

## **Curator's Report for April 2021 Annual Meeting Summing up work done April 2021- March 2022**

### **Accessions:**

I have accessioned and created Past Perfect records for 54 2021-2022 donations/gifts, including 5 that are Born Digital materials. Born Digital Collections are scans of original material where the original is not housed in our collection. The owners have provided us with scans, or allowed us to scan their photographs. They also grant us the rights to provide access to these scans for research and in-house exhibit purposes.

Some of the standouts from these accessions are memorabilia from the Bristol Rangers Drum & Bugle Corps, a 1911 ledger from the IOOF women's auxiliary (Rebekahs), two D'Wolf ledgers dating from 1786 and 1806 (digital material only).

Additionally I have formally accessioned and databased 9 collections of Personal Paper/Institutional Archives that were donated pre-2018 but were never entered into Past Perfect.

### **Policies & Permissions:**

I completed and submitted to the board a formal Collection Management Policy. It was approved and finalized in November 2021.

### **Reorganization:**

We took advantage of the unfortunate pandemic closing by reworking our space in order to make the exhibit area handicapped accessible and also self-guided.

Towards this end we decided to assess the furniture collections on the first and second floors. I created an Excel inventory and Catherine, Rei, and Dan Manchester reviewed it and added information and recommendations. The review criteria was:

1. Is the item made in Bristol or a part of Bristol's history?
2. Is the item unique or special in some way?
3. Would the item be useful for display and or exhibit?

Based on this we identified items that did not fit or benefit our collection and earmarked them for deaccession.

As part of the reorganization I cleaned out all the Almy Room cases. Catherine and I moved all of the smaller furniture items and, in June of 2021 our wonderful movers safely moved 8 glass exhibit cases from the second floor to the first, and also moved the Burnside desk and Pozzi cabinet upstairs. During the move it became clear that many of the lights in the old cases were dangerous. Some had frayed cords or connections and others were no longer securely attached to the wood frame of the case. I removed all the lights, checked the shelf hardware for stability, and cleaned the cases inside and out, laying in new fabric liners for the bottom shelf of each case.

### **Processing:**

This year I processed 7 new collections and added newly accessioned materials to 16 old ones. Included in these was a large gift of books from the Bristol School Department, the Rulon-Miller Family Papers, and a collection of children's books and toys from Pam Meyer.

Our volunteer Dick Usher was a wonderful help as usual and cheerfully worked on our dusty collection of 1910-1940 building permits.

### **Exhibits:**

When we reopened in June 2021 I reinstalled our *Lost Main Street; the Mom & Pop Businesses of Bristol's Past* exhibit. It remained up through December 2021. We added a COVID extension on the effect of the pandemic on local, small businesses in service of a grant.

In July of 2021 we turned the Tessler Room into the Hands-On-History Room. The materials displayed in this room can be touched and interacted with. Catherine, Rei, and I designed a set of room "rules" or guidelines. For the Lost Business Exhibit our hands on activity focused on early pharmacies and we provided coloring pages, recipes for fountain drinks, and an activity that allowed children to write up a prescription and compound their own medicine (salt or pepper). For the current School Exhibit our Hands-On-History Room activities focus on school slates, learning to use an abacus, and questions from an actual test Bristol students needed to pass in order to be accepted into High School.

In 2021 I also installed a couple of smaller, pop-up exhibits. In late October- December we featured materials honoring Bristol Veterans who fought in from Korea up through Afghanistan. I also created an exhibit on the topic of collecting for the December 2021 Holiday Open House. This featured items that were collected by BH&PS staff and board members. We felt this might be appealing for crowds that did not live locally.

In January 2022 I installed our new 6 month exhibit, *Who are we Teaching and What are we Teaching Them? The Evolution of Courses of Instruction in Bristol Public Schools (1680-1899)*. Catherine, Courtney, and Rei provided valuable guidance and proofing (as usual). This exhibit includes the following sections:

- A 1680-1899 Timeline
- The Evolution of the Classroom System in Bristol's Public Schools
- History of School Terms and Attendance
- Courses of Study in Bristol Public Schools
- Segregating and Desegregating Our Schools (1851-1864)
- Evening School
- High School
- Creating a Well-Rounded Student: The introduction of Music, Art, and Gymnastics.

### **Public Relations:**

Catherine and I worked with the fabulous local designer Lauren Enjeti on a tie-in publication for our Lost Business Exhibit as well as a series of 6 mobile exhibit banners. These banners (like the two Mt Hope Bridge banners created in 2019) will be posted in different locations around town. We decided on the following topics: Industry, Banks, Farms, Military, Recreation, Schools. We wrote small paragraphs of text for each of the topics and I identified and scanned 15-25 images for 4 of the 6 topics. We have had 4 of them printed and they look wonderful!

We have had quite a few archival users this year. They range from local Bristolians to a researcher from France. I have provided access to students from Roger Williams, URI, Brown, Providence College, and West Point.

I worked with Alison Pardee regarding the 3 paintings that we had on loan from Nancy Abercrombie. She has agreed to formally transfer the paintings to our collection.

I have met with staff from Linden Place, Coggeshall Farm, and South County History Center regarding collaborating on material concerns, reproductions, and upcoming programs.

I answered more than a dozen reference requests for genealogical information, house information, library books, and even a few on basic Bristol history.

I worked on many Instagram posts this year highlighting national events such as: National Volunteer Month, National Preservation Month, Pride Month, Day of Portugal, and Native American History Month.. I also worked on posts highlighting our exhibits and special events including The Flea & Fair, Art Night, and the Holiday Open House.

Thanks for all of the support offered this year. As always I find this a supportive and collaborative place to work with a wonderful collection. It is a pleasure to work here!

Lisa DeCesare  
Curator