



PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 98, Portland, CT 06480

JULY 2021 NEWSLETTER

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The Town-Wide Tag Sales Day is Back on August 28, 2021!



On Saturday, August 28th, the Society will hold its 2021 Town-Wide Tag Sales Day—the 25th year of this event. Usually held on the first or second Saturday in May, this event was cancelled in 2020 for the safety of all involved and postponed to August this year with the hope that the pandemic would be significantly decreased.

Additionally, the Society is NOT holding its usual food and bake sale, hosting sales at the Grange parking lot, or holding a sale of donated items at the Ruth Callander House garage, all to protect our volunteers and event participants.

The Tag Sales Day is always the Society's largest fund raiser of the year supporting the maintenance and projects of the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History along with other Society activities to collect, preserve and share Portland's history. While the cutbacks may decrease the Society's fund raising, we hope to have a successful return to Portland's big tag sale day and assist many Portland residents and organizations in holding safe and profitable tag sales on August 28th.

As always, we will produce our comprehensive map of Portland with the trail of sales and listings of addresses and items in those sales. **Registration to be on the map is available online from our website: www.PortlandHistSoc.org, by filling out and mailing the form on [page 3](#) of this newsletter, or by picking up a form from the front porch of the Ruth Callander House at 492 Main Street and mailing—available beginning July 10.**

The Many Lives of Alfred Hall

by Julie Macksoud



Liberty Bank is the oldest mutual savings bank in the United States, as well as the third largest bank in Connecticut. Headquartered in Middletown, one of its 60 banking offices is located at 245 Main Street in Portland. If you are a Liberty Bank customer, you have no doubt seen this sign affixed to the front of the brownstone Greek Revival building and wondered about its origin and transformation over the past 182 years. It has come under the care of about a dozen owners over this time span, a mixture of (mostly) private residences and commercial property. Converted into the Liberty bank branch in 1975 - its original exterior and marble mantle pieces remain intact. For a time there was evidence of an attached carriage house as well. Built in 1839 in an already prestigious neighborhood, its architect was Alexander Jackson Davis [1803-1892] who designed the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, and the U.S. Customs House in Manhattan, among

(Alfred Hall - Continued on page 2)

(Alfred Hall - Continued from page 1)

others. Quarrying of Portland Brownstone began in the mid to late 17th century, and reached its peak in the mid to late 19th.

The first owner and namesake at 245 Main Street was The Honorable Alfred Hall, born on 15 November 1809, to Samuel Hall, and Ruth Bates, the sixth of their ten children. Alfred was an eighth-generation member of one of the oldest and most influential families in Portland, who were among the first settlers of the town, then known as Chatham. His grandfather, Joel Hall, established the Shaler & Hall Quarry in 1788. As mentioned in the *The History of Middlesex County 1635-1885*, Alfred attended public school until he was 12 years of age, when he was sent to the Episcopal Academy at Cheshire, to prepare for college. At the age of 14 he entered Washington (now Trinity) College, Hartford, being among the first students who entered the school. Alfred graduated in 1827, and was appointed tutor at the college in Geneva, New York, now Hobart College, where he remained for three years. In 1830, he delivered the masters' oration at Trinity College. He then attended Cambridge Law School, after which he returned to Middletown, where he commenced the study of law with Judge Samuel Storrs. He was admitted to the bar in 1832, and practiced law at that place until 1834, when he moved to Portland, and joined his father in the Shaler & Hall Quarry Company, until 1845. He devoted his whole energies to quarry interests and subsequently acquired a large interest in it, becoming its president until 1858, when he resigned and again took up the practice of law.

Alfred Hall took an active part in local politics and public education and was elected to the Legislature four times from 1847 through 1858. In 1853, he was elected to the Senate from the 18th District. Alfred was also one of the trustees of the State Normal School for many years. "He was exceedingly popular with the masses and was a liberal supporter of all public enterprises. He was an active member of the Episcopal church during his life and gave freely to all works of charity and benevolence. He was greatly beloved by his friends and honored and respected by his political opponents."

Alfred married Maria Lydia Whiting on 10 September 1833, in Hartford, CT. Maria came from a prominent Hartford family who were co-founders of the capital city back in 1635. Mr. and Mrs. Hall were the



parents of eight children: (the Rev.) Samuel Hall (the first graduate's son to receive a degree from Trinity College in 1851); Civil War soldier - 1st Lieutenant in the 9th Infantry - Alfred Gordon Hall, Maria Whiting Hall, Jane Whiting Hall, James Philip Hall, Mary Ellen Hall (Mrs. Oliver Gildersleeve), John Henry Hall ("one of the most enterprising and pushing young men of Portland" having a half interest in the manufacture of the Pickering steam engine governors), and Alice Elizabeth Hall.

Alfred Hall died on 11 September 1873, in Portland, at the age of 63, and is buried in Portland's Trinity Church Cemetery with his wife and two young daughters - who both died within a week of each other in March 1844. His wife survived him by nine years and died on the 11th of July 1882. Members of the Hall family lived at 245 Main Street until the 1880s.

By 1886 the property had passed into the hands of Irish born George and MaryAnn Wiseman. George came to Boston first before taking a job with the Portland quarry where he worked for 20 years. Daughter Frances was wed in the home in 1890. In early 1900, after their deaths in the home, the Wisemans' son John and his wife Minnie became its owners.

In 1915, Joseph William Walsh opened a physician's office in the home where he lived with his wife and three children. His tenure there only lasted three years as Dr. Walsh died of pneumonia while battling the Spanish Flu in October of 1918. He was 33 years old. For the next few years this home was the property of Irish undertaker Thomas William O'Keefe [1854-1926].

From at least 1919 through the 1970s, 245 Main Street was the residence of several generations of the Blancato family. Guiseppe Blancato, known as Sam, arrived in America from Sortino, Italy in 1905. He was a machine hand at a factory (RM factory company) until he retired in 1979. He and wife Isabelle had four daughters and a son, Ignazio, who became a US citizen in 1922 and lived to be 86 years old. A barber by trade, he spent three years in the military during World War I and was known around town for his amazing vegetable gardens of tomatoes and peppers. Its bounty became a memory in 1972 when an asphalt parking area was created for commercial business.

(Alfred Hall - continued on page 4)

25th Annual Town-Wide Tag Sales Day

Sponsored by The Portland Historical Society
Benefiting the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History



PLAN A TAG SALE

Saturday, August 28th

RAIN
OR SHINE

8:30 AM to 2:30 PM

RAIN
OR SHINE

Register online at www.PortlandHistSoc.org

or use this form and mail — Questions? email: PortlandCTHistory@gmail.com

<p><u>BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> You profit from your sale. <input type="checkbox"/> The Historical Society will help to promote your Tag Sale. <input type="checkbox"/> Your contributions will help fund the Museum of Portland History. 	<p><u>THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY WILL PROVIDE:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Location Maps with sale items <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising <input type="checkbox"/> Tag Sale Hints <input type="checkbox"/> House Marker & Trail Number Sign
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How it works:	Register by August 15 to be on Map
Have a sale at your home or neighborhood <i>for your benefit.</i>	Registered by July 24 — \$20 Registered AFTER July 24 — \$25

There will be NO sales at the Grange Hall and the Society is not hosting a sale at 492 Main.



Register online at PortlandHistSoc.org with credit card OR Clip form and mail to:

Portland Historical Society Tag Sale, PO Box 98, Portland, CT 06480 — checks to: Portland Historical Society

Contact Information:		
Name:	By July 24	After July 24
Sale Address:	\$20	\$25
Phone:		
Email:	Will you have Tag Sale if it rains? Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/>	
Item types map listing — 40 characters MAX		

Must be received August 15 for listing on Map

