

PAUL R. CAMPBELL
City Archivist



City of Providence
Division of Archives and History

Memorandum

TO: ANNA STETSON, CITY CLERK
FROM: PAUL CAMPBELL, CITY ARCHIVIST
DATE: OCTOBER 12, 2010
RE: SEPTEMBER 2010 MONTHLY REPORT

Visitations to the City Archives in September increased by nearly 39 % over the prior month. The eighty-two visitors who utilized our collections included a number of college students, visiting professors, title researchers, genealogists and historians. They came from such varied locations as Australia, Canada, Virginia, North Carolina, Michigan, and Florida. All spoke very highly of our level of service. We also answered a number of e-mailed and written inquiries and responded to a number of city departmental requests for documents. The archives was also featured on television and the local print media for the recent discovery of important historical papers in the basement of City Hall. This positive story featured our efforts to preserve these irreplaceable records.

Work continues on a large grant to preserve and catalog our extensive collection of maps and blueprints. In addition, we have submitted a smaller grant application to the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission in the amount of \$3,500 to provide funding for a condition survey of the collections and building environment to be carried out by the Northeast Document Conservation Center.

In an ongoing effort to improve security we have changed the entrance lock to the archives, tightened use procedures, and have ordered lockers which will be used by patrons to store their bags and briefcases which will no longer be permitted in the reading room. Two staff members attended an all-day disaster response workshop and we are now working on a disaster response plan.

Archives staff have placed approximately 30 boxes of historical documents found recently in the basement in acid-free folders and boxes. We are continuing a systematic cleaning of shelving areas. Dust is now being controlled with the purchase of a new air cleaner. I am also pleased to report that we have completed the installation of 320 linear feet of new storage shelving in the Atrium area. This is the largest expansion of storage area since the establishment of the City Archives in 1978. I am confident that we can add an additional 320 feet of space within the next six months. Working closely with RI State Archives staff, we are reducing the volume of non-permanent records housed here at City Hall. Last month more than 300 boxes of records that had exceeded state

mandated retention schedules were shredded or recycled. This process will continue, freeing up valuable space for permanent records while at the same time reducing off-site storage costs.

While progress is being made in addressing many of the concerns expressed in the Archives Commission Report, lack of expandable space, the increasingly poor condition of the roof and walls, and the archives' inaccessibility to those with physical disabilities all argue for relocation as a practical solution to effectively address these issues. The recent proposal by the city to relocate some city offices to an off-site location presents an opportunity for the archives that should be seriously considered.

IN CITY COUNCIL
OCT 21 2011

READ
WHEREUPON IT IS ORDERED THAT
THE SAME BE RECEIVED.
Chen M. Lee CLERK