

# News from The Heritage Center Spring 2022

## The Grindstone Island Research and Heritage Center

41591 Cross Island Road, Grindstone Island

[www.grindstoneisland.org](http://www.grindstoneisland.org)



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Dear Grindstone friends,

It is such a great pleasure to look forward to another summer on our most wonderful River and Island with all of you. I hope that you and your families are still well through our second year of a pandemic. As River folk and Grindstoners we have a lot to be grateful for. Few people have the blessing of spending such quality time in an environment as healthy and happy as we do on the great St Lawrence River and Grindstone Island.

With the pandemic lessening its grip on our world, we are excited to resume more of our regular activities on the island. We hope to see you for the first kick-off event at the **July 4th Mule Parade**, 11:30 A.M start at the Upper (Red) Schoolhouse. Join the parade in your decorated vehicle for an island tour to celebrate the US of A's birthday.

The most exciting news this season is the opening of the new Grindstone Island Heritage Museum in District # One, the Lower Schoolhouse. After several years of hard work and much support from our community, we will be opening our first exhibit, "the Story of Education on Grindstone Island." The exhibit will feature the history of the two schoolhouses and what one-room school life on the island was like. You are invited to join us for a **grand opening July 23rd**. Stay tuned for the details! We have come a long way from the first day we heard that our friend Manley Rusho was going to leave the island and that he and the family hoped the Heritage Center would purchase and protect the Lower Schoolhouse for future generations. What better way for the Heritage Center to share the history of the Island with friends and family? We are extremely grateful for the support of our donors and all who have donated time and energy toward this goal.

For the past two years the children of Grindstone have enjoyed a new and exciting direction for our summer camp program with Jane Riff as our leader. This program, sponsored by the Heritage Center, has attracted many new "campers" along with moms and grandparents. Jane has brought her wonderful creativity and energy to the program that includes learning and fun in equal portions. Indeed, many island adults have shared with us their wish to be part of the summer camp themselves! We're grateful for Jane's hard work and the work of her many assistants over the past summers, most recently Kat Parr as her number two. **Camp starts right after July 4th** and continues through July four days a week M-Th from 10-noon.

Your membership and donations support these programs every year. You have allowed us to create the endowment which supports our youth through scholarships. You have helped us to sponsor our summer program where the youngest of our island community can learn what it means to live on an island, appreciate the nature around them, and understand how the past sustains our future.

We hope that you will continue your support by renewing or beginning a new membership either on our website ([grindstoneisland.org](http://grindstoneisland.org)) or with the envelope enclosed.

Thanks for your continued interest,

Roxane C. Pratten  
President  
GIRHC

P.S. Please also let us know if you would be interested in becoming involved in some way with the Heritage Center. We are looking for volunteers to help at the museum, as well as our events. Contact Roxane Pratten at [prattendev@gmail.com](mailto:prattendev@gmail.com) or Liz Raisbeck at [lizraisbeck@yahoo.com](mailto:lizraisbeck@yahoo.com).

### The Summer Children’s Program Returns

Jane Riff will be back this summer as teacher of the children’s program. Last summer Jane’s creative skills attracted new families to the schoolhouse for a month of eager exploration of Grindstone’s natural world plus creative projects and outdoor fun. This summer campers will be learning about island ecosystems, and how we can help them to continually flourish, including building bat boxes to help protect our bat population, which was devastated by “White Nose Syndrome” disease. We will learn about gypsy moths, where they originated, why they are a problem, and what we can do to help protect our trees from gypsy moth invasions. Campers will be introduced to the balance brought about by healthy predator and prey populations. To this end, we will be looking for signs of some of the island’s predators (everything from coyotes and eagles to spiders and frogs/toads), and will explore what happens to an ecosystem that is thrown off balance. This should be a fun summer full of exploration, learning, and play. We can’t wait to see you in July!



*A group of moms led by Kara Braun has purchased this gorgeous new jungle gym for the schoolhouse yard. We are so grateful for their wonderful generosity!*



*Examining owl pellets with Brenda Luce*



*Collecting wildflowers for study*



*Class of 21 on the pirate ship*

**Don't forget the July 4th Parade!**

*Manley Rusho grew up on Grindstone Island, and over the last few years has written a number of reminiscences about his experiences on Grindstone. As an adult Manley bought the Lower Schoolhouse, District #1, for use as a summer cottage, and in 2019 he sold it to the Heritage Center to house a new Grindstone Island Heritage Museum, which opens this summer.*



*Manley L. Rusho*

### **First Day of School, 1936, by Manley L. Rusho**

Early memories of the Lower Schoolhouse include the uncut grass of the school yard, an acre of land enclosed on two sides along the road by a rather curious woven fence, two gates - one for foot traffic and one for wagons or car--supported by gate posts in the ground. My first day of kindergarten, I was escorted by my Aunt Carnie (Carnie Rusho Hammersley), who was about 13. We were ushered in to a large part of the building that had two windows and a door that led to the classroom - where I would spend the next eight years getting educated.

In the huge classroom there were windows on the right, too high to escape through, no doors to the rear-- I was trapped. The wood floor was freshly oiled; it would be a long time before the odor of the oil went away. My aunt seated me next to her in a large wooden desk, the top was covered by carvings that consisted of initials, weird designs, some full names and more. A huge clock was fastened to the east wall, its pendulum swinging back and forth with loud clicks.

At 9:00 the teacher struck her desk with a large ruler. I ducked down closer to my aunt afraid of what was to

come next. The teacher welcomed the students back with a pleasing voice, and began roll call. The teacher did not have horns and there was no whip contrary to my aunt's previous description, although the large ruler was scary enough.

There were two large pictures on the wall - both men, who they were and why their pictures were hanging in a school room, I had no idea. The large clock ticked away slowly - only ten minutes had gone by. I wanted to ask a question, but was hushed by my aunt and she gave me book with pictures to shut me up. I continued to look around the room, straight ahead was the blackboard with the teacher's name, MRS SNELL written in big letters. To the left of the blackboard was the complete school library, just five shelves of books that were a mystery to me at the time, but eight years later, I would have read all of them and many more. On the left side of the room was a shelf with a drain, sitting on the shelf was the pail that held the drinking water for the school, protruding from the pail was a dipper, the drinking cup for the entire student body. Behind the water pail was a door that led to a small room where students hung their coats.

My aunt's desk was the furthest from the teacher, behind her was the rear wall of the classroom, to her left and one seat away was the stove, a large barrel-like thing. Under the stove was a metal shield to protect the floor. The pipes from the back of the stove went upward to a brick chimney that did not sit on the floor, the chimney was supported by two large planks with shelves containing books or papers. A big rope hung from the ceiling, there was a hole in the ceiling and the rope disappeared into the hole. There were four lamps hanging from chains to the ceiling. I fell asleep soon after 11:00, when I awoke it was lunch time, everyone outside, the uncut yard stopped no one. I shared a sandwich with my aunt and shortly after lunch, my school day was over.



*Site of the new museum, Lower School, District #1*

### 50th GIRHC Scholarship Awarded in 2021

GIRHC offers one or more scholarships in two categories each year, which are administered by the Northern New York Community Foundation. We are pleased to share that GIRHC awarded its fiftieth scholarship in 2021! There were two 2021 recipients of the Traditional Heritage scholarship, who must be direct descendants of former permanent Grindstone residents:

#### **Mari V. Matthews, who is attending Syracuse University, studying Biology**

**Parents:** Christopher & Cynthia Leavery Matthews

**Patrilineal Grandparents:** George & Wendy Fitch Matthews

**Great Grandparents:** Charles & Florence Garnsey Matthews

**Great Great Grandparents:** George & Carrie Orvis Matthews, Robert & Clara Turcotte Garnsey

**Great Great Great Grandparents:** Hubbard & Alice Murdock Garnsey, John & Levina Eastwood Murdock

The other recipient, who wished to remain anonymous, is attending Lemoyne College studying Biology and Hispanic Studies.

The recipient of the Mary Lou Nunn Rusho Scholarship, who must have long-time ties to Grindstone, is **Delanie Mattingly Rae Miller**

**Parents:** Michael Miller & Tammy Hall

**Matrilineal Grandparents:** Francine Rusho & David Bou-  
yea

**Great Great Grandparents:** William & Clara Calhoun Rusho

**Great Great Great Grandparents:** Freeman & Frances Calhoun Rusho

For directions on how to apply for a GIRHC scholarship, go to the GIRHC website or apply at local northern New York high schools.

### Thank You, NNYCF!

We would like to thank our partners at the Northern New York Community Foundation again for approving our first grant application. In addition, the Heritage Center entered into a partnership with NNYCF with a \$5,000 investment that will be matched by NNYCF in the next 5 years if we can grow it another \$5,000. For more information on all the good work the NNYCF is involved in throughout the North Country, go to [www.nnycf.org](http://www.nnycf.org).

### Make a gift to the NNYCF that will be matched dollar for dollar for GIRHC and its museum by the foundation!

For more info contact Liz Raisbeck: [lizraisbeck@yahoo.com](mailto:lizraisbeck@yahoo.com) or Roxane Pratten: [prattendev@gmail.com](mailto:prattendev@gmail.com)

### Pavers, Pavers! Thank you, Kevin Garnsey!

We are finally able to start moving forward with our paver project. One last hurdle, besides a pandemic and high water, has been resolved with the help of our own Kevin Garnsey. Prior to installing the pavers we needed to install gutters on the Upper Schoolhouse to protect them. In our difficult search for a contractor to do this project, Kevin stepped in. His team prepped and painted all soffits and fascia, supplied and installed gutters, and donated the work. We are so grateful for his generosity!

The town staff will start prepping and installing pavers this spring and fall in front of the Upper Schoolhouse. We are installing approximately 1200 pavers with 150 purchased and engraved so far. In the future we will once a year remove blanks and engrave new ones as families purchase new memorials. If you are interested in remembering your family or ancestor, a favorite place or even the family pet with a paver, go to our website: [www.grindstoneisland.org](http://www.grindstoneisland.org) to purchase.

### Grindstone Island Research and Heritage Center Summer Schedule 2022

- June 7 - Board Meeting** - Upper Schoolhouse 10 am
  - June 21 - Board Meeting** - Upper Schoolhouse 10 am
  - July 4 - Mule Parade & Picnic** - Upper Schoolhouse 11 am
  - July 5 - Summer Camp begins, 10am-12pm M-Th** - Upper Schoolhouse
  - July 5 - Board Meeting** - Upper Schoolhouse 10 am
  - July 1 - Board Meeting** - Upper Schoolhouse 10 am
  - July 23 - Grand Opening of Heritage Museum**
  - July 24 - Museum opens to the public**
  - August 2 - Board Meeting** - Upper Schoolhouse 10 am
  - August 14 Annual Heritage Center Picnic/Auction**
  - August 23 - Board Meeting** - Upper Schoolhouse 10 am
  - September 5 Annual Meeting** - Upper Schoolhouse 10 am
- Possible dates for a Heritage Center Lecture Series:**  
July 27, August 10, August 24 - Stay tuned!