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**For image,** <http://portsmouthhistory.org/phs-media/>. Caption: Tour Guide Lauren Gianino in front of Celia Thaxter portrait inside Portsmouth Public Library.

## New History Walking Tour Focuses on Portsmouth Women

*Portsmouth, New Hampshire...* Last summer Lauren Gianino had a problem. A retired teacher with a passion for history, she was about to lead a walking tour for members of the Seacoast Women's Network, a support group for female entrepreneurs. But from shipbuilder Gov. John Langdon to ale tycoon Frank Jones, the traditional downtown tour was dominated by male characters.

"It didn't seem fitting to walk a group of professional women around Portsmouth talking solely about the men in Portsmouth's history," Gianino recalls. "So I did some research and added information about a few women on that tour."

Erika Beer, who manages the expanding list of walking tours for Portsmouth Historical Society, saw a good thing in the making. Following a year of research, this summer Lauren Gianino introduces "The Portsmouth Women Tour" on the fourth Wednesday of each month.

"Can you think of a better mother-daughter activity?" asks Beer.

Leaving from Discover Portsmouth and ending in Market Square, the guided tour features the rarely told stories of women navigators, preachers, artists, authors, tavern keepers and madams "who defied stereotypes and shaped Portsmouth." Gianino has drawn many characters from the book, *Portsmouth Women*, edited by Laura Pope, from the online history features by historian J. Dennis Robinson, and from extensive African American history research by Valerie Cunningham.

The 75-minute tour will introduce participants to Rosary Cooper, an African American woman who operated a 20-ton crane at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard during WWII. See the birthplace of Celia Thaxter, famed poet of the Isles of Shoals. Meet Dorothy Vaughan, the city's 99-year old librarian who sparked a preservation revolution. Discover Sarah Haven Foster, author of the city's first portable guidebook, and the Prescott Sisters, who donated millions of dollars to turn a hard-knuckle waterfront into a family-friendly park. Learn about Ona Judge, enslaved by George and Martha Washington, who escaped to relative freedom in Portsmouth. And there's more.

Born and raised on the North Shore of Massachusetts, Lauren Gianino earned her master's degree in Education from the University of New Hampshire. Recently retired from her career as a Reading Recovery teacher, a resident of Eliot, Maine, she decided to "dive head first" into Seacoast history. In addition to her work with Portsmouth Historical Society – including the John Paul Jones House - she is a guide at the Moffatt-Ladd House and Strawberry Banke Museum.

"I find that I learn so much by working and spending lots of time in each of the historic homes. And yes, it is turning into a full time job," Gianino says. "But there is plenty of variety in my week. I get to meet people from all over the world and I love telling Portsmouth stories."

The Portsmouth Women Tour leaves from Discover Portsmouth, 10 Middle Street, at 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday May 24, June 28, August 23, September 27, and October 25. Reservations are suggested. Groups interested in a special tour (up to 12 participants) should contact Erika Beer at [603-436-8433](tel:603-436-8433). For more information on a wide variety of themed Portsmouth tours visit [PortsmouthHistory.org](http://PortsmouthHistory.org). Tickets are \$12 for members and \$15 for non-members and can be purchased online through the website.

Now celebrating its Centennial, Portsmouth Historical Society is a tax-exempt 501©3 nonprofit devoted to introducing, interpreting and stimulating the study of Portsmouth history and to maintaining collections of historical artifacts and documents. It operates two facilities – Discover Portsmouth and the John Paul Jones House. Discover Portsmouth, located at 10 Middle Street, Portsmouth, NH, is open daily from 9:30-5pm, and until 8pm for Art Round Town, the first Friday of each month. The John Paul Jones House opens Memorial Day.