

2011 -- H 6288

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2011

J O I N T R E S O L U T I O N

RECOGNIZING BLOCK ISLAND'S MANISSEAN HISTORY ON JUNE 26, 2011

Introduced By: Representatives Walsh, and Hull

Date Introduced: June 22, 2011

Referred To: House read and passed

1 WHEREAS, The first founders to establish a community on Block Island were
2 Narragansett Native Americans, who inhabited the island for centuries and called it “Manisses”;
3 and

4 WHEREAS, In 1524, Giovanni da Verrazzano, in service to the French crown, sighted
5 Block Island, and although he did not land, he named the island “Claudia,” after the mother of
6 King Francis I; and

7 WHEREAS, In 1614, Dutch explorer Adriaen Block set foot on the island and so loved
8 its beauty and charm that he named it Adriaen’s Eyelandt. He placed it on navigational charts,
9 which later recognized it as Block Island; and

10 WHEREAS, In 1660, Block Island was sold by the Massachusetts Bay Colony to a
11 company of sixteen men, most of whom constituted its first colonial settlers; and

12 WHEREAS, In the 1990s, an archaeological excavation carbon dated objects found at the
13 site of a year-round village on the island, and established its time frame to be 500 B.C.; and

14 WHEREAS, Artifacts found in this area suggested that the inhabitants went deep-sea
15 fishing by navigating their dugout canoes through a transient breach way between Great Salt
16 Pond and the ocean. Remains of many sturgeon, a deepwater fish, were found during the
17 excavation along the shore of the pond; and

18 WHEREAS, Several archaeological sites also indicated that the people lived primarily by
19 catching fish and shellfish, growing corn, and making trades with Wampum; and

20 WHEREAS, In 1661, Native Americans on the island numbered between 1,200 and

1 1,500, but by 1774, that number had been reduced to fifty-one; and

2 WHEREAS, In 1672, Block Island received its town charter from the Rhode Island
3 General Assembly and was incorporated by the Colony of Rhode Island as “New Shoreham,
4 otherwise Block Island”; and

5 WHEREAS, The tiny community took hold with stubborn independence and prospered
6 despite wars, taxation, piracy, and invasion. In 1774, it declared its independence from the crown
7 by repudiating British duties on tea; and

8 WHEREAS, Through the ensuing centuries, Block Island remained a ruggedly
9 independent yet close-knit community while still fully partaking in global events; and

10 WHEREAS, The people of Block Island remain unabashedly proud of their island and
11 their community. They strive to strike a balance among conservation of land, commercial and
12 residential development, and affordable living opportunities in today’s economy; and

13 WHEREAS, This year, the current Block Island community celebrates the importance
14 and rich heritage of all who have come before to establish communities on and “discover” Block
15 Island; now, therefore be it

16 RESOLVED, That this General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island and Providence
17 Plantations hereby recognizes that this smallest town in Rhode Island is large of heart, striking in
18 beauty, and great in importance; and be it further

19 RESOLVED, That this General Assembly hereby extends hearty congratulations at the
20 celebration of the New Shoreham, otherwise known as Block Island, Memorial Honoring the
21 Manisseean Native Ancestors and Descendants on June 26th of 2011. We furthermore
22 commemorate and encourage the preservation of the local indigenous cultures and their historical
23 sites; and be it further

24 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and he hereby is authorized and directed to
25 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to Shirlyne J. Govern, Member of the Block
26 Island Semiseptcentennial Committee, Administrative Assistant to the Town of New Shoreham,
27 and descendant of the original native family.

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