A Letter from the Director

When the public health crisis struck in March 2020, like everyone else, we wrestled with adjusting to a new reality. For an organization like NRF, it was a time of uncertainty. Would we be able to open Rough Point and Whitehorne House Museum? What impact would social distancing and quarantines have on our need to preserve our houses? How would the pandemic affect the well-being of our staff and the community?

The year was far from typical, and yet we realized that the best way to navigate through the pandemic was to keep everyone working as long as we could do it safely. We were fortunate in not having to lay off or reduce the hours of a single employee. We ended the year with a balanced budget and we got things done.

Working with two different groups of consultants, we initiated Historic Structure Reports on both Rough Point and the William Vernon House. Our museum staff produced educational videos at a pace of more than one a week. NRF’s Director of Preservation, with assistance from the preservation crew, completed condition assessments on all of our houses – more than 70 in total. We convened our furniture symposium – Collective Perspectives – as well as hosted the Doris Duke Historic Preservation Awards virtually. In July, we opened Rough Point and Whitehorne House Museum for in-person visitation.

We could not have sustained this work in 2020 without the support of friends like you. On behalf of the Board of Trustees and NRF staff, thank you for reading this report and for taking an interest in our mission.

Sincerely,

Mark Thompson
Executive Director
Operating within the context of a pandemic was challenging for all museums and Rough Point Museum was no exception. The museum staff’s top priority in 2020 was the provision of quality (and safe) educational experiences despite the unprecedented circumstances that required most of us to stay home. With the museum unable to open to the public as scheduled, NRF staff were determined to get creative. They learned new skills like filming and video editing in order to help bring audiences together when people needed it the most. In March 2020, NRF launched a new YouTube channel to share video content and educational programming. The channel premiered several video series such as The Myth & Mystique of Doris Duke, Jazz in the House, Rough Point Unseen, Museum Close-Ups, as well as many more.

As required by the state, we closed Rough Point to the public for three months, from March to June. In June, public health officials allowed museums to operate at a restricted capacity, and the museum reopened first as a grounds-only experience, then the house reopened for self-guided tours in July. The museum remained open until the end of the year, but programs and events took place virtually. Staff worked diligently to ensure compliance with the State of Rhode Island’s public health regulations, including requirements regarding social distancing, mask-wearing, and routine sanitization. Safety of guests and staff was of the utmost importance.

Not surprisingly, the early-season closure of the museum had an impact on visitation. In 2019, over 20,000 guests visited the museum; in 2020, we received less than 7500 visitors. Despite this reduction in in-person visitation, we were able to engage virtually with audiences from all over the world. The videos on NRF’s YouTube channel received total views of 27,871 during 2020 alone, and people throughout the community and beyond continue to watch and share the content widely.

Because of the pandemic, Whitehorne House Museum delayed reopening its doors to the community until July. Like at Rough Point, NRF staff worked diligently to ensure that the museum was a safe environment for visitors per the State of Rhode Island public health guidelines.

The museum continued to offer free admission for Newport County residents and welcomed a total 564 visitors during the abbreviated season.

In 2020, Prescott Farm provided a refuge for those seeking safe, outdoor experiences. Nonetheless, all programs and events, including monthly Second Sunday programs, were held virtually. A dedicated team from the University of Rhode Island’s Master Gardener program continued to care for Prescott Farm’s kitchen and herb gardens. During the fall of this year, the Master Gardeners grew over 200 pumpkins of three different varieties, which we donated to the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center.
Preservation Perseverses

While COVID-19 put a halt to many aspects of our everyday lives, maintenance at NRF’s historic houses can never cease. The Preservation Crew continued to be hard at work painting, restoring windows, performing exterior carpentry repairs, maintaining HVAC systems, and more. They performed these tasks while adhering to a new set of COVID-19 protocols designed to uphold their health and safety as well as that of their tenant-stewards.

During the summer, NRF’s Preservation Crew carried out comprehensive exterior maintenance at the Sisson Collins House (40 School Street). Along with the anticipated cyclical carpentry and paint failures due to age, this property suffered from additional damage due to the positioning, type, and extent of the surrounding vegetation. The landscaping accompanying a historic building is a major factor in its long-term preservation. Overgrown bushes inhibit the proper drying of building fabric, crawling vines attach themselves to foundations and creep underneath clapboards, and overgrown trees cause damaging bio growth on roofs. All of this creates carpentry and paint failure, accelerating the deterioration and loss of historic building fabric (shown here to the right). After the crew completed the necessary repairs, the home received a fresh coat of beautiful Prussian Blue paint. NRF documented the restoration for an episode of our virtual Preservation Pop-up series, which premiered in November on NRF’s YouTube channel.

Keeping History Above Water

For the first time, NRF intended to expand our Keeping History Above Water initiative to an international audience with a workshop in Barbados scheduled for March 16, 2020. Ten days before the workshop, the Caribbean Heritage Network realized it had no choice but to cancel the program.

Nevertheless, NRF remained busy. In May 2020, an agreement was signed to work with partners in Charleston to convene Keeping History Above Water: Charleston in March 2021 (subsequently rescheduled to June 2021). In July 2020, another agreement was signed to work with partners in Norfolk to convene Keeping History Above Water: Norfolk in May 2022. Although our Norfolk partners would wait until 2021 to begin planning their conference, NRF enjoyed engaging in the planning process with our Charleston partners throughout the latter half of 2020.
Celebrating Preservation Excellence in Newport

NRF convened the 14th Annual Doris Duke Historic Preservation Awards differently in 2020. On Friday, September 11, the event was presented virtually on our YouTube page. Through a short video presentation, our virtual event guests were able to get a behind-the-scenes view, and learn more about the restoration or rehabilitation of these properties. This new event format allowed the property owners and contractors to share their passion for taking on these projects.

NRF recognized the following projects:

**BankNewport (1930), Newport, RI**
Awarded to BankNewport; recognized for the rehabilitation of a 90-year-old bank in Newport’s Washington Square (pictured left). The structure was built between 1929 and 1930 and was designed with the intent to blend in seamlessly with its neighbors and the character of the square. When the building was recently evaluated for a new HVAC system, it was decided that the entire space should be rehabilitated. BankNewport determined that maintaining the branch’s historical integrity while balancing modern amenities was of the utmost importance. Highlights of the rehabilitation included mechanical and electrical updates, HVAC system replacement, exterior masonry restoration, and recreations of the building’s original artistry by local artisans such as hand-painted gold-leaf lettering on the exterior, ornate interior ceiling details, and the lobby’s decorative plaster. Ultimately, the building was carefully rehabilitated and restored in order to continue serving the exact purpose it was built for decades ago – as a community bank.

**Edgar House “Sunnyside” (1885), Newport, RI**
Awarded to Susan and Peter Metzger; recognized for rehabilitating and restoring an early example of brick colonial revival architecture (pictured above). The house was built by the renowned architectural firm of McKim, Mead, & White between the years 1884 and 1886. In 2018, the house was purchased by Susan and Peter Metzger as a two-family home in need of preservation. Exterior restorations included repairing 20 wood columns, masonry, steps, and walkways. The 13 third floor dormers were all repaired and the roof was replaced. Inside, systems were upgraded, bathrooms were renovated, and a large-scale ceiling mural was also restored. After extensive work, Sunnyside is once again a stately one-family home.

**International Tennis Hall of Fame: Frieze Restoration (1879-81), Newport, RI**
Awarded to the International Tennis Hall of Fame (ITHOF); recognized for the restoration of a lost portion of historic fabric located on Bellevue Avenue (pictured right). ITHOF is dedicated to the preservation and stewardship of the Newport Casino, which is where the museum resides. During the 20th century, the Newport Casino’s decorative “Frieze,” or a horizontal board of sculpted or painted decoration, was replaced. Fortunately, many of the original frieze medallions were salvaged and stored at the museum. Due to their significant level of deterioration, the original medallions were not able to be reinstalled. Instead, 38 new circular and semicircular ornate medallions were hand carved to match the original size, motif, and carving techniques using historic photos and drawings. This project not only restored the historic frieze, it restored a portion of Newport’s past for all who pass through Newport’s downtown.

We are grateful to our committed donors and friends who supported the event in this new format. With your help in this challenging environment, over $66,000 was raised to sustain NRF’s historic preservation efforts. We especially would like to thank our Platinum sponsors, Mr. and Mrs. Mortimer Berkowitz, III, Ms. Edith McBean, and James and Alice Ross, for their generosity.
# Thank You to our 2020 Donors

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*Thank you to participants in our Restoration Partners program
Statement of Financial Position
December 31, 2020

ASSETS
Current assets:
- Cash                             8,292,699
- Accounts & other receivables     40,620
- Contributions receivable        2,442,080
- Inventory                       71,920
- Prepaid expenses                167,169
Total current assets              11,014,488
Assets restricted to investment in property and equipment 244,640
Property and Equipment            38,569,739
Less accumulated depreciation     18,166,687
Net property and equipment        20,403,052
Investments                      4,321,282
Total Assets                      35,983,462

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS
Current liabilities:
- Current portion of long-term debt 124,900
- Accounts payable                 523,187
- Accrued expenses                177,564
  Total current liabilities        825,651
- Long-term debt, less current portion 0
- Security deposits                158,511
- Environmental remediation obligations 306,653
  Total liabilities                1,290,815
Net assets:
- Unrestricted                     26,367,753
- Temporarily restricted           8,324,894
  Total net assets                 34,692,647
Total Liabilities and Net Assets  35,983,462

Statement of Activities
December 31, 2020

Changes in unrestricted net assets:
Operating revenue and support:
- Rental income and related charges 2,192,420
- Retail sales                      11,784
- Admission income                  102,158
- Interest and dividend income      38,599
- Special events                    66,486
- Program income                    77,710
- Grants and Contributions          50,812
- Other revenue and support         116,453
  Total:                            2,579,442
Net assets released from restrictions 1,937,657
  Total unrestricted revenue and support from operations and net assets released from restrictions 4,517,099
Program expenses:
- Rough Point                         2,535,801
- Rental property                     2,366,761
- Whitehorse                           77,278
- Prescott Farm                        42,251
- Queen Anne Square Maintenance Trust 5,458
  Total program expenses              5,022,091
Supporting services expenses:
- Administration                      507,132
- Special events                      7,933
  Total supporting services           515,065
  Total expenses:                     5,537,156
Increase (decrease) in unrestricted net assets from operations (1,020,057)
Nonoperating revenue (expenses) and support:
- Investment income, net              476,923
- Net gain (loss) on disposal of assets 27,891
- Net assets released from restrictions 301,031
  Total nonoperating revenue and support 805,845
Increase (decrease) in unrestricted net assets (214,212)
Net assets with donor restrictions:
- Grant Contributions                 2,862,857
- Investment income, net              9,850
- Net assets released from restrictions (2,238,688)
  Increase (decrease) in net assets with donor restrictions 624,169
Change in net assets                  409,957
Net assets - beginning                 34,282,690
Net Assets - Ending                    34,692,647
Thank you to our Board of Trustees

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