet Annual Town Meeting. But it is a doomed Town Meeting, for apparently some kind of local rebellion was going on. [See Jan. 8, 1784.]

## 1784

1784 – Ridgefield's population is estimated at 1,700 people.

Jan. 8, 1784 – Something bad happened at the Dec. 2, 1783 Annual Town Meeting – or were there two different meetings that day? The Connecticut General Assembly reports that, “Upon the representation of Nathan Olmsted [and other] inhabitants of the Town of Ridgefield, showing to this Assembly that in ye forenoon of the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of December AD 1783, a number of persons belonging to said town, stiling themselves a Town Meeting, and then and there chose and appointed a lot of town officers for said town, who have been sworn to a faithful discharge of their duties of their respective offices, and that afterwards and the same day, the Select Men with the town clerk and a major part of the inhabitants thereof, convened together agreeable to the ancient usage and custom of said town, and appointed another set of town officers for said town, who have also been duly sworn, which is like to produce Great confusion and disorder amongst the inhabitants thereof. Whereupon, resolved by this assembly, that each of the aforesaid meetings and all the votes and doings thereof, be and the same are hereby declared to be utterly null and void, and the inhabitants of said town, who have a right by law to vote in Town Meetings, are hereby directed and (impowered) to meet together at the usual place of holding Town Meetings in said town on the third Monday of February next, at 12 o'clock in ye said day, and to choose town officers for said town for the current year, and do any other ordinary business proper to be done at a legal Town Meeting....”

Feb 16, 1784 – As ordered by the General Assembly Jan. 8, a new Annual Town Meeting takes place and elects pretty much the same officers that had been elected Dec. 2 at the first meeting.

June 28, 1784 – Ridgefield's followers of the Church of England have their first meeting since the Revolution. They vote not to repair the Episcopal church burned in the Battle of Ridgefield seven years earlier.

Aug. 30, 1784 – The Town meeting is asked whether “they would do anything toward erecting a court house and goal in the Town of Danbury? Resolved in the affirmative. Whether they would do anything by way of tax for ye purpose aforesaid. Resolved in the negative.” The meeting recommended that “subscription papers to be drawn and handed about by the Select Men, in order to know what the Inhabitants would contribute for the purpose aforesaid.” It then dismissed all the previous votes, except for the selection of Philip Burr Bradley as moderator.

October 1784 – Jonah Foster, who was “head of a class” in Ridgefield charged with hiring a soldier for the war effort, tells the General Assembly that a man was selected and paid “sixty hard dollars” to serve. However, before he could be mustered in, the recruit deserted and refused to be inducted.

Oct. 28, 1784 – The Episcopal church members in town vote to levy a tax of one shilling on the pound to support the church, including erecting a new meetinghouse measuring 40 feet long, 30 feet wide and 18 feet tall inside.

## **1785**

Sept. 20, 1785 – Lt. Benjamin Smith, a veteran of the Revolution, donates land to the Episcopal church, increasing the size of its lot on Main Street. With more land available, church members vote that the new church will be larger.

## **1786**

1786 – The list of taxable property of the First Society totals 9,395 pounds while the Second Society [Ridgebury] is 4,901 pounds.

April 10, 1786 – The Town Meeting agrees to “accept the resignation of Lt. Ebenezer Olmsted of his office of collector of ye state taxes on ye list of 1780, on conditions of his accounting with and paying to the Select Men the full that he has collected and received on the rates made on said list, and deliver up said rate bills and warrants to the Select Men.” The same meeting appoints Capt. Nathan Dauchy to “be ye collector of ye rates missing on the list of 1780 that are not collected, which Lt. Olmsted has resigned.”

April 26, 1786 – The proprietors of the Independent School House meet at the house of the Widow Clemence Smith and vote that “the proprietors of ye said Independent School House will take and appropriate the now Town House agreeably to the vote of the town respecting said town, and School House, and do wholly and fully invest the town with the privileges respecting said school house, which are mentioned in the town vote, respecting ye same.”

May 1786 – Responding to a petition from Redding residents who live in the Great Pond area, the General Assembly annexes to Ridgefield land that had belonged to Redding.



This odd spur of land had projected into Ridgefield for many years and residents there found it more convenient to do business in Ridgefield, which was closer.

July 6, 1786 – The Rev. Samuel G. Goodrich becomes the third minister of the Ecclesiastical Society. He later becomes the father of S.G. Goodrich, known to millions in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century as author “Peter Parley.”

Aug. 18, 1786 – The Town Meeting appoints Col. Philip Burr Bradley and three other prominent residents “a committee to assist the Select Men in a settlement of the taxes which appears by Ebenezer Olmsted, ye late collector’s rate bills, to be due on ye bills he lately resigned to the select man, which we made on ye list of ye year AD 1780.”

Sept. 30, 1786 – The Town meeting votes that “Ebenezer Olmsted, late collector of ye state taxes for ye town of Ridgefield, holden under arrest at the suit of the town of said Ridgefield, shall be liberated and discharged from said suit, upon condition for the said Olmsted shall fully vest the fee simple right” to a list of his property holdings in town. The property includes his 13-acre homestead on Main Street, about 25 acres scattered around town, eight tons of hay, his right to some cows, and “2,258 Continental Dollars.” He is ordered to deliver all to the town treasurer and told to post a 1,000 pound bond to guarantee payment of the owed taxes.

Nov. 30, 1786 – Perambulators, appointed by the selectmen of Redding and Ridgefield, survey the boundary between the two towns.

Dec. 4, 1786 – Town meetings begin being held in the Independent School House instead of the Town House.

Dec. 4, 1786 – A committee that includes such notables as Col. Philip Burr Bradley, Capt. David Olmsted and Lt. Joshua King, is ordered by the Annual Town Meeting to “to make sale of the real and moveable estate that the town hath obtained of Ebenezer Olmsted, late, failing collector of state taxes.”

Dec. 4, 1786 – The town votes “that swine have liberty to go at large on the highways and commons provided they are ringed, after they are two months old, and that in the months of December, January and February they may go at large without ringing.” [Rings were put in the noses of pigs to prevent them from rooting – digging with their noses in search of food. The technique today is considered cruel.]

Dec. 7, 1786 – In an unusual expression of gratitude, the Town Meeting votes that “the thanks of the town be given to Mr. Stephen Smith, late town clerk and treasurer, for his long and faithfull service in said capacities declaring their satisfaction with and high appreciation of his conduct.” [Smith had been town clerk since 1746 – 40 years of service recording deeds, minutes of town meetings, vital statistics and more.]

## 1787

March 8, 1787 – The Town Meeting is asked “whether they are willing the parish of Ridgebury should be incorporated into a distinct town.” Townspeople respond by voting “unanimously that the town will not make any opposition to the parish of Ridgebury being incorporated into a distinct town; and they are willing their memorial [request to the General Assembly] should be granted.”

March 12, 1787 – The town holds a sale of the property of Ebenezer Olmsted, who had pocketed the state tax collections he had made in 1780. The house fetches only 129 pounds – Olmsted had paid 300 pounds for it in 1782. The sale and confiscations are not enough to cover what is owed to the state, however, and the issue drags on.

Sept. 31, 1787 – The First Episcopal Society sets a tax on its members of four pence on the pound. However, commodities are accepted instead of cash: Rye is worth three shillings and six pence per bushel; corn, three shillings; oats, one shilling six pence; buckwheat, two shillings per bushel; and flax, seven pence per pound.

Oct. 21, 1787 – Michael Warren captures seven stray calves that “are very small and poor” and reports them to town clerk Benjamin Smith.

Nov. 12, 1787 – The Town Meeting votes unanimously to approve the Constitution of the United States, and names delegates to the state convention in January in Hartford to ratify the Constitution. “The delegates are instructed to declare the voice of the people at this meeting at their meeting aforesaid at Hartford,” the meeting orders.

Nov. 16, 1787 – Ambrose Olmsted Jr. becomes the first member of the Methodist Church in Ridgefield.

## 1788

Jan. 12, 1788 – In Hartford, Col. Philip Burr Bradley and Capt. Nathan Dauchy cast Ridgefield’s favorable votes as Connecticut becomes the fifth state to ratify the Constitution, which goes into effect a year later.

March 3, 1788 – More tax collection problems are discovered. The Town Meeting votes to appoint a committee to examine “the circumstances of Jacob Smith Jr., collector of state taxes, and find what he has on hand, what he has collected in said taxes, and what is due (or uncollected) on said taxes, and make a report thereof to this meeting.”

March 17, 1788 – Townspeople are not letting Jacob Smith escape his obligations. A Town Meeting is asked “whether Jacob Smith Jr. their late collector, be excused from collecting the remainder of the taxes due on ye lists of 1781 and 1782. Voted in the negative unanimously.”

Aug. 27, 1788 – In the first use of their new church building, members of the Episcopal congregation in town gather for their annual meeting to elect officers. The building's interior is still unfinished more than two years after the project started.

Dec. 8, 1788 – Henry Scribner sells David Olmsted a “blacksmith shop and coal house,” and, in an unusual look at the details of a smith's shop of the era, he details the contents of same: “one bellows, one anvil, one vise, one sledge, five hammers, one buttress, five pair of tongs, one pair of snippers, one breast wimble [a kind of drill], one polishing file, one coal shovel, one stake, two chisels, two swages [a block of iron with holes in it, used for shaping hot metal], one eye wedge, one lamper iron, and one coal rake.”

Dec. 22, 1788 – The Town Meeting votes that “the Oak Tree near Thomas Smith's dwelling, be and serve as a place to set up warnings instead of the old Chestnut.” [This tree stood at the southeast corner of Main and Prospect Streets.]

Dec. 22, 1788 – The meeting also votes “that for the future all rams that shall run at large between the first day of August and the 10<sup>th</sup> day of November, each year, shall be liable to be castrated by any persons, at the risk of the owner.” [In rut and pre-rut season, rams may be aggressive not only to other rams, but humans, and this law – variations of which are still on the books across the United States – is designed to control roaming rams that may be a threat.]

## 1789

1789 – The Rev. David Belden becomes the first post-war rector of the Episcopal Church. He lasts four months in the part-time post.

1789 – Timothy Keeler Jr., Nathan Dauchy, and Elijah Keeler build an “irons works” on the outlet of Lake Mamanasco, off North Salem Road, “being the old mill place where the grist mill lately stood that was burnt.” The operation continues into the 1800s, but by 1817, has closed.

June 28, 1789 – Itinerant Methodist preacher Jesse Lee gives his first sermon in Ridgefield in the Independent Schoolhouse on Main Street.

Sept. 15, 1789 – The Town Meeting votes to send Col. Philip Burr Bradley to Hartford to discuss “the state of ye taxes due from this town to the state treasury” – probably referring to the money tax collector Ebenezer Olmsted had pocketed in 1780.

Sept. 15, 1789 – In a rare case of official chastisement, the Town Meeting says it “disapprove(s) of ye conduct of the Select Men in receiving Town Orders on account of State Taxes.” [The details are not there, but it seems to have something to do with the handling of Jacob Smith Jr.'s faulty state tax collections – *see* March 3, 1788.]

Oct. 21, 1789 – Miriam Lobdell, wife of Josiah, dies at the age of 67. Her gravestone in Titicus Cemetery, however, reports very clearly that she died in 1287.

Nov. 14, 1789 – Ridgefield receives a notice from the town of Bedford, N.Y., that Peg Wilson, formerly a slave of Isaac Miller of Bedford, deceased, was freed “from a state of slavery by the last will and testament of Isaac Miller” and “is desired to pass and repass unmolested.”

Dec. 15, 1789 – The town votes to allow the building of a pound in Limestone District.

## **1790**

1790 – The census finds 1,947 people in Ridgefield.

Jan. 28, 1790 – Jesse Lee organizes a class in Ridgefield. The first members of the precursor of the Methodist Church here are Mr. and Mrs. Ichabod Wheeler and Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Keeler. The group meets in the homes of members.

Oct. 16, 1790 – Bishop Samuel Seabury of Connecticut ordains Dr. David Perry, a Yale graduate who is also a physician in town, as an Episcopal priest. Dr. Perry becomes the first settled minister here after the Revolution.

Feb. 11, 1790 – Ten years after Ebenezer Olmsted, collector of the state tax in the town, had failed to turn over his collections, the town is still dealing with the problem. It appoints a committee find a “speedy settlement” and takes an extraordinary step by voting to authorize the “Select Men [to] hire a collector to collect the arrears due on the rate bills ... as cheap as they can.”

Dec. 16, 1790 – The Annual Town Meeting votes to require that any collector of state or town taxes be required to obtain a performance bond. To this day, the town requires and provides a bond on the tax collector to assure that if a shortfall occurs, the town is protected.

## **1791**

March 1791 – The new Episcopal Church building is completed, nearly seven years after the project was first approved. Nonetheless, there is still no pulpit until 1799.

March 26, 1791 – Abijah Resseguie is born on a farm in Whipstick District. For many years, he is the proprietor of the Keeler Tavern. As a boy, he witnessed the last flogging at the whipping post at the corner of Main Street and Branchville Road. [*See also* Dec. 17, 1886 *and* April 16, 1887.]

Sept. 22, 1791 – The Rev. David Perry is named part-time rector of the resurrected Episcopal congregation in Ridgefield. There is considerable friction between him and church leaders, and he leaves the post in 1795.

Dec. 12, 1791 – Some sort of controversy is afoot as the Annual Town Meeting convenes to elect town officials. Ridgefielders vote “that in ye present meeting it shall be a rule to choose a town clerk, Select Men and constables by silent vote.” The meeting then picks Benjamin Smith to be town clerk, and promptly adjourns from the schoolhouse to the church, perhaps because of the size of the crowd. There, Lt. Joshua King, Nathan Smith, and Capt. Henry Whitney – all leading citizens – are elected Select Men. The meeting then decides the rest of the town officers would be selected “by voting by ye hand.”

## **1792**

1792 – Theophilus Burt, who had “absconded and taken side with the British troops against the United States of America” and had had his land confiscated, petitions the General Assembly to restore his title to the Ridgefield land. Some property near Lake Mamasco is returned.

April 9, 1792 – The issue of whether Ridgebury should be incorporated as a separate town comes up again and voters approve. However, when the voters are asked “Whether this meeting are willing to relinquish their right of choosing and sending two representatives to the General Assembly of this State,” they vote “in the negative.” It then votes that if Ridgebury is made a town, it should still join with Ridgefield in selecting the two representatives to the General Assembly. [Since the “town of Ridgebury” was never approved, this must have been a major issue.]

Dec. 10, 1792 – Apparently abandoning hope of ever collecting all the taxes due from Ebenezer Olmsted in 1780 and from perhaps other years, the Annual Town Meeting instructs the Select Men to “borrow such sums as shall be necessary to settle ye demands the state treasurer has against the town.” The town is apparently so hard up for money that the same meeting votes to sell “the books containing the law of ye United States ... to the best advantage for ye town.”

Dec. 10, 1792 – Ebenezer Olmsted isn’t the only taxing problem facing Ridgefield, who vote “that ye Select Men be instructed and authorized in ye behalf of ye town to borrow such sums as shall be necessary to settle ye demands the state treasurer has against this town.”

## **1793**

Aug. 9, 1793 – Samuel Griswold Goodrich Jr. is born in a house on West Lane. More than 100 books are written under his pen name, Peter Parley, in the 1800s, and his two-

volume autobiography, *Recollections of A Lifetime*, gives a rare glimpse into Ridgefield life in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Aug. 17, 1793 — Catee, formerly the wife of James Abbott, found dead in his house; A Fairfield County court inquest is “of the opinion that it was suicide occasioned by insanity of mind.”

Dec. 11, 1793 – Perhaps the town’s problems with the state tax collections have been settled, for the Annual Town Meeting votes: “The thanks of this meeting is hereby given to Major Joshua King and ye other gentlemen, Select Men and collectors, who have served the town in their several official capacities during four years last past, for their vigilance, assiduity and [unreadable] in their associative departments; and in particular for their spirited solutions in obtaining a settlement of the town’s debts due to the state treasury and individuals.”

## **1794**

Spring 1794 – Soon after the leaves open, canker-worms that have been infesting apple trees for several years appear. However, reports the Rev. S.G. Goodrich in 1800, “There came into the orchards several flocks of uncommon birds, a little larger than a blue-bird, of a brown color, and picked the worms from the trees, as was also the case with a number of flocks of pigeons, which greatly checked them, and the frost which happens sometimes the latter end of May entirely destroyed them. So we have not one canker-worm since that has been heard of. Respecting the bird, it has never been seen with us since.”

Sept. 29, 1794 – The Farmer’s Chronicle in Danbury contains an advertisement: “Hugh Cain, of Ridgefield, announces that he can full in the driest season, has now begun, and can continue to full, provided there should be no rain for six weeks to come. He makes all colors made in America (scarlet excepted). Mr. Cain operated a fulling mill for processing cloth at what is now Route 7 and Topstone Road.

Sept. 30, 1794 – The Connecticut Collector of Revenue issues a license to Timothy Keeler of the Keeler Tavern to sell “foreign distilled spirituous liquers.”

## **1795**

1795 – The first library, consisting of 150 volumes, is established in town, according to the Rev. S.G. Goodrich.

Aug. 11, 1795 – Tirzah Welker is divorced from John Welker for “the detestable sin of adultery.”

Dec. 14, 1795 – Nancy, daughter of the slave woman Jenny, belonging to Stephen Smith, is born. Under state law, she must be given her freedom at the age of 25.

## 1796

March 12, 1796 – William Resseguie sells Timothy Keeler Jr. and Daniel Olmsted, representatives of the First Society [the Congregational Church] “all right, title, interest, challenge, or demand that I ... have in and unto one certain pew in the gallery of the Meeting House in the First Society of Ridgefield, said pew being the northwest corner pew in the north gallery.” The price is \$6 – about \$75 today.

Dec. 12, 1796 – The town votes to erect a pound on Main Street at the corner of what is now called Pound Street.

## 1797

Jan. 5, 1797 – Philip Burr Bradley and Joshua King sell Epenetus How a third interest in the “hatter’s shop” near How’s house at Titicus. The price of 30 pounds includes a third interest in the “utensils” and “tools” of the shop, plus the land. It may be the earliest recorded mention of a hatting industry in Ridgefield.

May 11, 1797 – St. Stephen’s Church adopts the constitution of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Connecticut.

July 17, 1797 —Josiah Northrup, late of Ridgefield, found dead in the morning of the 17th of July. A Fairfield County court inquest rules he died “by hanging himself on a tree with a rope, he being insane.”

Dec. 4, 1797 – Pounds are apparently in considerable need. The Town Meeting establishes a publicly supported pound near Samuel Stebbins house and then, in an unusual move, votes “that liberty is granted to Robert Edmonds and his neighbors to erect a pound at their own expense between the dwelling houses of Stiles and Cyrus Edmonds.”

Dec. 4, 1797 – Seventeen years after small pox inoculation is first allowed [*see* Dec. 21, 1780], the Town Meeting again decides that “liberty is given to inoculation for the small pox, under the restrictions and regulations of law.” Unlike most votes, it is not unanimous, and the motion passes by “two thirds of said meeting.”

Dec. 4, 1797 – The Select Men are authorized to “repair ye roof of ye House where Yabecomb lives, at the town expense.” [Gilbert Yabbecomb, according to Silvio Bedini, came from Wales, and by the late 1700s, was a town pauper. He was not without income, however, for he was receiving a four-pound annuity from England until 1802 on property he owned at “Quarry Park.”]

## 1798

May 8, 1798 – The Town Meeting votes “on motion whether this meeting will do anything respecting the direction of Capt. Nathan Dauchy, administrator on the estate of Jacob Smith Jr. deceased, what further measure to pursue with Josiah Raymond, now imprisoned in Fairfield Goal for a debt due to said estate, of which the town is a principal creditor, (said Raymond having taken the poor prisoners oath), voted in the negative.” [This is a fascinating, but unclear action. Jacob Smith had been the state tax collector who failed in his duties – *see* March 3, 1788. How Raymond is connected to Smith is unknown. However, by taking the “poor prisoner’s oath,” Raymond is attempting to get out of jail by swearing he has no property of value and has not conveyed any property to others to escape his debts. The voters clearly didn’t want to get involved in whatever Capt. Dauchy felt might be done.]

Aug. 30, 1798 – The Town Meeting appoints three men to ascertain the value of land and buildings, as well as to enumerate slaves, in accordance with a recent Act of Congress.

Dec. 3, 1798 – The border between Ridgefield and Norwalk [now Wilton] is still in dispute, and the voters decide to ask old-timers what they recall about the border. The Town Meeting names Joshua King Esq. to “be agent to procure the testimony of some aged gentlemen to perpetuate the remembrance of the bounds between Ridgefield and Norwalk towns.”

## 1799

1799 – The First Society has 10 schoolhouses serving 433 children. Ridgebury has two more schoolhouses and about 75 children.

Feb. 14, 1799 – The Rev. David Butler becomes part-time rector of the Episcopal congregation, serving until 1804.

Oct. 18, 1799 – In the only perambulation ever recorded between the two towns, officials of Ridgefield and New Fairfield survey their joint boundary.

Dec. 2, 1799 – The Annual Town Meeting appoints Samuel Stebbins “to inspect the wood which shall be furnished for the town’s poor.” [Could it be that the people that are supposed to supply wood – the 1700s equivalent to today’s fuel oil – were providing an inferior product?]

Dec. 2, 1799 – The Select Men are told to take care of Joseph Jagger for the coming year, “by way of public venue to the lowest bidder.” [Joseph Jagger came to town in 1774. Writing in 1800, the Rev. S. G. Goodrich reported that there were three “foreigners in the town who are paupers,” one of whom was “named Jagger ... an old man about 95 years, an Englishman who served under the Duke of Cumberland at the Battle of Culloden in



1745, and was in Flanders with the regiment previous to that battle.” Mr. Goodrich said that Jagger “wrought jet work in cedar since he has been in this country, till he was near 80 years old and he will to this day ... sing a martial air he learned in Flanders and cry, ‘God save King George.’” Jet work may have meant inlaying cedar with pieces of polished black coal to form decorative articles. He died in 1802, supposedly at the age of 100.]

## **1800**

1800 – The census finds 2,025 people in Ridgefield, an increase of about 50 from 10 years earlier.

Feb. 24, 1800 – Danbury residents don’t like the drive to and through Ridgefield, but Ridgefield doesn’t like their approach to fixing the problem. Joshua King, Nathan Dauchy, David Olmstead, William Forrester, and Timothy Keeler 2nd are appointed to confer with the Select Men and other inhabitants of Danbury, “to see whether they can not accommodate the public and the Stage Proprietors with a road from Danbury through said Ridgefield without a committee’s being appointed for said purpose by the County Court.” A petition by Danburians had asked the court to “alter or straighten the road” between the towns.

March 21, 1800 – The Select Men are directed to attend a meeting on the new road between Danbury and Ridgefield.

March 22, 1800 – The First Society has a lottery for seats in the new church.

Dec. 1, 1800 – In this era, everyone shares in maintaining roads. However, they are compensated. The Town Meeting decrees that, in lieu of having to pay highway taxes, “each person who shall labor on the road shall receive 75 cents per day, and for a man and team, \$1.50 for payments toward taxes, provided the work was done before July 1. If the work was done after July 1, the pay for a man was 50 cents a day, and for a man and team, \$1.” [Back then, \$1 was worth about \$12 in 2008 money.]

Dec. 1, 1800 – Jonathan Andrews, S. Smith Baldwin, Daniel Warren, James Sturges, and Jonathan Whitlock are elected haywards. [Haywards were town officials who kept an eye on fences to make sure they were in good condition so livestock would not escape and damage crops. They could also impound stray livestock. “Hay” is from a Middle English word for hedge or fence.]

## **1801**

May 1801 – The Danbury and Ridgefield Turnpike is chartered by the state legislature. The road is to run through the Sugar Hollow and follows the path of today’s upper Danbury Road and Route 7. Incorporators include Joseph M. White and Ebenezer B.

White. Tolls include 12 cents, five mills, for a loaded ox cart, 8 cents for a loaded wagon, 4 cents for an empty wagon, and 4 cents for a man and horse. However, “all persons going to or returning from funerals, all persons going to or returning from public worship, and their traveling to and from mills, and all officers or soldiers on days of military exercise on command, who must necessarily pass through such gate, and all those who live near the place where such gate is erected, whose necessary daily calling requires their passing through such gate, shall be exempted...”

Aug. 19, 1801 – On his eighth birthday, Samuel G. Goodrich [“Peter Parley”] visits the grist mill at Lake Mamasco and while waiting for grist, “angled in the pond and carried home enough for a generous meal.”

Nov. 23, 1801 – The Annual Town Meeting, which until now had been held in December, takes place in November for the first time. [The year before, it had been Dec. 1 – and had been tending to creep earlier and earlier in December. Could it be they were trying to avoid the cold of the Independent School House, their meeting place?]

## **1802**

April 1, 1802 – Benedict Gregory sells Epenetus How his one-third interest in the hatter’s shop near How’s house, along with “one-third part of the time of two apprentices that are now bound to said How to learn the trade, art and mystery of making hats.”

May 1802 – The Greenwich and Ridgefield Turnpike Company, proposed by William Knapp and Andrew Mead, is chartered by the Connecticut Legislature, and would run through Lewisboro, Pound Ridge, Bedford and Stamford. It is never built.

Aug. 30, 1802 – After first voting against it, the Town Meeting agrees to a tax of one cent on the dollar “for the purpose of paying the bill of damages, and cost, which is allowed by the County Court, for that part of Danbury and Ridgefield Turnpike Road, which lyeth in said Town of Ridgefield, and that this town pay one half of the cost of laying out said road.”

Nov. 15, 1802 – The Annual Town Meeting sets taxes as two cents on the dollar for highways, and “six mills on the dollar for defraying the expenses of ye town.”

Nov. 15, 1802 – One of the more unusual agreements is recorded on the land records: “Know all men that I, Andrew Wood, do, for the consideration of three pounds, received of Anna Townsend, bind and oblige myself and heirs to find my mother, Mary Wood, the privilege of getting firewood sufficient for her own use, during her life.” The agreement is dated Dec. 7, 1797, five years earlier.

Dec. 5, 1802 – Lewis Mead dies on board the ship, Penman, on its passage from Canton, China, to New York. He is 25 years old.

Dec. 24, 1802 – Joseph Jagger dies. He is “supposed to be one hundred years old,” says a town vital record. [See Dec. 2, 1799.]

## **1803**

March 2, 1803 – A special Town Meeting is called to “choose an agent to carry on the law suit against the Town of Fairfield” to recover the costs of maintenance and support of “Timothy Fountain, a transient person.” The meeting not only votes against selecting an agent, but then instructs the Select Men “to withdraw the prosecution which they have commenced against the Town of Fairfield for the support of Timothy Fountain.”

Nov. 21, 1803 – Ridgefield officials don’t like out-of-towners messing with their women. The Annual Town Meeting votes “that the Select Men be directed to institute a suit at law in behalf of Susanna Smith 2nd, an inhabitant of this town, against Hart Weed of Southeast, Town in the State of New York, for the recovery of damages for seduction and a breach of covenant on the part of said Weed, to and with the said Susanna, and that said Select Men institute said suit in the State of New York, unless said business is settled to their satisfaction in some other manner.” Interestingly enough, in 1847, a man named Hart Weed is a judge in Putnam County, in which Southeast lies.

Dec. 6, 1803 – Timothy Keeler receives \$20.65 for acquiring a new bell for the Congregational Church.

## **1804**

1804 – The value of all property in the first society is listed at \$36,981, and in the second society, \$16,567, for a total of \$53,549.

Feb. 23, 1804 – Apparently, Redding residents are complaining about the road to Ridgefield center – probably today’s Florida Hill Road. A special Town Meeting deals with a “citation, served upon the Select Men of said Town of Ridgefield, upon a complaint made to the County Court for Fairfield County against said town of Ridgefield, of the road leading from the Meeting House in said Ridgefield to Reading line, near the dwelling house of Thomas Couch.” The meeting appoints an agent to oppose the citation and to borrow money to cover the costs of fighting it.

Oct. 1, 1804 – The Rev. David Butler leaves as rector of the Episcopal congregation in Ridgefield.

November 1804 – The Rev. Samuel Camp, pastor at Ridgebury Congregational Church since 1769, resigns because of failing health. Nonetheless, he lives nine more years.

Nov. 26, 1804 – Among the many officials elected at the Annual Town Meeting are Jeremiah Mead, Daniel Smith and Henry Whitney, the leather sealers. These officials certify that any leather sold in town is of good quality.

## **1805**

April 8, 1805 – The Town Meeting votes to “appoint an agent to oppose a petition which was brought before the Honorable General Assembly of the State of Connecticut, at their session in New Haven in October last, praying said assembly for liberty to extend the Turnpike Road leading from Danbury to Beldens Bridge in the town of Wilton, from said Bridge to the Bridge in Norwalk, at the stores or landing.” Since this extension is well south of Ridgefield, it is not clear why the town opposes.

April 8, 1805 – Without explaining why, the Town Meeting gives Joshua Burt and others permission “to erect barrs for the purpose of fencing up the highway leading from the dwelling house of David Mead around the west side of Mamanasco Pond, in such places as they shall thing necessary, which liberty shall remain during the pleasure of the town.”

Sept. 15, 1805 – The Rev. Russell Wheeler begins serving as the part-time Episcopal rector in Ridgefield.

Nov. 25, 1805 – The Annual Town Meeting withdraws the earlier action and says that Joshua Burt and other associates “shall no longer keep up barrs which they have erected by permission of this town across the road leading around the west side of Mamanasco Pond.”

## **1806**

1806 – The grand list drops to \$49,380.

May 1, 1806 – The Rev Russell Wheeler leaves as Episcopal rector.

Dec. 1, 1806 – The Annual Town Meeting votes that one half of the highway tax owed by the people “living on the main road leading from Ridgebury line to Wilton line” should be used to make improvements on the stretch of the road “between the dwelling houses of Benjamin Benedict and John Scott.”

Dec. 1, 1806 – The Select Men are told “to furnish necessary tools to be used at each of the burying yards in this town for the purpose of digging graves.”

Dec. 1, 1806 – The Select Men are also “directed to make temporary repairs on the house where Gilbert Yabbacom resides.” [*See* Dec. 4, 1797.]

Dec. 14, 1806 — At about 7 a.m. the sky over Ridgefield brightens as a meteor, described as looking like the size of the moon, passes over Ridgefield and explodes as it hits the ground in Easton, then the eastern part of Weston.

## **1807**

May 2, 1807 – The Rev. Elijah G. Plumb becomes part-time Episcopal rector in Ridgefield.

Sept. 14, 1807 – The early morning is lit by a ball of fire, described as nearly the size of the moon, passing across the sky. It explodes several times and the sound is like thunder. The next day, a piece of the meteor is found in nearby Weston. It weighs 25 pounds and is now in the mineralogical collection at Yale.

Nov. 23, 1807 – The Annual Town Meeting votes that “the inhabitants living within the limits of each school district may procure one scraper for each district for the purpose of working and repairing the roads in the same; and the expense of procuring the scraper shall be deducted from the amount of the highway tax in each district that shall procure a scraper as aforesaid...The scraper furnished by Mr. Ezra Mead the last year shall be a model.” [Horse-drawn scrapers leveled the dirt road that had been rutted by wagons and damaged by erosion.]

## **1808**

1808 – The Grand list totals \$51,717.

Oct. 5, 1808 – A charter is granted to Jerusalem Lodge 49, A.F. and A. M. The Masons are thus the oldest extant organization in Ridgefield.

Nov. 21, 1808 – The Annual Town Meeting, held at the Independent School House, votes not to build a town house (town hall) and instead to approach both “the committee of the Presbyterian Society, or the wardens of the Episcopal Church, for liberty to hold town and freemen’s meetings for the future in the Presbyterian Meeting House or Episcopal Church” and to pay them up to \$10 a year for that liberty.

Nov. 21, 1808 – Voters agree to remove the pound on Main Street, and instead have it on the land of Amos Baker, near and north of the bridge above Samuel Stebbins dwelling house. This may have been on Grove Street.

Nov. 26, 1808 – The first meeting of the Jerusalem Lodge of Masons takes place in Amos Smith’s tavern at Main and Prospect Streets.

## **1809**

April 1, 1809 – Dr. David Perry, a Ridgefield physician who had been ordained an Episcopal priest in 1790 and served briefly as rector here, quits the Episcopal Church to become a Baptist. He dies three years later.

Nov. 20, 1809 – The Annual Town Meeting takes place at the “Presbyterian Meeting House” – the Congregational church on the green. The highway tax is lowered to one cent on the dollar while the town tax is raised to eight mills on the dollar.

## **1810**

1810 – The census finds 2,103 people in Ridgefield, an increase of 78 from 10 years earlier.

1810 – The grand list totals \$53,360.

1810 – The Episcopal Church building in Ridgebury, unused for 20 years, is torn down.

1810 – Returning to her cave on a stormy night, Sarah Bishop, the hermitess of West Mountain, slips, falls down a rocky hillside, and dies. Searchers find her several days later wedged between masses of rocks.

Dec. 13, 1810 – Annual Town Meeting is back to mid-December. Joshua King and others are named commissioners to procure scrapers to be used to repair the highways, and to acquire the timber and planks needed for repairing the bridges. They are also authorized to oversee bridge repairs.

Dec. 13, 1810 – The Town Meeting appoints several agents to “prosecute the town of Wilton for supplies which have been furnished, or which may hereafter be furnished, by the Select Men of this town to the wife and family of Isaac Gregory.” [The Gregory family apparently came from Wilton and was destitute. The town was helping them but expected Wilton to pay for the help since the Gregorys were not legal residents of Ridgefield.]

## **1811**

Jan. 22, 1811 – The Rev. Samuel G. Goodrich leaves his post as minister of the Ecclesiastical Society.

April 8, 1811 – A Town Meeting appoints a committee “for the purpose of making propositions to the Town of Wilton respecting a settlement of the line in dispute between the said town of Ridgefield and said town of Wilton.”

## 1812

Jan. 15, 1812 – The Rev. Reuben Hubbard becomes part-time rector of St. Stephen's Church.

Feb. 14, 1812 – Abigail Northrop dies of “a prevailing fever.” She is the first of 29 Ridgefielders to die of the “prevailing fever” over the next year. [“Prevailing fever” was a term that covered such diseases as malaria, typhoid fever, and yellow fever.]

Feb. 20, 1812 – For reasons that are not stated, a Town Meeting decides to oppose “the petition of Joseph Warren, William Whiting and Stephen Raymond, praying the Honorable County Court, to send out a disinterested committee or otherwise to examine – lay out – a new road, and make such alterations as public convenience may require, from the Meeting House in this town through the towns of Wilton, New Canaan, and Norwalk to the Port of Five Mile River.” [That port was today Rowayton Harbor.]

March 1, 1812 – The Rev. Reuben Hubbard unites Peggy Lobdell and David Dauchy in marriage. Although many Episcopal marriages had occurred in town previously, this is the first one ever recorded in a record book.

June 10, 1812 – Delight Benedict, teacher immortalized in Samuel Goodrich's *Recollections of A Lifetime* many years later, dies at the age of 55 of the “prevailing fever” [see Feb. 14, 1812].

Dec. 9, 1812 – The Annual Town Meeting accepts the latest perambulation of the line between Wilton and Ridgefield.

Dec. 16, 1812 – Waterbury is suing Ridgefield to recover the costs of taking care of “the Widow Sarah Bouton,” whom Waterbury maintains is a Ridgefielder. Ridgefield officials think she came from New York and commission an investigation to see whether her late husband, Fairchild Bouton, was a New Yorker. The town meeting votes to fight the Waterbury suit, if investigations show she was never a legal resident of the town.

## 1813

Jan. 11, 1813 – The Town Meeting votes unanimously not to accept Sarah Bouton as a resident of the town [see Dec. 16, 1812].

Jan. 11, 1813 – Voters agree to buy planks to repair the bridge near David Banks' house.

Feb. 14, 1813 – Captain Henry Whitney dies, the last of 29 people who have succumbed in a year due to a “prevailing fever” [see Feb. 14, 1812].

June 7, 1813 – A committee meets to plan a July 4 community rally in support of the War of 1812. Since the fourth is a Sunday, the Sabbath, members of the “Peace Party” move that the celebration be July 5, but they are defeated.

July 4, 1813 – A large “celebration” supports the war effort, and includes patriotic readings, a military demonstration, and music. Expenses include \$1.09 for three and a half quarts of rum, \$1 for 10 pounds of cheese, and \$18.25 for a keg of powder.

Nov. 29, 1813 – Annual Town Meeting votes to “approve of the doings of the Select Men relative to the agreement they have made with the Town of Waterbury, respecting the maintenance and support of the widow Sarah Bouton, and also their agreement made with her children.” [There’s no clue as to the nature of the agreement that ends a dispute lasting nearly a year – *see* Dec. 16, 1812.]

## **1814**

1814 – The town’s grand list totals \$54,611.

Dec. 5, 1814 – The Annual Town Meeting decides that “permission is given to Thaddeus Keeler 2<sup>nd</sup> to add to his store on the south end 10 feet in width.”

## **1815**

Dec. 4, 1815 – The Town Meeting agrees that “swine are permitted to go at large on the commons and highways in this town, provided the owners thereof keep them ringed with at least one good ring made of iron in the center of the nose of each.” If swine are found without a ring, “it shall be the duty of the haywards, and it may be lawfull for any other person, to impound them, and the owner or owners of such swine shall pay the poundage by law allowed before they are released out of pound.” [*See also* Dec. 4, 1786.]

Dec. 4, 1815 – The town is still looking for its own permanent meeting place. Amos Smith and five others are named a committee “for the purpose of viewing the store and land appertaining thereto, belonging to Thomas R. Wilson, and of ascertaining the price for which it may be obtained, and the probable expense it would cost to make repairs and accommodations for a Town House.” The building is located near the Episcopal Church.

## **1816**

1816 – The Grand List of taxable properties totals \$55,557.

Jan. 15, 1816 – After hearing the report of its committee, the Town Meeting votes not to buy the land and store of Thomas R. Wilson. The meeting is then asked whether it wants “at this time to make provision to build a Town House” – what we today call a town hall. The answer is “No.” The meeting then votes to appoint a six-member committee “to view and report to a future meeting a suitable place on which to erect a Town House.”



March 14, 1816 – The Town Meeting appoints agents “to carry on a suit at law in behalf of this town against the Town of Fairfield, for supplies furnished by the Select Men to Daniel King, a resident of this town, who is said to be an inhabitant of said Town of Fairfield.”

Oct. 7, 1816 – The Town Meeting reaffirms earlier positions that Ridgebury should be allowed to become a distinct town of its own. But the meeting also votes that, if this should happen, Ridgefield should not give up one of its two representatives to the State Legislature.

Dec. 2, 1816 – Ridgefielders are taxed two cents on the dollar of assessed value to cover highway maintenance for the coming year. However, one can get around paying cash by doing the highway work himself in lieu of taxes [*see* Dec. 1, 1800]. But it appears that some people are getting paid more than they are worth, for the Town Meeting votes that “The surveyors of highways be directed not to allow any person who labors on the highways in discharge of his tax, a greater sum than in his opinion he really earns.”

## **1817**

1817 – Jerusalem Lodge of Masons builds its Masonic Hall on Main Street. It later serves as a town hall. It burns in the Fire of 1895 and is replaced by the existing building, just south of today’s Town Hall.

March 20, 1817 – The Rev. Samuel M. Phelps is selected as minister of the First Society church. In appointing Mr. Phelps, the Ridgefield society breaks with the consociation of western Fairfield County churches for reasons that are not clear.

April 14, 1817 – Overfishing is apparently causing problems in Ridgefield. The Town Meeting decides that “no person or persons shall draw any sein or seins, use or employ any hook, pot or other implement by which fish are or may be caught or taken, in the Round Pond so called in said Ridgefield for the term of two years from and after the first day of April AD 1817, under the penalty of \$10 for every fish so taken or caught.” [\$10 then is about \$125 today, so that’s a pretty stiff fine.]

Nov. 17, 1817 – Apparently people are complaining about the quality of the Ridgefield portion of the main highway between Wilton and Ridgefield, and Ridgefielders don’t want county officials deciding how it should be handled. The Town Meeting votes that “Nathan Dauchy and Jared Olmsted Esq. be agents in behalf of this town to oppose the petition of Matthew Keeler and others now pending before the County Court for Fairfield County, relative to laying out a road leading from the dwelling house of Benjamin Jones in said Ridgefield to Wilton line, and through the Town of Wilton as is specified in said petition.”

Dec. 8, 1817 – The Town Meeting gathers, probably at the church, but then adjourns to Masonic Hall and rescinds the appointment of Dauchy and Olmsted to fight the Wilton road petition [*above*]. Apparently the move to Masonic Hall is another sign of a continuing problem: A decent place to gather for government business. The meeting then votes that “The Select Men be directed to procure some convenient place for the town to assemble in to hold their future meetings.”

Dec. 25, 1817 – St. Stephen’s Church, completed in 1791, is seriously deteriorating because of lack of money to keep it in repair, and the church vestry votes to name a committee to repair the roof and windows, and to build a steeple that had been cut from the original construction plans. Church members are asked to pledge money.

## **1818**

1818 – The town’s tax base totals \$54, 013.

April 1818 – The Rev. Reuben Hubbard leaves as rector of St. Stephen’s.

April 13, 1818 – A Town Meeting instructs the state representatives “to use their influence to have a convention called to form a written constitution for this state, and that the clerk furnish them with a copy of this vote.”

April 13, 1818 – The Town Meeting decides that “Lydia, a woman of colour, and late servant of the Widow Hannah Wilson of this Town who is now a pauper, be, and she hereby is freed from slavery.”

April 13, 1818 – First fishing is banned at Round Pond [*see* April 14, 1817]. Now, the Town Meeting extends the ban to Bennett’s Pond, beginning May 1 and lasting two years.

June 15, 1818 – The Rev. Charles Smith becomes part-time rector of St. Stephen’s Church, remaining until 1823.

July 4, 1818 – The Town Meeting names Joshua King and Abner Gilbert Jr. as delegates to a state constitutional convention in Hartford Aug. 4

Sept. 24, 1818 – “Nab, a woman of colour,” dies at the age of 40. She had been a servant of the Matthew Seymour, who died two years earlier at the age of 94.

Oct. 1, 1818 – The Town Meeting gathers to vote on the proposed state constitution that had been approved Sept. 15, 1818, by the convention. The vote was 169 in favor, and 108 opposed.

Dec. 9, 1818 – The fishing ban at both Round Pond and Bennett’s Pond is extended indefinitely.

Dec. 23, 1818 – Ira Keeler of Ridgefield, age 29, dies when his vessel is shipwrecked off Cape May, “when every person on board perished,” reports his tombstone in Titicus Cemetery.

## **1819**

1819 – Renovations to St. Stephen’s Church, including addition of a steeple, are completed, but the steeple lacks a bell.

Oct. 11, 1819 – The town agrees to pay Dr. Nehemiah Perry \$20 and Doctor David Richmond \$4.50 “for their attendance, amputating the leg of Josiah Lobdell, and for medicine.”

Dec. 20, 1819 – The Jerusalem Lodge of Masons acquires land on Main Street for a meeting hall.

## **1820**

1820 – The census finds 2,301 people in Ridgefield, an increase of nearly 200 in 10 years.

1820 – The town’s Grand List totals \$30,475.

March 19, 1820 – Stephan Norris and 14 others petition the General Assembly that their 310 acres in Ridgebury along George Washington Highway, given to Danbury in 1736, be re-annexed to Ridgefield. They say the current arrangement causes great inconvenience, including the fact that most of the landowners live in Ridgefield and few people know which town to pay their taxes to.

April 1820 – 43 years after the British burned the old Episcopal church on Main Street, St. Stephen’s Church petitions the Connecticut General Assembly for compensation – “praying for a remuneration of damages sustained in consequence of the injury done to the former church belonging to the Parish by being used as a storehouse for provisions by the commissary in the time of the Revolutionary War.” The General Assembly quickly rejects the plea.

May 26, 1820 – The General Assembly, meeting in New Haven, returns 310 acres to Ridgefield that had been annexed to Danbury in 1736 [*see* March 19, 1820].

Oct. 2, 1820 – The problems of the poor are apparently increasing, and the town sets up a “Board of Relief.” Samuel Stebbins, Aaron Lee, Benjamin Lynes, Elijah Hawley, and Runa Rockwell are elected to the board.

## 1821

Jan. 4, 1821 — Col. Philip Burr Bradley, who led the Fifth Connecticut Regiment in the Revolutionary War and became a leading citizen of the town, dies at the age of 82.

Oct. 1, 1821 – A town tax of one cent and five mills is set. The highway tax of two cents on the dollar is levied. Town Meetings are in the dwelling house of Amos Smith.

## 1822

April 1, 1822 – The winter must have damaged a lot of roads because a Town Meeting rescinds the highway tax of two cents, and a new tax of four cents is levied. However, property owners could avoid paying the tax but working on the roads themselves. Compensation for road work is 75 cents a day, or \$1.50 if “what shall be deemed by the surveyors a good sufficient team and tools” is supplied by the worker.

April 1, 1822 – The town pays Runa Rockwell \$4.77 for schooling the children of the “Widow Parsons...after she became one of the paupers of the town.”

April 24, 1822 – Hiram Keeler Scott, who becomes one of Ridgefield’s most prominent citizens of the century, is born in the Scotland District. His birth is recorded by Samuel Stebbins, town clerk for 35 years. Scott grows up to be the only town clerk to exceed that tenure at town clerking, with 37 years.

Oct. 7, 1822 – The town pays Stephen Norris \$4.75 for “supplies furnished Nathaniel Northrup and timber for repairing a bridge.”

Oct. 21, 1822 – Jared Ingersoll, son of the Rev. Jonathan Ingersoll, second minister of the First Congregational Church, dies in Philadelphia. Unlike his father, who was an ardent Tory, Jared Ingersoll sympathized with the colonists in the Revolution. He settled in Philadelphia, was a friend of Alexander Hamilton and, in 1812, was candidate for vice president of the United States on the Federalist ticket, headed by DeWitt Clinton.

## 1823

1823 – S.G. Goodrich publishes his first Peter Parley book, *Parley’s Tales of the Sea*, aimed at youngsters. Over a hundred more will be turned out by his publishing company, including many school textbooks, during the next 40 years.

May 26, 1823 – The Rev. Origen P. Holcomb becomes part-time rector of St. Stephen’s Church, serving until 1831.

Oct. 8, 1823 – Even scandals get aired at public meetings. The Town Meeting votes “that upon William H. Seymour’s paying and discharging all the expenses which arose in consequence of Abigail Rockwell having an illegitimate child, which is now dead, the

Select Men are hereby directed to give him up two certain notes of hand now lying in the Town Treasury which were given to indemnify the town against any expenses which might arise for the support and maintenance of said Abigail and said child.”

Dec. 23, 1823 – A tree falls on John Benedict, killing him. He was 71 years old.

## **1824**

1824 – The first Methodist Church is erected in Ridgefield at the corner of North Street and North Salem Road, land now part of the cemetery.

May 24, 1824 – Four years earlier, the General Assembly gave back land that had been annexed to Danbury, but apparently the action was unclear. Thus, the town names Jesse L. Bradley, Esq. as its agent to petition the General Assembly “to render more definite a resolve passed in a General Assembly...annexing about 310 acres of land belonging to the Town of Danbury to the Town of Ridgefield.”

Oct. 24, 1824 – As usual, the town votes that “swine may run at large on the commons and highways in this town, provided they are ringed with a good iron ring in the snout of each,” but this time, they add that “the Select Men cause the foregoing vote relative to swine to be published in the Norwalk Gazette as the law directs.”

## **1825**

1825 – The Grand List totals \$33,726.

## **1826**

Oct. 1, 1826 – Hezekiah Hawley, who served eight years in the Revolution – longer than any other enlisted man from Ridgefield, dies at the age of 70.

Oct. 2, 1826 – The highway tax is down to two cents on the dollar.

## **1827**

Oct. 1, 1827 – Apparently the town faces a lot of legal problems, for Ridgefielders vote that “Jesse L. Bradley, Esq., be an agent to defend the Town of Ridgefield in any suit in which said town may be engaged during the year ensuing.” In effect, the voters are appointing a town attorney. The same position is not filled the next year.

## **1828**

1828 – St. Stephen’s Church finally buys a bell for its steeple, built nearly 10 years earlier.

1828 – A blind, eight-year-old girl named Frances Jane Crosby moves to a house at the corner of Main Street and Branchville Road. Fanny Crosby leaves town at age 14, and

goes on to compose more than 8,000 hymns, among the most famous of which is “Safe in the Arms of Jesus.” She dies in 1915.

March 20, 1828 – William Edmond of Newtown sells Robert C. Edmond of Ridgefield three acres “at a place called Florida.” This is the first mention of “Florida” in Ridgefield’s geography. Nearly two centuries later, no one is able with certainty to explain why Florida District, Florida Road and Florida Hill Road are so called.

April 2, 1828 – Moses Norris sells Moses K. Norris a half interest in “comb makers shop.”

Oct. 6, 1828 – The Town Meeting votes that “the Select Men adjust and settle the claim of Doctor Thomas Wilson, for his service and attendance on those who had the small pox, by direction of the Board of health, in the year 1826.”

Nov. 18, 1828 – The boundary between Ridgefield and Redding is perambulated and 16 monuments are noted.

## **1829**

May 1829 – The General Assembly incorporates the Sugar Hollow Turnpike Company to run a highway from Georgetown through Ridgefield north to the Danbury and Ridgefield Turnpike Road near the dwelling house of Thomas Sherwood in Ridgefield. Near the north end of the Danbury and Ridgefield Turnpike, the Sugar Hollow Turnpike continues northwesterly through Mill Plain – then part of Ridgefield – to the New York state line.

May 2, 1829 – The vestry of St. Stephen’s Church votes to hire Philo W. Jones to ring the new church bell on Sundays. His salary is \$2.50 a year. [That would be about \$45 in today’s money.]

Oct 5, 1829 – There is a movement in Fairfield County to build a “work house” or “house of correction” to handle those convicted of breaking the law. Ridgefield doesn’t like the plan, and at a Town Meeting, voters agree that “In the opinion of this meeting it is inexpedient at the present time to erect a publick work house in this county and we hereby request our representatives to oppose the adoption of the measure at the proposed meeting to be holden at Fairfield” the next week.

Dec. 31, 1829 – The Rev. Samuel M. Phelps ends his services as minister of the Ecclesiastical Society.

## **1830**

1830 – The census finds 2,305 people in Ridgefield, only four more than 10 years earlier.

1830 – The town's Grand list totals \$30,972.

Jan. 18, 1830 – Ridgefield native Stiles Hawley, “a candidate for the gospel ministry,” drowns in attempting to cross the Kaskaskia River in Illinois. He is 32 years old.

Feb. 8, 1830 – Pressure is still on to build a county work house, but Ridgefield isn't buying it and explains why at a Town Meeting: “We do think it inexpedient to subject the county of an expense for the erection of a house of such description, because we are impressed with the belief that the expense of erecting a house necessary and convenient for said purpose will be attended with heavy costs and will not answer the design contemplated.”

June 8, 1830 – Henry Irving Beers is born on a farm in the Florida District. In 1863, he and two partners purchase a farm in Rouseville, Pa., where they strike oil, and make a fortune. They once refuse an offer of \$4 million – a quarter of a billion dollars in today's money – for the property.

Oct. 5, 1830 – Voters tell the town treasurer “to pay Amy Lobdell ten dollars for her services in attending on her Mother in her last sickness, and charge the same to the town.” [While the town often helps pay for the care of poor people, this is an unusual case in that a daughter is being paid for taking care of her mother.]

## **1831**

May 13, 1831 – The Rev. Charles J. Todd becomes part-time rector of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, serving until 1834.

May 25, 1831 – The First Ecclesiastical Society selects the Rev. Charles Selleck as minister and agrees to rejoin the Consociation of the Western District of Fairfield. Mr. Selleck begins an active effort to recruit members to the church.

Oct. 3, 1831 – The quality of roads in town is becoming an increasing concern at Town Meetings. The highway tax is raised to four cents on the dollar and voters name a committee “to view New Lane, so called, and report to this meeting in the expediency of widening the same.” [New Lane is the western end of Branchville Road.] Another committee had looked into widening the road from the west end of Long Bridge to the main road near Jacob Dauchy's – i.e., western Farmingville Road – and the voters decide to reject the idea.

Oct. 31, 1831 – The committee on New Lane finds various encroachments had been made by landowners into the road, which was supposed to be two rods wide (33 feet), but was only 40 to 44 links wide (27 to 29 feet). If these encroachments are removed, no widening is necessary, the committee tells a satisfied Town Meeting.

Nov. 11, 1831 – The road from Ridgefield to Wilton [now called Route 33, Wilton Road West] is the subject of complaints, especially in the area of Flat Rock and Pot Ash Hill (north of Silver Hill Road). A committee is appointed to determine whether the existing road should be repaired, or a new route found.

Nov. 12, 1831 – The Right Rev. Thomas Church Brownell, third bishop of the Connecticut diocese, consecrates “the Protestant Episcopal Society of this town by the name of Saint Stephen’s.”

Nov. 26, 1831 – “Emily, a girl of colour,” dies at Philip Bradley’s house.

## **1832**

Jan. 12, 1832 – Samuel Hawley and Abraham Holmes are added to a committee “to view the contemplated route for a highway leading from Ridgebury to the First Society.”

April 2, 1832 – A committee investigating what to do about Wilton Road West near Pot Ash Hill makes a report to the Town Meeting, but voters decide not to accept it. [The nature of the report is not revealed in meeting minutes.]

April 12, 1832 – Faced with the need to do something about Wilton Road West, the voters approve spending \$200 on repairs. [That’s about \$3,900 in today’s money.]

April 23, 1832 – Perambulators appointed by the selectmen of Wilton and Ridgefield survey the boundary between the two towns

May 1832 – The General Assembly allows the Danbury and Ridgefield Turnpike Company to alter its route near the northern and southern ends because of difficult hills the road passes over.

May 1832 – The Simpaug Turnpike Company is incorporated by the General Assembly. The road begins at the Sugar Hollow Turnpike [now Route 7] in Ridgefield, passes into Redding and onto what is now Bethel, but was then part of Danbury.

Nov. 5, 1832 – The Town Meeting decides that “horses, mules, and horned cattle shall not be suffered to run at large on the highways in this town.”

Dec. 22, 1832 – The town votes to settle a suit, brought by Newtown, over the costs of taking care of Huldah Sharp “alias Floriana Kelsey.”

## **1833**

Feb. 1, 1833 – The town faces proposals to build two new roads, and votes both down. Then voters agree to spend up to \$200 to fix the road between Ridgebury and Ridgefield



“to commence at the dwelling house of Caleb Keeler and extending down the Mountain to the Guide post.”

Aug. 2, 1833 – A child of Gould St. John is drowned. She is two years old.

Oct. 7, 1833 – The town gets even tougher on livestock on the roads, voting to ban “horned cattle, horses, mules, sheep and geese” as well as swine without nose rings.

Oct. 29, 1833 – Martin Jackson, “a transient person,” kills himself by cutting his throat with a razor.

## **1834**

January 1834 – The Ridgefield Lydian Society is formed at the Congregational Church. An early ladies aid society, it is supposed to “raise funds to promote the interests of such benevolent associations or individuals as shall from time to time be considered worth our cooperation.”

June 1834 – The First Ecclesiastical Society’s church is rededicated after extensive renovations.

Oct. 6, 1834 – Road maintenance and construction remains a headache in the growing community. A battle over highway taxes occurs at the annual Town Meeting when a tax of 10 ½ cents on the dollar is proposed. It is voted down, undoubtedly quickly. An eight-cent tax is then proposed, but is also rejected. Finally, the voters settle for six cents, which is still double the three-cent tax, laid in 1833.

Dec. 1, 1834 – Ebenezer O. Bennitt takes out a \$1,463 mortgage with Samuel Hawley and Rufus H. Pickett on his share in a cabinet shop on Main Street, including “the steam engine, turning lathes, [and] sawing, turning, boring and mortising apparatus.” [It is the first mention of steam power in Ridgefield.]

## **1835**

1835 grand list totals \$34,412

May 1835 – The General Assembly incorporates the Fairfield County Rail Road Company to build a “single, double or treble rail road or way” from Danbury to either Fairfield or Norwalk, possibly running through Ridgefield.

June 26, 1835 – Enoch Crosby dies at the age of 85. A Revolutionary War spy who was the supposed inspiration for James Fennimore Cooper’s novel, *The Spy*, Crosby owned land on Shadow Lake Road, and may lived there before the war. After the war, his home was in adjacent Southeast, N.Y.

July 20, 1835 – The Rev. Jacob Lyman Clark becomes part-time rector at St. Stephen's Church, serving until March 1837.

Oct. 5, 1835 – The Town Meeting votes to pay Walter and Keeler Dauchy \$250 for their 44 shares in the Masonic Hall on Main Street to use the building as a town hall. The committee is also authorized "to make necessary repairs in the inside of the Masonic Hall for the purpose of accommodating the people attending the next town meeting, by seating the same."

Oct. 5, 1835 – The highway tax is back to three cents.

## **1836**

1836 – David Hunt establishes a stage line from Ridgebury to Norwalk.

1836 – The Rev. Parmelee Chamberlain becomes the first settled pastor of the Methodist Church in Ridgefield.

March 27, 1836 – Samuel Stebbins dies at the age of 73. A community leader all his life, he had been town clerk for more than 35 years, a tenure exceeded only by Hiram K. Scott (1872-1909).

March 29, 1836 – The selectmen waste no time in replacing Town Clerk Stebbins, and name Nathan Smith to the post.

May 1836 – The General Assembly incorporates the Ousatonic Rail Road Company to build a line from Sheffield, Mass., along the Ousatonic River to Danbury and possibly to Ridgefield, where at the state line, it would "meet a contemplated rail road from Harlem through West Chester County."

Oct 3, 1836 – The Annual Town Meeting takes place in the refurbished Masonic Hall, which is now also being called "the Town House."

## **1837**

Jan. 30, 1837 – A special Town Meeting receives \$5,000 "deposit" from the state, which in turn had received a large amount of money from federal government. The federal dollars are Connecticut's share in the federal budget surplus that Congress voted to return to the taxpayers [can you imagine!]. Nathan Smith is appointed the first agent to handle the money as what is called the "town deposit fund." Soon, the town invests the money in mortgages issued to Ridgefield residents – serving as a bank. The agent of the town

deposit fund remains a town office until the 1970s when the town treasurer takes over the duties. [*See also* Oct. 5, 1931].

July 11, 1837 – Walter Hawley and Enoch Hawley, and two children, are all killed by a lightning bolt around 11 p.m. that night.

Aug. 1, 1837 – The Rev. Eli Wheeler becomes the first full-time rector of St. Stephen's Church, serving a year and a half.

April 3, 1837 – The town votes against a county proposal to build a “penitentiary and also a house for the poor.”

Oct. 1, 1837 – The road “across the Long Bridge at Great Swamp” is in need of repair, and voters name a committee to decide what to do.

## **1838**

1838 – The first Episcopal Church rectory is built on land donated by Phillip Burr Bradley in what is now the south end of Ballard Park.

1838 – The Ridgefield Band is organized. In one form or another, it lasts nearly a century.

Jan. 14, 1838 – In appointing the Rev. Joseph Fuller its new minister, the First Congregational Church of Ridgefield calls itself “Congregational” for the first time.

April 28, 1838 – The Town Meeting unanimously votes that Ridgefield be set off from the Danbury Probate District, and become a district of its own. Three years later, it happens.

May 7, 1838 – George Edward Lounsbury is born in Bedford, N.Y., but a few years later his family moves to Ridgefield, where he grows up. He serves as Connecticut governor from 1899 to 1901.

Oct 1, 1838 – Voters decide to pay Edmond Beers \$10 for a small piece of land needed to improve the Long Bridge at Great Swamp. Beers could also have the wood on the land

## **1839**

Oct. 7, 1839 – The Annual Town Meeting selects Hezekiah Scott to be “an agent for the town... to prosecute Eli Griffin for harbouring and entertaining unlawfully one John Jones, unless said Griffin shall comply with the law in such cases made and provided with respect to giving bonds....” The same meeting also votes to sue the town of North Salem for expenses Ridgefield has incurred due to a pauper from that town named Minerva Gall.

July 6, 1839 – The Rev. Warner Hoyt becomes rector of St. Stephen's Church, remaining for five years. His is later called "one of the most successful rectorates the church had enjoyed," including the building of a new meetinghouse. He dies in office in 1844.

Aug. 13, 1839 – General Joshua King dies at the age of 81. A Revolutionary War veteran who had guarded Major John Andre and escorted him to the gallows, King has been a leading Ridgefield citizen and businessmen for decades.

## **1840**

1840 – The Grand List, the town's taxing base, totals \$33,218 (\$874,000 in today's dollars). The Grand List of 2020 is \$4.9 billion.

Jan. 22, 1840 — John Gardner Perry is born in Boston, becomes a surgeon who serves in the Civil War and writes hundreds of letters home to his wife that are, in 1900, published in a book graphically describing the hell of war. In 1891 he turns an old farm into his country home on Old West Mountain Road, an estate later called Sunset Hall and owned over the years by a variety of celebrities including actor Robert Vaughn and TV host David Cavett.

Jan. 24, 1840 — A meeting of Whigs in Ridgefield passes a resolution endorsing nominations at the state convention, and adding its special support for the incumbent governor. "We, in common with the people of the State of Connecticut, may point with honest pride to our Chief Magistrate, William W. Ellsworth; that his pure Republican sentiments meet with a hearty response from the yeomanry of his native State; that his conduct as Governor, has been such as to elicit commendation from without and gratitude from within the confines of Old Connecticut; and that we look forward with please to the period, which will afford us the opportunity of testifying our approbation of his acts, by again elevating him to the Chair of State."

March 30, 1840 — Congressman Thomas Burr Osborne introduces into the U.S. House of Representatives, a petition from 160 citizens of Ridgefield, "praying for a distribution of the proceeds of the public lands among the states." The petition is referred to the Committee on Public Lands. Since the 1820s, politicians particularly in the South had been proposing that the sale of public lands in the West would, among other things, bring in money that could help states finance road and other improvements.

May 2, 1840 — Stages begin operating between Ridgefield and Norwalk to connect with the steamer Nimrod, which ferries passengers to and from New York City.

June 12, 1840 — Wakeman Burritt dies at the age of 81. As a soldier in the Revolution, he joined the Army at the age of 16, was present at the evacuation of New York by General Washington, and fought Tryon's troops in New Haven, Fairfield and Norwalk.

June 26, 1840 — The Boston Recorder, a publication of the Congregational Church, reports a large number of “conversions” in Connecticut and that “the congregation in Ridgefield, in Fairfield West, has enjoyed a large share of divine influence.”

Aug. 17, 1840 — Elijah S. Hawley of Ridgefield dies in New Haven at the age of 19, having just finished his sophomore year at Yale College. “He possessed an amiable disposition, good talents, and excellent habits as a student, and was universally respected and beloved,” says the New-York Observer. “He died suddenly in the midst of his preparations and prospect for future usefulness, and sincerely lamented by a numerous circle of connections.”

Sept. 18, — Benjamin Lynes dies at the age of 81. As a boy, he was captured by the British just before the Battle of Ridgefield and was soon released after he refused to help them. He later served as a teamster in the Continental Army and after the war had a store and tavern at the top of the hill on Ridgebury Road.

Oct. 1, 1840 – The Town Deposit Fund, Ridgefield’s share in the proceeds from the sale of the Western Reserve in Ohio, now has a principal of \$5,919.24, and has earned \$355.15 in interest, mostly from mortgages. The interest is split between the schools and the town to help operating costs.

Nov. 2, 1840 — Whig William Wolcott Ellsworth is re-elected 30th governor, with Ridgefield’s help. The local vote is 252 to 177 for John Niles, a Democrat. Ellsworth, later a state Supreme Court justice, became noted for helping enact a progressive method for voter registration and establishing a school commission to oversee the quality of the state’s schools. In the national election, Ridgefield favors Gen. William Henry Harrison, a Whig, over incumbent Democrat, Martin Van Buren, 252-177.

Nov. 5, 1840 – Elias Pulling hangs himself in his farm’s corn-house. “He was about 59 years of age, and had exhibited signs of insanity for some time previous,” says the Hartford Times.

Nov. 18, 1840 — Thomas Hawley dies at the age of 95. He was a Revolutionary War pensioner.

Nov. 21, 1840 — The census finds 2,474 people in Ridgefield, a gain of 162 from 10 years earlier.

Dec. 1, 1840 – The child of Elias Gilbert, aged about 3, drowns.

Dec. 22, 1840 — Sarah, the wife of Jeremiah Smith, dies at the age of 71. Five days later, Jeremiah, 72, is found dead in his bed.

Dec. 29, 1840 — George Henry Smillie (name rhymes with Willie) is born in New York City and becomes a noted landscape artist. For many years he will maintain a home and studio at 114 Main Street.

## **1841**

1841 – A new Methodist Church is built at the corner of Main and Catoonah Streets. It lasts until 1964 when it is torn down to make way for stores and offices.

Jan. 10, 1841 – Phineas Chapman Lounsbury is born in Farmingville. He serves as Connecticut governor from 1887 to 1889.

Jan. 29, 1841 – The vestry of the growing St. Stephen's Parish decides the building is too small to handle the growing congregation and "it is expedient to erect a new church."

June 1841 – The Rev. Nathan Burton resigns as minister of the Ridgebury Congregational Church. He has been pastor for 20 years and was a deacon for eight years before that.

March 29, 1841 – The Town Meeting votes against building a new roadway near Pot Ash Brook to handle Ridgefield-Wilton Road.

July 17, 1841 – Under newly minted Judge Harvey Smith, the Ridgefield Probate Court has its first session. Smith B. Keeler is sworn in as the first clerk of the court.

June 28, 1841– Henry L. W. Burritt of White Haven, Md., sells Aaron Lee and Harvey Smith the limekiln at the corner of Lee and Limekiln Roads.

Aug. 12, 1841 – The cornerstone for a new St. Stephen's Church is laid. The building is estimated to cost \$2,400, but winds up more.

Aug. 27, 1841 – Isaac Jones gives St. Stephen's Parish a parcel of about 80 by 100 feet for its church operations. He had earlier given the church a 48 by 10 foot plot. Together, this is the land on which today's church stands, a fact so noted in the narthex of the building.

Oct. 4, 1841 – Hoping to solve highway problems at the south part of town, voters decide to spend \$30 to build a bridge across the Spectacle Brook near the house of Matthew Seymour.

## **1842**

Feb. 5, 1842 – For \$75, Lockwood Olmstead sells Waterous F. Olmstead of Danbury "a certain horse power and all the machinery and apparatus attached thereto, situated in my

shop in said Ridgefield.” [Horse power probably referred to a device that employed one or more horses, each attached to a bar and going around in circles, that was used to power equipment, such as the saws in small mills.]

April 22, 1842 – The First Congregational Church adopts a 12-article constitution, describing rules on meetings, admissions, communion, discipline, and more.

May 17, 1842 – Ill health forces the Rev. Joseph Fuller to leave his Congregational Church post.

Sept. 5, 1842 – The first meeting takes place in the new St. Stephen’s church building – in the basement.

Sept. 20, 1842 – Bishop Thomas C. Brownell consecrates the new St. Stephen’s Church.

Oct 3, 1842 – A town tax of two cents on the dollar, and a highway tax of three cents is approved.

Oct. 24, 1842 – The Rev. James A. Hawley, a native of Avon and a Yale Divinity School graduate, becomes minister of the First Congregational Church.

Dec. 13, 1842 – The first bankruptcy is recorded in the Ridgefield land records, that of John Fry of Danbury, who apparently had debts in Ridgefield. [A year earlier, on Aug. 19, 1841, Congress had passed standardized bankruptcy laws, which proved so popular more than 33,000 people took advantage of them before the laws were repealed in 1843.

## **1843**

1843 – The First Congregational Church publishes “A Concise History of the First Congregational Church in Ridgefield, Conn.,” probably the first history of the town printed in book form. It is 32-pages long.

April 17, 1843 – Moses K. Whitlock and Charles Bates, both about 16, drown.

Oct. 2, 1843 – The poor are becoming a greater concern. The Annual Town Meeting authorizes the Select Men to negotiate “with Sturgess Selleck or some other person to keep the paupers of this town for the ensuing year.”

Oct. 2, 1843 – Voting is becoming more sophisticated. The Town Meeting decides that in the future, instead of voice votes, printed paper ballots will be used for electing major town officers – Board of Relief, Select Men, town clerk, town treasurer, and constables. They also decide ballot boxes will be open from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m.

## 1844

June 15, 1844 – Troubles over the Ridgefield-Wilton road continue to plague the town. State's attorney L H. Hickok has filed a suit against the town about the condition of the road near the town line. A Special Town Meeting names William Lee and Harvey Smith a committee to negotiate a compromise with Mr. Hickok. If that doesn't work out, Charles A. Hanford is named a "general town agent" to defend the town against the state's action – or any other in the coming year.

Oct. 7, 1844 – Ridgefield bans fishing in Mamasasco Pond for a period of one year, and sets a \$4 fine for each offense.

Oct. 7, 1844 – Voters order the selectmen to "put the Town House [town hall] in comfortable repair by the first Monday in November next, and also to furnish for said house a stove, not to exceed in price \$12."

Dec. 24, 1844 – Philip Bradley sells St. Stephen's Church land and buildings on Main Street, "for the purpose of supporting the preaching and the gospel of said society, the rents and interest only to be applied for said object."

## 1845

1845 – The Grand list totals \$30,302.25, down \$3,000 from five years earlier.

1845 – A bell is cast at the Buckeye Brass Foundry in Cincinnati, Ohio. During the Civil War, the bell is captured by Confederates, who write on it: "This bell is to be melted into a cannon – may it kill a thousand Yankees." But Connecticut Col. Alexander Warner captures the arsenal with the bell, brings the bell home, and years later gives it to Gov. Phineas Lounsbury, who has it mounted in his front yard. It rings for the ending of both World War I and World War II, and is still there today in front of Lounsbury's house, the Community Center.

April 20, 1845 – Jerusalem Lodge of Masons leases a room in the lodge hall to the Good Samaritan Division #17 of the Sons of Temperance.

Oct. 6, 1845 – The Annual Town Meeting orders the Select Men to meet Nov. 1 to pick someone to take care of the town's paupers, who must be cared for "in a decent manner, well fed and clothed, to the acceptance of the Select Men."

Oct. 6, 1845 – The town has a new responsibility, thanks to a recent law. Rufus H. Pickett, Seth Olmstead and James E. Haight are named commissioners "for the purpose of granting license for sale of wines, and spiritous liquors, according to law."



Dec. 1, 1845 – The Rev. David H. Short becomes rector of St. Stephen's Church, but lasts only five months. However, he then establishes a popular private school at the corner of King Lane and Main Street, among whose students are Phineas C. Lounsbury, a Methodist who later becomes governor of Connecticut.

## **1846**

April 13, 1846 – The Rev. Henry Olmstead Jr. becomes rector at St. Stephen's, serving for four years.

May 8, 1846 – Joseph Sears and others in northern Ridgebury have petitioned the General Assembly to break off from Ridgefield a sizable strip of land running all the way to the New Fairfield town line and to annex it to Danbury. The width of the strip at its southern end is about a mile and a quarter; at the north end, bordering New Fairfield, only 80 rods. Ridgefield had purchased the land from the Indians more than a century earlier. Residents of this territory argue it is too far to travel to Ridgefield center to participate in government, and that Danbury is much closer. A Town Meeting is called to vote on the issue, but instead requests the General Assembly to postpone a decision on the annexation till the next assembly session.

July 28, 1846 – Ridgefield is unsuccessful in its effort to delay losing a big chunk of northern Ridgebury, and a meeting this day agrees to pay Danbury \$338, which represents the share of the Town Deposit Fund proportionate to the population that has become Danburians.

June 19, 1846 – The Knickerbocker Base Ball Club plays the New York Nine on the Elysian Fields at Hoboken, N.J., which some argue is the first formal baseball game. Knickerbocker president is Daniel L. Adams who, in 1871, becomes the first president of the Ridgefield Savings Bank.

Oct. 5, 1846 – Handling the poor is still a problem. Voters decide to put out the contract for taking care of paupers to a public auction, awarding the contract to the lowest bidder.

## **1847**

June 11, 1847 – Pilgrim Lodge, No. 46, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, is founded as a social and benevolent organization for men. It lasts a century and a half before disbanding and selling its last hall, on King Lane, to the Methodist Church. [Its previous hall on Main Street is, in 2008, stores, including the Toy Chest and Rodier Flowers.]

July 1, 1847 – George Washington Gilbert, who becomes the "hermit of Ridgefield," is born.

Sept. 30, 1847 – Paty Keeler dies at the age of 35. Her gravestone in Ridgebury Cemetery is perhaps the most verbose in Ridgefield, observing, besides the basics: “Dear sister, she has gone from our sight, nevermore to return. But we hope that if we are faithful until death that we all shall meet our dear sister and mother in heaven, for we trust they have gone there. If it had been the Lord’s will to have spared them, we should like their company. But we must be still and know that it is the Lord’s will.”

Oct. 4, 1847 – A state constitution amendment that would allow blacks to vote is defeated at the Annual Town Meeting, with only two in favor and 94 opposed. Statewide, the proposal fails as well.

Oct. 4, 1847 – Voters agree to have a six-foot addition build onto the south side of the Town House, “the stairs that lead to the chamber to be taken out and erected on the outside of the building, and that a fence be erected in front of the building to correspond with the fence of John Keeler.”

Dec. 25, 1847 – Frederick Dielman is born in Baltimore. The noted American artist and longtime president of the National Academy of Design, lives for many years at “The Boulders,” now the Boulder Hill Road area, where he dies in 1935.

## **1848**

Jan. 22, 1848 – A woman, “a stranger, said to be from the Island of Bermuda,” dies. Her age is unknown.

April 3, 1848 – The state election is held for governor, lieutenant governor and other state offices as well as state senator and Ridgefield representatives to the General Assembly.

July 4, 1848 – The wife of Anson Pardee of Lewisboro is injured in a fall from the wagon in which she is riding as it crosses a bridge near Jonathan Rockwell’s shop. Her husband subsequently sues the town for damages, saying the accident was caused by a “defect in the bridge.”

Autumn 1848 – Gold Fever hits Ridgefield as word of great strikes in California reaches the town. Among the first to go west is Peter P. Cornen, who leaves his ship chandlery business in New York. Cornen later makes his fortune in oil, found not in the West, but in Pennsylvania. He returns to Ridgefield and declares there is oil under the town [*see* Nov. 19, 1887].

Oct. 2, 1848 – The town votes to investigate the Pardee law suit [*see* July 4, 1848]

Nov. 7, 1848 – The committee investigating the Pardee accident finds “very little or no cause for complaint or demands for damages exist against the town of Ridgefield.”

Nov. 30, 1848 – The James Brophy family, said to be the town’s first Catholics, moves to South Salem Road. It is Thanksgiving Day.

## **1849**

May 1849 – The General Assembly approves an act incorporating the Danbury and New York Railroad Company to construct “a single, double or treble railroad or way” whose road may pass through Ridgefield. Among the backers are Samuel Tweedy of Danbury, former U.S. congressman, and Aaron Turner, the Ridgefield native who owned the circus that gave P.T. Barnum his first circus job.

May 1, 1849 – Martha F. Mead, age 12, dies of “organic affection.”

May 7, 1849 – For \$30, Phineas Chapman sells the 12th School District [Farmingville] land for a new schoolhouse, next to the “old schoolhouse,” with the provision that two oak trees are to remain in place at least five years “as shades for the benefit of the school house.”

Oct. 1, 1849 – Voters learn that Anson Pardee is suing over the injuries to his wife in the bridge accident [*see* July 4, 1848], and order an investigating committee to defend the town – or settle – whichever is in the best interest of Ridgefield.

Oct. 6, 1849 – The hilly, muddy highway to Wilton continues to create controversy. Joshua I. King, William Lee and George Keeler, a committee named to study the issue, say improvement is needed in view of the “vast number of passengers and tons of merchandise, etc., that yearly pass over the road to and from tide water.” Voters give the go-ahead to lay out the road.

Oct. 20, 1849 – Hanford Bates contracts with the town to take care of its paupers for the next three years for the cost of \$784 [around \$18,500 today].

Oct. 27, 1849 – David and Julia Hurlbutt lease their ice house to William Hawley and six others.

Nov. 5, 1849 – The Rev. James A. Hawley leaves his post as minister of the First Congregational Church.

## **1850**

1850 – The census finds 2,213 people in town, a decline of nearly 250 over 10 years and a sign that many have headed for the West and its flatter, more fertile land with fewer rocks.

Jan. 13, 1850 – Phebe Knapp, a servant girl living in Ridgebury, dies of eating opium. She is 10 years old.

Jan. 22, 1850 — Capt. Burr Scott dies of a fever aboard his ship at Bridgeton, Barbados. He was 32 years old.

Feb. 12, 1850 — Sturges Selleck, president, leads a meeting of Ridgefielders who want a railroad line from Danbury through Ridgefield, Lewisboro, and New Canaan to Stamford. Nearly \$200,000 has been pledged for the project, Selleck says.

April 2, 1850 — David Hurlbutt and Hiram K. Scott are elected state representatives from Ridgefield. Scott, then only 28, is the second youngest man in the legislature. He goes on to become a major force in town politics, serving as judge of probate, town clerk, postmaster, and the owner of what is now Bissell Pharmacy. Hurlbutt, a butcher, dies eight years later after he is gored by a cow he is trying to kill.

April 9, 1850 — After a two-day trial, a Westchester County court jury convicts D.P. Bailey of North Salem with “encroachment” for erecting a building and a fence in the highway between Ridgefield and Somers

May 3, 1850 — A patent is issued to Francis A. Rockwell of Ridgefield for a “bed clothes clasp,” designed “to prevent them being drawn from the person while asleep, or in other words ‘kicked off,’” reports the Boston Evening Transcript. General Tom Thumb receives a review sample of the invention and finds it works “admirably,” adding “I snoozed nicely last night, and found myself OK this morning, which is seldom the case, for I have such a way of ‘kicking up a dust’ in this world that I usually make the bed clothes fly long before midnight.”

June 1, 1850 – Roaming dogs are annoying someone. The town proposes to regulate dogs, banning them from running loose and charging a tax of 25 cents per dog per year to cover expenses of regulating them. Voters turn down the idea at a special Town Meeting.

June 5, 1850 – The Rev. Clinton Clark, a Presbyterian, begins service as minister at the First Congregational Church. He remains 14 years. Although his term is long, his departure is not friendly.

June 7, 1850 – The Danbury and Norwalk Rail Road Company is organized to build a 23-mile line between those two cities, including a station in Ridgefield.

July 25, 1850 — Word is received of the death in Illinois of Mary A. Hawley, wife of the Rev. James A. Hawley of Ridgefield, who is a missionary in Illinois. “Mr. Hawley and his family had spent the Sabbath at Warsaw [Ill.], assisting the Rev. Mr. Abernethy, whose child he baptized,” reports The New York Spectator. “The next day, both Mr. Abernethy’s

child and Mr. Hawley's died of cholera. Mr. Hawley set out for Augusta with the corpse, Mrs. Hawley being in another conveyance with a clergyman. At a stopping place on the road, Mrs. Hawley complained of indisposition, and in thirty minutes she had ceased to breathe."

Oct. 7, 1850 – Ridgefielders approve a state constitutional amendment requiring that judges of probate and justices of the peace be elected by the townspeople instead of being appointed.

Dec. 18, 1850 – Willett Miller, 71, dies of "gangrene of the foot."

Dec. 18, 1850 to June 13, 1851 – Six residents of the Fifth School District on West Mountain die of typhoid fever. They range in age from 7 to 69, and include two members of the Dickens family, and two Dauchys.

Dec. 19, 1850 – Sherman Beers sells land to the Danbury and Norwalk Rail Road Company for tracks and a station in what is now Branchville.

## **1851**

1851 – The Grand List totals \$38,611 — about \$1.2 million in 2020 dollars.

1851 – The Rev. Thomas Ryan visits the James Brophy home on South Salem Road and administers the Last Rites to two relatives. It is the first official service by a local Catholic priest in Ridgefield. Subsequently, the Rev. Michael O'Farrell, pastor at Danbury, visits the Brophy home once a month to hear confessions and celebrate Mass for Ridgefield's Catholics.

1851 – The old Ridgebury Congregational Church is taken down and a new one – the church that exists today – is built in its place.

April 7, 1851 – Ridgefielders turn out to elect state officials, the first election since voters passed the new constitutional amendment. So, for the first time, they elect a probate judge, Ebenezer Hawley. Justices of the peace are also elected and, as usual, representatives from Ridgefield to the General Assembly: this year, Russel B. Keeler and Robert C. Edmonds.

April 22, 1851 – Because of the plans for the new railroad from Norwalk to Danbury, passing through the southeast corner of town, Ridgefield businessmen press the selectmen for a better road to the contemplated station at what we now call Branchville. The existing road to that area, today's Old Branchville Road, is both hilly and swampy, and difficult for freight to traverse. The Select Men refuse, and a Town Meeting is called. The meeting decides to wait till the Annual Town Meeting in October, when the new road — today's Route 102 between the two ends of Old Branchville — is approved.

May 31, 1851 – Businessmen continue to complain that the Select Men are ignoring the need for a new road to the new station, and petition another Special Town Meeting. It appoints five town leaders to a committee to study a route.

June 1, 1851 – A man about 30 years old, whose name is unknown but who is said to have been born in Ireland, dies of “ship fever” in Ridgefield Station district. [“Ship fever” was an old name for epidemic typhus.]

June 23, 1851 – The state legislature approves commissioners to oversee the “Stamford, New Canaan and Ridgefield Plank Road,” a company that plans to run a wood-topped highway from Stamford to Ridgefield. Capital stock \$100,000 is authorized. The road is never built.

June 30, 1851 – The pressure for a road to the new station builds. Joshua I. King, Nehemiah Perry, William Hawley and others apply to the Select Men to lay out a road. The selectmen refuse.

July 5, 1851 – Fourteen men, mostly members of the newly formed American Flag Company in Ridgefield, contribute \$33 to buy a 14 by 10 foot flag, which is flown from a pole erected on Main Street to protest slavery.

July 7, 1851 – Another Special Town Meeting votes to overrule the Select Men and orders a survey for the route of a new road.

July 8, 1851 — Edward “Uncle Ned” Armstrong dies at the age of 65 in Ridgebury. He and his wife, Betsey, had operated a station on the Underground Railroad at their home on what is now called Ned’s Mountain. Four of their grandsons later serve in the Civil War — two die while in the Army.

August 1851 – A new church bell, weighing 1,508 pounds and made by the same company that cast the Liberty Bell of 1776, is hung in the St. Stephen’s Church belfry. The old one is sold to the Congregational Church in Georgetown.

Sept. 1, 1851 — The Methodists sponsor a Camp Meeting on Wilton Road West. The revival is aimed at bringing in new members to the growing congregation.

Oct. 6, 1851 – The town tax is up to 7.5 cents on the dollar while the highway tax remains steady at 3 cents.

Oct. 6, 1851 – A bridge accident case brought in 1848 is settled. On July 4, 1848, the wife of Anson Pardee of Lewisboro was injured in a fall from the wagon in which she was riding as it crossed a bridge near Jonathan Rockwell’s shop. Her husband subsequently

sued the town for damages, saying the accident was caused by a “defect in the bridge.” The town pays \$220 to the Pardees, and \$30 to their attorney. The two agents of the town are each paid \$12.50 for their services.

Oct. 27, 1851 – A thief breaks into Lobdell’s tailor shop during the night and makes off with a suit, and two pairs of pants.

Nov. 2, 1851 – A speaker on Chinese missions at the First Congregational Church reports that a “Chinese pagoda” has been built in California. In her diary, Anna Marie Resseguie says it’s “the first heathen temple ever erected in the United States, but as the paper in which he read it stated, perhaps neither to be feared or dreaded.”

Nov. 17, 1851 – Stockholders in the Danbury and Norwalk Rail Road, under construction, meet at the home of Sherman Beers in Ridgefield and vote to approve a mortgage to complete the project and buy rolling stock.

Nov. 27, 1851 – Ridgefielders celebrate Thanksgiving, many by going to church. It is said to be the 200th anniversary of Thanksgiving Day.

Dec. 10, 1851 — Francis A. Rockwell gets a patent on an improvement to candlesticks that will prevent candle grease from spilling.

## **1852**

Jan. 2, 1852 – The temperature in Ridgefield reaches 4 degrees below zero.

Jan. 24, 1852 – More demands for better highways face the town. A Special Town Meeting is called to approve a new road from Sharp Hill on West Mountain down to the stone bridge at the foot of the mountain – and eastward toward town – today’s Barry Avenue. The Select Men are authorized to build the road with money from the town treasury, and \$88 contributed by supporters of the roadway. They also approve a new road from Isaac Osborn’s house to William Barhite’s – today’s Limestone Road from Great Hill Road to around Bates Farm Road. The 31 petitioners chip in \$185 toward costs.

Jan. 31, 1852 — The Rev. Chauncey Wilcox, who operates a private secondary school in the former Rev. Samuel Goodrich home on High Ridge, dies suddenly, only a few days after returning from the funeral of his father. An outspoken abolitionist and founder of a Congregational parish in Greenwich, he was 55 years old.

Feb. 7, 1852 – Charles Hyatt, 25, of Ridgefield dies when the New York and Erie Rail Road car he is riding in plunges into icy waters somewhere in New York State. Walking home from the funeral in town a few days later, Matthew Seymour, 61, collapses and dies.

Feb. 25, 1852 – Test trains begin running on the new Danbury and Norwalk Rail Road line. The only stop in Ridgefield is at Ridgefield Station, now Branchville.

March 1, 1852 – Regular train service on the Danbury and Norwalk Rail Road begins. Three days a week, a connecting steamer to New York City is available; the ferry ride costs 37½ cents. “Carriages will be in readiness at Ridgefield Station [Branchville] to convey passengers to any part of the village of Ridgefield,” the railroad advertises in the *New York Tribune*.

March 20, 1852 – Seven people petition the town to build a new road from Farmingville to the Sugar Hollow Turnpike north of Bradley’s saw mill. A Town Meeting turns them down.

April 6, 1852 – Two weeks into spring, and more than a foot of snow falls on the town.

April 18, 1852 – The Rev. Clinton Clark, preaching at the First Congregational Church, says the severe, stormy weather the town has been experiencing is the result of Ridgefielders’ sins.

April 27, 1852 – In honor of the anniversary of the Battle of Ridgefield, Judson Hawley stages a fireworks show.

June 20, 1852 — Charles Day, 16, who lives with William Smith 2nd in Ridgefield, drowns in Great Pond while bathing. “A remarkable fatality has followed the relatives of this lad,” says the *New Haven Register*. “His mother has been dead some time; the father was found dead in a house in Wilton about two years ago; two little brothers were killed at the great land slide in Troy; another fell from a tree and broke both legs and an arm; the remaining child has just met the above fate.”

July 5, 1852 – Ridgefielders celebrate the nation’s independence a day late with a parade or “procession,” fireworks, church bell ringing, and church services. The Ridgefield Brass Band performs.

July 29, 1852 – Hundreds flock to see the “Southern Circus,” which stops in town. [The Great Southern Circus traveled widely, and included tight-rope walkers, acrobats, comics, animals, and music.]

Oct. 4, 1852 – The town tax rises to 8 cents on the dollar.

Oct. 9, 1852 – Infrastructure is weighing heavily on the town. The Select Men have gotten a new proposal for a road from Farmingville to the Sugar Hollow Turnpike. Though the route is “feasible,” they recommend the Town Meeting reject it because of



“the indebtedness of the town.” The meeting agrees. William Lee of Farmingville then rises and proposes that if the town lays out a road and appropriates \$600 for its construction, he will pay for the right of way and fencing the road, and will build the highway “without any further expense to said Town of Ridgefield.” The motion passes and Select Men are instructed to lay out the road – today called New Road. [This road made it easier for central Ridgefield residents to reach the Topstone train station on the new Danbury and Norwalk Rail Road just across the line in Redding.]

Oct. 25, 1852 – Twenty-two people petition the town to create a shortcut from North Street to Danbury Road. The voters agree, and Copps Hill Road is built.

Oct. 27, 1852 — A sizable crowd turns out to hear an address for a Col. Sevier of Louisiana, speaking on behalf of the Whig Party. “The town, we are assured, will roll up a very large Whig majority,” reports the *Bridgeport Standard*. The Whigs, indeed, take Ridgefield in November, favoring General Winfield Scott for president. However, Democrat Franklin Pierce took the nation.

Nov. 1, 1852 – Hiram K. Scott advertises his “circulating library,” charging between three and nine cents per week per book, depending on its value.

Nov. 26, 1852 – Eben Gilbert is found dead, face down in a ditch, “his bottle by his side.”

Dec 5, 1852 – Franklin E. Hawley, a 21-year-old student, dies of anthrax.

Dec. 23, 1852 — A “band of thieves” is believed to be operating around Ridgefield. Early today, the stable of J. Sherwood is entered and his horse is hitched to his “claret-colored square box buggy” and driven off. The same morning, the factory of R.H. Pickett is entered and several “looking glasses stolen therefrom.” —*Norwalk Gazette*

## 1853

1853 – Hiram K. Scott establishes his Main Street store, selling food, drugs, and other wares, plus serving as a post office. He remains in business until 1895 when he sells to H.P. Bissell. Scott is one of Ridgefield’s most prominent men of the second half of the 19th Century, serving as postmaster, a state representative, town clerk for 37 years and probate judge for 39.

Jan. 12-14, 1853 – A couple of feet of snow fall on Ridgefield. Diarist Anna Marie Resseguie reports on the 14th, “snow banks over the tops of the fences, but few out today as the road are almost impassable this morning.”

Jan. 15, 1853 – After 150 years of keeping town records in private houses — the homes of the town clerks —Ridgefield finally decides to acquire a fireproof vault.

Jan. 18, 1853 – The Episcopal Society has a fair at Hyatt's Store. It included sales and a supper.

Feb. 9, 1853 — Jeremiah Keeler dies. As a teenager, he enlisted in the Continental Army but soon after was selected by Baron von Steuben to join the Light Infantry under the command of General de Lafayette. He was promoted to Orderly Sergeant, and "he was frequently selected for the execution of difficult and responsible duties," says Bedini.

March 2, 1853 – The town hires an attorney to defend it in a suit brought by Russell White, who had built a road here and who apparently claims the town did not compensate him fairly for the work.

July 9, 1853 – A yoke of oxen, owned by David Northrop, is struck and killed by lightning.

Aug. 1, 1853 — Ridgefield native Samuel G. Goodrich ("Peter Parley") ends his service as the popular consul of the United States in Paris. He returns to the U.S. and buys an old brick house on Route 6 in Southbury. It is today the center of the Lutheran Home for the Aged.

Aug. 2, 1853 — John Lovejoy of Ridgefield, a crew member on the ship Advance sailing from France to New York, is lost at sea after trying to rescue a passenger who fell overboard. He is only 19 years old.

Oct. 1, 1853 – The trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church lease to Abner Stevens land on which he will build a weaver's shop. The land is on the north side of Catoonah Street near where the firehouse is today.

Nov. 13-14, 1853 – A major storm hits the town, and downpours wash away bridges in the region and stop train service.

## **1854**

Jan. 16, 1854 — The Ridgefield Musical Association gives a choral concert, which diarist Anna Resseguie calls "quite pleasing."

Jan. 25, 1854 — Aaron Turner, a Ridgefield native who was an American circus pioneer, dies in Danbury, aged about 64. Turner had a circus in the 1830s and hired P.T. Barnum as his treasurer, ticket-taker and publicity expert. He later ran a large hotel on Main Street in Danbury, called Turner House, that became the Knights of Columbus Home in the 20th Century, and was torn down in the 1960s to make way for a used car lot. It's now the site of a Walgreens.

Feb. 21, 1854 – The biggest snow storm in a quarter of a century hits the town.

Feb. 23, 1854 — Marie Hartig is born in Alsace, France. She comes to the U.S., marries Dr. John Calvin Kendall of Ridgefield, and becomes fascinated with photography. After living here briefly she and her husband move to Norfolk where she blossoms as a professional photographer, one of the first women in the field. Her 1900 book, *Glimpses of Ridgefield*, shows many rare late-19th Century views of the town.

March 1, 1854 – The Rev. William H. Williams becomes rector at St. Stephen's Church, serving more than nine years.

March 11, 1854 – The Ridgefield Shirt Manufactory leases a building on the east side of Main Street, south of today's town hall.

March 12, 1854 – The Rev. Clinton Clark preaches a strong temperance sermon at the Congregational Church, calling for a Prohibition Law and maintaining that the only time strong drink is appropriate is “to him that is ready to perish.”

April 7, 1854 – A 30-foot monument to General David Wooster, who was mortally wounded at the Battle of Ridgefield and died a few days later in Danbury, is unveiled by the Masons in Wooster Cemetery, Danbury.

April 15, 1854 – More than a foot of snow falls on the town.

April 17, 1854 – More snow falls, bringing the total to a foot and a half. The Hartford Courant calls the stormy weather very unusual.

April 17, 1854 – John Samerson, a laborer, dies of “bilious fever” at the age of 60. His race is listed as “copper” and his birthplace, “Owyhee, Sandwich Islands.”

April 27, 1854 – Ten days after the big snow storm, the temperature in Ridgefield reaches 70 degrees and a thunderstorm hits the town.

May 1, 1854 – Melting snow contributes to a flood that inundates the region. Only two bridges are left on the train line between Branchville and Norwalk. Several mills are swept away. The Hartford Courant calls it the worst flood in 200 years.

May 22, 1854 – Professor Josiah O. Armes delivers a lecture on mnemotechny — techniques for helping one's memory.

June 7-9, 1854 — A chorus of nearly 200 singers performs at a Musical Convention, directed by Professor I.B. Woodbury of New York. Many attend different sessions at the convention, which sparks the formation of the County Musical Association, with the Rev. Friend W. Smith of Ridgefield, minister at the Methodist church, as president. Secretary

is G.C. Mead, and treasurer, C. Smith Jr., both of Ridgefield. More than 100 people join association.

Sept. 1, 1854 – The air in Ridgefield is smoky from forest fires throughout the Northeast, caused by a drought that affects 20 states from Maine to Illinois.

Oct. 1, 1854 – To deal with the problem of roaming livestock, the town votes that “horses, neat cattle, mules, swine and geese shall be prohibited from running at large on the highways or commons of this town.”

Oct. 14, 1854 — Four funerals, said by the *Norwalk Gazette* to be an unprecedented number for one day, are held in town today, including those of Keziah Scribner Hawley, 97, and Huldah Mead, 74. The total age for all four decedents is 243 years.

Dec. 4, 1854 – Nearly two feet of snow has fallen on the town.

Dec. 5 — “A man lately mailed a letter containing one hundred dollars at Birmingham [now Derby], for Ridgefield, showing the money to the postmaster at the time of mailing it, and strange to say, neither letter nor money has reached the place of destination.” — *Springfield (Mass.) Republican*

Dec. 19, 1854 – The nation is in a recession. Diarist Anna Resseguie observes this day, “The hard times are felt all about us. Bread stuffs are very high. Best flower \$12 or \$13 a barrel. The scarcity of money is greater than since 1837.”

## 1855

Feb. 27, 1855 — Francis A. Rockwell gains another patent on a design for candlesticks he makes at his village factory.

April 13, 1855 – Frances A. Bassett, 9, dies of scarlet fever.

June 7, 1855 — John W. Rockwell marries Hester A. Hurlbutt. Rockwell, a partner in the Ridgefield candlestick factory with his brother, Francis A. Rockwell, later acquires and operates The Elms Inn for many years.

July 17, 1855 – A Mr. Gardner, a daguerreotype photographer, stays at the Keeler Tavern. [Probably John B. Gardner, a pioneer American photographer, who had a studio in New York City.]

Aug. 18, 1855 – Samuel G. Goodrich, better known to contemporaries as Peter Parley, the prolific author, shows up at the Keeler Tavern on a visit to his native town. “Mr. G. is very agreeable, full of humor, but not a pious man,” observes Anna Resseguie, daughter

of the tavern owners in her diary. Goodrich soon writes an account of his visit, which he includes as a chapter in his autobiography, *Recollections of A Lifetime*.

Sept. 1, 1855 — “The Norwalk Gazette contains a rich account of the operations of one Ralph Hine upon the good people of Ridgefield. The operator bought houses and lands — extra fine shirts by the hundred dozen — slept in the best beds in the town — talked of his brother’s losing \$100,000 in one day — passed for a big bug a few hours and barely escaped tar and feathers by Saturday night. Nobody lost any money to speak of, but many were so bit, that they will not like to hear Hine spoken of.” —*The Hartford Courant*

Sept. 7, 1855 – A Mrs. Smith cuts off her forefinger and most of her thumb as she attempts to behead a chicken.

Oct. 1, 1855 — The hay and grain barn of Sherman Beers burns to the ground.

Nov. 6, 1855 — Annie Bailey is born on a farm on Ridgebury Road. She later goes to college and then medical school and, in 1885, becomes one of Connecticut’s earliest women physicians, practicing in Danbury and at Danbury Hospital until her death in an auto accident in 1927.

Nov. 13, 1855 – Polly Hubbell, 55, is found dead, and officials suspect foul play. However, a coroner’s inquest the same day finds no signs of violence on her body.

Dec. 4, 1855 – A burglary occurs at the Main Street store of Keeler Dauchy. Some \$300 in goods [\$2,770 in 2020 dollars] are taken during the night.

Dec. 19, 1855 — In Paris, France, Josephine Louise Lee, daughter of Ridgefield native David Lee, marries Baron Johann August von Wächter-Lautenbach, foreign minister of the Kingdom of Württemberg. After his death in 1879, widow Josephine Baroness von Wächter-Lautenbach became one of the richest women in the Kingdom of Württemberg. In 1864 her sister, Mary Esther Lee, marries Friedrich Emil August, Prince of Schleswig-Holstein, later called Prince von Noer, minister of war of the provisional Schleswig-Holstein government. After his death, she marries in 1874 Count Alfred von Waldersee, a Prussian field marshal, and as Mary Esther, Countess von Waldersee, she becomes a noted German philanthropist.

Dec. 20, 1855 – Henry Ward Beecher lectures at the Congregational Church. The prominent theologian and abolitionist is the brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. In the 1870s, he becomes the subject of a major scandal when he is accused of adultery.

Dec. 25, 1855 – On Christmas day, a major ice storm hits Ridgefield, felling many trees.

## 1856

Jan. 16, 1856 – The three choirs of the Ridgefield Musical Association give a concert.

Jan. 31, 1856 – A man known as “Dr. Brink,” described as recently released from state prison, is buried. He was found dead and frozen in an old house on West Mountain, and his corpse was sledged down to the village for burial.

Feb. 5, 1856 – Diarist Anna Resseguie reports the death of the six-month-old son of Joel Rockwell. “The parents took the little one to Norwalk yesterday. Returned today and on arriving home and uncovering the baby, found it a corpse. Some think it smothered; the mother that it died in a fit.”

Feb. 14, 1856 – A temperature of 13 degrees below zero is recorded in town.

March 9, 1856 — “The depot at Ridgefield was broken open on Sunday night. The thief found nothing for his pains, but left his tracks in the snow so that he was traced to his house, taken and sent to jail.” —*Connecticut Courant*

June 7-8, 1856 — Town taxes were due, and Tax Collector Aaron Reed is at the town clerk office Friday, at the Ridgebury post office Saturday morning, and at Isaac Haviland’s store in Limestone district Saturday afternoon to receive payments. “All persons neglecting to pay their Taxes on or before said times appointed, must expect to pay traveling fees,” warns Reed, meaning that if he has to come to your house to collect, you will be charged extra for that “service.”

June 13, 1856 — Eighteen-year-old Sylvester Williams of Ridgefield drowns in a pond in Pound Ridge, N.Y.

June 23, 1856 – Walter Jones, 26, a jeweler in town, dies of phthisis. He is the second person in three weeks to die of the disease, today called tuberculosis. Two months later, Olivia Williams, 32, dies of the disease. During the 1850s in Ridgefield, phthisis is one of the most common causes of death.

July 22, 1856 – Ridgefield native S.G. Goodrich stays overnight at Resseguie’s Hotel [the Keeler Tavern]. His two-volume autobiography, *Recollections of A Lifetime*, is soon to be published.

Aug. 18, 1856 – Jesse E. Keeler, 58, is killed after falling from a load of hay.

Aug. 23, 1856 — The presidential election campaign is getting hot, with Democrat James Buchanan facing Republican John C. Fremont, while Millard Fillmore runs as a Know Nothing. A crowd attends a Buchanan rally in the town hall, in which a Mr.

Wynne of North Carolina alleges that Fremont is guilty of treason for opposing slavery, and so is anyone who supports him. He also says slavery is a divine institution. Some Buchanan supporters even maintain “that a negro was not a human being,” reports a correspondent for the *Albany Evening Journal*, who attends the event.

Aug. 27, 1856 — H.K. Smith, J.O. Mead, George Smith, and Isaac Haviland are Ridgefield’s delegates to the state Democratic convention which endorses Buchanan for president, calling him “a statesman of the highest qualifications” who is “peculiarly qualified, in a crisis like the present, for the highest post...” The convention accuses “the Black Republicans of Connecticut” with sowing “sectional warfare...against the Constitution and the Union...We invite all who rally under the national flag, with its thirty-one stars yet brightly shining, and who are determined to ‘keep step’ with no other than a national party, to unite with us in the great struggle on which now depends the peace, the happiness and the prosperity of a united and powerful people.”

Aug. 28, 1856 — The Rev. W.W. Page of Kent is the new minister of the Ridgebury Congregational Church, reports the *New York Evangelist*.

September, 1856 — A stagecoach connection between Ridgefield and the New York and Harlem Railroad station at Purdys is being widely promoted.

Sept. 18, 1856 — A “great mass meeting” for Buchanan takes place in town, according to diarist Anna Resseguie, who adds that “a procession of Fremont men, numbering 52 wagons, it is said, passed our house.” The nearest Fremont rally is in Danbury.

Nov. 3, 1856 – On election eve, supporters of Buchanan have a torchlight parade down Main Street.

Nov. 4, 1856 – In a fiercely fought election that sees 83% of the eligible voters participating nationally, Ridgefield gives a 100-vote plurality to Fremont, the Republican, but Democrat Buchanan wins the presidential election by a wide margin in the nation. Know-Nothing Fillmore places third.

Nov. 20, 1856 — Samuel G. Goodrich’s two-volume autobiography, *Recollections of A Lifetime*, is published. Better known as Peter Parley, the Ridgefield native wrote or published more than 100 books under his name in the first half of the 19th Century. The autobiography includes more than 200 pages describing life in Ridgefield from the late 1790s until around 1810.

Dec. 3, 1856 – Richard P. Clark of Philadelphia visits town, promoting his monumental “Clark’s Map of Fairfield County Connecticut,” a 5-by-4½-foot hand-colored wall map that shows virtually every building in the entire county with the names of their owners. It is the earliest detailed map of Ridgefield and of many other towns in the county.

Dec. 23, 1856 – The Rev. Mr. Harding of South Weymouth, Mass., arrives in town to recruit people in a campaign to raise money to build a monument in memory of the Pilgrims at Plymouth, Mass. Three years later, work starts on the 81-foot-high monument, but it is not completed until 1889. More than 11,000 people, plus federal, Massachusetts and Connecticut governments, chip in on the \$150,000 cost.

## 1857

Jan. 19, 1857 – A fierce nor'easter hits the town, with heavy snow and temperatures as low as seven degrees below zero. Banks of snow more than four feet tall cover roads. There is no mail and traffic comes almost to a standstill for several days.

Jan. 24, 1857 – Temperature reaches 26 degrees below zero.

March 4, 1857 — “A new Post Office has been established in the town of Ridgefield. Limestone is the name of the new office, and Edwin Taylor Esq. is appointed Post Master.” —*New London Daily Chronicle*

April 6, 1857 – The Town Meeting elects Benjamin K. Northrop and Howard O. Nash as state representatives.

April 19, 1857 — The store of Charles Smith Jr. burns down along with all its stock of groceries, “fancy goods,” boots and shoes, for a loss of \$3,500. It is insured for only \$2,000, reports the Connecticut Courant in Hartford.

July 28, 1857 – Cyrus Northrop Jr. of Ridgefield graduates from Yale. He becomes a lawyer, then a Yale professor of English, and in 1888 is named the second president of the University of Minnesota. During his 27 years there, the school grows from 300 students to several thousand.

Aug. 15, 1857 — Eli Rockwell, a former state representative and two-term selectman, dies at the age of 52.

Aug. 18 — Wilber Elliott Wilder is born on a farm in Atlas, Mich., graduates from West Point in 1877, and on April 23, 1882, at Horseshoe Canyon, New Mexico, under heavy fire in a battle with Apaches, Lt. Wilder carries a wounded comrade down the side of a mountain amid a hail of Apache bullets. Four years later, Wilder rides alone into the camp of Chief Geronimo to arrange for his surrender. In 1896, he is awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his rescue at Horseshoe Canyon. After retiring from the Army, he moves to Ridgefield, dies here in 1952, and is buried in Fairlawn Cemetery — the only Medal of Honor winner interred in Ridgefield.



Oct. 1, 1857 — The Bridgeport Republican Farmer reports that “an insane man named Staples,” living in northern Ridgefield, was “temporarily confined in an outhouse, which he fired, and before he could be removed, was so seriously burned that he almost immediately expired.” The report is reprinted by scores of newspapers in the Northeast.

Oct. 5, 1857 – The Town Meeting sets the costs for impounding animals: Horses, asses and mules, 25 cents each; neat cattle, 12 cents; swine, 10 weeks old or more, 8 cents; sheep, 6 cents.

Oct. 18, 1857 — Future U.S. Congressman Jeremiah Donovan is born in what is now called Branchville. He is the third and last native son to serve in Congress (1913-15).

## 1858

Jan. 1, 1858 – The season has been unusually mild and flowers have been seen to bud and even bloom.

February, 1858 — St. Stephen’s Church reopens after an extensive remodeling of the interior, designed by New York architect John W. Priest. Priest, who was one of the founding members of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), dies the next year at the age of 34.

Feb. 2, 1858 — A person walking the railroad track between Georgetown and Ridgefield discovers a large stone near the rail, which he removes. “A girl, some eighteen or twenty years of age, named Lizzie Gardiner, is suspected of placing the rock there. She is arrested the next day and ‘lodged in Bridgeport Jail.’ ” — *Bridgeport Republican Farmer*

March 5, 1858 — Fanny Crosby, a blind woman who grew up on Main Street, marries blind musician Alexander Van Alstyne. Fanny goes on to write more than 8,000 hymns under her maiden name — many, such as “Blessed Assurance,” are still sung today. The marriage is unsuccessful and the two eventually separate.

March 25, 1858 – The talk of the town is the disappearance of a Ridgefield woman named Hurlbutt, who goes to Redding with a mysterious man named Duncomb and, days later, is still not heard from.

March 29, 1858 — Mr. B. Norris, working at Flint’s paper mill on Lake Mamasco, is severely injured in an industrial accident, and it is thought he might lose an arm. “Although he earnestly solicited the doctor to remove his arm, there is yet we learn a good prospect of his saving it.” — *Bridgeport Republican Farmer, April 16*

April 28, 1858 — Henry Smith of Ridgefield advertises in the New York Church Journal for “a Female Teacher to instruct twelve or fifteen young ladies in the higher English

branches and French. A liberal salary will be given and if competent to give instruction in Music, additional compensation could be obtained.”

June 10, 1858 — The barn at the Episcopal parsonage on Main Street burns down, killing a horse and destroying a carriage. Henry Smith’s barn next door also catches fire and burns down. The loss of \$1,500 total is not insured.

July 16, 1858 — Mrs. Abigail Goodrich Whittelsey dies in Colchester, Conn. A native of Ridgefield and brother of Samuel G. Goodrich of “Peter Parley” fame, she marries the Rev. Samuel Whittelsey and soon becomes one of the first woman magazine editors in the United States, founding *Mother’s Magazine* in 1832, running it for many years and then founding a second magazine devoted to mothers and daughters.

July 31, 1858 — “During the month of June last, two boot and shoe makers, named Eli Keeler and William Beckworth, residing in the vicinity of Ridgefield, Conn., obtained from sundry manufacturers in New Canaan, Conn., and Salem, N.Y., several cases of ‘stock’ to be made up into boots and shoes at their own residences, and returned within a reasonable period, as is usual in that business. After the lapse of a month or so without seeing or hearing anything from the shoemakers, ... it was ascertained that the stock had all been worked up and disposed of by the two speculators, who were soon afterward arrested to answer a charge of swindling, preferred against them. They then succeeded in effecting their escape from the officers who had them in charge. Deputy Sheriff Bennett, ascertaining that the parties were still lurking about Ridgefield, with the assistance of a number of citizens of that place, kept watch on every road and avenue, and effected their rearrest a few nights ago....Keeler, when rearrested, showed fight, and his family were about to attempt to rescue him from custody, when his captor drew forth a revolver, and by his firmness soon restored quiet. Some sympathy is felt for Beckworth who, it is thought, has been victimized by Keeler, an old offender.”

October 1858 – The first Ridgefield Agricultural Society Fair and Cattle Show takes place at the corner of Main and Gilbert Streets. The fair grows over the years to a four-day event on a dedicated fairgrounds with a race track, but closes after 1881.

Oct. 10, 1858 — An estimated 1,000 people attend special afternoon services of the Methodist Church, commemorating the 100th birthday of Mrs. Sarah Middlebrook Denton, who lives with the family of Samuel Abbott. A sermon is preached by the Rev. Albert Nash, presiding elder of the Methodist Church for the New Haven district. Mrs. Denton dies two years later.—*Connecticut Courant*

Nov. 20, 1858 – David Hurlbutt, 57, a popular Ridgefield butcher, is killed by a cow he is attempting to slaughter. Death is attributed to “fracture of cervical vertebrae.”

Dec. 29, 1858 — Henry Smith is still looking for help. He advertises in the New York Church Journal for “a lady...to take charge of a young ladies’ school in a village near New York.”

## 1859

Jan. 5, 1859 – Of 500 children aged 4 to 16 in Ridgefield, only 200 are attending Sabbath School. Consequently, the Congregational, Episcopal and Methodist churches undertake a recruitment campaign. In March, Anna Resseguie reports, “The Sabbath School has increased in numbers in our three churches, since the effort commenced of bringing in the destitute.”

Jan. 10, 1859 – Mercury hits 14 degrees below zero.

Jan. 18, 1859 — Thomas Payne of Ridgefield receives a patent on an “improved clothes sprinkler.” The sprinkler features “an interior self-closing stopper.”

April 6, 1859 – Samuel S. Olmstead sells Hiram O. Nash the Titicus Store, which Nash and his son, John D. Nash, run for many years. The store on North Salem Road still stands, now used for offices.

April 15, 1859 – Rockwell’s Candlestick Factory, where brass and tin candlesticks and other implements are made, is heavily damaged in a fire. The building on Catoonah Street, opposite today’s firehouse, is insured. It is rebuilt, but becomes known as Catoonah Hall – and the street is subsequently called Catoonah Street. The new building burns to the ground in 1868.

May 15, 1859 – While driving his cows, Lewis Beers falls from his horse, breaks his neck, and dies. He is 71.

June 3, 1859 — The house of Lewis Sloper is destroyed by fire. The blaze begins in the attic in a room occupied by a servant girl; the girl was still asleep when it was discovered. “How it caught she cannot tell, as she was certain she blew out the light when she retired,” says the *Bridgeport Standard*. “Nearly all the furniture was saved,” adds the *Hartford Evening Post*.

June 5, 1859 – Although it is nearly summer, Ridgefield experiences a frost and so do many other parts of New England and the North.

June 10, 1859 — Charles Short is advertising that he is the regional agent for the “famous” Buckeye Mower with Folding Bar. “The Buckeye is light, durable, simple in its construction of draught, and can be moved from field to field or on the road. Easier than any other machine.”

Aug. 18, 1859 — Eunice Bennett, 83, of Wilton is walking alongside the railroad tracks just south of Ridgefield Station when the 6 o'clock train from Norwalk to Danbury passes and throws her down. She suffers multiple injuries and dies later that evening.

Aug. 26, 1859 – 500 people attend a Methodist and Congregational Sabbath school picnic at Lake Mamanasco, then commonly called Burt's Pond.

Aug. 28, 1859 – Ridgefielders witness spectacular display of aurora borealis. The Northern Lights continue for a week.

Sept. 29, 1859 – Catoonah Hall is dedicated with lectures and music from the Ridgefield Glee Club and the Ridgefield Boys Band. [See April 15, 1859.]

Oct. 8, 1859 – The barn of Charles Smith is struck by lightning and burns to the ground. Two horses perish, reports the *Connecticut Courant* in Hartford.

Oct. 14, 1859 – The Ridgefield Agricultural Society's second annual fair takes place at the corner of Main and Gilbert Streets. "A Cattle Train of about 100 yoke was got out and in the Cart, drawn by the Train, was a Pine Tree, standing upright and loaded with every conceivable farm and garden product," reports the *Bridgeport Standard*. "Some very fine cattle and horses were exhibited."

Oct. 15, 1859 – Mary E. Steele, a member of one of Ridgefield's few land-owning Black families, is born in Farmingville. Her great grandmother had attended a gathering in North Salem when Generals Washington and Lafayette stopped for refreshments. She dies in 1933, age 75.

Nov. 5, 1859 – Mrs. Thaddeus Keeler is sewing when a pin that had fastened down her work pops loose and strikes her in the eye, which is subsequently blinded.

Nov. 12, 1859 — *The Columbia Register* reports that Benjamin Gilbert of Ridgefield "shot a wild cat four feet four inches in length — large as a panther — last week Wednesday, near the state line."

Dec. 29, 1859 – Snow and cold hit the town; temperature is minus 10.

Dec. 31, 1859 — Francis A. Rockwell wins two wine awards from the American Institute — a gold medal for grape wine, and a silver medal for blackberry. *The Church Journal*, a national ministerial newspaper, tries samples and exclaims: "We can heartily recommend as being pleasant and genuine in manufacture." It adds that "the Rev. Mr. Williams, rector of St. Stephen's, Ridgefield, who has lived next door to Mr. Rockwell for the last six years, vouches for the purity of the wines from personal knowledge and observation, and specially commends some of the varieties for sacramental purposes."

## 1860

1860 – The census finds yet another decline in the Ridgefield population, which is 2,213, down 24 from ten years earlier.

Jan. 17, 1860 – Dr. Oliver Starr Hickok, a physician, moves to Ridgefield from Bethel. In a year, he will be the subject of a major scandal.

Feb. 10, 1860 – Winds so high that Catoonah Hall is evacuated for fear of collapse occur in town. Men watching the hall are summoned by the fire bell to the nearby house of Harvey K. Smith, which has caught fire. They extinguish the blaze.

Feb. 25, 1860 – While Edwin Benedict is visiting the clover mill on the Danbury and Norwalk Turnpike north of Branchville, his horse is frightened by a passing train and bolts. Mr. Benedict is run over by the horse and wagon, breaking his arm.

March 16, 1860 – Six days after the death of her son, Judson, age 70, Charity Hawley tells her niece, Anna Resseguie, that she is feeling “very well considering my age and my affliction.” She is 99 years old.

March 24, 1860 – Six hundred people fill Catoonah Hall to hear Charles Case, a congressman from Indiana, speak against slavery and in favor of the Republican Party, led by Abraham Lincoln.

March 25, 1860 – The Ridgefield Shirt Factory employs 1,100 women who sew shirts in their homes, The New York Times reports.

May 7, 1860 – S.G. Goodrich, the Ridgefield native and author known as Peter Parley, dies while visiting his brother in New York. His house on Route 6 in Southbury later becomes the Lutheran Home for the Aged.

June 23, 1860 – A burglar breaks into the milk room at Resseguie’s Hotel and steals meat, butter, a loaf of bread, and “two bottles of beer plant.”

July 20, 1860 – Charity Hawley dies, five months short of reaching 100.

July 20, 1860 – Many Ridgefielders see a great meteor, witnessed widely in the Northeast and as far south as Delaware, that passes overhead and apparently falls into the sea. Anna Resseguie describes it as “a meteor of uncommon size and brilliancy.”

Aug. 30, 1860 – Frederick R. Brinkerhoff, a three-month-old baby, dies of “marasmus” or malnutrition.

Sept. 23, 1860 – The Bell District schoolhouse on southern Main Street, so-called because it's the only schoolhouse with a bell, burns in a pre-dawn fire.

Oct. 3, 1860 – The third annual Ridgefield Agricultural Society fair opens. Apples are a big hit, following one of the best apple-growing seasons in years. Mrs. Richard Smith exhibits 12 apples weighing one pound each.

Oct. 4, 1860 – The presidential campaign is underway, and Republicans in Ridgefield hold a torchlight parade down Main Street.

Oct. 31, 1860 – The Wide Awakes, a young Republican group, has a torchlight parade. Between 300 and 400 people march back and forth on Main Street.

Nov. 6, 1860 – Republican Abraham Lincoln wins Ridgefield by a good margin over Stephen A. Douglas, the Northern Democrat, and two Southern candidates.

## **1861**

Feb. 6, 1861 – Town gossips are in a tizzy. The adulterous affair between Dr. Oliver Starr Hickok, who had moved to Ridgefield from Bethel the previous year, and Mrs. John Canfield, is made public. Both Dr. Hickok and Mrs. Canfield are excommunicated from the Congregational Church, and Hickok is run out of town. The New York World reports Mrs. Canfield "admitted that the M.D. had drugged her, and while in a state of stupefaction from the effects of the draught, he had committed a diabolical outrage upon her person."

March 21-22, 1861 – A blizzard hits the town. It takes 30 men with two spans of horses and three yoke of oxen to clear a 10-foot-high snow bank on Branchville Road near Nod Road so that the sleighs can reach the station in Branchville.

April 1, 1861 — Ridgefield votes for Republican candidates, showing its support for President Lincoln as the Civil War is about to start.

April 16, 1861 – Matthew Keeler, age 73, walks out of his house that evening, without putting on a coat or scarf, and disappears. Fifty men search for him through the night. The next day, the mill pond at Miller's Ridge off Nod Road is drained, and his body is found.

April 19, 1861 – Only six days after the shot fired on Fort Sumter, S.C., two Ridgefielders, Nathan Couch and George W. Banker, leave for the front after having been among the first men in the area to answer President Lincoln's call for volunteers.

April 20, 1861 – In reaction to the outbreak of war, a rally is held, with band music, cannon firings, and flag waving.

April 26, 1861 – The Town Meeting decries the “armed rebellion...seizing the forts, arsenals, navy-yards and hospitals which belong to the people of the United States, and consummating its crime by firing upon the flag of the nation, the glorious symbol of our liberty, and our general welfare.” The meeting votes that the town should provide support for any families whose men head off to the new war. Wives will receive \$2 a week plus 50 cents for each child under 12.

May 2, 1861 — Abraham Nash and Edwin Fowler are shot, allegedly by Stephen Buttery, for tearing down a secessionist flag Buttery had erected outside his Florida Road tavern.

May 27, 1861 — Three burglars, named Beckwith, Gilbert and Knapp, all from Ridgefield, “whittled their way out of Danbury jail with a pocket knife, escaping on Monday night,” reports the Worcester (Mass.) Spy.

June 10, 1861 – Lightning strikes the home of Dr. Nehemiah Perry Sr. [where the Community Center is today]. “Mrs. Perry’s cap was taken from her head and thrown some distance,” writes Anna Resseguie. “A board very near Sarah P.’s feet was torn in pieces. Panes of glass were broken. Mrs. Perry deaf for a time.”

June 11, 1861 — Darius Baxter is trying to remove an old explosive charge from a rock when the charge explodes, blowing off one of his arms.

July 2, 1861 – The Congregational Church gets a new organ, costing \$950 [\$27,000 in 2020].

July 31, 1861 – Ridgefield women meet at the home of Mrs. William O. Seymour to sew hospital garments for soldiers.

Aug. 20, 1861 – The new organ at the Congregational Church needs repair; rats have gnawed through the bellows.

Sept. 26, 1861 – Ridgefielders participate in the “national fast” called for by President Lincoln. Though it is a Thursday, many attend church services.

Oct. 1, 1861 — Joel E. Sammis of Ridgefield, a soldier in a new Civil War regiment training in New Haven, is arrested in that city for “picking the pockets, robbing the valises, &tc, of his fellows.” He is tried in the Police Court and sentenced to pay a fine of \$3 [\$86] and costs. “It is the general impression that Sammis won’t train in that company any more,” says the New London Daily Chronicle.

Oct. 2, 1861 – The Ridgefield Agricultural Society Fair opens and an estimated 6,000 people visit the fair the next day. The main address is delivered by the Rev. Aaron L. Lindsley, minister at the South Salem Presbyterian Church. Lindsley later moves to

Oregon, establishing missions and churches. Lindsley's two sons, George and Addison, are among the founders of a new community. When a name for the town was being selected, it was their suggestion that it be called Ridgefield in memory of the "pleasant little town in Connecticut which they remembered from their childhood."

Nov. 1, 1861 – Van Amburg's Menagerie parades down Main Street before setting up its show. The parade is led by Hannibal, said to be the largest elephant in the United States.

## **1862**

Jan. 21, 1862 – A major ice storm strikes town, felling many trees and limbs but, of course, not utility lines.

Feb. 17, 1862 – Bells are rung and cannon fired celebrating news of Union troops' taking Fort Donelson in Tennessee.

Feb. 4, 1862 — George Jennings, a brakeman, is carrying a bundle of iron across the railroad track at Ridgefield Station [Branchville] when he slips and falls across the rails, with the "heavy burden top of him," says the Springfield (Mass.) Republican. "His recovery is doubtful."

March 7, 1862 – Author George W. Bungay speaks in town on "The War, its Heroes and Lessons."

March 17, 1862 – Another ice storm hits and breaks many limbs and trees.

April 7, 1862 — Charles Smith 2nd and Jared N. Olmstead are elected state representatives from Ridgefield in what the Stamford Advocate calls part of a "Glorious Victory" statewide for members of the Union Party, also known as Republicans.

April 12, 1862 — While visiting South Norwalk, Alfred Mead of Ridgefield is accidentally shot by one of his companions, who carelessly handles a pistol. The wound is not fatal.

April 27, 1862 – Cpl. Thomas Payne dies while in the Union Army.

May 6, 1862 — The woods above Ridgefield Station [Branchville] catch fire from ashes emitted by a passing locomotive, and the blaze burns some 500 acres before it could be controlled. "The extent of the damage is not known, but it was mostly young wood that burned," says the New London Chronicle. "Several young cattle that were grazing in the woods had a narrow escape, but were saved by being driven into a swamp."

July 1862 – A scarlet fever outbreak sickens many and kills several children in town.



Aug. 2, 1862 — Hiram L. Seymour is seriously injured by a bull, which breaks two of his ribs. In attempting to stop the bull, William Benedict is tossed into the air and also severely hurt.

Aug. 9, 1862 – Responding to President Lincoln’s call for 300,000 more volunteers, a Town Meeting votes to pay \$200 “bounties” to the families of any Ridgefield men who enlist in the Union Army.

Aug. 9, 1862 – Corporal Edwin B. Gilbert is captured at Cedar Mountain, Va. He survives, and is discharged from the service July 19, 1865.

Aug. 16, 1862 – A group of Ridgefield volunteers, responding to the President’s call for more men, marches down Main Street before heading off to the war.

Aug. 28, 1862 – Many Ridgefielders are among the troops to be mustered into the service as part of the Seventeenth Regiment, Company C and Company G, in Bridgeport. They camp at Seaside Park and leave by rail Sept. 23.

Sept. 5, 1862 – Joseph Hawkins of Ridgefield, home on furlough from service with the 14th Regiment of New York Volunteers, is killed by cannon during a celebration he is attending in Norwalk.

Sept. 13, 1862 – A Town Meeting votes to borrow \$15,400 to pay \$200 bounties being given to families of men who just volunteered for service. Bonds are issued for \$50 each, paying 6% interest.

Sept. 17, 1862 – Corporal Henry Keeler is wounded in the bloody battle of Antietam, only six weeks after he enlists. He dies the next day on the battlefield. His brother, Silas, also a soldier, takes two off to search for his brother. “I kept going for miles and miles, looking at every grave I saw,” he writes a family member, “and was about to give up the search from fatigue and hunger (for I had already gone over twenty five miles), but I kept on till dark, and just as I was about to lie down for the night, I saw a few graves under an apple tree, a few rods off, and there I found the grave of our dear brother. It was a solemn time for me as I sat by the grave.”

Oct. 8 and 9, 1862 – The Ridgefield Agricultural Fair takes place on what is now Veterans Park field, east of the Community Center.

Nov. 2, 1862 – Many attend the funeral of Corporal Henry Keeler, whose body has been brought home from Antietam by his brother.

Nov. 10, 1862 – Christopher Olmstead, who had enlisted in the Union Army in August, dies of typhoid fever in Washington, D.C., before ever seeing combat. He is 23.

Nov. 16, 1862 – The funeral of Christopher Olmstead takes place.

Nov. 24, 1862 – Ridgefielders are suffering from inflation of prices due to shortages and war demands. Kerosene has jumped from 75 cents a gallon last year to \$1.25. Coffee is 30 cents a pound. Rags are selling for 10 cents a pound and, with a paper shortage, old newspapers are selling for four to five cents a pound.

Dec. 10, 1862 – Smith Keeler is discharged from the Army after being wounded on a scouting expedition and losing his left arm.

## **1863**

Jan. 15, 1863 — “The Danbury Times says that about midnight of the 15th, two colored men passing through Sugar Hollow, a lonely region between Danbury and Ridgefield, were furiously assaulted by an animal believed to be a cross between a Jaguar and a wild cat. The men were unarmed and for a time were in great danger of losing their lives. They succeeded, however, in killing the brute at last, and have deposited its hide in the Times office. The animal was a full three feet in length, with a stout thick neck and head. Its coat of hair and fur was of a glossy black mottled with irregular stripes of grey.” —New Haven Palladium, Jan. 22.

Jan. 18, 1863 – John G. Fry dies in the war, just five months after joining the army.

Feb. 7, 1863 – The Town Meeting names seven, including the selectmen and the treasurer, to a committee to figure out how “to equalize the payment of the war debt of the town of Ridgefield.”

Feb. 9, 1863 — A new post office, called Ridgefield Station, is established at what is later called Branchville, and William W. Beers is named postmaster, reports the Hartford Courant today. The post office at Limestone is discontinued.

Feb. 28, 1863 – To raise money to cover its war debt, the town votes to issue bonds of between \$50 and \$500 each, to be made payable to the bearer with an interest rate of 6%. [A December 1862 act of the State Legislature allowed towns to issue such bonds.]

Feb. 28, 1863 — Samuel R. Hanley is convicted in Brooklyn, N.Y., for bigamy and sentenced to 10 years confinement in Sing Sing after his wife in Brooklyn discovers he has another wife in Ridgefield.

March 30, 1863 – William Avent, who had enlisted the previous August, dies while in the service.

April 2, 1863 – Mrs. Joel Seymour is dressing her young children when her clothing catches fire from a stove. She is so badly burned that she dies within an hour and a half. She is 25 years old.

April 3, 1863 — Ridgefield joins the state in voting for incumbent Republican Gov. William Buckingham, said to be an expression of backing of the Civil War and President Lincoln's policies. The Democrats had put up Thomas H. Seymour, who opposes the war. "The hardest battle ever known in the state," says a New York Tribune headline. "Complete overthrow of the Copperheads," says another.

April 7, 1863 – A Mr. Potter arrives in Ridgefield to establish a "singing school." By May 27, it has gone out of business.

April 26, 1863 – Francis E. Seymour dies while serving in the Army.

April 30, 1863 – Ridgefielders participate in the National Fast, requested by President Lincoln as a day of prayer.

May 2, 1863 – Andrew Lockwood, a member of the 17th Connecticut Volunteer Regiment, is captured at Chancellorsville, Va. He survives and lives until 1905.

May 23, 1863 — "An old man in Ridgefield who had ventured to remonstrate with some females who kept a house of ill-fame in that town, was attacked by some rowdy friends of the frail women and seriously wounded with knives," The New Haven Palladium reports.

May 26, 1863 — John W. Rockwell is granted a U.S. patent for an improvement in currycombs.

July 1, 1863 – In the Battle of Gettysburg, Edwin D. Pickett and Lawrence Carney are killed. Joseph Whitlock is seriously wounded, and several other Ridgefielders are also hit by fire. Henry W. Keeler is shot three times in the foot.

July 1, 1863 – Horace Q. Judd is captured by Confederates during the Battle of Gettysburg. Nine days later, he escapes, and serves through the rest of the war.

July 1, 1863 – The Federal Government was now drafting men into the Army, and a Town Meeting this day votes to pay \$300 to each draftee.

July 2, 1863 – Selah Gage of the 23rd Connecticut Regiment dies in a New Orleans hospital at the age of 43.

July 2, 1863 — Eight people have been arrested in Ridgefield, charged with “keeping and visiting houses of ill-fame,” reports The Hartford Courant.

July 31, 1863 — At his graduation from Yale, future governor George Edward Lounsbury of Ridgefield delivers the “philosophical oration,” entitled “Responsibility of Liberty.”

July 7, 1863 – News has begun arriving of the losses of local boys, like Eddie Pickett, at Gettysburg, but the surrender of the Confederate troops at Vicksburg prompts Ridgefielders to ring church bells and fire cannon.

July 16, 1863 – Joseph S. Whitlock and Rufus Warren, both of whom had been wounded at Gettysburg July 1, die in a Washington, D.C., hospital. Warren had his leg amputated the day before his death.

July 20, 1863 — J.J. Lockwood is attempting to catch his horse in an open field when the horse strikes him with his fore feet, one foot hitting him on the head and fracturing his skull, the other foot inflicting wounds on his body, The Hartford Daily Courant reports.

July 25, 1863 — Daniel B. Bradley, 41, of the 23 Connecticut Regiment dies in a New Orleans hospital.

Aug. 7, 1863 – A Town Meeting renews the town’s offer of \$300 to each man drafted into the service, but adds that the \$300 may also go “to the drafted man who shall furnish an able-bodied substitute, who shall be accepted and mustered into the United States service.”

Sept. 26, 1863 — Three women are convicted in Superior Court, Danbury, of keeping a house of ill-fame in Ridgefield and Stamford, and six girls are found guilty of residing in them, reports the Columbian Register in New Haven.

Sept. 30-Oct. 2, 1863 – Thousands attend the Ridgefield Agricultural Society fair.

Oct. 7, 1863 — The draft of soldiers, paused for a while, resumes in Ridgefield.

Oct. 16, 1863 – William Hawley Esq. dies at the age of 79. The New York Times obituary notes that a train connecting to Ridgefield in time for the Oct. 19 funeral leaves New York at 7 a.m.

Nov. 14, 1863 — Ridgefield’s apple crop is reported as “very large” this year, says the Connecticut Courant. “One farmer gathered nearly one thousand dollars’ worth.”

Dec. 12, 1863 – Cpl. Frederick L. Sturges dies in the war.

## 1864

Jan. 2, 1864 — Lydia Gregory, nearly 70 years old, perishes in a fire that burns her house to the ground north of Branchville.

Jan. 3-6, 1864 – Three children of Willis and Catharine Bennett, die of croup in four days. Ada, Francis and Edward Bennett are aged one, three, and five years old.

Jan. 29, 1864 – The town is experiencing an unusual mid-winter warm spell and bluebirds are heard singing.

March 20, 1864 – In declining health and with dissatisfaction being expressed over his performance, the Rev. Clinton Clark of the First Congregational Church announces his retirement, effective April 5. He has served 13 years.

April 10, 1864 – The Rev. Clinton Clark delivers his final sermon, but few people attend in the nasty weather.

April 27, 1864 – Prices continue to rise. Sugar is 26 cents a pound in Ridgefield. Brown sugar is 20 cents, but expected to soon be 25 cents. Good calico is 40 cents a yard. Molasses is \$1.10 per gallon. [\$1 in 1864 had the purchasing power of about \$16.50 of today's money. Twenty five cents was worth more than \$4 today.]

April 28, 1864 – Julia Lynes dies after she accidentally eats some “phosphorus.” She is two years old.

May 1, 1864 – The Rev. Curtiss T. Woodruff becomes rector of St. Stephen's Church, serving two years. His salary is \$1,000 a year plus use of the rectory.

June 4, 1864 – More high prices due to the war are reported by Anna Resseguie. Sugar is up to 28 cents a pound and salt, which had been \$2 for four bushels, is now \$6. Beef is 22 cents a pound in Ridgefield (but 30 cents in Norwalk) and veal is 18 cents.

June 13, 1864 – Ernest Bahring is missing in action and presumed dead at the battle of Proctor's Creek, Virginia.

June 17, 1864 – Ezra Lee Edmond is killed in action in the war. He is 18 years old.

July 9, 1864 — “Sylvester Schofield of Lewisboro, N.Y., visited recently, in company with two men, a noted house near Ridgefield Station. After spending part of the evening there, they started for home. On the way Schofield, who had been, with the others, drinking freely, was taken sick and fell out into the road. His companions put him back

into the wagon. He was greatly distressed and groaned loudly. When near Ridgefield village, it was discovered he was dead.” —Connecticut Courant, Hartford

Aug. 2, 1864 – Corporal George Gilbert dies. He had been wounded July 20 at Peach Tree Creek, Ga.

Aug. 6, 1864 – Ridgefield is having some trouble filling its quota of men needed for the war, and a town meeting this day names three prominent citizens – Hiram K. Scott, Lewis H. Bailey, and John D. Hurlbutt – to a committee to procure volunteers and substitutes for the army.

Sept. 18, 1864 – Sylvester Godfrey dies at Andersonville Prison. He had been captured at Fort Darling, Va., on May 16.

Oct. 3, 1864 – Frederick John, captured May 16 at Drury’s Bluff, Va., dies at Andersonville Prison.

Oct. 5, 1864 — Judge James H. Olmstead of Stamford, a Ridgefield native, speaks to a gathering of Ridgefielders on the merits of voting for Democrats, the Republican Farmer in Bridgeport reports. The Columbian Register in New Haven maintains that 3,000 Democrats attend the afternoon meeting. The town’s entire population — men, women and children — is 2,100 people.

Oct. 6, 1864 — Despite poor weather Democrats gather to hear John D. Hurlbutt of Ridgefield speak on the merits of Gen. George B. McClellan for president. “He was accompanied by a delegation from the Ridgefield McClellan Club — and they were greatly pleased with the little affair.” —Republican Farmer, Bridgeport.

Oct. 13, 1864 — A “Mr. Dauchy of Ridgefield” is “badly wounded in the head” when a New York and New Haven Railroad train derails near 79th Street in Manhattan. Several cars “were overturned, unroofed and more or less broken up,” several newspapers report. “The passengers were thrown in all directions, many of them sustaining severe injuries.” Mr. Dauchy was sent to Bellevue Hospital where, presumably, he recovered.

Nov. 8, 1864 – Abraham Lincoln wins Ridgefield over General McClellan by a 79-vote majority.

Nov. 30, 1864 – Albert N. Davis, an artilleryman, dies in an Army hospital in Washington, D.C.

Dec. 10, 1864 — “As Mr. George Smith of Ridgefield was husking corn on his barn floor one day last week, his boy, who was pitching hay on the left, threw down a pitchfork,

which struck Mr. Smith on the arm. One of the tines of the fork passed through the arm below the elbow, lacerating it badly.” — *Columbian Register*, New Haven.

## 1865

Jan. 20, 1865 – Wartime prices continue to hurt Ridgefielders. A good men’s overcoat costs between \$70 and \$100 in Ridgefield [\$900 to \$1,300 today]. Muslin is 60 cents a yard and calico, 40 cents.

Feb. 18, 1865 – Recruiting agents Timothy Jones and John D. Hurlbutt tell a Town Meeting that substitutes to fulfill the Ridgefield quota of soldiers are becoming rare. “Good men were scarce to find and difficult to obtain,” the record says. The price of substitutes is increased from \$630 to \$775.

Feb. 23, 1865 – Samuel A. Coe is discharged from the Union Army after losing his arm at the Siege of Petersburg. [Coe goes on to become a leading citizen. Often called the Mayor of Ridgebury, he was a selectman for eight years, a state representative from 1911 to 1913, a deacon of the Ridgebury Congregational Church for 35 years, a member of the Board of Assessors for 20 years, and a member of the Board of Relief until he was 90. He died in 1935 at 92.]

April 4, 1865 — Hiram O. Nash and Ebenezer W. Keeler, both Union (Republican) party members, are elected Ridgefield’s two state representatives.

April 8, 1865 — A 12-year-old son of W.M. Squires of Ridgefield “playing with a pistol, in company with other boys, caused a premature discharge, tearing his hand in a most frightful manner,” reports the *Connecticut Courant* today.

April 8, 1865 – A week before he is assassinated, President Lincoln visits wounded soldiers at City Point, Va., and before a delighted crowd, picks up an axe and begins chopping wood – in high hat and long black frock coat. Soldiers grab Lincoln-generated wood chips as souvenirs. Among them is Jacob Legrand Dauchy of Ridgefield, who often tells this story of “the railsplitter’s” last use of an axe. [In 2008, 143 years later, the axe used by the President that day is discovered in the collections of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Ill.]

April 10, 1865 – Ridgefielders celebrate news that General Lee had surrendered to General Grant the day before.

April 15, 1865 – Only five days after the town celebrates the Confederate surrender, word comes that President Lincoln has been assassinated.

April 19, 1865 – At noon, the same hour as the funeral of President Lincoln in Washington, D.C., all churches in Ridgefield are filled with mourners attending special services. All businesses are closed for the day.

April 28, 1865 — Irad Hawley, a Ridgefield native who became a canal and coal executive, dies at the age of 72 in Rome whose climate he had sought because of poor health. His mansion in Manhattan is now home of the Salmagundi Club.

May 2, 1865 — “The route of the proposed New York, Northern and White Plains Railroad, as laid out through Greenfield, N.Y., and Ridgefield, Brookfield in this state, has been accepted by the railroad commissioners,” reports the *Columbian Register* in New Haven. “Work on the road will begin in about a month.”

June 20, 1865 — Seven different mowing machines for farmers are tested today in Ridgefield fields and a Hubbard takes first place in the competition.

June 22, 1865 — A small barn belonging to William Howe is struck by lightning, catches fire and burns to the ground.

July 19, 1865 – The 17th Connecticut Regiment, containing many Ridgefielders, is mustered out at Hilton Head, S.C. which, a century and a half later, has become home to many ex-Ridgefield retirees.

Aug. 7, 1865 — While B.D. Norris and Hiram Reynolds are riding in a carriage, the whippletree disconnects, causing the horse to run and throwing out the two men. Both are badly bruised, the *Columbian Register* reports.

Aug. 10, 1865 — The store of Bradley Beers at Ridgefield Station, now called Branchville, is entered during the night and \$200 worth of goods [\$3,300 in 2020] is taken.

Sept. 7, 1865 – The Rev. Curtiss Woodruff of St. Stephen’s Church leads a concert of vocal and instrumental music at Catoonah Hall on Catoonah Street.

Sept. 27, 1865 — John S. Smalley, an African-American born in Ridgefield, dies in Brownsville, Texas, one of the last Union soldiers to die as a result of the Civil War. His death from dysentery comes just two days before his 29th Regiment learns that it has been ordered home to be disbanded. Smalley, one of the first Blacks to enlist from Connecticut, served in many battles, and had been severely wounded in the Petersburg-Richmond campaign the year before. He is a grandson of Uncle Ned and Aunt Betsey Armstrong, who hosted an Underground Railroad stop in Ridgebury.



Oct. 3-6, 1865 – Many thousands attend Ridgefield Agricultural Society fair, but Anna Resseguie says it is “inferior to that of former years, though as many or more strangers were present. Horse racing seemed to form a great attraction. Mr. Couch’s collection of birds was an object of special interest, and the chief one.” [Edward J. Couch was a local taxidermist. A century and a half later, on the occasion of Ridgefield’s 300th birthday, the Aldrich Museum has an exhibit commemorating his taxidermic work.]

Oct. 26, 1865 — William Stebbins, a young man who works for the railroad in Norwalk, is engaged in coupling two cars when something goes wrong and he is killed almost instantly. The Ridgefield native was a veteran of four years service in the Civil War. He is only 23 years old.

Nov. 1, 1865 – A town meeting votes 17 to 12 to dissolve the 13th or “Bell” School District after a fire destroys the schoolhouse on lower Main Street. Students are absorbed into nearby school districts of West Lane, Flat Rock, and Whipstick Districts.

Nov. 3, 1865 — “Mr. E.S. Benedict trotted his span of horses from Ridgefield to Danbury recently, making the distance, 10 miles, in 34 minutes, 45 seconds, in spite of the high wind and dust which prevailed,” reports the Republican Farmer in Bridgeport.

## **1866**

1866 – The Ridgefield Bakery is founded and lasts well into the 20th Century.

Jan. 8, 1866 – It is the coldest day in the memory of many – the thermometer reaches minus 21 degrees.

Feb. 1, 1866 – While visiting Bailey’s menagerie in Danbury, John Hurlbutt asks the lion keeper whether he can put his hand in the cage. The keeper says it’s safe to do so, Hurlbutt does, and the lion bites him. He contracts lockjaw, and by Feb. 11, he is dead at the age of 33.

Feb. 12, 1866 – Dr. Nehemiah Perry Sr., the town’s most popular physician for many years, dies at the age of 76.

Feb. 14, 1866 – The town virtually shuts down for the hugely attended funerals of Dr. Perry and Mr. Hurlbutt.

Feb. 15, 1866 – Grace King, youngest child of Lt. Joshua King, Revolutionary War officer who escorted Major John Andre to the gallows, dies at the age of 57.

Feb. 16, 1866 — Jacob M. Lockwood has a new funeral parlor on Catoonah Street. “The undersigned has purchased and greatly enlarged the business formerly conducted by

Gilbert & Brothers, and is now prepared to furnish the public a very large and choice assortment of coffins,” he advertises in the Bridgeport Republican Farmer.

Feb. 26, 1866 – Jerome Blitz, a ventriloquist and magician, performs in Jones Hall, which is the second floor of the Big Shop carriage factory on West Lane at Main Street.

March 3, 1866 — “The inhabitants of this town contemplate the erection of a monument to the memory of the late Dr. Nehemiah Perry, who had ministered to his fellow citizens for more than half a century, and who sustained a high character and reputation in his profession. Dr. Perry and his father before him continuously practiced medicine in Ridgefield for upwards of a hundred years.” —*Hartford Courant*.

May 6, 1866 — The store of Hiram N. Nash & Son is broken into and a small amount of cash is taken. “A lad was arrested and owned up,” says the *Hartford Courant*.

June 3, 1866 – The Rev. Francis T. Russell becomes rector at St. Stephen’s Church, serving two years. He had earlier been a professor of elocution at Hobart College. He replaces the Rev. C.T. Woodruff who take an assistant rectorship at St. Paul’s Church in Norwalk.

June 9, 1866 – Wanzer Bouton, age 17, a sailor, drowns when his sloop sinks off Stamford.

June 16, 1866 — Zebulon Jennings of Ridgefield, Conn., beat his grown-up daughter so badly a few days since, that her life has been despaired of.” —Providence Evening Press

June 28, 1866 – The Methodist Church’s Strawberry Festival at Jones Hall in the carriage factory raises \$150 for church work.

June 30, 1866 — “A young man named Ward, of Ridgefield, has been held to bail in \$1,000 on charge of attempting to poison his father with strychnine administered in liquor. The old man was very sick.” —New Haven Columbian Register

July 1866 – A telegraph office opens in Ridgefield.

July 6, 1866 – Ridgefield is feeling the same effects of the heat wave that has killed hundreds in New York City. Here, the temperatures are said to be 95 in the shade and 140 in the hay fields.

July 7, 1866 — “William J. Hoffman Jr. has bought the mill property at Ridgefield, known as Burt’s Mill, and will transform it into a paper mill. The name of the establishment will be the ‘Mamasco Lake Mills.’” —Boston Commercial Bulletin

July 17, 1866 – The town has been in the midst of a heat wave for two weeks and the temperature in Ridgefield hits 97, according to diarist Jared Nash.

Aug. 9, 1866— The schooner G.W. Purnell, loaded with scrap iron, sinks in Long Island Sound after colliding with a barge and a crew member named Bruton of Ridgefield drowns.

Aug. 17, 1866 – Miles Casstick of Norwalk, 30, a fireman aboard a train running between Danbury and Norwalk, is killed when he falls from an engine near Ridgefield Station.

Sept. 18-20, 1866 – Attendance at the Ridgefield Agricultural Fair is hurt by rainy weather — and bad publicity. A woman named Crissey from Vista, N.Y., has her breast bone and two ribs broken by being crushed against a fence by a frightened horse. “Her recovery is doubtful,” reports the Hartford Courant.

Oct. 30, 1866 – Heavy rains cause the dam to burst at New Pond, serving Gilbert’s Mill at Titicus, reports Jared Nash in his diary. Many buildings downstream are flooded; some are damaged and a few carried away. The barn of John D. Nash is swept away and David H. Valden’s tan works are nearly demolished., says the Springfield Republican. The Columbian Register reports “a woman and child were carried off, but were rescued.”

Nov. 1, 1866 – For the second year in a row, the Town Meeting votes to dissolve the 13th or “Bell” School District. Opponents had threatened a lawsuit, saying the 1865 vote was improper. The latest vote ends a year of bickering.

Nov. 13, 1866 – A meteor shower is expected that is so spectacular, Ridgefield church bells will be rung so that people will rise to see it. Alas, the bells are silent because nothing is seen. In England, however, Greenwich Observatory reports a stunning show of up to 5,000 meteors an hour.

Nov. 17, 1866 — Phebe Graves, the oldest resident of Ridgefield, dies at the age of 101 years, 9 months, and 16 days. She was 10 years old when the Declaration of Independence was signed.

Nov. 26, 1866 – Samuel B. Grumman of West Lane, a captain in the militia during the War of 1812, dies at the age of 85

Dec. 19, 1866 — William J. Hoffman’s paper mill at Mamasasco burns down, with a loss of \$25,000. Insurance covers only \$15,000. It is the third paper mill he has built in the area that has burned down; the other two were in North Salem.

Dec. 28, 1866 — The house of George Jennings on West Lane is destroyed by fire. The loss is valued at \$1,000; Jennings had insurance for \$400.

## 1867

Jan. 18, 1867 – A huge snowstorm that has created drifts up to 11 feet high shuts down most traffic in Ridgefield for two days. Mail cannot reach town.

Feb. 5, 1867 – Carrie Fancher, age two years and 10 months, dies of worms.

March 13, 1867 – William Henry Burleigh comes to town to lecture to Republicans. He promotes abolition and temperance. Burleigh is also a poet, whose most popular book is *The Rum Fiend and other Poems*. His poetry is still in print in 2020.

March 20, 1867 – A meeting is held in Jones Hall by sponsors of a railroad that would run from New York to Titicus. They propose taxing the town to build the Ridgefield section.

June 6, 1867 – A special act of the General Assembly orders the state comptroller to pay the 11<sup>th</sup> School District in Ridgefield \$29.40, “being five sixths of the March dividend for 1867 on 31 scholars.” The money is apparently compensation for the Florida school district’s accepting students from nearby Redding.

July 7, 1867 – The Ridgefield and New York Railroad Company is chartered by the General Assembly. The line is to run from Ridgefield through Lewisboro, Pound Ridge, New Canaan or Stamford, and Greenwich, connecting with the New York and New Haven Railroad in either Stamford or Greenwich. The track right of way is to be up to six rods wide.

July 9, 1867 – News reaches town that Rufus H. King, who grew up in Ridgefield at the corner of King Lane and Main Street, was a friend of S. G. Goodrich, and became an Albany, N.Y., financial leader, has died.

July 26, 1867 – The General Assembly gives the town permission to buy stock in the New York and Ridgefield Railroad.

Nov. 10, 1867 – Local merchant Hiram O. Nash dies when he falls from “a load of stalks.” He is 56 years old.

Nov. 23 1867 – James Enright and James Walsh, acting as agents for the Catholic congregation in town, pay \$975 for a small frame house on Catoonah Street, across from the present-day firehouse. It becomes the first Catholic church in town, but is destroyed by fire in less than a year. Catholics return to celebrating Mass in private homes.

## 1868

Feb. 15, 1868 — In a blatant case of fake news, the *New Haven Columbian Register* and many other newspapers around the country report that “Eladsit Tisdale recently died in Ridgefield. His name, spelled backwards or forwards, was the same.” The only known Eladsit Tisdale was born in 1790 in Taunton, Mass., died in Oneida, N.Y., in 1815, and never set foot in Ridgefield.

March 16, 1868 — “At Ridgefield several burglaries have lately been attempted, which resulted very satisfactorily to the burglars,” says the *Waterbury Daily American*. The *Middletown Constitution* reports that “a thief robbed the Ridgefield post office of one hundred pennies the other night.”

March 26, 1868 — E.N. Glover is selling his woolen factory, located along the Sugar Hollow Turnpike [Route 7] at Topstone Road, a quarter mile west of Sanford’s Station [Topstone] on the Danbury and Norwalk Railroad. The 60-by-30 foot building is three stories tall, gets its water power from the Norwalk River with a 10-foot fall, and contains wool processing machinery, says an ad in the *New York Herald*. The property includes 35 acres, a house, barn, and fruit trees. No price is given. The site was originally Hugh Cain’s fulling mill, inspiring the names of nearby Cain’s Hill Road and Fulling Mill Lane.

April 18, 1868 — A group is petitioning the legislature for permission to build a railroad from Derby to Peekskill, N.Y., running through Huntington (now called Trumbull) Monroe, Redding, Ridgefield, Danbury, and other towns, the Hartford Courant reports.

May 22, 1868 – Betsy Palmer, 45, dies “suddenly by the road side.”

June 20, 1868 — The Legislature’s committee on railroads reports favorable on the proposal of the Danbury and Norwalk Railroad to run a branch line to Ridgefield center from Ridgefield Station.

July 1, 1868 – “A Concise History and Manual of the First Congregational Church in Ridgefield, Conn.” is published, an updated version of the history first published in 1843.

July 11, 1868 — Hubert Main is out walking when he is approached by a man “carrying a scythe carelessly over his shoulder,” reports the *Waterbury Daily American*. Main moves aside to avoid the scythe, but not quite far enough, and the point enters the back of his hand, “inflicting a painful wound.”

Aug. 2, 1868 – The Rev. Samuel F. Jarvis becomes rector at St. Stephen’s Church, serving five years.

Sept. 15, 1868 — A one-day “teacher’s institute” takes place in Ridgefield, featuring talks by professors from Yale and elsewhere. While all exercises are open to the public, the institute is aimed chiefly at teachers and school visitors (school board members).

Sept. 18, 1868 — A fire destroys the recently built Catoonah Hall on Catoonah Street, the first floor of which was used for J.W. Rockwell’s factory for making candlesticks, auger bits and other tools. Upstairs were apartments. Flames spread to some smaller buildings, including one used by Catholics as a church, which was also destroyed. The *Middletown Constitution* reports “the fire was the largest ever known in Ridgefield.”

Sept. 29, 1868 — The four-day Ridgefield Fair begins. One of the chief attractions is a four-month-old bull calf belonging to Warren Hoyt of Titicus that already weighs 468 pounds. Even before the fair, “Hundreds have been to see it and pronounce it the finest calf of the age they ever saw,” says the *Hartford Courant*.

Oct. 6, 1868 — “Ridgefield is overrun with horse thieves,” the *Hartford Courant* reports. “On the night of the 7th inst., Deacon Louis Benedict’s horse, harness and buffalo robe, and Amos Northrop’s carriage, harness and robes were stolen, and on the nights of the 10th and 11th attempts were made to steal the horse of Russell Stebbins and Judson Hawley. On Thursday evening last, the citizens met and formed an anti-thieving association, of which W.W. Seymour was chosen president. The association is designed for the protection of property of all kinds from thieves.”

Dec. 7, 1868 — “An old gent in Ridgefield, Conn., who is very fond of buckwheat cakes, and who cooks them himself every morning, the other day prevailed on his son to try them. Son thought they had a queer taste; father thought so too. What could be the matter? After breakfast one of the neighbor’s girls came in to wash the dishes, stir up more cakes and put the house in order. On stirring up the buckwheat, she fished up a huge rat from the bottom of the dish, and on stirring again, fished up four more in succession. The next morning the following conversation ensued: Son: “Pa, shall we have more cakes?” Old gent: “None for me if you please, Eben.”—*Providence Evening Press*

Dec. 19, 1868 — The hotel at Ridgefield Station, established by Sherman Beers, has been sold to Seth J. Benedict, reports the *Columbia Register*.

Dec. 23, 1868 – John Walters, a 33-year-old laborer who had emigrated from Germany, dies when a tree limb falls on him.

## 1869

Feb. 13, 1869 — “A horse stolen in Ridgefield some time since has been traced to Worcester, Mass., and Ridgefield officers went there on Saturday and found the animal in possession of a man who bought it at auction. It seems that a man named Tuttle, of New England Village, who was recently sentenced to three years imprisonment for larceny,

disposed of the horse to his counsel, who had it sold at auction with a reservation that if it proved to have been stolen, it should be returned. As the matter now stands, the lawyer will have to collect his fees over again.” — *Hartford Courant*.

March 6, 1869 — “P. P. Cornen Esq. of Ridgefield has sold a lot of land at the upper end of New York City to the New York & New Haven R.R. Co. Price paid, \$208,000. The company will use the land for depot purposes.” That depot is today called Grand Central Terminal and \$208,000 then would be about \$4 million today.

April 12, 1869 — Circus executive Lewis June of Ridgefield, accompanied by his daughter, is at the Purdy’s Station awaiting a train. “His horses took fright at an approaching train, started off at full speed, came in contact with an obstruction, throwing Mr. June out of the vehicle with great violence against a stone, and rendering him insensible for a considerable time,” says the *New York World*. “Miss June fortunately escaped with slight injuries.”

April 16, 1869 – The Danbury and Norwalk Rail Road begins construction of a branch line into Ridgefield village from its line at Ridgefield Station, soon to be called Branchville.

April 29, 1869 — Windows shake in much of Ridgefield as 42 kegs of black powder plus nitroglycerine are used to blow up a seam of rock in the path of the new railroad branch. The resulting hole is 18 feet deep. At a price of \$300 [\$5,800 today], the explosives remove rock and dirt that would have cost \$2,000 [\$39,000] to remove any other way, reports the Providence Evening Press.

May 3, 1869 — Czar Jones of Main Street, a Ridgefield native born on the Fourth of July, dies at the age of 80. Jones, a woodworker, was an owner of the carriage-making company in the Big Shop and Jones Hall on the shop’s second floor was named for him.

June 26, 1869 — The New England Journal of Agriculture publishes a letter about crows from an unnamed Ridgefielder. “If there is anything made in vain, it is the crow. They destroy our little warblers; they catch our chickens, ducks, turkeys and goslings; they dig our potatoes, pull our corn and beans from the time they appear above ground until they grow out of their way. Then, as soon as the grain is formed on the ear, they commence their work again. I have not the least doubt that our town was taxed \$200 last year to feed crows.”

July 1869 – St. Stephen’s Church receives a bequest of \$500 from the estate of Nancy Smith of Norwalk, a former parishioner who had died six years earlier. Income from the grant is to be used to take care of the poor.

July 17, 1869 — “Near the Ridgefield branch of the D. & N. R.R., a little boy was recently engaged in throwing stones at an empty tin can. Suddenly the can flew into the air with a loud report, and the little boy lost no time in getting out of the neighborhood. It had contained [nitro]glycerine, and the last stone struck a portion of that dangerous stuff adhering to the can.” —*Bridgeport Standard*

July 28, 1869 — The Ridgefield Floral Society has its second annual Festival in Jones Hall of the Big Shop. The top prize winner is Mrs. Frank R. Hunt, \$4 [\$78 today], for the best bouquet of cultivated flowers. Other winners included Miss Sarah A. Keeler, Mrs. C.H. Kendall, Mrs. John D. Nash, Mrs. Jeremiah Bennett, Mrs. Amos Northrop, Mrs. E.J. Couch, Miss Mary F. Platt, and Mrs. Abram Holmes. A child, Master James Platt, wins second prize, \$2, for best bouquet of wild flowers.

Aug. 4, 1869 — Dr. Nehemiah Perry Jr., is apparently still distraught over the 1866 death of his beloved father, Dr. Nehemiah Perry Sr., with whom he had practiced medicine. He is advertising his medical practice for sale in the *New York Herald*. Perry soon changes his mind and continues to serve Ridgefield until his retirement in 1893.

Sept. 8, 1869 — “A remarkable escape from death on the Ridgefield, Conn., branch road lately occurred. One of the laborers was washing his hands under the shade of a large tree, when a rock weighing about two hundred pounds was hurled through the air from a blast that had been let off. The rock came with force enough to knock the tree over, which fell by the side of the man. The stone then rolled over and struck the man on his leg, knocking him down, tearing off part of his boot and badly bruising his foot and leg.” — *Worcester (Mass.) Palladium*

Sept. 18, 1869 — Samuel Perry, member of a Ridgefield family of three generations of physicians and owner of the Glenberg Mills in Georgetown, dies at the age of 37. Glenberg makes patent medicines.

Oct. 7, 1869 — Although construction is nearing completion on a much-shorter branch line to the center of town from the Danbury and Norwalk Rail Road, work is also continuing on the longer, but more direct route to New York, “Portchester and Ridgefield Rail Road,” whose directors meet and hear a report on the 23-mile line.

Oct. 22, 1869 – A three-year-old boy named Reynolds dies of burns after his clothing catches fire.

Nov. 1, 1869 – Charles Rasco, 29, a farmer, is run over and killed by a train at the Ridgefield Station in Branchville. “The engineer saw him, signalled him to get off the track, and reversed his engine, but could not stop in time to prevent the accident,” says the *New Haven Columbian Register*.



Dec. 25, 1869 — “Heman Keeler, who went off from Ridgefield some twenty years ago, and been traveling over both hemispheres, died lately in Idaho, possessed of considerable property.” —*New Haven Columbian Register*

Dec. 31, 1869 — Ridgefield records 41 births, 38 deaths and nine marriages in 1869.

## 1870

Jan. 28, 1870 — Phebe Jones, widow of Capt. Benjamin Jones, dies at the age of 98.

April 20, 1870 – The first rail is laid on the new bed from Branchville to Ridgefield center.

May 6, 1870 — Daniel L. Adams, a state representative from Ridgefield, is appointed to the Judiciary Committee in the State Legislature. Adams is soon to be named first president of the Ridgefield Savings Bank. Today, Doc Adams is better known by many as a founder of modern-day baseball, whose admission into the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown is under consideration.

June 14, 1870 — The *Hartford Courant* reports that the shirt factory of E.H. Smith and D. Smith Sholes in Ridgefield employs some 50 people, and has “forty or more sewing machines.”

June 25, 1870 – The first train arrives in Ridgefield center on the new branch line from what had been called Ridgefield Station and is now officially called Branchville. Building the four-mile line has taken a year and has cost the Danbury and Norwalk Rail Road \$250,000, as much as it spent 19 years earlier to build a track all the way from Norwalk to Danbury.

July 5, 1870 – Despite the opening of a new branch line into the village, the General Assembly approves amending the Ridgefield and New York Rail Road Company’s charter, giving it another three years to run a train line to Ridgefield center from the main line along the shore.

July 6, 1870 – The General Assembly allows the Ridgefield and New York Railroad Company to issue bonds of at least \$500 each.

July 11, 1870 – The Ridgefield and New York Rail Road begins buying land in Ridgefield and building a bed for a new line from Port Chester to Ridgefield and probably Danbury.

July 23, 1870 — “It is told by a credible party, (says the *Stamford Advocate*.) that a rock weighing nearly two tons was sent by a blast from the road bed of the Ridgefield railroad,

now in course of construction, over a piece of wood to a clear field, where it bounded from another rock and flew further, striking a cow and lifting her on top of a large apple tree, from which she fell dead to the ground.” —*New London Democrat*

Sept. 13-16, 1870 — A mammoth sunflower stalk 16 feet high, bearing 27 flowers, “some of them very large,” is on exhibit at the Ridgefield agricultural fair, reports the Hartford Courant.

Sept. 20, 1870 — Two barns belonging to Henry Stewart and worth about \$2,000 burn to the ground. They are not insured.

Oct. 20, 1870 – The existence of “The Union Hotel” on the west side of Main Street, maybe owned by Nirum Dykeman, is mentioned in a deed.

Nov. 8, 1870 — “Two wild cats were shot in Ridgefield recently.” —*Waterbury American*

Nov. 19, 1870 – Newly released census counts indicate Ridgefield has undergone the steepest drop in population since the census began. Only 1,919 Ridgefielders are counted, nearly 300 fewer than in 1860. Many have apparently left town after the war for parts west. In population, Ridgefield is the 89th largest town in the state of 164 towns. New Haven is the most populous town at 50,886, followed by Hartford, Bridgeport, Norwich, and Waterbury. Danbury is 12th. Bridgeport, at 19,876 people, then had 5,000 fewer residents than Ridgefield has today.

## 1871

Jan. 13, 1871 — “Ridgefield has an anti-thieving association,” report several state newspapers

Jan. 15, 1871 — Western Union opens a telegraph office at the new Ridgefield Depot on Prospect Street.

March 8, 1871 — “David M. Blackman of Ridgefield, serving a sentence in the Bridgeport jail for turkey stealing, attempted suicide Monday morning by drinking about a pint of kerosene and then plunged a knife into his arm and cutting his throat. He will recover.” —*The Hartford Courant*

April 15, 1871 — A storm brings hailstones as large as three inches in circumference. “In some places they were drifted in heaps two feet deep,” reports the *New Haven Columbian Register*. “Cattle and horses in the fields were wild with terror and pain, and one man had a finger broken by a blow from a hailstone larger than a pigeon’s egg. Seventy panes of glass were broken in one house.”

May 5, 1871 – F.E. Baxter of Ridgefield sells John Cochran his 5/8 interest in a “walnut billiard table,” located in the basement of Cochran’s Store in Purdys, N.Y. The price of \$225 – about \$3,700 in today’s money – included four balls, 12 cues, and one rack

June 28, 1871 — The Norwich Aurora joins dozens of newspapers in the East in publishing this example of humor of the times: “A Ridgefield young man, just married, being congratulated on his marriage, was asked where he married his wife. He said Long Ridge [in Stamford]. “Ah,” spoke up a neighbor, with deep feeling, “those Long Ridge gals make clever wives. I have had three of ’em.” Another example, circulated widely that year, was: “A new scholar in one of the Sunday Schools at Ridgefield, Conn., on being asked “Who made the beautiful hills?” replied that he did not know, as his folks had “only moved in the Friday before.”

July 19, 1871 – The Connecticut General Assembly agrees to charter the Ridgefield Savings Bank.

July 22, 1871 — More summer visitors are trying to stay in Ridgefield than the town can handle. The *Columbian Register* reports that “more than a hundred families have applied for boards in Ridgefield this season, who could not be accommodated.”

July 29, 1871 – The Board of Directors of the new Ridgefield Savings Bank elects Dr. Daniel L. Adams, a Ridgefield physician, as its first president. Twenty five years earlier, Dr. Adams had been the first president of the Knickerbocker Base Ball Club, which played its first game on June 19, 1846, in Hoboken, N.J. against the New York Nine. Some say it was the first baseball game.

Aug. 8, 1871 – The Ridgefield Savings Bank opens for business in the Old Hundred [now part of the Aldrich Museum]. The bank grows in the 20th and 21st Centuries to become the Ridgefield Bank and then the even larger Fairfield County Bank.

Sept. 26-29, 1871 — The 14th annual Fair and Cattle Show of the Ridgefield Agricultural Society takes place, with the Rev. A.N. Benedict of Lewisboro delivering the annual address to farmers.

Oct. 16, 1871 – Twelve people meet in the office of Dr. W. S. Todd to establish The Ridgefield Library and Historical Association. Each pledges \$3 to be used to buy new books for the next year. This system is used for six years.

Oct. 24, 1871 – The estate of Aaron Turner, the circus pioneer who once hired a Bethel man named P.T. Barnum as his ticket seller, transfers to School District 15 in north Ridgebury a half acre for a schoolhouse, on the condition that the school district “make and keep forever a tight stone fence five feet high” between the Turner and schoolhouse lands.

Oct. 9, 1871 — A year after the 15th Amendment allows African-American men to vote, the Annual Town Meeting elects Ridgefield's first Black town officials. Thomas F. Brown and Hart Stiles, whom the *Columbian Register* in New Haven describes as "two colored gentlemen" are chosen as haywards "by almost unanimous vote." Haywards caught and impounded loose livestock, such as cattle or swine, that could damage farm crops.

Oct. 24, 1871 — N.S. Barnum of Ridgefield receives a U.S. patent for a "fork tine scoop for gathering stones."

Nov. 13, 1871 – The Ridgefield Savings Bank issues its first mortgage – to S.S. and J.J. Dauchy for \$1,000 at 7% interest.

Dec. 14, 1871 — *The Waterbury Daily American* reports that the Rev. D.M. Teller of Hadlyme will become pastor of the Congregational Church at Ridgefield Jan. 1, 1872. Daniel Teller becomes so enchanted with the town that he writes its first formal history in 1878, a 251- page volume now considered a classic. Though he later moves on to other parishes, Teller arranges to be buried at his death in the Ridgefield Cemetery.

Dec. 16, 1871 — In another example of humor of the times, *The Danbury News* reports that "a very wicked Ridgefield man, being recently taken ill, and believing he was about to die, told a neighbor that he felt the need of preparation for the next world, and would like to see some property person in regard to it, whereupon his feeling friend sent for an insurance agent."

Dec. 23, 1871 – John Reiley of Ridgefield, who works for the waterworks in Norwalk, dies while blasting rock. He is 27.

Dec. 31, 1871 – The new Ridgefield Savings Bank reports its net income, the difference between receipts and expenses, totals \$106.61 [about \$1,725 in 2008].

## **1872**

Jan. 23, 1872 — Peter P. Cornen and his wife Lydia are riding in their carriage when their horse is spooked and begins running wildly. The carriage overturns, and Lydia suffers a broken arm. Peter escapes with a few bruises.

Feb. 1, 1872 – The Rev. Daniel Teller becomes minister of the First Congregational Church. He later writes the first history of Ridgefield published in book form.

April 2, 1872 — George B. Gruman, who has an ice tool factory in Branchville, wins a patent for his design of an ice plough.

May 11, 1872 — “We are authoritatively informed that pleuropneumonia is more or less prevalent among the cattle of Ridgefield, Fairfield County,” reports The Columbian Register in New Haven. “Another cow died a few days since, and several animals have been taken sick with the disease. At first the people in that town were quite indifferent if not averse to having any efforts made by the board of agriculture to prevent the spread of the disease and to exterminate it. Now after losing some valuable animals, they are aroused to action, and, under the direction of the physician to the board, measures are afoot to confine the fatal disease to its present quarters.”

July 11, 1872 – The General Assembly votes to give the Ridgefield and New York Railway a one year extension on its efforts to secure a right of way to establish a new rail line into Ridgefield.

August 1872 – A new state law, about to go into effect, allows towns to ban liquor sales. Forty people petition the Select Men for a Town Meeting to consider “the propriety of instructing the Select Men not to recommend any person to be licensed to sell liquors in the Town of Ridgefield.” They believe “the sale and use of a beverage of intoxicating liquors is a great curse of any community, productive of much of the crime and misery which affects society.” Signers included many prominent citizens. It is the beginning of a protracted battle that lasts 40 years.

Aug. 14, 1872 — Postmaster Hiram K. Scott resigns his seat on the Republican Town Committee, saying he will support and help elect the Liberal Republican candidate, Horace Greeley, for president over incumbent Republican Ulysses S. Grant. “His resignation as postmaster is expected,” says the Middletown Daily Constitution. Scott, who established what is now Bissell Pharmacy in the 1850s, later returns to the regular Republican fold. He serves many terms as town clerk and judge of probate — neither of which he resigned when he supported Greeley.

Aug. 22, 1872 — An unusually severe thunderstorm passes through Fairfield County. Lightning sets fire to three Ridgefield barns that burn to the ground. Five other barns burn down in Wilton, Long Ridge, and New Canaan.

Sept. 3, 1872 – A Town Meeting votes, 104 to 49, to ban the sale of intoxicating liquors in Ridgefield. Subsequently, the vote is thrown out because the state law allowing local option did not go into effect until Sept. 15, 12 days after the Ridgefield vote. Prohibitionists launch a second petition drive.

Sept. 13, 1872 — The Fairfield County delegates to the Democratic and Liberal Republican State Convention in Allyn Hall, Hartford, are Samuel S. St. John of Ridgefield and Phineas T. Barnum of Bridgeport.

Sept. 24-27, 1872 — Rain dampens the annual four-day Ridgefield Fair and cuts attendance.

Sept. 28, 1872 – A second Town Meeting is held on banning liquor sales, but only 32 people show up. The meeting adjourns to Oct. 7

Oct. 7, 1872 – The adjourned Town Meeting votes again to ban liquor sales in Ridgefield, by a much closer margin, 107 to 99. The debate is said to be “spirited.”

Nov. 5, 1872 — The ladies of the Methodist Church provide an oyster supper this afternoon and evening of Election Day in the church basement. “They will be happy to see their friends from far and near, and to serve them to hot oysters, hot coffee and tea, cold meats, cakes, pies, &c., in rich abundance,” reports the Bridgeport Standard in advance.

Nov. 5, 1872 — Ridgefield narrowly favors Liberal Republican Horace Greeley for president over Republican Ulysses S. Grant by a vote of 213 to 207. So does Fairfield County, 8,526-8,388. But Connecticut favors Grant, 50,626-45,890. So does the majority of the rest of the nation, keeping incumbent Grant in office.

Nov. 26, 1872 — A bit and chisel are stolen from the carriage shop of Smith & Jones in Ridgefield. Two days later they are used to break into the Norwalk store of J.C. Randall, from which \$300 [\$6,600 today] worth of goods are taken. According to the Norwalk Gazette, the robbers then steal Randall’s horse and wagon and drive to Stamford where they abandon the rig and vanish.

Nov. 30, 1872 — Matthew W. Olmstead of Olmstead Lane dies in Norwalk at the age of 46. According to the Bridgeport Standard, “for several months past he has been leading here a reckless and dissolute life, eating and sleeping but very little and drinking to excess. On Saturday evening while carousing with some companions at Bracken’s liquor saloon, Main Street, he suddenly complained of feeling ill and asked to be seated in a chair. His request was complied with and medical aid called for, but he expired before a physician arrived. Until quite recently he has always been a strictly temperate and sober person, and a man very highly spoken of by all who know him. The loss of his wife a few months since is said to be the cause of his declension.” His wife, Phebe Benedict Olmstead, 36, actually died two years earlier.

Dec. 18, 1872 — Dr. Calvin Kendall of Ridgefield, a physician and dentist who maintains offices both in Norwalk and Ridgefield, advertises in the Bridgeport Standard that he is using “laughing gas” for tooth extractions. Nitrous oxide gas is still being used by dentists today.

## 1873

Feb. 1, 1873 — The Ridgefield Agricultural Society votes to become a joint stock company. The organization runs the annual Ridgefield Fair and is planning to expand facilities at its fair grounds off Wilton Road West..

May 3, 1873 — The *Bridgeport Standard* reports that 11 months after they ran away from home, three Ridgefield boys are still being sought. Two, described as “white,” are Samuel Turner, 16, and Willie Pender, 12. The third, described as “colored,” is Willis Sills, 12. They were last seen in Bedford, N.Y.

June 1, 1873 — Col. David Perry, a Ridgefield native, commands U.S. Army troops who take into custody “Captain Jack,” chief of the Modocs, near the Oregon-California border. Properly known as Kintpuash, the chief is charged with war crimes — the only American Indian leader ever charged with war crimes — for the killing of an Army general and a minister at a federal peace commission meeting. He is hanged Oct. 3.

April 1873 – Ridgefielders are getting thirsty. Twenty five men – including Gould Rockwell who had signed a previous petition to ban liquor sales – turn in a petition to rescind the “no license” vote of Oct. 7, 1872. Petition signers include Peter P. Cornen, an oil baron and probably the town’s first millionaire, and L.H. Bailey, prominent businessman who built Bailey Avenue.

April 14, 1873 – The Rev. Samuel Jarvis is running into trouble with his parishioners at St. Stephen’s: He is taking up too many collections. The vestry votes “that the wardens and vestry be authorized to specify the number of collections to be made in the church for incidental expenses, and the Messrs. Keeler Dauchy, Abijah Resseguie and Amos Northrop be appointed a committee to confer with the rector with regard to relations existing between him and his charge.” Things do not get better, and he leaves in August.

April 26, 1873 – At probably one of the most “spirited” town meetings in Ridgefield history, voters are asked to rescind the ban on liquor sales. George Lounsbury, later governor of Connecticut, moves that the selectmen be allowed to license the sale of “spirituous and intoxicating liquors, ale and lager beer.” Up stands Phineas Lounsbury, brother of George and also a future governor. Unlike George, Phineas is a leader in the temperance movement. He moves that the vote be taken by paper ballot and that the voting box be kept open for two hours, presumably allowing him to run up and down the village to gather supporters. When the ballots are counted, 104 favor alcohol sales, and 111 oppose. Ridgefield remains dry.

May 12, 1873 — Sarah Cunningham Gilbert, wife of John Gilbert, is walking across James Gilbert’s saw mill dam near Titicus when she slips and falls 16 feet to rocks below, breaking her neck and killing her instantly. She is 35 years old.

June 13, 1873 — Joshua King is elected president of the Ridgefield Agricultural Society and will oversee the erection of the society's new building on the fairgrounds off Wilton Road West, costing \$2,400 (about \$52,000 in 2021 dollars).

July 1, 1873 – The Ridgefield and New York Railroad Company gets another one year extension on its right-of-way acquisition.

Oct. 1, 1873 – The Rev. David D. Bishop becomes rector at St. Stephen's Church, serving nearly five years.

Oct. 1-3, 1873 — The Howe Band, a 20-piece group that plays throughout the region, furnishes the music for the Ridgefield Agricultural Fair.

Nov. 23, 1873 — While the S. Seymour family is at church, thieves enter their house and steal some \$83 (\$1,800 in 2021 dollars), reports the *New Haven Register*.

December 1873 – The anti-alcohol forces discover something defective about the previous votes to ban liquor sales, and petition a fourth Town Meeting on the subject, warning that the previous three votes “are of doubtful validity and may be the cause of expensive litigation.” They want a new vote to ban booze.

Dec. 3, 1873 — “The name of the post office at Ridgefield Station, Fairfield County, has been changed to Branchville. — *Norwich Aurora*

Dec. 20, 1873 – Drinkers win a round. A Town Meeting rescinds the previous alcohol sales ban, but also votes against a new ban. A total of 136 people favor licensing and 131 are against.

Dec. 22, 1873 – Shocked at their defeat Dec. 20, prohibitionists take only two days to turn in a new petition, calling for a fifth Town Meeting on the issue. Among the 25 signers are the Rev. Daniel W. Teller, minister of the First Congregational Church who will soon write the town's first history in book form; D. Crosby Baxter, who will found The Ridgefield Press in two years; and future governor Phineas Lounsbury.

Dec. 26, 1873 — Newspapers throughout the region report that “Dr. Perry” of Ridgefield starts out late in the evening to visit a friend when, about a mile and a half from his home, “while passing over a lonely road,” he is attacked by two men who approach him on each side, stop his horse, and demand his money. “The doctor drew a revolver and shot one of the men dead, and drove rapidly away,” the account says. However, the *Massachusetts Spy* in Worcester reveals today that the tale “turns out a canard.”



## 1874

January, 1874 – In three hours of balloting, a Town Meeting votes 152 to 129 not to license liquor sales. A total of 281 people participate; in the vote for governor later that year, 397 people cast ballots. [Booze is a big issue, but it isn't attracting everyone. The issue is brought up yearly at annual town meetings for many years. In 1874, the vote is 136 to 67 against licensing. In 1875, 136 to 69. And 1876, 136 to 2!]

Feb. 24, 1874 — Sylvester Main of Ridgefield is sentenced to three months in the Fairfield County jail and given a fine of \$200 after being convicted of stealing an \$80 check from a letter mailed to his employer, Frank Wilson of Ridgefield. According to the New Haven Press, Main picked up the letter at the post office, removed the check, and went to New York City to cash it. "He then started west, where he remained for some length of time, and supposing that the trouble in his case had subsided, he ventured to return east, locating in Waterbury, where he has worked for the past year," the newspaper says. The U.S. marshal's office tracked him there and to Winsted, where he was arrested. "Main, who is 22 years of age, admits to having led a rather dissipated career, but says that if he gets out of this scrape, he will ever after live a truly virtuous and upright life," The New Haven Press says. "The father, whose name is Zalmon Main, is a gentleman of excellent character, and has ever maintained a good reputation in the community where he resides, and once represented his town in the State Legislature." (Whether or not Sylvester Main did indeed straighten out his life, he lived to be 75, and died in 1926 in Sullivan, Madison County, N.Y.)

April 6, 1874 — As a Democrat, Phineas Chapman Lounsbury is, along with Lewis C. Seymour, elected a state representative to the General Assembly from Ridgefield. Fifteen years later, he will, as a Republican, be elected governor of Connecticut.

May, 1874 — Several boys at an unnamed boarding school in Ridgefield are poisoned early this month by eating water hemlock. One, James M. Huntington of Brooklyn, N.Y., dies at the age of 15. The others are saved by taking an emetic.

June 10, 1874 — Dr. Daniel W. Adams is elected to the board of stockholders of the Ridgefield and New York Railroad. Doc Adams, the baseball pioneer, is also president of the new Ridgefield Savings Bank.

June 12, 1874 — John Burt, 65, of Ridgefield asks the General Assembly's state prison committee to be released due to his failing health. He is serving a six year sentence for horse stealing. "He has a perfect record as a prisoner, but previous to his incarceration here, he had served three terms in the Massachusetts state prison and one in the Connecticut prison, the time of imprisonment amounting in all to 36 years," says the Middletown Daily Constitution. A physician testifies that Burt probably has less than a year to live, and the prisoner is released to die.

July 15, 1874 – The General Assembly extends the time for “building and constructing” the Ridgefield and New York Railroad to June 7, 1880.

Sept. 4, 1874 — Benjamin L. Gregory of Ridgefield and his elderly father William drive to Gregory’s Point on Long Island Sound in South Norwalk to go clamming. The son heads out to Round Beach off the shore, and digs a bushel full of clams. He sees the tide is rising, slings the sack of clams around his neck, and attempts to cross a channel to the mainland when he is caught by the tidal current and swept away. His body is recovered several days later. He was 23 years old and had recently been married, reports the *Columbian Register* in New Haven. The *New York Tribune* adds that his is the fifth case of drowning near Gregory’s Point within 13 months.

Sept. 28, 1874 — The Highlands of Ridgefield are among the teams competing in a baseball tournament in Danbury starting today. Others include the Secrets of Stamford, Rip Raps of Westport, Modocs of Danbury, and Osceolas of Stratford. The T.B.’s of Bridgeport win the tourney, beating the Modocs 38 to 2 in the final game

Sept. 29-Oct. 1, 1874 — The 17th annual Ridgefield Agricultural Fair, now a four-day event, takes place on Wilton Road West.

Oct. 6, 1874 — In the state election, Ridgefield votes for a measure that would ban the sale of liquor, which does not pass statewide but has already been enacted in this town. Ridgefield also votes, 100 to 3, in favor of a constitutional amendment giving towns of more than 5,000 population two representatives in the state legislature, which does pass. The measure affects only a handful of towns; most, like Ridgefield, already have two representatives. But oddly enough among the towns with only one are the cities of Bridgeport, Meriden and Derby.

## **1875**

Jan. 13, 1875 – D. Crosby Baxter publishes the first issue of *Baxter’s Monthly*. The initial press run is 500 copies.

April 5, 1875 — The honor roll for the winter term of the Ridgefield schools is announced: Children who were not absent from school: George Bustoed, Carrie A. Stephens, Maurice Enright, William Casey, George Thomas; children neither absent nor tardy: Thomas Brewer, Carrie B. Sarles, Minnie F. Avery, Mary Carney, Jennie Carney, Bertie Lee.

April 6, 1875 — Lewis H. Bailey, a Ridgefield Democrat, defeats Republican Hiram K. Scott to serve as 11th District state senator.

April 1875 – *Baxter's Monthly* changes its name and becomes a weekly newspaper called *The Ridgefield Press*.

April 1875 – The Missionary Society of the Congregational Church, as well as the Ladies' Aid Society, are formed.

June 25, 1875 – The General Assembly approves the incorporation of The Danbury Home, whose leaders include Lewis H. Bailey, Aaron T. Bates and Hiram K. Scott of Ridgefield, “for the purposes of relieving, supporting and educating children who are homeless and destitute.”

July 3, 1875 – After adding four stops and 126 pipes to the St. Stephen's Church organ, J.E. Adams gives a recital on the 450-pipe, 16-stop organ, accompanied by the church choir. The concert is well received.

July 27, 1875 — The Rev. Daniel Teller of the First Congregational Church declines a call to serve as minister of the Litchfield Congregational Church, which had offered him \$1,800 annual salary.

Aug. 6, 1875 — “The store of William Rogers in Branchville was broken into one day last week and \$80 taken,” reports the *Hartford Courant* today. “The depot at Ridgefield was also broken into, and some things were stolen.”

Aug. 13, 1875 — “Ridgefield dogs killed a number of valuable calves last week, and left them partially eaten,” reports the *Hartford Courant*. The calves belonged to John W. Keeler, adds the *Waterbury American*, which includes a gory description of their death.

Aug. 17, 1875 — Members of the Beers clan from far and wide descend on Ridgefield for a family reunion.

Sept. 7, 1875 — The four-day Ridgefield Agricultural Fair will include higher monetary awards in the trotting races this year.

Sept. 16, 1875 — Thieves place a ladder to a second floor window of Resseguie's Hotel, earlier known as the Keeler Tavern, and climb into the bedroom of hotel owner Abijah Resseguie as he is sleeping. They steal “the venerable landlord's gold watch and \$150 in money out of his pockets,” reports the *Columbian Register* in New Haven. “They disturbed him, he got up, but they fled.”

Oct. 4, 1875 — Samuel M. Smith, Eben W. Keeler, and George Boughton, all Republicans, are elected selectmen at the town election.

Oct. 8, 1875 — George A Hyatt of Norwalk, a Civil War veteran who survived the Battles of Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, is killed by a “derrick” at the Price & Bates’s quarry in Ridgefield.

Nov. 13, 1875 — In an advertisement published in the *Hartford Courant*, Mrs. Levi Dann of Ridgefield is quoted: “Consumptives should use Wine of the Woods. It is the best of medicines. It does more than you claim. I never saw anything like it.” Moses Dame’s Wine of the Woods, produced from 1872 to 1883 in Danbury, was promoted as a remedy for dyspepsia, biliousness, costiveness, headache, worms, jaundice, liver complaint, debility, loss of energy, feebleness and all other diseases arising from derangement of the stomach, liver or blood. Indigestion, heartburn, distress, or a sense of fullness after eating, pains in the bowels, back, sides, or under the shoulders, female weakness and irregularities, piles, sick headache, boils, ulcers, eruptions, weakness, flatulence, sour stomach, fever and ague, disturbances of the bowels, nausea, diarrhea, dysentery, colds, palpitations, asthma, kidney complaint, erysipelas, painter’s colic — chronic intestinal pains and constipation caused by lead poisoning. Not much left after all that.

Dec. 6, 1875 — “Ridgefield has determined to have street lamps,” reports the *Waterbury American*. The lamps will be lit with oil.

## 1876

March 11, 1876 — “During a scuffle over the possession of a loaded pistol on Thursday afternoon last, Mrs. Alfred Dickens of Ridgefield was shot in the abdomen by her husband,” reports *The Hartford Courant*. “Mrs. Dickens will probably recover from the wound, serious though it is.” In fact, she lives until 1909, five years longer than her husband.

April 3, 1876 — Hiram K. Scott is re-elected the town’s judge of probate.

May 19, 1876 — State Rep. Simon Couch of Ridgefield is named to a House committee on “female suffrage.” The committee eventually recommends giving women the ability to vote for president and vice-president, but the Legislature turns it down 82-101.

June 1, 1876 — “Present indications promise that the influx of strangers in our village the ensuing summer will be fully equal to that of the past, many having already secured, and others seeking quarters in which to pass the summer months,” writes the Ridgefield correspondent in the *Bridgeport Standard*. “Our village presents many attractions which are seldom surpassed in points of health, beauty, and neatness. Arrangements have been made to supply many of the vacant places, and we are very much gratified to learn that the property known as the Dr. Perry place has been recently purchased by Mr. P.C. Lounsbury, of the enterprising firm of Lounsbury Bros. & Rockwell, of South Norwalk,

who designs occupying it as a summer residence, and which is now undergoing a thorough improvement, and we are glad to learn that the services of Mr. Alonzo Byington, of Georgetown, who is well known in this vicinity, has been secured in the direction and supervision of said improvements; and we rest assured that under his competent charge, the place will present quite a changed and lively aspect, instead of its rusty and lifeless appearance of the past. In fact, he is the right man in the right place.”

July 11, 1876 — This afternoon lightning strikes the Catoonah Street barn of J. M. Lockwood, the town’s undertaker, and it burns to the ground, destroying a horse and two hearses. *The Hartford Courant* says “one handsome pair of grey horses were at the time in the stable, one of which was burned to death, the other breaking his halter, broke through the closed door and escaped.” Along Catoonah Street, “every other telegraph pole” was “splintered.” Lightning from the same storm kills oxen owned by Burr Taylor of “Lyme Stone District” and James R. St. John in the south end of town. “Mr. St. John’s house was also struck but not burned,” says the *Bridgeport Standard*. “A house standing on the same ground was struck by lightning several years ago and burned.”

July 19, 1876 — Early this morning, fire destroys a barn owned by D. Crosby Baxter and occupied by Henry Whitlock, killing five horses, and destroying carriages, wagons and other equipment. The barn was insured for \$250, but the contents were uninsured.

Aug. 9, 1876 — A large quantity of “superior quality” feldspar has been found on Samuel Gilbert’s farm on the east slope of West Mountain, about a mile and a half west of the village, and is being mined at the rate of two or three hundred tons per week, reports the *Hartford Courant*. The *Stamford Advocate* says the first 60 tons of ore arrives at the railroad wharf in Norwalk today. The mineral was used in making ceramics, glass, and paint.

Sept. 1, 1876 — “Ridgefield is again in a turmoil of excitement,” says the *Hartford Courant*. “Deputy Sheriff Hunt’s horse and carriage were stolen on the 16th and with them disappeared Clifton Gilbert, son of Constable Gilbert, and a colored boy, David Riley. The thieves were arrested in New York state and taken home. Constable Gilbert was allowed access to them, and enabled his son to escape. His conduct is strongly denounced. The boy has disappeared. His colored companion has been sentenced to state prison for three and a half years.” A few days later, the *Waterbury American* reports that “Ridgefield folks are pretty mad at Constable Gilbert because he allowed his son, who was arrested for stealing Deputy Sheriff Hunt’s horse and carriage, to escape, while a colored boy, who helped him, goes to the state prison for three years and a half.”

Sept. 4, 1876 — Members of the “notorious Bennett family” of Ridgefield appear in the Superior Court, Bridgeport, facing dozens of charges of burglary and larceny. Jeremiah Bennett, receiving stolen goods, five years; George and Arthur Bennett, burglary and theft, 15 years each. Adeline, Mortimer and Francis Bennett are each also charged with

burglary and theft. “They are very respectable looking people, and are the last who would be suspected of crime,” says the *Bridgeport Standard*. Jerry Bennett and sons George and Arthur are soon sentenced to long terms in state prison. The rest are acquitted.

Sept. 25-29, 1876 – The Ridgefield Agricultural Society fair features an exhibit of “centennial oddities” in connection with the nation’s 100th birthday celebration. Among these, according to the *New-York Tribune*, are a commission in the provincial army 161 years old, signed by G. Saltonstall, “Commander in Chief of His Majesty’s forces in Connecticut”; a mortar used to grind snuff, brought from Ireland in 1713; a pair of wedding shoes over 200 years old; an oath of allegiance signed by one Thaddeus Keeler at Valley Forge; and an inn-keeper’s sign, having upon it the date 1794.

Oct. 4, 1876 — “The republicans of Ridgefield held a remarkably good meeting on Wednesday afternoon. It was in the fair ground building, which was crowded full. Joshua King, Esq., presided, and excellent addresses were made by the Hon. Henry C. Robinson, Samuel Fessenden, Esq, and Professor Cyrus Northrop. Set down Ridgefield for a good republican majority in November.” —*The Hartford Courant*.

Nov. 9, 1876 — “As a citizen of Ridgefield, Conn., was sitting at a table last week at a Philadelphia hotel, a familiar-looking spoon bearing his name was handed to him with his coffee. He sought out the landlord and learned that he had purchased a number of similar spoons from a man in Philadelphia. That night’s mail brought a letter saying that after the Ridgefield man left home, a number of places were robbed, his own included, and certain suspected persons were under arrest, and that a letter from Philadelphia, from a brother of the arrested men, had been opened by the officers and it read, ‘Goods received all right and disposed of.’ The brother and all the other thieves now await trial.” —*The New York Evening Post*

Nov. 21, 1876 — Hezekiah “Uncle Kiah” Scott dies at the age of 86. Scott once operated a sawmill and a distillery off Ledges Road on a stream that came to be known as Kiah’s Brook.

Dec. 1, 1876 – The new town hall is dedicated. The two-story, 40-by-60-foot wooden building cost \$5,976.55 (about \$148,000 in 2021 money). “The building is quite respectable in size and architectural appearance,” opines the *Stamford Advocate*. “The lower floor will be used for town meetings, and the upper is to be rented for concerts, lectures, etc. It is comfortably seated with cane-seated chairs fastened together in sections.” Nineteen years later, the town hall is destroyed in the Great Fire of 1895.

Dec. 3, 1876 — The Union Hotel, owned by Mary Smith Dykeman on Main Street [about where the Toy Chest is in 2021], catches fire and burns to the ground. The fire reportedly originated in the chimney near the roof, “but could not be put out owing to a lack of any

fire apparatus in the village, although they were able to remove all of the furniture,” the *Bridgeport Standard* reports.

Dec. 20, 1876 — New Haven says Ridgefield owes it \$119.40 for “support of paupers” who come from Ridgefield. —*The Bridgeport Standard*

## 1877

Jan. 24, 1877 — Lewis June of Ridgefield and George Bailey of Danbury, managers for P.T. Barnum’s “Greatest Show on Earth,” have returned from a trip to England and Europe to explore the possibility of taking the circus there on a tour, reports the *Watertown (N.Y.) Daily Times*. They found the tunnels too low in England to fit their railroad cars, but made arrangements to build lower cars, should Mr. Barnum decide to do the tour.

Feb. 7, 1877 — “Nash and Mead are going to put on an addition to their store,” reports The Ridgefield Press. “This shows that there is business in Titicus.”

Feb. 23, 1877 — “Ridgefield had an elopement last week, the parties being a boy of 18 and a young woman of 25.” —*The Stamford Advocate*

April 13, 1877 — A large fire burns through the woods on West Mountain, and another in Branchville damages many young trees.

April 27, 1877 — A grand ball takes place in the new Town Hall to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Ridgefield.

May 16, 1877 — “Weddings appear to be of frequent occurrence up at Ridgefield during the past winter, the reason for which we will not pretend to give. Some ascribe it to the entertainments in our new town hall and other social gatherings, which have brought the young and unmarried people together. Others say that it is because our young men have not been so busily employed but that they have had plenty of leisure to look about them and ascertain and appreciate the excellent qualities of head and heart pertaining to the marriageable young ladies of our pleasant town.” —*Stamford Advocate*

May 20, 1877 — The Ridgefield Band gives an outdoor concert.

May 30, 1877 — Phineas C. Lounsbury and family arrive in town to spend the summer.

June 11, 1877 — While picking strawberries on West Mountain, W. J. Humphrys comes across a five-foot rattlesnake. He kills it.

June 20, 1877 — “The parasols this season look like a gingersnap on a walking cane,” observes *The Ridgefield Press*.

June 22, 1877 — Mormon elders from Utah are holding meetings in Ridgefield, reports the Stamford Advocate.

July 4, 1877 – Miss Hurlbutt’s school had a picnic Friday afternoon in the grove near the Depot. “The children enjoyed themselves, regarding it as a happy release from the school room,” *The Ridgefield Press* reports.

July 5, 1877 — Jonah Boughton, a native of Ridgefield, “is working in the interests of the Murphy temperance movement, and has been lecturing in Pennsylvania,” reports the Newtown Bee. Francis Murphy, a native of Ireland, was a temperance evangelist of the era.

July 11, 1877 – Children at the Branchville Schoolhouse announce they will have an Ice Cream Festival Thursday evening at the school house to raise money “to procure new books and a bell.”

July 20, 1877 — “It is reported that Hiram Dykeman of Ridgefield, whose hotel was burned to the ground a few months since, has become deranges, and that he is soon to be removed to the asylum.” —*Stamford Advocate*.

Aug. 20, 1877 – A house in Limestone District belonging to Munson Blackman Esq. burns to the ground, taking with it “his wardrobe, valuable library, family plate, and furniture.” *The Press* reports the loss is estimated at “\$5,000.49.” The same day lightning kills a cow owned by James R. St. John.

Aug. 22, 1877 – William H. Gillette, a 24-year-old actor, gives a performance in town hall. He goes on to become world famous, especially for his portrayal of Sherlock Holmes. In 1919, after five years of construction, his home in Hadlyme is completed. Today, it is the central attraction of Gillette Castle State Park.

Aug. 29, 1877 – The young ladies of St. Stephen’s Church hold their annual fair.

Sept. 25-28, 1877 – The Ridgefield Agricultural Society has its four-day fair at the fairgrounds on Wilton Road West.

October 1877 – William Stone is cleaning his well when he finds a silver spoon, lost 23 years earlier, and a hammer, lost 13 years earlier.

Oct. 11-13, 1877 — A three-day teachers’ institute for Fairfield County, sponsored by the state Board of Education, takes place in Ridgefield. It features many lecturers.

Nov. 7, 1877 – Raisins are 10 cents a pound at Scott’s Store.



Dec. 5, 1877 – “Tramps are on the increase,” reports *The Ridgefield Press*.

## 1878

1878 – Professor James Dwight Dana of Yale visits the Branchville mica mine during the year and discovers one of the purest pieces of uraninite, an ore of uranium, ever found.

Jan. 9, 1878 — Humorist Eli Perkins writes the editor of *The Ridgefield Press* that he will be in town Jan. 10 to give a lecture. “I will be on hand at the time appointed,” he assures the editor. “Very well, I will not fail to be with you at the time appointed. I never fail to be present when I lecture, never.” He adds, “Here in New York the people who have heard me lecture follow me around in great crowds, enthusiastically cheering me and inviting me to — go away.” It turns out, however, that heavy rains cause widespread local flooding, and Perkins — whose real name was Melville D. Landon — appoints a new time in February to visit.

Jan. 31, 1878 — The traveling production of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, starring Lillie Wilkinson as Topsy and Portia Albee as Eve, is staged at the Ridgefield Town Hall. Tickets at 35 cents are sold out. Wilkinson, who dies in 1920 at the age of 79, was famous in the United States and Europe for her portrayal of Topsy.

Feb. 20, 1878 — Eli Perkins tells his jokes to a full house.

March 11, 1878 – Starting today, a local ordinance requires that all dogs be muzzled, *The Ridgefield Press* reminds readers. Any dog that is not muzzled may be shot on sight, and the shooter paid \$1 for his troubles.

March 27, 1878 — “Mr. John B. Smith of West Lane should be placed in the front ranks of the Mutual Improvement Army for the splendid row of Maples just set out in front of his residence,” reports *The Press*. “Long may he live to enjoy their shade.”

April 10, 1878 — Even “man problems” has cures advertised in *The Press*. Today’s issue carries an ad for a booklet called “A Lecture to Young Men” by Dr. Robert J. Culverwell, described as “just published in sealed envelope, price six cents.” The lecture deals with “the nature, treatment and radical cure for seminal weakness of spermatorrhea, indicated by self-abuse, involuntary emissions, impotency, nervous debility and impediments in marriage generally.”

April 17, 1878 – The new Morgan silver dollar is issued by the Federal government, prompting comment from *The Ridgefield Press*: “The new white dollars of 1878 coinage are being carried as pocket pieces. The eagle screams lustily and its wings are stretched to soar.”

April 24, 1878 — George Mead of Ridgefield reports he will join Thomas Vail in running the Hotel at Peach Lake in North Salem for the coming season.

May 6, 1878 — Many Ridgefielders head to Bridgeport to see P.T. Barnum's "Greatest Show on Earth."

May 11, 1878 — The store of W.W. Beers in Branchville is entered during the night and "several pistols and postage stamps" taken, The Press reports. The thieves also break into Eli Bennett's store, but take "nothing but candy."

May 12, 1878 — The Rev. David D. Bishop, rector for nearly five years, gives his final service at St. Stephen's. He headed off to Cheshire where he gains some note for building an artificial trout pond in 1883.

May 29, 1878 — "Miss Addie Keeler had a very narrow escape from a serious injury while riding her horse in front of Benj. Amblers. The animal shied very suddenly, throwing her from her seat; her habit catching on the horn of the saddle held her firmly. The horse turned and stepped on her hat, which was torn from her head, fortunately not striking it but stepping on her hand, injuring it quite severely. Her companion, Miss Mary Boughton, sprang from her horse and with admirable presence of mind, extricated the young lady from her perilous position. Both of the Fair Equestriennes may be congratulated on their fortunate escape from material injury."—The Ridgefield Press

June 5, 1878 — "There are evidences of foul play among the fowls of C.M. Benjamin; of late, about 50 chickens and hens have died of a rather mysterious ailment."—The Ridgefield Press

June 5, 1878 — The Press announces the impending publication of History of Ridgefield by the Rev. Daniel W. Teller, minister of the Congregational Church. It's the first full-length, illustrated history of the town. Coincidentally, Mr. Teller is building a new house on Prospect Street.

June 6, 1878 — The Methodist Ladies have a Strawberry and Ice Cream Festival in Town Hall, which is "tastily dressed with a profusion of wild flowers and exotics."

June 7, 1878 – St. Stephen's vestry votes to sell a piece of its property for \$800 to Phineas C. Lounsbury, who lives across the street, so that Mr. Lounsbury can lay a pipe through to his planned water cistern on High Ridge that will supply his home with water. [Years later, the cistern is turned into a house.]

June 12, 1878 — 21 different newspapers from Fairfield and Westchester Counties, plus New York City, are available in the Free Reading Room at Masonic Hall, The Press reports.

June 16, 1878 — A man and three women stop at Resseque's Hotel (Keeler Tavern) for dinner. Afterward, the man goes out to hitch up his horses, but takes one belonging to Dr. Nehemiah Perry instead of his own. The group heads off, and a half hour later, the theft is discovered. A group attempts to chase the party, but gives up at Bald Hill in Wilton. "The horse taken was a valuable beast, the one left was almost worthless," The Press reports. "This is the most high handed proceeding that this town has been the theatre of for many years." The horse is later returned "in bad condition."

July 1, 1878 — The Rev. Francis A. Henry becomes rector of St. Stephen's Church, serving ten years. He had been rector at Stamford.

Aug. 28, 1878 — The Ridgefield Temperance Association has its annual meeting and hears Col. Heusted Warner Reynolds Hoyt of Greenwich, a Ridgefield native, speak. Edward H. Smith is elected president and "Doc" Daniel Adams, a vice president. Another vice president is Francis A. Rockwell, maker of church wines.

Sept. 6, 1878 — The New North-west in Deer Lodge, Montana, is among many newspapers across the country that carry this news item: "A Willimantic girl, employed in a thread factory, writer her name and the words, 'Wanted — A Husband,' on a spool recently, and when it had been wound with thread, it was sent to a South Norwalk shoe factory, where it fell into a Ridgefield man's hands. He began a correspondence; the girl replied that she was engaged, but would find him another as good as she, and a marriage has just taken place as a result of the spool's message."

Sept. 14, 1878 — The Kalamazoo (Mich.) Gazette, in a humor column, reprints an item from the Danbury News: "A Ridgefield man has invented a chair which can be adjusted to 8,000 different positions. It is designed for a boy to sit in when having his hair cut."

Sept. 19, 1878 — Miss E.A. Greenwood of Brooklyn, N.Y., gives a temperance lecture at the Methodist Church. "She pleases all and offends none," says The Press.

Sept. 24-27, 1878 — Exhibitions of trotting horses are the main attraction at this year's four-day Ridgefield Agricultural Society Fair.

Oct. 8, 1878 — In the town election (which then took place in October), four men vie for three seats on the Board of Selectmen. Ebenezer W. Keeler and John D. Nash tie at 123 votes each for selectman. James H. Hoyt is third at 58, so they make up the board. The loser is Edward H. Smith, president of the Temperance Association, who gets 54 votes. In the election for town constables, the lowest vote-getter among six people is John F.

Gilbert, who two years earlier, was accused of letting his son escape from police custody after the son was arrested for stealing a deputy sheriff's horse and carriage.

Nov. 5, 1878 — Ridgefield votes for Republican Charles Bartlett Andrews for governor, 234, over R.D. Hubbard, 186, the Democrat. The Litchfield lawyer has an unremarkable two-year term in office, and retires two years later.

Nov. 9, 1878 — Polly Fancher of Ridgefield celebrates her 100th birthday with a large gathering of family and friends. She has 61 grandchildren, 64 great-grandchildren, and 18 great-great grandchildren, one of whom comes from Michigan for the event. Mrs. Fancher is the mother of Professor Cyrus Northrop of Yale, who goes on to become president of the University of Minnesota for many years.

Nov. 21, 1878 — “The Ridgefield Roman Catholics propose to erect a church right away,” reports The Hartford Courant.

Nov. 28, 1878 — By Proclamation of the president, today is Thanksgiving Day.

Dec. 3, 1878 — David Winfield Scott and Carrie Stevens are married by the Rev. Daniel Teller at the bride's parents' home on Mont-Lac, what folks in town were calling West Mountain back then.

Dec. 20, 1878 – The selectmen of Danbury and Ridgefield survey the boundary of the two towns.

## **1879**

1879 – The town's Grand List of taxable property totals \$1,076,106 [about \$23 million in 2008 dollars].

Jan. 5, 1879 — Fire breaks out at the Limestone Schoolhouse, destroying the north end of the building. The fire is blamed on a defective chimney. While the desks are all saved, the damage to the building was not insured. Repairs are made within a couple weeks.

Jan. 14-15, 1879 — George Wilson catches 60 “good-sized” pike at Burts Pond [Lake Mamanasco] Tuesday and 180 Wednesday. Locals often call the fish “torpedoes.”

Jan. 28, 1879 — Perley's Superb Union Square Comedy Company stages “Our Boys,” starring Miss Josephine Perley, at the Town Hall.

Jan. 29, 1879 — James R. St. John of Ridgefield has been keeping statistics on snowfall for the past 30 years. He comes up with these statistics: Average number of snowstorms per year: 17; average depth during each year: 5.5 feet; greatest depth in one year: 8 feet 4 inches in the winter of 1867-68; greatest depth falling at one time: Jan. 12-14, 1853, and

Dec. 26, 1872, each 24 inches; greatest number of snowstorms in one year: winter of 1874-5, 27; fewest snowstorms, winters of 1864 and 1878, 9 each; the coldest day, Jan. 8, 1866, 21 below zero (the hottest was July 20-21, 1853, 100 degrees).

Feb. 6, 1879 — *The Boston Journal* reports that the Rev. Daniel W. Teller of the First Congregational Church in Ridgefield, in entering the eighth year of his pastorship, “voluntarily relinquishes one fifth of his salary” — reducing his pay from \$1,500 to \$1,200.

Feb. 7, 1879 — Ed Taylor is working on a pile of logs off Limestone Road when the pile collapses, throwing him onto the ice-covered ground and injuring him so severely he cannot move. He lies there five hours before his weak calls for help are heard by a Mrs. Bradley, who summons her son Benjamin for assistance. “It was a providential thing that Mr. Bradley found him, as undoubtedly he must have soon perished,” *The Press* says later.

March 12, 1879 — Charles S. Nash Jr. places a notice in *The Ridgefield Press*, declaring: “This is to certify that my wife, Amanda E. Nash, has left my bed and board without cause or provocations and I hereby forbid any person or persons harboring or trusting her on my account as I will not pay any debts of her contracting.”

March 26, 1879 — Hiram K. Scott’s store is advertising in *The Press* the availability of Dr. David Kennedy’s “Favorite Remedy,” touted as “a real blessing to women.” The ad did not point out that the patent medicine contained 18.4% pure grain alcohol.

April 2, 1879 — E.S. Reynolds opens a new barber shop over George Abbott’s store on Main Street. “Hair cutting, shaving, shampooing, dyeing, &c. done in the best manner,” he advertises in *The Press*.

April 9, 1879 — The store of Seymour & Barhite, operated by L.C. Seymour and W.C. Barhite, changes its name to Seymour & Company with the addition of F.H. Stalford to the partnership.

April 16, 1879 — George Jelliffe, superintendent of the state fish hatchery in Westport begins seeding the ponds and lakes of Ridgefield with 10,000 land-locked salmon fry.

May 21, 1879 — “A first-class accident came near taking place last Saturday evening. As Miss Elnora Mills and Miss Hattie Burt came out of Singing School, the evening being dark and the lamps somehow not having been lighted, they both pitched head-foremost the whole length of the north stone steps. Miss Mills was taken up senseless and carried into the parsonage, whither Miss Burt was also assisted, and both received careful attending of many anxious spectators. Dr. Todd was immediately sent for, but being away from home some time elapsed before he appeared. Meantime, Mr. Platt had rendered

them such assistance as his medical resources allowed and when the doctor came Miss Burt had recovered sufficient to be taken to her home. Miss Mills also soon left with the assistance of Mr. Casey and Hibbart, who took her safely home, although with considerable difficulty owing to her frequent swoons.” —*The Ridgefield Press*

May 25, 1879 — Phineas C. Lounsbury is elected president of the new Union Temperance Society organized at the Methodist Church. The only condition of membership is the signing of a pledge: “With the help of God, I promise to abstain from the use of Intoxicating Liquors as a beverage, and to encourage others to do the same.”

June 1, 1879 — Both the Episcopal and Congregational ministers have been preaching special Sunday services in the Branchville Schoolhouse to serve the Branchville community. The Episcopalians decide to take up collections to buy an organ for the schoolhouse.

June 25, 1879 — *The Press* reprints a report in the *Bridgeport Farmer* about the discovery of a skeleton in a Ridgebury cave, believed to have been used for hiding slaves fleeing from the South. The Underground Railroad stop was maintained by a Black couple, Edward and Betsey Armstrong — “Uncle Ned and Aunt Betsey.”

July 4, 1879 — C.B. Morehouse Jr. of Branchville hosts a celebration for Independence Day. “A monster clam bake was in full blast, and the style in which the bivalves were roasted would do honor to the most experienced caterer at our seaside resorts,” says *The Press*.

July 7, 1879 — *The New York Tribune* publishes a longer report that the cave of Edward and Betsey Armstrong — “Uncle Ned and Aunt Betsey” — had been used as a popular station on the Underground Railroad, and does not mention a skeleton. It commends their service to fleeing slaves.

Aug. 1, 1879 — Construction is about to begin to improve and widen High Ridge Avenue, from King Street to West Lane, with the hope of developing some properties along it. It will have sidewalks on each side.

Aug. 6, 1879 — St. Stephen’s Peach and Ice Cream Festival in the Town Hall is a great success. “The Hall was tastily dressed with a profusion of wild flowers and exotics,” says *The Press*. “Over in the rear of the stage proper, the emblem of our nation’s glory was gracefully festooned.”

Sept. 4, 1879 — The race track at the fairgrounds off Wilton Road West is the scene of a human race — two times around the track. The winner is Aaron Lockwood, who travels the distance in five minutes 15 seconds. Afterwards there’s a half-mile horse race with

Black Maggie first, Breweryguard second and Nelson third. The winning time is one minute and 20 seconds.

Sept. 11-13, 1879 — The local Catholics hold a fair in their new church on Catoonah Street, including music supplied by the Mutual Cornet Band and St. Peter's Band from Danbury. The fair brings in \$360.

Sept. 17, 1879 — D.K. Hoyt is building a sidewalk along West Lane from the Corner Store at Main and West to Parley Lane.

Oct. 5, 1879 – Built under the guidance of Father Martin Lawlor of Danbury, the new Catholic Church on Catoonah Street is dedicated by Bishop Lawrence McMahon. A special train brings the bishop and an entourage from Danbury to the ceremony, including the St. Peter's Band. The celebration includes a parade with bands.

Oct. 6, 1879 — In the town election, E.W. Keeler is top vote-getter for the three-man Board of Selectmen, 109, while John D. Nash is second with 104. Both are Republicans. Democrat James H. Hoyt is third with 56, and Harvey K. Smith, another Democrat, is the loser, 46.

Oct. 11, 1879 — A huge fire destroys the barn of D.K. Hoyt & Sons on Main Street near West Lane. Horses and carriages are removed before the barn becomes completely engulfed, with flames visible throughout the village and raising fears among many that it was the venerable Big Shop nearby that was ablaze. The loss is estimated at \$2,000 (\$56,000 today) while Hoyt has insurance for only \$900. "The origin of the fire is unknown," says *The Press*. "Some assert that it is the act of an incendiary and other claim it was purely accidental as Mr. Hoyt has no such dastardly enemies."

Oct. 14, 1879 — Not everyone is happy with the Catholics' parade Oct. 5. "The Ridgefield Methodists are very made and have passed resolutions because their Sunday services were lately disturbed by a Roman Catholic procession with brass bands and a grand 'blow out,' the occasion being the dedication of a new Catholic church," reports the *Springfield (Mass.) Republican*. The Methodists particularly attack the priests for allowing the disruption of Methodist services.

Oct. 29, 1879 — Professor George Jarvis Brush, a leading mineralogist from Yale, visits the Fillow mine in Branchville and declares that soon, things much more valuable than the current feldspar being mined, will be found there.

Nov. 5, 1879 — The Rev. George F. Waters of Bethel, described as "one of the most talented and eloquent advocates of temperance in Fairfield County," delivers a lecture at the Congregational Church.

Nov. 7, 1879 — Schoolhouses report the following enrollments: Ridgebury, 28, with Fred Fayerweather, teacher; Whipstick, 34, C. I Dickinson; West Mountain, 15, Lucy N. Smith; Titicus, 23, Faustina H. Hurlbutt; Scotland, 11, F.E. Gage; Centre, 54, B.F. Otis (?); West Lane, 21, Jennie E. Holmes; Flat Rock, 23, Edith Miles. Branchville, Farmingville, Florida, Limestone and Bennett's Farms did not send in reports.

Nov. 12, 1879 — "The new road, Bailey Avenue, north of the town house will shortly be thrown open to the public," says *The Press*.

Nov. 13, 1879 — Jason Whitlock, 69, "an old and respected citizen of Bennett's Farms," is found dead, an apparent suicide by hanging. He had had periods of despondency after the death of a "dearly beloved daughter" the summer before.

Nov. 27, 1879 — Today, Thanksgiving Day, Nehemiah Keeler of Ridgebury, often called Colonel Keeler, marks his 90th birthday. Forty family members and friends, including 23 grandchildren, join him in a celebration.

Nov. 29, 1879 — "The other day a child of James Sammis of Ridgefield was uneasy and restless and the grandmother gave the child a few drops of what she supposed was a soothing preparation, but which proved to be chloroform. The child died." —The Boston Journal

Dec. 17, 1879 — The Ridgefield Improvement Society agrees to make improvements to the grounds around the Town House (Hall). The organization has already improved the stage and elsewhere. Money for the efforts is raised from "entertainments."

Dec. 24, 1879 — On Christmas Eve, The Methodist church has a Festival at which carols are sung and recitations made by Sunday school children. St. Stephen's has a Vesper service, featuring its choir.

Dec. 25, 1879 — The new Catholic church celebrates a High Mass at noon "The church was prettily trimmed with Christmas greens, made in neat and pretty designs by the young ladies of the parish, which exhibited their artistic skill," says *The Press*. "The singing was of a high order and the selections excellent."

## **1880**

1880 – Ridgefield's census population begins growing after years of decline. A total of 2,028 people are counted, about a hundred more than 10 years earlier.

1880 – The General Assembly approves the final boundary between New York and Connecticut. Some 500 acres in various places along the line transfer and some 200 New Yorkers find themselves Connecticut residents – a few are incorporated into Ridgefield.



May 1880 – The Ridgefield Band gets its own band room on Bailey Avenue.

May 1880 – Two businessmen from Southbury visit town, looking for a site to build a factory to make table and pocket cutlery. They particularly investigate Titicus, but think the water supply inadequate. The factory is not built here.

May 19, 1880 – S.O. Seymour opens a “fish, oyster and vegetable market” on Bailey Avenue behind the town hall.

May 19, 1880 – “Mr. L. H. Bailey is putting in a title drain under the lower end of Bailey Ave., to carry the water off without having recourse to one of those detestable ‘thank you mams,’” The Press reports. “He will also grade the avenue and make it a gradual and easy ascent from the depot and place neat and ornamental lamps at proper intervals to guide the traveler on his way.” [A ‘thank you mam’ was a ditch cut across the roadbed; it caused a jolt when a vehicle passed over, and might prompt the exclamation, ‘Thank you mam!’ from the driver.]

Aug. 15, 1880 – In a story about a buggy trip through the countryside, a New York Times writer praises the beauties of Ridgefield and in particular, High Ridge, which he [wrongly] calls “the highest elevation in Connecticut ... commanding a view in every direction of from 50 to 60 miles....Here the adventurous people are buying houses, with the certainty that no one can cut off or interrupt their view. One of them has generously provided, on the highest point, a summer-house, with means of access from the road, and wonderful to tell! a hitching-post and chain, where you may tie your horse while you go in and enjoy the prospect.”

October 1880 – The Rev. Daniel Teller, minister of the First Congregational Church, and Ridgefield’s first published historian, leaves to take a post with a church in New Haven.

November 1880 – Charles W. Lee becomes owner and publisher of The Ridgefield Press.

## **1881**

1881 – The Catholic church on Catoonah Street is officially named St. Mary’s Church by the Rev. Lawrence Stephen McMahon, bishop of Hartford. The Rev. Thaddeus Walsh is named the first pastor.

Jan. 31, 1881 – Twelve-year-old Martin Penders is “killed while sliding.”

July 1, 1881 – Amos S. Rasco, described as a peddler, commits suicide by cutting his throat. He is 31 years old.

## 1882

Jan. 27, 1882 – Two farces, *Rough Diamond* and *Lad from the Country*, are staged at the Town Hall. The W.M.C. Band provides music. Tickets are 25 cents.

February 1882 – William W. Whiting buys The Ridgefield Press, but keeps Charles W. Lee as a staff member. Lee resigns in two years because of ill health, and dies six years later of tuberculosis, age 30. Whiting himself dies of pneumonia in 1885, age 29.

Feb. 8, 1882 – The Rev. William W. Leete, a recent graduate of Yale Divinity School, is settled as minister of the First Congregational Church.

March 11, 1882 – The First Congregational Church gets bids of from \$2,000 to \$5,000 to fix its church on the green. Members are apparently not pleased, and nine months later, decide to build a new church on the site “provided the property owners, adjoining, will not object...” They did object, and the plan is abandoned.

May 12, 1882 – St. Mary’s Parish incorporates.

May 22, 1882 – Phineas C. Lounsbury gives the Sixth School District the land on which a schoolhouse is to be built. It is now the Bailey Avenue Municipal Parking Lot.

July 14, 1884 – “Three-wheel velocipedes are numerous on our sidewalks,” reports The Ridgefield Press.

July 21, 1882 – The Ladies of the Methodist Episcopal Church hold a Lawn Festival, with ice cream and other refreshments, on the Parsonage Grounds that evening. Proceeds benefit the church.

July 22, 1882 – Frederick C. Lee of Farmingville is driving into town when, near the pound, his horse becomes frightened by some “gypsies,” and suddenly turning, throws Mr. Lee from the vehicle and runs for home “at a lively rate,” The Ridgefield Press reports.

July 24, 1882 – The thermometer at Hiram K. Scott’s store at 1:30 p.m. reads 118 degrees.

August 1882 – Under the leadership of Father Thaddeus Walsh, its first pastor, St. Mary’s Parish buys its cemetery land on North Street. Four years later, Father Walsh is buried there.

## 1883

Oct. 13, 1883 – Bishop Lawrence McMahon blesses the new St. Mary’s Cemetery.

Nov. 23, 1883 – George P. Sherwood, a 59-year-old mason, is killed in Branchville when a derrick falls on him.

Dec. 7, 1883 – Reports are afoot that the Connecticut Legislature will be asked to allow the merger of the New York and Connecticut Air Line, the Harlem and Port Chester, the Ridgefield and Port Chester, and the New York Elevated Railroads. “The Ridgefield and Port Chester is a road on which much work has already been done, and its charter is such that it may run through Westchester County to any point of the western boundary of Connecticut,” The New York Times reports.

## **1884**

1884 – The Leatherman, a famous tramp who wandered Connecticut and New York in the 1800s, is said to pay his last visit to town. [However, The Press in 1886 says the Leather Man, “as far as we know, has never included Ridgefield in his habitual route.”] Five years later, the Leather Man is found dead in a cave near Sing Sing, N.Y. He is said to have come to this country in the 1850s as a stowaway after failing at business and romance in his native France.

1884 – The Ridgefield Savings Bank moves from the Old Hundred [today’s Aldrich Museum] to Hiram K. Scott’s store in the village.

Jan. 21, 1884 – In the continuing financial maneuverings behind a new railroad that would run through Ridgefield, a contract is signed for the “New York, Danbury and Boston Railway. The name of “Port Chester and Ridgefield Railroad” is dropped.

July 1884 – S. D. Keeler, who began his career in retailing with a grocery stand, opens his mercantile store on Main Street [where Deborah Ann’s Sweet Shop is in 2008]. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, he is the town’s biggest merchant, with operations including a grain elevator on Bailey Avenue, the Titicus Store, and the Corner Store at Main and West Lane. He retires in 1921.

Aug. 28, 1884 – Twenty one Ridgefield veterans of the Civil War are among 400 Connecticut veterans to attend a reunion here. They march through the village and meet in the town hall. Two thousand people greet them, and most join them for a picnic on the Lounsbury grounds [now Veterans Park].

Oct. 4, 1884 – The First Congregational Church’s building committee is authorized to erect a new church on a new location, the corner of Main Street and West Lane.

## 1885

Jan. 1, 1885 – Ten-year-old Abram Hoyt drowns after falling through ice in Limestone District.

March 7, 1884 – William W. Whiting, editor and publisher of The Ridgefield Press, dies of pneumonia at the age of 29.

March 1884 – The Ridgefield Press is taken over by Dr. W. S. Todd, administrator of the estate, who, in 1886, joins seven other Ridgefielders in establishing The Ridgefield Press Printing Company, giving the paper financial backing. Dr. Todd comes to Ridgefield in 1866 and teaches three years at William O. Seymour's school on High Ridge. He then goes to medical school for three years and becomes a physician. As a newspaperman, Dr. Todd "wielded an able pen," The Press reports at his death in 1893, "many of his editorials attracting great attention and were quoted by leading journals."

Feb. 1, 1885 – William Ernest Smith, who lives in the Flat Rock district, dies of accidental strangulation. He is three years old.

April 13, 1885 – Thaddeus M. Benedict, an 84-year-old shoemaker in Titicus District, is killed when a horse kicks him.

July 18, 1885 – The Town of Ridgefield pays the Congregational Church society \$2,000 for the "meeting house yard" on the green, with the stipulation that the society move its building from the site.

Oct. 1, 1885 – The Ridgefield Savings Bank, 10 years old, has \$100,155 in deposits. Of 896 depositors, 801 have accounts of \$500 or less. Only five have \$2,000 or more.

## 1886

Feb. 4, 1886 – At 2:20 a.m., something goes awry at the New York City aqueduct construction project in the Bronx. An underground dynamite shack explodes, sending a shaft of flame 400 feet into the air and causing widespread destruction around the site. In Ridgefield, 40 miles away, The Press reports the next day, "The earthquake which waked nearly everybody out of a sound sleep Tuesday night proves to have been caused by an explosion of dynamite at Shaft 22 on the new aqueduct at Fordham Heights. One of our merchants thought someone had broken open his safe..."

Feb. 5, 1886 – Ridgefield Justice John F. Gilbert fines "Con" Mahoney \$1 plus costs for wife beating, and sentences him to 30 days in Danbury Jail.

Feb. 12, 1886 – Miss Carrie Scott begins her duties as principal of the Titicus School, replacing Clarence Austin, who resigned. Miss Scott is “a graduate of a seminary in New York State.”

Feb. 13, 1886 – The Shakespeare Club meets at the home of Dr. Archibald Paddock on Main Street to hear readings of “As You Like It.”

Feb. 17, 1886 – “As Mrs. J. L. Hunt was driving in front of Geo. Abbott’s store, she was accosted by a person, and reined in her horse,” The Ridgefield Press reports. “M.B. Whitlock was on his hack behind her and before he could stop his horses, the whiffletree caught in the wheel and upset the carriage instantly, throwing out Mrs. Hunt and her little boy. The wagon rested on the little boy’s head, but Mrs. Hunt was able to get up and relieve him at once before outside assistance arrived. The horse acted kindly and no serious injuries resulted.”

Feb. 19, 1886 – The Rev. F. A. Henry lectures on Macbeth and Hamlet in the town hall.

Feb. 22, 1886 – Mrs. C.A. Jennings is elected president of the Ladies Benevolent Society.

Feb. 24, 1886 – “The lower part of Bailey Avenue is almost impassable,” says The Ridgefield Press. “The question naturally arises: Who is to repair it. It ought not to be allowed to remain as it is.”

Feb. 26, 1886 – A social dance is held in the town hall, with “music under the able management of Professor Offen.” Tickets are \$1.50 with dinner, but “spectators admitted into the gaiety for 35 cents.”

March 1, 1886 – High winds fail to keep members of the Ridgefield Literary Society from gathering at the home of Miss Minnie Valden at Titicus to hear and discuss readings of Washington Irving’s *Knickerbocker’s History of New York*.

March 4, 1886 – John Sheriden is fined \$3 plus costs for “beating up Wm. Rascoe in a terrible manner on Wednesday evening.”

March 10, 1886 – Miss Jennie Dann, teacher of the Farmingville School, celebrates her 19<sup>th</sup> birthday at a party with a few friends in her home.

March 24, 1886 – The Snowflake Mission Band of the Congregational Society gives an exhibition consisting of declamations, recitations, and singing in the church.

March 26, 1886 – The Port Chester Journal says work is about to begin on the “Ridgefield and New York Rail Road” which, despite its name, would run from Port

Chester to Danbury, but through Ridgefield. The road is supposed to carry passengers and no freight.

March 31, 1886 – Ridgefield has its second thunderstorm in a week.

April 1, 1886 – D. Smith Sholes becomes postmaster of Ridgefield. Hiram K. Scott is assistant postmaster.

April 1, 1886 – W. H. Gilbert sells his carpentry business to his employees Will F. Hoyt and Charles H. Nash, and goes into the kindling wood business. He cuts the wood from eight acres he buys in Great Swamp and supplies it by the cord or barrel.

April 9, 1886 – Ridgefielders are warned that a counterfeit five dollar bill, purporting to be issued by the Central National Bank of Norwalk, is in circulation. "It has a picture of Garfield on it, which the genuine bill does not have." [Genuine bills carry a picture of Ulysses S. Grant.]

April 9, 1886 – John M. Ericson is elected worthy patron of the Sons of Temperance and Emma Nash is worthy matron.

April 15, 1886 – The household goods of the late Father Thaddeus P. Walsh, first pastor of St. Mary's, are auctioned off by H.E. Mead. "A large number of spirited bidders assembled," The Press reports.

April 19, 1886 – Cornelius McCarty, who has worked for "Mrs. Hickok" for some time, mysteriously disappears. He leaves the house to go to the village, saying he would be gone one or two hours. He visits Seymour and Barhite's store and sells some eggs, telling them to credit the amount to Mrs. Hickok's account. He leaves his horse in front of the store, where it is found the next morning. No one can explain his disappearance.

April 27, 1886 – The pupils of the higher department of the Center School give an "entertainment" in the Ridgefield Hall in commemoration of the Battle of Ridgefield. Mrs. Jarley exhibits her wax works and afterward, maple sugar on ice is served in the lower hall.

April 30, 1886 – The Elm Shade Cottages on Main Street, now The Elms Inn, get a telephone connection.

May 6, 1886 – Two are arrested among the 150 men from Branchville and Georgetown who are on strike at the Gilbert and Bennett wire mill in Georgetown.

May 7, 1886 – “George Washington Gilbert has dispensed with his shoes,” a sure sign of the “approach of summer,” observes The Press. Mr. Gilbert, the “hermit of Ridgefield,” goes barefoot as much of the year as he can.

May 8, 1886 – A committee of the Grand Army of the Republic Post meets at the home of A.W. Lee to plan “suitable arrangements” for Memorial Day.

May 12, 1886 –The Social Glee Club meets at the home of J. W. Mead.

May 21, 1886 – The Methodist Society presents Miss Addie Edmonds “with a purse of \$31 in acknowledgement of her excellent service as organist during the past year,” The Press reports.

May 22, 1886 – George I. Abbott opens his “ice cream saloon,” prompting The Press to later observe: “George has at last come to the conclusion that the public likes Abbott’s ice cream better than Horton’s or Dixson’s, and accordingly will have to do his own freezing this year.” [Horton and Dixson were commercial ice cream makers.]

May 28, 1886 – *The Young Folks Cyclopedia of Common Things*, and *The Young Folks Cyclopedia of Persons and Places* are acquired by the Center School, The Press reports.

June 5, 1886 – Mrs. Joseph Taylor of Limestone District picks the first strawberries of the season.

June 1886 – A Mrs. Brinkerhoff and her three-year-old son are visiting friends in Ridgebury when the boy is suddenly attacked by a dog. “The little one was playing about the door when the dog suddenly rushed upon him and tore one side of his face with his teeth,” reports the Danbury News. “Mrs. Brinkerhoff hastened to Danbury and the wound was dressed by Dr. Annie K. Bailey. The child is getting along nicely at present and it is hoped there will be no trouble in the future. The dog, which has long been a source of annoyance to passers-by, has been killed.”

June 11, 1886 – “The Bailey House and The Elms Shade Cottages are rapidly filling up,” The Ridgefield Press reports. “The most desirable rooms will be open for a short time only if the great demand for board during the past week is any sign.”

June 13, 1886 – Children’s Day is observed at Jesse Lee Methodist Church. Each child at Sunday school that evening is given a bouquet of flowers which is then presented to Superintendent F.W. Rockwell, who proceeds to construct from the blossoms the word “Wisdom.”

June 23, 1886 – Cyrus Northrop, a Ridgefield native who is president of the Minnesota State University – now the University of Minnesota, receives an honorary doctor of laws degree from Yale, his alma mater. He spends a few days in Ridgefield visiting family.

July 2, 1886 – The closing exercises at the West Lane School take place that afternoon, and Rufus H. King Jr. awards a prize to the best scholar in mathematics.

July 2, 1886 – “Extensive improvements are being made to St Mary’s Chapel,” The Ridgefield Press reports. “There is now a large addition at the rear of the church, making the building more commodious, and the interior has been artistically decorated, thus making a more pleasing house of worship.”

July 1886 – “Ridgefielders are talking again of organizing a fire company,” says The New Canaan Messenger. “The great wonder is such an enterprising town as Ridgefield has not had a well-equipped fire department years ago.”

July 5, 1886 – Because the Fourth of July falls on the Sabbath, celebrations take place Monday. “Some of the city boys celebrated the Fourth quite hilariously,” The Ridgefield Press reports. “They had a lot of horns, a drum, and lanterns, and marched through the streets. The lower part of the street was quite lively for a time.” In addition, “The colored domestics of John W. Rockwell’s boarding house enjoyed themselves ‘hugely’ on the Fifth. They hired a four-in-hand of ‘Mott’ Whitlock, trimmed the wagon and horses with the stars and stripes, and ‘whooped ‘er up’ until a late hour.”

July 16, 1886 – Crime is rampant in Ridgefield. “Last Friday night, the residence of Mr. George Smith was entered and \$20 were stolen,” The Ridgefield Press reports. The same night an attempt was made to enter George Gregory’s house in Titicus, “but the family was aroused in consequence, and Mr. Gregory, gun in hand, pursued two men for some distance from the house. They finally got out of sight. On the same night burglars tried to enter the house of Mr. William Rusco on West Mountain, but were scared away by *pater familias* and a shot gun.”

July 19, 1886 – Ridgefielders are all abuzz as stock in the New York and New England Rail Road rises on sharp sales. The New York Times reports the company has gained “a new entrance into New York.” The Times says the railroad will be known as the New York, Danbury and Boston Railroad. The portion from Port Chester to Ridgefield has already been surveyed as part of the Port Chester and Ridgefield Rail Road.

July 23, 1886 – “Poppy Smith, who is in the employ of D.C. Baxter, was tumbled into a heap last Sunday afternoon in consequence of petting ‘Daisy’ with a broom.”



July 23, 1886 – Sanford Barnes, fishing on South Pond with Ernest F. Walton, catches a black bass weighing four and one half pounds and measuring 20 inches. He used a seven-ounce rod with grasshopper bait. [South Pond is Oscaleta Lake in Lewisboro.]

August 1886 – The Board of School Visitors decides to substitute Harpers Geographies in place of Mitchell's in the schools of the town. It's cheaper; there are only two books in the Harpers series instead of three in Mitchell's. "All pupils having Mitchell's can exchange them at the store of H. K. Scott for Harpers' by paying sixty cents for the large and twenty five cents for the small edition," The Press reports Aug. 23.

Aug. 3, 1886 – The house of Andrew Benedict is broken into and clothing, including four overcoats and a "valuable shawl," are stolen. "John Taylor, colored, was suspected of the crime and was arraigned before Justice John F. Gilbert, Wednesday, but on investigation, it appeared that the Negro was not the guilty party," The Press later reports. "He was accordingly discharged, with the strict injunction to return to his home in New Canaan, as he had every appearance of a vagrant."

Aug. 9, 1886 – The children's parlor fair at Elm Shade Cottage takes place, with items made by both children and adults for sale. \$87 is raised to benefit the Methodist Episcopal Hospital of Brooklyn and the House of the Holy Comforter, described by The New York Times as "the only home for incurables" in New York City.

Aug. 15, 1886 – At 1 a.m., a man walking up Main Street sees flames coming from the porch of the Congregational Church on the village green. He gives an alarm. The fire is extinguished before much damage is done. "This was fortunate," The Press later comments, "for it would be very unpleasant to have it destroyed before a new building is completed." [The fire is probably set by vandals who know the church is soon to be replaced by the new stone edifice at Main Street and West Lane.]

Aug. 20, 1886 – "The Grand Juror gives notice that all persons who have not destroyed all Canada thistles, wild carrots, and wild parsnips for which they are responsible by the first of next month, will be prosecuted according to law," reports The Press. [These weeds – the wild carrot is today's popular wildflower, Queen Ann's Lace – were the "invasives" of the 1800s, and caused considerable problems for farmers whose fields they invaded. Hence, the state law requiring property owners not to allow such weeds to exist.]

Aug. 21, 1886 – The ladies of St. Stephen's Church hold a "fair and festival" in the afternoon and evening, with many articles for sale.

September 1886 – Capt. Frank Mix Lovejoy is appointed deputy U.S. marshal for the New Haven District. The Ridgefield native started out his career building carriages in the Big Shop factory on West Lane. After the war, he became an assistant Internal Revenue collector and was then a reporter for The New Haven Courier for many years.

September 1886 – “Ridgefield has a scheme on foot to organize a social club after the style of the Lenox Club. The men who are interested in the project almost guarantee its success. Already more than half of the necessary funds has been pledged. It is proposed to convert a cozy cottage into a club-house with bowling alley, billiard room and bath house attached, and ought, if rightly conducted, as we presume it will be, to make Ridgefield more popular than ever. Greenwich might take a hint and do likewise.” – *The Greenwich Graphic*

Sept. 3, 1886 – “There is less elmshade at the Elmshade than there was. One of those magnificent elms is totally dead and another is dying. It became necessary because of the danger of falling limbs, to have the branches cut off, which was done last week by W. F. Thomas. It looked as if a small tornado had passed through. It seems very much as if all the old elms in the street will go very soon. We shall miss them, especially the one in front of the hall.” – The Press [This is long before Dutch elm disease arrived to decimate the North American elm population.]

Sept. 10 – The Democratic Town Committee holds a meeting to select delegates to the state convention in New Haven. Chosen are Jonathan F. Gilbert, chairman, D. Smith Sholes, Frank R. Hunt, and E.H. Smith.

Sept. 14, 1886 – The residence of Ebenezer Jones on Kings Ridge, occupied by Emerson Brooks, narrowly escapes destruction by fire. The blaze starts beneath the parlor fireplace, which had been used the night before. Neighbors come to his aid, including General Rufus H. King, who grabs fire extinguishers from his own house. They put out the fire and damage is minor. “This is another warning to our people that they are insufficiently protected from fire,” The Press says that week. “Do something about a fire company.”

Sept. 15, 1886 – Professor Lewis R. June, a member of a family of circus performers from the area, gives a sleight-of-hand and conjuring performance in the Town Hall. The audience seems pleased with the many tricks performed, The Press later reports. “The little folks were equally pleased. The Demon Skull told quite accurately who in the audience was stricken by Cupid’s darts and it was amazing to see the Professor collect the quarters and half dollars from the hair of the audience. The entertainment was under the auspices of the Sons of Temperance.”

Sept. 17, 1886 – Edward Martin of Georgetown is “terribly mangled under the wheels of a freight train on the Danbury and Norwalk railroad.” The Press describes him as “a shiftless young man, 18 years old.”

Sept. 24, 1886 – Peter Denny of Ridgefield has been noticing his well water has fishy taste. He cleans out the well and finds 60 trout at the bottom. “Then he remembered that

he had put a trout in the water three years ago because he had heard that it was a good scheme,” The New York Times reports. “The trout was a female and had spawned, with the result of making the well a fish pond.”

Sept. 30, 1886 – W.S. Elliott, MD, DDS, of Danbury opens a branch dentistry office in Ridgefield. He had previously practiced in New York City.

Oct. 4, 1886 – The Annual Town Meeting as usual elects a Republican Board of Selectmen, with Republican Ebenezer W. Keeler receiving 110 votes, Republican George Boughton, 89, and Democrat William H. Gilbert, 94. Last place loser is Lewis H. Bailey, 87 votes. The Press observes that it was “a quiet day in town. There was but little evidence of an election, if an election is to be judged from the amount of liquor that is drunk. This is a no-license town. There was but one drunken man to be seen on our streets.”

Oct. 6, 1886 – Thomas Parkinson, the gardener for Joshua I. King, shows up at The Press office with “a bunch of bananas grown by him in Mr. King’s hot-house...It is the first time that bananas have matured in Ridgefield, and Mr. Parkinson has proven himself to be an expert in growing tropical fruits.”

Oct. 15, 1886 – The cellar has been dug and the walls are nearly up on the new Congregational Church building at Main Street and West Lane.

Oct. 21, 1886 – E.W. Keeler is digging the cellar for the new Cheesman house on Prospect Ridge. [Today, the stone house is the front of the Prospect Ridge Congregate Housing complex.]

Oct. 22, 1886 – Charles Lockwood of Farmingville has a finger badly injured by the unexpected discharge of a gun. There was no shot in the gun, only a wad.

Oct. 23, 1886 – H.E. Mead holds an auction at Baxter’s Salesroom. Wares include harnesses, whips, halters, surcingles, teas, coffees, spices, scraps, brooms, glassware, tinware, coal hods, knives and forks, shears, butcher knives, silk handkerchiefs, umbrellas, mugs, clocks, glass pitchers, watch chains, shoe brushes, shaving brushes, mirrors, napkins, watches, hammers, saws sleigh bells, and second-hand clothing.

Oct. 23, 1886 – Mrs. Clark Keeler of Ridgefield travels to Bridgeport. While she is at the station, a pickpocket relieves her of \$10.

Oct. 25, 1886 – Only a few people attend the first meeting of the Chautauqua Club.

Oct. 30, 1886 – In September, a farm hand named Burdick bites into one of the apples he is gathering for cider. “There was a hole in that apple and within the hole lurked a bee,

which stung Burdick on the tongue,” The New York Times reports. “For two or three days he went about feeling that his mouth would have to be enlarged for comfort.” The swelling dissipates and he was well for two weeks. “Then his trouble returned to him in a curious form,” The Times continues. “Whenever he tries to eat an apple, his tongue swells up and he becomes dreadfully sick....Burdick doesn’t know what to make of the phenomenon, but he has given up apples. His friends think it is a case of overgrown imagination.”

Nov. 2, 1886 – In the state election, Phineas C. Lounsbury of Ridgefield becomes governor of Connecticut.

Nov. 5, 1886 – “The workmen digging the well on Dr. Bennett’s place found a vein of soft material, greasy to the feel, and resembling tallow in consistency,” reports The Press. “It was similar to that found in digging a well on Aaron Lee’s place that gave rise to the story of the finding of oil.”

Nov. 6, 1886 – The town throws a grand party for Phineas Lounsbury, the native son who was elected governor Tuesday. Every house on Main Street is especially brightly lit for an evening parade – canceled by a last-minute thunderstorm. The town hall is packed and the Danbury Band salutes the new leader of the state.

Nov. 13, 1886 – The Rev. Patrick Byrne becomes the second pastor of St. Mary’s Church, serving until 1892.

Nov. 17, 1886 – Mr. Hodges, a lawyer, stages a defense of Richard III in the town hall.

Nov. 19 – New books at the library include *Kidnapped*, *Roland Blake*, *Modern Telemachus*, *Heroes of Science*, *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *Rifted Clouds Or the Life Story of Bella Cooke*, *a Record of Living Kindness and Tender Mercies*, *My Young Alcides*, and *Tent and Harem: Notes of An Oriental Trip*.

Nov. 25, 1886 – Thanksgiving Day is stormy through the Northeast, and many family gatherings are cancelled in Ridgefield.

Nov. 26 –The Board of Assessors, cut from five to three members by the previous Annual Town Meeting, begins its work of compiling the grand list of taxable properties.

Dec. 6, 1886 – The funeral of Mrs. Fred DeForest takes place at the Methodist Church. She had died Saturday. “For some months,” The Press reports later, “she had exhibited signs of insanity, and had become so bad that preparations were being made to send her to the state asylum. She refused all nourishment and medication, and sank rapidly.”

Dec. 17, 1886 – The Press remarks on the new weather vane on Louis Valden's barn in Titicus. "Besides being an ornament it is of great use.... It will keep the good people of Titicus posted in a truth that all want to know – that is, which way the wind blows – so they can prepare for emergencies." The vane is described as "representing a jockey sitting on his sulky, holding the ribbons over a fast steed that looks as though he would best the wind in every race. It is finely gilded and painted, and is certainly very appropriate for a barn."

Dec. 17, 1886 – There's a new hotel operator in town. "Ridgefield has not had in several years a hotel kept up to the standard which the place and times demand," The Press maintains. "The Ridgefield Hotel [Keeler Tavern] once justly had a wide and enviable reputation – none had better. Its genial landlord [Abijah Resseguie] was famed for the excellent cheer he gave his guests. But since he has borne the weight of four score years, he has become more and more inclined to close his doors. ... We believe that Mr. Thompson, who has recently purchased the Dykeman House, knows how to keep a hotel and will do so... Mr. Thompson will not enlarge the house at once, although we feel that he would make no mistake in so doing. He would find no difficulty in filling it."

Dec. 24, 1886 – Tobogganing has become all the rage in Connecticut, The Press reports. Many "toboggan slides" are being set up. "At present the depot hill [Prospect Street area] seems to be the only tobogganing slide in Ridgefield, and half bare ground at that."

Dec. 25, 1886 – It is Christmas, but at the Episcopal Church at least, the holy day is hardly noticed by parishioners. "The audience was not large at St. Stephen's church last Saturday, neither was the church very warm," The Press observes, "yet all who were there must have felt repaid by the singing and the excellent sermon by Rev. Mr. Henry, who took for his theme, 'Christ, the Light of the World.' It was a very fine discourse."

## **1887**

Jan. 6, 1887 – Gov. Phineas C. Lounsbury is inaugurated in Hartford as the 53rd governor of Connecticut since 1639.

Jan. 14, 1887 – Miss Bertha Lee moves to Bridgeport to study stenography.

Jan. 21, 1887 – "An accident which might have proven very serious occurred to Solomon Mills the other day," The Press reports. "While drawing a load of ice, he fell from the load and narrowly escaped being run over by the sleigh. He escaped with slight injury to his shoulder."

Feb. 11, 1887 – S.F. Main has added sewing machines to his business on Bailey Avenue, including the "New White, a perfect working machine." [In 1858, Thomas H. White, a 22-year-old machinist with only \$350 to his name, founded White Sewing Machine Company in Massachusetts to produce small, hand-operated sewing machines. The

company still exists today, producing an array of sophisticated sewing machines that would have astounded the 1887 homemaker.]

Feb. 11, 1887 – The House of Representatives passes a bill incorporating the Ridgefield Club. It awaits the signature of the governor who, since he is P.C. Lounsbury of Ridgefield, is certain to sign.

Feb. 25, 1887 – Ridgefield farmers are offering eggs at 20 cents a dozen. Since 20 cents then is around \$4.50 now, that was a high price.

March 2, 1887 – Governor Phineas Lounsbury nominates his neighbor, William O. Seymour of Ridgefield, as state railroad commissioner. Mr. Seymour has been chief engineer for the New York and New Haven Railroad for nine years.

March 4, 1887 – “All the telegraph poles on the new line have been labeled ‘Am. Tel. & Tel. Co.’ and consecutively numbered,” The Press reports. “The one near the Catholic cemetery is numbered 2020. It will not do for anybody to take them for walking sticks or bean poles. If they do, their sin will find them out.”

March 5, 1887 – An auction at the home of the late James Gilbert in Titicus sells off household furniture, garden tools, a sled, a wagon, and more. Gilbert had died Feb. 6, less than a month earlier, at the age of 83.

March 6, 1887 – That afternoon Charles Brown is driving his sleigh across the tracks at Branchville when one of the runners catches on the rail and the sleigh overturns. The horse does not bolt and Mr. Brown escapes injury.

March 8, 1887 – The Lenten Sewing Circle at St. Stephen’s Church meets that afternoon at the rectory. “The ladies are hard at work with the thread and needle for the poor and needy,” The Press observes.

March 11, 1887 – 19-year-old Frank R. Hoyt decides to take his parents’ carriage out for a Friday evening spin around town. On his return, he is pulling into the family driveway when one of the wheels strikes a stone abutment, overturning the carriage and throwing the young man against a stone wall, killing him instantly. His parents, Warren and Bridget Hoyt, had been waiting up for him to return, and discover the bloody body of their only child only a short distance from their front door. A year earlier, Frank was nearly killed in a fall from his milk wagon, and underwent a long recuperation. “It is a sad lesson of the uncertainties of life,” The Press observes.

March 30, 1887 – The Ladies Home Missionary Society meets at the home of Mrs. Phillip Barhite.

March 30, 1887 – At the Congregational Church, the Snowflake Mission Circle gives “an entertainment” that includes singing, recitations and “a few scenes from foreign countries.” Foreign costumes from Boston have been rented, “which will add to the interest of the exercises,” The Press says. Admission is 10 cents.

April 1887 – E.C. Bross is hired as editor of The Ridgefield Press.

April 1, 1887 – D. Crosby Baxter has begun delivering Sunday papers here before 7 a.m. “It will be possible to read all the important news before church time,” The Press observes.

April 1, 1887 – Town library hours are Wednesdays from 3 to 4, and Saturdays from 7 to 8 p.m.

April 2, 1887 – Henry Mead, William Crofut, Eugene Keeler, and Mrs. F. B. Daniels are arrested and charged with illegal liquor selling in dry Ridgefield. The town retains J. Belden Hurlbutt of Norwalk to prosecute the cases. They all appear before Judge Hiram K. Scott in town court. Mead bargains a fine of \$30 plus costs on one count. Mrs. Daniels and Mr. Keeler are found guilty and fined \$35 and \$30 respectively; both say they will appeal to Superior Court. Crofut is “let off with costs.” “Probably no crusade against illicit liquor-selling has created such agitation of the public mind in this town...” The Press says of the cases.

April 8, 1887 – Hoyt Brothers is selling shoulder steak for 12 cents a pound.

April 10, 1887 – Joel Rockwell is on his way home from church this Sunday when his horse takes fright and bolts, breaking the whiffletree [part of the mechanism connecting the horse to the wagon]. Mr. Rockwell jumps from his wagon, hoping to grab hold of the horse, but fails. The horse runs off with the wagon, containing Mr. Rockwell’s daughters. In going around the sharp curve on West Mountain Road near the old lime kiln, the girls are thrown out. Both are injured, but not seriously.

April 15, 1887 – S.O Seymour’s home in Flat Rock District has been twice entered by burglars recently, The Press reports. They steal pillows, clothing, crockery and many other articles. “Some method should be adopted by the town authorities for the protection of our citizens against petty thieving,” The Press declares.

April 16, 1887 – Abijah Resseguie, who had operated the Ridgefield Hotel for more than 60 years in what is now the Keeler Tavern, dies at the age of 96. [*See also* March 26, 1791.]

April 27, 1887 – A tree being is being cut down in front of Seymour and Barhite’s store on Main Street. A rope around the trunk is supposed to control the fall, but fails, and tree

crashes through the window of the store. Inside is a safe that had been left open; the tree trunk hits the open door and rips it off. Only moments before L.C. Seymour had been seated at a desk next to the safe. He “escaped death by a hair’s breadth,” said The Press.

May 6 – “Willis Gilbert attracts considerable attention on our streets riding a handsome bicycle,” notes The Press.

May 6, 1887 – H.E. Mead purchases 185 dozen fresh eggs from various sources in town. The wagon load of them is parked in front of Samuel D. Keeler’s store on Main Street when Tommy Barrett, a teenager, attempts to back out a team that was hitched next to Mr. Mead’s wagon. A wheel of Barrett’s wagon catches on a Mead wheel, overturning Mr. Mead’s wagon. Only a handful of the 2,220 eggs survive what The Press calls an “expensive eggs-ident.”

May 8, 1887 – Her husband out-of-town, Mrs. Jared Ritch discovers her house on fire. Being in a remote section of West Mountain with no close neighbors, there is little she can do except grab a few belongings and watch the house burn to the ground.

May 23, 1887 – The Chautauqua Circle meets at the home of Miss Reba Northrop to discuss astronomy and Longfellow’s poetry.

May 30, 1887 – The town’s elaborate observance of Memorial Day includes something special this year: The presence of and a speech by the governor of Connecticut. He’s Ridgefielder Phineas C. Lounsbury, of course.

June 1, 1887 – Levi Dann’s family wants to have some greens for dinner and one member goes out and picks what is thought to be “milk weed.” The dish is prepared, but proves unsavory and no one will eat it. Meanwhile, the waste weed parts have been thrown to the pigs, and soon they are discovered to be sick from eating the greens. One dies. “Care should be given in gathering anything out of the ordinary line of vegetables,” The Press editor warns. “It was a very narrow escape for the family.”

June 1, 1887 – Fairfield County High Sheriff Clarks swears in T.C. White of Ridgefield as a deputy.

June 7, 1887 – Henry Fecks of Scotland District is arraigned before Judge John F. Gilbert on charges of felonious assault, filed by David Dykeman and Smith Burt. He pleads guilty. The Press reports he “was furnished with a free ride to Danbury in the company of Sheriff White, where for the next 60 days he will be lodged and boarded at the expense of the county.”



June 17, 1887 – Dr. D.L. Adams, one of the town’s leading citizens, puts his Main Street house up for sale. He plans to move closer to his sons, who will be attending school in New Haven.

June 24, 1887 – A. Newbold Morris of High Ridge has purchased an elegant new coach from the Ridgefield Carriage Factory. The coach is being painted by Judge John F. Gilbert, and upholstered by Sylvester Smith.

June 24, 1887 – Whipstick School’s 32 scholars have their closing exercises that include the presentation to teacher Miss Sarah E. Stone of a nine-volume set of the works of Washington Irving. Afterward, strawberries and cake are enjoyed by all.

June 26, 1887 – Phoebe J. Thompson of Titicus, described by The Press as “an ideal mother” who was well-known in the community, dies of acute Brights’ disease at the age of 34.

July 1, 1887 – The pupils of the Center School stage their annual “entertainment,” which includes dialogues, essays, declamations, class work. Admission is only 15 cents.

July 6, 1887 – Harriet Hawley Lawton, a 67-year-old widow, dies. Dr. W. S. Todd, the medical examiner, says the cause of death is “overwork.” It is the only death in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century records attributed to that cause.

July 8, 1887 – Recent titles acquired at the Ridgefield Library include: *A Tramp Trip: How to See Europe on 50 Cents A Day*, *A Passionate Pilgrim*, *Round the World by A Boy*, *In the Clouds*, *The Prophet of the Snowy Mountains*, *Men Who Saved the Union*, and *Jo’s Boys* by Louisa May Alcott.

July 11, 1887 – Eight-year-old Starr Lent, son of Fred Lent of Branchville, is playing on the branch line tracks this evening near Webb’s Crossing when he is struck by the last train to Ridgefield. He left arm is run over and the boy is placed on the train and rushed to the office of Dr. W. S. Todd in the village. With Dr. Perry assisting, the arm is amputated above the elbow. “Another sad example of the fate in store for children who persist in playing on the rail road track,” The Press observes.

July 19, 1887 – Forty New York City children, spending two weeks in North Salem as part of the Fresh Air program, are treated to a party at Amos Sherwood’s grove at Lake Mamasasco.

July 24, 1887 – A young man named Knapp rents a horse and phaeton from Whitlock’s livery stable on Catoonah Street. When they are returned, the phaeton is found to be “in a dilapidated condition” after apparently having been involved in a crash. M.B. Whitlock reports young Mr. Knapp has not appeared to pay for the damage.

July 30, 1887 – Joshua I. King, a leading citizen and businessman in town for many decades, dies at the age of 85. The Press calls him a “living landmark.” He is the son of General Joshua King, Revolutionary War officer who lead Major John Andre to the gallows. [See Aug. 13, 1839.]

Aug. 12, 1887 – The clubhouse of the Ridgefield Club is nearly complete, but already in use for bowling.

Aug. 19, 1887 – M. B. Whitlock reports his livery stable has 35 vehicles available for rent, including pleasure wagons, canopy-tops, surreys, and top-buggies.

Aug. 26, 1887 – Surveyors are at work on East Ridge, planning the widening of Prospect Avenue.

Aug. 28, 1887 – The Methodist Sunday School has its summer picnic at Roton Point in Norwalk. The group goes by train from Branchville, a 23-minute ride each way.

Sept. 2, 1887 – This afternoon, The Press Nine plays the Danbury Club at baseball on the fairgrounds off Wilton Road West. The Press comes up the winner, 9 to 5. “The players of both nines, although they are considered good baseballists, were out of practice, none of them having played to any great extent during the present season.” Among members of The Press team is the Rev. W.W. Leete of the First Congregational Church, who plays left field.

Sept. 2, 1887 – Former State Rep. Jonathan Holmes loses the key to his front door. Three days later, he finds it where he had hitched his horses by the town hall. Two weeks earlier, Mr. Holmes came home from a Sons of Temperance meeting carrying several packages and a two dollar bill. At home he discovered the money missing. The next day he retraced his steps and found the bill lying in the middle of the walk on Catoonah Street opposite the Methodist Church. “Few people are so lucky,” The Press observes.

Sept. 5, 1887 – The district schools reopen today after summer vacations, and the popular Miss Lucia M. Alvord returns to her third year as principal of the Center School.

Sept. 9, 1887 – A concert and recital takes place in the Town Hall to raise money for the new Congregational church under construction. Mrs. H.C. Kroh, who has been spending the summer in Ridgefield, gives several recitations of Shakespeare and other noted authors. She has done similar programs in Washington, Newark and New York. Admission is 50 cents; reserved seats go for \$1.

Sept. 16, 1887 – “Work on the new street was commenced this week. It is to be a broad, well-built avenue, and when finished, should be called Governor Street.” – The Press

Sept. 26, 1887 – Professor Emile Rigal leaves for New Haven after spending the summer in Ridgefield, teaching French to classes and individual students.

Sept. 26, 1887 – Albin “Boss” Jennings dies. A Ridgefield native, he was the town’s leading carpenter and the home he built in 1816 for his bride became in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the Outpost Inn on Danbury Road. Jennings, who was 96, had lived during the administration of all the presidents of the United States.

Oct. 21, 1887 – Dr. W. S. Todd of Ridgefield is named a post surgeon. “All persons between the ages of 18 and 45 years desiring exemption from military duty and commutation tax, by reason of mental or physical disability,” are required to be examined by a post surgeon to receive certification.

Nov. 4, 1887 – More than two million pounds of freight is being transferred each month at the Ridgefield railroad depot, and The Press complains that “we badly need greater facilities for handling freight. The two tracks are insufficient for the business, and their crowded condition greatly impedes the proper and speedy handling of material.”

Nov. 11, 1887 – St. Steven’s vestry votes to buy the home of the late Keeler Dauchy, a pillar of the church, to use as a rectory. The house, which stood in front of the present rectory, was moved around 1914 to its present location, opposite the firehouse, serving retail and office uses. In 2007-08, the building is extensively renovated.

Nov. 18, 1887–H. E. Mead advertises that he “has on hand a large stock of pork, cider and other barrels; also firkins, which he is disposing of at reduced rates to close out.”

Nov. 19, 1887 – Peter P. Cornen, who made a fortune discovering oil in Pennsylvania, believes that Ridgefield is situated over an oil field of “considerable magnitude.” A public meeting takes place to discuss forming the Ridgefield Oil and Gas Heating and Gas Lighting Company to begin drilling. Cash capital of \$12,500 is sought to buy equipment needed to sink a shaft 2,000 feet down. Nothing ever happens.

Nov. 25, 1887 – The Ridgefield Division of the Sons of Temperance celebrate their fifth anniversary.

Dec. 1, 1887 – Winter is coming early. The temperature in town drops to six degrees above zero.

Dec. 5, 1887 – A. Newbold Morris of High Ridge and Manhattan gives a grand ball at Delmonico’s in New York City for the debut of his daughter, Miss Eva Van Courtlandt Morris. It’s widely covered by city daily newspapers.

Dec. 16, 1887 – About 30 couples attend the first of the season's balls in the town hall and dance into the week hours to the music of the Davis Brothers.

Dec. 17, 1887 – The first snow of the season blankets the town and brings out the sleighs and sleigh bells. It presages much, *much* more snow to come.

Dec. 23, 1887 – “It has been demonstrated beyond question that winter is here,” The Press observes. “George Washington Gilbert has donned his boots.” [Mr. Gilbert, the hermit of Ridgefield, was barefoot most of the year.]

Dec. 30, 1887 – Samuel Beers butchers a 580-pound pig for Selectman William H. Gilbert.

## **1888**

Jan. 5, 1888 — A horse belonging to Egbert Ruscoe of Flat Rock District breaks its leg and has to be killed.

Jan. 6, 1888 – “Lounsbury Avenue is being rapidly pushed through, and it will be a decided convenience to those wishing to go to East Ridge from Main Street speedily,” The Press says of what we now call Governor Street.

Jan. 12, 1888 – Lewis June, who had been involved in circuses for many years, dies at the age of 64 at his home in Scotland District. He had been one of the owners of P.T. Barnum's “Greatest Show on Earth.”

Jan. 22, 1888 – The temperature reaches 10 degrees below zero at the Corner Store at West Lane and Main Street, but other parts of town record minus-14. The coldest it got the previous winter was minus 6. But there's colder to come.

Jan. 26, 1888 – A locomotive at Branchville frightens a span of horses owned by George Lounsbury. The horses run, throwing the driver headlong into a snow bank and wrecking the sleigh. The horses are eventually recovered unharmed. Lounsbury survives and becomes governor of Connecticut.

Jan. 26, 1888 — Postmaster James H. or John Sammis of Cooper Station post office off Florida Hill Road appears before a federal commissioner in New Haven. Sammis is charged with embezzling \$81.75 in stamp sales from the U.S. Post Office Department. “Sammis denies any crookedness and still claims that the stamps were stolen,” The Press reports. He is released on \$500 bond, posted by Lewis H. Bailey, a prominent Ridgefield businessman.

Jan. 27, 1888 – J.W. Rockwell says Ridgefield needs a creamery and can support one, pointing out that more than 800 cows live in Ridgefield and nearby South Salem. [A

creamery would take farmers' milk, turn it into butter, cream and skim milk, and sell those products – relieving the farmer of those tasks – and most farmers then were throwing out the skim milk.]

Jan. 29, 1888 — The thermometer at the home of Elbridge G. Northrop, Esq., registers 21 degrees below zero, “the coldest morning experienced in Ridgefield for years,” The Press reports.

Feb. 2, 1888 — “Tonight the ball of the season occurs at Ridgefield Hall. The committee has taken extra care in issuing invitations and therefore the dance will be very select. Dancing will commence at 8:30 sharp. The committee has decided to charge spectators 10 cents extra for seats in the front row gallery. Admission to gallery, 25 cents.” Music is provided by the Cogswell band and the grand promenade occurs at 9 o'clock.

Feb. 10, 1888 – The Golden Star Lodge of Good Templars has organized in Ridgefield.

Feb. 13, 1888 — Burt Benjamin is fishing in Lake Mamasco when he catches “the largest pike that has been captured in the water of this section in years.” It weighs five and a quarter pounds and is three feet, one inch long. Alas for Benjamin, the next week, Samuel Mills lands a five and three quarter pound pike in the same lake. “It seems that a friendly rivalry exists among Ridgefield's fishermen since so many heavy weights have been caught in this locality,” The Press opines.

Feb. 14, 1888 — Today, the scandal-ridden Cooper postoffice is discontinued and James Corcoran, the Georgetown post-master, acts as receiver of all the property belonging to the United States at that office. The Press offers this comment: “It was made out of nothing and unto nothing it has returned.”

Feb. 17, 1888 – L.H. Bailey has erected a new building on Main Street and S.D. Keeler moves his store into the premises. The Odd Fellows will soon occupy upstairs quarters. [The building in 2008 houses Deborah Ann's Sweet Shop.]

Feb. 20, 1888 – A crew of 16 men from the American Telegraph and Telephone Company are in town, adding three more wires on the telephone poles to increase service. There are now 31 wires on the poles in the center area of town.

Feb. 20, 1888 — Effective today, the postmaster-general has reduced the mail services between Ridgebury and Danbury from six to three times a week.

Feb. 22, 1888 — The Ladies' Lenten Sewing Circles meets at St. Stephen's rectory. “Besides experiencing a pleasant afternoon socially as only ladies know how, much work was accomplished for 'sweet charity's sake,’” The Press reports.

March 1888 – The Magazine of American History publishes an article, “Historic Cannon Balls and Houses: The British Invasion of Connecticut in 1777,” that includes many pictures of Ridgefield scenes.

March 2, 1888 — “A fair audience listened to the lecture on temperance ... at Ridgefield Hall by Grand Worthy Chief Templar Rev. Otis J. Range of Essex, under the auspices of Golden Star Lodge IOGT, and came away pronouncing emphatically the excellence of the lecture,” The Press reports. The International Organization of Good Templars, founded in 1851, and still functioning, promotes the benefits of avoiding alcohol.

March 11-13, 1888 – The Blizzard of ‘88 hits Ridgefield, isolating the town for four days. At least two feet of snow falls, but wind creates banks as high as 20 feet across some roads.

March 17, 1888 – The Press publishes a special, small-sized, two-page “Blizzard Edition,” on Saturday instead of Friday, with stacked headlines over the storm story: “A Howling Blizzard! The Storm Rages Furiously for Two Days! Cities and Towns Paralyzed! Ridgefield Shut Off from Outer World for Nearly a Week! Traffic on All Roads at a Standstill! Ridgefield Fortunate! She Escapes the Terrible Human Sufferings Experienced Elsewhere. Cheering News from New York and Other Points.”

March 20-21, 1888 – So much rain falls on top of the huge amount of snow remaining from the blizzard that there are fears of serious flooding.

March 23, 1888 — E. H. Smith at The Corner Store at Main Street and West Lane is advertising four brands of Golden Tea “at hard-pan prices”: Fancy Spring Leaf, Spring Leaf, Garden Flowers and Fancy Chop.

March 30, 1888 – “Our selectmen did nobly in the recent snow blockade and opened the roads as rapidly as they could,” The Press observes. “Not fast enough to suit those who waited to be shoveled out, but we presume those are the very ones who at the annual meeting will complain the most loudly of extravagance. It is not pleasant to be the servants of the public.” The Press also reports that undoubtedly the biggest snow drift in the area occurred near the “Redding church”; the drift measured 38 feet high by 200 feet long.

March 31, 1888 — A dozen friends and neighbors of A.J. Sarles, an ailing stonemason who fought at Gettysburg, meet at his house and have an old-fashioned “bee” sawing and splitting his year’s wood. “They all worked faithfully showing their respect and esteem for the aforementioned gentleman,” The Press says. “We believe the old adage is true, that ‘A friend in need is a friend indeed.’” Though in poor health, he is only 53 years old lives until 1904.

April 2, 1888 – Mabel Nickerson and Elmer Leason, both 4 years old, disappear, causing their mothers to be frantic and searchers to gather. Some hours later, the children are found barefoot, locked in the hen house where a door had slammed shut behind them. The Press quotes young Elmer: “We tood not det out; we toot off our boots to trawl frew de hole,” but they couldn’t fit.

April 6, 1888 – “Mr. William Rasco, who over-worked himself during the blizzard week, causing a hemorrhage of the lungs, is again able to be about,” The Press reports.

April 8, 1888 — Though Ridgefield has four houses of worship, The Press later observes, not a church bell rings out to break the solemn stillness, explaining “The Methodist church was in want of a pastor; the Episcopal wanted repairs; and the others have no bells.”

April 13, 1888 — Spring has not yet officially arrived in Ridgefield, says the editor of The Press.

April 13, 1888 — “The children of Titicus school are enjoying a vacation of a week. The teacher, Miss Marion Nash, is visiting friends in New Haven.”

April 14, 1888 – Aaron B. Gilbert buys the old tannery buildings in Titicus from the heirs of D. Harvey Valden, and plans to convert the best buildings into “a neat tenement house.”

April 15, 1888 – A large gathering greets the Rev. John L. Peck, new pastor of the Methodist Church, who at morning and evening services preaches “two forcible and pointed sermons, and the verdict is unanimous that the conference has appointed a pastor who is a conscientious worker, a scholar in the pulpit and a gentleman in every action with mankind,” The Press later observes.

April 17, 1888 — Charles Holly goes to Danbury and parks his horse and carriage on Main Street to do some business. The rig is stolen. That night it is found damaged in New Milford and an a man is arrested for stealing it. The rig and its thief are brought to Danbury by a New Milford constable. The rig is returned and the thief locked up, tried the following Monday and sentenced to a fairly mild three months in jail. “It was shown that the accused was not a professional horse thief, that in this case he did not offer to sell and was [clueless] as to what to do with the things and further that he was under the influence of liquor when he took the horse,” The Press reports. Holly faces “considerable expense” in repairing damage to the vehicle.

April 20, 1888 — A portrait of the current governor, who happens to be Phineas Lounsbury of Main Street, is added to the state library at the Capitol in Hartford. Harry J. Thompson of New Haven is the artist

April 27 — “Friday evening was a gala night for the young people of Ridgefield and vicinity, it being the occasion of the grand social masquerade, so long looked forward to,” The Press reports a week later. “Dancing did not commence until ten o’clock for some reason, but after the excellent music by the Davis Brothers started up, the merry makers under most amusing masques and attired in grotesque as well as artistic costumes were not satisfied until morning began to peep through the shutters of the [Town] Hall. The rich and tasteful costume of Mr. C. G. Mead deserves special mention. Many couples from Danbury, the Salems, and other surrounding towns were in attendance. The collation, which was served about midnight, was under the management of that most efficient caterer, A.L. Burr. The managers are to be congratulated on the success of the masquerade.”

May 5, 1888 — Mrs. J.W. Hibbart, her two children and her mother are going up Sharp Hill when a trace gives ways. The wagon runs back and overturns, throwing out the occupants. All escape injury except Mrs. Sarles, who injures her shoulder.

May 18, 1888 — Tramps are blamed for the fire that destroys Lambert Burr’s barn.

May 13, 1888 – The Rev. William W. Leete tells his congregation that he is leaving his post as minister of the First Congregational Church. “His many friends are reluctant to part with the pastor who has worked with them so harmoniously and conscientiously for the past six and a half years,” The Press says. “And it can also be said that the citizens of Ridgefield in general will regret Mr. Leete’s departure.

May 16 and 17 — The Jubilee Singers perform to “overflowing houses” in the town hall. The African-American a cappella ensemble is on tour, offering “an entire new programme of plantation melodies and Jubilee refrains,” says an ad in The Press beforehand. “These singers have traveled extensively the past winter, appearing to crowded and fashionable audiences.” Tickets at 15 and 25 cents (35 reserved) are sold at Gage’s Store.

May 19, 1888 – Dr. W. E. Weed makes a house call in Flat Rock. As he prepares to get back in his buggy, the horse is spooked and takes off toward the village, leaving the doctor behind. The buggy is wrecked, but the horse is uninjured, as is the doctor.

May 19 — The last of a huge snow bank, formed by the March blizzard on the south side of Ridgebury Mountain opposite Mrs. Dennis Toomey’s home, finally disappears today. “It occupied a conspicuous position and has been the subject of much comment since the



first of the month,” The Press reports. “The bank has left its traces behind found in broken limbs and distorted saplings. Originally it stood thirty feet high.”

May 30, 1888 – Though it has been raining several days, skies clear for the town’s Memorial Day exercises that feature Governor Phineas Lounsbury as chief speaker – even though he is suffering from a severe cold.

June 1 — Samuel D. Keeler’s grocery store on Main Street is advertising “high prices cut in two!” For instance, fine canned peas or lima beans are 18 cents; “the best corn” is two cans for 25 cents; sardines, 10 cents a box; Legget’s Oat and Wheat Flakes, 15 cents; prepared buckwheat flour, 30 cents for a large package; plus lobsters, pears, salmon, tomatoes, peaches in cans “at equally reasonable prices.” In the same issue, A. K. Lockwood in Ridgefield advertises “refrigerators of all kinds, for party, dining room hall and nursery.”

June 5-7, 1888 — Henry I. Beers of Ridgefield is a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in St. Louis, which nominates incumbent Grover Cleveland for president. Cleveland loses the election in November, but four years later is returned to the office — the only president to serve two terms that aren’t consecutive.

June 6, 1888 – A huge stone, weighing several tons, passes down Main Street, drawn by five pair of oxen, on its way to the construction site of the new First Congregational Church.

June 7 — Miss Anna Resseguie moves from her home at the “old Ridgefield tavern” to the W. W. Whiting homestead for the summer season; Dr. Emmett’s brother of New York will occupy the hotel for the summer.

July 15, 1888 – The last service in the old meeting house on the green takes place. The pulpit is decorated with “a profusion of flowers,” church notes report. The next week, services take place in the new church.

Aug. 13, 1888 – To raise money to provide a house for the parish priest, St. Mary’s has its first “fair,” which begins today and lasts evenings through the week. The event includes a raffle of a \$20 gold piece, a sewing machine, and an engagement ring.

Aug. 19, 1888 – The new bell at the new First Congregational Church tolls for the first time. The old bell is sold for “old bell metal.” The new bell “has a pleasant tone but the masonry rather deadens its effect,” says a Press critique.

Aug. 25, 1888 – Dr. Archibald Y. Paddock of Main Street joins his 18-year-old son, Harry, in their favorite activity, target shooting, in a nearby field. Something goes amiss,

and Dr. Paddock accidentally shoots and kills his son. When he sees what he has done, he turns the gun on himself. Dr. Paddock's body is found fallen across the body of his son. Deputy Coroner Albert M. Tallmadge rules Dr. Paddock's death was caused by "temporary insanity." [Dr. Paddock was one of Ridgefield's leading citizens and had been treasurer of the First Congregational Church.]

Sept. 23, 1888 – Today, Sunday, is the last of 13 straight days on which it has rained in town.

Oct. 7, 1888 — Henry Agard Wallace is born in Orient, Iowa, and grows up to be the 33rd Vice President of the United States, the 11th Secretary of Agriculture, and the 10th Secretary of Commerce. He founds the Progressive Party and serves as its presidential nominee in the 1948 presidential election. His last years are spent at Farvue Farm on Route 35 in South Salem, and he becomes a prominent member of St. Stephen's Church in Ridgefield, where his funeral takes place in 1965. Wallace bequeaths St. Stephen's \$6,200 in stock in the Pioneer Corn Company. A decade later, the stock is found to be worth more than \$800,000.

Oct. 24, 1888— The Rev. Richard Salter Billings, only recently appointed minister of the Ridgebury Congregational Church, dies suddenly at the age of 68.

November 1888 – The Ansonia Sentinel reports: "This is going to be a cold winter. When George Washington Gilbert, the only true and genuine hermit in Fairfield County, with hundreds of testimonials from respected citizens, goes barefooted until Nov. 1st, a mild winter can be looked for. If he dons his shoes Oct. 1st, it is a sure sign of blizzards to come. As he began to wear shoes about that time this year, The Ridgefield Press has taken in its thermometer and is putting weather strips on its back door."

Nov. 6 — Elias Hoyt, a carriage-maker, and Dr. W.S. Todd are elected state representatives from Ridgefield. In her memoirs, Hoyt's daughter, Josie Hoyt Wright, later recalls that night: "The people all came to serenade Pa, came at 7:30 and stayed past ten. We had chocolate, raisin and coconut cake, cookies, and jumbles with white and pink icing, and sandwiches and cheese and coffee. The boys came from downtown; after they all got through eating, they fired off the cannon six times...Father passed cigars, then they all cheered for President Harrison and for Pa, and they all sang and fired off the cannon some more. There were 50 friends there."

## 1889

1889 – Lucius Horatio Biglow buys a house on Main Street, revamps the place and names it Graeloe. In 1964, his daughter, Elizabeth Biglow Ballard, dies, leaving the land to the town. Today it is Ballard Park.

March 1, 1889 – The Rev. Foster Ely becomes rector of St. Stephen's Church, serving until 1906 – the longest term of any pastor in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. His starting salary was \$1,000 a year. Dr. Ely was a cousin of S.G. Goodrich, the Ridgefield Congregational minister's son who became the famous 19<sup>th</sup> Century author, Peter Parley.

March 12, 1889 – Susan Bailey turns 100. She walks about the house without assistance, eats three meals a day, makes her own bed, and cleans her own room. She dies exactly one month later, having lived more than a century in the same house in which she was born.

July 20, 1889 – “The people here are enjoying themselves with rowing, fishing, and driving, and visiting the Ridgefield hermit, George Washington Gilbert, who lives on stale bread in an old farmhouse, goes barefoot, and recites page after page of Homer and Virgil,” The New York Times reports. “Mr. A. Newbold Morris is one of Ridgefield's best drivers and always has a splendid team of blooded horses. Mrs. Gen. Rufus H. King of Albany, N.Y., is a most fearless horsewoman, while Mrs. Henry A. McHarg of New York City is often seen driving here with her family. At the Ridgefield Club, Dr. William F. Cushman of New York is the champion billiardist....”

July 28, 1889 – The Main Street mansion of J. Howard King, millionaire president of the National Bank of New York, burns to the ground. Described by the New York Times as “the grandest old mansion in the village,” it had been built in the late 1700s by General Joshua King, “who figured prominently in the arrest of Major Andre.” The loss is estimated at \$25,000 [around \$575,000 today].

Sept. 7, 1889 – “The great event of the week here has been the Masonic Fair, under the auspices of Jerusalem Lodge, No. 49, A.F. and A. M.,” reports The New York Times. “The summer residents have been generous patrons, and the fair has drawn hundreds of people from all parts of the county.”

Sept. 22, 1889 – The Rev. John Winthrop Ballantine becomes minister of the First Congregational Church.

## **1890**

1890 – The census finds 2,235 people in Ridgefield, about the same population that was here in 1820 and 200 more than 10 years earlier.

1890 – Charles Wade Walker establishes “Walker's Happy Shop” on Main Street. It lasts 35 years and at one point advertises its wares as “Toys to make the kiddies happy, sweets to make the ladies happy, and smokes to make the men happy.”

June 20, 1890 – J.O. Poole buys the Dyckman House, operated on Main Street for about 10 years. He changes the name to The Ridgefield Inn. Six years later, Lydia Ruggles takes it over and changes the name to Oreneca Inn. In 1903, S.S. Denton buys the place and years later moves it to High Ridge, near the church, where it still stands. The Main Street site becomes Odd Fellows Hall and, in 2008, is stores, including the Toy Chest.

Sept. 21, 1890 – Eva Hoyt, age 2, dies of cholera.

October 1890 – After years of meetings voting down the sale of alcohol in town, the Annual Town Meeting votes to allow license, 132-123. It lasts but a year.

Oct. 1, 1890 – On this day, according to the Grand List, the town has 555 houses valued at \$642,869 [about \$14,640,000 in today's dollars]. There are 31 mills, stores, distilleries and manufactories; 478 horses; 1,470 neat cattle; and 148 "coaches, carries and pleasure wagons." In all, the town has \$1,263,000 in taxable property [about \$29 million today].

## 1891

Jan. 2, 1891 – Charles F. Pearson, an Englishman who met Miss Sarah Keeler of Ridgefield in New York several years earlier, married her, and moved to Ridgefield, leaves home ostensibly to dine with "his old sea captain," and to collect bills owed to his wife for laundry work. He disappears. Days later his wife finds he collected \$40 and borrowed more from several people. Rumors around town say he either fell off his old ship and drowned or "shipped to a foreign shore."

Jan. 21, 1891 – The Liquor License Commission meets in the Town House and grants Hiram Cobleigh of Branchville a license to sell alcohol.

Jan. 30, 1891 – "Two large sleigh loads of Danburians made a trip to Ridgefield Tuesday evening and took supper at the popular Ridgefield Inn," The Press reports. "Landlord Poole has a reputation for setting a first-class table, which will doubtless lead many outsiders to enjoy the drive to Ridgefield during the present good sleighing."

Feb. 3, 1891 – A barn, wagon house and lumber shed in Branchville, owned by L.L. Valden and leased to Postmaster Couch, burns to the ground in a "suspicious" fire. A colt and some chickens die, sleighs burn, but Mr. Couch's nearby post office and store are saved.

Feb. 7, 1891 – The New York World runs a story about the disappearance of Charles F. Pearson [Jan. 2, 1891], describing him as "a young Englishman of gracious manners and ready tongue." Interest in Ridgefield was "heightened by the further discovery, as was believed, that a young Danbury woman was also missing, and the inference was that it was an elopement."

Feb. 13, 1891 – Barhite and Stevens store is having a sale on men's all-wool flannels – some now sell for \$1 instead of \$1.20 – at and below cost. Also on sale are “ladies’ and children’s hoods, nubias, and toboggans.”

Feb. 27, 1891 – “Postmaster Couch has done a laudable thing to forbid profanity in the postoffice” in Branchville, The Press reports.

Feb. 28, 1891 – The missing Charles Pearson [Jan. 2] suddenly reappears, after walking from Norwalk to Ridgefield this night. “His personal appearance indicates that he has gone through some very unpleasant experiences,” says The Press later. Pearson himself says nothing, except that he is “sane.” Friends point out that a year earlier, “Pearson was struck on the head by a heavy saw horse, which stunned him and laid him up for several days, and subsequently his friends aver he had at times complained of strange feelings about the head.”

March 2, 1891 – Mr. and Mrs. Henry E. Hawley, whose summer mansion here is nearly completed, come to Ridgefield for the day. “The new summer residence is one of the finest in the village,” The Press report. The house, called Ashton Croft, is now Wesley Hall, behind the Jesse Lee Memorial United Methodist Church.

March 16, 1891 – Mrs. Nellie E. Middlebrook, elocutionist and “a graduate of oratory,” gives an evening of readings at Bailey’s Hall, benefiting the Young People’s Society of Christian Endeavor at the Congregational Church. (Bailey’s Hall was in the Bailey Inn, no longer standing, on Main Street across from the First Church of Christ, Scientist.)

March 25, 1891 – D. F. Bedient, who has been studying the science of embalming for the past six months, goes to New York City for final instructions at St. Mary’s Hospital.

March 26, 1891 – John McClintock, 17, is arrested in Danbury for stealing the watch of a Ridgefield farmer several days earlier.

March 29, 1891 – It is Easter Sunday, and the Rev. John L. Peck delivers his farewell sermon at the Methodist Episcopal Church. Mr. Peck, minister there for three years, notes that his very first sermon as a clergyman was given on an Easter Sunday.

April 1891 – Work begins on a new telephone company in Ridgefield.

April 8, 1891 – Luman Davis buys Alvah Jerman’s blacksmith business, located in the Big Shop, and will continue to operate both his own and the new shops.

April 27, 1891 – Titicus School reopens after having been closed a while due to the serious illness of its teacher, W. J. Betts, who has recovered.

May 1, 1891 – Conrad Rockelein, “the tonsorial artist,” moves to new quarters above Hibbart’s Market on Main Street.

May 6, 1891 – Twenty couples attend a “social dance” in the town hall that lasts till the wee hours of the morning.

May 8, 1891 – L.D. Whitlock of 7 Catoonah Street has a second-hand bicycle for sale for \$10. It has 38-inch wheels.

May 12, 1891 – The disheveled widow of Charles Burt rushes into Nash & Mead’s store in Titicus, screaming. She is followed by Albert Burt, her boarder, brandishing a pistol. He points the gun at her, but she knocks his hand away. A fight ensues, then suddenly stops. The man sits down on a sugar barrel and weeps, “She don’t love me. She will not love me! I wanted to kill her and then I’d have shot myself.” Burt is a cousin of his landlady’s late husband. Neighbors claim an “off-color” relationship exists between them, and demand action from authorities.

May 14, 1891 – As if Mrs. Archibald Y. Paddock hadn’t had enough problems in her life [Aug. 25, 1888], thieves break in her Main Street home and make off with a feather bed, five pillows, a set of cups and saucers, a clock, and a lamp – worth \$50 in all.

May 18, 1891 – Allie Glenn arrives in Easton, Pa., on a solo bicycle trip he is making from Ridgefield to Virginia. It is his 17<sup>th</sup> birthday.

May 22, 1891 – Charles Couch has installed a steam engine in his Branchville mine, The Press reports.

May 27, 1891 – Bicyclist Allie Glenn arrives in Harper’s Ferry, W.Va.

May 29, 1891 – Rufus K. McHarg, a leading real estate agent in New York who specializes in finding summer homes for wealthy city people, complains to The Press, “I could rent more houses in Ridgefield if they had the conveniences of city houses in one particular – closets.”

May 30, 1891 – The Rev. Foster Ely of St. Stephen’s Church is principal speaker at Memorial Day exercises in town hall, after which there is a parade to the cemetery where the graves of the dead soldiers are decorated.

June 3, 1891 – Bicyclist Allie Glenn writes home from Roanoke, Va.

June 5, 1891 – “Prof. Bishop, oculist optician, of New York, will be at the Loder House one week, commencing Monday, June 8. Sight thoroughly tested with advice gratis.” – ad in The Press

June 16, 1891 – Will Barrett and Michael Delaney get into a noisy fist fight over a “fair damsel” at 11 p.m. on Main Street, prompting Richard Osborn to yell out his window, “I’ll have all of you arrested! You’ll frighten the ladies, you scoundrels.”

June 26, 1891 – George Tefft is awarded the King gold medal for excellence in scholarship and attendance during the closing exercises of the Center School.

July 1, 1891 – Dr. Austin Scott, new president of Rutgers College in New Brunswick, N.J., begins renting the T.A. Tefft house for the summer. Dr. Scott is a cousin of Judge Hiram K. Scott of Ridgefield.

September 1891 – Long-distance telephone service in Ridgefield begins. “It certainly works well,” The Press reports. “There is no trouble talking with New York and Albany.”

Sept. 15, 1891 – Mrs. P.M. Bryson opens a kindergarten school in town and during the next five years, teaches a total of 123 children.

Oct. 6, 1891 – The Annual Town Meeting reinstates the ban on alcohol sales by a vote of 296 to 56, the biggest margin ever recorded in the many votes on the issue.

## **1892**

March 10, 1892 – Gould Rockwell dies. A longtime vestryman at St. Stephen’s, he leaves the church \$8,000 in his will.

April 10, 1892 – Timothy O. Scott, 95, a farmer, dies of “exposure to cold.”

May 31, 1892 – Elizabeth Knoche, the 68-year-old wife of prolific Weir Farm mason Joseph Knoche, dies of typhoid fever.

June 9, 1892 – The Rev. Joseph O’Keefe becomes the third pastor of St. Mary’s Church, serving a year.

## **1893**

March 4, 1893 – Alonzo B. Sutton, 46, a farmer, is killed in a railroad accident.

May 30, 1893 – The Rev. Richard E. Shortell becomes the fourth pastor of St. Mary's Parish. He remains for 41 years, by far the longest-serving and most influential pastor St. Mary's has ever had. He serves as a clergyman here longer than any other of any church.

June 1893 – A new post office opens in Lewis H. Bailey's building on Main Street [Deborah Ann's Sweet Shop in 2008]. The Ridgefield Savings Bank shares the office.

July 11, 1893 – Frank Stockvis, a New York City salesman summering with his family in Ridgefield, suddenly disappears. A month later, a store in South Dakota telegrams his former employer, seeking references for Mr. Stockvis. "He had no reason to conceal anything from me," his wife bitterly tells a reporter. "He never even hinted of any intention to go West."

August 1893 – The talk of the town is the case of J. Wesley Edmonds, 26, who has been arrested and jailed for nearly a year for allegedly threatening to burn the barn of George M. Webb of Ridgefield. The arrest was made based on evidence supplied by one person – Edmonds' father, whom a court years ago had ruled was insane. The younger Edmonds says there is a conspiracy among his relatives to keep him in jail. He is unable to post bond, but various newspapers – including The New York Times – take up his cause.

Aug. 26, 1893 – Henry W. Keeler volunteers to help clean up the West Lane schoolhouse grounds, including blasting out rocks. He lights a fuse, but it appears to go out. As he approaches to relight the fuse, the powder explodes, knocking Mr. Keeler unconscious for several hours. He is badly burned but survives.

Aug. 28, 1893 – Officer Powers arrests Pat Gehan for assault, breach of the peace, and intoxication, and hauls him before Judge Gilbert. He pleads guilty and is fined \$3 plus costs, amounting to \$22.40. Judge Gilbert assures him that, "on a repetition of the offense, like leniency need not be expected," The Press reports.

September 1893 – Jacob Lockwood sells St. Mary's Parish land on the corner of Catoonah Street and High Ridge for a new church and rectory. The price is \$2,750.

Sept. 3, 1893 – Jerry Crystonan, a laborer on the estate of Henry deB. Schenck on Florida Hill Road, shoots 14-year-old Frank Caspera. The Press describes Crystonan as "nearly six feet tall, with heavy dark moustache and flat fierce-looking face, peculiarly scarred on the chin, his countenance presenting sharply the Italian underhand cunning that will stab in the dark." The Press adds, "It is said that Crystonan is a member of the dreaded Mafia, and had sworn vengeance against the uncle of the boy he shot, because the uncle had testified against him, the testimony sending him to prison for several years."

Sept. 15, 1893 – "The Tefft cottage on High Ridge, a very charming situation, is still on the real estate market," The Press reports. "This will make a most desirable summer



home for somebody. Good water and the neighborhood is the best. The terms reasonable and the figures low.” [“Cottage,” of course, was the contemporary word for what later generations would call a mansion.]

Sept. 21, 1893 – “A movement has been inaugurated during the past month by Mrs. A. Newbold Morris, and heartily seconded by Mrs. P. M. Bryson, for the establishment of a cooking school, together with a sewing class, for growing girls, to be open in Ridgefield during the winter months,” The Press reports. “A competent teacher from New York will be in charge.”

Sept. 29, 1893 – The town’s 14 schoolhouses have enrollments ranging from 13 children (North Ridgebury) to 103 (Center). The cost per pupil ranges from \$8.01 a year at West Lane, which has 35 scholars, to \$13.80 at Florida, which has 17.

Oct. 3, 1893 – Voters decide that “the riding of bicycles on the side walks of the Main Street from the Olcott house [Casagmo] to the New Inn [the Ridgefield Inn at the south end of the street], so called, be and the same is hereby prohibited, and any person violating this by law shall be fined five dollars.”

Oct. 4, 1893 – At nearly midnight, someone drives a team up to the front of Dr. Cushman’s house on Main Street, enters the doctor’s garden and proceeds to load his vehicle with the doctor’s vegetables, including cauliflower, cabbages, celery, and beets. Dr. Cushman is at home and, though he does not sleep well that night, never hears the thief.

## 1894

March 1894 – Ground is broken for new St. Mary’s rectory on Catoonah Street.

March 23, 1894 – The Rev. Daniel Teller, who wrote his *History of Ridgefield* in 1878, dies in Fredonia, N.Y.

July 21, 1894 – “That which has contributed largely to the success of Ridgefield as a summer resort is the influence of many of the prominent physicians of New York, who have inducted their patients to pass the summer here,” The New York Times reports. Among the summering doctors are Clarence G. Beebe, Newton M. Shaffer, Bache McEvers Emmet, William F. Cushman, John G. Perry, William H. Flunt, J.A. Booth, M.D. Hubbell, and Robert Talbot.

Aug. 18, 1894 – “Ridgefield will become more popular than ever, now that the village fathers have come to their senses and begun the work of improving the drives in a thorough manner,” The New York Times reports. “While the farmers, of course, raise strenuous objections against the increased taxation involved in the radical treatment of the roads, their objections will not be strong enough to stem the tide of public opinion in

favor of a less parsimonious policy than that pursued during the past decade. Already the long main avenue, so refreshingly shaded by enormous maples, is nearly half macadamized, and the Selectmen have made excellent roads in the outlying districts, so that now it is a pleasure to drive within six or eight miles of the village. Only well-built drives had been needed to make Ridgefield's environment as desirable as the Berkshires, and now that the progressive element controls, the town will grow rapidly."

Aug. 29, 1894 – Catherine Lee Youmans dies suddenly, shocking many of the summer residents. Mrs. Youmans is known for her "refinement, hospitality and unpretentious charity," says the New York Times. She was a major benefactor of the Ridgefield library, and the library's bazaar, scheduled for Sept. 10, is moved to the 15th because of her death. She is the widow of Professor Edward L. Youmans, founder of Popular Science Monthly.

September 1894 – Melbert B. Cary of Ridgefield is being talked of as a Democratic candidate for governor.

Oct. 2, 1894 – The town votes that "Travel on the side walks of the town by horses and wagons ... be prohibited, except to enter the premises of the adjoining land owner."

Oct. 20, 1894 – A Republican convention in Stamford nominates George Lounsbury, brother of ex-Governor Phineas C. Lounsbury, for state senator from the 12<sup>th</sup> District. George Lounsbury goes on to become a governor himself.

Nov. 22, 1894 – About 2 a.m., Mrs. George Lane is sleeping in her apartment on Main Street over the offices of the Ridgefield Savings Bank and post office. She is awoken by a "terrific explosion." She looks out the window and asks the men outside what happened. One of the men fires a gun at her. The bullet grazes her cheek. She screams. The men flee toward Catoonah Street. Bank officials find their safe blown apart, which also holds postal records and stamps, but nothing is missing. They later vote to buy a "burglar-proof safe with a time lock."

Sept. 13, 1894 – John W. Sammis, a farmer, is killed on the Danbury and Norwalk Rail Road. He is 88 years old.

## **1895**

May 21, 1895 – The station agent of the Danbury and Norwalk Rail Road here commits suicide, prompting an editorial in The New York Times. "A resident of Ridgefield, Conn., Mr. Edward R. Glenn, took so deeply to heart his wife's refusal to speak to him that, after the cruel silence had endured for a month, he swallowed a large dose of strychnine and is now, alas! no more," says The Times. "Cynics, of course, will say that Mr. Glenn was strangely inappreciative of exceptional good luck, but that only proves how thoroughly disagreeable cynics can make themselves..."

August 1895 – Col. Hiram K. Scott sells his store to Harvey P. Bissell, and Bissell's Pharmacy is born. Four months later, the building burns to the ground in the Great Fire. Bissell rebuilds and a century later, the building burns again. But Bissell Pharmacy still exists a few hundred feet east of its old home and in 2008 the "Bissell Building" is resurrected in the image of its destroyed predecessor.

October 1895 – New England Magazine publishes a 17-page elaborately illustrated article on Ridgefield, calling it "The Connecticut Lenox."

Dec. 9, 1895 – Around 9 p.m. Saturday night, a fire breaks out in Bedient and Mead's store at the corner of Main Street and Bailey Avenue. The blaze quickly spreads and, by the time it burns itself out at 3 a.m. Sunday morning, 10 buildings in the village are destroyed at a loss of more than \$100,000 – in today's money, about \$2.5 million. The blaze inspires the creation of a fire department and the installation of a public water system in the village.

Aug. 12, 1895 – Farmer William Tiley is working in a field when he is struck and killed by lightning. He is 35 years old.

## **1896**

Feb. 3, 1896 – Yonkers police clear Thomas Bloomer of Ridgefield of any connection with the recent murder of his ex-wife, finding that he was working on his Branchville farm on the day she was strangled. Bloomer tells a detective he was forced to marry the woman "at the point of a pistol" more than 15 years earlier, but obtained a divorce immediately afterward, and then married a young woman from Purdys Station, N.Y.

March 5, 1896 – Three months after D.F. Bedient's Main Street building catches fire and burns down, sparking the Great Fire of 1895, his wife, Carrie, dies of measles. She is 31 years old.

April 4, 1896 – In the wake of the Great Fire, the town creates the Fire District of Ridgefield to levy extra taxes on villagers to support a fire department and water supplies. In 1901, it becomes the Borough of Ridgefield, which remains in existence until 1921.

May 1896 – Work begins on the new St. Mary's Church, which will cost \$20,700 [about \$510,000 in 2008].

July 1896 – Twenty-three residents sign a petition asking that "wheelmen" – bicyclists – be allowed to use the sidewalks of Main Street, banned to them three years earlier. Signers include the Rev. Foster Ely, rector of St. Stephen's Church, Col. Hiram K. Scott,

town clerk, probate judge and postmaster, Sereno S. Hurlbutt of Hurlbutt's Market, and E.C. Bross, Press editor. The effort fails.

July 1896 – The Ridgefield Branch of the National Flower Guild is established. Its members are mostly summer residents from New York City.

July 4, 1896 – The Right Rev. Michael Tierney, bishop of Hartford, lays the cornerstone for St. Mary's Church.

July 17, 1896 – Press Editor E.C. Bross reports: "The other day a gentleman of our acquaintance barely escaped serious injury as a team of spirited horses were recklessly driven from the street to the sidewalk. In another place, a heavy wagon a few days ago cut deep furrows into a sidewalk after the owner had expended money to put his walk in good order. This is a very important matter and should not be neglected."

Aug. 8, 1896 – "The mid-summer event in this pleasant summer resort was the ball in the assembly rooms of the Ridgefield Club this evening," The New York Times reports the next day. "Despite the heat, representatives of nearly every family in the New York colony were present, and the function was a great success."

October 1896 – While taverns couldn't sell liquors, mobile stands are doing it. The Annual Town Meeting includes a resolution to "instruct the selectmen or other town officers to take measures to suppress the beer traffic in town from wagons coming from other towns." The voters decide "that the selectmen ... are instructed to prohibit the sale of intoxicating liquors, ale, and lager beer from wagons or other vehicles, if it is possible to do so."

Nov. 21, 1896 – The new town hall is completed. Unlike the wooden town hall that burned the previous year, the new building is brick. It costs \$16,000 [\$380,000 in 2008], nearly three times its predecessor's cost.

## **1897**

Jan. 23, 1897 – A special Town Meeting authorizes the selectmen to provide fire-fighting equipment storage in the basement of the town hall, which is under construction.

Feb. 10, 1897 – Sparked by the fire two years earlier that had destroyed much of the center of town, Ridgefielders form a fire department. Charles S. Nash is elected the first chief. Two companies are formed: The Caudatowa Hook and Ladder Company and the P.C. Lounsbury Engine Company.

March 29, 1897 – A man is hit and killed by a train. Dr. R.W. Lowe reports that neither his name nor his place of residence is known. The man is said to be around 40 years old.

May 9, 1897 – A group of men at St. Mary's begins efforts to form a council of the Knights of Columbus.

June 17, 1897 – A circus sets up in town for three nights of shows, but after the tent is pelted with eggs the first night, moves on.

June 29, 1897 – Twenty-two Catholic men form The Marquette Council No. 245 of the Knights of Columbus in Ridgefield.

July 5, 1897 – The new St. Mary's Church is dedicated.

Oct. 6, 1897 – A special train brings guests from New York City to Ridgefield for the wedding of Miss Sadie Hawley to Dr. T. Halstead Myers at the First Congregational Church. The reception takes place at the Hawley mansion.

## **1898**

Sept. 15, 1898 – Nary an automobile is yet seen in Ridgefield, but The Press reports the town may soon have one. A month later, an automobile from Norwalk passes through town.

## **1899**

1899 – The American Bioscope Company shows an animated short in the town hall. It is Ridgefield's first look at a "movie."

June 2, 1899 – Marcus Knapp, overseer on the estate of Dr. Northrop, a wealthy New York physician, hangs himself. He is 50 years old and leaves a widow and three children.

July 22, 1899 – The Adams and Keeler barn and stable on Wilton Road East is badly damaged by fire early that morning. The same night, the home of Dr. H. B. Savage burns to the ground. Firemen's efforts to save the building are frustrated by a lack of water.

Oct. 15, 1899 – Mrs. Elizabeth W. Morris dies at her home in Ridgefield. Soon after, her husband, James, donates money to build a new Ridgefield Library in her memory.

Nov. 8, 1898 – George C. Lounsbury of Ridgefield, Republican candidate for governor, wins election by a margin of around 16,000 votes.

Dec. 31, 1899 – St. Stephen's Church holds a special service just before midnight to welcome in the new century – even though, technically speaking, the new century did not begin until 1901.

## 1900

1900 – Ridgefield's population is 2,626.

1900 – The town budget totals \$20,413.

1900 – The Ridgefield Savings Bank moves its business office to the town hall, where it remains for 22 years.

1900 – Five years after a fire destroys much of the business district, the Ridgefield Water Supply Company begins providing service, including hydrants, on June 13.

Jan. 19, 1900 – William Cornish of Ridgefield, an electrician, is arrested by the county sheriff for stealing copper wire from the Bridgeport Traction Company.

April 1900 – First National Bank and Trust Company of Ridgefield is formed. It has its office in the town hall, along with Ridgefield Savings Bank. Through many mergers and acquisitions over the years, it is now Wachovia.

April 13, 1900 – The Rev. Larmon W. Abbott dies at the age of 84. Mr. Abbott had been pastor of the Methodist Church in the 1870s and, in 1884, represented Ridgefield in the General Assembly. He was a longtime school visitor [school board member].

April 22, 1900 – Burglars enter Graeloe, the summer home of Lucius H. Biglow on Main Street, now Ballard Park. John Nepph, the gardener, discovers the men removing a large number of valuables. A fight ensues. One of the men shoots at him, and the burglars flee. Except for a powder burn, Mr. Nepph escapes serious injury.

March 31, 1900 – The Rev. John Winthrop Ballantine leaves his post as minister of the First Congregational Church.

July 19, 1900 – J. Howard King, wealthy Albany banker, dies at his summer home in Ridgefield. He is a member of the King family that has been prominent in town since the Revolution. His wife is the daughter of Dr. John Emerson, owner of the slave Dred Scott, who in 1856 unsuccessfully sued for his freedom before the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled that slaves or their descendants, even if free, could never be citizens and therefore had no right to sue.

Aug. 22, 1900 – Hawley Northrop, 24, a member of one of the wealthiest families in town, is killed instantly when his wagon, drawn by a pair of "spirited horses," crashes and he is "thrown over the dashboard like a stone from a catapult and his head crashed against a stone wall 20 feet away," The New York Times reports.

October 1900 – the Ridgefield Branch of the International Sunshine Society is organized to help shut-ins.

## 1901

1900 – The Ridgefield Library and Historical Association is chartered and begins building a new library.

1901 – Col. Edward M. Knox, Congressional Medal of Honor winner who is a hat manufacturer, acquires and expands the Henry deB. Schenck place and calls the 300 acres off Florida Hill Road “Downsbury Manor.” Mark Twain, who lives in nearby Redding, is a frequent guest in the 45-room house, which is razed in 1958 because it’s too big to maintain.

April 1901 –The Borough of Ridgefield is established to create and maintain services such as sewers and gaslights in the village. A Board of Burgesses oversees the operations until the borough government is abandoned in 1921 in favor of a “village district.”

May 10, 1901 – The Ridgefield Press observes: “If every automobilist would show the same carefulness and consideration shown by Dr. (R.W.) Lowe, with his Locomobile, there would be fewer complaints from horse owners.” It is the first mention of an automobile in Ridgefield.

Sept. 6, 1901 – Throngs surround the telegraph office on Main Street to learn the fate of President William McKinley. Ridgefielder William S. Hawk, with the president until just before the assassination, wires confirmation of his death at 7:30 p.m.

Sept. 12, 1901 – The new bell at St. Mary’s Church is installed and blessed by Bishop Michael Tierney. The first time it tolls is for the death of President William McKinley two days later.

Sept. 12, 1901 – “The dog show and pet animal exhibition held in the rear of the Casino of the Ridgefield Club last Friday afternoon was not only a financial success, but it was successful as an exhibition,” The Press reports. “They were all in fine temper, allowed themselves to be petted and seemed to be delighted with the attention they attracted.”

Sept. 14, 1901 – The town hall is draped in black after news that President William McKinley, shot eight days earlier by an assassin, is dead.

Oct. 18, 1901 – The Rev. Richard E. Shortell, pastor of St. Mary’s Parish, is elected to the Board of School Visitors, the school board of the era, and is named acting school visitor.

## 1902

1902 – A Christian Science practitioner, who leases a house here for the summer, holds the first Christian Science meetings in Ridgefield.

1902 – The Rev. Horace W. Byrnes tells local Methodists that he found empty liquor bottles out back of the church, consumed perhaps by “husbands blighting the lives of their wives and blasting the future of their children” or by “boys who were breaking mothers’ hearts and bringing fathers’ gray heads in sorrow to the grave.”

June 1902 – New village sewer system is completed.

June 1902 – 208 children from the city arrived late in the month for their stay at Life’s Fresh Air Farm in Branchville.

July 1902 – The Press reports that H.B. Anderson has been purchasing land on West Lane to “erect a handsome summer home.” The place would later be F.E. Lewis’s Upagennit, now the Ridgefield Manor Estates.

July 1902 – A mad dog shows up one Sunday in July, bites lawyer Sam Keeler, attacks dogs and children, and kills a cat before A.W. Northrop grabs a gun and “ended its career.” Dr. R.W. Lowe cauterizes Mr. Keeler’s wound.

July 4, 1902 – To show their patriotic spirit, 130 Italians working on sewer and water projects in the village organize a Fourth of July parade down Main Street, over West Lane and High Ridge, Catoonah Street, Governor and East Ridge, complete with band.

July 9, 1902 – The Town School Committee votes that it “shall hire no teachers from outside the State of Connecticut, provided that satisfactory ones can be hired from within the state.”

July 29, 1902 – The Town School Committee votes, with thanks, permission to the Village Improvement Society to repair the Center School.

Sept. 1, 1902 – The selectmen report that ten people are living in the “alms house.” Five are men, and five women, but none is married.

Sept. 19, 1902 – Harvey P. Bissell, secretary of the Town School Committee, reports that the cost of operating the town’s 14 schoolhouses during the previous year was \$6,462.70.

October 1902 – Sereno S. Hurlbutt, tax collector for 21 years, retires in October, having handled hundreds of thousands of dollars and having “accounted for every penny.”

## **1903**

1903 – George I. Johnson becomes the first Ridgefielder to get a new state-required license plate for his car. His 1903 one-cylinder Rambler runabout bore number 688.

1903 – Alan S. Apgar installs an almost unheard-of two acres of lawn at his new mansion, Stonecrest, off North Street.



1903 – Dr. B. A. Bryon buys a piece of land at the top of Titicus Mountain on which a rock spring flows, names it St. George Pure Water, and plans to erect a bottling house to sell the water.

April 29, 1903 – The General Assembly extends the time limit for the Ridgefield and New York Railroad Company to secure the right of way and building its road until July 4, 1907.

June 1903 – The new Ridgefield Library is dedicated at the corner of Main and Prospect Streets, the gift of James Morris in memory of his wife, Elizabeth W. Morris.

June 11, 1903 – The General Assembly allows the Danbury and Harlem Traction Company to run its trolley line from Danbury into Ridgebury.

August 1903 – The town reimburses Mrs. John Meisner \$13.50 for “chickens killed by dogs.”

August 1903 – Young Willie Rascoe is sitting outside the Titicus store as two young ladies pull up in a buggy to let their horses drink from a trough. Something goes amiss as the horses pull away and the buggy almost turns over. But Willie, “ever prompt especially when the distressed parties are young and pretty,” rescues the girls. “The boy hero” then hides in the store till the commotion is over without ever stopping for thanks.

Sept. 1, 1903 – Dr. R.W. Lowe, town health officer, reports there have been four cases of typhoid fever in town during the past year. Three are “imported” and one is due to local conditions. There were 11 cases of diphtheria, all but one due to “unsanitary conditions of families living in town.”

Sept. 23, 1903 – There were 561 children in the town’s 14 schools during the previous year, reports Harvey P. Bissell, secretary of the Town School Committee. The most populated was the Center School, with 137 pupils; the smallest was Bennett’s Farm Schoolhouse, with 10.

## **1904**

1904 – The year was the coldest of the century, with 45 days at or below freezing in New York City.

August 1904 – The George Bennett family is sitting down to dinner in Titicus one evening when a bullet enters the house, hits a teapot and ricochets into the mouth of the Bennett boy, Allen. He survives.

September 1904 – An expert on electrical lighting tells town officials that Ridgefield should allow a generating plant near the station. “The wires will be carried through the

side streets and supported on neatly painted poles, which will harmonize with the surrounding trees,” The Press says. “Service will be started in the early evening and run until daylight, thus providing light during all the hours of darkness.”

November 1904 – Seven buildings are leveled as fire sweeps the Sturges Selleck farm in the Bennett’s Farm district. All the animals are saved.

## **1905**

April 14, 1905 – The Mary Rebekah Lodge, the women’s side of the International Order of Odd Fellows, forms. For decades each Halloween it sponsors the popular Masquerade Ball that benefits various local charities. The lodge lasts until late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when dwindling membership causes it, like the Odd Fellows, to disband here.

April 20, 1905 – The engine of the 8:20 a.m. train from Ridgefield to Branchville jumps the track, overturns and scalds engineer William Horan to death. The Press’s headline: “Horan’s Tragic End.”

Sept. 28-30, 1905 — The Ridgefield Volunteer Fire Department has a “Firemen’s Fair” to help raise money for a new firehouse.

October 1905 – An automobile, on its way from the Danbury Fair to South Norwalk, collides with a cow in Ridgefield, seriously injuring two people. Driven by another member of the party, the automobile – without lights or brakes – continues on to South Norwalk that night.

## **1906**

1906 – Ridgefield Electric Company is organized to provide the town with power. Coal-burning generator is erected on Ivy Hill Road.

Aug. 12, 1906 – The Rev. John H. Chapman becomes rector of St. Stephen’s Church, serving until 1914.

Nov. 19, 1906 – Seventeen cars of a 27-car freight train, on its way from Danbury to New York City, go off the tracks in Branchville. Some cars wind up in the Norwalk River. The train is carrying hay, potatoes, apples, coal, and hardware. No one is hurt.

Nov. 22, 1906 – A firebug is blamed as two large fires break out in village businesses in two days. One occurs at Brundage and Benedict’s store on Main Street while the other at Hiram K. Scott Jr.’s stable on Bailey Avenue. Howard Fillow is seriously injured fighting one fire.

Dec. 21, 1906 – Twenty three people meet at Masonic Hall to form the Ridgefield Chapter of the National Grange, Patrons of Husbandry.

## 1907

1907 – The Port of Missing Men inn opens on West Mountain, set among 1,750 acres in Ridgefield and New York that Henry B. Anderson had been amassing for several years. It is a popular destination for New Yorkers, famous for its view spanning many miles and its two kinds of chicken, broiled or fricassee.

1907 – Dr. D. Everett Lyon lectures at town hall on “The Wonders of the Microscope,” showing enlarged pictures of a flea, which has “the strongest muscular development of any known living thing.”

1907 – The Ridgefield School for Boys is established by Dr. Roland Jessup Mulford on southern Main Street. During the summer months, the school building becomes the Ridgefield Inn.

March 1907 – The selectmen vote in March to pay J. G. Hawley \$10 in compensation for sheep killed by roaming dogs.

April 7, 1907 – As Dr. and Mrs. A.L. Northrop sleep upstairs in Good Cheer, their West Lane home, thieves enter, have a feast in the kitchen, and steal hundreds of pieces of silver, valued at thousands of dollars, as well as \$2 worth of postage stamps. They escape in a buckboard.

April 19, 1907 – William Jennings Bryan, three-time presidential candidate and famed orator, speaks at town hall. “Main Street looked as though half the population of the town had turned out,” The Press report later reports.

May 2, 1907 – Edward J. Couch dies. Ninety-two years later, the Aldrich Museum exhibits an art construction celebrating him and his collection of stuffed native birds, and 101 years later, the exhibit becomes part of the town’s 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.

May 1907 – Constable Frank Taylor finds the horse sheds behind St. Stephen’s Church ablaze and “a horse securely tied, which was being roasted.” He rescues the animal, which survives.

July 2, 1907 – S.D. Keeler’s elevator on Bailey Avenue is heavily damaged by fire.

July 4, 1907 – An “automobile parade” takes place. “It is suggested by the managers that drivers of timid horses avoid the route...” The Press warns in advance.

August 1907 – The school board votes \$550 to install eight “automatic flush closets” in the Center School. The less expensive manual flush units are \$430.

August 1907 – Architect Cass Gilbert buys the Keeler Tavern.

Aug. 15, 1907 – “There have been many stories around town lately that the water we have been getting from Round Pond was not pure and that there were germs of disease, etc., in it,” the Press reports. Dr. R.W. Lowe has tests performed. Nothing bad is found.

Aug. 22, 1907 – Around midnight, Arthur B. Cole, 20, steals a horse from Sperry’s livery stable and rides to Danbury, where he sells the animal for \$100. He is captured the next day and “young Cole enjoys the distinction of being the first prisoner ever brought to Ridgefield in an automobile as well as the first ever taken to Bridgeport jail from here in the same manner.”

Sept. 1, 1907 – Effective this day, all automobiles in the state must be registered. Fee is based on horsepower (\$3 under 20 hp, \$5 20 to 30, \$10 more than 30; motor bicycles, 50 cents).

November 1907 – Seventy-five men form the St. Mary’s Club in the recently opened parish clubhouse.

November 1907 – “Don’t think that because my elevator was burned out that I can not supply the demands of my patrons, as I have plenty of oats and a fair supply of other feed,” said an ad from S.D. Keeler that runs for weeks.

December 1907 – Judge Howard B. Scott in Danbury awards \$100 damages to Mrs. Minnie A. Dingee of Branchville, who alleges that one day in March, conductor Frank A. Lacey “jumped off his train near Branchville and hugged her by force.” She sues. He denies the charges. Each side has witnesses. After the judgment, The Press carries the headline: “A Costly Hug.”

## 1908

1908 – Dr. Maurice Enright publishes *The Ridgefield Tavern: A Romance of Sarah Bishop (Hermitess)*, a highly fictionalized novel inspired by the real hermitess who died in 1810, which makes Sarah the daughter of the keeper of the Keeler Tavern [the real one was supposedly a farmer’s daughter from Long Island]. Hardbound and paperback copies are sold, but it is not popular. Sample sentence: “When the colonel was wounded, he was partly facing his men and the bullet passing obliquely through the soft parts of his back, shattered the dorsal vertebrae and either a fragment of the bone or the bullet is pressing upon the spinal marrow, causing paralysis below that point.” His obituary in the April 15, 1926 Press does not even mention the book.

1908 – Registration of dogs begins. Untagged strays are impounded and owners pay \$5 to get them back.

February 1908 – At the Methodist Church Cotton Carnival, young men are challenged to sew carpet rags. Arthur G. Seymour wins for neatest work. Julius G. Ficket gets the booby prize. “The efforts of the gentlemen in trying to sew caused much amusement,” The Press says.

March 1908 – A front page story in The Press offers tips on fighting the Gypsy Moth caterpillars.

March 1908 – The newly formed Ridgefield basketball team plays its first game against an out-of-town opponent, Danbury, losing 21-7. The game takes place in town hall.

May 14, 1908 – “Mr. A.B. Hepburn, one of the most prominent financiers of the country, former comptroller of the currency and now president of the Chase National Bank of New York, is building one of the most handsome homes to be seen in this town of beautiful homes,” The Press reports. The house on High Ridge is dubbed Altnacraig. Eighty-four years later, an arsonist burns it to the ground.

May 18, 1908 – Brig. Gen. David Perry, the only Ridgefielder ever to rise to the rank of general, dies in Washington, D.C. Born here June 11, 1841, he fought in the Civil War but gained most of his reputation as “a noted Indian fighter” in battles with the Apaches and Sioux.

June 1908 – Two boys follow one lad’s father into a Whipstick field. While the father sets up targets for practice, one boy picks up a rifle and accidentally fires it, killing six-year-old Walker T. Bailey Jr. Just four years earlier, Walker’s 13-year-old cousin, Bertrand Bailey, is killed when a rifle discharges in his South Salem home.

July 1908 – The town marks its 200<sup>th</sup> birthday with ceremonies, orations, a parade, and a special bicentennial book.

August 1908 – Several “toughs” from Danbury, who attend a Ridgefield baseball game and “brought something stronger than water with them,” brutally attack Ridgefield fans, are arrested by Constable Frank Taylor, and fined \$10 each. .

Oct. 5, 1908 – In “the most hotly contested town election in years,” Benjamin Crouchley wins first selectman and Samuel Keeler, second selectman. Both are Democrats in a town that, even then, almost always elects Republicans.

December 1908 – “An army of men” is at work in, building F.E. Lewis’s estate on West Lane, complete with a 1,100-foot macadamized driveway with electric lights every 125 feet.

Late 1908 – New firehouse on Catoonah Street opens late in the year, replacing town hall basement quarters.

## **1909**

1909 – The Ridgefield School on south Main Street, incorporated in 1908, options the former Edmonds farm north of Lake Mamanasco on which to locate a new campus.

1909 – The major debate this year, as last, is what to do about the ancient dirt roads as more automobiles appear. The selectmen investigate oiling.

January 1909 – Ridgeburians are shocked when James Reynolds, an old and prominent resident, is “slain and mutilated” by a bull. Mr. Reynolds is killed almost instantly, but evidence indicates the bull tossed and dragged him all over a field. “The injuries upon the body were inflicted by the vengeful animal,” the medical examiner says.

May 1909 – Surveyors are in town, laying the route of a new Danbury to New York City railroad line due to be completed by 1914.

May 1909 – The Ridgefield Press advertises for “a bright, active boy” to learn the printing trade “for which there is an ever increasing demand.”

May 7, 1909 – “Barking dogs not to be tolerated,” says the headline about a new state law cracking down on annoying dogs.

Summer 1909 – Work is completed on Fairlawn Cemetery on North Salem Road that summer.

July 1909 – State crews begin oiling main highways in town. “Tar is an admirable dust layer, but little of it has been used in this state as of yet,” The Press says.

August 1909 – A rare porcupine takes up residence on Catoonah Street.

October 1909 – Petitioners want the town to allow sale of alcoholic beverages, banned most years since the 1870s. The selectmen dislike the petition, and print it in full in The Press, “believing that the public would like to know the names of the voters who desire to introduce the saloon in our quiet village.” Those saloon-lovers include C.D. Crouchley, son of one of the selectmen, Hiram K. Scott Jr., whose father had been a prohibitionist, H.D. Hull, father of future first selectman Harry E. Hull, and Cyrus A. Cornen, who later embezzled money from the town government and St. Stephen’s Church. When the vote is taken, Ridgefield remains dry, 194 for licensing and 204 opposed.

Nov. 9, 1909 – Hiram Keeler Scott dies at 87. The former town clerk, probate judge and postmaster founded what is now Bissell Pharmacy in 1853.

Dec. 26, 1909 — Frederic Remington, the foremost artist and sculptor of the American West, dies at his home on Barry Avenue, just six months after moving to Ridgefield. His death was due to complications from appendicitis.

## **1910**

Jan. 19, 1910 — Someone’s pet bulldog gets caught in a fence and Mrs. Charles Willis goes to its assistance, but the dog turns on her, biting a piece out of her arm and slitting one finger.

Feb. 19, 1910 — John Ryan of Ridgefield miraculously escapes death at a railroad crossing near Lake Kenosia in Danbury. “The sleigh in which Mr. Ryan was riding was struck by an engine running light and smashed into an unrecognizable mass of kindling wood,” reports the *Bridgeport Evening Farmer* a few days later. “The horse was killed outright. But Mr. Ryan was found to be almost unhurt when he was pulled out from the mass of splinters and twisted iron that composed what had been his sleigh, and his worst injury was a severe scalp wound.”

March 3, 1910 — Charles W. Neth, gardener for Mrs. L.H. Biglow’s Main Street estate, Graeloe, reports the very rare blooming of an umbrella palm, *Kentia Belmoreana*, and invites the public to stop by the Graeloe greenhouse to view it. Various experts have reported they’d never before heard of a *Kentia* palm blooming in a greenhouse environment.

March 3, 1910 — The Ridgefield Press is holding out hope that a new railroad line from White Plains through Ridgefield will be built. Surveyors are working on the route.

March 23, 1910 — George L. Rockwell of Ridgefield is elected superintendent of Putnam State Park in Redding. Created in 1887, it is Connecticut’s oldest park.

April 9, 1910 — Hiram M. Bouton, called the “oldest man in Ridgefield,” celebrates his 88th birthday at his Catoonah Street home. (However, see also Nov. 24.)

April 9, 1910 — The Tigers of Ridgefield defeat the Campers of New Canaan, 26-16, in a basketball contest in town hall.

April 14, 1910 — Elm leaf beetles are attacking the local elms. The State Agricultural Experiment Station recommends spraying the leaves with lead arsenic mixed in water.

April 14, 1910 — Joseph Conron is offering a \$100 reward for information on who put paris green (copper acetate triarsenite used to kill rats and mice) in his West Mountain Road pasture, killing two of his cows. “It was a dastardly thing to do and it is hoped the miscreants who did the deed will be caught,” says *The Press*.

May 24, 1910 — Adolph E. Geoppler, who operates the big cider mill at Topstone with a daily capacity of 3,000 gallons, sues Bashford Baine of Redding for slander, reports the *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*. Geoppler’s mother-in-law is Sarah Ruggles, whose husband died about 19 years ago, leaving her with considerable property. Since her husband’s death Mrs. Ruggles has made her home with her daughter, the plaintiff’s wife. In his complaint Geoppler alleges that on Aug. 7, 1908, Baine said in his and others’ presence: “You are a liar, robber and a thief. When the old lady’s husband died, he left her rich and you have robbed her of all her property, and now you want to prove that she is insane and send her to an asylum.” Geoppler seeks \$2,500 in damages [\$70,000 in 2021 dollars]

May 31, 1910 — Artist Frederic Remington, who died Dec. 26, 1909 at his home off Barry Avenue, leaves a personal estate just in New York State valued at \$54,669 [\$1.5 million in 2021], including \$20,750 in paintings in storage, according to an appraisal filed in that state. He had no real estate in New York.

June 7, 1910 — “Nine Italian ‘speakeasys’ were raided Sunday morning at Ridgefield by the state police. The town of Ridgefield is a no-license town and four of the places raided were in the town proper and the others in the village of Branchville.” —*Norwich Morning Bulletin*

June 12, 1910 — Charles White, 45, who worked for the livery stable of H.J. White and was sleeping on the second floor of the stable, is burned to death in a fire that destroys the building.

July 16, 1910 — The State Society of the Sons of the American Revolution names a committee to plan a monument in Ridgefield to the 1777 battle with the British. The monument appears to have never been realized.

July 24, 1910 — The Rev. Harvey E. Burnes, pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Ridgefield, dies at the age of 70. He is called “one of the oldest and most honored clergymen of the New York East Conference.”

July 27, 1910 — The town gets a break from months of drought when “a deluge that made the oldest inhabitants search the recesses of their memory for its equal,” the Stamford Advocate reports. “The downpour came yesterday afternoon, and it was accompanied by thunder and lightning that made houses shake. Roads were washed on the hillsides and fields and gardens got the greatest soaking of the season.”

July 29, 1910 — Ridgefielders are irate at today’s announcement that the passenger ticket rate for the train from Ridgefield center to New York City is rising to \$1.30. Only two weeks earlier, the railroad increased the fare from \$1.20 to \$1.25.

Sept. 8, 1910 — Connecticut Democrats pick George Pratt Ingersoll of West Lane, former U.S. minister to Siam, to run for Congressman at large in the November election. He loses.

Oct. 12, 1910 — “The scarcity of water is getting to be a serious thing in Ridgefield.” —*Norwich Morning Bulletin*

Oct. 29, 1910 — Ridgefield’s population reaches 3,118, according to the new census data just released. The 1900 population had been 2,626.



Nov. 1, 1910 — Beginning today and lasting until April 1, the stores in town close at 6 p.m. except on Monday and Saturday evenings.

Nov. 24, 1910 — Hubbard Blakeslee, 103, supposed to have been the oldest resident in Fairfield County, dies in a fire that destroys his barn in Southport. Blakeslee's home is in Ridgefield, but in the summer he lived in the barn at Southport where he kept a prize stallion and raised hogs.

Dec. 16, 1910 — Mr. and Mrs. Frederick E. Lewis of West Lane give \$50,000 (\$1.4 million in 2021 dollars) to the Pomfret School so it can build a gymnasium.

Dec. 18, 1910 — Dr. James Tuttle-Smith of Main Street, rector emeritus of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in New York City, dies at his home. He was a Civil War chaplain and had been a member of the Academy of Sciences. His house in recent years has been South Hall of St. Stephen's Church, now for sale.

Dec. 29, 1910 — "When H.J. Kellogg of Ridgefield, who owns extensive property on and near Sugar Hollow Mountain, went to Salt Pond at the summit on Tuesday, he was surprised to hear the warblings of robins and making an investigation found a colony of twenty or more robins in a clump of cedar trees near a barn."—The Bridgeport Evening Farmer

Dec. 30, 1910 – The Rev. Nathan L. Rockwell, a Ridgefield native, dies of pneumonia in Korea, where he is a missionary. He is 59 years old.

Dec. 31, 1910 — 80 births are recorded in town during the year.

## **1911**

Jan. 11, 1911 – John P. Mannion is walking along the railroad track near the village station around 8 p.m. when he discovers the body of Eugenio Frulla of Abbott Avenue, who had just been struck and killed by the 7:38 train.

Jan. 13, 1911 — "No better evidence of the demand for real estate in Ridgefield and the adjacent towns could be had than the statement of Adams & Keeler, Ridgefield real estate agents, that their sales in that locality during 1910 aggregated 2,979 acres." —Bridgeport Evening Farmer

Jan. 14, 1911 — The newly organized Ridgefield Dramatic Club meets at the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Perry and picks as its first play to stage, "What Happened to Jones," described as "a very funny and enjoyable piece."

Jan. 24, 1911 — William Oscar Seymour of Parley Lane, a Ridgefield native who started out as a local private school teacher, became an engineer who designed railroad lines and

bridges in the Midwest, and then became a Connecticut railroad commissioner, dies at the age of 77. Seymour also led the celebration of the town's 200th birthday in 1908. Fifty years later, his great grandson, Karl Seymour Nash, would lead the town's 250th birthday celebration.

Feb. 1, 1911 — "South Norwalk, Conn. — Gay folks in this section are infatuated with a 'moondance' invented by Porter Morgan and Jay Buckley. A big transparent disk is suspended above the centre of the ballroom floor, all other lights are put out and Luna is made to blink, fade and revive amid weird noises. The orchestra plays 'Moonlight,' 'Moonbeams,' 'By the Light of the Silvery Moon,' and others and the dancers hum the tunes. The dance has spread to Stamford, Bridgeport, Danbury, and Ridgefield, and soon promises to be a general craze." —New York Daily People

Feb. 6, 1911 — By the will of Catherine Augustus De Peyster of New York, who summered in Ridgefield, the Ridgefield Fire Departments gets a bequest of \$5,000 — about \$140,000 in 2021 dollars.

Feb. 11, 1911 — The Board of Burgesses, who govern the borough or village of Ridgefield, unanimously pass an ordinance giving themselves the power to order property owners to build and maintain, at their own expense, sidewalks of concrete, asphalt or tar along roads bordering their property in the borough. "If the Board of Burgesses will only enforce the ordinance they have enacted in regard to the laying of good walks in Ridgefield, the public will greatly appreciate it," says The Press a month later.

Feb. 17, 1911 — The Rev. Nathan L. Rockwell is buried in the Ridgefield Cemetery today after his body arrives from Korea where the missionary died Dec. 30. The Ridgefield native is brother of George L. Rockwell, the Ridgefield historian, and father of Dr. Alice Rockwell, said to be the first woman to practice medicine in Bridgeport.

Feb. 27, 1911 — "County Commissioner Simeon Pease is today in Ridgefield in arbitration of the differences between the Borough of Ridgefield and the selectmen of the Town of Ridgefield. The two governing bodies of Ridgefield cannot agree on the roads which will be turned over to the state for state purposes. Under the law a county commissioner may settle the disagreement." —Bridgeport Evening Farmer

March 5, 1911 — Robert S. Nicholas advertises in the New York Tribune that he will build a new home in Ridgefield for from \$1,600 to \$20,000 and has building sites selling from \$700 to \$12,000.

March 16, 1911 — Popular local physician Dr. R.W. Lowe returns from a trip to north Africa during which he drove an automobile 850 miles through Morocco and Algeria. He says the roads there are better than Connecticut's.

March 18, 1911 — Howard D. Smith, who had a drug store in Ridgefield, has filed for bankruptcy, with liabilities of \$5,800 and assets of \$4,800.

April 1, 1911 — The Elms Inn opens for the season, “with the greater part of the accommodations engaged.”

April 6, 1911 — The state forest fire warden appoints former Fire Chief George H. Becker as forest fire warden for Ridgefield, a post more significant then than today.

April 7, 1911 — At a largely attended and “torrid” Town Meeting, voters reject a plan to borrow \$50,000 [\$1.4 million today] to build a new “school house.” The additional debt would place the town’s total bonded indebtedness at \$110,000 and the borough’s at \$160,000. Frederick E. Lewis, a wealthy summer resident, has offered the town a free site for the school, which the meeting accepts.

April 9, 1911 — A surprise greets church-goers this morning: A blanket of snow. “The immaculate whiteness of it was emblematic of the life of the leading character commemorated by the day, Palm Sunday, and one could not but be deeply impressed,” says *The Press* later that week.

April 13, 1911 — The week before Easter, *The Press* runs a “shape poem” called “The Easter Gown” that begins: “I am a simple Easter gown, with trimming running up and down; my price, however, I must say, is always on the upward way. The wives and daughters fuss at me, and twitch and pull maliciously, and vow that I will never fit, and jokers turn their caustic wit upon my sweeping curve and lines, and poke fun at my new designs, and say that I would quite be lost if it were not for my great cost...”

April 15, 1911 — The New Canaan YMCA basketball team forfeits its game against Ridgefield in the second half after complaining that Ridgefield is bringing in “outside players” at the last moment. New Canaan had been ahead, but with the new Ridgefield players in the game, falls behind 12-7, and after what the New Canaan Messenger calls “strenuous objections,” quits, giving Ridgefield its first win over New Canaan this season.

April 27, 1911 — “All the gutters on Main Street are being scraped and cleaned up under the direction of Contractor J.L. Reiley, who has quite a large force of men at work. The gutters will be finished this week.”—*The Ridgefield Press*

May 5, 1911 — A settlement is reached today between Charles Moffitt of Bennett’s Farm district, two of whose cows were shot while he was at church the previous Sunday, and Dr. Sidney Higgins, his neighbor, who admits that he shot the animals because they trespassed on his property. Dr. Higgins gives Moffitt \$120, the amount at which the cows were valued.

May 9, 1911 — St. Mary's Parish has a meeting in the clubhouse on Catoonah Street to discuss the proposed new public grammar school for the center of town. "What we want in this town," says Father Richard E. Shortell, the pastor, "is a first-class, modern school house, one that will be an ornament to the town as well as being useful." But, he cautions in addressing costs, "let us be progressive without being extravagant, practical without being penurious."

May 10, 1911 — The school committee, which is also considering starting a high school in Ridgefield, travels to Naugatuck to see its Whittemore High School in operation. The 15-room building, costing \$100,000, was a gift of J.H. Whittemore.

June 1, 1911 — The Ridgefield Public Market opens today on the grounds near the Ridgefield Club on West Lane, operating under the auspices of the Village Improvement Society. It is a farmers' market, selling "produce, fruit, chickens, cakes, jellies, butter, and many other articles" every Saturday during the summer. The Press later pronounces the opening a great success. "There were about ten buyers for every article on sale and right here, let us say that the buyers were an intelligent and discerning class of people who knew market prices and were glad and willing to pay them, but would not give fancy prices."

June 3, 1911 — The Board of Burgesses votes to allow the Ridgefield Band to erect a temporary bandstand at sites in the borough where it is giving concerts, as long as the facility is removed after the performances.

June 19, 1911 — More than 500 Catholics and Protestant friends gather to honor Father Richard E. Shortell on the 25th anniversary of his ordination. Parishioners give Father Shortell, pastor of St. Mary's for the past 19 years, a purse of \$2,000 "as a token of the esteem in which they hold their pastor," reports the Danbury News. It is high esteem: \$2,000 then is the equivalent of \$56,000 in 2021.

June 23, 1911 — The school committee looks at plans for eight-room and ten-room grammar schools. Father Shortell, a member of the plans committee, says he favors a 10-room building that would hold the current Center, Whipstick, Flat Rock, West Lane and Titicus Schools' enrollments.

June 26, 1911 — Francis D. Martin opens his first store, selling jewelry, eyeglasses and doing watch repairs. "Francis is a very popular young man," says The Press. He "is a first-class artist in his business and we hope he will receive a very liberal patronage."

July 24, 1911 — Justice of the Peace Samuel E. Nichols fines George B. Knapp \$10 for having an open muffler, in violation of automobile law. In 1909 the state passed a law saying auto engines had to be "fully muffled" between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. William McGlynn is fined \$10 for operating a car without a license — he is only 17 years old.

July 27, 1911 — Six tables of guests at the Bailey Inn play progressive euchre. Prizes included baseball bats, boxes of candy, and “knick-knacks of all kinds.”

July 27, 1911 — Because of increasing demand, the Ridgefield Electric Company has installed a new 150KW generator at its powerhouse on Ivy Hill Road, bringing its total output to 275KW. The new generator is powered by a 225 horsepower Baker & Wood automatic engine.

July 28, 1911 — The Ridgefield Equal Franchise League meets in the town hall to hear speakers on the woman’s suffrage issue. “The hall was thronged with a representative gathering of the summer colony and the townspeople,” says Press correspondent Edna Innis Workman, wife of the editor. The meeting, led by league president Emily Eaton Hepburn of Altnacraig on High Ridge, heard from state franchise organizer Emily Pierson who says that “a Connecticut farmer told her that she could not do anything about woman’s suffrage in Connecticut, because it was too conservative,” and she replied that “she was a Connecticut woman born and bred, and what she had done she felt in her Connecticut bones other women could and would do.”

July 31, 1911 — After what the Stamford Advocate calls “the largest and most expensive funeral in the history of the town,” Annunziata Spadoni is buried in St. Mary’s Cemetery. “The poor Italian woman,” wife of John Spadoni, was only 21 years old when she died of accidental poisoning July 28. She had been feeling ill and thought that the bottle from which she was drinking liquid was medicine. It wasn’t. “Four hundred persons participated in the procession which was over a mile long. The full Ridgefield band led the march, followed by two girls in white carrying a beautiful floral piece.” The estimated cost of the funeral is placed at \$1,000 [about \$28,000 today]. Besides her husband she is survived by an infant son.

Aug. 12, 1911 — Ridgefield defeats New Canaan, 3-0, behind the pitching of former state-leaguer Harry Cornen, who allows but four hits and fans eight. About 100 Ridgefielders travel to New Canaan to cheer on the locals.

Aug. 14, 1911 — Starting today the Ridgefield Post Office is also a Postal Savings Bank, allowing people to deposit interest-earning money, backed by the U.S. government. Savings certificates are issued in \$1, \$2, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, or \$100 amounts.

Aug. 17, 1911 — George Picknell, a popular American artist, has been summering on Old Branchville Road.

Sept. 2, 1911 — The Board of Burgesses takes up the claim for damages from Charles E. Scofield, who maintains his automobile was damaged by “a defective highway at the corner of Grove and Prospect Streets.” After an investigation, the board blames the

accident on “lack of due precaution on the part of the driver” and maintains that the road is “in ordinarily safe condition.”

Sept. 11, 1911 — The Board of Finance appropriates \$220 to buy a piano for the town hall instead of renting one. Member Benjamin Crouchley notes that “a piano in the hall had been used 20 times since January 1 and if the town owned one, it would not only pay for itself but would pay 30 percent on the investment.”

Sept. 14, 1911 — 39 women have been made registered voters within the past week in Ridgefield and more have signified their intention of voting for the School Committee Oct. 2, the Stamford Advocate reports. “The women say they will elect one of their own sex to the board.” While women have not yet gained national suffrage, Connecticut law allows women to vote in matters related to schools.

Sept. 22, 1911 — George Kirk Jr., president of the Ridgefield Water Company, along with employee John Cranston, are injured when the horse pulling their wagon is frightened by a passing bicycle and takes off at high speed. Both men are thrown from the wagon; Kirk is knocked unconscious. Both men are bruised and take a while to recuperate, reports the Stamford Advocate.

Oct. 2, 1911 — Eldridge N. Bailey succeeds Benjamin Crouchley as first selectman as 382 of the town’s 592 eligible voters show up for the biennial town election and Annual Town Meeting. Women are able to vote for the school board and three men are elected. However, there are four write-in votes for Grace R. Keeler — three from women and one from a man.

Oct. 3, 1911 — The cornerstone is laid today for the new Ridgefield School for boys on North Salem Road, overlooking the north end of Lake Mamanasco. Yale President Arthur T. Hadley speaks at the ceremony.

Oct. 5, 1911 — A large truck, hired by a group of people returning from the Danbury Fair, crosses a small bridge in Ridgefield, somehow causing part of the bridge to break apart and closing the road for several hours and backing up a large number of cars coming from the fair. The truck is not damaged, but “the bridge was badly shaken up, several of the planks being torn off,” reports the Stamford Advocate.” The selectmen get the bridge fixed within a few hours.

Oct. 7, 1911 — George M. Olcott of Casagmo, Main Street, is elected president of the Village Improvement Society. The society has a membership of 90 people, a decrease of 12 from the previous year.

Oct. 12, 1911 — James M. Kennedy is undertaking the construction of the cellar for the new C.P. Dixon house at Lake Mamasasco. The mansion later becomes Mamasasco Lake Lodge, Manresa, and now St. Ignatius Retreat House.

Oct. 20, 1911 — Irving S. Holmes of Ridgefield is selling a nearly new Underwood typewriter, Number Four, for \$38 [\$1,000 today].

Oct. 21, 1911 — Emily Eaton Hepburn is denied the right to be made a voter in Ridgefield because she resides here only four months of the year. She is thinking about suing over the issue.

Oct. 28, 1911 — The Ideal Concert Company of Hartford, composed entirely of blind musicians, performs in the town hall.

Oct. 28, 1911 — Alvah Jerman, a Ridgefield blacksmith, is “seriously and probably fatally injured” when his runaway horse collides with an automobile, reports the Bridgeport Evening Farmer. The horse became spooked, took off, came up to a car being driven by a Bridgeport man, reared, and came down on the hood and windshield, wrecking the front end of the automobile. Jerman was thrown from his wagon, and taken unconscious and taken to Danbury Hospital with a fractured skull and other injuries. The horse had to be put down, but Jerman survived, living to the ripe old age of 91 before his death in 1937.

Oct. 31, 1911 — Olas Larson, chauffeur for Col. Edward M. Knox, “the hat man,” pleads guilty to reckless driving and is fined \$27.41 in Ridgefield Justice Court. He was also warned not to attempt to drive again in Connecticut without a state license. Knox, owner of Downesbury Manor on Florida Hill Road, was not in the car at the time of the arrest.

Nov. 14, 1911 — “The new state highway on the Norwalk road between the Ridgefield line and Branchville is still in an unfinished condition and the present indications are that the road will not be completed before next season. The greatest source of delay at present is a swampy place that the roadmakers encountered a few weeks ago a short distance below the old cemetery at the corner where a road branches off to Topstone. The ground in that locality is thoroughly saturated with water and it has been found impossible to dry the place out sufficiently to put in the Telford base that is required there. The highway below Maplewood is now blockaded at the first turn toward Ridgefield as road workers are cutting down a knoll between there and the lower road to Ridgefield. The only safe way for automobilists to go from this city to Norwalk at present is by way of Ridgefield.” —*Danbury News*

Dec. 11, 1911 — A for-sale ad in the Norwalk Hour: “EXCELSIOR MOTORCYCLE, 1910, magneto, fully equipped, just overhauled, tip-top condition. Write Box 26, Ridgefield, Conn.”

Dec. 13, 1911 — Organist Charles Wade Walker dedicates the new organ at the Methodist Episcopal Church today by playing it.

Dec. 22, 1911 — The fireman aboard the engine of a southbound freight is killed when his locomotive collides head-on with a stationary northbound engine in front of the Branchville Station. The southbound train, with 19 cars, had brake problems and missed a siding while the northbound engine had detached itself from its freight cars to grab some water at Branchville.

## **1912**

Jan. 2, 1912 — Fire breaks out in A. Berotti’s grocery and fruit store in the Bertotti block on Bailey Avenue, causing a near panic among the dozen or more people living on the second and third floors of the building. The store’s metal ceiling, however, delays the flames from spreading upward in time for the Ridgefield Fire department to respond and quench the blaze. Damage is put at about \$1,200 [\$32,000 in 2021].

Jan. 18, 1912 — Tired and starting to fall asleep, Albert Hunt nonetheless departs Danbury for his Ridgefield farm tonight, and mistakes the bed of the New York, New Haven and Hartford railroad for the main highway to Ridgefield. Before he realizes his mistake, he gets stuck and holds up a half dozen trains on their way to and from South Norwalk, including the Pittsfield express, and “completely disarranged the division schedule,” the Norwalk Hour reports. A special train has to remove the horses and wagon.

Jan. 18, 1912 — The U.S. Senate confirms President Taft’s nomination of George L. Rockwell to be postmaster of Ridgefield, succeeding Rufus H. Seymour.

Jan. 24, 1912 — Miss Eva Keeler, a popular student at the Merrill Business College in South Norwalk, dies of pneumonia at her Ridgefield home. Because of her death, a college dance scheduled for Jan. 27 in the Town Assembly Hall in Norwalk has been indefinitely postponed.

Feb. 9, 1912 — For the first time in its history, the Board of Burgesses has a secret, closed-door meeting, claiming it is because bids on a project are being considered. “This excuse merely strengthened gossip,” says the Stamford Daily Advocate.

March 17, 1912 — George Scott’s paint shop is destroyed by flames before the fire department can put them out. The loss is insured.



April 21, 1912 — Frederic Remington's home on Barry Avenue is on the market, Thaddeus Crane advertises in The New York Daily Tribune. No price is given. Remington died in December 1909, only six months after moving into his new home.

June 1912 – Angry selectmen chastise State Highway Commissioner McDonald's "proverbial failure to make good his promises" after many complain about the "intolerable dust nuisance" of Main Street. The commissioner had promised to spray Tarvia B on the road by May 20, didn't, and the selectmen took the initiative and began sprinkling water on the dirt road.

June 22, 1912 — At what witnesses call "the largest wedding that has taken place" in Ridgefield in years, Miss Leila Ingersoll Haven, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. George G. Haven of West Lane, marries Gilbert E. Jones Jr. of New York City in St. Stephen's Church. The Rev. D. Rolland Cotton Smith of Washington, D.C., and rector Rev. John Chapman perform the ceremony. A special train is run from New York to Ridgefield to convey the wedding guests.

July 1, 1912 — Camp Coleman, a summer camp of St. John's Church in Stamford, opens today at Lake Mamanasco in Ridgefield. The church's Boy Scouts will occupy the camp for the first two weeks. Then the church's Boys Club members take over from July 15 to 29, and finally the members of the St. Johns Choir's men and boys will frolic until Aug. 5.

July 9, 1912 — The Norwalk Hour reports that Ridgefield merchants and businessmen join together to offer a \$1,000 reward [\$27,000 today] for the capture of Domenic Marcoriello, who on Sunday attacked his landlady, "Mrs. Francesconi," with a razor and slashed her face and left arm. Marcoriello disappeared after the assault.

July 6, 1912 — Patrick Carroll, a livery stable worker in Ridgefield, is arrested for bigamy after his estranged wife in Waterbury files a complaint upon learning Carroll recently married Miss Annie Geweld of Stamford. "A year ago," says the Norwalk Hour, "he was engaged to marry a Ridgefield woman who committed suicide on learning that he had another wife living."

July 13, 1912 — A motorcycle driven by Walter S. Bedient, 23, of Ridgefield hits a telegraph pole in Norwalk, killing the driver.

July 19, 1912 — Ex-Governor Phineas C. Lounsbury is elected president of the Ridgefield Press Company.

July 27, 1912 — John T. Hunt, who lives in Ridgefield and whose house is said to be but a few rods from the New York state line, is released on \$2,500 bond on a charge of bringing cattle with tuberculosis from New York State into Connecticut, in violation of an

1884 federal statute forbidding transporting diseased cattle across a state line. Hunt says he was unaware of the old law. In November, he is convicted and fined \$300 and costs.

Aug. 8, 1912 — David W. Workman, a native of Norwalk, is named editor of The Ridgefield Press, reports the Norwalk Hour.

Aug. 8, 1912 — “Joseph Rapp of Ridgefield didn’t care a rap for the South Norwalk police yesterday afternoon and he thought it a good joke when he gave Patrolman John Flynn the laugh as he disregarded the officer’s signal to stop and rushed on up West Avenue. Rapp didn’t think it so funny when he was collared by the Norwalk police a few minutes later, however, and the probabilities are that every semblance of the would-be joke will pass away when Rapp appears in South Norwalk court to answer to the charges. Rapp is chauffeur for former Judge Scott of Ridgefield and with two young men and two young ladies burned up the streets in South Norwalk yesterday afternoon. Patrolman Wallace R. Sammis had just time enough to catch his breath and the number of the car as it shot by him on the way to Norwalk.... This morning Judge Scott of Ridgefield appeared in South Norwalk court and explained that Rapp had been made so sick by the arrest that he couldn’t appear in court. Judge William F. Tammany demanded \$50 bond for Rapp’s appearance in court tomorrow on the charges of reckless operating of the automobile, neglect to endorse his driver’s license, and refusal to stop when signaled by an officer.” —Norwalk Hour

Aug. 9, 1912 — “Ridgefield, Conn.,— Frank Long, an elderly farmer, was held up yesterday by two gypsy women, part of a band which is passing through, and robbed him of \$4 and other valuables, and then left him helpless in the road. The authorities are after the women.” —Bridgeport Evening Farmer

Aug. 30, 1912 — Linn’s “educated dogs” perform before what the Norwalk Hour calls “the largest crowd of any show that has ever played in Ridgefield.”

Sept. 10, 1912 — “An unknown Italian laborer on the estate of Jonathan Bulkeley in the West Mountain district was nearly blown to pieces by a charge of dynamite used for blasting shortly before noon today.” — Stamford Daily Advocate

Sept. 16, 1912 — A dog that reportedly bites seven children, five adults and several dogs today is found to be rabid. More than 100 dogs and cats that may have come into close contact with the dog are put to death. Health Officer Dr. R.W. Lowe orders all dogs be muzzled and no dogs be allowed on the streets.

Sept. 21, 1912 — Jeremiah Donovan, Democrat, and E.J. Hill, Republican, both candidates for congress, campaign in Ridgefield today. Donovan, a resident of Norwalk but a native of Ridgefield, wins the seat in November, defeating Hill who had been in Congress for nine terms.

Sept. 21, 1912 — Francis McNeil Bacon, president of a large silk manufacturing firm with mills throughout the country, dies today at the age of 77 at Nutholme, his country home in Ridgefield. Nutholme later becomes known as Westmoreland and is now the home of Congregation Shir Shalom.

Oct. 5, 1912 – Fire that starts in a hay loft levels a barn and garage at Graeloe [now Ballard Park] on Main Street.

Oct. 7, 1912 — In the municipal election, 128 women are eligible to vote on school questions. Of these, 108 turn out to vote on the choice of school board members and 109 on furnishing free textbooks for students. Of the eligible women voters, 85% participate in the election while of the 619 male voters, only 72% [444] show up.

Oct. 7, 1912 — Ridgefielders vote at the Annual Town Meeting to allow the sale of alcoholic beverages for the first time in 50 years.

Oct. 7, 1912 – The Annual Town Meeting also accepts a gift of land to build a school on East Ridge and appoints a building committee. The land donor is Edward Payson Dutton, owner of the E.P. Dutton publishing house – an imprint still alive in 2021.

Oct. 15, 1912 – The Adams & Keeler stable on lower Main Street catches fire. Firemen wet down the rubble and inspect nearby buildings. Soon after they leave, the remains of the stable burst into flame and it completely burns down. Two horses die, but many horses and carriages are saved.

Oct. 21, 1912 — “The townspeople, who have just quieted down from the recent mad-dog scare, when an animal suffering from rabies bit nine people, eight of whom were taken to the Pasteur Institute in New York, were aroused again today when it became known that the same dog, shortly after biting the nine, visited the barn of E.R. Biddle and bit one of his coach horses. The animal developed rabies and was killed, but not before it had bitten two other horses and the Biddle coachman, Samuel Paul. Paul was taken to the New York institution for treatment. The two horses are under observation.” —Stamford Daily Advocate.

Oct. 20, 1912 — William A. White, former editor of The Ridgefield Press, dies in Stamford where he had operated a printing business and a small weekly newspaper, called The Free Lance. From 1901 to 1904 White led The Press, which, says the Stamford Advocate, “under his trained direction, became at once one of the best weekly newspapers in the state.”

Oct. 21, 1912 — Mrs. Howard Reed is rendered unconscious and seriously injured when two running men knock her over as she is walking to her home on Main Street. She hits her head on the concrete sidewalk. A concussion is feared. The men remain unidentified.

Nov. 7, 1912 — Thomas Bloomer of Ridgefield is chosen as the road superintendent — of Redding.

Nov. 12, 1912 — Coal is selling for \$8.25 a ton in Ridgefield while in Darien it's \$7.25, and Stamford and Westport, \$7. However, in the big city of Bridgeport, it's \$8.50.

Nov. 13, 1912 — "A very attractive animal drinking fountain, cut out of a solid piece of granite, six feet wide and four feet three inches high, hewn out bowl shape, two feet six inches deep, has been installed at the foot of Catoonah Street. This is a gift of John A. Mitchell and others who contributed to the last horse show." —Norwich Morning Bulletin

Nov. 14, 1912 — The owners of the Adams & Keeler livery stable that burned Oct. 15 have decided to retire and an auction takes place to sell the contents of the livery stable, rescued from the fire. The auction includes "40 horses consisting of matched pairs, surrey, runabout and workhorses, all of which are serviceable and good-mannered." There are also "60 wagons consisting of coaches, carriages, station-wagons, surreys, top buggies, runabouts, business wagons, farm wagons, trucks, and sleighs," says a legal notice of the auction.

Nov. 22, 1912 — A Connecticut medical examiner is investigating the cause of death and the identity of the body of a man found in the cellar of the summer home of Louis M. Starr in Farmingville. It turns out to be the 26-year-old brother of the estate's caretaker, who had been visiting and who had committed suicide.

## **1913**

Jan. 19, 1913 — The Holy Name Society is formed in St. Mary's Parish.

March 9, 1913 — Sunset View, a small hotel on West Lane, catches fire and burns to the ground while the owner, Thomas Kiernen and his family, are in church. A "firebug" is blamed.

Spring 1913 — Lucius H. Biglow's new Tudor-style store and office building on Main Street is completed. The telephone company and Brundage and Benedict are the first occupants.

April 1913 — The state House votes down woman suffrage, but both Ridgefield representatives are in favor. Two months later, a big anti-suffrage rally takes place at the town hall. "The woman of the past decade specialized on children and the men on work,"

Mrs. John Preston Martin tells the audience. “Now man has stolen woman – drafted her into the service of making money for man... Forcing woman out of the home into the cares and worries of the outside world is wrong and is wearing on her.”

April 1913 – The new Congregational parsonage opens containing “11 rooms with all modern improvements and a charming little sun parlor included.”

June 20, 1913 – Burt Dingee is walking his dog along the track in Branchville that night when he is struck by a northbound train. With his dog at his side, he lies helpless all night in the pouring rain. When the 6 a.m. train out of Danbury approaches Branchville, the engineer spots the dog standing in the middle of the track, barking at the locomotive. The dog refuses to move. The engineer stops the train, discovers the victim, and summons medical help. Burt Dingee recovers.

Fall 1913 – The straightaway on Farmingville Road, across the north end of Great Swamp, is built, bypassing Lee and Limekiln Roads, the old route.

Oct. 31, 1913 – The Seventh Annual Masquerade of the Mary Rebekah Lodge takes place.

Nov. 20, 1913 – The Italian American Political Club, later the Italian American Mutual Aid Society, is organized.

## **1914**

1914 – A total of 101 births are recorded in town, the largest number between 1910 and 1930.

June 9, 1914 – The Ridgefield Garden Club is founded.

Oct. 15, 1914 – The District Nursing Association, now the Ridgefield Visiting Nurse Association, has its first meeting.

## **1915**

1915 – Benjamin Franklin Grammar School opens on East Ridge. Twelve years later it becomes Ridgefield High School. [Today, it is the Richard E. Venus Municipal Building.]

Jan. 7, 1915 – The Ridgefield basketball team defeats the Germans of Danbury, 58-27 on Francis D. Martin leads all scorers with 12.

April 4, 1915 — It’s Easter Sunday and Ridgefielders wake up to a blanket of snow on the town.

May 2, 1915 – The Rev. William B. Lusk becomes rector of St. Stephen’s Church, serving 35 years.

June 15, 1915 – “A large band of gypsies” encamps on lower Main Street. Selectman Eldridge N. Bailey tells them to scram, and they leave the next day.

## **1916**

1916 – 100 births are recorded in town, well above the average for 1910-1930 of 68.

1916 – The public school system takes over operation of the kindergarten, which had been founded in 1894.

May 30, 1916 – The Right Rev. Chauncey Brewster, bishop of Connecticut, consecrates the new St. Stephen’s Church.

## **1917**

1917 – The school budget totals \$25,996.

Jan. 12, 1917 – A huge explosion at the DuPont Powder Mills in Haskell, N.J., is felt in Ridgefield as “quivering and shaking as though a mighty gust of wind.” Many think it is an earthquake and people at higher elevations can see the sky lit up by the blast 70 miles away.

April 3, 1917 – William J. Cumming enlists in the U.S. Army, the first to do so in World War I. Nine months later, he is dead.

June 1917 – First graduation takes place at Hamilton High School on Bailey Avenue [now the municipal parking lot].

Summer 1917 – A Chautauqua program, aimed at educating and entertaining the common people, opens with a parade of school children waving flags and flowers and takes place under a tent on East Ridge. Ten more annual shows would take place before Chautauqua in Ridgefield dies.

Nov. 28, 1917 – A Red Cross chapter organizes here to help with war effort.

## **1918**

1918 – Charlotte Wakeman is named Ridgefield’s first school superintendent.

January 1918 – Postmaster Willis S. Gilbert announces that under new federal orders, “male citizens, denizens, enemies or subjects of the German government or of the Imperial government, the age of 14 and over, who are in the United States and not naturalized or American citizens,” must register as “alien enemies.”

Jan. 5, 1918 – Private William James Cumming, with the 102<sup>nd</sup> Ambulance Company of the United States Army, dies in France. He was the first man to enlist from Ridgefield in World War I.

July 29, 1918 – Private Everett Ray Seymour is the second Ridgefielder to die in World War I. He is killed in a battle near Fere-en-Tardenois, France.

Oct. 8, 1918 – The massive influenza epidemic prompts officials to cancel the Danbury Fair for the first time in its history, the lead story in The Press reports.

Oct. 14, 1918 –A packed Town Meeting unanimously backs President Wilson and supports “unconditional surrender or a fight to the finish” in the war against Germany.

Nov. 7, 1918 – False news reaches Ridgefield that Armistice has been signed. Virtually the entire population turns out, church and school bells ring all afternoon, and a parade led by the Ridgefield Band marches down Main Street.

December, 1918 – “A moving picture machine of the latest model is being erected in the Parish House of St. Stephen’s Church ... and there will be shown every Sunday evening and on stated week evenings pictures of an educational character,” The Press reports.

## **1919**

1919 – Regular Christian Science services begin here. Within a couple years, rooms over the post office [Addessi Jewelers in 2008] are rented for services, a reading room, and a Sunday school.

January 1919 – The 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment – Prohibition – is ratified and takes effect a year later. Connecticut is among the states that do not vote for ratification.

December 1919 – Fifteen members of two Casaveedio families barely escape with their lives just before Christmas as their house on Bennett’s Farm Road burns down.

Dec. 8, 1919 – American Impressionist artist J. Alden Weir dies at 67. His longtime Branchville farm later becomes the first National Park property in Connecticut.

## **1920**

Ridgefield’s population falls to 2,707, a drop of 400 in 10 years.

March 9, 1920 – Twenty teachers (most of the staff) submit resignations in a salary dispute with the school board. Teachers return March 16 and in May, get a raise. The highest-paid teacher is making \$150 a month, the lowest, \$70.

Aug. 20, 1920 – The American Legion post is organized and named for Everett Ray Seymour, the first Ridgefielder to die in battle in World War I. It plans to erect a war memorial.

Nov. 2, 1920 – Hubbard's Radio Store on Main Street sets up a receiver in the town hall so Ridgefielders can listen to the returns that show Harding and Coolidge beat Cox and Roosevelt. Before this, Ridgefielders had gotten returns by telegraph.

December, 1920 – This winter, "hot lunches" – cold sandwiches with hot cocoa – are provided for the first time for children of the Ridgefield Grammar School, thanks to the Ridgefield Mothers Association, District Nursing Association, Red Cross, Sunshine Society, and the Franchise League. The lunches are for 200 of the school's 400 children, mostly bused, who can't walk home for noon break.

## **1921**

1921 – Kathryn G. Bryon establishes the first Ridgefield Girl Scout Troop – Troop One.

Feb. 23, 1921 – The League of Women Voters has its first meeting on less than a year after women win the right to vote.

May 11, 1921 – The Borough of Ridgefield is incorporated into the town of Ridgefield. The Village District replaces the borough to oversee sewer, light, hydrant, and other specialized center services. It has its own town meetings to approve budgets and special tax rates.

June 23, 1921 – Lightning strikes a shed at Mortimer C. Keeler's farm at Whipstick, igniting a blaze that spreads to barns and stables. The fire department's "motor apparatus" responds, but can do little. [*See also* March 24, 1926.]

Summer, 1921 – The school board hires Charles D. Bogart as superintendent, but the state refuses to certify him. The board reconsiders, but retains him on a 5-4 vote. Pro-education forces are outraged.

Oct. 3, 1921 – In the first town election after the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment the year before, Marion Nash wins a seat on the School Committee (Board of Education). Not only is she the first woman elected to a town office, but she also gets more votes than the three men who run for the board do. At the committee's first post-election meeting Oct. 11, Miss Nash is given a welcoming speech and "a handsome, large bunch of flowers."

Oct. 21, 1921 – Hawk's Nest, a 28-room mansion built by William S. Hawk on Branchville Road, burns to the ground in a spectacular blaze. The place has been vacant for some years.



Oct. 27, 1921 – Six days later, Felsenberg, the West Mountain mansion of diplomat William Harrison Bradley, burns down, destroying 5,000 books – many of them rare – as well as historic documents, antique vases, china, and jewelry. The blaze starts a forest fire on the mountain.

November 1921 – The New Haven Railroad registers vigorous protest to the state's granting a jitney license to the Trackless Traction Company, which wants to run a bus service from Stamford to New Canaan, Ridgefield, and Danbury.

November 1921 – A seven-passenger Hudson goes out of control on Danbury Road, “turns turtle” in a ditch, and catches fire with four people inside. Passerby John Nelly, “a man of powerful strength,” tears open the car, allowing all to escape. The Press headline: “Miraculous escape from cremation.”

Nov. 6, 1921 – Joseph Roche and his roommate Vincense Reneri, a Branchville storekeeper, quarrel on the platform of the Branchville Station. Roche stabs his friend to death and disappears.

December 1921 – Dr. John Perry, the school physician, announces that all children will have their eyes tested. “He is convinced that 5% of the children cannot see the blackboard.”

December 1921 – Francis D. Martin is selling The New Edison, “the phonograph with a soul.” He demonstrates the device to a large audience in town hall, comparing the Edison with live singer Helen Davis.

December 1921 – The state police open headquarters on West Lane, covering all of Fairfield County with troopers on motorcycles. “Lawbreakers nowadays, whether crooks breaking a bank in the city or committing depredations in the rural sections, nearly all use the auto to make quick getaways,” The Press said. “The motorcycle cop is a decided advantage over an officer on horseback who would have small opportunity of stopping or overtaking an auto.”

December 1921 – A gasoline stove explodes at Coleman's Lunch Café behind the town hall, severely burning Ben Brown, the “right bower,” and destroying the restaurant. Owner Michael Coleman rebuilds.

## **1922**

1922 – The Ridgefield Savings Bank, which had rented space in the town hall for its office for 22 years, moves out and across the street to the Scott Block, [where Ridgefield Office Supply is in 2008]. The Ridgefield Press headline: “Town Loses \$600 a Year Lease.”

1922 – Holy Ghost fathers buy the former Cheesman house on Prospect Ridge for a novitiate that lasts till early 1970s.

Jan. 25, 1922 – A Manhattan bus hits and kills A. Barton Hepburn, president of the Chase National Bank, on. The owner of Altnacraig on High Ridge bequeaths more than \$5 million to universities, colleges, and family members.

March 1922 – The state begins paving Wilton Road West, then dirt, and straightens the road in the process. The abandoned Flat Rock School houses workmen.

April 1922 – Ernest Scott moves some buildings, tears down others, as he begins erecting the Scott Block on Main Street. [The Addressi family now owns the block.]

April 1922 – The school committee reports that among the 689 children in the public schools, attendance is running at 88%. The high school has the best rate: 92%.

April 1922 – For roadwork, the selectmen that spring buy a kerosene-fueled tractor, perhaps the first town-owned motor vehicle. “One of the great advantages of a tractor is its economy,” The Press reports. “Its running expenses are comparatively light and it will do the work of four horses.”

April 22, 1922 – A tenement on Bailey Avenue catches fire and burns to the ground, igniting other buildings including Bates’ Garage, which is also destroyed. The Press charges that the water company failed to keep its standpipe full, leaving virtually no pressure to protect the buildings adjacent to the garage. The paper cites other fires when firefighters lacked water pressure.

May 1922 – The state is still in the throes of dealing with early versions of daylight saving time. Half the businesses in town, including the Ridgefield Savings Bank, are on “standard time” while half, such as First National Bank and Trust, are on “advanced time.” An attempt in 1923 to ban “local option” on daylight saving time is defeated in the state senate.

May 1922 – The Town School Committee adopts new course requirements for Hamilton High School, making it more likely graduates can get into colleges. It includes four years of Latin, three years of French, plus courses in general science, physics, chemistry, algebra, geometry, and trigonometry.

June 1922 – Woodcarver Sebastiano Grassi gives an elaborately carved chair to President and Mrs. Warren G. Harding in honor of the calling of the conference on world disarmament. The chair is placed in the White House.

July 20, 1922 – State Police Officer John C. Kelly visits the Ideal Garage on Danbury Road to have his motorcycle fixed. He notices a furniture truck with two suspicious occupants, checks the cargo, and uncovers 225 gallons of grain alcohol valued at \$1,400 [about \$16,000 in 2008]. He and Officer Leo F. Carroll arrest the men and lock them up in the town hall basement. Later in the day, in court in the town hall, the two are fined \$167 each. “Both fines and costs were paid by a stranger, a man driving a large touring car, who was apparently waiting outside.”

July 25, 1922 – William Lynch of St. Mary’s Parish joins the Order of the Marist Brothers at Poughkeepsie, N.Y. He is 16 years old.

July 30, 1922 – St. Mary’s marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dedication of its church.

July 31, 1922 – The post office moves from east side of Main Street to the Scott Block [where Addressi’s is now] and remains there till 1959.

August 1922 – In the great brouhaha that summer, Dr. H.W. Allen wants the two trees in front of his new brick retail building at 423-27 Main Street removed because they block the view of the businesses. The tree warden refuses, citing a petition from the garden club and letters from others supporting the trees. Allen appeals to the County Commissioners. They order the trees removed, then suddenly reverse their decision after an “influential person” speaks up for the trees.

September 1922 – Catoonah Street is paved.

Fall 1922 – Townspeople debate removing the watering trough from Main Street in front of town hall. “This fountain is in effect a ‘filling station’ for horses,” says B. Ogden Chisholm. “No thoughtful person would sanction a filling station for motor cars on the main highway.” But Mrs. Cass Gilbert says it should remain as a memorial to editor and author, John Ames Mitchell, who designed and donated it.

## **1923**

1923 – The American Legion Auxiliary is organized.

January 1923 – The School Committee closes Farmingville and Scotland Schools because the teachers at each have resigned. “It is exceedingly difficult to secure teachers at this season because of the requirements demanded by the State Board of Education,” The Press says, adding that pupils will be transported to Titicus and Benjamin Franklin schools in “covered” buses. “The children will assemble at their respective school where they will be met by the bus. The school houses will be opened and kept warm so that the pupils may be sheltered from the elements.”

March 7, 1923 – Darius Crosby Baxter, the founder of The Ridgefield Press in 1875, dies. “Mr. Baxter was a unique character and his individuality stood apart from the average,” The Press says, adding he was “gifted with good business acumen and a sense of humor. He had many terse sayings.”

March 1923 – The Press reports that “to the shame of Ridgefield and its lack of protection, rowdies took possession of the village center Sunday afternoon and bombarded passing motors and pedestrians with dirty snow. The humiliating part is that some of these boys come from respectable homes and all are old enough to know better.”

April 23, 1923 – Parishioners celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Father Richard E. Shortell’s tenure as St. Mary’s pastor by giving him a surprise party – and a new Cadillac Coupe.

May 1923 – The School Committee decides to erect a new high school on East Ridge, next to Benjamin Franklin Grammar School. The two-story, 120-foot long building would contain eight rooms on the first floor and a 400-person auditorium on the second. Total cost: \$60,000. Voters later approve, but the town runs into financing difficulties and the high school becomes an addition to the grammar school – sans auditorium.

June 1923 – The Press reports that a Bridgeport newspaper chastises the town because lots behind village stores “resemble a combination of Johnstown after the flood had subsided and a second-class Kansas cyclone. Just why a town will be so fussy on the front of a set of lots and so careless at the rear is hard to understand...”

Aug. 30, 1923 – In what might be the first sidewalk sale in Ridgefield, village merchants hold “Ridgefield Dollar Day.”

Fall 1923 – Jeweler L. P. Cartier leases his “Downesbury Estate” on Florida Hill Road to the Paulist Fathers, who set up a novitiate there with 20 candidates for the priesthood. The operation is short-lived.

Oct. 22, 1923 – At 7 a.m., a northbound Oldsmobile truck is descending Limestone Hill on Danbury Road when its axle breaks. The truck overturns, spilling its content of grapes – and 35 gallons of grain alcohol. The driver and a passenger disappear. “The grapes spilled over the road and some of the cans of alcohol also were thrown out and broke, the odor at once giving information to people who stopped as to the nature of the secret contents,” The Press says. “Evidently that was the reason why the driver and the other man did not linger in the vicinity.”

November 1923 – A half-page ad for Schultze’s Meats and Fish “at the old Hibbart Market” includes (prices per pound) pot roast, 16 cents; rib lamb chops, 38 cents; Porter House steak, 44 cents; frankfurts, 22 cents; milk-fed roasting chickens, 38 cents; Puritan

sliced bacon, 45 cents; sirloin steak, 38 cents; Prime rib roast, 26 to 34 cents; Sunlight butter, 55 cents; and pure pork sausage, 25 cents.

## 1924

Jan. 3, 1924 – “The Town Hall was never more artistically or prettily decorated,” The Press reports, describing the Girls Athletic Club’s annual New Year’s Eve dance with the music of Sterling’s six-piece orchestra from Norwalk.

Jan. 5, 1924 – George Washington Gilbert, known far and wide as “the Hermit of Ridgefield,” is found frozen to death in his cottage on Florida Hill Road.

March 1924 – Miss Ella J. Rose, supervisor of home economics for the state school board, tells the School Committee that “there was something wrong in Ridgefield” because only 10 students are signed up to take home ec the next year. Twenty-four are needed to run the course. “Miss Rose said home economics should be given to the girl nearest the time when she could use it,” The Press reports. “Fourteen years is the minimum age.”

March 24, 1924 – The Christian Science Society of Ridgefield is established.

May 1924 – Dr. Harry E. Bard, a former school superintendent in the Philippines, is chosen Ridgefield’s new superintendent. [*See also* Sept. 6, 2006.]

June 1, 1924 – Nearly 1,000 people attend the dedication of St. Mary’s new cemetery.

June 1924 – With the arrest of three young men, state police break “a gigantic chicken-thieving ring” operating in the area. The ringleader is the father of one of the boys. He’s described as providing “vicious home surroundings” for his son, who can neither read nor write and is trained only in stealing chickens.

June 1924 – State police also arrest Alfred Payne for arson. Troopers say he has burned several barns and other buildings around town in recent months.

July 4, 1924 – The American Legion dedicates the new War Memorial on Main Street at Branchville Road.

Summer 1924 – Years of motorists’ complaints about the muddy condition of the Sugar Hollow Road [Route 7] between Ridgefield and Danbury prompt the state to spend \$113,000 that summer to pave the road with concrete.

August 1924 – The Ridgefield Electric Company announces it will soon receive its current from Connecticut Light and Power Company instead of generating its own at the Ivy Hill Road power station.

September 1924 – Town Clerk and Probate Judge George G. Knapp dies suddenly in September of “acute indigestion.” He is 41.

Sept. 20, 1924 – Constable Roswell L. Dingee shows up at state police headquarters with a carload of people – two men and three women – he’d pulled over on West Lane. He asks Sgt. John Kelly to arrest one for reckless driving. Kelly says Dingee should make the arrest himself. Dingee declines, saying he doesn’t know which person to arrest. Kelly is suspicious. Dr. H. W. Allen is summoned, examines Dingee, and finds him to be intoxicated. Kelly arrests Dingee for drunken driving. He’s fined \$100.

Oct. 24-26, 1924 – Jesse Lee Methodist Episcopal Church celebrates its 100th anniversary.

## **1925**

1925 – Delivery of mail to homes and businesses begins, but only in the village.

March 7, 1925 – The Rev. Francis H. McGlynn, a Ridgefield native, is ordained a priest and celebrates his first Mass the next day at St. Mary’s Church.

May 31, 1925 – Several hundred people attend the dedication of The Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes at the Holy Ghost Novitiate off Prospect Ridge. [The grotto is still there, minus the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes.]

July 1925 – The Danbury and Norwalk railroad line is switched from coal-powered engines to electric engines. The line remains electrified until 1961 when diesel engines take over.

Aug. 8, 1925 – The last passenger train from Branchville arrives at Ridgefield station [in 2008 now a Ridgefield Supply Company warehouse slated to be moved to become a youth arts center]. The service, begun in 1870, is no longer profitable. Buses now run between the station and the village.

September 1925 – Hamilton High School on Bailey Avenue is so overcrowded, students must attend some classes in the top floor of the town hall and some at the firehouse.

## **1926**

1926 – The number of motor vehicles registered in town totals 1,061; 36 auto accidents are reported during the year.

Jan. 1, 1926 – George Walter Weir of Bryon Avenue, “one of the best-known men in Ridgefield,” dies. For 36 years, he had been a conductor on the Ridgefield Branch of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad.

Jan. 8, 1926 – Hamilton High School’s basketball team beats New Milford, its eighth straight win. The next week, it finally loses, to Norwalk.

Jan. 9, 1926 – A large part of the mansion of newspaper mogul Robert P. Scripps is destroyed in a fire finally brought under control by the Ridgefield Fire Department. “The worst and most insidious fire the department had ever fought” causes \$20,000 damages [\$230,000 in \$2008].

Jan. 28, 1926 – The Ridgefield Promoters Club has its first meeting at the Elms Inn, and elects George G. Scott its first chairman. James J. Kelly, one of the founders, explains that the club is “one in which religion and politics (are) barred and where the town’s interests would be advanced.”

Feb. 11, 1926 – The Ridgefield Baseball Club endorses the building of a gymnasium “for the use of the town boys and the school until such time as the school board builds a gymnasium” of its own.

Feb. 12, 1926 – In what must have been a shocking and saddening sight for local oenophiles, state police raid a house on Prospect Street and confiscate 20 barrels “of what is reported as being very good wine, some of it having been imported from Europe,” The Press reports. Police pour the contents onto the snow and arrest the owners of the house. Nearby, 20 cases of beer and other alcoholic beverages are confiscated at the store of Brunetti and Garsparini at Prospect and Bailey Avenue.

March 7, 1926 – Calling Norwalk becomes easier. “It will not be necessary for telephone users to ask for the toll line operator when making a call to Norwalk,” The Press explains. “Subscribers here will simply give the local operator the out-of-town number that is desired and the call will go through about as quickly as a local call...”

March 11, 1926 – The new Promoters Club hears Robert Hurley, superintendent of the Connecticut State Police, explain the value of fingerprinting.

March 12, 1926 – A dog is the only casualty when the chicken plant at Shadowbrook Farm, owned by Seth Low Pierrepont, burns down.

March 24, 1926 – Eleven head of cattle die when a large barn on M.C. Keeler’s farm on Nod Road burns to the ground. The glow of the fire is discovered at 5 a.m. by young David Seymour, who lives a mile away on Wilton Road West and who arises early because he is “very fond of viewing the sunrise.” [*See also* June 23, 1921.]

March 26, 1926 – Samuel D. Keeler, a prominent village businessman and merchant for 40 years, dies at 73.

April 10, 1926—Joseph Wilmot Hibbard, who had operated fish and grocery markets on Main Street for nearly half a century, dies at 65.

April 13, 1926 – The Town School Committee reappoints staff and sets salaries. High School principal Clifford A. Holleran is the highest paid, at \$2,400, followed by Hamilton High School teachers Eleanor Burdick, English, and Ruth E. Wills, French and Latin, who each get \$1,700 [accounting for inflation, about \$20,000 today].

April 23, 1926 – Arbor and Bird Day is observed in the schools with various exercises. Col. Louis D. Conley of Outpost Nurseries and Seth Low Pierrepont of Twixthills provide trees for planting.

April 26, 1926 – The motion picture, *The Iron Horse*, by Fox, is shown at the library.

April 29, 1926 – Two youths are arrested after creating a disturbance during the high school play, staged at the town hall. One was drunk.

April 30, 1929 – The Lockwood brothers, John and Edward, are arrested in a shanty near the railroad track, charged with a burglary of jewelry, clothing and cutlery from a Titicus home. The stolen items are recovered.

May 1926 – The Ridgefield Garden Club sponsors a contest for school children who collect tent caterpillar egg clusters. Fourth grader Gino Polverari wins \$10 for coming in first with 10,349 cases, followed by Nancy Jones, 9,204, who wins \$8.

May 28, 1926 – A landmark Farmingville house is destroyed after an oil stove explodes. The house, modeled after a Spanish hacienda, was built around 1852 by Stephen Fry, a carpenter, after he came back from the California Gold Rush.

June 10, 1926 – Julia Finch Gilbert, wife of noted Architect Cass Gilbert and owner of the Keeler Tavern, says in a letter to *The Press* that the recently announced plans to turn Main Street into a state highway, widen it and cover it with concrete will increase noisy traffic between metropolitan New York and the Berkshires, ruining the quiet of the village. “Modern traffic is a serious modern problem,” she says, adding she would prefer to “continue to bump down from the fountain to the bank and back again, and continue to suffer from this slight annoyance until our traffic problem is more scientifically solved.”



June 17, 1926 – 24 students graduate from Alexander Hamilton High School, seven of whom plan to go to college or normal school. Commencement takes place in town hall. It is the school's last graduating class.

June 24, 1926 – John Bacchiochi leads the Hamilton High baseball team this season with 20 hits for an average of .377. He is followed by Olinto "Lynce" Carboni, .321.

July 1, 1926 – Opposition to Main Street turning into a concrete state highway continues as Louis Morris Starr sends The Press a copy of an editorial from The New York Times, entitled "Replacing Elms with Concrete."

July 8, 1926 – In a full-page advertisement in The Press, Central Garage asks, "Is this the answer to America's traffic problem?" The ad promotes the new four-cylinder Whippet, made by the Overland Company, which parks in 12 feet, has a 34-foot turning radius, pick-up of from 5 to 30 mph in 13 seconds, four-wheel brakes, and up to 30 miles on a gallon of gas and 1,000 miles on a gallon of oil.

July 18, 1926 – Charles H. Ritch, a prominent Ridgefield contractor and builder who owns many houses in town, dies.

July 19, 1926 – A bus carrying 23 passengers collides head-on with a touring car, driven by a Brooklyn man, on South Salem Road in front of Pinchbeck Nurseries. A second bus, trying to avoid the accident, goes off the road. No one is seriously injured, but the driver of the bus is convicted of having improper brakes.

Aug. 1, 1926 – The Bridgeport Construction Company begins laying the concrete highway along Main Street to Island Hill on Danbury Road. Construction includes redesigning the intersection of Main Street and Danbury Road by removing the old Pulling homestead. Eventually the highway will be extended along the Danbury Road to the Sugar Hollow Road, making a modern highway the entire distance between Ridgefield and Danbury.

Aug. 11, 1926 – George L. Rockwell and many others petition the Town Meeting to appropriate \$500 to celebrate the Battle of Ridgefield's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1927.

Aug. 26, 1926 – The State Highway Department is seeking bids on laying concrete on the Danbury-Norwalk Road between the Danbury and Branchville, where it will meet the new concrete highway under construction from Branchville to Norwalk. Work is underway by October. The complete project from Danbury to Norwalk costs \$680,000 [\$8 million in 2008].

September 1926 – Hamilton High School moves from Bailey Avenue to a new wing at the grammar school on East Ridge, and begins being called Ridgefield High School. The

Town School Committee plans to move the kindergarten and first grade from the grammar school to the old Hamilton High, which will be called The Garden School. The building had been given to the town years earlier by Gov. P.C. Lounsbury for educational uses.

Sept. 15, 1926 – A Town Meeting approves concrete for Prospect Street from Main Street to the railroad tracks.

Oct. 8, 1926 – All schools are closed for Danbury Fair Day.

Oct. 12, 1926 – A total of 741 children are enrolled in the schools including high school, 130; junior high, 126; Benjamin Franklin Public School, 325; Titicus, 115; West Mountain, 16; Ridgebury, 9; Branchville, 28; Bennett's Farm, 11; and Farmingville, 15.

November 1926 – Many Main Street homeowners are using the occasion of the paving of Main Street to install concrete curbing along their properties.

November 1926 – Eugene O'Neill of North Salem Road sails for Bermuda for six months, planning to write a play.

Nov. 2, 1926 – Ethel M. Ryan and Mortimer C. Keeler, both Republicans, are elected Ridgefield's state representatives to Hartford, defeating Democrats Herbert E. Bates and Charles D. Crouchley. Ridgefield favors John H. Trumbull for governor; he wins the state, too.

Nov. 9, 1926 – George Chase of Goldens Bridge and Irene Elden of Danbury are arrested for stealing apples from the Rundle farm in Ridgebury. Grand Juror Octavius "Tabby" Carboni prosecutes the case before Town Justice Peter McManus, and the two are fined \$10 plus costs.

Nov. 11, 1926 – The recently formed Ridgefield Gym Club now boasts 65 members and gathers several times at its gymnasium on Danbury Road for workouts.

Nov. 24, 1926 – More than 200 people dine on chicken pie at the eight annual Father and Son Banquet of the Ridgefield High School YMCA at the Congregational Church House.

Dec. 8, 1926 – Marshall W. Ralson, popular station agent for the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad in Ridgefield, dies at his desk. He is also the town's auditor.

Dec. 15, 1926 – Miss Mabel Cleves retires as president of the Parent-Teacher Association, which she had led the 10 years since its creation from the old Mothers Club, of which she had been president for 16 years.

Dec. 20, 1926 – A committee to study whether Ridgefield should have zoning, created at the October Annual Town Meeting, has its organizational meeting and elects H.P. Bissell chairman. The committee hears from Judge Norman of Darien, who describes how well zoning has worked in that town for many years.

Dec. 22, 1926 – Alfred Holley, an automobile dealer from Danbury, is driving a new Studebaker Special Six sedan on Branchville Road when it suddenly catches fire. He jumps out. The car goes down a 20-foot embankment, lands on its side, bursts into flames, and is destroyed.

## **1927**

1927 – Only 43 births are recorded in town, the smallest number of any year between 1910 and 1930.

Jan. 29, 1927 – Italian American Club opens its new quarters on Prospect Street.

February 1927 – A recommendation to adopt zoning, proposed by a Town Meeting-created committee of leading citizens, “creates great commotion” at a packed Town Meeting, which vetoes the idea, 224-169.

April 1927 – Two bandits, one wielding a revolver, the other a cheese knife, rob \$50 from Pasquale DeBenigno’s Store in Branchville. A shot fired at Mr. DeBenigno misses, goes through four shoes on a shelf, and is lodged in the toe of a fifth. A few months later, part of Mr. DeBenigno’s house burns down.

June 1927 – The National Garden Club has a meeting here. The West Lane Schoolhouse is used as headquarters for events.

May 30, 1927 – Throngs attend 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Battle of Ridgefield on Memorial Day. Celebration includes parade, speeches, ball games, a band concert, and a dance.

June 1927 – Giants star Rogers Hornsby signs a ball raffled at Ridgefield Base Ball Club benefit.

August 1927 – Mr. and Mrs. Francis D. Martin begin a 14-month driving tour of the U.S., Canada, and Alaska.

August 1927 – Dominic Fossi kills a six and one-half foot water adder on Prospect Street after it frightens Miss Grace Clark. It is called “the largest reptile ever seen in Ridgefield.”

Fall 1927 – State police arrest a dozen Ridgefielders for “shooting craps.” After a packed trial in town hall, each is fined \$5 and costs.

November 1927 – George L. Rockwell’s *History of Ridgefield* is published.

## **1928**

1928 – The school board votes to install electric lights in the Titicus School, as long as the Titicus PTA pays for it.

1928 – Arthur D. Horton named school superintendent and serves 14 years, longer than any Ridgefield superintendent.

1928 – Harvey P. Bissell sells his drug store to J.J. Kelly. Edgar C. Rapp would be the pharmacist, but the Bissell name would remain.

1928 – The state rebuilds and paves Danbury Road, eliminating many curves.

January 1928 – Harold Finch buys the United Cigar Store on Main Street.

Feb. 2, 1928 – Joseph Kaufman, president of the American Safety Razor Corp., who has a country estate here, dies of appendicitis at the age of 46. The financial leader served with the U.S. Intelligence Service in World War II.

July 31, 1928 – The last Chautauqua program takes place in Ridgefield to dwindling audiences. First started here in 1886 and later resurrected in 1917, Chautauqua provided five-day camps, full of entertaining and educational programs for children and adults – opening with a parade.

August 1928 – The Francis Martin family returns in August after traveling 23,000 miles around North America for one year.

Summer 1928 – Three Ridgefield firemen escape serious injury when their Reo chemical truck, responding to an alarm, overturns, pinning them underneath. Six others on the truck are thrown clear.

Oct. 27, 1928 – A car driven by author Konrad Bercovici on Danbury Road near Limestone Road collides with a car driven by a Southbury man on his way to the Yale-Army football game. Bercovici is injured, and sues for \$100,000. A court in July 1929 awards him \$12,634 [\$152,000 in 2008].

Nov. 20, 1928 – A gas explosion and fire wrecks several stores in the Scott Block [Addessi block in 2008] on Main Street. No one is seriously hurt, though little Fred Rux is blown off his bike as he rides by.

## 1929

Jan. 3, 1929 – “Mr. John Dowling is going into the bedding business,” announces an advertisement in The Press, pricing a full-sized hair mattress at \$65. Eighteen months later, Mr. Dowling dies tragically [*see* July 11, 1931].

Jan. 3, 1929 – E.F. Brown beats Horace Walker, 30-22, in the Ridgefield Fire Department election for fire chief.

Jan. 16, 1929 – Dr. B. A. Bryon is badly injured when his Elcar Coupe is hit by a speeding car in Georgetown. Dr. Bryon recovers and sues the other driver for \$10,000 [\$120,000 in 2008].

Feb. 8, 1929 – The Ridgefield Y basketball team surprises Danbury YMCA, 26-23, to win the Fairfield County championship.

Feb. 26, 1929 – John J. Anderson, 32, who claims to have been a World War veteran who was shot down several times while on missions over Europe and also claims to have been gassed by the Germans, is arrested and jailed for stealing pencils and flashlights from United Cigar Store on Main Street.

March 14, 1929 –The Grove Inn on Danbury Road burns to the ground in a spectacular fire.

March 19, 1929 – Aldo Branchini, 7, of Nod Hill suffers a fractured pelvis and internal injuries after he was run over by a school bus at the Benjamin Franklin Grammar School.

March 20, 1929 – John Hampton Lynch, a New York City businessman whose country estate is on West Mountain, dies at 70. [His home in 2008 is Ridgefield Academy, and had been for years, the Congregation of Notre Dame motherhouse.]

Late March, 1929 – Opera Star Geraldine Farrar of West Lane returns home after a 21,000-mile, North American singing tour that began in October.

April 23, 1929 – The Ridgefield Lions Club has its first meeting, electing Francis D. Martin president.

May 5, 1929 – Joseph Thoma, 63, is driving his horse and carriage along Silver Spring Road, along with his dog, when he pulls over, slumps to one side, and dies of a heart attack. State police are called to the scene but the dog will not allow them to touch Mr. Thoma. His daughter arrives and calls the dog away. “Here again is an instance of the fidelity of man’s friend, the dog,” The Press comments.

May 12, 1929 – Fire destroys the social hall and 15 bungalows at Camp Topstone on the Danbury Road. High winds spread the fire to nearby woods.

May 19, 1929 – The Christian Science Society of Ridgefield opens its new home in the “Old Hundred” on Main Street [in 2008, the administrative building of the Aldrich Museum].

June 25, 1929 – A Town Meeting approves abandoning one of two crossings of the railroad line north of Branchville station. Voters reject closing the crossing just north of the station, but OK closing the “Crusher Crossing” north of that.

July 18, 1929 – The Ideal Garage on Danbury Road is advertising Graham-Paige automobiles, starting at \$855 [\$10,000 in 2008] for a two-door sedan, featuring a 62-horsepower engine.

July 20, 1929 – Henry deB. Schenck dies in England. In the 1890s, Mr. Schenck built the 45-room Downsbury Manor on Florida Hill Road, which he called Boswyck. He sold the place, moved to Litchfield and then returned to town and around 1920 built another mansion, Nydeggen, which still overlooks Lake Mamanasco.

July 22, 1929 – The Corner Store, a fixture at the intersection of Main Street and West Lane for more than a century, is torn down and the space made into a lawn on the Herbert Spencer Greims property. The building and a predecessor had been a general store operated by such personages as E. H. Smith, Judge George G. Knapp, and S.D. Keeler, as well as a shirt factory owned by D. Smith Sholes

Aug. 18, 1929 – L. H. Crossman, the Main Street jeweler, is driving his new Nash sedan over Hartland Mountain in East Hartland, accompanied by Charles D. Crouchley Jr. and John Nash, when he swerves to avoid an oncoming car. The Nash plunges down a 125-foot embankment, rolling over many times. Mr. Crossman and Mr. Crouchley suffer many cuts and bruises but not Mr. Nash, who was in the back seat and “had put his hands against the roof of the sedan as it repeatedly overturned, and that had saved him,” The Press reports.

Aug. 16, 1929 – A number of Ridgefielders visit upper Wilton Road to watch the US Navy dirigible, Los Angeles, “flying at a great height” some 20 miles away near Bridgeport.

Aug. 22, 1929 – The proposed town budget for 1929-30 totals \$175,000, of which \$77,000 is for schools. Among the special appropriations is \$25,000 “for equipment and three salaried men for the Fire department” and \$1,000 for a traffic signal.

Aug. 29, 1929 – David Francis Bedient, who operated Bedient's general store and was also the funeral director for many years, dies at 68. His store, purchased just before the great fire of 1895, remained in business until 1998.

Sept. 3, 1929 – The Town School Committee decides to close Ridgebury School. The schoolhouse has only four pupils and it is cheaper to work a deal with Danbury to send them to the Miry Brook School.

Sept. 5, 1929 – Dr. R.W. Lowe, the town's health officer, tells the Board of Finance Ridgefield needs to buy land for a public dump where garbage could be buried.

Sept. 5, 1929 – The Board of Finance approves \$600 for a traffic light at Main and Catoonah Streets. The Oct. 8 Annual Town Meeting OKs the light, the town's first.

Sept. 19, 1929 – Harry Tripp, who runs the Hill Top filling station on the Wilton Road, tells state police he was "flimflammed to the extent of \$20 by gypsies." Sophia Steve, 45, is soon arrested, tried, fined \$25, and sentenced to 30 days in jail – suspended if she gets out of town right away. She does.

Sept. 26, 1929 – C.W. Riedinger of Bailey Avenue is selling the Victor Radio with Electrola, a floor console unit that includes a radio and "Orthophonic Victor Record" player. Cost is \$275 [\$3,300 in 2008!]. A simple console radio costs \$155 [\$1,860].

Oct. 6, 1929 – The Ridgefield Base Ball Club defeats Danbury, 6-0, to win the regional semi-pro championship.

Oct. 8, 1929 – "Little Interest in Election" says The Press headline as 692 of 1,465 eligible Ridgefielders vote for town officials at the Annual Town Meeting and Election. A proposal to adopt zoning in town is rejected by a 152 to 320 machine vote. Winthrop E. Rockwell remains first selectman.

Oct. 9, 1929 – Jonathan Peterson, 63, president of the United States Tobacco Company, dies of heart disease at his summer home here, Barrack Hill.

Nov. 7, 1929 – The Town School Committee and Board of Selectmen decide to sell the Florida, Whipstick, Limestone, and Flat Rock Schoolhouses, which have been closed.

Nov. 28, 1929 – The stock market crash produces no stories in The Ridgefield Press, but does prompt a full-page advertisement from New England Furniture, headlined, "Extra! Sales News! Stock Market Crash. Factory Prices Broke, Factory Cut-Price Sale."

December 1929 – 375 people give \$833 to the Christmas Seals campaign to fight tuberculosis.

Dec. 3, 1929 – William Dougherty, 22, a carpenter for contractor Peter McManus, is working on a chicken house on the William F. Ingold estate on West Mountain when he loses his balance. He grabs an overhead wire, not realizing it carries 4,600 volts. His funeral is four days later.

Dec. 12, 1929 – The stock market may have crashed, but Ridgefield still needs its golf. Seth Low Pierrepont of Twixthills announces that a group of Ridgefielders, acting as Flat Rock Corporation, has acquired 270 acres in the Silver Spring Road area to build a country club.

## **1930**

1930 – Ridgefield's population is 3,580, a rise of more than 800 after a drop of 400 reported in 1920.

1930 – Ridgefield has 1,093 houses, 65 business buildings, 162 horses, 475 cows, 1,298 automobiles, and 1,425 taxpayers.

1930 – There are 45 auto accidents in town, 14 fewer than in 1929. However, three people are killed in 1930 compared to two in 1929.

Jan. 29, 1930 – Lt. Sereno T. Jacob of Barry Avenue flies a plane from Detroit to Bridgeport that will be used to start a new airline between Bridgeport and Albany.

Jan. 29 and 30, 1930 – The Epworth League stages the three-act mystery comedy, "Oh Kay," in town hall.

February 1930 – The state wants to pave West Mountain Road at a cost of \$126,000, a quarter of which must be paid by the town. Voters later agree.

Feb. 2, 1930 – New England Transportation Company reduces bus service between Ridgefield and Danbury because of lack of passengers.

Feb. 8, 1930 – Ethel Frances McGlynn, age 6, captivates the audience with her "clever songs and dances" at a talent show at the Empress Theater in Danbury, winning first place.

Feb. 16, 1930 – After 16 years in business, McHugh's Men's Shop on Main Street announces it's closing. Men's suits are selling for \$9.95.



Feb. 28, 1930 – \$70 worth of merchandise is stolen in a burglary at the clothing store of J. Howard Burr on Main Street. State police later arrest William Hull of Starrs Plain, who confesses. The stolen items are recovered in an old quarry, where Hull hid them.

March 1, 1930 – Lt. Robert Keeler, Harry E. Hull and Carleton A. Scofield are the Tribe Committee of the Pine Tree Tribe of the Boy Scouts of America, which go on a hike.

March 17, 1930 – The Hill Top Service Station on Wilton Road West burns to the ground killing two dogs and severely burning owner Harry Tripp, after a gasoline camp stove explodes.

March 26, 1930 – The Ridgefield League of Women Voters celebrates the 10th anniversary of woman suffrage with a gathering at Mamanasco Farm, the home of Miss Anne Richardson and Miss Edna Schoyer. Speaker is Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, who was president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association at the time of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, and later president of the National League of Women Voters.

April 1930 – The H. Wales Lines Company is awarded the contract to erect the new Ridgefield Savings Bank building on Main Street. Plans are designed by Ralph E. Hawes of Stamford and his assistant, Ernest F. Strassle. The building is faced with limestone quarried in Bloomfield, Ind.

April 3, 1930 – The state warns the town that its sewage treatment plant is heavily overloaded.

April 6, 1930 – Harvey P. Bissell, former state comptroller and senator, dies at 63. The pharmacist was collector of customs for Connecticut, appointed by President Warren Harding two weeks before the president died in 1923.

May 25, 1930 – The Ridgefield Home Boys base ball team plays Broad Rivers, but Broad Rivers walks off the field in the seventh inning because they are dissatisfied with an umpire's ruling. Ridgefield wins 9 to 7.

June 19, 1930 – “The largest senior class in the history of Ridgefield High School” – 24 students – graduates.

July 1930 – Col. Louis D. Conley opens the Outpost Inn on Danbury Road. Over the years it is the site of many local gatherings as well as a refuge for many celebrities. [The property is now Fox Hill condominiums.]

July 1, 1930 – Lightning destroys the house of Gus Sturges at Flat Rock, blowing out windows, shattering plaster and clapboards, knocking the building off its foundation, and

virtually vaporizing a radio. A huge maple outside the house is “shattered and hurled to the ground as if some fabled giant had struck it, crumpling it like a pasteboard box,” The Ridgefield Press reports.

July 5, 1930 – The Silver Spring Country Club Inc. finally organizes, and announces plans to build an 18-hole golf course on 263 acres in the Silver Spring district. Governors include George Doubleday, Louis D. Conley, John H. Lynch Jr., Theodore C. Jessup, Richard L. Jackson, Seth Low Pierrepont, and Robert P. Scripps.

July 11, 1930 – While crossing Main Street near Bissell’s Drug Store, John Dowling, 73, is struck by a car and killed. A furniture-maker, he was a veteran of the Spanish-American War.

August 1930 – The Village Improvement Committee of the Ridgefield Garden Club is working on cleaning up the ancient Burying Yard on upper Wilton Road East, and will erect a memorial.

Aug. 3, 1930 – Teenagers Thomas Brady, George Mulvaney, and Joseph Pierandri are returning from a firemen’s carnival in Brewster when their Chrysler is run off the road by several drunks in a car. A man pulls a gun and starts firing at the boys, who flee. No one is injured or arrested.

Aug. 9, 1930 – An oil stove is believed to have started a fire that destroys a vacant house in Farmingville. The house was a weekend retreat for a New York man.

September 1930 – Talk of the town is Charlotte Potter Lewis, stepdaughter of ambassador to Cuba Harry F. Guggenheim [later founder of Newsday]. She is in Reno, getting a divorce from Reginald Lewis of South Salem Road, charging him with “constant fault-finding.”

Sept. 7, 1930 – Col. Louis David Conley, who once led New York’s fighting 69th Regiment and later became Ridgefield’s biggest landowner, dies at 56 at his home, Outpost Farm [now Bennett’s Farm State Park]. Colonel Conley founded Outpost Nurseries, which spread over some 2,000 acres of northeastern Ridgefield and parts of Danbury, and supplied estates and cities throughout the Northeast. He had also just established the Outpost Inn earlier this year.

Sept. 12, 1930 – 40 people have applied so far for membership in the Silver Spring Country Club. A subscription to 10 shares of stock costs \$1,000.

Sept. 14, 1930 – A new Ford pickup truck and a Chevrolet coach are destroyed when an outbuilding on Mrs. John H. Lynch’s estate on West Mountain burns.

Sept. 18, 1930 – Burr's store in the Scott Block on Main Street is having a sale. Raccoon coats start at \$150 while Australian Opossum is \$175. A muskrat coat starts at \$75.

Sept. 20, 1930 – Baltimore Orioles hurler Big Jim Weaver comes to town to pitch the Ridgefield Pros to a 5-2 win over Brewster.

Oct. 6, 1930 – Mary M. Gilbert, a Democrat, is elected the town's first female constable at the Annual Town Meeting. A total of 711 electors out of 1,475 on the voting list appear to pass budgets and elect own officers, including first selectman Winthrop E. Rockwell.

Oct. 9, 1930 – The Republican caucus nominates the Rev. Hugh Shields, minister of the First Congregational Church, along with Alice V. Rowland, as candidates for state representative from Ridgefield [there were two representatives then].

Oct. 18, 1930 – Two Mount Vernon, N.Y., men are killed, and three other people are injured in a head-on collision on the Sugar Hollow Road, just south of the Danbury line. Liquor is found in the New York car, whose driver was said to be drunk.

Oct. 20, 1930 – Ridgefield Savings Bank moves into its new Main Street headquarters.

November 1930 – State Police Lt. John Kelly stops and searches a car operated by Edward Knudson. A passenger, Mrs. Hilda Knapp of South Salem, grabs a gallon jug of applejack and smashes it on the concrete pavement of Main Street. She is charged with breach of the peace and later fined \$10 and costs in town court. Lt. Kelly later finds two more gallons of "booze" in the car.

Nov. 4, 1930 – Yale Dean Wilbur L. Cross wins Fairfield County and the state to become governor over Republican Ernest E. Rogers. Republican Ridgefield, however, goes strongly for Republican Rogers, 728-273.

Nov. 9, 1930 – Crossing Main Street in front of her house, Librarian Marion Nash of the Ridgefield Library is killed by a car. The popular Ridgefield native is the second person killed by a car on Main Street this year.

December 1930 – Thieves steal light bulbs from the Christmas display at the Ridgefield Library, prompting a lot of outrage.

## **1931**

1931 – Joseph H. Donnelly becomes the first lawyer to open a full-time practice in Ridgefield.

January 1931 – The Ridgefield Red Cross, led by Mrs. Frederic E. Lewis, sends \$500 to the Drought Fund to help the 21 states suffering from drought. A total of \$10 million is being sought nationwide.

Jan. 10, 1931 – In a Saturday morning raid on the home of a housewife living on Prospect Hill, state police uncover 30 barrels of wine, 8 barrels of cider, 38 quarts bottles of wine, 33 pints of whiskey, and other alcoholic beverages. She is tried before Justice Peter McManus that afternoon and fined \$200 plus costs, and given 30 days in jail, suspended. The booze is destroyed.

Jan. 17, 1931 – High school students stage “Hiawatha,” at the town hall. Eleanor Burdick is the coach of the performance, aimed at raising money to support the class trip to Washington, D.C.

Feb. 5, 1931 – William F. Sturges is elected foreman of the P.C. Lounsbury Engine Company.

March 2, 1931 – Luke Kilcoyne, “Ridgefield’s pride,” defeats his Hartford opponent in less than 10 minutes in a Knights of Columbus wrestling match in the town hall.

March 7, 1931 – The Nissaki Camp Fire Girls are busy selling cookies. A total of 175 orders are taken.

March 23, 1931 – A large barn on the former John F. Holmes farm on Barry Avenue, now owned by George Doubleday, burns to the ground

Spring 1931 – The District Nursing Association decides to intensify efforts to have all town children inoculated for diphtheria.

April 1931 – Fire Chief Joe Bacchiochi is teaching his men how to use the new Seagraves fire truck that just arrived. It’s equipped with many ladders from 45 to 12 feet long, an 80-gallon booster tank, three soda acid extinguishers, one carbon technichloride tank for electrical fires, a door opener, and three nozzles.

April 2, 1931 – Aballo, the Magician, appears in a program for kids at the Italian Mutual Aid Society, along with “Alice, the Girl of Many Mysteries.”

May 4, 1931 – Francis D. Martin, president of the Lions Club, tells the League of Women Voters that Ridgefield could have town-collected garbage service by only slightly raising the property tax. The actual cost would be less than a dollar a month per household, he estimates.

May 15, 1931 – Francis F. Kelley, driver of a truckload of liquor confiscated on the Danbury-Norwalk Road April 15, is sentenced to a year in jail. He is the son-in-law of Joseph Jordan, “reputed king of the New York-Canadian boundary,” the Press reports.

May 20, 1931 – The State House votes \$1 million to build the Merritt Parkway.

May 30 to June 2 – Artist George J. Stengel opens his Main Street studio for an exhibit of paintings of Mexico, from which he had recently returned. [Today, works by Stengel, who died in 1937, sell for \$35,000 or more.]

June 1931 – Under a new state law, the Town School Committee is now called the Board of Education. Towns that use the term, Board of School Visitors, must also change.

June 6, 1931 – Schultze’s Modern Sanitary Market, temporarily located elsewhere, reopens in its old but extensively renovated spot in the S.S. Denton block. The new building is “fireproof and rat-proof” [*but see* Jan. 12, 1932].

June 14, 1931 – The Ridgefield Base Ball Club opens its season, beating Greenwich 5-4.

Jun 18, 1931 – 24 students graduate from Ridgefield High School. Agnes Creagh is valedictorian.

June 20, 1931 – The Ridgefield Library costs \$4,612 to operate during the previous year, the library’s annual meeting learns.

July 2, 1931 – The Board of Education votes to build a sidewalk along the road in front of the Benjamin Franklin School [now the Venus office building].

July 11, 1931 – The Ladies’ Guild at St. Stephen’s Church put on The Village Fair on the church grounds, with many stalls of goods, a grab bag, and fancy meals.

July 13, 1931 – 45 children between preschool age and five attend the Summer Play School, operated by the Ridgefield Garden Club at the Garden School on Bailey Avenue. The school is led by Miss Marion Scofield, who graduated in June from the Kindergarten Training School in Bridgeport.

August 1931 – Work begins on reconstructing several unpaved roads in town under the state Dirt Roads Act, which provides aid. Being rebuilt are Mulberry Street, Silver Spring Road, Nod Hill Road, Wilton Road East, and Florida Road.

August 1931 – Frederick Dielman of Ridgefield, a noted artist and former president of the National Academy of Design, retires as professor at Cooper Union in New York. He is 84.

August 1931 – A Danbury company begins to build nearly four miles of a new West Mountain Road, replacing what's now Oscaleta Road.

Aug. 9, 1931 – A 1927 Whippet, parked in a garage at the Jonathan Bulkley estate on West Mountain, catches fire and nearly burns down the garage. Employees save the building, but the car is lost.

Aug. 10, 1931 – At about noon, the first auto-gyro to ever visit Ridgefield lands at Stonecrest Farm on North Street, piloted by D.J. Barrett Jr. His father, D.J. Barrett Sr., is renting the estate. The auto-gyro, a predecessor of the helicopter that has both wings and rotors, has 37 foot blades and can travel up to 95 mph.

Aug. 26, 1931 – Kittens from as far away as Iowa are exhibited in the Kitten Show at the Congregational Church casino, sponsored by the Connecticut Cat Club.

Sept. 16, 1931 – The schools count enrollments: 321 in junior and senior high, ranging from 92 in seventh grade to 31 in 12<sup>th</sup> grade, and 230 in elementary grades, all at the Benjamin Franklin School; 73 students in the Garden School (preschool, kindergarten and first grade); 56 at Titicus School (first through fourth grade); 14 at Farmingville; and 24 at Branchville.

Sept. 19, 1931 – State police pick up two drunken boys staggering along the main road in Branchville. After they sober up, the boys confess where they bought their booze. Two days later, police raid a home in Branchville, confiscate a large quantity of beer and wine, arrest the owner, and take him before Justice Peter McManus, where he pleads guilty and is fined \$200 plus costs. The boys are not charged.

Oct. 1, 1931 – Rumors that the Danbury Fair has been canceled “because of the infantile paralysis situation” prove false, The Press reports.

Oct. 5, 1931 – 711 of the town's 1,554 voters turn out for the Annual Town Meeting, which elects Winthrop Rockwell and Charles Palmer, Republicans, and Charles D. Crouchley, Democrat, as the Board of Selectmen. Palmer is also elected to the Board of Education along with Robert E. Richardson and future first selectman Harry E. Hull, who, despite being a Democrat, is soon elected chairman. The only loser for the board is Harry E. Bard, former superintendent of schools.

Oct. 5, 1931 – After the state cracks down on town deposit funds, voters approve appropriating \$5,760 to replenish the Town Deposit Fund [*see* Jan. 30, 1837]. Apparently at some time in the past, the fund's money became mingled with other money of the town so that its identity was lost.

Oct. 11, 1931 – Poachers kill a deer in Ridgebury and escape.

Oct. 29, 1931 – H.P. Bissell is advertising “the new Verichrome Film” along with a complete line of Kodaks.

November 1931 – Thanksgiving turkeys are running from 39 to 55 cents a pound.

Nov. 1, 1931 – Thieves take \$6,000 in furniture, rugs and other items from the Ridgefield summer home of “New York millionaire” Paolini Gerli. Police later arrest former Ridgefielder Halfdam Paulson, 30, and another man for the break. [Gerli headed the famous international silk manufacturing and designing firm, Gerli & Co., still extant today.]

Dec. 10, 1931 – The Ridgefield Fire Department is collecting used toys to repair and distribute to the needy.

## **1932**

January 1932 – Dog Warden Joe Zwierlein warns dog owners that rabies is around.

Jan. 2, 1932 – B. Ogden Chisholm throws a big party at his High Ridge home, with invitations that state, “on this occasion it is hoped to give the BOOT to Old Man Depression.”

Jan. 12, 1932 – Fire at the Denton Block on Main Street heavily damages several businesses and destroys the apartments and belongings of three families. The recently renovated Schultze’s Sanitary Market is damaged.

March – Tom Clark scores 12 points to lead Prosperity to a 25-20 basketball win over Depression in town hall.

May 1932 – The Lions and Garden Clubs cooperate to provide free land on which unemployed Ridgefielders can raise food.

May 28, 1932 – The first nine holes of new Silver Spring Country Club open and all 18 are ready July 2.

July 31, 1932 – Officer John Palmer is responding to a report of an illegal peddler at a baseball game on East Ridge when a car hits his motorcycle at East Ridge and Governor Streets. He is killed, the first and only Ridgefield policeman to die in the line of duty.

Summer 1932 – An entrepreneur reopens the silica, mica and feldspar mine in Branchville.

September 1932 – A truck carrying 100 kegs of illegal beer is captured on West Lane and three men, including an ex-con, are arrested.

October 1932 – Hundreds view a parade down Main Street for the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of George Washington's birthday year.

## **1933**

1933 – A state aid cut threatens school bus service. The state had paid a third of the town's \$9,000 busing cost.

Jan. 12, 1933 – The Past Noble Grands Association is organized. Any former noble grand of the Mary Rebekah Lodge, the female version of Odd Fellows, is eligible.

March 1933 – In the fourth burglary that winter, \$15,000 in silver is stolen from Mrs. F. E. Lewis of West Lane. State police soon arrest Sing Sing parolee "Big Frank" Dreger, "the smartest silver thief in the United States." Though he dresses like a tramp, Dreger is widely traveled in Europe and his conversation is "very cultured," says State Police Trooper Leo F. Carroll.

Spring 1933 – The talk of the region is the new "Merritt Highway," proposed to run through south-county towns.

April 1933 – The Ridgefield Boys Band, disbanded in December 1932, is replaced by The Oreneca Band, "a new and better band."

May 1933 – 600 people crowd town hall for the Lions Club "Community Get Together," featuring music, dance, and speakers.

June 1933 – Ridgefielders join the state in voting for the repeal of Prohibition. The margin: 6 to 1.

Summer 1933 – Many businesses adopt Roosevelt's NRA program to improve employment and set a minimum wage.

November 1933 – Though district schoolhouses like Branchville are in bad shape, the Town Meeting votes 177-38 against a new \$70,000 school addition that would allow consolidation of grammar school pupils and closing of outlying one-room school houses. Times are too tough, voters say.

November 1933 – Dr. George W. Andrews tells 100 teenagers that the "modern moving picture is degenerating and is the problem of today's society."



Dec. 2, 1933 – Two sacks of first class mail, headed for Ridgefield, are stolen from Branchville Station. No clues are found, and it is believed at least \$1,000 was in the bags.

December 1933 – 170 unemployed Ridgefield men show up at town hall early this month to apply for jobs under Civil Works Administration plan.

December 1933 – Outpost Nurseries ships a 60-foot Norway Spruce to New York to become the third Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree. The first was in 1931.

## **1934**

February 1934 – Francis Rowland and Chuck Walker rescue skater Enzo Bartolucci, 18, from the icy waters of Lake Mamanasco.

Feb. 1, 1934 – The Cott Wine and Liquor Store opens the first new liquor store since Prohibition was repealed.

Feb. 22, 1934 – “Worst Blizzard Since 1888 Grips All New England” says the banner Press headline after more than two feet of snow fall. Drifts as high as eight feet are reported and roads are impassible for miles.

May 1934 – A manhunt seeks the Faruggia brothers, former Ridgefielders described as “religious and social fanatics,” who kill a New York City policeman and a bystander while on their way with two gallons of gasoline “to burn down the first Roman Catholic church they came to.”

May 27, 1934 – Eliza Gage Wade of North Street, who remembers talking to Revolutionary War veterans, turns 104. She dies three weeks later.

July 1934 – Eleven of 20 living pupils of Miss Jennie Holmes’ at the Flat Rock Schoolhouse in 1883 gather to honor her as she nears her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. She began teaching there in 1873.

Aug. 1, 1934 — The Triple Brothers Circus comes to town

Aug. 5, 1934 – St. Mary’s dedicates three new altars

Sept. 8, 1934 – Ridgefielder William Wright, a 17-year-old seaman, is credited with rescuing several passengers as his ship, the Morro Castle, burns off New Jersey, killing 133.

Oct. 15, 1934 – Frank L. Hilton, a retired New York banker, stands on the sidewalk in front of the First National Bank on Main Street at 6:45 p.m. and puts a bullet through his

head. "Simply one of the thousands who thought they could not carry on any farther," he says in a note. "Cause of death: suicide. Reason: Financial worry." It is the height of the Depression.

Nov. 6, 1934 – State Rep. Alice V. Rowland is elected state senator, the first and last Ridgefield woman to hold that office.

Nov. 9, 1934 – The state library begins cataloging all the extant gravestones in Ridgefield's cemeteries, with money from the Works Projects Administration. The 205-pages of listings are completed in December 1937.

## **1935**

1935 – Police say 46 auto accidents occur in town this year, two fewer than in 1934.

February 1935 – A mass meeting discusses Dutch Elm disease after federal authorities begin removing diseased trees in the area. None have yet been found in Ridgefield.

February 1935 – The local laborers union petitions the selectmen to raise the wage of town workers from 40 cents an hour to the 50 cents that federal relief workers are getting locally.

March 1935 – A Plymouth automobile salesroom opens at the Tidewater Garage on Danbury Road.

March 1935 – First Selectman Winthrop Rockwell proposes \$100,000 in projects for the federal Public Works Administration grants. He includes a \$50,000 auditorium for the East Ridge School.

March 28, 1935 – A front-page Press editorial headlined: "UNFAIR – UNPATRIOTIC – UNSOUND," denounces the big estates in town that are having work done by "outside firms and labor." "Ridgefield men can do Ridgefield's work," the editorial says. "Give them a chance."

April 1935 – After a four-day strike, the painters' union agrees to a wage of \$7 for eight hours of work. Painters had been getting \$6 for seven hours.

Spring 1935 – Walter Evans collects 23,733 tent caterpillar egg masses to win a Ridgefield Garden Club contest aimed at curbing the defoliators. In all, 239,628 egg masses are amassed.

Summer 1935 – Ridgefield marks the state's Tercentenary that summer with the "greatest parade ever to be seen in Ridgefield," as well as exhibits and tableaux. In October, two

Ridgefield floats – the Italian-American Club's and the First Congregational Church's – appear in the state parade in Hartford.

July 1935 – After a three-year delay, John L. Walker is confirmed as postmaster.

Sept. 6, 1935 – A Town Meeting approves selling alcoholic beverages in Ridgefield hotels and restaurants, but not at taverns, on Sundays.

September 1935 – The new A&P liquor store opens on Main Street. Old Overholt rye is \$1.99 a pint.

October 1935 – Francis D. Martin opens his new jewelry store on Main Street. It's the forerunner of today's Craig's Jewelry Store.

December 1935 – The Lions Club distributes 100 food baskets at Christmas.

## **1936**

1936 – Stamford Community College offers Ridgefield High School graduates free tuition, thanks to a WPA program.

January 1936 – The post office cuts back its hours, closing at 6 p.m. instead of 7 Monday through Saturday.

February 1936 – The Democratic Town Committee votes to support closing Titicus Schoolhouse and expanding the Center School on East Ridge.

March 1936 – Tight times force the schools to drop the lunch program. The District Nurses decide to provide milk, but must stop by May because the schools have no way to refrigerate the drink.

Spring 1936 – A Torrington company, rebuilding a half dozen town roads, has trouble finding laborers willing to work for 45 cents an hour after someone tells workers union scale is 62 cents.

Spring 1936 – St. Mary's Parish charts Boy Scout Troop 76.

Spring 1936 – The Abbe children – Patience, Richard, and Johnny – of West Lane are a national sensation, as their travel book, *Around the World in 11 Years*, becomes a best seller.

May 1936 – Responding to the fact that many can no longer afford magazines or daily newspapers, The Press expands from eight to 16 pages a week adding many national

features plus the “World’s Best Comics,” including The Featherheads, Mescal Ike and Finney of the Force.

May 1936 – First National opens a new market in the Scott Block, described as “one of the most beautiful combination meat and grocery markets in Fairfield County.” Tom Clark is manager.

May 1936 – A 27-year-old Branchville woman is charged with manslaughter after beating her three-month-old daughter to death.

June 1936 – By a 251 to 229 vote, a Town Meeting again rejects establishing zoning in the village.

Summer 1936 – Because so many business people are parking along Main Street, the selectmen establish a two-hour parking ordinance.

July 1936 – Gene Tunney, former heavyweight boxing champion of the world, plays a round of golf at Silver Spring Country Club with John Wheeler of Ridgebury.

July 1936 – 800 watch a “donkey baseball game,” sponsored by the American Legion.

July 22, 1936.– Eleven Ridgefield women, most of them wealthy, create the Ridgefield Boys Club.

Aug. 18, 1936 – Francis J. Bassett is driving down Wilton Road West when he stops for a car parked near the middle of the road. “Will you get over?” he asks the driver. He looks more closely. “Oh, please excuse me, Mrs. Roosevelt,” Bassett exclaims. “That’s all right, young man,” replies Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of the president.

September 1936 – American Mercury magazine, a leading periodical, says it’s moving its offices to Main and Governor Streets.

September 1936 – In a GOP caucus contest, George L. Rockwell easily defeats two women challengers for state representative. Rockwell gets 319 votes; Mrs. Hugh Shields, 67; Mrs. Charles W. Weitzel, 19.

Nov. 3, 1936 – Mrs. Roosevelt’s husband takes the nation by a landslide, but Republican Ridgefield goes for Alf Landon, 1,203 to 556.

## **1937**

1937 – The Ridgefield Thrift Shop opens in the Donnelly Block on Main Street.

January 1937 – Ridgefielders learn of plans for a new parkway proposed by the Fairfield County Planning Association that would run from Pound Ridge through New Canaan, southeast of Ridgefield Center past Putnam Park in Redding, through Newtown and on to Hartford. The goal is to connect New York with western Massachusetts. It gets nowhere.

Mid-February 1937 – The temperature hits 92 in the sun on Main Street; a month later the whole town loses electricity in a severe ice storm.

March 1937 – The School Building Committee selects Cass Gilbert Inc. to design an auditorium, gymnasium and additional classrooms for the Center School on East Ridge; the cost is estimated at \$250,000.

April 1937 – Outpost Nurseries gets the contract to supply full-grown trees to be planted in Flushing Meadows for the 1939 World's Fair in New York; on July 1, the Outpost Inn opens on the nurseries' property on Danbury Road.

June 1937 – Townspeople are up in arms over state highway department plan to enforce parallel parking on Main Street, to change the speed limit from 20 to 30 m.p.h., and to put in a rotary at Main and Catoonah Streets.

June 1937 – Lightning strikes and kills nine Jersey heifers at Robert Lee's farm in Farmingville.

Summer 1937 – A. Bacchioni & Sons pours concrete onto a sunken ledge of jagged rock to form the dam that creates a 45-acre lake on Seth Low Pierrepont's estate. Today the water is called Pierrepont Pond.

Summer 1937 – With \$92 in cash and \$2,250 in borrowed money, brothers Karl and John Nash buy The Ridgefield Press, a \$12,000-a-year-gross newspaper that under Karl Nash grows into a multi-million dollar group of newspapers.

Fall 1937 – The Board of Education votes to close the pre-school at the Garden School so that pupils from the Titicus and Branchville Schools can be transferred there and those remaining "little red schoolhouses" can be closed. Townspeople rally for a new school and soon learn there will be no federal money for the addition to the Center School on East Ridge.

Oct. 29, 1937 – A town meeting on approves a \$250,000 bond issue for the Center School addition, gymnasium and auditorium. It takes a year for work to begin.

## 1938

1938 – The Ridgefield Teachers Association, the collective-bargaining agent for the town's teachers, is formed.

1938 – The Ridgefield School, a private prep school for boys on North Salem Road, closes for lack of enrollment and alumni support. It started in 1907.

Jan. 4, 1938 – The first Ridgefield ambulance takes its first passenger to the hospital: Aldo Casagrande, injured in a fall on the ice. The new service is free to townspeople; the ambulance was acquired by the fire department, which raised \$2,000 by public subscription to buy it. By the end of the year, 54 ambulance calls are received.

Feb. 17, 1938 – The Ridgefield Press goes from broadsheet to tabloid size, a format that remains until the early 1960s.

March 1, 1938 – Hundreds watch as a fire destroys the 20-room mansion of Mr. and Mrs. H. Steele Roberts on Peaceable Street, built less than a year earlier for the then sizable sum of \$55,000.

March 31, 1938 – The Last Man's Club has its first dinner on. The club, made up of 31 Ridgefield World War I veterans, meets annually to dine until only one man remains – Thomas Shaughnessy in 1989.

March 31, 1938 – Joseph Dlhy's "big hound dog" dies after being bitten by a rattlesnake in the woods in Ridgebury.

April 1938 – Plans are announced to build "a beautiful, modern air-conditioned motion picture theater" on land to be acquired for \$7,500 from the Ridgefield Library. In 2000, the library buys back the old playhouse from Webster Bank for \$1.5 million.

May 1938 – The first Firemen's Ball takes place. The annual tradition would continue until the 1970s.

May 1938 – The Ridgefield Press moves from the Masonic Hall to a building formerly known as Walters' garage on Bailey Avenue.

Sept. 21, 1938 – The huge hurricane that strikes southern New England takes a heavy toll on the town's trees; about 100 were reported down and many more damaged, says State Police Lt. Leo F. Carroll.

Sept. 25, 1938 – Three Ridgefield sport fishermen, feared lost on Long Island Sound in Wednesday's hurricane, arrive home. They weather the storm on Plum Island, and their

38-foot cabin cruiser – built by one of them, garage owner Paul E. Raymond – suffers only minor damage.

Oct. 1, 1938 – St. Stephen's Church sponsors a dog show.

Nov. 1, 1938 – Construction of the new classrooms, auditorium, and gymnasium at the East Ridge School begins.

Nov. 1, 1938 – The Socialist candidate for Connecticut governor, Jasper McLevy, gets 181 votes in Ridgefield; the majority favors the eventual winner, Republican Raymond E. Baldwin, who also defeats Wilbur Cross.

## **1939**

1939 – Actor/director/coach Michael Chekhov moves his Chekhov Theatre Studio from England to North Salem Road, where it remains during the war.

1939 – The Ridgefield Branch of the Red Cross is mobilized to help refugees in occupied Europe, and eventually, to help American soldiers. By 1945, more than 20,000 articles of clothing are knit or sewn by the women.

Jan. 30, 1939 – Ridgefielders celebrate President Franklin D. Roosevelt's birthday with the Shipwreck Dance, to raise money for the March of Dimes. The event in town hall raises more than \$100, at admission of 50 cents per person.

February 1939 – The Press reports that more than 100 townspeople are vacationing in Florida.

May 4, 1939 – Gloria Morgan Vanderbilt, the quintessential "poor little rich girl," is spending a few days at the Outpost Inn (under the assumed name, "Miss Whitney") when she is stricken with appendicitis and is rushed back to New York for emergency surgery.

May 25, 1939 – Four train carloads of cast iron pipe arrive for the Ridgefield Water Supply Company, to be used to replace old pipe and extend some lines in the village.

June 1939 – The last of the "one-room" district schoolhouses (though some had two rooms) close – Titicus, Farmingville, Ridgebury, and Branchville.

June 15, 1939 – The 100-foot high water tower at Downesbury Manor burns in "one of the most spectacular blazes in the history of the town."

June 1939 – A Works Progress Administration project begins to alter and improve the athletic field on East Ridge at the high school.

September 1939 – The new classrooms on East Ridge added to what had been called the “Center School” are in use as school opens.

Sept. 8, 1939 – The Ridgefield Chauffeurs Club has its first Chauffeurs Ball at town hall, to benefit the District Nursing Association.

Sept. 7, 1939 – The Press reports that with the beginning of war in Europe, “Local People Flee Europe at Outbreak.”

Oct. 9, 1939 – The town’s night constable, J. Ebert Anderson, dies in town hall of a single gunshot wound from his service revolver, which discharged when he accidentally dropped it. He is the second Ridgefield police officer to die while on duty.

Nov. 9, 1939 – Just in time for Veterans Day, the Board of Education transfers the Titicus School to the American Legion Post for its headquarters.

Nov. 28, 1939 – Nearly 500 people see the first basketball games in the new gymnasium on East Ridge; Ridgefield’s two squads both defeat their Bethel opponents.

Dec. 22, 1939 – The first school dance takes place in the new high school gym.

Dec. 24, 1939 – On Christmas Eve, Ridgefielders join fellow Americans in lighting up the night to celebrate the country’s freedom from the war-caused blackouts then occurring in Europe.

## **1940**

1940 – Ridgefield’s population is 3,900.

1940 — A total of 49 births, 54 deaths and 50 marriages are recorded by the town clerk this year.

Jan. 3, 1940 — Luther R. Nash is named the chairman of a Ridgefield committee collecting contributions for Finnish Relief. The Ridgefielders are responding to former president Herbert Hoover’s request to help the nation that has been invaded by Russia.

Jan. 4, 1940 — The biggest problem facing the school board is what to do about the janitors at the East Ridge School. Ernest V. Haight Sr. has resigned as supervising janitor on the advice of his physician who said he should not do the heavy physical work the position demands. But the board declines to name a replacement head janitor after hearing a report from members Edna Schoyer and Anne S. Richardson that the “school is not undermanned” in janitorial services. The board tells School Superintendent A D. Horton to supervise janitorial work.



Jan. 8, 1940 — Karl S. Nash, president of the Young Republicans Club, names Mrs. Lyman E. Anderson, Miss Monica McManus and Lewis J. Finch to the social activities committee.

Jan. 11, 1940 — “The Hunchback of Notre Dame” is playing at the Empress Theater in Danbury. Among the film’s stars is Walter Hampden of Mopus Bridge Road, who portrays the bishop of Notre Dame cathedral.

Jan. 11, 1940 — “The White Spot is the Right Spot” says an ad in The Ridgefield Press for the White Spot Restaurant on Main Street, serving “delicious quality food.”

Jan. 15, 1940 — Leno Valentino leads RHS with 12 points as the locals down Danbury Trade, 32-27, at basketball. In two years Valentino will be piloting B-24 Liberator bombers in the South Pacific.

Jan. 16, 1940 – Harvey Lown, tax collector for 12 years and a longtime insurance agent, is arrested for embezzling more than \$10,000 (\$174,000 in 2017 dollars) of town money over the past two and a half years. He resigns his office.

Jan. 18, 1940 — A Bridgeport driver escapes serious injury when his large tanker, carrying 1,200 gallons of oil, goes off Route 7 just north of Branchville and winds up upside down in the Norwalk River. The oil winds up flowing down to Norwalk.

Jan. 18, 1940 — Perry’s Market on Main Street, “associated with S.S. Pierce Co.,” has pot roasts for 32 cents a pound, home-made sausage for 30 cents, and smoked tenderloins at 35 cents. One can also buy three pounds of ground beef, pork and veal mix for meat loaf for a total of 69 cents.

Jan. 21, 1940 — Joseph Gibney, proprietor of the Outpost Inn, appears on the Major Bowes national radio program, “Capitol Theatre Family Party,” as a singer. The innkeeper is a former church soloist.

Jan. 23, 1940 — The Lions Club votes to create a swimming pond and skating rink for young people at the late Gov. P.C. Lounsbury’s fish ponds on Governor Street. Lion Francis D. Martin says it’s an ideal location at a relatively small cost. The site is now the Boys and Girls Club swimming pool.

Jan. 24, 1940 — For Ernest J. Rosenblad, 33, the third strike is fatal. Rosenblad, a Ridgefield construction worker, has nearly recovered from injuries from two accidents in two months in which he successively lost the use of his right and and left legs and was hospitalized for a total of four weeks. At around 1 o’clock this morning, he is returning

from attending a hockey game in New York City when his car enters an unprotected grade crossing in Mt. Kisco and is hit by a New York Central locomotive, killing him.

Jan. 25, 1940 — Ridgefielders have contributed \$1,662 (\$29,000) for Finnish Relief.

Jan. 28, 1940 — Dr. Russell W. Lowe retires as town health officer, a job he has held since 1893. Coincidentally, Miss Ellen Anderson, his office nurse for 18 years, dies two days earlier. The selectmen appoint Dr. Francis B. Woodford as the new health officer.

Jan. 29, 1940 — The East Ridge School's new cafeteria opens, part of the recent \$310,000 (\$5.4 million in 2017) expansion of the school that was delayed by the late arrival of various pieces of kitchen equipment. Mr. and Mrs. Arnold B. Nash operate the cafeteria, which is feeding about 200 students a day. "The menu for the children is simple," says The Press. "There is a hot dish with soup, meat, potatoes and two other vegetables for 15 cents. Tomato juice, grapefruit, pineapple juice, and milk is five cents. Pie and salads are eight cents and sandwiches, six."

Feb. 1, 1940 — Auditors going over the books of arrested tax collector Harvey Lown find \$4,000 more money missing. Lown has made restitution for the \$10,000 in shortages discovered earlier.

Feb. 4, 1940 — On a Sunday, The Press publishes a special edition that reprints the entire state audit report on Harvey Lown's books.

Feb. 8, 1940 — Lewis Chevrolet in Danbury is advertising the 1940 Master 85 Sport Chevy Sedan for \$740. Features include an 85 horsepower valve-in-head engine, new exclusive vacuum-power shift and all-silent syncro-mesh transmission, perfected hydraulic brakes, sealed beam headlights with separate parking lights, improved shockproof steering, and new crystal-clear hi-test safety plate glass.

Feb. 12, 1940 — Ted Shane of North Salem Road and Lowell Thomas write a new book, "Soft Ball — So What?" which is both a history and a handbook on the game.

Feb. 14, 1940 — A severe blizzard, with 70 m.p.h. winds, hits the town. A crew of up to 39 men supplied by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) helps clear drifts.

Feb. 15, 1940 — Francis J. Bassett, economics teacher at Ridgefield High School, announces he's a candidate for state representative on the Democratic ticket. He says he's running, "believing that the need of the day is for youth to take responsibility in government to bring a new spirit of honesty and unselfishness in democracy, restoring Christian values in every institution of American life."

Feb 15, 1940 — Ridgefield Motors on Catoonah Street is appointed local dealer for Pontiac, LaSalle and Cadillac automobiles.

Feb. 16 — George I. Johnson, who had been Ridgefield's first telephone operator in the 1890s, dies at age 84. Johnson worked his switchboard in a small building on Governor Street, behind today's Wells Fargo Bank, and later in the "Telephone Building" on Main Street (now the Amatuzzi building). He was also the town's telegraphy operator for 34 years and carried on a watch and clock repair business when people weren't calling and sending Morse. He was also one of the first Ridgefielders to own an automobile: A one-cylinder 1903 Rambler Runabout.

Feb. 17, 1940 — Jack Leary, a 1939 RHS graduate, begins the five-week Babe Ruth Baseball School program in Palatka, Fla. Leary hit over .400 in his senior year. While he does well in the camp, he is not signed by any scouts from the majors because he is too small.

Feb. 23, 1940 — Mrs. Ralph B. Crouchley is elected chairman of the Girl Scouts in Ridgefield. Miss Elsa Hartmann is vice chairman.

Feb. 28, 1940 — Boyd's, a new restaurant, opens in the former quarters of the Village Grill on Main Street. Proprietor Herbert Brooks, who had worked for the Howard Johnson chain, has added a soda fountain. A complete dinner includes "choice of mushroom soup, cranberry, pineapple, grapefruit, tomato juice, or fresh fruit cup; salad bowl and relish dish; a choice of roast stuffed native chicken with cranberry sauce and giblet gray, or broiled sirloin steak with a choice of two: fresh green peas, julienne carrots, fresh garden spinach, fluffy whipped or French fried potatoes; home-made rolls and butter; and a choice of apple, mince, or pumpkin pie, fudge mocha cake, fudge shortcake, ice cream, or sherbet, with coffee, tea or milk." The price? 85 cents.

Feb. 29, 1940 — The Chekhov Theatre Studio on North Salem Road announces it will send a company of its members on a national tour in the fall, staging several plays including Dickens's "The Cricket on the Hearth" and Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night."

March 1940 — "Thin first, then prune," advises Paul Edward Case of Ridgefield in an article in House and Garden Magazine. "Clipping off the outside tips of a shrub is not only harder to do well, but cutting out the entire limb is often of more benefit to the plant." Case is the president of a landscape management company.

March 3, 1940 — A major ice storm hits town, bringing down trees and power lines and shutting off electricity to much of Ridgefield for days. "The financial loss to the utility companies cannot be estimated... but all in a position to know assert that it is vastly more than the loss here from the September 1938 hurricane....Miles of electric lines were broken and grounded by falling trees." Cleaning up debris from the storm takes months.

March 6, 1940 — Tommy Shean scores 12 points as RHS defeats Katonah, 25-23. “This game was far and away the best game played at Ridgefield this season and oddly enough, it was the high school’s last encounter of the winter,” says sports reporter Joseph Brunetti. Shean winds up high scorer for the year at 125, followed by Allan Crowley, 91.

March 12, 1940 — In what The Press calls “a voice choked with emotion and perilously close to tears,” State Judge Carl Foster sentences former Ridgefield tax collector to serve from two to five years in prison for embezzlement by a public officer. For years Lown, a beloved war hero and prominent citizen, had tried to help people hit by the Depression. He borrowed money from tax collections to cover the premium payments of his financially strapped insurance office customers, and was replenishing the tax money as his customers scraped together payments. He had gotten behind in the balancing act when state auditors caught him. “This man deserves every ounce of credit that can be given to him, but the public must be protected and the law must be upheld,” says Judge Foster.

March 13, 1940 — The Ridgefield Community Council discusses having a town-wide field day on the Fourth of July, but also banning the sale of fireworks here “because of the fire hazard and the many accidents they cause.”

March 14, 1940 — Mrs. Frederic E. Lewis of West Lane, chairman of the Ridgefield Branch of the Red Cross, reports that 66 sweaters, 34 beanies, 26 mufflers, 42 pairs of socks, and 15 pairs of mittens were knitted by Ridgefield women to ship to European war refugees.

March 14, 1940 — A 1940 Pontiac “Special Six Business Coupe” is on sale at Ridgefield Motors, 13 Catoonah Street, for \$783 (\$13,600 in 2017). The four-door touring model is \$884.

March 20, 1940 — Gov. Raymond Baldwin names former state representative Ethel M. Ryan of Ridgefield to the Merritt Parkway Commission, which is overseeing construction of the road begun in 1938. (Although Ryan’s father, Michael McGlynn, was for many years chairman of the Democratic Town Committee, she was a lifelong Republican.)

March 23, 1940 – The Ridgefield Playhouse, the town’s first dedicated theater, opens on Prospect Street and shows its first movie, “Broadway Melody of 1940,” starring Fred Astaire and Eleanor Powell, plus the Disney cartoon, “The Ugly Duckling.” The building is designed by the acclaimed architect John Eberson (1875-1954), who had done more than 160 theaters in the United States and Europe. The Ridgefield Press publishes a 12-page special supplement in honor of the opening. “The history of the Ridgefield Playhouse up to the time of its becoming a going institution, is concerned largely with the efforts of Arthur Carnall to sell an idea based on faith in the future of Ridgefield and the countryside round about,” says Press editor and publisher Karl S. Nash. (Closed around

1973, the playhouse became the Webster Bank for many years, but in 2000 was purchased by the Ridgefield Library, which had provided the land for the theater back in 1939. The library sold it to a group of Ridgefielders who tore down the building and erected a near replica movie house, called The Prospector, which employs many people with disabilities.)

March 27, 1940 — Attempts to verify a widespread rumor in town that the former Ridgefield School property at the north end of Lake Mamanasco, currently being used by the Chekhov Theater Studio, is soon to be purchased by the German-American Bund, a pro-Nazi organization, have proven fruitless, The Press says.

March 28, 1940 — Business leader Francis D. Martin says the town should sell the Town Farm on North Salem Road and use the money to remodel the town hall, adding more space for the growing government. He says officials need “efficient and adequate offices.” Voters reject the idea of selling the farm, but appoint a committee to study town hall improvements.

April 1940 – Gene Casagrande and John Moore open Casa-More market on West Lane. Today called West Lane Deli, it is the only neighborhood grocery store left in Ridgefield.

April 1, 1940 — Edward D. Hyde opens Hyde’s Wines and Liquors on Main Street. He had been manager of the A&P liquor store since 1935. Hyde’s continues into the 1980s, operated by his son, Brian, later by the family of First Selectman Joseph McLinden, and then by Barbara McCarthy who was to become famous as the owner Corner Pub (now The Hideaway) for a quarter century.

April 2, 1940 – Alex Santini bowls 200 consecutive games in one night at the Brewster Alleys. His average: 155. It was “one of the most dazzling bowling performances ever seen in these parts,” says Press sports reporter Joe Brunetti.

April 4, 1940 — Paolino Gerli, a prominent silk importer, sells his Branchille Road home — the former Greims estate — to Edward and Elizabeth Petry. One of the features of the estate is a Japanese Tea garden, complete with tea house that was a gift to Gerli from a wealthy Japanese businessman who had it shipped from Japan to Ridgefield.

April 10, 1940 — At a special town meeting, tree warden John W. Smith asks for \$4,200 (\$73,000 in 2017 dollars) to deal with tree work resulting from the recent ice storm. The voters take no action.

April 11, 1940 — Townsend Keeler, Doris LeClair, Joseph Venus, Gladys Seymour, the Rev. Hugh Shields, and Dorothy Ritch are among the cast members in the three-act comedy, “Junior Sees It Through,” staged at the Congregational Church House.

April 17, 1940 — Fifty friends give a bachelor party at the Outpost Inn for Lewis J. Finch, who will marry Adelaide Newman on April 21. “The affair, unlike other dinners of its kind in Ridgefield, was a total surprise to the young benedict-to-be but this did not embarrass him in making a speech of appreciation to the gathering at the end of a program of speaking and entertainment over which Attorney Joseph H. Donnelly presided as toastmaster,” The Ridgefield Press reports.

April 18, 1940 — Ridgefield gets a not-too-nice mention in a booklet just issued by the New England Regional Planning Commission, called “Too Many Cars, Too Little Space.” In it the commission says of Ridgefield: “Narrow, New England main street with rear of diagonally parked cars encroaching on two-lane main thoroughfare. Unenforced two-hour parking restrictions.”

April 19, 1940 — A town meeting takes place for the first time in the new auditorium at the East Ridge School, construction of which was recently completed as part of the new addition to the school. “All speakers could be heard from any part of the auditorium Friday, despite the fact they they spoke in normal tones of voice,” said a Press story, heaping praise on the acoustics of the venue that is now The Ridgefield Playhouse.

April 21, 1940 — Philip S. Carr, manager of the New England Playhouse — Ridgefield’s summer stock theater, flies to California to sign up talent for the coming season opening June 24. He is expected to confer with Humphrey Bogart, Fredric March, Walter Pidgeon, Kay Francis and others. He isn’t as lucky with the stars as he hopes, but he does get Henry Aldrich’s voice.

April 25, 1940 — Greyhound bus advertises new rates: from Ridgefield to New York City, 90 cents; to Philadelphia, \$2.25; to Boston, \$2.75; to Washington, \$3.30; and to St. Louis, Mo., \$15.90. The bus stops at the United Cigar Store on Main Street.

April 25, 1940 — Henry G. Kuhlmann, who operated a popular Main Street market during the 1920s and 30s, dies of a heart attack while playing cards with friends.

May 2, 1940 — The Rev. William B. Lusk’s 25th anniversary as rector of St. Stephen’s Church is celebrated at a dinner at the Outpost Inn.

May 2, 1940 — Harold E. Finch is advertising building lots on Griffith Lane off High Ridge, “restricted to Colonial homes,” for \$1,000 each.

May 5, 1940 — The new addition to the East Ridge School, including classrooms, an auditorium, gymnasium, and cafeteria, is dedicated. Classrooms were ready on time; the rest wasn’t.

May 9, 1940 — The State Traffic Commission tells the town that it must eliminate diagonal parking along Main Street, which is a “trunk line” state highway. Diagonal parking makes the travel portion of the roadway too narrow. The selectmen soon announce a new plan for parallel parking.

May 13, 1940 — Miss May S. Denton’s team wins the Women’s Bowling League title, with a record of 44 victories and only 12 defeats. Miss Lil Girolmetti has the best individual average, 149.4

May 15, 1940 — “I can believe that life begins at 40, but police work goes on forever,” says Lt. Leo F. Carroll, commander of State Police Troop A in Ridgefield. He marks his 40th birthday today and the 20th anniversary of his entry into his policing profession.

May 20, 1940 — Ridgefield’s ears are glued to the radio this morning as students of the sociology class of Ridgefield High School broadcast what is believed to be the first public high school forum in the country on the topic of “How Can We Prevent Crime?” The forum, on WICC in Bridgeport, included students Thomas Shean, Leno Valentino, John Brennan, Dorothy Fischer, Phyllis Smith, Donald Partrick, and Susan Morgan, but also features State Police Lt. Leo Carroll and Fairfield County High Sheriff J. Edward Slavin.

May 21, 1940 — Benvenuto Carboni, a stonemason and “head of Ridgefield’s first family of Italian immigrants,” dies at the age of 70. “Mr. Carboni came to Ridgefield 40 years ago with his family from Ancona, Italy, and took a job helping lay the mains for the town’s water supply system,” says his Press obituary. “He proved himself a skillful artisan and for many years his services have been in great demand.” Carboni also established Ridgefield’s first Italian food store, located first in his Bailey Avenue home and then at the corner of Prospect Street and Bailey.

May 23, 1940 — Francis D. Martin has petitions at his Main Street jewelry store, urging the Republican National Convention to nominate Wendell Willkie as candidate for president.

May 26, 1940 — Head Assessor Sereno T. Jacob, only eight months in office, threatens to resign unless the Board of Finance improves the pay which he says is insufficient for the amount of work required. In addition, the Press reports, the job is tough: “The public is not cooperative and assessors are constantly making enemies among their own townspeople because of changes which they make in valuations.”

May 29, 1940 — Summer is coming and Press ads reflect it. “This Week Is Rose Week,” says the Outpost Sales Garden on Route 7, the Ridgefield-Danbury Road. “Climbers, hybrid teas, baby ramblers, ready in large pots, in bud and flower, immediate effect, no cutting back, plenty to choose from.” Frank Gabbianelli’s Ridgefield Shoe Repair is

selling child's sneakers for 50 cents; youth's, 60 cents; "large girl sizes," 70 cents; and men's, 75 cents.

May 31, 1940 — A fire, which breaks out in the heater room, does about \$1,000 in damage to the clubhouse of the Silver Spring Country Club.

June 1940 — Miss Anne S. Richardson donates an ambulance for war work in Great Britain.

June 5, 1940 — Al Tulipani strikes out 12 as the RHS Millionaires defeats Bethel, 10-1. On June 7, the team upsets Stamford, 11-5, to advance to the semi-finals of the State Schoolboy Tournament. Ridgefield subsequently beats Falls Village, but loses in the semi-final game, 3-2, to Bristol.

June 6, 1940 — There are 25 places in Ridgefield licensed to sell liquor in one form or another, including restaurants, liquor stores and drug stores.

June 12, 1940 — 59 pupils score perfect attendance in second through 12th grades for 1939-40, reports Superintendent A.D. Horton.

June 13, 1940 — Ridgefield High School graduates 37 students at ceremonies in the new school auditorium — the first time graduation has not taken place in the town hall. Denton Coleman is valedictorian and president of the class. Lydia Bedini is salutatorian.

June 13, 1940 — Members of the Italian-American Mutual Aid Society ("the Italian Club") vote unanimously to state they are opposed to Italy's June 10 declaration of war against the Allies and are "deeply saddened" by the stand of Italy. Their resolution states that club members are 100% Americans in spirit, thought and action, and urges increased national preparedness to meet "any attack or opposition against our democratic institutions."

June 15, 1940 — Hollywood star and singer Jane Pickens joins Ridgefield stage and screen actor Walter Hampden in a special performance marking the opening of the second season of the New England Playhouse, located at the Congregational Church House on West Lane.

June 16, 1940 — The first of three festival performances of "Court Music of the Eighteenth Century" takes place at the Playhouse of Dunrovin on the estate of William Matheus Sullivan on West Lane. The Sunday performances by the Bach Circle Orchestra benefit the Ridgefield branch of the Red Cross, largely for war relief in Europe.

June 18, 1940 — A town meeting votes 19-17 to ban the sale and discharge of fireworks in Ridgefield. "Thus, for the first time in history, Ridgefield joins the slow but steady



march of communities throughout the nation toward a 'safe and sane' celebration of Independence Day," says The Press, which clearly favors the move. Even cap pistols are included in the ban, says Judge Charles Wade Walker of the Town Justice Court.

June 19, 1940 — Working to centralize and concentrate Ridgefield's efforts toward war relief, a Ridgefield War Work organization is created by a group of women meeting at St. Stephen's Parish House.

June 20, 1940 — The U.S. Census office announces that Ridgefield's population is 3,785, compared to 3,580 in the 1930 census.

June 20, 1940 — "Stop Hitler Now!" declares a two-page advertisement in The Press, placed by the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, a national organization seeking grass-roots support. "If Hitler wins in Europe — if the strength of the British and French armies and navies is forever broken — the United States will find itself alone in a barbaric world, a world ruled by Nazis," the ad says. "The world will be placed on a permanent war footing. Our country will have to pile armaments upon armaments to maintain even the illusion of security. We shall have no other business, no other aim in life, but primitive self-defense." The local publication of the ad is financed by "a number of patriotic Ridgefield citizens who believe in all seriousness and sincerity that the safety of our country, the whole future of our national faith, is gravely threatened by the world revolution of Hitlerism."

June 24, 1940 — Constable Gus Rux, described by The Press as "Ridgefield's ruddy-faced guardian of law and order," suffers slight injuries when he attempts to arrest Oiva Taimi Kaisla, 42, of New York City and Wilton on a charge of driving while under the influence of liquor after Kaisla's car slams into a parked car on Main Street. Kaisla attacks Rux, who is rescued by Selectman Harry Hull and State Trooper J.B. Murphy. Kaisla, who had been arrested in Danbury the month before on the same charge, winds up spending 60 days in jail.

June 25, 1940 — Frank I. Beers of Pittsburgh, who grew up in Ridgefield and is 87 years old, visits town and says he can remember back to 1860 when Abraham Lincoln was running for president and there was a Republican parade down Main Street. "He was puzzled then, he said, that the young men marching in the parade carried heavy rails on their shoulders," The Press reports. "But his father, the late Lewis I. Beers, told him that the candidate Lincoln had just made a great reputation for himself as a rail-splitter in Illinois and that rails had become a symbol of Lincoln's strength of body and character."

June 27, 1940 — Frank Daniska of Main Street is convicted of cruelty to animals and illegal discharge of fireworks after he throws a five-inch firecracker at Trigger, "a valuable pointer," belonging to his neighbor, Donald Miller. The firecracker explodes in the face of the dog, which is not only injured but runs off and disappears. Daniska says he

meant to frighten, not harm the dog, which he says has continually annoyed him and was barking at him at his own porch. He is fined court costs of \$9.82.

June 27, 1940 — Willis Sherwood Gilbert, one of Ridgefield's most prominent and respected residents, dies at the age of 73. Active in many aspects of the community, Gilbert was manager of the local telephone company in its early years, a postmaster, and selectman.

June 27, 1940 — Nazzareno Lavatori reports he plans to close The Maples tavern at Danbury Corners (now Joe's Corner) and lease the property to Raymond Kellogg of Stamford, who wants to operate a gasoline station on the property after moving the restaurant building north a bit. In July, the selectmen deny a permit for the gas station, saying there are enough of them already in that area and the location is not appropriate anyway. A total of 500 people sign a petition favoring the station. Then a petition opposing the station is circulated and collects hundreds of names. In September the selectmen again reject a permit for the gas station, saying the location "is not suitable." Today, a bank is there.

June 28, 1940 — Mrs. Rodman Valentine throws a handkerchief clear across the Congregational Chapel to win the prize in the handkerchief-throwing contest, a feature of the June meeting of the Ridgefield Grange.

June 29, 1940 — Theodore Bailey of West Mountain, "a stooped, white-bearded former disciple of the anvil," dies at 89. Long known as "the blacksmith of Bald Hill," Bailey had practiced his profession in north Wilton for decades and was the subject of many stories. For instance, on the day of his wedding in January 1874 to Miss Mary Lambert of Bedford, N.Y., snow drifts were so deep that sleighs could not be run from his Katonah, N.Y., home. So, starting at 5 a.m. from Katonah, the prospective bridegroom plodded on foot through the drifts for six miles and arrived in Bedford at noon, just in time for the ceremony.

July 3, 1940 — Harry Perregaux, local electrical contractor, also sells radios, including the new 1941 Zenith table model, costing only \$14.95 (\$260 in 2017 dollars).

July 4, 1940 — Ridgefielders mark Independence day with an old-time Fourth of July community celebration, with events running from 9 in the morning till past midnight, and, for the first time in 164 years, no fireworks of any kind. (In June, 19 of the 36 voters at a town meeting were in the majority on a motion to ban all sale and use of fireworks in Ridgefield.) The day includes a softball game in which Lowell Thomas and other celebrities play a team led by Lemuel Q. Stoopnagle of radio fame. Actress Gloria

Stewart, in town to perform in a New England Playhouse production, is umpire. (Fifty-seven years later, Stuart is nominated for an Academy Award for portraying a 100-year-old woman in the movie, "Titanic"; she was 87 at the time.) The next week, The Press has a story headlined, "Crowd Enjoys Safe, Sane Fourth and Nobody Misses Fireworks." However, none of the town's children are asked their reaction.

July 6, 1940 — Internationally known contract bridge expert and peace advocate Eli Culbertson of West Lane announces he is a candidate for congressman-at-large. (For many years, Connecticut had a congressman who represented the whole state, in addition to the those who represented defined districts. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 banned the practice.)

July 11, 1940 — The Ridgefield Library and Historical Association lists a few of the historic relics in its collection, including: A piece of burned wood from the frigate Constitution, better known as "Old Ironsides"; an 1879 letter from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow to a Mrs. Winthrop; a yard-long sword captured from a Hessian soldier at the Battle of Monmouth, N.J.; a framed order, signed by John Hancock, commissioning Philip Burr Bradley of Ridgefield a colonel in the Revolutionary Army of the United States (Bradley's homestead was across the street from the library in what is now Ballard Park); and a framed, original, 1718 letter from King George II of England to Czar Peter the Great of Russia, asking for the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two nations.

July 23, 1940 — Jeweler Francis D. Martin is heading the Wendell Willkie for President campaign in Ridgefield.

July 24, 1940 — The PTA sponsors Ridgefield's first "well-child conference" at the Garden School on Bailey Avenue. The aim is to check the general health of infants and children not old enough to go to school. Ninety one children are examined.

July 25, 1940 — "Let Coty Toilet Water be your informal fragrance to keep you crisp and exquisite all summer long," says Bissell's pharmacy in an ad. A standard-sized bottle, with atomizer, is \$1.25.

July 25, 1940 — Sandwich steaks are 10 cents each at Perry's Market where a pound of First Prize frankfurters is going for 32 cents (frankfurters are only 19 cents a pound down the street at Kieran and Sloane, but they're probably not First Prize). A few doors north of Perry's, the A&P Liquor Shop is selling Gilbey's Spey-Royal Scotch Whiskey, a blend of whiskies "all 10 years old," at \$2.75 for a 4/5 bottle.

July 27, 1940 – Eleanor Roosevelt dines at the Outpost Inn and calls Ridgefield "a very very charming place." She drives to the inn herself to join friends for the dinner.

August 1940 — Eli Culbertson, who is running for Congress, is opening his natatorium — a glass-enclosed swimming pool — to the public two days a week in August. The pool is on his estate, Upagenstit, formerly Frederic E. Lewis's place, on West Lane. A lifeguard will be on hand.

Aug. 1, 1940 – Three English children, aged 11, 9, and 6, come to stay with their aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Elder, “for the duration of the war.” “It will be a terrible wrench, parting with them,” says their mother, Belle Swainson of Middlesex, but the fact that German bombers were attacking England was too risky. “In one town four wee children were killed while playing in the street,” she writes. “It fairly makes my heart ache when I hear of innocent children being subjected to such beastly cruel treatment. Why, oh why, if men must have wars, don't they go fight it out amongst themselves in battlefields? It is absolutely wrong that young children and women should be the victims.”

Aug. 1, 1940 — Michael Chekhov says he rejected the possibility of establishing his Chekhov Theater Studio in New York City and chose Ridgefield instead because his school for actors benefits from the “rural quiet.”

Aug. 4, 1940 — The English Wightman Cup team plays an exhibition tennis match at Silver Spring Country Club in a benefit for the Ridgefield branch of Bundles for Britain.

Aug. 12, 1940 — Ezra Stone, the squeaky voiced actor famed for his portrayal of Henry Aldrich on the radio for 14 years, stars in “Mum's the Word,” the final production in the New England Playhouse summer theater series here.

Aug. 15, 1940 — Mme. Germaine Frank of Newtown is on her way to speak to Ridgefield's Bundles for Britain group when a three-year-old child darts in front of her car on White Street in Danbury. The child dies. Mme. Frank, daughter of French Premier Georges Clemenceau, is declared not at fault in the accident.

Aug. 20, 1940 — Mrs. H. Dunscombe Colt is chairman of the fashion show, sponsored by the Ridgefield Chapter of Bundles for Britain, at the Outpost Inn. Fashion artist Fanny Fern Fitzwater is commentator for the apparel provided by Mrs. Pleasants Pennington of Chez Rosette in Manhattan. More than 500 people attend.

Aug. 22, 1940 — Ridgefielders have contributed \$5,400 (\$94,000 in 2017 dollars) to buy four ambulances for the American-British Ambulance Corps, making Ridgefield the top community in the nation in donating ambulances to the organization.

Aug. 23, 1940 – While fishing all night at Lake Mamanasco, Peter Lockwood of High Ridge lands a 7-pound, 23-inch-long bass. It's believed to be one of the largest fish ever caught in the lake.

Aug. 23, 1940 — Mortimer Cole Keeler, a farmer, former state representative and school board member, dies at age 72 in the house in which he was born in Whipstick District. He is a direct descendant of the Keelers who helped found Ridgefield and Norwalk.

Aug. 24, 1940 — At the state Democratic convention, Ely Culbertson sees he hasn't enough support to win the nomination as congressman-at-large, and withdraws his candidacy. His pool is still open.

Aug. 26, 1940 — Ridgefield's new Highway Safety Committee, appointed by the governor and answerable to the State Highway Department, has its organizational meeting. Many towns have the committees, designed to improve traffic safety in each community. The first meeting under chairman Luther R. Nash discusses the "excessive speed of automobiles through the business section."

Aug. 28, 1940 — The "skeletal remains of a woman who apparently met a violent death a decade or so ago" are discovered by workers digging up tree on the former Carl Stolle farm in Farmingville, now owned by Outpost Nurseries. State police do not announce the "gruesome find" until Sept. 12 because they want Yale anthropologist Dr. Harry Ferris to examine the bones first. Ferris estimates the victim was between 26 and 40 and died 10 years earlier. State Police Lt. Leo F. Carroll, in charge of the investigation, says several people in Farmingville were aroused on the night of June 30, 1930, by the screams of a woman. "Some insisted the woman was being murdered," The Press reports, adding, "This incident may have had something to do with the skeleton just found."

Aug. 29, 1940 — Back to school specials are being advertised in The Press. W. T. Grant in Danbury has pencil boxes for 10 cents and fitted school bags for 25 cents. Notebooks are 4 cents. At J.E. Ryan's Department Store at 111 Main Street (Telephone 22), "Tops by Barbizon, also Gordon's 'Campus Caper' socks in 16 winning fall colors" are on sale. John P. Previdi Company, "opposite post office" in Danbury, offers a new Royal portable typewriter for \$39.95 instead of the usual \$49.95 (\$695 vs. \$869 in 2017 dollars.) By Christmas Previdi has cut the price to \$37.50.

Aug. 30, 1940 — Ridgefield's first mailman dies at the age of 87. Robert Wilson became the town's first rural mail carrier when Ridgefield was declared eligible for the service in February 1901. Using a horse and buggy, he carried mail through Titicus Center, Farmingville, Limestone, Florida, and the upper part of Whipstick, and "gained many friends with his friendly disposition and cheerful manner."

Aug. 30, 1940 — Mrs. Sereno T. Jacob is chairman of the children's pet show at Outpost Inn, benefiting the Ridgefield War Relief Fund.

September 1940 — Dog World Magazine issues certificates of heroism to two Ridgefield dogs, both from Waldeck Kennels on Route 7 (whose building later becomes the Red Lion Restaurant). Pete V. Waldeck, a Saint Bernard, is cited for recently preventing a tramp from attacking a woman, alone at the kennels, and driving the intruder from the grounds. Kazon, a Siberian Husky, was helped bring medicine to a girl in Westport in the blizzard of 1934 when a dog team was the only means of getting the serum to the patient. “The act saved the girl’s life,” the magazine says.

Sept. 13, 1940 — Officers at State Police Troop A barracks begin using two-way radios in their patrol cars.

Sept. 3, 1940 — About 750 children show up in the schools, approximately the same number as a year before.

Sept. 5, 1940 — Women from the PTA offer their services running the East Ridge School cafeteria if the school board fails to approve \$1,440 needed to subsidize the program. The PTA has already been providing the cost of free lunches for needy children.

Sept. 5, 1940 — Mrs. E.L. Ballard of Main Street gives The Press a copy of its second issue — Vol. 1, No. 2, published Feb. 13, 1875 and known then as Baxter’s Monthly. The small, four-page newspaper, framed with glass so that it may be read from both sides, still hangs in the Press office today.

Sept. 6, 1940 — Mrs. Jonathan Bulkley of Rippowam Road wins the Garden Club of America and Ridgefield Garden Club medals for her entries in the 25th annual exhibit of the Ridgefield Garden Club. More than 300 people attend.

Sept. 14, 1940 — Probably a small number of Ridgefield men — perhaps 15 to 20 — will be subject to the first draft under the Burke-Wadsworth compulsory military training bill, signed by President Roosevelt today. Some 16.5-million men ages 21 to 35 must register for the draft Oct. 16, but “the Army does not intend to include any married men in the first draft call,” The Press says. “Only 900,000 men will be drafted annually.”

Sept. 14, 1940 — Belgian refugees in England benefit from a production of Thornton Wilder’s “Our Town” by the Town Players of Newtown on the New England Playhouse stage here. Playwright Rachael Crothers of Redding speaks at the show.

Sept. 14, 1940 — Jeannette McManus and John T. Jones are married in St. Mary’s Church by the Rev. John F. Donohue. Maid of honor is Monica McManus, sister of the bride. The reception is at the Kane Inn on West Lane. (Jones, then a bookkeeper who works at Hyde’s Wines and Liquors, becomes a state police trooper three years later and rises through the ranks to serve as commanding officer of Troop I in Bethany. He grew up

in Ridgefield and Darien, and lived in Ridgefield from 1940 until his death in 2012 at the age of 94.)

Sept. 14, 1940 — Absolom Sherwood of Peekskill, N.Y., observes his 90th birthday by driving three friends in his 1920 Buick to Ridgefield where he attends a birthday party in his honor at the home of his niece, Mrs. Harry S. Williams. Sherwood has driven the car to Ridgefield on his birthday since 1930. The 27-mile trip takes him more than an hour and a half because he never drives more than 20 mph. What's more, in the 20 years he's had the Buick, he has put it in reverse only a half dozen times. He keeps the car in a barn that is open at both ends, driving in one end and out the other without ever needing to back out.

Sept. 19, 1940 — Major Robert R. Keeler is named head of Ridgefield's new Defense Committee, created "to help the state agencies in carrying out their defense functions and to prepare now for the protection of the American Republic."

Sept 19, 1940 — Burns' Drug Store in Danbury is selling new, cloth-bound, full-size "best-selling books" for only 39 cents each, five for \$1.95. Among the hundreds of titles are: "Angel in the House" by Kathleen Norris; "White Collar Girl" by Faith Baldwin; "Death in the Air" by Agatha Christie; "The Good Earth" by Pearl S. Buck; "Thank You, Jeeves" by P. G. Wodehouse; "It Can't Happen Here" by Sinclair Lewis; "League of Frightened Men" by Rex Stout; and "The Original Charlie Chan Mystery" by Earl Derr Biggers.

Sept. 23, 1940 — In an effort to provide Ridgefield with an organized recreational program, a group called the Community Recreation Committee makes plans to ask the school board for use of the new school gym for men and women of post-high school age two evenings a week. The new group elects high school principal Clifford A. Holleran as its chairman. Marjorie Cornish, girls physical education teacher at the high school, feels "a mixed program, including both men and women, would not be as enthusiastically received," the Press reports. Charles Ashbee says there's a pressing need for a recreation program and that in his contacts with young people (outside of playing Santa Claus), "I have struck an enthusiastic lot who are ready and eager to begin on any program we prepare."

Sept. 23, 1940 — Will Nichols of Peaceable Street tells Justice Charles Wade Walker in Town Justice Court that the shotgun he fired was intended to scare away what he believed was intruders. What he frightened was State Trooper George Silva and Constable John Moser who had gone to Nichols's house to question him about an auto accident he appeared to have been involved in. Seeing the shotgun coming out of a window, the two officers ducked before Nichols fired, took off, and returned the next morning to arrest Nichols for breach of the peace and simple assault and to confiscate his three guns and one revolver. Nichols is fined \$5 on each count and given six months probation.

Sept. 24, 1940 — The Lions Club gets permission from Joseph Gibney, proprietor of the Outpost Inn, to organize public ice skating this winter on Outpost Pond along Danbury Road.

Oct. 1, 1940 — Michael T. McGlynn marks his 43rd year as a member of the Board of Education. McGlynn has been chairman or president of the board for 30 of those years.

Oct. 3, 1940 — Five Ridgefield herds are among the top 20 in milk production in the county from January through August, the Fairfield County Dairy Herd Improvement Association reports. Among them are Daniel McKeon, 11 cows, averaging 5,837 pounds of milk and 315.6 pounds of fat each; Rundle Bloomer, 96 cows, 6,229 pounds of milk, 251.2 pounds of fat; and Irving B. Conklin, 84 cows, 5,675 pounds of milk and 250.1 pounds of fat.

Oct. 7, 1940 — At the annual town meeting, Sereno T. Jacob, chief assessor and a vocal critic of local government, leads an apparent revolt against what many have termed the inefficiency, smugness and complacency dominating the administration of town affairs. The meeting is packed with Jacob supporters who want an explanation of the audit of the town books, especially in view of the embezzlement arrest and conviction of the previous tax collector. The meeting is continued till the next Monday.

Oct. 8, 1940 — Artist Charles Sheeler of Nod Road and his wife, Musya Sokolova, a former Russian ballerina, are honored at the New York World's Fair where a number of Sheeler's paintings and photographs are on exhibit at the Ford Motor Pavilion. Sheeler is famous for his paintings and photographs of industrial scenes, including many of Ford Motor in Michigan.

Oct. 9, 1940 — Lawrence H. Coleman, who was appointed town tax collector in January after the arrest of the sitting tax collector Harvey Lown, quits, saying that the job requires too much work for the compensation. The position is only part-time, and Coleman tells the Board of Finance that it should be full-time.

Oct. 12, 1940 — The investigation into the skeleton uncovered in Farmingville suffers a setback when Yale anthropologist Dr. Harry Ferris dies. Ferris had been helping state police efforts to identify the bones, discovered Aug. 28 by nursery workers moving a tree. The bone are never identified.

Oct. 14, 1940 — The reconvened Annual Town Meeting continues to battle the status quo. After picking over the auditors' report, the meeting decides not to pay for the salary of Judge John H. Light of Norwalk as town attorney, favoring instead hiring a local attorney. At a third session, the meeting decides to restore the \$150 for Judge Light's pay.



Oct. 16, 1940 – All men between the ages of 21 and 35 are to register today for the military draft. Ridgefield schools are closed to enable teachers to aid in the registration process. A total of 496 complete the registration; 570 had been expected. Only one conscientious objector is recorded. He explains that although he is willing to serve his country, under no circumstances would he “pull the trigger of a gun.”

Oct. 17, 1940 — Luther Nash, chairman of Ridgefield’s Highway Safety Committee, reports that the state Department of Motor vehicles is finding that the new Merritt Parkway is cutting down on the number of auto accidents on other roads, especially the Post Road (Route 1), which has had the densest traffic in the county. Reducing congestion and accidents were chief aims in building the parkway.

Oct. 17, 1940 — Karl Brothers, the Buick dealership in New Canaan, advertises a used 1940 Buick Roadmaster Sedan, “heater and defroster — only 8,000 miles,” for \$1,075. A 1943 Packard seven-passenger sedan, “like new,” is \$250 (\$4,300 in 2017 dollars).

Oct. 21, 1940 — The school cafeteria opens today under the supervision of the PTA instead of school employees. Mrs. Charles W. Weitzel, chairman of the PTA cafeteria committee, runs the operation. Luncheons will include a hot plate, cocoa, bread, and dessert for 15 cents. At least 160 students must buy the lunches for the operation to break even; that day, only 80 buy lunches, but by Wednesday, the number is up to 125. The PTA takes over the operation after the school board opted not to subsidize lunches, but the parent group is soon forced to seek public donations to keep the hot-lunch program going.

Oct. 24, 1940 — James E. Ryan, president of the First National Bank and Trust Company of Ridgefield (now Wells Fargo) and one of Ridgefield’s leading businessmen, dies at the age of 64 at his High Ridge home. A former state representative, he had operated a grocery store on Main Street for many years.

Oct. 29, 1940 — Newlywed John Thomas Jones of Main Street is the first Ridgefield resident to have his name drawn in the draft lottery. Because he is married, he is not a prime candidate for being drafted early on, and three years later, joins the Connecticut State Police. Other Ridgefielders whose numbers are among the first drawn in the lottery are Dr. Walter T. Dolan, Valtiero J. Roberti, Raymond T. Benedict, Harold O. Davis, Joseph H. Mannion, and Edward M. Shaughnessy.

Oct. 31, 1940 — As the November election looms, The Press is full of political ads, mostly for Wendell Willkie, the Republican presidential candidate. “Do not vote for a politician, vote for a man who worked with his hands,” says one advertisement from the National Committee of Democrats for Willkie. “Don’t vote for the easy way, vote for a man who came up the hard way.”

Oct. 31, 1940 — The new Ridgefield Playhouse has a special Halloween showing of “The Son of Frankenstein,” starring Boris Karloff, Basil Rathbone and Bela Lugosi. The theater is decorated in keeping with the “ghostly atmosphere of Halloween and patrons are being warned to expect anything to happen,” The Press reports in advance.

Nov. 2, 1940 — Two teenagers, he aged 17 from New Canaan and she 16 from Pound Ridge, hitchhike from New Canaan to Ridgefield where they come upon the unattended and unlocked car of Mrs. Henry Potter of Farmingville. They hop in and take off, only to be arrested by New York State police in White Plains. They confess to stealing the car so they could elope. Both get off with probation.

Nov. 5, 1940 – Willkie carries Ridgefield by a two-to-one margin, 1,361 to 625, but, of course, fails in the country, 27 million to 23 million and carrying only 10 of the 48 states. In Connecticut, he loses 417,000 to 361,000. Joseph H. Donnelly is elected the town’s new judge of probate over J. Edward McGlynn, who among all Democrats running in Ridgefield, gets the highest vote. Donnelly will replace George G. Scott, who retires at the end of the year. The top vote-getter is Levio G. Zandri, a Republican running for justice of the peace, 1,395. William R. Keeler and Peter A. McManus are re-elected to the State Legislature, Keeler for his second term and McManus, his ninth. Losers in that contest are named Brace and Gaeta — The Press does not give their first names, perhaps because they think everyone knows them already or because, being a Republican newspaper, they do not think it is important.

Nov. 7, 1940 — It will not be necessary to call up any draftees to fill Selective Service’s regional quota of 219 because already, 237 young men have volunteered for military service. Harry Bennett is the first Ridgefield man to volunteer in advance of the draft. (After the war Bennett becomes one of the nation’s top book cover artists.)

Nov. 10, 1940 — The vestry of St. Stephen’s Church gives a leave of absence to its rector, the Rev. William Lusk, who wants to devote more time to war relief efforts in England through an organization called Toc H. He eventually goes to London where he leads efforts to resurrect and restore All Hallows-by-the-Tower Church, the city’s oldest church, which had been bombed by the Germans.

Nov. 14, 1940 — Mrs. Elizabeth Ballard establishes the Edward L. Ballard Memorial Scholarship in memory of her husband, who died in 1937 and was head of the Ridgefield Library. The annual award to an RHS senior would be given on the basis of integrity of character, loyalty and scholastic ability. The scholarship is still being awarded 77 years later.

Nov. 14, 1940 — Growing sympathy for the plight of the Chinese people, invaded by Japan, prompts the formation of a Ridgefield committee of the American Bureau for

Medical Aid to China, which will have a "Bowl of Rice Party" Dec. 14 to raise money for medical supplies and other aid for the Chinese.

Nov. 15, 1940 — Pekin ducks and seven varieties of pheasants, all bred by Miss Mary Olcott at her Casagmo estate on Main Street, take seven first prizes and three seconds at the Garden State Poultry Show in Carlstedt, N.J.

Nov. 16, 1940 — Democrats may not have done well in the local election but they did well in state and national contests so Ridgefield Democrats celebrate victory with a dinner at the Kane Inn at which Congressman-elect LeRoy Downs speaks.

Nov. 16, 1940 — The selectmen name Arthur J. Carnall as the town's tax collector, replacing Lawrence Coleman, who quits after seven months because it was too much work for a part-time position.

Nov. 21, 1940 — 32 states mark today — the third Thursday of November — as Thanksgiving, but Connecticut is not one of them. Gov. Raymond Baldwin has signed a proclamation, setting the next Thursday, Nov. 28, the fourth Thursday, as Thanksgiving in Connecticut. A year later President Roosevelt declares the fourth Thursday in November as Thanksgiving in all 48 states.

Nov. 22, 1940 — At The Grange's annual Hobby Night, members show such avocations as crocheted bedspreads, first-day stamp covers, old coins, poems, and nautical items. The Rev. Hugh Shields tells about his hobby: the recitation of the works of James Whitcomb Riley. Another highlight of the evening is the pie-eating contest, won by G. Roy Norton. Pie is consumed with contestants hands tied behind their backs.

Nov. 23, 1940 — The home of Vincent Bedini of North Ridgefield is designated an official "observation post" as part of a test of the new Aircraft Warning Service of the United States Air Defense Command, which is developing "methods and means for defense against air attack." Hundreds of these posts will be tested in the region in "enemy maneuvers" in January, all reporting to the command at Mitchell Field on Long Island. "The foundation of a successful Aircraft Warning Service is the proper location of Observation Posts and observers who report the presence of 'enemy' aircraft," the command says.

Nov. 25, 1940 — Mrs. Winthrop Rockwell, wife of the first selectman, is chairman of the District Nursing Association's 1940 Christmas Seals drive. Many hundreds of sheets of the seals are being mailed to Ridgefielders, starting this week, in the fund-raiser for the Connecticut branch of the Tuberculosis Association.

Nov. 25, 1940 — Ridgefield's two banks — Ridgefield Savings and First National Bank and Trust — send out about \$22,000 in Christmas Club checks, an increase of \$4,500 over the payment the year before.

Nov. 26, 1940 — Charles F. Ashbee completes the annual school enumeration and finds 644 Ridgefield children over 4 and under 16 years old. For each of these, the state will send the town \$2.25 (\$39 in 2017 dollars), income from Connecticut's sale of the Western Reserve lands. The Western Reserve was granted the colony by King Charles II in the 1600s in what is now northeastern Ohio (including Cleveland) and was sold by the state in 1796 for \$1.2 million (\$17 million in 2017 dollars).

Nov. 26, 1940 — For Thanksgiving, "fancy fresh-killed Vermont turkeys" are 29 cents a pound at Kieran and Sloan. At Perry's Market, "fancy young" turkeys are 35 cents a pound.

Nov. 30, 1940 — Bill Smith of Barry Avenue does something no one has done in town in 20 years: He traps an otter. Despite claims by veteran trappers that it's impossible to capture the wily mammal in Ridgefield, Smith catches one at the Ridgefield Lakes. He says otter pelts bring \$15 (\$215 in 2017). The last person to trap a Ridgefield otter was Smith's father, James "Big Jim" Smith, back in 1920.

Dec. 2, 1940 — Louis Ridolfi, Joseph Montanari, and Robert Fossi are among the students who give presentations at a school-wide assembly at the high school, observing the 117th anniversary of the signing of the Monroe Doctrine.

Dec. 2, 1940 — Julius Tulipani is elected to his 13th straight year as president of the Italian-American Mutual Aid Society. Rudolph Marconi is first vice-president and Gino Polverari, second vice-president.

Dec. 4, 1940 — 4.3% of Ridgefield's population is receiving relief payments, the state commissioner of welfare reports. The percentage is considered low, compared to many other towns.

Dec. 4, 1940 — Despite federal, state, and local efforts to check the spread of Dutch elm disease, the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station reports the tree-killing fungus, spread by elm bark beetles, has been found in 13 more towns. The disease eventually kills all the elms in New Haven, long known as "Elm City," and most of the elms in Ridgefield.

Dec. 6, 1940 — "We must idealize manual labor," School Superintendent A. D. Horton tells the Board of Education. "We must impress on our children that it is just as honorable a type of work as any other; that a plumber, for example, is just as invaluable as any lawyer." It is part of his report to the board, called "Education for Defense." Horton also

sees the need for “sound bodies trained to be obedient to the command of alert minds.” In addition, “younger children need to be more familiar than they are with the exciting story of America....If there is to be continental solidarity, there must be sufficient knowledge to form a base for a community of interest among American nations.”

Dec. 9, 1940 — Inspired by the recently formed Community Recreation Commission, the Young Men’s Athletic Club is formed and elects its officers: Joseph Brunetti, president; Olinto Carboni, vice president; Peter Casagrande, secretary; and Marino Carboni, treasurer. Clifford Holleran and Charles Ashbee from the committee are directors. Among the many early members are Arthur Frattini, Dominic Bedini, Ciro Mai, Daniel Mahoney, Vincent Paccadolmi, Julius Santini, Dominic Carini, Evo Principi, Leo Pambianchi, Ciro Franceschini, Jack Leary, Venico Petrini, and Primo Zandri.

Dec. 11, 1940 — Actor Walter Hampden leads the ceremonies as Ridgefield “takes on a gay Yuletide appearance” with the switching on of the village Christmas lights, sponsored by the Lions Club. The ceremony includes a parade down Main Street, the Sons of Legion Fife and Drums Corps, two old-fashioned hay rigs with men and women in old-fashioned clothes, Boy and Girl Scouts, and a dog team from Waldeck Kennels carrying Santa Claus. John Gutscher, music teacher in the schools, leads the singing of Christmas carols, accompanied by Miss Margaret P. Nash at the Methodist Church organ, amplified outdoors in the center of town via large speakers.

Dec. 12, 1940 — A total of 370 Ridgefield aliens have registered under the Alien Registration Law of 1940, the Post Office reports, adding “there still are a considerable number who have not yet complied with the Alien Registration Law of 1940.” The deadline is Dec. 26.

Dec. 14, 1940 — Anna May Wong, the first Asian-American actress to gain international fame, attends Ridgefield’s Bowl of Rice Party to benefit medial aid to China, which is fighting the Japanese. First Selectman Winthrop E. Rockwell declares today Humanity Day in Ridgefield, dedicated to the “salvation of suffering human beings and to the expression of an avowal of our faith in international justice and morality.” Hundreds of people attend the party at the high school gym, netting a profit of \$2,115 (\$37,000 in 2017).

Dec. 16, 1940 — Superior Court Judge Patrick O’Sullivan hears an appeal of the selectmen’s rejection of a gas station on the Lavatori property at northern Main Street and rules in favor of Raymond Kellogg of Stamford, who wants the station.

Dec. 19, 1940 — In a letter to Francis McGlynn, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. Edward McGlynn of Fairview Avenue, a teenaged correspondent named “Nancy” in Glasgow, Scotland, describes what life’s like in a place where German bombs are falling. On a recent evening, she writes, she and her friends were walking to a night-school class

“when the air raid sirens went. We ran across the road to the air raid shelter, but the door was locked. A friend of mine, Billy Bryce, went to the air raid warden’s post to get the keys. He came back and opened the door and we all went in. The light was off and we had to stick candles in the holders. The shelter is about 50 feet long and six feet broad. There is a bench running along each side of the wall. There is a door at each end....The gunfire was terrible and the searchlights were all around. We could hear planes high above and then we could hear them coming lower and lower and then a sudden — bang! of a bomb dropping. With the explosions of the bombs, the walls of the shelter began to shake. We had to stand up. There were only eight of us in the shelter. We were all very cold. We were not at all frightened until we heard a sudden whistling noise of a whistling bomb. Then the walls shook and shook and we began to feel very scared. After two hours the ‘all clear’ came and we rose and walked home.” On the way to her house they came across many detours around streets with bombed-out houses. “We were all very alarmed at all this as it was very near where I lived. We went up another road and luckily we were not turned away from there. A lot of people were standing and staring. We ran up only to discover that the two houses next door to ours had been blown right in; luckily, only our windows were blown out. Altogether eight bombs were dropped about us, but only two people had to be treated for shock.”

Dec. 20, 1940 — Students in the grammar, junior high and high school classes at the East Ridge School stage a Christmas program in the gym that includes demonstrations on how Christmas is observed in other countries, a recitation of the Lord’s Prayer, a reading of the Birth of Christ from the Bible, and many songs such as Adeste Fideles, Silent Night, Ave Maria, and The Dying Cowboy.

Dec. 21, 1940 — A total of 110 Ridgefield Girl Scouts have their first annual Christmas Pageant in the East Ridge School auditorium. The pageant was suggested by retired Metropolitan Opera star Geraldine Farrar, who writes and arranges the program with Mrs. Richard E. Conley, daughter-in-law of Col. Louis Conley, as director. All participants are attired in “ancient robes” and trees supplied by the late colonel’s Outpost Nurseries serve as a background.

Dec. 23, 1940 — Harry Perregaux’s electrical shop wins first prize in the annual Christmas window decorating contest. The Thrift shop gets second place and Ridgefield Bakery and Casa-More tie for third.

Dec. 23, 1940 — The Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company, which bonds Ridgefield’s town employees, agrees to pay the \$2,910.21 (\$50,000 in 2017) that jailed tax collector Harvey Lown cost the town when he embezzled tax collections.

Dec. 31, 1940 — The Ridgefield Community Council sponsors a Community New Year’s Eve Dance at the high school gym. Nearly 600 people attend the dance, lasting

until 2 a.m. and featuring the music of Pop Benson's Cornhuskers from Washington, Conn.

## 1941

January 1941 — "Ridgefield's talented young soldier-artist" Harry Bennett is having an exhibit of his pictures in all media in the Ridgefield Playhouse lobby. Ridgefield's first pre-draft volunteer, he's now at Camp Devens, Mass., in basic training.

Jan. 2, 1941 – The Ridgefield Rotary Club has its first meeting. Clifford Holleran is chosen its president of the new group, which meets at the Outpost Inn.

Jan. 8, 1941 — Joseph H. Donnelly is sworn in as judge of probate, replacing George G. Scott, who retires after serving since 1924.

Jan. 9, 1941 — Edward Freer shows movies on "Magic Caves," "Air Road to Gold," "Network Broadcasting," "Ocean Telephone," and "The Hurricane" at the monthly meeting of the PTA.

Jan. 13, 1941 — Fire heavily damages the stockroom of Rudolph Hurzeler's Ridgefield Bakery on Main Street. (The bakery was located where Planet Pizza, formerly Roma, is now.) Quick action by the volunteer fire department prevents the blaze from spreading to the entire building.

Jan. 16, 1941 — The Acorn Press, parent company of The Ridgefield Press, announces it has published "Memories," the autobiography of Laura Curie Allee Shields of Main Street, as its second book-publishing endeavor. "Although she wrote it primarily for members of her family and intimate friends, Mrs. Shields has offered to sell copies of the book to anyone interested and to give the entire proceeds to Bundles for Britain," reports The Press, which has copies of the 316-page, illustrated, hardbound book for \$3.

Jan. 16, 1941 — Ridgefield may soon get high-speed air mail service. At present air mail letters must go to New York City before they board an aircraft; under a proposal before the Civil Aeronautics Authority in Washington, Ridgefield's air mail would be picked up at Danbury Airport.

Jan. 21 and 22, 1941 — Four large bombers are spotted flying over town and within 30 seconds, their positions are reported to the United States Air Defense Command at Michell Field, Long Island. More than 40 Ridgefield volunteers eye the sky for aircraft in a test of the ability of airplane spotting stations to see and warn of airplanes, especially the enemy type. Ridgefield's spotting spot is the Wadsworth R. Lewis estate on Great Hill Road (later the home of the Luces and the Krauses).

Jan. 23, 1941 — Greek relief is the latest local fund-raising campaign as Ridgefielders sell pins and schedule events to help the war-torn country. Greek Relief pins cost \$2 for women, \$1 for men. A \$3 set of both is “a sum equal to a Greek soldier’s monthly salary,” The Press reports under a photograph of Miss Ethel McGlynn selling pins to B. Ogden Chisolm.

Jan. 23, 1941 — The Ridgefield Lakes development is growing rapidly, says William L. Winthrop, manager of the operations. A total of 26 new cottages will be completed by spring, he says, bringing the number of homes at the lakes to 68. Winthrop is working on plans to build another 50 cottages during the coming season. “Nine miles of roads wind in and out among the homes there and are kept free of snow throughout the winter,” The Press writes. “Weekending at Ridgefield Lakes is especially popular, too, now that the skating is good.” Winthrop acquired the Fox Hill Lakes property in 1934.

Jan. 23, 1941 — Marian Cox, widow of John W. Cox, returns to town, buying the former home of artist George Stengel on lower Main Street. Earlier in the century, Cox — an author of several books of fiction and non-fiction — and her husband owned the Stonecrest estate on North Street. “It seems I am only following the instinctive lure of the past in returning to Ridgefield to find the home for which I have been vainly seeking ever since I left there,” she writes in a long essay about returning to town.

Jan. 24, 1941 — As part of an urgent effort to improve America’s defense program, the town of Danbury approves \$35,000 to buy 10 parcels of land to expand the size and capability of Danbury Airport.

Jan. 25, 1941 — Starting today, Ridgefield stores will observe winter hours on Saturdays, closing at 6:30 instead of 8 p.m. until March 1.

Jan. 27, 1941 — Henry King McHarg, a railroad executive who donated the land on which the First Congregational Church was built in 1888, dies at the age of 90. McHarg was a direct descendant of Lt. Joshua King, Revolutionary War officer and first Ridgefield postmaster who lived on Main Street at King Lane. In his will McHarg leaves 26% of his \$500,000 estate (\$8.3 million in 2017 dollars) to various charities, the rest to family, friends and employees.

Jan. 28, 1941 — “If Hitler wins in his invasion of England, it is doubtful if the Latin American countries will be able or willing to defend themselves against aggression,” RHS history teacher Francis J. Bassett tells the Lions Club at the Outpost Inn. Bassett, who was on a six-week South American tour the previous summer, says factors in the weakness of Latin America are poverty, economic backwardness, the temperament of the people “which is always to support a winner regardless of how the victory was accomplished,” the persistent anti-American feeling, and the cultural, economic and



racial ties with European nations. Bassett soon joins the Navy and as an officer, handles a public relations post in England.

Jan. 30, 1941 – Gray Court School in Stamford announces it's bought the former Lewis estate, mostly recently the Eli Culbertson homestead on West Lane, and will establish Gray Court Junior College there. The school pays \$72,000 (\$1.2 million in 2017) for the property. W. Roscoe Slack, principal of the school, says classes will begin in the fall with 100 students and 15 faculty members. In September, 70 students show up, taught by a faculty of 14.

Feb. 1, 1941 — Harry E. Hull is chairman of the Presidents Birthday Ball in the East Ridge School gym, benefiting the March of Dimes. Music for “old-fashioned and modern dancing” is provided by Joseph Venus and Aldo Casagrande and their orchestras. Elisha Keeler calls square dances.

Feb. 5, 1941 — After a visit and lunch here, Greenwich school officials decide to model that town's new high school cafeteria after Ridgefield PTA-operated cafeteria. “The Greenwich visitors were enthusiastic about the Ridgefield project and felt that the one-tray, 15-cent lunch plan was proving satisfactory,” The Press reports.

Feb. 6, 1941 — President Roosevelt nominates John Gilbert Winant, a “liberal Republican,” to be the next United States ambassador to Great Britain, replacing Joseph P. Kennedy. Winant, who lived in Ridgefield as a teenager and played baseball on a local team, is former governor of New Hampshire and was the first head of the Social Security Administration.

Feb. 6, 1941 — Industrial arts teacher Martin Chabon asks the school board to consider creating a four-year industrial arts program at the high school. There is a long waiting list for openings at the state's trade schools.

Feb. 7, 1941 — Defective wiring in the basement boiler room causes a blaze that does \$2,160 in damage (\$35,700) to the Ridgefield Boys' Club. A guinea pig dies in the fire. Meanwhile, the day before, a fire that “apparently started in some sort of electrical contrivance” causes \$1,500 in damage to the Sereno T. Jacob home at High Ridge and Barry Avenue.

Feb. 9 — A bed sheet accidentally thrown over an open-coil electric heater starts a fire that severely burns a six-month-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Gore. The mother rescues the child and his twin brother from their “flaming crib” and then throws the burning bedclothes out the window of her West Lane home. She takes the babies to the doctor's office and Roland Gore is then sent to Danbury Hospital where he undergoes months of treatments, including skin grafts and blood transfusions. “The shock of the severe burns,

however, was too great and the baby's strength gave out," says The Press in reporting the baby's death in June. Twin Ronald Gore was not injured.

Feb. 7, 1941 — Captain Allen Crowley scores 15 points and leads the league in scoring as Ridgefield High's basketball squad downs Darien, 31-30, moving into first place in the Little Four League.

Feb. 11, 1941 — The RHS senior class stages "Bachelor Born," with a cast that includes Francis McGlynn, Robert Fossi, George Vetter, Grace DeFranco, Edward Freer, Donald Bouton, Armando Torcellini, Frederick McManus, Charles Wade Walker Jr., and Irene Koby. Charles Coles, Charles Cogswell and Allen Crowley are stage managers. The play is delayed a week by the illness of two cast members.

Feb. 14, 1941 — William Creagh, the lone Democrat on the three-member Board of Tax Appeal, resigns, saying only "I find it is impossible for me to serve any longer under existing conditions." It is known that he has been in disagreement with the other two members regarding many tax assessment appeals.

Feb. 14, 1941 — Several hundred people attend a Valentine Day Dance to benefit the library.

Feb. 15, 18 and 20, 1941 — Members of Ridgefield's American Legion post are registered to serve the country in case of a "national defense emergency."

Feb. 20, 1941 — Five of the six men in the next contingent of draftees selected by the region's draft board are from Ridgefield: Aldo J. Rossini, George J. Frulla, David Truesdale, Chester S. Zawacki, and Roland Hogaboom.

Feb. 20, 1941 — Ridgefielders continue to mull over the idea of zoning. "For some years owners of real estate in Ridgefield have been thinking about possible ways of protecting their property from depreciation due to undesirable activities of their neighbors," says the Ridgefield Community Council. "Such protection is secured in many large cities through zoning ordinances which, among other things prevent the erection of commercial buildings in residential areas." However, previous attempts to adopt fairly elaborate zoning ordinances in Ridgefield were rejected by voters. The council proposes the "simple" system being used by neighboring Wilton. Under it, all of Ridgefield would be designated residential, and any use other than that would have to face a permit process that includes a public hearing, overseen by a five member board that would make certain the use was compatible with the neighborhood.

Feb. 20, 1941 — "Be Sure with K.E.B." says an ad for the K.E.B. Service Station on Danbury Road (now Ridgefield Mobil) which promises low prices and quality service.

K.E.B are Warren Keeler, Charles Elliott and Francis Brown, the founders of what has been called Ridgefield's first full service station, offering both gas and car repairs.

Feb. 25, 1941 — Popular radio entertainers Gene and Glenn (Gene Carroll and Glenn Rowell) appear in a show at the school auditorium, benefiting the Lions Club's summer programs for youths. The singer-comedians have a daily show over WEA radio (now WNBC) in New York. Joseph Bacchioni is chairman of the event, which filled the auditorium.

Feb. 26, 1941 — About 250 people from all over the state attend the official "Charter Night" launching of the Ridgefield Rotary Club at Outpost Inn.

Feb. 26 and 27, 1941 — "Now at popular prices!" says the ad for "Gone with the Wind," the 1939 movie with Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh, now at the Ridgefield Playhouse.

Feb. 27, 1941 — "Will you please explain to the readers what has happened in regard to the sports section of your publication?" asks a letter to The Press from Paul Baldaserini, who reminds the editors that the paper used to run "many a column on sports activity in our town." Continuing to complain about the lack of sports coverage, he ends his missive, "I dare the Press to publish this letter." Right under the published letter is an announcement, headlined "Joe Is Back," reporting that Joe Brunetti, who was forced to give up writing sports for the Press last year because of his late father Ernest's illness, "comes back to his old post this week as sports editor." (After serving in the Army during World War II, Baldaserini returns to town and is himself hired as sports editor of the Press. Then, under a new name of Paul Baker, he becomes a regional radio personality, a sportscaster, and the voice of the Danbury Fairgrounds Racearena,

March 1941 — For several years Beaumont Morehouse of Branchville has been collecting and turning in bottles to get the three-cent or five-cent deposits. By the previous fall, he has saved more than \$164 (\$2,716 in 2017) with which he buys a used trailer. He and his mother, Mrs. Ferris Morehouse, head off to Florida where they spend the winter in the trailer and are about to return to town.

March 3, 1941 — Classmates from the 10th grade at Ridgefield High School serve as pallbearers for the popular Fulvio Giambartolomei, who dies at the age of 17 from complications connected with appendicitis.

March 5, 1941 — Goodwill Community Church, serving many of Ridgefield's blacks, is established in the chapel of First Congregational Church. About 125 people from Ridgefield and surrounding towns attend the first service. A year later, Goodwill buys the old creamery on Creamery Lane, holding services there until the 1970s.

March 6, 1941 — Mrs. Frederic E. Lewis, chairman of the Ridgefield Red Cross chapter, names Mrs. Robert E. Soder of High Ridge as chairman of Ridgefield Emergency First Aid. Mrs. Soder will have charge of the first aid stations at the State Police Barracks, Venus Brothers gas station, the Branchville Garage, and Pinchbeck Brothers Nursery.

March 7, 1941 — The Ridgefield Junior High basketball team ends its season with eight wins and one defeat — the lone loss is tonight against Bedford. Forward Fred Leary has the highest point total for the season, 65, followed by Willie Ciuccoli at 22.

March 8, 1941 — Despite a snow storm a crowd gathers in front of Ridgefield Hardware on Main Street to watch Peter McLaren, a professional woodchopper from Australia, chop his way through a log in 58 seconds. William Fortin of Ridgefield, who has worked in the Maine woods, tries to equal the record, but requires nearly three minutes to split the log.

March 13, 1941 — “Feeding chicks should not be a guessing game!” says an ad from the J.E. Ryan Company Department Store on Main Street. “Feed Larro Chick Builder and play safe.”

March 15, 1941 — A crowd of 250 people attend the opening of the Hayloft Restaurant on Route 35 in South Salem, operated by Arthur Sfondrini. Luncheon is 75 cents and dinners start at \$1, “served with piping hot rolls and corn bread.” Dancing Saturdays and Sundays to Rudy Molinari and his orchestra begins in May. The Hayloft quickly becomes a popular eating spot and watering hole for many Ridgefielders. (The restaurant was torn down around 15 years ago to make way for a subdivision.)

March 20, 1941 — The Rev. Eugene C. Fowler, pastor of the Methodist Church for the past five years, accepts a call to lead a church in Bridgeport.

March 20, 1941 — Mrs. Richard E. Conley, recently elected commissioner of Ridgefield’s Girl Scouts, reports that girl scouting, which started five years earlier with one troop, now has six troops totaling about 130 girls.

March 25, 1941 — Charles F. Ashbee is named chairman of Ridgefield’s Easter Seal Sale, benefiting the Connecticut Society for Crippled Children.

March 26, 1941 — Capt. Robert “Bob” Bartlett, a famous arctic explorer, speaks to the Rotary Club. Bartlett led over 40 expeditions to the Arctic — more than anyone before or since — including several expeditions with Commodore Robert Peary.

March 27, 1941 — Judge John H. Light of Norwalk, who is Ridgefield’s town attorney, marks his 86th birthday. Light is a former Connecticut attorney general.

March 30, 1941 — Six-foot-five-inch Tim Haisley sets a local record when he bowls a 287 game for Jerry's Dark Horses as they defeat Ridgefield Motors in the bigpin league at the Recreation Alleys.

April 3, 1941 — Dr. Charles P. Izzo of Greenwich takes over the dental practice of Dr. C.J. Ciffate, who has joined the Army. Izzo, who had previously served as a dentist at the federal prison in Leavenworth, Kansas, eventually moves to Ridgefield, becomes a school board member, and dies with a companion while swimming in the surf on Nantucket Island in 1973. His practice was taken over by Dr. Neil Schwimer who retires in 2012 and hands it over to Dr. Harinder Sandhu, who operates it today.

April 9, 1941 — Voters approve spending \$25,000 (\$414,000 in 2017) to convert Town Hall from a hall to an office building. No longer will the building be usable for dances, movies, basketball games, wrestling matches, and big town meetings — the new auditorium and gymnasium at the East Ridge School can handle those — and the building will now be able to have offices for the growing bureaucracy of town government. The vault is to be expanded to include both the basement and first floor and the stage in the back of the first floor will become the location of the town justice court and small town meetings of up to 75 people. The exterior of the building will be changed so it will be “more colonial in design” (a technical impossibility since there were no brick buildings in colonial Ridgefield). “This would involve the removal of the railing on the roof and minor alterations to window and adornments.”

April 14, 1941 — Dr. E.I. Rogers opens a medical practice at the corner of Main and Governor Streets.

April 15, 1941 — Twenty-five members and friends attend the opening meeting of the Ridgefield Garden Center on Branchville Road and hear LeRoy Chapman, agricultural agent of the Fairfield County Farm Bureau, speak on successful raising of fruit, especially apples.

April 15, 1941 — Members of the Bundles for Britain branch of Ridgefield War Work are creating layettes for “mothers of homeless and destitute little English babies.”

April 16, 1941 — Ridgefield author Konrad Bercovici files a \$5 million law suit against Charles Chaplin, alleging that the comedian-producer used Bercovici's idea for the film, “The Great Dictator,” without compensating him. Bercovici says that in 1938 he wrote for motion picture use a satire on dictatorship and Hitler, and that Chaplin subsequently used much of the plot for the movie. Chaplain and Bercovici had been close friends and Chaplin had suggested the name, Rada (Rumanian for “revolution”) for Bercovici's daughter. The suit is settled seven years later (see May 1, 1947).

April 17, 1941 — The Egyptian transport liner S.S. Zamzam is captured by a German warship, which removes its passengers — including 138 Americans — and blows up the ship. The Zamzam goes down, carrying one of the four ambulances purchased by the people of Ridgefield for the British-American Ambulance Corps. The passengers are safely landed in France.

April 17, 1941 — Miss Stata Norton, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Norton, is honored at the University of Connecticut as the sophomore who received the highest scholastic rank of any student as a freshman. Norton, valedictorian of the RHS class of 1939, goes on to earn a Columbia M.A. and a Wisconsin Ph.D., becomes a professor of pharmacology, and serves as the dean of the School of Health Professionals at the University of Kansas Medical Center, which today offers an annual “Stata Norton Distinguished Teaching Award.”

April 24, 1941 — State Police are intensifying their search today for a “charming young lady” who has passed bad checks in many towns and cities throughout the Northeast, including two in Ridgefield this week and five in New Canaan two weeks ago. According to the New Canaan Advertiser, “She not only possessed charm but she was a bit fussy about what she took away from the stores in which she demonstrated her art.”

April 24, 1941 — By raising \$1,200 — \$200 over its goal, Ridgefield becomes the first town in Fairfield County to meet its quota, reports the Greek War Relief Committee, adding that “Citizens of the town have given generously to help the embattled Greeks fighting so bravely beside Britain.”

April 24, 1941 — An ad in the Press, builder Daniel J. Tobin suggests that “the only real security” is “a home of your own.”

April 27, 1941 — Fred William Blanks, 43, an Outpost Nurseries laborer, dies after being struck by an out-of-control car as he is walking along Route 7 near New Road at 9:30 p.m. A 21-year-old Bethel driver is arrested. Blanks is the second Outpost worker to be killed by a car while walking along Route 7 in the past six months.

May 29, 1941 — Pitcher Charles Coles allows only five hits at the RHS nine defeats Bedford for their second straight win. Johnny Tulipani gets three straight walks in the game.

May 1, 1941 — United State Defense Savings Bonds and Postal Savings Stamps begin being sold today at the post office “as part of a national effort to make America impregnable.” Savings bonds cost \$18.75 and after 10 years were worth \$25 (an annual interest return of 2.9%, compounded semi-annually). Those who couldn’t afford bonds could gradually buy stamps at 25 cent each, place them in an album until they had \$18.75 and turn them in for a bond.

May 1, 1941 — George M. Durant, the founder and director of The School of Radio Technique at Radio City in Manhattan, becomes the partner of William R. Keeler, veteran real estate salesman, in the new realty and insurance firm of Keeler and Durant. The business began in 1892 as Adams and Keeler with William's father one of the founders. William is also president of the First National Bank and Trust Company and is one of the town's state representatives. Two weeks after the partnership begins, Keeler falls in his bathtub and is seriously injured. He dies a week after that at the age of 74. (Years later Keeler and Durant is acquired by the late Fred P. Montanari. The house-turned-offices at the corner of Main and Governor Streets is still called the Keeler and Durant Building.)

May 3, 1941 — Patricia E. Potter and James J. McManus are married in St. Mary's Church. Mrs. McManus, a 1937 Ridgefield High School graduate, works at Benedict's Store. Mr. McManus, who studied at St. Thomas Seminary in Hartford and graduated from the Ridgefield Boys' School in 1935, is in the contracting business with his father, Peter A. McManus of Bryon Park.

May 16, 1941 — Don Mackin and his orchestra, with a "girl vocalist," provide the music at "The Junior Hop," the Class of 1942 dance in the high school gym. "Mackin has promised to play his version of 'Shanty Town' by special request," The Press reports, referring to the hit song, "In A Shanty In Old Shanty Town." Ethel Barry Moore and Helen Bassett are in charge of decorating the gym for the dance.

May 18, 1941 — The first of the annual field trials for coon and fox hounds, sponsored by the Ridgefield Fish and Game Association, takes place at the Sutton farm in Ridgebury. Joseph A. Zwierlein is the field marshal.

May 21, 1941 — Robert Eccles of London, England, a frequent visitor to Ridgefield, is aboard the cargo ship SS Robin Moor about 750 miles off the west coast of Africa when it is stopped by a German U-boat. The German captain orders the crew and passengers to get into the ship's four lifeboats and then sinks the ship, which was carrying innocuous supplies to Mozambique. The submarine pulls alongside the captain's lifeboat, hands the captain several tins of brown bread and butter, and tells him the ship was scuttled because it was carrying supplies to the enemies of Germany. Eccles spends 18 days in the lifeboat before it is discovered off South America.

May 22, 1941 — Two more gasoline filling stations are being proposed for Catoonah Street, one operated by Leo Pambianchi and the other by Ernest Scott. Already Charles Elliott has a station in the old Sperry's Garage opposite the firehouse.

May 22, 1941 — John C. Kelly of Wilton Road West is promoted from lieutenant to captain, becoming the fourth highest-ranking officer in the Connecticut State Police.

May 24, 1941 — Alex Santini, “Ridgefield’s marathon bowler,” departs for Bermuda where he will spend six months with the F.H. McGraw Construction Company of Hartford, building an new U.S. Navy air base.

May 25, 1941 — The Rev. George R. Tompkins, the new pastor of Jesse Lee Memorial Methodist Church, preaches his first sermon here.

May 25, 1941 — Seniors Marie Mahoney and Edward Freer are honored by the PTA for showing the best qualities of good citizenship during their four years at RHS. They were picked by the teachers. Mahoney receives a gold bracelet and Freer, a fountain pen.

May 28, 1941 — The free public concert by students at Ridgefield high school concludes with a rendition of “You Can Defend America” by the orchestra, band and glee club.

May 29, 1941 — Behind the six-hit, shut-out pitching of Allen Crowley, the undefeated Ridgefield High School baseball team beats Darien, 4-0, and wins the Fairfield County Class B Championship. Right-fielder Gil Pongetti hits in 11 straight games and comes in first in hitting in the league. He, Crowley, Tony Del Biondo, Walter Evans, John Tulipani, and Faust Verna make up six of the nine members of the league’s All Star Team.

May 31, 1941 — The selectmen vote 2-1 to reject Leo Pambianchi’s application for a filling station on Catoonah Street, calling it a traffic hazard.

June 3, 1941 — In the latest war-related fund-raising campaign, the newly formed United Service Organizations for National Defense begins efforts to raise \$10 million to provide soldiers and sailors with off-duty recreation activities in more than 360 service clubs next to training centers throughout the nation and overseas. Wadsworth R. Lewis, Ridgefield’s chairman, calls it a “national demonstration of united appreciation for those who have left their homes to serve the nation.” Today, the organization, known as USO, operates more than 160 locations in 27 states and 14 countries.

June 5, 1941 — Mary Stoughton of the American Women’s Voluntary Services tells 150 men and women in the school auditorium that too few people in the United States are prepared to meet even a small emergency.

June 12, 1941 — A record 49 students graduate from Ridgefield High School. Valedictorian and ranked first in class is Phyllis Smith, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John W. Smith. Salutatorian is Jean Rotherforth, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Lester Rotherforth, second in the class.

June 14, 1941 — The dream of every child to have all the ice cream he or she could eat comes true at the party given for the Girl Scouts by Geraldine Farrar at her home on West Lane. Each year Farrar hosts a party for the scouts and this year, more than 100



attend to enjoy lot of ice cream and a variety of other foods, a May Pole, music from the accordion of Aldo Tulipani, and square dancing.

June 26, 1941 — Ethel Turley, manager of the Peatt Store, arranges a water safety and life saving course, taught by a Red Cross instructor, beginning this evening at the Peatt Waterfront on Lake Mamanasco.

June 26, 1941 — A dozen area fire departments send pieces of apparatus to the parade down Main Street between Gilbert Street and the Fountain on the third evening of the Ridgefield Volunteer Fire Department's carnival on the grounds of the East Ridge School. Some 750 visiting firemen march in the parade, along with nine bands.

July 1, 1941 — First National signs a lease for property at the corner of Main and Governor Streets to built "a self-service store or super-market of the kind which has had a rapid growth throughout the country in recent years," The Press reports on Aug. 7. "It is understood that one and possibly two other stores would be located in the same building." First National already has a small grocery store in the Ernest Scott Block on Main Street.

July 4, 1941 — Once again there are no fireworks in Ridgefield as the town marks the Fourth of July, but there is not much else, either. Heavy rains force the cancellations of most of the old-fashioned "Old Home Day" including a parade, sports programs, concerts, food, all arranged by the Community Council. Only the evening dance goes on as scheduled.

July 6, 1941 — Someone goes on a strange rampage on Bailey Avenue, breaking into the Hair Craft Barber Shop and stealing \$3; trying to break into Antonio Travostino's grocery; smashing the dashboards and cutting the wiring of two school buses belonging to Leo Pambianchi; letting the air out of two tires of a Kieran and Sloane delivery truck; and stealing a car belonging to Harold "Pinky" Gillum. The car is recovered in New York City. Two weeks later, a 16-year-old reform school parolee from White Plains admits he did it.

July 8, 1941 — St. Mary's Ladies Aid Society decides that because of the "critical war situation," members will work each month on altar cloths to be used by priests in the Army and Navy.

July 10, 1941 — Although American is not at war, so many young men have been drafted that George A. Mignerey, Ridgefield pharmacy owner, advertises supplies to send to the boys in Army camps. "We will gladly take off your hands the job of packing and mailing — at cost," the ad in The Press notes.

July 15, 1941 — Ridgefield artist John C. Atherton wins two prizes in a competition for national defense posters designed for the treasury and war departments to help sell

defense bonds and recruit men for the Army Air Corps. Originals of the posters are on exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

July 19, 1941 — Daniel Hull, 10-year-old son of Selectman and Mrs. Harry E. Hull, is killed when he is struck by a car while riding his bicycle across Danbury Road in front of his home. Two years earlier the Hulls lost their nine-year-old daughter, Audrey, to an illness. The driver of the car is found not at fault.

July 21, 1941 — A weeklong drive begins today to collect scrap aluminum to be used for national defense. A shortage of aluminum due to the war has forced manufacturers to cease making aluminum articles for domestic consumption. Aluminum is needed for planes, tanks and “other instruments of defense.” In the end 825 pounds are collected. “One housewife sent in an aluminum tea kettle which had served in her kitchen for more than 30 years,” The Press reports. “She tossed it in the heap in the interest of defense.”

July 22, 1941 — Lynn W. Wilson, editorial writer for the Danbury News-Times, tells the Lions Club that Russia will defeat Germany in the current conflict. Wilson dies several months later.

July 24, 1941 — Calling the current ball field behind the East Ridge School “hazardous and unfit for baseball,” Press sports editor Joe Brunetti writes “an open letter to the town’s political administration,” asking “When will Ridgefield have a new ball field?” Brunetti notes that “we have a fine baseball team but we can’t watch it play unless we follow the team out of town.”

July 25, 1941 — Frederic M. Fayerweather, a Ridgefield native who commuted to New York City more more than a half a century, dies at the age of 81. An expert on color harmony and design in stained glass windows, he had worked for Tiffany Studios Inc. for most of his 60-year career.

July 29, 1941 — Leading citizens of Ridgefield, included author Ted Shane and businessman Arthur Carnall, ride burros in a softball game to benefit United China Relief. The game is arranged by Leo Pambianchi, sponsor of the Ridgefield Motors baseball team.

Aug. 3, 1941 — Some 1,300 people attend the fourth annual Italian-American Mutual Aid Society field day at the club grounds on Prospect Street.

Aug. 11, 1941 — Geraldine Farrar of Ridgefield, along with 14 other Republican leaders including Herbert Hoover and Alf Landon, sign an appeal that “Congress put a stop to step by step projection of the United States into undeclared war” and objecting to “any aggressive measure to put our United States into the European conflict.”

Aug. 12, 1941 — H. Dunscombe Colt of High Ridge tells the Lions Club about his many years of archaeological work in Palestine, particularly the translations from the Greek of documents inscribed on papyrus which he had discovered.

Aug. 13, 1941 — A special town meeting overwhelmingly favors an ordinance against commercial buildings south of the village — i.e., south of Main and Governor Street — by declaring it is a residential area or zone. That would prevent First National from building a “super-market” at the south corner of Main and Governor Streets. It is the first formal effort at zoning in Ridgefield.

Aug. 14, 1941 — At the state police barracks on East Ridge, 100 or so Connecticut and New York police officials, newspapermen, lawyers, and doctors watch as a “sad-faced man,” who had not eaten in several hours, drinks six rye whiskey highballs in a row and blows his breath into a tube attached to a machine resembling a radio. “I feel a little high,” says the man, as a liquid in the machine turns blue and a needle on a dial rises to the figure 0.3. The demonstration marks the official beginning of the state police use of an “automatic alcoholometer,” invented by two Yale scientists to quickly and accurately test for drunken drivers.

Aug. 20, 1941 — Declaring that he’d rather sit home and play solitaire than continue to serve on a Board of Education that never discusses education but devotes practically all of its time to fussing about inconsequential matters, Wadsworth R. Lewis outspokenly assails the procedure of the board. “Does the Board of Education feel that our educational program is so well run that it never need be discussed?” he asks, complaining that the board spends all its time discussing bills and other “minor matters.” Lewis joined the board June 9 to fill a vacancy.

Aug. 21, 1941 — The Junior Garden Club and the Ridgefield Playhouse sponsor a ragweed-pulling contest, with the winners getting passes to the Playhouse.

Aug. 27, 1941 — Stage, screen and radio star Clifton Webb is master of ceremonies for “Frills and Furbelows,” a series of costume tableaux, to benefit Bundles for Britain. Around 500 people attend the event at the Outpost Inn.

Aug. 28, 1941 — Although he is a patient at Danbury Hospital recuperating from appendicitis, Si Bellagamba is elected the first chief of the Junior Fire Department. He is one of 14 boys aged 14 to 21, who sign up for the new service to help the fire department, whose ranks have been depleted because of the draft.

Sept. 2, 1941 — A total of 657 children showed up for school, fewer than the 720 at the same time last year.

Sept. 4, 1941 — The Board of Education votes to abandon the teaching of Italian in the high school because of the small enrollment. Only four students have signed up for first year Italian and only five students are taking the second year.

Sept. 8, 1941 — Noting that many students in the public schools frequently use its facilities, Mrs. Theodore C. Jessup of the Ridgefield Library board asks the town for a \$500 grant (\$8,300 in 2017 dollars) from its budget.

Sept. 10, 1941 — At a caucus tonight, Ridgefield Republicans pass a resolution, opposing US Senator John A. Danaher's isolationism and his objections to aiding the Allies against Hitler. Danaher is a Republican.

Sept. 12, 1941 — St. Stephen's Harvest Festival begins tonight with a dance outdoors in the gardens near the rectory and continues Saturday with a fair that includes many wares, pony rides, a magician, tea, a turkey dinner, and "moving pictures of the New York World's Fair."

Sept. 25, 1941 — The Bundles for Britain group reports it has produced more than 20,000 garments for England, all made or assembled by Ridgefield women during their sessions on Mondays and Thursdays at St. Stephen's Parish House.

Sept. 30, 1941 — All six bids for remodeling the town hall exceed the \$25,000 appropriated for the job. Lowest is Achille Bacchiochi and Sons of Ridgefield at \$27,325. Other bidders from Ridgefield are Daniel Tobin, \$29,685, Cleveland Bassett, \$31,260, and John Morganti, \$32,000.

Oct. 7 — Winthrop Rockwell, first selectman since 1927, is re-elected to another term, which is not surprising since no one opposed him. M.T. McGlynn, in his 44th year on the school board, fails to get re-elected. Karl S. Nash, who has been covering the board as a reporter for The Press (which he co-owns), is elected to his first term. He goes on to serve 20 years — 17 of them as chairman, starting with the Oct. 22 meeting when he replaces retiring chairman Robert E. Richardson.

Oct. 9, 1941 — As Ridgefield's drive to aid China draws to a close, Edna Schoyer, Ridgefield chairman, reports that \$3,471 (\$57,500) has been raised so far.

Oct. 15, 1941 — Sixteen people attend a selectmen's public hearing on extending the town's residential-only "zoning," now limited to southern Main Street, to other roads including High Ridge, King Lane, Peaceable Street, East Ridge, and Branchville Road "and vicinity." No one opposes the idea and the next week, the selectmen approve adding the roads.

Oct. 21, 1941 — The Georgetown telephone district is established, including homes in the Branchville section of Ridgefield. The process involves many people, The Press reports. At 7 a.m. at the Ridgefield telephone switchboard, the word ‘cut’ is spoken into a telephone. “Instantly a dozen men in three different buildings will jump into action and in a few minutes time, 200 telephones in the Georgetown area will be connected to a new dial exchange.”

Oct. 23, 1941 — “Don’t wait until the first frosty morning, fill your bin with Blue Coal today,” urges Ridgefield Supply Company in an ad, featuring “Uncle Hank,” a cartoon character.

Oct. 25, 1941 — The 36th annual Masquerade Ball is sponsored by the Mary Rebekah Lodge at the Odd Fellows Hall on Main Street.

Oct. 27, 1941 — Fire destroys a small house on South Salem Road where, last February, a crib containing twin boys caught fire, resulting in the eventual death of one of the boys. The family of the baby had moved out of the house months ago, and the ill-fated building is occupied by a lone farmhand from a nearby estate. He is not injured.

Nov. 1, 1941 — Opera and stage singers Clifford Menz and Susanne Fisher (Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Menz of Silver Spring Road) give a costumed concert of opera and other favorites at the school auditorium to benefit the PTA school lunch fund. Some 200 people attend. The couple donates their talent.

Nov. 1, 1941 — Hollywood and New York film director/producer Walter Wanger, who recruited such stars as Maurice Chevalier, the Marx Brothers, Claudette Colbert, Jeanette MacDonald, and Fredric March, for the movies, visits the Ridgefield Playhouse to stage a screening for a group of his friends of “Foreign Correspondent,” which Alfred Hitchcock directed and Wanger produced.

Nov. 2, 1941 — More than 150 men and boys take part in the first turkey shoot of the season at the James H. Smith farm on Barry Avenue. Winners get some of the 265 birds Smith raised this season.

Nov. 4, 1941 — A device called a “Go-Devil,” which slithers its way through underground water mains removing sediment and other accumulations, gets stuck in a pipe near the the standpipe early Tuesday morning, and the town is without water for a full day.

Nov. 7, 1941 — Though it is housed in a special bicycle repair room at the Boys’ Club, the new Ridgefield Bicycle Club serves both boys and girls — 63 children in all.

Nov. 7, 1941 — Hershel Brickell of Branchville Road, an author, editor, and student of Hispanic history, sails for Bogota, Columbia, where he will fill the newly created post of senior cultural relations assistant to the U.S. ambassador to Colombia. Brickell, a friend of such literary personalities as novelists Margaret Mitchell and Eudora Welty, and poet Robert Frost, says his duties are to improve cultural relations between the two countries and shift the U.S emphasis away from “missionary” work.

Nov. 9, 1941 – Jesse Lee Methodist congregation marks the 100th anniversary of the erection of its church building on the corner of Main and Catoonah Streets. The Rev. William Lusk of St. Stephen’s and the Rev. Hugh Shields of First Congregational join the Rev. George B. Tompkins in celebrating the evening service.

Nov. 10, 1941 — Dr. Franklin M. Erlenbach and two dental hygienists from the Connecticut Department of Health are in town, cleaning the teeth of pupils in the first, second and third grades at the East Ridge School, part of a state experiment. Dr. Erlenbach reports the general condition of the youngsters’ teeth is good.

Nov. 17, 1941 — A gallon of La Boheme sauterne, barbera, or burgundy wine is \$1.35 at Hyde’s Liquor Store which says, “Be in Good Spirits for the Holidays.” Casa-More’s market on West Lane has sweet cider for 39 cents a gallon.

Nov. 18, 1941 – Tommy Manville, the 47-year-old asbestos heir and “famous playboy,” marries “Miss Bonita Edwards, 22, a Broadway showgirl” in the office of Probate Judge Joseph H. Donnelly, who waives the normal five-day waiting period. “A crowd of curious onlookers, recognizing the famous playboy and his automobile, gather in the streets outside,” The Press reports. It’s his fifth plunge into matrimonial waters. Only 17 days after the ceremony, Bonita heads for Reno to seek a divorce, charging extreme mental cruelty. By the time he dies in 1967, Manville has been married 13 times – to 11 women.

Nov. 19, 1941 — The Ridgefield Boys’ Club marks its fifth anniversary. The club has grown from 120 to 251 members during that time.

Dec. 4, 1941 — “The wolf bites its young in the flank and sends them off to look out for themselves,” says famous photographer James E. Abbe. “I use the wolf theory.” Abbe, who lived with his family in Ridgefield a few years back, is talking about his theory of raising his three children. They didn’t do so badly. As children, Patience, Richard and John Abbe wrote “Around the World in 11 Years,” a best-seller that sold 100,000 copies, was translated into six languages, and netted \$40,000 (\$700,000 in 2017 dollars) with which they bought a 320-acre ranch with 11-room house in Colorado. One wonders how many kids, hearing this, would say, “Bite me!”

Dec. 4, 1941 — The Ridgefield Press announces it will send free subscriptions to members of the military. “We make this offer so that we may do some small part to aid

these fine American young men who are making sacrifices for their country,” The Press says.

Dec. 8, 1941 – Teachers in the schools meet at the home of Miss Grace C. White to sew for the Red Cross. So far they have completed three shirts, three ladies’ dresses, 12 night dresses, and four baby sets including jackets, bonnets and booties, all embroidered. Some in the group are also knitting.

Dec. 11, 1941 — “Town Gets Ready for Any Emergency as War Comes,” says the headline at the top of The Ridgefield Press, four days after Pearl Harbor and the same day the U.S. declares war on Germany and Italy. Much is happening. The Bundles for Britain group disbands and joins the Red Cross, which is provided the auditorium in the town hall as a work center. Please go out for volunteer workers for local defense efforts, including manning the airplane spotting station 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at the Wadsworth Lewis estate on Great Hill Road. The American Women’s Voluntary Services headquarters on Catoonah Street is now open 24 hours daily and all members must be fingerprinted. Ridgefield’s Red Cross seeks \$5,250 in donations toward national Red Cross’s special war relief drive of \$50 million. The Christmas doorway decorating contest is canceled (though many still decorate their doors). Students in the public schools collect \$22 to buy Christmas gifts for four Ridgefield soldiers.

Dec. 11, 1941 — Three hand-operated air raid warning sirens have been installed — at the town hall, Peatt Park, and Wilton Road West at Olmstead Lane. When sirens are sounded, the chief air raid warden announces, townspeople should: 1. Remain cool and calm; 2. Obey orders of proper authorities; 3. Keep off the streets. 4. Stay away from windows and outside walls. 5. Motorists should park cars and seek shelter. 6. Avoid the use of telephones. 7. Remain calm.

Dec. 11, 1941 – The day Italy declares war on the U.S., and the U.S. on Italy, the Italian American Mutual Aid Society passes a resolution of loyalty and support for America and offers its building for defense uses. The resolution says members “are in principle, thought and action 100 percent behind the policy of the federal government in prosecuting this war to a successful conclusion for the United States and her Allies.” When O. J. Carboni finishes reading the resolution aloud to the membership, “the entire gathering burst into loud and prolonged cheering.”

Dec. 12, 1941 — Arthur Dingee of Barry Avenue, foreman of the fire department’s Hook and Ladder Company, dies at the age of 35. “His sudden death was believed due to acute indigestion,” The Press reports.

Dec. 15, 1941 — Leo F. Carroll of the Connecticut State Police is promoted from lieutenant to inspector, and is assigned to the eastern half of the state. Despite this, he will continue to maintain his home on Wilton Road West at Creamery Lane.

Dec. 16, 1941 — The Marquette Council of Knights of Columbus votes to buy a \$1,000 defense bond (\$16,500 in 2017 dollars).

Dec. 17, 1941 — Mr. and Mrs. Earl Roberts learn that their son, Ensign Everett Roberts, in the Navy at Pearl Harbor, is safe.

Dec. 17, 1941 — Westbrook Pegler, the Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist, and his wife buy the Rundle farm of 100 acres along Old Stagecoach Road. Some years later, Pegler calls Ridgefield “an old aristocratic town of moldering white mansions on a white main street” that “has quietly become infested with wealthy Sixth Columnists” (supporters of communism).

Dec. 20, 1941 — Miss Ethel Fitch plays the part of the Virgin Mary as Ridgefield’s Girl Scouts stage a pageant in the East Ridge School auditorium. The program also includes the girls’ presenting the operetta, “Pennies, Buns and Roses.”

Dec. 22, 1941 — State defense officials meet with Ridgefield’s Defense Council and ask for Ridgefielders who can fly a plane to volunteer for the civilian air patrol. Richard E. Conley of Danbury Road, a private pilot, heads the CAP committee. Meanwhile, Officer Gus Rux reports that 50 men have already enlisted in the Ridgefield auxiliary police force. These men will wear a khaki uniforms with white puttees. There will be officers and privates, with the officers carrying firearms and the privates, night clubs and whistles.

Dec. 22, 1941 — “Because of the censorship decreed by the government on weather reports, The Press has been unable to receive and print, as it did last year, a dispatch from Santa Claus’ headquarters at the North Pole,” the newspaper reports on its front page. “People generally believe, however, that it is cold there and that there probably is snow.”

Dec. 25, 1941 — Although it is Christmas, Ridgefielders still staff the airplane spotting station at the Lewis estate — all day and night long.

Dec. 28, 1941 — The airplane spotting post is moved today from the Lewis estate to a small building, formerly used by the Works Progress Administration, at the rear of the East Ridge School. The building has a wood stove, electricity, and a phone line, and being centrally located in town, is easier to staff — many volunteers can walk to the post instead of needing a ride to Great Hill Road. The post is staffed by men and women in two-hour shifts around the clock.

Dec. 29, 1941 — Ridgefield’s defense headquarters is moved from a small building on Catoonah Street, used by the American Women’s Voluntary Services, to the larger facilities at the firehouse.



Dec. 31, 1941 — Despite the war, the Community Council has its second annual community dance to celebrate New Year. Joseph Venus furnishes the vocal numbers and calls off for square sets.

## 1942

1942 – Outpost Nurseries sets up sawmill on Route 7 to cut huge timbers for Navy patrol boats, mine sweepers, PT boats, and other small craft. President Roosevelt's Hyde Park supplies some of the trees.

Jan. 7, 1942 — Chief White Horn, a full-blooded Omaha Indian, speaks to the Rotary Club at Outpost Inn about plans for a handicraft project on three Newtown farms, leased by the Indians. He is introduced by Cliff Younger, “the well-known reformed bandit,” also involved in the project.

Jan. 7, 1942 — Members of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Italian American Mutual Aid Society vote to buy a \$1,000 defense bond and contribute \$25 to the Red Cross war relief drive.

Jan. 8, 1942 — Accustomed to an unusually mild winter till now, Ridgefielders are shocked to wake up to minus-10 degree temperatures and many were unprepared. Cars are frozen tight in unheated garages, on the streets and along the countryside, The Press reports.

Jan. 8, 1942 — Tire rationing is underway, and Mrs. Thomas J. McGlynn, Ridgefield member of the automobile tire rationing board for this district, which includes Danbury, says that virtually the entire district quota of 46 tires for cars in January has already been assigned by the board. Mrs. McGlynn has applications for people wishing to try to buy a tire, but warns “that the quota is so low that individuals need not expect to be permitted to purchase tires, even if they come within the eligible classifications.” Meanwhile, Ridgefield's milkmen announced daily milk deliveries are stopping. Deliveries will be every other day, to conserve truck tires.

Jan. 8, 1942 — Major Robert R. Keeler, chairman of the Ridgefield Defense Council, tells the Board of Finance that the town may be asked to provide up to \$5,000 for local defense efforts. The financiers whittle that down to \$2,000 in “immediate needs.”

Jan. 8, 1942 — Air raid drills are being planned for the public schools, Superintendent A.D. Horton tells the Board of Education.

Jan. 11, 1942 — The Rev. Wayne W. Womer, executive secretary of the Connecticut Temperance Union, tells parishioners at Jesse Lee Methodist Church: “There are in the

jails of this county 1,200 alcoholics. Alcoholic beverages account for a high percentage of those in hospitals for the insane. It is one of the major causes of broken homes. A majority of juvenile delinquency comes from broken homes.”

Jan. 12, 1942 — Mrs. Howard P. Nash, librarian at the Ridgefield Library, kicks off a campaign to collect books to send to men in the military and workers in defense plants.

Jan. 15, 1942 — Elizabeth Browning, whose shop is on Prospect Street opposite the Playhouse, is having a dress sale. “Wool day dresses” are \$5, \$10 and \$15 while evening dresses are \$10 and \$15.

Jan. 19, 1942 — Seth Low Pierrepont of Twixthills begins work in Hartford as chairman of the Connecticut General Salvage Committee, which will set up a program of collecting waste metal, paper, rags and rubber throughout the state to recycle for the war effort.

Jan. 22, 1942 — “Save Fuel for Defense,” advertises William S. Chamberlin of New Street, the local representative for the Terminix Insulation Company, which sells Fiberglas wool.

Jan. 16, 1942 – The State Police will begin training a volunteer corps of auxiliary state policewomen at the Ridgefield barracks. Already, nearly 80 men are training at Troop A to be auxiliaries. It’s also announced that people will no longer be able to take their driver’s license exams at the barracks.

Jan. 16, 1942 — “Children of the pre-school, kindergarten and first grade at the Garden School on Bailey Avenue played a new ‘game’ Friday morning,” The Press reports. “Donning their clothing as quickly and as quietly as possible, they followed their teachers across the street to The Ridgefield Press building. The purpose was to see how quickly and orderly they could do it. So the children said. It was really an air raid drill, first for the smallest children in the public school system, and was rated a success by Supt. A.D. Horton, and the three teachers at the school, not to mention the little tots themselves.” Because the Garden School is wood frame, the 40 or so pupils will use the brick and cement-block Press building as an air raid shelter.

March 19, 1942 – John Sherman Vissches is Ridgefield’s first wartime draftee.

Jan. 21, 1942 — A Court of Common Pleas judge upholds the selectmen’s rejection of a permit for another gasoline station, sought by John J. Cranston on Catoonah Street.

Jan. 22, 1942 — Major Robert R. Keeler, head of the Ridgefield Defense Council, says anyone connected in any way with civilian defense must have an identification card, issued by the state police. The cards require a photo and Keeler says his camera at the assessors’ office in town hall is available for those who need a picture. Four days later, Major Keeler resigns as defense chief because he has been called up into active Army

service. Sereno T. Jacob, a fighter pilot in World War I and former airline captain, will take over as chairman of the defense council.

Jan. 26, 1942 — The Ridgefield Defense Council begins a house-to-house survey to find out what facilities the community has to combat the effects of air raids and for taking care of possible evacuees from cities such as Bridgeport or Stamford if they are bombed.

Jan. 27, 1942 — Roger C. Tredwell of Nod Road, a retired U.S. consular official for 25 years, tells the Lions Club he is fed up with Congress and urges the public to send more competent people to Washington. He calls the Senate “a kindergarten of politicians instead of a school for statesmen” and wants legislators who would “understand the science as well as the business of government, men who know what makes the wheels go round.”

Jan. 29, 1942 — Leo Pambianchi is in Hartford today, seeking a permit from the Public Utilities Commission to operate a bus line between Ridgefield and Bridgeport, aimed at transporting local defense workers to the plants in the city. He gets the permit, buys a new 30-passenger bus and begins the service Feb. 23. The Victory Bus Line runs three round trips daily between here and Bridgeport. One of his drivers is Reno Carboni.

Jan. 30, 1942 — Larry Aldrich of New York City buys the A.F. Baldwin home on Nod Road.

Feb. 5, 1942 — “Mrs. A. J. Detzer, daughter of Mrs. Van Allen Shields, and her three children, Diane, Donald and David, are soon to arrive in Ridgefield from Honolulu, Hawaii, for the duration of the war,” The Press reports. “Mrs. Detzer’s husband is commander aboard a destroyer of the U.S. Pacific Fleet.”

Feb. 9, 1942 — Leo Pambianchi and George L. Rockwell Jr., as part of a volunteer firefighter group, witness the huge blaze that destroys the 1,000-foot-long S.S. Normandie, which catches fire in the Hudson River as it is undergoing conversion from a luxury liner to a troop carrier. “Loss of the Normandie served to cast gloom over the community, many people apparently realizing what a setback to the country’s war effort it would be,” The Press observes, adding “most people felt strongly that the tragedy should have been and could have been avoided by greater vigilance.”

Feb. 11, 1942 — Because of the limitations on automobiles, like tire rationing, the New Haven Railroad agrees to add three more commuter trains to the Danbury line. At the same time bus lines running through Ridgefield announce a 10% rate increase.

Feb. 12, 1942 — Alex Santini flies home on a Pan Am clipper for a break from his work on Bermuda where he is foreman of a construction company building a naval air station.

Santini reports that during his off hours, he has played considerable golf, won several tournaments and is in the running for the island championship.

Feb. 13, 1942 — Frank Mai, head janitor of the East Ridge School, is also placed in charge of the town's other public school, the Garden School on Bailey Avenue.

Feb. 14, 1942 — The first of many salvage collections takes place under the direction of Irving B. Conklin, chairman of the collection subcommittee of the Ridgefield Salvage Committee. Rubber, paper, rags and metals — but not tin cans — are collected by a fleet of trucks mobilized by Conklin. The metal alone totals three and a half tons.

Feb. 16, 1942 — 239 more Ridgefield men, aged 20 to 45, register for the selective service today.

Feb. 18, 1942 — More commodities are being rationed and more people are being appointed to rationing boards to deal them out. A five-member sugar rationing board is appointed today by First Selectman Winthrop Rockwell. Selectman Harry Hull is named chairman.

Feb. 19, 1942 — “Bombs Can't Destroy Town's Oldest House” says the Press headline over a story about how the 1712 Hauley house on Main Street is one of 6,500 landmarks of colonial America that have been photographed and measured by the Historic American Buildings Survey so they might be restored if they are destroyed in the war.

Feb. 23, 1942 — Nina Romeo, who has been a nurse at Danbury Hospital, leaves for Fort Devens, Mass., as she joins the Army and is commissioned a lieutenant. The first nurse from Danbury Hospital to enlist, she is also believed to be the first woman from Ridgefield to sign up for war service. At least three others subsequently enlist. Romeo makes the Army a career, later serving in the Korean War and retiring as a major.

Feb. 23, 1942 — Dr. Francis Woodford, town health officer, reveals plans for an emergency hospital to be set up in St. Stephen's Parish House. Obstetrical cases would probably be the first to get the attention of physicians and nurses in case of an emergency, he says. Medical equipment and supplies will cost \$415 (\$6,200 in 2017 dollars).

Feb. 25, 1942 — The town spends \$2,662 on public welfare or “relief” this winter, less than half what was spent in 1941. Only 1.7% of the town's population is receiving relief payments.

March 1, 1942 — The town has its first blackout test this evening at 9 p.m. as the air raid sirens go off and auto horns are sounded. Ridgefielders turn off their lights and traffic comes to a stop for a half hour. No one is allowed outside except the air raid wardens.

March 1, 1942 — During her shift from noon to 2 today, Sunday, at the station on East Ridge, Mrs. Charles D. Crouchley sets a local aircraft spotting record, sighting 22 airplanes — all of which are reported to Mitchell Field on Long Island. Some are visible only through “powerful field glasses.”

March 5, 1942 — More than 300 Ridgefielders have completed first aid courses since the war began, the Ridgefield Defense Council reports.

March 12, 1942 – Sereno T. Jacob, head of the Defense Council, asks for \$25,000 for civilian defense projects; the selectmen slash the appropriation to \$2,000. A Town Meeting in April increases it to \$2,500.

March 17, 1942 — Mr. and Mrs. Gene Casagrande jump from the roof of Casa-More on West Lane as a blaze consumes part of their grocery market. Damage is estimated at \$4,500 (\$67,000 in 2017), but by late April, they are back in business.

March 19, 1942 — The Ridgefield Savings Bank begins offering a “thrift club.” Similar to a Christmas Club where savers put aside a few dollars each week and get a check for their savings plus interest in December, presumably to use for buying presents, the thrift club collects money that the savers can use to pay their income tax.

March 19, 1942 — The PTA votes to ask the school board to reduce the school lunch period from an hour to a half hour, thus allowing school to be dismissed at 3 instead of 3:30. The PTA argues that many children leave home for school before 8 a.m. and don’t get home until after 4:30.

March 26, 1942 — The Defense Council has purchased 20 aerial bombs — similar to those used in Fourth of July fireworks displays — to employ as air raid warning devices. A recent test of auto horns to supplement the three hand-operated air raid sirens in town proved not too successful in drawing the attention of Ridgefielders during surprise blackout Monday. The bombs, too, soon prove unsuccessful and, according to state police, are dangerous to boot.

April 1942 — Ridgefield High School students undergo a battery of new tests, designed by the State Department of Education to evaluate intelligence, “personality,” and achievement in a wide variety of subjects. Tests will be automatically scored at UConn with machinery that is “electrically operated.”

April 1, 1942 — Union workers in Ridgefield get pay increases, effective today: Bricklayers, masons, plasterers, carpenters, and plumbers rise from \$10 to \$11 for an eight-hour day; painters go from \$9 to \$10; laborers, from \$6.50 to \$7.20. (\$10 then was the equivalent of \$150 in 2017.)

April 2, 1942 — Cyril Adamseck is the first known war fatality of someone who lived in Ridgefield. Chief Mate Adamseck, who lived on Wilton Road West for six years in the 1930s, dies when a U-boat torpedoes his freighter off the coast of Norfolk, Va. The 49-year-old World War I Navy veteran leaves a wife and two daughters who live on Long Island.

April 2 — Superior Court Judge Robert L. Munger rules that Ridgefield's banning of commercial uses on the south part of Main Street is a valid law. The form of zoning enacted last August had been appealed as illegal by Dr. and Mrs. E.I. Rogers, who want to build a supermarket on the south corner of Main and Governor Streets.

April 2, 1942 — The senior class at Ridgefield High School votes to forego the annual senior trip to Washington, D.C. The decision comes after President Roosevelt indicate in a press conference that only people connected with defense should be in Washington; everyone else is a "parasite."

April 3, 1942 — Some avocations are just more important than others. After 15 years on the Board of Education, Robert E. Richardson resigns, saying his new appointment to the Grand Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star would make it impossible for him to attend school board meetings.

April 5, 1942 — Connecticut Governor Robert A. Hurley calls for a mobilization of a 4-H Victory Corps of boys and girls. "The production and conservation of food and supplies is equal in importance to service in the armed forces," he declares. "In order that our state may increasingly do her part, I urge present 4-H Club members to continue and to expand their activities and also urge other young people in large numbers to join in this program of agriculture, homemaking, community service, and citizenship training."

April 7, 1942 — Town clerk George G. Scott writes the War Department that he wants to join the Army. Though he is 71 years old, he feels like 30 and is happy to earn \$21 a month as a soldier. "I want to do anything I can to crush that damned paper-hanger from Berlin," he writes the government, adding, "Speaking of paper hangers, I was once one myself; the only difference is, I was a good one."

April 14, 1942 — Because there's so much interest in what emergency evacuees to Ridgefield would be fed, the Red Cross puts on a sample luncheon for 100 people at the Methodist Church parlors, serving what would be given to people escaping bombed cities like Stamford or Bridgeport. The menu features tomato juice, baked lima beans, cole slaw, whole wheat bread, and brown betty with lemon sauce. The meals cost the Red Cross 17 cents each; diners at the sample luncheon pay 25 cents.

April 9, 1942 — School Superintendent A. D. Horton, who has led the schools since 1928, is retiring, due to poor health. He will move to Florida.

April 13, 1942 — Red Cross workers are temporarily lifted out of the drudgery of sewing nighties and such this afternoon when a suave, well-dressed man in his 40s strolls into their Town Hall quarters and nonchalantly commences to rifle through pocketbooks, removing money. When workers start noticing open pocketbooks, they realize that Robert C. Somers is not just waiting for a friend, as he alleges, and the New York City man takes off out the Town Hall door, followed by a pack of screaming women workers. They are joined by Christopher Kane and Jerry Mugavero, who catch the thief in the bushes near the First National Bank (now Wells Fargo). Unable to post \$7,500 bond, Somers is incarcerated in Danbury where, four days later while exercising in the jail yard, he climbs a fence, dashes through a cemetery, and heads off into Danbury where he is soon trapped hiding under a barn. Somers, it turns out, has a long police and prison record, including Sing-Sing, and is known as “a dapper lady killer with suicidal tendencies.”

April 15, 1942 — “How long will it be before we quit griping about our tires and our automobiles?” Connecticut Gov. Robert A. Hurley asks more than 100 members of the Rotary Club, gathered at the Outpost Inn. “We are not fighting for a way of life, we’ve got that. We’re fighting for our lives.” Hurley adds that “we must work harder, sacrifice and stop complaining if we are to win this war.”

April 16, 1942 — The Italian-American Club’s Ladies Auxiliary puts on its first public dance, but instead of charging cash, admission is two packs of cigarettes, which will be shipped to Ridgefield men in the armed services.

April 17, 1942 – Dr. R.W. Lowe, school doctor since 1927, retires and is replaced by Dr. Francis B. Woodford.

April 20, 1942 — Several residents of rural Ridgebury, where there is no air raid warning system, volunteer to ride through the area on horseback to give air raid alarms, the Ridgefield Defense Council learns. The council agrees that, since no better idea has come forth, “these modern Paul Reveres” may be used.

April 23, 1942 — “Keep ’em Flying! Keep ’Em Rolling! Keep ’Em Fighting!” says the full-page ad in the Press, sponsored by 50 Ridgefield businesses as well as employees of the Post Office, urging people to buy war bonds and stamps.

April 23, 1942 — “Waste is A Saboteur” says another ad, this one from Louis Devantery, proprietor of the Central Garage on Danbury Road, suggesting that taking good care of your car — presumably at Central Garage — is patriotic.

April 27, 1942 — 491 Ridgefield men — including most of Ridgefield's veterans from World War I and some who are even older — register under the Selective Service Monday at the East Ridge School. The men, aged 44 to 65, may be used for some as-yet undetermined duties to help the war effort.

April 27 to 30, 1942 — Ridgefield women register as part of a mobilization of the state's womenpower for war industries. The women are able to indicate what field they might like to work in.

April 27, 1942 — Because of the war and all the defense-related activities people are involved in, the Ridgefield Community Council, formed three years ago by Stewart E. Scofield, disbands.

May 1, 1942 — The new Ridgefield Ration Board selects a room at the Garden School for its office. The room had been used for Girl Scout storage and as a kitchen.

May 1, 1942 — Thomas J. McGlynn is elected to fill Robert Richardson's vacancy on the school board, creating two households with double representation on the board. Ethel McGlynn, Thomas's wife, is already a board member; however, she plans to resign when their daughter graduates June 11. She's a Democrat, he's a Republican. The second two-member household consists of Anne Richardson and Edna Schoyer.

May 2, 1942 — Silver Spring Country Club opens with curtailed activities because of the war. The club employs no golf or tennis professionals this year.

May 4, 1942 — Because of health problems, Sereno T. Jacob resigns as head of the Ridgefield Defense Council.

May 5, 1942 — The town learns it has lost another former resident to the war. Lindgren Bancroft, who graduated from RHS in 1934, is third assistant engineer of the unarmed Esso Tanker T. C. McCobb which is sunk March 31 by an Italian submarine 400 miles off the north coast of Brazil.

May 7, 1942 — Barry Finch, just 4 days old, is the youngest applicant for a war ration book. His book allows him to purchase one pound of sugar every two weeks. Some 3,500 people have applied for sugar ration books; only 50 have been rejected because they already have a large supply.

May 12-14, 1942 — Owners of motor vehicles apply for gasoline rationing cards at the East Ridge School and a new type of "fraternal order has mushroomed into being," reports The Press. They are the A's, the B's and the X's. The A's — people who drive less than six miles a day — commiserate with one another on how they will manage on three gallons of gas a week. The B's, generally factory workers and salesmen, stratify into B1



(6-10 miles a day), 4.5 gallons; B2 (11-14 miles), 6.5 gallons; and B3 (more than 14), eight gallons. The X's are the elite — as doctors, nurses, clergymen, police, war workers, important government officials, letter carriers essential truck drivers, bus drivers, and hearse operators, they get unlimited gas.

May 15, 1942 — The school board increases the salary of elementary teachers so that the maximum they can earn is \$1,800 instead of \$1,600 (\$26,900 in 2017 dollars vs. \$23,900). Maximum for a high school teacher is now \$2,000.

May 18, 1942 — Mary (Mrs. Frederic E.) Lewis, who has been chairman of the Ridgefield Red Cross since 1914, resigns because it is becoming too difficult for her to travel to Ridgefield from her apartment in Manhattan to attend the increasingly frequent meetings.

May 18, 1942 — Marthe Krueger, an internationally known dancer and choreographer, opens a school of dance at the “Old Coach House” on Branchville Road. “Ridgefield was selected for the establishment of a school to perpetuate her art because Marthe Krueger feels that in the hills of Connecticut, spiritual as well as bodily strength may be developed through the appreciation, practice and understanding of beauty of movement,” The Press reports, apparently holding a copy of a publicist's press release.

May 21, 1942 — Ridgefield has many dirt roads in need of oiling as a treatment for their surfaces, but First Selectman Winthrop Rockwell tells Hartford he's willing to forego state oil aid grants. “If receiving any oil would hamper the government in any way, we would rather win the war and do the extra work on the roads after the war is over,” he tells the state highway department. However, he adds that he is optimistic that the war will end quickly.

May 21, 1942 — The engagement of Margaret Mary Shean to Lt. Harry R. Bennett is announced. She is a student at the New England School of Art in Boston and he is in the Army at Fort Benning, Ga., after just having graduated from Officers Training School.

May 28, 1942 — The Rationing Board is cracking down on the holders of X cards that provide unlimited gasoline. Already 19 of the 81 people who got X cards have had to give them up after being interviewed by the board.

May 28, 1942 — The Red Cross is looking for old felt hats — they'll be turned into bedroom slippers for use by casualties in war hospitals.

May 29, 1942 — Ridgefield schools are closed today to give teachers a long weekend, in appreciation of the long hours they have been spending helping Ridgefield's rationing program.

May 29, 1942 — Mr. and Mrs. Frank H. Lee Jr. buy a house with 10 acres on Nod Road. He is a son of the founder of the big hat factory in Danbury where he works.

May 29, 1942 — The Ridgefield High “Millionaires” again win the Class B County League baseball title, trouncing Darien 11-4. Dante Brunetti pitches the win, and heavy hitters include Tony Del Biondo.

May 30, 1942 — No motor vehicles — including fire trucks — are used in Ridgefield’s Memorial Day Parade. There are horses and bicycles instead. The two veterans of the Spanish American War — who usually ride in cars for the parade — march down Main Street; they are Arthur F. Eilenstein and Ward F. Lang.

May 31, 1942 — The Goodwill Community Church dedicates its new house of worship in the old creamery on Creamery Lane.

June 1, 1942 — Starting today and until Oct. 1, Ridgefield stores will be closed on Wednesday afternoons as part of a national effort to conserve on tires and gasoline.

June 1, 1942 — Ridgefielders buy \$59,753 (\$894,000 in 2017 dollars) in war bonds and stamps during May, which is \$24,225 (\$362,000) more than what the Treasury Department expected to sell here.

June 2, 1942 — The Defense Council decides that car horns are no longer to be used for air raid warnings and instead, the town will rely on sirens, the fire whistle, church bells and school bells.

June 2, 1942 — 18 former members of the Ridgefield Boys’ Club are now in the military service, reports William R.F. Miller, club director.

June 3, 1942 — The selectmen reject a permit application, filed by Dr. and Mrs. E.I. Rogers, to build a supermarket at the south corner of Main and Governor Streets. That property is within the new residential “zone” that the town set up on south Main Street and that a court approved.

June 3, 1942 — Leo Pambianchi is doing well enough with his Victory Bus Line from Ridgefield to Bridgeport that he asks the state for permission to set up more routes serving Westport and Wilton.

June 5, 1942 — “Keeping abreast of the fast-moving times,” Ridgefield High School will offer a basic course in aeronautics starting in September, the Board of Education learns.

June 6, 1942 — The school board turns over to the town four schoolhouses it no longer uses — these last four district schoolhouses had been closed in 1939. Titicus School has become headquarters for the American Legion and Ridgebury School is being used by the Ridgebury Social Club. But Farmingville and Branchville remain unused. The selectmen the next day mull over a problem with Farmingville — the land on which the building stands may have to be returned to the Starr family, which donated it, if it is not used for educational or religious purposes.

June 11, 1942 — 43 students graduate from Ridgefield High School. Emily Canestrari, highest ranking student, is valedictorian while Kenneth E. Johnson, second highest-ranking, is salutatorian.

June 12, 1942 — Marion Roberts and John F. Haight Jr. are married at St. Mary's. Mrs. Haight works at a defense plant in Stratford and Mr. Haight — the future police chief — is in the Army at Pine Camp, N.Y.

June 17, 1942 — The senior class travels to New York City for the day and most members take in a Giants-Cardinals game at the Polo Grounds. This is the first year since 1926 that seniors do not do a class trip to Washington, D.C.; the class had voted to spent most of the D.C. trip money on defense bonds, with the remainder for the day in New York.

June 18, 1942 — Ridgefield is still helping China relief efforts and in the past few weeks, \$2,722 (\$40,700 in 2017) has been raised, reports drive chairman Edna Schoyer. Meanwhile, in the past two weeks, \$1,877 (\$28,000) has been raised for the USO.

June 19, 1942 — The Board of Education approves a school operating budget for next year of \$95,750 (\$1.433 million), which is a decrease of \$555 (\$8,300) from the current year's budget. However, the request will increase by October when it faces the Annual Town Meeting.

June 19, 1942 — Mr. and Mrs. James Cumming of Catoonah Street — known to all as Ma and Pa Cumming — celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. She gets a gold watch and he a gold pencil, and each receive a "clean, new \$50 bill."

June 22, 1942 — Fat salvaging begins this week as homemakers are urged to save their left-over cooking fats and turn them in at local meat markets, which will pay them four cents a pound. Fats are needed for glycerin to make explosives — a pound of fat could make a pound of explosives (whose ingredients used to be imported from the Far East). The government estimates that more than two billions pounds of fats are wasted in the kitchen each year.

June 22, 1942 — The first contingent of 100 kids from New York City arrive at Life's Farm on Florida Road in Branchville for a two-week summer camp session, provided by the New York Tribune Fresh Air Fund. "Other groups of underprivileged youngsters will arrive at regular periods throughout the summer to drink in Connecticut's fresh air and get a taste of life away from the hot city pavements," The Press reports.

June 25, 1942 — Dairyman Irving B. Conklin buys the 230-acre Stonecrest estate along North Street and plans to use most of the land for his dairy business. It is the sixth farm Conklin operates.

June 28, 1942 — In what The Press calls "the worst accident which has ever occurred in this vicinity," five people — aged 3 to 35 — die and seven are injured in a two-car, head-on collision on Route 35 in South Salem, a mile west of the Ridgefield line. Three of the dead are from Georgetown. No evidence of excessive drinking is found.

July 1942 — The selectmen begin improving Standpipe Road to make the highway "suitable for general 20th century traffic" after a Superior Court judge rules that the path is a town highway and has not been abandoned by non-use. Standpipe Road is today called Peaceable Ridge Road.

July 2, 1942 — Wartime restrictions on transportation don't deter the Ridgefield Boys' Club from having its annual summer vacation day camp at Roberts Pond off Mulberry Street. Seventy boys register for the program, which is now called "victory camp"

July 2, 1942 — A group of Ridgefield women interested in canning has volunteered to teach others about canning techniques under the auspices of the Farm Bureau. They include Mrs. Carl A.F. Stolle, Mrs Lyman Keeler, Mrs. Arnold B. Nash, Mrs. Douglas Main, Mrs Irving W. Keeler, Mrs. John Walters, and Mrs. Daniel M. McKeon.

July 9 to 11, 1942 — A new gasoline rationing system has been devised by federal authorities and Ridgefielders will for a second time have to register for new gas rationing cards. More than 1,400 sign up. Most people get A books, allowing four gallons of gas a week. A-book people are supposed to go no more than 90 miles a month "for private use"; the rest must be for business or gainful occupation.

July 10, 1942 — A scrap rubber campaign that has been underway nationwide for three weeks ends today.

July 10, 1942 — Colonel Lemuel Q. Stoopnagle, well-known comedian of radio, stage and screen, appears at the Ridgefield Playhouse for a showing of his one-reel movie, "Better Bowling." Bowlers from throughout the area attend.

July 11, 1942 — Ridgefielders are still helping China, the latest effort being a series of Chinese shadow plays staged at the Playhouse of Dunrovin on William Matheus Sullivan's estate on West Lane. \$1,200 is raised.

July 13, 1942 — Navio Ligi, Evo Principe and Joe Brunetti are hot hitters as the Ridgefield Merchants come from behind to beat the Georgetown Grillers, 7-5. Ridgefield leads the area baseball league. Top hitter for the Merchants is Primo Zandri, batting .488.

July 16, 1942 — Karl S. Nash has been named chairman of a committee to organize a Ridgefield Merchants Association.

July 16, 1942 — "In the past and last week Wednesday particularly, rumors have been flying around town that there would be a blackout on a certain evening," writes Richard L. Jackson, chief air raid warden, in a letter to The Press. "Col. Fisher, the head of the State Defense Council, has publicly made a statement urging people not to make or pass on such rumors as it is detrimental to morale. Only the Army can order a test blackout and nobody connected with the local defense ever knows when it is coming until the signal actually comes from Stamford."

July 20, 1942 — The town has its first full-scale mock civilian defense "trial" this evening, testing Ridgefield's ability to deal with mass casualties, fires, water line breaks and other disasters.

July 22, 1942 — A new airplane spotting tower has arisen next to the octagonal lookout booth at the town park, just east of the East Ridge School. The 25-foot-high tower, built by John Walters and a crew of volunteers at a cost of about \$207, allows airplane a better view of the sky that, from the booth, had been partially blocked by maples growing around the edges of the park. Meanwhile, two Army privates tell 100 volunteer spotters how best to do their job. "If you hear a mosquito and think it's an airplane, send us a report," says one. "It is better to be safe than sorry."

July 2, 1942 — Carleton Scofield and Ralph Cramp are elected new members of the Board of Directors of the Ridgefield Savings Bank. Scofield eventually becomes its president.

July 28, 1942 — Mrs. Edward L. Ballard is re-elected president of the Ridgefield Boys' Club, a post she has held since the creation of the club six years earlier.

July 28, 1942 — Because of the war's constraints on automobile travel, First Selectman Winthrop Rockwell asks the New Haven Railroad to consider restoring passenger service on the branch line into Ridgefield, something it dropped in 1923 because of dwindling customers. The railroad evaluates and request and announces two weeks later that it will

not be able to restore service because it has neither the locomotive nor passenger cars to do it.

July 30, 1942 — Ridgefield fuel oil and coal dealers urge Ridgefielders with oil burners to convert to coal because of an expected shortage of oil this coming winter due to the war. It is estimated that of the 500 oil-heated homes in town, 90% use furnaces that had been converted from coal-burning and could easily be returned to using that solid fuel.

Aug. 2, 1942 — The town begins reconstructing the ailing baseball field at the town park on East Ridge, part of a plan devised several years ago that including building tennis courts, which are now in place.

Aug. 11, 1942 — The Lions Club formulates plans to erect an “honor roll” in front of town hall, displaying the names of all Ridgefielders serving in the war. 165 names have been collected so far. The display — which will grow as more people enter the service — will be used until the war ends, after which a permanent honor roll will be created.

Aug 13 — Ten days after it went missing, James H. Smith’s dog is discovered sitting at the bottom of a well on Peaceable Street. He is found by tree warden Thomas F. Shaughnessy who hears its weak whimpers. The well had been dry most of the summer but recent rains provided enough water for the dog to drink and survive on, even without food.

Aug. 17, 1942 — Col Samuel H. Fisher, head of the State Defense Council, issues rules for how to fight fires caused by incendiary bombs. It basically involves using a jet of water.

Aug. 19, 1942 — New York newspaper editor Lee B. Wood of Ridgefield tells the Rotary Club that America must awaken to its peril. “We need to put everything we’ve got into this struggle for democracy,” he says. “Not a moment can be lost. It’s already far later than we think.”

Aug. 20, 1942 — Francis D. Martin is named Ridgefield’s “wood fuel coordinator” as the county officials begin looking at Fairfield County’s 6,700 acres of forest as a source of wood to replace oil for heating.

Aug. 21, 1942 — The town’s surprise air raid test tonight prompts an angry statement from the chief air raid warden after phone lines light up during the blackout. “Over and over again, the telephone company, the Defense Council and the U.S. Government have urged people not to make telephone calls during an air raid or a test,” Richard L. Jackson says. “Yet on last Friday night, the switchboard was so cluttered up with unnecessary calls that signals to the Air Raid Wardens were seriously delayed. Only the most urgent reason should prompt anyone to use the telephone during a defense test or a raid.”

Jackson adds, “The people of the United States have been accused of complacency in their attitude toward the war. Broadly speaking, it is impossible to prove that charge, but Friday night offered a specific instance where many people put curiosity above patriotism.”

Aug. 21 and 22, 1942 — The town has “Ridgefield Victory Days,” designed to stimulate the sale of war bonds and stamps. Similar events have been held in communities across the country. Merchants display their flags and remind all patrons of the drive — many stores sell defense stamps and ask customers to take them as change. The Press offers \$100 in bonds to winners of a war slogan contest. The town failed miserably in meeting its July quota of \$75,000 in bond sales — reaching only \$26,575. August’s goal is a more modest \$59,000.

Aug. 26, 1942 — In a hotly contested race veteran GOP head Harold E. Finch defeats Sereno T. Jacob, 170-65, to retain his chairmanship of the Republican Town Committee, a post he’s held for the 12 years since the death of Harvey P. Bissell.

Aug. 27, 1942 — After director William Miller decides to take a post with a Southport club, the Board of Directors votes to discontinue the Ridgefield Boys’ Club, effective Sept. 9.

Aug. 28, 1942 — Alex North performs on the piano as the children of the new Marthe Krueger dance school on Branchville Road perform the musical, “Danny Dither,” in a PTA benefit at the East Ridge School auditorium (now the Ridgefield Playhouse). North later buys a home on Great Hill Road and composes the music for many of the 20th Century’s top movies, including “Death of A Salesman,” “The Rose Tattoo,” “The Rainmaker,” “The Sound and the Fury,” “Spartacus,” “Cleopatra,” “The Agony and the Ecstasy,” “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf,” “2001: A Space Odyssey,” “Dragonslayer,” and “Good Morning, Vietnam.”

Sept 1, 1942 — Longtime photographer Joseph Hartmann, who came to Ridgefield in the late 1880s, dies. Hartmann’s thousands of photographs document the people and places of Ridgefield from the 1890s until the 1930s. His glass negatives are now in the archives of the Keeler Tavern Museum.

Sept. 2, 1942 — A surprise blackout for western Connecticut goes off well, except for one casualty, Arthur Mullen of the janitorial staff of the East Ridge School. In the darkness he bangs his head on a door and sustains a bump bad enough to force him to stay in bed for several days.

Sept. 4, 1942 — Behind the strong pitching of Ray Eppoliti, the Ridgefield Athletic Club beats McCrory’s of Danbury to win the Intertown Softball League championship.

Sept. 10, 1942 — Miss Mary A. Creagh wins first prize in the Ridgefield Press's war bond slogan contest with "We're all in it — let's all help win it." Other winning slogans include "Let's give 'em the rap for changing the map" (Paul Baldaserini, later known as Paul Baker); "The axis is tough — have you bought enough?" (Theodore C. Jessup); "No lollipops, thank you, we're licking the Axis instead" (Mrs. Bernard Christopher); "We fight with bullets for the right of ballots" (Douglas Vernon); "Every American dollar will make Hitler holler — so buy bonds" (Otto S. Young).

Sept. 10, 1942 — Even bicycles are being rationed. The state reports 540 will be allotted to all of Fairfield County in September. Potential owners must show the bike is needed for their occupation.

Sept. 12, 1942 — The Chekhov Theatre Studio of Ridgefield, including Michael Chekhov himself, stages a benefit performance at the school auditorium and raises \$1,000 to help the struggling people of Russia. In early October, the studio closes down because of the war.

Sept. 13, 1942 — The Lions Club honor roll, bearing the names of all 205 Ridgefield men and women in the armed services, is dedicated outside town hall; by 1943, added panels are needed to list all the names.

Sept. 14, 1942 — Van Miller, 35, of Albany, N.Y., begins work as Ridgefield's new superintendent of schools. A former field service specialist with the New York State Department of Education, he had earlier been a superintendent in small Nebraska towns. He will earn \$4,550 (\$68,000 in 2017 dollars).

Sept. 16, 1942 — Marie Stefanelli is sworn in as a private in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. The daughter of Mrs. Julius Latanzi was valedictorian of the RHS Class of 1937 and had been working in a defense plant

Sept. 17, 1942 — "Congress is fiddling while the people of America burn with indignation," says a statement from the Ridgefield League of Women Voters, angry over Congress's failure to raise taxes to pay for the war. The league wants the income tax hiked, and opposes imposition of a sales tax. The group also attacks the lawmakers for failing to close various corporate taxing loopholes.

Sept. 22, 1942 — Ridgefield has its first "real" air raid just after 9 p.m., but hardly anyone knows it. Much of the East Coast falls under the alert as an unidentified aircraft is sighted "over a seaward area," triggering a "blue alert." However, it is nearly a half hour before Ridgefield civilian defense officials get the notice, but by then an all-clear had been given by federal authorities. Fire sirens and church bells ring in Ridgefield to sound the all-clear, but since few people knew there was an air raid underway, most people think the sirens and bells mean the air raid is just beginning. Adding to the chaos are air raid wardens, driving around sounding their car horns.



Sept. 22, 1942 — Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Westbrook Pegler of Old Stagecoach Road is photographed in front of town hall, removing the bumpers from his car to contribute to the scrap steel drive.

Sept. 24, 1942 — The Ridgefield War Price and Rationing Board reports that prices for services such as auto repairs, laundering, window cleaning, upholstering, safe deposit boxes, tool sharpening, and radio repairing are now controlled by federal law. The aim is to prevent wartime inflation.

Sept. 25 and 26, 1942 — Ridgefielders leave a total of 1,400 pounds of tin at the ends of their driveways for trucks to pick up in a special “Tin Roundup” for the war effort. That’s 600 pounds less than the ton of tin that was hoped for.

Sept. 30, 1942 — School enrollment totals 674 children, which is 21 fewer than the same day in 1941, the school board learns.

October 1942 — The school board approves RHS’s fielding a six-man football team, the school’s first venture into football. Among the students who come out for the team are Joseph McManus, George Bloomer, Abbott and Alan Goodwin, Louis Feduzi, Fred Leary, James Principi, and Joseph Moylan.

Oct. 1, 1942 — Mrs. John Potter, 82, of Ridgefield has seven grandchildren in the armed services, including Sgt. Thomas Potter Jr., Privates Michael, Hugh and John Potter; and Seaman Nicholas Fiore, all of Ridgefield.

Oct. 5, 1942 — At the most sparsely attended annual town meeting in years, voters approve a budget of \$233,000 (\$3.5 million in 2017 dollars)— \$121,000 (\$1.8 million) for general government and \$111,000 (\$1.66 million) for schools. The biggest discussion is over whether to invest the money already appropriated for the town hall renovation project in defense bonds, and undertake the renovations after the war. Legal advice is being sought. It is also noted at the meeting that Jesse L. Benedict is completing his 25th year as treasurer of the town.

Oct. 8, 1942 — While some people like columnist Westbrook Pegler donate their car bumpers to the scrap metal drives, Mrs. B. Ogden Chisholm donates her entire 1933 Cadillac roadster to the cause. The car being taken apart is pictured on the front page of The Press.

Oct. 8, 1942 — Elio Rossini is elected temporary chairman of the newly created Student Council at Ridgefield High School.

Oct. 15, 1942 — The state reports that thanks to rationing, the consumption of gasoline has already dropped 42%.

Oct. 17, 1942 — Hundreds of volunteers gather up more than 133 tons of metal in a huge, one-day scrap drive. That's 166 pounds per resident of Ridgefield.

Oct. 17, 1942 — Clare Boothe Luce of Greenwich, candidate for Congress in Ridgefield's Fourth District, tells Ridgefield Republicans, "I would hope to make a little less noise and shed a little more light than some Congressmen." More than 200 people attend the GOP dinner at Outpost Inn.

Oct. 22, 1942 — "ENLIST this car in your wartime service," advertises Danbury Buick, which has 1942 Buicks available for sale — and buying one would be patriotic, the dealer claims. "This is one of many brand new, unused, 1942 models built before automobile production ceased," the ad says. They are "models that are safer, more dependable and, in many cases, more economical to run than older cars which have passed their prime. That is why present car-buying regulations take into consideration the age and condition of your present car as well as the use you make of a car."

Oct. 28, 1942 — A fire destroys the North Salem Road home of Jan H. Huton and, much to the firemen's surprise, reveals a huge hoard of canned goods, some hidden within the walls of the house. Huton denies he was hoarding during rationing and tells officials the canned goods came from a boat he had disposed of. However, state police say there was "enough stuff there for a small army, and not such a small one at that." It is also noted that Huton has a 1,000 gallon tank of gasoline and a 3,000 gallon tank of fuel oil on the residential property. The police decline to say whether such hoarding was actually illegal.

Nov. 1, 1942 — Red Cross volunteers put in 1,400 hours of service during October. In addition, 693 pounds of kitchen fats and grease are collected during the month.

Nov. 3, 1942 — Of 2,371 people eligible to vote in the election today, only 1,437 do. Alice V. Rowland of Ridgefield, a Republican, beats Mrs. Schofield Outhwaite, Democrat, as state senator, 876-404. Peter McManus and Ethel Ryan beat their Democratic opponents for state representative, Ted Shane and Edna Schoyer. Clare Boothe Luce takes Ridgefield and the district for Congress and Republican Raymond E. Baldwin tops incumbent Robert A. Hurley for governor in both the state and Ridgefield.

Nov. 3, 1942 — Fifteen minutes after election day arrives, Wadsworth R. Lewis dies of a heart attack at his Great Hill Road home, Taghkanick. He is only 53 years old. The prominent citizen and school board member bequeaths a trust fund that since 1950, has contributed more than \$3.4 million to local charitable, educational or religious organizations. A few years after his death, Clare Boothe Luce — just elected to Congress

today — buys Lewis's home along with her husband, Time-Life publisher Henry Luce, and move to Ridgefield.

Nov. 4, 1942 — Users of fuel oil to heat their homes, already warned that they best convert to coal, are forced to sign up for fuel oil rationing today at the East Ridge School.

Nov. 5, 1942 — New food items have come under federal price controls, including butter, cheese, eggs, poultry, white potatoes, canned and fresh citrus fruits, onions, and all kinds of flour.

Nov. 16, 1942 — After the federal government asks people to eliminate meat from their diet one day a week, First Selectman Winthrop E. Rockwell issues a proclamation, declaring each Tuesday as "Meat Conservation Day" in Ridgefield. "I request that the proprietors of all inns, restaurants and other eating establishments voluntarily refrain from serving any beef, pork or veal on Tuesdays until further notice. I further appeal to all citizens....likewise to omit these meats from their meals on Tuesdays and to limit their consumption of all meats to two and one-half pounds per adult or adolescent until further notice." (He did not say whether it was 2 1/2 pounds per day, week or month.) "In carrying out this request," Rockwell adds, "our people will be demonstrating in one more way that they look forward confidently to our victory and the victory of the American way of life throughout our presently troubled world."

Nov. 17, 1942 — Francis D. Martin announces that he will lead an all-male board of directors who will reopen the Ridgefield Boys' Club that was closed in September by the all-female board which had founded the club five years earlier. Ralph B. Crouchley will be the new director. Martin praises the work of the women directors of the past and hopes that the men "would be able to do as well for the boys of town," The Press reports. Seventy five boys quickly sign up for the resurrected club.

Nov. 19, 1942 — Even old keys are now being collected as salvage, and Arthur Carnall is displaying the pile of salvaged keys in his office window on Main Street. Meanwhile, the Women's Salvage Corps has begun collecting silk, nylon and rayon hosiery.

Nov. 19, 1942 — Robert W. McGlynn, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. E. McGlynn of 2 Fairview Avenue, is one of 39 undergraduates at Wesleyan University whose high standing will permit him to enter Wesleyan's Honors College football program. McGlynn graduates in 1943 and goes on to become an English teacher at Deerfield Academy in Massachusetts where his students include John McPhee, the Pulitzer Prize-winning writer. He dies in 1993.

Nov. 21, 1942— George Ernest Benedict, who began working at the Ridgefield Savings Bank while still in high school and continued with the bank for 50 years, dies at the age of 66. He was secretary and treasurer at his death.

Nov. 23, 1942 — Even broken phonograph records fall under federal price controls. Used, worn-out and broken records are in demand by manufacturers as a source for critically limited supplies of shellac required to make new records. The demand is so great that the government requires record dealers to post the maximum price they are allowed to pay for old records.

Nov. 28, 1942 – Ridgefielders Fred McManus and Ruth Unwin, are on a date in Boston when they escape the deadly Coconut Grove fire that kills nearly 500 people. The two are celebrating a Holy Cross football victory over Boston College and decide to give up waiting for a table in the main dining room. They go to the lounge just before the blaze breaks out in the main room, where most of the deaths occur.

Nov. 29, 1942 — Coffee rationing begins. Each person over 15 is allotted one pound that must last five weeks.

Dec. 1, 1942 — Merchants start curtailing delivery services as the new T ration coupon books go into effect, cutting gasoline allotments for commercial users. One groceryman in town is allowed only one gallon of gas per day per truck for his deliveries, and a man in the electrical business receives only a half gallon a day.

Dec. 7, 1942 — A painting called “The Black Horse” by John Atherton of Ridgefield wins a \$2,000 fourth prize in the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s “Artists for Victory” Exhibit. Atherton, who has already done a prize-winning war poster, is a member of Artists for Victory who submit some 14,000 works for the consideration. “The Black Horse” is now in the Met’s permanent collection.

Dec. 10, 1942 — Just as the town is getting accustomed to its new auditorium and gymnasium at the East Ridge School, word is received that their use may have to be considerably reduced this winter because of the shortage of fuel oil to keep both warm.

Dec. 10, 1942 — Volunteers in the seventh through 12 grades have set up a booth in the main East Ridge School hall to sell defense stamps to students during the lunch breaks. In the first six days, \$50 worth are sold.

Dec. 11, 1942 — World-famous contralto Marian Anderson performs at the Ridgefield Playhouse at a “Revenge Pearl Harbor” bond rally emceed by Mary Margaret McBride, national radio talk show celebrity and author. The standing-room-only crowd buys \$16,000 in bonds (\$240,000 in today’s dollars).

Dec. 13, 1942 — Thomas F. Shaughnessy, who served as a Navy radio operator on a battleship in the first world war, is back at sea. He enlists in the Merchant Marine as a lieutenant and radio operator aboard a ship in the North Atlantic.

Dec. 14, 1942 — Changing and expanding rationing rules are causing some confusion, and the Ridgefield War Price and Rationing Board schedules a “mass meeting” in the school auditorium to try to explain it all. Only 50 people attend.

Dec. 15, 1942 — A complete resuscitator, “the most elaborate one in civilian use in the county,” arrives at the state police barracks in Ridgefield. It will be used by the Mobile Catastrophe Unit in this area.

Dec. 17, 1942 — “Let’s not deny him 3 minutes of Christmas!” declares an advertisement from the Southern New England Telephone Company, urging people not to make long-distance calls Christmas Day so that enough lines will be available so soldiers can call home.

Dec. 18, 1942 — The school board extends the Christmas break in the schools until Jan. 11 to conserve fuel oil. At the same time, the board shuts down use of the auditorium and gymnasium “for the duration of the fuel crisis.” The board is also shocked by news that, after Feb. 1, school children across the country may be forced to walk up to one and a half miles to get to and from a school bus stop — or school — each day to conserve fuel.

Dec. 30, 1942 — “The Spotters Ball” offers Ridgefield’s airplane spotters a chance to make merry. Originally scheduled for the East Ridge School gym, the spotters have to move to the Congregational Church House because the school board has shut down the gym and auditorium to save fuel oil.

Dec. 30, 1942 — The headlines on the front page of today’s Press reflect a town in the midst of a dire war: “Fuel Oil Situation Acute; Many to Convert or Shiver”; “Board Struggles with Many More Ration Problems”; “William H. Hall, Jap Prisoner in Far East”; “Town Invests About Million in War Bonds”; “How Blood Plasma Saves Lives of Men on the Fighting Fronts”; and the main story, “Town Prepares to Welcome A Happier Year Tomorrow.” The subheading on the last story adds: “Many Look to End of the War in 1943; Hundreds at the Front; Celebration Quiet.”

Dec. 31, 1942 — For New Year’s Eve, the Palace Theater in Danbury shows “Yankee Doodle Dandy,” the Warner Brothers film starring James Cagney.

## **1943**

1943

January 1943 — State Forester Austin F. Hawes recommends people gather in groups of four to eight to have “woodcutting bees” to produce fuel to replace oil and coal whose supplies are getting short.

Jan. 7, 1943 – Charles D. Crouchley prepares to close his auto supply store and retail gas station in the Scott block on Main Street to devote himself to his new position, president of the Ridgefield Savings Bank. With the war rationing and limited auto travel, business is slow anyway.

Jan. 8, 1943 — All “pleasure driving” is banned. The aim is to leave more fuel for heating.

Jan. 14, 1943 – The lead headline in The Press says: “Ridgefield in a Walking Basis as Gasoline Shortage Halts Cars, Many Convert to Coal, Three Churches Close, Traffic Almost Disappears.”

Jan. 14, 1943 — Brothers Patrick and Louis Rogers, who grew up in Ridgefield, have been declared “missing in action” by the Navy. The brothers enlisted together, along with two other Rogers brothers, Joseph and James, who are not missing. Both sets of brothers were serving together in the Navy.

Jan. 15, 1943 — The school board decides to convert one of the two big boilers in the East Ridge School to coal, and to continue not to heat the auditorium and gymnasium, which will remain closed to school and public use in winter.

Jan. 21, 1943 — When people call the town telephone operator to find out where the fire is, most people think she is kidding when she says, “The firehouse.” But in fact, a blaze guts the second floor meeting room, “just north of the pool room,” causing \$600 in damage (\$8,500 in 2017 dollars). Cause is undetermined.

Jan. 22, 1943 — The school board decides to award diplomas to seniors in good standing who enter the service before they graduate.

Jan. 23, 1943 — Holders of B and C ration books have their gas allotments cut 25%. “It will mean that all essential travelers, including war workers, will have to renew their efforts to double up on automobile driving and possibly to make other transportation arrangements, such as using trains or buses,” The Press explains.

Jan. 28, 1943 — Local authors kick off a campaign to provide books for servicemen by donating autographed copies of their own works to the drive. The authors include Mildred Gilman, William Woods, Westbrook Pegler, Geraldine Farrar, Ted Shane, Peggy Shane, and Louis F. Nebel from Ridgefield as well as Anne Parrish and Josiah Titzell of Redding and Konrad Bercovici from South Salem.

Jan. 28, 1943 — Gary Miles of the Connecticut Extension Service suggests homeowners raise rabbits in their back yards to supplement their meat ration.

Jan. 28, 1943 — Francis D. Martin, wood fuel coordinator, reports more than 2,000 cords of wood have been cut in Ridgefield so far this season.

Jan. 30, 1943 — Charles Wade Walker resigns as trial justice and instead takes a post as a town constable, serving as the “night watchman.” The day duty constable is William F. Sturges.

Feb. 1, 1943 — 140 pupils who used to ride buses to school must now walk under a new busing plan designed to save 7,128 miles of driving a year.

Feb. 1, 1943 — Beginning today and lasting the next two months, all stores in the state will be closed on Mondays to conserve dwindling fuel supplies.

Feb. 4 — Lewis J. Finch becomes chairman of a committee that will seek 20 typewriters that will be sold to the government for war work. The quota, based on one typewriter per 200 residents, must be made up of office-style machines manufactured in 1935 or later. The government will pay from \$26 to \$46 for the typewriters, depending on age and condition.

Feb. 6, 1943 — Captain Meinhard Scherf of Barry Avenue takes command of the “William P. Frye,” a new Liberty Ship, at its launching in Portland, Maine.

Feb 13, 1943 — WOR radio personalities Ed and Pegeen Fitzgerald visit town and are so impressed with the Junior Red Cross, whose workroom is in the Masonic building next to town hall, that they invite members to be on their show this morning in Manhattan to discuss their work.

Feb. 16, 1943 — Dr. Philip L. Martin, son of Mr. and Mrs. Francis D. Martin, graduates from the Pennsylvania State College of Optometry with a degree of Doctor of Optometry. “Dr. Martin is one of the first Ridgefield young men ever to earn a professional degree,” reports The Press, no doubt echoing Dr. Martin’s dad.

Feb. 18, 1943 — In a letter to The Press, Private John J. Frulla reports from the Pacific that he has captured a Japanese flag “from a Jap who thought himself a better soldier than I.”

Feb. 19, 1943 — Student Peter Wick is emcee as the junior and senior high students at East Ridge School have a bond rally “over the air” using the school PA system. More than \$500 in stamps and bonds are purchased.

Feb. 22, 1943 — A salvage drive collects three tons of tin cans from curbsides throughout town, breaking a tin salvage record for Ridgefield, which also meets its goal for the first time.

Feb. 22-24, 1943 — Ridgefielders — mostly housewives — endure long waiting lines at Odd Fellows Hall on Main Street as 3,532 people sign up for new food rationing books. “People took the new wartime regulations in general good mood,” The Press reports. “Now and then there was a complainer and somebody with his chin touching the ground.”

Feb. 23, 1943 — Many American fighting men now in Australia will not return to the United States from the continent down under after the war, Maud Teet Laughlin tells a Lions Club dinner. Mrs. Laughlin, dean of Gray Court College on West Lane, believes the Americans “will find the land in the south Pacific so attractive and that the young women of that continent make such good wives that they will wish to make their homes in the commonwealth,” The Press reports.

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March 1, 1943 — Rationing of canned goods, frozen or dried fruits, and vegetables begins today. Special ration books have been issued. Sugar and coffee ration books have been in use for a while.

March 1, 1943 — Judge Joseph H. Donnelly, a Ridgefield attorney, is named town counsel by the selectmen, replacing Judge John H. Light, a Norwalk attorney. His stipend is \$350 (\$4,900 in 2017 dollars).

March 4, 1943 — Five children of Mr. and Mrs. Adolph Casagrande of Bryon Avenue are fighting the war: Rudolph just made a second lieutenant in an Antiaircraft Artillery division; Jeo is a soon-to-be second lieutenant undergoing navigation training at Hondo Field, Texas; and Peter, a yeoman third class in the Navy, is stationed in Washington, D.C., as a secretary. Daughters Yole and Columba are both working in war factories in Bridgeport.

March 10, 1943 — The fuel crisis has eased and the Ridgefield Playhouse, which had closed Wednesdays during the shortage, resumes showing movies all day Wednesdays. On the screen this week is “In Which We Serve,” the Academy Award-winning British film starring and written by Noel Coward. Playing a barmaid in the film is a young English actress named Kay Young, who soon marries director Michael Wilding (who divorces her and marries Elizabeth Taylor). For the last 25 years of her life, Kay Young is Mrs. Myles Eason of Olmstead Lane.

March 11, 1943 — Ridgefield is using a “Shareride Plan” that is so successful, other towns may adopt it. Under the plan, overseen by Arthur Carnall, industrial establishments are grouped by driving routes they are along, and a card for each car/driver that uses the route is thumbtacked below the name of his employer on a large bulletin board. Green thumbtacks are using to indicate a full car and yellow tacks, a car that needs riders.



March 14, 1943 — A month-long drive begins to collect five tons of used clothing for distribution among the war-stricken people of Russia.

March 15, 1943 — The school board votes to give the Ridgefield Library 35 cents for each Ridgefield pupil who is a library member. The aim is to help compensate the library for the free services it has provided for many years to public school children.

March 17, 1943 — A Rotary Club auctions off goats, calves, pigs, turkeys, geese, rabbits, and baby chicks, raising more than \$200 for the Red Cross war fund.

March 23, 1943 — Due to a shortage of baby pigs in town, the Lions Club considers asking the selectmen to repeal the ordinance banning the keeping of pigs in the village district. The Lions wind up taking no action.

March 25, 1943 – Capt. Reinhold Carl Riede of Ridgefield, a 1936 RHS graduate, receives the French Croix de Guerre with Gold Star for service with the U.S. Army on the Tunisian battle front. Details of his heroism and why the French honor him are not available. The next week, word is received that he is also awarded the Silver Star “for gallantry in action Jan 25 to 28.” in north Africa.

March 29, 1943 — Mrs. R. Curt Hasenclever announces that the Congregational Church House will be the location of Ridgefield’s “food processing bureau,” which will be involved in canning and otherwise preserving “surplus food.”

March 29, 1943 – Captain Meinhard Scherf dies when a German submarine torpedoes his Liberty ship on its maiden voyage to Europe. He is the first Ridgefielder to die in the war.

March 30, 1943 — Art and household furnishings of the late Wadsworth R. Lewis of Great Hill Road bring \$187,166 (\$2.6 million in 2017 dollars) at a three-day auction at Parke-Bernet Galleries in New York City.

March 31, 1943 — The Ridgefield Merchants Association agrees that beginning today, stores in Ridgefield will close all day Wednesdays to conserve resources for the war. Until now they have traditionally closed at 1 on Wednesdays.

April 1, 1943 — Dr. E. I. Rogers, who came to Ridgefield two years ago to practice medicine and soon made headlines by proposing a supermarket at the corner of Main and Governor Streets, is killed instantly when his car slams into a tree off Route 7 in Cannondale, Wilton. His wife is seriously injured. Dr. Rogers’ plan sparked the town’s first efforts at zoning — Main Street south of the village was declared a residential-only area, blocking the shopping center plan. Rogers appealed but lost in court. His death

leaves Ridgefield with three practicing physicians: Drs. R.W. Lowe, Francis Woodford, and Joseph Bell.

April 4, 1943 — In a few minutes fire of unknown origin wipes out the fruits of a decade of hard work by James Giambartolomei and family as flames destroy a garage and workshop on Railroad Avenue (Sunset Lane), taking with them a heavy truck, a light truck, a car, and many tools and pieces of contractor's equipment. The loss is placed at \$5,000 (\$70,000 in 2017 dollars); only the building is insured.

April 5, 1943 — Jane Smith-Hutton of Fairfield, who had been a prisoner of the Japanese for several months after Pearl Harbor, speaks to the League of Women Voters here. The wife of the naval attache in Tokyo says that news reports of the war in the Pacific are often inaccurate, painting a rosier picture of American progress than is in fact the case. She is also appalled by many Americans' discontent over food rationing. "We are soft here — we haven't begun to feel the war yet," she says. "And many people still don't know that they have more to eat than our men out there doing the fighting. But you can't win a war without rationing — before this war is over, none of us will have enough to eat. Our men, they are the ones who must get everything. We don't count — we aren't important any more."

April 6, 1943 — The school board raises teachers' salaries. A beginner gets \$1,100 a year and the maximum is \$2,500 for a master's degree and 13 years of experience.

April 14, 1943 — Jack Jones, a former Welsh miner doing a speaking tour in the U.S., tells the Rotary Club about life in England during the war. "We live under military conditions," he says. "Everyone is drafted, women as well as men, and by men and women, I mean even boys and girls more than 14 years of age. There is no manpower problem and 'business as usual' is out. There is no advertising, as there is nothing to sell, except what we can get by coupons."

April 14, 1943 — State Rep. Peter A. McManus votes against a bill that would allow birth control in Connecticut, but the measure passes the state House 156 to 83. Ridgefield's other representative, Ethel Ryan, is home with a bad cold when the vote is taken. A week later, Senator Alice V. Rowland of Ridgefield votes against the bill, contributing to its 24-11 defeat. Connecticut has banned sale of contraceptives since 1879 and will continued to do so.

April 15, 1943 — Dairy farmer Irving B. Conklin is discussing a plan to import two train carloads of Texas longhorn steer to be raised in Ridgefield. The chief problem appears to be finding enough well-fenced pasture to hold and graze them.

April 23, 1943 – James Birarelli becomes the first Ridgefield native to die in the war when his squad is ambushed in North Africa. He receives a posthumous Purple Heart and Silver Star for heroism.

April 24, 1943 — Capt. Reinhold Carl Riede, who had already been injured in battle in January, is seriously injured in North Africa when the Army truck in which he is riding strikes a land mine and he is blown into the air. He suffers various injuries including broken ribs and is later awarded a Purple Heart.

April 28 — Movies of wartime gardening in England, produced by the British as a token of appreciation for garden seeds sent to them by Americans, are shown at the monthly meeting of the PTA in the school auditorium.

April 29 — Rita Potter joins the U.S. Marine Corps.

April 29, 1943 — Connecticut farmers are asked to increase their potato output by a million bushels in 1943.

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May 1943 – The region experiences the most consecutive days of precipitation in the century – 17 days.

May 5, 1943 — John Tulipani departs to join a Navy construction battalion, the fourth son of Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Tulipani to so far join the military. The others are Tech. Sgt. Joseph A. Tulipani, stationed with the Army in New Guinea; Private Alfred Tulipani, with the Army in Sault Sainte Marie, Mich.; and Seaman First Class Albert Tulipani, with the Pacific Fleet. Aldo also joins, bringing the total to five. And all five return home safely after the war.

May 5, 1943 — With a mock war disaster at the East Ridge School grounds, State Police at Troop A dedicate their new mobile catastrophe unit, which consists of a large emergency truck with extensive medical equipment including a four-person resuscitator, an iron lung, and a surgeon's kit, plus acetylene torches, fire extinguishers, gas masks, and much more. There's also a mobile generator and a radio truck with short- and long-wave radio equipment.

May 6, 1943 — Vincent Bedini, whose extensive tomato gardens feature plants that produce 75 or more tomatoes each, tells his growing secrets in an interview. One is to use "normal soil" as soil that is too rich will cause the tomatoes to crack.

May 11, 1943 — "Too often we lose sight of our religion in our devotion to our creeds," Rabbi Jerome R. Malino of Danbury tells the Lions Club. "One does not have to go to church to be religious, but it does help. The Bible is not religion, but it is a religious book and there would be religion even if there were no Bible."

May 12, 1943 — Insurance manager George A. Potter tells the Rotary Club about fighting “The Seventh Column,” which he calls “the carelessness that causes accidents that cut down war production and which is a threat to America’s home front.”

May 16, 1943 — Miss Jennie Elizabeth Holmes, a Ridgefield native who had taught in the old Flat Rock School and was active in the Congregational Church, dies at the age of 88.

May 18, 1943 — 2nd Lt. Thomas A. Ward of Lewisboro, who had attended Ridgefield High School from 1938 to 1940, is killed in a plane crash while training to be a pilot near Tallahassee, Fla.

May 19, 1943 — Another nationwide ban on “pleasure driving” is announced by Chester Bowles, state Office of Price Administration director, who happens to be in Ridgefield to speak to Rotary. Bowles, who later becomes governor of Connecticut and twice serves as U.S. ambassador to India, also warns that the gas situation is “very difficult and getting worse.... We’re going to have less gas, there’s no doubt about it.” A week later, on a radio broadcast, Bowles remarks how unsuccessful the “honor system” of no pleasure driving is, maintaining that when he was in Ridgefield, he saw 60 cars parked for a dance at the Odd Fellows Hall on Main Street. (The organizer of the dance later claims not all the 60 cars were dance-goers and that many of the 100 dancers walked.)

May 24, 1943 — A young black angus steer, one of several just trucked to the Hubbard farm on Bald Hill along Route 33 in northern Wilton, smashes through a fence and takes off toward the west. A posse searches Ridgefield, Wilton and Lewisboro for the steer, last seen “going like a bat out of hell” crossing Silver Spring Road near the New York line.

May 28, 1943 — Catherine deBernard of Main Street, a native of Paris who began flying in 1938 when she bought her own airplane, is a member of the second class to graduate from the Army Air Forces Flying School at Avenger Field, Sweetwater, Tex., and will join the new airplane ferrying service, “helping relieve men flyers for combat and other duties.” Her father had been a French aviator in World War I and she was a member of the Olympic fencing team in 1928.

June 6, 1943 — Elizabeth Grace Boyd, daughter Margaret Shane of North Salem Road, graduates from Vassar. After a magazine career in New York, she becomes Mrs. Karl S. Nash, and co-edits The Ridgefield Press for more than 30 years.

June 10, 1943 — Hiram Davis, the last living veteran of the Civil War to enlist from Ridgefield, visits town. The 94-year-old now makes his home in Florida.

June 13, 1943 — A 600-pound bell that served as a fire alarm in the early days of the Ridgefield firehouse, is dug out of storage and moved to the Ridgefield Lakes where it

serves as an air raid alert. The hand-operated siren that had been in use at the Lakes was not loud enough; a test of the bell proves it is “effective.”

June 17, 1943 — 43 seniors graduate from Ridgefield High School. There is no valedictorian or salutatorian, and the ceremony is kept brief. However, it is noted that the top-ranking student is Antoinette DeLuca.

June 17, 1943 — Word is received that Oakland R. Tugman of South Salem Road, a Merchant Marine seaman aboard a tanker in the Pacific, has survived after his vessel is torpedoed and sunk by a Japanese submarine. It was the second time Tugman survives a torpedoing; in March 1942, his vessel was sunk in the Atlantic.

June 17, 1943 — The Ridgefield Ration Board warns that “the gasoline situation has never been so acute” and repeats its warning that Ridgefielders must make no non-essential car trips. The board is receiving complaints about people wasting gas, including one reporting that several cars have been left parked in the village with their motors idling while the drivers went shopping.

June 21, 1943 — Two Hereford steers hurdle a five-foot fence at the Stonecrest farm on North Street and owner Irving B. Conklin says three days later they are still at large. The steers are among dozens being brought to town to raise for war-effort beef.

June 23, 1943 — Although his clavicle is fractured in a bicycling accident and he is in great pain, 15-year-old Richard E. Freivogel cycles three miles from Lake Mamanasco to a doctor’s office in the village. The doctor sends him to Norwalk Hospital, where he recuperates.

June 23, 1943 — Weeks after it escapes from a Bald Hill farm, a black angus steer is captured. The steer had eventually been sighted in a swamp along Silver Spring Road, losing weight because of lack of suitable food. Lawrence Hoyt of Ridgefield, who works on the Swaine estate on Silver Spring Road in northern Wilton, eventually uses feed to lure the hungry animal to an old kennel on the Swaine place and, after repeated tries, the steer is successfully trapped in the kennel and returned home where it reportedly becomes “docile as a lamb ever since.”

June 26, 1943 — “What can be done to attract more of the townspeople so we can show them what we have to offer in the way of recreational or informative reading?” asks librarian Christie L. Nash as she delivers the annual report to the Ridgefield Library’s annual meeting. Only 24% of the people in town use the library, she says.

Summer 1943 – The Ridgefield Child Care Center is established in the Garden School on Bailey Avenue that summer to handle children of parents working in war factories.

July 1, 1943 — Just under 400 Ridgefield men and women are serving in the armed forces, the Press reports, listing all the names. More join weekly. The honor roll sign in front of the town hall will be modified to accommodate the ever increasing number of service people.

July 1, 1943 — Alice V. Rowland, state senator from Ridgefield, is appointed to the State Board of Education by Governor Raymond E. Baldwin.

July 8, 1943 — The new Ridgefield Food Processing Center opens in the Congregational Church House, with two shifts of volunteers daily canning goods for the war effort at the rate of 100 cans a day. The operation allows home gardeners a way of preserving their food — locally sourced foods helped the war effort. On opening day beans, peas, carrots and beets were processed into tin cans and glass jars.

July 15, 1943 — Even dogs are helping the war effort. Owners of dogs who contribute various amounts to the Dogs for Defense Fund — which processes dogs donated for use in war zones — can gain “ranks” for their own pets at home. “Babsie,” a small dog belonging to Mrs. Howard L. Thomas, is the first “enlistee” from Ridgefield, with a rank of private. For a dog to be a lieutenant, the owner would have to donate \$10; a general, \$100.

July 22, 1943 — James Waterman Wise of New York City, author, lecturer and radio commentator who was warning against Nazism before Hitler came to power, buys a 27-acre estate on West Mountain that includes an eight-room English colonial dwelling, stables and a poultry house.

July 22, 1943 — Naval Lt. Richard E. Conley of Danbury Road survives after the plane he is piloting makes a forced landing on water and sinks so quickly that he has to extricate himself and swim to the surface. While swimming about waiting for help, Conley decides he could do better without his shoes. Then he remembers that shoes are rationed and leaves them on.

July 22, 1943 — The Board of Managers of the resurrected Boys’ Club places an ad in The Press, pleading for donations to keep the club going. “Our boys now have a building, all their own, where they can participate with other boys in character and body building games; where they can learn photography, develop their skill in shopwork, and other useful crafts, under supervision that understands boys and their problems,” the ad said. Among the board members are Larry Aldrich, Carleton Scofield, Julius Tulipani, Dr. Francis Woodford, Patrick F. O’Keeffe, and Francis D. Martin.

July 24, 1943 — Cited just a week earlier for the “brilliant job” he did, First Lt. Walter Rose of Ridgefield dies today from wounds received in combat. Rose was a navigator aboard transport planes that carried hundreds of parachute troops to the Battle of Sicily July 9. “Never have I seen such admirable discipline, devotion to duty, courage and

intelligence,” his commanding officer said of Rose’s work. He is the second soldier who enlisted from Ridgefield to die in the war. Rose’s family lives on the Outpost Farm. His mother died April 30.

July 29, 1943 — Kirk Browning of Ridgefield, a young ambulance driver with the American Field Service in Tunisia, reports that “the other day I got a lift into Sousse and walked through that section of the city near the harbor which was demolished by our air force a couple of months ago. However, I managed to find a piano on the third story of an apartment house and, after digging plaster away from the pedals and fashioning a stool out of same, sat down for a bit of music. The tone was excellent...All in all, a refreshing experience.” Long after the war Browning wins 10 Emmys during his years as the director of 185 performances of “Live from Lincoln Center,” the acclaimed concert series on PBS.

July 29, 1943 — Corp. Otto Pambianchi, writing also from North Africa, reports he hopes to bring home an Italian machine gun and a German helmet he captures during combat. He adds that “It sure is hot out here in the daytime, but the nights are cool. One day last week, it was 135 degrees.”

Aug. 4, 1943 — Residents of Branchville petition the selectmen to have their own “Honor Roll,” with names of Branchville service members, to be erected on the green in Branchville. Americo Ridolfi, who circulates the petition, says more than 40 people would be on the Honor Roll — including his own son, who enlisted several weeks earlier in the Navy. Ridolfi wants the town to pay for the monument, but in September the Board of Finance suggests private donations cover the cost. Ridolfi chips in the first \$50. (The Green was an island in the old intersection of Branchville Road and Route 7, before the flood of 1955 led to the rearranging of roads and elimination of the green.)

Aug. 10, 1943 — Two U.S. Army Jeeps, each with a crew of four soldiers, arrives in town to help promote the sale of war stamps and bonds. Children 1 to 10 may ride in a Jeep for a purchase of \$1 in war stamps; youngsters 10 to 18 must pay \$5. Adults must buy \$25 bonds, at \$18.75 each. The rides take in \$31,122 in bond/stamp purchases (\$439,000 in 2017 dollars).

Aug. 12, 1943 — When the Marines landed on Guadalcanal, they threw hand grenades to clear the way, but the Japanese picked them right up before they exploded and threw them back at the landing forces, Albert Tulipani tells meetings of the Lions and Rotary Clubs this week. “Our boys soon got tired of getting back their own unexploded ammunition and started throwing stone instead,” Tulipani says. “When the Japs got used to the idea that we were throwing stones, which they were not interested in throwing back, we’d put a grenade or two again. So we fooled them and made our landing.” A seaman aboard a submarine chaser, Tulipani is home on furlough for the first time since he left for service 15 months ago.

Aug. 24, 1943 — The blackout tonight sparks another irate reaction from Richard L. Jackson, chief air raid warden who notes that despite many warnings against using telephones during blackouts, 550 unnecessary phone calls — 400 social and business calls, and 150 calls to ask the operator whether there was a fire or an air raid — were made in Ridgefield during this blackout. Thomas Touhy, regional manager for the Southern New England Telephone Company, said Ridgefield had the worst unnecessary-calls record of any town in the state, noting that in all of neighboring Danbury, only three unnecessary calls were recorded.

Aug. 26, 1943 — Leo J. Pambianchi buys Hunt's Lunch, a restaurant and bar on the east side of Main Street. Pambianchi already owns a garage on Bailey Avenue, the local school bus service, and the bus line from Ridgefield to Bridgeport that transports defense workers.

Aug. 30, 1943 — School opens today, a week earlier than usual to save fuel during the cold months when longer breaks will be scheduled. The first grade moves to the East Ridge School, leaving only kindergarten and pre-schoolers at the Garden School on Bailey Avenue. East Ridge has the space and advantages that a larger building offers, the school board says.

September 1943 — The Branchville mica mine of Peaceable Street, long ago abandoned, reopens this month because the government needs vast quantities of mica, especially for radio equipment. After water is drained from the hole, more than 3,000 pounds of mica are removed in the first three months. "The Branchville swimmin' hole on Peaceable Street has gone to war," The Press observes.

Sept. 3, 1943 — Joseph H. Donnelly buys the business block south of the town hall from George G. Scott. The two-story building contains five stores and two apartments. Its current occupants include Ridgefield Hardware, the Lown Agency, Hyde's Liquor Store, and the Ridgefield Tonsorial Parlor.

Sept. 9, 1943 — The Press learns that 47 of the 63 children in the seventh grade have been ordered quarantined for three weeks because they were exposed to a child who was found to have polio. Public health officials advise the school not to send home any school books during the period, which means that the 47 pupils will be three weeks behind the rest of the school system all year long. The 16 students who were not exposed are given "special educative experiences" for the quarantine period. "It would not be well for them to be three weeks ahead of their classmates for they would become lazy or bored as class time was devoted to the others catching up," says Superintendent Van Miller.

Sept. 16, 1943 — The Rotary Club votes to build a frozen food storage facility on Danbury Road to help with the war effort. People will be able to rent space to store food



at a time when freezers in the home were virtually unheard of. (Long after the war ends, the refrigeration room becomes part of a popular local liquor store, Town Spirit Shoppe, owned by Gino Bob Polverari and Alex Santini.)

Sept. 23, 1943 — Mr. and Mrs. Robert Bell learn that their 19-year-old son, William Patterson Bell, is missing off the coast of Florida. The Navy radioman was one of two men aboard a naval patrol plane that went down in a thunderstorm and whose wreckage has been spotted. Bell was only a junior at RHS when he enlisted in July 1942. His body is never recovered.

Sept. 24, 1943 — As the growing season nears an end, the Ridgefield Food Processing Center closes for the season. During its 12 weeks, 155 volunteers spend 3,363 hours preserving 5,078 cans and jars of locally grown food.

Sept 25, 1943 — A successful war bond rally at the Ridgefield Playhouse helps Ridgefield reach \$800,000, more than double its sales quota of \$398,000 for the current third drive period. The rally is broadcast nationwide over the NBC radio network, thanks to George Ross and Larry Aldrich of the rally committee. Nationally known Ridgefielders participating in the show include opera singer Geraldine Farrar, stage and screen star Walter Hampden, and Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Westbrook Pegler. One aim of the drive is to sponsor a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress, which is ready and in the air next spring, bearing the name, "The Town of Ridgefield, Connecticut."

Oct. 5 — Determining that the chances of an air attack on the East Coast of the United States are pretty slim, the Army orders an end to round-the-clock airplane spotting stations in Ridgefield and other communities, but says their services may be reactivated if the need arises. Ridgefield's spotting services began the day after Pearl Harbor and have continued 24/7 ever since. Officials say an average of 73 men and 68 women did spotting duties each day, and some 10,000 planes were reported to the Army. To keep on their toes, Ridgefield volunteers will do spotting duties every Wednesday from 1 to 5 p.m.

Oct. 7, 1943 — Saying his work as publisher of The Press has become incompatible with holding office, school board Chairman Karl S. Nash resigns, effective Nov. 17 — even though he was just re-elected to the board at Monday's biennial election. Two weeks later, The Press reports that petitions are circulating, urging Nash to remain on the board. Two more weeks later, Nash withdraws his resignation, saying he had decided the public had faith in his ability to "act independently of political considerations, both as editor of The Press and as a member of the Board of Education."

Oct. 10, 1943 — The Branchville Honor Roll bearing the names of 31 service members is erected on the Branchville Green.

Oct. 14, 1943 — Francis D. Martin buys the former Ridgefield School at the north end of Lake Mamasco. The school had, until recently, been leased to the Chekhov Theatre Studio, an acting school that closed due to the war.

Oct. 15, 1943 — A 200-pound pig is among the auction items as the American Women's Voluntary Services Motor Transport Unit has its "Harvest Moon Festival" at Dunrovin on West Lane. Among other items raffled off are two four-pound cans of paste wax, a bushel of apples, a pound of candy, \$5 in war stamps, two dinners at the Kane Inn, a bottle of brandy, two chickens, and one "American apron."

Oct. 21, 1943 — Joseph Warren, 11, of Ramapoo Road is accidentally shot by his 15-year-old friend, Harold Walker, also of Ramapoo Road, who mistakes him for a pheasant. Both boys were hunting with 16 gauge shotguns in West Mountain woods. Warren survives.

Oct. 27, 1943 — Schools close today so that teachers can help with registering people for new "A" gasoline ration books, needed by average citizens. A total of 3,580 books are issued.

Nov. 2, 1943 — The school board begins wrestling with the problem of the Garden School on Bailey Avenue, which has become too popular. The public pre-school and kindergarten have admitted children first-come, first-served, but the two teachers have been able to handle nearly all applicants in the past. Now, there are too many seeking admission for two to handle, and the board will evaluate admission policies.

Nov. 4, 1943 — Petitions are being circulated asking the selectmen to call a special town meeting to purchase the former Lounsbury mansion and property on Main Street for not more than \$75,000 (\$1 million in 2017 dollars). Petition sponsors, including GOP town chairman Harold Finch and Sereno T. Jacob, favor having a town hall on the site, either in the existing Lounsbury mansion or in a new building.

Nov. 18, 1943 — In another sign that the fear of being bombed from above was waning, State Motor Vehicles Commissioner John T. McCarthy says it's time to remove headlight shields from cars. "Shielded headlights were a necessary evil required by war-time, dim-out regulations," he says. But since the federal government has lifted dim-out requirements, shields must come off. Studies found, he says, that "night-time accident rates, for pedestrian accidents particularly, increased sharply as a result of general dim-out conditions."

Nov. 21, 1943 — Carmela Sabilia, long known to many as "the peanut lady," dies at the age of 86. For years and well into her 80s, Mrs. Sabilia walked routes through Ridgefield, Redding, Weston, and Wilton, selling bags of roasted peanuts. She and her husband also owned a market in Georgetown.

Nov. 22, 1943 — Phyllis DeFranco is named editor of the Hilltop Dispatch, the high school newspaper. Business manager is Mary Belle McGlynn; art editor, Betty Rotherforth; assistant art editor, Mary Petroni; and sports editor, Elaine Klein.

Nov. 23, 1943 — The Lions Club discusses how to prepare for the return of Ridgefield men and women now in the armed forces, feeling that the club should lend whatever assistance it can. It suggested the selectmen act as a clearing house “for any problems that may arise in this connection.”

Nov. 24, 1943 — Dr. Harry Blum of New York City, an eye, ear, nose, and throat specialist, buys the 25-acre Levy place on Route 7 north of New Road. Blum later runs a mink farm there and becomes a regionally known artist who has his first major exhibit when he is 100 years old. He dies in 2004 at the age of 105.

December 1943 — Dr. Joseph Appleby opens the Ridgefield Veterinary Hospital at 69 West Lane. The newcomer from Yonkers is the son and brother of veterinarians.

Dec. 1, 1943 — Stressing the importance of price controls, state OPA administrator Anthony Arpaia speaks to 350 ration officials from 11 towns at the East Ridge School auditorium. “We would be chaos without price control,” he says. “Stable prices are essential if we are to keep our country on an even economic keel. Rationing and its little inconveniences will soon be forgotten when the war is over, but if the value of the dollar is destroyed, every man, woman and child in the country will be affected. Price control is a means of insuring production to carry on the war and prevent a post-war collapse.”

Dec. 2, 1943 — The French Relief Shop, a store that opened recently in the Denton Block on Main Street to sell wares to benefit war-torn France, is looking for French poodle fur to spin into wool to make “handsome knitted garments.” Miss Louise Davidson of Olmstead Lane is head of the effort.

Dec. 2, 1943 — 28 girls sign up for the RHS basketball squad under Miss Margaret O’Sullivan’s leadership.

Dec. 9, 1943 — Add sneakers to the list of items in short supply. There is such a shortage of sneakers for kids that the PTA is setting up a “sneaker exchange” and is asking townsfolk to “hunt up all sneakers in their possession. It does not matter whether they are large or small, white, blue or black.” Sneakers are needed to participate in physical education programs in the school gym.

Dec. 9, 1943 — Five nurses aides from Ridgefield, especially needed because of wartime staff shortages, are capped at a Danbury Hospital ceremony: Mrs. Quinto Carboni, Mrs. Peter Greene, Mrs. Henry Hoyt, Mrs. C. S. Lee Jr., and Mrs. John W. Wheeler.

Dec. 9, 1943 — In another sign of the times, Strauss Stores on Main Street in Danbury is advertising “rebuilt bicycles for boys and girls — no priority needed.” New bicycles for kids are almost impossible to obtain. Meanwhile, Rocano’s on White Street in Danbury is advertising war toys for Christmas: Shooting Tanks, \$1.98; Jeeps and Cannons, \$1.69; Army Trucks, \$3.98; Tommy Guns, 89 cents and up; Guns on Tripod, \$1.98 and up; and Soldier Sets, \$1.35.

Dec. 11, 1943 — A special Saturday town meeting takes no action on a proposal to buy the old Lounsbury property on Main Street between Governor and Market Streets. A future vote on the subject is seen as likely, however.

Dec. 14, 1943 — The RHS basketball squad earns its first victory of the season, beating Danbury Trade School 23-16, behind the shooting of Joe Moylan, who got 12 points and Bernie Leighton, 11.

Dec 20, 1943 — Pfc. Otto R. Kuhlmann is wounded in the leg and hand during fighting in Italy. He later receives the Purple Heart.

Dec. 23, 1943 — The very muted front page of The Press has little mention of the impending holiday. Of the 20 news items on page one, two are Christmas-oriented — The high school presenting its annual Christmas pageant, which includes many traditional carols and a manger scene, and the Boys’ Club’s welcoming the holidays with a party and dinner.

Dec. 24, 25 and 26 — The Ridgefield telephone operators have a busy three days handling 1,300 out-of-town calls over the long Christmas weekend. Miss Ella Krapowicz, the head operator, reports the busiest day is Christmas Eve, Dec. 24, with 500 calls. Back then, of course, all “outside” calls had to be handled by a local operator.

Dec. 27, 1943 — Italo Montanari of Ridgefield, fire chief second class, is one of 208 members of the crew of the destroyer U.S.S. Brownson who survive the sinking of their ship by a Japanese plane that dropped two bombs on her off Cape Gloucester, New Britain, in the South Pacific. 108 crew members are lost. 1944

## **1944**

Jan. 11, 1944 — Lt. Jeo J. Casagrande, a navigator, is shot down on a bombing mission over Germany.

Jan. 5, 1944 — Dr. Russell W. Lowe, a Ridgefield physician for 53 years and a leading citizen of the community, dies at the age of 76. Lowe earned his medical degree in 1889 from New York University — at age 21, he was the youngest member of his class. He

was one of the first Ridgefielders to own a car, which he used, of course, to make house calls.

Jan. 11, 1944 — Lt. Jeo J. Casagrande, a navigator, is shot down on a bombing mission over Germany. In March his family gets a postcard from him, dated Jan. 17: “I am a prisoner of war in Germany. I am not injured in any way. Apply to your local Red Cross agent for all details. This is only a transit camp. I will write and give my return address from my next camp in a few days. Love to all, Jeo.” On Jan. 26, he writes another card, not received in Ridgefield until May. “Dear Mom,” he says. “Just finished a good game of cards and am about ready for bed. Sleep and food are both very plentiful. You must give the Red Cross \$25 for me. They’re doing wonders over here... Believe me when I get home there won’t be a sad person around. Everyone must be cheerful and I myself will not have a grouchy day for the rest of my life.”

Jan. 12, 1944 — In a letter home Lt. Lee Vance describes his accommodations on an island somewhere in the South Pacific war theatre: “We have a fair shanty here, the frame made of small trees and bamboo stalks, roof and walls of an assortment of canvas, shelter halves, and ponchos, and a wooden deck of amo. boxes. Mud, jungle, 10-foot grass, and as there’s a lot of moving stuff, it’s mostly mud. Nothing stays dry, everything is mouldy.... We get good chow, cigarettes and jungle hammocks... We have an active volcano a few miles off in the hills. She’s a pretty sight on a clear day, white smoke rising out, and clouds ring the hills lower down.”

Jan. 13, 1944 — Pvt. Ralph B. Blackmer, 25, who had been a Ridgefielder for two years, is missing in action in Italy.

Jan. 15, 1944 — The Knights of Columbus give St. Mary’s Church a service flag, which bears 185 blue stars for parishioners who are in the service, and two gold stars for parishioners — James Birarelli and Thomas Ward — who’ve died.

Jan. 16, 1944 — A total of 75,000 “mock bombs” — paper bags with various colored streamers denoting different types of bombs — are dropped on the state in an air raid designed to test the ability of local volunteers to respond to the emergency.

Jan. 16, 1944 — Sledding can be hazardous. Today, Edwin B. Allan suffers a broken leg when his sled hits a tree at Colonial Park and Nancy Carroll, daughter of Captain and Mrs. Leo F. Carroll, earns a broken wrist in another accident.

Jan. 19, 1944 — A crew from the federal Office of War Information films a Red Cross blood bank in Ridgefield today to create a movie that will be shown primarily to U.S. fighting forces overseas as a morale-booster. A total of 177 people show up to give blood, close to last August’s record of 181.

Jan. 21, 1944 — It's been a rough winter for State Rep. Peter McManus. Today his car slides on ice and hits a fence, fracturing three of his ribs. Two weeks earlier he drops a piece of firewood on his foot and breaks two toes.

Feb. 1, 1944 — An explosion at the Branchville Mica Mine injures two workers who are drilling and apparently strike an old dynamite fuse cap. In August, an even worse explosion will take place.

Feb. 3, 1944 — Three cases of spinal meningitis have developed in Ridgefield in the past week. The victims — Sally Jacob, Winifred Venus, and Mrs. Terrence Knoche — are recovering.

Feb. 3, 1944 — Miss Louise Davidson and Mrs. Beth Kemble Widmer open the Ridgefield Book Shop in the Rabin house next to Perry's Market (now the site of Ridgefield Hardware).

Feb. 3, 1944 — The town's population is 4,036 according to the latest estimate of the Connecticut Department of Health. That's a decrease of 136 since the 1940 federal census. In 1930, the population was 3,580.

Feb. 8, 1944 — Lowly RHS inflicts a severe blow to Darien's hopes for first place in the Class B basketball conference, with a 52-38 win — the first league victory of the season for Ridgefield.

Feb. 13, 1944 — In a day-long drive, Ridgefield Boy Scouts collect seven tons of salvaged newspapers.

Feb. 29, 1944 — Ridgefield exceeds its quota of \$590,000 in defense bond and stamp sales by \$170,175 during the Fourth War Loan Drive.

March 2, 1944 — Fire Chief Donald Cumming puts out a plea for volunteer firemen, expressing concern that inductions into the armed forces may soon deplete the fire department's membership to "a danger point." The next week, 21 more Ridgefield men enter the service.

March 9, 1944 — Photographs and snapshots of many of the Ridgefield men and women serving in the armed forces are on display in the windows of the Lown Agency on Main Street as part of the Red Cross war fund drive.

March 11, 1944 — Staff Sgt. Charles Cogswell, a waist gunner on a Flying Fortress, is missing in action in Italy. A few weeks earlier he receives the Air Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster for "meritorious service while participating in aerial flights on combat operational missions." Cogswell could have come home and concluded his hazardous duty. Instead,

he volunteers for more bombing runs. His body is never found. The 1941 RHS graduate is only 20 years old.

March 16, 1944 — For the first time in the history of RHS basketball, the Little Four League has picked two Ridgefield players for the All-League First Team: Joseph Moylan and Bernie Leighton. Romeo Petroni is named to the second team and Merico Giambartolomei earns honorable mention.

March 16, 1944 — As World War II rages on, 16 veterans of World War I gather for their annual dinner of the Last Man's Club — an organization that lasts until the last man dies. Present at the Kane Inn are Harry E. Hull, Duncan Y. Campbell, Fred Minnerly, Harvey B. Lown, John Morganti, Sereno T. Jacob, Clarence Fischer, Henry Palau, Julius Tulipani, Rudolph Marconi, George N. Bloomer, Edward Unwin, Henry Cumming, John J. Crowley, Curtis V. Leighton, and William T. Peatt. In keeping with tradition, a place is set for any member who has died since the club was formed in 1938, but the plate is turned over. There is only one overturned plate — for Ernest Brunetti.

March 20, 1944 — B. Ogden Chisolm of Wickopee Farm on Peaceable Street and High Ridge, an expert on penal institutions, dies at the age of 78. Named to the international prison commission by President Calvin Coolidge, Chisolm constantly advocated prison reform. "He believed that sentences for a term of years was wrong and urged that confinement be set at one year as a minimum and release made dependent upon fitness to return to ordinary life," his obituary says. He wrote such books and booklets as "If It Were Your Boy," "The Man Who Slips A Cog," and "How Shall We Curb Crime." One of his children was Priscilla C. Lee, who owned the Bissell building and pharmacy for many years.

March 20, 1944 — The Board of Education grants School Superintendent Van Miller a leave of absence so he can join the Army Air Force as an operations analyst.

March 23, 1944 — The war has limited a lot of things one can do, but maintaining your house is not one of them. The Ridgefield Supply Company points out "it is permitted" to reroof, repaint or repair your own home.

March 28, 1944 — Chief Petty Officer Daniel N. Tobin of Silver Spring Road, home on leave, describes some of his exploits with the Seabees in the South Pacific. He tells of the hardships of establishing and building airfields and other military installations on Pacific islands and how these facilities have mushroomed into tremendous plants, some capable of handling more mechanical and construction problems than those in the States.

March 30, 1944 — Not all flights overseas are of a combat nature. Opera singer Edwina Dick of Old Branchville Road, who is doing USO shows for American troops around the world, gets a flight from Cairo, Egypt, to Amman, Palestine, on a private plane piloted by

King Peter of Yugoslavia. "The king had met Miss Eustis earlier in Cairo where they were guests at a banquet following Miss Eustis' command performance for the U.S. commanding general at Cairo," The Press reports. On that occasion Miss Eustis sat next to King Farouk of Egypt. In Palestine, she helps dedicate an American chapel at an army air field. In April she is in Teheran, singing for the Shah of Iran.

March 30, 1944 — A little hope for a not-too-distant conclusion to the war: At the suggestion of the state, the selectmen appoint a Ridgefield Post-War Planning Board whose duties will be to deal with the returning service men and women and their problems.

April 10, 1944 — Three high school history classes travel to New York City to see the Broadway play, "Life with Father."

April 14, 1944 — Ted Shane's new book, "Heroes of the Pacific," is published by Julian Messner. Kirkus Reviews describes it as "a compilation of courage, gallantry, heroic deeds and death with honor, from the early days of the war in the South Pacific, to Guadalcanal, in stories of soldiers, marines, air force, chaplains, unknowns, natives, men in the ranks and officers."

April 20, 1944 — Word is received that Cpl. Richard Brown, son of Mr. and Mrs. Lee Brown of Peatt Park, recently suffered shrapnel wounds to the hip during fighting in Italy. He is recuperating at an Army hospital in Italy.

April 26, 1944 — 14 men from the island of Jamaica arrive in Ridgefield to begin a season of work as laborers in Outpost Nurseries. They are lodging at the Outpost labor barracks on Route 7 (now the site of Pond's Edge Medical Center). "When the men arrived from the warm southern climate which has always been their home, they were shivering with the cold," The Press reports. "Outpost had to find some additional clothing for them." The men are part of a contingent brought to the states each season to help with the labor shortage. Many work at the Outpost mill, which produces wood, such as keels, for Naval vessels.

April 26, 1944 — One of the freaks of baseball occurs today as Dino Cingolani, an RHS right-hander, pitches a no-hitter against Wooster Prep, only to lose 3-2. Cingolani faces 23 men in six frames; six reach first, five on walks and one on a fielding error. Alas, in the third and fifth innings, the Ridgefielders commit two more errors with Wooster players on base, allowing three runners to score. Several years later the New York Giants, Brooklyn Dodgers and Philadelphia Nationals all offer Cingolani contracts to pitch; he chooses the Giants and, in 1946, heads off to training camp in Florida. There he works under the legendary Carl Hubbell, who was reputed to have called him "another Bob Feller." He plays three years for farm teams in Zanesville, Sioux City, Ogdensburg, and Trenton with the likes of Hoyt Wilhelm and Bobby Thompson. Though observers felt he



could easily have made it to the majors, in the end, he decides to abandon minor league play, and return to Ridgefield.

April 27, 1944 — Everyone knows that an invasion of continental Europe is imminent, and Dr. George B. Tompkins, pastor of Jesse Lee Methodist Church, announces his church will ring its bells at the start of the invasion, and the doors of the church will be open for prayer.

April 27, 1944 — A three-day auction of the contents of Wickopee Farm, the Peaceable Street estate of the late B. Ogden Chisolm, begins today. The auction includes the 22-room house, six outbuildings on 12 acres, plus all the contents. Chisolm died March 20. George Doubleday is high bidder for the property, offering \$17,000 (\$235,000 in 2017 dollars), but the widow Chisolm exercises her right to reject the bid.

May 1, 1944 — Mr. and Mrs. John Backer buy the White Spot Restaurant on Main Street from Anna Kappner, who has operated it for two years. Mrs. Backer is the former Ruth Dingee of Ridgefield, who had worked at the Outpost Inn. Her husband is “an experienced restaurant man.”

May 1, 1944 — Irving B. Conklin sells his retail milk business to the Mitchell Dairy in Danbury. Conklin, who has been in business 20 years, will continue to run his dairy farms, including Stonecrest.

May 1, 1944 – The League of Women Voters agrees to favor the establishment of a municipal refuse collection service for the community and plans to present a proposal to the selectmen and Board of Finance. It goes nowhere.

May 11, 1944 — The First National Bank and Trust Company of Ridgefield hires Frank E. Warner as assistant trust officer. Warner goes on to become a well-known member of the community and longtime member of the Board of Finance.

May 11, 1944 — Eddy Brown, a former child prodigy violinist who is credited with contributing “enormously” to the development of classical music in the United States, buys a house on Peaceable Street. Now 49 years old, Brown is an owner and former music director of WQXR, the longtime New York City classical music station. He continues to perform as a soloist with orchestras around the world.

May 11, 1944 — Richard L. Jackson, who is now the head of the Ridgefield War Council, is grouching again about slackers during blackouts. This time it’s people who failed to turn out their lights. He says there were “numerous cases in which persons darkened their homes when the wardens drove past blowing their auto horns and turned the lights on again as soon as the wardens were out of sight,” The Press reported.

“Although there may be no real danger,” Jackson says, “this blackout business is no fooling matter.”

May 13, 1944 — Two professors from Danbury State Teachers College urge an assembly of RHS seniors to take teacher-training courses in college because there’s a serious shortage of teachers. Jesse Brill tells the students that “although one would never become a millionaire on a teacher’s income, all would be assured of a fairly decent salary.”

May 15, 1944 – Juvenile Court Judge Stanley Mead tells Republicans that lazy parents cause juvenile delinquency and urges using school gyms as roller skating rinks to keep teenagers busy. He also observes that “52% of the children involved in delinquency cases have had no religious instruction,” saying the problem is “a challenge to the churches.”

May 25, 1944 — The fuel oil shortage seems to be less severe. Hoffman Fuel in Danbury is advertising, “You May Buy A New Hoffman Oil Burner” if your old burning is worn beyond repair or is over 10 years old. Meanwhile, Rippowam Farm is advertising eight-week-old pigs for \$5 each, \$9 a pair.

May 30, 1944 — As Police Officer Charles Wade Walker is directing traffic during the town’s Memorial Day celebration, the fire alarm sounds and firemen rush off to the house of Charles Wade Walker, where an oil burner has malfunctioned. Walker races to the scene, only to find the fire is out.

May 31, 1944 — Achilles Catsonis of the Greek Office of Information in Washington, D.C., tells the the Rotary Club of the conditions in Greece today and of the bravery of the Greek army that had resisted the onslaughts of Italian, German and Bulgarian armies.

June 1944 — During the month, Miss Irene Hoyt, the Visiting Nurse Association nurse, makes 205 house calls while handling 35 cases.

June 1944 — Mr. and Mrs. Lyle Torrey buy the Peaceable Street home of C. Chandler Ross, a noted portrait artist. The estate is later owned by Jack Ward and called Ward Acres.

June 1, 1944 — Librarian Christie Nash reports that at the end of its fiscal year May 31, the Ridgefield Library has 24,866 books in its collection, including 730 adult and 243 juvenile titles added in the last year. However, circulation is down from the previous year, 26,041 vs. 30,521. “Red Cross and other activities have absorbed the time and interest of the community so largely that the number of adults taking out books has shown a decided decrease,” she says.

June 4, 1944 — Actor Walter Hampden of Mopus Bridge Road begins a new drama radio show called “The Adventures of Leonidas Witherall.” The series is about an amateur detective who looks like Shakespeare, operates a boys schools in New England and also writes scripts for a radio detective show. It runs for a year. Hampden also appears in the movie, “The Adventures of Mark Twain,” which is in theaters around the country.

June 6, 1944 — Hardly anybody talks about anything except the invasion of western Europe, The Press reports. “D-day, whatever the expression’s origin, brought considerable excitement to the community. But there was no celebration — only the quiet realization of its import to the nation and its people.” The first local notice comes from the Methodist church, which starts ringing its bell at 7:30 a.m., “calling people to prayer for the triumph of righteousness.” Services also take place at St. Stephen’s and First Congregational Churches. An assembly for all students is held at the East Ridge School, with the students saying The Lord’s Prayer and singing the National Anthem. Teacher Eleanor Burdick reads three short passages from the Bible, the first two from Corinthians, the other the 100th psalm. The program closes with the singing of “God Bless America.” At mid-day two Army photographers arrive from New York City to take moving pictures of Ridgefield’s reaction to the big news so a repeat school assembly is hastily scheduled so photographers can film the students’ singing and praying. The scenes are used in a morale-boosting movie to be shown to troops — several Ridgefield soldiers in both Europe and the Pacific wind up seeing it.

June 7, 1944 — Air raid wardens, auxiliary policemen and others will make a complete canvass of the town house-to-house to sell war bonds in the “fifth war loan drive” that starts today and will last till July 6. Sale of at least \$100,000 in Series E bonds is a goal.

June 8, 1944 — Outpost Nurseries, the town’s largest business and for 21 years provider of trees and shrubs to world’s fairs, universities, city parks, and countless estates, announces it will discontinue operations because of the war, and turn over future business to J. Mortimer Woodcock, the company’s manager. “The Ridgefield nursery is said to contain the largest single supply of landscape grade material in the world,” The Press reports. “Labor shortages, ceiling prices, transportation difficulties, and other restrictions have forced this decision upon the management,” Outpost says. Woodcock Nurseries takes over and continues to operate on a smaller scale until the mid-1960s. Woodcock himself later becomes first selectman and gets a nature center and a road named for him.

June 13, 1944 — Irving B. Conklin is elected president of the Lions Club.

June 15, 1944 — Ridgefield High School graduates a class of 29 students. Four of the male members are not be in attendance — they are in the military. A fifth serviceman, Charles E. Bass, is home on leave and does attend. Sally T. Jacob is the highest-ranking student, with an 88.9 average over four years. Phyllis DeFranco, who ranks second with 87.4, is chosen by the class to be the only student speaker. Music includes a violin and

piano duet with Vivian Hull and Mario Scala, and a string quartet featuring Betty Lou Main, Walter Boyce, John Franzmann, and Scala. Aldo Tulipani sings.

June 15, 1944 — Gaines, the dog food company, announces its opening a research center at the former Outpost kennels at Routes 7 and 35. Built by Col. Louis D. Conley, the kennel was once the largest in New England. About 125 dogs will begin arriving in the next few weeks. Thirty years later, the kennel is the Red Lion restaurant.

June 22, 1944 — Lt. General Mark Clark commends Otto Pambianchi for “outstanding performance of duty” in an operation Feb. 10 near S. Elia, Italy. “Technician Fifth Grade Pambianchi assisted in the task of recovering a prime mover from a ditch,” the Army says. “Although enemy shells were falling in the immediate area, he remained at his work until the vehicle was removed to safety. His courageous actions aided in saving valuable equipment from destruction.”

June 22, 1944 — Henry Dick & Son in Danbury is advertising Coolator electric refrigerators for \$69.95 (\$970 in 2017 dollars).

June 25, 1944 — The Rev. Hugh Shields marks his 25th anniversary as minister of the First Congregational Church.

June 28, 1944 — When Private David Moore marches into Rome with the U.S. Army after helping drive the Germans from the Anzio beachhead, he spots an elderly man looking like he was in need of food. Moore offers him some Army chow, the man accepts and in passing says he used to live in America. “Where?” asks Moore. “In a little town in Connecticut,” the old man says. “What town?” Moore asks. “Ridgefield,” the man says. It turns out that the Roman had lived with a Rossini family many years earlier and remembers many old Italian residents of Ridgefield.

July 4, 1944 — Elvina Natalie Franceschini marries Sylvester P. DeLuca at St. Mary’s Church. Mrs. DeLuca eventually becomes head of the Ridgefield school lunch program for 25 years in the days when meals were “home cooked,” many of them by the same women who prepared the delicious meals at the Italian-American Club. Si DeLuca operates Deluca’s Footwear here for many years.

July 5, 1944 — Ridgefielders are still worried about the Russians welfare. A new branch of Russian War Relief opens a depot today for collecting used clothing to send to the Soviet Red Cross to aid people returning to devastated areas of their country. The depot is in a back room of the Ridgefield Book Shop, just south of the post office (where Ridgefield Hardware’s building is today). The book shop was established to help the French people.

July 7, 1944 — Volunteers at the Community Canning Center at the Congregational Church House prepare and can 51 quarts of green beans to be used in the school cafeteria.

July 10, 1944 — The Board of Education votes to give teachers a \$100 bonus to help with the increased cost of living. That is equal to nearly \$1,400 in 2017 dollars.

July 13, 1944 — As if Ridgefielders didn't have enough military and charitable endeavors seeking their money, town attorney Joseph H. Donnelly makes a plea to donate to the National Probation Association. This organization is trying to improve how juvenile delinquents in the country — 200,000 of whom come before the courts each year — are handled. "The youths of today are our citizens of tomorrow," Donnelly says. "Everything possible must be done for those who will come before our courts each year as first offenders."

July 14, 1944 — Around 1,500 people take part in a traditional French street party in the center of town to mark Bastille Day and to raise money to help the French people. Main Street is set up like Paris, with outdoor cafes, French music and dancing in the street. Among the planners for the event is Babette Ullman of Main Street, wife of artist Paul Ullman, a Frenchman and an OSS operative who in April was parachuted into France to help the French underground. Unknown to Babette at this time, Paul is dead — shot and killed by the Nazis soon after he deployed in France.

July 13, 1944 — Dr. James Henry Inkster opens a practice of medicine in the house of the late Dr. Henry W. Allen on Main Street.

July 16, 1944 — While working in his garden at Titicus, Charles W. Sterling unearths a cannonball believed to have been fired in the Battle of Ridgefield 167 years earlier. The four-and-a-half-inch diameter ball is the first cannonball found since 1925.

July 20, 1944 — Master Sgt. Jack Rifkin of Ridgefield creates a B-26 Marauder bomber whose nose has flown fewer missions than its tail. Rifkin is head of a "mobile reclamation and repair squadron" in England. Two B-26's had crash-landed at a field returning from missions, rendering both unfit for further flying and destining them for the scrap heap. But Rifkin and his crew chief note that one plane is heavily damaged in the front and the other in the rear. "We think we can cut both planes in the middle, combine 'em and come up with one complete and serviceable Marauder," they tell commanders. And with their crew, they do it in just under three weeks.

July 27, 1944 — Two days after family members are notified by the Army that Dominic Bedini is missing in action since D-Day, they learn that Bedini is in fact safe and recuperating in Normandy. The 24-year-old was a member of the first wave of paratroopers landed in France June 6, and was injured in battle. When American troops landed from ships and made it inland, they found Bedini lying on the ground where

retreating Germans had left him. Attached to his uniform was a handwritten note in English signed by a German army doctor. It said: "I did all I could do for this man. I hope he survives." The note included a signature and the fact that the German doctor had attended Michigan State University. Bedini not only survives but lives to be 84.

July 30, 1944 — Staff Sgt. Eugene "Jack" Frulla is injured while fighting in France, but is doing well. Sgt. Frulla is known in the Army as Sgt. Farula because a recruiting clerk made a mistake when he enlisted.

Aug. 1, 1944 — The Victory Food Market, selling donated fruits, vegetables and eggs, opens for its second season at the Ridgefield Playhouse. Proceeds benefit the Boys' Club and Danbury Hospital.

Aug. 3, 1944 — Sgt. Dante Salvestrini has an unusual job: He processes the film that B-24 Liberator bombers shoot while they are on missions over France. "'Strike' photos — pictures of the bombs hitting the target — are of vital importance to the high command in pushing the invasion because the pictures will show whether the enemy has been choked off," the Army Air Force says. "Sgt. Salvestrini is one of the important members of the base photo laboratory in England, and his speed in developing prints taken by the big aerial cameras within the pressing deadlines is a contributing factor to the success of the lab."

Aug. 7, 1944 — Ely Culbertson of West Lane, a world-famous bridge expert, also fancies himself as a savior of the world. He tells the League of Women Voters that his plan for organizing a world government will be adopted in the next four to five years. Culbertson, who has written a book about his plan, believes his plan will bring a permanent peace to the world. The plan calls for dividing the world into five federations; we'd be in the Pan-American Federation of North and South America. Others are Malaysian, British Commonwealth, the small sovereign states of the world, and the "seven other powerful nations, including Germany and Japan."

Aug. 9, 1944 — Private Harry Pancotti writes from Camp Shelby in Mississippi that "last night we had a special Army and Navy film on how the United States took the opening day of the invasion. To my great surprise, I saw Ridgefield, Conn., I was the only soldier to have his home town on the screen and it sure made me feel good. Some of the people I recognized were the Rev. Lusk, Red Cross Workers, and Miss Anne Richardson; also the kindergarten school with Miss Carroll."

Aug. 14, 1944 — Because of the large kindergarten enrollment, the school board decides to have two sessions, with children divided between morning and afternoon classes.

Aug. 16, 1944 — It rains today, but it does little to relieve the record 10-day "hot spell" Ridgefield has been experiencing. "When it stopped the mercury hadn't gone much

below the 90 degrees around which it had been standing nearly all this month,” The Press reports. Air conditioning, of course, was virtually unheard of then.

Aug. 17, 1944 — Five “men” have joined the many women who have been operating the Food Processing Center, canning vegetables and fruits from local harvests. The men are Harris D. Colt III, Raymond Jones, the Rev. William B. Lusk, August Zinsser, and Jacques Ullman. Jacques is the seven-year-old son of Babette and Paul Ullman — see July 14 entry.

Aug. 17, 1944 — The U.S. War Shipping Administration posthumously awards the Mariner’s Medal “in commemoration of the greatest service anyone can render cause or country” to Captain Meinhard Scherf, a Liberty Ship captain who died when a German U-boat torpedoed it March 29, 1943 in the North Atlantic. Elsa Scherf, the captain’s widow, declines the usual official ceremony of presentation, and asks the government to mail the medal. “He has gone, but he has gone in honor and in goodly company of patriots,” writes E.S. Land, administrator of the War Shipping Administration in mailing the award. “He was one of those men upon whom the nation now depends to keep our ships afloat upon the perilous seas — to transport our troops across those seas and to carry to them the vitally-needed materials to keep them fighting until victory is certain and liberty is secure.”

Aug. 19, 1944 — Just as the Pittsfield Express is pulling into the Branchville train station, a huge explosion at the Branchville Mica Mine sends showers of rock and mica hurtling at the train and parked cars. Two girls playing in their back yard — Betty deLuca, 8, and Evelyn Campbell, 5 — are injured by the debris from the mine, which is a quarter mile away in Redding. State police arrest Fred Burrone of North Branford, the mine owner, for failure to take proper precautions when using explosives. The mine has been active since September 1943 to provide mica for war-related electronics, was also the scene of a Feb. 1 explosion when a worker drilled into a buried blasting cap.

Aug. 19, 1944 — Sgt. Joseph Tulipani writes that he has played his accordion for a native chief and won the friendship of native people in a New Guinea jungle. Tulipani hikes through the jungle to the native village where he hopes to get information on Japanese movements. “After distributing candy and peanuts, which the children wasted no time in eating — in fact, the word candy drew them around me like bees around a hive — I took my accordion from its small box,” he writes. “All you could hear were the ohs and ahs and in between theses exclamations, the word accordion. I played a few songs and never saw a group of people so attentive before. Upon finishing a song I was quite surprised when they all applauded. I asked the chief if he would have his people sing for me. Believe it or not, the first song they sang was ‘You Are My Sunshine.’”

Aug. 24, 1944 — Sgt. Aldo J. Branchini receives the Air Medal for his excellent work during the invasion of Normandy.

Aug. 24, 1944 — Scripps-Howard newspapers decides not to renew the contract of fiery Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Westbrook Pegler of Ridgefield. While he praises Pegler as “one of American journalism’s most colorful, conscientious and effective craftsmen,” Roy Howard says “the impact of Mr. Pegler’s writing on the opinion content of any paper is very great — so great, in fact, that the editorial voice of Scripps-Howard could not continue by resort to a stridency which we do not care to employ.”

Aug. 26, 1944 — Edwin B. Allan Jr., a member of Ridgefield’s 4-H Club, wins five blue ribbons for his displays of flowers, fruit and vegetables at the 4-H Fair in Newtown.

Aug. 31, 1944 — “Because of the present critical tire shortage, please don’t travel over Labor Day!” says a large advertisement in The Press from Greyhound. “Hundreds of buses needed in war effort are today standing idle due to lack of tires.” Ridgefield’s Greyhound station is Finch’s Cigar Store on Main Street.

Sept. 5, 1944 — School opens today with 601 students — 23 fewer than the year before.

Sept. 7, 1944 — On duty with the Army Air Corps in Italy, Cpl. Mario Bedini is selected to have four-day rest in Rome and an audience with Pope Pius XII, who blesses a string of rosary beads and gives them to the soldier. Bedini sends them home to his sister, Mrs. Tecla Cioccolanti.

Sept. 14, 1944 — This is the last day motor boats can operate on Lake Mamanasco. Beginning Sept. 15, they are outlawed by action of the selectmen, who had received a petition from 20 residents in the area who say a ban is needed “for the purpose of conserving the health of the inhabitants of the town, for the purpose of preserving the waters of Lake Mamanasco, and for the purpose of eliminating unnecessary disturbances.” The ban is in effect to this day.

Sept. 14, 1944 — To help the war effort, children in the Ridgefield schools are collecting milkweed pods. Dried floss from the pods is used as a substitute for kapok — which comes mostly from Southeast Asia — in life preservers and jackets used by the military.

Sept. 15, 1944 — Harvey J. Webster, only 19 years old, is killed when his amphibious tank is blown up during the invasion of Peleliu Island in the Pacific. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Webster, receive word of his death in November, only days after learning another son, Sgt. George Webster, had been wounded Nov. 8 while serving with the infantry in France. A third son, Charles, is undergoing Army training at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

Sept. 15, 1944 — A hurricane hits the town, felling trees and knocking out power. Gusts top 75 mph. Hurricanes didn’t have names then.



Sept. 21, 1944 — Ridgefield is participating in a growing hospitality program under which service men and women of this and other nations are being entertained in private homes during their stays in this part of the country. Marian G. Scofield is chairman of the Ridgefield committee.

Sept. 21, 1944 — The Ridgefield Food Processing Center ends its second season, putting up 6,640 cans of fruits and vegetables. A total of 556 cans are processed by the Parent-Teacher Association for the school cafeteria.

Sept. 24, 1944 — Campaigning Gov. Raymond E. Baldwin tells a gathering of some 400 Republicans picnicking at Stonecrest Farm that the GOP's aim is "to make Connecticut an ever better place to live in."

Sept. 26, 1944 — Elizabeth (Mrs. Edward L.) Ballard is elected president of the Ridgefield Garden Club.

Sept. 28, 1944 — Staff Sgt. Elbert Ferguson has reached 50 missions as an engineer gunner aboard a B-24 over targets in such countries as Germany, Hungary, Rumania, Italy, Austria, France, and Yugoslavia. The 19-year-old with the 15th Army Air Force in Italy has earned the Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters.

Sept 30, 1944 — For the first time in its history, the assets of the Ridgefield Savings Bank exceed \$3 million (\$42 million in 2017 dollars).

Oct. 3, 1944 — Dr. Adolph S. Oko of Whipstick District, editor of the Contemporary Jewish Record and an authority on the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza, dies at the age of 61. His survivors include a son, Benjamin who, a half century later, becomes chairman of Ridgefield's Conservation Commission.

Oct. 4, 1944 — Ridgefield Fire Department members prepare boxes of Christmas gifts for the dozens of members who are in the service. Each box contains a portfolio of V-mail, a tube of shaving cream, a toothbrush, a package of tobacco, a pocket comb, a tube of toothpaste, a package of foot powder, three packages of razor blades, two cakes of soap, a candle, and a pack of playing cards.

Oct. 5, 1944 — John L. Walker, Ridgefield postmaster since 1935, resigns due to poor health. Less than three weeks later, on Oct. 24, he dies at the age of 73. J. Edward McGlynn becomes acting postmaster.

Oct. 5, 1944 — While serving with the U.S. Army in Italy, Enzo Bartolucci visits his grandmother, Mrs. Asunta Barolucci, whom he had never seen before. She lives in Castel Colona.

Oct. 6, 1944 – Speaking at the high school auditorium, Republican U.S. Senator John A. Danaher says Communists are infiltrating the government, but adds that Communism shouldn't be confused with Russianism since only 3% of the Soviet people are Communists. Danaher is being challenged in the coming election by Brien McMahon of Norwalk.

Oct. 10, 1944 — Ridgefield joins the nationwide celebration of China Day with a fund-raising dinner. Speaker Mary Tsui Chu, a representative of China Relief, notes that China is the oldest nation in the world and the youngest democracy while the United States is the youngest nation and the oldest democracy.

Oct. 12, 1944 — Actors Brien Aherne and Katherine Cornell are touring military bases in Italy in the play, "The Barretts of Wimpole Street." One of the props on the stage is a Mahogany Empire sofa, which a scout from the American Theatre Wing spotted here and purchased from the Ridgefield antiques dealer, Raymond H. Krotz.

Oct. 14, 1944 — Angelina Helen Lavatori and Julius Joseph Santini are married in St. Mary's Church.

Oct. 16, 1944 — Ridgefield High's gridders win their first game of the season, beating Purdys (N.Y.) High School 19-6. Stars for the Millionaires include Mario Scala, Louis Girolmetti, Ed Green, and Gene McMahon.

Oct. 16, 1944 — Claiming that the local plumbing ordinance protects the plumbers and not the public, syndicated columnist Westbrook Pegler moves at the annual Town Meeting that the \$50 for the "plumbing board, supplies and fees" be deleted. He fails as the appropriation is approved, 26-5.

Oct. 16, 1944 — Patrick O'Keeffe buys the old Sperry livery business on Catoonah Street, opposite the firehouse, and enters the automobile business, buying and selling cars, accessories, gasoline and oil. Car storage is also offered.

Oct. 19, 1944 — In an unusual front-page editorial, Press editor Karl Nash — a Republican — announces he will vote for Democrat Brien McMahon for U.S. senator over incumbent John Danaher, a Republican. "The world is tired of 'peanut politicians, slick manipulators of public opinion and short-sighted, self-aggrandizers,'" Nash says, calling McMahon a man of "high moral standards, of exceeding great honesty and of far-sighted purpose." Nash adds that the editorial's aim is satisfy possible curiosity about his view of the election, not to "impose our opinion upon our readers who are capable of deciding for themselves."

Oct. 25, 1944 — During the huge Battle of Lyte Gulf off the Philippines, the destroyer escort USS Samuel B. Roberts is sunk by Japanese torpedoes. The ship's executive officer is Lt. Everett E. Roberts of Ridgefield, who survives after spending three days adrift in the Pacific. He is later awarded the Legion of Merit for "exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services" during and after the battle. In January, Roberts is back home on leave in Ridgefield and tells the Rotary Club about the battle and the several days adrift. Roberts stays in the Navy until 1958, retiring as a captain and member of the Military Liaison Committee to the Atomic Energy Commission. He works 24 years for RCA in New Jersey where he was instrumental in developing the government's Ballistic Missile Early Warning System. He dies in 2007.

Oct. 26, 1944 — Supporters of Margaret E. Connors, Democratic candidate for Fourth District Congressman opposing Republican incumbent Clare Boothe Luce, take out a sizable advertisement in The Press, saying "wisecracks are no substitute for wisdom." Ridgefielders don't buy it and stick with Luce, a Greenwich resident who two years later, retires from Congress and moves to town.

Oct. 26, 1944 — Another ad that week is more powerful. Local businessman Arthur J. Carnall, who immigrated to the United States from England when he was a boy, takes out a full-page advertisement, addressed to "Ridgefield's sons and daughters fighting for our country," knowing most will receive mailed copies of the paper around Christmas time. The ad features a picture of the Battle of Ridgefield monument at Casagmo, and notes "in 1777 your forefathers fought against my forefathers of the British army.... Today you fight side by side with Britons who, like yourselves, are defending the independence of their land and of the world. And you, too, are fighting for something more than independence. You are fighting for peace. You are fighting for peace on earth, good will toward men. You are fighting for the spirit of Christmas. As one of your fellow citizens, I send you this greeting in honor of your service and sacrifice and for the strengthening of your hearts." Those words echoes the concluding words of the Casagmo monument: "In honour of service and sacrifice, this memorial is placed for the strengthening of hearts."

Nov. 1, 1944 — Flight Officer Grosvenor Gilbert dies in a plane crash in Amarillo, Texas. Gilbert is a son of Cass Gilbert Jr. and grandson of noted American architect Cass Gilbert. His grandmother, Mrs. Cass Gilbert, lives in Ridgefield and Grosvenor is buried in the family plot at Fairlawn Cemetery on North Salem Road. The 21-year-old enlisted in the paratroopers from Staunton Military Academy in Virginia, and became a pilot Oct. 1. He was training to pilot B-29 bombers when he crashed.

Nov. 2, 1944 — Artist Paul Ullman's wife, Babette, and young son Jacques, learn that he is dead, shot by the Germans while on an OSS underground mission in April in France.

Nov. 2, 1944 — Vice President Henry A. Wallace visits Ridgefield to support Margaret Connors, Democratic candidate for Congress. Hundreds gather on Main Street to hear

Wallace, probably only the second vice-president ever to visit Ridgefield while in office. (Hannibal Hamlin, vice president under Lincoln, spoke here in 1864.)

Nov. 2, 1944 — Paratrooper Lester Hunt Jr. is reported to be a prisoner of war in Europe, his parents learn.

Nov. 6, 1944 — The American Legion Ladies Auxiliary bakes and packs 15 dozen cookies for the Veterans Convalescent Hospital in Avon, Conn.

Nov. 7, 1944 — With 80% of Ridgefield's eligible voters turning out, Republicans, as usual, sweep the local election, but not the state as isolationist Republican Senator John Danaher is booted from office by internationalist Democrat Brien McMahon. In Ridgefield, McMahon loses 1,328 to 636 while in the state, he wins 52% of the vote, 430,716 to 391,748. McMahon goes on to serve in the senate until 1952 when he dies of cancer at the age of 48. He becomes known for his strong leadership as chairman of the Senate Atomic Energy Committee in promoting peaceful uses of nuclear energy — including radiation to treat cancer — and has been called the father of the nation's nuclear energy policy.

Nov. 7, 1944 — Today is not only election day, but school visiting day, when members of the public can see how the schools, both East Ridge and Garden, operate. More than 100 sign up and are given tours while classes are in operation. There is also a high school assembly at which Vivien Hull plays the Allee Memorial electric organ in the auditorium (now Ridgefield Playhouse).

Nov. 7, 1944 — Christie Law Jones Nash (Mrs. Howard P.) resigns as librarian of the Ridgefield Library, a job she has held since 1931, a year after her sister-in-law, longtime librarian Marion Nash, was killed by a car while walking across Main Street. Sylvia Davis is named the new librarian — she had been children's librarian for nine years.

Nov. 9, 1944 — Harold S. Goldsmith of Wilton, president of Popular Publications Inc., buys Taghkanick, the estate of the late Wadsworth R. Lewis on Limestone and Great Hill Roads. Popular publishes more than 40 magazines of pulp fiction such as All-Story Love, Argosy, Black Mask, Dare-Devil Aces, Detective Tales, Dime Detective, Dime Mystery, Dime Sports, Dime Western, Dusty Ayres and His Battle Birds, .44 Western, G-8 and His Battle Aces, Horror Stories, Knockout Magazine, New Detective, New Western, The Pecos Kid, The Scorpion, The Spider, Terror Tales, and Western Rangers. Two years later he sells the estate to Clare Boothe Luce, who just won re-election as congressman, and her husband, Henry, and moves to another estate in Ridgefield. Starting in 1954 he develops Lakeland Hills, a subdivision of 27 lots on about 30 acres on the north side of Bennett's Farm Road, opposite the Ridgebury School site. The development includes Skytop Road, Douglas Lane, and North Shore Drive.

Nov. 9, 1944 — Paper is being called the “number one scarce item” in the nation, and today Ridgefield Boy Scouts collect nearly eight tons of it in a paper recycling drive.

Nov. 10, 1944 — The Vestry at St. Stephen’s Church votes to ban all political meetings in the Parish House. The decision results from controversy over a recent Democratic campaign rally in the Parish House at which Clifton Fadiman, Lt. Gov. Wilbert Snow, congressional candidate Margaret Connors, and others speak. In addition, despite the fact that it is a non-partisan organization, meetings of the Ridgefield League of Women Voters are banned, “such meetings being deemed political in nature.” The Rev. William B. Lusk, rector, declines to comment on the Vestry action.

Nov. 16, 1944 — The PTA is offering dancing classes for children from kindergarten through high school age. Classes in rhythm and story dancing, ballet, tap, and ballroom dancing will be provided at a fee of \$2 for four classes.

Nov. 23, 1944 — Although it is Thanksgiving Day, turkeys are scarce — most have been acquired for the military meals — so many Ridgefielders make do with other meats for dinner.

Nov. 24, 1944 — Several dozen servicemen away from home spend the long holiday weekend hosted by Ridgefield families. Tonight many attend a dance for them at the Congregational Church House.

Nov. 30, 1944 — Now that the threat of being bombed by the enemy has dwindled, blackout curtains that many people bought for their windows are no longer needed — or wanted. Except by the American Relief for France group in town, which is collecting the black sateen curtains to be made into school aprons for French children.

Nov. 30, 1944 — A new state law allows savings banks to sell life insurance, and the front page of the Press pictures Mrs. Lewis J. Finch buying the Ridgefield Savings Bank’s first life insurance policy from bank president Charles D. Couchley. Prominently featured in the middle of the photo is the insured party, Barry Finch, age 3.

Nov. 30, 1944 — The American Legion post here organizes the Home Front Commandos, a unit of children in grade and high school who sell defense stamps and bonds and earn golds and silver bars and stars, as well as ranks, for their accomplishments.

Dec. 1, 1944 — The Office of War Utilities of the War Production Board reminds officials and the public that once again, they should not use decorative lighting for Christmas because of the large amount of fuel it takes to generate the electricity to supply them.

Dec. 2, 1944 — Corp. Harold J. Rome, “the Army’s song writer,” and his wife pay their first visit to his new home on Great Hill Road. Rome is well known for writing the Broadway musicals “Pins and Needles” and, with Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman, “Sing Out the News.” During the war he writes promotional music for the Army. After the war, Rome writes such musicals as “Wish You Were Here” in 1952, “Fanny” in 1954, “Destry Rides Again” in 1959, and the show in which Barbra Streisand makes her Broadway debut, “I Can Get It for You Wholesale” in 1962. Rome’s house here is only a few doors away from where Aaron Copland spends part of 1945 and 1946.

Dec. 2, 1944 – Nehemiah “Fuzzy” Keeler of Ridgebury goes out back of his house to hunt rabbits and bags an 18-pound “wildcat.” “The wildcat which Nehemiah Keeler killed has a tremendous tiger-like head and a dark streak down the back,” The Press reports. He plans to make a rug out of the bobcat.

Dec. 6, 1944 — Samuel S. Denton, called “Ridgefield’s best-known businessman,” dies at the age of 79. Denton, one of the town’s largest property owners, also sold fuel oil, farm machinery, insurance, and has an automobile repair garage. For many years he sold coal, too.

Dec. 9, 1944 — Dom D’Addario has recently graduated from flight training school and received his wings as a navigator and bombardier. D’Addario goes on to have a career in the Air Force, retiring as a colonel. Later in his life he returns to his home town of Ridgefield and becomes a leading participant in town government and community service.

Dec. 14, 1944 — Ralph Edwards, host of the radio show “Truth or Consequences,” is emcee at a bond rally at the Ridgefield Playhouse. Edwards apparently likes what he sees while visiting here, and soon buys a house on North Street, a residence he maintains for a dozen years. He goes on to become a major personality and producer in the first decades of television. His shows include Truth or Consequences, Name That Tune, About Faces, and Cross-Wits, as well as This Is Your Life and the long-running The People’s Court.

Dec. 14, 1944 — Even before the Edwards show at the Playhouse, Ridgefield war bond sales in the Sixth War Loan Drive top \$1-million, the highest sales in any of the wartime drives. That’s \$13.8 million in 2017 dollars.

Dec. 21, 1944 — Staff Sgt. Sidney C. Brown, 25, of Catoonah Street has been reported missing in action over Germany since Nov. 30 serving as a tail-gunner on a B-24 Liberator bomber.

Dec. 22, 1944 — The family of Lt. Rudolph Casagrande receives word that he has been “slightly wounded” in action in Germany. His brother, Lt. Jeo Casagrande, is a prisoner of war in Germany.

Dec. 24, 1944 — Many Ridgefielders celebrate Christmas by attending in a stage show, in which Ridgefield school children perform a Christmas Tableau, “a semi-religious presentation in which they ... sing carols and other Christmas music.” After the tableau, the theater shows the film, “The Sign of the Cross,” starring Fredric March, Claudette Colbert, and Charles Laughton.

Dec. 25, 1944 — A snow storm earlier in the week provides Ridgefield with a white Christmas. “With a larger proportion of the town’s population than ever before scattered all over the earth, the folks at home have been celebrating the Christmas holiday season to the accompaniment of snowstorms and strident blasts of winter,” The Press says Dec. 28.

Dec. 28, 1944 — The estate of Frederic E. Lewis begins foreclosure proceedings against Ely Culbertson, owner of Upagenstitt, the former Lewis place on West Lane. When he bought the estate in 1934, Culbertson gave a \$98,000 mortgage. In 1940 he sold much of the property to Gray Court College, but that enterprise failed, and he regained title. Papers on file do not indicate why the trustees now seek foreclosure.

## **1945**

Jan. 4, 1945 — Marine Cpl. Robert C. Unwin writes from somewhere in the Pacific that he just saw the government-made movie, “Invasion Day,” showing the reaction to D-Day on the home front and including some scenes shot June 6, 1944, in Ridgefield. “I can’t quite find words to express how it made me feel, but seeing the people a fellow knew actually praying and working for us seems to make this whole mess worthwhile,” Unwin writes. “We all try to grin and bear the hardships, but something like that movie of home certainly lightens the load a great deal. I for one — and I believe that will include the multitudes of men in the service — really appreciate the troubles and hardships the folks on the home front are going through to make our load that much lighter. Thank you one and all.”

Jan. 4, 1945 — A growing number of Ridgefielders are approaching the local ration board, asking for enough gasoline to allow them to travel to Florida for the winter — many claim it’s on “doctor’s orders.” Board Chairman Arthur Carnall says requests, even accompanied with a doctor’s certificate, will be denied. “With the demands for gasoline at the fighting fronts still on the increase, it is our duty to see that our limited civilian supplies are put only to the most essential use,” he says.

Jan. 13, 1945 — PFC Armando Frulla, an Army paratrooper who had survived landing in France on D-Day, is killed in battle in Belgium. He is 22 years old. Although word of his death does not reach the family until February, his mother has a premonition early in the morning of Jan. 13 that something bad has happened and begins crying.

Jan. 15, 19445 — Dominick Bedini, who was shot in D-Day fighting last year, is seriously wounded in action in Belgium. It is the third time he has been wounded in battle.

Jan. 18, 1945 — Two mid-January snowstorms and near-zero temperatures close schools. “Deepest snowbanks in years along town streets,” a Press headline says.

Jan. 24, 1945 — State Senator Alice V. Rowland of Ridgefield introduces a bill in Hartford that would reduce the minimum compulsory school age from seven to six years old.

Jan. 25, 1945 — Staff Sgt. Sidney C. Brown, a turret gunner on a B-24 shot down over Germany Nov. 30, is a prisoner of war, his parents learn this week from the Red Cross.

Jan. 25, 1945 — “Now Let’s give the Sons of Heaven Hell!” says a full page ad, provided by the government and sponsored by the Ridgefield Press, urging support for the Sixth War Loan Drive.

Jan. 30, 1945 — Marine Pfc James Principe, a Ridgefield native, speaks at the high school, telling students about his battle experiences in the Pacific, including the time the cruiser he was on shot down a Japanese Zero, only to have it crash onto the ship’s deck. The crew quickly put out the fire, he says. He also described his landing and fighting on Leyte.

February 1945 — Leno Valentino is promoted from flight officer to second lieutenant in the Army Air Force. He is a pilot flying B-24 bombers in the South Pacific.

February 1945 — Corp. Jay E. Eddy of West Lane, a radio operator, receives the Air Medal for participating in more than 25 flights over enemy territory in the India-Burma Theatre with a combat cargo group of the Allied Eastern Air Command. The Army describes the missions as “flying through the most turbulent of weather and over extremely hazardous terrain in heavily loaded, unarmed cargo aircraft.”

Feb. 1, 1945 — Tech. Sgt. Joseph Salvestrini has been wounded in combat and is recuperating in a hospital in France, his parents learn.

Feb. 3, 1945 – Pvt. Howard R. Sears killed in action in France. He had joined the infantry in September and had been in action less than three weeks. Word of his death does not arrive in Ridgefield until March 15.

Feb. 3, 1945 — Sgt. Joe Brunetti writes that he is one of the first Americans to set foot on the Philippines and “didn’t see a Jap...They ran to beat...and somehow I don’t blame them ’cause running was a lot better than waiting for the Yanks. It’s a swell feeling being



with civilized people again and what a fine people these Filipinos are. They have been horribly mistreated and some stories are almost unbelievable.”

Feb. 8, 1945 — Harry Miller, executive secretary of the Gaines Dog Research Center at Routes 7 and 35, announces that designs are being sought for a memorial in honor of the dogs that will have fought and died in World War II. The plan goes nowhere, but a war dog memorial is eventually erected at a national cemetery on Guam in 1994.

Feb. 9, 1945 — Alice T. Atkins is interviewed on WEAF radio’s program, “Little Known People Doing Important Work” about her helping to make model ships for the Navy so seaman spotters will know what they are seeing.

Feb. 10, 1945 – Pfc. Robert Nichols Blume dies in action with the 5th Division of General Patton’s Third Army in Germany. A member of the Class of 1943 at RHS, Blume joins the Army immediately after graduation. He is posthumously awarded the Purple Heart and Bronze Star. His Bronze Star citation reads: “Private Blume, a radio operator, volunteered to go forward over exposed terrain which was under enemy artillery and mortar fire to clear an enemy machine gun emplacement which was bringing devastating fire on our troops. Despite the danger involved, Private Blume succeeded in making his way forward and silencing the weapon. On his return he was fired upon by an enemy sniper. While in search of the sniper he was killed by another sniper. His courage and devotion to duty was a great inspiration to all men of his company and reflects greatly upon himself and our armed forces.”

Feb. 13, 1945 — Eight boys receive their tenderfoot badges at a Boy Scout Parents Night meeting: Richard Scala, Andrew Montanari, William Coles, Ronald Bassette, Ralph Almgren, Lyle and William Torrey, and Kenneth Dodson. Edwin Allan Jr. sings a scouting song.

Feb. 13, 1945 — Heide Grafensteiner, a St. Bernard from Waldeck Kennels in Ridgefield, wins two awards — winner’s bitch and best of opposite sex — at the Westminster Kennel Club show in Madison Square Garden.

Feb. 14, 1945 — The RHS Hilltoppers top Bridgeport Trade School, 25-23, behind the shooting of Lou Girolmetti with 9, Romeo Petroni with 8, and Jimmy Costanzi with 5. It is a rare win for Ridgefield which has not been having a good season so far.

Feb. 15, 1945 — Gulf Oil Corporation takes out a full-page ad in The Press, celebrating “the new \$5,000,000 ‘Stairway to the Stars’ — the newly opened Westchester County Airport. The ad says the airport is less than 30 minutes from any point in Westchester or Fairfield Counties and features “an ultra-modern administration building, complete with sun deck, lounges, restaurants and a flyers’ club.”

Feb. 21, 1945 — “And Be My Love,” a comedy starring Walter Hampden of Ridgefield, opens at the National Theatre on Broadway. The New York Times says the show “has the virtue of restoring Walter Hampden to the local scene.”

Feb. 22, 1945 — Pfc. Irving E. “Ernie” Parks, son of Frank Parks of Abbott Avenue, is stationed at Lake Placid, N.Y., after spending 34 months in the Asiatic-Pacific Theatre with an anti-aircraft battalion.

March 1, 1945 — Charles W. Weitzel Jr. of Wilton Road, a 23-year-old veteran B-24 pilot, is promoted to first lieutenant. Weitzel, who has won the Air Medal, has piloted many missions over targets in southern and Central Europe, including Germany.

March 8, 1945 — The Rogers property at the corner of Main and Governor Streets, source of much controversy a few years earlier, is sold to Keeler and Durant insurance and real estate. Half the ground floor will be used by the firm while the other half will be the new home of the Ridgefield Book Shop. The house, more than 70 years old, has been owned by a succession of physicians, including Drs. William S. Todd, Russell W. Lowe, Henry W. Allen, and Elwood Rogers. Rogers, killed in a car crash April 1, 1943, had once proposed tearing down the building and erecting a shopping center with supermarket there. That move sparked the town to adopt a form of zoning that limited Main Street south of the village to residential uses.

March 8, 1945 — Ridgefield High’s basketball squad finishes the season with a 7-12 season, but there’s reason to cheer: The record was better than the previous year’s 6-13. Top scorer is Romeo Petroni with 169 points, followed by Lou Girolmetti with 163.

March 11, 1945 — Charles Joseph Iven of Peaceable Street, an internationally known deep sea sport fisherman, dies. Iven broke a world record May 15, 1925, when he caught a 190-pound tarpon with lightweight fly fishing equipment.

March 12, 1945 — Sgt. Harold W. Scott, a 25-year-old tail-gunner, is reported missing in action over the island of Cebu in the Philippines. An Army report written March 26 says Scott’s plane “while attacking a target at Cebu City was apparently hit by anti-aircraft fire in the left outboard fuel tank. Flight Officer Harmell ordered his gunner to bail out and Sgt. Scott was seen to leave the aircraft at very low altitude, his parachute opening and breaking his fall. The gunner landed approximately two miles west of Cebu City. The aircraft was seen to clear the land and crash in the water approximately two and one half miles southwest of Cebu City. The 310th Bombardment Wing Air Sea Rescue Section was advised of the crash and a request made that Guerrilla Forces on Cebu be contacted and an attempt made to assist Sgt. Scott. Flight Officer Harmell was not seen to survive the crash landing.” Scott was never found.

March 13, 1945 — Pfc. Geno Polverari dies of wounds received in earlier combat in Italy. Only four days before he dies, Polverari writes his wife, Marguerite, that he is “all right.” He has been a member of the elite Ski Troops, specially trained to deal with mountainous winter conditions, and had been in combat since January. Besides his wife, he leaves a two-year-old son, John.

March 13, 1945 — “The Red Cross does for the soldier what neither the Army nor anyone else has time to do, and brings the decent things of life to an indecent way of living,” Eleanor Stevenson, who has just returned from spending several years with a Red Cross unit overseas, tells a Ridgefield Red Cross rally.

March 13, 1945 — Paul Webb, popular cartoonist of hillbilly characters, tells the Lions Club at La Bretagne “some secrets of the cartoonist’s art.”

March 14, 1945 — A team of Ridgefield businessmen takes on the RHS varsity basketball squad in a benefit for Red Cross. The oldtimers include Lyman Anderson, Lyndon Ferry, Peter Carboni, Pat O’Keeffe, Joe Venus, Ed Rabin, Vinnie Smith, Tabby Carboni, and Frank Warner, all coached by Tom Clark. The geezers wind up being soundly defeated, 36-21.

March 26, 1945 — Miss Marie Kilcoyne’s second grade stages a play on patriotism. Among the stars are Patti Cain, Roger Yelinek, Merritt Jacob, Ida Falcinelli, Peter Mugavero, Joseph Coffey, Betty DeLuca, and Catherine Brady. The show ends with the entire assembly singing “Let’s Remember Pearl Harbor.”

March 28, 1945 — Edward Wiltshire, British vice-consul in New York City, tells the Rotary Club at the Kane Inn that Britain faces the post-war future with renewed confidence, an increased appreciation of the idea of world united as expounded by the late Wendell Willkie, and with an increased conscience regarding her colonial possessions. He describes the British Empire as the only world-wide system of collective security that has functioned with any success in the history of the world.

March 30, 1945 — The Hilltop Dispatch, Ridgefield High School’s quarterly newspaper which is marking its 10th anniversary, wins a first place award in its class in an annual contest conducted by the Scholastic Press Association at Columbia University. Publications from more than 40 states competed. Yvette Wright is editor in chief, while the staff includes Arvi Maki, Marion Herzog, Grace Wick, Eugenia Archer, Harold Walker, Joan Conklin, Evelyn Petrini, Edwin Allan, Ada Bedini, Helen Sterry, and Ann McGlynn.

April 5, 1945 — The flag at the town hall is being flown at half staff for seven consecutive days in memory of the seven Ridgefield men who are known to have lost

their lives so far in the war: Meinhard Scherf, James Birarelli, Walter Rose, William P. Bell, Armando Frulla, Robert N. Blume, and Geno Polverari.

April 5, 1945 — While Mrs. Alice Finch Moore learns that her son, Pfc. David Moore, has been officially declared missing in action since March 15, there is a suspicion he may be a prisoner of war. Moore, who had fought at Anzio and in France, is alive and well, according to a letter written by a pal of Moore.

April 9, 1945 — The school board considers tripling the size of the school cafeteria, which is suffering from severe overcrowding. Apparently the lunches provided by the PTA staff and volunteers are quite popular. The cost would be \$25,000 (about \$340,000 in today's dollars).

April 12, 1945 — "PRES. ROOSEVELT DIES" screams the full-page headline on The Press, which goes to press only a couple hours after the president's death at 4:35 p.m. of a cerebral hemorrhage. "Mr. Roosevelt, president for more than 12 years, died as victory in Europe appeared certain within a matter of days," The Press says. Four days later, hundreds fill the high school auditorium for a memorial service that includes prayers by all the town's ministers. Actor Walter Hampden reads "O Captain, My Captain."

April 12, 1945 — U.S. Coast Guard Lt. J. Gordon Coffin of Ridgefield is photographed with Coast Guard Commander Jack Dempsey aboard a Coast Guard-manned LST, invasion-bound in the Pacific. Coffin is a local businessman while Dempsey is former world heavyweight boxing champion. Coffin graduated in 1937 from the Coast Guard Academy in New London. After the war Coffin becomes Ridgefield's postmaster.

April 15, 1945 — With Aldo Tulipani's induction into the service today, all five sons of Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Tulipani of Ivy Hill Road are now members of the armed forces. First to go was Albert, a coxswain in the Navy, at home on a 12-day leave, who has been in both the Atlantic and Pacific Theatres. He is followed by Sgt. Joseph Tulipani, now with the Army in New Guinea for three years; Cpl. Alfred Tulipani, serving at Camp Livingston in Louisiana for two years; and Johnnnny, currently with the SeaBees in Hawaii after having been in the Marshall Islands. All return safely.

April 18, 1945 — Pfc. John Edward Dowling is serving as a member of an infantry anti-tank unit with Patton's Seventh Army in Germany that sets up a 57-mm gun on a road near the town of Unter-Gruppenbach. An approaching German tank blows up the gun. Dowling and two other men are hit, and a fourth man is killed. Injured seriously enough to have been later given the Last Rites, Dowling nonetheless drags the two injured comrades to a ditch alongside the road. All three hide there, wounded, as the German tank drives by (the tank is knocked out down the road). Dowling is sent to Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington, D.C., to recover, and is discharged from the Army in July. He is

later awarded two Purple Hearts, the Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Soldier's Medal for heroism, and other commendations, but rarely talks of his war experiences.

April 19, 1945 — Sgt. Philip Martin, who is stationed at the Prisoner of War General Hospital at Camp Forrest, Tennessee, describes the “commotion” that occurs when camp officials discover the suicide of Nazi Lt. General Karl Buelowins, who was found hanging from his belt in his room. Buelowins had served with Rommel in Africa and had been captured in 1942. Martin also reports that shortly afterwards two German prisoners were shot and killed as they tried to escape the camp.

April 19, 1945 – On a happier note, 2nd Lt. Rudolph Hurzeler, a fighter pilot who'd just been home on leave, takes the opportunity to buzz Main Street in his military plane. The Press reports: “He dipped his big plane low over the village but hardly slackened his speed and was gone in a jiffy, but not before the pilot's parents and sisters working in the Ridgefield Bakery had a chance to run out and see him fly by.”

April 25, 1945 — The Red Cross mobile Blood Bank pays its 10th visit of the war to Ridgefield and collects 191 pints, again surpassing quotas. Among the donors are four visiting Royal Air Force boys from England.

May 1945 — The Italian-American Ladies' Mutual Aid Society is sponsoring a month-long effort to collect evaporated milk and other tinned foods for the starving children of liberated Italy.

May 1, 1945 — While there are signs that the war, at least in Europe, is nearing an end, the Ridgefield Canning Center learns that less sugar is available for the coming season of canning fruits and vegetables.

May 1, 1945 — A farewell reception takes place for the Rev. Dr. George B. Tompkins, who is retiring from active ministry after four years as pastor of Jesse Lee Memorial Methodist Church.

May 2, 1945 — Charles Weitzel Jr., home on a month's leave, tells the Rotary Club about some of his experiences piloting 63 missions over enemy territory in a B-24 bomber.

May 8, 1945 – Church bells peal just after 9 a.m. today after President Truman's announcement of victory in Europe. The town observes VE (Victory in Europe) Day with a special service in St. Stephen's Church at which the choirs from several churches sing hymns. Although storekeepers had announced they would close when VE Day came, they acceded to Governor Baldwin's request to stay open.

May 9, 1945 — Francis D. Martin buys the S.S. Denton's block on Main Street north of Bailey Avenue, saying he was purchasing it for his son, Sgt. Philip L. Martin, an optometrist.

May 10, 1945 — Word is received that Pfc. David J. Moore has been liberated from a German prisoner camp and is on his way home.

May 10, 1945— Fighting in Okinawa, just a few hundred miles from Japan, Pvt. Charles Coles writes that he is still receiving copies of The Ridgefield Press. "Last night I put the latest issue into my musette bag and dug into my foxhole. This morning I looked at the Press and the Jap shrapnel had really made a mess out of it. I was dug in deep, however, and none of it hit me personally."

May 11, 1945 — Elizabeth Coffey Tumbridge drives home from a Christian Science lecture in Norwalk and pulls her car into the garage of her home in the Whipstick district. Hard of hearing she does not realize that she's forgotten to turn off the car's engine. Carbon monoxide gas from the exhaust works its way into the air conditioning ducts of the house and she is found dead the next day in her bathroom. She had been about to move to Williamstown, Mass.

May 12, 1945 — Elizabeth M. Leary of Ridgefield marries Staff Sgt. Thomas J. Brady of Hempstead, Long Island, in St. Mary's Church. One day three weeks later Mrs. Brady is to meet her husband at their Long Island apartment to go out to dinner. She arrives and finds the door locked; her husband has the only key and the landlady is away. Mrs. Brady waits two hours outside the door, and then decides to spend the night with her mother-in-law, leaving a note on the door explaining where she is. She returns the next day to find the note still there. With the help of her mother-in-law, they break into the apartment and find her husband unconscious, suffocating from gas leaking from a refrigerator. He dies a few hours later in a hospital. Brady, who was back in the states after being injured in combat in Germany, had been awarded the Purple Heart and cited for meritorious service in the war.

May 15, 1945 — Beating New Canaan 7-6, Ridgefield takes the first round in the Little Four baseball league tournament. Romeo Petroni hits a line drive that a New Canaan third baseman bobbles, allowing the winning run to score.

May 15, 1945 — An early morning fire guts the workshop of Morelli's Sales and Service in the Travostino building on Bailey Avenue and heavy smoke destroys the contents of Antonio Travostino's grocery store next door. Abe Morelli and his brother-in-law, Archie Parent, proprietors of the electrical appliance repair business, estimate the loss at \$10,000 (\$135,000 in 2017 dollars) and say they'll open a new business in the former Denton Block on Main Street in June.

May 24, 1945 — Ridgefield is not close to meeting its quota of 10 tons of salvaged paper. Less than three tons has been collected so far.

May 24, 1945 — First Class Petty Officer John Carini tells the RHS senior economics class about his work building airstrips with the SeaBees on many Pacific islands in temperatures as hot as 130 degrees.

May 30, 1945 — Dr. Harry Martin of Brookfield, who spent time in a Japanese prisoner camp in China, discusses patriotism and the meaning of the flag at the Memorial Day services in front of the War Memorial on Main Street at the head of Branchville Road.

May 31, 1945 – With Gray Court Junior College defunct, Samuel Weiss and Jack Albert of New York City acquire the former Lewis estate on West Lane from Ely Culbertson by foreclosure. At the same time, Mr. and Mrs. Harris D. Colt Jr. sign a contract to buy Stonecrest Farm's mansion from Irving B. Conklin who is retaining the farm buildings and fields.

May 31, 1945 — Gov. Raymond Baldwin appoints Ridgefield State Rep. Peter McManus to the new State Labor Relations Board, created under the Labor Relations Act piloted through the current legislature largely through McManus's efforts. Among the other appointees is Ashbel G. Gulliver, dean of Yale Law School.

June 1945 — Seaman First Class Frederick J. Romeo is serving in the Pacific aboard an LSM(R), a small landing ship fitting out with more than 100 rocket launchers. Dubbed a "Small Boy" by the bigger ships of the fleet, one 970-ton LSM(R) has more short-range fire-power than two 45,000-ton battleships. Romeo's LSM(R)-189 has brought down three Japanese planes and blown up three enemy suicide boats in recent action.

June 6, 1945 — Professor C. Grove Haines of Syracuse University discusses the problems of peace now facing the nations of the world at a meeting of the League of Women Voters.

June 7, 1945 — Army Sgt. Eugene J. Frulla is among the first veterans of the European theatre to be allowed to return home. He has been overseas for 34 months during which time he participated in six campaigns and earned a Purple Heart and Bronze Star with Oak Leaf cluster.

June 8, 1945 — The Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster is awarded to Major Harry R. Bennett who is with the army's First Corps in Luzon, the Philippines. In July he returns home after more than three years of continuous duty overseas.

June 11, 1945 — Behind the clutch hitting of Lou Girolmetti, Ridgefield beats Darien and wins the "Little Four League" championship. Other stars include Aldo Biagiotti, Dan

Fischialetti, Bob Carboni, Jim Costanzi, Jim O'Keeffe, Harry Zandri, and Dino Cingolani, who pitches the win.

June 14, 1945 — 32 students graduate from Ridgefield High School, but six are absent; they are in the service. Ann McGlynn is the valedictory speaker while Thomas H. Beck of Wilton, president of Crowell Publishing, is the commencement speaker. Though he envisions the world of unlimited opportunities for young people, Beck urges the students not to pay much attention to the advice of oldsters like himself, but to look about them and see what needs to be done to make life more pleasant for mankind. He tells of how he himself had left the automobile business as a young man because an older and presumably wiser man had said there was no future in it.

June 14, 1945 — Clothing provided by the Red Cross volunteers in Ridgefield have been proving very useful in France, reports an official in that country. "The garments helped to meet the most emergent needs of those who were made homeless by the war and had lost all their personal possessions. There were large numbers of such people in the LeHavre-Rouen area following our invasion and the severe bombing it entailed. The garments were of equally great help to the French refugees and displaced persons found in other areas, such as the depleted south of France."

June 21, 1945 — 1st Lt. Natalie T. Eddy of Ridgefield, commanding officer of the Women's Army Corps detachment at Middletown, Pa., is studying personnel administration at Purdue University.

June 21, 1945 — Even then, parking in town is a problem. John Franzmann, a student at RHS, wins the Ridgefield Garden Club essay contest on the subject of how to improve parking in the village. One answer, Franzmann says, would be "having the merchants park their cars in the rear of the business establishments instead of occupying a space through the day which a customer could occupy. Another method is to get the use of certain parking areas such as the one behind the Savings Bank, the Odd Fellows and other such areas."

June 26, 1945 — Author Konrad Bercovici of South Salem tells the Lions Club that the people of Germany should be imprisoned for 100 years as a punishment for their war crimes. "There is no reasonable argument why a whole nation that has proven itself asocial should not be treated by the civilized nations of the world as an asocial individual is treated by society," he says. "The crime committed by a thousand or a million or ten million is not less a crime because it has been committed by a mass." While he admits it may be extremely expensive to imprison 70 million people for a century, "it still would be cheaper than to go to war with Germany every 20 years or so."

June 29, 1945 — Josephine Rockwell, daughter of George L. Rockwell and the late Mrs. Rockwell of Governor Street, marries Warrant Officer Daniel J. Tobin Jr., son of Mr. and



Mrs. Tobin of Silver Spring Road, in Mission Dolores, Calif. They soon come back to live in their home town.

July 1, 1945 — The state says Ridgefield has a population of 4,068 people today.

July 4, 1945 — Lt. James Bacchiochi of Ridgefield marries Gloria Ciccaroni of Bethel at St. Mary's School. Lt. Bacchiochi is a B-24 bomber pilot.

July 5, 1945 — The telephone system in Ridgefield is overloaded with calls going outside the town, causing mounting concern to phone officials. "Every available girl is working at the switchboard, but during the peak hours of the day there just aren't enough operators or facilities to handle the load," says Miss Ella Krapowiz, chief operator at the Ridgefield exchange. "Telephone users can help us considerably by not calling back to inquire again about the progress of their calls after we have informed them that they will be notified when the call is ready."

July 5, 1945 – As the war draws to a close, Superintendent of Schools Van Miller is released from duties with the Army Air Force, and returns to town to resume his post after an absence of a year and a half.

July 5, 1945 — D.F. Bedient was advertising "a lovely Pyrex Flavor Saver Pie Plate" for only 45 cents (about \$6 now), adding that "for dozens of wedding and shower gift ideas, see our Pyrex Ware Counter."

July 7, 1945 — Ridgefielders buy \$1,456,000 (nearly \$20 million in 2017 dollars) in bonds during the Seventh War Bond Drive, which has lasted eight weeks. "The town had thus demonstrated its patriotic support of the nation at war," said Anne S. Richardson, chairman of the town's War Finance Committee.

July 12, 1945 – Pvt. John Evald Nelson dies of wounds received in battle in Northern Luzon, the Philippines. The 1939 RHS graduate is 24 years old and leaves a wife and and young son, John Jr.

July 17, 1945 — Henry M. Propper of Ridgebury sails today aboard the Queen Mary as a member of a mission to confer with officials of the British Ministry of Health about housing problems in the future. Propper has been a member of the National Committee on Housing, formed in 1941 to help solve war housing problems. He is a former New York City housing official.

July 19, 1945 — 500 people attend the American Women's Volunteer Services fund-raising dog show on the grounds of the former Lounsbury estate on Main Street. Because an Aug. 1 town meeting will decide whether to buy the property from the Lounsbury

descendants, the mansion is open to the public today so voters can inspect what they might be buying.

August 1945 — Ridgefield's representative in Congress, Clare Boothe Luce of Greenwich, has a side job this month. She is starring in "Candida," the play, at the Strand Theatre in Stamford. Among the crowds attending the shows have been such celebrities as Gov. Raymond Baldwin, Joseph P. Kennedy, Bernard Baruch, actors and actresses Jean Arthur, Ilka Chase, Frederick March, Evelyn Keyes, Talulah Bankhead, and Stu Erwin, journalist Dorothy Kilgallen, conductor Fritz Reiner, and novelist Edna Ferber.

Aug. 1, 1945 — 300 attend a Town Meeting and vote to buy the former Lounsbury estate for up to \$60,000. The property includes the mansion and all the land in the block of Main, Governor, East Ridge and Market Streets — except the corner of Main and Governor, owned by Keeler and Durant. While no use has been specified, there is talk of making the mansion a town office building and the land, a town park. The selectmen and sellers eventually agree to a price of \$56,000 (about \$760,000 in 2017 dollars).

Aug. 2, 1945 — The sugar shortage this year is even greater than the previous year, the Ridgefield Ration Board warns would-be canners and other big users of sugar.

Aug. 2, 1945 — Sirens installed here several years ago by the Civilian Defense Committee as part of the air-raid warning system are used tonight to call the Ridgefield Fire Department to its monthly meeting. It's an experiment to determine whether the sirens, owned by a private company, would be practical as part of the town's fire alarm system. They work well and are retained.

Aug. 8, 1945 — Commander John Jay Pierrepont of Main Street, who collects stamps, shows some of his Panama Canal Zone collection to the Rotary Club and describes why stamp collecting is interesting.

Aug. 11, 1945 — Margaret Mary Shean marries Major Harry R. Bennett at St. Mary's Church.

Aug. 14, 1945 — With tooting and hollering and marching, with jubilation unrestrained and unmatched since November 11, 1918, Ridgefield celebrates the end of the war. The fire whistle, fire sirens and church bells start the celebration about two minutes after 7 o'clock when news comes by radio that President Truman has announced the Japanese government's unqualified acceptance of unconditional surrender. "Within a few minutes the whole village was crowded with celebrants, many of them driving up and down the street blowing automobile horns," The Press reports two days later. "The sirens continued to wail for hours thereafter. By dark several hundred people had gathered to cheer, to sing and to rejoice that the end of carnage had come."

Aug. 16, 1945 — What is probably the largest headline ever to appear in The Ridgefield Press, before or since, announces: “Town Joyous As War Ends,” followed by smaller headlines saying “Wild Celebration in Village When Japs Give Up; Lots of Noise; Church Bells Call People to Prayer; Gas Rationing Ends, Too.”

Aug. 23, 1945 — The “Victory Edition” of The Press reports that more than \$6 million in war bonds — \$81 million in 2017 — are purchased by Ridgefielders. Bond drives sometimes double their quotas here. It also reports that between Dec. 7, 1941 and May 29, 1944, some 200 men, women and children staffed the airplane spotting posts in town, which reported more than 7,000 aircraft to military officials.

Aug. 23, 1945 — The “Victory Edition” also features a front section page, headlined “... that these honored dead shall not have died in vain,” that profiles 16 Ridgefielders who are known to have lost their lives the war: Meinhard Scherf, Robert N. Blume, William P. Bell, Paul Ullman, William H. Hall Jr., Charles Cogwell, Howard Sears, James Birarelli, Harvey J. Webster, Harold W. Scott, Armando Frulla, Geno Polverari, John E. Nelson, Walter Rose, Ernest Farrell, and Thomas A. Ward.

Aug. 23, 1945 — Some “sidelights on the war” reported in the Victory Edition include: At least six Ridgefielders were in German POW camps: Jeo Casagrande, David Moore, Lester Hunt, James Verner, Sidney Brown, and Ralph Blackmer. Mrs. Tecla Cioccolanti has a pair of Rosary beads blessed by the Pope; they were sent to her from Rome by her brother Pfc. Dominic Bedeini, who was in Rome on a furlough and was chosen one of the few American soldiers to have an audience with the Pope. Rico Ridolfi, “mayor of Branchville,” who was behind the Branchville soldiers monument, found time to correspond with more than 40 soldiers on the fronts. Four nurses from Ridgefield served in the military: Nina Romeo, Margaret Moylan, Winifred Finch, and Mary Benedict.

September 1945 — Lt. S. Denton Coleman wins the Distinguished Flying Cross. The navigator on a B-29, he is cited for “extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight on June 6, 1945.”

Sept. 4, 1945 — Romeo Petroni, a senior at Ridgefield High School, is elected class president.

Sept. 5, 1945 — Because it would cost more than \$50,000 under the current inflated building prices, the Boards of Education and Finance abandon plans to expand the school cafeteria, once thought to be a \$25,000 project. Meanwhile, a total of 338 students have a complete meal at the cafeteria that day, the first day of school. “The menu consisted of meat loaf, mashed potatoes, sliced tomatoes, milk, and home-made cake,” The Press reports. “This year the price will be 15 cents for a full meal instead of the 20 cents that was charged last year.” The price decrease is not explained.

Sept. 6, 1945 — Rumors that Sherman Billingsley, operator of the famous Stork Club in New York City, is about to take over the recently closed Outpost Inn, are denied by Outpost spokesmen.

Sept. 6, 1945 — A group of Ridgefield organizations sponsors a “Back to Peace” meeting at the Lounsbury house to hear speakers representing the United States, Britain, Russia and China discuss promoting understanding and friendly relations among nations. “When the intense urgency of the war ceases, old misconceptions and prejudices can crop up and only by understanding backgrounds and cultures, national habits and ways of thought can true friendship and cooperation be created and maintained,” say the sponsors, including the Red Cross, American Legion, Ridgefield Garden Club, Rotary Club, Grange, Italian-American Mutual Aid Society, and PTA.

Sept. 7, 1945 — In the first serious, old-fashioned runaway incident to occur in a decade, three Ridgefield boys are thrown from their buggy as their runaway horse rounds a curve in a wild dash through the darkness on Ivy Hill. The three walk to the state police barracks to report the crash and Trooper Jack Jones recognizes that one boy, Richard Knapp, 12-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Knapp of Ivy Hill Road, is badly hurt and sends him to Danbury Hospital. Joseph Knapp and a friend Robert Keeler Jr. are uninjured. The horse, which had been frightened by a snarling dog jumping from a roadside bush, is found the next day calmly browsing shrubbery on Prospect Street.

Sept. 10, 1945 — Among the members of the football team, under coach Ray Eppoliti, this season are Gus Montanari, Lou Girolmetti, Frank Lancaster, Romeo Petroni, Bud Morrisroe, Frank Serfilippi, Si Lavatori, and Paul Rossini.

Sept. 13, 1945 — Levio G. Zandri, a teacher at the high school, is the only candidate to be certified by the Civil Service Commission as eligible to be the new Ridgefield postmaster to replace John L. Walker, who resigned because of poor health and soon died. Nine people apply for the position, which pays \$3,400 a year. U.S. Senator Brien McMahon says he can not accept certification of only one candidate — “As a matter of policy, I think it is unfair to choose a postmaster from a single eligible,” he says. J. Edward McGlynn, one of those applying for the job, has been serving as acting postmaster.

Sept. 28, 1945 — Canvassers begin a house-to-house campaign to raise \$6,000 for the Victory Fund Drive to help “countries ravished by the war.”

Sept. 29, 1945 — The Ration Board office closes and its work, still underway, is merged with the Danbury office that will now serve the region. Rationing is about to be limited to sugar, fats and oils, but even these will be dropped soon, an official says. Many of the

people who serve on the Ridgefield board gather for a dinner at the Kane Inn, celebrating its demise.

Sept. 30, 1945 — Ridgefielders no longer have to save tin for salvage efforts, effective today, but paper is in short supply and still being sought.

Oct. 1, 1945 — A town meeting votes \$59,000 to purchase of the former Lounsbury estate on Main Street and also agrees to sell the old Town Farm, also known as the poorhouse, on North Salem Road.

Oct. 1, 1945 — Today is also local election day, and voters once again elect a Republican majority with no surprises — and often, with no opposition. Winthrop E. Rockwell is again first selectman, with Charles Palmer and Harry Hull as selectmen — all unopposed. Among the very few people who lost their bids is Lillian Gilkes of Olmstead Lane, a professor and writer, who runs for tax collector on the Democratic ticket against Arthur J. Carnall, who wins by a wide margin, 518 to 173.

Oct. 1, 1945 — Frank Gordon of Georgetown opens the Ridgefield Photo Shop on Main Street. In 1951 he sells his business to Clarence (“Korky”) and Gerry Korker, who run the store until their retirement in the early 1990s.

Oct. 3, 1945 — The body of R. Donald Beardslee, the 41-year-old son of Ralph W. Beardslee, an employee of the McKeon farm in Ridgebury, is found in Long Island Sound. The younger Beardslee, a test pilot for the Civil Aeronautics Administration, had apparently picked up a hitchhiker while on his way to look for an apartment on Long Island. His car is found Sept. 30, abandoned on the Bronx-Whitestone Bridge. Pinned to the seat is a note, allegedly written by his assailant, saying that a ring that he’d taken from Beardsley was “worth more than three cars.” It also says that “the guy resisted, so I had to slug him — try to track this one.”

Oct. 4, 1945 — Daniel P. Mahoney is a gunner’s mate aboard the U.S.S. Wichita, which is anchored in Nagasaki Harbor, helping a unit that is removing prisoners of war and civilian internees “from this city which was devastated by the second atomic bomb attack.” Mahoney has seen much Pacific Theatre combat since boarding the Wichita in 1942 and had previously served along the North African coast.

Oct. 8, 1945 — Page Kane, an owner of the Kane Inn on West Lane, attends her first school board meeting after having been elected to the board Oct. 1. Karl S. Nash is re-elected chairman.

Oct. 9, 1945 — The returning veteran doesn’t like to be classed as a “problem” and really is no more of a problem than the average man in Ridgefield today — except, perhaps, finding a job, says Van Miller, school superintendent, speaking to the Lions

Club. Miller, who had been an Army operations analyst in the war, says men who'd been wounded in battle would need and should have all the aid that it is possible to give them.

Oct. 11, 1945 — Ridgefield is one of five area towns eligible for a new post office under a bill before Congress. The current post office in a Scott Block storefront (Addressi Jewelers in 2017) was recently redecorated with new lights and a new "writing table" in the lobby.

Oct. 12, 1945 — Joseph Shaw of North Street is in his yard, sawing wood and chatting with a friend when he sees an elderly man climb the steps to his front door and knock loudly. "It's probably a tramp," Shaw tells the friend. Shaw's wife answers the door. "Lady, can you spare a bite to eat?" the visitor says. Mrs. Shaw stares at the man and then exclaims, "Why, I know you!" The visitor is Robert Shaw, Joseph's twin brother from Michigan. The two, who are 78, haven't seen each other in more than 20 years. Coincidentally, a third brother, Ellis from Indiana, happens to be visiting at the same time, so the three brothers have a surprise reunion.

Oct. 16, 1945 — The new Ridgefield Big Pin Bowling League begins play at the Congregational Church House's two alleys on West Lane. By Nov. 19, after 12 games, John Walters has the highest average, 182, followed by Ernest Sturges, Levio Zandri, John Smith, Richard Venus, and Abraham Morelli.

Oct. 17, 1945 — Lyman Beecher Stow, author of the bestselling "Saints, Sinners and the Beechers," speaks at a high school assembly. "A person must be enthusiastic about his job or he will fail," he tells the students. He admits that he, like most Harvard men, is proud to be one and noted that his most famous classmate was the late Franklin D. Roosevelt "who was a leader even at that time." Stowe is a grandson of Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

Oct. 18, 1945 — Lawrence I. Graham of Wilton, a widely known restaurateur, buys the Outpost Inn from the Conley estate and hopes to have the place back in business by Nov. 1. The sale includes the inn building, built in 1812, a 14-room guest house, and 29 acres. Years later Graham becomes first selectman of Wilton.

Oct. 20, 1945 — Dino Cingolani, who pitched two seasons for RHS, signs with the New York Giants and will report for training in the spring. He is also offered contracts with the Dodgers and the Phillies. The 18-year-old is a member of the Class of 1945.

Oct. 25, 1945 — Instead of weekly lists of Ridgefielders being inducted into the military, The Press is now running periodic lists of "discharges." This week's contains 109 names.

Nov. 1, 1945 — The town takes title to the Lounsbury estate.

Nov. 2, 1945 — The Ridgefield Choral Society organizes and elects Mrs. Theodore C. Jessup president. Mrs. Willis Boyce is accompanist.

Nov. 8, 1945 — Dr. Samuel Gerber donates his terra-cotta bas relief of sportswriter Ring Lardner to the New York Historical Society, where it remains today.

Nov. 8, 1945 — Sgt. Joe Servadio, discharged after five years in the service, tells of an incident during a furlough in a little town outside London. Staying at a USO center where beds are at a premium, Servadio has just settled for the night, hoping for a good rest, when a tall soldier walks up and asks him, "May I share your bunk?" Servadio looks up, leaps out of his bunk and shakes hands with Eddie Dowling, a fellow Ridgefielder. "Both boys forgot they had been interested in sleep and stayed up until 4:30 a.m. discussing events back home and reminiscing," The Press reports.

Nov. 9, 1945 — The British Empire Medal is awarded to William Hull Browning of Spring Valley Road at the British Embassy in Washington in recognition of his "bravery in evacuating wounded men from two engagements in Italy, Sassino and Monte San Savino, under intense shelling and mortar fire." Browning served in Africa and Italy with the American Field Service.

Nov. 11, 1945 — The town has a memorial service for its war dead and adds two new names to the list: John Gully, killed in action on July 23, and had lived on one of the Mallory farms in Ridgebury, and Charles Acocella, who died April 19, and had been a horseman for Ada Forbes Phair on North Salem Road. It brings the number of Ridgefield war dead to 13.

Nov. 11, 1945 — By a matter of minutes, a brave mother and quick-witted firemen avert a double tragedy at the Goodwill Community Church building Sunday evening, rescuing two small boys from a second-floor burning bedroom. "My baby brother — he's still asleep in there," cries Ivan Schmitt, 6, as a gas-masked fireman carries him from the burning building. The child's mother, Rosetta Schmitt, summoned from the memorial service for Ridgefield's war dead, arrives at that moment, dashes into the smoke-filled apartment, finds her way to the baby's crib, and grabs the unconscious three-year-old Gilbert, 3. Dr. J. H. Inkster administers first aid and sends the children to Danbury Hospital where both, suffering from first degree burns, as well as smoke inhalation, spend more than three weeks recuperating. The fire is believed to have started from a kerosene stove.

Nov. 13, 1945 — In the second major fire of the week, the accidental smashing of an electric light bulb starts a \$18,000 blaze that destroys the Outpost Garage on Danbury Road at Farmingville Road and sends John Morganti Jr., 18, to the hospital with third degree burns. Morganti is working on his father's heavy truck and is cleaning a gasoline

line when a trouble light slips from his hands, smashes on the floor and ignites gasoline that had spilled. As Morganti struggles to push the truck outside, his clothing catches fire. He starts to run for home when someone yells for him to stop and turns a hose on him. "This puts out the fire but the youth was screaming with pain from his burned flesh," The Press reports. Morganti spends nearly a month in the hospital.

Nov. 15, 1945 — Dr. Forbes Hathaway Burgess of Washington, D.C., who had been in the Army for the past 30 months, rents the former home of Dr Russell W. Lowe on Main Street and opens a practice of medicine. He gets the same phone number as Dr. Lowe, Ridgefield 41.

Nov. 15, 1945 — Quinto Carboni, proprietor of Quint's Log Cabin restaurant, offers a free chicken-spaghetti dinner "with all the fixings" to any servicemen recently discharged or home on leave. Seventy three men take him up on the offer and many declare the evening "the best party ever."

Nov. 16, 1945 — With peace in place, auto makers can begin making cars for the consumer instead of vehicles for the war. Leo Pambianchi of Ridgefield Motors on Bailey Avenue is one of the few dealers in the nation to receive one of the first 1946 Pontiacs, which will be used for show and demonstration. The car is a two-door coupe sedan.

Nov. 23, 1945 — For the first time ever, a woman is admitted to membership in the Everett Ray Seymour Post of the American Legion. Mrs. Dorothy Wojnar had just been discharged as a WAVE.

Nov. 24, 1945 — Of the 532 men and women sent into the service from Ridgefield, the draft board has received notices of the discharges of 191 as of today. Among the latest are Dante Brunetti, James S. Leary, Leo Pambianchi, Rita M. Potter, and James J. Romeo.

Nov. 24, 1945 — Mr. and Mrs. Charles D. Crouchley return from a 10,000 mile, six-week car trip around the United States. The journey includes stops at many national parks as well as Mr. Crouchley's gathering hundreds of rocks for his mineral collection.

"Avoiding the big cities the Crouchleys found accommodations in small towns and villages where there was no concentration of military forces," The Press says. "They found the food good, but expensive and like the cooking in the East better than any during their trip. 'Too greasy' in the South, 'too hot' in the West, but 'just right' at home."

Nov. 28, 1945 — The Fairfield County Planning Association, at its annual meeting, awards Ridgefield a silver cup for its "vision in purchasing the Lounsbury estate for a park and recreation grounds."



Dec. 1, 1945 — Seven cartons of shoes are packed at the Thrift Shop to be shipped to French Relief. Among the shoes are several pairs from a Paris shop.

Dec. 6, 1945 — Dr. Charles P. Izzo, recently discharged from the Navy after three years of service, rents space above Perry's Market on Main Street and will reopen his dental practice on Jan. 2.

Dec. 8, 1945 — Though the war is over, paying for it is still a problem, but Ridgefielders are doing their part as the Victory Bond Drive concludes with sales of \$290,000, exceeding the town's goal of \$200,000. It's the final bond drive since the war started. (During the eight war drives, 85 million Americans — of a population of 131 million — bought \$185.7 billion in bonds. That's more than \$2,000 per person when the average household income was only \$2,000 per year.)

Dec. 9, 1945 — "Bringing home the bacon" is no new experience for Mrs. Erwin Reed, who has taken care of her family since Mr. Reed has been in the service, but today she demonstrates her ability to also bring home the turkey. In fact, she wins two turkeys competing with the men who gather for the annual Ridgefield Fish and Game Club turkey shoot at Big Jim Smith's turkey farm on Barry Avenue.

Dec. 13, 1945 — Ridgefield is all abuzz after learning the town might become the site for the United Nations Organization headquarters. Mrs. Ruth Cutten offers her Old West Mountain Road property, featuring the 44-room Sunset Hall mansion. That the Cutten place is being considered as the UN site is reported by Lowell Thomas on his national evening news broadcast Dec. 12.

Dec. 17, 1945 — Artist Rolan G.S. Mattson of Georgetown is exhibiting his work at the Ridgefield Playhouse. Mattson was recently discharged as a sergeant after three years in the Army where he was a staff artist for HQ G5 in England, and contributed to the Stars and Stripes, the Army newspaper.

Dec. 18, 1945 — A total eclipse of the moon is followed immediately by a 24-hour snowstorm that drops 14 inches of snow and sends the mercury to zero.

Dec. 20, 1945 — A quarter of the schools' 600 or so students are absent daily for the past week because of the flu and weather conditions.

Dec. 23, 1945 — Despite the flu and weather conditions, 800 children attend the Christmas party sponsored by the State Police in their large garage at Troop A on East Ridge. "They came by foot, in automobiles and in big buses," The Press reports. "They sang Christmas carols, applauded a lively stage show and dug into the refreshments as children usually do."

Dec. 25, 1945 — Ridgefield is lit up with Christmas lights for the first time in four years and the community celebrates the holiday — and peace — at churches, with a carol sing sponsored by the Lions at the town hall, and various pageants. But 2.2 inches of rain Christmas day washes away most of the 20 inches of snow that had been on the ground.

## **1946**

1946 – After 20 years of debate and acrimony, zoning is adopted.

1946 – Electro Mechanical Research opens a lab here.

January 1946 – One day early, a caravan of 11 cars full of international officials, escorted by the state police, arrives in town to inspect sites for a possible headquarters for the United Nations. They look at Mrs. Cutten's Sunset Hall on West Mountain and the former Ridgefield Boys School on North Salem Road. In the end, a bigger town wins out.

January 1946 – Former Lt. Leno Valentino starts Ridgefield Cleaners in the second story of the Denton Block.

January 1946 – Plans to reopen Silver Spring Country Club, closed four years earlier because of the war rationing, are announced.

February 1946 – Dr. Gordon G. Pettit, recently a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy, opens his dental practice on Main Street.

Feb. 7, 1946 – Mrs. Raymond Sears and her son, Raymond, die in a car crash in Westport. She is the widow of Pvt. Raymond Sears of Ridgefield, who was killed in the Battle of the Bulge on Feb. 3, 1945.

June 1946 – Thirty-four Ridgefield High School seniors take the traditional class trip to Washington, D.C., the first since 1941.

Summer 1946 – Edward Smith of New Haven buys the Mignerey Drug Store from George A. Mignerey who had been in business for 35 years.

Aug. 14, 1946 – 230 veterans march down Main Street in a huge Victory Day celebration that includes a ball game, dinner, and a dance.

July 1946 – The American Legion Post presents an Old West Show and Rodeo on Miss Elizabeth Hull's property off West Lane. It draws 1,000 spectators, but just meets expenses.

September 1946 – Frank and Fred Montanari open their fuel and range oil business on East Ridge. The brothers are just back from military service, Frank in the Pacific and Fred in Europe.

Sept. 2, 1946 – Stonehenge Inn opens for business under the ownership of World War II veteran Victor Gilbert, who names it for the mysterious monument he saw in the service in England.

Fall 1946 – Ridgefield schools supervisor of music Robert Rowe announces plans to offer instrumental music instruction in the schools to those students who have suitable instruments.

December 1946 – Conrad Rockelein, a barber in Ridgefield since 1889, moves his shop from the Martin Block to his home, but says he has no plans to retire.

## **1947**

January 1947 — State Rep. Harold Finch is sponsoring a bill in the legislature to allow pari-mutuel horse-race betting in Connecticut, aimed at helping the state eliminate an estimated \$30-million budget deficit.

Jan. 2 1947 — Donald W. Cumming begins his seventh term as fire chief.

Jan. 4, 1947 — 13-year-old Peter Kramer is killed instantly when his sled shoots out from a driveway on Ivy Hill Road and into the path of a moving truck.

Jan. 23, 1947 — Peter A. McManus, Ridgefield's other state representative, announces he is opposed to Harold Finch's horse-race bill. "If we were to legalize horse-racing betting, we would be paving the way for many other forms of gambling," he argues. "We would be welcoming with open arms all the cheap gangsters, tin-horn sportsmen, racketeers, and trash that are present in many of the areas surrounding race tracks now."

February 1947 — Artist Robert Fawcett of Nod Hill Road is exhibiting some of his Saturday Evening Post illustrations in the lobby of the Ridgefield Playhouse on Prospect Street.

Feb. 1, 1947 — Daniel Merritt, 56, caretaker on the state of columnist Westbrook Pegler on Old Stagecoach Road, dies after his mattress catches fire and he is overcome by smoke trying to extinguish the blaze. He had apparently been drinking with friends before the accident occurs.

Feb. 10, 1947 — Today is the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Ridgefield Fire Department. However, as The Press notes on Feb. 27, the anniversary was "practically unnoticed."

Feb. 18, 1947 — Diane Detzer is named president of the Teen-Age Canteen. Frank Serfilippi is vice-president.

Feb. 20, 1947 — The Casa-More store on West Lane adds a meat department, which is under the supervision of Paul F. Venus, “well-known Ridgefield butcher.”

March 2, 1947 — The school board approves a “large increase” in teacher salaries. The maximum salary will rise from \$2,900 to \$4,300. The new starting salary will be \$2,400 (\$24,300 in 2017 dollars).

March 17, 1947 — The Zoning Board of Appeals rejects a New York man’s proposal for a hotel and riding academy on the Stonecrest estate on North Street.

March 27, 1947 — Brothers Henry and Max Seemann reopen the Titicus Store on North Salem and Mapleshade Roads.

April 1947 – Ridgefield’s Sally Ann Reid, 12, using her stage name Sally Swan, appears in her second movie, “Unfinished Dance,” starring Margaret O’Brien. Her first picture was “Holiday in Mexico,” which was shown at the Ridgefield Playhouse in March. She is a dancer.

April 4, 1947 – La Bretagne, a French-style inn at the corner of West and Olmstead Lanes, is destroyed in a blaze that the Press calls the worst in 10 years. This and several major fires, including Perry’s Market in the village, prompt The Press to carry a front-page, clip-off coupon to sign and mail to the selectmen, saying, “As a citizen of Ridgefield I respectfully but urgently request that your honorable board immediately employ an additional fireman so the firehouse on Catoonah Street will be staffed on a 24-hour basis.” A Town Meeting soon votes to staff the firehouse around the clock.

April 15, 1947 — A town meeting approves creating a Park Commission.

April 29 — Four kids die when a fire destroys a goat barn belonging to Mrs. Nazzareno Giambartolomei on Prospect Street.

Spring 1947 – The selectmen appoint a committee of 25 to study the need for a Planning Commission that could help control development of the town.

May 1947 – The selectmen appoint the town’s first Park Commission: Michael Bruno, Mrs. T.C. Jessup, John P. Duncan, Anne S. Richardson, Francis J. Bassett, and Ernest O. Wilson.

May 1, 1947 — Charlie Chaplin agrees to pay \$95,000 to Konrad Bercovici, a Ridgefield author, to settle a law suit out of court. Bercovici had sought \$6.4 million, claiming Chaplin had based his film, “The Great Dictator,” on a script he had written in 1938.

May 27, 1947 — George L. Rockwell, author of History of Ridgefield and a former postmaster and diplomat, dies at the age of 78.

June 1947 – More than 200 Ridgefield veterans apply for a bonus offered by the state. To pay for it, and other post-war expenses, the new 3% state sales tax goes into effect July 1.

June 12, 1947 — 38 seniors graduate from Ridgefield High School. They are: Robert “Bob” Carboni, class president; William “Junior” Lee, vice president; Anne “Prince” Principe, secretary; Aldo “The Brain” Biagiotti, treasurer; Edwin “Red Fox” Allan, Edward “Banksy” Banks, Jane “Janie” Bloomer, Walter Boyce, Edward Burr, Catherine Carroll, Dorothy “Dot” Cassavechia, Thomas Christopher, Arthur Dingee, Harry Dodson, Sandro “Spruce” Feduzi, Norma “Kooball” Fossi, Alexander “Ally” Frulla, Jacquelyn “Jackie” Holden, Helen Keeler, Nancy “Boxcar” Keeler, James Keenan, Robert “Loverboy” Keenan, Joseph “Rabbit” Kennedy, Frank “Lanky” Lancaster, Margaret “Magie” Lavatori, Silvio “Zombie” Lavatori, William Le Clair, George “Doc” Miller, Ralph “Ralphy” Moser, James O’Keeffe, Sonja “Sunny” Olsen, Leslie “Squeaky” Peatt, John Reed, June “Little Lulu” Reidy, Charlotte “Rumba” Rumbaugh, Beatrice “Beady” Scott, William Sjovall, Dorothy “Dot” Stolle, Nancy “Ditto” Tower, Howard Waite, and Helen Weitzel.

Summer 1947 — Tuppence, a small house and former trading post dating from the early 1700s, is moved from the center of town to southern Main Street, where it is now a home. Tuppence is considered the oldest surviving commercial building in Ridgefield. It’s original site now houses the Ridgefield Conservatory of Dance building.

July 1, 1947 — Ridgefield’s population is 4,132, says the State Department of Health.

September 1947 — Michael Skandera of Danbury begins teaching fourth grade. He retires 45 years later.

September 1947 — William W. Allen joined the Ridgefield High School physical education department, but also teaches science. He later becomes the school’s popular athletic director.

September 1947 – Maestro Arturo Toscanini leads members of the NBC Symphony Orchestra in a concert at the East Ridge School to benefit the library and Boys Club. The only other small town in which he had ever conducted was Giuseppe Verdi’s birthplace in Italy.

October 1947 – Harry E. Hull is elected first selectman, the first Democrat to hold the office since 1910. He replaces the ailing Winthrop E. Rockwell, a Republican who'd held the office since 1926. Seven weeks later, Rockwell is dead.

October 1947 – Ridgefield's tax base would be increasing: Townspeople learn that Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation of Houston, Texas, subsidiary of a French company, will move its research department here.

November 1947 – Plans are announced for a First National Supermarket to be located in the Heyman Block on Main Street.

## **1948**

1948 – The Branchville Civic Association raises the money to buy five acres for a playground and immediately begins fund raising to do the work to create the field.

1948 – The A&P opens a store on Main Street next to Bissell's. It later becomes Brunetti's Market, and then Gail's Station House restaurant. [The building burned down in 2005.]

1948 – The installation of high-candlepower streetlights begins in the village.

1948 – The selectmen name a committee of 10 to consider a town building code.

January 1948 – Joseph A. Roach, 50, dies as the result of wounds incurred during the First World War; he had been a patient at the Veterans Hospital.

Jan. 17, 1948 – Under the weight of recent snows, huge old Sperry's Garage on Catoonah Street – a landmark since its livery stable era – collapses in a roar of breaking timbers 12 hours after a family living in the attic moves out.

Feb. 11, 1948 – The Children of Mary sodality is formed at St. Mary's Church, serving women from 16 to 25.

April 1948 – Pietro Giannotti, 72, sells his shoe store and shoe repair business to retire to his home in Pesaro, Italy. There, awaiting him, are his wife and family, whom he hasn't seen in 36 years. He left Italy in 1912, when his daughter was three months old, and has never been back, in part because of the upheavals of two World Wars. A shoemaker since he was seven, he was first an employee of Willis S. Gilbert and then bought Gilbert's business.

May 14, 1948 – Ridgefield Hardware moves into its new building on the west side of Main Street.

Summer 1948 – Eastern Military Academy of Stamford looks at the F.E. Lewis estate on West Lane as a possible new home, but facing public opposition, opts to move to Long Island.

Summer 1948 – Seventy-five petitioners ask the selectmen to install traffic lights on Main Street at Governor Street and Gilbert Street.

August 1948 – The town learns that the late Mrs. Mary Frazier of North Street has bequeathed a fortune to the small coal-mining town of Perryopolis, Pa., where she spent her early years, but had left 60 years before. Her last two years were in Ridgefield, living alone with her servants. The early estimate of a \$10-million bequest eventually shrinks to \$1.5 million by October. [\$1.5 million then would be about \$13 million in 2008.]

October 1948 – A caucus, the largest in local Republican history, selects Ralph Cramp for judge of probate, ousting eight-year incumbent Joseph H. Donnelly.

Fall 1948 – The PTA announces plans to investigate the prevalence of “low grade” comic books in the hands of the town’s students.

Fall 1948 – A joint meeting of the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign War posts results in the proposal that a new war memorial be established facing the front entrance to the Lounsbury House, newly acquired by the town.

December 1948 – The Parks Commission votes to clear brush to create a sledding area in Veterans Memorial Park (east of the present school).

December 1948 – A snow storm allows plumber Charlie Weitzel to demonstrate his heated driveway installation; the pipes under the pavement are hooked into his heating system and make a foot of snow disappear with nary a shovel needed.

## **1949**

1949 – Gristede Brothers buys Perry’s Market on Main Street.

1949 – The Town Farm on North Salem Road, a home for indigents since 1882, is closed down.

1949 – Schlumberger opens its new lab on Old Quarry Road.

February 1949 – Outpost Nurseries asks the Zoning Commission to create a light industry zone on Danbury Road for 1,800 feet north of Farmingville Road. It’s rejected.

March 1949 – 58 people submit a petition to repeal zoning; a huge town meeting rejects it, 633 to 359.

March 1949 – The Jewish People's Fraternity, the new owner of the former Lewis Estate on West Lane, is listed as an affiliate of a "subversive" organization by the U.S. attorney general. The fraternity says it is harmless. Some years later, a boy from the neighborhood finds a giant poster of Lenin in a barn on the property.

March 1949 – A fire heavily damages the Stonecrest mansion on North Street.

May 1949 – Prominent contractor Achille Bacchiochi dies.

May 30, 1949 – Post-parade Memorial Day services are held at the Community Center for the first time. They had been at the War Memorial at the head of Branchville Road.

June 1949 – Msgr. Fulton J. Sheen, Catholic author and lecturer, speaks at St. Mary's. In the 1950s, he becomes the most-watched religious personality on television and in 1999, he is nominated to sainthood.

September 1949 – 686 pupils show up on the first day of school, up 33 from 1948.

September 1949 – By a vote of 544 to 334, a Town Meeting rejects moving town offices to the Lounsbury mansion, later the Community Center, to handle overcrowding. Instead, existing town hall will be remodeled.

October 1949 – Arturo Toscanini gives his second Ridgefield concert, raising \$11,000 [\$95,000 in 2008 dollars] for the library and Boys Club.

October 1949 – For the first time in 37 years, Democrats control the Board of Selectmen as Harry E. Hull is re-elected first selectman and Patrick O'Keeffe, a member. Julius Tulipani is the sole Republican.

## **1950**

1950 – Ridgefield's population totals 4,201.

January 1950 – Town Meeting votes \$80,000 to renovate the town hall, adding a second interior floor.

March 1950 – Westbrook Pegler writes in his widely syndicated column that "Ridgefield ... an old aristocratic town of moldering white mansions on a wide street, has quietly become infested with wealthy Sixth Columnists." The Press pooh-poohs Pegler, quoting a critic who says he is "too riddled with phobias."



Spring 1950 – The Zandri brothers – Primo, Harry, and Louis – buy the Italian grocery store founded by Benvenuto Carboni at the corner of Prospect Street and Bailey Avenue.

June 1950 – The League of Women Voters publishes “Where is Ridgefield Heading?” a slick, 26-page booklet that predicts Ridgefield’s population might be 8,200 by 1985 and that traffic would be a problem. It was off by 12,000 on the population but right on with traffic. The league suggests a bypass for the village, a civic center, and new shopping areas for the center.

June 1950 – One hundred children from New York City arrive to open the season at Hidden Valley Camp in Branchville. It is one of six camps sponsored by the New York Herald Tribune Fresh Air Fund.

Summer 1950 – Girl Scout Camp Catoonah opens on West Mountain. [It is now Sturges Park.]

July 13, 1950 – A “twister” wrenches part of the roof off Ridgefield High School, and cuts a path of felled trees down Governor Street, through Veterans Park and across Main Street.

August 1950 – The war in Korea is getting hotter and nine Ridgefield men are called to duty from the National Guard or reserves. Two others enlist.

Fall 1950 – The Zoning Board of Appeals rejects August Zinnser’s plan to turn Dunbankin, a 23-room South Salem Road mansion, into a hotel.

Fall 1950 – The Port of Missing Men property, some 1,700 acres in Ridgefield and North Salem, goes on the market for \$195,000. [That’s \$115 an acre, and includes all of today’s Eight Lakes development.]

Fall 1950 – The Ridgefield Library begins selling a new invention as a fund-raiser. Silly Putty, discovered seven years earlier by a GE scientist working in New Haven on war materials, had gone commercial that summer. The library sells it at a dollar a hunk.

October 1950 – The Town Planning Committee, 27 people from 22 organizations, meets to mull over traffic, parking and other growth problems.

October 1950 – The president of Columbia University is an overnight guest of Howard Young on Branchville Road and the next day the two go hunting. Two years later, Dwight D. Eisenhower becomes a president of a different sort.

Oct. 1, 1950 – The Rev. William B. Lusk retires as rector of St. Stephen's Church after 35 years of service – the longest term of service of any Episcopal rector in Ridgefield.

Dec. 15, 1950 – The Rev. Aaron Manderbach becomes rector of St. Stephen's Church, serving until 1980.

## **1951**

1951 – The school census finds 1,168 children in town. That's a quarter of the population.

1951 – The Ridgefield Branch of the NAACP, 50 members strong, is established. W.O. Scott is elected the first president.

January 1951 – Capt. and Mrs. Jeo Casagrande win a hefty \$3,100 on Break the Bank, the popular radio show.

February 1951 – Gaines, the dog food company, moves its research kennel from the Route 7 and 35 circle to Illinois.

February 1951 – International Business Machines – now IBM – wants to turn the former Cutten estate on West Mountain into a company country club. The Zoning Commission votes 2-1 in favor, but because two members abstain, they are not a majority of the commission, and the plan fails.

March 1951 – Chef John Scala buys The Elms Inn. A few weeks later, his young son Robert unearths a Revolutionary cannonball in a rotted tree trunk in front of the inn. A month later, another cannonball is found under floorboards in a rear room of the inn.

Spring 1951 – The Port of Missing Men Inc. is created by Solomon Gilbert and Ira Kavanau of New York City to develop the historic "Port" tract of 1,750 acres west of Mamasco into house lots.

May 14, 1951 – The Clarence Korkers buy the Ridgefield Photo Shop from the Frank Gordons.

May 23, 1951 – Ridgefield gets dial telephone service.

December 1951 – Daniel Milford, an oil company executive from Ridgefield, disappears while on a project in Louisiana. Police say the last person known to see him alive is a waitress who gave him a ride. His body is found in February.

## 1952

1952 – Ridgefielders vote down planning, which would give greater control over subdivisions.

January 1952 – A zoning appeal to establish an “old people’s home” at the Ridgefield Country Lodge on Tackora Trail is vetoed.

January 1952 – Reed F. Shields becomes town attorney.

February 1952 – A proposal to turn the Lounsbury House – now the Community Center – into an elementary school is rejected by the state.

March 1952 – Robert R. Keeler starts an “I like Ike” Club.

April 1952 – The PTA learns that the Garden School on Bailey Avenue is a “fire trap.”

April 1, 1952 – The W. Knox Denham home, a Colonial-era saltbox, burns to the ground. The family escapes through a second floor window.

Spring 1952 – Harry S Truman tells real estate agent James Belote, who had heard a rumor the president might retire to Connecticut and had written him about the Cutten estate, that he plans to return to Missouri upon retirement.

June 1952 – The selectmen, who’d already banned the sale of fireworks, tighten the regulations further.

July 1952 – Several residents reported seeing flying saucers.

Summer 1952 – A plan for a new elementary school is vetoed at a town meeting, 360 to 216. Voters feel it is too expensive. The building committee vows to get the cost down to \$661,000.

September 1952 – William Keeler, three years old, falls down an abandoned well, but clings to a pipe for 20 minutes until he is rescued. Seventeen years later, he is killed in Vietnam.

October 1952 – Democrats sponsor a “Gladly for Adlai” Party to support presidential candidate Stevenson.

October 1952 – Prescott Bush, father of President George H.W. Bush and grandfather of President George W. Bush, campaigns for senator along Main Street. Frank Warner sells him a Lions Club broom.

## **1953**

1953 – Voters approve \$691,000 to build Veterans Park School.

January 8-10, 1953 – An ice storm leaves some parts of town without power for five days.

February 1953 – The League of Women Voters is resurrected.

February 1953 – The Ramapoo Rifle and Revolver Club is established with William Allen as its first president.

February 1953 – Boy Scout Troop 49 is chartered.

April 9, 1953 – The Marianite Sisters of The Holy Cross begin serving in St. Mary's Parish.

July 1953 – Work begins to create Great Pond beach, now Martin Park, and by August as many as 700 people are using the beach on weekends.

July 1953 – The Morelli family buys Bedient's Hardware and Aldo "Squash" Travaglini buys United Cigar Store.

October 1953 – Democrat Harry E. Hull beats Republican Harvey Tanton for first selectman by only 182 votes. Hull, elected in 1947 and 1949, had lost in 1951 to Tanton.

October 1953 – Governor John Lodge names John C. Kelly as head of the state police while Kelly's next door neighbor on Wilton Road West, Leo F. Carroll, is named head of the Liquor Control Commission.

October 1953 – The village stinks after the dump catches fire, particularly wastes tossed by the Oriented Plastics plant on Grove Street.

Fall 1953 – The police and fire departments get two-way radios.

## **1954**

1954 – Three fire departments – engine, hook and ladder, and hose – vote to consolidate into Ridgefield Volunteer Fire Department.

January 1954 – Voters approve paying taxes four times a year instead of two, as most towns do.

March 1954 – Atilio Cassavechia is spading near the front wall of his son's home on Danbury Road when his fork strikes a cannonball, fired during the battle of Ridgefield in 1777.

March 1954 – St. Mary's buys land on High Ridge for a school, and first through third grade classes open in temporary quarters in September. The new school building, completed in June 1956, is designed for 400 pupils. With an addition, it holds 600 students by the late 1960s.

May 1954 – Four boys are caught vandalizing Great Pond beach. In Town Justice Court, beach founder Francis D. Martin declares that the four "ought to get the worst tanning a boy ever got."

June 1954 – Great Pond beach formally opens. More than 1,200 people are counted on the beach one hot Sunday.

July 1954 – Officials decide to call the new school under construction "Veterans Park School."

August 1954 – The school board says it can't legally provide busing for St. Mary's School pupils.

September 1954 – The town-owned Lounsbury house on Main Street gets an official name: The Ridgefield Community Center.

October 1954 – The entire five-member Zoning Commission resigns, saying that town fathers won't support its efforts to crack down on zoning violators.

October 1954 – In a closely watched election in which two native sons, both attorneys, battle for probate judge, incumbent Democrat John E. Dowling, who'd been elected to fill a vacancy, loses to Republican Reed F. Shields, 1,295 to 1,168.

Fall 1954 – Edwin and Donald Allan buy Patterson's Men's Store on Main Street and open Allan's Men's Store.

## **1955**

1955 – The Vincentian fathers buy the Cutten estate on West Mountain to use as a novitiate.

February 1955 – Veterans Park School, the town's first modern elementary school, opens, six months late. East Ridge School students move out of classes in cloakrooms and have some breathing space.

February 1955 – George Smith, 45, dies of suffocation in a mattress fire at his Silver Spring Road home.

March 7, 1955 – Construction begins on St. Mary's School.

March 1955 – The New England Institute for Medical Research opens on Grove Street.

July 1955 – Dr. James E. Sheehan opens the town's first practice of pediatrics and Dr. Peter Yanity opens an office of dentistry.

August 1955 – During one of the worst heat waves of the century, The Press reports that a temperature of 117 degrees was recorded on the 10<sup>th</sup> green of the Silver Spring Country Club.

August 1955 – Leo Pambianchi gets a contract to demolish the Garden School, once Hamilton High School, on Bailey Avenue, soon to be the "municipal parking lot."

September 1955 – St. Mary's School opens with 87 students in temporary quarters. By 1963, enrollment grows to 456.

September 1955 – 78 Ridgefield babies are born in Norwalk Hospital during the past 12 months.

October 1955 – The Ridgefield Police Commission is created, meaning that the town moves from a constabulary/state police combination, to having its own, fully empowered police department. The first selectman is no longer the police chief. James Brady, a longtime constable, is named the first chief. As officials learn a year later, the Police Commission is also the town's traffic authority.

October 1955 – 13.8 inches of rain in three days cause the worst flood of the century. In one 24-hour period, 7.82 inches fall. Many bridges, roads, and railbeds in the Norwalk and Titicus River valleys are washed out, and some buildings are destroyed. State and Army Corps of Engineers soon undertake the still-incomplete Norwalk River Flood Control Project.

October 1955 – During the height of the flood, a 50-year-old unused gas tank in the basement of the Meisner home on Peaceable Street explodes, injuring three firemen.

Nov. 13, 1955 – Wayne Arnold, chairman of the Zoning Commission, is killed in a crash at the south end of Main Street where it becomes Wilton Road West. Several others have died here over the years, prompting a state investigation of the curve.

December 1955 – The Lions Club strings Christmas lights across Main Street.

Dec. 27, 1955 – Ely Culbertson, an international bridge expert who once owned the former Upagenstitt mansion off West Lane [now the Ridgefield Manor neighborhood], dies at 64. He leaves portions of his sizable estate to each of his two ex-wives. A few weeks after the will is announced, the second Mrs. Culbertson, Josephine, dies of a stroke at 57.

## **1956**

1956 – Pilgrim Lodge of Odd Fellows buys the former Freund estate on Main Street and establishes its meeting place in the carriage house. Three years later, the lodge sells the main house to the Methodist Church—it's now Wesley Hall.

Jan. 4, 1956 – Fire Marshal Horace A. Walker is investigating the cause of a suspicious fire that destroys one of Perry Scott's nearly completed houses on St. John's Road.

Jan. 10, 1956 – The school board votes to provide psychological services in the schools for the first time.

Jan. 24, 1956 – Five members of the Julian Junsch family, formerly of Ridgefield, die in a fire in Milford. Only an 11-year-old boy survives.

Feb. 23, 1956 – Sculptor Frederick Shrady of Route 7, who is creating 53 sculptures for the new St. Mary's School building, describes his plans to St. Mary's Mothers Club. [Today, Mr. Shrady's work is in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Vatican, and museums around the world.]

Feb. 24, 1956 – Behind the 27 points of Fred Mazzi, Ridgefield High beats Bethel and wins the Southern Housatonic Valley League basketball championship with an 11-1 record.

March 9, 1956 – The League of Women Voters begins petitioning for the establishment of planning, to help control residential development.

March 12, 1956 – President William W. Allen is worried that lack of parental support will mean there will be no third season of Little League.

March 19, 1956 – A weekend blizzard drops 22 inches of snow on the eve of spring.

March 31, 1956 – Seth Low Pierrepont, for more than 40 years a prominent Ridgefield citizen and town official, dies at 71. His huge estate is now Pierrepont State Park and the Twixt Hills subdivision.

April 1956 – Efforts to get the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad to change “Branchville Station” to “Ridgefield Station” fail because the railroad feels there would be confusion with the Ridgefield freight station in the center of town.

April 1956 – The school board increases teacher salaries so that a beginner makes \$3,500 a year and top veterans, \$7,200.

April 7, 1956 – Fire heavily damages the Main Street home of Dr. Edward T. Wagner.

April 12, 1956 – A geologist says he has found uranium in the Branchville mica mine.

April 20, 1956 – Mrs. Edwin Reich of South Salem opens “Ellen Roberts,” a women’s clothing store on Bailey Avenue. Ellen and Robert are her children, and Robert later becomes U.S. secretary of labor in the Clinton Administration and, in 2008, is a professor in California.

May 15, 1956 – More than 1,000 people have their chests x-rayed for tuberculosis and other diseases at a mobile clinic sponsored by the District Nursing Association.

May 26, 1956 – Capt. C.N. Warren of Ridgefield pilots a new DC-7C airliner from Miami to Paris in what is then the longest commercial airline flight on record –14 hours. The plane travels between 350 and 450 mph, depending on tailwind.

May 31, 1956 – A group of merchants meets about reviving a Ridgefield Chamber of Commerce.

June 1956 – The Connecticut Supreme Court of Errors rules the Zoning Board of Appeals had no right to grant permission for Dr. Jordan Dann to build a veterinary hospital in a business zone on Route 7 north of the Circle. Veterinary hospitals are allowed only in industry zones.

June 2, 1956 – Bishop Lawrence J. Shehan, later a cardinal, dedicates the new St. Mary’s School building. At the same time he officiates at the ordination of the Rev. Pierre Botton, the first ordination at St. Mary’s.

June 7, 1956 – 24 girls and 12 boys graduate from Ridgefield High School.

June 18, 1956 – A Zoning Commission proposal to zone for industry almost the entire length of Route 7 in Ridgefield – some 850 acres – is vehemently opposed. Only one of 28 speakers favors it, and the commission abandons the plan.

June 23, 1956 – Heavy vandalism is reported at Great Pond beach.



June 28, 1956 – Margaret McGlynn, a member of the Board of Assessors, sues chief assessor B.B. Morgan, charging he grabbed and pushed her during an argument a few months earlier, causing her to fall. She seeks \$10,000 damages.

July 12, 1956 – 36 New York City children arrive for two weeks in the country, sponsored through the Lions Club's Friendly Town Program.

July 30, 1956 – Enrollments are growing fast, and the school board learns that remodeling the East Ridge School and an addition to Veterans Park will cost the town \$1.2 million.

August 1956 – The Public Utilities Commission approves the sale of the Ridgefield Water Supply Company to the New Canaan Water Supply Company.

August 1956 – At an auction on the steps of the town hall, real estate agent Edward Gradess pays \$600 for the old Bennett's Farm Schoolhouse, and the sixth of an acre it's on.

August 1956 – Norman Craig buys Craig's Jewelry Store from his mother, Mrs. Ross Craig. She had bought it from Francis D. Martin in 1950 from Francis D. Martin, who established it in 1911.

Aug. 1, 1956 – Dr. Joseph Grimes becomes superintendent, replacing retiring Dr. Edward H. Fuller.

Sept. 5, 1956 – 1,081 children show up for school, an increase of 75 over the previous year. Another 206 are in the new St. Mary School's first through fifth grades.

Sept. 6, 1956 – Wilton First Selectman Harry Marhoffer crashes his town-owned pickup truck into the side of a car driven by Ridgefield Selectman Harvey D. Tanton, demolishing Tanton's car. The crash occurs in Wilton, patrolled by state police, who issue a warning to the Wilton selectman – also town's chief of police – for driving too fast for conditions.

Sept. 14, 1956 – A two-headed, three-eyed cat is born on the Harold Jones farm in Farmingville, and dies three days later.

Sept. 15, 1956 – A Long Island man is killed when his small plane runs out of gas and crashes in woods off Silver Spring Road.

Sept. 24, 1956 – Theodore Case of Peaceable Street finds a three- or four-day-old baby in his car, parked at Branchville Station. It may have been there up to 24 hours. State welfare officials take the child.

October 1956 – Msgr. James J. McLaughlin becomes pastor of St. Mary's Parish, replacing the Rev. Edward J. Duffy, who moves to Danbury.

Oct. 5, 1956 – After many years as a six-man team, Ridgefield High School plays its first 11-man football game. It loses to Brewster, 39-19.

Oct. 15, 1956 – A 16-year-old Ridgefield youth leads police on a six-mile chase at speeds of up to 90 mph, ending in a five-car crash at the Twin Lake Inn on Route 7.

Oct. 8, 1956 – Dr. Jordan Dann and others propose a light industry zone along Route 7 from the Danbury line south to Haviland and Picketts Ridge Roads. Zoners later adopt the idea.

Oct. 8, 1956 – The school board votes 6-3 not to provide free bus transportation for St. Mary's School students.

Oct. 21, 1956 – W. Knox Denham, 68, shoots and kills himself on the lawn of the state police barracks on East Ridge A South Africa native who was pilot in France in World War I, he had lived in this country 35 years. His antique Ridgefield home had burned down April 1, 1952 [*q.v.*]

Oct. 25, 1956 – A Town Meeting votes to begin planning school additions, and names 23 people to a school building committee.

Oct. 27, 1956 – Jesse L. Benedict, the town treasurer since 1917, dies at 78.

November 1956 – It is the last year the District Nursing Association sells Christmas Seals. The sale brings in \$3,000.

November 1956 – St. Mary's Parish holds its first "minstrel show."

Nov. 6, 1956 – Dwight D. Eisenhower carries Ridgefield by a 3.8-to-one margin.

Nov. 23, 1956 – Petitioners force an all-day referendum on the adoption of planning, but the proposal goes down, 1,011 to 744.

Dec. 1, 1956 – Octavius "Tabby" Carboni is named town treasurer.

Dec. 13, 1956 – Julius Tulipani retires after 25 years as president of the Italian American Mutual Aid Society.

## 1957

January 1957 – The Zoning Commission rejects a rule to allow three-family houses.

February 1957 – Voters approve an addition for Veterans Park School but reject buying Barlow Mountain Road land for a new school site.

February 1957 – The Ridgefield Home Owners Association incorporates, with E. Donald Goldsmith as president. In September it elects Bill Shipley, a well-known TV announcer, as president.

Feb. 11, 1957 – An explosion of gas and oil leaves the Sipes family homeless on Bailey Avenue.

March 1957 – Dr. Jordan R. Dann submits petitions with 600 signatures, asking zoners to allow veterinary hospitals in business zones. They soon do.

March 1957 – A League of Women Voters survey finds the most common reason for not shopping in Ridgefield is “not enough choice,” followed by “prices” and “parking.” Danbury is the most popular shopping destination.

March 14, 1957 – A steam engine chugging down the Danbury-Norwalk rail line sets off a rash of grass fires.

March 31, 1957 – A fire destroys the Charles Weedon home in Ridgebury.

April 1957 – Romeo Petroni joins Judge John E. Dowling’s law practice.

April 14, 1957 — The Community Center, under director George Fasolo, has its annual Easter Egg hunt and roll. Gay Montanari finds a golden egg.

Spring 1957 – Principal Isabel O’Shea bans water pistols at Veterans Park School.

Spring 1957 – Dominic Gaeta buys Pilgrim Lodge, the Odd Fellows hall on Main Street, to become part of his shopping center – and maybe a post office location. The lodge moves to a carriage house on King Lane. The post office goes elsewhere.

Spring 1957 – Clifford Holleran retires that as high school principal. Philip Pitruzzello of Roger Ludlowe in Fairfield is picked as his replacement.

June 1957 – A Town Meeting votes to lease Governor Lounsbury’s fishpond property on Governor Street to the Boys Club so it can build a new clubhouse.

June 1957 – CBS newsman Richard C. Hottelet of Wilton addresses the 31 Ridgefield High School graduates.

July 1957 – Edward Benenson of Stamford announces he wants to build a shopping center on Main Street, opposite Prospect, that will include a new post office and the town's first supermarket. Zoners okay the plan in the fall.

August 1957 – Voters turn down a \$1.2-million expansion and renovation of the East Ridge School, 834 to 571.

August 1957 – At a Republican primary, Ridgefield newcomer John B. Jessup challenges Paul Morganti's nomination for selectman and loses.

September 1957 – 1,300 children show up in school, 200 more than in 1956.

Fall 1957 – In the hope of building the tax base to pay for school projects, the Zoning Commission creates a business and industry zone both sides of Route 7 between Haviland Road and the Danbury line.

Fall 1957 – Voters defeat planning, 1,014 to 1,005, at an all-day referendum. But proponents do not give up.

October 1957 – In the town election, Republican Leo F. Carroll defeats Democrat Richard E. Venus by 203 votes to replace retiring Democrat Harry E. Hull as first selectman.

November 1957 – The Ridgefield Library creates a special "students library" for young people.

Nov. 21, 1957 – The watering trough that once stood in the middle of the Main and Catoonah Streets intersection, and was later placed at Titicus, will be moved to the triangle at West and Olmstead Lanes, Mrs. T.C. Jessup of the Park Commission reports.

December 1957 – The State Highway Department announces its intention to build a four-lane expressway between Norwalk and Danbury. A route is not yet established.

December 1957 – Ridgefield High School says it will offer algebra in the eighth grade and two foreign languages in the seventh in 1958-59.

## **1958**

1958 – Electro Mechanical Research moves its lab from Main Street to Sarasota, Fla.

January 1958 – Twenty-one townspeople meet to begin planning the town's semiquincentennial – 250th anniversary – celebration. Press editor and publisher Karl S. Nash is chairman. The committee organizes parades, concerts, exhibits, special events, and the publication of Silvio Bedini's history of the town, *Ridgefield in Review*, a 400-page book that starts out as a pamphlet.

Winter 1958 – The Zoning Board of Appeals rejects Ridgefield Water Supply Company's plans to put a 500,000-gallon water tower in the middle of a row of mansions on High Ridge. Neighbors are outraged by the plan. The 80-foot tank is later built on Peaceable Ridge.

February 1958 – Some 4,000 rats live at the town dump and he'll do something about it, newly elected First Selectman Leo F. Carroll tells the League of Women Voters.

March 1958 – The town votes to renovate the East Ridge School into a real high school and junior high, including a gym. Cost: \$1.1 million.

March 1958 – The Methodists decide to buy the Freund estate at Main Street and King Lane for a possible new church.

April 1958 – St. Mary's School basketball team wins the state championship.

Spring 1958 – The state straightens Route 102 in Branchville.

May 1958 – In honor of the town's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Larry Aldrich gives the town land in Farmingville. It becomes known as Aldrich Park.

June 1958 – After four earlier tries over the years, townspeople vote 1,125 to 1,054 to adopt planning, giving the town more control over subdivisions.

July 6, 1958 – More than 2,500 people attend a mass in a field at the McKeon farm in Ridgebury. The Bishop of Worcester delivers the sermon. In 1781, French troops encamped at this site are believed to have celebrated the first mass in Ridgefield.

July 1958 – Ground is broken for the new Boys Club building.

Summer 1958 – Judge Joseph Donnelly announces he'll build a shopping center off Governor Street [Balducci's et al. in 2008] in back of the old Boys Club building, which he tears down.

Summer 1958 – William Winthrop says his Ridgefield Taxpayers Association will join the Citizens Committee Against Town Planning in an effort to rescind the just-adopted planning ordinance. They don't succeed, but they force yet another vote.

August 1958 – Dr. Jordan Dann opens the town's first veterinary hospital.

September 1958 – The Red Raiders, the town's first midget football squad, organizes.

Nov. 4, 1958 – Abraham Ribicoff, winning re-election as governor, carries Ridgefield by 319 votes – the first time in 82 years that a Democratic candidate for a major state office takes the town.

December 1958 – Superintendent Grimes tells the school board that the town will need three more elementary schools in four years. Plans to put temporary classes in St. Stephen's South Hall fall through when the state fire marshal vetoes the idea.

Dec. 5, 1958 – The Zoning Commission adopts sign regulations, effective this day.

## **1959**

1959 – The new Ridgefield Boys Club opens.

1959 – Ullman Devices, a company begun in the 1930s, opens a plant on Route 7 producing specialty hand tools. Ullman receives many awards over the years for hiring handicapped workers.

January 1959 – The new post office opens at the north end of the Grand Union shopping center.

March 1959 – An 18-year-old cat tips over a can of turpentine, which drips through the floor of artist Richard Rainsford's remodeled barn on Florida Road, hits a furnace and starts a blaze that levels the building. A dog and five cats – including the culprit – are rescued but a 5,000-volume library with many rare books is lost.

March 20, 1959 – Arthur F. Eilenstein of West Lane, Ridgefield's last veteran of the Spanish-American War, dies at the age of 95. The bricklayer built countless chimneys and buildings in town.

May 1959 – Ridgefield Savings Bank announces it will build the town's first drive-in bank on Governor Street on the old Boys Club site.

May 25 1959 – Five huge arches of the new Ridgefield High School gymnasium on East Ridge collapse during construction, delaying the project for months. Contractors eat the \$30,000 loss, but sue arch supplier for \$100,000.

September 1959 – Overcrowded Ridgefield High School goes on double sessions for two years.

Fall 1959 – The Ridgefield Community Kindergarten opens.

December 1959 – The Community Center itself continues to have financial problems and, by year's end, is \$5,000 in the red.

## **1960**

1960 – Ridgefield's population is 8,165.

1960 – The Jesuits buy Manresa, once the home of a gangster, and plan to operate the 40-room mansion at Lake Mamanasco as a retreat house.

January 1960 – By this time, the new Ridgefield Cookbook has sold 900 of its 1,000 copies.

February 1960 – The Zoning Commission zones Ridgebury for two-acre lots.

Feb. 27, 1960 – Fire guts La Bretagne Inn on West Lane, the second time the inn burns in 13 years. The 1947 blaze helped spark the town to have 24-hour fire protection; this one fires a campaign to buy an aerial ladder truck.

March 1960 – Philip Pitruzzello resigns as high school principal to teach at the University of Chicago, but he soon returns to a new job [*see* February 1962].

Spring 1960 – Some residents of Standpipe Road feel their address lacks class and successfully pressure town officials to change it to Peaceable Ridge Road.

April 1960 – The local NAACP plans to picket Ridgefield chain stores with outlets in the South that practice segregation.

April 1960 – The town votes to build Ridgebury School at Todds Farm.

Spring 1960 – Stonehenge Inn owner Victor Gilbert runs for state representative, but eventually drops out.

May 1960 – Dr. Harold E. Healy of Portland, Conn., is named new principal of Ridgefield High School. He remains 28 years.

July 1960 – 10 boys who'd been "engaged in a gang fight at Lake Mamanasco" and two other boys caught stealing auto parts all get off in Town Court on legal technicalities, prompting Trial Justice Carleton A. Scofield to resign in a rage over "this circus-like treatment of justice." He later returns.

June 1960 – The Thrift Shop moves from the Masonic Hall building to its current quarters in the old Catholic church on Catoonah Street.

August 1960 – While the Republican Town Committee picks four-term incumbent Nancy-Carroll Draper to run for state representative with John Kelly, a caucus drops her in favor of native son Romeo Petroni. Democrats put up David Marlin and John Sjovall.

August 1960 – Morganti Inc. is low bidder to build Ridgebury School.

September 1960 – A drainage pipe project that has messed up Main Street's business district nearly a year is finally finished.

Sept. 27 — Romeo Petroni defeats incumbent Nancy-Carroll Draper in a GOP primary for state representative.

Nov. 8, 1960 – Petroni and Kelly are elected, two to one [see August 1960].

## **1961**

1961 – Ridgefield is ninth in the state in spending on schools – \$593 per pupil.

1961 – John Yervant takes over ownership of the Fox Hill Inn from Fred Barker, who founded it in 1946 in the mansion that had been the center of the Conley family's Outpost Farm and Nurseries. In 1971, Yervant sells the property to IBM. Today, it is Bennett's Pond State Park.

1961 – Journalist John Scott tells the Lions there is a 50-50 chance of war over the new Berlin Wall, and every Ridgefield home should have a fallout shelter with a two weeks' supply of food. Civil Defense Director Gus Tiburzi agrees, and tells how to build a shelter.

1961 – Because the town starts making annual contributions from its budget, the Ridgefield Library becomes a free public library instead of charging membership fees.

1961 – Jerry Tuccio begins developing the 93-lot Twixt Hills subdivision.

September 1961 – Because the new Ridgebury School isn't ready, Veterans Park School goes on double sessions for several months.

September 1961 – The Lions Club sponsors its first annual Antique Car Show at Veterans Park field. It lasts until the late 1980s when all vehicles are banned from the field and a move to the middle school parking lot proves unsuccessful.



December 1961 – The first service of the newly formed Ridgefield Baptist Church takes place in Masonic Hall.

## **1962**

1962 – The Conservation Commission is established.

1962 – Congregation of Notre Dame, based in Quebec, acquires the Lynch estate on West Mountain for an American novitiate, U.S provincial motherhouse and a retirement home. The operation lasts more than 40 years, but because of health and safety requirements, closes. On June 17, 2005, the congregation sells the last of its property to Ridgefield Academy for \$8 million.

Jan. 23, 1962 – The A&P supermarket and liquor store open on Danbury Road. The market closes in the 1970s but the liquor store lasts until 2008, when the building is razed to make way for a Walgreens. [The liquor store is due to return when the new building is completed.]

January 1962 – Voters approve money to start planning Farmingville School, but reject \$4,500 to include a fall-out shelter in the building.

Feb. 11, 1962 – Ridgebury School is dedicated. The school, which then held 600 pupils, cost \$977,000.

February 1962 – Philip Pitruzzello, former principal of Ridgefield High School, is picked to be the next school superintendent, replacing Dr. Joseph Grimes, who's leaving.

March 1962 – A defective space heater kills an 86-year-old woman and her 45-year-old daughter in their Bailey Avenue apartment.

March 1962 – Richard J. Bellagamba is appointed to the seven-man police force. He eventually rises to become second in command of the department.

March 1962 – Overcrowding at Ridgefield High School prompts the school board to consider asking the town for a junior high school.

March 1962 – Telephones go all numbers. No longer are we ID8-6544. ID stood for Idlewood.

March 18, 1962 – The Ridgefield Post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars is organizing, mostly thanks to Gene Casagrande of West Lane, the first commander.

July 1962 – A fire badly burns artist Bernard Perlin’s home on Shadow Lake Road, prompting the Ridgebury Community Association to petition the town to build a Ridgebury firehouse. Six years later, it opens.

September 1962 – Voters approve \$1.1 million to build Farmingville School.

Oct. 25, 1962 – “Ridgefield’s Civil Defense organization, meeting in emergency session yesterday noon, urged townspeople to be prepared but not panicky over the present crisis in Cuba,” says the lead story in The Press.

November 1962 – The Kiwanis Club organizes. Robert A. Kane, the funeral director, is elected first president.

November 1962 – The First Congregational Church celebrates its 250<sup>th</sup> birthday with special programs and a 56-page history written by Muriel Hanson.

Nov. 6, 1962 – John Kelly and Romeo Petroni are re-elected state representatives.

Dec. 8, 1962 – In what is probably the best-attended referendum of the century, 62% of the voters turn out to approve the town’s providing school bus transportation to St. Mary’s Catholic School children. The vote is 1,402 in favor, 1,190 against.

December 1962 – North American Phillips contracts to buy 67 acres on Farmingville Road to build a research center, but can never get the zoning approval and eventually gives up.

December 1962 – The school board approves a \$300 raise for teachers. The average hiring rises from \$5,500 to \$5,700.

## **1963**

March 1963 – Joseph Young donates 75 pullets to the 4-H Club.

March 1963 – The school board approves a \$1.8-million budget, up 21%. Meanwhile, faced with a deficit, the board threatens to cancel hot lunches for 900 elementary school pupils, prompting parent outrage. A reluctant Board of Finance appropriates \$11,000 so lunches continue.

April 1963 – Two hundred supporters of “New Route 7 Now” travel to Hartford to demand a new highway from Norwalk to North Canaan.

April 15, 1963 – William R. Coleman, a 42-year-old pilot, dies after a fire at his home on Peaceable Street. Ill with the flu, he had fallen asleep in a chair while smoking a cigarette. Smoke wakes him up, and rushes outside for a garden hose, then returns to the

house, goes upstairs, becomes trapped, and dies of a broken neck trying to leap from a balcony.

May 1963 – In the annual battle of the school budget, the Board of Finance cuts \$100,000 from the school budget, and voters back the cut three to one.

Spring 1963 – Jerry Tuccio, owner of the old Eleven Levels estate, wants the land rezoned from two- and three-acre lots to one acre for a subdivision he's planning. The Conservation Commission and others object. The disagreement spends years in court.

June 1963 – Richard E. Venus is officially appointed the town's postmaster by President John F. Kennedy; he'd been acting postmaster since 1961.

June 29, 1963 – St. Mary's Parish lays the cornerstone for a new convent and school addition.

July 1963 – Realtors Sal Monti and James Hackert propose a 367-acre light-industry zone in Ridgebury. The Ridgefield Community Association opposes it.

Summer 1963 – To meet its budget cut, the school board begins charging for community use of the schools and makes kids walk farther to bus stops.

Summer 1963 – The Ridgefield Fire Department asks the town to buy land at Danbury and Capps Hill Roads for a new firehouse.

August 1963 – The Good Government Party is formed, saying it is "dissatisfied with the leadership and control of the two existing parties," especially with respect to the schools. The GGP runs candidates in 1963 and 1965. None wins, but some come close.

August 1963 – Francis D. Martin urges the town to buy Camp Adventure, 100 acres on Route 7 with 700 feet of shoreline on Great Pond. The town ignores him. Years later, most of the tract is Laurelwood, but the town gets the shoreline land as part of the zoning approval.

September 1963 – The schools open with 2,660 children, 340 more than a year earlier. Parents don't like the new, longer walking distances to bus stops, but the school board says: Tell the budget-cutting Board of Finance.

Fall 1963 – Governor John Dempsey helps dedicate the library's \$120,000 addition.

Fall 1963 – Julia Woodford, chairman of the new Conservation Commission, says the agency's aim is "not to prevent development, but to determine at what point growth

would take away desirable natural assets and to suggest how they may be permanently preserved.”

Oct. 30, 1963 – One of the biggest barns in Ridgefield burns to the ground at the Jacob Baker place on Barlow Mountain Road.

November 1963 – The Board of Finance votes \$14,000 to buy the Bailey-Rockwell property at Branchville Road and East Ridge for a new junior high school. A December town meeting rejects the appropriation because the Rockwell family does not want to sell. Voters are unwilling to condemn the land.

November 1963 – Late that month, 500 people gather in front of town hall to hear First Selectman Leo F. Carroll read the selectmen’s letter to the family of John F. Kennedy. “We shudder at the deed which has violently deprived this nation of its constitutional head by the assassin’s bullet, an act of unparalleled atrocity – shocking to all mankind,” the letter says in part.

December 1963 – The Board of Education rejects a request to rename the Farmingville School, still under construction, the “John F. Kennedy School.” Schools here are named for parts of town, not individuals, the board says.

December 1963 – Author Cornelius Ryan asks that the new library addition be named after President Kennedy, offers \$5,000 if this is done, and says others will match his offer. Library directors decline, but set up a memorial collection of political science books in Mr. Kennedy’s name.

December 1963 – The Zoning Commission creates a 300-acre light industry zone in Ridgebury.

December 1963 – Benrus decides to buy the old “labor camp” on Route 7 for a watch-making plant and headquarters.

December 1963 – The Volunteers of America buy Camp Adventure at Great Pond to use as a summer camp for underprivileged city children.

Dec. 1, 1963 – The new St. Andrew’s Lutheran Church has its first service, with 125 people gathered in Cleves Auditorium, Veterans Park School.

Dec. 17, 1963 – Fire Warden Richard McGlynn is overcome by smoke while rescuing a German Shepherd from the burning home of Jerry McNally at Lookout Point. Both Mr. McGlynn and the dog recover quickly.

Dec. 28, 1963 – Fire heavily damages the Earl Harris home of Nod Road, killing six canaries and a puppy, and sending Firefighter Frank Santini to the hospital for two days with smoke inhalation.

## **1964**

Jan. 2, 1964 – Richard McGlynn becomes first paid fireman to be chief of the Ridgefield Volunteer Fire Department.

Jan. 6, 1964 —Neighbors sue Zoning Commission for creating an industrial park zone in Ridgebury.

Jan. 12, 1964 — Blizzard offers 50 mph winds, 5 degree temperatures, and a foot of snow.

Jan. 14, 1964 — Town OKs 80-lot development called Twin Ridge.

Jan. 16, 1964 – Massachusetts company plans 150 homes on the 230-acre estate known as Westmoreland.

Jan. 20, 1964 — Townspeople debate the pros and cons of fluoridating water.

Feb. 3, 1964 — Bissell's Drug Store closes its 68-year-old soda fountain with a day of free ice cream.

Feb. 6, 1964 — 285 new houses were built in the past year, the assessors report.

Feb. 8, 1964 – The last freight train comes up the branch line from Branchville. By year's end, rails are gone.

Feb. 13, 1964 — Dr. Theodore Safford and associates announce plans to create the "Rippowam Field Club" on 13 acres off West Lane.

Feb. 24, 1964 – The new Farmingville School opens, ending double sessions at Ridgebury School.

March 1, 1964 — Thomas Dyer joins the Ridgefield Police force.

March 5, 1964 — Otto Pambianchi marks 25 years of driving a school bus without a single accident.

March 10, 1964 — Eugene Lavatori opens Nina's Restaurant on northern Main Street, featuring Italian specials made by his mother, Nina.

March 20, 1964 — Ridgebury Congregational Church decides to buy back the 1844 parsonage it sold in 1958.

March 21, 1964 — James Leonard, Michael Skandera, and two other teachers dress up like the Beatles to perform at the Ridgebury PTA Fair.

April 2, 1964 — Dr. Philip Pitruzzello quits as school superintendent.

April 6, 1964 — Connecticut National Bank opens an office on Danbury Road.

April 9, 1964 — It's Bob Tulipani's first year of teaching here, a story reports.

April 16, 1964 — Ridgefielders were still puffing away, despite recent surgeon general's announcement that cigarettes cause cancer.

April 25, 1964 – Town votes to buy 14 acres on East Ridge for a new junior high school.

April 28 1964 — CTS Microelectronics will move into empty industrial building on Grove Street and Old Quarry Road.

April 30 1964 — Developer Jerry Tuccio says he's buying Casagmo, the Olcott estate on Main Street, and plans 300 apartment units.

May 13 1964 — Voters approve raising tax rate from 44 to 46 mills.

May 17 1964 — Father James J. McLaughlin, St. Mary's pastor, celebrates his 25th year in the priesthood.

May 20 1964 — Philanthropist Anne S. Richardson is feted as Rotary Citizen of the Year.

May 21 1964 — 75 people petition the town to rid the dump of its stench.

May 31 1964 — The last service in the historic Jesse Lee Memorial Church takes place after Methodists vote to sell the building at Main and Catoonah Streets to a group of investors. The old church is torn down.

May 26 1964 — Bishop Walter W. Curtis dedicates new novitiate for Sisters of Notre Dame on West Mountain (now Ridgefield Academy).

May 27 1964 – Ridgefield teachers apply to start an American Federation of Teachers AFL/CIO Chapter and 50 join.

May 30 1964 — At Memorial Day ceremonies, the town dedicates a new monument at Community Center to those who died in World War II and Korea.

June 2 1964 — George Leeman is named top student among seniors at RHS.

June 6 1964 — 150 dealers turn out for the Flea Market at Veterans Park field, sponsored by the Community Center.

June 14 1964 — Elizabeth Biglow Ballard dies at 88, and bequeaths her Main Street homestead to the town as a park.

June 16 1964 — Tom Belote is elected president of the RHS Student Council.

June 18 1964 — Ridgefield High School graduates 129 students.

June 24 — Five-year-old Jennie Dudics catches 121 fish at Lake Mamamansco, breaking a Kiwanis Fishing Derby record.

June 25 1964 — Benrus Watch Company buys 47 acres on Route 7 to build corporate offices and a plant.

June 26 1964 — The new Keating Shell gas station opens at Danbury and Farmingville Roads.

July 2 1964 — Because of drought conditions, the Ridgefield Water Supply Company bans lawn sprinkling.

July 4 1964 — A Navy band performs at the annual Kiwanis Club fireworks in Veterans Park.

July 7 1964 — Two teenagers are arrested for stealing hubcaps — off a police cruiser!

July 13 1964 — Mary Boland retires after 45 years of teaching, mostly RHS English.

July 14 1964 — Two Ridgefielders petition the Zoning Commission for a business zone on Route 7 from Haviland south to the Ridgefield Motor Inn (Day's Inn) in Redding.

July 18 1964 — 1,400 people attend the Firemen's Ball at the East Ridge field.

July 20 1964 — The Women's Republican Club unanimously backs Barry Goldwater for president.

July 23 1964 — Dr. Clark A. Heydon opens an orthodontics practice.

July 31 1964 — Dr. James Inkster moves his home and his practice to Newtown after 20 years here. Newtown had only two doctors.

July 31 1964 — Dr. Joseph Buchman opens a practice in internal medicine.

Aug. 1 1964 — The police force grows to 11 men with the hiring of Kenneth Shannon.

Aug. 4 1964 — Gov. John Dempsey breaks ground for the new Benrus Center.

Aug 10 1964 — Oexle Supply Company opens new headquarters on South Street.

Aug. 13 1964 — 700 people petition for a firehouse in Ridgebury.

Aug. 17 1964 — The school board approves plans for a \$2.5-million junior high school.

Aug. 30 1964 — 100 entrants take part in the annual Kiwanis Club Horse Show at the Anne Richardson estate.

Sept. 1 1964 — The historic Ballard house is torn down to make way for the new park.

Sept. 3 1964 — Ridgefielder Carol Corn Rosenberg dies in a mountain-climbing accident on Grand Teton in Wyoming.

Sept. 4 1964 — 44 new teachers attend orientation.

Sept. 8 1964 — Two gunmen rob Connecticut National Bank of \$64,000, but are caught within 24 hours.

Sept. 9 1964 — 3,021 children show up for school, 335 more than a year earlier. The high school begins double sessions.

Sept. 12 1964 — Nearly 200 cars are on exhibit at the Lions Club Antique Car Show at Veterans Park.

Sept 17 1964 — Consultants recommend the town replace the stinky dump with an incinerator.

Sept. 18 1964 — Dr. Jordan R. Dann is named head of Ridgefielders for the election of Johnson and Humphrey.

Sept. 22 1964 — Matthew Rich wants his land at the north corner of Danbury and Copps Hill Roads rezoned for business so he can open a Chrysler Plymouth dealership there.



Sept. 26 1964 — Mrs. Richard W. Osborn, Ridgefield's oldest resident, turns 100.

Sept. 30 1964 — The Shapley School buys the old Outpost Inn property it's been using for a year as a prep school. It's now Fox Hill condos.

Oct. 1 1964 — Ridgefield Police force climbs to 12 with addition of William Greene Jr.

Oct. 3 1964 – First Church of Christ, Scientist, opens its new church on Main Street.

Oct. 4 1964 — State says town's population is 11,900.

Oct. 5 1964 — Dr. Thayer D. Wade, head of North Salem's schools, is named Ridgefield superintendent.

Oct. 8 1964 — 96% of Ridgefield is residential, zoning officials learn.

Oct. 12 1964 – The Girolmetti family opens a 16-lane bowling alley, called Ridge Bowl, on Danbury Road.

Oct. 17 1964 – 400 attend art collector Larry Aldrich's black-tie gala marking the opening of his Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art.

Nov. 1 1964 – After much debate, Prince Chambliss, a black teenager from Alabama, is admitted to RHS, the first beneficiary of Carol Rosenberg Memorial Education Fund. He later becomes a prominent Memphis attorney.

Nov. 3 1964 – Lyndon B. Johnson outpolls Barry Goldwater by 740 votes, a very rare win in Ridgefield for a Democratic presidential candidate.

Nov. 4 1964 — Town officials approve installing walk lights on Main Street.

Nov. 14 1964 — The 45-unit Ridgefield Arms, the town's first apartment complex, opens on Prospect Street, offering free TV antenna, free parking and "dream kitchens." Rents range from \$125 for an efficiency to \$190 for two bedrooms.

Nov. 17 1964 — Jerry Tuccio buys the 33-acre Mimosa estate on North Street, and plans to build houses.

Nov. 18 1964 — Hardie Gramatky, author of Little Toot, visits Veterans Park School.

Nov. 20 1964 — Voters approve planning a Ridgebury firehouse.

Nov. 23 1964 — Constance Churchill, who was active in community work, dies when the TWA jetliner, on which her husband, John, is second officer, crashes on take-off in Rome. He survives.

Nov. 24 1964 — The town votes to buy 75 acres from Evelyn Luquer, land that now includes the Scotland and Barlow Mountain Schools, plus nature preserves.

Nov. 30 1964 — The school board recognizes the Ridgefield Teachers Association as a bargaining agent for the teachers.

Dec. 3 1964 — First Selectman Leo Carroll recommends turning the recently abandoned railroad bed into a walking path and bridle trail.

Dec. 5 1964 — Adolf and Lori Gaub's Ridgefield Diner on Route 7 at the Danbury line opens an addition, doubling its size and prompting a name change to Ridgefield Restaurant.

Dec. 7 1964 — As the town population continues to burgeon, the school board agrees to add 25 teachers, five counselors, and a principal to the staff next year.

Dec. 10 1964 — "Ridgefield has a good educational system — but not an excellent one," new Superintendent Thayer Wade tells the Jaycees.

Dec. 14 1964 — Teachers ask school board for a pay raise. A beginner, getting \$5,300 a year, would earn \$5,500, and annual increases would be 5%.

Dec. 21 1964 — The Lions Club skating rink at the East Ridge tennis courts opens.

Dec. 27 1964 — More than 700 people attend the sixth annual Rotary Jazz Festival in the high school gym.

Dec. 29 1964 — Voters accept 30 new roads as town roads. 1965

## **1965**

1965 — The year is the driest of the century, with only 26 inches of precipitation in the region.

1965 — The Ridgefield Symphonette, now the Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra, is founded. Its budget is \$3,000.

Jan. 4, 1965 — Robert A. Lee and Craig Warren see two flying squirrels in Farmingville, making front-page news.

Jan. 7, 1965 — James J. Brady announces his retirement as the town's first chief of police. John Haight is named acting chief.

Jan. 14, 1965 — Col. Jerry Skillen of Main Street says Benedict Arnold's horse is not buried in his back yard, as a group wanting to put his property in a historic district allege. Instead, Skillen says, the long-dead horse is on the property of his neighbor to the south, Mrs. John Jay Pierrepont.

Jan. 17, 1965 — Postmaster and Mrs. Richard E. Venus, in Washington to attend the inauguration of President Johnson, dine in a restaurant and are surprised to find Linda Bird Johnson, the president's daughter, eating at the next table with friends. She signs autographs for them.

Jan. 24, 1965 — The Rev. Harold Wheeler begins his pastorate at Ridgefield Baptist Church, which is meeting in Ridgebury School with about 50 people.

February 1965 — Drs. Armand and Christine Guigui begin practicing medicine with Dr. Frederick VanPoznak.

Feb. 3, 1965 — Judge Joseph H. Donnelly quits as the town attorney after the Zoning Commission ignores an opinion he rendered. Thomas VanLenten takes his place.

Feb. 4, 1965 — Of 115 teachers polled that week by the Ridgefield Federation of Teachers, 90 feel the school system "is in trouble."

Feb. 17, 1965 — Mathew Rich opens a new Chrysler-Plymouth-Valiant dealership in the "Morganti Building" on Danbury Road. The dealership is now Pamby Motors.

March 5, 1965 — Edward D. Hyde, owner of Hyde's Liquor Store on Main Street for 25 years, dies at the age of 56.

March 21, 1965 — The Zoning Board of Appeals approves Francis D. Martin's plan for a "village shopping center" on his land at the corner of Danbury and Copps Hill Roads, which is zoned partly residential and partly business. Seven years later Copps Hill Plaza opens.

March 22, 1965 — "The Cass Gilbert Fountain is going to stay where it is," declares First Selectman Leo F. Carroll amid media reports that the town is battling with the state, which wants the fountain moved from the busy intersection of Main Street and West Lane.

March 25, 1965 — The basements of the Ridgefield Travel Agency and the Ridgefield Hair Stylists in Gaeta Shopping Center fill up with suds after vandals pull out plugs in the washing machines of the nearby Ridgefield Launderette.

March 31, 1965 — Isabel M. O'Shea, the first principal of Veterans Park School, dies at 59.

April 1965 – Bongo's, a Western Auto outlet and one of the village's most charismatic stores, announces it's closing.

April 1965 – Morganti Inc. is low bidder at \$2,559,000 to build the East Ridge Junior High School.

May 1965 — A new granite monument, honoring Ridgefielders who died in World War II, is erected in front of the Community Center in Veterans Memorial Park.

June 1965 — Ruth E. Wills, Latin and French teacher at RHS, retires after 45 years with the Ridgefield schools.

June 1965 — The town is looking into buying the former Branchville Fresh Air Fund camp on Florida Road as a site for a new school.

June 10, 1965 — Ten policemen — Ridgefield, Danbury, and state — descend on the King Neptune Restaurant on Route 7 at 2 a.m. after a burglary and theft of \$150 is discovered and police spot two thieves running off into the woods. Four shots are fired at the fleeing crooks, who escape.

June 17, 1965 — 132 seniors graduate from Ridgefield High School; 77% will pursue further study.

July 1965 — Three new subdivisions with a total of 152 lots have been proposed: Meadow Woods on Lounsbury Road, Colonial Heights on Peaceable Hill Road, and Mimosa on North Street.

Aug. 9, 1965 — Acclaimed chef Albert Stocki takes over Stonehenge Inn. The former chef director of Restaurant Associates (The Four Seasons, The Mermaid Tavern, etc.) wants to get away from the hectic city life. Seven years later, he was dead at the age of 54.

Aug. 21, 1965 — Less than a fifth of the town's voters turn out to reject a proposed town charter to reorganize government. The vote is 918-72, perhaps the most decisive margin in town referendum history.

Aug. 28 1965 – Benny Goodman and his orchestra play before 2,500 people in Veterans Park. Emcee is radio/TV personality Jack Sterling.

September 1965 – By a six to one margin, voters at a referendum combine the Planning and the Zoning Commissions into one agency.

Sept. 23, 1965 — Alan Amundsen and Richard Wahl are named National Merit Scholarship semi-finalists.

October 1965 — The police acquire “Major,” their first-ever police dog, then still a puppy in need of training.

Oct. 5, 1965 — Leo F. Carroll is re-elected first selectman at the biennial town election (then held in October), defeating Gary L. Bryant, 2,118 to 1,413. Louis Fossi and Paul Morganti win seats on the Board of Selectmen; Karl S. Nash, running with the Good Government Party, does not.

Oct. 14, 1965 — Joseph M. Dunworth is elected chairman of the school board.

Oct. 31, 1965 — Pierrepont State Park, a bequest of Seth Low Pierrepont of Twixthills, opens on Barlow Mountain Road for recreational use — but no hunting.

November 1965 — Daniel M. McKeon is elected the first chairman of the new Planning and Zoning Commission.

Nov. 9, 1965 — Ridgefield is, of course, among the victims of the Great Northeast Blackout, the biggest power failure in American history, which begins around 5:20 p.m. Many Ridgefielders are among the 800,000 people trapped in subway and commuter trains. At the high school, many were in the dark as the emergency lighting system failed.

Nov. 20, 1965 — The funeral of Henry A. Wallace, vice president under Franklin D. Roosevelt, takes place at St. Stephen’s Church. The South Salem resident is a longtime member of the church.

December 1965 — Many Ridgefielders help efforts to find Fred Grossfeld, a 19-year-old MIT honor student from Ridgefield who has disappeared.

Dec. 4, 1965 – A TWA 707 and an Eastern Airlines Constellation collide over South Salem. The crippled Constellation flies over Ridgefield, dropping pieces of the plane on the town, and crashes on Hunt Mountain, just over the state line in North Salem. Ridgefield Fire Department, first on the scene, leads rescue efforts. Four die of the 50 people aboard; the pilot dies trying to rescue a trapped passenger. The TWA jetliner makes it to Kennedy, despite losing 25 feet of wing.

## 1966

January 1966 — “The Negro Incentive for Recovery” is the topic for the Rev. William Webb, president of the Ridgefield branch of the NAACP, speaking at a service at the Unitarian Meeting House on King Lane.

January 1966 — Time-Life publisher Henry Luce and his ambassador-playwright wife, Clare Boothe Luce, sell their Great Hill Road home to Hans P. Kraus, a rare book dealer. The 22-room brick Georgian house was built in 1938 by Wadsworth R. Lewis, who died in 1942 and who, in his will, created the Wadsworth R. Lewis Fund that has donated millions to local organizations.

January 1966 — James McChesney is appointed to the Flood and Erosion Control Board, replacing Mrs. Paul Velte, who goes to Formosa to be with her husband (who is soon to become CEO of Air America, the CIA-owned airline in Southeast Asia).

January 1966 — The state is suing the estate of the late Anne S. Richardson to prevent it from tearing down her house at what is now Richardson Park. Miss Richardson had asked that the house “which my beloved friend, the late Edna Schoyer, and I occupied together for many years, be not occupied by others after my death.” The state loses and the house is razed.

January 1966 — Eleven Ridgefield clergymen wire President Johnson, urging a cessation of bombing of North Vietnam, and a renewal of efforts to negotiate peace.

Jan. 3, 1966 — The school administration wants a \$2.6-million budget, an increase of \$309,000, or 13.8%, to operate the schools in the 1966-67 coming year. (\$2.6 million then would equate to \$18.7 million in 2016 when the actual school budget today is about \$86 million.) More than 23 new teachers are being requested, reflecting the rapid growth of the town.

Jan. 6, 1966 — First Selectman Leo F. Carroll reports the town owns only 309 of the 19,475 acres of land in Ridgefield for education, recreation and open space, and he proposes doubling that in 1966. Among the parcels he is eying is 60 acres around Lake Windwing.

Jan 8, 1966 — Joe Bailey scores a whopping 50 points as the Ridgefield Townies open the basketball season by defeating Newtown AC, 119-104. Don Ligos and Harold Mead each have 26.

Jan 10, 1966 — The nine-member, GOP-dominated Board of Education becomes the first in Ridgefield’s history to have four Democratic members on it, after choosing Lodi

Kysor, a Democrat, to fill the vacancy caused by Karl S. Nash's resignation. The Republican Town Committee had recommended Eleanor London for the post.

Jan 12, 1966 — Dr. Florence Powdermaker of Ridgebury Road, internationally known for her work on the problems of making children feel secure in society, dies at age 71. One of her best-selling books is "The Intelligent Parents' Manual."

Jan 13, 1966 — Princess Frances Georgette Moss de Bearn of Branchville Road, who had been married three times to Prince Gaston de Galard de Bearn et de Charlais, files suit for divorce from him yet again, charging intolerable cruelty.

Jan 13, 1966 — "Ridgefield refers more youngsters to Juvenile Court in Danbury than any other town in this district except Danbury itself," Ridgefield police Detective Sgt. Richard Bellagamba tells the Kiwanis Club. The increase in population and the leniency of the courts are partially responsible for the increase in juvenile arrests, but the biggest culprits are parents who have lost control of their youngsters, the detective says.

Jan. 17, 1966 — School Board Chairman Joseph M. Dunworth holds a private meeting of eight school board members at his home to discuss his plan to increase the board's efficiency, cut down on the length of meetings, and involve townspeople in school affairs. Superintendent Thayer D. Wade is not invited.

Jan. 20, 1966 — A group of anonymous Republicans takes out a half-page ad in The Ridgefield Press, deploring GOP school board members Enzo Bartolucci, Allen Shafer, Rudolph Sykora, and Thomas Nelson for picking a Democrat — Lodi Kysor — to fill a vacancy on the school board. The ad resents their "illogical and discourteous rejection of a qualified Republican [Eleanor London] in favor of a Democrat who received the fewest votes in the last election."

Jan. 22, 1966 — Francis D. Martin, has his 56th annual ice skating party at Lake Mamasasco. "About 3,000 skaters were present," Mr. Martin maintains.

Jan. 24, 1966 — The Ridgefield Teachers Association asks the state Board of Education to mediate its dispute with the Ridgefield school board over salary negotiations. Base salary for a teacher is \$5,300. The school board proposes increasing it to \$5,600. But the board wants to eliminate annual pay increases and instead award increases on "merit" through a system yet to be devised. The teachers don't like that.

Jan. 27, 1966 — A Ridgefield Teachers Association survey gets responses from 131 of the system's 185 teachers, indicating the greatest reason for the morale problem was the "attitude of the Board of Education toward education, teachers, and the teachers' organization."

Jan. 27, 1966 — Israel Grossfeld says he will close his Main Street clothing store to spend full time searching for his son, Fred, an MIT student who had gone missing in late November.

Jan. 29, 1966 – Mrs. Francis Gage, 74, dies in a fire at her home at Route 7 and Topstone Road. The house has no plumbing or central heat, and Mrs. Gage is sitting next to a space heater when the fire breaks out.

Feb. 1, 1966 — Israel Grossfeld meets with U.S. Sen. Edward M. Kennedy to learn what might be done to help him find his missing son, Fred, last seen on Nov. 30 in Cambridge.

Feb. 3, 1966 — The town's grand list of taxable property rises by 6.6% to \$65.5 million. Most of the increase is due to the completion of 172 new houses in the past year.

Feb. 3, 1966 — Hickory and Tweed at 114 Main Street is advertising ski bus trips every Saturday.

Feb. 7, 1966 — At the end of a tense and lengthy meeting, the Board of Education cuts the number of languages taught at the junior high from four to two. The board's aim is "to intensify the program for seventh graders and make entrance into language classes somewhat more restrictive than it has heretofore been." The action comes despite the opposition of Superintendent Thayer Wade and Merriam Moore, chairman of the foreign languages department. The board tells Wade to pick two languages to eliminate from among Spanish, French, German, or Latin.

Feb. 8, 1966 — Discussing the Vietnam War, Congressman John Monagan tells a combined meeting of the Lions, Rotary and Kiwanis clubs at the King Neptune that "we are dealing with aggressive imperialism" on the part of North Vietnam and China. Having made a commitment to South Vietnam, he says, the United States must now keep trying to maintain stability. Hanoi and Peking consider talk of peace as a sign of weakness on our part, he says, and the North Vietnamese "impression that they have us on the run is being strengthened either consciously or naively by some elements of our community."

Feb. 10, 1966 — Expressing "alarm over the declining quality of education in Ridgefield," the Citizens Action Committee forms "to encourage citizen awareness of educational issues; to take a realistic creative constructive approach; to be prepared to take community-wide action."

Feb. 10, 1966 — For Valentine's Day, Bissell's has one-pound boxes of Russell Stover candies for \$1.60

Feb. 13, 1966 — Varian Fry of Farmingville Road is subject of a long feature in Parade, the Sunday newspaper magazine, about his work in World War II rescuing Jewish artists



and writers, including Marc Chagall, from the Nazis. Fry is working on his seventh book, which is about the Trojan War.

Feb. 14, 1966 — The school board and the teachers agree to a new, two-year salary schedule that provides a \$350 increase in the first year and \$250 in the second. The new maximum salary is \$11,895 in the first year and \$12,220 in the next, compared to the previous maximum of \$11,400. The starting pay is still \$5,300.

Feb. 17, 1966 — A scholarship at Ridgefield High School is established in the memory of Fred Grossfeld, the 19-year-old Ridgefield student at MIT who is found dead in Boston's Charles River a week earlier. He had been missing since November, sparking a nationwide search. "The general opinion of police and others seems to be that Fred took his own life," says Israel Grossfeld, his father. "I am absolutely certain that this could not be true. Fred was a victim of foul play."

Feb. 17, 1966 — The 1966 American Motors Rambler is touted as being "the lowest-priced car made in the U.S.A." in a Georgetown Motors ad that, alas, gives no prices. It does say the car gets 24.5 miles per gallon, though. Regular gas is 32 cents a gallon that year.

Feb. 21, 1966 — The selectmen appoint a committee to oversee construction of a new Branchville Elementary School. The members, the same as the committee overseeing Scotland School's erection, include Frank Burgess, Fred Montanari, Dr. Joseph Belsky, William Dingee, John Dioguardi, Dr. Nelson Gelfman, Harry E. Hull, Stanley Lewis, Elinor London, William Manion, Charles F. Meffley Jr., Leonard Molaskey, Charles Weedon, and Karl Nash.

Feb. 21, 1966 — The selectmen decide to seek a paid recreation director for the town. There is also talk of expanding the Park Commission into a Parks and Recreation Commission.

Feb. 24, 1966 — Mr. and Mrs. Richard Fay open The Family Room in the Grand Union shopping center, calling it "a place for kids to go after school or the movies, a place where they get a soda and a hamburger, listen to the jukebox, a place where they'd feel welcome."

Feb. 24, 1966 — The Herd, a new band making its debut at the Veterans Park gym, consists of Tim Martin, Rick Gramatico, Tony Stone, and Bob Gagnon.

March 1966 — John Gormley open "9½," which he calls "the smallest restaurant in Fairfield County." Located at "9½" Bailey Avenue, it specializes in hot dogs, hamburgers and french fries.

March 1966 — Robert Loeb Jr. of Farm Hill Road, author of the runaway best-selling cookbook “Wolf in Chef’s Clothing,” has a new book out, “How to Wine Friends and Affluent People.” “This book is dedicated to the proposition that all men are not created equal,” he says. “Some, for example, are born affluent. Others have to earn affluence. And still others have to cultivate the friendship of the congenital and post-congenital affluents in order to better survive. It is to those of this third estate, the poor and needy, who wish to entertain the rich and seedy, to whom this book is especially dedicated.”

March 5, 1966 — Carroll W. Brewster of Farmingville, a member of the Conservation Commission, is featured in a long article in the New Yorker, on the Fellows in Africa program. The Reporter-at-Large article by John McPhee describes Brewster as “a handsome fellow of upper medium height, solidly built, with thick eyebrows and sharp blue eyes,” who is a representative of the national Sudanese judiciary at a major Sudanese conference. An editor of the Sudan Law Journal, he’d moved to the Sudan in 1962 at the age of 28. “In doing this work,” the article says, “Brewster became much interested in the Sudanese people and, through such feats as unconcernedly munching a fresh, five-pound raw camel liver when it was offered to him, became a favorite with the sheiks and nazirs.”

March 7, 1966 — About 150 people attend a public hearing on the school board’s decision to cut the number of foreign languages taught in the junior high. Most oppose the move.

March 9, 1966 — Roaming dogs kill 15 rabbits belonging to Charles Bedini of Ramapoo Road and another seven owned by John Eppoliti of Main Street. The dogs are caught and the owners forced to pay for the dead bunnies.

March 10, 1966 — The Crock ’n’ Bowl, between Woolworth’s and the First National off Governor Street, is selling Irish coffee glasses for 98 cents, regularly \$1.19.

March 14, 1966 — Irving B. Conklin Sr., who ran a well-known dairy farm in Ridgefield (Farm Hill Road area) and later operated Conklin Motors where Party Depot is today, dies at the age of 66.

March 17, 1966 — The town’s School Site Committee recommends two locations for future elementary schools: off Peaceable Street in what is now the Westmoreland subdivision, and on the north side of George Washington Highway, where Encampment Place is now.

March 17, 1966 — Levio G. Zandri, adviser to the Hilltop Dispatch magazine at RHS, is one of 15 advisers to high school publications to receive a Gold Key Award from the Columbia Scholastic Press Association.

March 21, 1966 — Among the teachers granted tenure by the school board are J. Robert Tulipani of Veterans Park and Edward M. Brolin of the senior high.

March 22, 1966 — Two big subdivisions get final approval: Lincoln Development Corp.'s 270-acre, 172-lot development called Westmoreland, and Lewis J. Finch's 100-acre, 29-lot project, Colonial Heights.

March 24, 1966 — Reflecting Ridgefield's rapid growth, town officials propose an 18.4% increase in the municipal budget. Major increases included expanding the firehouse, buying land on Barlow Mountain Road for a school, adding six more policemen, hiring a professional town planner and a full-time recreation director, and buying a new ambulance.

March 31, 1966 — Romeo G. Petroni, one of Ridgefield's two representatives to the state legislature, announces he will seek the Republican nomination to run for congressman from the Fifth District. He would oppose incumbent Congressman John S. Monagan of Waterbury, a Democrat.

March 31, 1966 — The Morganti brothers — Paul, John, Joseph, and Robert — begin construction of a "two-story brick colonial retail building" on the corner of Main and Catoonah streets, long the site of the Jesse Lee Methodist Church that was recently torn down. Four stores are planned downstairs, offices up.

March 31, 1966 — Sibbi Beards of Lounsbury Road is one of three Connecticut finalists in the Mrs. America Beauty Contest. A homemaker, she appears in many local amateur theater productions.

April 1966 — First Selectman Leo F. Carroll asks the New York Stock Exchange, then threatening to leave New York City for suburbia, to consider moving to Ridgefield. "No stock exchange could locate upon firmer ground than ours," he tells the NYSE.

April 1966 — The Keeler Tavern Preservation Society votes to buy the pre-Revolutionary hostelry on Main Street from Glenna and Vernon M. Welsh for \$85,000 (\$638,000 in today's dollars).

April 1966 — Ridgefield still had seven miles of "dear old dirt roads," says First Selectman Leo F. Carroll, who plans to keep them dirty. The roads are Hulda Lane, Barlow Mountain Road, Spring Valley Road, Chestnut Hill Road, Mopus Bridge Road, Old Osaleta Road, and Rippowam Road.

April 1966 — Orlando Busino of Shadblow Hill Road, a cartoonist for many national magazines, receives a Reuben Award for excellence from the National Cartoonists

Society. He draws "Gus," a comic character that has appeared in Boys Life magazine for a half century.

April 7, 1966 — The school board approves plans for Scotland Elementary School, scheduled to be completed by the fall of 1967.

April 7, 1966 — Sal Monti is the new president of the Rotary Club. Dr. Harold Healy and Robert Lewis are elected to the board.

April 11, 1966 — Conflicts over control of the GOP in Ridgefield are evident as 24 people vie for 15 seats on the Republican Town Committee. Among the candidates are Dirk Bollenback, Norman Craig, Nancy-Carroll Draper, Robert Haight, Dr. Charles Izzo, Sal Monti, Paul Rosa, Dr. Richard Scala, Marty Carr, Grace Beck, Marjorie McKenna, and Sam DiMuzio.

April 12, 1966 — Three Ridgefielders are named to the Western Connecticut Conference all-star basketball team: Stan Englehardt, Chipper Bliss and Allen Wallace.

April 13, 1966 — "The Trouble with Angels," a movie based on the novel "Life with Mother Superior" by Jane Trahey of New Road, opens, starring Rosalind Russell and Hayley Mills.

April 14, 1966 — The Good Government Party petitions to reduce the size of the school board from nine to five members, and their terms from six to four years. "We don't believe it is fair to the town to have to wait out a six-year term if a board member is not acting as the voters want him to," says Mrs. Eugene Sanders of the GGP. What's more, "a smaller board means a tighter organization and a faster-moving one."

April 14, 1966 — Someone steals a kitchen stove from a new house at Chestnut Hill Estates. They leave the sink.

April 17, 1966 — Four RHS students received top honors at the 10th annual father-son athletic banquet: Rudy Marconi, outstanding senior athlete; Chip Bliss, outstanding athlete-scholar; Al Wallace, outstanding sportsmanship; and Vic Ribeiro, most improved player of the year.

April 18, 1966 — The school board votes to fire Merriam Moore, chairman of the foreign language department. No one was saying why, but Mrs. Moore had strongly objected to the board's efforts to cut foreign language courses in the junior high school. She plans to fight the firing.

April 18, 1966 — A plan to build a \$7,500 rifle range at the town garage draws more discussion than any other item in the proposed 1966-67 budget at a public hearing. The

Ramapoo Rifle and Revolver Club wants the Park Commission to build the range, saying that some 200 Ridgefielders are interested in shooting.

April 20, 1966 — An 11-year-old North Salem Road boy is treated at Danbury Hospital for severe lacerations to his face after his homemade bomb explodes in his back yard.

April 21, 1966 — Jack B. Ward contributes \$50,000 (\$375,000 in today's dollars) toward the completion of the chancel in the new Methodist church being built at Main and King Lane.

April 21, 1966 — Someone who has a return address of Box 383, Ridgefield, mails mimeographed sheets that say the National Council of Churches is linked to the "communist conspiracy."

April 21, 1966 — Donald Dennis is named the new scoutmaster of Troop 80 on the retirement of Wendall Keeler. (Nearly 50 years later, more than a dozen former Scouts charge in a civil suit that Dennis sexually molested them.)

April 25, 1966 — The school board backs off on firing language department Chairman Merriam Moore. Instead, the board reprimands her for "her actions," and says it will explain later what those actions were. However, Dr. Joseph Belsky, a board member who opposed the firing, suggests it is because Ms. Moore had spoken out in public against the school board's plans to eliminate some junior high language courses.

April 24, 1966 — The Rev. Harold Wheeler, pastor of the Ridgefield Baptist Church, announces plans for a church building at the corner of Danbury and Tanton Hill roads.

April 28, 1966 — Behind the hot hitting of the likes of Chip Landon, Rudy Marconi, Mike O'Gorman, and John Stolle, the unbeaten Tigers blast Bethel, 15-3, and Newtown, 11-3.

April 28, 1966 — Jim Finklea, Lee DeForest, Prince Chambliss, and Dave Crucitti are among the stars of Jean Anouilh's "Becket — The Honor of God," being staged by the RHS Honor Society.

May 1966 — Faith Baldwin, author of more than 100 novels, speaks at the Community Center Covered Dish Supper.

May 1966 — State National Bank issues a \$2.6-million mortgage (\$19.5 million in today's dollars) to cover the cost of Benrus Watch Co.'s building its new headquarters on Route 7. Contractor is Ridge-Contracting Inc., headed by Selectman Paul Morganti.

May 3, 1966 — Walt Valentine pitches a one-hitter in the Tigers' win over Abbott Tech. RHS is undefeated.

May 5, 1966 — A total of 1,246 people sign petitions for a town meeting to cut the school board from nine to five members and their terms from six to four years.

May 5, 1966 — The Canzler Company of Danbury is low-bidder to build the new Scotland Elementary School. Its bid of \$1,024,000 (\$7.7 million in today's dollars) is \$44,000 lower than hometown Morganti Inc.'s. Paul Morganti is displeased and says he may seek an appeal.

May 12, 1966 — Angry at what chairman Joseph Dunworth calls an "inaccurate, sometimes distorted version of school board actions" by a small group of "highly organized, self-appointed guardians of the Ridgefield schools," including The Ridgefield Press, the Board of Education mails a newsletter to all residents of town, aimed at conveying "the truth relative to your schools." There is no money in the budget for the mailing, The Press reports.

May 13, 1966 — Voters approve a new budget with a rise of nearly 20% in the town tax rate. About 175 people attend the lively Annual Town Meeting, and the majority beat back efforts to cut the \$4.2-million budget.

May 13, 1966 — Addressi Jewelry Store opens on Main Street in space that had been occupied by the post office. Addressi already has two stores in Danbury and one in Brewster, N.Y.

May 19, 1966 — A sizable ad in the Ridgefield Press from DOES (the Ridgefield Committee to Defend Our Educational System) opposes efforts by the Good Government Party to reduce the size of the school board from nine to five members. It maintains that when GGP-minded people were in control of the school board a few years earlier, budgets were repeatedly cut by the voters because they contained "so much water." But since the currently constituted board gained power three years earlier, all budgets had been approved uncut by the voters, the ad says.

May 19, 1966 — Bedient's is selling an 11-inch-screen, GE portable color TV for \$249 (\$1,871 in today's dollars).

May 24, 1966 — Walter Valentine shuts out Abbott Tech for the second time that season, 8-0, as the Tigers stretch their winning streak to 11. Valentine gives up only three hits over 14 innings in the two Tech games.

May 26, 1966 — The school board, which had voted to fire language department Chairman Merriam Moore and wound up issuing a reprimand instead, releases a letter

explaining why: She had prepared an “erroneous” report on class size without authorization and made it public; she publicly challenged the statistics of a board member; and she signed a petition for a public hearing on the board’s planned cuts to the foreign language department.

May 26, 1966 — In an interview with reporter Linette Burton, retired Army Maj. Gen. J.F.R. Seitz of Old Branchville Road says the U.S. government should stop being wishy-washy about Vietnam, and instead attack the enemy with full force. “They should step out,” he says of the politicians, “and let us do what we want. As MacArthur said, ‘There is no substitute for victory.’ I think we should go for victory.” America, he adds, “is not pursuing this wholeheartedly. I think people would like to get about the business and get it over.”

June 1966 — Octavius J. “Tabby” Carboni, who had lived in Ridgefield since he came here from Italy 60 years earlier, retires from the State National Bank where he had been a teller since 1959. He is planning to spend his free time playing golf.

June 1966 — Jolie Gabor, mother of the Gabor sisters, and her husband, Count D. Odon De Szigethy, buy a house on Oscaleta Road and plan on “glamorizing” the place. “I like to make from a nothing something,” says the mother of Zsa Zsa, Eva and Magda.

June 1966 — The Ridgebury Congregational Church buys from Mrs. Otto Lippolt her house directly across the street and plans to use the place for Sunday school, church offices and meeting rooms.

June 1966 — Charles D. Crouchley Jr., assistant principal of the high school, retires after 35 years of teaching at and managing the school.

June 1966 — The state orders a halt to burning garbage at the town dump. Ridgefield asks if it could bring its trash to Danbury’s incinerator, but Danbury says no. So the selectmen appear to be required to build Ridgefield’s own incinerator because incinerators burn trash more efficiently, with less pollution, than open burning.

June 2, 1966 — Douglas Smith of Wilton, an elementary principal in Norwalk, is appointed the first principal of the soon-to-open Scotland School.

June 5, 1966 — The Vietnam war is the subject of a debate at Ridgefield High School with the question “Resolved: that the U.S. should withdraw its military forces from Vietnam and disengage itself from the war.” The negative side won, arguing, “We must stop the spread of communism in Vietnam or we will be involved in a bigger war later.”

June 7, 1966 — A huge turnout at a referendum rejects a proposal to reduce the size and terms of the Board of Education. A total of 1,550 people favor retaining the existing nine-member board with six-year terms, while 1,363 want five members and four years.

June 9, 1966 — The Tigers end a perfect 15-0 baseball season, beating Joel Barlow 13-6.

June 9, 1966 — The Elms Inn on Main Street is offering a Friday smorgasbord from noon to 3 for \$2.75.

June 13, 1966 — Reading teacher Arnold Finaldi explains to the school board his newly developed system for teaching reading readiness, called “the aural-spacial method.” He eventually becomes principal of Veterans Park School.

June 14, 1966 — The Connecticut Education Association finds that Merriam Moore, the language department chairman that the school board had tried to fire, “is an outstanding, competent professional educator” and that the school board “has assumed an improper role in relation to the administration of the Ridgefield public school system.”

June 16, 1966 — Police Chief John F. Haight is surprised and dismayed by that week’s U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Miranda vs. Arizona* that police had to inform people detained for questioning of their constitutional rights to remain silent, to consult with an attorney, and that anything they say can and will be used against them. The chief feels this would curb the ability of the police to effectively question people.

June 16, 1966 — Mr. and Mrs. Nazzareno Lavatori mark their 50th wedding anniversary at a party with 145 guests at the Italian American Club, *The Press* reports.

June 16, 1966 — The undefeated RHS golf team captures the Western Connecticut Conference title. Young duffers include Mike Carroll, Kevin Morris, Gordon Casagrande, Chip Bliss, and Phil Santini.

June 17, 1966 — Three quarters of the graduating Class of 1966 plan to continue their studies, RHS Principal Harold E. Healy reports at commencement.

June 20, 1966 — Telling the school board he could not continue to function under “your current philosophy,” Dr. Thayer Wade resigns as superintendent of schools. “At this point I do not feel that I can compromise my own position any further in an attempt to abide by your wishes,” says Dr. Wade, who still has another year remaining on his three-year contract.

June 21, 1966 — A 22-person crew spends a full day at Mr. and Mrs. Herman Schuster’s house on North Salem Road, filming a one-minute commercial for a new Nabisco product, Mr. Salty Pretzels.



June 23, 1966 — Dr. Peter Yanity of Main Street is appointed Pop Warner National Commissioner for the state.

June 30, 1966 — Thayer Wade, who just resigned as superintendent the previous week, is hired as superintendent in Wakefield, Mass., at a salary of \$19,000, the same he would have gotten in Ridgefield. That's \$143,000 in today's dollars. Louis A. Formica is named acting superintendent in Ridgefield.

June 30, 1966 — "You learn something every time you step on the stage," says Jessie Royce Landis of Old Branchville Road. Among the best-known films the actress has appeared in are Alfred Hitchcock's two classics, "To Catch A Thief" and "North by Northwest," both starring Cary Grant. She is only eight years older than Grant when she plays his mother in the latter.

June 30, 1966 — The Board of Education ends the fiscal year with an \$18.30 surplus on a budget of \$2.3 million.

July 4, 1966 — Between 7,000 and 10,000 people pack Veterans Park field for the Rotary Club's annual Fourth of July fireworks. It is "the biggest crowd ever," according to an account.

July 7, 1966 — Ridgefield Baptist Church members vote to build a new church, a pre-engineered structure designed by Christian Life Publications that will hold 225 worshippers. Construction is expected to begin in the fall.

July 14, 1966 — Police throughout the county are looking for the Rev. John Draper, former assistant pastor of St. Mary's Church and principal of St. Mary's School. Father Draper's sister tells police her brother had disappeared with no luggage, money or other indication that he planned to go anywhere. He has been serving at a church in Shelton.

July 14, 1966 — Building Inspector Fred C. Hall is pictured on the front page of The Press with First Selectman Leo F. Carroll, holding a check for \$9,601 — the largest fee ever paid for a building permit in town. The fee (equal to \$72,000 today) is for the new Benrus Watch Company plant and headquarters on Route 7, to be built by Morganti for \$2.4 million. It is to be Ridgefield's biggest industry.

July 14, 1966 — Gristedes on Main Street has whole chickens for 35 cents a pound.

July 16, 1966 — Some 1,200 people dance under the stars on the high school tennis courts at the annual Firemen's Ball, keeping Dom Scutti's orchestra going till 2 a.m. "It was a really great success," says Fire Chief Richard McGlynn.

July 21, 1966 — The Park Commission hires William Seirup of Trumbull as the town's first full-time director of recreation.

July 21, 1966 — The body of the Rev. John J. Draper, who'd been a popular priest at St. Mary's and former principal of its school, is found in a New York City hotel where, officials say, he apparently slipped and fell while taking a shower, and died of a "fractured larynx." The 39-year-old had registered at the hotel under a different name.

July 23, 1966 — Stage and screen actor Douglass Montgomery of Golf Lane, who also acted under the name of Kent Douglass, dies at the age of 58. He is best known for his 1933 performance as Laurie, opposite Katharine Hepburn's Jo March, in "Little Women."

July 25, 1966 — Salvatore Mangiafico is named principal of the new East Ridge Junior High School, due to open in September.

July 28, 1966 — Dirk Bollenback, summer school director, reports 159 students are taking enrichment and other courses.

August 1966 — Residents of Jerry's Court at Stonehenge Estates petition the selectmen to change their street's name to Druid Lane, arguing that a druid from ancient England is more suitable than the name of the road's developer, Jerry Tuccio. And after all, the neighborhood is called Stonehenge Estates. While England's Stonehenge has in fact nothing to do with Druids, ancient Celts who arrived on the scene a thousand years after Stonehenge was created, the selectmen agree to the name change.

August 1966 — First Selectman Leo F. Carroll is trying to get owners of the Grand Union Shopping Center to move the entrance to opposite Prospect Street. The offset entrance was demanded by the State Highway Department, which did not want it to be a four-way intersection.

August 1966 — Harry Minot, 12-year old son of Dr. and Mrs. Henry Minot of Main Street, returns from a trip to Europe with his grandmother. "We met a few drunks on the Swedish coastal steamer, who staggered and asked if everybody was happy," young Harry reports. "Mops, my grandmother, did not approve, so we had some Cokes — she didn't approve of them, either." (Minot goes on to become the manager of WPKN, the eclectic FM station in Bridgeport, for 30 years.)

Aug. 4, 1966 — Widespread upzoning of the town is being proposed in order to cap Ridgefield's population at about 31,000 by the year 1991. Professional advisers to the commission predict Ridgefield's population in 25 years will be 37,000 without increasing future lot sizes. All one-acre zones would be upped to two acres, and all areas less than an acre would become one-acre minimum lots.

Aug. 6, 1966 — Ridgefield Days sidewalks sales are underway. Among the many stores participating are Addressi, Allan's, The Balcony, Bell Book and Candle, Brunetti's Market, Candlelight Shoppe, Colby's, Cortina Shop, Craig's Jewelry, Crock 'n' Bowl, H.P. Bissell and Company, Lelak's Delicatessen, Question Mart, Rich Chrysler Plymouth, Ridgefield Hardware, Ridgefield Photo, Ridgefield Supply, Ridgefield Television, Smith Pharmacy, F.W. Woolworth, Young's Feed Store, and J. Zalla.

Aug. 11, 1966 — The sisters of Notre Dame seek a zoning variance to erect a high school for girls on West Mountain, to be called Notre Dame Academy.

Aug. 16, 1966 — Before a largely unsympathetic and vociferous crowd in the Cleves Auditorium of Veterans Park School, plans to upzone much of the town meet with attacks as unjust, unfair and confiscatory. The Planning and Zoning Commission wants to increase all zoning outside the village to two-acre lots — many areas are one acre or less — in order to curb the rapid growth that is causing the town to build a new school nearly every year.

Aug. 18, 1966 — Robert Kraus of Main Street has a new book for children, "My Son the Mouse," about to be published by Harper and Row. The New Yorker magazine artist and cartoonist dedicates the book to his sons, Bruce, 12, and Billy, 5.

Aug. 18, 1966 — Woolworth's has casual fall handbags for \$2.99 while nearby Brunetti's Market has broilers and fryers for 39 cents a pound.

Aug. 25, 1966 — Fearing the Planning and Zoning Commission is about to upzone their property, landowners submit 14 subdivision applications to get their land grandfathered. The proposals would create 132 new building lots.

Aug. 25, 1966 — Officials are concerned about rowdyism in the parking lot of the Benenson Shopping Center, then the home of the Grand Union and the post office, and now CVS. "There have been complaints of unruly gatherings of young people," and even "alleged cruelty to an animal," the story in The Press says.

September 1966 — Many people in neighboring South Salem are opposing a proposed interracial country club, called Pheasant Valley, on the grounds of the old Rainsford estate on the Lewisboro/ Ridgefield line. The head of the South Salem Community Association says opposition has nothing to do with racial issues, but is centered around a "traffic explosion and taxes needed to increase policing of all that traffic going to and from the 18-hole course." The plan eventually fails to get approval and the estate becomes Le Chateau, the restaurant.

Sept. 1, 1966 — "Three years ago the town of Ridgefield had little in the way of plans and less in the way of action in the important area of providing adequate building

facilities,” school board member Paul McDevitt tells 65 new teachers. Now, he says, a new junior high school would open in a week, Scotland School would open in September 1967 and Branchville School in September 1968. McDevitt credits his school board and “the citizens of Ridgefield” for getting the balls rolling.

Sept. 6, 1966 — The new East Ridge Junior High School arrives with a bang. A homemade bomb explodes outside a window of the school the evening before the Sept. 7 first day of classes. The bomb breaks some glass, but the school opens on schedule. Police investigate, but the bomber is not found.

Sept. 7, 1966 — A total of 3,646 children show up the first day of school. That was about 300 more than were in school a year earlier.

Sept. 8, 1966 — Sister Mary Albert is named the new principal of St. Mary’s School.

Sept. 10, 1966 — Recipients of honors at the Babe Ruth League Awards Night include Greg Miner, fielder of the year; Frank Lancaster, pitcher of the year; Jim Croce, batter of the year; and Bob Hlavac, most valuable player.

Sept. 13, 1966 — Lowell I. “Bud” Williams is hired as Ridgefield’s first full-time, professional planner. The Planning and Zoning Commission sets his annual salary at \$12,500 (\$100,000 in today’s dollars).

Sept. 15, 1966 — Both Republican and Democratic Town Committees open fall campaign headquarters on Main Street, though the GOP is calling its storefront the “Republican Action Center.”

Sept. 15, 1966 — Cube steaks are 99 cents a pound and ground round, 79 cents, at the First National on Governor Street. Next door, Woolworth’s has a 10-transistor pocket radio for \$5.88.

Sept. 17, 1966 — U.S. Senator Abraham Ribicoff and Democratic National Chairman John M. Bailey attend the Ridgefield Democratic dinner dance. Other guests include Fifth District Congressman John S. Monagan.

Sept. 26, 1966 — Louis A. Formica, acting superintendent of schools, tells the school board that the quality of teachers hired for the new school year is an improvement over the previous year and that the board’s “increased expenditures for recruitment are producing results.”

Sept. 29, 1966 — A pack of four dogs chases two fawns on Ward Acres, the Peaceable Street property of Jack Ward, until they are exhausted, then kills them. The screams of the dying deer alarm neighbors who call the police. “Deer are protected by the state,” says

Game Warden Brian Johnson, “and if I had seen the dogs worrying the deer, it would have been my job to shoot them.” Dog Warden Joseph Zwierlein warns dog owners that if they don’t keep their pets on their own property, “they are going to be sorry.”

Sept. 29, 1966 — Brown’s limousine service is charging \$8 for a ride to Kennedy or LaGuardia.

October 1966 — A large crowd packs the Cloverleaf Restaurant in Danbury to honor Ridgefield’s hometown candidate for congress, Romeo Petroni. Among the supporters and speakers is the minority leader of the U.S. House of Representatives, Gerald R. Ford.

October 1966 — Mary Luke of Peaceable Street has a new book out. “Catherine, The Queen” is a biography of Catherine of Aragon, the first wife of Henry VIII.

October 1966 — Sally Bishop Anyan is a new music teacher at Scotland School.

October 1966 — Mrs. Francis Williams of Limekiln Road and Mrs. Joseph Hackett of Christopher Lane open the Ridgefield Model Agency to teach and promote photographers models, both children and adults. Williams is a veteran of Parents and McCall’s magazines while Hackett has been a Conover model who appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show as a Copa girl.

October 1966 — Cornelius and Kathryn Ryan return from a trip to Europe, where Mr. Ryan promotes his new book on World War II, “The Last Battle.” To offset Russian propaganda attacks leveled against Ryan, Mayor Willie Brandt of Berlin meets with the author and congratulates him on the book. Brandt tells the press that Ryan’s book on the fall of Berlin in 1945 contains “for the first time the truth about the siege and fall of Berlin” and he labels “ridiculous” Soviet charges that Ryan “falsified the part played by the Red Army in taking the city in 1945.”

Oct. 3, 1966 — Lengthy legal arguments from opposing attorneys and impassioned exhortations from residents near Route 7 cause a brouhaha at a Zoning Board of Appeals hearing over Harold A. Mead’s application to open a restaurant serving liquor at the old Twin Lakes Inn on Route 7, between New Road and Cain’s Hill Road. Homeowners claim the restaurant would destroy the residential atmosphere of the neighborhood while Mead’s attorney, Patrick Crehan, points out the past restaurant use of the building and the fact that another restaurant, The Alibi, is right across the street. The property is now the home of Golf-Art (the Alibi burned down long ago).

Oct. 3, 1966 — The school board asks the Scotland School Building Committee to study the feasibility of a putting second high school on the Scotland School site, and the Citizens Advisory Committee on Secondary Schools to study whether the East Ridge high school should be expanded.

Oct. 6, 1966 — Canada geese are so uncommon that the fact that 15 visited a pond on St. Johns Road prompts a story about them and their neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. William Armstrong.

Oct. 11, 1966 — Despite opposition from developers and large landowners, the Planning and Zoning Commission upzones most of Ridgefield.

Oct. 13, 1966 — Officers Thomas Rotunda and Gerald Fucci save the life of an Irish setter that is floundering in a swimming pool on Bart Salerno's West Lane property. After getting a report from a neighbor, the officers arrive to find the dog holding on to the side of the pool with one paw, apparently fatigued from staying afloat and trying to get out of the pool. The dog is returned to its owner, Mrs. Neale Turner of Mead Ridge Road.

Oct. 20, 1966 — Richard M. Nixon writes a letter praising Ridgefielder Romeo Petroni, the congressional candidate. "Your party at the national level as well as the Connecticut level has been tremendously encouraged by the fine campaign you are conducting in the Fifth District," Nixon says. "The essential ingredients of victory in any election campaign, I believe, are relatively simple ones: a good candidate and a good campaign. The Republican party has both in abundance in the Fifth District."

Oct. 20, 1966 — John C. Kelly of Wilton Road West, former commander of the Connecticut State Police who is seeking another term as state representative from Ridgefield, says he favors the new Route 7 expressway. "Because of the increase in population, we will need more schools, better transportation and we'd like to get started on Route 7," he says. "That doesn't seem to be progressing. On Sunday, Oct. 2, there was bumper-to-bumper traffic from Norwalk to Danbury. With a new Route 7, you wouldn't have that." The Oct. 2 traffic is going to the Danbury Fair.

Oct. 24, 1966 — The selectmen resurrect a past proposal to turn the property between the high school and the new junior high into an "educational complex" on East Ridge. The plan would require buying a half-dozen properties, including the state police barracks.

Oct. 27, 1966 — William L. Winthrop sues the town over its recent upzoning, maintaining it would cause him "irreparable damage." Winthrop is a major developer of lots at the Ridgefield Lakes.

Oct. 31, 1966 — Shaving cream fights, soaped windows, egg lobbing, shattered pumpkins, trick-or-treat, UNICEF — Halloween is commemorated in the traditional manner in Ridgefield. Police Chief John F. Haight Jr. reports no serious vandalism and few complaints.

November 1966 — In the past six years, the number of children in town has increased 92% — from 3,067 in 1960 to 5,879 in 1966, the census bureau reports. The overall population jumps from 8,165 to 14,200.

Nov. 2, 1966 — The Civil Defense is monitoring Ridgefield for fallout from an atomic bomb tested in China the week before.

Nov. 3, 1966 — The new Federated Ridgefield Woman's Club has its first meeting.

Nov. 3, 1966 — New England Business Machines on Main Street is selling IBM typewriters — “the original IBM Executive type that looks like printing!” — for only \$199. They originally cost \$650 to \$750.

Nov. 8, 1966 — Republican Romeo Petroni's hopes of being elected a congressman are dashed as incumbent Democrat John S. Monagan is re-elected, probably helped by the landslide victory of John Dempsey as governor. Petroni easily takes Ridgefield, 3,041 to 1,307, but the incumbent congressman wins the district, 96,795 to 67,045.

Nov. 10, 1966 — The Chieftain, the high school's newspaper, is returning, reports correspondent Susanna Hofmann. “Although it was a tradition at RHS, the light-hearted, sometimes tongue-in-cheek Chieftain was discontinued last year in favor of a more serious publication, the Tiger Paw Press,” she says. “Student dissatisfaction caused a decrease in circulation and Ridgefield High's journalists had to close up shop several months before the school year ended.”

Nov. 11, 1966 — A large plaque listing all the names of World War II and Korean War veterans is unveiled in town hall today, Veterans Day.

Nov. 13, 1966 — Ridgebury Congregational Church dedicates the “Lippolt House” in honor of Mrs. Marian Lippolt, who had lived there, and Shields Hall, in her stone garage which the church plans to convert to a fellowship hall, honoring the Rev. Hugh Shields, its longtime pastor.

Nov. 17, 1966 — A proposed loitering law, to prevent teenagers from hanging out in the center of town, is stirring up controversy. “We need to have some control over the conduct of these young people,” says Police Chief John F. Haight. But Richard Fay, owner of the Family Room, a restaurant aimed at young people, objects to the law, saying it singles out teenagers and is unequal in its treatment. Kids might be angered and “retaliate,” he adds.

Nov. 17, 1966 — Butterball turkeys are 45 cents a pound at Grand Union.

Nov. 20, 1966 — Lewis J. Finch's plan for 30 lots on 64 acres off Blackman Road is the subject of a quiet planning and zoning hearing. He calls the development Hunter Heights after a former owner of the property.

Nov. 21, 1966 — The Board of Selectmen approves a plan to buy 11.7 acres behind Ridgebury Elementary School to use for student nature study. Robert Kaufman is offering the land at \$2,050 an acre.

Nov. 22, 1966 — Ridgefield selectmen meet with other area selectmen and leaders about the creation of a western Connecticut community college, possibly located in Ridgefield or Redding.

Nov. 22, 1966 — The roofing of the Jesse Lee Methodist Church is completed. The new building will seat 425 people when finished.

Nov. 26, 1966 — Miss Irene Tulipani, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Aldo Tulipani of Ramapoo Road, and James M. Gray, son of Mr. and Mrs. William Gray of Hayes Lane, are married in St. Mary's Church.

late November 1966 — First Selectman Leo F. Carroll cuts the ribbon as the Ridgefield Photo Shop moves across Main Street to the new Morganti building at the corner of Catoonah Street. The store is operated by Clarence and Gerry Korker. Upstairs in the building are Mary Hagan Real Estate, A.J. Carnall insurance, and Norman Hub, accountant.

December 1966 — Immaculate High School football star Kevin Kerrigan is being scouted by many independent and several Ivy League colleges, says his father, Robert. A junior, Kerrigan might attend a prep school next year, dad adds.

December 1966 — Mr. and Mrs. Henry Prieger take over operation to Walter Tode's Inn at Ridgefield on West Lane.

Dec. 1, 1966 — Dr. Charles Stabinsky joins Dr. Murat Merdinolu in the practice of obstetrics.

Dec. 2, 1966 — The centuries-old ban on Catholics' eating meat on Friday ends. "News of the new regulation has been received with mixed feelings in our parish," says the Rt. Rev. Msgr. James J. McLaughlin, pastor of St. Mary's. "Some people resist change, but to people who are allergic to fish, the news is very happy. I love all fish, so it has never been



a problem to me.” As for First Selectman Carroll, “To a chubby person like me, fish is extremely fine,” he says. “There is iodine in fish which is important for us humans to have in our carcasses. But now I’ll have to find a new penance since not eating meat is no longer a penance.”

Dec. 5, 1966 — William Casey was elected president of the Ridgefield Board of Realtors.

Dec. 6, 1966 — The second of three Planning and Zoning Commission members who had opposed upzoning most of the one-acre residential properties in town to two acres resigns. Robert Corbin says “personal matters convinced me that I can no longer serve.” Earlier, Paul J. Rosa Jr. quit.

Dec. 8, 1966 — The school board approves spending \$8,000 (\$60,000 in today’s dollars) on a consulting service to revise its policies.

Dec. 8, 1966 — “I left with the feeling that in spite of good intentions, what the U.S. is doing in Vietnam is irrelevant,” says William W. Pfaff of North Salem Road, who has just spent two weeks in South Vietnam on assignment with the Hudson Institute, a think tank.

Dec. 8, 1966 — Four members of the RHS football squad are named to the Western Connecticut All-Star team: Rick Miller, Bill Bruschi, Dennis Pontanella, and Ken Church. Among the honorable mentions are place kicker Tom “Leadfoot” Santini.

Dec. 12, 1966 — The Board of Education approves adding 17.5 new teaching positions to the faculty in the next school year. The increase was needed to handle rapidly rising enrollments as the town continued to add nearly 200 new houses a year. The school board also votes to ask the selectmen to buy the 77-acre Richardson property at North Salem and Ridgebury Roads to hold as a site of a possible new high school.

Dec. 15, 1966 — Pete Santini scores 21 points as the Tigers down Masuk, 83-70, to win the season’s basketball opener. They also rally to top Wilton, 65-59, behind the sharp shooting of Stan Englehardt and Tony Forcelli.

Dec. 20, 1966 — Voters at a Town Meeting reject a proposed loitering law, aimed at dispersing teenagers in the center of town. The vote is 59-48. “The main arguments against the ordinance were that it would not solve whatever problems Ridgefield has with teenagers and that enforcing it would create more disharmony between teenagers and the police and among adults,” The Press says.

Dec. 29, 1966 — St. Mary’s decides to have a lay Board of Education for its school. Members would be chosen soon, says Msgr. James J. McLaughlin.

## 1967

1967 – David E. Weingast is named school superintendent and serves 10 years, the second longest term of any superintendent. A few days after he accepts the job, he is offered a college presidency, which he turns down. “I have often wondered what would have happened if I had accepted that instead,” said Dr. Weingast in a 1977 interview.

1967 — Jack Herr arranges to have a military band perform in Ridgefield, the first of scores of military concerts he schedules over the next 50 years.

1967 — Gerda von Fekete opens Teen Fashions on Catoonah Street. The shop’s collection include mini and maxi skirts, trendy tie-dyed shirts and skirts, jeans and “bright and colorful fun clothing.” She also introduces Gunne Sax Victorian-style gowns for prom goers.

Winter 1967 – Temple Shearith Israel is established. The Doubleday mansion is purchased a year later and dedicated as a temple in 1970.

January 1967 — Among the Ridgefield servicemen in Vietnam are Robert M. Anderson, Benjamin E. Carter, Robert Compo, Robert Dioguardi, Stephen Henson, Dale Holmberg, Russell Paul Keeler, Denis G. Murawsky, Peter Allen Murawsky, Edward C. Scott, Leslie Wilson, and John C. Wolf.

Jan. 8, 1967 — Architect Roger Carpenter of Split Level Road is asked by the selectmen to estimate the cost of building a public restroom on the south side of town hall. First Selectman Leo F. Carroll reports that the facility in town hall is not large enough to comfortably accommodate all the people who wish to use it.

Jan. 26, 1967 — “Ridgefield’s difficulties with teenagers who drive over to New York State to buy liquor were cited this week by Leo J. Mulcahy, state police commissioner, as one of the reasons Gov. John Dempsey is seeking 75 additional state troopers to further control what the governor describes as the two major causes of highway deaths: speeding and liquor,” The Ridgefield Press reports. New York’s drinking age is 18 back then.

Feb. 2, 1967 — “Talk fest with teens doesn’t solve problem,” says a front-page headline on a Press story about teenagers seeking a place to gather. The young people who meet with town officials include Missy Miner, Barbara Sill, Heidi Herman, Michael Kelly (president of the Student Council), Sue Ball, Thomas Buch, Andrew Gaeta, and James Mulvaney. “The teenagers feel that, after being in school all day, they would like a place to get together and linger, without causing a disturbance,” the story says.

Feb. 3, 1967 – Fire destroys the James H. Hackert family home on North Street. The 200-year-old house, full of antiques, had a furnace problem that was supposedly being fixed the day of the fire.

Feb. 9, 1967 — Prince Chambliss — a black student from Alabama who had attended Ridgefield High School as a guest of the DePue family and the Carol Rosenberg Memorial Education Fund, stirring opposition led by the local John Birch Society and others — is described as “blissfully happy” as a freshman at Wesleyan University. Mrs. Henry Urrows, in a report to Rosenberg Fund donors, says, “Prince’s parents came to his high school graduation last spring. ... Mr. Chambliss told us that Prince has already learned more than he could have hoped to in the segregated high school and local Negro college in Alabama.” Chambliss goes on to become a prominent Memphis attorney.

Feb. 11, 1967 — First Selectman Leo F. Carroll tells Republican Town Committee that, after 10 years as the town’s chief executive, he will not be a candidate for re-election.

Feb. 22, 1967 — Planning and Zoning Commissioner Frank Dolen pens a strongly worded dissent from the commission’s decision to liberalize the regulations governing the “Section 13” floating zone for laboratories and light industry. Dolen lambastes his colleagues, writing: “In return for an uncertain promise of tax revenue” the commission had “disregarded its own extensive knowledge of good zoning ... To allow manufacturing uses in residential land is a violation of the true spirit and intent of zoning.”

March 1967 – The Zoning Board of Appeals rejects AT&T’s request to build a 162-foot-high microwave tower on Peaceable Ridge. AT&T sticks it just across the line in South Salem.

April 1967 — Ridgefield High School students are photographed for the fall’s “back to school” issue of *Ingenue* magazine. A photographer is planning to take shots of students “in their native habitat: the high school, The Family Room, a discotheque, and the community center.” The Family Room, where Steve’s Bagels is today, was known among teens as “the shaggy dog.”

May 1, 1967 — Members of the First Congregational Church vote 97 to 89 to acquire a new site on which to build a new church. The existing church, constructed of granite quarried in Ridgefield, has been on the corner of Main Street and West Lane since 1888. It is still used today by the congregation, which eventually decided to stay on the corner.

May 15, 1967 — The school board asks the selectmen to appoint a building committee “for the construction of an 1,800-student high school on the Richardson property on North Salem Road.” Two weeks before, First Selectman Leo Carroll had gotten the town an option to buy the 77 acres — for \$110,000.

May 18, 1967 — Ridgefield artist Richard Rainsford and a man in Chicago are headed for a trial in the summer after a federal grand jury indicts them “for alleged fraud in selling paintings represented as the work of Pollock and Kline.”

June 6, 1967 — Wilton successfully ends Ridgefield’s 30-game winning streak against them in baseball. Tensions run high in the fifth inning. “While still on the ground, Forcelli [of Ridgefield] expressed his opinion of Shell’s [Wilton] tag and Schell immediately expressed his opinion of Forcelli,” The Press reports. “Dirt and fists began to fly and ... the fury of the disagreement spread to both benches and the bleachers as well.”

June 8, 1967 — Voters approve \$1,319,000 to build Branchville School.

June 22, 1967 — Honorary RHS student Ace, a black Labrador retriever, receives his diploma with the class of 1967. A formal petition was circulated by the seniors to organize the special diploma. “I think most of the student body and faculty members signed it,” Coach Bill Allen says. “They took the petition to Dr. Harold Healy who agreed to sign Ace’s diploma.”

Aug. 21, 1967 — In sadder dog news, Pippin, the Dalmatian mascot of the fire department for 11 years, dies.

Aug. 27, 1967 — David L. Paul, a New York City attorney, buys Casagmo, the former Olcott estate on northern Main Street, from Jerry Tuccio and plans 300 garden apartments. The 30 acres and mansion sell for \$400,000 (\$2.9 million today).

September 1967 – Theodore Stainman becomes the first rabbi serving Temple Shearith Israel.

Sept. 1, 1967 — Joseph Zwierlein retires as dog warden, a job he has held off and on since 1937.

Sept. 6, 1967 — Scotland School opens, despite construction delays.

Sept. 6, 1967 — 4,760 children show up on the first day of school.

Sept. 13, 1967 – Varian Fry, a journalist and classics scholar who is credited with helping more than 2,000 anti-Nazi and Jewish refugees escape from Nazi Germany and the Holocaust, dies alone in Easton at the age of 59. He had lived on Olmstead Lane in the 1950s and early 1960s.

Sept. 18, 1967 – The 203,000-square-foot Benrus Center, Ridgefield's biggest industrial buildings, opens on Route 7. Some years later the complex becomes a Perkin-Elmer facility and today it's medical offices and storage.

October 1967 — Barbara Ann Sill, a senior at RHS, is named DAR Good Citizen of the Year.

October 1967 – J. Mortimer Woodcock is elected first selectman, replacing retiring Leo F. Carroll.

Oct. 9, 1967 — Allen O. Shafer is elected chairman of the school board.

Nov. 2, 1967 — The planned new 1,800-student high school on the Richardson Property on North Salem Road may cost \$6.5 million (\$47-million in 2017 dollars), the school board learns. Two weeks later, the estimate climbs to \$8-\$10 million. Panic sets in and officials begin cutting plans. First thing to go is an indoor swimming pool, which would have been the town's first public pool.

December 1967 – The Ridgefield Baptist Church has its first service in its new Danbury Road home.

Dec. 1, 1967 — David Paul, who bought the Casagmo estate, is getting ready to tear down the mansion to make way for building the apartments. He retains the barn which he turns into the the community building.

Dec 5, 1967 — Electric Regulator files an application to build a corporate headquarters and manufacturing facility on Route 7 south of Stonehenge Inn under "Section 13," a controversial zoning law that allows commercial uses in residential zones, as long as the site is at least 40 acres. The proposal meets widespread opposition and goes nowhere. Section 13 winds up getting repealed.

## **1968**

January 1968 – Scotland Elementary School opens.

Jan. 4, 1968 — Irene Hoyt is honored for 40 years of working as a nurse for the District Nursing Association.

Jan. 4. 1968 — Author Alvin Toffler of Deer Hill Drive tells interviewer Linette Burton he's working on a book on the psychological impact of the accelerating technological changes in the world. "I'm interested in what the new science does to the family structure, what people will feel like in 1990," he says. "People are not psychologically prepared for the blows that lie ahead, blows that are avoidable if we move into the future rationally and anticipate the consequences. If we blunder into the future, there will be hell

to pay.” The book, which comes out in 1970, is called “Future Shock,” and becomes famous around the world, selling more than six million copies. The title becomes a term in most dictionaries today for, as Toffler puts it, “too much change in too short a period of time.”

Jan. 11, 1968 — Dr. Francis Woodford retires as school health officer since World War II. Dr. James Sheehan takes over.

Jan. 14, 1968 — Dawne Marie Knapp is born to Mrs. and Mr. Joseph Knapp. Her siblings are David, Daryl, Darcy, Darin and Dayle.

Jan. 16, 1968 — The Planning and Zoning Commission receives a petition for a regulation change that would limit the number of liquor stores in town by setting a minimum distance between any new store and an existing one. The petition comes not from temperance leaders, but liquor store owners who don’t want more liquor store owners competing with them.

Jan. 19, 1968 — Jack Ward gives \$150,000 to Danbury Hospital for its new ICU.

Jan. 25, 1968 — Patrick J. Crehan of Catoonah Street opens a law office in the Scott Block on Main Street.

Jan. 31, 1968 — Folksinger Oscar Brand sings and speaks at Ridgefield High School.

Feb. 2, 1968 — Voters approve the purchase of 579 acres of the late Otto Lippolt’s land in Ridgebury at a cost of \$350,000. The land is now Hemlock Hills and Pine Mountain Refuges, part of a vast contiguous spread of open space that includes Bennett’s Pond State Park and parks in Danbury and Bethel.

Feb. 12, 1968 — Veterans Park and Branchville Schools — the latter housed at VP — are placed on double sessions until the Branchville building could be completed in another year, sparking ire in parents.

Feb. 15, 1968 — After helping establish St. Mary’s School and getting it running, Msgr. James J. McLaughlin, pastor of St. Mary’s Parish since 1956, is transferred to a Trumbull parish.

Feb. 22, 1968 — Three selectmen and a member of the Board of Finance meet with the Planning and Zoning Commission to press them into approving North American Phillips Company’s plan to build a light industrial plant under “Section 13” on Danbury and Farmingville Roads where the company bought 60 acres of old Outpost Nurseries land six years earlier. The plan is not popular and Phillips gives up.

Feb. 24, 1968 — Mrs. Paul Botsch and daughter Patricia and Jacqueline Roos take over the Ridgefield Luncheonette on Main Street (now the site of Planet Pizza and earlier, Roma Pizzeria). The place had years earlier been the Ridgefield Bakery.

Feb. 27, 1968 – Fire heavily damages the Main Street house of Mrs. John Jay Pierrepont who, at the time, is at her South Carolina home. A few months before, many valuable paintings and antiques had been donated to the John Jay Homestead in Katonah, N.Y. Others still in the house are later restored, including letters from George Washington to John Jay, the first U.S. Supreme Court chief justice, an ancestor of Mrs. Pierrepont's late husband.

Feb. 29, 1968 — Carl Lecher, who just opens Design House Inc. on Route 7, says he wants people to know what modern marvels are available to them when they have a house built. "We're way behind the trendsetting ideas coming out of the West and Midwest," Lecher says. "In this time and space, there are so many automatic devices available that aren't used. I'm in the house design business and I like to create a total living environment for people for the rest of their lives."

March 1968 — Marine Cpl. Edward C. Scott of Silver Spring Park Road is recuperating from wounds received in combat in Vietnam. In July he is promoted to sergeant.

March 1968 — The state is looking at the possibility of using the old railroad bed from Branchville to the center of town as a new path for Route 102, Branchville Road.

March 7, 1968 – Joseph Egan carries his six-year-old daughter, Lisa, to safety through an upstairs window of their burning Twixt Hills home. His wife and two other daughters watch outside as the blaze races through their house.

March 8, 1968 — Nazzareno Birarelli celebrates his 88th birthday. Almost every day the 62-year resident hops on his bicycle and rides from Wilton Road East home to the center of town.

March 8, 1968 — R. Gordon McGovern of Lounsbury Road is elected president of Pepperidge Farm.

March 10, 1968 — Ursula Mary Orange of Sudbury, Ontario, is married to Carroll W. Brewster of The Hickories, Lounsbury Road.

March 14, 1968 — The Connecticut Development Commission reports that Ridgefield's population growth between 1960 and 1967 is the highest of the state's 169 towns. The population jumps 89.8% in those eight years, from 8,165 to 13,500.

March 28, 1968 — The Rev. Martin J. O'Connor is named pastor of St. Mary's Parish.

March 28, 1968 — Stan Engelhardt and Tom Santini of the Ridgefield High School basketball team are named Western Connecticut Conference all-stars.

March 28, 1968 — Six Ridgefielders join the Army and are sent to Fort Dix, N.J.: Robert J. Donohue, Douglas G. McKenzie, Glen C. Moore, Edward F. Moline, Charles Rogers, and Robert J. VanWagner. All are 20 years old, except 19-year-old VanWagner.

March 31, 1968 — Stephen Corbett, 13, of Spire View Road wins the Eastern U.S. Championship Go-Kart race in Danville, Va.

April 1968 — Dr. Brice E. Vickery opens a full-time chiropractic office at his home on Route 7.

April 2, 1968 — Paul Hampden quits the Planning and Zoning Commission, saying it functions “in a manner wasteful of the energies of its members.” Commission meetings have often been running till 1 or 2 a.m.; just approving the minutes of a previous meeting is taking up to an hour of debate.

April 4, 1968 — Attorney Philip Hilsenrad, who retired from his law practice and moved to Florida four months earlier, returns to town and reopens his office. He says he didn’t like “the inactivity of retirement.”

April 6, 1968 — Despite being from Ridgefield, Barbara Butterly and Karen Woodsum are among the competitors for the title of “Miss Danbury.” Butterly is a WestConn student and Woodsum, a secretary in Danbury. Butterly wins.

April 9, 1968 — All schools in the state and many stores in town are closed to mourn the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, assassinated April 4. More than 450 attend special services Sunday, April 7. School Superintendent David Weingast calls King “a man of epic importance in our times” and urges school staff that week to “devote time and energy to convey to our boys and girls the measure of Dr. King’s contributions and the magnitude of our loss.” The Republican Town Committee issues a statement saying “it deplores the continued existence of conditions that create a segregated society and divides the hearts and minds of the people of our land.”

April 12, 1968 — 800 children and parents go crazy at annual Easter Egg Hunt at the East Ridge athletic field.

April 16, 1968 — The Planning and Zoning Commission approves 160 acres in Ridgebury for a town golf course.



April 17, 1968 — Robert Stanger, fifth grade teacher at Scotland School, is named Jaycees' Outstanding Young Educator in Ridgefield.

April 18, 1968 — Lt. Thomas Edward Carnegie of Silver Spring Lane is killed in action in Vietnam, the first Ridgefielder to die in combat in that war. Carnegie dies while trying to rescue a radioman injured by an exploding rocket. He later posthumously receives a Bronze Star for heroism.

April 25, 1968 — The A&P is advertising top sirloin roasts and ground round beef for 88 cents a pound.

April 28, 1968 — First Selectman J. Mortimer Woodcock cuts the ribbon to open the new public indoor rifle and revolver range at the town garage.

May 1968 — Robert Hurley and John Robertson are coaches of the Ridgefield Rockettes girls softball team, now in its second year of play.

May 1968 — Elizabeth Smith of Fulling Mill Lane, an RHS junior, is a finalist in the Miss Ingenue competition sponsored by Gimbel's, the department store in New York City. Finalists are chosen on the basis of "personality, grooming and photogenic potential."

May 2, 1968 — Charles F. Scott Jr. of High Ridge wins a National Merit Scholarship. Meanwhile, Thomas Mead and Peter Holm learn they've been accepted at the Air Force Academy.

May 9, 1968 — The Ridgebury Community Association says it wants Spring Valley Road, Mopus Bridge Road and Wheeler Road to remain dirt roads.

May 12, 1968 — The new Jesse Lee Memorial United Methodist Church is consecrated. At the same time, the 1,675-pipe organ at the church is dedicated. The organ is a gift from Francis D. Martin in honor of his wife, Doris.

May 13, 1968 — For the first time in the town's history, a town meeting rejects the entire town and school budgets of the Board of Finance, not because they are too high but because they are too low. The meeting tells the finance board to restore cuts. Even though the financiers had reduced the \$6.2 million budget requests by \$230,000, the budget would still be \$1 million more than the current year.

May 27, 1968 — The Tiger baseball squad clinches its third consecutive Western Connecticut Conference title, topping Joel Barlow, 12-3, behind the pitching of Frank Lancaster and the hot hitting of Tom Santini, Steve Martin, Jim Croce and Stan Engelhardt.

June 1968 — Ethel Nash, a Ridgefield High School home economics teacher for 25 years, retires. Also retiring is Katherine O’Hearn, a first grade teacher in Ridgefield for 43 years.

June 1968 — The fire department has a new mascot: Charlie Brown II, a four-month-old Dalmatian. He replaces Charlie Brown I, who had to be given away after it was discovered he was deaf, a handicap that would be too dangerous for him amid the ambulance and trucks moving in and out of the headquarters.

June 3, 1968 — Harry Pierandri graduates from Boston College where he was on the varsity football team.

June 6, 1968 — The town is in shock over word that Senator Robert Kennedy has been assassinated. The Ridgefield Clergy Association immediately schedules a memorial service for Sunday afternoon in O’Shea Auditorium, East Ridge Junior High School. “We are more than horrified — we are bewildered and even angry that one who had so much to say and give his country has been quickly removed from us,” says the Rev. Clayton Lund of First Congregational Church, as reported by Susanna Hofmann in The Press.

June 9, 1968 — Mrs. Michael Jaykus of Wilton Road West graduates third highest in her class at Western Connecticut State College, majoring in elementary education. She plans to be a teacher “as soon as her daughter’s school schedule allows.”

June 13, 1968 — Jennifer Joyce wins the Mary Immaculate Award and George Hefferon, the St. Joseph Award, as St. Mary’s School graduates 59 eighth graders. Patricia Sheehan wins the Christian Doctrine Award, Dawn Hackett, the Good Conduct Award, and Christine Foley, the Achievement Award.

June 17, 1968 — After \$100,000 of \$250,000 in cuts are restored by the Board of Finance, town and school budgets are approved at a referendum. Only 29% of the voters turn out.

June 17, 1968 — Reading teacher James Leonard is named a principal and will head the Branchville School, due to open during the next school year.

June 18, 1968 — 190 students graduate from Ridgefield High School. Top-ranking student in the class is Nancy Jane Martin.

June 20, 1968 — Mario Frulla wins a law suit against the town that he charges illegally fired him as a police officer. He collects \$10,500 (\$73,000 in 2017 dollars) in the settlement.

June 22, 1968 — The Rev. Craig Haight becomes minister of Jesse Lee Memorial United Methodist Church.

June 25, 1968 — Democrats nominate attorney Patrick J. Crehan to run for state representative.

June 26, 1968 — The Board of Education votes unanimously that the next elementary school should be build on the 10-acre Bacchiochi property on the corner of Prospect Ridge and Ivy Hill Roads.

June 26, 1968 — Despite heavy rain, 250 youngsters take part in the Kiwanis Fishing Derby at Lake Mamasasco.

June 28, 1968 — “With the increasing crackdown on glue sniffing in the area, it appears that the young glue sniffers have gone underground,” says a front-page Press story, reporting that youths had broken into a 150-year-old underground tomb at the Ridgefield Cemetery “and were conducting glue-sniffing sessions inside.”

June 30, 1968 — Laura Curie Allee Shields of Main Street, an early suffragist who had been active in town for a half century, dies at the age of 97.

July 1968 — Lt. Jack Croce of Mary’s Lane, commander of Connecticut State Police Troop L barracks in Litchfield, is retiring and will become head of internal security at Perkin-Elmer.

July 1, 1968 — Lowell I. Williams, the town’s first professional planner, resigns to go into private practice.

July 2, 1968 — Ridgefield’s newly formed American Legion baseball team has some of the area’s finest talent, says The Press. Stars include Frank Lancaster, Greg Miner, Steve Martin, Steve Bellagamba, Peter Lamb, Tom Stolle, Bob Tripi, and Dave Yelinek.

July 2, 1968 — Technical Planning Associates, hired by the Planning and Zoning Commission to write a “master plan” for the town, predicts Ridgefield will reach saturation at 32,000 people in the year 2000. They are off more than a tad.

July 4, 1968 — Danbury’s lack of any fireworks this year sparks a horrendous traffic jam for Ridgefield’s display at Veterans Park as countless Danburians descend on the town to add to the thousands of Ridgefielders attending. “The crowd was so large that, after the fireworks were over, it took some people on foot 15 minutes just to get through the hordes of humanity trying to get out through the Governor Street fence exit,” The Press says. Then there were the miles of cars.

July 9, 1968 — The Planning and Zoning Commission proposes upzoning more than 3,300 acres of Ridgefield, mostly changing two-acre minimum lot areas to three-acre, prompting panic for major developers like Jerry Tuccio.

July 10, 1968 — Donald Ligos is elected chief of the Ridgefield Volunteer Fire Department.

July 11, 1968 — “It is necessary to curtail operations and cease and desist from future filling,” the commissioner of the State Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (now DEEP) tells the town in a letter pressing Ridgefield to close its landfill — better known as “the dump.”

July 13, 1968 — About 240 family and friends celebrate the 25th wedding anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. Deno Carboni at the Italian-American Club.

July 16, 1968 — 900 acres of Ridgebury land north of George Washington Highway are upzoned for light industry by the Planning and Zoning Commission. Years later most of it becomes the campus of Boehringer-Ingelheim, the pharmaceutical company that is far and away Ridgefield’s largest taxpayer (assessed valuation in 2016 of \$198-million).

July 18, 1968 — Boneless chuck roasts are 65 cents a pound at First National where you can also buy 10 cans of tomato soup for \$1. Bedient’s is selling a GE top-loading clothes washer for \$188.

July 24, 1968 — Dr. Peter Yanity is elected president of the Ridgefield Boys Club.

July 25, 1968 — Danbury Savings & Loan is offering 5.25% interest on a six-month savings certificate.

July 21, 1968 — The Ridgefield Police Department grows to 17 officers (it’s now 41 officers and seven civilians).

July 31, 1968 — The Board of Education ends the fiscal year with a \$1 surplus. It spent \$3,018,498.

August 1968 — Pinchbeck Nurseries on Peaceable Street erects a 15,000-square-foot greenhouse to hold more roses. The 65-year-old operation cuts 45,000 roses a month, mostly for the New York City market.

Aug. 2, 1968 — Sgt. Daniel M. McKeon Jr. of Old Stagecoach Road receives shrapnel wounds in the front of the brain during a Vietnam War battle. Three weeks later he is reported in “excellent condition.”

Aug. 2 and 3, 1968 — The Toy Caboose on Prospect Street sells many items at half price at the annual Sidewalk Sales. There were also 50 cent and \$1 tables.

Aug. 4, 1968 — Edward J. Fitzgerald of Tannery Hill Road, chairman of the Parks and Recreation Commission, dies at 44.

Aug. 7, 1968 — By only 36 votes, Attorney Herbert V. Camp wins the Republican primary to be GOP candidate for the state House of Representatives, beating Catherine Edighoffer and Margaret Reinhardsen. Camp faces Patrick Crehan in November.

Aug. 14, 1968 — Angry that their children will be on double sessions because the building won't be ready in September, parents tell the Branchville School Building Committee to speed up work and get the job done on time. "We are paying 63 mills in taxes," says J.W. Hackaday of Rising Ridge Road. "For this our children will get no recess, no lunch, four-hour class days, and will come home in the dark."

Aug. 17, 1968 — John Iovino allows only two hits as Ridgefield American Legion baseball squad beats Hopewell Junction, 1-0, to win a regional invitational tournament in Ossining, N.Y., with teams from four counties. Ridgefield's only run is scored by Stan Engelhardt as he singles, steals second, heads for third on a bad pick-off throw, and then continues on home when a frantic Hopewell catcher throws the ball into the outfield.

Aug. 22, 1968 — Josephine Tobin recalls when her cousin, the about-to-be first lady of the United States, used to visit Ridgefield. One of Patricia Ryan Nixon's favorite places was Great Swamp. "She had never seen a partridge before, even though she was a farm girl," Tobin says. "She was thrilled when on one of her walks a partridge rose whirring toward the sky."

Aug. 23, 1968 — RHS coach Robert Mark and just-graduated alumnus John Stolle participate in the annual Nutmeg Bowl game of statewide football stars. Mark is assistant coach and Stolle, starting center, for the West.

Aug. 29, 1968 — Fewer than 50 people turn out to approve spending \$150,000 on 120 to 140 acres of the Leighton, Lawrence and Dlh properties in Ridgebury for a new municipal golf course.

Aug. 31-Sept. 1, 1968 — Some 1,200 people — 75% of them teenagers — gather at the Psychedelic Shed on Route 7 to call for peace in Vietnam and to decry Chicago's police's treatment of protestors at the Democratic National Convention.

Sept. 4, 1968 — The Sisters of Notre Dame on West Mountain open Notre Dame Academy, a Catholic girls high school, with an opening class of 40 students. The academy closes four years later because of lack of enrollments.

Sept. 5, 1968 — Enrollment in the Ridgefield public schools today — 4,655 children — exceeds the entire town's population of 4,356 in 1950, only 18 years earlier. By Sept. 10, enrollment climbs to 4,763 as late arrivals from moves and vacations straggle in.

Sept. 5, 1968 — The Planning and Zoning Commission rejects Jerry Tuccio's plan for 88 houses on the old Keeler farm off Ridgebury Road, citing a "haphazard" sewage and drainage seepage report. The next day Tuccio resubmits the application for "Pleasant View Estates."

Sept. 6, 1968 — Richard Bellagamba is promoted to the newly created position of lieutenant in the Ridgefield Police Department while Thomas Rotunda and Kenneth Shannon are named sergeants. R. Philip Mitchell, an RHS graduate who had been an auxiliary policeman, joins the force.

Sept. 11, 1968 — Charles John Hofmann, who'd been captain of the RHS track team, begins his freshman year at UConn.

Sept. 12, 1968 — Airman First Class Robert Rowella of Riverside Drive (RHS 1966) has been in Vietnam only three months, but already has a plan to help the Vietnamese children who are victims of the war. "I am looking for anyone that is interested in helping children to send in some old but usable clothes," he writes. A donation of \$26 will send a child to school for a year, he adds.

Sept. 13, 1968 — Two Ridgefielders — Peter Bunblasky, 20, and Jeanne Potter, 16 — are killed when Bunblasky's car, traveling at a high rate of speed, hits a tree head-on on West Lane. Two weeks later, Police Chief John Haight issues a plea for Ridgefielders to drive carefully. "When the lives of two of our young people were snuffed out in an auto accident two weeks ago, it would seem that a lesson should have been learned from that tragic incident," he says. "Not so. The following evening we received a complaint of drag racing on the same highway. A few nights later, also on the same road, an operator was arrested by one of our officers and charged with racing. What lesson was learned? Last week another life was lost in a car-truck accident on Route 7. Only minutes later, two young men narrowly escaped death on Route 116 when their vehicle rolled over...."

Sept. 15, 1968 — The Rev. John K. Kjoller (pronounced Keeler) becomes pastor of St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, which is still having services in Veterans Park School.

Sept. 18, 1968 — After 11 months of negotiating, Ridgefield teachers and the school board sign a contract that provides pay increases. Beginning teachers with no experience, now hired at \$5,900, will get \$6,400 next year and \$6,900 the following year.

Sept. 26, 1968 — Rick Addressi, who had been managing the Danbury Addressi Jewelry Store, is named manager of the Ridgefield store by his dad, John J. Addressi.

Sept. 28, 1968 — Jimmy Tulipani's sharp passing leads the undefeated Tiger football squad to its third straight victory.

October 1968 — Girls at St. Mary's School get new plaid uniforms, but boys stay in their old blue — except they now wear plaid ties.

Oct. 5, 1968 — The Tigers thump Newtown, 42-6, for another gridiron victory. Counting last year, that's 12 straight Ridgefield wins. On the sad side, Ricky Bellagamba, the 15-year-old sophomore kicker on the Tiger squad, suffers a broken femur on the opening kick-off and is in a cast from his chest to his toes.

Oct. 10, 1968 — "It looks as if the wall will come tumbling down at Mimosa and the residents there will get inside school bus service once again," The Press reports. "Last week a bus with 40 junior and senior high school students on board smashed into one of the walls, heavily damaging the stonework. The accident prompted the school officials to cancel all bus trips between the pillars because they said the narrow distance between them is dangerous." John Hastings, head of the Mimosa homeowners, says the damaged wall will be torn down and the opening will be widened.

Oct. 13, 1968 — 13-year-old Debbie Burnett of Split Level Road is being credited with saving the life of Karen Meenan, 24, after Meenan was bitten by a timber rattlesnake at Macedonia State Park in Kent. Following Meenan's instructions Burnett uses a shirt as a tourniquet and cuts open the wound with a knife. Burnett then sucks the wound for 45 minutes to remove venom. Both are members of a Civil Air Patrol group doing a practice rescue at the park.

Oct. 14, 1968 — The prospect of several years of double sessions in the schools prompts a standing-room-only crowd of parents to pack the school board meeting, expressing their dismay. The event helps convince the board to press town officials for more schools.

Oct. 16, 1968 — Ridgebury Firehouse opens.

Oct. 19, 1968 — The Tigers beat Joel Barlow to win the Western Connecticut Conference football title.

Oct. 21-28, 1968 — Off-duty Ridgefield police officers picket in front of town hall in a contract dispute centering on salaries, sick leave and vacation time. One placard carried by picketers says "Work diligently with integrity... you'll get your reward"; it shows a policeman with a large screw going through his body. The sign was drawn by recently hired Officer R. Philip Mitchell, a graduate of the Silvermine College of Art.

Oct. 22, 1968 — Ridgefield Police set up roadblocks at various locations after the Georgetown office of Fairfield County Trust Company is held up by two men. The getaway car is found in Redding; in its trunk is the body of the 19-year-old man it was stolen from.

Oct. 22, 1968 — Susan Pfeifer, formerly of Ridgefield, and Robert Scala of The Elms Inn are married in Georgetown. The reception is at Stonehenge Inn.

Oct. 24, 1968 — First Selectman J. Mortimer Woodcock thinks the next elementary school should be built on the former McManus property on Oscaleta Road, which the town already owns.

Oct. 24, 1968 — “America has failed because its leadership has failed,” says an ad quoting Richard M. Nixon, candidate for president, in The Press.

Oct. 24, 1968 — In the same issue, a full-page ad for Ridgefield European Motors on Danbury Road touts the little-known BMW, especially the 1600, noting that “Car and Driver calls our latest ‘The world’s best \$2,500 automobile.’” The 1600’s price is actually \$2,597 (\$18,200 in 2017 dollars)

Oct. 26, 1968 — The left hand of 14-year-old Glenn Symon of Orchard Drive is seriously injured when a Revolutionary War-style cannon, operated by him and other members of his Boy Scout Troop 90, misfires at a football game ceremony in Wilton. In the months that follow, many fundraisers are held to help the family with medical expenses.

Oct. 28, 1968 — A bolt of lightning hits the recently purchased West Mountain home of Leonard and Maddie Corbin, blowing out four windows, ripping off baseboard heaters, punching a large hole in the dining room wall, and sending clapboards flying 40 feet from the building. There is no fire.

Oct. 31, 1968 — Cheryl Anne Frost of Rolling Ridge Road is named DAR Good Citizen of the Year.

November 1968 — During the month 259 people use the newly opened shooting range at the town garage.

November 1968 — The huge, 6,800-square-foot Conklin barn on North Street, once part of the Stonecrest estate, is being dismantled piece by piece to be rebuilt as a house on Spring Valley Road. Arthur Edelman, an executive of a New York City reptile hide-tanning firm (as in alligator handbags), purchases the 80-year-old building and plans to



turn it into an 11-room house, using every piece of material from the original barn. Construction cost is estimated at \$73,000 (\$512,000 in 2017).

Nov. 1, 1968 – In more barn news, just after midnight on All Souls Day, a suspicious blaze levels a 19th Century barn on Ridgebury Road. The barn had belonged for generations to the Keeler family, but is owned by Jerry Tuccio, as part of the land on which he plans Pleasant View Estates. It's the first fire that the new Ridgebury firehouse responds to.

Nov. 1, 1968 — William Robertson, guidance counselor at Veterans Park School, becomes acting principal of Scotland School.

Nov. 2, 1968 — After winning 15 straight games, the Tiger football squad meets its match in state tourney play at the hands of Northwest Catholic of West Hartford, 36-22.

Nov. 5, 1968 – Attorney Herbert V. Camp is elected state representative over Patrick Crehan, 4,104 to 2,409. Nixon's the one in Ridgefield, which Lyndon Johnson had carried four years earlier. Nixon gets 4,390 votes to Hubert Humphrey's 2,267 and George Wallace's 270. Ridgefield goes for Republic Edwin May for U.S. Senator, but Democrat Abraham Ribicoff wins the state.

Nov. 11, 1968 — The Board of Education decides the “next two” elementary schools should be built on the Scotland School site on Barlow Mountain Road and the McManus property on Oscaleta Road.

Nov. 14, 1968 — Fred Hoff of Circle Drive East learns that he is still mayor of Crestwood, Ill., even though he moved to Ridgefield in October. He was mayor of Crestwood for four years, but the Chicago suburb was unable to find a replacement for him and Crestwood's town attorney has ruled the Ridgefielder is still the mayor.

Nov. 14, 1968 — “Now they have schools for truck drivers, but I had to learn it myself,” says Americo Giambartolomei, a transcontinental truck driver who loves his work, in an interview with Linette Burton in The Press. “I was a born natural truck driver.”

Nov. 16, 1968 — The selectmen declare today Biafra Day, calling the suffering of the Biafran people “a human tragedy unparalleled in modern times.” One million people eventually die of starvation in the conflict in Biafra, now part of eastern Nigeria.

Nov. 21, 1968 — Kathleen Lane is named St. Mary's School's first assistant principal. She is a former New York City high school science teacher, married to Dr. John O'Gorman Lane.

Nov. 26, 1968 — The Board of Education learns that the new 1,800-student high school will cost \$8.3 million (\$58-million in 2017), which is \$1.8 million (\$12.6 million) more than the town has agreed to pay. Agonizing begins.

Nov. 26, 1968 — Bird Motors' ad in The Press shows a picture of a VW Beetle and a headline: "\$1,749." It then asks "What's the catch?" The answer: "There isn't any." That's the price — and it would be only \$12,250 in today's dollars.

Nov. 27, 1968 — While hunting in Maine, John Utz of St. John's Road shoots a deer that turns out to have an antler, hooves and size of a buck, but the organs of a female. "I could not quite believe my eyes," he says, "and I guess a lot of other people couldn't either because by the next day the whole area around Rangeley was buzzing about the freak deer." The Press headline: "Ridgefielder Bags Queer Deer in Waist-Deep Snows of Maine."

December 1968 — A Riverside developer proposes 26 new three-acre building lots on the former Sunset Hall estate on Old West Mountain Road, used recently as a St. Vincent de Paul novitiate. The development, called Sachem Hill, would retain the mansion and, of the 104 acres, ten along the edge of Round Pond — the town's reservoir — would be donated for open space.

December 1968 — The Hong Kong flu hits town, jacking up school absentee rates to as high as 12% a day, compared to the normal 5%, and making it difficult for the schools to find substitute teachers for sick ones.

Dec. 3, 1968 — After chopping 10 lots off the planned 84 lots, the Planning and Zoning Commission approves Jerry Tuccio's Pleasant View Estates development of 217 acres of former Keeler farmland in Ridgebury. The lots are two-acre minimum, but at the same meeting, the commission upzones 400 acres on both sides of the Tuccio land to three-acre lots.

Dec. 5, 1968 — Ed Moline, who enlists in late March, is already a paratrooper with the Air Cavalry in Vietnam.

Dec. 5, 1968 — Schlumberger begins using satellite transmissions to move complicated data between its Paris headquarters and its research center on Old Quarry Road. "The transmission, which lasted 10 minutes, may lead to time savings of as much as a month in the process of setting up oil wells in the Mid-East," The Press reports.

Dec. 5, 1968 — Carl Shapley, head of the defunct Shapley School on Danbury Road, argues in court that the foreclosure auction price of the school property is not close enough to the appraised value of \$200,000 for the 26 acres and buildings. Apartment

Developer David Paul has bid \$146,400 (\$1 million in 2017) for the property, now Fox Hill condominiums. Shapley loses, Paul builds.

Dec. 7, 1968 — Harry Stiller, 63, is clearing his jammed .22 rifle at his Mamasco Road cottage when the weapon accidentally discharges. The bullet hits his wife, Nora, 62, killing her.

Dec. 7, 1968 — A record 152 boys register for the 15th season of Townies basketball.

Dec. 12, 1968 — John Fossi is the new manager of Craig's Jewelry Store. He had once worked there.

Dec. 12, 1968 — Joseph Jones Sr. of Bailey Avenue is elected president of the Ridgefield Branch of the NAACP, taking over from the Rev. William Webb, who had been president for 17 years.

Dec. 12, 1968 — Fairfield County Trust Company says in an advertisement in The Press, "Join our Christmas Club and Sing Along with Mitch and all his Friends." That is to say, open an account to save from 50 cents to \$20 a week for 50 weeks, and you'll get a limited-edition 33 RPM record, "The Gift of Christmas," with songs by Mitch Miller, Ray Conniff and the Singers, the Norman Luboff Choir, Doris Day, Patti Page, Jimmy Dean, Anita Bryant, and Bobby Vinton. God help we merry gentlemen.

Dec. 15, 1968 — Even Santa's visit to town, sponsored by the Jaycees, is cancelled when eight inches of snow falls on Ridgefield in an era before the SUV.

Dec. 16, 1968 — School officials are still puzzling over where to build the next elementary school: East Ridge? Oscaleta Road? The Scotland School site?

Dec. 18, 1968 — The Italian American Club hosts a dinner for the 40 members of the WCC champion Tiger football team. "Mothers of the seniors, with the help of Mrs. Vincenzina Buccitti, prepared a meal of chicken, macaroni, meat balls, salad, ice cream, soda, coffee, and cookies." With hot sauce on the side, no doubt.

Dec. 19, 1968 — Newcomers in town include Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Dzielinski of Ritch Drive and their four children, Paul, 14, Peter, 12, Greg, 9, and Bruce, 5.

Dec. 19, 1968 — The Rickshaw Restaurant at the Ridgefield Motor Inn on Route 7 (in Redding) is advertising luncheon specials that sound like a Buddy Hackett comedy routine: Chicken Chow Mein, Spareribs, Shrimp Chow Mein, Egg Foo Young, Pepper Steak w/Onion, and Shrimp w/Lobster Sauce. Meals are priced from \$1.65 to \$1.95. .

## 1969

1969

January 1969 — Ridgefield ranks 35th in the state in per-pupil school spending, down from 15th the year before. Wilton is sixth, down from second.

Jan. 1, 1969 — Herb Shaw, owner of State Line Service Station on South Salem Road for the past 20 years, sells the business to Eddie Woodcock of South Salem.

Jan. 4, 1969 — More than 300 teenagers attend a dance sponsored by the Ridgefield Youth Center at its temporary facilities in the former Shapley School on Danbury Road.

Jan 6, 1969 — An anonymous editorial in *The Chieftain*, the high school newspaper, charges that education at RHS is a “meaningless experience” with an “undisciplined schedule” and “meaningless requirements,” prompting Superintendent David Weingast to respond. “This is a sweeping indictment,” he says. “It ignores the high-quality instruction that is taking place in many classrooms. But to whatever degree there is validity in this student’s charges, this is something to think about.”

Jan. 9, 1969 — Sgt. Ed Moline (RHS 1967) is awarded a Bronze Star for heroism and promoted to sergeant. Four days earlier his patrol was ambushed in Phuoc Long Province. “Sgt. Moline, a member of the Air Cavalry, was acting as a scout...when his group came under attack by a large number of hostile soldiers,” *The Press* reports Feb. 20 on the front page. “The patrol was forced to move through enemy lines to a helicopter pickup point. Specialist Moline exposed himself to the intense hostile fire as he moved farther than normal ahead of the patrol to insure good security. During the movement Specialist Moline engaged and killed an enemy soldier which was firing on his patrol, enabling the patrol to continue toward the pickup zone. His display of personal bravery and devotion to duty is in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service.”

Jan. 9, 1969 — John Edward Dowling, a Democratic former FBI agent and once the youngest probate judge in the state, is appointed town attorney by Republican First Selectman J. Mortimer Woodcock.

Jan. 13, 1969 — David Moore, a Purple Heart veteran of World War II and former owner of the Ridgefield News Store, dies at the age of 52. Moore, who also earned the Croix de Guerre, sold the store to Aldo “Squash” Travaglini, resulting in a new and lasting name for the business.

Jan. 13 and 20, 1969 — Large and sometimes unruly groups of Westmoreland parents appear at two school board meetings and eventually pressure the board into providing better school bus service to the 115-family development. At the time buses are not

entering Westmoreland; all children are picked up at either Barry Avenue or Peaceable Street. The school board notes that elementary pupils can be required to walk up to a mile to a bus stop; high school kids, one and a half miles. Parents don't think that's safe.

Jan. 16, 1969 — Engagements are announced for Aileen Leary to Joseph A. Egan — a June wedding is planned, and Dale Tulipani to Richard J. Ligi — a September wedding is planned.

Jan. 19, 1969 — Bob Fish is elected head of the local postal carriers union. Frank Shaw and Bud Mahoney are vice presidents and Walter Boyce, secretary.

Jan. 24, 1969 — The Board of Selectmen wants a halt to all work on the new high school until estimated building costs are cut by \$2 million. The town had approved \$6.5 million (\$43 million in today's dollars) for the job but latest estimates are putting the school at \$8.5 million (\$56 million).

Jan. 24, 1969 — Newly elected State Rep. Herbert V. Camp receives the Jaycees Distinguished Service Award.

Feb. 1, 1969 — More than 3,000 people attend Francis D. Martin's annual skating party on Lake Mamanasco, postponed one week because the ice was wet. Light snow falls during the gathering.

Feb. 4, 1969 — The Planning and Zoning Commission approves "cluster zoning," which allows houses to be built on smaller than normal lots, provided that a sizable quantity of worthwhile open space is permanently set aside. The new rules prove popular with many developers.

Feb. 4, 1969 — David Ables, son of Kay and Lewis Ables of Ashbee Lane, is born.

Feb. 9 and 10, 1969 — More than 20 inches of snow, whipped by winds of up to 50 mph, virtually smother the town Sunday and Monday in what is called the worst snowstorm in 20 years. Some roads are still only one lane wide on Thursday.

Feb. 15, 1969 — Tony Adamowicz of Main Street receives the Tim Mayer Memorial Trophy as outstanding young race car driver in the country at the Sports Car Club of America convention in Denver. He goes on to have a long career in racing, dying of brain cancer in 2016 at the age of 75.

Feb. 18, 1969 — Branchville Elementary School opens. Construction was delayed six months by strikes, labor shortages and bad weather, school officials say.

Feb. 20, 1969 — Gert Kaufman of Cain's Hill Road submits a letter to the selectmen, signed by 130 people who want a planned Super 7 interchange at Florida Hill and Old Redding Roads eliminated from plans for the four-lane expressway, leaving only two interchanges in Ridgefield. The board is not impressed. "I would like to fight for four" interchanges, says First Selectman J. Mortimer Woodcock, who pooh-poohs the 130 signatures. "I'm sure we could get three times as many from people near the other interchanges who want theirs cut out." Kaufman's side eventually wins and the interchange is dropped; eventually the whole expressway plan is abandoned.

Feb. 26, 1969 — Bartholomew T. Salerno of Silver Spring Road reveals he is president of Radio Ridgefield Inc., a firm that has applied to the Federal Communications Commission to fire up a 1,000-watt AM broadcasting station in Ridgefield.

Feb. 27, 1969 — James "Jimmy Joe" Joseph is still running Joe's Store at the corner of Danbury Road and Main Street — Joe's Corner. He began in 1918, and is the oldest business in town continuously under the same management. (Today the operation is called Country Corners.)

Feb. 28, 1969 — "The Wrecking Crew," starring Dean Martin, is at the Danbury Drive-In. "Doctor Dolittle" is at the Ridgefield Playhouse on Prospect Street.

March 1969 — A team from RidgeBowl wins a championship title at the Connecticut State Junior Tenpin Bowling Tournament: Sandy Jones, Claudia Burnes, Nancy Baldaserini, Dot Nicholas, Nara Franzi, Margaret Moylan, Jay Seeley, Carol Acocella, Carol Dlugo, and Don Heibeck.

March 1, 1969 — Less than a month after it opens, vandals break into the new, \$1.3-million Branchville School and ransack eight classrooms. Children caught vandalizing schools "will be arrested and vigorously prosecuted," says Police Chief John F. Haight.

March 1, 1969 — Gordon Walsh Jr. heads the Boy Scout's annual fund drive in Ridgefield. Some 800 Ridgefielders aged 8 to 17 are Boy Scouts with 150 adult volunteers.

March 6, 1969 — Noxious fumes from the heating plant at the new Scotland School have been leaking into five classrooms, causing headaches and nausea for pupils and teachers. Today, one teacher becomes sick and has to see a doctor, who prescribes a 14-day drug treatment and says the fumes are probably the cause. The architect and contractor disagree as to who is responsible for the fumes.

March 7, 1969 — A town meeting votes \$250,000 (\$1.7 million in 2017) to buy three Rockwell family properties totaling 25 acres on East Ridge to eventually use for schools. One parcel is now the athletic field north of East Ridge Middle School; another is now

the soccer field north of the ice rink; and the third, with the Rockwell homestead on it, is later sold and becomes the home of First Selectman Sue Manning.

March 7, 1969 — Charles G. Bluhdorn of Florida Hill Road is on the cover of Time Magazine for the second time. The 42-year-old, who came to this country at 16 as a penniless war refugee from Austria, is head of Gulf and Western, the huge conglomerate, and is said to be worth \$50 million (\$350 million in 2017 dollars).

March 7, 1969 — Ridgefielders Pat DiMuzio and Jason Nevins star in “The Lion in Winter,” opening today at the Bonner Playhouse in Georgetown.

March 12, 1969 — The school board approves \$15,000 in the coming year’s budget to create a “media center” that will include a video-taping system. Dr. John Trout, director of curriculum, says uses of the system include “taping of educational television shows which can later be shown to classes when the teacher wishes. Science demonstrations could be taped and shown to many classes. Student and first-year teachers can be taped so they can examine their own techniques and improve them.” A video-taping machine costs \$7,800 (\$55,000 in 2017)

March 15, 1969 — Two charter members — Harry Hull and Henry Cumming — are present as the American Legion Post celebrates its 50th anniversary with a dinner at Legion Hall.

March 15, 1969 — Pvt. Robert F. Sidonio is beginning Warrant Officer Flight Training School at Fort Walters, Texas, after graduating from Army basic training at Fort Polk, La.

March 18, 1969 — Whether to include a costly fallout shelter in the new Ridgefield High School is discussed by the High School Building Committee. The shelter is eventually axed.

March 19, 1969 — With provisions to avoid any double sessions in the coming year, the school board approves a 1969-70 budget of \$4.9-million (\$32 million in 2017).

March 20, 1969 — New at Korky’s Ridgefield Photo Shop is the Kodak Instamatic Reflex Camera with interchangeable f2.8 lens for \$199.50 “and worth a lot more.” Today that’s the equivalent of \$1,330 and it didn’t even include a flash — the camera used rotating “flash cubes,” with four flashes per cube.

March 22 and 29, 1969 — The Jaycees have their annual Battle of the Bands. Ridgefield bands and their leaders include Society Innovation, with Paul Hannan; Ulterior Motive, with Jim Edighoffer; Rush Hour Blues with Chris Wilson; The New Joy with Mike Filgate; Why, with Larry Shabb; The Third story World, with Carl Aronsen; The Purple

Haze with Curtis Paige; and Inner Sanctum with Greg Tropsa. The winner? The New Joy, whose other members are Gary Johnson, Jim Filgate, and Richard Martylewski.

March 24, 1969 — Specialist Fourth Class William Howard Keeler, 19, is killed in action in Vietnam.

March 26, 1969 — Miss Charlotte Wakeman, who had been Ridgefield's first superintendent of schools from 1919 to 1921, dies at the age of 91 in Hastings on Hudson, N.Y. Wakeman had been principal of Hamilton High School before becoming superintendent. She later taught high school English in Mt. Vernon, N.Y., for many years.

March 27, 1969 — In an interview with Linette Burton, Frank Lancaster of Harvey Road, a longtime booster of boys athletics, discusses his philosophy on sports. "Physical fitness is so important," he says. "And somewhere along the line, a boy has to learn how to lose. Competition is important; it's a matter of when you introduce it. After all, any game, even dominos, is competition. In learning how to lose boys learn self-discipline."

March 27, 1969 — Russell P. Keeler of New Street, who is back home after completing four years in the Navy, receives a Bronze Star for heroism in action. Keeler was a gunner on a boat that was landing a Naval SEAL team, the Navy says. "Just as the bow of the boat was placed onto the river bank, a tremendous explosion was unleashed against the craft and its personnel...The craft's hull was torn by shrapnel. After the explosion and during the chaos that resulted, Petty Officer Keeler, with disregard for his own life or personal safety, left his gun position and went over the side by the blast. Petty Officer Keeler jumped into the water, although there could have been Viet Cong with automatic weapons standing ready in the predawn darkness to climax the ambush, and pulled a SEAL officer ashore. Once ashore he tended his wounds until the SEAL Team medic arrived. His heroic actions and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United State Naval Service."

April 1969 — First Lt. Michael Casey of Main Street, a U.S. Army Green Beret, is discharged after three years of service, the last one in Vietnam.

April 1, 1969 — State Police Trooper John T. Jones of Barry Avenue is promoted from sergeant to lieutenant, and given command of State Police Troop I in Bethany. He now has an 86-mile round-trip commute.

April 2, 1969 — 21 cases of burglary, larceny and vandalism in Branchville are solved when police arrest two 14-year-old boys inside a vacant house on Brook Lane. Detectives believe the pair trashed the new Branchville School a month before.

April 3, 1969 — Sixteen RHS seniors are State Scholars: Scott Helmers, Mark Archambault, Arthur McGrath, Tracy Troost, Nancy Cole, James Ryan, Christine Walsh,



Joy Judell, Nancy Hubert, Christopher White, Meris Delli-Bovi, Peter Ochsner, James Blaine, Susan Wood, Carol Schoenbrunn, and Dolores Gallo.

April 8, 1969 — After retiring from 32 years with the state police, four years on the state Liquor Control Commission, and 10 years as first selectman, Leo F. Carroll is back in action, elected to fill a vacancy on the Board of Education. Carroll says the next day that the board faces difficulties: “There is some confusion and perhaps some corrosion concerning some problems.” However, he adds, problems “will be ironed out quickly between the board and the public.” Little does he know the board will soon face one of its most trying periods: The “Book Burning” controversy.

April 10, 1969 — One currently growing controversy is sex education. A local group, calling itself MOTOREDE, vehemently objects to sex education in the public schools. Superintendent David Weingast assures parents that “there is no curriculum committee of the schools developing material in sex education.” Some parents don’t believe him.

April 14, 1969 — Pitcher Frank Lancaster Jr. leads batters with three hits and two runs as he limits Abbott Tech to three hits as the Tigers win their season opener, 7-2.

April 16, 1969 – “This is going to be a soul-searching session,” says Father Martin J. O’Connor. The St. Mary’s pastor tells 300 parents and others that due to lack of vocations, the teaching nuns from the Marianite Sisters of the Holy Cross will leave St. Mary’s School, most at the end of the school year and all by the end of the next year. Father O’Connor plans to replace the nuns with lay teachers, but that will mean a sizable increase in tuition to pay them.

April 21, 1969 — Orlando Busino of Shadblow Hill Road is honored as best magazine cartoonist of the year by the National Cartoonists Society.

April 26, 1969 — A “hell of a smell” wafts across town as someone sets fire to the town dump, requiring firefighters to spend two days extinguishing it.

May 1969 — Casagmo, which is under construction, wins a blue ribbon for design at the national convention and exposition of the Apartment Builders and Developers Association. “We have carefully designed Casagmo in acknowledgement of the history and natural typography of the site so as to blend in with the community,” says Lee Harris Pomeroy, lead architect. “Large areas of the site will remain untouched because of the historic significance as well as natural stately beauty.”

May 1, 1969 — Frank Lancaster Jr., an RHS senior, is selected by the National Football Foundation and Hall of Fame as one of the ten 1969 Scholar Athletes in the United States. The multi-sport star is in the top 5% of his class at RHS.

May 5, 1969 — Quinto Cassavechia, a Ridgefield contractor, is working on clearing land off Thunder Hill Lane when a truck on the site hits a tree limb, which falls and strikes him on the head. He dies at Danbury Hospital that night, only 48 years old. His widow, Dora, will become Ridgefield's town clerk for many years.

May 8, 1969 — The town obtains an option to buy the Holy Ghost Novitiate on Prospect Ridge for possible school use.

May 11, 1969 — Jimmy Warner, a star RHS athlete, is a passenger in a car that crashes into a tree, leaving him paralyzed from the neck down. In the months and even years that follow, many fund-raisers are held to help Warner, who eventually operates his own telephone answering service in Ridgefield and then moves to the Boston area where he dies in 2002 at the age of 50.

May 12, 1969 — At the Annual Town Meeting, 220 voters approve a budget that will mean a nine-mill tax hike.

May 13, 1969 — 84-year-old Roger Nash Baldwin, a founder and a longtime executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union, tells the RHS National Honor Society it's healthful to fight for an unpopular cause, whether it be for human rights or personal freedoms, because it keeps you "both young and on the ball."

May 15, 1969 — Calling themselves Concerned Students for the Future, five RHS students begin a fight against the destruction of coastal wetlands in Connecticut. They are Jay and Joan Gormley, Paula Littlefield, and Liz Shultis.

May 24, 1969 — A fire heavily damages a 150-year-old building on Danbury Road that had once been the Outpost Inn and more recently the Shapley School. Developer David Paul had planned to use it as a community center for his new apartment development there, but damage is too extensive and he tears down the building.

May 26, 1969 — Sale of beach tags for Great Pond Beach begins. Beach chief Francis D. Martin reports that the donation for a family tag is increasing from \$25 to \$35 because of rising costs, including damage from vandalism.

June 1969 — The Tigers take another Western Connecticut Conference title and close the season with Greg Miner hurling a one-hitter against New Milford. Ranked second in the state, they then beat Gilbert of Winsted, 1-0, on a Frank Lancaster shutout in tourney play, but eventually succumb to Stamford Catholic.

June 6, 1969 — Organist, composer and author Alec Wyton leads the Boys Choir of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York at an Evensong concert at St. Stephen's

Church. Eighteen years later he leaves the city to become minister of music at St. Stephen's.

June 6, 1969 — Cornelius Ryan of Old Branchville Road is in Normandy where he helps lead a ceremony honoring war correspondents, like himself, who covered the landing on D-Day just 25 years earlier. Ryan wrote the best-selling D-Day history, "The Longest Day."

June 7, 1969 — With 3,063 people voting, Ridgefielders reject by a mere 33 votes a proposed town charter that would eliminate the town meeting, and consolidate the elected Board of Selectmen and the appointed Board of Finance into a powerful, nine-member, elected town council. The charter would also have added a code of ethics and term limits for town officials.

June 10, 1969 — A reception honors three long-time teachers who are retiring: Mary Creagh, after 41 years (36 in Ridgefield); Levio Zandri, 35 years at RHS; and Christine Hurlburt, 40 years as a teacher (20 of them as a substitute).

June 16, 1969 — Howard Paul is named principal of Scotland School, succeeding acting principal William Robertson.

June 19, 1969 — Scott Helmers, first in his class of 219 students, is the graduation speaker as Ridgefield High School has its 53rd commencement.

June 24, 1969 — Westbrook Pegler, the Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist and former resident who once called Ridgefield "an old aristocratic town of moldering white mansions on a white main street" that "has quietly become infested with wealthy Sixth Columnists" (read: commie supporters), dies at the age of 74 in Arizona.

June 25, 1969 — Rain doesn't deter 260 youngsters from turning out for the Kiwanis Fishing Derby at Lake Mamanasco. Winners are Kevin O'Shea, most fish caught, boys; Pam Vallerie, most fish, girls; Mike McManus, biggest fish, boys; Patti Ann Martorana and Ellen Odaniel, tied for biggest fish, girls.

June 26, 1969 — The lowest bid for construction of the planned Barlow Mountain School is \$1,445,000 — slightly less than town officials were expecting. Winner is Arthur A. Canzler Construction of Danbury, which had previously built the Scotland and Branchville Schools.

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July 1969 — Jesse Lee Methodist Church is sponsoring a coffee house for teenagers, called The Porch.

July 1969 — Dr. Joseph Belsky of Stonecrest Road begins a two-year appointment as chief of medicine at the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission facilities in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan. He resigns as a member of the school board, on which he has served four years.

July 2, 1969 — The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station says that the elm span moth population is at its highest peak since 1936. So many of the small white moths have appeared that, in some places, it looks like a blizzard. Earlier in the season, beeches, maples and oaks in town were coated in webs from the moth's caterpillars that were eating the leaves.

July 10, 1969 — In a letter to The Ridgefield Press, a former drug addict maintains that "more than 50% of our Ridgefield high school students take drugs regularly...Although no one commits physical suicide in our lovely little town, there are many teenagers who commit psychological suicide every day by using drugs." In response, Police Chief John Haight says: "I don't think I would subscribe to that figure. I think it would be substantially less than that." But a resident who has worked closely with teenagers says he thinks 50% to 60% of the RHS students use drugs regularly and up to 85% have tried them. Various school officials aren't around to comment; they're on vacation. However, in August, they have many meetings and commission a study of the issue, working with a newly formed "Narcotics Task Force."

July 10, 1969 — Rick Kinnaird, 18, of Peaceable Hill Road wants to give local kids something to do, so he is managing several dances, the next being Friday, July 11, at the Elks Hall in Danbury, featuring The New Joy, which recently won the Battle of the Bands. Other dances will be in Danbury and Wilton. Why not Ridgefield? Too expensive, Kinnaird says. The schools want a minimum of \$300 (\$2,100 in 2017 dollars) to open a building to a dance, and the Recreation Department says "they can't run dances."

July 16, 1969 — Voters agree to pay for the Barlow Mountain School and to buy the "Ballard Backland" behind Ballard Park (where in the 1970s, Ballard Green senior housing is built).

July 17, 1969 — Debate has been going hot and heavy over the location for the new high school. Plans are well underway to put the school on the former Richardson property on North Salem Road, but a sizable group opposed to sticking RHS so far from the center of town — and so close to New York where drinking is allowed at 18 — is promoting expanding the existing high school on East Ridge. That would be cheaper, too, they say.

July 17, 1969 — There's an English lord living in Farmingville. Francis Storer Eaton, The Lord Newall, is an executive with Schweppes USA Ltd., who has bought the former Starr homestead. He is the second in his family to bear the title, which was bestowed on his father, Marshal Cyril Newall, by King George VI in 1946 for his work as chief of

Britain's Air Staff during the Battle of Britain and for his success as governor general of New Zealand for five years. In 1972 Lord Newall returns to England and becomes interested in politics, taking a seat in the House of Lords where he serves more than 35 years — finally ousted by the passage of the House of Lords Act of 1999 which expels all hereditary peers. Today he is known as Francis Storer Eaton Newall, 2nd Baron Newall DL ("deputy lieutenant").

July 20, 1969 — Apollo 11 astronauts land on the Moon and go for a walk, picking up the first moon samples. The same day, Ridgefield officials put their shovels into Earth to break ground for the new Barlow Mountain Elementary School.

July 24, 1969 — Jack Croce, a former state police lieutenant, is appointed by the selectmen to fill a vacancy on the Police Commission.

Aug. 28, 1969 — Bruce Becker and his wife, Andrea Eastman, are newcomers on Hillcrest Court. He is back from Europe where he produced the film, "Three," featuring rising stars Charlotte Rampling and Sam Waterston, for United Artists. His wife, Andrea Eastman, is a casting director for Paramount. "My chief claim to fame is that I put Ali Macgraw in 'Goodbye Columbus,'" she tells a Press interviewer. She is currently in "a mad search" for an actor to play opposite MacGraw in "Love Story." "There is a boy, David Birney, I believe very strongly in, but the writer and studio feel he's not physically right. They think he should look preppy and waspish." Ryan O'Neal gets the part. Later, Eastman — divorced from Becker — becomes a top Hollywood agent, representing such stars as Sylvester Stallone, Barbra Streisand, Richard Gere, Billy Crystal, and Dustin Hoffman.

Aug. 1, 1969 — Nancy Murphy, Ridgefield's first full-time woman police officer, goes on duty. She will act as the department's clerk as well as a "regular police officer with full policing powers." The same day, Officer John F. Haight III resigns to pursue a career as a professional photographer. He is a son of Police Chief John F. Haight Jr.

Aug. 7, 1969 — Dr. Clifford V. Smith, a former university professor, is appointed to fill a vacancy on the school board. He is the first black to serve on a Ridgefield board or commission.

Aug. 8, 1969 — Doug Winkel, Philip Van Lidth de Jeude, Mary Price, and Joy Judell are among the stars of Bye Bye Birdie, a Ridgefield Student Workshop production that opens today.

Aug. 14, 1969 — The location of the new Ridgefield High School continues to spark debate as both Superintendent David Weingast and The Ridgefield Press announce support for putting it on East Ridge by renovating and enlarging the existing school and

making it a part of an educational complex that includes Veterans Park School, East Ridge Junior High, various athletic fields, and other facilities. An East Ridge school would be ready sooner, at less cost and in a more central location, both argue.

Aug. 15, 1969 — An 18-year-old Brookfielder is the first to be arrested under the new loitering ordinance. Police say the boy refused to move after being told to do so by Officer George Kargle at 12:30 a.m. on the sidewalk in front of the Korner Kitchen on Main Street.

Aug. 20, 1969 — The Board of Education decides that land next to the Farmingville School should be used for the town's eighth elementary school. Later in the year, it changes its mind and says town-owned land at Lake Windwing, across the road from Ridgebury School, would be better. Eventually the board settles on the town-owned, former McManus property on Oscaleta Road, but school is never built.

Aug. 24, 1969 — Thieves take a tent that was used for the judges' stand at the Kiwanis Horse Show, and Kiwanians want it back — they had borrowed it from a local funeral home.

Aug. 28, 1969 — The Planning and Zoning Commission has begun assigning new numbers to every house, business and lot in Ridgefield so that there will be a logical, orderly street-numbering system in town. Police and fire officials have long complained it's difficult to find many locations of emergencies because the numbering system is ancient, haphazard or non-existent. The move proves controversial as many people whose numbers will change complain of the trouble and cost to homeowners and businesses: postage needed to notify friends, periodicals and bill-senders of changed addresses plus the cost of printing new stationery and business cards. Elizabeth Hull heads a group petitioning to stop the renumbering. "We can easily get 1,000 signatures," says Miss Hull. "They must be mad as a hatter." She loses, renumbering is completed and her address changes from 1 Silver Spring Road to 478 Silver Spring Road.

Sept. 1, 1969 — Francis D. Martin, the man behind the Great Pond Holding Corporation, announces he will give the beach at Great Pond to the town. He values the facility at \$250,000 (\$1.67 million in 2017 dollars).

Sept. 3, 1969 — 3,334 students show up on first day of school, 679 more than the first day the year before.

Sept. 8, 1969 — More than 400 people attend a public hearing to debate whether to build the high school on East Ridge or the Richardson site on North Salem Road. The arguing drags on for six hours, ending at 2 a.m. when nearly 100 people are still in the junior high auditorium.

Sept. 19, 1969 – Fire destroys the Old West Mountain Road home of photographer and race-car driver Jacqueline Seligmann, whose family owns the noted Seligmann art gallery. She and 27 of her cats escape; several other cats perish, and many antiques, rare books, and Miss Seligmann's negatives, photographs and cameras are lost.

Sept. 20, 1969 — Since the Tiger football squad began playing the Warriors in 1958, Wilton had won six games and Ridgefield, five. It all evens up today at 6-6 as the Tigers maul the Warriors, 30-7. The night before, 1,500 people watched the Red Raiders topple the Wilton Tomahawks, 12-6, thanks to such stars as Pete Bellagamba, Jeff Yelinek, Ed Scala, John Duggan, and Alex Gallo.

Sept. 23, 1969 — Mopus Bridge Road, one of the town's last remaining dirt roads, gets blacktopped. So does part of Spring Valley Road from Ridgebury Road north to Mopus Bridge. Upper Spring Valley and part of Chestnut Hill Road from Spring Valley to the state line are now the only unpaved town roads left, but their dirty days are numbered. First Selectman J. Mortimer Woodcock says dirt roads are too expensive to maintain.

Sept. 24, 1969 — A six-cent, first-class stamp is issued, commemorating the 100th anniversary of baseball. It is designed by Ridgefield artist Alex Ross.

Sept. 25, 1969 — Geoffrey Himes and Margaret Nelson are Ridgefield High School's two National Merit Semi-Finalists.

Sept. 28, 1969 — A small, unoccupied house on Crest Road at the Ridgefield Lakes is destroyed after it explodes in a blast heard more than a mile away. Firemen believe the house, owned by Arthur Ingram, was entered by children who turned on the cooking gas, which eventually ignited when the oil burner fired up.

Sept. 30, 1969 — After 15 years of running the popular Kozy Nook Restaurant on the corner of Prospect Street and Bailey Avenue, Reno "Bones" Carboni and his wife, Laura, retire. What do they plan to do? "Relax," says Laura.

October 1969 — In its long-range plan, the Tri-State Transportation Authority is proposing a four-lane expressway that would connect I-684 with Route 8 in eastern Fairfield County. The superhighway would run through southern Ridgefield, from the south end of Silver Spring Country Club eastward through the Branchville-Georgetown area and is proposed to be done by 2020. Obviously, that idea gets nowhere.

Oct. 4, 1969 — As a full-house crowd watches the drama of Doctor Zhivago at the Ridgefield Playhouse, a drama of another sort is taking place in the lobby. A young man wearing a home-made, Halloween-type mask sticks a knife at the 17-year-old cashier and makes off with \$1,000 in receipts. Theater personnel think the robber is joking when he walks into the lobby. An 18-year-old college student from town is arrested the next week.

Oct. 9, 1969 — The engagement of Mary Madeleine “MooMoo” Venus to Daniel Albert “Chip” Landon is announced.

Oct. 13, 1969 — Longtime Ridgefielder William Webb of Knollwood Road is ordained a deacon in the AME Methodist Church. He later becomes a minister.

Oct. 15, 1969 — It is “M-Day” as 300 people gather in Ballard Park for a moratorium to protest the war in Vietnam. Twenty-four percent of the students at RHS are absent (normal rate is 5%). Teachers, too, skip classes to attend, and the school board later votes that teachers who took the day off to participate in the moratorium will not lose their pay for that day.

Oct. 17 to 19, 1969 — Long before the arrival of the cell phone, the New England Institute for Medical Research on Grove Street sponsors an international conference in Puerto Rico on the effects of radio waves on human bodies.

Oct. 18, 1969 — Some 3,236 voters turn out to reaffirm plans to build the new high school on the Richardson site and not switch to East Ridge. The margin is only 63 votes — 1,606 to 1,543. A total of 87 people operate the voting machines incorrectly and their votes do not register.

Oct. 23, 1969 — First Selectman J. Mortimer Woodcock announces plans to create a public swimming pond on 10-acres of state-owned flood control land on the Norwalk River along Route 7 opposite Ashbee Lane.

Oct. 30, 1969 — Joanne Bodurtha of Hayes Lane is named DAR Good Citizen of the Year. The RHS senior is president of the Student Council.

Oct. 30, 1969 — Two brothers, aged 12 and 13, use a trick they saw on television to steal \$2,000 worth of television taping equipment in a burglary at the East Ridge Junior High school, police report. The audio-visual room, where the equipment was stored, is locked, but the door has a window. The boys tape the window so pieces won’t fall and make noise when they smash it to gain access to the handle on the other side to unlock the door — as seen on TV.

Nov. 1, 1969 — The Tigers beat Immaculate, 50-0, after downing Central Catholic the week before, 41-0, to capture another Western Connecticut Conference football crown. Stars include Bob DeCosta, Jim Tulipani, Jim Storey, Frank Lancaster, and Bob Wilson.

Nov. 4, 1969 — Republican J. Mortimer Woodcock easily wins re-election over challenger Joseph M. Dunworth, 2,611 to 1,746. Among others elected are Robert F. Hoffman, selectman; Mary Gelfman, J. Robert Hall, Leo F. Carroll, Stanley Kullbom, and



David D. Huntoon, school board; Gary L. Bryant, Daniel M. McKeon, Willis Hart, and Joseph J. McLinden, Planning and Zoning Commission.

Nov. 6, 1969 — Of the first four persons charged in Ridgefield under the new loitering ordinance, none has been found guilty. What's more, even when one defendant pleads guilty, the judge dismisses the charge, citing the fact that the boy had no previous record.

Nov. 6, 1969 — The Air Force announces that Sgt. Robert Rowella has received the Air Force Commendation Medal for distinguished service in Vietnam. "Airman Rowella displayed outstanding professional skill and initiative which aided immeasurably in identifying and solving numerous problems encountered in the accomplishment of his duties," the Air Force says. "The energetic application of his knowledge has played a significant role in contributing to the success of the United States Air Force mission in Southeast Asia."

Nov. 10, 1969 — Robert F. Haight is elected chairman of the school board and the next night, Joseph McLinden outpolls longtime chairman Daniel McKeon to head the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Nov. 10, 1969 — Norman Craig is re-elected president of the Babe Ruth League. Other officers are Ralph Beals, vice president; Martin Carr, secretary; Walt Valentine, assistant secretary; and Frank Dolen, treasurer.

Nov. 11, 1969 — Connecticut Light and Power Company begins digging up Main Street sidewalks to lay gas mains that will provide the center of town with natural gas service. The village last had gas 60 years earlier, generated by a plant in town that went bankrupt with the arrival of electricity.

Nov. 14, 1969 — Karen Jacke, an RHS senior, is one of two Girl Scouts sent by the regional scout council to view the Apollo 12 launch at Cape Kennedy, the second mission to the Moon. She not only sees the launch, but meets Tricia Nixon, who is there with her father to view the take-off.

Nov. 25, 1969 — Bonvincini Building Company of Torrington is the low bidder on the job of erecting the 213,000-square-foot Ridgefield High School. The firm bids \$7,127,00. Only two other companies bid; one is Ridgefield's own Morganti Inc., \$7,789,00 — losing the high school bid is reportedly a major disappointment for company chief, Paul Morganti, a Ridgefield native and RHS alumnus. Bonvincini's bid is for construction, not fixed and moveable equipment, and the total school cost is now estimated at \$9 million (\$60 million in 2017 dollars). Only \$6.5 million has been approved by the voters.

Nov. 26, 1969 — IBM confirms that it is buying some 700 acres on Bennett's Farm Road, but does not say what it would be for. The land includes the Fox Hill Inn and former Outpost Nurseries acreage.

Nov. 28, 1969 — Ridgefield native Peter J. McManus begins work as a new Ridgefield police officer, bringing the force to its full 22-officer quota. He is soon nicknamed "Pistol Pete."

Nov. 30, 1969 — St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, which had been having services for six years at Veterans Park School, dedicates its new church building on Ivy Hill and Branchville Roads.

Dec. 1, 1969 — Esso announces plans to build a gas station at Routes 7 and 35. It would be the fourth gasoline station at that intersection.

Dec. 4, 1969 — The Western Connecticut Conference names nine Ridgefield football players to the 29-man all-star team (the Tigers had won their fourth straight WCC title). All-stars are: Jim Tulipani, Bob DeCosta, Jim Mulvaney, Paul Robertson, Ray Salvestrini, Jeff Turner, Charley Nixon, Dane Vontobel, and Steve Lancaster.

Dec. 5, 1969 — All RHS English classes spend their period writing 1,200 Christmas cards to 25 Ridgefield soldiers in Vietnam.

Dec. 11, 1969 — School Superintendent David E. Weingast gets a \$2,500 raise — from \$30,750 this year to \$33,250 next year. (In 2017 dollars, that's from \$204,000 to \$221,000.) He is currently the 12th highest paid superintendent in the state; when he came here in 1967, he was eighth highest.

Dec. 15, 1969 — The school board is planning a second junior high school, to be bigger than the first, which just opened the previous year.

Dec. 16, 1969 — New work commitments at IBM prompt Frank Dolen to resign from the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Dec. 19, 1969 — Oklahoma Weirdbruce performs at The Cage, a teen coffeehouse. The band consists of Phil Mische, Greg Tropsa, Russ Schwamb, and Jim Knowles.

Dec. 21, 1969 — Hockey is coming to Ridgefield. Volunteers begin construction of an outdoor ice skating rink on the east side of Prospect Ridge, just south of the novitiate athletic field. Among the workers are Hank Wilson, Charles Reach, Al Barnes, and Chuck Dean. "Thus far," says Frank Lancaster Sr. in his Sportlight column in The Press, "90 boys in grades seven through 12 have signed up to participate, and adult advisors expect to have junior and senior divisions of play, with four teams in each division."

Dec. 23, 1969 — Averaging 67 points per game so far this season, the Tiger basketball squad downs North Branford, 89-78. Five players hit double figures: Kevin Mackenzie, Dan Gasperino, Chip Salvestrini, Jeff Turner, and Dave Sill.

Dec. 30, 1969 — Capt. John Walker of Continental Drive, chief pilot in charge of training for Pan-American Airways, has been flying and training others in the new Boeing 747 passenger airliner, due to go into commercial service in 1970. “The aircraft is very responsive, very stable,” says Walker of the plane that seats 362 passengers. (Boeing had planned for the 747 to become obsolete after 400 of the aircraft were built — the manufacturer believed supersonic aircraft would be in vogue by then. As of July 2017, a total of 1,532 of these “jumbo jets” had been built and 20 more were on order.)

## **1970**

1970 – Ridgefield’s population is 18,188, more than doubling in a decade.

1970 – The Ridgefield Branch of the American Association of University Women is chartered.

1970 – IBM buys the Fox Hill Inn and some 700 acres on Bennett’s Farm Road. Part of the land is zoned for light industry.

Spring 1970 – A huge outbreak of leaf-eating caterpillars prompts townspeople to vote to hire helicopters to spray town with insecticide the next year. The spray company backs down under threat of suit by environmentalists.

June 1970 – Declining enrollments, increasing costs, and lack of available nuns prompt Pastor Martin O’Connor to close St. Mary’s School after 16 years in operation.

July 1970 – Voters defeat \$2 million to build the West Mountain Elementary School on Oscaleta Road.

September 1970 – Morganti Inc.’s additions to the junior and senior high schools are erected over the summer to handle overcrowding (the senior high addition is now the “town hall annex”).

Dec. 24, 1970 — The Korner Kitchen, the last of seven different restaurants located at the corner of Main and Catoonah Streets, closes its doors. Bob and Dot Stolle of West Redding, who had operated the restaurant for five years, purchased a restaurant in Carmel, N.Y. instead. The space will become the office of Robert Tuccio’s real estate business. Shortly after the brick building was constructed in the mid-1920s, the Hutchison sisters of Catoonah Street opened the Lorna Doone Restaurant. Then William Pettit had the Corner

Cupboard there. After Sam Levine operated a drug store for a while, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Schmidt opened the White Spot Restaurant around 1939, there. In the mid-40s, John Scala, formerly of Outpost Inn and subsequently owner of The Elms Inn, operated Chef Scala's. Around 1962, Alex Santini took over and called the place Santini's. The Stollers took over from Santini.

## 1971

Jan. 4, 1971 — John Yervant, who sold his Fox Hill Inn property to IBM last year, tries for a third time to get permission to establish a new Fox Hill Inn in the former Cullerton house across Maplewood Road [now Bennett's Farm Road] from his former inn. He appears before Zoning Board of Appeals, seeking a variance to allow the commercial inn in a residential zone, saying he had been assured by town officials it would be okay. The board says sorry, Yervant has no hardship imposed by zoning, and has to look elsewhere for a new inn location. Yervant goes to Brookfield.

Jan. 5, 1971 — The Planning and Zoning Commission adopts a regulation limiting to five the number of unrelated people living together, and to three, the number of unrelated people living with a blood-related family. The aim is to limit apartments or boarding houses in single-family residential zones.

Jan. 5, 1971 — Ted Librizzi is elected president of the Ridgefield Red Raiders youth football league.

Jan. 6, 1971 — Among the Ridgefielders at the Governor's Ball, celebrating the swearing in of Connecticut's new chief executive Thomas Meskill, are Mr. and Mrs. Paul Morganti, Sylvia Latanzi, William Ruschmeyer, Mr. and Mrs. Herbert V. Camp, Mrs. and Mrs. Lewis Finch, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Rosa, and Senator and Mrs. Romeo Petroni,

Jan. 7, 1971 — Brunetti's Market advertises extra lean loin lamb chops for \$1.79 a pound.

Jan. 8, 1971 — Ridgefield's first full-time health department sanitarian begins work. George A. Frigon, a 29-year-old former undertaker from Waterbury, had received the highest score ever recorded on the state sanitarian's test.

Jan. 9, 1971 — "Who would stoop so low?" asks Father Benedict Tighe after someone steals the statue of the baby Jesus from the manger scene in front of St. Mary's Church. Perhaps it was a symbolic protest over what was about to be announced.

Jan. 12, 1971 — Father Martin O'Connor, pastor of St. Mary's Parish, announces that St. Mary's School will close in June. In 1969, citing lack of vocations, the nuns who taught at the school said they would be departing, leaving the parish with the expense of having

to hire lay teachers. Father O'Connor says there is hope that the state legislature would approve state aid for private schools, but that does not happen.

Jan. 14, 1971 — Police warn dog owners to keep their animals under control after a six-year-old Kristina Thorn is bitten in the face Monday and a dog is shot and killed chasing sheep in Farmingville today.

Jan. 14, 1971 — Ridgefield's five Eagle Scouts are honored at a Danbury Exchange Club banquet. They are Douglas Lundgren, James Knowles, Leonard Kessler, Brian Scott and Charles Smith III.

Jan. 17, 1971 — M. Estelle Benjamin, a former Western Union manager, bank officer and longtime real estate agent here, dies at the age of 95.

Jan. 19, 1971 — Ridgefield Police Officer Peter McManus earns the nickname, "Cowboy Pete" after he uses his cruiser to deftly round up three horses that escaped from Landegger estate off Wilton Road East two days earlier and are spotted on various roads in the south end of town — sometimes munching on seeds in bird feeders.

Jan. 21, 1971 — The Ridgefield school board is in the midst of one of its "book controversies," this one involving parents who want 12 supplementary paperback books removed from use in experimental English and social studies classes at the junior high. A brouhaha erupts at a board meeting at East Ridge Junior High School when the board votes to go into executive session to discuss the books issue with a teacher committee. John Longden refuses to "budge" from his seat if the board goes into the secret session, and a dozen angry parents support him. The board cancels the meeting and as they are leaving, teachers say they are verbally attacked by parents who called them "pinko," "communist," and "bums," and one teacher has "the legitimacy of her birth questioned." "I couldn't believe this was Ridgefield," says one teacher, who adds it was "a terrifying experience."

Jan. 21, 1971 — Unable to cope with all the complaints about roaming dogs and other things canine, Dog Warden John J. Burgess resigns. "I feel that the town no longer warrants a part-time warden," he says. "Since I took the position three years ago, the amount of dogs and complaints have tripled."

Jan. 25, 1971 — Grant "Tiger" Peacock is elected head of the newly formed Youth Action Council, sponsored by Parks and Recreation to "help develop better recreational facilities for the youth of Ridgefield." First Selectman J. Mortimer Woodcock gives him the keys to two old buildings at Ballard Park backland that will be turned into a new teen center.

Jan. 28, 1971 — Two longtime members of the Board of Finance — Frank Warner and Jesse Meeker — resign and are replaced by Louis J. Fossi, a former selectman, and Allen O. Shafer, a former school board chairman.

Feb. 2, 1971 — Paul Morganti unveils before the Planning and Zoning Commission plans for the Yankee Ridge shopping center at the corner of Main and Prospect Streets. The project would erect new buildings and tear down a half dozen old ones, including a house, and structures housing the Sport and Toy Caboose, the Tag Sale Shop, Buck Realty, Villa Italia restaurant, Salmagundi, and the Remnant Barn.

Feb. 3, 1971 — Suzanne Benton of Donnelly Drive, president of the Western Connecticut branch of the National Organization for Women (NOW), speaks to a joint meeting of the Fairfield Villages Wellesley Club and Smith College Club on “The Promises and Pathways of Women’s Liberation.”

Feb. 5, 1971 — The Ridgefield Taxpayers League draws a crowd of about 100 people to an open forum on the book issue and hears both pros and cons of removing certain supplemental books from junior high courses. “There’s a new and very clever approach to influencing a child’s mind and ‘selling’ certain messages and to delving into the child’s psyche and personal value system with questions about subjects and issues that baffled adults for centuries,” says John Tynan of Holmes Road, referring to the “Loyalties” series of four books used in a special section of English. He is a leader of Concerned Parents, a group opposed to the books.

Feb. 5 and 6, 1971 — Ridgefield High School on East Ridge has its annual Winter Carnival featuring a basketball game and “sockhop” Friday night and snow sculpture contest, tobogganing party, skating at Outpost Pond, and a dance Saturday. The dance features “The Trails” band plus singer Doug Moir with his guitar.

Feb. 5, 1971 — Sophomore Tom Cesca paces the Tiger attack with the largest point output in recent history of RHS basketball teams: He pumps in 14 field goals and six free throws for 34 points in Ridgefield’s first victory of the season, beating Andrew Warde, 71-67. Then on Tuesday the Tigers topple Stamford Catholic, 71-69, with Chip Salvestrini top scorer at 19.

Feb. 8, 1971 — School Superintendent David E. Weingast recommends the town buy St. Mary’s School, which is closing in June, and turn it into a 400-pupil public elementary school serving west-central Ridgefield. The board tables the idea, mostly to find out whether St. Mary’s actually wants to sell the building. It doesn’t.

Feb. 10, 1971 — Alice V. Rowland, a former state representative and state senator from Ridgefield who also served on the Connecticut Board of Education, dies at the age of 75.

Feb. 11, 1971 — Popular Ridgefield pianist Peter Walters, who plays several of the area's top restaurants, tells interviewer Linette Burton: "I made my first public appearance when I was five at a ladies club in Tonawanda, N.Y., where I lived. I sat on a box and used extended pedals so I could reach them. Occasionally, I'd fall off the piano stool."

Feb. 11, 1971 — Some 600 teenagers attend a dance at the East Ridge Junior High School aimed at supporting a new teen center. The Pelican, a local band, provides the music.

Feb. 16, 1971 — Robert Quinlan, a New York City real estate consultant, announces plans for close to 100 condominiums on 10 acres of the Sullivan family property on Prospect Ridge. The result is today's Quail Ridge.

Feb. 17, 1971 — Entertainer George Jessel is due in town May 15 with a variety show that's a fundraiser for the Ridgefield Police Benevolent Association. However, the "high pressure" advertisement solicitation techniques for the show's program book prompt many local merchants to complain to the selectmen who decide to write to the PBA, suggesting less pressure be used in the future. The PBA describes the letter as an "attack" on the organization and suggests the selectmen are using the issues as "a personal vendetta and a form of oppression toward the PBA and union at a time in the midst of contract negotiations."

Feb. 25, 1971 — The Census Bureau releases data from the 1970 census that indicates: Ridgefield's population in 1970 was 18,188; 14% of the population was under 21 years old; only 127 people — 0.7% — were black and only nine of the 4,125 houses in town were owned by blacks; the average family was 3.9 people; the average house had 6.7 rooms (the state average was 5.2 rooms); the average owner-estimated selling price of a house here was \$43,100, about \$17,000 more than the state average.

Feb. 25, 1971 — "Fifty percent of my business is teenagers," says Alfred Dirago of Prospect Street, manager of the Friendly Ice Cream Shop and restaurant on Danbury Road.

Feb. 25, 1971 — Ethel McGlynn Ryan, a former Ridgefield state representative, dies in Florida where she had lived for 11 years.

Feb. 26, 1971 — Police arrest two out-of-town people for sale and possession of heroin, bringing to six the number of arrests so far this year for drug violations. Three are for heroin and three for marijuana.

March 7, 1971 — Col. Gerald R. “Jerry” Skillen of Main Street, a veteran of both World Wars I and II, dies. During his years here he wrote dozens of letters to The Ridgefield Press, often critical of town government operations.

March 8, 1971 — The Board of Education votes to back its staff in the current “book controversy,” passing a motion that it “fully supports its staff in their right to legitimate and unbiased use of any professionally accepted educational materials in the schools” and saying it “has full confidence in the professional judgment of its staff in the selection and use of such material.”

March 8, 1971 — Charles “Chuck” Dean, manager of the newly created Ridgefield Athletic Association Corporation (RAAC), tells the school board his group wants to build a \$150,000 artificial ice rink near the corner of Prospect Ridge Road. The group at first seeks to use school land, but then buys the former Blodgett property on the corner of Prospect Ridge and Ivy Hill Roads.

March 9, 1971 — Writing in the Congressional Record, Congressman John Monagan praises the heroism of Army helicopter pilot Robert F. Sidonio in Vietnam. “In all, his helicopter and its three teams were credited with saving 30 outposts which might have otherwise fallen,” the congressman says. “After being shot at several times, Sidonio and his helicopter, which was given the name ‘Tiger Surprise,’ were downed during some night fighting. Fortunately Sidonio and his copilot escaped fatal injury. For his service to his country, Sidonio has received the Purple Heart and two Air Medals.” Monagan adds that “the exploits of the ‘Tiger Surprise’ have become so well known across Vietnam that the Army has outfitted another helicopter to be named ‘Tiger Surprise’ to honor the tradition and accomplishments of the original.”

March 10, 1971 — Gloria Shayne of High Ridge (Mrs. Noel Regney) performs on the piano at the Veterans Park PTA Fashion Show. Shayne and her husband wrote the Christmas classic, “Do You Hear What I Hear.” She also wrote the hit song, “Goodbye Cruel World,” recorded by James Darren — his biggest Billboard Hot 100 hit.

March 11, 1971 — The Planning and Zoning Commission approves the 286-unit apartment and condominium complex now called Fox Hill Village, located on the former Outpost Inn/Shapley School property on Danbury Road.

March 11, 1971 — “Allowing students to study courses that they are interested in is beneficial,” says Don Gregory, chairman of the RHS English Department, discussing the school’s new “mini-courses that include creative writing, film study, mythology and modern fiction. “The short time the courses are offered inspires the students to work harder.”



March 12, 1971 — Parks and Recreation Director William Seirup opposes any plans to put a new police station or other town offices on the Ballard Backland, behind Ballard Park. “Keep the Ballard Backland as a future town park,” he says. Later in the 1970s, the town votes to put Ballard Green senior housing units there.

March 18, 1971 — A state survey of the town reveals that Ridgefield is likely to suffer yet another heavy infestation of gypsy moth caterpillars in the spring that will defoliate many trees. The year before millions of gypsy moth and elm span moth caterpillars devoured most of the leaves of deciduous trees in town.

March 24, 1971 — Voters agree to buy the former Holy Ghost Novitiate on Prospect Ridge, along with 26 acres, for \$395,000 (\$2.4 million in 2017 dollars). The main building soon becomes the school board administration offices and is now congregate housing for the elderly. Other buildings go to the Ridgefield Guild of Artists, the Ridgefield Workshop for the Performing Arts (Theater Barn), and the Marine Corps League. Some of land is used for two projects of affordable housing, a baseball field, and a dog park.

March 24, 1971 — Robert Tuccio, son of Westmoreland/Mimosa/Twixt Hills/Stonehenge Estates developer Jerry Tuccio, opens a real estate office at the corner of Main and Catoonah Streets. “We will have a unique set-up,” he says. “We plan to do a little more for our clients.” Among other things the office can serve house-hunters some lunch from the full kitchen in the new office, which had for the past 45 years been a restaurant — most recently, the Korner Kitchen.

March 24, 1971 — Charles Coles Jr., assistant treasurer of the Ridgefield Savings Bank, is given a surprise dinner at the Red Lion restaurant, honoring his 25 years with the bank. In a few years he becomes the bank’s president.

March 25, 1971 — For the second time, actress Jessie Royce Landis of Old Branchville Road appears in a major role on Ironside, the popular TV series about a wheelchair-bound detective starring Raymond Burr.

March 29, 1971 — The new Barlow Mountain School opens its doors today. The school’s pupils and staff had been using empty space at St. Mary’s and Notre Dame Academy, awaiting the new school’s completion.

March 30, 1971 — All patrols by Ridgefield Police vehicles come to a halt today after the Board of Finance the night before unanimously rejects providing more money to cover rising costs of operating the cruisers. Only emergency calls are answered.

March 31, 1971 — Most of the more than 600 people who attend a special town meeting want the whole town sprayed by helicopters with insecticide to kill the gypsy

and elm span moth caterpillars. Many misunderstand the purpose of the meeting, which is to appropriate \$12,000 to aerially spray land under town jurisdiction, not all of town, and are angry that the whole town won't be sprayed. Officials decide to expand the spraying program, but landowners must opt in or opt out of being sprayed.

April 1, 1971 — Ridgefielders are wondering what's in the works as the huge 250-acre F. Eileen Wallace farm in upper Ridgebury is sold to Pierson and Smith, a Stamford industrial and commercial real estate firm. About half the farm straddles the Ridgefield-Danbury line and other half is in Southeast, N.Y. (After various failed flirtations with commercial development, Ridgefield's side becomes the Turner Hill subdivision while Danbury's is developed for both light industry and apartments. In New York it's now just woods and a big horse farm.)

April 2, 1971 — Police patrols of the town resume late tonight after the Board of Finance, at an emergency meeting, agrees to provide money for gasoline and other depleted accounts at the police department. The finance board action comes after a public outcry; people — even including two Danbury residents — offer to pay for the gas to keep cruisers on the road.

April 3, 1971 — More than 3,000 pounds of glass and aluminum containers are collected today as REAP, the Ridgefield Environmental Action Program, has its first bottle-and-can recycling drive at the town highway garage. The group earns \$55 selling the containers — about \$331 in 2017 dollars.

April 5, 1971 — Firefighters pour more than 25,000 gallons of water on an early morning blaze that destroys the Ski and Racquet shop next to the post office in the Grand Union Shopping Center.

April 12, 1971 — John C. Scala — known to a generation of Ridgefielders as Chef Scala — dies at the age of 71 while visiting his native town of Saluggia, Italy. After a career with major national restaurants, Chef Scala came to the Outpost Inn in Ridgefield in the 1940s, then opened his own restaurant at the corner of Main and Catoonah Streets. In 1951 he bought The Elms Inn and turned it into one of the town's — and the region's — premiere dining spots.

April 13, 1971 — The selectmen have asked anyone who wants their property sprayed by helicopter with caterpillar insecticide to call their office. By today, more than 1,000 people have done so. At the same time, the Conservation Commission and others are petitioning to prevent spraying of any conservation lands in town.

April 15, 1971 — Richard B. Howard opens the Ridgefield Tennis Club on Copps Hill Road. Justine Butler is the club's pro.

April 16, 1971 — Only 13 years old, Stephanie Chase of Mimosa Circle appears on the David Frost TV show, performing on her violin. Chase, who has played the violin since before she was two years old, goes on to become “one of the violin greats of our era.” She has appeared with more than 170 orchestras including the New York, London, and Hong Kong Philharmonics and the Chicago, San Francisco, Atlanta, Baltimore, and London Symphony Orchestras, and is currently a professor of violin and chamber music at New York University.

April 18, 1971 — Two 12-year-old boys are charged with doing \$1,000 worth of vandalism (\$6,000 today) to the brand, new Barlow Mountain School. Police say the boys shot 20 windows with a BB gun, smashed a glass door, and ransacked a couple of classrooms.

April 20, 1971 — A citizens committee appointed a year ago by the school board issues a report recommending that the town have two high schools and two junior highs, feeling it would be the most educationally and fiscally sound way of handling the burgeoning secondary school enrollment. The committee is headed by James M. Blackwell of Silver Spring Lane, director of editorial operations for Newsweek magazine.

April 20, 1971 — Irving B. Conklin Jr. of Wooster Street is elected to a vacancy on the Planning and Zoning Commission caused by the resignation of Willis Hart.

April 21, 1971 — “Splendid Fare: The Albert Stockli Cookbook” wins three first prizes — including best cookbook of the year — at a gathering of 350 food editors at the Hotel Pierre in New York. “It was a touching moment,” says Chef Stockli, owner of the Stonehenge Inn here.

April 22, 1971 — Coincidentally, Chef Stockli this week applies for a zoning variance to create 60 units of hotel accommodations, designed like Swiss chalets, southeast of the main Stonehenge building off Route 7. He says the facility would draw business and industrial firms who want a place for seminars, particularly in the winter (when the Stonehenge Inn is not very busy). The application is rejected. A year later, Stockli dies of a heart attack; he is only 54. In 2017, the restaurant closes after 71 years of serving fine food.

April 22, 1971 — The town has 21 gasoline stations either operating or under construction. Their proliferation prompts the Planning and Zoning Commission to adopt a regulation outlawing new gas stations located within a 1,500-foot radius of another gas station. That leaves only three spots left where a gas station could be opened: along Route 7 north of Branchville; along Route 7 next to the Danbury line; and near the corner of Grove Street and Old Quarry Road.

April 22, 1971 — First Selectman J. Mortimer Woodcock reports he won't seek re-election, and three people quickly announce they are candidates to succeed him: Joseph McLinden, chairman of the Planning and Zoning Commission, Michael Hagan, a local real estate agent and labor negotiator, and Leo F. Carroll, who held that job for the 10 years before Woodcock.

April 28, 1971 — The Board of Finance slashes town and school budgets to keep a proposed 10-mill tax increase to three mills. While a half million dollars is cut from the school budget, the educators would still get \$9.6-million, an increase of more than \$500,000 (\$3 million in 2017 dollars).

May 2, 1971 — Ridgefield Little League opens its season with dedication services at the new Edward J. Fitzgerald field at Lake Windwing. "The unselfish efforts of many Ridgefielders who brought the beautiful new Little League ball park into existence are a fitting tribute to the man whose name it will bear," says Frank Lancaster in his "Spotlight" column in The Press. "The late Edward J. Fitzgerald was an untiring worker in several Ridgefield youth programs, one of that special breed who found unlimited joy in serving others."

May 9, 1971 — More than 1,000 people — mostly youngsters— march up to 20 miles today in the Ridgefield Walk for Development. They raise \$12,000 (\$72,000 in 2018 dollars) for the American Freedom from Hunger Foundation.

May 10, 1971 — Plans are underway to use helicopters to spray insecticide Sevin on most of the town in an effort to curb the coming outbreak of gypsy and linden moth caterpillars. John Longden, a selectmen's aide who is keeping track of people who call to sign up to have their property sprayed or not sprayed, says about 90% do and 10% don't want aerial spraying. But opposition to widespread spraying is mounting. Opponents include the Conservation Commission who say the spraying will upset the balance of nature, killing many beneficial insects, such as bees. Others worry that children, waiting for buses or playing outside, will be sprayed. There is talk of a law suit to halt the spraying.

May 13, 1971 — A three-member arbitration panel recommends a \$225 across-the-board raise in teacher salaries that would bring a starting teacher's wage from \$7,700 (\$46,300 in 2017 dollars) to \$7,925 (\$47,700). However, a week later, the Ridgefield Teachers Association rejects the raise.

May 14, 1971 — Maura, their 11th child and eighth daughter, is born to Dr. and Mrs. James Sheehan of Main Street. She is the sister of Mary 19, Betsy, 17, Patsy, 16, James Jr., 15, Ann, 13, Kathleen, 11, Matthew, 10, Teresa, 7, Constance, 6, and Stephen, 5.

May 15, 1971 — Some 450 people attend a vaudeville-style show at East Ridge Junior High School, starring entertainer George Jessel and singer Cab Calloway. The show is a benefit for the Police Benevolent Association.

May 18, 1971 — The Planning and Zoning Commission approves Jerry Tuccio's plan for a 33-lot subdivision, called Scodon III, off the south side of George Washington Highway. The town gets 35 acres of open space in the plan. Scodon III, an extension of the larger 1960s Scodon subdivision to the east, is one of the town's first major Planned Residential Development (PRD) subdivisions, under which smaller than usual house lots are allowed if large parcels of open space are permanently preserved.

May 20, 1971 — The Ridgefield Townies decide to field a team in the newly formed Housatonic Intercity Baseball League and make John Tulipani of Ivy Hill Road the manager.

May 27, 1971 — Geraldine "Lee" Marsh of Pine Mountain Road, a veterinary nurse, is named the new dog warden, the first woman ever to hold that post.

May 31, 1971 — "When the chips are down, American will unite and rise to the occasion," longtime Ridgefielder N. Donald Edwards says in the post-parade Memorial Day address at the Community Center. The Georgetown native has been president of the Kiwanis Club and St. Mary's Parents Guild, vice president of the Ridgefield Boys' Club, and is a member of the Board of Finance.

June 1 and 4, 1971 — The Ridgefield Rockettes girls softball team opens its season, scoring 50 runs in its first two outings: They beat New Milford, 29-0, and Grolier Publishing, 21-1. They then win their next three in a row, by which time they've scored 116 runs while their opponents have gotten 9. Pitcher Peggy Fenn wins four of the five games — her pitching skill prompts coach Robert Hurley to quip, "If you gathered the best 11 softball players in Ridgefield, they couldn't even see this girl throw. Combined with the defense she has behind her and the great hitting, no men's team from Ridgefield would stand a chance."

June 3, 1971 — Plans for aerially spraying Ridgefield public and private property with Sevin are cancelled after an angry contractor, faced with a potential law suit, tells town officials he will not do the job. Announcement of the refusal comes in Superior Court, Bridgeport, where a hearing was to take place on a possible injunction against aerial spraying sought by the Conservation Commission and others, including Daniel M. McKeon. The sprayer, Chemapco Inc. of Massachusetts, says it's been threatened with a law suit by conservationists. First Selectman J. Mortimer Woodcock says it is not impossible to proceed with spraying because no other firm is available to do the job.

June 8, 1971 — Ed Stone receives the Outstanding Senior and Student Athlete Award at an RHS assembly. Chip Salvestrini earns the Sportsmanship Award. Stone takes the occasion to blast school officials for the lack of adequate track facilities. “The football field, although not magnificent, is always prepared before a Saturday contest,” the track team co-captain says. “The basketball court each year is waxed and cared for. The baseball diamond is raked, rolled and nurtured as if it were Shea Stadium. This is all done at great time and expense. Yet the track athletes must suffer serious injury from running on sidewalks, parking lots and the swamp in Veterans Park.”

June 10, 1971 — Illicit use of drugs is on the increase and so are overdoses, the Ridgefield Police report. So far this year more than 20 police cases have involved drugs, including three youngsters who suffered drug overdoses. Sixteen arrests have been made, five more than during all of 1970. Police believe the most widely used drug is LSD, which one officer says is more popular than marijuana.

June 15, 1971 — The Ridgefield Athletic Association Corporation receives a Planning and Zoning permit to erect a \$250,000 ice rink on Prospect Ridge. RAAC is headed by A. Raymond Bessette, a member of the school board.

June 16, 1971 — 285 seniors graduate from Ridgefield High School, the institution’s 55th commencement and the penultimate one at its longtime quarters on East Ridge. Ed Stone delivers the class address, “Challenge the Status Quo.” Music for the ceremony is provided by popular teacher Sylvia Hodge. Top-ranking student in the class is Deborah Crowell Rippel.

June 17, 1971 — William H. Casey, head of Casey Fuel and long active in community organizations, throws his hat in the ring for first selectman, bringing the number of GOP candidates to four.

June 17, 1971 — John Robinson, administrative assistant at Manhasset Junior-Senior High School on Long Island, is named assistant principal at Ridgefield High School. The former Army lieutenant will replace Edward Brolin, who had been appointed principal of East Ridge Junior High School.

June 22, 1971 — The town’s growth prompts the fire department to put a second ambulance — a Cadillac — into service.

June 27, 1971 — Because of overcrowded conditions at its own church’s parking lots, St. Mary’s begins celebrating an 11:30 a.m. Sunday mass at Jesse Lee Memorial United Methodist Church. And it’s popular — an overflow crowd of 500 people attend. “The parish is just too big,” says a St. Mary spokesman.

June 29, 1971 — The undefeated Ridgefield Rockettes beat the undefeated Bethel Debs who had won 23 straight games to win the Danbury area title. The 10-9 win meant the Rockettes have scored 157 runs to their opponents' 19 over seven games. They eventually lose in the state tournament to the New Haven Nutmegs, 6-5, even though they out-hit the Nutmegs 12-6. Nine errors were the killer.

June 30, 1971 — The Porch, a summer coffee house for teenagers sponsored by Jesse Lee Methodist Church, has its first session. Among the local performers are Craig Turner, Bill Comeau, Terry Powers, and Ed Kruelski. In August, the church shuts down the coffee house, citing the behavior of some teenagers who “abused the parking lot, the grounds of the church and neighboring property.”

June 30, 1971 — 18 to 21-year-olds gain the right to vote after Ohio becomes the 38th state to ratify the 26th Amendment. Until now, people aged 18 to 21 could register as federal electors, meaning they could vote for U.S. senators, representatives and president. As of today, only 121 Ridgefielders under 21 had registered as federal electors.

July 1, 1971 — Using four full pages in The Press, the A&P in town announces it's gone “discount all the way,” advertising that “now —when it seems as though every blessed thing is going up in price — A&P is going down! Now, all our stores in this area are full discount stores, with lower-than-low discount prices. No stamps, no games, no gimmicks.” The announcement comes as the nation is experiencing double-digit inflation.

July 1, 1971 — The number of registered voters in Ridgefield tops 8,000 today. Ridgefield now has 4,556 Republicans, 1,487 Democrats, 1805 unaffiliateds, and 65 members of the Good Government Party.

July 2, 1971 — The town's first indoor tennis courts are approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Sugar Hollow Racquet Club immediately begins construction on a Route 7 site just south of the Danbury line and next to Ridgefield European Motors, the BMW dealership owned by Eric Erhardt, who is also vice president of the new club.

July 7, 1971 — RCA — the Radio Corporation of America — reports it has dropped options on several parcels of Ridgebury land north of George Washington Highway where it was rumored to be considering building a corporate headquarters. Headquartered at 30 Rockefeller Plaza (“Thirty Rock”), RCA owns NBC and manufactures televisions, radios, phonographs and other appliances. Sources say the company is looking farther north along the I-84 corridor, but the move never comes as RCA begins to falter financially and is acquired by GE, which liquidates many of the company's assets.

July 7, 1971 — Growing enrollments have prompted the school board to investigate building a second junior high school. A committee studying conversion of the 1,000-

student Ridgefield High School on East Ridge into a 1,200-student junior high, with swimming pool, says the job would cost \$6 million (\$36 million in 2017 dollars). However, inflation is likely to push the price higher, the board is told. The news of the high price prompts the selectmen to vote to tell the school board to stop all planning on the project.

July 8, 1971 — Ray Hastings of Great Hill Road announces he's invented a plastic holder in which to keep one's TV Guide so it won't get lost. The holder, which attaches to the TV set and is called a "TV Program Locator," is available at Grand Union, Caldor and other area stores.

July 8, 1971 — Five members of Troop 90 become Eagle Scouts: Gregory and Jeffrey Tropsa, Glenn Symon, Michael Carpenter, and Dave Amos. Soon Troop 107 announces five Eagles of its own: Michael Massagli, Bill Hiller, Michael O'Neil, Bob Fonner, and Terry Carr.

July 10, 1971 — Alan Rashkin opens Vital Vittles, a natural foods store, in a little red house at 34 Danbury Road. He says the store will give Ridgefielders an alternative to "foods poisoned by chemicals."

July 15, 1971 — The State Health Department orders the town to remedy at least four violations of the state health code at the town dump on Old Quarry Road. The state has been pressuring the town for years to come up with an alternative to the dump which, it charges, is polluting the Great Swamp and the Norwalk River, among other things. It soon orders that the dump be closed.

July 17, 1971 — 2,100 people in town sign petitions, circulated by Arthur McKenna and others, opposing the state's adoption of an income tax. McKenna dislikes the way the legislature is handling the proposed tax. "Voting on a major tax bill, some 90 pages long, with apparently only about 10 copies available among 163 legislators, who narrowly passed it at 4:30 a.m., has shaken the voters' faith and confidence in representative government in Connecticut," he declares.

July 19, 1971 — The Democrats now have two candidates vying to run for first selectman: real estate agent Gary L. Bryant and pharmacist Cora Smith.

July 21, 1971 — Corinne Fingado, who was active in Ridgefield organizations and served on the Conservation Commission, dies at the age of 46.

July 21, 1971 — The Babe Ruth 13-year-old All Stars win their game, 9-2, in the first round of the state tournament. Mark Fleischmann gets a three-hitter, striking out eight, and he and Bob Gaudet each have two of Ridgefield's seven hits. Other Ridgefield



players included Andy Montanari, Bob Landers, Larry Bossidy, Steve Bodurtha, Charlie See, and Tom Francomano. Alas, they lose in the semi-finals to Stamford National.

July 22, 1971 — Ridgefield, like the rest of the nation, has been suffering through a recession, but there are indications the economy is about to start improving, including increases in advertising which — according to N. Donald Edwards, is among the first businesses to feel the pinch of a recession. “We are also the first to see signs of an upswing,” he adds, “and we have seen them.”

July 22, 1971 — Holiday magazine ranks Stonehenge Inn as the best restaurant in Connecticut. The Elms and The Inn at Ridgefield also win praise.

July 26, 1971 — The state approves a traffic light for Route 35, Danbury Road, at Grove Street. The town will pay a third of the cost of the new light.

July 27, 1971 — “Two acres of questionable wetland isn’t worth it,” says one speaker at a Planning and Zoning Commission public hearing, favoring creating athletic fields at East Ridge Junior High School which, since it opened five years earlier, has not had a single formal athletic field for its 1,300 students. Plans call for developing multiple use fields on the Rockwell land to the north, which has some wetland.

July 29, 1971 — The Big Shop off Bailey Avenue and behind Main Street, where Hannibal Hamlin of Maine, vice president of the United States under Abraham Lincoln once spoke, is about to be condemned, says sanitarian George Frigon who described the tenement building as “in a sorry state of disrepair.” Beams are rotten, walls are cracked, plumbing is leaking and many windows are broken. And yet three people are living in apartments in the building. The building was once a meeting hall and factory, located where the First Congregational Church is today. Today it houses shops and two popular restaurants, Luc’s and Terrasole.

July 30, 1971 — Books Plus opens on Main Street. Owner Bernie Learman has another book store of the same name in Wilton. “It’s a lively bookstore, a comprehensive bookstore, a fun place,” Learman says. “I’m happier having my own peanut stand on the corner than earning the highest salary in the world.”

Aug. 1, 1971 — A Georgetown man is arrested for misuse of the flag after police receive numerous complaints of the man’s dragging the flag on the pavement, sitting and walking on it. After a search uncovers an ounce of marijuana, police add a charge of possession of a controlled drug.

Aug. 2, 1971 — William L. “Willie” Winthrop, who was largely responsible for creating the Ridgefield Lakes and was an outspoken critic of local government, dies at the age of 75. Winthrop bought what was then called the Fox Hill Lakes in 1932 and wound up

developing some 400 houses, many of them initially aimed at being summer and weekend cottages.

Aug. 9, 1971 — The Court of Common Pleas rejects a plea from Clover Leaf Shell which had appealed a Zoning Board of Appeals' decision not to allow auto repairs at its gasoline station on Route 33 near the Wilton line. The appeals board said repairs would be the expansion of a non-conforming use in a residential zone, and the court agrees. The property had been purchased in 1967 from the Jensen family which operated Hilltop Shell, a filling station and convenience store, but not a repair garage. Shell tore down the old station and built a modern, three-bay structure. However, without a repairer's license, the gas station has never been able to make money for any of its several owners and has for years sat unused.

Aug. 9, 1971 — Don R. Gregory, chairman of the high school English Department, resigns, citing conflicts over "my sense of priorities and those of the administration." Gregory is among the teachers who've been criticized by some parents over the paperback books he has assigned for high school elective courses.

Aug. 9, 1971 — A computer is needed at the high school, says a report to the school board from a group of math teachers including chairman Hope Gilchrist. "The computer is with us for good, part of our social and occupational life, and the school is obligated to introduce students to its rationale and use," says the report, which notes that Darien, Fairfield Westport, Wilton Weston, Redding, and Norwalk all use a computer in math classes. The school board agrees and approves the acquisition of a Hewlett Packard model, which uses BASIC as its language and can be fed with mark-sense cards instead of keypunched cards. The town government has an NCR computer, but it uses Fortran language and is not really designed for school use. The HP computer will cost about \$24,000 (\$148,000 in 2018)

Aug. 12, 1971 — A former physical education teacher at a Newtown middle school joins the paid fire department. "I took a hobby and made it my regular job," says Richard Dingee of Barry Avenue, a Ridgefield native who's been a volunteer firefighter.

Aug. 12, 1971 — Husband-and-wife psychiatrists buy the former St. Vincent dePaul Novitiate on Old West Mountain Road — better known now as the Sunset Hall mansion. Drs. James and Lauma Katis pay \$212,000 for the 19-room mansion and 13 acres that has a colorful past that's included consideration as the headquarters for the United Nations, and such owners as magician Houdini's brother, a New York beer baron, and the U.S. ambassador to Russia. They plan to restore the house-turned-novitiate into a house again.

Aug. 18, 1971 — Michael A. Hagan decides he will not run for first selectman, leaving only Joseph J. McLinden as a Republican candidate after William Casey earlier bowed out of the race.

Aug. 19, 1971 — “There is a very real possibility that a vital organization, whose benefits Ridgefielders have enjoyed for 57 years, may not exist much longer,” says a story by Sally Sanders on the front page of *The Ridgefield Press*, warning that the District Nursing Association “faces a financial crisis which can only be resolved through the active and continued support of all the citizens of Ridgefield.” The DNA needs at least \$16,600 in donations to meet its coming budget.

Aug. 19, 1971 — A New Canaan man announces he wants to put 175 condominiums on Jack B. Ward’s “Ward Acres” horse farm on Peaceable Street. Needless to say, the plan does not fare well with either neighbors or town officials.

Aug. 20, 1971 — The Rev. Hugh Shields, a part of Ridgefield’s public life for half a century, dies at the age of 80. Shields had been pastor of the First Congregational Church from 1919 to 1956, and served as pastor of the Ridgebury Congregational Church. But he was also involved in the civic life of the town, serving two terms in the late 1920s as a state representative from Ridgefield — the only Ridgefield clergyman ever elected to the Legislature. He started his career doing dramatic poetry readings in Indiana.

Aug. 26, 1971 — Harold Lewis, developer of the new Copps Hill Plaza shopping center that’s under construction, announces that the Jerry Lewis movie theater chain has just signed on as a tenant. It will be the town’s second theater, the first being the Ridgefield Playhouse on Prospect Street, opened in 1940.

Aug. 28, 1971 — Tropical storm Doria arrives, dropping 5.25 inches of rain on the town and serving up winds of more than 60 mph, killing power to thousands of homes — many of which do not have electricity for two days. First Selectman J. Mortimer Woodcock says cleaning up after the storm, including opening many blocked roads, will cost the town more than \$10,000 (\$62,000 in 2018 dollars).

Aug. 30, 1971 — The school board learns it can’t give raises to teachers or increase school lunch prices because of the wage-price freeze that President Nixon enacts. Executive Order 11615 freezes prices, rents, wages, and salaries for 90 days, in order to “stabilize the economy, reduce inflation and minimize unemployment.”

Aug. 30, 1971 — Harold Voorhees Jr. of Ridgefield is named business manager of the school system.

Sept. 1, 1971 — Attorney Paul S. McNamara of Danbury becomes an associate in the law office of Attorney Joseph H. Donnelly. McNamara does well in Ridgefield — he has been chairman of the board of the Fairfield County Bank, formerly Ridgefield Savings Bank, since 1987.

Sept. 2, 1971 — Coach Bob Mark is preparing the Tiger football squad for competition in its new league, the Fairfield County Conference. Ridgefield had dominated the the Western Connecticut Conference for the past five years, but has some problems with the bigger schools, losing the first two games of the season in shutouts. Then, “the sweet taste of victory” is the Press headline over the story of the Tigers’ Oct. 2 shutout of winless Darien, 26-0, for their first win in the conference. Stars included Billy Morris, Steve Scala, Perry Caporale, Rich Phelan, quarterback Chip Dean, Ken Pribanic, Craig Vontobel, Tom Thomas, Jim Coffey, and Larry Hart.

Sept. 7, 1971 — A group of Ridgefielders that includes Dr. Joseph Buchman, an internist, and Vincent Pelliccione, a builder, plan to develop a 16,000-foot medical complex at the corner of Grove Street and Old Quarry Road.

Sept. 9, 1971 — Owners of more than 40 houses at the Chestnut Hills development in Ridgebury find themselves in the midst of a “chaotic mess” as officials discover that the residents do not have clear title to their land. Town Counsel John E. Dowling tells the Planning and Zoning Commission that two different maps of the subdivision were created — one in February 1959 and a second, more accurate map in July 1959. Many subsequent deeds for lots described the parcels using the July map. Other deeds referred to the February map and still others referred to no map at all. The problem, Judge Dowling says, is that the two maps are different, none of the lots match, and no one can be sure where their property lines are. Because of this they can’t sell their homes.

Sept. 11, 1971 — More than 300 vintage automobiles pack Veterans Park field for the Lions Club Antique Car Show.

Sept. 12, 1971 — St. Mary’s Parish celebrates the 75th anniversary of its church building.

Sept. 13, 1971 — Female attire at Ridgefield High School draws critical comments from one of the town’s older females. Parents “want to know why girls get ‘in trouble,’ ” says Sylvia Latanzi speaking at a school board meeting. “It’s only natural when they (the boys) see them (the girls) half undressed.” She also decries overly informal dress at the school. “I thought only farmers wore overalls,” she says.

Sept. 14, 1971 — Enrollments in the schools are indeed declining — drastically. The school board had predicted an enrollment of 6,200 students but by today, only 5,843 have showed up, 357 short of what was expected.

Sept. 18, 1971 — The U.S. Marine Corps Band concert at East Ridge Junior High goes on as scheduled, even though a truck packed with the band’s instruments and uniforms is stolen from a motel parking lot the night before in New Jersey. The Marines have a helicopter loaded with spare uniforms and equipment ready to fly to Danbury Airport, but

do not need to make the trip. The truck is found three miles from the motel, everything intact; apparently the thief abandoned it after discovering its contents. "There's not much of a market for stolen military band equipment," says one member of the Ridgefield Kiwanis Club, which sponsors the concert.

Sept. 20, 1971 — George L. Bakes, an investor-developer from Norwalk, pays \$600,000 for the 110-acre former Camp Adventure on Route 7 north of Great Pond. "I am looking toward the day when I can attract a blue-chip corporate facility," Bakes says. "It's the best and finest use of the property." It will be 20 years before Bakes wins approval for any use — and that will be for age-restricted condos, a nursing home, and congregate housing for the elderly.

Sept. 21, 1971 — Recent Fordham law graduate Joseph A. Egan Jr. of Bryon Avenue is admitted to the Connecticut Bar today and the new attorney becomes an associate of Judge John E. Dowling of Catoonah Street.

Sept. 21, 1971 —Despite opposition from Farmingville residents, the Planning and Zoning Commission approves a new car wash near the corner of Danbury and Farmingville Roads, behind the Shell station. The owner is Joseph McLinden, chairman of the commission and a candidate for first selectman.

Sept. 23, 1971 — Robert T. Steinholtz of Cranberry Lane will lead an effort to create up to eight miles of foot and cross-country ski trails at the 276-acre Pierrepont State Park.

Sept. 23, 1971 — Five Ridgefield High School seniors are semi-finalists in the National Merit Scholarship Test: Tina Courtright, Charles Reach, Dennis Himes, Carl Erikson, and Jean Ackerman.

Sept. 28, 1971 — Burning of leaves in Ridgefield was banned in 1970 to curb air pollution. Now the town announces it has purchased a "Super Vac," a machine pulled by a truck that will suck up leaves that rakers pile alongside roads.

Sept. 28, 1971 — Attorney and Mrs. Philip Hilsenrad, who had operated the Mamanasco Lake Lodge for 20 years, report they are moving to Florida — again. "We tried moving to Florida once before," Mr. Hilsenrad says, "but we came back here. This time I think the move is permanent."

Sept. 29, 1971 — A green, slimy ooze has been flowing from Lake Windwing into the Ridgefield Lakes and beyond, reports Sanitarian George Frigon, who suspects someone dumped a load of "paint or dye waste" into Windwing. "I'm surprised there hasn't been a fish kill," he adds.

Sept. 30, 1971 — Ridgefield native and historian Silvio A. Bedini is promoted to deputy director of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of History and Technology.

Oct. 2, 1971 — St. Mary's Property Evaluation Commission rejects an offer of \$800,000 for its parochial school and 5.3 acres at High Ridge and Barry Avenues.

Oct. 7, 1971 — The Ridgefield Savings Bank marks its 100th birthday with a special 36-page section in The Ridgefield Press, written by Karl S. Nash and focusing on the history of the bank and the town. The bank also offers depositors a special commemorative paperweight — a silver dollar embedded in a block of clear plastic. The price is \$2.50, "value - \$5.70." (Melted for its silver, that dollar is worth about \$13 in 2018.)

Oct. 7, 1971 — The selectmen drop a bombshell, calling a town meeting to exempt the town government from having to comply with any zoning regulations. The proposal is an outcome of an inter-agency dispute over whether the East Ridge wetlands should be preserved, as zoning would require, or made into playing fields at the north side of East Ridge Junior High, as school officials want. In a rare front-page editorial, The Press says such a move would be "a serious and sad mistake."

Oct. 10, 1971 — In a poll taken at today's masses, St. Mary's parishioners vote by a margin of seven to one to sell the parish school. A total of 1,400 favor sale while only about 200 oppose.

Oct. 14, 1971 — The Rev. Bill Comeau, associate pastor of Jesse Lee Memorial United Methodist Church, sends every parish family a copy of his new booklet of poetry, "Patterns," which will be used in religious education classes. (Dr. Comeau, who now lives in Rhode Island, has gone on to write a dozen books, seven plays, and many songs — three of his albums have been Grammy finalists.)

Oct. 15, 1971 — More than 500 teenagers turn out for the opening of the new Teen Center behind Ballard Park and listen to the music of The Loon's Canoe. Sponsored by the Parks and Recreation Department, the Teen Center is headed by Dave Hebert, a full-time professional youth leader.

Oct. 19, 1971 — "Gentlemen, I expect to tell you tonight how it really is," Ridgefield Police Sgt. Thomas Rotunda tells the Rotary Club. He describes the poor working conditions in the department's "headquarters" in the town hall basement where interviews are conducted in a boiler room. "They're so jammed down there — why even their one lavatory is constantly running over and the police officers, policewoman and prisoners have to climb two flights of stairs to use a half-way decent lavatory in another town agency." In the past eight years, he adds, "our floors have been washed once. Yes, once!"

Oct 20, 1971 — Prolific author Max Gunther of Beechwood Lane discusses his latest book, “Wall Street and Witchcraft,” at the annual Women’s Town Club Book & Author Luncheon. “People have made money on the stock market by predicting stocks by astrology, tarot cards, witchcraft, and dream interpretation,” says Gunther, who spent three years researching the book.

Oct. 21, 1971 — Allen O. Shafer, a member of the Board of Finance and former chairman of the Board of Education, predicts the school system will have 900 empty seats by 1976. He suggests the figures indicate there is no need for another elementary school or for renovating the existing high school, which is about to close and be replaced by the new RHS. He is correct on all counts and the town eventually winds up closing two elementary schools.

Oct. 21, 1971 — Terry Montague, 10, and her sister Valerie, 8, are heartbroken because their Collie, Duke, has been missing for more than a week. Then comes a knock on their Ridgebury Road door. Two hunters escort an “exhausted” Duke whom they just rescued from the bottom of an eight-foot dry well in woods off Saw Mill Road where the dog had been without food for a week. “Duke looked stunned,” says Jon Montague, the girls’ father.

Oct. 23, 1971 — “It’s very depressing.” That is Coach Bob Marks’s reaction after the RHS Tiger football squad holds Norwalk to only 16 yards rushing, and still loses the game, 9-0.

Oct. 25, 1971 — Steven Lancaster, a star athlete and top scholar in the RHS Class of 1971, dies of leukemia at the age of 18. A son of Frank and Bunny (Bedini) Lancaster, he had been a member of the National Honor Society, Student Council, yearbook staff, Chess Club, and other organizations and had won several scholastic awards, including a Wadsworth R. Lewis scholarship and a VWF Auxiliary Good Citizenship Award. He lettered in football, baseball and indoor track and was quarterback of the 1970-71 football team, which had a 6-2 record. Today the main athletic field at Ridgefield High School’s Tiger Hollow bears his name, the Steven M. Lancaster Memorial Field.

Oct. 28, 1971 — Gov. Thomas Meskill speaks at a retirement dinner for First Selectman J. Mortimer Woodcock

Oct. 31, 1971 — After only five months on the job, Geraldine Marsh quits as dog warden, echoing the complaint of her predecessor that the job should be full-time and not part-time. She adds that she gets calls 24 hours a day and must use her own vehicle, since the town does not provide the warden with one.

Oct. 31, 1971 — Ridgefield children again collect donations for UNICEF. The effort is sponsored by the League of Women Voters, and local Girl Scouts distribute collection boxes to students.

Nov. 1, 1971 — Charles Rhine of North Salem Road, a former trade magazine editor, is the latest dog warden. He also has a business building dog houses. Two weeks later, firefighters are called to his house to fight a blaze that nearly destroys the place.

Nov. 2, 1971 — Republican Joseph J. McLinden is elected first selectman, replacing retiring J. Mortimer Woodcock, and defeating Democrat Gary L. Bryant. In a surprise Town Clerk Ruth M. Hurzeler holds off a strong challenge from her Democratic challenger, Terry Leary, narrowly winning by 2,461 to 2,239. Other winners included Raymond Bessette, Samuel DiMuzio, Stanley Gianzero, and Mary Gelfman on the school board, and Ron Finn, Vincent Maneri and Joseph Heyman on the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Nov. 4, 1971 — George Mulvaney Jr. of Ridgebury Road is in fair condition in Danbury Hospital after he was buried alive for 25 minutes and received the last rites of the Catholic Church. Mulvaney was working on a narrow ditch at the Danbury Regional Center when the sides collapsed on top of him. Fortunately, he was bending over his shovel at the time and enough air remained around his head for him to survive. However he needed weeks of traction for a broken pelvis and was in a cast for weeks.

Nov. 5, 1971 — The Ridgefield Sport and Toy Caboose, a popular place with local kids on Prospect Street, is moving from Prospect Street to a new building on Governor Street (in 2018, Bissell's Pharmacy). The old building is about to be razed to make way for the new Yankee Ridge Shopping Center, and stood about where Dimitri's Diner is today.

Nov. 6, 1971 — Eric Sloane drives down from his home in Warren, Conn., and signs copies of his 22nd book, "I Remember America," at Books Plus on Main Street.

Nov. 9, 1971 — James H. Hackert and Attorney Herbert V. Camp Jr. propose 50 condominium units on five acres behind one of the town's most historic houses. The development at the corner of Branchville Road and East Ridge, on the backland of the 1713 Hauley House, would be built partly in what had once been a pond for cutting ice. The proposal does not fare well with officials, and a half-dozen single-family houses are built instead — none in the old pond.

Nov. 13, 1971 — Patsy Sheehan is RHS homecoming queen.

Nov. 13, 1971 — State National Bank builds a new branch office, its second in town, on Route 7 just north of Route 35. The bank's grand opening gimmick: A chance to win "one day's interest on one million dollars." One of a seemingly endless number of bank offices



that open in town in the 1970s, the bank vanished long ago and the building now sells Subway sandwiches, one of three Subways in Ridgefield.

Nov. 17, 1971 — Oneneyrtus clisiocame, a parasite, appears to be destroying the eggs of the snow white linden moth, adult form of the elm span worm, State Entomologist John Anderson tells officials of area towns. The elm span worm and the gypsy moth caterpillar are the two culprits that defoliated thousands of trees in the area last summer.

Nov. 18, 1971 — John Yervant finally gives up trying to find a new home in Ridgefield for his Fox Hill Inn and announces he will build in Brookfield. Yervant had sold his famous restaurant — once the mansion of the Conley family's Outpost Farm — to IBM, which eventually tore it down. (The land is now Bennett's Pond State Park.)

Nov. 22, 1971 — Newly elected First Selectman Joseph McLinden says the town needs an official seal, and will have a contest "There are plenty of Ridgefielders with artistic talent," he says. "We should be able to get many fine entries."

Nov. 22, 1971 — The Mamasasco Lake Improvement Fund has been formed to halt the deterioration of the lake due to eutrophication.

Nov. 23, 1971 — Smoke so thick that "when you enter the lavatory, you're smoking, whether you want to or not," is how one student describes the current cigarette problem at Ridgefield High School to the Board of Education. Smoking is banned at the school, but it is not uncommon to enter a bathroom and find 20 or 30 students "huddled in the corners, smoking." Superintendent David Weingast says cracking down on smoking is "an impossible job."

Dec. 2, 1971 — The Associated Press carries a feature on Johnny Cash's new film, "Gospel Road," in which Bob Elfstrom of Old Branchville Road plays Jesus Christ. Elfstrom, a documentary filmmaker, had earlier made a feature on the country singer, called "Cash," and the singer liked it so much he asked Elfstrom to play Jesus in his own film.

Dec. 2, 1971 — James Farfaglia, a sophomore at Ridgefield High School, wins the annual Voice of Democracy Contest at RHS sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars post. "Freedom is the most desired element in American society and the most short-lived throughout the world," his talk begins. [Farfaglia becomes a parish priest and is now in Corpus Christi, Texas. He is a frequent speaker on national Catholic radio stations, and author of two books on Catholicism.]

Dec. 6, 1971 — Serenaded by songs and music from James Edighoffer of the jazz band and other students, the Board of Education learns about the efforts of more than 150 people preparing programs for the new North Salem Road high school that will open in

the fall of 1972. Edighoffer is part of a presentation staged by music department head Joseph Celli that seems more entertaining to the audience of 100 or so people than description of the new \$26,000 card-fed computer that will grace the math department.

Dec. 9, 1971 — The police report seven more burglaries in the past week, bringing to 20 the number of house breaks that have occurred in the past two months. In one case this week, a man and his seven-year-old daughter come home to find three strangers in their house.

Dec. 9, 1971 — William Casey, head of Casey Fuel, announces he is buying the Ridgefield Supply Company's fuel oil business.

Dec. 11, 1971 — The Ridgefield Athletic Association Corporation (RAAC) opens its new skating rink on Prospect Ridge.

Dec. 13, 1971 — Penn Central enacts a new schedule for trains on the Danbury-Norwalk line. Among the big changes: No more stops at Georgetown Station. The state has taken over the Penn Central operation and there's talk of improvements on the line, including returning to electrification.

Dec. 13, 1971 — The Board of Education is wondering what to do with the high school on East Ridge, which will be vacated when the current class graduates in June 1972 — the new high school will open in September. "The school is a magnificent structure," says board member and former first selectman Leo F. Carroll. "We must not neglect to protect it."

Dec. 14, 1971 — Bulldozers continue to knock down buildings on Main and Prospect Streets for the new Yankee Ridge Shopping Center. Latest to go is the Osborn house on Main Street.

Dec. 16, 1971 — Holly D'Alessandro, 15, and her four-year-old brother Robert, are killed when their car, driven by an 18-year-old from Fairfield, crashes into a tree on Route 7. The RHS Chorus sings and music teacher Sylvia Hodge plays the organ for the service at the First Congregational Church, led by the Rev. Clayton R. Lund.

Dec. 18, 1971 — Golfers vote themselves a Christmas present as just under 2,000 people turn out for a referendum to approve buying land for and building the Dlh Ridge Golf Course.

Dec. 20, 1971 — Tom Cesca scores 20 points as the Tigers get their first basketball victory of the season, downing Greenwich, 70-67. Don Mills sinks 18 points, Jim "Doc" Halliday, 14, and Jamie Morris, 13. The Tigers are now 1-3.

Dec. 22, 1971 — The three children of Mr. and Mrs. David Detzer of Main Street are doing something practical about international relations, becoming pen pals with young people abroad. Christopher, 12, is writing to a boy in Kuwait, Curtis, 10, to a boy in Northern Ireland, and Katrina, 9, to girls in Bermuda and Australia. Their mother is a teacher at Farmingville School.

## **1972**

Jan. 3, 1972 — Mario Frulla, the new custodian of the town refuse depot, otherwise known as “the dump,” says he will be cracking down on non-residents who have been dropping off their trash there. Frulla is a former Ridgefield policeman.

Jan. 4, 1972 — Joseph Heyman, a new member of the Planning and Zoning Commission, recommends the commission create an architectural review board to go over any proposals for developments in town and recommend design improvements where appropriate. Heyman maintains that the architecture of many non-residential developments approved here in recent years is “not up to a high standard.” The commission approves his idea and the agency still exists.

Jan. 5, 1972 — A five-story tall estate water tower, built around 1900, is knocked down by a Morganti Inc. bulldozer. The town has just purchased the former Holy Ghost Novitiate land for municipal use and First Selectman Joseph J. McLinden says the tower, subject to much vandalism, is a fire hazard and an eyesore.

Jan. 6, 1972 — The number of burglaries and larcenies in town more than doubled in 1971 and the number of people arrested on drug charges almost tripled, The Ridgefield Press reports.

Jan. 8, 1972 – Recycling operations have begun on Old Quarry Road and REAP is collecting donations to erect a recycling building.

Jan. 8, 1972 — Notre Dame Academy on West Mountain Road will close in June, Sister Ann Moore, the principal, tells parents. “We realize that neither the availability of sisters and teachers, nor finances, but rather enrollment is the key issue in this decision,” she says. While its new building can hold 400 students, the highest enrollment the Catholic girls school has reached is 160 in 1970-71. That dropped to 145 this year.

Jan. 10, 1972 — After a large number of students show up at their meeting to press for lifting the RHS smoking ban, the school board votes to allow smoking in certain outdoor areas — on a trial basis. Student Kathy Fossi tells the board that students currently use lavatories for smoking, resulting in unsavory and unhealthy conditions, especially for non-smokers.

Jan. 13, 1972 — One of the newest residents of Main Street has become one of the most popular. Himself, an Irish donkey, is the new pet of Bob and Susan Scala of The Elms Inn.

Jan. 15, 1972 — Two well-known Ridgefielders die today. Joseph A. Zwierlein, had served as the town's dog warden for 30 years, had been a volunteer fireman for more than 60 years, and was a police commissioner. He was 78. Edwin Raymond, a Ridgefield policeman for 10 years, was 62. He had previously been a Bridgeport motorcycle policeman.

Jan. 19, 1972 — "Poverty thrives on antiquated attitudes," a panel on poverty in Ridgefield tells the Women's Fellowship of the First Congregational Church. Policewoman Sandra Britton says that police are "acutely aware of local poverty when they investigate."

Jan. 22, 1972 — After a date, a teenage girl comes home at 11:15 p.m. to find 25 to 40 teenagers, aged 14 and 15, in her parents' house, drinking beer. Some were some half undressed and several couples were in bed. The girl calls police, but the teens scam before cops arrive. The party coincided with a dance at the nearby teen center. Apparently youngsters had been dropped off at the center and then walked directly to the party.

Jan. 25, 1972 — Town Health Officer Dr. Patrick Neligan orders the selectmen to close the town dump within two years. It is one of eight directives in an order that includes immediately beginning efforts to clean up unsanitary conditions at the dump.

Feb. 2, 1972 — Stage, film and TV actress Jessie Royce Landis Seitz of Old Branchville Road dies at the age of 67. Miss Landis's many roles included Cary Grant's mother in the Alfred Hitchcock thriller *North by Northwest* — she was only eight years older than Grant. "I am probably one of the most prolific mothers out there," she once said, noting that she also played mothers of Grace Kelly, June Allyson, Tab Hunter, Anthony Perkins, Jean Peters, and Kim Novak in films over the years.

Feb. 3, 1972 — Ridgefield newcomer Stephen Schwartz is busy polishing up the songs for "Pippin," a new musical due to open on Broadway in the fall. At 23 years old, he already has "Godspell" to his credit. In March he earns a Grammy for "Godspell."

Feb. 7, 1972 — The school board votes to name the baseball field at the new high school the "Clifford A. Holleran Field," recalling the former principal and longtime RHS coach. [The name is no longer in use.]

Feb. 8, 1972 — Lowell I. "Bud" Williams, who had served as the town's first full-time planning director, returns as temporary director until a replacement for Michael Ocorr, who quit, is found.

Feb. 8, 1972 — Dr. Sullivan Campbell of Main Street, a scientist and mathematician involved in the invention of photocopying machines, dies of injuries sustained in a Jan. 26 crash in which his car hit a tree on lower Main Street at Wilton Roads East and West. He was 49 years old and the third person to die in accidents at that curved intersection of Route 33.

Feb. 9, 1972 — “Let Freedom Ring” phone line in Ridgefield carries conservative messages that have labeled such people as Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger as communist-accommodating, and organizations such as UNICEF and concepts like busing as communist-inspired. The line gets about 400 calls a week, reports Barbara Fisher, who runs it from a bedroom closet in her Mimosa Circle home.

Feb. 10, 1972 — After 264 years without Ridgefield’s having an official town seal, Robert Malin of Harding Drive, a graphics director for Perkin-Elmer, wins a contest to create one. His design includes Settlers Rock, where a group of men exploring the territory to create a new town spent their first night; a spreading oak tree, recalling the state’s Charter Oak; and farmhouses with stone walls to recall Ridgefield’s long agricultural past. It is still used today. Among the 13 accomplished local artists who entered the contest were Don Carboni, Warren Kaffka, Patricia Scott, and Franklin Lischke.

Feb. 10, 1972 — “All new from Kodak,” says the ad in The Press from Ridgefield Photo Shop, promoting Kodak’s cartridge-loading Instamatic M105 movie projector. “First, drop-in and shoot movies; now, drop-in and show projection!” The price? \$140 — equivalent to about \$840 of today’s money (you can now buy an antique M105 for anywhere from \$5 to \$40; \$5 today is about 84 cents in 1972).

Feb. 24, 1972 — The Sisters of St. Thomas of Villanova sell their house at 40 Barry Avenue. The sisters, who came from France in 1954 to run a convalescent home in Norwalk, bought the place four years earlier as a retreat. However, the sisters who ran a “rest home” found they did not have time to use it to rest themselves.

Feb. 24, 1972 — In its first year of competition, the RHS hockey team improves its record to 4-2-2 with a 4-1 win over Wooster School. Left winger Tom Thomas scores two of the four goals.

Feb. 27, 1972 — Workmen begin tearing down the first of three garages at the new Casagmo apartments after the Planning and Zoning Commission determines that the buildings were erected too close to Main Street.

Feb. 28, 1972 — Faced with dramatic increases in house burglaries and narcotics cases, the Board of Finance quickly approves adding six officers to the Ridgefield Police force, increasing the total to 30. First Selectman Joseph J. McLinden adds his support, noting

that twice in the past few weeks, rocks have been through through his town hall office window and last week several fire extinguishers were stolen from the building.

Feb. 28, 1972 — Five Ridgefield High School students are National Merit Scholarship semifinalists: Jean L. Ackerman, Christina Courtright, Carl E. Erickson, Dennis P. Himes, and Charles H. Reach.

March 1, 1972 — The Parks and Recreation Commission drops fees for Martin Park membership by 20%. A family can now join for \$40 instead of \$50.

March 5, 1972 — “I covered a team that no longer exists in a demolished ball park for a newspaper that is dead,” Roger Kahn, a new resident of North Salem Road, tells The Press. The team was the Brooklyn Dodgers, the ballpark was Ebbet’s Field, and the newspaper was the New York Herald Tribune. Why is he talking about it? Because he’s the author of the new book about the Dodgers, “The Boys of Summer,” that quickly becomes a national bestseller.

March 6, 1972 — James “Jimmy Joe” Joseph, a native of Lebanon and operator of Joe’s Store for many years, dies at what the family says, based on his Arabic birth certificate, is the age of 114. He himself had once told the Press he was born in 1878, which would have made him about 94.

March 9, 1972 — Benrus, the watchmaker with offices and factory on Route 7, is still the town’s largest taxpayer, but Casagmo-Fox Hill developer David Paul rises to second place as more of his apartments are completed. IBM is third, thanks to its purchase of the former Fox Hill Inn property, and home developer Jerry Tuccio drops to fourth.

March 13, 1972 — School enrollments continue to rise, the school board learns tonight. Since the beginning of the year, 24 more students have arrived, bringing the total to 5,897.

March 13, 1972 — John Longden of Rising Ridge Road, a former corporate financial officer who worked for the United Nations, becomes the town’s first “budget director,” a job that eventually evolves into the controller. Longden has been the volunteer clerk of the board of Finance.

March 16, 1972 — In its very first year of competition, The Ridgefield High hockey team compiles a 7-2-4 record behind the playing of such stars as Tom Thomas, Chip Dean, Charlie Ancona, Chuck Reach, Richie Tocci, Jeff Yelinek, and Eric Menten, and the coaching of Ray Bessette and Chuck Dean.

March 18, 1972 — More than 3,000 hot dogs are served, free of charge, as the new RAAC skating rink on Prospect Ridge throws a “Francis Martin skating party.” Last year,

Martin gave up sponsoring annual skating parties at Lake Mamanasco after 40 years, so creators of the new rink — especially Ray Bessette — decide to pick up where he left off.

March 23, 1972 – Suburban Action Institute, which opposes exclusionary zoning and is headed by noted planner Paul Davidoff, wants to buy the Kaiser turkey farm on Barry Avenue for low-cost housing. SAI is eventually turned down by zoners, files suit against “lily-white Ridgefield” and loses the case on a technicality.

March 24, 1972 — In a satirical reaction to the selectmen’s contest for an official town seal, advertising executive Yustin Wallrapp announces the winners of the “Real Ridgefield Seal Design Contest.” First place goes to Elizabeth A. Lynch of Nod Road whose seal shows a bulldozer and the motto, “We Level the Earth.” Nicole Pasternack takes second place with a design featuring “all the diverse elements of current Ridgefield life” including school books burning, trees being chain-sawed, and a “somnambulant planning and zoning commission.”

March 29, 1972 — Despite Selectman Robert Hoffman’s objections, the Board of Selectmen votes to allow a local go-cart club to use a school parking lot for races. Hoffman says that allowing legalized racing would encourage the use of go-carts and would thus lead to the “proliferation of a public nuisance.”

March 30, 1972 — The Army Corps of Engineers confirms that it is investigating possible sites for a new post office in Ridgefield to replace the small quarters at the north end of the Grand Union supermarket building.

April 3, 1972 — The most debated item at the public hearing on the 1972-73 town budget is a plan to install a switchboard in the town hall. Currently each agency has its own phone line, but with a switchboard, the town government would have only one number. “I just feel that it’s a more businesslike way of handling the whole telephone aspect of town business,” First Selectman Joseph J. McLinden says. “The town government will be more efficient at a small increase in cost.” That cost includes \$5,300 for a switchboard operator who would double as a town hall receptionist.

April 6, 1972 — Lillian Gilkes of Tryon, N.C., formerly of Olmstead Lane, publishes an article in the Nathaniel Hawthorne Journal that attacks the reputation of S.G. Goodrich — Peter Parley — maintaining he was, among other things, a skinflint. As a publisher, she says, his only goal was to make money and that he “didn’t give a wooden nutmeg about lifting the standards of literature and art.” She also admits that she herself is “an old trouble-maker.”

April 6, 1972 — Residents in the Danbury and Haviland Road areas are finding gasoline in their well water, says a Press story, headlined: “Water, Water Everywhere, but Hi-Test in the Well.”

April 6, 1972 — Evelina Tulipani, the mother of five World War II veterans, dies at the age of 77. The wife of Vincenzo Tulipani, she was a native of Italy, a homemaker, and active in the Italian Club . Her sons Aldo, Joseph, Albert, Alfred and John were all in the war and all returned home safely.

April 13, 1972 – Ridgefield makes national news after the school board refuses to allow high school seniors to read Boss, columnist Mike Royko's book about Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley, in a political science elective. "I don't think it's a good book," said one board member. One thousand students at RHS sign petitions opposing the ban. Royko himself hears about it, and calls the board "rubes." The board later reinstates the book.

April 20, 1972 — The Ridgefield Press publishes a special eight-page section on the book controversy. It included more than 45 letters from readers.

April 25, 1972 — Blacksmith Harry Thomas and his wife, Minola, mark their 65th wedding anniversary. They built their home at 22 Catoonah Street (the house between the firehouse and post office today) and lived there 45 years.

April 27, 1972 — Mr. and Mrs. Jan Myslik, who escaped communist Czechoslovakia, open the Semaphore restaurant in the Gaeta Shopping Center where the Bill o' Fare restaurant had been.

May 2, 1972 — The Planning and Zoning Commission fails to practice any "southern hospitality" as it tells Kentucky Fried Chicken not to even bother applying for a permit to open a restaurant in the Copps Hill area. "That's all we need," says one commissioner. The zoners oppose take-out restaurants, ostensibly because they generate too much traffic but also because they think they're tacky.

May 6, 1972 — Gus Thomas, president of Babe Ruth Baseball, announces at the season opener that the league's most valuable player award will be named after Steve Lancaster, the athlete and scholar who died last October at the age of 18.

May 9, 1972 — Weinstein and Weinstein, a Norwalk law firm, is appointed legal counsel for the Planning and Zoning Commission, which has been asking for legal help for years as pressures to develop the town continue. Lawrence Hirsch of the firm becomes the Ridgefield specialist and later practices law here.

May 10, 1972 — David Hebert, recreation director since November 1970, is named the new superintendent of the Parks and Recreation Department, replacing William Seirup, who resigned.

May 10, 1972 — After losing 11 straight games this spring, the Tiger baseball team defeats arch-rival Wilton in a 12-8 slugfest that includes strong showings by Tom Thomas



and Tom Cesca, and pitcher Bob Mosely. It turns out to be the only win of the season that features 17 defeats.

May 15, 1972 — Dr. Joseph Schanno, brother of Lucy Wilson of Standish Drive, operates on Alabama Gov. George Wallace, critically injured today in an assassination attempt in Maryland. “We knew he was a prominent doctor, but we never knew he would be called in on something as big as this,” said Mrs. Wilson, who is personnel manager at Pepperidge Farm (and goes on to become a vice president of Campbell Soup, owner of Pepperidge Farm).

May 17, 1972 — New information from the 1970 census reveals that 2,394 families in town, about 57%, have incomes of more than \$15,000. Ninety five families, or 2.3%, are at or below poverty. Ridgefield’s largest income group, 1,650 families, makes between \$15,000 and \$25,000 (equivalent to \$89,000 to \$149,000 in 2018 dollars).

May 18, 1972 — Unhappy with the religious education program of St. Mary’s Parish, which just closed St. Mary’s School, and opposed to the “trend toward modernization” in the Catholic Church, a group of parents announces plans to open a first-through-eighth grade Catholic school in September. The location for Holy Innocents School has not yet been selected.

May 18, 1972 — Arthur Arent, an author and playwright who had a summer home on Saw Mill Hill Road for about 30 years, dies at the age of 67. Among his best known works was the hit Broadway musical “Pins and Needles,” for which Harold Rome, who had lived in Ridgefield in the 1940s, wrote the music.

May 21, 1972 — Keough’s, Branchville’s only hardware and paint store, opens on Route 7. Owner Edward Keough had previously been in medical and electronics industry marketing. His wife Barbara and sons Billy, Edward and Mark are all part of the operation.

May 23, 1972 — Frank Gabbianelli, a Ridgefield shoemaker and shoe repairman for nearly 40 years, dies at the age of 86. His first shop in the early 1920s was located where the big Fairfield County Bank (former Ridgefield Savings Bank) building stands today on Main Street.

May 23, 1972 — Singing star Tiny Tim appears on the stage of Ridgefield High School in a benefit for the Police Benevolent Association.

May 23, 1972 — Grant Peacock Jr. is elected president of the Lions Club. Alex Santini is first vice president, Joseph Knapp, second, and Harry Gill, third. The Tail Twister is Ed Czynr, and the Lion Tamer, Barry Finch.

May 24, 1972 — The Ford Foundation awards a \$5,000 grant to the Conservation Commission to build, with the Ridgefield Environmental Action Program, a recycling center at the town dump.

May 29, 1972 — After what The Press calls “the longest Memorial Day Parade in history,” Jack Herr of Barrack Hill delivers the annual address. He calls for a return to a strong family life.

June 4, 1972 — The lecturer at the First Church of Christ, Scientist, on Main Street is Alan Young of Newport Beach, Calif., a member of the Christian Science Board of Leadership. Most people would better know him, however, as the comedian who starred on the 1960s television series, “Mr. Ed,” whose titular co-star was a talking horse. Mr. Ed did not appear at the church.

June 5, 1972 — After Howard Paul resigns as principal of Scotland School effective June 30, school board member Mary Gelfman suggests his replacement should be a woman. She notes that 75% of the staff, and 50% of the students are female, and yet not one school has a woman principal.

June 6, 1972 — Connecticut Light and Power Company announces it wants to build a new power substation at the end of Halpin Lane to boost the electrical service to the town. It will require a 115,000 volt transmission line from Redding, mostly running along the old railroad bed, a fact that generates months of sparks from neighbors of the proposed power line.

June 7, 1972 — Edith Meffley, chairman of the Conservation Commission, is honored as the Rotary Club Citizen of the Year.

June 8, 1972 — Three Ridgefield firefighters complete training to be certified as the department’s first emergency medical technicians (EMTs), the first step in becoming paramedics. They are Gary Frulla, William Warner, and Richard Brown.

June 8, 1972 — Nancy Yanity of Main Street is salutatorian as Notre Dame Academy on West Mountain has its final graduation ceremony. Due to lack of enrollments, the Catholic girls high school is closing after four years in operation.

June 14, 1972 — Three Ridgefield teachers with 100 total years of service are honored at a “coffee or punch” reception. They are Linda Davies, 42 years; Vincent Caponera, 22 years; and Rose Edelman, a kindergarten teacher for 32 years.

June 14, 1972 — The selectmen finally grant a peddler’s permit to Richard E. Venus Jr., who wants to operate his “Dot’s” hot dog truck on Main Street. The selectmen had feared that allowing one food stand would create a flood of requests for them and, indeed, the

same week, Stanley Elliott of Rockport, Me., pulls up his truck at the American gas station at Routes 7 and 35 and begins selling live lobsters, shrimp and clams. The Planning and Zoning Commission is in an uproar.

June 15, 1972 – Ridgefield High School has its final graduation on East Ridge. In September the new high school on North Salem Road will open. The Class of 1972 totals 301 students — as usual, the largest ever. James Robert Larkin is the highest-ranking student.

June 16 — Mrs. James Gareau and her infant of Lafayette Avenue park themselves and refuse to budget from in front of a tree that they maintain has been illegally cut down at Copps Hill Plaza. They want to prevent the large tree, which had helped screen her house from viewing the large new shopping center, from being hauled away before town officials could see it. First Selectman Joseph McLinden, Zoning Enforcement Officer Gardner Taft, and a policeman show up, but McLinden says the developer is justified in removing the tree because it's diseased.

June 18, 1972 — Ridgefielders Ed Stone, Brian Sullivan and Mike Keeshen — all former RHS track stars — establish several new meet records at the Fairfield County Striders Track and Field Championship at New Canaan High School.

June 18, 1972 — Both ministers of Jesse Lee Methodist Church are honored at a farewell party. The Rev. Craig Haight is moving to New Paltz, N.Y., area churches and the Rev. Bill Comeau is returning to school.

June 19, 1972 — As part of an effort to absorb a \$704,000 cut in its budget, the school board votes to fire 34 teacher aides and one teacher for the coming year. The board's budget is \$6.7 million.

June 20, 1972 — The Planning and Zoning Commission approves a roof and three sides for the new skating rink on Prospect Ridge, built by the Ridgefield Athletic Association Corporation. One side will remain open. "It's more pleasant to skate outside than in a room," says Robert Schnuck, RAAC present.

June 23, 1972 — S. Howard Young, one of the world's wealthiest art dealers, dies at the age of 94. Young is credited with helping convince his friend, Columbia University president Dwight D. Eisenhower, to run for U.S. president during a weekend at his Branchville Road estate where he also played host to his nephew's daughter, actress Elizabeth Taylor.

June 28, 1972 — Ted Sorensen, who recently moved to Bennett's Farm Road, says he won't be going to the Democratic National Convention this year. "I have no role to play," said the former confidant of and speechwriter for President John F. Kennedy and a one-

time U.S. Senate candidate. Sorensen had helped Kennedy write the inaugural speech with the famous line, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."

July 1, 1972 — The community celebrates the 75th anniversary of the Ridgefield Volunteer Fire Department with a parade featuring more than 1,300 marching firefighters, plus a carnival and a special commemorative book, largely written by Elizabeth Leonard, who later becomes the town's state representative, then the first woman first selectman.

July 1, 1972 — 12,000 Ridgefielders turn out at Veterans Park to see the Rotary Club's fireworks display. They wait and wait and finally at 10 p.m., Rotary announces the truck with the fireworks had not shown up (due to a complex mix of problems, including new laws on fireworks and the fact that the manufacturer's plant blew up the year before). The club postpones the display. Ten minutes later, the truck carrying the fireworks arrives in town — but someone gives the driver the wrong location and he winds up stuck in mud at the old novitiate property on Prospect Ridge. The fireworks are rescheduled for July 2 and go off without a hitch.

July 2, 1972 — Fifteen Ridgefield Girl Scouts take a trip to England where they meet Princess Margaret. "She was so pretty," said Diane Grieco. "When she walked in, she had on a black and white suit, long black gloves, her hair was up, and she had a black straw hat on the back of her head. She is unbelievably nice and sweet. Lord Snowden was there and was taking pictures of her." The trip had been arranged by their scout leader, Mrs. Anthony Bedini, who then telegraphed the princess as soon as the troop had arrived in London. Two days later, they got a letter from the princess's secretary, setting up the meeting.

July 5, 1972 — The Rev. Roy A. Hassel, the new minister of Jesse Lee Memorial United Methodist Church, arrives in town with his family.

July 6, 1972 — With one dissent, a panel of state mediators proposes a one percent pay increases for teachers in the coming year. A beginner with a bachelor's degree would go from \$7,925 to \$8,004.

July 7, 1972 — Federal Judge Jon O. Newman orders a halt to all work on the new Super 7 until a study of the road's environmental impact has been made by federal transportation officials. Newman rules that the study of the Norwalk to Danbury stretch should consider alternatives to the four-lane expressway, such as improved rail transit or reconditioning the existing Route 7.

July 8, 1972 — Nearly 2,200 people — an all-time record — turn out for the Firemen's Ball on the high school tennis courts. They dance to the music of Lionel Hampton and his band.

July 10, 1972 — Ridgefielders are excited to “witness” a near total eclipse of the sun — 80% is blocked by the moon. The last time that had happened hereabouts was 1925.

July 11, 1972 — A Stamford developer announces plans to build a shopping center, with parking for 300 cars, at Danbury and Farmingville Roads, kitty corner across from the new Copps Hill Shopping center. The plan dies and the site later becomes the headquarters building for the Fairfield County Bank.

July 12, 1972 — Martin Park has been so overcrowded recently, probably exacerbated by the drop in family fees from \$50 to \$40 a season, that the Parks and Recreation Commission is considering plans for a public indoor swimming pool, built with private funds.

July 14, 1972 — The Rev. William H. Webb of Ridgefield is elected president of the Connecticut Conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. He had been a longtime head of the Ridgefield branch.

July 15, 1972 — The Sells and Gray Circus brings elephants and other wild animals to the now “old” high school field on East Ridge. The Jaycees sponsor the event to raise money to light a ballfield in town.

July 18, 1972 — Dr. John Trout, the administrator who for the past four years had been updating the Ridgefield schools’ curriculum, dies suddenly at his Holmes Road home at the age of 65. Only four months earlier, Trout’s working in Ridgefield was noted by the State Board of Education whose newsletter said he “appears to be headed for a national reputation in the field.”

July 19, 1972 — Oswald “Ozzie” Inglese, a native of Argentina, is hired as the town planner. He remains in the job for 30 years, retiring in 2003. At the time, he was the longest-serving town administrator.

July 20, 1972 — Selectman Joseph Dunworth is leading a local effort to increase tax relief for the elderly. “With the situation of ever increasing taxes in most suburban communities, many elderly citizens are finding it difficult and, in some cases impossible, to pay their real property taxes,” he says. He favors a state bill allowing towns to grant tax relief. The bill passes, and four years later Ridgefield adopts a flat \$150 reduction in the tax bill of anyone 65 or older in the first year, and \$450 thereafter. \$450 in 1977 — the first year that amount was granted— is roughly equivalent to \$1,850 today. However, while today’s tax break granted through the assessor’s office is \$1,048, that’s effectively \$800 less than what the town granted in 1977. Joe Dunworth would not be pleased.

July 20, 1972 — Rodney Anderson, a Ridgefield native, is elected chief of the Ridgefield Volunteer Fire Department, succeeding John L. Sullivan.

July 25, 1972 — Charles Coles Jr. of New Street is elected the ninth president of the Ridgefield Savings Bank (now Fairfield County Bank). He succeeds Carleton A. Scofield, president for 17 years, who is elected chairman of the Board of Directors.

July 27, 1972 — The Suburban Action Institute, headed by activist planner Paul Davidoff, discloses it wants to build 180 low- to middle-income apartments on the 13-acre Kaiser farm off Barry Avenue. “It’s for people who work here and want to be able to live here, and they should be able to,” says George Kaiser, explaining why he plans to sell to SAI, which dedicated to building low-cost housing in the suburbs, particularly those that have not provided opportunities for such housing.

July 29, 1972 — Genovese Drugs, Ridgefield’s first chain pharmacy, opens in the new Copps Hill Plaza. The 48-year-old group has 39 stores in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

July 31, 1972 — W.T. Grant, the town’s largest store, opens in the brand new Copps Hill Plaza Shopping Center. The store includes an auto center and a “Bradford House” restaurant. About 50% of the 225 employees are high school and college students who work part-time, says John La Tulippe, who moves to Ridgefield to manage the new store. Within two years, Grant is bankrupt. Caldor takes over the space, only to go belly up in 1999. Since then Kohl’s has occupied the spot.

Aug. 3, 1972 — The new Holy Innocents School, aimed at replacing the closed St. Mary’s School, advertises that applications are still being accepted. The school plans to lease space in the “Morganti addition” at the now “old high school.”

Aug. 7, 1972 — A group of Wiltonians, including attorneys Julian A. Gregory and Thomas T. Adams, buys 118 acres zoned for business on the north side of Shadow Lake Road in Ridgebury. They say it’s “for investment.” The land had been owned by Dr. Charles and Zoe Izzo and would eventually become part of the Boehringer Ingelheim campus.

Aug. 10, 1972 — Dr. Joseph Belsky of Stonecrest Road has returned after spending three years as chief of medicine at the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission in Hiroshima, Japan. “Children conceived right after the bomb showed none of the serious effects,” he says. “and no more congenital abnormalities than normally expected. We’ll have to study their children.”

Aug. 15, 1972 — Vandals and litterers have regularly struck the town center area this summer, frustrating the police and angering many shopkeepers. “Every morning when I arrive at my store, it looks like a pigpen,” says one merchant.

Aug. 17, 1972 — Summer is travel time and among that summer’s travelers was Kay (Mrs. Earl) Edighoffer, who spent time in Yugoslavia with a friend who had been born there. “People in stores take time to be pleasant,” she says. “Everyone you meet says ‘good day’ and when you leave a store they say ‘good bye.’ When we went shopping for food, people put it in your basket without wrapping — there is no garbage disposal problem because you re-use cans for various things around the house.”

Aug. 23, 1972 — Disappointed in public apathy toward her job, Geraldine Marsh of Pine Mountain Road resigns as dog warden — for the second time in the past 12 months. “I don’t want to put up with it any more,” Marsh says, maintaining that “people don’t have any respect for the job.” In several recent instances, she’s been “cussed out” for telling dog owners to keep their animals on their own property.

Aug. 25, 1972 — Beginning today, instead of having their own phone numbers, all the offices in the town hall have one number: 438-7301. A switchboard operator sends the call to the proper department. First Selectman Joseph McLinden says the system allows a single phone bill, convenient direction of calls, answering coverage when offices are temporarily empty, easier and less expensive addition of more lines, and better control over toll call costs.

Aug. 31, 1972 — 35 Ridgefield business and professional people are organizing the new Village Bank and Trust Company of Ridgefield, reports Richard Owen Carey, chairman of the steering committee. He declines to say where the bank would be located

Sept. 1, 1972 — Joseph Leheny, principal of Veterans Park School, is named acting director of curriculum for the school system. Dr. Michael Skandera, an elementary school teacher here since 1947, is named acting principal of Veterans Park.

Sept. 4, 1972 — 115 people attend an interfaith memorial service at Temple Shearith Israel for the 11 Israeli athletes slain at the Munich Olympics by Palestinian terrorists.

Sept. 6, 1972 — The new Ridgefield High School on North Salem Road opens. Four years in the works, the building is designed to hold 1,800 students. About 1,725 students show up on the first day; within a couple of years, more than 2,000 students will be crammed into the building.

Sept. 6, 1972 — Also new and opening their doors today are the Noah’s Ark Preschool, operating in the former St. Mary’s School building, and Holy Innocents School, using the Morganti addition at the now “old high school.” Owner Bea Camis expects Noah’s Ark, the town’s first “day care center,” to have at least 42 pupils while Holy Innocents’

enrollment is between 30 and 40, a spokesman said. The Ridgefield Montessori School is opening in new quarters at St. Mary's.

Sept. 6, 1972 — After 10 months of negotiating, the Board of Education and the Ridgefield Teachers Association sign a new three-year contract that provides beginning teachers with an \$8,200 salary, which is \$275 more than last year's but \$338 less than is paid starting policemen, firemen or highway department crewmen.

Sept. 9, 1972 — More than 300 old cars fill Veterans Park field for the annual Lions Club Antique Car Show. The cars all predate 1942, says Lions president Grant Peacock.

Sept. 12, 1972 — Enrollment in the Ridgefield schools totals 5,995. Before the school year ends, it reaches an all-time high: 6,037 children.

Sept. 14, 1972 — The Toy Caboose has begun stocking 10-speed bicycles and offers Columbia models from \$90 to \$115. A Shimano 10-speed goes for \$110 which is equivalent to about \$655 today.

Sept. 15, 1972 — Dr. Joseph Buchman tells a group of local residents that the new medical condominium — one of the first in Connecticut — that he and others are building at 90 Grove Street would attract “new physicians to the area and bring resident physicians into a closer working arrangement for the benefit of the community.” Between 14 and 18 units are planned.

Sept. 16, 1972 — Hundreds of Ridgefielders dine and dance on the parking lot of the town highway department overlooking the trash landfill as REAP has its Dump Ball. The event raises money — and awareness — for recycling effort. Among the gifts attendees receive are drinking glasses made by cutting off the upper halves of bottles.

Sept. 21, 1972 — National Merit Scholarship semifinalists are announced: Gerri Hibbard, Naomi Slavin, Jeffrey Robinson and, seated, Deborah Ettington.

Sept 26, 1972 — Railroad buffs flock to the Branchville Station at 5 p.m. to photograph what they think might be a once-in-a-lifetime sight: The bright red Amtrak turbo train on the Danbury branch line. A barge hit an open railroad bridge in South Norwalk earlier that day, and it took workers hours to get the bridge closed. Meanwhile the Amtrak Washington to Boston trains were routed up to Danbury, then Stevenson and Devon and on to the main line — a route used by occasional late-night freight trains back then. But the turbotrain had to stop at Branchville to await clearance to proceed up the tracks, normally used by local commuter train at that hour.

Sept. 30, 1972 — Gristedes Market, which has operated on Main Street for 32 years, closes its door. Part of a chain of 132 small stores and supermarkets owned by Gristede



Brothers of the Bronx, the store cited poor business as its reason for closing. The market's space had earlier been Samuel Perry's market, Stewart's Market and originally, S.D. Keeler's market. The building had been owned by attorney John E. Dowling until last month when he sold it to Dennis Goddard of Barry Avenue, who has no immediate plans for the empty space.

Oct. 3, 1972 — Stop & Shop opens its 21,000 square foot supermarket in Copps Hill Plaza. It will be open daily except Sundays — Sunday hours back then were banned by the state. Also opening this month at Copps Hill Plaza is Ridgefield's first Chinese restaurant, the Dragon Inn.

Oct. 5, 1972 — Anton Hittl of Old Redding Road, a 26-year Ridgefielder and cabinet-maker who builds hydroplane boats and almost has a degree in social psychology, is named the town's new dog warden.

Oct. 8, 1972 — Irene Hoyt, District Nursing Association nurse for 44 years, is found dead at her desk on this Sunday. For decades she was the only visiting nurse in town, and had been called Ridgefield's "Florence Nightingale on Wheels." Philanthropist Jack B. Ward of Ward Acres once gave her a new car as well as a renovated office because of all the work she did for the community.

Oct. 11, 1972 — The Zemo brothers open stores at the new Copps Hill Plaza. Don Zemo, 28, operates Zemo's Men's Store, his second store, while Stephen, 26, opens his third women's clothing store, Ann Stephens. "We are geared toward the housewives in the area — the 30-year-old housewife or the 50-year-old housewife shopping for her daughter," says Stephen, a graduate of Boston College's business school. He added that they picked Ridgefield because it is the second fastest growing town in Fairfield County. Stephen is better known today as Selectman Steve Zemo, who has built many stores and apartments in town over the years since his Ann Stephens days.

Oct. 12, 1972 — The scent of burning leaves in the fall has ended. Due to a new federal law, leaf burning is now illegal, reports Fire Warden James Belote. Connecticut had in recent years been limited a few special days in the fall, but now there are no days and the age-old tradition is gone. The town suggests composting, hauling them to the dump, or piling them near the roadside to await the very slow leaf-sucking truck to show up on your road.

Oct. 12, 1972 — By a vote of 33 to 21, a town meeting rejects a proposed ban on all-night stores in Ridgefield. The ordinance would have prevented businesses — except restaurants, theaters, and service stations — from operating between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. and seemed largely aimed at the new Copps Hill Plaza. One resident, Cynthia Judell, calls the idea "a high-handed intrusion on civil liberties."

Oct. 14, 1972 — The Tiger football squad crushes West Hill, 40-6, behind the top play of Dave Landers, Tom Thomas, Paul Natale, Thomas Johnson, Chip Dean, Billy Morris, Steve Lavatori, and Doug Piazza.

Oct. 16, 1972 — Quickly and almost unanimously, the school board rejects a proposal from Superintendent David E. Weingast to have two junior high schools operating within two years. One of the schools would have been the old high school on East Ridge, which would have been renovated into a junior high. It and East Ridge Junior High would each hold about 750 students.

Oct. 17, 1972 — Joseph F. Young of Gilbert Street, who operated Young's Feed Store on Catoonah Street for 20 years, dies at the age of 66.

Oct. 18, 1972 — Albert Stockli, renowned chef and owner of Stonehenge Inn, dies at the age of 54. Stockli was one of the nation's best-known chefs, a founder of the Four Seasons, The Mermaid Tavern, and other top New York City restaurants, and author of "Spendid Fare: The Albert Stockli Cookbook."

Oct. 18, 1972 — Ridgefield Supply tears down its store, which has been replaced by a new and larger building behind it. (In 2016-17, THAT building is torn down and replaced by a new and nicer store.)

Oct. 21, 1972 — In the first Homecoming at the new high school, the Tigers topple Norwalk, 33-13. Paul Natale scores three touchdowns and Chip Dean and Tom Thomas add one each.

Oct. 26, 1972 — Derek Hilton of 57 North Street, also known as Sim Sala Bim, is a former British magician who tells The Press he wants to form an area club for amateur and professional magicians. "One of the good aspects of magic is the social side of it," says Hilton, who manages a chain of U.S. movie theaters. "I've never yet met a magician I didn't like."

Oct. 27, 1972 — More than 60 people attend a surprise 78th birthday party at Republican headquarters for Sylvia Latanzi, vice-chairman and longtime member of the Republican Town Committee, who is noted for her outspokenness at countless town meetings. "When I die," she tells the party hosts, "I want my coffin closed because no one's ever seen me with my mouth shut." To which someone in the gathering responds, "I'm going to ask to keep it open to see if your mouth is really shut."

Oct. 28, 1972 — Susanna Hofmann of Ridgefield marries William McShea of New Jersey and moves to the Garden State where she later writes three "Hometown Heroes" mystery novels, featuring a group of senior citizen amateur detectives who live in the

fictional town of Raven's Wing — which sounds remarkably like Ridgefield, right down to Squash at the News Store.

Nov. 1, 1972 — Grants has on sale a Commodore electronic calculator that weighs only three pounds and that “multiplies a negative figure by a positive number and divides the result by another negative to give you a perfect answer with the proper sign.” The cost: Only \$78 (equivalent of \$464 today). Commodore goes on to produce three of the most popular of the early personal computers: the VIC-20, Commodore 64 and the Amiga.

Nov. 2, 1972 — Bill Allen of Fairview Avenue tells the Press about his collection of DUKWs — better known as “Ducks” — eight-ton military surplus amphibious landing craft. He hopes to convert one into the first amphibious motor home and go camping on land or water.

Nov. 2, 1972 — A full-page feature in the Press covers a reported insurgence in home wine making, and features such local experts as Vinico Carboni, who is 95 years old, and Gus Nazzaro.

Nov. 7, 1972 — 88% of Ridgefield's eligible voters turn out at the polls to help re-elect Richard M. Nixon, 6,169 to 2,621 for George McGovern. The town helps Republican Ron Sarasin beat incumbent Democrat John S. Monagan for Fifth District congressman. While native son Romeo Petroni easily takes Ridgefield in the contest for state senator, Wayne A. Baker, a Danbury Democrat, wins the district. Herb Camp, the GOP incumbent, easily beats William Laviano, a Democrat, 5,312 to 3,340, to continue serving as Ridgefield's state representative.

Nov. 10, 1972 — Pinchbeck Nurseries marks its 69th anniversary with special tours of its greenhouses, along with coffee and donuts. And each visitor receives a free rose.

Nov. 11, 1972 — The skating season begins at the RAAC rink on Prospect Ridge which, for the first time, has a roof over it. Sides will be added in the coming summer.

Nov. 11, 1972 — The good news: The Tiger football squad clinches its first winning season in the Fairfield County Athletic Conference, defeating Andrew Warde, 21-7, for a 4-3 division record. The bad news: Coach Robert Mark resigns after 14 years of coaching RHS football with a 57-45-4 record. He plans to continue graduate studies in administration and is currently an administrative assistant at RHS.

Nov. 11, 1972 — Developer Jerry Tuccio announces he's donating 42 acres on Pine Mountain to the Ridgefield Council of the Boy Scouts of America. “Our scouts do not now have a camp of their own and I think they can use one,” he says.

Nov. 13, 1972 — Eleanor Karvelis is named the new principal of the Scotland School, the first female principal since Isabel M. O'Shea retired in 1960. She has been acting principal since Howard Paul resigned several months earlier.

Nov. 13, 1972 — Lodi Kysor is re-elected chairman of the school board, but Dr. Richard Scala and Leo F. Carroll are unseated as vice-chairman and secretary, respectively, replaced by A. Raymond Bessette and Samuel DiMuzio.

Nov. 14, 1972 — Back in 1910 Camp Fire Girls was founded as the girls' equivalent of Boys Scouts. In the 1920s, Ridgefield had a Camp Fire group that eventually disappeared. Now the new Camp Fire Girls in Ridgefield has been resurrected and the girls, under Mrs. Leonard Willey, are selling candy and nuts door to door to support the new chapter.

Nov. 14, 1972 — The Ridgefield Woman's Club begins seeking zoning approval to build a bandstand in Ballard Park. Ridgefield architect James M. Hancock has designed the structure.

Nov. 15, 1972 — Larry Aldrich of Nod Road retires from his dress manufacturing business to devote full time to the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art on Main Street. "I want to make certain that this museum will continue forever, and that takes quite some doing," Aldrich says.

Nov. 16, 1972 — "It's not a pretty story that Kathryn Morgan Ryan tells in 'The Betty Tree' but it's an absorbing one." So says reporter Sally Sanders, interviewing the widow of Cornelius Ryan on her new novel about growing up in Iowa during the early years of World War II.

Nov. 16, 1972 — The selectmen name Frank Dolen, former Planning and Zoning Commission member, to the Board of Finance, replacing retiring N. Donald Edwards. In so doing the selectmen ignore the Democratic Town Committee's recommendation of Richard C. Schultz Jr. and also bypasses another candidate, Louis A. Garofalo, head of the Ridgefield Taxpayers League, which has been highly critical of town government.

Nov. 20, 1972 — Amid some heated audience reaction, the school board agrees to the superintendents's resolution of two parent complaints about teacher actions. In one case a high school teacher is reprimanded for handing out a sample book report outline dealing with LSD. In the other, a complain against a junior high teacher who used a book, "Police, Courts and the Ghetto" in a class, is termed "unjustified and inappropriate." One parent, Norman Little, calls the findings a "whitewash."

Nov. 20, 1972 — Venice Pizzeria opens in the new Copps Hill Plaza. Owners Dominick Ruggiero of Ridgefield and Silvio Dinardo of nearby New York, who already have two Westchester restaurants, specialize in the Sicilian style thick-crust pizza.

Nov. 21, 1972 — A Danbury woman, who had posed as a nurse, is arrested for harassing and stealing from Mrs. Mary Adelaide Scott Pierrepont of Main Street. The woman took nearly \$20,000 worth of jewelry, slashed a portrait of a Pierrepont ancestor who was an aide to George Washington, made harassing phone calls, destroyed checks, overturned furniture, and set fire to the house, police said.

Nov. 27, 1972 — The school board gives the Jaycees permission to set up a ski tow on the grounds of Ridgebury School.

Dec. 2, 1972 — It sounded like an airplane crashing, says neighbor Sal Monti, referring to the 5:30 a.m. collapse of the 72-year-old Ridgefield Water Supply Company standpipe on Peaceable Ridge Road. The pipe held 188,000 gallons of water, which created a great but temporary river down the hillside and did not flood any houses. The standpipe was manufactured in 1899 at the the Cunningham Iron Works in South Boston, Mass., and shipped by rail to the Ridgefield station. From there the plates were taken by horse-drawn stone boats three miles to the site, which is 871 feet above sea level. The project required several months and was completed in 1900. A newer standpipe nearby takes up the job of maintaining water pressure. That spring company President William Streit had predicted the standpipe wouldn't last a year and backed his opinion with a 25-cent bet with Vice President Leland Glidden. "I guess I lost," Glidden says as he looks at the wreckage.

Dec. 2, 1972 — Randy Ward opens Cycle Circus at Copps Hill Plaza. The bike shop, one of 12 in a Connecticut-New York chain, carries Italian, French and Swedish 10-speeds as well as the usual American models.

Dec. 5, 1972 — The Planning and Zoning Commission approves an indoor riding ring at Waterfall Farm on Spring Valley Road.

Dec. 5, 1972 — The Connecticut Supreme Court rules that the Zoning Board of Appeals was correct in denying an auto repairer's permit to the operator of the Hilltop Shell gas station on Route 33. David F. Raymond had sublet the new station with three bays in the hopes of being able to do repairs, the main way of making money at a gas station. However, the appeals board maintained that the old Hilltop station, which was torn down when Shell bought the property, did not do repairs and allowing that service now would be an illegal extension of a non-conforming use. The station is non-conforming to the zoning regulations because it is in a residential zone, but it's allowed to sell gas because it did so before zoning was adopted.

Dec. 6, 1972 — Health Director Dr. Patrick Neligan tells the Charter Revision Commission to get rid of the Conservation Commission, the Flood and Erosion Control Board and the Health Department, and instead combine all their functions into a Health and Environmental Protection Council. The commission doesn't go for it.

Dec. 8, 1972 — Miller's Card and Giftique opens in Copps Hill Plaza.

Dec. 9, 1972 — City National Bank of Connecticut also opens at Copps Hill Plaza, and there are more banks to come (see Dec. 12.)

Dec. 9 and 12, 1972 — Tom Cesca, Ridgefield's varsity basketball captain, scores a total of 62 points in the first two games of the season as the Tigers drop the opener to Bassick and then top New Canaan.

Dec. 11, 1972 — "Fear is our constant companion in Ridgefield," says a long statement issued by the Ridgefield Teachers Association in response to attacks on teaching and curriculum by a group of parents and some school board members. "There is tension, ignorance, misdirection, irrelevance, pettiness, hypocrisy, distrust, hatred — and fear." RTA president Elfrida Travostino says the statement, entitled "Why Not Let Education Happen?," was approved by the association's council, 16-4. She adds that it represents "something that should have been said for a long time."

Dec. 12, 1972 — Hartford National Bank and Trust Company opens a branch at the new Yankee Ridge Shopping Center on Prospect Street. It is one of seven commercial banks projected for Ridgefield, three others of which are already in operation: Connecticut National, Union Trust, and State National Bank and Trust. There is also Ridgefield Savings Bank on Main Street and Danbury Building and Loan Association office at Yankee Ridge, but they are not commercial banks (no checking accounts). City National just opened at Copps Hill and Connecticut Bank and Trust Company plans to open in the Caboose building on Governor Street. In addition, Village Bank and Trust of Ridgefield has applied for permission to open a new bank here.

Dec. 14, 1972 — Boots, the Ridgefield Volunteer Fire Department's Dalmatian, recently had 11 puppies and the department decides to give away up to 10 of them to dog-loving families in town as a wind-up to its 75th anniversary celebration year.

Dec. 15, 1972 — Dan McKee and Ed Bedford are new Eagle Scouts with Troop 26. McKee's Eagle project was clearing brush at the Boy Scouts' Hoyt Training Center in Redding. Bedford spent 100 hours painting the outside of the building at the new Woodcock Nature Center.

Dec. 18, 1972 — The town gets some sweet news about a smelly subject — a new sewage treatment plant. The federal government reports it's increasing Ridgefield's

construction grant by \$350,000 (equivalent to \$2 million today) and the low bid for the project is lower than planned. Bonvinci of Torrington bids \$1.2 million, \$150,000 less than the designer expected. It was bad news for Morganti Inc. of Ridgefield, which placed third in the bidding at \$1.42 million — \$70,000 more than the designers expected. Five years earlier, Morganti lost to Bonvicini for the contract to build the new Ridgefield High School, much to the dismay of the Morganti family — all graduates of RHS who had built the junior high and other schools in town.

Dec. 20, 1972 — After local veterinarian Dr. Jordan Dann calls the conditions at the town dog pound “deplorable,” First Selectman Joseph McLinden announces he will seek funds not only for major improvements at the shelter, but also for a full-time dog warden.

Dec. 26, 1972 — President Harry S Truman dies. In his honor The Press publishes a picture of Truman at the commissioning of the aircraft carrier Franklin Delano Roosevelt on Oct. 27, 1945. The photo was taken by Clarence “Korky” Korker, then a U.S. Navy photographer and now owner of the Ridgefield Photo Shop on Main Street.

Dec. 28, 1972 — Andy Robustelli, the ex-Giant who has a travel agency on Danbury Road, is offering a trip to the Super Bowl in Los Angeles that “includes Hilton Hotel, full day at Disneyland, reserved seat at game, transportation to and from game, only \$156, plus air.” If you want to go to the Hula Bowl in Hawaii, it’s eight days for \$125, plus air.

## 1973

Winter 1973 – The Board of Education votes that to remove Eldridge Cleaver’s book, *Soul on Ice*, and another book critical of police from a high school elective, sparking a controversy that lasts for months and draws national attention. Teachers and many parents are incensed. It’s called Ridgefield’s “book burning” and more than 700 people attend some board meetings on the issue.

January 1973 – Elfrieda Travostino, the head of the teachers association, says someone entered her house, took her dog, and hung it by the choke collar from the trunk of a tree. A telephone caller said: “We have muzzled your dog. If you don’t shut your loud mouth, your kids and you will be next.” The dog survives.

January 1973 – After a six-hour meeting, teachers decide not to stage a walkout over threats to academic independence, brought on by the “book burning” controversy. RTA president Elfrieda Travostino quits.

February 1973 – Without explanation, the school board votes not to renew the contract of Superintendent David E. Weingast. It later reverses its decision; Dr. Weingast retires in 1977.

March 1973 – Though threatened with arrest, Louis Garofalo, Ridgefield Taxpayers League president, refuses to leave a “private” budget meeting of the Boards of Education and Finance, saying the “public has a right to be present.” Police arrive, but the boards give up and allow Mr. Garofalo and 10 others to attend.

March 1973 – “Firefighters burn over lack of men,” says the Ridgefield Press headline about the firemen’s union maintaining 18 men, not 15, are needed to provide adequate ambulance and fire protection.

March 1973 – The OWLS, the “Older, Wiser, Livelier Set,” is founded.

May 1973 –In the wake of the town’s many school crises, the Connecticut Education Association publishes a 38-page booklet, *Responsible Academic Freedom: Challenge to Ridgefield*, which criticizes the outbreak of “academic vandalism” in the schools and suggests ways to resolve differences.

September 1973 – The first St. Mary’s Fall Festival takes place.

Nov. 6, 1973 – Louis J. Fossi, a Democrat in a largely Republican town, is elected first selectman. He is subsequently re-elected to three more terms, retiring in 1981.

Mid-December 1973 – The worst ice storm of the century hits town. Temperatures dip to below zero and some neighborhoods are without power for nearly a week.

## **1974**

1974 – Ridgefield is 13<sup>th</sup> of 169 towns in the state in per-capital income this year –\$7,189 – while Darien is tops at \$11,404

1974 – Voters abolish the Village District.

1974 – IBM proposes a school for corporate executives on part of its 700 acres off Bennett’s Farm Road.

1974 – The Village Bank and Trust Company, the town’s only locally owned commercial bank, opens in the former Ridgefield Playhouse building on Prospect Street.

1974 – Boehringer Ingelheim buys 134 acres of old farmland off Shadow Lake Road for its new laboratory and corporate headquarters.

February 1974 – Joseph Heyman announces he will run for the state senatorial seat held by retiring Romeo G. Petroni. He is unsuccessful.



February 1974 – The Ridgefield Guild of Artists organizes.

April 1974 – The Ridgefield Recycling Center opens.

Spring 1974 – Dlh Ridge Golf Course opens.

Sept. 6, 1974 – The town buys the old state police barracks and begins to convert it to the Ridgefield Police headquarters.

Fall 1974 – Two Ridgefield teenagers, on their way to set fire to the old state police barracks [Sept. 6, 1974], are stopped and arrested by police, who find cans of gasoline in their trunk. The two later confess to six cases of arson in a month, including three empty old houses, a High Ridge barn, and an old wooden water tower owned by IBM.

December 1974 – Yankee Ridge Shopping Center, on Main Street and along Prospect Street, opens its stores.

December 1974 – Most Copps Hill Plaza stores announce they will flout state's blue laws and open Sundays.

December 1974 – Singer Harry Chapin gives two concerts to fight world hunger.

## **1975**

1975 – Branchville Station closes, is leased to the town, and eventually becomes a restaurant.

1975 – Police investigate 834 auto accidents during the year. Ten years earlier there were only 389 crashes.

February 1975 – The selectmen create the Commission on Aging.

February 1975 – Sugar Hollow Racquet Club has its first "Fairfield County International" tournament, slated to feature number-one-ranked Jimmy Connors as well as Ilie Nastase. Nastase shows, Connors doesn't.

April 1975 – 911 emergency phone service begins.

June 3, 1975 – While attending the Community Center's Outdoor Flea Market, Tom Pearson of Overlook Drive discovers a canteen owned by General David Wooster who, 198 years earlier, had been mortally wounded fighting the Battle of Ridgefield. "My knees were water for two hours after," he says. "It has to be a one-in-a-million shot that it would just pop up like that."

June 1975 – Arma Tool & Die Company opens on Route 7.

Summer 1975 – After vandals continue to damage the building, IBM tears down the Fox Hill Inn on its Bennett's Farm Road property. A restaurant since the late 1940s, the former mansion had been built as the home of Colonel Louis D. Conley of Outpost Nurseries.

Sept. 7, 1975 – School enrollment hits an all-time high of 6,029 children.

Fall 1975 – Townspeople don't seem to mind IBM's plan for a corporate school on its Bennett's Farm Road property but many vociferously oppose a helicopter landing pad and IBM drops its plans for Ridgefield and goes elsewhere. It holds onto the land until 1998.

Oct. 23, 1975 — Hundreds of Ridgefielders begin a campaign to raise \$18,500 to buy 100 new uniforms for the RHS Marching Band. They are successful.

October 1975 – A Ridgefielder is arrested for murder after he stabs his ex-girlfriend's boyfriend. A week later, on Oct. 18, the unoccupied, state-owned murder house on Stony Hill Terrace mysteriously burns to the ground.

November and December 1975 – The Ridgefield Press marks its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary by publishing a 184-page tabloid-sized history of the town in the past century.

Dec. 15, 1975 – The Rev. Aaron Manderbach marks his 25th anniversary as rector of St. Stephen's Church.

## **1976**

1976 – \$60-million in property sells during the year, 57% more than the year before.

1976 – The town celebrates the nation's bicentennial with

1976 – The Ridgefield Family Y opens with offices at St. Mary's School.

January 1976 – The Rev. Harold Wheeler, pastor of Ridgefield Baptist Church, leaves after 11 years. When he arrived, the church had 50 members meeting in Ridgebury School.

January 1976 – Ann Marie Sheehan joins the Democratic Town Committee. At 18, she is the youngest person ever elected to a political town committee.

Jan. 2, 1976 – Karl F. Landegger of Wilton Road East, a builder of mills who is said to be one of the wealthiest men in the nation and is a benefactor of local organizations, dies at the age of 70 in the Bahamas.

Jan. 22, 1976 – An early morning blaze levels the Alibi restaurant on Route 7.

Feb. 9, 1976 – A Marcus Dairy milkman is found dead in his truck on Ramapoo Road, the apparent victim of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Feb. 11, 1976 – Owners of W.T. Grant, Ridgefield's largest store, file court papers asking to liquidate the chain. The place closes the next day along with 358 other Grant stores, but the Ridgefield outlet will reopen briefly for a liquidation sale. [Grant's space is now Kohl's.]

Feb. 18, 1976 – Voters approve a program of tax relief for the elderly – a flat \$150 reduction in the tax bill of anyone 65 or older in the first year, and \$450 the following year and thereafter.

March 1976 – Ridgefield's supermarkets, long closed on Sundays, have started opening on the Sabbath. A&P is first, followed by Grand Union and Grand Center. Only Stop & Shop remained closed.

March 25, 1976 – First Selectman Louis J. Fossi calls town and school budget proposals a "shocker." If approved, town taxes would rise around 14%; the current year increase was 11%. That's 25% in two years.

March 26, 1976 – Renovation of the old state police barracks into a new Ridgefield Police headquarters begins after a referendum March 20 approves \$503,000 for the project. The police have been in the town hall basement since the department was established in 1955.

March 26, 1976 - After another car hits the fountain, Primo Polverari and his son, Bill, puts it back together again.

Spring 1976 – Lenard De Lescinskis opens Chez Lenard on Main Street, which soon becomes Connecticut's most famous sidewalk hot dog stand.

Spring 1976 – Silver Spring Country Club creates a new pond along Silver Spring Road to supply the golf course with water. It will hold more than a million gallons.

April 1976 – The fire department requests a new kind of ambulance. Instead of a one-piece Cadillac, it would be a truck with a box on the back so the chassis could be replaced when worn out.

April 1976 – Philanthropist Jack Boyd Ward gives \$100,000 to Danbury Hospital for its new tower project.

April 8, 1976 – The bishop of Bridgeport formally names Ridgefield's new Catholic parish for St. Elizabeth Seton.

April 11, 1976 – Comedian Rodney Dangerfield appears in two shows at the high school to benefit for the Police Supervisors Benevolent Association.

April 23, 1976 – The Town Meeting approves expanding the historic district to southern High Ridge and eastern West Lane.

April 16, 1976 – Robert P. Scalzo, who is active in Little League, Pop Warner and Townies basketball, dies at 45. He was an eight-year resident who worked for IBM. A year later, Scalzo Field on Prospect Ridge is dedicated in his honor.

May 3, 1976 – The Ridgefield Family Y opens its first office at 616 Main Street, near Joe's Corner.

May 14, 1976 – Two hundred Ridgefield High School students stage a protest during school over a new attendance policy that flunks a student who exceeds the allowed number of cuts per course – 20 for a one-year course, 10 for a half-year.

May 18, 1976 – Two men, described as “very courteous,” walk into The Tontine Emporium on Route 7 in Branchville, handcuff the proprietor, and leave with 11 signed Tiffany lamps or shades, valued at more than \$200,000 [more than \$700,000 in 2008].

May 22, 1976 – A referendum rejects both town and school budgets as too high and at a June 12 second referendum, voters confirm that they want the school budget chopped.

May 29, 1976 – Chief Catoonah, Tobacconist, opens on Main Street.

May 29, 1976 – St. Elizabeth Seton Parish officially begins as its first past, the Rev. Francis J. Medynski, arrives. He had been St. Mary's pastor.  
The same day, Father Charles Stubbs becomes pastor of St. Mary's Parish.

June 1976 – Baron, the police department's new dog, goes on duty, handled by Officer Scott Clark.

June 12, 1976 – Samuel O. Perry, who operated Perry's Market on Main Street from 1929 to 1949 when he sells to Gristede Brothers and retires, dies at 88.

June 16, 1976 – Harry E. Hull, who retired as first selectman in 1957, is named Rotary Citizen of the Year.

June 17, 1976 – 700 people pack Richardson Auditorium at Ridgefield High School to see Comedian Milton Berle in a vaudeville show benefiting the Ridgefield Policemen's Union.

June 22, 1976 – 445 seniors graduate from Ridgefield High School.

June 26 and 27, 1976 – “Colonial Commons Days,” Ridgefield's principal Bicentennial salute to the nation's birthday, includes exhibits, demonstrations, performances, an Indian village, an 18th Century farm, cannon firings, many concerts and bands, a muster and show by the Connecticut Fifth, readings, and 18th Century foods. Centers of activity are Veterans and Ballard Parks.

October 1976 – A 15-year-old girl is severely injured when a sudden storm fells a tree on her father's car driving on Main Street. Power in some parts of town is out for two days.

December 1976 – The owner of the Ridgefield Cinema at Copps Hill Plaza promises in that he won't book any more X-rated movies after a storm of protest over showing of Emmanuelle.

December 1976 – The average selling price of a house is \$88,000.

## **1977**

1977 – The Youth Commission is created to deal with needs and problems of the community's youngsters.

January 1977 – Ridgefield police add a second German shepherd to the staff.

January 1977 – The second coldest winter of the century sends heating costs skyrocketing and by mid-month, the schools' energy budget is \$90,000 in the red.

Jan. 6, 1977 – John F. Haight announces he will retire after 11 years as the town's second police chief.

Jan. 12, 1977 – Voters agree to lease most of the old high school to Boehringer Ingelheim as its headquarters until an administration building in Ridgebury is erected.

Jan. 23, 1977 – Lori Jean Pinkerton is named Connecticut Junior Miss.

Jan. 24, 1977 – Pat Freeman of the Toy Caboose is elected president of the Chamber of Commerce.

February 1977 – The FBI is investigating the “mysterious” disappearance of \$5,000 from the Ridgefield office of the State National Bank.

Feb. 2, 1977 – A Town Meeting agrees to lease 6.6 acres next to the skating center to the Ridgefield Family Y for \$1 a year.

Feb. 4, 1977 – It’s Vinnico Carboni Day, in honor of Mr. Carboni’s 100th birthday.

Feb. 8 and 9, 1977 – Voters petition a referendum on the new principals’ contract, the first time such a pact has been challenged in town. At the end of the month, a referendum rejects the contract, 664-358, feeling raises are too high.

Feb. 10, 1977 – Dave Kingman, New York Mets outfielder, speaks to Little League players and families.

Feb. 22, 1977 – Neighbors of Jack B. Ward’s Ward Acres oppose his plan to subdivide 16 of his 55 acres into one-acre lots.

Feb. 25, 1977 – First Selectman Louis J. Fossi appears in Hartford, seeking money to build a sewer line on Route 7, from Georgetown to the Danbury line.

Feb. 26, 1977 – Ruth M. Hurzeler, town clerk, dies at 61. When she was elected in 1949, she was the first woman to hold the job since 1708.

Feb. 28, 1977 – The town’s grand list is announced: \$373 million.

March 2, 1977 – Ridgefield police set up roadblocks as two women are found shot to death in a house on Route 123 in nearby Lewisboro

March 5, 1977 – The RHS track team wins the state Class L championship. It subsequently wins the state open title.

March 12, 1977 – Three Ridgefield teenagers are charged with stabbing a Ramapoo Road man 22 times in an alley off Main Street. The man nearly survives.

March 20, 1977 – Dr. Francis B. Woodford, longtime town health officer, dies one day before his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday.

March 22, 1977 – Paul Properties, builder of Casagmo and Fox Hill condos, files for bankruptcy protection.

Spring 1977 – The Community Gardens program begins with 53 plots on Prospect Ridge. Later, affordable housing takes the spot, and the new location gets 27 plots, still going strong today.

April 1977 – The town issues something unique: Bronze and silver medals honoring Benedict Arnold. The occasion is the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Ridgefield, at which General Arnold was a hero.

April 5, 1977 – With Gov. Ella Grasso wielding a shovel, Boehringer Ingelheim breaks ground on its \$20-million research center in Ridgebury.

April 24, 1977 – Nine women vie for the title of Miss Ridgefield. Karen Kopins, 18, wins, and goes on to compete in Atlantic City as Miss Connecticut. She then becomes a movie and TV star.

April 30 and May 1, 1977 – A thousand soldiers participate in the re-enactment of the Battle of Ridgefield, marking the conflict's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary, which was actually April 27. Main Street is closed Sunday and covered with dirt to provide realism in a battle reenactment. Special effects from blood (fake) and smoke (from theatrical bombs) are used. Between 7,500 and 15,000 witness the show.

May 1977 – Faced with battles over the budget, its contract and conditions in the school system in general, The National Education Association-Ridgefield – the teachers' union – appoints a Strike Committee.

May 11, 1977 – Dr. Peter Yanity is elected chairman of the Parks and Recreation Commission, a post he holds for many years. The gym at the old high school is named in his honor.

May 16, 1977 – The State Board of Labor Relations orders the town to abandon its regulations covering officers' hair, saying it cannot adopt grooming guidelines without negotiating them with the union.

May 21, 1977 – For the first time in several years, the Ridgefield Taxpayers League's efforts to get budgets cut at a referendum fails, and both town and school spending plans are approved. A total of 3,741 people vote – 32% of the electorate.

June 1977 – Karen Kopins, 18, is selected Miss Connecticut and goes on to compete in the Miss America Pageant in September.

June 16, 1977 – 450 seniors graduate at Ridgefield High School.

June 18, 1977 – Teachers picket in front of town hall over stalled contract negotiations.

July 1, 1977 – Elliott Landon becomes superintendent of schools.

July 1, 1977 – Thomas Rotunda becomes the town's third police chief.

July 1977 – High costs force the Rotary Club to abandon its annual Fourth of July fireworks displays, started in 1960.

## **1978**

1978 – The average price of a new house sold this year is \$135,000.

March 1978 – The Board of Education votes to fire high school guidance department chairman Walter Bishop for knowingly submitting false class rankings to colleges. Many rally to his defense, but to no avail.

May 1978 – The school board begins fining the Dunn Bus Company after dozens of complaints that school buses are late.

June 1978 – Dr. Harold E. Healy retires as high school principal and goes into the real estate field.

Summer 1978 – A referendum approves giving the Ridgefield Family Y five acres off Ivy Hill Road, but the gift is quickly challenged on the grounds that government is unconstitutionally supporting a private, religious organization.

December 1978 – The first masses are celebrated in St. Elizabeth Seton Church.

Dec. 3, 1978 – A child playing with a candle sets fire to the First Congregational Church House, destroying the building. The church escapes.

Dec. 24, 1978 – On Christmas Eve, a cross is burned in the front yard of a racially mixed couple. Later, two teenagers are arrested and convicted of the crime. One turns state's evidence and the other spends 30 days in jail and gets a year's suspended sentence. Meanwhile, both admit they are members of a devil-worshipping cult.

## **1979**

1979 – During the 1979-80 school year, Ridgefield is spending \$585 per pupil on public schools, the second highest of any town in the state, says the Connecticut Public Expenditure Council. At the same time, the town was spending less than most area communities on police protection, public works, or the library.



1979 – Dwindling enrollments prompt the Board of Education, amid much acrimony, to vote to close Barlow Mountain School fewer than nine years after it opens.

June 1979 – Late one night, under a full moon, a policeman responds to a call that chanting in a foreign tongue is coming from woods off Oscaleta Road. As he investigates, he's attacked by hooded men, who then flee. The remains of a bonfire are found in the woods, and there's evidence that a vacant house nearby was used by devil worshippers.

Aug. 25, — The First Congregational clubhouse, heavily damaged in a fire last Dec. 24, is torn down.

Sept. 29, 1979 – The Most Rev. Walter Curtis, bishop of Bridgeport, dedicates the new St. Elizabeth Seton Church on Ridgebury Road.

October 1979 – Ballard Green housing for the elderly is completed.

## **1980**

Jan. 2, 1980 — Detective Sgt. John Hogan and Sgt. Richard J. Ligi are sworn in as lieutenants of the Ridgefield Police Department. Both positions are new.

Jan. 2, 1980 — Michael J. Venus of Harvey Road is named by the selectmen as the clerk of the Board of Finance.

Jan. 3, 1980 — A group of parents has asked the State Superior Court to stop the school board from closing the Barlow Mountain Elementary School. The suit asks the court to demand that the board use “meaningful school closing criteria, and full and adequate data” to determine which of the town's six schools to close because of dwindling elementary enrollments. The suit gets nowhere, and Barlow Mountain — the town's newest elementary school — is shut down in June.

Jan. 3, 1980 — Francis D. Martin turns over to The Ridgefield Family Y 19 acres of his Far View Farm on North Salem Road. The Y wants to use the property, which includes the gymnasium of the former Ridgefield Boys School, for its headquarters and offices. The land's high water table and inability to handle a septic system sinks the plan.

Jan. 3, 1980 — Noel Deeks of Maui, Hawaii, a 32-year resident of Ridgefield, dies at the age of 76. Deeks came here in 1938 to work in the photographic laboratory of Edward Steichen of Redding, one of the top 20th Century photographers. Deeks was especially active in Boy Scouting in Ridgefield.

Jan. 6, 1980 — Americans are still being held prisoner by Iran, a topic addressed by Dr. John Norman of Ridgefield, a Pace professor, in a talk to the Ridgefield Republican Club. Even if the American hostages are returned unharmed, the U.S. should make reparations

by sending our strike force into the country and taking over Iran's oil supply, Norman says. "We shouldn't wash the slate clean after they return the hostages."

Jan. 7, 1980 — Dora Cassavechia is sworn in as the new town clerk. As one of her first official acts she names former town clerk Kay Donohue, whom she defeated in the November election, as her first assistant, and Barbara Serfilippi, who becomes her successor years later, as second assistant.

Jan. 8, 1980 — Barry Montgomery and partners plan both offices and townhouses on the 68-acre former Mallory estate north of Shadow Lake Road in Ridgebury. With his father, Giles, Barry Montgomery had developed the Twin Ridge subdivision in the 1960s. A preliminary plan that includes rezoning for hundreds of townhouses is filed with the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Jan. 9, 1980 — Fairfield is the fastest growing county in the state — up 4,100 people in a year — and the largest county, at 837,000 people. Ridgefield is also growing; its population of 20,400 is 2,300 people more than in 1970.

Jan. 10, 1980 — Crooks seem rampant in Ridgefield. Burglaries are increasing dramatically — a total of 249 during 1979, mostly involving houses, the police report. And more than 600 larcenies are investigated, twice the number reported in 1977.

Jan. 10, 1980 — Perhaps not coincidentally, the Police Commission approves a proposed budget that includes adding six more police officers. The department "doesn't need six, it needs 10," says Police Chief Thomas Rotunda, citing FBI recommendations for police coverage of a town Ridgefield's size. There are currently 27 officers.

Jan. 10, 1980 — Robert Fish and Rodney Anderson, longtime active members of the Ridgefield Volunteer Fire Department, retire. Between them they've served 41 years total.

Jan. 14, 1980 — Only three months after the completion of the 40-unit Ballard Green housing for the elderly complex, town officials are planning more units on the Ballard Backland. First Selectman Louis J. Fossi and Selectman Lillian Moorhead appear before the Housing Authority to ask it to plan 20 more units on 3.5 acres still available behind Ballard Park. The town has more than 100 people seeking the 40 units that just opened.

Jan. 16, 1980 — Wary of jumping the gun on such an explosive issue, the selectmen delay a vote on a proposed firearms control ordinance for Ridgefield. The ordinance would prohibit "the use of firearms including .... pistols, revolvers, shotguns, rifles, and machine guns" except at the town rifle range and in approved hunting areas during hunting season. Violators would face fines of up to \$200 and 60 days in jail.

Jan. 17, 1980 — Caldor is selling Jaobsen three horsepower snow throwers for \$244. A five horsepower snow blower is \$499. If you prefer being indoors in a storm, Sony Trinitron Plus color TVs are \$457 for the 17 inch model (\$1,379 in 2018 dollars).

Jan. 18, 1980 — Vasken Demirjian, a 17-year-old junior at Ridgefield High School who hails from Turkey, is named to the All-New England soccer team. (Today, Demirjian is an antiquities dealer and owner of Vasken Demirjian Salon in the Trump Tower City Center in White Plains where he is “widely renowned as one of the country’s leading hair experts”).

Jan. 19, 1980 — Si Tarsi, a captain, retires after 22 years with the Ridgefield Fire Department. A dinner is held in his honor, at which First Selectman Louis Fossi presents him with a plaque. Tarsi is overcome. “I had a big speech set up,” he says later, “and I couldn’t say a word.”

Jan. 21, 1980 — The school board gives a 7.9% raise to superintendent Elliott Landon, whose pay will go from \$44,945 to \$48,500 next year. (That’s equivalent to \$146,000 today when the most recent superintendent was paid \$233,000.)

Jan 22, 1980 — More than 60 neighboring homeowners pack a meeting room as the Planning and Zoning Commission votes 8-1 to reject a plan for corporate offices on 68 acres along Route 7 between Stonehenge and New Roads, proposed by New Canaan architect Victor Christ-Janer. First Selectman Louis Fossi, who wants corporate development to ease the tax burden, is furious. “I don’t know what they’re thinking, or what they’re attitude is, but it’s not in the best interest of the town,” Fossi declares.

Jan. 23, 1980 — The selectmen have a hearing on spending up to \$125,000 a year to have Ridgefield’s firefighter ambulance attendants trained in advanced life support techniques — now available only when patients reach the hospital. They could administer drugs and intravenous solutions, use anti-shock equipment, and employ esophageal obturators and defibrillators. No one opposes the idea.

Jan. 24, 1980 — The Planning and Zoning Commission shows plans for a bypass road from South Street and Old Quarry Road to Farmingville Road, paralleling Danbury Road to the east. Town Planner Oswald Inglese estimates the project, first envisioned by the commission in 1968, could cost close to \$2 million — some of which he hopes could come from federal and state grants. Work begins in 1984 but the road isn’t completed until October 1999. What’s more, the state Department of Environmental Protection determines that, in building the road, the town had illegally filled wetlands. To compensate for lost wetland, the town is ordered to build a new swamp, which is situated behind the ROAR dog shelter and includes a viewing stand.

Jan. 24, 1980 — Brunetti's Market has chuck steaks at \$1.59 a pound and filet of sole at \$2.69.

Jan. 26, 1980 — The Tiger hockey squad compiles a 9-5-1 record to qualify for the state playoffs. Stars include Kelly Shackelford, Harry Geary, Victor Popow-Horsa, Terry Hughes, Tom Scala, Dave Dec, and Pat Carney.

Jan. 31 — A panel of arbitrators awards Ridgefield teachers a three-year contract with an average salary increase of 9%. To the surprise of some, the three state arbitrators does not award teachers a dental insurance plan, although teachers in other communities had gotten dental plans in recent arbitration findings. Under a new state law, the arbitrators' findings are binding on the town.

February 1980 — President Jimmy Carter presents the National Medal of Science, the the Government's highest honor for scientists and engineers, to Dr. Raymond Mindlin of Deer Hill Drive, a professor at Columbia's School of Engineering. What is he getting the award for? Dr. Mindlin is asked. "About 40 years of work," he replied. "What sort of work? "I devise mathematical equations to describe and explain mechanical and electro-mechanical phenomena," he said. It wasn't the first time he got an award from a president; in 1946, Harry S Truman presented him with the Medal of Merit for work that helped the military during World War II.

Feb. 4, 1980 — Prescott Bush Jr. of Greenwich tells Ridgefield Republicans that his brother, George, is not a liberal, not a conservative, not even a moderate, but a presidential candidate whose worst characteristic is that he splits infinitives. "He's got the integrity, he loves this country, he's a family man, he's as clean-living a man as you'll ever see," Bush says of the presidential candidate.

Feb. 5, 1980 — Fourth graders in Judi Gould's Farmingville School class write letters to Iran, asking that the hostages be released. "It's not fair for the people who are being held hostage," says one pupil, Suzanne Rieke. "Some want to see their families. Others have things to do. Ninety three days is just too long. I hope you release the hostages soon."

Feb. 5, 1980 — Planning and Zoning Commission approves plans for a new post office on Catoonah Street.

Feb. 6, 1980 — Selectmen unanimously pass an ordinance banning all outdoor target shooting in town and that would virtually outlaw BB guns and other air-powered weapons. A Town Meeting approval is needed.

Feb 7, 1980 — Johanna H. Laszig of 245 West Lane, a native of Germany who lived here 48 years, dies. In March it is announced that Mrs. Laszig, widow of barber Paul

Laszig, has left more than \$1 million, a third of which will set up a fund to aid the elderly that in its first 35 years donates more than \$1 million to local organizations.

Feb. 7, 1980 — Dennison F. Fiala of Cooper Hill Road announces he is a Republican candidate for Fifth District congressman, saying he was running “because of my deep concerns with the expanding role that our federal government has taken in recent years” and the “frustration we all feel toward inflation, high taxes, hostages, and responsive government.”

Feb. 7, 1980 — Tom Hilton of Charter Oak Court becomes the 60th Eagle Scout for Troop 26. His Eagle project was creating a film about native plants.

Feb. 12, 1980 — The father and son real estate team of Lewis and Barry Finch proposes a commercial development on 44 acres along Ridgebury Road, just north of George Washington Highway, called Wedgerock Corporate Park. It goes nowhere.

Feb. 12, 1980 — Sidney Scott, a descendant of early town settlers, retires after 36 years as a letter carrier for the Ridgefield post office. “The service was better then,” Scott says of the 1940s when people had mail delivered twice a day. “We were more friendly with the people, things were less rushed,” he adds.

Feb. 14, 1980 — A Town Meeting vote — with only 50 people present — authorizes the selectmen to replace the town’s landfill with a \$430,000 transfer station, where trash will be collected for hauling by truck elsewhere. The state in 1978 ordered that the dump be closed because it’s polluting Great Swamp and its aquifer.

Feb. 14, 1980 — Town agencies submit budget requests that total a 22% increase overall.

Feb. 14, 1980 — Only five inches of snow have fallen on the town so far this season — and half that occurred Oct. 10, long before winter began, reports weatherman Charles Howes of Georgetown. The average snowfall for a season has been 45 inches over the past 32 years, he says.

Feb. 20, 1980 — Cable television service may be available in densely populated sections of Ridgefield by September, the Board of Selectmen learn. Teleprompter may begin laying lines in late spring.

Feb. 21, 1980 — The Police Commission votes to provide all officers with lightweight bullet-proof vests, despite the fact that a recent survey of the 26 officers found 16 did not want a vest, nine would wear it year round while on duty, and one said he’d wear it only in the winter season.

Feb. 21, 1980 — Radio Shack is selling a Duofone TAD-30 “Deluxe Phone Answerer with Remote Control” for \$250, regularly \$300. It features allegedly unlimited message length and separate cassettes for incoming and out-going messages.

Feb. 22, 1980 — Guido Maiolo, a teacher at East Ridge Junior High and freshman coach, is named head football coach at RHS. “He’s a superb physical education teacher and a very fine man,” says Superintendent Elliott Landon, who makes the appointment. Three years later, RHS wins its first state championship.

Feb. 26, 1980 — Sgt. George Kargle of Bethel, a Ridgefield policeman for 12 years and a decorated Vietnam War veteran, dies in a one-car crash. Kargle was off-duty and on his way home when his car went off Danbury Road at Buck Hill, scene of several fatal auto accidents. He was 33 years old.

Feb. 27, 1980 — Four Ridgefield High School students are National Merit Scholarship finalists: Margaret Morris, Allison McMorran, Jim Caragher, and Bob Carriger (yes, two surnames that sound the same but are spelled differently).

March 1, 1980 — In her first year of competitive swimming, eight-year-old Janel Jorgensen breaks state record in 50-yard freestyle swim at a statewide meet. A week later, she takes four firsts in an AAU meet. She goes on as a teenager to become an Olympic medalist in swimming.

March 6, 1980 — Chambers Army and Navy, a clothing store, opens in former Gasland service station at Danbury Road and Grove Street. While the name sounds like a store selling military surplus, most items are new and brand name. “There’s very little surplus left, now that there aren’t very many wars,” says owner Steve Chambers.

March 9, 1980 — Four RHS skiers place in the top 10 at the state championships: Dave Quisenberry, Bettyann Gilchrist, Jeanne Merriman, and Susan Preter.

March 10, 1980 — After a Superior Court judge rejects their suit to prevent the school board from closing Barlow Mountain School, Barlow parents make another plea to the school board to listen to arguments against the closing. “We’ve heard enough,” says board chairman Robert Furman. “To dredge up more and more supposedly valid data is just redundant.” To which Al Shagory, a parent, replies: “As public officials, you have an obligation to listen. Don’t shut the door in our faces.” The door was shut and the school was closed.

March 11, 1980 — Gabrielle Kessler of Limestone Road, a local Realtor, joins a White House task force on problems of “the upward mobility of women, primarily in the area of home ownership and finance.”

March 11, 1980 — The Planning and Zoning Commission okays seven lots on the former Justin Colin property on West Lane and Country Club Road. Colin's mansion, once the home of gubernatorial candidate Melbert B. Cary and later celebrity attorney William Mattheus Sullivan, burned to the ground in 1977.

March 12, 1980 — The selectmen veto a request from the Parks and Recreation Commission for \$7,000 to begin planning an indoor swimming pool on East Ridge. The selectmen feel the town can't afford a pool at this time.

March 13, 1980 — George Passantino of Rising Ridge Road, an artist and teacher, is co-author of a new book, "The Portrait and Figure Painting Book," which winds up so popular, it's published in seven languages.

March 19, 1980 — RHS head basketball coach Dave Morgen resigns after three years, saying there was no pressure to do so from the administration. His record is 5-57.

March 19, 1980 — The Board of Selectmen votes to create a five-member agency to draft parking regulations and propose a budget to enforce them. It is the beginning of the town's Parking Authority. Edwin B. Allan, a supporter, says fines from parking tickets may be able to support the agency and its enforcement work.

March 23, 1980 — Tara Draper, a Simmons College sophomore, comes out on top of a field of eight contestants to win the Miss Ridgefield pageant and to compete for Miss Connecticut after giving a crowd-pleasing comedy monologue, "The Anxious Mother," portraying a Jewish mother waiting for a guest to arrive. She is crowned by a former Miss Ridgefield who won Miss Connecticut, Karen Kopins. Runner-up is Kimberly Ann Schmuck, and second runner up is Tara Mohring.

March 24, 1980 — After 11 years on the school board, attending nearly 300 meetings, Mary Gelfman retires. Gelfman, who passed her bar exam in 1979, says "family responsibilities and professional opportunity made it increasingly difficult for me to attend meetings."

March 25, 1980 — Until this year, Connecticut had never had a presidential primary. However, under a new law, presidential primaries are allowed, and Ridgefielders who are registered Republican or Democrat head to the polls and support Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter. However, statewide, George Bush beats Reagan for Republicans while Senator Edward Kennedy outpolls Carter.

March 25, 1980 — Mill River Pond disappears shortly after noon when the dam holding back its waters for 30 years bursts. The pond near Deer Hill Drive and Route 35, South Salem Road, had swelled from recent heavy rains. The dam is in Lewisboro, giving local authorities little control over its future, and the pond is never restored.

March 29, 1980 — “Saturday Night Live,” starring Tim McKee, Derek Hilton, Colin and Myra Healy, and Paul Gordon in an eclectic show on the St. Mary’s Hall stage raises money for the Ridgefield Orchestra.

March 29, 1980 — Al Diniz, “the father of Ridgefield soccer,” is honored at the annual Ridgefield Boys Club father-son brunch.

March 31, 1980 — The average selling price for a house in Ridgefield so far this year is \$150,000.

April 1, 1980 – Linda Arciola is hired as the first female patrol officer on the Ridgefield police force.

April 3, 1980 – Brutus, the three-year veteran Ridgefield police dog, is stolen from the dog pound. “The dog is basically friendly, but is trained to become aggressive upon command,” warn police.

April 8, 1980 — Planning and Zoning Commission approves a new, 9,400-square foot post office building on Catoonah Street.

April 9, 1980 — The Democratic Town Committee interviews six people interested in filling the school board vacancy of Mary Gelfman, who resigned: Raelene Ali, Gerald DePass, Kitty Haas, Elizabeth Kennedy, Gay Ramabhushanam, and Dr. Donald Teig. Ali winds up the winner.

April 10, 1980 — Ridgefield is spending \$585 per resident this year for its public schools, more per capita than any other town in the state, says the The Connecticut Public Expenditure Council.

April 14, 1980 — Robert Kolton of Silver Hill Road, principal of the soon-to-close Barlow Mountain School, is named the school system’s new director of special education, replacing Dr. John Phillips, who had been promoted to “executive assistant for special education.” Restructuring the special ed administration is needed, says Superintendent Elliott Landon, “because of the increasing complexity of special education regulations and the rather sizable expenditures...made for special education in Ridgefield.”

April 16, 1980 — The Ridgefield Library has an open house for kids who want to play Dungeons and Dragons Monday nights. Already, more than 20 youngsters are gathering each week to play the game.

April 17, 1980 — In an interview with The Press, Christopher Dodd, who is running for U.S. senator from Connecticut, is asked whether he supports Jimmy Carter or Edward M.



Kennedy for president. “I support Ted Kennedy,” he says. “I disagree with Ted Kennedy on a number of substantive issues, but I feel that in terms of the leadership ability of both men, Senator Kennedy is superior.”

April 22, 1980 — A new SPV-2000 “Budd car” begins operation on the Danbury-Norwalk line. The \$1-million self-propelled railroad car is part of an effort to improve commuter service, and the new car is named “Lizzy” in honor of State Rep. Elizabeth Leonard of Ridgefield, who has been a tireless supporter of commuter rail improvements. Alas, Budd ceases making SPV-2000s a year later because they prove mechanically unreliable —as many frustrated commuters soon discover.

April 28, 1980 – After 15 years on the job, Tax Collector Alice P. Besse announces she’ll retire. A week later, she is stricken ill and dies.

April 29, 1980 — David L. Paul, who built Casagmo and Fox Hill condominiums a decade earlier, proposes 224 condos on 59 acres across Danbury Road from Fox Hill. He calls it Ridgefield Green. The land is now the Ridgefield Recreation Center and Founders Hall, the Ridgefield senior center.

May 1, 1980 — Darla Shaw, systemwide reading coordinator in the schools, has returned from three weeks in Algiers, where she was observing techniques used by the American School there, a “sister school” for Ridgefield. Getting kids to read there is no problem, Shaw says. “With no television and few forms of recreation other than what was offered by the school, most of the children looked to reading as their favorite pastime.”

May 1, 1980 — The about-to-expand Ridgefield Library offers the former home of Dr. James Sheehan, which it recently purchased, to anyone who will take it away. Otherwise it will be torn down as part of the library’s expansion. No one takes it and down it goes.

May 3, 1980 — The Mouse House, a store devoted to Disney stuff, opens at Yankee Ridge Center, 20 Prospect Street. Mickey Mouse ears are only 79 cents as a grand opening special.

May 5, 1980 — The Frame Barn, operated by Herb and Janet Eilertson of Gilbert Street, opens on Danbury Road.

May 8, 1980 — Dr. Walter T. Dolan, a dentist here for nearly a half century, retires and turns over his dental practice to Dr. Neil Schwimer.

May 9, 1980 — The Jerk, starring Steve Martin, opens at the Cinema Ridgefield in Copps Hill Plaza.

May 9, 1980 — The same day, pool chemicals, paints, charcoal starter, and fertilizers feed a spectacular blaze that destroys the Caldor outdoor garden center. It takes firefighters five hours to put out the blaze.

May 13, 1980 — Brutus, the police dog stolen from the town pound in early April while his handler was on vacation, is reunited with Officer Donald Monckton, after he is found wandering in the woods near Brewster, N.Y. “He didn’t even have to see me,” Monckton says of his arrival at the house where the finder lives. “He saw the cruiser and couldn’t wait to get in. He was very excited.”

May 18, 1980 – The First Congregational Church lays the cornerstone for its new church house to replace the one that burned in 1978. The new building is already nearly completed, with Morganti Inc. in charge of construction.

May 19, 1980 — Catoonah Street, a restaurant offering “great food and drink,” and operated by Paul R. Courchene and Stephen J. Thompson, opens at 23 1/2 Catoonah Street (the Tiger’s Den in 2018). The menu includes quiches and crepes. “The restaurant business is fun, or should be,” says Courchene. “It’s certainly challenging and if we do things right, it’s profitable.”

May 24, 1980 — Ridgefield High School students put on a 12-hour “Superdance.” More than 225 students dance and raise \$15,000 to fight muscular dystrophy. That \$45,000 in 2018 dollars.

May 25, 1980 – Conservative Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre of France, soon to be excommunicated by the Pope, comes to town to dedicate the St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary in the former Manresa retreat house on Tackora Trail, and to conduct ordination of new priests. Bridgeport Bishop Walter Curtis declares the ordination is “illegal.” What’s more, protestors show up with a different cause, including Barbara Wardenburg of North Salem Road, carrying a sign saying “Equal Rites for Women” and asking the bishop to allow female priests.

May 26, 1980 — More than 500 people attend a dinner at the Italian-American Club honoring Julius Tulipani, who will turn 90 on July 5. A leader in the Italian community and a former selectman, Tulipani was born in Italy and immigrated to Ridgefield at the age of 17. “Without money or station, unable to speak our language, he arrived as a stranger in Branchville,” emcee Romeo Petroni says, “With no one there to greet him, he walked the railroad track to Ridgefield. He spent the next 73 years working to make Ridgefield a better town for us.”

May 29, 1980 — Elizabeth Leonard reports she will run for a third term as state representative, saying “I still have many goals unfulfilled.”

May 30, 1980 — Michael Graham of Spring Valley Road and his puppets perform at Scotland School, one of many shows he has staged here since he was 13 years old.

May 31 — Paul Hazel, director of personnel for the school system, autographs copies of his first novel, “Yearwood,” at Books Plus on Main Street. Published by Little Brown-Atlantic Monthly, the book has been receiving acclaim from fantasy and science fiction authors.

June 1, 1980 — Ridgefield gets Touch-Tone telephone service. Dialers using rotary phones suddenly notice that the clicks associated with dialing have disappeared. To sign up for TotalPhone, so you can use the push-button phones, Southern New England Telephone Company customers have to pay more — \$2.10 a month (\$6.35 in today’s dollars) plus an installation fee for one phone — even though the new system saves the phone company a lot of money on electricity and uses much less space in their switching stations.

June 3, 1980 — A prisoner who had gotten hold of a key to his handcuffs escapes from the Danbury Police custody as he is arriving at the Superior Court building in Danbury, but is quickly nabbed by Ridgefield Officer Brian Jones, who was at the court on police business. Jones receives minor injuries in the scuffle that ensues.

June 5, 1980 — Barlow Mountain School parents are still not giving up their fight to halt the closing of their neighborhood’s school and are now asking the State Board of Education to investigate the Ridgefield school board’s action. The parents charge the school board acted on false and improper statistics, using records that were altered, and that the result is that their children would “be denied an equal opportunity to receive a suitable program of educational experiences.”

June 5, 1980 — Pitcher Chris Britt of the Lions is helping his team win games with his amazing bubble-gum bubbles that intimidate the opposition.

June 5, 1980 — Radio Shack is having a sale on its TRS-80 “personal microcomputer system” that includes a cassette tape recorder on which to store your data. The sale price is \$749 (equal to about \$2,260 in 2018).

June 6, 1980 — After 20 years in small quarters at 13 Catoonah Street, the District Nursing Association moves into a large house at 304 Main Street, at the corner of Market Street. It’s the former home of the Detzer-Shields-Allee families, and built by the Hurlbutt family in the early 1800s.

June 9, 1980 — The school board learns that the answer sheets for a new state-mandated test of all ninth graders, given in March, were mailed March 28 but never reached the Massachusetts firm that administers and scores the tests. The state refuses to let RHS re-

administer the test, feeling the students would have an unfair advantage in taking the same test twice.

June 12, 1980 — A high-level delegation of dignitaries from the People's Republic of China is staying at the West Lane Inn while touring the area. Visits here include local schools and supermarkets — and Danbury Hospital, after two delegates are injured in a two-car crash at Main Street and Branchville Road a week after arriving.

June 14, 1980 — David Baumann of Keeler Drive sells 234 tickets for today's Little League Pancake Breakfast, winning a 10-speed bicycle. His nearest competitor sells only 66.

June 15, 1980 — 425 students graduate in Ridgefield High School's first-ever Sunday commencement ceremony — it's also Father's Day. Student speakers are Phil Hughes, class president; Mary Ann Briody, class treasurer, and Gina Marie Gianzero.

June 18, 1980 — The Town Meeting votes to create a Parking Authority to establish and enforce parking rules. The meeting removes any ability to buy and use parking meters, long a very unpopular idea in Ridgefield.

June 23, 1980 — Fifty employees of the King Neptune restaurant throw a surprise party for their boss, Fred Orrico, to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the popular restaurant's founding. Also there was Joe Chelednik, his partner.

June 26, 1980 — Attorney Lawrence Hirsch, who had practiced here and represented zoning agencies in town as a partner in other firms, opens his own legal practice.

June 26, 1980 — Only 1,382 people turn out for an all-day referendum on leasing land at the town golf course for a driving range, a plan that is handily defeated 838-544.

July 1, 1980 — Cars in Connecticut starting today need only one license plate — on the rear — according to a new law designed to save the state \$250,000 a year. However, a check in town later in July finds very few one-plate cars as most people are unaware of the new law.

July 2, 1980 — The hills of southern Ridgefield are in an area that would be most severely affected by air pollution from the Federal Department of Energy's proposed conversion of the Norwalk Harbor Electric Station from oil to coal, a government report says. The report envisions both environmental and economic consequences for Ridgefield, says the finding of the Norwalk Harbor Station Study Task Force.

July 5, 1980 — Neil Ringers, Bob Hogan and Mark Dankowski are among the stars as the Community Center tops Village Bank to win the Little League majors championship,

4-0. In the AAA division championship, Mike Bellagamba and Mike Baker combine to pitch Allan's to a 14-13 win over Fitzgerald and Hastings.

July 8, 1980 — Free movies in Ballard Park, sponsored by Parks and Recreation, begin with Pinnocchio.

July 10, 1980 — The Police Commission decides to buy bullet-proof vests for its officers. The cost is \$4,000 of which \$3,500 will come from the proceeds of a recent fund drive.

July 12, 1980 — Pat Hughes is the winning pitcher and hits 3 for 4 as the Ridgefield South Little League all star team defeats the Norwalk Nationals.

July 13, 1980 — Paul Rickert of Silver Spring Road and Jerome Larkin of Old Sib Road win the scholarship contest of the Ridgefield Workshop for the Performing Arts after performances before a panel of judges. Rickert will enter UConn in the fall, majoring in drama, while Larkin will study theater and music at Boston College. Both appear in the RWPA summer student production of Once Upon A Mattress.

July 14, 1980 — The Ancona brothers — Joe, John and Nano — open the doors of their new grocery and liquor stores off Branchville Road. The grocery store is 20,000 square feet, said Joe Ancona. "A bigger store was needed to serve our customers, but we have tried to retain the warm and friendly feeling that our other store had." (The old store, established in the 1920s, was at the corner of Route 7 and Branchville Road in a building still owned by the Anconas today and occupied in part by Joe Jr.'s "Tusk and Cup." While the market has closed, the liquor store is still going strong, and recently opened a new branch in the Donnelly Shopping Center off Governor Street.)

July 15, 1980 — Southern New England Telephone Company is seeking state permission to increase the price of a pay phone call from 10 cents to 20 cents.

July 17, 1980 — William Pitt Inc. real estate moves from the cellar of the Yankee Ridge Shopping Center's Main Street building to the street-level floor — where it is today.

July 19, 1980 — Voters at a referendum decide that the new transfer station's operations should be paid for with user fees instead of a tax on everyone in town.

July 21, 1980 — A federal court judge in Bridgeport sentences an 20-year-old Ridgefielder for the Christmas Eve 1978 burning of a cross on the front lawn of an interracial couple on Old Sib Road. The cross-burner received a one-year suspended sentence and three years' probation on a charge of violating the couple's civil rights. He had earlier been convicted in a state court of criminal mischief and spent a month in jail.

July 21, 1980 — As temperatures hover around 100 degrees, Mike Pontello, well-known local barber, tries to fry an egg on Main Street in front of town hall, but winds up with something resembling scrambled eggs instead.

July 24, 1980 — Dr. Royal C. Van Etten of High Ridge, a prominent Manhattan obstetrician and professor who delivered more than 8,000 babies over a 59-year career, dies at the age of 94.

July 31, 1980 — Barry Montgomery, who, with his father, Giles, created the Twin Ridge subdivision, is proposing a corporate office development of three buildings totaling 210,000 square feet north of George Washington Highway in Ridgebury. The site is in a corporate zone and involves 69 acres that once belonged to the Mallory family, whose estate includes the Boehringer-Ingelheim research laboratory north of Shadow Lake Road.

July 31, 1980 — “The car you’ve been waiting for!” is what Kellogg-Theiss on Danbury Road calls the new X-platform Pontiac Phoenix with front-wheel drive. Most people not only waited, they ignored it; those who didn’t were rewarded with a car that quickly started falling apart and whose rear wheels tended to lock up when brakes were applied.

Aug. 2, 1980 — Sonney Carroll and his 21-piece orchestra play for the 29th annual Firemen’s Ball at the Prospect Ridge Skating Center. Price is \$20 per couple, tax deductible.

Aug. 6, 1980 — Jane Futterman resigns from the Housing Authority on which she has served since its founding in 1974, citing increased work responsibilities.

Aug. 7, 1980 — Barbara Polverari, owner of Perp’s Cafe, is pleased with the crowds that are populating her bar and restaurant on Grove Street, now that she has introduced scantily attired “go-go dancers.” According to reporter Will Lynch, who checked out the new dancers, “their attire made them look like live department store underwear advertisements.” As for First Selectman Lou Fossi, the dancers are “promoting neighborhood discomfort,” he says.

Aug. 8, 1980 — The musical comedy, *Once Upon A Mattress*, opens at the high school auditorium, staged by the Ridgefield Workshop for the Performing Arts’ summer student group. Stars include Mary Lou Yanity and Joe Brady.

Aug/ 14, 1980 – Real estate times are tough. More than 80 new houses sit unsold. Their average selling price: \$180,000. However, mortgage rates are no longer pushing 20% and can now be had at around 12.5%.

Aug. 14, 1980 — Annette Pasternack just returned from spending her junior year at a college in England. “I learned so much — basically I learned what a student really is,” said the Marist senior. “They try to get you to question your own questions.”

Aug. 15, 1980 — Red DeLuga wins the Ridgefield Men’s Golf Club championship.

Aug. 18, 1980 — Robert J. Furman, chairman of the Board of Education, resigns, citing business pressures.

Aug. 20, 1980 – The town landfill shuts down, and the new transfer station opens. The fee for dumping is \$1.50 for 100 pounds. Sticker permits are free for residents driving cars, \$10 for pickups or vans.

Aug. 21, 1980 — Two young men who grew up in Ridgefield — Jerry Myers and Mike Drake — begin working for the Ridgefield Fire Department. Myers is now chief.

Aug. 21, 1980 — Rare book and manuscript collector Harrison Horblit gives the police department \$1,000 to help pay for bullet-proof vests.

Aug. 25, 1980 — Pants And at Copps Hill Plaza has corduroy chinos on sale for \$9.99.

Sept. 2, 1980 — By an 8-0 vote, the Planning and Zoning Commission approves a three-building, 210,000-square-foot corporate office project called NewburRidge on 70 acres north of George Washington Highway. Up to 1,100 people would work there, but parking for only 604 cars is planned. Barry Montgomery, the developer, was involved in subdividing Twin Ridge a decade earlier.

Sept. 3, 1980 — Schools open with a total of 4,652 children, though more are expected to show up in the coming week. School officials had predicted an enrollment of 4,698 last year.

Sept. 4, 1980 — Judy Bernstein, who grew up in Ridgefield, is the new head of the Ridgefield Teachers Association. She teaches second grade at Ridgebury School.

Sept 4, 1980 — Two people were taken to the hospital and traffic tied up for hours after a truck loaded with building supplies hit and snapped a utility pole on Route 7 and then crashed into the Ridgefield Ice Cream shop. No one in the shop was injured.

Sept. 4, 1980 — Dr. Harold E. Healy of Lantern Drive, former principal of Ridgefield High School, is named manager of John F. Coyle Associates, Real Estate, at 23 Danbury Road.

Sept. 6, 1980 — The annual Antique Car Show this year honors Bill Oexle, the Ridgefielder who was an expert car restorer and a show founder, and who died earlier this year. The show features several of his cars and an award for excellence, given in his name. Oexle protege Rob Kinnaird said his mentor had restored more than 20 cars in his lifetime. “He did it as a labor of love,” he said. “It wouldn’t be worth it to do as a profession.”

Sept. 7, 1980 — Editor Robert Wohlforth and his writer wife Mildred Gilman Wohlforth of Rockwell Road mark their 50th wedding anniversary.

Sept. 8, 1980 — The Conservation Commission votes to oppose any widespread spraying to deal with the infestation of gypsy moth caterpillars. “Probably the surest way to rid ourselves of the problem for the next 10 or 12 years is to let them do their thing,” said Commissioner Michael Autuori, explaining that if nature takes its course, the caterpillars will succumb to a type of virus that multiplies only when there is a large population.

Sept. 9, 1980 — Enrollment is up to 4,737 today, the fifth day of school, traditionally the day for taking the first “solid” count after the summer vacation. That is 0.1 percent higher than projected.

Sept. 10, 1980 — RHS seniors Leslie Allen, Frank Parkin, Randy Maycock, and Margee Krebs are semifinalists in the National Merit Scholarship competition.

Sept. 11, 1980 — Bill Allen of Fairview Avenue is threatening the town after two of his amphibious DUKW or “duck” vehicles that he had stored at the town dump, were chopped up and hauled away when the dump was closed down. Allen says he had permission to store them there, and a town employee admitted they were destroyed in error. Allen still has a third “duck” at an undisclosed location. The Press’s headline? “Duck Suit: Hot Water?”

Sept. 13, 1980 — The Tigers earn a hard-fought victory in their season’s opener football game against New Britain, 15-14, as Bo Beatty, Chris Anderson, and Steve Pinkerton turn in outstanding performances. It is the first game for the new head coach, Guido Maiolo.

Sept. 14, 1980 — The Rev. Edward L. “Father Edd” Schultz Jr., assistant rector of St. Stephen’s Church, preaches his last sermon here. Father Edd, as he likes to be called, came in 1976 and will become rector in Rockledge, Pa., outside Philadelphia. He is also a magician who has run workshops in ESP and mind control.

Sept. 18, 1980 — “We’ve been wanting to open our own place for three years at least,” says Frank Dolen, co-owner with Joe Hahn of Galloway’s, a new sports pub that’s just



opened in the Gaeta shopping center, a spot previously occupied by the Smalley House. Five years later, Galloway's literally blows up in a propane gas explosion.

Sept. 19, 1980 — Vandals paint a swastika on a rock and the letters KKK on a tree along Casey Lane, near the home of author Peter Wyden, who came from Germany in 1937 where many of his relatives died in concentration camps. "I would like to think it is a stupid, youthful exuberance, but it could be more," Wyden tells Press reporter Will Lynch. "I really don't know what is on their minds. It is an ugly thing. It certainly stirs up painful memories if nothing else."

Sept. 19, 1980 — Airman Patrick Boylan of Ridgefield is one of 21 men who miraculously escape injury when a Titan II missile explodes in a silo in Damascus, Ark. His sergeant is killed in the blast, shortly after ordering his men to evacuate the silo.

Sept. 19, 1980 — Perp's Cafe on Grove Street faces charges from the state Liquor Control Commission for having disrobing go-go dancers at the bar on Grove Street after two inspectors visit the bar today. "State statute says they can go only so far, and they've probably gone farther," says Police Chief Thomas Rotunda, without further elaboration. The state inspectors say the dancers "removed their clothes while dancing," but did not specify what clothing or how much.

Sept. 24, 1980 — The Paperback Trader, a used book shop, opens at 15 Danbury Road in Girolmetti Court. Owners are Carol Scher and Mary Ellen Bigham. "Paperbacks have gotten so expensive," says Scher. "You used to be able to get a bestseller for 95 cents, but now they cost \$3.95. Paperbacks are almost as expensive now as hardcovers used to be."

Sept. 23, 1980 — The Tiger soccer team is ranked fourth in the state after winning five straight games. Stars include Terry Hughes, Vasken Demirjian, Robie Shenk, Randy Ballin, and Guy Welton.

Oct. 1, 1980 — Ridgefield firefighters join the ladies for a fashion show sponsored by the Ridgefield Woman's Club at the Red Lion Inn. Richard Dingee, a firefighter, gets an award for his help.

Oct. 2, 1980 — Nancy Servadio is marking 32 years as administrative assistant to the first selectman — currently Louis J. Fossi, who is in Italy on an Italian-American Club tour. (When she eventually retired, she had worked 45 years, working under seven first selectmen.)

Oct. 2, 1980 — Merrie Moppet Too, a consignment store for children's clothing, opens in the Hackert and Monti Building, next to Roma Pizzeria, on Main Street. (Merrie Moppet "One" was in Westport.)

Oct. 5, 1980 — On the day after his birthday, the Rev. Aaron Manderbach retires after 30 years as rector of St. Stephen's Church. (While he went to northern Connecticut for a while, he often returned to St. Stephen's to help out, and then wound up moving to Georgetown, where he spent two decades. He died earlier this year.)

Oct. 6, 1980 — Tim Boesch of Walnut Grove Road becomes the 22nd member of Troop 116 to earn Eagle Scout status.

Oct. 10, 1980 — The Age of Video begins its Grand Opening weekend, with special prices on video recorders, cameras, large-screen projection TVs, and of course, movie rentals. It also offers a "private video club."

Oct. 12, 1980 — "I was heartbroken, they came such a long way," says 22-year-old Larry Bossidy of the Philadelphia Phillies' victory over the Houston Astros to win the National League pennant. Bossidy has just recently been signed by the Astros as a free agent.

Oct. 18, 1980 — Liz O'Brien is queen and Tim Dent, king, as RHS celebrates Homecoming. Some 3,000 people pack Lancaster Field to watch the Tigers defeat Stamford, 26-14. Bob Iseley, four-time winner of the Tigers' MVP defense award, is among the stars.

Oct. 20, 1980 — Witold Stanislaw Alkiewicz of 211 West Mountain Road, a Polish nobleman, dies at the age of 87. During World War I he flew open cockpit planes in the first Polish Air Force.

Oct. 22, 1980 — The town has no plans for mass spraying to fight gypsy moths, says First Selectman Lou Fossi. Only a few valuable and threatened trees around the village will be sprayed, he says at a public meeting on the issue.

Oct. 23, 1980 — Louis A. Garofalo, head of the Ridgefield Taxpayers League, announces he's planning a movement to place a ceiling on town spending. "When an individual makes a mistake, he pays for it," Garofalo says. "When government makes a mistake, we all pay for it. Government has continued to do business as usual for the last 20 years. An individual couldn't do that and stay in business, but the government can — because of taxes."

Oct. 23, 1980 — "Don't Reach for the Peach," screams the headline on a small ad in The Ridgefield Press, "paid for by Concerned Citizens." The ad urges townspeople to keep Ridgefield beautiful by not supporting Today, a daily newspaper published by Gannett, which has started a Fairfield County edition — on peach-colored paper distributed via peach-colored vending machines set up along sidewalks all over the center of town.

Oct. 23, 1980 — The Clothes District at 409 Main Street is under new ownership, presumably Judy Finn.

Oct. 25, 1980 — After a public hearing, the Planning and Zoning Commission vetoes a Ridgefield Family Y plan to build a headquarters and public swimming pool on 15 acres, donated by Francis D. Martin, at the north end of Lake Mamanasco. The facility would require too much well water, threatening the water supply for homes in the area.

Oct. 25, 1980 — “Six Fables for All Time,” a work by composer Vaclav Nelhybel, a former Ridgefeilder, has its world premier at the Ridgefield Orchestra concert, conducted by Beatrice Brown.

Oct. 28, 1980 — The Planning and Zoning Commission issues a order to Barbara Polverari, operator of Perp’s Cafe, to “cease and desist” employing scantily clad go-go girls. Neighbors have complained about the exceedingly large number of cars — no doubt belonging to men — parked along Sunset Lane. Polverari says she’ll ignore the order.

Nov. 1, 1980 — The Chamber of Commerce gathers at Silver Spring Country Club to honor Edwin B. Allan with its Service Award. Allan has been in the clothing business in town for 25 years.

Nov. 4, 1980 – Ronald Reagan takes Ridgefield and the nation, and while Republican James Buckley wins Ridgefield in the U.S. Senate race, Chris Dodd takes the state. Democrat William Ratchford retains his congressional seat.

Nov. 4, 1980 — Donald I. Rogers, formerly of Mimosa, a journalist, author and columnist for Hearst, dies at the age of 61. Rogers at one time was editor of the Bridgeport Sunday Herald and then started and published the short-lived daily newspaper, The Fairfield County Courier.

Nov. 6, 1980 — Francis D. Martin gives \$10,000 to the District Nursing Association to establish a fund in his name. Martin said he knew Miss Ellen Enright, the first district nurse, and he rented to the association its first offices, three rooms for the price of one, in what is now the Amatuzzi Block (Planet Pizza etc. on Main Street).

Nov. 7, 1980 — Agatha Christie’s “The Mousetrap” opens at RHS. Stars include Jim Bollinger and Joan Bennett.

Nov. 7, 1980 — Elfrieda Travostino, an RHS social studies teacher who headed the Ridgefield Teachers Association during a period of controversies over banning books, dies at the age of 58. She was an outspoken teacher president and at one point in the early

1970s, she reported someone had entered her house, grabbed the family dog, hung it from a tree in the front yard, and called her on the phone to warn that it could happen to her and her family. The dog survived, but Mrs. Travostino quit her post soon after.

Nov. 13, 1980 — All That Glitters, a store selling “contemporary jewelry,” opens at 409 Main Street, the Hackert and Monti Building. Most of the pieces are produced in Armonk by owner Nancy Galli and her husband, Patrick.

Nov. 13, 1980 — Florene Main, a nationally known antiques specialist and dealer who lives on West Lane, dies at the age of 83. She sold her first antique at the age of 5 — a jewel box that had belonged to the Duchess de Orleans. The buyer, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, paid 4,000 times what she had paid for it.

Nov. 17, 1980 — Artist-Author Sam Savitt comes to Farmingville School’s Book Fair. Savitt, of North Salem, wrote “Wild Horse Running” and other popular books about horses.

Nov. 20, 1980 — Citing vandalism and insurance risks, IBM begins tearing down most of the huge and handsome brick barns that were part of the Outpost estate on the south side of Bennett’s Farm Road.

Nov. 24, 1980 — Most of Ridgefield’s athletic fields are “in such poor condition as to be a safety hazard for the young people using them,” says a consultant hired by the school board and Parks and Recreation Department. The two agencies will come up with a plan to improve the much-used fields.

Nov. 25, 1980 — William Remick is re-elected chairman of the Board of Education, but only after a rare challenge. He barely outpolls Jon Elkow, 5-4, with voting pretty much along party lines — Remick, a Republican, got five GOP votes while Elkow, a Democrat, got the three Democratic votes, plus Republican William Wyman’s support.

Dec. 1, 1980 — A computer controlling the electric heat and air conditioning at Ridgefield High School has saved the town \$140,000 over the past two years, the school board learns. Honeywell, the computer’s manufacturer, is using Ridgefield as an example in efforts to sell its energy system to other towns.

Dec. 1, 1980 — The average selling price of a Ridgefield house in November was \$152,000.

Dec. 2, 1980 — Frank Mercede of Stamford proposes a three-story office building on Copps Hill Road, just west of Town and Country Chrysler-Plymouth. The building is eventually approved, but only at two stories.

Dec. 3, 1980 — The Board of Selectmen accepts 10 roads as town highways, including Downsbury Court, Kingswood Place, Hauley Place, Willow Court, Great Rocks Place, Jackson Court, and Hermit Lane.

Dec. 4, 1980 – Ridgefielders are distressed to learn Gov. Ella Grasso is resigning because her cancer has spread. She dies Feb. 5, 1981.

Dec. 4, 1980 — Pamby Motors is offering a free sunroof or 100 gallons of gas to those who buy a new Renault Le Car, whose features include tinted glass, rear wiper, wheel covers, fabric interior, and 31/41 city/highway gas mileage.

Dec. 4, 1980 — R. Gordon McGovern of Lounsbury Road is named president and CEO of Campbell Soup Company.

Dec. 6, 1980 — The First Congregational Church has its annual Christmas Fair in the brand new church house.

Dec 7, 1980 — The Rev. Clayton R. Lund leads dedication services for the new First Congregational church house, replacing a structure destroyed by fire two years earlier. Soon, the facility will be named Lund Hall in his honor.

Dec. 11, 1980 — Erland van Lidth de Jeude hopes his portrayal of a prison inmate in the new movie, “Stir Crazy,” starring Gene Wilder and Richard Pryor and directed by Sidney Poitier, will make directors notice his talent more than his size — which is six foot six, 380 pounds. The MIT graduate, opera singer and world-class wrestler grew up in Ridgefield.

Dec. 11, 1980 — Teleprompter Cable TV, Ridgefield’s first cable service, advertises that it has a “fantastic introductory offer” to be a cable subscriber, but only if you live in an area that’s just been cabled.

Dec. 11, 1980 — Michael and Teri Liberta are the new owners of Bolling’s Wines and Liquors at 393 Main Street, next to Squash’s. The one-time A&P Liquor Store had been owned and operated by William Bolling since 1975.

Dec. 11, 1980 — Ciuccoli TV at 113 Danbury Road advertises a 25-inch Zenith “System 3” color TV with “REMOTE CONTROL” and a swivel base for an unspecified price.

Dec. 12, 1980 — Linda Arciola, Ridgefield’s first woman patrol officer, is leaving the Ridgefield Police for a better-paying job in Westport — her native town. She says Westport will pay her, as a college graduate, \$2,000 more than Ridgefield does (\$6,000 in 2018 dollars).

Dec. 13, 1980 — RHS senior wrestler Jeff Shaw is trapped for two hours inside a car after an early morning crash in New York State, and is in fair condition later in the week. His team is pulling for his recovery. “Jeff was dedicated,” says Coach George Pollock. “He would come in before each practice and work out afterwards as well.”

Dec. 17, 1980 — The Dec. 8 murder of John Lennon prompts the Ridgefield High School Jam Club to have a memorial concert of his music. Among the performers will be high school biology teacher, Leo Kretzner (who is now a biology professor at Chaffey College in California and a professional musician).

Dec. 20, 1980 — The Tag Sale Shoppe has opened in Branchville Center, operated by Joyce Robichaud of Silver Spring Lane. Her husband, Roger, is president of the Village Bank and Trust Company in Ridgefield.

Dec. 19-21, 1980 — Patricia Schuster’s Ridgefield Civic Ballet performs “Peter and the Wolf” in O’Shea Auditorium, East Ridge Junior High School.

Dec. 24, 1980 — Postman John McCrystal is “flabbergasted” today when he receives a \$500 check and letter of commendation from the U.S Postal Service for saving the life in October of Dorothy Simond, an elderly widow of Prospect Ridge. McCrystal had noticed that Mrs. Simond had not collected her mail for three days and told police who found the woman on the floor of her home with a broken hip and shoulder. She had been there three days and nights.

Dec. 25, 1980 — It is a tough Christmas for Santa as temperatures dip to minus-14 in Ridgefield today, the coldest Christmas in memory. But the four inches of snow that falls provides appropriate decoration

## **1981**

Jan. 4, 1981 — The high temperature today is five degrees; the low, minus-11. It warms up the next day, with a high of 24 and a low of minus-four.

Jan. 10, 1981 — School Superintendent Elliott Landon proposes a \$14.1-million education budget, up \$1.36 million or 10.7% from the current year. Expressed per pupil, the increase is 17%. Landon attributes most of the increase to inflation, noting that the Consumer Price Index rose 12.6% for the 12 months ending October 1980.

Jan. 13, 1981 — Frequent cases of school buses running late to pick up students, waiting sometimes in sub-zero temperatures, irk the school board. “My son came back home after standing out there almost a half hour, waiting for a high school bus,” board member William Wyman reported, echoing complaints from other parents.

Jan. 14, 1981 — Frank A. Rowella Sr. of Riverside Drive, a printer with Perkin-Elmer in Danbury, dies at the age of 62. Survivors include four sons, Robert, Frank, Richard, and Paul.

Jan. 14, 1981 — Steve Zemo announces plans for a shopping cluster at 103-107 Danbury Road. Plans include a new access from Danbury Road to Copps Hill Plaza, just north of Friendly Ice Cream, and removal of some old frame buildings housing The Soda Center, Constitution Federal Savings and Loan, The Cat House, and apartments.

Jan. 15, 1981 — It's a frigid January so far, with temperatures over the first two weeks averaging 10.7 degrees.

Jan. 16, 1981 — One of the widest loads ever to be transported across Connecticut enters town on North Salem Road, travels south along Main Street, and down Wilton Road West into Wilton. It is a 14-by-15 foot chamber that will be used by Perkin-Elmer in the manufacture of the Hubble space telescope, and is headed for the Perkin-Elmer facility on Route 7 in Wilton.

Jan. 17, 1981 — Intermission, a new hair salon, opens in the Grand Union shopping center where Ye Olde Washtub had been. "Where once was a dank and dark space filled with washing machines and folding tables and dirty laundry, there's now a sparkling, clean, light and airy hairdressing salon," says reporter Sally Sanders. It's operated by Patricia Tallman, Laura Mancini, and Edward Gotthardt.

Jan. 20, 1981 — Lucile and Manuel Leitao of Bloomer Road are among the invited guests at the inauguration festivities for President Ronald Reagan, including a gala ball with Frank Sinatra at the Sheraton in Washington. The Leitaos met Reagan in 1978 when he spoke to a luncheon they hosted for the board of directors of The Pet Food Institute, of which Mr. Leitao was chairman. He's now a vice-president at U.S. Tobacco, in charge of corporate development and chairs its political involvement committee. Son Robert is on the Ridgefield Republican Town Committee.

Jan. 22, 1981 — Amedeo "Matty" Contessa, a longtime Ridgefielder and prominent citizen, dies after being stricken at his retirement home in Lebanon, Conn. He was 71. He had operated Contessa Yarns on Bailey Avenue for many years, and had been active in many organizations, including being president of the Lions Club in 1949 and a vestryman at St. Stephen's.

Jan. 22, 1981 — Griffin Ford in New Canaan is offering the new Ford Fiesta "front wheel drive" for \$5,395 (about \$14,700 in 2018 dollars).

Jan. 23, 1981 — Teachers at Ridgebury School are experimenting with using micro-computers in the schools as early as the third grade. “The idea is to touch as many kids as we can,” said Jack Halapin, who is directing the program. “We want to find out the potential of computers as a teaching aid.”

Jan. 26, 1981 — School board member William Wyman questions a budget proposal to spend \$350 for a 35mm camera for the junior high industrial arts department. “We’re paying the school price, not the Caldor price,” he said with a smile. But School Business Manager Harold Voorhees quickly replied that Caldor was where, in fact, the schools buy their camera equipment.

Jan. 27, 1981 — Ridgeburians are irked at the number of airplanes flying in and out of Danbury Airport — between 300 and 400 takeoffs a day in good weather. “Noise from the airport is so loud and so nearly incessant that it is changing the lives of people in the affected areas and appreciably reducing real estate values,” says Ed Plaut of Hawthorne Hill Road. “It has reached the point where people cannot sit outdoors with friends on a Saturday summer afternoon and carry on a conversation in normal tones.”

Jan. 27, 1981 — Go-go girls have again gone too far at Perp’s Cafe on Grove Street. For the second time in six months, the State Liquor Control Commission formally charges that the restaurant’s dancers have broken the commission regulations with their erotic entertainment. The commission plans a hearing on the charges.

Jan. 28, 1981 — S. Scott Faubel, a former bus company owner who created Shadow Lake Orchard in Ridgebury, dies at the age of 56. Faubel sold his bus company in 1952 and began planting apple trees on his parents’ farm on Shadow Lake Road. By 1974, he had more than 1,200 trees and a popular farmstand selling apples and cider. His place is now part of Boehringer-Ingelheim’s campus, but many of his trees are still growing there.

Jan. 28, 1981 — Two stores that have been in business on Main Street for 26 years are closing: Allan’s Men’s Store, founded by Edwin and Donald Allan in January 1955, begins its closing sale today, and Zalla’s Sportswear next door, operated by Jimmy Zalla also for 26 years, has begun advertising a going-out-of-business sale that will last till mid-March. Both Eddie Allan and Jimmy Zalla later go into real estate.

Jan. 29, 1981 — Attorney J. Allen Kerr Jr. opens a law office on Big Shop Lane. He had been working in New Canaan. He later becomes town attorney.

Jan. 29, 1981 — Area officials gather in Danbury today to discuss how to handle the “drastic drought” occurring in western Connecticut. One idea being studied with the Army Corps of Engineers envisions “the piping of river water miles and miles, across town boundaries, at a cost which one council member described as ‘tens of millions of dollars.’”



Jan. 29, 1981 — The Highway Department has outraged many townspeople, as well as the Planning and Zoning Commission, by announcing it plans to cut down a line of old trees at the very edge of Prospect Ridge behind the old RHS gym and tennis courts to make the road wider and safer. The uproar prompts abandonment of the plan; instead the road is made one-way from Prospect to Governor Streets.

Feb. 2, 1981 — Speaking before the Republican Town Committee, GOP Selectman Josette Williams complains that some town cars and trucks are being misused by the employees they are assigned to. “A number of town employees are allowed, in fact encouraged, to take town-owned cars home with them every day after work,” she says. “The town has lost control over gas consumption, insurance claim exposure, and wear and tear on town cars.” She adds that she’s not referring to the police chief, fire chief and highway superintendent, who are often on call while off duty at home and need their town cars.

Feb. 2, 1981 — Steve Schuyler of the Tiger Parents Club tells the school board that the town needs a field house like Wilton and Westport have. The problem is it would cost \$4 million [about \$11 million in 2018 dollars].

Feb. 4, 1981 — Sue Manning, president of the Ridgefield Family Y, reports the Y will offer the town \$60,000 to buy 7.47 acres of the town-owned, former Bacchiochi property on Ivy Hill Road, next to the skating center, in order to build a YMCA with indoor pool. As soon as the announcement is made, many neighbors begin opposing the plan, some claiming the price is “far too low” and others fearing high volumes of traffic.

Feb. 5, 1981 — “Parking has been, and is now, one of our primary projects,” newly elected Chamber of Commerce president Barbara McCarthy tells Press interviewer Hayes Rowan. “We’ve been working on it for years. There is an extreme, crying need for more space. It’s just not feasible the way it is, it’s just not working.” McCarthy owns Hyde’s Wines and Liquors on Main Street and later operates the Corner Pub on Grove Street for 30 years.

Feb 5, 1981 — Ridgefielders mourn Governor Ella Grasso, who dies of cancer. The first woman elected governor of a U.S. state without having been the spouse or widow of a former governor, Grasso had often visited Ridgefield, including for the dedication of Ballard Green and the Boehringer Ingelheim headquarters. “She was a mother to all of us, a stern mother but a good mother,” says First Selectman Louis J. Fossi. “She had a great deal of compassion but she was firm when she had to be.”

Feb. 6, 1981 — The girls track and field team, under Coach Rick Medve, wins the Fairfield County Championship, only six years after the sport was established at RHS.

Stars include Marcie Scott, Barb McCarthy, Marie Kjoller, Peggy Hauschild, Heidi Zaph, Beth Moughty, and Mary Ellen Rhyins

Feb. 7, 1981 — Kathleen Elizabeth Lane, a teacher at St. Mary's School from 1958 to 1968 and then its principal from 1968 until its closing in 1971, dies as the age of 60. Mrs. Lane, wife of Dr. John O'Gorman Lane, had also been president of the District Nursing Association from 1973 to 1975

Feb. 11, 1981 — Berkley H. Hill Sr., a Danbury native who was a real estate agent and stockbroker here, dies in Florida at the age of 79. A Danbury native who became a pilot in the early 1920s, he became one of the fliers in the Danbury area, and founded the Danbury Aero Club.

Feb. 12, 1981 — Who knew Ridgefield had a "doll hospital." And yet La Petite Francaise at 605 Ethan Allen Highway is advertising its services.

Feb 12, 1981 — The new RHS women's gymnastics team has two girls qualify for the state championship: Crystal Pawlowski and Jennifer Rubin.

Feb. 22, 1981 — Ilo Wallace, widow of U.S. Vice President Henry A. Wallace, dies at her South Salem home at the age of 92. Like Mr. Wallace, Mrs. Wallace was active in St. Stephen's Church, to which her husband had bequeathed \$6,200 in stock in the Pioneer Corn Company. A decade later, the stock was found to be worth more than \$800,000 — around \$3.7 million in 2018 dollars.

Feb. 24, 1981 — Richard Dingee and Richard Brown are promoted to lieutenants in the Ridgefield Fire Department. Each has more than 10 years experience with the department.

Feb. 25, 1981 — Widespread vandalism in Ridgefield has caused "severe financial loss," says the Rev. Charles Stubbs, chairman of Ridgefield's Youth Commission, speaking at a townwide forum on vandalism that includes a 1978 movie, "Solutions to Vandalism." Only 50 people show up.

Feb. 26, 1981 — Ridgefield, like other area towns, is witnessing many cases of the suffocation death of hundreds of fish due to the low water levels and the thick winter ice.

Feb. 26, 1981 — St. Mary's Parish is planning its centennial celebration. But, says reporter Jeff Glaser, "no one seems to know for certain the year during which the Rev. Thaddeus Walsh, St. Mary's first pastor, moved to Ridgefield from Georgetown to upgrade the former mission. This year, therefore, marks either the 101st, 100th or 99th birthday of the most populous parish in town."

Feb. 27, 1981 — Marty Motors is advertising a “computerized tune-up special” in which “we’ll test your car 100 ways,” with the help of a “Sun 1215 Computer II with 1216 printer.”

March 2, 1981 — For the first time in a decade, the school board makes a substantial cut in the administration’s proposed budget, chopping \$150,000. But that reduces the increase only from 10.7% to 9.7%, and few expect the Board of Finance will OK the resulting \$14-million request. Meanwhile Superintendent Elliott Landon gets a 3.1% pay hike, from \$48,000 to \$50,000, plus an annuity.

March 3, 1981 — Eric Erhardt is steaming. Seven radios — expensive ones — were just stolen from brand new BMWs at his Ridgefield European Motors on Route 7. Burglaries, he says, cost him nearly \$100,000 in 1979 and almost as much in 1980. “I am beside myself,” he says. “I don’t know what to do.”

March 4, 1981 — The selectmen delete a Police Commission request for five new patrol officers, but do approve a nighttime dispatcher for the department — freeing up an officer to do patrol work.

March 5, 1981 — State Attorney General Carl Ajello files charges that the New England Institute for Medical Research has been brought to financial ruin by the “neglect, mismanagement, waste, and self-dealing” of its management. Dr. John Heller, institute founder and chairman of the institute’s board, says the charges will be proven false, “chapter, text, and verse.” and a court eventually throws out the charges.

March 5, 1981 — It’s been a cold winter and plumber James Tobin has been advertising one of his services: “pipes thawed.”

March 7, 1981 — Five members of the RHS indoor track team run in the state meet in New Haven: Greg Browne, Mike Lage, Harry Hughes, Steve Horn, and Mike Baymiller.

March 9, 1981 — Pamby Motors opens its new auto showroom on Danbury Road, just west of its gas station and auto body shop at Grove Street. Pamby’s is selling Jeep, American Motors and Renault cars. (The building now houses Prime Taco restaurant while the Jeeps are sold on Route 7.)

March 10, 1981 — The State Department of Public Utility Control approves a 30% rate increase for the Ridgefield Water Supply Company. The utility argued it needs money to fix infrastructure, including replacing an aging water tower on Peaceable Ridge. Nine years earlier, an old standpipe holding 188,000 gallons of water collapsed.

March 11, 1981 – Voters approve selling 7.5 acres on Prospect Ridge to the Ridgefield Family Y for its headquarters and pool, despite one critic's contention that "we're getting a lousy deal."

March 11, 1981 — The girls ski team wins the state championship at a competition at Catamount. Stars included Betty Ann Gilchrist, Joanne Merriman, and Cathy Conway.

March 12, 1981 — Harry Geary and Tom Scala, RHS juniors, make the New Haven Register all-state hockey squad. Ridgefielder Kevin Martin, a senior playing on the Fairfield Prep state championship team, makes the first squad for the second year in a row.

March 13, 1981 — Ralph B. Crouchley, who led the Ridgefield Boys Club from 1942 until 1969, dies at the age of 76. The Ridgefield native spent several years working in Mexico for a U.S. corn products company, then joined his father's plumbing and paint store on Main Street before taking over duties at the club, which he led out of financial difficulties.

March 15, 1981 — The Rev. Fred Bender is chosen as the new rector of St. Stephen's Church, replacing the Rev. Aaron Manderbach, who retired last summer after 30 years as the church's leader. Now an assistant rector in Darien, the former Air Force pilot will conduct his first service here May 10.

March 18, 1981 — James Gareau of New Street, a banker, is chosen by the selectmen to be the new town treasurer, replacing Steve Thompson who resigned because of business commitments. The board rejects the pick of the Democratic Town Committee and First Selectman Louis J. Fossi, who favored Leo J. Whelton.

March 19, 1981 – The Charter Revision Commission proposes that the three-member Board of Selectmen be expanded to five.

March 20, 1981 — The RHS production of Brigadoon, starring Tom Fagan and Trish DiMuzio, opens amid sets built by John Frey and Ron Brookover. Also appearing in a non-starring role is Paul Stroili who goes on to become a widely seen actor in movies and TV, and on stage. His one-man "Straight Up with A Twist" has had more than 1,000 performances, including two long runs Off Broadway.

March 20, 1981 — It's Preston Bassett's 89th birthday, but he is celebrating the fact that Atheneum has just published his first children's book, "Raindrop Stories," following Johnny Raindrop through a gentle spring shower, a hailstorm, a summer thunderstorm, an autumn rain, and an ice storm. An engineer, inventor and former head of Sperry Gyroscope and president of Keeler Tavern, Bassett lives in the Peter Parley house on High Ridge.

March 22, 1981 — The cost of a first-class postage stamp jumps from 15 cents to 18 cents.

April 1, 1981 — Leslie Allen and Nick Warren are named finalists in the Presidential Scholars program, two of only 1,000 finalists from throughout the country.

April 2 1981, 1981 – Boehringer Ingelheim, which is renting the old high school, announces it wants to lease the Barlow Mountain School for office space. Neighbors begin a fight that includes two lawsuits.

April 2, 1981 — Actor Gerry Matthews of Lounsbury Road describes his career to Linette Burton of The Press. His performances have included 40 years as the voice of Sugar Bear in Post cereals' Sugar Crisp commercials. He was also the man in tiny boat floating in a toilet tank for Ty-D-Bol television commercials.

April 8, 1981 — Two new restaurants open in town: The Rusty Nail at 23½ Catoonah Street, recently a restaurant called 23½ Catoonah Street, and Connolly's on Route 7 where the Hungry Knight had been.

April 9, 1981 — The latest U.S. Census figures indicate only 123 blacks live in town, surprising one official who remarks: "There's that many? I'd never've known it. Where do they all live?" First Selectman Louis J. Fossi is not pleased with the number. "Is it good?, No, it is not," he says. "I have said this before. In a stratified community, everyone misses out. The kids growing up in that kind of community have missed an awful lot in the way of learning about their fellow human beings. Segregation, by color or economic strata — I just don't think it's healthy."

April 13, 1981 — The first selectman's pay is increased to \$36,225 over the next two years. The current pay for Louis J. Fossi is \$31,500.

April 19, 1981 — Ridgefield's Main Street and Copps Hill commercial areas will be able to "recover and survive" the now seemingly inevitable construction of a regional shopping mall at the Danbury Fairgrounds, according to a study on "retail growth" in the area by a Washington, D.C. urban development consultant. However, the mall would have a considerable effect, including the closing of some businesses that do not adapt effectively to the increased competition of a big mall, says the report, commissioned by the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials.

April 22, 1981 — Space Invaders, Space Encounters, Stellar Wars, Asteroids Deluxe, Middle Command, Black Night, Rally X — the game machines that line the walls of Thumpkin Else, an off-Main Street shop, have been drawing many teenagers, who in turn have been drawing complaints to town officials, especially after school and weekends. "I

guess the overall complaint is the bicycles left outside, trash, and the spillover of kids outside the building — maybe some of them not too nice to potential customers, I suppose,” says First Selectman Louis J. Fossi. Elmer Coombs, an owner of the game and craft shop with daughter and son-in-law Barbara and Bernard Conrad, says that Roma Pizzeria’s Amatuzzi brothers, his landlords, are glad to have the games nearby — now the kids don’t sit in the pizza shop all afternoon.

April 23, 1981 — “We’re #1 in the #2 Business,” says an advertisement for Santini Septic Service. The service is still around today and still uses the same slogan.

April 23, 1981 — The Marine Corps League hauls away more than three tons of trash collected by some 300 volunteers today, Rid Litter Day.

April 30, 1981 — The town is bracing itself for another invasion of Gypsy Moth caterpillars as the now-tiny creatures begin wiggling out of their winter egg masses. There is talk of using Sevin, a pesticide that would also kill other insects, including bees.

May 1, 1981 — Ridgefielders Zebbie Mathis, Marty Pierce and Lynne Rudy open the Red Balloon, a children’s consignment shop at 409 Main Street, where the Merrie Moppet, a similar enterprise, had operated for not very long.

May 2, 1981 — Joe O’Brien and Lorayne Kain preside as king and queen at the RHS Junior Prom, attended by more than 125 couples. They dance to music by Spectrum.

May 2, 1981 — A fight at a party on Ramapoo Road leaves one man dead of stab wounds and two others injured. Five people — four from Waterbury — are arrested. A Ridgefielder arrested in the case is later freed after authorities rule that the stabbing was in self-defense.

May 4, 1981 — Walter Gengarelly, a Republican candidate who lost in the race for first selectman two years ago, tells the GOP Monday he will again seek the office. Democratic First Selectman Louis J. Fossi has not yet made an announcement about his plans.

May 6, 1981 — The selectmen commiserate with a group of people who want a traffic light on Route 35, Danbury Road, at Haviland and Limestone Roads, scene of many crashes. However, they fail to approve the light. “I don’t know how in God’s name we’re going to fund it,” says First Selectman Louis J. Fossi, who notes the town would have to share with the state half of the \$38,000 cost of the light.

May 9, 1981 — The Ridgefield Jaycees celebrate their 20th anniversary.

May 9, 1981 — More than 1,000 people attend the auction of the contents of the home of the late Margaret Hoffman at her 100 acre estate on West Lane, on the state line. The

widow's husband, Richard Hoffman, rose from being an office boy to a vice president of Union Carbide.

May 12, 1981 – The talk of the retail community continues to be the proposed Danbury Fair mall. A Chamber of Commerce luncheon concludes that personal service and small-town flavor will keep local stores alive, even with a big mall nearby. That proves true.

May 14, 1981 — Bob Sharp Motors is advertising a Datsun 210 Hatchback for \$6,000, with a claimed highway fuel consumption of 45 mpg. The car didn't look like much, and didn't offer many extras. Even the audio was only an AM radio.

May 16, 1981 — The Lady Tigers softball team wins the division title, beating Westhill, behind the playing of such stars as Cindy Schreiber, Allison Trado, Lisa Merullo, Carey Keene, Lea Ann Schmidt, Judy Ginn, Bridgett Stearns, and Lisa DiVita.

May 17, 1981 — Three young Ridgefielders — Patricia Call, Margee Krebs, and Ariane Bergquist — are soloists in the ninth annual joint concert that brings the best high school musicians together with the Ridgefield Orchestra.

May 18, 1981 — The RHS baseball team wins a spot in the state playoffs for the first time in six years, beating Brien McMahon, 5-4. Team star was Tony Wilmot with 28 hits in the 18 games played so far, an average of .467. He also led the team in RBI's, with 18. Years later, Wilmot coaches the Tigers.

May 21, 1981 — Leslie Loomis of Bennett's Farm Road, assistant principal at RHS, resigns to become principal of a high school outside Syracuse, N.Y.

May 21, 1981 — Admitting he was a little "crazy" for doing so, 41-year-old Geoff Harrington of Langstroth Drive recently completes his second "ultramarathon," running 50 miles in eight hours, 42 minutes and 22 second at Lake Waramaug. He took up running, he said, as therapy for the leg he broke skydiving.

May 22-23, 1981 — Liberta's Spirit Shoppe has its grand opening at 393 Main Street, quarters formerly belonging to Bolling's liquor store and earlier, A&P Wines and Liquors. Liberta's says "Our service makes the difference" and the store remains in business more than 30 years. Mike and Teri Liberta retire in 2015 and Cheers takes over, only to go out of business three years later.

May 26, 1981 — Consultants hired by the school board recommend moving the sixth grade from the elementary schools to the East Ridge Junior High School. The move would free up space in the crowded elementary schools.

May 28, 1981 – As rumors spread that Louis J. Fossi will retire as first selectman, two

more Republicans say they want the seat. Selectman Josette Williams and Planning and Zoning Chairman Sue Manning both announce their candidacy, following Walter Gengarely. None turns out to be the eventual choice.

May and June 1981 – The “Mill Rate Watchers” petition referendums that cut the town and school budgets. “It’s a bad budget – the town will pay for this down the road,” says First Selectman Fossi of the cuts that he describes as “devastating.”

June 1, 1981 — State Rep. Elizabeth Leonard becomes the fourth Republican to run for first selectman in the wake of rumors Louis J. Fossi would retire. Leonard says she had had “urgent requests from members of both parties” that she run.

June 2, 1981 – The Planning and Zoning Commission okays the Ridgefield Family Y’s plans for a recreational complex and pool off Ivy Hill Road.

June 5, 1981 — The post office awards long-service pins to Ralph Gay, 27 years; Don Gay, 25; Richard Freivogel, 33; Jim Clark, 25; Anthony Casavechia, 27; and Dave Broadhurst, 32.

June 6, 1981 — Maurice Sendak, whose “Outside Over There” recently came out, receives a state award for excellence in the arts.

June 10, 1981 — Sue Manning, retiring president of the Ridgefield Family Y, is honored at a dinner hosted by the Y at the Italian American Club. The Rev. Dr. Roy Hassel, the new president, praises her “inspiring leadership” and says “the progress of the Y is the result of her dedication.”

June 11, 1981 — Louis J. Fossi finally announces he’s retiring as first selectman. “It feels good,” he says, looking much more relaxed than he had in years. “I’d forgotten what I used to feel like.”

June 11, 1981 — In a review of Lodestar, the high school’s new literary annual, Macklin Reid writes in The Press that “its outstanding quality — the one which recommends it to people who, really, couldn’t give a hoot about the development of high school literary talent — is the brazen honesty with which many of the pieces are written, and the vivid, sometimes shocking glimpses into teenage life today that such honesty affords.”

June 12, 1981 — A “small red car” slams into the Cass Gilbert Fountain at Main Street and West Lane, causing extensive damage, and then leaves the scene. “The impact of the crash left shattered pieces of marble scattered over a large area,” the Press reports.

June 14, 1981 — 435 seniors graduate at Lancaster Field during RHS’s 64th commencement. Speakers include valedictorian John Marra and salutatorian Mark Engle.



June 15, 1981 — RHS Senior Bill Van Orman wins the regional golf state championship at Ridgewood Country Club in Danbury.

June 16, 1981 — E. Earl Roberts of Mamasco Road, a longtime electrician and local businessman, dies at the age of 85. Roberts was also Ridgefield's sole dealer in Locke lawnmowers. The Bridgeport-made machines were once the mower of choice for estate superintendents and golf course managers.

June 18, 1981 — Sunday buffet at The Elms is \$9.75, says an ad in The Press. From noon to 2:30, there's "piano music for your enjoyment."

June 18, 1981 — Calling it "America's most popular sports car," Griffin Ford of New Canaan is advertising the 1981 Mustang coupe Model S for \$5,897.

June 20, 1981 — The Red Lion restaurant at Routes 7 and 35 is offering "dinner club membership." For \$40 a year, a person may dine 12 times, accompanied by one guest, and each time, one of the two dinners will be served without charge.

June 23, 1981 — Town Meeting Moderator Steffi Jones threatens to have Ridgefielder John Longden thrown out of Tuesday's town meeting on the budget if he doesn't stop talking about a question he raised about tax bills. The meeting finally approves the town budget, ending months of often acrimonious debate that had included a referendum. Longden heads a group called The Mill Rate Watchers.

June 25, 1981 — The Food Chandler, a European-style bakery and gourmet food store, opens at Ridgefield Commerce Park, 90 Danbury Road.

June 29, 1981 — Three women and one man are now seeking the job of first selectman as Democratic selectman Lillian Moorhead announces she will run for the top job, joining a field that includes Republicans Elizabeth Leonard, Sue Manning and Walter Gengarelly.

July 1, 1981 — A mass is celebrated on the lawn of St. Elizabeth Seton Church on Ridgebury Road, marking the 200th anniversary of what was probably the first Catholic mass ever said here. That would have occurred Sunday, July 1, 1781, when French troops under Rochambeau encamped in Ridgebury, on their way from Rhode Island to Yorktown, Va. and the final battle of the Revolutionary War.

July 1, 1981 — The Rev. Aaron Manderbach receives the Rotary Club Citizen of the Year Award, even though he is no longer a Ridgefielder. Dr. Manderbach, rector of St. Stephen's for 30 years, had retired here and moved upstate nine months earlier.

July 2, 1981 — Among the school staff who announce they are leaving are Robert Kolton of Silver Hill Road, director of special education who is moving to Lincoln Hall School for troubled boys; Janet White, librarian at Ridgebury school since 1967, retiring; Leslie Loomis, assistant principal at RHS, who is becoming high school principal in Manlius, N.Y.; and Eleanor Titis of Barrack Hill Road, Veterans Park teacher since 1966.

July 2, 1981 — Dr. Joseph Belsky of Stonecrest Road has been honored by Drew University for his work as medical chief of the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission in Hiroshima, Japan, from 1969 to 1972.

July 2, 1981 — Former teacher and school board chairman Mary Gelfman becomes a lawyer. “Some people have been lawyers for 40 years,” she says. “I just started and I’m 45 so I have a long way to go.”

July 2, 1981 — Bill Van Orman, RHS 1981, places sixth in the National High School Athletic Association tournament in Biloxi, Miss. and is named an All-American golfer.

July 6, 1981 — The Discovery, a gift shop, opens at 40 Ethan Allen Highway in Branchville.

July 6, 1981 — Two men are interrupted while burglarizing a Ridgefield home, one of a half dozen burglaries in the past week. The two men flee after collecting silver, jewelry, radios, a camera and other items in a pillow case — which they drop as they escape. In many house breaks, ransacking and even vandalism is being reported.

July 7, 1981 — Charles W. Schieding is elected the new president of the Ridgefield Savings Bank and Charles Coles Jr. moves from president to chairman of the board and CEO.

July 8, 1981 — The former Allans’ Men’s Store at 440 Main Street is being converted to a mini-mall of stores. Already, Chief Catoonah Tobacconist and PDQ Printing have moved in, and five more shops plan to open later this month.

July 9, 1981 — With temperatures reaching 100 degrees, already some 1,400 people a day have been visiting Martin Park.

July 12, 1981 — To celebrate its completion, Girolmetti Court, on the site of an old ice house and then a bowling alley, has a one-day Summertime Festival. The shopping center has 12 stores and 12 apartments, reports John Girolmetti. Stores include Essy of Veracruz, B&D Guns, Barnes Wallpaper, The Conversation Piece (antiques), Curtiss and Crandon real estate, The Paperback Trader, Durant’s Party Store, The Locker Room, The Age of Video, Christian’s Hair style, and the Coffee Factory. Still in operation is the family’s popular restaurant, The Old Ice House and the RidgeBowl bowling alley. [The

center at 7-19 Danbury Road is now called Girolametti Court, using an older version of the family name.]

July 15, 1981 – The Planning and Zoning Commission takes the Zoning Board of Appeals to court over a variance that would allow apartments at Main and Gilbert Streets. Many are not pleased that one town agency is suing another.

July 19, 1981 — The Rev. Sarah Seivard becomes only the second woman to serve as a minister at the First Congregational Church during its 289 years. She is named the new assistant minister.

July 21, 1981 — Emirill, “fine gifts, accessories and furnishings from the Orient,” opens at the 440 Main Street mini-mall where once Allans’ Men’s Store was.

July 23, 1981 — Pants And, a store that has operated at Copps Hill Plaza since soon after the shopping center opened in 1972, reports it is closing and is offering up to 75% off on such famous brands as Levi, Lee, Sergio Valente, Jordache, Blaze, Campus, Dee Cee, French Connection, and Huk-A-Poo.

July 28, 1981 – The Good Government Party, born in 1963 to support the schools, officially dies. In its heyday, it has 75 members and collects as many as 1,295 votes for one of its candidates. But none ever wins and the party has been inactive for 15 years. By 1981 only 25 registered members exist.

July 29, 1981 — Elizabeth Leonard wins the GOP caucus to become Republican candidate for first selectman, beating challenger Sue Manning, 455-278. But there’s talk of a primary.

July 31, 1981 — Ann Stephens, a women’s clothing store at Copps Hill Plaza, closes its doors. The shop was opened in 1972 by a then 26-year-old Stephen Zemo, who later becomes a longtime town selectman and a major commercial developer; his brother Don, 28, had opened Zemo’s Men’s Store also in 1972.

Aug. 6, 1981 — A Town Meeting votes 204 to 145 to lease the closed Barlow Mountain School to Boehringer Ingelheim, the pharmaceutical company, which would use it for office space. However, the plan still faces the Planning and Zoning Commission where opposition to a business use in a residential zone is expected to be fierce.

Aug. 8, 1981 — At the Nutmeg Festival today, Chris Santini comes closest to guessing the number of bouillon cubes in a five-gallon jar, winning a hand-made quilt. With the help of his companion, Siobhan McCleery, Santini estimates 4,900, and there are 4,923 cubes in the jar.

Aug. 11, 1981 — At a Planning and Zoning Commission hearing, Dr. Peter Yanity proposes condominiums for his Main Street property. The idea sparks many debates, but no condos. However, three decades later, condos are approved for The Elms Inn property across the street.

Aug. 12, 1981 — Gypsy moth caterpillars have defoliated 1.5 million acres of woodland in Connecticut, four times the amount of 1980, says a state entomologist. But he adds that based on egg case counts, 1982 shouldn't be as bad. "As expected the gypsy moth population grew so large that it may have exhausted itself through starvation, disease, and the growth of predators happy with this unlimited food supply," writes Press reporter Tom Moran (who is now editorial page editor of The Newark Star Ledger and frequently heard on WNYC, the NPR radio station in New York).

Aug. 13, 1981 — It's not just a fish story. On his 25th anniversary fly fishing trip with his dad, Kevin Kerrigan catches a 23-pound salmon in the Gaspé Bay of Quebec. "It took almost an hour and 15 minutes to pull that one in," Kevin says. But it was dad Robert who took the prize: A 29-pound salmon.

Aug. 14, 1981 — Paul Stroili and Kristin Power star in West Side Story, the student summer production of the Ridgefield Workshop for the Performing Arts.

Aug. 18, 1981 — A 61-unit condominium complex is proposed for the Sullivan family land on Prospect Ridge by a Westport developer named Edward Cadoux. The plan eventually becomes Quail Ridge

Aug. 18, 1981 — John M. Lelak of Old Sib Road, who had operated a popular delicatessen at the Grand Union shopping center, dies at the age of 64. Lelak, who sold his business to Irving Gold, had been a longtime supporter of youth sports, including many Little League teams.

Aug. 20, 1981 — New businesses that have opened at 440 Main Street, the mini-mall where Allans' Men's Store had been, are Emirill, a shop specializing in Oriental gifts; G. Daniels, fine men's and boys' clothing; and Accessories Ltd., with handbags, belts, jewelry, and such.

Aug. 23, 1981 — The West Lane Schoolhouse has an open house with a party for both the public and for former students, including Aldo Bacchioni, Milton Haight, William Ross, Helen and Catherine Tobin, and Mrs. Joseph Pinchbeck.

Aug. 24, 1981 — Bulldozers begin tearing down the former home and office of Dr. James M. Sheehan to make way for a parking lot at the expanding Ridgefield Library. The

Sheehans had sold the home in 1978 to the library which offered it free of charge to anyone who would haul it away. There were no takers.

Aug. 22, 1981 — The Dress Barn opens at Copps Hill Plaza. Sister stores are in Danbury and Wilton.

Aug. 23, 1981 — Ridgefield native Clinton D. Reynolds, a mailman who began carrying the mail in town on horseback in 1924, dies at the age of 86. Reynolds, who retired in 1956, had for his first 28 years a mail route that took him through Branchville, Georgetown, Weston, Wilton, and part of Redding. His last route included West Mountain, Waccabuc and South Salem, N.Y., Silver Spring and St. Johns Roads, and Wilton Road West. He had figured in his 32 years of carrying mail, he wore out 10 vehicles.

Aug. 25, 1981 — The Planning and Zoning Commission hears expansion plans from the St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary which owns the former Manresa mansion on Tackora Trail. The conservative Catholic order wants a new dormitory wing, more classrooms, and a chapel on its campus. Some 54 new private rooms would be created. No traffic study is included in the plans since seminary students aren't allowed to have cars and only about 10 vehicles are expected on Sundays for "the faithful that attend Latin mass."

Aug. 27, 1981 — Barbara McCarthy, the new owner of the restaurant/bar at Prospect Street and Sunset Lane, has filed applications to reopen what had been called Perp's Cafe under the new name of The Corner Pub.

Aug. 28, 1981 — "Leave work early tomorrow!" urges an ad from Radio Shack. "Let a professional TRS-80 desktop computer save you hours of work." The computer, with 48K RAM and "360K disk storage," costs \$2,495 (nearly \$7,000 in 2019 dollars). Printer not included.

Aug 28, 1981 — Chuck Barnell says he's found a way to "avoid the hassle of getting to the movie theater, getting a baby-sitter, and paying high prices." You can shop at his new Home Video Outlet on Danbury Road, near Friendly Ice Cream, where he sells video cassette recorders from \$700 to \$1,300 that hook into any TV. And for just \$5 a night, you can rent a "first-run movie, only six month after it hits the box office." \$700 to \$1,300 then is \$1,950 to \$3,600 in today's dollars. And five bucks then is \$14 today. Home Video Outlet was still around 10 years later so there must have been a lot of people seeking to "avoid the hassle" — at any price.

Aug. 30, 1981 — The Crystals, whose rock hits include "He's A Rebel" and "Da Doo Ron Ron," join singer Freddy Cannon in two rock concerts at Ridgefield High School, benefiting the Ridgefield Firefighters Association.

Sept. 1, 1981 — The Ridgefield Baptist Church submits plans to the Planning and Zoning Commission for a 17,000-square-foot church building on Branchville Road, opposite Nod Road.

Sept. 2, 1981 — Robert Cox, chairman of the RHS English Department, is named director of adult education. Cox has been at RHS since 1975.

Sept. 3, 1981 — Boots, the fire department's Dalmation, dies. She had inoperable cancer. Boots had 26 puppies in two litters in her younger years, and all 26 were given away to children in town.

Sept. 3, 1981 — Emilio Tailoring on Danbury Road is promoting its custom suits, saying "If you want a better British suit, come to an Italian."

Sept. 7, 1981 — The Journal de Geneva reports that Ridgefield baritone Philip van Lidth de Jeude has won a bronze medal in the 1981 International Voice Competition for Opera in Geneva, Switzerland.

Sept. 7, 1981 — Nine of the 13 new teachers and librarians hired by the schools this year are town residents. They are Priscilla Anselmo, Dorothy Baier, Betty Gray Brown, Phoebe B. Krebs, Paula McCarthy, Barbara McElroy, Monica McMorran, Anne Murphy, and Dr. George Noyes.

Sept. 8, 1981 — By a two-to-one margin, a Republican primary picks State Rep. Elizabeth Leonard to run for first selectman over P&Z Chair Sue Manning.

Sept. 9, 1981 — A total of 4,555 students show up on the first day of school, about 70 more than expected, but still 274 fewer than were in the schools in June. The continuing decline in enrollment is prompting talk of closing another elementary school; Barlow Mountain had closed in June 1979, only eight years after it opened.

Sept. 9, 1981 — By a 1,300-to-1,000 vote, a referendum rejects the selectmen's effort to exempt town property from zoning. Exemption would have allowed Boehringer Ingelheim to lease the former Barlow Mountain School as a commercial use in a residential zone. Boehringer gives up on using Barlow and at least two other towns start wooing the company to set up offices there.

Sept. 11, 1981 — Camp Fire — which had been called Camp Fire Girls before boys were admitted — has sign-ups. Michael Graham's puppets are on hand for entertainment. Local leaders include Mrs. Douglas Main and Mrs. William Relsen.

Sept. 11, 1981 — “Strictly Ridgefield,” an art show at the Guild of Artists barn, includes a rendering of retiring first selectman Louis J. Fossi, done by his RHS classmate, Jack Barrows, a longtime professional cartoonist, who lives in Danbury.

Sept. 12, 1981 — The U.S. Army Field Band and Soldiers Chorus gives a free concert at Ridgefield High School, thanks for the Kiwanis Club.

Sept. 12, 1981 — The Lions Club has its 30th annual Antique Car Show at Veterans Park field.

Sept. 15, 1981 — The Computer Store, offering sales and service of PC’s and software, opens at Girometti Court, 19 Danbury Road. Few even know what a PC is.

Sept 17, 1981 — After 22 years as a Ridgefield police officer, Lt. John Hogan, head of the detective bureau, retires and soon moves to Florida.

Sept. 18, 1981 — On the bus trip to a football game, several members of the high school band get drunk. The band’s appearance is cancelled, three students are suspended and kicked out of the band, and Principal James Spafford asks that others involved in the incident come forward. “I know it sounds idealistic,” he says, “but I expect the people who were drinking to own up to what they did. And I know that’s a heck of a challenge.”

Sept. 19, 1981 — Hundreds attend the popular annual Field Day of the Italian-American Club on Prospect Street — another decades-long tradition, like the Firemen’s Ball and Antique Car Show, that has disappeared.

Sept 21, 1981 — A contingent of parents shows up at the school board meeting to complain about “overcrowding” in the first grade at Ridgebury School. The two classes there have 22 pupils each; the school system recommendation is at maximum of 20.

Sept. 24, 1981 — Village Pontiac/Cadillac, formerly Kellogg-Theiss and earlier Conklin Motors, really wants to sell you a new car. “We make house calls,” says its advertisement, offering to bring the car of your choice to your home for a test drive.

Sept. 25, 1981 — School officials learn they have no insurance covering the operations of Ridgefield High School’s auto shop, labeled by educators as the “power mechanics lab,” where students learn how to service and repair cars. “This activity must stop forthwith,” says town attorney Richard J. Fricke, “or the Town of Ridgefield will be subjected to an exposure which has never been anticipated nor provided for.” Shop teacher Dave Lewis says: “My program is going to be reduced to the level of any other shop. I thought Ridgefield wanted better.”

Sept. 26, 1981 — St. Mary's Church publishes a history of its parish, marking its centennial year. The book goes on sale today at the annual parish fair today. Also marking its centennial year is Sacred Heart Church in Georgetown.

Sept. 26, 1981 — The Tiger football squad wins its second straight game, beating arch-rival Wilton, 15-7, behind the quarterbacking of Craig Saltzgaber, who led all runners with 67 yards

Sept. 29, 1981 — Dr. David Skarz from Marblehead, Mass., is named the first "director of middle school education" and will lead a study of whether the East Ridge Junior High, now a seventh and eighth grade school, should be a middle school, serving sixth through eighth grades. The end result is "yes" and Sklarz becomes the school's first principal. To pay for the new post, Superintendent Elliott Landon eliminates assistant principal jobs at the high school and junior high.

Oct. 1, 1981 — An oil glut is keeping down the prices of home heating oil. Last winter oil was going for as much as \$1.32 a gallon, but this summer has been down to \$1.20. Still, people are complaining.

Oct. 3, 1981 — The Great Danbury State Fair opens for its last edition. After it has its final day Oct. 12, the fairgrounds will be bulldozed and rebuilt into the Danbury Fair Mall.

Oct. 3, 1981 — Warner H. Keeler — the K of the longtime KEB gas station (now Ridgefield Mobil) — dies at the age of 87. With Charles Elliott and Francis Brown, he started the station in 1932, despite the Depression. When Mobil took over in 1946, he moved to Vermont, then Florida. He had also been the first paid driver for the New Canaan Fire Department.

Oct. 3, 1981 — The Tiger soccer team beats Stamford Catholic for its fourth straight win behind the playing of Sandro Stefanelli, Kurt Onalfo, Harry Hughes, and others.

Oct. 8, 1981 — The Police Commission names Keith Keating "Police Officer of the Year," gives him a plaque, a ribbon and a \$300 savings bond. Sgt. Robert Brunelle is promoted to lieutenant and placed in charge of the Detective Bureau.

Oct. 11, 1981 — On the 200th anniversary of the encampment of the French General Rochambeau's troops in Ridgebury during the Revolutionary War, 1,000 militiamen re-enact the event with much hoop-la.

Oct. 12, 1981 — An exhibit of selections from the Ridgefield glass-negative photographs of Joseph Hartmann opens at St. Mary's Clubhouse, part of the Ridgefield Preservation



Trust's "Catoonah 260" celebration. It marks the 260th birthday of the establishment of Catoonah Street, where the Hartmanns once lived.

Oct. 14-15, 1981 — On these two days, jeweler Norman Craig gives half his store's profits to the Tiger football team to outfit them with parkas to wear while on the bench — costing a total of \$1,900 for the team.

Oct. 16, 1981 — In a restructuring move, Robert J. Morganti becomes president of Morganti Inc., the big construction company in town, replacing his brother, Paul J. Morganti, who becomes chairman of the board. The company, one of the 400 top construction companies in the nation, dates back to 1920 when it was started by Robert and John's dad, John.

Oct. 18, 1981 — Navio Peter Carboni of West Lane, longtime manager of the A&P Liquor Store who later worked at Hyde's, both on Main Street, dies at the age of 74.

Oct. 18, 1981 — The Rev. Fred Bender is formally installed as rector of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church.

Oct. 20, 1981 — Dr. Peter Yanity asks the Zoning Board of Appeals for zoning exceptions that would allow 30 condominiums on his four-acre homestead on northern Main Street. The board eventually rejects the request, saying Dr. Yanity showed no "hardship" worthy of a zoning exception.

Oct. 22, 1981 — In the 1970s, references to drugs, alcohol, and sex as well as vulgarities had slipped into the RHS yearbooks, prompting a school board ban on abbreviations and innuendoes. Now, pressured by students, the board relaxes the ban. Three teacher advisers to the high school yearbook quit in protest.

Oct. 23, 1981 — Familiar with the issues and fresh from meeting the candidates, 468 RHS students pick Republican Liz Leonard over Democrat Lillian Moorhead, 347-104, for first selectman in the annual mock election, sponsored by the League of Women Voters. While students tend to be more liberal and vote for Democrats, says Dirk Bollenback, chairman of the social studies department, "the most influential factor seems to be the candidate's personality."

Oct 24, 1981 — The Tigers give Homecoming fans a victory over Roger Ludlowe. Star performer was Doug Campbell who scored two touchdowns and returned the ball a total of 140 yards. [We'd tell you the score, except that the detailed account of the game in The Press never reveals the final score, nor could we calculate it from the descriptions.]

Oct. 29, 1981 — Atheneum publishes the autobiography of the Rev. John Verdery of 620 Ridgebury Road, called "Partial Recall, The Afterthoughts of A Schoolmaster." Verdery

was headmaster of Wooster School in Danbury from 1943 to 1976. When he started he was 25 years old and the youngest headmaster in America. Kirkus calls the book “chatty, engaging...” but avoiding “the pitfalls of this Mr. Chipsian genre: whimsy, sentimentality, twiddling with the Old School Tie.”

Oct. 29, 1981 — Another new book by a Ridgefielder is a bit lighter: “Oh, Gus,” a collection of cartoons from Boys’ Life magazine by Orlando Busino already has 100,000 copies ordered. Busino, named Best Magazine Cartoonist of the Year three times, has been drawing Gus for the Boy Scout publication since 1970.

Nov. 1, 1981 — The cost of a first-class postage stamp rises to 20 cents today, reports Postmaster Richard E. Venus. Coincidentally, Venus announces he is retiring after 20 years as postmaster and becoming the last Ridgefield postmaster to live in Ridgefield — every postmaster before him back to 1793 had lived in town and every one since have lived elsewhere.

Nov. 1, 1981 — The RHS Debate Team wins first place among 14 schools in its first tournament of the season.

Nov. 3, 1981 – Former State Rep. Elizabeth Leonard is elected first selectman, the first woman to hold that office since the town was founded in 1708. However, it’s not exactly a victory of women over men – her opponent is Selectman Lillian Moorhead. The score: Leonard, 3,895; Moorhead, 2,061. However, Moorhead outpolls fellow Democrat Robert Swick to retain a seat on the Board of Selectmen. The election is a sweep for Republicans after Democrats had held many major offices — including first selectman — for eight years.

Nov. 3, 1981 – Elizabeth Rolle, one of only 50 women rabbis in the world, becomes spiritual leader of Temple Shearith Israel on Peaceable Street.

Nov. 5, 1981 — Mike Pontello celebrates his 25th anniversary as a barber on Main Street.

Nov. 5, 1981 — Ridgefield Savings Bank is offering certificates of deposit, \$500 minimum for one year, at 10.3% interest.

Nov. 9, 1981 — “There is no question in my mind that computers are the tools that are going to make the world run one day — soon,” says school board member Dexter Street as he and six other members vote for a plan to bring the Ridgefield schools into the “computer age.” By 1983-84, the schools would have 67 “microcomputers,” more than 20 of them at the high school. The schools have been experimenting with computers made by Radio Shack, Apple and Atari.

Nov. 12, 1981 — Democrat Norman Craig announces he will run for state representative to fill the term of Republican Elizabeth Leonard, who resigns after being elected first selectman. The GOP names Martha Rothman, a member of the Republican Town Committee, to run for the vacancy. The special election will be Jan. 6.

Nov. 12, 1981 — Pamby Motors says the new 1982 Renault Le Car can get 40 miles per gallon on the highway.

Nov. 14, 1981 — Bedient's Home and Garden Center has live demonstrations of the new Amana Radaranger radar ovens, ranging in price from \$375 to \$649 (or, in today's dollars, \$1,045 to \$1,813).

Nov. 16, 1981 — Otto H. Jespersen, a native of Denmark who'd been active in Ridgefield, dies at 80. In his youth he had served in the King's Guard in Denmark, and came here in 1936 to work for Outpost Nurseries. He'd been president of the Boys' Club, a member of the Parks and Recreation Commission and Board of Tax Review for many years, and served on the Democratic Town Committee for 20 years, 10 of them as chairman. He was Rotary Citizen of the Year in 1969. He lived on a road named in part for him, Jeffro Drive (Ro was his friend and coworker named Rodier.)

Nov. 18, 1981 — With the departure of the Fossi administration, town attorney Richard J. Fricke resigns and is replaced by Herbert Rosenberg. Fricke has been the town's lawyer for more than eight years.

Nov. 21, 1981 — Chawla's of Ridgefield, formerly Allans' Mens Store, opens at 440 Main Street, with clothing for "Ridgefield's boys and young men, sizes 8-20." The store's slogan is "Known by the Companies We Keep" and its brands include Calvin, Ramar, Izod, Robert Bruce, Boast, Mighty Mac, Rifles, Pacific Trail and Bruxton.

Nov. 22, 1981 — Ridgefield's 14-Year-Olds soccer team, coached by Al Diniz, wins a state cup, beating Manchester 4-1. The team includes Rich Nicholas, Doug Bronson, Cliff Onalfo, Danny Dardenne, Brian Cuddebach, Peter Coffin, Brad Pelligrinelli, Matt Cole, Bruce Rychlik, Peter Dolen, Jon Pacquin, Scott Roberti, and Mark Edwards.

Nov. 23, 1981 — Jon Elkow, a member of the school board for 3½ years, is elected chairman, replacing William Remick who did not seek re-election to the board. Though the majority of board members is Republican, Elkow is a Democrat.

Nov. 24, 1981 — Retain Residential Ridgefield, a group opposed to the Planning and Zoning Commission rezoning of 36 acres on Route 7 opposite Stonehenge Estates for commercial development, sues the commission after it approves the commercial rezoning. The group, represented by attorney Samuel Chambliss, consists mostly of

Stonehenge Estates residents who oppose Victor Christ-Janer's plan to put a corporate office building on the one-time mink farm.

Nov. 26, 1981 — Ridgefield roasts not turkey but Danbury in the traditional Thanksgiving Day high school football game, with the Tigers beating the old rival 33-0. Press Reporter Peter Yanity called it "a one-sided onslaught."

Nov. 30, 1981 – The A&P supermarket has closed its doors, but the liquor store remains. The town now has only three supermarkets: Grand Union, Grand Central and Stop & Shop.

Dec. 1, 1981 — John Katz, a member of the Planning and Zoning Commission since 1978, is elected chairman of the commission, defeating fellow Republican David Huntoon, 6-3. [Katz is still a member in 2019.]

Dec. 1, 1981 — The Lotus Restaurant opens in Ridgefield Commerce Park on Danbury Road and people are waiting an hour or more for a table. "This area needed something different," said owner Geoffrey Liu. "We make everything. Everything is fresh."

Dec. 2, 1981 – The selectmen name Francis P. Moylan, a 62-year-old Ridgefield native, the town's first full-time fire marshal. Moylan been a part-timer at that job for 26 years. A member of the volunteer fire department since 1940, he served as its chief from 1954 to 1956.

Dec. 3, 1981 — Danny Mahoney, an unassuming 28-year-old North Street resident, earns a bit of local fame as he bowls a perfect 300 game, the first in the 18-year history of Ridge Bowl on Danbury Road.

Dec. 5, 1981 — Lt. Gov. Joseph Fauliso speaks at the opening of the campaign headquarters of Norman Craig, who is running against Martha Rothman to fill Liz Leonard's seat as state representative. The headquarters are at 58 Danbury Road in the "Cumberland Farms Complex" and as a "special holiday treat," Santa will pay a visit for the kiddies.

Dec. 7, 1981 — Newsweek magazine publishes a huge cover story on the effects of the Vietnam War on a company of American soldiers. One of the company members is Skip Sommer of Ridgefield, who called the report "right on target," especially in its descriptions of lack of government help for veterans. Sommer, who owns a bike shop here, says, "The government has forgotten Vietnam. The burden of remembering has been placed on the men who fought."

Dec. 10, 1981 — Tiger football defensive end Kevin Kane is the only area representative on the New Haven Register's All-State first team. Craig Saltzgaber, Mike Bullock and

Doug Campbell are honorable mentions. Kane made 130 tackles (50 more than the previous year) and 18 sacks, and “was so relentless that if he missed a ball carrier the first time around, he would catch him downfield or on the opposite side of the field,” The Press says.

Dec. 15, 1981 — Anthony Czyn applies to the Planning and Zoning Commission for a seven-lot subdivision on Golf Lane, land that was from the 1890s till the early 30s part of a golf course. Running through the property is a railroad bed that was built in the 1860s for a train line that would have connected Titicus with New York City. Czyn uses part of the bed for an accessway.

Dec. 17, 1981 — Schlumberger confirms it plans a 30,000 square foot addition to its Schlumberger-Doll Research Center off Sunset Lane and Old Quarry Road. It will include 37 offices for 50 new employees.

Dec. 20, 1981 — Robert and Pam Kraus of Main Street have teamed up to produce a new children’s book, *See the Christmas Lights*. Robert, who has drawn many children’s books, did only the words this time and let his wife Pam do the illustrations — it’s her first book. *See the Christmas Lights* also offers something unusual: Pam’s pictures glow in the dark.

Dec. 23, 1981 — “We’re just trying to say thank you to people,” says Allan Gerdau. “I’m 82, and a lot of people have done a lot of nice things for me during my life.” His way of saying thanks? Decorating his 85-foot spruce along Route 7 in Branchville with 1,500 lights for Christmas season. Gerdau, who’d been lighting the landmark tree for years, owns the Tontine Emporium antiques shop. [Alas, the building — and tree — were removed years ago to make way for a shopping plaza.]

## **1982**

1982 – The will of Johanna Laszig creates the Laszig Fund to aid Ridgefield’s elderly.

January 1982 – Republican Martha Rothman narrowly defeats Norman Craig, 1,707 to 1,588, in a special election for state representative after Elizabeth Leonard resigns in November 1981 to be first selectman.

Winter 1982 – Walter Gengarelly announces he’ll run for governor on the Libertarian Party ticket. He winds up getting 130 votes (of 7,486 voting) in Ridgefield, and collects 7,942 in the state, far less than 1% of the turnout.

February 1982 – School administrators win a 31% raise over three years. The high school principal’s salary would go from \$39,000 to \$51,000.

February 1982 – One night that month, a Copps Hill Shell worker is robbed of its night deposits. Gregory Winsauer, 19, working at nearby Fred's Exxon, spots the robber, gives chase, and catches him in woods off Copps Hill Road, wrestling him to the ground until police show up. In August, he is given the police department's first Citizen's Valor Award.

February 1982 – The New England Institute for Medical Research on Grove Street files for bankruptcy. The institute later closes, its buildings catch fire and burn, and the place is razed for office condominiums.

March 1982 – Counts of egg clusters on trees confirm that the Gypsy Moth caterpillar, which defoliated thousands of trees for the past few springs, will not return in record numbers. They tended to have population explosions every eight to 10 years.

March 18, 1982 – More than 50 children are sent to three hospitals after a car hits black ice, strikes a school bus, which rolls down an embankment on Peaceable Street. No one is seriously injured, but the crash prompts a study of road sanding procedures.

March 1982 – Parents submit petitions with 700 signatures, asking that any sex education courses proposed be brought to a referendum.

April 1982 – Against the order of the Pope, traditionalist French Bishop Marcel Lefebvre comes to St. Thomas Aquinas Seminar on Tackora Trail to ordain seminarians. Six years later he is excommunicated.

Spring 1982 – A development corporation owned by the Rockefeller family options 58 acres in Ridgebury for development. The sale never goes through.

Spring 1982 – Genoa Deli opens on Danbury Road, in the old Wayside Market location.

Spring 1982 – A 26-member study panel recommends converting the seventh and eighth grade East Ridge Junior High School into a middle school of grades six through eight.

May 31, 1982 – Rain cancels the Memorial Day parade, and the selectmen ask coordinators to have one July 4.

June 1982 – In heavy rains, 175 dealers for the Community Center Flea Market arrive at the traditional location, Veterans Park field, but their wheels do thousands of dollars in damage to water-softened playing fields. The Parks and Recreation Commission subsequently bans use of the fields for vehicular events, including the long-running Lions antique car shows each September.

Summer 1982 – James Spafford resigns after four years as high school principal.

July 4, 1982 – The town has its first – and only – “Heritage Day,” with the Connecticut Fifth giving military displays, a Dixieland jazz band at the community center, and special shows at the Keeler Tavern.

July 1982 – A year after a car smashes it, Dr. Robert Mead fixes the Cass Gilbert Fountain, which is replaced on its Main Street and West Lane island.

August 1982 – A 33-year-old Air Force veteran kills both his parents with a shotgun. He flees, is later captured in California, convicted and sent to prison.

August 1982 – Prompted by incidents of late-night revelry, a Town Meeting approves an ordinance banning drinking in public without a permit. The 65-24 vote is dominated by senior citizens.

October 1982 – Rick and Donna Addressi buy the Scott Block, in which their Main Street jewelry store has been located since 1966.

Nov. 2, 1982 – Republican Martha Rothman beats Democrat Linda Bohacek for state representative by what is called a record margin: Rothman gets 71% of the vote.

Nov. 12, 1982 – Safe Rides, which offers drives home to kids who are intoxicated or want to avoid being with drinkers, launches in Ridgefield. A year later, it has provided 626 rides with the help of 3,500 volunteer hours.

November and December 1982 – Police scour the town for a white male in his 20s who stabbed a boy and a girl, each 14, in separate incidents at Mimosa. The man is never caught.

Fall 1982 – The Ridgefield Family Y, fearing the high price of developing its Ivy Hill Road site, says it wants to buy the closed Barlow Mountain School and build a pool there.

Fall 1982 – As school officials decide whether to close Branchville or Veterans Park Schools, First Selectman Elizabeth Leonard proposes turning the latter into a town and school office building.

December 1982 – The Ridgefield Boys Club offers to pay the town \$39,200 for the 4.9 acres it leases on Governor Street. The offer answers a court decision that the town’s \$1-a-year lease to the all-male club is unconstitutional government support of a discriminatory organization.

## 1983

1983 – The Board of Selectmen is increased from three to five members to give it greater representation. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, it had been a five-member board.

January 1983 – WREF's 180-foot transmitting tower is erected at the edge of the old town dump.

February 1983 – More than 700 people pack a town meeting to approve the sale of Barlow Mountain School to the Ridgefield Family Y for \$625,000.

February 1983 – Because of enrollment declines, the school board votes 7-1 to close Branchville School.

Feb. 11, 1983 – In only 12 hours, nearly two feet of snow falls on town, one of the fastest accumulations on record.

March 1983 – The Connecticut Public Expenditure Council reports that Ridgefield is the 12<sup>th</sup> richest town in the state in personal income.

An anonymous donor says that he or she will give \$1 million toward the expansion of the Ridgefield Library, starting a process that leads a renovation and addition that almost doubles the size of the building.

June 1983 – A 23-year-old Ridgefielder is arrested after he grabs a cement-based handicapped parking sign and begins smashing a car illegally parking in a handicapped spot at Copps Hill Plaza. Police describe the damage as "extensive."

June 11, 1983 – In the worst vehicular accident in the town's history, four people die when their light plane crashes and burns off Mopus Bridge Road just after taking off from Danbury Airport. The FAA two years later rules the crash was caused by a faulty fuel cap the pilot was aware of.

June 1983 – Forty teachers protest after the school board allows four students who had flunked English to participate in graduation.

June 13, 1983 – On commencement night, a hit-and-run driver kills Christopher Ely, 17, outside a North Salem Road graduation party. An 18-year-old classmate is later arrested and convicted. He subsequently commits suicide.

June 23, 1983 – A town meeting votes to spend \$600,000 to create three new athletic fields and renovate many others.



July 1983 – A federal judge rules that the town cannot give land to the Boys' Club for a swimming pool unless the club opens its doors equally to girls. The club refuses and the land deal gift falls through. The judge later rules that the \$1-a-year lease for the clubhouse site is also illegal, and the club agrees later that year to pay the town \$59,000 for the land.

Summer 1983 – Ken Carvell, named the town's first appointed assessor in 1975, leaves to take a job in Westport.

August 1983 – The U.S. Postal Service says that it'll ignore the Planning and Zoning Commission's rejection of its permit for a new post office on Catoonah Street and will build anyway.

September 1983 – A study committee recommends creating a historic district in Ridgebury.

Fall 1983 – First Selectman Elizabeth Leonard, who once opposed the Ballard Green senior housing, proposes adding \$1.5 million more housing for the elderly.

Fall 1983 – Two tokens replace eight quarters as admission to the trash transfer station.

Nov. 8, 1983 – Elizabeth Leonard beats Mike Venus, 4,243 to 1,801, for first selectman, but Mr. Venus ekes out a seat on the board, beating Robert Swick who polled 1,798, three fewer votes.

November 1983 – CVS, a big drug chain, announces that it will move into the old A&P supermarket on Danbury Road.

November 1983 – Police report 16 accidents involved cars crashing into deer.

December 1983 – Group W reported that it was providing cable TV service to 70 of the 200 miles of road in town.

## **1984**

1984 – A total of 561 houses, worth \$125 million, are sold this year. Just two years earlier, only 330 houses sold.

1984 – The state Department of Education calls Ridgefield's junior and senior high schools among the best in the state, based on federal criteria.

1984 – With a \$1-million anonymous donor's gift and another \$500,000, the Ridgefield Library undertakes a major expansion during the year. After closing for the final month work, the library reopens just after Christmas more than double its previous size.

March 1984 – School Superintendent Elliott Landon calls the leaking high school roof “a disaster.”

March 1984 – Affected property owners reject a new historic district along upper Ridgebury Road.

March 1984 – Since 1982, developer Peter Friedman has been purchasing corporate-zoned land in upper Ridgebury. Now, more than 200 acres in hand, he reports that “it's my grave desire to have a Rolls Royce project there. What is right for Ridgefield is a Chesebrough-Pond's, an American Can, an IBM and not Union Carbide. I don't want to build a city.”

March 1984 – In a presidential primary, Ridgefield Democrats join the state in supporting Gary Hart (62%) over Walter Mondale (26%) or the Rev. Jesse Jackson (6.5%).

Spring 1984 – The town settles a lawsuit, brought by Attorney William Laviano on behalf of a man arrested for drinking in public. Mr. Laviano claims the town's anti-public-drinking ordinance is unclear, unfairly enforced, and violates civil rights. The town abandons the law and passes a clearer version that still stands.

Spring 1984 – All town vehicles that sport front plates saying “Ridgefield Home of Champions” after Ridgefield High football, boys and girls soccer, hockey, and girls cross country teams all win state championships that school year.

April 1984 – Conductor Maxim Shostakovich, who recently fled Russia and is the son of composer Dmitri Shostakovich, leads the Ridgefield Orchestra in a concert. Maxim's son, Dmitri, is pianist for his grandfather's Second Piano Concerto. Both live in Ridgefield.

Spring 1984 – Charles Szentkuti proposes a two-story office condominium, called the Executive Pavilion, at the old New England Institute site on Grove Street. Zoners approve.

Spring 1984 – Lack of members prompts the Women's Town Club to fold after 28 years. “They'd rather earn \$10 or \$15 in an afternoon than sit in a meeting all afternoon,” said the last president, Elaine Knox. “I think we just got caught up in the times.”

June 1984 – In an unusual referendum, voters reject the school budget because it's too low. A higher budget later passes.

Sunday, June 24, 1984 – The first parent-sponsored, alcohol-free post-graduation party takes place. It is a year after a drunken graduate kills a classmate with a car at a graduation party at which alcohol was served. The party has taken place annually since.

June 1984 – Former school board member Barbara DePencier is named principal of Scotland School.

Summer 1984 – The Ridgefield Youth Orchestra travels to Europe and gives concerts on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

Aug. 1, 1984 – The trash transfer station switches from quarters to tokens.

August 1984 – After holding up a Wilton bank, a Bridgeport man robs the Ridgefield Savings Bank branch on Governor Street. Ridgefield police capture him a short while later. It's the fourth and last bank robbery of the century. All four cases are solved.

August 1984 – Rick and Donna Addressi buy the Gaeta block on Main Street.

Aug. 12, 1984 – Barbara (Mrs. John) Grasso of Ridgebury Road gives birth to Alyssa Brook, Joseph Anthony, and Scott Andrew.

Summer 1984 – The town undertakes a \$600,000 renovation of many athletic fields, including installation of underground irrigation. The project drags on into the fall, causing many game-scheduling headaches.

Summer 1984 – A \$1.5-million asbestos-removal project begins in the elementary schools. It, too, drags into the fall.

September 1984 – The selectmen approve \$5,000 to begin work on a Danbury Road bypass. The road opens 15 years later.

September 1984 – Big cement blocks barricade a ramp connecting Yankee Ridge shopping center with parking lots to the south. Yankee Ridge owners disliked it's being used as a shortcut. Despite much criticism of the move, the blocks are still there.

Fall 1984 – James Lapak, director of the Ridgefield Family Y, says membership has grown to 4,000 people. He expects another 2,000 once the pool is completed in 1985.

Nov. 6, 1984 – Republican John Rowland beats incumbent William Ratchford for Fifth District Congressman. Ronald Reagan takes the town, 8,500 to 3,200 for Walter Mondale.

November 1984 – The new Ridgefield Post Office opens.

Fall 1984 – Ridgefield's Center Historic District is placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Fall 1984 – Children's playing with matches leads to a smoky fire that takes hours to subdue at the old New England Institute. Part of the building is the old Ridgefield Golf Club, built in 1895 off Golf Lane, and moved to Grove Street in the 1930s to be a goat barn.

## **1985**

Jan. 4, 1985 – Willie Amons, 69, dies of carbon monoxide poisoning caused by a small fire started by a space heater he was using because the fuel tank for his town-owned house at 21 Gilbert Street was empty. The town had been paying for the oil.

Jan. 10, 1985 – Cardiologist Dr. Joseph Buchman says the town's ambulance service should be staffed by paramedics.

Jan. 10, 1985 – There are 138 computers in the town's six schools, and Superintendent Elliott Landon wants more.

Jan. 19, 1985 – A seven-year-old Ridgefielder is arrested on four counts in connection with two house burglaries on Eleven Levels Road. He is believed to be the youngest person ever arrested here.

January 1985 – A group of Ridgefielders is working on creating a local chapter of A Better Chance to bring gifted inner-city students to town for their high school education.

Jan. 22, 1985 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Paul B. Cocks dies after his Air Force transport goes down off the coast of Honduras. The pilot is a 1977 RHS graduate.

Jan. 30, 1985 – The grand totals \$503 million.

January 1985 – The fire department says its Catoonah Street headquarters are overcrowded, and First Selectman Elizabeth Leonard says the town should determine whether to build a new center station or a smaller satellite one.

February 1985 – The first townwide revaluation begins, led by Assessor Al Garzi.

February 1985 – Charles Szentkuti gets a \$5.3-million mortgage to build the 50,000-square-foot Executive Pavilion on Grove Street.

Feb. 13, 1985 – The RHS hockey team finishes the regular season 19-0.

February 1985 – Coyotes are being spotted in Ridgebury and cats are being reported missing.

Feb. 19, 1985 – Leo F. Carroll, former state police executive and longtime first selectman, dies at the age of 84.

Feb. 18, 1985 – School Superintendent Elliott Landon, the town's highest-paid employee, gets an 8.5% increase, for a \$68,250 salary for the coming year.

Feb. 22, 1985 – Four eighth graders are arrested at East Ridge Middle School for possession of marijuana.

Feb. 25, 1985 – The school board trims its budget request to \$18.6-million, up 11%.

March 6, 1985 – The Nolan brothers of Danbury propose building 24 units of affordable housing on Prospect Ridge, if the town will provide the land.

March 11, 1985 – WREF, Ridgefield's radio station, begins broadcasting.

March 14, 1985 – With an assessment of \$21.8 million, Boehringer Ingelheim is the town's top taxpayer, followed by Schlumberger, Perkin-Elmer, IBM, and CL&P.

March 1985 – Draining half the water out of Lake Mamanasco and new methods for disposing of sewage in and around the lake are recommended in a new environmental report on saving the troubled, weed-filled lake.

March 1985 – Another study, prepared for the Police Commission on improving traffic flow, recommends moving the fountain and installing traffic lights.

March 15, 1985 – Only Harry E. Hull and Thomas F. Shaughnessy attend the Last Men's Club dinner. All the other members are dead, except for Edward Unwin, unable to attend. The club started in 1938 with 30 members, all World War I veterans.

March 21, 1985 – Fire Marshal Francis P. Moylan is probing four suspicious fires in the past week, including a large, abandoned Ridgebury barn.

March 29, 1985 – Fumes from leaking gasoline tanks at the old Ridgefield Tire building on Bailey Avenue get into the sewer system and the basement of The Press. One building is damaged in an explosive flash fire. A third of the village is evacuated, and power is shut off for 11 hours.

April 1985 – The fire department receives its new \$350,000, 45-foot-long tower truck that can reach 100 feet in the air.

April 10, 1985 – The selectmen increase the cost of using the trash transfer station from \$2 to \$2.25 per token.

April 24, 1985 – Junior Achievement offers the town \$1.1 million to buy the closed Branchville School to use as a headquarters. A nursing home and private school are also interested.

May 1985 – 324 Ridgefield High School students gyrate as long as 12 hours at SuperDance, raising \$28,000 to fight muscular dystrophy. To celebrate, popular teacher Bob Cox shaves his beard.

May 18, 1985 – 85 volunteers install a tire playground at Scotland School.

May 29, 1985 – Ridgefield State Rep. Martha Rothman is among the authors of a bill, just passed by the state senate and on its way to the governor, requiring use of seat belts.

May 29, 1985 – Brain-storming for two and a half hours, some 90 concerned citizens and community leaders put together a ten-point agenda for action against teenage drug and alcohol abuse.

June 1985 – The Youth Service Bureau sets up an emergency hotline for teens with troubles.

June 1985 – The Parking Authority votes to recommend acquiring land to build a new parking lot in a grassy area off Governor Street, east of today's Balducci's.

June 1985 – Substitute teachers get a pay raise, from \$35 to \$40 a day.

June 1985 – John Girolmetti reports RidgeBowl, the town's only bowling alley, will close soon and its space will become offices and shops.

June 1, 1985 – Geno Torcellini retires after 40 years as manager of Silver Spring Country Club.

June 5, 1985 – The Parks and Recreation Commission says it will study a request from East Ridge Middle School student Cabe Chaplain to provide a skateboarding ramp in town, addressing the increasingly popular sport.

June 9, 1985 – More than 1,000 people walk up to five miles in a benefit raising \$32,000 for African relief.

June 18, 1985 – A man who had befriended a number of Ridgefield youngsters is arrested after a 13-year-old Ridgefield boy, who had spent the night in a motel with him, was taken to Danbury Hospital in a heroin-induced coma, suffering from lacerations and bruises.

June 23, 1985 – 400 seniors graduate from Ridgefield High School.

July 1985 – Dr. Clifford Heidinger opens a veterinary medicine practice at 614 Main Street.

July 4, 1985 – While Ridgefield has no fireworks, Keeler Tavern celebrates the state's 350<sup>th</sup> birthday with a party that includes old-fashioned military music. And the Democratic and Republican party leaders square off in a softball game at Veterans Park.

July 10, 1985 – Norman Craig, chairman of the Democratic Town Committee, quits, citing frustration over the “lack of activity” within the party. He rejoins the Republican party, where he was also once a town committee member.

July 26, 1985 – A leaking hose from a propane tanker causes an explosion that demolishes Galloway's Restaurant in the Grand Union shopping center, destroys three cars, damages 32 more, and blows out windows of many nearby businesses. Only three people are injured, and then only slightly. The driver of the truck is arrested two months later for violations of statutes on handling hazardous chemicals. The restaurant never reopens.

July 30, 1985 – The new \$1.6-million Route 7 sewer plant goes online.

August 1985 – Joseph Sweeney retires after 14 years as assistant school business manager and becomes a candidate for the Board of Education.

Aug. 2, 1985 – Msgr. James J. McLaughlin, pastor of St. Mary's Parish from 1956 to 1968, dies at 72.

Aug. 8, 1985 – What police Chief Thomas Rotunda describes as a “rash” of resignations continues as two more officers announce their departure. Pay scale and working conditions have “something to do with it,” he says.

Aug. 14, 1985 – A panel of experts recommends the town employ Norwalk Hospital to provide around-the-clock paramedics.

Aug 28, 1985 – East Ridge Middle School is closed after an industrial hygienist determines that areas where asbestos removal work is going on aren't properly sealed off.

The problem is fixed in time for the opening of school the next week, but causes much concern – and expense.

September 1985 – The sixth grade, which had been in the elementary schools, moves to the East Ridge Junior High, which is renamed East Ridge Middle School.

Sept. 11, 1985 – State Rep. Martha Rothman says she's retiring and moving to California, and recommends Selectman Josette Williams to run for her seat.

Sept. 11, 1985 – Med-I-Chair, a Danbury firm, is picked by the selectmen to work with Ridgefield firefighters to provide "interim" paramedic service.

Sept. 9, 1985 – Attorney Rex E. Gustafson, Ridgefield's youngest native lawyer, joins the legal firm headed by Judge Joseph H. Donnelly, the town's first full-time and longest-practicing lawyer.

September 1985 – The old New England Institute buildings, damaged by a December fire, are razed to make way for the new Executive Pavilion.

Sept. 23, 1985 – A GOP caucus picks Jane Jansen to run for state representative, turning down Josette Williams and Leslie Morelli.

Sept. 24, 1985 – Democrats pick Diane Crehan to run against Jane Jansen.

Sept. 28, 1985 – Verbal SAT scores of 486 for the Class of 1985 are 33 points higher than the Class of 1984 while the math score rise 28 points to a record high of 523.

October 1985 – Attorney Romeo Petroni, a former state senator and state representative, begins running for governor.

Oct. 9, 1985 – The town's Electronic Data Processing Steering Committee tells the selectmen a \$281,000 Burroughs "A Series" computer is needed to replace the town's six year old Burroughs 1815 computer, which handles all the town's accounts and payrolls.

Oct. 11, 1985 – Betty Dolen, a 58-year-old mother of eight, becomes one of only 1,394 people to hike the entire 2,047-mile Appalachian Trail. She does it over a period of eight years.

Oct. 13, 1985 – Senator Christopher Dodd tells Ridgefield Democrats at the Red Lion that he favors President Reagan's restraint in not making indiscriminate reprisals after a recent cruise ship sea-jacking, but that the U.S. should considering cutting off aid to nations that harbor or aid terrorists, as Egypt seems to have done in this instance.



Oct. 16, 1985 – The Firehouse Needs Committee tells the selectmen Ridgefield needs a third firehouse, located in the Copps Hill vicinity, costing \$1.2 million, and holding six trucks.

Oct. 22, 1985 – A recent incident, in which a caretaker of land owned by the Ridgefield Water Supply company fired a shotgun over the heads of 34 teenagers he found trespassing on water company land, leads to a meeting of concerned parents who say the town needs a teen center. [The caretaker was arrested for reckless endangerment.]

Oct. 19, 1985 – An earthquake rumbles Ridgefield, registering 4.0 on the Richter scale. A Columbia University geologist notes that Ridgefield straddles a collision point, called Cameron's Line, between two ancient continental plates – a North American land mass and a Euro-African land mass – that undergo occasional adjustments. Mineral types in the north part of town are more typical of North America while in the south side, they match types in Africa and Europe.

Nov. 1, 1985 – Both the boys and girls soccer teams at Ridgefield High School wind FCIAC championships.

Nov. 5, 1985 – Jane Jansen beats Diane Crehan by just 272 votes, 2,266 to 1,994, in the contest for state representative. Unopposed Elizabeth Leonard wins first selectman. Only 34% of the eligible voters turn out.

Nov. 6, 1985 – Roger Carpenter shows the Parking Authority his concept for a 148-car parking garage on the Bailey Avenue lot that holds 85 cars.

Nov. 26 – A young man walks into Addessi Jewelers and asks to see Rolex watches. Wayne Addessi shows him a diamond-studded model worth \$9,800. The man grabs it and runs from the store. Addessi gives chase on foot, along with father Rick, and the two help police capture the thief near Ballard Park.

Dec. 4, 1985 – Bringing the middle and high schools up to state building, fire safety and handicapped codes will cost between \$2 and \$3 million [between \$4 and \$6 million in 2008], the Municipal Building Committee reports.

December 1985 – Fire Marshal Francis P. Moylan sues the selectmen and fire chief for removing him from his job without a fair hearing.

Dec. 11, 1985 – The selectmen approve the concept of a third firehouse and begin looking for land to house it.

## 1986

1986 – Superintendent Elliott Landon leaves for a post on his native Long Island. [He returns to Connecticut in 1999 to take over the Westport school system. In 2008, he is still there.]

January 1986 – “Five years of work” goes up in flame as the Tower of Pizza on Route 7 burns down.

January 1986 – Danbeth Partners proposes a \$45-million corporate park in the northwest corner of town. The company gets approval but the market for offices collapses. The land is now the Turner Hill subdivision.

Feb. 1, 1986 – Around-the-clock paramedic service begins.

February 1986 – Charles Szentkuti proposes building 426 condominiums on Farmingville Road. The idea gets nowhere, and the land is now the Norrans Ridge subdivision.

February 1986 – Saying he’ll run on the theme, “the American dream for all Americans,” newcomer Jeffrey Peters announces he’ll run for Congress. He doesn’t make it past the convention. In 2000, living in New Hampshire, he’s a candidate for president on the ticket of the We the People Party, which he founds in 1994.

March 1986 – Jennifer Benusis, a Ridgefield High School senior, is named Ms. Connecticut. Three years later, sister Alison Benusis, an RHS junior, becomes Connecticut Teen All American.

March 1986 – The Zoning Board of Appeals rejects Pamby Motors’ application to put a Yugo sign at its Danbury Road dealership. [Remember the Yugo?]

March 1986 – Gasoline prices fall below \$1 at a couple of gas stations, but others are charging as much as \$1.60 a gallon for regular.

May 1986 – The Annual Town Meeting rejects a plan to spend \$2 million on a third firehouse somewhere north of the village.

June 1986 – Ridgefield native Romeo Petroni, who’s been seeking the GOP nomination for governor, bows out of the race. “I don’t have the votes,” he says.

Spring 1986 – Despite youngsters’ repeated pleas for a place to go skateboarding, town officials shy away, fearing injury lawsuits.

Spring 1986 – Saying that its numbers have dwindled from more than 100 to “30 good, active members,” leaders of the Ridgefield Volunteer Fire Department fear the organization may die.

Spring 1986 – The state realigns the intersection of Route 7 and Simpaug Turnpike, called one of the most dangerous intersections in town.

Summer 1986 – The town rallies around an American Elm, proposed for felling so Prospect Street can cross Main directly into the Grand Union shopping center. Tree supporters say it’s a rare survivor of Dutch elm disease and a symbol of what’s best about Ridgefield. Opponents say it will die soon anyway. [In 2008, the elm is alive and well.]

September 1986 – In the GOP primary, Westport’s Judith Freedman beats former Ridgefield state representative Herbert V. Camp for state senator. Sixteen-year incumbent Senator John Matthews is retiring.

Fall 1986 – As the race for state representative moves closer to November, GOP incumbent Jane Jansen quits, citing family considerations. Jan Johns fills the slot, but loses in November to Barbara Ireland, the first Democrat to hold the job since 1911. The Ridgefield Press’s Nov. 6 headline: *‘Irish’ Eyes Are Smilin’*.

November 1986 – Brunetti’s Market, a Main Street fixture for a quarter century, announces it will close.

November 1986 – A Better Chance (ABC), denied a town-owned building on the Community Center property, finds a home on Fairview Avenue to house girls from the inner city who will attend Ridgefield High School.

November 1986 – Tree Warden John Pinchbeck reports that “maple decline” is killing many roadside trees and a virus is attacking many ashes.

December 1986 – David Larson, a former math teacher and football coach from Southington, is hired as school superintendent.

December 1986 – The town has an advisory vote on whether to support the construction of Super 7. Only 1,636 of the 12,900 voters show up, with 1,241 against and 393 for the expressway. The vote helps mold official policy on the road for years to come and eventually, Governor Rowland shelves the project.

December 1986 – Altnacraig on High Ridge, the town’s only nursing home, is for sale. Eventually it closes. In 1994, it burns to the ground.

## **1987**

1987 – Ridgefield leads the state in car-deer accidents with 63 reported.

April 1987 – Citing her painful rheumatoid arthritis, Elizabeth Leonard announces she won't run for a fourth term as first selectman.

April 3, 1987 – John and Patricia Manningham die of smoke inhalation after a baseboard heater starts a fire in their Twin Ridge home.

June 1987 – A Ridgefield man is arrested for shooting an acquaintance through the head at a Farmingville Road house. A year later he is sentenced to 10 years in prison for manslaughter.

July 1987 – Dr. David Sklarz, middle school principal, resigns. He is the third principal to leave in two months – Bernadette Marczylo left the high school in May and Angela Wormser-Reid quit Ridgebury in June. "It's a difficult time," says fledgling Superintendent David Larson.

Summer 1987 – First Selectman Elizabeth Leonard proposes converting the former Holy Ghost Novitiate on Prospect Ridge, then the school office building, into congregate housing for the elderly.

Oct. 4, 1987 – Barely two weeks after summer ends, a freak snowstorm dumps three inches on the town, felling countless leaf-laden trees and limbs, and knocking out electricity to 83% of Ridgefield's homes. Some remain without power for four days.

## **1988**

1988 – The average selling price of a house this year is \$350,000.

1988 – Books Plus on Main Street, the town's oldest bookstore, closes.

January 1988 – School board offices move from the old novitiate to former Branchville School, but by May school officials are wondering about reopening Branchville due to signs enrollment would start rising again.

March 1988 – State Rep. Barbara Ireland says Super 7 "certainly seems to be coming."

April 1988 – Eleven classrooms at Scotland School have plastic sheeting for ceilings after melting ice and snow cause widespread leaks in the flat roof.

Spring 1988 – Morganti Inc., a Ridgefield contracting firm for 68 years, is bought by a Greek concern.

Spring 1988 – Claiming a violation of free speech, supporters of Lodestar sue the school board after the high school literary magazine publishes an alumnus submission with colorful language that prompts the superintendent to ban non-student submissions. The battle will last three years and cost the board more than \$400,000.

Spring 1988 – Deer ticks and Lyme disease are becoming big news.

Spring 1988 – A pick-up truck driven by an off-duty Norwalk policeman shatters the Cass Gilbert fountain, the fourth time in 12 years, prompting the state to recommend the monument be surrounded by guardrails.

June 1988 – Stonehenge Inn's 170-year-old building is destroyed by a fire of undetermined origin.

July 1988 – Boehringer Ingelheim announces plans for a 250,000-square-foot corporate headquarters in Ridgebury.

July 1988 – An outcry is heard after the school board awards Superintendent Larson an 18% pay increase (to \$90,000) shortly after two referendums heavily cut the school budget. Two months later, Larson quits and returns to Southington, whence he came.

July 1988 – Voters agree to buy the “Crouchley property” next to the post office.

Summer 1988 – Janel Jorgensen, a Ridgefield High School senior, wins a silver medal as a member of the 400-meter women's medley relay team at the Olympics in Seoul. She is the only person ever to win an Olympic medal as a Ridgefielder.

October 1988 – The Housatonic Area Regional Transit District (HART) announces it will start running buses between Danbury and Ridgefield every 45 minutes Mondays through Saturdays. The service lasts 10 months before HART figures out it will never come close to being self-supporting.

Fall 1988 – The library decides to add a program room.

Nov. 8, 1988 – Democrat Barbara Ireland handily defeats Tim Klvana for a second term as state representative.

## **1989**

1989 – Only 26 permits for new houses are issued in 1989; just five years earlier 137 new houses were built.

Jan. 31, 1989 – The state Supreme Court rules that Carol M. McConnell, a Danbury Hospital nurse from Ridgefield, has a right to die. Mrs. McConnell has not regained consciousness since a January 1985 auto accident, but the state has fought removal of life support. Support is removed; she dies Feb. 28.

Spring 1989 – Amid a poor national economy, it takes a record three budget referendums to pass the budgets. Many town and school employees are laid off. “Cuts sink morale,” says a July 6 headline.

June 1989 – A life-care complex is proposed for the Ippoliti land on Danbury Road and zoning for it is approved the next May. Nothing happens.

June 1989 – A strange fungus is killing most of the Gypsy Moth caterpillars in the latest outbreak of the tree defoliators. “We’ve never seen anything like this,” said the state entomologist. It is the last year Gypsy Moth caterpillars create a defoliation problem in Ridgefield.

June 1989 – The school board names Jerry Marcus of White Plains as superintendent.

July 1989 – The Republican Town Committee rejects former First Selectman Elizabeth Leonard’s candidacy for Board of Selectmen, but a GOP caucus overrules the committee and puts her – and other rejections – on the ticket. She wins in November.

August 1989 – GranCentral Market, which had occupied the old First National since 1974, says it will close. “We’re just not getting support,” said an executive. [Balducci’s occupies the space in 2008.]

September 1989 – Times may be tough but the town’s Dlh Ridge Golf Course has 2,000 Ridgefielders registered as users, a record in its 15 years.

Oct. 30, 1989 – Richard Nagle, a former New York City firefighter, a thespian, and an amateur entomologist, becomes fire chief, replacing Richard McGlynn, who retires.

November 1989 – A 130-foot pole, the tallest structure in the village, is erected over the police station to hold cellular phone communications as well as police radio antennas.

Fall 1989 – To save money, the school board offers teachers \$27,000 in cash if they’ll retire early. Many jump at the chance.

November 1989 – A Waterbury firm proposes in building a senior housing and health care complex called Laurelwood on Route 7.

December 1989 – Despite the budget battles of the spring, Ridgefield's tax hike of 11.6% was the biggest in Fairfield County, says the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities. But the Connecticut Public Expenditure Council notes a month later that Ridgefield ranked 122<sup>nd</sup> among 169 towns in taxes.

December 1989 – After a complaint that it violates separation of church and state, the Crèche is moved from the Community Center grounds, where it stood each Christmas since 1952, to private property on Main Street.

## **1990**

1990 – Ridgefield's population growth, slowed by 1980s recession, reaches 20,919.

January 1990 – First Selectman Sue Manning announces plans to give the village business district a facelift, with old-style lighting fixtures, benches, and brick walks.

February 1990 – A real estate official reports 76,000 square feet of office space are vacant in town.

March 1990 – The town begins charging for ambulance calls. They had been free rides.

April 1990 – Ground is broken for the new Ridgefield Bank headquarters on Danbury Road.

May 1990 – Romeo Petroni, a lifelong Ridgefielder, is named a Superior Court judge.

Spring 1990 – Encore Books opens at Copps Hill Plaza.

June 1990 – The first three ABC students graduate from Ridgefield High School.

June 1990 – Lacking enough money, The Ridgefield Family Y announces it will close immediately. "We have done all that we can do," says President Bruce Hopkins.

July 1990 – The Ridgefield Press announces that despite an earlier announcement, it will not be sold to the Times-Mirror Corporation.

August 1990 – Ridgefield Cinema, the town's last movie house, closes.

September 1990 – For the first time in years, school enrollment increases, albeit slightly: from 3,284 the previous September to 3,300. School officials are concerned.

September 1990 – Aldo Biagiotti's book, *Impact: The Historical Account of the Italian Immigrants of Ridgefield, Conn.*, is published.

September 1990 – The Gulf War causes gas prices to jump 15 cents a gallon almost immediately.

Fall 1990 – Vivian Schneider becomes the first Ridgefield Volunteer Fire Department woman firefighter.

Fall 1990 – Joseph Ellis is named high school principal.

Nov. 6, 1990 – Barbara Ireland wins a third term as state representative, topping Beth Yanity, 4,968 to 3,823.

November 1990 – President George Bush signs a bill into law creating the Weir Farm National Historic Site.

November 1990 – Men working on a new slate roof for a century old Main Street mansion at King Lane set it afire, causing \$500,000 in damage.

December 1990 – Voters approve an ordinance, complementing a new state law requiring recycling, imposing \$100 fines for not recycling, but town officials are still wrestling with how to make sure families follow the law.

December 1990 – The Ridgefield Swim Club is formed to try to take over the Family Y.

## **1991**

Dec. 5, 1991 The Ridgefield Press publishes a 16-page special supplement, “Ridgefield and A World at War,” marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of World War II and containing stories of war and the home front.

January 1991 – A town employee is found to have embezzled \$50,000 and faces up to 20 years in prison. A restitution settlement and plea bargain kept her out of jail.

January 1991 – The Rotary Club goes co-ed, electing State Rep. Barbara Ireland its first female member.

February 1991 – Thirty-two yellow ribbons are tied on trees at the middle school honoring the Ridgefielders serving in Operation Desert Storm.

March 1991 – Two dogs corner a rabid raccoon in Ridgefield late in the month, the first case of rabies recorded in Connecticut since 1960 and the beginning of the epidemic that will sweep through the state.

March 20, 1991 – the Fitzgerald quadruplets – Sean, Brittany, Tyler, and Ryan – are born.



June 1991 – Hay Day Country Market opens in the old First National/GranCentral space [in 2008 occupied by Balducci's].

July 1991 – A black bear visits town early in the month, the first time one had been sighted in many years.

Summer 1991 – As Bridgeport Hydraulic Company prepares to take over the Ridgefield Water Supply Company, residents of High Ridge are without water for two weeks in late summer because of pressure problems.

Aug. 22, 1991 – The state income tax passes in the state Legislature.

Fall 1991 – Prospect Ridge affordable housing and the Congregate Housing, both built by the Housing Authority, open as does Halpin Court, affordable housing built privately by the Nolan brothers of Danbury.

Nov. 5, 1991 – Regina Yannuzzi wins two seats on the Board of Education, running as a Democrat write-in candidate for a four-year seat and the party's nominee for a two-year seat. She can hold only one.

November 1991 – President Bush signs a bill providing \$1.75 million to establish Weir Farm National Historic Site.

## **1992**

January 1992 – The school board votes to eliminate the outdoor smoking area at the high school.

Spring 1992 – The Class of 1992 has a record-breaking 11 National Merit Scholarship finalists.

Spring 1992 – The ripple effect of bad times leads to big town and school budget cuts, including three cops and a fireman. The schools, which lost 36 teachers in four years, drop eight more.

April 14, 1992 – Laurelwood, the town's first large-scale care center for the elderly, is approved for a 50-acre site on Route 7.

April 1992 – Boehringer Ingelheim opens its new administrative building.

July 13, 1992 – Elizabeth Leonard resigns from the Board of Selectmen because of ill health. Two weeks later, she is dead.

Summer 1992 – Less than three years after he's hired, Jerry Marcus quits as school superintendent and moves to Atlanta.

August 1992 – Dunkin Donuts opens.

Dec. 22, 1992 – Karl Seymour Nash, editor and publisher of The Press for more than a half century, dies at the age of 84.

## **1993**

1993 – The state says plans to extend Super 7 expressway from Norwalk to Danbury would be put on hold at least 10 years.

May 1993 – The town votes to buy the old Barlow Mountain School from Village Bank, which had foreclosed the mortgage on the Ridgefield Family Y.

June 1993 – The town votes to reopen Branchville School to serve the growing elementary enrollment.

June 1993 – Beechwood wells off Farmingville Road go online for Ridgefield Water Supply Company, ending a two-year moratorium on new hook-ups.

July 1993 – The pilot dies, but a young passenger escapes as a vintage airplane crashes on Pine Mountain.

October 1993 – Woolworth's, the town's only "five and dime," closes at the end of the month.

## **1994**

January 1994 – A major fire shuts down Pizza Hut on Danbury Road for weeks.

January 1994 – A suspicious fire levels Altnacraig mansion, a 90-year-old High Ridge landmark. Firemen are at the scene 14 hours.

Jan. 15, 1994 – The Ridgefield Recreation Center opens.

Feb. 1, 1994 – Jo Ellyn Schimke is sworn in as first female commandant of the Marine Corps League.

Feb. 17, 1994 – Laurelwood opens [see April 14, 1992].

March 24, 1994 – By this day, 75 inches of snow have fallen during the winter season, canceling school 12 times.

Spring 1994 – The Allan brothers sell 440 Main Street, now the Gap et al.

June 1994 – Duchess restaurant opens on Danbury Road.

June 1994 – The town rents part of the old high school to the District Nursing Association.

Summer 1994 – With a \$250,000 state grant, the town begins village beautification that includes new sidewalks, hedges, and streetlights.

October 1994 – Voters agree to re-open Branchville School.

Nov. 8, 1994 – Chris Scalzo defeats Di Masters for state representative, the first time in eight years a Republican holds the office.

November 1994 – A Norway Spruce is felled and shipped to New York to become the Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree.

November 1994 – After a “vigorous” two-hour discussion, a Town Meeting vetoes a “regional diversity” program for the schools, 101 to 81.

December 1994 – The Barn, a long-awaited teen center, opens.

Dec. 25, 1994 – Some 3,500 homes spend part or all of Christmas without electricity after a Christmas Eve storm.

## **1995**

February 1995 – Ridgefield Girls Initiative is founded by the American Association of University Women to boost girls’ self-esteem.

April 1995 – The Planning and Zoning Commission asks the selectmen to buy the IBM property, suggesting a \$5-million offer.

April 1995 – Beatrice Brown ends her 25 years as conductor of the Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra.

June 1995 – Eight-term Town Clerk Dora Cassavechia announces she’ll retire.

June 24, 1995 – Eleanor Karvelis, only the second woman to be a school principal here, dies at 67.

July 1995 – A Superior Court judge overturns the school board's 1993 firing of teacher Nancy Sekor, but the battle continues [*see* February 1997].

July 1995 – John P. Cooke announces he will run for first selectman on the Independent Party ticket.

Aug. 8, 1995 – The U.S. Postal Service issues a 78-cent stamp honoring suffragist Alice Paul, designed by Ridgefielder Chris Calle. She is the first Ridgefield resident ever pictured on a postage stamp. However, three years later, a second Ridgefielder – Henry Luce – appears on another stamp.

August 1995 – Rainfall is 10 inches below normal, wells are running dry, and the selectmen impose a water emergency at the end of the month.

September 1995 – The Alternative High School opens.

October 1995 – A parade of 55 Bernese mountain dogs marches down Main Street in the first of what becomes an annual tradition lasting ten or so years.

Nov. 7, 1995 – Sue Manning is elected to her fifth and final term as first selectman, defeating Barbara Manners by 450 votes. Independent John Cooke is a distant third.

Dec. 13, 1995 – Dr. John Heller, who brought the New England Institute for Medical Research here in 1954, dies at the age of 74.

December 1995 – Petitioners ask that Pelham Lane be declared the town's first "scenic road."

## **1996**

1996 – WLAD in Danbury buys the ailing WREF, ending its local radio coverage of the town.

1996 – During the winter of 1995-96, the most snow of any winter in the century falls on the region: approximately 111 inches.

Jan. 7-8, 1996 – the town gets 21 inches of snow in 24 hours.

Jan. 7, 1996 – Pamby Motors opens its new showroom on Route in middle of the blizzard.

May 1996 – As it attempts an emergency landing at Danbury Airport, a plane crashes on Pine Mountain, killing two.

Spring 1996 – The town pays \$2 million for development rights to the 101-acre Brewster farm in Farmingville, the first such arrangement in the town's history.

June 1996 – The Alternative High School has first graduation.

July 18, 1996 – Pilot Richard G. Campbell, the flight engineer, is among the dead as TWA Flight 800 explodes off Long Island.

July 31, 1996 – Dr. James Sheehan retires after 41 years as a Ridgefield pediatrician.

Aug. 1, 1996 – Silicon Valley Group (SVG) buys the 201,000-square-foot Perkin-Elmer building and 50 acres on Route 7. The plant was built in 1967 to house Benrus, the watchmaker.

September 1996 – 20 children enter kindergarten at the resurrected St. Mary's School, the beginnings of an elementary school that expands to higher grades in the years that follow.

October 1996 – To avoid a long and possibly costly lawsuit over zoning – and the threat of a big multifamily housing project, voters agree to pay Peter Friedman and others \$17.5 million for their 252 acres in Ridgebury, mostly to sell off as single-family housing lots.

October 1996 – Sidney Rothstein debuts as the new music director of the Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra.

Oct. 19, 1996 – A nor'easter hits town with 6.16 inches of rain in 24 hours, the heaviest since the Flood of 1955.

## **1997**

1997 – The Historic District Commission refuses to allow the First Church of Christ, Scientist, to put vinyl siding on its church, sparking a two-year lawsuit. The church loses.

January 1997 – The town's first portable classroom in years opens at Ridgebury School.

February 1997 – The State Supreme Court upholds the school board's right to fire Nancy Sekor in 1993.

March 1997 – The Zoning Board of Appeals rejects a variance that would have allowed the town to double the size of East Ridge Middle School.

March 1997 – Ottaway, a division of Dow Jones – then in the midst of financial changes – decides not to buy Acorn Press, publishers of The Ridgefield Press and four other weekly newspapers. It is the publisher of the neighboring Danbury News-Times.

April 1997 – Voters reject an attempt to exempt town from zoning in order to build the expanded middle school.

May 14, 1997 – Bob and Lessley Burke win \$37 million in the Connecticut Powerball lottery.

May 1997 – With the Junior Prom that year, the high school begins using Breathalyzers before admitting students to major social events.

July 1997 – Jeffrey Hansen announces he's quitting as school superintendent.

Aug. 21, 1997 – The Gap opens on Main Street.

Summer 1997 – The town creates a 59-lot subdivision from its 1996 Ridgebury purchase from Peter Friedman to sell at \$11.7 million.

Summer 1997 – A merger between the Nash family, owners of Acorn Press – The Ridgefield Press's parent – and the Hersams of New Canaan Advertiser fame, creates the seven-paper Hersam Acorn Newspapers.

September 1997 – Ruth McAllister becomes first woman police sergeant.

Fall 1997 – IBM signs a contract with Toombs Development to sell 678 acres at Bennett's Pond.

Nov. 4, 1997 – Abe Morelli is elected first selectman, beating Rudy Marconi who comes back two years later to beat Mr. Morelli.

## **1998**

1998 – Landmark Academy says it will buy the old Notre Dame Academy on West Mountain for its prep school. It does, and the renamed Ridgefield Academy opens the next year.

February 1998 – The school board picks Dr. Ralph Wallace, outspoken and sometimes controversial superintendent in Cheshire, as the new school superintendent.

Spring 1998 – Bedient's Hardware closes. The town's oldest store dates to the 1783 [q.v.] when it was King and Dole.

April 1998 – Voters approve up to \$7.55 million to buy the 58-acre Ippoliti tract on Danbury Road for a possible new school.

Spring 1998 – Ridgefield Bank opens a branch at Ancona's Market, the first banking office in Ridgefield to be open Sundays.

Spring 1998 – Chez Lenard, Main Street's by-now venerable hot dog stand, moves to Bailey Avenue after a nearby store owner sues, saying the wiener wagon drives away business. The cart soon returns to its old spot a half block north after many petitioners rise to its support. [In 2008, Chez Lenard is still alive and well; the complainer is long gone.]

May 25, 1998 – For the first time since 1982, rain cancels the Memorial Day Parade.

Spring 1998 – Governor John Rowland taps State Rep. Chris Scalzo to run for state comptroller. John Frey gets the nod to replace Scalzo on local ticket. Democrats, who'd expected the popular Scalzo to run, had put up no opponent. In November, Frey wins, Scalzo loses.

Aug. 29, 1998 – Voters reject putting a new middle school on the just-purchased Ippoliti property. On Nov. 21, they do it again.

November 1998 – The Board of Selectmen votes to outlaw skateboarding in the village, but also establishes a skate park on East Ridge.

November 1998 – The Girl Scouts give the town 42-acre Camp Catoonah after the Sturges family, the original donors of the land, point out that it cannot be sold. In May 2000, the camp is renamed Sturges Park.

December 1998 – The new owners of the old IBM land unveil plans for a corporate center, 150 units of multi-family housing, a conference center and hotel, and a 27-hole golf course. The land is called Bennett's Pond.

## **1999**

1999 – After 22 years as police chief, Thomas Rotunda retires to become executive director of the Connecticut Division of Special Revenues, the agency in charge of casino and other gambling income.

1999 – After 22 years as the town's department store, Caldor closes. Kohl's arrives in April 2000.

February 1999 – When a proposal for a bypass between Route 102 and Route 35 is announced, residents of Quail Ridge – through which the road would go – are up in arms. The plan dies quickly.

February 1999 – A group forms to save the Scott House on Catoonah Street. The 1740s building will be moved to a pocket park at Grove Street and Sunset Lane to become the Ridgefield Historical Society headquarters.

February 1999 – Phyllis Paccadolmi retires after 53 years at the library.

March 1999 – The school board votes to build a new middle school.

March 1999 – Priceline, an online buying service, goes public and Ridgefielder Jay Walker, its founder, is suddenly a billionaire.

April 1999 – Pinchbeck's Nursery closes after 96 years in business.

April 1999 – The school board votes to build a sixth elementary school rather than add onto the existing five.

April 22, 1999 – Richard Ligi is named the town's fourth police chief.

May 1999 – Chancellor Park at Laurelwood opens.

July 1, 1999 – It's been a dry spring and BHC, the water company, orders water use restrictions.

August 1999 – The Ramapoo Road sewer line, the first sewer system expansion in many years, is completed to serve 170 homes.

September 1999 – Voters adopt a pooper scooper ordinance, but nary a ticket is issued for unscooped poop in the many months that follow. No enforcement method is provided.

September 1999 – State officials are watching Great Swamp mosquitoes for both encephalitis and the new West Nile virus.

September 1999 – The remains of Hurricane Floyd dump 12 inches of rain in two days in mid-month, cutting power and causing more than \$2 million in damage. Officials say a third of the town's roads need some repair.

Fall 1999 – The town votes to renovate the old high school auditorium on East Ridge, unused since 1972, into a playhouse for the performing arts.



October 1999 – Bypass Road, between Old Quarry and Farmingville Roads, is opened more than 25 years after it's first proposed.

Nov. 2, 1999 – Rudy Marconi is elected first selectman. Of 19 first selectmen during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, he is only the fourth Democrat to win the office.

1999 – In proof that every vote counts, two candidates for selectman – Joseph Heyman and Michael Jones – tie at 3,787 votes each! In a runoff election, the first of its kind here, Heyman wins by 400 votes.

Dec. 31, 1999 – Under clear skies and in not too cold temperatures, thousands come to the village New Year's Eve for Festival 2000, a musical and fireworks celebration of the new century and millennium.

## **2000**

Jan. 1, 2000 – The new millennium arrives in Ridgefield to fireworks and none of the feared computer glitches. Some 4,000 people have braved the cold to attend Festival 2000.

Jan. 6, 2000 – Ed Karvosky announces his purchase of Bissell Pharmacy at 382 Main Street.

Feb. 3, 2000 – CL&P offers the town a rail trail after its remediation of arsenic contamination along the old branch line railroad bed that's now a power line right of way. Many neighbors oppose the idea, while town officials generally favor it.

Feb. 13, 2000 – Ruth Wills, a legendary Ridgefield High School teacher who taught there for 45 years, retiring in 1965, dies at 102.

March 9, 2000 – Ridgefield primary voters favor John McCain and Bill Bradley for the Republican and Democratic Presidential nominations, bucking the trend that eventually led to the George W. Bush/Al Gore contest.

April 8, 2000 – John McCain brings his "Straight Talk Express" to Ridgefield in support of Republican Mark Nielsen's congressional bid.

April 11, 2000 – Town officials meet with state public health representatives to discuss how to combat the apparently growing threat of mosquito-borne West Nile virus and eastern equine encephalitis.

April 14, 2000 – Kohl's department store opens in Copps Hill Plaza, taking over space that had once been Caldor's and before that, W.T. Grant's.

May 5, 2000 – Vandals with spray paint coat the windows of 38 school buses and one van, closing schools for the day, costing taxpayers about \$115,000 for the lost day and the damage, according to Superintendent of Schools Ralph Wallace.

May 11, 2000 – The renovation of the old Ridgefield High School auditorium will be done by local firm Roche, Inc. and the new Ridgefield Playhouse for Movies and the Performing Arts is slated to be ready by the winter holiday season.

June 8, 2000 – The Ridgefield Library announces plans to buy the Webster Bank building behind it on Prospect Street; the building, previously the Village Bank, was originally the Ridgefield Playhouse movie theater, built in 1939.

June 30, 2000 – Bridgeport Hydraulic Company announces that its water in Ridgefield is unfit for drinking because of bacterial contamination, affecting some 6,800 customers. It is nearly two weeks before the all-clear is given and in the meantime, the utility supplies bottled water to its customers.

July 2, 2000 – St. Stephen's Episcopal Church celebrates its 275th anniversary; the present church building dates from 1915.

July 25, 2000 – Tiger Hollow, the upgrading and expansion of Ridgefield High School sports facilities planned and financed by volunteers, wins Planning and Zoning Commission approval.

Aug. 10, 2000 – Ridgefield's last dairy farm, the McKeons' Arigideen Farm, closes and its 30 milking cows are shipped to New Hampshire, Pennsylvania and upstate New York.

Sept. 6, 2000 – The Board of Selectmen unanimously vote to rename the old high school The Richard E. Venus Municipal Building.

Sept. 10, 2000 – The Ridgefield Library hosts a reception in honor of retiring director Anita Daubenspeck, who is leaving after 25 years.

Sept. 30, 2000 – At a Founders' Day celebration, the Ridgefield Preservation Trust's Scott House committee launches public fund-raising efforts to rebuild the circa-1715 saltbox as the home of a new Ridgefield Historical Society on Sunset Lane. The earlier phase of fund-raising, Jeanne Timpanelli reports, has already raised more than \$440,000 of the \$600,000 goal.

Oct. 5, 2000 – ROSA (Ridgefield Open Space Association) has launched a petition drive for the acquisition by eminent domain of the Bennett's Pond properties formerly owned by IBM.

Oct. 12, 2000 – Two anonymous donors come forward with an offer to build a town senior center and First Selectman Rudy Marconi proposes using the Ippoliti property on Danbury Road, which will soon figure into plans for huge school building project, though not as the site for a school.

Nov. 7, 2000 – George W. Bush outpolls Al Gore by more than 1,200 votes in Ridgefield and eventually wins the U.S. Presidency after the U.S. Supreme Court intervenes in Florida's vote counting.

Dec. 5, 2000 – Voters approve "The Bundle" – a \$90-million appropriation to convert the recreation center back into Barlow Mountain Elementary School, renovate the five existing elementary schools, East Ridge Middle School and the high school, and build a new recreation center on the Ippoliti property on Danbury Road.

Dec. 12, 2000 – The new Ridgefield Playhouse is packed for an opening concert by singer/guitarist Jose Feliciano.

Dec. 19, 2000 – Celebrating its 125th anniversary, The Ridgefield Press publishes a history of the 20th Century featuring a timeline and the stories of Notable Ridgefielders.

## **2001**

Jan. 1, 2001 – Ed Helminski, director of the Ridgefield Boys and Girls Club for 40 years steps down and is replaced by Terry Hughes, one of the many young Ridgefielders who grew up as members of the club.

Jan. 17, 2001 – Ridgefielders at public hearing get details of a plan that would allow the town to acquire 43 acres of the McKeon Farm in Ridgebury as open space, preserving a piece of Ridgefield's farming heritage. Voters on Jan. 31 go on to approve the town's participation in the purchase with a group of private investors.

Jan. 27, 2001 – William I. Allen, government watchdog and founder of Ridgefield's Independent Party, dies at 67.

Feb. 5, 2001 – A very snowy winter is augmented by a storm that drops 15 to 20 more inches on Ridgefield.

Feb. 13, 2001 – J.R., a Bichon Frisé, owned by Cecelia Ruggles of Ridgefield, wins Best of Show at the Westminster Dog Show in New York.

Feb. 19, 2001 – Despite the signatures of 2,777 Ridgefielders on a petition asking for a vote on taking the Bennett's Pond Property by eminent domain, the Board of Finance effectively quashes that plan by refusing to appropriate \$10.6 million for its acquisition.

Feb. 28, 2001 – The school board approves placing an armed police officer at Ridgefield High School as a “school resource officer.”

March 1, 2001 – The family of Ridgefielder Jack Tobin reveals he has been arrested in Voronezh, Russia, and charged with drug possession, although Russian security services are also alleging possible espionage. Fluent in Russian, Mr. Tobin was a Fulbright scholar studying the Russian transition to a market economy. Charges are eventually raised that would mean up to 15 years in a Russian prison.

March 8, 2001 – Grand Union, the only supermarket in the village, will close. It is to be replaced by a CVS store.

April 10, 2001 – Ridgefield Democrats join in toasting U.S. Senator Joseph Lieberman, their 2000 candidate for vice president, at the Jefferson-Jackson-Bailey Day Dinner in Danbury.

April 19, 2001 – Bridgeport Hydraulic Company prepares to open its new pipeline into Ridgefield, solving supply and quality problems that have plagued the system.

May 3, 2001 – After three months in Russian custody, Jack Tobin is sentenced to an additional two years and 10 months. Diplomatic efforts toward his release involve Secretary of State Colin Powell, as Congressman Jim Maloney rallies support for Mr. Tobin.

May 15, 2001 – A majority of voters approve an advisory measure that would have the town acquire the Bennett’s Pond property by eminent domain.

May 31, 2001 – Joan Voss, who was instrumental in founding the Alternative High School in 1995, is named Teacher of the Year in Ridgefield.

June 7, 2001 – Print and television reporters descend on town to follow up on the story of the “phantom reviews” that appeared in Sony Corporation ads, highlighting effusive praise by “David Manning of The Ridgefield Press.” Mr. Manning, The Press confirms, was not and never had been its film reviewer.

July 10, 2001 – A young black bear visits Ridgefield, sampling bird food at several feeders.

July 11, 2001 – Daniel M. McKeon, “a leading citizen and advocate of conservation and local history,” dies at 94. An organic farmer and an accomplished horseman, he was a charter member of Ridgefield’s Planning Commission in 1958 and the longtime chairman of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

July 22, 2001 – The first item of business at a meeting between President George W. Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin is “the Jack Tobin case,” reports Congressman Jim Maloney.

July 24, 2001 – After the Republicans decline to renominate him, Selectman Steve Zemo, switches party affiliations and accepted the Democrats’ nomination for the Board of Selectmen, in a year when First Selectman Rudy Marconi, a Democrat, would run unopposed.

Aug. 8, 2001 – Jack Tobin is free: The 24-year-old Ridgefielder lands at Kennedy Airport, accompanied by his father, John Tobin, and Congressman Jim Maloney. A rally at Town Hall welcomes him home on Aug. 13.

Sept. 11, 2001 – Ridgefield, with the rest of the world, is devastated by the terrorists’ attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. Churches fill for prayer services, volunteers head to New York, and the town comes to a halt as it waits for news of victims and survivors. The dead included Ridgefielders and Ridgefielders’ relatives Tyler Ugolyn, 23, Robert Higley, 29, and H. Joseph Heller, 37, who were in the World Trade Center; Wilson and Darlene Flagg, and Barbara Edwards, all on Flight 77 that crashed into the Pentagon; and New York City firefighters John Williamson and Christopher Blackwell.

Sept. 25, 2001 – By a wide margin, Ridgefield voters approve spending \$11.6 million to acquire the Bennett’s Pond property, by eminent domain if necessary.

Oct. 26, 2001 – Larry Aldrich, a prominent fashion designer who championed contemporary artists, dies at 95. In 1964, Mr. Aldrich founded the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum and gave the town Aldrich Park in Farmingville,

Nov. 15, 2001 – The remaking of Copps Hill Plaza begins with ground-breaking for a new building along Danbury Road and will eventually include demolition of a portion of the original plaza buildings, expansion of Stop & Shop and the building of a freestanding Eckerd’s Drug Store. In the process, the popular 33 1/3 Restaurant closes.

Nov. 18, 2001 – The Leonid meteor showers put on an amazing show, one of the best in many years, which Ridgefielders who were up at 4 a.m. enjoy from the comfort of their homes or at a gathering at Great Pond organized by the Discovery Center.

Nov. 27, 2001 – Ground is broken for Founders Hall, the new senior center on the former Ippoliti property.

Dec. 13, 2001 – ASML Holdings NV, which had been occupying the former Perkin-Elmer (former Benrus) building on Route 7, announces plans to leave town, consolidate operations in Wilton and lay off up to 400 employees.

Dec. 20, 2001 – The town takes title to the 458-acre northern portion of the Bennett's Pond property.

Dec. 28, 2001 – A fire destroys a Pine Mountain Road home and kills its two residents, Rudy and Darlene Casagrande. Fire Marshal Dave Lathrop reports later it will be impossible to determine the cause.

## **2002**

Jan. 10, 2002 – The Board of Selectmen, as the Bennett's Farm Development Authority, begins planning for the development of the southern 155 acres of the Bennett's Pond property, which the town plans to take by eminent domain from its owner, real estate developer Eureka V, LLC. In February, Eureka sues to block the taking.

Jan. 17, 2002 – Ridgefield joins several other Housatonic Valley area towns to hire legal representation to fight the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation's petition to be recognized by the federal government. With federal tribal status, it is feared, the Schaghticoques might proceed to build a casino on their reservation in Kent.

Feb. 25, 2002 – Scotts Ridge wins out as the name for the new middle school on a 6-2 vote by the Board of Education. The other proposed names were North Ridge, Mamasasco, and John Sturges (for the late chairman of the school building committee).

Feb. 28, 2002 – The town learns that its sewage treatment plant was releasing vast quantities of coliform bacteria over a period of months in the previous year, because of decisions made by a now-replaced manager.

April 1, 2002 – Ground is broken for the addition to Ridgebury School, and the following day, ground is broken for the addition to Ridgefield High School.

April 8, 2002 – A new shuttle bus begins runs between Ridgefield and the Katonah, N.Y., train station; commuters park in a special lot at Jesse Lee United Methodist Church.

April 18, 2002 – A continuing drought leads to calls for Ridgefielders to reduce water consumption by 20% by May 24. If that goal is not met, the Board of Selectmen plans to enact emergency water conservation measures.

April 25, 2002 – The Catholic church's burgeoning sexual abuse scandal touches Ridgefield as townspeople learn that a former priest at St. Mary's Church has been defrocked following "credible" allegation of sexual misconduct.

April 26, 2002 – The town begins a weekend-long celebration of the 225th anniversary of the Battle of Ridgefield.

May 16, 2002 – The Police Commission voices its opposition to changing the name of Danbury Road to North Main Street, a proposal that was brought to the selectmen by retailers. A public hearing is planned in June.

May 27, 2002 – The Bark Park opens on Prospect Ridge.

June 13, 2002 – Dunkin' Donuts, a fixture in many people's lives, is preparing to move from its 107-109 Danbury Road location a bit south, to the former Boston Market building on the opposite side of Danbury Road.

June 25, 2002 – CHIRP (Concert Happenings in Ridgefield's Parks) begins its first free concert series in Ballard Park, bringing out music aficionados every Tuesday all summer long. Selectman Barbara Manners is the creator and manager of the series.

June 26, 2002 – Voters approve a 25-year lease of town land to ROAR (Ridgefield Organization for Animal Rescue) for a site for a new privately operated animal shelter.

July 18, 2002 – Ridgefield Realtors describe the market as hotter than hot, with low interest rates making mortgages more affordable and increasing demand, resulting in rising prices and quick sales.

July 25, 2002 – No one steps forward as an opponent for State Rep. John Frey, who is up for re-election.

Aug. 1, 2002 – The town hears rumors that Donald Trump may be working on plans with the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation to create a casino on the former Union Carbide property in Danbury, just north of the Ridgefield town line.

Aug. 13, 2002 – More than 5,000 Ridgefield customers lose electricity in a 90-plus-degree heat wave as demand for power causes a primary line on Grove Street to break.

Sept. 11, 2002 – More than 700 Ridgefielders turn out for a remembrance ceremony at Ballard Park on the anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks.

Sept. 29, 2002 – The Scott House opens to the public as the new home of the Ridgefield Historical Society on Sunset Lane, three years after it was disassembled on Catoonah Street.

Oct. 1, 2002 – Speaking to the Chamber of Commerce, Gov. John Rowland says "The best is yet to come" for Connecticut. Three years later, he is in prison.

Oct. 15, 2002 – The new Scotts Ridge Middle School finally opens; students spend the beginning of the school year sharing space at East Ridge Middle School.

Oct. 17, 2002 – Among the honorees at the Old Timers Association banquet is “Squash,” Aldo Travaglini, a fixture on Main Street for some 70 years, first at Bissell’s Drug Store and then at his Ridgefield News Store.

Nov. 3, 2002 – In a sign of the times, firefighters from four area towns gather at East Ridge Middle School to practice a mass casualty event involving a school shooting. [A sniper in Washington, D.C., caused cancellation of a Ridgefield school trip earlier in the fall.]

Nov. 13, 2002 – Voters at a town meeting reject a proposal to rename Danbury Road North Main Street.

Nov. 14, 2002 – Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ralph Wallace announces plans to retire in 2003. He came to Ridgefield in 1998.

Nov. 24, 2002 – Founders Hall, the new senior center, opens.

Nov. 28, 2002 – Members of the First Church of Christ, Scientist, celebrate the church’s 100th anniversary in town at a Thanksgiving service.

Nov. 30, 2002 – Some 100 people rally on Main Street in opposition to a war in Iraq.

Dec. 14, 2002 – St. Mary’s Church learns that its pastor has resigned because of an allegation of sexual misconduct.

## **2003**

2003 – The town sells Bennett’s Pond’s 460 acres to the state as parkland. The price is \$4 million; the town had condemned the land from Eureka V, paying \$11.5 million.

Jan. 12, 2003 – The Ridgefield Recreation Center on Danbury Road opens with a traditional ribbon-cutting and public open house.

Jan. 14, 2003 – Ridgefield will continue to have a village funeral home: Dan Jowdy, owner of Kane Funeral Home, will move the business east from 41 to 25 Catoonah Street to a new building at the site of a former gas station. The move is necessitated by the Kane family’s plans to sell the current Kane Funeral Home property.

Jan. 23, 2003 – Ridgefield High School students organize “Ride the Bus Day” as an energy saving protest to put a focus on America’s oil consumption and its relations with the suppliers of oil in the Muslim world.



Feb. 17, 2003 – A President's Day weekend snowstorm drops more than a foot and a half of snow on the town; meteorologists at Western Connecticut State University rank it in the top 10 of recorded snowstorms.

Feb. 21, 2003 – With the Homeland Security alert at level Orange, Ridgefielders consider what preparations to make: They're encouraged to have family disaster plans and to stockpile emergency supplies including plastic sheeting and duct tape, water and food, medicines and batteries.

March 4, 2003 – Town hall is evacuated after a roof beam slips, causing ceilings to collapse, the result of construction work on an elevator being added to the building. Some town offices are quickly re-established in several locations; the selectmen are in the firehouse.

March 6, 2003 – Dr. Joseph Ellis announces he will retire after 13 years as principal of Ridgefield High School and 41 years in education.

March 10, 2003 – Charles Coles, Jr., a retired president of the Ridgefield Bank, active in the community and a student of Ridgefield's history, dies at 80.

March 13, 2003 – With the war with Iraq imminent, three Ridgefielders prepare for deployment: Lance Cpl. Kevin Weber and Cpl. Mike Delpino, both Marines, and Spec. Nick Ciarcia, an Army reservist. A community prayer service for peace takes place March 19 at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church.

March 20, 2003 – Town planner Oswald Ingles, the longest-serving town administrator, having been hired in 1972, announces plans to retire.

March 25, 2003 – Dr. James E. Sheehan, pediatrician to generations of Ridgefielders over 43 years, dies at 80.

April 6, 2003 – A crowd of 300 rallies on Main Street in support of American troops fighting in Iraq.

April 11, 2003 – David Harris is charged in the brutal murder of his ex-wife, Simone Harris, at her apartment in Ridgefield.

May 1, 2003 – The Grand List reaches \$4 billion, following a revaluation.

May 8, 2003 – The town rallies to support popular barber and Main Street caretaker Mike Montello, following his diagnosis with a brain tumor. He dies Sept. 22.

May 14, 2003 – Dora Conti Cassavechia, Ridgefield town clerk for 16 years, dies at her home.

June 3, 2003 – Betty Grace Nash, who was an editor of The Ridgefield Press for 35 years, dies in Cocoa Beach, Fla., where she had been living for 10 years.

June 8, 2003 – A Hummer, driven by an allegedly drunk Stamford man, crushes the Cass Gilbert Fountain after going over concrete planters and a raised platform designed to protect the marble fountain. It's expected that rebuilding the fountain will take a year.

June 22, 2003 – The Ridgefield Library celebrates its 100th anniversary with a party for the town.

June 26, 2003 – Ridgefield voters reject a negotiated settlement that would have had the town pay \$5.35 million to Eureka V plus allow the company to develop the 155-acre southern parcel of Bennett's Pond property with a 160,000-square-foot office building and 225 townhouses.

Aug. 7, 2003 – Ridgefield Bank announces plans for a merger with Fairfield County Bank, pending government approval [later received]. The banks are to each maintain their own names in their home territories.

Aug. 21, 2003 – Ridgefield and most of the Northeast goes dark, the result of a fault in the power grid that took place in Ohio. The power is out for 24 hours.

Aug. 31, 2003 – To the great sadness of their many friends and loyal customers, the Amatuzzi family (George, Anna Maria, Gigi and Vicki) close the popular Roma Pizzeria on Main Street.

Sept. 7, 2003 – After nine years as head of the Redding-Easton regional school district, Dr. Kenneth Freeston becomes Ridgefield's school superintendent.

Sept. 25, 2003 – Boehringer Ingelheim announces a \$500-million expansion of its Ridgebury headquarters, with most of the new construction on the Ridgefield portion of its campus.

Oct. 1, 2003 – Ridgefield restaurants go smokeless as a new state law goes into effect, forbidding smoking in restaurants and nearly all public spaces.

Oct. 23, 2003 – As the Aldrich Museum undergoes extensive rebuilding, art goes on, in the form of "Big Baby," a seven-foot high sculpture of an infant, clad in a diaper, who sits in front of the museum property on Main Street. Response is not entirely enthusiastic.

Nov. 4, 2003 – First Selectman Rudy Marconi easily wins a third term, defeating Republican Marty Heiser by a nearly two-to-one margin.

Nov. 21, 2003 – Todd Szegedy Day, as proclaimed by Gov. John Rowland, honors the 27-year-old Ridgefield native who is the new NASCAR Featherlite Modified Touring Series Champion.

Dec. 4, 2003 – The Chamber of Commerce issues a “call to action” to find a solution to the chronic lack of parking spaces in the Village retail district. Three-hour parking limits don’t seem to be doing the job and also aggravate visitors.

Dec. 21, 2003 – Winifred Aldrich, an artist and founder with her husband of the Aldrich Museum, dies at the age of 89.

## **2004**

January 2004 – Ridgefield Crossings opens the “harbor Program,” an assisted living community for those who are memory impaired.

Jan. 2, 2004 – The face of the Big Baby – a seven-foot-tall Styrofoam and clay child by artist Nina Levy, in front of the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum – is burned by vandals using a roadside flare. Mailbox vandalism was also rampant.

Jan. 7, 2004 – The Selectmen discuss whether to sponsor hunting of deer on town land to cut the size of the growing herd.

Jan. 14, 2004 – Schlumberger announces that it is moving over the next two years to the Boston area to be closer to scientific and educational research centers.

Jan. 19, 2004 – The first Spirit of Martin Luther King community service award is given to Dave Goldenberg, active in promoting affordable housing in Ridgefield.

Jan. 26, 2004 – Superintendent Kenneth Freeston proposes a 13% increase in the school budget to \$64 million.

February 2004 – Two veteran principals – Scotland’s Barbara DePencier and Veterans Parks Robert Lynam – announce they will retire in June.

February 2004 - The Ridgefield Playhouse is seeking a liquor license.

Feb. 1, 2004 – Joseph E. Brunetti, a second generation grocer who had operated one of the village’s last family markets and was a longtime supporter of athletics programs, dies at the age of 83.

Feb. 4, 2004 - After more than 30 years as town health officer, Dr. Patrick Neligan retires, and Chief Sanitarian Ed Briggs is named the new health officer, the first time the job is held by a full-time town employee.

Feb. 5, 2004 – John Edward Dowling, a popular Ridgefield attorney and raconteur who won two Purple Hearts in World War II, dies at the age of 82. The former FBI agent had been a probate judge and town attorney.

Feb. 9, 2004 – A survey finds that 94% of village businesses believe there is a parking problem in the center of town, and 30 officials and merchants have a powwow on parking.

Feb. 21, 2004 – A 364-foot luge, one of only four like it in the country, has been completed on the West Mountain property of Brett West, and is the highlight of Cub Scout Pack 124's annual Winter Carnival.

March 2004 – Two months after the death of their 10-year-old daughter, Cathy and Todd Tango create the Molly Ann Tango Memorial Foundation to provide grants to families with special needs children.

March 2004 – Members of the Youth Commission meet with middle school officials about the continuing problem of bullying.

March 1, 2004 – The school board reduces the \$64 million budget to \$62.5 million, an 11% increase. Cuts include removing a police officer from the high school.

March 2, 2004 - John Kerry is the Ridgefield winner in Connecticut's presidential preference primary. He gets 628 of 920 votes cast for eight Democrats on the ballot, including John Edwards, Dennis Kucinich and Al Sharpton.

March 8, 2004 – The school board votes to restore February and April week-long vacations, which had been eliminated in favor of one week off in March.

March 11, 2004 – Voters will face an 11% tax hike unless the Board of Finance cuts the proposed budgets, The Press reports.

March 20, 2004 – Sixties rock star Chubby Checker (remember the Twist?) does two shows at the Playhouse.

March 22, 2004 – Paul Hazel, who spent more than 30 years as school personnel director, announces he will retire in September.

March 26 – Paul J. Rosa Jr. dies at 76. He had been a selectman and member of many town agencies during his 37 years of town service.

April 1, 2004 – Fearing its budget would not succeed with voters, the school board cuts another \$1.2 million, and its increase is down to 8.98%.

April 13, 2004 – The Board of Finance cuts town and school budgets, resulting in a proposed 8% tax hike.

April 13, 2004 – The Planning and Zoning Commission refuses to endorse a Police Commission plan to put traffic lights for Route 116 and North Salem Road, where the commission has installed all-way stop signs as an experiment.

April 20, 2004 – Toll Brothers applies to build 73 age-restricted condominiums off Route 7, to be called Regency at Ridgefield. Units are expected to sell from \$500,000 to \$550,000 but in 2008 were mostly going for \$700,000-plus.

April 21, 2004 – State biologist Howard Kilpatrick tells the selectmen there are probably 150,000 deer in Connecticut. In 1894, there were fewer than two dozen.

April 24, 2004 – Coast Guard Petty Officer Nathan Bruckenthal, a former Ridgefielder and volunteer firefighter, is killed protecting an oil terminal off the Iraqi coast. He served with the Coast Guard

May 1, 2004 – Lotus, a Chinese restaurant on Danbury Road for 22 years, closes after its lease is not renewed.

May 2004 – Complaints about the large number of “sandwich-board signs” on Main Street prompts the Planning and Zoning Commission to discuss regulating temporary signs.

May 5, 2004 – First Selectman Rudy Marconi testifies before the House Subcommittee on Government Reform in Washington, about faults in the tribal recognition process that could lead to Indians’ buying land and building a casino nearby.

May 5, 2004 – The Youth Commission approves setting up a hotline to receive calls from bullying and harassment victims in the schools.

May 10, 2004 – Wicked, the Broadway musical whose score is written by Stephen Schwartz of Ridgefield, is nominated for 10 Tony awards.

May 11, 2004 – The school budget, with a 9% increase, is defeated by voters at a referendum, 2,747 no to 1,980 yes.

May 13, 2004 – Yankee ace reliever Mariano Rivera visits Ridgefield High School to offer tips on athletic success to students, coaches and parents.

May 17, 2004 – The Board of Finance cuts another \$1 million from the school budget, dropping the tax increase to 6%.

May 19, 2004 – A Ridgefield Deer Study Committee is established to recommend what to do about the burgeoning deer population.

May 27, 2004 – Dr. Randall Balmer, an author, a professor of religious history at Columbia, and a Democrat, announces he will run against Republican John Frey for state representative.

May 31, 2004 – William von Zehle of Ridgefield, an Iraq war veteran who was one of the first rescuers on the scene of the Aug. 19, 2003 bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad, is the Memorial Day speaker.

June 5, 2004 – The town mourns the death of President Ronald Reagan. “I think he kind of restored pride in our country,” says State Rep. John Frey.

June 8, 2004 – 5,201 voters – 34% of those registered – turn out at a referendum to approve a \$60-million school budget, with a 6% tax increase. The vote is 2,880 yes, 2,321 no.

June 9, 2004 – David and Martha Campbell are named “Citizens of the Year” by the Rotary Club.

June 14, 2004 – Three new principals are named: Adeline Merrill at Farmingville, Lorraine A. Marcantonio at Veterans Park, and Mark H. Solomon at Scotland.

June 18, 2004 – The first Relay for Life raises \$195,000 to fight cancer.

June 22, 2004 – 340 seniors graduate from Ridgefield High School.

June 26, 2004 – The Westport Country Playhouse, whose building is being renovated, begins using the Ridgefield Playhouse as its temporary venue. Among the stars who show up during the season is Paul Newman.

June 2004 – *Cercarial dermatitis*, or “swimmer’s itch,” has users of Great Pond’s beach scratching. It’s caused by parasitic water-borne larvae that burrow into the skin.

July 2004 – The fact that so many cell phones now include cameras prompts the Recreation Center to ban them in the locker rooms, swimming pool area, whirlpool or restrooms, “in order to protect the privacy of its members.”

July 2004 – The Ridgefield Volunteer Fire Department elects a new chief who doesn't live in Ridgefield. Dave Cuny grew up here, but resides in Bethel.

July 1, 2004 – State Rep. John Frey attends the inauguration of M. Jodi Rell as governor, replacing disgraced and later imprisoned Gov. John Rowland, who resigned.

July 7, 2004 – Steve Zemo, a member of the Board of Selectmen since 1995, retires. Julia “Di” Masters, chairman of the Planning and Zoning Commission, soon announces she's a candidate for the seat and is appointed, effective Aug. 9.

July 8, 2004 – Terrar LLC wants to raze Belzoni's Red Lion restaurant on Route 7, which began life as a dog kennel, to build 50 condominiums.

July 20-21, 2004 – The stop signs on North Salem Road at Ridgebury Road are removed. The experiment to deal with the busy intersection fails. As a result of the sudden change, several crashes occur.

July 29, 2004 – Nineteen veteran teachers retire, reports personnel director Paul Hazel, himself about to retire. Among them are Arthur Amend, Janet Belote, Jane Breen, Lois Brower, William Brower, Betty Gray Brown, Dorothea Lang, Monica McMorran, and Curtis Pickup.

Aug. 2, 2004 – ROAR – Ridgefield Operation for Animal Rescue – breaks ground on its new dog and cat shelter on South Street.

Aug. 5, 2004 – Two Ridgefield boys, Brian Schlierf, 8, and Kevin Schlierf, 6, are in critical condition after a fire at a Dominican Republic resort their family is staying at. Brian dies Aug. 18. The community rallies to support the family through a medical fund.

Aug. 18, 2004 – The selectmen decide to buy a reverse 911 system to make mass phone calls to residents in case of emergencies.

Aug. 29, 2004 – George Brunstad of Ridgefield, a retired airline pilot who turned 70 three days earlier, becomes to be the oldest man to swim the English Channel, crossing in 15 hours, 59 minutes.

Sept. 13, 2004 – A large party at the Amber Room in Danbury honors Tax Collector Mary Hart Foyt, who's retiring after 37 years of service and is moving to Maine.

September 2004 – *Ridgefield's Notable Trees* is published by the Ridgefield Tree Committee and describes 20 significant trees [here](#).

September 2004 – St. Mary's School celebrates its 50th anniversary and the completion of its rebirth to a full kindergarten through eighth grade school.

September 2004 – Dr. Richard Lipton and three other local doctors propose converting part of the old SVG/Benrus building on Route 7 into a medical center.

September 2004 – Norwalk Community College is considering having classes in Ridgefield, possibly at the Community Center or the old high school.

Sept. 13, 2004 – High School Principal Dianna Lindsay tells the school board that Ridgefield High School's graduation in June should take place at the O'Neill Center in Danbury, which is both air conditioned and free from threats of rain that sometimes force graduations into the small RHS gym.

Sept. 19, 2004 – The Rev. Wilma White delivers her final sermon as minister of the Ridgebury Congregational Church. She arrived in 1996.

Sept. 21, 2004 – The Planning and Zoning Commission votes 8-1 to allow Toll Brothers to build 73 age-restricted condominiums on Route 7 north of Great Pond.

Sept. 23, 2004 – Only four member of the public speak at a hearing on Terrar's plan to build 50 condominiums on the Red Lion restaurant site at Routes 7 and 35. "You're actually putting down something here that is a celebration of sprawl," says one.

Sept. 29, 2004 – The new 19-member Deer Study Committee has its first meeting.

October 2004 – Round Pond, once a town reservoir, becomes state property, part of the "Centennial Watershed State Forest" that includes 15,000 acres the state acquired from Aquarion Water Company, largely in other counties.

October 2004 – Chloride levels are so high in the well at Scotland and Barlow Mountain Schools that children must drink bottled water.

Oct. 1, 2004 – Chambers Army and Navy Store at Danbury Road and Grove Street closes after more than 20 years in business. The competition is just too much.

Oct. 2, 2004 – Mary Wilson of The Supremes joins Broadway composer Stephen Schwartz of Ridgefield in a benefit concert for the high school Music Department.



Oct. 6, 2004 – Sunrise Cottage, an independent living home for five people with developmental disabilities, is dedicated on Sunset Lane.

Oct. 15, 2004 – In a year when vaccine is in very short supply, 500 older Ridgefielders line up outside the Visiting Nurse Association to get a flu shot.

Oct. 21, 2004 – More than 1,000 political signs are stolen or damaged in two weeks, angering candidates of both parties, The Press reports.

Oct. 22, 2004 – Police are called to a possible burglary at a ranch house on Branchville Road, only to find illegal living quarters for 18 workers at a Chinese restaurant.

Oct. 23, 2004 – A concert at the Playhouse raises money to help the victims of embattled Darfur.

Oct. 26, 2004 – Ridgefield zoners adopt tougher regulations, banning all kinds of temporary signs that make roadsides, especially in the village, look “cluttered.”

November 2004 – In one week, the Ridgefield High School girls cross country squad wins the school’s first-ever regional championship, and the girls swim team captures the state Class L title.

Nov. 2, 2004 – John Frey defeats Randall Balmer, 8,824 to 4,478, gathering more votes than any other candidate on the ticket, including George W. Bush (7,407).

Nov. 23, 2004 – Voters agree to spend another \$3.5 million in a court-ordered settlement of the lawsuit filed by Eureka V LLC over the condemnation of its Bennett’s Pond land. The town had already paid \$8.5 million to Eureka, but the developer sued for \$12 million more than that for the 458 acres, now a state park.

Nov. 23, 2004 – The Planning and Zoning Commission rejects Terrar’s plan for 50 condominiums at Routes 7 and 35, but an appeal is expected because the plan includes “affordable” apartments that, under a state law, make it difficult to veto a project.

December 2004 – The Ridgefield Basketball Association proposes an outdoor basketball court at the high school to honor Tyler Ugolyn, a 1997 RHS graduate killed at the World Trade Center Sept. 11, 2001.

December 2004 – Ridgefield police have their first “Shop with A Cop” program, treating a fifth grader whose father has vanished and whose mother is out of work to a holiday shopping spree.

Dec. 3 and 4, 2004 – Nearly 70 downtown businesses join in the fifth annual Holiday Stroll.

December 2004 – The Sky's the Limit playground, built at the Recreation Center with money raised by Rotary Club, opens. The playground is especially designed for kids with handicaps, but is fun for more typical kids, too.

December 2004 – The school board is debating whether to sign agreements with Coke or Pepsi to allow sale of their products in the schools in exchange for contributions.

## **2005**

January 2005 – Neighbors are vehemently opposed to a proposed 11,000-square-foot maintenance building on Weir Farm property off Old Branchville Road.

January 2005 – To deal with possible terrorist threats, firefighters here are learning many new techniques.

January 2005 – Residents of the Abbott Avenue neighborhood complain about a pony being kept at a home with only 0.17 acres. The debate eventually leads to an ordinance aimed at controlling the kind of animals allowed on small village lots.

January 2005 – Terrar LLC and Toll Brothers are suing the Planning and Zoning Commission for rejection of their separate projects – 50 Terrar apartments and 73 Toll Brothers condos – at Routes 7 and 35.

Jan. 6, 2005 – The Friends of Ballard Park announce a plan to improve the popular village park.

Jan. 7, 2005 – A Ridgefield school bus driver is arrested for selling alcohol and tobacco to students.

Jan. 15, 2005 – Local performing artists like Kevin Briody and Rabbi Jon Haddon give a concert to help victims of the Asian tsunami.

Jan. 17, 2005 – Ruth Leibowitz, chair of the Youth Committee, is given the second annual Spirit of Dr. King Community Service Award.

Jan. 24, 2005 – The school budget comes in just under the 8% increase “cap” agreed to by officials the previous year.

Jan. 24-25, 2005 – After the weekend's near blizzard, temperatures dip to minus 3, freezing pipes and triggering a cascade of heating system problems in four of Ridgefield's 10 school buildings. Three close Monday and one also Tuesday.

February 2005 – The Ridgefield General Store, opened in 1984 at Copps Hill Common and moved to Route 7 in 2004, closes its doors.

February 2005 – An apologetic Stamford fireman, whose Hummer smashed the Cass Gilbert Fountain on June 8, 2003, volunteers his time to install stage lighting equipment at Ridgebury School.

Feb. 7, 2005 – High School principal Dianna Lindsay has to temporarily step down from her post because the state rules she has not taken an examination needed to be a Connecticut educator. A week later, she passes the test, and is soon back on the job.

Feb. 6, 2005 – The Rev. Mark Delcuze, a veteran of 20 years in the ministry in Virginia and West Virginia, delivers his first sermon as rector of St. Stephen's Church.

Feb. 8, 2005 – Ridgefield firefighters say staffing is unsafe.

March 2005 – Town officials are looking at putting a water tower off Route 116 to help with water pressure and allow building of a new main to the water-troubled Barlow Mountain-Scotland School site.

March 2005 – Eureka V LLC wants 510 condominiums for its 156 acres south of Bennett's Pond, land zoned for corporate offices.

March 2005 – Franny Wood sends pizza, donated by Genoa Deli, to her son, First Lt. David Wood, and 400 other soldiers in Iraq. The pizzas are vacuum sealed. They were "absolutely delicious," Lt. Wood reports.

March 2005 – The ROAR dog and cat shelter, built and maintained entirely with private funds, opens.

March 9, 2005– Complaints about noisy snowmobiles on the frozen Pierrepont Lake prompt the selectmen to have a hearing on an ordinance banning them.

March 31, 2005 – The Community Prevention Council distributes the Ridgefield Parent Network and Partyline Directory – a list of parents who supervise their teens' parties.

April 2005 – The Deer Committee determines that an ideal maximum population of deer would be 20 per square mile. Estimates vary between 60 and 100 as the current population density.

April 2005 – At \$171,000, the school superintendent Kenneth Freeston is the town's highest paid employee, earning nearly twice what the first selectman, at \$93,000, does.

April 5, 2005 – 120 people attend an Inland Wetlands Board public hearing debating expanding buffer areas needing special building permits near wetlands. Speakers are split pro and con.

April 6, 2005 – Jill Kelley receives the Edith B. Meffley Award for conservation.

April 7, 2005 – A bus with 44 RHS freshmen on a field trip to the Museum of Natural History is turned back after five students are caught drinking in the back of the bus. All five are suspended.

April 7, 2005 – Nehemiah Lyman Keeler, a descendant of the town's earliest settlers and one of Ridgefield's last native farmers, dies at 91. He was born in 1913 in the "Pink House" on Ridgebury Road.

April 23, 2005 – The Ridgefield Historical Society hosts an encampment in Ballard Park, commemorating the 228th anniversary of the Battle of Ridgefield.

April 24, 2005 – The Rev. Mark Allan, a Ridgefield lawyer, is ordained a minister at the First Congregational Church.

April 27, 2005 – The former manager of a Subway shop here is arraigned on charges he bought alcohol for a 15-year-old girl in exchange for sex.

May 2005 – A Charter Revision Commission is appointed by the selectmen.

May 2005 – House sales are showing signs of slowing. Only 78 sell in the first four months of the year, compared to 113 the same period in 2004.

May 5, 2005 – The first Senior Arts Festival opens at Founders Hall.

May 10, 2005 – Town and school budgets pass at a referendum, raising taxes by 6%.

May 11, 2005 – The selectmen renew Chez Lenard's permit for a hot dog stand, but Chad Cohen may have to move because a nearby landlord who says the operation hurts business at his tenants' shops.

May 18, 2005 – Delphine Marcus, a longtime Ridgefielder and WMNR broadcaster, dies at 73.

May 20, 2005 – The Ridgefield Fire Department receives a donation of oxygen masks designed to be used on dogs and cats rescued from burning buildings.

May 22, 2005 – The town has “Senior Appreciation Day” that includes 30 exhibits on community groups and services, plus food and entertainment.

May 25, 2005 – Roy Cogswell, popular owner of The Early Bird restaurant, dies at 57.

May 26, 2005 – A fire levels the Bissell Building, holding the pharmacy, Gail’s Station House restaurant, and apartments. The building is resurrected in 2008.

May 30, 2005 – Three mysterious sculptures, seated human-like figures, show up on benches at the Branchville Station. No one knows who put them there, and weeks later, Metro-North removes them. “It’s amazing they’ve been here as long as they have,” says Lolly Turner, owner of the Whistle Stop bakery in the station house. “People just sit down next to them as if there was nothing unusual.”

June 2005 – Sally Anyan, music teacher in the Ridgefield schools for 38 years, retires.

June 2005 – Experts say eating disorders are epidemic among teenagers in the country and Ridgefield is not an exception.

June 2005– In what was a skillfully executed hoax, parents of many Ridgefield High School seniors are greeted with mail bearing the “news” that their child is failing English and will not graduate June 26.

June 2005– The 35-year-old preschool at Ridgefield High School – designed to teach students about home care – closes.

June 2005 – Workers on the new Arnold’s Way development off Main Street find a cannonball from the Battle of Ridgefield.

June 6, 2005 – Jason McKinnon, a native of Australia, is named principal of Branchville School.

June 8, 2005 – A transformer explosion causes nearly two days of power outages on Prospect Street. Merchants lose thousands of dollars worth of food and business.

June 8 – Town Historian Kay Ables is named Rotary Citizen of the Year.

June 17, 2005 – Ridgefield Academy pays \$8 million to the Sisters of Notre Dame, completing a six-year lease-to-purchase agreement and gaining another 60,000 square feet of facilities on West Mountain.

June 20, 2005 – The Zoning Board of Appeals gives Mario Conte a permit to turn the long-vacant gas station on Route 33, Wilton Road West, into a country store. In 2008, it is still long-vacant.

June 26, 2005 – Ridgefield High School has its first off-campus commencement, using the O'Neill Center at WestConn in Danbury. About 330 students graduate.

July 3, 2005 – Belzoni's Red Lion Grill, born a dog kennel and a restaurant since the 1950s, closes to eventually make way for an apartment complex.

June 2005 – The Deer Committee issues a 26-page report, favoring town-sponsored hunts on open spaces to help control the deer population. One of 18 members opposes, feeling there are non-hunting ways of controlling deer.

June 2005 – Ridgefield police begin bicycle patrols in the village.

July 1, 2005 – In the biggest residential sale in the town's history, E. Hunter and Jeannie Harrison pay \$12 million for the former McKeon farm in Ridgebury that includes 87 acres. Mr. Harrison, CEO of the Canadian National Railway, and his wife plans to maintain the place as a horse farm.

July 12, 2005 – A gasoline tanker truck crashes and explodes on Route 7 near Simpaug Turnpike, killing the driver and closing the road for days. Nearly 9,000 gallons of fuel burn, heavily damaging a bridge over the Norwalk River that takes a year to replace. A one-lane temporary bridge is in place within 36 hours. Police seek a white SUV that may have caused the truck to swerve and jackknife.

July 14, 2005– Attorney A.J. Di Mattia, chairman of the Republican Town Committee, announces he will run for first selectman against incumbent Rudy Marconi.

July 2005 – Work begins on widening Route 7 north of Ridgefield Ice Cream to I-84.

July 2005 – Dr. Peter Yanity announces he will retire as a selectman, ending more than three decades of public service in Ridgefield.

July 14, 2005 – Sperry Andrews, an artist who, with his wife Doris, led efforts to preserve his home, Weir Farm, dies at the age of 87.

July 22, 2005 – Jerry Marcus, a longtime Ridgefielder and nationally syndicated Trudy cartoonist whose work appeared frequently in The Ridgefield Press for four decades, dies at 81.

August 2005 – 20 condominiums are proposed for 66 Grove Street.

August 2005 – After 40 years on the Conservation Commission, Edith Meffley retires.

Aug. 29, 2005 – Hurricane Katrina hits New Orleans and almost immediately, Ridgefielders led by Selectman Di Masters begin planning aid efforts under the name, Ridgefield Responds. The town adopts Pass Christian, Miss., sending truckloads of supplies, plus other help.

Aug. 30, 2005 – 5,600 children show up for school.

September 2005 – In the wake of Katrina, premium gasoline is reaching nearly \$4 a gallon in Ridgefield.

September 2005 – Aquarion, the water company, proposes putting a water tank in Pierrepont State Park as part of a plan to get a water line to Scotland-Barlow Mountain Schools.

Sept. 7, 2005 – 61 local nurses volunteer to be available in case of a local emergency.

Sept. 7, 2005 – Davis Harris, 59, pleads guilty to murdering his wife with a baseball bat at a Danbury Road apartment in April 2003. He is sentenced to 35 years in prison.

Sept. 22, 2005 – The Planning and Zoning Commission quickly approves plans for a new Bissell building that will look very much like the one that burned down in May.

Sept. 24, 2005 – The Police Department has a semi-formal dinner dance at St. Mary's Hall to celebrate the department's 50th anniversary.

October 2005 – New Alliance Bank says it will open any office in the old Chambers Army and Navy store. Three years later, the building is still empty.

October 2005 – Temple Shearith Israel begins having services at the First Congregational Church while its building is being renovated and expanded.

Oct. 1, 2005 – A state ban on talking on a cell phone while driving goes into effect. In the years that follow, Ridgefield police pinch many hundreds of drivers for violating the law.

Oct. 8, 2005 – A 68-year-old Stony Hill Road woman dies after a candle sets her house afire during a power failure.

Oct. 13, 2005 – Local Republicans charge that First Selectman Rudy Marconi was a partner 18 years earlier in a Long Island-based printing company involved in pollution

and other legal entanglements. Mr. Marconi is among 11 named defendants in a suit brought by the state of New York to recover cleanup costs for pollution in Babylon, Long Island. Mr. Marconi says he is not responsible for the pollution, though he was once a partner in the firm.

Oct. 16, 2005 – Temple Shearith Israel breaks ground on a \$3 million expansion and renovation project.

Oct. 19, 2005 – The selectmen appoint a five-member Deer Management Committee, led by Tom Belote who was co-chair of the previous Deer Study Committee. It will oversee hunts on town land.

Oct. 20, 2005 – A two-year study of Route 35 finds that strategic “tweaking” of many intersections, costing perhaps only a half million dollars, could improve traffic flow.

Oct. 20, 2005 – Ridgefield High School sophomore Heather Stephens and senior Josh Kearns each earn Fairfield County Interscholastic Athletic Conference cross country championships – the first time since 1991 that the same school produced both boys and girls individual winners.

Oct. 26, 2005 – A security guard at Ridgefield High School is arrested for selling drugs to students, and the company that supplies guards is suspended.

Oct. 26, 2005 – Edna-May Olson, a founder of the OWLS and a longtime vocal advocate for senior citizens, dies at 93. She was 90 when she retired as the town’s agent for the elderly.

Oct. 31, 2005 – After 28 years with the department, Fire Chief Louis Yarrish announces he will retire July 1, 2006.

Nov. 2, 2005 – Voters approve the town’s assuming ownership of Mapleshade Cemetery, four of the 14 acres of graveyards bounded by North Salem Road, Mapleshade Road, and North Street.

Nov. 8, 2005 – Incumbent First Selectman Rudy Marconi takes 66% of the vote in defeating Republican challenger A.J. Di Mattia.

Nov. 9, 2005 – Eureka V LLC has a new plan for its 156 acres off Bennett’s Farm Road: 345 age-restricted condominiums and a 100,000-square-foot office building.

Dec. 1, 2005 – Wayne Addressi, whose family owns buildings and a jewelry store on Main Street, suggests the town build a 300-car parking garage on Bailey Avenue,



Fall 2005 – Two Newtown men are arrested for stealing more than \$40,000 worth of fuel oil from the Home Heating Oil terminal on Route 7.

December 2005 – The King Neptune, a fixture on the restaurant scene for 50 years, closes.

Dec. 1, 2005 – A 19-year-old Wilton man is arrested on an assault charge, alleged he broke a bottle over the head of a 15-year-old Ridgefield girl in a fight during a drinking party at a Ridgefield house.

Dec. 6, 2005 – William Frazee, who died in Oct. 19 at 99, left bequests of \$200,000 each to the Ridgefield Fire Department and the Ridgefield Library plus grants to other local organizations, it is revealed in Probate Court.

Dec. 11, 2005 – The Rev. Dale Rosenberger preaches his last sermon at the First Congregational Church, from which he is retiring to take over a new congregation on Cape Cod. He had been here nearly eight years.

Dec. 16, 2005 – A large number of police surround Ridgefield High School after a report of a possible angry student with a gun. Officials never explain exactly what triggered the incident, but no one is arrested.

Dec. 28, 2005 – A veteran and beloved school bus driver, fired after some minor traffic accidents and then found to be suffering from brain cancer, is rehired so she can get back her medical benefits, even though Marlene Buturla cannot drive. Many in the community rally to her support.

## **2006**

January 2006 – The Ridgefield Police propose demolishing their East Ridge headquarters, a 1890s house, and replacing it with a new building. Preservationists object.

January 2006 – Electric rates increase 22%.

January 2006 – Vandals go on a rampage late in the month, smashing dozens of mailboxes, and knocking down fences.

Jan. 4, 2006 – Toll Brothers pays \$8.4 million for 27 acres north of Great Pond to build its 73-unit Regency at Ridgefield condominiums.

Jan. 5, 2006 – Coordinated raids on the Ridgefield and South Salem homes of a suspected “significant drug dealer” by Ridgefield and Westchester County police uncover close to one kilogram of cocaine, some \$75,000 in cash, a loaded .45 caliber semi-automatic

handgun, and a stolen Kel-Tech .223 assault rifle.

Jan. 16, 2006 – Mary Ann Baldwin receives the Spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Community Service Award.

Jan. 17, 2006 – Four days of severe weather cause many problems, but most lasting are the pipes that burst at the Keeler Tavern, damaging hundreds of old glass photographic negatives in the Joseph Hartmann collection. The plates are sent to a restoration company.

Feb. 9, 2006 – After more than 130 years of publishing, The Ridgefield Press finally goes full color on its front pages.

Feb. 11, 2006 – Both supporters and opponents of the war in Iraq stage demonstrations at the veterans memorial by the Community Center.

Feb. 13, 2006 – The Board of Education approves Mandarin as the seventh language taught at the high school.

Feb. 14, 2006 – The Planning and Zoning Commission vetoes Eureka's plan for 345 age-restricted condos, and a 100,000-square-foot office building south of Bennett's Farm Road.

Feb. 18, 2006 – Playing goalie for St. Michael's College hockey team in Vermont, Ridgefielder Kristen Salierno breaks an NCAA record – the most saves in a game: 86. Nonetheless, her team loses, 9-2, to Manhattanville.

Feb. 26, 2006 – Bishop William Lori blesses the new organ at St. Mary's Church. There's also a concert in the afternoon.

Feb. 27, 2006 – Julie Sullivan announces her retirement as principal of Ridgebury School.

March 2006 – Uranium is discovered in a well serving 14 houses on Acre Lane and plans begin to provide an Aquarion water line to the street.

March 2006 – Phyllis Paccadolmi, who worked at the Ridgefield Library 53 years, dies at the age of 76. When she began in 1946, the library had two employees. When she retired in 1999, it had 18.

March 4, 2006 – Pulitzer Prize-winning author Frank McCourt charms an audience of 500 people at the Ridgefield Playhouse.

March 7, 2006 – RHS basketball Coach Ray Bielizna resigns amid allegations that he

deliberately didn't use his best players for much of the final regular-season game against Bassick Feb. 22, resulting in a loss that dropped Ridgefield into a less tough tournament category where it stood a better chance of doing well. The coach denies the charges. His team backs him at a school board meeting. Two weeks later, school administrators refuse to accept his resignation and he returns for another season.

March 15, 2006 – Former Probate Judge Reed F. Shields dies at 85.

March 28, 2006 – Sunset Hall, an 18,000-square-foot mansion built in 1912 on Old West Mountain Road, is placed on the auction block by the owners, but no one bids enough. It had been on the market for \$11.5 million.

March 31, 2006 – After learning he was not selected as the new fire chief, Assistant Chief Nick Gaeta has an angry confrontation with First Selectman Rudy Marconi. The next day, the selectmen call the behavior unacceptable, and tell him he can resign or take an unpaid leave of absence. He retires. Later, he appeals his treatment. [The case is still in litigation in September 2008.]

Spring 2006 – *Two Little Girls in Blue*, a suspense novel by best-selling author Mary Higgins Clark that is set in Ridgefield, is published by Simon & Schuster. The author later speaks [here](#).

April 6, 2006 – Town historian Richard E. Venus, former postmaster and selectman, dies at the age of 91. His 365 Press columns, "Dick's Dispatch," tell the history of Ridgefield in much of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

April 23, 2006– Matthew S. Turley, a 21-year-old Ridgefield High School graduate doing mission work in Argentina for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is struck by a car and killed.

May 2006 – The housing market in Ridgefield is "softening." A total of 233 houses are on the market compared to 149 the previous May.

May 2006 – Zeus, the police department's new dog, goes on patrol, sniffing for drugs and helping to find lost people. His handler is Officer Shawn Murray.

May 8, 2006 – Heather Burford takes over as the new fire chief. She is the first female fire chief in the state and heads an all-male department.

May 9, 2006 – Only 18.6% of the voters turn out to pass town and school budgets, totaling \$111 million and raising taxes 3.5%.

May 18, 2006 – The town's Emergency Planning Committee meets to consider "what

happens in case of an avian flu pandemic.”

May 22, 2006 – Two women who have taught here for years are named principals: Elizabeth Smith of Ridgebury School and Julie Droller of Veterans Park. Carl Charles is named new athletic director at the high school.

May 31, 2006 – In one of the biggest Town Meetings in many years, more than 700 people turn out and vote 531 to 194 to approve a controlled deer hunt on town properties.

June 2006 – The venerable Limestone Service Station begins selling Irving gas, made in Canada and cheaper than any other brand in town.

June 2006 – Superior Court approves 50 multifamily units at the old Red Lion site, overturning Ridgefield’s rejection because 15 of the units will be affordable housing.

June 2006 – The widening of Route 7 north causes many traffic jams and irate motorists.

June 4, 2006 – More than 1,000 parishioners gather in Ballard Park to celebrate the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St. Mary’s Parish.

June 5, 2006 – William T. Peatt Jr., a builder, contractor and Realtor in Ridgefield who for many years ran Peatt’s Resort on Lake Mamanasco, dies at 80.

June 7, 2006 – Mary Creagh dies at 97. She had attended the one-room schoolhouses at Starrs Plain and Limestone, was a member of the last class to graduate from Hamilton High School on Bailey Avenue in 1925, and taught in the Ridgefield schools from 1933 until 1969.

June 9, 2006 – A motorist almost hits a bear crossing West Mountain Road.

June 13, 2006 – Heather Burford is sworn in as fire chief.

June 21, 2006 – Edwin B. Allan is Rotary’s Citizen of the Year.

June 25, 2006 – Victoria Howell, 12, photographs a Black Bear on her family’s back porch on Flat Rock Drive.

June 26, 2006 – The town begins improving Cain’s Hill Road, probably the steepest old road in heavy use in Ridgefield.

June 29-July 1, 2006 – The town celebrates the 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the encampment of Rochambeau’s troops in Ridgebury with a ball, re-enactments, a concert, speakers, exhibits, and a Mass in a meadow, celebrated by Bishop Lori.

Summer 2006 – A new Little League practice field is built on town land off Shadow Lake Road.

July 2006 – Dianna Lindsay, high school principal, takes a job in Virginia.

July 2006 – Paying town property taxes online begins.

July 2006 – Pond's Edge Professional Park, mostly medical offices, opens in the old Benrus/Perkin-Elmer/Silicon Valley Group building on Route 7.

July 2006 – A townwide property revaluation begins.

July 26, 2006 – The selectmen name Kay Ables as town historian.

August 2006 – The Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra terminates the contract of 10-year director Sidney Rothstein, who had suffered a stroke. Mr. Rothstein sues.

August 2006 – The state Department of Environmental Protection says bow hunting will be allowed at Bennett's Pond state park.

Aug. 3, 2006 – Olinto "Lynce" Carboni, a multisport star in his youth and a dancer into his 90s, dies at 97. He had worked for the school system until he was 91.

Aug. 5, 2006 – Albert Gaeta, former fire chief, police commissioner, and plumber, dies at 80.

Aug. 8, 2006 – Anti-war challenger Ned Lamont outpolls U.S. Senator Joseph I. Lieberman, 3 to 2, among Ridgefield Democrats in the state primary. Lamont wins statewide, but by a slimmer margin.

Aug. 9, 2006 – The selectmen agree that instead of a new police station, the town should renovate and enlarge the existing one.

Aug. 12, 2006 – The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of the Nutmeg Festival takes place at St. Stephen's Church. The fair began in 1906.

Aug. 29, 2006 – Bob Fortunato lives up to his name when he wins \$1.7 million in the Connecticut Lottery.

Aug. 31, 2006 – The Odd Fellows sell their hall on King Lane to Jesse Lee Memorial United Methodist Church, which renovates it into a chapel and other facilities.

September 2006 – Because of a mold problem, the high school library closes for eight days. The fix costs \$30,000.

September 2006 – The schools begin using ConnectED, a system that can notify parents in an emergency, calling up to 25,000 phones in three minutes.

September 2006 – 50 Coins, a restaurant, opens off Main Street.

Sept. 1, 2006 – For the first time in 17 years, the school year's first head-count has found fewer students than were there the year before – a total of 5,492, compared to 5,540 on Oct. 1, 2006.

Sept. 1, 2006 – The Rev. John Heeckt becomes minister of the Ridgebury Congregational Church.

Sept. 5, 2006 – Construction begins on the new Boys and Girls Club, a \$6-million project.

Sept. 6, 2006 – A Town Meeting accepts the donation of 17 acres off Hickory Lane from the Bard family. Dr. Harry Bard, Ridgefield school superintendent from 1924 to 1928, bought it in 1915.

Sept. 12, 2006 – The Ridgefield Library reveals expansion plans that call for tearing down the old Ridgefield Playhouse/Webster Bank building it owns.

Oct. 25, 2006 – Four Ridgefield Marines, who went to Iraq together, arrive back home after seven months of service. They are Corporal Anthony Ippoliti, Lance Corporal Frederick Lohse, Lance Corporal Juan Ocampos and Lance Corporal Jon Olbrych.

November 2006 – Connecticut Magazine again rates Ridgefield the number one town in its population class, citing in particular its low crime rate and top rating for “leisure/culture.” The crime rating was the lowest the magazine had found since it started ranking towns in 1992.

November 2006 – Keith Jones, who has written two books of Ridgefield history, one covering the farmers of Farmingville and the other, the Battle of Ridgefield, reports he is moving to Arizona.

Nov. 7, 2006 – Voters approve charter changes that among other things lengthen the terms of the first selectman and selectmen from two to four years.

Nov. 7, 2006 – In the election, Gov. M. Jodi Rell, U.S. Senator Joseph Lieberman (running as an independent), and Congressman Christopher Shays all win by comfortable

margins here.

Nov. 9, 2006 – Media flood Peaceable Hill Road to cover the felling of this year's Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree on the Robert Kinnaird property.

Nov. 15, 2006 – The first town-sponsored deer hunt begins at Hemlock Hills preserve.

Nov. 13, 2006 – Teachers agree to a 3% a year pay raise for three years.

Nov. 14, 2006 – A 17-year-old Ridgefield boy dies of an apparent suicide, and his parents charge that drugs obtained at school led to the death. Officials vow to boost the battle against drug use.

December 2006 – Deborah Ann's Sweet Shoppe moves from near the Ancient Mariner, where it started eight years earlier, to 381 Main Street, once the site of several grocery stores.

Dec. 11, 2006 – Responding to concerns about drugs in school, the Board of Education decides to allow the police dog to sniff high school lockers.

Dec. 19, 2006 – The town's first deer hunt ends; 25 are killed over about two months.

Dec. 27, 2006 – Scott Mullin photographs myrtle blooming in his front yard as the weather continues to be unusually mild.

Dec. 30, 2006 – Charles F. Meffley, who chaired the committees that built Scotland and Branchville Schools, dies at 84.

## **2007**

2007 – The Ridgefield Film Commission is created to woo moviemakers here.

January 2007 – Town officials are talking about a parking garage to boost spaces at Branchville Station, but concede it's not apt to happen soon.

Jan. 2, 2007 – Superintendent Kenneth Freeston announces he will retire in one year, but soon changes his mind and becomes superintendent in North Salem, N.Y.

Jan. 10, 2007 – The selectmen decide not to spend \$1.3 million on 1.2 acres next to the police station, and the Leary property is eventually developed for apartments.

Jan. 15, 2007 – Longtime community volunteer Frank Lancaster receives the Spirit of Dr. King Ridgefield Community Service Award.

Jan. 21, 2007 – National Public Radio journalist Scott Simon speaks at the Playhouse in a benefit for Wooster School.

Jan. 21, 2007 – A 78-year-old Ridgefield man is arrested for unlawfully discharging a firearm after shooting himself in the foot while apparently trying to bag a raccoon.

Jan. 25, 2007 – Walgreens confirms it plans to become the town's fifth pharmacy. In summer/fall 2008, the old A&P/CVS building at Danbury Road and Grove Street is razed and the new Walgreens building erected.

Jan. 29, 2007 – William Peeler, who led the Toys for Tots program from a small local operation to a regional effort that distributes tens of thousands of toys each Christmas, dies at 77. His wife, who helped the effort, had died June 21, 2006.

Jan. 30, 2007 – State Rep. John Frey is named a member of the Republican National Committee.

Jan. 31, 2007 – Jeff Jaslow, a longtime staff member, is appointed principal of Ridgefield High School

February 2007 – Realtors find a glut of "inventory," but also are hopeful for a rebound in the housing market. It doesn't happen.

February 2007 – George Harrison, owner for 16 years, announces he is closing the Ridgefield Photo Shop. The 60-year-old business is a victim of the digital age.

Feb. 5, 2007 – A fire destroys the Monahan home on Seth Low Mountain Road.

Feb 22, 2007 – John Katz, longtime planning and zoning commissioner and youth advocate, explains why he always wears black: "It's intellectual laziness," he says. "I don't want to bother picking out colors."

March 2007 – Chad Cohen sells the Chez Lenard hot dog stand to Ridgefield native Michael Principi.

March 2007 – Air Age, which had leased office space in the Venus Building, moves to Wilton. Dairyland USA, also known as The Chef's Warehouse, soon moves its headquarters to the space.

March 2007 – Police officials tell the selectmen they want a 7,200-square-foot addition to the 100-year-old police station. Cost is estimated at \$5 million.

March 2007 – A campaign begins to convince the TV show, Extreme Makeover Home



Edition, to rebuild the home of EJ Carfi, a fourth grader at Veterans Park School who has a rare skin disease so severe that a touch can give him a blister. When the TV show picks someone else, the community rallies, raises money and has the project done in the spring of 2008.

March 2007 – Some parents complain about the use of *An Inconvenient Truth*, Al Gore's movie on global warming, in a high school course.

March 2007– The town basketball tournament, a mid-March tradition since 1977, dies for lack of players.

March 5, 2007 – “We’re having a period of enlightenment, where people are becoming more aware of the risks that are out there,” Ridgefield economist Nick Perna tells PBS’s The News Hour, commenting on the Feb. 27 stock market plunge.

March 11, 2007 – A Ridgefield father is arrested for breach of the peace and disorderly conduct after grabbing an eight-year-old hockey player by the collar, shaking him and screaming at him after a championship game ends.

March 14, 2007 – Assistant Superintendent Michael Hibbard confirms he’s quitting to join Superintendent Kenneth Freeston as a North Salem school administrator [see Jan. 2, 2007].

March 19, 2007 – A 19-year-old Bedford, N.Y., driver is sentenced to prison for the death of his passenger, 17-year-old Michael Plunkett of Ridgefield, in a December 2005 car crash in Bedford. The Bedford teenager was allegedly driving under the influence of drugs at the time, and a month later, was arrested for drunken driving after another crash the seriously injured another passenger.

March 20, 2007 – Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz demonstrates the new optical scanning voting machine to students at Ridgefield High School.

March 23, 2007 – Pauline Frulla Moylan, longtime Republican registrar of voters who had been one of the town’s first girl scouts, dies at 83.

April 2, 2007 – The school board narrows its superintendent search to Deborah Low, who is assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction in Wilton.

April 12, 2007 – Dr. David E. Weingast of Main Street, superintendent of schools from 1967 to 1977 and author of four books of history, dies at the age of 94.

April 16, 2007 – In what is called the worst flooding since 1955, the Norwalk River overflows its banks in many places along Route 7 and sweeps away the long-famous

Branchville antiques shop that had straddled the river for 75 years. With just over five inches of rain having fallen Sunday night and Monday in already rain-soaked Ridgefield, dams burst at Stonehenge Inn and Woodcock Nature Center. Some roads are closed for two days, and the state is eventually declared a disaster area.

April 17, 2007 – Gov. M. Jodi Rell helps the town break ground on 20 units of affordable housing on Prospect Ridge. In the past 33 years, the state has helped Ridgefield provide 140 units of subsidized housing, including these.

April 17, 2007– None of the 10 Ridgefield students who attend Virginia Tech University is injured when a gunman kills 32 students and faculty.

May 2007 – Newsweek magazine ranks Ridgefield High School 440<sup>th</sup> in the nation, third in Connecticut, and first in Fairfield County for academic quality. The ranking is based largely on the number of students taking advanced placement courses.

May 1, 2007 – Eureka V applies for a 509 unit housing development on its 153 acres south of Bennett’s Farm Road. It would include affordable units and cover 55 acres, leaving 98 acres for open space.

May 3, 2007 – Developer Jerry Tuccio, who built more than 1,000 houses in Ridgefield over 25 years, announces he plans to give \$125,000 to help five of his developments refurbish recreation areas.

May 14, 2007 – The Ridgefield Library receives an anonymous \$1 million gift for its building campaign.

May 15, 2007 – For the annual budget referendum, optical scan voting machines are used in Ridgefield for the first time. Only 19% of the eligible voters turn out, and while they approve the budgets and planning for a police station addition, they reject a \$1.4-million proposal to improve Onalfo field.

May 16, 2007 – A “microburst” with winds near hurricane strength hits town late in the afternoon, felling countless trees and wires, closing more than 60 roads, and leaving thousands without power for up to three days. Downed trees trap 15 to 20 school buses that are delivering elementary pupils to their homes, but no one is hurt.

May 28, 2007 – The Memorial Day parade uses a new route – from Jesse Lee Memorial United Methodist Church, as usual, straight up Main Street to Ballard Park. In recent years, it had turned east on Prospect Street, marched down East Ridge and over Market Street to the Community Center. The route is deemed too long and steep, especially for older marchers. Post-parade ceremonies now take place in the park instead of at the Community Center. Keynote speaker is Paul Bucha, who received the Congressional

Medal of Honor for valor in the Vietnam War.

May 31, 2007 – Matthew Gabriele, an East Ridge Middle School seventh grader, makes it to the quarter finals of the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C.

June 2007 – Dr. Lyn Merrill, principal of Farmingville School and a 33-year staff member here, retires, but later in the year is elected a member of the Board of Education.

June 2007 – Barlow Mountain Principal Patricia Michael is named the new assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction, replacing Dr. Michael Hibbard.

June 3, 2007 – Ridgefield's first triathlon takes place as 250 people swim a half mile across Great Pond, bicycle 15 miles through Ridgebury, and run 3.4 miles to end up at Veterans Park School.

June 13, 2007 – A federal jury finds First Selectman Rudy Marconi violated Edward Tuccio's First Amendment right to petition the government, by refusing to meet with him about a development plan. The jury fines him \$1. Mr. Marconi appeals and the verdict is overturned [*see* Oct. 25, 2007].

June 13, 2007 – Michael Ryer, Realtor and longtime community volunteer, is named Rotary Club Citizen of the Year.

June 20, 2007 – Neighbors oppose a postal plan to put more parking spaces next to the post office, demolishing a 100-year-old house in the process.

June 21, 2007 – Developer Edward Tuccio, who sued Rudy Marconi, announces he will run against Mr. Marconi for first selectman. Mr. Tuccio fails to get any backing and eventually drops out.

June 21, 2007 – Hersam Acorn Newspapers, publisher of The Ridgefield Press and seven other community newspapers, announces it will buy 11 more newspapers, plus two printing plants and other publications.

June 24, 2007 – 417 Ridgefield High School seniors graduate.

June 25 & 27, 2007 – The last men's and women's monthly dinners are held at the Italian American Club, which is closing its banquet hall and leasing the space to Nature's Temptations, a health food store.

June 25, 2007 – The Connecticut General Assembly votes to name stretches of highway in Ridgefield for two prominent citizens, the late Dick Venus and the late Liz Leonard. West Lane from the fountain to the Little Red Schoolhouse (Route 35) would be the

Richard E. Venus Memorial Highway and North Salem Road from Barlow Mountain Road to the New York State line (Route 116) would be the Elizabeth M. Leonard Memorial Highway.

June 28, 2007 – HSBC, the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corp., announces plans to open a branch at 108 Danbury Road, a former gas station site.

July 1, 2007 – Deborah Low begins work as school superintendent.

July 3, 2007– Gino Torcellini, who had managed Silver Spring Country Club for 40 years and was a longtime town treasurer, dies at 88.

July 5, 2007 – School board member Scott Mason confirms he is running for first selectman on the Republican ticket.

Aug. 24, 2007 – Martin Lawrence and Raven-Symone shoot scenes for the film, *College Road Trip*, at the Community Center.

Sept. 4, 2007 – A lone man robs the Citibank office at the north end of Main Street; it's Ridgefield first bank robbery since 1984. The robber is caught several weeks later, after a car crash following a bank robbery in Monroe.

Sept. 11, 2007 – Jeanne Timpanelli, a founder of the Ridgefield Historical Society who led the effort to save the 18th Century Scott house and move it to Sunset Lane to become the home of the new Ridgefield Historical Society, dies at 83.

Oct. 2, 2007 – Aldo “Squash” Travaglini dies at 93. His nickname became part of the local vernacular from his 66 years working on Main Street, 36 of them as owner of the Ridgefield News Store.

Oct. 11, 2007 – Two and a half years after the fire that destroyed the Bissell building on Main Street, works is ready to proceed, officials say.

Oct. 13, 2007 – The new Ridgefield Boys and Girls Club on Governor Street, complete with an outdoor pool, has its grand opening.

Oct. 19, 2007 – Branchville Elementary School Principal Jason McKinnon, who is the town's first Australian school administrator, passes the test and becomes an American citizen, to the delight of his fifth grade study partners.

Oct. 25, 2007 – A federal judge dismisses a jury verdict in a suit against First Selectman Rudy Marconi and the town, brought by Edward Tuccio who claimed his civil rights were violated. Judge Peter Dorsey said Mr. Tuccio's claim had no basis in law.

Nov. 6, 2007 – With more than 70% of the vote, Rudy Marconi is re-elected to his fifth term as first selectman, defeating Scott Mason. It is the first four-year term under the new charter provisions. It is also the first town election in which Ridgefielders vote with optical scan equipment rather than the old mechanical style lever machines.

Nov. 17, 2007 – The Ridgefield High School boys varsity soccer team wins the Class LL state title; it was the third championship in program history, the first since 1984.

Nov. 28, 2007 – After more than a year of battling over ponies kept on a small Abbott Avenue lot, a Town Meeting approves an ordinance prohibiting people from keeping livestock on plots of land of less than one-half acre.

Dec. 6, 2007 – Hudson City Savings Bank of New Jersey announces plans to open what will be Ridgefield's 16th banking office; it will be the 12th banking corporation to have a presence in the town.

Dec. 13, 2007 – The donation of five Tasers to the Ridgefield Police Department by an anonymous donor kicks up a ruckus, with some selectman arguing that a private donation was driving public policy. The police keep the Tasers, which had been cut from several previous budget requests.

Dec. 18, 2007 – The Planning and Zoning Commission refuses to prohibit first floor office space in the Central Business District.

## **2008**

Jan. 6, 2008 – More than 1,400 people attend the opening party for the Ridgefield 300<sup>th</sup> celebration. The event in the Community Center includes many exhibits, actors as historic personages, and even ice sculptures (which soon melted in the above-average January weather).

Feb. 11, 2008 – Pizza Hut on Danbury Road closes, making no announcement and no explanation.

Feb. 26, 2008 – Dr. Peter Yanity, former selectman and founder of youth sports programs, who practiced dentistry in Ridgefield for 49 years, dies at 81.

March 1, 2008 – The Governor's Ball at the Community Center is part of the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. Named for Governor Phineas Lounsbury, who built the center as his home, the event is also attended by current governor, M. Jodi Rell.

April 23, 2008 – As the subprime mortgage losses mount nationwide, Ridgefield's pension fund has seen an 8.5% drop and town officials consider suing the management firm that put town money into a riskier fund than the Pension Commission had approved.

May 10, 2008 – The new music director of the Ridgefield Symphony is named. Gerald Steichen is one of four finalists who conducted the orchestra in the 2007-08 season.

May 15, 2008 – With a run up in gas prices to \$4 and more per gallon, Ridgefielders begin changing their driving habits, somewhat.

May 16, 2008 – The Field of Flags, 4,576 small American flags, is placed on the lawn of the First Congregational Church to pay tribute to the members of the U.S. military forces who have died in Iraq and Afghanistan. The memorial, which moves from church to church, and sadly, grows, remains in Ridgefield till July 6.

May 25, 2008 – Museum in the Streets is dedicated. The 30 illustrated historical plaques have been erected throughout the village and in Branchville and Ridgebury.

June 7, 2008 – Thanks to the donations of money, materials and labor by hundreds of Ridgefielders and others, E.J. Carfi, his mother, Jodi, dad, George, and sister, Carina, move into their rebuilt home, which has special facilities to ease life for E.J., 11, who suffers from a rare disease that makes his skin incredibly fragile.

June 13, 2008 – Ridgefield gets its first Farmers Market, a place where local growers will gather weekly to sell locally grown produce and foods.

June 26, 2008 – As the price of fuel oil hits \$5 a gallon, town zoning officials consider regulating wood-burning furnaces.

July 4, 2008 – Rabbi Eric Eisenkramer conducts his first Shabbat service as the new spiritual leader of Temple Shearith Israel. Rabbi Jon Haddon, who retired after 21 years at the temple, remains as Rabbi Emeritus.

July 5, 2008 – Ridgefield celebrates its 300th birthday with a parade featuring 10 marching bands and 29 floats, a town fair, an old-fashioned game of base ball, and a concert by the Air Force Band. Despite torrential downpours the night before (after the July 4 fireworks had ended), it does not rain on Ridgefield's parade and the only people who get wet are the ballplayers sliding for catches on a saturated Veterans Park field.

July 21, 2008 – Theodore "Ted" Kunst, 54, drowns in Pierrepont Pond after his kayak overturns; officials believe he became entangled in the heavy weeds.

July 31, 2008 – Joining the trend in retail, the Ridgefield Library begins offering Express Checkout. Patrons use a special touch screen to scan their library cards and items they wish to take home.

Aug. 13, 2008 – The Board of Selectmen declines to change the name of Pump Lane to Somerset Place.

Aug. 27, 2008 – Ridgefielder Paul Bucha, a Congressional Medal of Honor winner for service in Vietnam, leads the Pledge of Allegiance at the Democratic National Convention, which nominates Barack Obama for President. Mr. Bucha is a national security and veterans affairs adviser to Senator Obama.

Sept. 2, 2008 – A moose visits Ridgefield; it's sighted near Route 7 and days later are photographed in the backyard of a Great Hill Road home. The roaming moose possibly meets its fate three weeks later when one is killed on I-684 in neighboring Lewisboro, N.Y., causing a nine-car pile-up.

Sept. 4, 2008 – Ridgefield schools now employ video security and intercom buzzers to control who enters the building; the school board discusses even more security, in the form of a computerized "visitor management" system, which would require visitors to provide a photo ID for scanning.

Sept. 12, 2008 – Police Chief Richard J. Ligi dies suddenly at age 60. He joined the force in 1967 as a clerk, when he was too young to carry a gun, and rose through the ranks before being appointed chief in 1999.

Sept. 17, 2008 – Mike Principi, owner of the Chez Lénard hot dog cart on Main Street, gets a chance to serve a special hot dog creation to domestic doyenne Martha Stewart during her television show.

Sept. 28, 2008 – Hundreds of people attend a three-hour party, with exhibits, marking the end of Ridgefield's 300<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration that began in January.

Oct. 1, 2008 – The State Highway Department announces it must close lower Branchville Road for two months in order to repair a retaining wall at Greims Pond, an old quarry.

