



HARTFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

• HARTFORD, VERMONT 05047 •

HARTFORD • QUECHEE • WEST HARTFORD
WHITE RIVER JUNCTION • WILDER

Volume 7, Issue 3 • SOCIETY NEWSLETTER • September 1994

September Meeting . . .

Our September meeting will feature a talk and slide presentation by Andersen Thorp on New England gravestone folk art. Andersen researches and writes about the material culture of New England's past. Recently she has researched Hartford's gravestone folk art. Along with Hartford's cemeteries, she has also visited cemeteries in other Upper Valley towns as well as some in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

The Meeting will be
Wednesday, September 14, 7:00 PM
at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ
Route 14, Hartford Village

In addition to Wednesday's meeting, there will be a tour of the Christian Street Cemetery on the following Saturday morning led by Andersen Thorp. Andersen will highlight the variations in gravestone carvings within this single cemetery. She will also demonstrate gravestone rubbing techniques on site. Materials for the rubbings will be provided.



The Cemetery Tour will be
Saturday, September 17, 10:00 AM
at the Christian Street Cemetery
Route 5, North of Wilder
Parking at Dothan Brook School across from cemetery

From the President:

Many thanks to Cameron Clifford for taking on the task of Editor for our newsletter.

We would also like to thank Matt Bucy and David Ford for assisting Pat Stark in doing an inventory of the Society's collection. It was a big job and they were a huge help.

Pat Stark is still looking for back issues of the *Quechee Times*. If you have some cluttering up in your attic or basement, why not give Pat a call.

Alma Bradley has kindly agreed to serve as our temporary Secretary until we can find a volunteer. The Secretary's duties involve taking minutes at our four annual general meetings and at meetings of the Board of Directors as well as preparing the mailings of the newsletter. Won't you please consider volunteering your services?

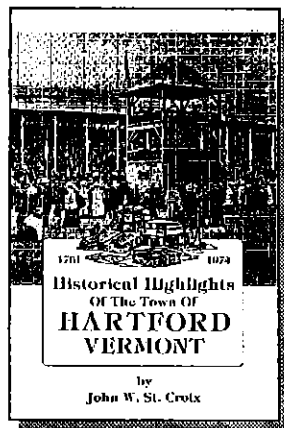
Our fundraising effort is underway. At our September meeting we will offer coffee mugs which bear an etched drawing of Engine 494 on one side and the Hartford Historical Society's logo on the other. They are priced at only \$5.00 plus tax and would make excellent gifts or collectibles.

Mary Nadeau

November Meeting:

Our November meeting will feature a presentation by Leo and Pat Zacharski on the history of Hartford's Jericho district.

The Zacharskis have lived in the Jericho district over twenty years and have become acquainted with its history through oral traditions and their own original research. Their findings will be shared with us on November 9, at 7:00 PM at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ in Hartford Village. Please come and learn about early Jericho's landholding patterns; its architecture, including the district school, Methodist Church, and area farmhouses; as well as the families involved.



Available:

There is a limited number of copies of John St. Croix's *Historical Highlights Of The Town Of Hartford Vermont* available for purchase from the Hartford Historical Society. The price is \$10.00 per copy (\$9.00 for Hartford Historical Society members). This wonderful book is packed with over 375 photographs of Hartford between the 1860s and 1970s making it an important archive for anyone wishing to visualize the past. With the successful integration of appropriate text, this book not only helps one visualize, but also understand Hartford's historical highlights. A copy would make a great gift for family or friends. Copies of *Historical Highlights* can be conveniently purchased at the Hartford Town Clerks Office.

Cemetery Improvement

William Howard Tucker expressed the feeling of many in the later part of the nineteenth century when he wrote that after dying ones body should be "consigned to a resting-place amidst scenes of beauty... to perpetuate our memory..." This attitude toward what ones final resting place should be like was in part a product of the nineteenth century. Earlier in the century, urban cemeteries began being designed more like parks where families were encouraged to stroll and reflect. It took a while for these attitudes to become popular in the more rural towns of Northern New England. By the 1880's when Tucker evaluated Hartford's cemeteries for inclusion in his History of Hartford, Vermont; the push for cemetery improvement within the town was under way.

Of Hartford's (then) eleven cemeteries, Tucker evaluated four as being "pleasantly located and well-cared for." The Quechee cemetery association had been endowed by a "gentleman" for upkeep and improvements. West Hartford's cemetery had in the "few years past" had a "great improvement" made to it by up-righting toppled headstones, clearing briars, re-sodding the graves, and expanding the cemetery with new lots. The cemetery between Hartford Village and White River Jct., no doubt had improvements also made to it on the level of West Hartford's. Tucker's highest praise was for the "Catholic" cemetery (the cemetery on South Main Street in White River Jct. as Mount Olivet Cemetery was not in existence at the time). Tucker wrote that it was laid out in an orderly fashion, kept clean and was "attractive to the eye." The Catholic cemetery was also using "terracing" which was an attractive and fairly new phenomena in increasing usable space within cemeteries at the time. By the turn of the twentieth century cemetery improvement within Hartford was not complete, but the expectations of what cemeteries should look like was firmly entrenched.



Cameron Clifford Photo

Christian Street Cemetery, Hartford, Vermont

New England Gravestone Folk Art

by

Andersen Thorp



It is through death that we often reflect on life. In our cemeteries lie interesting and informative data, records of peoples' lives and their deaths, carved in words and designs carved into stone. Cemeteries are an open book into a town's history and into its prevailing conditions. They provide us with first hand information on the history of former community founders and members. Cemeteries are an important and integral part of the cultural character of a society and a community.

Burial practices by cultures throughout history and around the world are as varied as the billions of people who have lived on our planet. Eastern coastal cemeteries in the United States are the oldest formal public monuments this nation has. Here in New England, we are fortunate to have near by, cemeteries which date back to some of the earliest European settlements on this continent. Cemeteries in Vermont date back to when Vermont was still a Republic. In the Connecticut River Valley, old cemeteries are memorials to the courageous individuals and families, who faced hardships and never ending challenges in the new frontier lands. It is exciting to discover the images and symbols on gravestones which radiated out of Boston to be later carved by itinerant craftsmen here in the Upper Valley.

The Puritans rarely indulged in any sort of imagemaking or iconography. It is on their gravestones that we can find the only evidence of imagery they ever used such as death heads, soul effigies, skeletons, coffins, ect. During colonial times, the images on the gravestones were very bold statements and made a strong impact. Though graveyards at the time were never under "direct" control of institutions, there is evidence that censorship occurred. Sometimes, in spite of organized religion, the stone carver may have gone a little too far to bring the eternal closer through the use of images. In extreme cases, it has been discovered that the image on the stone was carefully chipped away...too carefully to be attributed to vandalism.

Most early New England graveyards enjoyed more freedom from control than other art forms of that time. Gravestone imagery was truly an art of the people. Symbols used on gravestones grew out of what was considered "proper" by the community as a whole. The symbols the Puritans used were an awakening of an after-life, which words alone could not express and their "love" could not suppress. It is through the gravestones we learn of a Puritan well hidden but deep-seated naive belief in mystic symbolism. If you venture into an old cemetery in a colonial town of Massachusetts, Connecticut, or New Hampshire, there are surprises waiting for you, through decoratively carved headstones, the Puritans still teach the living as well as commemorate the dead.

On a material level, our illusion of permanence applies to the notion that stone does not deteriorate. Certainly, granite which is most often used today for gravestones and monuments, is one of the most durable stones, yet slate, sandstone, and marble, which were used for early gravestones, are by comparison more susceptible to the elements. Indeed, most stone markers still stand, but in today's environment some are rapidly deteriorating, for example stop and look at some of the early slate gravestones. The out-of-doors harbors many agents of deterioration, the most destructive being water, acid rain, salt, and plants. Hartford's cemeteries are comparatively in good condition. But it is important through public awareness, appreciation, and education that we are aware of the historical importance of our cemeteries and understand the vulnerability of stone.

Even though the Puritans believed in a predestined life, they also believed in hard work and that every citizen should play an active role in their community. The preservation of our Upper Valley gravestones can be performed by any interested community member and it can be as simple as brushing ones' teeth. Gravestone preservation is as simple as removing lichen from a stone with a tooth brush. Preservation methods for gravestones, doesn't have to be complicated. Preservation should be an ongoing maintenance process and look to the future in order to see that our oldest gravestones last throughout the next century and beyond.

Andersen Thorp is an artist. She currently teaches Art and History at Hartford High School and is completing graduate work at Dartmouth College.

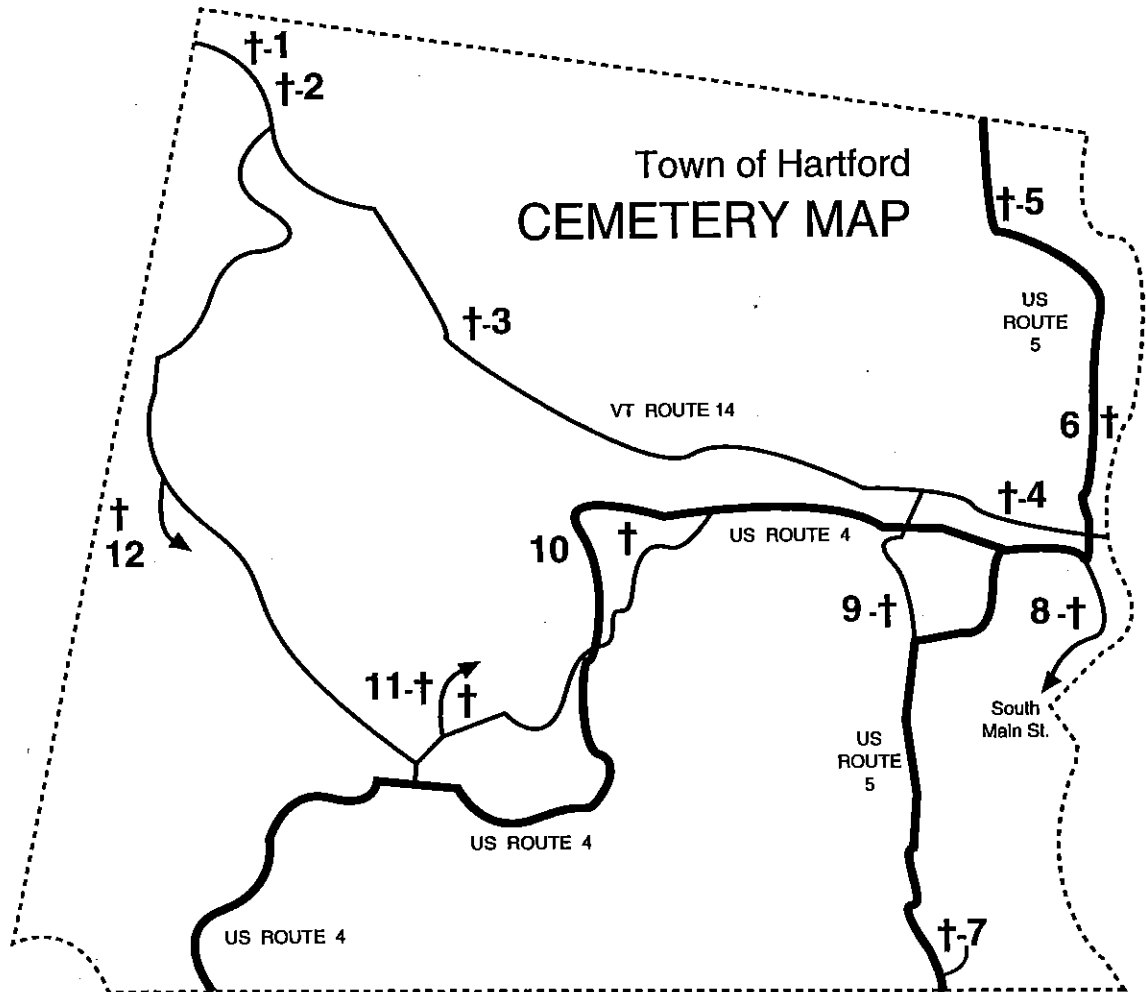
Cameron Clifford Photo



A decorative headstone in the Christian Street Cemetery.

Hartford's Cemeteries

Hartford's cemeteries are all available for research or just a stroll.
Stop and visit one or all.



- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Tucker; Route 14, north of West Hartford | 7 Russtown; Route 5, near Hartland town line |
| 2 West Hartford; Route 14, in back of church | 8 White River Jct.; South Main St., W.R. Jct. |
| 3 Delano; Route 14, at intersection of Jericho Street | 9 Wright Tomb; V.A. Cutoff Road |
| 4 Hartford; Route 14, east of Hartford Village | 10 Center-of-Town; Center-of-Town Road |
| 5 Christian Street; Route 5, north of Wilder | 11 Quechee; off Old Quechee Road |
| 6 Mt. Olivet; Route 5, south of Wilder | 12 Simonds; Kings Highway., off Old Town Farm Road |



Local Gravestone Inscriptions

Here is a sampling of the gravestone inscriptions that you will find in Hartford Cemeteries. These inscriptions state views on the Christian life and the circumstances of death.

**Stranger stop and cast an eye,
as you are now so once was I,
as I am now so you must be,
prepare yourself to follow me.**

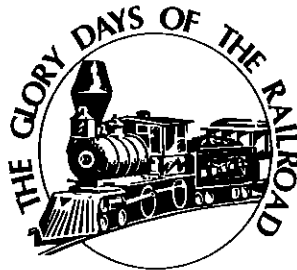
**A morning flower,
cut and withered within an hour.**

**Friends & physicians could not save,
This mortal body from the grave,
Depart my friends dry up your tears,
Here I must lie till Christ appears.**

**Life is uncertain,
death is sure;
Sin is the wound,
and Christ the cure.**

**In the forest lay
the body of this youth
four weeks to the day.**

**Babes are caught from womb & breast
And shall sing a loud above the rest
Because they found a happy shore
They never sought nor knew before.**



History in the Making:

The Glory Days of the Railroad Festival

Friday, September 16, 1994 – 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Saturday, September 17, 1994 – 10:00 am to 8:00 pm

The *Glory Days of the Railroad Festival* celebrates White River Junction's 146-year railroading history.

You can enjoy miniature trains rides, tours of two Amtrak Superliner cars and a CV diesel locomotive with a caboose. There will also be live music, roving street entertainers, and antique steam tractor rides.

In Sympathy:

We would like to extend our sympathy to
the family of Shirley Jardine.

Recent Gifts:

The Society thanks the following individuals for their recent gifts:

Herbert Adams - postcard of covered bridge in White River Jct., 1913

Jackie Jacobs; 1993 Vanity Beauty Shoppe cloth change purse.

Woodstock Historical Society; three colored slides of White River Jct., bridge, train engine, and a fire.

Margurite Hogg; 1975 National Grange Patrons of Husbandry booklet.

Richard Steward; 1869 F. W. Beers Atlas of Windsor County, Vt.

Pat Stark; five cooking booklets from the 1940's.

Everett Savage; 1923 calendar picture "Crossing the White River."

David Ford; 1994 membership drive flyer for the Main Street Museum of Art.

Fred Bradley; 1993 video by John Rogers of Old 494 being moved to new location in White River Jct., Vt.

Barbara Kendall; 32-page booklet about the 1927 flood by Hank W. Bowman.

Anonymous; 1994 touring map of the Upper Valley with local advertisements.

HARTFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Hours: By Appointment

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Cameron Clifford, *Newsletter Editor*, (802) 296-2046

Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of March, May, September and November at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ, Route 14 in Hartford Village.