

SEPTEMBER 7, 2023



**CITY OF PORTSMOUTH
BLUE RIBBON TASK FORCE**

PORTSMOUTH ARCHIVE



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY **JEFF & VINCE** — ALL NAME TAGS WILL BE REMOVED

The purpose of the Portsmouth Public/Private Archives is to preserve and provide access to the historical, cultural, and administrative records of Portsmouth for the benefit of present and future generations. We are committed to providing archival services to member organizations in organizing, and maintaining these records in a secure, climate-controlled and fire protected environment, and to making the archives available to researchers, students, and the general public through digital and physical means. We strive to promote engagement in our community and access to anyone interested in the early history of our country, state and city through the preservation of these records, and by fostering partnerships with public and private organizations to achieve our shared goals.

Portsmouth's rich history and extensive cultural resources attract thousands(?) of visitors coming to admire, study, learn and enjoy the city and all it has to offer. Portsmouth is considered a primary resource of scholars studying the early development of our country, the land and populations that preceded it and the struggles that our 400 year evolution has weathered. Individuals come to study their own heritage and ancestry. History-tourism in Portsmouth has fostered an economy rich in first class restaurants, the arts and shopping that has sustained the City through the wild economic fluctuations of the past few years. Preserving these primary resources and making them widely available for research is critical to the well being of the City.

There are four primary stakeholders in the Portsmouth Public/Private Archives. The City of Portsmouth, Portsmouth Athenaeum, Portsmouth Historical Society and Strawberry Banke Museum. We anticipate additional stakeholders including some of the many smaller institutions and organizations as well as individual collectors of significant historical documents, art realia.

The City of Portsmouth has many documents and records that are required to be saved and cared for by New Hampshire Statutes as well as many deemed as important to understanding the City's context in the overall history of the Seacoast area.

Portsmouth Athenaeum is home to extensive documents and photographs entrusted to them by historical organizations and individuals. The Athenaeum has cataloged, digitized and stored these records and made them accessible through their on-line presence. Their storage facility is full and cannot accommodate all they have as well as what they expect in growth in the future. Their history of growth is a good indicator of what to expect in the coming years and is a useful measure in determining the scale of a new archival facility.

[\(include statement about storage of non-circulating books, art, framed art and three dimensional artifacts\)](#)

Strawberry Banke Museum has similar storage issues plus the addition of 32 historic buildings on their original foundations with historic furnishings. The unique intact neighborhood has also produced an extensive collection of archaeological artifacts currently stored in boxes in the basements of the historic houses.

Portsmouth Historical Society uses the Portsmouth Athenaeum for storage of their documents and photographs. It has a large collection of furnishings currently stored in the attic of the John Paul Jones House.

Additional Areas

1. Establish a legal framework to ensure that the archive operates in a way that defines the responsibilities and duties of the public and private partners involved in the archive, as well as the ownership and access rights to the records.
2. Create a governance structure that ensures that the archive is managed effectively and transparently. Create a governing body that oversees the archive, including appointing a director or manager to oversee day-to-day operations.
3. Establish policies and procedures to ensure that the archive operates smoothly, for record acquisition, preservation, and access and that these policies should be informed by best practices in archival management and should be regularly reviewed and updated as needed.
4. Develop a record management system so that records are organized, preserved, and accessible and allows for the easy retrieval and sharing of records, while also ensuring that they are protected from unauthorized access or loss.
5. Provide access to the public. Establish procedures for requesting and accessing records, while also ensuring that privacy rights are protected.
6. Identify funding sources – planning grant.
7. Site Selection.
8. Preserving historical records: One of the primary reasons for creating a public-private archive is to preserve historical records that are important to the municipality. These records can include government documents, maps, photographs, and other artifacts that provide insight into the municipality's history and culture.

9. Enhancing transparency for the City.
10. Promoting economic development.
11. Creating a public-private archive can strengthen the partnerships between the City, private organizations, businesses and community groups.
12. Technical and Physical attributes of the archives.
13. Security and accessibility.
14. Potential funding sources.
15. Explore other organizations to contribute.



GENERAL INFORMATION TOM & TOM

Records speak to citizens in the present and in the future about who we are, what is important to us, and how we perceive and react to events around us.

The obligations of a municipality to create, retain and make available to the public, records of governmental activity have long been regulated by the N.H. General Court. In contrast, decisions relating to the acquisition, retention, and preservation of and accessibility to records and other archival material generated or acquired by private institutions have historically been lightly regulated (e.g., the obligation to retain tax records) and left to the varying rules of the institutions, and, often, to the discretion of their leaders. This difference in approaches has resulted in much variation among community historical, religious, fraternal, sporting, business and educational institutions' record keeping efforts. Some institutions have retained records for more than two

centuries, others have disposed of their records much sooner for lack of adequate storage space. Moreover, as some community organizations have ceased to exist, their records have been lost to landfills. Portsmouth, despite being one of North America's earliest settlements, has not been immune from the loss of its written history.

The Blue Ribbon Task Force on Portsmouth Historical Archives was empaneled by the City Council on January 9, 2023 to explore options to create a public/private archive to protect documents related to the city's past, present, and future. The need for and utility of such a facility has been recognized since at least August of 1979, when Nancy Peace of the School of Library Science at Simmons College submitted "A Proposal for Preserving the Historical Records of Portsmouth, NH." Peace wrote:

When I sat down to write this report, I began by making a list of the types of materials that serve to document the life of a town and its people. In a parallel column I tried to list the potential custodians of each type of material in Portsmouth. The latter effort proved futile as almost any of the city's institutions could collect each type of material. I believe the most effective programs are those where a single institution accepts the primary responsibility for developing research collections.

The report generated interest, but efforts to create a consortium of collecting institutions were timid and the costs of conservation and cataloging of historic materials were left to grant funding and private donations. The public library requested an appropriation of \$45,000 in the city budget for 1982 to do more extensive cataloging and preservation, but the request was not funded.

That same year, the new master plan for the Portsmouth Athenaeum prepared by Robert Thoresen and Richard Candee recommended that the Athenaeum use its newly acquired space on the 3rd floor of the Foye store building in Market Square to create a research library. The new free research library opened in 1986 and the Athenaeum took on the administration of the records of 40 Portsmouth organizations, including the very important historical archives of the Portsmouth Historical Society, the Warner House Association, the Society of Colonial Dames of New Hampshire, and five historic churches.

A grant to the National Historic Preservation of Records Commission to create a city archive was proposed in 1983 but was not approved because the City could not guarantee future funding of the operation. The grant was revived in 1992 as a joint application from the City and the Athenaeum but was again rejected because there was no guarantee of future funding beyond the 2-year term of the grant. In 1997, the City Council approved \$10,000 to fund a complete inventory of the City's historical collections. Contractor David Goodman's 3-volume report on more than 5,500 items was submitted in 1999 and comprises the format for the City's archives today.

In 2018, the City made a major commitment of \$200,000 over four years to create a permanent document storage area (City Archive) in City Hall, overseen by the Finance Department and City Clerk. The facility has UV protection, a dry fire suppression system, environmental monitoring, and tight security. Abby Mills, Administrative Manager and Budget Coordinator for the City, has created the best archival storage system that the City has ever had for its internal records, but it is rapidly pushing its capacity to the limit.

The Athenaeum received a critical engineering report in 2019 showing that, primarily due to the exponential growth of its archival collections, its constricted space in the Foye building was dangerously overloaded and has had to take drastic steps to move materials offsite, limiting their accessibility. The Portsmouth Public Library's new building constructed in 2006 has a special collections room and climate-controlled vault, but both are now filled to capacity. Strawberry Banke Museum closed its Thayer Cummings library in 2007 and its Jones House Archeology Center soon after, leaving major historical resources with little or no accessibility to the public. The Portsmouth Historical Society's collections storage areas are bursting at the seams, limiting its ability to accept new donations. In addition to these concerns, there are important private collections small and large that are leaving the city because our institutions lack the space and the resources to care for them.

The fragmentation of preservation efforts in Portsmouth acknowledged more than 40 years ago has only increased in the intervening decades. The misery is multiplied by the inefficiency of several institutions having to fund doing exactly the same thing. The huge disparity of access to materials across collecting institutions means that our city's rich history is only being promoted incompletely to our citizens and to the wider world. The creation of a central archive would not only meet the public benefit objective need

identified in 1979, the efficiencies and funding opportunities of a public/private partnership would reap long-term savings for all of the participants involved.

The 1979 Peace report concludes: “Research collections, if they are to be useful, must be as extensive as possible, well organized, carefully cared for, and accessible on a reasonable basis. Staff with expertise in the handling of special materials is required, as is a safe environment to preserve valuable and often unique items. The development of research collection demands considerable commitment of time and funds. If this commitment is absent, a program should not be undertaken.”



CURRENT CONDITION ELIZABETH & EMMA

Strawbery Banke

Strawbery Banke has appropriate storage space for archival materials, including documents, photographs, oral history transcripts, maps and building assessments in the Carter Collection Center. However, there is little to no room for growth. The closure of

the Thayer Cumings Library and Archive in 2009 precipitated the need for alternative storage, hence the move to the object collection facility. However, public access to the museum's resources was severely affected by the library closure. The archival material is still available if requested, but the public facing nature of the resources no longer exists.

The museum has a small vault in what is now a museum owned rental building, the Shapley Townhouse at 454 Court Street. This small space has environmental challenges, and must be monitored constantly. The vault holds glass plate negatives, various types of tapes with recorded oral histories, 20th century advertising material collected during the Abbott Store project, institutional archives among other archives.

The museum's archaeological collection is precariously stored in the basements of the museums' 18th and 19th century basements. The collection represents artifacts from the 30 excavations executed by archaeologists on Puddle Dock, and the significant Deer Street excavation of the 1980s. This is problematic for numerous reasons including accessibility, possible harm from failing building systems like furnaces and sump pumps, the constant breakdown of the boxes from damp basement conditions and more recently, the threat of sea level rise.

Strawbery Banke's archival material should be more easily accessible to the public and the archaeological collection should be protected and available for scholars for research projects.

Portsmouth Historical Society

The Portsmouth Historical Society's collection of objects and artworks are located on the 3rd floor of the John Paul Jones House. While attempts have been made to properly store the items with archival boxes, metal shelving and hanging walls, the third floor space is not properly climate controlled. There is evidence of substantial past leaks from the roof and the window air conditioning units are not sufficient to moderate the fluctuating heat and humidity levels in a 1758 home. The 3rd floor is only accessible to museum staff and the organization lacks adequate study/research space. The lack of public access and climate control are two major concerns for the Portsmouth Historical Society that we hope this project will address.

Portsmouth Athenaeum

The overriding, dominant concern at the Athenaeum is with the environment-temperature and humidity control, and visible and ultraviolet light levels – which is damaging the collections. Equally important is fire risk, especially in the 1805 Building. There is an urgent need to address these issues.

The Athenaeum is quickly outgrowing its existing space, to the point where the weight of the collections compromise the structural integrity of its buildings. A short-term solution has been secured with additional off-site storage on State Street, but this storage is not environmentally stable.



City of Portsmouth

Archive

In 2017, the City devoted the only climate controlled area of the basement in the Seybolt Building of City Hall (the former hospital building) to city records, including those records it is required to keep due to RSA laws and regulations. Prior to 2017, the records were stored in an underground tunnel connecting the hospital to Connors Cottage, where they were subject to frequent water infiltration, fluctuating temperatures, and mold. Many of the historical records were compromised in the process.

The archive is climate controlled with a temperature monitoring system in place to alert for outliers. The archive room is also humidity controlled through an industrial sized dehumidification unit (standalone unit) with humidity monitoring in place to alert staff to any needs for changes to levels. The lighting in the room is UVA/UVB protected and water sensors have been put into place for security, due to the nature of the building's old plumbing structure. The room is protected by a waterless fire suppression system.

While there are attempts to control the climate of the rest of the basement through dehumidifiers and HVAC, there are instances of leaks and outside water infiltration during heavy rains - although through trial and error, these leaks no longer directly affect the archive space. Staff is acutely aware of the importance of the archive space and monitor it often when extreme weather events are in place. Basements and attics are two of the

least ideal places for archival storage due to the likelihood of water infiltration as well as additional challenges controlling heat and humidity of the area.

During our site visit, the ceiling of the quarantine room and the fire suppression system room were exposed due to a recent burst wastewater pipe that impacted the fire suppression area. The affected pipes were chased back until a healthy pipe was located and the affected pipes were replaced to ensure a safe environment for the documents. Thankfully no records or artifacts were harmed during the episode.

Records stored in the archive are growing at a rate of 4-5 shelving units per year to include all the documents required under RSA. It was noted that there are permanent records and artifacts not stored in the City's archive for various reasons, including objects and maps at DPW as well as records from the School, Legal, Library, Planning and Police Departments. It should be noted that some departments including the School Department, Public Library, Legal and Police Department have additional state, federal and RSA requirements for specific documents as well as privacy laws that increase the difficulty of a central repository for City records.

The facility is already at capacity for space (within 6 years of opening) and the need will only be more pressing. At present, the City has an employee in the finance department who has taken on the archives as a passion project. The building of this archival space, its contents and its current upkeep are all due to the dedication of the Director of Finance and Administration, a member of the Finance Staff, the Director of Public Works and his facility staff. Finance, along with the City Clerk annually request funding to maintain and expand the facility as well as to clean and remediate damaged materials in the City's Capital Plan as well as apply for the State's Mooseplate Grant for document preservation. The City's Finance team member is not able to devote a significant amount of time to some of the more finite tasks needed to enhance the capabilities of the city Archive but is able to dedicate her time to its oversight and upkeep. She works in tandem on a regular basis with the city facilities staff to ensure annual maintenance is performed, environmental needs are met and identified issues are fixed in addition to checking in frequently during drastic weather events. Although the location has a great amount of technological monitoring, she relies heavily on the facilities and maintenance teams for in-person routine checks during overnight, weekend, holiday and extreme weather situations.



DESCRIPTION OF NEED AND ASSESSMENT ELIZABETH & EMMA

The following assessments include collections, scope and special needs.

City of Portsmouth

Library

The collections consist of books, articles, city documents (tax records, annual reports, etc.), city directories, vital records (birth, marriage and death indexes), maps, art work, photographs, historical newspapers and ephemera. Also included are microfilm covering

Portsmouth Historic newspapers, digital files created by PPL relating to the art and archival collections, and institutional records for several Portsmouth organizations.

The Special Collections department maintains an archive of manuscript, photograph, and art collections. Researchers will find unique historic materials including school attendance records, urban renewal materials, and mural sketches by WPA artist Gladys Brannigan. Artwork from prominent local artists can be viewed throughout the building while the vault holds the majority of the library's special collections.

The Collections include information and resources pertaining to local history and genealogy topics for Portsmouth, the Seacoast, and some surrounding cities and towns.

While the collection development efforts have focused on acquiring materials relating primarily to the city of Portsmouth, information about other towns in Rockingham County, including town histories for Strafford County, NH, York County in Maine, and a bit of Essex County in Massachusetts, are also available.

In terms of condition the PPL collections are in good order and well cared for. A collection assessment was done many years ago and has been the focus of conservation grants yearly, rehousing of many materials, and creation of finding aids for improved access. This work is ongoing related to the Library's mission. Special Collections storage has also extended from the vault and office to the repurposed Reference Storage space during the past several years. This allowed for safer storage for growing collections of vertical files, historic books and archives.

City Archive

By law, the City is required to keep certain types of documents and artifacts in perpetuity (i.e. tax warrants, assessing information, city council records, etc.) Many of these historic/permanent documents, ranging in age from newly created to 300+ years of age, are not in current city use by City Staff, and are being stored in the archive with others found at the City's Police Department, Planning Department, Legal Department and Public Works Building. The City Archive houses permanent records from many of the City's departments including City Clerk, Finance, Planning, Public Works, Human Resources, Trustees and Fire Department. City Staff are bound by many different record retention policy requirements including, but not limited to:

- NH RSA 91-A (Right to Know Laws)
- NH RSA 33-A (Municipal Record Retention)
- NH RSA 201-D (Libraries)
- NH RSA 106-B (Criminal Records Laws and Rules, Police)

The goal of the City's archive is to eventually house all City permanent records and artifacts to ensure compliance, historic preservation, and security of the items. All documents and artifacts removed from the archive must do so through a City Department. Documents may also be subject to a review for sensitive or private material before releasing for public use or viewing.

These permanent records, as well as the vital records held by the City Clerk, are to be held in perpetuity by the City and as such must be protected more so than other records. The City created a climate controlled space with numerous sensor capabilities to detect changes in temperature, humidity as well as wetness monitors (due to the building's age and the archive's basement location). The Archive is protected by a waterless suppression system, and is the only part of the building to be so.

Portsmouth Athenaeum

The Portsmouth Athenaeum has, since its inception in 1817, been the steward of important collections related to the history of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and the Piscataqua River region. Scholars and students from all over the United States and internationally come to use the Athenaeum's rich resources for original research. Virtually the entire collection is also accessible online, with catalogue information and images; the site receives between 2,000 and 3,000 unique visitors every month.

The Athenaeum's holdings include:

1. The Art and Artifacts Collections including paintings, furniture, original art prints, models of Piscataqua River ships, ethnographic and archaeological objects given before 1875, and other artifacts of local historical significance;

2. Rare Books, including many old and rare books purchased starting in 1817, and the entire libraries of Charles L. Woodbury and Benjamin T. Tredick, both dating from about 1870;
3. The Manuscript Collection (1300 lineal feet), comprising archives of local businesses, families and the Athenaeum itself;
4. The Photographic Collection, including 24,000 photographs, copper plates, daguerreotypes, glass slides, etc., almost all of which are on the Internet;
5. The circulating library (40,000 volumes), which is available to proprietors and, through the New Hampshire Public Library System's Inter-library Loan Program, to members of the general public.

Day-to-day responsibility for the Athenaeum rests with the Keeper, who oversees a staff of five: a Research Librarian, who is also responsible for the Ephemera Collections; a Rare Books Librarian, also responsible for pamphlets; an Archivist, who is responsible for the Manuscript/Archive collection, the Photographic Collection, and the Map Collection; a Curator of Art and Artifacts; and an Assistant Curator.

A number of members of the board and proprietors generously volunteer their time assisting with Athenaeum work, such as mounting exhibits, maintaining the building, acting as docents for the public, and carrying out special projects.

Strawbery Banke Museum

Strawbery Banke Museum collects objects needed to illustrate and understand the Puddle Dock neighborhood through time as defined by the interpretive plan. Strawbery Banke collects archives and artifacts that were made or owned in Puddle Dock, Portsmouth, the greater Piscataqua area, and the Seacoast region between the period of Native American presence in the region until the founding of the museum (c. 1960) when Puddle Dock was last a residential neighborhood. Except for Native American artifacts, the core years represented by the collection are 1623-1960. Core collections items include:

- Objects that can be documented or attributed to Portsmouth makers or makers in the greater Piscataqua River region or the Seacoast region.
- Objects that have a history of ownership in Puddle Dock, Portsmouth, or in the Piscataqua region, or the Seacoast region.
- Period objects that are similar to those that might have been owned in Puddle Dock, Portsmouth, the greater Piscataqua region or the Seacoast region as documented by local archaeological evidence, early household inventories, newspaper advertisements, account books, related documented examples, photographs, and oral histories.
- Period manuscripts, photographs, and published materials that relate to the families of the Puddle Dock neighborhood and the furnished house exhibits of SBM.

The Permanent Collection consists of original, rare, and often irreplaceable historical and art objects preserved for future generations with the inherent understanding that curatorial staff are only temporary stewards. Objects in the Permanent Collection may be used for research and exhibition and curator-supervised teaching and include ceramic, glass, metal, textiles, paintings, prints (graphics), wooden objects (primarily furniture), and tools from the late seventeenth century through the mid-twentieth century.

The museum will avoid using objects in the Permanent Collection in any way that is detrimental to their preservation. Objects in this collection number around 25,000 and are fully accessioned and may only be transferred through the deaccession process.

The Archaeological Collection consists of material culture remains found during the course of excavations at Strawberry Banke, in the city of Portsmouth, and the greater Piscataqua region. There are over one million artifacts in this collection. These remains constitute a collection of prehistoric artifacts and historic artifacts from the late seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. The collection includes human-made objects as well as biological, and geological remains which are maintained in storage, exhibition, study, and educational collections. In addition to artifacts, environmental and dating samples, field documentation, laboratory documentation, photographic records, related

historical documents, maps, and reports are considered part of the Archaeological collection.

The Thayer Cumings Library and Archives Collection includes historical monographs, photographs, research papers, manuscript collections or single items (account books and other business records, personal letters and diaries, ephemera) and books relating to the history and inhabitants of Puddle Dock and the surrounding neighborhoods in Portsmouth, and architectural plans and drawings of Strawberry Banke structures and landscapes. There are approximately 500 linear feet of archival collections housed in Carter Collections Center and the Townhouse Vault.

Strawbery Banke's Collections staff consist of a full time curator, a full time project based archaeologist and a 15 hour per week Collections Manager.

Portsmouth Historical Society

The Portsmouth Historical Society has one of the most diverse collections of objects which includes furniture, paintings, textiles, silver, glassware, china and more. The nearly 3,000 objects are all stored on-site at the historic John Paul Jones House. PHS has collected objects needed to illustrate and understand the history and material life, broadly conceived, of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and the immediate Seacoast area, from the seventeenth century (with the exception of certain earlier Native American materials) to the present. Such objects include artifacts that were made or owned in Portsmouth and the immediate Seacoast region. Some types of core collections items include but are not restricted to:

1. Objects that can be documented or attributed to a Portsmouth artist, artisan, company, or maker(s);
2. Objects that have a significant history of ownership in Portsmouth or the Seacoast region; for example, Asian or European ceramics of the types imported into Portsmouth;

3. Period objects that are similar to those that might have been owned in Portsmouth or the Seacoast region as documented by local archaeological evidence, early household inventories, newspaper advertisements, account books, related documented examples, photographs, and oral histories;
4. Period manuscripts, photographs, and published materials that relate to the history of Portsmouth. This aspect of the collection is coordinated with the Portsmouth Athenaeum, where PHS materials of this sort are on long-term deposit.

The archives of the Portsmouth Historical Society are on deposit at the Portsmouth Athenaeum. The collection is overseen by a part-time Collections Manager and part-time Curator who are guided by a Collecting Policy that has been vetted by the organization's Collections Committee and Board.

37,000	2	4 drawers each	2	5%	10%		y	1	
52,000	1	4 drawers each	2	5%	25%		y	3	
52,000	3	4 drawers each	2	5%	25%		y	1	
49,000	1	6 drawers each	2	5%	25%		y	1	
44,000	1	6 drawers each	2	10%	5%	25%	y	1	
40,000	1	7 shelves each	3	10%	5%	25%	y	1	
52,500	24	2 shelves each	3	10%	5%	25%	n		
89,000	4	3-2 shelves each	3	10%	5%	25%	n		
33,000	1	6-7 shelves each	3	10%	5%	25%	y	1	
29,500	1	3 shelves each	3	10%	5%	25%	y	1	
81,500	4	4 cupboards each	2						
42,000	1	2 shelves each	2						
26,500	1		2						
30,000	1		2						
12,000	1								
2,000	1								
1,000	1								
2,000	1								
12,000	1	shelves	2	10%	50%		y	1	
15,000	1	shelves	2	10%	50%		y	1	
10,000	1	shelves	2						
12,000	1	shelves	2						
15,000	1	shelves	2						
10,000	1	shelves	2						
9,000	107	cantilever shelves	2	2%	10%		y	107	
11,000	18	cantilever shelves	1	2%	10%		y	18	
8,000	16	cantilever shelves	2	2%	10%		y	16	
8,000	40	cantilever shelves	2	2%	10%		y	40	
12,500	8	cantilever shelves	1	2%	10%		y	8	
18,500	22	cantilever shelves	2	2%	10%		y	22	
11,000	1	cantilever shelves	2	2%	10%		y	1	
10,000	1	cantilever shelves	2						
22,000	20		2						
18,500	1		2						
24,000	1		2						
10,000	1		2						
6,000	22	5 drawers each	3	30%			n		
15,500	4.5		3	30%			n		
48,000	6,000		3	30%			n		
53,500	41,500		3	30%			n		
23,000	1		3	30%			n		
18,000	23,000		3	10%			n		
18,000	23,000	3 shelves each	3	10%			n		
18,000	23,000	3 shelves each	3	10%			n		
83,000	1	10 shelves each	3	10%			n		

Recommendations for Storage Conditions

These new National Archives and Records Administration guidelines move away from set points towards bands. The guidelines are intended to balance long-term preservation of holdings with energy efficiency.

Environment #1: "Comfort Conditions" for work spaces (70° F. ±5°/ RH 35-45% ±5%)

These conditions can drift seasonally, warmer in summer, cooler in winter. They need to be maintained only when spaces are occupied, not on a 24/7 basis. Areas include research and collections management spaces that do not include storage.

Environment #2: Low Sensitivity Holdings (50° - 65°F / RH 30 – 50%)

Most paper including rare books, maps and plans, newspapers, ephemera, pamphlets and manuscripts. Black and white photographic materials including paper-based black and white photographs, polyester-based black and white film, photo albums, and glass plate negatives. Electronic and magnetic media including computer tapes and disks, optical disks, video tapes, audio tapes, disk recordings and wire recordings.

Environment #3: Cold Storage for Sensitive Materials (35° F / RH 30 – 40%)

Cellulose acetate-based media including motion picture and still picture film negatives, microfilms, vesicular microforms, slides and color still picture negatives and transparencies and motion picture film. If there is not much sensitive material, a frost-free refrigerator may be the best solution. In the longer term, and depending how the collections grow, a cold storage vault could be considered. *Note that there are special packaging requirements for cold storage of photographic materials.*

Environment #4: Highly Sensitive/Unstable materials (Frozen Conditions 30° F, never above 32°F / RH 30 – 40%)

Includes deteriorating acetate negatives, deteriorating motion picture film, and any nitrate material. A single upright or chest freezer would be adequate for the materials currently held by the Athenaeum only.

For all other items, the following conditions are ideal for long-term preservation and storage, as recommended by the National Park Service and the Department of the Interior.

Environmental Controls	
<i>Temperature</i>	A temperature range of 59-77°F is acceptable.
<i>Relative Humidity</i>	It is generally recommended to maintain environments in the range of 45-55% with an allowable drift of no more than 5% within a 24-hour period, yielding a total annual range of 40% to 60%.
<i>Lighting</i>	Recommended to use LED or UV-filtered fluorescent lighting. Lighting levels should not exceed 200 lux or 20 footcandles.
<i>Pest Management</i>	An integrated pest management system, overseen by paid staff, is essential to ensure the collections remain free from any insect infestation that could cause irreparable damage to natural materials such as paper, textiles, furniture and more.
<i>Fire Safety</i>	Buildings should be built of fireproof or fire-resistant materials. Sprinkler systems are only permitted when floor drains are installed.
<i>Water Mitigation</i>	Storage spaces should not be located in basements or attics.

Space

Many of our organizations must sacrifice public space to create room for collection storage and have a finite amount of space, though our collections continue to grow.

By separating curatorial office, work, and research spaces from the space housing the collection, we minimize environmental impacts on the collections and lessen security risks.

Building	
<i>Load Bearing</i>	A live floor load of 350 pounds per square foot is desirable, especially for particularly heavy collections such as paper-based materials such as archives and herbaria, some fossil collections, metals, heavy equipment, and if you plan to install a moveable aisle (compactor) storage system.
<i>Flooding</i>	Collections storage should be located outside the 100-year floodplain.
<i>Building materials and features</i>	Buildings should have minimal to no windows (or have windows blocked/insulated), be built of fire-resistant or fireproof materials, and be insulated with a vapor barrier.
<i>Growth</i>	Storage must also provide adequate space to accommodate reasonable growth of the collection over the next ten years.
<i>Piping</i>	No pipes should run through the storage space with special exception for sprinklers, in which case floor drains are required.

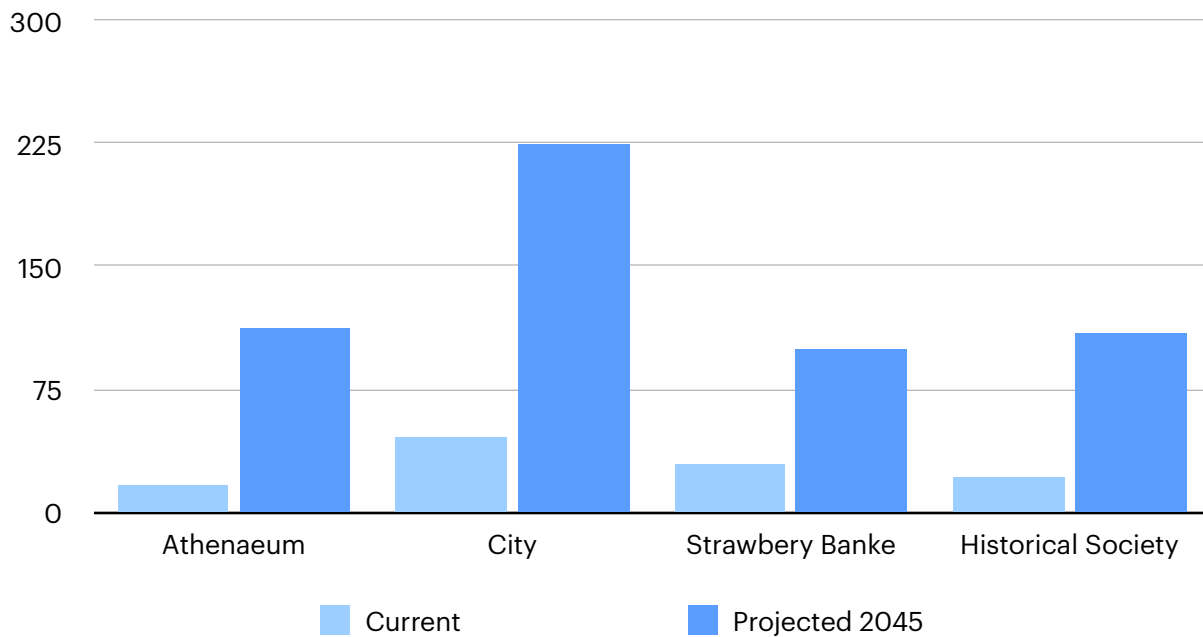
Storage Materials

Museum quality, equipment and containers are made using inert, non-reactive materials that do not off gas (emit) substances that accelerate or cause deterioration of objects. Storage containers are often made of corrugated paper-based boards or plastics. Museum quality corrugated boards are made of acid-free paper and are available in neutral pH (unbuffered) or alkaline pH (buffered) varieties. Other storage material must be acid-free and of neutral or alkaline-buffered pH. Certain plastics are considered museum quality storage material, such as polyethylene and polyester. Museum cabinets, shelving units, and other storage equipment are made of metal.

Shelving

Museum cabinets, shelving units, and other equipment are raised off the floor at least 4" preferably 6" on metal risers as a precaution against potential flooding and to facilitate cleaning of floors and inspection for pest problems.

Inventory of Need – Can we create?



Staffing

Collections require constant oversight, management and processing, handled by trained professionals. Collections management and archival studies are two degree concentrations offered at the undergraduate and graduate level.

Potential Grant Funders*

National Endowment for the Humanities

[Humanities Collections & Reference Resources:](#)

\$350,000 for implementation; prefer institutional collaboration

[Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections:](#)

Planning: \$50,000

Implementation Level I: \$100,000

Implementation Level II: \$350,000

IMLS

[Museums for America:](#)

\$250,000 for collections stewardship and access

National Archives

[Major Collaborative Archival Initiatives:](#)

A grant is for one to three years. Awards will be between \$150,000 and \$350,000. Nonprofits and local government agencies are eligible.

Private Foundations

Penates Foundation

Fidelity Foundation: [Capital Investments or Planning Initiatives](#)

Luce Foundation: [American Art Responsive Grants](#)

[Foundation Grants for Libraries & Archives](#) (Library of Congress)

Mellon Foundation: [Expanding Public Knowledge](#)

Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation: [Research Libraries Program](#)

There are additional opportunities for digitization efforts as well as preserving underrepresented collections.

**The grants listed here are for the highest awards. Additional opportunities exist at each federal agency.*



RATIONALE KRISTEN & ALAN

Historical Significance

The history of Portsmouth dates back to the early part of the 17th century. From the earliest explorers, to the settlers who found economic prosperity, to shipbuilders, merchants and industrialists, Portsmouth has paralleled the struggles and growth of the State of New Hampshire and the United States. The importance of our seacoast city in the northeast corner of the country cannot be overstated.

We boast of the earliest engagement of the war for US independence, revolutionary war heroes, signers of the Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution, Statesmen and successful businessmen – and that is all before the end of the 19th century. Documentation of the earliest period of our city is a treasure for researchers and scholars who seek to understand who we are and the events that shaped us.

Cultural Identity

The earliest beginnings of 'merchant adventurers' versus those seeking religious freedom shaped the values and the cultural underpinnings of the region; all were welcome, everyone's contributions were valued and the building of our area was based on the collective effort of all who lived here. We certainly acknowledge the dark history of both slavery and sometimes less than harmonious relations with native peoples who inhabited these lands some 12,000 years before Europeans. The sad lessons we have learned from these times have also shaped who we are and has led us to being more open and inclusive to all our fellow citizens. The written history as well as the artifacts tell a story of who we are. Their safeguarding and accessibility are important for us today and are a legacy for future generations who want to know and study this community and the impact that we had in building and shaping this region and the United States.

Tourism Attraction

The Chamber Collaborative tells us that we receive some 4 million visitors per year, 2 million alone in the summer. With our old stately buildings, many of which were built during the Brick Act (1814-1825), the history that abounds and the music, art and dining scene, Portsmouth can proudly declare itself as a tourist heritage economy. Visitors take advantage of perusing the collections at the Athenaeum. taking the self-guided tour of our living history museum; Strawberry Banke or viewing the exhibits and taking the walking tour at the Historical Society. The foundation of economic vitality of Portsmouth is the historical attractions that bring tourists here. Once here, they are delighted to hear world class jazz and blues, take in a Broadway worthy show or take advantage of fine dining opportunities. Everything that we do today continues to add to our unique and fulfilling way of life. We must do all we can to preserve everything we have and to treat our archives as the treasures that they are.

Archive for Economic Long-Lasting Viability

Having a city archive in Portsmouth can bring several benefits that contribute to the

economic viability, scholarly interest, cultural preservation, and future development of the city. Here's how it can make a positive impact:

1. *Preservation of Historical Records:*

A city archive serves as a repository of historical documents, photographs, maps, city-owned documents and other artifacts related to the city and its surrounding region. By preserving these records, the archive ensures that the history of Portsmouth and the Piscataqua region is safeguarded for future generations. This preservation effort helps maintain the city's cultural heritage and provides researchers with rich resources to study and document the past.

2. *Attracting Scholars and Researchers*

The existence of a comprehensive city archive attracts scholars, historians, and researchers from all over the world who are interested in studying the history, people, and cultures of Portsmouth. Researchers often require access to primary source materials for their research, and a well-organized archive with a diverse collection can make Portsmouth an attractive destination for academic and intellectual pursuits. This influx of research and general interest can bring economic benefits to the city through increased tourism, enhanced collaboration with local institutions, and academic conferences.

3. *Promoting Cultural Tourism*

Portsmouth has a rich cultural heritage, and a city archive can help promote cultural tourism. The archive can showcase exhibitions, host educational programs at schools, and offer guided tours that highlight the historical significance of the city and its surrounding region. This not only attracts tourists but also generates revenue for local businesses, such as hotels, restaurants, and shops, thus enhancing the economic viability of the city.

4. *Shaping Future Development*

A city archive plays a vital role in informing the future development of a city. By studying historical records and understanding past patterns, city planners, policymakers, and architects can make more informed decisions about urban development, infrastructure projects, and heritage preservation. The archive acts as a valuable resource for identifying and protecting historically significant

buildings, neighborhoods, and cultural landscapes, thereby ensuring that future development aligns with the city's historical identity and character.

5. *Engaging the Community*

A city archive can actively involve the local community by organizing educational programs, workshops, and exhibitions that promote historical literacy and civic engagement. By connecting residents in the preservation and interpretation of their city's history, the archive fosters a sense of pride, identity, and belonging. This community engagement can also lead to the generation of local historical knowledge, oral histories, and personal archives, which further enrich the city's archival collection and make it more representative of diverse experiences.

In summary, a city archive brings economic viability by attracting researchers, promoting cultural tourism, and shaping future development. It serves as a repository of information, allowing local schools and colleges, as well as scholars from around the world to study and document Portsmouth's history. Furthermore, it plays a crucial role in preserving the city's cultural heritage, engaging the local community, and informing decision-making processes for a sustainable and historically conscious future.



THE ISSUE SUSAN & TOM H.

The taskforce is charged with exploring options to create a public/private archive to protect documents related to the city's past, present and future.

The major issue that launched the task force in November of 2022 was the City of Portsmouth's lack of space to store documents. The city has mandated documents and historical documents going back to the seventeen hundreds era that need a home. Both materials should have well organized and proper archival storage to protect them for the future.

The city has to store documents from city hall, police department, fire stations, department of public works and the library. Currently each of these locations is bursting at the seams. These items are not stored in optimal conditions. Unfortunately, historical items have disappeared in the past due to not having a central repository where items would be entered into an inventory for tracking and quick access to items.

A properly designed archive would address all the issues created by the city's storage problems. In today's economic environment, it would be costly for the city to build and to maintain an archive. In the past the city has researched a possible partnership with local historical organizations. It did not produce a positive outcome for an archive.

The Portsmouth Athenaeum, Strawberry Banke, and the Historical Society are the major private organizations collecting and preserving Portsmouth History. Citizens and smaller organizations have deposited their Portsmouth collections with these organizations for safe keeping.

These Historical groups are bursting at the seams too. Many have their collections scattered in off site storage. Artifacts are stored in damp basements or hot attics. Access is time consuming, inefficient and exposes items to possible damage each time it has to be transported back to the central home of the organization.

The City of Portsmouth, Portsmouth Athenaeum, Strawberry Banke and The Historical Society currently are facing the same major issue of lack of storage. Every organization wants to preserve the incredible history of Portsmouth. Each organization has limited funds as well as limited space.

Now is the time to sit down together and create a public/private archive. Organizations are receptive to the idea and are willing to come to the table to discuss the idea. A well designed collaborative archive benefits everyone financially and offers better preservation for items in a central location.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND GOALS

CHRISTINE

Given all the above, the Task Force recommends that first and foremost the City show its support to move toward the creation of a shared space among the represented groups, acknowledging that such a space would be in the cultural and

economic interest of the city and the non-profits. The first step in this support should be the continuation of this committee under the new Council. For the first time, the city and non-profit organizations have come to agreement that it is in the best interest of all entities to support a combined archive, sharing the overhead of temperature and humidity control, fire protection and other special considerations required to protect archived materials.

Once renewed, this continued committee should address the following:

1. *Legal entity options*

What would be the best legal entity for a shared archive. Among the considerations



are the legal and financial interests of all parties and the way to keep the consortium a viable entity to receive a variety of grants, donations and other contributions. While some grantors require a grantee to be a registered 501©3, other grants are available to government entities. How can the future organization best take advantage of all sorts of financing and how can each organizations interests best be protected for the long term. What form of organization would allow for new entities to join? What would happen should a member choose to remove its collection in the future?

2. *Space requirements*

The committee should, in the very near future, work with a consultant to analyze more closely the space and environmental needs to sustain such an archive. The funds should be appropriated to pay for such a study, based on similar studies carried out in the past 10 years.

3. *Funding*

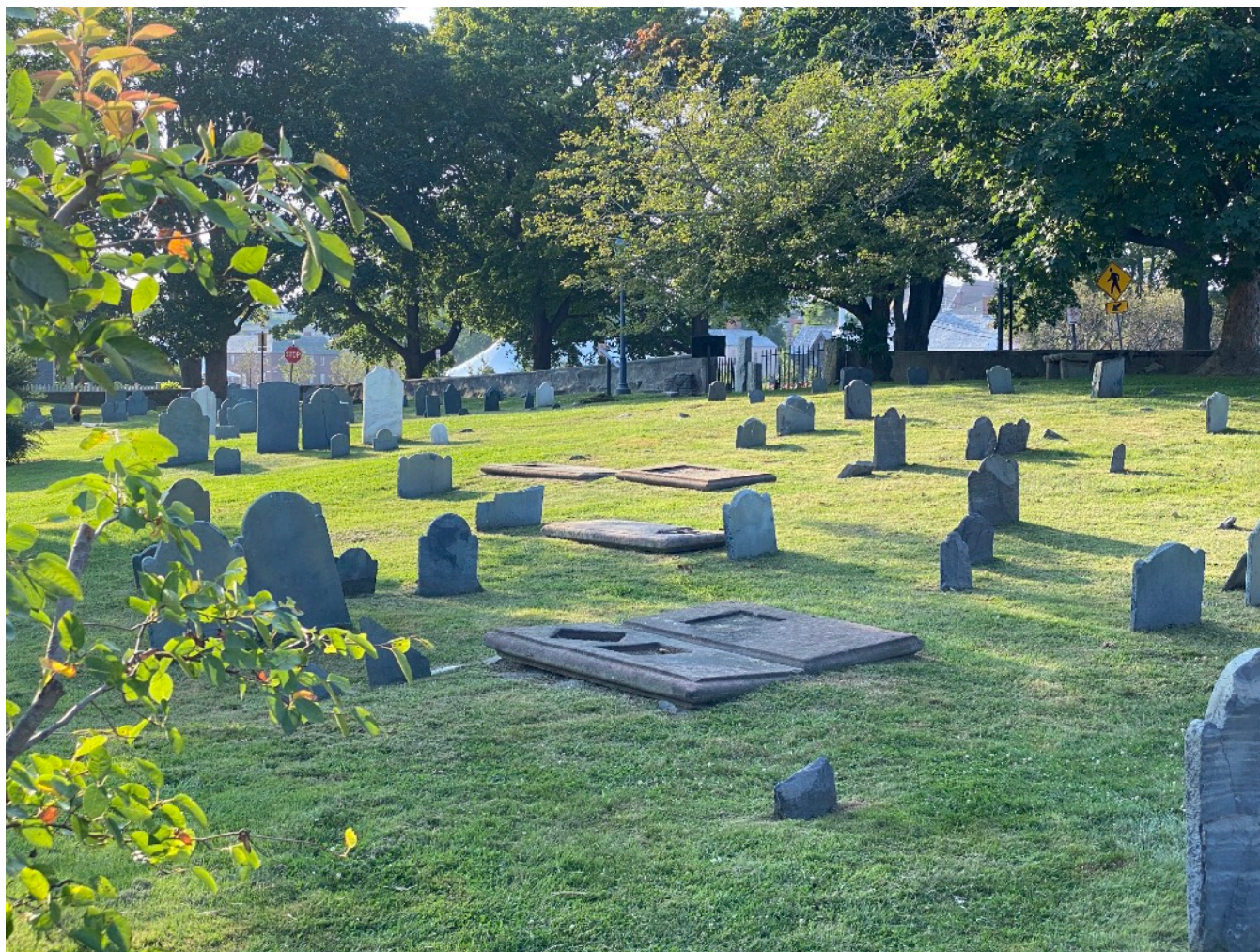
Will others consider the legal options, the committee should continue to identify ways in which to pay for the archive, considering what will come from each organization and what funds might be raised in the community and through grant opportunities

4. *Organization membership and responsibilities*

The committee should come to agreement as to the makeup of the new ongoing shared archive. Will participants beyond those currently represented on the Task Force be considered. Additionally, what will be the responsibilities of each member organization. Based on the determined legal entity, how will each organization be represented on the governing board

5. *Identification of materials to include*

As shown above, the number and types of items being archived differs greatly. The committee will need to set boundaries as to which types of materials should be retained in the shared space and which should not. Is there an object size limitation? How will space growth needs be limited? This will directly impact the space requirements study as well as the archiving methodologies required.



CONCLUSION JEFF & VINCE

TBA

APPENDIX A

Seacoastonline

Portsmouth's historic archives in need of a home. Here's what is being done about it.

Tom Hardiman Portsmouth Athenaeum

PORTSMOUTH — On Sept. 19, 2022, the City Council voted unanimously to establish a Blue Ribbon Task Force to study the establishment of a private/public partnership to Properly Archive Historical Documents relating to the City of Portsmouth. The committee is chaired by Councilor Vince Lombardi and has 12 regular members who represent the city, multiple nonprofit historical organizations, and city residents interested in preserving local history.



The need for and utility of a central archival facility was recognized as early as 1979 in a report commissioned by then-city librarian Sherm Pridham. One aspect of that report was picked up in the 1982 Athenaeum master plan, written by Richard Candee and Bob Thoresen, which recommended that the Athenaeum open its archives to the public and solicit other organizations to deposit their archives with them. The Athenaeum now administers the historical records of nearly 40 historical, religious and civic organizations.

Multiple efforts throughout the 1980s and '90s to create a true central archive in Portsmouth failed for various reasons. The most recent, begun in 2016 by then-city Library Director Steve Butzel, was derailed by the pandemic, but ultimately led to the collaborative publication "The History of Portsmouth in 101 Objects." Councilor Lombardi felt that with the unprecedented institutional collaboration that went into the book and

the rising appreciation for local history engendered by the Portsmouth 400th celebrations, 2023 was the right time to take up the cause again.

Lombardi is uniquely well suited to the work, having long associations with Strawbery Banke, Portsmouth Historical Society, the Athenaeum, Portsmouth Advocates, and the city's Historic District Commission. The other committee members include current executive directors of the public library, the Athenaeum, the Historical Society, and the chief curator of Strawbery Banke Museum, and many current or past board members of the cooperating institutions. Sue Sterry represents the city Cemetery Committee and frequently reminds the other members of the frustration of having to go to four or five different institutions or city departments to try to find information on a single historical person or location.



The committee held its first meeting in the Levenson Room of the Public Library on Jan. 27, when several members of the public echoed Sterry's aggravation of having to search multiple collections to find documents. Since then the committee has met biweekly and has toured the seriously overcrowded collections facilities of the Historical Society, Strawbery Banke, the Athenaeum, the Public Library, and City Hall. It also heard from Rodney Obien, archivist at Keene State College, Brian Burford, former state archivist for New Hampshire. Both shared valuable experiences with setting up archival facilities. The committee also got a sobering assessment from real estate expert David Choate on the critical shortage of available sites for such a facility in Portsmouth.

Halfway into its work, the committee is now drafting its report of findings of fact and recommendations on how to proceed. It has had one public hearing and plans to hold another in the fall. The good news is that all of the participants are now keenly aware of the need for a new facility and can see that a public/private partnership would be vastly more economically efficient than the current system of having five institutions run their own facilities separately. The members remain optimistic, confident that others will feel the same way once they see the facts.