



PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 98, Portland, CT 06480

OCTOBER 2003 NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S REPORT - Regina Wolmann

Greetings! It has been about six months since our last Newsletter in April 2003 at which time we were busy planning our Annual Town-Wide Tag Sale in May and the Grand Opening of the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History in June. So much has happened since then.

The Tag Sale in May was our most successful to date raising thousands of dollars. We had over 100 homes throughout Portland hosting tag sales and sold every item at our bake sale at the Grange. Thanks to the Tag Sale Committee and to all of our members who donated baked goods for the bake sale and to all of you who volunteered services before and during Tag Sale Day.

Then it was time to concentrate on our Grand Opening Weekend in Early June. Again, a number of volunteers from the Society worked hard to make our Grand Opening a memorable occasion. Hundreds of current members, charter members, town officials and visitors attended the wine and cheese party on Friday evening, the open house and dedication of the Betty Keser Scott Garden on Saturday and the celebration of Ruth Callander's birthday on Sunday. The Ruth Callander House Committee and the Museum Committee are to be commended for all their efforts in preparing for this event along with other volunteers from the Society. Thanks also to the Portland Garden Club for all their efforts on the garden and for hosting and preparing refreshments for the Saturday festivities.

Since the Grand Opening in June, we have held an Open House on the first Sunday of each month from 2 pm - 4 pm. We have been very pleased at the turnout on these days and the enthusiastic feedback we have received from our visitors, many from out of town, but with some connection to Portland's past. A number of donations have been made since

we opened the Museum as people know that their artifacts/photos, etc. will be displayed and enjoyed by many. Our Museum Committee has done an outstanding job with our exhibits and continues with the ongoing cataloging and organizing of our archives.

Our booth at the Portland Fair during the past weekend highlighted school buildings and classes from early in the century up to 1972. Thanks to those members who set up this impressive display and to all who responded to my calls for volunteers to man our booth. People enjoyed viewing the photographs and talking over old times. We even sold some items, including the just published 2004 Calendar!



Phyllis Frisbie and Regina Wolmann admiring the new 2004 Portland Historical Society calendar.

As always, the Calendar Committee has done a fabulous job with a calendar based on the Grand Opening Exhibit at the Ruth Callander Museum of Portland History. So, for those of you who weren't able to be there in person that weekend, this is the next best thing. Please order calendars for your family members and friends today!

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT (Continued)

Our monthly meetings with a focus on Portland themed programs complement the opening of Portland's history museum. We're planning more special programming and exhibits throughout the year and we need your help!

Please share your ideas and talents with us - come to our meetings, sign up for one of our committees, help prepare an exhibit, present a program or contribute in any way you can to ensure the continued success of the Portland Historical Society. Please do not hesitate to contact me at rtwoltmann@yahoo.com or write to P. O. Box 98, Portland, CT 06480.

In conclusion, I would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to all of our members for their contributions throughout the year.



"Four Generations of Gildersleeves" - Photo taken about 1877 shows (R-L) Sylvester Gildersleeve, 1795-1886; Henry Gildersleeve, 1817-1894; Oliver Gildersleeve, 1844-1912; Alfred Hall Gildersleeve, 1872-1930. Picture donated by Judith Gildersleeve duPont.



The Society's booth at the 2003 Portland Fair. Here John LeShane looks for a familiar face in the classic pictures displayed.

Membership - The annual letter and return envelope are included with this Newsletter. Note that the number on your address label indicates the year that you last joined the Society.

NOTE: Sylvester Gildersleeve, on the right in picture above, is listed in the Society's 2004 Calendar as the enterprising ship builder who consolidated several of Portland's shipyards to establish the famous S. Gildersleeve and Sons which built and launched 358 vessels between 1821 and 1932. The yard was located on Shipyard Lane, now known as Indian Hill Avenue.

QUESTION ASKED AT THE FAIR:

Was Marlborough Turnpike once called "Old Stagecoach Road?" The answer from Bernie Dillon, Town Clerk: "The chances are very good that it was called 'Old Stagecoach Road'. We know that there was a Toll House situated on the road near the corner of Goodrich Lane."

PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 98, Portland, CT 06480

Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History

492 Main Street, Portland

October, 2003

2004 MEMBERSHIP

Greetings to our current members and welcome to prospective members of the Portland Historical Society for the year 2004. The Society is open to all people interested in preserving Portland's history.

- ❖ Now, the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History (492 Main Street) has been open for four months displaying samples from our collection of Portland artifacts. Documentation and storage of the entire collection, a long job, continues. Various events need lots of hands, ideas and support. We hope yours will be among them.
- ❖ The Society also works to raise awareness of Portland's historical assets through local programs, heritage walks to historical sites, collection of historical artifacts and a newsletter listing events of interest.

Included in this mailing is an envelope for next year's membership and a form to order the 2004 Historical Society Calendar. This issue of the Calendar features photos of Portland artifacts in our inaugural museum exhibit.

Memberships make a nice holiday gift for family and friends. They are tax deductible.

We thank you for your support and look forward to seeing you at future Society events.

Sincerely,

Jean B. Kelsey (s)
Jean B. Kelsey, Membership Chair

Regina T. Wolmann (s)
Regina T. Wolmann, President

Portland Historical Society 2004



Museum Grand Opening - June 6-8, 2003 - 492 Main Street
The Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History

2004 Calendar

"The Ruth Callander House
Museum of Portland History"

-Bob McDougall

This year's Historical Society Calendar commemorates the significant milestone reached by the Society on June 6th with the opening of the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History. After 29 years of incorporation we finally achieved the goal of having a permanent home to help us further our mission of collecting, preserving and sharing material about Portland's history.

The Calendar features photographs of displays from the inaugural exhibit and the Grand Opening of the Museum. The exhibit focuses on three broad areas of the town's heritage: Origins, Business and Industry, and Social Life.

Publication of the calendar is one of our major projects each year, and while it is intended to share information about the town, it is also a fundraiser for the Society. Please help us sell our calendars in any way you can, and encourage your friends and relatives to show their support for our projects by buying a calendar. The Calendar makes a great gift for new residents trying to learn about our town, and for former residents who have moved away, but wish to stay connected with Portland. We hope you enjoy the Calendar and will plan to visit the Museum.

NOTES -

HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE - DECEMBER 13

As our part in Portland's holiday celebrations this year the Ruth Callander House Museum will be open with a special festive exhibit. We are planning a train display arranged by members of our Finance Committee from their treasured boyhood train layouts, a doll display featuring Vivian Dower's collection, other toys and games, and a special visit from Santa to pose with young visitors. "Pride" will be photographing them with their new digital camera. If you have any old pre-digital toys you would be willing to loan for the display, such as doll houses, Lincoln Logs, Erector sets, etc., let Phyllis Frisbie (342-0303) know.

CALLANDER HOUSE PAINTING

Pat Crowther has been researching, through painters of antique houses, the best cure for the Callander House paint chipping problem. They agree that removing all the old layers of lead-based paint from the clapboards must be done first, then a treatment with a primer followed by a modern acrylic is the solution. The shortage of specialized painters combined with the cold weather means that we will have to suffer its present appearance until at least June, 2004. Removing so many layers of antique paint will be costly, but the house deserves special treatment at its age. Perhaps the new coat will even see it through to its 300th birthday in 2015.

MIDDLESEX HOSPITAL CENTENARY

Middlesex Hospital is celebrating its 100th birthday this year. Research in the archives we are told shows a major Portland connection! The first patient admitted was a Portland quarryman.

NOTES: (continued from page 4)

COMPUTERS1

The on-going inventorying of the Society's artifacts carried on by Bob McDougall and Marie Keser has become such a large list that our hand-me-down computer has grown more sluggish and refuses to sort the list. If you know of any businesses upgrading their computers, let us know about their cast-offs. We would like a Pentium III or better. Call Bob McDougall, 342-3062 or e-mail <PortlandHistSoc@Yahoo.Com>. Of course, if you would like to start a technology fund for the Museum, Bob would be ecstatic!!

MUSEUM DONATIONS -

Since our Grand Opening, we have received numerous artifacts for our collection. Our thanks to donors: Vivian & Walter Dower, Phyllis Peterson, Judith Gildersleeve duPont, Frances M. Sprague, Linda Cunningham, Harriet & Bill Sanborn, Beverly Ellsworth Newberg, Diane Burgess, Donald Pelton, Mrs. Robert Cone, Elsie Hale, Margaret Brainard, Robert & Christiane Johnson and Ms. Doris Armstrong, Glastonbury Historical Society.

POTENTIAL FUTURE PROGRAMS -

Several interesting programs about Portland are in the works. Watch for details in future Newsletters or in the local newspapers. They are:

Portland's Veterans - stories from the Revolutionary War through the present time - pictures/stories and other memorabilia either for a program or exhibit.

Ethnic immigration to Portland - An exhibit or program on the different ethnic groups that settled Portland, i.e. Irish, Swedish, Italian, etc. With pictures and stories.

Portland's cemeteries - is anyone interested in gathering information and taking slides/pictures of some of the old tombstones for a future program? . . . Organizing a cemetery tour?

If you would be interested in helping with such programs or donating items for display, or, if you have any ideas/suggestions, please contact Regina Wolmann at rtwolmann@yahoo.com

CALLANDER HOUSE CUPBOARD

The following items are available from the Society - at the Museum and by mail order from P.O. Box 98.

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|---|---|
| Portland Scenes Notepad
(50 pages, 5 scenes) . . . \$3.Ea. | Brownstone PEN SET . . . \$20.Ea. |
| Portland Scenes Tea Towel . . . \$6.Ea. | Callander House
STONEWARE JAR . . \$25.Ea. |
| Mesquimasic Forest Video . . . \$6.Ea. | Museum BOOKMARK . . . \$1.Ea. |
| 2004 Heritage CALENDAR . . . \$6.Ea. | Calendar (Back Issues) . . . \$5.Ea. |

Include \$2. Shipping charge for each \$10. of order.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS - Regina Wolmann

October 28 - Portland Senior Center - "Growing Up in Portland" - featuring a distinguished panel of long-time Portland residents - Bill and Connie McBrien, Barbara Chapman, Bob Johnson, Hazel Robinson and Marion Anderson - and moderated by former President and Society Director Rick Gildersleeve. Join us on a trip down memory lane as we discuss what life was like in Portland of the 1920s -1940s.

November 11 - Grange Hall - Our Annual Meeting and Pot Luck Supper will commence at 6 pm . The program will be an overview of the Society's 2004 Heritage Calendar, presented by Bob McDougall.

December 13 - Museum, 492 Main Street - We will hold a Tuesday evening meeting in December, but will host an Open House with an exhibit featuring toys, trains and Christmas items from long ago and a visit from Santa Claus for photos with children.

January 27 - To be announced.

February 24 - Mesomasic Forest - John LeShane

NEW SLETTER - Phyllis & Bill Frisbie, 10-24-03



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NEW SLETTER!