



PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 98, Portland, CT 06480

FALL 2010 NEWSLETTER

Ruth Callander House Museum, 492 Main St., Portland, CT, 06480, Tel: 860-342-5455
www.PortlandHistSoc.Org email: PortlandHistSoc@yahoo.com

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Sue Anderson

It's hard to believe the summer is over and it's time to start with our fall activities.

First before focusing on our upcoming events, we would like to express our gratitude to the many wonderful volunteers and supporters who helped to make our Annual Town-Wide Tag Sale and Secret Garden Tour successful events. We really appreciate your ongoing support of these major Society fundraisers.

The summer exhibit at the Museum, featuring antique wedding gowns, news articles and photos of the 1936 flood in Portland, and one-room schoolhouses, was well received by our visitors. Thanks to Phyllis, Claire, Deb, Vivian, and Chris for another wonderful display. Deb and Chris are currently working on an exhibit for the Portland Fair.

The indoor potluck supper held in June was enjoyed by everyone in attendance. Rick Spencer's program: "A Songwriter from Connecticut: The Civil War Music of Henry Clay Work" was very interesting and entertaining.

We would also like to extend a special thank you to Dylan McDougall for creating five exhibit audio stations at the Museum for his Eagle Scout Project. The audio stations are a wonderful addition to our exhibits and will be utilized by visitors for many years to come thanks to his efforts.

The Society's newly formed Board of Trustees has been diligently meeting over the summer. They have been busy drafting a long range plan for the Society, creating a charter for the Collection Board, compiling job descriptions and developing a list of potential nominees to populate a Collection Board. The trustees are: Vivian Dower, Phyllis Frisbie, Bob McDougall, Chris Sullivan, and Regina Woltmann.(continued pg 2)

EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT: EXHIBIT AUDIO STATIONS

Bob McDougall



**Dylan McDougall
with an Exhibit
Audio Station**

The Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History is pleased to announce the addition of five Exhibit Audio Stations built in March 2010 as part of an Eagle Scout project by Dylan McDougall, while a senior at Portland High School, a member of Boy Scout Troop 2, and a life member of the Portland Historical Society.

Each station consists of a stand with a box on top that can be removed and used separately on a table or other surface. The box contains a handmade Daisy mp3 player ordered and partially donated from Makershed.com and a pair of repurposed computer speakers, graciously donated by the Pratt and Whitney Surplus Store in East Hartford, CT. Both the speakers and the mp3 player can be powered by wall outlets or by battery packs contained in the box. The audio recordings can be changed to keep them current with the exhibits at the museum. The boxes, stands, and mp3 players were all assembled by volunteers including the boy scouts and funding was made possible by a grant from the Middlesex County Community Foundation.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Museum News	Page 2
Programs	Page 3, 8
Classifieds.....	Page 4
William Van Beynum Award.....	Page 5
New products for the holidays.....	Page 6
Callander Cupboard.....	Page 7

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE *(continued)*

Bob McDougall and Doris Sherrow-Heidenis, with the assistance of Luiza McDougall, have done another outstanding job compiling the Society's calendar. The 2011 Calendar, "Gone but not forgotten...homes from Portland's past", features twelve Portland homes of historical importance that are no longer standing. Photos of these houses were selected from the "Federal Writers' Project, Works Progress Administration, Census of Old Buildings in Connecticut", completed in the late 1930s.

We are pleased to announce that we are adding two new items to our "Callander House Cupboard" that will be perfect for holiday gift giving. New this year is a hand painted porcelain ornament, in two different designs, created by Nancy Paine in her Simsbury, Connecticut studio: one with Central School and one with The Brainerd House or also known as The Wagner House. Nancy is known throughout New England for her watercolor and acrylics paintings. Her work can be seen in many fine galleries and stores. The 3" round flat ornaments, with full color design and ribbon, will be individually boxed and priced at \$12 each.

This year the Society is inviting the third-grade students at Gildersleeve School to participate in a contest that will correspond with their study of the early history of Portland. Students will be encouraged to design their own artwork of a postcard, postage stamp, or coin depicting a Portland scene and write a sentence about why they think it is important to Portland's history. Each student who submits artwork will receive a certificate of recognition and pencil from the Society. First, second, and third-place winners will be awarded savings bonds. All of the students' artwork will be on display at the Museum for the November 7th opening from 2-4 pm.

We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events, exhibits, or at our regular monthly program meetings held at the Portland Library or Senior Center. We are always happy to welcome new members.

VISITORS AT THE MUSEUM

Each month on the first Sunday, the Society's Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History opens to the public. Every month brings new and interesting visitors. October brought Regina and Jim Cornwall of Naples, Florida. Jim is writing a book about his ancestors: the Cornwells and Cornwalls, who were among the first 15 families who came to Middletown in 1650 and moved to East Middletown (Portland) before 1700. Jim Cornwall's ancestor, William Cornwall, has been recorded by local historians as Portland's third resident. The Society's primary researcher, Doris Sherrow-Heidenis, and other museum volunteers were able to provide the Cornwalls with documents and other materials. Doris found that the Cornwall/Cornwell differentiation



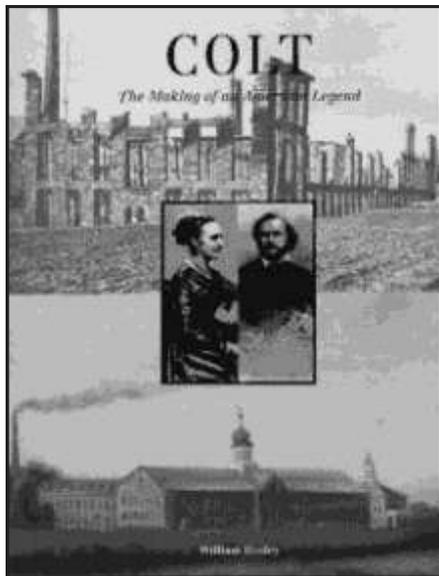
Regina Cornwall, Doris Sherrow-Heidenis and Jim Cornwall at the Museum

took place in the 19th century when, according to Beers Biographical Sketches of 1903, the Cornwalls lived in Portland and the Cornwells lived in Middletown. Doris notes, "The Victorians were into all sorts of quaint things, having somewhat improved their ability to communicate and associate. But unfortunately, they didn't always create prosy, analytical writings about these tendencies, the way we do now..."

The Cornwall House was on the Glastonbury Turnpike across from the Town Garage and in 1991 was the oldest house standing in Portland. Shortly after it was dismantled and was recently seen for sale, still awaiting reconstruction.



Programs



Elizabeth Hart Jarvis - *Chris Sullivan*

Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt (1826-1905) was the subject of a fascinating program in September presented by William Hosley, author of the 1996 book *Colt: the Making of an American Legend*.

Elizabeth Hart Jarvis (1826-1905) was the first child of Elizabeth Hart and Rev. William Jarvis, who was rector of Trinity church in Portland (or Chatham at that time). She spent her childhood in the Hart-Jarvis house, also known as Manor House at Elmcrest. The family moved to Middletown, where she married the famous arms manufacturer Samuel Colt of Hartford in 1856. The couple went on a world tour for their long honeymoon and came back to a grand home Sam named "Armsmear," which overlooked extensive grounds with the Colt factory and the river beyond. Colt firearms led the way for other industries in Hartford and the area, making the Connecticut River Valley the "Silicon Valley" of the time.

After a marriage of less than six years and her husband's early death in 1862, Elizabeth Colt carried on Sam's life work, leading his company and rebuilding the Colt factory after a devastating fire in 1864. She overcame the losses of four young children and, years later, her remaining son, Caldwell. For the next four decades she influenced the civic life of Hartford, becoming an art patron, philanthropist, and local institution builder. Elizabeth memorialized her husband and son with projects that were also works of art--the "Colt Memorial 'Church of the Good Shepherd,' the 'Caldwell Colt Memorial House,' the 'Colt Memorial Statue,' 'Colt Memorial Park,'... and the 'Colt Memorial' biography of Sam Colt."

Elizabeth left in her will the grounds of her estate to the city of Hartford for a park, which still remains. Her large and important collection of art, including paintings by Hudson River School artists that she had commissioned, was bequeathed to the Wadsworth Atheneum, which then built a new wing with her \$50,000 endowment.

Following the program, Linda Cunningham donated an autographed copy of the William Hosley book to the Society.



Hart - Jarvis House in 2009

Upcoming - *Regina Woltmann*

October 26, 2010 - Portland Library - 7:30 pm - "Theodate Pope Riddle - One of Connecticut's first female architects" - presented by Dan Davis. Theodate was educated at Miss Porter's School in Farmington, CT, and became one of the first female architects in Connecticut. She designed the Hill-Stead Museum which is a National Historic Landmark as a home for her parents around the turn of the twentieth century (1901) and spent many years on her most ambitious project designing the buildings for Avon Old Farms School in Avon as a memorial to her parents. Learn more about Theodate and her life and legacy during this interesting presentation by local architect and University of Hartford Professor, Dan Davis.

November 9 - Potluck Supper at Hemolock Grange Hall - 6 pm

December - Holiday Exhibit at Ruth Callander House - dates to be determined

CLASSIFIEDS

Wanted

A picture of Jessie Alsop (1875-1951). "Miss Alsop," as I heard Ruth Callendar call her in perhaps 1980, was a local history dynamo during the later 1930s until her death in 1951. She wrote many columns for the Middletown Press on various aspects of Portland's history, as well as all the Colonial Dames reports on old houses up in the State Library. One can even go on the Internet and see her gravestone in Indian Hill Cemetery in Middletown. I have located most of her MP columns, but, so far, I have not seen a picture of this creative woman! Does anyone have a snapshot of Miss Alsop? Contact Doris Sherrow-Heidenis, kerry.doris@sbcglobal.net or 860-342-2493

Photos of Annino's Drug Store, the predecessor to Bordonaro's Pharmacy Inc. Medicine Center at 283 Main Street. We can copy originals. Contact Bob 342-3062

Jobs

Collections Board Members – We are currently seeking volunteers to serve on our new Collections Board. Applicants should have a keen interest in Portland History, be experienced in drafting policies and procedures, and have willingness to contact other Historical Societies and Museums to learn of their collection policies and operating procedures. Time Commitment: Four hours a month. Contact Sue 342-0433 susanneanderson@sbcglobal.net

Program Committee Members – Seeking one or more volunteers to coordinate speakers for our monthly meetings, nine months a year. Candidates will assist present Chair, should be well organized, and have good communication skills. Support resources available. Contact Sue 342-0433 susanneanderson@sbcglobal.net

Wanted: **Portland Brownstones Baseball Team photos** taken 1920 to 1925. Newspaper accounts indicate team photos were taken after some games.

THE PORTLAND BROWNSTONES BASEBALL TEAM OF THE MIDDLESEX COUNTY LEAGUES

by Ed Wilcox, Baseball Historian

Portland had a team in the Middlesex County League (MCL) by 1919. They would have had a team well into the 1950's when the Leagues started to fade in popularity. Each town would have their own team. They had all local players except for pitchers and catchers. The players were semi-pro. They received money for each game they played. This was a part time job. Until 1924 all MCL games were played on Saturday afternoons starting at 3 or 3:30 pm. All the players had regular jobs. Portland would also play most Sundays against other teams throughout Connecticut. The High School Field off of Main Street was used. The MCL started in 1905 and except for a few years played right through into the 1950's or 60's.

Teams in the MCL, over the years were Portland, Middletown, East Hampton, Essex, Chester, Deep River, Saybrook, Branford, Higganum, Glastonbury, and Meriden. Portland finished second in 1920 and then won three consecutive championships 1921-23. The managers during these four years were Ed O'Donnell, Dennes O'Brien and Frank Brainerd.

1923 Team Captain-James Kingston LF

Other players-Jack Carlson 2b, Jack Anderson, Carl Olson CV, Dave Cynoski, Joe Bransfield

Other player's last names: Werdelin, ss; Kingston, lf; Sullivan, 2b; Bransfield, 1b; Corkins, c; Anderson, 3b; Olson, cf; Brainerd, rf; Nelson, p

Contact Ed Wilcox 860-346-5379, 31 Brainerd Avenue, Middletown, CT 06457

The Portland Historical Society, Inc.

William J. Van Beynum Award Nomination Form

The Portland Historical Society, Inc., a volunteer-driven organization, is a non-profit corporation that depends on the support of many in order to succeed. We feel that it is important to recognize and value contributions made by members and others. In that spirit, the Portland Historical Society created the *William J. Van Beynum Award* in 2009. This award recognizes an individual or organization/business for an outstanding contribution of time, talent, or service to the Society's mission to preserve and protect Portland's past. The award was established to honor the memory of William J. Van Beynum, who tirelessly volunteered his time to research, promote, and document the history of Portland.

Nominee

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

Nominator

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

Please summarize your reasons for nomination:

Please return form, **postmarked no later than November 1**, to: Awards Committee, The Portland Historical Society, Inc., P. O. Box 98, Portland, Ct. 06480-0098.

The awards are presented each year at the Portland Historical Society's Annual Meeting, currently held in January.

FOR THE HOLIDAYS

2011 Portland Heritage Calendar



The 2011 Portland Heritage Calendar, *Gone but not forgotten...homes from Portland's past.* The historical pictures chosen for this year's calendar come from the "Federal Writers' Project, Works Progress Administration, Census of Old Buildings in Connecticut," done in the later 1930s. It recorded sixty-two of Portland's historic buildings, sixteen of which are no longer standing. The calendar shows a dozen houses which were standing in the 1930s and *were deemed to be of historical importance, but are no longer standing.* On the cover is a portrait of a colonial house, probably the 1765 Jonathan Penfield house, which stood at the southwest corner of Penfield Hill and

Pepperridge roads until 1969, when it was dismantled. The calendars are priced at \$8 each and can be purchased at the Society's Museum or at one of the following locations: Portland Town Hall, Portland Library, Gotta's Farm, Bordanaro's The Medicine Centre, Gildersleeve Spirit Shop, Tierney Bros. Package Store and Portland Discount Liquors.

Hand Painted Porcelain Ornaments

New this year are hand painted porcelain ornaments in two different designs - one with the Central School, and one with the Brainerd House (Wagner House of Elmcrest). The 3" round flat ornaments, with full color design and ribbon, will be individually boxed and priced at \$12 each.

We don't have photos yet, but the artist, Nancy Paine of Simsbury, Connecticut, is the same one who paints the tiles and mugs. Nancy is known throughout New England for her watercolor and acrylics paintings. Her work can be seen in many fine galleries and stores.

Docents--Greeters--Hosts--Hostesses

Each month on the first Sunday, from 2:00 PM until 4:00 PM, our museum is open to the public. In order for us to maintain this schedule it is necessary for a few members of the Society to be on hand to open and close the museum, to greet our visitors and to handle the every day tasks associated with the sale of our calendars, tea towels, commemorative crockery and books.

There is a minimum investment of your time required with a maximum reward of a perfectly leisurely chance to view and learn about our museum with its many and varied exhibits. It is a wonderful opportunity to meet with and share your appreciation of Portland's heritage with friends, neighbors and visitors from near and far.

You don't have to know a great deal about Portland's history, but you'll certainly learn some things you didn't know and have fun doing so. So call Gene Sullivan (860) 342-0306 and tell him you'd be delighted to spend a part of one Sunday afternoon in October, November or December as a Docent/Greeter/Host/or Hostess. He'll work with you to schedule what fits with your time and the needs of the Ruth Callander House Historical Museum. You may also e-mail Gene at: teamsullivan1@comcast.net.

FROM THE CALLANDER HOUSE CUPBOARD



2011
PORTLAND
HERITAGE CALENDAR
*Houses from
Portland's Past*
Price: \$8/ea.



**PORTLAND
SCENES
TILE & MUG**
*Hand painted by
Connecticut Artist*
Tile \$12; Mug \$9.50



**PORTLAND
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REFLECTIONS**
*A wonderful
collection of
recipe favorites
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members &
friends.* \$8.

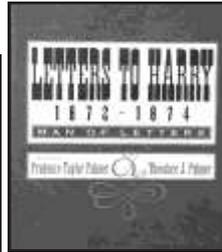


IMAGES OF PORTLAND
By Robert McDougall
128 pages of
history in photos
of Portland. \$20



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40+ views of **PORTLAND POSTCARD
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Total cost of order			

CALENDAR

All programs are held at the Portland Library,
Mary Flood Room, at 7:30 pm., unless otherwise indicated.

Oct 26 - "Theodate Pope Riddle - One of Connecticut's
first female architects" - presented by Dan Davis

Nov 7 - **Ruth Callendar House Museum of Portland History**
open 2-4 pm

Nov 9 - **Potluck Supper at Hemlock Grange**
Members are asked to bring a casserole or salad to serve
6-8 people along with their own set-ups. The Executive Board
will provide dessert and beverages.

Holiday Exhibit at the Museum in December

For further details, please watch
the Rivereast News Bulletin.



Central School



Brainerd House

NEWSLETTER - *Phyllis and Claire Frisbie, 10-15-10*

Newsletter

*Ruth Freeburg
George Gilbert
Eugene Sullivan*

DIRECTORS

*President - Susanne Anderson
1st Vice President - Deborah Ellsworth
2nd Vice President - Martha Luteci
Recording Secretary - Linda Cunningham
Corresponding Secretary - Joanne Lappi
Treasurer - James McCabe*

2010

SOCIETY OFFICERS



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