

Guide: At the Monument: General Introduction

We hope you have all come prepared to step back into the history of Portsmouth. The Portsmouth Historical Society has opened its grounds to the public and the Actors from the Portsmouth Community theater will portray some prominent figures in our history.

Guide: Col. William Barton

You are about to meet one of the true heroes of the American Revolution. In 1776 the British had invaded and occupied all of Aquidneck Island. British and Hessian troops guarded the coastlands to prevent the Americans from recapturing the island. But in July of 1777 volunteers risked a night time mission that would encourage the Americans to continue their fight. The monument before us marks a later Battle to take back the island. Col. William Barton will tell you about the daring raid.

Col. William Barton

My name is William Barton and I felt that something had to be done. It was July 1777. In December, 1776, at about the same time that the British were occupying Aquidneck Island, General George Washington's second in command, General Charles Lee, had been captured by the British in the American retreat through New Jersey. We Americans had no officer of equal stature to exchange for him.

At the time, I was twenty-nine-years-old, a lieutenant-Colonel in the Rhode Island militia, and second in command at an American fort in Tiverton. I decided that what Washington needed more than anything else was a British general to swap for Lee.

I received intelligence that Major General Richard Prescott, commander in chief of the British garrison on Aquidneck Island, had moved his sleeping quarters for the summer from Newport to the country house of a wealthy Quaker named John Overing in Portsmouth. I knew the area well, having lived in the area and I had good intelligence sources on the island. We had never done anything like this, but I convinced my commanding officer to allow me to prepare for a nighttime raid. He provided me with five whaleboats and told me to recruit volunteers. Four of my key officers agreed to join me, and all of my regiment volunteered to hazard a raid that might mean death if captured. I selected the best rowers for a total of 45 men. We moved the boats from Tiverton to Bristol on the night of 4 July, avoiding the British gun batteries near the Bristol Ferry area. On 6 August, we continued to Warwick Neck, just north of Prudence Island, in order to better avoid the five British warships stationed in Narragansett Bay. Once there, we waited for the stormy weather to improve. On 10 July, the storms had passed and it was an exceptionally dark night. I detailed the plan to my men and gave them the opportunity to withdraw from the raid, but none did. I issued strict orders. There must be no talking, not even in whispers. Plundering was strictly forbidden. No one was to fire his musket without orders. Anyone who had brought liquor to fortify his courage would have to get rid of it.

Before we shoved off for the 10 mile trip to Aquidneck Island, we wrapped sheepskins around the oarlocks to muffle their sound, and at nine o'clock the five whaleboats slid into the dark bay. There was no moon. It was almost midnight when we slipped between the 50 gun frigate Chatham and the southern tip of Prudence Island.

As we got close to the shore, we suddenly heard horses running. I had the chilling thought that we had been decoyed into a trap. But the sound died away; it was apparently nothing more sinister than a few horses frolicking in a pasture. We landed just before midnight at the mouth of a small creek that led uphill to the Overing House. I left a man to guard each boat while the five squads made their way up the gully. Crouching low, we followed the brook uphill to the West road in front of the house. As I opened the gate, a sentry's alarmed voice hailed us. "Who's there?" I walked toward him, answering, "Friends." "Friends advance and give the countersign." I answered, "We have no countersign. Have you seen any deserters?" The sentry shook his head. By that time I was up to him and said: "Make a noise and you are a dead man! Is General Prescott in the house?" The sentry was too frightened to answer. Finally he waved his hand in the direction of the house and nodded his head. Leaving a man to guard him, the rest of us charged into the house. The downstairs was dark and deserted. We ran up a spiral staircase and burst into the first room on the second floor. We found John Overing, the owner of the house, seated in a chair, reading.

"Where is General Prescott?" I demanded. From a room in the rear, a voice called, "What is the matter?" The rear room was locked, but my servant lowered his head and charged, splintering a panel; I reached in and lifted the latch to open the door. A stocky, middle-aged man in a shirt and nightcap was sitting on the edge of the bed. I placed my hand on his shoulder.

"Are you General Prescott?"

"Yes, Sir."

"You are my prisoner."

"I acknowledge it, Sir."

I let him put on his breeches and waistcoat over his nightshirt. When the General had trouble finding a stocking, I said, "Let it go and come along." I picked up the General's bedroom slippers and took him by the arm. Downstairs, my men had taken another prisoner, the General's aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Barrington. Hearing the noise, he had jumped out the window, and had been apprehended wearing only his shirt and breeches.

Crossing the rye field to the brook, General Prescott faltered: the stalks were scratching his bare legs, he complained. We hooked the General's arms around our shoulders and dragged him along at a run.

Prescott was put in the lead boat with me, Barrington and the sentry in the one behind it; they were warned that they would be killed if they so much as made a sound. As the boats slipped past the Chatham, her riding lights mirrored paths on the waves, and then we heard the watch call out, "All is well!" Suddenly, three rockets soared into the sky behind them. The men bent low over their oars, pulling with all their strength. A rattle of alarm guns drifted over the water, and torches appeared like moving stars against the darkness of the island. I was worried, for I knew that it would be a close race if the warships spread their guard boats over the bay. But as the first grayness of dawn appeared, we stroked safely into Warwick Neck. "Sir, you have made a bold push tonight," Prescott said as he was helped ashore. Still wondering why no guard boats had appeared, I answered, "We have been fortunate."

Several months later we exchanged General Prescott for General Lee.

Guide: School House

This building, the Southernmost School, was built in 1725 and was originally located across the road on Union Street. In 1952 the school was donated to the Portsmouth Historical Society and moved to the museum grounds. The students' families supported the schoolmaster and he often lived with a family. The early schoolmasters were men, but unmarried women later were allowed to teach. Boys and girls both attended the one room school, but recess was separate with each group having their own place to play. Please come inside and attend a class.

School master James Preston

Setting: Southernmost school. It is 1725 - the first day of school (ever). School rules and Queen Anne's Flag on the wall.

Props: A switch (small branch without leaves), replica hornbooks, small school bell, larger old slate, chalk and rag.

Opening: Stand by the outside door and ring the bell to call "students" to class on the first day of school.

Welcome everyone. Come in, sit down. Boys on one side and girls on the other. We can't have you sitting together - can we?

Good Morning. I am Mr. James Preston. I am grateful to your families and the town of Portsmouth for seeing the importance of education, for building this wonderful schoolhouse, and for hiring me to be your teacher. I have spent several years at sea and I learned that my education was critically important for whatever success I have had.

My family and I will be staying in the homes of your parents. Right now, we are boarding nearby with Master and Mistress Strange and their family.

Like you in your own homes we depend greatly on the light from the windows, so I will adjust our start time throughout the year. Rest assured that you will have time to complete your morning chores before coming to school. Girls, you will have time to collect the eggs from the chickens. Boys, you can bring in the firewood for your stove and for warmth. And then you can come to school.

Your families have pledged to donate firewood for the school. When it is cold some of you will be responsible for coming early and bringing in some firewood for the stove and I will help you light the stove here.

Now - What will our day be like?

As you enter you will place your lunch pails in the entryway and then go to your seats. Boys on one side and girls on the other.

We will begin each day, of course, with a short reading from scripture. Today I have chosen.... Proverbs 22:6 — “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

We will then acknowledge our dependence on our good King George. King George has sent his troops to protect us and we have not had an indian attack in over 20 years. We will face our flag and sing “God Save the King.” I am sure you have heard the tune. It goes like this.

GOD SAVE THE KING - National Anthem of United Kingdom

God save great George our King,

Long live our noble King,

God Save the King!

Send him victorious,

Happy and glorious,

Long to reign over us,

God Save the King.

If you don't know the song now we will learn it together over the next few weeks.

Now I expect you all to be on your best behavior while you are here and I expect you to continue studying at home. I must tell you that we have rules here and there are punishments if you do not follow the rules. I have posted the rules here for all of you to see and I will mention some of them now. The punishments are also listed - so many lashes. For example..

Boys and girls playing together - 1 lash

Boys going to the girls' play place - 3 lashes

Girls going to the boys' play place - 2 lashes

What do I mean by Lashes? - That means that I will take my switch here and probably have you hold your palm in front of me (up or down) so I can hit you with it. HIT TOP OF DESK...I may hit your hand lightly or more strongly depending on how often you break the rules. Look at this rule: Misbehaving to girls - 10 lashes. You don't want to do that, do you? Actually I hope I will never have to use this. You are all going to be good and follow the rules - right?

One other rule of course - you must ask permission to go outside and use the privy (outhouse).

Now - what will you learn here? Reading, Writing and Arithmetic

Some of you know how to read a little because your families have taught you. I will group you all by reading ability. We have a few hornbooks and hope to get some more. Pass those around so everyone can see one. The better readers among you will help others. You will come to my desk for help in groups according to your abilities. If you have books at home practice with your parents or older brothers or sisters.

Writing - You will use the hornbooks and slates for practice - we don't have much paper - use your slate and chalk. I'll show you. I will write my initials. JP - Then I can wipe them off using the cloth.

You will also learn everyday arithmetic so you will be able to buy and sell and take measurements, and use tools. After all, you must know your pounds, shillings and pence. What is our highest unit of money? - the pound. You must learn that there are 20 shillings in a pound and 12 pence in a shilling. So how many pence are there in a pound? — 240. You must know weights so you can figure out how much, for example, potatoes will cost. Try this one. If 10 stone of potatoes cost 12 shillings, what will 20 stone cost? — 24 shillings

I expect you to work at home with your parents or other family members. Use your bible or other books you may have at home to practice reading. That's all the time we have for today. I look forward to teaching all of you. I expect to see you all bright and early tomorrow morning. Have a good day

Guide: Stone Wall Behind Cup Stone:

We walk by these beautiful stone walls, but do you ever think about the hands that built them? The earliest farmers here in the 1640's had a lot of work to do to clear the land for planting. Cutting down the trees was just the beginning. When they tried to plow, bumper crops of stones heaved up every year from the frost. Farmers dug them out and stacked them around the fields. When winter came they would work the puzzle of putting these walls together without cement. I think I see someone working on a wall.

Captain Thomas Cooke

I'm glad to see you admiring my handiwork. Long after I'm gone these walls will stand as my legacy. Sweat and toil went into clearing these fields for farming and grazing.

Let me introduce myself. The name is Thomas Cooke. Of course I'm English by birth, hailing from Netherbury in Dorset. My wife and I along with our three sons came over in 1637 aboard the Speedwell. You may know that the Speedwell was set to accompany the Mayflower. It was a leaky bucket then, but it was seaworthy when we left the port of Weymouth and crossed over to the colonies.

Like most Englishmen in these parts, we started out in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. We lived in Taunton but land holding in Rhode Island called us. I took issue with how the Bay Colony treated my dear friend Obidiah Holmes. They threw him into jail just for being a Baptist. There is more liberty here to follow your conscience. I liked the opportunities for landholding here as well. We came to Portsmouth in 1643 and were granted land right here. We've prospered with hard work. My sons and grandsons own as far as you can see - from the Main path all the way to the River.

My home is by River and I have a ferry landing right at the bottom of the hill. With the thick forests here there was no place to graze my livestock. Right across the river is a perfect grazing spot commonly called Fogland. We've good relationships with the natives about and I was able to negotiate with The Wampanoag sachem Massasoit to use the grazing land. Every morning I ferried my livestock over to Tiverton. Just imagine sheep, lambs, cows, pigs, and horses on a big flat bottomed boat with sails. We sailed them back each evening to keep them safe. It was the beginning of Cooks or Fogland ferry and serves as the passage between Old Dartmouth Rd to the Bay Colony and the island.

I'm a farmer, aye, but I've served my colony and town in many ways as well.

I trudged out and surveyed land to set the western boundary lines between Rhode Island and Connecticut. I served as the timber warden for Portsmouth. Those rascally Newporters love to poach timber from our woods, without paying for it - mind you.

I'm getting on in years now. as are my other old friends who were part of the founding of this town. I've deeded land over across the way to my son John. A young Indian boy slave helps with the orchards and fields.

Even when I pass away - these walls will stand firm.

Guide: Old Town Hall

Welcome to the Old Town Hall. This structure was built during the second quarter of the nineteenth century and served the town for about fifty years. It was replaced by the present Town Hall in 1895. The building was then used for storage purposes and also as the Fire Department headquarters. It was moved to this location in 1975 and it now houses the museum's farm tool and vehicle collections.

Today you will hear from Asa Anthony who was the proud owner of Willow Brook Farm on West Main Road. Asa served in town government and he will tell you about his role as town coroner his prize possession - a horse drawn hearse.

Asa Anthony

Good afternoon. My name is Asa Burington Anthony. I was born on Willowbrook farm on West Main Road and I have lived there all my life. Like most people in Portsmouth I am a farmer but I have some skills for other necessary occupations as well. I know enough about animals to be a good veterinarian and I have served as the Town Coroner for Portsmouth for many years.

You might think it is strange that I would own a hearse but in my job it comes in handy since I am often required to transport the deceased to my home and hold them there temporarily until their family can arrange a wake and funeral. I found this used hearse in New Bedford and my son, Frank, and I brought it back together. It was built about 15 years ago in the early 1870s. It is obviously more fancy than I need for my purposes but it is well constructed and the price was right. You can see the nice urns on the top. Those flames could be removed and replaced with plumes of black feathers. Of course the extent of the feathers signified how important the deceased was. It has a few practical features as well such as rollers to make it easier to push the coffin into the hearse and spikes that can be raised to keep the coffin in place. When I got it it was painted black like most hearses but it needed a new paint job so I decided to paint it gray. Several people have told me this hearse looks a lot like the hearse that the Christian Union Church nearby has. Well - it was built about the same time. It has really been a useful vehicle ever since I got it.

Let me give you an example of what I have to do on the job as Town Coroner. A few months ago the Church Brothers had a fishing steamer called the Jemima Boomer. They were unloading fish at the oil works at 5 in the morning. The fish were being hoisted by a derrick when the gaff on the derrick broke and a tub of fish fell on three men who were in the hold. One man was killed and two were seriously injured. It was my job to summon a six-man jury who immediately came to the scene of the accident. After hearing the evidence they returned a verdict of accidental death. The doctor was summoned to treat the injured men but it was my task to transport the poor soul that died that day. We treat our dead with respect here in Portsmouth and I think using this hearse is a sign of that respect.

Thanks for stopping by. Hopefully you will not need my services for a long time.

Guide: Bottom of church steps: Introduction to the Church

Welcome to the Christian Union Church. This church was founded in 1810 as the Christian Church of Portsmouth. Members met in private homes until a small meetinghouse was built in 1824 on this site. At that point they called themselves the Union Society to help unite rather than divide the Christian community. This structure was built in 1865 at a cost of \$7,000. They returned to the name of the Christian Church of Portsmouth. The basic belief was that the Bible is the word of God. When the church disbanded in 1940, the building was turned over to the Portsmouth Historical Society which had been formed in 1938.

Guide: At top of steps. Introduction to Channing.

William Ellery Channing was a prominent clergyman in Boston during most of the year, but he spent his summers in Portsmouth at Oakland Farm just down East Main Road. Channing would enjoy coming to the original Union Church which was on this site. He would spend Sunday afternoons talking to the Portsmouth farmers. He didn't preach, he sat and discussed topics with them. As early as 1825 he spoke out against slavery. He was an active leader in the new Unitarian Church and was part of the Transcendental movement with Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. He relished his summers on Aquidneck Island and especially enjoyed the beach. You are about to hear his views and some of his poetry.

Guide Leads group to front - to the left of the pulpit.

William Ellery Channing

This is a beautiful world! Rhode Island is a Paradise for me. Spending summers in the quiet charms of Oakland Farm is healing. Our house has been something of a hospital and those excellent remedies of patience and kindness have done much for us.

I welcome the visitors that have come from Newport, but I won't be giving a formal sermon. Each summer I set aside my duties as a Unitarian minister in Boston to come to the farm in Portsmouth, right across the street. On Sundays I enjoy sitting and talking to the farmers who come to this church.

Everyone is welcome at this church. If you believe that the bible is the word of God, you belong here. We look at what we have in common, not those doctrines that divide us. My children's governess, Dorothea Dix, has started a Sunday School at Mrs. Durfee's Teahouse. I encourage you to gather together to learn and to share your spiritual journey. Come, sit, and I will share some of my poetry with you.

My symphony

To live content with small means.

To seek elegance rather than luxury,

and refinement rather than fashion.

To be worthy not respectable,

and wealthy not rich.

To study hard, think quietly, talk gently,

act frankly, to listen to stars, birds, babes,

and sages with open heart, to bear all cheerfully,

do all bravely, await occasions, hurry never.

In a word, to let the spiritual,

unbidden and unconscious,

grow up through the common.

This is to be my symphony.

Sea Song

Our boat to the waves go free,

By the bending tide, where the curled wave breaks,

Like the track of the wind on the white snowflakes:

Away, away! 'Tis a path o'er the sea.

Blasts may rave, - spread the sail,

For our spirits can wrest the power from the wind,

And the gray clouds yield to the sunny mind,

Fear not we the whirl of the gale.

Waves on the beach, and the wild sea-foam,

With a leap, and a dash, and a sudden cheer,

Where the seaweed makes its bending home,

And the sea-birds swim on the crests so clear,
Wave after wave, they are curling o'er,
While the white sand dazzles along the shore.

Guide: Move group to the right by the organ: Introduction to Dorothea Lynde Dix

Dorothea Lynde Dix came to Portsmouth to regain her health. It was in Portsmouth that Dorothea found her voice as a reformer. Although some found her disciplined and strict, she had a heart for the helpless - prisoners, the mentally ill, the wounded and the poor. Dorothea will tell you about her causes.

Dorothea Lynde Dix

Let me introduce myself, I am Dorothea Lynde Dix. I first came to Portsmouth as part of the household of William Ellery Channing. His summer home, Oakland Farm, is just across the street. During the spring and summer of 1827, I came from Boston with the family as the governess to the Channing daughters. I was recovering from consumption and could no longer practice my occupation of teaching. The Channing daughters described me as "strict and inflexible in discipline," but they appreciated this strictness later in life. Here at the Union Meetinghouse I established the Sunday School. I always had the class of troublesome men and boys, but I was firmly able to correct their ways. The charms of nature and the sweet spiritual community here bring me back year after year. On one such visit I bought an organ for the church and school. Music should be a more integral part of the services and school, don't you agree? Concerts and singing of the psalms began - oh what lovely sounds.

And there is so much work to be done here. Last time I was here I received a letter from a poor soldier at Fort Adams. I just had to right this wrong and persuade the government to improve the arrangements for the comfort of the men. On another visit I became aware of the plight of Abram Simmons. I even wrote an article for the Providence Journal of how his case illustrates the appalling treatment of the insane in Rhode Island.. Confined to a dungeon in Little Compton, Simmons lived "in utter darkness, encased on every side by walls of frost, his garments constantly more or less wet." I persuaded Dr. Cyrus Butler to donate \$40,000 toward the establishment of a facility for the poor insane and Butler Hospital was created from that gift. My efforts to ensure humane treatment for the those poor souls in Rhode Island and even in Portsmouth were not always successful, but with the backing of Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, the husband of my dear friend Julia Ward Howe, I was encouraged to publish my views.

When the South seceded and the Union fought to restore our nation, I headed to Washington to volunteer my services. I had learned nursing techniques from Florence Nightingale when I visited England. I was appointed to organize and outfit the Union Army hospitals and to oversee the vast nursing staff that the war would require. As superintendent of women nurses, I was the first woman to serve in such a high role. I'm

afraid my female nurses found me too strict. Although I was stripped of command, I didn't let that deter me from advocating for modern hospitals.

Be it prisoners, the wounded, the poor, the insane...there is always work that needs to be done to improve their situations. My visits here to Portsmouth refresh me for the tasks ahead. You must excuse me, I have a speech to write.

Guide: Move group downstairs to the back of the museum - Julia's Room

Guide: Julia Ward Howe Room

You are about to get a glimpse into the bedroom of Julia Ward Howe. She lived in Boston, but she spent her summers up the road at Oak Glen on Union Street. She was an accomplished writer and was involved in the abolition and women's suffrage movements. In 1870 she was the first to proclaim "Mother's Day" with her Mother's Day Declaration. Julia is most famous for writing the words to the "Battle Hymn of the Republic". It is most fitting that some of her possessions were donated to our museum. The records of the Union Church show that Julia was invited to "supply the pulpit" as a guest preacher on a number of occasions. Among other things, Julia can tell you how she came to write the Battle Hymn of the Republic.

Julia Ward Howe

My husband Samuel Gridley Howe and I have always been involved in the fight against slavery. When the War between the States began, my husband and I became involved in the U.S. Sanitary Commission that fought for sanitary conditions in the War Hospitals and Prisons. More men died in the Civil War from disease caused by poor sanitary conditions in prisoner of war camps and their own army camps than died in battle. The Sanitary Commission was the chief institution of reform for that condition, leading to far fewer deaths later in the war than earlier. As a result of our work with the Sanitary Commission, in 1862 we were invited to Washington by President Lincoln. We visited a Union Army camp in Virginia across the Potomac. There, we heard the men singing the song which had been sung by both North and South, one in admiration of John Brown, one in celebration of his death: "John Brown's Body Lies a'Mouldering in His Grave." The tune was written by a Southerner to be used at religious revivals.

A clergyman in the party who knew I write poetry urged me to write a new song for the war effort to replace "John Brown's Body." "I replied that I had often wished to do so." in spite of the excitement of the day I went to bed and slept as usual, but awoke the next morning in the gray of the early dawn, and to my astonishment found that the wished-for lines were arranging themselves in my brain. I lay quite still until the last verse had completed itself in my thoughts, then hastily saying to myself, I shall lose this if I don't write it down immediately, I searched for an old sheet of paper and an old stub of a pen which I had the night before. I began to scrawl the lines almost without looking, as I learned to do by often scratching down verses in the darkened room when my little children were sleeping. Having completed this, I lay down again and fell asleep, but not before feeling that something of importance had happened to me.

The result was a poem, published first in February 1862 in the Atlantic Monthly, and called the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." The poem was quickly put to the tune that had been used for "John Brown's Body" and became the best known Civil War song of the North.

Guide: Museum: Mrs. Durfee's Teahouse - Center museum

Ruth Durfee was an active member of the Christian Union Church, but she was most noted for her marvelous "griddle cakes." Writers for Harper's Monthly Magazine in 1854 praised her as the "Goddess of the Glen." Her tea house was off of Glen Road and it was a traditional spot for visitors to the Glen to seek refreshment after a day enjoying nature. Ruth and a later Mrs. Durfee often hosted country parties for the wealthy families who summered in Newport. You are welcome to come and enjoy Mrs. Durfee's hospitality.

Ruth Durfee

Good afternoon and I bid you welcome to the Christian Union Church in the beautiful Glen. The ladies of the Social Committee have outdone themselves in preparing delicious refreshments for your enjoyment. We welcome you to sit, enjoy the pleasant conversation and taste the home made pastries that the ladies have prepared for you.

I also invite you to visit my teahouse which is just across the field there. I suggest that after you drive or walk or take time for courting in the Glen that you rest your weary bones at my Tea House and Inn. You will be welcomed and you will soon have an opportunity to taste my famous griddle cakes. They are as thin as a wafer, slightly sweetened with a hint of nutmeg. We make them with a mixture of ten eggs to a quart of milk and the finest Rhode Island meal, butter, sugar and spice. They are really good. We also have plum cakes and other dainties, but you should have the griddle cakes.

Our teahouse is a Portsmouth gathering place. You will feel right at home. In the winter time the teahouse hosts weekly meetings of the singing school, ladies sewing circles, and the Portsmouth Union Lyceum which is a debating society. With elections coming the debates will be lively.

Miss Dorothea Dix and other church members hold a Sunday School at the teahouse. You are welcome to come any Sunday morning.

If you come in the evening we usually have some music. You may even be able to frolic in a Virginia Reel and then return home later by the light of the moon. So please consider stopping by my Tea House today or on some future visit. You will have an afternoon and maybe an evening you will not soon forget. Hope to see you soon!

And then, when our lovely Glen Ramble is past,

And we rest our tired limbs on a sofa at last,
How delightful to mark on the table outspread
The primrose-hued butter, the delicate bread!

The cakes and the cream, the preserves and the ham, The eggs, the hung beef, the
sliced peaches and jam, The coneé so fragrant, the fine flavored tea,

And the other good things of good Mrs. Durfee!