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MOLOKAI, HAWAII

Mules to Molokai: Treacherous Trail to the Leper Colony

To visit the leper colony in Kalaupapa, Molokai, Barrington native Josh Korr and other adventurers mounted Molokai mules (this one is named Deuce) and rode the 2.9 mile Kaluapapa Trail. It descends the almost 2,000-foot sea cliffs through a series of 26 harrowing switchbacks.

(Below) Josh checks the current issue of RIMJ at the approach to the leper colony. In the background are three hospitals which served those afflicted with Hansen’s disease and banished to the island settlement in the mid 1800s to 1969. A few residents still remain here. Kalaupapa became a National Historic Landmark in 1976.

Wherever your travels take you, be sure to check the latest edition of RIMJ on your mobile device and send us a photo: mkorr@rimed.org.
In 1900, the Hawaii Board of Health planned a major construction program at Kalaupapa, Molokai, the site of the leper colony, building dormitories, hospitals, and individual cottages. In 1902, Dr. William J. Goodhue became resident physician, where he remained until 1925, when he contracted Hansen’s disease. After World War II the discovery of sulfone drugs offered a successful treatment for the disease. In 1969 forced quarantine was abolished by the state of Hawaii.

Editor’s Note
See Heritage Section, page 66

The Pawtucket Leper Boy and the Penikese Leper Colony off of New Bedford, Mass.

Photo of Father Damien, taken in 1888, the year before his death. He served the Kalaupapa settlement from 1873 until his death in 1889, when he succumbed to Hansen’s disease at age 49. In 2009, Father Damien was canonized by Pope Benedict.

Photo of the leper colony at Kalaupapa in 1899.