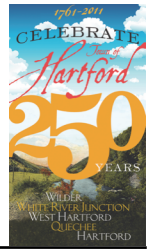




Hartford Historical Society

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

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



Volume 31, No. 5

SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

September-October 2018

Harold Wright Describes the Infamous Hurricane of 1938

By Mary Nadeau

This September marks the eightieth anniversary of the Hurricane of 1938. Nicknamed at the time, “The Long Island Express” or “The Yankee Clipper,” the event is still remembered vividly by White Junction resident Harold Wright.

The violent storm originated south of the Cape Verde Islands off the coast of Africa. During its trek across the Atlantic, it reached Category 5 intensity by the time it arrived in the Bahamas on September 20, 1938, and then began its journey northward. Lodged between high-pressure systems that had formed to the east and the west, the hurricane rode a trough of low pressure, reaching Long Island on September 21 and continuing toward New England.

During the 1930s, weather forecasting in the U.S. was far less sophisticated. Forecasters even then were considered to be poorly trained, and systematic planning was not in place. As a result, they had to scrape by to get whatever information they could. So, due to the lack of reliable, accurate information, the intensity of this coming storm was greatly underestimated.



The hurricane of 1938 shattered trees and displaced automobiles along School Street in Hartford. It holds the record as the most powerful and deadly hurricane in recorded New England history.

The Yankee Clipper slammed into Vermont at 6 p.m. on September 23, causing extensive damage to trees, buildings and power lines. An estimated 2,000 miles of roads were rendered impassable. Salt spray from the ocean could be seen on windows as far away from the coast as Montpelier, and high winds derailed a train in Castleton. In total, an estimated 682 lives were lost in New England, and more than 57,000 homes were

Continued on page 8.



Growing Up and Growing Old In the Upper Valley

Presentation by Stephen Taylor

7 p.m. Wednesday, September 12, 2018, at the Greater Hartford
United Church of Christ in Hartford Village. Refreshments.

From the Editor . . .

The end of the summer is near and the Garipay gardens look wonderful thanks to Peggy McDerment. Thanks, also, to one of our newest Board members, Lannie Collins, who is making plans for winterizing the Garipay House. And welcome to our newest Board member, Pat Thurston Rondeau.

The Bugbee History Hour is growing fast. We will meet at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, August 22 at the Bugbee Senior Center in the library. We will be discussing the Taft family of Tafts Flat (now Hartford Avenue).

The Ice Cream Social on August 11 to celebrate the end of the Hartford Library's Summer Reading program for adults and children was a success. Well attended by 35 adults and 10 children as games, lemonade and plenty of ice cream brought the program to a close. The Garipay House backyard was busy with games, bubble blowing, corn hole bag tossing, horse shoes, and croquet.

Librarian Nadine Hodgdon and helper Pat Cook were ably assisted by Historical Society Board members. Gaylord Newcity gave tours of the Garipay House, Lannie Collins enthusiastically challenged and

cheered game participants as they outscored him. Peggy McDerment provided assistance where needed. And of course everyone enjoyed their free ice cream served in cones or dishes with desired toppings.

On Wednesday September 12, Steve Taylor, who presented the much-acclaimed program on Vermont's poor farms, will give an encore performance. This time, his topic is, "Growing Up and Growing Old in the Upper Valley Region." Steve will recall the many changes that have taken place over the course of the past 50 years, some for the better, and some, well, not so much. Join us at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ for another informative and entertaining evening. As always, the program will begin at 7 p.m. and delectable dessert items will be served afterwards, courtesy of the Historical Society's terrific cooks.

Finally, we invite you to renew your membership or make a gift to the HHS using the PayPal form on our website at hartfordhistory.org. The Board has voted to reinstate a life membership category. Persons sixty-five years or older may now join (or renew membership) as a life member for the one-time fee of \$250 (with board approval). Thanks for your support!

Mary Ann Devins, Editor

NEWSLETTER SPONSORS

We appreciate the following sponsors who make it possible to print the newsletter in color:

JAS Auto

Lebanon Sewing & Vacuum Center

**Mark, Patricia & Christie
Pippin - Cloverleaf**

Sean Kuit - SymQuest

The Clerkin Agency

Don & Sue Foster

Hartford Historical Society

Post Office Box 547, Hartford, VT 05047-0547

<http://www.hartfordhistory.org>

info@hartfordhistoricalsociety.com

802-296-3132

Board Members and Officers

Gaylord Newcity—Chairman	802-296-2269
Robin Adair Logan—President	802-698-8610
Roy Black—Vice-President	802-295-0608
Pat Stark—Secretary	802-280-2221
Peggy McDerment—Treasurer	802-295-2357
Judy Barwood	802-295-2435
Lannie Collins	802-356-2883
Mary Ann Devins	802-281-0273
Pat Rondeau	603-675-6612

Program Director	Mary Nadeau	802-295-2123
Museum Director	Vacant	
Curator/Archivist	Pat Stark	802-280-2221
Newsletter Editor	Mary Ann Devins	802-281-0273
Print & Web Design	Scott Fletcher	310-227-3147
Membership	Vacant	
GenCenter Director	Mary Ann Devins	802-281-0273
Genealogist	Mary Ann Devins	802-281-0273



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.

Norma Parrott Hamel Receives the Hartford Cane

By Mary Nadeau

Hartford resident Norma Hamel, born on December 28, 1921, was determined to be Hartford's oldest resident by the Hartford Historical Society. In honor of this status, she was presented with the Hartford Cane at a special ceremony held on July 15, 2018, at the Garipay House in Hartford Village.

Norma grew up in Wilder and attended grades one through eight at the Wilder Elementary School. One of her fondest school memories is of learning to play basketball in the school's cramped basement while doing her best to avoid running into a cement support column. As a student at Hartford High, she helped her team win the state basketball championship and remembers well fellow teammates Dot Mock (Jones) and Polly Stebbins.

While a high school junior in 1938, she won first place in the Alfred Watson Speaking Contest, reciting "Billy Brad and the Forbidden Fruit" and walked away

She recalls how upset villagers became when the bridge between Wilder and East Wilder on the New Hampshire shore was demolished to accommodate the construction of the Wilder Dam.

with the princely prize of \$25. Her writing skills earned her a job with *The Landmark*, a local newspaper that was replaced in 1952 by the *Valley News*.

Norma's position involved making phone calls around the village to get local news for a column in the paper. Her recollections of growing up in Wilder include picking blackberries in the patch behind the house and then peddling them around the village from a wagon. The family also picked blueberries from Clough's in Enfield, and Norma would take those berries around the neighborhood as well. She recalls how upset villagers became when the bridge between Wilder and East Wilder on the New Hampshire shore was demolished to accommodate the construction of the Wilder Dam. Residents hated to lose that handy shortcut to Hanover. She also remembers her father's band, the Old Timers. Dad played the saxophone, Marguerite Paine played the piano, Mr. Goodrich



Norma Hamel, left, will turn 97 years old in December. She was recognized as Hartford's oldest resident by the Hartford Historical Society at a ceremony in July at the Garipay House. Norma grew up in Wilder.

played the banjo, and there were drums and a wooden xylophone. Her mother and an aunt sang at the Lebanon Opera House and played the piano for silent movies there. Another favorite memory is of spending time at a relative's camp on Long Lake in Bridgton, Maine, where Norma loved to fish for white perch.

After high school, she attended Houle's Beauty Academy in Manchester, New Hampshire, and became a licensed hair dresser. Norma operated a hair salon from her home in Wilder for a short time and then relocated her operation to Gates Street in White River Junction. She retired from the hairdressing business in the late 1940s.

Norma met her husband Roland when he transferred to Hartford High School from Littleton, New Hampshire, during their junior year. Like Norma, he was athletic. He played football and is credited with having brought skiing to Hartford High. After graduation he joined the U.S. Army and was stationed in Arkansas, where he received training as an airplane mechanic. They couple married in 1943 when Roland was home on leave. After his discharge from the army, he became a barber and operated the Hotel Coolidge Barber Shop until 1982.

After living at several locations in Wilder, the couple bought land in Thetford in 1979 and built their dream home. Norma and Roland cut down trees and prepared their own firewood, did maple sugaring, raised rabbits and built a pond that became home to a

Continued on page 4.

family of ducks. The pond also contained one trout named Charlie. Roland would walk along its banks, dangling a worm near the water's edge with the trout

Norma operated a hair salon from her home in Wilder for a short time and then relocated her operation to Gates Street in White River Junction. She retired from the hairdressing business in the late 1940s.

in hot pursuit until he finally dropped the wiggling morsel into the water. After her husband passed away, she moved to Hemlock Ridge in Wilder, where she still resides.

Norma is an avid Bruins fan. On one occasion, her grandson arranged for the family to view a game from a private box. When the "jumbotron" passed by, Norma playfully blew kisses. Later she was featured on the "Tron" as one of the three finalists for Fan of the Day. The crowd voted her the Fan of the Day, and she received pizza and popcorn from the Bruins Girls. She also enjoys watching the Patriots, the Red Sox and Dartmouth hockey.

Norma enjoyed her job at Shopping International in Norwich, and she proudly displays her collection of European beer steins that she purchased over the years while working there. Her home is tastefully decorated, immaculate and very welcoming.

Computer savvy, she enjoys emailing, playing games and using Google on her laptop. Norma still drives and bought herself a (new to her) red car last year. The family nicknamed her the "Hot Rod Grandma."

In addition to her two daughters, Doreen Cutter and Dee Aher, Norma is proud of her grandchildren, Mark Aher (Jacqui McCoy) of Boston, Massachusetts, Lynn Aher Barnes (Ron Barnes) of Altoona, Iowa, with great-grandchildren Madison and Alex, and Ryan Cutter (Nina Pacchia) of Park City, Utah.

Daughter Doreen was present when I interviewed Norma, and she added some interesting perspectives. In addition to being an "awesome Mom, she is a great cook. Doreen has fond memories of her mother's meatloaf, dumplings, fried dough with maple syrup and donuts "to die for." Doreen quipped that her husband dated her for Norma's donuts! Dad was an enthusiastic hunter, and Mom would support his efforts by cooking whatever came through the door. The family enjoyed "going jeeping" on weekends, and



Top, Norma with great-grandchildren Madison and Alex. Above, Norma with daughters Doreen and Dee at the Garipay House.

they would explore area roads with no idea where they would lead or if they would wind up at a dead end. Whenever they traveled, everyone sang.

Growing up, Doreen and Dee dreaded the possibility of spilling their milk because that was their mother's pet peeve. On one occasion, Norma herself accidentally spilled a glass of milk and the sisters retreated to the pantry, laughing hysterically in secret at the irony of it. While Norma loves watching the birds that inhabit her back yard area, she absolutely detests snakes!

Norma Hamel comes from a long line of women who lived into their nineties, is in good health, is blessed with an excellent memory and possesses an engaging sense of humor. It's small wonder that she was voted the wittiest girl in the class for her high school yearbook. She is a delightful person, and it was with the greatest pleasure that the Hartford Historical Society presented her with the Hartford Cane in honor of her being the oldest citizen in our community.

The Loyal Club, a Historical Sketch

By Mary Ann Devins

The Loyal Club was established in 1891 at the request of Alvin C. Bean, a member of Abraham Lincoln G.A.R. Post No. 85. Mr. Bean fought in the Civil War as a member of the Fifteenth New Hampshire Regiment Company C.

One of the first projects of the Loyal Club was to raise money for the Soldier's Monument that stands on the second level of the Hartford Cemetery and is dedicated to all the soldiers of Hartford since the period of the American Revolution.

The Soldiers Monument, which was unveiled and dedicated Memorial Day 1893, bears the following inscription:

**TO THE SOLDIERS OF THE
TOWN OF HARTFORD AND
ABRAHAM LINCOLN POST.**

**ERECTED BY THE LOYAL CLUB.
MAY 30, 1893.**

With the development of the railroads in the late 1840s, the land in front of today's Hotel Coolidge became a dumping ground for coal ashes and other waste from the trains. In the spring of 1899, the Loyal Club petitioned the Central Vermont Railway, owners of the property, for permission to create a park in this area. Permission was granted and the club went to work. Local businesses donated \$300 and, for the next several years, Loyal Club members transformed the space into a garden. In 1907, Miss Helen W. Smith donated a fountain, supplied by the Hartford Water Company, in memory of her brother.

Prior to 1900, the village library of White River Junction was housed in various places. It was first located in the Woodstock Railway freight depot. When that building burned, the books were moved to a private schoolhouse near the Episcopal Church and later to a room over Smith's bakery. The 900 volumes were unused for several years.

The Loyal Club incorporated on February 1, 1906. In May, Amos Barnes donated land and funds for a library in memory of George W. Gates and family. The gift was, "to be placed as a trust in the name of

the Loyal Club." George W. Gates (1824-1887) was superintendent of construction and repairs at Western Union Telegraph Company and a key figure in the development of White River Junction.

The Gates Memorial Library was established in 1907 on North Main Street in White River Junction. This project was accomplished largely through the efforts of Mrs. E. J. Wallace, the president of the Loyal Club. The club began meeting in Gates Memorial Library in April, 1907. That year also saw the club receive the Smith Memorial Fountain on April 6, and the deed of the library on November 5.

Arbor Day in 1906 found the town's tree warden setting out about 70 maple trees on Maple Street to replace trees lost in running the new telephone

line between the White River Junction and West Hartford. The Loyal Club and T. L. Hunt, road commissioner, shared in the work, the club furnishing 20 trees and Mr. Hunt supervising the planting.

Through the years there have been many more projects accomplished by the Loyal Club, which have been reported in many newspapers around Vermont.



Top, the Soldiers Monument was erected by the Loyal Club in 1893. Middle, the park created between the Junction House and train station. Bottom, the Gates Memorial Library served White River Junction from 1907-2000.

Hartford Plans for the Future of its Cemeteries

By Scott Fletcher



Art Peale of West Hartford is trying to solve a mystery. Oramel Bond and his wife Hannah are buried next to a son, a daughter, and a granddaughter on the second level of the Hartford Cemetery while another son and his wife are buried at the other end of a long row of graves. Oramel and his son died just a few weeks apart but their headstones are very different. And the headstones of the daughter and granddaughter are missing. Why was this family not buried together, why are some of the headstones different, and where are the missing markers?

Peale says it's possible the family was originally interred on their farm south of Hartford near Route 5, but the graves were moved when the interstate came through in the 'Sixties. Possibly, he says, some of the markers were replaced, family members were separated, and two markers were lost. He probed the ground around the graves but did not find the missing markers. Now, he would like to consult the records of the Hartford Cemetery Association but he's been denied access. "It's possible there are no records," he says.

Questions like this have often puzzled Peale since he started a business called *Gardens of Stone* to repair and maintain headstones in 2006. He has an annual contract with the Town of Hartford for repairing and cleaning headstones, building new bases, and clearing brush and branches. He also provides services for private clients and nearby communities. He used to work full time but has slowed a bit since hip surgery two years ago. "Age is catching up with me," says Peale who recently turned 81.

The most common question is what happened to so many markers? Looking across the Hartford Cemetery, Peale points out dozens of areas where there are depressions but no headstones. He recently found a marker that had sunk nearly a foot below the surface since it was placed in 1949. Having unearthed it, he will rebuild the base so the marker is again at ground level.



Art Peale (top left) has been tending Hartford's cemeteries since 2006. He cleans and repairs headstones, clears brush, and honors the memories of former residents. Top right, Peale recently completed work on the Tucker Cemetery in West Hartford. Above middle, he discovered and raised a headstone in the Hartford Cemetery that became buried over the past 50 years. Above, Peale used metal braces to repair stones with cracks near the base.



Top, stones in the Christian Street Cemetery carved by Gershom Bartlett whose whimsical work can be found across New England. Above, Peale recently began work on the secluded Delano/Savage Cemetery.

Art Peale recently restored the Tucker Cemetery on Route 14 north of West Hartford and is now focused on the Delano/Savage Cemetery. Located at the base of Jericho Street between Hartford and West Hartford, the site is hidden by trees and shrubs.

Hartford maintains seven small cemeteries that no longer have active associations including Center of Town, Delano/Savage, Potters Field, Russtown, Simonds, Tucker, and the Wright Family Tomb. Hartford Town Manager Leo Pullar says the town provides mowing and other services through the Parks and Recreation Department.

Peale says there is plenty of work to be done, including clearing a half-mile path to the Simonds Cemetery on King's Highway. "It was deeded over to the town in the 1800s but, until two years ago, the town didn't know it," he says. Now, the old cemetery is overgrown and virtually inaccessible.

Potter's Field is another of Hartford's forgotten resting places. It sits behind a lock and chain off the Old River Road as a reminder of one of the farms built to house indigent residents in the 1800s.

But some of Hartford's cemeteries are fascinating reminders of the town's early residents. Several are dotted with headstones by Gershom Bartlett who carved whimsical faces and shapes on markers throughout New England. Peale says the Christian Street Cemetery holds a number of these markers. In the Center of Town Cemetery sits a Gershom Bartlett marker that Peale restored from a dozen pieces. When necessary, he has a hoist allowing him to load heavy pieces in his truck for repair in his garage.

Leo Pullar explains that cemetery maintenance can be difficult and costly, and Hartford is not legally required to do it for sites other than the seven mentioned above. "But I believe we have a moral responsibility to do what we can," he says. The town formed a Cemetery Committee this year to look at issues such as funding and recordkeeping.

Hartford's nine other cemeteries continue to be privately operated. Christian Street, Hartford, Mt. Olivet, Quechee, St. Anthony's, and West Hartford receive funding from Hartford voters each year. These facilities still offer plots, but the growing demand for cremation has greatly reduced the market. Hartford employees help where they can. When water stopped flowing to the Hartford Cemetery recently, two employees fixed the problem on their way home from work.

Hartford's three other burial sites are completely private. These are the Ballardville Private Memorial Site, the Potwin Private Lot, and the grave of Azra Wyman at the Advent Campground.

Hartford recently received a grant to conduct an oral history project to capture the history of the town's cemeteries. The Cemetery Committee is also looking at the possibility of the town managing cemetery records, which are currently housed in various locations. "These records have been passed along over many generations so they are fragile," says Leo Pullar. "We are looking to see what is involved in converting them to the required format."

White River Junction resident Sue Buckholz has been active in the Quechee Cemetery Association and is now a member of Hartford's Cemetery Committee. "I'd like to see Hartford come up with a coherent plan for cemetery maintenance and recordkeeping," she says. "It's important that we continue to preserve these sites and when they can no longer be managed privately, I think the town should take over. It's part of being a town."

Meanwhile, Art Peale will continue cleaning up the Delano/Savage Cemetery. "I'm working on the trees and brush, and then I'm going to straighten the stones," he says. And he will continue doing "freebie" work at the Hartford Cemetery. "I care about these places," he says. "I care about the artwork, the history, and the people."

Just last week, Peale cleaned up about 30 markers in a "potter's field" section at the top of the Hartford Cemetery. "They were getting buried and no one else was taking care of them," he says. He loves the work. "I can't do as much as I used to but, if I can do a couple hours a day, I feel pretty good."

damaged or destroyed, bringing the total damage to an estimated \$4.7 billion in today's dollars. It holds the record as the most powerful and deadly hurricane in recorded New England history.

Harold Wright was going on 12 years old at the time, living on the family farm on Route 5, just south of White River Junction. Dairy farming was the family's principal livelihood, with "24 or 25" head of cattle.

The production of milk was stored in a cooler in the farm's milk house before being shipped to a creamery in Bellows Falls. The Wright's income was rounded out by raising potatoes, strawberries, hens and turkeys and by selling eggs. (Harold recalls an annual trip to the circus as his reward for his work on the farm.)

His parents, Seaver and Helen Wright, and Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Neal had departed for the Eastern States Exposition in Springfield, Massachusetts, on Tuesday of that week with the intention of staying for several days. However, when the heavy rains began on Wednesday, Mr. Wright grew uneasy and announced that he wanted to return home. Mr. Neal wanted to stay, but since he wasn't driving, there was no choice but to pack up and head for home. Fortunately, they arrived back in Vermont before much damage had occurred. Harold wonders how long it would have taken his parents to return had they not started out when they did, since roads were rendered impassable by fallen trees and debris for weeks to come.

The family managed to bring the cows into the barn for safety before the wind reached peak intensity. There was no electricity or phone service, so the family had to make do with flashlights when darkness set in. Harold and one of his brothers shared a room, and each thought the other had managed to fall asleep, but both were lying in their beds, praying that they would get through the night as the wind shook the house and rattled the windows and the rain came down in torrents. It was a terrifying experience for the young boys. A stand of poplar trees across the road was no match for the wind's velocity, and they toppled easily. However, the maples, having a deeper root system stayed upright. The house itself rode out the storm with relatively little damage, and the barn lost but a few shingles. Thankfully, the silos remained upright because they were on the backside of the barn and so were protected from the wind. As luck would have it, heifers in the back pasture that the family was unable to get into the barn survived. Fences were knocked down, so the milking cows couldn't be put out to pasture until they were repaired.



Storm debris surrounded the former home of Governor Samuel E. Pingree in Hartford Village.

The family was grateful that the farm had escaped devastating damage, but because the roads were blocked by fallen trees and other debris, the milk couldn't be shipped out. It was fed to the pigs and chickens or made into butter and cheese by Harold's mother. What they couldn't find a use for had to be dumped because without electricity there was no means to keep it cool. A week passed before the roads were cleared and traffic resumed.

There was a considerable loss of lumber on the Wright's property, perhaps as much as one million board feet. Harold recalls that lumber wasn't worth much back then, but they salvaged and cut 100,000 board feet and sold it to the government, doing the work manually with crosscut saws. The financial impact on the family was mitigated by the fact that they were self-sufficient and thrifty. Very little of their food was purchased. Harold recalls that he never had new clothes until he was married. Being the third son, he had plenty of hand-me-downs. His mother dressed the family in clothing donated to rummage sales by wealthy Hartford families, such as the Morrisses and the Pingrees, so the family wore good quality items purchased at reasonable prices.

He recalls that they had to curtail their activities for awhile, but the family's big annual outing had been the turkey supper at their church, so the impact wasn't significant. At the time, Harold was in fifth grade at the Municipal Building (recently renamed the Town Hall), and he remembers missing a week of school.

There was no loss of life locally as a result of the hurricane, and for that everyone was extremely thankful as they rolled up their sleeves and went to work repairing the damage. However, 80 years later, Harold vividly recalls in great detail the terror he experienced as a small boy on September 23, 1938.

Eighteen Hundred and Froze to Death

(Taken from the HHS files - source unknown)

Submitted by Art Peale

On April 10, 1815, one of the greatest cataclysms in human history occurred and was largely overlooked. Mount Tambora on the Indonesian island of Sumbawa exploded in the largest eruption since prehistoric times. Lava flows quickly killed more than 10,000 people on the island. At least 80,000 more died in the aftermath of diseases, famine and tsunamis that erupted after the volcano blew.

While people across the state lost their crops, Foster's corn crop, shielded by the warmth from those burning stumps, thrived. He not only had enough corn for the winter, but he had more than he could use as seed corn in the year to come.

be widespread and enduring. It was even felt in a corner of Franklin County that would come to be known as Egypt, after the Biblical land of plenty, because of a local farmer's response to the disaster.

A year after the eruption and half a world away, Nathaniel Foster was planting corn in a field that he had partly cleared. Foster, a veteran of the War of 1812, had recently relocated to Fairfield, Vermont from Massachusetts. Like many farmers, he decided that pulling out the tree stumps was so time consuming that it made sense to just leave them to rot. But rotting was a slow process, so, like many farmers, Foster planted his corn among the stumps. The stumps would prove to be just what the Fosters needed to survive the misery to come. Fortunately for many of his neighbors and others farther away, Foster had an ingenious mind paired with a generous heart.

Little could have prepared Vermonters for the freakish and devastating year to come. Looking back, people would call 1816 "the year without a summer," "the poverty year," "the famine year," or "eighteen hundred and froze to death." But it started with strangely mild weather. January and February saw

high temperatures of 46 degrees, and March saw a high of 52. That was nothing compared with April, when a heat wave pushed the temperature to 82.

The first sign of trouble came in mid-May. The nights of May 15-17 saw hard frosts. Vermonters might have forgotten those frosts by June 5, when the temperature rose well into the 80s. But the winds shifted at night, and a Canadian cold front drove the temperature down 40 to 50 degrees. Two days later, as an anonymous diarist in Brookfield succinctly put it, "Froze all day. Ground covered with snow all day. All the trees on the high land turned black."

Vermont and much of the Northern Hemisphere was experiencing the effects of Mount Tambora's eruption. The blast had blown an estimated 100 cubic miles of debris into the atmosphere. One researcher calculated that there was enough dust to cover the island of Manhattan a mile and a half deep. The high-altitude dust partly blocked out the sun, which to make matters worse, was experiencing a period of particularly low solar activity. In some parts of the Northern Hemisphere, the dust cloud darkened the sky and made it glow oddly. The airborne debris caused global cooling, particularly in New England. People didn't understand that a volcano halfway around the world could be the culprit.

Nathaniel Foster realized that if he did nothing, his crops were doomed, but what could he do? He thought of those stumps in the field. Maybe they were the answer. He decided to burn them in hopes of keeping the green shoots of his corn crop alive. The stumps didn't burst into flames, but smoldered. During the worst of the weather, Foster worked day and night, lighting and relighting the fires, according to a Fairfield Town History. While people across the state lost their crops, Foster's corn crop, shielded by the warmth from those burning stumps, thrived. He not only had enough corn for the winter, but he had more than he could use as seed corn in the year to come. Meanwhile, many other Vermonters feared that they wouldn't have seed corn to plant in 1817.

Foster's unexpected bounty could have made him a rich man. The price of corn had skyrocketed. Before 1816, corn generally brought anywhere from 75 cents to \$1.12 a bushel in the New York marketplace.

Continued on page 11.



“Hats Off” to Our Local Business Supporters!

Benefactors
Geobarns

Patrons
Cloverleaf Jewelers
Merchants Bank

LET OUR BUSINESS MEMBERS KNOW YOU APPRECIATE THEIR SUPPORT!

C&G Creative Catering

Charlie Brown's
Outdoor Equipment

John Sherman
Photography, Inc.

Main Street Museum

Meeting House
Furniture Restoration

Rockwood Land Services
LLC

Route 4 Country Store

Schaal Electric

Studio Nexus

Hartford Historical Society
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Memberships run for a calendar year (Jan-Dec).

Individual \$20.00 per year
 Family (same address) \$25.00 per year
 Senior \$15.00 per year
 Senior Family (same address) \$20.00 per year
 Institutional \$30.00 per year
 Special Gift of Support \$ _____

Name: _____ Additional Names: _____
 Address: _____ City: _____
 State: _____ ZIP Code: _____ Phone: _____
 e-mail: _____
 Comments: _____

The Hartford Historical Society is a non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.
 Mail this completed form, along with a check payable to Hartford Historical Society, to:
 Hartford Historical Society, Attn: Treasurer, P.O. Box 547, Hartford, VT 05047-0547

THANK YOU!

Hartford Historical Society
BUSINESS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Memberships run for a calendar year (Jan-Dec).

Contact Name: _____
 Business Name: _____
 Address: _____ City: _____
 State: _____ ZIP Code: _____ Phone: _____
 e-mail: _____

Corporate/Business: \$50 ___ Patron: \$100 ___ Benefactor: \$250 ___ Other: _____

Special Opportunities for Higher Levels of Support

Silver Sponsor: \$500 ___ Gold Sponsor: \$1000 ___ Platinum Sponsor: \$2500 ___

The Hartford Historical Society is a non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.
 Mail this completed form, along with a check payable to Hartford Historical Society, to:
 Hartford Historical Society, Attn: Treasurer, P.O. Box 547, Hartford, VT 05047-0547

THANK YOU!

“Siri” Comes to White River Junction

By Judy Barwood

The recent SIRI fundraising event presented by the Hartford Historical Society on July 20 at the Engine Room in White River Junction was an evening of good food by Maple Street Catering, interesting information, and great music.

Susan Cameron Bennett talked about her life as Siri, how it happened and her experiences since then. Siri is the person on Apple’s original iPhone who answers all your questions. Her father, Everett Warren Cameron, was born on South Main Street, White River Junction and graduated from Hartford High School. He was one of nine children of Carl Warren Cameron and Caroline Latham Wallace. Her mother was Bertha Colby of Plainfield, NH. Susan herself was born in Burlington, Vermont, and spent her younger years in Massachusetts. She graduated from Brown University and now lives in Atlanta, Georgia.

The audience enjoyed the 60’s and 70’s songs sung and played by Susan and her husband, Rick Hinkle with Susan on the keyboard and Rick on the guitar. They had a private event band, “Interactive,” for over two decades and they still continue to work together in their soul band, “Boomers Gone Wild!” Susan also toured as a backup singer with Burt Bacharach and Roy Orbison and does commercial work in Atlanta. Her website is www.SusanCBennett.com.

It certainly was exciting to have a celebrity with local roots visit our town and perform for our benefit. The Historical Society realized just over \$1000. Thanks to Maple Street Catering, Hanover Strings, Brandon Fox, Zack Davis, Piecemeal Pie, NBC Channel 31 news, the *Valley News*, members of the Society and all who attended and contributed to make this event a success.



Eighteen Hundred and Froze to Death continued from page 9.

Because of the early summer frosts, the price rose from \$1.25 in August and hit \$1.75 in early 1817.

People began referring to Foster’s corner of Fairfield as Egypt, after the Bible story in which Jacob sends his sons to Egypt to buy corn.

spring 1817, a bushel cost \$5 in Barnard. Some saw the crisis as a chance to get rich. A Newbury man took a boatload of corn up the Connecticut River and sold it for five times the normal rate.

When word of Foster’s bounty got out, he received generous offers for his corn. Bankers traveled from St.

Prices were dramatically higher in Vermont. In the fall of 1816, a bushel of corn had reached \$2.50 in Newbury and \$3 in Peachham. By

Albans to visit Foster on his farm. They offered him \$5 a bushel, thinking they could turn around and sell the corn for still more to desperate Vermonters. Foster rejected the offer. He wasn’t holding out for a higher price, but wanted to sell it for less, and not to speculators. Instead, he sold it the next spring to neighbors and people from throughout northwestern Vermont and Canada. The cost? One dollar a bushel. Foster limited how much each person could buy in order to make the seed corn go as far as possible, or perhaps to deter speculators. People began referring to Foster’s corner of Fairfield as Egypt, after the Bible story in which, during a famine, Jacob sends his sons to Egypt to buy corn.

The story of Nathaniel Foster is largely forgotten today, even in Fairfield, but you can still find Egypt Road and Egypt Cemetery where Foster is buried near the field where he grew his corn.

Hartford Historical Society

Post Office Box 547

Hartford, VT 05047-0547

Return Service Requested

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 15



This newsletter is in color thanks to
JAS Auto

HHS Calendar

OPEN HOUSE at the Garipay House

THE GARIPAY HOUSE MUSEUM will be open to the public Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10 a.m. to Noon or by appointment 802/280-2221. Look for the flag or contact us at 802/296-3132.

MONTHLY MEETINGS are open to the public on the fourth Thursday of the month at the Garipay House at 6:30 p.m. (Please check for exact date.)

BUGBEE HISTORY HOUR is on the fourth Wednesday of each month at the Bugbee Senior Center in the library, 1 p.m. to 2 p.m.

SUMMER OPEN HOUSE will be the second Sunday of September at the Garipay House from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Wednesday, September 12, 2018 – "**Growing Up and Growing Old in the Upper Valley Region,**" presented by **Stephen Taylor**, 7 p.m. at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ, 1721 Maple Street, Hartford Village. Refreshments.

Saturday and Sunday, September 8-9, 2018 – **Glory Days of the Railroad**, Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Saturday, October 13, 2018 - **A Valley Quest in the Maple Street Cemetery**, "Hartford in the Civil War Quest" with local experts to share fascinating stories about the families and graves. Meet at the cemetery at 1:30 p.m. for a not-so-spooky guided tour.

The **Genealogy Center** on the second floor of the Hartford Library is open on Tuesday afternoons from 1-3 p.m. Mary Ann Devins will be happy to assist you in exploring the resources we have and in accessing information from *The Landmark*, which we have on microfiche. Just drop in on Tuesdays or call the library to set up an appointment.