

"We must never be intimidated by another man's ideas, and we must never rush to silence free speech."

— Kweisi Mfume  
Former president, NAACP, 1997  
(These weekly quotes compiled by The Freedom Forum)

# FORUM

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## Our Forum

### Historical Society move was sound

The Isle of Wight Historical Society has wisely concluded that, while the Charles Driver Jordan House should certainly be preserved, it is outside the society's ability to undertake the task.

The society's decision not to accept the deteriorating old farmhouse from Benn's Grant property owner Richard Turner offers the potential that someone will now purchase the building, relocate and ultimately restore it. That, in turn, would remove the old house from any future discussions of Benn's Grant — in itself, a worthwhile conclusion.

The Jordan family figured prominently in the history of the Benn's Church community, and their home the Jordan House, built in the 1850's, once had some of the finest woodwork of any rural home in Isle of Wight.

When Mr. Turner purchased the house along with the Jordan farm in the 1990s, the building was in pretty good condition. It quickly became a part of discussions concerning the future of the site. The new owners first offered to restore the house and use it as an office for Isle of Wight Materials, a sand mining company which was at the time asking for borrow pit permits. The pit materialized, but the house sat vacant and was vandalized. Much of its heart pine trim was stolen.

Next, the house was portrayed as the focal point of the Benn's Grant development, and it was at that point that Mr. Turner offered the historic dwelling to the Historical Society, the deed to be passed, along with restoration funds, when development began.

Since the crash of the housing market, Benn's Grant has been put on hold and the house has continued deteriorating. The Historical Society attempted a modest fund drive at one point but recently decided that, in the best interest of the house, it would bow out.

The decision is in the best interest of the Historical Society. Such groups serve a valuable purpose, most often by being vocal proponents of historic research and preservation. The Isle of Wight Historical Society, for example, performed an incalculable service to the community recently by documenting dozens of rural graveyards throughout the county.

Such projects keep local history in the forefront and are tremendously valuable. Attempts to preserve large, badly deteriorated buildings, on the other hand, too often end up not only failing, but also damaging the society that's trying to do the preserving.

The Isle of Wight organization's decision with respect to the Jordan House is a sound one and clears the way for much more beneficial work by this valuable organization.