By 1840, Nantucket with a population of 9,700 persons had become the whaling center of the world. Nantucket's golden age of whaling was, like most golden ages, brief. After awhile, whale ships became too large to clear the narrow bars outside the harbor. All departments of whaling began to move to New Bedford. In 1846 a great fire destroyed 1/3 of the town. Three years later Nantucketers, by the hundreds left for the gold fields of California. The Civil War took its toll of Nantucket men and ships. The last whaling vessel to sail from Nantucket, put to sea in 1869, ten years after oil was discovered in Titusville, Pennsylvania. Petroleum had arrived. As the westward movement of the American people continued, the Nantucket population decreased to 4,000. By 1870 Nantucket homes were being opened to visitors. Tourists were no longer regarded with a tolerant eye. They were welcomed with sincerity.

Today, tourists are the main source of wealth on the island. In July and August with an influx of 12,000 summer residents and daily visitors the town can seem crowded. In the summer farmers back their trucks up to the curb on Main Street and sell fresh flowers and fresh vegetables. There are three good golf courses, good tennis courts and excellent horseback riding. However, a five minute bicycle ride will take you away from the crowds in town and bring you to the majesty of beach, sky and surf. For us the day includes heading for the nearest beach for a day of sun and relaxation in the water. Frequently, adults and children alike gather shells, blue mussels, little clams and other interesting specimen of marine life. Incidentally, for those of you who have not eaten blue mussels, the next time you see them on a menu, be sure to order them. They are very succulent. Before they are served, the small white barnacle shells are scrubbed off and the mussels cleaned. One of the great delights is catching blue fish either by surf

casting from the beach or by trolling in a charter boat outside the harbor. In the winter, the charter boat captains earn their livings by scalloping for the tiny delicious bay scallops which "run" from November until March. A typical all day beach picnic involves digging a pit, building a fire, letting it burn down/covering the coals with wet sea-weed, and then putting in clams, lobsters, corn on the cob and potatoes. Once covered with a tarpaulin the clams and lobsters steam for over an hour. No one has to be called twice to come and eat.

Much publicity has been given to Walter Beinecke, Jr. who presently owns eighty percent of the town's commercial property. As one of the S & H Green Stamp heirs he and his family have recently given Yale its Beinecke Rare Book Library and a $15,000,000 endowment fund! So he easily can afford his three Nantucket houses. His schemes for the island are to preserve its historic past and to prevent it from becoming a honky-tonk tourist trap. Some of his schemes have earned the indignation and annoyance of many of the older year-round residents. He and others like him would like to discourage the day visitors or trippers, who come over on an excursion boat and leave within 4 hours. The saying goes, a tripper is one who comes over for a few hours with a dirty shirt and a $5.00 bill and doesn't change either. However, the 4 hour visit to the island is the only brush that many people have with Nantucket and its storied history of commerce and whaling and so/should not cannot really be prevented.

In some ways, Nantucket has changed not at all since it was the whaling capital of the world. Every breath of air is still washed pure by the ocean. The old mill which stands as a symbol of fresh air, is still on the high point of town. (It was badly burned last summer by hippies in retaliation for a

police crackdown on the drug cluture, but it still stands.) Its four outstretched arms were once a signal telling returning whale ships whether the coast was clear of British frigates. As a recent editorial in the weekly newspaper which has been published on the island since 1821 said, "The old mill built 225 years ago is a priceless heritage of the unique Nantucket past. Its historical value will grow through the years ahead. It is a lovely windmill of softly weathered shingles and rough hewn beams, of cleaverly fitted oak and machinery and gracefully swinging canvas sails." Stewart Udal, writing in the New York Times recently, termed working windmills as a symbol of ecological purity since they utilize a free resource, the wind, and produce no material waste. Like sailing vessels their operation bypasses the entire problem of consumption of nonrenewable fuels and production of pollutants." In a prophetic statement, he says that the windmill symbolizes the next goal of technology which must be to build machines which approach as closely as possible the windmills operating condition: zero environmental impact.

The Norsemen probably discovered Nantucket in the 10th century, but they were notoriously careless about keeping records so the credit goes to an Englishman, Bartholomew Gosnold who was searching for Virginia in 1602. In 1635, Charles the 1st. ordered his Plymouth Colony to deed the island to the Earl of Sterling who in turn sold Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard (that other island) and other land to Thomas Mayhew for 40 pounds in 1641. Mayhew was a puritan, Watertown, Massachusetts merchant who set out to make good Christians of the Indians on Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard. He translated the Bible into Natick language and made many converts among the islands 1500 Indians. In 1659, he sold the island for

30 pounds and two beaver hats to nine men, including Tristram Coffin, Thomas Macy, Christopher Hussey and others, who lived in Salisbury in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Coffin was the moving spirit of the venture and is considered the father of Nantucket. (Four generations later he had 1500 descendants.) Thomas Macy and his wife, Sarah, his five children, a widower named Edward Starbuck and a 12 year old orphan named Isaac Coleman were the first white settlers in the fall of 1659. The next year 10 more families moved to Nantucket.

One of the reasons the original settlers moved to Nantucket was because they couldn't stand the bossiness of witch burning leaders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Macy's trouble with the leaders of the Colony started from the fact that he had given shelter to four Quakers who had stopped at his Salisbury house during a heavy rainstorm. To let a Quaker into a house, no matter how hard it was raining, was a violation of a Massachusetts law passed in 1655. The law described the Quakers "... as a cursed sect of heretics lately risen up in the world, who take upon themselves to speak and write blasphemous opinions, despising government and the order of God." Quakers were to be sentenced to death and those who harbored them were to be fined and whipped. Macy escaped with a minor fine and no whipping when he told the Court that the Quakers had only stayed in his house during the storm three quarters of an hour, and didn't speak very much. John Greenleef Whittier, the Quaker poet, celebrated this episode in his poem "The Exile" about 1840. (You must remember that the Puritans hadn't come to the new world to establish religious freedom; they had left England because of the lack of religious freedom which prevented

them from worshiping in their own way. But their purpose was to establish and enforce their own religion, not to found a colony in which every man could worship as he pleased. There was far less religious freedom in Massachusetts than in England.) Most of the people who migrated to Nantucket from the mainland, however, weren't motivated by religious matters. They came to raise sheep because there was adequate grazing for sheep.

As the whites increased on the Island, the Indians decreased. The history of red and white race relations on Nantucket portrays, in capsule form, the whole dilemma of Indians and white men trying to live together. By 1701, Tristram Coffin's daughter, Mary Coffin Starbuck, had become a convert to the Quaker faith. The first Quaker meetings were held in her house. By 1711 there was a Friends Meeting House. Within a few years about half the islanders were Quakers. Whaling and Quakerism came to Nantucket about the same time. Whales brought money and the Quakers saw to it that the money was wisely saved and invested. The Quakers also bred men ideally suited by temperament to captain whaling vessels.

Besides being tight-fisted, it has been said that the Nantucket Quaker was a glum, sanctimonious, nosey, meddlesome killjoy. Although they shipped whale oil around the world, they had a phobia against wasting it. "Two lamps burning and no ship at sea" was the snearing phrase applied to anyone who made a bright show of prosperity by living above his income.

When people from off island asked why there weren't any street lights, the Quakers had two different answers depending on the world price of whale oil. If the price were high, the Quakers said that they naturally wanted to sell all their "ile" while the market was up. And if the price were low they said they had to sell every drop they could get their hands on

to make ends meet. The Quaker religion on Nantucket reached such peculiar extremes as contrasted with the more gentle characteristics of the Philadelphia Quakers, before it finally expired from its own bossy excesses. Yet before it died on Nantucket it fathered an amazing society which might have stepped right out of the pages of Franklin's Poor Richard's Almanac. Truth, honesty, craftsmanship, industry, plainness of dress and sobriety were all part of the religion. Solely because of these traits, Nantucket became the one place on earth where whaleships could best be fitted for sea. And although Quakers opposed violence and bloodshed, they became unexcelled at the goriest, riskiest, most thrilling and most violent occupation of the day - hunting whales.

Nantucket women were all ahead of the rest of the colonies in securing women rights. An island woman had to do a man's chores when he was away at sea. Once accustomed to running things in his absence, she didn't take too much nonsense from him when he came home. Captain Benjamin Worth was home a total of only six years during his 41 years as a whaler. He bragged about the fact that he brought home 19,000 barrels of whale oil and sailed 879,000 miles and never lost a man. But many were lost at sea so the ratio of widows and spinsters was high. In 1700 there were four women for every man.

A famous visitor to the island in 1782, Hector St. John de Crevecoeur in his book Letters From An American Farmer, said half in jest, "A singular custom prevails here among (these lonely) women. They have adopted these many years the Asiatic custom of taking a dose of opium every morning and so deeply rooted is it that they would be at a loss as to how to live without this indulgence." Crevecoeur also said, "At my first landing, (on Nantucket), I was much surprised at the disagreeable smell which struck

me in many parts of the town; it is caused by the whale oil, and it is unavoidable; the neatness peculiar to these people can neither remove nor prevent it."

Despite the unattractive characteristics of the Quakers on Nantucket they were good people. They didn't fine or torture offenders; they simply ostracized them. Compared with other punishments popular at the time- burning at the stake and cutting off hands and ears, ostracism was a mild price to pay. No one was forced to be a Quaker. But if he wanted to be one he had to conform. The Friends were completely honest, deplored violence, looked after their poor, considered all men and women equal, and practically eliminated debt, poverty and alcoholism on Nantucket. Crevecoeur had a comment on this too: "Idleness is the most heinous sin that can be committed on Nantucket. Literally speaking, the Nantucket men are never idle. Even if they go to the market place, they always have a piece of cedarwood in their hands. And while they are talking they will employ themselves in whittling it into something useful".

Quakerism thrived on hardships, but it couldn't stand prosperity. So when Quakers got rich from whale oil, some of them wanted to build nice, big houses, get servants, and so forth. Some even wanted to engage in occupations of which the Quakers disapproved. One famous Nantucket lady, Maria Mitchell, was a star gazer. The Quakers disapproved of Astronomy, so they disowned Maria. She went on to discover a comet and to establish herself as America's first internationally known Astronomer. She was decorated by many kings and governments. When Mathew Vassar founded his college; he asked her to head the Department of Astronomy. By the Civil War, Quakerism was all but dead on Nantucket. It has been said that no literature or art of any consequence stemmed from the Quaker domination of Nantucket. But from England to Chile to China, wherever the island sailing ships had ventured, a Nantucketer's word was his bond.

The Quakers managed to keep Nantucket neutral in the Revolutionary War. In spite of its neutrality, however, Nantuckets suffered unbelievable

hardships during the revolution and the War of 1812. There never was enough food or fuel. In violation of treaties, the English captured Nantucket ships, impressed Nantucket seamen and at intervals blockaded / the island. Both British and Americans continually accused Nantucketers of dealing with the enemy. Incredible as it seems, neutral Nantucket with a population of slightly more than 4500 people lost 1600 lives and 134 ships between 1775 and 1781. If Nantucket had not been "neutral" it would have been wiped out altogether, by one side or the other.

21 Nantucket men served aboard John Paul Jones' Privateer Ranger and the Bon Homme Richard and Jones said that this crew was the best afloat. He harrassed British shipping quite successfully. As a result he captured several hundred British prisoners when he sighted the brand new British frigate Serapis. The subsequent 3 1/2 hour battle by moonlight is one of the most famous in naval history. The first man killed aboard the American ship was a Nantucketer, but another Nantucketer, Henry Gardner, helped save the day by leading a group of men up the Richard's splintered masts and lobbing hand grenades at the British cannon. The grenades didn't damage the cannon but they demoralized the gun crews, and then one lucky throw hit a pile of ammunition and the resulting explosion cleared the deck. Somehow, John Paul Jones managed to keep his sieve of an old boat afloat after it had been hit a number of times by ordering every prisoner to pump or drown until the British skipper had had enough and struck his colors. Jones quickly transferred all his men and prisoners to the Serapis while the Bon Homme Richard went down to the bottom. Thus, the battle was won by the ship that sank! Jones was understandably proud of his crew.

At the foot of Main Street, stands a brick building which I mentioned earlier. It is now called The Pacific Club where retired Nantucket sea captains exchanged yarns and played checkers and cribbage. Originally it was William Rotch's Market, a combination office and counting house, which was built in 1774. Painted on the outside of the building are the names "Dartmouth, Eleanor and Beaver". These vessels owned by William Rotch and his brother sailed from Nantucket in 1772 with whale oil for the lamps of London. The ships were chartered in London by the East India Company and sent back to Boston with a cargo of tea for the colonists. While in Boston harbor, the three vessels were boarded by "Indians" who tossed the cargo over the side in the famous Boston Tea Party. Because Rotch was a good friend of John Hancock's, the ships weren't damaged by the "Indians".

Whale was king on Nantucket for the better part of two centuries. By 1725 Nantucketers were sailing all the way up to the Artic Circle in search of whales. By 1790 sea captains were going to the Pacific for whales. Whaling involved more discomfort and called for more daring than any adventurous job short of war and piracy the world has ever known. Nantucket Quakers who were conscientous objectors to war, were the best whalers. Their prey was the biggest animal on earth and their weapons were very primitive. They went any place in the world in search of whales, despite typhoons, cannibals, British and Spanish men of war, hidden coral reefs and pirates.

Whales have been killed which weighed 176 tons or more than 2000 men. Some whales can open their jaws 30 feet wide. A whale tongue weighs as much as an entire elephant. Certain species of whales feed mainly on 300 pound squids. The Blue Whale grows at a rate of 200 pounds per day.

Since it is a mammal, it nurses its young. The new-born whale is about 25 feet long and weighs about 2 tons. It suckles for up to 14 months, during which time it doubles its length and may add 20 tons to its mass. Like other true mammals, it has warm blood, breathes air and drowns if it stays under water too long. Whales are know to descend more than 1000 feet and remain submerged for more than an hour. The ability of the great whales to dive deeply without incurring nitrogen narcosis on descent, or the bends on ascent, is probably due to the construction of their respiratory system. When whales emerge from the dive, they exhale a cloud of watery vapor from one or two blow holes. Sperm whales have two blow holes. Blue whales have only one at the top of the head, This cloud rises, geyser fashion, as high as 50 feet in the air and is the blow that masthead lookouts watch for.

Some whales are monogamous but Sperm whales travel in harems with a bull in charge. When another bull shows up to challenge him, the two males back away, then rush forward at speeds of 35 miles an hour to butt heads with a sickening impact. Someone has compared this to 3 locomotives in tandem having a head-on collision with 3 other locomotives in tandem.

Our knowledge of the cetacean family of whales is very limited even today. as as 100 clasification them into
There are/many/varieties of whale. One /separates / two general types: Those with teeth and those with baleen or strands of bone which hang down inside their mouths and act like seives.

The Pygmy Right Whale lives in the southern oceans. It is the smallest of the Baleen Whales.

The Black or Biscay Right Whale lives in more temperate waters and does not frequent the icy polar seas. Excessive hunting of these has much reduced their numbers.

The Gray Whale of the Pacific migrates from the Arctic to Lower California to give birth to its young. It was hunted to excess and was reduced to a rarity, but has recovered in numbers in recent years. This is the whale which is the subject

of an article in the current issue of the National Geographic.

The Fin Whale is second in size only to the Blue Whale. It has been the main quarry of the Whaler since the killing off of the Blue Whale and its numbers are greatly reduced.

The Blue Whale is the giant of whales and is the largest animal that has ever lived. During the first half of this century, this whale was hunted so intensively that the vast population was reduced to a few thousand.

The male Narwhal carries a spirally twisted tusk up to nine feet long projecting from its snout.

The largest toothed whale gets its name of "Sperm Whale" from the spermaceti found in the enormous reservoir in the forehead. It was the basis of the American Whaling industry in the old days.

(This is one of the earliest prints showing Indians in canoes going after whales. Note the strange appearance of the whale.

This old print shows whales being cut up after having been pulled ashore.)

Nantucketers went after the biggest of whales in open boats, smaller than the mouth of their prey. Frank B. Gilbreath, Jr., the author of Cheaper By The Dozen, has written humorously, "Arm a mouse with a pin, put him in a toy automobile and send him out to attack an elephant and you'll have a comparable situation in regard to size."

The first whaling at Nantucket was of the off-shore variety. When lookouts along the beach saw a whale, they signalled boat crews which rowed out and attacked the animal. Then his carcass was towed ashore and his blubber " tried out". The first such whale was killed off shore in 1672.

Soon small boats supplemented the row boats in chasing down the whales sighted from shore. Then in 1712 a small whaling sloop owned by Christopher Hussey was blown out to sea in a gale. After the wind died down, Hussey headed back to Nantucket. He sighted a whole school of spermaceti whales. He killed one and towed part of it back to the island. The Sperm whale was of much more value than the Right whales which were formerly caught off-shore. In addition to its blubber, and whale bone the spermaceti whale has a cavity in the top of its head containing up to 500 gallons of the highest grade oil. By 1732 little Nantucket sloops of 40 tons were hunting whales as far north as the Davis Straits between Greenland and Baffin Island. In 1759 the first square rigged whaling ship was fitted out on Nantucket. This was the forerunner of a whole fleet of ships seaworthy to go anywhere. They had cranes to hoist the segments of the cut-up whales aboard, brick try-works to boil down the blubber and hundreds of hogsheads to store the oil.

Obed Macy, in his History of Nantucket, says that in 1690, someone on the island predicted that the ocean was a green pasture where one day their children's grandchildren would go for bread. By the mid seventeen-hundreds, Nantucketers were plowing the oceans as no one had before. They began to cross and re-cross almost every mile of ocean, and in the process, discovered new islands, mapped shoals, and learned much about weather and currents. At the same period, merchantships were still sailing in a straight line between various ports. The American captains were already acquainted with the Gulf Stream, but the English packet boats were not. This delayed the English boats by as much as two weeks on each trip from England to the colonies.

When Captain Timothy Folger reported the workings of the Gulf Stream, he sketched a rough map and sent it to his cousin, Benjamin Franklin, who was then Postmaster General of the Colonies. Franklin had the map engraved and it revolutionized commerce between Europe and America. (Incidentally, Franklin's mother was a Nantucket Folger and Franklin himself missed being born on Nantucket by only two months.)

Franklin's chart of the Gulf Stream records velocity in "minutes" which correspond to knots or nautical miles per hour. He advised mariners to use thermometers to determine when they entered the current, thus taking advantage of it when sailing east and avoiding it on their return. He attributed the Gulf Stream current to the trade winds, which became the prevelent view until 1860 when an earlier theory of Franklin's was accepted involving gravity and the frictional drag of the winds across the water surface. This is still the accepted theory today, although oceanographers have begun to advance more sophisticated hypotheses.

The first Nantucket whale ship to double Cape Horn was the Beaver, captained by Paul Worth, which made the dangerous journey in 1791. Thereafter, Nantucketers began to cross the Pacific as they had the Atlantic. The Pacific was almost completely unknown at the time. Only 13 years before, Cook, the English explorer, had landed at Hawaii where the Polynesians first had fallen to the ground and worshipped him as a God, and then had murdered him in revenge for a flogging given to a native who stole a boat.

The whalers, themselves, discovered hundreds of islands in the Pacific where the natives had never seen white men before. More than 30 Pacific Islands and reefs are named for Nantucketers. One of their most surprising finds occurred in 1808 when Captain Mayhew Folger sailed up to

the supposedly uninhabited island of Pitcairn to replenish his supply of fresh water. He was amazed to see a group of handsome boys put out from Pitcairn in a canoe and approach his ship and when the boys hailed the Topaz in English with a cockney accent, Folger was speechless.

Inadvertently, Folger had blundered upon the hiding place of the mutineers of Captain Bligh's H. M. S. Bounty, and thus solved one of the most intriguing maritime mysteries of all times. Captain Folger and his crew went ashore and received a warm welcome from the last of the mutineers, a white haired old Englishman named Alexander Smith. Smith was the unofficial king of the island - presiding benevolently over a small group of middle aged but still handsome Polynesian women and 20 or more "beautiful children". The mutiny on the Bounty occurred in 1789 when Fletcher Christian and his crew seized command and cast adrift Captain Bligh and 18 loyal members of the crew. The mutineers then sailed the Bounty to Haiti where some of them elected to remain and eventually were captured, taken back to England, and hanged. But Christian and 8 other mutineers along with 12 Tahitian women sailed to uninhabited Pitcairn. There they burned the Bounty so as not to attract searchers to their hiding place. For 19 years the British Navy had been looking for the mutineers to bring them to justice. During that time all the culprits had died except Alexander Smith. When Folger reached civilization with proof that the mystery had been solved, his news threw the maritime world into an uproar. Incidentally, the British admiralty allowed Smith to remain unmolested in the middle of the Pacific where he died in 1829.

There are scores of hard-to-believe, but well documented, coincidences about whaling. First Mate Marshall Jenkins was in charge of a boat which

the supposedly uninhabited island of Pitcairn to replenish his supply of fresh water. He was amazed to see a group of handsome boys put out from Pitcairn in a canoe and approach his ship and when the boys hailed the Topaz in English with a cockney accent, Folger was speechless.

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(Melville in Moby Dick described this painting as the finest representation of whaling he knew.

This is a typical barque rigged whaleship in the mid-ninteenth century with six whaleboats. Notice the lookout.)

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Each man aboard a whale ship from the captain to the cabin boy, was entitled to a share of "lay" of the profits of the voyage. The captain's share might be 1/16th or even 1/8th, and the cabin boy's 1/200th. You will remember that Ishmael in Moby Dick was offered a lay of "1/777th". He finally settled for 1/300th part of the profits. All crew members were charged for clothes and other articles they bought from the ship. When this money was taken off the lay, a hand might end up a four year journey with less than $100 in his pocket. Sometimes he even owed the ship money at the end of the journey.

When whaling began on Nantucket it was at first a communal activity. In the early days, a whaleship skipper knew every man of his crew. By 1841 when Melville shipped on the whaler Acushnet, the whaleship was a factory. Crews were dredged from the bottom ranks of all races and nations. One-third of the men were green hands (like Ishmael) and two-thirds deserted every voyage. On Melville's first voyage he jumped ship in the Marianas. On his second he became a mutineer. Greasy luck actually did occur fairly often. For instance, the "Sarah" returned to Nantucket in 1830 after a three year voyage with $98,000 worth of "Ile". The Loper, in the shortest successful voyage to the Pacific, made $50,000 in only 14 months. The Watchman, in addition to "Ile" and whalebone, found 800 pounds of ambergris in 1858 worth $10,000. Then perhaps the biggest compensation of all for men and boys who liked excitement was the virtual certainty of finding adventure exploring the Pacific Islands. On Nantucket, whaling was the test of manhood. One old Nantucket song goes: "So be cheery, my lads, let your hearts never fail, while the bold harpooner is striking the whale." The more a boy heard about the discomforts and dangers, the more he wanted to demonstrate that

he could face them without flinching. And the test was all the more important since some girls on the islands scornfully told their landlubber suitors that they'd never marry a man who hadn't killed a whale.

For recreation, the crews danced and sang and one ship was even famous for its plays and dramatic presentations. But more than anything else they scrimshaved. Scrimshaving is carving and decorating the teeth and pieces of jawbones of whales. Whalemen made all kinds of objects, such as rolling pins, clothespins, chessmen, dominoes, canes, bracelets and yarn winders. They made thousands of jagging wheels which are used for crimping the edges of pie crust. Scrimshaving took time and every whaleman had plenty of that.

At the corner of Centre and Quince Streets, there is an old house where Captain George Pollard, of the Essex, lived back in the 1820's. Everybody on Nantucket knows about Captain Pollard. He is the man who ate his cabin boy, not to mention other assorted members of his crew. The account which follows comes from a book by Frank Gilbreath, Jr. called Whales and Men. Captain Pollard's ship, the 240 ton Essex, was sailing near the Equator in the Pacific at 8 o'clock in the morning of November 20, 1820, when the cry of "thar she blows" went up simultaneously from three lookouts. As the Essex changed course and bore down, the lookouts continued to sing out "thar she blows, she blows, blows, blows." Three whale boats were quickly lowered from their davits. Each was 27 feet long and 6 feet wide and manned by 5 oarsmen and an officer who was the boat steerer. As customary, only three men, the cooper, the cook and the cabin boy were left to sail the Essex. The water was calm and the oars left a herringbone wake like three centipeds walking on top of the water as the craft closed on

their giant prey. The officers at the tillers whispered the rhythm, for the oarsmen, with the refrain "a dead whale or a stove boat".

Ordinarily, the bow oar was pulled by a harpooner. The harpooner, invariably a powerful man, would heave his weapon into the whale and then change places with the boat steering officer. The harpoon wasn't designed to kill the whale, but only to hook it. If everything went right, the monster was killed about an hour after it was hooked and the whale was exhausted from towing the whale boat around the ocean and from gyrations to rid itself of the painful barb. Once the whale was exhausted, the boat was rowed up along side the monster and the officer in the bow went "after its life" with a lance aimed at the lungs.

In this case, First Mate Chase picked up a heavy sharp harpoon connected to the boat with a coiled line, a half-mile long. The First Mate fit his thigh into a specially built brace in the bow and tensed himself for the important effort. The oarsmen with their backs to the whale weren't allowed to look around because there was always a chance that a view of the whale at close quarters might cause them to become panicky. Chase motioned with his left hand that he wanted the boat rowed forward a few feet. The man at the tiller, always using a hand signal, passed along the command. The boat edged forward without a sound. (Some people seem to be under the impression that the harpooner hurled his weapon javelin-fashion a hundred feet or so in a dramatic arc. Actually the harpoon was much too heavy for any such toss. The harpooner used both hands when he hove his weapon and never tried to throw it more than 10 or 15 feet. In other words, the boat had to come within an oar's length of the whale.

At such close quarters, the harpoon seldom missed its mark. The big question, though, was whether the harpoon would hit head-on and whether it would stick. With a tremendous grount, Chase hurled the weapon. It sank deep into the back of the female spermaceti whale and the big beast leaped instinctively, gulped air, and dived. In the split second that Chase got a look at her tail as she submerged, he made a mental note that she would be worth $4,000 if she was worth a cent. The rope attached to the harpoon came to life as it snaked out of its coil amid ship. The line went from the coil carefully arranged in a bailing basket to a logger head or post on the gunwale. It made one loop around the logger head and then came forward through the middle of the boat to a groove in the bow. If a man didn't manage to stay clear of the line he could lose an arm or a leg.

The men shipped their oars. As the logger head began to smoke from the friction of the rope, the man at the tiller sloshed a bucket of water over it. Already the boat was beginning to move fast enough to kick up a white wake. The oarsmen, dripping sweat and filling their lungs with welcome air, sat back for a moment as they prepared to enjoy the most exciting part of the kill - the Nantucket sleigh ride, a dashing, spray-eating spin across the ocean at speeds reaching 25 miles per hour; speeds faster than any person in the world, except a whaling man, had ever traveled on water. The men in Chase's boat didn't get to enjoy their sleigh ride. The line suddenly slacked off. For a moment or two it seemed as if the harpoon must have pulled free. But then there was a bump and a terrifying lurch as the whale surfaced under the boat and with a flip of its tail punched a hole in the side. Then the animal sounded. Chase took one look at the damage. In a split second decision, he seized a hatchet which was kept in the bow for just such an emergency and cut

the line. Miraculously no one was hurt. Some of the men stuffed their jackets into the hole. Chase took over the tiller again and gave orders to row back to the Essex. When they were safely aboard the vessel once more, the mate supervised the repair of the whale boat and watched through his telescope the activity of the other two whale boats. The Captain's boat finally harpooned a whale.

Suddenly a huge sperm bull, much bigger than the female which had smashed their whale boat, surfaced off the bow of the Essex, blew twice and lazily sank again. A few seconds later the whale came up again, about a ship's length off. The bull studied the Essex through eyes not much bigger than a man's and for some unexplained reason exploded into a foaming, frenzied rage. Slapping the water with his ponderous tail, the enraged beast headed for the ship. Never before in the history of whaling had a whale deliberately charged a ship, although ships had bumped into whales accidentally and, of course, whales had attacked the tiny, open whale boats. In amazement that amounted to disbelief, Mate Chase roared orders to the helmsmen. The ship changed course as the man at the wheel veered off but the huge bull changed course with the ship, homed in like the radar-controlled torpedos of today. There was a splintering crash as the beast rammed his jaws into the Essex. The ship was brought up violently as if she had been hit by a rock. "We realized at once the dreadful accident which had befallen us", Chase wrote in the stilted language of the day, "After recovering in a measure from the consternation that had seized us, I concluded that the whale had stove a hole in the ship." Suddenly the whale turned and struck the boat a second time and completely stove in the bow. What was to follow was even more terrifying. As you doubtless recognize, the fate of the Essex parallels

closely the last heroic chapter of Moby Dick. Indeed, the attack on the whale ship by a rogue whale is the basic plot of Moby Dick which was written 30 years later. A copy of Chase's booklet with Melville's pencilled notes on the margin is a collector's item today. Had it not been for what happened to the Essex, Melville probably would have rejected as implausible the thought that his great white whale, Moby Dick, could sink the Pequod. Whales had been known to swim along with ships and scratch their backs by brushing almost affectionately against the ships' bottoms as a dog will do to the underside of a chair, but prior to the Essex episode, a sailor would have gaffowed at the thought of a whale deliberately sinking a ship. The Essex filled with water in a matter of minutes. Just before she shivered and toppled over on her beam ends, Chase managed to launch the spare whale boat while his men grabbed the two compasses from the binnacle and two quadrants from the table in the Officers' Mess.

By chopping the masts away, the boat was allowed to right herself. When she finally did so, with her decks awash, the crew hacked through the planking and salvaged the Captain's and First Mate's sea chests, six hundred pounds of bread, tinder boxes, some fresh water and a couple of live turtles from the Galapagos Islands. Since there were no accurate charts of the area, the Captain decided that the safest procedure would be to head for South America some 2500 miles away! It was agreed that the three boats would remain together if possible. After about two weeks at sea, the boats were so battered that all three were leaking and the men were so weak from short rations they could scarcely bail. One of the turtles was killed the meat /pryed loose from its shell and cooked over a fire built within the shell. The men ate every scrap of it and then eagerly drank the blood. This gave them renewed

strength for a few days and they needed it because a fierce storm struck and every man had to bail for his life while being tossed around on the bottoms of the boats jolted from wave to wave. They were wet all the time, either from spray or from water in the bottoms of the boats or from both. The salt rotted off their clothes and the men blistered in the sun. Festering boils formed where the salt rubbed into the blisters. The men managed to stay alive and keep the three boats together. After 26 days in the ocean, they found a small island. But within 3 days everything edible had been consumed on the island. So the boats were hauled up on the shore and repairs made, and 14 men and the officers set sail again. Three men elected to remain on the island because there was probably enough food and water on the island to sustain 3 people. Two weeks later at night the bearded skeltons huddled together, wet and miserable at the bottoms of the boats trying to draw animal warmth from each other. Two weeks later, the second mate died from a combination of exposure and starvation. They sewed his body in what was left of his clothes and pushed him over the side. Two of the boats drifted apart during a squall. Two weeks later one of the men died in the most horrid and frightful convulsions. By this time there were only 3 men including the first mate in this boat. They proceeded to eat their now departed dead companion. About a week later they were picked up by an Indian ship and found that they had sailed a total of 3700 miles on two legs of a journey which had brought them to within 300 miles of the South American coast. Nothing was ever heard of the second mate's boat, but Captain Pollard made it back alright with one crewman. That boat, too, had turned to cannibalism. Only he and one other man were still alive on their boat when they were picked up near the coast of Chile. The five Nantucketers returned home from South

America aboard the whale ship "Hero" which flew the black flag of disaster, a signal of death from her masthead as she entered Nantucket Harbor. Being a seafaring town, Nantucket understood the rigid hardships which the sea sometimes imposes. In fact, Pollard and Chase both gained prestige because of the remarkable jobs of navigation and of keeping their whale boats afloat. All five of the survivors soon went to sea again and all eventually became captains, except, of course, Pollard who already was one. Although Chase wrote of his experiences, most other Nantucketers were reluctant to discuss the Essex episode, particularly to discuss it with off-islanders. Cannibalism apparently was regarded as a sort of family tragedy that one did not care to mention. A favorite story which is contained in almost every book on Nantucket involves the tale that a young reporter from a Boston newspaper came to the island to interview old whaling captains. The reporter happened to be a descendant of one of the Nantucket families and among those he interviewed was old Captain Owen Chase. At the conclusion of the interview, which had touched only on general matters, the reporter said, "By the way, sir, perhaps you knew one of my great uncles. His name was Isaac Coleman I understood he died in a whale boat in the Pacific." "Know him?" cackled Chase. "Know him? Why, son, I et him."

Incidentally, the ship "Hero" which brought the Essex survivors back to Nantucket was captained by a 16 year old boy who had gone to sea when he was 13 and had been marooned when the Hero was taken by pirates off the Chile coast and the captain shot. Young Obed Starbuck escaped from his guards, rallied some members of the crew, recaptured the Hero and sailed her to Valpariso. So at age 16 he became the captain of the boat and became one of the most successful whaling captains of his generation. He brought

back a record cargo of oil worth $50,000 in 1829. He also discovered 15 or 20 important Pacific islands, among them Starbuck Island and the New Nantucket, now Baker Island. His house still stands across the street from the Episcopal church and is now known as the Ship's Inn.

In an essay published in 1951 on the one-hundreth anniversary of the original publication of Moby Dick, Walter Bezanson said that Melville took all the details of ocean life, of history and of the whaling industry and wove them into a great work of art. He took the materials of empirical knowledge such ship's logs, diaries, letters and personal lore and through the medium of fiction, created a brilliant narrative.

Instead of calling this paper "Ahab and a Certain Lady" I think I should have called it "Ishmael and a Certain Lady". While Ahab is the captain of the Pequod and the prime mover in the quest for the great white whale, it is Ishmael who is the real narrator and protagonist of the novel. He alone survives the catastrophe. Not the ship, nor the captain, nor the rest of the crew, not even the whale, only Ishmael lives to tell the tale.

He starts out on his journey to cure his wanderlust. "Call me Ishmael. Some years ago, . . . having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. It is a way I have of driving off the spleen, and regulating the circulation."

Ishmael (or Melville) weaves all the intricate parts of geography, history and an immense knowledge of whaling and oceanography into one great hymn to the sea and to whaling. In each part of his narrative, we observe the humblest and the most noble elements in the nature of man and in the

nature of whales. Indeed Melville had what we would call double vision and what has been called two-fold sensitivity. He sees and lets us see what is at once noble and vile, and all that is lovely and appalling.

Above all, what the author lets us share in Moby Dick is his inexhuastible sense of wonder. Wonder at the ocean world with its eternal undulations; wonder at the creatures of the deep; wonder at man: dreamer, doer, doubter. To Melville, in retrospect, the whale had become a mighty, analogue of the world, of man, of God. He was in awe of the whale, its size and its power.

And Yet, for all Melville's power of imagery and evocation, men have continued to slaughter the great whales for one hundred and twenty years since Moby Dick.

Peter Matthiessen in a recent article has said "The great whales of the seven seas are so depleted that Japan and Russia alone, among the nations of the world, are still engaged in large scale open ocean whaling. . . . already the Blue Whale is practically extinct and in most parts of the world the Right Whales and the Humpbacks are close behind. The one large whale that still survives in any numbers is the Sperm Whale, which is hunted in every ocean in the world and could disappear in the next decade.

"Using catcher boats and helicopters, the factory ships move ponderously about the oceans killing ever larger numbers of smaller individual. The relentless waste of life is bearly profitable, since almost every whale product except ambergris is more readily available from other sources. Whaling industry is dying of consumption. Still there is no better use for these monsterous ships and their fleets of whale catchers and no better use for whales, to judge from the apathy with which their slaughter has been met."

One of the most popular books on the market today is The Year of the Whale. This book details in almost poetic terms, the birth and first year in the life of a sperm whale. These pictures depict the birth of dolphins, because they are the only mammals of the cestacean family whose birth cycle has ever been photographed. Other than commercial facts, little has been known about the lives of whales until fairly recently. Suddenly, as they face extinction, we are attempting to learn as much as we can about these magnificent creatures before it is too late.

There is a new recording available called Songs of the Humpback Whale which for the first time analizes the sounds of whales. The man who made the record maintains that the sounds follow definite patterns and are similar to human conversation. Composer Alan Hovhaness has incorporated these sounds into a symphony called "And God Created Great Whales" which has been premiered by the New York Philharmonic Symphony. In addition to scrimshaw and drawings, prints and paintings, whaling has inspired many sculptors. At Cranbrook outside Detroit, the great Swedish sculptor Carl Milles executed several representations of whales and dolphins. (In Norway, this statue has been erected to the whaling industry.)

The Year of the Whale has become a rallying point about which has grown up a large group of informed - concerned citizens, who are attempting to do something about the foolish - needless killing to extinction of whales.

In the last two weeks the United States has finally banned all Commercial Whaling. In addition, the law will also make it illegal to import any more whale products into our country. If Japan and Russia will join in this law we may just be able to save the mightiest creature which has ever lived, from extinction.

(As with all travelogues, I want to end your voyage with me this evening with a few favorite shots of Nantucket. As we sail away, we bid a fond farewell to the "Little Gray Lady of the Sea.")

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