

Portsmouth Athenaeum Library and Archives

Brief Guide to the Reference Library

The following is a list of selective resources available to researchers of families and their history in the reference room of the Portsmouth Athenaeum.

1. **Subject or vertical files:** they are organized by location. See INDEX in blue folder on top of the fall file cabinets. The vertical files are located in two grey file cabinets. You may copy articles as long as they are re-filed in the same folder, keeping the same order.
2. **Name files:**
 - a) **Family files** are organized alphabetically and located in the tall file cabinets. These files contain genealogical information, as well as other materials pertaining to various Seacoast area families. The list is not comprehensive.
 - b) **Street files** were researched and organized by the Portsmouth Advocates. They are located in the low file cabinets and are organized alphabetically according to street name. They contain images and basic information on houses in Portsmouth, including the Historic District. Some files have extensive information pertaining to the history and occupants of significant buildings.
3. **City Directories 1821 to present:** located in the Portsmouth section (middle stack of shelves). The city directories contain alphabetical lists of streets and family names. The head of households are listed, usually with profession or place of work, as well as the residence. Also listed in the directories are holders of town offices. Advertisements in the back of the directories can yield useful and interesting information. NOTE: Portsmouth street numbers changed between 1912 and 1914. The directory for 1914 contains both the old and the new street number.
4. **Church and Cemetery Records:** Portsmouth's major churches are the Congregational North Church, the South or Unitarian Church, and the Episcopal or St. John's Church (known as Queen's Chapel till the 1790's). For these we have incomplete records of births, marriages and deaths. There are locators for the South Cemetery plots. South Cemetery includes four sections: Cotton (1721), Proprietors' (1830), Harmony Grove (1847) and Sagamore (1871). Other existing historic cemeteries are 1) Graves' End, 2) Pleasant Street, and 3) North Cemetery. In all of these you will find the tombstone inscriptions of certain Portsmouth family members.
5. **Maps:** The Athenaeum has an index to maps in its collection. Most useful for the general researcher is the 1813, 1839, 1850, and 1877 maps of the city displayed in the research library. We also have the 1910 and 1920 Sanborn Insurance maps available. They are located on the horizontal file cabinet next to the tall file cabinets. NOTE: Buildings first appear on local maps after 1801.
6. **Electronic card catalog:** The card catalog is available online at *portsmouthathenaeum.org* as well as in the research library itself. It lists all available books and pamphlets in the library. It is indexed by subject matter, author and title. The Athenaeum subscribes to a number of general periodicals and topical journals. These are stored in the stacks on the fourth floor. A list of materials in stacks is posted. Ask for assistance from library staff.

Brief Guide to the Reference Library continued

7. **Manuscript Index:** The Portsmouth Athenaeum has 76 manuscript collections, and over 700 single item and small collections. Most of these are available for research. The finding aids are available on line as well, together with a subject index and a box list of items.
8. **Photo Index:** The Portsmouth Athenaeum has a large collection of photographs, postcards, cabinet cards, stereographs, slides and negatives. Use the on line catalog to find your topic and note that the collections are organized from P1 to P25, followed by PS and the separate collection of the Isles of Shoals.
9. **Dictionaries:** In the research library there are general dictionaries such as American Biographies, the Dictionary of American Art, and many more.
10. **Genealogy:** Index and contents of the New England Historical and Genealogical Society are available on CD-Rom. Family genealogies are shelved together alphabetically in a separate section in the research library. Town histories are shelved in alphabetical order by state.
11. **Customs Records:** A transcript of Portsmouth customs records is available in a 5-volume set, shelved on a cabinet at the end of the stacks.
12. **Newspapers:** A list of newspapers is located near the lower file cabinets. We have newspapers on microfilm, and some original copies of the *New Hampshire Gazette* and other Portsmouth papers.
13. **Town, State and Regional Histories:** A collection of town histories from New Hampshire and Southern Maine, covering the entire Piscataqua region, is available on the shelves of the research library.
14. **Micromedia and Multimedia:** There is a collection of CD-ROMs, including records of the New England Historical and Genealogical Society, Civil War records, Revolutionary War roll, Evans' Abstracts of New Hampshire Probate Records.

ATH/usw6/25/02; revised 7/19/07