

# STATE ARCHIVES ANNUAL REPORT

# 2022



Community members view the *Undefeated* Exhibition during the Opening Reception at the State Archives on July 26, 2022



**Nellie M. Gorbea**  
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 Nellie M. Gorbea. The State Archives was first authorized by Rhode Island General Laws Chapter 42-8.1 in 1989, under the purview of the Secretary of State. It was established that, "the division shall be the official custodian and trustee for the state of all public records of permanent historical, legal or other value, regardless of physical form or characteristics, which are transferred to it from any public office of the state or any political subdivision thereof."

## WHAT WE DO

As the repository for official permanent records of Rhode Island state government, the State Archives strives to protect, maintain, and preserve Rhode Island's powerful history.

### **The State Archives has three primary objectives:**

1. To advance the Rhode Island Department of State's mission to engage and empower all Rhode Islanders by making government more accessible and transparent and encouraging civic pride;
2. To assist Rhode Island residents in learning about their history and increase awareness of Rhode Island's history; and
3. To ensure transparency and accessibility by conserving and preserving records and making them available to the public through exhibitions, public programs, and digital initiatives.

In addition to preserving permanent records of state government, the State Archives also works closely with cities and towns to manage the State Archives Local Government Records Program. This work ensures that records across Rhode Island are maintained and preserved according to the law.

### **The Local Government Records Program helps cities and towns through a variety of programs including:**

- Workshops & Public Presentations: State Archives staff provide updated information on standards, best practices, and State Archives services for records management and preservation; and
- Clean-up Days: State Archives staff provide full-day guidance and on-site approval for destruction of records which have met their legal retention requirement.



## THE STATE ARCHIVES TEAM

**Ashley Selima**  
State Archivist &  
Public Records  
Administrator

**Zachary Garceau**  
Administrative  
Records &  
Technical Services  
Specialist

**Tracey Croce**  
Local Government  
Records  
Coordinator

**Rachel Strashnick**  
Records Analyst/  
Data Manager II

**Richard Hite**  
State Records  
Coordinator

**Mark Kleniewski**  
Administrative  
Assistant

**Ken Carlson**  
Reference Analyst

**Kaitlynne  
Ward Morris**  
Director of State  
Archives, Library  
& Public Information

**Kate Telford**  
Senior Digital  
Archivist

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 From Secretary Gorbea
- 4 Looking Back:  
2022 In Review
- 6 Preserving Rhode Island's  
History
- 8 Connecting with the  
Community: Public  
Programs in 2022
- 12 Sharing our History

# FROM SECRETARY GORBEA



Dear Rhode Islander:

It has been my honor for the last eight years to serve as your Secretary of State. During this time, we have worked hard to transform the State Archives & Public Records Administration. What was once an under-utilized collection of historically significant records is now a community space that offers innovative programming.

*"I'm proud that the State Archives provides daily access to hundreds of thousands of historic and public records to researchers across the United States and abroad. These records are rich with stories that show how ordinary Rhode Islanders lived, were civically engaged, and shaped the Ocean State that we know today."*

Our government documents are history in the making and preserving them and ensuring access to hold government accountable is an important responsibility. The records generated today are the future of the State Archives. One day they will inform future key decisions made by public officials and help tell the rich and diverse history of Rhode Island for generations to come.

In this 2022 Annual Report, I am proud to showcase our continued efforts to protect public records, promote Rhode Island history, and provide opportunities for all Rhode Islanders to engage with their past.

As the Department of State welcomes a new administration, I encourage you to continue accessing **YOUR history at the State Archives.**

Sincerely,

Nellie M. Gorbea  
Secretary of State

## OUR COLLECTION



More than  
**10 MILLION**  
records



Accumulated over  
**380 YEARS**



Over  
**350,000**  
public digital objects



Over  
**40,000**  
family history  
record downloads





# LOOKING BACK: 2022 IN REVIEW

## A YEAR IN PUBLIC PROGRAMS



**368**

IN-PERSON  
ATTENDEES



**297**

VIRTUAL  
PROGRAM  
VIEWERS



**869**

IN-STATE  
RESEARCHERS



**2,538**

TOTAL  
RESEARCHERS

**33%**

increase in out-of-  
state researchers

## A YEAR IN RECORDS



**2,250**

AGENCY  
MANAGEMENT  
REQUESTS



**5,042**

HISTORICAL  
RECORDS  
REQUESTED



**4,732**

HISTORICAL  
RECORDS  
RETRIEVED



**4,669**

TOTAL  
RECORDS  
PROVIDED

**640.53%**

increase from  
2017!

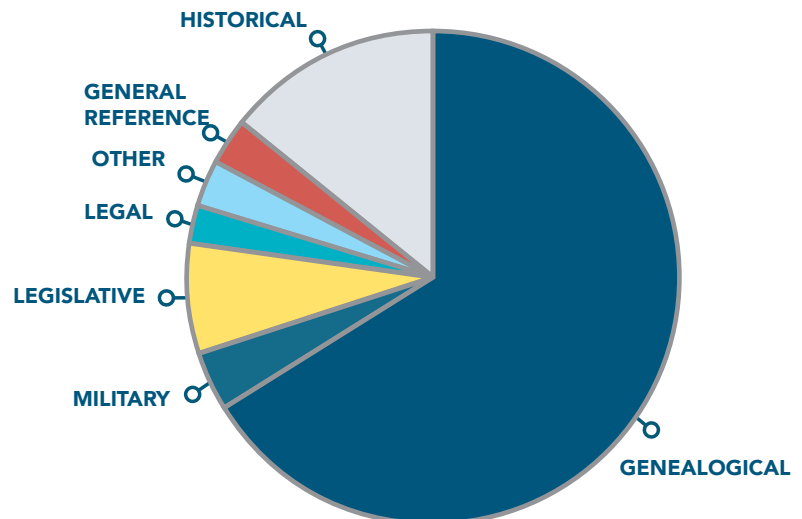
## A YEAR IN REFERENCE

Provided over 4,700 records  
to historical researchers.

Received 2,537 unique  
requests in 2022.

**27%**

increase from  
2021!







# LOOKING BACK: 2022 IN REVIEW

## OUR COLLECTIONS

### PHYSICAL



**+ 51** CUBIC FEET  
OF RECORDS  
WERE ADDED TO OUR COLLECTION

In 2022, the State Archives received several significant accessions, including:

- Records of the Rhode Island State House Restoration Society (2022-17)
- Department of Health Vital Records (2022-01, 1921 Births and Marriages, 1971 Deaths)
- 2020 Public Laws and Acts and Resolves (2022-02) from the General Assembly
- Edward D. Greer Collection postcards (2022-05)
- Rhode Island Remembers Covid-19 Memorial Project flags (2022-19)
- Final Report 1696 Historical Commission, October 15, 2015 (2022-07)

### ACCESS AND USAGE

**1,814**  
NEW ENTRIES

New entries added to the Archives Catalog.

**1,015,762**  
LINKED RECORDS

Linked records from the Archives Catalog to the Digital Archive.

**125,612**  
NEW DIGITAL FILES

Searchable and downloadable files available to the public 24/7 increased to over 300,000 in 2022.

OVER  
**206,772**  
DOWNLOADS

Files downloaded from the Digital Archives.

**297**  
TOTAL VIEWS

Total views of our 2022 workshops and video tutorials.

### DIGITAL



**4.936511** TERA  
BYTES  
OF ITEMS PRESERVED IN DIGITAL STORAGE

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

**97,692 new records** scanned for long-term preservation; and

**121,308 new items** uploaded to the Digital Archives.

### New to the Digital Collections in 2022

- › State House Commission incoming correspondence (1894-1932)
- › Bicentennial Scrapbooks (1977)
- › Tall Ships photographs (1977)
- › Colony of Rhode Island census (1774)
- › Council of War records - Volume 1-4 (January 12, 1776-November 24, 1781)
- › Suspected Persons records (1775-1783)
- › Secretary of State Revolutionary War Pension correspondence (1851-1860)
- › RI Reds photographs and ephemera



# PRESERVING RHODE ISLAND'S HISTORY

## Planning for Preservation!

The State Archives partnered with the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC), the leading institution in the conservation and rescue of historical records in New England, to restore the Act of Renunciation and a selection of the Rhode Island State House Plans to ensure their safety for future preservation and public viewings. NEDCC worked to address fragility of these documents to stabilize them for future research and use.

Under the watchful eye of the Rhode Island State Police, the documents returned to the State Archives on August 29, 2022, in new, specially-designed archival safe housings. The new housings are acid-free, UV-filtered on the inside, and provide protection from light, dust, pests, and environmental risks. With these new housings, all the documents are more stable and can be safely handled for temporary display without posing undue risk.



***State Archives team members carefully unpack the newly conserved records and prepare them for Vault storage upon their return from NEDCC in August 2022.***







# PRESERVING RHODE ISLAND'S HISTORY

*We thank the professionals at NEDCC for their dedication and hard work in guaranteeing the documents are presentable and safe for many years to come.*

*We also thank the Rhode Island State Police for their assistance in transporting and protecting these priceless Rhode Island treasures.*

SCALE: ONE EIGHTH INCH  
EQUALS ONE FOOT

RHODE ISLAND STATE HOUSE  
WEST ELEVATION

EAST & WEST ELEVATIONS ARE ALIKE  
SEE PLANS

MEKIM, MEAD & WHITE ARCHT'S  
160 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK

DESIGNED AND CONSTRUCTED AS PART OF  
CONTRACT DATED AUGUST 2ND 1894

*Norcross Prother*





# CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY: PUBLIC PROGRAMS IN 2022

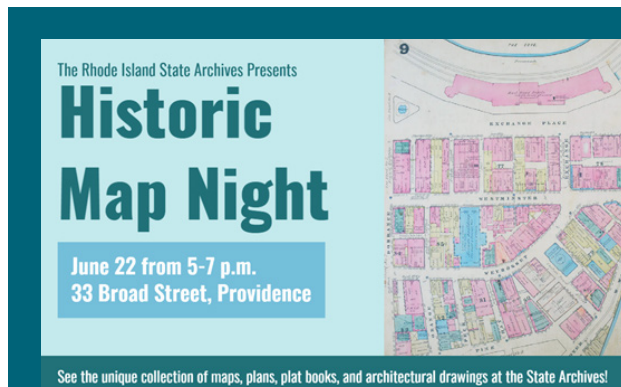
## Connecting with Community

The State Archives continued to develop new and innovative ways to connect with Rhode Islanders in-person and online. The State Archives hosted several public programs and events at its downtown location to encourage Rhode Islanders to interact with the collections and explore their history.

### IN-PERSON EVENTS

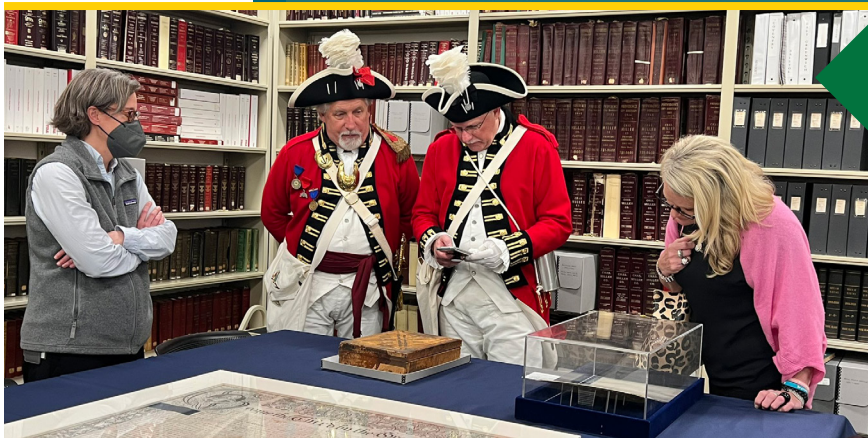
#### MAP NIGHT

*A one-night-only pop up display 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.*



#### PVDFEST

*The Department of State joined the PVDFest excitement downtown to share about State Archives programming, elections updates and making a voting plan, and how the Department can help everyday Rhode Islanders.*



#### GASPEE OPENING RECEPTION

*The State Archives celebrated the opening of the new exhibition, Gaspee: The Spark that Ignited the American Revolution. The exhibit displayed letters, testimonies, maps, and other primary source documents to tell the complex story surrounding the burning of the Gaspee in Narragansett Bay in 1772.*



## GILBERT STUART MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT VISIT

*More than 80 students joined the State Archives for an educational tour to learn about what archives do, what tools are important to keeping documents safe, and a sneak peak into the Vault to see some of our most well-known treasures.*



## FRIDAY AT THE ARCHIVES

*Rhode Island's copies of the Declaration of Independence and other documents from the Revolutionary War were on display! This special event also shared other rarely seen items and documents in the State Archives collection.*



## ROCKY HILL STUDENT VISIT

*Fourth grade students from Rocky Hill Elementary School visited the State Archives to learn about archives, preserving primary sources, and to see this dynamic history up close.*





# CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY: PUBLIC PROGRAMS IN 2022



## TOUR WITH PROGRESO LATINO

For the second year in a row, the State Archives hosted a small group tour of Rhode Islanders from the Progreso Latino group. This tour provided a special viewing of some of the state's most recognizable documents and a walkthrough of the *Undeclared* exhibit. With the help of additional staff from the Department of State, Malen Cepparo, this tour was translated in real-time for Spanish speaking group members.



## NAGARA PRESENTATION – RELAUNCHED

State Archivist Ashley Selima, Director of State Archives, Library, & Public Information Kaitlynne Morris, and Visual Communications Manager Sue Bohorquez presented at the NAGARA Annual Conference focusing on relaunching the Records Management website and the importance of accessible communication tools for both agencies and members of the public.

### Managing Government Records

The Public Records Administration oversees records management functions within state and local government. The program provides records management advice, assistance, and consultation to all public bodies, including state and municipal agencies, on the proper care of records during their life cycle, including the preservation of historical records in their care.

#### Where is that Record?

Looking to access public records? This chart shows what agency holds your record, so you can get it faster.



#### For State Agencies →

Resources for government agencies about managing records and working with the State Archives for government records.



#### For Municipalities →

Resources for local government agencies and divisions to preserve and protect government records.



#### Records Retention Process →

Access retention schedules and learn how to legally dispose of public records at state and local agencies.

#### Frequently Asked Questions →

Commonly asked questions about public records, including records management.

#### Educational Resources →

Access step-by-step guides and webinars to learn more about records management.

#### Schedule a Workshop for your Team →

Request an in-person or virtual workshop for your team.

#### Using the State Records Center →

Learn more about how State Agencies can use the State Records Center.







# CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY: PUBLIC PROGRAMS IN 2022

## VIRTUAL EVENTS



### INSIDE THE STATE ARCHIVES

How can stories from the past inspire today's activist storytelling? At What Cheer Writers Club's *Inside the Archives: The Art of Then*, attendees learned how to access sources of inspiration in Rhode Island's collections. Archivists from Rhode Island Black Heritage Society, Rhode Island Historical Society, Rhode Island State Archives, Tomaquag Museum, and Wanderground Lesbian Archives/Library showcased artifacts from our state's activist movements and offered insight into their collections, including how local writers can access materials to support, inspire, and substantiate their creative projects.

[Link to full video](#)



### UNDEFEATED EXHIBIT LAUNCH MEETING

In February 2022 the State Archives met with members of the South Providence community to explore stories and kick off the oral history project that led to the *Undeclared* Exhibition that went on display in July 2022.

[Link to story](#)



## DISCOVER YOUR STORY AT THE RI STATE ARCHIVES

This collaborative presentation with The Genealogy Center provided the opportunity to share with a much wider audience how to complete genealogical research in RI and from home. More than 120 people attended the live webinar!

[Link to video](#)

### FACT OR FICTION?

- **FICTION** –The belief that names were changed at random at Ellis Island is False.
- **Example:**
  - Vito Corleone? →
  - Vito Andolini?





# CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY: PUBLIC PROGRAMS IN 2022



## Gaspee: The spark that ignited the American Revolution

*The burning of the Gaspee was the first major act of open rebellion against the British in the American Colonies, and set the stage for what was to follow. This exhibition provided visitors the opportunity to explore records that document the events that led to and immediately followed the burning of the Gaspee, including letters between the colonial government and representatives of the crown debating who had control of Narragansett Bay; shipping logs and maps that provide insight into the local maritime economy; and conflicting first-person accounts of events.*



## UNDEFEATED RECEPTION

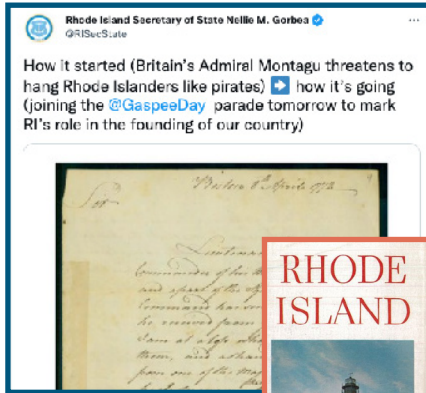
*The story of Central High School's undefeated 1969-1971 basketball seasons mirrors the story of South Providence as a neighborhood—a vibrant community that has continued to thrive despite any odds. Co-curated by alumni, family, and friends of legendary Central athletes, community activists, and the RI State Archives, "Undeclared" included maps, memorabilia, photographs, and documents that highlight the excitement, hope, hard work, and love for an ever evolving neighborhood.*



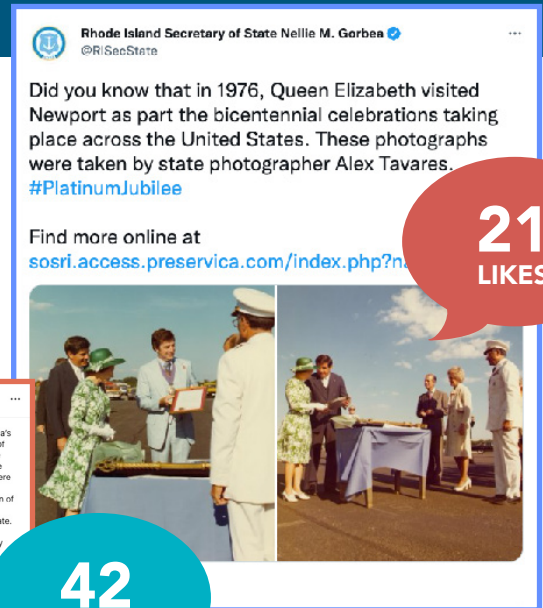


# SHARING OUR HISTORY

## TOP SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS FOR THE YEAR



19  
LIKES



21  
LIKES



42  
LIKES

## AMERICA AT 250

In 2021, a bill drafted by Secretary of State Nellie M. Gorbea's office was signed into law, creating the Rhode Island Semiquincentennial (RI 250th) Commission.

The 30-member commission works to commemorate Rhode Island's unique role in the founding of our country and stimulate the local economy through civic engagement and tourism opportunities. To learn more about their events and initiatives visit their new website: <http://rhodeisland250.org>

In 2022, the RI 250th Commission began meeting and outlining goals, initiatives, and events to begin commemorations for the country's Semiquincentennial.

In partnership with the State Archives, students and teachers throughout the state connected with the State

Archives collection and learned about the complex story of the burning of the Gaspee.

With support from the 250th Commission, the RI Department of State, and the Phyllis Kimball Johnstone & H. Earl Kimball Foundation, a professional development opportunity was held onboard the period ship the Oliver Hazard Perry (OHP).

Teachers got hands-on experience with presentations provided by the OHP Crew and Lane Talbot Sparkman (RI Department of State).

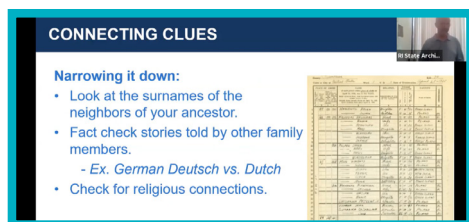






# VIRTUAL EVENTS

## Records management webinar series:



### RECOGNIZABLE RECORDS – MARCH 2022

*This workshop walked through the essentials of records management, including a deeper dive into file naming, structure, and organization. File naming is an essential tool for proper records management that will keep public records identifiable and accessible!*

[Link to video](#)



### DIGITAL RECORDS LIFECYCLE – JUNE 2022

*This presentation for state agencies focused on the unique challenges and benefits of both good and poor management of digital records, and how to combat obsolescence in digital media.*

[Link to video](#)



### DEMYSTIFYING RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULES – SEPTEMBER 2022

*This workshop focused on the process of creation and use of records retention schedules and provided tools to be more efficient, be compliant with the law, and save money by making the most of proper records management!*

[Link to video](#)



### AVOIDING DISASTER: EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS OF RECORDS - DECEMBER 2022

*This session provided the best ways to prepare in advance for potential disasters, storage and mitigation tips, and how to maintain intellectual control to limit records loss in emergencies.*

[Link to video](#)

### EQUITY INSTITUTE TEACHER PROGRAM

*The State Archives team, in partnership with the Department of State's Education and Public Programs, met with the Equity Institute to share about using primary resources in the classroom and led a mock-discussion to model one of the many ways these resources can be used.*

2017

## DIGITAL ARCHIVE

Launched a new digital archive, using Preservica. The digital archive initially provided approximately 1,000 digital objects to the public.

2018

## DIGITAL CATALOG

Launched a new more user friendly and intuitive catalog, ArchivesSpace, where researchers could look up records from home.

2018

## DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Prioritized the conservation of pivotal documents for Rhode Island history, starting with the 1777 Declaration of Independence, signed by John Hancock, and sent to the General Assembly.

2019

## CONSERVATION INITIATIVES

Completed a Collection-Wide Assessment report with NEDCC to identify conservation priorities, environmental recommendations, and plan for future preservation projects.

## WE MOVED!

Relocated the State Archives from 337 Westminster St. to 33 Broad St, Providence, with a dedicated, climate controlled vault to better protect Rhode Island's historical government records.

2020

2021

## ONLINE VITAL RECORDS

Launched the online Vital Records collection with over 60,000 images of birth, marriage, and death records from 1853-1921 (As of 2022, death records up to 1939 are now available).

## ACT OF RENUNCIATION

Prioritized the conservation of the next pivotal record of Rhode Island history, the May 4, 1776 Act of Renunciation, Rhode Island's own "Declaration of Independence," drafted two months before the Declaration.

2022

## ARCHIVING SOCIAL MEDIA

This year the State Archives took another step forward in digital preservation by securing ArchiveSocial to capture and preserve public records shared on social media, one of the most common forms of communication with the public from government officials.

2022



join with the Commissioners or Delegates from the other  
Colonies in consulting upon proper measures to obtain a  
repeal of the several acts of Parliament for levying taxes  
his Majesty's subjects in America without their consent  
particularly an act lately passed for blocking up the port  
Boston and upon proper measures to establish the rights  
and liberties of the Colonies upon a just and solid foundation  
agreeable to the instructions given you by the general As-  
sembly.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the said  
Colony this tenth day of August in the year  
our Lord 1774 and the 14<sup>th</sup> of the reign of his  
most sacred Majesty George the third by the  
of God King of Great-Britain &c forth.

Signed J. Wanton

(L.S.)  
By his honour Command  
Henry Ward Secy.

for Connecticut

In the House of Representatives of the Colony  
Connecticut June 3<sup>d</sup> 1774.  
Whereas



Nellie M. Gorbea  
Secretary of State

This publication  
was produced by the Rhode  
Island Department of State