

# Hartford Historical Society

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

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

Volume 20, Number 4

SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

March - April 2008

## Memories of a Tin Peddler's Grand-daughter

*Written by Viva Dodge Whitney, who died at Brookside Nursing Home on February 10, 2003*

*Submitted by her daughter, Dorothy Yamashita*

### **April Program: Memories of a Town Manager, Remi- niscing with Ralph Lehman**

*Wed., Apr. 9th - 7:00 pm  
Greater Hartford United  
Church of Christ*

Former Hartford Town Manager Ralph Lehman will reflect on his many years of service to the Town of Hartford. Ralph will speak on the accomplishments and changes in town during his tenure and since.

There will be a question/answer period and refreshments will be served following the program.

Please join us for a wonderful evening!

I would like to tell of the man who couldn't sign his own name when he was married and lived to send three of his four children to college. That man was Alonzo C. Martin, who came to Vermont from Canada, married Eliza Downing in Norwich, Vt. on 2 September, 1873. I am that tin peddler's grand-daughter. (Note: Alonzo died in 1912, Eliza in 1930 and they are buried in Hartford Cemetery.)

In 1865, 21 horse-drawn carts bearing the words TIN PEDDLER - A. C. MARTIN traveled up and down the highways and byways of the Connecticut Valley. The routes they traveled went as far north as Barre and Montpelier, circling back through Northfield, Randolph and Bethel and on down the first branch of the White River back to the home base in White River Junction, where the carts were emptied and re-loaded, ready to go again. By 1912, there were only 2 or 3 carts remaining in operation.

RECYCLING is a familiar word today. It isn't defined in my little black 1910 dictionary. What happened to things a



*Tin peddler's cart (possibly one belonging to A. C. Martin) on Main Street in Hartford Village.*

*(Continued on next page)*



*Back, l-r: Florence, Frank and Leon Martin, Nathan Dodge; Front, l-r: Eliza (holding Viva Dodge), A.C. Martin and Millie Mae (Martin) Dodge (wife of Nathan, holding Albert Dodge). Viva and Albert are children of Millie and Nathan.*

family couldn't use? I'm sure they never heard of a yard sale, although they did have auctions. And they had tin peddlers! When this horse-drawn cart was opened, it revealed a myriad of compartments: huge compartments for the brooms, rakes and hoes, and little cubbyholes full of combs, papers of pins and needles, nutmeg and nutmeg graters, castor oil, liniment and salves, tea

from China - and it seemed like a million other things.

Mr. Young drove the cart that stopped at our house, and my grandfather usually came to meet him and exchange loads. My constant ohs and ahs brought a shake of the head from my red-headed father, Nathan Dodge, who never wanted his father-in-law to give the family anything he couldn't pay for! My mother, Millie Mae, brought out feathers and old rags to trade for pins and scissors. Way in the back were beautiful bolts of fabric. Tea kettles and dish pans didn't interest me much, but when Mama looked longingly at some of them, I noticed Grandpa quietly put them away in our pantry!

This was recycling in the 1800's. Many customers had little cash so they saved every little item this peddler might swap for goods. When father cut everyone's hair, it went into a bag! Likewise, all rags and old clothing, bones washed and bleached, animal fur, old iron, bent nails, old tin dishes and broken crockery. Milkweed pods, gold thread, catnap, wintergreen leaves, and ginseng were worth a lot. Eggshells which had been washed and dried were acceptable - but not fresh eggs. One of my daily chores, as for other children,

was to sort out things in the SAVE corner of the woodshed.

Everything was then stuffed into bran sacks and other feed bags. These bags of all kinds were the most valuable of all and were slung under the wagon or tied on top, to be unloaded at storehouses along the way and picked up by another driver with a lumber wagon to be transported back to White River Junction.

How exciting it was when I was allowed to climb up beside my Grandpa and take the 20 mile drive with him. Getting ready meant packing some brown eggs from my hens for Grandma Eliza, and my brother must send some of the white eggs from HIS hens. There was also a pail of maple sugar to tuck in the carriage and some witch hazel bark from the trees for which our farm in South Royalton was named: HAZELWOOD.

Away we went with my satchel tucked securely under the seat. About ten miles down the road we came to a pretty shady spot on the left hand side of the road where there was a spring; Grandpa could feed and water the horse and get nice cold water for us to have with the sandwiches, cookies and apples Mama had packed for us. I thought it was the best lunch I ever ate!

Long before dark we were driving into the yard to be greeted by Grandma. Their house was so-o-o-o BIG. The little town seemed like a city to me. There was so much for a little girl to see and explore. The big nursery with my special bed all made up for me seemed lonely without any

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## 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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Fred Bradley, Honorary Director 802 295-3819

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[newsletter@hartfordhistory.org](mailto:newsletter@hartfordhistory.org)

other children there. My seven years didn't seem so important without my mother and father!

The long dining room table where everyone sat down together for all the meals was a constant source of wonder to me. I could not leave the table until I said "Excuse me" - and for some reason I don't yet understand, I would sit there after the hired girls, the men who drove the carts, probably the minister, maybe an uncle or aunt or two had all excused themselves and left. Grandma would patiently wait for me. I would finally say the dreaded words and leave.

Another marvel to me was the huge linen closet at the end of the dining room with its piles of napkins, tablecloths, towels, and linen spreads. I probably didn't know the difference between linen and cotton in those days, but those piles of white fascinated me. Mama kept ours in one bureau drawer!

This 24-room house was situated on a lot 150 feet deep and 200 feet in length in front of the recently built Hartford High School. The ell had a huge unheated space filled with pots and pans, needles and thread, and everything to fill the shelves in the peddlers' carts. Between that and the sorting sheds was a barn for some of the horses and a couple of cows.

I loved to go with Grandma Eliza to the sorting sheds. She greeted each tin peddler by name and directed the unloading of the contents. The next morning even the children could help with the sorting and put many, many items in the Missionary Barrels, of which there were several - large

and small. There were ten or twelve sheds, each marked by a shingle with big black letters designating its use: RAGS, FUR, FEATHERS ETC., BAGS, PAPER, HERBS, METAL, GARDENING, IRON, WOOD, SHIPPING & PACKING -

These are the ones I recall 85 years later!

After everything had been sorted and cleaned, and Grandma had carefully inspected each shed, Grandpa and the men were baling big bundles of everything to be taken to the railroad station. The address was for some big firm in Boston. Where, oh where, was Boston? And China? They must be magic places, for tea and tea-pots and a white-haired uncle came from China - or so I thought, because he always brought the teapots. I know now that he lived in Boston and his occupation was "tea-taster."

Some of the Missionary Barrels remained, and large boxes were sent to local churches. Missionaries made Grandma's house their home when passing through - and so did many of the men who were called "tramps." I never could figure out what a tramp was and why their breath smelled so funny!

The crowning joy was to be allowed to climb on top of the finished load and ride over the BIG BRIDGE to that wonderful place called the railroad station... the whistles, the names, the noise were so exciting to a little country girl. That was greater than the Grand Central Station seemed a few years later. To me it all seemed so big - big men in uniforms, whistles blowing, beautiful ladies wearing such hug hats - I wondered where they all lived and where they were going.

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## Another Martin Story

*Submitted by Dorothy Yamashita*

Alonzo Chapin Martin was a tin peddler with home and headquarters in White River Junction located on what is now (2007) the location of the Hartford Motors across from City Hall.

His oldest daughter, Millie Mae, was my grandmother. Grandpa Nathan Dodge was active in the Tunbridge community... VT legislator in 1936, Tunbridge Fair President during the 1938 hurricane... and Millie was always by his side until he died in 1943.

But this is really the Martin story. Millie Mae grew up in White River Junction with two younger brothers, Frank and Leon, and a sister, Florence. Apparently the tin ped-

dlers business flourished. Leon graduated from Dartmouth College, and Millie Mae became one of the first graduates of the Boston Deaconess Training School, one of eight girls who "took the bonnet" in 1900. She was later ordained in the Vermont Conference and set up to assist pastors who had more than one church.

This letter indicates her foundations in the Methodist Church in White River Junction.

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE WHITE RIVER EPWORTH LEAGUE (A.C. Martin collection)

Dear Epworthians:

It is always with a feeling of peculiar seriousness and solemnity that we enter upon the New Year. As we have crossed the threshold of another year, I trust that each of us individually have made fervent resolves that a nobler, fuller,

*(Continued on page 7)*



# White River School Celebrates 100 Years of Great Teaching and Learning

June of 2008 will mark the completion of the 100th year of public education for the White River School Building. It has housed Hartford High School from 1908-1963, The Memorial Annex from 1963-1970, White River Elementary School from 1970-1994 and White River School from 1994 until today.

The White River School Staff has planned to commemorate the building's 100th year with these strands of activities:

## Historical Learning:

On February 14th "Journey Back in Time" a traveling hands-on museum will present White River School students the opportunity to experience life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Hands-on activities include: toys, domestic and kitchen chores, working with wool and handicrafts.

On April 11th – Billings Farm Museum will bring their exhibit "Children on the Hill to White River School. This historical program describes a day in the life of a Vermont child living 100 years ago.

On April 11th – Each classroom will research a topic from the past 100 years in White River and share their findings with the school.

Caldecott & Newbery Books: As part of their library studies students will read and hear Caldecott and Newbery Award Winners from many of the last 100 years. They have chosen their favorite books for display in the library.

## Community Outreach and Interaction:

Alumni Interviews/Visits: Alumni from Hartford High School will visit classes during the late winter to talk to students about what school and life in White River was like

when they were young. Visits are scheduled for January 31st, February 7th, March 13th, 2008

## Memorial Donations for Library Books:

People who wish to make a donation to purchase a library book in memory of someone or honoring someone may view the list at the White River School website: [www.hartfordschools.net](http://www.hartfordschools.net) or get this information by calling the school (295-8650). Donated books will have a special faceplate. (all book donations need to be processed through the school library.

Community Birthday Party/Open House: The entire alumni community from Hartford High School, Memorial Annex, White River Elementary School and White River School will be invited to an Open House and party on Thursday, June 5, 2008.

## Just Plain Fun:

White River School 100th Year of Great Teaching and Learning Tee Shirts, created by two WRS students.

Special Events: Halloween, Thanksgiving, RIF, Pencils, All school group photo, Book Discussion Club, 100 years of (personal favorites) children's poetry and more.

For more information, contact White River School Principal Christopher Ashley at (802) 295-8650.



*Hartford High School Class of 1954 at the School on Pine Street*

## Curator's Corner

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

Open House hours start up again in March (1st Tuesday 6-8:30), so I am busy putting new items out on display – from wooden water pipes from Loveland Hill to an antique silver mustard spoon. Stop by to check them all out!

The Post Office Displays this year feature some of the ways we have entertained ourselves and friends in the past – from sledding to Island Park. (Next year's will be on the performers, etc. that came to town to entertain us). If you are not a regular post office patron, make it a point to stop into one – they are switched around every other month.

Jim Kenison is helping with a new 'user-friendly'

computer search tool for our collections which will improve their usefulness and save me time. Once we have the inevitable 'bugs' out, you can stop by the Garipay House to see what we have on any topic – from Aubuchon's to zoo's! THANKS so much Jim! We are so lucky to have someone available who can actually DO things with computers for us!

I am looking for any small implements used in dairying to add to the collection, as well as a copy of a current Simon Pearce catalog. If you have anything, please contact me at 295-3077, M-F 9-4.

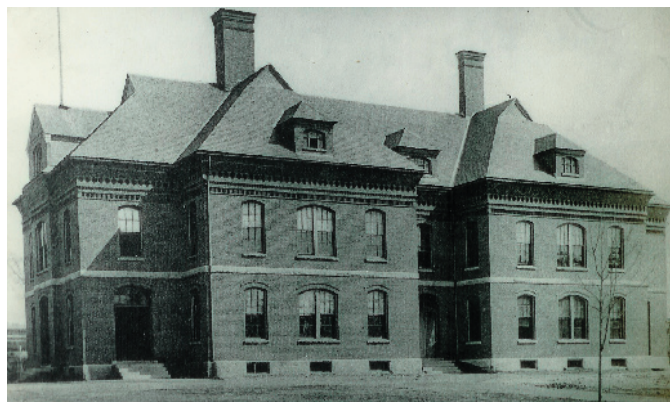
Thanks!

## Mystery Solved

Thanks to all who responded to our question of where the Town Government was located before the Bridge Street school building was used.

Charlotte Lahar tells me the Manager and Clerk were upstairs over the old bank in WRJct. I wonder when they moved in.

Freegrace Leavitt was the first Town Clerk I've found record of – he kept records at the tavern. Gov. Pingree probably worked out his law office. ? Hmmmm.



### *Reminder!*

Dues notices for 2008 have been mailed out to each member who is not already paid through the end of 2008. If your mailing label reads 2007/12 in the upper corner and you have not received a notice, please call Jim Kenison or Peggy McDerment (See page 2 for contact numbers).

Additional gifts are greatly appreciated as a large amount of money has been spent on maintaining our building this year. Any gifts above and beyond your dues are tax deductible, and a donation receipt may be requested.

Keep in mind that all dues payments were due by December 31st.

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## From the Chairman

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

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Dear members of HHS,

We all share excitement in the history of Hartford, and I am gradually learning more about my own family roots. When it's time for Spring cleaning, don't throw away those old letters in the attic! They may reveal a history of the community as well as your family.....the businesses, schools and organizations in Hartford. Old receipts are proof that the economy has changed! We accept donations of those old pa-

pers -- no matter how dusty!

To examine them is time consuming, so we also welcome volunteers. Share your newsletter with family, friends, and neighbors. It's a busy world we live in, but let us know if you can find some time to explore what's hidden in dusty envelopes! I'm really enjoying the experience.

Dorothy Yamashita

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## News and Notes

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### HHS 21st Century Honor Roll

The Hartford Historical Society Board of Directors has been considering ways to honor individuals who have had an impact on Hartford. The Board decided to create an "Honor Roll" to do just that.

Purpose: To create a public list of citizens deemed to have had a lasting positive influence on the town and its citizens, particularly regarding our history. This is intended to be a way to permanently honor those who come to the attention and appreciation of the Society and its members. Admission to this list can be submitted to the Board of Directors by any member of the Society and will be approved by the Board. A brief biography of the honoree will be sought and published in our Newsletter. The name will be recorded in a book along with the biography and date of entry. A 'traveling' scroll or other medium of listing will be created and brought to all Meetings and events sponsored by the Society. This will be kept in public view at the Garipay House at all other times.

If you would like to nominate someone for the Honor Roll, please complete the form that appeared in the last newsletter or contact Dorothy or Pat. (See page 2 for contact information.)

### 250th Anniversary Planning Committee

The 250th Anniversary Planning Committee has been meeting regularly to coordinate the efforts of local towns in planning a fitting celebration for the summer

of 2011. The group met last on January 24th at the Howe Library in Hanover, NH, and has representatives from most Upper Valley towns that were chartered in the summer of 1761.

While each town will conduct their own local events, the committee is trying to help coordinate things like scheduling and regional activities. Vital Communities has expressed interest in creating a region-wide Valley Quest in honor of the anniversary, and ideas like a traveling Quilt Exhibition, pageants, concerts, and, of course, fireworks have all been discussed.

Committee members have been trying to reach out to contact other interested persons, and representatives from schools, churches, and other nonprofit organizations who may be interested in participating in the planning for the events of 2011. If you or anyone you know would be interested in helping, please call Jim Kenison at (802) 738-5333 or email Pat Stark at [pstark@hartford-vt.org](mailto:pstark@hartford-vt.org).

### Oral History Project

Although we have not had any new interviews in several months, I am very happy to announce that it has given Lyla Collins a chance to INDEX all the interviews we have – all 65 of them! THANKS LYLA! Without her many volunteer hours we would have no idea what is in these interviews! If any of you would like to 'try your hand' at interviewing folks please let Pat know – we continue to lose valuable interviewees – such as the recent death of Ruth West. Fortunately we DO have one from John Dutton!



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# News and Notes

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## White River School 100th Year Celebration Continues

The celebration of the 100th year of education on Pine Street by the White River School community is moving toward a birthday party on June 5, 2008. Activities include classroom interviews with former Hartford High Alumni, two in school historical programs by the Billings Farm Museum and Journey Back in Time and research projects about life in White River over the past 100 years by current White River School classes.

All former students and staff of Hartford High School (1908-1963), Memorial Annex (1963-1970), White River Elementary (1970-1994), and the White River School (1994 to present) are invited to an Open House and Celebration on June 5, 2008. (Exact time TBA)

Former students and others who wish to make a donation to purchase a library book in memory of someone or honoring someone may view the list at the White River School



*Hartford High School as it appeared after  
1937.*

website: [www.hartfordschools.net](http://www.hartfordschools.net) or get this information by calling the school (295-8650). Donated books will have a special bookplate. (All book donations need to be processed through the school library.)

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*(Continued from bottom of page 3)*

sweeter life for us shall make its history.

The past is gone, we cannot recall it, neither can we change it, but the "book unread" of the year that awaits us must be of our own writing. Most of its pages are blank as yet. What shall be written upon them? Shall it be a year of happiness and helpfulness? Shall it be a year of unselfishness, of thoughtfulness for others, of good deeds done in the name of the Father of us all? Shall it be a year of consecration to Christ, a better knowledge of His word, and a deeper desire to do His will? God grant it.

THEN FOR OUR LEAGUE, DEAR EPWORTHIANs:

What shall ITS history be for 1903? Where does our League stand today? In view of all the present opportunities, advantages, and God's promises, are we just what we ought to be? True, the past is gone, but now what of the present, this present year? What shall our league be? Great responsibilities rest upon us, vast opportunities meet our opened eyes; what shall we do with these, dear friends? As the New Year opens before us the BLANK record book of our League, what shall be written thereon? The responsibility of each individual member, the OPPORTUNITY for filling its pages full of loyalty and victory comes to each of us, my brother, my sister.

*March - April 2008*

It is OUR privilege, our duty to help fill each page, keeping it white, clean, pure, that we may not be ashamed of our record.

God has blessed us richly, but better still, He has much richer blessings awaiting us. DO YOU BELIEVE IT?

"If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." Mark 8:23. And let us pray: "Lord, I believe.

Help thou my unbelief." Mark 9:24.

We need to pray for full salvation. To be filled with the Spirit, that we may have spiritual power, otherwise all our work will be a failure. Will you pray for an entire consecration to God? Will you pray for this Spiritual filling and power, first for yourself, and then for the League? May God speak to us as individuals, as a League, and as we hear the call may we come forth to do His bidding, strong in His might.

Once more exhorting you each and all to follow the New Year's resolutions with an ENTIRE CONSECRATION OF YOURSELF TO THE MASTER for preparation for work, and praying that the power of Pentecost may fall upon us individually, and as a League.

I am yours in the Master's service.  
MILLIE MAE MARTIN  
(Acting) Pres. of E.L.

# Hartford Historical Society

Post Office Box 547

Hartford, Vermont 05047-0547

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

**April Program:**  
**Wed., April 9th - 7:00 p.m.**  
**Reminiscing with Ralph**  
**Lehman**

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## HHS Calendar

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### 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.

**Wednesday, Apr. 9 -- *Reminiscing with the Town Manager***; Ralph Lehman will speak on his experiences both as a resident and as former Hartford Town Manager.

**Wednesday, June 11 -- *Twin State Airport***, Jim Kenison will present a pictorial history of the airport that served White River Junction from the late 1920's to the early 1950's.

### 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 Dorothy Yamashita, Board Chairman (See page 2 for contact info.)

Note: During January, February and March, Board Meetings will be held upstairs at the Hartford Library on Maple Street in Hartford Village.