

# Hartford Historical Society

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

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

Volume 19, Number 6

SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

July - August 2007

## The Story of Vermont Transit

By Charles O. Little, Montpelier, VT

[Editor's note: This article is reprinted from *The Vermonter*, Vol. 50, No. 6, June, 1945.]

When Bill Appleyard, automobile agency owner, couldn't market a bus he was expected to sell some 20 years ago, he ended by taking it himself. A 21-passenger affair, looking like a school bus, it was the paternal grandfather of the Vermont Transit system, deployed all over the state and now hoping to reach into the air highways. If transportation is going to leave the ground, transportation is the company's business, and it hopes to keep carrying the ball.

More than a year ago the Vermont Transit lodged its application for authority to run a helicopter air service, passenger, mail and express, after the war. The air-

bus network will nearly parallel present transit bus lines and visionary as the prospect seems" Transit men aver it is "closer to hand than people realize."

If the concept of helicopters dropping down on Vermont towns seems rather academic, one has only to bend an ear to Transit officials and take a look at some of the documented plans to overcome the feeling. The project is roughly an air transport service with stops at many of the larger towns operated by trained pilots and technical personnel but administered by the present bus

organization, the whole integrated with short-haul bus and through air service.

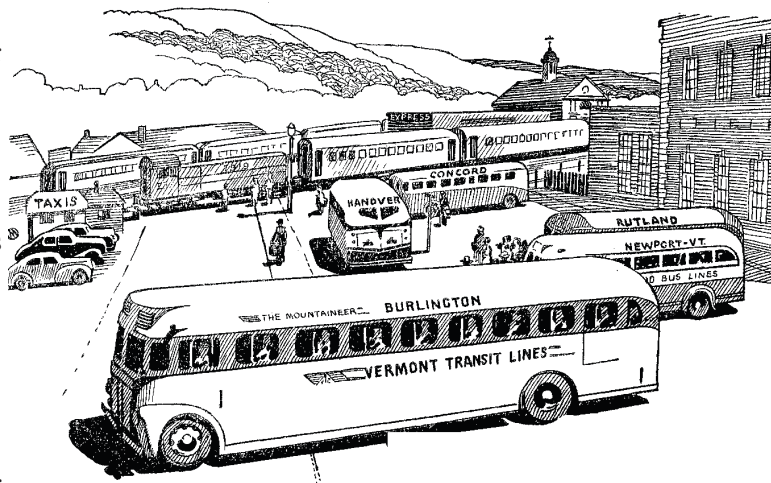
The idea takes a little getting used to, but comes easily.

The case for helicopters is based on the belief that ordinary air routes will never reach many thriving towns over Vermont's rugged terrain, and that these towns must be tied in with an air "feeder service". But this alone would not provide enough business to warrant a network, and the going plan is to furnish regular short-haul or local delivery between Vermont points as well.

The company feels that

both feeder and local service will be needed if the network is to be economically productive.

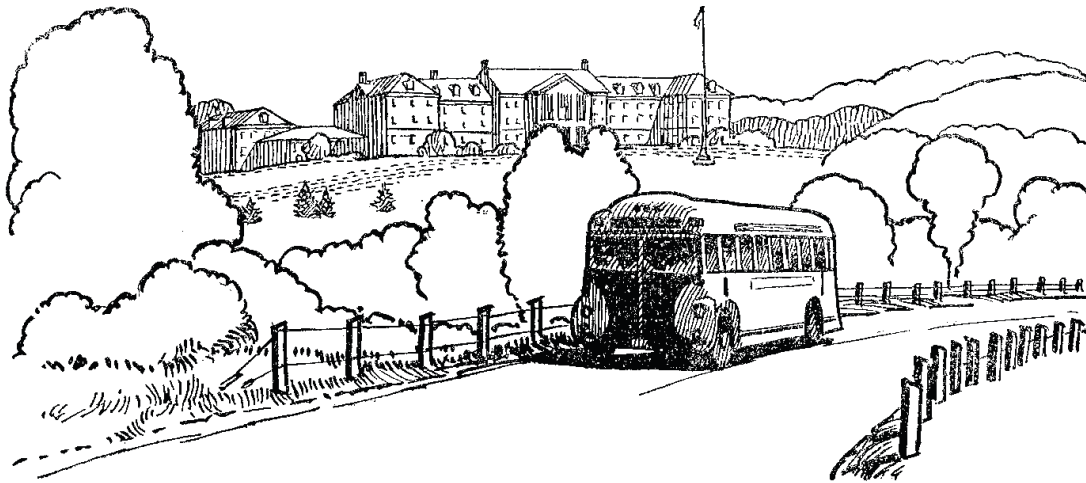
There are two obvious questions of feasibility, and the company has answers, if not the final ones, to both. Replying to the question of the helicopter as a carrier the answer is that technically the rotary-winged airships are farther along than most people realize, a fact ascribed to the secretive nature of development under the military in war years. The machines are capable now of holding six to eight persons, the Transit application asks authority for



A BUS TERMINAL, WHITE RIVER JUNCTION.

One of two Diesel engine shifters, employed, day and night, with others, in this great railway yard, doing away with smoke, is just beyond crossing gate. Vermont Transit, for Montreal, in foreground, is passing slowly to its berth.

(Continued on next page)



*BUS FOR SPRINGFIELD AND BRATTLEBORO, VERMONT, AND NEW YORK CITY  
 Passing the Veterans Hospital (for Vt. and N. H.) near White River Junction*

a seven passenger craft and it is expected that double that capacity will not be long in arriving.

Commercial feasibility is subject to an "if, as and when" and is coupled with the growth of airfield aviation. But Vermont Transit and many other companies have already made tentative commitments for helicopters, and do not contemplate: new services just for the ride.

The feature of the craft which bus companies feel is adapted to their organization is, of course, that it can be set down almost anywhere. The plan is to drop down on present bus terminals, garages and other facilities in the center of towns where there may never be a landing strip. The helicopter is a slow machine, would serve towns not fixing hopes on other air services. Other air lines have no cause to fret, so it is said.

Vermont Transit, since it opened for business in 1929 linking Burlington and Barre, has become a million dollars concern, and with 53 busses, a familiar one on the landscape. It has reached steadily out into the state, taking over a stage line here, extending its routes until it now ties nearly all Vermont together by road. There are still 38 bus companies in Vermont but the transit system has put coordination into the state's carrier travel where there was none.

Transit officials take some pride in the safety record of the: line but have never reached for the type to tell about it as a matter of policy. Their busses have rolled about sixty million miles -- plenty of it on curves-without a passenger death from accident. "We are honest enough to admit that we have been lucky," has been the com-

ment of Executive Vice President Robert F. Thompson. Thompson has been chairman of the New England Bus association for five years past. In further explanation of this negative feat, it might be said that the Transit busses have been involved in several fatal accidents in which pedestrians met death, but the drivers were completely exonerated. The line has

never had a very grave passenger injury; a broken leg was the worst.

There is probably no business with more heaven-sent opportunities to disaffect the public than the carrier business, or none in which the public needs more polite nursing. Where railroad lines have traded on an independent basis, and the passenger knows what is expected of him, the bus men have never been able to afford this point of view. Road travel has to be flexible. The Vermont Transit found the answer to this by tossing out the rule book and handing all resulting road problems to drivers who

*(Continued . . .)*



## Hartford Historical Society

Post Office Box 547, Hartford, VT 05047-0547

<http://www.hartfordhistory.org>

### Officers:

Dot Jones, President	802 295-2701
James Kenison, Vice President	802 738-5333
David Ford, Secretary	802 356-2776
Peggy McDerment, Treasurer	802 295-2357

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Dorothy Yamashita, Chairman	603 448-1067		
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Bill Wittik	295-9683		

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take pride in running their own busses. The management likes to think it has the most courteous outfit in the country because the network isn't saddled with regulations. Baggage mix-ups which total several hundred a year, iced-up roads and floods, the wandering and befogged traveler -- or arbitrating how many baby carriages can come aboard -- the business of carrying for hire has got to be flexible.

Burlington is the home port of Vermont Transit and from there radiate the through trips to New York, Boston and Portland. Other major lines carry to St. Johnsbury, Newport, Barre. With alternate routes and an intricate system of connections, the state is well linked up.

Vermont Transit is one of the first lines to collaborate with an out-of-state network in setting up through routes between metropolitan points without change of schedule. Railroads have been doing it for years, though. On the New York trip down Route 7 via Rutland and Bennington the Vermont driver gets off at Pittsfield, Mass., and Greyhound lines lease the bus outright for the rest of the trip. The Vermont driver will operate a Greyhound bus northward on a reciprocal basis. North of Burlington to Montreal Central Greyhound lines is the operator on the same scheme.

Two other out-of-state routes--the Boston trip via Montpelier and Claremont, N. H., and the Portland, Me., trip via Montpelier and Woodsville (or St. Johnsbury) are entirely in Vermont hands, the driver staying overnight at the terminus and returning the next day. Another New York trip by way of Montpelier, White River Junction and Bellows Falls runs only to Springfield, Mass., but connecting service carries on. There are a number of local schedules such as the Claremont-Windsor-Springfield-Albany, or the Claremont-Springfield-Bellows Falls services.

The Transit company was an outgrowth of a Burlington venture which had its beginning in 1926. At that time the ancient Burlington Traction company, an electric trolley system operating under the still older Burlington and Winooski Horse Car company charter, was getting a taste of competition from Appleyard's new bus. The owner had a certificate to operate around the "Country Club loop" and his motorized threat to electricians was tagged the Burlington Rapid Transit company, a nomenclature to which the Interborough Rapid Transit of New York had contributed. In short, Appleyard applied for more routes, sold his auto agency and finally bought out the traction company in 1929. The Burlington Rapid Transit with 20

busses is still run side by side with the Vermont Transit it begot.

There was no sorrow in the Queen City on August 4, 1929, though it was the day when the last trolley cars were all scrapped at once with funeral obsequies, and a fleet of busses was installed. From noon until 3:30 o'clock that day all trolleys in the city, wearing black crepe bows of mourning, took no fares, and at the latter hour the electric current was shut off. At 4 o'clock there was a concert in front of the Hotel Vermont in City Hall park, and in the presence of the mayor and other dignitaries an ancient trolley, appropriately draped and wreathed, was rolled up and converted into a funeral pyre as taps were blown. There is no record of tears.

Soon thereafter, Vermont Transit was born with purchase of the Yellow Bus line from Burlington to Barre, owned by Fred A. Jewett. From this trip the company has expanded almost yearly, buying and adding extensions and connections, and integrating all runs wherever possible. The objective was to tie the system together, rather than acquire a sprawling monopoly, both for business and for service.

The next year VTC bought the Burlington to Rutland run from Lackard and Norton, and obtained the Burlington-Vergennes franchise from George Roberts. The following year the Rutland route was extended to Pittsfield, Mass., initiating a Burlington to Bennington through line. In 1932 the Barre schedule was pushed through to Portland, Me., though for the first few years the through trip was operated in summer only. It was the first cross country travel offered to the Maine coast. In the same year Central Vermont railroad discontinued its branch line from Essex Junction to Burlington and the Transit company made arrangements for a train connection bus.

In 1935 the Rutland to Bellows Falls route was purchased from Ralph Wright and about the same period the Burlington to Barre line was carried through "White River Junction to Claremont, N. H., now the connecting point for Boston and Springfield, Mass. It was in the same year that busses were sent beyond Pittsfield, Mass., to New York City in collaboration with what later became Greyhound lines. The next year the Ward bus line franchise from Rutland to Albany through Bennington was taken up. A case for coordinated schedules was found here where "the Albany-bound wayfarer descending on Rutland from the north would find his Albany bus had left an hour before.

*(Continued on next page)*



In 1937 the VTC bought the Montpelier-St. Johnsbury privileges from Doris M. Hawkins and asked to extend this to Littleton in order to tie in with the Burlington to Portland run through Woodsville. The next year the Burlington-Newport link was gained by purchase of the Burlington-Cambridge Junction rights from Ray Nichols and an extension to Newport. A cut across from this trip to St. Johnsbury afforded a second through run to Portland. Turning again to the southern part of the state, in 1939 permission was granted to jog off the Rutland-Bellows Falls trip to Chester and reach Springfield with its expanding industry. There had been no public transportation to Springfield from the north. To reach it one had to go to Bellows Falls, entrain for Charlestown, N. H., and take the trolley to Springfield.

Four years ago The Burlington-to-Boston service of Frontier coaches was acquired; in effect an extension from Claremont N. H., through Concord, N. H., and Manchester, N. H. Service from Claremont to Springfield, Mass., afforded an alternate route to New York down the Connecticut. The Burlington to Bellows Falls trip was sent through to Boston by arrangement with Greyhound lines similar to the New York trip south of Pittsfield.

The most recent growth of the system is the Montpelier-to-Rutland route, purchased from Oscar Crandall. And plans are to install a modern terminal at Rutland.

With 130 employees and no "misters", Vermont Transit is a "family" company. There are yearly parties for the scattered personnel and considerable esprit de corps lubricates the working mechanism, so it is said. Some little time ago a complaint was made that some of the girls at a regional office were smoking at their desks. The upshot was that word was passed down to give them half an hour each morning in which to leave the office, and light up. An unusual gesture was recently made at the time of the late President Roosevelt's funeral. All company busses came to a halt at 4 o'clock, the drivers explained what was afoot and then stood at attention outside for a moment of silence. In some cases the passengers left the busses, or remained inside with hats off.

War conditions have brought some retrenchments while the system is carrying more fares than ever. Last year one and three quarters passengers were carried a total of nearly three million miles, about the same as the year before. One development of wartime is that of standees. In normal times the company wouldn't allow much of it, nor would the public like it. For the time being the rule of

thumb is "standees up to 50 per cent or seating capacity"; the Office of Defense transportation rules out overloading tires; the Public Service commission won't worry until they start to "sit or stand upon the steps, running boards, hood, bumper or roof"; and the driver just tries to get them home. Company officials are thankful for the leniency of the standee. "We can't say enough for them on this", says one official.

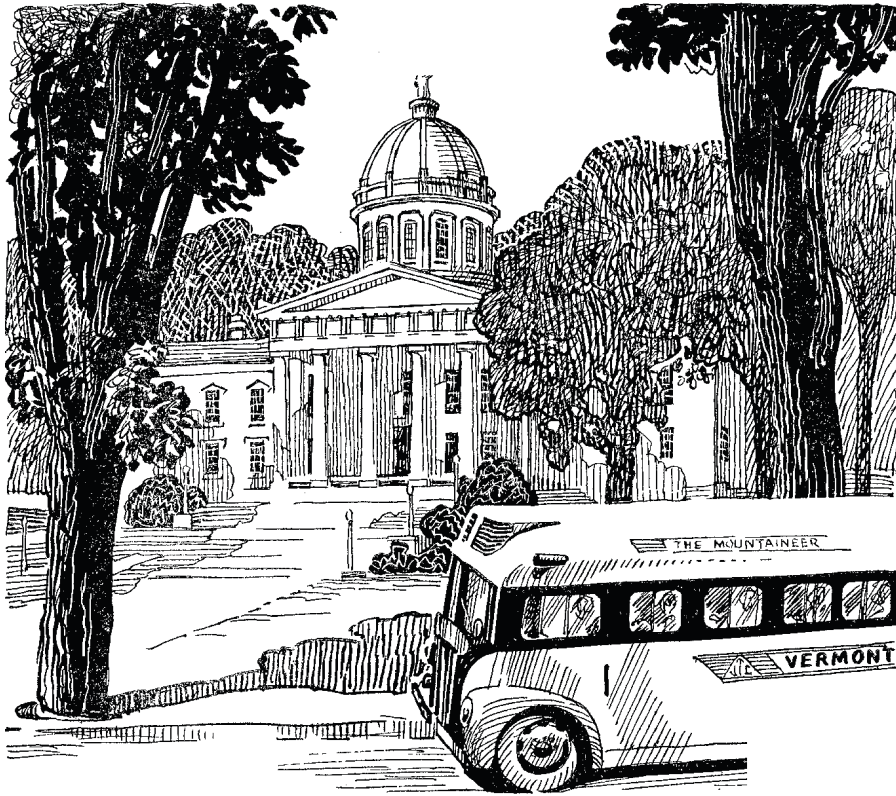
The tire problem is not complex; the outfit doesn't own any. All tires are on rent from the tire companies which allocate them to commercial vehicles on the basis of horse sense and maximum use is obtained all around. The omnibus industry has to use retreaded rubber even as the next man, but thus far Vermont Transit vehicles use no retreads on front wheels.

When it comes to putting mileage behind, some busses have got the oldest car or most durable truck backed right into a siding. A few of the green and tan Vermont coaches are approaching the million mile mark. In elucidation the bus man hastens to add that few moving parts in these road veterans are the original ones.

The department of maintenance is where the greatest adjustment has come due to the war, but in relaxing mechanical standards, safety standards have not been dropped, bus men declare. Overhauling is a continuing process beginning with a check of every machine each night with an eye to steering, braking and other basic operation. Certain mechanical parts are regularly replaced every 2000, 5000 or 10,000 miles but replacement shortage has taken a toll here. It used to be the custom to replace pistons every 50,000 miles regardless of condition, but that pleasure has been foregone. The inevitable result has been a few road failures which normally would have been forestalled. There is still no temporizing when it comes time for a new steering knuckle or brake lining. The chief garage, as with the other main offices, is in Burlington, but there are secondary garages at Barre and Springfield, Mass.

The company feels that it has been lucky in the draft. The majority of the drivers have not been affected by shifting draft standards for the chief reason that the industry has been classified from the start as a "critical" industry. Most of the drivers are married men with children. The company has lost about 20 or 30 men to the draft and there are four or five veterans of the war at the helm of transit coaches.

A trend is the changed emphasis from the tourist and



*A VERMONT TRANSIT BUS AT ATTRACTIVE VERMONT STATE HOUSE, MONTPELIER*

sightseeing trade of pre-war days to the short-haul and worker commutation work of nowadays. The vacationist still comes to the Green Mountains, but not just for the ride and the commuter is getting the attention. The lucrative chartering sideline has been jettisoned by federal order. Vermont Transit estimates that on a Burlington to New York trip 150 passengers are handled, but less than three per cent ride all the way.

Road speed is another matter with which the bus industry has had to grapple. When Vermont's governor declared a war emergency and in conformity with national speed regulations ordered that all road traffic slow down to a maximum of 35 miles an hour the Vermont Transit lines geared down all schedules to meet the order. Months passed and road traffic of all kinds began to pick up speed. Today the strong assumption is that bus lines are doing no better nor worse than other by a rule that neither drivers nor enforcement officers are willing to take at its face value. It is common knowledge that no one is flagged down at 40 miles an hour these days on the open road. It is a good guess that no bus driver could be hired to keep his cruising speed under 35 miles at all times.

On the bulletin board of one Vermont Transit station is a draftsman's conception of the "bus of tomorrow-or

sometime next week." This luxuriously-appointed land yacht has facilities for 600 passengers and can furnish them with such improvements as observation platform, sweet shop, drug store and roller skating on its six decks. Something to work toward, perhaps. Vermont Transit men look for no radical alterations in bus design however, although a few refinements are expected. The Vermont line is hoping to have two new busses soon which will be smart, but in no way revolutionary.

The two main types now owned by the system differ principally in the greater height observable in the long-haul carriers. Behind the greater height is the problem of seat clearance over the wheel houses, and opportunity for greater baggage stowage under the raised seats. The average bus carries 21 passengers. Particularly during the summer when the bus traffic is heavier, one or more extra sections are run together to care for the overflow.

As with every transportation system, the Vermont line employs a service organization to ride the system anonymously and report on all aspects of road operation. The spotters report impartially and their service is a protection to all parties.

Thus -- the sprawling Vermont bus company. Some persons do not like to ride busses (as some do not like riding the rails) but the bet is they are riding them anyhow these days. Those who do not may sit up near the helm and learn some pointers from the operator against the time when the family lorry is back on the road. Most persons like their bus travel and enjoy rubbing elbows with the rest of the fares-though there are a few lines where it is hard on the elbows.

The public takes its riding in various ways, but the bus company is agreeable if the party has a good time, and, in fact, the driver often manages to make a fine, unofficial host. The saying at one Transit office is that a bus crowd on the west side of the state has a better time than a bus full of eastsiders. There is one westside caravan that regularly sings its trip up the New York line, the driver getting in his licks. It gets them over the road faster.



## From the Chairman

Thanks to Jim Kenison for the fine display of the Twin State Airport, HHS was well represented at Vermont History Expo 2007. Visitors had many interesting comments as they viewed the photos; one gentleman from Ohio pointed to a picture on the board and said "I flew in one of those last week" (at Wright Patterson AFB).

If you missed this year's Expo, you may want to put it on your calendar for 2008. Whether or not you carry the Vermont Historical Society Passport as you go from town to town, it's a wonderful opportunity to swap stories with residents from around the state. Of the 251 towns and cities in Vermont, close to 100 historical societies showcased their town's stories. What a trip! Old maps and photos, modern videos, and an incredible assortment of memorabilia were on display - plus Hands on History Demonstrations (eg granite carving and timber framing), presentations by authors and craftsmen, musicians on stage, a parade, and, of course, FOOD!

It was a privilege to "man" the HHS exhibit on Sunday. And I am honored to be asked to chair the Board. My qualifications are limited to "interested and

By Dorothy Yamashita, *Board Chairman*  
chairman@hartfordhistory.org

available" and I have much to learn, but with the help of our many talented Board members, I look forward to a busy year.

For those of you who may wonder how a Yamashita became involved in the HHS, my great grandfather was a tin peddler who lived on the site where Hartford Motors is now located. I have been researching the story of the Alonzo C. Martin family for some time now, and would welcome any information about that family or about other tin peddlers.

I know that Alonzo's daughter, Millie Mae Martin married Nathan Dodge and lived in South Royalton. Their daughter, Viva, married Fred Whitney, and I was born in 1925. As a child, I lived in Tunbridge, moved to Rutland and graduated from high school there, before attending Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio, where I met Stan Yamashita. We were married for 55 years - 20 of which were spent in the military, and 18 retirement years in California. Only in 1996 did we move to Lebanon, N. H., so this "old-timer" is really a "new-comer" to the area - digging up her roots! Thanks for welcoming me back to the fold!



## News and Notes

### Annual Business Meeting

The Hartford Historical Society's annual Business Meeting and Election was held on Wednesday, June 13th.

Jim Kenison was reelected to the board for a second three-year term. No other nominations were presented. We would like to fill two positions on the board. If interested, please call Dorothy Yamashita at (603) 448-1067.

### 250th Anniversary Update

The planning for the 250th anniversary of Upper Valley Towns continues. Each Town has been asked to establish a town planning committee for the event. Local committees should meet in September and the region-wide committee will meet again in October. If you are interested in planning

and would consider serving on the committee, please call Jim Kenison at (802) 738-5333.

### Genealogy Resource Center

The Hartford Genealogy Resource Center was recently awarded a grant in the amount of \$2500 to be used toward the purchase of microfilm copies of "The Landmark", a weekly newspaper published in White River Junction from 1882 to 1952.

The Center has already received the first installment of 18 reels, which are available for viewing at the Center on Mondays from 12 to 6 pm or by appointment. The Center is located upstairs at the Hartford Library on Maple Street in Hartford Village. Appointments can be scheduled by calling the library at (802) 296-2568.





## Curator's Corner

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

Donation Highlights from July 2006 through June 2007:

- Food Grinder "Universal 71, Made in USA" (Abbott, Collamer)
- Connecticut River Valley Assoc., Certificate for 8 Shares, 9/27/1890 (Barwood, Judeen)
- Safford, Noah B., Certificate for Appointment as WRJct. Postmaster, 12/22/1880 (Barwood, Judeen)
- Cascadnac Grange, misc. items, books, etc. (Berry, Clyde)
- Sheet Music from Marshall Music, WRJct., "Just an Echo in the Valley" (Bradley, Fred)
- WRJct PTA, Meeting minutes book, 1950-1961 (Chase, Dee & Everett)
- Hartford Water Co., 1952 receipts for Wilder Church & parsonage (Greater Hartford U. C. C.)
- Wilder Church, interior photos (Greater Hartford U. C. C.)
- WRJct, VT, souvenir mail card with several scenes (Goodale, Ruth)
- HHS Basketball Program 1983-84, booklet with photos (Hartford Alumni Assoc.)
- Testimonial to 1973 Baseball champs at VFW Program (Hartford Alumni Assoc.)
- Cross Abbott Co., Hurricane Brand Tomatoes, label (Hofstad, Karen)
- Hartford Woman's Club, "Penny Postal Card" Fundraiser, unmailed (Hollister, John)
- World War Mothers, Chapter I, VT, Wooden friendship tray given to Ethel Fisk Laugee (Jacobs, Jackie)
- Green Mountain Brand Spanish Olives, jar, packed

### **Hartford Genealogy Resource Center**

Located at the Hartford Library

Open Mondays, 12 to 6 p.m.  
or by appointment

Volunteers are needed

Please contact Jim Kenison at (802) 738-5333.

for Cross Abbott Co., WRJct. (Kenison, James)

- Alum container from Howard Drug Co., WRJct (Kenison, James)
- Miller Auto Co., 60 yrs, round match box (Kenison, James)
- Basketball Schedule booklet, 1932-33, many local ads (Marcotte, Leah Braley)
- Class Evening Program, 6/26/1935 (Marcotte, Leah Braley)
- HHS Diploma awarded to Leah Irene Braley, 6/18/1936 (Marcotte, Leah Braley)
- Photographs of downtown WRJct taken by Drafting Class (Nadeau, Art)
- Hartford Rubber & Truss Co., WRJct., wooden box (Sadler, Jerry)
- Laws of the State of VT, 1808, book with local names inscribed (Schremmer, Patty Lyman)
- Green Mountain Box & Lumber Co., Frank M. Gilman, Business Card (Therault, Ron)
- Hornpout Club, WRJct., Business Card (Therault, Ron)
- Teddy's Hotel & Grill, Business Card (Therault, Ron)
- Wilder Lake Assoc., Charter Membership Card (Therault, Ron)
- Downtown WRJct, aerial photos (Town of Hartford)
- Scanned photos of several Wilder people and businesses (Trottier, Joseph)
- Program for HHS Production, "The Saturday Evening Ghost", 4/13/1944 (Wood, Richard)
- VT Council of Safety, War-time Farm Labor Certificate awarded to Richard Wood for labor in 1942 (Wood, Richard)

This listing is not complete, but rather a samplig of the many donations received over the last year.

Items pertaining to Hartford's past are always welcome. Please call Pat at (802) 295-3077 (days) or 296-2192 (evenings) if you have any items to donate.

# Hartford Historical Society

Post Office Box 547

Hartford, Vermont 05047-0547

NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U. S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
PERMIT NO. 15  
HARTFORD, VT

**September Program:  
Wed., Sept. 12th - 7:00 p.m.  
The Great Railroad Disaster  
of 1887**



## 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.

**Saturday, Sept. 8 -- *Glory Days of the Railroad,***  
Downtown White River Junction. 10 am to 5 pm.

**Wednesday, Sept. 12 -- *The 1887 Railroad Disaster.***  
The greatest railroad disaster within the region occurred in West Hartford in 1887. Speaker TBA.

**Saturday, Sept. 22 -- *Discover Historic Hartford,***  
Historic Tour of sites throughout the Town of Hartford. Times and sites to be announced. Volunteers are needed. For more information, call Pat Stark at (802) 295-3077 (days) or 296-2192 (evenings).

**Wednesday, Nov. 14 -- *19th Century Popular Music,***  
Eric Bye presents a lively history of popular music from the 19th century, accompanied by live and recorded music.

### 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 Peggy McDerment, Board Chairman (See page 2 for contact info.)