

# The Quorum Review

Vol. V No. 2

Official Newsletter of the Brownstone Quorum, Inc.  
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## Arch Pavilion Update

by Howard Rosenbaum

Don't panic!! Work is progressing, though slower than we would like. Right now we hope to be finished in time for the Festival (September 13th). The pavilion is obviously up and the brownstone walls are also up. Thanks to the Portland Exchange Club and Reed Johnson there is a really nice brownstone slab base on which the arch (and its sling) will stand. The unmarked bricks are here and await installation. The engraved bricks are due to arrive August 8th or 9th. As soon as possible, Rick Kelsey and the DPW (who have done a fantastic job helping us) will prepare the site and the bricks will be installed. This will probably be during the last two weeks in August. We still have to arrange for the lighting to be installed and the landscaping to be purchased (donated) and planted. So there it is. Slower than I had hoped, but well on its way and from what I hear, worth the wait. Thanks to everyone for their help and patience.

Flag Rededication

## Flag Rededication



(See story on page 2.)

## Flag Rededication

Way back in 2002, the Quorum raised the American flag on the promontory of the north quarry and dedicated it to the “quarrymen past, present and future” and in so doing celebrated the effort that had gone into cleaning up the quarries and saving them as a Portland treasure. Beside the flag pole, the Quorum installed the bronze plaque awarded to the Town by the United States Department of the Interior declaring the Portland Brownstone Quarries a National Historic Landmark (only the second such designation in the entire state). We celebrated, also, the support and help the Town and the Quorum had received from John Monroe, Program Director of the Rivers and Trails division of the National Park Service.

We had speeches and music (the Milardo band played) and food and laughter. It was a great day! A little overcast, but a great day!

We knew the installation was temporary, that something – we didn’t know what – would happen as we dedicated ourselves to building a new life for the remarkable quarry lake and lands.

What happened was that through the Quorum efforts at introducing the quarries to the public and showing off their beauty and recreational utility, a new use was found for them – a use that would take advantage of what the quarries had to offer and still protect them into the future. The late Scott Oakliff, of the Portland VFD Dive Team, introduced the quarries to Ed and Frank Hayes as a possible site for a SCUBA school or dive spot.

It clicked. The connection was made and today Portland has a fine recreational facility, the Portland Exploration and Discovery Park, an outstanding adaptive reuse of a historic site.

But with that new use, the flag and pole and plaque had to be removed from the promontory.

When the lease for the quarry property was signed, the Quorum requested a piece of land for a new flag installation. A triangular spot, just south of the WPA wall, overlooking the quarry seemed just about right. With the help of the Hayes brothers, the spot was cleared, a cement base for the flagpole was installed, a small lighted “plaza” was created, and on June 14th, 2008, Flag Day, the flagpole, flag, and Landmark

plaque, now mounted on a brownstone monument, were rededicated.



Whereas the original dedication was a joyous affair, the Rededication was a more serious and solemn one. The day, again, was overcast, but it seemed to be appropriate for what was a memorial celebration. Jim Tripp, Quorum President, welcomed everyone. Nan Zimmer read the speech written for the first dedication, which paid tribute to the workers of the past, the present and the future.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield spoke of history, and hope, and change, and hard work - all of which were represented in this rededication. Her talk set the scene perfectly for the raising of the flag which was donated by Barbara Clark and her children, Don, Tim, Deb and Robert, in memory of her husband Donald, Sr.

Barbara has ties to the quarries. She is a Bell, of the E. I. Bell family and Portland Steam Brownstone Company. Her late husband, Don, served in the U. S. Navy as a warrant officer (a B’s’n or boatswain) in the Pacific during WWII and later in the Korean War. Don became an active member of the Portland community serving the Town, Trinity Church and the Republican party. His daughter, Deborah, spoke of her father with reverence, love – and humor. His sons, Don, Jr. and Tim, raised the flag.

It was a solemn moment as Jim Tripp led the Pledge of Allegiance. Mark Milleville, a graduating senior at Portland High School, sang the Star Spangled Banner.

This rededication tied the past and the present together and in the ongoing presence of the flag in its permanent location at the Flag Plaza looks to the future.

It was a good day. A little overcast, but a very satisfying day.

## **Quorum Tag Sale**

Portland was one big traffic jam on Saturday, May 10<sup>th</sup>, but unlike most traffic jams that lead to short tempers and aggravation, this one was fun. It gave drivers time to read their maps and look for signs, catch glimpses of great buys and share tips on where to find that special item.

It was the Portland Historical Society's famous "Town-Wide Tag Sale." For the fifth year the Quorum participated and did very well. We had a variety of stuff. A canoe. A rowboat. Tables, chairs, dishes, glassware, some bedsteads. There was sports equipment and books. We had paintings, flower arrangements, centerpieces. Tools. Hand thrown pottery. You name it, we had it. One lady got a real steal when she bought an antique wardrobe.

We had our "FREE" boxes of things we knew people would like. Kids had their own boxes to rummage in.

We sold a lot of stuff. What we didn't sell, we distributed to a variety of organizations in Portland and Middletown, selecting items that were appropriate to each organization's needs.

It was a good day. We had good stuff. We had good workers. We had fun. And we made over \$900. (That helped the Quorum pay for the hydro-seeding we had done down at the riverfront park.)

It's interesting the number of people who come back to us and say, "We came here last year and got ... and you guys were so nice, we had to come back!" That's music to our ears.

**NOTE TO CONTRIBUTORS:** If you made a donation and did not receive your receipt, please call Jeanne at 342-2260.

## **Cub Scouts Celebrate**

The new grass at the Riverfront Park saw a lot of action on Thursday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> when the combined Portland Cub Scout Packs held their end of the year celebration.

While parents were setting out food and cooking hotdogs, the Scouts had games and competitions with a lot of running, cheering, laughing and falling over with fun. The highlight of the afternoon was the rain gutter boat race. The Scouts had made boats, decorated them and then raced them in two rain gutters. No hands were allowed, no nudging with noses either. The boats were powered by the Scouts breath – that was a whole lot of blowing. Good practice for the next birthday cake.

All that exercise made for big appetites – both Scouts and adults – and there was plenty of food. Quorum members were invited to join the fun, especially if they brought some food. So we did, and we did.

The event was planned by Sue Fiedler, a Cub Scout Den Mother and the Landscape Architect who has created the design concept for the Riverfront Park. Her design is for a park for people. This event showed how well her ideas work.

## **The Quarrylands Riverfront Park**

Throughout the winter, spring and early summer, members of the Quorum have been working down at the riverfront clearing an activity area and getting it ready for people to use and enjoy. With permission of the Board of Selectmen, they have been following the park concept design created by Landscape Architect, Sue Fiedler.

They have cut down trees, cleared brush, moved rocks, leveled and raked the soil and hydro-seeded the cleared areas. Much of the work has been done by hand and it has been hard work.

Last year at Festival time, about 100' were cleared along the river. By Festival time this year, close to 300' will be cleared. That's room for several new activities and displays.

This is Town-owned land, but currently the Town does not have the money to develop it.

The Quorum does what it can as part of its role as unofficial stewards of the property.

During slow periods this past winter, the Public Works Department was able to help in the clearing and spreading wood chips to keep the cleared areas open. And then we had the good

fortune of gaining two new Quorum members, Cari and Steve Klick.

We had put an appeal in the Rivereast News Bulletin asking for help with the work at the park. With the Board of Selectmen's approval we asked anyone who had heavy equipment to come down and give us a hand. Cari and Steve have equipment and they came down to see what was going on.

What they saw was a bunch of "old folks" – people with grey hair and well beyond 39 – chopping, hacking, and hauling by hand. (Most of the "active" Quorum members are retired.) That was enough for the Klicks. They went home and came back with a tractor with a backhoe and a scoop, and a truck with a dump trailer. And Whoooooee! did we get work done that day! Yes, we did. Piles of brush eight feet high and twenty feet around were scooped and put into the trailer and hauled off to the transfer station.

Rocks as big as steamer trunks were moved from here to there. It was great!

We had a few more good days like that, but with the hot, steamy weather we have not been doing any more clearing. We've got our 300 feet. We'll be back to get spruced up for the Festival, but more clearing will wait until the fall.

## **4<sup>th</sup> Annual Brownstone Festival**

The Portland Brownstone Festival and Family Day will be held Saturday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, from 9:00 AM through 6:00 PM. This is the day that Portland celebrates itself.

Plan on breakfast at the Senior Center with the Seniors and the Ecumenical Youth Group. Later they'll be serving "stuffed" baked potatoes. Stop downstairs and visit the Portland Arts Group show and sale before you head on over to the Portland Economic Development Commission-sponsored Crafters Market in the parking lot beside the bank.

Family Day will begin on the Town Green at 11:00 AM and run until 2:00 PM. This is a great place for families with kids up to 5<sup>th</sup> grade, with bouncers, a magic man, games, crafts, lots to do for kids, and bake sales, displays and information for grown-ups, too.

See Dr. Mormile for bike helmets. Hungry? Get your popcorn & water from Cellar Savers, or

hotdogs, ice cream from 80 Licks or one of those "stuffed" baked potatoes.

The Cellar Savers will be operating their antique fire engines on Main Street. The rides are free, but contributions would be nice. They'll stop at Trinity Church where you can get off and tour the historic church and cemetery (Did you know that Trinity cemetery holds many of the graves moved from the quarry land when the quarries went commercial?). The garden clubs will have a flower show in the Fellowship Hall and Joanne Luppi will be giving guidance in flower arranging. Get off that fire engine and check it out. Pick up a ride on the next trip.

At the Cellar Savers Fire Museum you really have to get off. Otherwise you'll miss the wonderful display of antique fire fighting equipment.

Heading back up Main Street, the fire trucks will make a stop at the Historical Society Museum for the Portland Farm exhibit. Then they'll head back to the Town Green.

Now comes the really important part. Be sure to get over to the Brownstone Intermediate School and take another ride, this time on a hay rig with Jeff Kelsey. Also starting around 11:00 AM, Jeff will take you down Middlesex Avenue and Extension all the way down to the Riverfront Park and the water park. The hay rig will ride along beside the river – it may stop at a few places for things to do, but it will bring you up to the Brownstone Quorum area where there will be music, displays, old-fashioned games, an art show with demonstrations, Kettle Korn, 80 Licks, and the Quorum's FREE town picnic. For the fourth year, from 3:00 to 5:30, the Quorum is inviting Festival goers to come to our picnic – hotdogs, hamburgs, etc. – sit and enjoy music presented by Dave Kuzminski, chat with your neighbors, meet friends old and new, and just have a good time enjoying Portland's Riverfront Park. Don't worry about getting back to your car, Jeff will shuttle you back up to Main Street before dark.

So, please mark your calendars for September 13<sup>th</sup> and come on down. Bring your friends.

*The History of Portland, Part 31*  
**The Brownstone Quarries Part VIII**  
by William Van Beynum

*(Editor's Note: This is the fourth part of an article printed in THE NATIONAL MAGAZINE in 1853.)*

“When the removal of the stone from the lowest bed or stratum of chasm was commenced, certain singular phenomena were observed, which, it is believed have not been described as occurring elsewhere in quarries of this kind. It consisted of a peculiar movement of the stone in certain cases, indicating that the strata are not altogether at ease in their present position; or, in other words, that the enormous pressure of the superincumbent strata is not equally distributed in different directions! The fissures or rents which occur at irregular intervals divide the stone into masses of every form and size; but it is remarkable that most of the more extensive fissures run in the general directions of north and south, and east and west, and of course cross each other nearly at right angles. When a new layer is to be penetrated sometimes the beginning is made by blasting; but as this of necessity destroys much of the stone by breaking it into fragments too small for use, another method is frequently adopted: the workmen commence by the side of one of the main fissures, and cut a channel a foot or more in width, and perhaps forty or fifty feet in length, carefully removing the fragments as they are separated by the pick, which serves the place of the woodman's axe. This channel is often carried down very uniformly through the whole length, several workmen being engaged upon it at the same moment. When the channel or groove has been excavated nearly to the bottom of the layer, which varies from two to six feet in thickness, suddenly, as if by mighty compression, the little remaining stone at the bottom of the layer is crushed to fragments, and the two walls of the new channel make a slight approximation to each other, amounting in some cases to three-fourths of an inch! In one instance the occurrence was attended by a report so loud as to be heard in all parts of the quarry, and was mistaken for a blast. At the sound the workmen leaped from the excavation, and hesitated at first whether it would be safe to return. It is an interesting fact that this occurrence takes place only when the channel has been cut in a north and south direction; nothing of the kind having been noticed when it is made east and west. It is observed, too, that which these natural joints which run east and west are often a little

open, those which run north and south are often very close and tight; all of them becoming more close as the work of excavation is carried downward.

“These facts plainly indicate a lateral pressure of the stone in an east and west direction, and the absence of such pressure in the direction of north and south. To account for it fully would probably be no easy task, but we may not hazard much if we attribute it to the removal of the vast pressure of the many millions of cubic feet of stone and earth which formerly rested on the strata now laid bare. It would seem that the strata, since their original disposition, must have had time to settle very firmly on their foundation, whatever it may be; but still, as the removal of a part of any mass of matter resting on a foundation not absolutely immovable may give it a tendency to change its position, it is not absurd to suppose that this may be the case here. Icebergs floating in the water of the ocean have been seen to turn quite over, in consequence of the change of form produced by the irregular melting away of some parts of the mass more than other parts. Any may not the fissures we have spoken of, as occurring everywhere in the rock, have had their origin, in part at least, in this irregular settling of the rocky strata upon their ancient foundations?

Next to the grounds of the Brainerd & company quarry, to the north of the buildings and quarry hole is the ancient graveyard. “This earth that covers the stone here is some ten feet in depth; and when the land was appropriated for the purpose of burial. In 1712, it was little thought that the quarries would ever so extend themselves as to disturb the repose of the dead! This may not yet have to be done; but encroachments have been so steadily made upon the small space grudgingly allowed them that; we judge, very soon the cemetery will be left as an elevated mound, standing indeed securely on its foundation of stone laid by the Almighty himself, yet to be shaken continually by the thunderblasts of the quarrymen.

This blasting is no ordinary operation at Portland. Holes are sometimes drilled a foot in diameter many feet in depth, and whole kegs of

gunpowder poured in at a charge. In all the quarries these are reserved until noon or evening, just as the men have left their work, and then fired, shaking, as by terrible thunder, the country for miles around.

“As the supply of the stone here is absolutely inexhaustible, and so many circumstances favor its use- its excellent qualities for architectural purposes, the facility with which it is worked, and the situation of the quarries upon the banks of a navigable stream, affording the means of ready transportation- it would seem that the business must hereafter be greatly increased; nor is it easy now to determine its limits. At present some thirty or forty sloops and schooners are constantly employed, during the season of navigation, in transporting the stone to the various cities on the Atlantic coast, from which it is sometimes carried into the interior. Even in the city of Milwaukee, in the West, on the Pacific, these quarries are represented!

“They belong, geologically speaking, to the great sandstone formation of the Connecticut Valley, and, indeed, we may say of the “Atlantic slope” of the United States; for it extends, though interrupted in places, through the states of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia into North Carolina, exhibiting everywhere the same general characteristics, and, so far as has been discovered, the same organic remains. In Europe there are two principal deposits of this kind, called, from their supposed comparative age, the old and new red sandstone. The former occurs abundantly in Scotland, and is that so graphically described by the old stone-cutter, Hugh Miller. Our deposit corresponds more nearly with the latter, as is determined by its fossils and other characters. The former lies below the great coal formation, and is therefore, the older of the two; but the latter lies mostly above it; and may, therefore, be considered more recent in its origin than the coal.

*(This article's text will be concluded next issue)*

*This article first appeared in  
The Portland Citizen, Vol. 1 No. 34, November 7, 1958  
Courtesy of the Portland Historical Society*



The new pontoon bridge at the Brownstone Exploration and Discovery Park, connecting the promontory to the peninsula



Sign at Park Entrance



Park Entrance and Ticket Office

# Quorum Membership

Membership in The Brownstone Quorum, Inc. is open to all. Dues are ten dollars (\$10.00) per person per calendar year. The Quorum has no paid representatives. All monies received go toward Quorum activities (see below). The date on your address indicates the last membership renewal. A self-addressed return envelope is included if your membership has lapsed.

We welcome all supporters and whatever degree of participation they choose. A reading of this issue will apprise you of the variety of opportunities for fun (and service).

Call me if you have any questions. Romanie Gussenhoven, Chair, at 342-7237

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The Brownstone Quorum is a non-profit volunteer organization established in 1997 to protect and preserve the Portland brownstone quarries and related riverfront property, to educate the public about the significance of this site, and to determine public interests regarding quarry and riverfront development. In 2000, the United States Department of the Interior designated this town-owned property a National Historic Landmark. The Portland Board of Selectmen shortly after authorized the Quorum serve the

Board as advisor regarding this site with permission to use and develop community activities there.

Over the intervening years, the Quorum has performed clean-up throughout the area; established a network of 3+ miles of walking trails; conducted monthly canoe rides and annual Quarry Focus Days; provided guided walks for the public and education programs for the Portland schools; published canoe and walking trail maps; established a Tree Trail, identifying and labeling 35 notable trees on the riverfront property and creating an educational map of those trees and their locations.

The Quorum has held programs to provide public education in quarry history, geology, and park development; and conducted surveys of townspeople regarding uses for this land. They have cooperated with the Town and the Hayes brothers with regard to leasing the quarry for the water park.

The Quorum focus now is on the development of the riverfront park into a full community park with the interests and needs of all Portland individuals, families and community groups considered.

## Quorum Calendar

### 2008 Events To Think About And Dates To Remember

**4<sup>th</sup> Annual Brownstone Festival:** Saturday, September 13<sup>th</sup>. The Quorum sponsors this Festival each year to give the townspeople an opportunity to meet and enjoy their Town and each other.

**Dedication of the Arch Pavilion:** Date to be Announced

**Riverfront Park Work Parties:** Watch Rivereast News Bulletin for dates and times.

**Portland Agricultural Fair:** Friday, Saturday and Sunday, October 10,11,12. The Quorum will be there with a booth in the Pole Barn. The Quorum display this year will focus on the development of the Rivverfront Park. Quorum members will also be available to listen to and record your "Quarry Stories" for a book project they hope to complete in the coming year.

**Note:** *Because much of the work the Quorum will be doing this year will be actual labor in clearing and developing the Park itself, the regular meeting schedule has been changed. Four community meetings will be held instead of the monthly meetings currently scheduled. Notice of these meetings, agendas, times and places will be provided in Rivereast and on the website.*

Newsletter: Jeanne Dilworth & Bob McDougall

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# *The Quorum Review*

## *August 2008*

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*Brownstone Festival:*  
*Saturday, September 13<sup>th</sup>*  
**9 AM - 6 PM**