

Hartford Historical Society

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

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

Volume 23, No. 1

SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

September-October 2010

PARK HISTORY

Submitted by Dorothy Yamashita

Not until 1974 did the Hartford Parks and Recreation Department, as we know it today, become official. However, in the Fall of 1956, a Recreation Committee was appointed by the Selectboard with no budget and a request for a Director on the ballot for 1957. A Swimming Pool Committee was voted in at Town Meeting.

Park development dates back long before that. In the 1880's there was a wide ditch between the hotel and the railroad station with a narrow foot-bridge crossing. Used as a dump, the Ladies of the town decided to fill it in and created a small park. On July 18, 1890 the following article appeared in the Landmark: *If any person has old garbage that is an eyesore about their premises, the ground between the depot and the Landmark block will be found a convenient place of deposit. The pile already on the grounds is large, but we presume the railroad folks will furnish attraction to the traveling public. How refreshing and restful it must be to the weary traveler who has been whirled through green woods and fields to let his eyes rest upon a pile of elegant red and yellow labeled fruit cans in a beautiful setting of coal ashes and broken bottles.*"

In 1898 the Central Vermont Railroad Company filled in the complete area and granted permission to the Loyal Club to convert it into a Park. By 1902 the park was complete with trees and a water fountain. In 1924, the town had the high-



In August of 1981 the Christian Street Home Demonstration Group decided Frost Park needed a play area. Here is a before photos of their efforts—afters are on the page 3.

(Continued on page 3)

SEPTEMBER PROGRAM

Wednesday, September 8, 7 pm: Joe Collea will give us a presentation on the First Vermont Regiment's significance in the war, based on his recent book [The Vermont Cavalry in the Civil War, A History](#). His inspiration for the book stemmed from the fact that two of his ancestors rode with the regiment throughout the war. He likes to reference his book as a socio-military history, the idea being that it is not only portrays the First Vermont's significant role in the war but also delves into the lives of many of the troopers and the effects of the war upon these men and their families. He will give a brief overview of the regiment's history, addressing the unit's formation and the various locales in which it fought, highlighting a couple of its most significant engagements, and finally concluding with a few vignettes of some of the men.

Joe Collea has been the principal of Hartford High School for the past six years. Prior to that, he was in public education in New York State for thirty-five years. During that time, he taught American History for fourteen years before becoming an assistant principal, an athletic director, and then principal. He is from Ilion, NY, the home of Remington Arms since 1816, where Joe served on the Village Board for three terms followed by his being elected mayor for three more. He attended college at SUNY at Albany, Syracuse University, and studied at the American University at Cairo through a Fulbright Scholarship. He has BA in American History, an MA in Advanced Classroom Teaching, and a Specialist Degree in Educational Communications.

From the Chair . . .

Thank all of you for your contributions to the Picnic exhibit. It's not over! We will continue to research the history of the Hartford Parks – see more elsewhere in this issue.

Some of you will remember my story of the Tin Peddler's Granddaughter, explaining how I became involved in Hartford History....During my recent research on the Hartford Parks, I was reminded of another story she told about taking her Grandfather's cows to graze in an open area along the river bank just before going up the hill to the village (c. 1915.)....Sure sounds like today's Watson Park.

Our Building Committee is actually exploring the feasibility of expansion, beginning with an underground vault [The Bradley Memorial Vault]. There's a wonderful opportunity here for someone interested in fund raising to join our Board and make the vision a reality! . We'll make room for all interested applicants. Don't delay - Phone today! We would also welcome any donations you can make toward it. As funds become available, the plan is to add two above ground floors to accommodate more display area, a designated meeting room, and handicap accessibility to all.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I regret to announce the resignation of Randy Dickson, due to

time constraints. Tony Battaglia has accepted the nomination to finish Randy's term. Thank you Tony! We also say farewell to Ron Heroux as Gen Center Director and welcome Mary Ann Devins, who has already served as a volunteer and is willing to continue as Director. Ron's considerable cemetery research and contributions to our web site are much appreciated. Good Luck in your new home, Ron!

Dorothy

Tony Battaglia Accepts Nomination as Board Member

If you live near the Ottaquechee General Store possibly you have already met the Battaglia family....who will soon celebrate their first anniversary in the area with a new sign: ROUTE 4 COUNTRY STORE AND VERMONT CHOCOLATIERS. Margie and Tony were both born and raised in Michigan, married in 1984, and moved to Hartford, Connecticut in 1999 where he was marketing Director for Permatex for ten years. Daughter Holly is studying at the University of Connecticut and Joe at Hartford High School. Welcome to our community and to the Historical Society!

News from Members

Alberta Patch-Slegaitis of Surf City, N.C. wrote: "In the late '20's we used to picnic and fly kites at the Lone Pine on a hill behind the church. The Fairy Rocks was another favorite spot. It was on a ledge north of Hartford. Probably the highway has obliterated that now. Nature had formed a tiny stairway of brick-colored rock descending from one of the ledges down into the grassland. We children imagined a kind of Peter Pan legend about it."

Alberta also shared some wonderful news.....She was honored to cut the ribbon for the dedication of a new Alumni Building at Keene State College on her 75th graduation anniversary in June, 2010. With seven family members representing four generations, it was a memorable week-end!

Congratulations, Alberta! With added concern regarding the subsequent news of your fall and broken hip.....



Hartford Historical Society

Post Office Box 547, Hartford, VT 05047-0547

<http://www.hartfordhistory.org>

Officers

Susanne Walker-Abetti, President	802-295-9687
Bill Wittik, Vice President	802-295-9683
David Ford, Secretary	802-356-2776
Carole Haehnel, Treasurer	603-295-3974

Directors

Dorothy Yamashita, Chair	603-448-1067
Tony Battaglia	860-655-3111
Martha & Brent Knapp	802-295-2713
Peggy McDerment	802-295-2357
Joyce Miller	802-295-2025

Newsletter Editor: Muriel Farrington 802-295-6511
newsletter@hartfordhistory.org

Curator: Pat Stark 802-478-1110

(Continued from page 1)



way department cut the trees and turn the park into a parking lot to accommodate the increasing number of busses coming to meet the trains. It has taken a tremendous amount of effort by various civic organizations, and will continue to do so, as changes are continually made to meet the needs of each unique community.

For example, one of the most common complaints of residents who live near parks is the carelessness of those who allow their pets to litter the park area. As a result of those complaints, the City of Hartford has strict regulations –but even better, a DOG PARK. Opened in 2010, this was the result of a grass roots movement, and is the only Hartford Park maintained by membership fees and donations.

Long before there were municipal summer recreation programs, parents would get together and say: “Wouldn’t it be great to have a place where the children could play? Let’s build swings - a slide.....a teeter-totter....and then merry-go-rounds...remember the kind you had to push and then jump on for the ride? What a thrill! Maybe when Margaret and Mary Frost deeded property to the Town for the sole purpose of a public park in 1946 they had the children in mind – but it wasn’t until 1982 that the Park was dedicated.....thanks to the efforts of White River Post #2571, VFW, in cooperation with the Christian Street Home Circle and the Wilder Womens Club, which are well-documented in the valuable album recently donated by Patricia Trotter.



Frost Park Dedication, June 13, 1982

Long before Parks and Playgrounds, there were Village Greens. It seems worth noting here that Vermont launched a Vermont Village Green Pilot Program in 2009 under the direction of the Public Service Commissioner. Perhaps Lyman Point Park is Hartford’s Village Green? Historically, the Village Green was the location of the hitching posts for the horses, with a water fountain, right in the center of townnear the Village Inn, the Post Office, and the market..... With a Band Stand, of course..... but the Lyman Point Band Stand wasn’t open until 1997.

And so it has been in Hartford! As land became more developed, and residences closer together, residents found a need to set aside land for parks and playgrounds, and often this land has been donated by a property owner. In many cases, the meadow became a ball field long before it was a park! It would be wonderful if you remember areas like this and could share your stories. Where did you play when you were a child? Were you members of any organization that provided programs and/or activities? (athletic teams – where did you play? Swimming?....where? Public places are notorious for clandestine meetings of pot smokers, under-age drinking, or maybe just a “first cigarette”. Some of the challenges in maintaining park areas are related to vandalism, excessive noise, dog waste, and traffic problems, to cite a few. Those stories are important, too. Maybe it’s time to tell your story – You can remain anonymous! Maybe you think the rules are too rigid – or not strict enough. Depending on whether you are the parent or the child – right?

It’s probably a wild dream, but wouldn’t it be great to have so many stories we wouldn’t have time to read them all? And we could report “Fifty people remember before there was a band stand at Lyman Point” and “one couple was arrested for illegally camping on city property in 1942. He joined the Army the next day!”....Well! You get the idea!



The results of the Project!

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Send your stories to : Chair
Hartford Historical Society
PO Box 547, Hartford, VT 05047 or
email:chairman@hartfordhistory.org

CURATORS CORNER

One of the joys of serving as curator is coming across the unexpected. Especially with photos, I do not remember every one we have, especially the ones that have several on a page, so it was with excitement and pleasure I ‘discovered’ the following photo in John St. Croix’s photos taken at the 1961 200th Anniversary celebrations. It is of the old Mae Gates house on the corner of Gates & Currier Sts., used as a Parts Dept. for Miller Auto at the time. We have a photo of it coming down [mostly down], and I’d always wished we had a photo of it before the demolition! Note the columns on Currier St. – it must have been quite the house when it occupied the corner of North & South Main Streets! She moved it to Currier Street to make way for the current brick Gates Block building built in 1890.



TOWN ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

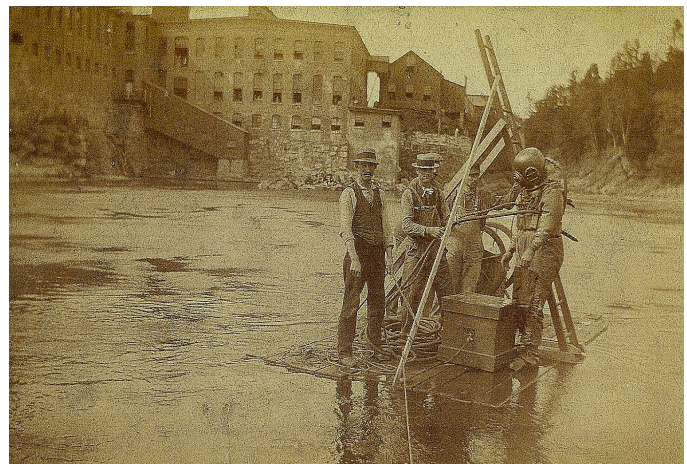
The 200th Birthday Party in 1961 was held in August. On Sunday the 13th Churches held special programs; Friday the 18th at the High School was a Songfest followed by Dancing on the Municipal Building lawns – [How many of you were there?] then Fireworks. On Saturday the 19th was the Big Parade in the morning, a Field Day at Watson Field in the afternoon, and a Ball in the evening. Sunday the 20th was a noon Chicken BBQ at the High School and the afternoon saw a Gladiolus Show and an Art Exhibit by the Middle School pupils. The Libraries were open all three days with special exhibits. [Remember, the libraries kept our Historical objects until after the Hartford Historical Society started in 1987.] If you remember other activities, or have memories of any of these, we’d love to have your story!



Mystery Solved??

Images of America: Hartford by FJ Barrett’s cover photo is from a collection taken at the Wilder Mill & Dam sometime around 1900, and has always been a mystery. On June 11 Janet Blood called me with an intriguing comment about it.

“ I believe one of the guys on the cover might be my father, Elijah Burton Kibbie. He told us once he was hired to work at a dam, installing an apron on the underwater edge of the dam. He told us he had to wear a diver’s helmet and lead-weighted boots.” She did not recall if he’d said where it was. He died in 1936.



Notes from the last Program on the Telephone Operators of White River Junction

Randy Dickson and Mary Nadeau presented the program about the telephone operators from the telephone building in downtown White River Junction. Ruby Fitzgerald generously allowed us to copy some of her photos of the building and the employees.

1894 was the start of the phone company in White River Junction, at the Junction House. A photo shown from John St Croix's book, shows the operators elbow to elbow along the cord-board in approximately 1900. A photo copy of the phone book from the same year was shown - it was one page long. The brick building at Gates and Currier was constructed in 1922. It was added onto in the late 1960s and another building added to AT&T properties in town in the 1970s. This latter building on North Main Street is now the Dreamland Building owned by Matt Bucy.

A recording of Lucile Spaulding, Carolyn Cheney, Kay Wilbur, and other former operators was used to augment the photographs projected. Ruby Fitzgerald was the chief operator. "In the old days" all operators were female and there was a strict dress code; no pants, dress shoes and nylons; and operators had to be single. Each operator used a personal password for the front door. Ruby Fitzgerald's job interview technique was conducted face to face and in separate rooms so that she could adequately gauge the qualities of young ladies voices. Training periods were 2 to 3 weeks. Ann Rogenski remembered training for accuracy and speed was very important. Operators were required to be single up until the 1960s, when that rule was relaxed, as was the dress code - pant suits were then accepted with high heels and dress shoes.

The early telephone numbers were four digits. All the towns had a code, and there were instructions to be learned for the long distance operators. Hanover, Woodstock, Hartland and most other towns in the area, had their own phone companies. A common old request was for "central" and then the customer would ask for a specific number. 8 operators worked on the local board, and the toll board had 25 to 30 positions, but these were not 24 hours. The pay scale was considered very good in an era when most women did not attend college. "If you get into the phone company, you'll be taken care of for life."

The operators knew where local people went during the day and would transfer calls. They would also provide wake up calls for people, and tell customers when doctors and other professionals would be in their offices. Pay phones were controlled by a tone. You could tell

from the tones how much money was put into the slot on the phone - a different tone for each type of coin.

Dartmouth College was a problem. There were often overtime charges from the dorm payphones. Sometimes the Dartmouth College students wouldn't pay for overtime and sometimes they would attach strings to quarters and using a single quarter for a lengthy call. Later, they figured out the tone used for coins and tricked the operators in this way. The technique of party line calls was also described.

During fires, a red light came on on the McGee Building. It lit up so people would know there was a fire. "The board lit up like a Christmas tree then". In the winter it was warm. In the summer it was so hot that the perspiration ran down their faces, noses and legs. Night operators were used and there was 24 hour service. There was free taxi service provided for operators to get them home safely late at night. Headsets were personal, and were stored in cubbies for the individual operators.

In November of 1961 dial service was initiated and many of the local offices, including Lebanon, NH, were closed and some of the operators were brought over to the White River Junction office.

Long distance rates were calculated and it was hard when they first had to learn them. There was an international code for overseas. Some older folks did not like the new dial tone. A lot of workers were laid off, and temporary workers were let go.

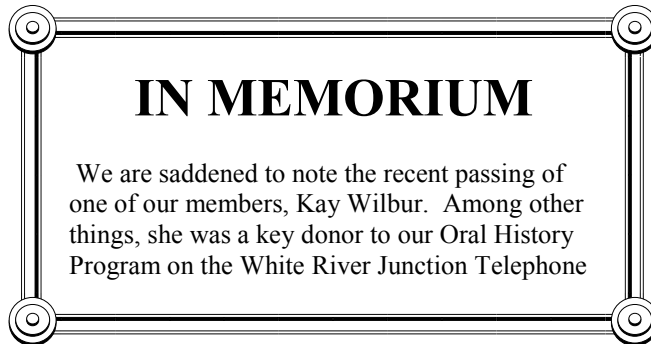
A phone company operator could make more money working a holiday or a Sunday - they could make more money than their husbands did working all week. They ate out in local diners, or the Mayflower [quite a ritzy restaurant]. They had the Riverside Grille for parties, and Landry's in Lebanon, for Thursday nights - there was dinner and dancing there.

"The Pioneers" are the early operators who do charity work. The federation is the union. Strikes were called in 1968 and 1989. Retirement was urged for operators and some operators lost out on a good deal of pay. Kay described her fraternity experience. Once she had to go into work after drinking a few screwdrivers up at a Dartmouth party her father took her to. She lay down in the rest area until she felt better. She worked a bit and then had to lie down again, complaining that she was sick. But she always said that she believed that no one ever knew that she showed up to work drunk.

The Tunbridge Fair payphone was near the girlie show. There was too much noise to hear the callers and the callers were always drunk. Everyone hated these calls.

NEWS 'N NOTES

Hartford High KEY – we have many extra copies of old yearbooks available, we also have a list of folks wanting issues we do not have. If you run across a yearbook you do not want we would be happy to take it off your hands! Thank you



HONOR ROLL

Please consider adding someone to our Honor Roll! Our Honor roll has not grown much lately and I'm sure there are plenty of folks who have an interest in our town and it's history! They can be living, or not, and we only need a little information: Your name & contact information, the full name of the person you wish to honor, what they did to advance the History of our town [why you feel they should be honored], and a brief biography [date born & location, where educated, and any other information you feel is important. There is a link to a form on our web site [hartfordhistory.org] or contact Pat if you'd like one. Thanks

MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission Statement of the Hartford Historical Society: To acquire, identify and preserve information and artifacts related to Hartford's past and communicate knowledge of local history through programs, publications, and other interaction with the community.

Commercial/Institutional Members:

CEMMS Family Painting	Geo Barns
Hartford Memorial Middle School	Hartford High School
Kibby Equipment	Main Street Museum
Lovell's Sugar House	Meeting House Furniture Restoration
	New England Transportation Institute and Museum

Membership rates:

Individual: \$15
Family [same address]: \$20
Senior: \$10
Senior family: \$15
Commercial/Institutional: \$25

From the Internet

I thought this one was worth sharing with you!

THE YEAR IS 1910

One hundred years ago. What a difference a century makes!

Here are some statistics for the Year 1910:

- *The average life expectancy for men was 47 years.
- *There were only 8,000 cars and only 144 miles of paved roads.
- *Fuel for a car was sold in drug stores only.
- *Only 14 percent of the homes had a bathtub.
- *Only 8 percent of the homes had a telephone.
- *The maximum speed limit in most cities was 10 mph.
- *The tallest structure in the world was the Eiffel Tower !
- *The average US wage in 1910 was 22 cents per hour.
- *The average US worker made between \$200 and \$400 per year ..
- *A competent accountant could expect to earn \$2000 per year, a dentist \$2,500 per year, a veterinarian between \$1,500 and \$4,000 per year, and a mechanical engineer about \$5,000 per year.
- *More than 95 percent of all births took place at HOME .
- *Ninety percent of all Doctors had **NO COLLEGE EDUCATION!** Instead, they attended so-called medical schools, many of which were condemned in the press AND the government as 'substandard.'
- *Sugar cost four cents a pound.
- *Eggs were fourteen cents a dozen.
- *Coffee was fifteen cents a pound.
- *Most women only washed their hair once a month, and

used Borax or egg yolks for shampoo.

*Canada passed a law that prohibited poor people from entering into their country for any reason.

*The Five leading causes of death were:

1. Pneumonia and influenza
2. Tuberculosis
3. Diarrhea
4. Heart disease
5. Stroke

*The American flag had 45 stars

*The population of Las Vegas , Nevada , was only 30!!!!

*Two out of every 10 adults couldn't read or write and only 6 percent of all Americans had graduated from high school..

*Marijuana, heroin, and morphine were all available over the counter at the local corner drugstores. Back then pharmacists said, 'Heroin clears the complexion, gives buoyancy to the mind, Regulates the stomach and bowels, and is, in fact, a perfect guardian of health'

*Eighteen percent of households had at least one full-time servant or domestic help

*There were about 230 **reported** murders in the **ENTIRE U.S.A. !**

*Crossword puzzles, canned beer, and iced tea hadn't been invented yet.

*There was no Mother's Day or Father's Day.

*There was no computers, internet or email

Try to imagine what it may be like in another 100 years!

Last issue's mystery has been solved!

We've had a couple of guesses – one being a cobbler's stitching tool, but Diana had this to offer:

"The mystery photo in this month's newsletter is an item used to make hooked rugs. I have two that were my grandmother's. Wool was cut in strips and pulled through the hole in the large needle like piece and then inserted into a burlap type fabric held in a frame. Then the two piece were slid back and forth punching through the fabric and leaving a loop. Sometimes nowadays yarn is used.

Diana Aher, Wolcott, VT

Mystery photo:

Below is a river scene with a railroad – can anyone identify the location/river or buildings?



HHS Calendar

Upcoming Programs, Meetings and Events

Summer OPEN HOUSE at the Garipay House – May - September:

The 1st Tuesday of the month 6-8pm

The 2nd Sunday of the month 2-4pm

Or by Appointment [call pat at 295-3077 M-F 9-4]

2nd Wednesday – Hartford Historic Preservation Commission meeting at the Municipal Building, 171 Bridge

street, White River Junction, at 4:30

4th Tuesday – HHS Board of Directors Meeting – Garipay House May – Oct and the Hartford Library Nov –

Apr at 7 pm. For more information contact Dorothy Yamashita, Board Chairman.

September 8 – Joe Collea, HHS Principal, will speak on the First Vermont Regiment in the Civil War and his recent book. The program will be followed by refreshments. 7:00 pm at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ, 1721 Maple Street, Hartford Village

Wednesday, Nov. 10 – Mark Pippin and friends will be telling us about some of the businesses in town that have been in the family over 2 generations – including photos! Refreshments will follow. 7:00 pm at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ, 1721 Maple Street, Hartford Village

Wednesday April 13, 2011 – Frank J. Barrett will be our speaker, followed by refreshments. 7:00 pm at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ, 1721 Maple Street, Hartford Village

Wednesday – June 8, 2011 – Annual Meeting and program by Michael Tougas on the Indian Wars in new England – focusing on Vermont, followed by refreshments. 7:00 pm at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ, 1721 Maple Street, Hartford Village

Hartford Historical Society

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