

New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center Lands National Endowment for the Humanities Grant

The Bendiksen family poses during the 1985 Blessing of the Fleet. Today, grown up sons Tor and Hans work in the family shoreside business.

The New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center is pleased to announce its receipt of a \$12,000 National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Cultural Heritage Grant. The grant will support a project to digitize the cultural heritage of New Bedford's fishing community. The project is a collaboration involving the New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center (NBFHC), University Archives and Special Collections at the University of Massachusetts Boston, MIT Sea Grant, the New Bedford Public Library, and New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park.

Commercial fishing is often a family activity with skills and knowledge passed from one generation to the next. Consequently, much of this history resides in the photo albums, documents, and artifacts of fishing families. This project will digitize these materials through a day-long public event (tentatively slated for May) in combination with "house calls" to digitally document materials from individuals who are unable to attend the event. The project will be bookended by a variety of public programs which will serve to inspire community participation, evoke memories, and provide an interpretive framework for materials that are brought forward. Digitizing these materials, making them publicly available, and using them to tell the story of the fishing community will create a lasting legacy for families who have spent generations working the water in what is one of the

nation's oldest occupations.

"We are thrilled to receive this funding which will further our efforts to document and preserve the rich heritage of New Bedford's fishing community. We look forward to engaging active and retired fishermen, shoreside workers, and their families in this project." (Laura Orleans, Executive Director).

Following the digitization event, UMass Boston will process images and metadata and will provide storage and public access through the University's online repository. These materials will be included in the Digital Commonwealth and Digital Public Library of America. In addition to UMass Boston's online repository, the resulting digital collection will be publicly archived as part of digital collections at the New Bedford Public Library, and the Massachusetts Public Library Digital Initiative, and shared as part of digital exhibits on the NBFHC website (currently under development). Those who participate by sharing their photographs, documents, or artifacts will be given a USB drive containing the scanned images of their materials.

Created in 1965 as an independent federal agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities supports research and learning in history, literature, philosophy, and other areas of the humanities by funding selected, peer-reviewed proposals from around the nation. Additional information about the National Endowment for the Humanities and its grant programs is available at: www.neh.gov.

The New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center is dedicated to the preservation and presentation of the history and culture of New Bedford's fishing industry through archives, exhibits, and programs. For more information contact the Center at 508-993-8894 or nbfishingheritagecenter@gmail.com.

