



PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 98, Portland, CT 06480

August 2025 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. 51 No. 2

From the President Susan Bransfield

The country's 250th Anniversary Year is off to a great start in Portland, with an active town committee that is doing a fantastic job! On April 18th the Portland Historical Society participated in the "Two Lights for Tomorrow" event, celebrating the anniversary of Paul Revere's famous ride, which alerted the patriots of the approaching British forces which resulted in the first battle of the American Revolution.



Michael Pelton, Portland's First Selectman delivering a proclamation, declaring Gildersleeve Family Day, on July 12, 2025 at the Center Cemetery to a group of Gildersleeve family descendants who were in town for a pre-reunion tour hosted by the Portland Historical Society. Pelton is shown in a colonial uniform once worn by the Portland Ancient Fife & Drum Corps.



July 12, 2025 Gildersleeve Family descendants visited the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History and are shown here at the future site of the 1821 Gildersleeve Store on the museum grounds.

Our most prominent project contribution to the nation's anniversary is the reconstruction of the 1821 Gildersleeve Store on our museum property. The store was built in 1821 by S. Gildersleeve and Sons Shipbuilders to meet a growing need for goods and supplies. Gildersleeve Landing was a primary commerce hub in a time before there were bridges across the river, and most products arrived by boat. The building is a 19' x 30' federal style building that stood at the corner of Main Street and Indian Hill Avenue until 1855, when it was replaced by the "new" Gildersleeve store building which is currently the home of Portland Floor and Wall Covering. In 1855 it was moved to 572 Main Street, which was owned at that time by Rev. Hervey Talcott.

Thanks to the Larson family, the current owners of 572 Main Street, we acquired the store in December 2020. We have received zoning approval to rebuild the store on the museum property, surveyed the building, had plans drawn up, tagged timbers, completed an engineering study, dismantled, and stored the parts. Working with Mark Aldieri, AIA, the windows are being restored or replaced as needed and we are preparing for the reconstruction of the building. We have already invested over \$115,000 of our Society's funds to get to this point.

To help raise funds for the store, we will be hosting a *very special and exclusive* House Tour on October 18. The tour features a unique home in Portland that was designed to efficiently adapt to the needs of a family as its needs and requirements change. This detailed tour is filled with useful and practical features for universal design, which you may consider incorporating into your own home. We hope you will attend.

House Tour

IN PORTLAND, CT



October 18, 2025



*Melding Past and Future
Ideas for Renovating or Building New*



REGISTRATION REQUIRED BY OCTOBER 1ST:

Forms at Portland Historical Society website: portlandhistsoc.com

or on the porch at 492 Main Street, Portland, CT

Call (860) 342-5455 with additional questions.

Ticket purchases are part of a fund raising campaign to rebuild the historic Gildersleeve Store.



The Portland Historical Society is in the midst of a major restoration project to rebuild the 1821 Gildersleeve Store building on the grounds of the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History at 492 Main Street. After five years of hard work we are very excited to announce the groundbreaking for the reconstruction will be this fall. Look to the *Rivereast* for updates.

The Gildersleeve store was built in 1821, the same year that S. Gildersleeve & Sons was founded by Sylvester Gildersleeve, a prominent shipbuilding firm in the Connecticut River Valley for over 100 years.

Our mission is to collect, preserve and share information and material about Portland, Connecticut history. This building will contribute to our mission of preserving Portland's shipbuilding legacy. It will provide a place to display artifacts and present stories about Portland's history for events like the annual third grade class visits where local children have an opportunity to learn the fascinating history of our town.

Our goal is to complete this rebuild in 2026 so it can be shared with the town during the nation's 250th Anniversary year.

Hope you will join us in our effort to complete this project. Your financial support will help us to assure Portland's history is remembered and accessible.

Donations may be made online by following the donations link at www.PortlandHistSoc.org, checks are preferred to avoid online fees. Please make your check payable to the Portland Historical Society.

For more information scan this QR Code



<http://www.PortlandHistSoc.org>

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PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.
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Email: PortlandHistSoc@Yahoo.com

Your financial support for the Gildersleeve Store in any amount will help us complete the restoration of this historic asset and help preserve it for future generations. Thank you for helping us to collect, preserve, and share Portland History in celebration of our country's 250th Anniversary.

Be 06480 PROUD

The Portland Historical Society has a new product displaying Portland's zipcode...a blue denim-like twill baseball hat with 06480 embroidered in white. Hats are available now by leaving a message at 860-342-5455. A Society volunteer will get in touch with you. Hats are \$25 and all profits will help continue the Society's mission to collect, preserve and share Portland's past. A perfect gift item for many occasions!



2025 Upcoming Events

September 6th – “Voices of Portland” Book

Presentation, Portland Library 1-2:30pm

September 14th – Museum Open 2-4pm

October 3rd, 4th, 5th - Portland Fair

October 12th – Museum Open 2-4pm

October 18th – House Tour

November 9th – Museum Open 2-4pm

December 6th & 7th - 14th Annual Festival
of Wreaths

December 14th – Museum Open 2-4pm

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