

---

# THE OBSERVER

The Magazine  
of the  
University of  
Hartford

FALL 2005

---



Carrie Chapman Catt, courtesy of Corbis Images

## A PASSION FOR HISTORY LEADS A HARTT ALUMNUS DOWN THE PATH TO HISTORIC PRESERVATION

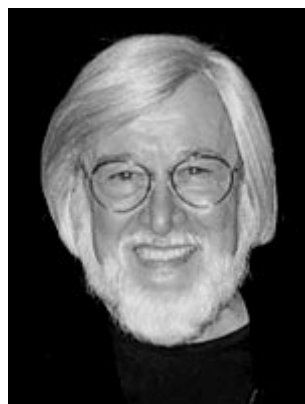
Carmino Ravosa '57, '67 (Hartt), has written songs for national TV shows, composed musicals that were performed at the White House, and enjoyed a stellar career as an educator. But he says his greatest triumph would be saving an 86-year-old farmhouse in a suburb of New York City.

While doing research for a new musical about the town of Briarcliff Manor, N.Y., Ravosa was surprised to learn that in 1919, Carrie Chapman Catt—a suffragist known more for strategic, persuasive movements than the rebellious, sometimes violent maneuvers of other women's rights activists—had purchased a 17-acre farm in neighboring New Castle, N.Y. Ravosa was familiar with her life, having featured Catt in a 1973 composition, *Seneca Falls*, a musical about the first women's rights convention, which was held in that city in 1848.

"People don't know Carrie Chapman Catt," laments Ravosa, a devoted student of women's history. "They only know Susan B. Anthony. It's a shame. Catt was a brilliant organizer."

Thanks to Ravosa's efforts, Catt has taken center stage on her Westchester County farm, Juniper Ledge, which was accepted last year to both the *New York Register* and the *National Register of Historic Places*. It is a fitting bow to Catt, founder of the League of Women Voters. But Ravosa's preservation work is not finished. Juniper Ledge's current owner, Marianne Marks, is planning to sell the property, and Ravosa is concerned that new owners will mean changes to Juniper Ledge. His goal is to recruit a buyer who is interested in purchasing the house to preserve its appearance and open it up to the public as a memorial or gathering place. Ravosa has contacted several local benefactors, but, so far, to no avail.

Best known as a songwriter for CBS's *Captain Kangaroo* and PBS's *Shining Time Station*, Ravosa gave a solo command performance of his musical *Ghosts* in the White House for President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter and more than 600 Halloween party guests. At former President George H. Bush's inauguration, Ravosa performed selections from his musicals *Shh! We're Writing the Constitution* and *From George to George*.



Carmino Ravosa '57, '67

A former composer-in-residence for The Dalton School in New York City and for the Edison Project, Ravosa wrote music as a means of teaching children about history. He is the author of *The Music Connection* and *World of Music*, two nationally popular music textbooks. He and his wife, Claire, a voice major, met as students at The Hartt School. They have been married for almost 50 years.

Although formally retired from teaching, Ravosa continues to teach music to his seven grandchildren. And then there is his work for Carrie Chapman Catt. Ravosa, who perseveres in the Juniper Ledge battle, believes that "providing it is saved, this house may be the most important thing I've done."