



PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 98, Portland, CT 06480

April 2026 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. 52 No. 1

30th Annual Town-Wide Tag Sales

Sponsored by the Portland Historical Society

Benefiting the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History

TOWN-WIDE TAG SALE

Saturday, May 9th

8:30 AM to 2:30 PM

RAIN
OR SHINE

RAIN
OR SHINE



BAKE SALE at the Ruth Callander House on Tag Sale Day

Questions? Contact PortlandCThistory@gmail.com or call 860-982-1486



Saturday, May 9 will be our 30th Annual Town-Wide Tag Sale Day — rain or shine! Thirty years ago a small group of Society volunteers organized the first town-wide tag sale and today's volunteers keep it going! It's exciting for us to be able to offer this to our community every year. At the end of the day we may be exhausted (along with those folks who had sales and the hundreds that shopped) but we also all agree that it is a fun day! Interacting — with the friends that bake, the people who donate items, our local business sponsors who help defray the cost of printing that large tag sale map that everyone loves, the folks who open their yards to bargain seekers from all over Connecticut and our volunteers who deliver and pickup tag sale poles — makes the Town-Wide Tag Sale Day a great event for the Society and our community.

No Yellow Tents — Most of you know that the Society is working to rebuild the historic 1841 Gildersleeve Store on the grounds of the Callander House. Foundation work is slated to begin and for that reason, the Society will not be having their wildly popular tent sale this year. If you have been planning to drop items off for our tent sale, please do not leave any items at the museum. For this spring, please find another non-profit that will accept them.



Linda Cunningham, our very own "Queen of Bake Sale"



It's #30 Featuring a Major Bake Sale

Don't fear, the Bake Sale is happening! We're putting all our Tag Sale Day energy into our always popular Bake Sale on the porch of the Callander House. All are invited to donate some of your best baked goods to our Bake Sale. Goodies can be dropped off after 7:30am on Saturday, May 9. We will have runners to carry your baked goods from the curb if necessary. Our Bake Sale starts at 8:30am. Set your clocks because we always sell out! Look for the path to the porch...if the weather's good (I mean when the weather's good), it'll be something to see.

Don't Forget — The Annual Tag Sale Day is always the Society's largest fundraiser of the year making it possible for us to maintain the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History and share Portland's history.

It's Not Too Late — Tag Sale Day gives you an opportunity to hold a sale and be listed on our official map.

Registration for your sale is open online or by paper for \$25 until April 26.

As always, we are producing our comprehensive map of Portland with the trail of sales and listings of addresses and items at those sales.

Registration to be on the map is available:

- online at www.PortlandHistSoc.com
- by printing application from website and mailing with payment to PO Box 98.
- by picking up a form from the front porch of the Callander House at 492 Main Street and returning it by mail with payment.

All registrations must be submitted/received by Sunday, April 26, 2026.



Brownstone Marker Donated to Town

In 1978 the Portland Historical Society erected the Historic Site Brownstone Marker on lower Main Street, just west of the former Strong and Hale Lumber Company office. The marker held a bronze plaque denoting the first ferry landing between Chatham (1726-1841)/Portland (1841-1896) and Middletown.

Later vandalized, the plaque was removed and returned to the Society. In 2012, when the town had the Lumber office demolished, this brownstone marker was also donated back to the Society. In February 2026, the Portland 250th Committee asked the Society for the stone in order to mount a commemorative plaque outside Town Hall. The Society Executive Board voted to de-accession the marker and returned it to the town.



The marker will be dedicated on July 4th as part of the 250th celebration. At the same time the Portland 250th Committee will dedicate a time capsule to be opened on the 300th anniversary, July 4th 2076. The capsule will contain many items, including essays written by students in the Portland Schools.

Upcoming Events

April 26 - 2-4 pm, Annual Meeting of Brownstone Quorum with Beau Doherty at the Waverly Center

May 2 - Time tbd - Voices of Portland – “Finding her Voice in Portland: "Nob “Ann” Hibino, An Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month Event” at the Waverly Center

May 9 - Townwide Tag Sale

May 16 - 11 am - 4 pm “Portland's Hometown Festival,” A 250th Celebration at Portland Riverfront Park, 284 Brownstone Avenue

May 30 - 10 am - 4 pm – “Quarry Celebration and Makers Fair” Sponsored by Brownstone Quorum, Portland Riverfront Park, 284 Brownstone Avenue

June 11 - 2:00 pm - Reception for the “Main Street Panorama” by Bob McDougall, Portland Library

June 14 - 1:00 pm Yard Goats Game in Hartford, a fundraiser for the 1821 Gildersleeve Store

June 20 - Noon - 5pm “Juneteenth Celebration” at Portland Middle School, 93 High Street

July 4 - 9:00 am “Dedication of the Time Capsule and Brownstone Monument, 250th Celebration” at Town Hall, 33 East Main Street

America 250 - Portland CT Committee

The America 250 - Portland CT Committee is planning several big activities in celebration of America's 250th birthday. On May 16th, the "Portland's Hometown Festival 250" will be held at the Portland Riverfront Park located at 284 Brownstone Avenue. The day will include Great Hill Mountain Band, Moodus Drum and Fife, historic reenactors, children's activities, food trucks, and vendors.

The 250th Committee is preparing a 250th Commemorative Book, with ads from local businesses and individuals. Contact Terry Grady, Vice Chairman of the 250th Committee at (TerryAGrady@aol.com) if you would like to buy an ad to put in this special book.

The Portland Historical Society is working closely with the 250th Committee. We are conducting an oral history series, interviewing long-term residents about their memories of life in Portland over the years. The interview narratives will be published in a book later this year, entitled "Voices of Portland - Volume 2." Also, as part of the celebration, we are conducting three major projects, including the "Historic House Plaque Program," the "Main Street Panorama" photography exhibit at Portland Library in May by Museum Director Bob McDougall, and our major re-building project, "Saving the 1821 Gildersleeve Store."

Susan Bransfield, Society President, represents us on the Portland 250th Committee. She can be reached at sbransfield0528@gmail.com or at the museum number, 860-342-5455.



★ PORTLAND ★
HOMETOWN FESTIVAL

Honoring Our Past, Celebrating Our Future

Portland's Riverfront Park
Saturday, May 16, 2026 11AM-4PM
— Rain Date: May 17, 2026 —

Come Celebrate America's 250th Birthday

- Food Trucks
- Moodus Fife & Drum
- Great Hill Mountain Band
- Reenactors
- Children's Activities

Sponsored by the
Portland America250 Committee





JUNETEENTH

PORTLAND'S 8TH ANNUAL
FREEDOM DAY
CELEBRATION
SATURDAY, JUNE 20, 2026
PORTLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL
12PM-5PM

Voices of Portland



Pictured from left are Barbara Shaw, a member of the “Voices of Portland” Planning Committee; John Mills, president and founder of the Alex Breanne Corporation; Jesse Nasta, a professor in the African American Studies Department at Wesleyan University, as well as executive director of the Middlesex County Historical Society; and the Rev. Debra Hopkins, former president of the Middlesex County NAACP.

On February 21, “The Fight for Freedom & Equality: from 1776 to 2026 - A Black History Month Event,” was held to a capacity crowd of over 100 people at the Portland Waverly Center. After a welcome from First Selectman Michael Pelton, we heard from John Mills, who is an author, a trained Genealogist, a descendant of the enslaved, and President of the Alex Breanne Corporation, a Connecticut-based non-profit. John told us about several Black soldiers from Portland who served in America’s wars, including the Revolutionary War and the Civil War. The second speaker was Jesse Nasta, who studies slavery, emancipation, and their aftermaths, with a particular emphasis on New England. He teaches African American Studies at Wesleyan University and leads the Middlesex County Historical Society in Middletown as Executive Director. Jesse discussed the Beman Family of Middletown, and their 19th-century African American neighborhood, and its connections to regional, national, and global Black community and antislavery networks. He also discussed the Colored Conventions which were held in the 19th Century before Black residents could vote in the U.S.

Other presenters included Portland High School student Drey Farmer, former Portland resident Barbara Shaw, and Rev. Debra Hopkins, former President of the Middletown NAACP. Special recognition was given to the late Grace “Aunt Gracie” Smith Larry of Portland, as well as to Odessa Buttram and Thelma Chatfield who are members of the original families of Chatham Court, built in Portland during Urban Renewal in the 1970’s.

The program was sponsored by the Portland Historical Society, Middlesex County Historical Society, Portland 250th Committee, the Committee on Solidarity, and the Portland Library. The event was recorded and will soon be available at portlandlibraryct.org/voices-of-portland.

The Voices of Portland Project began as a series of oral history recordings focused on the stories of Black Americans living and working in Portland, CT. Transcripts of these recordings and projects from 2023-2025 have been transformed into a book, “Voices of Portland – Volume 1,” which is available to check out at the Portland Library and can be purchased (\$30 each) by contacting the Society at 860-342-5455.



PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
492 MAIN STREET
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Celebrating Birth Dates

In February the Portland Historical Society announced our new **Historic House Plaque Program** for homeowners and businesses located in Portland. This program was planned to honor the history of our town and to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the United States.

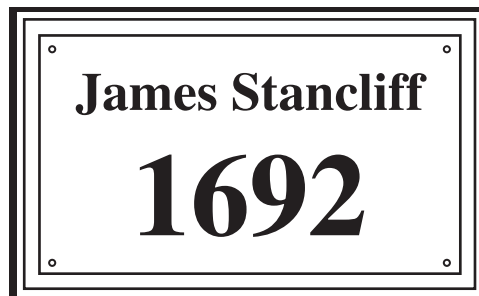
Want to celebrate the birth date of your house or the building that houses your business in Portland? We are pleased to announce the expanded plaque program.

Every house and building in Portland is now eligible for a plaque. If you want to celebrate the birthday of your house or business, we're ready to help you get a plaque marking its birthdate. Recognize your house or business for being a part of Portland's story — 200 years ago or ten years ago.

For a cost of \$100 each the Society will provide a new plaque. The new house plaques will be similar to the original ones and will include the house's year of construction and the name of the original owner.

To order your plaque, please mail a completed application with the \$100 fee to the Society at PO Box 98, Portland CT 06480. A Society volunteer will contact you to discuss the details specific to your house. More details and the application can be found on our website (www.portlandhistsoc.org.) Please email any questions you may have to: PortlandHistSoc@yahoo.com Please allow 6-8 weeks for the processing of each application.

Thank you for your support of the Portland Historical Society in its mission to collect, preserve and share Portland History.



PVC Sign Measurements: 10" x 20" x .75"



*Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History,
492 Main St., Portland, CT 06480, Tel: 860-342-5455*



*Susan Bransfield and Kathy Richards admiring
the new plaque on the Callander House*

HISTORIC HOUSE PLAQUE APPLICATION

Name of Homeowner: _____

Address: _____

Date home/building was built: _____

Name of original owner: _____

Daytime Phone: _____

E-mail address: _____

If you would like to order a plaque, please submit a completed application, along with the \$100 fee and a member of the Society will contact you to discuss the details specific to your house. Please allow 6-8 weeks for the processing of each application.

Please submit your application to: PortlandHistSoc@yahoo.com or mail it to P.O. Box 98, Portland, CT 06480. Thank you for your support of the Portland Historical Society in its mission to collect, preserve and share Portland History.



Gildersleeve Store Update

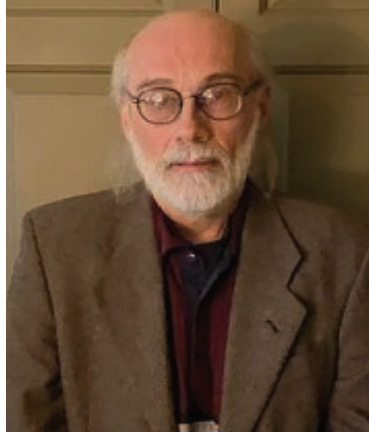
- Site Survey work was completed courtesy of Snyder Engineering in November.
- Restoration of the windows was completed by January.
- Excavation and foundation work by Michael Bordonaro is expected to begin in April.
- Architect Mark Aldieri is completing bid documents for the store reconstruction which should be ready for release in April.

30th Annual TOWN-WIDE TAG SALES DAY - SATURDAY, MAY 9, 2026
 Registration and information inside & online at www.PortlandHistSoc.org

**New Members of
 the Executive Board**



*Kathy Richards
 1st Vice President*



*Paul Santagata
 Director*

**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>*

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- 2025 SOCIETY OFFICERS**
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**Have you joined or renewed your membership?
 Check the date on the mailing label**

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