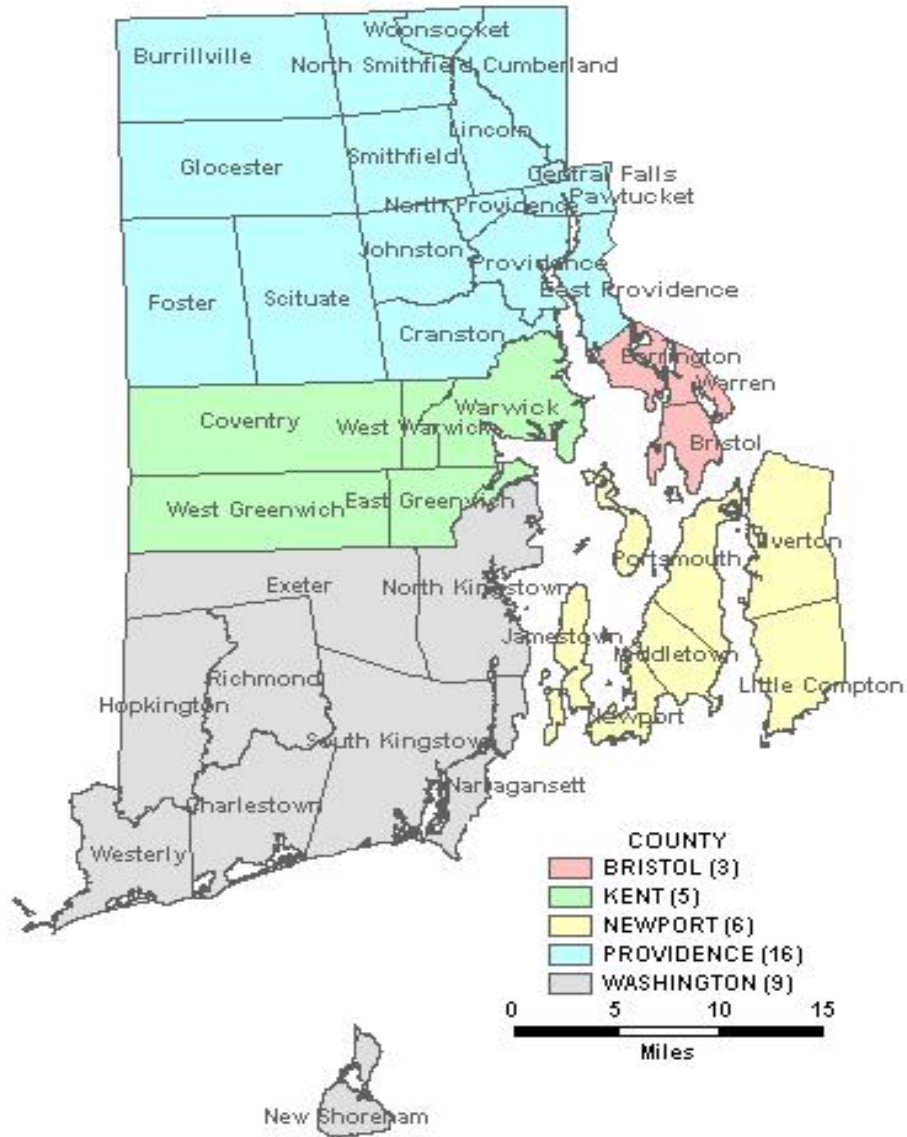


# Town of Portsmouth



## *Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation*

Research Division  
One West Exchange Street  
Providence, RI 02903  
Phone: (401) 222-2601  
FAX: (401) 222-2102

## **Introduction**

Portsmouth was settled in 1638. With Anne Hutchinson as leader of the settlement, Portsmouth became the first community founded in the New World by a woman. Its Indian name was Pocasset, and on May 12, 1649, the name of Portsmouth was confirmed. Portsmouth became part of the original group of settlements that united to form the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations.

The history of Portsmouth, which was at one time the most populous town in the colony, is rich with the flavor characterizing Rhode Island's early settlements. In fact, it was in Portsmouth that the most daring capture of the Revolutionary War was accomplished. Rhode Islander, Colonel William Barton, captured the British Commander-in-Chief, General Richard Prescott, in the Overing House, which is, today, located on West Main Road and marked with an historical plaque.

Several other historical landmarks further evidence reflections of Portsmouth's past. Founders Brook is marked as the site of the landing of the first settlers from Boston in 1638. This group was spirited under the leadership of John Clark and William Coddington. The Portsmouth Compact, the first instrument for governing as a true democracy, is inscribed on a bronze and stone marker. The little valley known as the Hessian Hole is a reminder of the famous Battle of Rhode Island, likewise, a memorial dedicated to those blacks that fought in the Battle of Rhode Island as the first black regiment to fight for the American Flag, is located in Portsmouth. Located on the corner of East Main Road and Union Street is the Southernmost School, the nation's oldest school, containing antique school desks, school bells and a variety of original textbooks.

Portsmouth is a fully-developed, fully serviced community. Among its features are several public golf courses, a modern motor hotel, antique shops, numerous marinas, and, the Sakonnet Times, a weekly newspaper serving the towns of Portsmouth, Tiverton and Little Compton.

Today, many of the town's working population is employed in private industry, in Portsmouth and nearby communities. The earliest source of income for the townspeople was farming and shipbuilding. However, boat building continues as one of the area's major industries.

Many areas, such as Melville, which was heavily occupied with Naval installations prior to the massive Naval reduction in 1974, have become the sites for the development of commercial, industrial, and recreational facilities. At the Melville small boat basin, for example, a 340-slip, fully serviced marina and boat building complex has replaced what was once a Naval docking facility, and the Navy's first PT - boat training facility.

**Table of Contents**

Introduction .....	2
Municipal Government & Officials .....	4
Population Characteristics .....	5
Census 2000 .....	6
Employment by Major Industry Group .....	8
Municipal Tax Rates .....	9
Points of Interest .....	10

**Town of Portsmouth**

**Municipal Government & Officials**

**Address:** Town Hall  
2200 East Main Road  
Portsmouth, RI 02871

**Established in 1638**  
**Incorporated in 1640**

**Fiscal Year Begins:** July 1st  
**Fax:** 683-6804

**Hours:** 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

**Location:** Newport County

**Website:** <http://www.portsmouthri.com>

**Form of Government:** Town Administrator and a seven member Town Council

**Council Meetings:** Second and Fourth Mondays Monthly @ 7:00 p.m.

**Website:** [www.portsmouthri.com/](http://www.portsmouthri.com/)

**Town Administrator:** Robert G. Driscoll 683-3255

**Assessor/Tax Collector:** David E. Dolce 683-1536 683-1214

**Building Official/Minimum Housing:**

George Medeiros 683-3611 Joseph Medeiros

**Clerk, Town:** Kathleen Viera Beaudoin 683-2101

**Emergency Management Officer:** Harry Johnson 683-5510

**Finance/Personnel/Welfare Director:** David Faucher 683-9118

**Highway/Public Works Director:** David Kehew 683-0362

**Housing Auth. Exec. Director:** James E. Dilley 683-3173

**Librarian:** Rosemary Finneran 683-9457

**Planner, Town:** Robert W. Gilstein 683-0888

**Police Chief:** Dennis C. Seale 683-0300

**Probate Judge:** Joseph C. Lopes 683-2101

**Registrar:** Madeleine Pencak 683-3157

**School Superintendent:** Timothy Ryan 683-1039

**Solicitor, Town:** Donato Andre' D'Andrea 847-0301

**Zoning Official:** George Medeiros 683-3611

**Fire Departments and Fire Districts**

Portsmouth Fire Department, 2300 East Main Road, Portsmouth, RI 02871 683-1200

Fire Chief: Alan T. Adams

Portsmouth Water and Fire District, P.O. Box 99, Portsmouth, RI 02871 683-2090

Tax Collector: Gaetano Polselli 683-0423

Prudence Island Volunteer Fire Dept., P.O. Box 305, Prudence Island, RI 02872 683-1100

Fire Chief: Thomas Gemp

**School Committee**

Ralph T. Cassese, Chairperson 34 Caiger Lane 02871

Karen Gleason 63 Massasoit Avenue 02871

Duncan N. Ingraham 55 Sigourney Road 02871

Terrence M. Kavanagh 282 Fischer Circle 02871

James A. Seveney 75 Macomber Lane 02871

John M. Taylor 85 Valhalla Drive 02871

Judith M. Wrathall 237 West Main Road 02871

**Town Council**

Peter D. McIntyre, President 24 Maize Corn Road 02871

Albert D. Buddemeyer 1970 East Main Road 02871

Jamie R. B. Heaney 1 Point Street 02871

Hubert E. Little 442 Union Street 02871

Amy G. Rice 438 Braman's Lane 02871

Judith J. Staven 15 Ash Street 02871

Dr. Thomas Swanson P.O. Box 382 02871

Rev. 3/11/04

## **Population Characteristics**

**Population:** The population count for The Town of Portsmouth as of April 1, 2000, was 17,149. This represented a 1.73% increase (292 persons) from the 1990 population of 16,857.

**Rank:** In 2000 Portsmouth ranks 21st in population among Rhode Island's 39 cities and towns.

**Median Age:** In 2000 the median age of the population in Portsmouth was 39.9.

**Age Distribution:** In 2000, 74.8% or 12,820 persons residing in Portsmouth were 18 years of age or older. 12,423 were 21 and over, 2,694 were 62 and over, and 2,307 were 65 and over.

**Population Density:** The 2000 population density of Portsmouth is 739 persons per square mile of land area. Portsmouth contains 23.21 square miles of land area (60,105,119 Sq. meters) (14,852.41 acres) and 36.09 square miles of water area (93,480,812 square meters) (23,097.51 acres).

**Housing Units:** The total number of housing units in the The Town of Portsmouth as of April 1, 2000, was 7,386. This represented an increase of 151 units from the 7,235 housing units in 1990.

Of the 7,386 housing units 628 were vacant. 381 of the vacant units were for seasonal or recreational use.

**Households:** In 2000, there are 6,758 households in Portsmouth with an average size of 2.53 persons. Of these, 4,866 were family households with an average family size of 3.00 persons.

**Race:**

Total Population of One Race: 16,969

White: 16,432

Black or African American: 201

American Indian and Alaska Native: 33

Asian: 234

Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander: 6

Some Other Race: 63

Total Population of two or More Races: 180

Hispanic or Latino: In 2000, 249 persons of Hispanic origin resided in Portsmouth. This represented 1.5% of the population.

**Town of Portsmouth**

**Census 2000 Demographic Profiles:**

<b>General Characteristics</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Total population	17,149	100.0
Male	8,421	49.1
Female	8,728	50.9
Median Age (years)	39.9	(X)
Under 5 years	1,042	6.1
18 years and over	12,820	74.8
65 years and over	2,307	13.5
One race - Total	16,969	99.0
White	16,432	95.8
Black or African American	201	1.2
American Indian and Alaska Native	33	0.2
Asian	234	1.4
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	6	0.0
Some other race	63	0.4
Two or more races	180	1.0
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	249	1.5
Average household size	2.53	(X)
Average family size	3.00	(X)
Total housing units	7,386	100.0
Occupied housing units	6,758	91.5
Owner-occupied housing units	4,995	73.9
Renter-occupied housing units	1,763	26.1
Vacant housing units	628	8.5
<b>Social Characteristics</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Population 25 years and over	12,040	100.0
High school graduate or higher	10,941	90.9
Bachelor's degree or higher	3,120	42.9

### Town of Portsmouth

Civilian veterans (civilian population 25 years and older)	2,418	19.3
Disability Status (population 21 to 64 years)	1,699	17.2
Foreign Born	683	4.0
Now Married (population 15 years and over)	8,591	63.4
Speak a language other than English at home (5 years and older)	922	5.7

<b>Economic Characteristics</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
In Labor Force (16 years and older)	9,161	68.7
Mean travel time to work in minutes (16 years and older)	21.5	(X)
Median household income (dollars)	58,835	(X)
Median family income (dollars)	68,577	(X)
Per capita income (dollars)	28,161	(X)
Families below poverty level	97	2.0
Individuals below poverty level	574	3.4

<b>Housing Characteristics</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Single-family owner-occupied homes	4,368	100.0
Median value (dollars)	167,800	(X)
Median of selected monthly owner costs	(X)	(X)
With a mortgage	1,427	(X)
Not mortgaged	450	(X)

(X) Not applicable.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Summary File 1 (SF 1) and Summary File 3 (SF 3)

Source: US Census 2000

**Town of Portsmouth**

**Portsmouth Employment 2002**

<u>NAICS Sectors</u>	<u>Portsmouth</u>		
	Number of Units	Average Employment	Total Wages
<b>Total, Private &amp; Government:</b>	<b>474</b>	<b>5,741</b>	<b>\$ 237,893,911</b>
<b>Total, Private Only:</b>	<b>461</b>	<b>5,205</b>	<b>216,564,317</b>
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	16	77	1,329,260
Mining	0	0	0
Utilities	*	*	*
Construction	83	593	22,301,112
Manufacturing	29	2,184	133,778,227
Wholesale Trade	27	84	3,492,061
Retail Trade	57	474	9,956,202
Transportation & Warehousing	6	51	726,785
Information	11	56	3,149,851
Finance & Insurance	19	86	3,946,310
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	14	99	1,842,648
Professional & Technical Services	51	135	5,299,889
Management of Companies & Enterprises	*	*	*
Administrative & Waste Services	23	70	2,508,786
Educational Services	9	227	7,222,910
Health Care & Social Assistance	27	368	8,573,761
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	10	125	2,514,445
Accommodation & Food Services	33	400	5,902,675
Other Services, except Public Administration	43	166	3,907,024
Unclassified Establishments	1	6	49,797
Public Administration	-	-	-
	13	536	\$ 21,329,594

**Source: DLT, 2002**



**Town of Portsmouth**

**2004/2005 Municipal Tax Rates**  
**(Per \$1,000 of Assessment)**

& These communities have homestead exemptions available. (Providence rate with homestead exemption \$23.96)

\* These communities also have local Fire district taxes.

# These communities may exempt wholesale inventories.

\$ These communities may exempt retail inventories.

Modified: October 5, 2004

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Residential Property Tax Rates Per \$1,000 Percent of Full Value Base Year Assessment Effective</b>			<b>Commercial Real Estate Rate Per \$1,000</b>	<b>Motor Vehicle Rate Per \$1,000</b>	<b>Retail &amp; Wholesale Inventory Rate Per \$1,000</b>	<b>Business Personal Property Rate Per \$1,000</b>
Barrington	18.99	100%	2003	18.99	42.00	8.88	18.99
Bristol	16.85	100%	2001	16.85	17.35	6.97	16.85
Burrillville * # \$	12.55	100%	2003	12.55	40.00	Not Taxed	12.55
Central Falls &	13.04	100%	2003	34.85	48.65	19.47	51.33
Charlestown *	12.59	100%	2001	12.59	13.08	5.38	12.59
Coventry * \$	25.63	100%	2001	25.63	18.75	7.75	25.63
Cranston &	23.23	95%	2003	30.80	42.44	12.70	34.84
Cumberland * #	16.73	100%	2002	16.73	19.87	10.03	16.73
East Greenwich * # &	17.91	100%	2002	17.91	22.88	9.48	17.91
East Providence &	15.20	100%	2003	19.35	37.10	15.44	44.59
Exeter #	14.70	100%	2002	14.70	32.59	14.00	14.70
Foster	14.11	100%	/2002	14.11	36.95	7.39	14.11
Glocester * #	20.91	100%	2001	20.91	24.37	10.06	28.46
Hopkinton *	17.71	100%	2003	17.71	21.18	8.30	17.71
Jamestown	11.58	100%	2004	11.58	14.42	6.05	11.58
Johnston &	16.40	100%	2003	16.40	41.46	13.86	44.11
Lincoln * # &	18.64	100%	2003	22.74	30.66	9.82	26.84
Little Compton	4.53	100%	2003	4.53	13.90	Not Taxed	4.53
Middletown #	15.85	100%	2002	17.90	16.05	6.64	15.85
Narragansett	10.57	100%	2002	15.86	16.46	6.74	15.86
Newport &	13.72	100%	2001	16.30	23.45	9.48	16.30
New Shoreham # \$	3.77	80%	2000	3.77	9.75	Not taxed	3.77
North Kingstown # \$	14.38	100%	2003	14.38	22.04	Not taxed	14.38
North Providence &	28.71	100%	2004	31.02	41.95	17.54	57.50
North Smithfield #	14.26	100%	2003	14.26	37.62	12.43	37.24
Pawtucket	17.25	100%	2003	25.88	53.30	20.83	52.09
Portsmouth #	16.20	100%	2003	16.20	22.50	9.19	16.20
Providence &	29.65	50%	2004	37.00	76.78	30.70	49.50
Richmond *	18.83	100%	2003	18.83	22.64	9.10	18.83
Scituate	22.08	50%	2003	27.75	30.20	Not taxed	33.05
Smithfield	13.95	100%	2003	13.95	39.00	15.60	41.00
South Kingstown *	12.58	100%	2003	12.58	18.71	7.75	12.58
Tiverton *	14.36	100%	2002	14.36	19.14	7.71	14.36
Warren	14.82	100%	2003	14.82	26.00	14.82	7.87
Warwick	14.81	100%	2003	22.22	34.60	17.73	29.62
Westerly *	9.64	100%	2004	9.64	29.67	5.05	9.64
West Greenwich	18.50	100%	2001	18.50	19.02	7.79	18.50
West Warwick	17.31	100%	2003	24.80	28.47	11.77	28.17
Woonsocket # &	23.85	55%	2002	38.25	46.58	18.63	46.58

## **Town of Portsmouth**

### **Points of Interest**

**BUTTS HILL FORT.** Off Sprague Street. Site was a key position during Rhode Island's only major Revolutionary War land battle, August 29, 1778. Old redoubts still discernible and marker tells of the battle in which Generals Lafayette, Hancock, Greene, and Sullivan participated. OPEN: Dawn to dusk.

**FOUNDER'S BROOK.** Off Boyd's Lane. Site of the landing of the first settlers from Boston in 1638 under Anne Hutchinson, first woman to establish a town in the nation. The Portsmouth Compact, an instrument which organized the first truly democratic form of government in the world, is inscribed on a bronze and stone marker.

**GREEN ANIMALS TOPIARY GARDENS.** (1880) Cory's Lane, off Rte. 114. Eighty sculptured trees and shrubs, some shaped in animal forms. Espaliered fruit trees, a rose arbor, and formal flower beds. Small children's Victorian Toy Museum. Gift shop. OPEN: May 1-Oct 31, daily, 10-5 p.m. 847-1000.

**HERITAGE FOUNDATION OF RHODE ISLAND PARK.** Prudence Island. 475 acres of natural landscape for hiking, bird watching, and photography. Entrance to property on Broadway, center of Prudence Island.

**MEMORIAL TO BLACK SOLDIERS.** Just to the left of the junctions formed by northbound Routes 114 and 24. On August 29, 1778, during the Battle of Rhode Island the First Rhode Island Regiment, comprised primarily of blacks, made a gallant stand which thwarted a British attempt to flank the American line centered on Butts Hill Fort.

**NARRAGANSETT BAY NATIONAL ESTUARINE SANCTUARY.** Prudence Island. Self-guided trail and guided nature walks; swimming, boating and picnicing. Ferry from Colt State Park, Bristol, Memorial Day-Labor Day, 253-7482. 683-6780, 253-7482.

**OLD SCHOOL HOUSE.** (c. 1716) Corner East Main Road and Union Street. Nation's oldest. Contains antique school desks, school bells, and textbooks. OPEN: Memorial Day-Labor Day, Sat and Sun, 1-4 p.m., and by appt. 683-9178.

**PORTSMOUTH ABBEY.** (1960) Cory's Lane. Benedictine monastery and preparatory school. Outstanding church in contemporary style, designed by Pietro Belluschi. Noteworthy interior feature of the church is wire sculpture by Richard Lippold. Library, also designed by Belluschi, to be built in 1990. OPEN: Year-round. 683-2000.

**PORTSMOUTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY.** (1868) Corner of East Main Rd. and Union Street. Former Christian Sabbath Society Meeting House. Museum. Collection of early household conveniences, farm implements, etc. Julia Ward Howe and other notables preached here. Monument on grounds marks site of initial skirmish, Battle of Rhode Island, August 29, 1778. OPEN: Memorial Day-Labor Day, Sat & Sun, 1-4 p.m., and by appt. 683-9178.