the power of preservation education
a campaign for the future of providence
We respect the past and take the long view.

The historic fabric of our city is what makes Providence special. Every building, park, and streetscape in our city means something. Every older building in our city tells a story about our past. When we alter our city, it leaves an impact for generations to come, so we must be vigilant stewards of Providence’s identity and architectural character. When we work together as advocates for that identity and character, we ensure a vibrant future for the city we love.
Respecting the Past While Embracing the Future
Important Work That Needs Your Support

You understand preservation and why it matters. The character of Providence didn’t just happen; it is the result of deliberate, painstaking, essential work. PPS has been at the forefront of that work, making our city a better place. The impact of PPS’s work on our lives—the beautiful cityscape, the tree-lined neighborhoods framed with historic houses, the smart urban planning that brings everything together—makes Providence the extraordinary place we treasure today.

We know you understand why this is so important. Like us, you love history, architecture, and the city itself, and you have helped PPS champion the preservation and thoughtful development that keep our city historic and vibrant. We are now asking for your support with an initiative that will educate residents about why preservation is so vital to Providence’s future – the power of preservation education.

This campaign will help PPS do the vital work needed to ensure that preservation concerns are given a seat at the table in every discussion about development. It will give us tools to inform and educate more citizens that preservation is never done. This is for today, tomorrow, and for generations to come.

Your philanthropic investment in the power of preservation education will have a profound impact on the future of Providence and its citizens. It is a worthy investment that will provide the means for PPS to remain a powerful advocate for a Providence that respects our past and embraces a vibrant and successful future. This is a legacy worthy of your support.

Gratefully,

Malcolm G. Chace Jr.  Johnnie C. Chace  Patricia A. Moran
The Power of Preservation Education
A Campaign for the Future of Providence

Today’s Challenge: Understand, Respect, and Preserve the Treasures of our Heritage

The character of America’s cities is shaped by a complex blend of geography, tradition, and history. Older cities have singular personalities stamped by the residents, architectural design, and the significance of their singular history and heritage. The very oldest cities connect us to hundreds of years of American experience through multiple layers of rich history and architectural styles.

Providence is a national treasure that demands our respect and attention. Its character could be lost forever if we are not vigilant in protecting our inheritance.

Preservation Education is critical to ensuring that current and future generations of citizens and policy makers understand why our city is treasured, and that it must be nurtured and protected. New residents are finding their homes among our historic streets; it is critical that residents young and old are taught to value the history and heritage of the place they live, but also to prioritize long term stewardship over short term gain.

Cranston Street Armory (1907)
The Cranston Street Armory was constructed in 1907 to house the Rhode Island National Guard. Designed by the architectural firm of William R. Walker and Sons, the castle-like structure is owned by the State of RI. The building was vacated by the National Guard in 1996 due to rising upkeep costs and the need for upgrades. PPS is working directly with the State and other stakeholders to find a new, sustainable operating model and tenants.
Safeguarding the heritage of our city is vital and it is a responsibility of each succeeding generation. Without your commitment, parts of our history - exceptional, precious, and irreplaceable - could vanish forever. The Providence Preservation Society (PPS) is now undertaking an important effort to help prevent that unimaginable loss and ensure a vibrant future.

In its first major campaign of the decade, The Power of Preservation Education, PPS is raising over $1 million to:

- Create a number of sustained preservation education programs that inform and inspire our residents and those who impact our city’s future. Estimated to cost $600,000 or more.
- Fund essential and critical improvements to Providence’s 1769 Old Brick School House and restore its role as a center for preservation education in the 21st century. Estimated to cost $400,000 or more.

“The historic neighborhoods, both residential and commercial, are often the location of choice for Millennials, new residents, small businesses, new businesses, and the creative and knowledge industries. Of the population growth since 2000, more than half occurred within local historic districts.”

*Historic Preservation: An Overlooked Economic Driver* (2018 statewide historic preservation study)
**Six Decades of Leadership**

PPS is more than a group of people who care about old buildings—it is a national leader in protecting the “power of place.” Formed in 1956 to save architecturally significant houses of College Hill from demolition, PPS has grown into a multi-faceted, city-wide organization, brave enough to take on City Hall.

**Our mission is compelling:**

*Work to improve Providence by advocating for historic preservation and the enhancement of the city’s unique character through thoughtful design and planning.*

In a nationally important event, PPS’s 1959 *College Hill Study* resulted in the first instance in which federal urban renewal funds were allocated for preservation rather than demolition of a neighborhood. This work created a preservation blueprint for American cities struggling to save themselves from wholesale demolition in favor of highways and strip malls.

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*PPS Presidents: Through the Years*

Elizabeth G. Allen (1956-1962)
Washington Irving (1962-1968)
Frank Mauran III (1969-1977)
Peter B. Freeman (1981-1983)
Morton Smith (1983-1985)
Robert D. Reichley (1985-1988)
Leslie A. Gardner (1990-1992)
Deming Sherman (1996-1999)
Patricia Moran (1999-2001)
Mark Van Noppen (2006-2007)
Oliver H.L. Bennett (2008-2009)
Vance Freymann (2010-2011)
Lucie G. Scarle (2012-2013)
Christopher J. Marsella (2018-2019)

*Antoinette Downing Kirk Kendrick-Prentice-Tirocchi House (1867)*

Built in a very elaborate Italianate Style, this house is often referred to as the “Wedding Cake House” as it is Providence’s consummate “gingerbread” house. PPS has listed the house for several years as a Most Endangered Property and helped raise $25,000 to restore the tower.
During the 1960s and ‘70s, PPS saved Providence’s historically significant Benefit Street and surrounding areas from large-scale urban renewal. This bold initiative set a new standard for preservation efforts around the country, shifting focus from preserving individual buildings to considering the future of entire neighborhoods. This set Providence apart from other cities that failed to prioritize their architectural heritage and lost their identities in a blizzard of wholesale demolition.

Providence was and is different. Preserving our city’s character inspires devotion from long-term residents, but also attracts energetic newcomers who value authenticity and urban vitality and have made this city their home.

“It’s fortunate that PPS’s early leadership, including such notable founders as Elizabeth Allen, John Nicholas Brown, Beatrice “Happy” Chace, and Antoinette Downing, was able to engage a strong group of energetic young residents to save some very important elements of Providence.

That enthusiasm and expert guidance has continued for six decades and has inspired significant preservation results throughout the city. Now is the time to take additional steps to carry that momentum well into the future.”

Liz Rollins Mauran, PPS Member and Vice Regent for Rhode Island at Mount Vernon
A Pivotal Era for Providence

After more than 60 years of service to the community, PPS remains vibrant, relevant, and firmly committed to promoting the value of historic preservation. The work of PPS has enormous impact on the lives of the many people who care about the historical significance and urban landscape of the city. What projects will shape the former I-195 land? How will the Industrial Trust Building be repurposed? Can institutional expansion be balanced with preserving neighborhood character?

PPS is at the forefront of these conversations, from reviewing proposed new building designs, to working to save endangered spaces, and helping residents improve neighborhoods through Local Historic District expansion. Never before have the economic, environmental, and cultural benefits of preservation been more crucial to Providence, its citizens, and their neighborhoods.

Providence, a city of nearly 200,000 people, is home to a variety of legacy buildings and intact neighborhoods. Cities thrive when they successfully adapt to change while retaining those elements that make them unique. PPS appreciates that evolution of Providence is not only certain but desirable. Our role is to provide the expertise and focus to make judicious choices. We champion what is most important to people in every area and neighborhood and encourage appropriate, well-designed development.
What other city of ours size can showcase world class arts, robust commercial diversity, culinary creativity, educational distinction, and medical and technological innovation, all within a beautiful and fascinating urban environment? These attractions, in turn, encourage deeper commitments to Providence by enhancing the recruitment of new capital and talent. And the champion for this amazing community is PPS. PPS tirelessly promotes the connection between Providence’s heritage, and its quality of life and economic strength. Providence thrives because of its heritage, which serves as a powerful engine of prosperity for its increasingly diverse population. Our city’s future hinges on how well we capitalize on its past.

Providence will continue to grow and change and reinvent itself. In the midst of what can sometimes be chaotic progress, the community relies on PPS to advocate for historic structures and neighborhoods that are the true soul of Providence, as well as thoughtful new design. Successful advocacy always starts with education. Those who fully understand the value of preservation and why it matters will be prepared to lead us into the future.

“…the historic resources in Rhode Island are significant contributors to the economy, the quality of life, and the environment of the state. The historic cities, towns, and neighborhoods in Rhode Island attract visitors, residents, businesses, and investment.”

Historic Preservation: An Overlooked Economic Driver (2018 statewide historic preservation study)

Historic Preservation: An Investment in Our Future

In 2015, the PPS Board of Trustees and other community members worked to create a strategic plan that detailed the goals and directions of the organization for the next decade and beyond. That process identified critical areas through which PPS could best satisfy its mission and benefit the people who live and work in Providence. This strategic plan resulted in PPS’s $1 million campaign, The Power of Preservation Education.

The purpose of the campaign is to fund the programs and investments that will bring the strategic plan into reality. This initiative will enable PPS to create new and robust programs in preservation education, and provide for a number of essential capital improvements to the 1769 Old Brick School House, our historic colonial building in the College Hill National Landmark Historic District.

Executive Director Brent Runyon welcomes people to a walking tour of Olneyville
Caring for the Past, Celebrating Our Future:
School House Capital Fund

Nowhere is the power of place more relevant than the home of an organization devoted to preserving and revitalizing the city’s historic fabric.

PPS owns and stewards the 1769 Old Brick School House at 24 Meeting Street. The building has a long and illustrious history as a place for assembly and education. Early in its 250 year history it was a munitions factory during the Revolutionary War, but later primarily served the citizens of Providence as a free public school. Education was its reason for being. It was one of the nation’s first free public schools for African American children, it housed Brown University during construction of the College Building, it was a cooking school, it was the nation’s first fresh air school for children with tuberculosis, and it later became the original site of the Meeting Street School.

Those deep layers of history reveal the true value of this beautiful old school house as a center for education. History is vitally alive inside this building, and its message of the value of preservation and the power of place resonates with visitors. This visible example of an old building brought to new life and meaning shows why stewardship is so important. PPS is honored to be the caretaker of this place where thousands of individuals have passed through and left their mark.

Our next era goals for the Old Brick School House are to bring it into compliance with modern building and fire codes, make both floors universally accessible, and expand the use of the building for engaging and informative educational activities and visitor services.
“Providence’s Old Brick School House has an unmatched legacy of transformational access to education. With the Campaign’s success, the community will benefit from preservation education programs of long-term benefit to all people connected to Providence. I hope our many friends and donors will, through their generous support, allow us to expand this essential work for the future of our city.”

Brent Runyon, Executive Director
The Power of Preservation Education campaign will make the Old Brick School House suitable for expanded educational programming by:

- Transforming the building to meet all current building, ADA and fire code, making both floors accessible to all visitors and members of the community while also retaining the look, feel, and materials of a 250-year-old building.
- Making interior modifications to accommodate expanded educational programming and exhibit space to teach and inspire the next generation of advocates for Providence’s unique sense of place.
- Creating a dedicated resource library space to house the unique collections of historic books, maps, and photographs in the care of PPS, making them accessible to visitors and researchers.
- Enhancing PPS’s role in heritage tourism by modifying the building’s interior layout to make provision for rotating, interpretive exhibits about historic preservation, Providence architecture and landscapes, and the complex narrative history of the site itself—including its central role in the history of access to public education for African Americans in the United States.
- Installing a “Welcome Kiosk” with information and signage to orient visitors and residents alike to points of architectural and historic interest and provide information about the Old Brick School House and the range of PPS services.

**Investment needed**........................................................................................................... $400,000+

**Components:**
- Code compliance, accessibility, meeting and library space .......... $350,000+
- Exhibit and visitor engagement spaces ................................................................. $50,000

“The historic resources of Rhode Island attract visitors who spend significant amounts of money, and the beneficiaries of those expenditures are local workers and businesses who are hosts to that market.”

*Historic Preservation: An Overlooked Economic Driver*  
(2018 statewide historic preservation study)
Ensuring Providence’s Unique Character and Sense of Place: The Preservation Education Fund

Preservation cannot exist without recognizing its value and its positive impact on our city’s economy and culture. That powerful sense of “home” resonates with those who learn to appreciate our historic past and architectural legacy. The Power of Preservation Education will support staffing, programming, and new educational initiatives that will increase public understanding of the value of historic preservation and help property owners learn more about how they can carefully steward their own properties. The Preservation Education Fund will support a full-time education staff person to develop and manage a range of new and expanded educational programs for the next five years. Creating this position will also allow current staff to focus more time on critical preservation advocacy issues.

Mayor Elorza joins PPS for a walking tour of his childhood neighborhood

Students from Manton Avenue Project perform place-based monologues
PPS plans to expand its base of grant funding to underwrite a significant portion of its educational programming costs. Sustainability is imperative, and PPS will seek donors to endow these services in perpetuity, and also create fee-based, revenue-generating programs to help supplement income in support of our mission. Examples of the educational programming under consideration include:

- A comprehensive, state-of-the-art, online portal for Providence architecture and landscapes which will serve as a central repository for information on historic places in Providence.

- Training in building skills, such as plaster work, masonry, and restoration carpentry, which are necessary to preserve historic buildings. As part of its strategic plan, PPS seeks to expand its role in the training of traditional building skills. We are currently studying similar, successful programs from around the country to determine how best to customize a program for the Providence community and its unique blend of neighborhoods.

- Expansion of youth education in schools, summer camps, youth groups, and throughout the diverse neighborhoods of Providence, helping children learn about and value the past so they can better steward the future of preservation.

- Reinstatement of PPS's popular Historic House Specialist certification course for real estate professionals. There is a high level of interest in this program, which conferred certifications on hundreds of real estate agents over a number of years. The program teaches architectural styles, the history of Providence’s neighborhoods, explains financial incentives for homeowners who do historically appropriate renovations, and how historic districts work.

- Reimagining PPS’s long-serving Preservation Consultant’s Bureau for the 21st century, allowing PPS to offer new workshops that give recommendations and support for anyone restoring an older building. This resource would be indispensable for the majority of Providence neighborhoods since more than 75% of the city’s housing stock is 50 years or older. PPS receives numerous requests every month for advice on everything from the appropriate choice of wood for shingle siding to how to glaze windows and do lead-safe window repair, paint colors and choices, and how to hire a contractor.

- Positioning PPS as a leader and expert on how to thoughtfully incorporate modern “green” technology into historic buildings. As part of its expanding role, PPS will take part in assembling and sharing information about environmental sustainability and work with other organizations involved in healthy and efficient housing.

**Investment needed** ............................................................... $600,000+

**Components:**

- Education staff funding for 5 years ........................................ $350,000+
- Program enhancement and operation .................................. $250,000+