

# Hartford Historical Society

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

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

Volume 23, No. 2

SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

November-December 2010

## CENTER OF TOWN



Established by the Original Proprietors in the geographic center of the township, it was established as the 'Town Green'. The green was used for our volunteer militia to drill on, the first meeting house and cemetery were established here, and the Freegrace Leavitt Tavern was an important business for many years.

### ***OLDE CENTRE OF TOWN MEETING HOUSE:***

Churches were an important aspect of life in New England villages, and the changes in them closely reflect the changes in the population and culture. Hartford is no exception and our earliest meetinghouses have much to tell of the population shifts in the growth of our town.

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## NOVEMBER PROGRAM

Mark Pippin and friends will be telling us about some 3-generation businesses in town and how they got started – including photos! Refreshments will follow. 7:00 pm at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ, 1721 Maple Street, Hartford Village

## From the Chair . . .

How can this be our last issue for the year? That means 2011 is just around the corner; I was amazed to see the calendar of Events celebrating the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary. See page 5.

That doesn't mean it's too late for you to get in on the planning of the details. We hope you will want to get involved, because we NEED everyone's assistance to make these events a success...Choose an event you or your organization can help with and let Susanne Abetti or Pat Stark know of your interest ASAP!

The Hartford Historical Society is a member of the Vermont Historical Society; and you were represented at the annual meeting by Susanne, Pat and me. We agree that it was worth the drive to hear speakers Burr Morse, reflecting on "Weather and the Woods" and his experiences and stories as one of Vermont's leading maple sugar producers, Roger Hill the weatherman, presenting a knowledgeable lecture on "A Fragile Atmosphere and How it Affected History", and Jeff Danziger "Drawing Vermont" with his perceptive cartoons on the screen! Find out more about the events sponsored by VHS at [www.vermonthistory.org](http://www.vermonthistory.org)

**Membership renewals** are due Dec. 30 each year, so a renewal form is enclosed with this issue. If you have recently joined, your membership is paid through December 2011. **Please check your mailing label for the expiration date.**

On behalf of the Board I take pleasure in extending a heartfelt invitation to all of you to celebrate the holidays and join us for First Friday at the **Main Street Museum on December 3** 5 to 7 p.m.. This will be our annual Christmas Open House, free and open to the public! Come and enjoy the decorated Museum tree, sing Christmas carols with us, and hear the giant Orthophonic Victrola as we spin our favorite Holiday Records all at 78 rpm! Bring your favorite holiday treats to share with friends and spend a relaxing evening as we enter into our busy holiday schedules.

Our honorary president, Dot Jones, and new president, Susanne Abetti joins me in much **Thanks - Giving** for all your support in so many ways.

Gratefully yours,  
Dorothy

Dorothy Yamashita, Chair

## IN YEARS PAST:

**200 Years ago** – 1810 a dam and 2 canals with locks were built at Olcott Falls on the Connecticut River.

**150 Years ago** – 1860 – the Hartford church vestry was added and Samuel & Stephen Pingree started a law service in Hartford village

**100 Years ago** – 1900 – George Smith built a brick bakers on North Main Street – later known as Tip Top Bakery

**50 Years ago** – 1960 – The old Watson home "Overlook" was renovated and converted to a Convalescent Home.



## 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	802-295-3974

### Directors

Dorothy Yamashita, Chair	603-448-1067
Peggy McDermont, Acting Treasurer	802-295-2357
Tony Battaglia	802-295-7563
Martha & Brent Knapp	802-295-2713
Joyce Miller	802-295-2025

**Newsletter Editor:** Muriel Farrington 802-295-6511  
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**Curator:** Pat Stark 802-478-1110

**GenCenter Director:** Mary Ann Devins 802-295-9095

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**1774** – In May the citizens of the Town of Hartford, numbering approximately 225, voted “to build a meeting-house as near the centre of town as convenient for a building spot and the house to be thirty-five feet by fifty, and two-story high”. Scheduled to be completed by September 1775, it was delayed by the events in this frontier area until 1783.



**1786** - It was completed and was a “plain unpainted structure, without a steeple or chimney. It had a gallery running around three sides, square pews, a high pulpit approached by two flights of steps, and a sounding-board. There were two stories of windows, and two doors, one on the east and one on the south.” This was the only church south of the White River for a long time. “In the interval between the morning and afternoon services the congregation usually repaired to Deacon Leavitt’s nearby tavern where even the minister joined with his congregation in a social glass of flip, sling or toddy.”\*

**1805** - The town ceased to support a minister, and a Congregational Society was formed which met here until **1829**. Town Meetings were held here for over 75 years, and Freegrace Leavitt was the Town Clerk until **1840**.

**1848** – The building “was built over and continued in use as a town-house until November 5, **1872**.”

**1884** – It was torn down.

**1911** – On July 5<sup>th</sup> as part of the 150<sup>th</sup> celebration of the Town’s Founding the Daughters of the American Revolution erected a marker here – the geographic center of the town and the site of the first church in Hartford.



**CEMETERY**—The oldest recorded burial here is 1768 – Samuel Webster. Other early occupants are Esther Tilden – 1797, Daniel Bliss – 1798, Nodiah Wright – 1792, Peter Ryder – 1800 and Rhoda Gross [first minister’s wife] in 1805. We are thankful to Art Peale for cutting back the brush and to the Eagle Scout who erected the sign in recent years – it is good to have our ancestors respected.

**SCHOOL** – the date of the building and opening of the rural schools is unknown as no records exist before 1861.

**1943** - The Center of Town School closed and became a private dwelling. You can still recognize the original school building in the small house near the cemetery.



⇒ Weston Cate, Jr. – otherwise quotes are from John St. Croix

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**FREEGRACE LEAVITT TAVERN –**

*1793 - Built near the Town Green at the Center of Town by Freegrace Leavitt of Hanover, it was modeled after the Half-way House.*

*1794 on **January 4th** it opened and soon accommodated much of the male congregation between Sunday services at the church on the Green.*

*1812 - During the War of 1812 a successful potato whiskey distillery was operated here.*

*From **1802 until 1836** Mr. Leavitt was the Town Clerk and his office was here, and from **1808 – 1819** Proprietor's meetings were held here*



*There was also a dance hall upstairs. The old Inn has since been converted to a private residence, reopened as an Inn, converted into offices, and converted back into a private residence. Although changed inside, the exterior still holds the imposing look from its past.*

**TOWN ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS**

July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1911 – Center of Town – Speeches were made, the Monument the DAR provided was dedicated, photographs were taken and perhaps a picnic was held as part of the 150<sup>th</sup> celebration.



# The SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL – or HARTFORD’S 250<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY in 2011

On July 4<sup>th</sup> 1761 Gov. Benning Wentworth signed a charter for the Town of Hartford. Following a precedent set by our ancestors, we are planning a BIG BIRTHDAY PARTY to celebrate our 250 years of history! We hope to have events in most months of the year AND, at the end of it all, create a MEMORY BOOK with photos from each of the celebrations, which will be for sale.

Here is the schedule as it is now. Some things are subject to change and details will be available on both the town’s and our web sites as they are made. The first official Event is on January 7, 2011 – the First Friday – come help us Kick-off the Year!.

**Jan 7– 1<sup>st</sup> First Friday/12 Night – Kick-off Reception** at the Main Street Museum from 5 – 7. A Christmas tree burn will be held also

**Feb 4 or 5 – The Great Wreck of 1887 – celebrating our Railroad Heritage [TBA]**

**Feb 28 + Mar 8 – Special Flag Ceremonies and Proclamation at Town Meetings**

**Mar 26 – Maple Sugar Festival in Jericho [TBA]**

**April – Ice Out Contest – Dewey’s Pond**

**May 30 – Memorial Day special events at Center of Town and West Hartford**

**June 18 – Balloon Festival with Historical Reenactments in Quechee**

**June 25 – Alumni Parade with a focus on our past celebrations in White River Junction**

**July 4<sup>th</sup> – Birthday Party and Fireworks in Wilder**

**July/Aug [tba] – Celebration of our Agricultural Past and tours of the Theron Boyd House in Quechee**

**August 8 – Old Home Days in Hartford Village**

**Sept 10 – Glory Days of the RR with Street Dance in White River Junction**

**Oct 29 – Gory Daze Halloween Parade in White River Junction**



## CURATORS CORNER

I'm pleased to report that we were recently given a couple of [at least to me] exciting donations. One is something I'd always wished we had in the collection – a piece of the fabric produced by the Hartford Woolen Mill used for baseball uniforms! Mary Ann Devins' father Harold worked in the Mill and acquired it; she turned it over to us for safekeeping! What a unique piece of Hartford History!

The other item is a Spinning wheel – complete! Of the 'Great Wheel' style, it just barely fits behind our loom, but you CAN see it. It was found in a garage attic on Summer Street a few decades ago – its former history is unknown, including its age. It's great that it found its way to us eventually. We hope someday to have a larger display area so it can be seen 'up close' and possibly demonstrated!

What wonderful gifts! Thank you! ["What's in YOUR attic?"]



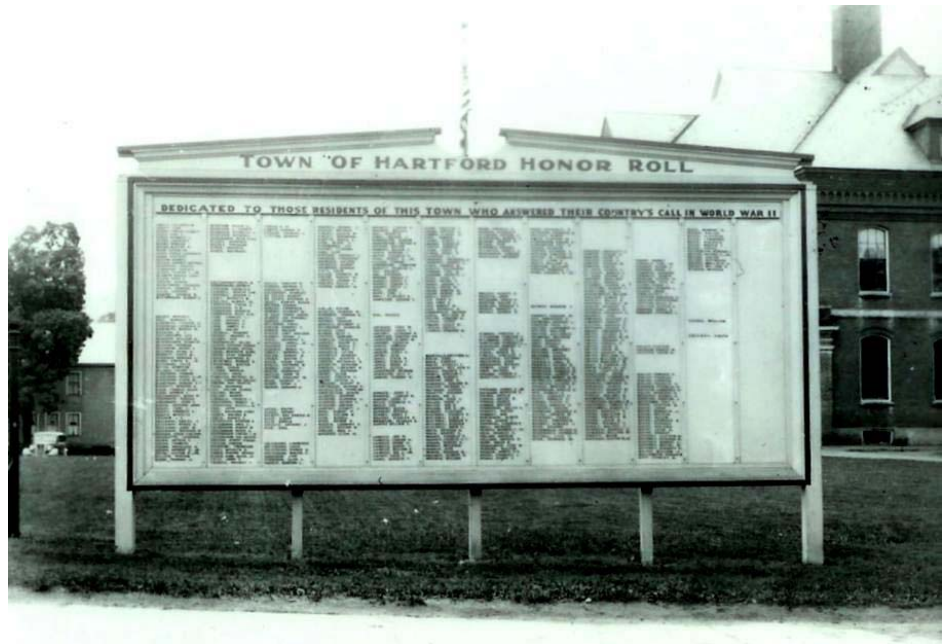
Here are a couple of artifacts from our collection – can you identify them? [Answers below] We'd love to hear any stories/memories you have around them!

Thanks Pat

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## MYSTERY PHOTO

Does anyone remember this World War II Honor Roll? We have no information on it other than this photo. We'd love to know when it was in place and what happened to it [and when]!



**Answer to Curator's Artifact ID:** A grate from JJ Newberry's on left above, and a speaker from the White River Drive-in on the right.

# MESSAGE FROM A READER

We recently received a post card with a wonderful suggestion: to include “old family recipes from days gone by cooked up in old Hartford ...kitchens” in upcoming newsletters as part of our Celebrations of our last 250 years! So – dig thru your old files & books and send in your favorite old-time recipes to share with others to:

pstark@hartford-vt.org

or

PO Box 547, Hartford, 04057

We might also put them on the website! Thanks!

## IN MEMORIAM

**Everett J Smith** [1930 – 2010] A past Director and long time supporter of the Hartford Historical Society.

**Weston A. Cate, Jr** [1921 – 2010] – member and beloved HHS Teacher.

## 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

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## HHS Calendar

*Upcoming Programs, Meetings and Events*

### Monthly Meetings:

**2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday** – Hartford Historic Preservation Commission meeting at the Municipal Building, 171 Bridge street, White River Junction at 4:30

**4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday** – HHS Board of Directors Meeting – Garipay House May – Oct and the Hartford Library Nov – Apr. at 7pm

For more information contact Dorothy Yamashita, Board Chairman.

**Wednesday, Nov. 10** – Mark Pippin and friends will be telling us about some 3-generation businesses in town and how they got started – 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

Don't forget the **Genealogy Center**, upstairs in the Hartford Library is open Monday afternoons

Please see the schedule for the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations elsewhere in this Newsletter. Hope to see you there!

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### Hartford Historical Society

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