



# PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 98, Portland, CT 06480

## November 2018 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. 44 No. 3

*This article on Portland Transmission is the second article in a series on local businesses in our Portland Historical Society newsletter. The purpose is to make our PHS members aware of the variety of Businesses and the People that own and operate them who have become the fabric of our Portland Community.*

### Portland Transmission by George M. Gilbert III



*Larson Welding truck fleet circa 1958*

Portland Transmission is located off the beaten path on Silver Street. I parked off the side of the building being careful not to park in the spots with the signage “Don’t even think of parking here”. Walking through the front door I was greeted by Doug “Mark” Etheridge. The office is decorated with models of race cars and many every day vehicles. Looking closer I see this could be Joey Logano’s Fan Club Headquarters. There is Joey Logano NASCAR racing memorabilia placed tastefully throughout the office.

Doug along with his brother Donn started and continue to operate this business since 1992. Being a family business Donn’s wife Jacqui does the bookkeeping. Donn and Doug oversee the shop making sure that customer vehicles are being repaired to their satisfaction. They employ four mechanics working day in and day out on all makes and models of cars and trucks. As their name implies the Etheridge’s work primarily on transmissions but in addition to that they also do general repair at customers request. The shop is clean and well organized. Their clientele are mostly repeat customers built up by years of confidence and trust. They not only service individuals but also dealers and other repair shops who require their expertise.

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*Henry Larson circa 1958*

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# 2018 FESTIVAL OF WREATHS

## JINGLE & MINGLE



Our 7th annual Festival of Wreaths will take place Saturday and Sunday, December 1 & 2, 2018, in the carriage house at 329 Main Street.

Again this year, we have invited local businesses, organizations, clubs, families and individuals to decorate and donate a wreath for this ticket raffle. Each year we have raffled over 30 wreaths and we promise to raffle festive and fun-loving wreaths again this year. Tabletop trees and holiday centerpieces are also accepted for this Festival.

You can help continue this tradition in Portland by making a wreath for this special fundraiser. If you prefer, a financial donation may be made to the Festival and your name will be posted during the event. Or if you like the idea of a decorated wreath and just don't have the time or don't consider yourself crafty, for a donation of \$30.00 one of our Society "elves" will make a holiday decoration in your name! We ask that everyone register by Thursday, November 29 so that we can plan our space.



On Saturday and Sunday, December 1 and 2, we will host two days of Portland folks, young and old, wearing their warmest sweaters, gathering to see some great holiday decorations, enjoying something warm to drink and homemade cookies, making new acquaintances over laughter and holiday cheer — "Jingle & Mingle"! From noon to 4 pm on the days of the Festival, tickets can be purchased and placed in the gift bags near the wreaths you would like to take home. On Sunday afternoon at 3:30 pm, the Portland High School A Capella Singers will again entertain us with seasonal songs. Shortly after 4 on Sunday, the winning names will be pulled before the start of Portland's Parade of Lights.



All proceeds from this event will be used to further the Society's mission to preserve Portland's history and to fund educational projects for the community. Last year we raffled over 30 wreaths and we are eagerly anticipating the arrival of many fun-loving and festive wreaths created by the artsy and crafty folks of Portland this year!

**In order for us to be able to plan our space, all participants must be registered by Thursday, November 29.**

Please contact Deb Ellsworth at 860-342-1927 to sign up or send an email to: [PortlandCThistory@gmail.com](mailto:PortlandCThistory@gmail.com).

Check our website for more information, decoration ideas, etc.  
[www.PortlandHistSoc.org](http://www.PortlandHistSoc.org).

## *Thank you, Members and Donors!*

*Your memberships and donations fund the activities of the Portland Historical Society and the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History.*

*We continue to work on and plan maintenance and upgrades for the Ruth Callander House and the surrounding property. As with any historic house, there are many ongoing requirements, along with plans for Museum improvements.*

*Our activities this year have focused on teaching townspeople and visitors about Portland's history through programs and displays.*



*In September, Jonathan Ives detailed the history and building of the Arrigoni Bridge to another large audience.*

*In October, Carl Oscar Hedstrom (played by George Gilbert) returned to life and spoke to a crowd at the Portland Agricultural Fair. In his honor, a group of Indian Motorcycles rode in and was displayed including models from 1951 and 2019, along with a photo of the first Indian model from 1902.*

*In November, the Museum again will host the 3rd grade classes of Gildersleeve School to augment their studies of Portland History.*

*A membership/donation envelope is enclosed. Your membership expiration date is above your name on the newsletter mailing label. Any questions, please call Claire Frisbie at 860-335-8581 or email [PortlandCTHistory@gmail.com](mailto:PortlandCTHistory@gmail.com).*

*Thanks again!*



## Portland Transmission

*(Continued from page 1)*

The Etheridge family comes from a lineage of Portland business people. Their grandfather Henry Larson had a welding business that was located on the old quarry property by the blacksmith shop on Silver Street. He started “Larson’s Welding” during the mid nineteen forties after WWII. At one time he was one of the largest welders in our local area having six trucks that went out on jobs daily. Larson’s Welding contracted with the State of Connecticut at CVH, and other local businesses including the oil business who routinely needed their tanks welded. He also serviced local manufacturing facilities including Airex Rubber and out of town businesses such as Zurich Steel in Wallingford, and Fafnir Bearing in New Britain. Henry’s oldest daughter Marion married Robert “Dutch” Etheridge and proceeded to have six children, four boys and two girls. Donn and Doug run Portland Transmission. Dale and David are working on our collective behalf for the Town of Portland. Darlene and Deb reside in Portland. Henry spent his retirement years deep sea fishing in the Atlantic, Long Island Sound, also angling on the Connecticut River and Higganum Reservoir. Henry Larson died in 1981 but his entrepreneurship spirit lives on in Portland generations later.



*Donn, Jacqui and Doug (Mark) Etheridge*

## Dedication of Restored Pergola at Former Home of Carl Oscar Hedstrom



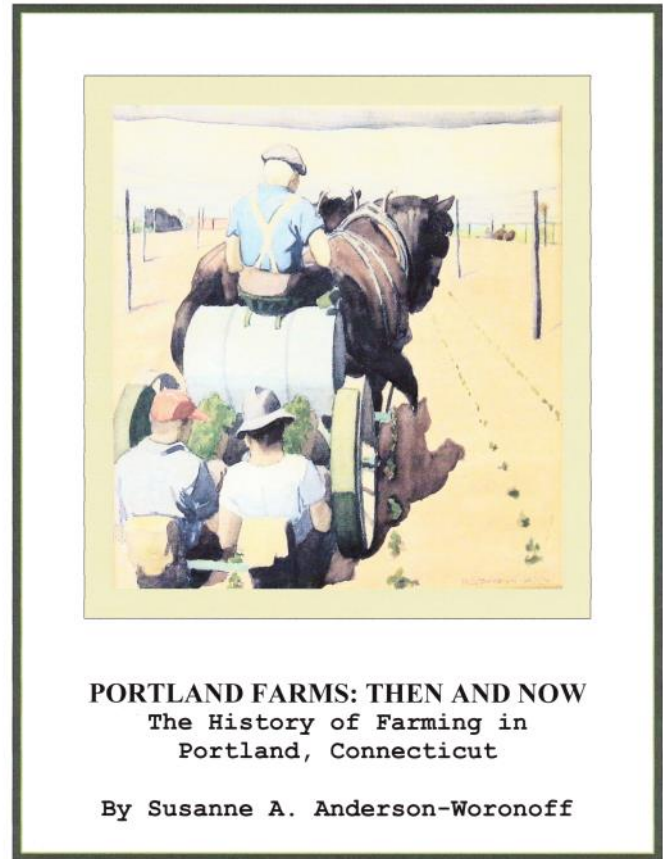
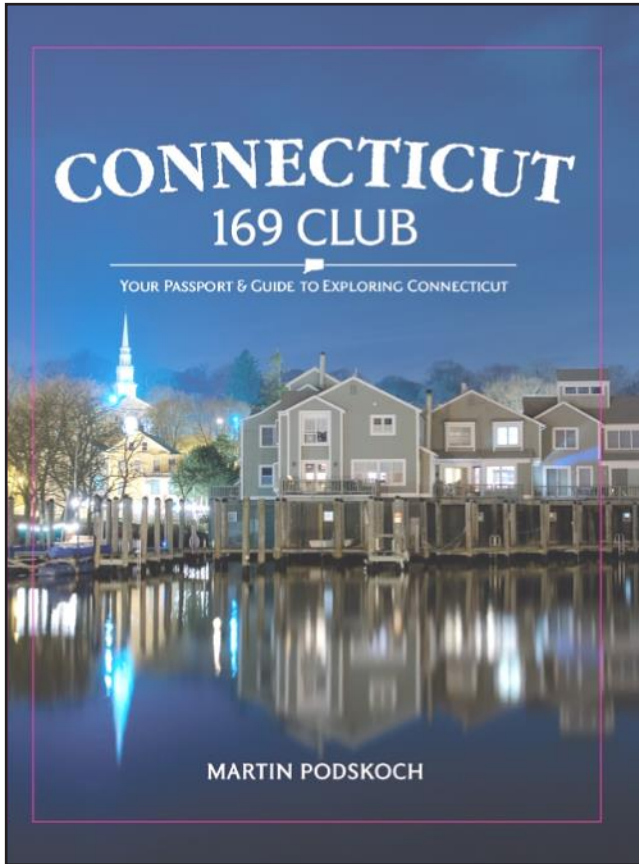
*Carl Oscar Hedstrom, the co-inventor of the Indian Motorcycle, and his wife, Julia stand under their pergola at their house at 533 Main Street. They purchased the house in 1911 and built the pergola.*

*Charles and Susan Young spent many hours restoring the Hedstrom Pergola. They recently sold 533 Main Street and are pictured with the family of the new owners, William and Ingrid Moss.*

*Left to right: William Moss, Ingrid Moss holding Emilia, Charles Young, Susan Young, Jay Swanson with Callum, Martha Swanson, Ernie Peterson.*



# TWO NEW BOOKS AVAILABLE FOR HOLIDAY GIVING!



Author, adventurer and historian **Marty Podskoch** scripted a solution for fragmented families and town-tied locals. With his latest travel guidebook, **The Connecticut 169 Club: Your Passport and Guide to Exploring Connecticut**, Podskoch navigates readers off the interstate and onto Connecticut backroads to meet and merge with fascinating neighbors and uncover cool curiosities tucked into the 169 towns and cities in the Nutmeg State.

Podskoch had someone from each town write a short description highlighting their town's location, history, and interesting places to visit. Podskoch did this because local residents knew more about their town than he. The book has a space for travelers to journal about their experiences and a place to get the book stamped or signed by a resident or business. Travelers will get to know the locals and perhaps learn about a good place to eat or an interesting local attraction. In this way they get to know a lot about Connecticut and its residents. Local historian, **Robert McDougall**, authored the pages on Portland.

Available at the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History for \$25.00. Podskoch will be speaking in Portland on Jan. 26 - see Calendar (page 6).

New for the holiday gift-giving season, **Portland Farms: Then and Now** by **Susanne Anderson-Woronoff**, takes the reader on a journey through the farming history of the Town of Portland. It includes information and photos on over 100 farms, starting with the Wangunks, a small Native American tribe that inhabited and farmed the land over 325 years ago, to the farms of the present time. The 260-page book celebrates the living spirit of our town's history through the personal accounts and photos collected from individuals of the Portland farming community. The author's intent is to reconnect us with the heritage of farming as well as to provide the reader with a glimpse of Portland farms, then and now.

After collecting materials for an exhibit on Portland's Farming History in 2008, Sue continued to gather more information and this book, **Portland Farms: Then and Now**, is the result of her hours of research and interviews.

On Sunday, December 9, Sue will be at the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History to introduce her book to our members and friends. For each copy of the book purchased from the Historical Society, the Society will receive \$5.00. Cost: \$25.00

To order books, email [PortlandCTHistory@gmail.com](mailto:PortlandCTHistory@gmail.com) or call Deb 860-342-1927 - shipping \$7 per book.

# PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY CALENDAR

Sat & Sun, Dec 1 & 2 - Festival of Wreaths  
 12 to 4 p.m., 329 Main Street Carriage House

Sunday, Dec 9 - Holiday Train Display  
 12 to 4 p.m., 492 Main Street

Sat & Sun, Dec 15 & 16 - Holiday Train Display  
 12 to 4 p.m., 492 Main Street

Sat & Sun, Dec 22 & 23 - Holiday Train Display  
 12 to 4 p.m., 492 Main Street

Thursday, Dec 27 - Holiday Train Display  
 12 to 4 p.m., 492 Main Street

Saturday, Jan 26 - The Connecticut 169 Club:  
**Your Passport and Guide to Exploring CT**  
 Program and book signing by Marty Podskoch  
 & Historical Society Annual Meeting  
 1 p.m. at Mary Flood Room, Portland Library



## Holiday Train Display

*This December, the train layouts of Mike Tierney and Tom Ladny return to Portland for a Holiday Train Display at the Callander House. Come enjoy these elaborate, functioning and historic trains. Donations for the Portland Food Bank will be accepted.*

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NEWSLETTER - Claire Frisbie, 860-335-8581, 11-12-2018

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## November 2018 Newsletter!

**FINANCE BOARD**  
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**2018 SOCIETY OFFICERS**  
 President - George Gilbert III  
 1st Vice President - John Peterson  
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 Corresponding Secretary - Shelli Nolan  
 Treasurer - James McCabe

*Festival of Wreaths - December 1-2, 12-4 p.m.  
 NEW Holiday Train Display - see Calendar*

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