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Contact: Meredith Affleck, Manager, Exhibitions & Programming

Phone: 603.570.2493

Email: meredith@portsmouthhistory.org

CAPTION: Beginning its phased reopening on July 10, the century-old Portsmouth Historical Society operates the 1758 John Paul Jones Historic House Museum and the newly renovated Discover Portsmouth Welcome Center, museum shop, as well as the Portsmouth Academy Galleries, located in an historic 1810-era brick building in the city's downtown. (Courtesy photo)

PORTSMOUTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY REOPENING JULY 10

PORTSMOUTH — “We are *definitely* ready!” insists Brian LeMay, director of the Portsmouth Historical Society. “We’re being cautious, but it really seems to be time now to open up and share all the great things we’ve got to offer during the second half of 2020.”

The Discover Portsmouth Welcome Center and the John Paul Jones Historic House Museum will begin a phased reopening on July 10. The schedule initially calls for the reduced hours of 11 am to 4 pm, Friday through Monday.

Located in a group of historical and modern buildings at 10 Middle Street, the Historical Society kicks off its belated 2020 season in a refurbished facility with a team of experts who can offer advice on where to go and what to see in a New Hampshire’s only seaport, a city rich in history, arts, and culture.

The Welcome Center, free to the public, now features universally accessible restrooms, newly renovated in a \$200,000 project co-managed with the City of Portsmouth using state and federal grants. The center also features a Museum Shop with the region’s best selection of Portsmouth-related books, many of which will be on sale for \$5, “and the kinds of gifts you can only find in a museum,” says the new shop manager, Beth Gross-Santos, a well-known figure in local retail.

A new season of historical walking tours will also begin on July 10, departing from the Welcome Center’s front doors. Some different perspectives on the town’s history will be explored in the tours this year. Details and tour registrations are available via www.PortsouthHistory.org, the Society’s website.

The Seacoast African American Cultural Center, one of the Society’s non-profit tenants, accessible through the Welcome Center, will open July 17. Their exhibition, "Obama, an Intimate Portrait" will feature the work of former White House photographer Pete Souza.

In early August, the much-anticipated “Threads: A Community Quilt for 2020” exhibition will open in the Society’s galleries, accompanied by a number of special programs. Featured in the exhibition will be a special quilt from the private collection of a well-known New Hampshire celebrity. Those who still plan to contribute quilt squares to the “community quilt” will find details and deadlines on the website. Make sure your story is told as part of this unique community project, to be installed as the centerpiece of the exhibition this fall.

“When we open, we’ll be following all the latest recommendations of public officials and museum authorities,” says Gross-Santos, who also manages the Welcome Center “We’ll have disposable masks and hand sanitizer available for

all guests so this can be the cleanest, safest, and most touch-free environment possible. We can't wait to welcome you back."

The 1758 John Paul Jones House at 43 Middle Street will also open July 10 for guided tours. Saved from demolition in 1917, this beautiful colonial mansion and fenced garden has been preserved for the public by the Portsmouth Historical Society since 1920. Legend says naval hero John Paul Jones boarded here twice during the American Revolution while awaiting two Portsmouth-built warships. Today the yellow gambrel-roof structure houses a unique collection of Portsmouth artifacts. Tickets are \$7 for adults and free to Historical Society members.

About Portsmouth Historical Society

Founded in 1917, the Portsmouth Historical Society is a nonprofit agency devoted to championing the history, arts, and culture of the Portsmouth region through acquisitions, preservation, museum exhibitions, programs, and publications. For more information on becoming a member or a volunteer you may also call 603-436-8433.