



Annual Report 2025

The Rotch-Jones-Duff House & Garden Museum





From the President and Executive Director



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Natalie A. Mello'.

Natalie A. Mello
President, Board of Trustees



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Dawn E. Salerno'.

Dawn E. Salerno
Executive Director

At The RJD, fiscal year 2025 spans two equal periods: the last six months of 2024 and the first six months of 2025. While 2025 has seen dramatic shifts in political, economic and cultural spheres, what has not shifted is our institutional values, determination, and commitment to vision.

We benefit from a stellar group of trustees who hold true to the goals outlined in our strategic plan. This May, the Trustees voted unanimously to adopt wording that describes our commitment to becoming an equitable organization that is grounded in the history of the three families (see below). In continuing to tell the story of this site, we hired a research fellow, Beatrice Alder, to research and write about our connections to Abolition and the Underground Railroad. Harvard Magazine published a scholarly article, written by Collections Committee member, Beth Luey, on letters sent between Henry Taber and “Willy” Rotch, currently housed in the Museum’s archives. We received a grant for our autumn exhibition and year-long programming focused on William Rotch, Sr. during the Revolutionary War era. Although the strategic plan includes further interpretation planning for the main historic house, we concluded the fiscal year by confronting the potential loss of federal grant funds designated as sources for that work. Like our peers in the museum sector, we are uncertain about how we will address these funding gaps.

Another goal we have been working towards is financial sustainability. This was the year to reach out to our most resolute supporters, gathering input on our plans and gauging their willingness to support that future. We are optimistic about the future, especially because the Annual Appeal successfully surpassed its target, the RJD secured three new grants, and the annual donor recognition event experienced higher attendance than in previous years.

Lastly, we are enjoying celebrating the Museum's 40th anniversary with you. We are so grateful to all those staff, trustees, corporators, volunteers, members and donors who have come before us, building the vibrant and community-engaged institution we have today in 2025. This anniversary is also our call for you to stick with us on this path as we forge ahead, stewarding important stories of our shared past and creating a welcoming and inclusive space for people from all backgrounds to gather, learn, socialize, and celebrate.

Equity

A rich history and the continuing commitment at RJD

- The Rotch, Jones, and Duff families were equity activists, often against popular opinion.
- We continue to leverage our equity history to develop new programs highlighting ethics, racial justice, domestic life, and horticulture.
- RJD's Board and leadership team are actively committed to continuing this mission.



LEADERSHIP

In Year Four of the RJD Strategic Plan, the Board of Trustees spent hours writing and aligning policy and practice with the four goals of the plan. Executive Director, Dawn Salerno, together with staff, implemented tasks outlined in the plan which is now 80% complete as of the end of this fiscal year.

RJD 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

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Alanna Jaworski
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Leonardo Reis
Derek J. Santos

A Special 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.



Kayla C.
Conner



Francis C.
Gray, III



Alanna
Jaworski

STAFF

Our wonderful staff fulfills the Museum's mission, working across all operations, from fundraising to the latest preservation project. Three staff departed seeking new opportunities and making way for excellent new hires.



FY 2025 Staff & Contractors



Rick Finneran,
Facilities Manager &
Lead Gardener



Chloe Crosby
Functions & Sales
Coordinator



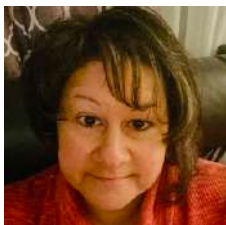
Lauren Pothier
Community
Engagement
Coordinator



Jackie Se'Alé
Development &
Administration
Coordinator



Dawn E. Salerno
Executive Director



Betsy Pinho,
Bookkeeper
(Contractor)

**Paul Crawford,
Kathryn McGreevy,
Aydan Sullo,**
Events Assistants

COMMITTEES

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Anne Heller	Dawn E. Salerno
Leonardo Reis	

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Anna Surma	

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Sage Lamade	Dawn E. Salerno
Ann Marie Lopes	

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Kayla C. Conner, Chair	Staff:
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Diana Henry	
Mirian Moultrie	

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Diana Henry
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John C. Pinheiro
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G. Stewart Young
Anne Heller

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Francis C. Gray, III	

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Leonardo Reis	
Derek J. Santos	

NEXTGEN

Leonardo Reis, Chair	Von Marie Moniz
Andrew Armstrong	Kennedy Silva
Kayla C. Conner	Toni Anne Wong
Marcus Coward	Staff: Lauren Pothier
Elizabeth MacDonald	



Photo Credit: Lens of Landry

EXHIBITIONS



Newsworthy 40 Years **January 2 - December 24, 2025**

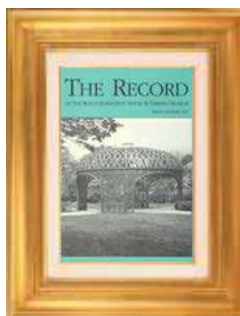
On January 4, 1985, the Rotch-Jones-Duff House & Garden Museum was incorporated. RJD trustees, volunteers and staff wasted no time, creating an exciting calendar of events and publishing a newsletter for the fledgling museum. This exhibition featured covers of each newsletter published, from the RJD's founding, to today.

This exhibition was created with the help of volunteers Lauren Kavanagh, Mary Ellen Rogina, and Kennedy Silva.

Celebrating 40 Years of Collecting **January 2 - December 24, 2025**

Curated by Sage Lamade, former Manager of Collections & Interpretation

As we celebrate 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 speak to these notable donations from our 40 year history.



AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

FY25 PROGRAM PARTNERS

AHA!	NB Whaling National Historical Park
Bristol County Beekeepers Association	NB Preservation Society
Big Brothers Big Sisters	NB Symphony Orchestra
Garden Club of Buzzards Bay	Preservation Society of Newport County
James Arnold Mansion	Reverie Theatre Group
Mass Audubon	Serlingpa Kadampa Meditation Center
Milward Tea Room	Third Eye Youth Empowerment
New Bedford High School	WHALE
NB Free Public Library	YMCA South Coast

67

of programs
run in FY25

18

of organizations
partnered with to deliver
programming

446

of school students
attending FY25 Field Trips
(49% increase over FY 24)

1,453

of people who visited
the Museum House
in FY25

2,124

of people who
attended FY25 programs



New Bedford High School and
All City Band Concert

FY2025 PROGRAMS

Family Story Time, With NB Free Public Library, monthly Wednesdays
Yoga in the Garden, With YMCA South Coast, Saturdays, July through September
The Bee's Mead, AHA, Hosted by the NexGen Committee, July 11
Music in the Garden, with NBSO, July 21
Bubbles & Bloom, August 8
Tie That Binds Exhibition Reception, AHA, August 8
Members Reception, August 15, January 26
Shakespeare in NB: Twelfth Night, August 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, 24, 25
Open House at the Mansion, with James Arnold Mansion, August 18
Five Pillars of Hip Hop, with New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park & 3rd EyE Youth Empowerment, AHA, September 12
Annual Meeting & Reception, September 19
House Tour, October 5, November 2, January 23, April 24, May 22
Jazz Concert in the Garden, October 6
The Great Pumpkin Parade, AHA, October 10

Domestic Staff of 396 County, AHA, November 14
Afternoon Tea in the Parlors, December 1, 3
Holiday House Tour, December 7
Christmas on Country, AHA, December 14
Living the Old House Dream, with WHALE, January 28, February 25, March 25
The Extraordinary Power of Love, with Serlingpa Kadampa, AHA, February 13
Craft Night, AHA, Hosted by the NexGen Committee, March 13
Open House at the Mansion, March 22
For the Love of Roses, AHA, April 10
The Annual Fellows Lecture, with Newport Preservation Society Fellows, April 15
Game Night, AHA, Hosted by the NexGen Committee, May 8
Mother's Day Tea, May 10
Modern Music Concert in the Garden, with New Bedford High School Bands, May 20
Garden Tour, AHA, June 12
Gardening with Native Plants, with Mass Audubon, June 18



Shakespeare in NB: Twelfth Night



The Great Pumpkin Parade

MARKETING

FREE ADMISSION PROGRAMS

Art Pharmacy - NEW!
Blue Star Museums
EBT/WIC Cards
ConnectorCare Card

Library Cards: Dartmouth Public Library,
New Bedford Free Public Library
Museums for All
Wunderfund

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



3,000

Number of
Facebook
followers (5%
increase since
previous year)

2,632

Number of
Instagram
followers (17%
increase since
previous year)

347

Number of
X followers
(-4% since
previous year)

98

Number of
LinkedIn followers
(18% increase
since previous
year)

49%

Average open rate
of RJD E-news

EVENTS



In our 40th Anniversary year, one major event gathered people together to celebrate and support the museum's service to the community. Rubies & Roses, on June 13, featured ruby décor, DJ Jordan Paiva, food from Pairings, and a brilliant June day in the garden.

Attendance hit 111 and the event generated over \$28,000 in net operating income for the Museum.

Thank you to those who supported our ruby anniversary party with their attendance, donations, and sponsorships.



Guests in the garden at Rubies and Roses.



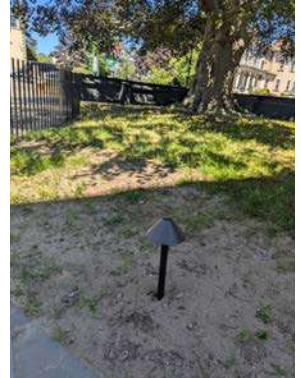
PRESERVATION



Restoration of the South Porch



Garden Lighting Project



PRESERVATION, BUILDINGS, & GROUNDS

Capital Investments Total	\$185,475
ARPA Grant-funded Improvements (Including: Masonry, Electrical Infrastructure, North Lawn Irrigation, Garden Seating, Garden Lighting, Restoration of Iron Fences, Restoration of South Porch)	\$171,460
Repairs to the Lift	\$8,215
Repairs & Improvements to HVAC	\$5,800

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. Skilled volunteers also serve on the Board of Trustees and its several committees.



46

Active
Volunteers in
FY25

2,109

Annual
Volunteer
Hours Donated

219

Current Museum
Members
(10% increase over FY24)

\$137,275.84

FY25 Annual
Appeal Total

\$6,275.84

Dollars Above
Appeal Goal

FY 2025 OPERATIONS FINANCIALS

REVENUE FROM OPERATIONS FY 2025 FY 2024 % CHANGE VS. '24

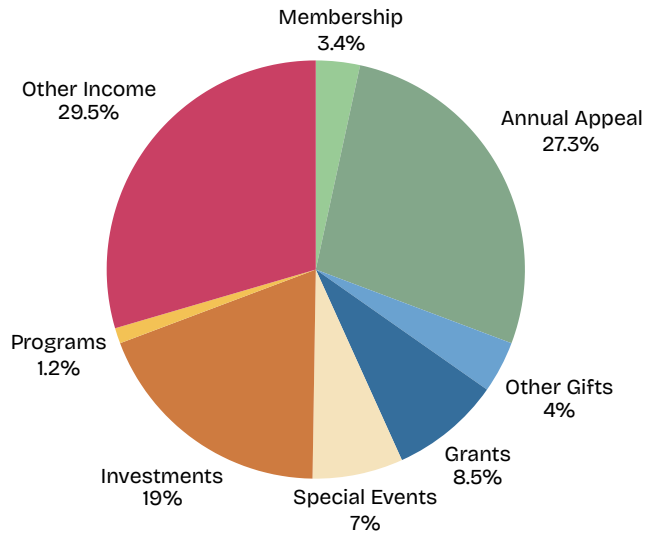
Membership	\$16,224	\$17,900	-9%
Annual Appeal	\$130,167	\$139,618	-7%
Grants	\$40,800	\$49,798	-18%
Other Gifts	\$18,991	\$14,747	29%
Special Events	\$33,209	\$31,703	5%
Programs	\$5,667	\$6,342	-11%
Investments/Annual Draw	\$91,363	\$90,712	1%
Other Income	\$140,852	\$60,368	133%
Total Revenue	\$477,273	\$411,188	16%

OPERATING EXPENSES FY 2025 FY 2024 % CHANGE VS. '24

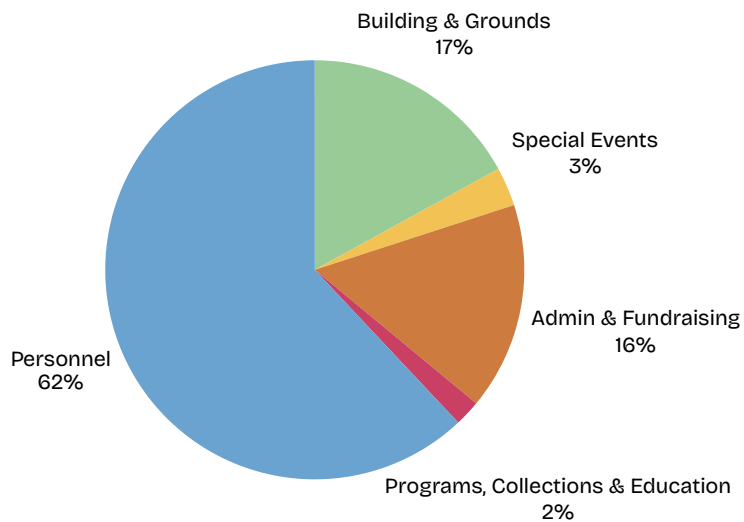
Programs, Collections & Education	\$10,420	\$10,799	-4%
Building & Grounds	\$87,572	\$47,946	83%
Special Events	\$16,308	\$8,493	92%
Admin. & Fundraising	\$83,756	\$79,058	6%
Personnel	\$316,990	\$305,470	4%
Total Operating Expenses	\$515,046	\$451,766	14%

Net from Operations	\$(37,773)	(40,578)	
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FY 2025 REVENUE FROM OPERATIONS



FY 2025 OPERATING EXPENSES



Thank you to this year's supporters!

\$5,000+

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Mr. Samuel P. Gray and Mrs. Margaret Z. Gray
Mr. William Hicks and Mrs. Lucile Hicks
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New Bedford Creative
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SouthCoast Community Foundation
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\$1,000+

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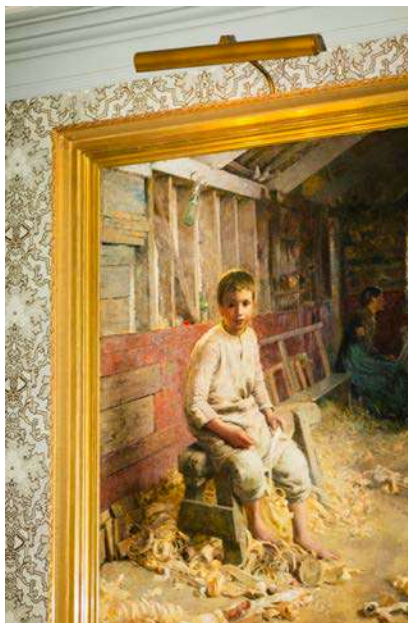


Photo Credit: Lens of Landry

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Ms. Ruth Furman and Mr. Ernest Fisher
Mr. Dennis Fusco and Mrs. Angela Fusco
Mr. and Mrs. Seth Garfield
Mrs. Mary Lou Garrett

Thank you!

\$100+

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Ms. Kathleen Solomon and Mr. Rodney Solomon



Audience members during a performance of Twelfth Night with Reverie Theatre Group



Christmas on County 2024



Living The Old House Dream program, 2025

\$100+

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Mr. and Mrs. Robert Sterns
Mr. and Mrs. William Stout
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Mr. Joseph Tardif
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Department of Revenue
Mr. Alfred J. Walker
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YMCA Southcoast, Robyn Branco

<\$100

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Thank you!

<\$100

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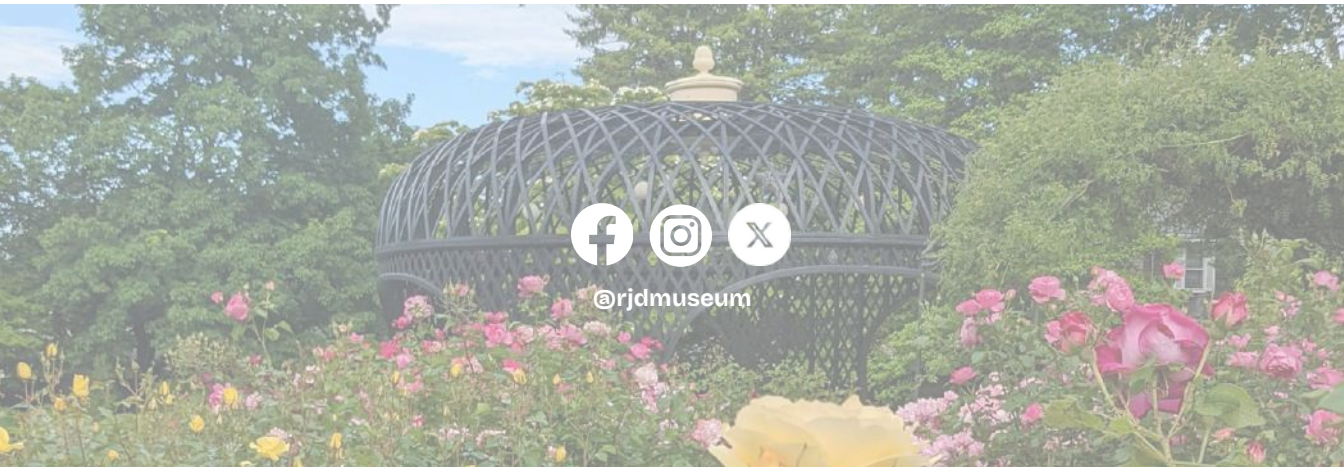
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Visit us online at
rjdmuseum.org

The Rotch-Jones-Duff House & Garden Museum

396 County Street
New Bedford, MA 02740
P 1(508)997-1401
E info@rjdmuseum.org





Bringing History Home

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. As we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the RJD, we honor the dedication and vision of those who made it possible. 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.

