



PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 98, Portland, CT 06480

JANUARY 2012 NEWSLETTER

Ruth Callander House Museum, 492 Main St., Portland, CT 06480, Tel: 860-342-5455
www.PortlandHistSoc.Org

YEAR IN REVIEW

It's time to renew your membership for 2012 and we want to remind you of the exciting year this all-volunteer group had in 2011.

⇒ The Board of Trustees has continued to work on a **long term plan** for the Society's future.

⇒ The Collections Board has investigated collections policies of similar societies and continues to draft a policy to guide us in **collecting and preserving** what is important about Portland.



Kaeren Enright autographs her book, Quarry Story: A History of the Brownstone Quarries of Portland, CT, for Lillian and Joanne Wimler.

⇒ The **Exhibits** Committee has curated several special exhibits at the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History including:

"Quilts, Civil War, and the Gildersleeves"

"Precious Pieces of Portland"

"Vintage Christmas Toys"



After their tour of the Museum, third-graders viewed their "coins" artwork on display as "Precious Pieces of Portland."



⇒ The Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History participated in Connecticut's **Open House Day**.

⇒ The Society **collaborated with the 3rd grade classes** at Gildersleeve School in their studies of local history by sponsoring the *"Precious Pieces of Portland"* contest with a special art show opening of their 107 coin designs and class tours at the museum.

(continued on page two)

Pat and Eleanor Crowther display their football viewing attire during "Fashion Through the Years."



Bob McDougall and Linda Cunningham entertain while visitors view the Society's "Vintage Christmas Toys."

YEAR IN REVIEW (continued from page one)

⇒ The **Tag Sale** Committee conducted our *15th Annual Town-Wide Tag Sale* the Saturday before Mother's Day with 128 tag sales on the map.

⇒ The successful **fall fundraiser**, *Fashion Through the Years*, a runway show and tea was co-sponsored with Zion Lutheran Church.

⇒ A variety of **interesting programs** were presented at the Society's monthly meetings including:

- ◆ **Jennifer Vernali Crutchfield**, society volunteer, presented "*A Historical Sketch of Public Education in Portland, CT*" based on the Master's thesis of that title by John J. McCormick.

- ◆ **Connecticut author L.S. Johnson** presented her book *Fashionable First Ladies* to encourage interest in October's *Fashion Through the Years* runway show and tea.

- ◆ **Godfrey Library** volunteer and Portland resident **Bruce Tyler** presented program "*Who Do You Think You Are?*" - an overview of resources available to family history researchers.

- ◆ **Portland historian Jim Sarbaugh and Wangunk expert Tim Ives'** program on "*Wangunk and English Encounters*" in southern New England.

- ◆ Middletown native and Connecticut's first "*Official State Troubadour*," **Tom Callinan** shared his repertoire of folk and popular songs from various times and places including original songs that he performed at the dedication of Civil War monuments.

- ◆ **Connecticut actress Kandie Carle's** humorous and anecdotal comments about the clothing of the Civil War era as well as the lifestyle, manners, etiquette and customs of the time period.

⇒ The Society's Callander Cupboard offers **two new porcelain ornaments** featuring paintings of the Arrigoni Bridge and the Civil War monument by Connecticut artist **Nancy Paine** and **new books** by local authors **Kearen Enright and Frank Winiski**.



Visitors from China toured the Museum with Elaine and Dick Carella, in October.



"Vintage Christmas Toys" exhibit included wooden horse drawn toys, metal cars and Lionel trains along with many other toys ranging from 1890 to 1980.

*Antique Cars were displayed at
"Fashion Through the Years".*

YEAR IN REVIEW (continued)

⇒ The Publicity Committee has published our **news** of Society activities and interesting history tidbits about Portland.

⇒ The **Historic Sites** Committee researches, documents and informs townspeople and others, about historic places and buildings in Portland.

⇒ The Ruth Callander **House Committee** made repairs to the furnace installation and alarm systems to protect against future flooding. Exterior repairs to buildings have been ongoing.

⇒ The **Museum Committee** continues to accept, document and catalog *donated materials*. Volunteers are working through materials donated by the schools and proofreading newly digitized materials.



Books containing records of the One-room Schoolhouses are included in materials presently being reviewed for addition to the Museum's collection.

We have appreciated your support in the past and hope that you will renew your membership now so that we can continue to deliver the quality and variety of programs and events that you are accustomed to enjoying from the Society. Please use the form on page 6 and the enclosed envelope to send in your membership dues. If there is a "pet"/special project related to Portland history that you would like to pursue, let us know what it is...maybe we can help.

Please join us to support and play a part in the preservation of Portland's rich and diverse past.



The Gildersleeve Album Quilt from the Museum's collection was on display during the "Quilts, Civil War, and the Gildersleeves" exhibit.

Coming Events

We need your help to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Girl Scouts. Do you have photos or items to lend for our Scouting exhibit opening in March? Photos can be scanned and returned; other items would be displayed through June. Call Deb or Claire.

Participate in our new Wreath Festival coming December 2012. Groups and individuals will be invited to and donate wreaths for the fund-raising event. More information to come, or call Deb.

Come be part of preserving Portland's history. To volunteer, please call Deb at 860-342-1927 or Claire at 860-335-8581.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

With never a dull moment, 2011 came to a close for the Portland Historical Society. I hope you all had a chance to view our holiday exhibit, "**Vintage Christmas Toys.**" We would like to thank the local residents who loaned us toys from their personal collections — David Finkelstein, Jim Waller, Maria DeMarest, Marie Keser, Gene Sullivan, Eileen Marino, and the following families: the Woltmanns, the Frisbies and the Ellsworths. Along with toys from the Society's collection, these personal toys brought a new look to our exhibit, allowing us to show childhood memories from the 1800's to the 1980's.



Third-graders listen to the history of Portland during their tour of the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History.

Our collaborative project with the third graders of Gildersleeve School, "**Precious Pieces of Portland,**" was a huge success with a very well attended opening on November 13. The third graders continued their study of Portland's past during class tours at the museum on November 15 and 21 with docents Claire Frisbie, Eileen Marino, Chris Sullivan and Deb Ellsworth. They asked great questions and showed enthusiastic interest in their hometown. Many thanks to Colleen Brede who coordinated this project.

The "**Fashions Through the Years**" runway show and tea co-sponsored by the Zion Lutheran Church and the Portland Historical Society was a rousing success. Attendees young and old enjoyed fashions celebrating over 150 years of fine clothing, along with exhibits and homemade refreshments. Financially, it was a success for both groups and many thanks go to Susanne Anderson and her committees, the models and the makers of all those delicious desserts.

Plans are underway for **2012 fundraising.** This will be Town-Wide Tag Sale #16! And new this year, the Society is planning a Festival of Wreaths for early next December. Watch RiverEast for meeting dates. If you are interested in helping out on these events, call Deb at 860-342-1927.

If it's January, it's time to **renew your membership.** I hope that you will renew now — remember that your dues will enable us to continue our work — to collect, preserve and share the rich history of this town. A membership envelope and form are included with this mailing.

I would like to extend my **thanks** to our Executive Board, our Trustees, our Collections Board, our Financial Board, our committees and volunteers who helped make 2011 such a busy year. New volunteers with a little time or a lot of time are always welcome to work on special projects. Let us know your interests by calling me at 860-342-1927, sending us an email at PortlandHistSoc@Yahoo.com. or writing a note with your membership renewal.

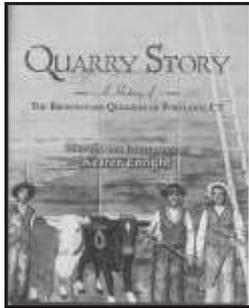
Finally, at this month's membership meeting on Tuesday, January 24, we will recognize the people who served as **docents** at the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History in 2011. It will also be our **annual meeting** complete with election of officers, recognition of Executive Board members who have completed their terms, Bob McDougall's pictorial review of 2011 and refreshments. Please plan to join us at 7:30 pm in the Mary Flood Room of the Portland Library.

Wishing you all a very Happy and Healthy New Year,
Deb Ellsworth

Mallory Perruccio models a 1930's era dress during "Fashion Through the Years."



FROM THE CALLANDER HOUSE CUPBOARD



QUARRY STORY
A History of the Brownstone Quarries
 Children's book
 Written & illustrated by
 Kearen Enright
 \$12.95

PORTLAND SCENES TILE & MUG
 Hand painted by Connecticut Artist
 Tile \$12 Mug \$9.50

2 NEW ORNAMENTS
 Civil War Mnmt. & Arrigoni Bridge;
 + Brainerd House & Central School
 Now all \$10/each



THE BROWNSTONE QUARRIES OF PORTLAND, CT
 Book of Photographs
 by Frank Winiski
 \$35

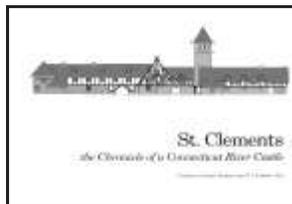


PORTLAND RECIPES & REFLECTIONS
 A wonderful collection of recipe favorites of 100 Society members & friends. \$8.



IMAGES PORTLAND
 Robert McDougall
 128 pages of history in photos of Portland. \$20

ST. CLEMENTS
 Chronicle of a Connecticut River Castle.
 by Prudence Taylor and T.J. Palmer. \$15.



LETTERS TO HARRY
 A vivid picture of life in the 1870's by Prudence Taylor & T.J. Palmer. Hardcover \$25.



COLORING & ACTIVITY BOOK OF PORTLAND HISTORY
 By Sue Anderson.
 56 Pages. Great gift for ages 3 to 9. \$3.50



Decorative **LINEN TEA TOWEL**
 Portland Scenes in maroon and white
 \$5 (Towels have a rod pocket for easy hanging.)

EIGHT ANTIQUE PHOTO POSTCARDS (VIEWS CIRCA 1900)
 1 Main St toward River
 2 Main St looking West
 3 Soldiers Monument
 4 Trinity Cemetery Font
 5 Engine House #1
 6 Town Hall/Buck Library
 7 Trinity Church
 8 Nathaniel White House
 \$.75 ea or 3 for \$1
 Great for Class Reunion favors or announcements

Sorry,
 No "2012"
 Calendar

PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY PENS \$2/ each
PORTLAND NOTEPADS
 50 pgs - 5 Town Scenes, 2 pads/\$3.



Mail order: Portland Historical Society, Inc.
 P. O. Box 98
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 Make checks payable to:
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Phone order: Call Deb Ellsworth at 860-342-1927.
 Will deliver locally at no extra charge.
 Purchases support Society projects.

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The Portland Historical Society, Inc. Membership Form

For new or renewal membership to the Portland Historical Society, please print, complete, and return this form by **March 1** with your check made payable to Portland Historical Society, Inc. Mail to Portland Historical Society, Inc., Membership, PO Box 98, Portland, CT 06480-0098.

Adult Member: _____

Adult Member: _____

Home Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Member 18 and under: _____ age/grade

Member 18 and under: _____ age/grade

Member 18 and under: _____ age/grade

I would like to receive my newsletter and event notices: In the mail Via Email

Membership Category:

Please circle one: New Member Renewal Gift

- Student (18 and under)..... \$10.00
- Senior (60+)..... \$10.00
- Individual \$15.00
- Family..... \$25.00
- Business Sponsor \$50.00
- Patron..... \$100.00
- Individual Lifetime Member..... \$400.00

Included is a donation to the Callander House Endowment Fund for \$ _____

I would be interested in volunteering in the following areas:

- Fundraisers
- Refreshments
- Annual Tag Sale
- Bake Sale
- Docent Duty
- Yard Work
- Exhibits

**The Middletown Press, Monday, Sept. 22, 1941
GILDERSLEEVE HAS ITS FIRST MAYOR**

Peary, Radio Character, Honored by Centennial Committee in Portland

On September 19, 1941 Hal Peary (pronounced "Perry") received an invitation to attend Portland's Centennial that month--he had been declared the Mayor of Gildersleeve! Peary played "Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve" --"The Great Gildersleeve"-- on a popular radio show. He had started out playing Gildersleeve, steward of a lingerie factory, on the Fibber McGee & Molly show in 1938, and in the first "spin-off" known to Wikipedia, he was invited to do his own show, *The Great Gildersleeve*, beginning August 31, 1941.

Peary declined the invitation, however, because flying in from Hollywood was a bit pricey. But he did telegraph back and forth with Joseph Bransfield, the Centennial Committee chairman.

On Friday, September 19th, Bransfield had telegraphed him: "And, whereas the first Gildersleeves built the fleet which helped win the war of 1812 and "The Great Gildersleeve" of the modern airways is building happiness for the American people: We, the centennial committee, do solemnly declare and hereby appoint "The Great Gildersleeve" honorary

Mayor of the village of Gildersleeve in the town of Portland, State of Connecticut."

Peary's show aired on Sunday nights; that Sunday, he began the show with a reading of Bransfield's invitation and his own appreciation with the response: "They say the first hundred years is the hardest. Well, here's hoping the second hundred will be easier."

But that wasn't enough. Peary went on to draft up a longer answer for the telegram folks to deliver: "General Chairman Joseph P. Bransfield, Portland centennial committee, Congratulations to Portland and Gildersleeve on 100th birthday and deep appreciation for honor bestowed upon me as honorary mayor. I do hereby decree that all schools and offices be closed today; that church bells be rung and all citizens spend the day in rest and prayer and that special dinners be prepared in all homes. Tomorrow (Monday), business as usual. Your gracious wire will be read at end of our program today which is dedicated to the citizens of Gildersleeve. Best wishes for your next 100 years. Harold Throckmorton, Mayor of Gildersleeve Peary."



2011 Precious Pieces of Portland Exhibit

The artwork of the third graders of Gildersleeve School was featured at the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History during the November opening. During October the students studied Portland history, took a bus tour of Portland landmarks and a walk with local hiker, John LeShane. Each student then chose an important part of Portland's past or present to illustrate on a coin design. This year's *Precious Pieces of Portland* contest winners are (back row left to right) TJ Reddington (third place), Jazmin Lesane (second place), Lily Pelton (first place); (front row left to right) Bryce Wiekrykas (honorable mention), Damon Carabetta (honorable mention), Brandon Masal (honorable mention).

2012 CALENDAR

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

Jan 24 - Society Annual Meeting, awards and elections.

Feb 5 - Museum closed for display changes.

Feb 15 - Town Wide Tag Sale Planning Meeting - Museum 7 pm.

Feb 28 - "They Called Me Lizzy - from Slavery to the White House"
Kandie Carle dresses as, and recounts the life of Elizabeth Keckly working for Mary Todd Lincoln.

**Mar 4, Apr 8, May 6 - Scouting in Portland through the Years
Portland Exhibit - Museum open 2-4 pm**

Mar 27 - "Scouting in Portland" - Scout leaders from past & present share memories and stories with audience participation, come and share! - Portland Senior Center at 7:30 pm

Apr 24 - "Norman Rockwell's America" - Gordon Williams presents examples of Rockwell's sense of humor as well as glimpses of darker issues and social problems addressed by Rockwell in his illustrations.

May 22 - "Aerial Photography of the Connecticut River Valley"
by Tom Walsh from Shoreline Aerial Photography, LLC shows many views of the valley towns during different seasons.



Caitlin tries out the tractor while helping set up the Vintage Toys exhibit.

NEWSLETTER - Claire & Phyllis Frisbie, 1-18-12, 860-335-8581

Jan. 2012 Newsletter

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