



# PORTSMOUTH *Historical Society*

## Portsmouth Historical Society Newsletter October 2019

October came in like a tornado, literally! While a few of our neighborhoods sustained minor damage, we are fortunate it was not more severe. It will be interesting to see how the future treats this historical event-the first recorded tornado in Portsmouth!

### Past Events

The September 8th Ghostly Witness performance by the Portsmouth Community Theater was very fun, and extremely well attended! Fascinating presentation and true life Portsmouth history!

The Sept 19th Book Club: Killed Strangely The Death of Rebecca Cornell by Elaine Forman Crane discussing this same case was also well attended, showing again the passion and interest our community has for learning about and discussing our Portsmouth past.

### Upcoming Events

**Friday Oct 11th PHS Member Appreciation** Rail Explorers 5:30 PM is SOLD OUT!! We are looking forward to pedaling along scenic Narragansett Bay during the popular sunset ride. Our past president and town historian Jim Garman provided Rail Explorers with many of the historical notes used on their tours. We are very appreciative that Rail Explorers is providing this opportunity for us, and happy that so many of our members took advantage of the offer!

**Sunday Oct 13th History Comes Alive** performance begins at 2:30 PM on our last open day at the museum, a great way to end the season! The Portsmouth Community Theater players will portray real life Portsmouth figures with interactive presentations. Come meet: John B. Gough, a Temperance preacher, and his wife (Richard Schmidt and Maria Schmidt), who will be holding a Temperance rally in our audience room; Isabella Fish (Cindy Killavey), a schoolteacher, will be conducting her first class of the year at Newtown School, circa 1900; Gertrude Macomb (Denise Betz), Portsmouth's first Girl Scout leader, will be tutoring her scouts on how to pass their cooking badge in the museum's kitchen area, circa 1924; Benjamin Boyd (Jim Killavey), a farmer and miller, will be telling stories in the Old Town Hall about windmills in Portsmouth, circa 1940s.

**Thursday Oct 17th Annual Harvest Social** 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM at Greenvale Vineyards, 582 Wapping Rd. Get out and mingle with like minded community members who enjoy and appreciate Portsmouth, in a beautiful historic setting! Live music provided by guitarist Michael Barclay de Tolly, and light refreshments served. This event is free, with a \$10 donation gladly accepted at the door. Many thanks in advance to Bob Wilson and Nancy Parker Wilson for sharing their vineyard and exceptional estate-grown wines with us!

**Wednesday October 23rd 36th Annual Beirut Memorial Observance** 10 AM commemoration of American Service lives lost in the Oct 23, 1983 bomb attack, including nine RI U.S. Marine Corps. PHS is honored to provide the location for this very special program. We thank all of our military members and their families for their service!

**Portsmouth Free Public Library** has its 20th Annual Taste of Portsmouth on Oct 18th at 7 PM, and is offering genealogy related programs: Sunday Oct 20th at 2 PM- A to Z World Food and American Ancestors: Tying Your Family History through Food with Colleen LeComte, and Sunday, Oct. 27 at 2 PM-Preserving Your Family History in the Digital Age with Stephanie Call. They now also have the American Ancestors database available for in-Library use. Check out their website at <https://www.portsmouthlibrary.org/events/adult> for more details. We encourage you to support our library, it is a valuable resource to complement what we offer!

### **Recent Acquisitions**

Kelly Hanks, granddaughter of Mrs. Mary Chase Hanks, donated a beautiful original water color through our super member Gloria Schmidt. We honored Mrs. Hanks this year as one of our Portsmouth Women. Mary was a farmer but her passion was art, and we are pleased to have this!

Vincent Luti donated old glass ink bottles for dipping steel point pens to the Southermost school house desks to show how students used pens.

Jan Menzi added to our photo collection with pictures of the St Mary's Episcopal basketball team, and the June 22, 1955 graduation class of the Henry F Anthony School. How many remember the motto that is on the gym wall in the background "Backbone Not Wishbone"?

### **Did you know?**

Our buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places, as are several other Portsmouth properties, like the Lawton-Almy-Hall house located at 559 Union St. Go on [www.preservation.ri.gov](http://www.preservation.ri.gov), and select the National Register tab for fascinating details on the Portsmouth history associated with these and other area properties. Information can also be found on our website at [www.portsmouthhistorical.org](http://www.portsmouthhistorical.org) under the Lost to Time tab. Both websites are definitely worth checking out!

On behalf of the entire board of the Portsmouth Historical Society, we truly hope to see you at one, or all, of our October member events!

Very Truly Yours,  
Anne Northup Burns. President