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## **Colonial Williamsburg Mourns the Passing of Abby M. O’Neill**

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. (May 5, 2017) – Colonial Williamsburg mourns the passing of Senior Trustee Abby M. O’Neill, one of the Foundation’s most generous supporters and granddaughter of its founding benefactor, John D. Rockefeller Jr.

Mrs. O’Neill served the institution as a trustee alongside her husband, Senior Trustee George D. O’Neill, for 28 years beginning in 1966, including nine years she spent as the board’s vice chairman. In 1992 she became the first recipient of the Foundation’s highest award for service, leadership and stewardship: the Churchill Bell.

Mrs. O’Neill supported numerous Foundation initiatives including the 1986 expansion of the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum, established from her grandmother’s collection; the Abby M. O’Neill Teacher Enrichment Project; construction of the Bruton Heights Educational Center and the restoration of Bassett Hall, her grandparents’ local home. Together, she and her husband contributed generously to the Colonial Williamsburg Fund, endowed the directorship of the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library and provided major support for the current expansion of the Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg, which broke ground on April 27.

“Like her grandfather, Abby O’Neill’s legacy stands in bricks and mortar, but also in the countless guests, educators and learners who draw knowledge and inspiration from the critical work of Colonial Williamsburg that she so generously supported,” said Henry C. Wolf, chairman of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation board. “She was also a remarkably kind and engaging person whom so many Foundation employees and volunteers enjoyed hosting as a guest with her family. We remember her with deep gratitude as we extend heartfelt sympathy to her family and to her many friends.”

As a board member, Mrs. O’Neill played an active role in reviewing architectural, interior design and landscaping plans across the Foundation. She was the first woman to become chairman of the board of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, a position she held from 1992 to 1998. She was chairman of the board of her alma mater, Bradford College, a trustee of Teachers College, Columbia University and served for 42 years as a trustee of International House in New York City. She was also a long-serving board member of social service agencies in Oyster Bay and Nassau County, New York, where she and her husband lived. The Community Foundation of Oyster Bay in particular benefitted both from her generosity and service as a board member for years.

“Abby O’Neill was an effective, respected and much-loved leader in her extended family and in the organizations she served,” said Colin G. Campbell, chairman emeritus of Colonial Williamsburg and retired president and CEO. “She was devoted to Colonial Williamsburg and exceedingly generous. When I was president of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, she was a firm

and engaged chairman—a warm and thoughtful colleague. Our partnership was productive, our travels memorable, and our relationship one that I will always treasure. Nancy and I have lost a dear friend.”

Mrs. O’Neill was the daughter of Abby Rockefeller Milton Mauze and David M. Milton. Along with her husband, she is survived by her children George D. O’Neill Jr., David O’Neill, Gail Caulkins, Peter M. O’Neill, Wendy O’Neill, and Colonial Williamsburg Trustee Catharine Broderick.

“Colonial Williamsburg is a treasure unique in the world, and one that would not exist without the vision and generosity of Abby O’Neill, her grandfather and the other members of her family who lead and sustain the Foundation to this day,” said Colonial Williamsburg President and CEO Mitchell B. Reiss. “So much of what we do – from research and educational outreach to the growth of the Art Museums – would not be possible without her support. As we mourn her passing, we honor her commitment to share our nation’s enduring story.”

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*Colonial Williamsburg operates the world’s largest living history museum, preserving Virginia’s 18th-century capital as a fully functioning city. Fun, engaging experiences transport guests back in time and highlight the relevance of America’s founding era to contemporary life. The Colonial Williamsburg experience includes more than 500 restored or reconstructed buildings, historic trade shops, renowned museums of decorative arts and folk art, extensive educational outreach programs for students and teachers, lodging, culinary options from historic taverns to casual or elegant dining, the Golden Horseshoe Golf Club featuring 45 holes designed by Robert Trent Jones Sr. and his son Rees Jones, a full-service spa and fitness center managed by Trilogy Spa, pools, retail stores and gardens. Philanthropic support and revenue from admissions, products and hospitality operations sustain Colonial Williamsburg’s educational programs and preservation initiatives.*

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