

Portsmouth Timeline

7 March 1638	Portsmouth Compact signed in Boston by 23 men
May 13, 1638	First recorded town meeting
1668	Erection of first windmill on Butt's Hill
1673	Hanging of Thomas Cornell, found guilty of killing his mother Rebecca Cornell
1700	Construction of Quaker Meetinghouse at corner of East Main Rd. & Hedley St.
1708	First census: 628 inhabitants, 104 eligible for militia
1716	Southermost School erected; now located on the grounds of the Portsmouth Historical Society, it is the oldest schoolhouse in America.
1755	Census: 1363 inhabitants
1774	The British blockaded Narragansett Bay.
Dec. 7, 1776—Oct. 25, 1779	British occupation of Newport and Portsmouth
July 1777	Col. William Barton captured British General Richard Prescott from Overing House/Prescott Farm.
August 29, 1778	The Battle of Rhode Island took place
October 25, 1779	British forces departed from Rhode Island.
May 20, 1790	Rhode Island was the last colony to adopt the U. S. Constitution.
1790	Census: 1560 inhabitants
1794	First bridge opened between Island Park and Tiverton
1810	Coal deposits discovered and mined off and on during 19 th century
1850	Census: 1833 inhabitants
1852	Dr. Samuel G. Howe and his wife Julia Ward Howe purchased 'Oak Glen' as a summer retreat from Boston.
1862	U. S. Army opened Lovell General Hospital at Portsmouth Grove
1865	Civil War ended; Lovell Hospital dismantled; wealthy Newport summer people began to establish large farms
1870	Census: 2008 inhabitants
1895	Town Hall constructed
1898	Portsmouth Free Public Library dedicated
1899	Rural Free Mail Delivery began
1900	Census: 2105 inhabitants
October 25, 1929	Mt. Hope Bridge opened, linking Portsmouth and Bristol
1936	State celebrated its 300 year anniversary
1938	Portsmouth celebrated its 300 th anniversary. Portsmouth Historical Society was formed and took possession of Christian Union Church property.
Sept. 21, 1938	The 1938 Hurricane decimated the Island Park the popular amusement park.
1940	Census: 3683 inhabitants
March 1942	The Navy opened the Motor Torpedo Boat Training Center at Melville.
1945	WWII ended; U. S. Navy maintained a presence with a fuelling station
1950	Census: 6578 inhabitants
1956	Sakonnet River Bridge opened to connect Portsmouth & Tiverton
1960	Census: 8251 inhabitants
	Raytheon Corp. constructed its anti-submarine warfare facility on the former Portsmouth Asylum (Poor Farm) property
1960's	The Town's population increased during the next 40 years as new industries moved in and transportation became easier. The number of farms diminished and the land turned into housing developments. Construction of Rt. 24 threatened Founder's Brook and memorial site of original settlers.
1970	Census: 12, 521 inhabitants
1980	Census: 14,256 inhabitants
1990	Census: 16,857 inhabitants
2000	Census: 17,149 inhabitants
2010	Census: 17,349 inhabitants
2012	New Sakonnet River Bridge opened to replace old bridge

(compiled by Anne B. Wagner, February 14, 2013)

