



Hartford Historical Society

The Garipay House • 1461 Maple Street

Hartford Village, Vermont 05047

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

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SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

February 2003

How to Handle Snow -- One Hundred Years Ago

One type of "snow roller" is a meteorological phenomenon whereby wet snow is tossed by the wind into a cylindrical shape. Another type of "snow roller" is a snow scoop -- new to the market -- that pushes snow to the side like a plow. But a century ago, another type of snow roller was around. This snow roller was like a huge rolling pin -- perhaps 5 feet in diameter and 10 feet wide and made of oak and iron -- used 100 years ago and more, to make the snow-covered roads suitable for travel by sleigh and sled. Typically, the core of a snow roller was 3 big wooden wheels on an iron axle. Planks were nailed side by side and end to end, from one wheel to the next along the circumference, forming a cylinder. This cylinder was reinforced by bands of iron. Inside, the cylinder was loaded or lined with some heavy material -- sand or blocks of granite, for example -- to provide enough weight to effectively pack the snow. Consequently, it might weigh many hundreds or even several thousand pounds. The roller was pulled by a team of horses or oxen, usually at least 4, but often 6 or more.

A brace, made of heavy oak beams and mounted on the axle, framed the roller. The beam at the rear was positioned close enough to scrape away much of the snow that might otherwise accumulate on the roller. The operator and crew stood on the brace or sat on an attached box, in front of or behind the roller. Or, a deck was built upon the brace, forming a platform over the roller. On this platform, a gang of men could sit, providing some additional weight, but mostly getting a free ride with a good view.

Like the snow plow that took its place, a snow roller might be heard before it was seen -- depending on what material was used as ballast and how the material was secured. Over the years, at least a few windows were

broken by the vibration.

While these machines were usually part of the inventory of a town, the crew may not have been the professionals that plow our roads these days. Citizens capable and willing to operate the roller shared the chore of maintaining the highways, taking turns from one snowfall to the next. Sometimes, the snow roller was hauled from one farm to the next, where the team and crew were changed, and so on, to the next farm. Sometimes the crew and the owner of the team were paid by the town, sometimes given a tax credit.

Most snow rollers seen in old photos look very much alike, but some are said to have a diameter of as much as 8 feet. Some had a wide wheel on either end of a bare axle and some machines had two smaller rollers -- perhaps 3 feet in diameter -- one behind the other. Besides winter use, some rollers also were used to roll oats

at planting and other ways.

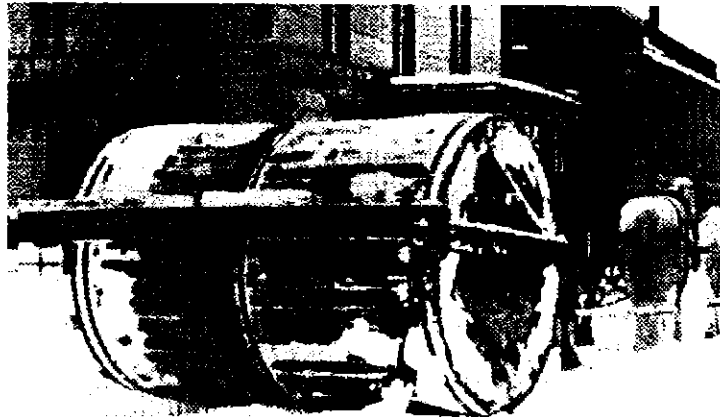
At least in the late 1800s, snow rollers were commercially made, with some towns needing more machines to maintain more roads. As today, towns would have sought to buy the most suitable product at the best price. One company known to have put

out considerable numbers of snow rollers was the Holmes Brothers in Georges Mills, New Hampshire.

Some people can remember seeing or operating the snow roller. The snow plow began to replace the snow roller around 1910, as the automobile replaced the sleigh, the wagon and the horse, but some snow rollers were not retired until the 1940s.

You might see a snow roller in use today, but most likely it is a type used at ski areas as part of the grooming process on ski trails. These look similar at a glance,

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but are smaller in diameter and wider, are made of something other than wood and are pulled by motor.

Many historical societies and museums recognize the significance and appeal of these antiques. Examples of them can be seen at: The Ashfield Historical Society Museum in Ashfield Village, Massachusetts; The Adirondack Museum in Blue Mountain Lake, New York; The Old Stone House Museum in Brownington, Vermont; The Limington Historical Society in Limington, Maine. Locally, one can be seen at the Canaan Historical Society Museum in Canaan, New Hampshire. These places are open from around May to October. A picture of an ancient snow roller -- photographed in action on Passumpsic Ave. in Wilder -- is on page 82 of John St. Croix's Historical Highlights of Hartford, Vermont. (Copies of this book are available thru the Hartford Historical Society and at a discount price to members) Could this be the same one that now rests in a field off Jericho Road? This idle apparatus was stripped of it's boards, bal-



last and part of it's brace long ago -- no doubt the parts were put to practical use elsewhere. Only the weathered wheels and the rusty iron bands, nails and a few nuts and bolts remain, vaguely framed by some of the brace. This skeleton of what used to compress snow is now buried in snow behind the old red schoolhouse. It can be viewed in other seasons. Photos of these remnants are

among the many items of interest at The Garipay House. Hartford Historical Society Open House is the first Sunday afternoon of every month from 1:30 PM to 4 PM and the first Tuesday evening of every month from 6 PM to 8 PM. 1461 Maple St./Route 14, Hartford Village, Vt. Free to all. 802-296-3132.

Do you know something about snow rollers? We would like to hear from you. Write to Hartford Historical Society, Attention: Newsletter Editor, P.O. Box 547, Hartford, VT 05047-0547. Or email mmfarrington1@juno.com.

By Tom Houghton

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Historical Events

- 50 years ago the School on Bridge Street was closed
- 75 years ago the Twin State Fair closed and the West Hartford Library was rebuilt by the citizens of Hartford, CT, after the 1927 flood destroyed the old one.
- 100 years ago the Hartford Church interior and ceiling were renovated by local architect Louis Sheldon Newton.
- 125 years ago the Methodist Church was built and the Universalist Church formed and built a worship hall.
- 150 years ago Sylvester Morris built a mill for grinding plaster on the site of the old cotton mill in Hartford Village.
- 175 years ago the Hartford Church was built as well as the brick house and law office down the street. They were built by Elias Lyman as a wedding gift for his son Wyllys. [Her parents furnished the house but the couple soon moved to Burlington].

My Heart on My Sleeve

3rd Installment
by Alice Adams McGinnis Mireault
Continuing Chapter 1

A New Experience , 1920

I HAVE AN EARACHE that just won't quit, even with all Mother's expertise as well as Grandma's and several on the party line. Mother makes me a bed in the warm living room, reads the Stacy book of Home Cures, Recipes and Everything a Farm Family Needs to Know. All to no avail, I cry a lot--Mother steams dried hop vines in a cloth bag and puts them against my ear as prescribed, but I wail on.

Finally, Dr. Rogers is called to come by horse and sleigh, several miles from Quechee. He has a wonderful bedside manner and is most sympathetic. He says I have ear abscesses and tonsillitis and should get the adenoids, as well as tonsils, out of there.

His medicine helps some and soon Mother and I board the train for Randolph. Dr. Gifford removes the offending parts in his hospital on my 5th birthday. It is a good present for me. I really enjoy my stay in the hospital. The nurses and everyone are so solicitous and I'm served vanilla ice cream in a pretty glass dish in the middle of the night. I get out of bed to look around this interesting and unusual place. As I wander, a pretty young lady asks me to get into bed with her. She is warm and nice and asks me, "Would you like to ring my bell?" Sure, I would love to push the plunger down at the top of that silvery dome. Pronto, a nurse arrives. She laughs and says "Here you are, did you know you were lost?"

I continue on through life doing smart(?) things in similar fashion!

Mother spends the two days with a friend, then we take the noon train back home. The train ride is fun. It sort of rocks and the engine whistles a lot. The wheels go clickety click in a musical rhythm. We watch when we go by our farm--don't see anybody.

Dad and Old Dick are waiting for us at the station. My parents are relieved. We are pretty happy just now.

Perhaps I have atoned for the time I let Mother's glasses case snap shut noisily during Rev. Dr. Ford's prayer one Sunday morning. "You are altogether too big to do those thoughtless things," I am told sternly.

"Dr. Ford is in retirement and is kind to come here from Hartford every Sunday to preach. We are to show respect."

I must add, he brings in a good congregation. He is much admired.

SPRING
Chapter 2

Sugaring, 1920

DAD HAS ALL HIS TOOLS READY and firewood gathered at the sugar house. As the sun gets warmer and the snow loses its fluffiness and is more compact, it's time to wash the buckets and boiling pan. The snow melts around the base of the maple trees; the trees must be tapped and buckets hung to collect the sap.

We leave for the sugar house at the edge of the woods, about a mile from our home, as soon as morning chores can be done. We set out on the short two-horse sled. We pass the checkerberry patch, go over the stone culvert and look, as we pass the arbutus on the bank to see if it is in bloom yet.

All day, Dad, with Jim and Ned, work the "sugar place" collecting the sweet liquid. When the gathering tank on the sled is full they come to fill the holding tank. By then Mother is ready. She keeps the fire steady as the sap runs down and works its way through the maze of the big pan. As it boils the heady vapor rises and the sap gradually turns amber, and finally is heavy enough to be drawn off and run through a strainer into big jugs.

More sap is beginning to thicken as the whole relay continues. It is a hard and busy job. When the process can be closed for the day both my parents are tired. They leave it ready to start the next morning and head home. Milking has to be done and all the home chores taken care of.

Mother bakes something for our lunch to go with us on our next day of sugaring. Dad has had the horses newly shod in preparation for this hard work. Each night he checks their hooves. They are faithful boys and have to dig in real hard at some of the spots where the sap runs extra good and is plentiful on the east and south sides, mainly.

The Ice Goes Out, 1920

WITH WARM SPRING SUN the snow melts, the river rises, the ice buckles and begins to break up. Huge pieces stir and put pressure on that below. Then somewhere the big break comes. It snaps, cracks, and soon crashes into anything in its path.

There is a thunderous roar as it tumbles along on the high water. Everyone watches this annual "ice show." At curves and inlets and especially on islands it piles up, sometimes dangerously. If a building or bridge is in danger, the ice has to be blasted. It does come up onto roadways at times so always bears watching.

Later islands look as if glaciers had passed over

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them. The huge chunks may take several weeks to melt.

The Log Drive, 1920

AFTER THE ICE GOES OUT, while the river is still high, comes the log drive. The water is fully covered from bank to bank with standard full length logs floating downstream. Hardy young men, many of them French Canadians, wearing spiked heavy boots are quick and clever with their peaveys or cant hooks.

They patrol the banks and go out onto the logs when necessary to keep them moving and avert jams. They are a daring bunch who work skillfully at the rapids and other treacherous spots.

Spring, 1920

MELTING SNOW, thawing earth and spring rains make mud. Boots are country wear now. Gravel roads can be trusted but most roads are potential mud holes. Travel is risky. A few steps on wet clay will add weights "au naturel." No need for commercial exercise equipment.

Our location, by comparison to many farms, is almost urban. This is the old stage road through Central Vermont that continues all the way from Boston to

Montreal. The White River is at the front and the railway runs behind us. Many more-rural families have had little contact with the outside world during the winter. They are eager to see people and they need to replenish supplies. They are looking forward to the arrival of "the Rawleigh Man." He is tall, young, genial Roy Campbell from the Woodstock area. His express wagon with the chest of Rawleigh products is pulled by a pair of sleek black driving horses. The varied and reliable products include spices and other kitchen supplies along with salves, liniments, plasters, appetite stimulants, laxatives and more.

Since we are centrally located and have ample room, Roy and his team stay with us for the week or ten days it takes to canvass this territory.

In later spring comes "Daddy Cotton." I don't know this man's first name. He always addresses Dad as "Son" so Dad dubs him "Daddy Cotton." He is a small white-haired Jewish man who drives a pair of light weight horses to pull a wagon full of EVERYTHING. He sells a surprising variety of goods and buys almost anything he can load onto or attach, in any way, to his wagon. He works his way up from Massachusetts and continues on northward. I enjoy the few days he is with us to cover his accustomed route. He is pleasant and interesting.

(to be continued next issue)

Garipay House Goings On

Hands-on Opportunity! We hope to assemble our hand-made loom for display in 2003. If you would like to help, advise, or just watch, let Pat know. Hopefully we can get enough interest going to have a few special days devoted to this project. We only have a couple Polaroids of it assembled, so if you know of anyone who might have an idea of the process, please let me know!! Thanks. Pat

Upcoming opportunity! We are just 8 years away from our 250th anniversary. It seems like a long time from now, but we all know how time sneaks up on us! I would like to form a group to discuss possible projects, including publishing a booklet. Should it be a brief history of the town? An update of St. Croix's publications? Please talk to other folks, think about ways to celebrate this anniversary, and let me know of your ideas, interest, etc.
Thanks, Pat

Special Exhibit at the Garipay House This year is The Woolen Mills of Hartford featuring photos, products, etc. of Dewey's Mills, Quechee Mills and the Hartford Woolen Mill. These mills were active from the early 1800's until the 1950's and employed hundreds of workers. To view this exhibit, as well as the permanent collection, come to our open house on the first Sunday afternoon [1:30 - 4] and first Tuesday evening [6-8] of each month, or call Pat for an appointment at 295-3077 [M-F 9-4].

Lost and Found - At the Holiday Cookie Sale - a change purse with money in it - call Pat at 295-3077 M-F 9-4 if it's yours.

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Veterans History Project in Vermont

Dear Friends,

The Vermont Folklife Center is working in partnership with the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress on the Veterans History Project in Vermont. The U.S. Congress voted unanimously to create the Veterans History Project on October 27, 2000. Congress recognized the urgency of collecting wartime memories, which become more precious as the number of veterans dwindles. Congress also saw the value of engaging the American public in its own history.

The Vermont Folklife Center is one of over 400 partner organizations working with the Library of Congress on the Veterans History Project nationwide. We are pleased to spearhead the effort here in Vermont because this is important work which needs to be done. To date there has been no coordinated effort to document the wartime experience of veterans or of civilian service on the home front. The Veterans History Project casts a broad net: to collect the memories, accounts, and documents of war veterans from World War I, World War II, and the Korean, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf wars, and to preserve these stories of experience and service for future generations.

I'm writing to introduce this project and invite your participation. If you are interested in interviewing veterans in your community, the Vermont Folklife Center can offer oral history/field research training sessions free of charge, and our staff will be available for consultation throughout the course of your project. The materials

you generate will be on deposit here in Vermont in the Veterans History Project archive at the VCF and will be made available to the Library of Congress archive in Washington.

As a part of this effort we also want to identify projects that have already been completed or are currently underway so that we can create a comprehensive directory of projects statewide. To get things underway, we have planned our annual Oral History Day program coming up in November to feature veterans projects that local organizations have already undertaken.

Please be in touch. Whether you think you'd be interested in setting up an interview project—or have information about a veterans history project that is underway or has already been completed—or know a veteran that you think should be interviewed, we want to hear from you.

The Veterans History Project is our history project as a nation. Through grass roots collaboration we can tackle this vast undertaking and create rich historical resrouce that will be a treasure to future generations—while honoring the living memories of the people who have served our country in so many ways.

Sincerely,
Gregory Sharrow, Project Director
Vermont Folklife Center PO Box 442
Middlebury, VT 05753
802-388-4963

WANTED:

- A copy of FAST LANE ON A DIRT ROAD for our Library. If you have one you can part with, please call Pat [295-3077] or a member of the Board of Directors.
- Treasures from your attic [basement, closet, etc.] Remember that history is happening today and before you throw out that whatever, ask yourself if it has any connection with the people of our town. Of special interest are programs from local events [school, civic events, etc] and photographs. Call Pat if you have any questions.

THANK YOU.

The Nominations Committee will be meeting soon. Our goal is to find board members who have skills to bring to the society and/or a desire to help our society remain viable and grow. Do you know of any such individuals? If you have any suggestions, please contact Dot Jones [295-2701]

News from the Sharon Historical Society - they have recently been given the entire collection of THE LANDMARK by Susan Wright Melendy and the family of Alfred T. Wright. The Wrights edited this paper from its inception in 1882 until its sale to the Valley News in 1952. They hope to preserve the fragile papers and make the information available for public use. This is a major project that will take several years to accomplish, as well as considerable funding. This is great news as it has long been our hope that this collection would be turned over to the public sector and preserved for posterity.

Hartford Historical Society

POST OFFICE BOX 547
HARTFORD, VERMONT 05047

Recent Donations:

- Ice harvesting pole - Twin Pines Housing Trust
- Shepard Company catalog featuring photos of their plumbing products, etc.—David Ford
- 3 colorful posters [Lyric, as for listen pipe tobacco, St. Anthony's memorial service] - Hartford Housing Authority
- Hartford Hilites - vol 1, Union agreement with Hartford Woolen Co, and 2
- Lyric movie schedules - Ethel Larabee
- Local business postcards - Priscilla Gadzinski

Thanks to all who have donated

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