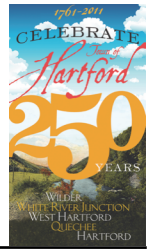




Hartford Historical Society

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

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



Volume 33, No. 3

SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

July-August 2020

Historic Homestead Still Stands by the White River



Josiah Tilden was just nine years old when he walked one hundred and sixty rugged miles from Lebanon, CT to what is now Hartford, VT. He followed his mother Abigail Tilden who rode on horseback with Josiah's infant brother Asa on her lap. Josiah's seventeen year-old brother Stephen was also on foot. The year was 1770.

The Tilden family settled north of the White River on land Josiah's father Stephen purchased from original Hartford proprietor Samuel Porter in 1761. Josiah's father became a prominent citizen of Hartford and Josiah soon did the same. As a boy, Josiah drilled with the Hartford militia and, at age 16, he went to Windsor to enlist in the Continental Army.

A year later, Josiah was among the men of Hartford who marched to Bennington to face the British. While camped near Rutland, young Josiah commented on

Josiah Tilden built the house at lower left in about 1800 when there were few buildings across the White River in Hartford Village. Soon after Tilden moved in, Hartford's first school convened in his barn. One day, two of Josiah Tilden's daughters were returning from church across the river when the ferry broke loose and floated downstream toward the falls. Watching from the shore, Josiah shouted for the girls to sit down as their dresses were billowing like sails in the breeze. Fortunately, the ferry reached shore safely. The house was later owned by Edwin C. Watson who made farm tools at a factory on the river. His son Alfred E. Watson added a third floor, cupola, and covered porch to the building, which was used as a convalescent home in the 1960s and renovated as a rental property by Twin Pines Housing Corp in 2017.

Continued on page 3.

From the Editor . . .

Last issue we included an autobiographical sketch of William Howard Tucker from his book *History of Hartford, Vermont; 1761-1889*. If you are not familiar with Tucker's detailed account of Hartford's early years, you can see the whole thing on the society's website at <http://www.hartfordhistory.org/Tucker.pdf>.

In this issue, we rely on Tucker again to help tell the story of the Josiah Tilden house from 1800 that still looks across the White River at Hartford Village.

We also provide a turn of the 20th Century look at Luther Pease who bought an old hotel around 1849 and said to himself, "This town needs a billiard room." And so it was.

One of the many things we learned researching this issue was the name for the item draped across Susannah Tilden's shoulders on page three. It's a "cope" and they were commonly worn by Hartford's female founders. The beautiful example on page three can be seen at the Garipay House.

We would like to note the passing of two members of the HHS. Fran Fowler died of heart failure on April 25 at the home of her daughter in Florida. Born on January 7, 1920, Fran enjoyed a lively 100th birthday celebration in the Upper Valley before moving to Florida in March. Bob Ammel suffered a stroke while mowing his lawn and died at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center on June 3. He was 88 years old. Bob and his wife Corabelle renovated the former Sornberger farm off Jericho Road in Hartford where they raised vegetables, beef cattle, and chickens. In addition, Bob operated a sawmill called the Goshen Hollow Lumber Company.

Please check your mailing label to see if it's time to renew your membership. **Overdue memberships will be highlighted in yellow.** Please use the PayPal form on our website to renew. Thanks!

Scott Fletcher, Editor

Hartford Notes

- Lightning struck Herbert Adams' barn in the Jericho District Wednesday evening of last week causing the loss of the building, with the crops, but with the aid of the neighbors, the stock was saved. (*The Landmark*, Oct. 2, 1919)
- Elias Lyman built a warehouse and wharf down on the land at the junction of the two rivers, the White and Connecticut, and carried on a thriving business there for years. Supplies from the settlements down the river such as molasses, salt, iron, and spirits were brought up in flat bottomed boats while return loads were made up of grain, meal, shingles, and copper from the mines in Strafford. One hundred boats at a time were often seen clustered around Lyman's Point. An eyewitness said that a flat boat rounding the point with sails up was one of the prettiest sights possible. The round trip from Hartford, VT to Hartford, CT occupied fifteen days. (*Early History of Hartford*, Mrs. Roland E. Stevens)



Hartford Historical Society

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.

how satisfying he found a meal of beans and brown bread after a long march. Josiah's company, led by Colonel Joseph Marsh, joined American Brigadier General John Stark the day after he defeated the British at the Battle of Bennington.

In 1780, Josiah marched to Bethel with the Hartford militia after the British raid on Royalton. Eventually, Josiah attained the rank of captain in the militia and was widely known as Captain Si.

Josiah Tilden and his brother Stephen built homes on parcels of land given to them by their father. Stephen's home, on the road from Hartford to Sharon, became one of the town's first public houses. As he built his home, Josiah said that he should finish building his cage before catching his bird. He completed the home and married Elizabeth Tracy in 1785.

In about 1800, Josiah Tilden cleared a parcel of land south of the White River across from Hartford Village and built a house that Kate Morris Cone described as a substantial, two-story square mansion, with a hip roof and hall through the middle. Josiah's wife Elizabeth died before the house was completed so Josiah moved into the new home alone. Hartford's first school convened in his barn in the fall of that year.

Josiah Tilden soon married Susannah Clark and, together, they raised fourteen children. Kate Morris Cone records that the Tildens had several attractive daughters who were occasionally serenaded by Dartmouth students.

Like his brother Stephen, Josiah operated a tavern, which became the site of local gatherings including the last meeting of Hartford's founding proprietors in 1808. Friends and family considered him an authority on the weather. He lived in this home until his death in 1849 at age 88.

After his death, Josiah's home left the Tilden family. It was reportedly owned by G. R. Pearsons from 1863 to 1869 and the barns were moved during this time.

The next recorded owner was Edwin C. Watson, a native of Worcester, Vermont who moved his family to Hartford around 1868 when he became a partner in French, Watson & Co., which made rakes, pitchforks, and other steel tools. Watson's diary notes that he went to his factory on the bank of the White River almost daily to serve customers, attend to the drying of wooden handles, and prepare shipments of tools.

A former judge, Watson brought continuing success to his firm and filled a number of important offices in the town. He represented Hartford in the Vermont General Assembly in 1874.



Top, portraits of Josiah Tilden and his second wife Susannah Clark. Below them is a cope with linen flowers stitched on fine mesh owned by Josiah Tilden's first wife, Elizabeth. Above is a skein of linen that is also traced to Elizabeth Tilden. These items were contributed to the Hartford Historical Society by Owen McCabe. Many Hartford farms grew flax in the early 1800s so women could spin linen thread or weave cloth.

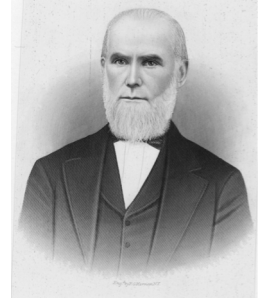
Continued on page 4.

When Edwin Watson died in 1885, the imposing home built by Josiah Tilden passed to Watson's son Alfred. A graduate of Dartmouth, Alfred also became prominent in Hartford's business and social circles.

Alfred and his wife Maud added a covered porch, a third floor, and a cupola to the house. The addition is said to have included a ballroom. Josiah Tilden's house had always been prominent on the Hartford skyline, but the new Victorian profile was even more imposing. Alfred and Maude also remodeled the interior to include a formal dining room with hand carved wooden paneling.

After Alfred died in 1950, the next recorded owners were Wilfred and Marion Nalette who purchased the home in 1960 and remodeled it as a nursing and retirement home known as Hillside Manor Convalescent Home. Josiah Tilden's barn where classes were once held was demolished in 1964. This operation closed in 1974.

The house next passed through several hands before being acquired by Twin Pines Housing Trust. After a thorough renovation, Twin Pines put nine rental units on the market in 2017. Still imposing, the historic building built by Josiah Tilden and lovingly cared for by the families of Edwin and Alfred Watson continues to rise above the White River across from Hartford Village.



Edwin C. Watson, top right, moved his family to Hartford when he became a partner in French, Watson & Co. in 1868. His son Alfred E. Watson and his wife Maude added a third floor to the house when they owned it from 1885 to 1950. The barn, center left, was one of Hartford's first schools. The home was remodeled as a convalescent home known as Hillside Manor in 1960. A new chapter began in 2017 when Twin Pines Housing Corp opened it as a rental property known as Hillcrest Manor.

Tilden House Timeline

1770 – Josiah Tilden walks from Lebanon, CT to Hartford.
1777 – Josiah Tilden marches to the Battle of Bennington.
1780 – Josiah Tilden and Hartford militia respond to the Royalton Raid but find the British have escaped.
1788 – Josiah Tilden builds his first home on land north of the White River given to him by his father.
1790 – Josiah Tilden marries Elizabeth Tracy.
1800 – Josiah Tilden builds a home on land south of the White River across from Hartford Village. It was a “substantial two-story square mansion, with a hip roof and a hall through the middle” (The Old and the New, 1901). Elizabeth Tracy dies on June 2. First school in Hartford opens in Josiah Tilden's barn in the fall.
1801 – Josiah Tilden marries Susannah Clark.
1808 – Josiah Tilden hosts the last meeting of the original proprietors of Hartford, Vermont.
1849 – Josiah Tilden dies, age 88.

1868 – Edwin Watson buys out A.J. Van Ornum and becomes a partner in French, Watson & Co., which makes farm tools. Edwin buys the house built by Josiah Tilden.
1885 – Edwin Watson dies. Alfred Watson acquires the Tilden house and adds a third story, a porch, and a cupola.
1950 – Alfred Watson dies.
1960 – Tilden house acquired by Wilfred and Marion Nalette and remodeled as a nursing and retirement home known as Hillside Manor Convalescent Home.
1964 – Original Tilden barn demolished.
1974 – Nursing home closes.
2017 – Twin Pines Housing Trust acquires Tilden house, renovates for rental housing, calls it Hillcrest Manor.

Alleged Hotel Gambling Ring Raided

Many Caught in Clutches of the Law

Reprinted from *The Landmark*, December 15, 1921

In a sensational, though very carefully and quietly planned gambling raid, three officers of the law, Deputy Sheriffs Angus MacAuley and Daniel Huffnail of Wilder, assisted by Chief of Police Patrick O'Keefe of this place, swooped down upon the Junction House here yesterday afternoon about 4:30 o'clock, disturbed

Three officers swooped down upon the Junction House yesterday, seized playing cards, quantities of money, and a "Klondike" machine, which it is alleged was being used for gambling purposes

some of the 11 or 12 men found in a card room just off the pool room conducted by "Pop" Furman; seized playing cards, quantities of money said to have been found on both of two card tables, and a "Klondike" machine, which it is alleged in the warrant served by Deputy Huffnail immediately after the raid upon Manager N. P. Wheeler of the Junction House, was being used for gambling purposes.

On complaint of a citizen of the town of Hartford, made through Grand Juror William S. Pingree yesterday, a warrant was issued for the arrest of the hotel manager, and seizure of the alleged gambling device, which it is claimed was permitted to be used for illegal purposes by persons frequenting the hotel.

Deputy Huffnail entered through the Junction House barber shop, and McAuley through the hotel lobby. Just a moment before, Chief of Police O'Keefe had been asked by one of the deputies to join them.

On entering the pool room, Huffnail ordered Mr. Furman to open the door to the card room, which was locked. Mr. Furman did so whereupon the trio entered the room. Some of the astonished men inside were playing cards, it is stated, while others were merely looking on. Spread out upon the tables, it is alleged, were both cards and money. The machine found in the room is now in the custody of officials, and is locked up at police headquarters.

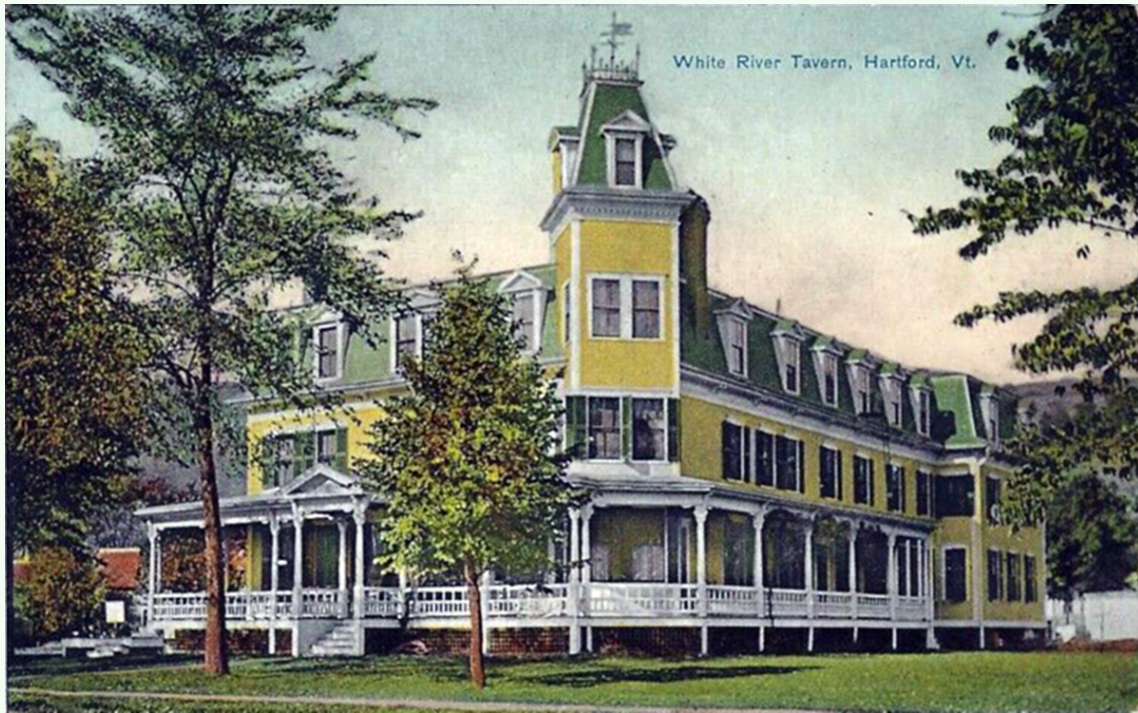


The Junction House was purchased by Nathaniel P. Wheeler and Lyman A. Gibbs in 1901. Wheeler became sole owner in 1919 and continued to operate the hotel after the incident described here. Wheeler changed the name to Hotel Coolidge in honor of President Calvin Coolidge's father, John. There are numerous references to gambling in Hartford's history including poker, slot machines, and wagering at horse races. The Klondike Company was an early slot machine manufacturer.

Judge A.G. Witham stated this morning no trial proceedings in the matter had yet come before him. It is understood further steps await the action of State's Attorney Glen C. Howland of Windsor, who is now in Montpelier, and that manager Wheeler desires postponement of a hearing until Lawyer Trainor returns from court at Woodstock. It is indicated as very probable that papers will be served on the others in the room at the time of the raid, and whose names were taken down by Officer O'Keefe.

Pease Hotel Brings the Good Life to Hartford Village

Reprinted from *The Gateway of Vermont - Hartford and its Villages, 1903*



In the list of Hartford's noted men of the past the name of Luther Pease is conspicuous and resplendent for what he accomplished for the good of the town and his fellowmen. He was a typical son of Vermont, a distinguished member of that class that did so much for the state in the century just ended. Sturdy, industrious, faithful to the smallest trust, and keenly alert to the duty of the hour these men built for Vermont a foundation that is safe, strong and reliable.

Mr. Pease was born in the town of Brookfield, November 14, 1814. He obtained a common school education, and then while yet a lad drove an eight-horse team from Hartford to Boston in the transportation of produce and merchandise. Later he engaged in the work of driving boats up the Connecticut River from Hartford, CT to Hartford, VT.

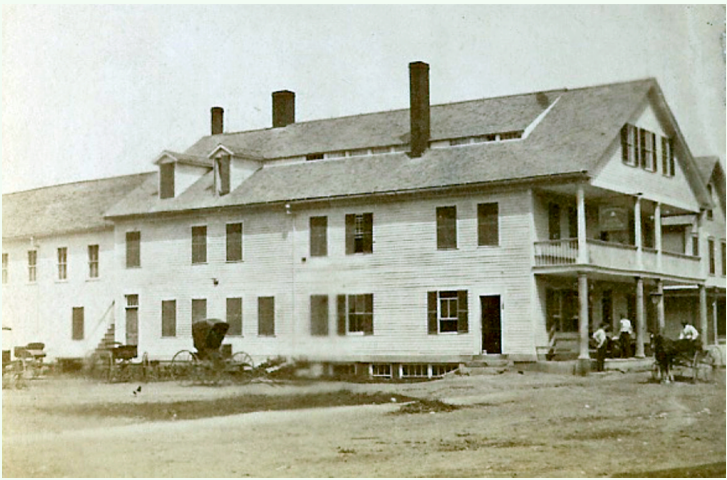
Possessing to a marked degree an abundance of that good old New England characteristic called "gumption" he prospered in his life work, and in 1849 became the owner of a hotel in Hartford village, which from that date has borne his name. This hotel he conducted until his death in 1876.

Occupying a site in the very heart of the village of Hartford, the attractive and commodious Pease Hotel is modern in its style of architecture, in all its arrangements, and in all it comprehends. It lacks not a

single essential of what is desired in either the year round or summer hotel. Broad piazzas, vine clad and flower laden, compass three sides, while spacious and neatly kept lawns add to the charm of the whole.

Inside are handsomely furnished rooms, commodious halls, parlors, baths, and every requisite of the best hotel. The dining rooms are especially to be noted for spaciousness, cheeriness, and the possible abundant supply of daylight and sunshine. The plumbing of the house is perfection itself and the kitchen equipment comprehends the latest appliances for the purpose.

There is a cold storage room, adjoining icehouse, while the water for drinking and household purposes is supplied by a hillside spring. The house is steam heated and electric lighted. It is distant only a three minute drive from the Hartford Station on the Central Vermont road, but a little further to that on the Woodstock Railway, and scarcely ten minutes from the Union Station at White River Junction. The hotel is owned by Horace C. Pease, and is under the management of H.M. Courser who comes to the hotel after a thirty years experience as a landlord in various places. He has had a valued and successful career as the manager of summer hotels and will strive to make the Pease the popular resort it should be.



The Pease Hotel in Hartford Village had gone through many hands by the time Luther Pease bought it. His wife remembered that the hotel had been pieced together from three existing buildings with a new facade and roof. In addition to the hotel, Mr. Pease operated a large farm, a hardware store, and other businesses. His hotel offered amenities he had seen at hotels during trips to Boston and Hartford, CT as a young man. The three sons of Luther and Harriet Pease were also active in local business and each managed the hotel for a time. The original building, top, was destroyed by fire in 1889 and rebuilt as the New Pease Hotel, above. During rebuilding, Luther's son Charles W. Pease welcomed guests to his home on Summer Street. Top right, a second floor view of the White River. Middle right, original meeting room and livery stable. Lower right, the Pease Hotel adorns transferware from England in the collection of the Hartford Historical Society. Luther's son Horace C. Pease sold the hotel in 1908 and it later reopened as the White River Tavern, which was closed and demolished in 1919. The meeting room was purchased by Alfred Watson and known as Watson Hall until it finally burned in 1941.

A Man's Pew is His Castle

From *The Old and the New, Hartford Congregational Church*

The meeting house as a business proposition in those days was a corporation in which the slips represented shares of stock, and the unsold slips stock that was held in common. Certificates of stock, i.e. slips, were issued in the Society's book. These were transferable under certain legal conditions. Some of these certificates are still in existence.

For a good while, only slip owners could vote in society meetings and a man had as many votes as he had slips. While the edifice was dedicated to, "the religious worship and service of Almighty God," the sense of individual ownership in it was far stronger than any sentimental considerations. "God's House" was a figure of speech: the slips belonged to John Grout, Elias Lyman, and the rest of the original forty subscribers, in the sense of being real property.

Each man's slip was his castle as much as his house was. He furnished it to suit himself with carpet and cushions, elbow-rest, book-rack, and foot-stools, according to his own taste and means. If he was very well off, he had the back upholstered in green, or red, or gray moreen. Each slip had a door, and when the owner had marshaled his family safe inside, he shut this door and sat down by it, and coldly enough would he have looked upon any attempt to make him share it with outsiders.

General Oramel Nichols, who sat where H.C. Pease now sits, had a lock and key for his slip. He was a tall man of dignified presence, long time the postmaster. One Sunday, by mistake, he failed to produce the key to his slip and fumbled in vain to unlock it. He then tried to pick the lock with his knife but at length was forced, rather shamefacedly, to accept a seat with Mr. Allen Hazen behind him.



Hartford's Second Congregational Church originally had box pews with doors like the Goshen Church in Bradford, above. In Hartford, members purchased slips for \$52. Hartford's current pews date to 1872 when seating was still assigned.

Will Your Tractor Do What My Doodlebug Does?

From a presentation by David Brown to the Hartford Historical Society

One thing I remember about the war is that you couldn't buy tractors. They just weren't available, but Yankee ingenuity led to something we called a "doodlebug."

What you did was find an old truck chassis. In our case, we found a '38 Ford V-8 engine truck. Then, we put in a second transmission – so there were two transmissions in a row. This made the truck run more like a tractor. And you shortened the chassis of the truck so it was about the same wheelbase as a tractor.

Then you would go to a construction site where they were taking tires off of dump trucks and you'd get the biggest tires you could find. The amazing thing is – you didn't even put any air in them. You chained them to the rim and this is where the term doodlebug comes from, because when you're going down the road you're riding over these chains on the rear wheels but, when you get into the field, that gives you traction that's similar to a tractor.

One of the big problems on a farm is how to get your manure out to the field in a timely manner without the old-fashioned method of having a bunch of men with pitchforks. So my father bought a 200-bushel spreader and pulled it with this doodlebug, and I don't think I was ever old enough to be allowed to drive the doodlebug, but I remember the fun of riding on it.

When you came to till our hill fields, they were pretty tough to get up into, particularly pulling the big spreader. But the doodlebug would go there even though tractors couldn't. So after the war when the tractor dealers called on my father and said, "We got this new John Deere." My father said, "well, I'll buy it if it'll do what my doodlebug does." But a lot of them couldn't. The doodlebug was amazing because of the double transmissions. Anyway, we got through the war with it.

Remembering Hartford's Boys of Summer

When Harold Wright was growing up in Hartford in the 1930s, he would come home from church on Sundays in the summer, have dinner with his family, and rush down to serve as waterboy for the Russtown Tigers baseball team. Armed with a milk bucket and dipper, he made at least two trips per inning to the brook behind the outfield to get fresh water for the players on both teams.

Between trips, Harold scoured the bushes for foul balls. "We couldn't afford to lose balls," he says. It was hard work but he looked forward to it.

In those days, most towns had a baseball team. The Russtown Tigers used to take on teams from Hartland, Quechee, Woodstock, Enfield, and Canaan. Hartford had a team too, the Indians, who played teams from larger towns like Lebanon, Hanover, Norwich, and Claremont. Wilder had a baseball team that played in front of good-sized crowds in Frost Park.

In Russtown, manager Bill Andrews recruited local boys like George Gunn who played catcher. He used to work for the town of Hartford taking care of the highways. Also the two Cameron boys, Everett and Jim, who Harold recalls were pretty good ballplayers. In the outfield they had Cal Simonds who was a good hitter. Also Phil Neill and Teddy Driscoll.

The Russtown baseball field was a clearing in a pasture owned by Mr. McCabe on the present site of the National Guard armory. The backstop was a pair of telephone poles strung with chicken wire. Mr. McCabe came to watch games and make sure the gate was closed so his cows didn't get out. The Russtown Tigers had jerseys but each player supplied his own knickers.

Crowds were small but some fans parked along the foul lines and watched games from their cars. Or you could get out and set up chairs. Some people would bring a picnic. A hat was passed around to collect a few dollars for the umpire.

Russtown's main rival was Hartland and, when they came to town, Bill Andrews would sometimes bring in a freelance pitcher like Harry Tucker from Canaan. "He was good and pitched for a very minimal fee," recalls Harold.

After the war, the Boston Red Sox invited Tucker for a tryout at their spring training camp in Sarasota, Florida. He had a first class train ticket from Boston to Florida but, when he didn't make the team, they gave him a bus ticket to come home.



When Wilder's baseball field opened in the late 1800s, games ended when the ball was lost in the tall grass.

Growing up, Harold was a fan of the Boston Braves. "For about ten dollars," he recalls, "we could go to Boston on the train, get off at North Station, and take the subway up to Braves Field. We could go to the game for a dollar, get a hot dog and a soda for another dollar, and the whole trip would cost about ten dollars. We liked the St. Louis Cardinals who had the Gashouse Gang with Johnny Mize and Ducky Medwick, so we'd go down maybe once a summer. We'd take a lunch with us because a hot dog wouldn't hold us the whole day."

The Boston Braves were owned for a time by Lou Perini whose first job as a young man working for his father's construction company was to pave the road from Hartford to Windsor. In the process, Perini met Harold's father. "One fall we had some turkeys," Harold recalls, "and Lou Perini stopped and said he wanted to buy six or eight of them. My father said, 'Well that's nice you're going to give turkeys to some of your help.' And he said, 'No, these are for politicians down in Boston.'"

Lou Perini turned his father's small company into one of the largest construction firms in the country, which allowed him to purchase the Boston Braves in 1945. He moved the team to Milwaukee in 1953 and finally sold the Braves after the 1962 season.

Harold Wright's own baseball career was brief. He played a little at Hartford High School and joined the Hartland team for a few years after the war. "It was fun, but I wasn't that good," he says. But he does have one nice memory. "We were playing Woodstock High School," he says, "and I hit a home run into the brook out behind the field. I like to remember that and forget about all the times I struck out."

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THANK YOU!



West Hartford, Vt.

Horse Versus Bicycle

Reprinted from *The Landmark*, October 9, 1896

A race of more than ordinary interest came off last Saturday afternoon at Hartford Village between W.A. Abbott's fast bay horse, "Dandy," and about a dozen of the fastest wheelmen in town.

The course was from Madden & Trumbull's store in West Hartford to the post office in Hartford, a distance of about six miles.

Fourteen wheels went up to the starting point, following each other in a direct line, making a perfect cycle track to return on. Horse and wheels were sent off by Edgar Madden at 3:45 p.m. Below is the time of each as they crossed the line in Hartford:

	Min.	Sec.
J.T. Paul	18	40
F.H. Perkins	19	30
W.A. Abbott's horse "Dandy"	19	52
D.W. Gero	20	10
L.A. Perkins	20	15
Hugh Ray	20	45
H.C. Jamason	21	45
Ned Ray	21	45
Willie LaBelle	22	15
F. Striebel	22	30
Louis Newton	23	01
Horace C. Pease	26	00
A. Levene	44	00

Previous to the above race, three trials were made from Hartford to White River Junction over the famous Cushing-Reynolds course, 3 1/4 miles, to beat 10 minutes.

	Min.	Sec.
J.T. Paul	9	46
F.H. Perkins	9	57
D.W. Gero	10	55
H.C. Jamason	10	57
L.A. Perkins	10	57

J.T. Paul won three prizes, F.H. Perkins three prizes, one each for beating time to and from the Junction, one each for beating 20 minutes from West Hartford down (six miles), one each for beating the famous "Dandy." W.A. Abbott drew the silver cup for beating time. D.W. Gero drew one of the silver prizes for beating time from Hartford. All but the last two drew prizes for beating the record held by any previous rider over the same distance.

The race proved an excellent one and was enjoyed by every one who took a part. The roads were fine, no wind to face, and the day perfect.

A dozen bicyclists took to the starting line in West Hartford and two of them finished ahead of W.A. Abbott of North Pomfret who drove his horse, "Dandy."

Hartford Historical Society

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HHS Calendar

THE GARIPAY HOUSE MUSEUM is open by appointment only. Please call 802/296-3132 or email us at info@hartfordhistoricalsociety.org.

MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS are open to the public on the last Monday of the month at the Garipay House at 6 p.m. (Please check for exact date.)

Saturday, September 12, 2020 - "Yard Sale at the Garipay House." This event is tentative. Please watch for details in the September-October issue.

The **Genealogy Center** on the second floor of the Hartford Library is open Fridays from 2-6 p.m. or by appointment. Please call Carole Haehnel at 802/295-3974.