



VERNON HOUSE

Newport, RI | GRANT REQUEST AVAILABLE FOR FUNDING



VERNON HOUSE

Located in Newport, RI

GRANT SUMMARY

Restoration of Vernon House, one of the most important 18th-century buildings in the city of Newport and one of the only high-style, urban wooden townhouses to survive anywhere in the northeast United States, will be a multi-year endeavor. The current projects address the condition of the building's slate roofing, roof dormers and 27 pairs of double-hung, wooden sash windows (at all elevations of the building).

AT A GLANCE

Location:	Newport, Rhode Island
Ownership:	Newport Restoration Foundation (founded by Doris Duke, 1968)
Grant Request:	Available for funding
Matching Fund Source:	Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission (RIHPHC) & NRF
Allocation of Funds:	Slate roof, roof dormer windows, wooden sash windows Cost of work : \$44,968
FHS Payment:	\$13,000 funding request

HISTORY OF OWNERSHIP

Vernon House, a national historic landmark, has a rich architectural and social history. In 1758, Metcalf Bowler, a wealthy merchant purchased a small but elegant house at the corner of Clarke, and Mary Streets. He quickly expanded the house to its current form around 1760. It has been long suspected that the expansion was designed by noted architect Peter Harrison who is responsible for the Redwood Library, Touro Synagogue and the Old Brick Market.

In 1773 it was purchased by another wealthy Newport merchant, William Vernon. A lovely example of Georgian architecture, Vernon House is one of Newport's last grand merchant's houses, and played host to many notable guests during Vernon's ownership.

COMPELLING INDICATORS

William Vernon, a well known supporter of the American rebellion and later the president of the Eastern Naval Board (precursor to the Department of the Navy), lived at Vernon House from 1773 to 1806. However, as an ardent patriot, he left Newport for an extended period during the British occupation in the Revolutionary War in order to take his family to safety. During his absence, the Comte de Rochambeau, leader of the French forces in America, used the house as his headquarters. Thus the house became the nexus of all French military activity in the city, with the highest ranking officers in the French expedition taking the immediately surrounding houses as their quarters. The Marquis de Lafayette and leaders of Congress were received at the house.

During the week of March 6, 1781, George Washington came to stay at Vernon House and it is believed that important strategic plans were discussed in between a round of formal celebrations in honor of Washington's visit.

Vernon House was added to the NRF's collection of historic homes in 2009. It was donated by the late Margaretta M. Clulow, an artist and a designer, whose family has owned the house from 1964 until her death in 2009. Throughout her ownership, Mrs. Clulow was an extraordinary steward of the property, preserving the house carefully and allowing access for scholars, preservationists, and enthusiasts. Under NRF ownership, and according to Mrs. Clulow's wishes, the house will remain a residence and be similarly accessible to scholars.



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