

Passing of the Torch

Susan C.S. Edwards...in her words:

The Museum of Old Newbury has announced that Executive Director Susan C.S. Edwards will retire at the end of this month. Edwards has led the museum since 2014, during which time it has experienced outstanding growth in membership, volunteer participation and donor support. During the course of her tenure, the museum has received over \$710,000 in grant awards in support of preservation projects, educational outreach programs and exhibitions, collections care and acquisitions.

Following her career of 46 years in the museum profession, Edwards will assist the museum and her successor in a transition process and will continue to work part-time at the museum on collections care and management.

"The Museum of Old Newbury is a venerable organization with a rich history and a significant collection of archives, artifacts, and fine and decorative arts. It has been a privilege and a pleasure to be the steward of this history and the diverse culture it represents," said Edwards. "Over these last seven years, we have been successful in expanding the museum's role in the community and implementing new exhibitions in both the Cushing House and the Perkins Printing and Engraving Building."

Before coming to Newburyport, Edwards served as executive director and curator of two regional museums accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and was employed by The Trustees of Reservations for 18 years, first in western Massachusetts and, subsequently, as the Director of Historic Resources where she was responsible for over 100 historic buildings and ten historic house museums with designed landscapes. She also established the Archives and Research Center, the first statewide collections center for The Trustees.

"We are going to miss her leadership, her competence and her results. These have been obvious to everyone who has had the opportunity to work with her. She has handled her directorship with admirable expertise, and we as an organization and as individuals will feel a great loss from her absence. She has commanded our attention and our respect. We are delighted that she plans to continue her work with us at the curatorial level, and that we shall have a prolonged time to wish her our best in her eventual retirement," said Les Ferlazzo, Treasurer of the museum.

Bethany Groff Dorau...in her words:

With the departure of Susan Edwards, the museum is pleased to announce the appointment of Bethany Groff Dorau as the executive director, assuming her new role as of June 28. "When our Board worked on a wish list of possibilities for a new Executive Director the name which came up most often was Bethany's," said executive board member and treasurer Les Ferlazzo. "We are delighted to have been able to attract a person of such proven talent and so much obvious affection for all things old Newbury. She requires no introduction to the community, but we look forward to providing opportunities for you to see her at work under our banner."

Dorau has deep roots in Newbury, Newburyport and West Newbury, and is perhaps best known for her 21 years at Historic New England's Spencer-Peirce-Little Farm. With the help of colleagues and community members, Dorau led a transformation of the National Historic Landmark from a traditional house museum to a vibrant, visible, family-friendly farm, complete with resident farm animals. She established innovative partnerships with numerous organizations, from the Newburyport Education Foundation, the Firehouse Center for the Arts, and, notably, the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. During her tenure at the farm, visitation grew from under 9,000 visitors a year to over 40,000. She also developed innovative programs and events at the circa 1670 Swett-Ilsley House and the 1678 Coffin House in Newbury, and 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.

"Old Newbury has been my life for the past two decades," says Dorau. "I have come to love this community and its incredible history during my tenure at Historic New England, and I look forward to deepening these connections at the Museum of Old Newbury. We have a world-class collection and world-class stories, and I am excited to find new ways to share these treasures with the community."

Dorau is the author of *A Brief History of Old Newbury* and *A Newburyport Marine in World War I* and her writing has appeared in the *New York Times*, *New England Quarterly*, *Magill's Literary Annual*, *Historic New England Magazine* and numerous other publications. She is a primary contributor to *Defining Documents in American History* and has co-chaired the New England history track of the annual Newburyport Literary Festival, along with colleague and fellow historian Ghlee Woodworth, for the past seven years.

Dorau was recently promoted to the position of North Shore Regional Administrator at Historic New England, where she was responsible for the eleven museums north of Boston and served as the Director of Cultural Tourism for the Essex National Heritage Area from 2001 to 2002.