

Hartford Historical Society

The Garipay House • 1461 Maple Street
Hartford Village, Vermont 05047

HARTFORD • QUECHEE • WEST HARTFORD • WHITE RIVER JUNCTION • WILDER

Volume 18, No. 1

SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

September-October 2005

Boarding 'Round Fifty Years Ago

by *The Boarder*

Editor's note: *This article was reprinted from the November 1929 issue of The Vermonter, a monthly magazine published in White River Junction, VT by Charles R. Cummings. While the story probably wasn't written about a school district in Hartford, it could have happened in any one of Hartford's many rural school districts of 1879. Hartford's own District No. 9 was the Christian Street district. The school building of 1879 is still standing, neighboring the Dothan Brook School to the south.*

THE "committee-man" and the incipient school-ma'am were trying to come to terms over the contract for a winter term of school in District No. 9. Because he had never before been elected to serve in this important capacity, Committee-man felt a heavy weight of responsibility to his constituents and he did not see his way clear to pay-

ing the three dollars-and-a-half a week that the school-ma'am thought her services would be worth to the "deedistrict." "They never hed paid but three dollars and he knew they would hev it in fer him ef he agreed to pay more." But he evidently considered me a desirable prospect, and was loath to lose the opportunity of having his daughter under my tutelage, so after much hemming and hawing on his part, we compromised on three dollars-and-a-quarter. This was after I had pointed out to him that the extra twenty-five cents a week, divided among all the tax-payers in the district, would be a trifling amount for them to pay, but it would mean three dollars more for me at the end of the term. And three dollars was a sum worth fighting for in those days, when

good calico for a dress could be bought for twelve-and-a-half cents a yard.

I made a mistake in selecting my young brother to drive me to the scene of my new labors that first Monday morning. My mind was already filled with apprehension, and while old Reuben ambled away the miles to be traversed, Young Brother enlarged upon the serious responsibilities I was about to assume and the



Hartford's own District #9 schoolhouse at the intersection of Christian Street and Route 5, adjacent to the Dothan Brook School.

continued on next page

dire difficulties I was sure to meet. When we came in sight of the little unpainted country school-house, he snickered, and I had difficulty in suppressing my own smiles. There, lined up against the front of the building, were all the boys of the school-to-be, while in the doorway were the younger girls, and at the windows stood the older girls, more dignified but no less curious. With calm, inscrutable faces they surveyed the new teacher and sized her up. With a last parting shot my escort delivered me into the den of lions and left me to my fate. Even now I wonder at the bravery with which I gave those youngsters a cheerful Good Morning and entered the building to begin my new duties.

The building was of the old New England type of district school-houses, containing four rows of unpainted, battle-scarred desks, each with its seat attached to the desk behind. The teacher's desk, raised on a small platform, was of the same rough construction. There was a rectangular wood stove, a chair for the visiting Superintendent, a water-pail and dipper, a wall blackboard and a bell to summon the wandering pupils. This completed the equipment. There was nothing of beauty or interest to distract youthful minds from the purpose of their presence there-to "learn their books." And the books! Not the large-typed, generously illustrated books of our day, with fascinating supplementary readers and books of reference. Each child owned his two or three books and a slate, and very carefully were they used. The books were always covered, either with heavy brown paper or with good stout gingham left from sister's dress. Often a brother and sister had to use the same book because the family income could not cover the cost of two, and sometimes a book was badly worn because of having been passed down in the family from one child to another.

At noon-time the dinner-pails were opened and a cold lunch eaten. There were no hot soups or cocoa served at the expense of the district, and the lunch-boxes contained no thermos bottles or well-balanced ration prepared according to the latest dictum of the domestic science writers. The luncheon consisted usually of bread or johnnycake, doughnuts and either pie or cake or cookies, and sometimes a huge pickle, but always a big red apple. One exception lingers in my memory -- the pail that never seemed to produce anything but cold pancakes. It was a white-faced, under-nourished boy who had to eat them and he always sat in a corner by himself. I pitied his sensitiveness and ever since a cold pancake has seemed to me next door to starvation.

They were eighteen lively, healthy country children in

that first school in District No. 9, ranging from five to eighteen years of age. I myself was not quite nineteen, and some of the boys were taller than I. The older boys and girls made me no trouble. The girls were sweet maidenly young women, appreciating the companionship and guidance of a sympathetic teacher. The older boys, less dignified and some of them full of "kinks," yet showed a crude sense of chivalry and loyalty. Those in the between ages were the most troublesome--some indifferent, some bent on playing tricks on each other or on the teacher. But the worst of all were the stubborn ones who rebelled at authority and worked out of sight in their trouble-making. Many of them had a keen sense of humor. One of the older boys had reached the "stand-up-collar" age and flaunted a brilliant plaid necktie, while the others wore only the soft collars on their gingham or calico shirts and did not worry about ties. One morning when I arrived at the schoolhouse there seemed to be something going on. Every boy except Albert was there early, and on closer inspection I found each one arrayed in some caricature of collar and tie, some of the collars made of white or brown paper, Lord Byron style, some of white cardboard standing up stiffly about the ears, and there were neckties of every description, mostly culled from mother's carpet-rags. The bedecked group were all lined up waiting for Albert. Unfortunately for their little party Albert was late that morning and I persuaded them to discard their finery before school opened. They did it good-naturedly, knowing that teacher and the girls had been entertained by their stunt.

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Hartford Historical Society

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<http://www.hartfordhistory.org>

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Of course there were no grades. I had to teach everything from primer to algebra, and the number of classes would seem appalling to a modern grade-teacher. Yet the children in these schools did acquire knowledge. There were no "side-shows to eat up the circus," no interruptions to the six hours of more or less concentrated study. Many successful college courses were achieved with this district-school foundation.

But the daily teaching hours were not the whole of the teacher's life. When four o'clock came the school-room floor was swept, the room dusted and put in order, and then the teacher made her way to whichever one of the homes she had been assigned for that particular time. I have often been asked if I did not find the "boarding 'round" very disagreeable. I did not find it so and would not for worlds have missed the experience.

In some districts, at some times, the teacher's board was

based on the number of children – so many days for each child. That might seem a logical plan, but I doubt if it ever worked out well for, even in those days when large families were considered perfectly respectable, the greater number of children were often found in the poorest family where it would be a real hardship to furnish the teacher's board and the place might be quite undesirable for the teacher. District No. 9 had the better plan of boarding on the grand list. The days of the term were divided pro rata among the taxpayers, those who had the heaviest tax having the longer time to board. Those who had little property or none escaped with only a day or two of the visitation. In my own case, living only a few miles distant, I was only too glad to spend my week-ends at home, which lightened the burden for some of those who were taxed for two or three weeks' board and enabled me to escape some of the undesirable places, to the satisfaction of both parties.



SEPTEMBER 14, 2005 PROGRAM

The Rotary Celebrates 100-Years

On Wednesday, September 14, 2005, at 7:00 pm, at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ on Maple Street in Hartford Village, Phil Hammond from the White River Rotary Club will be our guest speaker.

Seeking the warmth of friendship, Rotary's four founding members met on a cold Chicago evening in 1905 and launched a 100-year-long association. The idea belonged to founder Paul Harris, an attorney who had grown up with his grandparents in Wallingford, Vermont.

Fellowship and business interests first attracted members to Rotary in 1905. However, at the request of new member Donald M. Carter, the Rotary Club of Chicago added civic service to its constitution in 1906. Rotary began serving the community in 1907 when the Rotary Club of Chicago donated a horse to a local doctor and had a public restroom built at City Hall. Since then, Rotary clubs have worked to meet a broad range of

community needs — a wheelchair ramp for a library, a mentoring program for at-risk children, a Christmas party for senior citizens.

Rotary began in the Midwestern city of Chicago, Illinois, USA, but it soon spread to both coasts and quickly crossed borders and oceans. In 1911 through 1913, clubs were formed in Canada, Great Britain, and Ireland. Rotary expanded in numbers as well as territory. By 1920, Rotary had 45,000 members and clubs in 12 countries. Today, membership tops 1.2 million with clubs in 166 countries, including the newest Rotary countries of the United Arab Emirates, Afghanistan, and Timor-Leste.



Phil Hammond will speak on the history of Rotary International and the history and activities of the White River Rotary Club. A question and answer period and refreshments will follow the meeting.

Please plan to attend!

The attitude of the people of the district to the matter was a mixed one. Some of them considered it a burden to be met with resignation, like all life's other burdens. One hostess-to-be, driving home from town was accosted by a friend with: "Where you bin?" "Bin to town," she replied. And waving at her friend a large codfish, she said: "Teacher's coming to board and we had to get a cod." Another remarked to a friend: "We've got almost all our mean jobs done for this fall. We've killed and made soap, and now we've only got to board the teacher." This, at least, was the version passed around among the teachers.

Of course the personnel of the teacher had much to do with their feeling about it. Many of the farmers' wives welcomed the diversion and treated the teacher like "company." In every case she was given the best the house afforded. The house itself was spruced up and the best dishes brought out and the best menu the family could afford was set before her. Where there were children in the family it furnished a fine opportunity to talk over their needs and get into sympathetic contact with the parents.

The teacher, studying the child in the home environment, could give him more understanding treatment in school. Often a difficult situation was cleared up completely after the teacher had made her visit in the child's home. No Parent-Teachers' Association can reach the heart of a situation as can the teacher who can live in the home with the parents and children.

There were some hardships. I remember well the first night in the committee-man's home. A blizzard was raging, rattling the windows at the head of my bed. I spent the night turning over, trying to warm one ear at a time, and in the morning found snow on my pillow. There was the Christmas Day afternoon when I had to make use of the stage to carry me back to my work. The wind was blowing a gale and I was ill-prepared for such a bitterly cold ride. The kindly stage-driver, when he saw how I was suffering, put me down in the bottom of the sleigh and wrapped me round with his long heavy scarf, redolent with tobacco. Then he beguiled the weary miles by telling me tales of other times when the wind blew "a leetle harder'n common," and of one day when it blew everything clean out of his sleigh and he had to return the next morning to rescue his mail-bags from the snow-drifts. Then I have a vivid memory of the three December weeks spent in the home of the wealthiest man in the town. I slept in state in the "spare room," a four-windowed upstairs room, absolutely unheated. It

was over the parlor, which was only used on formal occasions, and there was no heat in the main part of the house, all the winter living rooms being in the capacious ell. The big four-poster bed would be of interest now and the bedding was of the finest quilts and blankets. But neither the deep feather-bed nor the mountain of coverlets could keep me warm those December nights. Long before daylight the sixteen year-old daughter would come quietly into the room with a pitcher of hot water, and setting down a dim candle in the far corner of the room go quietly out. Only the sternest resolution would keep me awake and strengthen me to plunge into that icy atmosphere for my morning ablutions. But the six-thirty breakfast never waited for me. The family moved by schedule and no one dared delay. In spite of chilly nights, the family circle was pleasant, the meals were most satisfying, and the long winter evenings were enjoyable.

The board varied greatly in the different families. One eighteen-year-old stepmother of three of my boys had yet to learn how to make biscuits without brown lumps of soda decorating them. In one well-to-do family where I spent some time the main dish each day was codfish, and I never knew it served in so many ways -- broiled, fried, creamed, hashed. I should not have minded it so much if the old lady had not talked so volubly about the virtues of cod as an article of food-a self justification for an economy that made them "sell themselves short," as the neighbors called it. Whenever they had a beef to "kill," they sold the beef and they ate cod.

My worst trouble was with the cold dinners. I learned to provide my own dinner-basket, a very small one, that would contain only a fraction of the food urged upon me. Even then I sometimes had to watch my chance when the children were outside the schoolroom to donate to the stove the food I could not eat: There is where the soda-biscuits went.

I enjoyed the family life in the different homes. There was often a grandfather or grandmother who could tell fascinating stories of earlier days and manners and were glad of an interested listener. How often since have I regretted that I did not write down some of their tales or take notes on some of the relics they showed me! They would be of value now. One old lady, a Revolutionary widow, I remember unpleasantly. She had the curiosity, and the audacity, to ask me if the extra twenty-five cents a week that the district was paying me covered the music lessons that she "heered" I was giving the committee-



Mary's Message

By Mary Nadeau, *HHS Board Chairman*
chairman@hartfordhistory.org

There At our June 8th meeting, John Lutz spoke on the history of Miller Auto and had a wonderful digitally projected presentation to illustrate his talk. After his portion of the program, Bill Miller spoke and answered questions from the audience. About 50 were present for this program.

I would like to welcome our four newest board members, who were elected at the business portion of our June meeting. Clyde Berry, Randy Dickson, Alan Grover, and Clair Lovell have all joined our board of directors. Welcome!

In April, we will be having a program on the mills of the town of Hartford. We would like to use first-hand accounts as part of our program – history in the words of the people who were there. If you or anyone you know was employed at any time in any one of the mills that operated throughout the town, please contact me as soon as possible. We would like to interview you on your experiences. You can meet us at the Garipay House, or we can come to you. Taped interviews will become part of our oral history collection. If you are interested in helping us with this project and have information to share, please call me at (802) 295-2123 or email me at chairman@hartfordhistory.org

Our next program meeting will be held on September 14th. The topic will be the 100th anniversary of Rotary. Please come and consider bringing a non-member. See you there!



man's daughter. I think my display of righteous indignation was a sufficient reply to her query.

One rewarding feature of the going from home to home was the attitude of the children. Except for an occasional case where an unruly one had some reason to fear what the parents might learn of his misdeeds, the children always looked, forward to the teacher's visit. I especially remember my youngest boy, a waif who had been sent up into the country to be cared for in a cheerless home where he was considered a burden. He was bright and keen, a wonderful caricaturist. With only a primer and slate he beguiled some of the long hours by drawing pictures for the entertainment of the pupils behind him, and some of the best of them were of the teacher. But he was fond of Teacher, and long before it was time for me to go to his home for my brief visit he began to ask when I was going, and when the time came he was fairly excited, and hung about me all day. After school, on the long walk that he had to take every day alone, he skipped about, telling me what he was going to show me -- of the new calf and the pig and all the other farm animals. And after we arrived and I had inspected all the farm stock, in the house he brought out his pathetic little treasures to show me -- one or two ragged books, a box with odds and ends a child picks up -- a pitiful little hoard. I regretted that I had only one night to stay; for Teacher's visit was a bright event in his lonely life.

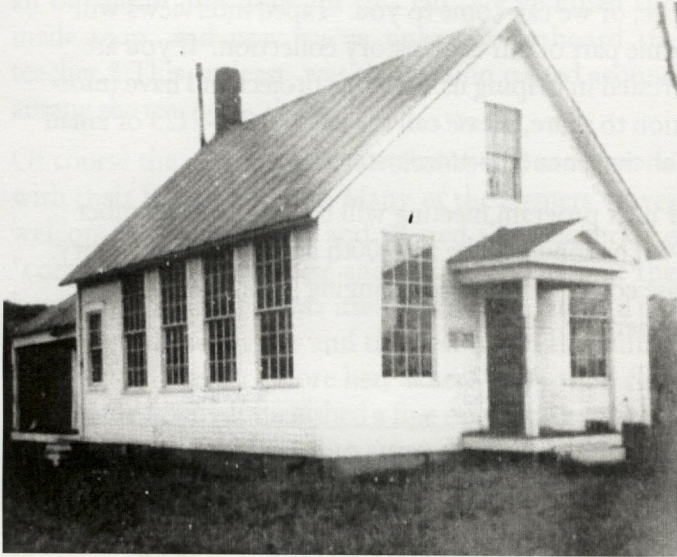
The spring or summer terms were those I remember most happily -- the long noon hours when the girls played "keep house" under the big pine trees, marking off the rooms of their make-believe houses with small stones, and using broken bits of crockery for their dishes. How little it required in those distant days to make a happy child! The boys meantime were wading in the brook or playing Indian in the nearby woods.

When the bell called them together, they came bringing me wild flowers for my desk, and sometimes a shy youngster offered me a long stem of Timothy-grass strung with berries. There were the long, leisurely walks with the children on the homeward road, gathering violets and anemones, listening to the birds and watching for their nests, although it was long before bird-study had become a fad. They were country roads, undisturbed by motor vehicles, and our minds were care-free, untroubled by modern problems. Life seemed very simple and very happy. The end of the road brought the children home to those who loved them, with a welcome for the teacher and a supply for all our needs. I had the friendliest relations with them all, and have always been grateful for the experience of "boarding 'round'." I feel quite sure that such human contacts help to develop a sympathy and understanding so essential in life. Some of us can do no great deeds, but we can always understand and sympathize.



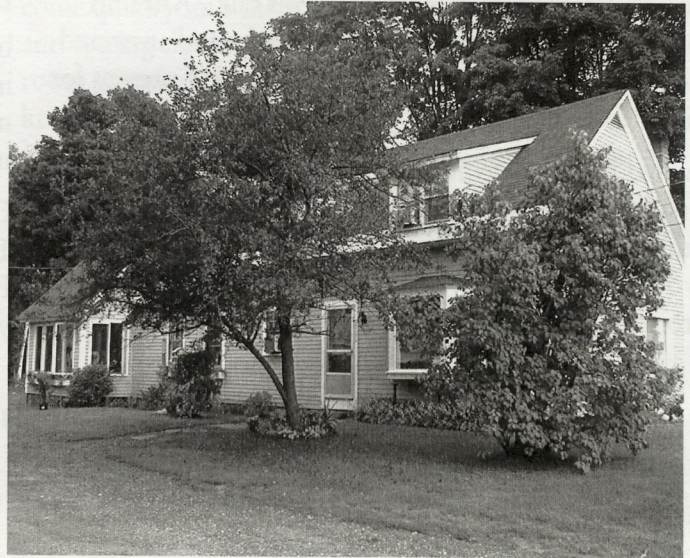
Then & Now...

The two photos below, show the Christian Street School as it appears today (on the right), and as it appeared in the 1940's.



Christian Street School ca 1940's.

The building sits at the intersection of Christian Street and Route 5, adjacent to the Dothan Brook School.



Former Christian Street School today.

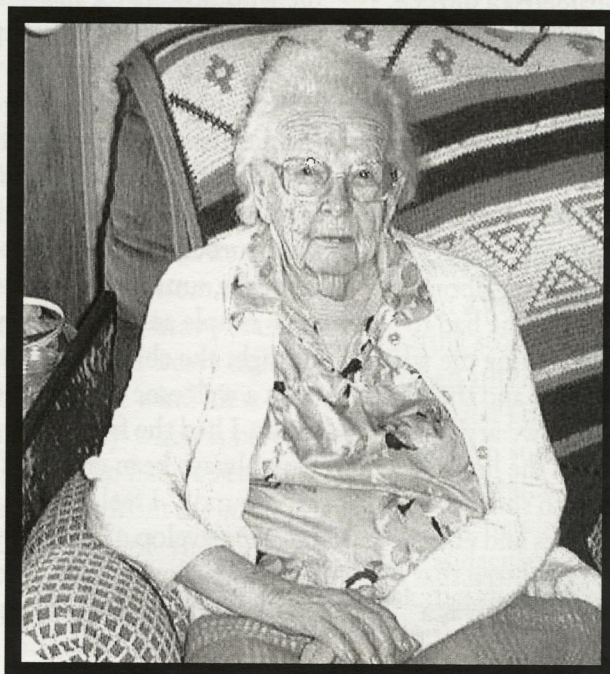


In Memory of ...

Bertha Horton Davis Perkins died Friday, July 22, 2005, at her home in White River Junction surrounded by her family. She was 100.

Mrs. Perkins was interviewed for a feature article that ran in the March 2005 newsletter of the Hartford Historical Society.

She had been a member of the Grange for more than 70 years. She was also a member



of the World War Mothers, Daughters of the American Revolution Thomas Chittenden Chapter, and the Wilder Home Dem Club for more than 50 years.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Upper Valley Community Grange, c/o Clyde Berry, secretary, P.O. Box 451, Norwich, VT 05055 or the Bugbee Senior Center, P.O. Box 158, White River Jct., VT 05001.



A Look Back

Events that made the news in Hartford

30 Years Ago (September/October 1975 – Valley News)

John A. Frietas, 64, of Cascadnac Place died Sunday (Sept. 7, 1975). He was a teacher and coach at Holy Family High School in New Bedford, Mass., from 1934-36 when he came to Hartford. He was made principal at Hartford High School in 1943 and superintendent of schools in 1953, retiring as associate superintendent in 1973. He had been a consultant at the time of his death.

Hartford voters approve 5-member board and recreation facility leasing at a special town meeting. Selectman Norman Reed had "grave reservations" about the turnover electing two new selectmen would cause in the first year, "but you've got to start somewhere."

Hartford High Hurricanes 1975 varsity squad: M. Stone, S. Lyman, M. Wood, G. Miller (Capt.), G. Gabourel (Capt.), M. Fournier, C. Jameson, J. Pippin, S. Menard, L. Brown, J. Easton, J. Bassette, C. Lowell, D. Thibodeau, T. Reynolds, M. Baribeau, P. Magrone, J. Potter (Capt.), J. Hazelton, B. Andrews, D. Dean, J. Dickerson, R. Coutie, M. Long, G. Aher, L. Nallette, A. Cochran, T. Ostler, D. Sawyer, D. Coutie, D. Rocheleau, M. Green, P. Rice, and E. Tobin.

60 Years Ago (September/October 1945 – The Landmark)

Fire of undetermined origin Sunday night destroyed stock and hay valued at between \$4000 and \$5000, in a barn owned by Ballam and Knight in West Hartford village. The firemen were unable to rescue eight horses, six cows, two bulls, and five calves and 15 pigs, all of which were destroyed, as were two mows filled with hay.

West Hartford Congregational Church: John W. Starie, Minister. Morning service of worship at 9:30 o'clock. The theme of this service (Sept. 23, 1945) is "The Dynamic of True Religion."

E. J. Bugbee was recently in Randolph to attend a Dartmouth 1891 class reunion.

110 Years Ago (September/October 1895 – The Landmark)

Robert Briggs commenced his first term of school in the Kindergarten class last Monday.

Olcott: Bertha Abbott has returned to the store of Simon Jacobs as clerk.

Quechee: Miss Alice Dewey is in New Bedford, Mass., on route to Atlanta, Ga., where she intends to pass the winter.



Curator's Corner

By Pat Stark, *HHS Archivist*
archivist@hartfordhistory.org

From time to time I will use this column to share with you information on preserving your treasures. If anyone has specific questions let me know - I have several resources where questions can be researched, and a list of others to call if that doesn't work. The topic this issue is PHOTOGRAPHS. We all have them, and they are the most popular and most used part of our collections.

If photos 'say more than a thousand words', think how much more they will say with the simple information of date and the identification of persons and places in them is available! We have been given many wonderful photographs that we know absolutely nothing about - what a loss to the future. Therefore, RULE #1 is to MARK YOUR PHOTOS. Although a soft [#2] pencil is best, I find most photo backs will not accommodate a pencil, so LIGHTLY use a ball-point pen [do not press hard!]. As ink will run and become unreadable if wet, but photos can be recovered from water damage, the best thing is to also mark them some other way - a slip of paper, on the outside of a photo sleeve, etc. as well as on the back.

HANDLING - finger prints are acidic - DO NOT TOUCH the photo surface - use the edges. Wash your hands frequently and, if the photos are valuable, use clean white cotton gloves [we do at the society]. When handling old photos, be sure they are supported, do not pick them up by the corners as they may tear easily.

STORAGE - do NOT use 'magnetic' photo albums or other adhesives

- they can permanently damage the photo and you may not be able to remove them in the future. Tape is a major destroyer of photographs - do not use it. Look for ACID-FREE sleeves or pages for you albums. Be sure to read the small print - some clear sleeves are marked 'archival' but are not safe - 'archival' only means a storage product. If the ingredients have any kind of vinyl in them, don't use them - vinyl smells and it will 'lift' ink off a page. Polyethylene is a common acceptable product.

ENVIRONMENT - A photo's worst enemy is not water - it is LIGHT! Photos are very sensitive to environmental conditions. Dust and dirt may cause abrasion which, along with high humidity, can invite molds, mildews etc. to damage your photos. HEAT will fade, discolor and double the rate of deterioration with each increase of 18 degrees F. Do not store photos in hot places [how hot is your attic?] or near heat sources. High humidity will make it much worse.

The best place to store your photos are in acid-free/polyethylene binders on shelves that have some air circulation and little light with even temperatures and humidity.

Display or store your treasures in a stable, clean environment:

- Filtered air
- Temperature below 72 with little fluctuation
- Humidity between 45 and 55 with little fluctuation

These are temperatures & humidity levels you also find comfortable.

Hartford Historical Society

POST OFFICE BOX 547

HARTFORD, VERMONT 05047

NEXT MEETING:

The Rotary Celebrates 100-Years

Wednesday, September 14 • 7 PM



HHS Calendar

- Tue., Sept. 6, 2005 Open House - Garipay House, 1461 Maple Street/Route 14, Hartford Village, VT, 6:00 - 8:00 pm. Come and see our collection.
- Sat., Sept. 10, 2005 Glory Days of the Railroad - White River Jct., VT, 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, Rain or Shine. Admission \$2 per person.
- Sun., Sept. 11, 2005 Open House - Garipay House, 1461 Maple Street/Route 14, Hartford Village, VT, 1:30 - 4:00 pm. Come and see our collection.
- Wed., Sept. 14, 2005 April Program - *100-Years of Rotary International*. Greater Hartford United Church of Christ, 1461 Maple Street/Route 14, Hartford Village, VT, 7:00 pm. Come enjoy a special program with guest speaker Phil Hammond followed by refreshments.
- Sun., Sept. 25, 2005 Book Committee Meeting - Garipay House, 1461 Maple Street/Route 14, Hartford Village, VT, 2:00 pm. Join us as we continue working toward an updated edition of John St. Croix's *Historical Highlights of Hartford, Vermont*. Volunteers are still needed.
- Tue., Sept. 27, 2005 Board Meeting - Garipay House, 1461 Maple Street/Route 14, Hartford Village, VT, 7:00 pm.
- Tue., Oct. 4, 2005 Open House - Garipay House, 1461 Maple Street/Route 14, Hartford Village, VT, 6:00 - 8:00 pm. Come and see our collection.
- Sun., Oct. 9, 2005 Open House - Garipay House, 1461 Maple Street/Route 14, Hartford Village, VT, 1:30 - 4:00 pm. Come and see our collection.
- Tue., Oct. 25, 2005 Board Meeting - Garipay House, 1461 Maple Street/Route 14, Hartford Village, VT, 7:00 pm.