

Campaign

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manager, to maintain the facilities once they are completed.

The Jamestown Museum building needs a comprehensive renovation, inside and out, according to Patricia Sheehan, publicist for the campaign. Sheehan stressed the need to secure the building with heat, insulation and climate control for proper preservation of the collections stored and displayed there. Originally a one-room schoolhouse in 1886, it was turned into the village library in 1898, and the building has housed the museum since 1971.

"We are going to restore the building to the degree where we are going to expand the corner of Narragansett Avenue and North Main Road with a pair of beautiful bookends, the new town hall and the museum," Murphy said.

For the town's most valuable historical documents and artifacts, the JHS and the town are currently ironing out details of an agreement that the town will provide, at the expense of the society, an archive vault in the basement of the new town hall. The vault will house such treasures as the recently acquired Conanicut Land Agreement. "Bill Burgin, a former president of the historical society, was instrumental in acquiring the document for us," Sheehan said.

Penned in 1657, the Conanicut Land Agreement is a contract signed by 100 colonists stating how the land would be divided between them. The colonists negotiated the purchase of the island from the Narragansett Indians at that time. "The land agreement has to be kept in a climate-controlled environment," Sheehan said. Well over three centuries old, the document will be on display at the Jamestown library in the near future and find a permanent home at the town hall upon its completion.

In support of education, the JHS will design a room at Lawn Avenue



School that will serve as a facility for instructing students in groups for hands-on, close-up presentations of items from the society's collection, and also where students may study and research their island's history independently.

"Two places the capital campaign will benefit, where scholars can work in appropriate places to write Jamestown history, will be outside the vault in the new town hall, and a town history room at Lawn Avenue School, where students can study local history," Murphy noted.

The committee hopes to obtain about \$350,000 from private donors and \$150,000 from grants. The grant applications, six so far, are scheduled for submission to funding organizations from March 1 to the end of the summer, Sheehan noted. Two noteworthy associations targeted for funding are the Rhode Island Foundation and the Champlin Foundations.

Sheehan hinted at a newly established basis for the half-million-dollar goal, through leadership gifts from "generous donors." The JHS started a donor recognition program: a gift of \$25,000 is recognized with a present of three framed panoramic photographs of the east shore of Jamestown, 1906; a \$10,000 gift is noted with

the same set mounted on Gatorboard or Sintra; and a \$5,000 donation is recognized with a choice of one panoramic photograph, also mounted. "With a gift of \$2,500 or more, the donor's name will be included on a permanent plaque in the museum," Sheehan added.

The society is also finalizing a program for entry-level donations, a time capsule. "People can purchase parchment paper and put their wish or comment on it," Sheehan explained. The papers, expected to attract children and adults alike, will be preserved in the museum collection.

Sheehan stressed the need to have an endowment for the long-term plan. The society developed the plan "to look forward and beyond the next exhibit," she noted. Sheehan praised the efforts of the society to upgrade and expand the facilities of the museum "to create a building environment where people can view the collection and artifacts are preserved." She called the JHS a "vibrant society, whether members want to be visitors, volunteers, or participants in other ways."

Sheehan went on to praise the generosity of the people of James-

town, saying, "Even if they are not preservationists themselves, they appreciate those who are tied into open-space protection and preserving the rural character of the island."

The JHS plans a more visible presence in the town this year, Sheehan also noted. The society plans to have an exhibit at the Conanicut Battery on Battery Day, May 12. The JHS will also participate for the first time in the Memorial Day Parade. The society then plans to open its doors to the Jamestown Windmill and the museum for summer season visits on June 30. The 2007 summer exhibition at the Narragansett Avenue museum will feature the old Jamestown Bridge and its demolition.

The bridge exhibit was developed in conjunction with the Public Archaeology Lab, Sheehan noted. The lab is a cultural resource management firm that specializes in terrestrial and marine archaeology, architectural history, research and documentation, and preservation planning.

The JHS plans to hold a major fund-raising event on July 28 at Horsehead.

A historical cornerstone of the island owned by Harrison Wright, the society's vice president and one of the writers of the long-range plan.

"We have a great committee," Co-chairwoman Anne Livingston said. "So many generous people who recognize it would be a great loss if our artifacts were to disappear. People here are willing to give of their treasures and talent."

For those who may consider offering up their own historical heirlooms for all to enjoy, the society's accession policy is, "We will collect anything that pertains to Jamestown," Sheehan said.

The historical society was founded in 1912, and maintains three historic sites in addition to its

museum downtown. The sites are the windmill (1787), the Quaker meetinghouse (1787), and the Conanicut Battery, a defensive earthworks dating back to the Revolutionary War.

To view the long-range plan of the Jamestown Historical Society, visit online at www.jamestown-historicalsociety.org. Two-thirds of the museum collection is catalogued in an online database for easy reference. Check the Web site for updates on the capital campaign and more upcoming events this year.

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