

New Bedford Whaling Museum Collections Development Plan

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Executive Summary

This document describes the present collections of the museum and offers guidelines for their development.

The American Alliance of Museums (AAM) encourages its accredited member museums to adopt a Collections Development Plan, pointing to “a growing consensus that [a collections plan] is a core document that helps the museum make wise choices and assures key supporters that the museum is making thoughtful use of the resources they contribute.” The museum agreed to write a plan as part of its cyclical accreditation review process.

The museum has two documents that deal with its collections:

The Collections Management Plan outlines the ways that the museum manages and cares for the collection of artifacts and archives. It notes the museum’s adherence to all applicable laws relating to the acquisition and purchase of art and artifacts, outlines policies for acquisition and deaccession, and the like.

The Collections Development Plan provides guidance for the content of those collections. What is in the collections, and, more importantly, what should be in the collections? What artifacts does the museum need “to educate and interest all the public in historic interaction worldwide of humans with whales; in history of Old Dartmouth and adjacent communities; and in regional maritime activity”? It asks questions about and suggests new directions for the collection such as:

- How does the mission relate to the collections as shaped with over a century of collecting?
- What gaps are there in the collection?
- What areas need to be amplified to meet the current mission?
- What, if any, items should be considered for deaccession?

There are two reasons to develop a Collections Development Plan. Firstly, it is helpful to describe what the museum has in its holdings. Our collections have the breadth, depth, and miscellany to be expected of over 100 years of collecting, reflecting changing goals and ideas and individuals. A good part of this plan is a description of present collections.

Secondly, the plan recommends courses of action. The AAM writes: “Collections planning is the process of making conscious, proactive choices about what belongs in the collections in light of the museum’s mission, purposes and audiences. It actively shapes the collections to support the stories the museum intends to tell or the questions its users ask.”

This document provides a roadmap for moving forward. It is based on the mission statement and the strategic plan, and on more recent statements about short and longer-term priorities.

The plan calls for new or enhanced collecting initiatives in the following areas:

- Whale ecology and contemporary interactions with whales
- The diverse communities of the Old Dartmouth region
- The contemporary fishing industry
- 20th and 21st century industry
- Contemporary art relating to the local area or whaling
- Historically celebrated Old Dartmouth artists

It calls for slower or refocused collecting in areas including:

- Scrimshaw
- Decorative arts
- Manuscripts
- Maritime history with no specific tie to Buzzards Bay

And finally, the plan calls for thoughtful pruning and deaccessioning of collections that are not related to the museum's strategic plans or are redundant, including:

- Prints beyond those related to whaling and local history, and duplicates
- Art not related to whales or the local area, including posters and European art
- Navigation instruments with no whaling connection
- Lighting devices not related to whale oil
- Clothing, decorative arts, furniture and other miscellaneous collections without a local provenance.

Even more important than the details of what the museum collects are the general guidelines of how it collects. The plan calls for continuing cooperation with regional museums and other whaling museums; a new collections management system so that the museum can make better decisions on future collecting based on a more complete understanding of its present collections, investments in retrospective cataloging and aggressive efforts in making primary collections web-friendly.

Writing this Collections Development Plan establishes a baseline by which constituents can understand the logic of curators. It will be useful to the Collections Committee and the Board as Curators consider new acquisitions and deaccessions, and the balance of the museum's work of collecting, education, and research.

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Introduction

The New Bedford Whaling Museum has been collecting art, decorative arts and craft, historic artifacts, ethnographic objects and ephemera along with documents, books, and photographs for over 110 years. Its collections today are large and diverse, including some 500,000 archival items, 200,000 photographs, 35,000 artifacts, and 18,000 printed books. The Museum possesses the world's most comprehensive collection of art, artifacts and archives of whaling history as well as the most comprehensive collection of art, artifacts and archives representing the social and cultural history of New Bedford and the surrounding area.

The Museum's collections include objects and archives from across a very broad range of categories: fine and decorative art, folk art, photography, domestic artifacts, artifacts that represent the history of technology and industry, books, manuscripts, maps and charts, ethnographic materials, clothing and textiles, and extensive personal, business, and financial records. It includes artifacts made around the world as well as the products of the shops, studios and factories that filled the area that was called Old Dartmouth (now New Bedford, Westport, Dartmouth, Fairhaven, and Acushnet). There are exotic collections as well as everyday artifacts used by the diverse peoples of this area over hundreds of years. The museum cares for a rich social history collection, an in-depth industrial and technological collection, and a remarkable art collection.

The vast majority of the Museum's artifact, library and archives collections are stored in its main building on Johnny Cake Hill, in areas that meet museum standards for environmental and security conditions. A limited number of objects, mostly larger industrial and whaling artifacts, are stored offsite, in spaces that are considered adequate for large objects that can withstand variable conditions (such as try pots and whaleboats).

The Museum's database has details on many of the Museum's 35,000 objects and about 28,000 of the estimated 200,000 photographs in the collection (note: it is debatable if it is worthwhile to have a digital image of every photograph in the collection). The objects and photographs online include most of those that have been photographed and which have acceptable descriptions. Many of the artifacts collected in the early years of the museum are not well documented and many of these artifacts have little or no provenance information. Subsequently these are listed as "found in collections," and designated with a "00" accession number.

About this document

The museum's Strategic Plan outlines its goals and purposes:

The mission of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society is to educate and interest all the public in the historic interaction worldwide of humans with whales; in the history of Old Dartmouth and adjacent communities; and in regional maritime activity. To accomplish this the Society shall collect, preserve and interpret the artifacts and documentary evidence of these endeavors; maintain a whaling, maritime and local history museum, maintain a library; promote and disseminate historical research; and accept historic sites where appropriate.

The Strategic Plan also describes the importance of the collections:

The Whaling Museum recognizes the Collection as a significant and irreplaceable asset that differentiates us from peers, and consequently, we will continue to develop, care for and steward the Collection to the highest possible standards.

This document is one of two documents that describe and shape the museum's collection. The *Collections Management Plan* outlines the ways that the museum manages collecting and cares for the collection of artifacts and archives. It notes the museum's adherence to all applicable laws relating to the acquisition and purchase of art and artifacts, policies for acquisition and deaccession, and the like.

This document, the *Collections Development Plan*, provides guidance for the *content* of those collections. What is in the collections, and, more importantly, what *should be* in the collections? What artifacts does the museum need "to educate and interest all the public in historic interaction worldwide of humans with whales; in history of Old Dartmouth and adjacent communities; and in regional maritime activity"? How does that relate to the collections created over the previous century? Which items no longer fit the museum's mission, and should be considered for deaccession? What areas of the collection need to be created or expanded to meet its current mission?

Collections development plans are the most recent addition to the set of documents the American Alliance of Museums urges museums to prepare. Their value is outlined in the Alliance's *National standards and best practices for U.S. museums*: "Many museums (perhaps the majority) spend part of their precious resources taking care of materials that do not advance their mission, serve their audiences or support the exhibits, educational or research plans." And so it is essential to make decisions about collections: "Collections planning is the process of making conscious, proactive choices about what belongs in the collections in light of the museum's mission, purposes and audiences. It actively shapes the collections to support the stories the museum intends to tell or the questions its users ask." There is, the AAM suggests, "a growing consensus that [a collections plan] is a core document that helps the museum make

wise choices and assures key supporters that the museum is making thoughtful use of the resources they contribute.”¹

Writing the Collections Development Plan is only the first step in shaping the museum’s collection. To be useful, it must be consulted when curators, the Collections Committee, and the Board consider new acquisitions and deaccessions. It should shape the ongoing work of the museum as curators consider the value — or lack of value — of existing collections and proactively consider deaccession. Of course, no plan can encompass all future possibilities, and the plan must allow for flexibility, for unforeseen opportunities.

This document is based on a snapshot of the museum’s collections and exhibition and education trajectory. It should be evaluated, reviewed, and revised periodically. An evaluation in one year, and then again every five years, as part of the rolling five year strategic planning process, will help to keep the museum’s collections aligned with its mission.

History of the collections

The Whaling Museum was founded to preserve the artifacts of New Bedford history. Ellis L. Howland urged the establishment of a historical society and a museum in 1903:

I believe that the need of a historical society arose not recently but generations ago when the history of New Bedford and vicinity commenced. Today we are suffering from the omission and if it is in the least deplorable it will be doubly a breach of our duty toward posterity to allow the lack to exist any longer... True, there are a few old log books stored away in the public library or here and there in the closet of some private collector, but when one contemplates the tons and tons of them that have been ground up into wrapping paper of prosaic fiber wash tubs, the absence of a historical society becomes in our minds almost a crime.²

Within a year there were some 600 artifacts in the collection and an exhibition of “the greatest collection of whaling relics in the world.” William W. Crapo urged the museum to collect and interpret. Through artifacts, he told the newly organized Old Dartmouth Historical Society in 1904, “we come near to the real life of a people.” Each object had “a tale to tell of the past that it is for us to interpret.”³ The collections have grown quickly ever since. Enthusiastic, and

¹ American Association of Museums, *National standards and best practices for U.S. museums* (AAM Press, 2008), pp. 48-49. The importance of collections development plans and best practices for writing them is described in James B. Gardner and Elizabeth E. Merritt, *The AAM Guide to Collections Planning*, 2004.

² ODHS Scrapbook Collection, "Historical Society Advised", 17 Jan. 1903

³ W.W. Crapo, “Talk to the Old Dartmouth Historical Society,” February 15, 1904,” ODHS Archives, quoted in James M. Lindgren, “‘Let Us Idealize Old Types of Manhood’: The New Bedford Whaling Museum, 1903-1941,” *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 72, No. 2 (Jun., 1999), p. 171

perhaps unfiltered, collecting characterized the early days of the Museum (this was true of many history museums of the era.) The Museum's storage spaces include a wide range of materials of only slight connection to the Museum's mission, then or now. It seems that few offers were turned down.

Over the past 25 years, two significant mergers shaped the Museum's collections. In 1992 the Museum acquired the collections of the New Bedford Glass Museum. An agreement, overseen by the Massachusetts Attorney General, outlined specific responsibilities for the care and growth of the glass collection. That agreement is included in the Collections Management Policy, and is reflected in the [section of this document related to the museum's glass collections](#).

The merger with the Kendall Whaling Museum in November 2001 had a profound effect on the New Bedford Whaling Museum. The Kendall Museum, founded in 1955 by Henry P. Kendall, possessed the largest collection of whaling artifacts in the world, a research library, and many manuscripts and logbooks.⁴ Some 70,000 artifacts came to the NBWM, increasing the size of the objects in the collection by 60 percent, and decisively bifurcating the museum's focus, adding the global whaling story to the existing (and continuing) story of whaling as an aspect of local history. The Kendall collection came with a 10 year restriction on deaccession, which has subsequently been amended and revoked by the Board.

There are 3 long-term loans from the museum that require special attention. The New Bedford Fire Museum is a repository for a collection of local fire-fighting apparatus, equipment, photographs, and records. The NPS holds a number of artifacts including a large model of the bark SUNBEAM. The Rotch-Jones-Duff House and Garden Museum has on loan several pieces of 19th century furniture from the museum.

Over the past decade or two there have been many discussions about the proper direction for the Museum's collecting. The museum has become comfortable with its split mission of telling both the global story of human interactions with whales, on the one hand, and local history, on the other, and has become particularly strong at the intersection of those two stories. It has made sense of a collection that includes some 400 harpoons from around the world and 2300 logbooks and journals from whaling voyages; hundreds of pieces of art glass from local manufacturers and the voluminous records of a local bank; and the art of those who have drawn creative inspiration from whales and whaling, as well as artists who lived in the area and painted other subjects.

The museum has made several significant deaccessioning decisions over the past twenty years. After careful thought it has either given to other museums or sent to auction objects in categories including figureheads, paintings, costumes, textiles, ship models, furniture, glass, and

⁴ <http://www.nct-archive.org/local-history/kendall-whaling-museum/>

firearms. The museum has followed good museum practice for these deaccessions. An exemplary example is Stuart Frank's 2007 report on "Recommendations for the permanent disposition of Figureheads," which carefully considered the value of each figurehead to the museum's mission, and recommended 12 of the museum's 21 figureheads for deaccession. Any future major deaccessions should meet this same standard.

Future collecting and deaccessioning

Museums collect for several reasons. They collect as documentation, for the long term. Over the course of the last century, the NBWM has saved tens of thousands of artifacts that represent the history of whaling and the history of the Old Dartmouth region. These objects, selected by thousands of donors and dozens of curators, provide evidence for researchers who use them to understand history: to understand the life and work, ideas and relationships, and creativity and skills of those who made and used these artifacts.

These artifacts are also tools for teaching, providing visitors to the Museum with an experience of the past unobtainable in any other way. Artifacts let the museum tell stories about the past to audiences today, and into the future, in a way that mere words can never do. Museum collections provide an insight into the past, and into other worlds, that can educate and inspire.

While some artifacts are collected with the knowledge that they may be of use only to researchers, others are collected with an eye to exhibition. Some collecting is driven by immediate needs, for an exhibition; other collecting is long-term, inspired by the Museum's preservation mission and the sense that someday, some curator or researcher will be thrilled to discover the object in the collection, saved for the ages, ready to increase understanding or delight the general public.

History museums, art museums, and museums of science, technology and industry — and the NBWM is a unique combination of all three—collect both historical and contemporary artifacts. While one might think of curators visiting antique shops, auction houses, and basements and attics for long-lost treasures, they are also to be found in artists' studios, operating factories, in stores and homes, and on the street, selecting for preservation contemporary objects that document the present day. Contemporary collecting, now widely accepted as an essential part of history museum work, is one of the most challenging of curatorial duties. "Contemporary collecting," writes J.J. Knell,

is one of the most difficult of practices because of its overwhelming and multifaceted nature, and because we are collecting things that reflect our own society, which we know to be complex. Collecting historical material only seems easier because there is

less of it, we know it less well, and because historians have constructed narratives which value one thing above another.⁵

Contemporary collecting is also increasingly essential, as much recent material culture will be lost without active intervention. Curators need to bring their expertise in history to bear on the contemporary world and make their best call about what recent objects are likely to be of longer-term historical value, storing them away for use in future research and exhibition.⁶

This plan balances historical and contemporary collections, the long-term and immediate uses of collecting, and the research and exhibition uses of artifacts, to provide guidance to curators and the Collections Committee as they go about their work of shaping the museum's collecting. It balances, as the museum has always, whales and Old Dartmouth. There will always be exceptions, and that the museum will need to respond to opportunities; but it will never have the financial resources, curatorial staff, and collections storage space, to collect in all the areas that it might, or even all of the areas that it should. It needs to make choices. This plan outlines the Museum's collecting priorities, and suggests how the Museum should make the best use of existing collections.

New collecting will, for the most part, be based on the ongoing exhibition and educational programs of the museum. The Museum needs to respond to audience interests, city needs, and the realities of funding. It will continue to collect based on long-term needs, but will for the most part subordinate that to the needs of the exhibitions and programs of the near future. For the next few years, the priorities of the museum include:

- Whales, including whale science, whale ecology, whale preservation, and whale ecotourism, and all considering local, national and international stories.
- Regional stories that address universal themes and current affairs (e.g. innovation, immigration, resource depletion, capitalism, entrepreneurship)
- A focus on the people and history that make New Bedford and the Old Dartmouth region unique (immigration, especially from the Azores, Cape Verde, French Canada, and new locales such as Guatemala; the succession of industries that formed the economic base of the city, from whaling to textiles to tourism and the creative economy)

⁵ S.J. Knell, "Altered Values: Searching for a New Collecting." In Knell, S.J., ed., *Museums and the Future of Collecting* (Ashgate, 2004)

⁶ Contemporary collecting is a relatively new museum phenomenon, tracing its roots to the SAMDOK network in Sweden in the 1970s. (See Bodil Axelsson, "Samdok – Collecting and Networking the Nation as it Evolves," 2011, <http://www.ep.liu.se/ecp/062/019/ecp11062019.pdf>. For contemporary practice, see Owain Rhys and Zeldia Baveystock, *Collecting the Contemporary: A Handbook for Social History Museums* (MuseumsEtc., 2014) and Owain Rhys, *Contemporary Collecting: Theory and Practice* (MuseumsEtc, 2014, 2nd edition).

- Exhibits and collections built around the region's well-known individuals: for example Herman Melville, Paul Cuffe, Hetty Green, John Manjiro and Frederick Douglass
- Near-permanent display of the Museum's treasures, the art and artifacts that visitors audiences expect to see and that attract new audiences
- Engaging with contemporary art, both regional artists and art that reflects the whaling focus of the museums.

Museum collecting, while not solely focused on art and artifacts that address these priorities, will be greatly influenced by them. Over the next five years the Museum will concentrate its collecting primarily in these four focus areas:

Whales. Not whaling — the museum's collection here is already strong — but the other manifestations of the human interaction with whales, including whale watching, whale conservation, the international politics of whaling, whale ecology, and whale science. The museum wants to find ways to collect manifestations of whales themselves, building on the recent acquisition of the William A. Watkins Collection of Marine Mammal Sound Recordings and Data.

Art. The museum has a strong tradition of art collecting, with significant collections of whaling paintings, drawings and prints, and also significant work by local artists. The museum should continue to collect art in both these categories, both historical and contemporary, not only because it is an essential part of the documentation of whales and whaling, and an essential part of the history of Old Dartmouth, but also because it is one of the most attractive elements of the museum to many visitors. It should continue to find ways to engage with contemporary artists whose work addresses the themes of the museum, either whaling or the local area. The museum has collected, and should continue to collect, work from deceased Old Dartmouth artists that address themes beyond the region or whaling. New contemporary art collecting should, for the most part, add to the museum's documentation of its two themes. Art exhibitions will play an increasing role in the museum's exhibition program, and it is important to attempt to purchase works from exhibits with salable items. This may be expensive, and the Museum should look for donors who will support expanding the museum's art collection.

Fishing and the Port of New Bedford. Fishing is in many ways the successor to the whaling story: a dangerous and complex occupation, and one that is critically important for the local economy. (New Bedford lands the highest dollar catch in the nation and it is expected to play a major role in the industry for at least the next 20 years.) The museum must define fishing broadly, including fish processing, and the environmental and political issues around fishing, and should document both its history in the area and the ongoing industry. The story of the Port more generally needs to be captured as well, with a focus on recent efforts to increase container traffic and build a marine terminal. The museum will work with local organizations,

including the Port Society and the Working Waterfront Festival, to collect and interpret this aspect of New Bedford's past and future.

Diverse Communities of New Bedford. The Museum should continue its work with local organizations to document the history and present of the area's many communities, collecting not only artifacts but also oral history and photographs. The Yankee and Quaker communities are well represented. The museum should continue to focus on Azorean and Cape Verdean communities, and should expand its collections to include other communities, with special attention to the most recent immigrants.

The museum's focus in these areas *does not mean* that it will not collect in other areas, but rather that it will focus its collecting initiatives in these areas.

Deaccessioning is as important to shaping a collection as new collecting. The museum should, of course, deaccession with great care; it should continue to leverage its eclectic collections. But a century of collecting means that the museum has artifacts that do not fit its mission as it is defined today. The museum also has space limitations which is a factor when seeking or offered large items.

Therefore, the museum should undertake a concerted plan to deaccession art and artifacts outside of the museum's two areas of interest. Details are noted below, section by section, but in general, collections of decorative arts, costume, furniture, and maritime art and artifacts acquired in the mid-twentieth century that have no local or whaling connection should be considered for deaccessioning. The very large collection of prints should be examined for duplicates, and for material not related to the mission. Some of this material might be given to other museums, some sold. Deaccessioning will take time and effort, but the end result — space and funds to build and care for a collections that meets the needs of the museum and the community in the 21st century — make the effort worth the trouble. Culling the collections will allow for room and funding for collections that the Museum needs to tell the stories it wants to tell, to document the history that is important for the museum, New Bedford, and the region in the present and future.

Few museums have the in-depth knowledge to evaluate every part of their collections. The museum staff can make many of the decisions about deaccessions, though it will be necessary to hire consultants with specialized expertise as needed.

This report focuses on collections, but collections do not exist separate from the educational mission of the museum, and it is important to keep that mission in mind in all of the museum's work. The museum should continue to find ways to show off collections as much as it can. The museum's "top 50" greatest hits should be on almost continual display. The museum should

consider increasing the open storage displays for as much of its other collections as is possible with a goal of making the collections useful, and viewed.

Challenges

The museum has made great headway to improve physical storage of its collections. Over the past 5 years, the climate controls and physical protection of the collection both in storage and on display has increased greatly. The investment in climate controls throughout the campus, and the fact that most of the collection is on site, sets the organization apart from its peers. The commitment to consolidate its collections on one site clearly has benefits when it comes to supervision, security, and protection. The consolidation also allows for better review and analysis. Before the museum can make full use of its collections it must improve documentation of them. This requires an investment in an improved cataloging system to provide far greater intellectual access.

While the vast majority of collections items are stored in appropriate storage areas with good environmental conditions and security, some selected items are stored off-site. It is not feasible or practical to store large items on site (consider moving a whaleboat or a ten-ton cannon to the second floor). The current “cold storage” site, in a warehouse in New Bedford, has no climate control. Criteria for storing off site are as follows: very large or heavy objects; low value items (e.g., voluminous quantities of low grade whale bone); and duplicate artifacts that are in poor condition (barrels, blocks, pulleys, etc). Not all of these items are detailed in the catalog system. Many of these items should be considered for deaccession (and in the case of whale parts, destruction).

Improving the cataloging and online presentation of the collections is essential to making them collections useful, and used. The museum must upgrade its collection management system, catalog artifacts not in the system, and improve the records for those artifacts not well described. There is significant work to be done here. A large number of the museum’s artifacts are listed as “found in collections,” and there is much information still in file cabinets that needs to be made available digitally. Objects, when appropriate, need to be photographed and described, and photographs need to be digitized. Outside consultants will be needed to evaluate some specialized collections. The museum has made a good start with digital outreach, but the possibilities are endless and capacity needs to be directed to take advantage of this new arena.

The museum needs to commit to a new collections management system that makes both registry work and online access easier. It will be difficult to make good decisions about future collecting and deaccession without a better understanding of the current collections.

It is important for the museum to continue, and increase in some cases, its cooperation with other museums, local and international, with which its collecting areas overlap. Local historical societies, libraries, universities and museums have collections that complement the museums as do museums focused on whaling and maritime history around the world. In an age of increasing

online access and decreasing resources, cooperation is essential. This report lists regional institutions that have overlapping collections, where they are known, and there are certainly many such organizations not included here. Future collecting and deaccessioning requires not only an increased awareness of the museum's peer institutions, but also ongoing cooperation with them.

The museum has a long history, recently reinvigorated, of publishing books about the collection. Many of the early reports ("Old Dartmouth Historical Society Sketches") are [online](#), as are some of the Kendall Museum's [monographs](#). [Recent books](#) published by or for the museum provide details about both museum collections and topics in local history and whaling history. Continued publication is important, and out-of-print monographs to which the museum holds copyright should be made available either as free online publications, or as print-on-demand books.

The rest of this document describes the existing collections, assessing strengths and weaknesses as well as fit for the Museum's mission, and offers guidance for future directions. It has three parts, with some overlap. The first part describes collections related to whales and whaling. The second addresses regional history, including social, cultural, art, and maritime history. Where there is overlap, links are used to connect the two sections. The third considers the Museum's library and archive, which includes material both on whales and local history, in a hard-to-separate way.

Part 1: Whales and whaling

Paintings, drawings, and sculpture

The museum has a large and diverse collection of art relating to whales, including some 1200 paintings that range from 17th-century Dutch paintings of whales to William Bradford's arctic scenes to contemporary art inspired by whales.

- Historical European whaling art. The museum holds several dozen 18th- and 19th-century paintings and drawings of whales and whaling, a large collection of Dutch and Flemish faience, and other works of art that capture the European fascination with whales. The Kendall collection (by far the largest part) is described in Brewington, M.V. and Dorothy. *Kendall Whaling Museum Paintings*. (Kendall Whaling Museum, 1965) and its update, [Corrections to "Brewington": Notes and Revisions to M.V. and Dorothy Brewington's Kendall Whaling Museum Paintings \(1965\)](#) by Stuart M. Frank. (KWM Monograph Series #3. 1988). The delftware collection, about 100 tiles and sets of tiles, mostly 17th and 18th century, is described in Stuart M. Frank, [Delftware: Dutch and Flemish Faience in the Kendall Whaling Museum](#) (1993).
- Historical American whaling art. This is a great strength of the collection, with hundreds of examples of ship portraits, portraits of owners, captains, and sailors,

and whaling scenes. New Bedford is, of course, the focus, but the collection extends far beyond the local area.

- Asian art. There are many Japanese whaling prints (see below, under [prints](#)) as well as scrolls.
- Ethnographic art. See below, under [ethnography](#). The museum has a collection of contemporary Inuit prints.
- Contemporary art relating to whales. In recent years the museum has acquired art relating to whales, much of it tied to Melville and *Moby Dick*. This includes the Elizabeth Shultz collection of contemporary whaling art (prints, photographs, paintings); Matt Kish posters and paintings inspired by *Moby Dick*; Claus Hoie watercolors of whales and whaling. A collection of 100 works by Rogerio Silva explores whaling themes. Recent ceramic art includes Ilona Nemeth's harpoon project, 1000 ceramic harpoon heads, and works by Chris Gustin and Nancy Train Smith.

Collection Development Plan

The museum will accept any artwork of whales and whaling which is either of high artistic quality or which documents whales and whaling in a significant way. It is eager to build a collection of high quality contemporary art featuring whales, especially artwork that depict the science of whales, whales not whaling, or that reflect on the history of whaling.

The collection of European art needs expert appraisal. The Kendall collection included many works not related to whales or whaling, but to maritime history more generally, and some of these should be deaccessioned.

Historic whaling prints

The Museum is the repository of the world's largest and most comprehensive collection of whaling prints, with more than 4000 examples. The collection, described in [this 2009 exhibition summary](#) (<http://www.whalingmuseum.org/explore/exhibitions/past/classic-whaling-prints>), includes Dutch and German foundations in the 17th century; French, British and American masterworks of the 19th century; and examples from Japan and the American 20th century. A Kendall Whaling Museum publication (M.V. Dorothy Brewington, *Kendall Whaling Museum Prints*, 1969) describes that part of the collection in detail; it includes both whaling vessels and scenes, as well as "a very large collection of views of the vast number of ports touched by whalers."

Collection Development Plan

The Museum's collection is just one of three great accumulations of whaling prints currently in the collections of Massachusetts museums. With some 2,000 prints and prints, the Allan Forbes Collection at MIT's Hart Nautical Collections is a second worthy of highest rank. The third is the collection of whaling prints that was formed by the late Francis Lothrop, which is now owned by the Peabody Essex Museum. The Lothrop collection, which contained some 576 prints as of the

publication of Libby Ingall's Whaling prints in the Francis B. Lothrop Collection (Salem, PMS, 1987), contained just 21 fewer prints than the Kendall Whaling Museum, as of the publication of Marion and Dorothy Brewington's *Kendall Whaling Museum Prints* (Sharon, KWM, 1969). The Kendall Whaling Museum rapidly gained ground on the Lothrop Collection thereafter.

The museum has been acquiring new examples on a more or less regular basis. For the most part (though perhaps not always) it has been restrained and selective in its purchases. With the exception of the well-known NBFPL's holdings, curators should ask more questions before purchases should items duplicate prints in the MIT or PEM collection. The guiding principle that if it isn't in the collection and seems important, we should buy it, should not apply.

Because of the strong nearby collections, the museum's own great strength in this field, and their importance as documents of whaling, it should continue adding whaling prints to the collection, but for the most part, only by donation. It should not acquire a print merely because it does not have an example of it, and it should not purchase prints already in the collection of another local repository. In any case, only particularly important examples should merit purchase.

Duplicates in the collection should be deaccessioned. There is a report on redundancy in this collection, from about 5 years ago; that report should be reviewed and redundant prints of the same edition, and prints outside the museum's mission, considered for deaccession.

Panoramas and Murals

The Museum owns several important large-scale pieces of whaling art that require unique collections management, storage and display. These include:

- *Grand Panorama of a Whaling Voyage 'Round the World* by Benjamin Russell and Caleb Purrington, a moving panorama painted with distemper on cotton sheeting, 1848. One of the Museum's iconic artifacts, the Purrington-Russell Panorama is believed to be the longest painting in the world at 1,275 feet long and 8.5 feet high mounted on six spools. Currently undergoing conservation and digitization, it requires special storage considerations due to each spool's weight and size.
- *Panorama of a Whaling Voyage in the Ship Niger* by Charles S. Raleigh, oil on canvas, 1878-80. This panorama was originally 242 feet long, consisting of 22 panels each approximately 6 feet by 11 feet. These were originally roped at the top and fitted with grommets, to be hung around the walls of a hall but they were mounted onto aluminum or wood during a ten-year conservation project in the 1960s. 18 panels of approximately 198 feet in total are owned by the Museum.
- *Sperm Whales Mural* by Richard Ellis, latex on canvas, 1986. This mural consists of eight 12' x 12' panels and one smaller piece and 2' x 4'. A total of eight Sperm whales are depicted swimming below the surface of the water, three juveniles and five adults including Moby Dick, an albino whale with a red eye, multiple scars, and embedded harpoons.

Collection Development Plan

The Museum should continue and complete its multiyear project to conserve the Purrington-Russell panorama. Given its large size, adequate arrangements need to be made to bring this back on site (currently sections are in climate controlled storage at MSP). When and how this panorama gets displayed in its original form and in its entirety is undetermined. The Museum should remain open to displaying it in non-museum settings, as these might be only spaces with large enough floor areas to accommodate (e.g.: conference centers, BCA in Boston, etc). It is recommended that the Museum continue to acquire photographs and documents that pertain to this panorama. It is not recommended that the Museum collect additional large-scale murals without direct connection to the Museum mission. (Note: the Collections Committee passed on a large Ashley map now on view at the MHS).

Photography

There are about 200,000 photographs in the collection, approximately 28,000 of which are scanned and may be viewed through the online catalog. (In addition, there are some 15,000 other photographs (copy photographs, etc.) available online. Note: [Some photography collections in the Old Dartmouth part of this document](#) include whaling images.

About half of all photographs are “found in collections” without complete accession records. This is not a surprise because photography was not considered a part of the collection until the 1970’s.

Major collections related to whales and whaling include:⁷

- Aldrich Collection: 258 images captured by journalist Herbert L. Aldrich (1860-1948) during the 1887 Arctic whaling season. 00.200 *
- Clifford Ashley collection: Author, sailor, and knot expert; photographs of local fishing, waterfront, Azores, Cape Verde, 20th century. About 400 images. 2000.100.79
- Bodfish Collection: 111 photographs taken by master whaler Hartson H. Bodfish (ca. 1862-1945) during his time aboard the Beluga as captain and later the Mary D. Hume as first mate. During the long stretches of voyaging in the Arctic, Bodfish took many photographs documenting life aboard these ships and on the icy tundra as well as demonstrating the whale craft and hunting. 2000.100.202 *
- Albert Cook Church collection: Church’s photographs, mostly after World War I, show his love of the sea and the people and vessels associated with it. His photographs capture the sailing vessels of the American Cup and the day-to-day processing and procedures of fishermen and whale men. About 1000 images. 2000.100.86 *

⁷ Collections for which finding aids exist are noted with a *.

- George Comer (1858-1937) collection: Taken during whaling voyages to the Hudson Bay between 1900 and 1905. The majority of the photographs document Aivilingmiut and Qaernermiut Eskimos and Eskimo culture; other subjects include the whaling schooner Era and her crew, whale processing, and the flora and fauna of the Hudson Bay. 1980.37*
- Corwin Collection: 53 photographs taken aboard the U.S. Revenue Marine Steamer Thomas Corwin during its summer 1885 cruise to the Arctic Sea. 1990.31 *
- William H. Tripp Collection: 19th- and 20th-century whaling, some 400 photographs, some collected, some he took.
- Headley & Reed collection: James E. Reed was a local black photographer; collection includes many city scenes and portraits of local people. Several dozen images 1996.21
- Fred Palmer collection: Local architecture, photographs of Houses and Public Buildings in New Bedford. On [Flickr](https://www.flickr.com/photos/nbwm/sets/72157622194822530/): www.flickr.com/photos/nbwm/sets/72157622194822530/. 2000.100.80

In addition, there are drafts of “Fact sheets for Photographers” for about one hundred of the photographers represented in the collection, including information on photographers, earliest and latest photos, sources of information.

Collection Development Plan

The museum should continue to acquire collections of whaling photographs, but should think carefully before acquiring large collections; staff time and effort could be better utilized in scanning and putting present collections online. The museum should consult with other whaling museums to consider how online photographic collections might be linked for easier searching. More importantly, the museum needs to consider the relationship of original photographic collections and their digital surrogates, and determine policies to include digital works and a preservation protocol for all this digital material. This question is not answered in this document but with the recent acquisition of the predominantly digitally based Watkins Collection, it needs to be addressed promptly.

As the museum focuses on whale science and contemporary human interactions with whales it should seek to acquire collections in this area, including images relating to whaling protests. It should expand the geographical scope of whaling photographs, which are now mostly from the immediate area.

Navigational instruments

Willem F. J. Mörzer Bruyns’s very thorough 2012 “Catalogue of the Navigating Instruments in the Collection of the New Bedford Whaling Museum” described 161 instruments in detail. (He notes that 26 instruments in the museum’s records could not be found.) There are fewer than

twenty eighteenth-century instruments and dozens of nineteenth-century instruments. A few were made, sold or used locally; most were not.

Collection Development Plan

Many of the instruments in the collection have not connection either to whaling or to Old Dartmouth, and might be considered for deaccession. A representative example of the sorts of navigational instruments used on whaling ships should be kept, as well as the Newport- and Boston-made instruments. All instruments with a New Bedford provenance should be kept.

Whaling equipment

Whaling equipment is the heart of the museum's collection. From the *Lagoda*, a half-scale ship fully equipped with the tools and equipment of whaling to five whaleboats to a collection of hundreds of harpoons, the museum has done an excellent job of documenting nineteenth-century American whaling technology. Some 1300 items are cataloged under "whalecraft" in the collections, mostly 19th century, from cannons to blubber chopper to tryworks, guns, grenades and gaffs. Twentieth-century whaling stations are documented in a large collection of artifacts from South Georgia Island, including a steam engine, a large reciprocating bone saw, mooring anchor, and many tools, collected by the Kendall Museum in 1995. (These are inventoried and cataloged in "South Georgia — Artifacts" blue notebook in registrar's office shelf.)

Other large collections of whaling equipment are at the Nantucket Historical Association (mostly local) and at the National Museum of American History (much of it from New Bedford, collected in the early 1880s for the international fisheries exhibitions).

Ethnographic whaling equipment is described below, under [ethnographic collections](#). See also [Old Dartmouth Industry, whaling-related industries](#).

Collection development plan

The museum should acquire 19th-century Yankee whaling equipment only if it is historically significant and fills in significant gaps in the collection. It should improve its collections on the history of Azorean and Cape Verdean whaling, as part of its focus on those communities. It should document contemporary Inuit/Eskimo, Bequian, Japanese and Norwegian whaling with a few small symbolic objects; much of that is better done with photographic and video collections.

Whale oil lamps

Lighting was one of the most important uses of whale oil, and the museum has built a large collection of lighting devices of all kinds. The Ashton lighting collection includes not just whale lamps, but the whole history of lighting: some 500 lighting devices from Roman lighting objects to candle molds to rushlight holders to whale oil lamps of many varieties. The collection is weak on whale oil candles and candle-making apparatus, and the equipment of candleworks.

Collection Development Plan

The museum should consider deaccessioning a significant part of the non-whale oil lighting collection. It should expand its collection of lighting devices using whale oil, including candles and candle-making equipment.

Scrimshaw

The museum's scrimshaw collection "is the largest and most comprehensive in the world... an exceptional resource of aesthetic and historical value." The collection, with over 5000 pieces, is well cataloged, and much of it is described and illustrated in *Ingenious Contrivances, Curiously Carved: Scrimshaw in the New Bedford Whaling Museum* by Stuart Frank (David R. Godine, 2012), which includes photographs of some 700 pieces (and from which the quote comes). Some 300 pieces are on exhibition. The collection is almost totally focused on historic pieces, and includes scrimshaw from around the globe. It includes tools for making scrimshaw.

Collection Development Plan

The museum should continue to acquire historical scrimshaw, but only by gift; it should not add to the collection by purchase.

The collection does not include work by contemporary scrimshanders, and that is an area for future expansion; the museum should be open to gifts (and perhaps purchase) of a small number of pieces by the finest contemporary scrimshanders.

The present collection was built when two very strong collections of the New Bedford Whaling Museum and the Kendall Whaling Museum were joined, which raises the question of thinning the collection. The museum could consider that possibility.

Note: The museum should keep a close eye on pending Massachusetts legislation that would limit the purchase, transport, and collection of scrimshaw, and take action to protect its ability to showcase this important art form.

Ethnographic and tribal art objects

The museum's collection of ethnographic artifacts fall into two categories: materials brought back by whalers and other travelers, and materials collected because it shows indigenous whaling and other contact with whales (mostly Kendall collection materials). These have not been organized into a separate collection, and so it's hard to estimate numbers, but inventories suggest well over 1000 items in this category. Several of the more important items are on the museum's website: <http://www.whalingmuseum.org/explore/collections-overview/ethnological-tribal-objects>.

Arctic collections are the largest and most significant group. About 500 artifacts are listed as "Eskimo," including tools and equipment for hunting, models, and masks. A significant part of this material was made for collectors. Some of the examples of ivory work are considered very important, including 10 pieces by Angokwazhuk ("Happy Jack"). There are several collections of

photographs and drawings of the peoples of the far north. Most of these objects are from the Kendall collection, and most of that, and indeed most of the collections, acquired from collectors. There seems to be no focused ethnographic or contextual collections, no material based on anthropological work. Most of this material is fairly well cataloged.

There is a small amount of important material from the Northwest Coast, from Makah, Nootka, Tlingit, and Haida peoples, and a collection of Polynesian, Micronesian, and Melanesian material, including tapa cloth, generally not well cataloged. An inventory of ethnographic items (File cabinet 350, drawer 3) lists some 900 items, many of which do not appear in the online catalog.

Collection development plan

The museum should continue to accept small donations of historic ethnographic materials collected by whalers or representative of native whaling traditions, but should not seek out large collections. The museum should consider extending these collections with a focused collecting initiative on contemporary Native Alaskan whaling today. It might also want to acquire contemporary Native Alaskan art referencing traditional whaling, as a way to bring the collection up to date and to provide indigenous artists a name and voice in their word.

Whales

The Museum collection of fully articulated skeletons includes four adults and one fetus of the following species: blue whale, North Atlantic right whale, humpback whale, and a sperm whale. There are also two dolphin skeletons, various vertebrae and other bones and bits, including:

- 10 plates of North Atlantic right whale baleen
- 25-plate section of blue whale baleen and gums, from the blue whale whose skeleton hangs in the museum
- 3 10-plate sections of bowhead whale baleen and gums
- Mandibles from three sperm whales
- Risso's dolphin brain
- Bullae (earbones) from sperm, fin and humpback whales, others from undetermined species
- Pilot whale melon oil
- Eyeball from unknown whale
- Sperm whale penis
- Ambergris
- Fetal porpoise skeleton
- Jars of sperm whale blubber oil, pilot whale blubber oil, whale soap

Unaccessioned items include a walrus baculum, ear bone (bulla) from undetermined species, mandibles from two undetermined species of dolphins, sperm whale teeth, and an incomplete sperm whale right mandible.

Collection development plan

The museum will not acquire more whale parts except for the educational collection or to complement specific exhibition goals. Material in bad condition should be considered for deaccession and destruction.

Whale Science and Ecology

The natural history of whales is a significant focus for the museum in the coming years, and the museum needs to find ways to create useful collections to tell that story - without the collections of a traditional natural history museum. The historical collections of the museum, based mostly on whaling, have proved useful for understanding whale behavior and ecology, and the museum is eager to find new uses for its collections in this field. A small number of tools used by scientists are in the collections.

The recently-acquired WHOI Marine Mammal Sound Recordings Collection consists of audio and videotape recordings of various marine mammals created or collected by William Alfred Watkins, William E. Schevill and others, including Peter Tyack, Melba Caldwell, Donald Griffith, and Thomas Potter from 1934-2001. The collection of sound recordings includes a digital database 20,000 calls from more than 70 species of marine mammals, and the video recordings series contains VHS, Beta, and Hi-8 video recordings of marine mammals created or collected by Watkins. Also included are examples of audio equipment developed by Watkins, photographs, and slides, related to Watkins-Shevill fieldwork, and hard copies of the sound recordings in various formats, including cassettes, CD's, and LP's.

Collection development plan

The museum should expand this area of its work. It should document ongoing whale science, collecting the technology scientists use to document whales: hydrophones, biopsy darts, etc. It should consider focusing on particular scientists, documenting their ongoing work in photographs, videography, and collections, for use in future exhibitions. And it should consider contacting scientists who have done important work in cetology to see how it might document their work.

The WHOI sound collections suggest the possibility of additional data collections. The museums should explore the possibility of becoming a repository for contemporary scientific whale data, as it is for historical whaling data. This will require significant investment in a digital archiving infrastructure, and requires careful consideration of capital and ongoing costs.

Contemporary interactions with whales

The museum's nineteenth and early twentieth century whaling collections are superb. It is weak, though, on the more recent part of the story of the human interaction with whales. It has a few pieces (posters, bumper stickers, advertisements, pamphlets) related to Greenpeace's and Sea Shepherd's anti-whaling campaign, and almost nothing on whale-watching or the federal and international politics regulating whaling and protecting whales.

Collection development plan

Over the next few years the museum will collect artifacts to tell the stories of all of the interactions with whales other than whale hunting. It will build collections to document and allow exhibitions of anti-whaling campaigns, the whale-watching industry today, and whale conservation. It will also document whales in popular culture, from whale songs in popular music to whales in movies, aquariums, and theme parks. In all these areas, collecting might include artifacts, art, photography, and video.

Melville Society Cultural Project

The collection is mostly comprised of books, the vast majority of them the personal libraries of noted Melville scholars, and a very few objects. The MSCP safe contains roughly 375 linear feet of materials. There are also two-dimensional objects stored in the MSCP's flat file in the Lower Stacks.

While there are some rare books in the collection, many of the books are technically unique, as they contain valuable annotations of the scholars who owned them. Rare books include a set of Melville first editions in the Wendel Collection and a library compiled by Robert Madison designed to mirror Herman Melville's personal poetry library; it includes a copy of every title in the exact edition that Herman Melville personally owned. Manuscript material consists of the research notes, correspondences, etc. of Melville scholars.

Demand for this collection is specialized and typically restricted to members of the Melville Society, the MSCP, MSCP Research Fellows, and other scholars pre-approved by a member of the MSCP.

Collection development plan

The museum should work with the Melville Society to form a plan for this collection.

Part 2: Old Dartmouth History

Art

The museum has a remarkable collection of local artwork, both art produced in the area and art produced by artists from the area. This collection (watercolors, oils, pastels, drawings and sculpture) displays the talent and diversity accomplished by artists who were born in the area, or who lived and worked here. The museum both displays art as art, and also uses art to illustrate the stories that it tells through exhibitions and publications. Portraits (there are several hundred in the collection) allow visitors to visualize not only the dress of the day but also the thought and activities of those who created Old Dartmouth and shaped it to the present day. Landscapes, marine scenes and ship portraits give us artists' insight into lived experience.

Local artists also tell the story of the development of art in the United States as well as New Bedford from the 18th through the 21st centuries. A number of important artists made the New Bedford area their home, and their drawings, paintings and sculpture reflect not only in the styles of the times, but also their education, training, and influences.

The museum owns the work of 94 artists who were born here or worked here. It has representative paintings or sculpture by all the nationally known New Bedford artists. The museum has always collected contemporary art, as part of the history of the area, and to document its cultural life, and that tradition continues today.

There are 239 portrait paintings, mostly 19th century. Most of these are of the prominent, upper-class, white men of New Bedford, and their families. Many are of only historical interest; they were collected because of the importance of the sitter to local history, or local families, not because of the quality of the painting.

Collection development plan

The museum should build on its strong tradition of local art collecting not only because it documents the area, but because it is one of the most attractive elements of the museum to many of its visitors. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century art of high quality is expensive, and the museum should focus its collecting on material that provides significant and useful documents the local area and the local art scene, even if it is not of the first quality.

Other local institutions have overlapping art collections. The New Bedford Public Library, for example, has about 100 paintings and sculptures, according to the Smithsonian Art Inventory, with significant overlap in both artists and subjects. Other local institutions also collect local art, and the museum should collaborate with them, and take into account their collections in any future acquisition decisions.

Portraits: Nineteenth-century Old Dartmouth is very well represented; most of the portraits will never be displayed. However, the museum should accept portraits of important individuals, if offered. It should make an effort to find portraits of individuals from communities who are at present under-represented in the museum. It's unlikely that painted portraits exist of many of these non-elite individuals, though, and so the museum should add photographic portraits to document these communities.

Landscapes: The museum should seek out for gift or purchase William Allen Wall, Edward Seager, Joseph Whiting Stock or Chester Harding paintings or drawings that offer a portrait or a local scene that provide perspective of the area before it was photographed, as well as other early local artists who presents a similar piece of visual information. The museum does not need to collect every artist who worked in the area.

The museum should also continue to collect nationally known local artists, including William Bradford, Albert Bierstadt, A.P. Ryder, C.S. Raleigh, R.S. Gifford, D.W. Tryon, and C.W. Ashley. These artists' works are expensive, and all are already represented in the collection, and so most new acquisition should be by gift, not by purchase. Works of any quality should be accepted.

The museum should find ways to engage with contemporary artists whose work addresses the themes of the museum. New contemporary art collecting should, for the most part, add to the museum's documentation of its two themes. The museum should continue to engage with local artists, try to exhibit their work, and should purchase works from exhibits with that include contemporary art. It should engage with local museums and galleries that show contemporary art, and work with them to strengthen the collection of art by area artists. In collecting contemporary art, it is important to set high standards of quality and to consider the long-term value of new acquisitions both as art and as historical documentation.

The museum holds a large collection (perhaps 100) of WWI and WWII posters. While a few might be kept, to speak to local history, many should be deaccessioned.

Photography

There are about 200,000 photographs in the collection. Approximately 28,000 of which are scanned and available through the online catalog. (In addition, there are some 15,000 other photographs (copy photographs, etc.) available online. Note: some [photography collections listed under the Whaling section of this plan](#) include New Bedford photographs. About half of all photographs are "found in collections" without complete accession records.

Major collections include:

- James Allen collection: Approximately 200 19th century yachting, city scenes 1987.26
- Clifford Ashley collection: Author, sailor, and knot expert; photographs of local fishing, waterfront, Azores, Cape Verde, 20th century. About 400 images. 2000.100.79

- Albert Cook Church collection: Church's photographs, mostly after World War One, shows his love of the sea and the people and vessels associated with it came through. His photographs captured the kaleidoscope of life and industry that surrounded the sea. He photographed the sailing vessels of the American Cup and the daily work of fishermen and whale men. About 1000 images. 2000.100.86 *⁸
- Fire collection: Approximately 430 photographs of firemen, fire equipment, and fires in New Bedford. 2000.100.2361 *
- Fortier Collection: 100,000 negatives. Fortier was a commercial photographer in New Bedford, 1940s-2000s. He was a generalist, doing advertising work, portraiture, and aerial assignments. These are well cataloged on index cards and log books (by owner of boat, mostly). In general, the collection is searchable through cards, then logbooks by date. Only 1800 negatives are scanned and available online. Web site: <http://www.whalingmuseum.org/explore/exhibitions/past/storied-lens>. 1996.18 *
- Prescott Collection: Named for its primary creator Dr. Henry Prescott and for his wife, Hester Swift Prescott, this consists of an estimated 1,300 negatives and 188 photographic albums, over 8,500 photographs. The vast majority of the photographs are of everyday life in his hometowns of New Bedford and South Dartmouth, from 1892 until his death in 1945. 1981.80 Web site: <http://prescott.whalingmuseum.org/index.php>.*
- Standard Times black and white newspaper photography: mostly glass plate negatives late 19th and early 20th century 1981.61 *
- Headley & Reed collection: James E. Reed was a local black photographer; collection includes many city scenes. Several dozen images 1996.21
- Fred Palmer collection. Photographs of Houses and Public Buildings in New Bedford. On Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/nbwm/sets/72157622194822530/>. 2000.100.80

There are drafts of "Fact sheets for Photographers" for about one hundred of the photographers represented in the collection, including information on photographers, earliest and latest photos, and other sources of information.

Other local collections. Spinner Publications has a collection of about 1 million photographs of Southeastern Massachusetts, about 15,000 of which are on Flickr. The New Bedford Free Public Library has smaller local photography collections, some of which are available on Digital Commonwealth.

Collection Development Plan

The photographic collection needs further cataloging, and more of it needs to be scanned and put online. (The museum needs to create policies to include digital works and a preservation

⁸ Collections for which finding aids exist are noted with a *.

protocol for all this digital material.) It also needs to develop a strategy for sharing more images online, and should continue working with organizations like [Digital Commonwealth](#) and the [Digital Public Library of America](#) to make its collections widely available.

The museum should be open to acquiring additional historical photograph collections, even large ones. It should seek out those that cover periods and subject matter complementary to its existing collections.

The museum should be collecting high quality contemporary photographs of the area from professional photographers, and may want to commission photographers to document topics that are hard to collect in other ways. It might also want to consider ways to collect or curate digital collections of everyday photography of the area.

Manufacturing

Manufacturing in the Old Dartmouth areas spans its entire history, from the small mills of the early settlers to the diverse industries of the present. In the nineteenth century, much of the industry in the area served the maritime trade. Shipbuilding and ship repair required carpentry and other woodworking tools, pumps and blocks, cordage, sails, rivets, rolled steel for cooperage, and cooperage itself. Whaling brought small-scale manufacturing of whalecraft (harpoons, lances, spades, etc.), and the industries that converted whales to useful products like oil, soap, and candles. Domestic productions like millwork, furniture and clocks that built off the strong craft skills and the wealthy population. Blank books were an important part of the maritime city's manufactures, as was the printing of maritime documents.

In the latter half of the 19th century, production from the whale fishery declined and factory output increased tremendously. By the early 20th century the city was a major producer of cotton textiles, yarns, steel products including drill bits and heavy machinery, copper plate, decorative glassware, silver plate and toys. Other manufactured products included castings, paint, carriages, hearses and wooden spools and spindles for the textile mills. By the mid-20th century major manufactured products included shoe eyelets, high quality cordage, apparel, bedspreads and electronic components. Marine oils remained an important product of local manufacture until the early 1970s when that production shifted to synthetic lubricants.

Overall, the museum has not done a good job of collecting manufacturing industry, and it has done a poor job of collecting twentieth-century industry. Of the city's factory manufacturers, glassware, silver plate and toys are by far the best represented in the collection as far as production output. There are small collections of the tools of woodworking, textile, glass and silver operatives. Many industries are represented in the photographic and archival collections.

Below some of the area's major industries are listed, with a large "miscellaneous" category at the end.

Textile and garment industries

Textile and garment manufacture was one of New Bedford's most important industries, second only to whaling, but the museum's collection representing these areas of the local economy is very weak. They include:

- Wamsutta Mill: 3 pieces plus library ephemera and general inclusion in photos, paintings, etc.
- Textile mills: 10 pieces. Extensive photograph and postcard collections. Manuscript collections (New Bedford Rayon, Pierce Manufacturing Corp.)
- Apparel, 1 piece.
- Operative's tools (textiles): 30 pieces
- Shuttles, spools and bobbins: 12-15 examples, unidentified as to factory of origin or manufacture containing cotton thread, cotton yarn, rayon thread, unidentified textile material)

Collection Development Plan

The museum does not plan to collect significantly in the area of textile machinery. Rather, it will work with the American Textile History Museum (looms and sample books) and the Abboud collection (mostly clothing production equipment, including sewing machines), borrowing equipment from them as needed. The museum will revisit this decision after the Energy & Enterprise exhibit comes down, judging interest in the topic based on that exhibition. Should either the American Textile History Museum or the Abboud collection be in danger of dispersal, the museum will reconsider its role in collecting.

The museum will continue to collect small examples of cloth and clothing made in the city, and related marketing material, as they are offered. Archives of the textile and clothing industries will be considered carefully, especially those that show how whaling money went into textiles. The museum should consider how it should document the ongoing garment industry in the city. Oral histories, a small amount of collecting of finished products, and a few examples of the tools and technology of production will serve as important documents of what remains an important part of the economy.

Glass

Glass was one of New Bedford's most important industries. The Mt. Washington glass company and its successor, the Pairpoint Corporation, produced luxury glassware from 1837 to 1957. "Constantly reinventing and reinvigorating its business through creativity in texture, decoration, pattern, and color, the companies developed a variety of styles and decorating techniques which were so technically complex that few are even practiced today," notes the Corning Museum of Glass, adding that, in their heyday, "Mt. Washington and Pairpoint glass rivaled Tiffany and Steuben."⁹

⁹ <http://www.cmog.org/collection/exhibitions/mt-washington-and-pairpoint>

The Museum has significant holdings of New Bedford art glass, including some 873 pieces of Pairpoint glass and 225 pieces of Mount Washington glass, as well as some tools and equipment. Much of this came to the Museum in 1992, when it acquired the collections of the New Bedford Glass Museum, the most extensive collections of New Bedford manufactured glass and related history. An agreement overseen by the Massachusetts Attorney General requires that:

1. The glass collection will hold and the Museum will acquire objects and archival material that document and illustrate the history of greater New Bedford's glass industry. Examples of glass manufactured outside of the New Bedford region and supporting archival material that directly relate to the development and aftermath of New Bedford's glass industry may also be acquired.
2. Priority will be given to the acquisition of aesthetically and/or historically significant examples produced by New Bedford's glass industry, especially those that complement archival material held in the Museum's Library and those that can be attributed to specific individuals. The acquisition or retention of every pattern or derivation produced is not essential.
3. Priority will be given to the acquisition or retention of complete examples suitable for exhibition. Incomplete or inferior items may be acquired or retained based on their significance to research.
4. The Museum will actively collect archival and other primary source material related to New Bedford glass. Where relevant archival materials are already held by other museums, ODHS-NBWM will endeavor to obtain copies to complement its holding.
5. All monies realized from the deaccession and sale of items from the glass collection will be retained in a fund restricted to the acquisition of objects or archival material for the glass collection.

The museum's collection of New Bedford glass is no longer necessarily the largest; a new New Bedford Museum of Glass (founded in 1993; moved to New Bedford and taking that name in 2009) has built a larger collection of glass objects from around the world. It claims over 7000 pieces of glass, with many from New Bedford.¹⁰ Other museums, including the Corning Museum of Glass, also contain significant New Bedford holdings.

Collection Development Plan

The Museum will continue to collect glass, as it is offered, but because of its large holdings and because other museums have significant holdings, it will not purchase glass items, with the exception of purchasing items using gifts restricted to the glass collection (Fund 78, the Louis St. Aubin Glass Fund). It should look at continuing cooperation with the NBMG.

¹⁰ <http://www.nbmog.org/Collections.html>

Shipbuilding and cooperage

The Old Dartmouth area — especially New Bedford, Dartmouth, and Mattapoisett — was a center of the whaleship building trade, launching a total of about 350 ships during the nineteenth century. Almost none of this once-extensive industry survives. The museum has a small collection (a few dozen) of the tools used in nineteenth-century shipbuilding and related woodwork, but overall, not a strong collection in the many trades that kept the port alive, like sail-making or cooperage. The museum also has about 40 examples of cooperage (buckets, casks, piggins, kegs, etc.).

Collection Development Plan

Other museums have excellent collections in these fields. Nearby maritime museums, especially Mystic Seaport, have extensive collections of shipbuilding and related tools. The National Museum of American History has a strong collection of cooper's tools from New Bedford, gifts of Jonathan Bourne, John McCullough, and Thomas Knowles & Co., all associated with the whaling industry. The Whaling Museum should not try to compete in this area.

One area that the museum might want to collect is in contemporary shipbuilding, documenting the work of local builders, including local recreational sailing boats and fishing boats.

Whale oil and related industries

Killing whales and bringing their oil to New Bedford was only the first step in a product of refining and putting the oil to use. New Bedford in its heyday had dozens of firms that produced a range of goods from whale oil and other products of whales. The museum is surprisingly weak in these areas; it was a dirty business, with large machinery, and without the romance of whaling.

The museum's collections include:

- Nye Lubricants: 37 pieces including oil samples, cans, bottles, advertisements and ephemera
- Ezra Kelley Oil: 37 pieces including oil samples, bottles, advertisements and ephemera
- Oil works (general New Bedford): pieces
- Candles (New Bedford): 1 piece
- Whalebone: a few pieces of baleen
- Oil gauging: 20 pieces

Collection Development Plan

The museum should build this collection by actively seeking candles, candle molds, and other apparatus. The Nantucket Historical Association has a restored 1847 oil and candle factory; the Whaling Museum does not need to collect in the area of oil production and in any case, vats, boilers, windlasses, and the like are large, and unlikely to be found. The museum documents this area of history photographically.

Whalecraft

New Bedford factories produced the tools needed for whaling. The collection includes 85 harpoons and 54 lances, spades, mincing knives positively identified as manufactured in New Bedford and Fairhaven.

Collection Development Plan

These collections are important to the mission of the museum, but probably extensive enough that no further collecting is required. Gifts in good condition should be accepted.

Miscellaneous industries

There were many industries in New Bedford with little or no connection to the whaling industry, and the museum has collected a miscellaneous collection of their work and archives. Collections include:

- Brownell Carriage Company: 1 piece, a velocipede
- Braddock D. Hathaway tool manufacturer: 9 pieces
- Kirby paint: 4 pieces
- Morse Twist Drill and Machine Company: 46 pieces including hardware, prints, photographs and ephemera. Manuscript collection.
- New Bedford Copper Company: 0 pieces (2 unlocated pieces of copper sheathing attributed to the company)
- New Bedford Cordage Company: 27 pieces including samples, prints and ephemera. Manuscript collection.
- Pairpoint silver: 273 pieces (some overlap with glass as things like salt shakers have silver caps.)
- C. Rhodes, shoe eyelets – 60 pieces including hardware and photographs
- A.D. Richmond/Dyre and Richmond foundry: 3 pieces
- Ted Toylers (toys): 71 pieces
- Weeden steam engines (toys): 50 pieces
- Zenas Whittemore, Soap: 1 piece (plus 2 unidentified)

Collection Development Plan

The museum does not have strong collections in local manufacturing and industry, and needs to build them, especially in post-1920 New Bedford collections. The museum should collect artifacts and capture oral histories of owners, managers, workers. It should make a special effort to collect material from the Acushnet Company and from Revere Copper, large and important firms not represented in the museum's collection.

Farming, forests and food

Until the last few decades, much of the Old Dartmouth area was forest and farms, but the museum has not focused on that part of the area's economy. A few miscellaneous items, including a nineteenth-century plow, represent this part of the area's past. Many paintings in the collection document farms and the forested landscape. Local historical societies in Westport

and Mattapoisett have some material relating to agriculture and forestry, and organizations like Old Sturbridge Village have rich collections that could be borrowed for specific exhibitions.

Collection Development Plan

The museum need not develop this collection, but should work with local historical societies to understand their collections. A few farms and firms might be of particular interest for contemporary collecting: Sid Wainer & Son, one of the key local firms, has found a successful niche in high-end agriculture and food distribution; organic farms, and especially Community Supported Agriculture, have made a comeback in the area; dairy survives in this part of the state; and oyster farming has begun to grow.

Fishing

Today, the Port of New Bedford is America's top fishing port. Fish landings are valued at \$369 million. Home to one of the nation's last remaining fish auctions, New Bedford has become New England's seafood hub, with more than 30 processors and distributors. Over 4,400 people are employed by New Bedford's commercial port, which generates economic activity in excess of \$1 billion. In 2011, the fishing fleet landed over 117 million pounds of products.¹¹

The museum's collection in fishing, fish processing, and related industries is very small compared to the importance of the industry in New Bedford's history and future, and the museum should address this lacuna in its collecting. The museum should work with other museums and local institutions to ensure that the industry is thoroughly documented and that materials for a future exhibition on the industry are preserved. Fishing is New Bedford's most important industry today, and it is important that its history be documented through collecting.

The museum's current collections include significant photography of the fishing fleet (especially in the Fortier collection), a few models and paintings, and a small amount of fishing gear. It has little on fish processing, fishing ship construction and repair, or the Port of New Bedford.

Sport fishing, a popular hobby, is also poorly represented in the museum's collections. The museum has a fine Gifford portrait of a striped bass and some material relating to various Buzzards Bay fishing clubs.

Other Local Collections

Fishing is a large and complex topic, and it is important that the Museum work with other institutions to document its history. There are several museums focused on fishing in New England:

¹¹ Data from Port of New Bedford, <http://www.portofnewbedford.org/commercial-fishing/our-commercial-fishing-industry/>

- Mystic Seaport has superb fishing collections, much of which reflects the New Bedford fisheries. It holds fishing boat similar to the type that was commonly used in New Bedford: a 1921 Gloucester fishing schooner, the *L.A. Dunton*, wind-powered; and the *Roann*, an Eastern-rig dragger, one of the last surviving examples of the diesel-powered fishing vessels that replaced sailing schooners like the Dunton, and which used nets, not hooks.
- The Cape Ann Museum has significant collections. Fishing artifacts include a dory, vessel gear, ship- and boat building & maintenance tools, fishing gear, and navigating instruments. Wharfside equipment includes a ballast cart and fish handling gear. Fishermen are represented by sailor's art, clothing, especially foul weather gear, and memorial tablets. There are many models (builders' half-models, scale models, sailors' models, dioramas, shadow boxes) and documents (ship- and boat building plans, rigging- and sail plans, and charts, maps, tables, almanacs, business inventories and sales records, log books, and official documents. The collection also includes photographs and paintings, drawings, sculpture and printed artwork: lithographs, fine presswork, postcards, and posters.
- Maritime Gloucester is building a collection; their mission is "to inspire students and visitors to value marine science, maritime heritage and environmental stewardship through hands-on education and experiences."
- In New Bedford, the Port Society, the Museum's neighbor on Johnny Cake Hill, has received significant funding from the Massachusetts Cultural Council to renovate the Mariners Home into a Fishing Heritage Center.
- The Working Waterfront Festival, also in New Bedford, has recorded every performance and conversation on its stages, creating a rich audio archive of music, fishing poetry, storytelling, and more. This work is part of the Festival's Community Documentation Project, which has also collected over 120 oral history interviews with a wide range of individuals connected to fishing communities in New England and beyond. Many of these interviews were incorporated into a series of 24 radio programs called *Voices from the Port* and a book, *Voices from the Waterfront: Portrait of the New Bedford Fishing Industry*. All of the oral histories have been transcribed and are archived as part of the NOAA Voices from the Fisheries web-based archive: <http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/voicesfromthefisheries/>

Collection development plan

Fishing is important, and the museum should build collections in this area; but it is a large, complex, and politically fraught topic, and the museum should move slowly and deliberately as it decides how and what to collect. It is essential that the museum work with other institutions in the area — both the historical organizations mentioned above, and organizations representing the fishing industry, fishermen, workers in fish processing and other parts of the industry, and environmental groups — before deciding on a collecting plan in this area, and before undertaking significant collecting.

The Working Waterfront Festival's archive of oral histories is complete enough that the Museum doesn't need to undertake oral histories of fishing or fish processing, but it should talk to WWF and see what role it can play and how the museum's collections might coordinate with the WWF's future work. It should also see if anyone is photo-documenting the fishing fleet and fish processing industries today, and decide if the museum should undertake that task. It needs to coordinate with the Cape Ann Museum and Mystic Seaport to better understand their collecting plans.

It seems reasonable to focus on two general areas:

- The modern fishing fleet, starting in the 1920s, when Captain Dan Mullins was responsible for the key innovations of engined boats and icing fish. It is important to balance collecting of fishing with collecting of fish processing, marketing, and distribution.
- Fish processing, a labor intensive industry that has been a traditional job for many in New Bedford's immigrant communities, and especially for women.

Some possible areas for focused collecting include:

- The tools and equipment used in fish processing
- The technology that changed commercial fishing over the past few decades, including electronics (depth finders, radios, weather forecasting, Vessel Monitoring Systems)
- The politics of fisheries regulations (bumper stickers, protest signs, documents kept by fishermen, etc.) and the new tools and technologies that address new regulations
- The cabin of a fishing boat (document the space and collect equipment, cabinets, etc., enough so that it can be reconstructed in an exhibition)
- Documents, perhaps for a particular boat, that represent the life a fishing boat, cradle-to-grave: financial records, crew manifests, etc.
- Plans, etc., for boats built in the New Bedford area; perhaps contact Fairhaven Shipyard?
- Fish brokering: Can the museum document the movement of fish to China and Japan, and the return of processed fish from China?
- Ship models
- Photography: The museum should add to present photographic collections, either by finding photographers who have documented the industry, or by commissioning photographers to document typical and significant aspects.

The museum should not collect a fishing boat, and should think hard before collecting any large piece of equipment (for example, a drag from a scalloper) that it is not able to put on display. It should instead document these aspects of the industry with photography and video.

Sport fishing collecting possibilities include paintings, club annuals, trophies, boat models, and fishing equipment.

The new economy: service and culture

Over the past few decades the economic basis of the greater New Bedford area, like much of the rest of the country, has changed. Today, New Bedford supports about 8000 manufacturing jobs, about 12 percent of the nonfarm workforce, and about twice that number of jobs in education and health services.¹² The tourism and cultural sector is booming, and plans are afoot, perhaps, for a casino. None of this new economy is represented in the museum's collections.

Collection Development Plan

The museum should be open to collecting in these areas. In the same way it has long collected nineteenth-century shop signs, political ephemera, and tools, it should keep an eye out for small, symbolic items that represent the changes in the area's economy today. This is an area where a concerted plan of contemporary collecting might serve to make the museum useful to the city at a time of significant change.

Sport and recreational sailing

The New Bedford area has had many major players in the field of recreational sailing, including William Hand, Ben Dobson, Ray Hunt, Tom and Isaac Manchester, Palmer Scott, Waldo Howland, Bill Pinney, Brodie MacGregor and Concordia Co., John Deknatel, the Beetle family and Beetle Boat Co., the Keenes and Edson, Schaefer Marine, Breck Marshall, John Garfield, and Marshall Cats, Major Smyth and Peirce & Kilburn, Bob Baker...

The museum has not focused on collecting this, except through photography. The Norman Fortier collection is a major archive of area yachting images, and there is also significant yachting material in the A. C. Church, Baylies, Allen, and Prescott photographic archives. The museum has been actively publishing in the area of yachting history, most recently Michael Lapedes, ed, *On the Wind: The Marine Photographs of Norman Fortier* (2007); Llewellyn Howland III, *No Ordinary Being: W. Starling Burgess (1878-1947), a Biography* (2014); and Stan Grayson, *A Genius at His Trade: C. Raymond Hunt and His Remarkable Boats* (2015).

Collection development plan

The museum should expand its collection in this area by acquiring books, paintings, models, archives, and ephemera from races. It has recently raised funds to acquire the magnificent Tom Borges 1/3 scale model of a Concordia yawl, and should acquire other models (smaller!) of yachts built and raced in the area. The Goodwin Collection of yachting books in the library is a distinguished and important one that should be added to, selectively, in the years ahead. William Bradford, Albert van Beest, C H Gifford, Julian Underwood, R. Swain Gifford, Clifford

¹² Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 2015, at http://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.ma_newbedford_mn.htm#eag_ma_newbedford_mn.f.P

Ashley, and Dwight Tryon are among the artists who have painted yacht portraits or yachting scenes in the collection, and the museum should accept the offer of paintings that document yachting history.

Archives of yacht clubs should be considered, especially logs and other documentation of important races, and ephemera.

The museum should not collect any boats that can't be stored in its storage areas!

Toys and children's things

Like many history museums, the Whaling Museum has long collected toys and children's belongings. There are over 1000 items listed as "toy" in the collections, including items across all of the museum's areas of interest: whale toys, Eskimo toys, toys made in New Bedford, and toys played with by children in New Bedford. There are several hundred dolls, a great deal of dollhouse furniture, and many games. The museum also has children's clothing, many bonnets and christening dresses.

Collection Development Plan

The collection is narrowly focused on 19th century toys, for the most part; expansion beyond that might be useful. But this is of low priority, with the possible exception of toys related to whaling, and ethnographic artifacts.

Ships and ship models / Maritime history

Whaling history and maritime history overlap: many artifacts, from navigational instruments to sailmakers' tools, tell both stories. See also separate sections on [navigational instruments](#), [fishing](#), [boat building](#), and [sport and recreational boating](#).

Judith N. Lund and R. Michael Wall's *Ship Models* (published by the museum in 2013), based on a recent exhibition, notes that there are 175 ship models in the collection; perhaps 30 of them are whaleboat models. There are also about 90 half hull models, some built as the first step in envisioning a new vessel, some presentation models. There are also 36 canoe and kayak models, mostly ethnographic.

The largest ship model, of course, is the *Lagoda*, a half-scale whaling ship, built 1916. 89 feet long and 50 feet tall, and built by craftsmen who had built whaling ships, it was based on measurements from the original *Lagoda* but lines taken from the *Charles W. Morgan*.

Collection Development Plan

The museum should accept ships and ship models and other maritime artifacts only if they directly relate to the specific stories of whaling and local maritime and fishing industries. It should not expand into general maritime history beyond whaling and local boat building, recreational sailing, and fishing. The present collections may include items that represent this

more general maritime history, but it requires specialized expertise to determine what maritime history items are not appropriate for the collection. The museum has hired a consultant to sort through the ship model collection. Duplicates of whaling vessels (e.g.: multiple models of the *C.W.Morgan*) have been recommended for deaccession.

The museum should not collect any boats or ships that cannot be stored in existing spaces.

Clothing and textiles

The museum has a large collection of clothing, at least 1000 pieces. Some is ethnographic; most is locally worn. The collection appears to be typical of historical society collections: upper class, mostly women's clothes, wedding dresses, many bonnets and hats, mostly nineteenth century. There are about 100 samplers in the collection, mostly local.

Collection Development Plan

The museum should not continue to acquire 19th century upper-class clothing. It might want to expand the collection to more recent items, or to a wider range of society, but that seems a low priority. Any future collecting should be carefully considered in light of exhibition plans. Specialists in period costume might be consulted about possible deaccessions; it would be useful to compare the museum's collection to that of other local museums, and to the large collection of clothing at the American Textile History Museum in Lowell.

Household equipment and furnishings

New Bedford had a small but significant furniture industry that served the local market. Wealthy New Bedford merchants imported their furniture from Boston, New York, or Philadelphia. Furniture historian Brock Jobe reports that there were at least two dozen furniture shops and warerooms in New Bedford during the first half of the nineteenth century.¹³

The museum has a solid collection of furniture made and used in New Bedford and the surrounding area; Jobe, in *Harbor and Home*, list the most important pieces. A significant group of about a dozen pieces is on long-term loan to the Rotch-Jones-Duff house. A report on the furniture collection by Jack O'Brien (not found for this report) gives more detail.

Other household goods include silver services, and at least 66 lots of Chinese porcelain of various patterns from the 19th century including: Teapots, tea cups, tea saucers, sugar bowls, creamers, coffee pots, plates, bowls, chocolate pots, flasks and a potpourri dish. The collections database lists over 1000 items used for food service.

Collection Development Plan

¹³ Brock Jobe, *Harbor & Home: Furniture of Southeastern Massachusetts, 1710-1850*, University Press of New England, 2009

Furniture made in the area should be kept, as should a few typical pieces used in the area. The museum should consider deaccessioning material without an Old Dartmouth connection, and perhaps a large amount of the material simply used here, keeping a few representative pieces.

Timekeeping: Clocks and watches

The museum has a small collection of clocks and watches. There are about a dozen clocks, including 7 tall clocks. These include an important mid-18th century Dutch clock owned by William Rotch and Samuel Rodman, and several clocks made by local clockmakers or case makers, including Ezra Kelley and Nathaniel Shepherd, clockmakers of Dartmouth, and Josiah Wood, of New Bedford.

The museum holds 45 watches, as well as a small number miscellaneous watch fobs, etc. (some for their ivory). These are Swiss, British and American; no large meaningful collections, and many in poor shape.

Collection development plan

Watches and clocks with no Old Dartmouth or whaling provenance should be considered for deaccession. Future collecting should be very small, with a narrow focus on timepieces made in the area or used by Old Dartmouth residents, or with a direct connection to whaling.

Natural history collections

Sailors brought back no end of natural history specimens from around the world, and the museum has become the depository for many of them, and for various collections of local natural history specimens. The collection includes:

- Shells: thousands of shells from around the world
- Bird eggs (perhaps from the New Bedford Lyceum)
- Six volumes of pressed plants from southeastern Massachusetts, from Dr. J.C. Shaw, 1900-1903
- Several taxidermied animals, including a penguin, seal, and walrus.

Many natural history collection items have significant conservation issues; much remains uncataloged.

Collection Development Plan

The museum should only collect material with provenance from whaling voyages, to help tell the global story. Only items of historic significance from Old Dartmouth region should be considered for the permanent collection, though the museum should continue to collect natural history items for education collections.

Note: [whales](#) are covered in separate category.

Diverse Communities of New Bedford

In recent years the museum has collected and exhibited materials related to the ethnic communities of New Bedford, an essential part of documenting a city with a remarkably diverse population almost from its founding, as well as reaching residents of the city with their stories. This work has been mostly driven by exhibitions, not by collecting, and the collections in this area are very shallow, especially in comparison to the vast depth of the museum's documentation of Yankee communities of the city.

- African American: A small collection, including Frederick Douglass and freed slave dolls; photographs; John Mashow ship models and a memorial manuscript written by whaling agents on his qualities as a shipbuilder; Lewis Temple toggle irons; Paul Cuffe manuscript collections, compass and (perhaps) elements of his house; scrimshaw on anti-slavery themes, sculpture of antislavery themes
- Azorean: A small collection; almost everything is on display in the Azorean Galleries/Casa dos Botes
- Cape Verdean: A small collection, some government gifts, some souvenirs of the islands; almost everything is on display in Cape Verdean Gallery
- French Canadian: Photographs only
- German: A small number of photographs
- Jewish: Photographs (there is an oral history and photograph collection at UMass-Dartmouth)
- Latino: Weavings produced by local Guatemalans, collected following the "Téjela: Weaving Stories, Weaving Lives" exhibition
- Madeiran: A small collection, mostly focused on contemporary Madeira, not New Bedford
- Native American: A few archaeological pieces; much was repatriated under NAGPRA
- Quakers: A large collection of Quaker clothing and portraits

Collection Development Plan

It is important for the museum to address this lacuna in its collections; the museum was created, and for much of its history run, by Yankees, and not until recently has it tried to be more inclusive of the other communities of New Bedford. It is essential, in building these collections, to work with the communities involved, and to collaborate with local ethnic organizations.

The [University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth Library](#) has significant archival holdings for some of these communities, and would be a useful partner in this work. These include the Ferreira-Mendes Portuguese-American Archives, the largest collection of historical material documenting the experience of Portuguese immigrants and their descendants in the United States; The Schooner Ernestina-Morrissey archives; and the Archives of the Center for Jewish Culture.

Miscellaneous

Any museum with a long history, excess space, and enthusiastic donors attracts collections with marginal connection to its core interests. The New Bedford Whaling Museum is no exception. Some of these collections are listed below, and there are certainly many other similar collections to be found:

- Firearms: Some firearms are locally made; some were used in the whale or seal hunt; some have ethnographic carvings; some were owned by New Bedford residents; some seem to have no connection with the museum's mission.
- Numismatic: From colonial to the Civil War, including locally produced banknotes and cancelled checkbooks. Much is miscellaneous, the gift of enthusiastic collectors.
- Philatelic: Some local stamps, some local first day covers, some related to whaling, both US and international.
- Fire history: A significant collection of local firetrucks and fire equipment, acquired in 1964 from the Old Colony historical collection and New Bedford Veterans Firemen's Association; at present on loan to the New Bedford Fire Museum.

Collection Development Plan

There is probably material here that should be deaccessioned, but it will require significant research to discover the presence or absence of a connection to the museum's missions.

Part 3: The Research Library and Archives

The museum library currently houses some 18,000 printed books, 144 named manuscript collections and 1700 additional lots of manuscript material, and over 700 maps and charts. It also boasts 2300 original whaling logbooks and journals.

Although the library's holdings include scarce and rare imprints and manuscripts in the museum's areas of collecting interest, the whaling and textile industries and the history of Old Dartmouth and New Bedford, the library is, in bibliographical terms, of somewhat limited national or international importance and consequence. Its great distinction is that it is the best library anywhere for research in the history of whaling.

The museum library has from its earliest years shared its primary collecting objectives with two sister institutions, the New Bedford Free Public Library and the Millicent Library of Fairhaven. More recently, it has also shared some of these objectives with the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Library and the library of the American Textile History Museum in Lowell, and with libraries in Providence and Boston.

The NBFPL had a significant half century start on the Whaling Museum and was the early recipient of some great Old Dartmouth treasures, including Audubon, Melville, and Transcendentalist imprints, major holdings in local genealogy (including the Barnet collection of local Jewish history), and, of course, much pertaining to the whaling and textile industry (not to mention its excellent collection of whaling journals and logs). It has continued to be an indispensable resource for students and scholars of Old Dartmouth and New Bedford history.

Fairhaven's Millicent Library has a particular strength in its holdings relating to native son Henry Huttleston Rogers, Rockefeller's partner at Standard Oil, and in Fairhaven's rich and varied local history. The American Textile History Museum library's holdings of primary materials relating to the cotton and woolen textile industries of New England are wonderfully rich and pertain to New Bedford as much as to Lawrence, Lowell, and other New England textile centers.

The collections of these libraries overlap to some extent, but the library staffs have traditionally been respectful of each other's missions and have kept turf battles to a minimum. Perhaps this is so in part because the libraries have generally lacked the means or the ambition to compete nationally against better-funded or more aggressive libraries or private collectors for imprints and manuscript material (work by Melville, for example, or Daniel Ricketson, or Henry H. Roger's friend Samuel L. Clemens), or to purchase manuscript collections of local interest but out of its price range.

Library Collections

The library holdings consist of 18,000 published titles in ten languages documenting American and international whaling history, voyages and travels, exploration, natural history, the local history of the Old Dartmouth regions including New Bedford, Fairhaven, Acushnet, Dartmouth and Westport, Massachusetts and New England regional history. Included are incunabula, rare books and pamphlets, newspapers dating to the late 18th century, art reference, local history reference, government documents, children's books and special collections.

Collection Development Plan

The best way to insure that the special collections of the museum library continue to thrive and grow is by having in place a knowledgeable and highly motivated librarian whom the board and staff fully support and who has the acquisitive instincts and the interest and desire to make the collection the very best possible, given the very real budgetary and mission constraints within which the museum operates. It helps if the librarian also has the close support of knowledgeable and generous museum friends and donors with similar collecting ambitions. Historically, great libraries have always prospered most when the dreams and goals of their staffs and benefactors have been most closely aligned.

Should the museum favor one category of history over another? More whaling history than local history? More on the experience of black Americans, less on the yachting community of Padanaram and Mattapoisett? More on incarceration and criminal justice, less on probate law practices? More on the economics of the commercial fishery, less on the affairs of the Garden Club of Buzzards Bay...?

Successful acquiring librarians have always been known for having open minds and few preconceptions. The best librarians look for connections between categories, not just for distinctions that impose boundaries between categories. It is easy enough to say why a particular imprint or manuscript would not be an appropriate one for the Whaling Museum library. The real challenge is wisely to identify what materials really do have a place in the permanent collection, even if their consequence may not become fully apparent for years or even decades to come.

The Scholarship and Publications Committee and the Collections Committee should continue to make specific recommendations with regard to the library's collecting policies, goals, and priorities. But these committees should not make hard and fast distinctions about what should and should not, may and may not be worthy additions to the library holdings. A great research library exists to give life to the past and bring life to the future. How it does so is a matter for continuous discussion, debate, and review.

Manuscripts

The idiosyncratic materials that make up its manuscript holdings are the great strength of the museum's library.

The library holds some 1700 linear feet of manuscript materials, the richest primary resources for Old Dartmouth local history and the history of whaling more generally. Included are late 17th century property deeds and indentures; the various mercantile investments and business practices of the agents of whaling and merchant voyages; church records; personal papers of significant (and lesser known) people of the 19th century; and industrial, banking, and modern whaling documentation extending well into the 20th century. Notable strengths include textile manufacturing, cordage manufacturing, tool manufacturing, banking (1825-1936, one of the largest collections in any American archive), modern mechanized whaling, biographical collections (1668-1977), local history (1787-1970), and firefighting.

The manuscript collections consist of over 140 distinct collections, organized with finding aids including notes historical, and where applicable, biographical. The finding aids include the scope and content of the collections and in many cases have subject listings and other forms of indexing. Not all of the manuscripts in the archive have finding aids. Many are cataloged discretely and can be searched through [the main library database](#). A small number are described in detail on the museum's [website](#).

Collection Development Plan

The museum has acquired significant archival collections in the past few years. Processing large archival collections is expensive and time-consuming, and the museum should cast a narrow net. But as the only institution with an ambitious archival collecting agenda, the museum should be willing to accept New Bedford and whaling archival collections even if full processing needs to be put off into the future.

It is important that the manuscript librarian seek out a diverse range of material, and not just, or merely, material relating to the successful, the well known, the highly achieved and visible (who for the most part are the ones whose heirs or assigns have enough self-regard or sense of history to preserve such material in the first place). The library must afford researchers an inclusive and balanced view of the history the museum collects and preserves.

Whaling logbooks and journals

The museum holds more than 2300 logbooks and journals, many described in a database available online [here](#). They date from 1668 to 1977, with the bulk of them between 1790 and 1880. It is strongest in Yankee whaling, and especially strong on ships from Old Dartmouth. British, Australian, Norwegian and Azorean voyages are also included. This is the largest collection of whaling logbooks; other very strong collections are the [Nicholson Whaling](#)

[Manuscript Collection](#), some 750 logbooks and related materials, at the Providence Public Library, and the [Carleton D. Morse whaling collection](#) at Brown University's John Hay Library.

Collection Development Plan

The museum will consider the purchase of whaling logbooks from Old Dartmouth, and will accept others if offered. It will attempt to expand the collection with examples from outside the United States, and from the twentieth century.

Maps and charts

This collection (<http://www.whalingmuseum.org/explore/library/maps-charts/finding-aid>) contains original and facsimile documents of the world's oceans, especially the Atlantic and Pacific oceans and islands, and harbors and bays of Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Charts were used for whaling as guides and resources toward profitable centers, and also exploratory expeditions to islands and foreign ports. Mapmakers include governmental hydrographic offices, and independent artisans working for their own business or shipping companies. The approximately 751 maps and charts range from the 1670's up to 2008, with the bulk of items falling between 1840 and 1925.

They represent all oceans of the world, with the bulk covering the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and islands. Lands described include Fiji, the Marquesas, New Zealand, Australia, China, Japan, the coasts of the American continents, and up to the Bering Strait in the Pacific. In the Atlantic, lands described include the Azores, Cape Verdean islands, Bahamas and Caribbean islands, and continental coasts, especially the North American coast and West Africa. A large number of maps and charts document Southern New England in general, specifically the area of New Bedford, Massachusetts. There are detailed street maps of the City of New Bedford, and topographical maps of the city and neighboring towns. Also represented are Narragansett Bay, Boston harbor, and Long Island sound.

Mapmakers include the U.S. Navy, British Admiralty, and Dutch, French, and Canadian hydrographic offices. Many were made through the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), and the U.S. Exploring Expedition. Some prominent independent mapmakers include James Imray, E. & G.W. Blunt, James Horsburgh, J.W. Norie, R.H. Laurie, and George W. Eldridge.

This collection is organized into 12 series by geographical area which the map or chart displays, and chronologically by date. Dates indicate the date up to which a map or chart has been updated, with original publication date noted in the record description. Titles may have obsolete spellings or names of particular islands or regions depending on period in which the chart or map was created. Geographic regions in which the maps and charts are organized may overlap due to changes in oceanic boundaries.

Collection Development Plan

The museum should continue to build its collection of maps and charts, especially looking to add material useful to understand current whale populations and contemporary interactions of humans and whales.