

CULTURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES

Widely regarded as a center for arts and culture in New Hampshire, a large component of Portsmouth's community character, quality of life, and economy relies upon its strong tradition of preserving and supporting its cultural and historic resources. In addition, Portsmouth's arts have proven profitable to more than the human spirit and intellect: the 2000 "Arts and Economic Prosperity" Study conducted by Americans for the Arts reported that the arts contribute \$26 million in the local economy.

Having completed a Cultural Plan in 2001, Portsmouth is prepared to take action to preserve and enhance its cultural assets. Developed over a two year period by the 16-member Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee on Arts and Culture, the Cultural Plan was adopted into the City's existing Master Plan in January, 2002.

As the Cultural Plan process unfolded, several focus groups worked to synthesize the community's desires with regard to arts and culture. Six primary goals represent the consensus:

- *Preservation:* Identify and preserve buildings and open spaces contributing to the unique character and cultural assets of Portsmouth;
- *Space:* Expand and support spaces for cultural activities and events, including affordable space for artists, and venues and space for performances, exhibitions, meetings, storage, rehearsal, and education;
- *Youth:* Engage young people in arts and cultural opportunities in all aspects of their life, including educational, recreational, and social setting;
- *Business:* Engage businesses with the arts and cultural community;
- *Marketing:* Market Portsmouth as a business and cultural destination;
- *Agency:* Create an arts and culture agency to act on the City's behalf on all matters related to arts and culture

These goals are supported by several strategies and actions in the Plan.

The City is involved in the preservation and promotion of cultural and historic resources in several ways: as a repository of information, an owner, a funder/space provider, a regulator, an organizer, a marketer/ educator, etc. Its on-going and steady support is vital to the health and well being of these resources.

Cultural Resources

According to the Cultural Plan, over 35 non-profit groups in Portsmouth are dedicated to arts-related enterprises. Several organizations work to foster cultural activities, including Pro-Portsmouth, the Prescott Park Arts Festival, the Music Hall, the Greater Piscataqua Community Foundation, and others. Due to the volume of institutions involved in Portsmouth arts and culture, no attempt to inventory these resources is made herein – as the Cultural Plan states, "The nurturing of culture happens everyday in countless and unseen ways in Portsmouth." Readers are encouraged to reference the Cultural Plan for a more thorough examination of the arts and culture in Portsmouth.

The State of New Hampshire likewise supports the arts through distribution of funds collected under the "1/2 percent for arts" program enacted pursuant to RSA Chapter 19-A, Section 19A:9.

Public Art and Sculpture

One visible indicator of a community's commitment to arts is the degree to which art is an accessible part of the built environment. Over 300 resources located within the City are catalogued by the Smithsonian Institution's Inventory of American Paintings and Sculpture. Of these, 37 are sculptures that are located throughout the City and have been inventoried in the early 1990's as part of a nationwide effort by the group Save Outdoor Sculpture (SOS). Following is a list of these with owner information – detailed descriptions are available at <http://www.siris.si.edu/>.

Table 99: Public Sculptures in Portsmouth

Sculpture	Artist	Owner
1 The Black Dolphin	Lyford Cabot 1925-	Albacore Park
2 (Cormorant)	Liff Walter	Beaupre Richard & Judith
3 (The Heron)	Liff Walter	Beaupre Richard & Judith
4 Untitled	Fenwick Mark	Botnay Bay Computers
5 General Fitz John Porter	Kelly James Edward 1855-1933	City of Portsmouth
6 Soldiers and Sailors Monument	Monumental Bronze Co. founder	City of Portsmouth
7 (Liberty Pole Eagle)	Pitts George	City of Portsmouth
8 Neptune Statue	Unknown (Italian)	City of Portsmouth
9 Fisherman's Luck	Lyford Cabot 1925-	City of Portsmouth
10 My Mother the Wind	Lyford Cabot 1925-	City of Portsmouth
11 Madonna and Child	A DA Prato Company fabricator	Immaculate Conception Church
12 St Francis Xavier Cabrini	Unknown	Immaculate Conception Church
13 St Theresa	Unknown	Immaculate Conception Church
14 World War Memorial Bridge	Gorham Manufacturing Co. Founder	ME-NH Interstate Bridge Auth.
15 Bust of Sir Walter Scott	Unknown	Portsmouth Athenaeum
16 Bust of Charles J Fox	Unknown	Portsmouth Athenaeum
17 Bust of Jeremiah Mason	Unknown	Portsmouth Athenaeum
18 Bust of Zachary Taylor	Unknown	Portsmouth Athenaeum
19 Bust of Daniel Webster	Unknown	Portsmouth Athenaeum
20 Bust of Captain Robert T Spence	Unknown	Portsmouth Athenaeum
21 Bust of John Adams	Unknown	Portsmouth Athenaeum
22 Bust of George Washington	Unknown	Portsmouth Athenaeum
23 Bust of Napoleon	Unknown	Portsmouth Athenaeum

	Sculpture	Artist	Owner
24	Gaudama The Buddah of the Burmese	Unknown	Portsmouth Athenaeum
25	Bust of Benjamin Franklin	Unknown	Portsmouth Athenaeum
26	Bust of Alexander Hamilton	Unknown	Portsmouth Athenaeum
27	Bust of General Lafayette	Unknown	Portsmouth Athenaeum
28	Bust of Levi Woodbury	Unknown	Portsmouth Athenaeum
29	Firefighters Monument	Happny Peter	Portsmouth Fire Department
30	Portrait Head of Ellen Koopman	Koopman Augustus 1869-1914	Restricted Owner
31	Rockingham Hotel Terra Cotta Heads	Lamb Francis Mortimer 1861-1936	Rockingham House Condominium Assoc.
32	Spring Summer Fall Winter	Lamb Francis Mortimer 1861-1936 (possibly by)	Rockingham House Condominium Assoc.
33	(The Rockingham Lions)	Unknown	Rockingham House Condominium Assoc.
34	Daniel Webster	Ball Thomas 1819-1911	Sawyer Richard A Jr
35	St Catherine of Siena Relief	Unknown	St Catherine's Church
36	Our Lady of the Streets	Unknown (Italian)	St Catherine's Church
37	Little Harbor Chapel Pediment Sculpture	Unknown	Trustees of Little Harbor Chapel

Notably, the City has recognized the importance of public art in Portsmouth as it has included sculpture restoration and preservation projects in its Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. As part of a larger effort to completely revitalize Goodwin Park, the Soldiers and Sailors monument will be the focus of a \$190,000 conservation effort to be completed by Daedelus, Inc. of Cambridge. In addition, the General Fitz John Parker statue is scheduled for treatment. A focal point in Haven Park, the monument was surveyed in 1994 by Harvard University specialist Dr. Henry Lee. Pursuant to his report and subsequent assessments, a multi year project will implement the recommendations for long-term conservation. A total of \$20,000 in CIP funds are targeted for this project.

The Cultural Plan suggests that the City consider a “percent for the arts” program (similar to Seattle’s program, perhaps) be explored as one means of producing new revenues in support of local artists and cultural organizations.

Performance and Exhibition Space, Live/Work space, and Arts Education

According to the Cultural Plan, the “severe shortage of affordable space in Portsmouth is the greatest challenge facing artists and cultural organizations.” Demand for increased activities is constant – two institutions, the Strawberry Banke and the Children’s Museum are actively pursuing plans to expand their space; plus, a new Seacoast African American Cultural Center opened in the Connie Bean Community Center last October. The Plan draws a comparison to the City’s impressive record of accommodating citizen needs for recreational facilities and activities, and encourages similar treatment for arts and culture.

Housing affordability and availability also factor prominently in preserving Portsmouth's artist population. Common knowledge has observed high rents and the lack of live/work spaces as top reasons for artists to leave the city.

In addition to the City's commitment to carrying forth the Statewide arts curriculum, the Cultural Plan recommends several initiatives to more thoroughly introduce students to the arts.

Arts and Culture Agency

Pursuant to a key recommendation of the Cultural Plan, a 13-member Arts and Cultural Agency was formed in November, 2002. Made up of residents and non-residents, the group was chosen for its combined experience in "marketing, business, grant writing and volunteer experience."⁵³ The agency is charged with implementing the Cultural Plan.

Historic Resources

Portsmouth's historic resources are vast; the City's well-preserved architecture is a vital contributor to the community's character and aesthetic appeal. The City's Historic District Commission acts as its lead regulatory agency, with groups such as the Portsmouth Advocates, the Strawberry Banke Museum, the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA), the Portsmouth Black Heritage Trail, and others playing vital supportive roles in the overall effort to preserve the built environment.

Inventory

Several existing sources provide detail as to the breadth and nature of the City's historic resources. The Nomination Form for the Historic District, written by the Portsmouth Advocates, provides a good description of the history Portsmouth architecture; in addition, several books, including Richard Candee's "Building Portsmouth: The Neighborhoods And Architecture Of New Hampshire's Oldest City" serve as excellent documentation of the City's history.

For the purpose of this report, the historic properties are categorized by the degree to which they are recognized by formal inventories and/or the level of protection they have been afforded.

National Register of Historic Places Properties

Created pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register (NR) is a compilation of nearly 76,000 of the country's most significant historic resources. The NR program works to identify, evaluate, and protect the nation's historic and archaeological resources.

According to information retrieved from the National Park Service, Portsmouth has 37 properties and one historic district (Strawberry Banke) listed as part of the National Register of Historic Places.

Properties can be nominated for National Register Listing if they meet one of the following criteria:

"The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess

⁵³ "Portsmouth Names Members of New Arts, Culture Panel," *Foster's Online*, 10/31/02.

integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. That have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.”⁵⁴

The practical effect of listing a property on the National Register is three-fold: 1) any changes to listed properties that involve federal funding or permitting undergo review pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, 2) listed structures may receive special consideration or exemption from certain other regulations (e.g., energy conservation rules, ADA compliance, etc.) and 3) listed properties are eligible to receive certain tax credits, and other grants. State funded, permitted, and otherwise “assisted” projects must undergo review to identify and mitigate any adverse impact on the historic resource (NH RSA Section 227-C:9). In addition, Register listing provides official recognition of a property’s historic significance, and may lend it added value (monetary or otherwise).

Following is a table of Portsmouth’s National Register listings. Map 19 illustrates the district as it relates to the National Register listings.

Table 100: Portsmouth Properties Listed on the National Register of Historic Places

	Property Name*	Applicable Criterion	Level of Significance	Period of Significance
1	Beck, Samuel, House	Architecture/Engineering	Local	
2	Benedict House	Architecture/Engineering	Local	1800-1824
3	Franklin Block	Architecture/Engineering	Local	1875-1899
4	Hart, Jeremiah, House	Architecture/Engineering	Local	1750-1799
5	Hart, John, House	Architecture/Engineering	Local	1750-1799, 1800-1824, 1825-1849
6	Hart, Phoebe, House	Architecture/Engineering	Local	1800-1824
7	Hart-Rice House	Architecture/Engineering	Local, State	1700-1749, 1750-1799, 1800-1824
8	Haven-White House	Architecture/Engineering	Local	1750-1799, 1800-1824
9	Jones, John Paul, House	Person	National	1750-1799
10	Langdon, Gov. John, Mansion	Person	National	1750-1799, 1800-1824

⁵⁴ <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/listing.htm>

	Property Name*	Applicable Criterion	Level of Significance	Period of Significance
11	Larkin–Rice House	Architecture/Engineering	State	1800-1824
12	MacPheadris–Warner House	Architecture/Engineering	National	1700-1749
13	Moffatt–Ladd House	Architecture/Engineering	National	1750-1799
14	Neal, James, House	Architecture/Engineering	Local	1825-1849
15	New Hampshire Bank Building	Architecture/Engineering		1825-1849, 1850-1874, 1875-1899, 1900-1924
16	Nutter–Rymes House	Architecture/Engineering	Local	1800-1824
17	Old North Cemetery	Event, Art	State	1750-1799, 1800-1824, 1825-1849
18	Pinkham, Daniel, House	Architecture/Engineering	Local	1800-1824
19	Porter, General, House	Architecture/Engineering	Local	1750-1799, 1800-1824, 1825-1849, 1850-1874, 1875-1899
20	Portsmouth Athenaeum	Architecture/Engineering	State	1800-1824
21	Portsmouth Cottage Hospital	Architecture/Engineering	Local	1875-1899, 1900-1924, 1925-1949
22	Portsmouth Public Library	Architecture/Engineering	Local, State	1800-1824, 1825-1849, 1850-1874, 1875-1899
23	Rockingham Hotel	Architecture/Engineering	National	1750-1799, 1875-1899
24	Rogers, George, House	Event	Local	1825-1849, 1850-1874
25	Rundlet–May House	Architecture/Engineering	State	1800-1824
26	Shapley Town House	Architecture/Engineering	Local	1800-1824
27	Sherburne, Henry, House	Architecture/Engineering	Local, State	1750-1799
28	Smith, Simeon P., House	Architecture/Engineering	Local	1800-1824
29	South Meetinghouse	Architecture/Engineering	Local	1850-1874

	Property Name*	Applicable Criterion	Level of Significance	Period of Significance
30	South Parish	Architecture/Engineering	State	1800-1824, 1825-1849
31	St. John's Church	Architecture/Engineering	State	1800-1824
32	Strawbery Banke Historic District	Architecture/Engineering	National	1650-1699, 1700-1749, 1750-1799, 1800-1824, 1825-1849, 1850-1874, 1875-1899, 1900-1924, 1925-1949
33	USS Albacore	Architecture/Engineering	National	1950-1974
34	Wentworth, Gov. John, House	Architecture/Engineering	State	1750-1799, 1800-1824
35	Wentworth–Coolidge Mansion	Architecture/Engineering	National	1650-1699, 1700-1749, 1750-1799
36	Wentworth–Gardner and Tobias Lear Houses	Architecture/Engineering	National	1750-1799, 1760
37	Wentworth–Gardner House	Architecture/Engineering	National	1750-1799
38	Whidden-Ward House	Architecture/Engineering	Local	1700-1749, 1720

* Listings in bold are also National Historic Landmarks.

National Historic Landmarks Program

Among properties listed on the National Register are those which have exceptional value to the illustration or interpretation of United States history. Designated by the Secretary of the Interior as National Historic Landmarks, these properties number approximately 2,500 nationwide, just 3% of those listed on the Register. In Portsmouth, 8 sites, or 21% of NR listings, are National Historic Landmarks. These properties are eligible to receive technical preservation assistance and advice from the National Park Service professionals. In some instances, National Historic Landmarks may also receive priority for grant funding.

State Register of Historic Places

In 2001, the State of New Hampshire began to compile a State Register of Historic Places. Currently featuring just 43 properties, listing on the State Register is another method of recognizing a property's historic value and promoting its preservation. Eligibility for listing is sometimes used as part of a pre-qualification process for grant programs, and criteria for listing are similar to those used for the National Register.

The People's Baptist Church at 45 Pearl Street is Portsmouth's single listing on the State Register. It became part of the Register in January, 2002.

Portsmouth Historic District

The City's most far-reaching historic designation involves those properties that fall within the boundaries of its local historic district. Encompassing a 200+ acre area anchored in the downtown, the district is roughly bounded by the Route One Bypass, the Piscataqua River, New Castle Avenue (both sides), Junkins Avenue, Parrot Avenue, Middle Street (extending 150' beyond both sides of the right of way to near its intersection with Middle Road), Islington Street (both sides of the street to the intersection of Union Street, then up to Dover Street on the west side), Bridge Street, the North Mill Pond, and Walker and Prospect Streets.

Surveyed by the Portsmouth Advocates in 1982, the local district is comprised of over 900 structures. Visible changes that are not part of ordinary maintenance must receive Historic District Commission approval before proceeding. All but two (the USS Albacore and the Wentworth-Coolidge Mansion) of the National Register and National Historic Landmark properties are also within this local district.

The Commission is made up of seven members and two alternates, and conducts business on the first Wednesday of each month.

NH Historic Marker Program

Enacted by the State legislature in 1955 (RSA 236.40), the Historic Marker Program is responsible for making New Hampshire's history more accessible to the public through the erection of signage along state highways. While the Commissioner of Transportation is the program's authorizing official, nominations to the program are administered through the Division of Historical Resources; a petition signed by twenty NH residents is a minimum requirement for nomination. Local municipalities are responsible for the cost and maintenance of the signage.

Portsmouth has three sites that participate in the Marker Program: the Portsmouth Plains, located on NH 101 about .5 mile east of its junction with Interstate 95; North Cemetery, located on a corner of the Old North Cemetery on Maplewood Road, east of US 1; and John Langdon (1741-1819), located at the State of New Hampshire Urban Forestry Center, on Elwyn Road, east of its intersection with US 1.

Preservation Easements (Restrictions/Covenants)

A preservation easement is the most effective regulatory measure used to preserve historic properties and structures. Recorded as part of the property deed, a preservation easement restricts present and future owners from making inappropriate alterations to the historic resource. An easement may be effective for a limited term or may be in perpetuity, and are enforced by the holder of the restriction – restrictions are often donated to or purchased by a government body or preservation organization and can be tax deductible.

At present, the NH Division of Historical Resources holds restrictions on the following Portsmouth properties:

- Hough and Drisco Houses at Strawberry Banke Museum;
- the Rundlett-May House on Middle Street (owned by SPNEA);
 - Wentworth Coolidge Mansion, a state-owned historic site.

In addition, historic preservation/restoration grant recipients of the Land and Community Investment Program (LCHIP) are required to record a restriction on their properties, the length of which varies in relationship to the amount received. The Portsmouth Black Heritage Trail received a \$164,000 matching LCHIP grant to perform restoration work on the "Pearl of

Portsmouth,” the People’s Baptist Church, located at 45 Pearl Street, and would be expected to record a 50 year easement on the property according to LCHIP guidelines.

Archaeological Sites

Several excavated sites in Portsmouth have revealed information about the City’s history and pre-history. Strawberry Banke has been the source of several important sites, and the museum’s Archaeology Center is located at the Jones House. Due to its intact nature, the Banke area is considered to be one of the most important urban archaeology sites in the country.

The former Vaughn Street Urban Renewal Area has likewise proven to be a significant archeological resource. Retrieved artifacts, particularly of ceramic materials, have led to discoveries concerning the development of Portsmouth’s material culture from c.1700 through the 19th century.

Current Initiatives/Emerging Issues

The City is presently pursuing a significant adaptive reuse project at the 1895 Cottage Hospital, a four story brick building located on Junkins Avenue on the site of the City Hall complex. Working in conjunction with the Portsmouth Housing Authority, the City is planning to convert this building into 20 elderly housing units, completely renovating the structure, and restoring and/or replacing in kind its historic features. This project has undergone Historic District review and received its approval in October, 2002.

The local Historic District Commission is charged with overseeing the preservation of the district, and is generally thought to be doing a good job of maintaining the character of the downtown. Some of the preservation-issues the Commission has faced recently and may confront in the near future include:

- Re-use and/or re-development of the Federal Building;
- Revitalization of the Northern Tier and its connections to Downtown;
- Expansion of its review authority to encompass non-historic site elements such as pools and patios;
- The need for additional public education and information disbursement about the district and its design review procedures;
- Lack of control of changes occurring just outside district boundaries;
- Lack of an overall Preservation Plan for the district; and
- Lack of a comprehensive inventory of district properties (the Portsmouth Advocates-sponsored survey notwithstanding).

In addition, there is no governmental or government-sanctioned group that provides a venue for consideration of issues that are located outside of district boundaries. The Portsmouth Advocates do address preservation-related issues within the City as a whole, however, have no regulatory authority. There are numerous historic properties that exist outside of the district that have neither been inventoried nor have any type of protection. Places such as Elwyn Park, Atlantic Heights, South Street, Portsmouth Plains, Pease, and neighborhoods just off of Islington Street all have historic structures that merit attention.

The Cultural Plan recommends hiring a Preservation Planner to administer to all of the City’s historic resources.

Scenic Resources

Scenic resources are the result of careful or traditional human intervention in the landscape, and include urban streetscapes, scenic roads, and scenic vistas. While Portsmouth clearly enjoys bountiful scenery, these types of resources have gone largely without inventory or protection. This may be especially true in the downtown, where recent projects have stirred controversy as to whether their designs would impact beloved view corridors to the waterfront.

Map 19: Historic Resources

Insert Historic Resources map