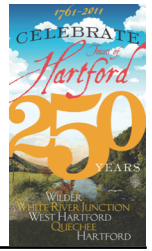




Hartford Historical Society

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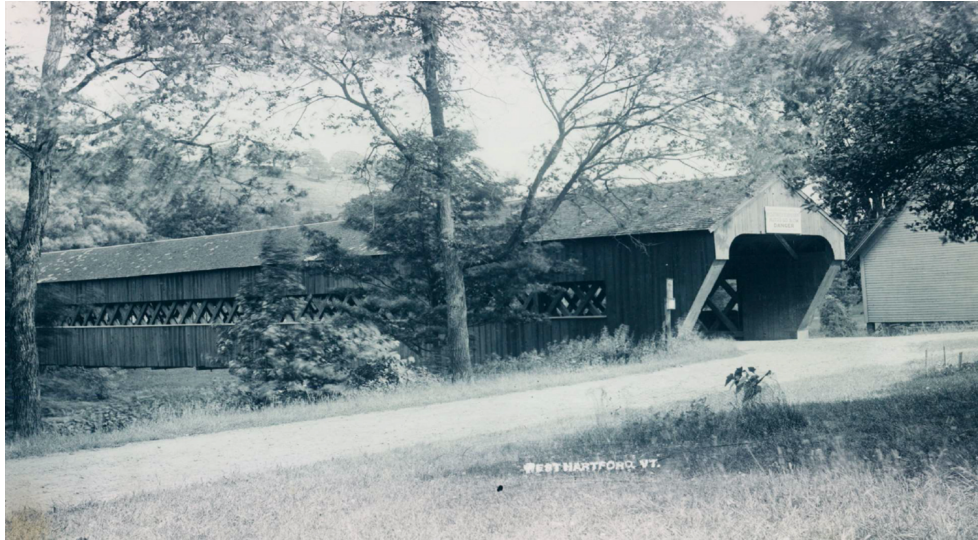
HARTFORD • QUECHEE • WEST HARTFORD • WHITE RIVER JUNCTION • WILDER



Volume 35, No. 5

SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

November-December 2022



The Disturbing Past of the West Hartford Bridge

By James M. Kenison

Many of us remember the old steel bridge that stood for many years in West Hartford – the predecessor to the current bridge. But do any of us remember the prior bridge? Or three? Probably not at this point, but West Hartford has had a total of five bridges dating back to the year 1820. Reading through some of the incidents surrounding the bridges in West Hartford sounds more like a campfire story designed to frighten than a history lesson.

Two men by the names of Bement and Adams built the first bridge in 1820. Tucker, in his *History of Hartford*, describes it as an open king-post bridge that was quite “ungainly” and had to be taken down in 1827.

The first bridge was replaced by a covered bridge built by Daniel Baldwin of Montpelier at a cost of about \$4,000. This was a Burr Truss style double barrel bridge. It had two lanes of travel divided by wooden supports down the center of the bridge. This bridge stood until February 10, 1867.

The third bridge (second covered bridge) had a squared-timber lattice truss with a laminated arch. This was built in 1867 by local bridge builder James F.

Tasker at a cost of precisely \$6,110.79. Mr. Tasker built other bridges in town and the surrounding area as well. This bridge served West Hartford proudly until November 1927.

Since my main interest lies in the history of covered bridges and wooden truss bridges, I won't go into details regarding the two bridges that followed. I did, however, allude to some eerie incidents regarding the wooden bridges in West Hartford. Here are some of those, courtesy of Tucker's *History of Hartford*.

1827 – While Mr. Baldwin was working on the second bridge, a great flood came and washed away his trestle work with a considerable amount of his frame timber. At the same time, about 40 feet in width of the east bank washed away carrying with it John Tenney's

West Hartford's third bridge was built by James Tasker in 1867 and was one of three bridges in the village destroyed by floods. Photo by George Fellows. Dartmouth College Photographic Files, 2014.

Continued on page 4.

From the Editor . . .

Before I forget, we would love to have copies of the following *Quechee Times* issues: 2021—Summer, Fall, Winter, 2022—Spring, Summer.

Also, I'm told that the refrigerator at the Garipay House has expired. A dorm-sized unit will meet the need and we would welcome donations for that purpose. They cost about \$275. Thank you.

People ask, "Scott, where does the expression 'stark naked' come from?" I had to look it up. The word "stark" is thought to be rooted in the old English term "stert," or "steort," meaning tail. So "stert naked" literally meant "tail naked" or "naked to the tail." The word stert may have a Norse origin and we can only guess how the phrase was first used.

Like many words, "stert" transitioned to "stark" around 1540 when English bibles were printed. Seeing their language on paper, people standardized words to form what is now called the early modern English language. Therein lies the tail.

A Proclamation

Governor Thomas Chittenden

October 18, 1784

As public praise and gratitude ever become public bodies, I do hereby appoint Thursday the second day of December as a day of public THANKSGIVING and I do hereby earnestly recommend to all persons residing within the same, carefully to observe said day that we might with united hearts render Thanksgiving and praise to our divinely bountiful Benefactor for all his mercies, both of a public and private nature. He has changed the condition of the American States from anxiety and distress to confidence and tranquillity so that we, in this state, so sensibly experience the greatness of the change, that the commotions of the state are so happily quieted, that civil government is so permanently established, and the blessings of it so greatly increased by the plentiful productions of the Earth. All servile labor is strictly forbidden on that day.

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.

This issue features an article on the quirky history of West Hartford's three covered bridges by Jim Kenison. That unpredictable stretch of the White River has had five bridges over the years. Jim is researching Hartford's covered bridges for a possible book and would welcome more information or photos from our readers (jmkenison70@gmail.com).

The Hartford Historical Preservation Commission has hired Neil Silberman to research the town's performing arts history. If you have memories of any arts venues, the 1961, 1991, or 2011 celebrations, the circus, drive-in, theaters, etc., please contact Matt Osborn (mosborn@hartford-vt.org), or call 802/295-3075.

In September, George Miller gave a well-attended talk on dairy farming in the Jericho District. George is a knowledgeable speaker as well as Hartford's last dairy farmer. His talk is well worth watching on *YouTube*.

Scott Fletcher, Editor



Hartford Historical Society

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Vermonters Have Long Used and Abused Opium

**DR. MOORE'S
ESSENCE OF LIFE,**
A valuable Medicine, lately discovered, which, if rightly applied, will be the means of snatching thousands from the jaws of death. It has been found very efficacious in the following diseases, viz.:

Consumption, Hooping Cough, common Coughs, colds, difficult breathing, Influenza, Quinsy, Asthma, Phthisic, Spitting of Blood, Flatulency, Indigestion, Looseness of the Bowels, Fits of every kind, Cramps, Rickets, Scurvy, Colic, Catarrh, Dysentery, Fainting, Hypochondriac Affections, Head-Aches, Sickness at Stomach, Measles, a preventative of contagious diseases, Gout, and Rheumatism.

¶ This Essence answers a valuable purpose in almost every case of debility; and there are but few, if any diseases which do not arise from that source. It may be given to either sex, and at any period if weakness prevail; the composition being entirely derived from the vegetable kingdom. The Hooping Cough may be cured in a week, if taken at the commencement of the disease. Dose for an adult, forty drops, taken clear, repeated once in two hours, in urgent cases; a child eight years old, 20; one a year old, 10, given in a table spoonful of milk. The best mode of giving the drops to infants is in a little breast milk. But respect must be paid to the age and constitution of the patient, for some will bear double the quantity that others will. The better way is to begin with small doses, and increase as the patient may require.

Certificate from Capt. J. Tilden, of Hartford, Vt.
This may certify all whom it may concern, that I, the subscriber, have for a number of years been personally acquainted with Dr. J. Moore's Essence of Life, and find it to be a very efficacious medicine in many diseases in my own family, and among my neighbours. I have one child that was given over for an incurable case by my physicians. We made preparations for the last solemn duty we owe to a fellow mortal.—The Doctors observed it made no difference what the child took—it was out of the reach of medicine. I had recourse to the Essence of Life. To my great surprise, it gave my child relief, which I have every reason to believe we should have lost, if the medicine had not been freely used. I can cheerfully recommend the Essence to my friends and public in general.

JOSIAH TILDEN.
To all whom it may concern.
We, the undersigned Physicians, who have proved the efficacy of Dr. Jonathan Moore's Essence of Life, conceive it our duty to patronize the medicine, and are of opinion that, if generally used, it will be of public utility.

ABEL DUNCAN, Dummerston.
SAMUEL STEARNS, do.
WILLIAM TOWN, Westminster,
C. W. CHANDLER, Andover.
ABRAHAM HOLLAND, Walpole.
JONATHAN BADGER, Westminster.
NATHAN STONE, New-Fane.
PERRIN HARRIS, Chesterfield.
CHARLES BLAKE, Keene.
PHINEAS PARKHURST, Lebanon.

* The above Medicine is sold by Blake Cutler, & Co. Bellows Falls, Vermont; Isaac Reddington, Esq. Walpole; and Messrs. Doolittle & Mudge, Winchester, New Hampshire; D. Chapin, Greenfield; Williston and Hunt, Brattleboro', Vt. 5 coply

Dr. Jonathan Moore was a Vermont physician who grew poppies and produced a potent opium tonic that he called the *Essence of Life*. In 1825, he advertised his product in the *Brattleboro Messenger* with a testimonial from Hartford resident Josiah Tilden and endorsements from a list of physicians including Dr. Phineas Parkhurst who, in his youth, sounded the alarm about the Royalton raid of 1780. After receiving treatment for a gunshot wound suffered during the raid, Parkhurst studied medicine and went on to practice in Lebanon, NH for many years.

In those days, sufferers around the world not only consumed opium, they could prescribe it for themselves. Not yet known to be addictive or deadly, the word among Vermonters was that opium brought relief unlike anything else. Parents often used it to help infants sleep.

Many stores kept opium in various forms and sold it to whoever could pay. It could be purchased in raw form as well as in products such as Allen's Lung Balsam, Bateman's Pectoral Drops, Dr. Bull's Cough Syrup, Dr. Carter's Compound, Dover's Powder, Godfrey's Cordial, Dr. Munn's Elixer of Opium, Paregoric Elixer, Perry Davis' Pain Killer, Scott's Emulsion, and Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup.

Opium use became even more widespread when Vermont prohibited the manufacture and sale of alcohol in 1852. In 1879, the Vermont Pharmaceutical Association tried to implement a written prescription protocol, but the medical community refused to change its ways of handling medications. Physicians also feared the liability that might follow if patients became addicted.

In 1883, Hartford's weekly newspaper *The Landmark* printed instructions for making an opium-based remedy for cholera and noted that it would prevent diarrhea, dysentery, colic, and other complaints. At the same time, *The Landmark* carried ads for tonics to cure opium addiction.

In 1898, Dr. Ashbel Parmlee Grinnell of UVM reported that Vermonters used the equivalent of one and a half doses of opium per adult every day of the year. Dr. Grinnell suspected his estimate was far less than the real use. In 1902, future Vermont Governor Percival Clement said, "There is more morphine, chloral, opium and kindred drugs consumed in our state per capita than in any other state in the Union."

The Vermont Legislature finally addressed opium abuse in 1915, when it passed "An Act to Regulate the Sale of Opium, Morphine and other Narcotic Drugs." The bill required that opium, morphine, and other narcotics be sold by prescription. That same year, the U.S. Congress passed a law preventing the sale of cocaine, opium, and morphine without a physician's prescription.

Top left, the reference to "vegetable kingdom" in this ad from the Brattleboro Reformer in 1848 reflects that Dr. Moore grew his own opium poppies. Center left, Josiah Tilden said the tonic brought his child relief. Bottom left, Dr. Phineas Parkhurst endorsed the Essence of Life and said, "if generally used, it would be of public utility."

store, a potash, and other buildings. I imagine it had an impact on Baldwin's design and budget for the bridge which now had to be considerably longer than originally planned. Stephen Downer and another man, while attempting to save the trestle timber, were surrounded by rising water, and escaped by being pulled to shore by rope.

1833 – A Mr. Bullard and his daughter from Pomfret were crossing the bridge one night when their horse became frightened, and all landed in the river, thirty feet below. Miss Bullard was killed outright, while Mr. Bullard and the horse were only slightly injured. Tucker notes that, “the old man had been drinking New England rum, the last glass of which he took at the store of Baxter B. Newton, but a few minutes preceding the accident.”

1848 – John Steele, a merchant in West Hartford, went out with some village boys to inspect some melon patches. While returning to his store, they heard a team approaching and ran into the north side of the bridge to escape discovery. During the day the flooring had been removed from the south side of the bridge. Forgetting this, Steele went over the dividing partition between the two sides, and over the obstruction put up to prevent teams passing. Missing his foothold, Steele fell to the solid rock about fifteen feet below, and was nearly killed. He lived just a few years after that and never fully recovered from the injuries caused by the accident. He did, however, recover in a suit for damages against the town about \$1500.

1867 – On February 10th, the second bridge was taken out by flood.

1927 – in November the third bridge at West Hartford was taken out by flood.



View of the third covered bridge in West Hartford taken by George Fellows. Dartmouth College Photographic Files, 2015. This bridge was replaced in 1929 by a steel truss bridge similar to the bridge in Sharon, which was built about the same time and is now on the National Register of Historic Places. The current bridge in West Hartford was built in 2006. West Hartford's bridges were destroyed by floods in 1827, 1867, and 1927.

Do you have any memories of any covered bridges (including railroad bridges) in the town of Hartford? Maybe photographs or postcards that were passed down? I am currently researching the history of the fourteen or so historic covered bridges that have existed over the years in Hartford. All authentic covered bridges are long gone, with only the current Quechee covered bridge remaining.

It is my goal to prepare future articles, and perhaps a booklet with an accompanying PowerPoint presentation to be presented at a future date. If you have any memories, photos, postcards, newspaper articles, etc., please contact me. My email is jmkenison70@gmail.com. I'd love to hear from you.

James M. Kenison is a board member of the Hartford Historical Society, chairman of the Historical Committee of the Vermont Covered Bridge Society, and a member of the National Society for the Preservation of Covered Bridges. He is also the administrator of the Hartford Historical Society Facebook group.

Abenaki Spent Millenia in Hartford

By Scott Fletcher

Thousands of prehistoric Native archaeological sites are located in Vermont and at least two of them are in Hartford. One is along the Connecticut River in White River Junction where the town's wastewater treatment plant sits. The other is on the Ottaquechee River in Quechee Gorge. Both sites have been partially excavated. The White River Junction site has been dated to about 1000 B.C. and the Quechee site is dated to about 1460 A.D..

Like many of Vermont's prehistoric Native sites, these would not have been discovered if they were not in the path of construction projects. "There aren't a great number of archeological sites in the Hartford area," says Vermont State Archaeologist Jess Robinson. "This is a little surprising because there is so much frontage on the Connecticut River, but there was logging and other early development of the river shore, which may have destroyed or buried archaeological sites in the area."

Robinson says that Native Americans in Vermont didn't leave stone buildings or other lasting marks on the landscape. "I often say that native archaeology in Vermont is not like excavating a Mayan temple in Mesoamerica. There's no single site or even single town or region that will tell a complete story. It's all about synthesis of a large numbers of sites to arrive at an understanding," he says.

Archaeologists have used distinctive artifacts and their contexts in the soil to identify three distinct periods of prehistory. "The oldest era is known as the Paleoindian Period, which in Vermont dates from about 12,700 years ago to about 9,500 years ago," says Robinson. "That's typically broken into the early, middle, and late Paleoindian Period defined by radiocarbon dates, also by changes in spear point styles and in the materials used to make spear points and other tools.

"The next period is the Archaic Period, which goes from about 10,000 years ago to about 3,000 years ago, a broad sweep of time. The final period is called the Woodland Period, which goes from about 3,000 years ago to the time of European contact, which was about 1600 A.D. here in Vermont."

Robinson says the more recent of the two known archaeological sites may have been a farming community. "They probably adopted corn, bean, squash agriculture around 1000 A.D. or a thousand years ago," he says. "Before that, they were very adept

at hunting, gathering, and fishing with a nuanced knowledge of the plants, animals, and landscape in their broad environment. These people probably moved about seasonally," says Robinson, "maybe staying from late spring, summer, and early fall in one place and then breaking off in smaller family units for the winter and early spring. They lived in larger communities for planting, maintenance, harvesting, and processing."

Hartford's early inhabitants, the Abenaki, knew the utility of various types of stone, where to find them, and how to shape them into tools. "They had an intimate knowledge of materials they could get in Vermont and also in New Hampshire," says Robinson. "This shows that the Connecticut River was really a locus of travel and community."

But the story of Hartford's archaeological sites may not be complete. "It's a story that is still unfolding and waiting to be told by future sites that are yet to be discovered," says Robinson. "But, in a general sense," he says, "we have revealed a number of things about the lifeways of these people. For example, they were Algonquian speakers so they shared a broad language base with a number of groups in the Northeast, Great Lakes Region, and Subarctic. Also, they were patrilineal. In general, they traced their descent through the father's line."

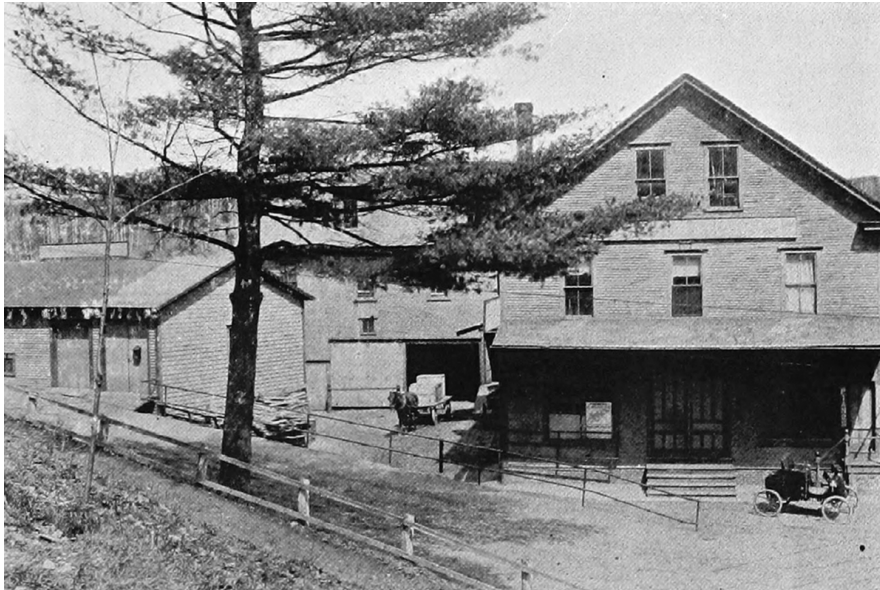
Asked if there was general equality between the sexes, Robinson replied that, "There were distinct roles for men and women but it doesn't appear that either sex was valued more highly than the other."

"They assuredly had a very extensive and rich cosmology," he continues. "We know that through oral histories, creation myths, and stories that were recorded after European contact and even today by Abenaki descendants." They were familiar with the stars. "The Pleiades were particularly important," says Robinson. "They had a belief system about the world and universe, which includes extra-natural precepts. Algonquian groups believed that an animate spirit coursed through everything."

Hartford's Abenaki villages could not survive the arrival of European settlers. "What basically happened," says Robinson, "was that by the late 1700s, living on the Connecticut River became too dangerous, so some Abenaki moved to the interior, some went to Canada, some were absorbed into the American milieu and are still living among us."

Bill Miller Recalls Bustling Times in White River Junction

Interview by Judy Barwood



ONE HUNDRED CARTS!
Finest Line of Carriages and Wagons,
Ever offered to the Public in Windsor County.

BIG LINE OF HARNESSES & WHIPS.

About the 5th of April, I will have at my repository in North Hartland, Vt., 100 Road and Speed Carts, comprising all the leading and most popular styles in the market, which will be sold at prices that defy competition and satisfaction guaranteed. My Stock of Harnesses is complete and larger than ever before. I have the best Harness for \$15, in the state. Come and see it? My stock of Carriages will be larger and finer this season than ever before. Many improvements have been made in the past year in the regular line of work, and many new and desirable styles have been brought out.

My stock will be complete about May 1st. Parties desiring to see me in person can find me at home any Saturday! My Brother, H. J. Miller, will look after the business during my absence. Give us a call.

H. R. MILLER, North Hartland, Vt.
New England Agent for the
Excelsior Carriage Co., Watertown, N. Y.
MARCH 17, '90.

William "Bill" Miller grew up in Hartford, VT and ran the Miller Automotive Company for many years. Miller was the third generation family member to head the company, which was started by his grandfather Henry Miller in 1880 when he became an exclusive agent of the Excelsior Carriage Company of Watertown, NY. By 1890, Henry Miller and his brother Herbert had a showroom in North Hartland and advertised carriages for sale in the Landmark. In 1895, the brothers opened Excelsior Carriages in White River Junction.

Bill Miller's father, Dusty Miller, showed an aptitude for the family business. While Henry Miller was away on business in 1902, Dusty signed a contract to sell Jaxon steam cars and the Miller family was soon in the automobile business. One of Dusty's first transactions was to trade a steam car for an early, single-cylinder Cadillac. A year later, Dusty had made ten trips to Boston's Cadillac dealer to purchase vehicles that he drove home and sold. In 1907, Henry Miller changed the company name to the Miller Automobile Company.

Bill Miller joined the family business after being discharged from the U.S. Navy in 1946. He ran it until 1987, which marked the company's eightieth anniversary. The Miller Auto Group subsequently changed ownership and is now based in Lebanon NH.

In this edited transcript, Judy Barwood asks Bill Miller to look back at his family's business and his childhood in White River Junction.

What do you remember about Miller Auto?

Miller Auto actually started as a carriage shop. They sold carriages, sleighs, harnesses, and all the rigging necessary for a horse to pull a carriage--plus blankets, umbrellas, whips, and whatever goes in the line of buggy accessories.

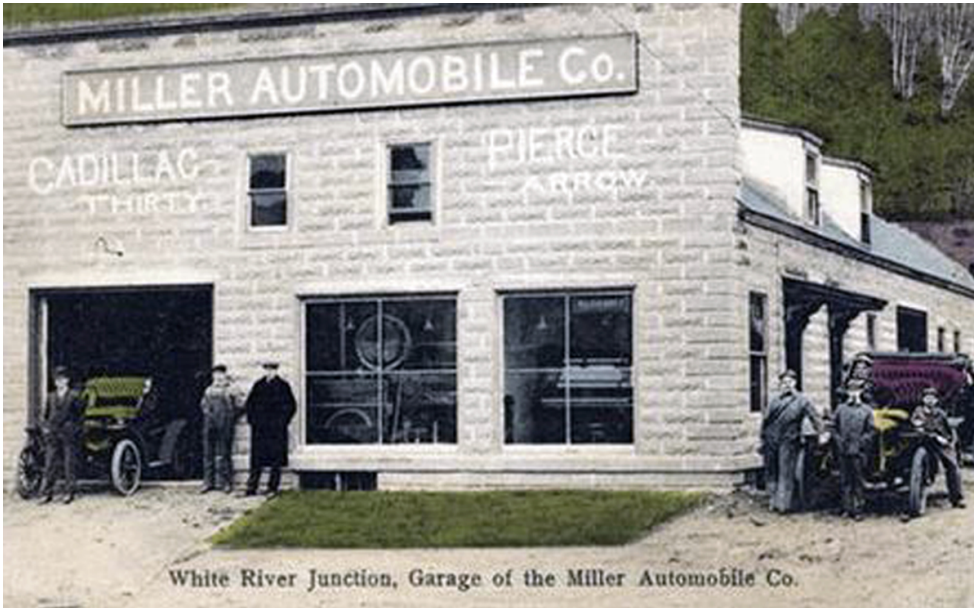
The company was started by my grandfather Henry Miller with help from his brother Herbert. My father Dusty Miller started working there in his teens. They were located in what later became Shepherd's Plumbing business on North Main Street in White River Junction. The building is now occupied by the Upper Valley Coop Food Store.

My father decided that the automobile might be of some interest so he got a franchise and set up the auto agency. That was about 1902, give or take, and it grew from there.

My father's name was Garfield Miller but people called him Dusty. People used to ask how he got that name and he said, 'Well, I used to pedal a bicycle when I came to work and my shoes were always quite dusty.' The name stuck with him throughout his life.

How were cars transported here?

By rail mostly. Some used to be shipped from Detroit to Buffalo, NY and then we would drive them over the road from Buffalo, which was quite a journey back in those days.



The Excelsior Carriage Company opened on North Main Street in White River Junction in 1895. The photo, opposite, shows a carriage and an automobile. The name was changed to the Miller Automobile Company in 1907. Henry Miller ran ads in The Landmark in 1890 for his first showroom in North Hartland. Left, the company later opened a showroom on Gates Street.

Did Miller Auto sell all Cadillacs?

Yep. Then we had a variety of franchises over the years--quite a few as a matter of fact, both domestic and foreign. We also used to sell Diamond T trucks and Garfield trucks. And we used to sell a lot of tractors--crawler tractors--used them for plowing snow and construction work.

Did your family build the home on Gates Street?

It was already built when we bought it. Then it burned and was rebuilt. The barn used to be the paint shop for Miller Auto Company. Painting was quite a big thing in those days because finishes didn't last very long. Quite frequently, people had their cars painted almost once year. They used a varnish and it didn't stand the elements very well.

What was it like growing up in White River Junction?

It was a very active town. On Saturdays, everybody would come in and buy their groceries or do their shopping as they had a good variety of stores. There was a lot of activity from the railroad. There used to be maybe thirty trains that stopped at this station every day going to Boston, heading north, or going south to New York and Washington, DC. It was smoky for sure as all the trains were coal-fired. I can remember as a kid raking leaves and coming home for supper perfectly black. Mother used to get so mad.

When the Hotel Coolidge burned completely back in 1926, I was home from school with either mumps or

measles and I could see the fire from my bedroom window. It was quite an entertaining spectacle. A lot of people who owned stores in town were concerned that they might be engulfed in flames. Miller Auto, being across the street from the Coolidge, moved a lot of their cars off the location for fear that the fire might spread there. There was a ladies dry goods store, a men's clothing store, a couple of drug stores, some old newsstands, and a couple of restaurants and they were all very, very concerned--and rightfully so.

My school is now the Hartford Municipal Building. One unique feature was the fire escapes that they had. They were big tubes that you would jump into and slide down to a big pile of sawdust. We used to love fire drills.

We had some great teachers. Very dedicated. There were some teachers who loved their pupils and made a career out of teaching. There was a lady who was the principal of the school and also taught. Her name was Reagan. She was a stern, but very good, teacher. She had a friend by the name of Keating who was also a devoted teacher and was there for many years. As a first-grader, I fell in love with my teacher, Marion Davis. I believe her father had a dairy farm.

In the second grade, I had a teacher by the name of Bowden who was also very good. Then I fell in love with my third grade teacher whose name was Welch. My fifth grade teacher was a lady by the name of Miss Andrews. She was a stern gal who lived on a farm south of the White River.

Continued on page 8.

We came home for lunch. I guess kids who lived a greater distance brought their own lunches because there were no school lunch program then. Then, along came the great flood in 1927. I got up one morning and school was completely closed and we were all delighted. It took a long time before they got it open again.

Then we went up to what is now the elementary school. They built a lovely gymnasium there in about 1935 and they added some added classrooms. I was in the class of 1937 but, the last two years, I got sent off to a prep school in Hanover called the Clark School. I am still associated with the Class of '37 at Hartford and try to keep in touch with those who are still around. There was Bob Blanchard who lived up on Taft Flat and Babe Falzarano who later owned a grocery store. And I think there was a guy who used to own a storage garage in town, Huber Kendall, who was there for many years. John Cone

was there for a year or two.

Salespeople would come to White River Junction on trains, and they would line up waiting to register for a room at the Hotel Coolidge. The next morning they would rent a horse and buggy to go to Norwich, Thetford, and Strafford to make their calls and sell their wares.

After the war, I took off my uniform and went to work at Miller Auto. I was thoroughly happy there. I was a real square peg in a square hole and I loved the work. I loved the people I was working with and our

customers. It was fun selling a product that changed yearly, and it was an enjoyable time.

Do you remember any particular people in town who were important to you?

Oh sure. I remember the owner of the Hotel Coolidge, a man by the name of Than Wheeler. Very colorful guy. He ran a nice hotel here and did extremely well with it. He rebuilt it after the fire.

I can remember stories of large groups of salespeople who would come to White River Junction on trains, and I understand they would line up waiting to register for a room at the Hotel Coolidge. Then the next morning they would go to the livery stable, which was called Wilson's Livery I believe, and they would



Dusty Miller, right, started selling automobiles in 1902. Here he delivers a 1956 Cadillac Fleetwood to artist Maxfield Parrish.

rent a horse and buggy to go to Norwich, Thetford, and Strafford to make their calls and sell their wares. Then they would come back here to spend the night and take off the next day.

I remember Alfred Watson who had an insurance business here in town. We played in the opening basketball game at the new gymnasium in what is now the elementary school. We played Proctor and, unfortunately, they beat us so we were quite disappointed to lose the first game in that lovely new gymnasium. Mr. Watson came into the locker room and said, 'Well boys don't worry. When I was in Harvard, why Harvard lost their first game in their brand new gymnasium.' He was quite a character.

Of course there are a lot of stories about Raymond Trainor. He was an attorney and he was very, very colorful. Long gray hair, very distinguished looking gentlemen, and I could see with his mannerisms and his ability to articulate how he would charm a jury. He was very successful and had quite a few attorneys that started with him.

There were a lot of wholesale operations in town. A big wholesale fruit company called Twin State Fruit. There was a big wholesale grocery called Cross Abbott located where Vermont Salvage is now. And there was Bogle Jewelers, Twin State Electric, Shepherd's Plumbing, the White River Paper Company, and Smith Baking.

White River Junction was quite an active community, especially before the war, but things changed with the decline of the railroads.

Charley Taylor, Honest Horseman

Charles R. Cummings

Excerpted from *The Vermonter*, January, 1907

About a mile from White River Junction lives a veteran driver, probably the oldest in the country, possibly in the world. He resides with the son of the late Chas. B. Ballard, his former employer. Not infrequently, he is still spends a few minutes in the office of the hotel that the Ballards used to run, and here "old Charley" is always sure of a welcome.

Everyone wants to shake his hand, note his vigorous personality, and his unassuming speech. He is now 101 years old. He looked to be an old man forty years ago when he drove *Empress*, *Miller's Damsel*, and *Snowflake* of the famous Ballard string.

When the writer visited Mr. Taylor the other day, he found him on the old Ballard farm, sweeping the light snow away from the outbuildings so that his forty *Plymouth Rocks* could walk around and pick up the gravel he had piled on the banking. He attends them morning and night. Next day, Mr. Ballard showed Mr. Taylor into the office. He stood in the middle of the floor, neatly clad in cap and stout jacket, and entertained a delighted circle for an hour with racing experiences. He declined two invitations to sit down.

Charley Taylor is in remarkable form for his years. His mind is, "clear as a whip." He enralls his hearers and convulses them with laughter. He is a perfect encyclopedia of racetrack experience. He is not at all abashed by the presence of strangers for, as he says, he frequently shakes hands with a thousand or more people at fairs.

He is such an honest horseman that he is adored by the people and has often been lifted from the sulky after winning a race and carried triumphantly on the shoulders of men past a wildly applauding grandstand.

"A horse knows more than he gets credit for," he says. He rarely carries a whip. He and his horse are good friends. They will do anything for him. A quiet, quick word in the last heat of an exhausting race was enough to put *Factory Boy* into the gap at any time or under the wire to win.

On one occasion, after two successful heats, a horseowner was seized with the colic and implored Charley to drive the next heat for him. There were twelve good horses in the field, but Charley won the heat and the race. The man offered him half the purse and he refused it. He didn't do it for pay.

He drove *Factory Boy*, the famous gray gelding, for sixteen years. The old gentleman says, "He was a sure



Charley Taylor at age 101 in 1907 with pacer Robert B.

winner." His great coup of fourteen years ago was when he won successive races with *Factory Boy* in Montreal, Burlington, and Plattsburg.

Mr. Taylor spent his early years in Canada. At eight years young, he became accustomed to the saddle. At first, he was a professional jockey and could distance all competitors in running races on the roads, for racetracks were almost unknown.

He soon engaged in selling horses. Taylor and a companion would collect the best animals of the vicinity, tie them to a long rope and, with Taylor astride the leader, they passed down to the states, selling to whosoever fancied them.

On one of these occasions, he met Chas. B. Ballard who had heard of the horse dealer and engaged him to care for his racing stable near White River Junction. He had a fine farm of 750 acres and always had four or five "winners."

Mr. Taylor eats plain food and takes his time about it. He works steadily every day about the farm. He retires early. "That is what saves a man. Work to eat. Work to sleep. If a man can't sleep, he'll wear out. Never had a doctor. No backache, no headache, no rheumatiz, not even a cold. I lay it to good habits."

Charley is full of apt sayings. When they tried to "pocket" him, he'd look out for his position. "If a man was going to shut a door on me, I wouldn't get front of it, or behind it. I'd stand in it, so I could go either way." Or in sticking to the pole, "If you get out of the king-row you're beat." Charley Taylor has lots of visitors. He's the acme of politeness and consideration. He is a philosopher. See him. It's rejuvenating.

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THANK YOU!

Yesterday's News

South Royalton News *The Landmark*, November 25, 1882
Nice turkeys are worth 20 cents per pound here.

Overheard in West Hartford

There is no hotel here now except the boarding house of Mrs. John Willey. Strangers arriving here on the night trains are obliged to stay at the depot until morning. "What a place!" *The Landmark*, April 15, 1882

More From West Hartford

We learn that something has taken one of Stetson's new tin buckets; it is said to be a skunk as they pass by there to an old house in the woods. As you know, no man would do it — would they? *The Landmark*, March 25, 1882

BRRR *The Landmark*, April 15, 1882

April is not succeeding much better than March in the manufacture of weather. People complain of the cold, but better have it now than next month.

TexMex Tour *The Landmark*, April 22, 1882

Jed N. Landon returned Saturday night from Texas, whither he had been to visit his brother and to see the country. While there he took a run over into Mexico, and found himself just so much beyond the borders of civilization thieving, murdering and gambling being the common pursuits of the people, and every man carrying in his belt the implements of war. He witnessed a genuine cockfight, which was finished off with a bulldog fight, in regular Mexican style. Jed comes back entirely cured of any southwestern fever that ever coursed in his veins.

It was there a minute ago ... *The Landmark*, April 18, 1935

Dr. Stanley L. Garipay had the great misfortune to lose his new Ford Tudor stolen from in front of the post office building one evening last week between 6:30 and 8 o'clock. Although the car was insured against theft the doctor had valuable surgical instruments in it, which will cost a good many dollars to replace. The car was only purchased last week and the mileage had not yet reached the 50 mark.

Button Up! *The Landmark*, February 21, 1952

In the Howard Drug last Friday morning for a cup of coffee with Bill Miller of the Miller Auto Co., when two local business men come in to sit with you and join in the gab-fest. After shedding their coats each is a little shocked at noticing the other's lapel. One prominently displayed an "I'm For Ike" button while the other wore a Taft button. No need to say more—I'll give you just one guess how the conversation went after that.

Abraham Lincoln Said ... *The Landmark*, June 7, 1889

"If all that has been said by orators and poets since the creation of the world in praise of women were applied to the women of America, it would not do them justice for their conduct during the war."

From the Publisher ... *The Landmark*, March 18, 1882

On account of a difficulty with our new press, we are one day late. It will be right in time, however.

The subscriber will sell at auction Saturday, November 25th, on the premises of the late Samuel L. King of North Pomfret, the following personal property: 2 work horses, 2 oxen, 9 cows, 3 yearlings, 4 calves, 7 hogs, 100 sheep, 48 tons hay, 400 bushels ears corn, 70 bushels oats, 40 bushels spring wheat, 2 bushels rye, 2 bushels beans, 100 bushels potatoes, 50 bushels apples, 6 casks and cider, 6 tons cornfodder, 4 tons straw. Farming tools, 1 cart, 2 wagons, 3 sleighs, 2 sleds, 1 plow, 1 harrow 12 chains, Fairbanks' scales, corn sheller, mowing machine, horse rake, hay teder, 7 harnesses, 1000 feet lumber, 1 swarm bees, 2 buffalo robes, 1 fanning mill, 2 ladders, 6 yokes, 200 sap buckets, 3 sap pans, 2 holders, and many other articles too numerous to mention. Sale to commence at 10 o'clock a. m.
C. A. SPERRY, Administrator,
N. C. BRIDGMAN, Auctioneer.
Pomfret Nov. 17, 1882. 37-38



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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. Phones/email are checked twice a week.

MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS are open to the public on the second Monday of the month at the Garipay House at 5 p.m. (Please check for exact date.)

Wednesday, November 9, 2022 - "Vermont's Sheep Farming Era." Presented by Steve Taylor. 7:00 p.m. at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ; 1721 Maple St., Hartford Village. Masks optional.

The **Genealogy Center** on the second floor of the Hartford Library is open Fridays from 2-6 p.m. and by appointment. Please call Carole Haehnel at 802/295-3974 or email her at: chaehnel151@comcast.net. Interested in helping residents explore their family histories? Please contact us at info@hartfordhistoricalsociety.com.

Websites

Hartford Historical Society: <http://www.hartfordhistory.org/>

HHS Membership Form: http://www.hartfordhistory.org/?page_id=437

Hartford VT Historical Society Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/hartfordvthistory>

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