



The **ARNOLD**
ARBORETUM
of HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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City of New Bedford
Community Preservation Committee
133 William Street
New Bedford, MA 02740
Re: Restoration of the James Arnold Mansion Landscape – Phase 2 – Surveys

Dear Committee members,

I write on behalf of the staff of the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University to offer our support of efforts by The James Arnold Mansion, Inc., a 501-c-3 organization in the City of New Bedford, to secure funding for a second phase of surveys toward the restoration of the historically significant James Arnold Mansion landscape. The Arnold Arboretum—the first public arboretum in America, and an Olmsted-designed landscape on the National Registry of Historic Places—is the only other landscape that is uniquely tied to James Arnold, a critical and pioneering figure in advancing and popularizing horticulture and gardening in New England. We are thrilled by the efforts of the James Arnold Mansion, Inc. to honor the legacy of the Arboretum’s namesake and benefactor through the restoration of his New Bedford home and its once legendary gardens as a critical historical and cultural link to the Arboretum and to the vocation of public horticulture in America.

James Arnold was a renowned plantsman and founding member of the New Bedford Horticultural Society, and was noted for his work in experimental agriculture. His vision for a public museum of trees, which became a reality in Boston through his munificence, was foreshadowed by his own magnificent living collection of plants at his estate in New Bedford. During his life, he opened his private gardens to the public, an unusual and highly regarded act at the time. On his death 1868, Arnold’s estate was lauded as “a home, the most conspicuous among all our homes, for culture, for hospitality, for charity.” Arnold’s will provided a significant bequest which was to be directed to the advancement of horticulture in New England, and thus the Arnold Arboretum was established in his name on property donated to Harvard University by Boston merchant Benjamin Bussey. Without Arnold’s generosity and passion for plants and their cultivation—garnered through his own experience creating a garden of singular character at his estate in New Bedford—the Arnold Arboretum may never have been created, and this touchstone for the study and appreciation of plants and our environment would not be a part of our cultural heritage in the Commonwealth.

Therefore, we strongly urge the Community Preservation Committee to consider the application of the James Arnold Mansion, Inc. for funding a Site/Topographic Survey and Ground Penetrating Radar Survey to advance their efforts to learn more about the history and significance of their landscape. This work will provide data on changes to the landscape over time, show accurate existing conditions, and help guide their efforts toward a faithful and appropriate restoration of this important landscape to the story of plants, people, and public horticulture in New England.

With best wishes,

Jon M. Hetman
Director of External Relations and Communications