



#PreserveBonnetHouse Campaign Fact Sheet

- In 1983, owner Evelyn Fortune Bartlett gifted Bonnet House to the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation in Tallahassee to preserve it for future generations. Her wish was to have the property managed locally and invest all of its revenue back into the estate to preserve, restore, and maintain it.
- The Florida Trust owns the estate's buildings and the property, but Bonnet House, Inc. owns the contents including the art, artifacts, and furniture.
- Bonnet House, Inc. is a nonprofit 501(c)(3), whose mission is to preserve this unique historic estate, which was created in 1920. Bonnet House, Inc. was formed in 1990 to take over day-to-day property management, when the Florida Trust was unable to properly care for and manage the estate.
- The Florida Trust takes about \$150,000 per year in Bonnet House revenue, which has totaled more than \$1.8 million since 1995. Bonnet House's revenue comprises 64% of Florida Trust's operating budget.
- When the Florida Trust began diverting revenue from Bonnet House, Mrs. Bartlett wrote letters to the organization, expressing anger that her wishes were not being honored and that she did not gift Bonnet House to support the Florida Trust.
- Bonnet House Museum & Gardens will be 100 years old in 2020 and requires continuous and expensive restoration and maintenance to prevent it from deteriorating beyond repair. For example, roof replacement alone would exceed \$500,000.
- In the 36 years that the Florida Trust has owned Bonnet House, it has never provided financial support to help preserve, maintain, or restore the estate. After Hurricanes Katrina, Wilma, and Irma struck South Florida, the Florida Trust provided no financial assistance to repair storm damage.
- Bonnet House funding is provided in part by the Broward County Board of County Commissioners as recommended by the Broward Cultural Council. Support for the educational programs is provided in part by the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture. Bonnet House receives revenue from ticket sales and group tours, memberships, weddings and private events, and gift shop sales. Donors have generously supported Bonnet House yearly and sponsored its programs.
- The Bonnet House Board has repeatedly tried to work — in good faith — with the Florida Trust to protect this beloved landmark, secure its financial future, and honor Mrs. Bartlett's true intent and wishes. This summer, the Florida Trust finally agreed to mediation and the Bonnet House Board felt a resolution was well within reach. But on September 26, 2019, the Florida Trust inexplicably declared a mediation impasse, and sent a letter to the Bonnet House Board giving them 48 hours to set a date to turn over the keys to the estate, have the management team vacate the property, and hand over all operating income and control of the Bonnet House bank accounts. As a result of the Trust's unwillingness to come to a mutually beneficial agreement, the Preserve Bonnet House campaign was launched.
- To learn more about the Preserve Bonnet House campaign and how supporters can get involved, visit www.preservebonnethouse.org.