

# The Quorum Review

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

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September 2009

## 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Brownstone Family Day & Festival

Although the Festival has two principal venues, the Town Green and the Riverfront Park, it really covers much more ground. Breakfast begins at the Senior Center at 8:00 AM and continues until 10:00 (or until the food runs out). It has been very popular, so get there early. When you finish breakfast, have the kids stop in the small meeting room at the Senior Center to learn how to arrange flowers. The combined garden clubs and Joanne Luppi will provide flowers, containers and lessons free of charge. The kids loved this last year. So did the parents who got the arrangements.

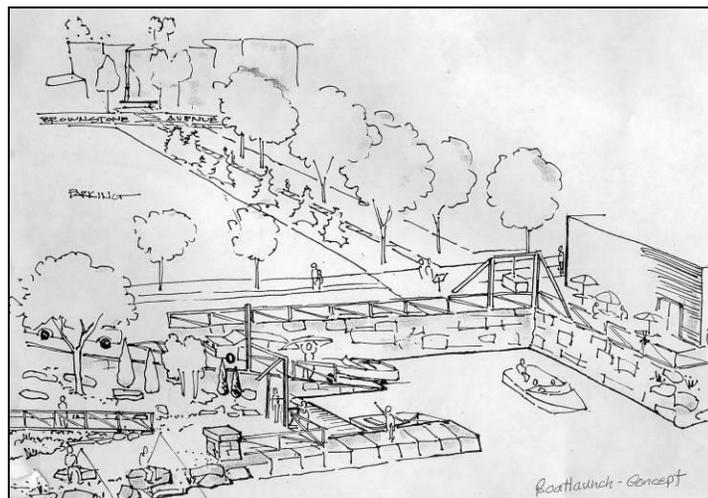
The Community Market by Stor-U-Self begins at 9:00. The Tag/Bake Sale sponsored by the Portland Republican Town Committee also begins at 9:00 at the American Legion Hall on Freestone Avenue. Family Day activities start at 11:00 AM and run until 2:00 PM on the Green. Along with all sorts of activities for kids from toddlers to 5th graders (including TWO jumpers) are information booths, and craft, book, and food sales to keep the adults busy while the kids jump.

The Fire and Police Departments will have information and demonstrations. Dr. John Mormile will be there with bike safety and helmets. You can get cotton candy from Edward Jones. Both Boy and Girl Scouts will be present to get kids started in Scouting. You can go GREEN sign up for Clean Energy, or learn more about the Portland Emergency Team. Register to vote (elections in November). Support the Library Friends and the Sojourn Bears (the Cancer "comfort" group). Learn about alpacas and buy some fiber.

The Methodist and Zion Churches will present displays of church activities, as will organizations and businesses which want you to know more about them. And through it all, the Connecticut Cellar Savers will be offering rides on their antique fire engines from in front of the Police Department up Main Street to the Fire Museum where riders can get off to visit the museum or just ride back to the Police station. Across the street at Brownstone Intermediate School, Jeff Kelsey will be offering hayrides down Middlesex Avenue to the quarries and the Riverfront Park.

The fire engine rides will not be shuttles this year, but be sure to stop at Trinity Church from 10:00 to 3:00. Tour the cemetery behind this historic church; it is site of many of the graves transferred from the first Portland cemetery once located on quarry land and moved when the quarries went commercial. The church is currently undergoing renovation and members will provide information on this process. While there, you can participate in a Stained Glass Window "Scavenger Hunt." - two levels of difficulty - so be sure to try it. Have some delicious refreshments provided by the Women of Trinity, use the restrooms, all free. Then

(continued on page 2, see Festival)

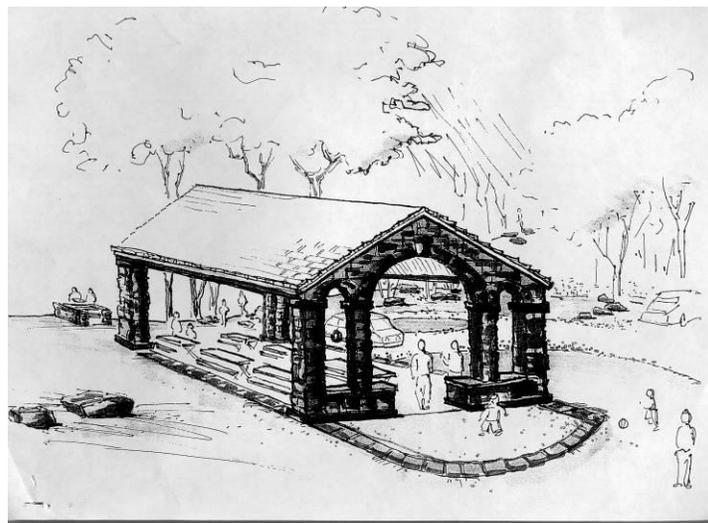


Boat launch – Concept Sketch

## The Next Step – Quarrylands Riverfront Park

The quarries are enjoying a new life as a water park. The brownstone arch has been rebuilt and has a beautiful permanent home on Main Street. The Townspeople are learning more and more about their town as they enjoy the Annual (5th this year) Brownstone Family Day and Festival.

Now it is time for the Brownstone Quorum to focus its full attention on the development of the Quarrylands Riverfront Park.



Picnic Pavillion – Concept Sketch

When Nan Zimmer and Wayne Andrus gathered a small group of townspeople together in 1997 to lobby the Board of Selectmen to acquire and preserve the brownstone quarries and adjacent land for the future, a majority of residents 1. didn't know where the quarries were. 2. didn't know what they were. 3. if they did know anything about them, it was basically negative. "It's a filthy place!" "It's dangerous!"

(continued on page 2, see Next Step)

## **Festival** (continued from page 1)

examine the antique farm equipment in the parking lot.

The Kelsey hayrides can be used as a shuttle down to the Riverfront Park. Leave your car on Main Street and come to the free Town Picnic sponsored by the Quorum starting at 3:00 PM.

Dave Kuzminski and his music will fill the air. The Portland Giant Pumpkin Growers Association will show you how to grow giant pumpkins. The Portland Historical Society display has moved their display from the museum to the riverfront. It will take you on a tour of the early quarry operations and other early local industry. Jack Dillon and Bill Barrows will be there with their treasure trove of information and artifacts from early Portland. You can register to vote, sign up for the Senior Reader program. Or take a hike with John LeShane and the Meshomasic Hiking Club at 4:00 PM. Sue Fiedler and Cub Pack 49 will offer old-fashioned games for kids of all ages. Just like the ones played when the quarries were operating.

With the potential for a boat ramp at the Riverfront Park a strong possibility, you might want to visit the Middletown Power Squadron display and learn more about boating on the river. Or joining the Squadron. You can register to vote at the Riverfront, too.

Brownstone Exploration and Discovery Park activities, including water competitions, will continue all day.

There is no end to what you can do at the 5th Annual Portland Brownstone Family Day and Festival. Don't miss a minute of it.

## **Next Step** (continued from page 1)

"We should just fill it in with trash (make a lot of money that way) and then sell it off."

Fortunately, the Board of Selectmen was miles ahead of conventional wisdom. They acquired the property and allowed the Brownstone Quorum to begin the process of introducing the newest Town acquisition to the townspeople. First the Quorum started a quarry clean-up. With boots and in boats they began to clear trash. In the winter, they hauled trash over the ice. Gradually the place began to look noticeably better. The Planning Charrette (see Ralph Lewis) was the big unveiling for the public and people began to see the quarries with different eyes. Monthly free canoe rides from with Quorum members April through October let people experience the beauty of the quarries. Quarry Focus Days gave townspeople the opportunity to see what was there and imagine what could come. What could come, among other things, was a water park.

The late Scott Oakliffe, a member of the Portland Volunteer Fire Department Dive Team, convinced Ed and Frank Hayes to take a serious look at the quarries as a possible business venture. Optimist though Scott was, he probably never imagined what we have in the north quarries now. The quarries have a new life in the capable hands of the Hayes brothers. The Quorum is now focusing on the development of the Riverfront land into a community park. Sue Fiedler has designed a concept plan for the Riverfront, which has been accepted by the Board of Selectmen as a

beginning point. The Quorum and the Town are on the way to making the concept a reality.

The first step the Quorum took on the riverfront was to cut about 3 1/2 miles of trails throughout the area. The trails range from open and easy to steep and difficult and go along the highland and the riveredge as well as down the middle. Notable trees have been marked with identifying tags. Trail maps showing the trees, trails and contours have been designed and printed for public use. For four years, the Quorum has conducted work days at the Riverfront to clear land of dead trees, invasive plants and trash dumped by people who think their trash is perfect decoration for vacant land. As his Eagle Scout project, John Vecchitto constructed trailside benches to make a park visit even more enjoyable.

But now, the Town is actively involved in developing the Park with two major projects underway. The first is the reconnecting of Middlesex and Brownstone Avenues. The rainy summer has delayed completion of this project, but if you go down Middlesex Avenue you can see what a tremendous improvement it will be. The area at the top of the hill going down to Brownstone, where quarry rowhouses used to be, will become a parking lot, serving not only the Riverfront park, but also the ballfields on Middlesex. Sidewalks along Middlesex and Brownstone Avenues and up Silver Street are part of these plans.

The second major Town project underway at the Park is the boat ramp proposed for just north of the old Coast Guard station. This project is in the engineering stages and is supported by the State DEP which wants a launch site in the Portland area.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield is working with State and Federal officials on both of these projects. She has been meeting with U. S. Representative John Larson and has provided him with a package of all the data the Town has acquired over the years including the original NHL application and designation, all subsequent planning and economic feasibility studies, current status, community support and actions, etc. The criteria used by the National Park Service to determine the value of open space in determining Federal funding include: providing regional recreational activities, possessing a unique and dramatic topography, having significant historical content, being located adjacent to a major water body, being located close to a service community. Portland's quarries and riverfront embody each of these criteria making it a very desirable project for funding assistance.

## **BQ - Teen Adventure Cooperation**

Some visitors to the Brownstone Quorum Town Picnic on Festival Day will have the pleasure and the honor of sitting at the new picnic tables built by Portland teens who participated this summer in the Parks and Recreation Teen Adventure Camp.

Teen Adventure Camp was a 7-week program for youths entering 6th through 8th grades. Each week of the program had a different outdoor theme, but a similar pattern of activities designed to help participants learn goal setting, activity planning with education about the possible activities from which to select, the "adventure" itself and just plain fun.

The Quorum and the Riverfront Park were beneficiaries of one of the adventures. Fourteen teens showed up one Wednesday, appropriately dressed and equipped for trail grooming. Their adventure - a community service project in nature - was to help John LeShane, Quorum Trailmaster, trim the Park trails of summer growth. They set right to work, clipping and cutting - until Mother Nature decided "No work, today, guys" and opened the storm clouds to a phenomenal deluge that went on practically forever.

The second part of the teens' "adventure" was much more successful. With materials supplied by the Quorum, they built three picnic tables for installation at the Riverfront Park. Those are the tables you can admire (and maybe use) at the Festival on September 12th. As you admire their handiwork, think about the young people who did the work: Stephen Alfano, Andrew Smith, Jacob Strong, Michael Tate, Connor Flynn, Kevin Wilson, Meghan Weeks, Austin Rodriguez, Michael Zampano, Timothy Peterson, Sandy Foley, and Anthony Distefano. Their leaders for the Camp were Dolores Bates, Katie France and Heidi Spohn.

We all owe them a vote of gratitude.

### Wesleyan Oral History Project

Ever since the Bownstone Quorum was conceived, members have wanted to collect "Quarry Stories" - those memories people have of their own experiences with the Portland Brownstone Quarries and those they have learned from friends and relatives who lived during the times the quarries operated.

First hand stories of the quarry operations have pretty much disappeared. Over the years (from 1997 to now) we have talked with some people who have had those original stories, and we have recorded them. But the Quorum has only one experienced interviewer, Alice Schumacher, whose professional commitments limit her interviewing availability. Now, however, through the efforts of Gloria Gdovin, Chair of the Quorum Organization Committee, we have been able to establish a relationship with Wesleyan English Professor, Indira Karamcheti, to supply her Oral History students with members of the Portland community who will talk with them about their relationship with the quarries.

The goal of the project is not only to preserve a portion of United States history, but also to preserve and further the oral tradition for disseminating American culture. The course will investigate the oral narrative with students working with Portland residents who have been involved with the quarries and know the history of this cultural, economic, and aesthetic feature of the Portland community which was declared a National Historic Landmark by the U.S. Department of the Interior in 2000.

The interviews will be recorded, transcribed (a major element in preserving the work), and produced as a finished product in visual, oral and printed format appropriate for preservation in Portland Town records (as in a museum envisioned for the Riverfront Park).

If you, or anyone you know, has a quarry story to tell, please contact Gloria Gdovin, at 343-2970.



Troderman Memorial Bench

### Troderman Memorial Bench Dedication

When Alice Schumacher approached the riverfront memorial garden on Saturday, June 20th, she stopped and smiled. "Oh, Michael would be so proud!" Two small children - a boy and a girl - were climbing over a huge brownstone boulder. Climbing up and jumping off and climbing up again. Sitting, legs swinging, to slip off and scramble back on, patting the stone with tiny hands.

It is just what Michael

Troderman would have wanted for his memorial to a wonderful life. It was the way Michael had lived

his years - open, accessible, welcoming, giving. And in selecting the stone that would become his bench, it was just what Alice had envisioned.



A few words of dedication were said. Grown-ups as well as children tried out the bench for comfort and size. It fit everyone very well. The river ran by. The sky was bright and clear. The birds were all in tune. It was a time of quiet peace and Michael's spirit blessed it all. Michael Troderman, musician, CPA, charter member and first treasurer of the Brownstone Quorum died last year after a valiant fight against cancer. While he lived, he loved his family, his music, his friends, his community and he gave himself fully to each.

He is survived by his partner, Alice Schumacher; his son Lorin and wife Jill and grandchildren Dylan and Max; daughter Sarah and her husband Sam Clarkson and their children Maya and Noah; son Joshua and wife Debra and their children Eden and Eli (the children clambering over the bench); son Adam Schumacher and wife Stephanie; and son Eric Schumacher and wife Erin and their daughter Sadie.

Michael's bench invites you to join him at the Quarrylands Riverfront Park for a quiet moment of contemplation

## Quorum Tag Sale

The Quorum tag sale, held each year in support of and conjunction with the Historical Society's Town-Wide Tag Sale, is the principal fundraiser for Quorum projects. Each year we have an intrepid crew that sets up tents and tables and organizes a couple of tons of STUFF. (Eunice Wiseman is the organizer-in-chief.) Then we try to price it fairly and realistically.

It is amazing that in our eclectic tons of stuff - from art work and antiques, baskets and baubles, furniture, toys, clothes, appliances, lawn equipment and boats - all stuff someone wants to get rid of, we find buyers for just about everything. And if we don't find a buyer, we find a home. We work with

local service agencies to fill needs in the community. So anybody who contributes to the Quorum tag sale can rest assured that their contribution is appreciated and put to good use. AND we give IRS receipts, too.

This year we received several donations from people in town who just wanted to help us out because they had been down to the riverfront and had seen some of the work we have been doing there. Each year we have people who come back because they say they always find something they can use and even if they don't, everybody is so friendly and we all seem to have such a good time working together they enjoy visiting with us. We enjoy visiting with them as well.

## The Main Street Pavilion - Ahh. C'est Fini.

Howard Rosenbaum, BQ Chair, Arch Project



Yup! In French or any other language you want to use, it's finally finished. (Well, maybe. By the time you read this, the last stone should be in place. That stone is the one designed to

help support the 1 1/2 ton - that's 3000+ pounds - brownstone block suspended in the chain sling hanging from the arch, to reduce the stress on the arch members.)

It has been a long haul from the refurbishing of the Arch to the planting of the flowers, but the verdict appears to be that the structure and the redone Arch is a pleasant and attractive addition to Main Street. We can only hope that all those who contributed their time, skills and dollars to the project are pleased. We thank all those wonderful people.

Sue Fiedler has finished the final plantings to add a bit of color to the pavilion. and Bud Harmon has given a fresh coat of paint to the metal rims on the wheels. The structure was officially turned over to the Town at a recent Board of Selectmen

meeting. The Town will now assume responsibility for its maintenance.

So, thanks again to everyone. If you haven't yet taken a close look at the final product, please take a few minutes, stop downtown and have a look at what individual and community effort can accomplish. The Quorum will now direct its efforts toward the development of the Quarrylands Riverfront Park (site of the Quorum's free Town picnic on Festival Day.)



**PORTLAND'S ARCH**

Just west of here are Portland's Brownstone Quarries, designated a National Historic Landmark in 1998. The history of Portland is a remarkable reflection of the immigration patterns and technology associated with the American Industrial Revolution.

Brownstone had a major influence on the architecture of cities like Boston and New York during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Its soft texture made ornately carved building facades available to an emerging urban middle class.

By the time the quarries stopped operating in 1958, most arches had disappeared or been destroyed.

This is the only major artifact remaining from an industry which once employed thousands of people and had a major influence on the history of the area.

Sometimes, to reach the most valuable stone strata in the quarries, poor stone was removed and dumped onto a flood plain to the north. This resulted in the unique and historic topography of our Riverfront Park.

In 1939, floodwater filled the two quarries. Today they are dramatic recreational areas.

Portland's historic landscapes tell the story of a time when machines such as the arch transformed our nation.

This etching depicts a time when the arch was the most advanced technology in the quarries.

An arch with its arm raised, meaning the team is at rest and no brownstone block is attached.

During the height of the industry, the three quarry companies, Middlesex, Brainard, and Shaler & Hall, had extensive fabrication and transport facilities within the quarries and along the Connecticut River. Narrow gauge trains moved massive amounts of stone out of the quarries to waiting ships, or to be processed by the Brownstone Steam Company.

For many generations however, stone was carried out of the quarries by teams of oxen pulling arches like the one you see here.

The 'arch' was named for the shape of its axle, which enabled huge blocks to be hauled below it. In the early years, much of the stone cutting was done by hand.

THE CONNECTICUT RIVER

By the time the quarries stopped operating in 1958, most arches had disappeared or been destroyed.

This arch was first restored in 1966. It was placed without shelter in front of the Brownstone Intermediate School and fell into disrepair.

The Soldier and Sailors Memorial Arch in Hartford is an example of brownstone architecture in Connecticut.

The arch in front of the Childreano farm after its restoration in 1994. It was displayed only at special events before the pavilion was built.

QUORUM

MIDDLESEX COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

## Thank You - Chris Gotta

On the first Saturday of each month, the Quorum holds a work session down at the Riverfront Park.

Each month we post a notice in RIVEREAST telling when, where, what to do, what to bring, and how to dress. Every now and then readers join us and cut brush, rake cleared areas, haul rocks.

In June, we requested help with mowing the areas we had cleared, graded and seeded. Chris Gotta of Gotta Landscaping responded to our request and he responded in spades. Chris not only mowed the areas that needed attention, he groomed those areas so that they stayed looking great through days of rain and sun and growing, growing, growing.

The Gotta family has a long tradition of supporting the Portland community and local organizations. The Brownstone Quorum acknowledges its gratitude to this latest generation of the Gotta family to carry on the family tradition.

Thank you, Chris.

### The Brownstone Quorum, Inc.

#### 2009 Officers

President: James Tripp  
Vice President: Cindy Andrus  
Treasurer: Tom Bransfield  
Recording Secretary: Ruth Freeburg  
Corresponding Secretary: Gloria Gdovin  
At Large: Debbie Machnik  
Howard Rosenbaum

#### 2009 Committees

Design: Frank Winiski  
Mailing: Luiza McDougall  
Membership: Romanie  
Gussenhoven  
Program: Nan Zimmer  
Newsletter: Jeanne Dilworth  
Organization: Eunice Wiseman  
Promotion/Education: Jeanne Dilworth  
Web Site: Bob McDougall

BrownstoneQuorum@Yahoo.Com  
www.BrownstoneQuorum.Org

## Yahoo Groups

Bob McDougall, Web Master

On June 22, 2009 an email message was sent to the individuals on the "old" Brownstone Quorum email distribution list, that were not on the:

BrownstoneQuorum@YahooGroups.com list, announcing that the old list was being discontinued and replaced with the YahooGroups list. Email invitations were sent to everyone to "join" the list, since you can only add yourself to the list, we cannot do it for you...(only a few of those invited actually joined, those who did not join the list will not get future messages, so if you know anyone who did not get this message, please let them know) This is a free service we have used for several years and it allows you to "subscribe" or "unsubscribe" yourself, so a volunteer is not needed to maintain a list when someone wants to join, leave or change their email address.

**If you received this message then you have already joined the group, Thank you.**

If you know anyone who would like to join the group here's what to do:

1. If they do not have a Yahoo email address, just have them send me an email at:

brownstonequorum@yahoo.com, and I will send them an invitation to join.

2. If they do have a Yahoo email address:

a. Browse to [groups.yahoo.com](http://groups.yahoo.com)

b. Enter brownstonequorum in the search box

c. Click the "join this group" button and follow the instructions.

That's all there is to it.

Other benefits to using YahooGroups is:

A. Your email address will not be displayed to everyone when messages are sent to the group

B. Any group member can send a message to the group by sending email to:

brownstonequorum@yahoogroups.com, (if a member sends inappropriate messages to the group, their membership can be blocked.)

C. If you want to leave the group, you can unsubscribe yourself.

Please spread the word and let me know if you have any questions.

## QUARRY TOWN, a poem

by Helen Curtin Moskey

Dedicated to the Class of 1948, Portland High School

*Of local history unaware, I grew up in "Quarry Town"  
whence came Portland brownstone's well-known fame.  
Elm trees shaded Main for miles to Gildersleeve  
where veiled in white, tobacco fields scented summers air.  
An aging homestead on East Main is filled with memories  
of the family of Bill and Mary Curtin, who sixty years lived there.*

*Father drives again Route 66 to the Feed and Grain store there,  
an old-time gathering place for farmers when in town  
to reminisce with them of Mr. Buck's ancient memories  
and how the "Buckboard" wagon brought him fame.  
I say, "We have a horse." Then the old men spark the air  
with Wangunk Indian tails from River Bend in Gildersleeve.*

*"In 1828," a sign at Town Hall says, "S. Gildersleeve  
began shipbuilding on the Connecticut River there  
when winds of change were blowing in the air.  
It said, "by 1930," a year before my birth, "Quarry Town,  
it's brownstone spent, had faded worldwide fame,  
and oxen, quarries, clipper ships were shadowed memories."*

*Town Hall and Buck Library safe kept those memories  
and a brownstone obelisk commemorates in Gildersleeve  
"War of Rebellion" dead, the Civil War's sad fame,  
with names of Middletown and Portland men carved there.  
Today, to childhood, simple, happy, free in "Quarry Town,"  
and to my friends of every age, this love song fills the air.*

*In childhood's happy Spring, I breathed a lilac scented air,  
ran free in grasses green, and so I do again in memory.  
On Sundays, church bells rang across the town  
and couples strolled beneath the shading elms to Gildersleeve  
to read the names immortal on the brownstone obelisk there -  
a courting ritual, of sorts - to praise men's bravery and fame.*

*"Young men, seek peace, reject war's quests for fame,"  
warned wimpled nuns with somewhat saintly airs,  
who peeked in church on Sunday, to see the men were there.  
Of Portland High School proms, I have sweet memories  
of Joey C. and Bobby G - that boy from Gildersleeve!  
Oh, friends, I often wonder now, "Why did I leave our town?"*

*Portland, dear "Quarry Town," once of worldwide fame,  
where Gildersleeve clipper ships billowed white the air,  
you harbor all these memories, hold captive my heart there.*

\*\*\*\*\*

This poem will become a part of the collection of Quarry Stories the Quorum hopes to compile to keep alive the Town's illustrious history. We are actively seeking contributions from others to add to this goal. Contact Eunice Wiseman, 342-1409 for more information, and see "WESLEYAN PROJECT" herein.

# Quorum Membership

Ever since 1997, when the first group got together, the amount of an individual's time contribution was not the important factor. What has been important is that people share - time, ideas, and labor, even money. As Nan Zimmer says, "No one of us is as good as all of us." And she is right.

The Quorum has accomplished an amazing amount of work. And all that has been accomplished has been accomplished by lots of people making lots of contributions in lots of ways. We are grateful for every bit of it.

We envision a park that invites quiet contemplation as well as community concerts. A place where families can gather, Scouts can camp, where you can launch anything from a canoe to a sailboat to a river cruiser - or a paper airplane. A place for horseshoe games, a Frisbie tournament. Dog walking and rock climbing. Nature study. Industrial archaeology. A town picnic. This piece of property has room for it all.

Just as the Quorum has room for all who want to be a part of *this* "transforming."

**Romanie Gussenhoven**, Membership Chair, will be glad to talk with you, as will we all.

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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

## Quorum Calendar

### 2009 Events To Think About And Dates To Remember

**5<sup>th</sup> Annual Brownstone Festival:** Saturday, September 12<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.

**Portland Agricultural Fair:** Friday, Saturday and Sunday, October 9,10,11. The Quorum will be there with a booth in the Pole Barn.

**Brownstone Quorum Open Meeting:** Monday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 7 PM - Ralph Lewis, Mary Flood Room Portland Library, 7:00 PM

**Monthly Workdays** - first Saturday 9:00 AM to noon - at the Riverfront Park, weather permitting,

**Monthly Trail clearing** - first Tuesdays - at the Riverfront Park, weather permitting,

**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*

Inside This Issue

- 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Brownstone Family Day & Festival
- The Next Step – Quarrylands Riverfront Park
- BQ – Teen Adventure Cooperation
- Wesleyan Oral History Project
- Troderman Memorial Bench
- Quorum Tag Sale
- The Main Street Pavilion – Ahh, C'est Fini
- Thank You – Chris Gotta
- Yahoo Groups
- *Quarry Town*, a poem
- *Quorum Membership*
- *Quorum Calendar*

# *The Quorum Review*

## *September 2009*

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*Brownstone Festival:*  
*Saturday, September 12<sup>th</sup> 2009*  
**9 AM – 6 PM**