



PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 98, Portland, CT 06480

NOVEMBER 2004 NEWSLETTER

President's message - Regina Woltmann

Thanks to all who volunteered to help at our booth at the Portland Fair in early October: Marlene and John Peterson, Sue Anderson, Hazel Robinson, Joan Hughes, Judi Elder, George and Leora Wilson, Charlie Woltmann, Jean Kelsey, Lin Masley, Ruth Freeburg, Martha Lutecki, Carol DeBerry, Jim McCabe, Doris Sherrow Heidenis and Kerry Heidenis, Marion Anderson, Al Carlson, Allan & Ruth Grover, Mary Ann Dolan, Connie and Nancy McBrien, and especially to Bill and Phyllis Frisbie and Chris Sullivan for creating a very impressive exhibit which featured historic postal card scenes of Portland. We received a number of compliments from fair goers and the pictures generated a lot of interest from people who wanted to purchase copies of their favorites! We also sold a number of items from our "Callander Cupboard" and successfully marketed the Society.

We are now selling the 2005 Heritage Calendars, an attractive reminder of our history. Bob McDougall and Doris Sherrow-Heidenis have done another outstanding job compiling the calendar with lots of interesting old pictures with appropriate commentary. In addition, Bob's book of Portland's history and photographs will be available soon for holiday gift giving. These are two of our fundraisers which enable us to maintain The Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History.

This edition of the *Newsletter* contains our membership renewal and return envelope with the Calendar order form.

We hope to see you at our upcoming meetings and/or exhibits. Your ongoing support is appreciated.

Regina Woltmann, President

ANNUAL MEETING:

Called for November 9., 6 PM at the Hemlock Grange Hall, 17 Sage Hollow Road.

A pot luck supper starting at 6:30 PM will precede the meeting. Discussion of the past year's accomplishments, adoption of the new budget, election of officers and plans for the new year will be the agenda. Bring your own comments, suggestions and ideas for the future.

Members are asked to bring a casserole or salad for 6 - 8. Beverages, breads and dessert will be provided by the Society Board.

Hope to see you there!



The Society's Booth at the recent Portland Agricultural Fair with Nancy McBrien, Connie McBrien and Mary Ann Dolan reviewing the display of enlarged old-time Portland Postcards.

NOTES . . .

Callander House Maintenance Committee -

-Chris Sullivan & Eleanor Crowther

Additional lights have recently been added by Pat Crowther for better viewing of our exhibits.

New combination storm windows are planned to replace the old wooden ones which do not fit well, so are inefficient.

The front of the garage was painted by Pat Crowther with a little help from Ruth Freeburg and Chris Sullivan. The rest of the building still needs cleaning and painting . . . which may be done in a warm spell or Spring.

Our museum entrance door has been given a fresh, final coat of paint by Pat, who also added non-slip strips to the handicap entrance ramp.

Museum notes - (Next opening Nov. 7, 2-4 PM)

To complement Rick Gildersleeve's program this month about the Gildersleeve shipyards, extra displays include the Gildersleeve 1850 Album Quilt with its 60 handwritten names of Gildersleeves and their neighbors. Possibly it was created as a gift to Sylvester Gildersleeve on his 70th birthday.

Also on display is a hand written list of all the town voters in 1845 - four years after Portland's break-away from Chatham (E. Hampton). Many of the names recur on the quilt.

NOTES FROM MUSEUM DIRECTOR,

Bob McDougall

George Wallace, Curator of the Northport Long Island Historical Society Museum, contacted us looking for information and images from the Gildersleeve Shipyard. Before moving to Portland, the Gildersleeve ancestors lived in the area near Northport. We were able to provide several scanned images.

History channel will be using some of our photos for a film on NY Brownstones which is premiering November 20 at 5 PM. We have provided 15 high resolution scanned images for the program.

Acquisitions/Inventory: Marie Keser, Joan Hughes We are nearly up-to-date processing current acquisitions, and have almost completed the inventory of physical artifacts. . . our next steps include labeling and organizing the items that have been inventoried and cataloging our files of photos and documents.

Transcription: Darren Anderson, Jennifer Vernali: We are in the process of having the History of Portland articles by William VanBeynum from the Portland Citizen retyped, as well as other material such as the 1976 History of Portland and the 1916 Portland 75th Anniversary booklet.

Jim McCabe, Treasurer, reports that this active Society year to date has produced \$18,215.81 in non-endowment income, and that we have \$2,481.41 cash on hand. A complete report will be given at Annual Meeting when the budget is presented by the Finance Committee.



We had an impressive collection of Gildersleeves at Rick Gildersleeve's program "The Gildersleeve Family and the Shipbuilding Industry", and they posed for this great photo. L-R. they are: Alfred Henry Gildersleeve Jr., Judith Gildersleeve DuPont (Stonington), Robert Sloan Jr. (S.C.), Ann Gildersleeve Sloan (Virginia), Rebecca Gildersleeve Robinson (Deep River), Lynn Gildersleeve, Elizabeth Gildersleeve, and Richard Gildersleeve.

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P. O. Box 98, Portland, CT 06480

Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History

492 Main Street, Portland

November, 2004

2005 MEMBERSHIP

Greetings to our current members and welcome to prospective members of the Portland Historical Society for the year 2005. As we conclude our 30th year of incorporation, we ask you to continue your support of the Society's mission to preserve Portland's history for future generations. We also encourage your active participation with your knowledge of our town or just to enjoy our activities.

- ❖ The Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History has drawn hundreds of visitors to its exhibits this year, encouraging many helpful reminiscences and donation of articles for our collection of Portland's past.
- ❖ Through the Museum work, the Portland History programs, heritage walks, and printed materials, we are seeking to raise awareness of the town's unique and renowned industrial/agricultural past.

Included in this mailing is an envelope for 2005 membership and a form to order the 2005 Historical Society Calendar which features photos from the 1896 Middletown Tribune Souvenir Edition printed for the opening of the first highway bridge between Portland and Middletown.

Memberships, which are tax deductible, make nice holiday gifts for family and friends.

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. Woltmann (s)
Regina T. Woltmann, President

P.S. Note that the number above your name on this Newsletter address label indicates the last year for which your dues have been paid.

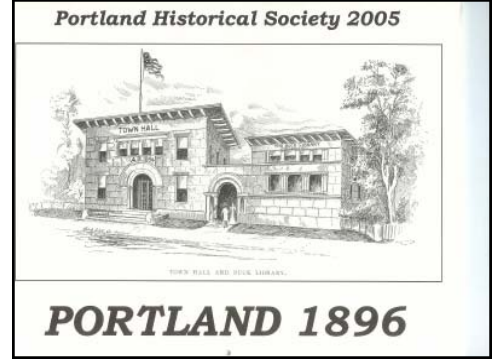
E-mail: PortlandHistSoc@Yahoo.com Web site: PortlandHistSoc.org

**NEW BOOK ON PORTLAND
IS NOW AVAILABLE!**

"PORTLAND, Images of America" by our own Bob McDougall will be released by Arcadia Publishing. The 128 page book includes over 200 photographs of Portland.

Subjects include: Parades & Celebrations, Floods & Hurricanes, Land marks; Transportation; Individuals & Organizations; and Shipyards & quarries. It primarily features photographs from the collection of the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History and some from private collections. A highlight is a never before published sequence of four photos taken while the Brownstone Quarry was flooding in 1936. Construction photos of both highway bridges across the CT. River are shown. The book is available from the Society for \$20, with proceeds to benefit our projects.

Call Sue Anderson, 860-342-0433



2005 HERITAGE CALENDAR

Using pictures first published by the Middletown Tribune in 1896 as a souvenir edition celebrating opening of the first pedestrian and carriage bridge over the Connecticut River, Bob McDougall and Doris Sherrow-Heidenis have created an interesting view of the leading citizens of the day and their homes compared to the same homes today. Restoration advocates will be especially interested.

Note order form enclosed with your membership envelope.



callander house cupboard

(A holiday catalogue picturing items is available. Items may be ordered by mail or obtained at the museum.)

Portland Scenes Notepad (50 pgs., 5 scenes)	\$3. Ea.	Callander House Stoneware Jar	\$25. Ea.
Portland Scenes Tea Towel	\$6. Ea.	2005 Heritage Calendar	\$6. Ea.
Brownstone Pen Set	\$20. Ea.	Calendar (back issues)	\$5. Ea.
Magnets (as shown & described in Sept., 04 Newsletter)			\$2. Ea.; 3 for \$5.; set of 20: \$30.

Please include \$2. shipping charge for each \$10. of order.

GILDERSLEEVE STUDENT VISITS TO MUSEUM

On October 4th and 7th, the third grade students at Gildersleeve School visited the Ruth Callander House Museum. On each day, three classes walked from the school to the museum for a tour that included Wangunk Indian artifacts, James Stancliff and early settlers, and the importance of brownstone quarrying, shipbuilding, and tobacco farming in the history of our town. We also talked about transportation in Portland, and the students were able to view the many military items on display. The students were interested in the one-room schoolhouse exhibit and the fact that several of the old school buildings can still be seen today, and that two are currently private residences. We also noted Ruth Callander's generosity in donating her house to become a museum, and the mission of the Portland Historical Society. On their return walk along Main Street the students were asked to look for pieces of Portland's history including brownstone foundations and the Civil War Monument. A total of 150 students, teachers and staff visited on those days and several museum docents were on hand to help with the groups. Special thanks to Marie Keser, Chris Sullivan, Phyllis & Bill Frisbie, Elsie Hale, Arline Gilbert and Millie Post for making the annual student visits a great success.

- Mary Ann Dolan, School Visit Coordinator & Guide

OLIVER GILDERSLEEVE (1844 - 1912)

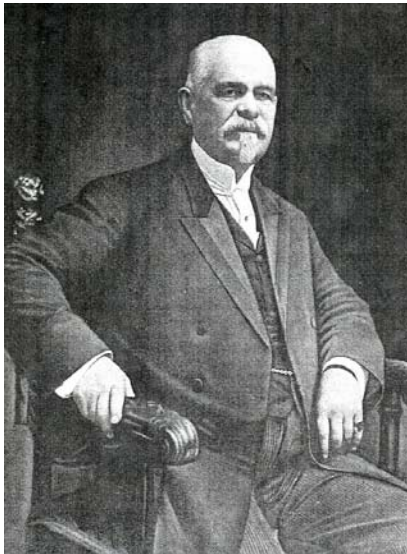
(Excerpt from his biography in “*Encyclopedia Of Biography - Representative Citizens of Connecticut*,” *American Historical Society, 1917* .

Oliver was the grandson of Sylvester Gildersleeve who amalgamated several of the Portland shipyards into S. Gildersleeve & Sons in 1820-30.

During Oliver’s 51 years at the yard, many of its most famous ships were launched, representing every style from Clipper ships to scows.

“Oliver Gildersleeve, in whose death on July 26, 1912, not only his home community, but the State of Connecticut, lost one of its worthiest sons, was a member of an old and prominent New England family.

Oliver was born into the shipyard business, just as he was born into the old family mansion at Gildersleeve, when he first saw the light on March 6, 1844. He passed his entire life in Gildersleeve with the exception of the short time he was away at school. Upon graduating at the age of seventeen, he entered the shipbuilding establishment of S. Gildersleeve & Sons as an apprentice. If it is true that Mr. Gildersleeve was born into the ancestral business, it is equally true that no favor was shown him, nor indeed, any of the Gildersleeve children, in the work required of them in their apprenticeship. The men of the line have had far too much practical sense to allow their children to hope for the direction of an industry without that experience and skilled training which alone could render them fitted to the task. It thus happened that the training of Oliver Gildersleeve in the business which he was one day to head, was long and arduous and consisted of every kind of work used in connection with the building of vessels of every kind, so that to quote a local publication, when the time came for him to assume the management of the concern he could “plan, draft, estimate, contract for a vessel of any size, can do any part of the work, and build the whole vessel with his hands , give him time enough.” At the time of his entrance into the establishment, there was on the ways a vessel destined to obtain national fame, and it was upon its construction that the youth performed his first labor.



This was the gunboat “Cayuga”, which was being built for the United States government, and which later took part in the Union attack upon New Orleans in the Civil War, leading the fleet in the capture of that place.

Mr. Gildersleeve’s position as head of this large and important industrial enterprise was sufficient to make him a prominent figure in the business life of his community, but his interests by no means stopped there. He

was a man interested in all industrial growth, not merely from the selfish attitude of the inventor, but from that of the public spirited citizen who desires to see all that can benefit the community proper. How energetic he was in the matter of the town’s industrial interest is admirably shown in the case of the National Stamping and Enameling Co. of New York which had had for many years a plant at Portland, CT. which at one time had employed six hundred hands in its extensive operations. The plant was an enormous one covering one hundred and thirty-five thousand square feet of land with its buildings and altogether occupying eighteen acres. In the latter part of the past century and for the first five years of the present one, this great factory had been practically abandoned, no work was carried on there and the valuable buildings and equipment were rapidly deteriorating.

These facts, coming to the notice of Mr. Gildersleeve, awakened in him a desire to remedy what he considered a most unfortunate state of affairs, and he set about with characteristic energy to reestablish the business. He interested a number of New York capitalists in the matter and in connection with them bought the entire property. The Maine Product Company was then organized and with new machinery installed in part of the old plant, a large business in mica products was established. With the taking over of the business of National Gum and Mica Company of New York City, it became the largest concern of its kind in the U.S. The remainder of the great plant they rented to the New England Enameling Co. of Middletown, CT. which has developed a great industry of its own, and promises, indeed, to do a larger business than that carried by its predecessors. This is but one example of the many enterprises with the organization or rehabilitation of which Mr. Gildersleeve was identified. He was actively engaged in the management in one or another capacity of well-nigh every concern of importance in the neighborhood.” . . . *He was active in or founded: the ferry, the trolley, Electric Co., Water Co., and one of the quarries.*

PROGRAMS:

- November 9 - Hemlock Grange - Annual Meeting and Potluck Supper will commence at 6 PM. The program will be an overview of the Society's business for the year.
- November 20 - History Channel, Story of New York Brownstone houses, includes Portland Historical Society pictures. 5 PM.
- December 9 - Portland Library presents Author Stephen B. Goddard, discussing his book, "Race to the Sky - the Wright Brothers vs. the U. S. Government" - slide show and book signing. 7 PM.
- December 11 - Holiday Open-House at the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History featuring trains and doll houses - 10 AM to 4 PM
- January 25 - To be announced.

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

NEWSLETTER - *Phyllis & Bill Frisbie, 11-5-04*



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Newsletter!