

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 Rotch-Jones-Duff House and Garden Museum encompasses 150 years of New Bedford's history. The property symbolizes New Bedford at its height of prosperity, when wealth was derived from maritime and commercial activities, related to 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. 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 parquet flooring, laid over the original random-width Colonial style flooring, was a Duff family alteration. 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 1850), 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 of future generations. In 1985, members of the community formed the corporation that established the house and garden as a museum, dedicated to education and preservation.

FIRST FLOOR

1. & 2. Back Hall

Beginning at the back hall, to your right is a portrait of William Rotch, Jr. (1759 – 1850) copied from a Rembrandt Peale painting. There is also a lithograph print based on a drawing that may have been created posthumously, of Rotch. At the far end of the hall on your right enter what was called the Basket Room, used for storage of garden baskets.

1851 floor plans depict a water closet with drawers. Rotch family oral history says a large copper tub was also in this room, on the east wall. Thus, the two rooms have been interpreted as being an early bathroom and dressing room when Edward Jones purchased the house.

Note the curved closet door: the house was built by shipwrights skilled in building curved walls as you will notice throughout the house. An elevator, installed for the convenience of Amelia Jones and later electrified by the Duffs, is situated just within the entrance. Amelia had the C. Kimball elevator installed around 1928, and it served as a major attraction to her nieces and nephews. Amelia Forbes Thomas recalled that her brothers “rushed for the elevator which was hoisted and lowered by hand with a big rope, which I was sometimes allowed to pull for half a floor until my brothers got impatient.”

3. William Rotch, Jr. Exhibition Gallery

Enter the room off the Back Hall. This gallery focuses on Rotch’s entrepreneurship, business and social ethics, and domestic interests.

William Rotch Jr.’s grandfather, Joseph Rotch (1704 – 1784) transferred a portion of his whaling business from Nantucket to New Bedford in 1765, recognizing the potential of the mainland’s deeper harbor and access to materials and labor. By the end of the century, all whaling interests of the Rotch family were consolidated in New Bedford. There they built and outfitted whaling vessels, owned and operated trading ships, owned wharves and storehouses, made candles, and sold whale oil and bone.

Capitalizing on the accomplishments of his grandfather and father, William Rotch Jr. established himself as the preeminent whaling merchant in New Bedford and propelled the port city into the golden age of whaling. By 1850, New Bedford was touted as the wealthiest city per capita in the United States.

4. & 5. Front and Rear Parlors

Moving through the Rotch gallery, you will exit into the double parlors.

Parlors in the 19th century functioned as the space for formal social activity and family rituals. Most of the functions typical of the parlor – formal visits, weddings, funerals, theatricals, domestic celebrations – are in keeping with the Rotch and Jones families’ use of the space. Parlors were often the most elegantly decorated room in the house and were used to showcase the family’s wealth and status. When Edward Jones purchased the home in 1851, he spent \$207 (\$7,900 in 2023) on 92 yards of velvet carpet for the front and rear parlors. It was the most expensive carpeting he purchased for the house, and indicator of the social importance of these rooms.

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.

In addition to socializing, parlors were also sometimes used for more practical purposes such as dining, although separate dining rooms were more common in wealthier homes. During the Rotch residency, the rear parlor would have been used to host large dinners for guests. What is now the dining room was then split into Rotch’s office and a smaller tea room.

The black Italianate marble fireplaces, the large mirrors over them, and the elaborate ceiling medallions were installed by the Jones family. 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. Amelia Jones (1849 – 1935) played the piano in this 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 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. It was here that William Rotch, Jr.'s funeral took place, at 11AM on April 20, 1850. According to Annie Bigelow Lawrence Rotch, "The services were after the Quaker form, prayer & exhortation. A great many attended to pay their tribute of respect to the memory of their aged friend." Two attendees, Charles W. Morgan and Samuel Rodman, were overwhelmed with the size of the funeral procession. The line of carriages to Oak Grove Cemetery was the longest either had seen in New Bedford.

6. Dining Room

Pass through the hall to the dining room. One of the features of a Greek Revival house is the symmetry: window balances window; door balances door; and fireplaces are centered in their walls. This room is atypical of that symmetry because the dining room was altered from its original plan. During the Rotch period, this room was originally designed as two separate rooms. The room at the front of the house overlooking County Street served as William Rotch, Jr.'s office. This room had 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. "Taking tea" was a daily activity for the Rotches and a means of entertaining visiting family and friends. The ritual of "taking tea" was a popular pastime in the 19th century, particularly among the upper and middle classes, and it was often seen as a way to socialize and relax. It involved the preparation of a variety of refreshments, such as tea, coffee, and sandwiches, which would be served to guests in a formal setting. Tea parties could be held in the afternoon or evening, and they were often an opportunity for ladies to gather and engage in polite conversation.

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 silver and porcelain on display in the cabinet is from all three families. 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.

Dining was an important and ritualized activity in the 19th century. It was a time for the family to come together and socialize, and it was often accompanied by formal rules of etiquette. One of the most notable features of 19th century dining was the use of a formal table setting, with each place setting carefully arranged to include all of the necessary utensils, plates, and glassware. There were also strict rules of etiquette governing things like how to sit at the table, how to hold utensils, and how to pass

food. Meals were often served in courses, with each course consisting of a variety of dishes. For example, a typical dinner might begin with a soup course, followed by a fish course, a meat course, and a dessert course.

7. The Pantry

Pass from the dining room into the pantry. The room's basic function did not change over the home's 147-year history as a private residence. As a purely utilitarian space the pantry's use and furnishings were tightly defined. It stored tableware, utensils, glassware, porcelain, silverware, and linens. At one time, the pantry had a sink.

In some cases, the pantry might have been used as a temporary holding area for food that was waiting to be served, but it was more common for food to be prepared in the kitchen and then served directly to the dining room.

8. Front Hall & Staircase

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 American artist Rembrandt Peale, a prolific portrait painter known for his likenesses of presidents George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. Their son Benjamin Rodman commissioned their likenesses. The letter from Benjamin to Peale is displayed on the table beneath. Mr. Rodman was Rotch's business partner. A portrait of Helen Rotch Rotch (1846 – 1914) by Stephen Greeley Putnam hangs on the wall to your left.

SECOND FLOOR

9 or 19: 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.

9. Mrs. Duff's Dressing Room & Bathroom

Proceed from either stair to the front of the house, by way of the center hall. In the room opposite the stairway railing, is a changing gallery space. In the late 19th century, this space served as Amelia Jones's bedroom. Images in the RJD collection c. 1885 show Amelia at a small writing desk in the corner near the fireplace. The room had wall-to-wall carpeting and the walls were adorned with framed 18th and 19th century art, numerous photographs of family members, and images of European countries that Amelia probably acquired during her travels.

The character and function of the room changed dramatically once Beatrice and Mark Duff moved in. It was turned into what the family called a sitting room and was outfitted with extra closet space to better accommodate their vast wardrobes.

The bathroom is decorated in an Art Deco style with silver wallpaper, eggplant colored tile and salmon fixtures. It features 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.

10. Mrs. Duff's Bedroom

Moving through the eggplant bathroom, enter Mrs. Duff's Bedroom, with its original furnishings. Beatrice Marceau Duff (1889 – 1987) is pictured in the large portrait over the mantel 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. In the closet are some of her clothes and accessories. Beatrice had a large collection of hats, many of which were made locally at Loretta's.

11. Children's Nook

This space serves as a family-friendly interactive space for children. It invites you to sit on the furniture, handle period toys, and make your own thaumatrope – a Victorian “fool-the-eye” toy. Read books from the late 19th and early 20th centuries while sitting in a bean bag chair in this cozy nook.

12. Gallery Room: Quaker Costume, Objects and Ephemera

This room was formerly the bedroom of one of the Duff daughters. The fireplace, with flat columns of local gray marble, is typical of Greek Revival decoration and is original to the house.

13. Green Bathroom

Enter the small green bathroom, previously two closets, installed by the Duffs in 1936, using green vitriol glass tiles and chrome fixtures. Vitriol glass is a type of colored glass that is characterized by its distinctive blue-green color. The color is produced by adding copper to the glass mixture during the production process. Vitriol glass was widely used in the medieval period and gained popularity again in the early 20th century. Notice how the window does not quite fit inside the original exterior window.

14. 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.

Exit the door by the back stairwell and hall.

15. Children's Bedroom

Continue into the next bedroom which is installed as a children's bedroom, with toys and clothing on display. Originally this room was divided in half to house two staff. The painted furniture set belonged

to William Rotch, Jr.'s granddaughter, Joanna Rotch (1826 – 1911). 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 20th 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.

The Jones daughters were partially raised by staff and women family members, as their father did not marry again until they were adults. Surviving letters and journals reflect that he cherished his children, and the feeling was fully reciprocated by his daughters. Daughter Amelia described him as “a most affectionate father, wise and impartial, sharing all our interests and making us his companions at all times.” Once the girls were older, Edward often took them with him on his trips to Boston or New York. When that was not possible, he often returned with books or presents for his daughters.

The Jones daughters were not defined by strict social norms and expectations normally put on young girls in the Victorian era. Like their father, the Jones daughters enjoyed reading, theater, and art.

All three daughters attended Friends Academy in New Bedford. William Rotch Jr. was one of the founders of the school, along with fellow Quakers Samuel Rodman, Samuel Elam, Thomas Arnold and James Arnold. It opened in January 1811 at the corner of County and Elm Streets. The Jones daughters would have attended the girls' school, built a block away on Morgan Street in 1857.

Exit by the doorway to your left, noting the recessed linen closet.

16. 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 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. Indoor toilets and plumbing were installed on the first floor by the time Edward purchased the home, so a chamber pot would not have been necessary. However, it is important to note that while affluent homeowners like Edward had access to modern conveniences such as indoor plumbing by the mid-19th century, the majority of households were not as fortunate. Many families still relied on alternative methods for their sanitary needs, such as a chamber pot. It wasn't until later in the 19th century that toilets became more common and accessible to a wider range of individuals.

The wooden medicine cabinet atop the dresser would have been used on board a ship filled; it contains 19th century remedies. A wing chair dating from the 1770s 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.

17. Hallway, Sewing Area

Departing the bedroom into the hallway, you will find a Jones era sewing area. In 1870, the Jones family employed a seamstress named Mary Thomas, originally from the Western Islands of Ireland, who resided in the home. Her primary responsibility would have been the creation and maintenance of clothing for the family members. She would also have mended and altered the family's linens, such as bedding, tablecloths, and curtains.

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 New Bedford harbor may be seen in the distance.

18. & 19. Back Stairwell

When the Joneses moved in, with a larger contingent of staff and extended family, the back stairway was added. 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 staff 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.

20. 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 kitchen. Around 1873, the Jones family installed the Arlington coal-burning range. The sink is original to the house with three faucets (hot, cold, and well water). 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 installed with kitchen furniture, appliances and tools like those that would have been used during the Jones residence.

Because work started early and ended late at night, the kitchen in the Jones household was constantly occupied. Meals, work and conversation revolved around a large, wooden table in the center of the room. In contrast to more affluent homes, the young female members of the families who lived in this house would have worked alongside the employees, doing light housework, seasonal cleaning, sewing, and a limited amount of cooking. Although the Jones household had some form of refrigeration, frequent trips to the market were standard. The family also grew their own produce in the garden and at the family's farm in Dartmouth, Massachusetts.

Terrace & Gardens

The south side porch provides an overview of the grounds, showing the formal boxwood parterre, the central pergola, and garden walkways. The garden you see today has been restored to the period of the Jones residence. In 2018 more than 300 new rose bushes and over 600 boxwoods were planted to restore the parterre rose garden. A diagram of the rose garden is available on our website, and as a hand out from the front desk.

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.

During the Jones era, the gardens included a grapery, the abundant produce of which was widely distributed to family and friends for years. 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 (GCBB) and the New Bedford Garden Club. The GCBB is now an active partner with the Museum, maintaining the boxwood varietal garden, and using the greenhouse.