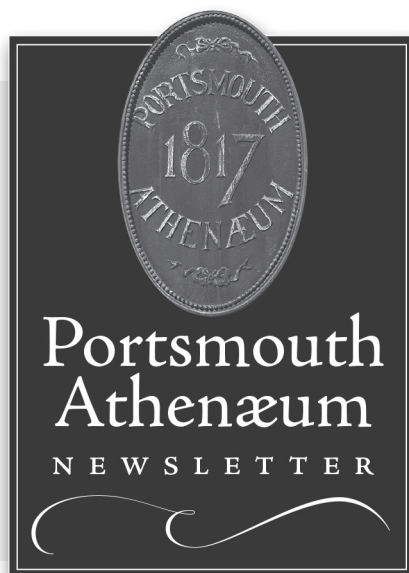


SPRING 2023

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

THE PORTSMOUTH ATHENÆUM
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FROM THE KEEPER

STATE ST. LEASE EASES STORAGE CRUNCH

ATHENÆUM PRESIDENT Sally Gayer and Temple Israel President Robert Zimman signed a three-year lease Jan. 24 for the building at 170 State St. The notable event followed months of negotiations led by Sally, Brad Lown and Mike Chubrich.

Almost exactly a year prior to the signing, we were given 30-days notice that we had to vacate the premises we had been renting for offsite storage in North Hampton. Board member Mark McNabb came to the rescue, offering temporary space at no cost in one of his properties awaiting restoration.

*For more,
see President
Sally Gayer's
address on
Page 2.*

He was also a vocal advocate for leasing the space on State Street, noting that for its location, affordability, and flexibility, the building is a near-perfect solution for all of the Athenæum's near-term space needs.

The arrangement is also good for the community in that it benefits two important local institutions, and includes an agreement that we will continue to work together to preserve the rich history of the Jewish community in Portsmouth.

The unassuming brick-and-glass-brick building was built in 1964 as the showroom for Auto City, which later became Edwards Toyota. The space contains



Temple Israel President Robert Zimman and Athenæum President Sally Gayer hold a three-year lease agreement for 170 State St. in Portsmouth.

2,700 gross square feet, including a small two-story addition in the front.

Most importantly, the floor is a concrete pad on grade designed to hold the behemoth solid steel automobiles of the 1960s. Holding stacks of books and newspapers should be no challenge for the structure.

Having the Athenæum's ongoing storage need secured with a three-year lease with options to renew allows the board and management to once again be proactive and not reactive to our challenges. The

board is actively working on defining a vision and a mission that will guide the Athenæum into its third century as a dynamic and indispensable Portsmouth institution.

Very soon we will be asking all of our members, friends, and neighbors to participate in discussions on what the Athenæum of the future can be and what we can do today to build it.

For more information, please call or see Executive Director/Keeper Tom Hardiman.

THE YEAR PAST AND THE YEARS AHEAD

(From an address delivered by Athenaeum President Sally Gayer at the Athenaeum's Jan. 25 Annual Meeting. The text has been lightly edited for written presentation.)

OFF-SITE STORAGE. As the membership knows, the Athenaeum's lease of storage space for its books in the North Hampton facility was unexpectedly canceled in February 2022, and we were asked to move out of the facility by March 1, 2022, forcing us to find 1,000 square feet of storage in a very short period of time.

Athenaeum Board of Directors member Mark McNabb stepped up immediately and generously offered temporary space at his property, the former



SALLY GAYER

Rudi's restaurant. By March 1 we moved part of what we had in storage into Rudi's. Rudi's was a convenient place for some of our items.

Since it wasn't as secure as the North Hampton space nor sufficiently climate-controlled, we moved the most valuable books and manuscripts back into the Athenaeum. Some members are familiar with the boxes stacked everywhere as one moves through the Athenaeum's rooms. The valuable manuscripts and books are safe where they are in the Athenaeum, but this short-term solution cannot be sustained.

Accordingly, the board began a measured and thoughtful deliberation about the next steps in dealing with our need for more storage, and we listened to our members. We discussed the concerns:

- Need for the care and preservation of our valuable collection;
- Growth and future need;
- The critical role that research plays in our mission;
- The need for a five- to 10-year plan;
- Possible changes in the use of our present space;
- Defining what we keep and what we don't need to keep; and

- Need for a period of stability to allow time to discuss these issues as we move forward.

The critical immediate need, of course, was for environmentally safe, secure, convenient and accessible off-site storage with sufficient workspace, and all at affordable cost, for the items stored at Rudi's and for the boxes in the Athenaeum.

Over the course of the last eight to nine months of 2022 and with the valuable help of Proprietors Karen Bouffard, Mike Chubrich, Mark McNabb and others, the board discussed criteria for a feasible solution to the problem before us.

We visited spaces around the Pease Tradeport facility and spaces in Portsmouth, including spaces owned by Mark McNabb around Market Square and space at 170 State St. owned by Temple Israel. Of the places visited, several were eliminated because of space issues, length of lease, cost and so on. The space at Rudi's was available for only a limited length of time and it wasn't a secure place for many of our resources.

One space rose to the top of our list. The 170 State St. facility at Temple Israel satisfied many of the criteria we had set, being nearby and offering:

- Easy access to load in boxes of books;
- Environmentally safe storage;
- A stable floor to carry heavy loads;
- Space to set up shelving and work tables;
- Room to grow;
- A reasonable and affordable rent; and
- A secure three-year lease with an option to renew.

Temple Israel accepted our proposal for a three-year lease and an agreement that we would set up a Joint Venture Proposal to exempt property taxes. At the Dec. 28 board meeting, the board voted unanimously (two members could not attend) to move forward with a lease with Temple Israel.

It bears emphasizing that this three-year lease specifies that the lease is ONLY for

storing our resources and for workspace for our collections as needed. There is no other intended use for this space for three years.

We have put money aside for this expense and can afford the rent agreed to. There will be no need to invade the investment portfolio or other financial resources to pay the rent. If we run short at any time, we would go to the cash account. Many of the board members already have made generous pledges for donations in 2023 and are committed to making sure that the Athenaeum remains as financially stable as it is today, whatever the ups and downs in the stock market.

The Board of Directors and our Executive Director, Tom Hardiman, are committed to studying the issues for long-term storage, uses of the space in the Athenaeum building and future growth. We will start immediately. Our plan to start this discussion months ago was delayed for a year because of the many hours spent discussing the immediate and critical storage issues.

The rental of space at 170 State St. will allow time to study the long-term issues facing the Athenaeum and to develop a five- to 10-year plan for the future. The discussions will include current use of our space, the condominium rental and so on. Once we have a definite action plan for study and discussion, we will share it with the membership so that we can discuss together the many questions that came up during 2022:

- What do we want to be in five years? In 10 years?
- How and in what ways does our research mission play into our future?
- Can we grow with our present space or should we consider acquiring another building or space?
- What are the limits to our growth?

The answers to these questions are not simple and will take ALL of us discussing the options in good faith and understanding what the issues are. We will launch a rigorous study of the options in spring 2023 and into 2024.

THE WENTWORTHS TAKE OVER RANDALL GALLERY

THE WENTWORTH Takeover: How One Family Dominated Portsmouth and New Hampshire 1715-1775” opened April 14 in the Athenaeum’s Randall Gallery.

Exhibit Curator Sandra Rux said that after arriving in New Hampshire in the 1630s, the Wentworth family gradually became more important through the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th centuries.

Friends and adversaries referred to the family as the “Wentworth clan.”

She began seriously researching the family in 2015 when it became clear that there was no comprehensive study of Lt. Gov. John Wentworth (1671-1730), his wife and 14 children.

“It seemed like there was a need for it,” she said in a recent interview.

Wentworth was appointed by Queen Anne as a member of New Hampshire’s Council in 1712, a justice in 1713 and lieutenant governor in 1717.

He and his wife, Sarah Hunking, daughter of fellow Council member Mark Hunking, had 14 children, all of whom lived to adulthood and became well-connected, talented and wealthy people.

In his book “History of New Hampshire,” the Rev. Jeremy Belknap wrote of the lieutenant governor, “under his mild administration we enjoyed great quietness.”

While a decade of unrest followed the death of Wentworth, the family and



Lieutenant Gov. John Wentworth (1671-1730) is depicted in a posthumous portrait by Joseph Blackburn.

Sit with the Wentworths

If you’re interested in being a gallery sitter for the Wentworths exhibit, please reach out to Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator Stephanie Hewson at shewson@portsmouthathenaeum.org, or visit <https://signup.com/go/FFfGFDy> to view the schedule and sign up.

allies in both New Hampshire and England managed to have Benning Wentworth, eldest son of Lt. Gov. John, appointed as New Hampshire’s first Royal Governor.

He was in office from 1741 to 1767 and became the longest-serving governor in the American colonies, Rux said.

Much of Benning’s success can be attributed to land grants. He created towns where he and his family received generous divisions, but the rest of New Hampshire citizens also benefited. The mast trade for the British navy made some very wealthy and generated enough revenue to keep the crown content. Cutting the trees led to open land for farming and encouragement of new residents.

By the 1760s, people were unhappy with Benning Wentworth’s increasingly autocratic ways.

Nephew John Wentworth spent several years in England becoming friendly with the rich and powerful. In 1767 he was appointed as New Hampshire’s second and last Royal Governor.

He fled to England at the beginning of the American Revolution, thus ending family dominance.

On June 21, Rux will present “Before ‘Live Free or Die’: The Wentworth Oligarchy 1715-1775.” The talk is part of the Athenaeum lecture series, “Portsmouth, NH: Evolution 1623-2023 Part 2.” (See Page 6)

The exhibit is open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 1 to 4 p.m. It closes July 15.



Avery Fisher Award winner Emi Ferguson

HANDEL AND HAYDN SOCIETY IN PORTSMOUTH

By CHRIS WHITE | Performance Committee

Boston’s acclaimed Handel and Haydn Society is coming April 27 to Portsmouth to celebrate the city’s 400th anniversary.

This program of music by Bach, Vivaldi and others will feature concertmaster Aisslinn Nosky, principal flute Emi Ferguson and principal keyboardist Ian Watson.

H+H has been captivating audiences for 208 consecutive seasons — the most of any per-

forming arts organization in the United States — speaking to its singular success at converting new audiences to this extraordinary music, generation after generation.

The concert at Portsmouth’s St. John’s Episcopal Church is at 7 p.m. It is cosponsored by the Portsmouth Athenaeum and free to all. A donation at the door of \$30 per person, or \$10 per student, would be greatly appreciated.

You say AtheNAYum, I say AtheNEEum...

THE ISSUE OF how to pronounce the name of our august institution was addressed in a newsletter article about 10 years ago. In the subsequent decade a significant turnover of Proprietors has taken place, and no effort has been made to standardize its pronunciation among our members. In consequence, an informal survey suggests that about half employ one usage and half the other.

The word “Athenæum” is derived from a Greek word that referred to a center of learned discourse, where all citizens were welcome to voice their views.

The Romans adopted both the concept and the word. These Latin-speaking people, according to scholars, uttered the diphthong “æ” (a blending of two vowels) as in our “aisle,” hence their pronunciation of “Caesar” is assumed to have been “Ky’sar.” We can be reasonably certain, therefore, that they would have said “Athen.i.um” (long “i”).

This is not of much help to us today since few among us speak Latin. Nor do we know how the founders of our own institution pronounced the word. However, longtime Proprietors say that they do not recall hearing the pronunciation “Athenayum” until fairly recent times, nor do



Athena, Greek goddess of wisdom, was featured in the Athenaeum's bi-centennial logo designed by Phineas Graphics.

they know how the practice originated and came to be somewhat prevalent.

Of seven modern dictionaries consulted, as well as the internet, all but two assert that the word is pronounced “Atheneeum” and lend further support to that usage by sanctioning the variant spelling “Atheneum” (no diphthong). The two outliers find both “Atheneum” and “Athenayum” acceptable. (We might note that the ligature “æ” seems to cause most people who are not familiar with the word “Athenæum” to beg for help after several false starts in attempting to spell it. Adoption of “Atheneum” would probably go far in easing their burden.)

Generally, modern dictionaries stress that their function is largely descriptive as opposed to prescriptive. That is, they seek to mirror widely-accepted usage rather than to set forth unbending rules as to how words should be used and spelled. Often this results in the sanctioning of usages that were once considered faulty.

As an example, the compound adjective “short-lived” is widely pronounced with a short “I,” sounding like “short liv’d,” when from an etymological point of view this would be incorrect since “short-lived” is

See ARCANA, Page 8

LIBRARY COMMITTEE SEEKS BOOK LOVERS

By PEGGY HODGES

The Athenaeum Library Committee is looking for avid readers, researchers and library aficionados to help strengthen our library services for members and the public. We advocate for and support the library staff, operations and collections in all areas, including the circulating library, research library, and special collections.

Thoughtful, eclectic readers are also needed on the Book

Selection Subcommittee, which reviews the librarian's suggestions for book purchases.

The committee meets every two months or so. Time commitment is minimal; impact is significant.

Please contact Peggy Hodges, committee chair, at mhodes_62@comcast.net to sign on, or for more information.

LADY CATHERINE, THE EARL, and THE REAL DOWNTON ABBEY

By Fiona, Countess Of Carnarvon

By LINDA POSSON

AS A NEW Proprietor, I received a copy of *Portsmouth Athenaeum — The Story of a Collection Through the Eyes of Its Proprietors 1817-2017*. One piece in particular, “Adventures in Archives: The Wendell Collection” by Ronan Donohoe, captured my interest immediately and inspired me to research the life of Catherine Wendell sixth countess of Highclere Castle, better known as Downton Abbey.

Little did I know when I watched the Masterpiece series that an American woman born in Kittery inspired the writers and prompted the present Countess of Highclere to pen Catherine’s biography.

Lady Catherine, the Earl, and The Real Downton Abbey is a fascinating read — chatty, but well-researched with photos of the fifteen-year marriage between American and British wealth during the 1920s and ’30s. Readers may feel like they’ve been invited for tea in Highclere’s sitting room where Catherine’s portrait hangs, as the current countess narrates the story of an unlikely marriage during a period of great political and social upheaval leading to the onset of World War II.

Lady Carnarvon’s interest in not only recounting Highclere’s fascinating history, but also in showcasing the lives of those who’ve managed the



Kittery-born Catherine Tredick Wendell wed Lord Porchester, the only son of the Earl and Countess of Carnarvon, on July 17, 1922, in London. Wendell was featured in a 2012 Athenaeum exhibit curated by Proprietor Ronan Donohoe, “Downton Abbey: The Portsmouth Connection.” Donohoe helped catalog the Athenaeum’s vast collection of Wendell family letters and realized the home Catherine lived in as the sixth Countess of Carnarvon was featured as Highclere castle in Masterpiece’s “Downton Abbey” period drama.

grounds and worked downstairs to keep the castle afloat, is as interesting as her husband’s grandfather’s philanthropy while he was married to Catherine Wendell. Her ladyship doesn’t hesitate to point out Lord Porchester’s penchant for womanizing while Catherine remained the long-suffering American wife.

In her acknowledgments, Lady Carnarvon thanks “Mr. Ronan Donohoe — Portsmouth Athenaeum USA, who has been incredibly helpful.” She goes on to say, “I am

so grateful for his time and research.”

I too am grateful to Ronan. His article inspired me to dig deeper into this fascinating moment in history that began with a birth in Kittery, Maine. Who would have thought...?

For a peek into present life at Highclere, I recommend viewing “Secrets of Highclere Castle” on Amazon Prime. Also of interest is episode nine, season two of the Netflix series “The Crown,” in which Queen Elizabeth’s

relationship with her horsey friend, Porchie, (Catherine Wendell’s son and the present Earl’s father) suggests the possibility of something deeper than friendship. Porchie and the Queen were such good friends that she gladly consented to be godmother to the present Earl.

All this is further explored in an article in *Town & Country* magazine, “Who Is ‘Porchie,’ Queen Elizabeth’s Racing Manager in ‘The Crown?’” found at <https://tinyurl.com/3bu5x2vt>

SHINING A LIGHT ON PORTSMOUTH'S 400th

By IRENE BUSH

THE 2023 Athenaeum Lecture Series, "Portsmouth, NH: Evolution 1623-2023 Part 2," continues to celebrate our city's significant anniversaries in this, Portsmouth's quadricentennial year. The talks this year shine a light on Portsmouth's commerce over 400 years, the historic interiors of those who lived here and, finally, the impact of climate change as evidenced at Strawberry Banke.

Each program begins at 5:30 pm in the Shaw Research Library of the Portsmouth Athenaeum at 9 Market Square (unless otherwise noted). Reservations for each program are required as seating is limited. Please call (603) 431-2538 to reserve. If unable to keep a reservation, please call 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 April 19, Proprietor Sam Reid gave a talk entitled "The Life, Near-Death, and Revival of Wood Island Station." The Wood Island Life Saving Station sits on a small island next to the Maine/New Hampshire border where the Piscataqua River meets the Atlantic Ocean. Built in 1908 and decommissioned in 1948, it housed the brave men, called "surfmén" or "storm warriors," who rowed out to save mariners in distress. Hundreds of rescues were performed and hundreds of lives were saved.

The station's ownership shifted from the federal government to the Town of Kittery in 1973, but little maintenance was undertaken. In 2011, to avert the planned demolition of the then-derelict and rotting structure, the Wood Island Life Saving Station Association (WILSSA) was formed to restore this National Register of Historic Places building to its former glory. Sam Reid has been the President of



On May 17, Proprietor Ann Beattie will speak on "An Abundance of Cod: Fueling the New World."

CREATIVE COMMONS

WILSSA since its founding.

Reid's background is in public service, as he has worked for three governors and President George W. Bush. In the past he has successfully tackled other challenging historic preservation projects, such as the \$80 million Masonic Temple restoration in Providence, R.I., that is now a Marriott Renaissance hotel. He loves wooden boats. Recently he has been researching the life saving stations of New Hampshire's coast including New Castle, Rye, Hampton and Wallis Sands.

In her talk May 17 on "An Abundance of Cod: Fueling the New World," Proprietor Ann Beattie will take you a step back in time to the early 17th century when Europeans began to sail to the New World and carry home tales of wondrous riches in the form of the obliging cod fish. Discover how salting and drying cod fish prevented the starvation of early settlers

and became a staple of New England life, literally fueling both the communities and economy of our region.

With a close look at the Isles of Shoals fishing station, investigate the lost art of drying cod to produce the renowned "dunfish," once sought worldwide for its quality and flavor. Solve the mystery of why this once prized commodity has been relegated to a distant memory in today's world.

Beattie is an educator with a fascination for the Isles of Shoals and its rich history. She combs through historical records, salt cod recipes and journals of Shoalers in an effort to capture and revive the unique stories that bring Shoals history to life. She is a former president of the Isles of Shoals Historical and Research Association and serves as a board member of the

See LECTURE, Page 8

COMMUNITY SERVICE: Collections on Deposit at the Athenaeum

By KATY STERNBERGER | Archivist and Research Librarian

THE PORTSMOUTH Athenaeum has always been a center for the community in more ways than one. Since the establishment of our archives in 1985, the Athenaeum has facilitated relationships with other historical institutions throughout the city by caring for and providing access to their records. These are collections on deposit, meaning that the institution retains ownership of their materials, but they are housed at the Athenaeum.

Almost 40 years on, the Athenaeum continues to maintain these relationships with our neighbors as well as forge new ones. The board of directors approved a

revised deposit agreement in April 2022, ensuring that our policy is more flexible, usable, and legally up to date.

Collections on deposit are stored alongside the Athenaeum's own collections; staff work with the depositing institutions to process the materials and make them available to both in-person and remote researchers. Deposited records date from the 17th century to the present day.

Frequently used collections include the William Ladd papers (MS017), on deposit from the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the state of New Hampshire, and the Portsmouth Histori-

cal Society collection (MS022).

Other organizations who have deposited their archival resources with the Athenaeum include the Portsmouth College Women's Club, Portsmouth Women's City Club, Rye Historical Society, Star Island Corporation, Temple Israel, Warner House Association, and Wentworth-Gardner Historic House Association.

Local churches, including Middle Street Baptist Church, North Church, South Church, and St. John's Church, have also entrusted their records to our care. Working together ensures that we mutually promote and preserve local history.

Athenaeum Calendar

To make reservations where required, please call 603-431-2538.

Thursday, April 27: As part of the Portsmouth 400 celebration, the Portsmouth Athenaeum is co-sponsoring a concert by the Handel & Haydn Society, 7 p.m., at St. John's Church, 101 Chapel St., Portsmouth. The ArtsAthenaeum concert is for Athenaeum members and the Portsmouth community. A donation at the door of \$30 per person, or \$10 per student, would be greatly appreciated.

Friday, May 5: Art 'Round Town reception for the exhibition: "The Wentworth Takeover," 5 to 7 p.m., Randall Gallery.

Friday, May 12: A Memorial Concert remembering Athenaeum Proprietors who passed in 2022; performed by Mike Blair and Jim Prendergast, 5 p.m., Sawtelle Reading Room.

Wednesday, May 17: The Athenaeum lecture series, "Portsmouth, NH: Evolution 1623-2023 Part 2," continues with Ann Beattie's "An Abundance of Cod: Fueling the New World," 5:30 p.m., Shaw Research Library. Reservations required.

Sunday, May 21: A talk and reception celebrating the bicentennial of the

New Hampshire Historical Society, which traces its origins back to the Portsmouth celebration of the bicentennial of New Hampshire in May 1823. 4:30 p.m. in the Shaw Research Library. Reservations required. If unable to keep a reservation, please call to release the seat for someone else.

Thursday, May 25: Book-signing. Proprietor Peter Randall interviews author Tom Curren, whose new book is: *All Join Hands: Dudley Laufman & the New England Country Dance Tradition*. It is a memoir of Dudley Laufman, who received the highest honor for traditional artists, the National Heritage Fellowship, in 2009. Interview and book-signing at 5:30 p.m. in the Sawtelle Reading Room. Reservations required.

Friday, June 2: Art 'Round Town reception for the exhibition: "The Wentworth Takeover," 5 to 7 p.m., Randall Gallery.

Thursday, June 15: Science educator and Proprietor Fred Schubert will give a talk on "Advances in Understanding and Treating Disease in the 19th Century with Lessons that Still Resonate." In 1800, the word biology had yet to be defined. By 1900, vaccines for many serious illnesses were being

developed. The work of John Snow, Louis Pasteur, Joseph Lister, Robert Koch, Max von Pettenkofer and other remarkable figures will be considered, 5:30 p.m., Shaw Research Library. Reservations required.

Wednesday, June 21: Sandra Rux will present "Before 'Live Free or Die': The Wentworth Oligarchy 1715-1775." The talk is part of the Athenaeum lecture series, "Portsmouth, NH: Evolution 1623-2023 Part 2," 5:30 p.m. in the Shaw Research Library. Reservations required.

Sunday, June 25: Athenaeum Proprietor and host of the "Short Fuse Podcast," Elizabeth Howard, will bring her literary interview program to the Athenaeum Reading Room with "Short Fuse Live," with Charles J. Doane, author of *The Boy Who Fell to Shore. The Extraordinary Life and Mysterious Disappearance of Thomas Thor Tangvald*. 3 p.m., Sawtelle Reading Room. Reservations required.

Friday, July 7: Art 'Round Town reception for the exhibition: "The Wentworth Takeover," 5 to 7 p.m., Randall Gallery.

Saturday, July 15: Final day of "The Wentworth Takeover," 1 to 4 p.m., Randall Gallery.

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LECTURE

From Page 6

Portsmouth Athenaeum. She leads tours of the Shoals and hosts history programs on Star Island.

From April through July in our Randall Gallery, the Athenaeum's Exhibits Committee features the Wentworth family in an exhibit developed by historian and Proprietor Sandra Rux. As a comple-

ment to the exhibit, on June 21, Rux will present "Before Live Free or Die: The Wentworth Oligarchy 1715-1775," during which period the family dominated Portsmouth and the New Hampshire colony.

Rux came to Portsmouth in 2005 as the Synergy manager for the Portsmouth Historical Society, Warner House, and Wentworth-Gardner and Lear Houses, later serving as manager and curator for the Portsmouth Historical Society until

December 2014. Sandra was Curator of the Warner House Association (2014-2019). At the Athenaeum, she has been a member of the Board of Directors (2016-2022), served as chair of the Exhibits Committee (2014-2021), and curated several exhibits.

ARCANA

From Page 4

derived from the noun "life" and not the verb "live." But owing to broad popular support, almost all modern dictionaries allow for the word to be pronounced with either a long or short "i."

Since for the most part dictionaries have not thus far yielded to the usage "Athenayum" we must conclude that

the generally-favored pronunciation is "Atheneeum." In so doing we fall into line with authorities at most of our fellow institutions such as Boston, Providence, and others.

We also observe that in every other known instance where the ligatured diphthong "æ" occurs, the standard pronunciation calls for a long "e" rather than a long "a." Thus, there is no dispute over the pronunciation of Aesop, aegis, or encyclopædia (variant spelling).

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