

Special Report

History Found!

- Portsmouth Asylum (AKA Town Farm) ruins found on Raytheon property.

Catalyst for Change!

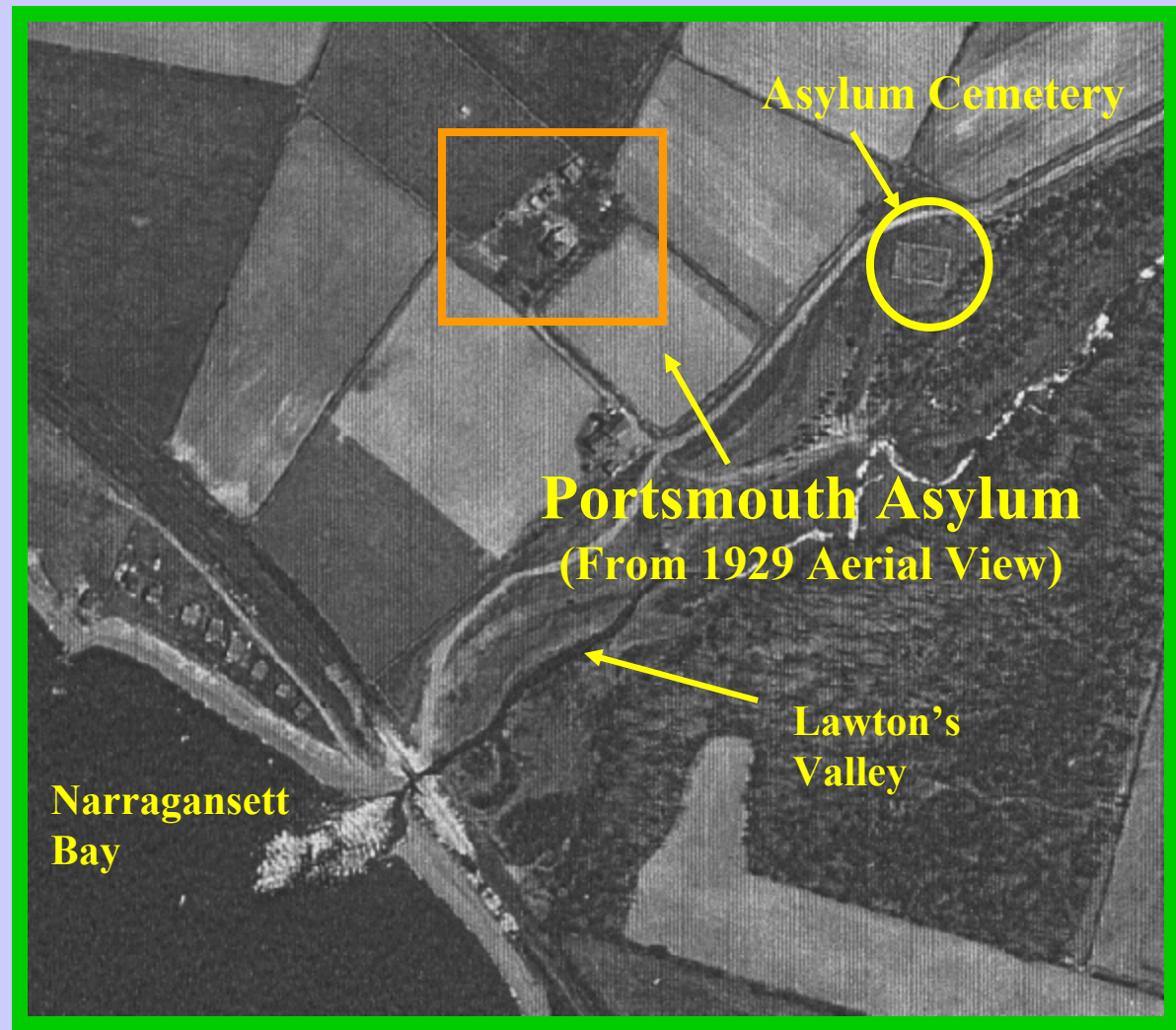
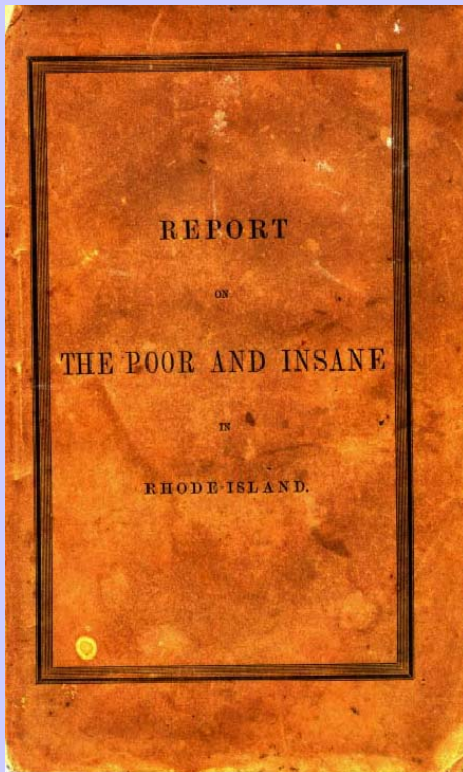
- Portsmouth abuses lead to new laws protecting the insane poor in Rhode Island.



This Just In . . . There Was Once an Asylum on Our Property. . .

Exclusive!

- 150 year old report discovered . . .



It Was a Source of Considerable Controversy in the 1800's . . .

Gathering Speed:

- Portsmouth Asylum research heats up with new information and the start of site mapping.

Educational Opportunity:

- Emerging story is one of neglect, power, and its indiscriminate use on those least able to protect themselves.



It Became a Catalyst for Landmark Social Welfare Legislation . .

To The Dungeon!

- Thirteen offences required solitary confinement on bread and water.

Out of Sight:

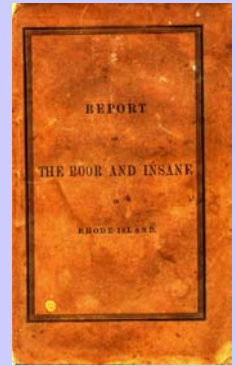
- Off the road and seldom visited, conditions were ripe for abuse.

“The dungeon of Portsmouth has scarcely been heard of beyond the boundaries of that town, and yet its victims suffer none the less.



The bread and water of the captive in the Bastille was probably sweet as that given to the feeble old woman or the broken spirited old man in the dungeon of Portsmouth . . .”

T. R. Hazard 1851



From The Top:

- Outvoted at town meetings, concerned residents unable to break the cycle of oppression at the Asylum.

Bragging Rights:

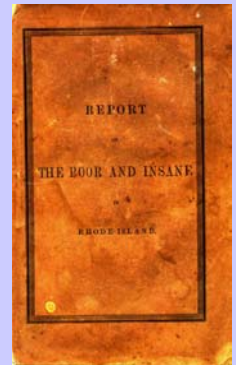
- Former commissioner of the poor, boasting of flogging the insane, receives approbation rather than disgust of majority.

“A significant glance by the keeper to the rebellious pauper and thence



towards the dark hole, would convey a hint sufficient to prevent any exposures.”

T. R. Hazard 1851



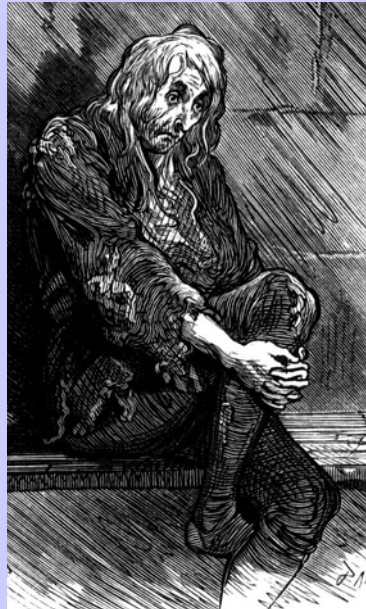
Bread and Butter:

- Man chained to keep him from taking bread and butter. Others say he just got underfoot.

Like a Worm:

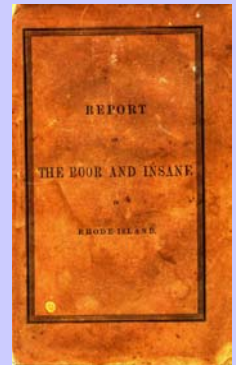
- Inmate, bailed in burlap, squirms on floor to nose around an apple offered to him.

“What if a widowed wife or a gray haired mother, on some future day, rendered desperate by oppression . . .



should, for daring to complain, be cast into a dungeon and there fed on bread and water, with only a plank to lie upon for days and nights together.”

T. R. Hazard 1851



It Wasn't Us!

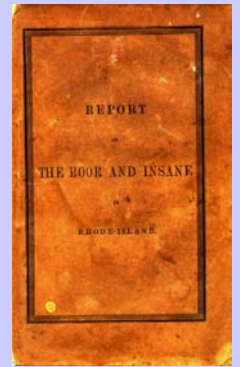
- Portsmouth Commissioners of the Poor present informal communication to General Assembly complaining of errors in the report.

It Was Too!

- T. R. Hazard “insisting upon the correctness of his report . . . and offering to prove the facts therein stated.”

“It seems that there is one town, at least, in the state, who, in virtue of authority delegated by you to them to provide for the care of their own poor, have decided poverty to be a crime of so deep a dye, that anyone found guilty of the offense within its jurisdiction, shall no longer be deemed worthy to partake of the inestimable privileges of an American citizen.”

T. R. Hazard 1851



Be a Part of This Interesting Chapter in Portsmouth History . . .

Get Involved!

- REWHC Needs your help in researching and telling the Portsmouth Asylum Story.

Contact:

- John Ort x4810 or
- webmaster@rewhc.org

150 years later, the Portsmouth Asylum is a powerful educational example for our community.

REWHC is working with local organizations to excavate the site and create an interpretive trail.

Interpretive themes include:

- “Anatomy of a Town Asylum”,
- “Roadmap For Abuse”,
- “Catalyst For Social Change”

Employees and community groups are invited to participate in research, walk the trail, and share our history.