

# Earl helps uncover historic records

## Found in RI city hall basement during storm preps

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PROVIDENCE, R.I. (WPRI) - Earl may have not packed a very powerful punch, but he can get the credit for an unexpected and valuable discovery in Providence that dates back to the 18th century.

Five floors below City Hall's dome in a dark corner of the basement, a team from the Providence Archives Department discovered 30 boxes of records that are more than 200 years old.

They went down there Thursday, as Hurricane Earl barreled up the East Coast, to search for boxes that needed protection from any potential flooding. They were shocked to find the original minutes from some of the city's earliest town meetings.

"They detail the operations of town government just after the American Revolution," said city archivist Paul Campbell.

Dozens of water-damaged boxes held thousands of pages of historical documents, including a manuscript logging the vote of early settlers to approve the city charter back in 1831. Another document shown to Eyewitness News cameras was dated 1789.

"It records the transformation of a small town into a manufacturing city," said Campbell, who called the discovery a real-life version of the movie National Treasure. "Just a remarkable find and something we're going to work hard to preserve."

The documents will now be placed in acid-free folders and boxes, where they'll be catalogued for historians and researchers.

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