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Scrimshaw Observer

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Scrimshaw Tools — Part 1

by Sanford A. Moss

The topic, “*Scrimshaw Tools*” is a large one.¹ So large, in fact, that I am going to look at it in an unconventional way. This article will examine a number of scrimshaw tools — some from museums and some from private collections, including my own. I hope to describe them from a functional point of view — how they work; how they were made; and how they fit into a larger context of maritime history and achievement. The tools that I choose will be tools in the traditional sense of the word. They were made to have a useful purpose — even if that purpose may have been wacky.

Many scrimshanders of the 19th century had training as craftsmen—carpenters, joiners, mechanics, blacksmiths, engravers, etc. They knew how to use taps and dies (and even how to make them); how to construct a wooden dovetail joint; and the difference between a mortise and a tenon. And if they went to sea without that sort of knowledge, they had every opportunity to learn it from their crewman peers as the ships slowly plodded around the world. While most pictorial engraved

scrimshaw might come from an artistic tradition, the tools come from a woodworking tradition.

Based on the questions that collectors ask me, I’m not sure that sort of craftsman-savvy continues in the 21st century. I encounter a lot of confusion about the distinctions, say, between marking and mortise gages; wood scrapers and floats; scribes and about everything else. How many people today actually prepare hide glue from scratch, and know how to use it? How many people, when secondary schools gave up on providing “shop” classes, learned woodworking from sucking on the electronic teat of Norm Abrams, losing touch with old fashioned craftsmanship? And I have learned after surveying a number of writings about scrimshaw tools, that there are errors. Tools are misidentified, and the descriptions of their actions and uses muddled, or sometimes even wrong. Perhaps it is time to take an old subject out, and dust it off. To do this I propose to go through the steps of making scrimshaw, from idea to plan; to layout; to marking and cutting out; to fabrication and assembly; and finally, to final finishing steps. I hope that a new look will be an informative one.

The Plan

In any project to create, repair, or recreate a woodworking project, the first step is to make a plan. This might be only in the mind of the workman, but it can also be a sketch or drawing, measured to scale, that will guide the work. We certainly know



Fig. 1. Banknote Engraver tooth brought home by Willard M. Brown, ship’s carpenter, from the bark *Canton Packet*, 1841-45. Obverse side, showing a full-rigged ship underway with a pilot schooner approaching. *Family legacy reported by Deborah May. Photo courtesy New Bedford Whaling Museum*

Was He the Banknote Engraver? Scrimshaw Shipmates aboard the *Canton Packet*, 1841-45

by Stuart M. Frank

The true identity of the much-celebrated, anonymous scrimshaw artist hitherto known only as the Banknote Engraver — the moniker applied by Norman Flayderman¹ in 1971 — has been one of the prevailing mysteries of scrimshaw history. Until now we had no name for the artist; now we have one, but the attribution is not entirely convincing.

In April 2007, Deborah May, an astute heir to her family’s one heirloom tooth, brought it to New Bedford for examination by the Scrimshaw Forensics® Laboratory (SFL). It turned out to be a smaller-than-average but particularly fine specimen, unequivocally the Banknote Engraver’s work, in a superb state of preservation — monochrome engraved on both sides with



Fig. 1. Seam rubber, sperm whale panbone (jawbone), inscribed “THOMAS FREEMAN / his Rubber” and on the back, “DROP IT YOU BUGGER.” Whaleman Thomas Freeman, active circa 1830-51, was from Fairhaven, Massachusetts. *Nantucket Historical Association. Photo by Jeffrey Allen.*

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A Word from the Editor

We are delighted to present in this issue Part One of the long-awaited article by Sanford Moss on "Scrimshaw Tools." His emphasis here is not the usual preoccupation with scrimshaw sailors' tools for ship-board use, or with familiar domestic cooking and needlework implements rendered in scrimshaw, but rather focuses upon tools for carpentry, draftsmanship, and cooperage; and the article is laid out as a sequence of the steps an artisan would take actually to plan and execute a woodworking or scrimshaw-building project. Part Two is scheduled to appear in the next issue. Following in this issue is a long-awaited look at the possible identity of the anonymous Banknote Engraver — which, alas! still remains somewhat unresolved, owing to suggestive but inadequate newfound documentation. Then comes a piece by Jonathan Blum heralding The Carnegie, a newly opened heritage center on Martha's Vineyard. And finally, our regular columnist Andrew Jacobson provides, with his usual verve and in his usual canny insights, a preview of scrimshaw to be offered at auction in Summer 2021, followed by a second market preview. You are accordingly invited to visit The Carnegie and Jonathan Blum's collection on Martha's Vineyard, to keep your eyes peeled for any relevant new information regarding the context and provenance of Banknote Engraver scrimshaw, and, of course, to patronize the auctions and dealers whose ads appear in these pages, as their support is key to keeping us going. Thank you, advertisers! —SMF

Scrimshaw Tools — Part 1 *continued from Page 1*

that many scrimshanders worked from plans, cutting templates from paper, penciled designs on raw teeth and jotted measurements and calculations. Done well, these plans would be measured drawings, set to exact or scaled dimensions. They would have been "laid out" on the plan or directly on the work piece. Surviving plans, however, are pretty scarce. More informative are partially completed works of scrimshaw that retain unfinished pieces that preserve evidences of scrimshanders intentions. There is an entire class of tools — called "layout tools" — meant to do this work. These include measuring devices like rules, dividers, bevels (for plotting angles), and a host of gages for drawing straight (or curved) lines on the plan or work piece. Also needed for this were scribes, marking knives, or pencils. All of these layout tools were grist for the scrimshander's mill, and together they comprise (by number) probably the largest category of scrimshaw tools.

Rules / Rulers

Thinking just of rules, we find scrimshaw examples of simple 1-foot rules, often crudely made of whale panbone, simply graduated in inch (or smaller) increments with knife slashes that might be pigmented with inks, wax, or tar. The fancier ones may have at least one beveled edge, with finer graduations (but usually down to only $\frac{1}{4}$ "). These short panbone rules are ordinary in every way, but they were good enough to do the jobs of measuring, and as a straightedge. But every now and again you can find a rule that is special. It might be because of the material — made of, say, baleen, or ivory — or having fine graduations (down to $\frac{1}{6}$ "), or being scribed with vertical embellishment lines.

Also, there are longer folding rules having multiple sections joined by complex joints. One of my favorites is made of ivory segments and is inked with a scale marked by letters that I haven't yet deciphered [Fig. 2]. Best of all it is folded into a case made of sharkskin. This isn't the standard dried spinous sharkskin commonly called *shagreen*. But the skin is tanned, dyed green, and has the *spicules* (placoid scales) of the skin ground down. This is a French 18th-century product known as *Galluchat* and makes quite an elegant case for a simple hand-lettered rule.



Fig. 2. *Galluchat*. Embellishment lines tend to "frame" the rule and serve as stops for various vertical lines of scale.

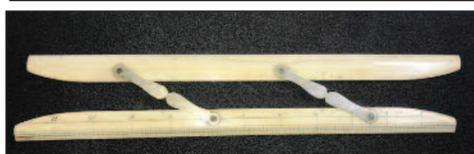


Fig. 3. Walrus ivory parallel rule. *Ladd Thorne Collection*

Another favorite is a parallel rule used for plotting ship position and course [Fig. 3]. Its two limbs are made from walrus ivory (with one side of each limb preserving the natural curve of the tusk), and are joined by German silver hinges. Its 12" length is graduated into $\frac{1}{16}$ " increments, and has a full set of embellishment lines. While commercial, patented parallel rules with graduated protractor markings exist, I haven't yet seen another graduated parallel rule like this one.

The panbone bench rule above is beveled on one edge [Fig. 4a]. It is in an unusual 15" length and is graduated into 8 equal segments, and then each of these is again divided into two halves. The rule appears old and the bone has a fair amount of black vascular channels that add to its darkness. Two features make it stand out in the crowd: First, it has a single embellishment line that parallels the upper edge, only $\frac{1}{32}$ " below it. Only one of the vertical graduation lines rises to reach the embellishment line, and it marks the center of the rule. I've shown this piece to a number of rule collectors, and all of them report not to have seen a rule like this before. I think that it probably is a center finding rule. The vertical gradations are a little more than 1" apart, so precise measurement is not a goal. Rather, if you slide the rule along the workpiece, you reach a point

where there are equal numbers of marked segments on either side of the single vertical graduation. And you have quickly found the center point of the work piece — a valuable point in the design and for further work on the project.



Fig. 4a. Center finding rule.

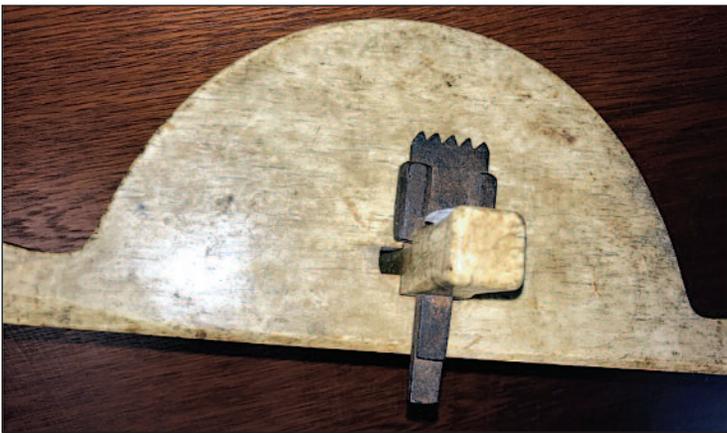


Fig. 4b. Center finding rule (detail).

Another distinction of this rule, is that at one end, it is marked and dated. The date is fairly clear, “1671” (with serifs) and the presumed maker has the initials, “WA”, with the “W” formed from two overlapping “V”s [Fig. 4b]. If real this would be a very early example of scrimshaw — so it is worth contemplation. I suspect that it is more likely English than American.

Speaking of foreign-made rules — manufactured or sailor-made — beware of those that have unusually “long” inches. The English or American “inch” was not the world standard in the 18th and 19th centuries. Many European countries, principalities, and even cities had their own “Standard Inch” that in the 19th century varied from others, sometimes by as much as $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch (12.5%). Spanish, French, and various German rule makers (and sailors) used

these “stretched” inches on their rules. Not accurate by modern standards, they are fun to collect, and can be used to determine the country of origin.²

Other Measuring Devices

Of course, other sorts of scrimshaw rule measures exist. Often bevels [Figs. 5-8] and marking gages [Figs. 9-15] have graduated blades, stems, or bodies to allow making quick measurements while setting the gage or bevel to the work-piece. But probably the most common scrimshaw measures are the “textile yardsticks” used by seamstresses when converting yard goods to finished clothing [Fig. 16]. These were commonly made by sailors as gifts for

loved ones at home, and are one of the fancier sorts of sailor work. The standard (36”) stick is graduated into fractions of a yard — typically $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{5}{8}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{8}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{8}$, and rarely, $\frac{1}{16}$ (a bit over 2”). Their 3-foot lengths, and the propensity for panbone to warp with age, means that these are not often found made from bone alone — but rather of tropical hardwoods, with abundant inlays of all kinds.

Bevels [Figs. 5-8] are used to transfer angles from a plan or example to the work



Fig. 5. Single-blade bevel..

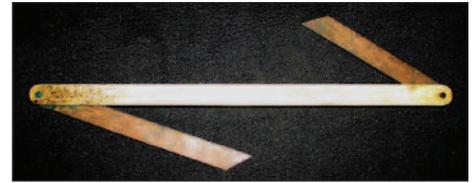


Fig. 6. Double-blade ship bevel..



Fig. 7. Panbone single-blade bevel.



Fig. 8. Baleen single-blade bevel, shown with a panbone 12” rule.

piece. These come as single blade or double blade models. Two blades can carry two angles and are useful for laying out the ribs and planking on ship hulls, and are referred to as “ship bevels.” Bevels with a single long blade are more favored by collectors.

Marking gages^{3,4} [Figs. 9-15], frequently made by scrimshanders for personal use, have a “head” or “fence” that clamps to a “stem” or “arm”. The latter bears a point or “stylus.” The arm can be adjusted so that the stylus is positioned a desired distance from the straight edge of the work piece. When the fence is registered against the edge of the workpiece, and drawn along it, the stylus scribes a line parallel to the edge. The gage thus “marks” this line to be later cut to size. If the gage has two points on the arm, that can be adjusted independently, two parallel will be scribed and will form the width of a mortise that can be cut in the work piece. This elaboration then describes a “mortise” gage.

Ordinary draftsman compasses were frequently used for decorating busks, whale teeth, panbone and baleen boxes. The circles and the complex design they traced are ubiquitous in scrimshaw. In place of adjustable compasses, whalemens sometimes used silver coins to lay out circular cutouts

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Fig. 9. Fence and stem of a panbone screw-lock marking gage. Note the layout lines defining the mortise for the stem. The thumbscrew was likely forged by a ship's blacksmith.

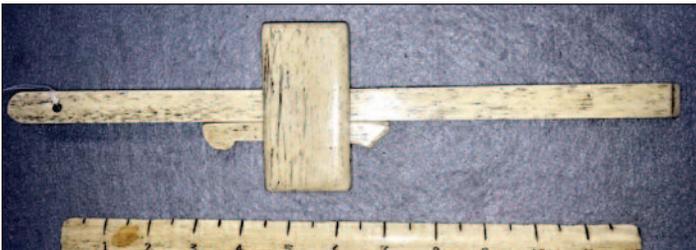


Fig. 10. Wedge-lock marking gage. A panbone wedge shares the head mortise with the stem to lock it in place.

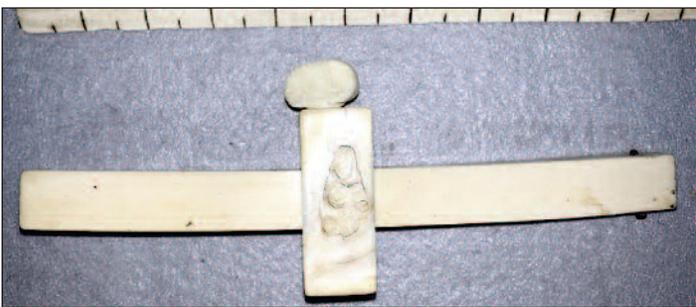


Fig. 11. Screw-lock marking gage, unusual for having both sperm whale ivory (head) and walrus ivory (stem). The warpage is regrettable.

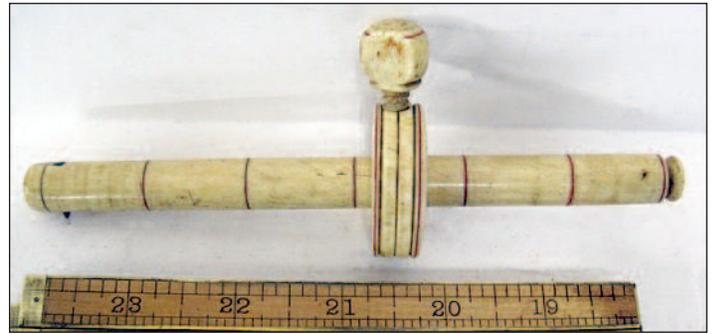


Fig. 12. Bone marking gage of lath-turned type with sealing wax decoration.



Fig. 13. Rare bone marking gage with wedge locking mechanism concealed inside the head.



Fig. 14. Not scrimshaw, but illustrative of a two-stem marking gage, each stem fixed by its own wedge. The two arms can be adjusted independently and in two passes across the work piece scribes a pair of parallel lines for laying out mortises.



Fig. 15a. Not scrimshaw, but illustrative of a two-stem marking gage, each stem fixed by its own wedge. The two arms can be adjusted independently and in two passes across the work piece scribes a pair of parallel lines for laying out mortises.



Fig. 15b. View of the slide-adjust mortise gage, showing the sliding iron rod in a groove in the bottom of the stem.



Fig. 15c. Detail of the slide-adjust mortise gage, showing the ornamental stop at the end of the stem.



Fig. 16. Three wooden yardsticks nicely inlaid with whale and walrus ivory, shown with two panbone straightedges and a panbone yardstick made by African-American whaleman Ezra Summons of Nantucket for his wife, circa 1825. *New Bedford Whaling Museum. Photo by Richard Donnelly*



Fig. 17. Small (6") carpenter's square with a mahogany handle that was probably "borrowed" from a manufactured square. The blade, however, is whale ivory and has a "hang" hole for hanging on a peg above the workman's bench. Squares are also made with blades set at 45 degrees to the handle. These so-called "mitre" squares are useful for laying out mitre joints, as in the corners of picture frames.

in baskets, etc. One story is that after layout, the coins could be sliced into pins with which to join the basket.

Carpenter's squares are simple tools, consisting of a wooden, bone, or ivory handle set at exactly 90 degrees to the blade, and are used for laying out right angle cuts ensuring that a work piece is perfectly square. Scrimshaw examples are fairly common [Figs. 17-19].

Markup

After the layout is completed and the work pieces are ready to be marked, the



Fig. 18. Example of a square made with a panbone handle and steel blade was not made well (the blade is not square to the handle), and a user beat it up with a leather worker's pinking iron — probably out of frustration.



Fig. 19a. Draftsman's 30 / 60 / 90 degree square (also known as a "triangle"): an exceptional example in the mode of squares used by draftsmen for formal plan and blueprint work, length 8 7/8", made by whaleman Faustino Manapsal of the San Francisco bark *Alice Knowles* in 1906. *New Bedford Whaling Museum*

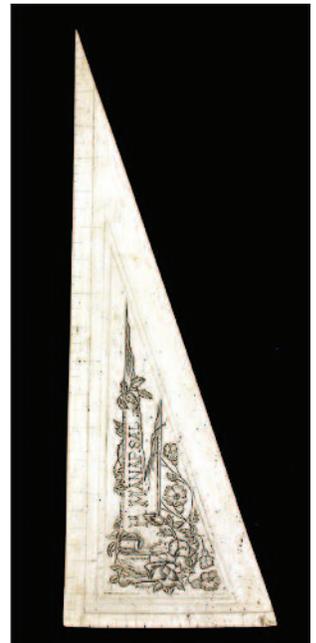


Fig. 19b. The triangular "square" is engraved on both sides and greatly exceeds the quality of similar commercial examples. It does not fit the typical draftsman's size, as the acute angle is 72 degrees, not the standard 60 degrees. A *tour de force* of a scrimshaw layout tool. *New Bedford Whaling Museum*

tendency for most folks is to take a sharp pencil for this task — but a seasoned woodworker or scrimshander will reach instead for a sharp, straight-bladed knife (a marking knife) for this job [Fig. 20]. Such a tool (lancet, scalpel, Exacto knife) does not leave graphite remains to dirty the work piece. The cut lines are usually thinner than pencil marks, and they better serve as guides for the cutting tools (saw, chisel, or knife) when the marked stock is cut. If you look closely at many scrimshaw pieces, you can often see the remains of these cut lines at the edges of mortises, etc. For me they serve to show that a good craftsman made the piece of scrimshaw at which I'm looking.



Fig. 20. Marking knife with panbone handle.

Scrimshaw Tools — Part 1 *continued from Page 4*

Saws

With the layout and markup completed, the next step is to cut out the piece(s). This is usually done by saw, but smaller pieces can be cut by knife or chisel. The choice of a saw is very personal, and preferences run from small dovetail saws, to hacksaws, to bulky frame saws [Figs. 21-26]. The noted woodworker Tage Frid preferred a honking big frame saw for cutting dovetails, while a famous Maine craftsman, Charles Pierce, always used a hacksaw for the same purpose. Skill overrides equipment when sawing. Unlike working with wood, the choice of whether to use a cross-cut saw (for cutting across the grain) rather than a rip saw (for cutting with the grain) is relatively unimportant in building scrimshaw. Most whale and walrus ivory is very consistent in density, while bone is so variable that neither requires any special filing, so long as the saw is sharp. I prefer a smaller size back saw (9" blade length) with 13 or 14 teeth per inch of blade.

Smaller hacksaws, with very narrow blades, often called “coping saws,” are exceedingly useful when making scrimshaw. The



Fig. 21. Backsaw made by Henry Disston & Sons — a great saw for reducing bone and ivory to work-size pieces. Backsaws, by definition, have a steel or brass spine atop the blade, which holds it stiff.

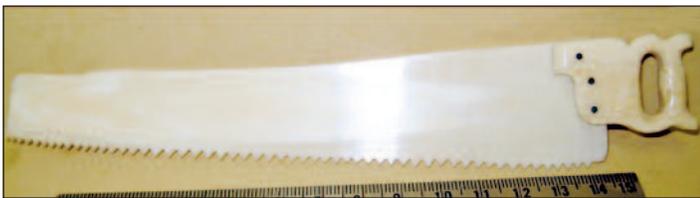


Fig. 22. Miniature backsaw, shown with a centimeter rule. This 8" specimen, made of walrus ivory, is a curiosity. It depicts an ordinary hand saw, even to the detail of its “nib” (the projection on the top of the toe of the blade). This was a common feature of hand saws up to about 1927. No one seems to know for sure what its function might have been (but there is lots of speculation). There are very few examples of scrimshaw hand saws — even steel-bladed hand saws retrofitted with an ivory or bone handle are quite scarce.



Fig. 23. Miniature frame saw. Only about 6" long, it is illustrated in Norman Flayderman's book, *Scrimshaw and Scrimshanders* (1971). The butt of the walrus ivory handle has a disk of abalone nacre (mother of pearl) fastened to it. Outside of bow or turning saws, it is the only true small scrimshaw saw that I've owned.



Fig. 24. Turning Saw. *Ladd Thorne collection*

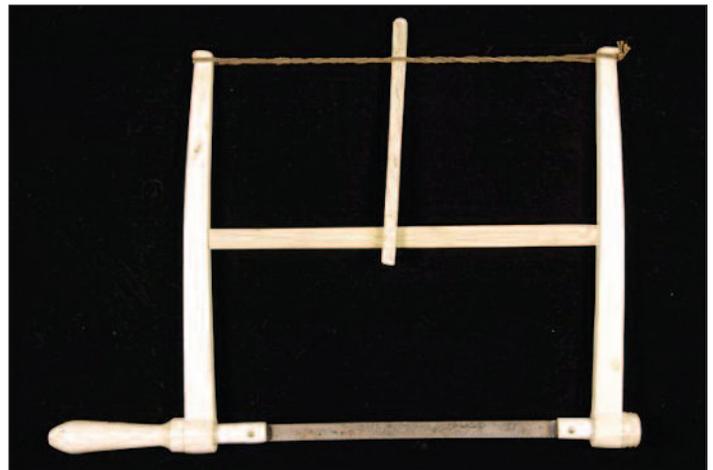


Fig. 25. Panbone turning saw, essentially a duplicate of the one pictured in Fig. 24. It consists of six pieces of sperm whale panbone, carved and assembled with a lathe-turned handle. The saw is sprung with a twine tension strap and metal fastenings, and like the turning saw, is collapsible into the component parts. *New Bedford Whaling Museum. Photo by Richard Donnelly*

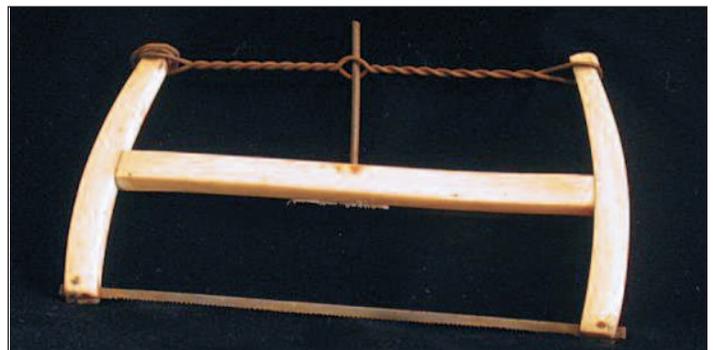


Fig. 26. Miniature bucksaw comprised of three struts of whale ivory, evidently fastened with copper tenons or posts, and a lightweight steel coping-saw blade fitted into slots and fastened with steel pins; sprung with twisted copper wire stopped with a ferrous nail. I suspect it could be an Eskimo-made model. *New Bedford Whaling Museum. Photo by Richard Donnelly*

blades are thin and flexible, and are capable of cutting curves of fairly narrow radii. Because the blades are easily available and replaceable, the onerous task of sharpening is avoided.

So-called “turning” saws [Fig. 24] are adjustable, allowing the tension on the blade to be relieved by loosening the handles or

the top tension rod or cord. Thus the blade can be rotated to change the direction of cut, without requiring the blade to be removed from the kerf. These saws are more abundant than any other sort of scrimshaw saw, as the saw (which has a floating crosspiece) can be broken down into a small package for easy transport or to be packed into a tool chest. Some, made of exotic woods, with panbone frames complemented with highly carved tropical woods, make showy and collectible display pieces.

Floats and Scrapers

In making engraved pictorial scrimshaw, especial attention is directed to preparing a smooth and regular surface (often on a sperm whale tooth) on which the engraving can smoothly proceed. This requires shaving the natural rough ridges on the tooth down to a smooth surface. To smooth the ivory and bone surfaces, old time whalers are said to have used files, sharp pieces of broken glass and dried sharkskin as the tools to make this transformation from rough to glassy smooth. Fine woodworkers (especially plane makers) generally eschew files, sandpaper (and sharkskin or broken glass) for this task. Instead, they prefer special tools called “floats” and “scrapers” that will abrade rough wood surfaces to satin smoothness very quickly. Looking from afar, floats might be confused with ordinary files or rasps; but they have a quite different tooth structure and placement. Wooden plane makers, in particular, have long relied on “floats” to smooth the ramp like blade support that lies under the angled plane blade. A plane maker’s float has ranks of relatively low angled teeth, each fairly chisel like, and when passed over a rough wooden surface smooths it almost perfectly, leaving none of chewed and feathered wood fiber ends produced by even the finest sandpaper. After being smoothed with a float the wood surface is ready to receive its finish. Sandpaper need not apply.



Fig. 27. Float. A nice sailor-made example with a panbone handle — almost, but not quite as good as manufactured ones. This one is for smoothing small work pieces. *New Bedford Whaling Museum*



Fig. 28. Float: a small, sailor-made example that started life as a small file which was then annealed in a blacksmith’s forge. New “float” teeth were then chiseled into the softened steel, and the blade was then re-tempered to make a crude, but workable scrimshaw float.



Fig. 29. These two carver’s floats are narrow and one is curved — examples of tools made by scrimshanders for making scrimshaw. The owner demonstrated his carving skill on one of the handles.

When I first started looking through the various tools in the collection of the New Bedford Whaling Museum, I was surprised to find a lot of floats in the collection. Many of these are fairly crude, and were obviously sailor-made, but they are definitely floats, and not the files and rasps listed on their accession records. There is little doubt in my mind that this is a tool that was commonly used by scrimshanders to do the rough work of removing the ridges from a raw whale’s tooth, and would precede the later file, scraper, and abrasive work of preparing the tooth for engraving. In small sizes, with thin and curved blades, floats also make effective carving tools and are certainly capable of sculpting ivory and bone. Here are a few examples [Figs 27-31].



Fig. 30. Float with a turned panbone handle. *Nantucket Historical Association*



Fig. 31. Close-up of a plane maker’s float set in panbone, showing the teeth.

Similar tools have long been used by comb makers to smooth ivory and tortoise shell combs, but here the tools are proportionally wider with teeth set closer together, and are called, “grailles.” I have no doubt that comb maker’s grailles would do a good job of smoothing whale ivory, as well as baleen. Grailles are rarer than floats. I see only one or two per year at tool auctions. Scrimshanders did a lot of their fine shaping of carvings and built scrimshaw with ordinary files. When looking for tool marks on scrimshaw, by far the most common marks were made by files.

Part 2 is scheduled to run in the next issue of Scrimshaw Observer.

Acknowledgements

I am happy to thank a number of people for stimulating my thoughts about scrimshaw over the years. My colleagues (past and present) on the Scrimshaw Forensics® panel, which convenes at the New Bedford Whaling Museum, are uppermost in my thoughts: Don Boger, Richard Donnelly, Judith Lund, Vasant Gideon, Michael Gerstein, Jim Vaccarino, and the late Don Ridley. Former Museum Registrar Jean Banker years ago pushed me into the Museum’s storage rooms charging me with making some order out of the tool collection. What a gift! Colleagues who have helped with conversations and tool pictures include Don Boger, Richard Donnelly, Ladd Thorne, and Gregg Hurwitz. “Our Leader”: Stuart M. Frank, continues to be an amazing and inspiring source of information about scrimshaw and nearly everything else in the universe. My wife, Barbara Moss, has been a patient sounding board, and expert editor. My deep thanks to her.

Sandy Moss, educated at Yale and Cornell, was Commonwealth Professor of Biology at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, and author of the books Sharks: An Introduction for the Amateur Naturalist (1984) and The Natural History of the Antarctic Peninsula (1988) as well as numerous articles in scientific journals and popular magazines. Since retirement, he has been a distinguished expert in the history and identification of tools, an antiques dealer specializing in hand tools, a volunteer at the New Bedford Whaling Museum, and a member of the Scrimshaw Forensics® Laboratory team.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 The phrase “scrimshaw tools” usually calls to mind, first and foremost, tools made for sailor use, whether on shipboard or elsewhere (for example, Fig. 1, a whale ivory seam rubber) and domestic tools for the kitchen or sewing room back home (such as ladles, choppers, cutlery, swifts, knitting needles, and work boxes). However, Dr. Moss’s emphasis here is on tools made for carpentry, joinery, cooperage, and other analogous uses — a rich heritage of scrimshaw seldom explored elsewhere in the literature. —SMF
- 2 Folding rulers made entirely of baleen with multiple sections, calibrated in centimeters and fastened with brass pins, were commercially produced in France in the 19th century. The late whaling historian and collector Thierry du Pasquier of Paris exhibited several of these at whaling history conferences at Bremerhaven and Cologne (Germany) in the 1990s. —SMF
- 3 Alternate spellings of the word, “gauge” and “gage”: Throughout the 19th & 20th centuries the two largest machine tool companies in the USA spelled the word as “gage” (L.S. Starrett Co., Athol, Massachusetts) and “gauge” (Brown & Sharpe Mfg Co., Providence, Rhode Island.). I will go with “gage” — it is easier for me to remember.
- 4 “Non-tool” people, including auctioneers and otherwise literate folk, often use the word “scribe” when talking about mortise gages, marking gages, and hand-held marking points. The latter tool is the only one I will refer to as a “scribe.”

Was He the Banknote Engraver? *continued from Page 1*

polychrome highlights: on recto, a sperm whaling scene with four boats lowered in pursuit of a pod of sperm whales, with a waif planted on a carcass and a full-rigged ship in the background [Fig. 1]; and on verso, a starboard view of a full-rigged ship under full sail with stuns’ls set, on a starboard tack, flying a long, home-ward-bound pennant, with a schooner-rigged pilot boat approaching on a port tack — and of course with the distinctive circumferential “banknote” filigree borders and the characteristic, meticulously incised lines pigmented in jet black [Fig. 2]. Ms.



Fig. 2. Reverse side of Fig. 1, showing a complex sperm whaling scene.

May recalled that in her childhood there was a slip of paper stuffed into the hollow of the tooth that explained where it had come from and maybe who made it; but to our profound dismay, she reported the paper missing and perhaps lost forever. The SFL team were naturally disappointed, but we encouraged her to look for the paper, little expecting that she would ever find it. She placed the tooth on long-term deposit at the Whaling Museum, and, lo and behold! 13 years later, in 2020, she contacted SFL again with the extraordinary news that she had found the paper! While the typescript note does not actually name the artist, as we had hoped, it does relate directly to Deborah May herself and provides the requisite clue to her ancestor’s identity:

SCRIMSHAW / A Sperm whale tooth over 80 [sic] years old decorated with scrimshaw. Debby’s great, great grandfather sailed on a three year whaling expedition as ships carpenter and did this work to pass the time.

Ms. May was able to provide the names of all four of her great-great-grandfathers, among whom Willard Brown was the only whaleman and the only credible candidate for a connection with

the tooth. Scrimshaw historians have always presumed, based on the style of the garments, the whaling technology shown, and the known sources of some of the pictures, that Banknote Engraver teeth must date from circa 1835-50. Brown’s one whaling voyage in the New Bedford bark *Canton Packet* from December 1841 to February 1845 is consistent with the hypothetical dates assigned to the Banknote’s career (though a generation later than one might have expected, given the much earlier date of many of the pictorial sources); and as a ship’s carpenter and future ship-joiner he may be presumed to have had the manual skills, perhaps in combination with the artistic talent, to produce meticulously finished scrimshaw. However, if he did all, or even most of the teeth and busks attributed to the Banknote Engraver on his one whaling voyage, it would amount to something like a miracle of efficiency.

In this connection, SFL took note of a report from scrimshaw collector Richard Merriman about another authentic Banknote tooth that traces back to Paul Oligschlaeger and Ivey-Selkirk Auctioneers



in St. Louis. That well-executed specimen has a broadside portrait of a whaleship on one side and a loving couple farewell scene on the other, which the auctioneer misleadingly described as being “in the manner of the Banknote Engraver.” It is signed on the root end “A.B. Trow-

Fig. 3. Tooth signed and dated “A.B. Trowbridge / At Sea 1840.” Obverse side, featuring a scene copied after “Edward and Isabel” in *Tales of the Ocean*, here labeled “The Departing.” On his next voyage Trowbridge was a boatsteerer on the *Canton Packet*, 1841-45. Private Collection, courtesy of Richard Merriman and Paul Oligschlaeger, Ivey-Selkirk Auctioneers, St. Louis

bridge / At Sea 1840.” To most of us who are familiar with scrimshaw, “in the manner of the Banknote Engraver” would imply that the Trowbridge tooth had the extremely fine, delicate lines and especially the distinctive, banknote-like borders that characterize Banknote’s work. It does not. But what the auctioneer may have had in mind is the key image on the Trowbridge tooth [Fig. 3], which is reminiscent of the Banknote Engraver: a faithful and highly detailed copy of an illustration familiar to scrimshaw collectors as “The Departure,” “The Departing,” or “The Farewell.” The scene features a man in a top-hat and tailcoat embracing a woman who has long ringlets, wears a full-length, low-cut gown; they stand before a house with an open door and a horse-drawn carriage waiting in the background — here labeled below in a cursive hand, “The Departing.” It is adapted from a wood-engraved illustration for “Edward and Isabel” in *Tales of the Ocean* (New York, 1840, p. 340) by Hawser Martingale, pseudonym of John Sherburne Sleeper (1794-1878). There are at least six known contemporaneous scrimshaw adaptations of the source image, including teeth and a busk by Banknote, teeth by the so-called Eagle Portraitist (in South Street Seaport) and other anonymous hands (e.g., Eldred, July 25, 2019, #5), as well as a panbone panel that sold last year at Eldred’s (Aug. 13, 2020, #4). It is significant to note that on the original illustration there is also a little girl, presumably a daughter, holding a hat and looking up at the embracing couple; but she is absent from all six scrimshaw adaptations, which seem to prefer the lovers in presumptive courtship mode without the encumbrances of minor dependents.

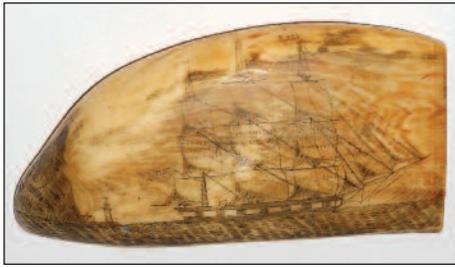


Fig. 4. Reverse side of Fig. 3, showing a conventional portrait of a full-rigged ship passing a lighthouse, outward bound. As a boatsteerer on the *Canton Packet*, Trowbridge was a shipmate of Willard Brown and Enard Coan.

The back of the Trowbridge tooth has a full-rigged ship under plain sail on a port tack, flying an American ensign at the spanker, a house flag at the fore, and a long homeward-bound pennant at the main, passing a rocky promontory with a lighthouse — but of course, no banknote-like filigree border [Fig. 4]. The signature belongs to Albert Blake Trowbridge, who made at least three or four whaling voyages, but his only documented voyage was as a boatsteerer in the bark *Canton Packet*, 1841-45 — the same voyage on which Willard Brown was carpenter.

Also on that voyage was another outstanding scrimshaw artist: the first mate, Enard Coan, whose name is understandably wrongly transcribed on the crew list as Edward Coan. On an earlier voyage Coan had scrimshawed an excellent tooth — one of very few pieces of authentic whalers’ scrimshaw in the John F. Kennedy Collection that can be attributed, and one of only two that are signed [Fig. 5].² Unfortunately, no other scrimshaw by Coan has come to light.

Albert Blake Trowbridge (1819-1886) was born in Westford, Massachusetts, the son of former mariner Phineas Trowbridge and Rebecca Nutting. His father had been first mate under a Captain Delano (probably on one of the many ill-documented whaling voyages that preceded the War of 1812) and was later the proprietor of



Fig. 5. Tooth by Enard Coan (3 views): a festive celebration of Independence Day, inscribed “forget me not” and “4 / July / 1841 / Enard Coan”; done when Coan was second mate in the New Bedford ship *George Howland* (1838-41). He was next first mate of the bark *Canton Packet*, 1841-45, then captain of a whaling cruise in the New Bedford ship *Charles* (1845-49) and two Gold Rush voyages around Cape Horn (1849-51). John F. Kennedy Library, Boston. Photos from Clare Barnes, 1964.

the Roebuck Tavern in Boston, then was farming in Westford. A boatsteerer’s berth on the *Canton Packet* indicates that that voyage could not have been Albert’s first time whaling; it was probably his second or third. Later voyages have not been discovered, but as he married Maria (AKA Almira) C. Colburn (1814-1856) in 1848, he may have gone as a second mate on an unidentified vessel around that time (a second mate’s berth was what was considered minimally required for a whaler to marry and support a wife). He was later employed in the paper-making and rope-making industries in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, then had a farm in Leicester, Massachusetts. After his first wife’s death in 1856, he married Hannah Catherine Rogers (1821-1883) in 1857, then Mary A. Davidson (b. 1827) in 1884.

Enard Coan was born in Guilford, Connecticut, the eldest of the three sons and one daughter of John Coan, Jr., and Phebe Ann Fowler. His mother died (probably of complications arising from childbirth) when Enard was about eight years old, and his father remarried in 1829 to Betsey Hart, who produced another daughter and two more sons. However, by that time Enard was already at sea. He must have shipped out for the first time in his early teens, as he was issued his second or third Seaman’s Passport at New Bedford in 1834, but his early voyages are unknown. Between voyages in April 1838 he married Caroline Smith, a widow, then went in October as second mate in the New Bedford ship *George Howland* (1838-41), the Pacific Ocean voyage on which he produced the JFK tooth: a whaler’s virtuoso proclamation of pride-of-country and pride-in-career, with a robust portrait of a U.S. Navy brig of perhaps 18 guns, with composite masts, flying Old Glory at the stern; inscribed and signed, “4 / July / 1841 / Enard Coan,” commemorating the Fourth of July, a holiday universally and enthusiastically celebrated on Yankee ships at sea as the greatest of all holidays. The tooth was almost certainly intended as a memento for his new wife (hence a portrait on it of the family dog), but it appears that Caroline died while Enard was at sea and she may

continued on page 12

THE MARINE SALE

August 19-20, 2021

Featuring the Collections of Ian R. MacKenzie and Michael Gill



1.



2.



3-6.

- 1. Signed "JT" and dated 1861
- 2. Louis Dodd "New Bedford Waterfront ..."
- 3-6. Patriotic tooth, Moses Denning, "South Sea Whale Fishery" and painted tusks illus. in Flayderman
- 7. Panbone Engraver
- 8. Exceptional Burdett example
- 9. Bone whaleboat model
- 10. Stan Stokes "Charles Morgan"
- 11. Logbook Teeth
- 12. Cutlery box with whalebone embellishments



7.

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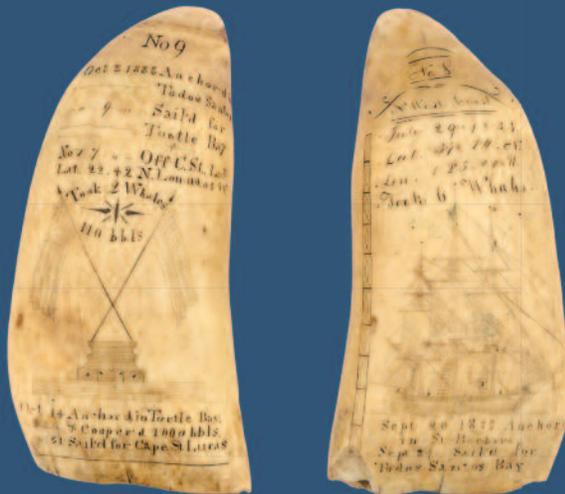
8.



9.



10.



11.



12.



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Was *He* the Banknote Engraver? *continued from Page 9*

never have seen it. After he returned in the *Howland* in October 1841, he immediately shipped out again as first mate of the *Canton Packet* (1841-45), the voyage on which A.B. Trowbridge was a boatsteerer and Willard Brown the carpenter.

Coan made only one more whaling voyage, his only one as captain, a successful cruise to the Indian Ocean grounds in the New Bedford ship *Charles* (1845-49). In May 1849 he was married again in Providence, to Mary C. Berry (1816-1902), and thenceforward he was a merchant sea captain. Remarkably, in 1849, “at the height of the gold rush to California,” the bark *Eureka*, 372 tons, evidently loaded with a cargo of wheat, “made the voyage from Cleveland [Ohio] to San Francisco by way of the St. Lawrence River and the long cruise around Cape Horn with fifty-nine passengers.”³ Coan was evidently the captain on that passage and was certainly in command on another doubling of Cape Horn in the *Eureka*, from which “Enard Coan, master” (spelled correctly) arrived back from San Francisco on Jan. 15, 1851, “with a crew of 16 and 120 passengers.”⁴ Coan likely died in the 1850s, as the records are silent after 1851.⁵

Willard M. Brown (1821-1900), who may have been but probably was not the one-and-only Banknote Engraver, was born in Litchfield, Kennebec County, Maine, the oldest of the four sons and one daughter of Andrew Jackson Brown III (1790-1877) and Nancy Ann Gove. The father was a shipcarver — a sculptor of wooden ship’s figureheads and ornamental carvings, “the half artist-half tradesman whose skill with a chisel gave so much of beauty and grace to the sailing ship” (M.V. Brewington, *Shipcarvers of North America*, 1972, p. xiii). This meant working in shipyards, where the Brown children would have been surrounded by shipwrights and steeped in the culture of the Golden Age of wooden ships. Willard doubtless received some structured training in carpentry, may even have served a formal apprenticeship, and when at age 20 he signed to go in the *Canton Packet*, it was as ship’s carpenter — at a higher rate of pay than an ordinary green hand, and with an idler’s greater degree of independent time, much of which could be used for scrimshaw-making, if that were his inclination.

Brown did not go whaling again, but took up ship joinery at the navy shipyard in Kittery, Maine. He married Mary C. Hamlet (1825-1904) in 1848. In 1850 they ran a boardinghouse in Kittery, where all four boarders were young ship carpenters, all born in Maine. In 1860 the Brown’s accommodations were more conventional, with their two daughters, both of Willard’s parents, and youngest brother Hartley (1837-1911), a sailor, living with them. Then, sometime between 1870 and 1873, Willard left the shipyard and became proprietor of a restaurant at 13 Market Street in Newburyport, Massachusetts, in which daughter Emily’s husband, William H. Darton, was also associated; the

Browns lived next door at N° 11. The City Directory actually lists the business in adjacent Salisbury, and they evidently still had a property in Newburyport when in 1875 they were running an “eating house” in Providence, Rhode Island, in which daughter Clara was a waitress and where Emily and Darton were living next door. However, in 1877 they moved to West Kennebunk, Maine. By 1880 Darton had left the scene: according to family reports, Emily was widowed; Darton’s death is accordingly reported in New Hampshire in 1879, but he is also reported to have remarried in 1883. In any case, in 1880 Emily and two Darton grandchildren were settled with Willard and Mary on a farm in West Kennebunk.

So the questions remain: Was Willard M. Brown actually responsible for the dozens of other, stylistically harmonious teeth? Did he continue making scrimshaw even after his one voyage? If so, where did he get the teeth? And importantly, is there any evidence that someone else was the actual Banknote Engraver? These questions are a call-to-arms and an invitation for collectors and scrimshaw historians to study Banknote Engraver scrimshaw closely, and despite the many convincing similarities, and in the face of the several fakes that have been detected or suspected, to attend to the minutest details of the engravings, pigmentation, and finish, to discover whether there is evidence of different hands at work.

Regardless of who was the actual Banknote Engraver, or how much scrimshaw, if any, was actually produced on that 1841-45 voyage of the *Canton Packet*, the stellar combination of Enard Coan, A.B. Trowbridge, and Willard M. Brown qualify the voyage as memorable.

ENDNOTES

- 1 E. Norman Flayderman, *Scrimshaw and Scrimshanders, Whales and Whaleman* (edited by R.L. Wilson; New Milford, Connecticut, 1972).
- 2 The other signed piece is a tusk by one H. Johnson, a Navy sailor aboard the USS *Vincennes*. The other three pieces of known authorship are a “Ceres A” tooth by William A. Gilpin and two unsigned walrus tusks by N.S. Finney. Illustrated in Clare Barnes, Jr., *John F. Kennedy, Scrimshaw Collector* (Boston and Toronto, 1964).
- 3 Ernest Seabury Clowes, *Shipways to the Sea: Our Island and Coastal Waterways* (Baltimore, 1929), p. 30; not in Charles Warren Haskins, *The Argonauts of California* (New York, 1890).
- 4 Robert Samuel Fletcher, *Eureka. From Cleveland by Ship to California, 1848-1850* (Duke University Press, 1959), p. 135.
- 5 His widow survived him for many years, for a while back in Maine, and by the 1870s in Brooklyn, N.Y., where she is listed as an “inmate” at the Methodist Episcopal Church Home and is erroneously listed in the City Directory and the 1892 state census variously as the widow of “Ignard” and “Enoch” Coan.

The Carnegie — A Heritage Center on Martha's Vineyard

Reported by Jonathan Blum, who as a Board Director established the vision for this new center, co-chaired the capital campaign to bring it to life, and who with his wife donated many of the historic artifacts, either from their own collection or purchased for and donated to the Carnegie at the Executive Director's request.

The Vineyard Trust (formerly Martha's Vineyard Preservation Trust) is a nonprofit on Martha's Vineyard established to preserve and restore more than 20 historic properties central to the island community and its heritage. These include landmarks such as the Old Whaling Church and the Dr. Daniel Fisher House in Edgartown, the Old Grange Hall and Alley's General Store in West Tisbury, and the Flying Horses Carousel in Oak Bluffs (the oldest carousel in the country).

In 2016, the Vineyard Trust acquired the Carnegie Library building from the town of Edgartown following the town's decision to build a new library several blocks away. The land had been donated by Caroline Osborn Warren, whose Osborn ancestors were prominent whalers (Osborn Wharf proudly sits on Dock Street in Edgartown). The neoclassical structure, funded by industrialist Andrew Carnegie, served as the town library from 1904 until it was acquired by the Vineyard Trust and, after extensive restoration and renovation, it



Fig. 1. The Carnegie Library building in Edgartown, built in 1904 and since 2017 home to The Carnegie, Martha's Vineyard heritage center. The history and culture of the island are comprehensively represented and admission is free.

became a free heritage center, named simply The Carnegie, where the public can explore various aspects of island life and culture, from farming, whaling and fishing, to tourism, religion, and socioeconomic diversity.

The Carnegie is located on North Water Street in Edgartown, set amongst beautiful whaling captains' homes — early-to-mid-19th-century Federal style houses, set at an

angle toward the outer harbor, with seaward views. Many have “widow's walks” on their rooftops, which folklore romantically suggests were built to allow wives to get the best view of their husbands returning home from sea. In actuality, the widow's walks were designed to put out a chimney fire and they today are used for small gatherings to watch the 4th of July fireworks over the harbor, or for summertime cocktail parties. All of these homes are adorned with picket fences and roses that blossom in late Spring and

Summer. It is beautiful to walk along Water Street to the Edgartown Lighthouse, which in non-covid times is open to the public to tour.

“Importantly,” Mr. Blum reports, “many of our fellow scrimshaw collectors and friends who have a connection to Martha's Vineyard made generous donations to the Carnegie of pieces from their own collections, and we are very grateful to all of you who have done so. Of special interest to me is the exhibit on whaling, and the importance that trade played in the development of Martha's Vineyard's history.” There are try-pots, harpoons, a whale jaw, scrimshaw, models of whaleboats and whaleships, whale oil, whaling documents, figureheads, and many other authentic representations of the era.

The island acquired much of its early wealth from whaling industry, many whaleships sailed from the Vineyard, and Dr. Daniel Fischer of Edgartown was one of the largest 19th-century purveyors of whale oil and one of the wealthiest men in the country. His stately mansion, built in 1840, is owned and operated by the Vineyard Trust, as is the Greek Revival Old Whaling Church next door, designed in 1843 by renowned architect Frederick Bayliss, Jr., and built with funds donated by whaling masters and whaling magnates. Both sit at the gateway to Main Street in Edgartown. The Vineyard Trust also owns the Norton Boathouse, a legacy of the family of the first captain of the *Charles W. Morgan*, Thomas Adams Norton (circa 1807-1885). Six of the 21 captains of the *Morgan*



Fig. 2. Part of the whaling exhibit at The Carnegie. In addition to the rigged model of a whaleship, and the scrimshaw, trypot, painting, sperm whale jawbone, and whaling gear visible here, the display includes a variety of historic documents, a half-model of the Edgartown bark *Ellen*, which made whaling four voyages to the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Ocean grounds (1852-63), and a scrimshaw tooth of a brig named *Ellen* (**Fig. 3**).



Fig. 3. Scrimshaw tooth picturing a hermaphrodite brig named *Ellen*, dated 1852, previously owned by Bill Boylhart, fondly remembered as an avid scrimshaw collector. The 6-inch tooth shows the vessel with a lighthouse, church, and cityscape, inscribed “View of New York Harbor, *Ellen*.” Loaned by Jonathan Blum to The Carnegie

hailed from Martha's Vineyard. All 20 historic properties owned by Vineyard Trust are showcased in The Carnegie, along with many artifacts from the time. Each cultural section of the heritage center is similarly brought to life by showcasing the history of the properties and artifacts used at the time. The Trust also owns the oldest structure on the island, the Vincent House, built in the 1670s.

Mr. Blum reports, “A visit to The Carnegie is free of charge, and provides a comprehensive overview of all the island has offered over the years and the importance it played in the whaling industry. We receive thousands of visitors annually since opening in 2018, and I encourage you to visit, and while you're here, come by my home to see my scrimshaw collection anytime. We will welcome all visitors, post a covid vaccine!”

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MARKET REPORT

Summer Preview

by Andrew Jacobson

During the past and current difficult year we've lost old friends Ian MacKenzie and Lorraine Gill and longtime dealers Chris Snow and Paul Scott. Gary Eckstine became the first that I know from our circle to pass from the virus. The ranks have thinned and there is a large hole in our community. As the vaccination reaches more people, there's hope that the summer auction and show season may take tiny steps towards that fondly recalled format of live events.

The past year brought a sea change to how business was able to continue. Auction houses, especially those that already had a strong online presence, were better suited to adapt to an absentee world. The steady rise in telephone, left, and online bidding led to an acceleration of those ex-

isting trends. Shows and many shops had to start from scratch. Thus far, online shows have proved a tepid substitute for the real thing. However, something is better than nothing. Consequently, it was a quiet winter on the scrimshaw front. Life goes on and there's justified optimism for a sunny, healthier summer.

There were some notable sales. According to reporting in the *Maine Antique Digest*, the necessary New York permits for the sale of the few pieces of scrimshaw in Sotheby's January 22, 2021 Vineyard Dreams / Americana Week sales failed to appear:



Lot 362: The ex-Barbara Johnson Collection wall pocket found a post-sale buyer in the trade for \$25,000.00, then sold again at Sotheby's in April for \$1,764.00 in a storm of controversy. It will in any case be illustrated in Alan Granby's forthcoming book on scrimshaw, and is scheduled to be displayed in a forthcoming exhibition at the Cahoon Museum (Summer 2022).



Thomaston Place Auctions' Feb. 27, 2021 sale had an interesting 76" narwhal tusk bridge lamp that had a Donald MacMillan provenance and sold for \$9,360.00. It was a gift to Isaac Skillen of Freeport Maine from Antarctic explorer Admiral Donald MacMillan (1874-1970). Skillen's son, Edmond, made the lamp in the 1930's using the tusk as the central tower and blank, polished walrus tusks for the cross member and base.

Skinner's April 2021 Online Americana sale had the following interesting lots that sold after press time. The results will be included in the next market report.



Lot 1700 was a 35.25" whalebone cane that had a whale ivory octagonal top over an exceptionally dark segmented spiral and diamond carved shaft. Estimate: \$800.00 - \$1,200.00.



Lot 1702 was a 32.75" whalebone cane that has a whale ivory Turk's head knob and carved checked connector that led to a quite unusual dyed dark brown, tapered whalebone shaft. Estimate \$600.00 - \$800.00.



Lot 1710 was two pairs of whalebone, whale ivory, and ebony banded knitting needles, one having clenched fist finials. The longest pair was 16". Estimate \$300.00 - \$500.00.

Summer Preview *continued from Page 15*

Osona Marine and Americana sale. Rafael and Gail Osona wintered on Nantucket and are working on putting together a full auction season with particular attention to their signature August 7, 2021 Marine and Americana sale.



At press time, they have an intriguing circa 1900 birdcage attributed to Joe Clapp.¹ The dome top mortised and pegged cherry frame cage is approximately 18" square and 13" high. It has whalebone slats and whale ivory finials.



What a difference an initial makes. A simple 34" whalebone cane that apparently belonged to cobbler Cyrus Hussey (1773-1849) of Nantucket has a round whale ivory knob and is marked "Cyrus Hussey" on the tapered shaft. A more intriguing connection would be Cyrus M. Hussey, cooper, surviving mutineer of the *Globe* and co-author of *A Narrative of the Mutiny on board the Ship Globe of Nantucket* (New London, 1828).²

The Eldred Summer 2021 auction features material from the collections of Ian MacKenzie and Mike Gill.



This pair of "Sheffield" sperm whale teeth comes from Ian MacKenzie's collection. The teeth are 6.25" and decorated with crossed American flags over a monument and a portrait of his ship *Timoleon* sandwiched between what appears to be logbook excerpts. One tooth is signed on the back "Josiah / Sheffield". They are dated Oct. 3, 1833 and Sept. 20, 1833. According to Dr. Stuart M. Frank, the 1807 Nantucket-born whaler sailed on the New Bedford whaleship *Timoleon* 1831-35. This pair is related to one originally in the Kendall Whaling Museum Collection, now at the New Bedford Whaling Museum.³



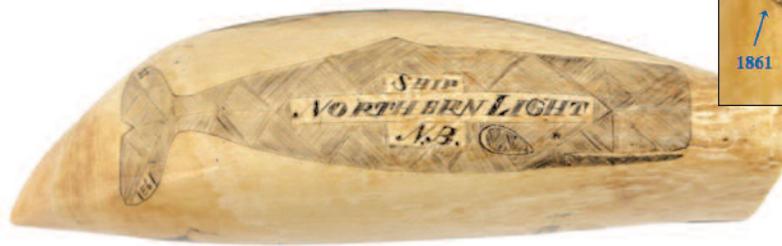
Just when you thought that there couldn't be anymore fine undiscovered Edward Burdett teeth this large 7.75" example fresh from a 90-year residency in a New England family is heading to market. True to form a whale-ship cutting-in and two whaleboats hooked up to a sperm whale decorate the front. It's the *William Tell* homeward bound on the back, and is signed on the edges "...engraved by Edward Burdett of Nantucket on board of the *William Tell*."



The oval 10" reticulated whalebone workbasket is 9.75" high. The body's center is in a diamond and triangle pattern topped by openwork six-point stars within circles. The shaped handle is riveted.



This 13.25" whalebone busk is decorated with two American-flagged ships under sail and a third hauling alongside a sperm whale. Off its bow two whaleboats are engaged with a tumultuous pod of sperm whales.



A 5.75" sperm whale tooth decorated with a sperm whale portrait marked "Ship / Northern Light / N.B.," dated "1861," and initialed "J.T." for Jacob Taber on the flukes. The opposite side has a whaleship, a whaling scene, and a harbor entrance. Taber served on the *Northern Light* through October 1861.⁴



The canted 14" finely grained mahogany and exotic wood cutlery box has a stepped base and a contrasting inlaid geometric border. The arched handle is whalebone-trimmed and has delicate line inlay. Each of the handle's ears is inlaid with whale ivory and ebony and exotic wood mariner's compasses. If memory serves, this box last appeared at Richard Bourne's Nov. 15, 1989 Marine sale as lot 87 when it traded for \$2,750.00.

Summer Preview *continued from Page 17*



Panbone 8.25" x 15.25" that is attributed to the Panbone Engraver. An active whaling scene that has a portrait of the British-flagged whaler and a mountainous island on the right, enclosed within a line border, and inscribed below, "MARY. GROVE".⁵ The scrimshaw is related to panbone plaques at the New Bedford Whaling Museum and the Hull Maritime Museum (former Town Docks Museum) in the U.K.

We hope for a healthy summer and a complete market report in a future issue.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Joseph W. Clapp (1825-1909) of Nantucket, older brother of whaling captain and scrimshaw-maker Henry Plaskett Clapp (1836-1907), was "a locally famous member of the Pacific Club [who] became a master mariner and an agent in Buenos Aires selling sundries and supplies to ships" (NHA). At least four stylistically similar but architecturally distinct birdcages are now attributed to him. —SMF
- 2 Cyrus M. Hussey (1805-1829), the youngest son of Cyrus Hussey (1773-1849) by his first wife, Nancy Butler (1776-1811), was a career mariner who with shipmate William Lay co-authored and published their account of the 1824 *Globe* mutiny. The mutineers, led by Samuel Comstock, killed the *Globe's* captain and her three mates. "A few days after she anchored at Mili Atoll [in the Marshall Islands], Comstock was murdered by co-mutineer Silas Payne. Six of the crew fled in the ship, leaving nine men stranded on the island. By the time the U.S. schooner *Dolphin*... arrived to rescue them two years later, the islanders had killed all but two of the crew." The survivors were Lay and Hussey, whose narrative they published in 1828, including a "Journal of a Residence of two years on the Mulgrave Islands; with observations on the manners and customs of the inhabitants." Hussey died at sea the following year. —SMF
- 3 Josiah C. Sheffield AKA Josiah Sheffield Jr. (1807-1880), born on Nantucket, made his maiden voyage in an unidentified Nantucket whaleship; he was later a seaman in the ship *Averick* of New Bedford (1828-31), then went in the *Timoleon* (1831-35), probably as boatsteerer or a junior mate. On that voyage he produced at least two singleton teeth explicitly inscribed with dates and places as a kind of itinerary of the voyage. One is signed (in the Kendall Collection, New Bedford Whaling Museum; illustrated in the *Dictionary of Scrimshaw Artists*, p. 119; and in *Ingenious Contrivances, Curiously Carved*, Fig. 3:2). An analogous tooth, unsigned but clearly by the same hand, has a ship-portrait inscribed "Ship Timoleon," it names the mates, documents the whale, and is dated "July 3d 1833" (illustrated in Flayderman, p. 16, where it is erroneously credited to the New Bedford Whaling Museum but is actually in private hands; also in Bourne, May 30, 1990, #56). The pair from the MacKenzie Collection, previously auctioned by Julia (Jan. 26, 2006, #437), are actually numbered 8 and 9, which indicates that there were at least that many more, as yet undiscovered. On that same voyage of the *Timoleon*, boatsteerer John H. Ricketson (1806-1885) of New Bedford produced a tooth inscribed with an analogous voyage itinerary in tabular form (donated to the New Bedford Whaling Museum by a namesake descendant in 1971; illustrated in Flayderman, p. 17, and in *Ingenious Contrivances*, Fig. 3:3). —SMF



Birdcages of wood, panbone, and ivory by Joseph W. Clapp of Nantucket. LEFT: Sotheby's NY RJ4 #121. CENTER: Nantucket Historical Association 1992.132.1. RIGHT: Kendall Collection, New Bedford Whaling Museum 2001.100.735.

- 4 Jacob Taber (1813-1891) commanded seven whaling voyages out of Fairhaven and New Bedford during 1844-69, including two in the *Northern Light* (1861-64). "He never had a mutiny, never sustained personal injury, and never lost a vessel." Two of his brothers were also whaling masters. —SMF
- 5 Contrary to appearances, there was no whaleship named *Mary Grove*. That "Grove" is in italics and "Mary" is not but is followed by a period, suggests that the inscription may refer to one of several London South Sea whalers named *Mary*, and to Captain George Grove, of whom records are virtually nonexistent except that he is listed as captain of the London whaler *Samuel Enderby* in 1847 (A.G.E. Jones, *Ships Employed in the South Seas Trade 1775-1861*, Canberra, 1986, p. 239). Chapter 100 of *Moby-Dick*, titled "Leg and Arm," is subtitled, "The Pequod, of Nantucket, Meets the Samuel Enderby, of London." —SMF

MARKET REPORT 2

by Stuart M. Frank

A Cowan's / Hindman auction, provisionally scheduled for September 30, 2021, is offering eight sperm whale teeth and a panbone ditty-box. Better photos than these snapshots will undoubtedly appear later on their website:



[Seaport tooth] A 9-inch (23 cm) tooth featuring a highly original sailor's view of a smallish port-of-call, likely based on the artist's personal experience, rather than a printed prototype: a huddle of buildings, one flying an American flag; two distinctive church towers surmounted with crosses, the tall one presumably way out of scale; what may be a long wharf projecting out into the harbor; a peninsular finger of land bordering the harbor; a full-rigged ship at anchor, and a two-masted schooner underway, with an unadorned figure of Columbia standing over the scene, holding an American flag. The back is polished but undecorated.



Fanny Campbell Tooth depicting the fictional female pirate of Lynn, Massachusetts, copied by pinprick transfer from the cover of the book *Fanny Campbell, The Female Pirate Captain*, by Lieutenant Murray (Boston: F. Gleason, 1845), pseudonymously written by Maturin Murray Ballou (1820-1895), later the publisher of *Ballou's Pictorial and Drawing Room Companion*. There are Fanny Campbell teeth in several museums and private collections, also at least two engraved walrus tusks. The distinctive features here are that the tunic is stippled and the subject is standing on acanthus leaves, a motif recapitulated on the back in a peculiar patriotic device, with flags, a shield, naval cannon, and cannon balls. (The acanthus leaves are an eccentric indication that the scrimshaw is by the same hand as the "Two Vessels" tooth.)



[Two Vessels Underway] The front has larboard broadside portraits of a full brig wearing stuns'ls and flying an American ensign, being followed or pursued by an unidentified American full-rigged, two-decker ship-of-war, evidently the type rated 74 guns. The back has a peculiar patriotic device stylistically analogous to the one on the Fanny Campbell tooth, but without cannon or shot: two compass-drawn conjoined hearts embellished with American shields and a blaze of acanthus leaves. These similarities, together with the acanthus leaves, indicate that both teeth are by the same hand. Moreover, at 8 1/4 inches each the two teeth are almost exactly the same size and shape, and the morphology (especially the contours of the backs) suggests that both are actually from the same whale.



[Woman with a Black Dog] A beautifully colored pinprick-transfer rendition of what was probably a monochrome fashion plate in a popular magazine, surmounted by a kind of proscenium arch of bunting-like semicircles. The low neckline and puff sleeves of the woman's gown, and the ringlets ("sausage" or "baloney" curls) of her hairdo, indicate a date circa 1830-45. The back is polished but undecorated.



Backs of the Fanny Campbell tooth and the so-called "Two Vessels Underway" tooth, showing the two similarly peculiar patriotic devices and the nearly identical size and morphology of the teeth.

Market Report 2 *continued from Page 19*



[Yankee warship] In-your-face patriotic paean featuring an American full-rigged “three-decker” ship-of-the-line that could only be the USS *Pennsylvania*, rated 120 guns (but carried up to 140), the largest American sailing warship ever built and the only “first rate” ship-of-the-line in the U.S. Navy. Used as a receiving ship (a mustering point for Navy personnel) and frequently illustrated (including by N. Currier in 1846 and *Gleason’s Pictorial* in 1853), the vessel would have been familiar to whalemens and to any sailor who served in the Navy between 1837 and the Civil War. The back has an unusual contemplative female bust portrait, copied from a popular magazine or book illustration — a conventional choice for whalemens-scrimshaw artists.



Hercules and the Cretan Bull illustrates an episode from Classical Mythology, the Seventh Labor of Hercules, faithfully copied after a print titled “THE CRETAN BULL. FROM A ZINC CAST AT BERLIN,” a wood engraving of a German sculpture by August Kriesmann (circa 1853) in the gardens of Schwerin Castle in Germany; printed as an illustration in *The Works of Eminent Masters in Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, and Decorative Art* (London, 1854). The back has a bust portrait of a woman wearing a tiara, pinprick-transfer engraved in polychrome, copied after a monochrome printed portrait or fashion plate.



Naïve engraved tooth with a primitive circumferential sawtooth border at the top, surmounting two 5-pointed stars superimposed on one another; a bearded man in a hat, holding a buggy whip, driving a horse-drawn wagon; a patriotic eagle with USA flags and shield; and the boldly inscribed name “A.E. HALL.”

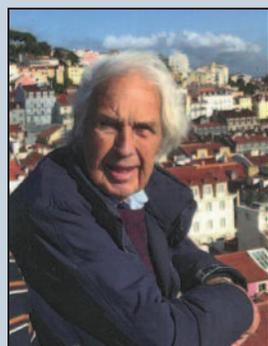


[Sperm Whaling] An original sperm whaling scene with a full-rigged ship possibly hove-to, four whaleboats (not to scale) in

various stages of pursuit of four whales, each boat properly manned by six men, one under sail, two with oars “tossed,” and one “fast” to a whale spouting blood; with three small, barren-looking islands in the background; the polychrome engraved back has two conventional memorial or mortuary vignettes: one is an architectural plinth with a pediment top and pineapple surmount, standing under a sort-of weeping willow tree with outsized leaves; the other, an urn-like monument under a similar willow tree.



Oval panbone box — superficially a conventional ditty-box with panbone top and sides, bent around and fastened to an oval base, with nine overlapping “fingers” or “rat-tails” (six on the side, three on the rim or “skirt”); and like most, the sides were engraved disregarding that when the lid is on the box, the skirt covers the upper portion of the pictures on the sides. But this box is distinguished by two special features: all visible surfaces are engraved with pictures, the top framed with a simple sawtooth, the lid and sides trimmed circumferentially with curly, umbrella-like devices; and the bottom, rather than the usual wood, is panbone, inset from the bottom edge of the curvilinear sides, fastened and reinforced with eight small whale ivory brackets.



Captain Albert J. Veldkamp

We don’t customarily publish obituaries, but in this case we feel it an honor and a necessity to recognize the passing of Captain Albert J. Veldkamp (September 9, 1925 – February 28, 2021). He was first mate and chief navigator on both of the Dutch floating-factory whaleships named *Willem Barents* from 1946 to 1962, an Arctic and Antarctic ice pilot, captain of the research schooner *Plancius* on two Arctic expeditions to excavate 17th-century Dutch whaling sites on Jan Mayen and Spitsbergen, a harbor pilot on the Scheldt River in Vlissingen (Flushing), and principal organizer of the Scheldtloodsenkoor (Scheldt Pilots Choir), who performed

sailor songs across Europe, America, and Australia. Some of his watercolors and drawings are in maritime museums on both sides of the Atlantic. And significantly for us, he was a prodigious collector of scrimshaw, proprietor of the only substantial trove of authentic whalemens’ scrimshaw anywhere on the European continent, the largest and best collection outside the English-speaking countries. Most of all, Albert was a kindly, universally beloved gentleman, immensely knowledgeable and articulate about nautical matters in five or six languages, and a welcome, celebrated presence wherever his maritime interests took him. —SMF

*How still,
How strangely still
The water is today,
It is not good
For water
To be so still that way*
(Langston Hughes)