

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: JANUARY 14, 2011  
RE: DECEMBER 2010 MONTHLY REPORT

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The implementation of a book restoration project is beginning to bear fruit. In December, 20 newly rebound books were returned to the City Archives. Among the books restored were the 1875 city census, early records of the Providence School Committee and the Reform School, as well as 18<sup>th</sup> century bound volumes of the Schedules of the Rhode Island General Assembly. This will be an ongoing project funded largely through the Historic Trust Fund.

This year also marks the 375<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Providence. I have begun working with the mayor's staff on initiatives that will celebrate this historic milestone. Among the projects suggested for support are the restoration of the city's collection of mayoral paintings, publication of the Providence Town Meeting Records, an "adopt-a-book" program to further assist with our restoration effort, and a City Hall exhibit.

Approximately 320 linear feet of new shelving was installed in the Atrium storage area this month. During the past three months we have added more than 650 linear feet of new shelving which will help accommodate transfer of records from city departments and aid in the reorganization of existing collections. This shelving also allows us to begin the process of organizing more than a century of Board of Alderman and Common Council records. Staff has also commenced a complete review of records stored at the NOVA storage facility. 105 boxes of records were returned to the city, and after review and consultation with the State Archives, nearly all these records can be destroyed having exceeded their retention schedule. We are confident that we can reduce the volume of records stored offsite, consequently saving the city money. Joan Peterson continues to process and catalog boxes of returns of Births, Marriages, and Deaths. These records provide information not found in the vital record indexes. Doyin Joseph completed an index of unsettled claims dating back to the early 1980s.

The City Archivist met with a student advisor of the MET School and agreed to participate in their mentoring program. Scott Thibodeau will be joining us in January two days per week and work to organize the archives' graphic collections. We have

made significant additions to the newly created archives web site and have already begun to receive positive feedback and requests for information via the site.

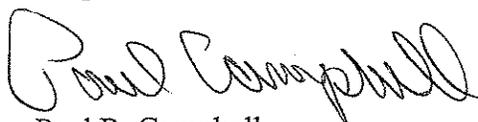
Water leaks continue to be a major problem along the entire perimeter of the building's fifth floor. This month leaks in archival storage areas damaged a number of blueprints and only quick action by staff prevented further damage. Shortly after Christmas, severe leaks in a records storage room adjacent the Recorder of Deeds Office damaged deed books as well as bound volumes of military pension records. Once again staff responded quickly removing wet books and implementing basic emergency conservation measures. The affected areas have been draped in plastic, but a more permanent solution to the roof's deterioration must be found.

Since my arrival in June, great progress has been made. These improvements include:

- Reorganization of staff roles and responsibilities
- Cleaning of storage areas & regular cleaning of research room
- Addition of two new computer terminals
- Elimination of 550 boxes of unneeded records
- Implementation of plan to reduce storage costs
- Addition of 650 linear feet of new shelving
- Initiation of book and manuscript conservation project
- Development of web site
- Improved security with purchase of lockers and tightened procedures
- Accelerated cataloging and processing of collections
- Hosting citywide records management workshop
- Initiation of plan to conserve mayoral painting collection
- Construction of artwork "cradle" to protect works of art
- Discovery and preservation of early records found in basement
- Participation in intern projects
- Emergency procedures training
- Assisted City Engineer's Office with flood related issues
- Increased patron use of archives

These accomplishments would not have been possible without the active support of the City Clerk and the City Council. I also want to acknowledge the assistance of the State Archivist and her staff in guiding us on a number of issues. A great deal of thanks is also due to the staff who worked hard and were fully engaged in successfully implementing many of the aspects of this improvement plan. We look forward to continuing our service to the public and our colleagues in other city departments as we enter the New Year.

Respectfully,



Paul R. Campbell  
City Archivist

IN CITY COUNCIL  
FEB - 3 2011

READ  
WHEREUPON IT IS ORDERED THAT  
THE SAME BE RECEIVED  
  
CITY CLERK