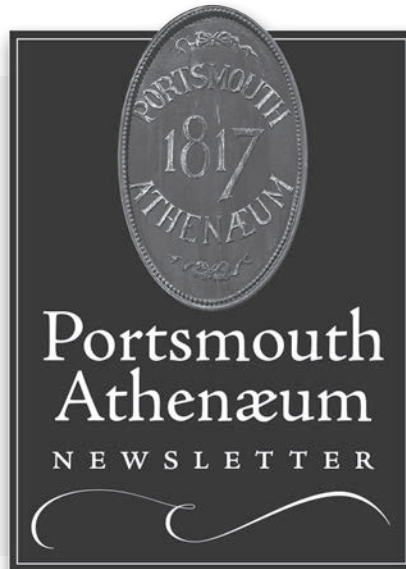


SUMMER 2022

*News and events for
Proprietors, Subscribers & Friends
of the Portsmouth Athenæum*

THE PORTSMOUTH ATHENÆUM
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CONTENTS

- 2022 Lecture Series • 2
- A mystery in a discovered painting • 3
- Summer Picnic set for Aug. 30 • 4
- Arcana: From gentlemen's reading room to research library • 5
- Your generosity matters • 6
- Athenæum authors tell Portsmouth's story in new book • 7
- Calendar of Events • 8

GEORGE WASSON SAILS INTO RANDALL GALLERY

By LAUREN GALLANT

THE WORKS of noted maritime artist and writer George S. Wasson (1855-1932) of Kittery Point will be exhibited in the Randall Gallery beginning Aug. 5.

The exhibit is being put together by a group of admirers of Wasson, including Proprietors Wendy Lull and Lauren Gallant, along with Dean Gallant. Dave Kaselauskas of Kittery Point, the chief curator of the exhibit, has been studying and collecting the works of Wasson for nearly 30 years.

Wasson — painter, author, carver, sailor — lived

and worked in Kittery Point in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and was well-known and admired for his work by some of the leading literary and artistic figures of his time. William Dean Howells promoted Wasson's writing, helping introduce his short stories to the *Atlantic Monthly*, and encouraged him to produce his three novels: *Captain Simeon's Store*, *The Green Shay*, and *Home from Sea*.

Howells also introduced Wasson to Sam-



This painting by George S. Wasson shows the Dec. 7, 1890, beaching of the Polly off Fort McClary in Kittery Point, Maine. The crew was rescued and the vessel was returned to service for another 25 years.

uel Clemens (Mark Twain), who praised one of Wasson's short stories ("Rusticators at the Cove") as the funniest he had ever read.

A marine painter, Wasson's works were exhibited at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and the Boston Art Club. He was well known to the Ogunquit group of painters — Marcia Oakes Woodbury was an illustrator for his novels. Famed author Henry James, visiting William Dean Howells, made a special visit to

meet Wasson.

Wasson's last book, *Sailing Days on the Penobscot*, is considered by many to be the authoritative book on the history of sail on the Maine coast. Today Wasson's paintings and sketchbooks are in the permanent collections of the Peabody Essex Museum, the Farnsworth Museum, the Maine Maritime Museum, and the Mystic Seaport Museum.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

ATHENAEUM 2022 LECTURE SERIES

Portsmouth's Evolution: 1623-2023

By IRENE BUSH
Program Committee

The territory of coastal New Hampshire, first inhabited by the Abenaki and other Algonquian-speaking nations, was first explored and written about by Martin Pring in 1603. Settlements by Europeans began soon after, and, 400 years ago, some became the city of Portsmouth.

The 2022 Portsmouth Athenaeum Lecture Series, Part I, celebrates and shines a light on the city's evolution from 1623 to 2023. This year, we celebrate its people, its architecture and the changes in its land use.

Each program begins at 5:30 p.m. in the Athenaeum's Shaw Research Library (unless otherwise noted.) Reservations for each program are required, as seating is limited; please call (603) 431-2538, Ext. 2. If unable to keep a reservation, please call again to release the seat for someone else.

Attendance at programs is free for Athenaeum Proprietors, Subscribers and Friends. Guests and members of the public are welcome to attend the entire series by becoming a Friend of the Athenaeum for as little as \$25 per year, payable at the door. Admission to an individual program is \$10.

On Sept. 21, **Nick Cracknell** will present "**A Century of Change in Land Use and the Built Environment in Portsmouth.**" As a practicing municipal planner, Cracknell has over 25 years of land-use experience and has served as the city planner in Amesbury, Mass., planning director in Newburyport, Mass., and as principal planner in Portsmouth since 2011.

He serves as the staff liaison to the Historic District Commission and, as such, has a deep affinity for the preservation and enhancement of the architectural character and heritage of Portsmouth.

Like many New England communities, Portsmouth has experienced significant changes to its character and land-use pattern — from the early planned development of Atlantic Heights, through the post-war period, to more modern times.



DOUGLAS ARMSDEN PHOTO

On Nov. 16, **Peter Michaud** will discuss the architecture of post-war Portsmouth. His talk will include the work of Portsmouth architect **Lucien O. Geoffrion**, who designed **Yoken's Restaurant (1946)**, among other commercial buildings.

Such changes have had a dramatic effect on how we live and where we work and play, with wide-reaching implications for how we will confront the many modern-day challenges of managing new growth and development in the city.

Cracknell will share some of his observations on how Portsmouth's land-use patterns have evolved over the past century, and will discuss how these changes have created both challenges and opportunities in managing new growth.

On Oct. 19, Athenaeum Executive Director and Keeper **Thomas Hardiman, Jr.** will discuss "**Architecture I — Imitation and Innovation: Developing a Portsmouth Style of Architecture 1660-1815.**"

Hardiman has more than 30 years of experience in the museum, library, and historic preservation fields. He has been Athenaeum keeper since 2000 and was previously curator of the Saco Museum.

He also has significant experience with the management, exhibition, and conservation of art and artifact collections and with the sensitive conservation of historic buildings.

The talk builds on the important work

of **Richard Candee** (author of *Building Portsmouth* and professor emeritus of American and New England Studies at Boston University), former New Hampshire Architectural Historian **James Garvin**, and **Arthur Gerrier** (longtime Portsmouth Advocates board member and architectural historian).

Hardiman will show how the Portsmouth community of craftsmen imported design ideas and structural systems from Europe and adapted them to the local climate and materials. Through this evolution, they created a style of architecture that is truly distinctive to the region.

On Nov. 16, **Peter Michaud** will conclude this year's series with "**Architecture II — Mid-Century Modest: The Architecture of Portsmouth and the Piscataqua in the Mid-20th Century.**"

A native of New Hampshire, Michaud grew up in Rollinsford and is a graduate of the University of New Hampshire in Durham. He began his career as the Portsmouth and Exeter site manager for Historic New England, working out of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



The 1876 Beers map shows the location of the house of S. Coffin (probably Sheafe-Coffin) on the Portsmouth side of Sagamore Creek. The artist would have been south-southwest of the house on the other side of the creek. Looking southeast from there is a bridge on what is now Wentworth Road, close to BG's Boathouse. Could this be the bridge?

DISCOVERED PAINTINGS: The Capt. Charles Coffin House and a mystery bridge

By DOUGLAS AYKROYD | oakscouter@gmail.com

IN JUNE 2019, Executive Director and Keeper Tom Hardiman was making a routine search on eBay when he came across the following lot: “Antique set original oil paintings landscape scenes Portsmouth New Hampshire.”

In looking at one of the two paintings, he saw the distinctive shapes of the Capt. Charles Coffin house which sat on Sagamore Creek. The other painting was of a bridge over a stream.

Initially thinking that the house was on the Rye side of the creek, he discussed his discovery with former Athenaeum archivist Susan Kindstedt because of her connection with the Rye Historical Society.

Also present at the discussion was Athenaeum Curator Elizabeth Aykroyd, who thought there was potential interest because the painting was of a known building even though the artist and the provenance were unknown. The price, under \$100, also added to the interest.

Elizabeth did some research and found a

photograph of the house in the Athenaeum collection (PS1633.36). She also found a watercolor of the cottage done by Sarah Haven Foster. Her view is very similar to that of the painting found on eBay.

It is curious that an art dealer in Alexandria, Va., should be able to identify landscape scenes as being from around Portsmouth, N.H., but both paintings had been framed by Montgomery's of Portsmouth, as indicated by the green sticker on the back.

The two paintings were duly purchased and shipped to Portsmouth. Although the identity of the building was certain, no progress was made in identifying the location of the bridge. Writing on the back of one of the pictures indicated a Mrs. Butler had the pictures framed at the cost of 93 cents each.

Our paintings conservator, Martha Cox, judged that the paintings were dirty, but the quality of the artwork was very good. She has recently completed her conser-

vation work on the two paintings, which will be put on display in the Old Library of the Athenaeum in the near future.

During the preparation of this article, I decided to find the spot where the artist must have painted the picture. Athenaeum Librarian Robin Silva pointed me to the Beers map, which is available for download from the Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center of the Boston Public Library.

This 1876 map shows the location of the house of S. Coffin (probably Sheafe-Coffin) on the Portsmouth side of Sagamore Creek. The artist would have been south-southwest of the house on the other side of the creek. Looking southeast from there is a bridge on what is now Wentworth Road, close to BG's Boathouse. Could this be the bridge?

Anyone who can provide more details on the location of the bridge or the identity of Mrs. Butler is requested to contact the curator or the keeper.

WASSON

Continued From Page 1

George Wasson was the son of an independent-thinking minister and writer, David Atwood Wasson. Although he was born and raised in Massachusetts, Wasson learned his love of the sea and sailing during summers spent at the home of his grandfather, a shipbuilder in Brooksville, Maine.

David Wasson recognized that his son's talents were more artistic than academic, so rather than send him to university, he took him to Stuttgart, Germany, for three years to study painting. When he returned from Europe, Wasson settled in Boston and joined the studio of J. Foxcroft Cole, a mentor to many "Boston school" artists.

Wasson was a member of the St. Botolph Club, where he would have mingled with artists such as John Singer Sargent and Augustus Saint-Gaudens. He exhibited at the Boston Art Club along with Seacoast artists Frank Benson and Edmund Tarbell. Wasson's marine paintings were successful, especially with sailors, because they were informed by Wasson's intimate knowledge of boats, rigging, and how boats looked and acted on the sea.

He continued to sail the New England coast, and in 1885 he met and married Amelia Webb at Isle au Haut, Maine. In 1888 Wasson moved to Kittery Point, where he and Amelia raised two sons, Lewis and David.

Wasson was fascinated by the lives and stories of the maritime characters of Kittery and spent time making notes of the distinctive maritime vocabulary that he published in short stories and three novels. His novels were well-received and reviewed, but were not commercially successful.

He spent some time at the carving studio of John Haley Bellamy, a neighbor, where he learned to carve and produced eagles, ship models, and frames and panels for his own paintings. Wasson lived, painted, carved, sailed, and wrote in Kittery Point until the tragic deaths of his sons (Lewis in 1912 and David in 1915).

In 1915, Wasson moved to Bangor with his wife and his daughter-in-law (David's wife, Mildred), where he lived until his death in 1932.


Wasson's wife and daughter-in-law later returned to Kittery to live. In 1943, Amelia christened the U.S. Navy Liberty ship, George S. Wasson. Mildred became a Proprietor of the Athenaeum in 1945.

Lauren and Dean Gallant's interest in Wasson began when they bought the house that had been Wasson's first home in the area. Kaselauskas also lives within sight of the Kittery Point home Wasson built for his family. He has contacted neighbors, fellow enthusiasts, and Wasson relatives who have allowed the Athenaeum to exhibit some of their treasures. Other contributors are Proprietor Elizabeth Aykroyd and the Athenaeum itself.


The exhibit will run through Nov. 5 and will be open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 1 to 4 p.m.




George Wasson lived in Kittery Point from 1888 to 1915.



Please join us for
The Twenty-ninth Annual
Portsmouth Athenæum Pot-Luck Picnic





The Seacoast Science Center
Odiorne Point State Park, Rye, NH
Tuesday, August 30, 2022 5 - 7 pm
(In the tent, rain or shine!)

Bring a dish to share, in single servings if possible, by last name:

A-C:	Main Dish
D-H:	Main Dish
I-M:	Appetizer
N-S:	Salad
T-Z:	Dessert

Or bring your own and enjoy the company and the scenery!
Wine, beer, water, and punch are provided!
No RSVP - just come!

And please encourage a fellow Proprietor, Subscriber, or Friend to join you!

Any questions? Call : Cindy Knapp 603 436 8748 or Tom Hardiman 603 431 2538

WE'VE COME A LONG WAY, BABY

WITH SPACE CONSTRAINTS and growing demand for research services occupying much of the attention of current Athenaeum leadership, this would seem to be a good time to review the process by which the Athenaeum's focus became increasingly centered on research.

In its early days — the 1820s and 1830s — the Athenaeum was essentially a private men's club, whose function, if not stated mission, was to serve as a locus for downtown businessmen to gather and exchange views on local affairs as well as to read the well-stocked array of newspapers in the Reading Room (more than 30 at their peak).

The use of the term “businessmen” is deliberate: it wasn't until 1860 that a woman was able to purchase a share in her own name: Eliza Wentworth Haven, widow of Nathaniel Haven, one of the early founders.

While it is true that the Reading Room and Library were generally regarded by Proprietors as public resources open to the community in those first couple of decades, little effort was made to assist either members or visitors in utilizing such resources. A librarian was on duty only a few hours a week, and his function seems mainly to have been one of keeping an eye on things.

For well over the ensuing century and a half, through times of growth and atrophy, the Athenaeum played almost no role in the cultural and intellectual life of the greater community.

A series of fortuitous events in the 1980s brought about a dramatic change in this role. The most significant of these events was the acquisition of the Foye building following its partial collapse in 1981, resulting in a more than doubling of available space. Unrelated to the Foye



This circa-1920s photo of Market Square in Portsmouth was donated by Athenaeum Proprietor Ruth Lamson Lines (1908-2005).

acquisition but having a major effect on the Athenaeum's fortunes was a dramatic improvement in the institution's financial posture in the 1980s.

These events made possible the implementation of many of the recommendations of a 1982 master plan, authored by consultants Richard Candee and Robert Thoresen. The most far-reaching of these provisions was that the Athenaeum become a historical research library, with its resources broadly available to both proprietors and members of the public.

Candee and Thoresen wrote, “The veil of mystery that shrouds the Athenaeum must be removed.” They went on to say, “There must be a more widespread perception that the Athenaeum contributes to the intellectual and social life of Portsmouth. A more conscious effort ... must be made to share the resources of the Athenaeum ... and to demonstrate its civic-mindedness.”

The first major step toward transitioning

the Athenaeum to an archival repository with resources adequate to support original historical research was the donation of 20 boxes of records and over 2,000 photographs from the Piscataqua History Club. These provided the foundation for a major expansion of the Athenaeum's archival collection, newly made possible by the acquisition of Foye.

The collection has grown today to over 550 lineal feet of boxed manuscripts and other materials, as well as about 35,000 catalogued photographs, with another 20,000 yet to be processed.

A highly skilled and knowledgeable staff headed by Executive Director Tom Hardiman now make these items available to researchers through a variety of means, including in-person, online, and via telephone. Though for much of the current year the Athenaeum has been open for research only via appointment, we are on track to assist over 1,000

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

THANKS FOR YOUR GENEROSITY

By JAMES SMITH | Photographic Collections Manager

WITH YOUR generous support, the Athenaeum raised nearly \$3,000 on New Hampshire's Day of Caring in June, passing our \$2,500 goal. Thank you!

We will use the funds to purchase archival boxes and acid-free negative envelopes for the Douglas Armsden (1918-2009) photograph collection to protect the images from damaging light, dust and handling.

Statewide, over 13,000 donors contributed nearly \$3.5 million to 575 participating nonprofits. What a success!

A prolific commercial photographer, Armsden lived locally in Kittery Point, Maine, and through his work, he captured the essence of mid-20th century Portsmouth, Kittery, the Seacoast region, and beyond.

With the incredible work of Proprietor James Shanley over three years, we have nearly finished rehousing the Armsden collection of approximately 30,000 images (prints, negatives, transparencies).

When fully processed and available on our online catalog, this Armsden collection will nearly double the Athenaeum's entire photographic collection.



DOUGLAS ARMSDEN PHOTO

An unidentified group in period costume poses in the garden at the Moffatt-Ladd House on Market Street in Portsmouth, circa 1940s.

Roughly, for every \$25 donation, we can purchase two archival storage boxes. A \$50 donation translates to 150 archival negative envelopes.

For more information, or to donate, go to www.portsmouthathenaeum.org and click on "Armsden Photographic

Project."

If you would prefer to donate by check, please make it out to the Portsmouth Athenaeum with "Armsden" in the memo line and mail it to "Portsmouth Athenaeum, P.O. Box 366, Portsmouth, NH 03802."

PORTSMOUTH ATHENAEUM NEWSLETTER

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Contributions and queries may be directed to Publications Committee Chair/Editor Sherry Wood at sixswords@aol.com.

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and Sherry Wood

GALLERY SITTERS NEEDED

By STEPHANIE HEWSON

We need your help! We're looking for volunteer gallery sitters.

The Randall Gallery is open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 1 to 4 p.m.

"Standing Together: LGBTQ+ Social & Support Groups" runs through July 15.

The next exhibit, on artist and author George Wasson of Kittery Point, starts Aug. 5 and runs through Nov. 5.

Gallery sitters generally welcome visitors, can give a brief overview of the

exhibit, and answer any questions that may pop up — but don't worry if you don't know the answer. Many answers are found in the exhibit itself, or you can ask for help.

It's a fun way to meet and engage with Athenaeum visitors from near and far.

For more information, or to sign up, contact our Outreach & Volunteer Coordinator Stephanie Hewson at shewson@portsmouthathenaeum.org

ATHENAEUM AUTHORS TELL PORTSMOUTH'S STORY FOR 400TH

By SHERRY WOOD | Publications Committee

MORE THAN A THIRD of the authors in "A History of Portsmouth NH in 101 Objects" are members of the Portsmouth Athenaeum.

The book is "intended as a record of what we value in 2023 on the 400th anniversary of Portsmouth's settlement, a resource for historians and future generations, and an illuminating tour of the city's past for the general reader," according to Stephanie Seacord, an Athenaeum Proprietor and the project's director.

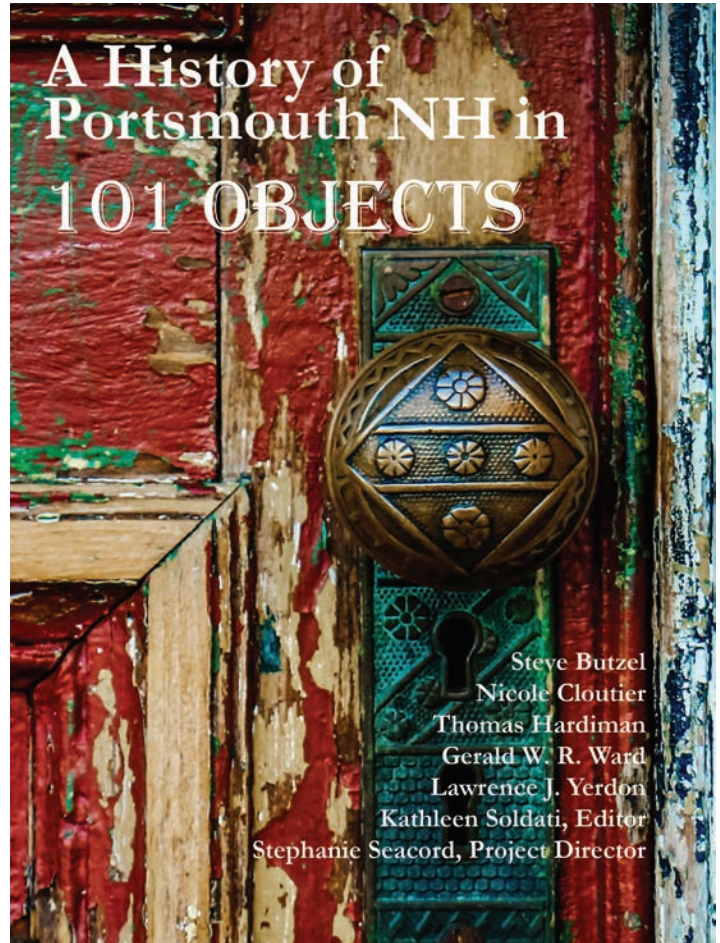
An editorial board composed of Athenaeum Executive Director Tom Hardiman as well as directors of Strawberry Banke Museum, the Portsmouth Historical Society and Portsmouth Public Library asked "a variety of people and institutions (and their own curators) to nominate the list of 101 objects," Seacord said in a news release.

Among the Athenaeum essayists are: Proprietor Valerie Cunningham, writing about the African Burying Ground Memorial Park; Research Librarian Carolyn Marvin, telling the story of the Ruth Blay quilt/mural; and Proprietor Bob Thoresen recalling the reimagining of Market Square.

Authors with Athenaeum connections also include Hardiman and Seacord, as well as Richard Candee, Jamison French, Jeff and Molly Bolster, Sandra Rux, Hollis Brodrick, Barbara and Gerry Ward, Chuck Doleac, Elizabeth Aykroyd, Steve Fowle, Ronan Donohoe, Sherm Pridham, J. Dennis Robinson, Elizabeth Farish, Jane and Richard Nylander, Deborah Child, Tara Raiselis, Tom Watson, MaryEllen Burke, Ellen Fineberg, Tammi Truax, Tom Kaufhold, Roger Wood and Larry Yerdon.

The 224-page, softbound book with 101 color photographs will be available in December. A pre-publication discount of \$5 off the anticipated cover price of \$29.99 is now available. Orders can be placed with RiverRun Bookstore through its Piscataqua Press.

To order, go to: riverrunbookstore.com/101-2/, call RiverRun at 603-431-2100 or visit the store at 21 Daniel St. in Portsmouth.



"A History of Portsmouth NH in 101 Objects" will be available in December. A \$5 pre-publication discount is being offered; the anticipated cover price is \$29.99. Orders can be placed with RiverRun Bookstore, through its Piscataqua Press.

LECTURES

Continued From Page 2

Portsmouth's Gov. John Langdon House.

He later served as the National Register, Preservation Tax Incentives and Easements Coordinator at the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources. Michaud now works as a cultural resource manager for the federal government. Michaud is a founding board member of the Piscataqua Decorative Arts Society, is on the National Council of Strawberry Banke Museum, and is the secretary of the Portsmouth Historical Society.

He will examine the architecture of post-war Portsmouth and the Piscataqua, looking at major buildings as well as the work of some of the architects who designed buildings in this area.

He will include Portsmouth architect Lucien O. Geoffrion, who designed such iconic local buildings as Yoken's Restaurant (1946), the clubhouse at the Portsmouth Country Club (1955) and the Pic'n Pay Supermarket (1960, now Hannaford).

The second part of this series in 2023 will continue to celebrate Portsmouth's 400th anniversary, 1623-2023.

ARCANA

Continued From Page 5

researchers this year. Thanks to the wonders of the Internet, requests for help come from all over the world.

The Athenaeum has indeed come a very long way in a relatively short time, considering that as recently as 2003 archival holdings were identified mainly through on-site use of a card catalog. An interesting footnote: today roughly 75% of all archival requests come from non-members.

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Athenaeum Calendar

Friday, Aug. 5: An exhibition of artist and author George Wasson's works opens in the Randall Gallery, 5-7 p.m.

Friday, Aug. 5: Portsmouth Historic Sites Associates Twilight Tours.

Thursday, Aug. 25: Athenaeum excursion to the historic Wood Island Lifesaving Station. Layered clothing and sensible shoes suggested. Departure is 4 p.m.; return about 6 p.m. Parking is in the Coast Guard parking lot, New Castle, with a short walk to Sally Smyser's dock at 61 Walbach St. Please RSVP by Aug. 15 to: info@portsmouthathenaeum.org

Sunday, Aug. 28: The Portsmouth Athenaeum Chamber Music Series begins with the Noree Chamber Soloists at the Kittery Dance Hall, 3 p.m. \$25 per person for individual concerts. Patron sponsorship for \$250 per person is also available. Patrons receive a ticket to each of the four concerts in

the series, and are invited to post-concert receptions with the performers.

Tuesday, Aug. 30: The 29th annual Athenaeum Picnic under the tent at the Seacoast Science Center, 5-7 p.m. (See Page 4.)

Friday, Sept. 2: The Randall Gallery open for Art 'Round Town, 5-7 p.m.

Sunday, Sept. 18: The Portsmouth Athenaeum Chamber Music Series continues with the Rasa String Quartet at St. John's Church, 3 p.m.

Wednesday, Sept. 21: Athenaeum Lecture Series. Nick Cracknell will present "A Century of Change in Land Use and the Built Environment in Portsmouth," 5:30 p.m. in the Shaw Research Library. Reservations required.

Sunday, Oct. 2: The Portsmouth Athenaeum Chamber Music Series continues with the Music Haven String Quartet at South Church, 3 p.m.

Friday, Oct. 7: The Randall Gallery open for Art 'Round Town, 5-7 p.m.

Sunday, Oct. 16: Athenaeum Chamber Music Series continues with the ASMI Trio at St. John's Church, 3 p.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 19: Athenaeum Executive Director and Keeper Thomas Hardiman Jr. will discuss "Architecture I — Imitation and Innovation: Developing a Portsmouth Style of Architecture 1660-1815," 5:30 p.m. in the Shaw Research Library. Reservations required.

Friday, Nov. 4: The Randall Gallery open for Art 'Round Town, 5-7 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 5: Wasson exhibit closes.

Wednesday, Nov. 16: Peter Michaud will speak on "Architecture II — Mid-Century Modest: The Architecture of Portsmouth and the Piscataqua in the Mid-20th Century," 5:30 p.m. in the Shaw Research Library. Reservations required.