



Portsmouth Historical Society Newsletter April 2020

As the State of RI slowly reopens, we too are preparing to open our museum buildings to visitors, following social distancing protocols. Our Annual Meeting will be held on Monday evening June 22, 2020, featuring a lecture by Jim Garman about the businesses that were operating in Portsmouth 100 years ago. This topic complements our 2020 seasonal display titled "A Tumultuous Decade 100 years ago, the 1920's". Exhibits will focus on suffrage, prohibition, Mt Hope Bridge, jazz music and radio with emphasis on a well known Portsmouth songwriter, Island Park diving horse and dance marathons, Portsmouth politics and prejudice-KKK activity and the State House bombing, and soldiers returning from WWI. The museum will reopen Sunday June 28, 2020 from 2 PM to 5 PM. These are hopeful, but tentative, dates due to the circumstances. We will confirm and provide more visiting details as the dates get closer.

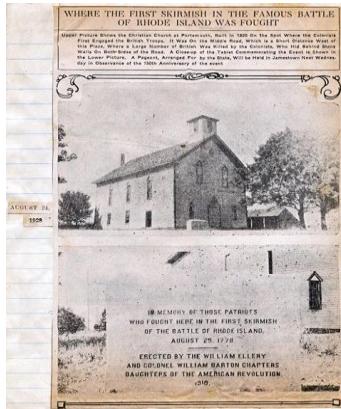
Rhode Island History Online Directory Initiative (RHODI) Support

We would love your help representing the Town of Portsmouth in the Rhode Island Historical Society and Providence Public Library's Rhode Island COVID-19 Archive, which is a state-wide "people's archive," dedicated to getting as many voices and perspectives as possible to tell the story of the pandemic. Be a documented part of history and please submit your pictures, items, and stories to PHSINFO@portsmouthhistorical.org. We have seen so many great ones! PHS will use your submissions to curate our own record, which we will share with RHODI.

Friends Meeting House Update

You may have noticed the "For Sale" signs have been removed from the Friends Meeting House. We are pleased to report that some very positive progress has been made in preserving this Portsmouth landmark. The Congregation has retained counsel, so we shall leave it at that for now, but expect to hear more in the near future, including ways that you can help. PHS will continue to support efforts to preserve this historically significant property. If you would like to be on the inside track, send your contact information to PHSINFO@portsmouthhistorical.org.

Did you know? This meetinghouse was built in 1700 and is the oldest public building in town and a critically important part of our town's history. The Friends movement arrived here in the late 1660's. Notable Portsmouth founders William Coddington, John Coggeshall and Nicholas Easton became Quakers and were leading members both here and in Newport. During the Years 1670-1695, Quakers were estimated to constitute half the voting population of Rhode Island. In 1673 Nicholas Easton was Governor and William Coddington was Deputy Governor. In 1675 the Rhode Island Council included ten Quakers among its twelve members. More information on these early settlers and their descendants, many who served in government positions, can be found online in Society of Friend's records.



Christian Union Church bell tower photo

Through the power of social media with a simple statement on our Facebook page, a 45 year quest by Jim Garman to find a picture of the Christian Union Church with the bell tower still in place has been completed. We are very grateful to Christopher Scott Martin, who had it in his ephemera collection, and sent it to us! The August 24, 1928 publication in which this appeared is still unknown. It would be wonderful to track down the original, so if you have some time and like detective work, give it a try !!

Strategic Plan

We are putting the polishing touches on our recently adopted Strategic Plan, which we are excited to share with you in more detail in the coming months. It is an ambitious vision for our future that we are passionate about, and hope you will be too! In the meantime, we hope you are well and able to get out and enjoy the beautiful scenery and neighborhoods that are the crown jewels of this wonderful town, whose history is our mission to preserve, interpret and actively promote!

Very truly yours,

Anne Northup Burns
President

