Welcome to the 2020-2021 Wilton House Museum Annual Report. As incoming Board Chairman, it is my privilege to recognize the Museum’s dedicated professional staff and board members, generous supporters, thoughtful partners, and wonderful friends who contribute year-after-year to our shared success.

I’m so grateful to our members and donors who made gifts last year during the 2020-2021 fiscal campaign. Your annual support animates every aspect of Wilton’s mission. Together we achieved a landmark fundraising total, securing over $150,000 in unrestricted gifts for the Museum, in addition to receiving a generous legacy gift from the estate of Katherine Horsley Booker (1946-2020).

The successes that follow would not have been achievable without the incredible support from the hundreds of donors listed herein, in addition to the wonderful contributions made by my immediate predecessor, Nancy Holcomb, and Wilton’s Executive Director, Keith MacKay.

Nancy effortlessly imbued her tenure with charm and intelligence, and I welcome the opportunity together with our board to build upon her many accomplishments.

Keith’s commitment to the Museum’s stewardship and programming welcomed scholars, colleagues, artists, friends, and students from across the Commonwealth and country to learn, exhibit, explore, and connect at Wilton. Because of his efforts, we secured re-accreditation with the American Alliance of Museums; commissioned both an historic paint analysis and historic structures report; produced a community-driven and -led Strategic Plan; achieved several long-term maintenance and facility improvements and upgrades; and completed both an Interpretive Plan and Furnishings Plan for the Museum’s interpretive reimagination. Thanks to Keith’s leadership, we have a clear vision for Wilton’s future.

Lastly, I’m so very thankful to the Development Committee, its co-chairs Kenzie Hubard and Mary Kulp, and Wilton’s Development Manager Lane Guiliams who expertly engineered last year’s great success. We are also fortunate Andrew Lunne returned to work with Kenzie and Mary for the 2021-2022 Wilton House Museum Fund.

As this work continues into 2022 and beyond to better understand, care for, and share Wilton, I believe in the relevance of the Museum’s mission and our role in promoting opportunities to consider how the past shapes the present. I enthusiastically invite you to continue this work and these meaningful conversations with us.

Respectfully,

Margaret Reynolds
Chairman, Wilton House Museum Board
Your Support

We’re pleased to recognize the generous support of the following donors who made gifts to the 2020-2021 Annual Fund. Gifts designated for the Annual Fund during the 2020-2021 fiscal year (June 1—May 31) are reflected in this listing. We’re so very grateful to the dedicated and thoughtful supporters included below. Thank you for your contributions toward our shared success.

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The mission of Wilton House Museum is to increase public understanding of life in Virginia since the 18th century, the paradox of hardship amid elegance, and how the past continues to shape life in America today.

The mission of The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America in the Commonwealth of Virginia (NSCDA-VA) is actively to promote our national heritage through statewide historic preservation, patriotic service, and educational projects especially at Wilton House Museum.
The House, the Exhibition, the Collection

Furnishings Plan Implementation: “A Virginian Story”

In August 2020, the Wilton House Museum Board and the NSCDA-VA Board of Managers voted to adopt a Furnishings Plan. Drawing upon household inventories, newspaper advertisements, archaeological records, and the archives of the NSCDA-VA, this interpretive roadmap addresses each Ground Floor interior of the historic house.

Completed by independent curator Gretchen Goodell Pendleton, the Furnishings Plan’s recommendations will guide future collecting and conservation priorities. It complements and follows a scholarly, years-long investigation into Wilton: its history and built environment, 20th-century preservation and move to its current site, and decades of strong stewardship.

Over the last year, Museum staff thoughtfully began the work of updating and rearranging Wilton’s interiors in alignment with this latest research. Undertaking this exciting work to activate and examine Wilton’s Collection both implements and illustrates the Museum’s Interpretive Plan (2019), which within Wilton creates multi-period historical room identities; defines specific content objectives; and determines future collecting priorities. Its culmination presents as “A Virginian Story,” a reimagining of the Museum’s Ground Floor narrative, presentation, and future programming.

Visitors will be re-introduced to the Randolhs of Wilton, exploring room-by-room the family’s near-century of ownership. From their once powerful, mid-18th century social and political positioning to the family’s rapid, financial decline in the mid-19th century, “A Virginian Story” frames a family’s—and ultimately a structure’s—generational survival.

This new presentation accomplishes key objectives from the Museum’s 2017-2022 Strategic Plan; specifically to better understand and share an historic landmark while pursuing opportunities to broaden the Museum’s educational and programming opportunities. As this work continues, please join the process and book a Ground Floor, self-guided tour, available by reservation online at wiltonhousemuseum.org.

Wilton Uncovered

Following two years of planning, Wilton Uncovered: Archaeology Illuminates an Enslaved Community opened last spring in the Museum’s Second Floor Gallery. On-view through 2023, the exhibition combines art and archaeology to explore the lives of the men, women, and children enslaved at Wilton.

Featuring over sixty excavated artifacts—from a parasol rib and button back to pipe fragments and hoe blades—the exhibit’s installation signifies the largest collection of material objects original to the site ever displayed.

Partnering with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) to conserve, loan, and display these objects, the artifacts had been unearthed during a 1998 archeological investigation. The search identified at least five enslaved families’ homes at Wilton’s original site in eastern Henrico, once the largest Enslaved Community in the area. Little historical record exists of their lives, and no known record exists of their fates.

To help illustrate the stories of those who lived, loved, labored, and died at Wilton plantation, Museum staff and curators approached Virginia artist and educator Dennis Winston to produce original woodblock prints.

Entitled Waiting at the Boat Landing (right), Winston imagines Dorcas, a known enslaved lady’s maid of Anne Harrison Randolph, standing with a companion and likely awaiting guests of the Randolhs. Deeded to Anne by her father, there’s little known of Dorcas’s life. In 1745, she was up-rooted from the Enslaved Community at Berkeley in Charles City County.
to the Randolph’s marital home. It’s possible Dorcas remained there until at least 1784, likely into her 40s and having outlived two of Wilton’s male heirs.

When approached to contribute to the exhibit, Winston drew inspiration from that which survived from the known slave quarters—objects the Black community at Wilton owned, purchased, cherished, resented, broke, played with, and discarded. They represent what little remains physically to share the material elements of their lives and imagine their stories.

Reflected Winston on the production of his prints,

I want to provoke thought from the viewer and reveal in my human subjects something of their character and the spirit that sustains them.

Receiving generous support from the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, the Mary K. Hubard Fund, James D. and Pamela J. Penny, the Virginia Sargeant Reynolds Foundation, and Virginia Humanities, Wilton Uncovered expresses the Museum’s mission to educate the public on Virginia’s history and encourages conversation on how the past continues to shape life today.

The digital adaptation of the exhibit will debut in October, increasing accessibility throughout the Commonwealth, while allowing for future years of robust, virtual programming. Wilton House Museum is so very grateful to the Museum’s panel of community advisors comprised of students, scholars, and peers who thoughtfully guided this entire process.

Photographing the Collection

While Museum staff anticipated aligning Wilton’s interpretive narrative with recommendations made by the Furnishings Plan, they continued documenting and photographing the Museum’s Collection. With tours reduced and the temporary closing of the physical site, a professional photographer came on-site to document some of the Collection’s largest and most delicate objects.

Over the course of ten days, around 400 objects were photographed from various angles in a ‘mobile studio’ assembled in Wilton’s Lower Passage.

While some objects transitioned back into storage in consultation with the Furnishings Plan, others excitingly went on-view, including this c. 1785 English silver inkwell (right). It now sits—perhaps at first glance peculiarly—in Wilton’s Dining Room.

The scene is set in 1815 as if Anne Andrews Randolph, Wilton’s mistress, has only just left the room. She’s recently been named the sole executor of the estate following the death of William Randolph IV, and the family is deeply in debt. Positioned on the dining room table amidst wares pulled from closets and drawers, this small Sheffield plate inkwell accents the Dining Room’s inventorying vignette, imagining Anne completing a probate inventory of silverware, porcelain, furniture, and enslaved human property.

As the Museum continues refining its presentation of “A Virginian Story,” this completed documentation of the Collection will aid future digitization and accessibility efforts.
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Members of The 1892 Society have made provisions in their estate plans for Wilton House Museum’s future.

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The organization’s endowed gifts help ensure a stable financial future and provide support for key preservation initiatives and museum programming.

The 125th Fund
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Restricted gifts advance the Museum’s ability to pursue designated institutional priorities. We gratefully acknowledge the following supporters whose gifts supported exhibitions, educational programming, and emerging initiatives.

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(pictured above) Chippendale Mahogany Chest of Drawers, American (Massachusetts), c. 1770-1780.
Gift of Mr. & Mrs. Hugh Long, 1900.14

(pictured page right) Federal Mahogany Heart-Back Armchairs, c. 1790-1800.
Gift of Ms. Mary and Ms. Anna Wales, 1938.0015
The Museum’s renowned lecture series—drawing upon social history, architecture and design, and material culture—will continue virtually for the 2021-2022 programming calendar.

Outlined below is this year’s exciting line-up. Tickets are available via Eventbrite; please visit wiltonhousemuseum.org to register. Join the conversation!

**Horse Culture of 18th- and 19th-century Virginia** (September 9)
Elizabeth McCague, University of Maryland

**Black Craftspeople Across the Virginia Landscape** (October 21)
Victoria Hensley, *Black Craftspeople Digital Archive*

**Plantation Pottery: The 19th-century Stoneware of Edgefield District, South Carolina** (November 18)
Katherine Hughes, Middle Tennessee State University

**The Birth of Southern Cooking: Food, Politics, and Mary Randolph** (December 9)
Dr. Christopher E. Hendricks, Georgia Southern University

Jeremy Musson, Architectural Historian

**‘So Pious an Institution’: Slavery, Religion, Education, and Virginia’s Bray Schools** (February 10)
Nicole Brown, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

**Mount Vernon’s Front Parlor** (March 10)
Adam Erby, Associate Curator, Mount Vernon

**Sewing the Seeds of Style: Botanical Silks and Enlightenment Era Fashion** (April 7)
Kristen Stewart, Nathalie L. Klaus Curator of Costume and Textiles, The Valentine

**Reflections on Glass in the 18th-Century British World** (May 5)
Dr. Christopher Maxwell, Curator of Early Modern Glass, The Corning Museum of Glass