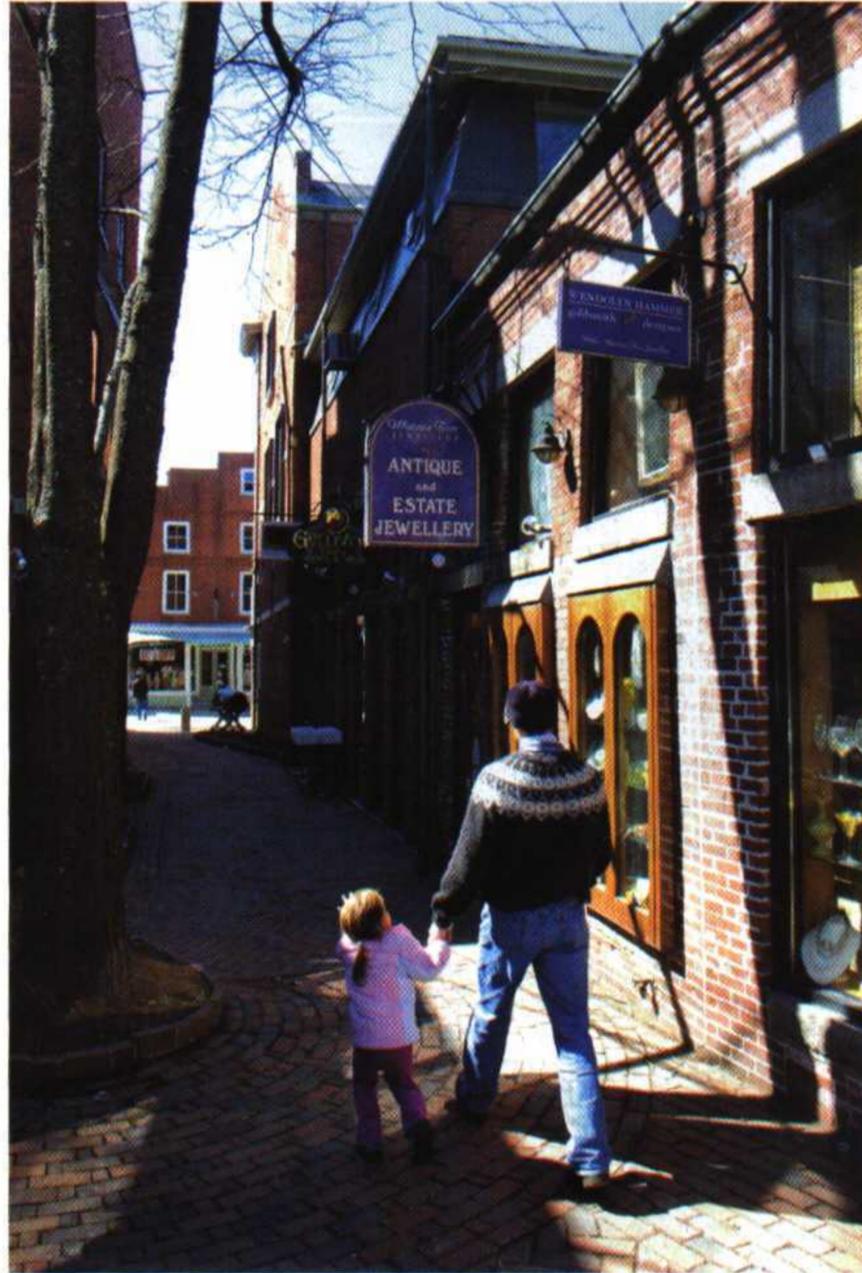


PORTSMOUTH, NH

BY RACHEL CARRIER



Many New England towns, particularly those along the Atlantic coastline, have a sister-city in Great Britain. Portsmouth, New Hampshire, takes its name from the naval town in the county of Hampshire, England.

If our English settlers lacked imagination when naming their New World town, they made up for it by gracing the seaport with magnificent architecture. Portsmouth, once one of the world's busiest shipbuilding cities, boasts a great variety of fine Gregorian, Colonial, and Federal style homes sprinkled throughout downtown and the surrounding areas. Many of these buildings are now museums and open to the public during the warm seasons for tours.

Cape Codders, who are often loath to stray from their own beaches and waterfront towns, will find that a trip to a different sea-coast brings a whole new set of experiences. Portsmouth offers

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DAY-TRIPPING

PORTSMOUTH, NH

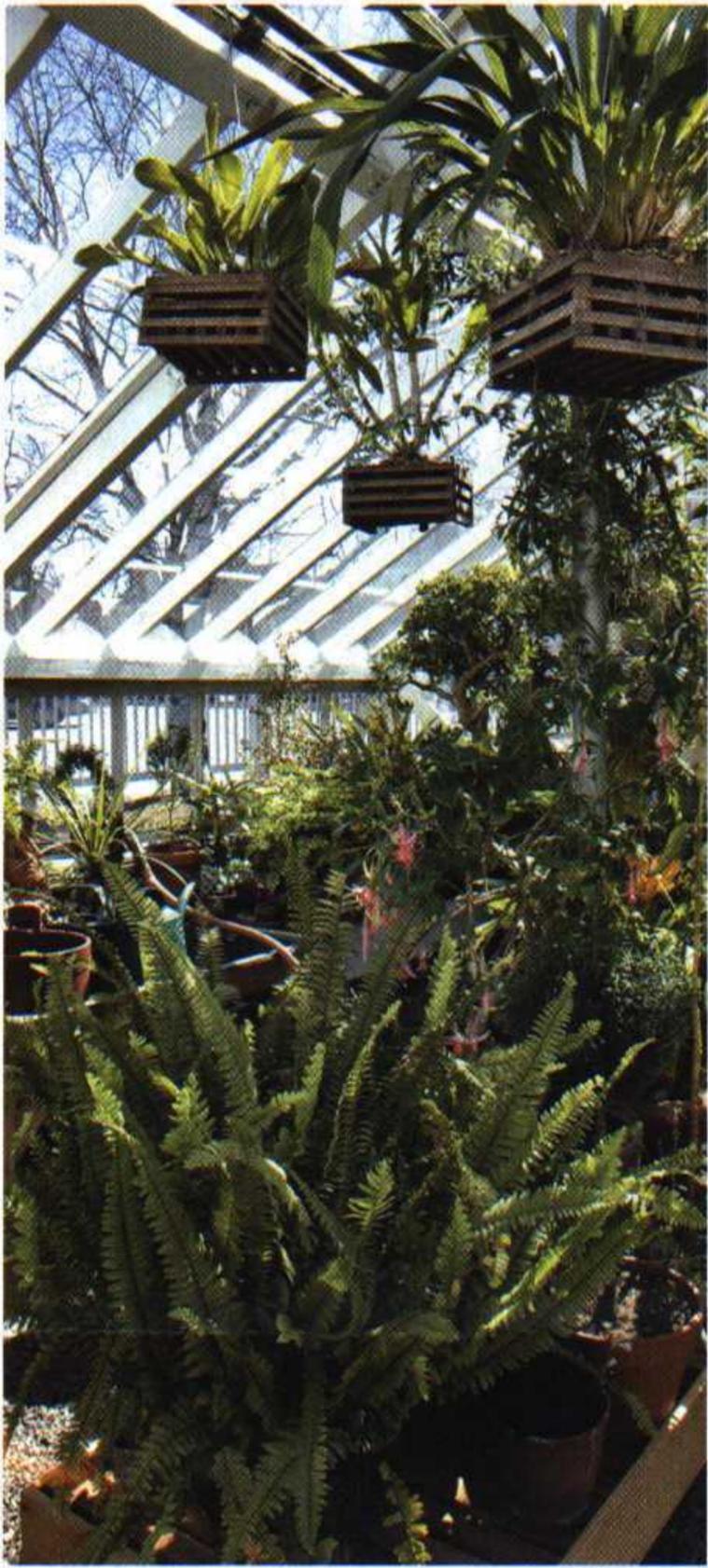
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sights, sounds, shopping, and dining that people of all ages are apt to enjoy. If you arrive in town early, be sure to stop for breakfast or brunch at the Friendly Toast, a quirky restaurant with one of the most extensive menus in town. Children will be mesmerized by the kooky décor.

Head to the South End first to see one of the city's most popular museums, which is actually an entire neighborhood of historic homes, collectively referred to as Strawberry Banke (www.strawberybanke.org). When it was settled in 1623, the town of Portsmouth was given this name because of the abundance of wild strawberries found alongside the Piscataqua River, a tidal estuary. Strawberry Banke, a must-see for history buffs and garden enthusiasts, stays open year-round, with self-guided tours and a variety of programs and events offered from May through October.

Right outside the museum visitors will find riverside gardens and Prescott Park, which is home to colorful flower gardens, including large demonstration beds planted





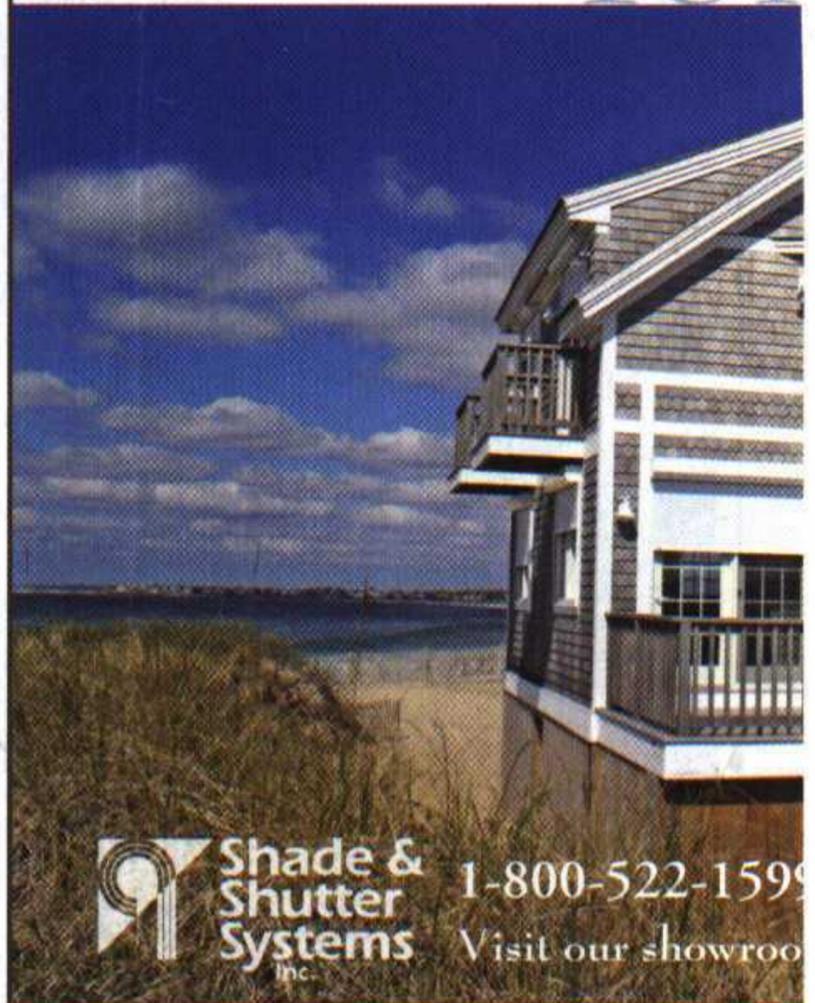
Greenhouse at Strawberry Banke

with different flower varieties each year. From June through October, the park serves as a venue for one of New England's most popular summer arts events, the Prescott Park Arts Festival (www.prescottpark.org), now in its 33rd year. For a small donation, participants enjoy music and food events, main stage productions, art shows, and other special activities and performances. This year's main stage production, *The Sound of Music*, features lots of local talent.

Portsmouth is currently a leading contender for the title of U.S. city with the most restaurants per capita, so it'll be easy finding a quick bite to eat in the early afternoon. Locat-

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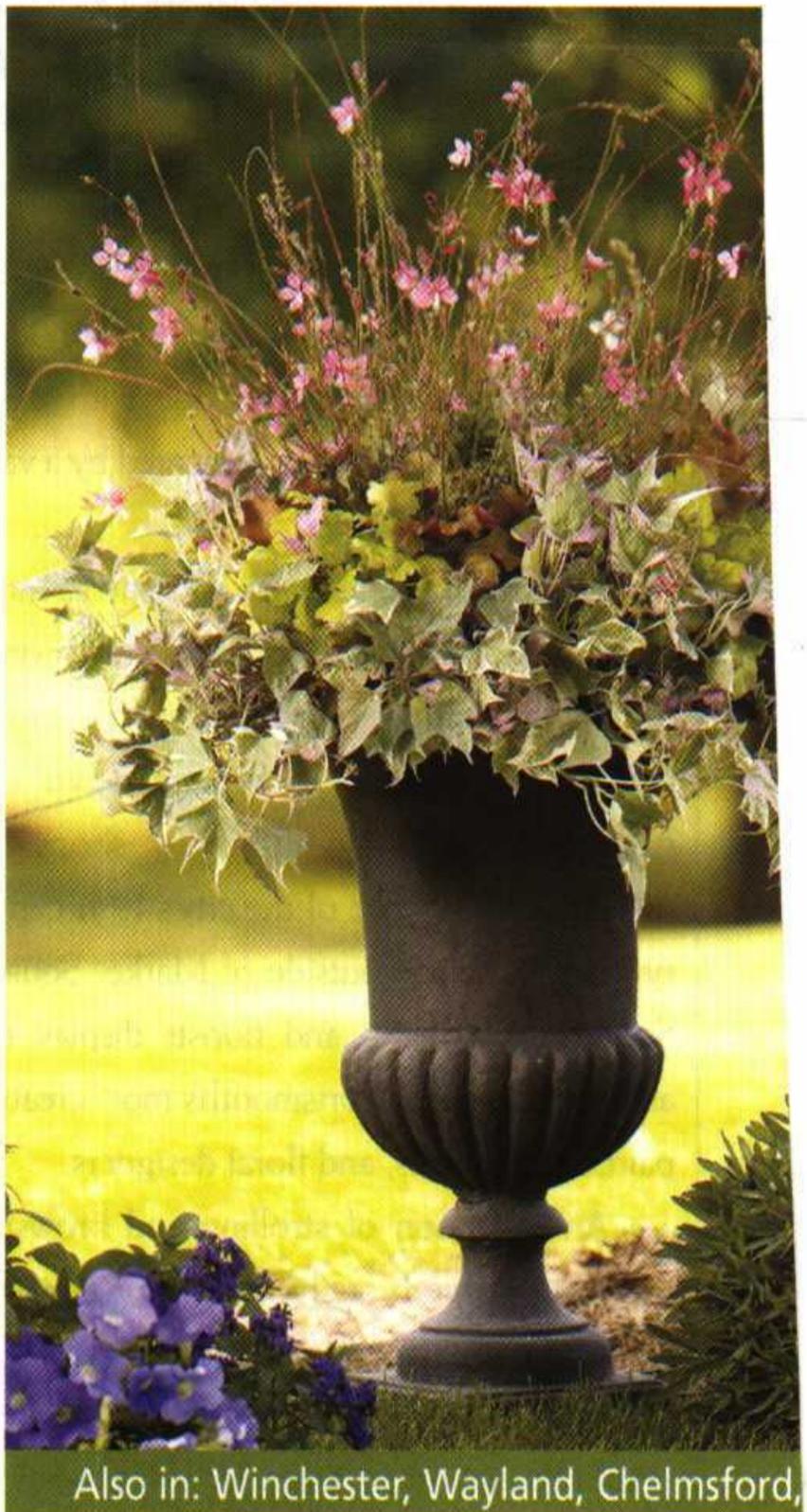
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ed right in the heart of Market Square, Popovers on the Square is a casual café offering sandwiches and soups made with fresh, seasonal ingredients, complemented by a variety of coffees and wines.

Downtown Portsmouth is home to more than 100 stores and boutiques, offering everything from antiques and clothing to books and toys. Make sure to venture down side streets and alleyways, as many shops are tucked away in some of the city's 19th-century brick buildings outside of Market Square. Several art galleries and florists display the artistry of some of Portsmouth's most creative painters, sculptors, and floral designers.

An afternoon of strolling and browsing will surely have brought back your appetite, so take advantage of one of Portsmouth's fine restaurants. A cool summer evening will put you in the mood for the selection offered by

Anthony Alberto's Ristorante, which offers dishes from all regions of Italy, sharing the menu with New England fare. The charming restaurant, nestled on a small side street in historic downtown, makes its own pastas and breads from scratch and offers a wide selection of Italian and California wines.

End your evening with some first-rate theatre, film, dance, or music at The Music Hall, located right off Congress Street (www.themusichall.org). The Seacoast Repertory Theatre (www.seacoastrep.org) is another venue offering award-winning theatre and entertainment, with an added bonus: after the show you can sit outside in the courtyard facing the Piscataqua River, and enjoy the crisp, cool summer night air. 📍

Rachel Carrier is assistant editor at Cape Cod Life Publications.