



PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P. O. Box 98, Portland, CT 06480
November 2021 Newsletter

Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History
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INSIDE: President's Letter, What's happening at the Museum? Membership - Renew now to stay informed!

Festival of Wreaths in-person Returns December 4-5, 2021



As we go to press, our generous members and friends are responding to our call for wreaths or holiday decorations for our **10th annual Festival of Wreaths** — “**Mingle & Jingle.**” This year’s Festival will be Saturday and Sunday, December 4 & 5. In past years, we have had over 30 decorations donated for our tea-cup raffle. With raffle tickets only a dollar each, some people have won a beautiful wreath on a single ticket, while others have won their favorite wreath by placing all their tickets in a single bag. It’s a game of chance.

It's not too late to help continue this tradition in Portland by making a wreath for this special fundraiser:

- ⇒ Let your imagination and artistry run free and make a wreath or decoration to donate.
- ⇒ If you like the idea of donating a decorated wreath and just don't have the time or don't consider yourself crafty, just donate \$30.00 and one of our Society elves will make a holiday decoration in your name!
- ⇒ If you prefer, a financial donation may be made to the Festival and your name will be posted as a supporter during the event.

Please register to donate by Thursday, December 2 by sending us an email to Portlandcthistory@gmail.com. **Wreath or decoration drop off will be Thursday, December 2 from 5 to 6:30 pm and Friday, December 3 from noon to 2pm at the Carriage House behind 329 Main Street.**

Make time to **visit the Festival on Saturday or Sunday, December 4-5, from noon to 4 PM. The carriage house at 329 Main Street will be bursting with holiday cheer** and you could win the most perfect decoration for your home! Tickets are just a \$1.00 each for this teacup raffle and we always have decorations that range from traditional to fun-loving. Put it on your calendar now!

All funds raised support the Portland Historical Society's Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History and our activities of collecting, preserving and sharing Portland's history. Thank you!

2021 FESTIVAL OF WREATHS
JINGLE & MINGLE



In the Museum Yard

As we continue our collecting, storage is always at a premium. To facilitate storage until more permanent solutions are available, the Society rented a storage container in November that was carefully secreted behind the Corn Crib by an expert truck driver.

President's Letter

My first year as president of the Portland Historical Society has been an unusual and yet enjoyable one. It has been a year of listening, learning, and pivoting to re-think how we can engage with the public during a global pandemic at a time when we were not able to be 'open' to the public. With good guidance from my fellow board members and our devoted trustees, I have been taking stock, taking inventory, and seeking ways to best serve you, our members.

The Portland Historical Society takes pride in partnering with the town government and our fellow non-profit organizations to maintain the overall quality of life in Portland, especially in ways that promote and preserve the special character of our town. We were happy to participate in a report to the Plan of Conservation and Development Implementation Committee to illustrate how the Society's efforts to protect important resources is in keeping with our mission to maintain an inventory of historic sites. Trustee Christine Sullivan responded to several requests for reviews of demolition permit requests for structures more than 75 years old. Trustee Bob McDougall provided superb and tender loving care of our museum on Main Street with constant upkeep and improvements of this special 300-year-old property that we treasure.

We welcomed Linda Cunningham back to the board as Corresponding Secretary. Doris Sherrow-Heidenis volunteered to transcribe handwritten cursive documents from a newly acquired Gildersleeve & Sons collection of invoices and letters from the past. First Vice-President Alexia Belperron explored grant opportunities to assist us in finding necessary funding to preserve and strengthen our presence in the community. And former president George Gilbert wrote well-researched articles for this newsletter on the history of several local businesses that continue to play an integral part in the fabric of our town.

We had many inquiries during the year from people asking about the history of their Portland homes, requesting photographs of former residents buried in local cemeteries, researching relatives who used to

work in the quarries, etc. We have expanded our collection of artifacts from thoughtful donors as well. Most inquiries are local, but we also connected with folks from Kentucky, Virginia, Colorado, Massachusetts, and more.

Since the Portland Historical Society is independently run and operated by volunteers with no paid staff, we welcome you to join us or renew your membership, and join the 1,422 people already following our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/PortlandHistSoc/>. Let us know if you are interested in getting closer to Portland's history by serving on the board or helping on a committee in 2022. There is lots to be done. As this uniquely challenging year begins to wind down, we sincerely hope we will be able to resume offering exciting programs in the new year ahead, and that you know how much your continued interest and generous support means to us. Thank you from the bottom of my heart!

Julie Macksoud



Corn Crib gingerly placed in it's new spot and the crew who did it!

THANK YOU, MEMBERS AND DONORS, FOR MAKING EVERYTHING WE DO POSSIBLE!

RENEW OR JOIN NOW

check your membership year on the mailing label and use the enclosed envelope or go to our secure Square site from

<http://portlandhistsoc.org/>



Ruth Callander's Tulip Tree

The Society Board recently had to make the difficult decision to give up the massive tulip tree that was behind the Ruth Callander House. Ruth had planted it around 1950 and it had grown into a very large, lofty tree over the years. Unfortunately, it was very close to the foundation and kitchen wing of the building and was causing some structural issues. In addition, the tree was struck by lightning in recent years and moderately damaged in the trunk with apparent rot setting in. The fact that the tree towered over the Callander House and was not as structurally sound as before, made all of us as stewards of this structure, nervous about the future.

After much discussion and consultation with tree experts, it was decided to take down the tree, an expensive and difficult process. On July 1, Mullen Tree Service and Arbor Crane, brought their expertise and equipment, and efficiently completed the task. The tree at its base was 5 feet in diameter and 16 feet in circumference with a ring count of about 70.

Museum Updates

The Ruth Callander House requires lots of the usual building maintenance and this year, it was washed and the paint touched up to keep it well protected. In addition, a few other projects are improving the view from the road:

- Our front door needed replacement as the 1930s version had been badly damaged by weather. It was decided to have a door made that was authentic to the original 1714 building. The beautiful new door is now in place.
- Our Museum sign was wearing badly and could no longer be repaired. A generous member offered to pay for the construction of a replica. Colla Signs was recently able to recreate and install the sign made with a sturdy modern material, but no significant visible changes.



In the Museum Yard

In preparation for the arrival of the Gildersleeve Store, it became necessary to move the Anderson – Hedstrom Corn Crib to the south side of the yard. Our Museum Director, Bob McDougall, reached out to Ben Srb who had moved the Corn Crib to our Museum when it was donated. On October 9, he brought equipment and friends, Brian Darna and Bill Richards, and they made the short, but not uncomplicated, move across the yard. See photos on page 2.



The New Callander Cupboard

A new business in Portland, Owen’s Emporium at 283 Main St, provided a new venue for us to display the Society’s products – collectively known over the years as the Callander Cupboard. It’s a great opportunity for the Society to “show our wares” and provide some small support to local business. Stop by to see what’s available. If you aren’t near Portland and are interested in our products, the Callander Cupboard is still available on our secure Square Site which you can find through our website

<http://portlandhistsoc.org/>

FESTIVAL OF WREATHS
December 4 & 5
Noon to 4pm
Carriage House behind
329 Main St.

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10th Annual Festival of Wreaths
SATURDAY & SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4 & 5, 2021

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