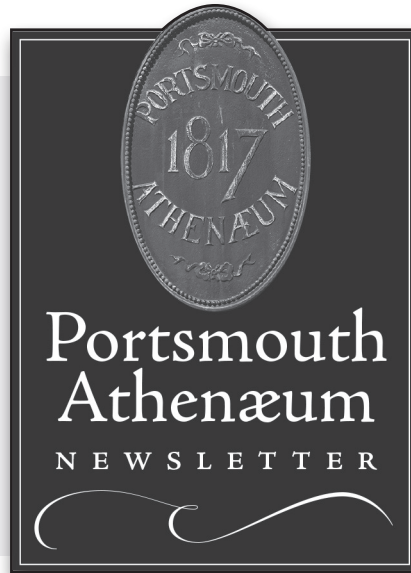


AUTUMN 2023

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

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RANDALL GALLERY:

NH STILL PACKS A POLITICAL PUNCH

By SHERRY WOOD

ALL POLITICS is personal, as an exhibit opening on Presidents Day weekend in the Athenæum's Randall Gallery will prove.

Co-curator Mary-Jo Monusky is looking for your stories as well as photos and memorabilia as she and a team of Athenæum members, volunteers and staff put together "First in the Nation: New Hampshire Presidential Primaries -- 1920 to 2020."

"We want to tell the stories of locals who worked on campaigns or met candidates at events," she said.

Monusky and co-curator Ceal Anderson became Proprietors this year and decided to jump in feet first.

Joining them will be Barbara van Buskirk, Ronan Donohoe, Dudley Dudley, Mara Witzling, Judy Groppa, Marjorie Smith, Stephanie Hewson, Linda Cheatham, Joan Graf, and Sooky Lassen, among others.

They are interviewing politically active Seacoast residents and reaching out to campaign volunteers, cartoonists and photographers for the exhibit, which opens Feb. 16.

A brief, accessible history of the state primary as well as compact descriptions



Democratic presidential candidate Franklin D. Roosevelt (in rear of car at left) campaigns in Portsmouth's Market Square in 1932. This photo was donated in 2022 to the Athenæum by William Upton of Concord. A new exhibit examining New Hampshire's role in national politics opens Feb. 16 in the Randall Gallery.

of each primary and its outcomes will be highlighted by a video of campaign songs put together by Dennis Kleinman of "Reading Rainbow" fame.

Monusky, a New Hampshire native whose first job was working in a small

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

FILMMAKER BRINGS HOLLYWOOD HOME

By LINDA POSSON

IN JULY 1957, the full-rigged Christian Radich, manned by 50 Norwegian sailors in training, glided into New Castle harbor on its 17,000-mile voyage around the Atlantic for the filming of Louis de Rochemont Jr.'s *Windjammer* — the first and only movie shot in Cinemiracle, a revolutionary wide-screen format shown on giant curved screens.

Cinemiracle's triple camera rig required only one projection booth in a theater instead of the three used for an earlier wide-screen format, Cinerama. Cinemiracle could capture close-ups to enhance the emotional appeal of the scenes as well as showcase de Rochemont's talent as a documentary filmmaker.

Louis de Rochemont's family moved to Newington when he was a boy. He made it his lifelong home.

To say that *Windjammer* was an ambitious film would be an understatement. De Rochemont and his son, director Louis de Rochemont III, pulled out all the stops to demonstrate the wonders of their mega-camera on the panoramic screen.

Part travelogue and part reality show, their film is rich with real-life dramas captured in tourist spots around the Atlantic — basket sledge racing in Madeira; an impromptu concert with cellist Pablo Casals in Puerto Rico; limbo-dancing in Trinidad; kaleido-



Two sailors perch above the figurehead of the Christian Radich in New Castle during the filming of Louis de Rochemont's documentary "Windjammer" in 1957.

scopic shots of fireworks in New York; breathtaking clips of Christian Radich crew members leaping from the top of a Philadelphia building onto a safety net during Fire Prevention Week.

In true de Rochemont style, Louis saved the best for last, beginning with a naval escort of warships off the New England coast and rigorous

underwater military training exercises, all performed by Christian Radich's crew. What audiences never saw were the two cameramen wielding their 500-pound rig while hanging onto the side of a submarine as it dived. This shot would not have been possible with Cinerama.

During these maneuvers, 17-year-old pianist Sven

Erick Libaek remained on the Christian Radich to rehearse for his audition scheduled in Boston with Arthur Fiedler. At the last-minute, de Rochemont flew Fiedler and the Pops to the Portsmouth docks for Sven's performance of Grieg's Piano Concerto.

This change in venue resulted in a crowning moment of the film and was indeed a testament to de Rochemont's genius.

Cinemiracle's moment on the wide screen, however, was short-lived. Two years after *Windjammer* premiered, Warner Bros. bought the patents with the promise of producing a film aptly entitled *The Miracle*, but it was never shot in Cinemiracle. This left the format dead in the water.

A re-mastered version of "Windjammer" is worth viewing on Apple TV or Amazon Prime. For Sven Libaek's seven-minute piano performance you can go to youtube.

The Athenaeum has a copy of Louis de Rochemont's *Windjammer*, a Random House book published in 1958. Edited by James Hardiman, it is packed with background info, photos, and personal reflections of those involved in the filming.

If you're curious about tracking the 86-year-old Christian Radich, still used as a training ship, go to <https://www.myshiptracking.com>. ♣

SEEN ON SOCIAL MEDIA

HOW GILLEY'S BECAME A PORTSMOUTH ICON

By JAMES SMITH | Photographic Collections Manager

FOR FOUR DECADES, Ralph "Gilley" Gilbert (1908-1986) operated a hot dog cart in Market Square. Each evening, the dog cart was towed into the Square, and each time, Gilley paid a 50-cent fine for parking his cart in a restricted area next to the North Church. In addition to hot dogs, he served hamburgers, coffee and the like to locals, servicemen and nighthawks.

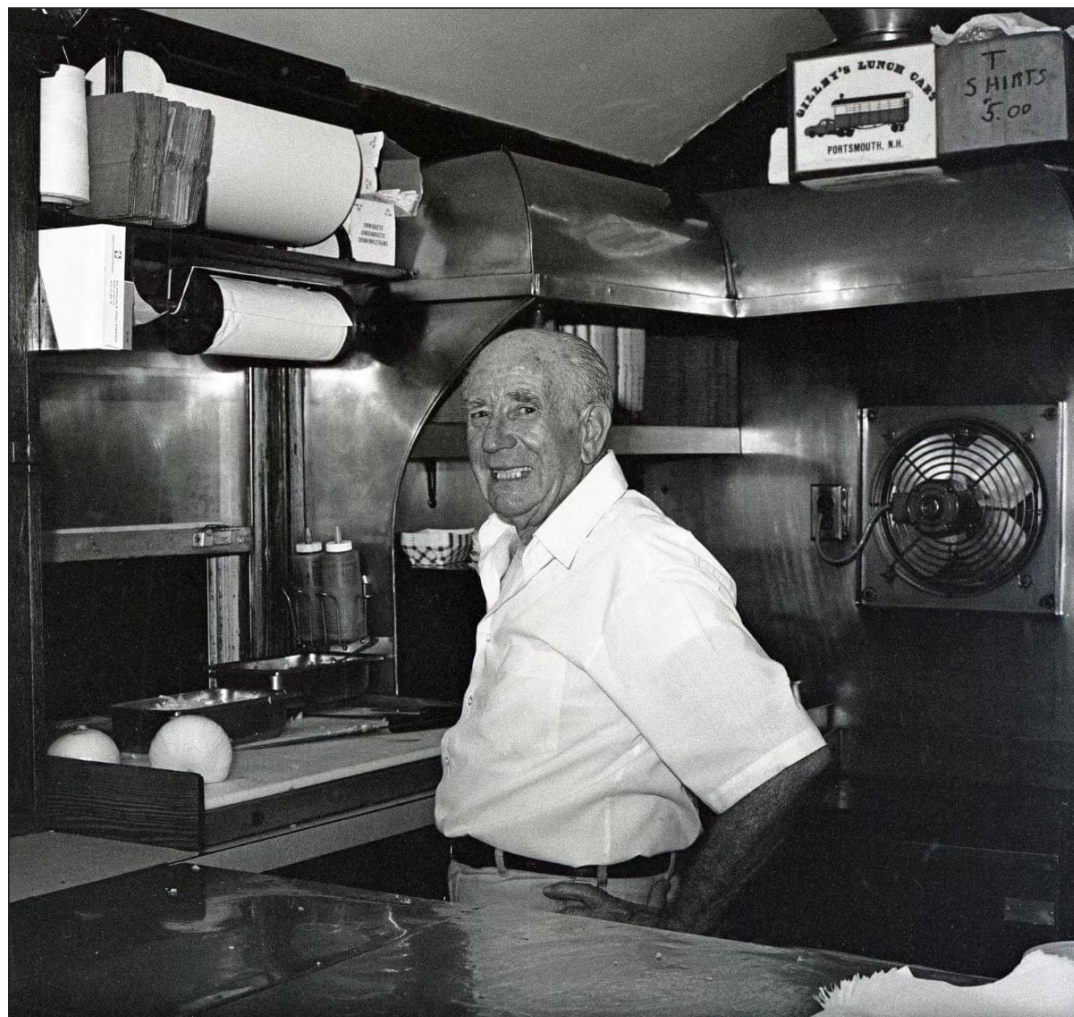
In 1974, when Gilley planned to retire, city officials and members of the community organized a retirement party for him, naming it Gilley Day. About 2,000 people bought tickets to the event, which was held on Aug. 26.

The day began with a parade through Market Square, followed by a presentation at Leary Field with a hot dog and bean supper and a beer garden. People also wore Gilley T-shirts!

Gifts were presented to Gilley during the day, including tickets to the Caribbean for him and his wife, Allah M. Gilbert (1909-1991).

Gilley's final tow out of the Square occurred in the early hours of Sept. 30, 1974. The Kennedy family had owned the dining cart, and afterward, the cart was moved to Fleet Street permanently, where the business is still known as Gilley's.

The legality of Gilley's in the



Photographer J.D. Lincoln snapped this circa 1974 shot of Ralph "Gilley" Gilbert, who ran a hotdog cart each evening in Market Square for decades. The diner is now located on Fleet Street.

Square seemed to be debated over many years. On Dec. 2, 1974, a Portsmouth Herald editorial opposed any effort to re-establish "the dog cart" in town.

"Gilley's, with all due respect to Ralph Gilbert, who had no control over the situation, was a public nuisance, attracting

like flies around a honey cage, all the town's undesirables at weird hours of the early morn."

Photographer J. D. Lincoln (1933-2022) captured the photo of Gilley, circa 1974, and featured the image in his book "People of Portsmouth" published in 1982 by Peter

Randall. Lincoln's work is now on display in our latest exhibit, "Peace, Love & Portsmouth: Celebrating the City's Cultural Renaissance through the Lens of J. D. Lincoln."

The free exhibit is open from 1 to 4 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday, in our Randall Gallery. ☞

A MASTER CRAFTSMAN CREATES A BREATHTAKING SPACE

IN THE PREVIOUS EDITION of this newsletter, we focused on the 1805 Building's architect, Bradbury Johnson, and marveled that he, with no formal education nor professional training, could have been capable of designing and building such an elegant structure.

This time, we profile George Pendexter, a man who single-handedly carried out major alterations to the interior. Like Johnson, he seems to have had no formal training and only a brief apprenticeship, relying largely on his native genius to accomplish feats of carpentry and joinery that craftsmen even today find astonishing.

Little is known about his early life. He was born into a farm family in 1807 in Madbury. In 1833, at 26, he moved to Portsmouth and established a carpentry and joinery shop on Vaughan Street. (The term "joiner," now uncommon in the United States, refers to one who installs wooden objects into structures created by carpenters, examples being doors and window shutters.) Pendexter clearly was a master of both trades.

Early in 1861 the directors of the Athenaeum decided to "bring the [4th-floor room] into the library" by cutting out the flooring separating the third and fourth floors. Before that work was accomplished, access to those floors was gained through exterior stairs.

Proprietor George Pendexter (share #57) was hired to take on that task. Included in his estimate was cutting out the flooring in an 11-foot by 22-foot oval, fashioning a black walnut railing and balusters, and creating a winding staircase between the two floors.

In order to support the flooring of the gallery created by this opening, he proposed to hang the floor joists from



Cellist Dorothy Braker performs at the top of the winding stair that George Pendexter created after removing the flooring separating the Athenaeum's third and fourth floors in 1861.

four cast-iron, one-inch rods that would carry the weight of the flooring up to the attic, where he would construct two sets of trusses made of massive chestnut timbers. Those trusses would in turn transmit the weight of the flooring to the building's walls and thence to the cellar.

Nothing in the Athenaeum's records indicate that Pendexter was assisted by a helper, though it's hard to imagine that he could have installed the trusses in the attic without assistance.

It's doubtful that any modern carpenter could carry out such a project using only hand tools, as Pendexter must have. And the winding stairway he created is a marvel in its own right, with the treads changing progressively in shape and dimension as one advances up them.

No doubt computer-aided programs would make that task fairly easy today,

but Pendexter had to rely on his own system of manual calculations to solve highly complex problems.

For his efforts Pendexter submitted to the Directors a detailed invoice of \$465.67. Equivalent in today's dollars to about \$17,000, it's clear that the Athenaeum got a very fair deal. Beyond getting a more useable floor, they (probably inadvertently) realized a dramatic enhancement in the beauty of the two floors, one which invariably causes first-time visitors to gasp with delight.

George Pendexter was a man of considerable interests and talents. Very active in politics throughout his life, he was a diehard Republican. Near the end of his long life, he was rewarded for his loyalty to the party through appointment as local Collector of Customs, a sought-after sinecure. He died of a seizure while at work, in 1890, in Portsmouth. ¶

2024 LECTURE SERIES TAKES SHAPE

By **DON MARGESON** | Lecture Committee

THE ATHENAEUM'S 2024 Lecture Series will center around the themes of elections, politics and democracy.

The seven-lecture series will begin in March; dates will be announced in the spring.

David Moore, a polling consultant, will speak on contemporary polling and its challenges. From 1972 to 1993 he taught political science at the University of New Hampshire, where he founded and directed the UNH Survey Center. From 1993 until 2006 he worked for the Gallup poll.

Three lectures will address 19th-century individuals born in New Hampshire who became major figures in the American political world.

Paula Fortner and Phyllis Gagnon will jointly present a lecture on Franklin Pierce, the 14th U.S. president, discussing his meteoric rise to the presidency within the framework of antebellum politics. Paula and Phyllis are members

of the Franklin Pierce Society, which manages the Pierce Homestead in Hillsborough, Pierce's home for the first 30 years of his life.

Proprietor and former Athenaeum President John P. (Jack) McGee Jr., will speak about Levi Woodbury, who served as an associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, a U.S. senator from New Hampshire, the state's ninth governor, and a cabinet member in three administrations. He was the first Supreme Court justice to have attended law school. Jack is a name partner in Flynn and McGee, P.A., in Portsmouth.

Proprietor and Director Ann Beattie will deliver a presentation on Benjamin Butler. Born and bred in New Hampshire, Butler was a colorful, dynamic and audacious lawyer and politician. He served as a Union general in the Civil War, earning the nicknames "Beast" and "Spoons." Later, he was elected governor of Massachusetts and made an unsuccessful bid for the presidency.

The Lecture Committee is seeking a speaker to discuss the subject of how campaigning in New Hampshire is different from campaigning in other states, and what differences in law, custom, political culture, campaign financing, etc. might account for that.

The committee is also planning to present two lectures on preparing American citizens for the responsibilities of citizenship.

To find a speaker, the committee has reached out to New Hampshire Civics, an organization that teaches civics for free on how democracy works and how to be good and active citizens. The other lecture will discuss a model for such education; selection of a speaker for this lecture is under discussion with representatives of New Hampshire Public Radio's hit podcast "Civics 101."

Lectures are held in the Shaw Research Library on the third floor of the Athenaeum; starting time is 5:30 p.m. ¶

COLLECTIONS

These Naval Prison keys took a roundabout path to the Athenaeum

By **ELIZABETH AYKROYD** | Athenaeum Curator

The Art and Artifacts Collection has two recent notable additions -- keys from the Portsmouth Naval Prison (1908-1974).

The keys took a roundabout journey from the Copley family of New Castle to Proprietor Joe Sawtelle (1928-2000) to his daughter, Caryl Sawtelle, who gave them to the Athenaeum.

It was Joe Copley's father who was a guard at the prison on the grounds of the shipyard in Kittery, Maine, and somehow obtained the keys (perhaps when locks were changed?).

Joe Copley was very involved with the Athenaeum in the 1970s, so it is good to have something from his family.



HOLIDAY CONCERT: COME ONE, COME ALL

By CHRIS WHITE | Performance Committee

The Portsmouth Symphony Brass Quintet will perform at the Athenaeum Holiday Concert on Dec. 14 at 7:30 p.m.

All are invited to hear the quintet play at South Church, 292 State St., Portsmouth.

"With trumpets, horn and trombones, the Quintet will herald all that's glorious about the season of Advent, Hanukkah, and Christmas," Chris White of the Athenaeum's Performance Committee said.

The committee describes the concert as "a joyful mix of traditional music, seasonal favorites and music from the Renaissance to pop."

The concert is the Athenaeum's gift to its membership and the community, although contributions will be gratefully accepted at the door.



Portsmouth Symphony Brass Quintet members are, from left, Adam Gallant, Greg Bechtold, Orlando Pandolfi, Brandon Newbould and Jim Griswold.

Athenaeum Calendar

Tuesday, Oct. 24: Keeper and Executive Director Tom Hardiman will hold an informal discussion session to get input from members on the new mission statements and talk about how we might make the Athenaeum better and stronger for the future. No RSVP necessary; just come to the Shaw Research Library at 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, Oct. 29: The Portsmouth Athenaeum Chamber Music Series hosts the ASMI String Quartet, 3 p.m. at St. John's Church.

Friday, Nov. 3: Art 'Round Town reception for the exhibition: "Peace, Love & Portsmouth: Celebrating the City's Cultural Renaissance through the Lens of J. D. Lincoln," 5 p.m. in the Randall Gallery.

Sunday, Nov. 5: Annual meeting of the Isles of Shoals Research Association at the Athenaeum.

Wednesday, Nov. 15: The Athenaeum lecture series, "Portsmouth, NH: Evolution 1623-2023 Part 2," concludes when Proprietor Rodney Rowland presents "Water Has a Memory: Sea Level Rise, Our Past, Our Future." Strawberry Banke Museum is confronting the impacts of and damage from sea level rise right now. 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. The impacts are from both surface flooding caused by rainfall and groundwater intrusion from upwelling (the forcing up of the water table by, in

this case, salt water.) This talk tells the story of the work to protect this historic site while we look to our past to help influence our future. At 5:30 p.m. in the Shaw Research Library and via Zoom.

Friday, Nov. 17: Final day of the exhibition, "Peace, Love & Portsmouth: Celebrating the City's Cultural Renaissance through the Lens of J.D. Lincoln."

Saturday, Nov. 18: The Research Library will be closed for a UNH History Department Seminar.

Wednesday, Dec. 6: Dr. Dane Morrison will give a talk about his most recent book, *Eastward of Good Hope* [Johns Hopkins University Press], 5:30 p.m. in the Shaw Research Library.

Friday, Dec. 8: Athenaeum Holiday Gala. Invitations forthcoming.

Friday, Dec. 8: Proprietors Art Show opens.

Wednesday, Dec. 13: Book signing with Dr. Kimberly Alexander and a talk about the UNH flax project: <http://www.theflaxprojectunh.com>. Dr. Alexander is the author of *Treasures Afoot: Shoe Stories from the Georgian Era* [Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018] and *Fashioning the New England Family* [Massachusetts Historical Society, 2021]. At 5:30 p.m. in the Shaw Research Library.

Thursday, Dec. 14: Athenaeum Holiday Concert with the Portsmouth Brass Quintet, 7:30 p.m., South Church.



A record 140-plus attended the 30th annual summer picnic at the Seacoast Science Center in Rye. Above, Social Committee co-chair Kathy Logan and Athenaeum Curator Elizabeth Aykroyd check out Maeve's Mobile Cocktail Hour.

JAMES SMITH PHOTOS

PERFECT DAY FOR A PICNIC

By TOM HARDIMAN | Keeper and Executive Director

The 30th annual Athenaeum picnic on Aug. 29th was by far the largest and one of the best-ever events we have had. More than 140 members brought a favorite dish and some choice conversational stories to share.

An event that seems so casual and easy is only made possible by the hard work of our fabulous Social Committee: Co-chairs Cindy Knapp and Kathy Logan and members Douglas and Elizabeth Aykroyd, Mark Ankar-

berg, Andrew Bagley, Janet Bagley, Jan Dinan, Joan Hammond, Mike Harvel, Cliff Hodgdon, Kate Maggio, Talia Spurduto, and Curt Springer.

We also need to appreciate Jim Chase, Hollie Dutton, and the rest of the staff of the Seacoast Science Center for getting us back to the site we have all loved for so many years. Special praise goes out to Mellissa Walls of Maeve's Mobile Cocktail Hour, who donated her charming, retro-elegant service for the evening



WE WANT YOU!

By STEPHANIE HEWSON | Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator

The Athenaeum is busier than ever with a variety of programs, exhibits, concerts, and more.

It's exciting to see the Athenaeum bustling again after the pandemic-induced quiet. However, to help make possible all of these great activities, we need your help.

Connecting those who want to help with activities that suit them is where our volunteer coordinator comes in. Whether you've been involved for years or are newer to the organization, we can help you find your place, or even an additional new place, within the organization.

We are always in need of help in the gallery during exhibitions as well as four times a month in the Reading Room. If you want to help, but don't know where to start, these two options are always available. Both of these opportunities are great ways to meet other Proprietors, visitors, and the staff, all while filling a great need that requires a modest time commitment.

If you're interested in volunteering, please reach out to Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator Stephanie Hewson at shewson@portsmouthathenaeum.org.

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CALLING ALL CREATORS

By JUDY GROPPA
Exhibits Committee Chairman

The Proprietors Art Show opens Dec. 8 as part of the Athenaeum Holiday Gala.

Proprietors, Subscribers, Friends and spouses/partners are invited to submit fine or decorative art, crafts, and published writings. Past shows have included paintings, photographs, sculpture, fiber works, jewelry, pottery and woodworking.

Items should be delivered to the Athenaeum from Nov. 20 to Nov. 27. If the Randall Gallery is not open, please leave your art near Librarian Robin Silva's desk. Be sure to fill out the paperwork, which can be found next to the copier.

Robin creates a display of all the publications by Proprietors from the previous year. Check with her to see if she has your work.

The show will be up until the Athenaeum's Annual Meeting in January. Please email questions to judygroppa@gmail.com.

POLITICS

Continued from Page 1

grocery her father owned on Portsmouth's Woodbury Avenue, also ran a costume jewelry firm in Manhattan, managed a convenience store in Rochester for 13 years and from 2014 to 2019 was executive director for Arts in Reach, a nonprofit empowering Seacoast teens.

Her dad, John D. Rigazio (1931-2012) was a Rochester businessman and political writer who ran as a candidate in the New Hampshire presidential primary in 1992 and 2004.

"He didn't think he could win," Monusky said. "He just wanted to get his ideas out there."

Anyone who would like to contribute an item or anecdote to the exhibit team can contact Monusky at maryjomonusky@gmail.com or Ceal Anderson at cealanderson@comcast.net. ¶

PORTSMOUTH ATHENAEUM NEWSLETTER

Published three times yearly. Deadlines for articles are March 15, June 15 and October 1.

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