

- The Monterey Tooth
- California Mission Scrimshaw
- Market Report

Scrimshaw Observer

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Scrimming the “Monterey California 1842” Tooth

by Ryan Cooper



“MONTEREY CALIFORNIA 1842.” Sperm whale tooth by Ryan Cooper, gift of the artist to the New Bedford Whaling Museum.

Having been raised in Monterey, I have always taken an interest in the history of the town and especially its maritime origins. As a kid, I spent many an hour playing around the remains of a long lost square-rigger that had gone ashore on the beach. In my fledgling imagination, the bones were those of a pirate ship. Whatever the truth was back then, it ignited my maritime interest.¹

Shortly after moving to New England in the early 1980s, I discovered scrimshaw and decided to try my hand in the ancient art. My career had been as a professional graphic artist which came in handy as I turned to engraving whale's teeth. I admired the traditional 19th-century style of scrimshaw which influenced my work. Several years ago, I had the opportunity to portray a 19th-century scrimshander in the Ric Burns film *Into the Deep*. I put myself in the shoes of the whaler. For historical accuracy in the film, I made replica engraving implements from sail maker's needles set into wood handles and other needed tools all set in a 19th-century ditty box.

Though living in New England, Monterey was still my hometown and its history never left me. I decided I wanted to scrimshaw a tooth with Monterey as the theme and chose one the most significant events ever to occur in the town. After Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1821, Monterey became an open port. American vessels in the hide and tallow trade and whalers frequently called there, and the United States looked upon California with envious eyes and were itching for any excuse to seize Monterey.

In the afternoon of October 19, 1842, the sleepy residents who happened to be about were startled to see American warships entering the bay. The fleet proved to be the frigate *United States*, under the command of Commodore Thomas ap Catesby Jones, with the sloops *Cyane* and *Yorktown* and the schooner *Shark*. The Commodore was under the belief that war had been declared against Mexico and sent a demand for the city's surrender. Monterey, being essentially defenseless, capitulated. The Mexican flag was lowered and the Stars and

Scrimshaw of the San Carlos Borroméo Mission by Stuart M. Frank

Perhaps the perfect segue after Ryan Cooper's brilliant scrimshaw depiction of Monterey is the little-known scrimshaw made by whalers of the California shore-whaling stations on Monterey Bay and its status as votive gifts to the San Carlos Borroméo Mission.

We tend to think of scrimshaw primarily in terms of the shipboard productions of whalers at sea, which certainly constitute a majority of the genre; but of course some whaling masters' wives and children were also occasional practitioners, also more Navy sailors than perhaps has been fully realized. Among the minority subcategories of scrimshaw, one of the least known and most compelling is the rare work produced by whalers of the California shore-whaling stations in the late 19th century — mostly, it seems, made by Portuguese Roman Catholics, for whom a spiritual rallying point was the Mission San Carlos Borroméo in Carmel.

Coastal whaling began in California at the behest of Captain John Pope Davenport (1818-1892) of Tiverton, R.I., veteran master of conventional whaling voyages out of Newport, New Bedford, and San Francisco, who founded California's first shore whaling station in 1854, the so-called First Whaling Company in Monterey. Over the years he and his followers established 16 whaling stations stretching from Eureka, in the north near the Oregon border, to San Diego in the south, on the threshold of Mexico. The stations were intermittently operational into the 1880s and '90s, and one until 1901 — whaling from shore in daylight hours during the whales' migratory seasons.

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Editor: Stuart M. Frank
Publisher: Mark Jacobson
Treasurer: Alden Wells
Graphic Production: Bonnie Goff
Website Manager: Jerry Dauterive
Emeritus: Richard Donnelly

P.O. Box 434, Foxborough, MA 02035
Email (Editorial):
Stuart.M.Frank@verizon.net
Email (Business):
ScrimshawObserver@gmail.com



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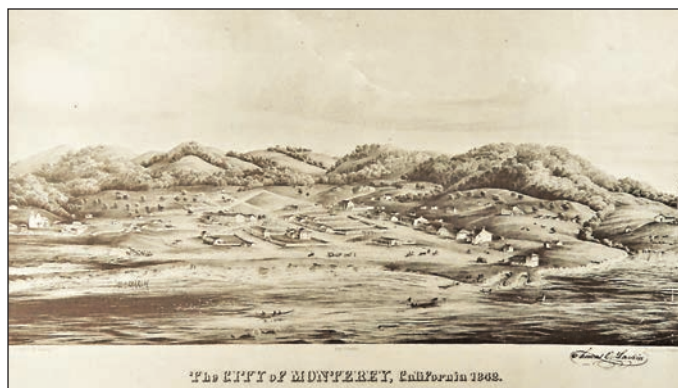
A Word from the Editor

Greetings, one and all. I am very pleased and not a little intimidated to be taking over the reins of *Scrimshaw Observer* from Richard and Jane Donnelly, who have done such an excellent job of building the journal from scratch and making it into something of genuine interest and value. I sincerely hope the new editorial team and I can do as well — to continue to build our readership and continue to present news and substantive articles that our expanding audience will find enjoyable and informative.

Atypically, this issue (my first) has a theme: Monterey, California, built around scrimshander Ryan Cooper's splendid depiction of the mistaken American conquest of Monterey in 1842, followed by the mostly unknown scrimshaw made by 19th-century Monterey Bay shore-whalers honoring the San Carlos Mission. And, of course, Andy Jacobson's regular "Market Survey" column, a feature we hope to include in each subsequent issue.

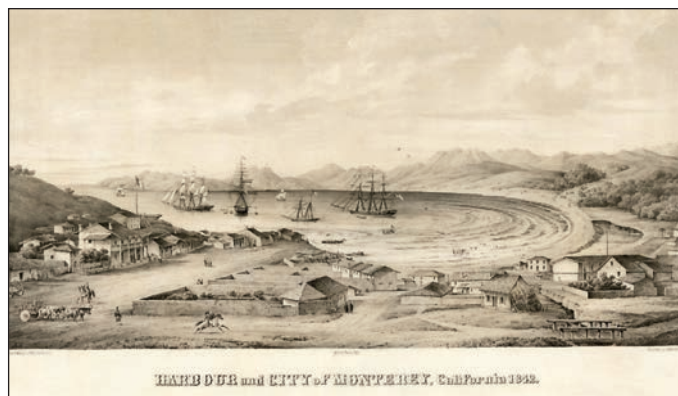
And to compensate for our having missed an issue during the coronavirus lockdown and the transition to a new editorial team, we present this as a double issue, with an unprecedented number of pictures.

"Monterey California 1842" Tooth, *continued from Page 1*



"The CITY of MONTEREY, California 1842." Lithograph by Francis [François] D'Avignon (1813-1861), New York, 1851; after a drawing by Charles [Karl] Gildemeister (1820-?1869).

"HARBOUR and CITY of MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA 1842." Lithograph produced for Thomas O. Larkin by D'Avignon of New York, 1851; after a drawing by Gildemeister.



Stripes took its place over the Customs House. The next day Commodore Jones was apprised that no state of war existed. Embarrassed, he apologized to the Mexican officials and, as the band played, cannons were fired from the American warships and the Mexican flag was restored to its rightful place.

When it came to depicting the scene I wanted to approach it in a traditional manner but with historical accuracy. That meant depicting Monterey as it was in 1842, as well as the vessels, especially the frigate *United States*. I chose to compose the scene as viewed from the harbor toward the town. The primary source was a pair rare lithographs published in 1851 by Thomas O. Larkin, who had been the American Consul in Monterey (when Alta California was still part of Mexico, a Spanish colony) and was a signer of the California Constitution in 1849.² The prints were based on original watercolors commissioned by Larkin in 1843.

The tooth was prepared by hand similarly to what a 19th-century whalemán-artist would do. The furrowed ridges were filed down and sanded with a final smoothing using pumice. The engraving tools were made from used dental drill bits, filed down to triangular points which brought to mind Herman Melville's description in *Moby-Dick*:

Some of them have little boxes of dental-looking implements, specially intended for the skrimshandering business. (*Moby-Dick*, Chapter LVII)

The composition was worked out with pencil sketches and the final drawing scaled down to fit the tooth. Instead of using the pin-prick method of transferring the image as many 19th-century scrimshanders did, I cut tiny holes across the pencil lines of the drawing, and penciled dots on the tooth to form the basic connect the dots pattern. The basic outlines were then penciled in.

I began engraving the basic outlines working from front to back and filling in with burnt umber oil colors as I proceeded. This is the same procedure employed by many of the 19th-century scrimshanders [see Fig. 1 and Fig 2, page 3].

Once the basic composition was outlined, I began engraving details and applying pigment as I progressed. I focused first on the *USS United States* which dominates the foreground, with the *Cyane* depicted ahead of the rest of the fleet in the background. The *United States* was one of the six original frigates launched in 1797. Her depiction was based on the original plans and contemporaneous notes. It should be noted that a few months after the capture of Monterey,



Fig. 1. An unfinished tooth with just the outlines of a sloop. The artist had begun as a free-hand drawing of the subject and apparently abandoned the project. *New Bedford Whaling Museum*



Fig. 2. An unfinished fashion plate subject showing how the artist was applying pigment as he worked along, leaving final details to be completed. *New Bedford Whaling Museum*

Herman Melville shipped aboard the *United States* in Honolulu. He later based his novel *White-Jacket* (1850) on his service aboard the *United States*, and some of the characters are based on his shipmates on that passage from Honolulu to Boston.

With the U.S. Naval Squadron in place, I turned to depicting the town in 1842. At the far left is the Royal Presidio Chapel.³ Between the *United States* and *Cyane* is the Mexican government building with the flag flying. On the right, the row of buildings along Calle Principal leads to the Customs House with the flag.⁴ And on the extreme right is the old Mexican fort.

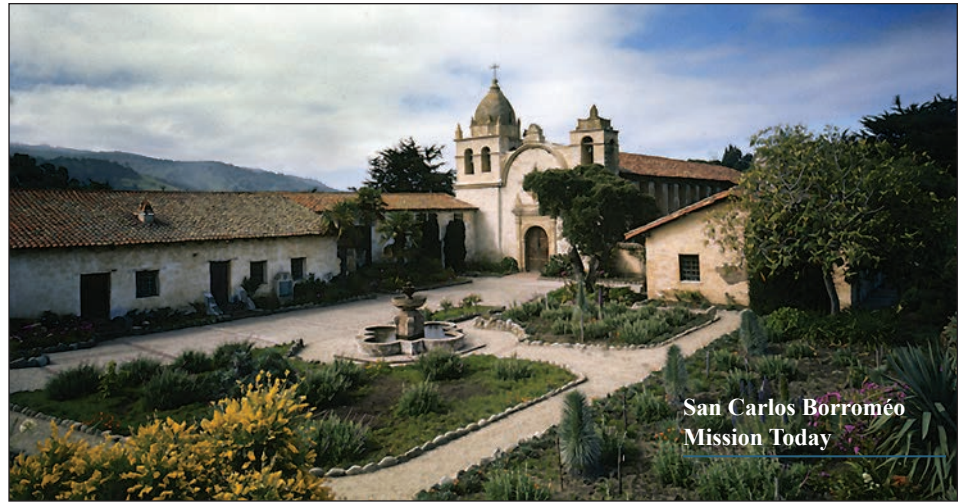
Within a few decades Monterey would be the site of the first of many California shore whaling enterprises to be established along the California coast.

The Monterey tooth was now completed. I feel it is a reflection of an historic California event with a binding tie between 19th-century and modern scrimshaw.

ENDNOTES

- 1 The ship *William H. Smith* was built at Bath Maine in 1883 and was wrecked at Monterey in 1933.
- 2 The print is counter-stamped with the signature of publisher Thomas O. Larkin (1802-1858). The California Constitution had been drafted and reported by J. Ross Browne (1821-1875), a former whaler and author of *Etchings of a Whaling Cruise* (1846), and was adopted at the state constitutional convention in Monterey (1849).
- 3 The Royal Presidio chapel was built in 1795 as the church of San Carlos Borroméo, in close association with the Mission San Carlos Borroméo del Río Caramelo (founded 1770). See the accompanying article on scrimshaw of the San Carlos Mission, in this issue.
- 4 Now called the Old Custom House, it was built by Spanish Colonial administrators in 1814 and its effigy appears on votive scrimshaw. See the accompanying article.

San Carlos Borroméo Mission, *continued from Page 1*



San Carlos Borroméo Mission Today



Sculptural effigy of the San Carlos Mission: a wall-hanging plaque made from the bones of whales attributed to an unidentified shore-whaleman from one of the whaling stations on Monterey Bay. Inscribed "CARMEL MISSION / MONTEREY." Shown here through the glass of an exhibit case at the Carmel Mission. *Photo by Mary Malloy.*



Sculptural effigy of the San Carlos Mission: a wall-hanging plaque made from the bones of whales attributed to an anonymous local shore-whaleman. The inscription (partly obscured by a bone overhang) is: "CARMEL MISSION / 1770 / MONTEREY, CAL." Ex voto from the Carmel Mission collection, now exhibited at the Point Lobos State Reserve (California Parks Service) in Carmel. *Photo by Donald Boger.*



Sculptural effigy of the San Carlos Mission: a wall-hanging scone candelabrum made from the bones of whales attributed to an anonymous local shore-whaleman. Inscribed "CARMEL MISSION / MONTEREY, CAL." Ex voto from the Carmel Mission collection, now exhibited at the Point Lobos State Reserve. *Photo by Donald Boger.*

The Custom House in Monterey was built by Spanish Colonial administrators in 1814. This wall-hanging plaque, anonymously carved and assembled out of whale skeletal bone and attributed to a local shore-whaleman, is labeled "OLD CUSTOM HOUSE / MONTEREY / CAL. / 1814." Some of the background panels are missing but the Custom House model itself is intact. Ex voto from the Carmel Mission collection, now exhibited at Point Lobos. *Photo by Donald Boger.*



continued on page 4



“Charles Wesley”-type figurines: the natural shape of a shark vertebra is painted to resemble a human figure in an attitude of prayer. These are three or four different examples in the Mission treasury; the one on the left is said to be Fr. Junípero Serra, founder of the California missions. The African acolyte is quite unusual, while the figure on the right is typical of the genre. Several Charles Wesleys in England and two in New Bedford are believed to have been made at sea by whalers. Ex voto collection, Carmel Mission. *Photos by Mary Malloy and Donald Boger.*

Some stations ran only or two whaleboats at a time, others mounted several crews. Each boat had its own “captain” (corresponding to a *boatheader* on a whaleship. Like the deepwater whalers of New England and New York, they had polyglot crews — in this case Mexicans, Chilenos, Native Americans, a few Japanese, and a handful of Yankee and Irish-American veterans of the whale fishery back East, some having risen as high as second mate on New Bedford vessels. But the majority, including many of the captains, were Portuguese from the Azores, a few of whom had also served before the mast in Yankee whaleships. The original multi-boat station at Monterey and its offspring multi-boat station on Monterey Bay in Carmel were the most active and productive, they remained predominantly Portuguese, and throughout their years of operation their spiritual and votive focus was closely connected to the Church.

The Mission San Carlos Borromeo was founded in Monterey in 1770, the second of nine Franciscan missions established by Fr. Junípero Serra (1713-1784). Almost right away, in 1771, the mission was moved to a site a few miles south, near where the Carmel River flows into Monterey Bay. A permanent building was not completed there until 1797. Meanwhile, a parish church, also confusingly named San Carlos Borromeo, was founded in Monterey and a stately building erected in 1795 (it was later known as the



Tinted post card adapted from one of several historic photographs of the Carmel Mission taken from essentially the same vantage point circa 1882, inscribed “SAN CARLOS BORROMEO (CARMEL) MISSION, NEAR MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA. FOUNDED 1770.” *Lithographed by Britton & Rey, San Francisco, circa 1910.*

Royal Presidio Chapel and is nowadays a cathedral). Fr. Serra did not live to see the Mission or church buildings completed, but the San Carlos Mission was his home and served as headquarters for the whole Franciscan establishment in California. Twelve additional missions were founded in the years following his death, making 21 in all; however, after Mexico achieved independence from Spain in 1821 the missions were secularized and most gradually fell into ruin. It was only after California independence (1846), accession of California by the United States (1848), and California statehood (1850)¹ in the wake of war with Mexico, that the missions were restored to the Church by government authority in 1859. But it was several decades before restoration of the San Carlos Mission was undertaken.

Still, the local shore-whalers took the San Carlos Mission to heart, and from the bones of whales created a unique, occupational legacy of vernacular art that is truly a kind of whalers’ scrimshaw and equally a barometer of the culture that produced them.

Most impressive are a unique type of wall-hanging plaques on which pieces of skeletal whale bone have been carved and conjoined to form delightful portraits of the Mission building. There is also at least one analogous rendering of the secular so-called Old Custom House in Monterey. One of these plaques remains in the Mission treasury while three are were transferred to the California Park Service to be exhibited at Point Lobos on the site of the former Carmel whaling station; but reportedly they were all (including the secular plaque) originally votive gifts to the Mission. Evidently, there were also some sold as souvenirs.²

Also in the Mission collection are figurines made from shark vertebrae³ painted to look like clergymen in an attitude of prayer. The generic name for these is “Charles Wesley,” as the prototypes are depictions of that great 18th-century British Methodist preacher and hymnologist; but one in Carmel is optimistically claimed to portray Fr. Junípero Serra (it is at least a Roman Catholic priest or friar) and the others are also ecclesiastical figures.

A practical byproduct of the Monterey whaling station was paving blocks made from whale skeletal bone. Even these were not entirely secular, as they were used to surface the walkway on consecrated ground at the Royal Presidio Chapel as well as at the

Wedgewood plate, manufactured in 1900 for a firm of grocers in Santa Barbara, copied after a photo dated 1882. Labeled verso: “San Carlos or Monterey or Carmel Mission / Founded June 3, 1770. / Located Carmel Bay, / 6 miles from Monterey, / California / Wedgwood / Etruria / England / made for / Show & Hunt / Santa Barbara / California.” *Private collection.*





The same painted whale scapula or its twin is displayed in the lower left corner of this turn-of-the-century photograph of a general store in Monterey founded by Rosario Duarte in 1865 and run by his son Manuel since the 1880s. A shop-sign proclaims “MARINE MUSEUM — MANUEL R. DUARTE,” another specifies “TAXIDERMIST” and “WHALE BONE,” while the curiosity-shop array of merchandise out front includes the pair of lower mandibles from a mysticete whale, a chair and two stools made of whale bone, and a host of taxidermic birds.

San Carlos Borroméo Mission. Painted on a whale scapula bone by an anonymous shore-whaleman circa the 1880s. Shown here in sadly deteriorated condition as exhibited in a glass-fronted case at the Mission. Photo by Mary Malloy.

Old Whaling Station itself. Robert Louis Stevenson, who lived in Monterey briefly in 1879, regarded these as distinctive, and commented respectfully and favorably:

[He] walked with Joaquin, a Portuguese whaler, to the local church, and the whaler said, “Look at the whalebone pavement in front of the church, Señor Stevenson. The Star of Hope is there all in the bones of whales that Saint Anthony has sent us. Each time a whale is caught, Portuguese fishermen carry bones on their backs all the way from the beach and kneel before the church to set them into the pavement in honor of the Saint.”

“I see,” Stevenson nodded and looked on the beauty at his feet. “Perhaps a fisher for words can someday honor the Saint by telling all the world about the devotion of fisher folk who come to the Mission [sic] Church of Monterey to pray and pay tribute.”⁴



Historic photograph of the whalebone pavers in the forecourt of the San Carlos Borroméo church (AKA the Royal Presidio Chapel) in Monterey. The paving blocks were donated by the local shore-whalers and set in a patterned arrangement in consecrated ground, as explained by Joaquin, a Portuguese whaler, to Robert Louis Stevenson in 1879. The old church, built in 1795, is now the Cathedral of San Carlos; the pavers have long since been removed and replaced with concrete.



San Carlos Borroméo Mission. Whale vertebra painted by an anonymous local whaleman, based like the others on a photograph of circa 1882, and shown here in a case at the Mission with two panbone fids also made by local whalemen. *Photo by Mary Malloy.*



San Carlos Borroméo Mission. Painted whale vertebra inscribed “San Carlos Church / By G.C. Maxey / 1882.” George C. Maxey (1858-1896) of Somerville, Mass., was born and raised on Nantucket. California Missions Museum, Cline Cellars, Sonoma, California. *Photo by Mary Malloy.*

A particularly distinctive subgenre consists of portraits of the Mission ruins, painted on the skeletal bones of whales. All of the known survivals are based on photographs of the Mission taken from essentially the same vantage point circa 1882. Three of these are still in the Mission treasury — a scapula, a slice of vertebra, and a segment of jawbone, all unfortunately in badly deteriorated condition; rumor has it that there used to be even more. Like the sculpted wall-hangings, they are anonymous, and the Mission has not preserved the names and dates of the donors, but they too are claimed as votive offerings from the same men (and their wives and families) who had harvested the bones.

Finally, there is at least one instance in which portraying the San Carlos Mission on whale skeletal bone was not limited to the local flock. The California Missions Museum — a terrific wayside attraction with free admission operated by the Cline Cellars of Sonoma — has among its special treasures an oil painting on an oval slice of whale vertebra that so closely resembles the one in the San Carlos Mission collection that it could have been painted by the same hand. But the virtual twin was actually done by George C. Maxey, a shop clerk in Massachusetts, who had no visible connection to the Mission itself. He faithfully

copied the image from a photograph — a different photograph than the one that had inspired the anonymous parishioner in California, but one taken from the same viewpoint at around the same time (per an original in the Bancroft Library), or perhaps copied from the anonymous colored lithograph that was based on that same photograph (per a specimen in the Oakland Museum). In style, sensibility, and orientation of the image on the bones, the two paintings, produced independently some 3,000 miles apart on slices of whale vertebrae, are astonishingly similar and almost precisely contemporaneous.

Though Maxey worked as a clerk in a store in Somerville, he had been born on Nantucket in 1858, was raised on the island, and lived there until 1879, which explains how and where he may have acquired a whale vertebra and the idea of doing some scrimshaw. His grandfather was a mariner and had been whaling, his father, a carpenter, had also been whaling, but George came along half a generation too late to conform to the Nantucket expectation that every able-bodied young man should go at least one whaling voyage. George’s father died when the boy was very young, the last Nantucket whaler sailed in 1869 when George was only eleven, and his widowed mother kept a public house on Nantucket (shades of Jim Hawkins and his widowed mother’s Admiral Benbow Inn in

Stevenson’s *Treasure Island*) — so instead of going to sea George went to work as a shop clerk.⁵

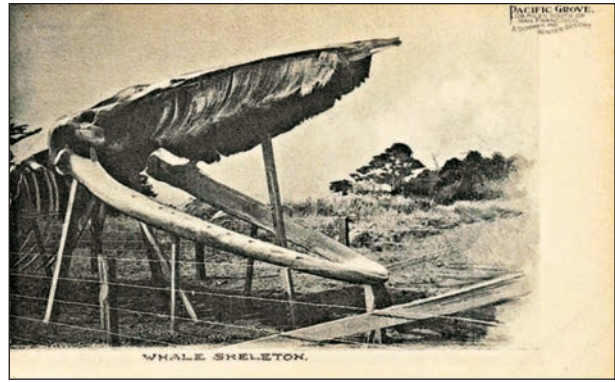
There is no accounting for how or why Maxey chose the Mission San Carlos Borroméo as a subject, nor for how closely his work resembles the anonymous *ex votos* of authentic California shore-whalemen in the same decade. But to me, today, as a non-Roman Catholic devotee of the Carmel Mission, in George Maxey’s place I might have done the same myself.



San Carlos Borroméo Mission. Painted on a segment of whale jawbone by an anonymous local whaleman, based like the others on a photograph of circa 1882. *Ex voto* collection, Carmel Mission. *Photo by Mary Malloy.*

ENDNOTES

- 1 It was an Irish-born whaler, J. Ross Browne (1821-1875), author of *Etchings of a Whaling Cruise* (1846), who drafted the California State Constitution, was the official reporter for the state constitutional convention in Monterey (1849), and afterwards served as an agent for the U.S. Treasury Department, surveyor of customs houses and mints, and official investigator of Indian and Land Office affairs.
- 2 Ryan Cooper reports that an elderly fellow known only as “Whalebone Charlie” (not further identified) was selling them at some point in the 20th century. The look of the sole example of one acquired from Charlie that we were able to locate (in a private collection) suggests, on solid technical and stylistic criteria, that whomever made it may also have made some of the others. In any case, both the Mission and the California Park Service attribute the several in their care as votive gifts to the Mission, “graven by the fishermen themselves.” Perhaps Charlie copied their work.
- 3 “Charles Wesleys” are widely believed to be whale vertebrae and have been sold as such by Sotheby’s in London and New York, but Dr. Sanford A. Moss (retired professor of biology, author of a textbook about sharks, and a member of the Scrimshaw Forensics® team) has identified them unequivocally as shark vertebrae.
- 4 Robert L. Santos, *Azoreans to California: A History of Migration and Settlement*, Denair, California: Alley-Cass Publications, 1995.
- 5 In 1879, Maxey moved to Somerville and married Carrie W. Hale (1860-1920) of that town and was employed as a shop clerk there too. They lived for a while with Carrie’s parents and had three children. He died in 1896, after which Carrie married Zebulon H. Cronkite, a dealer in groceries and provisions.



When the Carmel station ceased operation in 1901, a few Japanese veterans of the station erected this large manifestation of pseudo-scrimshaw as a monument to the shore-whalemen: a finback whale skeleton. The baleen shown on this post card lasted only a few years, gradually weathered away, and is absent on post cards of later vintage.⁶

- 6 This post card, published early along, is misleadingly labeled “Pacific Grove. 125 miles south of San Francisco. A summer and winter resort.” The publishers in Detroit and Philadelphia simply couldn’t seem to get the names and orientation of the towns correctly. The skeleton was actually located at Point Lobos in what became Carmel; some of the bones still survive at the Point Lobos State Reserve.



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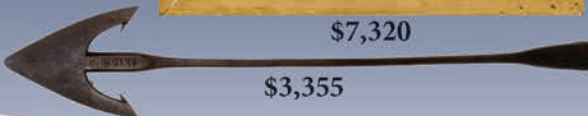
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MARKET REPORT

It's the End of the World As We Know It (and I feel fine...)

by Andrew Jacobson

First, I'm delighted that my friend Dr. Stuart Frank has taken the helm of the "Observer". As always, it is a privilege to have the opportunity to continue the Market Report. In these trying times my goal is to clarify and entertain our tiny cherished community.

I'm neither a medical reporter nor a war correspondent, just a scrimshaw observer. This will be the first market report where much of the commentary is based on something other than my own separate reality. I travelled to East Dennis to view the Eldred material but wild sea horses couldn't lure me onto the crowded Nantucket fast ferry.

The Osona commentary is based on some prior knowledge and Rafael's excellent pictures. None of the Americana mate-

rial was examined in person. Sooner and probably later, we'll all experiment and adjust to whatever the situation demands. Change, pleasant or not, is inevitable.

Eldred's Nov. 21, 2019 Marine Sale was the last of the comforting, safe as old slippers style auction that had been slowly evolving since the late 1960's. Great technological strides had visually improved catalogs. While an auctioneer still called the sale from a podium, advances in telephone- and computer-based bidding expanded the virtual audience and shrank the number of live bidders. However, nothing prepared us for a catastrophic medical virus. Those who had kept up with the technology were perhaps more prepared to function in our Not-So-Brave New World.

In this new configuration vendors clearly have the upper hand. Perhaps long distance buyers have adjusted to sight unseen or virtual purchase, but many who've spent decades touching are quite uncomfortable. No matter the quality or detail of the image color and patina changes from the photographer's eye to lens to computer screen. Many have relied on another set of on location eyes to provide the intangibles that are lost onscreen.

Pride of place goes to the Rehoboth, Mass. outfit "Americana Auctions". On April 26 and July 2020 Ed Tessier ran the first two post-Covid lockdown sales that had significant amounts of scrimshaw. The main observation of the sale was the strength of contemporary scrimshaw market.

Americana Auctions — April 26, 2020.

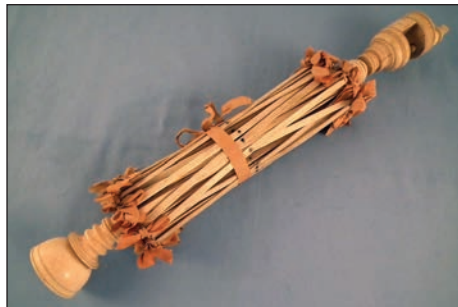
The commentary is based upon the brief catalog descriptions and images. Prices include a 25% buyer's premium.



Lot 64: A typical 35" whale bone fist cane and cuff with baleen spacers. Estimated at \$1,000.00–\$1,500.00, it sold for \$1,250.00.



Lot 97: A 17" high whalebone swift that has a barrel clamp. Estimated at \$600.00–\$800.00, it sold for \$1,875.00.



Lot 98: Another swift, 18.5" high, also estimated at \$600.00–\$800.00. It sold for \$2,125.00.



Lot 103: An 8" sperm whale tooth weighing 20.2 ounces, showing a British warship beneath an eagle backed by birds in a tree. Estimated at \$2,000.00–\$3,000.00, it sold for \$2,250.00.



Lot 106: A pair of 4 1/2" sperm whale teeth decorated with a sailor, a classically attired woman, and a variety of animals. Estimated at \$800.00–\$1,200.00, they brought \$2,250.00.

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April 26, 2020. continued from page 9



Lot 107: A 4 3/4" sperm whale tooth decorated with an active whaling scene signed "Shand". Estimated at \$400.00–\$600.00, it brought \$1,562.50.



Lot 109: A 6" sperm whale tooth of uncertain vintage decorated with the famous image of the female pirate Alwilda, taken from *The Pirates Own Book*¹ or the illustration in Flayderman. Estimated at \$1,000.00–\$1,200.00, it sold for \$1,406.25.

Lot 110: A 4 1/2" sperm whale tooth of uncertain vintage. Although cataloged as "Alwilda" the female pirate, it is actually the other famous female pirate, Fanny Campbell². Estimated at \$1,000.00–\$1,200.00, it sold for \$1,187.50.



Americana Auctions — July 12, 2020.



Lot 164: A 5 3/4" silver-mounted sperm whale tooth polychrome decorated with a young girl skipping rope.³ Estimated at \$1,200.00–\$1,500.00, it brought a reasonable \$1,000.00.



Lot 169: A 3 3/4" inverted sperm whale tooth decorated with a non-period portrait of a ship, inscribed "Hope," backed by a Victorian woman. Estimated at \$800.00–\$1,200.00, it sold for \$1,875.00.



Lot 323: A 35 1/2" whalebone cane that has a plain ball topped knob over a partially fluted shaft. Estimated at \$1,200.00–\$1,600.00, it brought \$1,250.00.



Lot 324: A 34 1/2" whalebone cane with a baleen inset squashed knob over baleen separators and an octagonal to rounded tapered shaft. Estimated at \$1,200.00–\$1,600.00, it sold for \$875.00.



Lot 325: A 33" whalebone cane. Estimated at \$1,200.00–\$1,600.00, it brought \$1,125.00.

Rafael Osona — August 9, 2020.

Although there are multiple payment options, the posted prices include a 27% buyer's premium.

Limited by the Covid restrictions, Rafael Osona presented his first major online only sale on August 9, 2020. There was phone

and left bidding in addition to the online format. Over a two-day period a vast array of interesting antiques crossed the block. As usual, there was a good selection of scrimshaw.



Lot 424: A 20" x 6 3/4" x 11" inlaid whalebone trimmed bird's eye maple box that has "B.F. Tilton" engraved within a banner.⁴ Estimated at \$1,500.00–\$2,500.00, it sold for \$1,143.00.



Lot 437: was whalebone and whale ivory 32 1/2" turk's head-topped cane with a tapered rope-turned shaft with intricate ropework bands ["worming"]. Estimated at \$2,000.00–\$4,000.00, it brought \$1,905.00.



Lot 439: A whale ivory clenched fist and frilly cuffed cane. The 34 1/2" tapered shaft has 41 alternating exotic wood and whalebone segments. Estimated at \$1,500.00–\$2,500.00, it brought a strong \$7,620.00.



Lot 441: An inlaid 36" whalebone clenched fist and ball cane. The octagonal tapering to round shaft is extensively inlaid with polychrome hearts, diamonds, and arrows of abalone, tortoise, mother of pearl, and silver. This was easily the best stick in any sale this summer. Estimated at \$7,000.00–\$9,000.00, it sold for \$11,430.00.



Lot 450: Two mahogany cased sets of whalebone napkin rings from the estate of a Captain Hiram Swift.⁵ Estimated at \$800.00–\$1,200.00, they soared to a remarkable \$2,540.00. Perhaps the bidders were anticipating the return of formal dining.



Lot 451: A 3 3/4" turned pickwick. Estimated at \$500.00–\$700.00, it sold for \$889.00. Years ago these scarce but essential utilitarian tools regularly traded for double.



Lot 453: A large 17 1/2" mahogany rolling pin that has lignum vitae separators and turned whalebone handles was estimated at \$1,000.00–\$1,500.00 and was a good trade at \$1,016.00.



Lot 463: A 5 ½" sperm whale tooth of the "Daniel of London" attributed to the Britannia Engraver. The tooth comes with an unusual and impressive provenance from a New London, Connecticut block maker Franklin Starr (1807-1872) by direct descent to the consignor. The *Daniel* is shown under sail and engulfed in flames. It was identified in script on one edge. There are minor chips at the base and an obvious age crack extending from the tip through the border but stopping before the ship. Estimated at \$10,000–\$12,000.00, it sold for \$8,890.00.



Lot 463A: A market-fresh, substantial, polychrome 8 ¾" x 3 ½" sperm whale tooth of the Newport whaleship *Audley Clark* cutting-in. The ship made four successful whaling voyages between 1833 and 1848. In Feb. 1849 the *Audley Clark* left Newport bound for San Francisco and the Gold Rush. Estimated at \$12,000.00–\$18,000.00, the tooth attracted fierce competition and sold for \$31,750.00.



Lot 466: A boldly carved 32 ½" whalebone cane, topped by a turk's head over six tapered, alternating rope-turned and fluted segments. Estimated at \$2,000.00–\$4,000.00, the cane realized \$4,127.50.



Lot 491: A well-proportioned whale ivory 6 ½" crimper inlaid with "blond" baleen diamonds and a three-tine testing fork that has a single replacement tine and a fluted wheel. Estimated at \$800.00–\$1,200.00, it brought \$2,222.50.



Lot 520: A large 7 1/8" x 2 ½" sperm whale tooth finely decorated with a stern view of a British warship, and a well-dressed standing Victorian lady on the back. Estimated at \$7,000.00–\$10,000.00, it seemed a good trade at \$6,350.00.



Lot 500: Two Nixon-like whale "inner ears" was well estimated at \$200.00–\$300.00 but brought an astounding \$2,540.00. Perhaps this was a lock-down side effect.

Lot 501: A 13 ¾" scallop-topped busk that had multiple vignettes including a cornucopia, a Victorian lady, "Elizabeth" in script, and a brig under sail. Estimated at \$1,00.00–\$1,500.00, it sold for \$1,270.00.



Lot 518: A 5 ½" x 2 ½" sperm whale tooth with bold yellowish patina, decorated with two whaleships and an active whaling scene. An eagle clutching American flag beneath an "E Pluribus Unum" legend backs it. Estimated at \$3,000.00–\$5,000.00, it sold for \$13,970.00.





Lot 522: A 5 1/2" whale ivory sleeping swan crimper with a relief carved wing and a fluted wheel. Estimated at \$1,000.00–\$2,000.00, this rare form went for a reasonable \$1,587.00.



Lot 542: "The Wiscasset of Wiscasset," a large 8 3/4" x 3" sperm whale tooth dated "Jan^y 7th 1836". It has a well-rendered active whaling scene, latitude and longitude, the catch of a 90 barrel whale taken off New Zealand, and an inscribed name "S. Svenson". This tooth is one of a handful showing Maine's best known whaleship.⁶ Estimated at \$150,000.00–\$170,000.00, it sold for \$158,750.00. This was the highest price for a tooth sold thus far in 2020.



Lot 582: An 11" x 7 3/4" x 8" mahogany and whalebone baleen bound tub. Unfortunately, the bottom had split in two and fallen out. The result was \$1,905.00, just below its \$2,000.00–\$4,000.00 estimate.



Lot 591: A 4 1/4" carved sperm whale tooth of an Arctic owl. Estimated at \$200.00–\$400.00, it attracted significant bidding and sold for \$1,524.00.



Lot 599: A 34 3/4" whale ivory fist cane clutching a stick. The exotic wood shaft is inlaid with mother-of-pearl hearts, drops, diamonds and dots. Estimated at \$700.00–\$900.00, it resonated with bidders all the way to \$5,080.00.



Lot 640: A 14" narwhalesque-shaped whale ivory fid, topped by a carved turk's head knot. Estimated at \$2,500.00–\$3,500.00, it was a crowd pleaser at \$12,700.00.



Lot 695: A 5" walrus ivory, abalone, and tortoise heart inlaid crimper was estimated at \$300.00–\$500.00 and sold for \$1,143.00.



Lot 696: A 6" whale ivory sea horse crimper that sports a dark patina. Estimated at \$2,500–\$3,500.00, it sold for \$5,715.00.



Lot 729: A 15" whalebone rolling pin with turned whale ivory handles. Estimated at \$1,000.00–\$1,500.00, it sold for \$1,016.00.



Lot 606: A 15" high whalebone swift that has a clenched fist clamp was estimated at \$8,000.00–\$10,000.00 and sold for \$6,477.00. The swift market remains extremely fluky and soft. There are way too many on the market and far too few active buyers.

Lot 613: A 10 1/2" x 6 1/2" x 5 1/2" extensively inlaid box solidly attributed to Spencer Pratt of Bristol, Rhode Island.⁷ Long held in the collection of the late Paul Decoste, to these tired eyes this was the transcendent masterpiece of the summer. Estimated at \$8,000.00–\$12,000.00, it was well bought at \$11,430.00.



Eldred's — August 13, 2020

Although there are multiple payment options, the posted prices include a 25% buyer's premium.

The return to a live preview at South Dennis was a strong reminder of the importance handling and examining scrimshaw. No matter how good the catalog, pictures, or condition report, they are not a real substitute for a "hands-on" examination. The patina, heft, actual size and magnitude of the piece are not effectively revealed from afar.

A good example was lot 19, an obviously large 8" tooth decorated with bow and stern vignettes of a brig identified on the stern. What are lost from the pictures are the massive heft of the tooth and the almost 3-D incised carving of the name. Estimated at \$6,000.00–10,000.00, the tooth sold for \$7,500.00.



Lot 19: "Mary Boston" tooth \$7,500.00.



Lot 3: A 6" sperm whale tooth decorated by end-of-the-whaling-era New Bedford scrimshander William Perry (1895-1966). The bow view of the whaleship *Wanderer* is initialed "W" in the lower left and signed "P" for "Perry" in the lower right. Mounted on a wooden stand⁸ and estimated at

\$800-\$1,200.00 it sold for \$1,750.00.



Lot 4: An unusual tombstone-shaped sperm whale scapula, 6" high and 5 3/4" wide, titled "The Farewell," is Banknote Engraver-like in its fine detail.⁹ Estimated at \$1,000.00- \$3,000.00 it drew great interest and sold for \$6,875.00.



Lot 4A: A rare, atypical William Sizer tooth decorated with patriotic motifs including "Lady Liberty" and a "Great Seal of the U.S." eagle. Perhaps its most important feature is the "Eng. By W. Sizer" signature and its "Pacific Ocean July 4, 1834" date. Unfortunately the condition is rough and faded. Originally from the William J. Boylhart Collection, the tooth was optimistically estimated at \$50,000.00-\$100,000.00. The market had to balance faded glory with great rarity. It sold for \$37,500.00.



Lot 4A: (detail): William Sizer July 4, 1834 \$37,500.00.



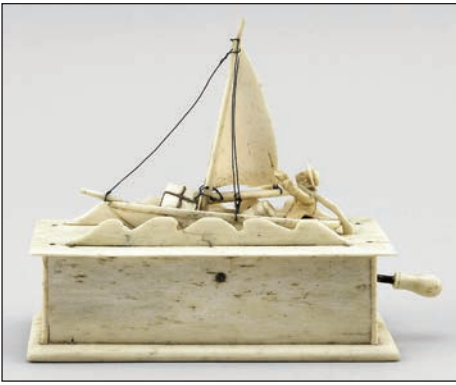
Lot 8: A large 8" signed Edward Burdett tooth featuring a whaling scene of the ship *William Tell*. Over the last several years, the market has been treated to some extraordinary examples of Burdett's work. The majority of the major players own prime examples. This tooth, from the McDowell Collection, was offered as lot 14 in Eldred's Nov. 2019 Marine Sale: it was estimated at \$200,000.00-\$300,000.00 and passed. This time around it was estimated at \$140,000.00-\$180,000.00, and found a new home for \$118,750.00.



Lot 12: A small 4 1/2" whalebone pipe intricately inlaid with geometric designs of abalone and metal was estimated at \$500.00-\$1,000.00. Despite quite a few missing pieces, these scarce items always do well. In this case it brought a strong \$1,500.00.



Lot 13: A panbone ditty box, 7" long and 5 1/2" high, boasting six overlapping fingers on the body and two on the lid. A turned whalebone finial topped the wooden lid. There is a significant chip to the right side of the lid. Estimated at \$2,000.00 - \$3,000.00, it sold for \$5,625.00.



Lot 16: A rocking toy sailboat in a turbulent sea mounted on a sea chest. It is 4 ½" long and 4" high. The helmsman was a replacement. These curios are uncommon and this was estimated at \$3,000.00-\$5,000.00. Another more complete example sold in 2018. This brought \$2,625.00.



Lot 18: A pair of 25" walrus tusks of Hawaiian and British interest, signed "Richardson U.S.N. Del." on the back. The provenance includes the Hawaiian McGrew and Cooper families. John S. McGrew was a strong advocate of the annexation of Hawaii. Estimated at \$3,000.00-\$5,000.00, they sold for \$3,750.00.



Lot 33: A 6 ½" tooth, densely engraved with a darkly polychrome whaling scene, wrongly attributed to the Portuguese scrimshaw forger Manuel Cunha.¹⁰ Estimated at \$700.00-\$1,000.00. Sold for \$600.00.

Lot 34: A 6 ½" tooth titled "The Battle of Plattsburgh,"¹¹ attributed to Manuel Cunha (1910-1987), a typical example of Cunha's pre-Endangered Species Act export work, of which the chief American outlet was the New Bedford shop Moby Dick.¹² Estimated at \$1,000.00-\$1,500.00. It brought \$1,000.



Lot 17: A polychrome 5 ¼" sperm whale tooth attributed to the Banknote Engraver. One side has the familiar portrait of a Victorian lady, hands clasped, within a fancy oval geometric border. The other side had a harbor view of an unidentified French port that has an American-flagged ship sailing in the foreground. The tooth has excellent clarity and contrast. It was estimated at \$10,000.00-\$15,000.00 and sold for \$10,000.00.



Lot 41: A large, two-foot-long "Dresser" box. The tropical wood body is inlaid in a checkerboard pattern, and has applied whalebone handles and pulls along with a stepped whalebone-and-wood top. The interior has a half-dozen drawers with whalebone pulls. Estimated at \$4,000.00-\$6,000.00, it brought \$4,687.50.



Lot 45: A 6 ½" clenched fist whalebone double wheel crimper with a nicely turned elongated handle. The free-floating wheels are at least highly unusual if not unique. The utilitarian crimper was estimated at \$500.00-\$700.00 and sold for \$1,375.00.



Lot 48: A 5 ½" sperm whale tooth decorated by one of the Ceres Artisans. The tooth sports the most basic Ceres image of the sailor and lady, with the standard ship vignettes and borders. It was extra clean and beat its \$3,000.00-\$5,000.00 estimate to sell for \$7,500.00.

Looking back to last November, it seemed that the market had hit saturation overload. A slew of perfectly good, market fresh pieces failed to find new homes. Some of the following were presented again with lower estimates and much more satisfying results.

Usually second shots don't fare all that well. In this instance either the market was exhausted last fall or fresh eyes recognized what had been overlooked.



Lot 69: A large 8 1/4" highly developed Unicorn crimper. As lot 87 in Eldred's Nov. 2019 Marine sale it was estimated at \$15,000.00-\$20,000.00 and passed. This time around it was estimated at \$10,000.00-\$15,000.00 and sold for the high estimate. It seemed a good trade. The curled tail is the difference between a \$36,000.00 example from the same source that had a whale's tail.



Lot 72: An unusual pair of chain linked 4" bodkins. They too were refugees from last November's sale. Illustrated on page 152 in Flayderman and estimated at \$1,200.00-\$1,800.00, a fresh look brought them \$1,250.00.



Lot 131: was the best whalebone busk in the sale. The largest of its three vignettes is a cutting-in scene. The contrast and condition are near fine. It had been overlooked last November. Estimated at \$3,000.00-\$5,000.00 it sold for \$5,625.00.



Lot 70: A snake crimper illustrated in Flayderman's *Scrimshaw and Scrimshanders* and marked with Meylert Armstrong collection number NH60 made its first appearance as lot 55 in Eldred's November 2019 Marine sale, where it was estimated at \$8,000.00-\$10,000.00 and passed. The second time was clearly "the charm." Estimated at \$5,000.00-\$7,000.00, it soared to \$18,750.00.



Lot 132: A 6" tortoise shell-bodied crimper enclosed by a studded whale ivory border, from the Barbara Johnson collection. The lightly fluted tortoise shell wheel is highly unusual. It was lot 59 and estimated at \$3,000.00-\$5,000.00 in the November sale. Estimated at \$2,000.00-\$3,000.00, it brought \$6,875.00.



Lot 142: A large 7 1/4" crimper that has opposing, double-fluted wheels and an inked, stippled snake-body handle. Estimated at \$10,000.00-\$15,000.00 it reached \$13,750.00.



Lot 236: It's not scrimshaw, but it's a 20" x 16", beautifully executed cutting-in scene titled "North Pacific Whalers Trying Out Oil" by prolific New York artist Julian O. Davidson (1836-1894). Paintings like this seldom come to market, and when they do they're likely to be by top tier, unaffordable artists such as William Bradford or W.E. Norton. This picture, with no apologies, is as nice as they get. Estimated at \$1,500.00–\$2,500.00, it clearly resonated with the audience and sold for \$7,500.00.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Charles Ellms, *The Pirates Own Book* (Boston: C. Ellms), 1837. [SMF]
- 2 Fanny Campbell, *The Female Pirate*, by Lieutenant Murray [pseudonym of Maturin Murray Ballou] (Boston: F. Gleason), 1845. [SMF]
- 3 The picture is a faithful copy of a wood-engraving by William E. Roberts (fl. 1846-76) after a drawing by Lewis Towson Voigt (fl. circa 1839-65), in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, April 1854. Voigt regularly contributed fashion drawings to *Godey's Lady's Book* and *Harper's*; his pictures were often copied on sailors' scrimshaw. The same girl-jumping-rope image also appears on teeth by different hands in *Mystic Seaport* (1939.1784) and the New Bedford Whaling Museum (1923.6.16; Frank, *Ingenious Contrivances*, Fig. 6:42). [SMF]
- 4 Benjamin Franklin Tilton (1862-1934) was a San Francisco whaling master from Martha's Vineyard. [SMF]
- 5 Hiram E. Swift (1836-1904) was a whaling master from Cape Cod credited with a variety of "built" scrimshaw made aboard the Nantucket bark *Islander* and descended in the family (reported by Ryan Cooper). [SMF]
- 6 There are four and possibly more scrimshaw teeth portraying the *Wiscasset* of Wiscasset, all pertaining to (and ostensibly created on) the *Wiscasset's* first voyage (1834-37), commanded by Captain Richard Macy of Nantucket. However, they each have different illustrations, different inscriptions, the quality of the engraving is not consistent among the several teeth, and each has a different name conspicuously rendered in the manner of a signature: William H. Acorn, George W. Hubbard, Richard Macy, and S. Svenson. [SMF]
- 7 Spencer Pratt (1808-1868), who was first mate (1834-38) and captain (1838-42 and 1842-46) of the ship *Mechanic* of Newport, R.I., is credited with at least four or five elaborately inlaid wooden workboxes, and is believed also to have been the elusive and hitherto anonymous so-called *Mechanic Artisan* (reported by Richard Donnelly). [SMF]
- 8 Most of Perry's wooden stands were made for him by Albert M. Williams (1898-1959) of New Bedford (reported by Judith N. Lund). [SMF]
- 9 The picture, known as "The Farewell" and "The Departing," is one of several scrimshaw adaptations copied after the wood-engraved illustration "Edward and Isabel" in the bestselling book *Tales of the Ocean* (New York, 1840, p. 340) by Hawser Martingale, pseudonym of John Sherburne Sleeper (1794-1878). Other manifestations include two teeth by the Eagle Portraitist (South Street Seaport and a private collection) and one each by the Banknote Engraver (New Bedford Whaling Museum), whaleman Albert B. Trowbridge aboard the *Canton Packet*, 1841-45 (in a private collection), and anonymous (Eldred, July 25, 2019, #5). [SMF]
- 10 The format and inscription are atypical of Cunha's work and the scrimshaw is misattributed. See Lot 34. [SMF]
- 11 This is not one of the usual War of 1812 scenes that whalemens sometimes copied out of Barber Badger's *Naval Temple* (Boston, 1816), or Horace Kimball's *American Naval Battles* (Boston, 1831) — or more often, Abel Bowen's *Naval Monument* (Boston, 1816), where no such "Battle of Plattsburgh" scene appears. Rather, it is actually copied from a latter-day source published long after the prime scrimshaw era, *Hutchinson's History of the Nations* (4 vols., London: Walter Hutchinson, 1915). [SMF]
- 12 Cunha was a skilled faker on the Portuguese island of Madeira commissioned by "antiques" dealers to produce scrimshaw pictures on genuine sperm whale teeth, which were fraudulently sold in New Bedford and elsewhere as antique whalemens' work. See Joshua Basseches, *Scrimshaw of Manuel Cunha: Late Work from Madeira Revealed* (Kendall Whaling Museum Monograph N° 2, Sharon, Mass.), 1988. [SMF]

Our Contributing Authors for the Fall 2020 Issue

Scrimming the “Monterey California 1842” Tooth

Ryan Cooper is a renowned artist, scrimshaw artist, and expert on wooden figureheads, ship carvings, wooden eagles, ship's bells, sailors' journals, and other nautical antiques. He has lived in California and Maine, currently lives and works on Cape Cod, and has been a consultant at the Kendall Whaling Museum, Mystic Seaport, Peabody Essex Museum, and the New Bedford Whaling Museum.

Scrimshaw of the San Carlos Borroméo Mission

Stuart M. Frank, founding director of the Scrimshaw Forensics® Laboratory, is the author of Ingenious Contrivances, Curiously Carved: Scrimshaw in the New Bedford Whaling Museum (2012), Scrimshaw on Nantucket: The Collection of the Nantucket Historical Association (2019), three biographical dictionaries of scrimshaw artists, and numerous articles about sailor arts, including in Scrimshaw Observer.

MARKET REPORT

It's the End of the World As We Know It (and I feel fine...)

Andrew Jacobson, a dealer and appraiser in Ipswich, Massachusetts, is an authority on marine antiques, a regular columnist for Scrimshaw Observer, and a regular speaker at the annual Scrimshaw Weekends in New Bedford.

Notice: We are now accepting advertising in order to defray costs and to continue to produce and mail printed issues of the *Scrimshaw Observer*.

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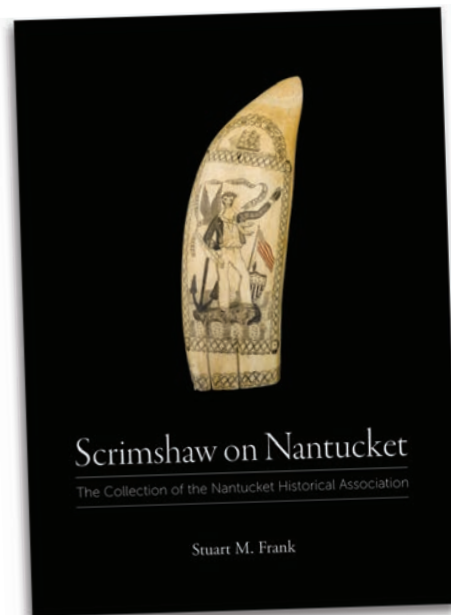
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For additional information, please visit:
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“Scrimshaw on Nantucket”



Several ASCA members have asked where they can purchase my book *Scrimshaw on Nantucket*, which was published in August 2019 but which the publisher, the Nantucket Historical Association has not made widely available: at the time of this writing it is still

not among books for sale at the New Bedford Whaling Museum or the Mystic Seaport Museum Stores, or even on the main web pages of the NHA. Some of those may have the book by the time this issue reaches you, but I'm told that the following web address seems to work:

https://nantucketmuseumshop.org/cart.php?m=search_results&headerSearch=Y&search=scrimshaw+stuart+frank. And if that doesn't work, try: <https://nha.org/research/nantucket-history/nha-publications-list/scrimshaw-on-nantucket/>.

—Editor

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Inside the Fall 2020 Journal



Scrimshaw Observer

Welcome to the Fall 2020 issue of the journal of the Antique Scrimshaw Collectors Association.

Inside the Fall 2020 issue:

- The Monterey Tooth
- California Mission Scrimshaw
- Market Report