<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter from the Interim Director</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preserving Our Properties</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping History Above Water</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meliorating Our Museums</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educating and Inspiring All</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping Our Community</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Our Message</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Development</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet Newport Restoration Foundation</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2017 was a year of sustaining NRF’s ongoing, foundational work while also contemplating the future. We have maintained programmatic momentum, streamlined systems, embraced innovation, and tested new approaches. We have tackled some lingering projects, charted a plan for the future, and set the stage for a new executive director to arrive and to flourish. In brief,

- Our Museums team welcomed 20,000+ people to our museums with activities for all ages. They explored how to better use NRF’s collection of Newport furniture to enlighten and inspire new generations. They piloted new ways of engaging visitors and expanded NRF’s social media footprint to reach wider audiences. They strengthened NRF’s capacity to conserve its treasures, finetuned fire, security, and climate control systems to improve conditions for the collections, and deepened understanding of individual objects. They entirely overhauled gardens, yielding great bounty which NRF was able to share. And, they kept our three camels happy and healthy.

- Our Preservation team continued to keep nearly 80 colonial wooden houses in good shape, weather-tight, looking good, and tenanted. They employed new property management software to log and prioritize 600+ work requests. They meticulously restored 49 windows at Vernon House, replaced the Rough Point Solarium structural supports, and made progress in identifying the sources of water penetration bedeviling Rough Point. With the City of Annapolis, NRF presented Keeping History Above Water, convening 275 practitioners eager to understand and respond to rising sea levels.

- Staff supporting the entire organization handled yeomen’s labors. They issued a new employee handbook and implemented new personnel policies and procedures. They led the recruitment of 13 new staff members and supported the executive director search process. They supported the Board of Trustees in governance, board education, policy, and strategic planning. They refreshed NRF’s visual identity and began the website’s much-needed overhaul.

I have been honored to serve as interim executive director during this year of transition. My aim has been to provide the organization with the time and space to reflect, to envision its future, to articulate its ambitions, and to find the right person to lead it forward . . . all while continuing NRF’s day-to-day work. With its dedicated staff, trustees and generous supporters, NRF has succeeded.

Wendy Nicholas
Interim Executive Director
Among NRF’s most significant properties is the 1758 Vernon House, a National Historic Landmark. Among its distinctions, Vernon House was headquarters of the Comte de Rochambeau, leader of the French forces in America during the American Revolution. It also welcomed General George Washington during the war. Vernon House was donated to NRF in 2009, with life tenancy for the donor’s daughter. With funding from the Rhode Island Historic Preservation & Heritage Commission and the French Heritage Society, NRF’s carpenters undertook the careful restoration of 49 early 19th century windows this year, a project which benefitted from NRF’s well-equipped and expertly-staffed carpentry mill.

Vernon House Windows Meticulously Restored

The Newport Restoration Foundation is the proud owner, protector, and longtime steward of what is arguably the largest private collection of colonial era houses in the nation. Since its founding in 1968 by Doris Duke, NRF has rescued and restored over 80 houses, properties that were it not for the NRF’s intervention might have been lost forever. NRF continues to own and care for most of them, believing that ownership is the most effective means to assuring their ongoing preservation. NRF retains a permanent crew of 14 carpenters, painters, mechanical systems staff, and gardeners to maintain our properties. This staff allows us to be nimble and efficient in handling repairs.

Preserving Our Properties

In 2017, NRF:

- Logged and addressed 600+ work orders on NRF properties
- Re-roofed six houses with Alaskan yellow cedar shingles
- Painted the exteriors of seven houses – five entirely and two partially – using NRF’s traditional paint palette
- Turned over nine NRF houses to new tenants, addressing outstanding carpentry and systems issues, selectively painting interiors and refinishing floors, and updating kitchen appliances prior to new tenants moving in
- Put up and took down 1,824 storm windows
- Performed seasonal tune-ups of nearly 80 boilers and furnaces
- Restored patios and walkways at eight properties
Water is the bête noire of historic buildings, and it has been an ongoing problem at Rough Point. This year, NRF:

- Removed and replaced deteriorated structural members beneath Doris Duke’s prized solarium, replacing the corroded cast iron beams with new galvanized beams
- Lessened water intrusion through the solarium’s bronze doors by temporarily sealing all entry points
- Installed an additional filtration system on the water chillers to remediate a problem with excessive sediment in the HVAC system
- Commissioned preservation architect Barbara Campagna to assess the sources of water penetration in the Music Room, Solarium and Entry Hall and to provide recommendations on mitigating this longstanding problem.

The Almy-Taggart House at 56 Farewell Street is a distinctive two-story house with a large interior chimney and a gambrel roof. Built c.1710, the house was purchased by the Newport Restoration Foundation in 1973 and restored in 1975. This summer, NRF undertook major repairs, replacing the failing roof, re-clapboarding one elevation, and repainting it NRF’s Prussian Blue. The house was resplendent, until early November, when – after a particularly heavy rain and wind storm – a 60-year old native black cherry tree toppled into the west elevation of the building. Luckily, the damage was limited to two windows and roof materials, with no compromise to the structural integrity of the house.

The Director of Preservation focused much attention on putting in place new practices for organizing and scheduling property maintenance and repair work. The crew and other staff now use NRF’s new property management software to log all work requests and to track progress in handling them. This practice assures that NRF has a good record of work done on its buildings and the time and personnel involved. The crew is now setting priorities and deploying its members in more efficient manner.
Keeping History Above Water

Following on the success of NRF’s 2016 conference, *Keeping History Above Water*, and the urgency of the issue in Newport and other coastal communities, the board of trustees and senior staff concluded that continued work on the threat of sea level rise was in order, rather than pursuing an entirely new topic. NRF:

- Co-presented the four-day second edition of Keeping History Above Water with the City of Annapolis to a capacity crowd of 275 people from around the world
- Through a partnership with US/ICOMOS, managed climate change and cultural heritage related website postings and social media accounts, regularly populating them with new content
- Successfully trademarked *Keeping History Above Water*
- Began planning for NRF’s 74 Bridge Street property to serve as a case study in resiliency rehabilitation
- Began planning for 2018/2019 *Keeping History Above Water* symposia, in CA and FLA

74 Bridge Street Serves as Model for Resiliency Rehabilitation

In 2014, NRF purchased the 1725 Christopher Townsend House at 74 Bridge Street. Since this time it has been used as a case study project to experiment with strategies for mitigation and resiliency in the face of sea level rise. Situated at the lowest spot in the Point neighborhood, this former home of one of Newport’s foremost colonial cabinetmakers was subject of NRF’s 2016 case study in resiliency for historic houses, *Keeping 74 Bridge Street Above Water*.

Since then, NRF has continued to explore various options to address the growing problem that sea level rise presents in this area of Newport. In spring 2017, with support from the van Beuren Charitable Foundation, RISD’s Interior Architecture faculty and students explored the magnitude of the threat of sea level rise and imagined new ways for historic neighborhoods to combat the threat. The students were challenged to create design adaptions for Newport’s Point neighborhood over the next 80 years, using the latest tools in 3-D modelling and augmented and virtual realities.

During the fall semester, Roger Williams University’s Historic Preservation graduate students developed specific proposals for improving the resiliency, and they proposed reuses of 74 Bridge Street. In addition, the RWU students developed recommendations to address similar conditions and issues at the Samuel Whitehorne House on Lower Thames Street. The results of both university projects are helping to inform NRF’s planning for the future.

Finally, replacement of 74 Bridge Street’s non-historic asphalt roofing with new Alaskan yellow cedar wood shingles got underway in December, with support from the 1772 Foundation.
NRF is steward of more than 1,000 fine and decorative art objects at Rough Point and close to 40 significant pieces of early Rhode Island furniture and related objects at the Whitehorne House Museum. NRF must maintain environmental conditions suitable for the collections in both of these historic houses, a challenge in buildings not designed as museums. It must also protect and conserve objects whose conditions might have become unstable.

In the area of conservation this year, NRF:

- Restored the finish on one of the two French partial gilt wrought iron pier tables in the Solarium of Rough Point
- Conserved both painting and frame of our 1924 John Da Costa portrait of James B. Duke
- Completed conservation work begun in 2017 on one of the larger Music Room wallpaper panels at Rough Point
- Joined the Williamstown Art Conservation Center (WACC), a multi-disciplinary regional consortium conservation lab able to treat a full range of artworks and artifacts, including paintings, works on paper, photographs, sculpture, decorative art objects, textiles, furniture, and frames
- Commissioned a team of conservators from WACC to assess the condition of 60+ paintings, gilded frames, and works on paper at Rough Point and to make recommendations for treatment
- Produced its first multi-year Conservation Plan, projecting out three years’ worth of conservation projects
- Continued to finetune the HVAC system at Rough Point for optimal environmental conditions for the collections
Welcome Home, Mr. Duke

The John Da Costa (England, 1867-1931), Portrait of James Buchanan Duke, ca. 1922-24 is conserved and now hanging in the second floor hallway of Rough Point, not far from the portraits of Nanaline and Doris Duke.

Early in 2017, NRF took advantage of the new membership in the Williamstown Art Conservation Center to finally make suitable for public viewing a portrait of James B. Duke that had been given to NRF in 2004 by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

Uncovering Stories

The Museums staff, guides and interns are always in pursuit of more information about the paintings, furnishings and other objects in NRF collections as well as the buildings that house them. Research is both a scholarly and an interpretive pursuit at NRF, providing added depth, accuracy, and color to object files, publications (online and print), social media posts, and public tours, and it helps to fill in any gaps that might still exist in provenance.

Some notable research and writing projects from this year are:

- With information from our collections database, two of our guides are creating a timeline of dates of acquisition for the Rough Point collections that will help to visualize patterns in Doris Duke’s collecting habits.
- The curatorial team put together the 2017 exhibition Nature Tamed in the Landscape, Gardens and Collections of Rough Point, which explored the history of the gardens and grounds, beginning with the 1887 survey by Frederick Law Olmsted and ending with the stewardship of the grounds under NRF, alongside examples of nature themed art, decorative arts, and fashion from the Rough Point collections.
- A guide whose graduate Art History thesis is on the Whitehorne House Museum collection has prepared detailed descriptions of about 25 to 30 of the more significant pieces of furniture for our collections database and for public view on the consortium collections database www.NewportalRI.org.
- A new relationship with one of the most highly regarded Joshua Reynolds scholars, Martin Postle, led to an interesting bit of trivia about our grand portrait of Caroline Spencer, Duchess of Marlborough, in her ermine lined peeress robes (ca. 1776). Turns out the painting never left Reynolds’ studio until well after his death in 1792, when his niece and heir sold off the studio contents.

The Story Behind Rough Point’s Renoir

A small painting by the French Impressionist Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Jeune fille blonde cousant (1875), hangs in Doris Duke’s bedroom at Rough Point.

Our Graduate Student Intern in Museum Studies made an exciting discovery while doing some background research for updates to our collections database: our little Renoir painting is a preparatory study for a larger, more “finished” version of the same portrait owned by The Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, MA. The resemblance between the two paintings is readily apparent and the compositions nearly identical, with the model calmly engaged in needlework as her blouse falls gently off one shoulder.
When Doris Duke decided to collect colonial era Newport and Rhode Island furniture for NRF as a companion piece to the houses she was acquiring and restoring, she also envisioned creating a museum to showcase the furniture. Newport is renowned for the high style furniture that its cabinetmakers produced in the 18th and early 19th centuries, furniture prized in the colonies and beyond. NRF’s extensive collection has resided in the Samuel Whitehorne House Museum since it opened in 1974.

The NRF decided not to open the museum for the 2017 season in order to concentrate on developing a new approach to its interpretation and a plan for revitalizing the museum and the visitor experience. The Museums staff convened representatives of peer organizations, hosted two open houses to gather public input, and canvassed other museums to identify innovative approaches to the presentation of furniture collections. In October, the Board of Trustees approved for further development a new interpretive framework for a ‘reimagined’ Whitehorne Museum.
Education runs through all of NRF’s work. NRF aims to engage people of all ages in a variety of ways. For children, NRF provides Newport public school students an art, history and observation-focused program at Rough Point and also welcomes other school groups and summer camps there and to Prescott Farm. Adults and their families enjoy guided tours of Rough Point during a 31-week season, along with special exhibitions, lectures, and collections-oriented events. NRF’s 46-acre Prescott Farm attracts people who enjoy exploring the trails, duck pond, restored 1812 windmill and other colonial structures, along with programming offered by the URI Master Gardeners on summer weekends.

In the 2017 program season, NRF:

- Welcomed nearly 17,000 people for guided tours and other programs at Rough Point, including 1,400 who took advantage of self-guided hours at a reduced rate.
- We opened our doors to 400+ Newport County residents and employees of the hospitality industry to Rough Point for free as part of the Newport Country Free Days in June.
- Presented 15 special programs at Rough Point in conjunction with the Nature Tamed exhibition.
- Hosted a glorious summer eve Garden Fête at Rough Point, inspired by a benefit event hosted by Mrs. Frederick Vanderbilt on the lawn in August 1905.
- Had 286 fourth and eighth grade students from Newport Public Schools visit Rough Point in the spring, thanks to a 10-year partnership with the Newport Public Education Foundation.
- Featured the students’ paintings at Rough Point as part of the 2017 exhibitions.
- Produced a new visitors guide for Rough Point.
- Led or co-sponsored 216 Newport History Tours in partnership with the Newport Historical Society as well as specialized tours of Vernon House, Christopher Townsend House, Whitehorne House Museum, and Rough Point for 12+ academic, museum and other groups and V.I.P.s.
- Hosted public presentations by RISD Interior Architecture and Roger Williams University students of results of their studio class, projecting long-term sea level rise impacts and ideas for resiliency response for our historic properties.
- Provided a diversity of experiences for nearly 1,000 visitors to Prescott Farm, showcasing its Revolutionary War era history and the lifestyles, foodways and structures of that period.
- Offered, with URI’s Master Gardener program, weekend talks at Prescott Farm on topics related to gardening, soils, and colonial history.
NRF staff members share their expertise generously, giving lectures, presenting workshops, and assuming leadership roles in professional organizations. In 2017, the outside professional activities of NRF staff members included:

**CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION AND OTHER PUBLIC ENGAGEMENTS**
- Tree Walk and Landscape Tour of the Island Cemetery, Newport Tree Society (Frank Amaral, Gardens and Grounds Supervisor)
- Keeping History Above Water: Annapolis (Shantia Anderheggen, Director of Preservation, and Kelsey Mullen, Public Programs Manager, Planning Committee)
- Costume Society America annual conference Portal to Progress: Transformations in Technology, Diversity in Dress, Portland, ME (Kristen Costa, Curator, Co-Chair)
- Public Humanities 10 Year Anniversary Conference, John Nicholas Brown Center for the Public Humanities, Brown University (Kristen Costa, Curator, Steering Committee)
- Hacking Heritage UnConference, John Nicholas Brown Center for the Public Humanities, Brown University (Kelsey Mullen, Public Programs Manager, Steering Committee)
- Assessing Museum Impact project, New England Museum Association (Kelsey Mullen, Public Programs Manager, and Margot Nishimura, Director of Museums, NRF representatives)
- “Mansion, Museum, Foundation, Farm: The Four-Part Legacy of Doris Duke in Newport,” lecture for the Institute of Classical Architecture and Art & Questers, NYC, and Ventfort Hall, Lenox, MA (Margot Nishimura, Director of Museums)
- “A Continuum of Craft: Architecture, Furniture, and Historic Preservation,” RI Statewide Historic Preservation Conference (Margot Nishimura, Director of Museums, session moderator)
- RI Docent Symposium (Liz Spoden, Visitor Experience Manager, Co-chair)
- National History Day, Rogers High School (Liz Spoden, Visitor Engagement Manager, and Kelsey Mullen, Public Programs Manager, judges)

**Prescott Farm Gives Back**

NRF is blessed with bounty to share from Prescott Farm. In 2017, NRF and the URI Master Gardeners who tend the gardens contributed 761 pounds of fresh vegetables to Lucy’s Hearth. This Middletown-based nonprofit is a 24-hour emergency and transitional shelter for mothers and their children who are homeless due to economic hardship, family crisis, divorce, eviction, and severe shortage of safe, affordable housing.
NRF participated in several new marketing partnerships this year.

- Joined 36 Hours in Newport, a collaboration between seven of Newport’s museums and cultural centers. Via the website 36HoursinNewportRI.com, the sites offered the first-ever combination ticket for visitors to tour multiple sites for one affordable price. Participating sites are Rough Point, the Audrain Auto Museum, International Tennis Hall of Fame, Marble House, Newport Art Museum, Redwood Library & Athenaeum, and Touro Synagogue.

- Promoted visitation to Rough Point via three new radio promotional programs: a five-month ad campaign with Rhode Island Public Radio, WADK’s six-week “Two Minute Tourist” program, and WPRO AM’s “Sweet Deals” promotion program in August.

NRF pursued a standard range of tactics for promoting its offerings and building audience, in addition to testing some new strategies, techniques, and partnerships this year. It publicized programs and promoted visitation at Rough Point, Whitehorne House, and Prescott Farm, as well as the popular joint walking tour program with the Newport Historical Society. NRF coordinated the marketing and media efforts for Keeping History Above Water: Annapolis. News outlets including The Associated Press, The Providence Journal, Baltimore Sun, Providence Business News, WADK, Saving Places and others covered our efforts this year.

OVERHAULING ITS WEBSITE WAS A KEY GOAL OF NRF’S 2014 STRATEGIC PLAN. THE CURRENT WEBSITE IS CUMBERSOME AND EXPENSIVE TO MANAGE AND ITS PLATFORM OUTDATED. NRF SELECTED DESIGN AGENCY OF PROVIDENCE TO WORK WITH A STAFF TEAM TO REFRESH NRF’S VISUAL IDENTITY AND TO DESIGN AND BUILD A NEW WEBSITE. THAT WORK HAS PROGRESSED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR; LAUNCH IS PLANNED FOR MAY 2018.

DIGITAL MARKETING & SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is an important tactic for engaging directly with audiences on daily basis. NRF’s core social media platforms include two Facebook accounts (for NRF and for Rough Point), a Twitter account, and an Instagram account. All accounts have seen growth in followers this year, ranging from 7.61% growth in Rough Point Facebook followers to 40% growth in Instagram followers.

One area of NRF’s marketing scope that has grown substantially has been digital marketing. Individual promotional eBlasts augment monthly eNewsletters to drive program attendance and ticket sales. Facebook advertising has allowed NRF to reach people beyond its fan base, accessing different locations, demographics and interests related to NRF promotions. NRF has seen increased engagement with these ads, with the top ad being one that promoted registration for Keeping History Above Water: Annapolis. The total reach was 7,226 people.

NRF’s digital footprint has benefited from a Google Grants account, which provides NRF free use of a Google AdWords search service, valued at $10,000 a month. Google AdWords enables NRF to attach keywords to our online ads and test which yield maximum traffic to NRF’s website. NRF’s first AdWords campaign for Rough Point had 155,991 impressions (how often the ad is seen) between June and November and was clicked 3,445 times on Google.

A collaboration with Design New England, a Boston Globe publication, yielded a Rough Point cover story with spectacular photography featuring a model with an uncanny resemblance to Doris Duke. Inspired by Duke as a design icon and tastemaker, she was posed in the museum’s beautiful rooms with Rhode Island-made jewelry and surf boards, dressed in outfits crafted from new upholstery fabrics of the season. The July/August issue continues to be one of the top performing issues of Design New England to date.

WEBSITE

Overhauling its website was a key goal of NRF’s 2014 Strategic Plan. The current website is cumbersome and expensive to manage and its platform outdated. NRF selected Design Agency of Providence to work with a staff team to refresh NRF’s visual identity and to design and build a new website. That work has progressed throughout the year; launch is planned for May 2018.
Meet Newport Restoration Foundation

Enhancing Our Organizational Excellence

Trustees and Staff Set Mission and Key Goals

Of priority in time of transition is to have clarity of mission and key goals. In advance of launching a search for a new executive director, the trustees and senior staff worked together to refresh NRF’s mission statement and to articulate its priorities for the future. All NRF staff members were engaged and invited to contribute. The planning benefited as well from confidential interviews with key stakeholders, which the interim executive director conducted in advance of a daylong strategic planning retreat, held at Harbour Court in April.

The key goals adopted are to:
1. Preserve more historic properties,
2. Advocate for good preservation-friendly policies and decisions,
3. Address the threat to historic communities of sea level rise and promote effective adaptations,
4. Advance learning and appreciation for NRF’s collections and the stories they can tell, and
5. Expand public access to NRF’s remarkable museums and support for historic preservation.

A challenge, of course, will be to sustain NRF’s longstanding stewardship of nearly 80 historic houses and its museums with sufficient staff and financial support while also growing NRF’s roles in these ways.

Following completion of the new strategic framework, NRF staff prepared a detailed work plan for 2018, with individual work plans following. That plan informed the 2018 budget planning.

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Linda Ramey
Carmen Rivera-Smith
Statement of Financial Position  
December 31, 2017

Current assets:
- Cash: 1,132,717
- Accounts & other receivables: 24,825
- Contributions receivable: 2,496,894
- Inventory: 76,760
- Prepaid expenses: 151,741

Total current assets: 3,882,937

Assets restricted to investment in property and equipment: 142,220

Property and Equipment: 38,136,656
- Less accumulated depreciation: 15,227,586
- Net property and equipment: 22,909,070

Investments: 7,935,099

Total Assets: 34,869,326

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Current liabilities:
- Current portion of long-term debt: 14,362
- Accounts payable: 488,363
- Accrued expenses: 93,791
- Total current liabilities: 596,516

Long-term debt, less current portion: 252,351
- Security deposits: 131,552
- Asset retirement obligations: 315,462
- Total liabilities: 1,295,881

Net assets:
- Unrestricted: 26,793,983
- Temporarily restricted (Note 7): 6,779,462
- Total net assets: 33,573,445

Total Liabilities and Net Assets: 34,869,326

Statement of Activities  
December 31, 2017

Changes in unrestricted net assets:
- Operating revenue and support:
  - Rental income and related charges: 1,992,905
  - Retail sales: 15,713
  - Admission income: 320,076
  - Interest and dividend income: 34,681
  - Special events: 111,951
  - Program income: 24,963
  - Contributions: 70,286
  - Other revenue and support: 5,116
  - Total: 2,575,691

- Net assets released from restrictions: 2,206,067
- Total unrestricted revenue and support from operations and net assets released from restrictions: 4,781,758

Program expenses:
- Rough Point: 2,661,639
- Rental property: 2,162,166
- Whitehorne: 55,976
- Prescott Farm: 49,068
- Total program expenses: 4,928,849

Supporting services expenses:
- Administration: 647,759
- Special events: 54,369
- Total supporting services: 702,128
- Total expenses: 5,630,977
- Decrease in unrestricted net assets from operations: (849,219)

Nonoperating revenue (expenses) and support:
- Investment income: 844,477
- Net loss on disposal of assets: (17,518)
- Net assets released from restrictions: 389,421
- Total nonoperating revenue and support: 1,216,380
- Increase in unrestricted net assets: 367,161

Increase in temporarily restricted net assets:
- Contributions: 2,631,120
- Investment income, net: (17,518)
- Net assets released from restrictions: (2,595,488)
- Increase in temporarily restricted net assets: 35,632

Change in net assets:
- Net assets - beginning: 33,170,652
- Net Assets - Ending: 33,573,445
Thank You to Our 2017 Donors and Supporters

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