

Annual Meeting
The Jamestown Historical Society (JHS) will hold this year's annual meeting today, Thursday, Aug. 14 in the Jamestown Philomenian Library meeting room. The business meeting starts at 7 p.m. with reports from the president and the treasurer. The Nominating Committee chair will then preside over the election of officers and directors.

At 7:30 p.m., our guest speaker, Dr. Robert M. Thorson, will present, "Stone Walls in Jamestown and throughout New England." Dr. Thorson, professor of geology at the University of Connecticut, has written three books — one of them for children — about New England's stone walls. "By studying stone walls," he writes, "you'll see the unending struggle of Yankee farmers — and also find signs of the melting and carving that have shaped the earth."

A summer visitor to Jamestown, Dr. Thorson spent his sabbatical year here a year ago. A stone on top of the wall near the Friend's Meetinghouse on Windmill Hill attracted his attention. He pointed it out to the JHS and explained that it was probably a headstone from an 18th century grave. The stone is now in the JHS collection.

Come and learn how 17th and 18th century agricultural methods shaped the face of New England. Everyone is invited.

Land Agreement Display

In 2005, the JHS purchased the 1657 Conanicut Island Land Agreement—a pre-purchase contract among 101 colonists that specifies the participants in the purchase, names the men responsible for the negotiation with the Narragansett, and lays down rules for the initial governance of the island when and if a "firm and fair" settlement with the Narragansett tribe is reached. For the past year, the document has been on display



Jamestown Historical Society News

By Rosemary Enright

in the Jamestown library while its permanent home was completed in the Town Hall.

The exhibit is now complete. A display case, designed especially for the document and purchased with funds donated by the McDonough family, is built into the wall on the hallway between the Town Clerk's office and the finance department. Surrounding the case are three large panels explaining the document's background and content. A copy of the 1658 map of the island and two copies of the complete text of the document—one a photocopy of the original and the other a modern transcript—complete "the wall."

The Jamestown Rotary Club and the Jamestown Lions Club each contributed toward the construction of the display and for literature about the meaning and importance of the document. We are very grateful for their support. Emmy Lutes and Kendra Davis, both seniors at North Kingstown High School, have chosen as their senior projects to produce brochures especially aimed at children.

The display will be dedicated in mid-September.

Library Display

Summers of yesterday were on our mind last month as we put together the display in the case in the library foyer. What to do for summer fun hasn't changed very much on the island over the last 150 years. Swimming, sailing,

fishing, golfing, tennis, clamming, picnicking, and walking on the beach retain their attraction, although cars have supplanted horses for both pleasure and mobility and we now see more kayaks than canoes on the bay. But what we wear to play has certainly changed. The library display shows a typical 19th century bathing costume, made of wool and reaching to the knees. Even for tennis and canoeing men typically wore trousers and tie.

Laurel Richardson, as part of her intern experience, played a major role in the exhibit preparation.

Fall Events

Put Friday, Sept. 12 and Saturday, Sept. 13 on your calendars. Saturday is the annual JHS House Tour. One of the houses on the tour is Riven Rock, the house where "Dan in Real Life" was filmed. On Friday, a "members only" cocktail party will be held at a historic house that will not be on the house tour. Watch for details in the Press.

Our Program and Development committee chairs are planning other events for the fall and early winter. You'll learn more about them in this column. If you're a member and we have your email address, you'll get an invitation to each event via the Internet—and save the society the cost of printing and postage. To get on the email list, send an email to jhs@jamestownri.com.

Visit Us

Please try to stop by our sites in the next few weeks. The School Days! exhibit at the museum is open Wednesday through Sunday from 1 to 4 p.m. until Sept. 7. We're hoping to extend the season with weekend openings and for special tours throughout the fall. The windmill is open weekends from 1 to 4 p.m. through Sept. 17. The Conanicut Battery Historic Park is always open during daylight hours.

Group tours—especially for educational purposes—are always welcome. In the past month, we've given special tours for interns from the Newport Historical Society and for television and magazine reporters looking for places to visit close to home.

Minto

Continued from page 1

increased from part-time to full-time. As part of the presentation, a suggestion was made to consider housing the Teen Center in a portion of the Jamestown Recreation Center. This location was considered ideal, as the physical structure already included basketball courts, ping-pong tables, pool tables and foosball tables—surefire attractions for teens. Still, in order to make it work, major renovations would be required.

The project was completed using town employees to hold down costs. Minto credits town employee Ramon Ibarlucea with completing the carpentry in the center, but admits that she assisted with the finished carpentry herself. When asked where she learned that skill, she said, "I grew up on Watson Farm. I was a bit of a tomboy. And," she added, "my dad let me play with power tools."

With the physical space renovated, donations were solicited for couches, computers, appliances and other necessities. January of 2008 marked the completion of the dream. The Grand Opening of the Jamestown Teen Center was held on February 15, 2008.

Minto's hard work, commitment to teens, and unbounded energy helped to create the fine Teen Center that Jamestown teens enjoy today.

She is leaving her post because she will be entering Cornell University later this month to pursue a master of professional studies degree in international agriculture and rural development. "I have wanted to get into this program for a long time and I am really excited about it," she said.

Minto has a long history of volunteering in Central America. "It's going to be hard to leave the teen center, but I've spent a lot of time in Nicaragua and Costa Rica and I believe I can make the most difference there. I am looking forward to attending Cornell and then using my skills to help impoverished communities," she said.

She combined her love of agriculture, her devotion to impoverished communities and her commitment to teens when she organized a trip to the Nicaraguan community of Goyena in July 2007. Minto and six teens traveled to Goyena to help the community recover from the devastation of a mudslide.

Eric von Hohenleiten, a 17-year-old Jamestown teen who participated, said that the trip allowed him to "travel to another country, expand my knowledge of other cultures and help people at the same time." Minto organized the teens and together they planted trees, made compost and taught the community members agriculturally sound practices. "If it weren't for Melissa, we wouldn't have gotten anything done. She is very organized and very outgoing. Everyone she meets becomes a friend," von Hohenleiten said. He described Nicaragua as "hot," but said, "The food was amazing and the people were really friendly."

Another Jamestown teen, Jessica Bucklin, 17, also accompanied Minto to Nicaragua.

"Melissa is a great person who never stops. She helps people in Jamestown and then she goes to Nicaragua and helps people there," Bucklin said. She was struck by the poverty in the Nicaraguan community and by the fact that there were sometimes "four families living together," she said. Like Minto, Bucklin said she is interested in traveling and helping others.

Minto's departure will not go unnoticed. "Melissa leaving is going to make a lot of people sad," von Hohenleiten said, "It won't be an easy role to fill."

Bucklin agreed, "We're all going to miss Melissa when she leaves. No one can really replace her," she said.

Minto, however, has worked to ensure that the teen center will continue to thrive. She worked closely with Debbie Tungett who has assumed the director's position since Minto's departure and, according to Minto, Tungett is ready to take up where she left off.

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The Jamestown Press