



PORTSMOUTH
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
10 MIDDLE STREET, PORTSMOUTH, NH 03801
603.436.8433 • WWW.PORTSMOUTHISTORY.ORG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – September 20, 2021

Contact: Meredith Affleck, Manager, Exhibitions & Programming
Meredith@portsmouthhistory.org
603-570-2493

Photo Caption: *Paint on the 1758 John Paul Jones House has not yet begun to dry. Photo courtesy of Portsmouth Painting Company.*

WATCHING PAINT DRY AT THE JOHN PAUL JONES HOUSE

The John Paul Jones House is still yellow. All of it, now.

In 1989, a well-known paint company featured the building in its national TV commercials. “Enduring centuries of New England’s harsh winters, stands the great American home of John Paul Jones,” the announcer intoned. “Today, we’re repainting it with new advance formula Weatherbeater!”

Twenty-five years later, the Portsmouth Historical Society received a New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) grant that permitted it to repaint most of the historic 1758 house (in which the famous naval hero lived, for a while, at least).

Now, with funds recently received through the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance from The 1772 Foundation, the Historical Society has been able to complete the job, painting the remaining portions of the house, including its addition (or “ell”) and its matching carriage house.

Even advance-formula paint does not last forever, but periodic coats of paint have protected the clapboard siding of Portsmouth’s old landmark for more than 250 years. Preservation is an on-going process, but fortunately, public nonprofits like the Portsmouth Historical Society have patiently assumed responsibility for maintaining these familiar connections with our earliest history. Funders like The 1772 Foundation, however, insist that the Historical Society raise matching funds from the public for work like this.

These contributions also permitted the Portsmouth Historical Society to repair several windows of the old structure. Because outside and inside air have different temperatures and humidity levels, and they most often come into contact at a building’s windows, these are the places where moisture frequently condenses, and are therefore the first places in old houses to decay. Sash & Solder Window Restoration, a local studio housed in the Button Factory, did the work to repair the windows.

Painting was performed by the Portsmouth Painting Company, the same family business that painted the main part of the house five years ago and has done work on various other historic structures in the city. They have even been sponsored by Sherwin Williams Paint Company to re-create that classic commercial featuring the old house.

Portsmouth Historical Society also maintains the historic Morton-Benedict House and the Portsmouth Academy building, both dating from the very early 19th century. Together with a modern addition constructed when the complex served as Portsmouth’s public library, today they serve as the headquarters of the Historical Society, with its exhibition galleries, visitor welcome center, and unique museum shop.

Walking tour tickets, Society memberships, and information on the latest events and virtual lectures are all available at: www.portsmouthhistory.org or by calling 603-436-8433.

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