



## PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P O Box 98, Portland, CT 06480

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# JANUARY 2004 NEWSLETTER

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### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE - Regina Wolmann

In all the excitement of the Grand Opening of the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History in June 2003, we have rather forgotten about the founding of the Portland Historical Society in the fall of 1973. It was at that time that a group of local citizens decided that Portland's unique history should be remembered. The Society was formally established in 1974 with over 300 Charter Members. These members began the work of gathering Portland history and artifacts for preservation and dreamed of a home for the Society where all of the town's treasures could be displayed and appreciated. For many years a room at the local library served as our Museum Room and was visited by local residents, school classes and others interested in Portland's history. In 2003, our dream became a reality with the opening of Portland's first historical museum.

As we celebrate our "30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary" in 2004, we can look back with pride at our many achievements during the last 30 years including publishing "The History of Portland, Connecticut" in 1976; placing plaques on historic houses in town; erecting bronze markers to identify historical sites in town; sponsoring a tour of historic homes; co-sponsoring a year-round 10 kilometer Volksmarch through historic parts of town; producing an annual historic calendar for the past 20 years; doing historic research on Portland's homes, families; early industries and cemeteries; assisting with preparations for Portland's 150th Anniversary in 1991; conducting a bus tour of historic sites; coordinating an Annual Town-Wide Tag and Bake Sale; holding monthly programs of historical interest; and most recently, the Grand Opening of our Museum on Main Street last June.

Hundreds of people have visited our Museum at our monthly openings since our Inaugural Exhibit and hundreds more enjoyed our Holiday Exhibit held in December and early January featuring antique toys, dolls, games, trains and other memorabilia. A special thanks to our volunteers who worked on the exhibit or served as docents and to our many members and friends in the community who donated or loaned items for the event.

Along with our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary we know there is much more to be done. We have many interesting programs focusing on Portland scheduled for 2004 and many other special exhibits and projects planned. We urge you to join us in celebrating not only our anniversary but Portland's unique heritage by getting involved with our various endeavors, encouraging relatives, friends and neighbors to join the Society, and to continue your ongoing support, which is greatly appreciated.



This lovely antique rocking horse, which was part of our holiday exhibit, has been donated to the Society by Jane and Myron Foster, a delightful addition to our collection. The toy was made in Massachusetts, c.1840.



#### ANNUAL MEETING - VETERANS DAY TRIBUTE

Our Annual Meeting was held at the Grange on November 11, 2003. Since it was Veterans Day, we saluted our hometown heroes and asked that our veterans present stand-up and be acknowledged. They each told a bit about their service and were warmly applauded. The paragraphs below are synopses of their service. Other information will be filed at the Museum. We will be happy to file the experiences of other local veterans if we receive them. L-R: Fred Chapman, Bob Johnson, John Cunningham, George Wilson, Bill McBrien, Alan Carlson, Walt Dower, and Charles Wolmann.

**FRED CHAPMAN** - moved to Portland from Williamantic as a teenager. He served in Patton's Army in Europe in the mountains between Spain and France and later in Germany. Fred served for four years and was wounded in action around the time of the Battle of the Bulge and was sent to England to recuperate.

**BOB JOHNSON** - Navy enlistee in 1942, he trained at Great Lakes and RCA Radio Communications School in New York. He transferred to Amphibious Forces and shipped to Scotland, then England, a staging area for French Invasion. Embarked aboard USS Bayfield, a Coast Guard Ship, as a unit of Admiral Don Moon's Staff for France the night of June 5, 1944. Spent two weeks on station at "Utah Beachhead". Next, stops at Oran and Naples and support for southern France, St. Raphael invasion. Returned to Norfolk and home leave, October, 1944. Then to Hawaii and the Philippines to be involved in Okinawa operations and landings in Lingayen Gulf in the Philippines. Returned to San Francisco and home leave, then back to Hawaii and Tsingtao, China for occupation duties. Finally discharged in Boston, 1946.

**JOHN CUNNINGHAM** - From Stafford Springs originally, John has lived in Portland for more than 40 years. He was drafted in 1951 and served during the Korean War; however, he was fortunate to be stationed with the Army of Occupation in Europe rather than in Korea. He worked for the Signal Corps and was involved in building underground communication centers in the tunnel near the French Maginot Line. He remembers the German people being friendlier than our former Allies, the French.

**GEORGE WILSON** - A Pennsylvania native who grew up in Middletown, he enlisted in the Navy in March, 1941 and served 6 years on active duty. He was stationed in Norfolk, Va., South Africa and South America, (which he remembers as being very primitive and poor), and the west coast of the U.S. During the War, his ship patrolled the oceans trying to prevent German and Japanese supply ships from getting through. After the war, George was stationed in Okinawa and Japan repairing ships. He remembers the Japanese people being very nice to the American servicemen. (Continued on next page)

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BILL M cBRIEN - A Portland native, he was one of 5 McBrien brothers and 2 brothers-in-law serving his country during WW II. He was one of the first to be drafted from Portland, and served in the South Pacific in the Army, and was stationed in Australia and New Guinea. He left the service with the rank of Master Sergeant. One of his brothers was a POW in Germany during the war.

ALLEN J. CARLSON - Volunteered and was accepted in the Air Force, June 1942. Stationed at Ft. Devens, and then Westover Air Force Base. Volunteered for detail on the Bombing and Gunnery Range, and spent one and a half years there. Built 50 Ft. steel towers with cupolas on each bombing range . . . 9 towers and 3 bombing ranges. Transferred to Fort Dix, N. J. and was part of a 15 man Ground Control Approach (to bring planes in through fog, etc.) This group was later transferred to the West Coast and the Philippines. Three days out to sea, the ship "broke down", and we floundered 2-3 days before being towed to Pearl Harbor. Spent two weeks there enjoying golf while vessel was being repaired. Finally we were off to the Philippines and then to Leyte. Both wars were over but there was still work for us, and the remainder of my tour of duty was spent there. I returned to Ft. Devens where I received my discharge December, 1945. Returned

to meet my daughter who was born while I was away.

WALT DOWER - A Portland native, he was a 17 year old high school student when he enlisted in 1944. He was allowed to finish high school and then start his stint in the Army Air Corps. (The Air Force hadn't been created yet.) Many of his classmates at Portland High School also enlisted, but everyone went in different directions. Walt went to Biloxi, MS for basic training and was stationed in Buffalo, NY and other stateside bases. He worked as an aircraft mechanic. He was sent to Finance School in Indianapolis toward the end of his tour of duty so that he could learn how to pay people being mustered out of the service.

CHARLES WOLTMANN - A Brooklyn, NY native, Charlie has lived in Portland for about 46 years. He was working for a steamship company when WW II commenced. He volunteered to go to sea as a merchant seaman as they made more money, and he was helping to support his elderly parents and younger brother. Charlie was in convoys delivering supplies in the North Atlantic. (Europe and North Africa.) He remembers other ships in the convoy being torpedoed. After the war, his ship delivered general cargo throughout the world, and he traveled to such places as Hawaii, China, the Philippines, India and South America.

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#### RECENT DONATIONS TO THE MUSEUM

Hand carved 1840 Rocking Horse, Shaker style, from Jane & Myron Foster.

A assorted antique china, including a mustache cup and silver tea service from Ruth & Allen Glover.

A pick-up truckload of ledgers c. 1850 used by the Gildersleeve Store from Bill Carlevale of East Hampton. Carlevale, who owns Max Grower's old house next to the depot, found a large number of ledgers in the attic, (perhaps 50), labeled "Gildersleeve & Co." He alerted the Society and delivered them to the Museum.

Though it will take time to remove the dust to see what we have, they appear to be the daily records during the 1850's of the Gildersleeve Store at Main St. and Indian Hill Avenue. (The Gildersleeve Genealogy states that "Sylvester G. started a brick store in 1821 with general merchandise and shipping stores".) The one ledger we have opened listed in detail each purchase by named customers. The names are familiar and their purchases should enhance our understanding of life in Gildersleeve in the 1850's. We're thankful that Bill Carlevale recognized their historic interest. We expect to have one to display at the January meeting of the Society.



Indian Material loaned by Gildersleeve School Students to Exhibit

Wangunk Indian Village projects from the Gildersleeve School third grade classes of Mrs. Jan Robitaille and Mrs. Virginia Cox will be on display at the museum during the months of February, March and April. The projects were created by individual students and groups of students as part of their local history curriculum. Society Board Member Mary Ann Dolan is coordinating the display of a few of the projects each month and encouraging the students to visit the museum with their families. The third grade classes will also be visiting the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History in the Spring.

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Fiscal Year End Financial Statement (10-31-03)

2003 Receipts - Donations & Dues. . . . \$4,991.  
 Product Sales . . . . . \$2,784.  
 Fund Raising . . . . . \$5,030.  
 Total receipts . . . . . \$12,805.

2003 Disbursements  
 Exhibits, Programs & Products . . \$4,294.  
 RCHouse Upkeep . . . . . \$6,848.  
 Total Disbursements . . . . . \$11,142.

Endowment Fund Total . . . . . \$201,805.

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The "March" to the Eighth Annual  
 Town-Wide Tag Sale May 8<sup>th</sup> - 8:30 - 2:30

The Organization Meeting will be February 17 at 4 pm at the Ruth Callander House Museum, 492 Main St. (342-5455). 105 Sales signed up last year. Ideas are needed to improve this major fund raiser. Join us and help put Portland on the Tag Sale Map.

Yankee Magazine will print our information in their May issue, published in April.

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NOTE FOR INTERNET BROWERS

At <http://www.portlandct.org/History>, Doris Sherrow-Heidenis has provided an interesting "Do-it-yourself Walking Tour of Indian Hill Avenue" describing the early residents.

The Society Board has signed a contract with the Charter Painting & Restoration Co. of Manchester, CT to paint the Callander House in the late Spring, weather permitting. We look forward to having its beauty restored!

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HOLIDAY TOY EXHIBIT

We were all pleased that the exhibit was a success. At least 150 people came to enjoy the display. We thank Vivian Dower for supplying so much of her doll collection and Marie Keser, Marion Anderson, Joan Hughes, Jean Kelsey, Carolyn Johnson, Jean Hamon, Marlene Peterson, Cindy Rooth, Phyllis Peterson, Alan Grover, Sue Anderson, and Pat Crowther for loaning all the other toys and games that made up our exhibit. A visit from Santa was a treat and Liz Swenson's camera work was great!

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INVENTORY PROJECT - Bob McDougall

The inventory project is continuing, though it has been somewhat delayed by the generosity of our donors, as we try to keep up with new acquisitions before returning to the inventory. We are pleased to announce that Joan Hughes is now working with Marie Keser on acquisition and inventory data entry. While we have almost completed the physical inventory of the artifacts, we are now preparing to catalog the photos and documents we have in the files.

We are still hoping someone has replaced a computer over the holidays and would be willing to donate their old system. As the inventory list grows, our current system is no longer able to sort the full catalog because of its size. Ideally, we would like a Pentium III or better with 128+ MB of memory.

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CALLANDER HOUSE CUPBOARD

Available from the Society, at the Museum and M.O.:

Portland Scenes Notepad (50 pgs., 5 scenes). . \$3. Ea.  
 Portland Scenes Tea Towel . . . . . \$6. Ea.  
 Meshomasic Forest Video. . . . . \$6. Ea.  
 Brownstone Pen Set. . . . . \$20. Ea.  
 Callander House Stoneware Jar. . . . . \$25. Ea.  
 Museum Bookmark. . . . . \$0.50 Ea.  
 2004 Heritage Calendar. . . . . \$6. Ea.  
 Back Issue Calendars . . . . . \$5. Ea.  
 When ordering by mail, include \$2. Shipping charge  
 For each \$10.00 order.

## IS YOUR SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP CURRENT FOR 2004?

We've listed below paid-up members as of mid-January for the current year. If you're not listed, check the Mailing label on this Newsletter. If "Life" appears, your life membership has been paid. If "2004" appears, you have paid your dues for this year. Otherwise, the last year for which we have received dues is shown.

The Society needs you as a contributing member. Not only financially, but also with your suggestions, your help and your knowledge of Portland's past. Dues: (Individual \$10; family \$20; lifetime \$250) should be mailed to: Portland Historical Society, Inc., P O Box 98, Portland, CT 06480. Call me, Bill Frisbie (342-0303) or our Membership Chair, Jean Kelsey (342-0632) if you have questions.

Ackerman, Bill & Kathi	Downing, Isabel	*Kavanaugh, Arne	Petzold, William & Paula
Ahlberg, Dorothy	DuPont, Judith Gildersleeve	Keenan, Violet D.	Powers, Brian & Karen
Anderson, Alan & Joan	Elder, Jim & Judi	Kelsey, Jean	Prout, Janet
Anderson, Darren D.	Ellsworth, Elizabeth P.	Keser, Marie	Puglisi, Sal & Ethel
Anderson, Marion	Epstein, Dr. Joseph & Estelle	Kutz, Roselles	*Richards, Lucile Chapman
Anderson, Susanne	Erskine, Lloyd & Eileen	Kuzninski, David & Ronna	*Robinson, Hazel
*Aresco, Patricia S.	*Finkelstein, Mark J.	Labbadia, Karen	*Rockwood, Mrs. Wm. O.
Bergman, Sharon A.	Flannagan, John E.	Ladny, Thomas & Susan	Roman, Ellen S.
Balcha, Edward H.	Fogelmark, Marshall V.	Lantos family, Dr. Joseph	Rosenbaum, Howard & Sari
Blaumvelt, Julia & Richard	Freeburg, Ruth S.	Larson, Bill & Evelyn	Rousseau, Edward A.
*Bouret, Sandy	Frisbie, Bill & Phyllis	Larson, Harold & Sue	Rowe, Marie W.
*Brede, Colleen M.	Geiges, Myrna G.	Law, George & Elaine	*Sarbaugh, James
Broberg, Grace E.	Gilbert, Bob & Arline	Lineen, Marty	Sheer family, Audrey
Bronson, Charles & Nancy	Gildersleeve, Richard & Lynn	Lojeski, Marjorie H.	Schneck, William D.
Bryan, Marion Basiel	*Gildersleeve, Richard O.	Luppi, Joanne A.	*Schufer, John H.
Burbank, Marybeth Keser	Goodrich, Barbara & Donald	Lutecki, Martha	*Scianna, Mrs. Peter P.
*Burke, Dr. & Mrs. Gerald	*Goodrich, Robert & Beatrice	Magnotta, Dorothy & Frank	*Sloan, Ann Gildersleeve
Bylan, Joy C.	Gotta, John F.	Markham, Donald R.	Sprague, Frances M.
Cabral, Linda	Grover, Allen & Ruth	Mattesen, Greg/Kelly/Amelia	Stanciff, Robert C.
Cannon, Mary Anne	*Guernsey, Jacqueline C.	McBrien, William & Connie	*Sullivan, Bill & Chris
Carella, Elaine & Dick	Guild, Virginia	McBrien, Nancy L.	Sullivan, Francis & Hildur
Chalfant, Helen F.	Guilmette, Randy & Joan	*McCabe, Jim & Martha	Sullivan, Gene & Shirley
Chapman, Fred & Barbara	*Hale, Elsie M.	McComick, Janice	Sullivan, John & Eileen
Clark, Barbara	Hale, George & Judy	*McDougall, Dylan Stephen	Sweet, Jane
Cohan, Fred & Susan	Hale, Robert A.	*McDougall, Robert W.	*Taylor, Donald A.
Conklin, John F.	Hamon, Richard & Jean	McGowan, Ruth J.	Taylor, Loraine B.
Connolly, Peter & Jeanette	Harper, John & Judy	Mitchell, E. Stuart & Janet	Tiemey, Peggy
Cozzi, Yvonne	Heerd, Bruce & Doris	Mueller, Nancy & Tom	Tyler, Bruce & Karen
*Cramer, Lucille C.	Heidenis, Keny/Doris Sherrow	*Muller, William R.	Van Steenberg, Lisa
*Crowther, Pat & Eleanor	*Herrick, Terrence J.	Nash, Jane	*Van Steenberg, Richard
*Csere, James	Hill, Dorian E.	Natalie, Virginia R.	Washburn, Bethia Robinson
*Cunningham, Linda	Hill, Jim & Carol	Newberg, Beverly C.	Weiner, Martin
Dalton, Sharon & Ray	Hoar, Luva M ead	*Olson, Walter	Werdelin, Norma
Davis, Jan & Dan	Hodge, Stephen & Jeanette	Omicoli, Mrs. Edith	*Wahmore, Kenneth & Jean
DeBery, Carol M.	Hughes, Joan B.	*Organek, Mrs. Edward	White family, Wm. Blunt
*DeGraff, Norma	*Jackson, Mary Jane	Otterbein, John & Diane	*Wilson, Alfreda B.
Dillon, John & Bernadette	Jackson, Mrs. Warren E.	Paradez, Kathryn	Wilson, George & Leora
Dilworth, Jeanne C.	Johnson, Charles B.	Parks, George & Constance	Wolmann, Charles
Dinatale, Fran	Johnson, George & Carolyn	Pemuccio, William Virginia	Wolmann, Regina
*Dolan, Mary Ann	Johnson, Hazel S.	Peterson, Ernest & Phyllis	Woodward, Mrs. Kenneth
Dower, Walter & Vivian	Johnson, Stuart & Beatrice	Peterson, John & Marlene	Young, Charles M & Susan A.
			Zimmer, Nancy C.

## PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY PROGRAMS -

- January 27 - The Antique World - Arthur Pope of Portland and Spencer Quinton, owners of the newly opened Brownstone Recycle Shop on Main St., will present a program about buying and restoring antiques.
- February 24 Meshomasic Forest, Portland- John LeShane introducing the oldest State Forest in New England.
- March 23 - History and Architecture of Portland - Portland Senior Center - Paul Loether, Director of the Connecticut Historical Commission, discusses some of the historically significant houses in Portland and the families who lived in them.
- April 27 - Portland's Brownstone Quarrying Industry - Jack Dillon, local quarry expert, will provide behind the scenes information on quarrying activities.

All programs are held at 7:30 PM in the Mary Flood Room of the Portland Library unless otherwise indicated.

The RCHM museum of Portland History is open the first Sunday of each month from 2-4 PM.

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NEW SLETTER - Phyllis & Bill Frisbie, 1-21-04

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P.O. Box 98, Portland, CT 06480

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### SOCIETY OFFICERS

2004

President - Regina Wolmann  
Vice President - Eleanor Crowther  
Secretary - Ruth Freeburg  
Treasurer - James McCabe

### DIRECTORS

Robert McDougall  
Mary Ann Dolan  
Susan Anderson

### FINANCE BOARD

Donald Goodrich  
Pat Crowther  
James Elder

New sletter!