



PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 98, Portland, CT 06480

March 2022 Newsletter

Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History
492 Main St., POB 98, Portland, CT 06480 Tel: 860-342-5455
<http://portlandhistsoc.org/> Email: PortlandHistSoc@yahoo.com

Vol. 48 No. 1

26th Annual Town-Wide Tag Sales Day

On **Saturday, May 7th**, the Society will hold its 2022 Town-Wide Tag Sales Day—the 26th year of this event. It is exciting to be back to our usual May date and hopefully, back to a full compliment of sales around town.

The Society is planning to hold our usual big tag sale of donated items in the yard of the Ruth Callander House and this year we will also have our bake sale at the Callander House.

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.

Portland's big Tag Sales Day gives you an opportunity to hold a sale and be listed on our map or donate your items to our sale. **Registrations for your sale are open online now for \$20 until March 31. April 1-24 register for \$25.**

As always, we will produce our comprehensive map of Portland with the trail of sales and listings of addresses and items of those sales.

Registration to be on the map is available:

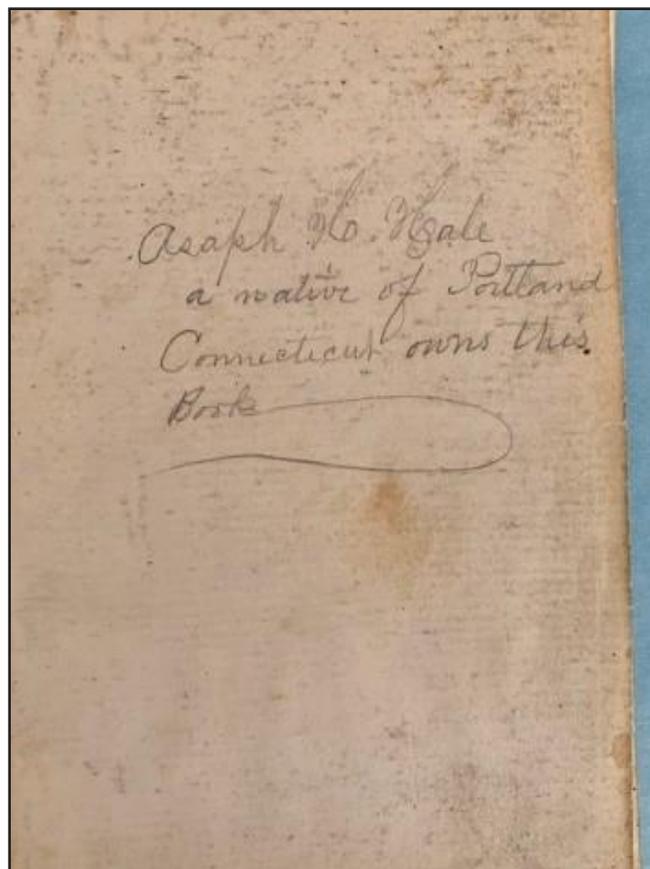
- online at www.PortlandHistSoc.org avail. now
- by filling out and mailing the form on page 3
- by picking up a form from the front porch of the Ruth Callander House at 492 Main Street and mailing—available beginning March 25.

All registrations must be submitted by April 24.

**THANK YOU, MEMBERS AND DONORS,
FOR MAKING EVERYTHING WE DO
POSSIBLE! RENEW OR JOIN NOW**
*Check your membership year on the
mailing label. Mail a check or go to
our secure Square site from*
<http://portlandhistsoc.org/>

A Portland Native's California Dream

In early spring of 1867, nineteen-year-old Portland native Asaph Henry Hale borrowed money from his parents, and along with five friends took the steamer *New York* to the east coast of Panama, traveled across the Isthmus, and then took the steamer *Constitution* to San Francisco. Asaph had been promised a job at his cousin's print shop, Dewey and Co., on Clay Street. One San Francisco publication lists the company as a "Mining and Scientific Press and American and Foreign Patent Agent" owned by George H. Strong, A.T. Dewey and W.B. Ewer.



A slim, spotty diary of his time in California survives. The first entry is on January 13, 1868, and the last entry is on January 21, 1869.

It appears that Asaph enjoyed his work as a printer and the camaraderie among his fellow workers. Asaph worked and roomed with Frank Clark, who

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was probably the 15-year-old Franklin Clark noted in Middletown's 1860 *Census*. Most of Asaph's diary entries were banal, simple observations and comments about the variability of the printing business, arrivals and departures of ships, sending money home to his parents, his desire for letters from home, dining out, the weather, etc. He was doing well at his job, even representing his employer at the San Francisco Mechanics' Fair.

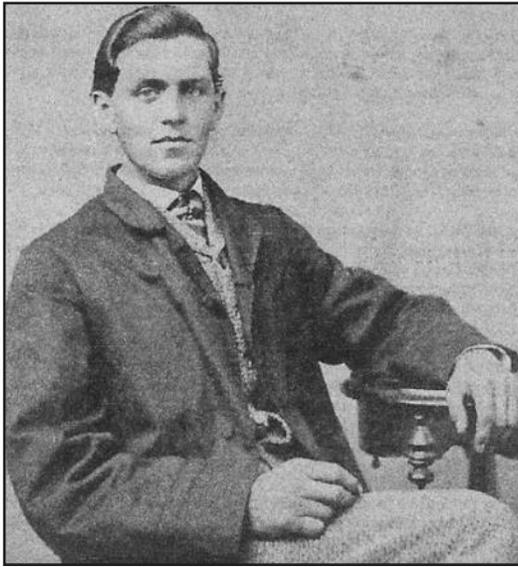
In a March 24, 1868, entry Asaph mentions a five-second-long earthquake at 11:25 a.m. On March 26 he's glad to receive copies of *Our Country* and *The Hartford Times*. On April 8 he notes a couple of shootings, events which seem to relieve the quotidian routine. A few days later he's happy to receive a photo from his sister, Jenny. The days drift along with brief, unremarkable diary entries. On June 26 he says he's been hired for another year at \$12.50/week, to be increased to \$15.00. He notes, "I have got the head ache a little. Frank is not feeling well to day."

June 27: "Frank has hired for another year, he seems unwell to day." June 29: "Had the doctor to Frank yesterday, he thinks it is the Typhoid fever." June 30: "The doctor pronounced Franks disease to be the Small Pox and tomorrow we are to go to the Pest House. I have not worked to day...Many of the boys seem to be afraid of me. Now they suspect the nature of F's disease. This is the first day I have lost for over a year." July 13: "Yesterday morning Frank breathed his last, his constitution was not strong enough to throw off the disease. I am now left alone." In that entry Asaph says Billy Nichols had taken him home from the hospital and that "I shall take a week to rest and regain my old strength and health for I feel very weak. Received letters this morning that Jenny is well. I have worried much about her..." (Asaph's sister, Jenny Lind Hale, was named after the 19th century Swedish soprano, Johanna Maria "Jenny" Lind, known as the "Swedish Nightingale.")

After his hospitalization Asaph wrote letters to local newspapers exposing brutal pesthouse conditions. Asaph returns to work on July 20 and says of Frank, "It makes me feel sad to see another at the Press he was accustomed to run. Everything I do reminds me of him, but at night I feel the loneliest [L]ast night my thoughts were so gloomy that I could not sleep for a

long time...[I] finally fell asleep and dreamed of him that I never shall see again in this life." On July 24 Asaph is still at work and is "rejoiced" to be greeted by Will who apparently has just returned from CT. "I have someone that I can talk to about home with." Both men plan to go to Frank's "funeral sermon" the next day.

On October 21, 1868, a violent earthquake hits San Francisco at 7:54 a.m. Asaph's cousin, 27-year-old William Kellogg Strong, runs outside and is killed,



Asaph Henry Hale

along with a Chinese man, when the building collapses on them. There are no diary entries about the quake. San Francisco's *Mortuary Record* notes that William was a stonecutter from CT, and that he died from a fractured neck.

Asaph intended to remain in California, but he became critically ill with typhoid fever, which may well have been the illness that had put him in the pesthouse (where he had taken care of Frank). He had to leave work and spend weeks convalescing in the Santa Clara Valley, we don't know with whom. Depleted physically and emotionally, Asaph decided to return to Portland.

The next diary entry is on December 31, 1868, when Asaph is *en route* to Panama, on the *Colorado*, and being "quite sick yesterday and somewhat unwell today." As usual, he mentions the number of miles the ship had run up to noon on that date. A January 13, 1869, entry mentions the ship's arrival in Panama Bay at 1:00 a.m., the drowning death of a crew member on the steamer *Ancon* ("It is sad to see a fellow creature hurried into eternity so suddenly.") and the railway trip across the Isthmus. He then embarks on the *New York*. The next few entries, up until Asaph's last notation on January 21, 1869, deal with tedium: bumboatmen selling goods and produce, weather, seasickness, the rumor of smallpox on the ship, playing a quoit-like game, running slow in bad weather, running fast in calm seas, seeing other ships, visiting with other passengers, and spotting a whale.

On November 23, 1870, back home in Portland, 22-year-old Asaph married 16-year-old Mary Jane Rathbun. They had four children, the youngest being my father, Perry Titus Wells Hale. Asaph came to be known as an "efficient and prominent" citizen of Portland. He taught school in Middletown and Portland. He was an owner of Strong and Hale Lumber. He held

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26th Annual Town-Wide Tag Sales

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

PLAN A TAG SALE

Saturday, May 7th

RAIN
OR SHINE

RAIN
OR SHINE

8:30 AM to 2:30 PM

Register online at www.PortlandHistSoc.org (starting March 1)
or use this form and mail - Questions? email: PortlandCTHistory@gmail.com

<u>BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:</u>		<u>THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY WILL PROVIDE:</u>
⇒ 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		⇒ Location Maps with sale item types ⇒ Advertising ⇒ Tag Sale Hints ⇒ House Marker & Trail Number Sign
Pick	How it works:	Register by April 24 to be on Map
1	Have a sale at your own home or neighborhood <i>for your benefit</i> .	Registered by March 31- \$20 Registered April 1 to 24 - \$25
2	Donate items to benefit the Historical Society tag sale at the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History.	Items may be delivered to the Society: Saturdays, April 23 & 30 at the Callander House garage, 492 Main St. from 9-11 AM. Pickup also available. Email PortlandCTHistory@gmail.com or call 860-982-1486

ALSO visit the BAKE SALE at the Ruth Callander House on Tag Sales Day

Questions? Contact PortlandCTHistory@gmail.com or call 860-982-1486

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

Portland Historical Society Tag Sale, P. O. Box 98, Portland, CT 06480 - checks to: Portland Historical Society

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Contact Information Name:	Item types map listing - 40 characters MAX	By March 31	April 1 to April 24
Sale Address:	<input type="checkbox"/> Home sale	\$20	\$25
Phone:	Email:		
	Will you have Tag Sale if it rains?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

26th Annual TOWN-WIDE TAG SALES DAY - SATURDAY, MAY 7, 2022
Registration and information inside & online at www.PortlandHistSoc.org

(A Portland Native's California Dream - Continued from page 2)

many positions in Portland, including assistant foreman of the fire department, school visitor, assessor, director of the Buck Library, Commissioner of Jurors, county auditor (1895-1897) and clerk of the Committee of Manufactures. He was elected to the State Legislature in 1894 as a Democrat, although Portland was a Republican stronghold, and he was a delegate to the 1902 Constitutional Convention. Asaph was president of the Portland Homestead Association, was a member of the Village Improvement Society, and was a stockholder in both Portland quarries. He was active in the Ancient Order of United Workmen and Odd Fellows. He lived in a lovely home at 430 Main Street. Considered to be an avid reader, a math and science enthusiast, he was a skilled draftsman and whist player as well. We may assume that Portland is a robust community today in part because of Asaph's commitment to public service.

Despite Asaph's wealth, accomplishments, vast social network, and pride in his children, years later his son related that Asaph was haunted by his experiences in California. His sadness was amplified by the February 20, 1870 death of his beloved sister Jenny who died of tuberculosis at age eighteen. He named his only daughter Jenny Lind.

On December 4, 1912, Asaph died at age 64 of heart disease at his summer cottage at Sound View, the family compound. Mary Jane had died of cancer on October 26, 1904. They are buried in Center Cemetery.

An imposing cenotaph at Wilcox Cemetery in East Berlin, CT, honors William Kellogg Strong's brief life. Asaph named one of his sons Kellogg Strong.

*The author, Marilyn Hale Brooks, was born and raised in Portland and currently calls New Mexico home.
 Asaph Henry Hale was her grandfather.*

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March 2022 Newsletter!

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**Have you joined or renewed your membership?
 Check the date on the mailing label**

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