

# New shop on the block: the Benjamin Thomas Gallery

By Erin Brown

Nestled on the edge of the wharf, with a great view of the Newport Bridge, there's a new addition to the shops and stores of Jamestown.

The Benjamin Thomas Gallery has joined the local businesses, opening just two weeks ago, according to owner and proprietor, Benjamin Thomas.

Thomas is a former Jamestown resident, who after growing up on the island moved to Boston for a few years. Thomas has recently returned, and hopes to be able to stay, with plans to showcase Jamestown in his work.

Walking into the gallery, customers are met with a soft combination of blues and yellows. The room is bright and airy. Thomas said he was trying to make the gallery comfortable. He placed a couple of chairs under the window to allow for leisurely viewing.

Thomas' photographs adorn the walls without cluttering them. They are of a variety of places and scenes, including beaches, boats, sunsets, the Newport bridge, and many others. The shots are primarily set in Jamestown, Newport, and Southern Rhode Island.

Unique in the gallery are the stretched canvas pictures. Thomas has taken photographs and stretched them out on a raised frame, making the pictures appear to be painted upon the canvas in stunning detail.

He attributes the inspiration for this distinctive idea to a colleague in the movie business who had a shop in Massachusetts with a similar style of display for his pictures. He decided to try to apply the concept to his own photos, adding that he now really enjoys this form of art, and thinks that it is really a "neat medium." So far the available stretched photos consist of Thomas' work, but he hopes to expand this part of his business by having his customers bring their own pictures to him to be converted to his stretched canvas style.

Thomas laughingly admits to his lack of experience in running a store. Having tried a variety of things, including banking and construction, Thomas has spent the last three years as a film and television location scout. "I just got fed up with the hours and all the moving around," he said.

"I'm still trying to figure everything out," Thomas said. He explained that in this new venture, he was doing everything that he could himself, including the actual artwork, the running of the store in general, and everything in between, in an attempt to cut out the middleman.

Thomas thinks that his biggest challenge will be simply letting people know that he's open and available for business. He's been attempting to alleviate this problem by doing some work for a few of the realtors that he met as a film scout. He is hopeful about

this prospect, and said, "With a little hard work, I think I can get the name out there."

In his free time, Thomas also enjoys watching sports, as well as playing them. He mentioned that when he was younger he played a variety of sports, such as golf, soccer, and basketball, but as he's getting older, he's discovering that he likes watching them just as much.

Thomas said that right now he is really concentrating on getting the word out about the gallery. "Like I said, I grew up on Jamestown, and I'm looking for ways to reconnect. I want to become a staple in this community," he said, adding, "I mean, some day I want to have a Little League team with my name on their shirts, you know?"



Benjamin Thomas

## Watson Farm hosts landscape painting workshops

The Watson Farm will offer a series of Watercolor Workshops on Saturdays, July 12 and Sept. 13, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Rain dates are set for Sundays, July 13 and Sept. 14.

Artists have enjoyed the scenic landscapes of the historic Watson Farm for over 100 years. Located in Jamestown, the farm offers panoramic vistas of the pastoral agricultural seaside landscape. These all-day workshops will enable participants to experience and capture the farm landscape and architecture through the medium of watercolor.

Artist Natalie Pfanstiehl, who has taught at the Newport Art Museum for nearly 20 years, leads the workshop. Her work has been shown in national,

regional and local juried shows and received numerous awards. She will give a one-hour demonstration of landscape painting and spend the rest of the day assisting students with composition and painting techniques. Students should bring their own painting materials and a bag lunch.

All levels of experience with painting are welcome.

The workshop is \$20 for Historic New England Garden & Landscape members, \$25 for Historic New England members and \$35 for non-members. To register and request more information, contact Heather Minto at 423-0005.

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