

STATE ARCHIVES ANNUAL REPORT

2025



Declaration of Independence viewing, October 2025



Gregg M. Amore
Secretary of State



ABOUT US



WHO WE ARE

The Rhode Island State Archives is operated by the Rhode Island Department of State under the leadership of Secretary of State Gregg M. Amore. The State Archives Division protects and preserves records of State government dating back to 1638, as authorized by RI General Law § 42-8.1.

WHAT WE DO

The State Archives is the official repository for permanent records of Rhode Island State government and actively works to maintain and increase access to Rhode Island's powerful history.

The State Archives makes government more accessible and transparent and encourages civic engagement through:

1. Assisting Rhode Island residents in learning about their history through public programs;
2. Increasing awareness of Rhode Island's history by providing online resources and guides, and in-person research appointments;
3. Sharing Rhode Island stories through public exhibitions and offsite outreach and events; and
4. Conserving and preserving records for future generations.

The State Archives Division also works closely with State and local agencies to ensure that records across Rhode Island are maintained and preserved according to the law. Additional programs include:

- The Local Government Records Program, which assists cities and towns with archival and records management;
- The Public Records Administration, which assists State agencies with records management and compliance; and
- The Administrative Records Office, which oversees and accepts regulatory filings on behalf of the RI Department of State.

The State Archives Division offers a variety of support programs for its records management stakeholders, including:

- Workshops, webinars, and public presentations;
- Guidance documents with step-by-step instructions for best practice; and
- Clean-up days and full-day guidance and on-site approval for destruction.

STATE ARCHIVES TEAM

Ashley Selima
Director of State Archives & Public Records Administration

Rachel Strashnick
Administrative Records & Technical Services Specialist

Tracey Croce
Local Government Records Coordinator

Emma Holmes
Assistant Reference Archivist

Richard Hite
State Records Coordinator

Hailey Paganetti
Administrative Records Temp

Ken Carlson
Reference Archivist

Jacob Lauria
Archives Assistant

Kate Telford
Senior Digital Archivist

OUR COLLECTION



More than
10 MILLION
records



Over
1 MILLION
public digital objects



Accumulated over
380 YEARS



Over
426,224
downloads



FROM SECRETARY GREGG M. AMORE



Dear Rhode Islander:

The State Archives is one of the most incredible places in our state – especially for a former history teacher like me. It's filled with historical treasures that tell the rich story of Rhode Island, and it's staffed by dedicated professionals who can assist you whether you're a seasoned researcher or a casual visitor.

As you'll see in the following report, there is an ever-growing demand for research services and interest in learning our state's history. Rhode Islanders and visitors alike are interested in learning more about our state through its founding documents, especially as we enter America's semiquincentennial year. That's why I have championed – and will continue to advocate for – a dedicated Rhode Island State History Center. I know that the accomplishments of the State Archives team detailed in this report will only be amplified by a space truly fitting of the trailblazing story Rhode Island has to tell.

Each day, I am impressed by the dedication of the State Archives staff under the leadership of Ashley Selima. The State Archives continues to grow both its collection – including items available digitally – and public engagement through workshops, lectures, and exhibits. I am looking forward to what's to come in 2026 as we mark 250 years of American history and Rhode Island's role in the Revolution.

I hope you enjoy reading about the accomplishments of the State Archives Division this year, and if you haven't yet, I hope you will visit the State Archives. There is truly something for everyone to discover.

Sincerely,
Gregg M. Amore
Secretary of State

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CONTACT US

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-  Follow us on Instagram
RISecState

VISIT US

ADDRESS

33 Broad St. Providence

HOURS

Mon. - Fri. 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

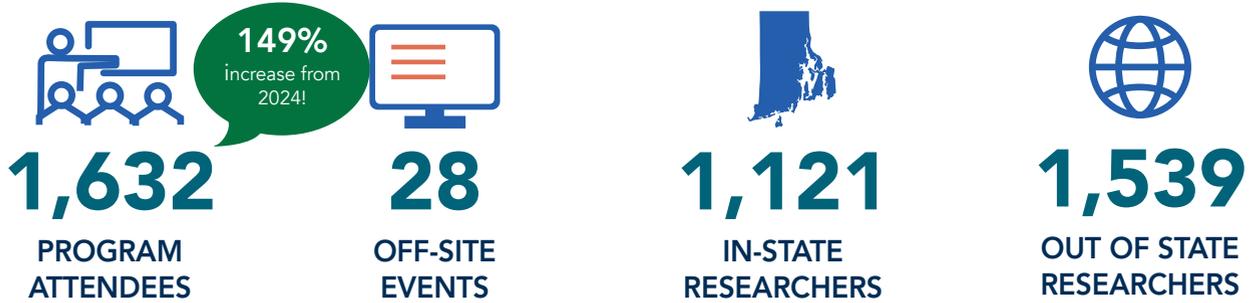
PARKING

Limited on-site and metered street parking available.

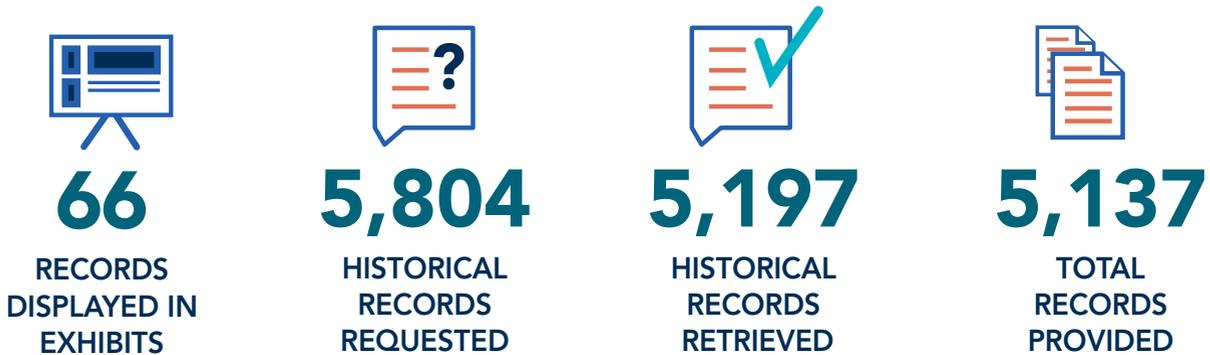


LOOKING BACK: 2025 IN REVIEW

A YEAR IN PUBLIC PROGRAMS



A YEAR IN HISTORIC RECORDS



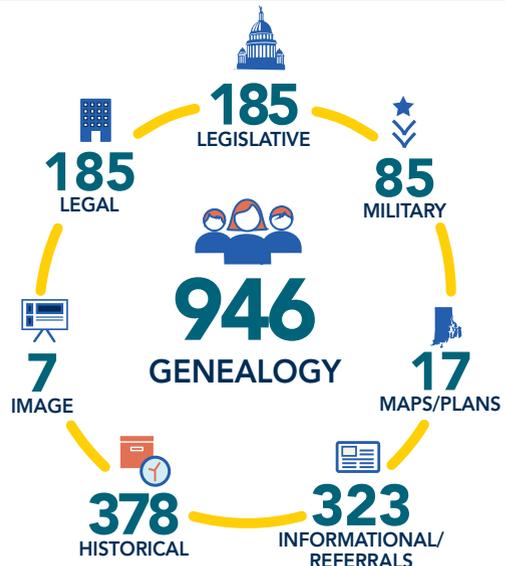
A YEAR IN REFERENCE

Reference Request Breakdown:

Provided over 5,100 records to historical researchers.

Received over 2,660 unique requests in 2025.

4% increase from 2024!





LOOKING BACK: 2025 IN REVIEW

A YEAR IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT



812

RECORDS
MANAGEMENT
REQUESTS



760

REQUESTS FOR
DESTRUCTION
FORMS (CRDS)



6

ON-SITE
ASSISTANCE
DAYS



272

WORKSHOP
ATTENDEES

A YEAR IN STATE GOVERNMENT



26,946

RECORDS
CENTER
ACTIVITIES



1,149

BOX DATA
UPDATES



4,679

STATE AGENCY
RECORDS SENT TO
OFF-SITE STORAGE



116

WORKSHOP
ATTENDEES

A YEAR IN ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS



13.11%
increase in drafts
from 2024!

138

REGULATIONS
FILED



301

REGULATION
DRAFTS
REVIEWED



10,933

REGULATION
PAGES
REVIEWED



698

REQUESTS FOR
ASSISTANCE



STATE ARCHIVES COLLECTIONS

Expanding our Collections

The State Archives collection spans hundreds of years, from 1638 to 2023. Each year new records are added and made accessible to the public for research and general use.

PHYSICAL STORAGE



**+ 48 CUBIC FEET
OF RECORDS**

WERE ADDED TO OUR COLLECTION



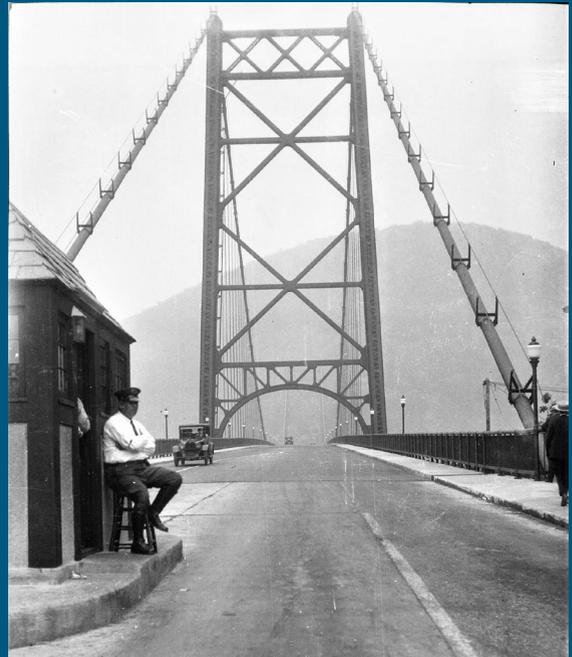
In 2025, the State Archives received several significant accessions, including:

- Department of Environmental Management, RI Metropolitan Parks Minutes, 1904-1930
- Digital Student Art, History's Stories, Today's Storytellers exhibit
- Bristol Fourth of July Souvenir Prints and Souvenir Books, 1985-2024
- 2024 Certifications of Election
- Rhode Island State House plans, 1897-1899
- Department of Environmental Management Legal Division landmark legal case files and minutes, 1904-2005

COLLECTION HIGHLIGHTS



Mount Hope Bridge Construction Negatives, 1925-1956





STATE ARCHIVES COLLECTIONS

Expanding our Digital Access

Digital access is increasingly popular among Rhode Islanders and users across the globe interested in Rhode Island history. Scanning, photographing, or otherwise imaging public records is an ongoing initiative each year to provide greater access to these documents and other records.

DIGITAL STORAGE

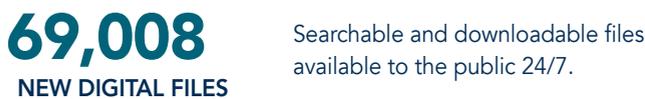
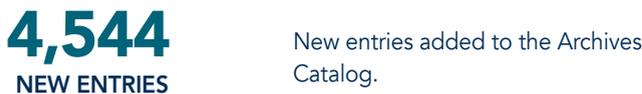


The State Archives team continued to work to expand the ever-growing Digital Archives for researchers at home. Substantial new materials were added, including:

66,272 new records scanned for long-term preservation; and

76,980 new items uploaded to the Digital Archives.

ACCESS AND USAGE



DIGITAL ARCHIVES ANALYTICS



NEW TO THE DIGITAL COLLECTIONS IN 2025

- › Death Certificates, 1940-1973
- › Governor's Messages to the General Assembly, 1732-2006
- › Newport County Branch of the NAACP Patriots Park Development Committee papers, 1967-2023
- › Photographs of President Jimmy Carter, Governor's Photographs, 1978-1979
- › Land and Public Notary Volumes, Volumes 1-4
- › Rhode Island Colony Records, 1779-1781
- › VHS tapes including: House Commission to Study the Department of Environmental Management videotapes, 1996-1998



PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

Legislative Update

In 2025, the Department of State worked to complete legislative updates to RI General Law § 38-3 to better represent the records management landscape and improve the process for the creation and finalization of records retention schedules. This update modernized the language of the Public Records Administration statute to current industry standards and codified that every State agency must have a Records Officer.

Working Together



66

Records Officers



361

Users and Contacts



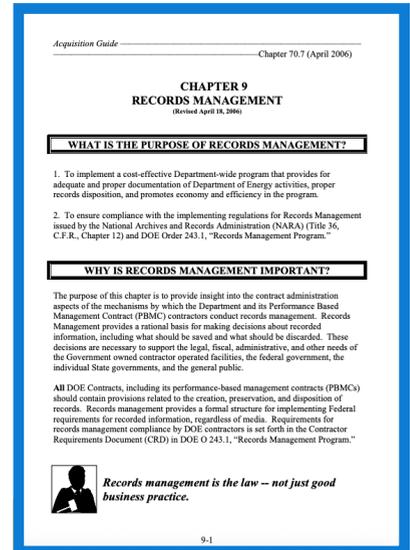
1,500+

Inquiries and Requests



40

Surveys Completed



What is Records Management?

It's how government ensures public records are properly cared for, and properly accessible.

A YEAR IN STATE RECORDS 2023

 28,793 RECORDS CENTER ACTIVITIES	 161 BOX DATA UPDATES	 5,584 STATE AGENCY RECORDS SENT TO STORAGE	 105 WORKSHOP ATTENDEES
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A YEAR IN STATE RECORDS 2024

 59,241 RECORDS CENTER ACTIVITIES	 1,826 BOX DATA UPDATES	 7,234 STATE AGENCY RECORDS SENT TO OFF-SITE STORAGE	 237 WORKSHOP ATTENDEES
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1,034% increase in data updates!

2025

 26,946 RECORDS CENTER ACTIVITIES	 1,149 BOX DATA UPDATES	 4,679 STATE AGENCY RECORDS SENT TO OFF-SITE STORAGE	 116 WORKSHOP ATTENDEES
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ACCESSING INFORMATION

Exhibits are a complex but incredibly rewarding way to tell unique stories.

Have you ever wondered how the State Archives selects themes and builds exhibits for in-person and online viewing? It is a creative collaborative process that helps the Archives highlight lesser-known moments in state history.



Exhibits start with a "big idea."

The overarching topic used to share Rhode Island history and the unique and diverse records preserved at the State Archives.

Exhibits ask and answer questions.

The State Archives looks at key questions and researches material in the collection that can answer them. The final exhibit should answer these questions for anyone who interacts with it.



1

TOPIC SELECTION

Review areas of frequent interest or upcoming observances to determine a Rhode Island story to focus on.

2

KEY QUESTIONS

Are materials safe to display the original, or can a reproduction be used?

3

COLLECTIONS RESEARCH

Review the catalog, Digital Archives, and finding aids to determine possible objects to help tell the story.

4

RECORDS IDENTIFICATION

Review all possible selected materials and note locations for retrieval day.

5

RECORDS RETRIEVAL

Organize materials, document their temporary absence from storage, and prepare for exhibit layout work.

6

SAMPLE LAYOUT

Start developing the story and see how different records display side by side.

7

LABEL AND NARRATIVE DRAFTING

Collaborate with archivists and communications team to describe the records and their part of the story.

8

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Collaborate with graphic designer to sketch and create visual story.

9

FINAL LAYOUT

Finalize all elements and open the exhibit to the public for viewing!

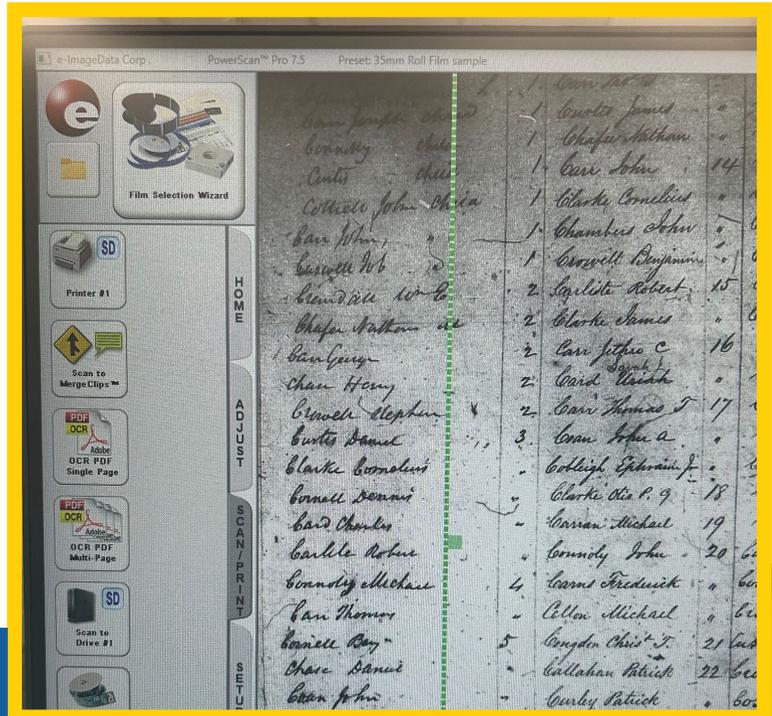


PRESERVING RHODE ISLAND'S HISTORY

Making Microfilm Accessible

Microfilm as a technology dates back more than 150 years, and is still a critically important archival tool today. It remains one of the most stable options for preserving and making archival documents available. As the technology of microfilm has improved, the State Archives has worked to ensure its microfilm resources are tools for research and building the digital collection.

In 2025, the Digital Archives program added a new microfilm reader that can specifically read and digitize microfiche, in addition to microfilm. This will assist the State Archives in making previously migrated material available online in the future.



Microfilm may feel outdated, but cared for properly it can last 500 years, offering important longevity.





CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY

At the Archives

The State Archives continued to develop new and innovative ways to connect with Rhode Islanders in-person, online, and at events throughout the state to encourage Rhode Islanders to interact with the collections and explore their history.

History's Stories, Today's Storytellers Exhibit Reception

Students from Mt. Hope High School and North Smithfield High School partnered with the State Archives for its continuing exhibit program focused on unique artwork created by students inspired by the historic documents preserved at the State Archives. This reception, open to the participants and the public, celebrated their hard work as their creations were on display from January-June.



Map Night (March)

This event provided the public with an opportunity to see the expansive and unique collection of archival maps, plans, plat books, and architectural drawings that are often unable to be shown as part of public exhibitions at the State Archives.

A limited selection of maps are available to view online in the Digital Archives.



CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY

Gallery Nights (April and August)

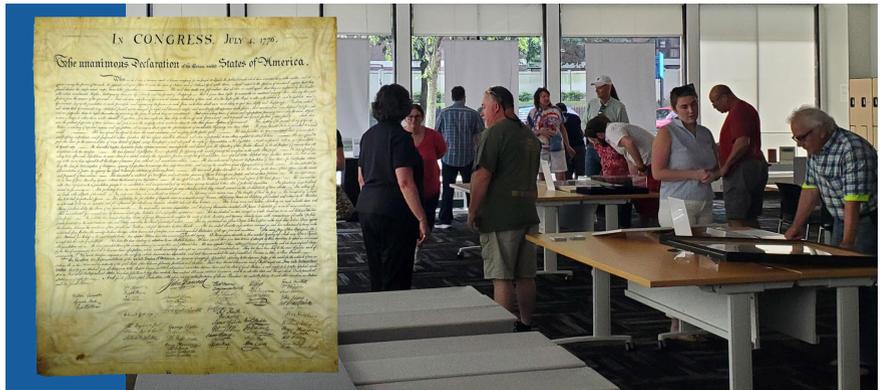
In 2025, we partnered with Gallery Night Providence to be a stop on their Thursday night art tours in April and August, showcasing the history exhibits to a new audience.



Visitors were able to view the exhibit on view, including History's Stories, Today's Storytellers.

July 4th Independence Day Display

In the biggest event of the year, all three versions of the Declaration of Independence were on special display on Independence Day! Over 90 Rhode Islanders came out to see these extraordinary pieces of history.



Constitution Day

The State Archives held a special viewing of Rhode Island's copy of the Bill of Rights on September 17, Constitution Day. Rhode Island's copy of the Bill of Rights, the first amendments to the US Constitution, was sent to Rhode Island in 1789. This unique draft copy is slightly different from today's Constitution and over 50 Rhode Islanders visited to see it in person!

The Bill of Rights
In 1789, during the debates on the adoption of the United States Constitution, opponents, including Rhode Island, feared the document as drafted did not provide redress from future tyrannical governments or the violation of individual civil rights.

Rhode Island's Path to the Ratification of the Constitution

- 1776: The American Revolution begins...
- 1781: The original Constitution is drafted...
- 1786: The original Constitution is drafted...
- 1787: The original Constitution is drafted...
- 1788: The original Constitution is drafted...
- 1789: The original Constitution is drafted...
- 1790: The original Constitution is drafted...

Bill of Rights
The compromise that created America

We the People
The consent of the governed - a critical component

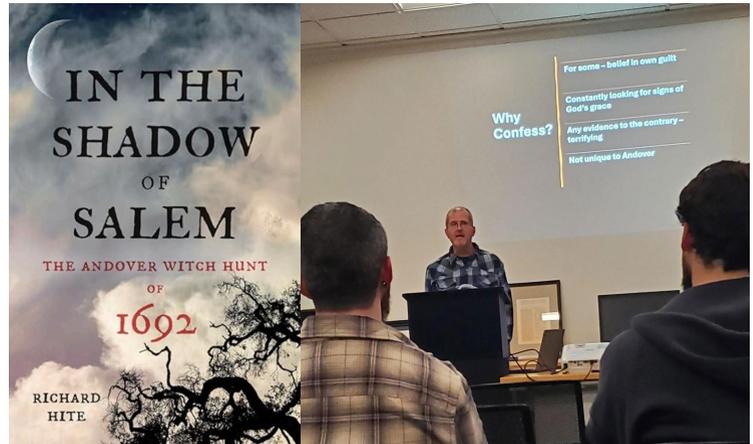
Representing the balance of the pendulum between citizens and government



CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY

In the Shadow of Salem, History Talk with Local Author Richard Hite

To celebrate Archives Month, and spooky season, local author and Rhode Island State Archives State Records Coordinator Richard Hite gave a history talk on the fear of witchcraft as it spread throughout northern Massachusetts and the greater New England area, sharing the fascinating story of a long-overlooked phase of the largest witch hunt in American history.



“More than a Number” Historic Cemetery Project Talk

The Rhode Island Training School Cemetery Project has been working to remove debris, clean up, and restore the cemetery on the site of one of the former State institutions. During the display of the State Archives “A Good for the Public” exhibit, Theresa Moore and John Hill joined to share about the project and how the historic records from the collection have aided in their work and the creation of a student curriculum.





CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY

In the Community

The State Archives works every year with collaborators across the state to share stories of Rhode Island's history, celebrate and preserve that history, and to keep public records safe and accessible. You may have seen us at a library or community space near you in 2025!

May 4th Display at State House

The Act of Renunciation was on display at the Rhode Island State House on Saturday, May 4 in recognition of Rhode Island Independence Day. In partnership with the Department of State's Civic Education & Engagement Division, the Act was a special complement to the Saturday tours.



CIVIC ACTION:
INDEPENDENCE

Rhode Islanders are justly proud of their state's independent spirit.

The Act of Renunciation

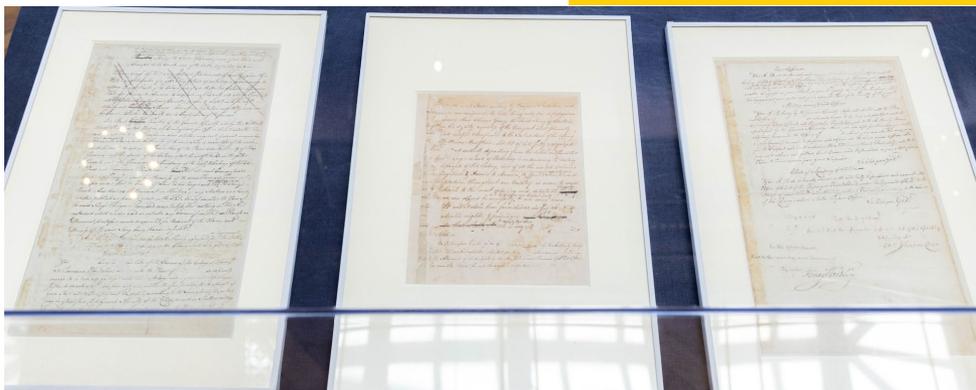
Passed by the General Assembly on May 4, 1776, the Act was an important legislative step towards the eventual Declaration of Independence signed two months later.

May 4, 1776

Before passage of the Act of Renunciation, the established Acts and Statutes of Rhode Island Colony featured the Royal Arms of Great Britain.

Following the act, Rhode Island Colony's seal arms, depicting a Native American and a female soldier surrounded by anchors, replaced the Royal Arms.

The Act of Renunciation offers tangible proof of Rhode Island's independent spirit and the colony's courage in the early stages of the American Revolution.



Portsmouth Founders' Day

Secretary Amore and State Archivist Ashley Selima were glad to again join the Town of Portsmouth for its annual Founders' Day celebration!

The original Portsmouth Compact, dating to 1638, was brought via police escort for display to residents and visitors.





CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY

History Talks

State Archivist Ashley Selima, and RI250 Program Coordinator Lauren Fogarty, collaborated this year on several history talks for organizations throughout the state. These presentations focused on the State Archives' historic collection, a brief timeline of Rhode Island history through State Archives documents, and how genealogy is a central part of the Archives' collection. Thank you for having us!

Talks included stops at the:

- Blackstone Valley Historical Society (April), and
- Genealogical Society Annual Meeting (June).



Student Visits

In September, Secretary Amore joined State Archivist Ashley Selima for a classroom visit in Little Compton to share about the importance of history and preserving historical records for future researchers, historians, and other social science professionals.

Pop-Up Exhibits

Traveling exhibits continued to stop in many communities throughout the state in 2025, including the RI's Revolutionary Communities and Wild Weather tabletop exhibits and other special, limited programs.

The pop-up exhibit program made 27 stops in 2025 and over 600 people saw records from the State Archives everywhere from Newport, the Big E, Stephen Hopkins House, Burrillville, Cranston, and beyond as it made its way throughout our cities and towns commemorating our history.



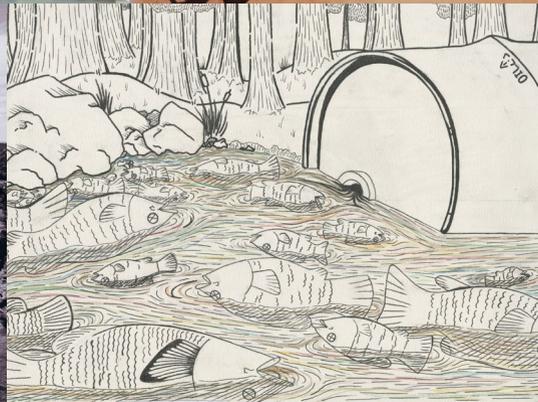


CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY

Exhibits

History's Stories, Today's Storytellers

This exhibit explored stories from Rhode Island history through the lens of high school student artists and their interpretations. Student artists chose to tell these Rhode Island stories by selecting a record from the State Archives and creating new pieces, including paintings, mixed media, and other artistic forms.





CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY

Exhibits

A Good for the Public

The exhibit explored the physical spaces State institutions occupied and offered insight into the experiences of the Rhode Islanders who relied on these services. From the "Dark Days of Social Welfare," to the advent of improved oversight and patient care, the records of the State Archives help tell part of this complex story.



A Good for the Public

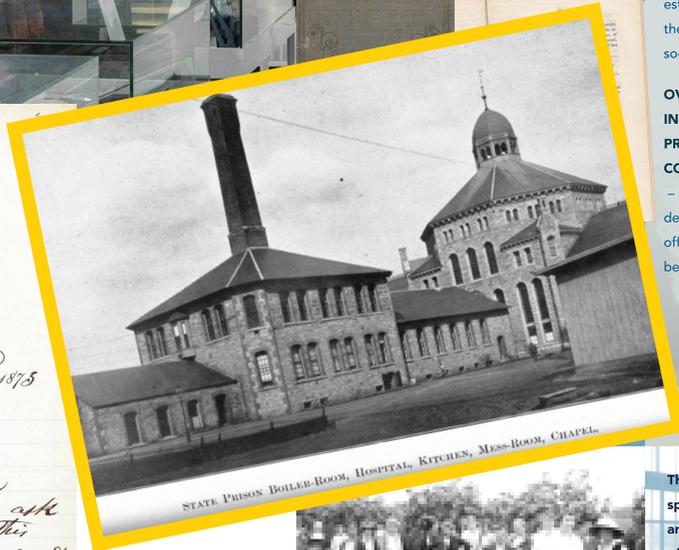
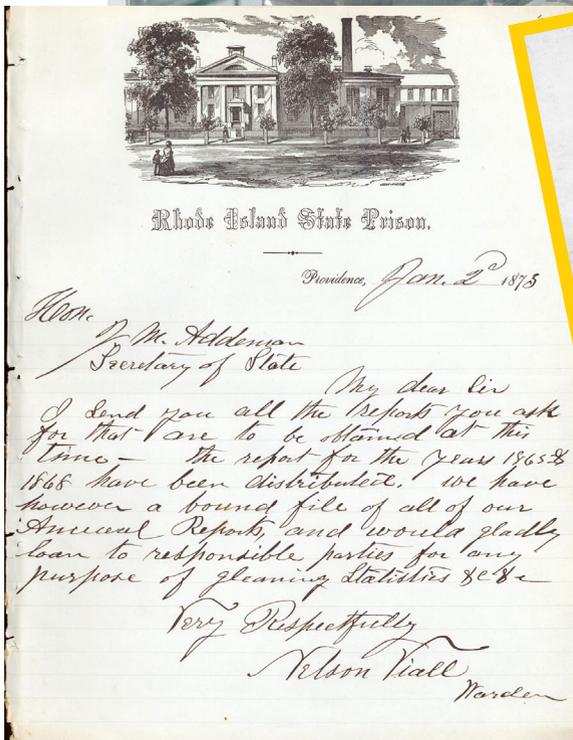
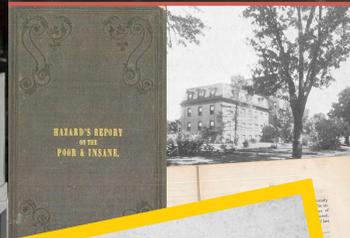
PUBLIC SOCIAL WELFARE IN RHODE ISLAND

dates as far back as 1647, when the colony's legislature passed a law requiring each town "...to provide carefully for reliefe of the poore" and "...to appoint an overseer for the same purpose." Each of the colony's towns and cities was responsible for dealing with local crime, poverty, and matters of social welfare, including establishing jails, asylums, and poorhouses as it saw fit.

This endured into the twentieth century, but by the 1860s, the provision and implementation of social welfare programs had begun to shift to newly established state government institutions. The Board of State Charities and Corrections was established in 1869, and its creation marked the start of the State's expanding role in the social welfare programs.

OVER THE NEXT DECADES, THE STATE INSTITUTIONS' RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROFESSIONAL AND SUPPORT STAFF CONTINUED TO GROW

— adding superintendents, physicians, dentists, nurses, educators, and probation officers as the need for these services became more evident.



This exhibit explores the physical spaces these institutions occupied and offers insight into the experience of the Rhode Islanders who relied on these services. From the "Dark Days of Social Welfare," to the advent of improved oversight and patient care, the records of the State Archives help tell part of this complex story.



The Rhode Island State Archives is responsible for preserving and maintaining access to the permanent, historical records of State government. Some records, finding aids, or descriptions may contain content that is harmful, offensive, or difficult to view. In addition, some of the materials presented in our collections may reflect outdated, biased, offensive, and possibly violent views and opinions that do not constitute the current opinions and views of the Department of State.

 **Gregg M. Amore**
Secretary of State



VIRTUAL EVENTS

Online Education Series

The State Archives and Public Records Administration also offers educational sessions related to the care and keeping of public records, including presentations to the public about the historic collection, in-person history talks and online offerings related to family history, as well as training opportunities for government agencies.

Rhode Island State Archives & Public Records Administration

Records Officer Annual Training

Review of Records Management Principles and Duties

Gregg M. Amore
Secretary of State

Rhode Island Department of State | Public Records Administration

Agency Records Webinars

In 2025, the Records Team hosted six live drop-in sessions for State agency records managers to answer questions on general records management, records retention, best practice for data keeping, and other topics aimed to support preservation and care of public records.

The PRA additionally launched its first annual Records Summit in December 2025. This session is a comprehensive records training for Records Officers and all records custodians throughout the state to offer up-to-date standards and advice for the care of public records.

Rhode Island State Archives & Public Records Administration

Discovering History At the Rhode Island State Archives

Ashley Selima
Director of State Archives & Public Records Administration

Gregg M. Amore
Secretary of State

Rhode Island Department of State | State Archives

Genealogy Webinars

In March & October, virtual programs on family history research tips and tricks using resources from the State Archives were offered to the public via Zoom.

Participants learned about the almost 1 million scans of birth, marriage, and death records available online 24/7, as well as more about supporting records including military muster rolls, city directories, and Census records.



SHARING OUR HISTORY

Did You Know?



"the Seale of the Province shall be an Anchor"; sketch of a shield bearing an anchor appearing at end of entry presumably drawn by William Dyer, Secretary.

Did you know, the first reference to the State seal was in 1647?

Don't get too scared – the State Archives preserves this horror icon's death record!

Queen Elizabeth II visited Rhode Island for what special occasion?



The Bicentennial in 1976 (RI76) commemorated the 200th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT
 CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

Place of Death: Providence, R. I.
 Date of Death: Aug. 6, 1923
 Name of Deceased: Howard Phillips Lovecraft
 Address: 66 College Street, Providence, R. I.

MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

1. COLOR OR RACE: White
 2. MARRIAGE: Single
 3. DATE OF BIRTH: Aug. 20, 1890
 4. PLACE OF BIRTH: Providence, Rhode Island
 5. OCCUPATION: Author
 6. CAUSE OF DEATH: *basinoma of small intestine*
 7. OTHER CONTRIBUTORY CAUSES: *schistosomiasis, nephritis*

11. Total Time (years, months, days, hours, minutes): 32 yrs, 9 mos, 17 da, 1 hr, 10 min



Did you know the original name of Rhode Island's state airport was Hillsgrove?

