



PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 98, Portland, CT 06480

October 2023 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. 49 No. 2

Arrigoni Bridge Stamp Ceremony

On August 24, 2023 an unveiling ceremony celebrating the first day of issue for the Arrigoni Bridge Stamp was held at the Brownstone Intermediate School, hosted by the **Portland Historical Society**, the **Connecticut Cover Club** and the **Town of Portland**.

The bridge spans the Connecticut River, connecting Middletown and Portland. The bridge is named for Charles J. Arrigoni, who served in the State House of representatives and State Senate in the 1930's. For his service and support of the bridge project, it was named after him.



Pictured from left to right: Foster Miller, Master of Ceremonies; Ben Florsheim, Mayor of Middletown; Julie Macksoud, President of the PHS; Ryan Curley, First Selectman, Portland; Norm Needleman, CT State Senator; Richard Hoffman, president of the CT Cover Club; Dan Pickett, grandson of Senator Charles Arrigoni



Cake by Amy Knous

President's Report: PHS Fall 2023 Newsletter

Where were you in 1973?

Personally, I was just starting high school up in Massachusetts. Come down memory lane with me. I remember Richard Nixon giving his "I am not a crook" speech, Roberta Flack's song Killing Me Softly with his Song, and the U.S. Supreme Court legalizing abortion. Secretariat won the Kentucky Derby. FedEx got its start. The first cell phone call was made. The oil crisis. On and on. Also, and most notably, the Portland Historical Society was established.

Since then, hundreds of volunteers (your family members, friends and neighbors?) have stewarded and tended to the growth and well-being of this organization on numerous fronts. Over the past five decades we have made huge strides in coming into our own as a non-profit organization with a mission to collect, preserve and share Portland's history. The Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History had its grand opening June 6-8, 2003. It was bequeathed to us in 1997 and is one of the oldest surviving homes in town built around 1715. This is where we have created exhibits, planned open houses, held scores of meetings, prepared for special events, crafted our strategic plan, and taken possession of hundreds (if not thousands) of historically significant items and collections over the years.

Our major annual fundraiser, the Town-Wide Tag Sale, launched in 1996, has grown from 40 family participants to 140! We have been proud to partner with other organizations such as the Portland Public Library, the Hemlock Grange, the Brownstone Quorum, Parks & Recreation, and the Portland Fair who all contribute in a very real way to a better quality of life for Portland citizens. Several of our members have received the Ralph Paley Spirit of Portland Award as "doers, performing quiet acts of kindness to make Portland a better place to live." We were delighted to restore the welcome sign by the Arrigoni Bridge, research and arrange cemetery tours, and offer opportunities to hear wonderful speakers on topics ranging from tobacco farming to shipbuilding, notable inventors to business leaders. We have recognized dozens of special individuals at our annual meetings for their tireless efforts to improve our growing community. This summer we were thrilled to present the John Wells Stancliff art exhibit and co-sponsor the commemoration of the Arrigoni Bridge stamp celebration.

Together with you, our members, we have born witness to all the diversity of human experience that has made Portland what it is today. By telling and sharing local stories of the best and worst of life, whether fire or flood, festivals or funerals, we have advocated for preserving not just historic buildings and artifacts, but the very voices of those who came before us and are worth remembering. (Take a sentimental journey of your own by reviewing more than 100 of our newsletter back issues online via our website at <https://portlandhistsoc.com/npublications.htm>)

Is there a way to measure the return on our investment? Would our charter members be satisfied with our progress during the last half century? Your continued, valuable, and necessary support of our efforts has seen us through some of our growing pains as we strive to be an even more diverse and evolving organization. We thank you! In this, our 50th anniversary year, we re-commit ourselves now to the core of our mission and celebrate our accomplishments to date while keeping an eye on making the next 50 years even more wonderful.



CT Open House Day

On Saturday, June 10, we celebrated CT Open House Day at the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History. We celebrated our benefactor's birthday, the 20th Anniversary of the Society having a home for its collection, and 50 years since the Society was formed, in 1973.

Presentations by Bob McDougall and Deb Freitag on the home's early owners, with information on the Overton family, highlighting the portraits recently acquired, were very well received.

The seventeen attendees were served refreshments and made paper flowers from expired tag sale maps reflecting the beautiful flowers in the *Betty Keser Scott Garden*, which is carefully maintained by the Portland Garden Club.



Susan Bransfield greeting guests.



Chris Sullivan & Susan Young in front of our display.

Portland's Juneteenth committee held its fifth Celebration of Freedom Day on Saturday, June 24th. This fifth year brought our community together to learn, remember, and celebrate the anniversary of June 19, 1865, when enslaved people in Texas learned about their freedom from slavery, two-and-a-half years after the Emancipation Proclamation.

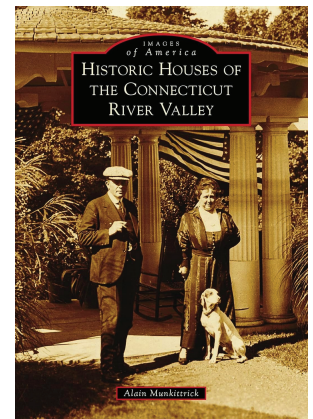
This year, the Juneteenth celebration was sponsored by the Committee of Solidarity of the Town of Portland, True Vine Holiness Church, Portland Youth & Family Services, Portland Social Justice Coalition, The Portland Library, Middlesex Habitat for Humanity, Liberty Bank, and DEL Printing.

History Uncovered: The Three Brainerd Place Houses



On Thursday, November 9th at Waverly Senior Center, Alain Munkittrick will present the results of his research into the architectural and family histories of three of Portland's most important historic houses, which are to be restored as part of the new Brainerd Place development of the former Elmcrest Psychiatric Institute campus; the Hart-Jarvis House (1830), the Erastus Brainerd Jr. House (c. 1855), and the John H. Sage House (1884). Besides architectural documentation of these houses, Alain will present rare family photos and the first public airing of historic home movie film footage he discovered, which dates to the early 1930s.

Alain Munkittrick lives in Portland. He graduated from Wesleyan University and the Boston Architectural College. With his wife Rosemary, has practiced architecture, space planning and interior design for 40 years in the Boston area and in Connecticut. Adaptive reuse and historic preservation are particularly important aspects of their practice. Alain was the only student member of the Wesleyan University Landmarks Advisory Board, past president for the Greater Middletown Preservation Trust, and is currently Vice-President of the Board of the Middlesex County Historical Society in Middletown, where he leads historic preservation efforts in that community. His latest book, *Historic Houses of the Connecticut River Valley*, includes over 300 period photographs, many never before published. These photographs illustrate 160 historic houses, curated and arranged thematically to tell the story of the river valley's development.



New Product!

Portland resident Alain Munkittrick's newest publication, *Historic Houses of the Connecticut River Valley*, is now available to purchase in our online Callander Cupboard at www.PortlandHistSoc.org.

The book includes several homes in Portland. Featured on the cover are Oscar and Julia Hedstrom in front of their home's pergola on Main Street.

Cost: \$24 (A portion of each copy sold will help us continue our mission to collect, preserve and share Portland history.)

The Portland Historical Society
Proudly Presented a Special Exhibition:
John Wells Stancliff; *A Portland Artist Comes Home*
A most comprehensive selection of his Maritime and Landscape Paintings
was shown at the **Portland Public Library**

On August 5th the PHS kicked off the 50th year celebration, with a one-day, 3-hour exhibition of local marine painter, John Wells Stancliff (1813-1891), *A Portland Artist Comes Home*. If you have visited the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History, you have seen one of Stancliff's paintings. It is the artist's vision of James Stancliff's house on the quarry cliff along the river. Stancliff is best known for his works portraying rough seas and smooth sailing ships.

This exhibition was done in collaboration with the Portland Library. *A Portland Artist Comes Home* was made possible by John Stewart and his wife, Candace Heublein, for many years ardent collectors of Stancliff's work. Stewart spoke about the artist's life, career and legacy during the 19th century, while highlighting some of the era's prominent inventors and influencers.

Deborah Payne, a direct descendant of Stancliff, began the program with a brief biographical sketch of the painter and the Stancliff family's important role in central Connecticut over hundreds of years.

Authentic sea shanty music was performed live, outside the library. Although no paintings were for sale, there were notecard sets of selected paintings available for purchase. The notecard sets can now be purchased on the PHS website, www.portlandhistsoc.org. The event was open to the public at no charge, with refreshments served thanks to the Friends of the Portland Library.

We hope you did not miss your chance to get lost at sea with John Wells Stancliff.



John Stewart



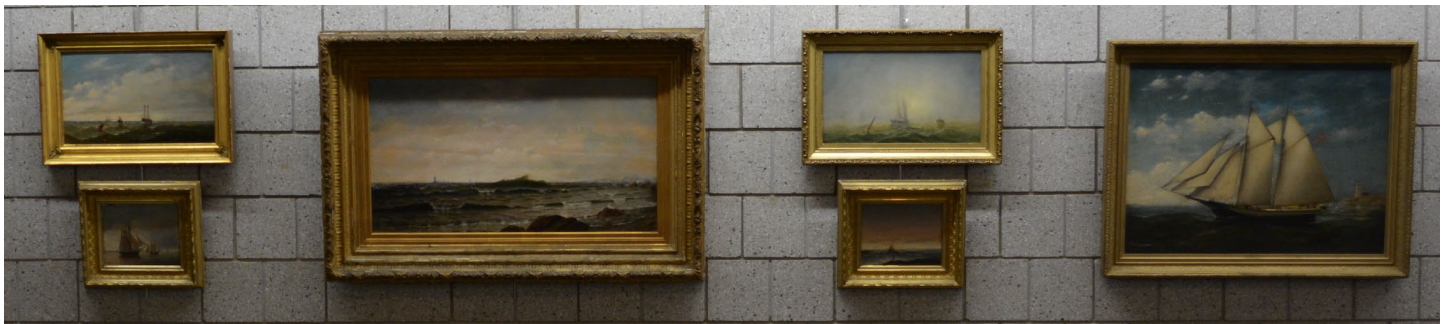
Deborah Payne



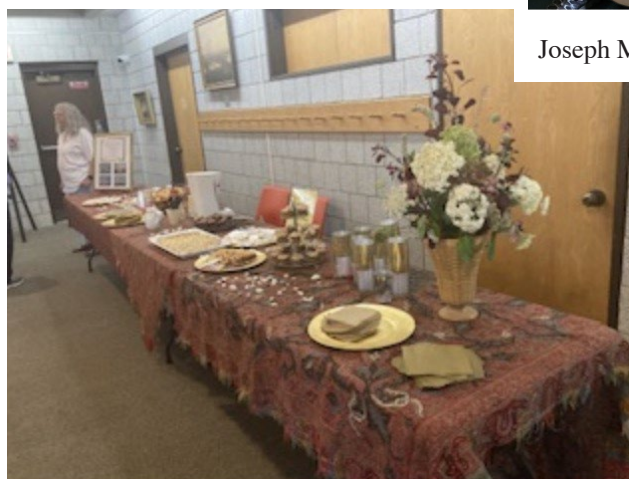
John Stewart, Candice Heublein, Deborah and Ron Payne



Linda Cunningham and Martha Lutecki



Joseph Morneault and David Littlefield



Food was provided courtesy of the Friends of the Library.



Our very own John Wells Stancliff is now on display at the Callander House Museum.

TOWN-WIDE TAG SALE

We enjoyed another successful Town-Wide Tag Sales Day (our 27th year) on May 13th, thanks to the efforts of many people. We had 135 registered vendors, and more than 25 volunteers working on the many tasks needed to make this annual Portland event happen. The volunteers tasks included producing the Tag Sales Map of the Town, setting up and running both the tag sale and bake sale at our Museum on Main Street, and delivering and picking up the numbered poles at all the tag sale sites around town.

The Tag Sale is an important fundraiser for the Historical Society. The proceeds help support the maintenance of, and projects essential to the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History along with other Society activities tasked with collecting, preserving and sharing Portland's history. We would like to thank our volunteers, the individuals who paid to register their own tag sales, the many business sponsors who paid for ads on the map and, of course everyone who purchased items at the tag sales throughout Portland. It was a lot of fun for a good cause, and we appreciate the strong support we received.

Be sure to mark your calendars for next year's sale, scheduled for Saturday May 11th, 2024. Let us know if you would like to volunteer. It is a great community event.



Pictured left to right: **Front Row:** Linda Cunningham, Caroline Murray, Chris Sullivan, Deb Ellsworth
Center Row: Nancy West, Deb Freitag, Martha Luteki, Sarah Perruccio, Mallory Perruccio Rowley, Susan Bransfield
Back Row: Bob McDougall, George Gilbert, Julie Macksoud, Jim McCabe



Susan Bransfield & Babs Scheer were handing out Town Tag Sale maps.



Linda Cunningham is shown organizing the Bake Sale profits.



Bob McDougall and Tag Sale signs



Jim McCabe and Stella



Deb Ellsworth, Sarah Perruccio and Mallory Rowley

VOLUNTEER CORNER

Thank you!

Our Town-Wide Tag Sale volunteers included, but are not limited to the following people:

Susan Bransfield	Linda Cunningham
Deb Ellsworth	Deb Freitag
Claire Frisbie	George Gilbert
Amy Knous	Tom Ladny
Gail Landry	Jim Landry
Martha Lutecki	Julie Macksoud
Mark Macksoud	Jim McCabe
Bob McDougall	Caroline Murray
Magdalena Organek	Sarah Perruccio
Patty Pizzichemi	Mallory Rowley
George Scheer	Babs Scheer
Chris Sullivan	Bill Sullivan
Nancy West	Frank Winiski
Susan Young	

Big thanks to Neil's Donuts, Adams Hometown Market, and all of our bakers for the very successful bake sale!



Julie and Mark Macksoud



Linda Cunningham and Amy Knous

**THANK YOU, MEMBERS AND DONORS,
FOR MAKING EVERYTHING WE DO
POSSIBLE! RENEW OR JOIN NOW**
*Check your membership year on the
mailing label. Mail a check or go to
our secure Square site from
<http://portlandhistsoc.org>*

MARK YOUR CALENDAR - A Family History Program

On Sunday October 22, 2023, we will present a special program entitled "My Aunt Gracie", by Brookelyn Grant. The program will begin at 2:00 pm and will be held in the Mary Lou Rice Room at the Waverly Senior Center, 7 Waverly Avenue. Brookelyn, a student in Middletown, is the daughter of Eric Grant and Erin Stannard Grant. She has prepared a family story about her Great-Grand Aunt Gracie, a Portland resident who is now in her 90s. Brookelyn will describe what her Aunt Grace Larry has told her about growing up in one of only 15 Black families in Portland, where she went to school, her church and other memorable events. It is a meaningful local history project, told with many details and interesting anecdotes. The event is open to all, free of charge, with refreshments served. We hope you will join us for the event.



**Eleanor Olson Crowther
(10/26/1935 - 8/28/2023)**

Eleanor served the Portland Historical Society in many roles including: Vice President 1993, 2003-2004, and President from 1994-1996. She was a leader and driving force behind the evolution of the Society as we know it.

The establishment of the Town Wide Tag Sale, the acquisition of the Callander House and the creation of our Finance Board were some of the many accomplishments during her tenure. She and her husband Pat, were the core of the Callander House Committee.

**Festival of
Wreaths
December 2 & 3**

**Come Jingle
and Mingle
And have a glass
of cheer**



Are you good with numbers?

The Portland Historical Society is seeking a new treasurer for the new year 2024. The duties entail use of the accounting software Quicken to prepare financial reports as well as income and balance sheets for monthly board meetings. Submission of an annual report and budget will be created to present to the membership at the Annual Meeting. Other duties include paying bills. If you have these skills and the desire to make a difference by volunteering for this important position, please contact our President Julie Macksoud at 207-877-1286 or submit your interest in writing, care of our museum at P.O. Box 98. We look forward to hearing from you. Thank you!

**NEWSLETTER - Editor: Susan Alyson Young PortlandCTHistory@gmail.com
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2023 SOCIETY OFFICERS
President - Julie Macksoud
1st Vice President - Amy Knous
2nd Vice President - Susan Bransfield
Recording Secretary - open
Corresponding Secretary - Linda Cunningham
Treasurer - James McCabe
DIRECTORS
Deborah Freitag
Open
Sarah Perruccio
TRUSTEES
Deborah Ellsworth Martha Lutecki
George Gilbert Bob McDougall
Christine Sullivan
FINANCE BOARD
Frank Connelly
George Law
David O'Brien
COLLECTIONS BOARD
Susan Alyson Young

**Have you joined or renewed your membership?
Check the date on the mailing label**

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