



# PORTSMOUTH *Historical Society*

## PHS January 2019 Newsletter

### **Happy New Year to all of our supporting members from the Board of Directors of the Portsmouth Historical Society!**

**Polar Dive:** We got 2019 off with a great start as we were the beneficiary of the annual Polar Dive, put on by the Portsmouth Business Association.

On a beautiful (and very unusual) 55-degree New Year's Day, a large crowd of Portsmouth residents took the opportunity to go for a swim at the Island Park Beach. The event kicked off at 11 o'clock with a gigantic beach bonfire which drove the spectators/swimmers back to Park Avenue. The effort by John Vit and his crew provided more heat than was necessary for the day's activities, but it was great!. And with the signal at noon, adults, kids and even dogs took the plunge.

The after party at Tremblay's Restaurant featured food **provided by the Portsmouth Business Association, Tremblay's and Rocco's**, a prize raffle and a 50-50 raffle. A good time was had by all and we are grateful for the Portsmouth Business Association for choosing the Historical Society as the beneficiary of the day's activities.

**Construction Progress:** We are pleased to announce that in addition to work previously noted, we have had significant repairs completed to the gutters and soffits of our 1865 museum building. The work was done by Norbury Construction of Portsmouth, a company that has done considerable work on our museum in past years. We are very grateful to Paul Norbury and his crew.

Additional construction work is in the planning stages by our building committee, especially involving climate control for our museum. Members of our Building/Grounds Committee deserve special recognition for their

work in coordinating these projects. They are Dave Duggan, Dave Gleason, Gary Gump, Lois Ryan and Bob Watts.

**Upcoming Events:** We are planning to host a lecture on Monday 28 January at the Library by our President. The topic will be "**Aquidneck Island Trolleys (The Streetcar Era) 1898-1925**". This will be an illustrated lecture about the two trolley lines that extended from one end of the island to the other during that time. This was the most significant form of mass transit back then.

We are planning another **Historical Book Club** meeting on 4 March (biography of RI General Nathanael Greene), at the Portsmouth Free Public Library. For **Founders' Day (7 March)**, we will have the **Portsmouth Compact** (from 1638) on display at the Town Hall again. Then it will be on to **Portsmouth History Trivia Contests** and numerous other activities. Currently we have 22 activities in the planning stages for 2019. We hope to see all of our members at many of these events.

**A Search Is On:** With all of the construction work going on at the Museum some of us have begun to wonder what the bell tower/cupola looked like on the museum building. Curator Gloria Schmidt found a newspaper article from 1928 which indicated that the tower had rotted and fallen down at that time. Another story, circulated for years, was that it came down in the 1938 hurricane. We have searched our museum photo collection and a number of personal files, but we cannot come up with a photograph or sketch of what it looked like. If anyone, in their family photograph collection, might have an old view of the building we would greatly appreciate being able to borrow it. Someday maybe we can restore the building to totally show what it looked like in its early life.

On that note, the Portsmouth Historical Society is always looking for photographs, letters, diaries, **and** any town memorabilia for its collection. Just about **ANYTHING** can be copied and archived these days. We would appreciate your considering us for your donations.

Thanks for all your continuing support.

Jim Garman  
President

Taking Pride in Portsmouth's History