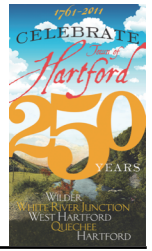




# Hartford Historical Society

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

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



Volume 36, No. 3

SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

July-August 2023



## Power and Water Come to Hartford

*By Scott Fletcher*

George Gates and Amos Barnes were conductors on the Passumpsic Railroad in 1850. They married the Currier sisters of St. Johnsbury, VT and became firm friends. By 1860, George and Mary Gates moved to Hartford where he was superintendent of the Vermont and Boston Telegraph Line. In 1868, he developed a system for monitoring the location of every locomotive in Vermont by telegraph, which enabled trains to run more efficiently. He later served on the boards of the Missisquoi Valley Railroad and the Vermont and Boston Telegraph Company. Amos and Emeline Barnes moved to Boston where he became proprietor of several fine hotels. The Gates and Barnes families visited often and, when electricity and plumbing came to Boston, they talked of doing the same in Hartford. George Gates died in 1887 but, three years later, his daughter Mae opened the Gates Block, which was Hartford's first electrified building. In 1893, Amos Barnes acquired the Hartford Water Company and the Mascoma Electric Light and Gas Co., bringing power and water to Hartford. Barnes also built the first apartments in town to feature plumbing and electricity. His last project was building the Gates Memorial Library to honor his friend George. It opened in 1906, the year after Barnes died.

*Above, former home of George and Mary Gates (center) on Gates Street in White River Junction in 1910. George Gates was born in Canada and drove horses down to Vermont for sale as a young man. He became a community leader after moving to Hartford in 1860. He bought the former home of Samuel Nutt on South Main Street, which his daughter Mae moved to Gates Street in 1889. George Gates and Amos Barnes developed residential property on Gates Street.*

## From the Editor . . .

Weather has always been part of the Hartford story and this issue looks at the development of forecasting methods over the years. Weather forecasts were once based on almanacs and arthritic elbows. Then, they arrived via newspapers, postmarks, and even flags flown over the White River Junction post office. Today, computers are a big help but nature can still catch us by surprise. Learn more on page eight.

Mary Nadeau provides a look at the true origin of baseball for those who couldn't join us for the lively presentation in June. Mary has contributed to many recent newsletters and I'm always an avid reader. Please let me know if you would like to send us an article or offer a suggestion.

This issue, we take a look at the early years of Wilder when the paper mill and other local employers attracted workers from Canada and many parts of Europe. "Little Canada" in Wilder is faint memory now. The late Roy Black told me it used to be where

James Street is now, and someone else told me it included what is now C Street. Please let us know if you can place the old photos of "Little Canada" in this issue. Or perhaps you can share other memories of the days when the paper mill was thriving and Wilder was a vibrant cultural melting pot.

Pat Stark's many years of loyal service have been recognized with her addition to the Hartford Historical Society Honor Roll. Pat joined the society in 1986 and has been the curator of our collection since 1990. No one has done more to preserve the town's history.

I have great respect for those who serve on the board and volunteer for the Hartford Historical Society. It is a small and dedicated group that invites you to help preserve the artifacts and stories of our town. Please contact us. And since you are reading this, thanks very much for being a member.

*Scott Fletcher, Editor*

## Drinks and Smokes

*The Landmark, April 5, 1884*

"I get about twenty dollars a week, and could live comfortably if it was not for the demands of courtesy. I do not like to drink, except an occasional glass of beer. As for smoking, I had rather take a brier root pipe and smoke in my room. But if I go out around town, I meet fellows who treat to cigars and beer, and are offended if I refuse to take something. And if I do take a drink or a smoke with them, I soon feel as though it was my duty to treat them and a round of drinks or cigars makes a hole in my pocket that looks like dynamite had exploded in it. How is a fellow to get along that way, save anything, and be respected by his friends? Can a young man decline to be treated or to treat, and not be considered small potatoes?"

Well young fellow, you have some symptoms of horse sense, but you have got to cultivate firmness and resolution, and have independence enough to pull you through, and you will come out all right.

### 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.



## Hartford Historical Society

Post Office Box 547, Hartford, VT 05047-0547

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# HHS June Program Reveals the True Origin of Baseball

*By Mary Nadeau*

The Society's program speaker for the June 14, 2023, public meeting was Norwich University Professor Rowly Brucken. A life-long passion for baseball led him to explore its origins, and the results were quite interesting and rather unexpected.

There is a long-held belief that the game was invented by Abner Doubleday, but there is no hard evidence to support this, nor does General Doubleday mention it in his biography. The myth took traction via the letters of one Abner Graves, born in Cooperstown, NY, submitted letters to the editor of the Akron, Ohio, *Beacon-Journal* in 1905.

According to Graves' account, "in either 1839, 1840 or 1841, and in the spring of the year when we smaller boys were "playing marbles for keeps," he claimed to recall an event when marble playing in front of Cooper's Taylor Shop in Cooperstown stopped as 16- or 17-year old Abner Doubleday began explaining "baseball" by drawing a diagram of a diamond in the dirt and detailing the mechanics of the game to the boys. Graves alleged that "baseball is undoubtedly a pure American game, its birthplace Cooperstown, NY, and Abner Doubleday its inventor.

Debate surrounding the accuracy of this claim ensued, and a commission was formed to seek the facts. After three years of consideration, it was declared that Doubleday had, indeed, invented the national pastime. (However, this would have been a surprise to Doubleday, who never claimed that he had invented baseball and never mentioned it in the numerous articles that he wrote for newspapers and magazines nor in the 67 diaries that he left behind when he died).

The blame for this historical falsehood can be placed primarily on three men: Albert Spaulding, the sporting goods magnate, Stephen C. Clark, a wealthy resident of Cooperstown, who wanted to promote tourism there, and Abner Graves, who has been described as a ne'er-do-well who liked seeing his name in a newspaper. By this time, nobody was left alive to corroborate or disprove Graves' assertion. The myth became part of baseball lore and inspired the creation of the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown in 1939.

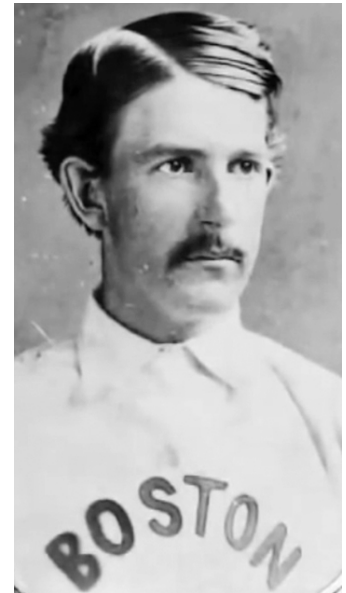
So, who exactly was Abner Doubleday (1819-1893)? A graduate of West Point, he served as a military officer during the Mexican American War

and as a Union Major General During the Civil War. He is believed to have ordered the first shot fired at Ft. Sumter, served at Manassas and Antietam, and rose to fame for gallantry at Gettysburg. In later life, he created the cable car system that is used in San Francisco.

So if not Doubleday, then who invented baseball? Egyptians, Greeks, and Northern Europeans all played games with a ball and bat. During the Eleventh Century, it was called "stool ball." In Fourteenth Century Italy, the ball and bat game was known as "drive ball." The British enjoyed a game called "rounders," which was similar to baseball in that players hit a ball and ran bases.

From there, the game emigrated with settlers to the American colonies. Albert Spaulding published the first official rule book, which was used until the 1920s. (By the way, Spaulding didn't want women playing baseball because he feared that it would "feminize the game," so women took up softball in its place.)

We can conclude that baseball evolved over time. So, why do we need an origin story? Professor Brucken noted that, "The All-American Sport needed an All-American Dad," and so the wheels were set in motion, and Abner Doubleday invented baseball without his knowledge or permission.

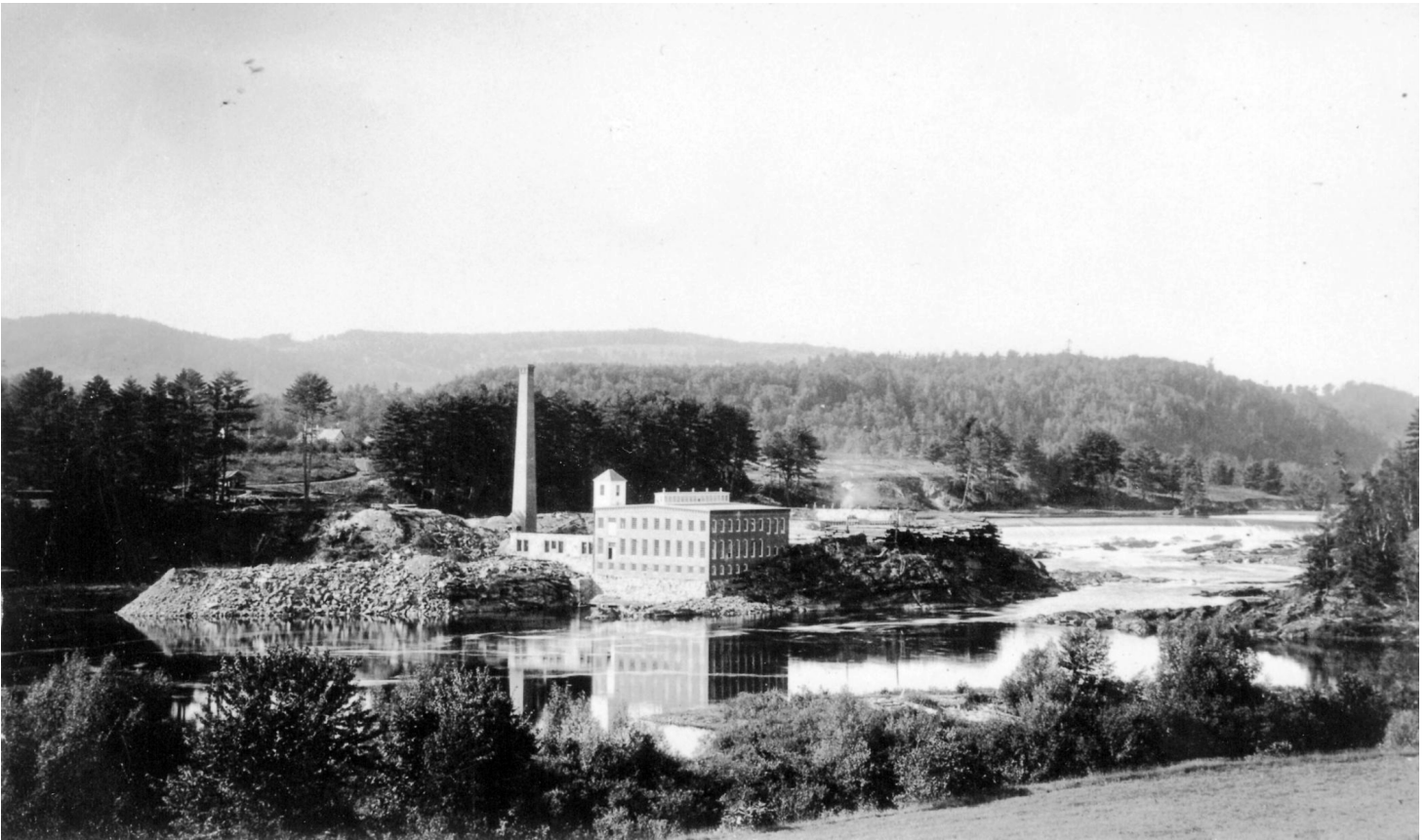


*Albert Spaulding signed as a pitcher with the Boston Red Stockings in 1871 and joined the Chicago White Stockings in 1876. He was the only pitcher for both of these teams. He retired in 1878 with 206 wins, 53 losses, and a .323 batting average. He was one of the first players to wear a glove on his catching hand.*



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## Charles T. Wilder Creates Vermont's First Planned Community



In 1882, Charles T. Wilder of Boston purchased the Olcott Falls Company, which gave him control of three powerful waterfalls on the Connecticut River along with 125 acres on each shore. By August, a rail spur began delivering lumber for construction of the Wilder Paper Mill, which opened in 1883. The mill employed over three hundred people and Wilder hired Levi Hazen of West Hartford to survey his property for worker housing. Hazen plotted one hundred and forty-one rectangular home sites on twelve streets. By 1889, Olcott Falls had fifty homes, a school, train depot, post office, public hall, livery stable, and Congregational church. It was Vermont's first planned community.

When Charles Wilder died in 1897, he left \$10,000 to be divided among his employees, \$12,000 for a bridge across the Connecticut River, and \$30,000 for a public library. Olcott Falls was renamed Wilder in 1898. The following year, the mill was purchased by the International Paper Company, which remained Wilder's largest employer until the mill closed in 1927. The paper mill, the dam that powered the mill, and the iron bridge across the river were destroyed in 1950 to make way for the current Wilder Dam.

*Charles Wilder opened his paper mill in 1883 and hired Levi Hazen of West Hartford to lay out streets and home sites for a community that became Wilder in 1898. Hazen also laid out lots for Orrin Taft and other property owners.*



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## Hartford, VT Celebrates 150 Years With Historical Pageant



Fashionable patrons on long benches line a hilltop above the White River as a band of Hartford residents dressed as Abenaki people appear through trees by the stage. Footlights glow as a herald introduces the first scene of a historical pageant written by Hartford's Kate Morris Cone in 1911 to celebrate the town's first 150 years.

Squaws erect tepees as hunters return with a deer. They dance in a circle until the herald warns that white men are coming, prompting them to gather their things and slip into the trees.

In the next scene, soldiers and warriors pass upriver during the French & Indian War. Hartford history unfolds as proprietors and early settlers like the Widow Ruth Strong arrive. The militia musters, the Royalton alarm sounds, Rev. Aaron Hutchinson preaches, and a husking bee brings music and contra dancing.

Some of the hundreds of actors portray their ancestors. The pageant ends with a hopeful look to Hartford's future and joyful strains of the Star-Spangled Banner.



*Some three hundred Hartford residents appeared in the town's one hundred and fiftieth anniversary pageant in 1911 including prominent citizens and descendants of early settlers. Authentic costumes were made and rented. The top photo shows the cast with horses in the background. Above, the opening depicted Abenaki people appearing through the trees to the right of the stage. Performances started at four o'clock in the afternoon when shadows would be most dramatic and there would be the least noise from locomotives in the distance.*

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## Canadian Workers Make Wilder Home



Wilder, VT was a bustling village from the opening of the Wilder Paper Mill by Charles T. Wilder in 1883, to the closing of the mill by the International Paper Company in 1927. Many men came south from Canada along the Connecticut River with vast rafts of timber that fed the pulp mill. Some were employed by the mill and settled in the growing town.

Many Canadians came to the United States in the latter half of the Nineteenth century seeking work in factories across New England. The number of immigrants from Canada has been estimated at almost a million. Communities known as “Little Canada” appeared in Wilder, VT as well as Lewiston, ME, Manchester, NH, Lowell, MA, and elsewhere.

This exodus prompted the Canadian government to offer grants of land to Canadian citizens willing to return. Around 1900, Canadian railroads also offered inducements for Canadians to repatriate, but *The Landmark* reported that there was no sign of Hartford residents being lured north. There were good jobs at the Hartford Woolen Mill, the Wilder Paper Mill, and the Smith and Sons Bakery. They could also visit Canada by train to see friends and relatives, some of

whom accompanied them back to Hartford.

The term, “Little Canada,” was first used by *The Landmark* in reference to the Wilder community in 1929 and dotted the paper until its last mention in 1952.

In 1946, Margaret T. and Mary H. Frost gave the town a piece of property in Little Canada for use as an open park or playground for the use of the general public (*The Landmark*, Aug 29, 1946). Frost Park, as it was called, was soon popular all year. There was ice skating in the winter and, in the summer, Frost Park was the home of the Wilder baseball club.

Workers from Ireland, eastern Europe, and many other parts of the world also came to the United States in the Nineteenth Century and Wilder’s paper mill made the village a cultural melting pot. During World War II, Vermont experienced a shortage of agricultural workers and *The Landmark* reports that Canadians were welcomed to fill these positions. When a Canadian worker was employed, the employer was required to continue listing a position as open and available to members of the local workforce.





Many Canadians brought timber down the Connecticut River from Canada to feed the paper mill opened in Olcott Falls by Charles T. Wilder in 1883. Some stayed to work at the mill and formed one of many Little Canadas in New England. Olcott Falls was renamed Wilder in 1897. Opposite, George Fellows captured this scene of Little Canada in Wilder in 1911. The view, above, is dated December, 19, 1908 and was also taken by Fellows. The precise locations of these photos are unknown but may have been near what is now James Street or C Street. When opening his mill, Charles Wilder hired Levi Hazen of West Hartford to survey the village for worker housing and many of these homes still line Wilder streets. At left, George Fellows shows a cook waiting to feed mill workers at a commissary provided by Charles Wilder in the early years of the mill. Wilder Village was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1999 and contains two hundred and three contributing resources.



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## Now, a Word About the Weather

**“There is no man living who can do more than guess what the weather will be doing one month or one week ahead.”** *Middlebury Register*, February 6, 1880

Before Europeans arrived in Vermont, Abenaki people predicted storms using a “weather stick” that pointed upward during normal air pressure and humidity, and downward in conditions preceding a storm. Native Americans also based weather forecasts on observations of the moon, clouds, wind, animal behavior, and other cues.

Europeans brought their own ways of predicting the weather including almanacs, barometers, and records of weather and temperatures in previous years. A sudden drop in barometric pressure signaled an approaching storm. So did aching joints.

**He: “My darling, I really believe my rheumatism has wholly disappeared.”**

**She: “Oh, I’m so sorry. Now we shall never know when the weather is going to change.”**

*The Landmark*, June 24, 1882

In 1859, the Smithsonian Institute formed a network of weather observers around the country that sent daily reports by telegraph to an office in Washington D.C. where they were posted on a map of the United States. Since storms traveled east, reports from the western part of the country provided fairly accurate forecasts that were telegraphed to major cities for publication in newspapers. Weather forecasts from Boston began to arrive in White River Junction by train and telegraph in the mid-1800s.

The U.S. Weather Bureau was established by Congress in 1870, and placed under the Department of War hoping that military discipline would help the accuracy of observations. Weather forecasts and storm warnings for areas east of the Mississippi River were issued at military bases across the country, transmitted by telegraph, and published in newspapers. Forecasts for the western United States were added in 1879. In 1886, the U.S. Senate passed a bill authorizing free transmission of weather reports by mail.

In 1890, the Weather Bureau was identified as a civilian agency and placed under the Department of Agriculture. The following year, it began issuing flood warnings. They also tried to make rain by setting off

explosions from hot air balloons.

In 1895, the U.S. Postal Service began sending daily weather forecasts by telegraph from Boston to White River Junction where they were forwarded by mail to one hundred and thirty-five towns across Vermont. On July 1, 1896, the postal service began adding the latest weather forecast to its normal postmarks.

In 1896, *The Landmark* reported that Hartford Postmaster Charles Fitzpatrick would raise a weather flag above the White River Junction Post Office every day. A white flag signified a clear day, a blue flag meant rain or snow, and a white flag with a black square in the center predicts a cold spell. The six-foot flags were visible across the Connecticut River in West Lebanon.

From 1890 through 1920, *The Landmark* featured reports from local weather observer C.W. Brown. In 1919, he recorded a downpour of 3.22 inches over two days, which was the largest total since he had started keeping records. In 1920, Frank H. Chipman began reporting weather in the Hartford area to the U.S. Weather Bureau.

In 1922, *The Landmark* noted that Lucian Haverstock of White River Junction had installed a radio in his home and received daily weather forecasts. Radios brought daily weather reports into many Hartford homes during the 1920s, and the increasing communication of weather data around the country steadily increased the accuracy of forecasts.

The Weather Bureau began using radar to forecast weather in 1947, and also experimented with computer modeling. The first computer generated forecasts were issued by the bureau on May 6, 1955. In 1970, the Weather Bureau was renamed the National Weather Service and made a branch of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

In 1991, the National Weather Service and the Federal Aviation Administration launched the Automated Surface Observing System, which is now the nation’s primary surface observing network. Weather stations at airports around the country capture sky conditions, visibility, precipitation, pressure, temperature, dew point, and wind speed and direction.

Technology has greatly improved forecasts but people continue to rely on barometers and aching elbows. And some skeptics agree with *The Landmark*, which opined in 1889 that, “The most accurate weather report is a thunder-clap.”

## Happy New Year 1951!



In 1950, August L. Zollikofer commissioned artist Peter Michael Gish to paint a barn dance scene across the back wall of a small cocktail lounge in the Hotel Coolidge in White River Junction. Gish, who had just finished painting a mural depicting the history of Vermont in an adjacent room, mounted panels to the wall and painted the lively scene that was the focal point of the lounge for twenty years.

In 1970, Zollikofer sold the Hotel Coolidge to investors planning the Quechee Lakes Development and it came under the management of Phidias Dantos who remodeled the hotel as a base for prospective buyers. Dantos enlarged the hotel's main dining room to include the former lounge and moved the barn dance painting to a new cocktail lounge off the main lobby of the hotel.

David Briggs remembers the new lounge had a very clubby atmosphere with a plaid rug, Naugahyde chairs, red drapes, and red velvet couches. The room currently serves as a coffee shop and the mural is still mounted on the east wall.



*Top, patrons celebrate New Year's Eve in 1950 at the bar in the new lounge at the Hotel Coolidge created by August Zollikofer. At right is Huber Kendall who owned the Hotel Coolidge Garage on Gates Street. Above, the location of the former bar is now an alcove in the Hotel Coolidge dining room.*

## Chairman's Corner

By **Jim Kenison**

*chair@hartfordhistoricalsociety.com*

We've had a busy month or so. We had our annual meeting on May 20, which followed a yard and book sale at the Garipay House. Our June 14 program focused on the invention of baseball.

At our last board meeting, the board approved the use of a new online membership platform called *Memberplanet*. This will allow us to easily keep track of members and dues. We will be able to communicate with HHS members by email or text, share documents, and post information about upcoming events. It will be a great tool for both members and the society administration. We invite you to learn more by sending your email address to [membership@hartfordhistoricalsociety.com](mailto:membership@hartfordhistoricalsociety.com). Your email will become your username in the new system.

If you haven't been by in a while, be sure to come visit the Garipay House and check out our displays. There are typically people at the house on Friday mornings from 9 to 11 a.m.. If those hours are not

convenient for you, please reach out to us and we can try to accommodate your schedule whenever possible.

We currently have a need for volunteers in various capacities. We can always use help from cleaning to organizing programs. We could use some volunteers to serve on various committees of the society. And, of course, anyone with special skills, such as plumbing, carpentry, etc. is always welcome. If you have any interest in serving, please contact us and we can figure out the best fit.

Lastly, we have quite an active Facebook group. It consists of some members and many other community members, or people that have some connection to Hartford. Not everyone in the group is a member of the historical society, but they all have an interest in the history of the town of Hartford. If you have not joined the group, please check it out at [facebook.com/groups/hartfordvthhistory](https://facebook.com/groups/hartfordvthhistory). We currently have over 900 members in our Facebook group.

Hopefully everyone is doing well. I hope you all have a great summer and we hope to see some of you soon either at the Garipay House, at one of our programs, or online.

## Thank You HHS Supporters!

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## Yesterday's News

### **Horse Play**

Levi Hazen of West Hartford, one day last week hitched his horse to a post in this village and went into one of the stores to do some business, and when he returned to his team was somewhat surprised to find it, especially that part of it called the wagon, in a rather demoralized condition. The horse undertook the difficult feat of rolling while attached to the vehicle, but not having had sufficient training the result was disastrous, and Mr. Hazen dissatisfied to use a mild term, and we think the horse was disappointed, for he got into a condition where he could not get up without help. The last we saw of Mr. H. he was making for West Hartford, a sadder if not a wiser man. *The Landmark*, August 12, 1882

### **What Was That?**

As L.E. Weymouth was out milking, during a shower, the evening of 10th, a flash or bolt of lightning knocked over the cow, which fell on Mr. W., who finally extricated himself from his perilous position unhurt, except some slight bruises. The cow soon regained her feet, and went on chewing her cud, as though nothing had happened. *The Vermont Tribune*, September 19, 1884

### **Try Using a Glove**

The Thetford and Bradford base-ball clubs played a match game of ball on the latter's ground Saturday, November 4, which resulted in favor of the Thetford's by the score 52-44. *The Landmark*, November 11, 1882

### **Loss for Words**

Martin I. Townsend rises to remark that he has "never found words strong enough to express his contempt for a man who will sit on a board fence and watch nine jackasses play baseball." *Vermont Standard*, April 20, 1882

### **No Reason at All**

W.O. Pitkin has the best nine-weeks-old horse colt there is around. Mr. Pitkin is an honest man and we see no reason he should not have as good a colt as anyone." *Vermont Standard*, July 13, 1882

### **Scenic Route**

Last Thursday, five carloads of immigrants, Russian Jews, passed through the Junction for New York. They came by way of Montreal, Canada. *The Landmark*, June 23, 1899

### **Going Down**

C.B. Ballard has novel fire escapes attached to the west end of the annex and ell of the Junction House, comprising light spruce ladders about 20 ft. in length, which are fastened to the buildings and extended from the attic windows to within a break-neck jumping distance from the ground. Evidently the devices are O.K. for acrobats. *The Landmark*, September 13, 1895

### **Just Like the Big City**

A toilet room with modern conveniences has been fitted up in good style adjacent the Odd Fellows Hall. E.H. Bagley had charge of the work. *The Landmark*, February 3, 1899.

### **Going Loco** (*Spirit of the Age*, January 9, 1878)

Quite a runaway occurred here lately. The engine "White River" was standing on a side track when a freight which was setting off, backed against the hind end of it, the shock caused the throttle" to fly open, and away went the "White River." An engine was immediately sent in pursuit, and to the surprise of all, it returned in about 15 minutes, bringing with it the truant, which had been captured about two miles below.

## Hartford Historical Society

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**THE GARIPAY HOUSE MUSEUM is open by appointment only. Please call 802/296-3132 or email us at [info@hartfordhistoricalsociety.org](mailto: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 6 p.m. (Please check for exact date.)

**Wednesday, September 13, 2023** - “**County Fairs.**” Presented by Steve Taylor. 7:00 p.m. at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ; 1721 Maple St., Hartford Village.

**Wednesday, November 8, 2023** - “**Turnpikes and Taverns in the Upper CT River Valley.**” Presented by Jay Barrett. 7:00 p.m. at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ; 1721 Maple St., Hartford Village.

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](mailto:chaehnel151@comcast.net). Interested in helping residents explore their family histories? Please contact us at [info@hartfordhistoricalsociety.com](mailto:info@hartfordhistoricalsociety.com).

### Websites

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**HHS Membership Form:** <https://hartfordvthistory.com/contact/membership/>

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

**Hartford History Timeline:** <https://www.tiki-toki.com/timeline/entry/1456118/History-of-Hartford-Vermont/>

**Very Vermont - Stories from the Green Mountains:** <https://veryvermont.exposure.co/very-vermont>