

**For more information:**

*Morgan Devlin*

*Marketing & Public Relations Manager*

*(401) 849-7300 ext. 14*

*morgan@newportrestoration.org*

## HISTORY OF ROUGH POINT

Rough Point was originally built for Frederick W. Vanderbilt, seventh child of William H. Vanderbilt and grandson of Cornelius Vanderbilt. When it was commissioned in 1887, Rough Point was the largest house that the Newport summer colony had yet seen, replacing two wood frame houses at the extreme southeast end of Bellevue Avenue. The house was designed in what has best been described as the English manorial style, built with the intent of evoking the feel of an English country home. Although two of Vanderbilt's older siblings would later build the Breakers and Marble House - each an elaborate Newport palace - the more conservative design of Rough Point recalls an earlier period when Newport summer homes were large in scale but much less ostentatious than what followed.

Vanderbilt eventually sold Rough Point to William B. Leeds in 1906. Leeds died in 1908, leaving Rough Point to his wife who sold it to James B. Duke in 1922. After purchasing the estate, Mr. Duke implemented massive rebuilding and renovations. These changes included a new wing at the northeast end of the house and a smaller wing on the seaward façade that included a solarium on the first floor and a large bedroom above for his daughter. Duke brought in the design firm of White Allom to "brighten up" the interior and the renovations were completed in 1924. Duke passed away one year later leaving the home and a substantial fortune to his then 12-year old daughter Doris.

Throughout her teenage years, Doris spent her summers at Rough Point until 1935 when she married and embarked on a year-long honeymoon trip around the world. She and her husband then settled in Honolulu and built a house inspired by the Islamic architecture they had seen during their travels to India and the Middle East. Doris's mother continued to spend her summers at Rough Point but after the 1938 hurricane that devastated Rhode Island, and with the advent of World War II, Mrs. Duke's visits became less frequent. In the early 1950's, Mrs. Duke took up permanent residence in New York City and emptied Rough Point of all its furnishings.

In the late 1950's, Doris Duke once again became a frequent visitor to Newport and turned her attention to refurnishing Rough Point. In 1958 and 1959 she began purchasing art and antiques for the house and combined these new pieces with family treasures. Rough Point was reopened in 1962 and, over the years, became one of Miss Duke's favorite residences; she lived there May through November most years and continued to collect items for the house during her wide-ranging travels.

Rough Point stayed in Doris Duke's ownership until she bequeathed it to the Newport Restoration Foundation upon her death in 1993. As stipulated in her will, Rough Point became a museum and the house first opened to the public in July 2000. Rough Point is unique, not only in its collections, which represent some of the best of their kind in the United States, but also in allowing visitors to visit a Gilded Age estate whose owner is within living memory.