

# New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center Established



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The story of New Bedford's fishing community is soon to come alive through the efforts of a newly established non-profit organization, the New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center, Inc. The Center will serve as a permanent, year-round venue to preserve and present the history and culture of New Bedford's fishing industry through archives, exhibits, and programs. The Heritage Center will be located in the historic 1787 Mariners' Home, adjacent to the 1832 Seamen's Bethel and complementing the Whaling Museum across the street on Johnny Cake Hill. The mission of the New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center is: to educate the public about the history and culture of New Bedford's commercial fishing industry by engaging them in authentic experiences, to document that culture and history for future generations, and to honor and support the men and women who make their living from the sea.

The founding members of the Board of Directors are Phil Mello (Chair), Paul Stubbs (Treasurer), Kirsten Bendiksen (Secretary), Kellie Martin, Teri Bernert, Cassie Canastra, Kevin Stokesbury, and Madeleine Hall-Arber. Laura Orleans has been named as the Executive Director. The Center is a Massachusetts non-profit corporation. Tax exempt status is pending.

The New Bedford Port Society is currently working with WHALE to restore the Seamen's Bethel and Mariners' Home. When the restoration project is complete, both buildings will be fully handicap accessible and connected with an enclosed walkway. Construction is expected to begin in the spring of 2015 with completion anticipated in spring of 2016.

The Center will spend the next 18 months engaged in planning and development and anticipates opening to the public in the summer of 2016. During this phase, the Center will present a variety of public programs in partnership with other non-profit cultural organizations. Executive Director Orleans plans to hold numerous focus groups and meetings with members of the fishing industry, educators and others to solicit community input and support as exhibits and programs are developed. To get involved, contact the Center at [nbfishingheritagecenter@gmail.com](mailto:nbfishingheritagecenter@gmail.com).

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