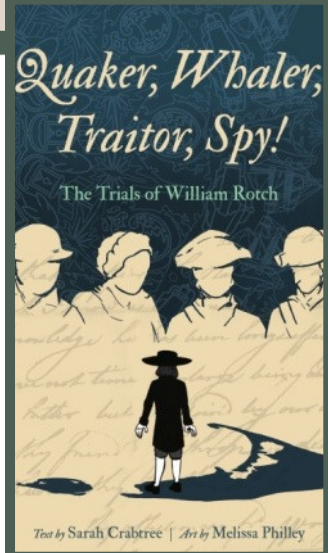




ANNUAL REPORT 2026



THE ROTCH-JONES-DUFF
HOUSE & GARDEN MUSEUM

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Letter from the President

The property at 396 County Street was never intended to welcome 45 fourth graders on a field trip, host a film crew for an eight-hour shoot, provide space for Saturday morning yoga, or accommodate 180 wedding guests dancing on the patio. Its original owners could not have imagined the varied ways this historic property would one day serve the community. But that changed in 1985.

This fiscal year began during our 40th anniversary, a time to celebrate the vision of the museum's founders and the many volunteers, staff, and supporters who have sustained the Rotch-Jones-Duff House and Garden Museum. It was also a time to prepare for the future. With grant funding, we improved public access to the grounds through upgraded seating, repaired structures, refreshed surfaces, leveled walkways, and new railings, making the gardens, porches, and patio more welcoming for the thousands of people who visit RJD each year to learn, gather, celebrate, and connect.

Over the past three years, equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion have become central to our work. We have expanded the stories we tell by placing the experiences of the house's residents within the broader history of New Bedford, acknowledging how wealth, labor, race, gender, immigration, and civic life are interconnected. In doing so, we have made greater space for perspectives often overlooked in historic-house museums, including those of workers, women, children, people of color, immigrants, and others whose lives shaped this community.



and Executive Director

Partnerships continue to strengthen our impact. We collaborated with organizations including Mass Audubon, the New Bedford Free Public Library, and BYOBook Club on educational programming, while community partners such as the New Bedford Historical Society, the New Bedford Film Festival, Habitat for Humanity, and the Association for the Relief of Aged Women used our spaces for programs and events. Together, these relationships help make RJD a shared community resource.

Our commitment to accessibility extends beyond interpretation. Improvements to the grounds have made participation easier and safer for visitors with varying mobility needs, while partnerships with schools, libraries, cultural organizations, and social-service nonprofits have broadened our reach across ages, backgrounds, and abilities. We continue to reduce financial, physical, and cultural barriers while listening, learning, and strengthening relationships throughout our community.

The founders of this museum believed that this history belongs to everyone. As we move beyond our 40th anniversary, we remain committed to sharing it more honestly, accessibly, and inclusively, ensuring that people from all backgrounds can find connection, meaning, and a genuine sense of welcome at RJD.



Natalie A. Mello
President, Board of Trustees



Dawn E. Salerno
Executive Director



LEADERSHIP Board

FY26 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Diana Henry

Mirian V. Moultrie

Leonardo Reis

Derek J. Santos

Jennifer Smith

Harvey J. Wolkoff

In Year Five of the RJD Strategic Plan, the Board of Trustees, Committees, and staff focused efforts on the remaining tasks within the four goals of the plan. At the end of this fiscal year, the plan was nearly 85% completed. Staff and Board will be addressing the original goals and objectives in strategic discussions aimed at building on the original goals for FY27 and FY28.

Strategic Plan Goals

1. To leverage RJD's history to develop new programs highlighting ethics, racial justice, domestic life, and horticulture
2. To enhance and unify the visitor's experience of Abolition Row
3. To develop sustainable financial strength
4. To grow our capacity as a diverse and inclusive organization



Natalie A. Mello

THANK YOU To this year's outgoing trustees

Individuals volunteer their services to the RJD Board. We thank them for their gift of time, knowledge and support.



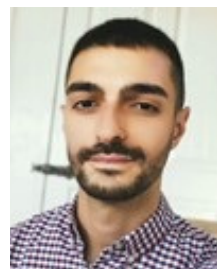
Mirian V. Moultrie



Rebecca G. Barnes



Nathanael R. Brayton



Leonardo Reis

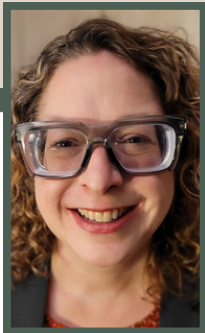
Staff



Our wonderful staff fulfills the Museum's mission, working across all operations, from fundraising to the latest preservation project.



Rick Finneran
Facilities Manager &
Lead Gardener



Jackie Se'Ale,
Development &
Administration
Coordinator



Chloe Crosby,
Functions & Sales
Coordinator



Lauren Pothier,
Community
Engagement
Coordinator



Dawn E. Salerno,
Executive Director

Betsy Pinho, Bookkeeper (Contractor)

Paul Crawford, Kathryn McGreevy, Events Assistants

LEADERSHIP

Committees

Finance

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Nathanael R. Brayton
Jennifer Smith
P.J. Ventura
Harvey J. Wolkoff
Staff: Dawn E. Salerno

Governance

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Caroline Konzatti
Anne Heller
Samuel H. Duncan
Staff: Dawn E. Salerno

Pathways Campaign

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Tia Bullard
Colleen Dawicki
Francis C. Gray, III, Honorary
Diana Henry
Alanna Jaworski
John C. Pinheiro
Amelia Tigner, Honorary

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Mirian V. Moultrie, Chair
Andrew V. Armstrong
William Rotch Bullard II
Francis C. Gray, III
Diana Henry
G. Stewart Young
Staff: Dawn E. Salerno, Jackie Se'Ale,
Lauren Pothier

Buildings and Grounds

Rebecca Barnes, Chair
Alanna Jaworski
Tony Oliva
Anna Surma
Staff: Rick Finneran, Dawn E. Salerno

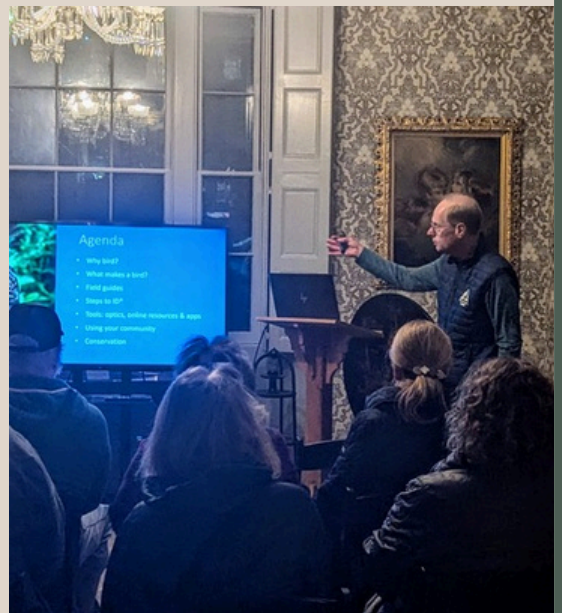
Collections

Amelia Alburn, Chair
Catherine Adamowicz
Eric Ficarra
Ruth Furman
Ann M. Lopes
Beth Luey
Lauren Prescott
Staff: Dawn E. Salerno

Executive Committee

Natalie A. Mello, Chair
Rebecca Barnes
G. Stewart Young
Anne Heller





EXHIBITIONS

Celebrating 40 Years of Collecting,

Through December 24, 2025

As we celebrated the RJD's 40th anniversary in the year 2025, this exhibition looked back on four decades of collecting. The period rooms in the historic house that you see today were only possible through the generosity of donors. Special labels marked with the anniversary logo throughout the historic mansion spoke to these notable donations from our 40 year history.

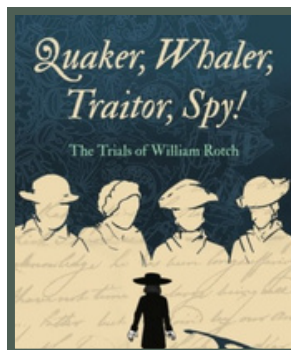


The Revolutionary Journey of William Rotch Sr., Through September 7, 2026

This exhibition presented selections from the historical graphic novel, *Quaker Whaler Traitor Spy!* by Dr. Sarah Crabtree, illustrated by Melissa Philley. Beginning with the Boston Tea Party, the Rotches stretched the bounds of acceptable business practice by claiming residency – simultaneously – in three different countries. This tactic landed William Rotch Sr. in court almost as frequently as his Quaker antiwar stance, but here too he won acquittal. This book, and exhibition, asked the question: was William Rotch a Quaker? A whaler? A traitor? A spy?



*This exhibition was created with the help of staff members Lauren Pothier and Rick Finneran, Executive Director Dawn Salerno, author and illustrator of *Quaker, Whaler, Traitor, Spy!* Dr. Sarah Crabtree and Melissa Philley. It is supported in part by a grant from Eastern National, a nonprofit partner of the National Parks.*



COLLECTIONS

Acquisitions

The museum has no funding for acquisitions so we are grateful to the donors who have chosen us to steward their precious artworks, ephemera, and other collections.



Persian Rug Bergamo
Oushak design, Turkey, c.
2000. 9.7' x 13'.

Gifts of Jessica and Blair Bailey, for the Education Collection



Pakistani Persian Rug, Wool
on Cotton. 10' x 16.



Portrait of Edmund Prior.
Oil on Canvas, Artist Once
Known. Mid-19th Century.



Portrait of Samuel Rodman, Jr.
(1792-1876).
Oil on Canvas, Chester Harding.
Mid-19th Century.

Gifts of George Rodman Goethals II and Marion M. Goethals, 2025.2

Collections staff and volunteers made significant progress this year digitizing accession records, conducting object inventory, and returning loaned objects to their owners.

Beth Luey and Eric Ficarra have also begun the research for installing a new period room about the domestic staff.



Victor V Phonograph,
manufactured 1913. Oak.

*Gift of Andrea G. Gordon,
for the Education Collection*

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

FY26 By the Numbers

Free Admission Programs:

Art Pharmacy

Blue Star Museums

EBT/WIC Cards

ConnectorCare Card

Library Passes: Dartmouth
Public Library, New Bedford
Free Public Library

Museums for All

Wunderfund

*The Museum receives no
subsidy to cover these lost
admission fees.*



66 Total
Programs



17 Partnering
Organizations

253 Students on
Field Trips



1,275 Museum
Visitors

2,630 Program
Attendees



MARKETING



3,239 Followers on
Facebook (8% Increase)



2,972 Followers on TWO
Instagram accounts (12% Increase)



121 Followers on LinkedIn
(21% Increase)



48% Open rate
for eblast



1,312 Eblast Subscribers
(20% Increase)

Our social media accounts generate engagement with our organization and brand. Our programming and events are shared across these accounts and we are able to communicate with our patrons and supporters. Each of our accounts has seen a steady increase in followers and engagement.

Our weekly eblast delivers news and updates directly to our subscribers' email inboxes. We consistently get new eblast subscribers through the sign up sheet at our front desk and via an online sign up link.



**Rotch-Jones-Duff House &
Garden Museum**

435 **1,649** **301**
posts followers following

History Museum

Chronicling 150 years of economic and
social life in New Bedford, as reflected in
the lives of residents.

PROGRAMS

FY26 Program Partners

AHA!

Association for the Relief
of Aged Women

Bristol County
Beekeepers Association

BYOBook Club

Garden Club of
Buzzards Bay

Mass Audubon

NB Film Festival

NB High School

NB Free Public Library

NB Whaling National
Historical Park

NB Symphony Orchestra

Preservation Society of
Newport County

Reverie Theatre Group

The Rescue Cafe

Westport Writers Group

WHALE

YMCA South Coast



**The Great Pumpkin
Parade AHA!**
October 9

**America's 250th: Unraveling
the Revolutionary Journey of
William Rotch, Sr.,**
January 6

Music in the Parlors
March 13



Yoga in the Garden
With YMCA South Coast
Saturdays,
July through September

**Waterscapes: A Summer
Reading in the Garden**
With Westport Writers Group
July 18

Open House at the RJD
September 11

Birding Past and Present,
With Mass Audubon
November 13

Sweetheart Tea
February 8

BYOBook Club
March 24 & April 21

Gardening with Native Plants
With Mass Audubon
April 9

Modern Music in the Garden
*With New Bedford High School
Bands*
May 19

**Shakespeare in
New Bedford AHA!**
With Reverie Theatre Group
July 10

Family Story Time
With NB Free Public Library
monthly on Wednesdays



**Shakespeare in New Bedford
Presents: Romeo & Juliet**
With Reverie Theatre Group
August 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17

House Tours
October 4, November 1,
March 5, May 7



Annual Meeting & Reception
September 18

Garden Serenade
With NBSO
September 21

Afternoon Tea in the Parlors
December 7, 9

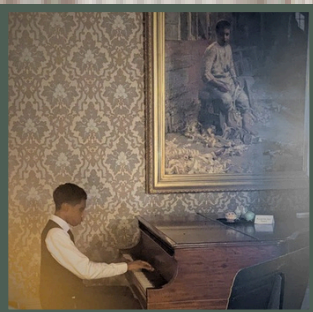
Christmas on County AHA!
December 11

**Remembering Richard
Smallwood AHA!**
February 12

**Classical Favorites in the
Parlors**
With NBSO
February 27



The Annual Fellows Lecture
*With Newport Preservation
Society Fellows*
April 2



Mothers' Day Tea
May 9

Living the Old House Dream
With WHALE
May 14

Garden Tour
June 16

Slice of History Civics Fair
June 23

EVENTS

LUMINOSITY

Our Annual Garden Party gathered over 100 people together to celebrate and support the museum's service to the community. Luminosity bore a bold brand featuring sparkling décor, Ten31 Productions, food from Servedwell Hospitality, and the public debut of the RJD's new landscape lighting. Attendance and fundraising goals were both met, and the event generated over \$23,800 in net operating income for the Museum. Thank you to those who supported with their attendance, donations, and sponsorships.





PRESERVATION



ARPA Grant-funded
Improvements:
\$100,344

Including: Masonry, Electrical
Infrastructure, Garden Seating,
Plantings, Directional Signs,
Carpentry

Capital
Investments Total:
\$105,037

Diseased Tree
Removal: \$3,000

Other Capital
Improvements:
\$1,693



SUPPORT

Thank You to Our Volunteers

The RJD relies on volunteers to assist with special events, greet visitors to the Museum, teach school field trip programs, care for the rose garden, and support office work. Volunteers also serve on the Board of Trustees and its several committees.



41 Active Volunteers



2,051 Volunteer Hours



215 Current
Museum Members



\$155,037 Annual Appeal Goal
\$22,037 Over Goal

Thank You to Our Annual Appeal Donors and Museum Members

Donors to the Annual Appeal are the bedrock of our support, helping us to leverage other public and private dollars to our cause. Museum membership is an investment in the greater New Bedford community and ensures the preservation of this property.

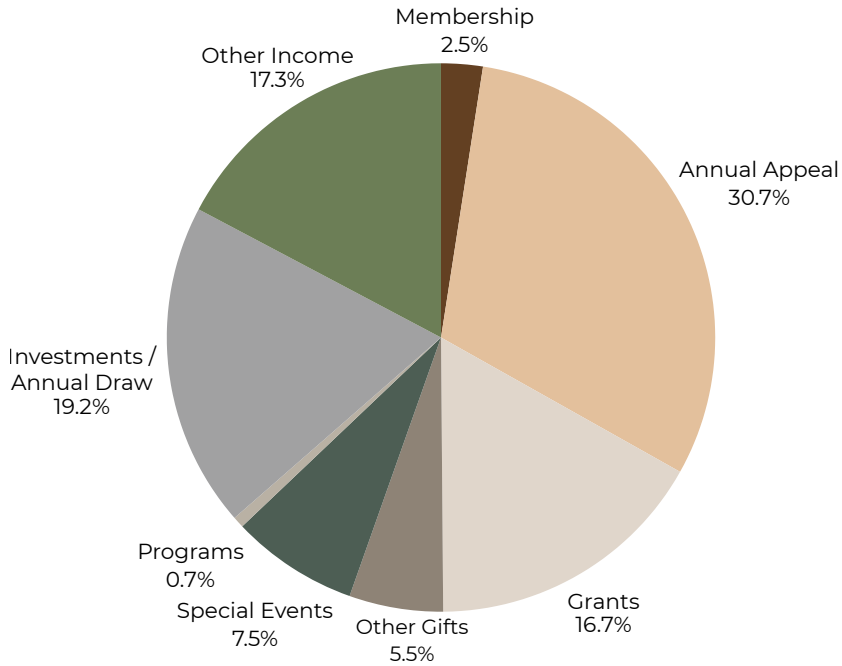


FY26 Operations

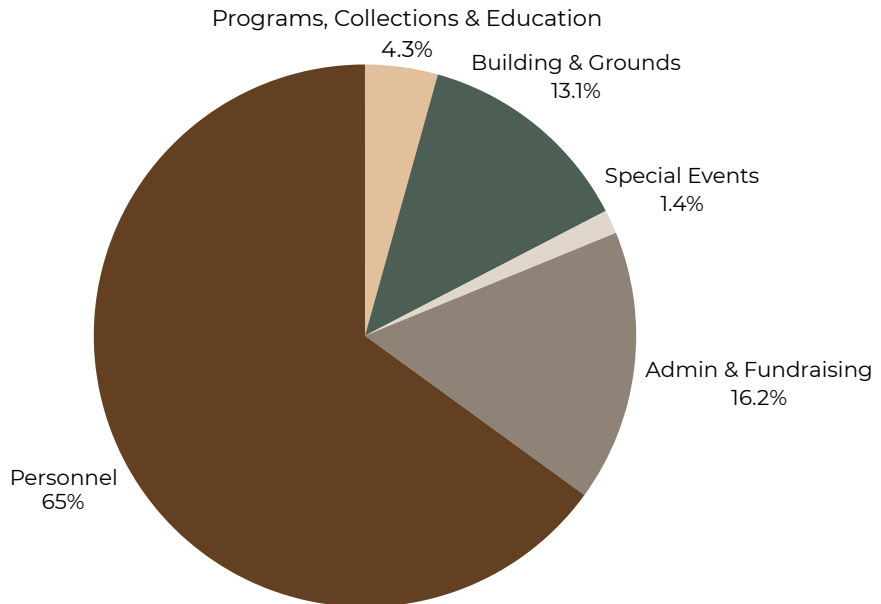
Revenue	FY26	FY25	% change vs. FY25
Membership	\$12,190	\$16,224	-25%
Annual Appeal	\$152,646	\$130,167	17%
Grants	\$83,181	\$40,800	104%
Other Gifts	\$27,534	\$18,991	45%
Special Events	\$37,277	\$33,209	12%
Programs	\$3,303	\$5,667	-42%
Investments / Annual Draw	\$95,331	\$91,203	5%
Other Income	\$85,827	\$140,852	-39%
TOTAL REVENUE	\$497,289	\$477,113	4%

Operating Expenses	FY26	FY25	% change vs. FY25
Programs, Collections & Education	\$21,523	\$10,420	107%
Building & Grounds	\$64,902	\$87,572	-26%
Special Events	\$7,054	\$16,308	-57%
Admin & Fundraising	\$80,466	\$83,756	-4%
Personnel	\$323,021	\$316,990	2%
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$496,966	\$515,046	-4%
NET from Operations	\$323	\$ (37,933)	

FY26 Revenue



FY26 Expenses



THANK YOU TO THIS

\$5,000+

Beech Tree Trust, c/o J.M. Forbes & Co. LLP
Mr. W. Gardner Chace
Mr. Richard Frisbie
Mr. and Mrs. Samuel P. M. Gray
Mr. and Mrs. Francis C. Gray, III
Grimshaw-Gudewicz Foundation
Mr. and Mrs. William Hicks
Ms. Sarah Jackson
City of New Bedford
Mr. and Mrs. David Ring
SouthCoast Community Foundation
Mrs. Amelia Jones Young Tigner
Mr. and Mrs. Harvey J. Wolkoff
Mr. G. Stewart Young

\$1,000+

Mr. Gary Ash and Mrs. Jane Harris Ash
Baycoast Bank
Mr. Nathanael R. Brayton
Ms. Barbara Brown
Mr. William R. Bullard and Mrs. Diana Dempsey-Bullard
Mr. Richard E. Byrd, III
Mr. Christopher W. Carey & Mrs. Lucinda H. Gray Carey

Mr. John H. Deknatel and Ms. Carol M. Taylor
Demers Landscape & Tree
Mr. and Mrs. Ronald J. Dias
Mr. and Mrs. Samuel H. Duncan
Eastern National
Mr. Michael Esposito & Ms. Cynthia Redel
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Mr. David DiBiasio and Ms. Natalie A. Mello
New Bedford Creative
New Bedford Cultural Council
Mr. Peter Pennoyer
Mr. Derek Santos
ServedWell Hospitality
Mrs. Maureen Sylvia Armstrong
Tidal River Clothing, Stephanie Marshall
Town of Dartmouth
Mrs. Kathleen Wattles
Ms. Jane F. Young
Ms. Esther B. Young

\$500+

Ms. Rebecca Barnes
Mr. Dana Barrows and Ms. Holly Babbitt Barrows
Bartlett Tree Experts
Mr. and Mrs. Stephen K. Brayton
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Mr. and Mrs. Marc E. Chardon
Mr. and Mrs. William Coquillette
Dr. Gail Davidson
Mrs. Helen S. DeGroot
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Dr. and Mrs. Paul T. Elder



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Mr. and Mrs. Robert Gray
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Mr. and Mrs. William N. Keene
Attorney and Mrs. Scott W. Lang
Ms. Deborah Pierce
Mr. Donald Rice and Mrs. Edgenie Rice
Mr. and Mrs. William Rotch, Jr.
Mrs. David Stone
Ten31 Productions
Mr. William T. Whitney

\$100+

AAO Consulting LLC
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Mr. Howard Allen and Mr. Timothy Evans
Anonymous
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 Town of Mattapoisett
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 Ms. Anna Sutton Whitcomb
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<\$100

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 Mrs. Becky Vercollone
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Pathways

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 Mr. Gary Ash and Mrs. Jane Harris Ash
 Mr. Nathanael R. Brayton
 Mr. and Mrs. John K. Bullard
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www.facebook.com/rjdmuseum



www.linkedin.com/company/the-rotch-jones-duff-house-&-garden-museum



The ornate patterned background featured in this report is the wallpaper from the museum house parlors.

Notecards of our different wallpapers are available in our museum shop.



Select photos used throughout this report are credited to:

Dave Cantelli Photography
Illuminate Us Media
Lens of Landry
Lily & Lime
Madeline Barr
Maggie by the Millimeter



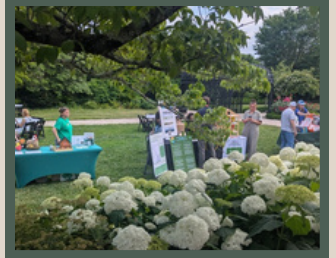
rjdmuseum.org



(508)997-1401



396 County Street, New Bedford MA



In 1981, a group of determined preservationists, led by the Waterfront Historic Area League (WHALE), embarked on a mission to safeguard one of New Bedford's iconic historic properties: the Rotch-Jones-Duff house had stood as a testament to the city's prosperous maritime heritage. WHALE's acquisition of the property was met with widespread community support and marked the beginning of a new chapter for the house, transforming it from a private residence to a public-serving museum. For several years, efforts to restore the property to its whaling era grandeur were undertaken and on January 4, 1985, the Rotch-Jones-Duff House & Garden Museum was incorporated, and officially transferred from WHALE to the newly established nonprofit organization. This "brave house", as Herman Melville might have referred to it, was saved by the brave individuals who organized, spoke up, took risks, raised funds, and established a vision of the property as a space where people could connect with the city's past in a tangible and meaningful way. The vibrant museum we have today is a tribute to the power of community action and the enduring importance of preserving our shared history.