

THE HARTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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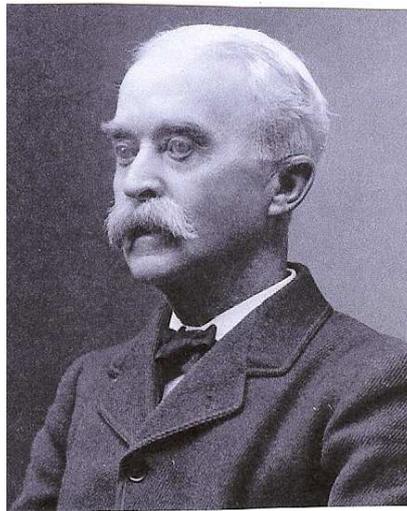
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SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2009

HENRY HARDING, M. AM. SOC. C. E.



The Hartland Historical Society is the proud owner of surveying equipment owned by Henry Harding. We also have in our possession a note as follows,

“Washington Dec 14, 1857

Dear Sir,

Your of the 11th inst has been received and I have enclosed it to the Hon John B. Floyd my successor as Secretary of War.

Very Respectfully
Yrs.
Jefferson Davis

Henry Harding Esq
Hartland, Vt.”

Having a hand written letter from the President of the Confederacy got my attention and I decided to see what else I could find out about the recipient.

Henry was born and raised in the home now owned by Peter Gordon on the Brownsville Road in Hartland Four Corners. This beautiful brick home was built by his father, the second Dr. John Harding and his wife, Lucy Willard Harding with help from her Willard relatives. Dr. John and Lucy were married on Feb 27, 1820 and had nine children, some of which died in childhood, with Henry being number eight. Henry was born on Dec. 10 in 1837.



Henry's obituary

Died October 23d, 1910

Henry Harding was born on December 10th 1837, at Hartland, Vt., where his father, Dr. John Harding, was a physician for many years.

He studied engineering under Mr. Job Atkins, a mining engineer of Richmond, Va., during 1859-60 and was afterward engaged on the construction of the Hudson River Railroad.

From 1865 to 1870, Mr. Harding was employed, under General Grenville M. Dodge, on the survey and construction of the Union Pacific Railway. He was also employed on the Adirondack, Housatonic, and Naugatuck Railroads, in charge of construction and in various other capacities.

From 1871 to 1895, he was engaged at intervals by the United States Corps of Engineers in charge of river and harbor improvements and other work, and was wont to recall with especial pride the construction of the fortifications of Fort Adams, at Newport, R.I. in 1871-73.

While in the employ of the Government, Mr. Harding contracted malaria, and, in 1895, he retired to his home at Hartland Four Corners, Vt. where he continued to live until his death.

Mr. Harding was a man of wide acquaintance and high reputation in his Profession, to which he was devoted, and, although living in a secluded country village, he kept well abreast of all the improved methods and was familiar with all the new instruments used in engineering work. At the time of his death, he was engaged as Engineer in charge of the construction of the new sewerage system of Windsor, Vt.

Mr. Harding was the embodiment of painstaking accuracy and scrupulous honor, and any work done under his superintendence was honestly constructed and fully served its purpose. He was of a genial and courteous manner, modest, kind-hearted, and drily humorous, an agreeable and interesting social companion. He never married, and is survived by several nieces and nephews.

Mr. Harding was elected a Member of the American Society of Civil Engineers on May 7th 1873."

Although Mr. Harding's health must have been impacted by the malaria, he did continue to be active in the engineering field as is indicated by the mention of the sewerage system in Windsor. We also have evidence of his activities from news clips of the time. C.Y.M.

1898 " Civil engineer, Henry Harding was surveying in Plainfield Plain for water works last week." " Henry Harding, the distinguished civil engineer of this town, has put in two more of the Hodgkins patent double acting hydrolic rams, one being for Fred A. Rogers, the other for S.W. Clark of Plainfield Plain, N.H. Both of these rams are the No. 2 and each one delivers daily eleven barrels of water, and supplies both house and stock at barn by the introduction of a branch pipe to the latter. Mr. Harding is one of the best civil engineers in the state, having been actively engaged in the business since 1865. Now that he has settled down permanently here, a good opportunity is offered for obtaining surveys or advice regarding water supplies. There are two hydraulic rams now in successful operation in this village, one on the Steele, the other on the Daniels places."

1900 " Being at the Four Corners, Sunday, we made a brief call on Civil Engineer, Henry Harding, the sole owner of the John Harding estate. We found our friend had just put the finishing touches to a finely drawn plan of Hartland cemetery, for the better convenience of the officers of that association. It is an elaborate and beautifully executed piece of work, such as we should expect from this distinguished and experienced engineer. His library and working room has been much improved of late. New wallpaper of a light color and elegant pattern has been substituted for the old, dark paper, which gives the room a much lighter and more cheerful appearance. His library contains a vast number of works on all branches of civil engineering science, both ancient and modern. The Harding estate is easily one of the finest at the Four Corners village, and has never known an owner outside the family name"

1906 " Mr. Harding is to superintend the construction of the new sewer to be built at Woodstock this season"

I have no idea why Henry was corresponding with Jefferson Davis in 1857 as this was before he became a student of civil engineering in 1859, but here again, we have an accomplished and interesting man who is a product of the Town of Hartland. C.Y.M.

The sharp eyes of Linda Schneider picked up the cobs of corn hanging to dry on the Poor Farm's porch in our last newsletter. I don't know if hanging them this way was common practice. It seems very labor intensive and I think it was more common to throw them into a corn crib. After drying, the kernels would be removed to be ground into corn meal for humans or pigs to consume or cracked for chicken and other animal's food. Now after the kernels were removed the usefulness of the cob lived on. In the days of outhouses and before "Charmin", corn cobs served yet another purpose. A subject for another time. Or maybe not. C.Y.M.

HOME GARDENING

With the renewed interest in home gardening that we are experiencing this year, I started thinking about gardens in my past and tried to find out more about gardens that went even further back. I was interested in what Vermonters grew for the family's consumption and how it might differ from what we choose to eat today. I remember Victory Gardens during WW2 which, at our house weren't very exciting. We started every spring with dandelions. It was only uphill after that but I don't remember fresh salads, zucchini green peppers or interesting herbs. We had rhubarb, chives but no basil, garlic, oregano, etc. I expect that that was because we were unaware of Italian cooking. For green leafy stuff we had swiss chard, beet greens and maybe spinach. Thinning carrots and beets were my idea of foolish slave labor for a kid who wanted to play. Everything had to be prepared. Peas shelled, green beans snapped, corn cooked and cut off the cob and all that we didn't eat had to be canned. At my grandmother's that meant a hot fire in the kitchen woodstove all morning, both for canning and for a hot meal at noon, but her house was more fun. After the dreaded dandelions we got to asparagus, then strawberries. My Grandfather had big strawberry fields and we ate shortcake until we split. Of course, my brother and I had to do all the picking. Lucia Hazen Webster's letters to her deceased husband talk about his strawberries. "When you stuck to a proper place for them you had very good luck with your strawberries – too good, some of us thought, for strawberries had to be picked and it was a back breaking operation. Then far worse than the picking, they had to be sold. You chose to do that by having the whole family peddle them house to house in Windsor, and how we hated it.

I can see you out in the strawberry field working as hard as any one but without any system. Nothing on earth could convince you to stick to one row until it was finished. Better berries in the next row were always beckoning and you could not resist. I invariably picked after you

I was also interested in her account of Mr. Webster's melons. My Grandfather also took great pride in his melons and they didn't have to be preserved. Just save the rind for the best pickles. CYM "The crop that undoubtedly gave you the most pleasure was the melons. You were famous for them and did not often sell any. They were kept for us and our friends"

There was a straight division of labor at my Grandparent's. Grammy could garden her "posies" but Grampa brought in the vegetables and Grammy "did them up". The only water they had flowed into a barrel in the kitchen so Mother Nature had to take care of moisture. There was plenty of manure but nothing was ever mulched.(except for the straw around the strawberries) I don't think we used pesticides. Mildred Varney in her diary mentions many days when she "picked potato bugs" She also said that they put 10 bushels into the cellar. Mr. Ruggles says "I raise a small piece of Indian wheat each year, mainly for feed for hens. I often sell a few bushels of potatoes. I have a good garden that I manure heavily and raise a large variety of choice vegetables. I have plenty of currants, grapes and plums, and often sell some of the two latter"

I have found mention and remember parsnips, turnips, and squashes of all kinds, butternuts, horseradish and popcorn. It was a lot of work but people who had a piece of land to garden ate very well and very economically. It was also common for people who weren't into large scale farming to have hens and a pig in the back yard. Maybe we will be going back to that way of life. Could do a lot worse. CYM

WE HAVE MUCH TO BE GRATEFUL FOR

A collection of photo albums from Dick and Elaine Brousseau

1910 program for "Bar Haven" at UU Church, 1919 War Commemoration Festival Dance Program from Marjorie and Leon Royce

1963 Graduation Program from Steve Howard.

And a nice boost to our coffers from Tom and Ann White

Along the lines of donations, we have a request. We were going over our collection of J. Howard Flowers "Free Soul" booklets. We are pretty sure that we don't have his complete works, but are not too sure about how he dated them. If you have any that you would be willing to find a new home for please remember us.

Carol Mowry, Editor

President's Note

Spring activities commence with the Hartland Historical Society sponsoring a slide presentation by Jackie Calder of the Vermont Historical Society on son of Hartland, Harold Goddard Rugg (1883-1957), noted librarian, historian, gardener, Vermont collector, and naturalist, at our annual meeting at the Hartland Library, on Sunday evening, May 17 at 7 o'clock. Refreshments will be served. Admission is free.

Slate of Officers to be voted on at the Hartland Historical Society annual meeting on May 17: Carol Mowry, President; Rosemary Morancy, Vice President; Edith Hoose, Secretary; Les Motschman, Treasurer and Board of Directors: Robert Guillette, Daniel Morancy, Barbara Spear, Jay Boeri, Anne Adams, Maureen Martin, Clyde Jenne, and Judy Howland.

Due to the increased cost of postage and printing, our newsletter will be cut back from four to three times annually. A supplemental flyer will be printed and placed at the library during the summer months.

Hartland Historical Society members Whit and Carol Mowry, and Elaine Brousseau along with Tom Giffin and Charles Marchant of the Vermont Old Cemetery Association attended a committee meeting in Montpelier in support of the pending Cemetery Bill. No action has been taken at this time.

A hearing for Petition to Declare Land Use Permit Abandoned/Unified Buddhist Church (Now Guite) will involve a site visit on April 30, 2009 at 9:00 a.m. The hearing will immediately follow the site visit in the Hartland Town Offices.

Although the 2009 Vermont Expo has been cancelled we will have an exhibit at the Farm Fest on May 31 at Hartland Library.

Don't forget to pay us a visit on Old Home Day, July 4. We have new exhibits on display.

A reminder that our fiscal year starts on June 1 and annual dues will be due at that time.

Rosemary Morancy