J.D. LINCOLN CAPTURED A CITY’S SEA CHANGE

By SHERRY WOOD

“PEACE, LOVE & Portsmouth: Celebrating the City’s Cultural Renaissance through the Lens of J.D. Lincoln” opens Aug. 4 in the Athenaeum’s Randall Gallery.

The photographer, who died at 89 in October 2022, writes in the intro to his 1982 book People of Portsmouth, and Some Who Came to Town” that he sifted through 4,000 negatives to find the images for his record of events from 1970 to 1980.

But in some ways the task of exhibit curator, Photographic Collections Manager James Smith, was just as formidable — sorting and scanning thousands of negatives to preserve Lincoln’s legacy and capture the decade of rapid change that began in Portsmouth during the late 1960s.

“The North End neighborhood was demolished by the early 1970s,” Smith said of the community he featured in a 2016 Athenaeum exhibit. “It created these big, deep scars in the city and led to a cultural shift. In some ways the city healed through the arts, and then prospered through the arts.”

“That’s where Lincoln comes in,” Smith said. “He documented the beginning of Prescott Park Arts Festival, Market Square and the success of Theatre by the Sea and restaurants like the Blue Strawberry.”

Proprietor Peter E. Randall, who published Lincoln’s “People of Portsmouth,” was instrumental in securing the donation of Lincoln’s work to the Athenaeum.

“He was mostly a ‘people’ photographer, as you can see from the book,” Randall said. “As a 12-year-old he was photographing and bringing the film to be processed at a Plymouth (NH) drugstore. They were amazed at the quality of his work and asked if they could put prints in the window. They gave him free film.”

Lincoln was a renaissance man, leaving Portsmouth for Santa Fe in 1984. He and

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**The Portsmouth Athenaeum Performance Committee is pleased to announce its 2023 Chamber Music Series. This is an annual series of chamber music concerts held in historic venues in the Portsmouth area. The public is invited to attend these concerts on Sunday afternoon at 3 p.m.**

**Aug. 27: Balourdet Quartet, The Dance Hall, Kittery.**
New to the concert series, the Balourdet Quartet is in residence at the New England Conservatory’s Professional String Quartet Program in Boston. The quartet received the Grand Prize at the 2021 Concert Artists Guild Victor Elmaleh Competition as well as prizes in other international competitions.

**Sept. 24: Noree Chamber Soloists, St. John’s Episcopal Church.** Returning by popular demand, Noree Chamber Soloists is a New York-based ensemble whose musicians have appeared on the world’s most prestigious stages and are winners of top international competitions.

**Oct. 8: Rasa String Quartet, St. John’s Episcopal Church.**
Rasa String Quartet is based in Boston and currently in residence at Phillips Exeter. It will make its return appearance in Portsmouth this season. They are winners of many music competitions and have performed across the U.S.

**Oct. 29: ASMI Trio, St. John’s Episcopal Church.**
Emil Altschuler’s ASMI Trio is returning to Portsmouth for another memorable performance. The trio includes Emil Altschuler, violinist; Thomas Pandolfi, pianist; and Carol Ou, cellist. The ASMI Chamber Ensemble performs as a collaboration between ASMI’s world-renowned faculty and up-and-coming young artists.

The Series Subscription tickets are $100 for all four concerts. A Patron sponsorship, which includes a ticket to the concert series, recognition in the program, and admission to the post-concert reception with the performers, is $250 per person. The charge in advance or at the door for individual admissions is $30; $10 for students.

Please make checks payable to The Portsmouth Athenaeum and send them to: The Portsmouth Athenaeum, P.O. Box 366, Portsmouth, NH 03802. Please note PACM on the memo line.

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**Athenaeum Calendar**

**Friday, Aug. 4:** Opening reception for “Peace, Love & Portsmouth: Celebrating the City’s Cultural Renaissance through the Lens of J.D. Lincoln,” 5 p.m. in the Randall Gallery.

**Friday, Aug. 11:** Portsmouth Historic Sites Association Twilight Tour of the Reading Room.

**Wednesday, Aug. 16:** Athenaeum excursion to the historic Wood Island Lifesaving Station. Layered clothing and sensible shoes suggested. Departure details TBA. Space is very limited. Please RSVP by Aug. 1 to info@portsmouthathenaeum.org.

**Thursday, Aug. 17:** Tour for the Historical Society of Old Newbury.

**Sunday, Aug. 27:** The Portsmouth Athenaeum Chamber Music Series hosts the Balourdet String Quartet, 3 p.m. at the Dance Hall in Kittery.

**Tuesday, Aug. 29:** Annual Athenaeum Pot-Luck Picnic at the Seacoast Science Center, Odiorne Point.

**Fridays, Sept. 1 & Oct. 6:** Art ‘Round Town reception for “Peace, Love & Portsmouth: Celebrating the City’s Cultural Renaissance through the Lens of J.D. Lincoln,” 5 p.m. in the Randall Gallery.

**Thursday, Sept. 15:** “Clear and Present Danger? America in a Bipolar World,” 5:30 p.m. in the Shaw Research Library. Are we really in a time of unprecedented global crisis and danger? How secure is the United States and how safe are Americans from global turmoil? Is American power and prosperity already in decline? Athenaeum member, Portsmouth native and foreign policy writer Gil Barondollar will offer his thoughts on the war in Ukraine, tensions with China, and international security.

**Wednesday, Sept. 20:** The Athenaeum lecture series, “Portsmouth, NH: Evolution 1623-2023 Part 2,” continues with Ed Caylor’s “Trading on the Gundalow,” 5:30 p.m. in the Shaw Research Library and via Zoom. The talk will follow the gundalows through their final commercial sails in the early 1900s and their brief local revival in 1950s.

**Thursday, Sept., 28:** A presentation and book signing by Nancy Hammond, whose new book, _The Life and Times of Jonathan Mitchell Sewell, 1748-1808, Poet – Lawyer – Patriot_, resurrects a forgotten Portsmouth celebrity, 5:30 p.m. in the Shaw Research Library.
LECTURE SERIES CONTINUES ITS EVOLUTION

By IRENE BUSH | Lecture Committee


As described on the website of Portsmouth’s Gundalow Company, “a gundalow is a shallow drafted type of cargo barge, once common in the Gulf of Maine’s rivers and estuaries. . . . [As it evolved it acquired] a cabin and lateen sail that could be lowered to ‘shoot’ under bridges.”

This presentation will begin with a discussion of the historic significance of gundalows for the growth of the Piscataqua Region through trade and transportation from the 1640s to 1870s. The talk will follow the gundalows through their final commercial sails in the early 1900s and their brief local revival in 1950.

The talk will close with the gundalow’s return to the area beginning in 1982 and their importance today in protecting the Piscataqua Region’s maritime heritage and environment.

Ed Caylor grew up in North Georgia and graduated from the Naval Academy in 1974. He flew P-3 patrol planes until he left the Navy in 1980 and moved to the New Hampshire Seacoast. He was an airline pilot in the U.S. and Japan until retiring in 2011. He has been both an Athenaeum Proprietor and Gundalow volunteer since 2013.

On Oct. 18, Proprietor Jane C. Nylander, a longtime student of New England interiors, will deliver a lecture entitled “At Home in Portsmouth, 1750-1850.”

Diary entries, probate inventories, newspaper advertisements, and excerpts from private letters will be combined with illustrations of documented household furnishings to illuminate the changing taste and advancing technology that enriched the domestic spaces of local residents.

Jane Nylander is president emerita of Historic New England and formerly a director of Strawberry Banke Museum, curator of textiles and ceramics at Old Sturbridge Village, and a director of the New Hampshire Historical Society. She has lectured extensively on New England social history and domestic interiors, textiles, clothing, and antiquarianism and been widely published in periodicals. Her books include Our Own Snug Fireside: Images of the New England Home, 1760-1860.

On Nov. 15, Proprietor Rodney Rowland presents “Water Has a Memory: Sea Level Rise, Our Past, Our Future.”

Strawbery Banke Museum is confronting the impacts of sea level rise. The 10-acre campus incorporates the Puddle Dock neighborhood; it is the lowest point in the city and just 150 yards from the Piscataqua River. Rowland tells the story of the work to protect this historic site from surface flooding caused by rainfall and groundwater intrusion from upwelling, and the forcing up of the water table by (in this case) salt water.

Rowland is director of facilities and environmental sustainability for Strawberry Banke Museum. He has worked for over 30 years at the site. Since 2012, Rowland has been in charge of a large resiliency project at the museum. The Sea Level Rise Initiative seeks to protect the very fabric the museum has used to teach 500 years of history and ensure that the lessons learned and the work done is broadly understood and relevant to the Seacoast area.

Each lecture begins at 5:30 pm in the Shaw Research Library of the Portsmouth Athenaeum at 9 Market Square in Portsmouth, NH (unless otherwise noted). Reservations for each program are required as seating is limited. Please call (603) 431-2538, Ext. 2 to reserve.

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 2023 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.
VEN THOUGH The Portsmouth Athenaeum's 1805 building on Market Square (the one flanked by the two carronades) is, arguably, the most notable and attractive structure in the city, it's likely that very few people know anything at all about its architect and builder.

A plaque affixed to it provides the meagre information "Bradbury Johnson, Architect, 1766-1820" but no more, and information about Johnson is hard to find.

A key question that has never been completely answered is this: How did a farm boy with little formal education acquire the knowledge and skills to design and construct such a splendid building? The following are the most plausible answers:

First, Johnson worked at an early age with a gifted architect-builder, Ebenezer Clifford. Even though their association was relatively brief, it's likely that Johnson learned a great deal from Clifford, who was twenty years his senior.

Next, in all likelihood Johnson had access to books that offered detailed design and construction principles. It's probable that he availed himself of builders' books in Clifford's collection, including William Pain's *The Practical Builder* (London 1774) and works by Englishman William Pain and American Asher Benjamin.

Last, it's clear that Johnson enjoyed a genius of the kind that was manifested across a broad range of disciplines in the 1700s and 1800s. Men like Robert Fulton, Elias Howe, and Eli Whitney had no formal education yet possessed extraordinary intellectual and creative talents that enabled them to make pioneering leaps into uncharted territory. Like them, Johnson's innate gifts of imagination coupled with strong practical skills enabled him to make architectural advances that were hailed even in his own time as being exceptional.

The bare facts of Johnson's early life are these: He was born in Epping in 1766, the second of seventeen children born to John Johnson, a farmer and housewright. His mother, Abigail, died at 32, when Bradbury was 11.

Bradbury apprenticed to his father but left Epping for Exeter when he turned 18. Exeter at that time was a flourishing town with considerable new construction going on, and Johnson quickly established himself as a much sought-after builder.

Initially he worked under the guidance of Ebenezer Clifford, at that time the leading architect-builder in town. The two built the second structure at Phillips Exeter Academy in 1795. Though it was destroyed by fire 1870, photographs of it exist. The handsome building's design and construction were no doubt pivotal in Johnson's early development as a builder.

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HAVEN PORTRAIT RESTORED TO GLORY

By DOUGLAS AYKROYD | oakscouter@gmail.com

It was a typical phone call to the Athenaeum.

“I have an old painting that I would like to donate to the Athenaeum. It is a copy of Gilbert Stuart’s portrait of John Haven.”

Curator Elizabeth Aykroyd went into research mode and discovered that portrait’s subject was an important Portsmouth merchant who began his business career as a shipmaster. His father, Samuel, was the minister of the South Church for 51 years. Additionally, Haven was an Athenaeum Proprietor from 1823 until his death in 1845.

Last July 27—12 days after the initial call—the owner sent a picture which revealed that the painting’s surface had become uneven over time. This was not a total surprise. Although the painting had descended down through the family, it had spent significant time in the previous owner’s storage unit.

Even though the painting was in poor condition, it was clear that the copy had been painted by a talented artist. The copy stands out from the original in one significant way. In the original painting, there are no objects behind Haven. In the copy, there is a large account book on Haven’s left side.

Executive Director and Keeper Tom Hardiman noted that the book in the painting looks like one of Haven’s books in the collection of the Athenaeum. Account books really represented how Haven made his living as a merchant.

After receiving the photo, Elizabeth asked the Arts and Artifacts Committee to accept the portrait for the collection. The affirmative response was almost immediate. She made arrangements to accept the painting in the parking lot of the state liquor store on the Portsmouth traffic circle as the owner was going to Maine for vacation.

The painting has spent over half a year with our paintings conservator Martha Cox, who returned Haven to his original, fit self. If all goes well, he will be back in the Shaw Research Library on the occasion of the bicentennial of his election as the first Proprietor of Share #60 in early September.

A recently donated portrait of John Haven, an Athenaeum Proprietor from 1823 until his death in 1845, is shown after its restoration by conservator Martha Cox. MARTHA COX PHOTO

Arcana

Following that, he played a key role in designing Exeter’s 1798 First Parish Meeting House, which still stands. Just how extensive was his involvement has not been conclusively established, but circumstantial evidence suggests that his role was significant and quite likely central.

In 1801 Johnson left Exeter to settle in Pepperrellborough, Massachusetts, now known as Saco, Maine. Why he did so is not known, though it may be that he perceived the opportunities for new construction there to be better than in Exeter, as Saco was booming.

He quickly established himself as a master builder and was tasked in 1802 with constructing a new meeting house. His work was a great success: one observer called it “the largest and most elegant in Maine.”

Following the disastrous 1802 fire in Portsmouth, the New Hampshire Fire and Marine Insurance Company hired Johnson to design and build a new office on the site of their previous building. That they reached out to Johnson, some 40 miles away in Saco, is testament to the high regard in which he was held.

Other than his clear attribution to the design and construction of the Fire and Marine Insurance building, definitive proof of his “ownership” of other structures in Saco and Portsmouth does not exist.

Proprietor James Garvin’s 1969 master’s thesis on Johnson lays out strong evidence that Johnson designed and built many other elegant buildings in both towns before his untimely death in 1820 at the age of 54.

Garvin’s work is on file at the Athenaeum (reference NA 737.J64) and was the source of much of the information conveyed in this essay.
UNH INTERN SIFTS THROUGH HISTORY

By BEN MENARD

INITIALLY, I ENROLLED at the University of New Hampshire with the goal to study law after my undergraduate degree. However, exposure to the investigative work of history and archaeology through the UNH History Department has captivated my interests. I have developed a passion for the process of discovering and preserving lost stories, especially from those who have been largely marginalized throughout history.

Director of Museum Studies, Professor Kimberly Alexander, recommended the Portsmouth Athenaeum to me when I approached her with the desire to complete an internship. She is a Proprietor at the Athenaeum and has guided UNH students in the past through internships with the collections department. I reached out to Executive Director Tom Hardiman and Photographic Collections Manager James Smith and they were gracious enough to give me the opportunity to collaborate with them on the J. D. Lincoln project.

Lincoln was a self-described documentary photographer. His work represents a unique perspective of Portsmouth's recent history. Based on his photographs, he tries to preserve the historical elements of a swiftly urbanizing city. His focus on local artwork, sculpture, jazz, and theatre are just some of the ways he chose to document the culture that seemed to be fading away. I am excited to see how the Athenaeum will share his story and perspective with the world!

Classical archaeology is my passion, and I am currently studying in Greece. In the month of July, I will be working on the excavation site at Mount Ithome in Peloponnesse. In a way, field work is very similar to archive research. Most of the time is spent digging and sorting. At the end of the day, research in history is done through careful analysis of the details.

While the internship gave me valuable experience in sorting, cataloging, and scanning artifacts, my greatest takeaway will be the connections and relationships I made while working at the Athenaeum. It was a beautiful experience to have been surrounded by staff and volunteers who are passionate about preserving and sharing with our local community.

I am currently enrolled as an accelerated graduate student at UNH in History and Classics. After I finish my undergraduate and master's degrees, I hope to pursue a PhD Program in Classical Archaeology. I would love to work on an excavation in the Mediterranean full-time, conduct museum archival research, or work as a professor.

CHECKING IN with the ATHENAEUM STAFF

Librarian ROBIN SILVA: “Just spent the day trying to help the South Church prove to the city that the South Cemetery was purchased by the Charity Fund and is a nonprofit. The rest has been requests for house histories, genealogy, Athenaeum parking and lecture signups and book-finding. Working on putting the transcription of the Ann Parry whaling log on the online catalog.”

Curator ELIZABETH AYKROYD: “A portrait of John Haven (1766-1845) acquired last year just came back from our painting conservator (See article, Page 5.) We also received a portrait of Bruce Ingmire (1947-1993), who was very active in the Athenaeum in the 1980s and started the process of getting our elevator. And we’re being given the walking stick that belonged to Daniel Marcy (1809-1893), a shipbuilder and one-time mayor of Portsmouth for whom Marcy Street was named. All three were Proprietors, so these are important additions to our collections.”

Assistant Librarian/Cataloger JUNE SPEZZANO: “Transcribing and normalizing the spelling of names (Sevy to Seavey, for example) from 17th-century North Church documents. Then I create a bio page in Past Perfect with the genealogical info and link the person to his tax documents.” The North Church records include everything from census and household inventory records to receipts such as the one issued in 1680 for the town of Portsmouth to Robert Elliott for cotton, “rum for the funeral,” a coffin and stockings.

Archivist KATY STERNBERGER: Published in the spring 2023 issue of the New Hampshire Genealogical Record a transcription of the 1782 Henzell's Island hospital ledger (S0047). Her article is entitled, “Genealogical Data in a 1782 Smallpox Inoculation Ledger from Portsmouth, New Hampshire.” Also this spring, she presented at the New England Archivists’ 50th anniversary meeting and a New Hampshire Archives Group workshop.
IN 1880, photographer Benjamin West Kilburn (1827-1909), of Littleton, NH, published this stunning view of the Old Man.
The stereograph was titled “Enthroned among the clouds, White Mts., N. H.”
On back, Kilburn described the Old Man of the Mountain: “The most attractive point of interest is this Great Stone Face, which hangs upon one of highest cliffs, 1200 feet above Profile Lake, a piece of sculpture older than the Sphinx.
“This strange apparition, so admirably counterfeiting the human face, is eighty feet long from the chin to the top of the forehead, and is formed of three distinct masses of rock, one making the forehead, another the nose and upper lip, and the third the chin. It is within one hundred rods of the Profile House, and is unquestionably the most remarkable natural curiosity in this country, if not in the world. — Among the Clouds.”
Kilburn and his brother, Edward, were well-known for both photographing and publishing stereoscopic views of the White Mountains and beyond, capitalizing on the Victorian tourism boom. According to Wikipedia, the Kilburn Brothers (later B. W. Kilburn Co.) became “the world’s most extensive manufacturer of stereoscopic views.”
The Kilburns’ former stereoscopic view factory still stands today in Littleton and is NH Historical Marker #71.
May 3 marked the 20th anniversary of the Old Man rock face’s fall.

Stereoscopic images are produced in pairs, showing slightly different angles that correspond to the angles of vision of the two eyes. With the aid of a special viewer known as a stereoscope, the image appears to exist in three dimensions. The Athenaeum has more than 700 stereographs in its digital collection.
PROPRIETOR ELLEN FINEBERG and I gave tours of the 1805 building to 20 groups of Portsmouth third graders this school year. Telling the kids about our history is always fun, rewarding, and exhausting! I started each group with: “Good morning and welcome to the Portsmouth Athenaeum. Who knows what an Athenaeum is?”

I was pleased that at least one student in each group knew that an Athenaeum is a library and a few even knew that Athena was the goddess of wisdom.

I also got more than a few comments like: “it is a secret library for rich people;” or “it’s like a private club.” I replied that if this was a private club for rich people, we would have to start raising our prices.

Then I tried to explain what a membership library is, and that, as envisioned by Benjamin Franklin in 1731, membership libraries were designed to democratize learning by pooling money to buy a wealth of books for members like himself who were not wealthy. A membership library is indeed elite because its supporters are a self-selecting group of people eager to learn and share, but it is not elitist. (Our membership dues only cover about 20% of our operations.)

It took a bit of mental acrobatics to figure out how to get that across to third graders, but by the 20th group I think I had it by deleting dates and not trying to explain tontine corporations.

At least I had it easier than Ellen, who got asked: “Have you ever tried to cut your fingers off with the model guillotine?” Somehow, “no,” just doesn’t answer that one adequately.

GET YOUR PLAQUE ON

THE PORTSMOUTH ATHENAEUM, Portsmouth NH 400, the Friends of the South End and the Citywide Neighborhood Committee are collaborating on a Historic House Plaque Program for 2023.

The owners of any house, no matter the age or location in Portsmouth, can research the origins of their home and complete the application for approval to install a plaque that has been pre-approved by the City’s Historic District Commission.

Athenaeum member Talia Sperduto of the Portsmouth Historic House Sign Committee is heading the plaque program. The signs are primed and painted white with black, hand-painted lettering on red cedar. A small plaque is $250 and a large plaque is $275.

For more information, email portsplaques@gmail.com.
Please join us for
The Thirtieth Annual
Portsmouth Athenaeum Pot-Luck Picnic

The Seacoast Science Center
Odiorne Point State Park, Rye, NH
Tuesday, August 29, 2023 5 - 7 pm
(In the tent, rain or shine!)

Bring a dish to share, in single servings if possible, by last name:
A-E:   Dessert
F-K:   Main Dish
L-Q:   Main Dish
R-Z   Salad

Or bring your own and enjoy the company and the scenery!
Appetizers, 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
Those parts of Lincoln's life as well as many signature events in Portsmouth — the 350th anniversary parade, Prince Charles' visit, Jimmy Carter's 1976 presidential campaign, and arts czar Grace Casey's River House — will also be featured in the multimedia exhibit.

“I’m trying to create an atmosphere of celebration,” Smith said. "Everything that happened in that time has led to the Portsmouth of today. The question is, where do we go from here?”

Or as Lincoln wrote in the afterword to his book, “There will be yet another story to tell of Portsmouth in future decades.”

The exhibit runs through November and is open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 1 to 4 p.m. The opening reception is 5 to 8 p.m. on Aug. 4.