



EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

The First Decade: A Retrospective 1996-2006



Scene from Benjamin Russell and Caleb Purrington's
Panorama: Whaling Voyage Round the World, 1848

Courtesy of the New Bedford Whaling Museum

What it Means to be a National Park

...to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

National Park Service
Organic Act, 1916



Statue of Liberty
National Monument

Currently, there are 390 units in the National Park System. Experiences in national parks refresh our minds and recharge our spirits.

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Parks like Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Grand Canyon showcase noteworthy natural systems and scenic splendor while places such as the Statue of Liberty, Independence Hall, and Boston National Historical Park represent people and events that helped shape this country's history and character.



Independence National
Historical Park



Boston National
Historical Park



Grand Canyon National Park

A National Park Comes to New Bedford



Park visitor center

If the story of whaling...is to be preserved and presented anywhere, New Bedford is the logical and most suitable location to do so.

Special Resource Study for
New Bedford, Massachusetts
National Park Service, 1992

Congress established New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park in 1996 to commemorate the American whaling industry and its contribution to our nation's history. During the 19th century, New Bedford was the whaling capital of the world. Today, that history is reflected in the city's historical architecture and the outstanding museum collections and archival materials preserved here by the Park's partner institutions.

In order to preserve for the benefit and inspiration of the people of the United States as a national historical park, certain districts, structures, and relics located in New Bedford, Massachusetts, and associated with the history of whaling and related social and economic themes in America, there is established the New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park.

Public Law 104-333
November 12, 1996



Fishing boats in New
Bedford harbor

A Park in Partnership

The town itself is perhaps the dearest place to live in, in all New England...nowhere in all America will you find more patrician-like houses; parks and gardens more opulent, than in New Bedford... all these brave houses and flowery gardens came from the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian oceans. One and all they were dragged up hither from the bottom of the sea.

Herman Melville,
Moby-Dick, 1850

New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park helps to preserve, protect, and interpret certain districts, structures, and artifacts located in New Bedford, Massachusetts, that are associated with the history of whaling and related social, economic, and environmental themes for the benefit and inspiration of this and future generations. These efforts will be undertaken in partnership with the city of New Bedford, local and regional institutions, and the Inupiat Heritage Center in Barrow, Alaska.

Park Mission Statement



National Park Service Director Mary Bomar (middle) and Northeast Regional Deputy Director Chrysandra Walter with park staff and park Executive Committee members, 2006

New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park represents a new model in the National Park Service: preservation and education are achieved, not through federal ownership, but through partnerships. Together, park partners preserve New Bedford's historic landscapes, structures, and collections and promote research and educational programming associated with the history of whaling. The park interprets the global reach of New Bedford's whaling trades through partnerships in regions visited by the city's whaling fleet.

Locally, the park functions as a source of community identity and pride and fosters a climate in which community initiatives and collaborations are encouraged. The projects highlighted in this commemorative publication exemplify these partnerships and contribute to visitors' appreciation and understanding of the 19th century whaling industry and its place in American history.



Schooner *Ernestina*



Inupiat Heritage Center in Barrow, Alaska

Park Timeline: The First Decade

1996-97



November 12, 1996 New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park established by Congress

September 9, 1997 A devastating fire rips through the Corson Building adjacent to the park visitor center

Public scoping meetings and visioning workshops take place as work begins on the Park's General Management Plan

The first uniformed staff members arrive at the park on a temporary assignment from Lowell National Historical Park



Preserving New Bedford's Heritage

New Bedford is a living, active, working community which has been preserved with pride. It is not a reconstructed town built to replicate the past. New Bedford's buildings, commercial center, industries, waterfront, and streetscapes testify to a vigorous and exciting past.

Through partnerships with local, regional, and national institutions, organizations, and communities, New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park supports the preservation of the historic landscapes, structures, and museum and archival collections in New Bedford that are associated with the history of whaling.

Park Mission Goal

Anne Brengle, President, New Bedford Whaling Museum testimony before Senate subcommittee on Parks, Historic Preservation and Recreation, 1995



The rehabilitation of the "Old Bank Building" into the park's visitor center was completed in 2003. The comprehensive preservation and accessibility project included stabilization and restoration of the brownstone façade.



Bolstered by the city's commercial facade program, 2000 was the peak year for preservation activity in the park with 44 of the 70 historic structures (mostly privately owned) having improvement and expansion projects underway.



The historic paving materials of the park's streets and sidewalks require a skilled hand when repairs are needed. While the park provides resources to secure the proper materials for this work, it is the city's public works masons who are the craftsmen. Other examples of this partnership effort include the installation of appropriate wooden fences, replica street signs, and copper street lights.



Courtesy of New Bedford Whaling Museum

The New Bedford Whaling Museum continued the preservation of the historic structures that comprise their complex with the exterior restoration of the Bourne Building. The new copper roof and lighting of the cupola was cause for celebration in the summer of 2006. This project demonstrates the commitment of partners to historic preservation in the park.

New Bedford Historical Commission

Established in 1972 by the city of New Bedford, the Commission ensures that preservation methods for historic structures and proposals for new construction are consistent with federal, state, and local guidelines and regulations. In 2001, the city ordinance was amended to allow for the National Park Service to have a permanent seat on the Commission.

Since 2000, the park's Historical Architect has provided professional staffing and administrative support for the Commission's daily responsibilities on a wide range of projects. The park has also worked in partnership with the city to maintain and properly house Commission archives, produce design guidelines, create a website, develop a newsletter, and provide training opportunities for Commission members.



John Piltzecker is named first Superintendent

City of New Bedford visitor center volunteers join NPS Volunteers-in-Parks program

May 17, 1998 Regional Director Marie Rust attends dedication ceremony for the Park

February 12, 1999 54th Regiment Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Plaza at Custom House Square is dedicated.

The New Bedford Historical Society and the park co-sponsor *The Gathering*, an Underground Railroad conference

The NPS Olmstead Center for Landscape Preservation receives an award for outstanding research for *Safely Moored at Last*, the cultural landscape report for the park

1998-99

Interpreting our Shared History



The New Bedford Historical Society was established at the same time as the Park and thus began our partnership. Through our collaboration, the many untold stories of African-Americans, Cape Verdeans, West Indians, American Indians and other people of color have become a vital part of the narrative of New Bedford.

Joan Beaubian,
President,
New Bedford
Historical Society

New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park collaborates with a wide range of institutions within the city of New Bedford and beyond to promote the delivery of high-quality, comprehensive, interpretive, cultural, and educational programming to the general public.

Park Mission Goal



Middle school students test water samples while sailing onboard Schooner *Ernestina*. The National Historic Landmark schooner, built in 1894, is the park's link to the sea.



Courtesy of New Bedford Whaling Museum

In 2000, the New Bedford Whaling Museum completed its ten million dollar expansion and restoration adding galleries and upgrading the theater for educational and public programming in the park.



New Bedford's Underground Railroad history is one story that comes to light through the park's partnership with the New Bedford Historical Society.

Interpretive Services

Over the past 10 years, the park has collaborated with partners to develop and offer the public an accessible visitor center for park orientation, indoor exhibits, an orientation film, outdoor interpretive and wayfinding panels, maps and brochures, guided and self-guided walking tours, youth and educational programming, and public programs that showcase the cultural heritage of our vibrant community. These projects highlight some of the ways the park and its partners interpret New Bedford's shared whaling and maritime history.



The City that Lit the World is the park's official orientation film and is the result of a collaborative effort by the park's partners.



Park volunteers and rangers offer guided walking tours of the park in July and August.



Portraits of a Port is one of several teacher institutes developed by the park and its partners.

Park's Volunteer Council is established

May 22, 2000 WHALE donates "Old Bank Building" for use as Park visitor center

July 7-9, 2000 Opening ceremony for the Jacobs Family Gallery in the New Bedford Whaling Museum



September 17, 2000 NPS Director Robert Stanton is the keynote speaker at the dedication of the Nathan and Mary (Polly) Johnson Properties as a National Historic Landmark

The city, the park, and local cultural institutions celebrate the 150th anniversary of the publication of Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*

Park General Management Plan is completed

Junior Ranger program launched



The NPS Northeast Museum Services Center completes the park's Collection Management Plan and re-houses the New Bedford Historical Commission and Park archives

2000-01



In pursuit of whales, New Bedford's fleet traveled the world's oceans and brought large numbers of Americans into contact with other cultures, including the Native People of northern Alaska.

Park Interpretive Theme

At New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park visitors understand the global dimensions of the city's whaling industry and maritime trades (past, present, and future), including their social, economic, and environmental history, the diversity of cultures associated with the industry, and its relationship to arctic exploration and Native Alaskan cultures.

Park Mission Goal

Distant Partners

The park works with a network of local, federal, state, and municipal partners to preserve and interpret America's 19th century whaling industry. The park also has ongoing relationships with partners in distant ports to assist with the interpretation of the global dimensions of the industry. Some of the projects completed by the park and its global partners are highlighted here.

In addition to these projects, the park has collaborated with its distant partners on the development of interpretive exhibits and publications, the park's orientation film, and several cultural exchanges.



Park partners participated in the *International Azorean Whaleboat Regatta* in both New Bedford and the Azores.



Norwegian fisherman Tor Bendiksen demonstrates net mending to a young visitor.



The blanket toss at Nalukataq festival in Barrow, Alaska



Park staff and partners travel to the Azores for the first of several visits that are part of a USDA sponsored program to foster educational and cultural ties



May 9, 2002 Premiere of park's orientation movie, *The City that Lit the World*

Park's WebRanger online kid's activity launched

\$500,000 in planning funds appropriated by Congress for the rehabilitation of the Corson Building into the park's education and public programming facility



The rehabilitation of the "Old Bank Building" into the park's visitor center is completed



The Faces of Whaling oral history project documented the experiences, artifacts and family stories of former whalers and their descendants during the final years of the whaling era in New Bedford, Massachusetts (c. 1900 - 1924). The project placed special emphasis on the experiences of whalers from the Azorean, Cape Verdean, West Indian, African-American and Native American communities.

Executive Summary
Faces of Whaling
project report, 1999



The park contributes to the accumulation of knowledge and understanding of historic resources related to the social, economic, and environmental history of whaling and their associated themes, and fosters the stewardship of these resources through a network of private and public partners.

Park Mission Goal

Highlighted Research Projects

- Faces of Whaling* oral history project
- Places of Whaling* oral history project
- Safely Moored At Last* Cultural Landscape Report
- Cape Verdean Genealogy Workshop
- Rotch-Jones-Duff (RJD) House and Garden Museum
- Historic Furnishings Report
- Fugitive Slave Traffic and the Maritime World of New Bedford* research study
- Visitor Center Historic Structures Report
- National Historic Landmark nominations for the Nathan and Mary (Polly) Johnson and RJD Houses
- Behind the Mansions* research study

Left: Antonio Lopes, the last surviving New Bedford whaler, during an interview for the *Faces of Whaling* oral history project



Visitor pathways to destinations within the city are safe and easy to navigate. Virtual pathways guide visitors to well-designed and developed destinations on the Internet that are easy to find and use.

Park Mission Goal



The visitor experience has been enhanced with the completion of significant projects done in partnership with the city of New Bedford. These projects include: reconstruction of bluestone crosswalks, installation of reproduction copper streetlights, and the development of a network of wayfinder signs that guide visitors to partner sites.

In addition to physical improvements, getting to the park has also been made easier for visitors. New highway signs were installed and a Traveler Information System radio station was set up to provide visitors with the latest information regarding park and partner site information, park programs, and special events.

The park's website has also taken great strides over the past ten years. The park's main page has links to past issues of the Toggle Iron newsletter, interpretive brochures, site bulletins, and research and planning publications. The WebRanger online activity was introduced as a way for young people to experience park offerings online. In 2006, as part of a service-wide effort, the park's website was redesigned to provide a more cohesive and user-friendly experience.

In 1830 forty feet was established as the legal width for town streets. The standard width, later found to prohibit aesthetic improvement and additional commercial development, was no doubt a practical measure to facilitate expansion. Ironically, this standard preserved the town's early utilitarian streetscapes as the port soared to the apex of the whaling industry. Converted wooden residential structures continued to line the narrow streets, giving the waterfront district the air of a bustling maritime village.

Safely Moored at Last: Cultural Landscape Report for New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, 1998

April 5, 2004 WHALE donates the Corson Building to the park

Congress appropriates \$2.5 million toward construction for Corson Building rehabilitation project

May 25, 2004 City and the park cut ribbon on a new working waterfront exhibit located in the historic Wharfinger Building and new wayside and wayfinder panels

Discovering New Bedford's Underground Railroad History interpretive program is accepted to the NPS National Network to Freedom Program

Celeste Bernardo is named Superintendent

Rotch-Jones-Duff House and Garden Museum is named a National Historic Landmark

Park Executive Committee of partner representatives is established

Corson Building final design as the park's education and public programming facility is completed

Congress appropriates \$3 million toward construction for Corson Building rehabilitation project



Community Pride

New Bedford today reflects its heritage as the 19th century whaling capital of the world. Many of the communities that participated in the whaling industry continue to contribute to the cultural fabric of the city. The descendants of those who first came to New Bedford aboard local whaleships developed thriving communities, which have grown to become a major cultural and political force in the region.

Park Interpretive Theme

The National Park Service recognizes that New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park is a source of community identity and pride and that positive, local participation in support of the park will yield success. New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park fosters a climate in which community initiatives and collaborations are encouraged.

Park Mission Goal



The park and New Bedford Whaling Museum hosted a display entitled *From Mindelo to Water Street* featuring the Museum's, Jim Lopes's, and other family's historic images of Cape Verdeans.

courtesy of New Bedford Whaling Museum



Nathan and Mary (Polly) Johnson House exterior rehabilitation is completed by the New Bedford Historical Society

2006

Park and New Bedford Whaling Museum sign agreement with Mystic Seaport to tell the story of American whaling



In 2005, New Bedford was the host city for the Melville Society's Fifth Annual International Conference, *Frederick Douglass and Herman Melville: A Sesquicentennial Celebration*. The conference, a collaborative effort between the park and numerous community partners, celebrated the 150th anniversary of the publication of both Douglass's *My Bondage and My Freedom* and Melville's *Benito Cereno*.



The annual Working Waterfront Festival, which began in 2004, highlights and brings attention to New Bedford's commercial fishing industry through maritime craft demonstrations and music, panel discussions, seafood cooking demonstrations, safety demonstrations, fishing boat tours, and oral history workshops.



Grupo Folkloric Clube SS Sacramento (Madeiran folk dancers) is just one of the many ethnic groups that have performed during AHA! (Art, History and Architecture), downtown New Bedford's free monthly night of arts and culture. The AHA! program has served as the park's link to the arts community since its inception in 1999.



Since 2005, Citizens Schools, in partnership with the New Bedford Public Schools, has introduced dozens of young people to park resources through its after-school apprenticeship program. Participants, some shown here in front of the Seamen's Bethel, served as Junior Interpreters during special events and worked with park staff to design a kid's activity booklet and a local history calendar.



October 24, 2006 Ground breaking ceremonies for Corson Building rehabilitation project

November 12, 2006 Park celebrates 10th anniversary during *Whale of a Weekend* festivities, marking the 50th anniversary of the world premiere of the 1956 film *Moby Dick in New Bedford*



Volunteers-in-Parks

I was very impressed by the quality and expertise of the park volunteers at the information desk.

Visitor Comment, 2003 Visitor Survey



The National Park Service Volunteers-In-Parks Program (VIP) was authorized by Public Law 91-357 enacted 1970. The primary purpose of the VIP program is to provide a vehicle through which the National Park Service can accept and utilize voluntary help and services from the public. The major objective of the program is to utilize this voluntary help in such a way that is mutually beneficial to the National Park Service and the volunteer.

National Park Service
Volunteers-in-Parks Mission Statement

Much of the park's success over the last 10 years can be attributed to the dedication and expertise of hundreds of volunteers who have donated thousands of hours to the National Park Service. Since 1998, the volunteers at New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park have contributed almost 60,000 hours staffing the visitor center information desk and special events, conducting walking tours, serving on the Volunteer Council, and attending training sessions.

Many park volunteers also give their time to local cultural organizations and the sharing of these valuable human resources has resulted in a comprehensive and seamless visitor experience. The park volunteers' efforts and contributions were recognized in 2006 when they were given the National Park Service Northeast Region Volunteer Program of the Year award.

I've been a Visitor center volunteer for more than ten years and it's still one of the high points of my week. The visitors are friendly and appreciative, and you get the added bonus of knowing you're helping both the visitors and the community.

Arthur Bennett,
Park Volunteer



Right: Park volunteer Billie Klawitter helps local school children with the Junior Ranger activity booklet.



Left: Park volunteer Judy Roderiques leads a walking tour of the park.

A Network of Partners



The park partnered with the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth and New Bedford Public Schools on several educational initiatives including professional development workshops for teachers and after-school programs for local students. Park staff conducted sessions for content institutes such as the *Connecting Oceans Academy* (participants shown left in front of the Wharfinger Building), offered in collaboration with the New Bedford Oceanarium and the New Bedford Whaling Museum, *Visions of Slavery*, and *Melville and Multiculturalism*. The *Speech Academy* after-school program taught middle school students public speaking skills while introducing them to park resources.



The park collaborated with Artworks! on many projects over the last decade. At *the Crossroads* (left) is just one example of several exhibits jointly produced that highlighting the strong historical as well as contemporary connections with places visited by New Bedford whalers. The park and Artworks! also co-sponsored an Artist-in-Residence program, summer youth programs, and arts and culture planning charettes.



Eastern National, who operates a sales outlet in the park visitor center, supports the mission of the park through donation programs and funding opportunities. Eastern National assisted with the printing of the park's Junior Ranger activity booklet and sponsored several interpretive and educational planning initiatives. In 2006, Eastern National provided funding to expand the sales outlet allowing for the addition of several new educational and interpretive sales items.



Summerfest, an international folk music festival held annually in the park, is a collaboration between the New Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce, the city of New Bedford, and the New Bedford Standard Times. Other highlights of this very popular event include the availability of fresh New Bedford seafood, whaleboat races in New Bedford harbor, and a juried arts and crafts marketplace.



The National Council for the Traditional Arts, through a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service, offered support to the Working Waterfront Festival through documentation of the commercial fishing culture by assisting with panel discussions (shown left) and by conducting oral histories. This support enabled the festival to extend its reach beyond a once a year event by creating a permanent archive of materials that will serve as the basis for ongoing research, curriculum development, and interpretive exhibits.



Special Thanks

The National Park Service in New Bedford works with a wide and diverse network of partners to achieve its mission. Most of the projects highlighted in this publication were completed through collaborations with organizations who share a similar education and preservation mission with the Park. These include the New Bedford Whaling Museum, the city of New Bedford, the Rotch-Jones-Duff House and Garden Museum, the Waterfront Historic Area League, the Inupiat Heritage Center, Schooner *Ernestina*, and the New Bedford Historical Society. Other partners have, through innovative collaborative programming with the Park, contributed greatly to the understanding and appreciation of the city's whaling past and cultural heritage. Some of the innovative projects the Park has collaborated on with this network of partners are illustrated here.

Who but a fool would take his left hand by his right, and say to himself, how d'ye do? Partners! I must have Partners!

Herman Melville,
Moby-Dick, 1850



The Southeastern Massachusetts Convention and Visitors Bureau provides funding for the publication of several brochures offered by the park and its partners. *The Underground Railroad: New Bedford* (shown left) is one example.






Charting the Course

New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park is a compelling destination that preserves and interprets the American whaling industry and its global influence through an exemplary national model of partnership and community collaboration.

Park Vision Statement
developed by Park staff and partners
at strategic planning session, 2006



The Corson Building, which is located next to the park visitor center, consists of two three-story brick structures built in 1875 and 1884. In 1997, a devastating fire ripped through the building. The Waterfront Historic Area League (WHALE), a non-profit preservation organization, came to the building's rescue after the fire, acquired the building, and secured the funds for its stabilization. WHALE donated the building to the park in 2004.

The Corson Building redevelopment plan calls for the creation of a number of interpretive and educational spaces in the facility including a 60 seat theater, a large multi-purpose education space, a seminar room, archival storage, and exhibition galleries. The plan also includes a link structure that will connect the adjacent visitor center to the Corson Building and a re-designed public outdoor program space.

Construction began in October 2006 and includes the fabrication and installation of a new structural steel frame, foundations and mechanical systems. The historic exterior will be restored with the installation of new windows, re-pointing of the brick façade, and the restoration of the cast iron storefronts to their original appearance.

Superintendent's Message

Whalemen knew that the first few weeks of a voyage would be a period of adjustment. Crew members had to get to know each other, discover each others strengths and weaknesses, compensate for both, and learn to work together as a team. Only then could they be successful at accomplishing what they had set out to do – to bring home a full hold of whale oil.

Park staff and partners at New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park have also embarked on a voyage during the last ten years. Along the way we've learned each other's organizational cultures, weathered storms, built trust, and shared successes. Individual staff members have come and gone, while others have remained steadfast. Through it all, we worked together to preserve and interpret the structures, collections, and landscapes in New Bedford associated with the American whaling story.

What will the next decade hold for the park? The partners are currently engaged in strategic planning to set a course and ensure continued success. Future projects include innovative educational programming, new partnerships, research and interpretation of the people and sites associated with the whaling industry, and an increase in historic preservation and development projects. As we define our collective priorities and identify the necessary resources to accomplish future goals, there is one thing we are certain of – we will do it together.

Celeste Bernardo



Park Map

Courtesy of Spinner Publications

New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park

Park Staff

Superintendent
Celeste Bernardo

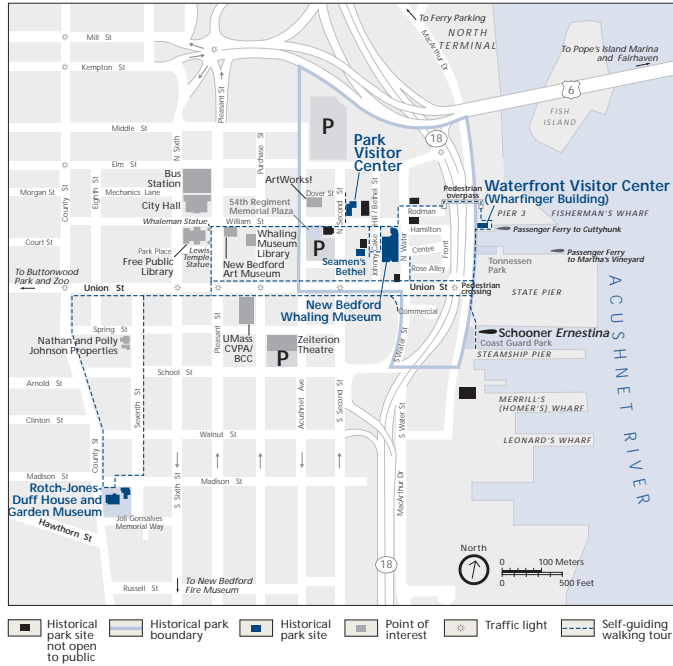
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The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



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