

THE ROTCH-JONES-DUFF HOUSE & GARDEN MUSEUM

SUMMER/FALL 2026

TRANSFORMING A LANDSCAPE





THE ROTCH-JONES-DUFF
HOUSE & GARDEN MUSEUM

596 County Street
New Bedford, Massachusetts
508-997-1401
www.rjdmuseum.org

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From the Director

We Share a Lot



I got into museum work because of my love for them. Admittedly, I wasn't aware then of the breadth of skills I'd need or day to day tasks I'd have, but at the core, the work still resonated. Museums like the RJD are keepers of history: keepers of the documents, the oral history, and the material culture that help tell the stories of the past to future generations. We're the keepers of correspondence between teenagers Henry Tabor and "Willy" Rotch, which often sounds like two teenagers today bemoaning the amount of homework assigned to them. We know more

about this 1834 estate based on interviews with Jones and Duff descendants who remember sliding down the hallway banister or being greeted by friendly "Aunt Amelia." And we're the keepers of the "stuff"—the New Bedford-made Pairpoint glassware, hand-painted wallpaper, and Steinway piano with real ivory keys.

The RJD's mission is not focused solely on keeping, however. It's focused on sharing that history. We "enliven New Bedford history and engage our communities" through our stewardship of these collections, our interpretation of stories in our galleries, and our educational programming. That's why the average work week at the RJD might include research on two recently acquired portraits: one of William Rotch Jr.'s nephew, Samuel Rodman, and the other of Rodman's father-in-law. (Come see these two new acquisitions now on view on the 2nd floor). It might also include marketing work, like the design of the invite for our annual garden party (June 12—I hope we're on your calendar) or the press release about this year's production of Shakespeare's Hamlet (on the patio this August).

Our work days also include face-to-face time, like when we go off site for a resource fair at New Bedford High School, meet with our volunteer docents, or collaborate with our museum partners on a joint ticket for local museums. Behind these tasks is the goal of sharing the RJD with school students, teachers, and the general public.

Knowing that our work results in a learning experience or an "aha" moment for someone else is what drives us. And we've got a lot to share with you at the RJD. I hope you'll come by soon for a tour of the exhibitions, an educational program, or a relaxing stroll through the garden.

Dawn Estabrooks Salerno

Executive Director

Comings and Goings, Board of Trustees



Leo Reis

In March, The RJD welcomed new trustees, Caroline Conzatti and Jennifer Smith who both filled open terms. We also said farewell to trustee, Leo Reis, who's job promotion had begun to make RJD trustee work impractical. Leo served as Chair of the NextGen Committee and was an important contributor to the work of the Nominating Committee in the years where they became more focused on representation from the community. Thank you, Leo!



Caroline Conzatti

Caroline Conzatti currently works at the Community Boating Center, Inc. in New Bedford. The non-profit organization's mission is to teach positive life values to youth through boating. She started there in the Spring of 2017 after spending 10 years at the Kittansett Club in Marion. Caroline also volunteers her time on committees and boards at various organizations, including Community Nurse, Manhattanville University, New Bedford Art Museum, and the St. Andrew's Episcopal Church After School Enrichment Program. She is a proud New Bedford resident who is currently representing the city on the Greater New Bedford Regional Refuse Management District.



Jennifer W. Smith

Jennifer W. Smith (Jen) is a lifelong New Bedford resident with a passion for history, preservation, the natural world, native plants, and the people of our community. She has spent decades collaborating, connecting, and celebrating the significance and beauty of the south coast. Recently retired from the National Park Service after 28 years, Jen is eager to continue her work in public service working with the Friends Group of New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, Whaling History Alliance, AHA!, Coastal Foodshed and, very recently, joining the Board of Directors of Spinner Publications.

Quiet on Set!



Photo Credit: New Bedford Film Festival

In a collaboration with the New Bedford Film Festival, The RJD hosted a film crew on March 28 for their NB48: Filmmaking Challenge. In the challenge, seven teams took over a New Bedford site to craft unique stories in only 8 hours of filming and 40 hours of production. The film "Now Now Now" took the festival award.

Restroom Rehabilitation

We know we have a talented staff. Chloe Crosby is not only good at coordinating the special events on property, she's also a budding interior designer. When given permission for a cosmetic overhaul of the three restrooms at the patio level, Chloe leaned in to color and pattern. They may not be a historic part of the architecture, but they should inspire joy the next time you visit.



Transforming a Landscape



Left: New iron railings lead to the parterre rose garden. Right: New bluestone replaces mismatched, broken patio stones.

BY DAWN SALERNO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I replayed the voice mail from Mayor Mitchell at least three times. On it, he informed me that the Rotch-Jones-Duff would be receiving \$525,605 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant dollars from the city. This amount of money was the largest single grant sum The Museum had ever received and it would turn out to be transformational.

By the end of fiscal year 2020, the RJD had seen its first deficit budget since 2008. Income was down, but expenses remained level due to, among other things, our continued employment of our staff and the installation of high speed internet. At the same time, usage of the garden had increased exponentially, with people seeking safe, outdoor spaces in which to hold meetings, socialize, and recreate. The city’s ARPA funds for “Enhanced Cultural Facilities” were made available in 2022 through a competitive application process. We realized we had an opportunity to restore certain features and enhance amenities to our increasingly popular outdoor space. Our case, articulated in terms of the grant goals, was:

- To increase the amount of time the public can enjoy the space: landscape lighting would be added, and the tented area would be improved.
- To increase the safety of the site: the project would include new and restored railings, leveling and refreshing stone walkways, tree pruning, and porch surface repairs.

- To create additional accessibility: a County street entrance would allow people to enter the property at its intended front entrance, and additional capacity for seating would be added.

Now in 2026, we have completed the multifaceted initiative with the help of masons, electricians, architects, landscapers, landscape designers, carpenters, painters, and our multitasking Facilities Manager, Rick Finneran. Investments included the following*:

Masonry	\$303,475
Tent	\$5,360
Landscape Lighting Design	\$10,000
Landscape Lighting Electrical	\$77,940
Carpentry	\$79,790
Other Landscaping Costs	\$19,118
Project Management	\$29,922

An estimated 5,000 people use the RJD’s grounds each year to recreate, socialize, learn about local history, and enjoy the beauty of the natural space. These improvements will help us welcome more people to the grounds, more often throughout the year. We are grateful to the city of New Bedford and Mayor Mitchell for awarding us this transformational funding, as well as our state legislators who advocated for the federal funding for this region of the Commonwealth.

**At the writing of this article, the final expenses were still being incurred and tallied, so these numbers are approximate.*

Calendar

JULY

SHAKESPEARE'S WORDS

WITH REVERIE THEATRE GROUP

Thursday, July 9, 5pm – 6pm (Ages 10+),
6pm – 7pm (Teens/Adults)

Join dramaturg and award-winning journalist Tony Silvia and Shakespeare in NB 2026 director, Omar Laguerre-Lewis, for an interactive session centered on the Bard's rich, layered language. For the first hour, youth learn about Hamlet through passages from Charles & Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*. The adult-targeted hour focuses on the play's history, vocabulary, and iambic pentameter. Free as part of AHA Night



FAMILY STORYTIME

WITH THE NEW BEDFORD FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Wednesday, July 15, Noon – 12:30pm

Meet in the garden for an engaging half-hour of stories for the whole family. After the stories, take home a family fun craft kit to collaborate and create together! Family Storytime will run every third Wednesday of the month, through December 16. Open to all ages with accompanying adult. Free.

YOGA IN THE GARDEN

WITH YMCA INSTRUCTORS MARK BORGETTI AND ELLEN SELLEY

Saturdays at 8am,

July 18 through September 26

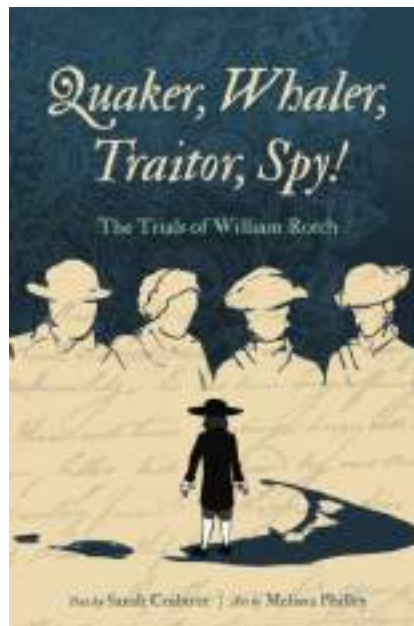
Enjoy a mindful morning stretch in the garden throughout the summer. Yoga can help increase flexibility, strength, stability, calmness, and focus. Bring a mat and water. YMCA Southcoast Members: Free / Other Participants: \$10. Advance payment is requested.

THE LEGACY OF THE WHITFIELD/ MANJIRO FRIENDSHIP HOUSE

WITH THE WHITEFIELD MANJIRO FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY

Wednesday, July 22, 5pm - 6pm

Join the Society's Program Director Debra Almeida, CEO Gerry Rooney, and cultural advisor Ayako Rooney for a presentation about the remarkable true story of friendship between Captain William Whitfield of Fairhaven and Manjiro Nakahama, a Japanese fisherman rescued at sea in 1841, who became the first Japanese person to live in America. Free.



QUAKER, WHALER, TRAITOR, SPY! BOOK TALK & SIGNING

Wednesday, July 29, 5:30pm – 7pm

Join author Dr. Sarah Crabtree and illustrator Melissa "Sawhand" Philley to celebrate the release of their long-awaited graphic novel, *Quaker, Whaler, Traitor, Spy! The Trials of William Rotch*. Following their talk, Crabtree and Philley will sign copies of the book. A limited number of books will be available to purchase that evening; pre-purchase your copy at the Museum Shop or through our website to guarantee a copy is available that night.

AUGUST

YOGA IN THE GARDEN

WITH YMCA INSTRUCTORS MARK BORGETTI AND ELLEN SELLEY

Saturdays at 8am,

August 1 through September 26

See July listing for full description.

YMCA Southcoast Members: Free /
Other Participants: \$10.

Advance payment is required.



SHAKESPEARE IN NB PRESENTS: HAMLET

WITH REVERIE THEATRE GROUP

August 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, 7:30pm

August 16 & 23, 2pm (Sensory Friendly
Matinees)

Bringing the Bard's most poignant plays to audiences of all ages and walks of life, RTG presents a chilling and timely take on Hamlet. Set in a Baptist church in the present-day, American south, this production interrogates the supposed divide between church and state, while also exploring the play's most enduring themes of mortality, madness, and moral corruption. Donations are accepted in lieu of a ticket fee.

This program is supported in part by grants from the Acushnet, Dartmouth, Mattapoisett, and New Bedford Cultural Councils, local agencies which are supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency. It is also supported in part by the Wicked Cool Places grant funded by the City of New Bedford through its Arts, Culture & Tourism Fund, and is facilitated by New Bedford Creative at the New Bedford Economic Development Council.



FAMILY STORYTIME
WITH THE NEW BEDFORD
FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Wednesday, August 19, Noon – 12:30pm
See July listing for full description. Open to all ages with accompanying adult. Free.

SEPTEMBER

YOGA IN THE GARDEN
WITH YMCA INSTRUCTORS MARK
BORGETTI AND ELLEN SELLEY

Saturdays at 8am, September 5 through 26
See July listing for full description. YMCA Southcoast Members: Free / Other Participants: \$10. Advance payment is requested.

FAMILY STORYTIME
WITH THE NEW BEDFORD
FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Wednesday, September 16, Noon – 12:30pm
See July listing for full description. Open to all ages with accompanying adult. Free.



Please call the museum in advance or visit our website to register for programs with a fee:

rjdmuseum.org / 508-997-1401

Virtual program info can be accessed from our website.



GARDEN QUARTET
WITH NEW BEDFORD SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA MUSICIANS

Sunday, September 13, 3pm – 4pm
Musicians from the New Bedford Symphony Orchestra play a mixed program for strings. The performance happens under the 19th century pergola, in the garden, weather allowing. Otherwise, the concert occurs under the tent. Bring a blanket and picnic lunch to enjoy on the lawn, or sit in the provided seating. Tickets available at the door: \$12 Members / \$18 Public.

ANNUAL MEETING & RECEPTION

Thursday, September 17, 5pm – 7pm
5pm Refreshment, 5:30pm Meeting
Join the museum’s staff, board, Corporators and fellow members for a look back at the past year of museum activities. The evening begins with a reception in the garden. Free admission.



Photo credit: Lens of Landry

HOUSE TOUR

Thursday, September 24, 2pm
Enjoy a 45-minute guided tour of the Rotch-Jones-Duff mansion with an RJD Docent. Free with the price of admission.



AFTERNOON TEA

Sunday, September 27, 1pm – 3pm
Enjoy afternoon tea on the tented patio surrounded by the beautiful garden and summer air. Festive dress is encouraged. Fee includes tea service plus admission to the Museum. Parties of 8 guests may reserve a table; smaller parties may be seated with each other at group tables. \$45 Members / \$50 Public; advance reservations required.

OCTOBER



THE GREAT PUMPKIN PARADE

Thursday, October 8, 4pm – 7pm
Visit the grounds for an autumnal evening of family-friendly activity. See this year’s display of Jack-O-Lanterns carved by local community members and enjoy lawn games in the garden. Inside the mansion, children can participate in a scavenger hunt with prizes. At 5:30pm, Toe Jam Puppet Band performs. Suggested donation: \$5 Individuals / \$10 Family. This event is also part of AHA night.

The RJD is looking for pumpkin carvers for this event! Interested? Email Lauren: lpothier@rjdmuseum.org. Carvers are asked to provide their own pumpkin and deliver finished pieces to the Museum by noon, October 8.



Photo credit: Lens of Landry

COLLECTIONS SPOTLIGHT
WITH EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
DAWN ESTABROOKS SALERNO

Wednesday, October 14, 5:30pm
 Enjoy a tour through the RJD mansion focused on some of the Director's favorite artworks and decorative arts. \$5 Guests of Members / \$10 Public / Free to Members.

BEHIND THE SCENES:
THE RJD ATTIC & CUPOLA

Saturday, October 17, 1pm – 3pm
 Learn about the space which was once home to the domestic staff and enjoy one of the best views of New Bedford. The cupola of the mansion, added during the Jones occupancy, gave residents a direct view of the port of New Bedford. See the view for yourself when you drop in for this behind-the-scenes look at the RJD attic. \$5 Members / \$5 + Admission, Public.

FAMILY STORYTIME
WITH THE NEW BEDFORD
FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Wednesday, October 21, Noon – 12:30pm
 See July listing for full description. Open to all ages with accompanying adult. Free.

NOVEMBER

HOUSE TOUR

Thursday, October 22, 2pm
 Enjoy a 45-minute guided tour of the Rotch-Jones-Duff mansion with an RJD Docent. Free with the price of admission.



BEHIND THE SCENES:
THE RJD ATTIC & CUPOLA

Saturday, November 14, 1pm – 3pm
 Learn about the space which was once home to the domestic staff and enjoy one of the best views of New Bedford. The cupola of the mansion, added during the Jones occupancy, gave residents a direct view of the port of New Bedford. See the view for yourself when you drop in for this behind-the-scenes look at the RJD attic. \$5 Members / \$5 + Admission, Public.

FAMILY STORYTIME
WITH THE NEW BEDFORD
FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Wednesday, November 18, Noon – 12:30pm
 See July listing for full description. Open to all ages with accompanying adult. Free.

MEMBERS DAY!

Thursday, November 19
House Tour, 2pm; Reception, 4pm – 6pm
 We're celebrating our members! Join a members-only tour of the house or come later in the evening for some shopping and nosh. No matter when you arrive, you'll be the first to enjoy the decorated halls of the RJD Mansion. Mingle with fellow Museum members, do some holiday shopping, and enjoy seasonal refreshments. Members can take advantage of special discounts in the Museum Shop. Bring a non-member guest for \$5.

DECEMBER



CHRISTMAS ON COUNTY

Thursday, December 10, 4pm – 6pm
 Drop in to see the decked halls of the mansion and hear from docents about some of the holiday customs held by residents of the house. Wear your ugliest holiday sweater and seasonal accessories. Be a baker or be a judge in the seventh annual Cookie Challenge where home bakers bring batches of their favorite homemade cookie for sampling and judging. This event is part of AHA night. Donations are accepted in lieu of a fee.

FAMILY STORYTIME
WITH THE NEW BEDFORD
FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Wednesday, December 16, Noon – 12:30pm
 See July listing for full description. Open to all ages with accompanying adult. Free.



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PRIVATE EVENTS
AT THE
RJD MANSION AND GARDEN

The RJD's tented patio, garden space, and indoor parlors provide a memorable and refreshing backdrop for your party, be it a corporate event, staff cocktail party, or afternoon tea. Enjoy exclusive access to a 19th century whaling estate, surrounded by greenery, roses, and trees.



"If you're looking for a venue that's rich in history, filled with charm, and surrounded by natural beauty, the RJD Mansion is an incredible choice."

- Khailah Cunha, Belmont & Bliss Photo Co.

Garden rentals are available 7 days a week. Rentals of the mansion are also available and can be perfect for smaller cocktail parties and holiday gatherings.

To inquire about a date, details, tea packages, or pricing, contact:
Chloe Crosby, Functions & Sales Coordinator
functions@rjdmuseum.org
508-997-1401

