



PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 98, Portland, CT 06480

SUMMER 2008 NEWSLETTER

Ruth Callander House Museum, 492 Main St., Portland, CT., 06480, Tel: 860-342-5545

PRESIDENT'S LETTER - Martha Lutecki

Town-wide Tag Sale: It is hard to believe that 12 years ago we started this venture with twenty-five homes, and this year we had a remarkable 157! As usual the hard working *Tag Sale Committee* spent several Saturdays sorting and pricing thousands of items. Many others delivered tag sale poles around town. Still others spent countless hours working on the map. Thanks to all Society members for baking, ensuring the success of the bake sale at the Grange. As in previous years we sold out of baked goods and hotdogs by 1 pm. With the continued success of our tag-sale many other organizations in town have scheduled events the same day, truly making Portland the place to be on the second Saturday of May. Thanks again to all who contributed either with labor or donations.

Farm Exhibit: This spring's exhibit at the *Callander House Museum of Portland History* is a wonderful display of farm memorabilia from Portland farms past and present. It has been very popular drawing large crowds each month. The *Society's 2009 Calendar* will also cover the farm story. I encourage all who have not visited the Museum yet to be sure and stop in. The Exhibit Committee has created an interesting show. Remember! We are open the first Sunday of every month, 2-4 pm, or by appointment by calling 860-342-0303.

Programs: A highlight of our programming was a special 75th Anniversary Program, held in conjunction with the Parent Teacher Organization, celebrat-

ing 75 years for the *Brownstone Intermediate School building* which formerly served as the high school and later junior high school. A panel discussion, moderated by Rick Gildersleeve, was held with Bill and Connie McBrien, Bob Johnson, Nan Zimmer, Jeff Burgess, Phyllis Greene, Katy Jozus Mooney, and Andrew Donahue. Our thanks to all who participated and to those who shared news articles, school newspapers, yearbooks, pictures and other memorabilia. A special thanks to member and former Director, Mary Ann Dolan, for all of her efforts to coordinate this wonderful celebration attended by more than 100 people.

Bylaws Revision Committee: This committee, chaired by Joan Guilmette has spent many months examining the Society's Bylaws, comparing them with those of other groups and weighing their application. This is a necessary process to ensure that the Society's organization continues to reflect changing obligations. The committee suggestions will be reviewed at the next Board meeting for approval after which the Bylaws will be presented to a general meeting of the Society for acceptance. Bob McDougall and Claire Frisbie were also committee members.

Potluck Picnic: The annual *Potluck Supper* is scheduled for Tuesday, June 24, 2008, at the Fireman's Picnic grounds, at 6 pm. The picnic is held rain or shine. Please bring a salad or casserole to serve 6-8 people. The Board will provide desserts. I hope to see you all there!



Brownstone School 75th Anniversary Discussion Panel



12th ANNUAL TOWN-WIDE TAG SALE
- Eleanor Crowther, Chairman

Our Appreciation to all Portland Historical Society members and friends.

THANK YOU: Ad solicitors, Tag sale treasure pricers, Pole maker, Hints writer, Sign producers, Publicity folks, Mailers, Computer experts, Bake sale callers, Radio caller, Map designers, Bakers, Pole people, Display team, Traffic guides and Sales associates.

AND Tag sales participants all around the town without whom there wouldn't have been a *12th Annual Town-Wide Tag Sale.*

LASTLY: Thanks to ALL the happy fun loving Tag Sale buyers.

See you **May 9, 2009** – 2nd Saturday in May, our 13th.

From Eleanor and Pat Crowther, Chris Sullivan



HISTORY . . .

Excerpts from MEMORIES OF PAYNETOWN

by Kathryn Payne Hughes

Editor's note: [The Payne family settled in Portland in 1676. The farm house mentioned, built c. 1795, is a brick 2 ½ story center chimney late Colonial/Federal style house on Portland-Cobalt Road – behind the farm stand. Paynetown, which was a fruit, vegetable and dairy farm, spanned the area from the Connecticut River to north of Jobs Pond, across Portland-Cobalt Road and to Middle Haddam Road. Kathryn Payne Hughes was very interested in the history of her family. These memories are excerpts from a larger document that can be seen as part of the Portland Farms Exhibit at the Callander House Museum.]

Going back to days when I grew up on a beautiful farm in Portland, I wonder if I really appreciated its beauty then. Our home was surrounded by peach and apple orchards, fields of alfalfa, gardens and pastures. In our barns and other out buildings were pure bred Durham and Devon cattle, steers and cows, Rhode Island Red poultry, and even pigs. My father was the cattle expert and my Uncle **Jack, the poultry man.** “Fair” time was busy, as cattle and chickens and fruit were made ready for exhibition at Haddam Neck, Berlin, and later Portland. Many cattle teams were walked [all the way] over to Berlin each year for the **annual fair...**

Great Grandfather Franklin Payne was a pioneer peach grower in this area, and the raising and harvesting of peaches was carried on for several years by my family. I remember how they sorted and packed the peaches for market, and how good they tasted as we sampled those that were fully ripe – delicious! My mother used to tell me that the peach trees were in bloom and the asparagus was ready to cut on the day that I was born in April 1910. The peach orchards in bloom were a beautiful sight. The trees **were not pruned as closely as they are in today's orchards** and so were really much prettier. No blossom though can **equal the apple tree's pink and white beauty.** I always wanted to pick them for a bouquet but was not allowed to very often because that might make fewer apples at harvest time!...

I loved the spring time walks we would take through the **woods to find Lady Slippers, Dutchmen's Breeches, Blood Root, etc.** I remember too, a special patch of wild strawberries that grew where the entrance to Lyman Lane is now. There were two big evergreen trees at each side of the driveway framed by a rustic fence. This was the road **that led to Dr. Hallock's camp on the river bank.** Dr. Hallock (of Cromwell Hall) had bought the land from my great grandfather to use as an outpatient sanitarium. His property included the pond where we harvested our ice. This is an area where many wild flowers grow (Hepatica, Lady



Kathryn Payne's house after 1938 hurricane

Slippers, Anemone)...

I am not sure what year my Mother started a little roadside stand business – (I think it might have been about 1922 or '23) - to increase our income a bit. My cousin Bud Hathaway, who lived with us during the War years and worked at Gildersleeve Shipyard, built a little wooden store much like the one that Eddie Payne had built later. [Now Q-P **Farm Market of Gotta's Farm on Portland-Cobalt Road.**] We sold ice cream, soda, candy, crackers etc. as well as the farm produce in season. There was also a gasoline pump (hand crank – no electricity) and I learned to pump gasoline, fill oil tanks, and make change – as well as sell ice cream cones, hot dogs, etc. At one time we were selling home made root-beer in addition to Undina products **and a home brew called "Near Beer."** This was during Prohibition days...

Music was an important part of Paynetown life. At 22 Granpa Payne started selling parlor organs from door to door. His endeavor grew into the formation of a music store in Middletown in 1874. He sold pianos, all kinds of musical instruments (violins, guitars, banjos, harmonicas, trumpets, etc.) **Payne's Music House was in existence until the 1950s or early '60s.** My Aunt Gertrude ("Gertie")

[article continued page 4]

[Memories of Paynetown, *continued from pg. 3*]
was educated at the New England Conservatory in Boston
and became an excellent pianist...

We had many happy family gatherings and picnics through
the years. Fourth of July was always a great day when ta-
bles were set up on the front lawn or down at Jobs Pond
with watermelon, iced tea, and all kinds of delicious food...

Jobs Pond, (named for my great, great,
great grandfather who owned most of
the land surrounding it) was just a short
walk from the house and there I learned
to swim at an early age. Both my
mother and grandmother Marsh were
good swimmers and my grandmother
loved to fish. She was happy to sit in
a rowboat all day and wait for the bass
to bite...

Three of my uncles served in World War
I. Only one returned. I remember how
proud I was of my Uncle Lyman when
he came home from Camp wearing his
uniform and took me for a ride in his
Model T Ford...

Card playing was a favorite cold
weather pastime, and many evenings
were spent playing bridge, set-back,
hearts, etc. (Canasta came in later
years, long after I was married.) Whist
parties and bridge parties were the
social events of those days and were
always enjoyed. My grandparents were
excellent players when it came to
Auction Bridge and later Contract
Bridge. I never became an expert but
have always enjoyed playing. Dancing,
too, was part of our entertainment.
Old fashioned square dancing and
waltzes, fox trots, etc. were enjoyed
both winter and summer...

I remember a special evening when I
was probably 17 or 18, **when my
mother's and father's friends included
me in a ride to Bolton in Will Stocking's
truck to go to a dance at the Rainbow
Ballroom. This dance hall was owned
and run by Flavia Butler's sister,
Lucy Pinney. We were bringing a
piano in the truck for the Pinney's
use. Frank Cambria, a fine pianist
from Middletown was with us and we
sang on our way – with his accompaniment!
That was an evening to remember! ...**

When I first went to school, my Aunt
Bessie, who lived in the **next house
up the road and was Charlie's and
Gladys' mother, drove us back and
forth to Central School in her Oakland
Touring car (which had side curtains
in case of**

rain.) The town paid her for this
transportation since there was one
other child who lived in a house east
of our farm **who had this same
advantage...**

My first grade teacher was Miss
Mary Bransfield, (Peter Bransfield's
aunt), a lovely lady. In Grammar
School, bells were rung for recess,
noon, etc. and when we went out for
recess we marched to the Victrola
record of "Parade of the Wooden
Soldiers." Of course, I always
took sandwiches, etc. for lunch...



A Payne at Jobs Pond c. 1930

When Penfield Hill School closed,
the Town had to provide transportation
for those children and so hired
Nathan Cohen (who owned the Valley
Feed Store in the Charlie Bell
building at the corner of Freestone
Avenue) to drive his **grain delivery
truck to bring the "rural" children
to the Central School and High
School. Seats, or rather large
benches, were placed on each side
of the truck and supports for
tarpaulin installed to protect
against rain and snow. I was
fortunate to be able to get the
"bus" from my house on its way
to school. Penfield Hill students
had to walk from their homes
down to the corner where Breezy
Corner Road abuts Middle Haddam
Road. Students were allowed to
ride the bus if they lived east of
the Portland Railroad Station...**

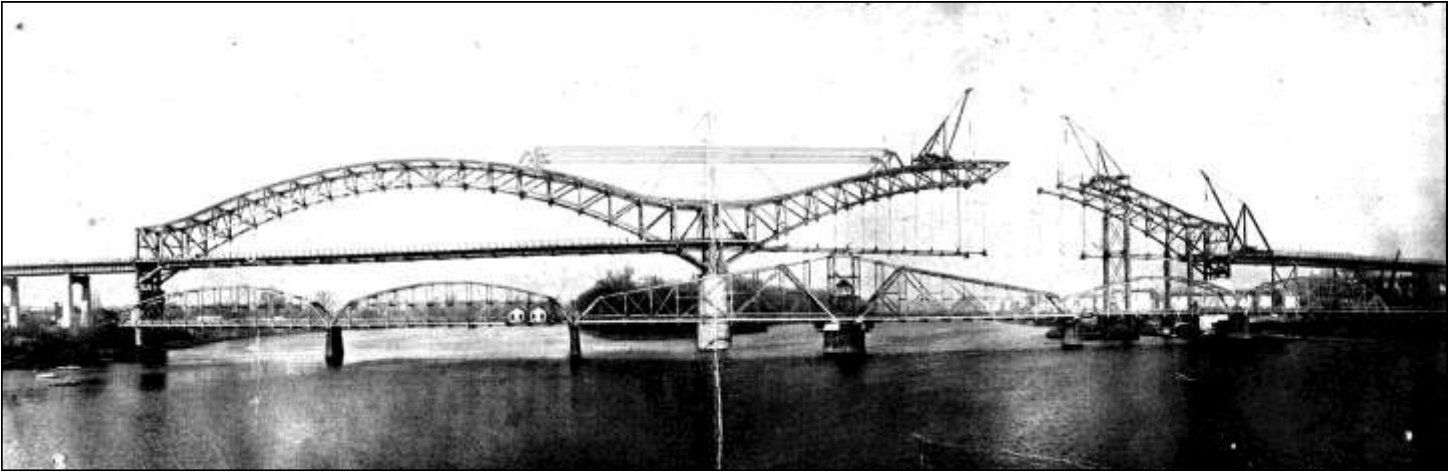
Our graduation ceremonies were
held at the Congregational Church,
as our school had no proper
auditorium. Our 1928 class was
the largest one (30 or so) to have
been graduated **from PHS...**

**We had no electricity until 1928 or '29,
and at that time I had been
graduated from High School and
was hired by the Conn. Power
Company as a Complaint Clerk. This
came in mighty handy for my
family due to the fact that as an
employee of the Power Company I
was entitled to a very sizeable
discount on lighting fixtures...**

One of the daily chores was to
refill the lamps with oil, and wash
the chimneys. Neither did we have
a bathroom in those early years,
so of course there was another
daily chore in connection with
that lack of convenience! What a
great improvement, the installation
of indoor plumbing!...

One of the memorable events of
those early years was the day my
cousin Charlie invited us to come
up to their house to hear his radio –
the first in our neighborhood. I
remember the station was KDKA
Pittsburgh and the marvelous
soprano soloist, Marion Tallery!...

NOTES . . .



ARRIGONI BRIDGE FILM - Bob McDougall

Some of you may recall that in 1999 at the January meeting we showed a film of the construction of the Arrigoni Bridge. (The program was so popular that the film had to be shown twice to accommodate the large crowd.) The film was made by the late Howard S. Ives, of Great Hill Road, who was Chief Engineer on the bridge project in 1938. Ives' son gave the film to Bill McBrien who passed it on to the Historical Society. Sadly the film deteriorated over the years. Art Warmesley, who transferred the recording to video tape for us, could not save it in its entirety. It is a silent, black and white film with 12 caption screens describing the project.

Last month (April 2008) I was contacted by Jonathan Ives, a bridge engineer with GM2 Associates of Glastonbury (an engineering firm that specializes in bridge and roadway design and inspection - www.gm2inc.com). He had read about the Arrigoni film on our web site (www.PortlandHistSoc.org) in an article from a 1999 newsletter. Curiously, he is not related to the Howard Ives who worked on the bridge in 1938.

Ives explained that he believes "that the Arrigoni is severely under appreciated. The tied arch construction of this bridge was somewhat of an engineering marvel, the like of which has not been seen in Connecticut before or since." He wished to borrow a copy of the film to view with his co-workers.

I located the VHS tape in the Museum's Collection and converted it to a digital format. On April 25 I showed the film to Ives and his fellow engineers at GM2. They were impressed with the level of detail shown and they have offered to provide a narrative to describe the scenes on the film in more detail.

We hope that Ives will be able to present the narrative at a future membership meeting when we show the film again.

SPECIAL GIFTS

At the settling of the estate of the late Robert Bruce Goodrich, Ellsworth, Maine, a generous donation was given to the Portland Historical Society. Mr. Goodrich was one of our life members.

An 1847 framed map of Portland, Connecticut was recently bequeathed to the Historical Society by the late Doris Linden Heerdt of Pound Ridge, New York. Marion Anderson, a schoolmate of Doris, tells us that this map was Doris' favorite daily study.

MEMBERSHIP - Bill Frisbie, 860-342-0303

Since our listing of members in the Spring newsletter we have received 12 individual, 7 family and 1 life membership.

Individual

Linda Cabral
Catherine Probolus
Barbara Clark
Marie Rowe
Ethel Puglisi
Louise Anderson
Duane Chowaniec
Jannie Desrosiers-Berman
Marybeth Burbank
Frank Brainerd
Virginia Natalie

Sharon Bergman

Family

William, Harriet and Maureen Sanborn
Robert and Arline Gilbert
David and Myra Finkelstein
Kathleen and George Brede
Marguerite and David Flanders
Kathi and Bill Ackerman
Janet and Michael Nocek

Life

C. Joseph Seiferman

CALENDAR

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

- May 27 - "Notable Trees in Connecticut"** Program
by Glen Dryer of Connecticut College
- June 1 - Portland Farms Exhibit** - Museum open 2-4 pm
- June 24 - 6 pm - Potluck Picnic at Firemen's Picnic
Grounds** - bring your setups and salad or casserole
- July 6 - Portland Farms Exhibit** - Museum open 2-4 pm
- August 3 - Portland Farms Exhibit** - Museum open 2-4 pm
- August 8 - 70th Anniversary of Opening of Arrigoni Bridge**
- September 7 - Portland Farms Exhibit**
- Museum open 2-4 pm
- September 13 - Brownstone Quorum Festival**
- Museum open
- September 30 - "Civilian Conservation Corps in 1930's
Portland"** Program by Marty Podskoch
- October 5 - Portland Farms Exhibit** - Museum open 2-4 pm
- October 28 - "Mining in Connecticut"** Program
by Local Geologist Herb Duey

CALLANDER HOUSE CUPBOARD

- 2008 Calendar - Queen Annes of Portland\$8
Portland Recipes and Reflections.....\$8
Letters to Harry
by Prudence Taylor and TJ Palmer....\$25
Coloring & Activity Book of Portland History.....\$5
Images of Portland by Bob McDougall.....\$20
St. Clements
by Prudence Taylor and TJ Palmer.....\$15
Previous Year Calendars..... \$5
Antique Pictures of Portland on Magnets
\$2 each, 3/\$5, set of 20/\$30
Portland Scenes Notepad (50 pgs., 5 scenes)..\$5
Portland Scenes Tea Towel.....\$6
Meshomasic Forest Video by John LeShane....\$5

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

Payments are donations to Society projects
Call 860-342-0433 to order or mail to: Portland
Historical Society, PO Box 98, Portland, CT 06480

NEWSLETTER - *Phyllis, Bill and Claire Frisbie, 5-31-08*

Newsletter!

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Pat Crowther
George Law

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2008

SOCIETY OFFICERS

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PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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