# 15/16 Annual Report



A Publication of The Preservation Society of Newport County 2015 - 2016



Charles Osgood filming at Marble House



Anne Garnett, John & Elizabeth Brooks



Angela Fischer, Alice Ross



Megan Kacinski, Trudy Coxe, Pat Fernandez, Monty Burnham



Pamela & Brian Ross Owens



Topsy Taylor, John Peixinho





Carol & Jonathan Epstein



Barbara Chapman, Archie van Beuren



# Chairman's Report

By Donald O. Ross

From the Annual Meeting, June 16, 2016

Good evening ladies & gentlemen, thank you for being here to help the Preservation Society celebrate another eventful and successful year of protecting, preserving and presenting some of America's most significant legacy properties.

I want to recognize our incredible Board of Trustees. There is no more dedicated and professional group of volunteers leading any other museum in America than the 30 people who give so much of their time and expertise to help the Preservation Society achieve its mission. Their diverse talents are incredible. It's always a good idea to recruit people much smarter than you. I am so thankful to each of you for all of the time you have spent on any number of projects, committees, reviews, and strategic planning.

I also extend my appreciation to our hard-working staff, led by CEO & Executive Director Trudy Coxe, who do the day-to-day work of carrying out the policies and directives set by the Board, and making sure that our historic house museums are the best anywhere. Trudy, you know that you have had the full support and backing of the Board, and your communications with that body have been extraordinary.

Tonight, I am addressing you for the final time as Chairman of the Board - which means I am speaking for the final time as chairman of what I believe to be one of America's great museums.

That's saying a lot - we have not always thought of ourselves that way, but the time has come.

I want to travel back in time a bit to see how we have changed, and importantly, how we have remained true to the mission set out by our founders. Our organization is complex and often not well understood. Historic preservation is more than just patching roofs and cleaning interiors. It is about education, satisfying the curiosity of visitors, and remaining relevant. Katherine Warren saw that were it not for visitors to Newport, these great houses would become apartments or would be



torn down. Presenting is extremely important - and making our visitors feel that they are welcome here and that we care is extremely important. This must go hand in hand with the restoration and conservation efforts that are important for our houses.

Hunter House circa 1948

As you all know, the founding purpose behind the Preservation Society in 1945 was to save Hunter House. But this was really just the first act in an advocacy effort to preserve the architectural heritage of colonial Newport. This advocacy effort helped spawn a revolving fund in 1948 to fix up colonial properties. Where it made sense, these properties were not just restored, but were to be used as well, and sold where appropriate.

Examples of this were the restoration work done on the Pitts Head Tavern, and the crowning achievement was clearly the White Horse Tavern in 1953. Every time a new owner comes into the picture, the PS is required to review the structure and further use of the property to ensure that the restrictions are observed. Holding easements on historic properties fits within our mission. Further, you might be interested to know that over 50 objects remain on loan to the White Horse Tavern.



Visitors examine a map displayed as part of the exhibition Newport and Her Southern Sisters at Rosecliff

Headquarters for the PS then was at 118 Mill Street, which was the Warren family home. Back to being a private residence, it is owned by an individual who is clearly sensitive to the history of the house and, very importantly, its Christopher Tunnard gardens.

The City of Newport and the PS saw that cultural tourism and architectural restoration of significant properties went hand in hand in rebuilding the Newport that was terribly hard hit economically after WWII. The path was slow, and had numerous disappointments, but the successes laid the foundation to tackle much greater challenges.

Stage 2 began with the acquisition of The Elms in 1962, saving it from demolition and a transformation of the property to a shopping center. Thus began a period over the next 13 years of saving the Gilded Age properties for which the PS is probably best known. During this period the PS became the owner and steward of three additional architectural treasures of the Gilded Age and three other earlier houses.

The intertwining of tourism and historic education played a dramatic role in the financing of these properties. The bridge opening in 1969 enabled more visitors to come to Newport, and the City's focus on tourism as a viable industry and economic engine really commenced. Newport had to move from a small town with insufficient infrastructure to meet the needs of visitors. The PS was giving visitors reasons to come to Newport. And Katherine Warren recognized the importance of this link. The focus of the PS clearly had to be keeping these houses open to the public. And very importantly, the public was creating the revenue stream to fund the restoration and preservation needed. In 1972, the year that the Preservation Society bought The Breakers, attendance was 243,000.

But with these added responsibilities of caring for, as many would call them, "white elephants," came a massive amount of work on leaky roofs, warped floors, drafty and rotting windows, and outdated eleccenteries of Add aportige of Rosecliff's builder Theresa Fair Oelrichs of Newport clients, Mizner built the Hispano-Medit

trical and plumbing systems as well as outfitting the properties that had no furnishings. The name The Preservation Society of Newport County became synonymous with the limestone gilded age properties.

The third chapter is one we have entered over the last several years with added focus on the collections, the landscapes, and education. In so doing, we really have become a great museum. We are also reinvigorating our advocacy role - carefully and in very selective areas. Witness the effort to bury power lines behind Second Beach and the review we submitted on the Navy's trial balloon for the possible construction of major wind turbines on the island.

There are many criteria that define a great museum:

- They curate and display extraordinary collections.
- They conserve and preserve priceless artifacts.
- They create sustainable funding for research.
- They are not just testaments to human achievement, but contributors to it.
- They help us to understand ourselves and our place in the world.

During my time on the Board, this great museum has continued and extended the mission set forth by Katherine Warren and our other founders 71 years ago.

Completing the return of the Venetian paintings cycle at The Elms is one of the most recent examples of acquiring and displaying extraordinary collections. There are many, many others, but to mention just a few of the more recent examples:

- We added a rare piece by colonial Newport silversmith Samuel Vernon to the collection at Hunter House.
- We acquired at auction and returned an original suite of furniture, which had been sold at the 1962 auction of The Elms furnishings, to its rightful place in the salon.
- And we created a state-of-the-art exhibition gallery at Rosecliff, where we can now share objects not only from our own collections but from other great museums as well to help tell the Newport story.



Chief Conservator Patty Miller restoring ceiling detail at Chateau-sur-Mer

Our preservation and conservation work was highlighted by the restoration of the Chinese lacquer panels in The Elms. But there are countless other examples in the last year alone. For example, with the help of the Coaching Club, we completed a restoration of The Breakers Stable just in time to show it off for Coaching Weekend. At Chateau-sur-Mer, some of the beautiful painted plaster ceilings have been repaired, and the paint details restored.

Programs like the Newport Symposium and our exhibitions at Rosecliff are among the ways that we bring together scholars and collections, broadening and deepening our ability to interpret the periods of historic significance represented by our houses.

Great museums also make their knowledge and collections accessible and relevant to people across the world. Our flexibility, and our nimbleness in meeting the needs of our visitors, has helped us to continue to grow and succeed while many other historic sites have struggled. We have nearly one million admissions every year, visitors who come from every state and from 114 other countries. That is up from the 243,000 visitations I mentioned earlier. Thousands more view our website every week.

Were she here with us today, I think I can say with confidence that Katherine Warren would be very proud of how far we have come. For more than 70 years, The Preservation Society of Newport County has led the way in historic preservation in America. We have built not only a national, but an international reputation for the quality of our preservation work, the integrity of our interpretation of our historic properties, and our hospitality to the guests who come to appreciate and learn from them.

While I have had the privilege of standing before you for these last six years to chronicle our accomplishments, the true credit for those accomplishments lies not with me, but with all of YOU. It is the dedicated members of our Board, the hard-working staff, the many volunteers who devote hundreds of hours to our committees, our thousands of members and donors, and all of our visitors, who make us a great museum.

Since 1989 I have served on this Board and been a part of its evolution. And despite some of the difficult times - be it mid-year budgeting when costs and attendance were not at parity, to serious downturns in the economy, and to a controversy here and there - I must say, especially during these last six years as Chairman, working for the PS has been true enjoyment for me. And it has been a real privilege to have worked with my fellow Trustees and the team that keeps our houses open on a day to day basis.

Thank you to you all.





# CEO & Executive Director's Report

By Trudy Coxe

#### From the Annual Meeting, June 16, 2016

Don has done an excellent job in making the case that over the last 70 years, from the time we started with Hunter House to today, the Preservation Society has become a great museum for one simple reason - the great people who have helped along the way:

- all of you in this room and our 33,000 members (our membership is larger than the population of Newport);
- an incredible, hard working staff of 400;
- a senior management team that set records on many fronts this year;
- and the most committed Board of Trustees I've known.

Seven of our Trustees are retiring this year due to term limits. Eugene Roberts, Angela Fischer, Elizabeth Leatherman, Mark Watson, Sarah Gewirz, David Ford. and Don Ross all have made significant contributions.

- Our collections are at their best thanks to Eugene Roberts.
- Our 25 year old Symposium is one of the most prestigious in the country thanks to Angela Fischer.
- There is no house in our collection that is better cared for than Hunter House, due to Elizabeth Leatherman.
- Arcane and important finance and insurance issues are under control thanks to the smarts of Mark Watson, who by the way is also an internationally recognized sailor.
- Every board needs a Sarah Gewirz. Decisive, no nonsense, let's get the job done, she was the first to contribute to our comprehensive campaign.
- Which brings me to David Ford, who several years ago a bit reluctantly - agreed to co-chair that campaign with Pierre Irving and Dayton Carr. And all they've done is exceed the goal by \$10 million. David's unflagging optimism was a key factor.
- And, finally, our fearless leader, Don Ross, under whose guidance such transformation has occurred. Where other museums are failing, ours is not. Where others are losing younger people, we're gaining. Where others can't afford to do the preservation work needed, we can. These things are this board's legacy led by Don.

Our strategic plan helped define how we can be an even greater museum in the future, by adding to the cultural vibrancy of Newport through great programming, exploring Newport's past with better research, being a leader on the horticulture front, and engaging as many young people and locals in our efforts as we can.

Cultural vibrancy. There's not a day of the year when something truly outstanding isn't happening. We work very hard at telling our stories in ways that inspire people to want to learn more, to become more engaged in history and art. That's why we are working on creating a Beneath the Breakers Tour, which will open in the winter. Visitors will descend the staircase from the caretaker's cottage to the vast underground boiler room, and see the massive boilers that helped power the house. Then they'll be able to walk through the tunnel into the basement, and walk around to see just how this amazing house was built, the original electrical panel and wiring, the plumbing and the foundation. And, once they have finished their tours of The Breakers, we want them to enjoy refreshments as is done in museums around the world.

Another thing that will make us a greater museum in the future is the kind of research we can turn out - thus our Fellows Program. On August 11 we will dedicate the Carriage House at The Elms as a scholars center, where our visiting fellows will be able to live and work.

As we head into the future we also want to further establish the Preservation Society's credentials as a custodian of great landscapes. That's why being certified as an official Level II arboretum this year was so important. But perhaps the biggest statement we could make is bringing our gardens back to their former splendor. We have been studying The Breakers landscape for several years, developing a Cultural Landscape Report, which has led to the creation of a master plan for 13 acres of land at The Breakers.

We will continue to spend a great deal of time reaching out to a variety of audiences, starting with the Newport community, our neighbors and friends. We have held a number of getting-to-knowyou receptions for our neighbors and continue to provide free admission for all Newport residents. We want to make it possible for everyone who lives here to visit us.

We are also joining forces with many institutions - fellow museums, tourism organizations, academic institutions, local action groups. One such collaboration - involving the Aquidneck Land Trust, Preserve RI, the Town of Middletown, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the van Beuren Charitable Foundation, the Prince Charitable Trusts and the Easton's Point Neighborhood Association - is finally achieving the long-sought goal of burying the utility lines along Sachuest Point Road, to restore the historic viewscapes there. On another front, we are partnering with Preserve RI to produce a report on the economic impact of preservation in Rhode Island which will strengthen and support each organization's advocacy and policy impact. In another example, working with the City of Newport, neighborhood association leaders and local residents, we have helped to create a policy that will guide the preservation of decorative streetlights throughout the city.

Finally, we are learning how to attract and communicate with young people - the millenials - in a language that they understand.

We were just the second museum in New England to begin using tablets for our audio tours, allowing us to include photos and maps and more information for our guests. We also now have a downloadable mobile app, so that visitors can listen to the audio tours on their own smart devices. I particularly want to thank the family of Snehal Shah, who donated the development of the app - which took many months of work.

We have been growing our Facebook presence along with other social media outlets. We have added Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram



Laura Jenkins is one of the new class of Fellows who are the first to live and work in the new Berwind-Stautberg Center at The Elms Carriage House

pages and now actively encourage our visitors to share their experiences and their photos through social media.

So, no one here can deny that this is an organization on the move. You all are part of that movement forward. I remember David Ford preaching often that we had to embrace transformation, and not be afraid of it. I hope that you agree we are doing so.

My grandmother was Cuban, and in March our family went to Cuba to understand our heritage better. What we learned is the fragility of historic resources, that buildings can crumble over a relatively short period of time - beautiful buildings with histories as important as ours.

So, I came back with a renewed sense of the importance of protecting what we have, a goal I know you all share.

As I conclude, I just want to reiterate my earlier comment. It is you, our dedicated and faithful supporters, who are at the heart of all our successes.

Thank you so much.



Above: Burying power lines along Sachuest Point Road will help to restore the historic viewscape. Right: Common room in the new Berwind-Stautberg Center in The Elms Carriage House





# Treasurer's Report

by William F. Lucey III

from the Annual Meeting, June 16, 2016

Success usually comes to those who are too busy to be looking for it. The staff of The Preservation Society of Newport County was certainly busy in fiscal 2016.

#### Revenue

The Preservation Society had a terrific year, with a pre-audit surplus of \$947,000, the largest in our history.

Total revenue was \$21.3 million, up over \$1 million from the previous year. Admissions revenue led the way with a \$700,000 increase. We had 967,659 individual visits, an increase of 4.3%.

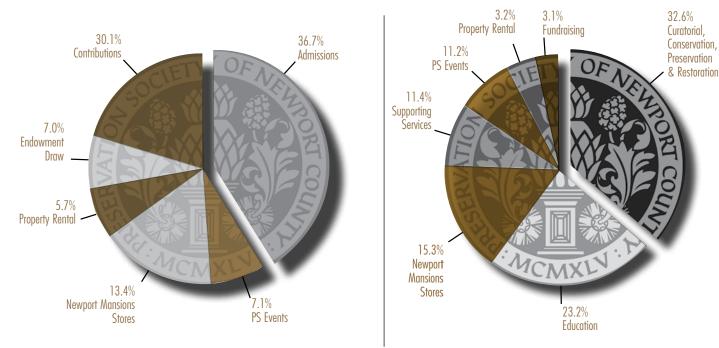
Other areas with significant revenue gains were retail sales, up 4.5% to a record high, special events up 23%, and fundraising events up 12%.

We had another successful fundraising year. We raised \$6.3 million, with over \$2 million in new funding for campaign priority projects. This is particularly noteworthy since it's the sixth year of our campaign, An American *Story*.

The foundations of our fundraising, the Annual Fund and memberships, have grown steadily throughout the campaign. The Annual Fund engaged over 1,000 donors and raised over \$900,000.

Membership dues exceeded \$1 million for the first time. We had 33,591 members from every state except Alaska. We have close to 1,200 supporters who have been loyal members for more than 10 years.

Thank you to everyone who supported us, especially our donors.



Revenue

To request a copy of the complete FY2015-2016 audited financial statements for The Preservation Society of Newport County, please contact James M. Burress, Director of Finance, at JBurress@NewportMansions.org

### EXPENSES



The exterior restoration of Kingscote continued in 2016

#### Expenses

Total operating expenses before major projects were \$18.96 million, just \$5,000 more than 2015.

Operating expenses are heavily dominated by payroll and related costs. Total payroll expenses, including wages, taxes and fringe benefits, accounted for 57% of our operating expenses or \$10.35 million, up 4.7% from 2015. We averaged 217 full time equivalents and issued 412 W-2s. Salary raises averaged 3.5% and healthcare costs rose over 13%.

Non-payroll operating costs totaled \$8.1 million versus \$9.2 million in 2015, a reduction of \$1.1 million. We managed these savings while we almost doubled our spending on major projects by spending \$1.4 million. Two significant projects were the completion of the Rosecliff exhibition gallery and the installation of a climate control system in Chepstow.

#### Net Available for Debt Paydown

As I mentioned earlier, we ended the year with a net surplus available for debt pay down of \$947,000.

We paid off The Breakers' audio tour loan, and we continue to paydown the defined benefit pension termination loan.

The value of our endowment dropped by \$2.3 million, but our restricted reserves increased by \$2.3 million thanks in large part to

Monty Burnham and the Helen D. Buchanan Trust, which bestowed over \$1.6 million to the Society, the largest single donation in our history.

#### 2017

Fiscal 2017's budget projects continued revenue growth for the Preservation Society.

Over \$1 million will be invested in renovations to The Breakers, for a new basement tour and renovations to the retail store. The payback for these investments is less than 3 years.

While this has been a very positive financial report, preservation is expensive. The Properties Department has requested \$2.5 million for projects and equipment this year. We can't fund it all, so many of the projects, such as the \$800,000 repair to the Marble House roof, have to be staged over time instead of doing it all at once. And only one parking lot repair out of ten could be funded.

The Garden and Landscapes Department asked for \$100,000 for various projects that didn't get funded this year. The list goes on.

That is why it is vital for The Preservation Society of Newport County to continue to look for ways to meet its ever-growing commitments to its museums and the communities it serves.

Once again, I congratulate our staff, our supporters and our members for a very successful year.



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Awarded To Donald O. Ross FOR HIS EXCEPTIONAL LEADERSHIP ON and OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF NEWPORT COUNTY

Elected in 1989, Donald O. Ross has been a Trustee of The Preservation Society of Newport County for twenty-seven years, including three as Vice President, five as Treasurer and six as Chairman of the Board.

A Trustee's job is to guide the organization's future, secure philanthropic resources to fulfill the mission, oversee the organization's financial integrity, develop leadership to assure succession and be an engaged and informed ambassador. Don Ross has steadfastly executed each of these responsibilities with professionalism, good humor and unparalleled dedication.

As Treasurer, Finance Committee Chair and Investment Committee Chair, Don expertly guided the organization through the Great Recession. During his service on the Board, endowment funds increased from \$8.7 million to \$35.8 million, and deferred maintenance decreased from \$13.5 million to less than \$500,000. He has been a lead member of the Steering Committee for our first Comprehensive Campaign, which had a goal of \$21 million and is poised to exceed \$33 million when it ends on December 31, 2016.

As Chairman, Don secured Board approval of our comprehensive Strategic Plan to lead the Preservation Society well into the twenty-first century. The Plan is already bearing fruit. This fall, four members of the Preservation Society's Fellows Program will move into new living and work space in the transformed Elms Carriage House. Another signal accomplishment under the Strategic Plan is the completion of museum-quality exhibition space at Rosecliff, with two exhibitions already mounted – *Newport and Her Southern Sisters* in 2015 and *Splendor at Sea: The Golden Age of Steam Yachting in America*, which just opened.

During Don's time on the Board, the exteriors of The Breakers and Chateau-sur-Mer were restored, The Breakers boiler room is being rehabilitated and a new tour planned, The Elms roof was replaced and the Marble House terrace was renovated. He celebrated the complex restoration of the magnificent gates at The Breakers as part of ongoing efforts to preserve and showcase the Preservation Society's flagship property. He presided over the return of the six Venetian overdoor paintings in The Elms, reuniting the largest collection of 18th century Venetian paintings in America after a 50-year separation.

Don guided the establishment of the International Council, individuals with an incomparable passion for arts and culture who serve as our global ambassadors. And his firm hand and calm guidance during The Breakers Welcome Center permitting process has been invaluable.

A long-time resident, Don is dedicated to Newport and Rhode Island. He has served on the boards of Bryant University, the International Tennis Hall of Fame, the Providence Preservation Society and Newport Hospital. He has built an impressive career in finance and management. Don and his wonderful wife, Susan, raised their family here and are now introducing their grandchildren to Newport. Living across the street from the Preservation Society's headquarters, Don will never be far away, and we will always be grateful.

With 14 museum properties, 88 acres of gardens and over 60,000 objects, The Preservation Society of Newport County's collections are valued at more than \$1 billion. Its 34,000 members and 960,000 visitors celebrated its 70th anniversary last year. Its museums are accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and its landscapes by the Morton Arboretum. In 2013, the Preservation Society was selected to present the Loan Exhibition at the prestigious Winter Antiques Show in New York City.

The Board of Trustees of The Preservation Society of Newport County is honored and pleased to award Donald O. Ross the Antiquarian Award, our highest organizational honor.

Given at Rosecliff in Newport, Rhode Island

This 16th day of June 2016 Monty Burnham

Fanchon M. Burnham Chairman, Board of Trustees

aurel Awards

Presented in recognition of outstanding service, artisanship or leadership



Mark Malkovich IV and Angela Fischer

#### Mark Malkovich IV

In recognition of your devotion to and perpetuation of the Newport Music Festival, bringing international musical acclaim to Newport for nearly 50 years.



Mary Berlinghof, Shelley Kraman, Kiki McMahan and David Leys

Newport in Bloom

In recognition of its achievement in beautifying Newport streetscapes for over 30 years.



Kenneth Lindh, Beverly Little, Lynda Lindh and David Ford

#### The Lindh Family

In recognition of your tireless efforts in coordinating, designing and supporting the triennial Coaching Weekend and in honor of David E.P. Lindh, champion of coaching's revival in Newport.

# **Donors** April 1, 2015 – August 31, 2016

The Preservation Society thanks our many members and individual, foundation and corporate donors for your ongoing support. Your generosity makes it possible for us to protect, preserve and present the exceptional collection of house museums and landscapes entrusted to our care.

#### INDIVIDUAL GIFTS

#### \$100,000 and above

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We could not be more grateful – thank you!

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#### OUR MISSION

Great Houses connect people to a nation's heritage and open windows to another age. The Preservation Society of Newport County is a non-profit organization whose mission is to protect, preserve, and present an exceptional collection of house museums and landscapes in one of the most historically intact cities in America. We hold in public trust the Newport Mansions which are an integral part of the living fabric of Newport, Rhode Island. These sites exemplify three centuries of the finest achievements in American architecture, decorative arts, and landscape design spanning the Colonial era to the Gilded Age. Through our historic properties, educational programs, and related activities we engage the public in the story of America's vibrant cultural heritage. We seek to inspire and promote an appreciation of the value of preservation to enrich the lives of people everywhere.

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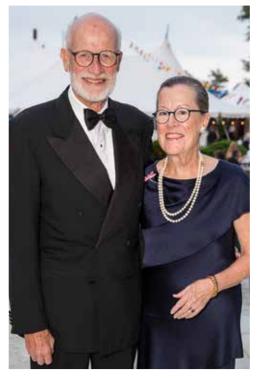
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