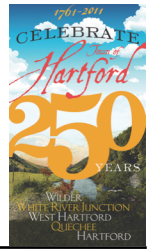




Hartford Historical Society

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

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



Volume 31, No. 1

SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

January-February 2018

A Visit to the Hartford Town Farm

(From *The Landmark*, February 16, 1933)

Nestled up among the hills, nine miles from this village and between the villages of Quechee and West Hartford is our Town Farm. Passing by the farm, one would think that a prosperous farmer resided there, for the white farmhouse and red painted barns have the appearance of being well cared for.

A representative of *The Landmark* accompanied W. H. Coutermanche, Overseer of the Poor for the past seven years, to the Town Farm Saturday morning during the heavy snow storm. Everything along the roadside looked so fine because of the soft white snow-blanket that was being spread. As the car rolled on higher up in the hills one could not help but feel that the air is much purer than down in the valley. And sure enough, after getting out of the car into the snowy yard of the Town Farm, the representative paused to look about and get a deep breath of that pure, snappy morning air that abounds up among those hills.

In the kitchen, a warm fire was burning, the teakettle was boiling, and a pan of home-made rolls were



The Hartford Town Farm was located off the Quechee-West Hartford Road. Hartford ceased to operate its town farm in 1950.

waiting their turn to be put into the oven so that later on, having been baked to a golden brown, they might be devoured by ten hungry folks. The linoleum covered floor was as clean as though it had just had a scrubbing; beautiful sunlight poured in at the curtained

Continued on page 4.



Happy New Year!

Hartford Historical Society Members – It's Time to Pay Your Annual Dues!

\$20 individual, \$25 family, \$15 senior, \$20 senior family. Mail your check made out to "Hartford Historical Society" to PO Box 547, Hartford, VT 05047.

Editor's Note . . .

Members are the most important asset we have at the Hartford Historical Society. Members like you give meaning to our history, provide historical artifacts to enrich our collections, and donate your time to make our events and research possible.

Very importantly your membership dues provide financial support to help our organization pay annual costs. It's the start of the new year and time to pay your annual dues for 2018. Martha Knapp, President

of the Hartford Historical Society, reports dues are arriving at our office daily. If you have not yet paid, please do so! The dues are: \$20.00 individual, \$25.00 family, \$15.00 senior, \$20.00 senior family. Dues are tax-deductible.

Please make your check out to "Hartford Historical Society" and mail to the same at P.O. Box 547 Hartford, VT 05057. We are most appreciative!

Gwen L. Tuson, Editor



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Post Office Box 547, Hartford, VT 05047-0547

<http://www.hartfordhistory.org>

info@hartfordhistoricalsociety.com

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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.



Our Eldest Hartford Resident Shares His Artwork

By Mary Nadeau

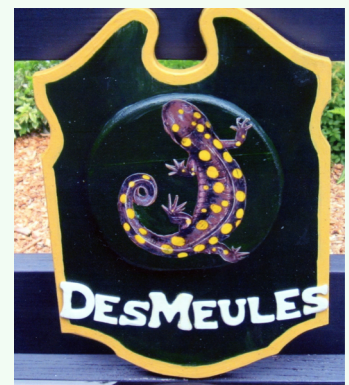
Martha Knapp and I made a second trip to the Quechee home of Joe DesMeules who is the current holder of the Hartford Cane in commemoration of his being our town's oldest citizen. After Joe's warm greeting, we were offered glasses of cold lemonade as we settled around his dining room table for another visit with this remarkable man.

Joe is a prolific folk artist and every room in his home is decorated with his creations. He gets enormous pleasure in producing these artworks, but he finds even more enjoyment in giving them away.

artworks, but he finds even more enjoyment in giving them away. Visitors to Joe's home are invited to choose whatever object they would like—as a gift. He presented me with a beautifully decorated walking stick for my husband, and then Martha and I each selected a carved shore bird as a personal treasure. A beautifully crafted duck decoy was donated to the Hartford Historical Society.

Although we hit upon many topics, he was particularly fascinated to learn of Martha's vast knowledge of the Abenaki and of her mission to share the information that she has discovered over a span of many years as a student of Native American history and culture. Joe, at 97, still possesses a healthy curiosity and retains a love of learning. His incredible memory could put to shame many people decades his junior.

As mentioned in a previous article, Joe is a prolific folk artist and every room in his home is decorated with his creations. He gets enormous pleasure in producing these



Joe donated one of his creations, a duck decoy, to the Hartford Historical Society. Joe's work includes walking sticks, painted stone door stops, duck decoys and models, a tree cross-cut hanging, a wooden plaque, and more. Joe made a plaque to grace the home of a family member.

windows; an electric washing machine in one corner of the room reminded one that somebody had seen to it that, in spite of all the woes of technocracy, this machine has been provided and is a much needed blessing to help lessen the burdens of work on the shoulders of Mrs. McWilliams.

Meet Mr. and Mrs. McWilliams

Mrs. McWilliams makes one feel so much at home. She is so cordial, and kind-hearted, as are all those dear souls who were raised in Ireland. Mr. McWilliams came from Scotland 38 years ago, and he met Susan who later became his wife in Williamstown, VT., she having come to that town thirty-two

On a shelf in back of the stove, six loaves of bread, covered with a linen towel were rising and when the curious reporter peeked under the towel Mrs.

McWilliams said, "I make that amount of bread every other day, besides the johnny cake, graham rolls and doughnuts."

covered with a linen towel were rising and when the curious reporter peeked under the towel Mrs. McWilliams said, "I make that amount of bread every other day, besides the johnny cake, graham rolls and doughnuts." "Pretty hearty eaters, aren't they?" she was asked. "You ought to see them eat!" she exclaimed.

"God Bless Our Home"

Breakfast is served at 7 o'clock. The inmates have a dining room to themselves. On a long table was spread a spotless white oil cloth, and the places were already set for dinner. A framed motto on one of the walls read "God Bless Our Home," and indeed, how fortunate they must feel to have such as the Town of Hartford offers. Cereals, coffee, toast, rolls, eggs and doughnuts make up their breakfast menu. Dinner is served at 12 o'clock, and their dinner is cooked in the same kettle as that of Mr. and Mrs. McWilliams. Nothing more, nothing less--they are given the best that can be afforded. Supper comes at 5 o'clock and the usual bedtime hour is 9 o'clock.

Family Squabbles Once in a While

"Do you have to supervise in the dining room when they are eating?" the reporter asked Mrs. McWilliams. "Quite often. We have a blind fellow here now and I must watch him quite a bit; then, once in a while, a family squabble will arise and I have to be on hand to make peace." Mrs. McWilliams smiled as she recalled several instances when the "family squabbles" had been staged.

Inmates Rooms Pleasant

A visit to the rooms was then made, and each of the inmates seemed delighted to shake hands with a stranger. All of the rooms occupied by persons were very warm, well lighted and made more cheery by blue painted walls and ceilings. In one of the rooms upstairs an old fellow was making his bed. He was the blind man, but after putting a finishing touch to the bed coverings, he walked toward the visitor and extended a polite greeting.



Center, Nedra Potter Cadiz as a child in front of the Hartford Town Farm. At left is Nedra's Great Grandmother Susan McWilliams who operated the farm for many years with her husband John.

At right is Nedra's grandmother Susan McWilliams Ducharme. Photo courtesy of Nedra Potter Cadiz.

Continued on page 8.

November Program Describes Vermont's Poor Houses

By Mary Nadeau

Stephen Taylor, noted local historian and lecturer presented a program on the history of Poor Houses (or Poor Farms, as they were sometimes called) on Wednesday, November 8, at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ.

Steve brought us back in time to Medieval England where the first recorded mention of dealing with the poor was made in 1349 in listing a statute that was passed to prohibit the giving of alms to the able-bodied poor. By 1496, every beggar was exported to the place he had come from as a means of handing off the problem of dealing with the poor to the communities where they had previously resided. By 1600, the only organized relief available to the poor was provided by the English churches, but when King Henry VIII confiscated church property, that practice came to an end. Subsequently, a tax was levied under Queen Elizabeth I to raise funds for the purpose of giving aid to the needy.

Fast forward to the American Colonies. In 1657, an ordinance was passed in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, that prohibited anyone taking in a boarder (vagrant) from getting assistance from the town for that person's support. In 1711, Portsmouth built the first almshouse in the Colonies in an effort to bring the poor to one central location. New Hampshire eventually became the first to enact a statewide tax to support the poor.

In the previous newsletter, it was reported that many towns had adopted a policy of "boarding out," a euphemistic term that described the auctioning off of these hapless individuals at a Town Meeting to the person who would care for them at the lowest cost to the community. These unfortunate individuals then helped to earn their keep through forced labor on the farms of their "owners." This system continued until the early 1800s, when a practice known as "warning out," was substituted. It involved the serving of a warrant advising vagrants of the choice that either they leave town on their own or they would be "carried out" (literally). Between 1810 and 1817, Vermont issued 77 such warnings.

By 1828, the idea of creating almshouses had caught on. Communities would buy farms to be known as Poor Farms, and the indigent were relocated there. This was a boon to towns because it cut welfare costs dramatically. The inmates, as they were now called, produced food for themselves and the surplus

generated cash sales. Cows, sheep, wool cloth, hogs, hens, turkeys and cord wood were among the goods produced and sold. Steve pointed out that when a person was sent there, all his worldly possessions were "signed over," right down to the underwear, leaving him with absolutely nothing to call his own.

Around 1835, some citizens were having second thoughts about a system that didn't distinguish poverty among those who were lazy or drunkards and those whose pauperism arose from unavoidable circumstances (e.g. widows, the feeble minded and the elderly). The Poor Farms by that time had become dumping grounds for petty criminals, the insane and orphaned children as well as the indigent.

In the 1850s, there appeared widespread disillusionment with the concept of Poor Farms. One significant factor was the prevalence of diseases among the inmates, especially tuberculosis, which was rampant among these people living in such close quarters with little or no medical attention. In addition, communities found that they didn't save as much money as had been anticipated. From the pulpits, especially those of the Congregational Church, the system was compared to Southern slavery.

After the Civil War, the tide began to turn when, for the first time, the U.S. Government provided pensions for veterans and their widows and children. The responsibility of caring for the poor was shifted from the local community to the county level, and the office of County Overseer of the Poor was created. About this time, The Loyal Order of Moose took up the welfare of children as their cause, focusing attention on their plight at the County Farms and revealing a disconcerting picture of typical living conditions to be found on them.

Another factor that led to the eventual demise of Poor Farms was the Social Security Act, which benefited the elderly, especially women, many of whom were widows with no one to care for them. (As a side note, Steve mentioned that Ida Fuller of Ludlow, Vermont, was the first American to receive a Social Security check.)

An article published in the February 16, 1933, edition of *The Landmark* describes a reporter's visit to the local Poor Farm that was located off the Quechee-West Hartford Road. It can be found on page one of this issue.



The Third Annual Old Fashioned Christmas Party is Once Again a Resounding Success!

Organizers Nadine Hodgdon and Martha Knapp said, “It’s a lot of work but it’s so worth it just to get this feeling of community back in Hartford Village again using all of our traditional resources; Volunteers, with a capital V, the Hartford United Church of Christ, the Hartford Library, the Hartford Historical Society, and most of all the visitors who let us know they enjoy it very much.” Here are this year’s photos.





Top left, storyteller Simon Brooks. Photo of the Hartford United Church of Christ (opposite) by Gregory Cook. Photos at the Hartford Library by Molly Drummond.

Cellar Stores Plenty of Food

Down in the cellar of the Town Farm depression has not even a chance to get in. Two large bins containing bushels of potatoes, raised on the farm, are the first reminders of this. Mr. McWilliams picked up one of the larger spuds and said in his earnest manner, "I found only one fault with our crop of potatoes this year; most of 'em are too big." A wide shelf extending nearly the entire length of the cellar contains jar after jar of canned foods. Mince meat, chicken, beef, pickles, ketchup, all kinds of vegetables, jams and jellies. Three large stone jars contain hams, shoulders, salt pork and corned beef. Quite a lot of work for one woman to do, but Mrs. McWilliams makes nothing of it and seems pleased that she was able to find the time for it. Beside the canned foods, the potatoes, etc., plenty of chunks are piled neatly away in the cellar to carry the farm through the cold months. The chunks are burned in the furnace, with Mrs. McWilliams as chief fireman. "Sometimes John puts in too many chunks, sometimes not enough, so I take care of running this furnace, then I'm sure the house is kept properly heated."

Overseer of Poor Given Praise

During a confidential chat with Mrs. McWilliams she spoke highly of the present Overseer of the Poor. "Since he has been overseer, things have been much better. That kitchen floor out there was rotting, so that one day I fell and got hurt. Look at it now! Then I used to have to do all the washings by hand. Mr. Coutermanche has made it possible for me to have this washing machine, and I don't know what I'd do without it. The porch on the front has been screened in, so that the inmates take pleasure out there in the summer-time," and Mrs. McWilliams told us of many other improvements which have been made within the past seven years. At this time Laura Belle came in with an arm full of wood and satisfied that her work was done, pulled off her toke. Her hair was bobbed, which reminded the reporter to ask about the barbering question. "Oh, we do that, John and I," Mrs. McWilliams answered. "There, now, I must get these rolls into the oven."

A Visit to the Barns

Bidding her good-bye and assuring her that we would be back again for another visit with her, the newspaper representative accompanied Mr. Coutermanche and Mr. McWilliams on a visit to the barns. The Jersey cows seemed entirely contented as they looked about to see who was paying a visit to their warm home. Three small "bossy cows" were in one corner of the stable, and at the farther end, proudly stood Mr. Bull, and a fine looking animal, indeed. Mr. Coutermanche told how they happened to be in possession of the Jersey Bull: "I went down to Mrs. St. George's to buy a bull, and she made us a gift of this animal. He was about eight or nine months old then, and his grandfather cost \$65,000. Quite a price to pay for a bull, isn't it? Well, we thought that our gift from Mrs. St. George was some gift, too."

Since the recent installation of a milking machine, the farm has been sending milk to the Bellows Falls Creamery, thus earning quite a sum of money during the year from this source. Two fine work horses are owned by the farm, and a flock of fifty hens that keep a supply of eggs for the use on the farm, and for sale at market, most of the time. Plenty of hay in the lofts to carry the animals through, a supply of grain that will last for some time, and five of last fall's pigs fattening "like hogs" still keep the wolf away from the barn door for some time.

A further interview with Mr. Coutermanche regarding the work of the Poor Department brought the following information: The work down on the Town Farm that has had to be done by hired help during the past year was all done by those who have needed help from the town. As the inmates of the town farm, at least the majority of them, are persons who are unable to work, it often is necessary to hire wood-choppers, etc., and Mr. Coutermanche assured us that all such work was given to men who have asked for help from the town.

An average of from fifty to sixty families have been taken care of away from the farm during 1932 by the town. The exact number of persons has not been ascertained, for some of the families number nine or ten people. Others less. The appropriation voted for the Poor Department at the Town Meeting in 1932 was \$11,000, and the total expenditures (approximate) at latest report were \$16,014.67 of which \$3,793.43 were for the Town Farm, \$11,112.03 for the poor away from the Town Farm, and general expenses including Overseer's expenses, and legal services \$1,190.21.

Mr. Coutermanche has taken in for the farm the following amounts, which are approximate sums: from labor, \$443.93; Creamery check \$1,390.88; farm produce \$300.

When asked about the number of visitors at the Town Farm, Mr. Coutermanche said, "I wish more folks would visit the farm and see for themselves what is being attempted toward improvement."

Reminiscing Mid-Century Life in the Jericho District

By Mary Nadeau

The September program subject was growing up in the Jericho district of Hartford in the 1950's and 1960's. Led by presenter and Jericho native Susie Camp, audience members shared wonderful, heart-warming stories of life in a gentler, slower-paced era where families routinely cooperated with farm chores and were always ready to jump in with a helping hand when somebody needed assistance. Socially they were like one big family of "cousins," although few were actually related.

It was widely agreed that, with unpaved roads during the early part of that era, "Mud Season" was not a fun time to live there. Susie recalled vehicles getting stuck in the mud and requiring the aid of a team of horses to get them out, only to have the vehicles becoming mired again further up the road.

The first farm machinery arrived around 1949 or 1950, and neighbors pitched in to cut hay and prepare the ensilage. Helpers would be fed home cooked meals by the host family, including wonderful homemade pies. Farms bore names such as "Breezy Hill Farm," "Jerichonia" and "Twin Meadow Mountain View." Joyce Miller recalled that a major change occurred in 1964 with the introduction of bulk milk tanks. Today, the only dairy farm left in the District is operated by George Miller, Joyce's son.

Susie recalled working as a young teen through her high school years helping Jericho resident Erminie Nott around the house. (Erminie taught for many years at the Wilder Elementary School.) She remembers that there were always "a lot of people around, including relatives," and that it was "fun." Boys from town spent their summers working on the farm to help with the haying. Haying meant hearty meals would be served with everyone gathered around the table engaged in lively conversation. Much time in the evenings was spent on neighbors' porches, more commonly known as "verandas."

Mail was delivered during this era via RFD (rural free delivery) out of the White River Junction post office, and members of the audience commented that one or the other of the two mail carriers was always happy to transport items from one farm to another without charge.

Smiles blossomed at the mention of long-time resident Armand "Frenchie" Gauthier. It seems that he "blew up" a row of apple trees where a new road was to be built. He was also one of Vermont's first

chainsaw artists, producing many statues and ornaments during his lifetime.

Jericho residents enjoyed participating in village activities. Most of the women belonged to the Home Dem Club (otherwise called the The Centerville Social Club) and got together monthly to

share recipes and craft ideas and to sew. Everyone sewed or crocheted or knit, had a garden, and did a lot of canning. It was, as Susie commented, "a nice social opportunity." Another activity, popular to this day, has been the "Ten-Cent Christmas Party." The idea was born in Springfield, Vermont, in 1935 and brought here by the Nott family. The idea was that everyone in the club received a gift, but the giver couldn't spend more than ten cents on it. (Beverly Lyman Pallmerine noted that the price was originally five cents! Today, the gifts consist mainly of Christmas ornaments.) Norma Miller Young recalled the spring-fed, icy cold swimming hole and sliding down Jericho Road from Bedell Road to Route 14 as a youngster. Everyone knew when to stop sliding because the dads were due to be driving up the hill after work. After a thrilling ride, children all walked back up the hill with their sleds! Susie added that 4-H was also "big."

Although the community of Jericho has no official municipal boundaries, it is locally referred to as Jericho "district." In the 1800's there was a larger farming population in the hill communities of Hartford and there existed two village communities with schools and church congregations. These were Jericho and Dothan. As the population decreased the Dothan community, the first of the two to close its school, lost its identity. By the mid-twentieth century anyone still living in what was once Dothan often identified themselves as Jericho district residents.

Our September evening had an atmosphere of "family reunion," and even those who had no connection to the Jericho District found the evening both interesting and informative.





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THANK YOU!

Hartford Historical Society Invites Participation In New Research Projects

By Martha Knapp

There are two subjects that are screaming for our attention and we are calling on all of our members to assist us.

The first project we are calling, "The Glory Days of the Hartford Elks Club." We would love to hear from former members or spouses and children of members who have stories that they would like to share about

We would love to hear from former Elks Club members, spouses or children.

about private rituals and such. We respect that the Elks had their own practices that only applied to the club's trusted members. What we are looking for is what it meant to be an Elk in our community and why so many people were proud and happy to belong to this good club. We encourage people to write down notable recollections and sign and date them, or make an appointment with us and have us record your memories. Either way, you would be doing a good service.

The second project is called, "A Better Chance Public School ABC Program" that we had in our community from 1969 until 1976. This was during the time of student activism at Dartmouth College. It was then that the Tucker Foundation led this movement to provide quality high schools to meet the educational needs of disadvantaged youngsters due to inferior schools in their own environment. The Tucker Foundation is an institute at Dartmouth that

encourages students to find meaning in service.

We understand that there were about 14 schools in the Upper Valley that took part in the ABC program and we are interested in the history of the one in Hartford. Hartford High School was given 10 or more students at a time. They came to this town straight from Native American Reservations throughout the country. At times there were Hopi, Papago, Sioux, Apache, Eskimos, and Navajo to name a few of the tribes (The tribal designations are from source documents.) and the students all lived together in a large home near the school. There were resident tutors and house caregivers.

Members of the Hartford Historical Society visited the Rauner Library in Hanover, received much information about the ABC Program, and learned that Dr. Frank Dey was the originator of the program. His son Tom is currently making a documentary movie about the program. We are hoping the Hartford Historical Society's research will be included.

We do have a page in all of our Hartford High School yearbooks from 1969 to 1976 dedicated to the ABC Project. We also have the graduation pictures of most of the ABC students and the sports teams they played for during those years. What we are looking for is some personal stories and photographs that go into the experiences beyond the classrooms of any of the ABC students' classmates. We would like to hear from classmates and parents who were "host families" who may have memories and stories to fill this chapter of Hartford's history.

Please contact the Hartford Historical Society if you have information about either of these important historical topics.

Campaign Update

By Judy Barwood

As the newsletter went to press, the Capital Campaign has raised \$97,455.47 including individual contributions, pledges and grants. The Fred Bradley endowment brings the total as of December 15, 2017 to \$177,455.47. Once \$400,000 has been raised, the Dorothy Bryne Foundation will donate another \$100,000. We are also awaiting notification from several more grants. Two exciting fund-raising events are coming in late spring and early summer. In May, Andy and Shyla Stewart of the Dothan District will host the first in a series of "Stone Hill Table" pop-up community dinners at their Stone Hill Farm with the Hartford Historical Society named as their first beneficiary organization. In June or July our own "Siri," Susan Cameron Bennett, (yes, the real Siri of your iPhone whose father was born and raised in White River Junction) will be at a special event to share her story and sing. She is a professional singer living in Atlanta, GA.

Hartford Historical Society

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This newsletter is in color thanks to

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HHS Calendar

OPEN HOUSE at the Garipay House

Until further notice, the Garipay House Museum is open to the public Monday through Friday each week from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. or by appointment. To be sure that we are open, look for the flag outside the building or contact us at 802/296-3132.

MONTHLY MEETINGS open to the public

Fourth Thursday of the month—HHS Board of Directors meeting at the Garipay House, 6:00 p.m. (Please check for exact date).

Hartford Historical Volunteers Needed!

Volunteers to staff Garipay House—many different tasks. You can choose to do what projects suit you from greeting visitors, including school groups, to working in the upstairs office. Call the Hartford Historical Society at 802/296-3132. Volunteers to interview senior citizens on research projects about the former Elks Club and the ABC Program—refer to the article in this newsletter and call 802/280-2221. Please leave a message if we are busy. We will return your phone call!

Wednesday, April 11, 2018 – “Dora Keen Handy” presented by **Roy Black**, 7 p.m. at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ, 1721 Maple Street, Hartford Village. Refreshments.

The **Genealogy Center** in the Hartford Library is open Tuesday afternoons from 1-3 p.m.. Carole Haehnel will be happy to assist you in exploring the resources we have and in accessing information from The Landmark, which we have on microfiche. Just call the library to set it up.