



# PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PO Box 98, Portland, CT 06480

## NOVEMBER 2016 NEWSLETTER

*Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History*

492 Main St, Portland, CT 06480 Tel: 860-342-5455

*www.PortlandHistSoc.org Email: PortlandHistSoc@yahoo.com*

Vol. 42 No. 4

### President's Letter - Martha Lutecki

Portland's 175th Anniversary year has been a busy one for the Portland Historical Society as we've collaborated with the Town Anniversary Committee to offer many special events celebrating Portland's historic past. We published the Anniversary Book, under the direction of Bob McDougall, and with the help of several society members who authored articles which were included in the book. The Board voted to donate \$1.00 from each book sold to the Portland Food Bank and we recently gave a check for \$1,000 to Ruth Maio. Thanks to everyone for their support of this endeavor! Bob McDougall served as a tour guide for our Historic Portland Bus Tours which were well attended and enjoyed by those participating. He and John LeShane created the successful Downtown Lantern Tours showcasing Portland's village district which were held on several evenings this fall. Our Arrigoni Bridge program in August and George Gilbert's Thomas Pickering Program in September were standing room only events.

#### *In this issue:*

- Festival of Wreaths - Pg 2
- Membership Envelope, Please renew! - Pg 3
- 99 Reasons to Read 175th Anniv. Book - Pg 4
- Hearth Cooking - Pg 5
- Holiday Gifts Available - Pgs 6-7
- Calendar of Upcoming Events - Pg 8

We all enjoyed the 175th Anniversary Parade which was held on Saturday, September 10, followed by Family Day on the town green. We look forward to seeing our members and friends of the Society at our upcoming Fifth Annual Festival of Wreaths scheduled for the weekend of December 3rd and 4th. Thanks to all of you for your efforts throughout this past year to ensure a successful anniversary year for Portland!

***The Society's Wm R. Peterson Tank Wagon was featured in Portland's 175th Anniversary Parade with Ernie Peterson (right) as guest of honor. Shadow and Flash from Allegra Farms were driven by John Allegra (left).***



# JINGLE & MINGLE

**FESTIVAL  
of  
WREATHS**  
Dec. 3 & 4 -  
Noon to 4 pm  
at the Carriage  
House behind  
329 Main St

It's "Jingle and Mingle!" time again! Plans are underway for our **5th annual Festival of Wreaths**. Thanksgiving is almost here and it's time to think about December! Last year we raffled over 30 wreaths and we promise to raffle many festive and fun loving wreaths again this year. Participating is a wonderful way to shine the spotlight on your business, organization, family or club! If you would like to help us, please consider donating a decorated wreath — it's not too late. New this year, you can decorate a table centerpiece or a tabletop tree! Or if you just don't have the time or don't consider yourself crafty, for a donation of \$30.00 one of our elves will make a holiday decoration in your name! Please register by Monday, November 28. Help us make this year's Festival the biggest and most beautiful ever!

Wreath/Centerpiece/Table Tree Drop Off:  
Where: Carriage House behind 329 Main Street  
When: Thursday, December 1, from 5 - 7 p.m.  
or Friday, December 2, from noon - 2 p.m.

On Saturday and Sunday, December 3 and 4, we invite you to come mingle with others over some holiday treats, wear your warmest holiday sweaters, share some holiday stories with acquaintances old and new and help us continue to build this holiday tradition in Portland. What better way is there to get into the holiday spirit than to explore our display of wreaths, take some chances and hopefully win your favorite! Wreaths will range from traditionally decorated greens to more elaborate or whimsical creations. Come see the work of the crafty and artsy people of Portland. Sunday at 3:30 p.m. enjoy the talented A Capella Singers from Portland High School.

**More Information: Check the website: [www.PortlandHistSoc.org](http://www.PortlandHistSoc.org)  
Register a Wreath: Call Deb - 860-342-1927  
or Email: [PortlandCTHistory@gmail.com](mailto:PortlandCTHistory@gmail.com)**



All proceeds from this event will be used to further the mission of the Society to preserve Portland's history and to fund educational projects for the community.

Winning names will be drawn after closing at 4 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 4, before the start of the Parade of Lights on Portland's Main Street.



## *Thank you, Members and Donors!*

*It's been a busy and successful year. Now we would like to take this opportunity to ask for your support for the coming year. Your Historical Society depends on Volunteers and Donations to accomplish its mission of collecting, preserving and sharing Portland's history.*



*The Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History provides a place to show our collection to visitors, and is the repository for most of our collection. Your donations support these activities and the ongoing upkeep of this structure.*

*We created the 175th Anniversary Commemorative Book to record more of Portland's history, along with the present, and inform future historians of Portland.*



*Informative programs on local history such as Jonathan Ives' Design and Construction of the Arrigoni Bridge provide all those interested with learning opportunities in Portland History.*

*A membership/donation envelope is enclosed. Your membership expiration date is above your name on the newsletter mailing label. Any questions, call Claire Frisbie 860-335-8581 or email [PortlandCTHistory@gmail.com](mailto:PortlandCTHistory@gmail.com). THANKS AGAIN!*

## 99 Reasons to read Portland's 175th Anniversary Book by Bob McDougall

99. The book includes a Schedule of Events for the Anniversary Year.
98. Learn about the Native American Indians that lived here.
97. There are over 1,000 names of people connected with Portland, you probably know some of them.
96. The book includes over 100 pictures and images related to Portland.
95. Discover who the Arrigoni Bridge is named for and why.
94. Learn why we have three garden clubs in Portland.
93. Find out who Phelps Ingersol was.
92. See a photo of Portland's Covered Bridge.
91. See photos of all the Boy Scout Troop 2 Pewter Ornaments.
90. Read the 191 Sponsor Ads, some are very interesting.
89. Learn the history of the Rev Masters Hot Rod Club.
88. See a map showing where the Commerce Street Cemetery was located.
87. Learn history of shipbuilding in Portland and the Gildersleeves.
86. Read about Thomas Pickering inventor of the Pickering Governor, manufactured in Portland for over 100 years.
85. See a photo of the launching of the 3,600 ton Steamship Battahatchee, on October 5, 1918 in Gildersleeve.
84. Who was David Agogliati and why is football field is named for him?
83. Learn about the inventor of the Indian Motorcycle.
82. Discover who Eric Osterling was.
81. Learn about Phil Gildersleeve, creator of the town seal.
80. See the depth of the record floods from 1814-1938.
79. Learn when the last surviving building of the Strong and Hale Lumber Company, the 142 year old office, was demolished.
78. Discover the history of the Hemlock Grange.
77. Find out why a road in Meshomasic Forest was named for Del Reeves.
76. See the bridge where Billy Joel sang "River of Dreams".
75. Read about immigrants who came to work in the Brownstone Quarry.
74. See a photo of Arrowheads found in Portland by Daniel Kelsey.
73. Learn about Portland's "Cash Crop" and the farms that grew it.
72. Find out where Portland's parks and preserves are located.
71. Read about the Meshomasic Hiking Club.
70. See a photo of Phinx's Diner
69. Learn about some of the Diners from Portland's past.
68. Discover how many of Portland's one room school buildings survived.
67. Find a list of all the Superintendents of Schools, since 1925.
66. Read how PHS 1988 Baseball Team CIAC Class S State Champs won.
65. See a list of the Portland High School Senior Class Plays.
64. Learn about the Portland Sports Hall of Fame.
63. Discover a list of Portland High School State Championships.
62. Find more information about sites highlighted on the bus tour.
61. Read about PHS 1986 Boys & Girls Golf State Championships.
60. See a picture of the Betty Keser Scott Garden.
59. Learn the history of the Noyes School of Rhythm.
58. Discover the recipients of the Dr. Wayne Andrus Award.
57. Find information about the Elmerest Campus Advisory Committee.
56. Read about the Brownstone Arts Group.
55. See the list of all 108 Portland Sports Hall of Fame Inductees.
54. Learn the history of the Portland Garden Club.
53. Discover the history of the historic Air Line Trail.
52. Find a photo of the Hart-Jarvis House (1829-30).
51. Read about the History of Boy Scouting in Portland.
50. See a photo of Portland Boy Scouts from 1960 Memorial Day Parade.
49. Learn the history of the Portland River Valley Garden Club.
48. Discover a list of Portland's Eagle Scouts.
47. Find out about the Ralph Paley Spirit of Portland Award.
46. Read about the Waverly Center.
45. See an 1874 Map of Portland
44. Learn the history of the Brownstone Garden Club.
43. Discover the history of the Portland Town Seal.
42. Find a photo of the Erastus Brainerd Jr. House (1851-1852).
41. Read about the history of Portland Youth Services.
40. See a list of past and present Fire Chiefs.
39. Learn about the Betty Keser Scott Garden.
38. Discover the name of the Portland Sea Scout who made Eagle Scout.
37. Find a photo of the John H. Sage House (1884).
36. Read about Portland's Complete Streets Group.
35. See a list of past and present first selectman.
34. Learn who has received the Spirit of Portland Award.
33. Discover why the museum is named for Ruth Callander.
32. Find names of the founding officers of the Portland Historical Society.
31. Read about railroad box cars that fell off the bridge into CT River.
30. See a list of past and present town clerks.
29. Learn about the Henry W. Coe Amphitheater.
28. Discover the meaning of Shepard's Nine.
27. Find when PHS Basketball teams won Charter Oak Conference Champ
26. Read about the iconic "COME ON OVER" sign.
25. See a list of past and present Portland librarians.
24. Learn what the 1979 Portland Sign says about the town's history.
23. Discover who restored the Brownstone Arch and Sling in 1999.
22. Find out where Governor John Winthrop found gold in 1661.
21. Read about Portland's 2nd Basketball State Championship win in 1982.
20. See the Eastern Tinware Company on Freestone Avenue in 1890.
19. Learn about Portland's Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camps; Camp Jenkins and Camp Buck.
18. Discover when Nathaniel Shaler and Joel Hall incorporated the Shaler and Hall Quarry Company.
17. Find when Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History opened.
16. Read about William Van Beynum and learn why the local history conference room at the Portland Library is named for him.
15. See Quarry workers of H. S. Watrous' gang photographed June 4, 1889.
14. Learn about the 1960 Plane crash on Meshomasic Mountain.
13. Discover when last ship was launched from Gildersleeve Shipyards, the 700-ton coal barge "Jack Daly".
12. Find when Portland Brownstone Quarries were designated a National Historic Landmark.
11. Read about William Nolan and why a ball field is named for him.
10. See a picture of the Swedish "Viking Ship" Float from the Town's 75th Anniversary Parade in 1916.
9. Learn about the last passenger train trip over the Airline Railroad Bridge on September 18, 1999.
8. Discover where Hemlock Grange held first meeting November 27, 1912.
7. Find a 2016 street map of Portland.
6. Read about the Portland farms that raised shade-grown tobacco.
5. See a list of PHS Valedictorians and Salutatorians from 1974-2015.
4. Learn about the projects completed by the Brownstone Quorum.
3. Discover when the Nike Missile site was operated in Portland.
2. Find out when Portland has celebrated its anniversaries.
1. It is a great reference for historical facts about Portland.

## Hearth Cooking by Alexia Belperron

Elections!... a piece of cake...

As Election Day is just passed, we thought it would be interesting to share how election days were celebrated in Colonial New England.

Today we may associate many things with Election Day, but cake isn't usually one of them. However, if we travel back in time to Colonial New England, Election Cakes or Muster Cakes as they were first called, represented the importance of and the celebration of muster and election days. Even before our Independence, elections were held for colonial assemblies and farmers were also called to "muster" and complete some military training in order to be able to serve in militias when the need arose. Many residents had to travel for days to reach the towns designated for voting and mustering and then spent several days voting, training and socializing. In Puritan New England, where religious holidays such as Christmas were frowned upon, these occasions were some of the most important social events of the time. The cakes were an important part of the celebrations, but fell out of favor in the mid-1800's when roads improved, travel times shortened, and Election Day ceased to be an important social event. There was a resurgence in interest in the cakes themselves at least, around 1900, and recipes were often "reinvented" at that time.

Election Cakes were sometimes referred to as "Hartford Election Cakes". Not only was Hartford known for its bakeries and wealthy residents (who could afford to have such a cake made), but also the Connecticut Colony was one of a few that elected its own governor (not appointed by the king); as a result Election Day celebrations were important in the state. The "cake" is somewhere between a modern day cake and bread, and as leavening agents were not yet in use during the 18th century, yeast or sourdoughs provided the leavening for it. It is evident from historical recipes that very large versions of these cakes were made, requiring brick ovens for baking. Yet they are also cakes that keep well and are easily cut into small pieces, and thus were thought to be made for the farmers to carry with them as they travelled to the designated election/muster towns. The recipes all contain sugar, fruits, and spices, the most expensive ingredients at the time, again demonstrating the importance of the cakes.



*During our November museum opening, a hearth cooking demonstration was held at the neighboring Deacon Samuel Hall House. Dr. Belperron (left above) made Amelia Simmon's version of an election cake (Her cookbook of receipts from 1796 is considered the first American cookbook), however not in the quantity she described (30 quarts of flour, 10 pounds of butter, 14 pounds of sugar.....). Also prepared on the hearth were Turnip Soup, Harvest Chili and Thirded Bread using ingredients that would have been available during the harvest season in the 18th Century. A large group of visitors thoroughly enjoyed the demonstration and flavorful samples.*

### Election Cake Receipt (with some modern adaptations)

Flour 4-5 cups white whole-wheat flour  
1¼ cups sour milk (or buttermilk)  
Sourdough starter or dry yeast  
½ lb. Butter  
1½ cups of sugar (or replace ¼ cup with molasses)  
2 eggs  
1 oz. of wine  
2 oz. brandy  
2 tsp. cinnamon  
2 tsp. coriander  
1 tsp. allspice  
½ tsp. nutmeg  
2 cups fruit (raisins, currants, prunes...)

1. Combine the warm milk and yeast (or starter) and add enough flour to achieve the consistency of bread dough, and then let rest over night.
2. Beat butter and sugar until light. Beat in the wine, brandy and eggs, then add the starter dough and spices, and finally fold in the dried fruit.
3. Bake at 375 for 45-60 minutes.

# The Gift Giving Time of the Year

Remember, when you give these gifts, you also give back to the Society!

We have some special items this year for holiday gifts — and each could be a stocking stuffer! These 5 items are available and representative of Portland's 175th anniversary that has been celebrated in 2016.

We now accept credit cards. Call Deb (860-342-1927) if you would like to place a credit card order by phone.

## 5 Ways to Make Your Purchases:

**Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History** - 2nd Sundays - 2-4 p.m. - next open December 11

**Festival of Wreaths** - Saturday and Sunday, December 3 and 4, noon to 4 p.m.

Call Deb - 860-342-1927

Email [PortlandCTHistory@gmail.com](mailto:PortlandCTHistory@gmail.com)

Mail order to: Portland Historical Society, PO Box 98, Portland CT 06480 - Send payment for products plus shipping (\$7 for 1-2 items or \$14.00 for 3+ items)

**175th Anniversary Commemorative Book** produced by the Society for the Town Anniversary Committee. Over 60 pages of Portland history with articles written by various authors. Along with the ads (some of which contain business, organization or family history), the book provides a snapshot of Portland in 2016. Price: \$5.00



In June the Society decided to donate \$1.00 for each 175th Anniversary Book purchased to the *Portland Food Bank*. Early in November, we presented Ruth Maio, director of the Food

Bank, a check for \$1,000.00 to support the wonderful work the Food Bank volunteers will do for Portland families during the upcoming holiday season. We are

proud to “pay forward” after the overwhelming support we received from the Portland community on the Anniversary Book project. It’s not too late — we will continue to donate \$1.00 for each additional book sold during this holiday season.



“**What’s in a Name?**” Bell produced by East Hampton’s *Bevin Brothers Manufacturing*, makers of bells since 1832 — back when Portland was still part of Chatham along with East Hampton and Middle Haddam. The bell highlights the name progression until Portland’s incorporation in 1841. Bell measures 3”W x 3.5”H x 2.25”D. Printed black on white. Price: \$10.00

# The Gift Giving Time of the Year

Remember, when you give these gifts, you also give back to the Society!



**Glass Schooner Suncatcher** portraying a wooden “brownstoner” schooner honoring our shipbuilding past made by Pairpoint Glass of Sagamore, MA. Schooners were used to carry brownstone from Portland quarries down river. Two colors available: cobalt blue or turquoise. Please indicate desired color. Suncatcher measures approximately 4.25” diameter. *Price: \$15.00*

## 175th Anniversary Logo Decorative Tiles

handcrafted by Society members Bob and Luiza McDougall. One with black and white seal logo. One with black, blue and white flag logo. Please indicate b/w or color version. Size: Approximately 4” square. *Price: \$5.00*



**Button Pins or Magnets** designed by the Town’s Anniversary Committee printed with blue and black logo on white. Size: 1 3/4”x 2 3/4”(vertical rectangle). *Price: \$1.00*

*And some oldies but goodies...*

**150th Anniversary Commemorative Book** from 1991, purchase supports the Town’s Anniversary Committee. *Price: \$5.00*

**125th Anniversary Book** from 1966, Timeline by William VanBeynum, purchase supports the Town’s Anniversary Committee. *Price: \$5.00*

# CALENDAR

Dec 3-4 **Festival of Wreaths** - 329 Main St Carriage House 12-4 p.m.

Dec 11 **Museum of Portland History** -

*Celebrations & History* - open 2-4 p.m.

Jan 8 **Museum of Portland History** -

*Celebrations & History* - open 2-4 p.m.

Coming in January - *Annual Membership Meeting* -see *Rivereast News Bulletin* for details and future history programs.



AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support the Portland Historical Society every time you shop Amazon, at no cost to you. When you shop at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com), select the Society and Amazon will donate 0.5% of your purchase costs.

## NEWSLETTER

Claire Frisbie - 11/18/2016 - 860-335-8581

(25th Anniversary of Frisbie Newsletters - volunteers welcome!)



*Wreath created by Jim Landry and donated by Evergreen Landscaping in 2014. This year's Festival of Wreaths is coming soon - Information on page 2.*

## November 2016 Newsletter

- FINANCE BOARD**  
 Pat Crowther  
 James Elder  
 George Law
- COLLECTIONS BOARD**  
 James Kau  
 Rebecca Robinson  
 Frank Winski
- TRUSTEES**  
 Eileen Marino  
 Julie Mackoud  
 Alexia Belperron
- DIRECTORS**  
 President - Martha Lutecki  
 1st Vice President - George Gilbert  
 2nd Vice President - John Peterson  
 Recording Secretary - Deborah Ellsworth  
 Corresponding Secretary - Shelli Nolan  
 Treasurer - James McCabe

Portland Gifts for the Holidays - Now Available  
 Festival of Wreaths - December 3 & 4



PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
 PO Box 98 Portland CT 06480  
 Address Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG  
 U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
 MIDDLETOWN CT  
 PERMIT NO 575