

Whale Hunters On Western Shores



Maritime Museum Association Of San Diego

MAINS'L HAUL

Vol. 37, No. 1 WINTER 2001

A Journal Of Pacific Maritime History

\$4.00

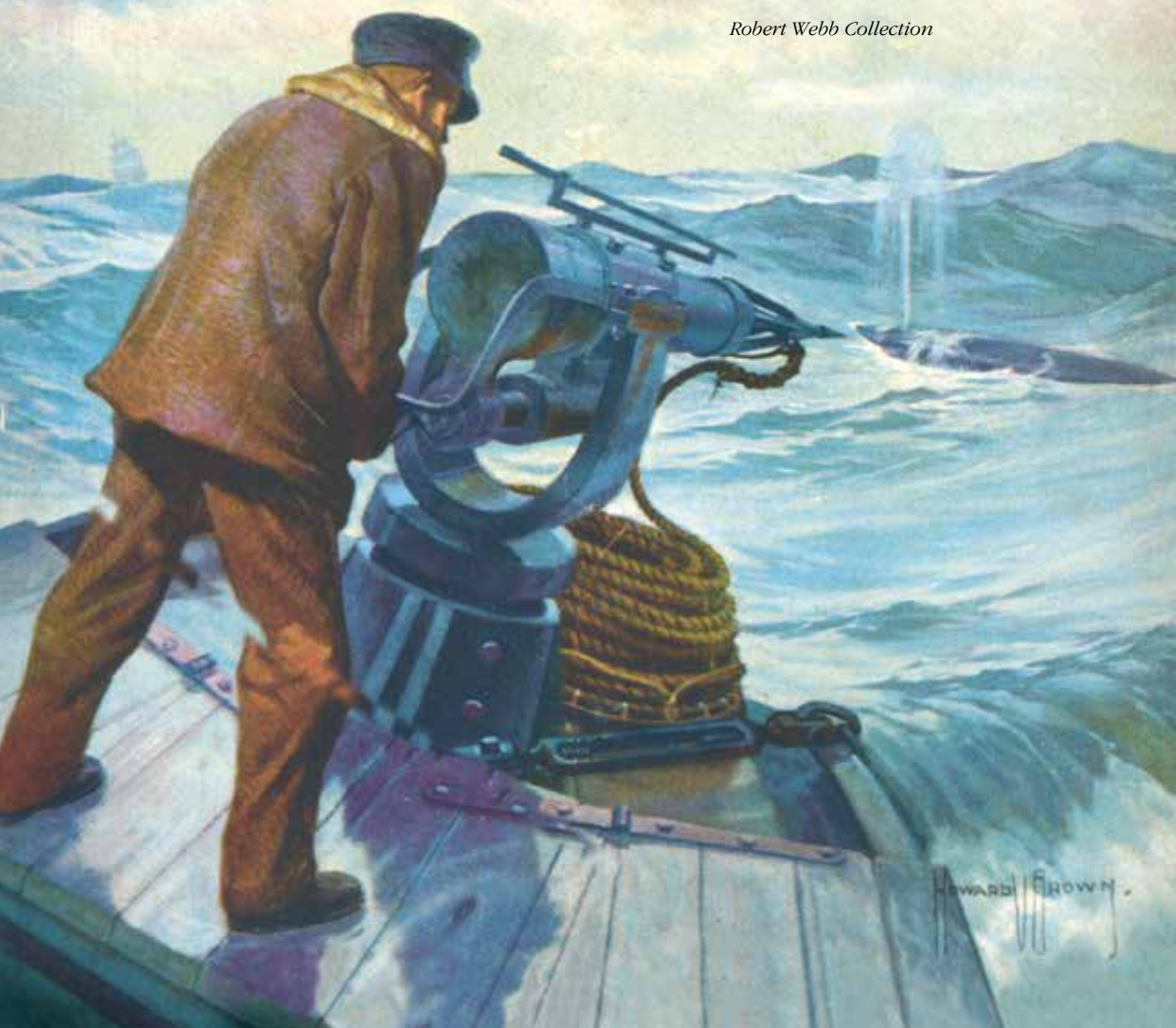


California's Boating Newspapers
Since 1971

THE LOG SUPPORTS THE SAN DIEGO MARITIME MUSEUM

This 20th-century California whaling scene graced a 1927 *Scientific American* cover. But times were changing; the issue also featured an article praising the preservation of elephant seals from hunting.

Robert Webb Collection



COUNCIL OF AMERICAN
MARITIME MUSEUMS
CONFERENCE OF CALIFORNIA
HISTORICAL SOCIETIES
INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS
OF MARITIME MUSEUMS

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

William Dysart
President

Kenneth Andersen
First Vice President

Chris Frost
Second Vice President

Chuck Allen
Treasurer

Merrill Day
Secretary

Raymond Ashley Executive
Director

Ronald Carlson
Keith Cruickshank
James Dalby
Bob Dilworth
Donald E. Hillman, Jr.
Phyllis Hom
Don Lenox
Robert Loomis
VAdm. Edward H. Martin
Kay O'Bryan
John Rebelo, Jr.
Barbara Sharp
Karen Sowell
Martha Von Der Wische

MAINS'L HAUL
is published quarterly,
wind and weather
permitting, aboard the
ferryboat *Berkeley*.

(619) 234-9153 x.118
FAX (619) 234-8345
editor@sdmaritime.com

Mark Allen, Editor
Tony Enyedy, Art Director

"Mains'l Haul"—An order
in tacking ship bidding
'Swing the main yards.'
To loot, steal, or 'acquire'.
—John Masefield

Inside this issue:

DID YOU KNOW ?

- San Diego's Kumeyaay Indians may have gone whaling in reed boats? (page 3)
- A pair of Portuguese-American identical twins hunted whales from rowboats off Point Loma? (page 5)
- Oil made from California whales lit lamps in East Coast homes? (page 15)
- A California newspaper suggested machine-gunning "useless" whales? (page 27)
- A harpooned whale was powerful enough to drag a steam tugboat backwards? (page 37)
- Proctor & Gamble made soap from the oil of California whales? (page 46)
- In 1960, supermarkets sold "Moby Dick" pet food made from whales on San Francisco Bay? (page 43)
- Whales were killed in the 1960s to help make mink coats. (page 43)

Maritime Museum Association Of San Diego

MAINS'L HAUL

Vol. 37, NO. 1 Winter 2001

A Journal Of Pacific Maritime History

Of Whales and Men
Ray Ashley

2



4

"A dead whale, or a stove
boat!"

Ronald May

12

Nineteenth Century Whaling
on California Shores
Georgia Fox



20

Japanese Whaling at
Point Lobos
Sandy Lydon



30

Power Whaling
Robert Webb



On the cover

Smoke rises over San Diego Bay from the whaling station on Ballast Point (1858-1873).

Painting by Jay Wegter, courtesy Fort Guijarros Museum Foundation

Errata from Vol. 36:4

The article cited in endnote 7 on page 21 is from *The Mariner's Mirror* (January, 1948).

Subscriptions are US \$30 per year. Subscribers also receive a bi-monthly newsletter and all benefits of membership in the Maritime Museum Association of San Diego. For information on subscribing or submitting articles, visit www.sdmaritime.com/journal, or write the editor, 1306 N. Harbor Dr., San Diego, CA 92101. This journal's mission is to engage our members and the public in the study of Pacific maritime history, while encouraging scholarly research. Articles are indexed for researchers worldwide in *America: History & Life* and *Historical Abstracts*.

We welcome submissions on the maritime history of the Pacific, and encourage the widest variety of perspectives on this rich heritage.
For advertising information, please call (619) 234-9153.

Look out to sea on any given day between November and late February and you will see a number of excursion vessels and half-day fishing boats that sometimes appear to be wandering about, and at other times meandering slowly south at a leisurely pace, roughly following the thirty fathom line. On weekends, their numbers are swelled considerably by smaller pleasure craft tagging along in loose packs. On every boat, people are up on deck, usually in the bow, with binoculars trained and cameras ready. The object of their attention comes and goes in a matter of seconds: a steamy, cloud-shaped blow, perhaps a glimpse of flukes, and then—except for a slick spot on the water called a footprint—it's over. This momentary appearance by a California gray

whale may be repeated in two minutes, twenty minutes, or perhaps not again on the trip. Yet, as brief and fragmentary as such contact may be, it provokes an intense excitement and satisfaction among whalewatchers that is almost primordial, and brings them back as customers year after year. Whalewatching is a significant economic activity. The four largest companies that offer whalewatching cruises from San Diego utilize sixteen boats and make about 550 trips per season, supplemented by smaller companies and countless private boats.

Though whalewatching has been a common wintertime activity in the waters off San Diego since the early 1970s, the involvement of local people with whales is an ancient one. In prehistoric and early historic times,

Of Whales & Men

FROM THE HELM

by Ray Ashley

Whale-killing may seem a far cry from whalewatching, but both show our age-old connectness with the "Leviathan" of the Bible. Here, the 1912 *Aberdeen* moves a finback carcass into place among others, probably at Akutan in the Aleutians.

*Courtesy Kendall Whaling Museum,
Sharon, Mass.*



the Kumeyaay people of this region processed for food the carcasses of whales which chanced to wash ashore, and may have actually hunted them from their nimble reed boats.¹ As you will see in this issue of *Mains'l Haul*, at different times in our past whaling was a significant West Coast economic activity, as it was in San Diego when this was a fledgling settlement whose links to the rest of the world were virtually all maritime. In the papers which follow, we explore the ways such linkages were forged by the natural histories of cetacean species and the diverse cultural histories of those who pursued them from stations along the shore—some of the same places, in fact, from which whalewatching boats set out today.

The difference, of course, is that today's activities are less consumptive of natural resources and more consonant with ethical sensibilities that place value on ecological stewardship and respect for fellow creatures (or at least fellow creatures we find attractive). The continuity of our involvement with

whales, however, highlights the reason why it will always be impossible to consider the natural history of whales from a strictly biological perspective isolated from human contact or influence: history and geography have interwoven the stories of whales and maritime peoples inextricably. Or, as the greatest author of whale stories once wrote, the relationship between humans and whales "has begotten events so remarkable in themselves, and so continuously momentous in their sequential issues, that whaling may be regarded as that Egyptian mother, who bore offspring themselves pregnant from her womb."² To Melville, the behaviors of whales and men were determined reflexively, each responding to the other. The quest and combat, too, were ingredients essential to illuminate culture's epic confrontation with insurmountable forces of nature. Today, we are more likely to see nature withering before insurmountable cultural pressures, and for that story also the fatal quest for the white whale provides a powerful and evocative metaphor, and a warning for ourselves and future generations.

1 Florence C. Shipek, *Kumeyaay Culture and History* (manuscript in preparation). The Kumeyaay word for whale is 'ehpank. Ted Couro and Christina Hutcheson, *Dictionary of Mesa Grande Diegueño* (Banning: Malki Museum Press, 1973), 2.

2 Herman Melville, *Moby Dick, or, The Whale* (New York: Random House, 1950), 107-108.



"A dead whale, or a stove boat"

The History and Archaeology of the Ballast Point Whaling Station

Ronald V. May

The shout in the title above may have echoed off Pt. Loma's cliffs as whalers shoved off. The *San Diego Union* reported in 1871 that "The cry, 'There she blows!' is to them the signal for bending to their oars and starting in instant pursuit. Not a moment is lost, everything being in entire readiness, in expectancy of the welcome call."

San Diego Union, 11 January 1871; painting by Jay Wegter, courtesy Fort Guijarros Museum Foundation

For nearly twenty years, citizens of San Diego woke up to a black smudge rising from just inside the mouth of San Diego Bay. Coastal breezes often wafted the smell of burned whale flesh and rotting blubber, while amidst the dark haze at the distant shore of Ballast Point, seabirds wheeled in large flocks. Life at the Ballast Point whaling station was lived on the periphery of San Diego society, but entered the senses of all San Diegans.

The distant blast of a harpoon gun often broke the morning quiet, as whalers attached a line to their quarry off the Point Loma kelp beds. After the enraged whale had tired itself, the echo from the detonation of a bomb-lance usually signaled a successful kill, and the bustle of activity that followed on the shores of San Diego Bay brought excitement and commerce to the sleepy town during the 1860s. Curious journalists and



sightseers ventured to viewpoints on Point Loma to watch oarsmen strain to pull their twenty-eight-foot wooden whaleboat through whitecapped seas, towing the carcass of a California gray whale or a humpback.

Elsewhere in California, a reporter exulted over the spectacle of their work:

Quick as thought...thunders the Greener's gun, while the whaleline tears over the boat's gunwale. A flash, a splash, and a hole in the water tells where the whale had been. For a second, all is quiet, as the hurt Leviathan, with its deadly harpoon deep in his flesh behind the left flipper, sulks at the bottom of the bay. Scant time has the crew for a hasty 'hurrah' and wave of the caps, when, stung by the rankly barb, the alarmed monster tears away, towing the boat behind him at more than race-horse speed. East, west, north and south he dashes in mute endeavor to free himself from the harmful harpoon and its ominous attachments.¹

Once ashore, the carcass was stripped of its blubber, which was rendered, or "tried out" into oil, in 150-gallon cast-iron cauldrons called tryputs. The carcass was then abandoned. "And there it remains, an annoyance to them, until some tide may happen to carry it off to another point," observed a prominent San Diegan in 1861; "I must confess the smell on the shore...was anything but pleasant."

Such scenes were a seasonal tradition in San Diego for almost thirty years beginning in 1857, when the Packard brothers arrived to establish shore whaling operations. San Diego had been visited by whaleships en route to the gray whales' calving lagoons in Baja California since the 1840s, but the Packards came to stay, attracted by the Bay's position along the whales' migration route. Prince William Packard and his twin brother Alphaeus brought all the implements of their trade, including whaleboats, Greener guns, bomb lances and several tryputs. The twins, seasoned forty-two-year-old mariners, also brought with them four centuries of whaling traditions.

The Packards were dark-complexioned, blue-eyed men of Portuguese

Pipe-shaped Ballast Point juts from inside Point Loma on this 1853 map.

La Playa lies just to the north.



SCENE AT WHALING STATION NEAR POINT LOMA.

"The whalers, some of them, were busily employed stripping the blubber from the carcass," reported an 1871 visitor. The author believes that this image shows operations on North Island, not Ballast Point as its 1887 caption suggests.

From the 1887 Album of San Diego and Coronado Beach, San Diego Historical Society Research Archives



The stone foundations of tryworks emerge from the earth. Archaeology is vital to understanding the lives of California's 19th-century shore whalers, for little other evidence survives. The author records data at right.

Photo by Michael Nabholz, courtesy Fort Guijarros Museum Foundation

Ronald V. May has been Director of Archaeology Programs for the Fort Guijarros Museum Foundation for two decades. He was rewarded by Spain with the title of Knight's Officer, Order of Civil Merit, for uncovering the 1796 Spanish fort on Ballast Point. Following 25 years as an archaeologist and historian with San Diego County and federal and state agencies, he is today Senior Project Manager at Pacific West Archaeology, and Principal Investigator for Legacy 106.

descent, born into the whaling culture of New England, the offspring of generations of Portuguese whaling families from the Azores Islands who resettled in Massachusetts. They shared Portuguese blood with the majority of nineteenth century California shore whalers, among them the Packard Whaling Company's harpoon-gunner, Thomas Lambert, also a New Englander by birth. In all likelihood, they carried on the Portuguese fisheries tradition of co-investing family funds and sharing in a traditional lay system, in which each investor owned one or more "lays," or shares, in the final financial net of the season.

In 1858, the Packard Company moved from La Playa to the eastern tip of Ballast Point, closer to the entrance of the Bay, where they were joined by a family of Anglo-American whale hunters. Captain Miles A. Johnson, of New Bedford, operated shore whaling stations in Baja California at Cabo Colonet and Isla San Martín. Cousins James and Henry James Johnson owned lays in the Johnson Whaling Company, which occupied a large building close under the lee of Point Loma.

The Packard brothers lived in a "little shack about the middle of Ballast Point," according to a contemporary. An 1896 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers map shows a small square footprint labeled "whaler's shanty" at this location, adjacent to a blacksmith shop. These shanties may have been approximately twelve by twelve feet in size, the dimensions of the floor of a structure from the whaling period, located at the eastern tip of the point, which archaeologists excavated. This floor was paved with broken Spanish tile bricks scavenged from nearby ruins, and it had one door and a few glazed windows, the latter revealed

by broken glass recovered in the 1988 excavation season.

The eastern tip of Ballast Point was a small “island” several acres in size that was connected to Point Loma by a spit of land which was frequently washed by waves and high tides, making it a less desirable place to live than where the Packards and Johnsons resided. To the east of this tile-floored structure stood two long warehouses built to house barrels of whale oil, where archaeologists unearthing a trash deposit recovered artifacts such as blouse buttons, jewelry, and toy marbles, which indicate that families resided there through the mid-1880s.¹⁰ West of the tile floor, archaeologists uncovered the foundation and double fire-pit of the tryworks ovens. Atop this foundation had stood a pair of trypots, surrounded by bricks.

San Diego’s earliest-known Chinese community coexisted with these Portuguese and Anglo-American whalers, making the whaling station a truly cosmopolitan settlement. An 1867 U.S. Army visitor reported that, “on Ballast Point, there are at present a few old huts occupied by whalers and Chinamen.”¹¹ The 1870 Census noted three Chinese houses on Ballast Point, and recorded that Ah Low served as cook for the Packard Company.

While archaeological investigations failed to locate remains of their houses, trash pits revealed numerous objects used by the Chinese. Along with Asian ceramics were found food remains, including large quantities of cattle, pig, sheep and wild animal bones and thousands of pismo (*Tivela stultorum*) clam shells, together with several hundred shell fragments from wild bird eggs. There were also dozens of limpets (*Incessa notoacmea*), a species which, while not eaten themselves, live exclusively on feather boa kelp, which might have been harvested as a food item. Intriguingly, charred whalebone found among domesticated livestock bones suggests the possibility that someone at the whaling station, most likely Chinese, was consuming some of the whale meat.¹²

The whalers’ shanties, other buildings associated with wharves and moored boats, and repair yards and workshops were scattered along the eastern shore of Point Loma from Ballast Point north to La Playa. At various times, the Packards and Johnsons were joined by other whaling outfits, and sometimes hunted their prey alongside ship-based whalers. On Ballast Point, the Tilton Company, Flanders Company and Price Company came and went. Daniel Flanders and Levi Tilton were both from Massachusetts, while William Price came from Ireland and worked at the Point Loma lighthouse until the lure of profits from whale hunting drew him to the sea.

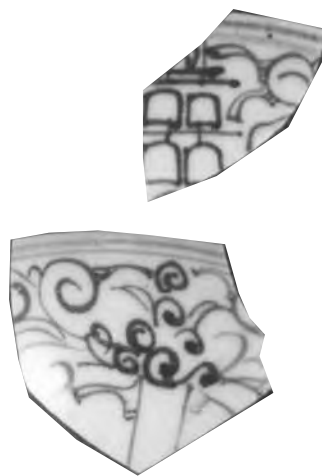
Profits there were, at least intermittently. By February 1858 the Packards had already stored \$2000 worth of oil in their warehouses.¹³ At a time when most men earned less than \$700 a year, the whalers’ success placed them high in the local economy. Oil from their efforts fueled the Point Loma lighthouse and lamps throughout San Diego, but most was shipped by sea to



A reconstruction of the tryworks, under excavation in the photo at left.

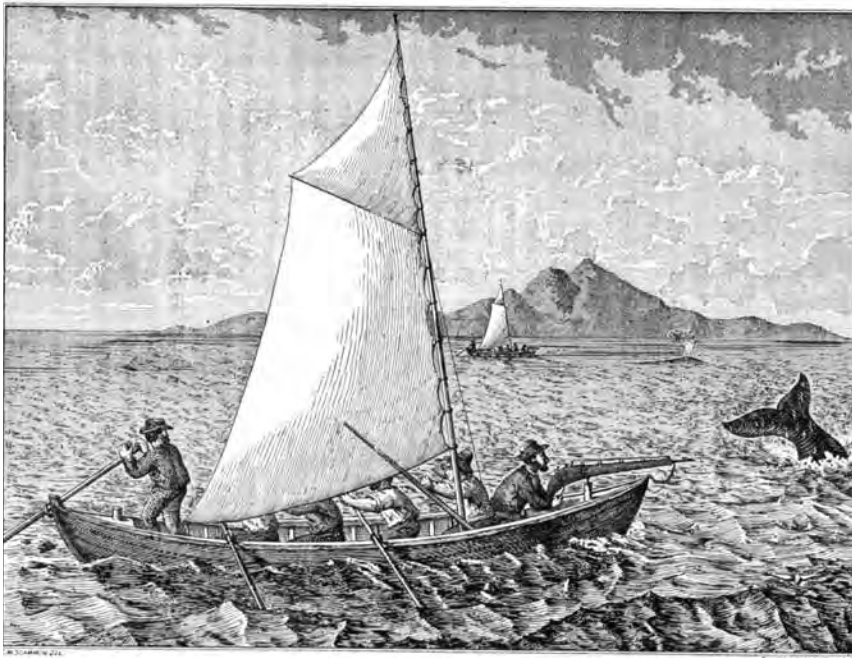
“The whalers,” reported a visitor, “were firing up and stirring the mass of the blubber as it sizzled and snapped in the pot.”

San Diego Union, 8 January 1873; painting by Jay Wegter, courtesy Fort Guijarros Museum Foundation



Fragments of “double happiness” bowls used by the Chinese who lived alongside the whalers.

Photo by John Wright, courtesy Fort Guijarros Museum Foundation



WHALEBOAT WITH GREENER'S GUN MOUNTED.

A sloop-rigged whaleboat like the Packard brothers' *New Hope*, in a Baja California lagoon.

From Charles Scammon's 1874 *Marine Mammals of the North Western Coast of North America*

San Francisco. The Civil War drove the price of whale oil up to \$1.45 a gallon, and each barrel could¹⁴ bring as much as \$390.

Times were not always good, as evidenced by a number of lawsuits for failure to pay bills. When Louis Rose sued the Packard Company in 1865 for failure to pay a \$743.22 meat bill, Sheriff James McCoy arrived to serve them with papers, only to find the camp deserted. After Rose filed a second complaint, the Sheriff seized forty-three barrels of oil in payment.¹⁵

Perhaps unknown to Rose and McCoy, the strategy employed by these shore whaling

companies involved the establishment of a string of whale hunting camps over several hundred miles of coastline. The Packard Whaling Company operated additional stations at Punta Banda and Santo Tomas in Baja California. When not working on Ballast Point, the twins inspected their other stations and brought back barrels of oil aboard the little twenty-eight-foot sloop-rigged¹⁶ whaleboat *New Hope*, or one of the other vessels from their growing fleet.

After the Civil War, the owners who leased Ballast Point to the whalers lobbied Congress to establish a U.S. Army post there, in hopes of selling the land. In 1870, however, a federal court ruled that the Point had always been public and military property and voided private ownership, clearing the way¹⁷ for the establishment of Fort Rosecrans and the eviction of the whalers.

The court action came when San Diego's whale hunting industry was most successful. Between the stations at Santo Tomas, Punta Banda and Ballast Point, the Packard Whaling Company co-ventured with the Tilton Company to bring in a record 550 barrels of oil in 1871, and recent investment had improved their business prospects.¹⁸ To survive the legal threats, the operators invested more heavily in their Baja California stations. When evicted in 1873, they simply dismantled their operations and sailed south to Santo Tomas or scattered around the Bay, principally to North Island, where whaling continued until 1886.

When U.S. Army construction crews arrived in 1873 to begin construction of an artillery battery, the¹⁹ Ballast Point whaling station remained only as a ghost town. The Chinese fisher folk probably stayed through the early 1880s, as evidenced by ceramics and glass from that period in trash pits. Sketches and photographs of Ballast Point made between 1886 and 1890 show the shanties and boathouses gone, with only two warehouses and a one-room kitchen still standing as reminders of life at the whaling station.²⁰ By that time, whaling had ceased in San Diego, ending an extraordinary chapter of the region's maritime history, and of the rag-tag and loosely-knit subculture it supported.



NOTES

- 1 Edward Berwick, "Offshore Whaling in the Bay of Monterey," *The Cosmopolitan* 29 (May 1900): 633.
- 2 Benjamin Ignatius Hayes, *Pioneer Notes From The Diaries of Judge Benjamin Hayes, 1849-1875* (Los Angeles: privately printed, 1929), 557.
- 3 Charles M. Scammon, *The Marine Mammals of the North-Western Coast of North America, Described and Illustrated, Together with an Account of the American Whale Fishery* (San Francisco: John H. Carmany & Company, 1874).
- 4 See also Ronald V. May, "Dog-Holes, Bomb-Lances and Devil-Fish: Boom Times for the San Diego Whaling Industry," *Journal of San Diego History* 32, no. 2 (Spring 1986).
- 5 Description of Prince William Packard from "Great Registry of Voters," 1894, San Diego Historical Society Research Archives (hereafter SDHS); regarding their ancestry see Lucy Wentworth, "Notes," p. 4, SDHS. The source for the Packards' initial financial backing is unclear, though circumstantial evidence suggests a link to John Pope Davenport, who invested in California shore- and ship-based whaling beginning in the 1850s. Among the vessels in which he invested was the schooner *Sovereign*, which in 1857 sailed from Monterey to Mexico via San Diego to engage in whaling, and could plausibly have left the Packard Company in San Diego. See Ronald V. May, "The Maritime Tradition of Shore Whaling: Research Implications From Ballast Point In San Diego Bay," *Fort Guijarros Quarterly* 3, no. 1: 9-10.
- 6 Lambert's ethnicity is known from District Court Case 108, #387, SDHS. His birthplace of Martha's Vinyard appears in the 1868 "Great Registry of Voters," SDHS.
- 7 Mrs. Alonzo Horton quoted in Winifred Davidson, "Loma Lore," San Diego Scrapbook, n.d., SDHS.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ronald V. May, "A Preliminary Report on the Summer-Fall 1988 Archaeological Field Season at Ballast Point, San Diego, California," *Fort Guijarros Quarterly* 2, no. 3: 13-14.
- 10 These warehouses were sketched in 1886 by Edward Harvey Davis and photographed in 1890. Ronald V. May, Field Director's Field Notes, Archaeological Resource Protection Act Permit Application, Fort Guijarros Museum Foundation, Building 127, U.S. Naval Base Point Loma, 1991.
- 11 Lt. Thomas H. Handbury, letter report to Brigadier General B.S. Alexander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1867, Record Group 77, U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

San Diegans inspect operations at "Whaler's Bight," North Island. Makeshift tryworks stand under a *ramada* just above this gray whale's back. Tourists visiting Ballast Point years before "relished muchly everything except the intolerable stench arising from the decomposing carcasses of whales and boiling oil."

San Diego Union, 1 January 1869; 1880s photo courtesy UCLA Library Department of Special Collections

A bomb-lance head discovered in the whalers' trash deposit.

Photo by John Wright; courtesy Fort Guijarros Museum Foundation



- 12 Artifacts recovered from trash deposits in 1991 include rice bowls and spoons, Japanese food-grinding bowl fragments, fish hooks and evidence of dried kelp. Mixed in the deepest deposit among broken sherds of Chinese double-happiness and bamboo-style bowls were pieces of English pearl ware, blue shell-edge plates from the mid-1850s. This raises the possibility that Chinese cooks at the station may have used Western ceramics as well as their own. Additional artifacts recovered in the Chinese trash pit seem to indicate that the Chinese practiced Western-style barbering. A large Asian plate features a notch intentionally chipped into its edge, a shape similar to Japanese barber bowls used by English surgeons for bloodletting. Masses of thin fibers were identified by the County of San Diego Sheriff's crime lab as cut Caucasian hair. The trash deposit also yielded dipped blue-banded pearl ware bowls, aqua-colored American patent medicine bottles, dark green English wine/ale bottles, light green and aqua English mustard bottles, blouse buttons, and toy marbles. Ronald V. May, 1998, "Ethnic and Economic Investigation of the Ballast Point Whaling Station and its Chinese Component (CA-SDI-12,953), San Diego, California," paper presented at the Society for California Archaeology Annual Meeting, April 11, 1998.
- 13 May, "Dog-holes," 76.
- 14 Frances Diane Robotti, *Whaling and Old Salem* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1962), 84.
- 15 May, "Dog-holes," 80.
- 16 Ronald V. May, "Schooners, Sloops, and Ancient Mariners: Research Implications of Shore Whaling in San Diego," *Pacific Coast Archaeological Society Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (1985). In addition to *New Hope*, the operation at its height included the schooners *Summer Cloud* at Ballast Point, *Toccao* at Punta Banda and *Emma Hayne* at Santo Tomas.
- 17 Ronald V. May, "The Fort That Never Was on Ballast Point," *Journal of San Diego History* 31, no. 2 (Spring 1985): 122-123.
- 18 May, "Dog-holes," 84.
- 19 May, "The Fort That Never Was," 122-123.
- 20 May, "Field Director's Field Notes."

Victorian-era Californians were fascinated by the opportunity to encounter whales -- dead or alive.

"On Sunday last the San Diego whalers caught the first whale of the season," wrote a reporter in 1873, "the signal for the organization of a picnic party to visit the scene of the 'trying' operations and to view the carcass of the 'monster of the Deep.'"

San Diego Union, 8 January 1873; photo of North Island courtesy San Diego Historical Society Photograph Collection



from San Diego's

THE DAILY UNION.

Thursday....January 11, 1872

"THE SAN DIEGO WHALERS--

...The last and largest whale captured this season made an interesting chase. Her blowing was observed by the crews of the four boats almost simultaneously. The moment she was seen the orders came quick and sharp from the boatswain in command, and at once the men bent to their oars with a will, making their boat bound over the water with such speed as would astonish a green hand. The whale, however, seemingly unconscious of the close proximity of its would be destroyers, at regular intervals sounded and returned to the surface to blow, evidently enjoying itself hugely.

Soon the boats were up with the "mammoth of the deep," and nearly in reach of its ponderous flukes. Having pulled their craft into such position as would allow the harpooners to take good aim, and to dart their lances with accuracy, the boats' crews lay on their oars

awaiting the signal to discharge the lances. Soon it was given, and one bomb and three other lances were simultaneously discharged at the whale.

If the speed of the boats when only impelled by the oars of the crew seemed immense, it now was almost startling. No sooner had the harpoons darted than off dashed the whale at a furious rate. Stout lines, however, towed the boats after it, and soon the fury of the wounded whale subsided, and it lay upon the surface of the water, an inanimate carcass.

After the death of the whale, the danger and accompanying excitement being over the work (no play work, but real, genuine labor) must be performed by the boat crews. It is necessary to secure the carcass, and to do this it must be towed to some sheltered place where it may be cut up. The San Diego whalers have chosen Ballast Point for this purpose, its close proximity to

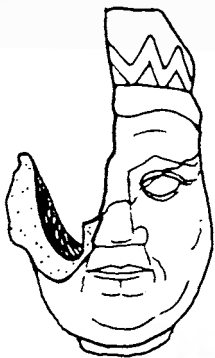
the mouth of the harbor and sheltered position rendering it the most advantageous point on the bay.

After towing in the whale and dragging it as far on shore as possible, the labors of the boat crews are finished. They then seek the kelp again, to lie in wait for more whales.

As soon as the captured whale has been brought inside the point and made secure, it is taken charge of by a force [of] 34 men employed for the purpose of trying the oil from the blubber. These men are divided up into gangs, some of which are employed in stripping the blubber, others in carrying, some attending to fines, etc.

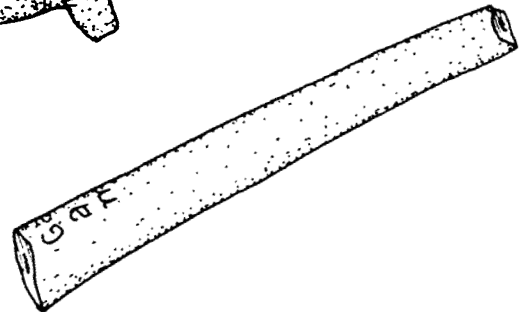
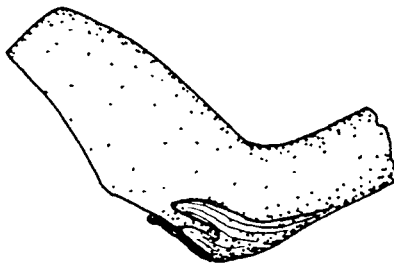
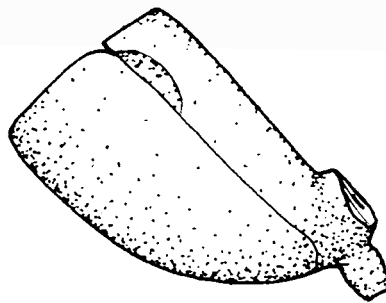
Two large vats or pots with a capacity of 150 gallons each are constantly filled with blubber from which the oil is rendered. The fuel used is principally remnant blubber, which makes a fine heat and a villainous stench. The blubber after being stripped into pieces of

from 13 to [1]6 inches is carried to these vats and thrown into them in such quantities as will nearly fill the vessels. The fires below are carefully watched and not allowed to burn too fiercely. Two men stand by with long poles, whose duty it is to stir the boiling mass of blubber, and keep it from burning, thus insuring a good quality of oil. At each pot is also a man with a large strainer, whose business it is to fish out the pieces of blubber as fast as they are sufficiently "browned," and throw them into a vessel. From this they are taken to a machine and subjected to a pressure which compels them to yield all the oil left in them. When the vats contain a sufficient quantity of oil it is then taken out with large pot ladles and poured into casks to cool. From these casks it is drawn off into others for shipment to San Francisco..."



San Diego's whalemens
puffed on these pipes,
shown actual size.

*Courtesy Fort Guijarros
Museum Foundation*



Nineteenth-Century Whaling on California Shores

Georgia Fox

Whalemen swarm over a California gray whale at Cojo Viejo, near Pt. Concepcion.

Like many Portuguese whalers, Capt. Frank Anderson had anglicized his name (actually Anasio). Beginning around 1870, he and about 40 men shared profits from the blue, bowhead, grays, and right whales they killed. In 1895, he left for Greenland, where whales remained plentiful. Note the block and tackle with which the carcass was turned.

Courtesy Lompoc Valley Historical Society

Most nineteenth-century California shore whaling stations have been obliterated from the landscape, as well as from memory. Recent scholarship, however, and archaeological investigations by Ronald May at San Diego's Ballast Point, have shed light on this little-known industry, its participants, and its significant place in California's maritime and ethnic history. Along California shores, the men who rowed out in small boats to intercept whales were some of the last practitioners of a form of whale hunting far older than ship-based whaling.

California shore whaling can be divided into three distinct periods: Early (1854-1900), Early Modern (1918-1950), and Late Modern (1956-1971).¹ During the early years, whales were hunted for their oil, which lighted homes and provided a fine lubricant for machinery of all kinds.² The blubber of California gray whales and humpbacks, the most commonly hunted species along the coast during this period, yielded a good grade of oil. Whale oil's gradual replacement by cheaper kerosene for lighting, along with the decimation of gray whales, ended shore whaling until technological advances led to its revival in the twentieth century.



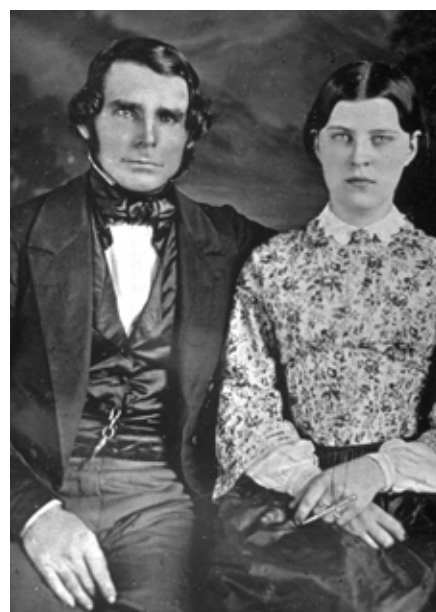
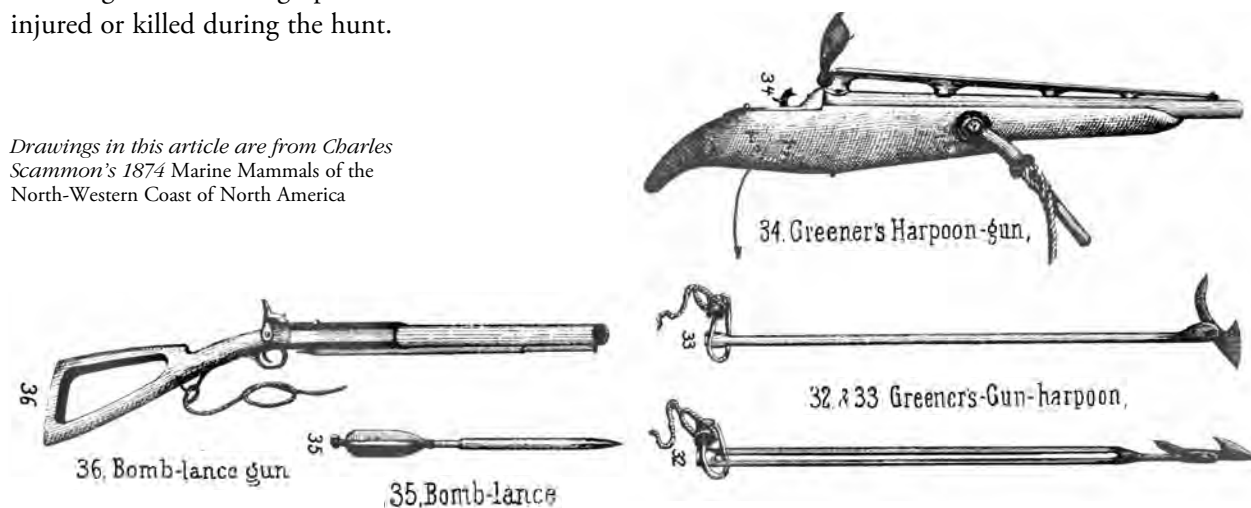


California shore whaling began in 1854 with the establishment of the Monterey Bay Whaling Company by Captain John Pope Davenport. From that time, at least eighteen whaling stations came and went along the California coast, the most active period being between the 1860s and 1880s. In addition, extensive shore-based operations were conducted at lagoons in Baja California, to which gray whales migrate in winter to calve.³ With the exception of the operations at San Diego and Monterey, most nineteenth-century whaling stations were small, ramshackle affairs, comprised of one or two buildings that served as storage and shelter for the whalers.

This California industry was made possible by two inventions: the Greener gun and the shoulder-fired bomb-lance gun. The Greener gun, developed by Englishman William Greener in 1837, became the weapon of choice for California shore whalers. "Were it not for the utility of Greener's gun," wrote whaleman Charles M. Scammon in the early 1870s, "the coast fishery would be abandoned, it being now next to impossible to 'strike' with the hand-harpoon" because of the skittishness of the quarry.⁴ Mounted to a swivel on the bow of a small whaleboat, the Greener gun fired a harpoon attached to a line, with an accurate range of thirty yards or better.⁵ The shoulder gun was hand-held like a rifle, with the ammunition being a lance carrying an explosive "bomb" which killed the whale, or stunned it sufficiently to enable whalers to lance it by hand. Most shoulder guns were iron, weighed about twenty-five pounds, and were manufactured in New England.⁶

There were several advantages to shore-based whaling operations. It was less financially risky than deep-sea whaling expeditions, requiring relatively little capital. Also, because theirs was a seasonal activity, shore whalers could farm or work other trades, diversifying their incomes. On the other hand, the work was dangerous. Although profits were to be made, whalers were sometimes injured or killed during the hunt.

Drawings in this article are from Charles Scammon's 1874 Marine Mammals of the North-Western Coast of North America



John and Ellen Davenport, about 1852.

This deep-water New Bedford whaler came to Monterey and pioneered West Coast shore whaling in the 1850s. Family tradition says that he promised Ellen he would not take any long whaling voyages in order to make her agree to marry him.

Courtesy Museum of Art and History, Santa Cruz

Georgia Fox is an anthropologist, specializing in maritime archaeology and cultures, material culture studies and artifact conservation. She received her Ph.D. from Texas A&M University in 1998. Her interest in archaeology stems from reading *National Geographic* during her childhood, and trips to the New Jersey shore. Fox now lives in Santa Barbara, California.

These photos show whalers at Portuguese Bend—near today's wealthy community of Palos Verdes. On this page, men "flense" carcasses, cutting away strips of blubber. At right, a racially-mixed group of men tend the try pots, rendering oil from the blubber.

Courtesy Photo Archives, Los Angeles Maritime Museum



The whaling season in California ran from October, when gray whales began their annual "down run" migration from the Bering Sea to the lagoons of Baja California and western Mexico, until March or April when they passed again on their "up run" return north. Typically, after a migrating whale was spotted from shore, often from a high point such as a cliff, six to eight whalers would leap into a small boat to begin the chase. Ranging from twenty-six to thirty feet long, and six feet wide, these traditional whaleboats were propelled by oars, sometimes with the addition of a small sail.



After a whale was killed, it was towed ashore and stripped of its blubber, a process called flensing. The large chunks of blubber were then cut into smaller pieces, or “bible leaves,” and boiled in iron trypots on the beach. The oil rendered from the blubber was poured into wooden casks and shipped to San Francisco on coastal vessels; rarely, it may also have been shipped directly to the East Coast where prices were higher.⁷ Because whales were taken for their blubber, the meat and bones were left to rot on the beach, producing a memorable stench.

The Whalers

The ethnicity of California shore whalers was mixed, and included men from Japan, China, Jamaica, Italy and New England. In the nineteenth century, however, they were predominantly Portuguese from the Azores Islands. Many had been involved in the New Bedford whaling industry as early as 1820, having shipped out aboard whaleships to escape

An Azorean whaler. Jacinto DeAmaral whaled in the Monterey area for decades. He later worked for a Japanese-owned abalone company, where he appears in the photo on page 20.

Courtesy the DeAmaral Family



unemployment, high taxes, and lengthy compulsory military service in the Azores. Following their time aboard New England whalers, many of the young men settled in New England or California. By 1860, California's Portuguese population had grown to 1,550 residents, with over eighty percent being Azorean, and they were an important presence along the coast into the twentieth century. The relationship between Portuguese coastal settlements and shore-based whaling operations was significant, as in the Monterey area, where Azoreans formed a permanent settlement to work at the whaling station.⁸

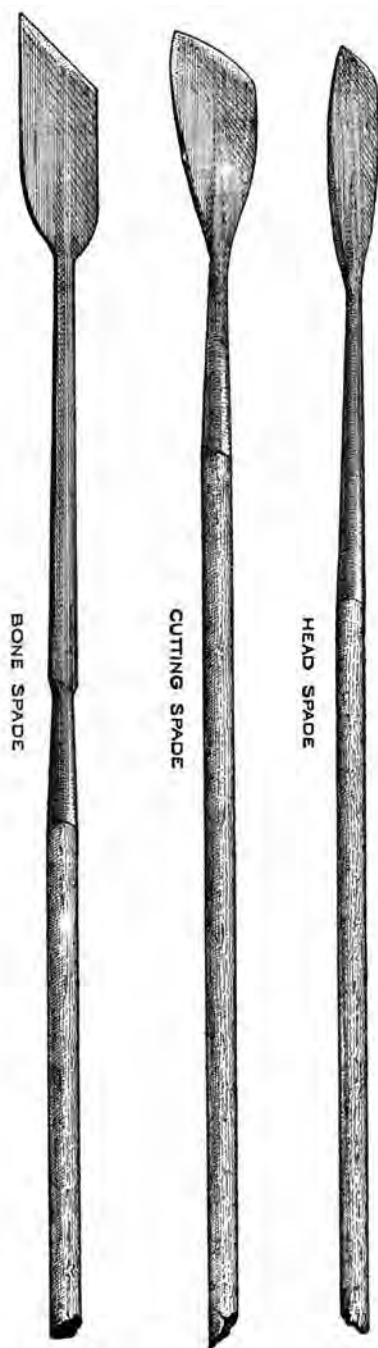
Whalers worked on the lay system, whereby they received a share of the business rather than regular salaries.

Each investor or member of the crew owned one or more "lays" which would be divided at the end of the season; skilled crewmen such as harpoon gunners owned several. In a good year, a shore whaler could earn a respectable income. Profits were based on price-per-barrel and the amount of oil a whaling station produced each season. For example, a single gray whale could yield between twenty-five and forty-five barrels of oil, which sold from \$27 to \$40 a barrel in 1855. Quantities and price-per-barrel varied annually, depending on seasonal catches and the market. In a given year, a large whaling operation such as the one at Monterey Bay could produce over 800 barrels, while a smaller station like Goleta might only yield 450 barrels.⁹

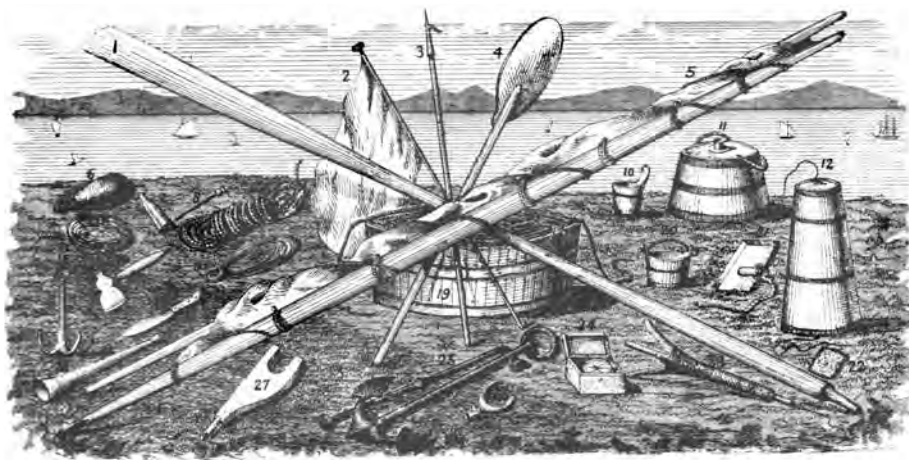
Remnants of a Vanished Industry

Due to the lack of information in both the archival and archaeological records, investigations into California shore whaling in this period are challenging. Fortunately, long-term excavations by Ronald May beginning in 1981 at Ballast Point in San Diego has shed light on daily life at a California whaling station.¹⁰ His work is the exception, although the Whaling Station Museum at Point Lobos State Reserve in Carmel is also instructive. To date, the best archaeological parallels to compare with California shore whaling operations come from excavations at Red Bay, Labrador, and in Southern Australia and New Zealand.¹¹

Today, most of the former shore stations are all but obliterated. In Santa Barbara, for example, construction of the Ward Memorial Highway entrance to the University of California campus caused the destruction and burial of the remains of the whaling station just below the cliffs. To the north, at Cojo Viejo, changes in beach configuration, plus the poor preservation of wooden structures, has left no archaeological trace. The twentieth-century stations, too, have nearly all vanished; at Field's Landing near Eureka, only a sorry lot of broken-down pilings and strewn lumber offer vague reminders of a thriving, large covered station with a ramp and hoist. Fortunately, rare photographs like



IMPLEMENTS USED
IN CUTTING IN A WHALE.



IMPLEMENTS BELONGING TO A WHALE BOAT

those reproduced here give some hint of the importance, and the fascination, these operations held for nineteenth-century Californians.

The End of An Era

Reminiscing about his days at Portuguese Bend, near Los Angeles, an old whaler remarked that the men “were afraid of the whales, but they kept at the business until so many things got smashed that it didn’t pay.”¹² Nineteenth-century shore whalers were a persistent and hardy lot who endured dangerous and unpleasant working conditions, and at times literally saw their profits sink to the bottom of the sea. Yet, in the end, it was not hardships that brought about the demise of open-boat shore whaling. Instead, the birth of the petroleum industry in 1859 and the subsequent introduction of cheaper kerosene lighting and petroleum lubricants, together with the decimation of migrating whales, closed this fascinating chapter in California’s maritime history.



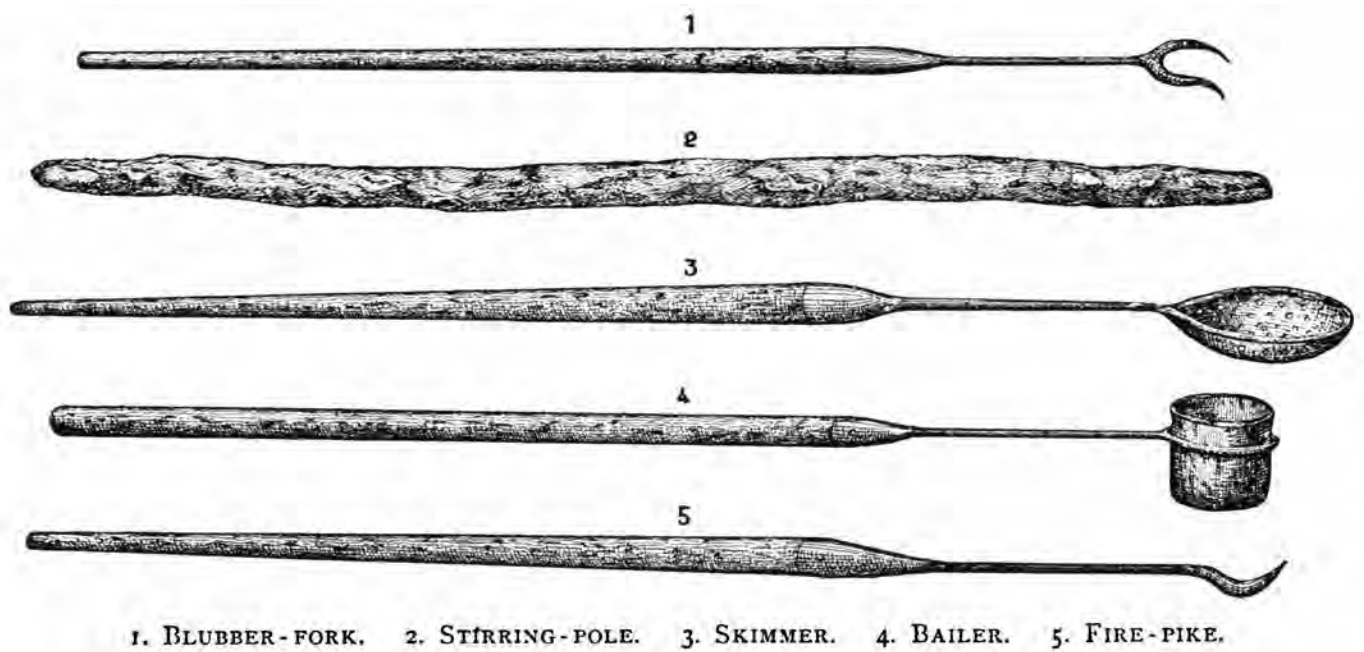
These men seem slightly resentful at the photographer’s request that they pose inside a trypot at Portuguese Bend. The crudely-finished structure behind them typifies whaling station architecture.

Courtesy Photo Archives, Los Angeles Maritime Museum



Tending the trypots at Portuguese Bend.

Courtesy Photo Archives, Los Angeles Maritime Museum



Implements used in trying-out blubber.



A California gray whale.

From Charles Scammon's 1874 *Marine Mammals of the North-Western Coast of North America*

NOTES

- 1 Thomas Leo Nichols, "California Shore Whaling: 1854 to 1900" (master's thesis, California State University, Northridge, 1983), iii.
- 2 California shore whalers infrequently harvested baleen, the cartilaginous filter-feeding plates of *balaenoptera* (non-toothed whales). Incorrectly termed "whalebone," this flexible plastic-like material was used for numerous products, including corset stays. The low-grade baleen of the gray whale and humpback had little value, and only on rare occasions when a right whale was taken was its baleen marketed by shore whalers. For example, see *Monterey Gazette*, 23 February 1866.
- 3 Dates of operation for some of these stations remain unknown. Many of the following dates are not conclusive: Monterey area (1853-1886, 1896-1900); Crescent City (1855-?); San Diego (1857-1886); Bolinas Bay (1857-?); Dead Man's Island, San Pedro Bay (1860-1866); Half Moon Bay (1860-1880s); Humboldt Bay (1855-?); Carmel (1862-1884); Pigeon Point (1864-1900s); San Simeon (1864-1892); Portuguese Bend (1864-1884); Soquel (1866-1867); San Luis Obispo (1868-1888); Goleta (1867-1880); Cojo Viejo (1879-1886); and Point Sur (1877-1879). Dates for 13 of the above follow Nichols, while Ronald May has documented San Diego's dates, and Sandy Lydon has done likewise for Monterey; see their articles in this issue. Humboldt Bay's dates are based on Robert C. G. Dickens, "Portuguese Shore Whalers in Nineteenth-Century California" (master's thesis, East Carolina University, 1998), 60. Goleta's dates are based on the author's research, but are also not conclusive.
- 4 Charles M. Scammon, *The Marine Mammals of the North-Western Coast of North America* (San Francisco: John H. Carmany & Company, 1874), 248.
- 5 loc. cit.
- 6 For a detailed discussion of whaling technology, see Thomas G. Lytle, *Harpoons and Other Whalecraft* (New Bedford: Old Dartmouth Historical Society, 1984).
- 7 Regarding the possibility that oil was shipped from some whaling stations to the East Coast, the March 22, 1859 *Sacramento Daily Union* quotes the *San Diego Herald* that
 "The class of whales taken in this vicinity [San Diego] are denominated gray backs,
 and produce a fine quality of oil, which is being shipped to the Atlantic states, as the San Francisco
 dealers will only pay about forty cents per gallon when it will readily command sixty
 or sixty-five in Boston or New York markets."
- 8 Dickens, 122-123.
- 9 Nichols, 73, 150. Nichols provides an extensive discussion on output for each whaling station, allowing for comparisons.
- 10 Ronald May has published many articles on his findings; see for example "Discovery at the Ballast Point Whaling Station: Archaeological Exposure of a Tryworks Oven in California," (Tucson: *Society for Historical Archaeology and Council on Underwater Archaeology Proceedings*, 1990): 119-125.
- 11 Shore whaling by Euro-Americans began with Basque operations in Labrador. Shore whaling in the Pacific began in Tasmania in 1806, followed by stations in Australia and New Zealand. J. A. Tuck and R. Grenier, "A Sixteenth-Century Basque Whaling Station at Red Bay, Labrador," *Scientific American* 11 (November 1981): 180-190; Susan Lawrence and Mark Staniforth, eds., *The Archaeology of Whaling in Southern Australia and New Zealand* (Canberra: Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology and the Australian Institute for Maritime Archaeology, Special Publication no. 10, 1998).
- 12 "The Passing of the Whaling Fleet," *Pacific Fisherman* 6, no. 12 (December 1908): 23, 27.

Japanese Whaling at Point Lobos, California

Sandy Lydon

The words “whaler” and “Japan” almost jumped through the microfilm-reader screen. I was scrolling through the 1900 manuscript census for Monterey County looking for the familiar names—Silva, Machado, DeAmaral, Vierra, Victorine—of the Azoreans who had been working as whalers around the Monterey Peninsula since the 1850s.¹ They were there, all right, but in 1900 they identified themselves as farmers, merchants, or saloonkeepers. The only persons who gave the census taker the occupation “whaler” were four young men born in Japan. Living together at Point Lobos on the south shore of Carmel Bay, they represent part of an unusual cross-cultural collaboration between the older Azorean immigrants and their more recent Japanese counterparts. Between 1898 and 1900 the two distinct shore whaling traditions intersected beside the small indentation that, appropriately, now bears the name “Whalers Cove.” The figure of the Azorean whaler is well represented today in the museum beside the cove, but the Japanese whalers are not, a testament not only to the brevity of their presence there, but to their rarity in the history of the Japanese in California.

A cross-cultural enterprise. Several Azorean ex-whalers, including Jacinto DeAmaral at far right, stand aboard converted whaleboats in a Japanese-owned abalone diving operation at Pt. Lobos in 1905. Gennosuke Kodani leans forward at center.

Courtesy Roy Christian

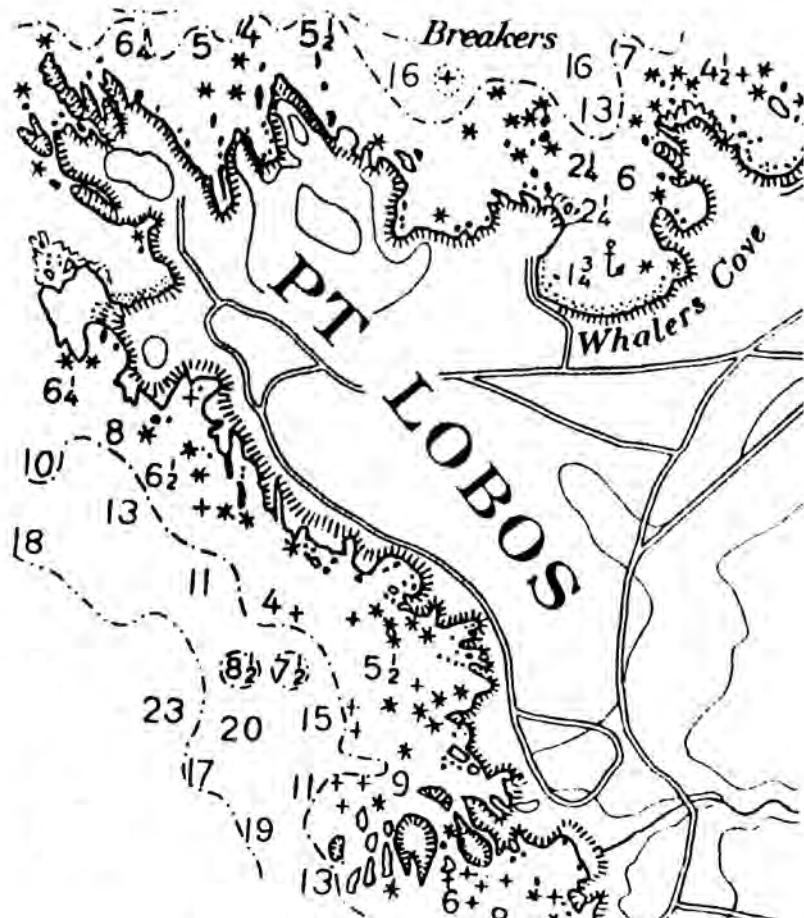


Sandy Lydon is emeritus historian at Cabrillo College in Aptos, California. Author of *Chinese Gold: The Chinese in the Monterey Bay Region*, and *The Japanese in the Monterey Bay Region: A Brief History*, he is currently co-authoring, with Kurt Loesch, *Voices From the Cliff of the World: Reclaiming the Human History of Point Lobos*, for publication later this year.

Japanese immigrants to California between 1885 and 1907 are usually categorized as agricultural workers who came to replace the Chinese, whose own immigration was truncated by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This characterization does not reflect the breadth of intellectual and technical experimentation that was sweeping Japan at the time. Some of these early Japanese immigrants were “Meiji men,” imbued with the spirit of innovation and modernization of the reign of Emperor Meiji (1868-1912).

Otasaburo Noda was one such Meiji man.² Born in 1866 in Saga Prefecture on the island of Kyushu, Noda came to California in 1885. After ten years of working in agriculture and land reclamation, Noda arrived in Monterey in 1895 and organized the first Japanese commercial fishing business in central California. Noda was a visionary, an entrepreneur, and a one-man business incubator; today we would call him a venture capitalist. While living in Monterey, he noticed the abundance of abalone offshore, and in 1896 he contacted the Agriculture and Commerce Department of the Japanese government. Noda suggested that there was a great opportunity in Monterey for the establishment of a Japanese abalone diving company. At that moment the Japanese abalone industry was in dire straits due to an unusual die-off of coastal kelp, and the government quickly responded to Noda’s suggestion by sending Gennosuke Kodani to Monterey in 1897.

Kodani, an experienced abalone company manager from Chiba Prefecture, surveyed the Monterey coast and found Noda’s assessment to be correct—the offshore abalone beds were virtually untouched. Chinese immigrants had been harvesting abalone commercially along the coast since 1854, but since they did not dive, the abalones beyond the lowest tide line were flourishing.³ Kodani immediately recognized the potential for an abalone diving operation, and after arranging a rental agreement with Alexander M. Allan, the owner of Point Lobos, he brought in a small crew of Japanese free divers. The abalone were well within the range of the experienced divers, but their cotton diving clothes were no match for frigid Northern California waters.⁴ So in 1898, Kodani brought in hard-hat diving suits and pumps from Japan, and the modern abalone diving industry on



Entrepreneurs like Otasaburo Noda, founder of the Japanese whaling operation at Pt. Lobos, show how small the Pacific had become by the late 19th century.

Courtesy Sada Onoye

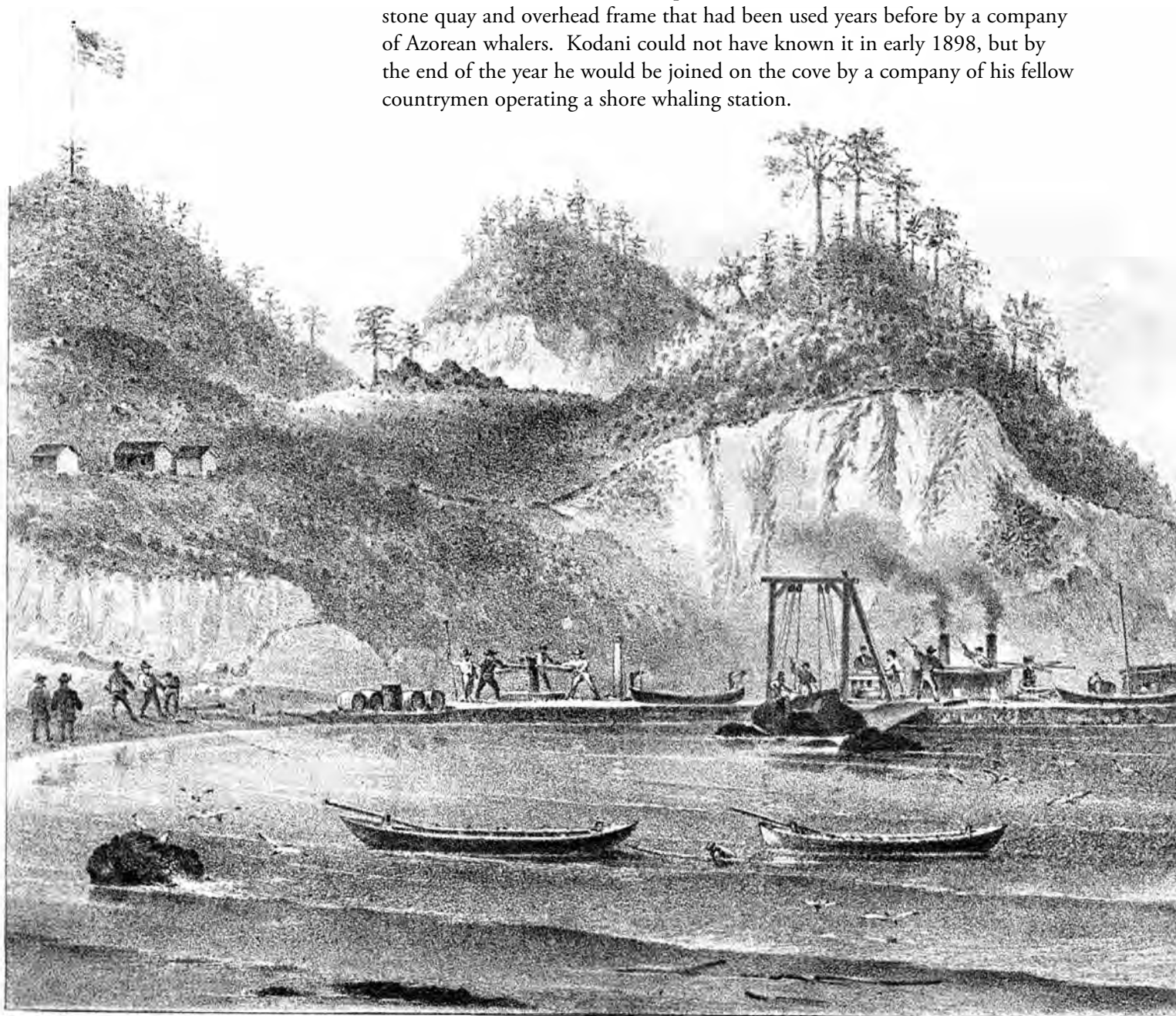
Pt. Lobos in the early 1870s.

With "Whalers Knoll" behind them, Azoreans heave round a capstan to haul in a whale. To turn the carcass while they stripped its blubber, they used a gantry originally built to load schooners with stone quarried from the hillside behind. The try-works smoke at right.

Drawings on these pages from Charles Scammon's 1874 Marine Mammals of the North-Western Coast of North America

the Pacific Coast of North America was born.⁵ Key to the Japanese abalone industry in California was their ability to harvest the abalone and then dry the meat before it spoiled. And, just as the Chinese shipped the bulk of their dried abalone products to China, Kodani sent most of his catch to Japan. Finally, in their landlord, A.M. Allan, the Japanese had a supportive Anglo-American partner and ally who would be helpful when anti-Japanese sentiment began to heat up in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Kodani built his bunkhouse and abalone drying operation on the east side of the small, sheltered cove at Point Lobos and adapted two old whaleboats as dive boats. Across from the Japanese, on the west side of the cove, was a stone quay and overhead frame that had been used years before by a company of Azorean whalers. Kodani could not have known it in early 1898, but by the end of the year he would be joined on the cove by a company of his fellow countrymen operating a shore whaling station.

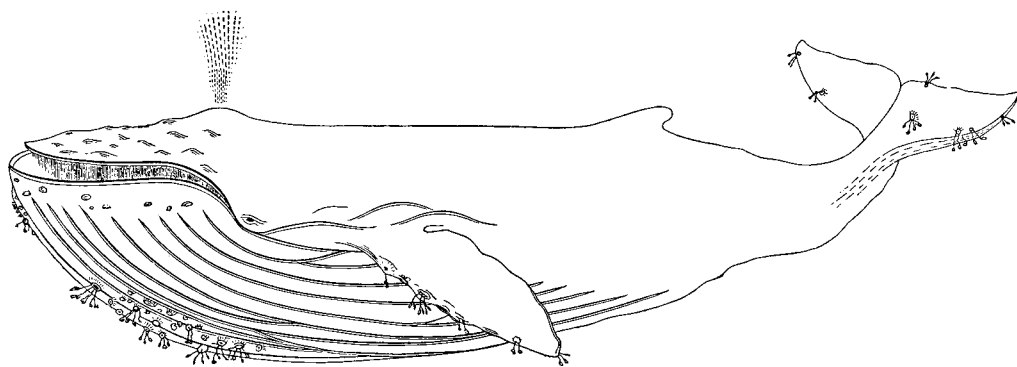


C.M. Scammon, del.

Shore Whaling at Point Lobos

California's commercial shore whaling industry began at Monterey in 1853, and for most of the nineteenth century, it was dominated by immigrants from the Azores. Organized into traditional-sized crews of seventeen men operating on shares or "lays," the Azoreans hunted migrating whales for their oil. Because of the seasonal nature of whaling and the vagaries of the price of whale oil, most were part-time farmers and part-time whalers, just as they had been in the Azores.

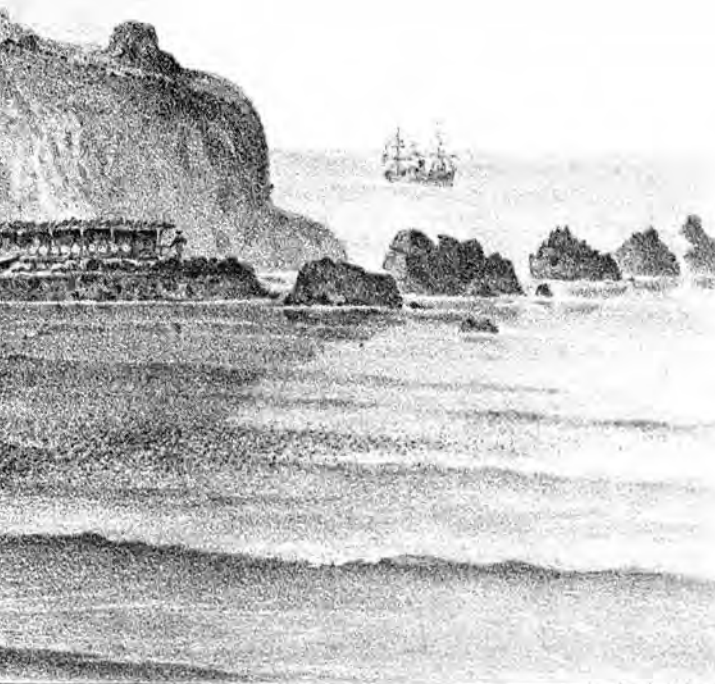
In 1862 a company of Azorean whalers from Monterey set up their tryposts at nearby Point Lobos, and for the next seventeen years they pursued whales when price and availability made the business attractive. The rest of the time they farmed on the terraces overlooking Carmel Bay. The Point Lobos whaling station was unique among those along the California coast because the whalers had the advantage of a stone wharf alongside which they could roll the whale carcass to strip off the blubber. At all the other stations, the



OUTLINES OF A HUMPBACK,

The "swarthy, hirsute and muscular" Azorean Jose Pedro poses with a Greener gun.

From The Cosmopolitan, October 1900



Lith. Britton & Rey, S.F.



CAPT. JOSÉ PEDRO READY TO FIRE THE HARPOON.



THE RETURN OF THE WHALEBOAT.

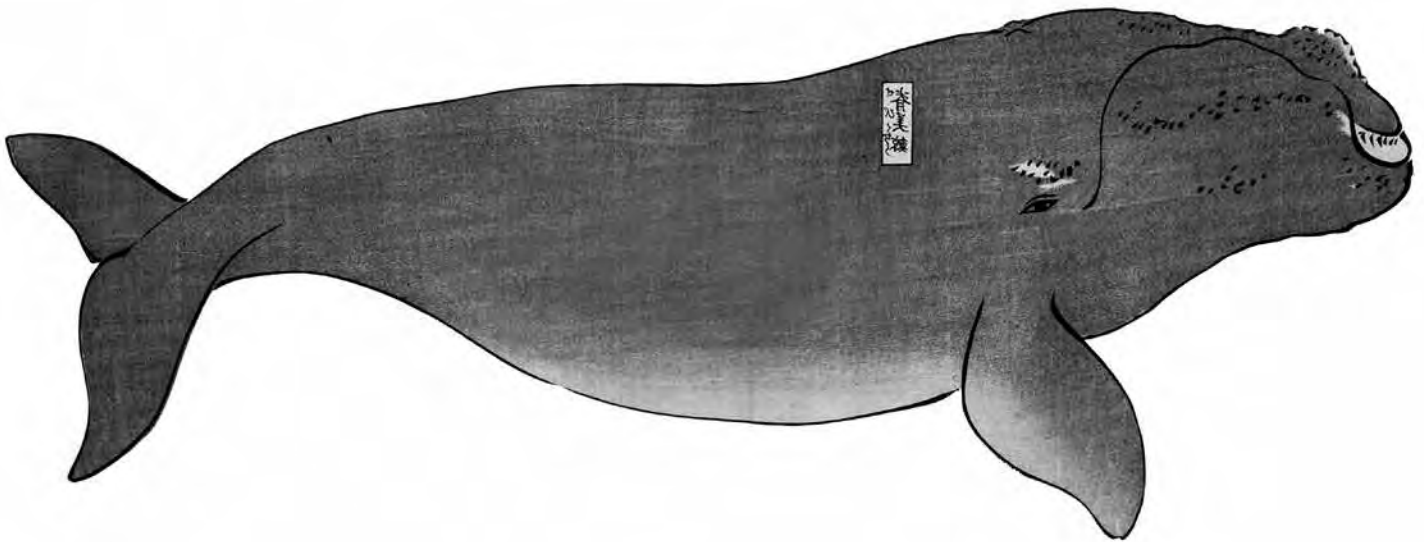
Jose Pedro prepares to dock one of his two boats during the Monterey revival of Azorean whaling.

From The Cosmopolitan, October 1900

whale carcass was processed on the beach, requiring that the carcass be rolled using block and tackle.⁶

During the 1860s and 1870s the price of whale oil dropped steadily in the face of the new petroleum distillate, kerosene. Eventually the financial return no longer justified either the effort or risk of chasing the huge animals through the sea. The Point Lobos whaling company went bankrupt in 1879, while the last whalers at Monterey finally called it quits in 1886.⁷

Once whaling stopped, whales immediately returned to the Monterey coastline, and in October, 1886 one observer noted that "Humpbacks, sulphur-bottoms, etc. are daily seen sporting inside [Monterey Bay] and play the mischief every now and then by 'catching on' to the fishermen's lines."⁸ That same year a local newspaper declared, "Whales have been so thick in the bay of late as to make fishing exceedingly hazardous."⁹





The Japanese have been shore whaling for millennia. The Japanese wood-block prints on these pages, from 1832, show right whales. The species was occasionally taken by Monterey-area whalers.

From the Isana-tori Ekotoba, courtesy Kendall Whaling Museum, Sharon, Mass.

A Brief Revival, 1896-1898

Monterey shore whaling was revived in early 1896 by local businessman Louis Schaufele in partnership with Azorean harpooner Jose Pedro. At a cost of \$2,000 the new company outfitted two whaleboats and assembled a crew of seventeen Azorean whalers. The plan was to strip the blubber from the whales, try-out the oil and ship it to New York. It is not clear for what use the oil was intended, but whaling resumed in January 1896.¹⁰ For the next two years, Pedro and his men killed and processed several dozen whales annually. Most of the whales killed were humpbacks, but they also took an occasional gray, several orcas, and a dolphin. Pedro, described as a “born whale-killer,” was a commanding figure with an “immense physique, swarthy, hirsute and muscular.”¹¹ He and his operation were quite an attraction for both locals and visitors staying at the Hotel Del Monte. One reporter observed, “‘Tis quite fashionable at this time to ‘go to see the whale.’ Those interesting monsters of the deep now being caught by the whaling company attract much attention.”¹²

The company may have been popular, but it was not financially successful. Hurt by the death of President Louis Schaufele in December 1896, it only managed to clear a few hundred dollars in 1897 despite Captain Pedro’s continued success in killing whales. By spring, 1898, the Monterey whaling company was out of business.¹³ There were still plenty of whales coming close to shore, however, and Otasaburo Noda believed that he saw another opportunity for Japanese technology and expertise—this time in shore whaling.

The Japanese have been shore whaling for over a thousand years, and the use of whale products is an integral part of Japanese tradition.¹⁴ By the time Noda arrived in Monterey, the major difference between Japanese shore whaling and that practiced by the Azoreans was in the use of the animal. While the Azoreans killed for the oil and discarded the remainder of the carcass, the Japanese used all of the whale, primarily for food. A Japanese

entrepreneur seeking to invest in Japanese-style whaling in California, however, faced a significant obstacle: the market was in Japan, but unlike abalone, which could be shipped in dried form, most whale food products could not survive the long ocean voyage without spoilage. There was only a small local Japanese market for whale products, and the declining value of whale oil had already pushed the Azoreans from the business.

Japanese Whalemen on Point Lobos

In the summer of 1898, with the backing of what a newspaper identified only as a “rich Japanese syndicate from New York,” venture capitalist Otasaburo Noda purchased the whaling equipment at Monterey, and that December he rented the old whaling dock from A.M. Allan and moved the company to Point Lobos.¹⁵

Don Pedro’s company had operated near the heart of Monterey, where local newspapers gave it a lot of attention. Once Noda transferred its operations to Point Lobos, the local newspapers seemed to lose interest. It is only through several offhand references that we know that it operated at all. In February of 1899, for example, an article about Point Lobos mentioned that “The whaling company is stationed there, and also the Japanese abalone fishermen.”¹⁶ Later that year, another newspaper published a lengthy article about A. M. Allan and Point Lobos: “In [Point Lobos]’ sheltered bay, the largest vessels of the sea can find anchorage, while nearby are the whale and abalone fisheries, also objects of great interest.”¹⁷ Landowner A. M. Allan himself hardly mentioned their presence; his journal entry for January 29, 1899 reads simply, “Cutting up whale.”¹⁸

A newspaperman revealed the composition of the traditional seventeen-man crew that same November: “The Japanese whaling company at Carmel have commenced operations for the season. They employ ten white whalers and seven Japanese. The whales are now going south and will be in these waters until the middle of January and some big catches may be looked for.”¹⁹ The whaling company was owned and managed by Japanese, but the majority of the company members were white, and no doubt Azorean whalers. This kind of cross-cultural collaboration was familiar at Point Lobos, for Gennosuke Kodani often employed ex-whalers to work on his abalone dive boats.²⁰ Who these seven Japanese men were is unclear, but the home of most of the Japanese fishermen then living in Monterey was the Wakayama Prefecture coastline, where whaling had been practiced for millennia.

The only other glimpse of the whaling company comes in the 1900 U.S. census. The census taker counted four young Japanese men living at Point Lobos in June 1900—aged eighteen, nineteen, twenty-eight, and twenty-nine—who gave their occupations as whalers.²¹ Interestingly, the Azoreans living in and around Point Lobos listed themselves only as farmers. Even that “born whale killer,” Captain Jose Pedro, had metamorphosed from being a whaler to a saloonkeeper.²²

The End of Point Lobos Whaling

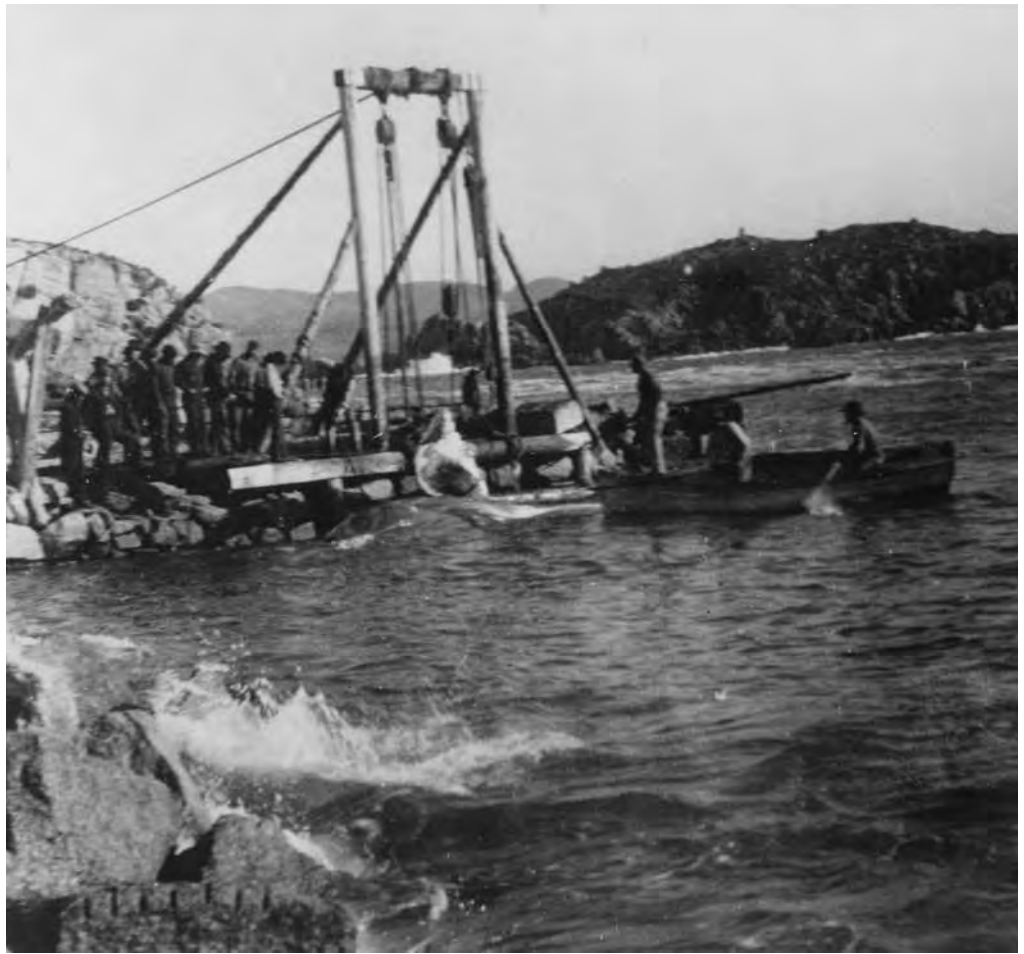
References to the whaling operation at Point Lobos disappear after the summer of 1900, and in September, 1901, a local newspaper refers to “old whalery” buildings at Point Lobos.²³ The Japanese whalers are not mentioned again in the local press, and the four Japanese men listed as whalers evidently moved on, for they do not appear in Monterey County’s 1910 manuscript census.

What happened to the Japanese whaling company at Point Lobos? We can only speculate. Certainly the market for whale oil would not have been any better for the Japanese than it had been for their immediate predecessors.

And even though the Japanese were much more efficient in their use of the animals, the local market for whale-derived food products was very small; in 1900 there were only 960 Japanese living in the entire Monterey Bay Region.

One thing is certain, however: the Japanese did not stop whaling because of an absence of whales. Complaints about whale damage to fishing equipment and the fisheries themselves escalated throughout the first decade of the twentieth century. By 1908, one Monterey newspaper was calling for the state to offer a financial incentive to rid the region of them: “A bounty on these useless mammoths might make it worth while to kill them, and would undoubtedly be the means of doubling the catch of the smaller fish in the seasons.”²⁴ Several days later the editor declared the whales to be a “nuisance.” “...A Maxim rapid fire gun would do some good in stopping [the whales] from ruining the fishing.”²⁵ Whaling, in its modern industrial form, did resume in the Monterey area in 1918, with one small Japanese element; enterprising local Japanese had a contract to purchase the tails, which they sliced, pickled and exported to Japan.²⁶

The passing of the Japanese whaling operation at Point Lobos left behind only two small legacies. In 1902, for the Fourth of July parade held in Pacific Grove, Otasaburo Noda and a group of fellow Japanese built a large wooden replica of a whale. They rigged a device to shoot water out of the top,



The Japanese whaling company at work on Pt. Lobos, 1900.

A gantry like that with which they are here rolling a carcass had stood at the site for decades, and appears in the drawing on page 22.

Courtesy Helen Weiss



The last project of the Japanese whalers of Point Lobos.

Charles Willis Collection

simulating a spout, and then climbed inside the contraption and propelled it along the parade route, resembling, according to one newspaper account, a group of “Oriental Jonahs.”²⁷

The other legacy was the skeleton of a ninety-four foot finback whale that was put on display at Point Lobos in 1901. According to most accounts, the animal drifted into Point Lobos already dead. A. M. Allan was very aware of the public interest in whaling and whales, so he instructed the Japanese living at the Point to clean up the skeleton. They stripped away as much meat as possible, and then buried the bones in a nearby field. Four months later they dug up the now-clean bones, put them in a horse-drawn wagon and carted them up to a picnic area and reassembled them.²⁸ The whale skeleton became a major visitor attraction at Point Lobos, and decades after the Allan family sold the property to the state of California in 1933, the whale skeleton continued to attract visitors. Today, a century after it was put on display, the finback’s skull and few remaining bones are on display beside the Point Lobos museum, a quiet reminder of the brief moment when Japanese whalers worked the shores of California.

NOTES

- 1 Though the Azores Islands were part of Portugal and emigrants from there technically were Portuguese citizens, they preferred (and continue to prefer) to be called Azoreans. See Robert Santos, *Azoreans to California: A History of Migration and Settlement* (Denair, California: Alley-Cass Publications, 1995).
- 2 Correct Japanese name-order would be Noda Otasaburo, with the surname placed first. This article, however, will follow English practice and place the surname last. Sandy Lydon, *The Japanese in the Monterey Bay Region: A Brief History* (Capitola Book Company, 1997), 33-34.
- 3 The key reason abalone flourished was the decimation of the sea otter population which fed on them, by fur hunters in the 1840s.
- 4 There is a 15° Fahrenheit temperature difference between the Pacific Coast of Japan and Point Lobos.
- 5 Toshio Oba, "The Centennial History of Diving Apparatus Fishery in Japan." *Rakusui* 710 (20 April 1980): 5-10. Mr. Oba is the leading abalone diving historian in Japan and has written extensively on the subject. This and all his publications are in Japanese.
- 6 Thomas Nichols, "California Shore Whaling: 1854-1900" (master's thesis, California State University, Northridge, 1983), 125.
- 7 *Monterey Californian*, 22 April 1879; *Monterey Argus*, 16 October 1886.
- 8 *Monterey Argus*, 16 October 1886.
- 9 *Monterey Cypress*, 9 August 1890. "Sulphur-bottoms" are known today as blue whales.
- 10 *Salinas Index*, 23 January 1896.
- 11 Edward Berwick, "Offshore Whaling in the Bay of Monterey," *Cosmopolitan* 6, no. 29, (October 1900): 632.
- 12 *Salinas Index*, 17 April 1896.
- 13 *Salinas Democrat* 26 July 1898.
- 14 Arne Kalland and Brian Moeran, *Japanese Whaling: End of an Era?* (London: Curzon Press, 1992), 65-74. There were many whaling companies on the Japanese coast, particularly in Chiba Prefecture, the home of Gennosuke Kodani, and in Wakayama Prefecture.
- 15 *Salinas Democrat*, 26 July 1898; *Monterey Cypress*, 26 November 1898. Economic pressure on Japan's whaling industry from the depression following the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 may have helped make this overseas venture attractive.
- 16 *Pacific Grove Review*, 4 February 1899.
- 17 *Monterey Cypress Souvenir Edition*, 1899, n.d.
- 18 A. M. Allan, diary, private collection.
- 19 *Monterey New Era*, 8 November 1899.
- 20 Seizo Kodani, interview by author, 15 May 1984.
- 21 The census taker recorded (and distorted) the names of the four as follows:
"Head of Household: Oshimato, Nag. Male, 28 yoa, single, came to US in 1884, speaks English, whaler. Living in Household. Tagonasha, Oma. Male, 18 yoa, single, came to US in 1891, does not speak English, whaler. Living in Household. Tamanashi, Tona. Male, 19yoa, single, came to US in 1896, does not speak English, whaler. Living in Household. Manogoshi, Akiyagu. Male, 28 yoa, single, came to US in 1885, speaks English, whaler."
Manuscript census, Monterey County, 1900, U.S. Bureau of the Census.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 *Monterey New Era*, 25 September 1901.
- 24 *Monterey Cypress*, 10 April 1908.
- 25 *Monterey Cypress*, 12 April 1908.
- 26 Bill Lehman, interview by the author, 22 June 1983. Mr. Lehman worked as a flenser at the Moss Landing station.
- 27 *Monterey New Era*, 9 July 1902.
- 28 I recently asked two marine biologists with experience in assembling whale skeletons whether such an assembly would require a special knowledge of whale anatomy, thinking that the assembled skeleton might be evidence that the Japanese whalers were still at Point Lobos in 1901. Both said that whale skeletons were relatively easy to put together, and that extensive or direct knowledge of whale anatomy is unnecessary. Frank Perry, Santa Cruz City Museum; Steve Webster, Monterey Bay Aquarium, personal communication January 2001.

POWER WHALING

Industrial Shore Whaling on the West Coast 1905-1972

Robert Lloyd Webb

The *Orion*'s gunner stands by his weapon at Sechart, B.C., in 1906. It was the gunner who directed the chase from the bow, and his job could be a dangerous one.

Photo attributed to Charles Robert Patterson, courtesy Kendall Whaling Museum, Sharon, Mass.

"Modern" whaling has always been an industry of statistics and technology. Its lengthy tables of catch arranged by nation, by station, by species, and by tons of products produced bears little resemblance to the whaling of Herman Melville's day. *Moby-Dick*'s victorious struggle had its basis in fact: by accident, or through the malevolence of the whale, men were often overpowered by the very creature they hoped to kill. Whaleboats were swamped, or overturned, or smashed; and whalers were crushed, or drowned, or, like Ahab, wrapped in the coils of their industry and hauled into the deep. After 1870 steam power re-balanced whaling in favor of the whalers, and replaced the glamour of the contest with the presumption that any whale could be quickly processed for profit.

Of course, modern whaling tells its own lurid tales: of whales powerful enough to tow a hundred-ton catcher boat in their wake, of whaling gunners washed overboard, or killed by the recoil of their own weapons. There are even accounts of steam catcher boats driven so hard in pursuit of whales that they capsized at speed and sank, taking their crews with them. But the ordinary business of whaling, which had formerly meant an unpredictable chase of a fifty-foot animal in a wooden boat half its size, became in the twentieth century a statistical matter of how many were caught, how much product was produced, and how much was paid in bonuses that were distributed according to the value of the species killed. As long as those three indicators ran high, everyone was satisfied.



The prototypical modern whaling station was created by Svend Foyn (1809-94) opposite the Norwegian town of Vadsø. Foyn harnessed steam technology to catch and process whales.

Courtesy Kendall Whaling Museum, Sharon, Mass.



Until 1905, whalers aboard sailing ships and at pre-industrial shore stations sought sperm, right and gray whales, and profited from their oil and baleen, or “whalebone.” But they also saw thousands of other whales, particularly the *rorqual*, or “pleated-jaw” species: the blue, finback, humpback, and sei whales, some of which exceed ninety feet in length and weigh as much as one hundred tons. Ahab’s disciples ignored these animals as uncatchable, rendered immune from hunting by the limitations of the whaling appliances. They swam too fast, fought too hard, and when they died, their bodies sank like stones.

Catching rorquals became the goal of Svend Foyn, an enterprising Norwegian seal hunter. In the mid-1860s Foyn replaced rowed whaleboats with a steam-powered catcher boat, and exchanged the hand harpoon for a powerful harpoon cannon. Each harpoon weighed more than a hundred pounds and was fitted with an exploding projectile point. To keep the carcass afloat, Foyn adapted the vessel’s engine to run an air compressor. Using a long tube punched-through with holes, the whale was inflated like a gigantic balloon. At his prototypical shore station, carcasses were hauled up an inclined slipway by a steam winch, and many processing tasks were mechanized for the first time.

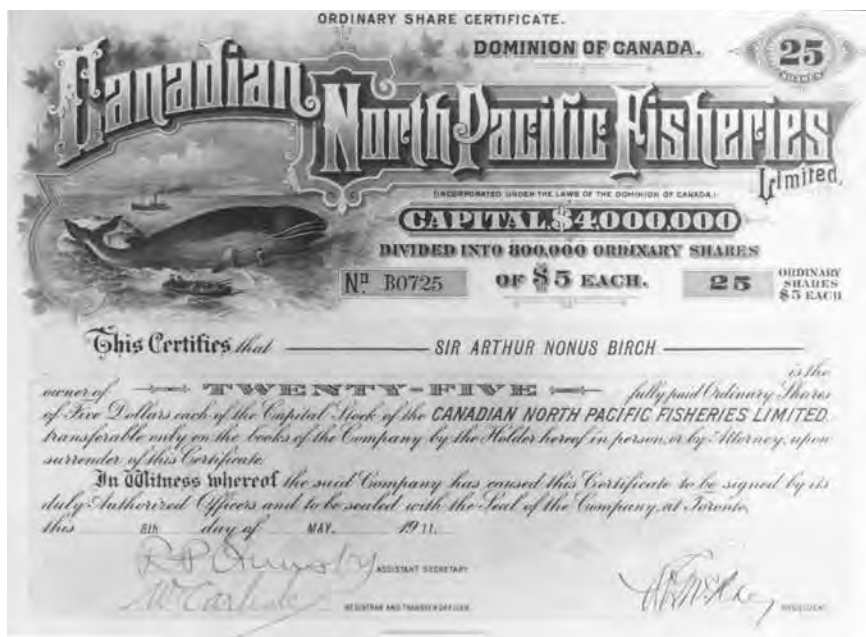
Foyn patented his inventions, and remained in control of them well into the 1880s. When his patents began to expire, other Norwegian entrepreneurs quickly introduced the new technology around the world, establishing limited-stock companies in each new region.

So-called “modern whaling” made its debut in North America in 1898, when the steam-powered catcher boat *Cabot* towed a whale into the harbor of St. John’s, Newfoundland.¹ Six years later, Foyn’s blueprint reached the Pacific coast in the hands of another sealer, George Washington (Sprott) Balcom. Balcom had left his native Nova Scotia for Victoria, British Columbia in 1892, lured there by the rich North Pacific fur-seal industry. During 1904 and 1905, he and a few colleagues established the Pacific Whaling Company, and applied to the Canadian government for a license to erect a shore station.²



Sprott Balcom pioneered West Coast whaling. His son Harry, standing, was a gunner who died of acute appendicitis aboard a catcher boat in 1918.

Courtesy Vancouver Maritime Museum



Ottawa moved quickly to regulate this new business, hoping to avoid the debacle that was destroying whaling in Newfoundland. There, first successes had drawn too much competition, so that the catch increased approximately tenfold in the first seven years. The press lauded the “wonderful whaling by steam,” but despaired of the aggressive greed of rival companies; “the gradual extermination of the herds is inevitable,” one observer wrote, “and the killing out of the rorquals as of the northern [right] whales will surely be the outcome.”³

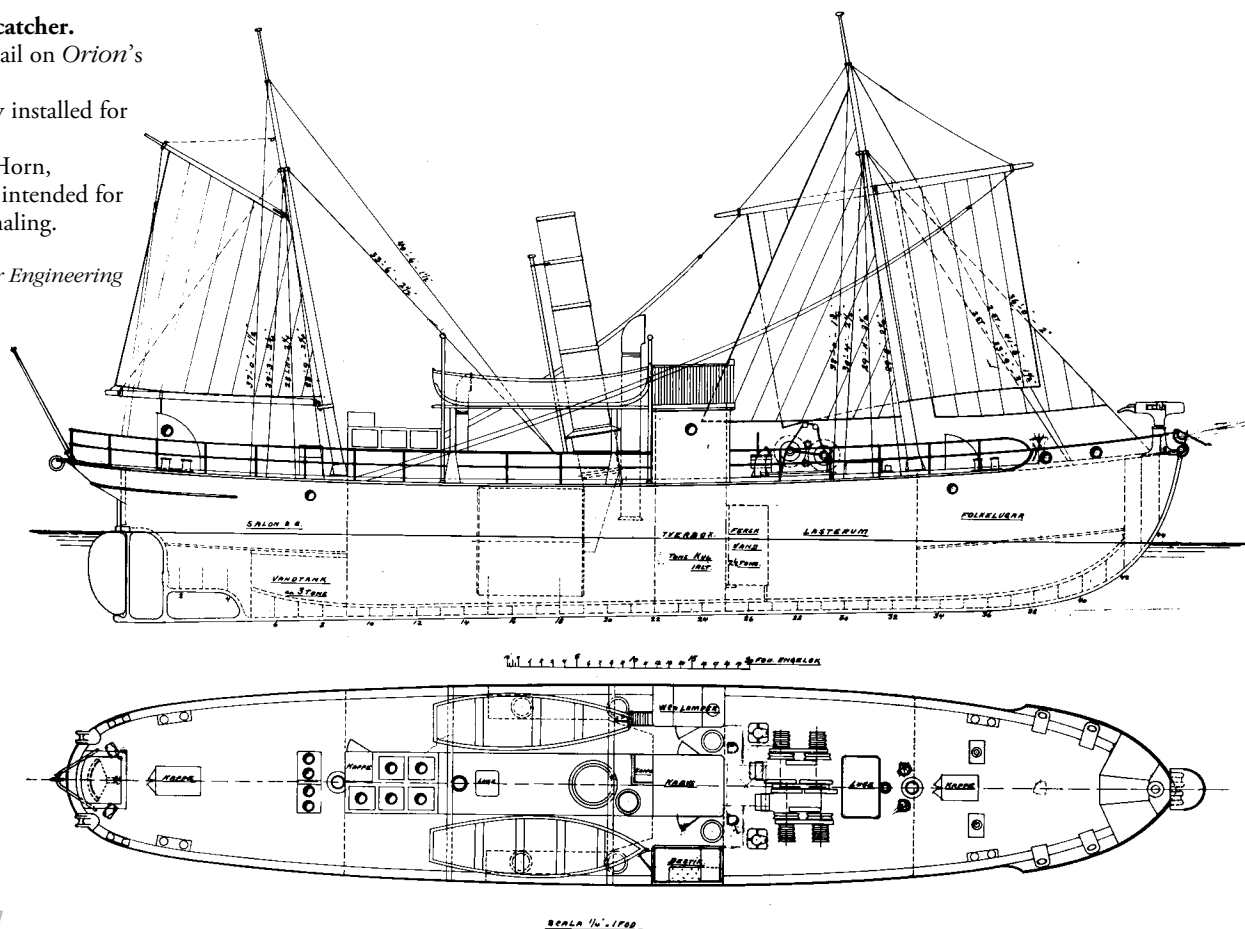
Stock sales financed modern whaling. This certificate was issued in 1911, during the expansion and reorganization of the Pacific Whaling Company.

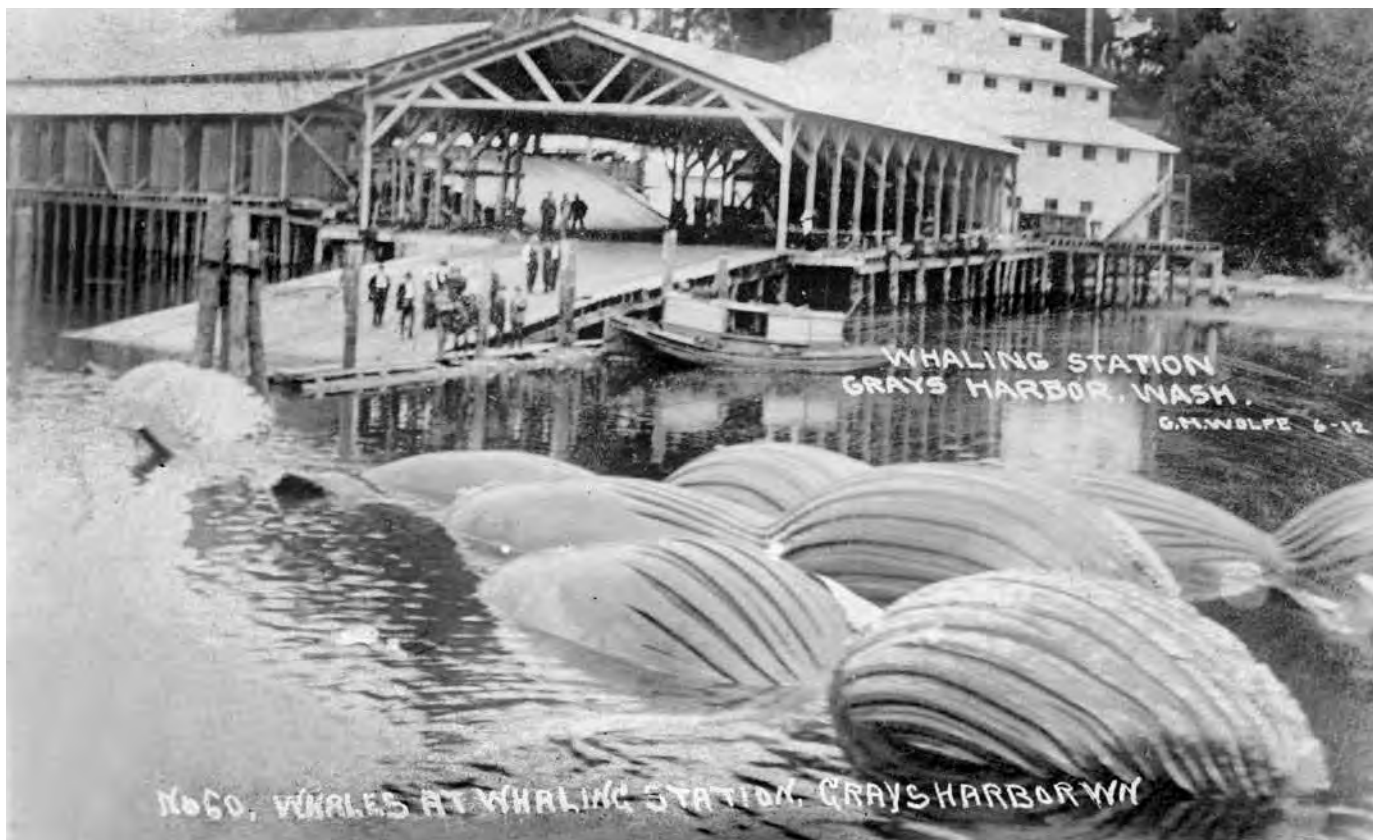
Courtesy Barthelmess Whaling Collection, Cologne, Germany, no. 129

Plans for a catcher.

The square sail on *Orion*'s foremast was probably installed for her passage around the Horn, and was not intended for use when whaling.

Courtesy Aker Engineering A/S, Oslo





Whaling in the Pacific Northwest

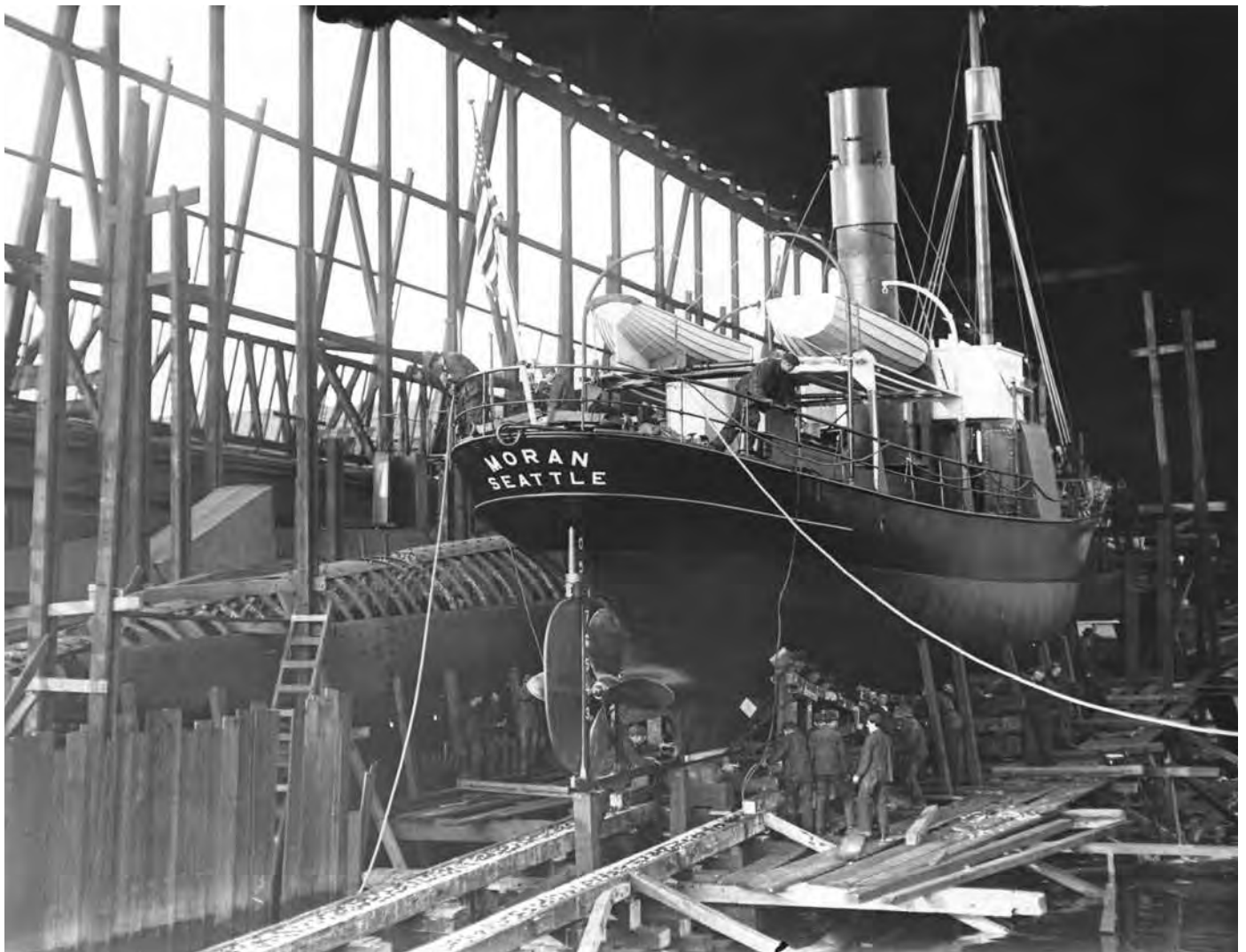
After a long period of indecision Ottawa issued a license to the Pacific Whaling Company, for a site at Sechart, in Barkley Sound on Vancouver Island's west coast. For a catcher boat, Sprott Balcom was obliged to turn to Norway; no Canadian shipyard knew how to build a steam whaling vessel. Experienced shipwrights at the Aker Mekanisk Verksted in Christiania (now Oslo) built him a ninety-four-foot catcher, christened *Orion*. Balcom's brother Reuben took delivery, and a Norwegian crew helped bring the boat to Victoria by way of Cape Horn.

Like most Norwegian whaling enterprises, the Pacific Whaling Company operated as an *aktieselskapet* (A/S), or limited-stock company. The secret to investing was to get into the game quickly, because the introduction of whaling in a new area inevitably produced a "bubble" that meant huge returns for the first shareholders. The *Orion* began whaling in the summer of 1905, and despite delays and some leaky barrels, at the first annual meeting the company's preferred stock earned an astonishing twenty-three percent dividend.⁴

Sprott Balcom promptly requested, and received, licenses to build a second station north of Sechart, at Kyuquot, and a third on Page's Lagoon, north of Nanaimo on the island's east coast. He hoped to keep his company in operation year-round; the latter station was built to employ his men when they were driven from the open Pacific by autumn storms. Balcom expected to catch humpback whales that wintered in the Strait of Georgia, but there were too few to sustain operations, and the Page's Lagoon station soon closed. In 1910, while the company was being restructured as Canadian North Pacific Fisheries, Ltd., its machinery was moved north to a station under construction

Inflated Humpback carcasses float in front of Bay City's large slipway and multi-storied bunkhouse in 1912. The vessel is a small towboat.

Author's collection



Sleek, Norwegian-inspired lines show to good effect on the *Moran*, just before her launching in Seattle.

Courtesy Puget Sound Maritime Historical Society, Williamson Collection

at Rose Harbour, in the Queen Charlotte Islands.

Rose Harbour was followed in 1911 by a station even farther north, in Naden Harbour. At the same time, a group associated with Sprott Balcom erected the first modern whaling station in the United States, in Gray's Harbor, Washington, at a site known anecdotally as "Westport" or "Bay City." It also opened in 1911, under an appropriate subsidiary name: the American Pacific Whaling Company. Because American law forbade the use of foreign-built hulls in coastwise commerce, two catcher boats were constructed by Moran Shipbuilding Company of Seattle. Moran had already built the *Tyee Junior* for the Tyee Company of San Francisco, whose principals in 1907 erected the first modern whaling station on American territory, at the southern end of Admiralty Island in the Alaska panhandle.

The catchers for Bay City, named the *Moran* and *Paterson*, were completed in 1911. During the following year they were joined by the *Aberdeen* and *Westport*, built by the Seattle Construction and Dry Dock Company. This company was also building catchers for a Norwegian entrepreneur, Peter Bogen, of Sandefjord. Bogen had raised \$3 million to finance his United States Whaling Company and its shore station on Baranof

Island. Located at Port Armstrong, the station soon earned the nickname "Smellstrong."⁵

Another Norwegian concern, styled the Alaska Whaling Company, began at the same time. Whaling manager Lars Christensen, also of Sandefjord, built his station on barren Akutan Island in the Aleutian archipelago. He, too, met disappointment. High operating costs and the unfamiliar environment crippled the effort, and whaling was suspended after one season. At the company's annual meeting, shareholders agreed to transfer management to an American-born insurance broker, William Schupp.⁶

In Canada, federal whaling regulations were diluted to favor Sprott Balcom's Pacific Whaling Company. Although a law that forbade establishment of two whaling stations within fifty miles of each other was extended to one hundred miles, another statute that limited each station to one catcher boat was rewritten to permit a company to operate as many catchers as it had licenses, without respect to location. This apparently insignificant change allowed Balcom to shut down unprofitable stations, and move his catchers to wherever whales were most numerous. The result, as in Newfoundland, was a precipitous decline in the catch.⁷ The company tumbled into receivership and its assets were soon acquired by Schupp, whose Seattle-based American Pacific Whaling Company operated Akutan and Bay City. He reorganized the Canadian operation as a subsidiary, Consolidated Whaling Corporation.⁸

He immediately cut staff, sold older catcher boats, and trimmed expenses, but he would never solve the problem of seasonal unemployment. Each spring Schupp had to transport men by ship to isolated sites, where they spent a six or seven-month work season far from civilization, living in close quarters in bunkhouses and working tiring hours amid whale blubber, oil and viscera. Monotony and boredom ashore led to gambling, quarrelling, illicit intoxication, and depression. When the autumn gales closed in, these men were paid and let go; many disappeared into the boarding houses and brothels of Victoria, from which Schupp had to round them up each spring. Inevitably, some had disappeared, while others had found work and did not return to whaling.

In British Columbia, an informal but rigid hierarchy placed Norwegians and Canadians aboard the catcher boats, and Japanese in favored jobs on shore. Chinese employees filled less-skilled positions at the stations, and at sea, by tradition, worked only as cooks. Cultural distinctions that separated the nationalities carried through the whaling experience: caucasian, Japanese, and Chinese men not only worked in segregated gangs, but ate, slept, and passed the time in separate bunkhouses.⁹

On To California

Some industry observers argued that the problems of more northerly whaling--seasonal scarcity of whales, bad weather, and irregular employment patterns--could be resolved by moving to California. There, a milder climate and a reported abundance of rorquals seemed to support year-round operations.¹⁰ Frederick Kristian Dedrick, another Norwegian seafarer,



Japanese workers held many of the best-paying jobs at British Columbia shore stations. This unidentified man was photographed at Rose Harbour in the 1930s.

Courtesy Kendall Whaling Museum, Sharon, Mass., Lewis L. Robbins Collection

Robert Lloyd Webb lives in Maine. He is the author of *On the Northwest: Commercial Whaling in the Pacific Northwest 1790-1967*, and *Ring the Banjar!: The Banjo in America from Folklore to Factory*, and has just completed a biography of the Anglo-American sailor-painter Charles Robert Patterson. His interests extend to sea songs and sailors' shanties; his latest CD of seafaring music can be sampled at www.bobwebb.net



Looking a bit whale-like himself, Fred Dedrick surveys his domain from Moss Landing's slipway.

Courtesy the Dedrick Family

moved modern whaling south. Dedrick had served as mate on West Coast schooners in the 1880s, was made master about 1899, and later established a ship chandlery in Gray's Harbor, not far from the Bay City station.¹¹ His association with Sprott Balcom is difficult to document, but in 1912, a year after Bay City opened, Dedrick helped to form the West Coast Whaling Company, which proposed a \$300,000 combination whaling station, fish cannery and cold-storage plant at Trinidad, on Humboldt Bay. The manager at Bay City apparently resigned his job to oversee the California project, but his departure was premature, since the Trinidad station was not built at that time.¹²

Dedrick persisted. On December 7, 1914 he registered the California Sea Products Company, and announced plans for a station at Moss Landing, near Monterey, where large whales were well-documented.¹³ During the 1840s, sailing-ship whalers took a few humpbacks inside Monterey Bay, and more were killed by local shore whalers who began their work a decade later. Even blue whales were sometimes seen from Cannery Row.¹⁴ Despite the presence of several well-placed California businessmen as officers



and directors, it took some time to sell the stock; the authorized capital of \$1 million was not fully subscribed even as late as 1917, when the principals released a glowing prospectus:

The equable climate of California; the proximity of the proposed stations of the California Sea Products Company to lines of rail transportation and to markets for both its products and necessary supplies; the low cost of fuel; the abundant supply of labor and the continuous presence of ideal working conditions combine to lend to the company advantages not possessed by any whaling organization in the world.¹⁵

The site fronted a sloping sand beach in an area of low surf. Construction of the main building and its inclined slipway finally began in May 1918, and the station was theoretically operational by October.¹⁶ The first of the catch to garner notice was a large sperm whale that arrived at the slipway on January 22, 1919. "The shore at Moss Landing was lined with hundreds of people," one Monterey reporter wrote, "attracted by the news that the *Hercules* had caught a whale and was dragging its victim to the cutting platform." In fact, the dragging had first gone the other way, when the harpooned whale turned seaward with the catcher boat *Hercules*, a former tugboat, in tow.¹⁷

After a promising first season, the company purchased the fifteen-year-old Norwegian catcher boats *Hawk* and *Port Saunders*, expecting that they could increase production by three or fourfold.¹⁸ The *Hawk* was a product of Nylands Verksted, the Oslo firm that had constructed Svend Foyn's original

A crowd watches workmen prepare to winch a sperm whale up the slipway into the new Moss Landing station in 1919.

Courtesy Monterey County Library





Modern whaling captains were a far cry from Ahab. Norwegian-born William Olsen stands aboard his catcher boat *Hercules*, a converted tugboat, in 1919.

Courtesy the Dedrick Family

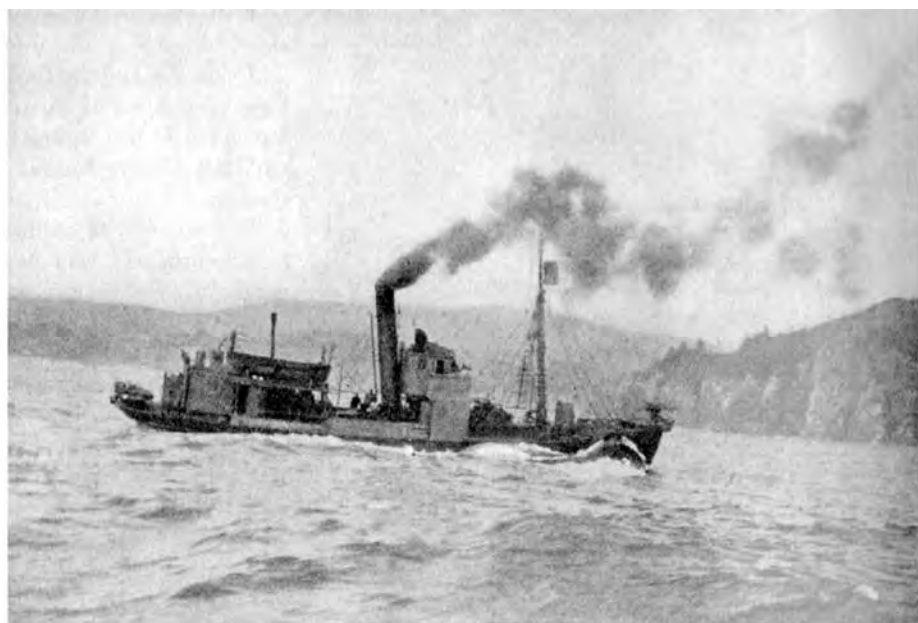
"The little whaling-steamers are almost round on the bottom. This enables them to be turned and managed with the greatest ease, but makes seasickness a thing to be dreaded by the ordinary man."

—Roy Chapman Andrews, 1908

steam-catcher, and the *Port Saunders* was almost identical to the *Orion*, having been laid down just ahead of her at Aker Mekanisk Verksted.¹⁹ Now, finally, Dedrick was positioned to return to Humboldt Bay. In the spring of 1920 he began construction of the Trinidad whaling station, over the objection of local fishermen who wanted the state legislature to prohibit whaling. They argued that whales drive schooling fish toward shore: if whales were killed, then the sardine fishery would be ruined.²⁰

At the end of the season, 463 whales had been processed at Trinidad, and 15,000 barrels of whale oil produced.²¹ Among this substantial catch were but two gray whales. When a combined party from the Smithsonian Institution and the San Diego Society of Natural History visited the station in 1926, a single gray, coincidentally brought in at the same time, was said to be the first of its kind taken in six years.²² By this time few mature grays were present, the majority having been killed during the previous century in the whales' Baja California calving lagoons, and by California shore-whalemen. They were also hunted by Makah and other Native peoples of the Pacific Northwest, who added an incidental number to the total catch.

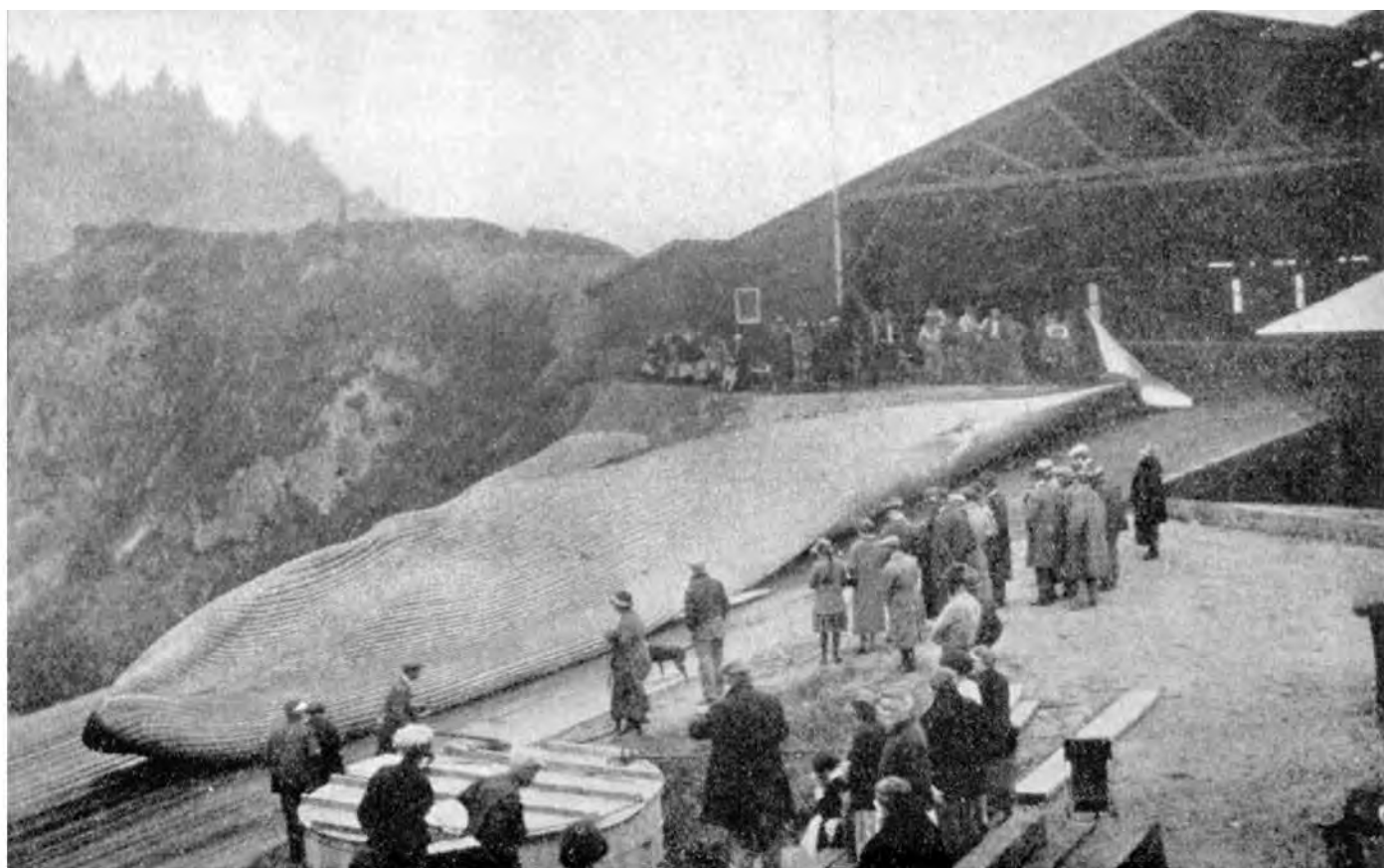
Unlike most awed visitors and journalists, the Smithsonian delegates understood the conundrum that doomed all industrialized shore-based whaling. "When whales have become sufficiently numerous in any district," they reported, "a whaling station is at once started and inevitably this continues operations as long as whales are to be had in sufficient numbers to offer a margin of profit, after which the station is abandoned."²³ This problem had already curtailed Dedrick's highly-touted plan to catch finback and humpback whales year-round. In its March 1923 issue, the *Pacific Fisherman* reported production at Moss Landing at a standstill. Only one



WITH A WHALE ALONGSIDE

The Port Saunders returning after a successful hunt, with her valuable captive safely lashed to the side. Note the lines and tackle used for this purpose

From the December 1908 World's Work



LOOKING OVER A SULPHUR-BOTTOM WHALE

A side view of one of the dead leviathans of the deep stretched out on the skidway at the Trinidad whaling station located on the northern coast of California

whale had been caught during an entire month. "The men have done their best," a spokesman explained: "but when located [the whales] generally slide into a dense fog bank, and the game is off."²⁴

A few abortive experiments were attempted to extend the range of the catcher boats. During 1924, catchers from Bay City worked out of Coos Bay, Oregon, several hundred miles to the south. Carcasses were towed to the Washington station by the tugboats *Ambassador*, *Roosevelt* and *Tatoosh*, while the whalemens continued to hunt.²⁵ But this effort did not improve its failing profitability, so William Schupp closed it for good. He sent the reduction machinery north by barge to a station under construction at Port Hobron, Alaska, but it never arrived, having been washed overboard during a storm.

Schupp must have hoped to chase unexploited populations of whales in the Gulf of Alaska when he selected Sitkalidak Island, just south of Kodiak Island, as the site of his new station. But now he needed costly new reduction equipment. Belatedly, he realized he could solve his dilemma by closing Kyuquot, which likewise had not remained profitable. In September 1925 this last shore station on Vancouver Island was abandoned, and its machinery went north. Port Hobron opened in July 1926, but its promise would be foreshortened by worldwide economic crisis.

Just as Port Hobron opened, whaling in California collapsed. In 1925,

Awed visitors inspect a blue whale. These "sulphur bottoms" were the most desirable catch, but whales of this size were rare, even in the first years of a whaling station.

From the June 1927 Scientific American



Off the California coast.
From the June 1927 *Scientific American*

Moss Landing operated only briefly, and together with Trinidad processed only 121 whales. When the 1926 results proved equally disheartening, Dedrick realized that he would have to take the hunt offshore. He determined to have a floating processing plant.

In Norway, factory ships carrying the same equipment found at shore-based processing stations were already evolving into giants whose crews would soon process most large whales around the world. After 1926, Dedrick abandoned his shore stations to concentrate on converting the steamship *Lansing*, and later the steam-schooner *California*, into processing ships.²⁶ He told reporters he would catch whales in some distant location, “to give the nearby district on the California coast time to recuperate.”²⁷ He sent the *Lansing* and her catchers first to Alaska, then to Southern California and Baja California, and devoted the last decade of his life to processing whales at sea.



Aboard the *Tyee Jr.*

From the December
1908 *World's Work*



In some ways he was prescient. In 1931, confronted by a worldwide glut of unsold whale oil, all whaling ceased. The blame fell on overproduction, particularly in Antarctic and South Atlantic waters where ninety percent of the catch was processed.²⁸ As factory ships and South Atlantic shore stations processed the largest amount of whale oil in history—some seven million barrels during the southern summer of 1930-1931—economic depression suppressed the market for it.²⁹ And in 1932, when the industry returned to work, it did so under terms dictated by the new International Whaling Convention, which established worldwide limits on whaling for the first time.³⁰

William Schupp struggled on for twelve more years, absorbing costly losses while eking out a modest profit, partly by deferring maintenance on vessels and equipment. In 1934, one of his gunners was killed, and another very nearly so, when harpoon-cannons parted from their swiveling mounts. Some blamed these accidents on the weakening of the metal after years of long service at sea. A few months later, Schupp lost most of his plant and dock in Bellevue, Washington to a fire.

He seemed content to let the catcher boats deteriorate. In 1941, the captain and mate aboard one of them entered a protest in the vessel's logbook, and took the unusual step of signing it: "Wall of starboard side bunker now in

The Norwegian-built *Port Saunders* was somewhat the worse for wear by the time this photo was taken in San Francisco. The enclosed wheelhouse over the bridge was added by her North American owners.

Courtesy San Francisco Maritime NHP, Call-Bulletin Collection



THE HARPOON AND BOMB
The bomb, held in the whaler's left hand, is fitted with a slow fuse which will detonate it when in the whale

Standing by the *Hawk's* cannon in California waters, this whaler holds a harpoon upright, its expanding barbs tied closed to ease handling. Two men loaded the harpoon, after which the "bomb" was screwed into place.

From the June 1927 Scientific American

(dangerous) danger of collapsing," they attested. "The ship in present condition considered hardly fit to carry on whaling."³¹ After that summer, Schupp probably couldn't repair them; when Japan entered World War II, whaling supplies of every kind were redirected to military use. The enforced removal of Japanese residents from the Canadian west coast almost strangled his British Columbia operations, and the station at Akutan was wasted by a succession of occupying armed forces.

No shore whaling was conducted in California between 1927 and 1938, when an attempt was made to beach an old lumber schooner at Point Reyes for use as a processing plant. This operation failed, as did a similar effort inside San Francisco Bay in 1939.³² The following year, a company called Maritime Industries, Inc., led by John Grigg, erected a new whaling station at Field's Landing, south of Eureka.³³ Results of the 1940 season were meager, despite the influx of more than a thousand tourists who paid twenty-five cents each to watch whales being flensed. Grigg and his successor, Max Hoffman, survived the wartime years by producing dried whale meat and other protein-rich products that were intended

for military use, but probably wound up as animal fodder.

After the war, the station stumbled along until a work-related death and two disastrous fires brought an end to whaling in 1951.³⁴

Whalemen in British Columbia fared better. Though Schupp sold Consolidated Whaling Corporation's assets in 1947, a new firm established a whaling station at the former Coal Harbour seaplane base, at the head of Quatsino Sound on Vancouver Island. The business soon became part of the B.C. Packers fishing combine, whose management invested time and money to find new sources of profit. Science had provided means for creating new products, and a high demand for pet food kept the business going.³⁵ From 1948 to 1958, B.C. Packers struggled to make something of its whaling operation.

Beginning in 1944, sei whales were added to the catch to augment declining numbers of blues, finbacks and humpbacks. These relatively small rorquals yielded less product, and for that reason had not previously been hunted. Despite the addition of expert Norwegian gunners, the catch continued to decline, so B.C. Packers closed Coal Harbour after the 1958 season. That would have ended Canadian whaling, except for an agreement forged with the largest Japanese fishing cooperative, Taiyo Gyogyo K.K., to process whale meat for human consumption in Japan. Beginning in 1960, Taiyo provided modern Antarctic-type catcher boats and trained personnel who supervised the preparation of meat for export. Demand from Japan allowed the Packers-Taiyo consortium to continue operating Coal Harbour for

seven more years.

On the American West Coast, a steady demand for animal fodder encouraged the continuation of whaling. In 1956 the Del Monte Fishing Company established a whaling station at Point San Pablo, on San Francisco Bay, and for a few years beginning in 1958 a second firm, Golden Gate Fishing Company, ran a similar operation at the same location. The pet food that formed their principal product was marketed locally under several brand names, most notably “Moby Dick.” At the mouth of the Columbia River in Oregon, demand from mink ranchers for feed led to the formation of another whaling consortium, which operated sporadically between 1960 and 1965.³⁶

But these were stubborn vestiges of an industry that had already gathered most of the available profits. And now the work was severely constrained by international agreements that stipulated the duration of whaling seasons and banned the catch of most large rorqual species.³⁷ By the 1960s, whaling in California became so marginalized that catch statistics went unreported, even in the professional organ *Pacific Fisherman*.

In 1972 the enactment of the Marine Mammal Protection Act finally compelled Del Monte to quit, and ended commercial whale hunting in the United States.³⁸ “The business stuck in the craw of whale-lovers everywhere,” a reporter explained, “generating cries of compassion over the suffering and decimation of the herds of sperms, finbacks and seis hunted by Del Monte.” The station manager appealed to the federal government, unsuccessfully, for an extension of his license, to protect a “\$1.5 million investment in plant and ships.”³⁹

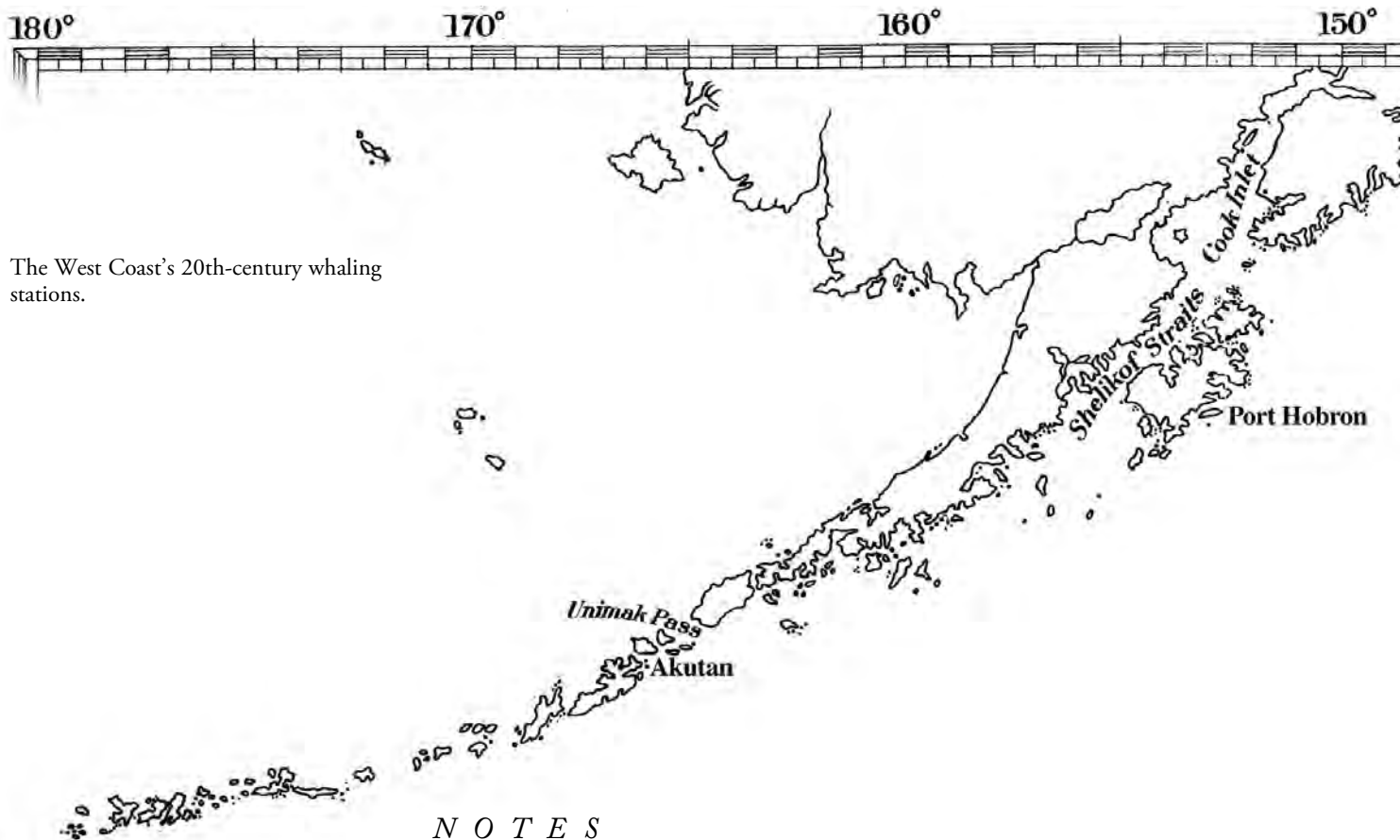
That same year, at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, the whale was selected as the icon to represent the threat of human destruction of all natural resources. Since then, an increasing concern over ethical and extinction issues has limited—though not stopped—whaling around the world. Profits from whales now accrue to entrepreneurs who run whalewatching operations. The North American public, who once paid money to inspect dead whales at whaling stations like Field’s Landing, now go to sea themselves to witness Leviathan alive.

The dream of efficient modern whaling: Bay City (1911-1925). A catcher hauls a whale to the slipway for conversion into products which steam to market on the tracks behind, or await shipment in the tanks by the manager’s tidy house. A problem, however, was that efficient whale killing ensured rapid whale depletion.

Courtesy Vancouver Maritime Museum



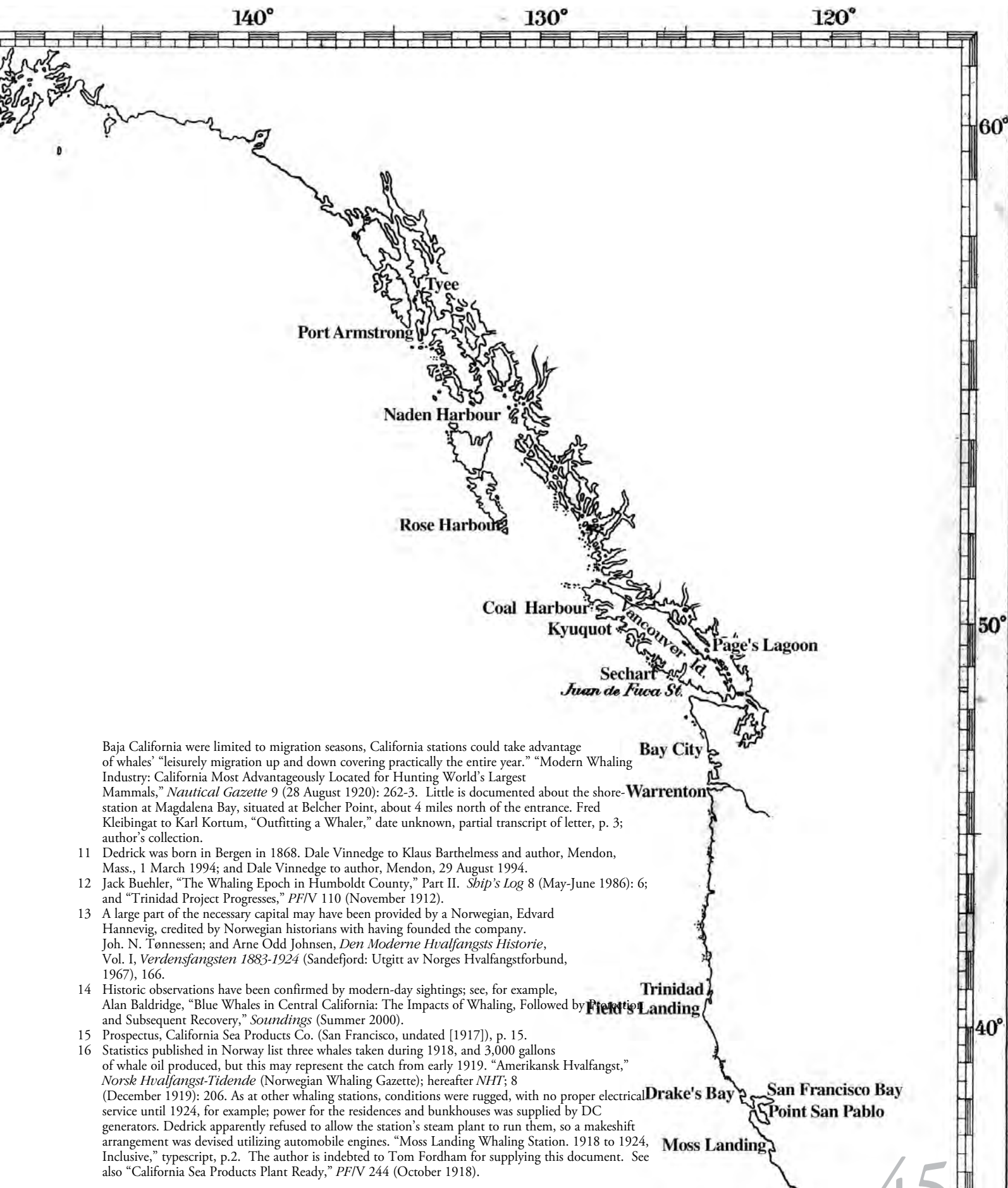
43



The West Coast's 20th-century whaling stations.

NOTES

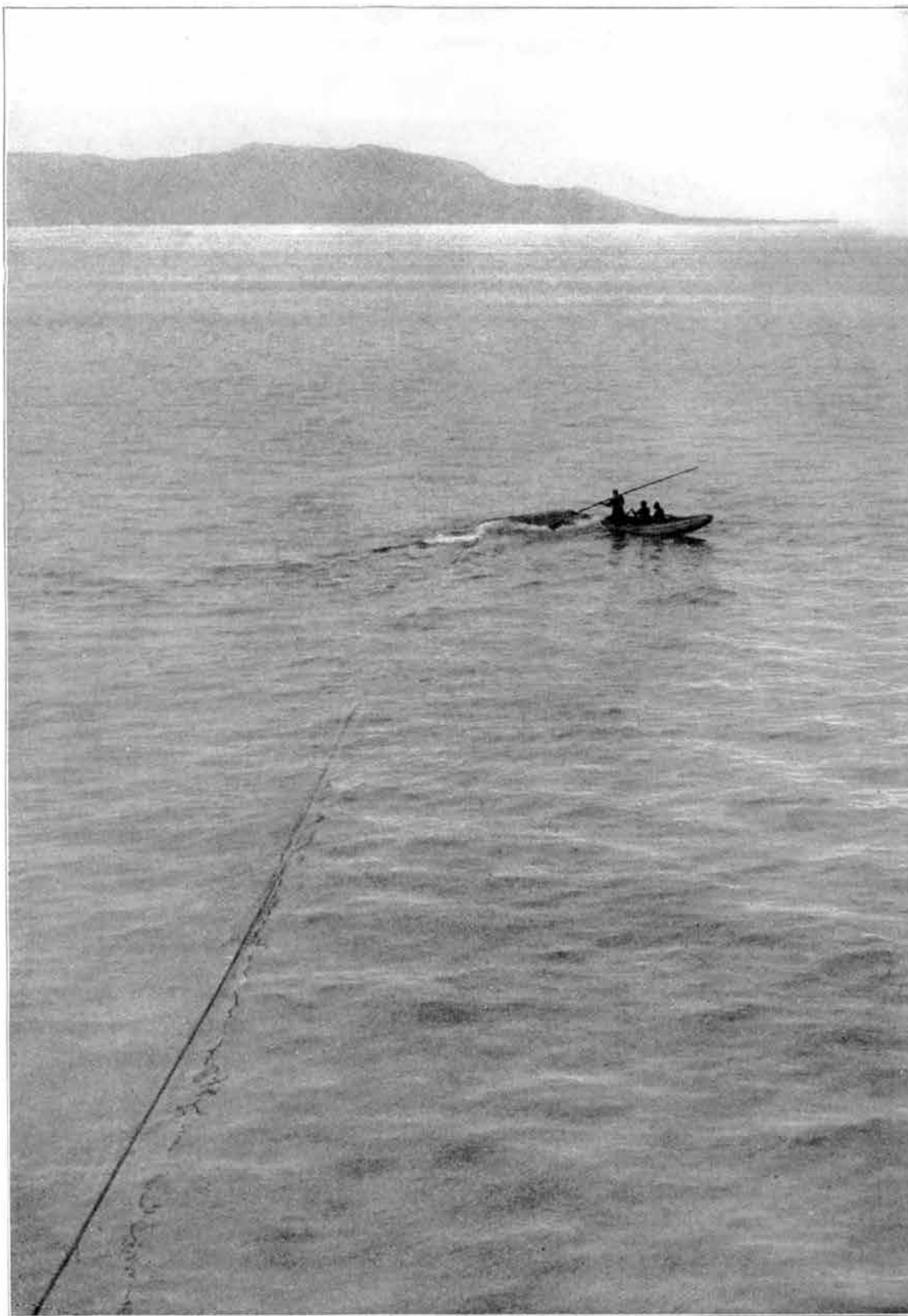
- 1 Chesley Sanger and Anthony Dickinson, "The Origins of Modern Shore Based Whaling in Newfoundland and Labrador: The Cabot Steam Whaling Co. Ltd., 1896-98," *International Journal of Maritime History* 1 (June 1989): 129-57.
- 2 For a comprehensive history of whaling in the Pacific Northwest, see Robert Lloyd Webb, *On the Northwest: Commercial Whaling in the Pacific Northwest 1790-1967* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988).
- 3 P.T. McGrath, "Wonderful Whale-Hunting by Steam," *Cosmopolitan* 37 (May 1904): 56.
- 4 Common shares paid an equally notable 16% dividend, and \$45,552 in earnings were reported at the first annual meeting in January 1907. W. Curtis Sampson, "Auditor's Report, Balance Sheet and Manufacturing & Profit & Loss Account to 31st December 1906," Victoria, 18 January 1907, fo. 2. Private collection.
- 5 Bogen also fitted out the 6,000-ton "floating cookery" *Sommerstad* and sent her to Port Armstrong. Whaling began on May 2, 1912, but initial expectations were not met, and the company struggled until 1922, when the plant was converted to herring meal and fish oil production. Webb, *On the Northwest*, 237. The catchers *Star I*, *Star II*, and *Star III* were sold to the Hvalfangerselskapet Rosshavet and participated in the first factory-ship expedition to the Ross Sea in 1923-4, which proved the feasibility of Antarctic factory-ship whaling.
- 6 Schupp, born to German immigrants about 1866 in Saginaw, Mich., first associated himself with Canadian mining and lumber ventures, then entered the insurance business. He wrote bonds for the Canadian Northern Railway—silent overseers of Canadian North Pacific Fisheries—and was well-positioned to engineer a takeover after the whaling company failed during 1914-15. Schupp's successful bid included an offer of new stock equal to 150% of each shareholder's current portfolio. After the Tyee Co. failed in 1913 and the United States Whaling Co. followed a decade later, Alaskan whaling was left in Schupp's hands. On Norwegian-Alaskan ventures see Webb, *On the Northwest*, 196-204.
- 7 Part of the collapse can also be attributed to market factors: there were few buyers for the oil, except soap manufacturers, and its smell restricted its use to industrial-grade soaps. As San Francisco broker C.R. Laurence explained, "there is no industry dependent on the oil produced, making that product of very uncertain value, and if no whale oil were produced nobody would feel the lack of it." Quoted in "Steam Whaling Overdone," *Pacific Fisherman* (Oct. 1912); *PFV* 106. This and other references to this West Coast fisherman's organ are culled from a transcript of its whaling-related articles: Dale A. Vinnedge, "Whaling Research Resources: *Pacific Fisherman Magazine*, Collected Whaling Articles, 1903-1967" (unpublished, 1991). The transcript does not note original pagination: references are cited as *PFV*, with month of publication and a chronological number supplied by Vinnedge.
- 8 The railroad company invested in the reorganization of the Pacific Whaling Co. as the CNPF during 1909-10, expecting profitable returns from eastward shipments of whale products.
- 9 Modern whaling in British Columbia relied upon Newfoundlanders, many of whom travelled west each spring at company expense. Japanese and Chinese men also worked in the stations from 1905, and Native Americans were employed during the first years of operation. Native housing at Sechart, B.C. was burned in 1914, perhaps because of infectious disease: it is not clear that Native American labor was utilized after that time. Webb, 207.
- 10 *The Nautical Gazette* boasted that whereas whaling both at Bay City and at Magdalena Bay,



Baja California were limited to migration seasons, California stations could take advantage of whales' "leisurely migration up and down covering practically the entire year." "Modern Whaling Industry: California Most Advantageously Located for Hunting World's Largest Mammals," *Nautical Gazette* 9 (28 August 1920): 262-3. Little is documented about the shore-station at Magdalena Bay, situated at Belcher Point, about 4 miles north of the entrance. Fred Kleibingat to Karl Kortum, "Outfitting a Whaler," date unknown, partial transcript of letter, p. 3; author's collection.

- 11 Dedrick was born in Bergen in 1868. Dale Vinnedge to Klaus Barthelmess and author, Mendon, Mass., 1 March 1994; and Dale Vinnedge to author, Mendon, 29 August 1994.
- 12 Jack Buehler, "The Whaling Epoch in Humboldt County," Part II. *Ship's Log* 8 (May-June 1986): 6; and "Trinidad Project Progresses," *PF/V* 110 (November 1912).
- 13 A large part of the necessary capital may have been provided by a Norwegian, Edvard Hannevig, credited by Norwegian historians with having founded the company. Joh. N. Tønnessen; and Arne Odd Johnsen, *Den Moderne Hvalfangsts Historie*, Vol. I, *Verdensfangsten 1883-1924* (Sandefjord: Utgitt av Norges Hvalfangstforbund, 1967), 166.
- 14 Historic observations have been confirmed by modern-day sightings; see, for example, Alan Baldrige, "Blue Whales in Central California: The Impacts of Whaling, Followed by Protection and Subsequent Recovery," *Soundings* (Summer 2000).
- 15 Prospectus, California Sea Products Co. (San Francisco, undated [1917]), p. 15.
- 16 Statistics published in Norway list three whales taken during 1918, and 3,000 gallons of whale oil produced, but this may represent the catch from early 1919. "Amerikansk Hvalfangst," *Norsk Hvalfangst-Tidende* (Norwegian Whaling Gazette); hereafter *NHT*; 8 (December 1919): 206. As at other whaling stations, conditions were rugged, with no proper electrical service until 1924, for example; power for the residences and bunkhouses was supplied by DC generators. Dedrick apparently refused to allow the station's steam plant to run them, so a makeshift arrangement was devised utilizing automobile engines. "Moss Landing Whaling Station. 1918 to 1924, Inclusive," typescript, p.2. The author is indebted to Tom Fordham for supplying this document. See also "California Sea Products Plant Ready," *PF/V* 244 (October 1918).

- 17 "Whale Fights Tug off Monterey Bay," unidentified news clipping, [22 January 1919]. Private collection. The two catcher boats were delayed by the late arrival of Bofors harpoon cannons from Europe, and did not leave port to hunt until 21 Jan. 1919. "Sea Products Company Gets First Whale," *PF/V* 252 (February 1919).
- 18 235 whales were taken the first season. *San Francisco Commercial News*, 6 April 1920, quoted in "Hvalfangst paa Pacifickysten," *NHT* 9 (May 1920): 75.
- 19 The *Port Saunders*, Aker (B/No. 235), and a sister, the *Harbour Grace* (B/No. 234) were built for William Reid of St. John's, Newfoundland; *Orion* was laid down as B/No. 237. Each measured 94.0' x 16.5', and 180 tons. The principal difference seems to have been that the *Port Saunders* lacked an after mast. Construction list, Aker Mekanisk Verksted, author's collection.
- 20 They were not alone in their protest: Native American fishermen also claimed that whales drove fish inshore. Herring fishermen along the Norwegian coast had long protested against whaling for the same reason.
- 21 Most oil was sold to Procter & Gamble and Ivorydale. Buehler, "Whaling Epoch," 7.
- 22 This low incidence of gray whale catch is confirmed by analysis of logbooks from Moss Landing and Trinidad. Between 1919-26 only 7 grays are noted among the recorded catch of 2,111. Humpbacks accounted for 1,871 of these. P.J. Clapham; S. Leatherwood, I. Szczepaniak, and R.L. Brownell, Jr., "Catches of Humpback and Other Whales from Shore Stations at Moss Landing and Trinidad, California, 1919-1926," *Marine Mammal Science* 13, no. 3: 368-94; A. Brazier Howell, "Visit to a California Whaling Station," in Smithsonian Institution, *Explorations and Field-work of the Smithsonian Institution in 1926*, Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections 78, no. 7 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1927), 71ff; "Fra Pacifickysten," *NHT* 10 (June 1921): 60.
- 23 Howell, 78.
- 24 "California Whaling Situation," *PF/V* 396 (March 1923); and "Fog Hampers Whaling," *PF/V* 440 (November 1924).
- 25 "Whale Catches Fair," *PF/V* 431 (July 1924); and "Whale Season up to Average," *PF/V* 436 (September 1924).
- 26 This vessel is not the same as the Norwegian floating-factory *Lancing*, also operating during the 1920s.
- 27 "California Whaling Plans," *NHT* 15 (July 1926): 103.
- 28 A U.S. Bureau of Fisheries technologist reported in 1932 that whale-oil output worldwide had increased nearly tenfold since 1919-20, and historians confirm that output of the Antarctic whaling industry, which produced 90% of the product, had quadrupled from 1927 to 1931. R.W. Harrison, quoted in "Some Astonishing Facts about the Whaling Industry," *PF/V* 600 (March 1932); J.N. Tønnessen and A.O. Johnsen, *The History of Modern Whaling*, trans. R.I. Christophersen (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1982), 385.
- 29 Including 13,608,348 barrels from shore stations during 1930-1, plus 3,384,048 from factory ship operations; Tønnessen and Johnsen, *History of Modern Whaling*, 385.
- 30 Drafted in Geneva in 1931, the Convention banned the killing of right whales, and prohibited taking pregnant females of any species, or any cow travelling with a suckling calf. It also set minimum size limits, and called for efficient utilization of all carcasses.
- 31 *SS Brown* logbook, June 1941, Add MSS 2123, Provincial Archives of British Columbia.
- 32 John Johnson established the North American Whaling Co. in 1938, but his Point Reyes operation almost immediately failed; his chaser the *Gleaner* was turned over to John Grigg, who in 1939 anchored the reduction ship the *California* off McNear's Point in San Francisco Bay. But the *Gleaner* brought in only 61 whales, so he shut down the operation and sold the *California* out of whaling. See, for example, "New Whaling Company Based at Pt. Reyes," *NHT* 27 (November 1938): 486; and "California Whaling Firm Ends Successful Season," *PF/V* 677 (December 1939).
- 33 The firm was reborn from the San Francisco Sea Products Co., under whose banner Fred Dedrick hunted whales offshore until his death in 1936.
- 34 Hoffman sold out to Gilbert (Gib) Hunter and Herman Foland, his former catcher-boat skipper/gunners. The death occurred in 1949, when a line parted as a whale was being hauled up the slipway; see "No Large-scale Whaling Planned for Humboldt," *PF/V* 770 (April 1950); and "May Resume Whaling out of Humboldt," *PF/V* 775 (March 1951).
- 35 One new product was whale-solubles, a protein-rich substance made from waste water created during the rendering process.
- 36 Bioproducts, Inc., of Warrenton, Oregon rebuilt a 60-year-old dragger, the *Tom and Al*, as a catcher boat, and processed whales in collaboration with the Oregon Fur Producers Cooperative. The venture lasted about five years, and may have only taken 13 whales; see Webb, 277.
- 37 The International Agreement for the Regulation of Whaling (1937) limited factory-ship operations, established hunting areas, increased protection of certain species including the California gray whale, restricted land-station operations to six months per year, and required that government inspectors measure and document each animal taken. The International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (1946) reinstated and amended those accords, added new stipulations, and created a permanent regulatory body, the International Whaling Commission. Webb, 241-2, 246-8, 261-2.
- 38 Closely regulated exceptions exist for Native Americans in Washington and Alaska.
- 39 Jack Schreiber, "Whaling Station Destroyed," undated clipping [probably 1989]; author's collection; and John Woolfenden, "Whaling Going Out of Existence in United States," *Monterey Peninsula Herald*, 10 August 1971.



"HE LEANED FORWARD, THRUSTING THE STEEL DEEP INTO THE ANIMAL'S SIDE"

This photograph, taken from the barrel at the masthead, shows a whale that led the ship a four-hour chase with the first harpoon in his side. It was finally necessary to go out in the small boat or pram and lance him

From the December 1908 World's Work

95 Ready-to-Display Models



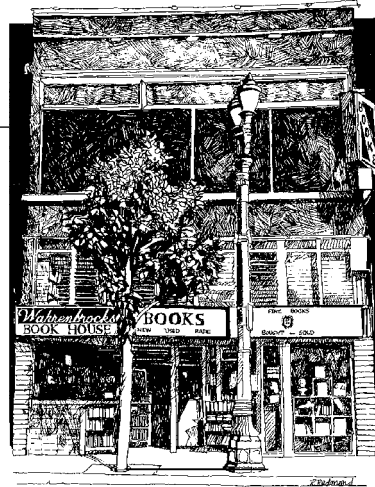
& Affordable Nautical Decor

Sailboats	Regional Workboats
Pond Yachts	Canoes
Tugboats	Half Hulls
Runabouts	Knot Boards
Chesapeake Bay Boats	Nautical Decor

www.ShipModels1.com

Toll Free 888-201-6004

LOCATED IN SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA



established 1935

NEW • USED • RARE • BOOKS BOUGHT
RARE BOOKS APPRAISED • MAIL ORDERS
Extensive Maritime & Naval History Sections

WAHRENBROCK'S BOOK HOUSE

1 800 315 8643

www.wahrenbrocks.com

(619) 232-0132 • (619) 232-3808 FAX

726 Broadway • San Diego, CA 92101

e-mail: wbh@ixpres.com



SALUTES THE FINE JOB THE MARITIME
MUSEUM HAS DONE IN
RESTORING THEIR CLASSIC VESSELS
LET US HELP YOU RESTORE YOUR
CLASSIC VESSEL

DOWNWIND MARINE
Serving Your Every Yachting Need

From the crew at Downwind Marine.

We are located at 2804 Cañon Street
San Diego, CA 92106

(619) 224-2733 WHX 369

homepage: <http://www.downwindmarine.com>
e-mail: downwind@IBM.net



West Coast whaling stations were makeshift, multicultural communities. Near the remains of the shanty and smithy shown in this artist's reconstruction, San Diego archaeologists unearthed fragments of the daily lives of Chinese and Portuguese-American people, including this Chinese bamboo-pattern bowl and fragment of an English plate.

*Painting by Jay Wegter,
courtesy Fort Guijarros Museum Foundation*





Look how far we've come...

Last fiscal year, maritime cargo passing through the port of San Diego reached an all-time high – 2.45 million metric tons. That's a lot of autos. oranges. cement, lumber, steel, sand...and much more. Like high-paying jobs for San Diegans...a vibrant working waterfront...and just one example of a port that's working to boost the region's economy.



Port of San Diego

www.portofsandiego.org



**MARITIME MUSEUM
ASSOCIATION OF SAN DIEGO**

Bark Star of India
1306 N. Harbor Drive,
San Diego, CA 92101

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
San Diego, Calif.
Permit No. 1089

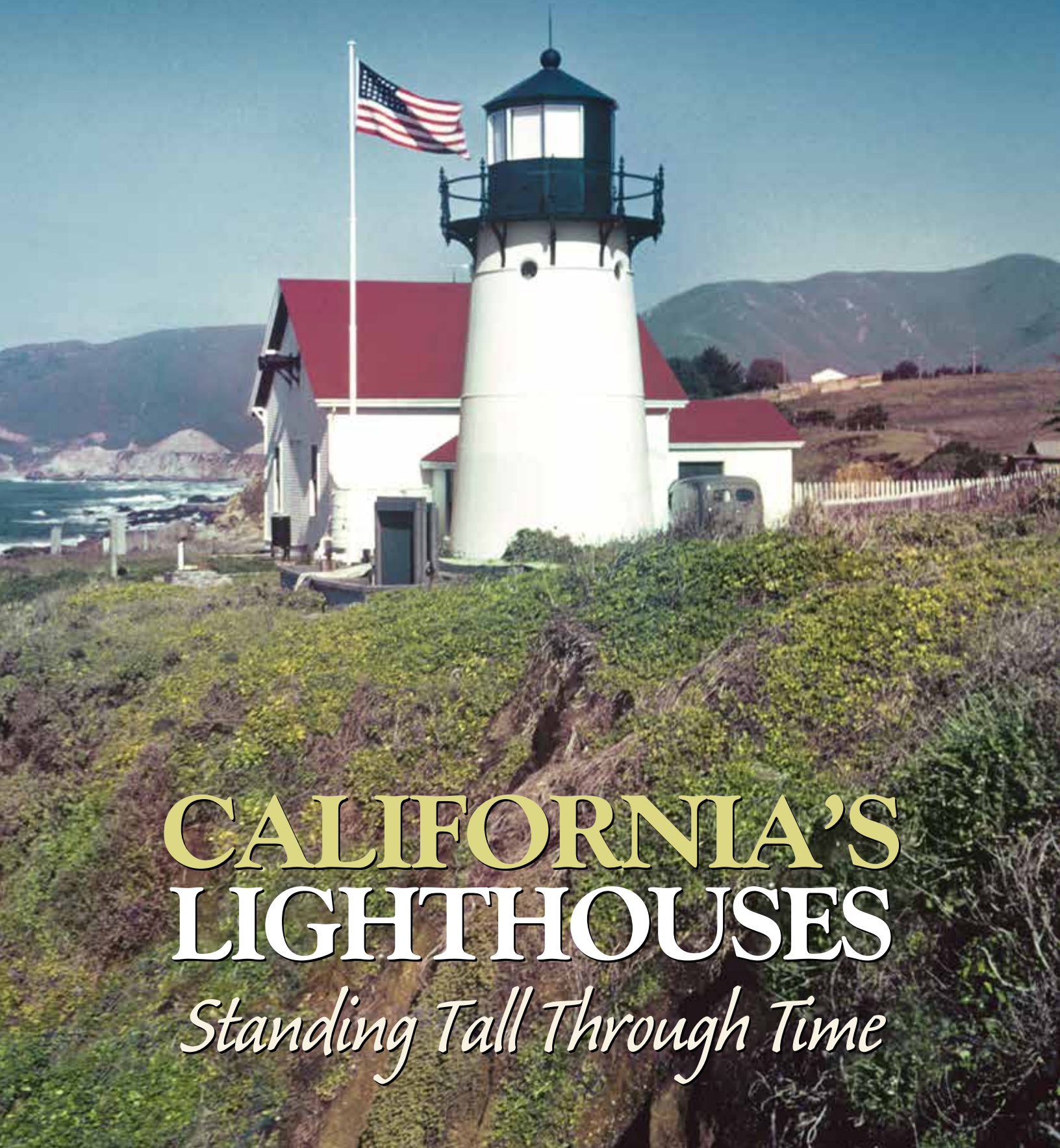
MAINS'L HAUL

Maritime Museum Association Of San Diego

Vol. 37, No. 2 SPRING 2001

\$4.00

A Journal Of Pacific Maritime History



CALIFORNIA'S LIGHTHOUSES

Standing Tall Through Time

THE LOG

California's Boating Newspapers
Since 1971

THE LOG SUPPORTS
THE SAN DIEGO
MARITIME MUSEUM



COUNCIL OF AMERICAN
MARITIME MUSEUMS
CONFERENCE OF CALIFORNIA
HISTORICAL SOCIETIES
INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS
OF MARITIME MUSEUMS

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

William Dysart
President

Kenneth Andersen
First Vice President

Chris Frost
Second Vice President

Chuck Allen
Treasurer

Merrill Day
Secretary

Raymond Ashley Executive
Director

Ronald Carlson
Keith Cruickshank
James Dalby
Bob Dilworth
Donald E. Hillman, Jr.
Phyllis Hom
Kipland Howard
Paul Kettenburg
Don Lenox
Robert Loomis
VAdm. Edward H. Martin
Kay O'Bryan
John Rebelo, Jr.
Barbara Sharp
Karen Sowell
Martha Von Der Wische

MAINS'L HAUL

is published quarterly,
wind and weather
permitting, aboard the
ferryboat *Berkeley*.

(619) 234-9153 x.118
FAX (619) 234-8345
editor@sdmaritime.com

Mark Allen, Editor
Tony Enyedy, Art Director

"Mains'l Haul"—An order
in tacking ship bidding
'Swing the main yards.'
To loot, steal, or 'acquire'.
—John Masefield

Many California lighthouses retain
their elegant and
efficient Victorian-Era Fresnel
(freh-NEL) lenses, like this 1887
example atop Pt. Loma's iron
tower.

Courtesy Karen Scanlon

DID YOU KNOW?

- Of the 7 Wonders of the Ancient World, only the Great Pyramid outlasted the *Pharos*, Egypt's great lighthouse. (page 3)
- The first operating West Coast lighthouse was razed to build the Alcatraz penitentiary. (page 7)
- The flash of each lighthouse is a "fingerprint" identifying it. (page 7)
- A lighthouse keeper was once kidnapped by a rumrunner. (page 26)
- A "tidal wave" ripped through Los Angeles Harbor. (page 30)
- Pt. Loma's lightkeepers once hunted an enemy sub from a rowboat. (page 51)

Maritime Museum Association Of San Diego

MAINS'L HAUL

Vol. 37, NO. 2 Spring 2001

A Journal Of Pacific Maritime History

Lighting the Way
Ray Ashley

2



4
The First West Coast
Lighthouses **Wayne
Wheeler**

10

Standing Tall Fifty Years
Later
Jan Mattson



22

Pigeon Point
JoAnn Semones

30



The "Tidal Wave" That Hit L.A.
Jim Thompson

36



"New" Point Loma Lighthouse
Karen Scanlon



On the cover

Point Montara lighthouse guards the coast in 1950. Though seemingly unchanged in the recent photo at left, the keeper's house is now a popular hostel.

Cover photo by George Mattson and John Twohy; this 2001 photo by Jan Mattson

48



Growing Up at Point Loma Lighthouse
Lexie Johnson with Karen Scanlon

Subscriptions to *Mains'l Haul* are US \$40 per year. Subscribers also receive a quarterly newsletter and all benefits of membership in the Maritime Museum Association of San Diego. To subscribe, comment, or submit articles to this quarterly, visit www.sdmaritime.com/journal, or write the editor, 1492 N. Harbor Dr., San Diego, CA 92101. Our mission is to engage members and the public in the study of Pacific maritime history, while encouraging scholarly research. Articles are indexed for researchers worldwide in *America: History & Life* and *Historical Abstracts*.

We welcome submissions on all aspects of Pacific maritime history, and encourage the widest variety of perspectives on this rich heritage.

Of all the types of fixed structures people have built, lighthouses are perhaps the most universally loved. It's easy to see why. Lighthouses always seem to repose in picturesque or dramatic settings. By their "characteristic"—the distinctive pattern of their flash—they establish identity of place to all who see them, while marking the beginning of a promising voyage, or the safe end of a difficult one. Their clockwork, lenses, illumination, and sound equipment are sources of fascination, as are the lives of those who tend them. Has anyone ever visited a lighthouse without wondering, with a bit of envy, what it would be like to live there?

Lighthouses are certainly signposts for mariners, but they are also signposts of civilization. It is frequently argued by maritime archeologists and historians that maritime enterprise was a precondition to civilization in the Ancient World, growing to such importance that one of the most significant structures of antiquity was the *Pharos* or lighthouse of Alexandria, identified by Herodotus as one of the World's Seven Wonders.

Founded by Alexander the Great in 332 BCE, the Egyptian port of Alexandria was situated far enough from the Nile to prevent the silting of its harbor, yet accessible to river trade by means of a connecting canal.

The resulting double harbor sat at the strategic nexus of most of the crucial trade routes of the Ancient World, but its geography was flat and impossible to distinguish from the sea, so the approach to the port could be dangerous. In consequence, in 290 BCE construction of a lighthouse began under the direction of the architect Sostrates of Knidos, a

contemporary of Euclid, on a small island some distance from the city and connected to it by a causeway. The work took twenty years to complete. It is said that Sostrates' patron, Ptolemy Soter I, insisted that his name be memorialized on the structure, which Sostrates accomplished with a plaster plaque on the foundation of the lighthouse. As the plaster wore away over subsequent centuries, Ptolemy's name was slowly replaced by the inscription beneath: "Sostrates Son of Dexiphanes of

LIGHTING THE WAY

by Ray Ashley

San Diego Maritime Museum Director



461

Schooner Alice McDonald. u

2

Knidos on Behalf of all Mariners to the Savior Gods.”

If ever a lighthouse were worthy of the Savior Gods, this was it. Rising in three tiers to a height of 384 feet (some accounts claim 650 feet), it was the tallest building on earth, excepting only the Great Pyramid, for most of its long life. It was also one of the greatest tourist attractions of its day, admired by distinguished travelers from Strabo and Pliny the Elder in the first century to Abou-Haggag Al-Andalousi in the twelfth century. By night, a great fire atop the tower guided ships into port, and by day the sun's rays were reflected out to sea from a gigantic mirror so powerful that legends claim its beam could set ships on fire at a great distance. The last of the six “Vanished Wonders” to disappear, the Pharos stood until the fourteenth century, when a series of earthquakes brought it down. In 1994, underwater archeologists mapped its remnants, using GPS, a modern navigational aid, to establish the position of the greatest navigational aid of all time.

Of equal significance, perhaps, was the *Pharos*' contribution to another kind of illumination. The “characteristic” of the lighthouse was intertwined with that of the greatest intellectual complex of its day, the *Museon*

or Academy of Alexandria. This institution functioned as a university, governmental advisory agency, astronomical observatory, research institute, medical school, library, and repository for specimens of arts, sciences, and nature from throughout the known world. Its scholars included the greatest mathematicians, astronomers, geographers, physicists, and medical researchers of antiquity, all brought to Alexandria by ships and connected to the outside world by the sea.

As we contemplate the magnificent and elaborate intellectual complex of our own community—great universities, research institutes, medical facilities, libraries, observatories, and museums—consider the lonely little structures on the tip of Point Loma, heirs to the great *Pharos*. As the stories in these pages attest, their purpose was simply to project a concentrated beam of light several miles out to sea. What the builders of California's first lighthouses never could have realized in 1854 was how far the light would reach, and how powerful a beacon it would become. Not only would it safely guide commerce to our ports, but in commerce's wake would follow the cultural and intellectual riches of Western Civilization.

Lighthouses epitomize Humanity's efforts to tame Nature's hazards. They can only mitigate, never eliminate, the dangers of navigation.

SDMM Collection, P7940C



The First West Coast Lighthouses

Wayne Wheeler

Wayne Wheeler, of San Francisco, founded the U.S. Lighthouse Society in 1984 and edits its quarterly, *The Keeper's Log*. He spent 23 years with the Coast Guard, first as an officer and later as a civilian. Wayne lectures frequently and has led lighthouse tours on several continents.

California's lighthouses came into being as a result of an event that occurred far inland. The cry of *GOLD!* at Sutter's Mill in 1848 sent thousands of ships racing around the Horn to San Francisco Bay, and many came to grief on the rocky, often fog-shrouded California coast, where there were no aids to navigation of any kind.

The U.S. Lighthouse Service, an arm of the Treasury Department, petitioned Congress for funds to build lighthouses along the West Coast, and Lt. Hartman Bache of the Army Topographical Corps was dispatched to select the best sites.¹ Congress passed acts in 1850 and 1851 to fund an initial string of eight lighthouses and several buoys, but the discovery of corruption in the awarding of the contract caused delays.²

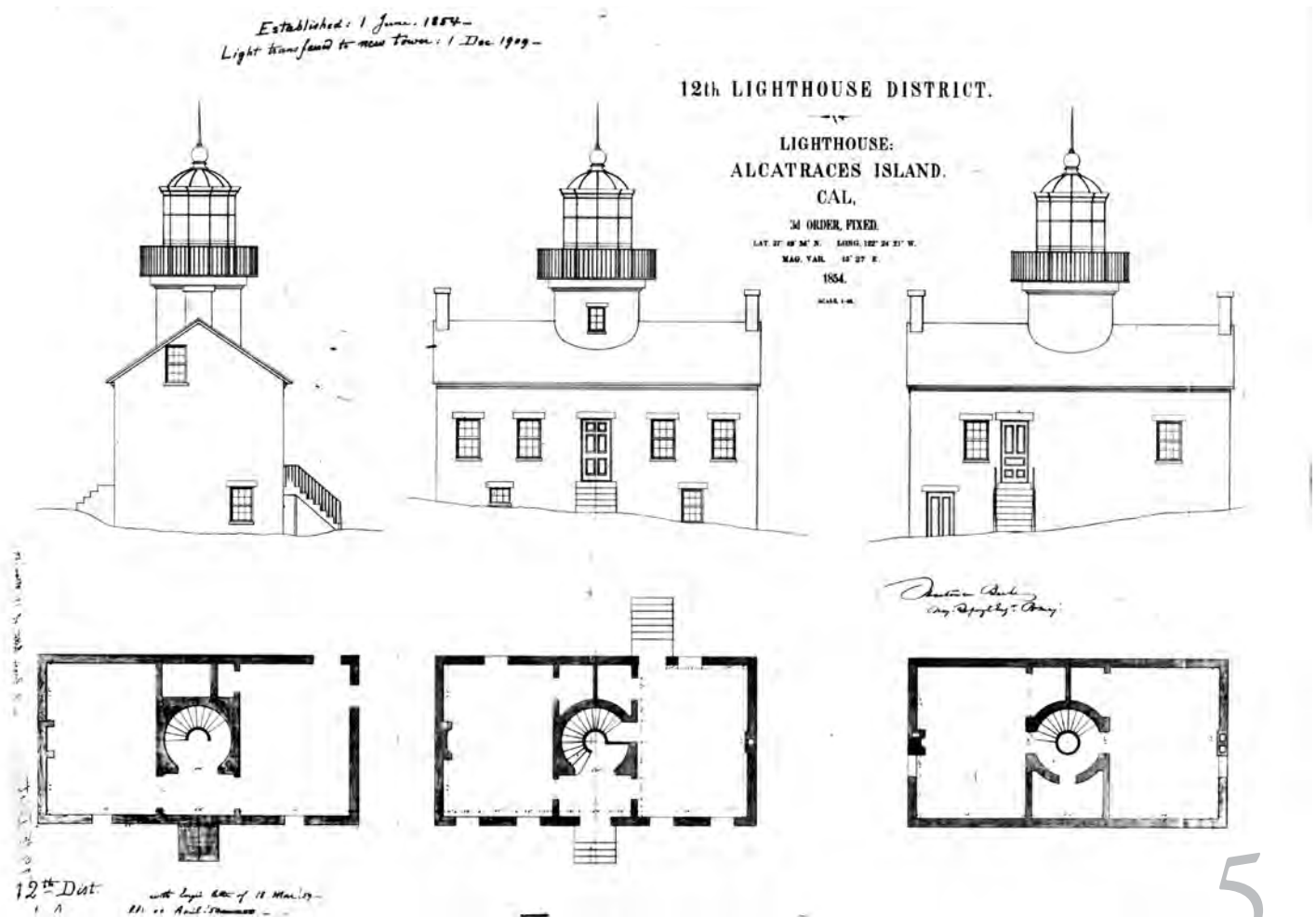


The contract called for identical lighthouses at San Diego, Point Conception, Point Piños (Monterey), Southeast Farallon Island, on Humboldt Bay, and in San Francisco Bay at Fort Point and Alcatraz Island. The eighth was to be built at Cape Disappointment at the mouth of the Columbia River. The Baltimore firm of Gibbons & Kelly was finally awarded the contract, and was set to receive \$15,000 for each California light, and \$31,000 for the one at Cape Disappointment.

Each lighthouse was intended to follow the same “off the shelf” government design, examples of which already stood on the East Coast.³ Though difficult terrain forced changes to the design of several, each was planned as a one-and-one-half-story Cape Cod-style house with a round tower rising through its roof. The interiors were divided into a basement, with a parlor and kitchen on the first floor, and two bedrooms and a small watchroom on the floor above, all connected by a spiral stair to a wrought-iron lantern room under a copper dome. A wooden lean-to was attached to the rear of the kitchen, and an outhouse stood nearby. Drinking water was supplied by a cistern, in the cellar or in the grounds alongside, connected to the structure’s rain gutters and downspouts.

The original plans for California’s first lighthouses were virtually identical. Only slight adaptations to the terrain distinguish the light stations on Pt. Loma, left, and Alcatraz.

Courtesy San Diego Historical Society Photograph Collection; drawing courtesy the author





Whether ponderous, like Pt. Loma's 1887 third order lens, or petite, like the fourth order 1897 example at Pt. Hueneme, Fresnel lenses are the heart of every classic lighthouse. The pattern of round "bullseye" panels, rotating around the light source, creates their unique signals.

Courtesy Jan Mattson

6

Gibbons & Kelly dispatched the bark *Oriole* from Baltimore carrying all the workmen and supplies needed to construct the eight structures, except their exterior walls, for which they were directed to use locally available materials.⁴ The *Oriole* sailed into San Francisco Bay on January 29, 1853. There, an advance party was already laying the foundations of the two lights planned for the Bay.

Alcatraz and Fort Point, completed in a matter of months, were sited to form a "range"—a set of aligned lights whose most distant light is sited higher than the nearest one. If a mariner approaching the Golden Gate could visually align the two lights, one above the other, he knew that his vessel was safely within the channel to cross the bar at the Bay's mouth.

The *Oriole* landed work parties at several of the pre-selected sites to enable construction to take place concurrently. The party that came ashore on Southeast Farallon Island, however, was promptly ejected by egg-gatherers who used the island to supply San Francisco bakeries and restaurants with seabird eggs. A U.S. marshal's intervention proved necessary.⁵ Once construction was finally complete, the crew moved south to Point Piños, on Monterey Bay.

Another party of workmen sailed north aboard *Oriole* to Cape Disappointment, which proved aptly named. While crossing the treacherous

Columbia River Bar, *Oriole* capsized, taking with her all the construction material, but fortunately no men. Construction was delayed until replacement material could be procured. When it arrived at last, some of the party remained to build the stations at Cape Disappointment and Humboldt Bay, while the rest sailed south for Point Conception and Point Loma.

When they arrived at San Diego, they made an unpleasant discovery: the site selected was atop a 422-foot-high bluff miles from the nearest landing place, with no access road. The contractor petitioned the government for an appropriation to build a road and several small bridges for the transport of supplies out to Point Loma, and after some haggling, the company was

awarded an additional \$15,000, doubling the station's projected cost.

The eight West Coast lighthouses were built in 1854, but it took two years for all to become operational—a delay caused by the government's re-evaluation of lighthouse technology. In the midst of construction, the Lighthouse Board, a new professional administrative body, ordered Gibbons & Kelly not to manufacture and install the optical systems originally planned.⁶ Instead, American lighthouses would switch from using the old type of optics, in which multiple light sources were reflected from parabolic metal reflectors, to the more expensive but far superior Fresnel lens widely used in Europe. Two Navy lieutenants were dispatched to France to purchase hundreds of lenses.

The lens invented by Augustin Fresnel in 1822 bends light from a single fixed source into a narrow horizontal beam using an array of glass prisms. Fresnel lenses may be fixed (as were most of the first California examples) or revolve mechanically; those which rotate emit a beam which seems to flash when viewed from afar. Rotating lenses were given individual "signatures" through the arrangement of their flash panels—bullseye lenses and curved prisms grouped around the optic's "waist"—and the speed of rotation, enabling mariners to identify them by their distinctive pattern of flashes. (If one was high above the lantern

room looking down, the pattern of light rays passing through these bullseyes would appear like spokes of a turning wheel.) The lenses were built in sizes, or orders, from first order lenses towering nineteen feet tall down to sixth order lenses eighteen inches in height; the largest orders were visible from the longest distances.⁷

The first West Coast light to shine was Alcatraz, on November 4, 1854. The following year, Fresnel lenses began functioning at Point Piños, Point Loma, Farrallon Island and in the second lighthouse built at Fort Point.⁸ Point Conception, Cape Disappointment and Humboldt Bay were finally lighted in 1856. Several of the new stations, however, were dogged by problems resulting from poorly-chosen sites. Point Loma and Point Conception, for example,



stood too high above low-lying fog and eventually had to be replaced by lower structures, while Humboldt Bay suffered from the opposite problem, standing too close to sea level for the beam to be seen very far.⁹

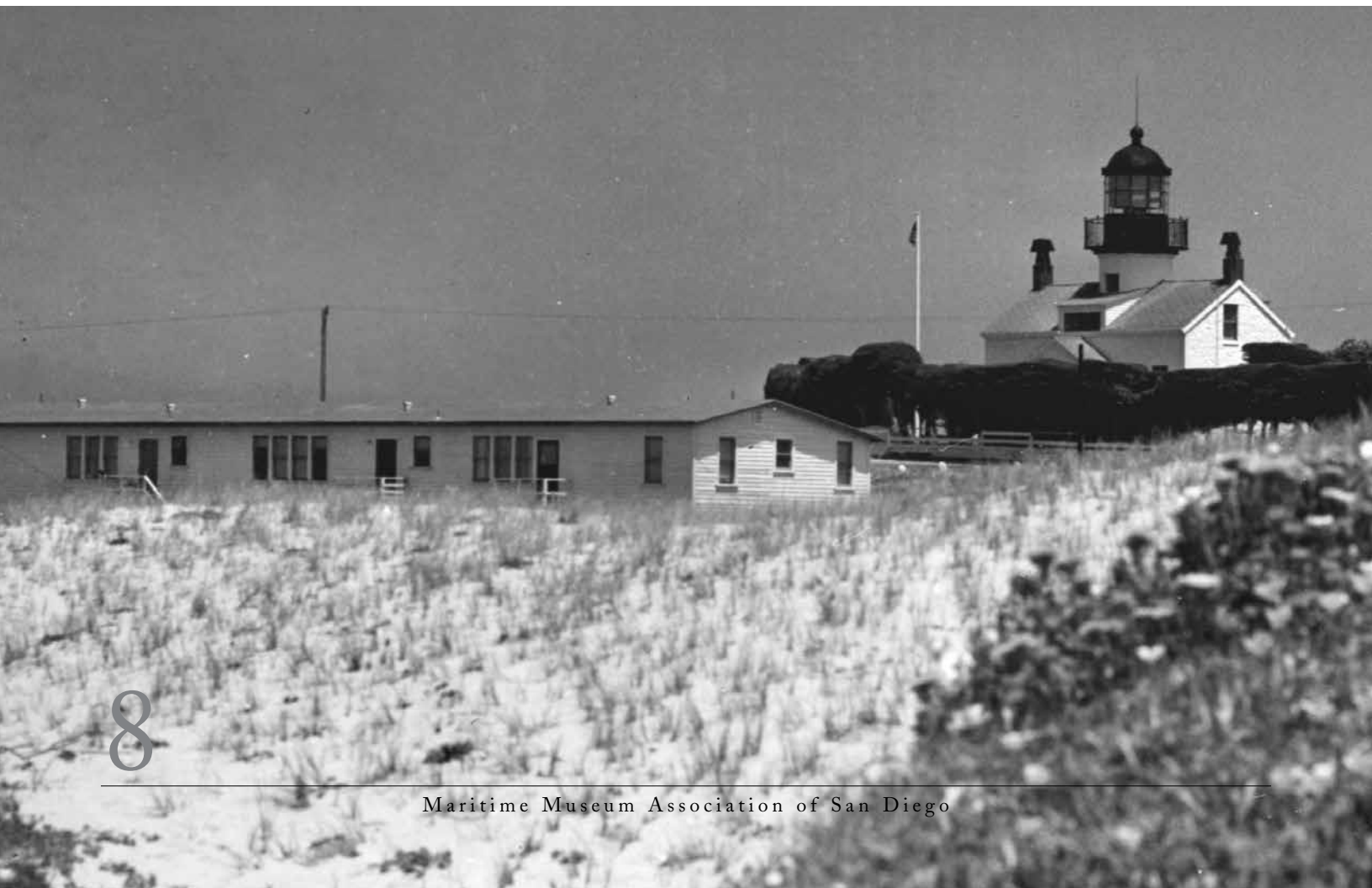
While these eight were under construction, Congress authorized eight more West Coast lights, earmarking three for California (Point Bonita, Crescent City and Santa Barbara) and the rest for present-day Washington and Oregon. Some of this second string were lighted before several of the first group because of the delays caused by the switch to Fresnel lenses. The design of this second set was essentially identical to the first, with a few modified to fit their sites; later West Coast lighthouses would follow different designs. By 1858, all sixteen of the lighthouses built to the original humble pattern were protecting mariners along the Pacific coast.

N O T E S

The world has changed around California's surviving first lighthouses. At Pt. Piños, the functional Coast Guard dwelling in the 1950 photo at left has been replaced today by a golf course.

1950 photo by John Twohy and George Mattson, 2000 photo by Jan Mattson

- 1 The lighthouse service was under the Treasury Department from 1820 to 1903, when it was transferred to the new Department of Commerce. The Fifth Auditor of the Treasury was responsible 1820-1852, when the Lighthouse Board was established. In 1910 the Commerce Department disbanded the Board and set up the Bureau of Lighthouses, which endured until the Coast Guard took over aids to navigation in 1939.
- 2 On the scandal see Wayne Wheeler, "1852: Dark Clouds Over the Pacific Coast," *The Keeper's Log* 12, nos. 2 and 3.
- 3 See, for example, East Point, N.J., built 1849.



- 4 They were directed to build exterior walls of brick, granite or rubble stone, and used all three materials on different sites. The workmen consisted of 14 mechanics, 2 bricklayers, 2 carpenters, a painter, a blacksmith, a plasterer/bricklayer, 2 stonemasons and 5 others.
- 5 The cramped space atop Southeast Farallon's peak forced the tower to be built there and the dwelling at the hill's base. Cape Disappointment followed suit for the same reason.
- 6 The Lighthouse Board was composed of 2 officers apiece from the Army Corps of Engineers and the Navy, and two civilians of "high scientific attainment." A Navy lieutenant served as recording secretary. It administered 12 districts, each under a Navy officer, assisted by an Army Corps of Engineers officer. The West Coast was the Twelfth District, headquartered in San Francisco.
- 7 Rotating first order lenses were originally installed at Farallon and Pt. Conception; Pt. Bonita featured a second order lens; Alcatraz, Pt. Pinos and Pt. Loma had third orders; fourth orders were at Santa Barbara, Humboldt Bay and Crescent City, and Fort Point had a fifth order lens.
- 8 Three months after the Fort Point Lighthouse was completed but before its lens arrived, the Army decided to build a fort there instead; it was razed before it could be lighted and a small wooden tower was built on the seawall. Erosion prompted its replacement by the present skeleton tower atop the fort's parapet.
- 9 In 1888 Pt. Conception was replaced by a lower lighthouse, as was Pt. Loma in 1891; the Humboldt Bay station was abandoned in 1891 and a new light built on Table Bluff on the opposite side of the Bay's entrance. Pt. Bonita was first to be moved lower, in 1877.



Take a few minutes to compare these pairs of photos, taken fifty years apart.

Lighthouses are reassuring: they symbolize security and stability, and put the best face on humanity's quest to tame nature. These pairs of photos are, in their own way, reassuring too. In the fifty years separating left- and right-hand photos, little seems changed. But the sameness is illusory. For example, lighthouse enthusiasts know that in 1950, when the left-hand photos were taken, they were manned by keepers and their families, a now-vanished way of life. At that time, the government regarded these structures as technologically obsolete, troublesome liabilities; now, the survivors are prized local assets, often being restored by volunteer organizations. In the wider world, of course, much more has changed. In 1950, when George Mattson and John Twohy drove the coast in a Studebaker and snapped their photos, America was waging the Cold War in its hottest form in Korea, and Japan was a recently-defeated enemy. Fifty years later, George's son, Jan Mattson, drove a Japanese-built truck on his way to re-photograph the same sites; California today is inseparably part of the Pacific Rim economy.

—the editor

Aaron Mattson 2000

Standing Tall Fifty Years Later

Some California Lighthouses Revisited

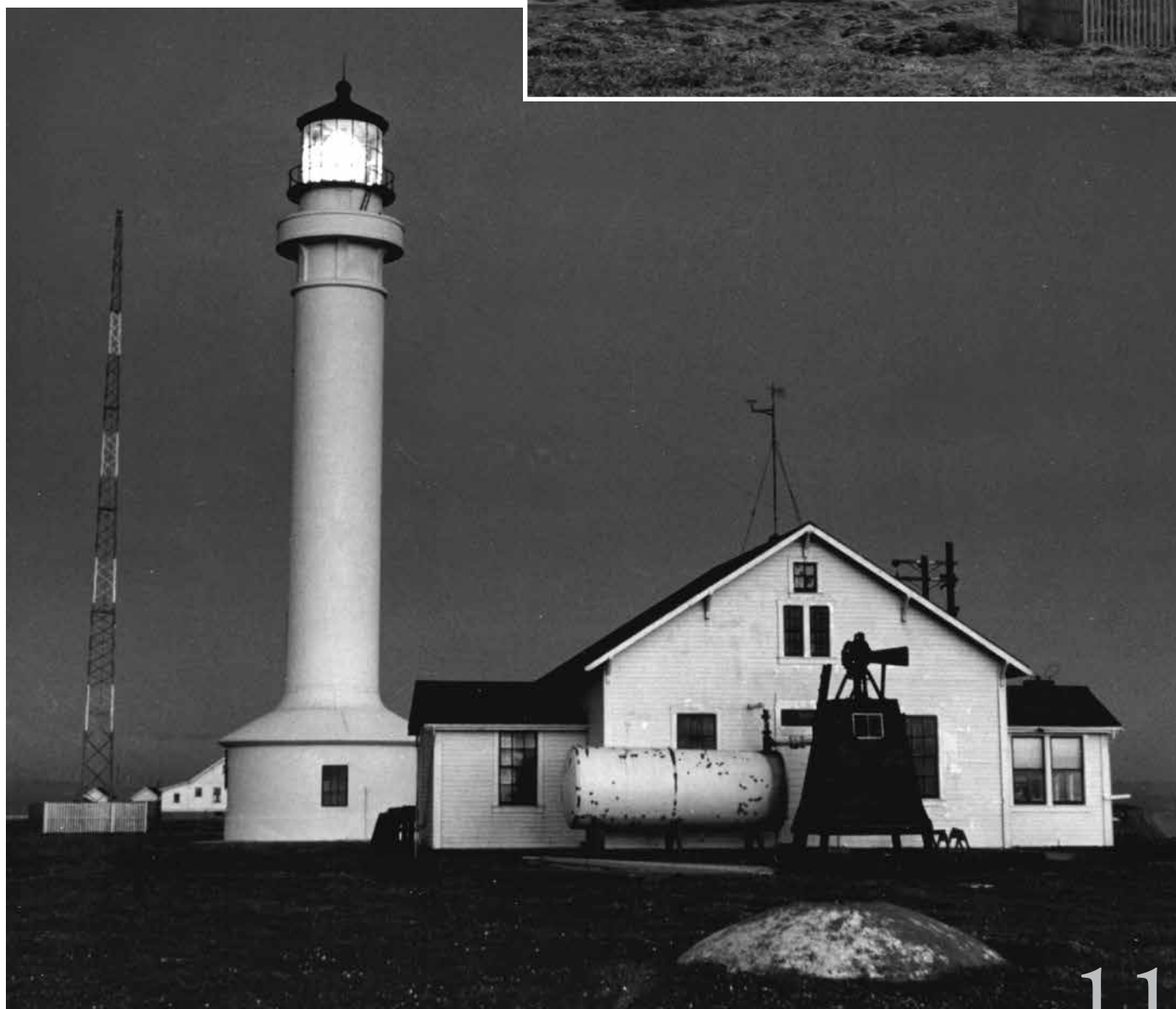
A Re-photography Project by Jan Mattson



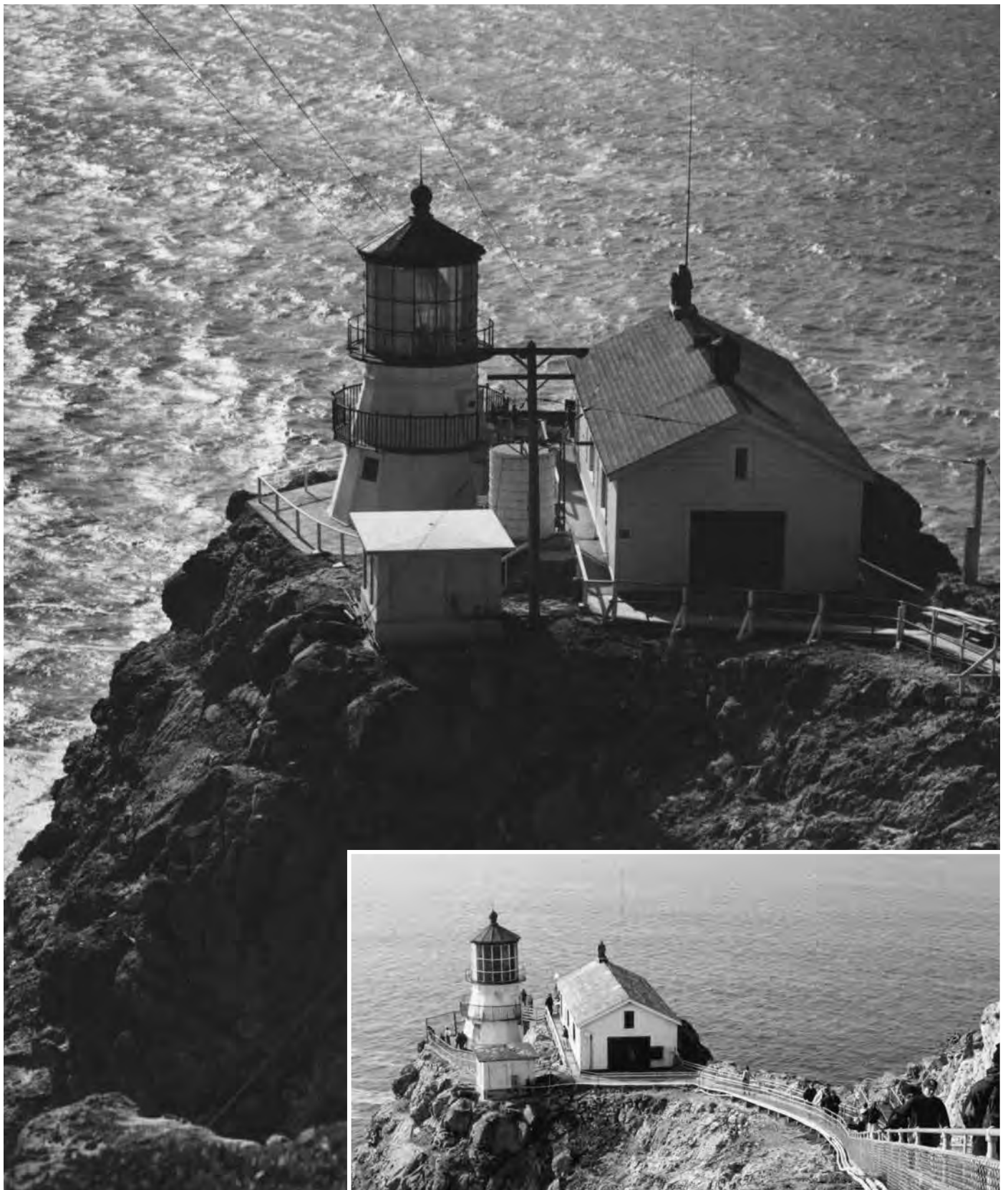
John Twohy/George Mattson 1950

Photographers **John Twohy** and **George Mattson** were close friends from the mid-1940s until George's death in 1991. Between 1949 and 1951 they visited most of California's lighthouses. In addition to reshooting many of them for this issue, George's son **Jan Mattson** is co-publishing the original photos with John as *California Light Stations and Other Aids to Navigation* c. 1950. For information write Goat Rock Publications, P.O. Box 21, Jenner, CA 95450

These two Northern California lighthouses show few changes, but appearances are deceptive. At left, 1909 Pt. Cabrillo was an aging navigational aid in 1950; today it's being restored as a local treasure. 1908 Pt. Arena today welcomes overnight guests. Their original lenses, and most of the others on these pages, have been supplanted by automated beacons.



John Twohy/George Mattson 1950



John Twoby/George Mattson 1950

12

Jan Mattson 2000

Jan Mattson 2001

The 1870 Pt. Reyes light station, north of San Francisco, is itself little changed—but instead of being the isolated navigational aid of 1950, in 2000 it drew half a million tourists and whale-watchers down its 300 steps to visit.



John Twoby/George Mattson 1950





At two lighthouses outside the Golden Gate, changes are more obvious. Both the 1906 tower of Mile Rocks, at left, and Southeast Farallon Island's 1855 lantern were decapitated. Today, biologists primarily use the island, under the auspices of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Supplies must still be pushed up the tracks from the landing, as in 1951.



*Left-hand photos:
John Twoby/George Mattson 1951*



*Right-hand photos:
Bart McDermott 2001*

Jan Mattson 2000

These two places encourage us to ignore today's changing world—

old photos are difficult to tell from new. At Pt. Sur, left, the purely functional buildings of 1950 are now primarily ornamental. Note that the WWII-era structure, below, has been replaced by the base of a recreated *Victorian*-era water tower. Likewise, the comfortable 1890 San Luis Obispo lighthouse is being restored. They are becoming commodities, valued less as navigational signals than for what they signify to us.



John Twoby/George Mattson 1950



John Twoby/George Mattson 1950



Jan Mattson 2000



John Twoby/George Mattson 1950



Jan Mattson 2001



John Twoby/George Mattson 1950

At Pt. Conception, left, time's passage is betrayed by a vanished fog signal building. Less obviously, in the 1950 photo the keeper has drawn protective shades around the lantern; fifty years later, Coast Guardsman Chuck Stercks, a periodic visitor, walks toward the 1882 lighthouse at an uninhabited, automated, station. All trace of Pt. Arguello, right, has been wiped away, and the space shuttle facility now looms behind the site.



Jan Mattson 2000



John Twoby/George Mattson 1950

Point Hueneme's 1940 tower is little changed, but below, the car carrier entering port behind it from Japan or Korea hints at a changing world.



Jan Mattson 2000

John Twoby/George Mattson 1950



The lightkeeper's daily tasks and way of life are gone, but not the need to maintain vital navigational aids. Keeper Jim Dudley stands at Pt. Loma's radio beacon controls in 1950, where half a century later, Chief Braden Brazier maintains a newer generation of electronics.



Jan Mattson 2000

Pigeon Point: A Lighthouse and Its People

JoAnn Semones

During Prohibition, this view from south of the tower was a familiar one to rumrunners on moonlit nights, landing contraband while the keeper's daughter watched from the quarters.

1950 Photo by John Twoby and George Mattson, courtesy Jan Mattson

Beneath the 115-foot tower of Pigeon Point lighthouse, perched on a cliff fifty miles south of San Francisco, generations of lighthouse keepers, families, and other residents of the hamlet of Pigeon Point Landing passed their lives. Their accounts of living in the lighthouse's shadow provide us with a glimpse into a sometimes bucolic, sometimes hazardous, and now vanished coastal life. Today, Pigeon Point Landing is no more, and only the lighthouse itself and these recollections, some published here for the first time, remain.

Located on a coast where, in the words of one early Californian, "black reefs of rocks rear their ugly fangs, like wild beasts watching for their prey," the promontory was known as Whale Point until 1853.¹ In that year, on its maiden voyage from Boston to San Francisco, the clipper *Carrier Pigeon* ran aground in a blanket of fog. All hands were saved, but the ship and cargo were a total loss. Nearby settlers found the incident unforgettable, and when the next shipload of locally-grown potatoes reached San Francisco, someone reported that it was arriving from Carrier Pigeon Point—soon shortened to Pigeon Point.

Public outcry grew over the need for a lighthouse. Three more wrecks, however, and considerable loss of life occurred before federal money was forthcoming. As the editor of the *San Mateo County Times-Gazette* argued in 1868,

The recent terrible wreck of the ship, *Hellespont*, at Pigeon Point in this county which resulted in the loss of many of its crew, constitutes another appeal to the government at Washington for the establishment of a lighthouse at Pigeon Point. Several vessels have been wrecked in that vicinity within the past few years. Thousands upon thousands of dollars are monthly expended from the national treasury for matters of much less benefit to the country than would be the construction of a lighthouse at this point.²

In 1868, Congress appropriated \$90,000 for the purpose, and a site was purchased two years later.

Because Pigeon Point is a low-lying promontory, a tall, tapering tower was built similar to some East Coast lighthouses—a resemblance resulting from the government's tendency to re-use the same plans.³ The tower employs structurally-connected inner and outer walls with an airspace between that insulates interior ironwork against corrosion. Its strength was amply demonstrated when it emerged undamaged from major earthquakes in 1906 and 1989.

The focal plane of the huge first order Fresnel lens lies 148 feet above the high-water mark. Its twenty-four flash panels, 1,008 individual glass prisms, and brass frame weigh 8,000 pounds, and arrived on the coast in seventy crates.⁴ The lamp, lighted on November 15, 1872, was originally a series of concentric wicks fueled by lard oil, which the prisms focused into a beam with

JoAnn Semones lives in Half Moon Bay, California, near Pigeon Point, where she is a docent. She also participates in a beach watch program monitoring endangered Snowy Plovers. JoAnn holds a Ph.D. in public administration and was a manager with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for many years.

an intensity of between 60,000 and 80,000 candlepower.⁵ By contrast, when the lighthouse switched to a 1,000 watt bulb in the 1920s, its power grew almost tenfold, to 680,000 candlepower, visible for more than twenty miles at sea.

The People of the Point

In the late 1800s, Pigeon Point was home to a small shipping center, trading village, and whaling station which preceded the lighthouse by several years. The cove south of the light station sheltered twelve cottages and two warehouses, established by shore whalers whose ancestors came from the Azores. Some of the laborers who built the tower from 500,000 locally-made bricks in 1872 shared this Portuguese ancestry, and were likely also seasonally involved in whaling.⁶ The community of Pigeon Point Landing featured a store, school, post office, and smithy. Under the lee of the Point was an anchorage where ships could be warped into a space not much bigger than a drydock. A few miles north, the fertile valley of Pescadero ("fishing

The keeper's quarters, shared by three families, stands at right in this photo from about 1952.

Courtesy of the Mygrants family



place” in Spanish) yielded trout and supported prosperous farms, orchards, dairies, and the village of the same name, founded in 1853. The region exported whale oil, tallow, potatoes, butter, cheese, grain, lumber, and hides by sea, primarily to San Francisco, and unreliable roads led it to depend on steamships for such essentials as fuel and mail. The demands of running a major government installation there were considerable. Frank Davis, born in a farmhouse in the shadow of the tower, recalled that “it took four of us men with four horses most of the day to cart the forty tons of coal, kerosene, and other supplies from the beach to the lighthouse.”⁷

Pigeon Point’s head keeper and three assistants shared a giant two-story Victorian dwelling divided into four apartments. The memories which generations of their families have left us are largely pleasant. Sometimes, recalled Jessie Mygrants-Davis, the daughter of a keeper in the 1920s, the families played cards together in the evenings and enjoyed homemade fudge, or went swimming and shared picnics on the beach. The residents all agreed on one disadvantage to the living arrangements, however: the house stood too near the fog signal. “When we’d have to hear that old fog horn, we’d think, oh, what a miserable noise,” remembered Mrs. Mygrants-Davis, “but when we’d think of all those men on all those ships on the briny deep, we could tolerate it.”⁸

At times the keepers’ lives turned dangerous, and called for outright heroism. Gerhard W. Jaehne saved eleven people from the shipwrecked fishing boat *Western Spirit* in 1932, and was honored with the Treasury Department’s Albert Gallatin Award, the highest given to civilians. Jaehne’s youngest son Herman recalled a father who was not the typical picture of a spray-soaked hero:

In his spare time, Daddy loved to paint and play the flute. We had a small vegetable garden and flowers of every kind. We took care of chickens and collected eggs and picked blackberries, artichokes, peas and brussel sprouts from nearby farms. We’d catch all the fish we wanted—ling cod, capazoni, snapper—and at low tide we’d load up with abalone. There were no game wardens in those days.”⁹

Or no wardens, at least, who ventured as far as Pigeon Point.

Two decades later, children growing up on the Point had similar experiences. According to JoLynn Werner, step-daughter of David L. Nimmo, Head Keeper in the late 1950s, “It was lonely at first but the ocean and bluffs became our playground. I’d run barefoot along the cliffs, and we built a raft with wood and rubber tires that we’d sail as far as we could beyond the waves.”¹⁰ “Some didn’t like it here and asked for a transfer,” said Coast Guard Seaman First Class Mel Braunagel while stationed there in 1958, “but it suits me fine. We’re on duty six hours and off eighteen. We’ve got our own private fishing area, and good living quarters. If you like it here and can do the job, they let you stay as long as you want.”¹¹

Naturally, life was not always idyllic, and there were occasional personality clashes. In 1900, Head Keeper John McKenna and First Assistant Louis Engilbrekt complained of each other to the District Inspector in San Francisco. McKenna accused Engilbrekt of “using violent language on the station.” Engilbrekt denied the accusation and cited instances when McKenna “could not stand his watch as he had come home drunk during the night,” or “left the tower intoxicated. Whiskey bottles were often found strewn about the yard or in the tower.”¹² Engilbrekt left the service late that year, and McKenna

departed the hard way: two years later, after his transfer to another light station, he was found on the rocky shore after falling over the cliff during the night.

Crime, too, intruded into this rural area, particularly during Prohibition. The secluded coves and beaches, with their proximity to San Francisco, proved ideal for rumrunners. One night, when Assistant Keeper Jesse Mygrants was on watch, a smuggler accosted him and demanded a ride. Mygrants protested that he could not leave during his watch, but, faced with a revolver, he drove the man eight miles down the coast in the family's Model T—an incident he did not reveal to his family until many years later. "They were quite ruthless men," his daughter Jessie recalled; "they were audacious enough to always come in on moonlit nights and unload their ships on the south side of the tower. We could see them clearly, so we'd watch for them. Once, one of the dories hit the rocks and the cargo was lost. There were lots of divers in the area after that."¹³

Rocks "like wild beasts watching for their prey"

Despite keepers' best efforts, their lighthouse did not entirely stop vessels from meeting disaster on this coast, particularly in the thick fogs common there. In 1896 the *Columbia*, a steamer making its first run from Panama to San Francisco, ran aground just south of the tower. Head Keeper James Marner was on watch when he heard the ship strike, and his recollection of this extraordinary event also offers a glimpse of the ordinary events expected in their spit-and-polish service:

I thought it was the tender *Madrono* that had come up in the fog and dropped her anchor. I hollered to the boys. They ran to put on their good clothes to receive the inspector, but we found our mistake. I could make out the *Columbia*. She was lifted by the roll of the sea and dropped again, crunching and grinding its nose into the rocks. She breathed out her life in great struggles with the waves. She was right up almost on dry land, and my fog horn blowing twice a minute all night. This is one of the queerest accidents I ever knew of, and I've been thirty-five years at sea.¹⁴

Apparently the captain had mistaken the fog signal as the signal from another vessel. He chose to turn his ship eastward to avoid a collision—and collided with the rocks instead. Mercifully, no hands were lost.

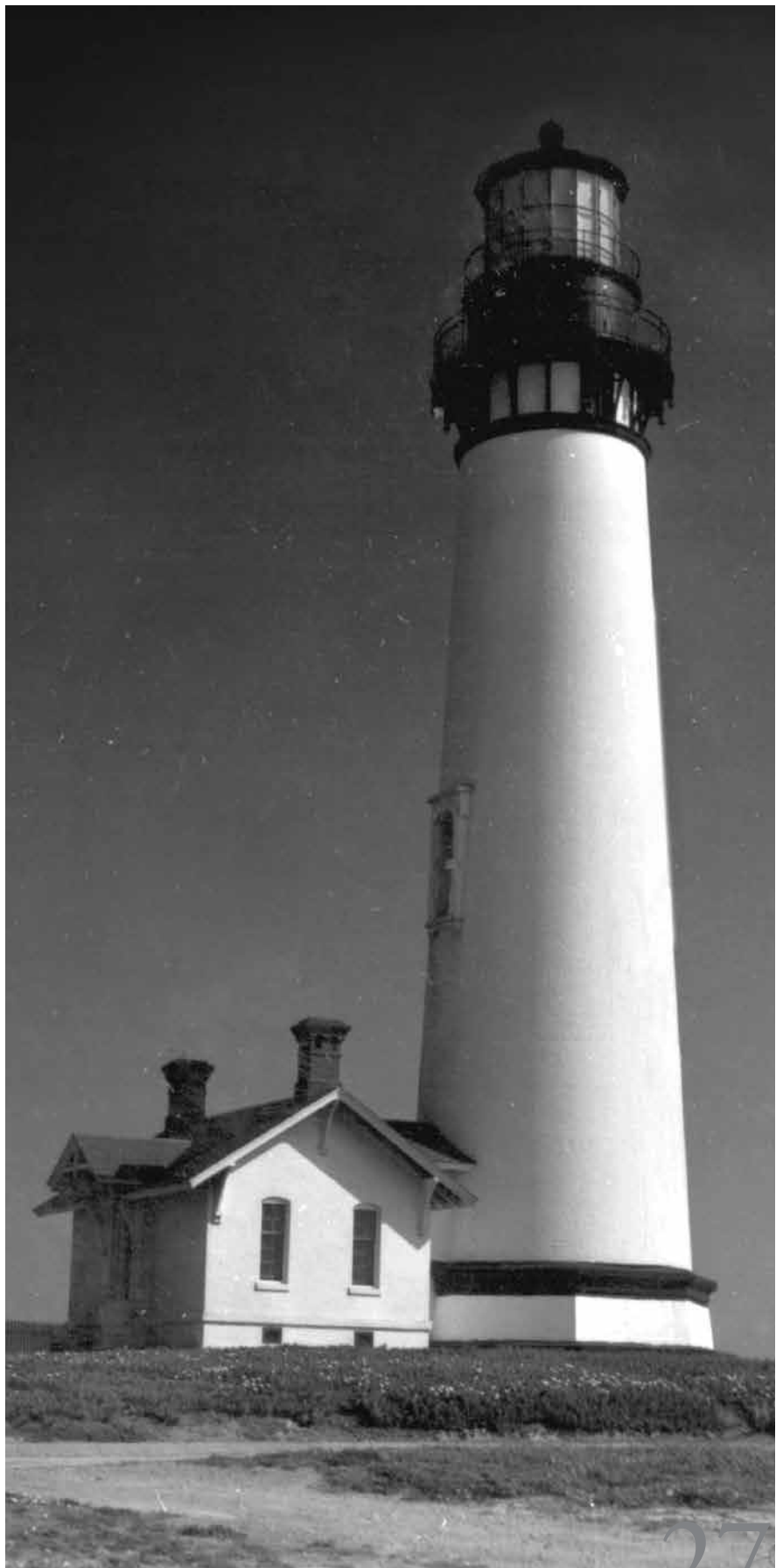
The next shipwreck also incurred no loss of life. In 1913, Head Keeper John E. Lind watched the steam schooner *Point Arena*, calling at Pigeon Point Landing to pick up a load of tanbark, foul a mooring line in her propeller in rough seas and drift helplessly onto the rocks. The wreck, broken in half, was later burned as a potential hazard to navigation. "Besides," Pigeon Point native Frank Davis pointed out, "it just would not have looked good to have a wrecked ship in front of a lighthouse."¹⁵

The region's last and worst maritime disaster occurred after midnight on August 30, 1929, when the tanker *S.C.T. Dodd* rammed the passenger steamer *San Juan* in fog-obscured waters. "We didn't have a chance," according to the *San Juan*'s third officer.¹⁶ Eighty-seven people lost their lives, including a passenger who had just mailed a letter saying that "I'd really rather take the train but the boat is cheaper. The children need shoes."¹⁷ Despite these disasters, many more wrecks would have occurred had there been no lighthouse at Pigeon Point.

Life at the Point Since WWII

Although this portion of the coast had been settled early in the American period, physical isolation slowed its social and economic development. The Second World War brought bustling military activity to the light station, but not until the 1950s did the area's population begin to grow; in the 1950s and 1960s, the population of the region doubled, and then doubled again.

The keepers' house survived a fire in 1933, but the Coast Guard demolished it in 1960 to make way for four bungalows. The most significant changes came in the 1970s in the form of the Coast Guard's Lighthouse Automation Program (LAMP). James A. Hanks was head keeper in 1972 when Pigeon Point was automated with a twenty-four inch aero-beacon, which revolves today on the catwalk outside the lantern room. "We were upset when we heard the lighthouse would be automated," his wife Anne recalls. "Economically that's what they're supposed to do, but it just didn't seem right—tradition, I guess." Automation ended much of the drudgery of maintenance, but eliminated the individuality that characterized keepers' lives, to which the Hanks' were no exception: "Jim would go down to the office with his ducks, Click and Clack, following him," she said, "They loved him and would sit outside the door of the lighthouse waiting for him." Apparently, these unorthodox pets helped guard the station: "Once, they bit the group commander who came to conduct an inspection."¹⁸ In 1974 all personnel were withdrawn except one family which remained as caretakers. On April 15, 1974, Jerry Jolley was the last keeper to secure the station. "It was very sad," his wife Joyce said, "because we didn't know what would happen to the



1950 photo by John Twoby and George Mattson; courtesy Jan Mattson



The isolated Coast Guard station of 1950, left, is today a hostel whose cottages welcome guests.

1950 photo by John Twoby and George Mattson, 2000 photo by Jan Mattson

lighthouse after we left.”¹⁹

The Jolleys, however, were not the last family stationed there. In 1977 Coast Guard Seaman Albert S. Tucker and his wife moved in to protect the station from vandals; fittingly, they upheld the lighthouse service tradition of individualistic behavior. To further deter uninvited sightseers, the Tuckers bought a Doberman, but when that proved ineffectual, they bought Lester, a pig who grew to eight hundred pounds. “With his good-sized tusks, nobody came in with him here,” said Tucker.²⁰

In recent years, as the swift pace of urban sprawl was recognized as destroying irreplaceable resources, a movement has arisen to preserve the coast. Pigeon Point was declared a State Historic Landmark in 1980 and the cottages became a hostel, open to the public for inexpensive overnight stays. Public tours have been ongoing since 1984. Today, the modern aero-beacon continues to serve as a navigation aid. Once a year, on the tower’s anniversary, the bulb within the giant Fresnel lens is switched on once again, lighting the way for seafarers and sending a signal that Pigeon Point and its people are not forgotten.

N O T E S

- 1 Albert S. Evans, *Á La California: Sketches of Life in the Golden State* (San Francisco: G.W. Bancroft, 1889), 49.
- 2 *San Mateo County Times-Gazette*, 28 November 1868. Previously wrecked at the Point were *Sir John Franklin* (1865) and *Coya* (1866).
- 3 Pigeon Point strongly resembles Bodie Island and Currituck Beach lighthouses in North Carolina, Charleston lighthouse in South Carolina, and Yaquina Head in Oregon.
- 4 In typical lighthouse practice, this lens saw previous service elsewhere. It may have shone



from the second, 1863, Cape Hatteras Lighthouse, being removed when the new tower was built there in 1870.

- 5 Later, a kerosene lamp was substituted, and then a lamp which used vaporized oil.
- 6 Local resident Diane Bettencourt reported that her great grandfather, Manuel Bernardo “boasted that he painted the first coat of white paint on the lighthouse.” Oral history log, 11 August 2000, Pigeon Point Lighthouse.
- 7 Frank Perry, *History of Pigeon Point Lighthouse* (Santa Cruz: Otter B. Books, 1995), 66.
- 8 Jessie Mygrants, videotaped interview, 26 April 1987, courtesy of Bud and Gert Woodhams.
- 9 Herman Jaehne and Alice Jaehne Tierney, interview by Katie Sanborn, Pigeon Point Lighthouse Oral History Project, 3 March 2000.
- 10 JoLynn Werner, interview with the author, 15 March 2001, author’s collection.
- 11 Quoted in Frank Perry and Wayne Wheeler, “Legacy of the Carrier Pigeon,” *The Keeper’s Log* XV no. 3 (Spring 1999): 14.
- 12 Ibid., 15.
- 13 Mygrants, interview.
- 14 June Morrall, *The Coburn Mystery* (El Granada, California: Moonbeam Press, 1992), 89.
- 15 Perry, *History*, 68.
- 16 *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, 31 August 1929, p. 1.
- 17 The extract from her mother’s letter was provided by Lorraine Spinelli in an interview with the author, 15 March 2001.
- 18 Anne Hanks, interview by Katie Sanborn, Pigeon Point Lighthouse Oral History Project, 6 November 1999.
- 19 Joyce Jolley, interview with the author, 15 March 2001.
- 20 Sharlene and Ted Nelson, *Umbrella Guide to California Lighthouses* (Washington, D.C.: Umbrella Books, 1993), 79.

The “Tidal Wave” That Hit L.A.

A Keeper’s Story

Jim Thompson

Jim Thompson recalls, “I didn’t want to be assigned to the lighthouse. Rumors about duty there made it out to be the ‘Devil’s Island’ of the District. Days were long and the work hard. The duty schedule was as bad as it can get, with only one day off a week...Life on the light was said to be the worst duty you could draw.” He ultimately enjoyed his years there, from 1959-1962, and now lives in Laguna Niguel, California.

When the call came alerting us to a possible tsunami, or “tidal wave,” I was standing the midnight watch. It was early in the morning on Monday, the twenty-third of May, 1960. We five Coast Guardsmen at Los Angeles Harbor Lighthouse were under orders, if a tsunami warning was issued, to monitor our tide gauge for any sudden changes. If we detected the arrival of a tsunami we were to send a “tsunami warning message,” similar to a telegram, to the Pacific Tsunami Warning System (PTWS) in Hawaii by phone. I walked from the lighthouse across the fifty-foot bridge to the dock, and took my station at the tide gauge located in a shack there.

The lighthouse, known to the locals as “Angel’s Gate” but referred to in the Coast Guard as “Losa Light” (derived from Los Angeles), loomed up in the darkness behind me to my right. Since 1913 it had stood at the end of the breakwater which juts out a little over two miles from San Pedro, protecting the largely man-made harbor. We Coast Guardsmen had manned the lighthouse since 1939.

An hour or more passed without any change in the tide where I stood. I had been warned that a tsunami, often incorrectly referred to as a “tidal wave,” might result from the earthquake that had occurred fourteen hours earlier off the Chilean coast. As I waited, I began to speculate whether we had the right exposure to be struck by a tsunami from Chile, and whether its energy would

The 1913 lighthouse stands atop the two mile long breakwater, whose completion in 1910 finally determined that San Pedro, not Santa Monica, would be the location for the port of Los Angeles. This photo was taken between 1915 and 1929.

Courtesy San Pedro Bay Historical Society



In the half century between these two photos, evidence of the station's WWII role has vanished, including the observation catwalk and the adjacent structure which housed the mechanism for the harbor's anti-submarine net. Like all California's lighthouses, it was automated in the 1970s.

1950 photo by John Twoby and George Mattson, 2001 photo by Jan Mattson

be dissipated by the time it reached us. That morning, the low tide of -0.3 feet was due to occur at 3:43, with the day's first high tide of 3.9 feet expected at 9:18 AM, followed by a low tide of 1.3 at 2:36 in the afternoon. The day's highest tide was to be 5.7 feet at 8:53 PM Monday night, a total tide range of six feet. At about four in the morning, the low had passed and tide gauge was slowly rising as expected, when suddenly the gauge started down. Within minutes it had fallen a startling six inches—the "slack" just before a tsunami, as the sea recedes and the wave piles up offshore. This is when one is supposed to run to high ground, according to the experts. I thought at that point that I was either going to observe a rare natural phenomenon or be the first casualty of the 1960 L.A. tsunami.

It only took fifteen minutes for the tide level to reach its lowest point as the water receded—a full foot below the lowest tide ever recorded at the light, and approximately two feet below mean low tide. Then it began to rise. As I watched, I could immediately tell that the maximum height, or "runup," at L. A. Harbor was going to be less than four feet, not big enough to flood low-lying areas. I ran from the dock up the lighthouse stairs to the office phone and called in my report, as the water began to really pour into the harbor. As I was finishing, I heard repeated blasts from a ship's horn. Looking out the window I saw a ship *sideways* in the harbor entrance, moving rapidly in my direction.

Ships about to enter Los Angeles, as with most harbors, are met first by a harbor pilot who is an expert on conditions in his home port, especially the effects of tides and currents. The tsunami, however, had outmatched this pilot's expertise, for he had clearly given the command to turn the ship and abort entering the harbor but could not turn the ship in time in the fierce current. If it wasn't going to be a "tidal wave" that got me, I recall thinking, was it going to be this ship?

Just then the tsunami crested and the water began to flow back out of the harbor. I watched the ship, still moving sideways, pushed seaward and out of



harm's way. I quickly called the Marine Exchange, which dispatched pilots, and reached confused personnel who were slow to believe that a "tidal wave" could ever hit Los Angeles. A Marine Exchange representative later described the surging waters of the main channel as looking like a "kettle of water boiling on a stove."

As dawn broke, looking outside the breakwater I could see more than a dozen ships spread out about three miles from the entrance, prevented by the current from coming inside to anchor. The ships anchored inside the breakwater, however, were learning the strength of a tsunami as several dragged anchor.

Although it was the start of my scheduled two days off, instead of taking the work boat in I sent the seaman to pick up my replacement and the Officer-In-Charge. Just after they returned, at about nine in the morning, the tide gauge recorded the maximum recession and runup. The difference between the tsunami's trough and crest was ten feet—which sounds unimpressive, except that the change occurred in just over twenty minutes, driving the current through the harbor entrance at over twenty-five knots. From the lighthouse, the entrance looked like a raging river.

When the three men returned to the dock in the work boat, they hoisted it into its chocks on the dock as usual and climbed the stairs to the galley on the lighthouse's third level, not noticing that I had gone up to the office on the floor above to phone in a final warning. As they watched from the galley, and I from the office, the current ripped the dock—all fifty feet and fifty pilings of it, along with the work boat and the bridge—away from the breakwater and swept it out the entrance. At first, the panicked men thought I was still in the shack on the dock, until they picked up the phone to call for a rescue and heard me calling in my report.

By eleven that morning it was over. The remains of the dock, along with the buoy normally located just outside the harbor entrance, could be seen float-



The white-painted dock and bridge, on which the author nearly rode out to sea, stand at right.

John Twoby/George Mattson, 1950; courtesy Jan Mattson

ing together five miles out to sea, amidst an armada of vessels leery of trying to enter the harbor.

Southern California and I were lucky on that day in 1960. The damage in Los Angeles and Long Beach Harbors was primarily limited to small boats, over eight hundred of which sustained damage and forty of which sank. Considered as groups, small boat owners and anchorage operators, primarily in the East Basin, each lost over a million dollars. Less lucky were residents of the southern Chilean coast, where runups of twenty-five meters killed a thousand people, and another two hundred perished on the island of Chiloe.

Americans were not immune; despite the efforts of many of us to send warning messages, the tsunami plowed into the Hawaiian Islands and killed sixty-one in Hilo, where 537 buildings were destroyed and damage totaled over \$23 million.¹ The earthquake which caused the tsunami—measuring 9.5 on the Richter scale—was the most powerful recorded worldwide in the twentieth century. For Los Angeles, the events of that day, when I narrowly missed a wild rafting ride out to sea on a dock, should provide a warning: the California coast, where disaster preparedness remains focused on inland earthquakes, remains more vulnerable than we realize.

N O T E S

- 1 Dave Gray, "L.A. Harbor Closed by Freak Tidal Wave," *San Pedro News Pilot*, 23 May 1960, p 1. See also *News Pilot* articles on the two succeeding days.
- 2 The officially-recorded "runup" was 0.8 meters; the readings at the light station, as observed by the author, were approximately double that number but could not be confirmed, because of the damage the tide gauge equipment sustained.
- 3 J.G. Keys, *The Tsunami of 22 May 1960 in the Samoa and Cook Islands*, *Bulletin of the Seismological Society of America* 53 no. 6 (1963): 221-227.

Leaning slightly out of plumb, as it has virtually since its construction, Angel's Gate remains a little-known Los Angeles landmark.

Courtesy San Pedro Bay Historical Society



“New” Point Loma Lighthouse

Karen Wagner Scanlon



Like a finger pointing south and out to sea, the peninsula of Point Loma protrudes from the mainland, sheltering the channel that links the Pacific Ocean to San Diego Bay. Atop its scrub-covered summit stands the famous old lighthouse, completed in 1855. Below, near the tip of the Point on a ten-acre sloping site, is “new” Point Loma Lighthouse. This working Coast Guard Light Station has guided mariners for well over a century, but with little of the attention paid to its more photogenic forerunner. The lower lighthouse is a significant feature of the local landscape, and the lives of those who manned it demonstrate that, even when near an urban area, a lighthouse was an isolated world.

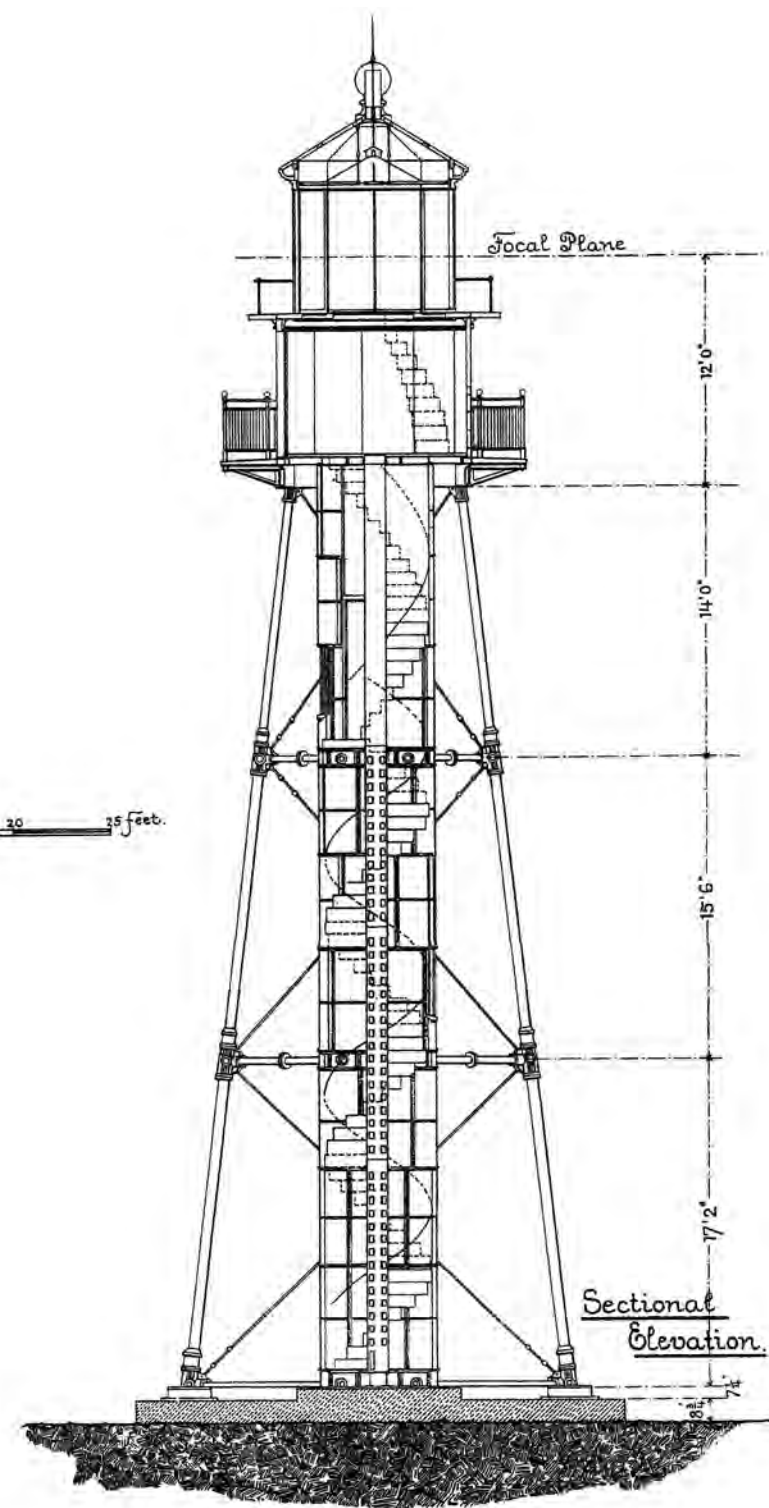
The United States Coast Survey had been forewarned that Point Loma’s summit was too high for a lighthouse due to the likelihood of low clouds and fog obscuring the light. Nevertheless, the lamp in San Diego’s first lighthouse was lighted on November 15, 1855. Only thirty-five years later, this lamp and lens were being packed for shipment to New York, because a new lighthouse had entered service on March 23, 1891.¹

The thirty-seven and one-half tons of iron intended for its tower rolled into San Diego on flatcars on July 5, 1890, and was unloaded at Old Town.² Strong wagons hauled the pieces—cast by the Phoenix Iron Works of Trenton, New Jersey—down rutted pathways that were little better than a trail in places, according to the lighthouse’s first keeper.³ The pieces were on the grounds by July 16, and were assembled the following month atop the waiting concrete foundation at the site, known locally as Pelican Point.⁴ The lighthouse engineers, however, were plagued by troubles in acquiring a proper lens, which delayed its operation for months after the tower was erected.

Pt. Loma’s freestanding skeleton tower is the only example on the West Coast. The Lighthouse Board favored the design elsewhere because it was prefabricated, strong, and its height could be increased simply by adding sections to the bottom.

1950 photo by John Twoby and George Mattson, courtesy Jan Mattson

Karen Wagner Scanlon, of San Diego, is an early childhood educator and freelance writer.



Plans courtesy U.S. Coast Guard; 1890s
photo courtesy San Diego Historical Society
Photograph Collection

Though the light station was located near town, the poor road sometimes made approach by water attractive. The disadvantages of this were discovered on October 18, 1890, by Superintendent of Lighthouse Repairs Frank A. Burke and his assistant. After arriving from San Francisco, they rowed from town to the speck of sand beach by the tower, to take measurements to ensure a correct fit for the Fresnel lens due to arrive. Though according to the *San Diego Union* Mr. Burke rolled up his trousers, removed his socks and shoes, and stowed his coat and vest in a box under the seat in the boat before pushing off again, he received a thorough dousing. The lighthouse watchman, tending the station before the keepers moved in, was forced to rescue his wet superintendent and the swamped boat.⁵

A report made a few days later stated the embarrassing fact that “the lens furnished for the new tower was found to be too large for the space provided for it, therefore it was necessary to procure another.”⁶ Further reports were filed recommending alterations for the illuminating apparatus because of a disparity of the dimensions of lens and lantern room.⁷ Instead of waiting up to three years for a new lens from France, it appears that a more expeditious alternative was chosen—a trade for a lens intended for another lighthouse and apparently available in a storage depot.

Such a substitution would account for an oddity about the third order Fresnel lens finally installed in San Diego: with help from an eleven-year old resident of the light station, the author recently made a crayon rubbing of a small brass plate secured to the iron door of the lens pedestal, and discovered the words ANCLOTE KEYS *Florida* HENRY-LE PAUTE *Engineer* PARIS 1887.⁸

Clearly, San Diego’s present lens was originally intended for use in Florida. The lens actually designed for Point Loma was somewhat delayed—it arrived in San Diego seventy-seven years later. The delay was caused by its manufacturer, Henry-Le Paute, which displayed the lens at the Paris Exhibition in 1889. There, in the shadow of another demonstration of French technology, the new Eiffel Tower, the lens won gold and bronze medals. With this success, permission was given to exhibit it in Chicago at the World’s Colombian Exposition in 1893, where it also won awards, but the delay caused by these exhibitions prompted the Lighthouse Service to locate another lens for Point Loma. Today, the award-winning lens—which served Chicago Harbor until the 1960s—is in the collection of Cabrillo National Monument.⁹

The barrel-shaped optic that graces Point Loma’s tower today arrived from San Francisco aboard the steamer

Corona on February 3, 1891, and was hauled to the light station by an eight-horse wagon. The six-foot-tall lens, “a \$4,000 affair from France,” as a *San Diego Union* reporter termed it, originally contained a kerosene lamp with three concentric, tubular wicks that created a more powerful light source.¹⁰ (The candle-power of this first lamp was doubled in 1912 when it was replaced by an incandescent oil-vapor lamp.¹¹) From the lantern room glowed a distinctive flashing red and white light, the result of panes of ruby-colored glass suspended in front of every other one of the twelve clear lens panels as they rotated around the lamp. In 1912, the red panes were removed because the red flash was a weaker signal than the white.¹²

Life at the Light

As one of the first residents of the lighthouse remembered, “we were only a few miles from San Diego, but we might as well have been across the county. There was no telephone, the road in to La Playa was terrible, and we had only coal stoves and kerosene lamps.”¹³ Even though conditions improved, life at San Diego’s lighthouse was always surprisingly isolated, and the keepers raised their families in a distinct, separate world.

A few days before the new lighthouse was inaugurated, the families of Captain Robert D. Israel and assistant Thomas W. Anderson moved down the hill from the old lighthouse into a pair of new clapboard houses. To reach town, they had to travel seven miles by mule team or buggy, or row across the water at low tide.¹⁴ Mail reached them on foot, with the mail carrier sometimes hurrying to beat high tide on Dutch Flats, where Lindbergh Field stands today.

Captain Israel had spent twenty-one years at the old lighthouse, and lighted the wicks in the new tower on his sixty-eighth birthday. He was, according to complaints made by more than one assistant keeper, a rather disagreeable character. Israel stayed on at the new lighthouse just nine months, fuming at the Lighthouse Board over an old dispute over reimbursement and aggravated by inadequacies in the new station’s water supply.¹⁵ In January, 1892, after a November inspection of the light station revealed that the lens was not clean and the grounds were in disorder, Israel was replaced by George Patrick Brennan.

The catch-water basin and cistern for collecting a share of San Diego’s scarce rainwater was not com-





The 1887 third order Fresnel lens stands unused today atop the tower.

Author's collection

pleted until the end of October, 1891, seven months after the move to the new lighthouse. Accusations of shoddy work, false reports, poor quality cement, lying, and malicious destruction of portions of the cement had flown among the cement mason, Captain Israel, and the lighthouse engineer in San Francisco. Though an investigation concluded that the catchment was satisfactory, Joe Brennan, the son of Israel's replacement, remembered that "The water supply was a problem";

we had what they called the "water-shed" out in back of the buildings and it was all right in wet years, but the years weren't always wet. The "water-shed" was a big patch of cement about the size of a couple of tennis courts, on the side of the hill, with a cistern at its lower corner. It was supposed to catch enough water to supply the two keepers' families, but it was seldom adequate.

During dry years, old Rafe Thompson, who had a little lunch-room in Roseville, used to load water from his well, half a dozen barrels of it at a time, and bring it out to us in a wagon, dumping it into the cistern for us to use; sometimes he'd come as often as twice a week, if it was a long, dry spell.¹⁶

Despite the shortage of water, keepers sought to make their wind-swept surroundings bloom. Today, tall palm trees remain as reminders of their efforts. As a keeper's son raised at the neighboring Ballast Point light

station recalled of Point Loma, "a light station was home to a light keeper and there was no committee to beautify it. Keepers were permitted to make it beautiful in any way they could. Some of them had green thumbs."¹⁷

Every few months the lighthouse tender *Madrono* arrived from San Francisco with kerosene, coal, and other lighthouse supplies. "That was always a big day, when the men came in through the breakers in a big pulling-boat, with the casks and the sacks to be carried up the cliff," recalled Brennan.¹⁸

A system of electric bells, whose power came from hand-turning a crank, was used in the keepers' dwellings and tower to alert each other of watch changes, and also linked the station to Ballast Point, permitting one station to notify the other when a vessel was outside the harbor.¹⁹ It was suggested in



1891 that “the telephone would be a welcome addition on the Point, and that if interested persons would get up a petition, they might induce the government to make this improvement”; telephones connecting the lighthouse with the outside world were installed in the keepers’ quarters and tower by 1911.²⁰

Electric cables were laid across San Diego Bay to Fort Rosecrans in 1909, but not until 1924 did the Superintendent of Lighthouses request from the Commanding Officer at Ft. Rosecrans that the power line be extended to the lighthouse.²¹ The light station was wired for electricity in 1926, though the families continued to burn kerosene lamps in their quarters for another seven years. Finally, in 1933, the electrical current was sent up the tower to a 500-watt globe, increasing the strength of the beam to 200,000 candlepower.

In 1913, a compressed-air fog siren was installed and a third keeper moved into a dwelling added to the light station the previous year.²² An engine house was built near the foot of the tower to shelter the new equipment. The fog siren was replaced in September, 1933, and the first guttural call of the new diaphone sounded—a two-tone warning of dangerous reefs and shoals. A keeper’s son who grew up at the neighboring light station recalled that “the diaphone at Point Loma hiccuped. Every fourth or so *bee-ooooop* came out *bee-op*. It was meant to be that way. It had a beautiful sound that we could hear at Ballast Point, if the wind was right.”²³ A radio beacon apparatus was installed inside the engine house at the end of 1936.²⁴

The “water shed” lies on the hillside behind well-tended gardens and the Second Assistant Keeper’s house in this snapshot taken by a keeper from the tower, about 1934.

Courtesy Lexie Johnson



The most essential rituals of lighthouse life, in San Diego as at every light station, were carried out in the tower. Joe Brennan recalled that he

would climb up the winding stairway and get ready for the night. The weight that provided the power to turn the big revolving red-and-white lens was wound up to the top of the tower, the reservoir was filled, the linen cover taken off of the lens, and the yellow window-blinds raised, around the lantern. Then the three wicks were lighted and adjusted, and the lens was started turning on its brass rollers. You checked the wicks to see that the flame wasn't too high or too low, and watched the machinery to be sure that the lens revolved at just the proper speed. At midnight, the weight would have fallen to the bottom of the tower, and you'd take the big crank and wind it up again—175 turns of the crank did the trick.²⁵

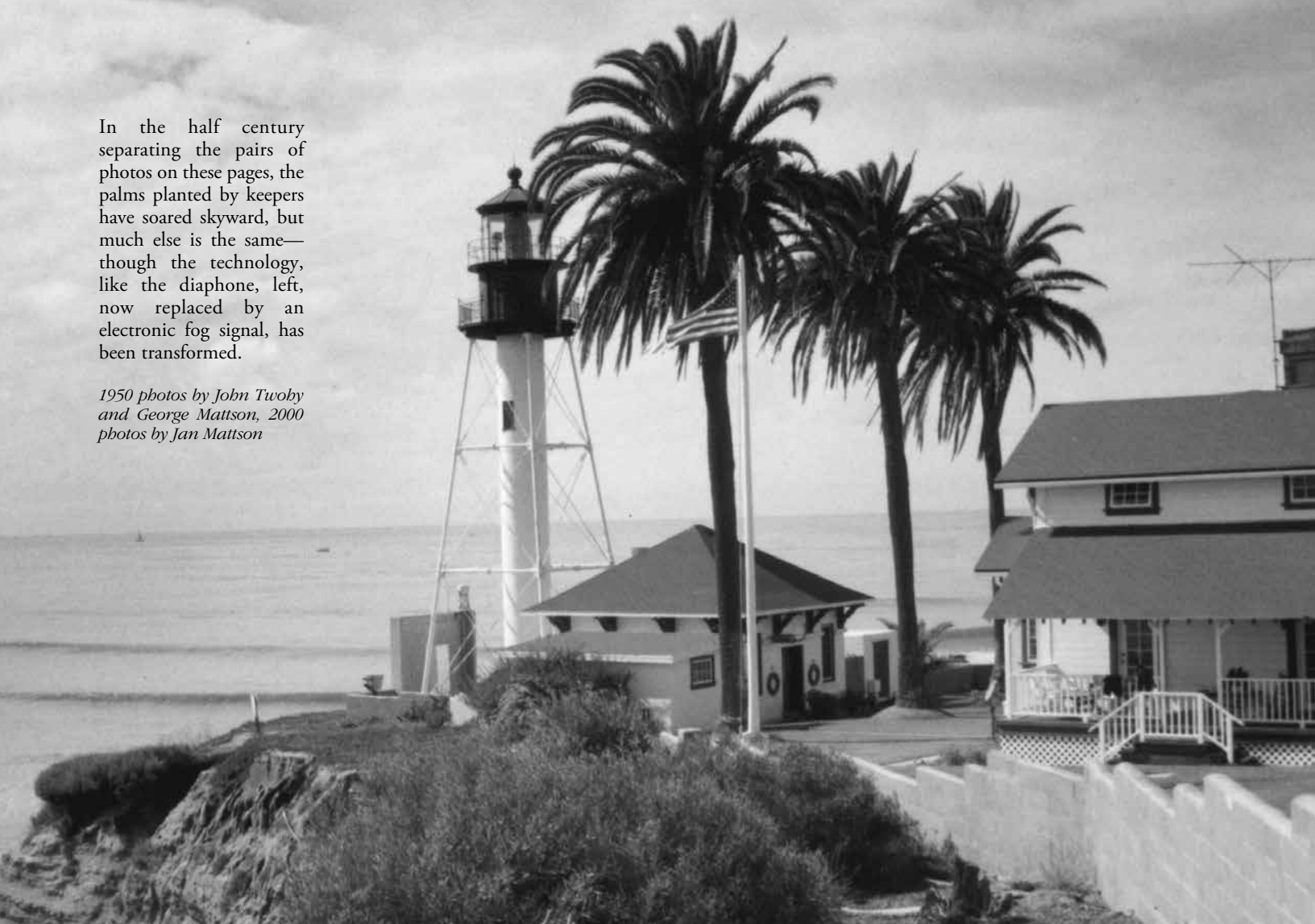
From sunset to sunrise, the keepers divided the night into four- to six-hour watches. The light was never left untended, and the clockwork that rotated the lens had to be wound once each watch. Every morning, the light was extinguished, the lantern room tidied up, and the shades were drawn to protect the lens from sunlight.

Growing up at the Lighthouse

The experience of growing up at the lighthouse was largely a pleasant one,

In the half century separating the pairs of photos on these pages, the palms planted by keepers have soared skyward, but much else is the same—though the technology, like the diaphone, left, now replaced by an electronic fog signal, has been transformed.

1950 photos by John Twoby and George Mattson, 2000 photos by Jan Mattson



according to those who have shared their memories. “For all its isolation, we didn’t mind it, out there,” wrote Joe Brennan. “I suppose it was a monotonous life, but if it was, we didn’t even notice the fact.” Childhood routines for the Brennans were little different from those of children elsewhere at the turn of the twentieth century: “I had four brothers, and three sisters, and the only school was at Roseville. So, on school days, we’d hitch up “Ping”—our sway-backed horse—to the spring-wagon, and drive in over the hill.” Few sons, however, had the safety of shiploads of passengers and goods depend on them, as Joe did when he tended the light during his father’s final illness.²⁶

Their amusements were probably typical of other families at this light station: they hunted quail, paddled in the tidepool “swimming hole” east of the lighthouse, and gathered abalones, selling the shells to tourists. “Every child should have the opportunity to live at a lighthouse,” says Lexie Johnson, who grew up there during World War II, though she recalled that for a teenager it was sometimes lonely—the glow of city lights doubtlessly seemed close, yet inaccessible. Childhood pranks, however, were like those everywhere: “The keeper that my dad replaced died in our house,” recalls Lexie. “He was always referred to as ‘Old Man Small.’ Our stairs always creaked—and I had all my girl friends that ‘slept over’ convinced that it was ‘Old Man Small’ climbing the stairs.”²⁷

Since 1973, when the light was fully automated and the last keeper—Coast Guardsman Ned J. Sacco—moved on, fortunate Coast Guard families have





occupied the dwellings.

Time has left its mark on Point Loma's working lighthouse. In November, 1997, over a century of tradition ground to a stop. Light station resident Commander Frederick Kenney was fishing—a classic recreational activity for generations of lightkeepers—with his friend David Tam. According to Tam, "it felt funny not to have the sense of the light rotating and casting its light about. We climbed the stairs and noticed that the motor was still running but the lens wasn't moving."²⁸ The Coast Guard's Aids to Navigation Team was able to restart its rotation, but determined that the effects of corrosion in and around the lantern room required the lens to be stopped indefinitely for its protection.²⁹ Today, a canvas cover shrouds it. The light station and its modern optic—as unassuming-looking as an outdoor garage light—are maintained by the Coast Guard Operations Center on San Diego's Embarcadero, nine miles away.³⁰

Vessels have gone aground in spite of the lighthouse, but uncounted numbers have been saved from hidden shoals and jutting cliffs. Though not employed as keepers, family members always helped. One of the last keepers, James Williams, told a reporter that "my wife takes it upon herself to keep an eye out for fog, sees that the light doesn't burn out, and keeps a watch for boats that might go on the rocks."³¹ And like the families of keepers before them, resident families today find themselves unofficial custodians of the light. According to light station resident Kathi Strangfeld, "boaters get into trouble out here, and we hear them yelling. We know that the privilege of living at a lighthouse also requires us to be alert to these things."³²

*1950 photo by John Twobly
and George Mattson,
courtesy Jan Mattson*



NOTES

- 1 *San Diego Union*, 2 April 1891; *1892 Light List* (Washington, D.C.: United States Lighthouse Board, 1892). Though the newspaper indicated it was lighted March 30, the *Light List* gives the date of March 23.
- 2 *San Diego Union*, 6 July 1890.
- 3 Captain R.D. Israel, quoted in the *San Diego Union*, 26 March 1891.
- 4 *Annual Report of the Lighthouse Board*, 1891, (Washington, D.C.: United States Lighthouse Board, 1892)
- 5 *San Diego Union*, 19 October 1890.
- 6 Report to the Light-House Board, Treasury Department, October 20, 1890, and also included in the 1891 *Annual Report of the Lighthouse Board*.
- 7 See, for example, the request by Lighthouse Engineer Heuer, 20 October 1890, index slip bound in Letter Book No. 900, p. 174, Light-House Board, Treasury Department. National

The neighboring Ballast Point light station had not yet been replaced by the Navy's submarine base when photographed in 1950. Today, virtually the only recognizable feature remaining is the grassy cemetery atop Pt. Loma.

1950 photo by John Twoby and
George Mattson, 2000 photo by Jan Mattson.



Archives, College Park, MD. See also index slips, bound in Letter Books No. 884, p. 650, 30 October 1890; No. 895, p. 264, 3 November 1890; No. not legible, 15 November 1890. These slips note the contents of correspondence, no longer extant, between lighthouse districts and the Board.

- 8 The author thanks Jesse Strangfeld for his assistance with the rubbing. Columnist Neil Morgan noted in the *San Diego Journal*, 15 October 1946, that the lens “first served at Anclote Keys, Fla.” When contacted by telephone on 7 November 2000, Mr. Morgan recalled that he had learned this from the keeper. The keeper may have known nothing more than what he read on the plaque, and it is doubtful the lens was ever at Anclote Keys, which began operation in 1887 with a third order lens made in 1884. F. Ross Holland incorrectly states in *Great American Lighthouses* (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1989) that this lens had served Alligator Reef Lighthouse, Florida, which actually had a first order lens.
- 9 The award-winning lens arrived in San Diego in 1968 and was displayed at Cabrillo National Monument, where it is presently in storage.
- 10 *San Diego Union*, 3 February 1891, p. 5.
- 11 In addition to producing 120,000 candlepower to the first burner’s 60,000, the new lamp used one gallon of oil per night to the old one’s three.
- 12 The station’s characteristic was altered in 1912 from one flash every 20 seconds to one white flash every 15 seconds, the beam lasting 1.5 seconds, followed by 13.5 seconds of darkness. Jerry McMullen, “Memorandum to the Files,” 6 September 1955, San Diego Historical Society Research Archives. See also letter from U.S. Coast Guard Office of the Commandant to Director, Junipero Serra Museum, San Diego, 22 September 1955, stating “the light was changed from fixed white to alternating (revolving) flashing red and white on April 1, 1899. It was changed from alternating flashing red and white to flashing white on June 29, 1912.” The assertion that lower Pt. Loma ever had a fixed lens perhaps confuses it with the fixed white light of the old lighthouse; the *1892 Light List* reports “a flashing alternating red and white light.” (The two lighthouses were considered a single, reestablished, station.)
- 13 Joe Brennan, “When the Lower Light Was New,” *San Diego Historical Society Quarterly* 1, No. 4 (October 1955), 51. Butane replaced coal in the early 1940s. Keeper’s daughter Lexie Johnson to author, 8 June 2001.
- 14 Pt. Loma did not maintain a boat of its own, but the Ballast Point Light Station did. Occasionally supplies were shuttled between the two and delivered to the beach below Pt. Loma’s tower, for there was no wharf or landing, requiring a climb or hoist up cliffs of nearly 35 feet.
- 15 Facsimiles of letters between Israel, assistant keepers, and the Twelfth District are in Katherine B. Menz, “Historic Furnishings Report, Point Loma Lighthouse,” December 1978, Cabrillo National Monument. “Captain” was a customary title bestowed upon keepers, not a rank.
- 16 Brennan, 51. The catchment was used until city water lines arrived shortly after WWI.
- 17 Ken Franke, interview by the author, 14 March 2001.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 The *San Diego Union*, 26 March 1891, states that “electric bells will be put in from each cottage to the tower watch room.”
- 20 Ibid. The presence of telephones is in “Description of Light Station Point Loma,” May 1915, p. 3. U.S. Coast Guard Exhibit Center, Forestville, MD.
- 21 Superintendent of Lighthouses to Commanding Officer, Fort Rosecrans, 25 September 1924. National Archives, Washington, D.C..
- 22 This signal emitted a 3-second blast followed by 17 seconds of silence.
- 23 Franke, interview.
- 24 The radio beam was synchronized with the diaphone to give ships bearings and distances during disorientating fog, cloud, and gale conditions. *San Diego Union*, 9 August 1939.
- 25 Brennan, “When the Lower Light Was New,” 51.
- 26 loc. cit.
- 27 Lexie Johnson to author, 20 March 2001.
- 28 Commander David Tam, Navy Medical Corps, interview by the author, 31 October 2000.

- 29 PO 3 Gary Tingley, interview by the author, 23 October 2000. Tingley states that corrosion is causing the floor and the top of the tower to lift, making the chariot wheels wear unevenly.
- 30 Today the light is a VRB-25 Vega Beacon, visible for 21 miles, containing a 6-place lamp changer. When one 100-watt lamp burns out, another automatically ratchets to the next position. Along with the ELG-300/4 horn system and lighthouse power controller, it is monitored through the Aid Control Monitoring System (ACMS). ACMS allows a controller to query and control daily operations by computer. Any beacon discrepancy is caught by ACMS, and an alarm is sent to the operations monitor. If lighthouse power fails, it switches to the compact Lister/Lima generator maintained in the engine house. Should the beacon malfunction, a secondary 300mm lantern provides backup. PO3 Gary Tingley and SN Kevin Conrad, USCG Aids to Navigation Team, interview by the author, 23 October 2000; MST Brian Puck, Marine Science Technician, interview by the author, 28 January 2000.
- 31 *San Diego Union*, 6 May 1973.
- 32 Station resident Kathi Strangfeld, interview by the author, 21 October 2000.

SDMM Collection, P2683C



Growing Up at Point Loma Lighthouse: A Scrapbook of Memories

Lexie Johnson with Karen Scanlon¹



Three lighthouse keepers and their families picnic near home in 1936. At left, next to the author's cousin, sits Head Keeper Cobb—off duty, but in regulation cap—his wife, known to all as “Mother Cobb,” and Louise and Milford Johnson. The author sits front and center with Patty and Joan Dudley. Their mother Violet and First Assistant Keeper Jim Dudley sit at right.

Author's collection

It was wonderful growing up at the lighthouse. I was pushing three years old when we moved to Point Loma in 1931, and was twenty-four when I moved away. I can think of nothing against it, except that it was sometimes lonely. I learned to enjoy my own company. Mom loved living on the Point. Dad [Milford Johnson] liked being a keeper, too.² The work wasn't real hard, but the hours were long. A keeper had to be a jack-of-all-trades—carpenter, mechanic, painter, you name it—and willing to polish brass constantly.

The entire place was like a garden. My dad had so many flowers: Roses, poinsettias, Easter lilies, as well as all kinds of vegetables and berries and fruit. He also had a big garden on the side of the hill near the old water catch-basin. My father grew everything in his garden behind the house—all the produce. The cypresses near the engine room were trimmed in cone shapes. And there

Lexie Johnson now lives in Summerfield, Florida.

was a tall lattice fence with cup-of-gold vine and saltbush hedges.

The Dudleys had a garden, too [James Dudley was then First Assistant Keeper]. They had cows, and three horses—I latched on to one! My dad raised chickens, rabbits and the occasional hog. Seems like we had no money, but I wasn't aware of that then. Dad made \$95 a month and had to pay rent, something like \$25.

The road was bad. It was maintained by the lighthouse keepers and it was a constant chore to fill in potholes. The milkman was a friend, and he'd have coffee with Mom and Dad, which he deserved, driving way out there.

We had a huge fish pond and big lath house. When we lived there, the houses had side porches with French windows into the living room and dining room.

My father was with the Lighthouse Service until the Coast Guard took over. When he switched to Coast Guard service, Dad had to wear a Boatswain's Mate Second Class uniform, an ugly, Navy blue thing he called his monkey suit. The keepers rotated six-hour shifts, two on, one off, with every third day off. When the Lighthouse Service tender *Lupine* came down from San Francisco, it was inspection time. Captain Rhodes, the inspector, was a tyrant. He would do white glove inspections in the quarters, too, on top of doors, everything—literally white gloves.

There was a shark pool directly off the little point that sticks out below the tower, with two caves. It was big and had a sandy bottom; sometimes it was full of sand sharks and seaweed. We swam around in it, and called it our swimming hole. If Mother didn't know what to cook for dinner, Dad would



Milford Johnson, above, stands in front of the fog signal engine room in the early 1940s. On the porch of the Assistant Keeper's house about 1940, the author stands at left with a friend, above her mother, father and Aunt Marie.

Author's collection



Viewed from the tower in 1940, the Johnson's home is surrounded by gardens, with an aviary for canaries at left. Sixty years later the grounds are neat but stark.

1940 view courtesy the author, 2000 view courtesy Karen Scanlon

go down to the beach and get lobster and abalone from the tidepools.

We had indoor plumbing. When we moved in, the old two-hole privies were sitting on the grounds on the other side of the fence. Dad moved one, and it became my art studio. It had a cot and a desk and cabinets. Dad put a big window in it.

Once a young family got lost in the fog and beached themselves. Dudley and Dad helped them in. I went out and saved the dog.

A War Going On In My Neighborhood

World War II touched us more directly than many others in California. During the war, we had a total blackout on the Point. The entire grounds at Point Loma—all the buildings, even the cement sidewalks—were painted olive drab. Going down that hill to our house in a blackout was tricky with no car lights. We had to put tarpaper on our windows if we wanted to turn the lights on inside. The foghorn and the lighthouse were out during the blackout for six or more months.

They would fire those cotton-pickin' guns without warning us and the Army shot shells right over our quarters. The windows would blow out. If they warned us, we could open them, but the Army replaced our windows frequently.

We used to dump all our trash over the cliff. One

night I went out to toss the garbage over and I met up with a young soldier on guard duty, with a rifle aimed at me. He wanted the password! He was told to guard the perimeter, and not warned that people lived there; we scared the dickens out of each other.

Another night we had a tremendous scare. We were told that a German sub slipped through the sub nets across the Bay in the vicinity of Ballast Point. A Swedish ship came in and they thought a German sub came in with it. There was total panic in Fort Rosecrans. Everyone was commanded to report with all available guns and ammunition. Dad and Dudley went out with a shotgun and a .22 and put them in a rowboat, and rowed around San Diego Bay looking for a German submarine!

N O T E S

- 1 Compiled by Karen Scanlon from interviews with Lexie Johnson, 15 March, 18 March, and 21 March 2001. A more complete version of this document is in the San Diego Maritime Museum Library.
- 2 Johnson came to Pt. Loma as Second Assistant Keeper in 1931; he retired in 1952 after spending his final two years there as Head Keeper.



Revelers wave from the tower, apparently ecstatic that half of its wartime coat of olive drab is painted white again.

Author's collection

Several years after they hunted a phantom submarine together in a rowboat, Milford Johnson (left) accepts the title of Head Keeper from Jim Dudley.

Author's collection

We wish to thank these Sponsors:

95 Ready-to-Display Models

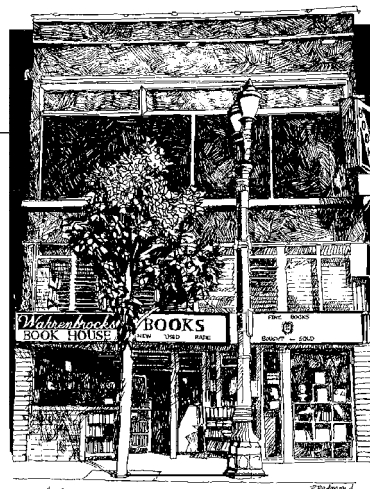


& Affordable Nautical Decor

Sailboats	Regional Workboats
Pond Yachts	Canoes
Tugboats	Half Hulls
Runabouts	Knot Boards
Chesapeake Bay Boats	Nautical Decor

www.ShipModels1.com
Toll Free 888-201-6004

LOCATED IN SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA



established 1935

NEW • USED • RARE • BOOKS BOUGHT
RARE BOOKS APPRAISED • MAIL ORDERS
Extensive Maritime & Naval History Sections

WAHRENBROCK'S BOOK HOUSE

1 800 315 8643

www.wahrenbrocks.com
(619) 232-0132 • (619) 232-3808 FAX
726 Broadway • San Diego, CA 92101
e-mail: wbh@ixpres.com

One

Light Source that
has proven itself
throughout history...

Press Plus

One Printing Source
that has proven itself
throughout its history.

**619
474-0666**



SALUTES THE FINE JOB THE MARITIME
MUSEUM HAS DONE IN
RESTORING THEIR CLASSIC VESSELS
LET US HELP YOU RESTORE YOUR
CLASSIC VESSEL

DOWNWIND MARINE
Serving Your Every Yachting Need

From the crew at Downwind Marine.

We are located at 2804 Cañon Street
San Diego, CA 92106

(619) 224-2733 WHX 369

homepage: <http://www.downwindmarine.com>
e-mail: downwind@IBM.net



Point Loma Light House, San Diego, Calif.



Lighthouse, Point Loma, Cal.



Across the Pacific, lighthouses embody the best of humanity's efforts to tame Nature, protecting those in peril on the sea.

Postcards courtesy San Diego Historical Society (top), SDMM Coll.; stamps of Pacific lighthouses courtesy Gabriel Rolo



A production of
MAINS'L HAUL

A Journal Of Pacific Maritime History

Published by the Maritime Museum Association of San Diego since 1964



This is a reprint from
Mains'l Haul: A Journal of Pacific Maritime History.
Each quarterly issue of *Mains'l Haul* addresses a different aspect
of the Pacific's past and features new articles by scholars
worldwide.

Subscribers also receive membership in the Maritime Museum
Association of San Diego, with benefits including the quarterly
newsletter *Full & By* and research privileges.
See contents page for subscription information.

www.sdmaritime.org

ISBN 0-944580-12-2



50695>



9 780944 580127

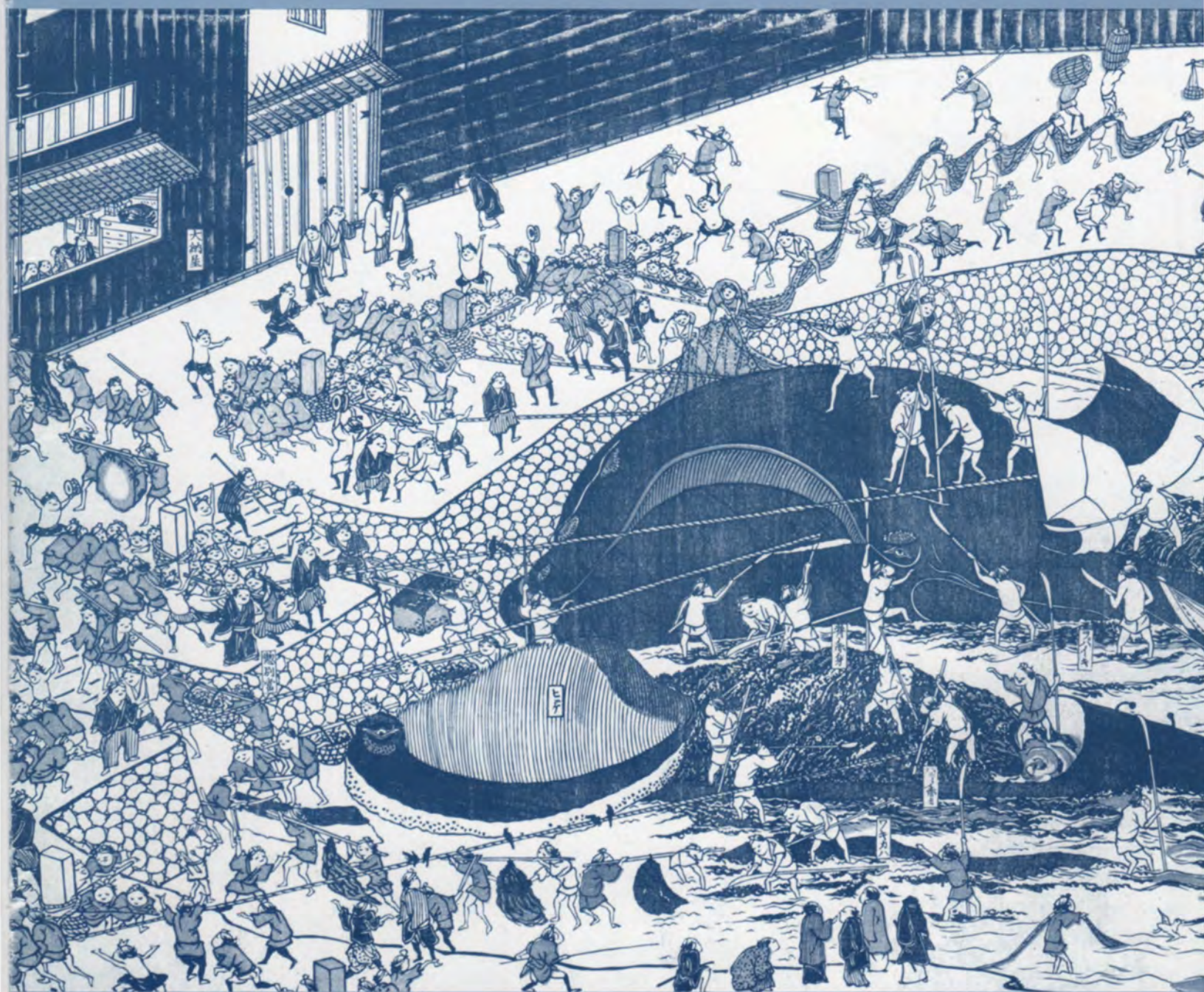
Maritime Museum Association Of San Diego

Vol. 37: 3 & 4

MAINS'L HAUL

\$4.00

A Journal Of Pacific Maritime History



Shore Whalers
Around the Pacific Rim



California's Boating Newspapers
Since 1971

THE LOG SUPPORTS
THE SAN DIEGO
MARITIME MUSEUM



COUNCIL OF AMERICAN
MARITIME MUSEUMS
CONFERENCE OF CALIFORNIA
HISTORICAL SOCIETIES
INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS
OF MARITIME MUSEUMS

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

William Dysart
President

Kenneth Andersen
First Vice President

Chris Frost
Second Vice President

Chuck Allen
Treasurer

Merrill Day
Secretary

Raymond Ashley
Executive Director

James Dalby
Bob Dilworth
Donald E. Hillman, Jr.
James Lonergan
Robert Loomis
VAdm. Edward H. Martin
Kay O'Brian
John Rebelo, Jr.
Barbara Sharp
Bob Sharp
Robert Smith
Karen Sowell

Mains'l Haul Editorial Board

Iris Engstrand
W. Michael Mathes
Dian Murray
Carla Rahn Phillips
Timothy Runyan
Raymond Starr
William Still
Richard Unger
Daniel Vickers

MAINS'L HAUL

is published quarterly,
wind and weather
permitting, aboard the
ferryboat *Berkeley*.

"Mains'l Haul"—An order
in tacking ship bidding
'Swing the main yards.'
To loot, steal, or 'acquire.'
—John Maselfield



San Diego Bay had its own shore whaling stations for
thirty years, beginning at Ballast Point in 1857—
reconstructed in this modern painting by Jay Wegter.

Courtesy Fort Guijarros Museum Foundation

DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ that whaling was Australia's first industry? (page 4)
- ▶ that Japanese whalers in wooden boats caught whales in huge nets? (page 20)
- ▶ that expatriate Norwegians sold their services as whalers in Russia, Japan and elsewhere? (page 37)
- ▶ that crews of Japanese men were hired to work in Canadian whaling? (page 38)
- ▶ that Western Canadians of Japanese ancestry were interned during WWII? (page 38)
- ▶ that whale meat was exported from Canada to Japan in the early 1900s? (page 45)
- ▶ that Canadians once sampled burgers and shepherd's pie made from whale? (page 46)

Maritime Museum Association Of San Diego

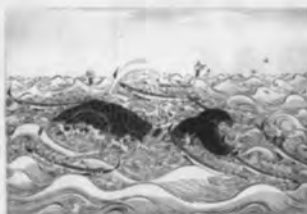
MAINS'L HAUL

Vol. 37: 3 & 4

A Journal Of Pacific Maritime History

From The Helm
Ray Ashley

2



4

Whaling in the South Seas
Susan Lawrence



12

Unearthing the Invisible People
**Mark Staniforth,
Susan Briggs
and Chris Lewczak**



20

A Japanese Whale Hunt in 1829
Stuart M. Frank

26



Japanese Whalers in Korean Waters
Katsuaki Morita

37



A Citizen of the Pacific Rim
Joan Goddard

38



The Japanese Experience in
Western Canadian Whaling
Joan Goddard

On the cover

Processing right whales in Japan, from the 1832 book *Isana-tori Ekotoba*. "All the people, from chief steward to day laborer, are engaged in butchering the whale and storing away the products. In a short time, a whale as big as a mountain is cut apart with great skill..."

*Courtesy of the New Bedford Whaling Museum/
Old Dartmouth Historical Society, New Bedford, Mass.*

Subscriptions to Mains'l Haul are US \$40. Subscribers also receive a quarterly newsletter and all benefits of membership in the Maritime Museum Association of San Diego. To subscribe, comment, or submit articles to this peer-reviewed quarterly, visit www.sdmaritime.com/journal or contact the editor: 1492 N. Harbor Dr., San Diego, CA 92101 (619) 234-9153 editor@sdmaritime.com

Our mission is to engage members and the public in the study of Pacific maritime history, while promoting scholarly research. We welcome submissions on all aspects of the Pacific's past, and encourage the widest variety of perspectives on this rich heritage. Articles are indexed for researchers worldwide in *America: History & Life* and *Historical Abstracts*.

Mark Allen Editor

Tony Enyedy Art Director

Readers who have followed the development of *Mains'l Haul* may have noted how our museum's flagship publication has developed over the past few years. "Shore Whalers Around the Pacific Rim" marks another significant waypoint in the journal's course; it is the tenth sequential issue in which each article addresses some aspect of a common theme pertinent to Pacific maritime history. As in this issue, featuring the work of authors from four nations, our contributors represent an international spectrum of scholarship, attesting to the growing stature of maritime history as a significant field of historical research. We are also proud to announce that this is our first "peer review" issue, in which submissions were reviewed by accredited scholars prior to publication. We are equally proud that the international editorial board we have assembled includes some of the most distinguished and accomplished maritime historians working in the field today. To our knowledge, *Mains'l Haul* is the world's only peer-reviewed historical journal adhering to a thematic

approach to maritime research.

What does this mean for *Mains'l Haul*? For the San Diego Maritime Museum, it attests to our commitment to promote research in Pacific maritime history as an

essential ingredient of our overall mission, and our strong desire to address the interests of our reading audience, just as we do for our visitors with an aggressive exhibit strategy. *Mains'l Haul* is also a tangible benefit of museum membership. Because of its themed

approach, it is eminently collectible, and we have recently found a ready market for past themed issues "re-released" for the general public as stand-alone publications now sold in a variety of bookstores, including those of other museums. For the contributing authors, publication in *Mains'l Haul* is an increasingly attractive testimony of good scholarship and good writing, in which the efforts of lay and public historians are as conspicuous for quality as those submitted by professional academics. For the field of Pacific maritime history, the ongoing development of *Mains'l Haul*

FROM THE HELM

by Ray Ashley

San Diego Maritime Museum Director





provides ever-increasing evidence that our field is coming into its own. No history of America and the sea can ever be regarded as complete unless our longstanding relationship with the Pacific figures prominently.

Finally, we are ever reminded that the story of humankind itself is inextricably interwoven with our story of the sea. As we see in this issue, whaling is not just an industry that transformed marine mammals into products for illumination, lubrication, decoration, or food. Nor, at the other extreme, is it simply the grand setting for parables and morality plays about pursuit and conquest, man against nature, or our mistreatment of our environment and the creatures we share it with. Whaling is also interwoven in the story of nations and empires, cultural diffusion, immigration, colonialism, imperialism, industrialization, and war. As in so many great tales of the sea, these historians' pursuit of the whale is really the pursuit of ourselves.

At left: boat builders prepare a fleet of whaleboats at Misaki, Japan, around 1829.

As the author Oyamada Tomokiyo explained, "About the middle of August, boatbuilding commences. Several types of craft are employed in the whale hunt and must periodically be replaced after a few seasons of use."

Above: Japanese whalers net a right whale.

"Raising a hue and cry, the whalers in *seko* boats to the right, to the left, and behind the whale dip their oars in the water and bang them with mallets, compelling the whale to rush forward into the net. As the whale struggles to get free, the men in *sogai* boats twist the net around its head and tail; and when the tired whale pauses to catch its breath, the first harpoon is planted. Here the prey is a *sebi-kujira* [right whale], considered the finest quality and worth two of any other species. Even in the middle of hunting another kind of whale, if the whalers discover a *sebi-kujira* nearby they will abandon any other species to go after the *sebi-kujira*."

Images from the 1832 book Isana-tori Ekotoba courtesy of the New Bedford Whaling Museum/Old Dartmouth Historical Society, New Bedford, Mass; background photo courtesy of Harry Crosby

WHALING IN THE SOUTH SEAS

Archaeological Evidence of Australia's First Industry

Susan Lawrence



Archaeologists excavate the whaling station manager's house at Adventure Bay, Tasmania.

In November 1791 the convict-laden ships of the Third Fleet anchored at Port Jackson in the new British colony of New South Wales, site of the future metropolis of Sydney. Once they had disgorged their cargoes, crews and masters alike gleefully anticipated the commercial prospects of the return voyage: several of the ships would try their luck in the newly-discovered southern whale fishery. The first whaleship there, the *Emilia*, had returned to London with news of her discovery the previous year.¹ If the whales numbered only half of those which the *Emilia*'s captain reported, the officers of the Third Fleet could hope to return to England wealthy men.

The reports were not exaggerated, and whaling became Australia's first export industry. The discovery of the fishery touched off an oil boom that lasted a century and drove white colonization in the Pacific, bringing the Australian colonies their first prosperity. Unlike their British, French and American whaling competitors, the Australians were initially unable to purchase and stock the ships needed for long whaling voyages. The colonials, however, already in the heart of the whaling grounds, did not need to. Instead, the earliest Australian whalers hunted the southern right whale, *Balaena glacialis*, which frequented shallow inshore waters along the southern coast. They did so primarily from stations built along the shore, where their activities left traces which remain to this day. The remnants of Australia's first industry have been excavated by this author and other archaeologists, and some of the results of our studies are explored here.

The whaling season, from May to November, corresponded to the Southern Hemisphere's winter. Some whalers practiced bay whaling, mooring in bays to hunt the whales as they came past. Others built semi-permanent shore stations—often consisting of barracks, storehouses, a cooperage, and a tryworks where oil was rendered from blubber—in sheltered bays where men were dropped off at the beginning of the season. There, a lookout was mounted from a tree or hilltop and the men would set out from the shore in whaleboats. At the end of the season the crews, oil and whalebone were picked up and taken to Sydney or Hobart, Tasmania.

In the first half of the nineteenth century shore stations were established along the southern Australian coast from Western Australia to New South Wales and in New Zealand. The largest concentration, over one hundred stations, was in Tasmania, an island colony off the southeastern tip of the mainland.² Tasmania is the first land the whales reach on their long journey from the sub-Antarctic waters where they spent the southern summer. Swimming up Tasmania's eastern shore, they part ways, some going west through Bass Strait to Western Australia, others continuing north to New South Wales. Tasmania's coast, with its numerous sheltered coves, made an ideal hunting ground. In the mid-1830s when the shore-whaling industry was at its height, nearly three hundred men were employed in Tasmanian whaling alone.³

Underwater and terrestrial archaeologists have begun to investigate what remains of this once-widespread industry. We have recorded the wrecks of



Susan Lawrence teaches historical archaeology at La Trobe University in Melbourne, and has recently published a book on Australia's gold rush. A native of Canada, she has lived in Australia since 1989 and began research on whaling in 1997. Susan notes that the lives of men at remote whaling stations were perhaps comparable to modern oil rig workers, isolated only for a season before returning to 'civilization'.



Captain James Kelly.

Courtesy of the Archives Office of Tasmania

whaleships, excavated shore stations, and surveyed the coastlines of several states and New Zealand.⁴ Among our efforts has been the excavation of two shore stations in Tasmania: Adventure Bay and Lagoon Bay.⁵

In December, 1997, the author and a team of archaeologists from La Trobe University, Melbourne, and Flinders University, Adelaide, excavated the site of a whaling station at Adventure Bay, Bruny Island, off Tasmania's south coast. We followed this in February 1999 with excavations at Lagoon Bay on the east coast of Tasmania. Both stations were owned and operated by Captain James Kelly, in partnership with Thomas Lucas at Adventure Bay and with Thomas Hewitt at Lagoon Bay. Kelly was a leading Hobart entrepreneur with business interests in urban property, farms, ships, and several whaling stations in Tasmania and Victoria.⁶ One of his first stations operated at Adventure Bay from at least 1829 until about 1841. The Lagoon Bay station operated briefly from 1838, and may have been revived between 1851 and 1854, by which time Kelly had lost his wealth and was attempting to begin again following bankruptcy. Unfortunately for him, right whales had been hunted nearly to extinction and the station, and Kelly's business recovery, failed.

Excavations at two of Kelly's stations reveal facets of the everyday lives of the crews. At both sites crew barracks and the quarters of the headsman (station manager) were excavated, as were the tryworks at Adventure Bay. Artifacts were recovered from shallow deposits of rubbish within and around the buildings.⁷

The sites are both located on the southeastern edges of sheltered bays opening to the northeast, and both afford wide views of the seas around from nearby hilltops. The Adventure Bay station lay on two low benches just above the high tide mark. At Lagoon Bay Kelly conducted his whaling operations from a small cove in the southeast corner of the bay, where two rocky promontories protect a short stretch of sandy beach. The tryworks,

These whalers' huts, behind a pile of bones in the foreground, belonged to one of Kelly's competitors, Alexander Imlay.

Courtesy of the Mitchell Library, Sydney



and possibly associated boat sheds and oil storage areas, were located on the level bench immediately behind the beach. The men's huts stood on the headland some twenty meters above the beach to the west, where the land forms a level, grassy terrace.

Both stations were also close to Kelly's competitors. In the 1830s Adventure Bay was the center of a flourishing fishery, with three other whaling stations occupying leases. A short-lived township, Cookville, was surveyed in order to accommodate the activity. In 1829 there were between eighty and ninety men at the bay engaged in whaling, of whom between twenty and thirty would have worked for Kelly and his partner Lucas.⁸ Operations at Lagoon Bay were smaller, but there too competition was fierce. Alexander Imlay ran a station immediately opposite Kelly and Hewitt's, while other competitors had stations in a neighboring bay.

One of the main purposes of our excavations was to learn more about living conditions at the stations. Of the three domestic structures excavated in the shallow and stony soil at Adventure Bay, only one was well-preserved. The other two, most likely crew barracks, were marked only by a few stones from the central fireplaces, and had probably been one-room structures framed with timber and covered with sheets of eucalyptus bark.⁹ The third residence was in much better condition. It was twelve meters long by five meters wide (forty by sixteen feet) and built of beach cobbles mortared with mud. Although only the lower portions of the walls remain, the stonework is of very high quality, obviously the work of an experienced mason. The building was constructed as a two-roomed structure with a pair of brick fireplaces and a single exterior doorway at each end. Subsequently, the fireplace in the southern room was filled in and removed and the northern room was subdivided into two compartments, one of which had an expertly-laid flagstone floor.

Such a substantial building was probably the quarters for the senior headsman in charge of the station: the separate northern half, with its two rooms and flagstone floor, suggests a private apartment. The southern end of the building with its single large room may have been the communal kitchen. Across from this building was a little one-room structure also built of stone, although with less skill, with a door on its southern side. The fact that this two and one-half by three meter building was built of stone—though too small for accommodation and lacking a fireplace—suggests that it was a strong-room for valuables like alcohol, tobacco, and the spare clothing sold to the crew as 'slops'. The other station buildings, including a cooperage, workshops, and boat sheds, appear to have been built of timber. Around the little storehouse and between it and the main building were considerable quantities of domestic rubbish, including iron hoops from wooden casks of several sizes, broken clay pipes, china tableware, fragments of glass bottles which once held wine, beer, and pickles, and thousands of bones left from kitchen waste.

Blubber once bubbled in a pair of cauldrons above these foundations of tryworks at Adventure Bay. The whale oil rendered here was primarily shipped to London, then sold to fill lamps throughout the Empire.



At Lagoon Bay we excavated two structures. Again it seems that one was the headsman's quarters and possibly the communal mess and the other was the crew barracks. Both were constructed of timber and had fireplaces of mud-mortared stone and brick. The main building formed a large rectangle, divided lengthwise into two rooms, with all the walls except the east wall outlined by a single course of stonework that served as the base for the timber superstructure. A massive stone fireplace in the center of the outside wall dominated the southern room. Traces of crushed shell indicate that the walls of these rooms had been plastered. Both rooms had earthen floors, but the high traffic areas of the doorways were paved with fist-sized cobbles.¹⁰

The larger of the two buildings excavated at Lagoon Bay also had two rooms, arranged in an L-shape, with two fireplaces, much smaller and rougher in construction than that in the first building, in each room.¹¹ Both of these rooms also had earthen floors. Unlike their counterparts at Adventure Bay, the occupants did not leave a thick layer of rubbish around their buildings, though fragments of bottle glass, china, and food scraps had accumulated within the rooms.

Although the residential quarters were the primary focus of our excavations, at Adventure Bay we also investigated the tryworks. Prior to excavation no evidence of the hearths built to render the blubber into oil could be seen. However, there were a few handmade bricks scattered along the top of the shingle beach, so we opened a trench where the concentration of bricks was greatest. It revealed quite substantial remains of one of the two or three tryworks the station probably once had: the lower levels of a brick core encased in a masonry shell. The core contained two adjacent hearths, each with its own stoke hole and flue, separated by a brick plinth. The 250-gallon iron cauldrons in which the oil was rendered would have been encased in more brickwork above these hearths. A century and a half after their use, the remaining bricks were still encrusted with a thick deposit of burnt oil, the residue of the blubber scraps used to fuel the fires.

The most revealing evidence about the men who lived and worked on



these stations is found in the artifacts they left behind. Animal bones show that the primary meats they consumed were mutton and salt beef, along with some salt pork and fish and the occasional native animal.¹² Other artifacts unexpectedly reveal two distinct, apparently contradictory, aspects of the whaling crews. One aspect was that of the boisterous, rough-and-tumble world of laboring men in a dangerous, dirty, isolated industry—but we also see evidence of aspirations by some to middle-class gentility.

As one might expect, they left behind abundant remains of tobacco pipes and alcohol bottles. Fragments of at least fifty-four beer, wine, and gin bottles were recovered from the two stations, but that hardly reflects all the alcohol consumed there, most of which would likely have been in wooden casks instead. James Kelly is known to have purchased large quantities of alcohol for his crews—seventy-one gallons of rum in 1834 and 547 gallons in 1836, eighty gallons of ale and six gallons of rum in 1841—which almost certainly were in casks.¹³ We recovered numerous wrought-iron barrel hoops and hoop fragments, most of which were likely used in the on-site construction of large casks for holding whale oil, but some of which may have had domestic functions like alcohol storage. A brass spigot used to dispense liquids from casks was also recovered from Adventure Bay. Some of the men drank from glass tumblers rather than the cheaper and more common ceramic, tin or horn mugs.

Unexpectedly, some at the rugged stations were sipping from delicate-stemmed wine glasses, including two found at Adventure Bay. This hints at another aspect of whaling life: self-betterment through hard work, and aspirations to middle-class gentility. Elements of refinement are found in other artifacts as well. ‘Slops’ accounts and the

account books of other station owners indicate that crews were provided with tin plates and mugs, but the archaeological evidence shows that ceramic plates, jugs, and bowls were also used—and even china teacups and saucers, teapots, and a chamber pot.¹⁴ We found at least thirteen teacups, some in the



Australia's hard-drinking whalemens left behind objects like this spigot, but also delicate breakfast cups and wine glasses.



latest colors and designs. Some of the residents of these two rough outposts were not only drinking tea, but doing so very fashionably. James Kelly himself may have used some of this formal china and glass. Captains of ships which met at sea would exchange news in each other's cabins over a glass of wine, a custom which Kelly would have experienced many times on his voyages and may have kept up when visiting the managers of his stations.

Crockery was found in all parts of the sites, including crew barracks and headsman's quarters, suggesting that headsman and crews alike were eating from ceramic plates. Some costlier pieces bore up-to-date blue transfer-printed designs. Others were more old-fashioned and cheaper, including plain creamware plates, plates edged with a scalloped blue design, and even a Chinese export porcelain plate fashionable a generation earlier. The cheaper items were probably used by the crews while the more expensive ones belonged to the headsman.¹⁵

James Kelly and the men he employed maintained a delicate balance. Whaling was an ugly business, exploitative of men and animals. Some of the men, like the creatures they hunted, were the worse for their involvement, with bodies broken by the work, spending the little money they earned on alcohol and tobacco. Others, like Kelly himself, saw whaling as one of the few ways for a man with no resources but his own nerve, skill, and muscle to "get ahead." Those who attained the rank of headsman or boatsteerer had earned their positions and the respect due them. Special marks of office set such men apart from the crews. As we have seen, they had private, and grander, accommodation on the stations, and they appear to have used the ritualized etiquette and equipment of tea drinking to show how far they had come and to suggest their allegiance to polite society in the colonial world beyond the stations.

NOTES

- 1 William Dakin, *Whalemen Adventurers*, first published 1934 (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1963), xxv-xxvii.
- 2 Mike Nash, "A Survey of the Tasmanian Shore-Based Whaling Industry" in Susan Lawrence and Mark Staniforth, eds., *The Archaeology of Whaling in Southern Australia and New Zealand* (Canberra: Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology, 1998), 25.
- 3 Kathryn Evans, "Shore Based Whaling in Tasmania Historical Research Project. Volume 1: A Social and Economic History," (Hobart: Department of Parks and Wildlife Tasmania, 1993), 22-23.
- 4 Mike McCarthy, "The Excavation and Identification of the ex-American Whaler *Day Dawn*," *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology and Underwater Exploration* 8, No. 2 (1979): 143-154; Nash, "Survey of the Historic Ship *Litberland* (1834-1853)," *Bulletin of the Australian Institute for Maritime Archaeology* 14, No. 1 (1990): 13-20; Peter Bell, "Research and Management Issues Arising from Sites Associated with the Australian Bay Whaling and Sealing Industries," *Bulletin of the Australian Institute for Maritime Archaeology* 15, No. 2 (1991): 45-58; Martin Gibbs, "Colonial Boats and Foreign Ships: The History and Archaeology of Nineteenth Century Whaling in Western

- Australia" in Lawrence and Staniforth, 36-47; Parry Kostoglou and Justin McCarthy, *Whaling and Sealing Sites in South Australia*, jointly published as South Australian Maritime Archaeology Series No. 2 and Special Publications No. 6, (Adelaide: South Australian Department of Environment and Planning and Australian Institute for Maritime Archaeology, 1991); Nash, 21-28; Chris Jacomb, "Shore Whaling Sites of Banks Peninsula: An Archaeological Survey" in Lawrence and Staniforth, 68-78; Nigel Prickett, "The Tasmanian Origins of New Zealand Shore Whaling," *Archaeology of New Zealand* 36, No. 4 (1993): 94-104; Michael Pearson, "Shore-Based Whaling at Twofold Bay: One Hundred Years of Enterprise," *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 71, No. 11 (1985): 3-27.
- 5 These investigations were undertaken as part of the AWSANZ (Archaeology in Southern Australia and New Zealand) Project, which seeks to foster cooperation between archaeologists working in universities, state heritage agencies, and museums, in order to develop an integrated, Australasian-wide approach to studying the archaeological remains of whaling. Lawrence, "Preliminary Report on Archaeological Excavations at Kelly and Lucas' Whaling Station, Adventure Bay, Tasmania," (Hobart: Department of Parks and Wildlife Tasmania, 1998); Lawrence, "Preliminary Report on Archaeological Excavations at Hewitt and Kelly's Whaling Station, Lagoon Bay, Tasmania," (Hobart: Department of Parks and Wildlife Tasmania, 1999). The work has generously been supported by an Australian Research Council SPIRT grant, La Trobe University, the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, Heritage Victoria, the National Parks and Wildlife Service of New South Wales, and by Tom and Cynthia Dunbabin.
 - 6 Keith Bowden, *Captain James Kelly of Hobart Town* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1964); Evans, 22-23.
 - 7 287.75 square meters were excavated at Adventure Bay and 285 square meters at Lagoon Bay. The Tasmanian Aboriginal Land Council requested that research regarding Aboriginal involvement at the stations not be pursued, therefore this article does not discuss Aboriginal materials.
 - 8 Evans, 11-13.
 - 9 The base of the chimney of one of these two remained intact, revealing remains of a brick hearth and semi-circular stone chimney.
 - 10 This structure was 11 by 8 meters in size.
 - 11 Two of the fireplaces face each other at either end of a room 9.75 meters long. The second room, at least 15 meters long, lies at right angles and to the west. Another fireplace marks the northern end, with another along the eastern wall, almost backing on to one of the fireplaces in the eastern room.
 - 12 Artifacts weighing a total of 173.9 kg were recovered; more than half of this weight was animal bone. Lawrence, "Foodways on Two Colonial Whaling Stations: Archaeological and Historical Evidence for Diet in Nineteenth Century Tasmania," *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 87, No. 2: 209-229.
 - 13 Kelly papers, State Library of Tasmania, letter dated 24 June 1841.
 - 14 Kelly Papers, slops accounts of brig *Amity*, 1836; Imlay Brothers account books, Mitchell Library, Sydney.
 - 15 In 1837 Kelly purchased 7 dozen ceramic plates, a number which clearly suggests that he was buying supplies for his crews. Luke Flanagan, "Colonial Enterprise: The View from a Nineteenth Century Whaling Station," BA (Honors) thesis, La Trobe University, 1999.

UNEARTHING the Invisible People:

European Families and Aboriginal People at South Australian Whaling Stations

Mark Staniforth, Susan Briggs and Chris Lewczak

Mark Staniforth is a senior lecturer in the Archaeology Department at Flinders University in South Australia. Co-editor (with Susan Lawrence) of *The Archaeology of Whaling in Southern Australia and New Zealand*, he has researched shore whaling activity in South Australia since 1996.

Susan Briggs is an honors graduate in Archaeology from Flinders University. Since completing her degree she has been a research assistant for the AWSA project, and is currently working to establish a postgraduate research project to study the living conditions of the working classes in Port Adelaide.

Chris Lewczak received an honors degree in Archaeology at Flinders University, specializing in maritime archaeology, and has been working as a research assistant for the AWSA project.

The first major industries in what would become the colony of South Australia were the closely inter-related ones of sealing and whaling.¹ Official European settlement of South Australia began in 1836, but for many years previously, small numbers of Europeans frequented, and sometimes lived on, its coastline and offshore islands. The activities of these men are largely unrecorded, and even less is known of the contributions of European women and children and Aboriginals. Archaeologists like ourselves are currently trying to learn more about these invisible people, and this article combines our discoveries with the evidence from the historical record. The study of European women and children and Indigenous people at whaling stations is still young, but it is already yielding results.

South Australia's whaling stations were harsh, isolated and inhospitable places whose inhabitants depended on shipping from distant ports for all their wants and needs. This dependence clearly shaped the type and scarcity of the artifacts we now find at these sites. Archaeological fieldwork at South Australian whaling station sites commenced in April, 1997, under the direction of Mark Staniforth.²

Early South Australian Whaling

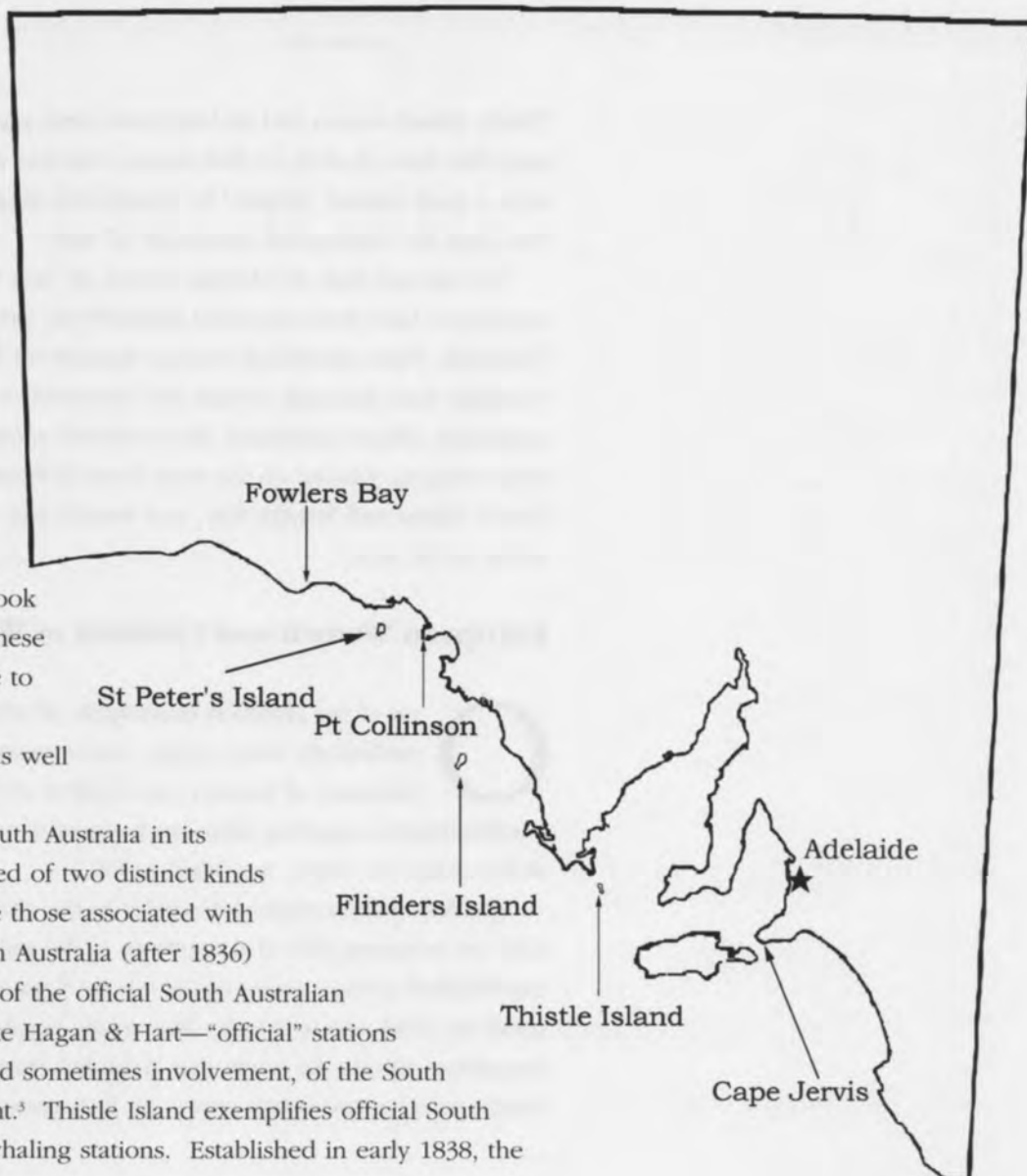
At least seventeen whaling stations are known to have existed on the coastline of South Australia before 1850. Although some of these sites are

The whaling stations of South Australia's lonely coastline. Below, a visitor inspects ruins of a house at Whalers Bay on Thistle Island in 1907.

*Map by Chris Lewczak
courtesy of the AWSA project;
photo courtesy Mortlock
Library, Adelaide*

relatively well documented, some of the more isolated ones are either lost to us or remembered only vaguely in the memoirs of people who took part in the industry. Finding these sites is frequently difficult due to the ephemeral nature of the evidence left by the whalers as well as the isolation of the sites.

Shore-based whaling in South Australia in its early, pre-1850, phase consisted of two distinct kinds of operations. First there were those associated with the official settlement of South Australia (after 1836) such as the whaling activities of the official South Australian Company and partnerships like Hagan & Hart—"official" stations operated with the consent, and sometimes involvement, of the South Australian colonial government.⁵ Thistle Island exemplifies official South Australian Company-owned whaling stations. Established in early 1838, the



Thistle Island station and its four boat crews produced between sixty and sixty-five tuns of oil in its first season, but was abandoned the following year after a poor season, plagued by complaints about inadequate provisioning of food and the subsequent desertions of men.⁴

The second type of whaling station, far less well known or documented, appears to have been operated primarily by whalers based in Hobart, Tasmania. These unofficial whaling stations on the far west coast of South Australia were privately owned and operated, and some existed before South Australia's official settlement. Hobart-based whalers were active in at least three whaling stations on the west coast of South Australia at Fowlers Bay, St Peter's Island and Streaky Bay, and French and American whaling ships were active in the area.⁵

European Women and Children at Whaling Stations

One of the common stereotypes of whaling is that it was an exclusively male activity, but occasionally we find evidence of the presence of women and children at whaling stations.⁶ Historical documentation regarding their involvement is meager—a gap that archaeology, we hope, can begin to fill.

The few written sources that refer to the presence of women and children offer an intriguing hint of domesticity in the unlikelyst of places. In the unpublished reminiscences of the whaler Captain James William Robinson about his 1844 visit to Streaky Bay on the South Australian coast in the brigantine *Abeona*, he wrote that "I landed Hungerford, Luttrell, who had charge with his two boat's crews. Mr E. Kreemer was at the fishery, and two

Mr. and Mrs. Clark and their pets once warmed themselves at this hearth.

Courtesy of the AWSA project



others. I also landed in good health Mrs Lutrell, and her little girl, with all their stores."⁷

At the Cape Jervis station, which began its operations as early as 1841, an 1851 newspaper account mentions that a Mr. Clark was accompanied by his wife, where they lived in a small wooden slab hut, "the picture of neatness and order," surrounded by ducks, fowls, pigs, turkeys, caged parakeets, a tame magpie, a cat and an infant cockatoo. As the visiting journalist also noted,

Mrs. Clark had attempted a little garden north of the house, a little above it, which she said her husband laughed at but we told her that it might prove no joke. She was ambitious of growing melons, which were thriving, and coveted cucumbers, but had no seed.⁸

We decided to excavate at the Cape Jervis whaling station site in the hope of learning more about the lives of women like Mrs. Clark at whaling stations. In November, 2000, a small team of postgraduate and other students assisted Mark Staniforth with the partial excavation of a slab hut there.⁹

A hearth made of local slate dominated the site of the hut, which had a single layer of stone foundations that revealed the width of the wooden slabs as well as the way in which the slabs were supported at the bottom. A pattern of wooden postholes within the hut's earthen floor was probably the remnants of posts that supported the roof structure.

The site proved to contain only very small amounts of portable material culture such as ceramics and glass. The majority of the glass found in the excavation, for example, was clear fragments that appear to have come from a single bottle and pieces of just a single kaolin tobacco pipe (manufactured by T. White of Glasgow). The low numbers of artifacts may reflect the difficulties of supplying this remote outpost, a high level of care given to ceramics and glass vessels and/or the disposal practices (and general cleanliness) of the residents. As an archaeological site it certainly fits the "picture of neatness and order" that the journalist described.

Indigenous People at Whaling Stations

The arrival of whalers often represented first contact between the invading Europeans and Indigenous people; their interactions and exchanges made the beach a dangerous and contested ground.¹⁰ Some Indigenous people became involved in whaling, which may have been due in part to their displacement from their traditional lands and food sources by farming and settlement. The interactions between the two cultures exposed Indigenous Australians to contact with new materials such as glass, ceramics and metal, and whaling stations are ideal sites to study how they utilized these materials. Because nearly all were established in remote areas,



This clay tobacco pipe from the Clarks' hut is among the few traces of domestic life found there.

*Photo by Susan Briggs and Tracey Treloar
courtesy of the AWSA project*

The remains of the Clark's hut at Cape Jervis, which once was "the picture of neatness and order" despite being crowded with pets.

Photo by Mark Staniforth courtesy of the AWSA project



the objects left behind there remain relatively undisturbed, giving archaeologists the opportunity to learn more about the interactions between cultures.

One of the few written clues regarding Aboriginal involvement in early South Australian whaling was recorded by a Mr. Homburg after his visit to Spalding Cove in May, 1832:

The object of his visit to Port Lincoln was to carry thither a party of thirty persons, with five boats and the necessary implements for catching whales... The natives he saw were numerous and peaceful. They assisted him in carrying water to the ship, and in other matters. For a little tobacco, and with kind treatment, he is convinced they would work well.¹¹

Notwithstanding twentieth century propaganda by the whaling industry about "making use of the entire whale," in the nineteenth century there was a limit to how much of a whale the whalers could actually use. They were most interested in the blubber, which they rendered into oil, and the whalebone (baleen), used to manufacture a range of items from umbrellas to corsets. The tons of meat and bone that whalers disregarded as unwanted by-products represented a rich source of protein to Indigenous people. A reminiscence of the Encounter Bay whaling station during the 1840s reports this, though colored by the racism of the era:

During the season the blacks came to the station in great numbers, and they and a lot of huge pigs would live on the "crang," or flesh after the blubber had been taken off for oil.¹²

Relations between the whalers and Indigenous people at whaling stations in South Australia varied widely. Also at Encounter Bay, Aboriginal people

were directly involved in whaling, as *The Southern Australian* newspaper reported in 1839:

It appears that a boat is employed in the fishery which is entirely manned with natives. They take their part in the occupation equally with the white men, and are found to be not less expert then they.¹³

The reminiscences of a whaler who had worked at Encounter Bay likewise shows Aboriginal people as both consumers and producers in the whaling industry:

The blacks gave the whalers much help as watchers. It was in their interest to do so, for...the capture of the big "fish" meant a royal feast for them. Incidentally, one of the best harpoonists at the station was an aboriginal – Black Dick.¹⁴

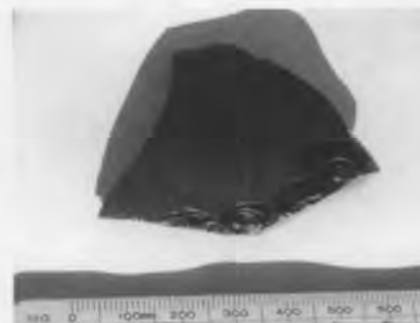
On the other hand, Captain Robinson recalled that at the Streaky Bay whaling station in 1844, "the natives were not allowed to come down off the ridges to the fishery without permission."¹⁵ Later in 1846 at the same station an unsuccessful attempt to "get a black woman" appears to have resulted in the deaths of three whalers who had been left at the station to guard the whale oil that could not be carried away by Captain Robinson aboard *Abeona* at the end of a successful season.¹⁶

Several historical accounts mention such abductions of Indigenous women and their children as a source of extra labor and as "wives"—or perhaps more accurately, slaves.¹⁷ These women were taken from the mainland and Tasmania to some of the most isolated whaling stations in South Australia, including Flinders Island and Kangaroo Island.¹⁸

Direct archaeological evidence for the interactions of white whalers and Indigenous people has emerged from the earth at two South Australian sites so far. Archaeology adds new dimensions to our understanding by showing some of the ways that Aboriginal people creatively adapted to new situations. A field survey carried out at the Point Collinson whaling station in 1997 discovered black bottle glass, flaked by Indigenous people to form tools, at two locations near the station.¹⁹

While it is possible that the glass came from other European visitors, the whaling station is the probable source. The proximity to the station of Indigenous sites containing reworked European material shows that this location was probably an area of interaction between whalers and Aboriginal people.

In June 1998 a group of four staff and students visited Flinders Island to carry out a small survey of the whaling station ruins. At one of the sites associated with whaling operations an exciting discovery was made: an imported quartz hammer stone, a tool which can be positively linked to Aboriginal women brought to the island by the whaler and sealer William



Confronted with a new material like whalers' glass bottles, Aboriginal people put it to their own uses, flaking glass into tools like this example found near Point Collinson.

Photo by Mark Staniforth courtesy of the AWSA project



This plain white quartz hammer stone found near Bryan's hut on Flinders Island is mute evidence of the presence of Aboriginal women—and perhaps of kidnapping as well.

Photo by Mark Staniforth courtesy of the AWSA project

Bryan (or Bryant). Documents record the presence of Indigenous women and children there:

A son, Bill Bryan Junior, was born to him by an Aboriginal girl, reputedly kidnapped by Bryan prior to his arrival on the island.²⁰

The hammer stone had obviously been brought to the island, as no quartz of that variety occurs naturally there. Furthermore, there is no archaeological evidence that Indigenous people ever used the island—which lies thirty-seven kilometers (twenty-three miles) from the mainland—prior to Bryan's arrival. The tool is therefore almost certainly associated with the Indigenous women brought by Bryan.²¹ Further archaeological work at whaling stations will, we hope, unearth other artifacts that will help us see again traces of the lives of people who have for so long been invisible.

Archaeological survey and excavation, together with the scarce historical evidence, has begun to shed some light on the involvement of Aboriginal people and European women and children in whaling station life. Archaeological evidence of Indigenous involvement in whaling and interaction with whalers is still minimal, a problem due at least in part to the tendency to focus on the whalers and their operations instead of viewing whaling stations as areas of interaction between cultures. The bottle glass tools from Point Collinson and the hammer stone from Flinders Island indicate that the evidence is there. We just need to keep looking.

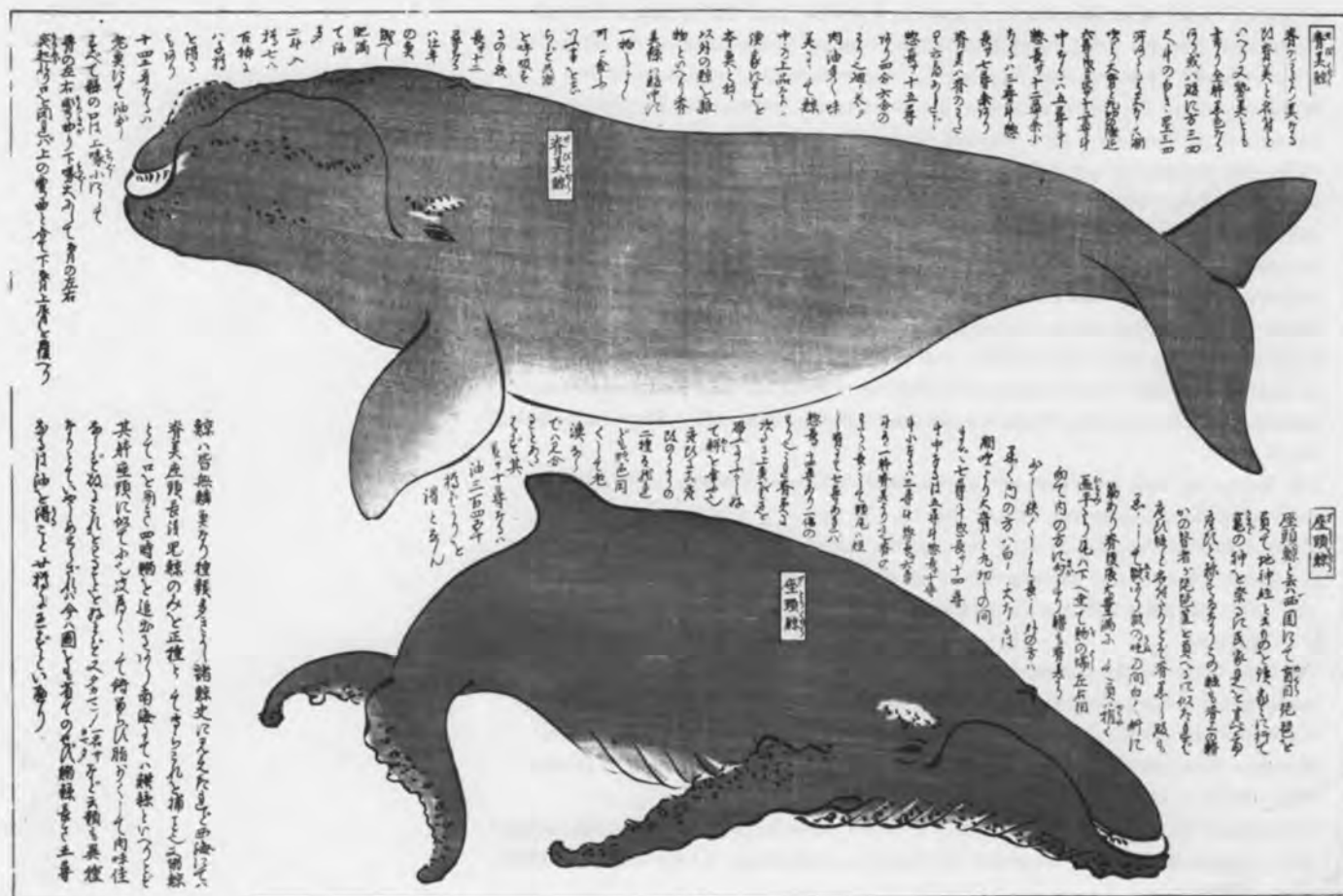
N O T E S

- 1 This is similar to the situation that existed in most of the early Australian colonies (as well as New Zealand). See Susan Lawrence and Mark Staniforth, eds., *The Archaeology of Whaling in Southern Australia and New Zealand* (Canberra: Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology and the Australian Institute for Maritime Archaeology, Special Publication No. 10, 1998); Granville Allen Mawer, *Abah's Trade: The Saga of South Seas Whaling* (St. Leonard's, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1999).
- 2 Funding for this AWSA (Archaeology of Whaling in South Australia) project and the development of a website has come from a Flinders University URB establishment grant, the Ian Potter Foundation, the Australian National Centre for Excellence in Maritime Archaeology (Western Australia Maritime Museum) and a Small ARC grant. The AWSA project involves the recording of surface artifacts and structural remains and, in some cases excavation, of whaling station sites on the Eyre Peninsula, Kangaroo Island and at Cape Jervis. The aim is to investigate whaling activity in South Australia, particularly the presence of European women and children and Indigenous people at whaling stations.
- 3 W.J. Hosking, "Whaling in South Australia: 1837-1872" (Honors thesis, School of Social Sciences, Flinders University, 1973); Parry Kostaglou and Justin McCarthy, "Whaling and Sealing Sites in South Australia" (Fremantle: Australian Institute for Maritime Archaeology, Special Publication No. 6, 1991).

- 4 Austral Archaeology, "Thistle Island Whaling Station Excavation Report" (Adelaide: State Heritage Branch, Department of Environment and Land Management, 1993), 10-13. A tun is a large cask holding about 250 gallons.
- 5 Michael D. Jones and Staniforth, "Fowlers Bay Whaling Site Archaeological Program" (Adelaide: South Australian Museum and the Australian and New Zealand Scientific Exploration Society, 1996); Staniforth, "Three Whaling Station Sites on the West Coast of South Australia - Fowlers Bay, Sleaford Bay and Streaky Bay" in Lawrence and Staniforth, 57-63. Regarding evidence of early whaling activities see the 1841 account by explorer Edward John Eyre, who, in his failed attempt to travel from Adelaide to Perth, was rescued by a passing French whaleship and its "shore gang." His short stay with them before heading back to Adelaide is one of the few accounts of whalers in this section of South Australia.
- 6 In neighboring Western Australia, see for example Martin Gibbs, "The Historical Archaeology of Shore-Based Whaling in Western Australia 1836-1879," Ph.D. thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of Western Australia, 1995; Gibbs, "Colonial Boats and Foreign Ships: The History and Archaeology of Nineteenth Century Whaling in Western Australia" in Lawrence and Staniforth; Gibbs, "Conflict and Commerce: American Whalers and the Western Australian Colonies 1826-1888," *The Great Circle* 22, No. 2: 3-23.
- 7 J.W. Robinson, "Reminiscences of Captain James William Robinson (1824-1906)," Archives Office of Tasmania, Hobart, Ref NS 222, 54.
- 8 *South Australian Register*, 25 April 1851, 3. The account also mentions that Mrs. Clark had visited the Hog Bay whaling station on Kangaroo Island with her husband.
- 9 The work was done with the co-operation and assistance of Terry Arnott at Heritage SA.
- 10 For a discourse on the dangers and misunderstandings possible in cross-cultural exchanges see Greg Denning, *The Death of William Gooch: A History's Anthropology* (Carlton South, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1995); Denning, *Islands and Beaches: Discourses on a Silent Land: The Marquesas 1774-1880* (Chicago: Dorsey Press, 1980).
- 11 H.P. Moore, "Notes on the Early Settlers in South Australia prior to 1836," *Proceedings of the Society of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia- SA Branch* XXV (1923): 93.
- 12 *South Australian Register*, 6 September 1879.
- 13 *The Southern Australian*, 7 August 1839.
- 14 *The Adelaide Chronicle*, 20 April 1933.
- 15 Robinson, 54.
- 16 Terry Arnott, "Mystery of Franklin Island Finally Solved," *Heritage SA Newsletter* (January, 1999): 5-7.
- 17 Cherrie De Leuien, "The Power of Gender," (Honors thesis, Department of Archaeology, Flinders University, 1998), 37.
- 18 Arnott, 5.
- 19 Staniforth, 62.
- 20 *South Australian Register*, 6 June 1878, 6.
- 21 De Leuien, 85-86.

A Japanese Whale Hunt in 1829

Selections from the *Isana-Tori Ekotoba*



An Introduction to Net whaling in Japan

Katsuaki Morita

The people of the Japanese islands have hunted whales for several thousand years. Archaeologists have found that stranded whales were processed in prehistoric times and uncovered evidence of the hunting of small cetacean species. When written records appeared more than a thousand years ago, they document that whaling-centered patterns of culture and trade networks already existed.

The illustrations on the following pages show net whaling, a technique which succeeded the older harpoon method. According to the oldest Japanese monograph on whaling, compiled around the 1720s, the harpoon method—in which

boats chased whales into a bay and harpooned them—developed on the central coast of Honsyu Island at the end of the sixteenth century. It spread west to Kyusyu Island in the 1620s, where over seventy whaling stations sprang into existence in the northwestern part of the island alone.

Since net fishing had long been common, attempts to capture whales with nets were made in several places, but it was the method developed in Wakayama in the late seventeenth century which spread throughout the western part of the Japanese Islands. When a lookout on a hillside spotted a whale, it was chased by a few dozen hunting boats into layers of huge nets. The entangled quarry was dispatched with several hundred harpoons and spears, and its carcass was towed to a land station to be processed into meat and other products. This method enabled whalers to catch larger and heavier whales—primarily grays, humpbacks, right whales, fin whales, blue whales and minke—some of which sink when harpooned.

The *kujira-gumi* ("whaling group"), was usually based deep inside an appropriate bay, where geography and migration routes conspired to form a natural snare. Tasks at a station were typically divided between the hunting department



Katsuaki Morita is Dean of the Department of Multicultural World Studies at the Konan Women's University in Kobe, Japan.

Stuart M. Frank is Director and Senior Curator of the Kendall Institute, the newly-formed research, library, and publications division of the New Bedford Whaling Museum. Besides being an internationally-recognized authority on whaling, Dr. Frank has published extensively on scrimshaw and nautical songs, which he also performs with his wife, Mary Malloy, a noted maritime historian in her own right.

(*oktai* or, *okiba*, literally "offshore place") and a processing department (*nayaba*, or "barn place"). A few hundred seamen and a few dozen boats composed the *oktai*, while the *nayaba* consisted of several hundred laborers and processing facilities.

Whaling became big business, rendering huge profits and demanding high managerial skills, substantial capital, scientific knowledge of whales, elaborate hunting techniques and a huge amount of manpower, plus political support from the local government in exchange for tax revenues. By the time these pictures were published in 1832, whaling had evolved from a simple fishing activity into a proto-modern industry, and one of the most successful enterprises was the Masutomi Group on Kyusyu Island, whose station at Misaki is depicted.

The Masutomi family brought the harpoon method to the small island of Ikitsuki, north of Kyusyu, in 1725 and introduced net whaling from Wakayama in 1733. Its operations peaked around the beginning of the nineteenth century, when it employed over two hundred boats and more than three thousand men at several stations. The men were recruited from villages not only in Kyusyu but also in other parts of the Japanese Islands, and their complete division of labor made a kind of "assembly line" processing possible. By the time the Masutomi ceased whaling in 1861, their total catch was estimated to be more than twenty thousand whales. Japanese net whaling was supplanted in the 1890s by mechanized whaling introduced from Norway, but for more than two centuries, communities in the four whaling centers—Wakayama, Kochi, Yamaguchi and Northern Kyusyu—based their lives and economies on the hunt.

The whaling stations attracted scientists, painters, philologists, literary scholars, amateur intellectuals and socially famous figures, and some stations produced handsome guidebooks in bound book or scroll form. The Masutomi, the biggest *kujira-gumi*, produced one of the most scientifically sophisticated guidebooks, *Isana-tori Ekotoba*, containing the highest knowledge concerning whales and whaling at that time.

Notes on the *Isana-tori Ekotoba*

Stuart M. Frank

On the following pages is a narrative of a whale hunt excerpted from *Isana-tori Ekotoba*, or "Whaling Illustrated," a book compiled or edited by Oyamada Tomokiyo in 1829 and published privately in two volumes at Edo (Tokyo) in 1832. It is the great, encyclopedic classic of Japanese whaling.

The woodblock prints and text on the following pages are from the first volume, a step-by-step description of whaling methods and procedures containing twenty captioned pictures each measuring 29 by 43 cm (11 1/4 x 17 inches). Volume Two, in a matching format, likewise contains twenty prints and text about the technical details of boats, nets, gear, and whale anatomy, including the images above and at left. A companion volume, a cookbook entitled *Getniku choumi bou* ("How to Cook Whale Meat") was also issued in 1832 in a smaller format.

Detailed depictions of whaling appeared as early as the first quarter of the eighteenth century as a few local *daimyo* (feudal lords) commissioned *emaki* manuscript scrolls chronicling the whale hunt in words and pictures. Several copies of each were typically produced for private circulation among the nobility.

Continued Japanese interest in rural activities and vernacular occupations like whaling eventually resulted in the watershed *Isana-tori Ekotoba*, based upon the narrative protocols and pictorial traditions established by the *emaki* scrolls over the preceding century, and informed by careful firsthand observations. The illustrations are reproduced from a copy of the book from the Kendall Collection now in the New Bedford Whaling Museum.

Images in this article courtesy of the New Bedford Whaling Museum/Old Dartmouth Historical Society, New Bedford, Mass.

"The whalers are 587 in number... Before starting, they gather at the house of Masutomi [whaling entrepreneur Masutomi Doki's home at Ichibu-ura, Ikitsuki Island] and drink sake, toasting to the success of the hunt. The whaling season begins in midwinter. It is customary to place at the prow of the boat a flag depicting the horn of a bull, symbolizing the whalers' hope that they will be as proficient as a bull in harpooning their prey."



"During the migratory season, when whales pass nearby, a lookout [like the two men in the foreground] is stationed on high ground while boatmen search for whales five to seven miles out to sea. By night, watchmen signal 'all's well' with drums. Flags and smoke are used to signal when whales are sighted."

"As the water in the migratory path is too deep to force a whale into the net, the hunters must drive their prey into the shallows nearer to shore. *Seko* boats surround the running whale, maneuvering left and right to prevent its escape from the circle. Here, a *zato-kujira* [humpback] is encircled by *seko* boats, to be driven towards shore into the nets spread in shoal water by men in *sogai* boats."



"Sometimes more than a hundred thrusts with the lance are necessary to kill a big whale, while three or four thrusts are sufficient to kill a thin whale."

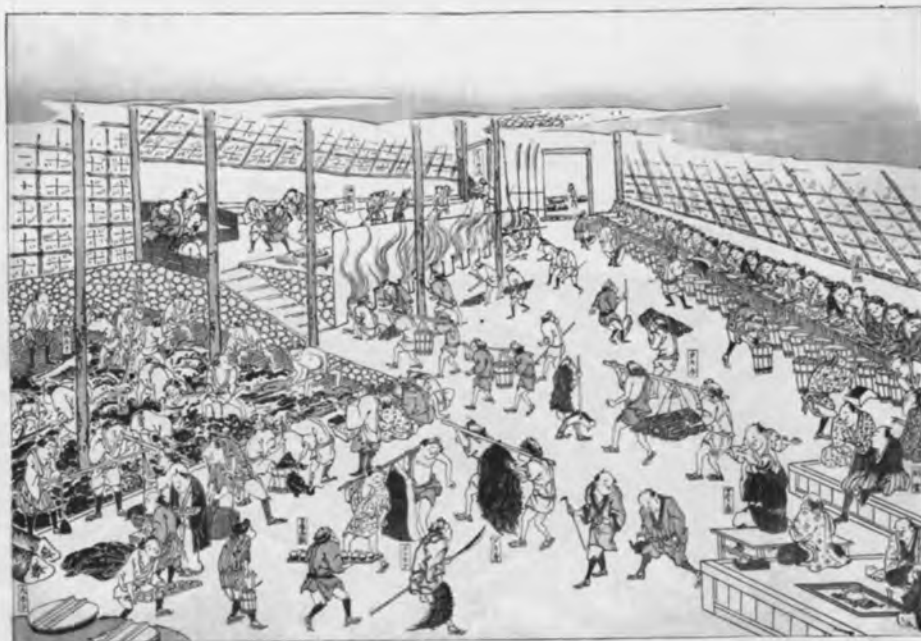


"A dead whale will sink to the bottom and cannot be raised by human power. Thus, when a whale is on the brink of death, one of the harpooners jumps onto its back and cuts a hole through the blowhole, through which a large rope is passed to fasten it to the boats. Then the hunters pronounce a Buddhist blessing and sing a song about having caught the biggest *sebi-kujira* [right whale] in three provinces. Forming two lines, the boats haul the whale back to the shore at Misaki."



"The whalers shout as their boats approach Misaki with the whale in tow. Several hundred people at the whaling station beat drums in salute, while others with big knives receive the captured whales at water's edge...With capstans, the whale is winched to the whaling station. Next, the net is removed and the length of the animal measured. Then, under the supervision of the flensing master [chief butcher] and according to rigid procedures, a team of specialists carves up the carcass into its component parts, each of which is brought to the appropriate warehouse."

"Blubber from the back and sides, the head, the tail, the tongue, and the red meat are carried to the big warehouse...Seventy or eighty men sit along the right wall cutting blubber into small pieces, which they put in the small bowls in front of them to be rendered into oil. At the left side near the wall, a little below ground level, is a "fish platform," where bamboo mats are spread on which the meat is cut. The tail and red meat are salted for food, to be shipped by sea to various markets in other parts of Japan. Behind this are seventeen cooking stoves in which the blubber is rendered into oil. In front of the cookery is a firewall to prevent the cauldrons from catching fire from the ovens. Pipes in the back wall carry the oil to storage vats in the adjacent oil warehouse."



"Fifty or sixty people work in the bone warehouse where the skull and bones are processed...Large bones are cut with a bone-saw. On the right about thirty men sit near the wall cutting bones into pieces which are placed in bowls and carried to the six ovens on the left, where they are boiled in sea water to recover the oil. The remaining bone is then crushed and sold as fertilizer. This fertilizer is especially good for growing tobacco."



"Harpooners grow their hair longer than that of ordinary men, for should they fall into the sea and be too weak to climb back into the boat, the men in the boat can grab their hair and lift them into the boat. The whalers dance three times: first, in preparing for the hunt; next, at a festival held at Misaki on the ninth day of January to open the hunt; and, finally, to celebrate their success after they return from whaling. This picture shows about thirty men dancing to drums and singing whaling songs at the end of the hunt."

JAPANESE WHALERS IN KOREAN WATERS 1890-1910

Katsuaki Morita



Japanese whaling in Korea enriched the Japanese colonists, but did little to benefit Koreans like these two men.

From Roy Chapman Andrews, Whale Hunting with Gun and Camera, 1916

At the turn of the twentieth century, Japanese whaling underwent drastic changes as new methods of catching whales, new target species, new work organization, and new hunting grounds transformed an ancient traditional industry into a modern mechanized one. The old method of netting whales was replaced by Norwegian mechanized harpooning, and whalers now sought out the largest and heaviest species, such as fin and blue whales. For the first time, too, Japanese whalers ventured extensively into Korean waters, employing a multiethnic workforce. Whaling in Korea was part of Japan's colonization efforts in Asia, and exemplifies Japanese colonialism at work.

Korea and Japanese Colonialism

Japan's colonization of Korea coincided with the birth of modern Japan in the late nineteenth century. When Japan formally annexed the kingdom of Korea in 1910, Koreans became unwilling subjects of the Emperor, which they remained until the end of the Second World War in 1945. From the beginning of colonization, the Japanese studied every branch of industry in Korea, seeking new ways to expand them under Japanese control. A huge



A MODERN WHALER IN PORT

The crew are practicing by shooting at a floating target

amount of research on Korean society and natural resources was undertaken, and by the 1880s, fishing in Korean waters was recognized as one of the most promising enterprises.¹

Prior to annexation, the Japanese "legalized" their encroachment into Korean waters through a series of unfair treaties; after 1910, Korea's fishery resources were open to all Japanese fishermen. Korea became a fisherman's dreamland, and large numbers rushed there. They introduced Japanese fishing techniques, formed permanent settlements, and gradually changed the coastal landscape. Approximately 25,000 Japanese fishermen worked in Korea by 1900.²

The government, too, recognized fishery expansion as an important part of its colonization programs. Beginning in the 1880s, it encouraged the pelagic fishery as part of the "national prosperity policy" through a series of laws. Fishing vessels supported by government subsidy increasingly left Japanese coastal waters for Korea, and whalers led the movement.

Whalers Bound for Korea

Throughout the nineteenth century, over a dozen whaling villages in Japan suffered from economic depression. Most had employed the net method of catching whales since the seventeenth century, in which as many as a dozen chase boats and sometimes more than 250 men towed the netted whale's carcass to a land station, where more than three hundred men and women were often employed. The nineteenth century saw a drastic decline in catch as whale stocks were depleted, and the gradual disintegration of whaling communities which had supplied the Japanese diet with meat and other products for centuries.

Several attempts were made to escape this depression. Theoretically there were two ways out—a new method, or new whaling grounds. During the 1880s the bomb-lance method and harpoon guns were tried with poor results. Some whaling villages tried their luck with the old net method in new whaling grounds north of Japan and near Korea, a day's steamboat journey away.

From the May 1911 National Geographic

Katsuaki Morita is Dean of the Department of Multicultural World Studies at Konan Women's University in Kobe, Japan. His first book, *A Cultural History of Whaling and Whales*, won the Mainichi Book Award in 1994. He is currently doing fieldwork in Korea for his next book, about cultural interactions during colonial-era whaling by the Japanese in Korea.

Drawings on these two pages are from Charles M. Scammon's 1872 *Marine Mammals of the Northwestern Coast of North America*.



In 1889, Japanese and Korean regulations sanctioned Japanese whaling in Korean waters. Though it was still difficult to obtain a license from the Korean government, a few Japanese companies sporadically tested the waters. One of the earliest was the Fuso Whaling Company, formed in 1889, which tried the net method near Pusan with poor results.³ Three years later the company transferred its license to the Pusan Fishing Company, which experimented with the bomb-lance method under the instructions of Japanese scientists, but the company failed within a year.⁴ Last to try the net method in Korean waters was the Sansyu Whaling Company (1896-1899), but despite fairly good results, the huge workforce required proved prohibitive.⁵

While these early trials failed, Russian enterprises operated by A. G. Dydymov and H. H. Kejzerling were tremendously successful.⁶ Their steamboats carried Norwegian gunners and mounted the revolutionary harpoon cannons developed by Svend Foyn in Norway. Following suit, two British merchants in Nagasaki and Vladivostok joined forces to launch the Holme and Ringer Whaling Company in 1897, which employed Norwegian gunners and equipment effectively for four years. The company had its offices in Nagasaki, and the large quantity of whale meat surprised the Japanese market.

The Russian fleet was multiethnic, with each ethnic group allotted functions appropriate to its place in the social structure of colonial East Asia: the managerial class was Russian, with Norwegian “technocrats” under them, while non-Europeans provided the unskilled labor force. It had long been common practice for European and American whalers to recruit unskilled seamen from among “lower” ethnic groups in East Asia, and the same was true of Russian, and later Japanese, whaling fleets.

In 1900, Kajzerling's company operated two catcher boats, each with a Russian skipper and a Norwegian gunner. The crew was Korean, with a few Chinese cooks or “boys.” Aboard the large Russian flensing ship, where the blubber was stripped, the captain and officers were Russians, while the seamen were likewise Koreans, with a few Chinese again in menial roles, and a salting team of five Japanese who were responsible for the meat production. Chartered Japanese transports, with Japanese captains and crews, carried the meat to market in Japan. Japanese and Korean crews sailed the two Russian transports. The headquarters ship and her captain likewise were Russian, and she carried the company director and a Japanese customs officer.⁷ When the first factory ship, the *Mikbail*, began operation in 1903, she carried approximately thirty Europeans, fifty Chinese, ten Koreans, and more than ten Japanese.⁸

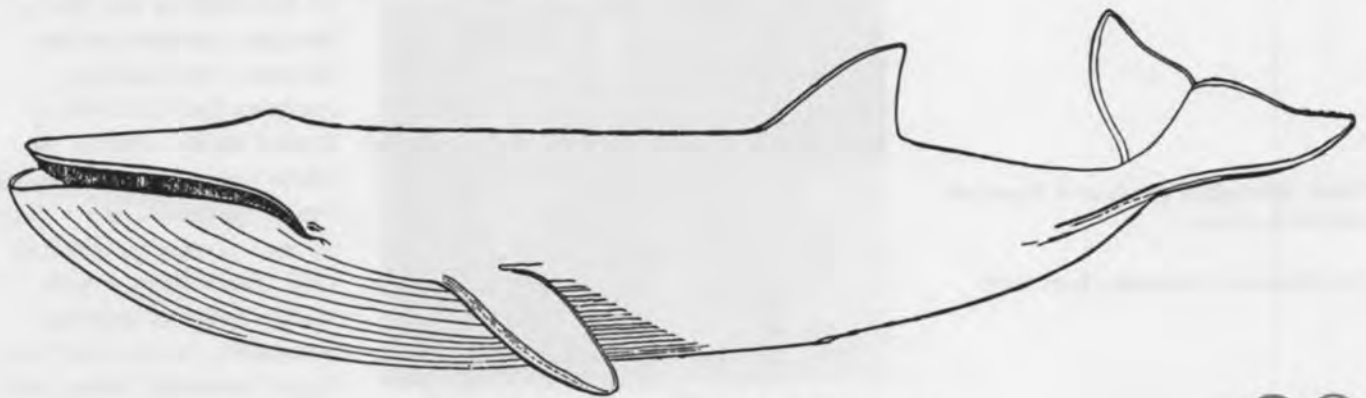
The Japanese Adopt the Norwegian Method

The successes of the Russians and British made Japanese whalers take the Norwegian method seriously. A group of Japanese fishing businessmen in Vladivostok, for example, made an abortive plan to charter a Russian steamboat with a Norwegian gunner in 1890. In 1897 the Nagasaki Enyo Hoge Company was organized, the first Japanese firm to use the Norwegian method.⁹

A central figure in this change was Takahashi Tojuro, who had been a carpenter on board Keizerling's whaleships before returning to Japan to realize his dream of establishing a whaling enterprise of his own. In 1898 he hired a Norwegian gunner who had worked for the Russians, E.E. Walby, aboard a new steamboat, the *Hoka-Maru*. She initially cruised on the coast of Japan, but poor results drove her to cross the Korean Strait and encroach into Korean waters—though lacking a license to do so—even boldly calling at the ports of Ulsan and Pusan.

The *Hoka-Maru's* excited crew sighted scores of whales off Korea's coast, including orcas, blue, fin, humpback, and Korean gray whales. (These whales, which migrate from the Okhotsk Sea along the Korean Peninsula, are genetically distinct from their California gray whale cousins. The original stocks of the Korean subspecies numbered only a few thousand, but like the larger California population, they would soon be gravely depleted.¹⁰) Aboard the *Hoka-Maru*, government official Matsumaki Saburo witnessed several hundred gray whales spouting in the Bay of Youngil, while just to the north, he reported with astonishment, "the wide expanse of more than thirty or forty miles of the sea was full of fin whales."¹¹

Though whales seemed abundant, the *Hoka-Maru's* operations were terminated in two years, and the company folded in 1900 after catching only ten whales. The failure evidently resulted from Japanese unfamiliarity with the new techniques, and Matsumaki Saburo made several recommendations to improve productivity, while trumpeting the potential of the Korean whale fishery. First, he advised that a land station be built on the Korean coast to shorten the time between catching and processing, because the *Hoka-Maru* had to tow whale carcasses back to Japan, and the meat was of inferior quality as a result. Second, he insisted that the hardware and associated techniques should be Norwegian, while Japanese whalers from traditional whaling villages should lend their skills at the hunt and the chase, and their techniques for processing and preserving meat.¹²



OUTLINES OF A NORTHERN FINBACK.



君 郎 十 岡 長 社 役 総 取

Entrepreneur Oka Juro imported whalers and whaling technology from Norway, where mechanized whaling had been developed.

From Honpo-no Norue-shiki Hogeishi (History of Norwegian Whaling in Japan), 1910

Three Norwegian gunners in Japanese service in Korea.

From Honpo-no Norue-shiki Hogeishi, 1910

Creating "The world's biggest whaling company"

At the turn of the century, entrepreneurs in the Japanese whaling center of Yamaguchi decided to try the Norwegian method in earnest. With their dedicated leader, Oka Juro, they launched a fund-raising tour to Tokyo and obtained financial support from the private sector and government encouragement. In 1899 they founded the first Japanese firm to successfully use the new method, the Nihon Enyo Gyogyo Company.¹³

In 1899, Japan high-handedly demanded a whaling license from the Korean government, based on the principle of "equal opportunity" with the Russians. Thanks to its political influence, the company overcame the strong anti-Japanese atmosphere in Korea; backed by the threat of force, Japan obtained the license in 1900 and a renewal in 1904.¹⁴

As Matsumaki Saburo had urged, Oka Juro ordered equipment from Norway and hired gunner Morten Pedersen, who had worked for the Russian fleet for six years, along with Norwegian seamen, offering them all extremely high salaries.¹⁵ For over a decade, Norwegian gunners, skippers and seamen were the technocrats who controlled catch operations. Though they were gradually replaced by the 1930s, in the 1910s approximately ninety percent of the gunners were Norwegians.

The company's first catcher boat, the *Chosbu-Maru*, was built in Japan under Norwegian supervision and launched in 1899. Though promising, she

was wrecked off the Korean coast in the winter of 1901.

Afterwards, the company adopted the policy of chartering catcher boats from other companies, whether domestic or foreign. After the Russo-Japanese war, captured Russian vessels were transferred and the Russian land stations leased to the company.

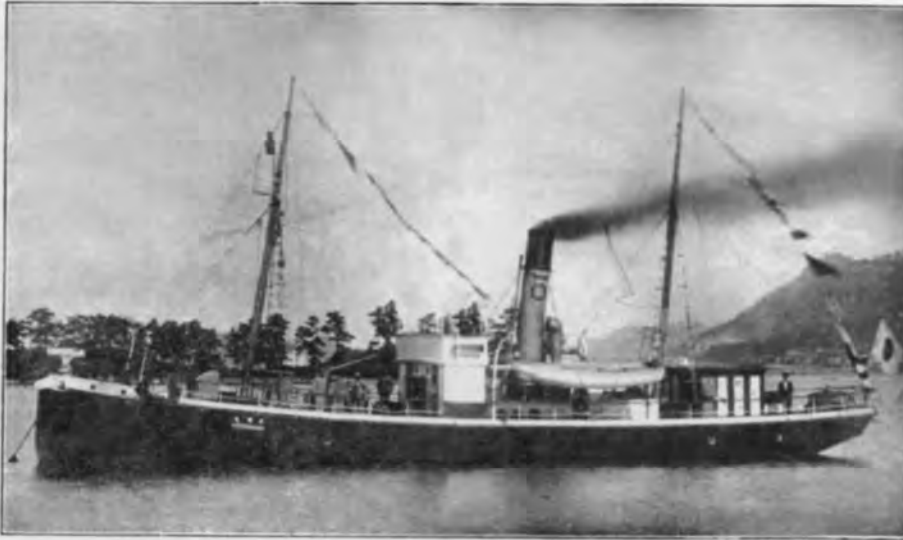
Their success led to a whaling boom, and 1907 saw over a dozen companies send more than twenty-eight catcher boats to sea. Most, however, operated on the Japanese coast, and the company had few rivals in Korean waters. In 1904 the Nihon Enyo Gyogyo Company was reconstituted as the Toyo Gyogyo Company, which in 1910, after affiliating with smaller domestic whaling companies, became the Toyo Hogeishi Company. Billing itself as "the world's biggest whaling company in terms of

C. Rogen. シケーゴ 千砲



ンセンハ、ムエ 手砲
(M. Hansen.)

ンセーダシア 手砲
(E. Andersen.)



The whale catcher boat *Chosbu-Maru* may have been the first such vessel built outside Norway.

From Honpo-no Norue-shiki Hogeishi, 1910

materiel and capital," Toyo Gyogyo operated twenty shore stations, including three in Korea, and twenty catcher boats. It accounted for two-thirds of Japanese whale production, and monopolized whaling in Korea until 1945.¹⁶

The company's vessels in Korean waters hunted primarily fin and gray whales. In the typical season of 1908, for example, fin whales formed slightly over half the catch, while gray whales comprised just over forty-five percent. The total number taken rose steadily from fifteen in 1900 to a peak of 292 in 1906.¹⁷

A Visit to Ulsan

Emi Suiin, a popular Japanese author of novels, plays, and non-fiction books, and one of the leading journalists of his day, visited the Toyo Gyogyo Company's first Korean shore station in 1906. At Ulsan he found an ethnically stratified workforce, similar to the Russian example, and discovered that the "Japanization" of the colonized Korean landscape was well underway.

On the night of his arrival he was surprised to witness "things Japanese" in every direction, even in the darkness. "The ships were all Japanese. The people meeting us were all Japanese. When I went ashore, a house of the Japanese style accommodated me. I used Japanese utensils, enjoying Japanese cuisine and refreshing myself in a Japanese bath."¹⁸

He also found himself surrounded by an ersatz Japanese landscape when he visited Pusan, the commercial center southeast of Ulsan. There, the streets and blocks had Japanese names and he felt as if he "were back in Japan. Everything reminds me of my country and it is very hard to imagine I am in Korea. Pusan is the most important gateway to Korea. These two peoples encountered and fought fiercely here from time immemorial and the more energetic people won the competition. This is just another example of the theory of evolution."¹⁹

Journalist Emi Suiin poses aboard a whaleship in Korea.

From his 1907 book Jichi Tanken Hogeisen (Real Views of the Whaling Ships)





Emi's report shows that not only the site of the whaling station itself, but also the surrounding region, was changed by the impact of Japanese encroachment on the Korean fishery—and also that men like himself brought their ideas of Japanese superiority with them. Japanese whaling created a “contact zone,” where the different ethnic groups met, fought, rejected, accepted and mingled with one another.

The whaling vessels themselves were also contact zones. In the 1905-1906 season the company operated four Norwegian-built catcher boats, the *Rex*, the *Olga*, the ex-Russian *Nikolai*, and the *Regina*, which was wrecked in December 1905. Emi Suiin observed in 1906 that navigation and catching operations were largely monopolized by the Norwegians, who composed all the gunners. The famed gunner Hendrik G. Melson, for example, was skipper and gunner on the *Rex*. Though it was still quite exceptional, there were some Japanese skippers; Emi reported that Natsume Ichitaro skippered the *Nikolai*, and apparently the *Olga* also. Natsume had already spent some seasons as a gunner, and Emi rated him “much more experienced than any Norwegian gunner in Korean waters.”

He wore a “medal” on his face above his right eye. The medal was actually an appalling scar near the eyebrow. When he was appointed as a gunner, the whale gun happened to explode. He made a narrow escape, with the scar as the reminder of the honor.²⁰

Two views of the whaling station at Ulsan, Korea.

From *Honpo-no Norue-shiki Hogeï*, 1910, and *Whale Hunting with Gun and Camera*, 1916.





G. Melson.

諸
威
式
捕
鯨
船
鯨
漁
の
實
景

砲
手
メル
ソン

Hendrik G. Melson of the *Rex* enjoyed a high reputation in the Japanese whaling industry.

From Honpo-no Norue-shiki Hogeishi, 1910

The fleet's crew was composed of Japanese and Koreans. Koreans appear to have been involved from the beginning; when the company's first catcher, the *Chosbu-maru*, was wrecked in 1901, a Korean seamen perished in the wintry sea.²¹ On board the *Rex*, Emi saw about ten Korean seamen working under a Korean leader. On the other hand, the *Nikolai's* crew was entirely Japanese, for both ethnic groups provided the fleet's unskilled labor force. Thus, the work structure on the catcher boats reflected the ethnic hierarchy of colonial-period East Asia.

Unlike the Russians, the Japanese employed a mixture of Norwegian and Japanese methods in hunting whales. The Norwegians were generally responsible only for the harpoon guns, while the Japanese directed the search activities, gave the chase directions, and struck the last lance in the whale. When the carcass was secured, a Japanese crewman undertook the depleting of the blood, essential to keep the meat fresh and edible, in the same way that a *bazashi*—an honored leader in net whaling—had done for centuries.

The flensing process followed Japanese methods, which had evolved to ensure thorough utilization of the whale carcass and the efficient production of whale meat. In Ulsan in 1906, Emi witnessed a team consisting of three flensing specialists, more than twenty chopping workers and a few dozen "coolies." The flensing team could number as many as forty or fifty men, supervised by a few officers and supported by a medical officer.

Three flensing specialists were wet with blood, sweat and brine and dissected huge jaws and bodies, brandishing large cutting spades. With hooks pulled by the winch, blubber strips were severed from the body, and mountains of white meat and red meat were carried away easily. How brave they look! ...If the flensing takes place in winter in the northern part of Korea, they must be very careful about their fingers. Otherwise they would have their fingers decay with frostbite. Thus they worked in many dangers and were regarded as the manliest of men. They won the respect of their comrades, with reason.²⁵

The station was a complex of many buildings including storage for the fresh meat and facilities for icing and salting meat and blubber, and oil extraction. Their arrangement was based on that of net-method stations in Japan and the traditional processing procedures were maintained. Because every facility needed these specialists, Korean whaling stations contributed to the preservation of traditional Japanese techniques into the mid-twentieth century.

(E. Furum.) ムル | フ 手砲



(F. Olsen.) シセルオ 手砲 郎太市日夏 手砲

At bottom is Natsume Ichitaro, one of the first Japanese whalers to break into the ranks of the Norwegians. Above him is the *Olga's* gunner Fred Olsen of Drammen, Norway, with gunner E. Furum at top.

From Honpo-no Norue-shiki Hogeishi, 1910

In all the facilities operated by the world's largest whaling company, many Japanese toiled in obscurity as unskilled laborers. Emi estimated that a few hundred Japanese worked at Ulsan. There, he watched more than a hundred amateur wrestlers at a recreational sumo meeting, singing whaling songs that whalers had handed down for centuries. However, he noted that only ten men in the crowd knew the songs, which suggests that eighty to ninety percent of the Japanese he encountered were not whalers but laborers.

At the bottom of the work organization were the Koreans. They were forced to take the toughest, most dangerous and dirtiest work. When the company transport *Bocho-maru* was stranded in 1899, for example, more than a hundred Koreans were employed to salvage her in the winter sea. At Ulsan, a few dozen Koreans carried the blocks of meat, blubber and bones to their respective facilities. They were regarded as cheap, disposable human resources and were often described in derogatory terms. Emi, too, referred to them as *mikai-jin* (primitives), or *do-jin* (natives) and described them as poor, dirty, lazy and inferior people. When he arrived, for example, Emi saw in the distance many "dog-like creatures scraping the white trees." These turned out to be Korean people stripping the remaining meat off vertical whale bones. "That explains it," he wrote, with an attitude typical of his era, "and it is just what I have been thinking of the people."²²

Some Koreans, however, attracted Emi's favorable attention. On board the *Rex*, C. H. Kim led the Korean crew with what Emi regarded as excellent leadership. Kim spoke English, Japanese and Korean and all the crew respected him. N.A. Jin, possessed of a large build and cheerful character, led the Korean laborers at the Ulsan station. Men like these served as liaisons or intermediaries, bridging ethnic differences and coordinating unified work.

Alongside the unskilled and semi-skilled Koreans toiled Japanese laborers, who were equally poor and hardworking. The new whaling business in

Bringing a gray whale in to Ulsan.

From Roy Chapman Andrews, *Whale Hunting with Gun and Camera*, 1916



Korea increased mobility among ordinary Japanese fishermen, who flocked there to provide their labor. At Ulsan, Emi met a fifty-two-year-old Japanese woman, Okamoto Take, who had been widowed for thirteen years. Her beloved son had left the declining whaling center of Yamaguchi and followed the dream of prosperity to Korea. He had been enthusiastic about the whaling life, but was killed in the Russo-Japanese war. In Emi's opinion,

An ordinary woman would do nothing but weep. But she was a mother to such a loyal soldier and she was determined to ask the director of the company, Oka, to allow her to work for the land station in Ulsan. She left her home for Ulsan and worked as hard as the men. It was quite moving to imagine that she covered all the tears and sorrow in the oil of the masculine gears. Get up, idle men! Even an old woman could go to a foreign country and get used to a fisherman's life.²³

She came to the station to live out her son's dream, working in oil-stained clothes and boots among poor and oily men. Did Japanese laborers like her unite themselves in friendship with their Korean comrades? The historical record is silent.



© D. Appleton and Company

CUTTING INTO A FINBACK WHALE OFF KOREAN COAST

Flensing a long strip of blubber at Ulsan.

From the June, 1919 Asia



At a feast, Japanese in Korea sing traditional whaling songs.

From Honpo-no Norue-shiki Hoge, 1910

Approximately seven hundred Japanese people lived and worked at the whaling station, including those at stations operated by two other Japanese companies at Ulsan. A magazine reporter in 1906 proudly pointed to Ulsan as "the symbol of fishery development in Korea."²⁴ He was correct in more ways than he knew, for Japanese whaling there was emblematic of the entire Korean colonial experience.

N O T E S

- 1 Che Kil-Seog ed., *Ilche-Shidae-ban Eotchone Munwha-Pyeonyeog* (Cultural Changes in the Fishing Villages in Korea in the Time of Japanese Colonization) (Seoul: Ashia Munwha Sa, 1992).
- 2 Yoshida Keiichi, *Chosen Suisan Kaibatsu-shi* (A History of Fishery Development in Korea) (Shimonoseki, Japan: Chosui-kai, 1954), 159-174.
- 3 Sekizawa Meisei, *Chosen Tugyo Jijo* (A Discourse on Fishing in Korea) (Tokyo: Dandan Sha, 1893), 63-66.
- 4 Oka Yoichi, *Saishin Kankoku Jijo* (A Discourse on Recent Korea) (Tokyo: Kozando, 1905), 223-226.
- 5 Park Ku-Byeong, *Han-bando Yeonbae Phogyeong-sa* (A History of Whaling on the Korean Peninsula) (Pusan, Korea: Minjok Munwha Sa, 1995), 227-232.
- 6 Dydyomov's company operated 1889-90, while Keizerling's Pacific Whale Fishing Company operated 1891-1909.
- 7 Chosen-kai Tugyo Kumiai, "Chosen Hogeigyo" (Whaling in Korean Waters) *Journal of the Fisheries Society of Japan* 235 (January, 1902): 21-27.
- 8 Dai-nihon Suisan-kai, "Nichiro Ryokoku-jin-no Kankai Hogeigyo" (Japanese and Russian Whaling in Korean Waters) *Journal of the Fisheries Society of Japan* 260 (January, 1904): 34-36.
- 9 Toyo Hogeigyo Company, *Honpo-no Norue-shiki Hogeigyo-shi* (A History of Norwegian Whaling in Japan) (Osaka: Toyo Hogeigyo Kabushiki-kaisya, 1910), 188-190.
- 10 Korean gray whales were virtually unknown to the West until scientifically investigated by R.C. Andrews in 1912. Roy Chapman Andrews, *Whale Hunting with Gun and Camera: A Naturalist's Account of the Modern Shore-Whaling Industry* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1916), 186-214. Japanese whalers themselves recorded catching none after 1933; today, only a few hundred survive. Park Ku-Byeong, *Han-bando Yeonbae*, 296-307.
- 11 Matsumaki Saburo, "Norue-shiki Hogeigyo Jikkenn-dan" (Experiments with the Norwegian Method), *Journal of the Fisheries Society of Japan* 228 (June, 1901): 17-22.
- 12 Saburo, "Norue-shiki Hogeigyo," *Journal of the Fisheries Society of Japan* 229 (July, 1901): 13-17; 230 (August, 1901): 19-22.
- 13 Toyo Hogeigyo, 192-280.
- 14 Ku-Byeong, 240-249.
- 15 Arne Kalland and Brian Moeran, *Japanese Whaling: End of an Era?* (Newcastle: Curzon Press, 1992), 108-111; N. Tonnessen and A.O. Johnsen, *The History of Modern Whaling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 136-137.
- 16 Toyo Hogeigyo, 7-28.
- 17 Between September 1906 and February 1908, 107 fin whales were caught (50.4% of the catch), along with 96 gray whales (45.2%). Ku-Byeong, 271; on the gray whales' decline, see *Ibid.*, 296-307. In 1901, the catch totaled 42; in 1902, 60; in 1903, 89; in 1904, 101; and in 1905, 254. Toyo Hogeigyo, 209-241.
- 18 Emi Suiin, *Jichi Tanken Hogeigyo-sen* (Real Views of the Whaling Ships) (Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1907), 8-9.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 142.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 38-39.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 131.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 12-13.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 146-147.
- 24 Anonymous, "Kankan-hogeigyo no Kinkyo" (Whaling News in Korean Waters), *Journal of the Fisheries Society of Japan* 287 (July, 1906): 26.

A Citizen of the Pacific Rim: Nils Nilsen

Joan Goddard

Shore whaling around the Pacific Rim was truly a multinational industry. The career of one man—Nils Nilsen—epitomizes the impact Norwegians had on Pacific mechanized whaling—and shows how small a world the Pacific had become. —Ed.

When Russia introduced mechanized whaling into the Pacific in 1894, its two Norwegian-built catcher boats, the *Nikolai* and the *Georgi*, carried skilled Norwegian personnel. The *Nikolai*, under captain Nils Nilsen, hunted from a station near Vladivostok, heading north during the summer and rendering the blubber into oil, and turning south in the winter, selling whales whole in Nagasaki to serve the Japanese appetite for whale meat. When Japan declared war on Russia in early 1904, these whalers—who had been secretly charting Japanese waters for the Russian navy—were immediately pursued. The *Georgi* escaped, but the *Nikolai* was captured, and Nilsen was imprisoned.¹

Perhaps a Norwegian broker secured his release—Norwegians were then beginning to deliver ships, materiel and men to Japan—for by the year's end, Captain Nilsen reappeared halfway across the world in Norway, ready to join the Norwegian-built *Orion*, bound for the Pacific once again. Nilsen signed articles on December 8, 1904 as gunner and first mate "for a voyage from Christiania, Norway to Victoria, British Columbia and thereafter engaged in whaling in the North Pacific Ocean for a period not to exceed two years from the date of signing."² The *Orion* and her first mate inaugurated mechanized whaling on North America's West Coast.

The Pacific's far-flung Norwegian whalers remained interconnected. Captain Fred Olsen, employed by the Japanese as a gunner (his photo appears on page 33), called in Victoria en route home to Norway in 1906, and compared notes with his colleague Nilsen about whaling in the Sea of Japan.³ Nils Nilsen served as *Orion's* gunner until 1906, by which time he was reported to have had ten years' experience whaling under Norwegian, Russian and British flags. He left to fill another contract and in 1921 and 1922 was serving yet another nation, this time as a harpooner based on South Georgia for the Argentine company Pesca.⁴ Little-known men like Nilsen epitomized a modern saga: Norsemen who carried their whaling trade to the ends of the earth.



Nils Nilsen scowls at the camera from the bow of the *Orion* at Sechart, B.C., in 1906.

Courtesy New Bedford Whaling Museum

NOTES

- 1 J. N. Tonnessen and A. O. Johnsen, *The History of Modern Whaling* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), 134; *Honpoo no Norway-shiki Hogeishi* (Whaling After the Norwegian Method in Japan) (Tokyo: Tooyoo Hoge Kaishiki Kaisha, 1910), 131; C.R. Patterson, "There She Blows! An Account of Present-day Off-shore Whaling," *Metropolitan Magazine* (1907?), 448.
- 2 Ship's articles, SS *Orion*, 8 December 1904. British Columbia Archives and Records Service GR0215, Canada Department of Marine and Fisheries.
- 3 "Steam Whaling in Japanese Waters," *The Victoria Daily Colonist*, 6 September 1906.
- 4 Nilsen's ten years experience is from Patterson, 448. Ian Hart, *Pesca, The History of Compania Argentina de Pesca Sociedad Anonima of Buenos Aires* (Salcombe, Devon: Aidan Ellis, 2001), 482.

The Japanese Experience In Western Canadian Whaling

Joan Goddard



Moichi Kosaka, foreman of Rose Harbour's Japanese crew, squats among his men in the mouth of a rare right whale in 1918, alongside the Canadian station manager and engineer. The man at left, Erio, later became foreman.

Private collection

Only days after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in December 1941, a Canadian naval ship appeared at the isolated Rose Harbour whaling station in the Queen Charlotte Islands. Its mission was to apprehend the winter security guard, elderly Japanese-born Kinsaburo Takahashi, and his two Japanese-Canadian assistants.¹ The three men had been left there for the winter to serve as caretakers of the idle whaling station and make repairs in readiness for the next whaling season, a task which these Japanese-Canadian employees of the whaling company had been doing since the station was built in 1910. The three soon discovered that they, like the 22,000 other Japanese-Canadians living within one hundred miles of the Pacific, were to be expelled from the coastal region. They



would spend their next four years in internment, far inland.²

The largely forgotten experiences of Kinsaburo Takahashi and other persons of Japanese ancestry in Canadian whaling are significant, demonstrating on an intimate scale the increasing interconnectedness of Pacific Rim peoples during the twentieth century, and putting a human face on the challenges immigrants faced. Ever since the first Japanese immigrants landed on Canada's Pacific shore in the 1870s, hostility had dogged their lives. Their willingness to work hard for little pay had quickly found them jobs, particularly in the salmon fishing industry, but political pressure based on fears that white Canadian workers were being displaced gradually squeezed them from this livelihood. The outbreak of war with Japan provided western Canadians an opportunity to get rid of this economic headache.

In 1906, one year after the Pacific Whaling Company introduced mechanized whaling to the West Coast, it had begun recruiting Japanese immigrant workers, inaugurating a trans-Pacific whaling connection that endured for almost sixty years. Many of them, including Kinsaburo, had come from Wakayama Prefecture, and some were from its whaling village, Taiji, where traditional net whaling had abruptly ended in 1878 after a destructive winter storm.³ The new industrialized whaling for which the immigrants were hired, however, was utterly unlike the old Japanese practice, in which whales were hunted primarily for meat. The mechanized whalers sought oil and byproducts such as meat meal and fertilizer.

Most Japanese in Canadian whaling worked as flensers, like these men at Kyuquot, stripping carcasses of blubber and meat.

Courtesy of the Lagen Collection, Special Collections Division, University of Washington

Joan Goddard now lives in Victoria, but spent 37 years in the U.S. She is the author of *A Window on Whaling*, a history of the industry in British Columbia, and is now preparing a book on the social history of B.C. whaling. She is fascinated by the evolution of mankind's concept of whales from the Bible's *Jonah* to Hollywood's *Free Willy*, and suspects that we are figuratively consumed even now by the whale.

Seated in front of this bottle-nose whale at Kyuquot in 1908 is the flensing foreman, a Newfoundlander. Eastern Canadian flensers were soon replaced by Japanese men, one of whom stands beside him. High boots are a good indicator of messy tasks.

Courtesy of the Victoria City Archives, Victoria, B.C.



The traditional whaling culture of Japan was not reflected in Canada, yet Japanese workers ashore proved to be critical to the success of the Canadian industry; when internment came, Consolidated Whaling Corporation, the Pacific Whaling Company's successor, closed its doors for good.

After World War II, whaling resumed in British Columbia. For ten more years, oil and meat meal were produced in the pre-war manner, but without Asian workers. Poor market conditions, however, forced a reorganization in which Japan's largest whaling company, Taiyo Gyogyo, joined the Canadians to produce frozen whale meat for Japanese tables as well as oil. This final whaling connection with Japan lasted only six years, until 1967, when Western Canada Whaling Company closed and the Japanese went home.

The Immigrant Experience in Canadian Whaling

When mechanized whaling began on North America's Pacific coast, the new industry annually imported crews from Newfoundland by train, absorbing men from the failing whaling industry there. But almost immediately, Newfoundlanders found themselves teaching Japanese immigrants the techniques of flensing—stripping the blubber from whale carcasses—which they themselves had learned from Norwegians, the inventors of mechanized whaling. Soon Newfoundland men were no longer needed and flensing became the specialty of Japanese immigrants. In 1908, a representative from the Japanese Toyo Hogeï whaling company reported that the Canadian whaling stations at Sechart and Kyuquot each employed thirty-five Japanese, along with a comparable number of Chinese.⁴ Between thirty-five and fifty men of both immigrant groups continued to work at every Western Canadian whaling station for the next thirty-two years.⁵

In the first decade of the twentieth century, Japanese immigrants had flocked to the western shore of North America hoping to make money quickly and return to their impoverished families. Most of the emigrating fishermen came from Wakayama prefecture, particularly from the poor fishing

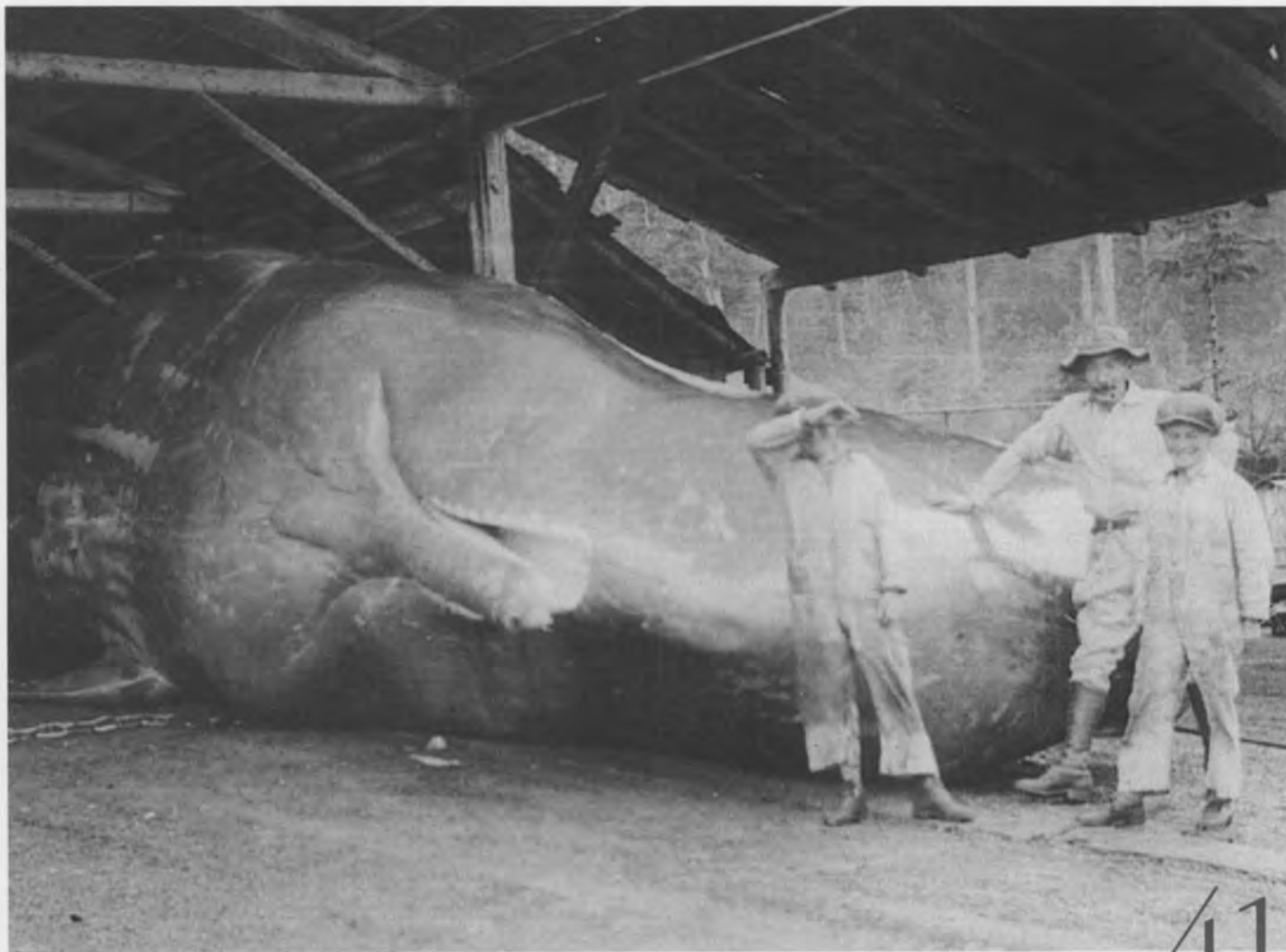
and farming village of Mio, which earned the nickname "America Village" from the men like Kinsaburo Takahashi who emigrated from there.⁶ By 1901, Japanese held 1,958 of the 4,722 fishing licenses in British Columbia's salmon industry.⁷ White resentment, however, forced them out with race-based restrictions.

Because mechanized whaling was a new venture on Canada's West Coast, the Japanese immigrants, earning less than fishermen, were not resented for taking jobs from whites. From 1906 through 1942 hundreds would find messy and menial jobs as whale processors. White, Chinese, and Japanese workers lived in separate bunkhouses, ate different food, and performed different tasks. Racist attitudes appear to have been minimal in the intimacy of the isolated stations, and Japanese labor bosses like Kinsaburo were respected and appreciated by station management and their families.

Kinsaburo Takahashi, an early immigrant, spent the decade prior to internment as a contractor with the Consolidated Whaling Corporation, recruiting Japanese-Canadian workers in the spring, ordering their provisions, serving as their foreman at Rose Harbour, and staying the winter as caretaker. As with all Japanese foremen at the company's stations, his command of English was essential in conveying management's orders to Japanese-born workers—the *Issei*—who spoke only their native tongue. He was scrupulously fair in paying his men, who called him "Kin-san," and his *Nisei*

Isuzuki, foreman of Rose Harbour's Japanese crew, stands with the station engineer's sons and a sperm whale in 1929. Some Japanese foremen forged close relationships with the families of station management.

Private collection





Kinoe Kosaka stands beside her husband Moichi—foreman of Rose Harbour's Japanese crew from 1910 to 1918—with their sons George and Isamu (Sam). Kinoe forged a lasting friendship with the author's grandmother, the manager's wife at the lonely whaling station.

Courtesy of the Victoria City Archives, Victoria, B.C.

S. Iwabuchi, Juro Suzuki and Lou Uyede cut up a whale at Rose Harbour in 1940. Uyede explained to the author that "I was hook tender. When you took the whale apart you had to have the assistance of a winch. In order to hook onto the whale to pull it...You fixed the hook that's on the end of the winch cable onto that part that you wanted to tear apart."

Private collection

(Canadian born) son even found jobs for them in the off-season to be sure of their return the following year.

A few Japanese foremen over the years had wives accompany them at the stations. Kinoe Kosaka arrived in Canada with her husband, Moichi, in 1905. Moichi served as foreman of Rose Harbour's Japanese crew during the whaling seasons of 1910 to 1918, during which Kinoe cooked for the Japanese crew. When she and her two small boys arrived at the lonely outpost, her friendship was much appreciated by the author's grandmother, Lena Rolls, wife of Station Manager William Rolls. Mrs. Kosaka was an important figure in the Japanese bunkhouse, mothering the single young men, far from their families in Japan. Few Japanese women accompanied the early immigrants, but more began arriving mostly as picture brides in a surge after 1908.⁸

The whaling industry valued Japanese-Canadian workers for their agility and energy. Because dead whales could begin decomposing while awaiting processing, diminishing their oil's value, men whose skills could quicken processing time were paid bonus "fish money" for each whale.⁹ These Japanese hook tenders and flensers considered themselves more skilled than the Chinese, mostly older men, who chopped blubber and sacked fertilizer.¹⁰

The Second Generation: the *Nisei*

For some years before the Canadian Navy arrived at Rose Harbour to collect Kinsaburo Takahashi and his assistants, the company had been employing English-speaking laborers born in Canada to Japanese parents, the *Nisei*. These men were bilingual products of Canadian schools, and some had university degrees, but they had few prospects of professional careers in a society largely closed to them. Though whaling work was unpleasant, these men were glad of a job.

The experience of two good friends epitomizes the *Nisei* experience in whaling. Kinsaburo's son Toyozo (George) Takahashi worked initially as a





Mary Kosaka, widow of Sam Kosaka, holds a family heirloom in 1997—a model harpoon made for her father-in-law Moichi Kosaka. Mary carried it with her into internment during World War II.

Private collection

flenser at Rose Harbour. Full of fun, he was popular with his fellow workers and admired by the management for his skills. Alan Armour, son of the Rose Harbour station manager, recalled that “he was the most clever craftsman I’ve ever met. No matter the medium, wood, metal, bone, anything he made was done to perfection.”¹¹ In 1941, George became foreman of the Japanese workers at Naden Harbour, the company’s other whaling station in the Queen Charlotte Islands.¹²

George Takahashi’s longtime friend and fellow *Nisei* Mamoru (Lou) Uyede also had family roots in the Japanese fishing village of Mio. Lou Uyede (pronounced *Weyda*), was born just north of Victoria in Sidney in 1920, and graduated from Victoria High School in 1936. His father Kunizo was an independent fisherman on Vancouver Island until after Pearl Harbor, when his boat was impounded and sold by the government. Lou worked first in the herring and dogfish fisheries and at a Japanese-Canadian-owned sawmill, then spent the last two years before internment as a hook tender for the whaling company.

As part of their “evacuation” inland, the Uyede men were sent immediately to a road camp. The rest of the family were taken to a temporary holding facility in Vancouver. There they lived in horse stalls in the fairgrounds for months before being dispatched to a camp in the interior of the province.¹³ Aspects of Canada’s evacuation policy, which separated women and children from heads of families and adult males, were harsher than American internment policy, which at least kept families and communities together.



Nisei friends George Takahashi and Lou Uyede pose en route to Rose Harbour for the 1940 whaling season.

Private collection

The affable George Takahashi gestures in front of his fellow laborers en route to whaling jobs at Rose Harbour aboard the *Prince John* in 1940.

Private collection



Japanese laborers, like this unidentified man stirring whale intestines in 1936 or 1937, held gruesome but precious jobs.

Courtesy of the New Bedford Whaling Museum/Old Dartmouth Historical Society, New Bedford, Mass.

Like other Canadians of Japanese ancestry, the Uyedes were hurriedly rounded up, with each one's possessions limited to 150 pounds. Few brought mementos of whaling with them, but Mary Kosaka stuffed into her pillowcase a model harpoon made by Rose Harbour's Norwegian blacksmith for her father-in-law, Japanese crew foreman Moichi Kosaka.¹⁴ Many evacuees who left possessions with neighbours for safekeeping never saw them again. In 1946, those who had remained in camps in British Columbia's interior were forced to choose between moving east or going to Japan. The ruling was later softened, but not until the spring of 1949 were Canadians of Japanese ancestry allowed to reenter the Pacific coastal region.

Lou Uyede, like other single men who had opted to be sent to an internment camp in Eastern Canada, was able to leave the camp as soon as he found a job. In 1943, he obtained a letter of reference from the whaling company, which had found him "an industrious, sober and trustworthy worker."¹⁵ In 1944 he was joined by his family, who were allowed to leave internment in British Columbia to move east. Like many other internees, the Uyedes elected to remain there after the war. As his *Nisei* wife Dorothy observes, "our people did very well in the East." Discrimination had prevented Japanese-Canadians from entering professions on the West Coast, but in Ontario, Lou Uyede became an accountant.¹⁶

Repatriation

In 1946, Kinsaburo Takahashi asked his son George to return with him to Japan.¹⁷ They were among 3,964 who chose to be repatriated, sailing on June 16, 1946 aboard the *General M.C. Meigs*.¹⁸ George felt duty-bound to accompany his father, though Japan, to him, was a foreign land. Years later Lou Uyede and the many other friends he left behind in Canada learned that, true to character, George lost his life while attempting to save others in a typhoon.¹⁹

Returning to his birthplace, the elderly Kinsaburo did not find the Japan he remembered, and economic conditions were even worse than those that had prompted him and other Japanese to emigrate so many years before.



A fin whale is processed in the 1960s in the joint Canadian and Japanese venture at Coal Harbour.

Courtesy of Pacific Biological Station, Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Nanaimo, B.C.

Starvation was threatening. General Douglas MacArthur, in charge of the American occupation forces, urged the country to return to whaling to feed its people. And whale they did, first in the Antarctic, and later in the North Pacific.

Canadian Whale Meat on Japanese Tables

In 1948, a consortium of logging and fishing interests under the name of Western Whaling Corporation resumed the whale hunt using a converted air force seaplane base at the north end of Vancouver Island. Unlike the isolated prewar stations, it was located by a small town, Coal Harbor. When a slump came in the market for whale oil, the major partner, BC Packers, reorganized in 1962 in partnership with Japan's largest whaling company, Taiyo Gyogyo KK. The new Canadian-Japanese partnership, Western Canada Whaling Company, would produce oil as before, but also meat for Japanese tables.²⁰

Meat production had actually been a small part of Western Canadian whaling in its earliest years, though white Canadians spurned whale meat. Buyers from Japanese firms appeared in Victoria in 1906, a year after operations began. The Japanese market for whale meat was growing, they said, and their own whalers could not keep up with the demand. The first buyer offered fifty dollars a ton for salted whales' tails.²¹ By 1907, over three thousand barrels had been shipped to Japan. Two more Japanese delegations visited, one hoping to obtain between three and five hundred tons of salted whale meat per month—an impossible goal for a new industry with only one whale catcher boat serving a new and still inefficient station.²² In February, 1907, the *Victoria Daily Times* reported that another Japanese firm was looking for whale meat:

There is eager competition amongst the whaling firms of Japan for the position of middleman. It is doubtful if a satisfactory arrangement can be entered upon for some time, for the meat would have to be cut in a special way which would entail extra labour and the installment of additional machinery which it is a question if the increase in the selling price of the meat would warrant, if already bringing \$40 per ton for fertilizer...Mr. Ehama...will instruct the local whalers in the methods used by the Japanese in cutting up the whale meat.²³

Lou Uyede recalls the work at a prewar whaling station:

"Block and tackles were set up to the tail of the whale and it was winched up onto the lower ramp. Three flensers cut the blubber in strips and the hook-tender hooked up chains on the strips so that they could be pulled back by winches. When one side had been peeled off the whale had to be turned over so that the blubber on the other side could be peeled off. Before turning it over one flenser had to cut the ribs with an axe. This being completed the carcass was winched to the upper deck, where three flensers and a hook-tender worked at taking each bone apart. Each spine, rib had to be cut and dissected by pulling with winches...When all the bones were removed, the meat was pulled by winches to be close to tanks for boiling. Huge pieces of meat were cut by labourers into small chunks. Bones were put into a 'digester' to render fat. The blubber was also boiled in large tanks. There was nothing from the whale that was actually wasted. Meat after being boiled was dried and bagged. Bone was ground for fertilizer."

The lack of further reference to these ambitious efforts to export preserved whale meat to Japan suggests that it was soon abandoned as impractical, but in the early years the Japanese workers' love for the taste of whale was indulged by their Canadian employers. If a tender sei whale showed up at the plant, the Japanese crew's cook was consigned enough for a whale dinner.²⁴ Though this custom was discontinued in later years, workers were known to occasionally drop a prime cut of whale meat into the boiling whale oil for a deep-fried snack.²⁵

In North America, a few attempts were made to create a market for whale meat due to the scarcity of beef brought on by the First World War. The *Victoria Daily Colonist* offered several recipes for canned whale meat on February 27, 1919, including "whale meat roll" and "whale meat shepherd's pie." But whale meat never caught on, though thirty-five tons were produced by the Canadian company in 1917.²⁶ Canning whale meat for distant markets in Africa also proved unprofitable. Not until the involvement of the giant Japanese whaling company Taiyo Gyogyo in 1962 would Canadian whale meat reach Japanese tables.

This time it was the Japanese who would instruct, training Canadians to prepare whale meat for human consumption, and refitting the plant to freeze and store meat. A crew of ten Japanese with temporary visas traveled from Japan annually to cut whale meat, working alongside Canadians who processed the rest of the carcasses for oil. First two, and ultimately four, fast and well-equipped Japanese whaling vessels crossed the Pacific each season to supplement the older Canadian boats.²⁷ Freezer ships carried whale meat back to Japan. Though the Japanese specialists ate Canadian food with the Canadian crew, on the job they delighted in snacking on the occasional tender strip of whale meat seared on the hot machinery.²⁸

Intrigued with Japanese meat production there, some non-Japanese residents of Coal Harbour experimented with eating freshly cut whale meat. A logging company nearby served whale sandwiches to its men, and for at least one event in town barbecued whale was served on buns with all the usual hamburger condiments.²⁹ When Major General Pearkes, British Columbia's Lieutenant Governor, visited, the assembled guests enjoyed a banquet that included whale liver.³⁰

Six years into the Japanese-Canadian partnership, however, whales were becoming scarce as Russian factory ships competed for the catch. Moreover, the popularity of whale meat in Japan had diminished as living standards had improved; whale meat had become a reminder of the hunger that had followed the war. In 1967 the Western Canada Whaling Company closed and the Japanese went home. Except in the Arctic, whale meat has been unavailable in Canada since the 1960s.

For most of the Canadian-born *Nisei* who worked in whaling before their internment, the taste of whale had always been foreign. They were Canadians, regardless of whether their government recognized them as such. When asked if whale meat had been a treat the few times he had tasted it at Rose Harbour, Lou Uyede's cousin Katsumi "Lucky" Uyede responded, "I would say you have to get used to it."³¹

NOTES

- 1 Betty and Neil Carey, personal communication to author, June 2001. Information was given them by residents in the Queen Charlotte Islands. For a description of Rose Harbour and a discussion of B.C. whaling, see Joan Goddard, *A Window on Whaling in British Columbia* (Victoria: Jonah Publications, 1997) and R. L. Webb, *On the Northwest: Commercial Whaling in the Pacific Northwest 1790-1967* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988).
- 2 See Ann Gomer Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians During the Second World War* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1981); Ken Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1976).
- 3 Katsuaki Morita, personal communication to author, 31 July 2001.
- 4 *Honpoo no Norway-shiki Hogeisbi* (Whaling After the Norwegian Method in Japan) (Tokyo: Toyo Hogei Kabushiki Kaisha, 1910), 84. A Norwegian translation is in the library of the Chr. Christensens Hvalfangstmuseum, Sandefjord, Norway.
- 5 Canadian Pacific Fisheries, successor to Pacific Whaling Company, operated four stations simultaneously in 1911-1914. After 1914 only two or three stations operated in any one year. The company evolved twice more as Victoria Whaling Company and Consolidated Whaling Corporation. See Goddard 1997.
- 6 Adachi, 19.
- 7 Ibid., 57.
- 8 Ibid., 85.
- 9 Mamoru (Lou) Uyede to author, 21 February 1991. Flensers and hook tenders both received fish money.
- 10 *Honpoo*, 84; Goddard, "Reminiscences of Life on the Shore Whaling Stations of British Columbia 1905-1918," *Archaeology in Solution: Proceedings of the Seventeenth Annual Conference on Underwater Archaeology* (Salinas: Coyote Press, 1988), 205-211.
- 11 Alan Armour to author, 9 June 1983.
- 12 Hatsumi (Lucky) Uyede, interview by author 3 April 1997.
- 13 Mamoru (Lou) and Chizuko (Dorothy) Uyede, interview by author, Victoria, 19 April 1997. See also Toyo Takata, *Nikkei Legacy* (Toronto: NC Press, 1983), 114, 141.
- 14 Isamu (Sam) and Mary Kosaka, interview by author, Victoria, 21 October 1985.
- 15 A. Garcin to Mamoru Uyede, 30 March 1943. Copy in author's possession.
- 16 Mamoru and Chizuko Uyede, telephone interview by author 13 August 2001, and personal interview 19 April 1997.
- 17 Mamoru Uyede to Alan Armour, 19 May 1983.
- 18 Sunahara, 171; National Archives of Canada RG18, RCMP Series F-3, Vol 3576.
- 19 Mamoru Uyede to Alan Armour, 18 May 1983.
- 20 For a full discussion, see Webb.
- 21 *Victoria Daily Times*, 28 July 1906.
- 22 *The Victoria Daily Colonist*, 6 January 1907.
- 23 *Victoria Daily Times*, 9 February 1907.
- 24 Isamu (Sam) Kosaka, interview by author, 25 October 1985.
- 25 Mamoru Uyede, personal communication, 19 April 1997.
- 26 E. Donovan, Secretary-Treasurer, Victoria Whaling Company Ltd to Hon. C. J. Desbarats, Deputy Minister of Naval Services, Ottawa, 15 December 1917.
- 27 Webb, 279.
- 28 Harry Shallard, interview by author, 16 October 1996.
- 29 Sharon Hume, personal communication, 31 July 2001; Joel Eilertsen, personal communication, 31 July 2001.
- 30 Francis Hole, personal communication, 13 June 2001.
- 31 Hatsumi (Lucky) Uyede, interview by author, 3 May 1997.

We wish to thank these Sponsors:

95 Ready-to-Display Models



& Affordable Nautical Decor

Sailboats	Regional Workboats
Pond Yachts	Canoes
Tugboats	Half Hulls
Runabouts	Knot Boards
Chesapeake Bay Boats	Nautical Decor

www.ShipModels1.com

Toll Free 888-201-6004

LOCATED IN SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA



established 1935

NEW • USED • RARE • BOOKS BOUGHT
RARE BOOKS APPRAISED • MAIL ORDERS
Extensive Maritime & Naval History Sections

WAHRENBROCK'S BOOK HOUSE

1 800 315 8643

www.wahrenbrocks.com

(619) 232-0132 • (619) 232-3808 FAX
726 Broadway • San Diego, CA 92101
e-mail: wbh@ixpres.com

Press Plus...

*A classic vessel
in printing*

619-656-8800

www.pressplusinc.com



SALUTES THE FINE JOB THE MARITIME
MUSEUM HAS DONE IN
RESTORING THEIR CLASSIC VESSELS
LET US HELP YOU RESTORE YOUR
CLASSIC VESSEL

DOWNWIND MARINE

Serving Your Every Yachting Need

From the crew at Downwind Marine.

We are located at 2804 Cañon Street
San Diego, CA 92106

(619) 224-2733 WHX 369

homepage: <http://www.downwindmarine.com>
e-mail: downwind@IBM.net

San Diego Maritime Museum 2002 Calendar



Every month this year, gaze at a dramatic, full-color photograph of the historic San Diego Maritime Museum vessels: 1863 bark *Star of India*, 1898 ferryboat *Berkeley*, 1904 steam yacht *Medea* and 1914 *Pilot* boat. Talented photographers have captured the beauty of the ships underway and at the dock, and surrounded by nature's glory.

This 9 x 12 spiral bound calendar offers large format blocks with room for all your daily appointments. Historical dates relating to the ships are featured each month. This calendar would be a colorful and attractive display for any wall. What a marvelous memento of a visit to San Diego's waterfront, a great gift for your friends, relatives, or yourself!

Available in the Museum Store, these calendars may also be purchased through the mail with the order form below. As a special project whose proceeds benefit the Maritime Museum, please understand we cannot extend a member's discount for this item.



Order Form – San Diego Maritime Museum 2002 Calendar

_____ number of calendars @ \$12.75 per calendar

Tax (7.75%) (\$.99 per calendar)

Shipping & Handling

\$2 per address

for 1-3 calendars (in the U.S.)

\$3 per address for 4-6 calendars (in the U.S.)

Please add \$5 per address for
outside U.S. (U.S. currency only)

Total

Method of Payment

☐ Check enclosed, made payable
to San Diego Maritime Museum

☐ Credit Card # _____ Exp. Date _____

Your Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone _____

SHIP TO ADDRESS (if different from your address)

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Please remit to: San Diego Maritime Museum
Calendar Orders
1492 N. Harbor Dr.
San Diego, CA 92101

Have a Whale of a Time Just Off San Diego Bay...

Hornblower Cruises & Events
(619) 686-8700 (Power Boats)

H & M Landing*
(619) 222-1144

Orion Charters, Inc.
(619) 574-7504 (Sail Boats)

Pt Loma Sportfishing*
(619) 223-1627

San Diego Harbor Excursions
(619) 234-4111 (Power Boats)

Discover what's in it for you.

* Also 2-3 day trips in Baja California
Photo courtesy of Phillip Colla/OceanLight.com

Port of San Diego

www.portofsandiego.org



**MARITIME MUSEUM
ASSOCIATION OF SAN DIEGO**

1492 North Harbor Drive
San Diego, CA 92101

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
San Diego, Calif.
Permit No. 1089