



# 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

January-February 2005

## Hartford History Highlights Compiled to Cover 300 Years

*by John Griesemer*

HARTFORD – With his hindsight helping him look ahead, John W. St. Croix sees a bright future for Hartford.

The town's premier, self-appointed historian, St. Croix recently pulled together his two previous books of Hartford lore into a single book spanning 300 years of local history.

"And from what I've seen in the last 20 years," he said, "I have a pretty rosy outlook for Hartford.

"After World War II, the businesses didn't develop, they were in a slump. But things have picked up – the interstates helped – and now I see no reason for the town to slide back into apathy.

"Actually, I think people here have become more aggressive."

A wispy man, St. Croix moved gently about the stacks of papers and memorabilia, in the study of his Summer Street home.

The recent publication of "Historical Highlights of Hartford, Vermont" marks the culmination of 14 years of delving into the past for St. Croix. A 1961 Hartford Village PTA parade float got him started.

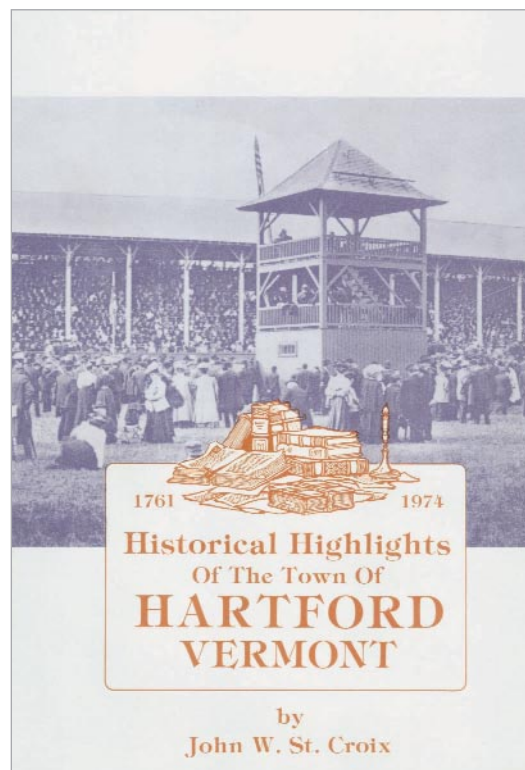
"We were doing a float for the town's bicentennial parade," he said, "So I started doing some research and became fascinated as I began gathering more and more material."

The PTA finished the float, but St. Croix's research went on. He said he now wants to make himself available to clubs and civic organizations interested in projects for the nation's bicentennial next year.

The "Historical Highlights" consolidates St. Croix's 1963 volume, "A Pictorial History of the Town of Hartford," and "An Album of the Town of Hartford," published in 1969. The volume highlights Hartford's past from the 1674 signing of King Charles' grant through the great 1887 railroad disaster to the completion of the Veteran's Administration's new hospital last year.

"I feel like I was born at a lucky time," St. Croix said, "I was able to see so many of these transitions myself.

"Our family came to Hartford in 1915 when I was three years old. I grew up in a horse and buggy era when the railroads



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One of the many train wreck photos referred to by John St. Croix.

were so important. I lived to see that die off, and now we're in the age of the automobile.

"Those changes have done a lot to Hartford."

### Tedious Research

But living through the transitions did not make documenting them easy.

"Research for books like this can be very difficult," St. Croix said, "and some times very tedious. You must go through many early newspapers. And back then, the papers had no headlines. A startling item that today would have a screaming headline back then had nothing and would be buried."

St. Croix admitted he, too, subdues some incidents.

"I didn't make a point of preserving the morbid," he said. "The railroad wreck in 1887 was a terrible disaster - 31 people died - and so much was written about it and so many photographs taken. Every time someone tells me they've got an old picture they'd like me to see, it's usually about the railroad wreck."

He includes the wreck in his history, but noted he does not dote on it the way Hartford did when it happened. He self-consciously mentioned his collection of artifacts even includes a rattle carved from the wood of one of the demolished coaches.

"They sure were morbid in those days," he said.

"But I concentrate on what affected the town. To me that's the real history."

### Centralizing Government

St. Croix noted the town's recent move to adopt a five-person board of selectmen is another step in a history of attempts to gather the town's disparate village populations.

"At one point in the 1870's the town had 21 schools," he said. "They were scattered all over the place."

Town meetings, he noted, were shifted annually between Quechee and White River Junction to give better representation.

"Even today you can talk to people in White River Junction who have never even seen Quechee Lakes," he said, "Really."

*continued...*



## Hartford Historical Society

Post Office Box 547, Hartford, VT 05047-0547

<http://www.hartfordhistory.org>

### Officers:

Dot Jones, President	802 295-2701
Norman Lyman, Vice President	802 295-2061
David Ford, Secretary	802 295-7105
Peggy McDerment, Treasurer	802 295-2357
John Lutz, Membership Secretary	802 296-7015

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Newsletter Editor: James Kenison 802 457-9988

Newsletter Printing and Mailing: John Lutz



Yet St. Croix feels the town is tighter today and although it does not dominate Lebanon and Hanover as the Upper Valley's hub, Hartford is moving forward, according to St. Croix.

"Right now, I think the town has the right attitude. I'm delighted with the town as it is. We have incentive. That's important for a town."

*Reprinted with permission from the Valley News, March 14, 1975.*

*Midway at the Vermont State Fairgrounds, White River Junction.*



## Society Begins Update of St. Croix's "Historical Highlights"

*By John Lutz, Book Revision Coordinator*

Thirty years have passed since John W. St. Croix published his pictorial history of our community, *Historical Highlights of the Town of Hartford, Vermont*. The book chronicles people, places and events that took place in the five villages from 1761 through 1974 with an amazing collection of photographs, many of which were taken over one hundred years ago.

Hartford has experienced a great deal of change since 1974 when the Tip Top Bakery filled the downtown White River Junction area with the aroma of freshly baked bread, residents shopped at the IGA supermarket in Wilder, J.J. Newbury offered two floors of general merchandise on Main Street, the Nalette family operated a nursing home in an old Hartford Village mansion and Quechee's Lake Pinneo was on the drawing board. Our present police and fire station, the Ottaquechee and Dothan Brook Schools, the Gilman Office Complex, the Simon Pearce hydroelectric dam

and our recycling center didn't exist. Entire neighborhoods have been created from former farm lands and wooded areas. The last thirty years have brought enormous change.

The Hartford Historical Society needs your help in updating the book to document the evolution of the Town of Hartford from 1974 into the present Twenty-First Century.

Our goal is to publish the updated, new edition within three years.

This is where you come in. We are appealing to residents to share their photographs and knowledge with us to ensure that the book is complete, factual and interesting. If you have something to contribute, please contact one of the Directors, or email us at [bookupdate@hartfordhistory.org](mailto:bookupdate@hartfordhistory.org).

Our next planning meeting will be held on Sunday, March 6th at 2:00 pm at the Garipay House in Hartford Village.



## Your Society at Work

### It's a mystery to us...

At right is a photo of the Hartford "Christmas Club" from June 1936. If you can identify any of the women (or children) shown, please let us know. We would also like to know more details about the club and its members over the years. This photo was recently donated by Esther Davis along with photos of club gatherings from 1970 and two earlier years.



### Letter to the Society

2 November 2004

Dear Hartford Historical Society,

We were very glad to see your display at the high school during voting today. Enclosed please find our membership dues.

Please feel free to call upon my husband to help in the oral remembrances research. He remembers quite a bit about the land in this section of White River Junction.

Sincerely,

Linda C. Brown  
White River Jct., VT

The tow on VA Cutoff Road (White River Jct.). Probably operated around 1950. This area had a rope tow, a lodge, and slopes that used part of the pastureland from the Brown dairy farm.

The tow at Hartford High School (White River Jct.). Operated around 1973-75 by the Hartford School District. According to the State, the school district ran two rope tows here.

Of course, there were probably other ski tows in town over the years as well. If you have any information regarding any of them, photos, or memories, please contact us!

### November Meeting

On Wednesday, November 10th, nearly 30 members and guests attended the presentation by David Briggs at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ. Mr. Briggs, owner of the Hotel Coolidge, presented a series of slides taken about 25 years ago along with the same views taken recently.

The images illustrated some of the many changes that the downtown White River Jct. area has gone through over the years while noting what things have remained the same. Mr. Briggs described the stages of growth (or life) of a village and how White River went through each stage. Discussion and refreshments followed.

### Ski-tow History

Anyone having photos, advertising, or memories of any of the ski tows that have operated within the town of Hartford over the years is encouraged to contact the society. We are looking for information regarding the following, and any others we haven't found yet.

Lundhugel (West Hartford, VT). This area is listed in two skiing guides, one from 1939 and one from 1942, as having a ski tow (240 feet), slopes for all classes, downhill and cross country trails, and 100 acres of open slopes.



## Mary's Message

By Mary Nadeau, *HHS Board Chairman*  
chairman@hartfordhistory.org

The book project committee has completed the task of listing the topics that need to be included in the revised edition of the Hartford pictorial history book. The next step will be to solicit help from the public in supplying us with photos of places that no longer exist. For example, we have no photos of the Russtown School, the White River Drive-in, Howard Johnson's, the Hartford Diner, the Railroad Hotel in Hartford Village or the old White River Village bandstand, just to name a few that are missing from our collection.

If you have old photos taken in any of the town's five villages, please consider sharing them with the Historical Society. We have the capability of scanning them and then handing them back to you, so there is no possibility that your treasured photos could get lost or damaged. Our regularly scheduled open houses are on the first Tuesday of the month from 6-8 pm, and on the second Sunday of the month from 1:30-4 pm at the Garipay House. (Please note that the Sunday schedule has changed from the first Sunday of the month effective January 2005.) If these times aren't convenient, you may contact our archivist, Pat Stark, to set up an appointment.

John Sherman of H/O Photographers has kindly offered to take shots that show how our community looks at the present time. If you enjoy photography, I'm sure that John would be happy to divide up the task.

The next step will be to do the research and write accurate captions to go with the photos. Anyone wishing to help with that should contact any member of the book committee (or email us at [bookupdate@hartfordhistory.org](mailto:bookupdate@hartfordhistory.org)). We are grateful to the people who have stepped forward and offered to help with the editing, but the greater need right now is for researchers to assist in gathering and verifying information.

During November, two "photo days" were held at the Bugbee Senior Center. On the first day, those in attendance examined mystery photos from the society's collection. Happily, many of the photos are no longer a mystery! On the second day, the seniors brought in photos of their own that they thought would be helpful to us. We were grateful for their help.

If you have any questions or would like additional information about this project, please feel free to contact me at 802 295-2123.



## New Hartford Genealogy Group

The Hartford Library will be conducting a Beginning Genealogy Course, one Wednesday each month at 7:00 pm.

This course is being offered free of charge thanks to a grant received from the Southern Vermont Council on Aging. Grant money will be used to purchase materials and sponsor genealogy programs.

In addition, the group will work closely with the Hartford Oral History Project.

Anyone with an interest in genealogy is welcome to attend. The first class will be held on Wednesday, January 26<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm. To sign up or learn more, please contact the Hartford Library at (802) 296-2568, or email Clyde Berry, the program coordinator, at [gengroup@hartfordhistory.org](mailto:gengroup@hartfordhistory.org).

Please check the Genealogy page of the society's website, [www.hartfordhistory.org](http://www.hartfordhistory.org), for updates on the genealogy group, printable genealogy forms and charts, and links for researchers.



## A Look Back

## Events that made the news in Hartford

### 30 Years Ago (*January/February 1975 – Valley News*)

- A vandalism spree at **Hartford High School** last month prompted the school board Thursday to discuss hiring a resident security guard. Pressed by budget and contract concerns, the board took no action on the matter, but “probably will take another look at it when the pressure’s off”.
- Film actor Charles D. Bronson appeared in **Vermont District Court** Monday and paid a \$100 fine for making a false statement on a hunting and fishing license. According to Windsor County Deputy State’s Atty. William Donahue, Bronson had declared himself a Vermont resident on a license application.

### 60 Years Ago (*January/February 1945 – The Landmark*)

- Word has been received by the parents, Mr. and Mrs. C. S. Rising, of Cpl. Floyd Rising, U. S. Marine Corps, of his safe arrival in the Pacific area.
- A fire at a six-room house in the rear of **W. V. Cannell & Co.** store, about 1 o’clock Wednesday morning in Wilder village resulted in the tragic death of four persons. Mr. and Mrs. Earl Alger, little six-year-old Freddie Gibbs, son of Alger by a former marriage, the six-month-old baby, Earl Jr., were all burned to death. A three-year-old child was taken to Hanover hospital. The house was entirely burned.

### 110 Years Ago (*January/February 1895 – The Landmark*)

- A. E. Watson, treasurer of the **White River Savings bank**, has leased of the **C. V. Railroad Co.** the triangular vacant lot of land lying between Main St. and the railroad fronting the Gates block on which he purposes to erect a commodious and substantial block for business purposes.
- Mrs. Rose Fournier and Mrs. Effie Whalen, who were found guilty of murdering Alfred Fournier, husband of Rose, and sentenced to a term of twenty years in state’s prison, were taken to Windsor by Sheriff Reeves of Chittenden county on Monday.



## Curator’s Corner

By Pat Stark, *HHS Archivist*  
archivist@hartfordhistory.org

We are always looking for folks to help us with Open House and other projects. If you think you may be interested in giving us a few hours, please give me a call (802 295-3077 days, 802 296-2192 evenings).

Recent donations to the society include:

Henry Pallmarine & Jere Smith – both have continued to expand our collection with scanned copies of their personal photo collections

Gerald Kozak – photo of the Hartford Diner in 1999

George Clain – a bound copy of the Gateway Urban Renewal Project Reports

Eliza Rice – unused tourist postcard of West Hartford

Jere Smith – many artifacts and documents from area businesses, including a cream bottle from Sunnyside Farm and Smith & Sons artifacts

Roberta Simonds – several postcards depicting scenes around town during the flood

John Lutz – Old 494 envelope w/Lewis & Clark stamp

Nat Perry – Hartford Village “Lone Pine” photo, circa 1900

Berkley Hunter – photo of Frank Thresher, fireman on the 1887 wreck, circa 1890

Alberta Patch-Slegaitis – family photo and memories from Hartford Grammar School – 1921-28

Fred Bradley – Hartford related postcards and documents

Estelle St. Jacques – phonograph – “On the Mountain High” by Margaret MacArthur & Family, including ballad of the train wreck of 1887

Dorothy M. Jones – photographs from Hartford village parade, 1996

St. Paul’s Church – commemorative plate featuring sketches of the old and current church buildings

Esther (Brown) Beckett – first book of minutes from Quechee Valley Grange, #490, by Wesley Brown, secretary, 1929-30

John Dutton – Sereph Spaulding Pease memorial bklt , 1928

Patricia Lewis – book of minutes and photos from the Quechee Sunshine Hill Homemakers Club, 1996-2003

Priscilla Gadzinski – postcards

Jerry Bergen – Glory Days of the Railroad videos by Jerry Bergen, 1997 and 1999

John Cone – Hartford Woolen Mill and additional Hazen family documents

As always, your donations are greatly appreciated.



## Then & Now...

The two photos below, taken 100 years apart, show the Hartford Elks Club building as it appears today (on the right), and as it appeared as the home of Mr. and Mrs. Horace Pease in 1904. The building sits on the corner of Maple and Elk



Streets in Hartford Village. The photo at the left brings us back to an era when many of the larger multi-family homes in Hartford Village and throughout the other villages were single-family residences.



## Oral History – A Worthy Cause

*By James M. Kenison, Newsletter Editor*  
newsletter@hartfordhistory.org

Perhaps you've read about the Hartford Oral History Project in one of our last newsletters, or on our website, or possibly in the newspaper. We've been talking a lot about it lately, and there is a good reason for that – it is an important tool that can greatly aid in the accurate preservation of our local history. Occasionally, I will be using this space to share a little about the ins and outs of oral history.

Everyone has a story. Each and every one of us has collected a lifetime of experiences and memories. It is our nature to organize our memories into stories that we then share with others – or not.

Oral history is all about these stories. Simply put, oral history is the systematic collection of living people's testimony about their own experiences. Historians have come to realize the historical importance of the everyday memories of everyday people, not just the well known. If we don't start collecting and preserving those memories now, then one day they will disappear forever.

Your stories and memories are unique, valuable treasures for your family and your community. You and your family members can preserve unwritten family history using oral history techniques. Likewise, you and your community can discover and preserve unwritten local history. Oral history is so flexible that people of all ages can adapt the techniques of asking and listening to create and learn about history and historical narratives.

Many people become concerned about “doing it right,” yet they also recognize that a voice on a tape is better than nothing at all. So they try just a simple interview, just talking to someone for an hour. Ten years later such people are thankful that they made the effort, and those who did not... well, they have regrets.

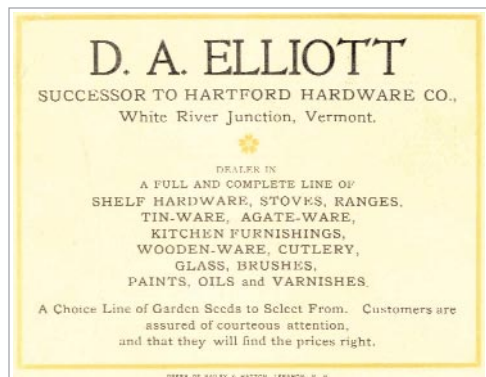
Please join us in this worthwhile cause by volunteering in the Hartford Oral History Project in some way. We are looking for interviewers and interviewees, as well as transcribers and people to help catalog and preserve the collection.

For more information, please call Pat Stark at (802) 295-3077 days, or (802) 296-2192 evenings. You may also email [ohp@hartfordhistory.org](mailto:ohp@hartfordhistory.org) and visit the program on the web at [ohp.hartfordhistory.org](http://ohp.hartfordhistory.org).

# Hartford Historical Society

POST OFFICE BOX 547

HARTFORD, VERMONT 05047



## HHS Calendar

**Tue., Jan. 4, 2005** Open House – Garipay House,  
1461 Maple Street / Route 14, Hartford Village,  
VT, 6:00-8:00pm. Come and see our collection.

**Sun., Jan. 9, 2005** \*Open House – Garipay House,  
1:30-4:00pm. Come see our collection.

**Tue., Jan. 25, 2005** HHS Board Meeting – Garipay  
House, 7:00pm.

**Wed., Jan. 26, 2005** Beginning Genealogy Class –  
Hartford Library, Maple Street/Route 14,  
Hartford Village, VT, 7:00pm. For more infor-  
mation, please call (802) 296-2568, or email gen-  
group@hartfordhistory.org.

**Tue., Feb. 1, 2005** Open House – Garipay House,  
6:00-8:00pm. Come and see our collection.

**Sun., Feb. 13, 2005** Open House – Garipay House,  
1:30-4:00pm. Come see our collection.

**Tue., Feb. 22, 2005** HHS Board Meeting – Garipay  
House, 7:00pm.

**Wed., Feb. 23, 2005** Beginning Genealogy Class –  
Hartford Library, 7:00pm. For more informa-  
tion, please call (802) 296-2568, or email gen-  
group@hartfordhistory.org.

**Sun., Mar. 6, 2005** Book Committee Meeting –  
Garipay House, 2:00pm. The book revision  
committee will meet to discuss progress and  
future steps to be taken in the revision of John  
St. Croix's Historical Highlights of the Town of  
Hartford.

*\* Please note that effective January 2005, our  
Sunday Open House will be held on the second Sunday  
of the month instead of the first Sunday.*