

Whaling Capital of the World

"The town itself is perhaps the dearest place to live in, in all New England. All these brave houses and flowery gardens came from the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian oceans. One and all, they were harpooned and dragged up hither from the bottom of the sea."

—Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*

In January 1841, a 21-year-old seaman named Herman Melville set sail aboard a whaling ship on one of the most important sea voyages in American literature. The book inspired by that voyage was the world-famous *Moby-Dick*, and the place Melville sailed from on that cold winter day was New Bedford, Massachusetts.

It is not surprising that Melville chose to embark from New Bedford—it was the whaling capital of the world. Its waterfront teemed with sailors and tradespeople drawn from all over the globe by the whaling industry's promise of prosperity, and its wide residential streets sparkled with the mansions of the wealthy whaling families.

The whaling industry that flourished in Melville's New Bedford had been born many years before and continued growing for another decade and a half. In the 1850s more whaling voyages sailed from New Bedford than from all of the world's ports combined.

Close-up of Richard Ellis mural of white whale
COURTESY OF RICHARD ELLIS © NEW BEDFORD WHALING MUSEUM

Park Partners



Sternboard from the brig Eunice H. Adams, 1845.

COLLECTION, NEW BEDFORD WHALING MUSEUM

Today, New Bedford is a city of nearly 100,000, but its historic districts still retain embellishments that Herman Melville admired. Walk its cobblestone-lined streets by stately buildings, banks, and storehouses from the days when New Bedford was the whaling capital of the world. Tour historic structures, gardens, and museums and visit the working waterfront, homeport to one of America's leading fishing and scalloping fleets. The streets, buildings, and harbor preserve the stories of early settlers, whaling merchants, maritime workers, and the many people for whom New Bedford was both port of entry and of opportunity.

Preserving the city's legacy did not come easily

Visiting the Park

One of the pleasures of visiting New Bedford is to walk its streets and look at its buildings. Most sites described here are within the national historical park. Some are open to the public year-round; others are open seasonally. Most are managed by nonprofit organizations that charge an admission fee. Stop first at the park visitor center to get oriented. Then, using the map at the far right as your guide, tour the park sites, including the waterfront.

For More Information contact:
New Bedford Whaling
National Historical Park
33 William Street
New Bedford, MA 02740
508-996-4095
www.nps.gov/nebe



Centre Street



New Bedford, Massachusetts



Barrow, Alaska

By car New Bedford is approximately one hour south of Boston and 45 minutes east of Providence. From I-195 take exit 15 and travel one mile south on Route 18 to the first set of lights. Follow the brown and white signs to the visitor center and parking.

For information on the park's affiliated site in Barrow, Alaska, contact:
Inupiat Heritage Center
P.O. Box 749
Barrow, AK 99723
907-852-4594
www.nps.gov/inup

Park Guide



Park Visitor Center

Park Visitor Center, at 33 William Street, offers information about sites, facilities, and community activities. This Greek Revival structure built in 1853 served as a bank, courthouse, auto parts store, antique mart, and a bank again before it became the national historical park visitor center. Park rangers and volunteers are on hand to answer