

## AMPLIFYING HISTORY

by lifting women’s voices and inspiring generations to come

**Lighting the Way: Historic Women of the SouthCoast** explores the historical impact of women from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds who shaped their SouthCoast communities, the nation, and the world. **Lighting the Way** is unearthing remarkable stories of women’s callings that required grit, tenacity, and enduring commitment to their families, careers and communities.

This **Lighting the Way Walking Trail Map** guides you to locations associated with inspiring women. Learn the stories of educators, philanthropists, abolitionists, crusaders for social justice, investors, confectioners, sister sailors, and millworkers as you walk through downtown New Bedford.

Download the **Lighting the Way** app from the Apple Store or Google Play to follow the trail on your mobile device.

Visit [www.historicwomensouthcoast.org](http://www.historicwomensouthcoast.org) to read full profiles of all the historic SouthCoast women featured in **Lighting the Way** and to learn about the project’s different initiatives:

- A school curriculum framework that supports educators to bring these stories into the classroom and provide useful resources.
- **Lighting the Way** will mark the 2020 centennial of the 19th Amendment and women’s right to vote with a traveling exhibit, riveting speakers, city-wide events in New Bedford, public art, and other engaging programs.



**Emily Howland Bourne**  
New Bedford Whaling Museum

Emily Howland Bourne (1835-1922) showed the same careful planning in her inspired philanthropy that her father Jonathan showed as one of New Bedford’s most successful

whaling merchants. She administered her wealth with a conscience that both honored her family and enriched its communities. Emily gifted the Jonathan Bourne Whaling Museum and its half-scale model of the whaling bark *Lagoda* to the Old Dartmouth Historical Society in her father’s memory, preserving the history of the waning whaling industry for future generations.

**Lydia Grinnell Brown**  
New Bedford Whaling Museum

New Bedford’s Lydia Grinnell Brown (1895-1945) became the first African American graduate of Simmons College in Boston. Her dedication to academic excellence and

commitment to the study of languages led to her becoming a translator of French, German and Spanish for the Pan-African Congress in Paris, London and Brussels. The Brown Family Papers at the New Bedford Whaling Museum include Lydia’s notebooks.

**Edith Guerrier**  
New Bedford Whaling Museum

The first woman supervisor of branch libraries of the Boston Public Library, Edith Guerrier (1870-1958) included social reform in library programs. Edith organized library clubs for

immigrant girls to encourage reading, storytelling, and exchanging ideas and co-founded Paul Revere Pottery to provide girls employment with decent wages in a healthy environment. The Edith Guerrier Papers at the New Bedford Whaling Museum include Edith’s autobiography, where she remembers her childhood in New Bedford.



## Lighting the Way: Historic Women of the South Coast Walking Tour

- New Bedford Whaling Museum**  
18 Johnny Cake Hill  
[Emily Howland Bourne](#) [Lydia Grinnell Brown](#)  
[Edith Guerrier](#)
- The Bedford Merchant**  
28 William St.  
[Eliza Bierstadt](#)
- New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park**  
33 William St.  
[Annie Ricketson](#)
- Location near Rosetta Douglass Birthplace**  
157 Elm St., about 7 blocks west of Elm Street Parking Garage, 51 Elm St.  
[Rosetta Douglass \(site of plaque\)](#)
- 54th Regiment Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Plaza**  
Corner of William St. and Acushnet Ave., and nearby mural at 41 William St.  
[Martha Bush Gray](#)
- New Bedford City Hall**  
133 William St.  
[Rosalind Poll Brooker](#) [Jennie Horne](#)
- New Bedford Free Public Library**  
613 Pleasant St.  
[Sylvia Ann Howland \(marble tablet for her philanthropy\)](#)
- New Bedford Public Schools**  
455 County St. (former site of New Bedford High School)  
[Elizabeth Carter Brooks](#) [Rosamond Guinn](#)  
[Marial Harper](#) [Mary Hudson Onley](#)  
[Mary Elizabeth Hartley](#)
- Stephen Taber House**  
446 County St.  
[Elizabeth Taber](#)
- Rotch-Jones-Duff House & Garden Museum**  
396 County St.  
[Amelia Jones](#)
- Grinnell Mansion**  
379 County St.  
[Cornelia Grinnell](#) [Harriet Jacobs](#)
- John Briggs House at New Bedford Pest Control**  
113 Allen St.  
[Martha Bailey Briggs](#)
- Historic Home of Mary Rotch**  
47 South Sixth St., (rear, green vinyl-sided house behind Our Lady of Assumption Church)  
[Mary Rotch](#)

- Hetty Green Birthplace**  
43 Seventh St.  
[Hetty Green](#)
- Historic Home of Phebe Hart Mendall**  
35 Seventh St.  
[Phebe Mendall](#)  
(Her house backed up to the Homer House on County Street)
- Nathan and Polly Johnson House**  
21 Seventh St.  
[Polly Johnson](#)
- Abolition Row Park**  
Corner of Seventh and Spring Streets  
[Amelia Piper](#)
- Friends Meeting House**  
83 Spring St.  
[Rachel Howland](#)
- Labor Mural**  
Sixth and Spring Streets  
[Margaret Ryckebusch](#)
- Historic Location of Helen Ellis’ Bookstore “The Whaler Book Shop”**  
106 School St.  
[Helen Elizabeth Ellis](#)
- Zeiterion Performing Arts Center**  
684 Purchase St.  
[Sarah Rodman Scudder Ashley Delano](#)
- Cape Verdean American Veterans Association Memorial Hall**  
561 Purchase St.  
[Valentina Almeida](#)
- Cape Verdean Ultramarine Band Club**  
185 Acushnet Ave.  
[Archangela Fortes](#)
- Location near Marie Equi Birthplace**  
South Second and Union Streets  
[Marie Equi](#)
- Casa dos Botes Discovery Center**  
N. Water St. or 18 Johnny Cake Hill  
[Mary Vermette](#)
- Mariners’ Home**  
15 Johnny Cake Hill  
[Sarah Rotch Arnold](#)



**Eliza Bierstadt**  
New Bedford Merchant

Active in the local 19th-century art community of William Street, New Bedford’s “Gallery Row,” Eliza Bierstadt (1833-1896) was likely America’s first female art dealer. Eliza’s work started

in New Bedford at the Ellis Art Gallery (now The Bedford Merchant) and later expanded with her move to Niagara Falls, New York, where she added Hudson River artists’ works to her stock. Correspondence to Eliza from several artists and friends reveal her savvy business skills, her knowledge of art supplies, and a busy social life.



**Annie Holmes Ricketson**  
New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park

Annie Holmes Ricketson (1841-?) accompanied her husband on whaling voyages and filled journals with details about life as the lone woman aboard ship. Annie lost her newborn daughter in Faial, Azores, as well as her husband on a return trip home. Annie and other whaling wives endured rough seas, terrible tragedies, painful homesickness, and limited companionship of other women. She is represented here at the New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, which tells the story of the American whaling industry.



**Rosetta Douglass**  
Location near Rosetta Douglass Birthplace

Abolitionist and social reformer Rosetta Douglass (1839-1906) continued a family legacy of activism that began in New Bedford with her parents, Frederick and Anna Murray Douglass.

Rosetta delivered her most notable speech, a paper entitled “Anna Murray Douglass – My Mother as I Recall Her,” as an acknowledgement of the essential part that Anna played in Frederick’s rise to becoming a renowned author and orator. Rosetta was born at 157 Elm Street, about seven blocks west of here.



**Martha Bush Gray**  
54th Regiment Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Plaza

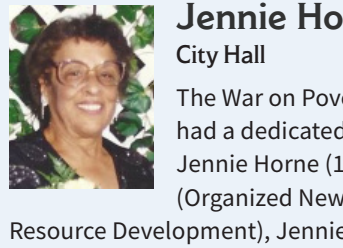
Known as the “Mother of the 54th,” Martha Bush Gray was an African American Civil War nurse who served the troops of the 54th and 55th Massachusetts Regiments in the South. Married to First Sergeant William H. W. Gray of the 54th Regiment, Martha was concerned for her husband’s health and wanted to be useful to the young New Bedford men during the war. “I am anxious to do all that I can for them, and my country also,” she wrote to her congressman, and became one of the few African American women allowed to serve the troops in the field.



**Rosalind Poll Brooker**  
City Hall

Rosalind Poll Brooker (1928-2016) was a trailblazer for women in the fields of law and politics. In spite of polio and post-polio syndrome, Rosalind overcame every obstacle

to become a tenacious lawyer and dedicated public servant. After her 1969 election to New Bedford’s City Council, Rosalind stated, “I’m not going down in history, I’m going up.” Rosalind rose up throughout her life and brought other women up with her. In 2005, a new public meeting room in New Bedford City Hall was named in her honor.



**Jennie Horne**  
City Hall

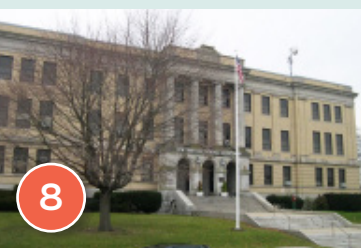
The War on Poverty initiatives of the 1960s had a dedicated New Bedford foot soldier in Jennie Horne (1920-1998). Within ONBOARD (Organized New Bedford Opportunity And Resource Development), Jennie rose up to become contact worker and then director of the West Central Community Center, where she initiated several programs to aid the disadvantaged. While at Model Cities, Jennie was involved in public school reorganization, public housing development, and improvements in relations between police and the community. As a member of the Mayor’s Citizen Advisory Committee, Jennie helped to channel federal Community Block Grants during several mayoral administrations.



**Sylvia Ann Howland**  
New Bedford Free Public Library

Once described as the wealthiest woman in New Bedford, philanthropist Sylvia Ann Howland (1806-1865) provided a legacy that benefited not only family members, caretakers, and charitable organizations, but also the residents of New Bedford through trusts to support education and business.

Upon her death in 1865, approximately half of her estate was distributed to her niece Hetty Robinson Green. A marble tablet in New Bedford Free Public Library commemorates Sylvia’s gift of \$200,000 to the city of New Bedford.



**Elizabeth Carter Brooks**  
New Bedford Public Schools

The first female African American public school teacher in New Bedford, Elizabeth Carter Brooks (1867-1951) was an educator, social activist and architect. Elizabeth taught at the Taylor School for over 25 years, founded and designed the New Bedford Home for the Aged, and helped to preserve the Sergeant William H. Carney House. In 1957, New Bedford Public Schools named the Elizabeth Carter Brooks School in her honor.

**Marial Harper**  
New Bedford Public Schools

New Bedford educator Marial Harper (1934-2016) positively impacted numerous lives at New Bedford High School, from where she graduated in 1952, and was the first

woman and minority to be appointed a Housemaster there. Of Mashpee Wampanoag and Cape Verdean descent, she became active with the Mashpee Wampanoag as a member of its Council of Elders in her retirement.

**Mary Elizabeth Hartley**  
New Bedford Public Schools

A U.S. military veteran with overseas tours during three wars, Lieutenant Colonel Mary Elizabeth Hartley (1920-1999) served in the Army Nurse Corps for 25 years, from 1942 to

1967. A graduate of both New Bedford High School and St. Luke’s Training School for Nurses, Lt. Col. Hartley contributed to the evolution in trauma and casualty care that was spearheaded by the U.S. Army.

**Rosamond Guinn**  
New Bedford Public Schools

The first African American woman to become a registered pharmacist in southeastern Massachusetts, Rosamond Alice Guinn (1892-1923) graduated from New Bedford High

School and the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy. While a pharmacy student, Rosamond was one of eight women who founded a club that became Lambda Kappa Sigma, the oldest professional fraternity for women in pharmacy. Rosamond returned to New Bedford and joined her father John, also a “druggist,” in the pharmacy business Guinn and Co.

**Mary Hudson Onley**  
New Bedford Public Schools

Pioneering educator and community activist Mary Hudson Onley (1889-1980) was one of the first African American graduates of Bridgewater State Normal School in 1912. A 1908 New Bedford High School graduate, Mary taught in New Bedford public elementary schools for 19 years. She was one of the founders of the Martha Briggs Literary Club and a member of the Martha Briggs Educational Club.





**Elizabeth Taber**  
Stephen Taber House  
Born in Marion, Elizabeth Sprague Pitcher Taber (1791-1888) married clockmaker Stephen Taber and settled in New Bedford. After her husband's death, Elizabeth lived in seclusion in this County Street home, where she amassed a fortune through her own wise investments. In 1876, at the age of 85, she founded Tabor Academy.



**Amelia Jones**  
Rotch-Jones-Duff House & Garden Museum  
Philanthropist Amelia Hickling Jones (1849-1935) focused on giving that benefited children. Amelia donated \$1,000,000 and the family's Dartmouth farm to St. Luke's Hospital in 1923 for a children's hospital, Sol e Mar. Amelia lived at the Jones mansion (now The Rotch-Jones-Duff House & Garden Museum) for 85 years.

"I am anxious to do all that I can for them, and my country also." — Martha Bush Gray



**Cornelia Grinnell**  
Grinnell Mansion  
Abolitionist, women's rights advocate and women's club founder, Cornelia Grinnell Willis (1825-1904), who grew up in the Grinnell Mansion, advocated for and secured Harriet Jacobs' freedom, making it possible for Harriet to write and publish what became an edifying "slave narrative." In 1852, Cornelia sent Harriet to the Grinnell Mansion to shelter Harriet from her "owner."

**Harriet Jacobs**  
Grinnell Mansion  
After escape from enslavement, abolitionist and reformer Harriet Jacobs (1813-1897) worked as a nursemaid for the family of abolitionist Nathaniel Parker Willis and his second wife Cornelia Grinnell Willis. There are several recorded instances of Harriet being sent to New Bedford to stay with the Grinnell family on County Street to shelter her from the Norcom family, who sought to re-enslave her. Nathaniel and Cornelia bought Harriet's freedom in 1852, and the next year Harriet began work on *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, the most important slave narrative by an African American woman.



**Martha Bailey Briggs**  
John Briggs House at New Bedford Pest Control  
Martha Bailey Briggs (1838-1889) lived at this Allen St. home. Born to African American abolitionists, she realized at a young age that education was essential to ending slavery. Her life is a testament to the leadership that African American women provided in the field of education during the 19th century. Her extensive experience as both teacher and administrator was invaluable in the development of teacher training programs, predecessors to modern college and university education departments.



**Mary Rotch**  
Historic Home of Mary Rotch  
A leading intellectual and deep religious thinker, Mary Rotch (1777-1848) remained true to her belief in the Light Within. Mary became a leader of the New Lights, progressive Quakers who believed in the Light Within as a sufficient guide, more important than the Old Light rules of organized religion. Disowned by New Bedford Friends in 1824, "Aunt Mary" united with Universalists and held fast to her convictions, refusing to participate in certain rituals and referring to the Supreme Being as "that Influence" instead of God.

"A girl should be brought up as to be able to make her own living, whether or not she's going to inherit a fortune." — Hetty Green



**Hetty Green**  
Hetty Green Birthplace  
Known as both "The Witch of Wall Street" and "The Queen of Wall Street," Henrietta "Hetty" Howland Robinson Green (1834-1916) was the richest woman in the world, her worth estimated at over \$100 million, the equivalent of about \$2.5 billion today, at her death in 1916. As a model of groundbreaking financial intelligence and independence, she was called "Mrs. Hetty Green" while her husband was known as the husband of Hetty Green. Hetty was born at this location.



**Phebe Mendall**  
Historic Home of Phebe Hart Mendall  
Wedding cakes became the specialty of baker Phebe Hart Mendall (1801-1887) who was widowed at age 35 when her husband Elihu Mendall was lost at sea. With two children to care for, Phebe applied herself to become the finest cook she could be. She ran a successful catering/baking service from her home.



**Mary J. "Polly" Johnson**  
Nathan and Polly Johnson House  
Confectioner and abolitionist Polly Johnson (1784-1871) specialized in sweets and provided safe lodging to freedom seekers in New Bedford along the Underground Railroad. The Nathan and Polly Johnson House, her home with her husband Nathan, became the first safe house of freedom seeker Frederick Douglass and his wife Anna. A business partner with her husband in confectionery and catering businesses, Polly worked hard so that freedom seekers could find "sweet freedom" in New Bedford.



**Amelia Piper**  
Abolition Row Park  
As one of the managers of the New Bedford Female Union Society, abolitionist Amelia Piper (1796-1856) organized one of the first anti-slavery fairs in New Bedford on January 1, 1840. Amelia and her husband helped many fugitives who came to New Bedford, including John Jacobs, brother of writer and abolitionist Harriet Jacobs. The Piper family lived at 58 Bedford Street, about six blocks south of here, near Lewis Temple. The mission of Abolition Row Park is to tell the story of abolitionists who once lived in the neighborhood.

"I'm not going down in history, I'm going up."  
— Rosalind Poll Brooker



**Rachel Howland**  
Friends Meeting House  
Peace, love, and understanding were hallmarks of Rachel Howland (1816-1902). Rachel negotiated peace in labor disputes, was a respected minister in the Society of Friends, and founded the Association for the Relief of Aged Women of New Bedford based on the principle, "Not Alms Alone, But a Friend."



**Margaret Ryckebusch**  
Labor Mural, Sixth and Spring Streets  
Educator and labor leader Margaret A. Duggan Ryckebusch (1940-1998) was a professor, department head, and union leader at Bristol Community College. Margaret was also a leader in the area's labor movement, serving on the New Bedford Central Labor Council and on the Advisory Committee of the Labor Education Center at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. Margaret is memorialized for her union work as part of this labor mural alongside other community activists.



**Helen Elizabeth Ellis**  
Historic Location of Helen Ellis' Bookstore, "The Whaler Book Shop"  
What do a tea room in Westport, a bookstore in New Bedford, special exhibits at the New Bedford Whaling Museum, and a children's museum in Dartmouth all have in common? These are just some of the creative projects conceived by teacher, woodcarver and entrepreneur Helen Elizabeth Ellis (1889-1978). In 1928, Helen opened The Whaler Book Shop with Imogene Weeks in a rented house here. The bookstore sold books for children and adults and offered special programs.



**Sarah Rodman Scudder**  
Ashley Delano  
Zeiterion Performing Arts Center  
"If you bulldoze your heritage, you become just anywhere," have become the most repeated words of Sarah Ashley Delano (1904-1994). Throughout her presidency of the Waterfront Historic Area League (WHALE), bulldozing was usually averted, and New Bedford kept its historic heart. Sarah steered WHALE through the process of saving the deteriorating State Theater from demolition and transforming it into the Zeiterion Performing Arts Center.

"I'm a back-burner person. I like to do, but I don't like to talk about it." — Valentina Almeida



**Valentina Almeida**  
Cape Verdean American Veterans Association Memorial Hall  
The child of Cape Verdean immigrants, Valentina Almeida (1913-2009) is best known for her advocacy work with immigrants within the local Cape Verdean community. She assisted immigrants by facilitating all aspects of their transition to a new country. In 1998, the Cape Verdean government named Valentina an auxiliary vice consulate. Uncomfortable in the spotlight, Valentina was twice honored at testimonial banquets held at the Cape Verdean American Veterans Association Memorial Hall.



**Archangela Fortes**  
Cape Verdean Ultramarine Band Club  
A tireless leader in New Bedford's Cape Verdean community, Archangela "Canja" Fortes (1919-2009) initiated numerous events that celebrated Cape Verdean women. As president of the Cape Verdean Women's Social Club from 1957 to 1962, she launched its annual Tea, as well as its annual Mother's Day Procession. The Cape Verdean Ultramarine Band Club was one of the meeting locations for the Cape Verdean Women's Social Club. Canja was also active in other local organizations and chaired the Cape Verdean Debutante Ball for nine years.



**Marie Equi**  
Location near Marie Equi Birthplace  
New Bedford prepared physician and political agitator Marie Equi (1872-1952) for a lifetime of social justice advocacy. Marie's Oregon medical practice and nationwide activism were influenced by her working class experiences while growing up in New Bedford, where she was born on South Second Street. Marie worked for women's suffrage, reproductive rights, and workers' rights. In 1918, Marie served 10 months in San Quentin for sedition. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt pardoned her in 1933.



**Mary T. Vermette**  
Casa dos Botes Discovery Center  
Her close friends lovingly called her MTV, so appropriate for a woman who channeled everything Portuguese in a way that no other South Coast woman has done. Deeply rooted in her Azorean heritage, Dr. Mary T. Vermette (1934-2003) worked with the Azorean Maritime Heritage Society and the New Bedford Whaling Museum to promote Azorean culture and the shared whaling heritage between New Bedford and the Azores. Mary oversaw the construction of Azorean whaleboats at the Casa dos Botes.

"The whaleboats are a bridge between here and the Azores; something physical of our past that we can see, that shows the presence of the Azorean people here." — Mary T. Vermette



**Sarah Rotch Arnold**  
Mariners' Home  
Nineteenth-century New Bedford's Sarah Rotch Arnold (1786-1860) was dedicated to her community, social reform, religious tolerance, and horticultural beauty. Sarah oversaw charitable work amongst families of seamen, supported abolitionist causes, and believed "the spirit of Truth is not limited to any sect" of religious denomination. In 1851, Sarah presented her late father's mansion to the New Bedford Port Society for a "Mariner's Home" to support seamen.



[www.historicwomensouthcoast.org](http://www.historicwomensouthcoast.org)



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