

# STATE ARCHIVES ANNUAL REPORT

# 2024



Student Civic Liaisons from the Department of State's Rhode Island Civic Leadership Program complete an escape room box activity at the State Archives in February.



**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

*Kate Telford*  
Senior Digital Archivist

*Tracey Croce*  
Local Government Records Coordinator

*Rachel Strashnick*  
Administrative Records & Technical Services Specialist

*Richard Hite*  
State Records Coordinator

*Mark Kleniewski*  
Administrative Assistant

*Ken Carlson*  
Reference Archivist

*Emma Holmes*  
Records Analyst/  
Data Manager

## OUR COLLECTION



More than  
**10 MILLION**  
records



Over  
**1 MILLION**  
public digital objects



Accumulated over  
**380 YEARS**



Over  
**35,000**  
record downloads



# FROM SECRETARY GREGG M. AMORE



Dear Rhode Islander:

In my second year as Secretary of State, I've had many opportunities to talk about Rhode Island's history – both to local groups and national audiences. Whether I'm speaking to lifelong Rhode Islanders or people who have never visited New England, they are always impressed when I detail all of the historic treasures included in our State Archives.

Rhode Islanders' enthusiasm for their history was evident this past Independence Day, when over 150 people came to the State Archives to view Rhode Island's three copies of the Declaration of Independence. I remain optimistic that one day we will be able to display Rhode Island's magnificent founding documents and other archival highlights in a permanent archives and history center, accessible to Rhode Islanders all year long.

Under the leadership of State Archivist Ashley Selima, the State Archives has continued to grow both its collection and public offerings through workshops, lectures, and exhibits. I am impressed by the hard work of the State Archives team each and every day, and I encourage you to visit and see how they might be able to assist you in your research endeavors.

I hope you enjoy reading about the accomplishments of the State Archives Division this year. I look forward to continuing to safeguard our state's historic documents and sharing their stories with Rhode Islanders.

Sincerely,  
Gregg M. Amore  
Secretary of State

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## CONTACT US

-  401-222-2353
-  [StateArchives@sos.ri.gov](mailto:StateArchives@sos.ri.gov)
-  [sos.ri.gov](http://sos.ri.gov)
-  @RISecState
-  Like us on Facebook  
RISecState
-  Follow us on Instagram  
RISecState

## VISIT US

### ADDRESS

33 Broad St. Providence

### HOURS

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

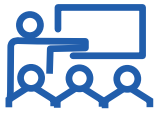
### PARKING

Limited on-site and metered street parking available.



# LOOKING BACK: 2024 IN REVIEW

## A YEAR IN PUBLIC PROGRAMS



653

IN-PERSON  
ATTENDEES

13%  
increase from  
2023!



16

OFF-SITE  
EVENTS



1,081

IN-STATE  
RESEARCHERS



2,858

TOTAL  
RESEARCHERS

13%  
increase from  
2023!

## A YEAR IN RECORDS

36.5%  
increase from  
2023!



118

RECORDS  
DISPLAYED IN  
EXHIBITS



7,358

HISTORICAL  
RECORDS  
REQUESTED



6,193

HISTORICAL  
RECORDS  
RETRIEVED



6,194

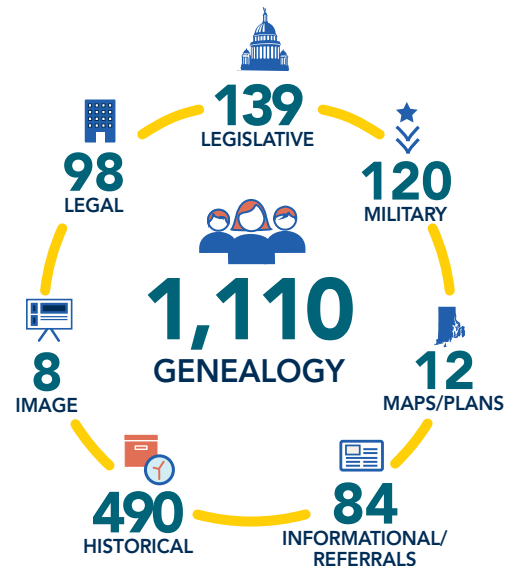
TOTAL  
RECORDS  
PROVIDED

## A YEAR IN REFERENCE

Provided over 6,000 records  
to historical researchers.

Received over 2,500 unique  
requests in 2024.

25%  
increase from  
2023!





# LOOKING BACK: 2024 IN REVIEW

## A YEAR IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT



**803**

RECORDS  
MANAGEMENT  
REQUESTS



**785**

REQUESTS FOR  
DESTRUCTION  
FORMS (CRDS)

**3.8%**  
increase in  
requests!



**5**

ON-SITE  
ASSISTANCE  
DAYS



**18**

WORKSHOP  
ATTENDEES

## A YEAR IN STATE RECORDS



**59,241**

RECORDS  
CENTER  
ACTIVITIES



**1,826**

BOX DATA  
UPDATES

**1,034%**  
increase in data  
updates!



**7,234**

STATE AGENCY  
RECORDS SENT TO  
OFF-SITE STORAGE



**237**

WORKSHOP  
ATTENDEES

## A YEAR IN ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS



**122**

REGULATIONS  
FILED



**418**

REGULATION  
DRAFTS  
REVIEWED

**14.8%**  
increase in drafts  
from 2023!



**10,588**

REGULATION  
PAGES  
REVIEWED



**712**

REQUESTS FOR  
ASSISTANCE



# LOOKING BACK: 2024 IN REVIEW

## OUR COLLECTIONS

### PHYSICAL STORAGE



**+ 48 CUBIC FEET OF RECORDS**

WERE ADDED TO OUR COLLECTION



In 2024, the State Archives received several significant accessions, including:

- Department of State, State Library photographs
- Department of Environmental Management Legal Division landmark legal case files, 2007/2009
- Department of Environmental Management, Division of Parks and Recreation records
- Digital Student Art, History's Stories, Today's Storytellers exhibit

## COLLECTION HIGHLIGHTS

### STATE LIBRARY PHOTOGRAPHS



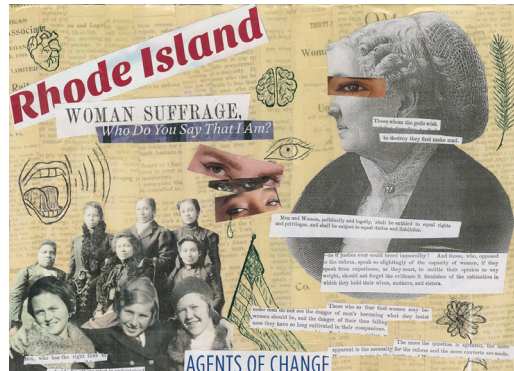
*Department of State, State Library photographs*

### PARKS AND RECREATION RECORDS



*Block Island, April 1987*

### DIGITAL STUDENT ART



*Voting, Margot Cooper, South Kingstown High School*



# LOOKING BACK: 2024 IN REVIEW

## OUR COLLECTIONS

### DIGITAL STORAGE

 **7.853 TERA BYTES**  
OF ITEMS PRESERVED

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

- 433,571 new records** scanned for long-term preservation; and
- 1,008,901 new items** uploaded to the Digital Archives.

### ACCESS AND USAGE

**478**  
NEW ENTRIES  
New entries added to the Archives Catalog.

**11,255**  
LINKED RECORDS  
Linked records from the Archives Catalog to the Digital Archives.

**433,571**  
NEW DIGITAL FILES  
Searchable and downloadable files available to the public 24/7.

OVER  
**35,882**  
DOWNLOADS  
Files downloaded from the Digital Archives.

**41**  
TOTAL VIEWS  
Total views of our 2024 workshops and video tutorials.

### DIGITAL ARCHIVES ANALYTICS

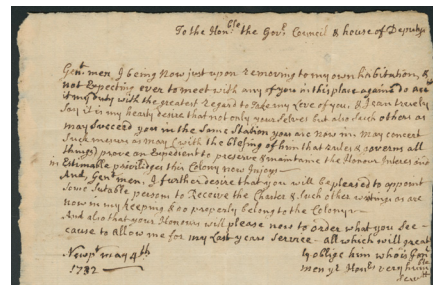
**648,184**  
PAGE VIEWS  
Page views from January - December 2024

**109**  
COUNTRIES  
Visits from 109 countries

**8 min 14 sec**  
PAGE ENGAGEMENT  
Average engagement time per page visit

### NEW TO THE DIGITAL COLLECTIONS IN 2024

- › 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
- › Boundary Line Between Gloucester and Scituate and Foster, John B. Smith, Charles W. Farnum, and Ira Winsor, 1873
- › 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



**Governor's Messages to the General Assembly, 1732-2006**



# ACCESSING INFORMATION

## Anatomy of a Reference Request



### REQUEST MADE

Request is received via email, mail, phone, or in-person walk-in. Common requesters include members of the public, State agencies, RI legislators, private law firms, & universities.



### CLARIFY

Archivists work with requesters via phone or email to fill in unclear or missing vital information made in the initial requests. Without this information, a search cannot be properly conducted.



### RESEARCH

Reference team begins conducting research. Requests vary widely, from locating a single death record, to in-depth legal, legislative, or military history requests, that require hours of research and records consultation on behalf of the constituent.

In addition to the holdings of the RI State Archives, the Reference team will supplement research by using online newspaper databases, historical publications, City Directories, and genealogical websites.



### RETRIEVAL

Record is retrieved from the vault and copies are made of document if condition permits. In some cases, the selected record is photographed or digitized for addition to the online catalog if it fits wider research interest.



### RESPONSE

Research request is responded to by email, mail, or in-person. Whenever possible, scans of records are sent via email, but certified copies of records are mailed.



### REFERRAL

If the requested record is not maintained by the State Archives, the requester is referred to the proper repository or State/municipal agency.



### FOLLOW UP

Reference team follows up with any questions requesters may have, receives any subsequent requests, and directs requester to the next step in their research.



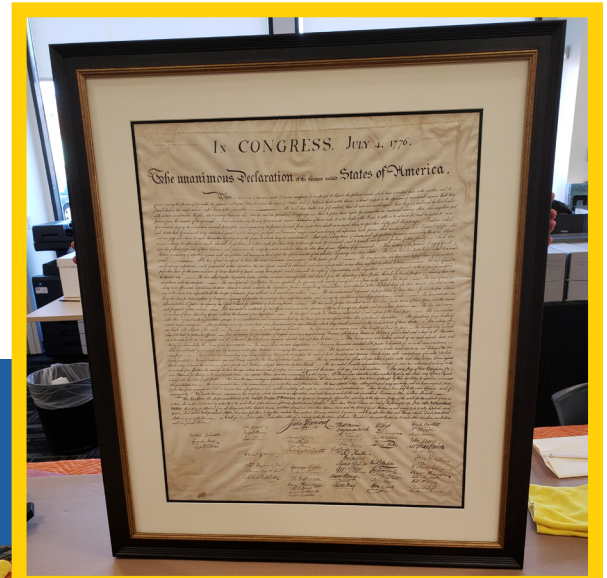


# PRESERVING RHODE ISLAND'S HISTORY

## Protecting Founding Documents

### Declaration of Independence

The State Archives partnered with Providence Picture Frame and Dryden Gallery, a local archival and museum quality specialty framer, to carefully review and encase one of the State Archives' printings of the Declaration of Independence from 1823. The Stone Engraving, one of 200 printed, was made to capture the look and feel of the original Declaration of Independence and is now better protected for temporary display to the public.



There were multiple copies sent to Rhode Island, intended for the Governor and one for the University of the State.



The Stone engraving shows both the text and the signatures in facsimile, very close in appearance to the original.

It is close to the size of the parchment original, which measures about 24 by 30 inches.



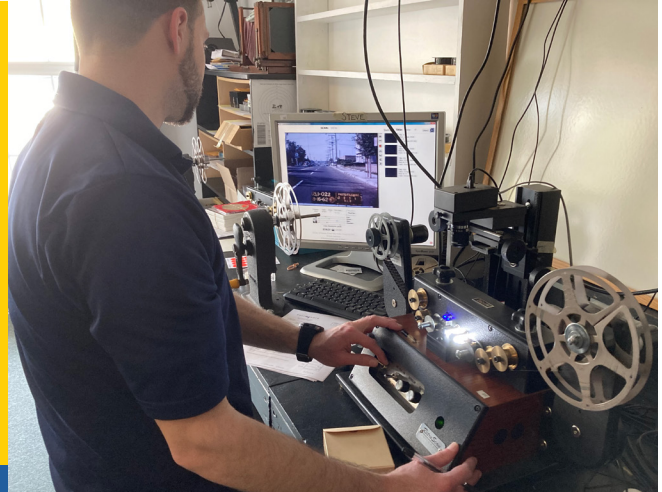


# PRESERVING RHODE ISLAND'S HISTORY

## Historic Highway Films

The State Archives additionally worked with media migration company RetroMedia in Smithfield, RI, to digitize historic highway films from their original 16mm film. Prior to their digitization, the films were not accessible for research due to lack of equipment.

These films are now accessible in the Digital Archives and show an incredible moment in time for mid-twentieth century Rhode Island.





# 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.

*Students from Ponaganset High School, with teacher Nicole Lloyd, attend the January 2024 exhibit opening in celebration of the student artwork and to kick off its time on display at the State Archives.*



### History's Stories, Today's Storytellers Reception

*Students from Ponaganset High School, South Kingstown High School, and Beacon Charter High School for the Arts partnered with the State Archives for its first-ever exhibit focused on unique artwork created by students inspired by the historic documents preserved at the State Archives.*



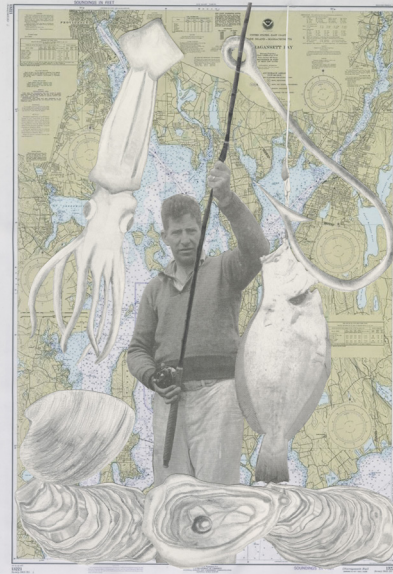
*"Ferris Wheel" by Reese Murdock, South Kingstown High School*



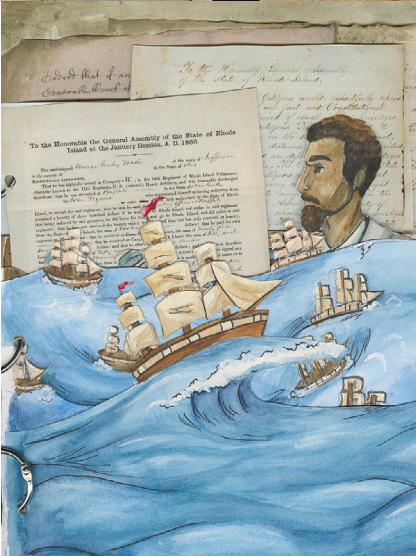
*Student artists chose to tell these Rhode Island stories through paintings, mixed media, pottery, and other artistic forms to help show the story of Rhode Island through a new lens.*



# CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY



**From left to right:**  
"Gaspee" by Carissa Sharp, from Ponaganset High School;  
"Rhode Island Fishing" by Addy Cook, South Kingstown High School



**Top/bottom left:** "Racial Justice" by Sidney Howard, Ponaganset High School  
**Middle:** "The Great City of Providence" by Holdenn Ricci, South Kingstown High School  
**Top/bottom right:** "Hunter in the 60s" by Ava Martin, South Kingstown High School; "Then & Now" by Holden Jennings, Ponaganset High School





# CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY

## MAP NIGHT (MARCH)

This event was 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.

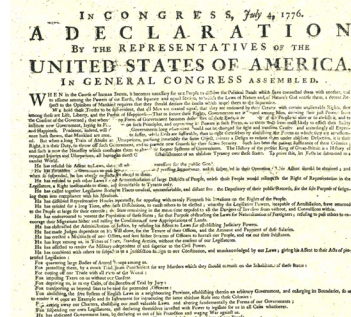


## GALLERY NIGHT (APRIL AND AUGUST)

In 2024, 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.

## MIGHTY VOICES OPENING RECEPTION (JUNE)

This exhibit explores the ways Rhode Islanders have been civically engaged throughout history.



## 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 150 people came out to see these extraordinary pieces of history.

## VAMPIRE'S GRASP TALK W/ MICHAEL BELL (OCT)

In celebration of National Archives Month, retired State Folklorist Michael E. Bell, PhD, joined the Archives to share about the vampirism scare in colonial Rhode Island and its impact over time.





# 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.



### 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.*



### NATIONAL MUSTER (AUGUST)

*In partnership with RI250, the State Archives brought document facsimiles for display at the Fife & Drum National Muster held at Fort Adams in Newport. Thank you for inviting us!*



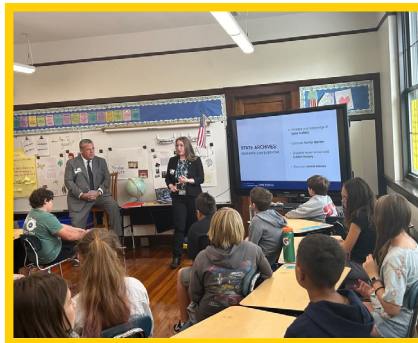
### 120 YEARS OF THE RHODE ISLAND STATE HOUSE RECEPTION (AUGUST)

*A celebration of the lower level gallery exhibit that told the story of the design, construction, and past and present uses of the State House as 2024 marked the 120th anniversary of the completion of construction of the building.*



### GANSETT DAYS (SEPT)

*Partnering with Narragansett Parks and Recreation, the State Archives brought the RI’s Revolutionary Communities pop-up exhibit to the Gansett Days Celebration in September, meeting members of the Narragansett community and sharing about RI history.*



### 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

*2024 was the return of traveling exhibits from the State Archives and our team was delighted to have the opportunity to stop in many communities with the RI’s Revolutionary Communities table top exhibit and other special programs. We can’t wait to be in YOUR community in 2025 and beyond!*



# VIRTUAL EVENTS

## Records Management Education Series



**Digital Records 101:**  
*How to Manage the Digital Divide*

**Kate Telford**  
Senior Digital Architect

**Rachel Strashnick**  
Administrative Records & Technical Services Specialist

**Ashley Selima**  
Director of State Archives & Public Records Administration



**Gregg M. Amore**  
Secretary of State

### DIGITAL RECORDS MANAGEMENT (MARCH)

The Public Records Administration kicked off 2024 by exploring the benefits and complexity of digital and born-digital records, the process to scan paper records and establish them as the Record Copy, and how to evaluate records to establish the best medium for its entire lifecycle.



**Records Management Round Table**

**Rich Hite**  
State Records Coordinator

**Rachel Strashnick**  
Administrative Records & Technical Services Specialist



**Gregg M. Amore**  
Secretary of State

### RECORDS ROUNDTABLE (JUNE AND NOVEMBER)

Twice a year the PRA hosts a virtual round table to explore the commonly asked questions received throughout the year and to offer the opportunity for records managers to bring their questions and improve records management through collaborative discussion.



**KNOWING YOUR RECORDS:**  
*Records Management for APRA Requests*

**Rich Hite**  
State Records Coordinator

**Rachel Strashnick**  
Administrative Records & Technical Services Specialist

**Ashley Selima**  
Director of State Archives & Public Records Administration

**Katherine Sadeck**  
Assistant Attorney General & Chief of Open Government Unit


**Patrick Reynolds**  
Special Assistant Attorney General



**Gregg M. Amore**  
Secretary of State

### KNOWING YOUR RECORDS: RECORDS MANAGEMENT FOR APRA REQUESTS (SEPTEMBER)

The Public Records Administration and the Attorney General's Open Government Unit presented this session about the importance of records management and how records management can impact your ability to effectively respond to APRA requests.




**Making SRC Records Management Manageable:**  
*How to Increase Best Practice & Avoid Unnecessary Extra Work*

**Ashley Selima**  
Director of State Archives & Public Records Administration

**Rich Hite**  
State Records Coordinator

**Rachel Strashnick**  
Administrative Records & Technical Services Specialist



**Gregg M. Amore**  
Secretary of State

### MAKING RECORDS MANAGEMENT MANAGEABLE (DECEMBER)

This webinar and Q&A session focused on best practices for using the State Records Center (offsite storage), advice on avoiding service issues, and answering top records management questions.



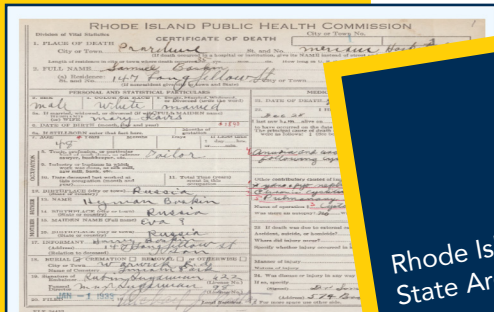
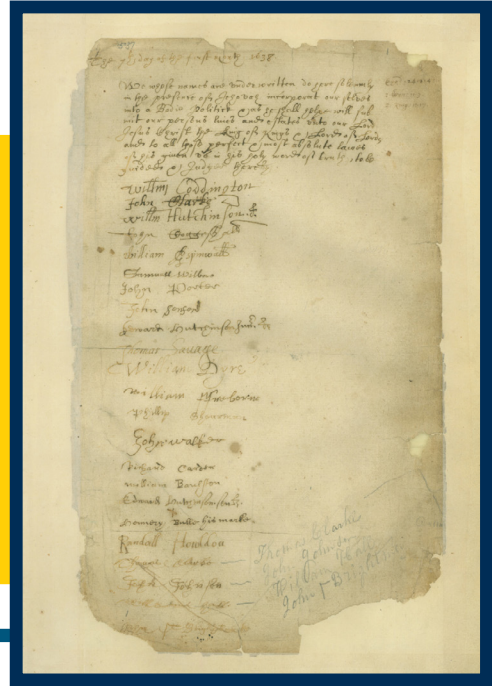
# SHARING OUR HISTORY

## Did You Know?

The State Archives' oldest record is from 1638:

### Portsmouth Compact

The *Portsmouth Compact*, part of the Records of the Island of Rhode Island, was a formal agreement of those undersigned to establish together the Town of Portsmouth.



Birth, Marriage, and  
Death Records →  
Discover your family story!

Rhode Island  
State Archives  
Exploring Family  
History Records

The most downloaded record of 2024 was a Guide to Vital Records:

## Exploring Family History Records.

In 2024, the State Archives was given the Library of the Year award from the University of Rhode Island, Graduate School of Library and Information Studies.





# MIGHTY VOICES

## Petitioning for Change throughout Rhode Island History

Writing or signing a petition has long been one of the most direct ways citizens make their voices heard – a tradition throughout history that endures today. In Rhode Island, petitioning the legislature has been a right of the people for hundreds of years and dates back to our earliest colonial days, with topics ranging from fair working conditions, to bounty payments, and even, quite dramatically, a divorce for former Governor Benedict Arnold.

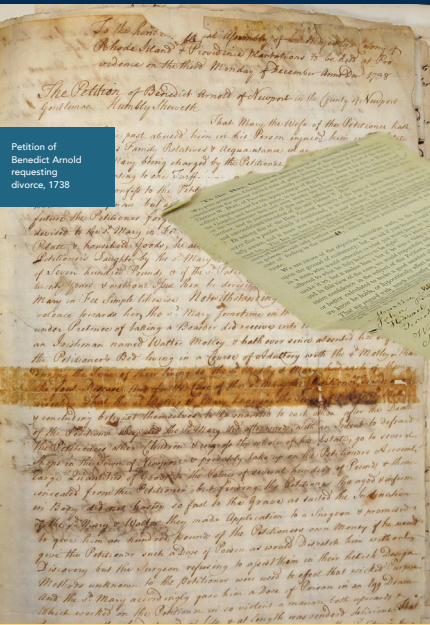
These hand-written pleas for change provide a historic view into the many important social, racial, and political issues voiced by the people of Rhode Island through the centuries.

One of three exhibits on display from the State Archives in 2024, Mighty Voices was a study and celebration of the way people interacted with their government throughout history and their efforts to advocate for a better Rhode Island.

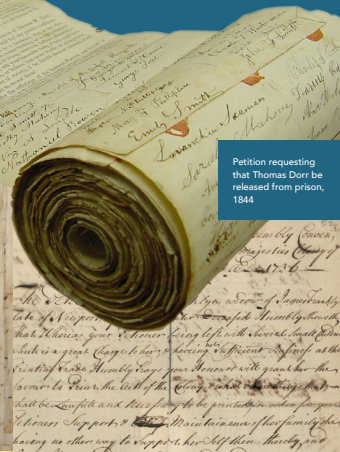


## CIVIC ACTION: RACIAL EQUITY

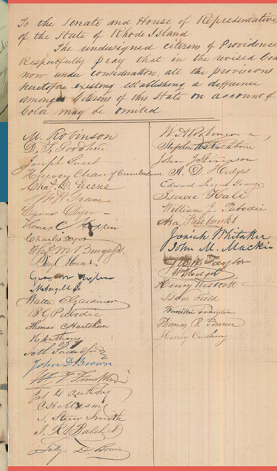
During the 1800s, many prominent Rhode Islanders petitioned the General Assembly to address instances of racial injustice. These petitions addressed topics like desegregation in schools, abolishing slavery, and fair payment for serving during the Civil War. Rhode Island is a stronger state because of the courageous civic action of these individuals.



Petition of Benedict Arnold requesting divorce, 1738



Petition requesting that Thomas Dorr be released from prison, 1844



### Petitioning for Equal Rights

Petition of George T. Downing, et al, Requesting Act Guaranteeing Equal Rights, Jan 1860

#### TRANSCRIPTION:

"To the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island

The undersigned citizens of Providence respectfully pray that in the revised Code now

This exhibit features an array of original manuscripts written by Rhode Islanders past as they came together for a common good, over and over again, to strike for that "more perfect union." Included are petitions related to women's suffrage.

Petition of Ann Franklin requesting to print the Acts of the Colony, 1736

This short but powerful petition

This exhibit featured an array of original manuscripts written by Rhode Islanders past as they came together around a cause. Selected records included petitions related to women's suffrage, racial injustice, divorce, the adoption of children, child labor, capital punishment, and equal access to public school.



Gregg M. Amore  
Secretary of State

This publication was produced by the Rhode Island Department of State