



PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 98, Portland, CT 06480

FALL 2008 NEWSLETTER

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

PRESIDENT'S LETTER - *Martha Lutecki*

I hope you all enjoyed your summer and are looking forward to joining us at our various programs this fall! As always, we can use your help with our many projects and outreach efforts and would welcome any assistance you can provide.

Brownstone Festival: By the time you receive this newsletter we will have participated in the Annual Brownstone Festival on Saturday, September 13th, with an Open House at our Museum featuring our Farm Exhibit and a booth on the Town Green selling items from the "Callander Cupboard."

Exhibits: Our Farm Exhibit has been a tremendous success and Sue Anderson, who coordinated and researched this project and Bill, Phyllis, and Claire Frisbie, our Exhibits Committee, and anyone else who has helped out all deserve our gratitude for all their efforts on this display. Record numbers of visitors have enjoyed learning about Portland's early farming history. We hope you will stop by the Museum on Sunday, October 5th, or visit our mini-display at the Portland Fair in October.

Nominating Committee: If anyone would like to serve on the Nominating Committee, please call me at 860-342-3212.

Portland Fair: We'll also need volunteers for our booth at the Portland Fair on Friday, October 12, Saturday, October 13 and Sunday, October 14th. If you can help out for a few hours, please let me know.

My term as President of The Portland Historical Society is coming to a close and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support of the Society's mission and projects. It has been such a pleasure to meet and work with such a wonderful



A young visitor to the Museum's Farm Exhibit enjoys testing the tractor.

group of people who share my love of Portland and its rich history. It has been a busy three years with a number of special projects and fundraisers, including the House Tour, cookbook, and increasingly popular Tag and Bake Sale. In addition we have coordinated well attended exhibits such as the Wedding Dress, Military and most recently the Farm Exhibit. We continue to offer a variety of interesting historical programs which are held monthly at the Portland Library. We would not be able to do all that we do without the many helping hands and your ongoing support which is greatly appreciated.

Thank you all!

Martha

NOTES . . .



Launching of Schooner Frank Brainerd in Rockland, Maine, September 24, 1908.

A generous donation was made recently to the museum by Frank Brainerd of Englewood, Colorado, a descendant of Frank Brainerd, secretary-treasurer of the Brainerd Quarry Co. in 1894. Mr. Brainerd sent some interesting family papers found in his attic. Several of the news articles refer to the three-masted schooner "Frank Brainerd" which though not built in Portland, carried brownstone from the Portland quarries for a number of years before moving to the Caribbean for other work, when the quarry business slowed.

Items in the donation include: 2 photos of the Frank Brainerd (see above), Log of the schooner Frank Brainerd, Newspaper articles: "Frank Brainerd off for Cape Verdes", "New Bedford Schooner lost off Bermuda", "Portland 'Old Salt' recalls lost ship", "New York Herald Tribune - Source of the Brownstone Front"; original deed to Diggins property, bill of sale for slave Kitt aged 49 years old, right of dower to Betsy Gillum, probate for District of Chatham - Welles Diggins, Tales of an Old Sailing Master.

Another Way to Visit the Museum

Here is an opportunity to view in detail our exhibits, and meet old friends and new. Anyone wishing to serve as a Docent during a few hours each month when we are open may contact Gene Sullivan at 342-0306 for instruction and orientation. It is fun to do and we really need the help!

Civilian Conservation Corps Camps Presentation

Author and historian Marty Podskoch of Colchester will speak on the History, Lore & Legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camps in Connecticut. One of the CCC camps was in Portland on Great Hill Road at the present site of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection in the Meshomasic State Forest.

The CCC began on March 31, 1933 under President Roosevelt's "New Deal" to relieve the poverty and unemployment of the Depression. Camps were set up in many Connecticut towns, state parks & forests. Workers built trails, roads, campsites, & dams, stocked fish, built & maintained fire tower observer's cabins & telephone lines, fought fires, & planted millions of trees. The CCC disbanded in 1942 due to the need for men in WWII.

Presently, Podskoch is conducting research on the CCC in the Adirondacks and Connecticut. He is keenly interested in meeting individuals who may have CCC stories to contribute to his next book.

Look for this interesting program Tuesday, September 30 following the Society's regular membership meeting at 7:30 p.m. in the Mary Flood Room at the Portland Library.



MEMBERSHIP - Bill Frisbie, 860-342-0303

Recent additions to the membership rolls have been:

Individual

Nancy Spooner
Denise Kateley
Dorothy Ahlberg
Loraine B. Taylor

William, Connie & Nancy
McBrien

Life

Joan Stettbacher, PhD
Donald Goodrich

Family

Faith Fraulino Family
Dr. Joseph & Estelle Epstein

Business

Angela's Fine Jewelry

PORTLAND HISTORY . . .



Aerial View of the Nick Nelson Farm, 1949
Front buildings, L to R: House, Barn, Icehouse/Milk room
Rear buildings: Goodrich Farm Tobacco Barns

“Where Did All The Portland Farms Go?”

The exhibit of Portland Farms photographs, artifacts and histories continues at the Callander Museum through December of 2008. This collection now includes 31 farms and the present working list includes 20 others being researched. Sue Anderson has reached out to townspeople and others to collect and document this important part of early town life. We have been very pleased that so many farmers, their descendants and friends have been willing to give time to sharing memories, photographs, and artifacts so that we all might better understand their lives on the farms.

The collection of farms to date covers farms established as early as 1700 and includes 6 farms still in operation. All were both for family use and sold products, often called a “cash crop”. There are 15 dairy farms, 8 tobacco farms, 3 poultry farms, 19 with mixed production and 6 other farms specializing in a specific product; for example, horses, oxen or potatoes. Soon to be added are several local Christmas tree farms. Acreage for all the farms ranges from 10 acres for a poultry farm to 1500 acres in tobacco.

All materials have been inventoried in the museum’s collection and we hope to compile a book to be released in late 2009. Portland Farms are also featured in our 2009 calendar. A map of the general location of the farms in the exhibit is shown on the following pages.

Right: *Ella Hulten feeding flock of chickens at Charles Larson’s Wheeler Farm, circa 1920*

First Street Lights in Town

From Portland, Connecticut: 125 years of Incorporation, compiled by William J. Van Beynum

“1891: Town agrees on September 12th with Portland Electric Company to supply 19 arc street lights and 10 incandescent lights to be on after sunset to midnight on certain nights of the week. Last payments made for this in 1894.”

Seth Overton* Mystery

A message from Doris Sherrow-Heidenis: In 1995, Gail Mason, direct descendant of Seth Overton, said “when she was young, she and her mother visited with a distant cousin who resided in one of the “Seth Overton” houses in Portland where a portrait, said to be of Seth Overton, Sr. was hanging on the wall.” Doris has determined that the original Overton house was demolished in 1906 (built in 1770). Can anyone identify the house or where the painting went?

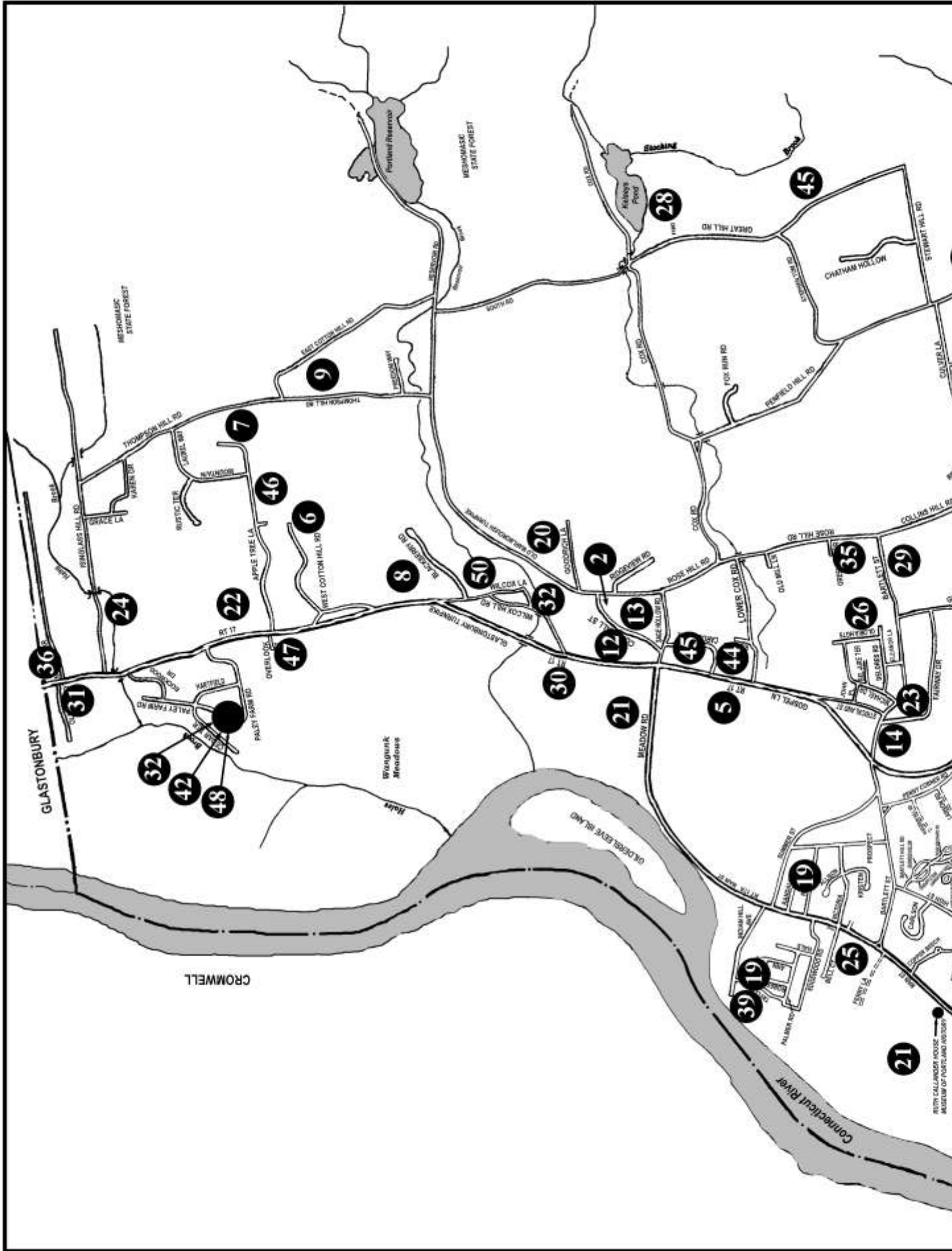
*During the Revolutionary War, Seth Overton was a Procurement General for the Army.

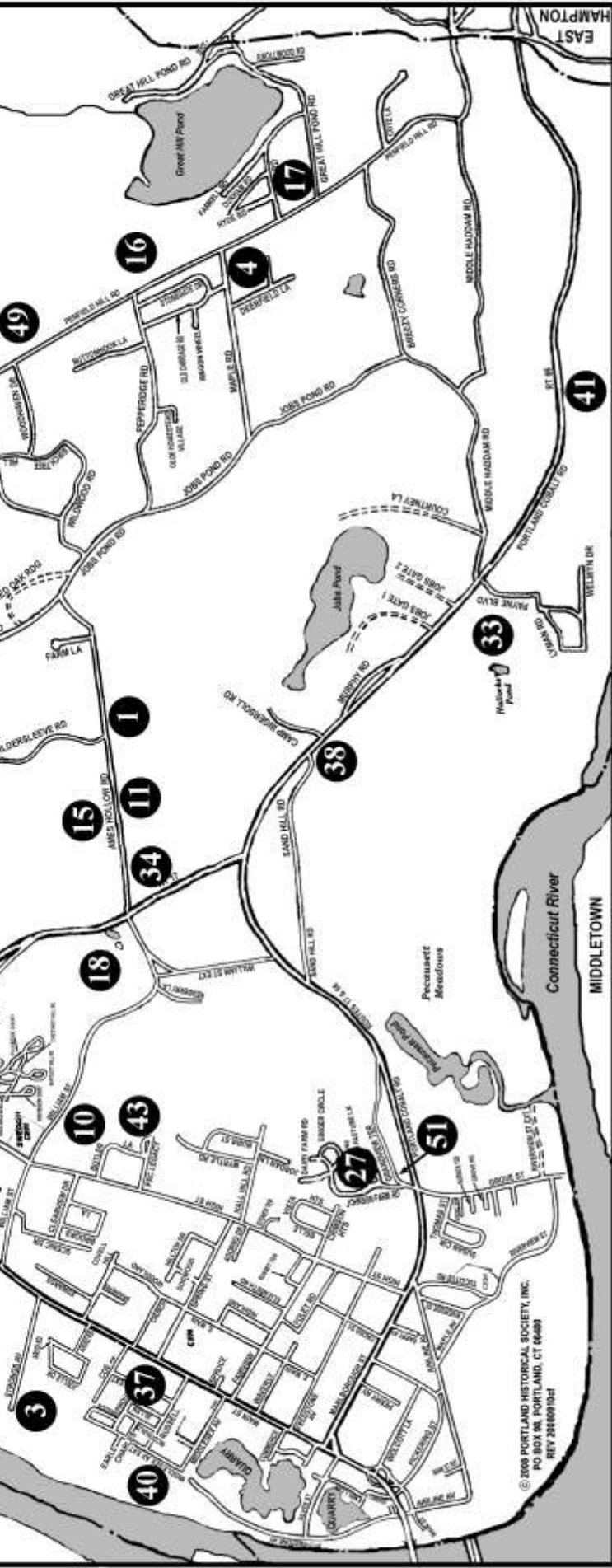
Mystery Scarf Donation

Can you help with this mystery? An embroidered silk scarf was recently donated by the Rocky Hill Historical Society. It was found in the attic of Priscilla Hick Kershaw and the maker, whose initials were L.E.H., embroidered “Portland, Conn. July 9th, 1900” on it’s border. There are many names embroidered on the scarf, some with designations such as “Wesleyan ‘99”, “NBSNS-94” ,or “PHS 1900” following the name. The occasion which prompted this group to sign the scarf is unknown. It will be on display and we hope our visitors and members might help solve this mystery!



“WHERE DID PORTLAND’S FARMS GO?” EXHIBIT





Locations of Portland Farms (approximate)

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| 1 Ames Farm (George & Will) | 18 Gilbert - Double G Alpaca Farm (George & Carol) | 35 Peterson Farm (Linus & Alma) |
| 2 Anderson Poultry Farm (John V.) | 19 Gildersleeve Farm (Ferdinand)* | 36 Pratt Farm (Harry) |
| 3 Anderson - Blague Dairy Farm (Arvid) | 20 Goodrich Farm (Howard) | 37 Prout's Dairy Farm |
| 4 Barrows Farm (Roy) | 21 Goodrich Tobacco Farm* | 38 Quarrytown Stables (Johnson) |
| 5 Bengston Farm (Charles & Oscar) | 22 Gotta's Farm | 39 Repozo's Farm (Joe) |
| 6 Bordonaro Farm | 23 Hale Dairy Farm (Doc) | 40 Ruitto Dairy Farm (Joseph) |
| 7 Case Farm (Myron) | 24 Hale Farm (Watson B.) | 41 Seiferman - Riverdale Farm |
| 8 Cavanaugh Farm (John) | 25 Hale Tobacco Farm | 42 Shepard Tobacco Farm (Nelson & Andrew) |
| 9 Chiabro Tobacco Farm (Eddie & Joe) | 26 Johnson Tobacco Farm (Per) | 43 Stemmler Farm (Joseph Henry) |
| 10 Clark Potato Farm (Walter & Lucie) | 27 Johnson - Grandview Farms (Charles) | 44 Stocking Farm |
| 11 Clark's Farm (Fred & Nellie) | 28 Kelsey Farm (Dan & Will) | 45 Strickland Egg Farm* |
| 12 Cornwall Farm (Fred) | 29 Larson - Wheeler's Farm (Charles) | 46 Walden Farm (Eddie) |
| 13 Cornwall Farm (Ira) | 30 Nelson Farm (Nick) | 47 Walker Farm (Charles) |
| 14 DeBari Farm (Francis) | 31 Ottone Farm (Lawrence) | 48 Wannerstrom Farm |
| 15 Dombrowski Farm (Joseph) | 32 Paley Brothers Farm* | 49 Wetzel - Storm Hill Farm (Rudi) |
| 16 Dunham Farm (Daniel & George) | 33 Payne Farms | 50 Wilcox Farm (George) |
| 17 Farrell, Will | 34 Penfield Farm | 51 Witkowski Farm |

General locations of farms in research to date. Other farms may be located and researched in future. *Multiple locations.



NEW . . .

2009 Portland Heritage Calendar

The 2009 Calendar, "*The Farms of Portland... Family Farms from Portland's past and present*", is based on this year's popular Museum exhibit. It will be available at the Portland Agricultural Fair, October 10-12. Our Calendar Editor, Bob McDougall, and his committee were severely challenged to pick just a few photos from such a large farm photograph collection. It may require several more years to cover all the great farms.

Portland Scenes Tile and Mug

Sue Anderson, our Ways and Means chair, has found two new interesting products that will be perfect for holiday giving. The hand painted tile and mug with Portland scenes are created by Nancy Paine in her Simsbury, Connecticut studio. She is recognized throughout New England as an artist whose main mediums are watercolor and acrylics. She has been classically trained in art and art history at the University of Hartford. Her work can be seen in many fine galleries and stores. Tile - \$12, Mug - \$9.50; call Sue at 860-342-0433 to order today!



Report of the Bylaws Committee

In December of 2007 the Executive Board created a list of questions to be addressed by a bylaws revision. The bylaws of the Society had not been reviewed since 1993 and changes to the organization and its operation necessitated a long look at our operating procedures.

A committee was formed made up of Joan Guilmette, Bob McDougall, Claire Frisbie and Martha Lutecki who met through the winter and spring, and finally presented a completed document which addressed the questions at hand in May 2008. The Executive Board considered and approved the bylaws in June 2008 and now these completed bylaws will be presented to the membership at the September meeting of the society, to be voted on at a subsequent meeting. Below are the questions addressed and changes implemented.

1. Process for Artifact Collections Management - the formation of a Museum Collections Board for oversight.
2. Leadership Development - Improve reporting and documentation of board and committee functions, add position of 2nd vice president.
3. Leadership Retention - Creation of a Board of Trustees made up of members with long term involvement, past Society board membership to perform oversight, long term planning and advisory function.
4. Committee Chairs board involvement - improve reporting, documentation and involve in board and trustee positions.
5. Board attendance - Executive members with excessive unexcused absences shall be replaced.
6. Documentation and Communication- create Recording and Corresponding Secretary positions to improve documentation, distribution, and reporting; require meeting minutes, annual reports.
7. Monthly membership meetings - changes made to reflect the actual function of Society.
8. Finance and Budget Board - **clarification of member's functions, relationship to Executive Board and terms.**
9. Clarification of certain words and of the Purpose statement of the Society to reflect actual function.

Copies at September 30 membership meeting or contact Claire Frisbie at 860-342-0303 or portlandhistsoc@yahoo.com.

CALENDAR

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

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 - "Slavery in Connecticut" Program by Patricia Trapp

November 2 - Portland Farms Exhibit - Museum open 2-4 pm

November 11 - Annual Meeting and Potluck Supper
- Hemlock Grange - 6 pm

December 7 } **"Christmas on the Farm"**
December 14 } **Museum Holiday Exhibit**
December 21 } **with our historic model trains**
December 28 } **2-4 pm**



Roy Barrows Farm - Jan on Old Sam

NEWSLETTER - Phyllis, Bill and Claire Frisbie, 9-19-08

Newsletter!

James Elder
Pat Crowther
George Law

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Joan Guilmette
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2008

SOCIETY OFFICERS



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