

BACKGROUND

New Bedford and Cabo Verde: A Shared Maritime Heritage

Many Cabo Verdeans can trace their roots to crewmen aboard whaling vessels. Nineteenth century New Bedford was the global center of the whaling business and the wealthiest city per capita in America. The concentration of capital, resources, ease of access to markets, and industry dominance put New Bedford first amongst its peers, and Cabo Verdeans played a critical role in its success.

America's global expansion of whaling was a catalyst for immigration, and New Bedford became a veritable "Cape Verdean Ellis Island." Early on, whaling captains recognized the maritime skills of Cabo Verdeans and encouraged them to join as crew. Over time, families followed them to America. As whaling declined and industrial manufacture increased, reoccurring immigration patterns ensued, driven by economic opportunity and the hope for a new life in America.

The New Bedford Whaling Museum has for decades related the contributions of Cabo Verdeans to the rise of America's maritime presence. In 2011, working with a group of dedicated community leaders, the Museum installed within its core the Cabo Verdean Maritime Exhibition, a permanent installation to tell this story. From this milestone, many programs and events at the Museum have since highlighted Cabo Verdean contributions to the economy, culture and vibrancy of America, and in particular, to New Bedford. In 2014, the Museum created an international travelling exhibit titled *Yankee Baleeiros*, which has been seen across the U.S. and Cabo Verde.

Now, this new permanent exhibition in Cabo Verde is the result of continued close cooperation between the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Cabo Verde and the New Bedford Whaling Museum. It is one of several projects described in an International Framework of Cooperation, signed 30 June 2014 in New Bedford by Humberto Lima, President of the Office of Cultural Heritage in Cabo Verde; Hon. Jon Mitchell, Mayor of the City of New Bedford; Hon. Armand Fernandes, Jr. (Ret.), Chair of the New Bedford Whaling Museum Board of Trustees; James Russell, Museum President & CEO; and Dr. Patricia Andrade and Eugene Monteiro, Co-Chairs of the Cabo Verdean Advisory Committee.