



Hartford Historical Society

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

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

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SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

January - February 2007

Village Life

1900 - 1915

by Collamer M. Abbott

[Editor's note: This article originally appeared in the July-August 1984 issue of Vermont History News and is reprinted here by permission of the Vermont Historical Society. Mr. Abbott, of White River Junction, is a member of the Hartford Historical Society.]

Hartford, once called White River Village, where the falls of the White River made possible the establishment of cotton, woolen, grist and saw mills, farm tool, carriage and chair factories, and the pool behind the log dam furnished ice for summer use, was the boyhood home of my father, Leon, and his brother Carroll, during the first fifteen years of [the last] century.

My father and Uncle Carroll were persistent journal keepers. Although Uncle Carroll sometimes was irked by the duty of keeping a "damn diary," he seldom shirked; and if a question about some past event came up, my father would invariably say, "I can tell my looking in my diary." One might easily deprecate such trivial record keeping, but it served a purpose by recalling times when my father could note after a day with his family: "The end of a perfect day." Or by capturing Uncle Carroll's flashes of humor, such as, "Bump over right eye on way to bed in dark lean down to move doorstep hit head on corner side board, swore."

Between 1900 and 1915 my father and uncle finished

school and tried to find their niche in the workaday world. Eventually my uncle found his bent in rural school teaching and my father in storekeeping.

My father graduated from Hartford High School in 1909 at the age of 22 after spending the previous year at Williston



Main Street, Hartford Village.

Academy in Easthampton, Mass. The lateness of graduation apparently was not the result of poor marks. When he "plugged" for exams, he got high marks, but he sometimes skipped a half-day or a day to work, or for other less excusable reasons. Uncle Carroll, two years younger, was about to graduate, but when his father (so the story goes) wouldn't buy him a new suit for graduation,

he quit. He was to regret it many years later when he had to prove that he had completed the requirements in order to pursue his education further.

My father's existing journals start in 1903 when he became sixteen and got a suit with long pants for his birthday. My uncle's early diaries and mementos were lost in a fire, so his record starts in 1912 when he was 23. However, there is enough to indicate the kind of recreation they enjoyed. Some of the childhood games had been left behind, but many of the early pastimes persisted.

My father went sliding on Mill hill or School House hill, attended socials at the Congregational Chapel, made but-

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HAPPY 100TH BIRTHDAY, ALICE SMITH! (SEE PAGE 3)

ternut fudge at home, knocked together a pair of stilts, and bought a pair of boxing gloves. He played baseball, tried to raise chickens, went swimming in the river, looked for mayflowers (“My hat blew into the river.”), played “hide and coop,” made a jack jumper (a one-runner snow vehicle with a raised seat), listened to the gramophone at a neighbor’s, and got up at 4 a.m. to watch the Barnum and Bailey Circus unload from the steam cars at the Junction. He mentions attendance once at a rooster fight, but a few days later he sold his rooster for 25 cents and does not say whether the bird took part in any battles.



Barnum & Bailey Circus comes to the Junction, circa 1890's.

Work seemed to be light chores, often around the livery stable run by his father. He also shoveled Mrs. French’s walk for 10 cents, carried a school drummer to the Junction in one of the livery rigs, worked in Chadbourne’s store, tapped the maple trees in the yard, planted peas and radishes in his garden, helped a neighbor get his horse out of a scuttle hole, shoveled coal for Horace C. Pease, and got 50 cents working for Ernest Bugbee.

Studies and work seemed to interfere little with pleasure. Holidays, club meetings, church services occurred on a regular basis, but the boys seized pleasure where and when they could.

Pool, for instance. From high school on for a number of years, pool was popular – Dutch, rotation, Kelly. Joe’s poolroom was scarcely more than 100 yards “up street” from the house on the corner of Main and School. Almost any evening would find some of the boys there – “Hump” Clifford, “Snooks” Bugbee, “Bunk” Folsom – eager to chalk a cue. My father seems to have had occasion frequently to regret his ventures into the poolroom. Once, after playing four games of pool, the diary says: “Got stuck 3. Isn’t that a good way to get rich?” Again, when he won three out of five, the diary comments: “He trimmed me the last 2 by bull strength and ignorance.”

Dancing was another popular pastime. My father started by learning a few steps from a sister-in-law, then attended the sophomore hop and began to branch out. For a time, he went to dancing school where he learned the polka, quadrille, Portland fancy and schottische. This institution had its attractions, as one diary entry makes clear: “To dancing school. Three of the ‘pretty cogs’ in the school gear were

there tonight. Escorted the prettiest home.”

Dancing often involved rather long trips for the horse and buggy days. However, if the incentive was there, even in the dead of winter, the youngsters would brave cradle holes and frostbite to get to Tucker’s Hall in West Hartford, to Quechee, to the Gates Opera House at the Junction, or to the Lebanon Opera House. Both the Grange and the Modern Woodmen of America sponsored dances, and more elaborate balls were staged by the Odd Fellows, the Eastern Star, or the firemen.

Uncle Carroll was more likely than my father to comment on the quality of the occasion – the dancers, the music, his

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Hartford Historical Society

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own reaction. He either had a “fine” time or a “punk” time. Sometimes, in those days, the participants got to “ragging,” which meant the turkey trot, the tangle (Uncle Carroll’s version of “tango”), and other more strenuous and unseemly exhibitions. Police surveillance seems to have been necessary, for at one dance the long arm of the law collared Uncle Carroll twice for ragging.

Parties were frequent and included ice cream “socials”; lawn parties with ice cream and cake and the music of harp, mandolin or piano; picnics; birthday parties; sugar-on-snow, Hallowe’en, and card parties; or musical soirees with the gramophone, graphophone, phonograph, Victrola, hexaphone, talkaphone, or whatever it might be called. While working on a farm in Brookfield, my father attended the 60th birthday party for a neighbor lady. The revelers played 500, listened to a program of singing, speaking, and reading, had refreshments of coffee, sandwiches, cake, corncakes, white grapes, and fudge, then played more 500. My father “rolled

in” about 1:30 a.m.

Parties were supplemented by band concerts, family sings, croquet, spelling bees, political rallies, bean, hash or chicken pie suppers at the church, seances with the Ouija board, joy rides with sleigh or buggy, lectures on Irish folklore, wireless telegraphy or temperance with magic lantern slides or stereopticon views. A rally for gubernatorial candidate Fletcher D. Proctor in 1906 drew the whole family to the Junction. When William Jennings Bryan came to the Gates Opera House in 1907, scholars were given an hour and a half nooning to attend.

My father felt some pride in his spelling ability, but in the only two contests mentioned he got spelled down, once on “universe” and the other time on “threshold,” but he had a “corking time” at a candy pull. Other words of approval were “fine,” “dandy,” and “elegant.” The night he went to the lecture on wireless telegraphy with Miss Parker, one of the pretty village schoolmarms,

(Continued on next page)

Happy Birthday Alice!

Alice Smith Celebrates 100 Years

On Saturday, December 2nd, well over 100 friends, family, former co-workers and former students gathered at the Sharon Elementary School to celebrate the 100th birthday of Mrs. Alice Smith, former Hartford Grammar School teacher and principal. Alice, born on December 2, 1906, taught for over 47 years before retiring. Happy Birthday, Alice!



Alice Smith with Joan Turner and Alice Hazen at Alice's 100th birthday party. The three taught together at the Hartford Grammar School.



Alice Smith receiving the key to the new Hartford Grammar School addition in 1952. L-R: Selectman Winsor Brown, Superintendent Eugene Hoyt, PTA President Ritchie Willard, Principal Alice Smith, PTA Chair Mrs. John Malone and PTA Secretary Mrs. Mira Davis.



View from a room at the Pease Hotel in Hartford Village, circa 1899.

they saw Halley's comet making its 1910 appearance. He added: "Almost saw stars. The lecture was fine." When he went to a social with "Miss B.," another school teacher, he "had a dandy time." A full moon and stars always had a poetical effect. "Miss B. and I took a stroll this evening," he wrote. "Perfect night. Good moon. Stars all out and weather just right."

My father was more of a joiner than Uncle Carroll, and both were great visitors, but the record of details comes from Uncle Carroll. My father belonged to the Grange, the Christian Endeavor, the Shakespeare Club, Modern Woodmen of America, and something called the K.O.K.A., of which he was once elected "king." One note I find says the K.O.K.A. was the original name of the Perseverers, "a class of young men for Bible study and clean athletics." There was also the "Bachelor's Club," formal or not, I don't know, but it met once anyway for "a spread...cigars, saltines, chicken a la Newburg and just a little 'Bar Harbor.'" The "Sign of the Greek Temple" was another mystical order, which, on one occasion, also had a "spread consisting of saltines, sandwiches with deviled ham filling, assorted chocolate almonds and caramels and a 'sip of sin'."

Uncle Carroll's visits stimulated compulsive eating. On the first day of a visit to friends who ran a store in Braintree, he "visited with Mrs. Cade & rest & ate candy, English walnuts & raisins." The next day he hung around the store "most of the time eating candy & nuts & raisins." Fortunately he left the following day to visit relatives in South Royalton, where he stayed four days and went on one of his monumental expeditions (this time fishing, which took him so far out of town he didn't get back until 8:30 in the evening.) Deer hunting or berrying or a long walk might end the same way. He would wander for hours, get "lost," starve gloriously, finally

find his way back to civilization, stagger home, eat ravenously and go to bed "some tired" – or, he might "doll up" and go dancing.

One favorite eating place of Uncle Carroll's was his maternal grandmother's. On July 4, 1914, when he put in a big day celebrating, "Gram" served corned beef and beet greens, which was "fine." A few days later he was back for more, and this time he put away "potatoes, peas & pork boiled together with milk." On another occasion at Gram's he ate "a lot of potato with

dried beef & egg gravy & some apple pie." Uncle Carroll had bouts about improving his diet. Once he decided to "live on less meat," and so that day he had oatmeal, toast, and four-minute eggs for breakfast; fried tripe, salmon salad and beans for dinner; and milk, cake, baked potato and cold roll for supper.

Regular holiday festivities were community Christmas trees and a Thanksgiving ball, and the Fourth, which was sometimes explosive. Eschewing sleep the boys would shatter the quiet of night by ringing the school bell and firing my father's "cannon" made from an old iron wheel hub. On another Fourth my father left his work in the store at Wilder to cross the Connecticut into New Hampshire and hoist "Old Glory" atop Mt. Lebanon. The Fourth was also the occasion for a parade of "horribles," in which grotesquely costumed participants marched behind the Hartford Cornet band. One celebration replete with costumes was a three-day pageant depicting the history of the town of Hartford on its sesquicentennial in July 1911. My father, fairly tall and lean, was cast in the role of an Indian which he played with distinction, I assume. It took him an hour to wash off the paint that was the larger part of his costume; however, this chore didn't prevent him from meeting Miss Parker and walking down to Mr. Dutton's where they had a swell time "inside and out."

The horse and buggy was still the principal way to travel locally. One could take the steam cars for longer trips, or "the electrics" in and between some larger cities. But this was the age of transition. More and more adventurous citizens were piloting automobiles. Uncle Carroll began his driving career about 1909 conducting a jitney service at the Twin State Fair in White River Junction. My father, who had run a horse and buggy jitney at the fair, eventually switched

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Interior of Hartford Church, probably early 1900's.

to automobiles. After he bought his first car in 1915, he even went to Rochester, N.H., to tote fair-goers to and from the railroad station. Soon, long excursions in automobiles replaced horse and buggy "joy rides," and everybody had fun trying out everybody else's automobile.

Along with the automobile an innovation in the teens was the "movies" which began to replace some other forms of entertainment. First mention as of the "New Moving Picture Show" in Easthampton in 1907 when my father was at Williston Academy. My father and Uncle Carroll frequented the cinema places of the day, with such names as Crown, Lyric, Dreamland, Star, Magnet, Globe, Empress and Empire, where they could see Evelyn Nesbit, Mary Pickford, Thelda Bara, Lillian Gish, Mae Marsh and other stars in such flicks as "Redemption," "Love's Refrain," "Sin," "A Man and his Mate," "A Woman's Resurrection," "Greater Love Hath No Man," "The Devil's Daughter," and "The Gypsy Girl."

My father and Uncle Carroll went to church with surprising regularity in these days and participated in socials, plays, and other events connected with the church. In Claremont, N.H., where they both had jobs for a while, they invariably went to a morning service and an evening service then followed up the evening service with a Salvation Army meeting. They also attended prayer meetings and when the annual Adventist Camp Meeting rolled around they were apt to be on hand.

Among my father's early reading was the Youth's Companion, but he later began reading popular novels from the village library. Among them were "White Fang" by Jack London, "The Trail of the Lonesome Pine" by John Fox, Jr., "Riders of the Purple Sage" by Zane Grey, "Their Yesterdays" by Harold Bell Wright, "A Girl of the Limberlost" by Gene Stratton-Porter, and "Joyce of the Northwoods" by Harriet T. Comstock.

Another form of recreation was "drama." The Shakespeare Club either gave a reading or actually staged "Hamlet." One group put on "A Midsummer Night's Dream" outdoors on an August evening. Less ambitious productions used the more popular comedies, farces, and tragi-comedies of contemporary writers. Perhaps most frequently played were these dramas published by Walter H. Baker & Co., of Boston. My father, being thin, played Jack Spratt in a play put on by the Hartford church. He also took part in "A Box of Monkeys," a farce by Grace L. Furniss. And, finally, one drama settled my father's fate. Early in 1916 the Wilder schoolmarms needed male characters for a three-act comedy called "Daddy." Miss Martin was the mother in the play, "Mrs. Wrexson Brown, just like her fellow women." My father was "Paul Chester, a young doctor."

As the rehearsals progressed Miss Martin and my father were seen together more frequently – at such festivities as the Eastern Star ball, at "divine service" in the Wilder Congregational church, and walking "around the square." – until the togetherness became permanent.

Uncle Carroll, with his lifelong nostalgia for "home" with its fringe benefits of good food and a warm hearth, remained a bachelor, "boarding around" (twentieth-century style) and "teaching young ideas how to shoot" in one-room schools that retained the wood-stove flavor of the nineteenth century.



Main Grand Stand at the Vermont State Fair in White River Junction.



News and Notes

Membership Renewals Due

The Board of Directors would like to remind you that dues for 2007 were due by December 31st. To avoid being removed from our mailing list, please submit your payment soon.

If you are unsure of your current status, please call Jim Kenison at (802) 738-5333.

Change in Open House Schedule

The Board of Directors voted at its November meeting to change the Open House schedule. Effective immediately, Open Houses will be held from February through October on the first Tuesday, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.; from May through September an additional Open House will be held on the second Sunday from 1:30 to 4:00 p.m. There will be no Open Houses from November to January.

In addition to scheduled hours, the Garipay House is open by appointment. To schedule an appointment, please call Pat Stark at (802) 295-3077 (days) or (802) 296-2192 (evenings). People interested in volunteering to host an Open House should call Pat as well.

Hartford Genealogy Resource Center

The Hartford Genealogy Resource Center is now open on Mondays from 12:00 to 6:00 p.m. (or by appointment) at the Hartford Library on Maple Street in Hartford Village. The center is well on its way toward becoming a "one-stop" resource for genealogical research related to Hartford, VT families.

The center's collection includes printed and electronic town histories and genealogies and research database collections of cemetery, church and vital records from Hartford.

Volunteers are needed in several areas. If interested in scheduling an appointment or volunteering, please contact Nadine or Marion at the library at (802) 296-2568.

November Program

Kevin Graffagnino presented an excellent program on Ira Allen for our November program. Despite the rain, about 20 people attended the informative and entertaining program.

Kevin, the Executive Director of the Vermont Historical Society, is an excellent presenter and very knowledgeable. He shared information about perhaps the least-known Allen brother and his personal and business dealings.

If you missed Kevin's presentation, he will be speaking again at our April program, where he will speak on the Saint Albans Raid.

Volunteer Opportunities

The Hartford Historical Society currently has a wide range of volunteer opportunities for those of you looking for ways to become more involved. Below is a listing of several key areas using volunteers on a regular basis. If you are interested in volunteering or would like more information, please call the appropriate contact person.

- Collections -- Call Pat Stark at (802) 295-3077 (days) or (802) 296-2192 (evenings).
- Book Update Committee -- Call Jim Kenison at (802) 738-5333.
- Program Refreshments -- Call Mary Nadeau at (802) 295-2123.
- Open House Docents -- Call Pat Stark at (802) 295-3077 (days) or (802) 296-2192 (evenings).
- Publicity Coordinator -- Call Mary Nadeau at (802) 295-2123.

Thank you for your interest!



News and Notes

Book Project Update

The committee undertaking the update of John St. Croix's Historical Highlights of the Town of Hartford, VT will be meeting again on Sunday, January 14th at 2:00 p.m.

The meeting will focus on deciding the general layout of the book, including subject divisions. A survey to collect data from local businesses and organizations has been designed and will be distributed to committee members. After collecting the data, the committee will then decide upon a final list of items to be included in the new book.

In addition to updating the book to include items from the past 40 years, St. Croix's original work will be revised to reflect changes that have occurred since

the publication.

Volunteers are still needed to help collect data and to prepare for publication. If you are interested in helping, please contact Jim Kenison at (802) 738-5333.

Monetary donations to help cover the costs related to this project and other society work are always welcome and appreciated.

In Memory of

John C. Cone

June 24, 1918 - November 20, 2006

The Hartford Historical Society Board of Directors would like to offer its condolences to the family of Mr. Cone, who has been an active supporter of the Society for many years.



Curator's Corner

Another year has past and a new one is on the way! I seem to get 'behinder and behinder' as the saying goes – so if you have donated something and haven't heard from us – thank you! I hope by the next newsletter to be able to give you a recap of some of the donations received in 2006.

Our photograph collection has seen a lot of usage in 2006 – especially the Quechee photos. I understand there is a dynamite reproduction of one of our older photos in the bakery in Quechee. The Randolph Bank at Waterman Place has copied several, as well as the new Quechee Jiffy Mart. Deborah Doyle-Schechtman is collecting some for use in her new publication on the history of Quechee. E-mail and the US Mail also bring requests for photos – at the moment I am copying some for a fellow to use who is writing a history of the Woodstock Railroad [hope we get a copy of his book!] There is also a good possibility some of them will be featured in the video for the Visitors Centers the Hartford Preservation Commission is producing.

I also wish to thank Jim Kenison, the members of the Hartford Genealogy Group and the Hartford Library for their efforts in setting

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

up the Genealogy Center in the Hartford Library. It is a wonderful place and I am happy to no longer have to take the time to help all the folks trying to trace their family lines!

In recognition of Alice Smith's 100th birthday, can you help us identify any of the students in this class photo from one of Alice's many Hartford Grammar School classes? Please contact me if you can help.



Hartford Historical Society

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Important Date

Sunday, January 14, 2007

2:00 p.m.

**Book Update Committee Meeting
at the Garipay House**



HHS Calendar

Special Meetings, Programs and Events

Programs are held at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ on Maple Street in Hartford Village at 7:00 p.m. and are followed by refreshments.

Sunday, January 14, 2007 -- *Book Update Committee Meeting* at the Garipay House @ 2:00 p.m. Members of our Book Update Committee will discuss the progress and next steps to be taken in updating John St. Croix's Historical Highlights.

Wednesday, April 11 -- *The St. Albans Raid*. Kevin Graffagnino will give a lively description of the only Civil War action in Vermont.

Wednesday, June 13 -- *The Transformation of Quechee*. From a sleepy little village to a beautiful and vibrant community, Quechee has undergone an incredible transformation since the 1960's. Presented by John Lutz.

Ongoing Meetings and Events

Regular meetings and Open Houses are held at the Garipay House, 1461 Maple Street in Hartford Village unless otherwise noted.

First Tuesday (February through October) -- *Open House*. 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. The public is welcome to visit the Garipay House and see items from our collection on display. Volunteers are on hand to give tours and answer any questions.

Second Sunday (May through September) -- *Open House*. 1:30 - 4:00 p.m. The public is welcome to visit the Garipay House and see items from our collection on display. Volunteers are on hand to give tours and answer any questions.

Fourth Tuesday -- *HHS Board of Directors Meeting*. 7:00 p.m. For more information, please contact Clyde Berry, Board Chairman.

Please note the change in Open House hours

The Garipay House is still open by appointment. Please call Pat Stark at (802) 295-3077 (days) or (802) 296-2192 to schedule an appointment.