

# THE ROTCH-JONES-DUFF HOUSE & GARDEN MUSEUM

## **SELF-GUIDED TOUR**

*As you tour the Museum, please do not touch the furnishings, displays, or wall coverings. Thank you for helping us to preserve the mansion for others to enjoy.*

### **Introduction**

The history of the Rotch-Jones-Duff House and Garden Museum spans over 150 years of New Bedford's history. The property symbolizes the city at its height of prosperity derived from maritime and commercial activities, particularly whaling. This property is especially remarkable because it has survived with its original house, gardens and grounds intact. Designed in the Greek Revival style by Richard Upjohn, the building is considered to be one of the finest examples of its type in New England. Upjohn was one of the founders of the American Institute of Architects, with commissions that included Kingscote in Newport, Rhode Island, and Trinity Church in New York City. Ceiling heights for the first floor are eleven-and-a-half feet while the second floor measures ten-and-a-half feet. The house encompasses approximately 12,480 square feet and contains a total of 42 rooms, counting all the halls and bathrooms.

Three families have occupied the mansion: the Rotches (1834 to 1851), the Jones (1851 to 1935), and the Duffs (1935 to 1981). Each is represented throughout the house by elements of the décor and gallery exhibitions. In 1981, the Waterfront Area Historic League (WHALE) of New Bedford purchased the property from the Duffs to preserve it for the enjoyment by future generations. In 1984, the house was incorporated as a Museum, dedicated to education and preservation. The garden was important to each of the resident families. William Rotch Jr., wrote to his grandson Benjamin not long after moving in:

*I enjoy our new habitation...very much, the delightful air & sea prospects is more gratifying than I anticipated; and I feel much weaned from the daily mixing, with company, which was little interesting, and I find a good deal of employment in arranging the Garden, planting Trees.*

Photographs show the Jones family enjoying the garden. The Duffs hired Boston landscape architect Mrs. John Coolidge to create a formal plan for the grounds, which included green gardens, ornamental beds of tulips, reflecting pools and walkways. Beatrice Duff was an active member of both the Garden Club of Buzzards Bay and the New Bedford Garden Club. The garden you see today has been restored to the period of the Jones residence. In 2018 more than 300 new rose bushes and more than 600 boxwood bushes were planted to restore the parterre rose garden.

The first and second floors of the Museum are open to the public. The third floor attic was used as servants' quarters and is presently for staff use only. The cellar, comprising seven rooms, accommodates the Museum offices. You will notice exhibit labels with additional information as you proceed through the Museum.

## **FIRST FLOOR**

### **Front Hall**

Begin your tour at the free-standing curved staircase. The house was built by shipwrights skilled in building curved walls as you will notice throughout the house. The center hallway with high ceilings and doors that opened at the east and west ends allowed breezes to cool the house on the hottest days. The newel post supporting the railing at the base of the stairs boasts an ivory "Mortgage" or "Deed" button, which traditionally proclaimed the house to be mortgage free. The deed was sometimes rolled and placed in a cylinder under the button. Facing the stairwell, on the wall to your right hang portraits of Elizabeth Rotch (sister to William Rotch, Jr.) (1757 - 1856) and her husband Samuel Rodman Sr. (1753 - 1835) painted in 1828 by Rembrandt Peale. Their son Benjamin commissioned their likenesses. The letter from Benjamin to Peale is displayed on the table beneath. Mr. Rodman was Mr. Rotch's business partner. A portrait of Helen Rotch (1846-1914) by Stephen Greeley Putnam hangs on the wall to your left. As you move toward the back hall there is a lithograph print based on a drawing that may have been created posthumously, of William Rotch Jr. (1759 - 1850).

### **Back Hall**

To your right is a portrait of William Rotch, Jr. copied from a Rembrandt Peale painting. At the far end of the hall on your right enter what was called by the Jones family, the Basket Room, used for storage of garden baskets. Note the curved closet door. An elevator, installed for the convenience of Miss Amelia Jones and later electrified by the Duffs, is situated just within the entrance. At one time it connected the basement, first and second floors.

### **William Rotch, Jr. Exhibition Gallery**

Enter the room off the Back Hall. The Rotch family's decision in 1765 to move their whaling operations from the island of Nantucket to the mainland village of New Bedford on the shores of the Acushnet River would have far-reaching consequences for New Bedford and the nation. By 1850 New Bedford was touted as the wealthiest city per capita in the United States. This gallery focuses on Rotch's entrepreneurship, business and social ethics, and domestic interests.

### **Front and Rear Parlors**

Moving through the Rotch gallery, you will exit into the double parlors. As a Quaker, William Rotch, Jr. preferred fine workmanship, simple design, and quality without a display of wealth. These preferences are expressed in the use of fine mahogany and cherry for the doors on the first floor, silver-plated door fittings, and deep ceiling moldings in the hallway. The sliding pocket doors separating the double parlors were used for privacy and to capture heat from the fireplaces. The interior window shutters controlled heat and the light of the sun in the days before gas or electricity.

The black Italianate marble fireplaces, the large mirrors over them, and the elaborate ceiling medallions were installed by the Jones family. The parquet flooring, laid over the original random-width Colonial

style flooring, was a Duff family alteration. Both parlors display chandeliers made in New Bedford; a Pairpoint original in the front parlor (closest to the front of the house) and a Mount Washington in the back parlor, also called the Music Room by the Jones family. Miss Amelia Jones (1849-1935) continued to play the piano in that room all her life. The Carpenter's Son, an oil painting by Edward E. Simmons, hangs on the wall behind the piano as it once did when Amelia sat to play. The painting was exhibited at the World Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 and then returned to County Street.

The furniture in the back parlor is typically Victorian, with ornately carved rosewood and velvet upholstery. Over the doors to the hall, hang two of Miss Amelia's oil paintings, one of chrysanthemums and the other of azaleas.

The front parlor could be closed off from the rear parlor for more serious occasions such as funerals when the deceased might be laid out for people to pay their respects. The Five Angels, the painting hanging to the right of the windows, was painted in the style of Sir Joshua Reynolds by an unknown artist. It hung there during the Jones era.

### **Dining Room**

Pass through the hall to the dining room. One of the features of a Greek Revival house is the symmetry with which it is designed. Window balances window, and door balances door; fireplaces are centered in their walls. This room is atypical of that symmetry because the dining room was altered from its original plan. When built, a partition extended from the window by the fireplace across the room to the doorway nearest the hall stairway. The larger room served as Mr. Rotch's office, having its own door to the vestibule near the front door, where business associates could enter. The smaller room was designed as a tea room for the purpose of greeting guests. During the Jones occupancy, the partition was removed in order to create a large formal dining room. The Jones installed the Colonial style wainscoting, and the Italianate marble fireplace surrounds. The sideboard was used in the Jones family home in Dublin, New Hampshire and was given to the Museum by the family in 1986. The silver and china on display in the china cabinet is from all three families. The Waterford chandelier was moved from the parlor of the Duffs' home at 695 County Street and broken when it fell from the ceiling during installation in the new house. The broken components were replaced with parts from the Pairpoint Corporation. Irving and Casson supplied and installed the wallpaper that emulated eighteenth and early nineteenth century hand painted Chinese papers. Gracie and Sons of New York was the possible source for the paper in the 1930s.

### **The Pantry**

Pass from the dining room into the pantry. The cupboards are original to the house, and were used to store china, glass, silverware, and linens. At one time, the pantry had a sink. It provided a serving area for the later formal dining room.

## SECOND FLOOR

*Access the second floor through either the curved stair at the front of the house, or the back stair. The latter is a straight stair providing slightly wider footing.*

### **Mrs. Duff's Bedroom**

Proceed from either stair to the front of the house, by way of the center hall. At your left is Mrs. Duff's Bedroom, with its original furnishings. Beatrice Marceau Duff (1889 - 1987) is pictured in the large portrait over the dresser and her husband, Mark Duff's (1891-1967) photograph is on the dresser. The furniture, lamps, Oriental rug, comforter, and watered silk bed hangings are original. The dressing table has been restored, using the silk fabric from a bolt discovered in the attic storage area. The purposely extra-long drapes were fashioned from a similar fabric woven in France. The dressing table items are silver. The ornate eggs, in the style of Fabergé, were made as a hobby by Mrs. Duff, who often gave them as gifts. The fireplace, with flat columns of local grey marble, is typical of Greek Revival decoration and is original to the house. In the closet are some of her clothes. She had a large collection of hats, many of which were made locally at Loretta's.

### **Mrs. Duff's Bathroom & Dressing Room**

Art Deco in style with silver wallpaper, eggplant colored tile and salmon fixtures, the room contains an enclosed shower with European-style shower heads, designed to keep the hair dry. This room also affords a clear view to the Parterre rose garden.

In the next room, currently a changing gallery space, Mrs. Duff was known to gather with her female friends to decorate Fabergé-style eggs. The room was originally a bedroom that may have been shared by Amelia and her younger sister, Sarah. More recently it was a Duff sitting, library and dressing room. This room also overlooks the gardens and is currently installed with changing exhibitions.

### **Edward C. Jones' Bedroom**

The adjacent room has been installed as Edward Coffin Jones' (1805-1880) bedroom. This room may have been used as a nursery when the Jones family lived here. The extension of the elevator is in the left corner and opposite that is a dressing room with a marble sink. The bed has a rope structure underneath supporting the straw-filled mattress. The rope can be tightened when the mattress appears to sag. The saying "sleep tight" comes from tightening the rope. A basin on the nightstand was filled with water for teeth cleaning, shaving or whatever grooming needs. A covered chamber pot for nighttime use rests on the lower shelf and was emptied each morning by one of the chamber maids.

Moving around the room notice a wooden medicine cabinet used on board ship filled with 19<sup>th</sup> century remedies atop the dresser. A wing chair dating from the 1770's has been recovered and suggests a place for Mr. Jones to rest between journeys. Near the chair is a staff carved with the names of the ships for which Edward Coffin Jones was agent. The signal book Mr. Jones used on his voyages showing the red circle of the Jones signal flags rests on the desk along with a chart. The long wooden telescope on top of

the desk was used in the cupola of the house by the Jones girls watching for their father's returning ships. The print above the desk shows the Ship Emma flying the Jones flag with the red circle.

### **Hallway, Sewing Area**

Departing the bedroom into the hallway, you will find a Jones era sewing area. Here a seamstress would have made gowns and clothing for the family, as well as mend the linens. Off the hallway area is a bathroom installed by the Jones family and updated to its present black and white Art Deco style by the Duffs. The triple hung window overlooks the garden terrace, and the Jones era Coachman's House and greenhouse. The busy harbor of New Bedford may be seen in the distance.

### **Children's Bedroom**

Continue into the next bedroom which is installed as a children's bedroom. Originally this room was divided in half to house two servants. The painted furniture set belonged to Joanna Rotch, granddaughter of William Rotch, Jr. Her likeness hangs over the bed. The large dollhouse was originally played with by Emma Billings Hathaway, a cousin of Emma, Amelia, and Sarah Jones. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, ownership passed to one of Sarah's children for her grandchildren to enjoy. Examples of toys and children's clothing are in the closet area. Exit by the doorway to your left, noting the recessed linen closet.

### **Back Stairwell**

When the Joneses moved in, with a larger complement of servants and extended family, the back stairway was added. Genealogical charts on the wall trace the families of Amelia Jones' parents. This hallway contains a maid's closet and the door to the attic. Eleven rooms serving as bedrooms, bath and storage areas comprise the attic. As many as six live-in servants were in service during the Jones' residence. Amelia Jones' nieces and nephews remembered the attic as an additional childhood play space when they were visiting. A "cow pull toy" was carefully brought down from the attic by Amelia for their visits and they looked forward to a special music box in the front hall.

### **Jones Family Gallery**

The small central room on this north side of the house is installed with items relating to the Jones family. Wall panels trace a detailed history beginning with Emma Chambers Jones' family in Faial in the Azores and Edward Coffin Jones' in Nantucket. Biographies of each of the sisters with photographs fill in further details.

### **Green Bathroom/Museum Gallery**

Pass through the small green bathroom, previously two closets, installed by the Duffs in 1936, using green Vitrioled glass tiles and chrome fixtures. Notice how the window does not quite fit inside the original exterior window. Opening off the bathroom is the Museum Gallery Room, formerly the bedroom of one of the Duff daughters. The fireplace in this room is in the style that was original to the house. This space is installed with temporary special exhibitions.

## **Kitchen**

Descend the back stairway to the first floor. At the foot of the stairway the doorway to your left leads to the Museum Shop which was once the Winter Kitchen. Around 1873 the Jones installed the Arlington Stove Works coal-burning Range. The sink is original to the house with three faucets (hot, cold, and well water). Water was brought into the city in 1864. A “dumbwaiter” in the corner was used to carry food up to the first floor from the summer kitchen located at one time in the basement. The room is currently the Museum Store.

## **Terrace & Gardens**

The south side porch provides an over-view of the grounds, showing the formal boxwood parterre, the central pergola, and garden walkways. Rose bushes planted in 2018 bloom from June to October. A diagram of the rose garden is available on our web site, and as a hand out from the front desk.