

# HARTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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HARTLAND, VERMONT

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SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2011

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## HARTLAND ABANDONED INDUSTRIES

Byron Ruggles is one of my favorite characters from early Hartland. His contributions to the Nature Club and Historical Society are invaluable. We have him to thank for hundreds of Hartland pictures taken in the early 1900s and for essays that describe the life of his times, and even before. Mr. Ruggles lived from 1838 to 1917 and these are some of his recollections. What an interesting place this must have been during those years. C.Y.M.

“POTASH MAKING: was one of the earliest industries in this town as well as in other towns. The first work of the settlers was cutting down the forest and clearing the land for farm crops. The trees were fallen in masses and when they had lain until the leaves and smaller branches were dry they were set on fire and all leaves, dead wood and the smaller branches were burned. Then the logs were cut in suitable lengths and drawn or rolled in log heaps and burned. The resulting ashes were not thought to be of use for fertilizer, and occasionally a man would gather up all his ashes and buy more of his neighbors and establish what was called a Potash, a saleable product in market. The Potash Kettles occasionally seen along the highway for water troughs are relics of this now obsolete and abandoned industry.” Note: potash is potassium carbonate – used in the manufacture of glass. (C.Y.M.)

“BRICK-MAKING: was commercial in town at an early date. There was a brick-yard on land now owned by Mr. Guy Graham ( brick house on North side of Rte 12 about half way between Three and Four Corners) and one on Mr. Henry Britton’s. Mr. Graham’s was peculiar in that there were glades or layers of sand among the clay so that by careful management sand and clay were properly mixed right there, saving the trouble and expense of drawing sand. There are several brick houses in town that were built by bricks made for the purpose on the spot. The

Conant house on the Plain is one of them. A.M. Gilson told me he was a boy there when the bricks were made and the house built; that the clay was dug from the bed of a small brook near by and there were stones among the clay, and he had the job of getting the stones out of the clay.

TANNING: The tanning of hides for leather was an occupation in town up to about forty years ago. A man by the name of Perry was running a tannery where the old broken chimney now is (can still be seen on the right after crossing Lull Brook heading toward Four Corners) when Charles W. Warren worked there and later became owner and run the tannery for thirty years till about 1869 when it was burned. The building across the road where Walter Jenne now lives (gone) was a Currier Shop and leather was finished there. Later the leather was not finished but was sold in the rough. Horse power was used for grinding bark at first, later water power was used until the shop across the brook could or would not spare the water, then a fifteen horse power steam engine, built by Mr. N. F. English was used to the last. A Mr. Levi Marcy had a tannery in Fieldsville (Brownsville Rd ) for many years, and one Mr. Joel Shurtleff had a tannery somewhere in town, but all have long since been discontinued.

DISTILLING; The large barn at the Lamb place ( Rte. 5, South of Village) was built and used for a distillery building near by down at Lulls Brook near the A.A. Martin Shop where Cider Brandy, Rye Whiskey and perhaps other liquors were made for many years. The late Mr. Julias Lamb once showed me the old still itself with its peculiar worm , there in the hog house. I have learned that there was Potato Whiskey made in the Densmore district, and I have a faint recollection some one told me there was once a cider distillery where the Warren Tannery used to be before the tannery was built, but I have no certain information about it.

SILK CULTURE; Was once an industry in this town at the Dr. Harding ( Peter Gordon) house near the Four Corners, and I presume at many other places in town, for it was quite common over the country along about 1840. My father's folks had a hand at it. The worms or larva were kept on tables and supplied for food with the leaves from a shrub called Mulberry, planted and grown for the purpose. When the worms were full grown they were supplied with brush from the Mulberry trees for them to wind up in or to make their cocoons. The cocoons were about an inch long and about half that in diameter and of a light yellowish color and contained the chrysalis the larva had changed into. The cocoons were put in warm water for awhile to soak up and soften the gum or gluey substance the worm used to cement the thread of his house together. A brush wiped among the cocoons would gather the ends of threads the worm began with and a suitable number of them to make a desired size of thread were reeled off many yards long or till the cocoons were used up. If the reeling was not done before a certain time, the chrysalis would hatch and the miller gnaw his way out to mate and lay eggs for more worms. These hatched cocoons could not be reeled for the thread had been cut ever so many

times. Put the cocoons in boiling water for awhile to kill the chrysalides, then they could be kept indefinitely. But a good many cocoons had to be allowed to hatch to keep up the supply of worms, and those hatched cocoons were soaked out and carded by hand and they made a kind of wool silk.

**CLOTH MAKING:** Many years ago a man by the name of Silsby was renting a woolen factory in the Foundry building, as we call it. Whether this man built the building and first started a factory there or not I do not know. He had two men working for him by the name of Sturtevant, and after a time the Sturtevants bought out Silsby and run the factory themselves, and still later they abandoned that building and bought the Gristmill at the head of the gorge near Hartland Village, (South of the bridge. Now gone C.Y.M.) the red building that sat upon the rocks, and took the gristmill works out and put the cloth machinery in. Later they built the larger building adjoining just below and then run quite a large factory. It was in full blast in 1861 when I came in town. I bought cloth there for a coat. After awhile the Sturtevants closed out and one Ashworth wove horse blankets there until the factory was burned down some 30 years ago. There was a vacant factory standing where the A.A. Martin shop now is, when I came to town. I suppose cloth had been made there but I don't know how long nor by whom. L.H. Merritt put in a woolen factory where Earl Martin's shop now is and it was run a number of years until it was burned. The cloth factories mentioned have been thoroughly abandoned, but there is one now running in North Hartland as you all well know. The Sturtevant factory, as well as about all the factories about the country in those times had carding machines for carding wool into rolls for hand spinning and cloth making in the many farm houses. My mother used to spin and weave webs and webs of cloth every year in my early remembrance. I never wore a garment that she did not spin and weave the cloth for and make the garment, until I was sixteen years old. She made fulled cloth, satinette, kersey flannel, sheeps gray and frocking. Webs of the two later often being sold at the store towards paying the store bill. Beside, from flax we raised, she spun and wove linen for sheets and shirts, diamond waled table cloths, towels and pocket handkerchiefs. I well remember her weaving one web, along the last of the 40's that was only about an inch wide: it was black, red and blue, web and filling, somewhat striped and checkered and was made for garters. This domestic spinning and cloth making has all gone by now. Many a middle aged woman today don't know how to thread a darning needle with woolen yarn.

**CLOTHES PINS:** After cloth-making had been discontinued in the foundry building, it was used for a variety of work. Clothes pins were made there in great quantities, also pastry rolling pins and hand hay rakes and horse rakes. A Mr. Blake made some of those things and Thomas Cobb some of them. George P. Hayes made coffins there and finally gave over his business to his brother, Oliver Hayes at the Four Corners. Finally in 1862 Darling and Gilbert from Woodstock established an iron foundry there and did a large stroke of business there until both had died and the dam had gone.

For two or three years or more, covering 1862, there was an eighty horse power steam engine, built by N.F. English at the Town Hall plant at the Four Corners. It run a grist mill in what is now Town Hall (large white building on south side of Rte 12 after intersection with Brownsville Rd.), also bobbin machinery, and in the further building, (gone) machinery for making Smith's Patent Square Clothes Pins and large quantities of those goods were made there. The clothes pin machines were sold and went to Barnard and the engine went to the Cotton Factory at Windsor to supplement the water power there.

MACHINE SHOP. Mr. N.F. English bought land and built a shop and dam on Lulls Brook and with an engine lathe he had built himself, and a planer he bought in Windsor, had a well equipped machine shop and did a good deal of work in it for a number of years. His son, Mr. Ernest English now has the machinery in his garage.

BASKET MAKING. Was followed by Abner Harlow and some of his boys in years gone by at the place where H.A. Gilson now lives.

TINWARE. Was made and repaired by E.H. Bagley where Mr. Temple now lives ( was on what is now the Richard White's front lawn. South side of Rte 12 about ½ way between Three and Four Corners. Fell into disrepair. ) and also by Mr. Fletcher at Hartland Village.

BOOTS AND SHOES : In early times were all made and repaired by the local shoemaker. There has been several shops of such work at the Four Corners and at Hartland Village since 1861, but now all the foot wear is bought ready made at the stores, and made in that peculiar way like the Deacon's One Hoss Shay, so the whole boot or shoe wears out all at once and very little or no repairing can be done.

LETTERED GRAVESTONES: John Harding, and others before him, lettered gravestones at the Four Corners and Alfred Hill and others did that work at Hartland Village, but no such work is done in town now that I know.

CEMENT PIPE: Benjamin Livermore invented a method of laying cement pipe for conveying water and a good deal of it was layed in town in the sixties (1860's) I was employed to lay a mile of it of a large size in Windsor to bring water to the village, and it did good service till the Windsor people wanted more water than would run through the 4 ½ inch cement pipe, then it was replaced by a ten inch iron pipe."

## BRICK CHURCH STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

Sharing the frame with the Websters, the most South-easterly of the windows was dedicated to Reverend Samuel Delano. Rev. Delano was pastor of the Brick Church from 1828 to 1839 and again from 1852 to 1857 A graduate of Dartmouth College in the class of 1828 he was ordained in that same year at the Hartland church and served the longest of any of its ministers. At the time of his ordination there were 112 members. Between 1828 and 1838 under the skillful

management of Rev Delano the church's home was changed from the Center of Town to its present location, It was his idea that the church be made of brick, which was made in Martinsville. The land was a gift of David Sumner.

In 1838 because of financial difficulties, a council recommended that the Rev. Delano be dismissed from the church unless his church could provide a salary of no less than \$400 and the necessary supply of firewood and enough hay for the keeping of a cow and a horse.

Note: At this time (1838) there was a great exodus from Vermont and the membership of the church suffered as a result.

Carol Mowry, Editor

## THANK YOUUS !!!!

We have a wonderful list of items and financial gifts to acknowledge since the last newsletter. You keep us going and we are deeply appreciative.

Congregational Church newsclippings from Phyllis Bowers, "Joining the Generations" Mrs. Skehan and Mrs. McClures classes interview older Hartlanders, Feb 1909 "The Vermonter" The Hartland Nature Club by Nancy Darling from David and Cynthia Hale, Circa 2000 (number, not year) obits on flashdrives from Steve Howard. Lamb family photo and genealogy from Jane Cawthorn, John D. Rogers 1877 music book from Marjory Shepard, Howland and Atwood family photos from Judy Howland, Livermore patent and wax seal issued by Queen Victoria, Cheese Wheel cover for Montvert Cheese. Ed Keyes and Co. Hartland from Barbara Mills, Copies of local newsclips from Vermont Journals from 1877 to 1921, incomplete. From Howland Atwood's estate.

Cash donations from the following. Without your generosity I fear that we would have to raise our dues. If I miss anyone please remind me. Jane Cawthorn , Betty Garrand, The David Hales, Donald Whelpley, Cordie Merritt, The George Littles, Carolyn Wheeler, Anne Adams, and some generous donations to the "bear".

## WHAT'S COMING UP ????

As you know by now, 2011 is the 250 TH anniversary of the charters for many Upper Valley towns. The Hartland Historical Society is planning at least two events in celebration. Towns all over the Valley will be commemorating the occasion and I anticipate a lively year. On May 15<sup>th</sup> at 2 P.M. at the Library we will be sponsoring, along with the Vermont Council for the Humanities, Jeanne Brink. Jeanne is an Abenaki descendant who will share the Abenaki story of the times. This will help us better understand the area before the white man moved in.

On June 18<sup>TH</sup> there will be a dedication of a plaque and bench to honor and celebrate Howland Atwood here at the Historical Society. I would hate to have to function at the Historical Society without Howland's contributions. More details in the next letter.

Very briefly. Please collect any recipes with a Hartland History for our someday cookbook. If you would like to be on a committee to make this a reality don't hesitate to step forward. Questions ?? You can call me, Carol at 436-3383

## PORTSMOUTH, N.H. BUS TOUR

Thursday, June 23<sup>RD</sup> we will be visiting Portsmouth, N.H. This is where our Charter was issued by Governor Benning Wentworth. We will start the day with a visit to his 40 room mansion. After a picnic lunch on the grounds we will go on to a choice of his much smaller first home or the more elaborate Moffatt-Ladd House with gardens. There will be free time to explore Seres St. before embarking on a 1 ½ hour Harbor Cruise with an emphasis on Portsmouth as it was when we were just a lot of land named Hertford, N.H. The day will end with dinner at Newicks. The cost for the day is \$65 per person, payable with your application. This price does NOT include your brown bag lunch or your dinner at Newicks. It DOES include 2 bottles of water per person and all entrance fees and tips. I will start general advertizing the first of March so reserve early. Mail the form below to: Hartland Historical Society, P.O. Box 297, Hartland, Vt. 05048. Hope you will be able to come!!

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Name (s) .....e.mail .....

Address.....phone.....

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Pick one: Warner House 1716 (original Governors house), or Moffatt- Ladd House and Gardens 1763.

Warner..... Moffatt-Ladd.....

There will be no refunds after June 1 unless we can fill your seat. More details as to time, place to meet bus, etc will be sent at a later date but the time will be approximately 8 A.M. to 8 P.M.