



# HARTFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Garipay House  
1461 Maple Street  
Hartford Village, Vermont

o Hartford

o Quechee

o West Hartford

o White River Junction

o Wilder

Volume 13, No 3

Society Newsletter

February 2001

## A Recent Acquisition

One day in mid January, Jim Dow stopped by the office to ask what I knew about the old school on the corner of Bliss Road and Hathaway Road, and if we were interested in some old desks from his mother's barn loft that he believed came from the school. We located the school on the Beers Atlas and (of course) I said yes! He shared several stories about the area as we perused the map, and asked if I knew the name of the school I didn't, but I remembered seeing a sketch in John St Croix's collection that identified the various school districts by name. We then discussed delivery options (while I was frantically trying to decide where I'd find room for the desks as they are one unit of 2 desks), and I promised to look up the name for him.

That evening I did find the sheet I'd remembered and called Jim to tell him it was the Pinewood School. He said that made sense as it was in the pine trees! Yesterday he stopped by with the desks on his truck and I excitedly went out to see them. He pointed out several features, my favorite being the very wide pine boards with which they are built, the hand-forged nails, and the "1865" some bored scholar carved in the back. Priscilla and I are in the process of cleaning them up and finding a home for them. They are a priceless addition to our collection, and I am very grateful to Jim and his mother, Mary Dow, for thinking of us and donating them, saving them so future generations can marvel at them.

The desk will also make the front room quite crowded when we get them in there. We are now in the fortunate position of running out of room (don't forget we have a sleigh in the garage) for our expanding collections. This is a wonderful position for a historical society to be in, but also creates a challenge for your Archivist, Curator and Board of Directors. by Pat Stark

## Upcoming Programs

**The next public meeting** will feature Jonathan Schectman's slide presentation of Street Scenes of White River Junction at the turn of the last century, mid century, and recent. This will be a very interesting presentation showing how the downtown has changed and how it has remained the same. The meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 10th, at 7 pm at the United Church of Christ in Hartford Village.

**The May meeting** will feature your "Memories of Entertainments of Yesteryear - come to tell and hear about what you and others did for fun in your youth (however you define it). If you wish to share memories of places that no longer look the same (or are no longer in existence), you may let Pat Stark know what they are, and we'll try to have copies of photos from the collection (if we have them) on display.

## Christmas Raffle Winner

Congratulations to the winner of our pillow doll raffle [drawn at the Christmas Tea], Mary Thomas of Reservoir Road. Her name was drawn at the annual Christmas Tea in December. Just the perfect prize for a young lady at Christmas time.

# **Forty Years Ago is not as Long Ago as it Used to Be**

or

## **Do You Remember "Fonda's"?**

Did you know that in 1964 White River Junction had five gas stations? Can you name them? Answers below). Do you know where Dick's Diner was?

The Junction had a lot to offer in 1964: gas stations, restaurants, diners, clothing stores, two "5 and 10 cent" stores, a home furnishing store, a news store, the library, the movies, a cobbler, doctors and dentists offices, and more - all within walking distance of Wilder, Hartford Village, and West Lebanon. We walked to the movies Saturday afternoon from West Lebanon; my sister walked to work at the telephone office; my friend's mother who lived on top of Seminary Hill in West Lebanon walked to work at Colodny's. People in Wilder and Hartford Village walked to the Junction as a matter of course.

The Housing Act of 1949 had authorized the Federal Government to help cities remove slums and rebuild in accordance with sound planning. Realizing the need for White River Junction Central Business District to correct its crowded conditions and to prepare for the future that the new interstate highways would bring, Hartford organized the local Urban Renewal Agency in 1960. A survey and planning application culminated in a contract, and funds were received.

The first priority in the renewal plan was the Gates Park Renewal Project. The Historical Society has the appraisals made in 1964 for this project. There are over thirty black and white photographs (with descriptions) of buildings on North Main, Gates, Currier and Church Streets. They have been copied and put in a binder which will be on display at the next meeting.

The renewal never materialized; the project was terminated. Does anyone know why?

An interesting note in one of the reports states: "People in this community maintain and make use of properties far beyond normal life expectancy."

Priscilla Gadzinski, Curator

Source: John St Croix' notes and Appraisal Report

\*Gulf, Mobile, Shell, Atlantic, and Cities Service

## **Notes From the Board**

At a recent meeting, the Board of Directors was informed that the 2 large oaks at the Garipay House have many dead limbs that are starting to drop. This is a potential liability issue and should be taken care of this summer. We also have a dead elm in the back that is slowly falling apart. The Board is asking if anyone knows of a good tree removal person/firm who might give us a financial "break" for this trimming & cutting project. Also, it will save us a lot of money if we do the removal of the wood ourselves once it is cut down, so we are looking for volunteers with a truck, chain saw, and/or time & muscle to remove it. Please contact one of your Board Members or Pat (295-3077 days) if you can help in any way. Thank you.

## A. Latham & Son

History tells us that ground was broken for the first railroad in Vermont, in Windsor, in December 1845, on land owned by Judge Elijah Paine, but the first rail laid in Vermont was on the farm of Colonel Samuel Nutt in White River Junction early in 1847. Excitement ran high throughout the area, and many men gave thought as to how they might share in the era of prosperity that was sure to follow.

When the building of this first railroad in Vermont became a certainty, Arthur Latham moved from Lyme, New Hampshire to White River Junction. As far as we know, he had been a farmer all his life, though he may well have had knowledge of other types of business. He certainly felt that machine shop and foundry operations would fit quite naturally with the pattern of the railroads. Accordingly, in 1847, when the Vermont Central Railroad was under construction, he built a machine shop and foundry where later stood the large engine house of the Central, and on what I believe is the site of the present freight house.

The land was purchased from that well-known figure in Town of Hartford's history, Colonel Samuel Nutt, and the parcel included several acres south of the foundry location. Some of this land was originally a part of lot #1 drawn by John Baldwin at the time of the grantees first sales, and lot #2 drawn by Daniel Newcombe. Incidentally, the same John Baldwin was commissioned by our selectmen to build the first ferry in the area, and it connected the Town of Hartford with the Town of Lebanon. The entire section south of the White River, including what is now our business district, sold originally for about 6 cents an acre. By 1861 this same land sold for \$140 an acre, and by 1876 brought \$400 an acre.

At the time the machine shops were built, Mr. Latham also constructed three double houses south of this spot. All are still standing, and are now known as the Schettino, Falzarano, and Depaol houses. It is believed that at least one of these houses was used originally as a boarding house for some of the railroad construction crews.

In 1852 Arthur Latham and his son, who was confined to a wheel chair as a result of a back injury in childhood, enlarged the machine shops so that they consisted of the iron foundry 90' x 50', the car shop 40' x 200', the machine shop 40' x 320', the boiler and forging shop 40' x 280', and three other small offices and buildings. A. Latham & Son began on quite a large scale the repairing and manufacturing of locomotives and freight cars. A picture of one of these early locomotives hangs in the Gates Memorial Library. The locomotive and tender was designed by John P. Laird and built by A. Latham & Company Works. With it is a photograph of James Clark Nash who was a machinist in the Latham shops when they closed. He then went west and became an engineer on the Peoria and Oquawka Railroad. This railroad later bought this same engine which he had helped to build, and turned it over to him to run. It was considered one of the prettiest of that time. It seems quite probable that the paths of some of these engines might be traced if one had the patience to attempt it. We know that railroads in other parts of the East purchased some of the A. Latham & Son products, and we know the Vermont Central Railroad bought several.

With the rapid expansion of business, A. Latham & Son felt many of the growing pains of business today, and within a short two years were forced in 1854 to discontinue operations. From an outside source comes the information that one reason for this business failure was because a well-known railroad refused to pay for several locomotives it had purchased. A. Latham & Son, because of the accidental burning of some of their business records, was unable to produce the proper documents with which to substantiate their claim.

I hope some day to be able to study his diary, as I feel that through it we will find some of the missing links in the story of A. Latham & Son.

Following 1854, the shops remained unoccupied for about four years and a half. In the spring of 1859, the machine shop was rented for shoe peg manufacturing, and other buildings including the foundry were rented and operated until 1861 when all of the buildings were destroyed by fire. Again, Mr. Latham suffered heavy losses, as we are told that he carried no insurance on any of this property.

Not until 1869 was there any further activity on this site. At that time Mr. Latham rented a portion of the premises for a term of years, for the construction of another shoe peg manufacturing plant. This operated until 1882, and then stood idle until 1884, when the building was refitted with machinery for making mouldings, clothes pins, and other wood products. Though I believe this building was occupied only until 1886, I am not certain as to the final disposition of it.

In 1869 the Vermont Central Railroad purchased a portion of the ground where the boiler shop stood, and fitted up the walls of that shop for an engine house. It was used for that purpose until 1973. At that time the railroad made further purchases of the Latham property and tore down the last remains of the Latham shops and built a large octagonal engine house.

The railroad brought much activity during the 19th century to these acres immediately surrounding us, and the resulting increase in value of the land enabled A. Latham & Son to recoup some of their loss. But, somehow, the railroad continued to bring misfortune periodically to Arthur Latham. At the age of 75 he one day walked too close to the track and the bumper of an engine caught the cuff of his pants, throwing him down in such a way that he lost his leg. He lived to the ripe old age of 86 however, and died in 1890.

### **Memo from Watson & West Insurance Agency, Inc.**

July 6, 1955

Dear Wes

Promised to send you the enclosed some time ago, but had completely forgotten about it until I ran across it today while cleaning out my desk. It is far from perfect, but includes the story as far as I have it on A. Latham & Son.

Hope you are home by now and feeling fit. It has been anything but a pleasant and comfortable beginning of a summer vacation, that I'm sure, but am glad the ordeal is over. Have hesitated to call the house as I know Jean must be very busy with the day camp as well as the usual day to day activities.

Forest Wedge & Clog, Inc. officially open on Monday, and it will be interesting to see how things move along from that point.

As far as other chamber matters are concerned, there is the usual flow of summer mail which I forward daily to Mildred. Hope she isn't discouraged yet. The booklet has gone to the printer and believe it will be ready for distribution by the first of the week. Am asking the rest of the publicity committee, Stan Wright, and our new secretaries to help in this respect so this is one job you won't have to think about this year.

Hope to see you soon. Regards, Betsy (Cameron)

## **Fund Raising**

The Fund Raising committee will be meeting soon to design projects for the upcoming year. If you have any ideas, please contact one of the Board Members. Thanks.

## John St. Croix

We are fortunate to have received much of John St. Croix's collection of Hartford photographs and memorabilia after his death. Both Priscilla and Pat have been very busy processing everything, and needless-to-say, a few real "gems" have turned up - such as a 1917 copy of the Hartford Gazette, an early periodical, and an 1844 Memorial Day Celebration Program. We have put copies of all the non-photograph documents in a notebook which will be available for examination at the Open Houses and at our first public meeting in the spring. The many photographs (about 6" worth) and the equally numerous postcards will be added to the photo and post card collections as we can process them. Many of them are in the Hartford History Books, but again, there are a few "never before seen" photos and postcards.

Below is the information submitted for the Town Report:

John St Croix, May 27, 1912-November 19, 2000.

Received his education in Hartford, graduating from Hartford High School. Later attended the University of Vermont. He married Marion Hilliard in White River Junction on November 22, 1951. John was employed as a mail room supervisor at the Veterans Administration Center Hospital for 32 years, retiring in 1972. He lived in Hartford Village where he enjoyed bowling and ice skating, teaching many village children to skate. He was a member and active volunteer of St. Anthony's Catholic Church.

Best known as the Hartford Historian, he became interested in local history after the Bicentennial. He collected and copied hundreds of local photographs and served as historical advisor to the Hartford Urban Renewal Agency. He was the author of "The Pictorial History of the Town of Hartford, Vermont", and "An Album of Hartford, Vermont", later reprinted in one volume as "Historical Highlights of the Town of Hartford, Vermont 1761-1974".

## Requests and Notes

**Spring Cleaning:** If you have artifacts that relate to the Town of Hartford, we would love to look at them before you dispose of them. Examples are old documents, tools, small items, uniforms, etc. Especially useful are photographs (even better if they are dated and/or identified), anything made in town, diaries and business account books. Storage space is at a premium, but our past and those who remember it are rapidly passing, so it is important that we preserve as much as we can! It is possible to copy some documents and photographs if you do not want to donate them. Please contact Pat at 295-3077.

**Fund Raising:** The Fundraising committee hopes to sponsor another raffle and flea market this year. We can't do it without your help - if you have anything that could be used as a raffle prize please contact Pat ASAP [suggestions - a small 'old' item in good condition or a 'like-new' handcrafted item]. Also remember to have a box handy when doing that 'spring cleaning' for flea market items, too! Thanks!

## Items Needed

- o Glass or ceramic bread or cake pans. Pat can use them to help regulate the humidity in the Museum. Please contact Pat at 295-3077 (days) or 296-2192 (evenings/weekends). Thank you.
- o Folks to help with keeping the museum open. This involves 2 hours on either the first Tuesday evening (6-8 pm) of the month or the first Sunday afternoon (1:30-4:00 pm) of the month. It's a great opportunity to view the collection and special exhibit or help index old issues of the Quechee Times! It's one way you can help your Society. If you have questions or suggestions about other ways to volunteer, please contact one of the Board Members or Pat Stark. Remember - this is YOUR Historical Society - and, bring a friend!

Hartford Historical Society  
PO Box 547  
Hartford, Vermont 05047



Plowing A Spring Snow Storm

NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Permit 15  
Hartford, VT  
05047

## Recent Donations

Besides the extensive St Croix collection, we have received several other items in the past couple of months:

John R. Stone's The Service Album (canal zone) which has many local photographs - c 1933, donated by Elizabeth Stone

1902 Certificate for the Hartford Camp of the Modern Woodsman of America, donated by Ed and Nancy Brower.

1906 Sanborn Maps of the town, donated by the Hartford Town Clerk.

Recent photos of the old Potter's Field off Old River Road, taken by Ron Heroux.

Hartford Grammar School Class - c 1928, donated by John Dutton.

Pilot's Log Book - Twin State Airport, belonging to James Harvey, donated by Charlotte Harvey.

Pants and fancy vest worn by Teddy Theriault during performance, donated by Rita Morris.

### Officers

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