



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

September-October 2004

A Visit With Alice Smith

by James M. Kenison

On a Saturday morning in May, I had the opportunity to interview Alice Smith, a woman known to many former teachers and students from Hartford Elementary School, where Mrs. Smith spent many of her 47 years in education as a teacher and principal. Mrs. Smith, now 97, who has outlived many of her former students, enjoyed the opportunity to sit and reminisce about years gone by.

Alice now spends many of her hours embroidering, making latch hook rugs, and crocheting. She knows how to knit, but doesn't like it. Oftentimes, she will work on projects for neighbors or other members of the Sharon Congregational Church, where Mrs. Smith is still a member.



In high school, Alice had wanted to go to Bay Path Institute. Her family, however, couldn't afford it at the time. Instead, Alice completed a one-year teacher training program in Randolph after graduating from South Royalton High School in 1925. Her teacher training class consisted of about 25 girls, and she was required to do student teaching as part of her course. Some of her student teaching was done in Randolph in the same building that housed the teacher training program, and some was done at rural schools in South Randolph and elsewhere.

After completion of her training program, Alice was hired to teach at the Howe Hill School in Sharon, VT. She taught there for a year or two during the time of the 1927 flood. She remembers the difficulties caused by living on one side of the river and teaching at a

school on the other side of the river during the flood when the bridge was taken out. At that time, the children near the river that attended the Village School in Sharon weren't able to cross the river, so the town had to reopen the Jilson School on Broad Brook Road in Sharon, where Alice taught for a year around 1929. Alice then taught for about 4 years at the Village School in Sharon, and then 2 years in South Strafford before being hired to teach in Hartford.

Alice remembers her years at the rural schools, which were "like one big family. We enjoyed skating, swimming, and picnicking with students after school."

Mrs. Smith's first position in the town of Hartford was at the Centerville School on Route 14 between Hartford and West Hartford. She taught there for 4 years. At the time, it was the custom to place new teachers in the rural schools, so that they might "prove" themselves worthy of a position at the more highly esteemed village schools. Alice was transferred to Hartford Grammar School around 1939/40, where she remained until her retirement.

One year of teacher training was all that was required in those early days. Things changed over the years, however. Later on, teachers were required to attend summer workshops, earning credits to renew their teaching certificates. Another thing that changed over the years, probably more noticeable to Alice as a principal, was the imposition of more and more paperwork as the state set up more and more requirements.

Alice became principal of Hartford Grammar School after the retirement of Alice Farrington and remained there until her retirement – which is somewhat of a sore spot with Alice. She had been looking forward to a total of 50 years teaching before retiring. The school board, however, decided that it could save money by

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requiring several older teachers to retire – thus being able to replace them with younger, lesser paid replacements. Therefore, upon turning 65, in 1972, Alice, Pauline Cole, and Genevieve Landers, were all forced into retirement by the school board. Alice remembers being asked to substitute teach after her retirement, to which she responded, “Well, I guess if I’m too old to continue working, then I’m certainly too old to substitute teach.” She told them to find someone else and never worked in a school again.



Hartford Grammar School prior to 1952.

Alice remembers the first question asked of her during her interview in Hartford with school director Alfred Watson: “Do you smoke?” She fondly remembers how Mr. Watson would personally bring around teachers paychecks once a month and talk to each teacher, with a dedication not seen much today. This dedication was also seen in the parents of Hartford’s school children. There was much parental involvement and a very active PTA. “If we had problems, we took care of them and we didn’t have much problem with parents,” Alice says.



Alice Smith is handed the key to the addition to Hartford Grammar School at a 1952 ceremony by Superintendent Eugene Hoyt. Also present, from left to right, Selectman Winsor Brown, PTA President Ritchie Willard, PTA Chair Mrs. John Malone and PTA Secretary Mrs. Mira Davis.

One time at a PTA meeting, a parent expressed a concern over having kids walk down the steep path in front of the school during the winter months. He thought they should walk up the road instead. Unknown to him, his own children had recently gone sliding down the same path after dark one night. Alice, not known for holding her tongue, said, “Well, if that path is safe enough for your kids to sled down after dark, then I certainly think it is safe enough for kids to walk down in the daylight.” That quickly ended the conversation and the meeting continued.

When asked about some of the challenges she faced as a teacher, Alice said, “When you enjoyed doing things, nothing was hard. There were a lot of meetings to attend, Teacher’s Association, Elementary Principals Association, and so on. Teachers went together.” Regarding challenges as a principal, “I probably did upset some of them [teachers], but I’m not sure.”

The biggest difficulties over the years were probably related with the addition to the Hartford Grammar School building in the 1950’s. Alice remembers,

“During the winter, while building it, the back wall was covered with canvas, so cold air came in. I also had problems with my eyes due to the bad lighting, so I convinced the school board to install new lighting because if it was bothering my eyes, what was it doing to the children’s eyes?”

After the completion of the addition, Alice kept her classroom in the old portion of the building because she preferred walking on the wooden floors. The new addition had cement floors.



Hartford Historical Society

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<http://www.hartfordhistory.org>

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One of the least favorite parts of her job as principal included keeping children back in school. This was something she dreaded and did very little of.

Some more dramatic changes have occurred since Alice's early teaching days, and even more since her retirement. In the early years, Alice states, "We always said the Lord's Prayer and saluted the flag before school. I had one boy whose parents didn't want him to salute the flag for whatever reason. I wasn't about to have him leave the room while the rest of the class saluted the flag, so I gave him the job of holding the flag while the others saluted it."

Today, Alice says, "Parents aren't allowed to discipline children. The government has taken away parent's rights. It should be the parent's privilege to bring up children the way they want. Teachers aren't even able to say 'no' now without problems." Alice feels that too many restrictions have been placed on teachers now and that children are becoming more and more out of control in the public schools. Alice says that "Kids shouldn't be able to do and act any way they want. There should be some limits set. The way it used to be would be better." For Alice, and many generations of students at Hartford Grammar School, 'the way it used to be' included Mrs. Smith's leather which reminded many of the importance of good behavior. Some for-

mer students remember the cord well and still cringe when talking about it, though no one has actually claimed to be on the receiving end of the cord. Mrs. Smith remembers keeping it in sight, but doesn't "recall whether or not I ever had to use it."



Four sets of twins at the Hartford Grammar School. Gerald & Garnett Mills, Carik & Carolyn Illsley, Judith & Joseph Danaher, and Stephen & Stanley Burnham.

When asked if she would go into teaching today if she were fresh out of high school, she says probably not.

She enjoyed teaching back then, but much has changed. Her advice to students considering a career in teaching: "Think twice before you start."

Memories of Mrs. Smith

Included below are several memories of Mrs. Smith from years past. In parentheses after the memory are the years each person had Mrs. Smith as a teacher, or the years they worked with her at Hartford Grammar School.

Lester Gibbs: One time I found a snake on the playground at recess and, knowing that Mrs. Smith was afraid of snakes, I came back in and put it in her desk drawer. After getting a tongue-lashing from Mrs. Smith, she promptly called my folks. I then got a thorough beating from my father when I got home. I remember she kept a thick leather strap in her desk drawer for discipline. That was back when you could mete out discipline. I was never on the receiving end of the strap, but I know of others in town who claim to have been. Really, though, just the sight of it was enough to scare the dickens out of you. She was really a 'hands-on' teacher. I don't think anyone in class really could have been behind because she would have seen to it that they received the instruction they needed. She encouraged us to participate in class discussion. I remember that if we were really good, we were treated to movies. The first time I saw *Ivanhoe* was in her class. (Third grade 1948/49)

Peggy (Harlow) McDerment: I liked her as a teacher and thought she was pretty patient with us. She would garner

a lot of respect from us because she would tell us that she had a wide strap that she would use if we misbehaved in a bad way. I never saw her use it, but the thought was always there. I don't think she was as strict as some of the teachers I had, but back then we didn't dare get in trouble because we would get in trouble at home too. I remember looking forward to movies on Friday afternoons. Overall I have pretty good memories of Mrs. Smith. (Second/Third grades 1950-52)

Rodney Kenison: I remember that when she set a rule for something, she lived by it. One year in the winter there was a problem with kids throwing snowballs. Mrs. Smith made a rule that the only place you could throw snowballs was up on the ball field. She went up there one day and someone hit her in the head with a snowball. She didn't get mad; she just said that it was her own fault since she had made the rule. (First grade 1954-56)

Esther Davis: Alice would eat with the children. Alice was strict, but she needed to be. She could use that ruler when she wanted to. There were a bunch of pretty rugged little fellas. There was a storm one time and the school buses couldn't run. The children that went on the buses couldn't go. I went home, which was just across the street, and I prepared a big kettle of corn chowder and some other things. I brought it back and Alice, to this day,

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Mary's Message

By Mary Nadeau, *Chairman, HHS Board of Directors*

Our September program promises to be very entertaining as well as informative. With the help of a generous grant from the Vermont Speaker's Bureau, we will present Susanne Poulette-Cheney in a living history portrayal of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who teamed with Susan B. Anthony in leading the struggle for the rights of women.

Susanne will appear in period costume to offer a performance so realistic that she "becomes" Mrs. Stanton. Many of you will recall her husband's portrayal of Dr. James Naismith, inventor of basketball, two years ago. You can expect the same levels of quality and realism in this performance.

Our program committee felt that the topic of women's suffrage would be a timely one in this election year. We hope that you will make an effort to attend. If there are

school-age children in your family, this program would be educational and fun for them, too. Help us spread the word that Hartford Historical Society programs are free and open to the public.

PROGRAM

THROUGH THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF THE VERMONT HUMANITIES COUNCIL
Susanne Poulette-Cheney portrays Elizabeth Cady Stanton

The Right is Ours!

Susanne Poulette-Cheney portrays the fiery Elizabeth Cady Stanton in a personable visit, pronounces her scathing rhetoric on women's oppression with wit and sparkle, as mother of seven, and friend to Susan B. Anthony.

WEDNESDAY EVE • 7 PM
SEPT. 8, 2004
Greater Hartford United Church of Christ
FREE - All Welcome!
For More Information: Tom Houghon (802) 296-2470

Memories of Mrs. Smith *(continued)*

never forgot that I made that chowder and she said it was the best chowder she ever ate. I remember the first year my oldest son was in school and he had a big collie dog that followed him everywhere. The two were inseparable. The first year he was in school, the dog slept under his desk all year long and Alice let him stay there. The dog never missed a day. The next year, the teacher wouldn't let him bring the dog in. *(School cook 1956-59)*

Charlie Kelton: Mrs. Smith was of the old school. She was there to teach kids and she did just that. My kids went there [to Hartford Grammar School] and she made them mind, but they respected her. I remember my son coming home and telling me some things that made me feel good - things that showed she was doing the job that she should be doing. She was a good disciplinarian, but very fair, she treated the kids the same. The most satisfying thing I've done over the years was being on the school board. We were fortunate to have a lot of "Mrs. Smiths" - people that were very dedicated to their jobs and the children of Hartford - that did an excellent job. *(School Board 1950's-1960's, 15 yrs, chairman for 13 years)*

Debbie DeCoff: I remember that she was very strict but very fair. Everyone respected her - that was back when people respected their teachers. I remember that she used to call me by my mother's name (Barbara) because she had taught my mother for first grade. The kids were afraid of her because there were stories that she had a razor strap. We never saw it of course, but the threat was always there and it kept us in line. *(First grade 1960/61)*

Peter Vincent: I remember the one time I said the "F" word in her class; I had to go into the teacher's bathroom

and chew on a bar of Dial soap. I also remember her spanking me one time, but I can't recall for what. She was a good teacher who didn't take any nonsense. She treated us all fairly. Some teachers had their teacher's pets, but she didn't do that. She helped me to appreciate reading a lot more. I don't know how old she was back then, but she seemed really old to me at the time. She was actually like a grandmother to us. I was certainly disciplined, but I deserved it, and to this day I really have a lot of respect for her. She was strict, but she really cared and encouraged us to keep trying. *(First grade 1963/64)*

Lois Nostrant: I was right out of college; this was my first year of teaching. I had a hard class that year and Alice kind of took me under her wing. I don't think I could have made it without her help. She was a wonderful mentor for me. Alice was great at discipline but the kids respected her at the same time. She was just a great lady. We all loved her. There's not a single person I can remember that didn't like her. After a few years, my job (as the second third grade teacher) was going to be eliminated. I could have taken a second grade position, but Mrs. Smith took the second grade position instead so I could have the permanent first grade position at the school. Mrs. Smith knew she didn't have many years left and had been teaching first grade forever. Thanks to Mrs. Smith, I have been teaching first grade ever since. *(Started teaching 3rd grade in 1965/66 at Hartford Grammar School)*

Dennis DeCoff Jr.: She was the nicest person you could have as a teacher. I had her during her last year teaching. My best memories of her were running into her in later years. She would always be very pleasant and sharp as a tack. *(Second grade 1971-72)*



Then & Now...

It is time to head back to school for another exciting year. Alice Smith taught school for a total of 47 years. Many of those years were spent in the classroom shown just below. This was Mrs. Smith's first grade classroom as it appeared in 1955 – complete with students! How many of the students can you help us identify?



Alice Smith Class – 1955

On the right, the same classroom is shown today from a slightly different angle. The Hartford Grammar School building is currently home to Green Mountain Institute, a college specializing in acupuncture with a clinic that is open to the public.

Photos: Alice Smith and James Kenison



Same Classroom Today



Curator's Corner

By Pat Stark, *HHS Archivist*

It has been a good summer for the collections thanks to the following volunteers:

Special THANKS to **David McDerment** for constructing three more pedestals for our artifacts on display. Not only do these give our museum a more professional look, but they help protect the items from accidental damage. We are lucky to have a 'resident carpenter' for these projects.

Thanks to **Jim Kenison** who has volunteered to help scan our photo collection. With his help we may get this project completed before another year is gone!

I am very pleased to welcome **Dorothy Yamashita** to our Archival Team. She is well qualified as a former librarian whose family has lived in Hartford for several generations.

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 daytimes, or 802 296-2192 evenings).

Recent donations:

Hartford Alumni Association – Newsletter and other Alumni Association documents

Evelyn Hutchins – photos of the 1927 flood

James B. Flanagan – two projector lenses from the White River Drive-in

Tom Houghton – photos of the Twin State Fruit building demolition

Walter Morancy – photo of the Hartford Fire Dept. employees

Roy Black – copy of a 1927 letter to Emma Gates from Grace Coolidge

Estate of Stanley Elliott – USDA Weather Bureau record books for the White & Conn. Rivers Gage readings from 1902 – 1960, surveyors equipment, etc.

Dorothy Yamashita – many family papers, etc., from the Martin Family. A.C. Martin was a tin peddler here in town and Dorothy's great grandfather.

Clarissa Holmes – Hartford School Report Cards

Fred Bradley – Valley Bank Stock Certificates, child's shoes from Ruth Seaton Estate, etc.

Jerry Bergen – Video of Restoration of 494, the last day of the station master and other railroad scenes from the station.



A Look Back

Events that made the news in Hartford

30 Years Ago (*September/October 1974 – Valley News*)

- Included in the new lineup for the **Canes** are: G. Gabourel, V. Dean, M. Colgan, S. Felice, J. Pippin, G. Miller, C. Jameson, D. Lauren, H. Hazen, D. Coutermanche, A. Cochran, J. Briggs, G. Aher, L. Fucci, J. Bishop, C. Tweed, C. Miller, G. Burnham, M. Wood, C. Hill, and L. Brown. Jim Carsley is assistant coach while Bob Potter and Don Nelson handle the junior varsity and freshmen. Coach McCanna pointed to Fair Haven and Woodstock as Southern Division Two title contenders this season.
- Political foes of Republican Congressional candidate James M. Jeffords ... have said he could never flip-flop on any issue. They say that before you can flop you first have to flip, and that can be done only by taking stand, the inference being that the former attorney general has no convictions at all.

60 Years Ago (*September/October 1944 – The Landmark*)

- Four new members added to the **high school** faculty included: Miss Charlotte Wysolmerski, to teach English; Robert Gilmore, who will handle classes in social science; Miss Priscilla Hall, who will teach French and social science; and Miss Mildred Whitcomb, to serve as the new music supervisor.
- The V-Day program (when Germany is defeated) for Town of Hartford published on September 7, 1944. “When Germany is defeated the **White River Fire Department** will sound the alarm as soon as hostilities cease by blowing the fire whistle for three rounds, seven blasts to a round.... [T]here will be a large Bonfire on **White River Grammar school** grounds. Shortly after the square in front of the **Post Office** will be roped off and there will be a street dance....”



September Program

On Wednesday, September 8th, the Hartford Historical Society will present a program featuring Suzanne Poulette-Cheney entitled *Elizabeth Cady Stanton: ‘The Right is Ours’*. The program will be held at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ in Hartford Village at 7:00 pm.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, (1815-1902) spokesperson and champion for the rights of women, developed her courage to lead as a young girl. When she was eleven years old, her last living brother died, leaving her grieving father to exclaim to her, “Oh, my daughter, I wish you were a boy!” In her childhood, Stanton learned of married women’s lack of legal rights by sitting in Judge Cady’s court and observing the women who came to him for help. She determined at a young age to make changes in the laws that denied women legal rights.

Deeply disappointed because females were not admitted to college, Stanton attended the Troy Female Seminary, run by Emma Willard. After graduation, she read law books with her father and over time became involved with the anti-slavery movement and met her future husband, abolitionist Henry Stanton. Traveling with her new husband to London, to attend the World Anti-Slavery Convention, she met Lucretia Mott, who was

to become her friend and mentor. Humiliating conditions for the female delegates to the convention moved Stanton to “discuss the social, civil, and religious condition, and rights of women.”

During the following years, Stanton bore and raised seven children, and continued her quest from within the confines of motherhood. She teamed in a life-long association with Susan B. Anthony, in writing, speaking, organizing, and leading the struggle for the rights of women. As a freethinking, often radical reformer, Stanton’s controversial ideas led to harsh criticism and rejection, even by her associates. After fifty years of working for women, she passed from this life without the rights she so passionately sought.

Susanne Poulette-Cheney, MS in Ed., CCC-SLP, is a speech-language pathologist experienced with school-aged students, an adjunct lecturer at The College of St. Rose, and a theater enthusiast. She has directed and performed children’s theater, produced school drama productions, taught children’s drama classes, and consults in student living history performances. She shares her interest in the life and work of Elizabeth Cady Stanton to bring history alive to students and to leave them with a deeper appreciation of the contributions of reformers such as Mrs. Stanton.



Your Society at Work

French & Indian War Program at Quechee State Park

John Soule and Amanda Page presented a French & Indian War program at the Quechee State Park on Saturday, August 7th. The weather cooperated and a good time was had by the many participants.

At noon, children's activities were held at the recreation field at the Park, where John & Amanda had set up an authentic campsite. Children enjoyed games, explanations of various tools and other items from the time, and even fencing – a sport popular at the time of the French & Indian War. John even fired off several rounds with his black powder rifle.



Amanda Page leads a group activity at the Quechee State Park.

An evening campfire program was held as well, enjoyed by many campers.

This program was held as part of the State Park's living history theme weekend. In the future it is hoped that more local residents will venture out to the park for similar events.

VT History Expo – June 26-27

Once again, the Hartford Historical Society prepared an exhibit for the Vermont History Expo. Our theme this year was "Miller Automobile Co. – Over a Century of Service". Our booth featured a photo history of the Miller Automobile Company prepared by John Lutz. His efforts resulted in a professional looking, very well done display that was enjoyed by many visitors to this year's History Expo at the Tunbridge Fairgrounds.

The weather cooperated for most of the time, although Sunday brought some strong winds that led to some excitement in some of the tents. There were many fas-



This year's HHS exhibit at the Vermont History Expo cinating exhibits and presentations from historical societies, museums, and other organizations from all around Vermont. One really needed to spend two full days at the Expo to fully enjoy everything there was to see and learn.

After the Expo, John Lutz presented the HHS Board of Directors with a comprehensive list of possible future Expo exhibit topics and preparation suggestions.

If you didn't attend the History Expo this year, please reserve June 25-26, 2005 – you won't regret it.

HHS Website Up & Running

The Hartford Historical Society announces its new website, www.hartfordhistory.org.

The website features information about the society, the Garipay House, upcoming programs, etc. There is a form to fill out to join our electronic mailing list, a page of links to other sites and a listing of our contact information also appear.

Please visit the site regularly, sign our Guest Book and email any website related comments or suggestions to webmaster@hartfordhistory.org.

Thank You!

The Hartford Historical Society would like to officially recognize the efforts of Peggy McDerment. Each year, Peggy takes on the job of planting and maintaining the beautiful flowers in front of the Garipay House. As people drive across the Hartford bridge, the Garipay House is straight ahead, and Peggy's lovely flowers make an attractive first impression for people entering the village.

*Thank you Peggy!
Your efforts are greatly appreciated.*

Hartford Historical Society

POST OFFICE BOX 547

HARTFORD, VERMONT 05047

Coming Events:

12th Annual Glory Days of the Railroad Festival

Saturday, September 11, 2004

9 - 5, White River Junction



HHS Calendar

Tue., Sept. 7, 2004 Open House – Garipay House,
1461 Maple Street/Route 14, Hartford Village,
VT, 6:00-8:00pm. Come and see our collection.

Wed., Sept. 8, 2004 September Program – *Elizabeth
Cady Stanton: 'The Right is Ours'*. Greater
Hartford United Church of Christ, Maple Street,
Hartford Village, 7:00 pm. Come enjoy a special
presentation by Suzanne Poulette-Cheney.
Refreshments will follow.

Sat., Sept. 11, 2004 Glory Days of the Railroad –
Railroad Station, White River Jct., VT, 9:00am-
5:00pm, rain or shine. Admission, \$2 per person.
For more information, visit www.glorydaysof-herailroad.org.

Sun., Sept. 26, 2004 Book Committee Meeting –
Garipay House, 2:00pm. Members of the com-
mittee undertaking the revision of John St.
Croix's *Pictorial History of Hartford* will meet to
discuss progress and future plans.

Sun., Oct. 3, 2004 Open House – Garipay House,
1461 Maple Street/Route 14, Hartford Village,
VT, 1:30-4:00pm. Come and see our collection.

Tue., Oct. 5, 2004 Open House – Garipay House,
1461 Maple Street/Route 14, Hartford Village,
VT, 6:00-8:00pm. Come and see our collection.



*Preparing "Old 494" for the first
Railroad Enthusiast's Day in 1957*