



PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P. O. Box 98, Portland, CT 06480
Summer 2019 NEWSLETTER

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This is the Part 2 in the third of a series of articles on local businesses the purpose of which 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.

A PORTLAND FAMILY TRADITION Part II
A 300-Year Marine Tradition Carries Forward Into the Next Generation

by George M. Gilbert III

Currently under the guidance of Bob Petzold, Petzold's Inc. President, and Ken Petzold, its Vice President, sons of Bill and Paula, they now have three locations. Petzold's has their working yard in Portland along with sales operations in Norwalk, CT and Point Judith, RI. All together they employ over thirty people between sales, operations, ship's store, engine/mechanical repowering/repairs, fiberglass repairs, parts, canvas design, canvas repairs, launching, hauling of boats, commissioning and decommissioning of boats. They also set up financing, marine surveying, and have insurance connections to offer their customers. Bob will work on a vessel worth millions of dollars as well as a forty-year-old two cycle Johnson-Evinrude outboard motor. They go over the top to please their customers. The Portland Yard consists of thirty-five slips that they use and rent out over the summer months, and has several

lifts including 15, 35, and 50-ton travel lifts.

The Petzold's crew participate in many shows throughout the year continuing on with the tradition started by Bob and Ken's grandfather, Bill, Sr. They can be seen throughout the autumn and spring months at in the water boat shows in Newport RI, Norwalk CT, Fort Lauderdale FL, Miami FL, and Essex CT, along with out of the water shows such as the CMTA (Connecticut Marine Trades Association) show at Mohegan Sun, the New York Boat Show, NYC, and their own show in their fourteen thousand square foot Portland showroom on Indian Hill Ave. Participating in these shows is no little task. The vessels must be transported. They are big, they are heavy and cost a lot to move from show to show. The Petzold family has a strong commitment to the

(Continued on page 3)



*Three generations of management.
Upper row l to r - Robert Petzold,
Kenneth Petzold, Bill Petzold,
Lower row- l to r- Heather Petzold,
Dominic Valenti*

In this issue:

Calendar of Events - pg 4

Mary Rogers Williams -

Artist - pg 2

Petzold's Tradition - pgs 1, 3

MARY ROGERS WILLIAMS, an Artist with a Portland Connection

Several years ago, the Society was contacted by a writer researching the artist, Mary Rogers Williams, having just found a collection of her letters, paintings, sketches and personal items that had been carefully preserved in a private collection for many years. Mary Rogers Williams, it was discovered, had a connection to Portland, having spent summers and vacations with an aunt, Wilhelmina Niven Williams Pelton, in the Penfield Hill area. This connection led the artist to paint a number of scenes of Portland including Jobs Pond, and local homes and farms. *Eve Kahn, the researcher and author, will give an illustrated talk about the painter at the Waverly Center in Portland on October 6, 2019 at 2 p.m.*

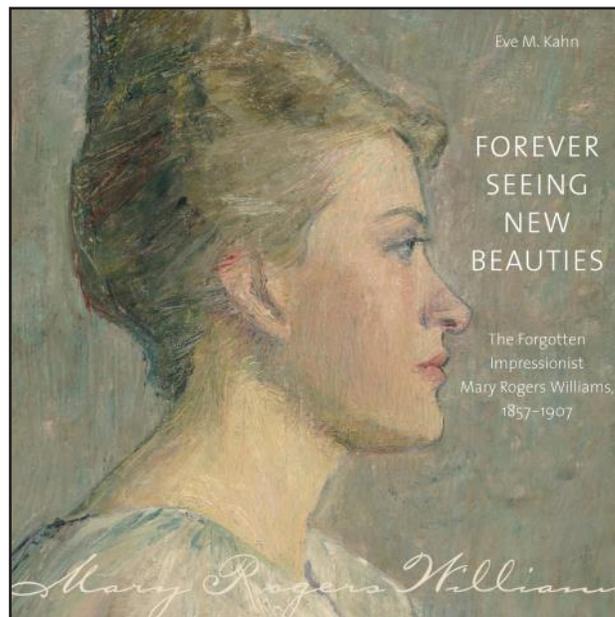
The following is the promotional announcement of the new book from Wesleyan Press.

New York, NY—A rediscovered trove of 19th-century correspondence and artworks has yielded a lively biography of a revolutionary artist, Mary Rogers Williams.

Forever Seeing New Beauties: The Forgotten Impressionist Mary Rogers Williams, 1857-1907 (Wesleyan University Press, October 2019), by the journalist and historian Eve M. Kahn, is based on letters, journals and paintings that surfaced in a Connecticut boathouse in 2012. Williams, a baker's daughter from Hartford, Connecticut, ran Smith College's art department while spending summers crisscrossing Europe by train, horse-drawn carriage and bicycle. She socialized with Albert Pinkham Ryder in New York and trained with James McNeill Whistler in Paris. Her paintings, exhibited at venues from the Paris Salon to Indianapolis's Art Association, were praised by critics as eminent as *The New York*



Unidentified painting by Mary Rogers Williams



Times's Charles de Kay. But after her untimely death, she fell into deep obscurity.

Williams's sketches and letters wittily record encounters with gushing Smith students, overworked Smith colleagues, befuddled Yankees abroad and overrated male artists. The book documents the artist's fierce opinions and luminously reproduces her pastels and paintings of everyday marvels, whether fishermen's cottages mirrored in Norwegian fjords or Italian church altars swathed in incense smoke.

Eve M. Kahn, the former Antiques columnist for *The New York Times*, also sheds light on Williams' circle of women adventurers who defied their era's expectations.

"I've never tired of telling people about Mary's accomplishments and feistiness and the flukes of fate that led me to her papers and paintings and to families of people who knew her," Kahn says. "I've been called 'a resurrectionist'—I love that title."

Advance reviewers lauding the book have included Professor Katherine Manthorne of CUNY, who calls it a "must-read." Amy Kurtz Lansing, curator at the Florence Griswold Museum in Old Lyme, Connecticut, describes the book as "at long last bringing this vivid woman the attention she deserves."

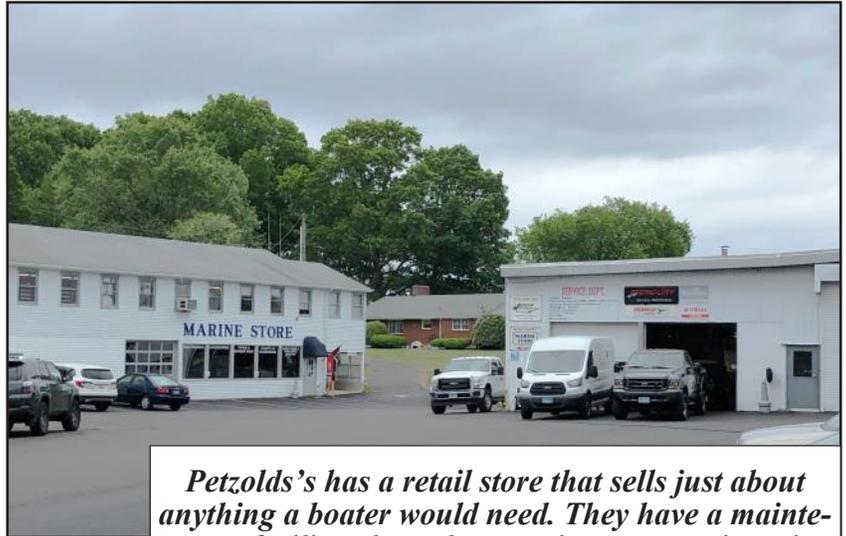
For further information, see evekahn.com and wesleyan.edu/wespress. Press contacts (and for hires images): evemkahn@gmail.com, Stephanie Elliott, selliott@wesleyan.edu

A PORTLAND FAMILY TRADITION Part II

(Continued from page 1)

marine industry aligning themselves with the premier manufacturers of marine products today. Even though they are a large operation by today's standards they still maintain the family atmosphere and personal service that you would expect from a smaller dealer.

When I visited the Indian Hill Avenue yard this spring it was lively. Boats were being moved, launched, worked on, and workers were busy. The atmosphere was bustling with activity while being very businesslike. My imagination ran away with me as I day-dreamed of the ghosts of clipper ships,



Petzold's has a retail store that sells just about anything a boater would need. They have a maintenance facility where they repair customers' marine vessels whether an outboard motor, pontoon boat, small runabout, a large sport fisherman or multi-million dollar pleasure vessel with Diesel engines. They also have a service where Petzold's mechanics go to the customer, providing on the road maintenance crews that can repair vessels while they are in their summer slips.

barges, and other vessels that once were manufactured on the very property on which I was standing.

Heather Petzold, 27, Bob's daughter, is their Operations Manager. She works just a few feet from her grandfather Bill, Jr. Heather oversees and promotes the Ship's Store along with advertising and outreach programs. She also oversees all the launching and hauling of boats. Heather is young - she is learning the business, and is being groomed for the future of a rapidly changing industry.

Dominic Valenti, 26, Bob's son, is learning the ropes in the yard - working as a mechanic and operating the heavy equipment used in the yard.

The next generation is working and learning a multi-faceted complex industry. I am sure that they will do a great job carrying forward the Portland tradition consisting of over 300 years of marine industry - founded by Giles Hall, continuing with Lewis family then Gildersleeve's and now Petzold's - on this Indian Hill Ave property.

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Riverside rest area- the Connecticut River is stunningly beautiful. The Petzold family welcomes their customers to take time and enjoy the outdoor patios overlooking the river.



Petzold's sign- The phrase "Our Family's Business Is Your Family's Pleasure" sums up how the Petzold family likes to approach their business by keeping their customers boating experience pleasurable.

Petzold's yard from the Connecticut River shows a very neat yard with outbuildings and cranes . Over a hundred years ago you would have seen Clipper Ships and other marine vessels being manufactured in this very spot. See "A Portland Family Tradition Part II" inside.



SOCIETY CALENDAR

Sept 8 - Museum Open 2-4 pm

Sept 24 - *Musician Craig Harris presents a program on the 50th anniversary celebration of the Woodstock Festival.* Enjoy memories of that wild and magical weekend in August 1969 with this participatory, multimedia program about the groundbreaking music festival. Drummer Craig offers a short film experience, a play along with the music moment, plus anecdotes from back in the day! *Portland Library at 6:30 pm*

Oct 6 - **Mary Rogers Williams Program** - *Author & researcher, Eve Kahn, discusses the artist's life and work including scenes of Portland and Connecticut River Valley. Waverly Center at 2 pm*

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