



PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P. O. Box 98, Portland, CT 06480
MARCH 2015 NEWSLETTER

Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History
492 Main St., Portland, CT 06480 Tel: 860-342-5455
www.PortlandHistSoc.com Email: PortlandHistSoc@yahoo.com

Vol 42 No 1

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Happy Spring! We enjoyed a special program in November celebrating the 300th anniversary of the Ruth Callander House (@1714-2014) and the recent achievement of National Historic Register listing to the house. An interesting presentation was given by Society board member, Claire Frisbie, covering the history, owners and building development of the Callander House. Claire led the process by which the National Register of Historic Places recognized and listed our house.

December brought our Festival of Wreaths with many beautiful and creative wreaths decorated by members and friends and some local businesses and organizations. Deb Ellsworth and Claire Frisbie did an outstanding job once again and we certainly appreciate all their hard work. In addition, the Museum was open for several Sundays in December with antique toys and memorabilia.

Our January Annual Meeting was postponed until February due to bad weather, so we met in February and enjoyed a review of the Society and the Town of Portland over the past year thanks to Bob McDougall, followed by a lecture and musical entertainment by Portland native, Joe Flood, who discussed his upcoming show. Joe, a singer, songwriter, and musician, will be presenting a multimedia concert tribute to three great songwriters from Middletown, Connecticut: Henry Clay Work (1832-1884), Reginald DeKoven (1859-1920), and Edward Barrett (1817-1914) on Sunday, April 12th, at 3 p.m. in the Middletown High School Auditorium. At the meeting, we also held our annual elections and welcomed our new Board Member, Alexia Belperron, and our new Trustee, Claire Frisbie.

Now that spring is in the air, we're very busy getting ready for our 19th Annual Town-Wide Tag Sale. We're always looking for extra helpers so please call us if you'd like to help out. I look forward to seeing many of you at our upcoming events.

Martha Lutecki

19th TOWN-WIDE TAG SALE

The Society's 19th Annual Town-Wide Tag Sale will be **Saturday, May 9**. *Sign-up deadline is Monday, April 27*. If you've been looking around your house and garage, wondering what to do with all "that stuff," maybe it's time for you to have a tag sale to create space, make money or just pass things on to others.

This town-wide event, publicized widely throughout the central CT area, is the Society's largest fundraiser of the year, and can be a fund-raiser for you, your family or your organization. Many organizations have invented creative methods of raising money while so many shoppers are visiting town from all over the state. You can support the Portland Historical Society with a small \$20 or \$25 donation and we will create a large map with all the sale locations and types of items to be found at each location. Non-profit organizations raising money get special highlights on the map. If you need a location, consider a sale at the Hemlock Grange parking lot. If you just want to donate items, the Society and other organizations will be collecting for their tag sales. **See page 7 for the Tag Sale sign-up form with all the details.**

(continued on page 3)



Janet Ellsworth, Ruth Freeburg, Alexia Belperron and Deb Ellsworth share a laugh during preparation for the 2014 Town-Wide Tag sale.

Thank You, Current Members and Donors

Annual memberships and donations are the backbone of our financial support. We depend on you to keep our mission of collecting, preserving and sharing Portland's history alive. The Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History and our member programs are visual reminders of your efforts. Thanks again.

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Annual Membership:

Student/Senior \$10,
Individual \$15, Family \$25,
Business \$50, Patron \$100

Individual **Life** \$400.

Send to:

Portland Historical Society,
PO Box 98,
Portland, CT 06480.

Contact Claire Frisbie at
860-335-8581 or
PortlandCTHistory
@gmail.com
for more information.

2015 Museum Exhibit - “Exploring Ruth’s Attic”

The focus of our museum exhibit for the next two years is our collection. We are calling this “Exploring Ruth’s Attic.” This will be the exploration and reorganization of our collection in order to make it as fully accessible as possible and in the best possible placement for preservation. The Portland Historical Society’s collection contains perhaps 20,000 items which require significant organizational review in order to be accessible for volunteers, research and exhibition. The Society’s Museum Committee’s target is to accomplish the first steps of this process over the next two years.

Goals of this process:

1. Reorganize the collection into two collections:
 1. Archive – all paper documents, books, photographs, and digital versions of paper documents,
 2. Museum – all other objects in the collection.
2. Label all items.
3. Update inventory.
4. Educate the Society and our public about what we collect and why.
5. Exhibit interesting pieces of the collection as we encounter them. Exhibit how we “collect, preserve and share”.
6. Identify items that do not fit our Collection policy.

Exhibit

To begin, we are taking several steps in the exhibit area:

1. The ground floor of the Ruth Callander House will be our main work area. The present “Portland History” exhibit, which includes cases and materials on brownstone quarries, minerals, tobacco farming, shipbuilding and Portland’s origins, will remain on display in the main exhibit room.
2. We are creating a “work space” in the main exhibit room for laying out materials and several empty display cases for showing materials discovered during “exploration” processing.
3. We are creating a “temporary storage area” in the Dining Room and Kitchen.

Processing

We are planning to process 2 or more of our present “boxes” per week. We will do this as our time allows and during open museum hours as they are scheduled.

Record Keeping

It is absolutely imperative that we continue and improve our records about our collection as we go through this process. This necessitates upgrading our present computers and software. Steps to be taken involve:

1. Itemize the exact technological needs and costs.
2. Research and apply for appropriate matching grants.
3. Fund raising for specific projections.
4. Purchase appropriate technology.

Programs and Member/public Communication

We are presently researching programs to be presented to the public regarding what we collect and why. It is imperative that our public know what they should and should not be donating so that we can appropriately “collect, preserve and share” Portland’s history.

Visit us at the museum during our open hours this year and join us in this exploration!

Museum Committee.

TOWN-WIDE TAG SALE *(cont. from pg 1)*

Volunteers are needed (and appreciated!) for this event. Help is needed on the three collection Saturdays, **April 18 and 25 and May 2, from 9-11am** at the Callander House; to deliver and pick up poles; to bake for the Society's bake sale; and on the day of the sales at the Callander House or the Grange. If you can donate a couple of hours before or during the tag sale, please contact Ruth at 860-342-3636 or attend the Tag Sale organizational meeting on Tuesday, April 14, 7:00 pm at the Callander House, 492 Main Street.

Welcome New Board Members!

The Society recently held annual elections for our Society Executive Board positions. A new director, Alexia Belperron, has joined the board. In addition continuing in their positions are: Martha Lutecki, President; George Gilbert, 1st Vice President; John Peterson, 2nd Vice President; James McCabe, Treasurer; and Shelli Nolan, Corresponding Secretary. The position of Recording Secretary continues to be vacant. Deb Ellsworth and Ruth Freeburg are continuing their terms as Directors on the Board. Claire Frisbie was elected to the Board of Trustees.

At a recent combined Executive Board and Board of Trustees meeting, new members were elected to the Collections Board. They are Rebecca Robinson, James Rau and Frank Winiski.

Regina Woltmann continues to do a tireless job as fill-in for Executive Board Recording Secretary. The opening is available to anyone interested in joining our happy board!

Thank you and welcome to all our wonderful volunteer board members!

Ruth Callander House News



Ruth Callander House restoration continues this spring with the pursuit of the best possible painter! We are presently accepting bids for cleaning, scraping and painting the exterior of the house and the garage. In addition, we will be applying for a matching grant to assist in paying for this project. It appears that it may cost close to \$20,000 to complete the painting with all the appropriate preparatory work. Please contact Claire Frisbie at 860-335-8581 or PortlandCTHistory@gmail.com if you have painter recommendations or you wish to make a bid.

Cromwell Historical Society's Ball of the Rebellion

Members of the Portland Historical Society have been invited to attend the Ball of the Rebellion at the member's price, a discount of \$5. The event is April 11 in Cromwell. Information is available at www.CromwellHistory.org, or 860-635-0501. Sounds like fun!

In loving memory of Historical Society members and supporters who passed away recently:

Duane Marie Chowaniec
Lucille Cramer
Phyllis Frisbie

Robert Johnson
Ruth McGowan

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.



For those of us still waiting for the snow to melt, here is a reminder from August 2014. The beautiful back yard of the Ruth Callander House with the wonderful Betty Keser Scott Garden maintained by the Portland Garden Club, and the Corn Crib from the Hedstrom/Anderson Farm.

HISTORY by Doris Sherrow-Heidenis

Passing along some gossip from the 1880s...

In 1979, I was one of the Portland researchers for the Portland History and Architecture book. I remember going next door to Anna O'Brien's house one day (5 Indian Hill Avenue) and interviewing her about her old 2 ½ story colonial.

She told me that her father Dennes O'Brien (born 1870) had gone to school with Mary Ranney Lewis (born 1869). Mary had told Dennes that her father, John R. Lewis (1844-1931), had witnessed the "raising" of the house at 5 Indian Hill Avenue! Mr. Lewis was "a small child" at the time, so the date would have been in the late 1840s or early 1850s. Mary Lewis had also told O'Brien how the single center chimney had been replaced by two narrower chimneys, another detail from her father. A saloon, called the Union Hotel, was set up in the basement.

In 1979, I went down into Miss O'Brien's basement, and sure enough, it was about eight feet tall—my own 1747 Cape Cod was barely even tall enough to stand up in! I could see how the building had been "lifted" to permit this generous basement—the 8-foot tall "ice box" still stood in one end of the room.

On the main floor, I took note of mid-19th-century "modifications"—(or so I thought!)—narrow floor boards, no visible support beams. I figured that was done to please the mid-19th century customers at the hotel—colonial details had been "replaced" by Greek Revival elements. The colonial elements—corner beams, ceiling beams, old wide board floors—were largely intact on the second floor, and the attic was pure, spacious colonial, with wide board flooring and bare trees for roof support!

From the outside, the second story and the attic had typical colonial 8 over 12 windows. On the first floor there were nothing but Greek Revival-style 6 over 6's, except for the front porch windows which were **6 over 6 over 6's**—typical of mid-19th century porch windows. I assumed that the 6-pane windows, so typical of the Greek Revival era, had been constructed to replace the old 8 over 12s, to make the main floor look "modern."

That's what I figured.

And then one day during a recent summer, I looked out my screen door to the west and realized that Miss O'Brien's house had been raised, not half a story, but a story and a half! From a cape cod like mine, to the 2 ½ story building it is today! The basement had indeed been raised another five feet or so, but the original first floor had then been elevated to become the second, and a Greek Revival-style first floor constructed! You could see it eloquently in the windows—8 over 12 pane colonial-style windows in the second floor and attic, but 6-pane windows Greek Revival on the main floor with 1850s-style narrow muntins and mullions.

So imagine a summery day in 1850, and an oxen team from the quarry or the shipyard, and the sort of dexterity that early American workmen could show—descending upon the second of the two cape cods on the corner of Indian Hill Avenue, to leave it a full story taller. Because that's what happened! I have it straight from a person—Miss O'Brien—who had it from a person—her father Dennes—who had it from a person—Mary Lewis, his school classmate—who had it from a person—HER father, John R. Lewis—who was there!

*We showed you this photo in November's newsletter.
Now, thanks to Bob Jackson, we know more about it. Thanks, Bob!*



This is the third grade at Central School about 1939-40.

Top Row L to R: Caroline Jordan, ?, Bob Jackson, ?, Tom Ellsworth, ?, Richard Cutler, Chico Fisher, ?

Bottom Row L to R: Patsy Waldren, ?, ?, ?, Wilfred Jordan, ?, Marjorie Johnson, ?

Still looking for some names... Do you recognize anyone in this photo?

Please let us know if you can tell us any other identifications. Send comments by email to PortlandHistSoc@yahoo.com or by mail to: PO Box 98, Portland, CT 06480.



Festival of Wreaths a Success

Our 3rd Annual Festival of Wreaths was another great success and lots of fun for everyone involved. Thirty-five wreaths were donated and raffled earning the Society over \$1000. Saturday was a rainy cold day, but Sunday made up for it with lots of sun. The Portland High School A Cappella, a select group of twenty-two students, came to perform on Sunday afternoon. Led by their director Samuel R. Tucker, they sang a collection of traditional carols surrounded by the Festival and an appreciative audience.

Above: Students in A Cappella entertain with traditional carols.

Right: Visitors enjoy the wreaths and take chances on winning them.





19th Annual Town-Wide Tag Sale
Sponsored by The Portland Historical Society
Benefiting the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History

PLAN A TAG SALE

Saturday, May 9th
8:30 AM to 2:30 PM

RAIN
OR SHINE

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:

- ⇒ You profit from your sale.
- ⇒ The Historical Society will help to promote your Tag Sale.
- ⇒ Your contributions will help fund the Museum of Portland History.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY WILL PROVIDE:

- ⇒ Location Maps with sale item types
- ⇒ Advertising
- ⇒ Tag Sale Hints
- ⇒ House Marker Sign

Option	How it works:	Rec'd by Society by April 11th	Rec'd by Society Apr. 12 - 27 <u>deadline</u>
1.	Have a sale at your own home or neighborhood <i>for your benefit</i> .	\$20.	\$25.
or 2.	Tailgate your tag sale at Hemlock Grange parking area, jct. Rte. 17 & Sage Hollow Rd	\$20.	\$25.
or 3.	Donate items to benefit the Historical Society tag sale at the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History. (No clothing, textbooks, TV's or unwieldy items, please.)	Items may be delivered to the Society Saturdays, April 18, 25, & May 2 at the Callander House garage, 492 Main St. from 9-11 AM. Pickup also available. Call 860-342-3636.	

ALSO BAKE & TAG SALES with coffee, soda & hot dogs at Hemlock Grange, 17 Sage Hollow Road on Tag Sale Day. *Questions? Contact 860-342-3636 or PortlandCThistory@gmail.com*



Clip and mail to Portland Historical Society Tag Sale, P. O. Box 98, Portland, CT 06480
Make checks payable to: Portland Historical Society

Contact Information: Name: _____	Options (Please check all that apply)	BY April 11	April 12 - 27
Sale Address: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Home sale	\$20.	\$25.
Phone: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Tailgate at Grange (limit 2/sale)	\$20.	\$25.
Email: _____	Item types (for map listing - 40 characters or less): _____		
Will you have Tag Sale if it rains? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> _____			
Must be received by April 27 for listing on Map			

CALENDAR . . .

The Portland Historical Society will be partnering with the Friends of Portland Library to produce a series of programs on the History of Portland. Watch Rivereast News Bulletin and local media for news of these programs.

March 25 Application/Sign ups begin for
19th Annual Town-Wide Tag Sale

April 12 "Exploring Ruth's Attic" - Museum open 2-4 PM

April 14 Organizational meeting for *Town-Wide Tag Sale*

April 27 Deadline for Sign-ups for *Town-Wide Tag Sale*

May 3 "Exploring Ruth's Attic" - Museum open 2-4 PM

May 9 *19th Annual Town-Wide Tag Sale* 8:30 AM - 2:30 PM



The Town of Portland has obtained a Vibrant Communities Initiative Grant to study the market and development potential for the Elmcrest site. The study will also look at ways to reuse the historic buildings on the site. Public comment is desired, watch news and town website for public meetings.

NEWSLETTER - *Claire Frisbie, 3-24-2015, 860-335-8581*

March 2015 Newsletter!

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19th ANNUAL TOWN-WIDE TAG SALE
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