



PORTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 98, Portland, CT 06480

MAY 2011 NEWSLETTER

Ruth Callander House Museum, 492 Main St., Portland, CT., 06480, Tel: 860-342-5455
www.PortlandHistSoc.Org

PRESIDENT'S LETTER - Deborah Ellsworth

Hope you were up early on May 7, and got your shopping in before the showers! Our **15th Annual Town-wide Tag Sale** was a success again this year due to the hard work of our volunteers. From pricing items at the Callander House garage to baking goodies for our food sale, from hanging signs to soliciting map sponsors, from delivering poles to cooking up hot dogs, we have the best volunteers! Many thanks to all our volunteers, the townspeople who listed tag sales on our map, the local sponsors of our map, and the thousands who came to town and bought our "treasures." A major fundraiser for the Society, the tag sale allows us to offer free educational programs for the community and to maintain the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History. What an idea some of our members had fifteen years ago!

The **Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History** will be open Sunday, June 5 from 2 - 4pm. We also will be open from 11am to 3pm on Saturday, June 11 as part of **Connecticut's Open House Day**, sponsored by the Connecticut Culture and Tourism Commission. **Fiona Fine** has offered to demonstrate her spinning at 1:30pm. We are still finalizing that day, but we are looking for other creative local people who work in crafts of the by-gone era - mid-1800's. Hand quilting, soap or candle making, painted floorcloths, reverse painting on glass, and whirligigs are examples of old crafts. If you practice one of them and would like to show your craft, please contact me at 860-342-1927. Volunteers are also needed to act as docents during the Open House.

In March we opened our "**Quilts, the Civil War and the Gildersleeves**" exhibit. The exhibit features quilts from our collection dating to the 1800's, and Civil War photographs and memorabilia from local residents as well as our collection. An *Album Quilt from the Gildersleeve family* is on display along with memorabilia from the family's shipyard and store. We hope to add other information and artifacts from Civil War times for our summer openings.



Fran DiNatale, Ruth Olson, and Ruth Freeburg await their next customer at the Society's Bake Sale during the recent Town-Wide Tag Sale. Society members make the best goodies!

Among the interesting programs this spring, organized by Regina Woltmann, were **Kandie Carle with her fashions** from the 1800's and **Connecticut's former Troubadour, Tom Callinan**, singing Civil War era songs.

In October, we will be co-sponsoring a **Fashion Show and Tea** with Zion Lutheran Church featuring vintage fashions from the late 1800's to 2010. Take time now to write it on your calendars: **Sunday, October 16.**

The **Exhibit Committee** is looking for new exhibit ideas. If you are active in a local organization and would like to put together an exhibit about the history of your group in Portland, let us know. Call me at 860-342-1927 with exhibit ideas/offers.

(continued page 2)

*In loving memory of Historical Society members and supporters who passed away in recent years.
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.*

*Charles (Bud) David Anderson
Robert (Bobby) Baines, Jr.
Ronald Chiasson, Sr.
Robert Edwards
Thomas Flood, Jr.*

*Myron Foster
Ruth Grover
Evelyn Johnson
Virginia Natalie
William F. Wells*

Fashion Show and Tea Planned

On **Sunday, October 16th** from 2-4 p.m., the Portland Historical Society and Zion Lutheran Church will host a fashion show and tea, “**Fashion Through the Years**” at the Church which is located at 183 William Street in Portland. The event will feature a runway fashion show highlighting fashions and accessories from nearly every decade beginning with the Civil War era through current times.

Along with the fashion show, guests will have the opportunity to participate in a basket raffle and shop at a boutique of vintage jewelry and handmade crafts. Many photographs and other memorabilia, showcasing the various design changes in fashion through the years, will be on display in the Fellowship Hall of the church. The exhibit will include, among many other items, a Civil War floral day dress with apron, a steampunk bustle dress similar to the one Lizzie Borden wore to court in the 1890s, and a Chanel purse designed by the famous German fashion designer, Karl Lagerfeld. The event will also showcase several vintage cars and much more.

An assortment of tasty sweets, tea, coffee, and punch will be served. Proceeds from this event will benefit The Portland Historical Society and Zion Lutheran Church.

If you have a vintage garment or a photo of one worn by a family member that you would like to loan us for the fashion show, please call Sue Anderson at 860-342-0433. If you would like to donate any items for the Society’s jewelry sale, please call Mary Ann Dolan at 860-342-0594.

Tickets for the fashion show will be available on September 1st.



*This 1890’s
Steampunk Bustle
Dress will be
shown at the
fashion show.
The dress was
originally made
for The Russian
Museum of
World Funeral
Culture.*

President’s Letter, continued from page 1

In the past year, we have established two important boards to help us move forward in our quest to preserve Portland’s past for the future. Our **Trustees** continue to work on a long term plan. The **Collections Board** is developing a policy that will help us focus on the items, information and documents that will preserve Portland’s rich history.

Have a sunny and pleasant summer, and we hope to see you soon at the museum.

MEMBERSHIP DUES. . .

We've listed below **paid-up members** as of May 15 for the current calendar year. If you're **not** listed below, check the mailing label on this newsletter. If "life" appears, your life membership has been paid. If "2011" or later appears, you have paid your dues for this year. Otherwise, the last year for which we have received dues is shown.

The Society needs you as a contributing member. Not only financially, but also with your help and knowledge of Portland's past. Dues [Student & Senior \$10.00, Individual (age 19-59) \$15.00, Family \$25.00, Business Sponsor \$50.00, Patron \$100.00, Individual Lifetime Member \$250.00] should be mailed to: Portland Historical Society, Inc., PO Box 98, Portland, CT 06480. Questions? Call Luiza McDougall, 860-342-3062.

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* denotes Life Membership

HISTORY. . .

Doris Sherrow-Heidenis, our trusty researcher, has been busily documenting the lives of Portland's Civil War Soldiers. The first difficulty is just figuring out who they were, as there are at least 17 different lists, made following the war, of Portland's participants. These first two soldiers, in the articles below, are listed on "George Stancliff's list", dated July 28, 1865. It lists the soldier, his wife and children, and includes 34 soldiers. By contrast, the list in History of Middlesex County, Connecticut by J.B. Beers & Co., 1884, includes 198 men. To document these historic characters, Doris digs through Vital Records and Land Records then searches 1860's era newspapers to find any hints. She also recommends Civil War Soldiers & Sailors System: <http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/> for further research on Civil War ancestors. Editor

Portland's Civil War Soldiers by Doris Sherrow-Heidenis

THE TWO WILLIAM FOSTER ORPHANS

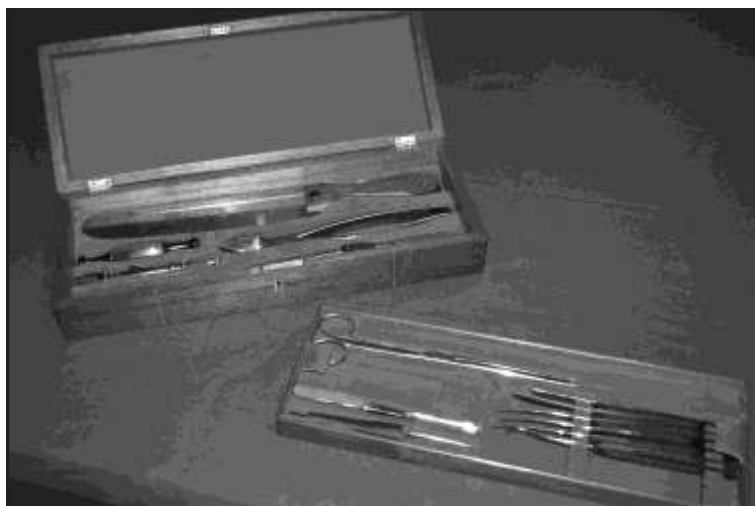
In 1865, George Stancliff drew up his list of the veterans of the Civil War. Thirty-four Portland men were on it, including a number that were deceased. On that list were the children of William and Ann Foster, Joseph and Amy, born in 1857 and 1862, respectively. Daughter Amy never met her father, William Foster (1834-1862), who had gone off to war a couple months before she was born, and was killed in battle only three weeks after her birth.

But the years before the war had not been kind to the Foster family either. William married Ann Ferguson, who had been born in Scotland, and their first child, a son named Joseph, was born on January 24, 1857 when William was 22, and Ann, 18. His occupation was "Quarryman." In September of 1858, the couple had a daughter, Margaret, but just 22 months later, in July of 1860, she died. (Millions of lives, particularly those of small children, were cut short by the diseases of summer.) Ann Foster was again pregnant when her little daughter died, she had a little boy on November 22. He is presumed to have died soon after as his name is not recorded in either Vital Records or the online records for Trinity Cemetery, where Margaret, and her father, are buried.

So in August of 1862, William Foster, 28 years old, left for the war in the South. He left behind his wife Ann, who was seven months pregnant, and his 5-year-old son, Joseph. Just two short months later, William was killed in Loudon County, Virginia, and his body was shipped home to be buried. He was the fifth Portland man to die in the war. Two years later, his wife Ann also died, leaving 8-year-old Joseph and 3-year-old Amy orphaned.



Items in Civil War display at the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History: (left) Civil War raincoat, rifle, bullet case, powder horn and belt case; (below) Civil War surgeon's field kit.



HISTORY. . . Portland's Civil War Soldiers continued

THOMAS S. DEAN

DIED APRIL 3, 1896, AGE 70, VETERAN OF THE CIVIL WAR, 20TH REGIMENT, Co. D.

Thomas Dean was born in Willington CT in either 1823 or 1826--vital records and his gravestone offer both possibilities. He married Lucy Dickinson (1823-1880) on October 31, 1847. The young Dean couple began life together in Portland. Three weeks later, on November 16, Lucy gave birth to their son, whom they named "Pulaski"--probably in recognition of General Casimir Pulaski (1745-1779), the Revolutionary War general.

Pulaski was joined by a sister Lucy on August 5, 1848, and Eugenia, on January 17, 1854. At that time, her parents were in their early 30s, her brother, 7, and sister, 6. Just 2 ½ years later on August 17, 1856, little Eugenia died from pneumonia. Three weeks after that, Pulaski succumbed to typhoid fever. The Deans were left with only Lucy, 8, and a baby on the way. Clarence was born on either January or June 11, 1858--the town clerk's writing is unclear. But on Sept. 6, 1860, Lucy, too, died.

By 1862, Thomas had only his wife Lucy and one 4-year-old son, Clarence, to support. So he signed up for the 20th Regiment of the Union Army which was assembling in Portland. The Regiment left for the war in August, 1862. Thomas came back in 1865 to his family. Clarence, his mother Lucy and father Thomas were on George Stancliff's 1865 list of all the Portland Civil War veterans and their families.

But twelve years later on May 24, 1877, Clarence, too died, rendering the aging Deans childless.

Curiously, Trinity Cemetery lists "Thomas & Lucy's granddaughter Ida V. Dean," dying at 7 years, 6 months in 1876. That would mean she was born in January of 1869, and therefore conceived around April, 1868. It is a mystery whose child she was. The Deans had had four children, but both Eugenia and Pulaski had died in 1856 and Lucy, in 1860. Only Clarence was left by 1868, but he would have been only 10! Could this little girl possibly be Clarence's? Of course little Ida might have been the illegitimate child of a sister or sister-in-law, or a neighbor's young child--we will likely never know.

Thomas's wife Lucy, with all her children gone, survived only three more years, dying November 30, 1880, age 57.

Lucy's will was written up on Sept. 4, 1880, two months before her death. It showed her concern that her possessions be disposed of as she wished and not left to her husband's determination. Item 1 doled out her "Hall Quarry Stock" to her brother Harry Dickinson. Item 2 gave something to her niece Sarah M. Waldo of Mansfield. The *third* recipient of her estate was her husband, Thomas S. Dean, and he got the use --not the ownership!--of her house near the New York & Boston Air Line Railroad Depot. Item 4 gave a large itemization of her clothes, her dishes, and her jewelry--which was to be equally divided between her brother and her niece! In the fifth item, she made William H. Beebe her executor. And there is a codicil--a very small piece of paper attached with a common pin--to the other papers, saying, "I give and bequeath to my husband Thomas Dean his bed and bedding and what other household furniture that will be necessary for him to have. Lucy Dean".

Thomas lived on for another 16 years, dying April 3, 1896 age 70. He was listed in Vital Records as a "laborer," dying of "blood poisoning." His obituary appeared in the next day's Penny Press.



***The soldier atop
Portland's
Civil War
Monument.***



15th Annual Town-Wide Tag Sale—A Success



Saturday, May 7, the Society’s Town-Wide Tag Sale brought a large crowd of shoppers to town. They had a lovely day, with only a shower at the very end, for finding every possible item, from the smallest keepsake to the largest motorized toy. Not only were the tag sales good, but the spring flowers just made the ride around town even better.



A host of volunteers showed up at the Ruth Callander House garage and the Hemlock Grange to assist the Society with all aspects of our tag, food, product and bake sales. The Masons of Warren Lodge #51 provided invaluable help with set up, take down, and along with other volunteers, delivering tag sale poles around town. Society members baked luscious items to fill a number of tables and satisfy all the hungry shoppers. Our terrific volunteer cooks kept everyone happy with hot dogs and all the fixings.

The result was a great day for all, shoppers and sellers, and a successful fundraiser to support the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History and the Society’s programs and historic sites projects.

This is a significant part of our fundraising year, and this year raised over \$5000.

Thanks to everyone who participated in every way, and especially to all the volunteers and sponsors without whom this annual project would be impossible.

Tag Sale Committee



FROM THE CALLANDER HOUSE CUPBOARD



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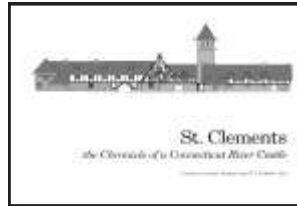


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2011 CALENDAR

All programs are held at the Portland Library, Mary Flood Room, at 7:30 pm., unless otherwise indicated.

June 5 - Civil War & Portland Exhibit - Museum open 2-4 pm

June 11 - CT Open House Day - Museum open 11-3 pm

June - Program membership meeting - See Rivereast News Bulletin for date, place, time and details

July 3 - Museum closed for Independence Day Holiday weekend

Aug 7 - Civil War & Portland Exhibit - Museum open 2-4 pm

Sept 4 - Civil War & Portland Exhibit - Museum open 2-4 pm

Sept 27 - Membership Program and Meeting— topic to be announced

Oct 2 - Portland Exhibit - Museum open 2-4 pm

Oct 16 - “Fashion Through the Years” - fashion show and tea at Zion Lutheran Church 2-4 pm

Oct 25 - “Aerial Photography of the Connecticut River Valley” program by Tom Walsh from Shoreline Aerial Photography, LLC.

Nov 6 - Portland Exhibit - Museum open 2-4 pm



Wangunk/Native American items on display at Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History

NEWSLETTER - Phyllis and Claire Frisbie, 5-27-11

May 2011 Newsletter

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