

STATE ARCHIVES ANNUAL REPORT

2023



Young scholars view the Declaration of Independence (1777) at the State Archives, May 2023.



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 Rhode Island General Laws Chapter 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
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.



THE STATE ARCHIVES TEAM

Ashley Selima
State Archivist &
Public Records
Administrator

Kate Telford
Senior Digital
Archivist

Tracey Croce
Local Government
Records Coordinator

Rachel Strashnick
Administrative
Records & Technical
Services Specialist

Richard Hite
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Coordinator

Mark Kleniewski
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Assistant

Ken Carlson
Reference Archivist

Elsie McLaughlin,
Records Analyst/
Data Manager

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FROM SECRETARY GREGG M. AMORE



Dear Rhode Islander:

The Rhode Island State Archives and Public Records Administration is tasked with safeguarding Rhode Island's historic treasures for generations to come. These treasures tell not only the story of our great state, but document essential moments in the founding of our country. Just this year, Rhode Island's original copy of the Bill of Rights was carefully assessed and protected in a new case, ensuring it remains in pristine condition for the future.

In 2023, the Rhode Island State Archives continued to serve as a hub for researchers, students, and members of the public to connect directly with our history. Additionally, the Public Records Administration and Local Government Records Program offered workshops as well as a new newsletter to improve the management of government records. The records generated by government employees today will go on to become permanent artifacts in the Archives collection in the future.

As your Secretary of State, I serve as a custodian of over ten million records that tell the story of Rhode Islanders past, present, and future. I am committed to making these records accessible to all Rhode Islanders, including creating a new facility to protect and share them.

I implore you to take some time in 2024 and connect with the Rhode Island State Archives, either by attending an in-person event at their facility, visiting one of their upcoming pop-up exhibitions in your community, or browsing their digital offerings.

The records we make today will one day be a part of our state's permanent legacy.

Thank you,

Gregg M. Amore
Secretary of State

OUR COLLECTION



More than
10 MILLION
records



Accumulated over
380 YEARS



Over
500,000
public digital objects



Over
154,392
family history
record downloads



LOOKING BACK: 2023 IN REVIEW

A YEAR IN PUBLIC PROGRAMS



577

IN-PERSON
ATTENDEES

56%
increase from
2022!



170

VIRTUAL
PROGRAM
VIEWERS



1,110

IN-STATE
RESEARCHERS



2,520

TOTAL
RESEARCHERS

A YEAR IN RECORDS

6.8%
increase from
2022!



155

RECORDS
DISPLAYED IN
EXHIBITS



5,387

HISTORICAL
RECORDS
REQUESTED



5,075

HISTORICAL
RECORDS
RETRIEVED



4,936

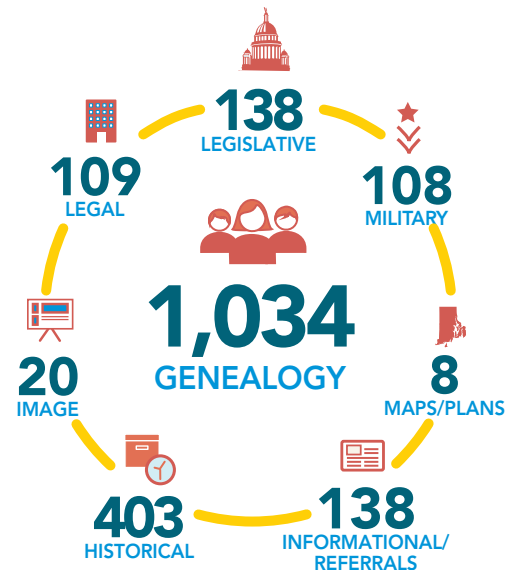
TOTAL
RECORDS
PROVIDED

A YEAR IN REFERENCE

Provided over 5,000 records
to historical researchers.

Received 2,000 unique
requests in 2023.

7.9%
increase from
2022!





LOOKING BACK: 2023 IN REVIEW

A YEAR IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT



756

RECORDS
MANAGEMENT
REQUESTS



756

REQUESTS FOR
DESTRUCTION
FORMS (CRDs)

68%
increase of
requests!



11

ONSITE
ASSISTANCE
DAYS



72

WORKSHOP AT-
TENDEES

A YEAR IN STATE RECORDS



28,793

RECORDS
CENTER
ACTIVITIES



161

BOX DATA
UPDATES



5,584

STATE AGENCY
RECORDS SENT
TO STORAGE



105

WORKSHOP AT-
TENDEES

A YEAR IN ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS



139

TOTAL
REGULATIONS
FILED



103

REGULATION
AMENDMENTS
FILED

74%
of all regulations
filed!



364

REGULATION
DRAFTS
REVIEWED



1,077

REQUESTS FOR
ASSISTANCE



LOOKING BACK: 2023 IN REVIEW

OUR COLLECTIONS

PHYSICAL STORAGE



+ 289 CUBIC FEET
WERE ADDED TO OUR COLLECTION

In 2023, the State Archives received several significant accessions, including:

- Secretary of State Nellie M. Gorbea records, 2015-2022
- Boundary Documents, 1846-2004
- Newport County Branch of the NAACP Patriots' Park Development Committee records, 1967-2023
- DEM Parks and Recreation Slides and Photographs, c. 1970-1990
- Department of Health Vital Records, 1922, 1972

COLLECTION HIGHLIGHT

WWI PORTRAITS, 1914-1918



World War I Portraits: Headquarters Co. Allister B W and J Kennedy

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE STATE ARCHIVES RECEIVES NEW RECORDS?

1

RECORD IS RECEIVED

Create and assign an accession number (YEAR-#); This helps the State Archives track the growth of the collection each year.

2

DOCUMENT RECORD(S)

Create accession record documenting information about the record, its creator, and other core information;

3

PREPARE RECORD(S)

Remove records from non-archival boxes/folders/containers while retaining original order;

4

PREPARE RECORD(S)

Remove paperclips and elastics which damage records long-term and replace with archival plastic clips;

5

ARRANGE RECORD(S)

Organize materials into distinct series to assist in research and identification (e.g. minutes, reports, etc).

6

ARRANGE RECORD(S)

Place records into archival quality folders, label with title and date of materials;

7

PROCESS RECORD(S)

Photocopy newspaper clippings, if present, onto acid-free paper;

8

DESCRIBE RECORD(S)

Take notes for scope note and create a folder list for the catalog record.



LOOKING BACK: 2023 IN REVIEW

OUR COLLECTIONS

DIGITAL STORAGE



5.75639

OF ITEMS PRESERVED

**TERA
BYTES**

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

254,268 new records scanned for long-term preservation; and

523,727 new items uploaded to the Digital Archives.

ACCESS AND USAGE

478

NEW ENTRIES

New entries added to the Archives Catalog.

10,542

LINKED RECORDS

Linked records from the Archives Catalog to the Digital Archive.

254,268

NEW DIGITAL FILES

Searchable and downloadable files available to the public 24/7 increased to over 300,000 in 2023.

OVER

175,598

DOWNLOADS

Files downloaded from the Digital Archives.

170

TOTAL VIEWS

Total views of our 2023 workshops and video tutorials.

DIGITAL ARCHIVES ANALYTICS

595,915

PAGE VIEWS

Page views from June-December 2023

11,659

PAGE VISITS

Page visits from 78 countries

6 min 40 sec

PAGE VISITS

Average engagement time

NEW TO THE DIGITAL COLLECTIONS IN 2023

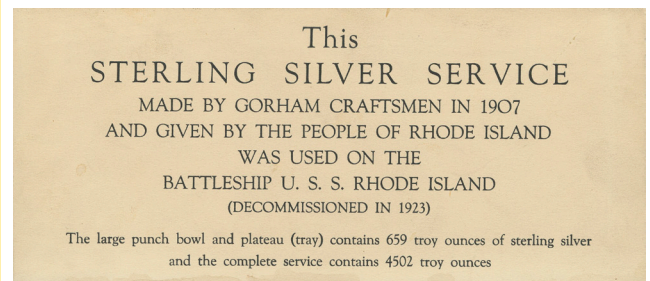
› RI Colony Records, 1715-1729

› Suspected Persons Records, 1775-1783

› Battleship RI Silver Service, undated

› Proceedings of the First General Assembly, 1647

› RI Folklife Collection Audio Recordings, 1979-2007



Battleship RI Silver Service, Information Sign (undated)

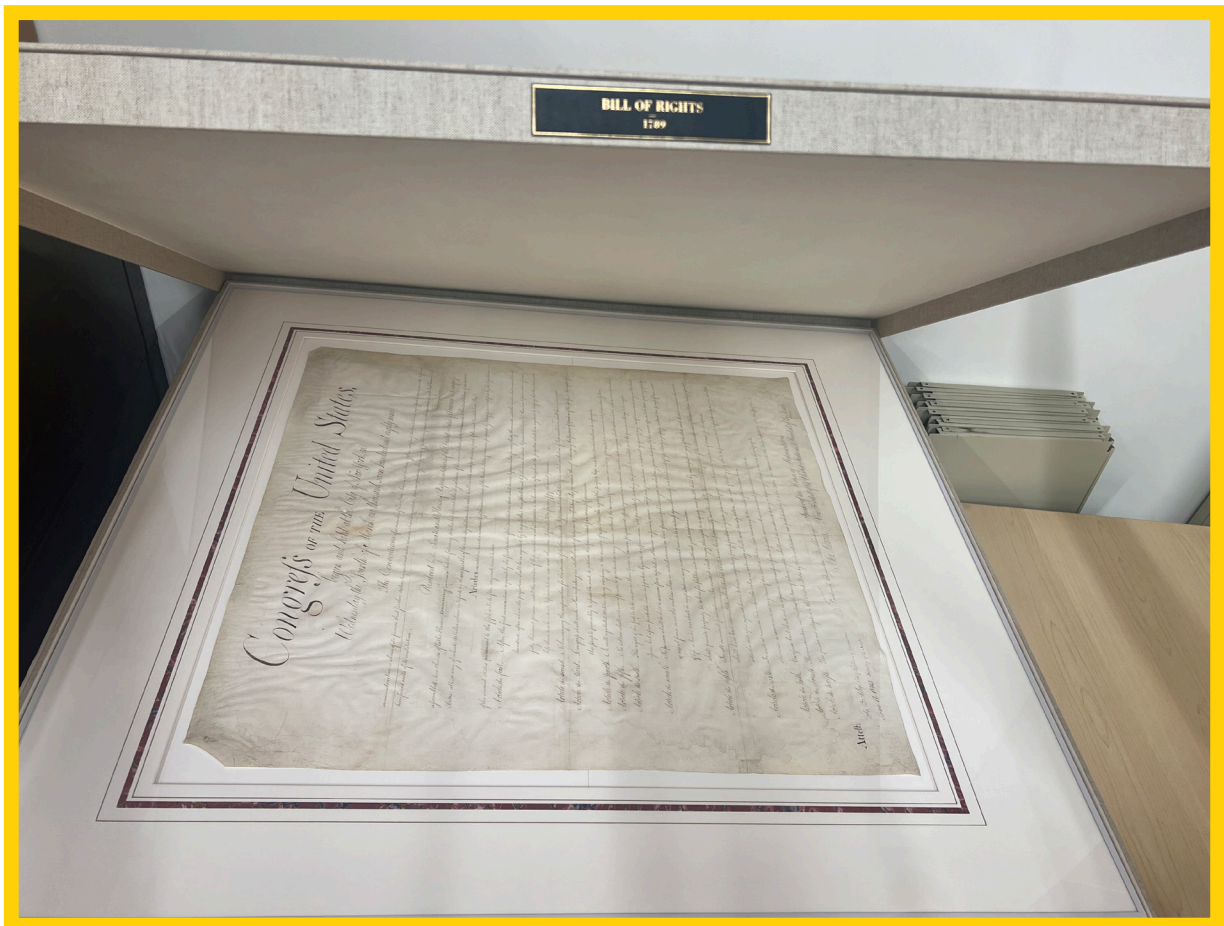


PRESERVING RHODE ISLAND'S HISTORY

Protecting Founding Documents

The State Archives partnered with the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC), the leading institution in the conservation and restoration of historical records in New England, to carefully review and encase the Rhode Island copy of the Bill of Rights.

- Only 13 copies of the Bill of Rights were created.
- This document is now in a UV filtering rigid sealed package to protect it from light, dust, and other environmental risks.
- The document is also now in a custom cloth box which allows for simple access for safe temporary displays or viewings of the document.





CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY: PUBLIC PROGRAMS IN 2023

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

EXPLORING PARKS & RECREATION PANEL (JUNE)

In partnership with RI Recreation and Parks Association (RIRPA), RI Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) and the City of Providence, this lecture explored the preservation of Rhode Island's history through the conservation of public gathering spaces and the natural environment of our forests, fields, waterways, and beaches that connect us to the outside world.



GENEALOGY OPEN HOUSE (APRIL)

The Archives team welcomed genealogists in-person to the State Archives to tour the Reading Room and hear about how to utilize collections both on-site and online for their family history research.



MAP NIGHT (FEBRUARY)

A one-night-only pop-up display to view the expansive and unique collection of archival maps, plans, plat books, and architectural drawings too large for regular display.



CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY: PUBLIC PROGRAMS IN 2023

NEW ENGLAND REGIONAL GENEALOGICAL CONSORTIUM 2023 GENEALOGY CONFERENCE (MAY)

State Archivist Ashley Selima joined NERGC in May in Springfield, MA, to share about family history resources available for researchers focused on Rhode Island ancestors.



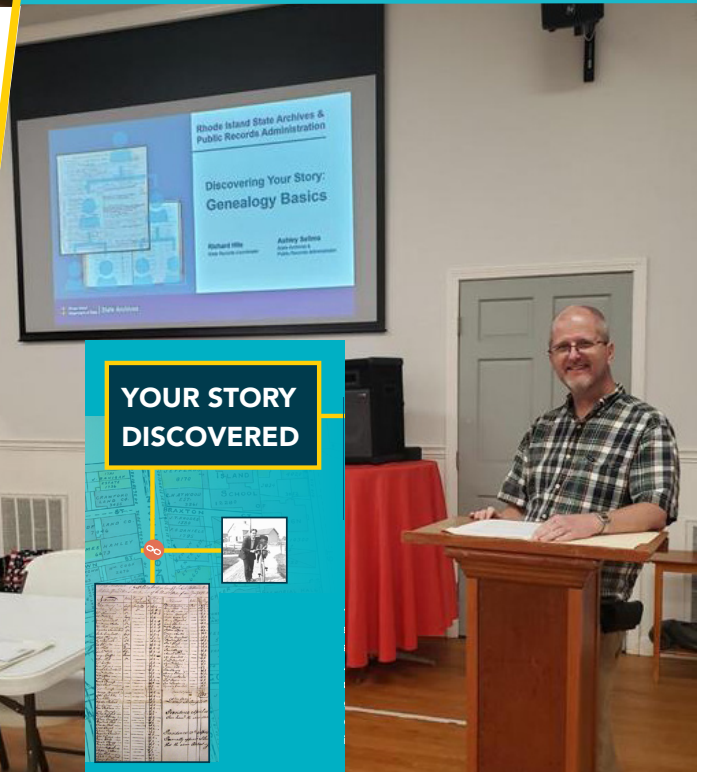
“ESCAPE FROM THE ARCHIVES” ESCAPE ROOM (OCTOBER)

In celebration of National Archives Month the State Archives hosted its first annual Escape Room! This special event hosted participants who solved clues unraveling the history of one of the collection’s greatest treasures!

Could you unlock the mystery?

GENEALOGY PRESENTATION TO FESTA ITALIANA – NEWPORT, RI (OCTOBER)

State Records Coordinator Richard Hite provided an in-depth introduction to genealogy, tips for successful research, and how to start with the State Archives.





CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY: PUBLIC PROGRAMS IN 2023

SCHOOL VISITS TO THE ARCHIVES

The Archives team welcomed multiple groups of students in 2023 for an educational tour to learn about what archives do, what tools are important to keeping documents safe, and a sneak peek at some of our most well-known treasures from the Vault.



ENRICH RI HOME SCHOOL
GROUP - MARCH



MEETING ST. SCHOOL -
MAY



HOME SCHOOL GROUP -
APRIL

SOUTH KINGSTOWN 300TH ANNIVERSARY:

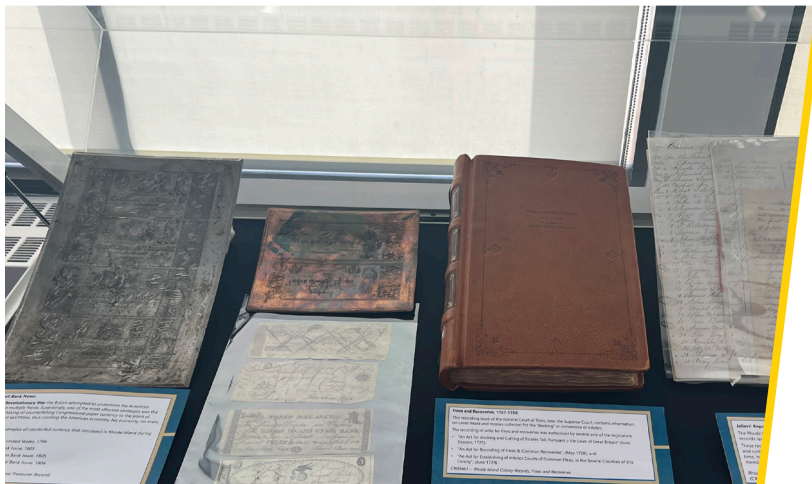
The State Archives collaborated with the South Kingstown 300th Anniversary Committee to join their summer Lecture Series in April, September, and November, to bring a pop-up exhibit highlighting documents relating to South Kingstown preserved in the State Archives.

Additionally, the State Archives brought a one-time pop-up exhibit for their September lecture highlighting the impacts of the Hurricane of 38' on the town.





CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY: EXHIBITIONS



FOR THE RECORD

For the Record brought in the new year through exploration of the broad nature of the State Archives collection through the display of documents and objects that are lesser known, but are no less important or part of the Rhode Island story.



WILD WEATHER

Wild Weather tells the story of how Rhode Island has prepared for, reacted to, and recovered from weather-related impacts dating as far back as colonial times up to and including recent years. The exhibit highlighted archival documents and objects from severe weather events throughout Rhode Island's history, including Hurricane Carol, the Blizzard of 1978, and the flooding that occurred in 2010.

[See the online story!](#)



FROM FIELDS TO FESTIVALS: PARKS & RECREATION IN RHODE ISLAND

This exhibit highlighted the physical spaces that have shaped Rhode Island's history, including State parks and beaches, municipal parks, outdoor public spaces, and recreation hubs now and throughout history, such as Rocky Point Amusement Park and Crescent Park. The exhibit featured historic artifacts, photos, and documents that tell the story of parks and recreation in Rhode Island.

[See the online story!](#)



VIRTUAL EVENTS

Records Management Education Series

Records Management Workshop Series

Making the State Records Center Work for You

March 15 at 10 a.m.

This webinar will dive deeper into topics from 2022 to assist with your day-to-day records management.

Sign up with Eventbrite
Email records@sos.nj.gov with additional questions.

MAKING THE STATE RECORDS CENTER WORK FOR YOU! (MARCH)

This presentation aimed to increase the knowledge of agency responsibilities for creating and maintaining records, the process of submitting State Records Center requests, and best practice in using retention schedules and inventories to simplify agency operations.

Annual Inventory 101

Using the Right Tools to Know Your Records

Wednesday, June 21
10-11 a.m.

Learn about the State Records Center Annual Inventory and best practices in maintaining up-to-date records using your inventory.

Sign up with Eventbrite
Email records@sos.nj.gov with additional questions.

ANNUAL INVENTORY 101 (JUNE)

This workshop highlighted the State Records Center (SRC) annual inventory listing boxes in offsite storage, what inventory information is most essential to accurately make SRC requests, and how to maintain organized and up-to-date agency records using your own inventory.

Records Management Workshop Series

Annual Destruction 101

Staying up-to-date to streamline your work

Wednesday, September 13
10-11 a.m.

ANNUAL DESTRUCTION 101 (SEPTEMBER)

This webinar focused on the annual destruction services provided by the State Records Center, how maintaining accurate data simplifies and streamlines your records; and how proper, timely, and legal destruction is key to good records management.

Records Round Table

Wednesday, December 13
10-11 a.m.

Explore the commonly asked questions received throughout the year!

Sign up with Eventbrite
Email records@sos.nj.gov with additional questions.

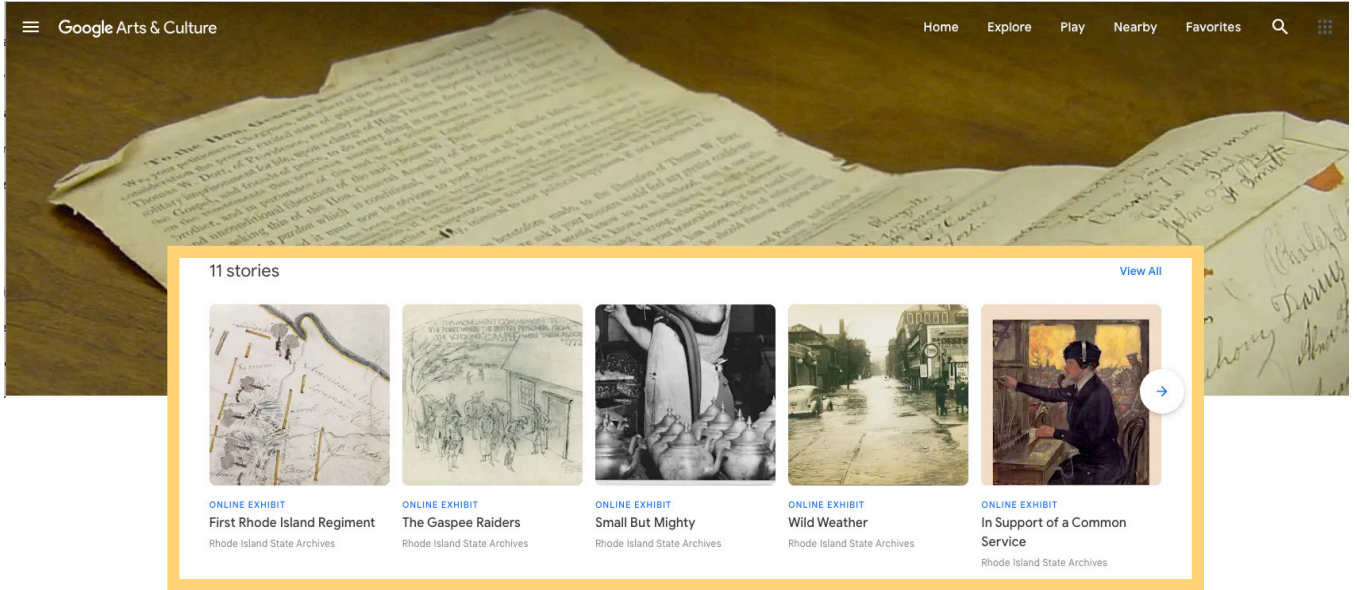
Presented by the NJ Department of State, Public Records Administration

ROUND TABLE Q&A (DECEMBER)

This session was 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.



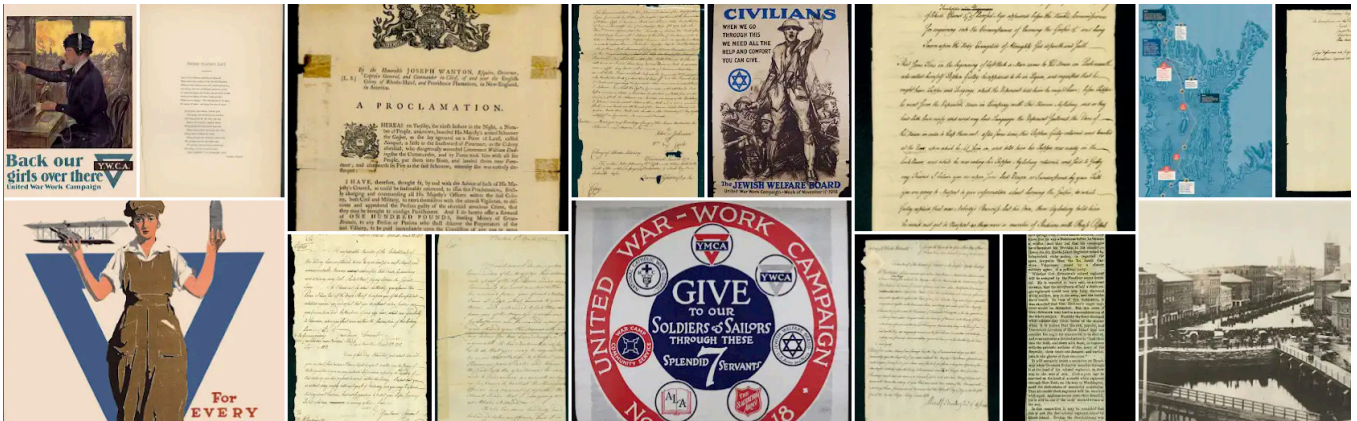
SHARING OUR HISTORY



New Virtual Exhibitions

In 2023, the State Archives began a new partnership to launch virtual exhibits on the Google Arts & Culture platform. Google Arts & Culture works “with cultural institutions and artists

around the world” and its “mission is to preserve and bring the world’s art and culture online so it’s accessible to anyone, anywhere.”





LOOKING FORWARD

A Permanent State Archives & History Center

Secretary of State Gregg Amore assembled an Archives Working Group in 2023 to explore and outline a route to success to build a new, purpose-built, permanent home for the Rhode Island State Archives and its priceless collection. Meeting in June, August, and October, members of the Working Group shared their expertise and ideas on how to make a new State Archives and History Center a reality.



Members of the Archives Working Group visited the Massachusetts State Archives and Edward M. Kennedy Institute in Boston, MA, to explore the potential of archives and civic engagement.





Gregg M. Amore
Secretary of State

Cushing and Walling Providence map, 1849

This publication was produced by the Rhode Island Department of State