



Hartford Historical Society

The Garipay House • 1461 Maple Street
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HARTFORD • QUECHEE • WEST HARTFORD • WHITE RIVER JUNCTION • WILDER



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SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

September-October 2025

When the Equalizer Came to Hartford

By Scott Fletcher

"Charlie Brown's radio spot, take one!"

Female voice, "Who's that good looking guy in the Ski-Doo suit? It must be, oh, Tom Selleck!"

Dennis Brown, "Wrong! It's me, Dennis, the Equalizer, from Charlie Brown's. But I must admit, the mistake is easy to make when I'm wearing my Ski-Doo duds because they make any guy or gal look just super. It'll make you the hottest thing on snow this winter.

We at Charlie Brown's carry a complete line of Ski-Doo clothing from helmets to pants. And we always keep a super selection on hand. About the only thing I don't like is that they don't make an outfit for Dixie the super dog."

Dixie, "Woof."

Dennis Brown, "So for every member of your family, except your super dog, get a whole bunch of quality Ski-Doo sportswear from Charlie Brown's on scenic Route 4 between White River Junction and Quechee. Family owned and run for over thirty years."

(Music fades.)



Such radio ads were heard regularly on radio station Q106 from 1984 to 1988. They were the creation of Dennis Brown of Charlie Brown's Outdoor Power Equipment and Will Stanley of radio station Q106. "It was a highlight of my life doing that," says Dennis. "I think we got people's attention and put our message across and were able to sell stuff and also have some fun."

The commercials originally featured Dennis' father, Charlie Brown. "My dad did some radio ads before I did and they were very short," Dennis says. "My father was a man of few words. A reporter would ask him questions and he'd say, 'Yup. Yup.' 'You mean that snowblower could blow snow into the neighbor's

yard?' 'Yup.' That's all he said."

With increasing competition from large retailers in the 1980s, Dennis Brown created light hearted radio commercials and print ads featuring a character called the Equalizer who, with his Super Dog Dixie, promised customers great service and low prices at Charlie Brown's Outdoor Power Equipment in Hartford, VT. The radio spots made Dennis and Dixie celebrities in the Upper Valley.

Continued on page 6.

From the Editor . . .

If you were in the Upper Valley in the 1980s, you may remember hearing radio spots from Charlie Brown's Outdoor Power Equipment featuring the legendary *Equalizer*. This character was the creation of Dennis Brown who remains a local celebrity. In this issue, we bring you the *Equalizer* himself, and you can listen to some radio spots on our website.

Ephraim Morris and his brother Edward owned the Hartford Woolen Mill in the late 1800s and were leaders in the community. In this issue, you will see the national reaction when Ephraim threatened to end his support for Hartford's Congregational Church because pastor Herbert Boyd had voted for Democrat Grover Cleveland in 1894. Newspapers across the country chastized Morris for linking church and state. Learn what the congregation did on page 3.

Justin Morrill was so successful as a merchant and investor that he was able to run for the U.S. House of Representatives at age forty-four and devote the rest

of his life to public service. He served in the House from 1855 to 1867 when he was elected to the U.S. Senate. He became the longest serving Senator and continued until his death in 1898. He is best known for the Morrill Land Grant Acts that passed in 1862 and 1890. These allowed the states to sell federal land, taken from Native Americans, to fund education in agriculture and engineering. The act led to the creation of some seventy colleges and universities including the Vermont Agricultural College. Our story is on page 9.

The Hartford Historical Society gratefully acknowledges gifts in memory of Herman Dexter Barrows, Phil Bouthillier, Stanley & Loretta Garipay, Tom O'Neill, Beth Potter, and Phyllis & Bill Shambo.

Our September speaker will explain how the Upper Valley got its name. Details are on the back cover.

Scott Fletcher, Editor

Counting an Army

The Landmark, April 14, 1883

It is related that when Lee's army was passing through Gettysburg, Mr. Messersmith, cashier of the bank, standing on the bank steps, undertook to ascertain their number, tallying every 100 on a slip of paper in his hand. A rebel officer ordered him to desist under threat of arrest. Mr. Messersmith politely bowed, went to his barn, procuring 100 grains corn, which he held in his right hand thrust into his pantaloons pocket. He took his stand on the steps of the bank like any other careless looker-on, and for every 100 men he dropped a grain. When his hand was empty he had numbered 10,000 men, and then he gathered the grains up again to repeat the census. Thus he stood in the hot sun counting till he had numbered the entire host -- 60,000. The night after the march, he communicated to Governor Curtin the information he had thus gained.

The Mission Statement of the Hartford Historical Society

**To acquire, identify and preserve
information and artifacts related to
Hartford's past and communicate knowledge
of local history through programs,
publications, and other interaction with the
community.**



Hartford Historical Society

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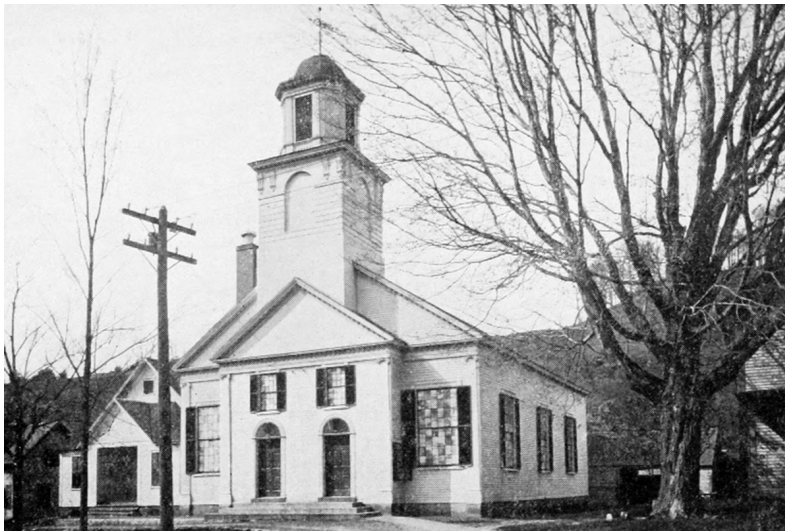
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Religion and Politics Spark Kerfuffle in Hartford

Ephraim Morris was a dedicated Republican. As owner of the Hartford Woolen Mill with his brother Edward, he required that all company superintendents be Republicans. When he went to Bugbee's Carriage Shop for a new express wagon and found that Mr. Bugbee only had a brand called a Democrat in stock, Mr. Morris wouldn't take a wagon of such politics. And when the Second Congregational Church in Hartford, VT advertised for a new pastor in 1894, Ephraim insisted that the new man be a Republican. This led to a church vs. state debate in Hartford that spread through newspapers across the country.

On October 11, 1895, *The Landmark* reported what most local residents had known since June.

Parties in Hartford Won't Accept the Gospel Propounded by a Democratic Pastor

"Politics have caused a serious disturbance in the Second Cong'l Society of Hartford. A year ago, a committee representing the society advertised for a pastor who should be young, an American, a graduate of Andover, married, interested in young people and ready to work for them, and a Republican. Rev. Herbert W. Boyd then pastor of the South Cong'l church at Amherst, Mass., offered himself as a candidate who met nearly all the requirements and was accepted.

"His relations to the church were harmonious until after the annual meeting of the church society last June, when Ephraim Morris, a woolen manufacturer,

who is a wealthy and prominent member of the society asked him if he voted for Grover Cleveland, and being told that he did, said that he would not contribute to his support. Mr. Morris, Edward W. Morris, his brother and partner, and Mr. Charles M. Cone, his son-in-law, have since then refused to contribute anything toward Mr. Boyd's salary. The three have usually paid about one-third the amount raised by the church society.

"Mr. Boyd said he had been treated kindly and courteously by Messrs. Morris and Cone, who do not believe that church and state should be kept separate. Calling him a Democrat, they had refused to contribute to his salary.

"He was not a party man, but voted, when he voted at all, for the candidates and the principles he believed in. This was a matter that concerned himself and his duty to the state. It had no connection with his duty to the church, he thought.

"Mr. Morris was ill and could not be interviewed, but a member of the family said he believed that Mr. Boyd, being a Democrat, was not fit to be pastor of the church. The country was being ruined by Democratic administration. His business was being ruined. One of his mills in Hartland would be shut down Saturday night, and 100 men would be thrown out of employment.

"He would not give one cent for the support of any Democrat. To get an idea of the feeling among the Republicans of the community relative to this matter, several were interviewed. None of these would permit the use of names, but said they believed that politics and religion should not be mixed."

Continued on page 4.

Kerfuffle continued from page 3.

Rev. Herbert W. Boyd had begun his pastorate at the Hartford Congregational Church on November 11, 1894 and all seemed well initially. He succeeded Rev. H.B. Greene who left the ministry, moved west, and went into business. Rev. Boyd had married two years earlier and the young couple settled into the parsonage on Maple Street. Mrs. Boyd was soon leading the church's Missionary Committee and the Sunday School program.

But Ephraim Morris rose in opposition to Rev. Boyd in 1895. *The Washington Post* quoted him on October 7, 1895 saying, "I mistrusted from Mr. Boyd's application that he was not a Republican, and cautioned the committee against hiring him, saying that I would not contribute toward the support of a Democrat; but they were all wise and had their way. I gave them fair warning and they must take the consequences.

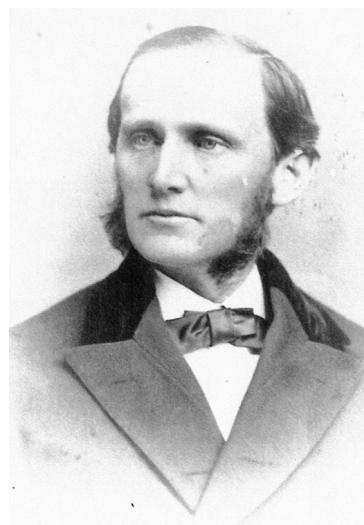
"I went to Mr. Boyd and he acknowledged that he voted for Mr. Cleveland. I am a woolen manufacturer. Democracy is detrimental to my business, and I wouldn't hear the gospel preached by a Democrat any more than I would cut off my right hand. If they secure a Republican they can have my support; otherwise they'll go without."

The flap gained notoriety across the country. *The Chicago Chronicle* provided insight into Mr. Morris' views on September 29, 1895.

Protection Manufacturer Warring on A Preacher Who Voted for Cleveland

"In the town of Hartford, Vt., is a woolen factory, of which the leading owner is Ephraim Morris. Mr. Morris is a stiff republican and a high protectionist and is vouched for as being a firm believer in the McKinley tariff, especially that part which lays the duties upon wool. The manufacturing business is in first-rate condition and the mill has been forced to run overtime lately on account of the rush of orders. But that none the less makes Mr. Morris a strong protectionist republican McKinleyite.

"The Congregational church in the town, of which Mr. Morris is the leading pillar and to which he is a large giver, has for its pastor Rev. Herbert W. Boyd, who went there last November from the Congregational church at South Amherst, Mass. When the business year of the society was opened in June, the place was canvassed for subscriptions for the support of the church for the ensuing year. Mr. Morris



Ephraim Morris threatened to end his support for the Congregational Church when he learned that pastor Herbert Boyd had voted for Grover Cleveland in the 1894 Presidential Election. In May 1896, he submitted a letter of resignation to the church, but the congregation accepted the resignation of Pastor Boyd instead.

said that he should not give anything to the church as long as Mr. Boyd was the pastor, for he was a democrat. He was sustained in this action by his brother E.W. Morris, and his son-in-law, Mr. Cone.

"These three men have been giving about one third of the money for the support of the church. The withdrawal of their subscriptions either means that the remainder of the church who, as far as known, continue to support Mr. Boyd, must get along without this material help and that the pastor must accept a reduced salary and live with the community in a state of discord, or that the pastor must leave and the church must

submit to the condition imposed by the Morris family of having a pastor who is acceptable to them in politics. There is no question that this difference of political views is the ground of Mr. Morris' action, for he has stated it to the pastor and to others of the church.

"The fact in the case is that Mr. Boyd is not a democrat, as Mr. Morris has said, but he did vote for Cleveland. He is a thorough mugwump, in that he has generally voted mixed ticket, selecting the candidates for his approval according to his estimate of their fitness for office and the public bearing of the issues.

"Mr. Boyd has never made his political views prominent in his relations with the people, but he has arrived at his conclusions after much careful study and continues to hold other doctrines than those of Mr. McKinley regarding the tariff, though the large part of his church are republicans of the Vermont type.

Continued on page 5.

Hartford Historical Society Newsletter



The Ottaquechee Mills in North Hartland, VT, owned by Ephraim Morris, benefitted from tariffs on imported wool enacted by Republican President William McKinley in 1890.

“The conclusion of this peculiar quarrel will be watched with some interest. The political faith of a pastor does not usually affect his standing in the pulpit, but this Hartford society demands new and original qualifications. The members by their actions have placed themselves in a somewhat peculiar position, and an explanation would be very timely. If Rev. Mr. Boyd was running for constable, road commissioner, or any other office, it would be a different thing, but when it comes to freezing him out of a church for his political convictions it appears somewhat intolerant and unreasonable.”

The Montpelier Argus and Patriot ridiculed Ephraim Morris on October 9, 1895. “A man who is thoroughly consistent demands a certain amount of admiration though his consistency may be devotion to ideas that are utterly wrong. But the man with but one idea, and that wrong, who consistently and persistently clings to that and tries to force it upon others, is not a pleasant kind of citizen and easily becomes a good deal of a nuisance. Such a man is Ephraim Morris, of Hartford, who has recently brought himself into a prominence not at all pleasant by his insistence upon his own theories of Republicanism and his aversion for and attempt to boycott Democrats. Morris strides his narrow world like a Colossus, and the outside world laughs at or blushes for him.

“A resume of some of Ephraim Morris' history shows him thoroughly consistent. When his woolen mill was completed he advertised for superintendents who must be Americans, Protestants and Republicans. He got them. When a new minister was wanted in

Hartford, the advertisement, which is understood to have been prepared by Morris, called for a Republican. He didn't get him.

“Trouble forthwith commenced and is likely to continue, but we understand that Rev. Herbert W. Boyd has grit and grace enough to remain in Hartford at a salary reduced because of the withdrawal of the support of Ephraim Morris, E.W. Morris and Charles M. Cone, rather than be driven from his pulpit and allow bigotry to reign in the little town.

“Now comes another chapter. Annie Morris, daughter of Ephraim Morris, not long ago became engaged to Edward B. Frost, a young man of excellent family and unexceptionable character, who is assistant instructor in astronomy at Dartmouth college. Since the trouble with Mr. Boyd, Ephraim Morris learned that his prospective son-in-law is a Democrat. He promptly informed the young man that he had had enough of him. He got rid of him. The engagement is at an end. This is a record of persistent bigotry and intolerance which it would be difficult to equal.

“We don't know that anything can be done about it. Ephraim Morris, as employer and as parishioner, may employ whom he pleases, and contribute or not as he pleases. If his daughter chooses to obey his commands in such extremes she may without interference from others. But the criticisms brought upon Ephraim Morris by the publicity given to his bigotry, insolence and proscription may deter others from going to extremes to which their own bitterness might prompt them. It is gratifying to have one's own way, but it is not pleasant to be regarded with contempt by the world.”

Without their financial support, Ephraim Morris and his allies expected Rev. Boyd to resign, but instead he declared that he would remain on principle, accepting such salary as the church could pay with these contributions withdrawn. Thereupon he was advised by Morris' supporters to resign, as he was not generally liked but, when the congregation voted on whether to retain their pastor, Rev. Boyd was supported by a tally of 89 to 4.

On May 15, 1896, however, *The Landmark* reported that Rev. Boyd had sent a letter of resignation to the church and noted on May 29, 1896 that, “Rev. Herbert W. Boyd, who has figured so prominently in the affair of the Hartford Congregational church on account of his politics, has finally resigned, his resignation to take effect Sunday.” Rev. Boyd and his wife returned to Massachusetts where he served as a highly regarded Congregational pastor for many years.

So Charlie asked Dennis to do the spots. "I think I did some regular cookie cutter-type ads to start with and then we got more creative as we went on," Dennis says. "Then we came up with the Equalizer idea. The Equalizer is selling service and low prices. The competitors then were like Sears, John Deere, Kmart, any of the box stores, but they didn't have service. We did, and so we touted that. So the Equalizer came to earth to counteract all that box store stuff. At Charlie Brown's, you could have low prices and still get great service.

As the Equalizer, Dennis wore a cape and can remember doing ads where he was flying around saying, 'We sold a new Wheel Horse tractor to so-and-so over here in White River Junction.' Then I flew over to Reading and said something like, 'We sold John Doe a trimmer,' or something. It was more of a, 'Thank you for your business,' rather than any nuts and bolts to it."

The Equalizer was often accompanied by Dixie, his super dog. Dixie was a miniature dachshund whose bark was featured in commercials. "Dixie got to be way more famous than I did because of the ads," says Dennis. "When I went to McDonalds drive-thru, they would know my voice. 'Oh, it's Dennis. He's here.' Dixie would be with me generally and they gave her free food but charged me for mine. I always thought that was funny."

Manufacturers mentioned in the Charlie Brown's spots often paid for a portion of the air time. "We usually paid half," says Dennis. "Sometimes it was one hundred percent on the company, and sometimes it was seventy-five percent, but most of it was fifty percent if you would advertise a Wheel Horse tractor or a Poulin chainsaw or whatever. They call this co-op advertising."

Some spots featured the evil Les Looter (similar to Lex Luthor in Superman), who Dennis created to represent the box store competitors. Many spots were synched with print ads in the *Valley News*. One print ad features a drawing of Dixie tied to the railroad tracks by Les Looter while awaiting rescue by the Equalizer.

"We synched print ads with the radio spots pretty much the whole time," says Dennis. "Print ads were mostly paid for by us because you put more manufacturers on there. But if only one is mentioned, they probably would have paid at least half for that."

Charlie Brown's didn't keep close track of the Equalizer's effect on sales, but the spots continued for



Dennis Brown ended most radio spots with a reminder that Charlie Brown's was located on, "Scenic Route 4 between White River and Quechee."

nearly four years and spread to other local radio stations. Many spots were produced at Will Stanley's Q106 office in Lebanon, NH. Other radio people who helped produce Equalizer spots included Dave Rhode and Bob Sherman from WTSL, and Dave Westphalen of WNHV. "They all helped me," says Dennis.

Most spots ended with a reminder that Charlie Brown's was located, "on scenic Route 4 between White River and Quechee." "I take responsibility for that slogan," says Dennis. He also takes responsibility for promoting a sale that featured one-hundred dollar riding mowers. "It got a lot of people there. They showed up real early and lined up on Route 4 to buy stuff." Radio station Q106 helped with some promotions. "They gave a Porsche away once, and they brought that up to our place for awhile. Later, they gave a house away.

How Did the Equalizer Come to Earth?

(Cue music.) Announcer: How did the Equalizer come to Earth and why is he here?

Dennis: Well, I'll tell you. This is Dennis, the Equalizer, from Charlie Brown's and it was just over thirty years ago on a planet called Equal far away, that I was born. The problem was that the planet Equal had been over-run by chain stores sellin' outdoor power equipment that they didn't service. As a result, everybody's yard was filled with broken down snow blowers, chain saws and tractors. Disgusted with what they saw, my folks blasted me off towards Earth to save the world from a similar fate.

Since that day, my mission at Charlie Brown's, where I landed on Earth, has been to provide the Upper Valley with the best service, at the lowest price, on the finest outdoor power equipment around. You see, on the planet Equal, the department stores thought of themselves as number one. But at Charlie Brown's we're not number one, you are.

So, for the lowest prices, the ultimate in service, and the best lineup of equipment in town, see the Upper Valley's own super hero, the Equalizer, that's me, at Charlie Brown's on scenic Route 4 between White River and Quechee. Family-owned for over thirty years.

(Music fades.)

They did all kinds of promotions and we were part of that. They'd broadcast from our shop."

Twice, Dennis traveled to Hollywood to attend the Grammy Awards with his radio colleagues. While there, he met celebrities such as Casey Kasem and June Foray who voiced Rocky in *The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle*. He also saw celebrities like Howard Stern and Cesar Romero. Howard Stern was next to Q106 and someone punched him in the face while he was doing an interview.

The radio ads brought Dennis considerable notoriety. "It was just crazy," Dennis remembers. "I had people stop me and want my autograph. We were up in Island Pond one time, launching a canoe, and a kid came over and said, 'You're that guy on the radio aren't you?' And I said, 'yeah,' and he said, 'I love hearing you,' and then he went on and on. So you could say I had some fame, I guess. It didn't happen a

FOR TRUTH, JUSTICE & THE CHARLIE BROWN WAY...SEE THE EQUALIZER

You've heard of the Upper Valley's Superhero - The **EQUALIZER** - He Equalizes **PRICES** - The lowest in the Valley - **SERVICE** - With factory trained technicians, and **SALES** with the best dang line up of equipment in the Valley. But why is he here? Where did he come from?

Equalizer Circa 1950's

Equalizer Patrolling The Upper Valley Today

NOW THE TRUTH CAN BE TOLD

HOW THE EQUALIZER CAME TO EARTH

QUECHEE--It was just over thirty years ago (about 1956 earth time) on a planet similar to earth in a faraway galaxy that a white haired man with a golden "E" embroidered on his chest turned to his wife and said--"Martha, I'm afraid all is lost. Our once lovely planet has been completely taken over by hucksters who make promises they don't keep, and discounters that don't know their arm from their elbow."

Sad but true thought Martha as she hugged her son, "little e". She looked away from her son and out the window. Martha could just barely see the tip of the rusted handle of the machine above the swaying three foot grass. That shiny red grass cutter, snowblower, chippershredder, snowmobile, hairdryer, and can opener combination tractor--had broken down after only a week. No one could fix it, the store didn't stock that model anymore, and worst of all, it wasn't even paid for yet.

"I'm just too old to fight it anymore," sighed the man with the big "E" on his chest. "Even the 'little e' here doesn't have enough power to reverse what's happened here."

The couple looked at their son and shook their heads. "I've heard of another planet," said the BIG "E", called earth, in a far away galaxy. It's not completely taken over by greed yet. There are beings there called Americans who still expect value for their dollar, and honesty in their dealings. Maybe if we send the "little e" there he can carry on my work and perhaps save our sister planet from the same sad fate that has befallen us."

So the next morning Martha packed a lunch for the "little e" and the two parents blasted him off on the long journey toward earth.

It was spring in America at that time. A man from Vermont named Charlie pondered a broken machine in his shop on SCENIC ROUTE 4 in Quechee. The rains had washed out the tracks, and the part he had ordered from Boston hadn't arrived. He had never let a customer down before. He didn't even notice the huge hole in the roof--or the baby crawling around on the floor.

He spun around at the sound of grinding metal. Imagine his surprise when he saw a baby sitting on the floor using his teeth as a lathe on a metal bar. In only a matter of minutes the baby had turned out a precision shaft and rolled it to Charlie.

After the machine was fixed the man turned his attention to the packet labeled "instructions" taped to the baby's diaper. He read...

"Sorry about the hole in your roof. I am an orphan. Please take me home. Do not turn to page two of this instruction manual until I am 12 years old."

Possessing a kind heart, and sensing that this kid might grow up to be useful around the shop the man took the baby home. It was either that or turn him over to the orphanage run by that slimey--LESS LOOTER. "Let's call him Dennis," he said.

The wife was only worried about what the neighbors would think. She agreed to put a pillow under her dress for nine months. No one was surprised when she gave birth to thirty-five pound baby--after all--Vermonters are a hardy lot.

WATCH THIS PAPER FOR--The EQUALIZER GROWS TO MANHOOD AND GAINS HIS SUPER POWERS

Charlie Brown's (802) 295-3421 Scenic Rt. 4, Between Quechee and White River Jct., Vt. Family Owned & Run For Over 30 Years

LOWEST PRICES IN THE VALLEY

Dennis Brown often coordinated radio spots with print ads featuring the Equalizer and Dixie the super dog. Manufacturers often paid a percentage of the cost of these ads and air time.

lot but it happened a fair amount. I'd hear people say, 'There goes the Equalizer,' or something like that. There's one guy I bump into occasionally who still says that.

"We had a good time with this," he continues. "I thought it should be fun and not just the nuts and bolts of, 'Here's a snowblower and this is what it costs and here's why you should buy it.' We incorporated all this other stuff with it."

Dennis sheltered Dixie from the limelight saying, "She wasn't the most friendly dog to other people. It was almost a social nightmare actually."

Charlie Brown's opened in 1958 and Dennis Brown was born in 1961. The family lived next door to the store, which is now owned by Dennis' second cousin, Cathy, and her husband Scott. "I've known Scott forever," says Dennis. "I sold him a Ski-Doo many

Continued on page 8.

The Equalizer continued from page 7.

years ago and mentioned him in a radio ad, "There goes Scott Willey on his new Formula Plus!"

"I started working there as soon as I could hold a wrench," Dennis says. "I did everything at the store from sharpening blades to selling tractors. After school I had hockey practice and I was beat when I got home, but there'd be a whole lineup of snowblowers waiting to be put together. I can hear my father now, 'You can't sell it in the box.' My main job growing up was to put the new equipment together."

Dennis recalls driving the company's propane delivery truck when he turned sixteen. "We always did well in the summertime with our power equipment," he says, "but we had some snowless winters when it was very tough to stay afloat so my father took on Home Gas, which I think is now Amerigas."

"We had a 1974 one-ton GMC truck that I learned to drive on. It had a stake body with a hydraulic tailgate and we would deliver gas cylinders that weighed one hundred and seventy five pounds--seventy-five pounds for the tank and one hundred for the gas. When we ran out of full tanks, we would put the empty cylinders in the truck, drive to Fairlee, and swap them out for full tanks. Today, propane is mostly delivered by bulk trucks rather than swapping tanks like we did."

"I just had my driving permit then and one time while coming back from Fairlee on Interstate 91 just short of Norwich loaded with full tanks, there was a sudden "Crash! Bang!" One of the dual rear wheels on our truck broke off and rolled past us down the Interstate, and the other tire and wheel ended up behind us as we skidded down the road. The truck was supposed to carry up to two thousand pounds, but we probably had eight thousand pounds on there. Today you'd have to be at least twenty-one years old and have a Commercial Driver's License."

"One thing that helped me," Dennis says, "was that my father had me take a Dale Carnegie Course in public speaking when I was just out of high school and that gave me an edge. I'm a people person while my brother Donald was a better mechanic, so I think it was natural for me to go into sales." So when his father put Dennis in charge of advertising, fame beckoned and the Equalizer was born.

In 1988, there was a family falling out and Dennis left the business and worked at Gateway Motors for the next fourteen years. Still, he kept a finger in the radio business. "After I left Charlie Brown's," he says, "my friend Ken Barlow from Q106 called and

said, 'Hey people are calling and saying they miss hearing you on the radio.' That's when we developed the, 'All Around Town with Dennis Brown Show.'

"We did a lot of funny things," he says. "I used to get the *Weekly World News* and I twisted it to suit the Upper Valley. One headline was, "The Passion of a Shrewsbury Moose." There was a moose up in Shrewsbury that was trying to mate with a cow and it became national news. I did a lot of stuff about the moose, and went up there three or four times. It hung around this cow for a long time."

"I did that until 1990 when my National Guard unit was activated and sent to the Middle East for Operation Desert Storm." Dennis drove a transport truck in Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait, delivering supplies and weapons for U.S. troops during the ground invasion. While there, he got to know a fellow soldier named Wade Hector. "Wade Hector and I were somewhat tight," he says. "I spent a whole night with him on guard duty and he told me, 'You've got to listen to country music,' because I never did."

Dennis relates that Wade Hector was one of two soldiers in his unit who died in an accident the day before the ground invasion. "So, now when I listen to country music I always think of Wade Hector."

When Dennis returned from Iraq, it looked like his radio career might be over and, in 2002, he went to work at Dartmouth College. But then came one last set of spots with Bob Sherman of radio station WGXL in Lebanon, NH.

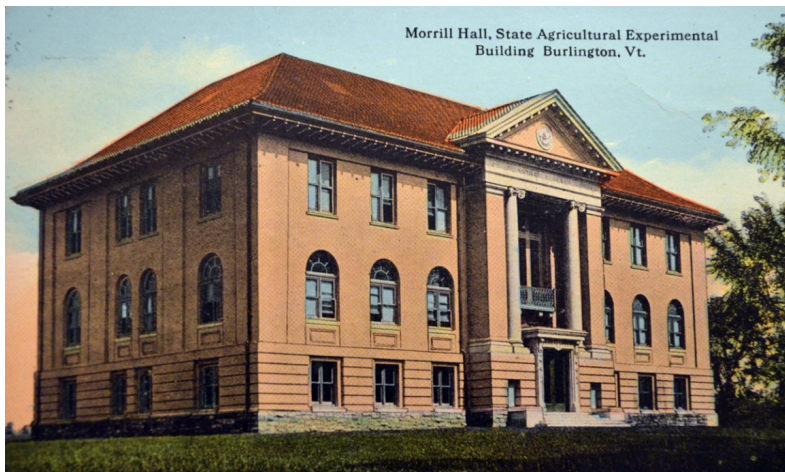
"It's a weird thing," he says. "I was getting my hair cut at the Yankee Barber Shop in Lebanon and was talking to the barber whose name was Eric Hector. It turned out that he was Wade Hector's brother, so the whole Desert Storm story unfolded. "I guess it came about that I said, 'We ought to do some radio ads for you.' So we did. I don't think he played them a whole lot but they were out there. Some people at Dartmouth said, 'I think I heard you on the radio,' and I would tell them I couldn't confirm or deny it!"

That was the end for the Equalizer. "I'd do it again," he says. "It was a lot of fun and it was such interesting work. I enjoyed writing the spots as well as voicing them. I have a real appreciation for the creativity of writers. We don't think about it when we see a TV show or a radio ad, but someone wrote it--and I did get a minor sense of that."

Did he think of moving to Hollywood? "No, I'm pretty well planted here, but I admire clever ads to this day. I didn't have any formal training for the things we did, we just got creative and did our thing."

Justin Morrill Gave a Boost to American Agriculture

By Scott Fletcher



U.S. Senator Justin Morrill of Strafford, VT is perhaps most remembered for authoring two Land-Grant Acts that provided federal funding for the creation of some seventy public colleges and universities. Senator Morrill's first bill, proposed when he was in the House of Representatives, was passed by Congress in June 1862 and signed by President Abraham Lincoln on July 2, 1862. This was the same year that the U.S. Department of Agriculture was established. The second act, passed in 1890 when Morrill was a senator, funded more schools including some of the nation's first historically black colleges and universities.

While the first bill was being debated in Congress, Daniel Needham of Hartford, VT was Secretary of the Vermont State Agricultural Society and he offered this resolution at the society's annual meeting in 1862, "Resolved, That the Vermont State Agricultural Society expresses its most cordial interest in the success of the Bill introduced in the Federal Congress, by the Hon. Justin B. Morrill, securing to the several States portions of the public domain for the establishment of State Agricultural Colleges, and that have good reason to believe that the interests of Agriculture would be greatly served by the passage of said Bill."

The Vermont Standard also supported representative Morrill's first act on March 28, 1862. The paper noted, "Vermont is so purely agricultural in its tastes and tendencies that seven-tenths of its population are directly engaged in that business. Notwithstanding that agriculture is the great specialty of this state, no agricultural paper is published here. The state

agricultural society says, after eleven years of existence, it has never received state patronage to the amount of a dollar, and they have never issued an annual agricultural report due to a lack of means.

"Neither agriculture nor any other business can ever reach its highest prosperity without educational facilities. The farmers' club, the agricultural society, the newspaper, the textbook, the college are but so many instruments to be used to reach the desired end. We are happy to add that Vermont is, through her representative Hon. Justin S. Merrill, endeavoring to secure national aid to state agricultural schools by the donation of government lands. How can the foundations of government be better strengthened?"

Vermont Representative Justin Morrill took the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives on June 6, 1862 to urge passage of his bill. He described national declines in harvests and livestock, as well as a drop in the percentage of Americans engaged in farming. The way to reverse these declines, he said, was to make agriculture more lucrative. He then described the recent growth of agricultural education in Europe.

"Some may argue that the institutions proposed will turn out unsuccessfully," he said in closing. "It may be that they will, but the object more than compensates the risk. If put into incompetent and unworthy hands, they will of course fail, and so would free government itself. But this would impute an imbecility upon the Legislatures of the several States they have not deserved. Let us not believe they will prove inert,

The Vermont Agricultural College merged with the University of Vermont where Morrill Hall was built in 1907.

Morrill Land Grant Acts continued from page 9.

helpless, or wanting in capacity to develop so palpable a boon. I have faith in the sagacity of people to profit by the experience of the world, and that they will mold these institutions in a form and place them in the charge of such men as will secure permanent usefulness and enduring honor to the whole country.”

After passage of the Morrill Land-Grant Act, it was funded by the sale of 10.7 million acres of land taken from two hundred and forty five tribal nations of Native Americans. Under the act, each state received 30,000 acres of land within or contiguous with its borders for each member of Congress the state had as of the census of 1860 when Vermont had two Senators and two members of the House.

The purpose of the act was to create institutions, “to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts (engineering), in such manner as the legislatures of the States may respectively prescribe, in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life.”

The University of Vermont was designated Vermont’s land-grant college and the institution was

given 150,000 acres of federal land, which it sold for \$122,626. The Vermont Agricultural College was chartered in 1864 and merged with the University of Vermont the following year. Vermont was thus able to provide education and research that has had a lasting effect on Vermonters and the state’s economy.

Vermont was one of nine states to give the proceeds of the Morrill Land-Grant Act to an existing institution. Pennsylvania and Michigan had agricultural colleges in operation at the time of the grant, so the proceeds of the act were used to increase their endowments. Massachusetts, Iowa and Minnesota used funds from the act to establish new agricultural colleges. Massachusetts gave one third of its funds to what is now the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to encourage education in engineering.

Today, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences continues as a division of the University of Vermont, and some thirteen hundred students are enrolled in the study of sustainable agriculture, food systems, and nutrition alongside the social sciences of agroecology, economics, and community development. Morrill Hall opened on the UVM campus in 1906 and a marble bust of Justin Morrill was added in 1942.

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THANK YOU!

Yesterday's News

Bright Idea, *The Landmark*, September 27, 1884

The White River bridge is ornamented with two new lamps in place of the three old ones. The reflectors consist of small pieces of cut glass, which, when lighted, look as if there were a hundred lights in one. Now if they will put oil enough in them to last till the lamp lighter gets out of the bridge, they will be of some benefit.

Here's a Deal, *The Landmark*, October 28, 1882

We are out of potatoes. Is there not someone who would like to pay for his paper in that fruit? If so, bring them to us. We are hungry.

New in Town, *The Landmark*, October 28, 1882

A stranger came into the place the other day and traveled up and down the streets three or four times and around the square twice, then stopped opposite the drug store and asked where the drug store was. Smart man, wasn't he.

Some Day ... *The Landmark*, October 28, 1882

When President Monroe was here a great many years ago, he looked all over our alluvial expanse and said that, "Some day," this place "would contain 25,000 inhabitants." He evidently foresaw that *The Landmark* was coming.

Fashionably Late, *The Landmark*, October 13, 1883

We have a new suit of clothes. They will be paid for just as soon as our April and July 1882 subscribers pay us. We are sorry for the tailor.

A Grim Silence, *The Landmark*, October 13, 1883

We this year raised some cabbages in our garden that would make a Dutchman laugh, and last Sunday, towards evening, four slab sided cows got into the garden and worked up the best of them into cold slaught.

Notwithstanding this sad bereavement we never swore a word; we could not do justice to the occasion, besides it was Sunday and there was a meeting behind us and another ahead, and so we cramped the big words and satisfied our carnal nature with a ghastly grin.

ZZZ ... *The Landmark*, June 28, 1884

Trask sleeps on the floor and he married less than a year. Cruel, cruel woman!

Mirror, Mirror ... *The Landmark*, June 28, 1884

Miss Emma Smith from West Randolph, sister of Mrs. L.W. Wheeler, has been here visiting her. She is very much handsomer than Mrs. Wheeler.

Snow Kidding, *The Landmark*, January 19, 1884

We have a new snow shovel for our wife to handle on the front yard walks. She will not need to use the broom there longer. To see her sweep the snow away after a heavy snow last winter, to clear a path to the hen house, almost broke our heart. *Some* men have no sort of care for their wives, but we are *kind* to ours.

Who is Who? *The Landmark*, April 1, 1882

Gov. Farnham did us the honor to make our office an hour's visit last Saturday. So easily does he bear his honors, that it would have puzzled a stranger to have told which was the Governor, he or us. To those who have never seen either, however, we would say that he has the most genial and pleasant countenance, while ours is the most attractive head.

Hartford Historical Society

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HHS Calendar

THE GARIPAY HOUSE MUSEUM is open by appointment and/or when the “Welcome” flag is hanging on the front porch. Please call 802/296-3132 or email us at info@hartfordhistoricalsociety.org. Phones/email are checked twice a week.

MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS are open to the public on the second Tuesday of the month at the Garipay House at 10:00 a.m. (Please check for exact date.)

Wednesday, September 10, 2025 - “Upper Valley? Where the term came from,” presented by Steve Taylor. 7:00 p.m. at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ; 1721 Maple St., Hartford Village. Free and accessible.

The **Genealogy Center** on the second floor of the Hartford Library is open Fridays from 3-6 p.m. and by appointment. Please call Carole Haehnel at 802/295-3974 or email her at: chaehnel151@comcast.net. Interested in helping residents explore their family histories? Please contact us at info@hartfordhistoricalsociety.com.

Website

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