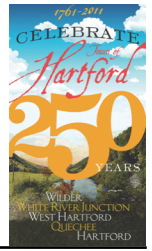




# Hartford Historical Society

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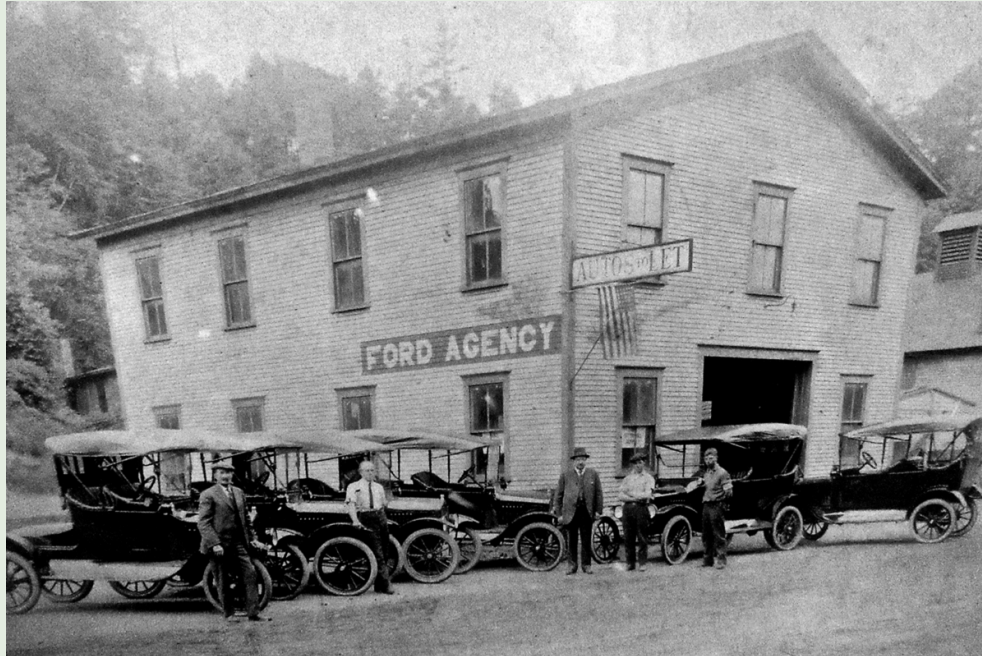
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Volume 39, No. 3

SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

July-August 2026



## Lyman Gibbs' Life of Quiet Accomplishment *By Scott Fletcher*

Lyman Alonzo Gibbs and Nathaniel Philip “Than” Wheeler had similar careers in White River Junction. Lyman Gibbs came to the area around 1880 with little in his pockets. He first lived in Lebanon, NH where he worked as a butcher for a man named Smith. Than Wheeler arrived in White River Junction about the same time. In November 1882, Lyman Gibbs became the partner of O.P. Shaw who owned a meat market in White River Junction, and he moved to the junction in December 1883. At first, Wheeler worked in a men’s clothing store that he later bought with partner E.C. Gilbert.

Lyman Gibbs bought out his partner Shaw in September 1884, and then sold his business in April 1885 to purchase the junction’s one livery stable with Than Wheeler. Both men were hard working, knew horses, and the business became successful. In 1901, Gibbs and Wheeler purchased the Junction House hotel. Wheeler also bought a large farm south of town where he raised meat and produce for the hotel. He

also bred race horses. In 1912, Lyman Gibbs opened the town’s first Ford dealership. In 1919, he sold his interest in the Junction House to Than Wheeler.

After his death in 1924, Lyman Gibbs was laid to rest in Hartford Cemetery and his story was all but forgotten. He was just sixty-six years old. There was no obituary in the *Landmark* and he was not mentioned in Howard Tucker’s History of Hartford,

*In 1912, Lyman Gibbs, center above, opened the first Ford dealership in White River Junction. Gibbs began his career as a meat cutter. He continued in this line as a partner with O.P. Shaw in the firm Shaw & Gibbs. Lyman Gibbs bought his partner out of the business and continued to prosper so that he was able to buy the town’s livery stable with Nathaniel Wheeler. In 1901, Gibbs and Wheeler bought the Junction House Hotel. Gibbs sold his interest in the hotel to Wheeler in 1919, but they remained partners in an automotive sales and rental business. Despite his business success, Gibbs left little in the town’s historical record.*

*Continued on page 6.*

## From the Editor . . .

Nathaniel “Than” Wheeler and his partner Lyman Gibbs purchased the livery stable next to the Junction House in White River Junction in 1884. They operated this profitably and went on to purchase the Junction House in 1901. Gibbs sold his share of the hotel to Wheeler in 1919 and Wheeler continued to operate it until his death in 1930. Wheeler was outgoing, generous, and popular in White River Junction. He was mentioned in the *Landmark* more than seven hundred times. Despite his success, though, Gibbs left far less in the historical record. This issue, we profile him using mentions found in local sources.

Dr. Abel Howard moved to this area in 1790 with his wife and three children. In addition to a busy medical practice, he farmed, bought property and established a homestead in West Hartford that is still in the Howard family. His great grandson C.H. Cutts Howard gathered the papers of his ancestors and

contributed a series of articles that appeared in the *Landmark* beginning in January 1933. These pieces have been edited into the narrative on page eight.

Mr. Cutts Howard also used the records of his grandfather, Abel Howard, Jr., to produce an article on the cost of things in West Hartford in the mid-1800s. Among other things, he noted that one could shoe a horse, “all the way round,” for 67 cents.

Our town’s celebration of America’s 250-year Anniversary continues with special events listed on our website. And please see our calendar on the back cover for other upcoming events.

*Scott Fletcher, Editor*

## 200 Years Ago

*Woodstock Observer, January 24, 1826*

The day I left Boston, Dec. 16, 1826, I had the pleasure of finding Gen. Wm. Barton in the stage coach bound to Providence, to see his family and home after an absence of nearly 14 years, as he had been confined for debt. It seemed to astonish the old General to see the great alterations on the road as we approached Providence; and when he spoke of the Marquis (as he always calls, Lafayette) his eyes filled with tears of gratitude. He retains now, in the 77th year of his age, much of the vigour of his younger days. He would often sing a few lines of an old revolutionary song with a clear and strong voice. But when the old General entered his ancient home and embraced the wife of his youth, his children, and his children’s children, it was a scene which I cannot attempt to describe. They all melted into tears, and he could hardly believe it to be a reality.

### 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

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# Presentation Looks at History of Hartford Schools



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*Hartford schools continued from page 3.*

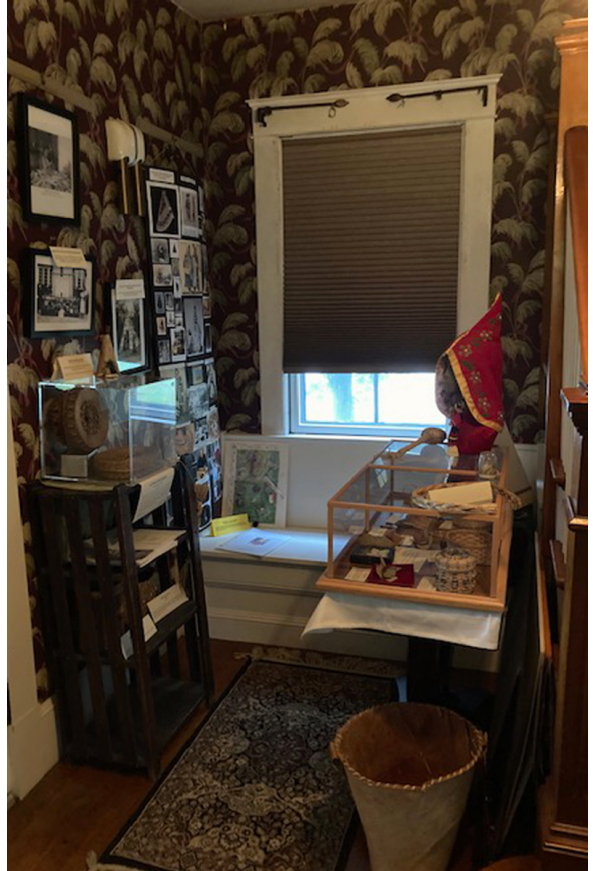
*Continued on page 8.*

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## News From the Garipay House



Above left, Matt Potter extended the parking lot at the Garipay House to accommodate lots of visitors and volunteers. We have also created a new display focusing on the Abenaki people of Hartford. For more information about the Hartford Historical Society, the Garipay House, and our activities, please contact us. Donations are also greatly appreciated.





Vermont. Tucker did mention Than Wheeler and, when he died in 1930, Wheeler's obituary appeared in nineteen newspapers across Vermont. Than Wheeler was mentioned in the *Landmark* over seven hundred times.

The most complete description of Lyman Gibbs comes from the publication, *The Gateway of Vermont, Hartford and its Villages*.

"Occupying a leading position among the business men of White River Junction is Lyman Alonzo Gibbs of the firm of Gibbs & Wheeler of the Junction House. His kindly nature, open heartedness and sincerity of life win him the respect of all. He is never a man of moods, but the same to-day as Mr. Gibbs, while not Hartford born, is nevertheless a native of the state and represents the truest type of its manhood.

"He was born in Brandon, January 30, 1858, and thus is yet well on the sunny side of fifty. In the comparatively brief years of his life, he has done himself honor in what he has accomplished, and in making himself what he is as respects the integrity of his characteristics. He was the son of Alonzo and Martha Gibbs, who removed when their son was one year, to Woodstock.

"Eventually, the son settled in West Lebanon, NH, and in his early manhood years operated a meat market. From this he engaged in the livery business at the Junction which he has ever since continued though finally merging it with the business of the Junction House. Mr. Gibbs married Miss Clara Belle Bigelow of Gaysville on June 19, 1882. They have two sons,

Charles Lyman, at present a billing clerk for the Central Vermont railroad company, and Alfred A., a student at home. In fraternal life Mr. Gibbs is an Odd Fellow. The church home of the family is the Methodist Episcopal of White River Junction."

The *Landmark* also mentioned Lyman Gibbs from time to time, and some of these items are presented here in chronological order.

"The band played a few pieces from the bandstand Wednesday evening and then went over, to West Lebanon and serenaded Lyman Gibbs, a young man who has lately committed matrimony. The boys said, on seeing his wife, that they didn't blame him a bit." *The Landmark*, July 1 1882.

"Lyman Gibbs, while dressing off a calf Wednesday, stuck a knife into his leg, severing one of the large veins and came very near bleeding to death. Dr. S.J. Allen, Jr. dressed the wound." *The Landmark*, April 21, 1883

"While cutting up another piece of mutton, Tuesday, Gibbs chopped his leg." *The Landmark*, September 29, 1883

*Lyman Gibbs, top left, moved to White River Junction from Lebanon, NH in 1883. He and O.P. Shaw operated a meat market that Gibbs acquired in 1884. He sold this business in April 1885 and purchased the livery stable next to the Junction House Hotel with Than Wheeler. They acquired the Junction House, above right, in 1901.*

“Lyman Gibbs has moved his family to White River Junction.” *The Landmark*, December 1, 1883.

“Joe Bonner tried to play a sharp trick on Shaw Tuesday. He went into the market when he was absent and bought some meat of Gibbs, had it done up and left it till Gibbs went away. When Shaw came, he went in for it, when Shaw asked him if he had paid for it. ‘Yes sir, I have.’ Shaw says, ‘all right if you have.’ Joe took the meat up and left it in Wheeler’s store while he went into Davis’ saloon and went to playing pool. When Gibbs returned Shaw was told that the meat was not paid for, and learning where it had been left he went and stole it, returning it again to his market. Joe had not the courage to call for it and bring Shaw to account.” *The Landmark*, May 24, 1884

“Gibbs and others are filling their ice houses. Ice thick and clear and cold.” *The Landmark*, February 7, 1885

“The person who stole Lyman Gibbs’ clock from his livery office had better return it as silently as it disappeared, as he knows just where it is situated. And the dog, for mercy’s sake, fetch him back, he isn’t worth stealing.” *The Landmark*, April 3, 1886

“Lyman Gibbs has added two horses to his livery stable the past week. Wheeler knows how much they cost.” *The Landmark*, April 10, 1886

“Lyman Gibbs had an auction sale of some of his worn-out livery stuff and old horses who had, ‘borne the heat and burden of the day,’ as well as the rigors of many a long and wearisome night’s drive.” *The Landmark*, October 16, 1886.

“Gibbs & Wheeler have recovered the team driven from their stable by one Orrin Whittemore on Sunday the 16th inst. It was a clear case of theft. Whittemore drove the team directly from here to Braintree, where he traded the horse and buggy for a broncho and road cart and then proceeded to Northfield where he left his harness at a stable, and then probably took the cars for Canada. Mr. Gibbs went in pursuit of the thief on Monday and found his horse and buggy at a stable in Braintree, and his harness, whip and lap robe at the stable in Northfield where they were left by the thief, and on Tuesday returned here, glad to have suffered no greater loss.” *The Landmark*, September 28, 1894



*As a partner in the Junction House, Than Wheeler bought a farm where he raised meat and produce for the hotel. He purchased Lyman Gibbs’ share of the Junction House in 1919.*

The lone obituary for Lyman Gibbs appeared in the *Vermont Standard* on October 16, 1924.

### **Lyman A. Gibbs**

The funeral of Lyman A. Gibbs was held Thursday, Oct. 9th, in the Methodist church. Mr. Gibbs passed away Tuesday, Oct. 7th. having been in poor health for some time. He was born January 30, 1859. He lived here 41 years. During his life he was connected with the business world in various ways. He will be remembered as a partner in the hotel for many years. He was highly esteemed by all who knew him and will be greatly missed. He leaves to mourn him, his wife Clara B., two sons, Charles L. of Springfield, Mass., and Alfred A. of this place, and three grandchildren. Rev. Robert Heseltine officiated at the service. Myrtle Lodge, No. 27, I.O.O.F. attended in a body and participated in the service. Burial was in Hartford cemetery.

## West Hartford Man Recalls Dr. Abel Howard

The following account of Dr. Abel Howard is drawn from several submissions by C.H. Cutts Howard of Beebe, Arkansas that first appeared in the *Landmark* on January 22, 1931. The author, a great grandson of Dr. Howard, was born and raised on the Howard family homestead in West Hartford. He prepared this narrative from family papers.

Before me there are a number of papers, yellowed with age, concerning early history in Pomfret. These range from 1778 to 1804 and concern the estate of Dr. Abel Howard who went to Pomfret in 1790 and lived there until his death on June 13, 1804.

Abel Howard was born in Sturbridge, MA in 1770, the son of William and Zilpha Bugbee Howard. His father was killed at the battle of White Plains in 1776 and his mother was left a widow with three sons of whom Abel was the oldest. His mother survived her husband by two years. The boys were then 'bound out' until they reached their majority. Judge Joshua Harding of Sturbridge was responsible for young Abel and he made a very good record since at the age of eighteen he had graduated from the academy at Leicester, MA.

After studying medicine for two years, Abel Howard married Tryphosa Harding, the daughter of Judge Harding, and they moved to Pomfret in 1790. Judge Harding made a note to Abel Howard for nineteen pounds, eight shillings and two pence, which was settled in 1792. Dr. Howard practiced medicine in Pomfret until he died at the age of 34 years. *The Weekly Wanderer* in Randolph noted on June 25, 1804 that Dr. Howard's death was, "much lamented."

It would seem from written records that Dr. Howard was a very capable business man. He owned a farm of 80 acres had an interest in a sawmill, had horses, cows, hogs, sheep, and oxen, also timberland. A list of accounts due to Dr. Howard at the time of his death included fifty different individuals and totaled \$149.46. The amounts of indebtedness varied from seventeen cents to thirty dollars and ninety six cents.



*Dr. Abel Howard's grave in Pomfret's Burns Cemetery.*

He left a medical practice of considerable volume.

Tryphosa Howard died in 1803, leaving Dr. Howard with three children. He then married Sarah Hyde, a widow with three children of her own. They had one more child, Abel Howard, who was born in 1805, some eight months after his father's death. Dr. Howard, his wife Tryphosa, and some of their infant children are buried in Burns Cemetery in Pomfret.

A glance at the inventory of Dr. Howard's estate shows how his house was furnished. In the living room of Dr. Howard's house were six Windsor chairs, a desk and bookcase combined in which were a Bible, Latin dictionary, and some medical books, which included Townsend's Guide to Health,

Cheselden's Anatomy, Science of Life, Hoopers Medical Dictionary, Perry's Dictionary etc. There were tables in the room and a razor and case.

Among Dr. Howard's papers is a list of medicines kept on hand. In addition to vials of various sizes, bottles, and powder and shot, there was recorded a Lancit, White Lead, Senna, Magnesia Spirits, Laudanum, Ammonia, Sulphur, Hoopers Pills, Aloes, Myrrh, Camphor, Ipecac, Jalap, Glycerin, Peruvian Bark, Cinnamon, Pepper, and Bar Junip.

In the sleeping rooms there were three different sized bedsteads and cord for them this being before the age of slats and springs. They had plenty of blankets, sheets, bureaus, candle stands, low chests, and high chests.

There were nine chairs in the kitchen. They had large and small plates, teacups and saucers, and numerous tumblers ranging in size from a quart down. Decanters, pewter ware, pitchers, servers, vinegar cruets, and other household articles were aplenty.

The cooking was done on the hearth or fireplace for which there were pots kettles spiders gridirons toasting irons bake pans skillets iron dogs shovels tongs and flat irons. There was plenty of pork and cheese on hand all the time. Four hives of bees supplied the honey. Sap buckets on hand would imply

*Continued on page 10.*

## What Things Cost ...

By C.H. Cutts Howard

The *Landmark*, June 18, 1931

I do not know that it was the custom for farmers in early days, to keep in Vermont, or elsewhere but, before us is such a book kept by Abel Howard in West Hartford between 1836, (seven years after his marriage) until as late as 1866-67. The later entries were partly by his sons but, the greater part were by Abel Howard in a hand very much like that of his father, Dr. Abel Howard.

The accounts were varied, partly for things from the farm, and wages for hired help. Onions were then selling at 75 cents a bushel and potatoes at 35 cents a bushel, by an entry therein.

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***“Among the names recorded on the pages of the book which these items were taken are Barron, Blaisdell, Bell, Bugbee, Adams, Crandall, Child and Chadwick, Clark, Cowdrey and Dimick, Fisher, Fairbanks, Hunt, Hazen, Goff and Gilman, King and Kempton, Myers, Noble and Marsh, Pierce, Pratt, Rogers, Russell and Randall, Sawyer, Snow and Tracy, Wheeler, Williams and Watkins.*”**

In 1836, a hind quarter of veal sold for \$1.25 and apples were listed at \$1.34 cents a bushel without noting their variety. A harness at \$2.50 and a barrel of cider at \$1.50. A bushel of "fine salt" came to 56 cents. The rent of a horse and wagon in 1840 for a 29 mile drive came to \$2.03. In 1836 a hired man's work for two days came to \$1.67.

In 1841, half a "web of sheeting," came to \$1.58. Seven pounds of rice was 60 cents, and nine pounds of raisins 54 cents. A bushel and a half of India wheat 75 cents, and three quarts of molasses 30 cents. Mending brass kettle 25 cents. In 1842, a two-bushel basket cost 67 cents. A six weeks old pig came to \$1.50, and four pounds of butter 67 cents. "Shoeing a horse all round" came to 67 cents.

In 1839, a barrel of flour came to \$7.00, a gallon of vinegar was 19 cents. A day's work hoeing 83 cents.

One bushel of potatoes 25 cents. "Shearing seven sheep, and a pint of rum," 26 cents. "To making one barrel of cider," 10 cents.

In 1841, one trunk came to \$3.00, and a half bushel of turnips 12 cents. In 1836 a pound of tea cost 75 cents. The making of a cart body in 1842 came to \$3.00. In 1845 the making of a pair of pants is given as 50 cents. (It is presumed the cloth for the pants was spun and woven at home).

In 1848, weaving 22 yards of flannel came to \$3.67 and a palm leaf hat cost 30 cents (Probably a work hat.) The price of an ox yoke in 1841 is given at \$1.00 and a "paring machine," as \$1.25.

A bass wood board cost 17 cents. A wash board was 25 cents, and twelve pounds and eight ounces of maple sugar cost \$1.00. In 1845, two bushels of wheat came to \$2.34, and six pounds of dried apple 30 cents.

A meat bowl cost \$1.50. A subscription to the *Vermont Chronicle* in 1836 is entered as \$2.00. "One pair of small shoes," is entered at 50 cents. One axe \$1.50, grinding sleigh shoes and two knives 63 cents. In 1834, the "Highway tax" came to \$2.69.

In 1840, three yards of "Sattinet Cloth," was \$2.25. In 1843, repairing harnesses and holdback strap came to 63 cents. One watch cost \$12.00, one neck handkerchief 34 cents, and eight yards of linen \$1.00. Three and three quarters yards of flannel \$2.50.

One duck 25 cents, and 15 pounds of veal 57 cents. Three dozen hen's eggs 30 cents and three dozen peas \$1.50.

Cutting and making one coat \$3.50. Seven rakes \$1.40. Walnut timber and drawing the same \$3.70. Ash plank \$11.50. In 1839, two turkeys cost \$1.50. Filing wood saw five times cents, three panes of glass 13 cents, and setting twelve lights of glass 25 cents.

Among the names recorded on the pages of the book which these items were taken are Barron, Blaisdell, Bell, Bugbee, Adams, Crandall, Child and Chadwick, Clark, Cowdrey and Dimick, Fisher, Fairbanks, Hunt, Hazen, Goff and Gilman, King and Kempton, Myers, Noble and Marsh, Pierce, Pratt, Rogers, Russell and Randall, Sawyer, Snow and Tracy, Wheeler, Williams and Watkins.

This gives an inkling of prices at that time as well as the methods of doing business by one farmer of the period.

that they had plenty of sugar maple trees on the place.

There were two beds with bolsters and pillows valued at \$10. and \$7.00 each. There were also two pair of sheets and pillow cases for each at a total valuation of \$7.50. The two coverlids for bed had a total valuation of \$6.00. There were also smaller beds, presumably for the children, with always the enumeration of "cord" feather bed and under bed. A bureau was valued at \$7.00, which the writer happens to know is still in the family, being the property of her great grandson Ernest Howard of West Hartford.

Four tables and one stand, of varying sizes were listed as well as a "small Pine table." There were eight Windsor chairs, two of which were listed as "large," presumably for the dining table. Also, six kitchen chairs and a looking glass, as well as two desks. There were Pewter platters, plates, "servers" and pitchers, as well as decanters, glass tumblers and mugs, and five gin bottles listed at a valuation of seventy-five cents. There were seven table spoons, for forty-two cents.

A case of knives and forks, but no mention of tea spoons. For kitchen use were the usual outfits of the period; iron ware, bake pans, pots, "spider" frying

pans, crane, shovel, tongs, tray, meal chest, barrels and butter tub. A side saddle was valued at \$14.00. They evidently had a well-stocked home, especially judged from the homes of the day of which one reads.

Abel Howard Jr., son of Dr. Howard and his second wife Sarah, lived all his life in West Hartford and had eight children, all but one of whom lived past middle age. Of the grandchildren, of whom there are now twelve living, the writer is the oldest son of the oldest son, the late Abel Trumbull Howard, who with his parents, two brothers and one sister, are all buried in West Hartford.

The old Howard farm is still in the possession of the Howard family through the children of the late Austin Howard. The fourth generation is still living there. This is a remarkable record, that in a period of 102 years the family name is still preserved on the land where three generations before the place first became the property of that family. From her first two marriages, Dr. Abel Howard's second wife Sarah has a dozen and a half great grandchildren, and four of her fourteen great great grandchildren live on the Howard farm at West Hartford, now known as "Grand View" farm.

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*THANK YOU!*

## Yesterday's News

**Smile!** *The Landmark*, November 20, 1886

Mrs. Felch and Mrs. Perrin had their teeth pulled Monday - 11 and 3 respectively.

**"Givin' you a number, and takin' away your name ..."** *The Landmark*, August 16, 1889

The Central Vermont engines are all to lose their names; Numbers will be substituted.

**Thanks,** *The Landmark*, August 16, 1889

It is lawful to bag wood cocks and wood ducks now, and other ducks after Sept. 1. We mention this for the benefit of our local Nimrods.

**Brace up!** *The Landmark*, November 15, 1889

The Junction has capitalists, but as is the case in many other Vermont villages, they overlook, or ignore entirely the many opportunities to be found right under their very noses and wait for something to turn up. Now don't be clams, gentlemen. Brace up and do something. As a starter, how would it do to buy Mr. Nutt's lily pond and convert it into a reservoir for fire purposes. The thing could be done by a stock company, and we believe the money necessary to carry out such an undertaking can be raised very easily if some one will only take hold of the matter.

**Mmm,** *The Landmark*, June 30, 1883

Col. Hamilton has been bragging about one of his big strawberries measuring 4 3/4 inches around. We had one just three-fourths of an inch larger at 5 1/2, and it was not much of a day for strawberries either.

**Watts New?** *The Landmark*, January 3, 1890

KILOWATTS is the term which is to be used hereafter to express the power of electric machines. The word "horsepower" will be no longer employed referring to the power of any electric motor.

**Note from the Editor,** *The Landmark*, February 14, 1890

By the way, are you reading your own *LANDMARK*, or are you borrowing your neighbor's?

**Behind Bars,** *Woodstock Observer*, December 5, 1826

In the Vermont State Prison are 133 convicts; 51 are confined for theft, 19 for horse stealing, 16 for counterfeiting, 12 for burglary, 11 for forgery, 6 for rape, 4 for manslaughter, 3 for arson, 3 for assault with intent to murder, 2 for perjury, 1 for polygamy, 1 for assault with intent to ravish, 1 for burglary and theft, and one for swindling. Only 25 of them were born in Vermont. The age of the youngest is 15, and there were three over 60 years of age when committed.

**Bathing Beauty,** *The Landmark*, July 15, 1882

Boys go in bathing quite frequently on the Sabbath, but women are not often to be seen doing so. Last Sunday, however, was an exception. She was in the river, below the bridge, and seemed to enjoy herself to the no small amusement of quite a crowd of men and boys on the bridge.

**Chip Off the Old Block,** January 12, 1884

Gibbs won't sell us any more meat just because we printed that his baby looked like him. We were rather hard on the poor child.

**Hot Streak,** January 12, 1884

Perrin has had another streak of luck in collecting a bad debt, a big streak this time. A few days ago, he raked in \$95 from a dead beat who has had property come to him by will, and now the Perrin household have bread made of wheat flour three times a week.

## Hartford Historical Society

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### HHS Calendar

**THE GARIPAY HOUSE MUSEUM is open by appointment and/or when the “Welcome” flag is hanging on the front porch. 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 Tuesday of the month at the Garipay House at 10:00 a.m. (Please check for exact date.)

**Wednesday, September 9, 2026** - “**The Native Americans’ American Revolution,**” presented by Dr. Colin Calloway. 7:00 p.m. at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ; 1721 Maple St., Hartford Village. Free and accessible.

**Wednesday, November 11, 2026** - “**War in the Connecticut River Valley, 1777-1782,**” presented by Izzy Provoncha. 7:00 p.m. at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ; 1721 Maple St., Hartford Village. Free and accessible.

The **Genealogy Center** on the second floor of the Hartford Library is open Fridays from 3-6 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).

**Website:** <http://www.hartfordvthistory.com/>

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**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>