

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***Handwritten History: Correspondence of Great Americans***  
*Newport Historical Society Exhibit Opens in Conjunction with*  
*Signing Their Lives Away Author Presentation*

**Newport, RI – (July 2010)** – The Newport Historical Society is pleased to announce the first exhibit opening in a series of exhibits that will be presented this summer. *Handwritten History* will debut July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend highlighting selections from the Society’s world-renowned collections. *Handwritten History: Correspondence of Great Americans*, at the 1739 Colony House on Washington Square, will feature large-scale reproductions of 11 letters and documents from the Society’s collections, all by or about famous individuals or events in American history.

Authors in *Handwritten History* include George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams as well as documents signed by Abraham Lincoln, James Monroe and John Quincy Adams. The most famous letter in the NHS collections, which will be showcased, is a 1787 letter from Thomas Jefferson to his nephew Peter Carr which offers a rare and surprising glimpse into his views on religion. Most of the correspondence, though not all, have a Newport connection. One is a letter from President John Adams to the inhabitants of Newport dated May 28<sup>th</sup>, 1798. Another is a first-hand account of the events leading up to the Boston Tea Party written by Newport resident Peleg Clarke.

“The letters in the Society’s collections provide fascinating and intimate behind-the-scenes glimpses into American history,” explains Newport Historical Society intern Sarah Vickery who curated the exhibit. “As Jefferson wrote, they have ‘all the advantages of Conversation, with the Additional ones of searching deeper into subjects.’” The letters allow readers to see the interconnectedness of people and places in American history as well as gain insight into who these legendary figures were as real people. *Handwritten History* is generously sponsored by BankNewport.

*Handwritten History* opens on Saturday July 3<sup>rd</sup> in conjunction with the 3pm program *Signing Their Lives Away* at the Colony House. In 1776 fifty-six men risked their lives and livelihood to defy the King of England and sign the Declaration of Independence. But how many of them do we really know? The Newport Historical Society will host the authors of *Signing Their Lives Away: The Fame and Misfortune of the Men Who Signed the Declaration of Independence*, Denise Kiernan and Joseph D’Agnese, who will share some of their favorite signer stories and debunk myths. Admission costs \$5 per person, \$1 for Newport Historical Society members. Reservations suggested. Persons with mobility issues should call in advance. 401-841-8770

Other exhibits set to open this summer include a costume exhibit featuring 19<sup>th</sup> century men’s clothing, *Tooth and Bone*, an exhibit featuring Rhode Island scrimshaw and miniature portraits on ivory at the 2010 Newport Antiques Show, as well as a preview of *Hold Fast! The Story of Newport and the Sea* at the Newport Convention and Visitor’s Bureau.

# *Handwritten History*

CORRESPONDENCE OF GREAT AMERICANS  
from the Collections of the Newport Historical Society

For additional information and/or to obtain media photos please contact: Elizabeth Sulock, Public Affairs Associate, 401-846-0813 x104, [esulock@newporthistorical.org](mailto:esulock@newporthistorical.org).

## **About the Newport Historical Society**

Since 1854, the Newport Historical Society has collected and preserved the artifacts, photographs, documents, publications, and genealogical records that relate to the history of Newport County, to make these materials readily available for both research and enjoyment, and to act as a resource center for the education of the public about the history of Newport County, so that knowledge of the past may contribute to a fuller understanding of the present. For more information please visit [www.newporthistory.org](http://www.newporthistory.org).