



PORTSMOUTH *Historical Society*

July 2017 Newsletter

Welcome to the July edition of our monthly newsletter. As we start the Society's 79th year as special welcome goes out to our 78 new members who joined in the past two months. Our total membership is now 561, a number of which we are very proud, but not yet satisfied. Bring along your friends, neighbors and families! Remember, it is not a requirement that a member lives inside the boundaries of the town of Portsmouth.

The Museums are open! Our three Museum buildings have been opened for 6 Sundays (2-4PM) so far and attendance has been good. But we want, and should hope to expect, that ALL of our members should take the opportunity to visit the museum to see our displays. Of particular interest is our annual exhibit "What's in Your Attic?" created by our team of curators led by Nancy Crawford, Marge Webster and Gloria and Richard Schmidt. It is a great display of items of Portsmouth's history culled from our "attic". We are always curious to know if you have items in your attic that could be donated to our collection. They need to relate to Portsmouth or Rhode Island history for the most part. It is amazing to us some of the things we see show up. Even items from the 50s and 60s are valuable as well. Keep in mind that the population of Portsmouth (nearly 18,000 today) was only 6,578 in 1950.

More Docents needed: Speaking of the museums, we are always looking for docent volunteers to help show off our collection. We have a good core of experienced docents but we need more. One of our goals is to have the museums open more often and we need more docents to do that. Experience is not required. New docents are always paired with a veteran and you can learn on the job. Please contact us through our website if you are interested.

Upcoming Events: Mark your calendar. (Admission is free for all these events)

1. **(Short Notice): Thursday 6 July 5:30-7 PM** at Town Hall. Lengthen your 4th of July holiday by dropping in to the Town Hall to view the Town's 2nd generation of the Declaration of Independence. It will be on display and our President will speak about it for a few minutes at 6 PM. Come see this beautiful copy of the Declaration printed a few days after the 4th by Christopher Southwick.

2. On **Sunday 23 July at 2 PM** join us for a 426th birthday celebration for Anne Hutchinson. The party will feature short remarks by historians Gloria Schmidt and Jim Garman. And.....we will have a birthday cake to celebrate this important birthday! Of course the Museums will also be open at that time.
3. On **Tuesday 8 August** the Society will sponsor a lecture by member/historian Fred Zilian at the **Portsmouth Library at 6 PM**. Fred's topic will be "**Life on Aquidneck Island during the Revolutionary War**". Reservations will be required for this lecture so call the Library at 683-9457 to reserve a seat.

Volunteers: The Society is always in need of volunteers and the summertime is a good time to come help us. We have many projects going on all the time but much is happening at this time of the year. Come see us on a Sunday or contact us on our website: portsmouthhistorical.org. Also you can friend us on Facebook.

Our cemetery project will be getting off the ground later this month. We have a number of volunteers so far. Anyone interested, please take a look at our project info page on our website: portsmouthhistorical.org/cemetery-graveyard-project. Check out the R I Cemetery Commission database for Portsmouth which lists all our cemeteries and considerable detailed information about them.

Did you know:

-9 May 1921: After relying on "Constables" the Town of Portsmouth appointed William J. Deegan as the first Police Chief. His salary, originally 30 cents ah hour was soon raised to 40 cents! By the time of his death in 1934 he was earning \$150/month.

-Ben Phillips began on the Police Department in 1934. He was the ONLY policeman until 1942 when the department was doubled to TWO! They got their first patrol car in 1942 also.

-1922 The Town Meeting voted to purchase its first fire engine. It was later (1927) housed in the Quaker Hill garage at the foot of that hill until moved up the hill in 1943.

-In 1945 Henry F. Anthony was honored for serving on the School Committee since 1892, a total of 53+ years! The Anthony School was named for him.

See you at our events!

Jim Garman
President

P.S. The video of our annual meeting 19 June is available at
<https://youtu.be/OzuHvysYr88>.

TAKING PRIDE IN PORTSMOUTH'S HISTORY