



# PORTSMOUTH

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*Explore*

JULY 2025

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JULY 2025 | EXPLORE



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Hidden Pond is designed for privacy and relaxation, bringing the outside world in with its thoughtful spaces. Read about this rejuvenating resort on page 12.

Photography:  
Jeff Roberts

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CONSERVATION'S

# Creative Side



At the intersection of architecture and art, Sash & Solder restores stained glass windows to museum-quality condition to last another century



ARTICLE BY ANN KATHRYN KELLY | PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEVIN EDGE



Stained glass windows are more than exquisite works of visual art. Each window also tells a written story, literally.

Throughout the Middle Ages, stained glass windows were dominant across Europe's Gothic cathedrals. While breathtaking, these windows had a practical purpose. They were "the poor man's Bible," visually interpreting Biblical stories for a widely illiterate population.

Stained glass, of course, isn't limited to churches. Fast-forward from medieval times to the 1600s through to World War II, stained glass windows adorned libraries, banks, municipal buildings, and elaborate residential homes throughout the world.

Celebrated for visual beauty, documentation is just as important to every stained glass window's "life story"—especially when it comes to recording current conditions and the repair processes needed, so that future generations may continue to enjoy the grandeur. This is where Sash & Solder comes in, working at the intersection between architecture and art; between conservation and creativity.

Sash & Solder, located in the Button Factory in Portsmouth, specializes in museum-quality stained glass window restoration and repair. Owner and craftsman Tom Driscoll founded Sash & Solder in 2015 with his wife and co-owner, Heather Brooks. A third owner, Dennis LaVersa, joined in 2019 and became partner in 2023. Fun fact: Driscoll and LaVersa met as teenagers, working together at a pizza shop. Decades later, their working relationship came full circle when they both apprenticed with the same Boston restoration studio. Together, they've worked for several Boston studios on projects that included Princeton University's chapel, Trinity Church in Boston, The Culinary Institute of America, Boston College's chapel, and Salve Regina University's chapel in Providence, Rhode Island, to name just a few. This depth of experience instilled in them the confidence and sophisticated skillset needed to now operate their own studio and bid on complex restoration projects.

The Sash & Solder team brings a combined 70 years of expertise to commercial and residential stained glass projects throughout New England and New York. They repair and restore antique glass and plated windows, and provide glass painting and firing services, partial and complete lead restoration, and repair of wood sashes



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and encasements. Sash & Solder is lead-safe certified and holds memberships and accreditations with Stained Glass Association of America, American Glass Guild, Window Preservation Alliance, New Hampshire Preservation Alliance, Maine Preservation, and Preservation Trust of Vermont.

The team works with churches, libraries, municipalities, and developers. Before new project work begins, they document each window's original design, construction, and condition. This is done through photographs, video, and rubbings (similar to gravestone rubbings), as they capture meticulous notes. "The lifespan of stained glass window installations is about 125 years before attention is needed," Driscoll explains. "The biggest factor is lead deterioration. When lead becomes brittle it can no longer hold the weight of stained glass and requires repair."

The scope and process of each restoration or repair is shared with the client and archived in Sash & Solder's files. "We document everything," Driscoll continues, "not only for our benefit, but for craftspeople who may undertake the next restoration in 100 years. Our documentation will enable them to either replicate our process or improve upon it using the next century's advancements."

Driscoll gravitated to a career in stained glass restoration after taking an Adult Ed class in the mid-1990s in Seattle, where he found his passion. He grew up in Massachusetts; his wife, in New Hampshire. They moved back to New England in 2000, and he and Heather started their business in 2005. They moved to Portsmouth in 2015, rebranding it Sash & Solder.

*Stained glass restoration and historic wooden window repair for commercial, sacred, residential and municipal space ranging from large-scale, multi-phased restorations to smaller-scale, more specialized repairs. Sash & Solder holds the highest preservation standard, always striving to retain the original integrity of the windows.*

**SASH & SOLDER**

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“We document everything for craftspeople *who may undertake the next window restoration in 100 years.*”

He says the team’s most challenging project to date has been a six-year, multi-phased restoration with First Church Christ Scientist in Concord. “When we finish, we will have restored every window,” Driscoll says. They expect to complete a third phase later this year. The Concord church holds a revered position in the Christian Scientist religion, second only to the “Mother Church” in Boston. He continues, “Due to its size—the church seats 1,000—it’s been a huge undertaking, but so rewarding.”

From that cathedral-sized project, he points to a more intimate assignment in North Hampton. “Union Chapel in Little Boar’s Head seats only 60 worshippers,” he says. Driscoll and the team restored the church’s focal point, a landscape window that features intricate opalescent glass. “Technically, quite challenging,” he explains, “because opalescent glass uses layers of stacked or ‘plated’ glass to deliver more visual depth than traditional stained glass.”

Sash & Solder’s latest project is at North Church, the beloved cultural landmark in Portsmouth’s Market Square. The church recently underwent major structural renovations, including ADA-compliant updates and office installations. Sash & Solder started reinstalling windows in June of this year which they restored over the winter—preserving this historic gem’s beauty for many more generations to come.