

## In Whaling Days

(From Barnstable Patriot,  
Sept. 14, 1831)

WHALING—This business is now successfully and increasingly carried on in Falmouth. But a few years since the hazard of this enterprise was first made in that place, by E. Swift, Esq. as principal and several others—there are now owned in that place four Whalers which have done well so far, and we understand it is contemplated building two or three others immediately. The Uncas, Capt. Bunker, recently returned from her first voyage in the Pacific, was built in Falmouth, of live oak timber and proved to be a first rate ship—she landed a cargo of oil which nearly exceeded in quantity any cargo before brought into the United States, and but for the staving some of her ground tier casks in consequence of bad weather she experienced in doubling the Horn on her return, would have probably enabled her enterprising owners and crew to say she brought home more oil than any previous ship. As it was, it is believed her cargo was sold for the most money; it amounted to \$82,000—paying her owners the cost of the ship, all expenses of the voyage, including interest and insurance and leaving them the ship, now valued at \$26,000. Most heartily do we wish their prosperity to continue while their exertions are so laudable; and very commendable should we esteem a similar undertaking from this place, and we see not why it should not be profitable too;—but we have but little hope of any such thing, while the enterprise of our monied men scarcely extends beyond the embellishing their own gardens, lest exposing their property to the eyes of the public should subject them to the oppressive justice of paying their proportion of the public taxes.

## A Heart-to-Heart Talk About Hearts

THE heart of a 90-foot whale beats about fifteen times a minute. The heart of the "upogebia"—a tiny microscopic crustacean and a distant cousin of our familiar friend, the lobster—beats about 67 times a minute. The little fellow's heart is only 15/1000 of an inch in diameter! The human heart hits up a slightly higher rate of 72 beats a minute.

## How Much Does a Whale Weigh?

OLD MOTHER EARTH has given birth to many an animal of monstrous size, such as the famed dinosaur. But none of them, excepting the whale itself, has ever reached the size of the great whale. For the whale is the largest and mightiest monster ever known on the earth. Although the whale which men have so assiduously sought for their oil and bone have seldom exceeded sixty feet in length, even that is an enormous length for any animal. Try pacing off sixty feet outdoors—you can hardly do it in any ordinary home—and you will gain some idea of how far the whale's mouth was from the tip of its tail! And still, there were—and probably still are—whales whose length exceeded one hundred feet. Add that extra distance to your measured pace!

The whale's monstrosity does not consist solely in its great length. It weighs, roughly, one ton for every foot of that length, so that an average oil whale would weigh sixty tons, and the really big fellows one hundred tons, or 200,000 pounds by short ton measure. That is a whale of a lot of whale!

## A Whale of A Fleet

IN January of the year 1874 no fewer than seventeen whaling vessels—all schooners, and not one square rigger—were owned in Provincetown. At that time, two of the craft were at sea in the cold North Atlantic. Another was at sea, and the remainder of the fleet were to head for the northern waters shortly. The sight of fourteen whaling vessels in Provincetown Harbor today would stir up tremendous interest. The fact that at that time the entire fleet was composed of schooners, indicates that the whaling ship owners found schooners not only more easily handled than the more impressive-looking barks, brigs, and full-rigged ships, all square-rigged, but that they needed very few men to handle them, thus releasing more hands for the hunt and resultant work.

## Whaling

WHALING was an important American industry during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Sperm oil from the sperm whale was used in the manufacture of ointments and in the making of candles. Whalebone, the horny, ridged palate at the roof of the whale's mouth, was made into stays and corsets for fashionable Colonial dames. One of the most valuable substances which could be had from a whale was ambergris, a hard mass found in the intestines of sick whales and used as a fixative for perfumes.

Modern whaling is infinitely more efficient than old-time whaling. The harpoon used today is shot into the whale. It has a pointed bombhead which explodes on contact, shooting long barbs into the flesh of the whale. When a whale is towed to the shore for processing, the carcass is made more buoyant by inserting a sharp perforated steel tube into the stomach and then pumping it full of air, and pieces of the tail flukes of the whale are cut off. At the factory the blubber is actually peeled off the whale in long strips which run the whole length of the body. The blubber is boiled down for oil.

"Sulphur-bottom" whales give as many as 6 tons of oil, 3½ tons of guano, and 3 cwt. of whalebone. Sperm oil obtained from the head cavity of a sperm whale may amount to 145 barrels from a single whale.

## Whaling at Province-Town

THE following report comes from the *Boston Post Boy* of February 19, 1739:

"We have advice from Province-Town on Cape Cod, that the whaling season is now over with them, in which there has been taken in that Harbor six small whales, and one of a larger size about six foot bone: beside which 'tis said two small whales have been killed at Sandwich, which is all that has been done in that business in the whole Bay. 'Tis added, that seven or eight families in Province-Town, among whom are the principal inhabitants, design to remove from that place to Casco-Bay in the spring of the year."

## Art of Whale-Fishing Capers Taught Islanders

NOT long after Cape Codders began chasing and killing whales, "Nantucket bristled with harpoons." For there "the hook caught those leviathans as the Penobscot weirs catch salmon." Nantucketers learned from the Cape Codders how to whale; indeed, they induced a master whaleman, one Ichabod Paddock, to come over and teach them what to do to catch whales.

It is said that the Pilgrims would quickly have gone after whales, which they must have seen often from the shore, and perhaps numbers of times as the *Mayflower*, herself no longer than some of the sea monsters, but they

had no gear for the purpose. The Indians used to go out in canoes and drive the whales in until they grounded in shallow water. Exploring parties reported seeing them stripping blubber from a stranded blackfish caught in this manner.

The first whaling venture to the Falkland Islands, (two islands in the South Pacific Ocean, with a number of smaller, neighboring islands), was the enterprise of two inhabitants of Truro. They received a hint of good whaling here from Admiral Montague, of the British navy, in 1774. The Truro whalemens were Captain David Smith and Captain Gamaliel Collins.

## Whaling Logs

NEEDLESS to remind any old salt, of course, that whaling log's were not logs of wood, but books of pages, and that in them the captain or the mates of a whaling ship would record the events of the day and night aboard all through the vessel's voyage. Wellfleet feels that there is hardly any old family in the town which does not possess at least one old log.

In a log, the captain would enter the date, the weather and any notable changes of weather, direction of the wind, miles "logged" or traveled since the last entry; the names of any other vessels "spoken" or visited; any illnesses, injuries, or misconduct aboard; and the activities of the crew. If whales were taken this was recorded. The ship's "position" at sea was most carefully recorded; and also any land sighted or ports visited. At the end of the voyage, the ship's

owners had in the ship's log a pretty good picture of the principal events of the voyage.

It is said that one whaler had a ship whose mate was given to excessive drinking, and day after day the captain would make the log entry: "Mate Brown drunk today." Then the Captain became ill, and Mate Brown was in charge. He saw the entries in the log, and had his revenge for them. Each day of the skipper's illness, he wrote in the log, "Captain Jones sober today."

## Poor Whaling Season

A century ago, the complaints of a poor whaling season were being heard up and down the Cape. The Provincetown men were dismayed at the fact that several vessels had returned with a total of only sixty barrels of sperm oil. A poor season like that meant tightening up all along the line at home of expenditures and expenses, and need to go out soon again for renewed efforts to bring home the oil.

## October 1853

Provincetown — Our whalemens have done very small this season. The Rienzi has brought in only 10 barrels sperm. Schr. Hanover has just arrived with only 50 barrels. All the fleet are now in from the Banks fishing grounds except the Pledge, which was sunk Sept. 23rd by the Hamburg ship Donan. Five of the Pledge's crew were drowned