



Hartford Historical Society

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

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

Volume 21, Number 1

SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

September - October 2008

Memories of a Town Manager

Transcript from the April 9, 2008 talk given by Ralph Lehman

**September Program:
Remembering White
River Junction with David
Briggs**

*Wed., Sept. 10th - 7:00 pm
Greater Hartford United
Church of Christ*

Innkeeper David Briggs will show photographs of White River Junction from former days, highlighting some of the changes our Downtown has undergone in the last few decades.

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

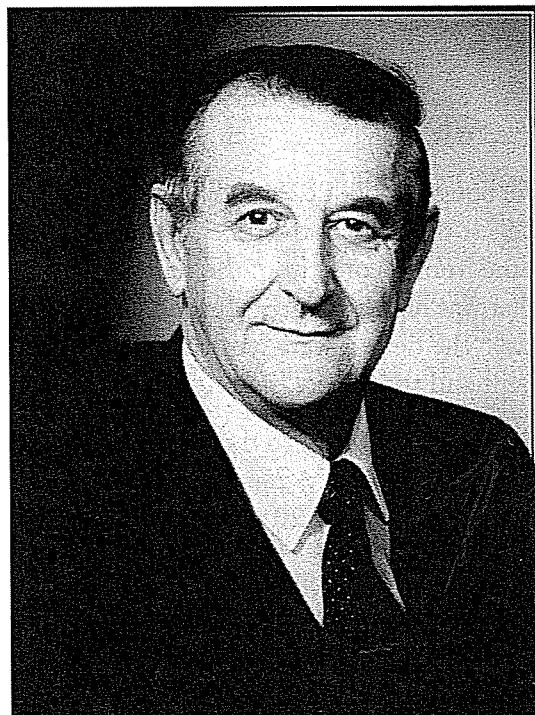
Please join us for a wonderful evening!

What I did was I graduated from the University of Maine [1959] with a degree in civil engineering and law it was a good course and a long course. There were only two of us that made it.

We moved here from Maine [1959]. In that era, there were changes that were made in government and other areas of our work. After 35 years of service I retired.

Both the Republicans and Democrats wrote me in on the ballot for [Representative]. It was 1994 when I retired. And a few days later I started in the state legislature. I lasted there for 3 two-year terms.

I am now going to get into the history of Hartford. When I started out we had a town-wide property tax valuation of 1 million dollars. It is over a billion dollars now. [Ralph asked Pat Stark if he was right. Pat doesn't know.] Well, if I make mistakes that's okay. Back in '59 I was taught by professor Edward Dow at University of Maine. He backed the use of town managers—the manager system—for town governments. To us, it seemed like Good Honest Government. What we initiated. Citizens' complaints. I



(Continued on next page)

have carried that message with me.

I arranged to have copies made of every complaint that came in. They were made in triplicate. The selectmen would get one, manager, and the person complaining. There were always copies on my desk. The selectmen had over 300 complaints. Many of those were highway related. The other was welfare. I had my work cut out for me.

Priorities. They rode me all over town and showed me the conditions. There were about 70 miles of town highway then. Now there are over 106. That was a muddy situation come spring.

There were people coming from Dothan, from Jericho, and if it was mud season, we had that problem on our hands.

Roads were a 20 year program. We were doing three to five miles of road a year, improved, paved. Gravel everywhere. There were pits in Quechee. We rebuilt a lot of roads. The River Road to Quechee was under water each year. Milk trucks complained. Had to be lifted out of the water each year.

We bought a bulldozer and a front-end loader—the biggest they had at the time. Financing the purchase came from income from the rental of the machines. That was big equipment. It took us 3 or 4 years [to repay]. The dealers were sympathetic. We were a government and they knew that money was coming.

First project was out to the Pomfret Road. We blew ledge. And drilled. After that it was “Grant took Richmond” for the next 20 years. Jumped from Jericho to In-Town to Wilder.

Had a good forman when I started. He was a worker. [who was his forman? -dff] Surveyed the roads. Went into the Town Clerks office and searched for titles to find out what we owned. By 1917 we owned any dead end. We could claim 50 feet to either side of the road. We built the roads according to standard. Sand gravel and hard surface. We were very successful.

I'm going to carry this on a little bit further. One area that we always liked to look at was cemeteries. There were six or 7. One of the cemeteries was in doubt. It was in West Hartford. There are places that you can't maintain cause you can't get to them. Class four roads you can't get through. There was one cemetery [Si-

mons]—I would walk in about a quarter of a mile and was trimming it, maintaining it.

One we don't take care of is the [Roman] Catholic Cemetery or South Cemetery [on South Main Street]. The Delano in West Hartford - that was questionable. It is a town cemetery. Got a grant from the government....

[Expansion of federal assistance.] We would take care of dependent children and aged and blind and disabled. People would come in and that was when you were old and gray. Back in '59 and '60 welfare wasn't as finessed as it is today. We didn't [call them] paupers. If you did, they were ostracized. These are the programs that are now called Social Services. That elevates people. There are a few that can't get wages and they aren't ostracized. I introduced that to the town—also: Surplus Commodities. When we started [distributing surplus to the town] we'd have 20 bags of surplus commodities. I thought you'd have a big truck. Next month a little more. I said to Joe Reed, we'd have a picture taken. There were 50 lb. bags of flour. I advertised it again and so 250 to 300 people came up the next time around. That was quite a thing and the papers made quite a story of it. Governor [Meldrin] Thompson called. He asked me to drive down to Concord. There were 12 men in an advisory commit-

(Continued . . .)



Hartford Historical Society

Post Office Box 547, Hartford, VT 05047-0547

<http://www.hartfordhistory.org>

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tee, and me. And so, they got [surplus commodities] started over there in New Hampshire. Vermont had already had it. Along with social services, the League of Cities and Towns we were able to transfer [to me another job] Overseer of the Poor.



Then they handed me a another job. Delinquent tax collection. On top of that I had Poll Taxes. We would collect 18 to 20 thousand [a year?]. Finally it went over a million. It made more work for the Board of Civil Authority. They would say to me, "I think I saw that guy. He's around town. You can't let him get away with that." They would get railroad men in the Coolidge Hotel. It was too much work [collecting the Poll Tax] for too little money.

As the years when by they got rid of the Inventory Tax. There was no tax on the other side of the river. It was a headache. They've got a pretty clean operation right now.

I want to get into the town plan started in 1955. There wasn't too much coming along at that time [in terms of planning]. We hired a company from CT. Planning and zoning was new in VT. We had the first comprehensive plan that was adopted in Vermont in 1961 and '62. There was zoning in there too. Couple of lawyers in town didn't want zoning. They had clients in town that [didn't want] set backs. We didn't have the right process for zoning. It took a couple of more years. The clients built the buildings right up to the road. In '62 I was appointed zoning person. Permits. Zoning board

listened to different people with special exceptions.

The one area that we spent a lot of time on was Urban Renewal. Larry Chase, Charlie Powden, Buddy Romano and Al Schaal too. We spent a lot of time on this. The town voted on this after 6 years.

There was an ABC to urban renewal delineations.

3 project stages. The fund was a 698,000 budget. We called it the "Gates Renewal Project." The whole issue was defeated! We never had code! It went down the drain. That was the end of that. The codes weren't going to go either. [We spent?] 6 years on that. I had an office made up, that was on Gates Street. Near the corner of Miller Auto. Buddy Romano took over. They closed shop and they voted in urban renewal in Lebanon. They did a good job over there.

We owed \$110,000 to the federal government. We had paid for map making, things like that. Over time, we didn't send any money in. It evaporated. On top of that we got another grant for Hartford Village about 6 years later. That was 300k. We annihilated the buildings on one side. Brought in and improved sidewalks there. But it wasn't urban renewal. It was called the "Small Cities Grants." We made out alright on that.

Finally the underpass in town. Trucks couldn't get through the underpass that was 8' 5" we took off 25 feet. They took the railroad tracks out. We had 12 foot clearance on Route 5 then. The cost of that was \$12,000. You couldn't do that now.

Miller construction and town *(Continued on next page)*

joint projects. We were paying 50 or 60 cents an hour. The workers worked 55 to 60 hours a week. Selectmen set up a pay plan. I wrote up a personnel plan that had 20 pages. Handed them out. Joe Reed looked at it and said "This is too much!" Flying pages came down like leaves. Then I whittled it down to 5 pages. That was more like it. And the workers all had 40 hours a week. The Federal government confirmed this.

We phased this in over a 5, 6 year period. We reduced the weekly hours. And gave them the same pay. Changed the hourly rates. We did that over the years. In the winter time time-and-a-half and we had 16 to 18 men on payroll. It added up. Wintertime plowing.

I think that the employees were no longer the low wage people.

It was a blessing.

Right after that the state asked us, in 1970, to lower the other underpass. [the one on Maple Street, going toward NH?]

The state was appreciative. New routes for trucks.

Until the Interstates came in. You know what that was all about if you lived here. We spent a lot of time between the planning board and the people who came down from Montpelier. Logged a lot of hours determining where the Interstates would go. There were areas that needed more study. 7 miles one way and 8 miles the other way. Discussed for hours. And where the interchanges would be. The Luce Farm—it went right through his yard. They justified the Center of Town Road underpass. Can you imagine what you would have to do, if we didn't have that underpass? There was a delay in bidding out the contracts. We got a lot of roads in the process. They turned them back to us—roads that ran parallel to the Interstates. They improved the Interstates. There were tunnels, cut-offs. They improved them and turned them back to us—for instance, River Road in Quechee.

The big event was Quechee Lakes. ['Holly' Page?] had just successfully sold a lot of land in MA and they thought they would like to meet with the selectmen. There were three. And in '65 to '66, they said that they would buy up the Quechee area. They took options and bought 5,000 acres of land. At one time Hartford was 20 percent urbanized, 80% farm. They bought a

lot of farms. Big farms - 200 to 300 acres. In '69 they came in and said that they were ready. They had a plan and over the years that got developed. They said that the value would match the rest of the town. Now there is 200 to 300 million [in valuation] up there. There were color codes on a map for farms and single family and that changed. Considerably. There were no farms. The original map was [created by] somebody out of Springfield, VT.

So, we've done a bit of reminiscing here. One of the things we should mention is the Senior Center. The Bugbee [Center] is in hand; but it was 12 years before it was built. Built with grant money. The First National [Bank] invested it for the town. One time it was turned over to the court. In 1968 and '67, Brockway and I went to court. The money was available after one of the Bugbee's died. We went to court and they read the will. In there, one thing - "A building of most need." It was about \$230,000. We got a little bit more than the banks would have had. We worked out \$500,000 over 12 years.

We put it out for bid and low bid was \$248,000. In 1980 it was finished and included seating and office and pool room, etc. Five or 6 years later, we added on and completed the addition. It was within the means that we had.

I've used up an hour and I want to add one thing. I got pretty upset about driveway plowing. We had about 250 driveways to plow. That was 1942 or 43 they decided to plow driveways in the town for hard times. An attorney looked at that and you can't use that equipment on private land. And we were getting 6 dollars a year for each driveway we plowed.

We had one project- Taft Avenue. We could have done that for 2 million. Federal and state. We bought all the land up there. Real-estate people. Like me. I knew most of the people. There were areas that didn't get cleaned up in terms of litigation. I could tell you that we had litigation. Contractually it took 12 years to settle.

I hope I didn't bore you too much. I had all this stuff in my own head.

[The meeting was opened up for questions and answers] *(Continued bottom page 5)*

Curator's Corner

by
Pat Stark

We'll start with the Building Report:

An enthusiastic painting crew of volunteers appeared on August 9th to paint the trim on the Garipay House! Bob Follensbee has painted the porch floors. He also provided the grill so we could enjoy hamburgers and hot dogs, courtesy Rich and Dorothy,,,cooked to perfection by David. If you regret missing out on this project; be sure to renew your membership and we'll keep you informed of future opportunities..... Renewal notices will be mailed in October..

Pete Schaal has completed the Electrical Project at the Garipay House. He replaced the old fuse box upstairs and installed an outlet in the upstairs bathroom, and one in the workroom to accommodate the computer, and installed a built-in Detector in the upstairs hallway.

The leak in the roof valley has not been addressed yet.

Art Peale and Rich Gallagher have installed the donated computer equipment so I now can scan photos at the Municipal building - little waiting! If you run across a photo you think we should have in our collection, bring it on in and as soon as I can get a break at the office we can run downstairs and I can scan it without you leaving it with me! I am grateful to Dana Yamashita for donating the equipment, and Arr & Rich for installing it!

In Memory of
Esther Bachelder
Charter Member of the Hartford Historical Society
d. 7-16-2008

The Hartford Historical Society Board of Directors would like to offer its condolences to the family of Esther.

[Dorothy]: We could keep on going for hours.

Questions: Which University of Maine campus did you attend?

A: In Orono.

Q: When did you marry?

[interjection from the audience] "Don't get it wrong Ralph."

A: In Oct of 1954. It will be 54 years this October. We had 5 children. We lived on North Elm Street at first. That's a Government subsidized park down there now. It took 2 to 3 years. At one point we got money from the federal government. If you were awake, you could get it. And the so-called fire station [emergency services for Hartford on V.A. Cutoff Rd. All [town services, fire and police] went into one building. Dissolution of the fire district[s]. We had to get rid of the districts to combine the emergency services—It was a 10 year process actually. Also in 1979 [the federal government] put out some money. I don't think I have it on here. It was a grant that built that fire station on five acres of land.

There are 55 acres in all that the VA turned back to the

town in 1939 -they kept 40 acres and turned back 55. The town owned that for a long time. We built that fire station there and then the VA gave us their ladder truck. We made out there too. Its one step at a time, and that was the way it was.

Q: What year was it that the bridge went out. [the Bridge Street Bridge]

A: It was in 1964—the first time. I stood on the [river] bank and said that I think its going to hold. A young woman with a little car went over about 15 [minutes] later. We built the bridge with federal and state money. 1991 they dedicated that bridge. The Lehman bridge.

The first bridge was cobbled together and it held for 15 years.

Now that's another interesting story. We were down in Boston. There was steel girders— 52 feet long. Pretty cheap. I was traveling.

The[y] were instrumental in the present site we have for sewage treatment. We just paid off this year the last money on the plant. We are pretty much out of debt. I know we never were over 2% of our value. We pay our bills.

From the Chair

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

As we start our new membership year in October, we welcome your renewal and encourage you to invite new members. Many interesting programs are in the planning stages and your assistance will be more than welcome, either as a board member or serving on one of our committees.

For the first time we are offering Junior Memberships in HHS. Jennifer Boeri-Boyce will be one of our sponsors; we look forward to featuring further research by her students and offering more opportunities for junior members to participate in our programs. Membership applications will be available at the Hartford Library and distributed by sponsors. There will be an organizational meeting at the Garipay house on September 14 at 3:00 P.M. Know any teen-age history buffs????? Let us know about them [or tell them about us!]

My personal thanks to all of those who participated in the painting at the Garipay house on August 9th. Dot Jones, Lorna Ricard, Mary Nadeau, David Ford, Rich Gallagher, Joyce Miller, Sandy Audsley, Norma Young, Phil and Gloria Hammond from the Rotary, Peggy McDerment, Bob Follensbee and "yours truly". A great job - but not quite finished! We still need some help on the high spots, so let me know if you can climb a ladder and help finish the painting [and when] (Dorothy or Pat)

Thank you all for your support as we continue to make [and save] history in Hartford

See you on Sept. 10 to hear about White River Jct. from David Briggs.

Honor Roll

Fred E. Bradley

At the urging of John St. Croix and with help from the Hartford Woman's Club, he founded the Hartford Historical Society in 1986. He continued to improve the society, arranging for speakers, finding directors, etc. He was also responsible for obtaining over 1,000 of St. Croix's photographs and documents for the Society. We can truly say that without Fred Bradley, the Hartford Historical Society would not be what it is today.

Born March 21, 1924 in Concord, NH, he attended the University of NH and served in the Pacific 1943-6. He married Alma V. Sluke in 1951. Other education was Barber School in Boston and Auctioneering School in Iowa.



News and Notes

Genealogy Center is looking for volunteers to both 'keep it manned' and to respond to email requests [even if it is to say we cannot help them!] If you have an interest in Genealogy and can give us a few hours a month, please let us know!

We are happy to announce Doug Albanese has 'stepped up' to cover the Center two Monday afternoons a month and is reportedly doing a great job with the files! THANK YOU DOUG!

* * * * *

Another HUGE THANK YOU to DANA YAMASHITA for the gift of a complete [used] computer system with slide scanner!!

* * * * *

The Hartford Historic Preservation Commission is happy to announce that they are nearing the completion of both the Brochures for

each Historic District, and Signage.

The Brochures list abbreviated descriptions of each 'contributing' building in the District, a brief general description of the District and a few photographs from our collections. They will be available at the Municipal Building and at least one location in each village - probably the library.

The Signs have been designed and will be produced as funding becomes available. A sign will be placed as near as possible to the entrance of each district - often on more than one road. The Quechee District will be produced soon as they have come up with the funding, and Jericho is busy gathering theirs.

* * * * *

HAPPY 100TH [Belated] to JOE POGAR!

Arabelle Rice was a long-time teacher and principal at Quechee Elementary school who died May 21, 1997. It has come to our attention that her death date was never put on her stone in the West Hartford Cemetery. We would like to see this omission rectified in respect for her many years of service to the citizens of Hartford. If you would like to donate toward this project, please send your donation to the Treasurer at P O Box 547, Hartford, VT 05047, or give it to Pat Stark. Thank you!

In Memory of
Fred E Bradley

**Founder, Charter Member, and Life
Member of the Hartford Historical
Society**

d. July 14, 2008

The Hartford Historical Society Board of Directors
would like to offer its condolences to the family of Fred.

Reminder -

The Membership year ends in October and we welcome your renewal and encourage you to invite new members.

Please note that your mailing label reflects your membership status

Hartford Historical Society

Post Office Box 547
Hartford, Vermont 05047-0547

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
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PERMIT NO. 15
HARTFORD, VT

September Program:
Wed., September 10th - 7:00 p.m.
Remembering White River
Junction with David Briggs

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.

Wednesday, Sept 10 -- *Remembering White River Junction with David Briggs.*

Wednesday, November 11 -- *Mount Independence - An Historical and Archeological Vermont Legacy by Peter Lihatsb*

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 (May 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.

At other times please call Pat [478-1110 M-F 9-4] for an appointment.

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