



PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 98, Portland, CT 06480

SEPTEMBER 2012 NEWSLETTER

Ruth Callander House Museum, 492 Main St., Portland, CT 06480, Tel: 860-342-5455
[www. PortlandHistSoc.Org](http://www.PortlandHistSoc.Org) <http://www.facebook.com/PortlandHistSoc>

President's Letter

Summer 2012 is almost finished — it certainly was a hot and humid one. Despite the weather, the **Portland Garden Club** has kept the Betty Keser Scott Garden looking glorious. We would like to thank them for their loving care of that space that was dedicated in June 2003. Many thanks to Garden Club member Donna Rini who gave a noon time talk about the garden during our special opening for CT Open House Day on Saturday, June 9. It was only shortened by a sudden downpour!

In June, the **Executive Board** accepted the **Five-Year Plan** that was written by the Trustees after two years of work and guidance from a consultant, John Monroe. The plan gives the Society a framework as we move towards our 40th Anniversary in 2013 and Portland's 175th in 2016. The **Collections Board** has made significant progress drafting their policy and hopes to finalize it before the new year.

June's Ice Cream Social was enjoyed by many! Featuring ice cream sundaes with homemade hot fudge sauce, fresh berries and real whipped cream, and barbershop tunes, the night was a hit. The **2012 recipients of the William J. Van Beynum Award** — the Portland Veterans Commission, Colleen Brede, Vivian and Walter Dower, Michael Gambaccini and Bob McDougall — were our special guests. Our **fall program season** will begin on Tuesday, September 25 at the Portland Library, see *Calendar* on the back page of this newsletter for details and watch the *Rivereast News Bulletin* for future programs.

The Society has received two matching grants — a **Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grant from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation and a 1772 Foundation Grant** — thanks to the grant writing of Vice President Claire Frisbie. The grants will assist us in our project to restore and preserve the Ruth Callander House.



The Betty Keser Scott Garden at the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History.

The **Portland Agricultural Fair** will be the weekend of **October 12 -14!** The Historical Society will have a booth featuring school photos — old and new — from Portland's public schools and from St. Mary's school. George Gilbert has been working to collect and identify photos from St. Mary's families but we are still looking for several classes from the 1960's. We have also received school photos from Luva Baker Hoar, a retired Portland school teacher. Be sure to stop by our booth and look for yourself in these photos. And it's never too late to bring us school pictures. **Volunteers** are needed to be with our display. If you can volunteer a couple of hours on Friday night, Saturday or Sunday, please call Regina at 860-342-3092.

On Saturday, December 1 and Sunday, December 2, the Historical Society will be sponsoring a **"Festival of Wreaths"** in the carriage barn at 329 Main Street. Help us create this new holiday event in Portland. For more information, see the article on page 5 or check our website www.PortlandHistSoc.org.

Check out the Mattatuck Museum in Waterbury with their new exhibit, including a loan from the Society. See **WPA Artists** on page 2.

See you at the Fair! *Deborah Ellsworth*

*In loving memory of Historical Society members
and supporters who passed away recently.
We apologize if we have missed anyone and ask you to please
contact us if we have not listed a loved one
who was one of our supporters.*

Mary Bransfield
Barbara Binnington
Lloyd Erskine
Mary Klemba
Joseph Lynch

Stuart & Janet Mitchell
Ellen Roman
Sari Rosenbaum
Edward Rousseau
Ann Gildersleeve Sloan

NOTES . . .

WPA Artists

Included in a new exhibit, **Art for Everyone: The Federal Art Project in Connecticut**, at the Mattatuck Museum in Waterbury, are two watercolors by WPA artist Harold Barbour. Donated to the Society by Elsie Hale, the paintings depict tobacco workers on Portland farms. The exhibit runs from September 14, 2012 to February 5, 2013. From the early 1930s to the outbreak of World War II, the federal government invested substantial funds in back-to-work programs, including work projects in the arts. In this state, 165 Connecticut artists created more than 5,000 pieces of art. The Mattatuck, located at 144 West Main Street, Waterbury, is open Tuesday - Saturday 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. and Sundays 12 noon - 5:00 p.m. For directions and more information see <http://www.mattatuckmuseum.org/visitmattatuck>.

Saving Portland in Pictures

One of our objectives is to visually record Portland's past. It's not just the past of the Wangunks, the quarry workers and shipbuilders but also the Portland of folks living here today. With that in mind, we are looking for photos that will allow us to create a continuous, chronological record of important events in your life, public events and even particular trends. Recently, a packet of photos arrived from Marilyn Hale Brooks. They document some of the teens who worked on the Hale tobacco farm in the 1950's. That was a trend in those days — working on the farms during the summer. These photos will be at the fair and at our October 7 opening. If you think you might be able to identify someone, please come and take a look. There's a wonderful photo taken of a group of ladies at the Portland Fair circa 1900 wearing their long dresses and hats. Do you have fair photos from when you were a kid? Does anyone else remember Clarabell the clown at our fair? Every year that we take school photos to the fair, people tell us how much they enjoy them. That is why we have been

working recently with St. Mary's to photographically document their students. We have digitized many Portland High yearbooks and class trip photos but we are always looking for more and now are ready to actively solicit the photos of more recent generations. By loaning us your photos to digitize, you help us continue the tradition of visually recording the times. Who doesn't like looking at a wonderful photo? Bring us your photos from the 50's up to yesterday. Contact Deb 342-1927 or email us at PortlandHist-Soc@Yahoo.com.



Winter and Holiday Photos

The exhibit committee is looking for **winter and holiday photos** from you! Remember those snowstorms from the 50's and 60's? Or earlier! Or even just two years ago? What did your holiday tree look like when you were a kid? Did you skate in the meadows or at the cranberry bog? Did you slide down Covell Hill? We're looking for winter scenes as well as photos of families. Did you all dress in your new sweaters and take a photo? Or pose with your new train set or Chatty Cathy? Somebody must have some great black and white or color photos of the river covered with ice and huge snow drifts on the local roads. We can scan your photos and return them to you before you even miss them. Bring them to our opening on Sunday, October 7 or call Deb 860-342-1927 and we can make other arrangements.



Recently this past late-August, I awoke to “carpenter noises” at the building across Indian Hill Avenue from me, Portland Floor & Wall Covering at 646 Main Street. The owner, Jeff Gates, had a fellow over to work on the Indian Hill Avenue garage door, and that fellow was holding up a large board to the area over the door, as if the only 21st century “cure” would be to re-frame the door as an ordinary rectangle! It was a gentle arch, worked in brick but wide enough for Jeff to drive his van into it. But some of that older brick may have been crashing on Jeff’s van--or on his head!

This building was built in...well, I don’t know exactly when it was built. In 1982 or -83, Jim Gildersleeve (1912-1985) told me that he had a letter from Sylvester Gildersleeve (1795-1886) to his son Ferdinand, who was away at boarding school in Colchester, saying something like, “You will be surprised by the new store when you come home from school!” Ferdinand had been born in 1840, so he would have been high school age--14 to 18--in 1854 to 1858. So that would be a reasonable guess for the construction date of the building--1854 to 1858.

Jeff has taken very, very good care of this tremendous artifact since he bought it in the mid-1970s. So, as distressed as I was to think that the gently rounded arch might be going the way of the dodo bird, I understood.

But they continued to fiddle with the doorway, and the next time I looked out, there were bricks removed from the arch, but gently arching woodwork in place to likely restore it!

Because I’m lucky enough to be living in the “Electronic Everything Age”--I went online to try to figure out arch information. It seems Jeff is the proud possessor of a Three Center, or “Basket Handle” Arch. The explanation for building (or preserving) one of these things is available online, but it requires a certain familiarity with geometry, and I was a Psych major. Suffice it to say that two smaller circles are placed within a larger circle, and various lines traced out, to form an arch which--well, it’s held up those center bricks for quite a while.

But bricks crumble, and these were doing that. So another arch, just as “Basket Handle”-like as its predecessor, has appeared on the Indian-Hill-Avenue side of 646 Main Street. *Doris Sherrow-Heidenis*



The ca. 1855 doorway on the north side of 646 Main Street--wide enough to accommodate wagons back in the day! The wooden piece going straight across the doorway forms a SUPPORT holding up the Basket Handle Arch above it, while it sets. This brickwork was done by Mark F. DeFrancesco. Photo by Kerry Heidenis (husband of Doris) at kerry.images@gmail.com

Collections Storage

Members of the Collections Board visited the Stor-U-Self Storage - Portland facility at 127 Main St. recently to see about possibly renting a space to alleviate crowding at the Callander House. Instead of renting, we were invited to share a space with Trinity Church that the storage facility donates to non-profits. The 10’ X 20’ space presently stores some pews and other things for the church, but there is still ample space for the Society to store pieces of the collection that would benefit from a climate controlled environment. We hope to start utilizing the space later in September. Many thanks to Stor-U-Self Storage - Portland for their generosity and to Trinity Church for sharing. *Collections Board*

Thoughts on Charitable Giving

Charitable giving can play an important role in many estate plans. Philanthropy cannot only give you great personal satisfaction, it can also give you a current income tax deduction, let you avoid capital gains tax, and reduce the amount of taxes your estate may owe when you die. There are many ways to give to charity. You can make gifts during your lifetime or at your death. You can make gifts outright or use a trust. You can name a charity as a beneficiary in your will, or designate a charity as a beneficiary of your retirement plan or life insurance policy. Or, if your gift is substantial, you can establish a private foundation, community foundation, or donor-advised fund.

Making outright gifts

An outright gift is one that benefits the charity immediately and exclusively. With an outright gift you get an immediate income and gift tax deduction. **Tip:** Make sure the charity is a qualified charity according to the IRS. Get a written receipt or keep a bank record for any cash donations, and get a written receipt for any property other than money.

Will or trust bequests and beneficiary designations

These gifts are made by including a provision in your will or trust document, or by using a beneficiary designation form. The charity receives the gift at your death, at which time your estate can take the income and estate tax deductions.

Charitable trusts

Another way for you to make charitable gifts is to create a charitable trust. You can name the charity as the sole beneficiary, or you can name a non-charitable beneficiary as well, splitting the beneficial interest (this is referred to as making a partial charitable gift). The most common types of trusts used to make partial gifts to charity are the charitable lead trust and the charitable remainder trust.

Private family foundation

A private family foundation is a separate legal entity that can endure for many generations after your death. You create the foundation then transfer assets to the foundation, which in turn makes grants to public charities. You and your descendants have complete control over which charities receive grants. But, unless you can contribute enough capital to generate funds for grants, the costs and complexities of a private foundation may not be worth it. **Tip:** One rule of thumb is that you should be able to donate enough assets to generate at least \$25,000 a year for grants.

Community foundation

If you want your dollars to be spent on improving the quality of life in a particular community, consider giving to a community foundation. Similar to a private foundation, a community foundation accepts donations from many sources, and is overseen by individuals familiar with the community's particular needs, and professionals skilled at running a charitable organization.

Donor-advised fund

Similar in some respects to a private foundation, a donor-advised fund offers an easier way for you to make a significant gift to charity over a long period of time. A donor-advised fund actually refers to an account that is held within a charitable organization. The charitable organization is a separate legal entity, but your account is not--it is merely a component of the charitable organization that holds the account. Once you transfer assets to the account, the charitable organization becomes the legal owner of the assets and has ultimate control over them. You can only advise--not direct--the charitable organization on how your contributions will be distributed to other charities.

Information from Broadridge Investor Communication Solutions



New Acquisitions

Wal and Hedy Jarvis of the Penfield Farm have donated an antique Penfield farm wagon to the Society's collection. Carl Johnson and Mike of the Town of Portland graciously delivered the wagon to its new home at the Ruth Callander Garage. Many thanks to the Jarvises and to the Town.



There's nothing like a wreath on the door to foster holiday cheer. The Society is looking for people who like decorating for the holidays. Our latest venture into fundraising will be a "Festival of Wreaths" on Saturday, December 1 and Sunday, December 2, in the carriage barn at 329 Main Street from noon to 4 p.m.

We are inviting individuals, businesses and organizations to donate a decorated wreath for this "tea cup" style raffle. Wreaths can be real or artificial, can be a size and shape of your choice and can even be made from other materials — shells, pinecones, scrapbook papers, candies. It can have a theme — snow, our outdoor friends — or be decorated to attract a particular audience — CDs, Legos or Princess items. A wreath can have a holiday appearance or a theme that may be perfect for a kitchen, a young child, an elderly neighbor or a teen in your life. A gift card or certificate for a service can be attached as part of your decoration. Your creativity is the only limit!

The wreaths will be presented as we host two days of Portland folks, young and old, gathering to see some great holiday decorations, enjoying something warm to drink and homemade cookies, making new acquaintances over laughter and holiday cheer! From noon to 4 pm on each day, you will be able to stop by and see the beautiful wreaths. If some of them attract your eye, look like a great hostess gift for an early holiday party or just what you want for your kitchen or front door, you can purchase tickets and take a chance on the wreaths you would like to take home. On Sunday, the winners will be pulled before the start of the Parade of Lights.



All proceeds from the "Festival" will be used to continue work on the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History and to fund educational projects for the community.

You can help us bring this new tradition to Portland by making a wreath for this fundraiser. Please contact Deb at 860-342-1927 to sign up or send an email to: PortlandHistSoc@Yahoo.com. Check our website for more information, decoration ideas, etc. www.PortlandHistSoc.org. *Ways & Means Committee*

Ruth Callander House Restoration

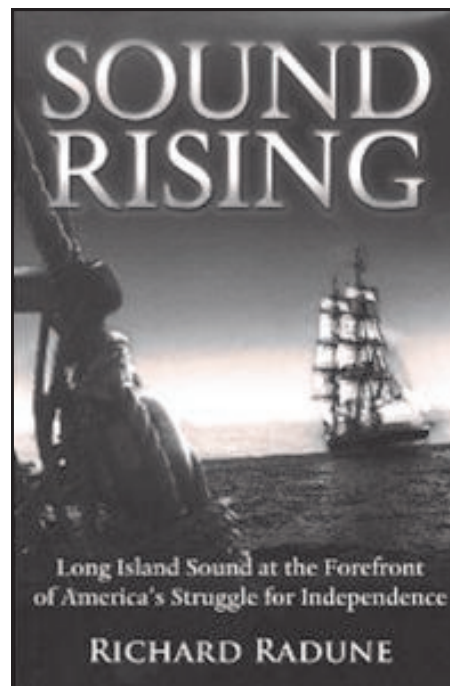
The Society is pleased to announce the receipt of a matching grant to assist in the restoration of the museum building, the c. 1714 White-Overton-Callander House.

The 1772 Foundation has awarded a matching grant to assist with the first stage of repairs expected in the Callander House restoration and preservation plan. The foundation, founded by the late Stewart B. Kean, provides financial support for targeted restoration and agricultural projects throughout the United States. During the next year, the Society will begin exterior work including surface preparation and painting, and foundation and chimney repair. *Ruth Callander House Committee*

2012 CALENDAR

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

- Sept 25** “Sound Rising” program by Richard Radune, author and historian - a dynamic presentation about maritime activity in Long Island Sound and Connecticut River between 1750 and 1820.
- Oct 7** **Portland History Exhibit** - Museum open 2-4 pm
- Oct 12-14** **Portland Agricultural Fair - Historical school photos & Portland display** - fairgrounds
- Oct 23** “The Great River: Art & Society of the Connecticut Valley” Program by Bill Hosley. Connecticut’s central valley was one of the major culture hearths of American civilization – blazing trails in art, architecture, technology, industry, agriculture, governance, religion and social reform.
- Nov 4** **Portland History Exhibit** - Museum open 2-4 pm
- Nov 13** **Potluck Dinner and Program** - Hemlock Grange - 6 pm
- Dec 1-2** **Historical Society Wreath Festival** - Sat and Sun, 12 - 4 pm at the carriage barn (behind Ameriprise) at 329 Main Street



NEWSLETTER - Claire Frisbie, 9-21-12, 860-335-8581

Sept. 2012 Newsletter

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