

Brooks Pierce Paralegal Leads Historic Society

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Mending Mendenhall: Historic Society Surpasses Goal for Chimney Work

This article first appeared in the Jamestown News and is republished here with permission from staff writer Carol Brooks. Brooks Pierce paralegal Jane Payne is quoted extensively within due to her role as Historic Jamestown Society president.

The Historic Jamestown Society received a large piece of good news to start off the new year. The organization not only met their target for needed funds for repairs to the Mendenhall Homeplace, but also surpassed its goal.

The funds will be used to repair holes in the chimneys as well as fix a crack in the plaster on an interior wall.

When the problem with the chimney stacks was first noticed, Mendenhall Homeplace Director Shawn Rogers contacted experts in the field to provide estimates for the repairs. Those figures came in over \$16,000, a hefty sum for the 501(c)(3) non-profit Historic Jamestown Society. Rogers then was able to secure a Federal Historic Preservation Fund pass-through grant of approximately \$9,800, meaning HJS would need to come up with the balance of the funds. The grant was the first of its kind awarded through the Guilford County Certified Local Government.

Through a poster resembling a chimney, HJS was able to show visitors the progress of their “Mending Mendenhall” brick sale fundraiser. For every \$25 donation, individuals could purchase symbolic “bricks.” Many were purchased in honor or memory of someone.

Through bake sales, donations and a raffle, the society was able to raise an average of \$278 a month from July to November.

Things began to pick up in December following a plea to the HJS membership by then-President Shirley Haworth during her annual membership drive letter.

“Within a couple of days after the letter went out, brick buying began and it hasn’t stopped,” Haworth said. “Some of the local donors who are not members of HJS mentioned the news articles when they contributed. (Articles ran in the Jamestown News and News and Record.) Visitors from out of state, the Mendenhall Family Association, community members and our membership have responded most generously. We have received contributions ranging from \$1,000 to \$300 to \$25 – all greatly appreciated.”

“This is an important project for the house – to preserve it,” Rogers said.

Other members of the HJS board of directors are very pleased with the response.

“The response from the membership was terrific,” Rogers said, noting that many people renewing their membership included a donation. “We didn’t anticipate bringing in more money than our target!”

Several people purchased “bricks” for Christmas presents and at least one family decided to do the “bricks” in lieu of gift exchanges.

The biggest donation came from the Sedgefield Colony Garden Club as a result of their successful Christmas Home Tour. At a luncheon Jan. 13, Haworth accepted a check for \$2,000, officially putting HJS over the top for its portion of the chimney work.

“The Sedgefield Colony Garden Club was pleased to be a part of the most recent campaign by HJS,” said Carolyn Gorga, chair of the SCGC Holiday Home Tour. “The club members think of Mendenhall as a special place that adds to the uniqueness of our area – it is not just a beautiful old home, but an important piece of the history of our state and country.

“Mendenhall is a neighbor to the Sedgefield Community and, as such, the club wanted to help with their efforts in its restoration.”

Rogers stressed that just because the goal has been reached does not mean donations can stop.

HJS is still accepting donations to mend Mendenhall. The 204-year-old house is constantly in need of repairs. Any donation overage will go toward new chimney caps, but more money is needed to do all four of the caps at \$300 each.

“If we receive more than we need, it will be put toward capital preservation projects. We have four or five capital projects that are pending.”

Rogers said work could begin in March, with the chimney in the worst condition – on the east side – being removed down to the roof. He said the people he will hire are experts in restoring historic structures and will use techniques to make the improvements nearly undetectable.

“We really appreciate everyone’s generosity,” said new HJS President Jane Payne. “Not only do the donations save very important pieces of history, but they allow the people of our community to buy into and take ownership of helping to save and protect a very important part of Jamestown and North Carolina history.

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“Too much of our past has already been lost. It is up to us to protect and preserve what is left for future generations.”

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