

The Quorum Review

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

Vol. II No. 1

January 2003

Annual Meeting: Monday January 27, 2003 - Portland Library

Topics: Year End Reports, Election of Officers, Appreciation Awards, Guest Speakers, Refreshments!
7pm in the Mary Flood Room See you there! *Jeanne Dilworth, President*

Happy New Year! This is the first anniversary issue of "The Quorum Review". This issue is packed with information about the activities of the Brownstone Quorum, what we have done, what we are doing and what we are planning, Enjoy! -ed.

Year End Report

by Jeanne Dilworth, President

2002 has been a year of trail blazing on both water and land. (see articles by *Jim Tripp* and *John LeShane*) It has also been a year of building the Quorum membership roster, of continuing to acquaint residents and visitors with the beauty of our remarkable quarries and riverfront, of accomplishing goals set in January, and of establishing goals for 2003.

Four major events marked the end of the year:

Quarry Focus Day III was held in September on a lovely day of bright sunshine and comfortable breezes. The quarry lake was colorful with a dozen canoes and boats taking people for rides up close to the far quarry walls to see waterfalls, fossil specimens, hanging "gardens" and buried treasure. From the promontory the music of four distinctly different and delightful musical groups drifted over the water: The Meadowlarks with folk songs and children's music; the *Mike Troderman* group playing sophisticated jazz; Tom Callinan, the first official CT State Troubadour sang his own compositions, including the "Freestone Walk of Fame", a song about our quarries, as well as old Connecticut ballads of the period of the quarry operation; The Breezy Corner Basement Boys and Friends ended the day with an hour of their own inimitable eclectic acoustic music.



Allison Guinness walking tour



Tom Callinan

A walking tour was offered in the morning, *Bob McDougall* and *Allison Guinness*, guided a group along Main Street and around the north quarry, highlighting the historic sites

Winter 2003

The Quorum Review

and buildings, explaining their connections with the quarry business. During the day, Jeff Kelsey plied the riverfront trail pulling wagonload after wagonload of hayriders from Brownstone Ave to Coe Ave. and back.



Mike Guiliano Pulling the Arch with his John Deere Tractor

Mike Giuliano and his handsome old tractor drew the totally restored brownstone arch along the Avenue giving everyone a chance to examine the fine result of four years of patient and dedicated work by *Eddie and Joe Chiabrero* and their nephew *Billy Long* to return the arch to its authentic dimensions and condition. Later in the day, First Selectman *Ed Kalinowski* dedicated the arch to "future generations of Portlanders" so that they could have before them a symbol of the hard work of the quarrymen and of their contribution to the building of Portland.



The Sling on the Arch



The Arch

Lots of people found themselves with an appetite for good food and the Brownstone Cafe by the WPA wall just what was needed to satisfy those appetites. The flower-decked tables at the cafe were occupied from 11am to 3pm.



Activity Sign Post



The Brownstone Cafe

Page 1

The hayrides passed numerous groups of people who decided to walk the riverfront trails where they could rest on the benches (dedicated that day) that *John Vecchitto* had built and installed as his Eagle Scout project.



Hay Rides



Sue Fiedler's Dinosaur plaza

Walkers could also stop along the way and make "Flying Fish" with *Betsy Graziano*, or learn about quarry geology with *Paul Dilworth* and *Sean Rizzo*, or make "tap bags" to hold samples of brownstone with *Marion Kollias*.

The day was full, with something for everyone and everyone seemed to enjoy their day in the town's new park, proud of their Portland Brownstone Quarries National Historic Landmark.



Promontory canoe launch



The promontory

The Portland Agricultural Fair - The restored brownstone arch that impressed visitors at Quarry Focus Day was the hit of the Quorum display at the Fair. People examined it closely, admired the workmanship and were happy to see the arch again after four years. The quarry diorama was also a big hit. No matter how often people see it, they always study it carefully, ask questions about it and marvel not only at the work of the artist, but also at what the diorama tells them about the working quarries.



Fair Booth & Kayak



Quarry Postcards 4/\$1

The Quorum display included many pictures of the work being done to make the park accessible to all. The primary goal of the Quorum for 2002 was to clear a 200 foot trail to the River edge. Through the hard work of *John LeShane* and *Bud Harmon* and their trail clearing crews, not only did the Quorum clear 200 feet along the riverfront, they established 1500 feet of river edge trail as close as six feet

from the river's edge and up to twenty feet above the water. It is a truly beautiful and breathtaking trail.

Service Appreciation Day - In October the Quorum said a "good-bye for now" to *John Monroe* of the National Park Service with a "Service" Appreciation Day dedicated to John for his guidance and support of the Quorum as members learned how to be a functioning organization dedicated solely to the benefit of Portland. The day was windy, cold and rainy, but twenty-eight hardy individuals gathered at the quarry promontory to dedicate a new flagpole installation honoring John and his service. *First Selectman Kalinowski* dedicated the flagpole and flag to the people of Portland past, present and future (see dedication speech), and *John Monroe* raised the flag for the first time. It was a moving and marvelous sight - the 30-foot glistening white flag pole, with the brilliant red, white and blue stars and stripes, rising against the brownstone quarry walls and blowing in the wind and the rain. Flag dedication over, the group moved to the Portland Middle School where they were joined by a large group of townspeople for tributes to John, with music by *Joe Milardo* and fantastic food by Quorum members. (see "roast" letter by *John LeShane* and thank you from *John Monroe*.)



New flag pole on the promontory (l-r Bud & Jean Harmon, Jeanne Dilworth and Mike Susca)



Nancy Mueller, Asst Town Planner & John Monroe NPS

Quarry History Program - In November, *Jack Dillon* brought ledgers, books, pictures and other memorabilia to the Portland Library where he shared a small portion of his great knowledge about the quarries, their workers, their economics and their influence-locally and beyond. Jack held his audience in the palm of his hand as he spun one human-interest story after another. Jack's philosophy is that history is what it is and must be presented that way. It must never be altered to suit someone's idea of what it should be. And using documentation - laid out on sixteen feet of table - Jack related the history of the quarries. When he ended his talk after ninety minutes, his audience was reluctant to let him go and they asked questions then and all through the refreshment period that followed. No one looked at the clock and the library was long closed before the evening ended.



Jack Dillon speaking on Quarry History

The entire 2002 year was productive and fulfilling for the Brownstone Quorum. The year ended with the development of a new slate of officers for 2003, with new goals for the coming year, and renewed dedication to the town of Portland and its people.



Planning meeting



Quorum Board Meeting

Market Analysis Update

by Jeanne Dilworth

Members of the Brownstone Quorum are part of a team of persons from the Planning Department, The Economic Development Commission, the Board of Selectmen, the Historical Society and P.R.I.D.E. that will be selecting and working with professional consultants conducting a market study and analysis of the quarry/riverfront properties. This study will identify and recommend marketable uses for the property and determine its viability as a tourist destination with recreational and commercial components.

This study will expand on the earlier studies and on the concept plan completed by Carol R. Johnson Associates in 2001. This study is being funded by the second \$50,000 State grant obtained for the town by Representative Jim O'Rourke

New Park Design Ideas

by John LeShane, Design Committee

With the completion of the River's edge trail at the Quarry Riverfront Park, the design committee has begun to look at other areas for recreational development.



New trail to the riverfront



New steps on the trail

One area considered high priority is the North Quarry's wooded peninsula across the quarry lake from the promontory. Since the very beginning, this one-half acre peninsula has been viewed as a great destination where boaters and canoers could picnic, take a stroll, or just hang out. This area is quiet and peaceful, away from all hustle, bustle, rush and noise. On it, you feel that you are on an island.

Another area for consideration is the spot near the monument at the South Quarry down Brownstone Avenue. This is where a time capsule was imbedded in August 1889 when the monument was put in place as the base for a derrick which moved blocks of brownstone from the quarry to the railroad that ran along what is now Brownstone Avenue.

With the removal of some poor quality trees and the clearing of some underbrush, the Quorum could establish a picnic or sitting area for people to enjoy the beauty of this quiet and hidden quarry hole.

The Design Committee has scheduled a meeting for 6pm at the Mary Flood Room on January 27th, prior to the Annual meeting to discuss these and other proposals for 2003. Folks interested in sharing ideas or getting involved can join us then or call John LeShane at 342-0658 or Sue Fiedler at 342-4493.

Cross-Country Skiing on the Riverfront

by Mike Troderman & Alice Schumacher

What could be more perfect? 3 inches of newly fallen snow, cross country skis and boots, and the desire to survey the beautiful landscape which is practically in our own backyard. Whenever there was enough snow, even two inches would suffice, Alice and I would rush to the riverfront area before the snow could melt. The beauty and the peacefulness are hard to describe. You can do it, too. You don't need a ticket. You might find some of your neighbors out there. Maybe even us. See you on the riverfront!

Membership

As the Brownstone Quorum, Inc. moves into its third year of incorporation, it also begins its second year of dues paying membership.

From articles in the four issues of The Quorum Review you have learned about some of the things the Quorum does. Much of what is done is accomplished by volunteer labor. However, much also requires funding: the printing of trail guides and maps, the purchase of certain services for community days, the publication and mailing of The Quorum Review are some examples.

Therefore, we now invite people to join the Quorum and provide a portion of the funds needed. All funds, whether memberships, contributions, or receipts from sales of "T" shirts, hats, postcards or raffle tickets go directly and only to the town-benefiting activities of the Quorum. Membership dues are ten dollars (\$10) per person per year from January 1 through December 31 of each year.

First year members are urged to renew their memberships, New members are encouraged to join us. This year, thanks to Jean Harmon and Eunice Wiseman, we will be issuing membership cards. Major projects, such as the flagpole installation, are also on the Quorum "to do" list.

**John LeShane
PO Box 80
Portland CT 06480**

October 26, 2002

John Monroe
Rivers & Trails - National Park Service
15 State Street
Boston MA 02109

Dear John,

I regret that due to my state job which expects me to work on weekends, I cannot be there today to honor you and celebrate the three (or has it been two?) years that you have been helping us. Maybe it just seems like three. The good news is today the state is paying me. With you, on the other hand, with your warmth and charm and your engaging presence and personality, I would have been shrewdly manipulated, along with 30 or 40 other well-meaning citizens, to slave like a dog for nothing! For this, we are honoring you today.

Don't get me wrong, John. I still think you are a great guy. But obviously, I have some mixed feelings about the work we have done with you over the last five years. Because, for me it has been, quite frankly, a bittersweet experience. I don't want to sound snippy or cut you down in any way, but before you came along, I was happily and very contentedly clearing trails in Meshomasic, lopping nice, normal mountain laurels and native trees, an occasional friendly grapevine and bushes without pricklers. But thanks to you, John, I have become a murderer of exotic and invasive species on a very disturbed site. I conduct "death and destruction to bittersweet vine" work parties. Does it sound like I might be a little disturbed?

Now, because of you, John, people avoid me. The sight of me reminds them of itchy red rashes they got on one of my work parties from either poison ivy or poison oak, take your pick, that they never saw and I forgot to warn them about. I remind them of mosquito bites (probably West Nile type), bloody blisters from trying to cut a too-thick vine with a too-dull lopper, or aching backs from spreading wood chips for a trail we made that disappeared mysteriously into the earth and grass not six months after we spread them.

It might not have been so bad had you been there, sweating and slaving side by side with us. But no, John, you were sitting in some posh, air conditioned office in downtown Boston overlooking the beautiful and very finished Boston Commons dreaming up more ways for us to make more lists of things that we could do so you could stick it on a piece of colored paper and then stick it on your cursed velcro wall.

And worse yet, when we wanted to indulge in a good ol' knock down-drag out argument over some stupid minute detail, like most groups do, or fight about the direction we as an organization should go, you ruined it by posting your ridiculous "Rules of Conduct."

Beyond my understanding, for all these things, we are honoring you today.

Well, of course, I am joking. Without you John, this project would never have happened. You have been instrumental in bringing this community together and reminding it where it came from, what it has to be proud of and what the future can hold.

For that John, we are indebted to you. No greater gift could a person give to a community. Thanks for a memorable ten years.

Sincerely,

John LeShane

Join Now!

**United States Department of the Interior
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Boston Support Office
15 State Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02109-3572**

November 26, 2002

Brownstone Quorum, Inc.
PO Box 402
Portland CT 06480

Dearest Friends of the Brownstone Quorum:

How do I express my appreciation for your appreciation on October 26th? For four weeks I have collected ideas, but I couldn't quite articulate why I think you are such extraordinary people and how much I care for you.

Maybe it's best expressed by explaining that you rendered me speechless that afternoon (no small feat considering how much I like to talk).

Maybe it's the way I have told every person in the office (and quite a few outside the office) about every incredible thing you did for me: the flagpole and certificate, the speech and letters (even the one from that Newfie - John LeShane!), the brownstone block, the bird bath, the hat, the magazine, the shirts, the pen holder, the food, the music, the party, the hugs and kind words...and who could forget those fabulous brownies. [Ummm, were they ever good.....just kidding....I didn't eat them.]

Maybe it's the warm glow I felt that afternoon (despite the chilly dampness) and continue to feel every moment I think of each of you and your town.

These are partial attempts to say thank you and describe how your kindness affected me, but they don't quite capture what I think is most important about the volunteers of the Brownstone Quorum.

Last night while I was looking at the stars, it finally crystallized: you are making history just as important as the work of those who've quarried brownstone for over 300 years. This isn't hyperbole; it's just a fact. Consider the parallels.

You recognized the current and potential value of a resource. You started small and learned from your early attempts. You rely on basic human strengths of muscle, energy and ingenuity. You work as a team to accomplish breathtaking results. And even though you face daunting challenges, you show up every day with your tools ready to chip away.

You clearly share with the quarrymen a dedication to the bedrock of your town. In an age when so many people know more about what's on TV than where they live, you are remarkable for your dedication to Portland and to your neighbors. If I had something helpful to offer as you learned to work with your neighbors, then I couldn't be more proud. Apparently, based on October 26th, you feel I did contribute.

I am so lucky to be in a position where I can do work that I love. Even better, that work is sometimes useful to others. Best of all, you are generous enough to express your appreciation.

It has truly been my privilege to learn from you. I will treasure the objects and memories from October 26th forever. Thank you.

Warmly,

John Monroe
Director of Connecticut Program, Rivers & Trails
617/223-5049, 617/223-5164 fax, john_monroe@nps.gov

PS While this may be the end of a particular chapter of our work together, it doesn't change our partner relationship. I expect to work with Bud Harmon on signage for the riverfront and I look forward to your continued calls and notes. jm

Promontory Flag Pole Dedication

(Notes for the dedication of the flag installation at the quarry promontory, Saturday October 26th, 2002, a celebration of service offered in appreciation for the assistance of John F. Monroe, NPS. Speech delivered by 1st Selectman Ed Kalinowski)

This flag and pole stand as a tribute to the people of Portland, past, present and future.

The quarries themselves are a continuing monument to their hard work and ingenuity. We look at the quarry walls and get a glimpse of the age and wonders of the earth, but when we look more closely, we see also the marks man has made on nature. The stone laid down by water and wind over eons of time has been drilled, blasted, moved and removed for human use. A ride through Portland streets is a testament to human history: the old Town Hall, the new Town Hall, Portland Middle School, Trinity Church, Stone Haven, foundations, chimneys, and monuments, both cemetery and Civil War.

We cross the river and visit Wesleyan University, not only built of Portland brownstone, but partially funded by the sale of Portland brownstone. Up river, Hartford has many examples of brownstone use: the bridge over the Park River, now channeled under the Conlon Highway, the majestic Soldiers and Sailors monument at Bushnell Park, the Old State House. Portland brownstone did not simply stay in Connecticut, it moved throughout the country, carried by Gildersleeve-built boats to New York, San Francisco, and London, England, prized for its beauty and workability.

The stone's desirability motivated Portlanders to design and build the ships that carried the stone around the world. Later Portlanders designed the process for cutting the stone to architects' specifications saving stone and transportation costs and on-the-job time.

When we examine the history of human interaction with the stone, we get glimpses of the people who made their livelihood in its excavation and use. These people present a profile of immigration into the United States.

The early landowners of East Middletown were largely of English origin, some with land grants from the king. Their Christian faith led to the establishment of Trinity Church and the Episcopal faith in Portland. At that time the quarries were common land, shared free by all. But as the stone's value became known, free stone soon became an economic product, the quarries passed into private hands and the quarrying industry began.

The first wave of immigration was Irish, a sturdy, hard-working, hard-living people, largely Catholic, willing to endure the labor and the dangers of a quarryman's life in exchange for a good living. St. John Church in Middletown and St. Mary Church in Portland were born of this wave. Then came the Swedes, bringing their stone cutting skills and their Lutheran faith; Italians came toward the end of the brownstone era bringing their skills at masonry and their strong family orientation into the social mix.

Each of these people was grateful for the work that needed their hands, backs and minds, and grateful, too, for the livelihood this work provided them. They expressed their gratitude in their gifts to the Town. Quarry owners provided, often free of charge or at reduced cost, the stone to build local churches and town buildings. Quarry workers and masons provided much of the labor, and they all contributed out of their financial resources, large and small, to build public buildings of which they and their progeny could be proud. These were the people of Portland past.

The people of Portland present are the people who continue the work begun almost 400 years ago. These are the people who serve the town every day: the town workers, officials, commissioners who take great pride in protecting and enhancing the gifts the past has given us. These are the people who maintain our roads and public buildings, schools and parks. These are the people who understand the value of Central School and the old Town Hall and have the vision to preserve them through adaptive reuse. These are the people who had the foresight to acquire the quarries and their riverfront property, preserving the gifts of nature and of man for the education and the re-creation of the present and the future. These are the teachers, the business people, Mike Meehan and his crew who again work the quarry. These are the volunteers who work with Scouts, in the schools, in hospitals, nursing homes and as friendly visitors through their churches and the Visiting Nurse Association. They are the members of the Historical Society, P.R.I.D.E. and, yes, the people of the Brownstone Quorum. These are the people who share the expense of the Town by paying their taxes and volunteering their time. The people of Portland present are still hardworking. They still give of themselves and their financial resources. Their legacy to the future is the gift of service to their fellows.

Who then are the people of Portland's future? Some of them will be our children and grandchildren. Some will be newcomers who move to town with their families, dreams and hopes. Some may be people who, passing through, stop at the quarries, see this flag and feel a common bond on this common land. Some may stay. Many will move on, but their presence will remain, the shoulders of each, in some way, bearing the mantle passed down over the years.

It is to these successive generations that this flag, symbol of the best of the United States, is lovingly and reverently dedicated



BQ Caps \$15.00 w/membership

2003 Quarry Canoe Rides and Tours

By Jim Tripp

Quarry Canoe Rides and Tours will be back in 2003. The 2002 quarry canoeing series was a great success. The Quorum provided hundreds of people with the opportunity to experience the quarries, gained us some new members, raised a little money, and we all had a great time doing it!

From May to October in 2002 we sponsored six quarry canoe days. Although two of the days were affected by the elements, we provided tours to over 250 Portland residents and visitors of our community. In addition to the tours we provided, many people explored the quarries with their own canoes or kayaks. Many of the people who participated in the quarry canoe days had never seen the quarries from the seat of a canoe and never viewed the quarry walls from the unique perspective of looking straight up. They were generally awed by the splendor of the quarries and intrigued by their history.

We gained several members during the course of the quarry canoe days. It was gratifying to meet new people interested in the quarries and who wanted to support our efforts to develop the property while preserving its unique history. We welcome them all and look forward to their support in the future.

The quarry canoe tours were provided at no charge to the public. Members of the Brownstone Quorum donated their time and equipment. Many appreciative riders did make contributions and bought the hats, "T" shirts, posters and postcards we have for sale. In all, the canoe days brought in over \$200 to help support our continuing efforts to clean and further develop the quarries.

A lot of work went into providing the quarry canoe days. Members of the Quorum donated their time and energy in many ways. Prior to each quarry canoe day, members worked to clean up the promontory, quarry, and surrounding areas. On the quarry canoe days, members provided tours, manned the sign-up table, and coordinated efforts at the launch site. It was a team effort to make these days happen month after month. Thank you to everyone who helped make the 2002 quarry canoe days the great success they were.

In 2003 we will again be providing Quarry Canoe Rides and Tours. In addition to the traditional canoe tours, we plan to open the peninsula up for picnicking in 2003. The schedule has not been set yet so be looking for additional details in the Spring Issue of the *Quorum Review*.

Kayak Raffle

The Brownstone Quorum raffled an Old Town Twin Otter two-person kayak to raise funds for the installation of a permanent flagpole at the promontory at the Brownstone Quarries National Historic Landmark. The kayak was won by Julie Rosebaum of Bard College at Annondale-on-the-Hudson, New York. The flagpole was installed on October 26, 2002 by the Flag Store of Meriden at a cost of \$1,470 fully funded by the Brownstone Quorum, Inc.

How to Contact Us

Email: BrownstoneQuorum@Yahoo.Com

Web: www.BrownstoneQuorum.Org

Phone: 860-342-2260

Mail: Brownstone Quorum, Inc.

P.O. Box 402

Portland, CT 06480-0402

2002 Officers

President	Jeanne Dilworth
Vice President	Jim Tripp
Treasurer	Mike Troderman
Recording Secretary	Mike Susca (acting)
Corresponding Secretary	Eunice Wiseman
Member-at-large	Wayne Andrus
Member-at-large	Bob McDougall

2002 Committee Chairs

Design	Sue Fiedler / John LeShane
Organization / Promotion	Nan Zimmer
Property	
Economic / Finance	Mike Troderman
Newsletter	Doretta Wildes / Bob McDougall
Canoe Rides	Jim Tripp

2003 Meeting Schedule

All Brownstone Quorum meetings are open to the public. Participation is encouraged and welcomed.

	Board 1st Mon.	Regular 4th Mon.
January	6 – SF	27
February	3 – SF	24
March	3 – SF	24
April	7 – SF	28
May	5 – SF	19*
June	2 – SF	23
July	7 – SF	28
August	4 – SF	25
September	8* – SF	22
October	6 – SF	27
November	3 – SF	24
December	1 – SF	22

Meetings are at the Portland Library unless otherwise noted.

* - off schedule meeting

SF - Store Front, 239 Main St.



The storefront 239 Main St.



Storefront window display

The storefront at 239 Main Street has been made available to the Quorum and other town organizations by Liberty Bank. Members of the Quorum cleaned, renovated, and furnished the room, and provide the window decorations.

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

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Inside This Issue

- 2002 Year End Report
 - Quarry Focus Day III
 - Portland Agricultural Fair
 - Service Appreciation Day
 - Quarry History Program
- Market Analysis Update
- New Park Design Ideas
- Cross-Country Skiing on the Riverfront
- Promontory Flag Pole Dedication
- Membership Update
- 2003 Quarry Canoe Rides and Tours
- Monroe Roast Letter
- Monroe Thank you Letter
- Kayak Raffle
- Annual Meeting Announcement

The Quorum Review

January 2003

Annual Meeting:

January 27, 2003

7pm Portland Library