

✓ 1625
X: Lance and Net and Hook

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So we on with our coats and we manned the boats
For the point where the whale she blew.

-- Wallace Irwin

In the first half of the Nineteenth century, Yankee whalers were sparse and casual visitors to San Diego, and the local fishing industry was limited to those of the local paisanos who had enough ambition to bait a hook and toss it into the then sparkling, clear waters of the bay.

It never was a whaling port, in the sense that locally-based ^{whalemen} ~~whalers~~ would head for the high seas in barks or schooners, although from time to time a fair amount of oil was coopered at the modest local try-works, from whales caught close to shore. Back in the 1840s, female whales calved in San Diego Bay -- a situation not overlooked by some of the transplanted New Englanders who made up the local seafaring population after the American occupation. Local whaling dates to around 1853, and by five years later there were two whaling companies located on Ballast Point; when the wind was right, it bore the robust effluvia from the bubbling try-pots all the way in to San Diego. In the 1870-71 season, the first recorded with any accuracy, they produced nearly 22,000 gallons of oil; the next season, which was the best, showed 55,000 gallons of oil and 200 pounds of whalebone. By 1886 it was down to around 15,000 gallons and continually declining.

In 1884 Capt. Enos Wall moved his whaling station from Ballast Point, across the channel to North Island, where there was a fresh-water spring and a little slough afterwards known as Whalers' Bight; it's all filled in, now, and part of the Naval Air Station. Wall, whilom lighthouse-keeper, boat-builder and generally good man around the water, is said to have had the only whaling schooner to operate in local waters; that was the little Sierra, in 1883. However, two whalers did outfit from San Diego.

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