

The Quorum Review

Official Newsletter of the Brownstone Quorum, Inc.
Published in Portland, Connecticut since 2002

Vol. IV No. 1

February 2005

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE, from Jim Tripp

The Brownstone Quorum had a successful year in 2004. High on the list of accomplishments was the completion of a trail of notable trees on the riverfront property and the accompanying *Guide to Trees and Points of Interest*. This project (described in article on page 4) was partially funded by a grant from the Rockfall Foundation. The grant itself was a notable accomplishment as the Quorum was in competition with several other towns and organizations for these desirable annual awards.

The Brownstone Paddlers presented all six Canoe Days, with no rain or wind cancellations. Guests came from 27 towns within the state as well as from New York, New Jersey, California and Colorado. A special tour was arranged for guests from the Netherlands. Not only did the Paddlers provide 240 tours on the quarry lake, they welcomed an average of fourteen visitors each month who brought their own canoes and kayaks.

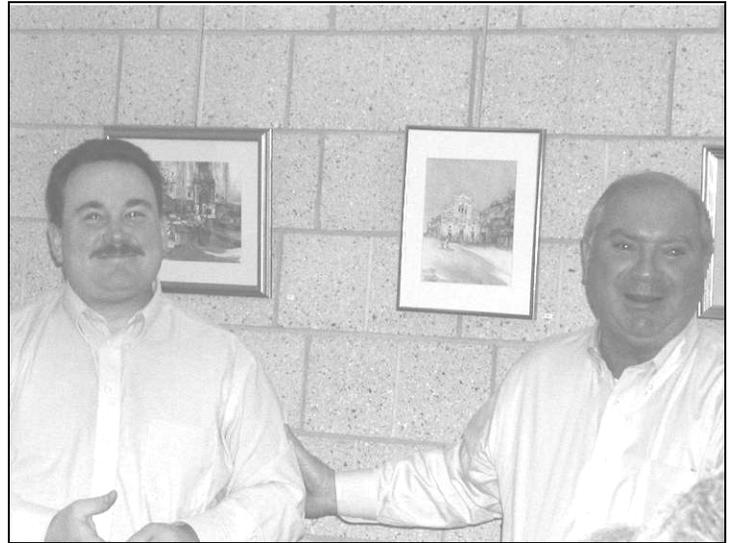
Use of the Riverfront Park has increased significantly. In addition to the daily visits by people who just want to take a walk, members of the Quorum have led walks with Boy and Girl Scouts, the Audubon Society, the Mom's Club and local school children.

Quarry Focus Day V and the Portland Fair were held in good weather and were successful with very large numbers visiting the Quorum Fair display of old pictures of the quarry operation as well as the "Home for the Arch" display and survey.

Fundraising was successful with the Quorum Tag Sale (in cooperation with the Historical Society Town-Wide Tag Sale) bringing in over \$500. The kayak raffle cleared \$1100. Paid up membership lists 120 members with several individuals making generous contributions. We look forward to continued growth

ANNUAL MEETING

The 5th Annual Meeting of the Brownstone Quorum was held at the Portland Library on January 24th, 2005. The meeting was opened by President Jim Tripp who presented his report on the 2004 year. (See above)



President Tripp presented four service awards to:

George Swanson, Leader of the local Sea Scout Troop for the assistance the Sea Scouts have given the Quorum during Canoe Days and for all the clean up they have done at the quarry lake.

Mike Susca, Quorum Treasurer for his excellent work in managing Quorum finances, and for his organizational skills in all Quorum activities.

Bob McDougall, Quorum Webmaster, for his technical expertise in producing *The Quorum Review*, and his wise counsel in Quorum decision making.

Jeanne Dilworth, Chair Promotion and Education Committee, for being the spirit of the Quorum and for working on everything.

After thanking the 2004 officers, President Tripp turned the meeting over to Nan Zimmer, Chair of the Nominating Committee who presented the slate of officers for 2005. No nominations were presented from the floor. The following slate was elected unanimously.

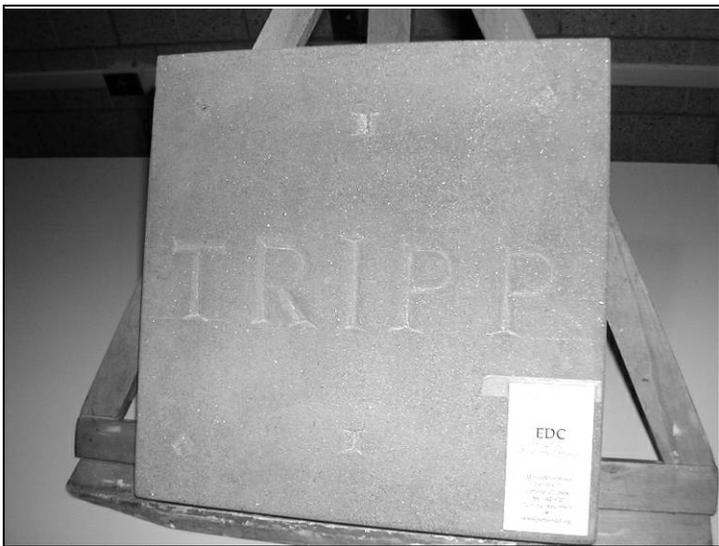
President.....	Jeanne Dilworth
Vice President.....	Tom Bransfield
Recording Secretary.....	Sari & Howard Rosenbaum
Treasurer.....	Mike Susca
Members-at-Large.....	Dan Davis
	Mike Giuliano
Historical Society Rep.....	Ruth Freeburg
P.R.I.D.E. Rep.....	Bob McDougall

Committee Chairmen will be:

Property Management....	John LeShane
Design.....	Bart Barresi
Membership.....	Romanie Gussenhoven
Promotion/Education.....	Eunice Wiseman
	Nan Zimmer
Organization.....	Cindy and Wayne Andrus



Eunice Wiseman thanked outgoing President Tripp for his work for the quarries and the Quorum and presented him with a large, heavy, newspaper-wrapped object which turned out to be a brownstone paver with the name "TRIPP" incised in sharp, bold letters. The carving was the work of Mike Giuliano, who in his recent retirement has been teaching himself stone carving.



The business meeting was followed by guest speakers Joseph Marfuggi and Mark Nicol of Riverfront Recapture (see separate article).

BROWNSTONE FESTIVAL

After five years of Quarry Focus Days, the Quorum has decided to expand and sponsor a Portland Brownstone Festival involving the entire town. We are hoping to have a variety of events in a variety of locations so that there will be something for everyone to enjoy. We'd like to have some ethnic displays or demonstrations (the quarries gained National Historic Landmark status in part for their contribution to immigration), art and artists, games, food, music, walks, maybe a stone cutting demonstration (with lessons?). We're hoping to showcase organizations, businesses, town departments, and individuals to let people know what's available in town. The first event of the day will be the Parks and Recreation Department's "Come on Over" Road Race. With luck this festival might become an annual event.

Come to the Quorum meeting Monday, February 28th at 7:00 PM at the Portland Library Mary Flood Room for a brainstorming session to get started on this project. All ideas welcomed.

AWARDS

The Brownstone Quorum is the proud recipient of two awards for their work at the Portland Brownstone Quarries National Historic Landmark.

The first, awarded in September is from the Portland Parks and Recreation Commission and reads: "In recognition of The Brownstone Quorum's outstanding contribution to the field of Public Recreation and Parks for all of Portland Citizens." It is a handsome plaque with a color photo of the north quarry lake in its full summer glory inset into a walnut plaque with the citation engraved in brass and black.

The second is from The Rockfall Foundation and reads: "The Rockfall Foundation, a charitable educational organization for community service established in 1935 by Colonel Clarence S. Wadsworth proudly presents this certificate of appreciation to The Brownstone Quorum, Inc. for leadership and dedication in developing Portland's National Historic Landmark Brownstone Quarries and Riverfront into a beautiful park for residents and tourists, and for developing trails and educational materials for this special place." This award was presented at the Rockfall Annual Meeting on November 18th, 2004.

RIVERFRONT RECAPTURE CAPTURES PORTLAND

On a cold, rainy day in November, several Quorum members took a “field trip” to East Hartford and across the footbridge to Hartford to visit Riverfront Recapture Riverfront Park. We had heard that this was a wonderful example of community-spirited volunteerism. Since we sometimes see ourselves as inventing the wheel, we decided to take a look to find out what we could learn from these “experts.” What we saw blew us away!

Some of you remember the “Little Rubber Ducky” promotion about twenty years ago that sent hundreds of little yellow plastic ducks floating down the Connecticut River from Riverside Park north of the Bulkeley Bridge as far as the current would take them. The project was designed to get the Riverfront Recapture prominently in the public eye (It did.) and to raise money (It didn't, but a lot of headaches *were* raised.) to meet the project goals. (That project makes the Quorum fundraisers look like very small change.) In the intervening two decades, both sides of the Connecticut River have experienced a rebirth of their natural beauty enhanced by the best efforts of some fantastic, dedicated people.

Two of those people visited the Portland Library in January to help the Quorum celebrate their 5th anniversary. Joseph Marfuggi, President and CEO of Recapture and Mark Nicol, Director of Planning and Park Development brought their expertise and their humor to an audience of seventy-five interested residents.

Mr. Marfuggi focused on the services the park provides and on the necessary financial realities of building the park and being able to offer services. He stressed from the beginning the necessity of making this park the people's park. First it was cleaned up, cleared of debris and made accessible as it had not been in the memory of most residents of the Hartford/East Hartford area. That accessibility brought in community support on both sides of the River, making believers of many skeptics. They assessed the benefits a riverfront park had to offer - and the problems inherent in being a riverfront subject to regular and extensive flooding.

Then, true to their “people's park” goal, they designed a park to support the activities essential to city residents. City dwellers need a place to get away and relax with their families. Some place close to home when transportation is often not available. Walkways and benches came first. We loved the benches - huge blocks of Portland brownstone, impervious to water

damage and not subject to blowing away, being burned, stolen or “borrowed.”

Because the River is swift-running and powerful and frightening to many people, they wanted to make it, too, accessible and safe. One of their first projects was boat building. Hartford area kids were invited to come to the riverfront and build boats. And then to row them on the River. The kids gained in respect for themselves and their abilities and for the River and its strength.

Adults were also given access to the river by the construction of Charter Oak Landing under the Charter Oak Bridge. Picnic tables were installed along both sides of the river. Music was added, and Fourth of July fireworks displays. Access was provided over the highway so no one had to risk life and limb to get to the fun. The Amistad made berth in the shadow of the Founders' Bridge welcoming visitors to climb aboard and inspect this historic re-creation. A landscaped esplanade stretches from the top of the dike near Founders' down to the walkway on the waterfront. Here people can sit and relax in the sun or enjoy the many programs, from Chinese dragon boat races, to Italian street festivals, hip-hop performers, and more that Recapture schedules throughout the warm weather.

Mr. Marfuggi spoke of the need to make the park safe and to keep it clean and in good repair. An agreement with the Metropolitan District Commission provides for Park Rangers who regularly patrol both sides of the river and also provide services to visitors. MDC also maintains the park, cleaning up after floods, mowing and grooming, and taking care of trash.

He spoke, as well, of what is now a principal job of his - fundraising. He gave the Quorum many ideas of how to handle this scary, but vital, activity, stressing always the value of the park and all that it offers to the City of Hartford and the Town of East Hartford, to businesses and to residents. He encouraged us by saying that he had learned his job by doing it, with no advance preparation.

Mark Nicol addressed the engineering aspects of each step. He spoke of the beautiful boathouse built north of the Bulkeley Bridge. It is an essential part of the rowing program provided for both children and adults. The boathouse location regularly floods in the spring. So they designed a building through which the flood waters could pass without causing any damage. Then to get the most out of their venture, they designed a beautiful community room which brings in funds when rented by local individuals and organizations for affairs from the simple to the elegant.

The program planned by Recapture determines the development of facilities in the park. Much of Mr. Nicol's time is spent in determining ways to accomplish what the program planners want.

A major project for him, now, is developing the south end of the park on the Hartford side dealing with the outflow structures serving the undergrounded Park River.

What had been planned as a 45 minute presentation, grew into a 90 minute presentation with Mr. Marfuggi and Mr. Nicol staying to share refreshments and answer individual questions. The Quorum members learned a great deal and are eager to put some of this learning to work.

ROCKFALL GRANT

Established in 1935 by Colonel Clarence Wadsworth as a philanthropic organization dedicated to public education in community issues relating to land use and development, environmental conservation and preservation, and community enrichment, The Rockfall Foundation is located in the deKoven House in Middletown.

Each year, the Foundation has two principal projects. The first is the annual symposium devoted to a planning issue of importance to Middlesex County towns. The second is the Foundation grants program which provides seed money for worthwhile projects offered by individuals and groups and designed to improve community life through environmental action. Winners of these grants are required to present a display at the symposium and explain them to symposium participants.

The Quorum submitted a proposal in 2004 to identify, map and sign the notable trees in the Riverfront Park. The Foundation accepted the Quorum proposal and awarded a \$1000 grant toward the \$2500 cost of the project. John LeShane, Quorum Property Manager, selected thirty-six trees and designed the metal, spring-loaded signs to identify each tree. He cut trails to the trees and he and Bart Barresi, Design Committee Chair, installed the signs.

Sue Fiedler, Design Committee member and a landscape architect, then surveyed the area and created a brochure mapping out the Park and locating the trees. On the reverse side of the map she has illustrated each tree and provided a brief description for identification purposes. The final project is a very handsome and useful brochure which is available at the Town Hall, the Library and by calling 342-2260

(Jeanne) or 342-4493 (Sue). Copies are also available at the Tourism Office at the Middletown Chamber of Commerce.

Sue and John were among the presenters at the Rockfall Symposium held October 8th at the Wadsworth Mansion in Middletown where the Quorum project was well received.

SCUBA UPDATE

The Town of Portland is entering into negotiations with the Hayes brothers of the Rocky Hill SCUBA Shack regarding possible leasing of the quarries for use as a SCUBA certification site.

The quarries have long been used by the Portland and State Police Dive Teams for training. Other communities have also requested their use. The depth of the water, its cleanliness, the various levels of the quarry floor and the fact that it is protected from winds and tides by the high quarry walls make the site particularly desirable for a certification site. Were it to be developed as such, it would be the only fresh water deep dive site in New England.

Because SCUBA certification requires two dives, on separate days, the Hayes brothers are interested not only in the quarry lakes, but also in facilities to accommodate divers and their families overnight.

The Quorum has discussed with First Selectwoman Bransfield issues involving site development which we believe are essential to making this project successful from the points of view of the Hayes group, the Town government and the residents of the town. These issues are related to the ultimate use of the property as revealed in the Planning Charrette conducted in 2000 by the National Park Service, in the surveys conducted by the Quorum in 2001 and 2002 and interests expressed by participants at various quarry events and the annual Quorum displays at the Portland Fair.

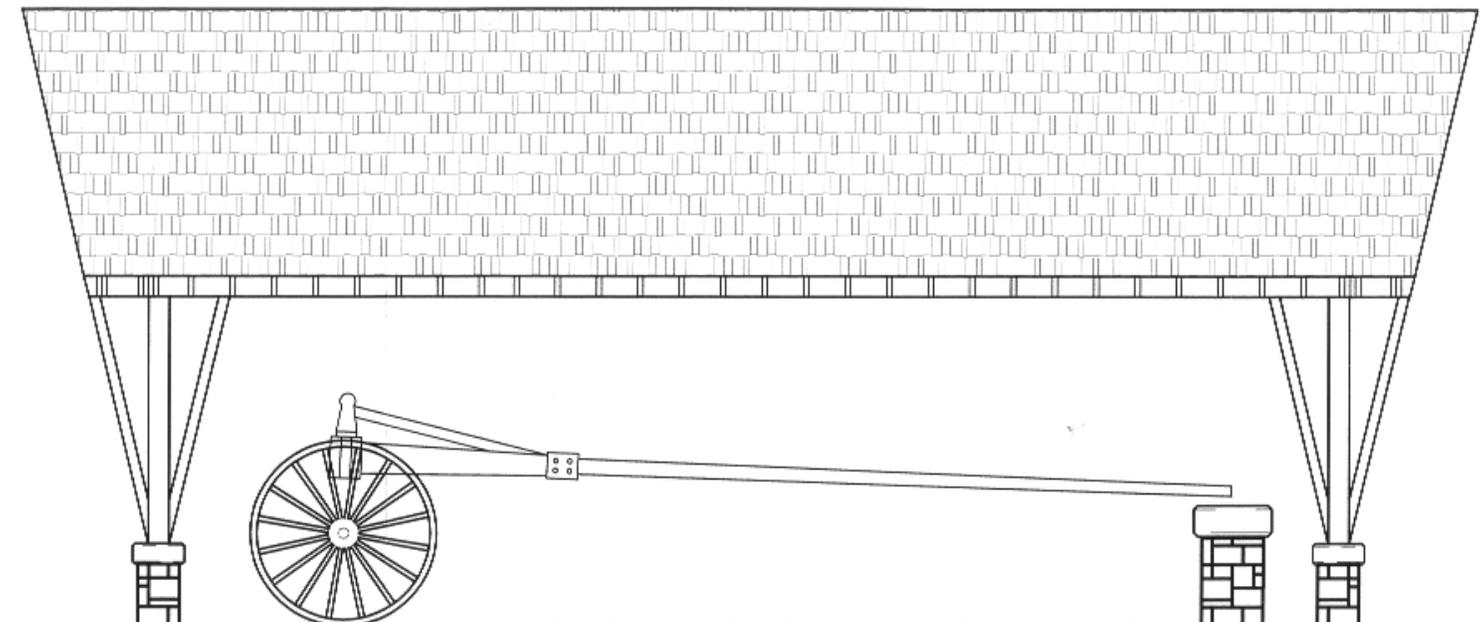
We'll keep you informed.

Meetings:

The Brownstone Quorum meets at 7pm on the fourth Monday of every month at the Portland Library, the public is always welcome to attend. Special Programs and work parties are announced in the Rivereast News Bulletin.

Web: www.BrownstoneQuorum.Org

Email: BrownstoneQuorum@Yahoo.Com



Preliminary Covering Design

A HOME FOR THE ARCH

In January, President Jim Tripp presented the Board of Selectmen the results of the surveys taken at the Portland Agriculture Fair regarding a permanent home for the restored brownstone arch. This 140 year old arch, once used to transport brownstone at the quarries, has been restored twice. The recent restoration by Eddie and Joe Chiabrero and their nephew Bill Long, has been done to original specifications. Wood for the restoration was logged in Meshomasic State Forest, cured and shaped by the Chiabrerros who also fabricated the ironwork to replace the original hardware lost over the years.

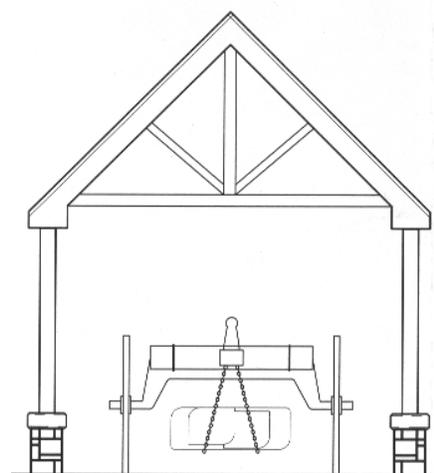
The two restorations were necessary because the arch, donated to the Town in 1914, was stored out in the open and it rotted. This restoration is truly magnificent and townspeople want to protect it.

At the Quorum Fair display, visitors were given a chance to select the location of the new arch home and the design for the shelter to protect it. Four possible sites were presented - the front lawn of the Brownstone Intermediate School, the Town Green between the Police Department and the Bank of America building, the vacant triangle at the end of the Arrigoni Bridge by the Exxon station - all on Main Street - and the lawn behind the new Town Hall on East Main Street. The winner, with 61% of the votes, was the Town Green site favored because it would receive maximum exposure, would lead people into the Green, would support efforts to improve Main Street and would provide the best security.

Voters favored a gable roof shelter providing total coverage for the 32' arch. They also chose fully open sides to allow maximum accessibility without blocking the view into the Green.

At their recent meeting on Wednesday, February 9th, the Selectmen voted to approve the site and to give the Quorum permission to begin the project. Selectman Tom Flood suggested that possibly some residents in town would be interested in contributing materials or labor in addition to the money the Quorum will be soliciting. The Chiabrerros have already offered their services as has local contractor, Don Guilmette.

Fund raising plans for the arch home will be completed in cooperation with the First Selectwoman when her budget is complete.



The Brownstone Quarries Part II

by William Van Beynum

When the town of Middletown sold land to James Stancliff, and granted him other lands because he built the "town's chimneys", they established the precedent of selling the source of the brownstone supply to individuals. His land, which included the first town quarry, stood on the "rocks" and was about six acres in extent. This is the section which in 1788 became the "old" Shaler and Hall quarry. In 1690 Stancliff's house stood on these rocks below the end of Commerce Street, where there is now a quarry hole. When Chatham was set off from Middletown in 1767 certain lands remained under joint control of "the proprietors of the common and undivided lands of Middletown and Chatham". It was on these lands, south of the first town quarry, that a second one was opened for the use of the inhabitants.

In 1783 the firm of Hurlburt and Roberts started in operating, south of the second town quarry and just north of the present Silver Street, and they had to dig down a distance of some ten feet to uncover the stone. The property was sold by the heirs of Aaron Hurlbert and two other persons around 1814 to two brothers from Middle Haddam, Erastus and Silas Brainerd. The Brainerds operated as a partnership, trading as E & S. Brainerd till 1857, the year that Silas died. Then the firm became known as Erastus Brainerd and Co., operating as a partnership (although Erastus Sr. died in 1861) until 1884 when it was incorporated as the Brainerd Quarry Co. In the 1880s the company employed almost 300 workmen, 45 yoke of oxen and 35 horses, the number varying with the years and seasons. They shipped their stone by as many as 16 schooners to various ports along the coast. The railroad was used to ship large amounts inland and to the western states. They produced close to 300,000 cubic feet of stone annually using four steam engines, one of 60 horsepower capacity from a depth in parts of the quarry of 200 feet. The stone was hoisted out of the quarries using the steam engines.

Just after the opening of what became the Brainerd quarry, the proprietors of the common and undivided lands met and voted, in 1786, that what quarry land was left in Middletown and Chatham should remain for the use of the residents of the towns, or for the general use of either town. By 1812 it had been decided to split the quarries equally between Chatham and Middletown and deed the land to the two towns, and a committee was appointed to take care of the necessary papers to accomplish this fact. This committee never took any final action to do as directed, so in 1872 two individuals were appointed to execute the necessary deeds, which they did. The towns accepted the deeds in March. In

May the Legislature extinguished all individual rights to the just over two acres of land. In June the towns started operating the quarry under the direction of a committee, and they were worked without interruption, except during bad weather, until 1884. An attempt was made to persuade Washington College (now Trinity) to come to Middletown in 1824 and it was voted to give the net profits and rents from the quarries until the sum of \$20,000 had been turned over if the college would settle and stay there. It didn't come to Middletown, so in the fall the diggings were leased to John Lawrence Lewis for a term of five years so stone could be obtained to build quarters for Capt. Cartridge's scientific and military academy.

The Captain's venture lasted only until 1829, so the next year the quarry was leased to Joel Hall and E. & S. Brainerd for another five year term. With no luck on Trinity College, and the collapse of the preparatory school venture, the interested persons in Middletown went after the individuals then organizing Wesleyan University to persuade them to come to Middletown. In addition to buildings erected for the Academy on High street that could be used, it was voted in Nov. 1833 "That the interest of the town (of Middletown) in the town quarry of Chatham be appropriated to the use and benefit of the Wesleyan University for a period of forty years, on condition that when the set amount of the avails thereof shall equal the sum of ten thousand dollars within said period grant shall cease." The sum was used up by 1860 with the building of the row of buildings along High street.

By 1884 the depth of the hole had reached such a point that it was not considered practical to work it any longer. It had been leased for the last several years by Brainerd Quarry Company who had used it as a scrapping ground or place of deposit for stone, and as increased river frontage. So in August the Brainerd concern bought the southern two-thirds of it, and the Middlesex Quarry Company the northern third. With this sale the right of townsmen to obtain stone for their cellars, walks, steps and the like, which right they had enjoyed for almost 200 years, was gone. The last "town quarry agent" was William H. Beebe. The companies paid \$20,000 for the quarry and this was divided between Middletown, Portland, Chatham and Cromwell. (to be continued)

*This article first appeared in
The Portland Citizen, Vol. 1 No. 28, September 26, 1958
Courtesy of the Portland Historical Society*

WEDDING BELLS

The Quorum is happily celebrating two weddings.



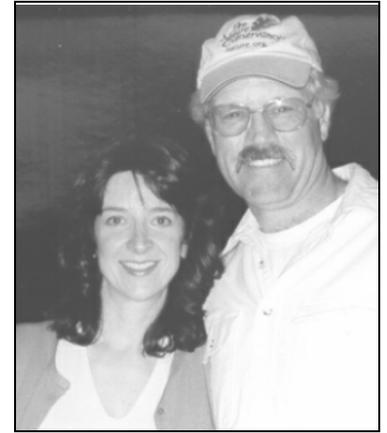
Mr. & Mrs. Robert McDougall

Quorum members, Bob McDougall, our Webmaster and IT expert and Luiza Penachio, were married in Odessa, Texas, her hometown, on December 27, 2004.

They reside in Portland.

John LeShane, Quorum Property Manager and super trailbuilder, persuaded Sylvia Torning of Colchester to join him in marriage on January 29th, 2005 at the Marlborough Congregational Church.

They are at home on South Road in Portland.



Mr. & Mrs. John LeShane

Quorum members are delighted to celebrate two such wonderful unions.

Quorum Membership

Now is the time to renew your Quorum membership. We have enclosed a self-addressed envelope for your use. Annual Dues are \$10.00 per person per calendar year. All monies received by the Quorum are tax deductible and spent only on Quarry and Riverfront

Park improvements or public education relating to the park.

If you have any questions about membership, please call Romanie Gussenhoven at 342-7237.

Quorum Calendar

February

6-2PM-4PM **Museum of Portland History**
492 Main Street

28-7:00 PM Regular Monthly Meeting Portland Library
Community Brainstorm –
Portland Festival September 10th
All invited to come and share ideas.

March

6-2PM-4PM **Museum of Portland History**
492 Main Street

28-7:00 PM Regular Monthly Meeting Portland Library
Invasive Species –
Guest Speaker Joanne Luppi Come and learn.

April

3-2PM-4PM **Museum of Portland History**
492 Main Street

April

25-7:00 PM Regular Monthly Meeting Portland Library
Work Session - Festival and Canoe Days
We can use help. Join us.

May

1-2PM-4PM **Museum of Portland History**
492 Main Street

14-8AM-2PM **Annual Tag Sale**
29 Prospect Street 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM
Start saving stuff to sell now.
Call 342-2260 for drop-off date.

23-7:00 PM Regular Monthly Meeting
Riverfront Park Walk on the riverfront,
with picnic.

Brownstone Quorum Inc.
P. O. Box 402
Portland, CT 06480-0402

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The Quorum Review

February 2005

Next Meeting:
February 28, 2005
7pm Portland Library