

their house & enjoy the particular company of their daughter Mary & received of them their consent." April 12, "Wrote a letter to Mary Thompson, being the first I have taken this notice of it." April 19, "Received from Mary a line (in answer to my letter) which was pleasing." May 13, "Went to Lexington & Concord — The first time that Mary Thompson rode out with me; a pleasant day & had an agreeable ride."

The outcome appears on September 23, 1808, when this note is entered, "Requested my Uncle Kettell to have me published for marriage," and a week later "Went to Boston with Mary to get Carpet & other articles." It is here the book ends. We will assume that after his marriage a new book was started. Possibly the bride seized the earlier one for the evidences of her husband's affection.

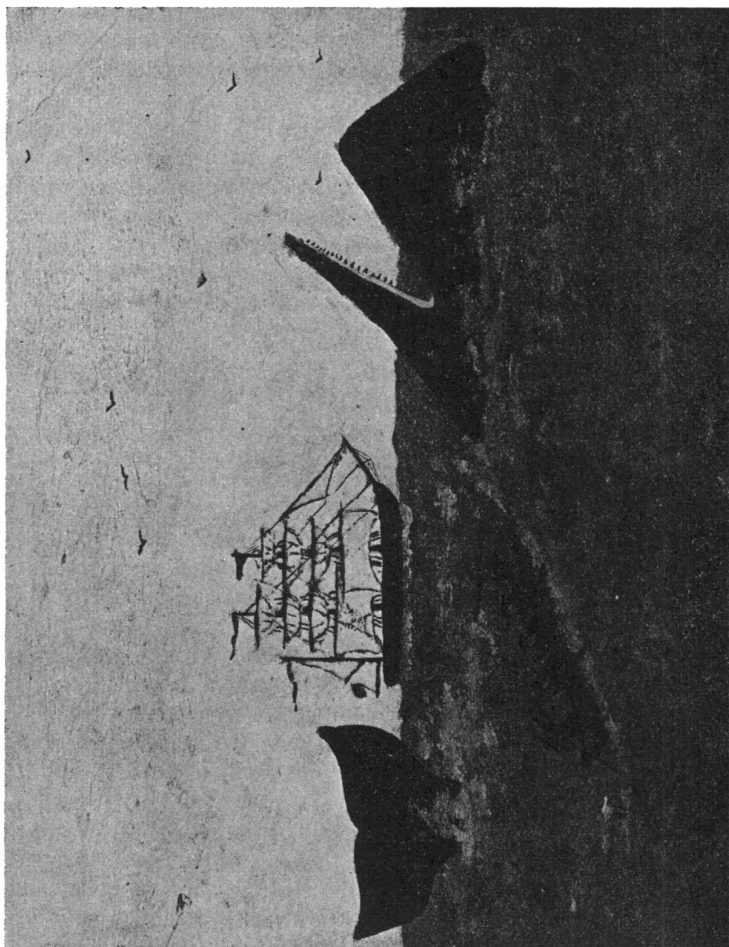
## The New Bedford Whaling Fleet

1790–1906

THE best piece of manuscript material the Society has ever received on the whaling industry surely deserves mention here. The book was presented to the Society about a year ago by one of its members. It is a descriptive catalog of New Bedford whaling ships for the years 1790–1906, prepared by Joseph Dias of New Bedford between 1880 and 1906. He has listed some 650 ships, giving a brief history of each, including dates of various voyages, waters explored, quantities of sperm oil, whale oil and whalebone brought back, as well as the names of the captains and agents for each voyage. One of the most valuable things about this book is that it adds information to every other piece of material that we have on New Bedford whaling.

For example, another item of whaling material in the Society's collection is a part of the logbook of the ship *Enterprise* for the year 1854, during a voyage under Captain Russell. The log book alone tells little, but the catalog informs us that this whaling ship was built in 1828. It went on eleven voyages in twenty-seven years and during this period brought in 6,599 barrels of sperm oil, 11,786 barrels of whale oil, and 80,023 pounds of bone. The ship was lost on "Company's Island" in May, 1855.

The most interesting feature of the log book is a charming old oil painting inside the back of the book, from which the accompanying



**Oil Painting Found in Log Rock of Whaleship "Enterprise"**

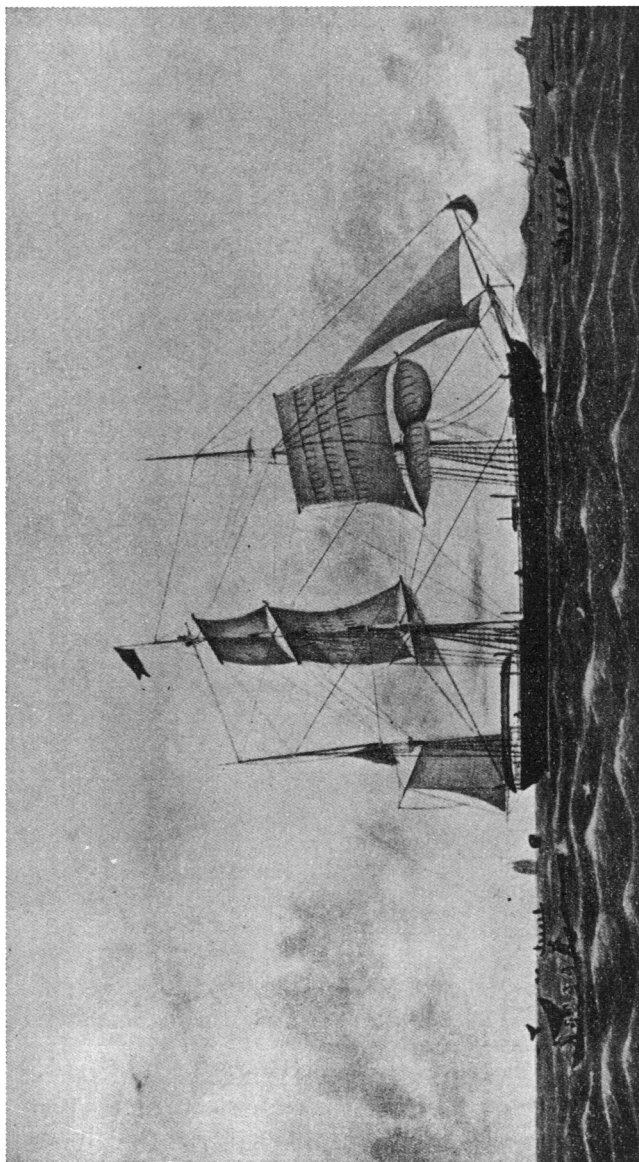
illustration was copied. The illustration loses much through the absence of color, but still retains some of the simple charm of the original. In the front of the same book are painted in color forty private signals of the whaling fleet of New Bedford.

A second item about which the catalog contributes added information is an account book of the bark *President* for the years 1899–1904. According to Mr. Dias, the bark was built in 1849. Our account book is for the last few voyages. In the book was found a letter from the captain to the agent in New Bedford, advising him of the wreck of the bark, which occurred in 1904 off the coast of Africa.

A third volume of whaling manuscripts for which the descriptive catalog contributes further information is an unusually excellent piece — the account book for the ship *George Howland* for the years 1834–1866. The accounts are beautifully kept and give a wealth of most important information. There are in the book the crew lists for each voyage of the thirty-two years indicated, giving the name of each member of the crew, with the percentage of the returns from the voyage that should go to each. These shares varied from  $1/8$  for the captain to  $1/200$  for the lowest paid member of the crew. In January, 1846, for a voyage covering fourteen months, the amounts received by the two members referred to were \$3,915.41 and \$352.38, respectively, the entire value of the catch being \$70,477.47. Unfortunately all voyages did not yield so generous a return.

From the account book itself, there is no way of knowing whether it covers the full life of the ship or not, but our catalog once more supplies the information. It tells us that the ship was built for George Howland in 1834, that in 1851 it was seized by convicts at the Gallipagos Islands, but was recaptured by a Swedish frigate, incidents which doubtless account for the extremely low earnings of the ship for that year — the total returns for the voyage being only \$9,443.05. Our catalog further tells us that the ship *George Howland* was lost in the Arctic in 1871 (probably one of the notable fleet of thirty-four whalers caught in the Arctic ice in that year, which resulted in such a terrific loss to the whaling industry that it could never recover from the blow).

To be closely associated with this account book of the ship *George Howland* is the letter book of Matthew Howland, for the years 1858 to 1879. It includes letters to the captains of various whaling ships belonging to the Howlands. The period covered is particularly in-



**BARK "PRESIDENT," SPERM WHALING, CAPTAIN BENJAMIN GIFFORD**  
Water color by Benjamin Russell of New Bedford. From the Collection of the State Street Trust Company

teresting as it includes the years of the decline of the industry. The letters indicate something of the psychology of the owner of whaling ships — he holds up the ability of one captain to others in order to provoke a feeling of competition which will increase the returns from the voyages, he tries to keep down expenses and yet also tries to avoid the development of a feeling of dissension among the crews which might arise out of poor conditions on board the boats. The following letter somewhat illustrates these points:

New Bedford 12 mo. 31<sup>st</sup> 1858

Capt. Robert Jones

Respected friend,

Thy two letters dated Oct. 6<sup>th</sup> at Honolulu, came to hand by the last steamer and the accounts they contained are very satisfactory — I have not yet received that promised letter from Alooi[?] — but notice by the Sandwich Islands Papers you sailed for New Zealand on the 10<sup>th</sup> which if correct was making very good despatch — I can but hope you will be able to make your Oil up to a thousand Bbls, that is Whale & sperm together — before going North another season — Sperm Oil has advanced 10 to 12 cts a gallon within a month and I should not be surprised if it went up to 150¢ [15¢] before Spring — so that you *must have* 2 or 300 bbls Sperm before the voyage is up — I was pleased to hear that you were well satisfied with one another in the after part of the ship — as I consider it very important on one of these voyages that the Captains & officers should especially live harmoniously together — I shall fully expect good accounts from you in the Spring and hope you will be successful enough so as not to let the *Scotland* beat you, *too bad* — I think it would be a good idea for a ship after the *Kodiac* season is over, to start for the Arctic, as the season there *does not commence* until the latter part of August. A large number of ships took from 800 bbls to 1200 bbls there, in the month of Sept who had taken nothing previous — One of them took 1000 bbls in a week — which was all she got the *Season* — but that was a good season's work — it seems to me you had better go to *Kodac* [*Kodiac*] next season as several ships this year took from 12 to 1500 bbls there and you *may have* a similar chance besides I do not believe there will be so many ships there, this next season — The ship *Rainbow* took 1500 bbls oil there the last season and reports the weather fine & whales plenty up to August 10<sup>th</sup> the time of his leaving — he took his first whale Latitude 57° North Long. 155 W on the 2<sup>d</sup> of May — The *Draper* saw and took her first Whale May 14<sup>th</sup> in Lat. 58, 40 North, Long. 139 W and left the ground with 1300 bbls Oil as her season's work — I hope you will be able to get a good cut the next

season North so that you will not be obliged to come home *short* of a *full Ship*.

. . . . .  
 I sent out some news of you, received early this fall, to thy wife and received a very satisfactory and prompt reply — She says “I am glad to hear my husband is doing so well — and earnestly hope that his life & health may be preserved —” Please say to him when you write that I am *very well* — *patiently waiting* and ever anxious to hear from and of him” —

. . . . .  
 Hoping & believing the next accounts from you will be favorable I remain

Very Truly & Respectfully  
 Matthew Howland.

## New Books in Business History

THIS winter will see the publication, by the Harvard University Press, of two excellent contributions to the field of business history. The material for both has been taken largely from original manuscripts, illustrating the value of collecting this most important type of source material.

*John Jacob Astor: Business Man*, a biography in two volumes, by Kenneth Wiggins Porter, will be released before Christmas. Among the several biographies of John Jacob Astor this is the first to consider him primarily as a business man. The various chapters deal with the particular aspects of his business life, the fur trade, commerce with China, land investments on Manhattan Island, interest in railroads, banks, insurance companies, and public securities. This biography is also the first to be based on original sources and each volume is supplemented by a collection of illustrative and supporting documents, letters, deeds, invoices, accounts, etc. However, full attention is paid to the many traditions which have gathered about Astor's personality, some of which are examined as to their authenticity. His family relations, cultural interests, philanthropies, and other significant aspects of his private life are also discussed. His career is developed from his first few months in New York City in 1784 and 1785, as baker's boy, furrier's assistant, and toy peddler, through his activities as a fur trader and China merchant and as an investor in Manhattan Island real estate, until his death in 1848 at the age of 84 as the wealthiest man in the United