

In This Issue

- ♦ Collectors' Corner
- ♦ Market Report: Three Important Auctions
- ♦ W. L. Roderick, Master Scrimshaw Artist



Scrimshaw Observer

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Voyage of Discovery: the Queen Amalia Tooth

by Michael Gerstein

Some of my favorite scrimshaw pieces are those with research potential and connections to people, places, other scrimshaw, or to the source print copied onto the scrimshaw. I recently acquired this skillfully executed 7" tooth through a knowledgeable dealer. Because of the unusual outfit, I turned to a professor of fashion history at the University of Rhode Island for guidance. She immediately responded, "It's Queen Amalia of Greece, 1840s!"

In dating artwork such as scrimshaw, it's sometimes helpful to use fashion clues from the depicted style of clothing, accessories, hairstyle, etc. Amalia is wearing an ermine (type of weasel with white winter coat and black tail) fringed garment, such as those worn by nobles and monarchs for coronations and other special occasions. *continued on p. 9*



Queen Amalia tooth and source art.

Auction Action

Kobacker scrimshaw collection set for auction at Eldred's

Eldred's will auction the Kobacker scrimshaw collection over two upcoming auction sessions. The Kobacker Collection, amassed by Arthur and Sara Jo Kobacker of Nantucket, includes approximately 130 lots, highlighted by two

"Susan" teeth by Frederick Myrick, multiple examples by the Ceres Artisan, a large group of patriotic-themed teeth and a number of exceptional pie crimpers, as well as canes, swifts, and much more.



Susan tooth by Frederick Myrick.

"Many in the scrimshaw field know of the Kobacker Collection. It's a gem," said Bill Bourne, head of Eldred's Maritime Art department. "Just before our summer Marine Sale we were contacted by the Kobacker family and secured the collection for a future sale. How fortunate we are to have this collection to follow Tom Mittler's."

continued on page 11

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The British Frigate Engraver

by John Rinaldi

Between the years 1998 and 2010, I discovered and was able to acquire four scrimshaw pieces by a very skilled artisan whom I have chosen, for obvious reasons, to call “The British Frigate Engraver.” The common scene on each example is a beautifully executed depiction of a large British frigate in a harbor that has several buildings in the background. None of the pieces has any form of signature and nowhere else have I come across other examples by this scrimshander.



1. A thick panbone panel engraved with three separate scenes, the center with this artisan's trademark view of a British frigate in a waterfront harbor.

2a. Scrimshaw tooth with a starboard view of a frigate in a port harbor.
2b (below). The reverse with a classic whaling scene. 7".

3. Scrimshaw tooth probably taken from the same jaw as the previous tooth. This example engraved one side only showing the frigate in a harbor with the usual buildings in the background. 7".

4a. Polychrome colored tooth engraved vertically with the frigate and harbor scene. **4b (right).** The reverse side with a fabulous portrait of a dark-skinned sailor standing by a capstan while using his bosun whistle. 8". Ex Bill Pearson collection.



I would be interested to hear from anyone who owns another piece by this artist or has seen other examples of his work illustrated in some publication.

John Rinaldi is a collector/dealer from Kennebunkport, Maine, who specializes in scrimshaw and maritime antiques.

The Hawaiian Sun Sets on Scrimshaw

by Gregg Hurwitz



I was in Maui when the Hawaiian ivory ban “hammer” came down on July 1, 2017. It was really sad. My wife and I have been going to Maui since our honeymoon in '91 and almost every summer since with our kids. During our first trip to Maui, scrimshaw was plentiful. There were six dedicated scrimshaw shops doing booming business. Most of what was readily available for sale was horrendously overpriced contemporary scrimshaw made for the tourist trade, but you could poke around, talk to people, and find some nice antique pieces if you got to know the right people around the island. From Kihei to Paia, Wailuku to Lahaina, there was incredible beauty everywhere you looked, and scrimshaw was for sale and selling briskly.

Visiting Maui friends that shared my passion for scrimshaw, talking shop with them, and hunting down and negotiating on some nice, antique pieces was one of the greatest things about going to Maui, for me, aside from the cherished time with family, the beautiful weather, sunsets, locally caught seafood, and gorgeous beaches. I loved devoting time to visiting various parts of the island to see people I had built relationships with, most forged from our mutual appreciation for scrimshaw. I picked up some beautiful pieces there over the years. I once found a gorgeous 2.5 lb. tabua, kept in a shoebox filled with other substantially smaller and less beautiful (yet genuine) tabuas in the back of little shop in a small town where locals lived and tourists rarely visited.

Effective July 1, 2017, those halcyon, adventure-filled days came to an abrupt end when the Hawaii State Ivory Commerce Ban went into force. The verbiage is virtually identical to the California commerce ban and that of a few other states that instituted the same within the past few years. I happened to be on Maui when it all came crashing down upon the heads (and hearts) of the Hawaii dealers, shop owners, collectors, and aficionados who loved and traded in scrimshaw, both contemporary and antique. It didn't matter to the Hawaiian state legislature that Lahaina was a whaling

capital in the early 19th century. The amazing history of it all was of no consequence in the decision. The days of seeing historic, marine ivory artifacts available for sale in the handful of beautiful little shops that carried it are over.

Does banning the sale of marine ivory—even if it's antique—save African elephants from poachers feeding the Asian market for newly made elephant ivory objects? That's the question that's been asked by those affected in each state that has adopted the same, all encompassing, intrastate ban.

The Hawaiian shop owners and employees seemed stunned that it was now happening. They knew it was coming, but how could they prepare for their businesses and jobs to be destroyed by a poorly thought out, unreasonable, and shortsighted intrastate sales ban? I stopped by all of my remaining old haunts during my second day on island and found all scrimshaw and anything ivory, regardless of the age of the object, had to be removed by July 1, the beginning of the ban's enforcement period. Over the years the shops had diminished to two dedicated scrimshaw shops from six. Their market was primarily modern scrimshaw for tourists, and every year they had fewer and fewer teeth to commission local artists to work on. They were just running out of their stockpile. The collectors of authentic antique pieces were more rare. But it was still fun to peruse, to talk shop, to immerse myself in the hunt for the prized piece. It was something that made Hawaii a unique and wonderful vacation destination, at least for me. Now, I don't know...Mexico? St. Thomas? Maybe I'll have to be happy with Bermuda. I hear they have nice shorts for sale in lots of touristy T-shirt and plastic souvenir shops...just like Hawaii does.

Gregg Hurwitz, collector of scrimshaw for more than 40 years, resides in Los Angeles, CA.



W. L. Roderick, Ship's Surgeon and Master Scrimshaw Artist

by Stuart M. Frank

There exists a virtually unanimous consensus that William Lewis Roderick was the greatest of all British scrimshaw artists and one of the best of any nationality or stripe. His panoramic whaling scenes, perfectly engraved, reflect deep knowledge and close observation based upon substantial whaling experience during ten years or more at sea. His exquisite portraits and genre scenes are also among the best pictorial scrimshaw. Accordingly, his work now brings big money at auction and his reputation is deservedly ascendant. But much of what has appeared about him in print is founded upon specious claims, and it is high time that these were corrected. He was not Welsh; the degree of his medical training is unknown; and though he was a “surgeon,” in private practice after his whaling days he was a “surgeon *dentist*” in London.

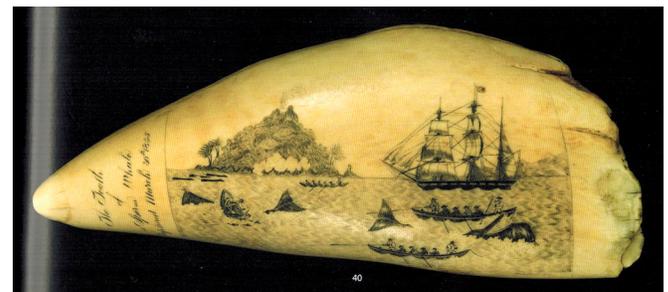
British regulations mandated that each Arctic whaleship have a ship's surgeon to tend to the medical and dental needs of the officers and crew, and this expectation spilled over to London's South Sea whaling fleet. (Thomas Beale, a sometime ship's surgeon in the London South Sea whale fishery, combined his scientific training as an M.D. with firsthand experience at sea and produced the first significant treatises on the sperm whale, published in 1835 and 1839. And in 1880, Arthur Conan Doyle, just as he was completing his medical studies at Edinburgh University and long before he wrote anything about Sherlock Holmes, spent a season as ship's surgeon on a Scottish Arctic whaler.)

What is truthfully known about W. L. Roderick is that he was ship's surgeon on three South Sea whaling voyages in the bark *Adventure* of London during 1847–56; that some of his meticulously rendered panbone plaques and sperm whale teeth featuring highly proficient, distinctively engraved sperm whaling scenes are signed and dated; and that some have explicit inscriptions identifying context and locale. However, what has not generally been realized is that his outstanding masterpiece, a panbone plaque in the National Library of Australia (NLA), inscribed “Whaling off the Islands of Flores and Pulo Comba in the Flores Sea, Indian Ocean (A Good Cut),” is signed and dated 1858, which was actually two years *after* his last known whaling voyage in the *Adventure*, suggesting that he may have made at least one additional voyage that has yet to be discovered—or that he continued to do scrimshaw even after he swallowed the oar in 1856.



Panbone plaque by W. L. Roderick, inscribed “Whaling off the Islands of Flores and Pulo Comba in the Flores Sea, Indian Ocean (A Good Cut), dated 1858. 12 x 25 inches (30.5 x 66 cm.), National Library of Australia, Canberra.

Among Roderick's best known works are three widely published polychrome plaques: at Mystic Seaport (Malley, cover and Pl. 1), the New Bedford Whaling Museum (Frank, *Ingenious Contrivances*, Fig. 5:5), and NLA. There are also signed teeth: two at Mystic, others in private collections, e.g., Hellman, *Mittler* #38-40; and Eldred, Oct. 15, 2016, #40); two are attributed, in the Dietrich American Foundation (DAF) and the Peabody Essex Museum of Salem (McManus, p. 11).



Sperm whale tooth by W. L. Roderick illustrating whaling off the Islands of Flores and Pulo Comba in the Flores Sea, Indian Ocean, inscribed “The tooth / of / a Sperm Whale / Captured March 30th 1855” and “In Shore Whaling The Death.” 8½ inches (21.6 cm.). *Mittler* Collection, Eldred's, Oct. 15, 2016, Lot 40.

A remarkable rendition of an analogous panorama, cleverly downsized to fit onto a tooth, is described by John Rinaldi as a “Beautifully executed depiction of an active Sperm Whaling scene with two whaleships in background and several longboats capturing Sperm Whales. In center of scene is a large sperm whale in furious battle with two of the longboats. Signed lower right in tiny meticulous lettering ‘W. L. Roderick.’ Length 7¾" x 2" max. width” (Northeast Auctions,

continued on next page

W. L. Roderick, Ship's Surgeon and Master Scrimshaw Artist, *continued*

Aug. 18–19, 2012, #770; Rinaldi 2013, #89). An equally spectacular example at Mystic is inscribed, “The tooth / of a Sperm Whale captured by / Captⁿ McCarty in the Barque / Adventure Augst 10th 1852 in Latitude / 39'50 North Longitude 32'42 West”; its mate is similarly labeled “The tooth of a Sperm / Whale Captured by / Captⁿ McCarty in the / North Atlantic Ocean Augst / 10th 1852 Latitude 39'50" & Longitude / 38'42" and made 90 Blls / in the Barque Adventure” (Malley #25, p. 45). The Mittler specimen, inscribed “The Tooth / of / a Sperm Whale / Captured March 30th 1855,” is another panoramic masterpiece that set a record at auction. Yet another broad panorama is adapted to the very different shape of a smaller tooth (Northeast, Aug. 18, 2013, #824). Two teeth are signed but not inscribed (Sotheby's London, Nov. 9, 1977; and a private collection); and the one in DAF is neither signed nor inscribed. There are also at least two signed female portraits and two genre scenes in private collections, likely copied after published illustrations.

Because the erroneous assertion that Roderick was born and educated in Wales was published in a prestigious journal along with other misleading claims, and as those errors have hitherto prevailed, we present here in detail the few actual facts that have been definitively ascertained about his biography, to counter any further misimpressions. William Lewis Roderick may or may

not have been of Welsh descent, but he was born in the Borough of Westminster, London, the son of David Roderick, victualler, and Susanna McCoy, who were married at St. John the Evangelist Church, Westminster, on Oct. 6, 1825. William's actual date of birth in 1826 is not recorded, but he was baptized in the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Westminster, on Oct. 15, 1826, near the family's home in St. Martin's Court. “William Lewis Roderick, Surgeon” was married on March 24, 1851, to Jane Elizabeth Baggott at St. James, Bermondsey, London; they first lived in Salisbury Street and later at 14 Suffolk Street, Lower Rotherhithe, Surrey. “William Lewis Roderick, Gentleman” died on Nov. 19, 1874, age 48, in the St. Olave parish of Southwark; his estate, valued at “under £1,500,” was probated Jan. 15, 1875, leaving his widow Jane Elizabeth Roderick and no mention of children (*Birth, Marriage and Death Records of England and Wales*). A legal notice regarding probate—recently discovered by London whaling historian Charles Payton—appeared in the *London Evening Standard* on June 7, 1876, further disclosing that Roderick had been in practice as a “Surgeon Dentist” in Surrey. A biographical sketch by Janet West and R. H. Barnes, “Scrimshaw by William Lewis Roderick” (*Mariners' Mirror*, 78:2, pp. 135-148), is geared to context and analysis, but their biographical speculations have been superseded and should be disregarded.



Panbone plaque by W. L. Roderick illustrating whaling off the Islands of Flores and Pulo Comba in the Flores Sea, Indian Ocean, circa 1850-55. 5¹/₂ X 7³/₄ inches (14 x 19.7 cm.). Hinsdale Collection, New Bedford Whaling Museum #1959.08.33.

Stuart M. Frank is the founder and director of the Scrimshaw Forensics® Laboratory, founder and organizer of the annual Scrimshaw Weekend at the New Bedford Whaling Museum, and author of Ingenious Contrivances, Curiously Carved and several other books and monographs about nautical art, including Classic Whaling Prints and the forthcoming Dutch and Flemish Old Master Paintings in the New Bedford Whaling Museum.

Scrimshaw Market Report

Masterpiece Theatre

by Andy Jacobson

A record-shattering non-Mittler Edward Burdett tooth topped Eldred’s July 20, 2017 auction for the final installment of the Mittler Collection. First and fast out of the gate, Lot 1 was an 8” signed Burdett tooth that boasted startling clarity and design presenting the polychrome, American flagged *William Tell* cutting-in with a blood-spouting sperm whale before her bow. The back sported the “Wm. Thomson Homeward Bound.” Signed and inscribed on the upper edge and bordered with Burdett’s distinctive foliate bottom border, this tooth was a collector’s Holy Grail come to market. Three floor bidders furiously bid the price to the record-shattering \$380,000 hammer with a final price including the buyer’s premium of \$456,000. (All sales prices in this report include buyers’ premiums.) This number eclipsed the previous record-holding \$324,000 Albatross Artisan tooth by a head-shaking \$132,000.



Burdett set the stage for an exceptionally strong finale to Tom Mittler’s collection. Prices for teeth were uniformly strong.

In keeping with the Burdett theme, the market for the formerly attributed Burdett-Britannia Artist teeth is taking shape.



Lot 71, a 5³/₄” Britannia Artist rendition of the *Daniel the Fourth* of London, was the perfect example of the early confusion between the two

artists’ work. The tooth has obvious design similarities to the now-record Burdett, right down to the billowing flag. There’s a whaling scene on the front and a whaleship under full sail on the back executed with distinctive deep carving and bold coloring. A mini-British Burdett was bought for “only” \$18,000.

Tiny, transcendent art pretty much describes Lot 72, a cataloged 4.63” Britannia Artist tooth with a fairly standard frontal portrait of the *Elizabeth* of London. It is the back that vaults this tooth to the scrimshaw masterpiece level. This tooth has haunted me since it appeared as Lot 188 at James Julia’s July 30, 1999 sale of the Robert Lang Collection. It sold for a then



astounding \$20,125. This time an astute collector took it home for \$20,400. The back is decorated with a J. M. Turner-esque/Edward Munch blast of emotional modern art. A deeply carved blood-filled vignette of four whaleboats assaulting a pod of five sperm whales on a stylized rectangular block of parallel waves is one of the most astounding renditions of a whale hunt in scrimshaw.

Scrimshaw bargains were found especially in the not-so-swift and walrus tusk categories. Lot 36, a “Rare Cased Whaleman Made Double Swift” from William Coffin’s Nantucket Collection, cost \$17,400 in 2004. It had passed as Lot 39 in the first sale with a \$12–\$18K estimate. This time around, it had a \$7-\$10K estimate and was snapped up by the trade at a bargain \$3,600.



Lot 48 exemplified the scrimshaw market’s never-ending disdain for walrus tusks. This beautifully decorated monumental 34” pair of tusks signed by whaleman J. A. Tuthill from the whaler *Majestic* was acquired from the Billy Pearson Collection in 1998 for \$12,000. It sold for \$6,600.



Lot 49, a more mundane 27” tusk from Herchel (sic) Island and dated 1892, sold for \$1,440.

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Location, Location, Location Meets Irrational Exuberance

by Andy Jacobson

Perhaps it was the fog covering the “Gray Lady” on the morning of August 5, 2017, but Rafael Osona conducted a strong auction under his “Osona Family Circus” banner on the back hall wall. Mr. Osona is a throwback to the ironman days of auctioneering. He does not relinquish the podium, and he coordinates left bids and the relatively limited phone bids himself. It is truly a one-man show. He also has a singular understanding that he works for the benefit of the consignor.

The heart of this sale came from a Nantucket summer resident who realized that his kids had no interest in preserving his lovingly acquired collection. Having actively bought through 2015, he decided to sell and take some big, but non-Titanic hits.



The tone of the sale was set by Lot 2, a 34¹/₄" beautifully carved, entwined snake-and-fist cane with a baleen separator above a tapered octagonal to straight shaft. The bottom segment of a long ferrule was clearly missing. There was a minor age crack that extended up from the baleen through the lower snake coil. No matter, a veteran cane collector and a newer competitor pushed the hammer to an astounding \$47,000, with a final price including buyer's premium of \$56,400. The rest of the prices in this report include buyer's premium.

The expected star of the show was Lot 176, the now thrice-sold signed Edward Burdett 4" Pacific whaleship tooth. It first appeared at Northeast Auctions on Aug. 21, 2005, and sold for \$193,000, making it the world's most expensive tooth for around five minutes. It next cropped up at the same location in 2013 and brought \$198,000.



This year, it took \$252,000 to bring it home. With last month's record-setting 8" tooth selling at Eldred's for \$456,000, Burdett masterpieces now average \$60,000 per inch.

Flipping pieces from one auction to another is a time-tested activity. It often proves more difficult than one might expect. The Osona sale had positive results that proved the adage that there is little to no carryover memory beyond a few dedicated dealers and collectors. It also exhibits the strength of the Nantucket summer market. It's doubtful that the same results would occur on the mainland.

In May, Marion Auctions sold the contents of the Fairhaven Colonial Club. Quite a few pieces appeared in this sale.

Lot 10 Whalebone 6" optimistically cataloged “bird form” crimper with a fluted wheel sold for \$780. Ex Fairhaven Colonial Club Lot 24, it cost \$275.



Lot 11 Whalebone 8" Abalone, floral inlaid 3-wheel crimper, fluted wheel brought \$5,400. Ex Fairhaven Colonial Club Lot 9 cost \$1,600.

Lot 12 Whalebone 5¹/₂" swan-form crimper, fluted wheel sold for \$2,640.

Ex-Fairhaven Colonial Club Lot 21 cost \$950.

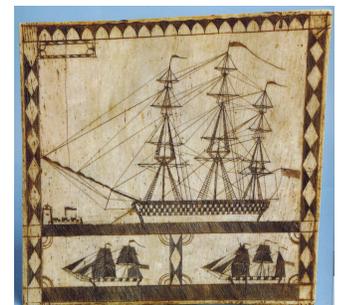


Lot 14 Whalebone and wood banded 15¹/₂" eagle head dipper sold for \$1,680.

Ex-Fairhaven Colonial Club Lot 17 cost \$1,050.

Lot 174 Mittler Panbone 7¹/₄" x 7¹/₂", frame removed, \$10,200.

The cover lot from the Mittler Collection, Eldred's Oct. 2016, Part 1 Lot 59 cost \$7,200. Northeast Auctions Aug. 18, 2007. Lot 994. Cost: \$12,760.



Head Turners and Head Scratchers

by Andy Jacobson

Skinner's August 13, 2017 Americana sale held more than its fair share of nautical surprises. Scattered among an array of the late Ernie Helides' canes and raw teeth were a couple of true rarities.



Lot 247 was a run-of-the-mill 19th-C. alphabet and scenic rustic sampler in a rare elongated oval panbone polychrome foliate-decorated 9³/₄" x 12¹/₄" frame with "mortise and tenon joints." Pseudo-diligent research revealed no similar examples. It sold for \$8,303.

Lot 418 was not scrimshaw but a certainly rare and perhaps unique lantern with a fascinating whaling connection. A 17" ordinary brass swing-handle lantern had a beautifully etched glass advertisement for "Thos Spencer/Ship Chandler/Honolulu SI." Whaling Capt. Thomas Spencer (1815–1884) was master of the New Bedford whaleship *Triton* on a successful 1846–1850 Pacific voyage that according to Starbuck was "...Attacked by natives at Sydenham's island; 5 of the crew killed, 7 wounded; captain Spencer rescued by ships United States and Alabama of Nantucket..." The good captain remained in Hawaii and ran a Honolulu ship chandlery from 1851–1861. In addition to its fine condition, this lamp had pretty much everything going for it—rarity, whaling, Hawaii, advertising, and the resulting \$30,750 price.



The true "head shaker" was Lot 249, a 7¹/₄" x 5¹/₄" badly warped panbone plaque decorated with nice contrast showing a full rigged ship upon a stylized water above the legend "M. D. Holmes." It sold to the telephone for a staggering and inexplicable \$52,275. "M. D. Holmes" is neither the ship's name nor its master. The name is not found in Judy Lund's compilation of whaling vessels and their masters, *American Offshore Whaling Voyages*. Despite shaded sails, the art is clearly not the work of Edward Burdett.



In July 20, 2017, Eldred's Marine Sale included the following more compelling decorated panbone pieces: Lot 106, a 4.75" x 6.34" polychrome decorated active whaling scene titled "The Death" and signed by master artist "W. L. Roderick" selling for \$39,000 (above), and Lot 60, a 10.75" x 17.5" active whaling scene from the Mittler Collection for \$15,600.



The next curiosity was Skinner's Lot 280, a 2"-wide stamp bearing the name "W. J. Dinsmore" decorated with hearts, arrows, and a rising sun secured by an undecorated sperm whale handle. It went to a telephone bidder for \$7,995. It was a charming object.

The remaining questions are: Who were those masked men and why those exceedingly strong prices?

Andy Jacobson is the owner of Andrew Jacobson Marine Antiques in Ipswich, MA, selling a full line of quality marine antiques for 39 years. He also provides auction consultation services and qualified appraisals of collections and estates.

Voyage of Discovery: the Queen Amalia Tooth, *continued from page 1*

Queen Amalia (1818–1875) was previously the Duchess of Oldenburg (Lower Saxony, now part of Germany). In 1836, she married King Otto (1815–1867), a Bavarian prince who in 1832 had been appointed king of the newly formed Kingdom of Greece. Amalia was said to be beautiful and was popular with the Greek people. She wanted to help build a sense of national pride and created the folksy “Amalia dress,” which became the Greek national costume still seen today. She also established the Royal Gardens in Athens. After a period of political unrest, Otto was deposed and they returned to Bavaria in 1862 to live in exile.

By searching Google Images, I found a matching image of Queen Amalia. It was from *The Illustrated London News* of August 31, 1844. This 16-page newspaper, replete with illustrations, could have been onboard a 3– or 4–year whaling voyage and inspiring the scrimshaw being done at that time. In any case, August 1844 is the earliest possible date of the engraving.

I now have a second Amalia tooth, the Amalia illustration found on eBay for \$15, an Amalia lacquered box, and a small book with her image. I group them together at home.

I displayed the Amalia tooth at the May 2016 New Bedford Whaling Museum’s Scrimshaw Weekend. Tony Dumitru, Collections Manager at the Nantucket Historical Association (NHA) pointed out that NHA had a similar tooth (NHA #1962.0126).

When I was on Nantucket for the Osona auction in August 2016, Tony met me at the Museum’s offsite storage facility and we compared my tooth and NHA’s, side by side.

Although they were possibly taken from the same source image, they appear to be by two separate hands. I’ve found that museums such as NHA, Mystic, NBWM, and the Boston MFA are more than willing to make their storage pieces available for examination by collectors. The museum may learn something from the collector and vice versa.



I learned of a similar tooth at the Bishop Museum in Honolulu (#1990.8.613) during a 2013 presentation given by writer-researcher Mary Malloy. The Bishop catalogs it as a portrait of Queen Victoria in her coronation robes;



Victoria acceded to the throne of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in 1837 and her coronation was in 1838. Noted scrimshaw authority Stuart Frank observed that the Bishop Museum’s woman is wearing a coronet tiara, not a full crown, so the robe would not be from her coronation.

When going through my collection of scrimshaw auction photos, I came across another whale’s tooth with the identical Amalia image from the August 2010 Osona auction (#182).



Is there another print that more exactly matches the Bishop and Osona teeth? Are they of Victoria and Amalia, or just Amalia?

Researching the Queen Amalia tooth and its related other teeth has been a fascinating adventure. I look forward to other interesting discoveries.

Michael Gerstein is a scrimshaw collector from Lincoln, MA.

Collectors' Corner

Methods We Use to Find Scrimshaw

by Tom and Barb Conley

Our recreation is antiquing—searching for things we don't need and can't afford.

Dealer inquiries. In the mid 1990s, we started collecting scrimshaw. It was at the annual Forest Hills Antique show in Rockford, IL, that we had our first “Bingo.” While waiting for Barb to finish up the last few booths, I started a casual conversation with one of the dealers near the exit. I asked, “Do you have any scrimshaw?” She said she had a swift at home and that I should call her in six weeks. When I called I said, “I'll bring cash. How much do you want for the swift?” She said, “\$250.” I hung up the phone, looked at Barb, and said, “It can't be a sailor-made swift for \$250.” It was—a 12-arm double (that required \$950 worth of repair).



I now ask every antiques-show Americana dealer as well as booth-stocking dealers in antique malls, “Do you have anything related to whaling?” In Champaign, IL, I got a positive response and another bingo from the mall manager. She had a whale bone seam rubber at home that we ultimately purchased for \$250.

Our next success was at the Oakton Antique Center in Des Plaines, IL. During one visit, the mall owner said, “I have something I want you to look at. Maybe you'll know what it is.” She brought out a 15” whalebone fid. I offered \$300 and she accepted. I asked, “Where did you get it?” She said an elderly lady walked into the mall with several nice antiques. The dealers working the floor that day bought every piece except for the fid. So she purchased it herself, hoping someone would know what it was used for.

eBay. eBay's policy is to pull all items made from ivory or whalebone.

Some sellers will list an ivory or whalebone piece as “faux.” If a good piece is listed and you want to own it, it is imperative that you contact the seller before eBay finds the piece and pulls it. At the bottom of a listing it gives an “Ask seller a question” option. Click that and then select “Other.” Ask something about the piece (size, weight, color), anything to get a reply from the seller. After you have a reply, you'll have a way to contact the seller if eBay pulls the piece.



From eBay we purchased a 23” walrus tusk cribbage board that was listed as “faux walrus tusk”—opening bid \$1,200. You don't have to be very smart to figure out the piece isn't plastic with an opening bid of \$1,200. We were the only bidders.

From our eBay dealer contacts, we have purchased two nice teeth. Our name is out there now, and people call us if they find a piece that will fit our collection.

Our last swift. We stopped at a single-owner antique shop in St. Joseph, IL, the same shop from which we had purchased our second piece of scrimshaw 20 years earlier. It was also our second fake, a bone-handled, ivory-bladed knife made from five laminations of a lady's fan handle along with a piece of ivory for a blade. The lady we purchased the fake knife from 20 years earlier was sitting in the same chair behind the same counter where she had been 20 years earlier. I said, “Twenty years ago you said you had a sailor-made swift at home that had been made into a lamp. Do you still have it and is it for sale?”

She looked at me like, “How did he remember that?”



Then she called her husband, he brought the swift from home, and \$864 later we walked out with a swift made by the same hand as the swift Paul DeCoste ran through Osona's in 2011. That swift had a hammer price of \$28,000. Paul's was complete. Ours has a central shaft consisting of a threaded rod for the lamp's light socket. For \$864, one can't be picky.

Tom and Barb Conley are longtime scrimshaw collectors from Huntley, IL.

Kobacker scrimshaw collection set for auction, *continued from page 1*

Bourne was referencing the landmark sale of the Thomas Mittler Scrimshaw Collection, which the firm sold over three auction sessions beginning October 2016. “We have to feel blessed to have handled the superb collection of Thomas Mittler with great success and interest from the scrimshaw collectors. We at Eldred’s would like to thank the Mittler family and the support of the buyers and underbidders for their passion and interest,” Bourne said.



Family portrait by Ceres B Artisan; ship portrait on reverse. Length 6.25”.

“The scrimshaw and crimpers from the Kobacker Collection are of great quality and somewhat different than Mittler’s,” Bourne said. The Kobacker Collection is comprised of many large teeth, a number of which are over 9” in length, with patriotic, whaling and naval battle/engagement scenes. The crimpers are exceedingly fine examples, including many rare and important pieces, and the five rare swifts, including the “tea cup swift” dated 1822, would be fine additions to any collection. Low estimates on lots in the collection range from \$500 to \$100,000.

Sale dates for the Kobacker Collection are to be announced soon. The first session may be sold in November as part of the firm’s Americana Auction or in January 2018 in a dedicated marine sale. The second session will be sold in July 2018 as part of the annual summer marine sale.



Large and exceptionally detailed polychrome tooth in the manner of William Roderick with whaling scenes on both obverse and reverse. Length 7”. Width 4.25”.

All auctions will be live auctions conducted at Eldred’s headquarters in East Dennis, MA. Absentee, phone, and online bidding will also be available.

Clarification of Marine Mammal Ivory and Bone Restrictions

by Mark Jacobson, in consult with Matt Gilmore, U.S. Fish and Wildlife/Law Enforcement, Chelsea, MA

The following information has been prepared to help provide some clarity to help the Cape Cod Antiques Dealer Association (CCADA) members understand, interpret and make decisions to conform with regulations currently in place in Massachusetts for the buying, selling, and collecting of antique artifacts containing—in all or part—marine mammal ivory and bone.

This information is limited in scope by outlining current regulations that apply only to help protect marine mammals including cetaceans (whales, dolphins, and porpoises), pinnipeds (seals and sea lions), sirenians (manatees and dugongs), sea otters, and polar bears, at the federal and Massachusetts level.

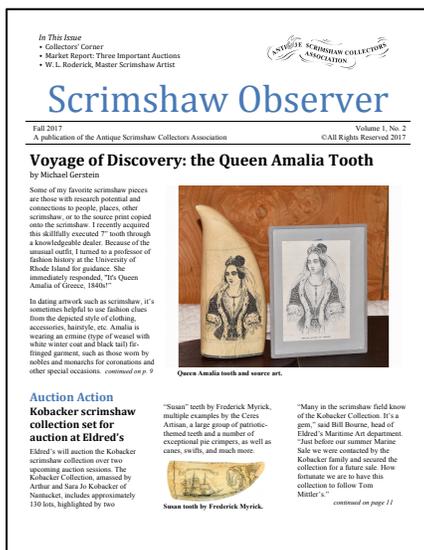
It is important to note that some states outside of MA (e.g., California, New Jersey, and New York) have their own, additional statewide restrictions that in some cases expand upon federal control. This article focuses only on the present law as of April 4, 2017, in Massachusetts. But because Massachusetts has, in effect, decided to concurrently utilize the standing federal Marine Mammal

Protection Act (MMPA) regulations to protect marine mammals, this article recites those main precepts and recites the “letter of the law” from the federal perspective.

Functionally, there have not been any changes made at the federal or Commonwealth of Massachusetts (state) level in how properly identified marine mammal artifacts can be bought, sold and/or collected since the MMPA was ratified December 1, 1972.

In providing this information, the CCADA is making a good-faith effort to help mitigate confusion, misunderstandings or confrontations in the future. We cannot enforce statutes that are not our to enforce, but we can impart knowledge, expect members to follow the rule of the law and to take appropriate actions to protect the animals, themselves, and the integrity of the Association by doing the “right thing.”

Please go to www.antiquescrimshawcollectors.org to read this article in its entirety.



Inside: Fall 2017 Newsletter



Scrimshaw Observer

Welcome to the Fall 2017 issue of the Antique Scrimshaw Collectors Association's newsletter.

This issue contains:

- Article on Scrimshander W. L. Broderick
- Collectors' Corner
- Market Report: Three Important Auctions
- Hawaiian Sun Sets on Scrimshaw
- Clarification of MA Bone and Ivory Restrictions



Polychrome patriotic scene tooth from the Kobacker Collection to be offered at Eldred's Auction. Length 6.25". See article on page 1.