

## WEATHER

Today:  
Mostly sunny;  
High of 74.  
Tonight:  
Low of 53.  
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## Familiar face to take the helm at Museum of Old Newbury



Bethany  
Groff Dorau

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NEWBURYPORT — After more than seven years as executive director of the Museum of Old Newbury, Susan C.S. Edwards will retire at the end of the month, making way for another person to take the helm.

Bethany Groff Dorau, who has dedicated 21 years to Historic New England's Spencer-Peirce-Little Farm, will assume the role of executive director on June 28.

Dorau currently oversees 11 North Shore museums as regional administrator at Historic New England.

With the help of others,

she led efforts to transform the farm, a National Historic Landmark, from a traditional house museum to a lively, family-friendly destination for people to gather, host events, discover history and visit with the site's resident farm animals. Visitation grew from under 8,000 visitors a year to over 40,000.

She also established partnerships with numerous organizations including the Newburyport Education Foundation, the Firehouse Center for the Arts and the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

A history buff and author of "A Brief History

of Old Newbury" and "A Newburyport Marine in World War I: The Life and Legacy of Eben Bradbury," Dorau said she was drawn to her profession because she knows there is still a lot of "original material," or objects and houses throughout Greater Newburyport



Susan C.S.  
Edwards

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## MUSEUM

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that tell stories about particular moments in time.

"I'm a preservationist in that I want to preserve the story of how humans lived, where they lived and what they used," she said.

Though she grew up in Canada, Dorau comes from a very old Newbury family. When she moved here at the age of 12, she didn't know anyone. It was through her exploration of history that she made connections and met people.

Dorau recently moved from Newburyport to the Poore family farm in West Newbury, where her children are the seventh generation to live in the circa 1817 house.

She believes there is something "stabilizing" about looking down a street in her community and just knowing that people have been walking it for a few hundred years.

"I think there are people who collect silver; there are people who collect houses; and I am a person that collects humans," Dorau said, explaining how she loves to discover the stories of people over the course of history.

Edwards, who has been executive director of the Museum of Old Newbury since 2014, has spent close to 50 years in the museum profession.

Though she is retiring from her current role, she will assist Dorau in her transition and continue to work part time at the museum on collections care and management.

"I'm just so grateful to have had the opportunity to work with some really wonderful people during the last seven years," Edwards said.

Looking back, she is most proud of the work she has done over the years to "bring collections to life" at the museum, especially all the research that went into studying the daguerreotypes of Henry Coit Perkins.

One of the photos was even loaned for an exhibit at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

The museum owns four daguerreotypes that are among some of the first images produced in this country through that photographic process.

"Bringing those to life was something that was really important to me," Edwards said.

During her tenure, the museum has experienced

outstanding growth in membership, volunteer participation and donor support. It has also received significant grant funding.

Another fond memory for Edwards was the acquisition of the 1725 Shem Drowne weathervane, which was made possible by an anonymous gift.

Most recently, the museum completed a major renovation project installing new electrical and security systems in the 213-year-old Cushing House.

"I'm just grateful for the support of the community, the funding agencies and our members and friends," Edwards said. "It's been a really wonderful, wonderful experience serving as the executive director and being part of Newburyport."

"We are going to miss her leadership, her competence, and her results," Les Ferlazzo, executive board member and treasurer of the museum, said in a statement.

"She has handled her directorship with admirable expertise, and we as an organization and as individuals will feel a great loss from her absence," he said, while noting that the board is grateful she will continue to help in other capacities.