

# A War to End All Whales

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“No nobler class of men, no more skillful navigators, ever trod any deck then those who have shipped upon our whalemens. Those in command are brave and daring without recklessness” (Starbuck, 114). These noble men sustained an industry that in itself sustained the New England economy for over a century. Whaling became one the most important professions in the 19th century, and supported the United States of America through its formation, its battles, and its eventual modernization. The largest mammals on Earth led to the creation of towns like New Bedford and to the fame of Nantucket, and 100 years later would contribute to their economic downfall. Specifically, the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Civil War, and technological advances occurring in the United States led to the eventual decline of whaling in New England and later the entire country. Although the discovery of petroleum was the final straw in the disappearance of whaling as a profitable venture, the three most influential wars in America’s history were the true factors in whaling’s demise.

In 1620 the Pilgrims set anchor in Massachusetts and immediately began to pursue whaling, following in the footsteps of native New England tribes like the Wampanoags. The Pilgrims pointedly settled on Cape Cod rather than further inland due to the abundance of whales. The weary settlers could see the “large whales of the best kind for oil and bone that came daily alongside and played about the ship [Mayflower] (Spears, 5).” The captain of the ship was quoted saying, “we might make 3 or 4 thousand pounds worth of oil” (Murphy, 19). This prediction would prove correct when the population of Massachusetts soon became whale-obsessed and intended on squeezing every last dollar of money from the industry. In 1639, a law was enacted in the colony that encouraged all prospering fisheries, stating that “all vessels employed in taking or transporting fish were exempted from all duties and taxes for the term of 7

years, and all fishermen were exempted from military service during the fishing season” (Starbuck, 110). Whalemens became vital to the survival of the colony, and would become crucial to its economic state.

In March 1644, several original settler families migrated to Long Island, New York, and immediately divided themselves into four groups of eleven people each to “attend” to drift whales ashore. When a whale was found, anyone over the age of 16 was entitled to a share. During this era, the only whales that were “hunted” were ones visible from land, which were retrieved with community-built boats. People were often summoned to “call out ye town to luke for whale” (Spears, 3). For any whale that washed ashore, the government, the town, and the owner each got a third of the whale, and in 1662 it was voted that a portion of every whale should be given to the church. Settlers in New England used the natives as cheap labor for whaling instead of hurting their communities as other settlers had done on the East coast. Natives were paid 3 shillings a day, and a law had to be enacted to pacify the competition among whites hiring natives (Spears, 6).

The emergence of the island of Nantucket as a whaling center began not long after the settlement of Plymouth. In 1659, Nantucket was sold to and settled by the nine original purchasers (Coffin, Macy, Hussey, Swayne, Barnard, Coffin, Swayne, Greenleaf, and Pike) for 30 pounds of sterling and two beaver hats (Timeline: The History of Whaling in America). Quakerism was established as the island’s main religion when Mary Coffin moved there with her father, an original settler. Nantucket society was proper and religious. There was a saying that Nantucketers were half Quaker and half sailor (“Whale Fishery of New England”, 18). The girls of Nantucket briefly formed a secret society, one of their pledges being that they would not

marry a man until he had “struck his whale.” Furthermore, it was an appalling act of a Nantucketer to shake hands with a “mainlander” or “foreigner” (“Whale Fishery of New England”, 16). Nantucket became an exclusive little island that would eventually host a large percent of the world’s whaling capital.

In 1690, whaling was brought to the island when Ichabod Paddock, a Long-Islander, was recruited to increase the efficiency of the shore whaling operations. Soon after, Nantucket whaleman Christopher Hussey was blown out to sea by a northerly wind and came across a sperm whale. He killed it, and thus revolutionized the process of collecting whale carcasses. Up to this point, whaling had been confined to shore whaling, and “operations were carried on entirely within sight of land” (Tower, 26). This new sperm oil was so superior to other kinds of whale oil that Nantucketers began whaling “in the deep,” voyages became longer, and ships became larger (“Whale Fishery of New England”, 19). By 1715, Nantucket had seven whaling ships, and in 1726, eighty-six whales were killed. On one record-setting day, eleven whales were killed, and by 1760, the era of shore-whaling in Nantucket had been replaced by true, efficient sea whaling. (Dolin, 354). Only fifteen years later would the British come to this small island, wreak havoc, and forever maim its most important industry.

“Fighting” back against the British in what would become known as the Revolutionary War were the whalers of the 18th century, some of the toughest, strongest, and smelliest men of their time. Whaling voyages rarely lasted less than two years. The ships never returned with the same crew. The men would simply “desert their floating wells.” By 1859, 3000-4000 men were lost annually by the US through whaling. Ships did not come home when they had a full cargo- they just shipped off their cargo and continued on (Morison, 323). The boats were square

rigged, weighing 300 tons each. They had wooden planks suspended from the starboard where officers stood to tie up the whales. Each boat had 30-35 men on board, and most ships had enough gear and provisions for a four-year journey (New Bedford Whaling Museum). Little technological advances to the vessels were made during the 1800's. The boats were built for capacity, not speed, and many had been previously used in the merchant service (Morison, 318). Upon catching a whale, it was "played" at the end of ropes, killed by a lance when exhausted, and towed to the whaler, where men on platforms or in spiked shoes walking on the whale cut away blubber. After 1760, the blubber was rendered onboard in cast-iron pots, turning into valuable whale oil (Jackson). The process was arduous and dirty, but yielded great amounts of money.

The whalemens were paid in a "lay" system by their captains, who gave each man a fractional share of the profit. This later became unfair- the dividend of the voyage counted on the oil prices fixed by the owner, not the worth of the cargo. An average compensation for three or four years was \$285-\$428. Some money was taken for "leakage and insurance," the cost of fitting out, and even the medicine chest (Morison, 319). A single "good" sized whale provided each member of the crew with "a payday equal to that which a shore based worker might earn in half a year" (Dolin, 71). The men were often secured by whaling agents, who were used to get farmer boys, immigrants, millhands, fugitives and derelicts to work on the boats. They "depicted the excitement of the chase and the fat profits of the voyage" (Morison, 322). The men, who were often uneducated and untrained, were not loyal to their boats. In 1849, the California Gold Rush beckoned to the whalemens. The voyages were broken up by men leaving, and hundreds of thousands of dollars in profit were sunk. Crews would "ship" as a cheap way of getting to the

mines, and would leave the boat, taking no interest in the whaling voyage. They didn't care about the profit/losses of the owner. Instead, they would focus on their own fortunes (Starbuck, 112).

The money of whaling came from whale oil, the most widely used part of the whale. Its prices fell and rose with the economic times, and supported dozens of cities on the United States' eastern coast. A whale yielded 25-40 barrels (30-35 gallons) of oil. Each whale produced six to eight barrels of high-quality spermaceti and the rest was the blubber (18 inches thick!). The oil had dozens of different uses, but it was primarily used as an illuminant for lighting. It was also used in candles, watch oil, additives in motor oil, glycerine, cosmetics ("it imparts a glossy sheen"), rust-proofing compounds, chemical fibers, detergent, vitamins, and glaze for photographs (Pees). It was extremely useful in the industrial factories of the north, where the census of 1860 said that each spindle in a cotton or woolen factory, which by 1835 produced about 1/3 of the US's total manufacturing, used half a gallon of sperm oil. By 1860, the New England textile industry consumed more than the nation's output of oils combined (Davis, 344). In the west, away from the easy ocean access, people experimented with lighting methods. The refinement in production and improvements in lamp design made lard oil and hog fat popular-hogs were even called prairie whales. Camphene was also invented, a mixture of turpentine and alcohol, which was a threat to whale oil. However, hog oil congealed when old and smelled when burned. Although camphene was cheaper and burned brightly, it was volatile and lamps often exploded (Dolin, 80). Sperm whale oil was truly the finest product, and by 1840, 500,000 gallons of sperm oil, 4.5 million gallons of whale oil, and 2 million pounds of whale bone were exported from the US (Morison, 317). These massive amounts would often plunge in accord with

the country's involvement in wars, and during the Revolutionary War, very little exchange of whaling products occurred.

The Revolutionary War certainly took its toll on the small island population of Nantucket, contributing to its severe loss of whaling supplies. In 1775, a ship of 100 provincial soldiers landed on the island and took most of its flour and 50 of its whale boats, which were "prized for their maneuverability, stability in rough weather, and their stealth on the water." Six days later, the Continental Congress declared that no goods could be exported from Nantucket in the multi-faceted Restraining Act. The Congress had been suspicious that Nantucket was providing England and its whale fishery with goods. They had right to question the island: of anywhere in the colonies, Nantucket was the most connected to Britain. All of its whale products (soap, candles) went there and most of the goods necessary for their survival (food came from England. The island's population was in favor of British communication, and after the Battle of Lexington and Concord, 60 British Loyalists sailed to Nantucket in search of a safe haven (Dolin, 150).

The whale fishery was the first industry to feel the effects from the war. In 1775, the aforementioned Restraining Acts restricted colonial trade to British ports and put an end to fishing anywhere along the coast. In the same year, the General Court of Massachusetts said that whaling vessels must pay a bond of £2000 and must return their cargo to ports in the Massachusetts colony. Nantucket whalers ignored this offer and instead "chose the risk of making a voyage, and chanced either capture or sinking, rather than to stay ashore and starve" (Stackpole, 70). In the fall of 1778, fellow whale-pursuing island Martha's Vineyard lost 10,000 sheep, 300 cattle, 388 stands of weapons, and £10,000 to the British, whose next target for

destruction was Nantucket. On the night of September 11th, 1779, a bitter east-northeast gale blew along the coasts and the British decided not to sail in such nasty weather, so the expedition returned to New York (Stackpole, 85). Before the war, Nantucket had owned 50 ships. After the war, that number had been reduced to two. There was an almost total suspension of whaling products, which had led to the widespread use of its substitutes. The industry would have to work hard to re-establish the former demand and consumption of the past.

In 1781, British admiral Digby, stationed in New York, was asked to permit Nantucket to keep twenty-four ships “unmolested by British cruisers” (Tower, 37-9). However, not until 1783 (too late for any benefit) were similar permits for thirty-five ships secured from the Continental Congress. The Revolutionary War had ruined the boat population in Nantucket and Martha’s Vineyard, and ruined all hopes of continuing the business during the late 18th century. Both the exposed state of the island and its Quaker beliefs had prompted Nantucket to be neutral during the war rather than support the colonies. However, neither the United States nor England would recognize or respect such a status (Hohman, 34-5). Meanwhile, in New Bedford, British forces, under General Gray (4,500 men) marched to Bedford Village, down King St. to the waterfront, burned 70 boats in the river and destroyed 26 storehouses filled with rum, sugar, molasses, coffee, tea, and sailcloth (Allen, 73). Nantucket and New Bedford’s fight in the war was underwhelming, and the towns lost much of their gusto and motivation. The two whaling centers would soon again be devastated by war.

Nantucket again became surrounded by British ships, eagerly waiting to capture their whalers, and soon many of their ships and men disappeared. Captured whalers were given a choice between serving on a man-of-war (where the conditions were terrible) or serving on a



whaler. Most went to work on the whalers, and so England managed to build up a sizable whaling fleet of stolen workers (Hohman, 35). After the war, in 1784, Nantucket had only 28 whalers left; 134 of its ships had been captured, and 15 had gone down at sea. 1,200 seamen were impressed into British service. In a total white population of 4,269, there were 202 widows. The families of Nantucket were torn apart, and their whaling industry had taken a serious blow. In 1798, after the famed “XYZ Affair,” French privateers preyed on US commerce by capturing numerous American vessels. In early 1799 many Nantucketers sold their ships rather than fitting out on whaling voyages. The fishing and trading businesses in Nantucket “almost ceased,” while the people of Nantucket saw this as a gross injustice, a “piratical depredation” (Starbuck, 91).

After the Revolutionary War, Americans had become accustomed to tallow (beef fat) candles, and were slow in changing their habits of consumption back to whale products. The British market had been halted due to the imposing of an import duty of £18 per ton of sperm oil. These two major events glutted the market and reduced prices, and in turn whale products became unprofitable. Around 1790, the whaling industry was starting to look up. Sperm candles were used more widely, and the government began buying large amounts of sperm oil for the new “lighthouses”. France began to consume the now fashionable whaling products in such quantities that its trade filled the gap caused by the loss of the pre-war British market (Hohman, 36). After nearly a decade of ruin in the New England whaling towns, the business began to boom once again. However, Nantucket would never recover from its great losses, and would, for the next hundred years, be a barren island, the “products of which were scarcely capable of maintaining 20 families” (Tower, 37).

New Bedford, the city that would overtake Nantucket in both wealth and prowess of whaling, was founded in 1767 by prominent Nantucket whaling merchant Joseph Rotch. He anticipated the city's future importance to the whaling industry. New Bedford had deep harbors, unlike Nantucket with its shallow sand bars, where ships could unload their cargo (Timeline: The History of Whaling in America). Although Nantucket had been having great success, it was the "least suited [place] geographically to maintain that position" (Stackpole, 257-8). Business attracts business, so men like Benjamin Tabor, block maker and whaleboat builder, Joseph Russell and John Loudon, shipbuilders, Gideon Mosher, mechanic, and Elnathan Sampson, blacksmith, came to the town to make a living (Allen, 72). The town grew, and in 1841, New Bedford had 75 whaling ships (New Bedford Whaling Museum). Sixteen years later it hosted 330 vessels, and a population of 12,000, which would double again in the following 20 years. It soon became the 5th largest shipping port in the US, but would also succumb to the war efforts of the British (Morison, 316).

Once again, in 1812, did war ravage the whaling towns, ruining their vessel populations. New Bedford opposed the war "bitterly," knowing their international ships would be kidnapped. In the presidential election of 1812, its citizens voted 399 votes for Clinton (the federalist/peace party) and 13 for Madison (the Republican/war party). Their port was closed to all traffic, which led to an economic disaster, and British ships patrolled to make sure no one went in or out. In the first three months of war, 8 ships were captured, worth \$218,000 (Allen, 73). This was only the beginning of a long struggle. During the war, 7/8 of Nantucket and New Bedford's mercantile capital was at sea, and ships returning from the Pacific could only hope to hear of the war to seek a safe haven (Stackpole, 259). Many Nantucket whalers en route to their home ports were

impressed into British service. The “Nantucketers, knowing no other business, continued to outfit whale ships for their globe circling voyages” (Ellis, 158). The people of the island had been too positive, and “trusting that the causes of contention between England and America would be removed without the necessity of a final appeal to arms, many owners had fitted out their ships.” However, British efforts to ruin the fleet did not last after this war.

Many families left their island homes, the effects of the war fresh in their minds. Groups of six or eight families at a time would leave, many to Ohio and the midwest to establish homesteads (Stackpole, 257-8). The War of 1812 had emptied out the island, and the search for whales had dwindled. Famous author and relative to the original settlers, Alexander Starbuck, described the situation as such:

“Again did war put an effectual stop to the pursuit of whaling from every port of the US save Nantucket, and again were the inhabitants of that town, knowing no business except through their shipping, compelled to strive to carry their commercial marine through the tempest of fire as free from complete destruction as possible.” (Starbuck, 93)

In 1846, the island of Nantucket experienced a great tragedy that marred the whaling industry and affected it for the remainder of its short history there. On July 13th, 1846, a fire began in a hat store and would destroy 250 buildings, all the markets and shops, 7 factories that processed whale oil, 12 warehouses, and 3/4 of the town’s wharves. 800 people became homeless, and over \$1 million dollars were lost in property and products (\$24 million today). The Atheneum, a library/museum that was a “symbol of the prosperity and sophistication that whaling brought to the island,” and also housed all the old whaling records, was burned to the ground (“Fire Nearly Destroys Nantucket Town”). In the Nantucket newspaper *The Friend* a story was published describing the horrors of the fire’s destruction:

“Along the path of flames were stored many thousand barrels of oil, and tons of spermaceti. The casks were burned through, and the liquid ran down the streets, converting them into perfect rivers of fire, driving the appalled inhabitants before it, and washing the buildings that lined the ways with burning waves” (Smith, 376).

The fire destroyed much of the infrastructure of the industry (warehouses, ropewalks, wharves, candle factories, blacksmith shops), and essentially led to the ruin of Nantucket as a whaling hub in the 19th century (“Fire Nearly Destroys Nantucket Town”). Only fifteen years later would the whaling industry of Nantucket completely cease, their boats taken and their men unmotivated.

In 1861 the Civil War broke out, a war that would kill over 620,000 Americans and reduce the whaling fleet to only several ships. When the war broke out, the North took ownership of the entire US Navy and the massive merchant marine fleet. The South meanwhile was left to build its own navy from scratch. The South didn't have ammunition, iron, or skilled workmen, and had remained agrarian while the North had industrialized during the past century (Dolin, 316). The North blockaded the South by ocean, and so the Confederate navy lacked the numbers to break the Union blockade, defend their ports, or fight with Union ships. They instead decided to focus on burning and capturing whaling ships to disrupt the Northern economy (New Bedford Whaling Museum). The Confederate navy boat *Shenandoah* entered the ocean in 1865, and captured and burned a dozen whaling ships in the Behring Straits, and a total of 34 ships in all (Starbuck, pg102). Another similar boat, the Confederate navy vessel *Alabama*, sailed around the Atlantic and “pounced” on the slow and unarmed Yankee whaling vessels, and once sighted, the “sluggish, deep-laden whalers” were at once overhauled and fell as prey to the “lithe, graceful panther of the seas” (Hohman, 291). In total the two ships destroyed nearly 60 New Bedford

whaling ships. In 1860, New Bedford's financial value was \$24,196,138, and by 1865, the end of the war, it had shrunk to \$20,525,790 (Allen, 74).

The New Bedford community was against slavery (at least the workingmen were, but the shipyard hands refused to work with black men). In 1770, citizen Elnathan Sampson purchased a 46 year old man in New Bedford, and renounced his ownership and "set him at full liberty to act his own will from the day of the date hereof forever" (Allen, 73). The war was very one-sided in these northern whaling centers, where their only involvement was the destroying of their ships. Whalers "took flight from the flag" and registered their ships with foreign nations to avoid the war. The demand for whale oil in the North decreased as kerosene became popular, and the pipeline of oil to the South was cut off. The US whaling fleet eventually contracted by 50% (Dolin, 310). Since the South had been the main supplier of cotton to the North for its many textile factories, which used multitudes of whale oil, the North had no cotton and therefore no use for whale oil in such great quantities as before. It was unknown when the "free importation of that most useful and necessary material from the Southern States of America will be resumed" (Davis, 345).

The most famous whaling event during the Civil War was the industry's association with the "Stone Fleet." The Stone Fleet was a fleet of old whaling vessels which were sailed to Southern ports like Charleston and Savannah, and abandoned and sunk in order to block the harbors. In 1861, Gideon Wells (Secretary of the Union Navy) had instructed a team to buy "25 old vessels of not less than 250 tons each" to be loaded with granite and have a pipe and valve so that the ship could be quickly deserted. Whaleship owners were happy to sell their boats for both economic and patriotic reasons. Cobblestones were ripped from the streets of New Bedford, until

7,500 tons of rock were collected, and dumped into the boats. The boats left the New Bedford harbor in December of 1861 and never saw that port again (Dolin, 310). From 1846-1906 almost 700 whaling ships disappeared. 50 were destroyed by the Confederates, 40 were lost to the Great Stone Fleet, and 50 were lost in Arctic disasters (Hohman, 303). “Owners who were unwilling to run the heavy risks of whaling in wartime” sold their ships to foreigners or put them into the merchant service. Others put their ships in Hawaii or the Pacific, and some were tied up to their home wharves where they rotted away until deemed unseaworthy (Hohman, 291). As author Elmo Paul Hohman eloquently wrote, “Most of them found their last resting places underwater, as a good ship should.” (303)

This immense loss of whaling vessels marked the eventual decline of whaling in the Northeast. Whaling became expensive and deemed unworthy of its high insurance costs. The three wars, The Revolution, the War of 1812, and the Civil War had destroyed an old American tradition that had begun as soon as the Pilgrims had stepped ashore. Whaling was only made more obsolete by the discovery of petroleum.

Petroleum was discovered in Pennsylvania in 1859 by two farmers, who first used a drilling rig to get the oil from underground. Petroleum quickly replaced whale oil as an illuminant, being cheaper and just as good for light. This single moment in history ultimately led to the the cessation of whale oil as fuel. However, whale oil was ideal and continuously used for clockwork lubricant, foodstuff/fat for humans, animal feed, fertilizer, and lubricant for military and aerospace use (New Bedford Whaling Museum). As author Alexander Starbuck sadly summed up:

“The expense of procuring oil was yearly increasing when the oil-wells of PA were opened, and a source of illumination opened at once plentiful, cheap, and good. It’s dangerous qualities at first greatly checked its general use, but, these removed, it entered

into active, relentless competition with whale-oil, and it proved the more powerful of the antagonistic forces” (Starbuck, 110).

The institution of whaling would soon be over. Even in New Bedford, petroleum was a “progressively victorious competitor,” and there came to be more profitable labor and capital found on shore. New Bedford devoted more money to the construction of cotton mills than to the equipment for whaling vessels, and “the whaling industry was drained of much of its capital at the very time when funds were sorely needed” (Hohman, 290).

The rise of the cotton industry from 1850-1875 in New Bedford drew capital to the conservative investments of cotton mills, and the city was saved from being deserted. Lubricating oils in the factories were being made of a residuum of kerosene, and wax candles had just been invented (“Whale Fishery of New England”). Whales were harder to find, forcing whalers to embark on longer, more expensive cruises. Insurance was hard to get for these dangerous trips, and whaling boat owners were less likely to have faith in themselves to capture one of the great beasts.

Some might argue that the discovery of petroleum saved the whales. Although a truly positive fact, considering that certain species of whales nearly went extinct after whaling ravaged the seas of these gentle creatures, the centuries old institution of whaling also disappeared. Whaling had allowed the North to industrialize, created thousands of jobs, and expanded and civilized Nantucket and New Bedford and turned them into successful cities. The mayor of New Bedford, Jon Mitchell, talked about his town in 2013- "On the eve of the Civil War, New Bedford was the wealthiest city per capita in the United States." Whaling transformed sleepy coastal towns into bustling centers of commerce.

In a recent article written by Derek Thompson for *The Atlantic*, he stated that “whales aren’t natural resources. They’re supranational resources. They belong to whomever can hunt them most efficiently.” For a century, the men of New Bedford were the owners of the whales. They were the owners of a resource that they believed would never run out. It was impossible to foresee the end to whaling at its peak in the 1850’s, and men were greedy for money in the form of ocean creatures. Bernard Germain de Lacépède, French naturalist during the 19th century, had great insight into the industry. He said that “since man shall never change, only when the whales cease to exist shall these enormous species cease to be the victims of his self-interest. They flee before man, but it is no use; man’s resourcefulness transports him to the ends of the earth. Death is their only refuge now” (Murphy, 19). Whaling became the product of greed and an early sort of oceanic manifest destiny. Over a quarter of a million of the gentle, beautiful creatures were killed for the benefit of their oil, and the events of merely a couple of wars and a magnificent discovery erased all memories of the industry that lit the world.

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## Works Cited

Allen, Everett S. *Children of the Light; the Rise and Fall of New Bedford Whaling and the Death of the Arctic Fleet*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1973. Print.

This lengthy book described exactly what the thesis focuses on, New Bedford and its fall. An entire chapter entitled "The Loss of the Fleet" discusses how each war contributed to the loss of the 700 whaling barks, specifically going into detail about the American Revolution and the British troops interacting in the whaling communities. The book described the voting habits and society of New Bedford, from which many things could be interpreted about the whalers.

"American Whaling." *New Bedford Whaling Museum*. N.p., 22 Aug. 2014. Web. 02 Nov. 2014.

The New Bedford Whaling Museum is one of the largest centers of whaling information, photographs, and records of whale ships in the world. Their website documents nearly all the same information as the museum itself offers, and included shipping records that detailed the cargo and workers of many ships. The website also includes brief overviews of the whaling industry and the effect of the wars, especially the Civil War, on the industry.

Cooper, Donna. "Reading the Whalemens Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript: A Six-Year Odyssey." *Historic Nantucket Winter 2005*: n. pag. *Nantucket Historical Association*. Web. 4 Jan. 2015.

This short article on Nantucket's Historical Association website written by Donna Cooper, who spent many years going through the Whalemens Shipping List, describes the kind of events the old newspaper used to cover. The WSL is one of the last non-destroyed whaling accounts that provided a view into the whaling society of the 19th century.

Davis, Lance E., Robert E. Gallman, and Karin Gleiter. *In Pursuit of Leviathan: Technology, Institutions, Productivity, and Profits in American Whaling, 1816-1906*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1997. Web.

This online publication by the University of Chicago reads like a textbook and offers a lot of information on the technology used by whalemens. It had many statistics on oil usage and the output of oil in the whale industry. It also went into depth on the economics of whaling and had over 10 pages of suggested reading on whaling, which helped tremendously when looking for sources.

Dolin, Eric Jay. *Leviathan: The History of Whaling in America*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2007. Print.

*Leviathan* is the complete account of whaling in North America, beginning with the Native Americans and lasting through the early 1900's where whaling consisted of fetching the bones for corsets and umbrellas. This source provided the most information for the essay, and was very useful for learning about the wars and the Stone Fleet. It also had a lot of information about Nantucket and its connections to England during the Revolution.

Ellis, Richard. *Men and Whales*. New York: Knopf, 1991. Print.

This short and detailed book was useful for finding the effects of whaling, such as the spread of exploration around the world to find new whaling sites. It also described the uses of whale oil and the decline of whale oil during the Revolution, and the taxes created by the British during this time.

"Fire Nearly Destroys Nantucket Town." *Mass Moments: Fire Nearly Destroys Nantucket Town*. Web. 30 Nov. 2014.

This short but descriptive article detailed the events of the Great Fire of 1846 in Nantucket. It had firsthand accounts and quotes from citizens living in Nantucket at the time, and the website, which recounts famous "Massachusetts Moments" was very helpful in researching New England whaling. The Great Fire also ruined nearly all the Nantucket whaling institutions and burned a library full of important documents, leading somewhat to the decline of whaling in Nantucket.

Hohman, Elmo Paul. *The American Whaleman; a Study of Life and Labor in the Whaling Industry*. New York: Longmans, Green, 1928. Print.

This online book written in 1928 was extremely useful in discussing the aftermath of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, especially the ship losses. Since the book was written in 1928, when whaling was still in the distant past, the author had a much more close perspective of the business. The chapter entitled "Disintegration and Decay" describes the causes and effects of the decline of whaling.

Jackson, Gordon. "Whaling." *Britannica School*. N.p., 2014. Web. 06 Nov. 2014.

This basic entry in the Encyclopedia Britannica was the basis for my knowledge about whales, and included a broad description and history of whaling. Although it didn't provide much for the final essay, the website was a great jumping-off point for learning about the subject when I knew nothing.

Morison, Samuel E. "The Whalers 1815-1860." *The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783-1860*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1921. 314-26. Print.

This book and others that were written in the 20th century were the most helpful, and provided direct quotes in the original wording. This book talked in depth about New

Bedford, and the new technology for whaling. It also discussed the duties of whaling offshore, and the emergence of whaling agents. Nantucket's population was briefly discussed, and the book ties together the relationship between the two whaling centers.

Murphy, Jim. *Gone A-whaling: The Lure of the Sea and the Hunt for the Great Whale*. New York: Clarion, 1998. Print.

In this kid-friendly book filled with colorful pictures and diagrams, author Jim Murphy describes whaling around the world, which was not completely useful but provided a good background for the essay. The ending quote of the thesis was taken from this book, but most of the book sounds like the biographies of various people in the whaling industry.

Pees, Samuel T. "Whale Oil." *Oil History*. N.p., 2004. Web. 30 Nov. 2014.

This article from the website petroleumhistory.org was very helpful in learning about whale oil and its uses. It detailed the discovery of petroleum and how it quickly overtook whale oil in numbers. I got a list from this website of over 20 things that whale oil could be used for, and it's prices at various points in history. The website also included a great diagram of the whale's anatomy and from where the oil comes.

Smith, Robert. "Nantucket Sufferers." *The Friend* 19.47 (1846): n. pag. *The Friend: Volume 19*. Web. 30 Nov. 2014.

This excellent source, from the newspaper entitled "The Friend" offers a great perspective on life in 1846. The article details the Great Fire of Nantucket, and many of the quotes in the essay concerning Nantucket come from this source. There are descriptions of great, flowing rivers of fire and recounts of the devastation on the island. The language and artistic description show the conversational aspects of the 19th century.

Spears, John Randolph. *The Story of the New England Whalers*. New York: Macmillan, 1908. Print.

This source, written in 1908, describes the voyage of the Mayflower and the actions of the Pilgrims, specifically why they decided to stay in Plymouth. It also talks about Long Island, which was settled by whalers and was originally a whaling community. The book was great for learning about the origins of whaling, and the act of whaling in America when the Natives did it in canoes.

Stackpole, Edouard A. *The Sea-hunters; the New England Whalemen during Two Centuries, 1635-1835*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1953. Print.

This book written in 1953 by Edouard Stackpole details the whaling industry from its inception in America to its rise in the mid 1800's. It was not totally helpful, however,

because it only discussed the period up to 1835, which didn't include whaling's high point in the 1850's and the Civil War's effects in the 1860's.

Starbuck, Alexander. *History of the American Whale Fishery from Its Earliest Inception to the Year 1876*. Waltham, MA: Author, 1876. Print.

Starbuck, related to one of the original founders of Nantucket certainly knew a lot about whaling, and probably had access to his family's documents and stories about whaling. His book talks about the men of whaling, their interests and duties onboard, and their eventual desolation of the boats in search of better opportunities such as the gold rush in 1849. Many of Starbuck's quotes are used in the thesis.

State Street Trust Company. *Whale Fishery of New England*. Boston: P. Walton, 1915. Print.

This old book, found in the archives of the Library of Congress, discusses Nantucket whaling society and the surprising actions that many women took in order to find a suitable mate, including finding men who had spent time on a whaling ship. It also talked about Nantucket's creation and founding, and the appearance of whaler Ichabod Paddock who taught everyone on Nantucket to whale.

Thompson, Derek. "The Spectacular Rise and Fall of U.S. Whaling: An Innovation Story." *The Atlantic*. Atlantic Media Company, 22 Feb. 2012. Web. 31 Dec. 2014.

This modern article in *The Atlantic* talks about the economics of whaling and includes graphs depicting the output of whale products. Thompson examines the "dry-land industrial revolution" that led to the decline of whaling and took away many of the whalers. He also discusses the transformation of New Bedford into a town filled with mills and petroleum refineries, which concluded the final days of whaling.

Tighe, Michael J. *The Rise and Fall of New Bedford Whaling, as Documented by the Whalers' Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript*. Thesis. University of Rhode Island, 1993. N.p.: n.p., n.d. Web. 8 Nov. 2014.

This thesis, written by Michael Tighe, was the least credible source, but written about a similar topic to my thesis. I couldn't take much data from the essay, but it was another good place to begin and read general knowledge about whaling.

"Timeline: The History of Whaling in America." *PBS*. PBS, n.d. Web. 30 Nov. 2014.

This timeline, although not terribly detailed, had over a hundred dates in the history of whaling that provided a backbone for my research and led to me important topics to inspect closely, like the Great Fire and the deaths of various important players in whaling.

Tower, Walter S. *A History of the American Whale Fishery*. Philadelphia: n.p., 1907. Print.

This book, written in 1907, was great in finding out more about the American Revolutions and whaling's part in it. It also had statistics on the whaling boats before and after the wars in Nantucket. It talked about the rise of Quakerism on the island and how the population was mainly sheep.

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APUSH

Mr. Bedar

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### Bibliographic Reflection

I don't remember how I became interested in the topic of whaling, but it seemed like an easy topic to write about- almost too easy. The entire "Save-the-Whales" movement of the 1960's and 1970's seemed like a clear track to follow, but I wasn't interested in environmental history or writing an entire paper about saving some stupid animal. Upon further examination, it became obvious to me that whaling wasn't just a social movement- it had been the industry upon which the Eastern seaboard of the United States had relied, a single animal that brought millions of dollars to cities like New Bedford. It was difficult to connect whaling to the wars, but it seemed evident that the success of the industry relied mainly on two places, Nantucket and New Bedford, and the two cities seemed to come to complete halts during wars.

The Newton Free Library has only three or four books that pertain to whaling. Furthermore, three of the four were written in the early 20th century, which makes for a biased account of whaling, which, in the early 20th century, was still seen as a normal occupation. One of the books was written in the mid 19th century, when one aspect of my argument, the Civil War, had not yet taken place. Very few 21st century books focus on whaling, and those that do are written for audiences of children. Few books go in depth about the consequences of whaling, and even fewer talk about the impact of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. Online sources had to be synthesized, studied, and connected in order to flow with my argument, and I

am probably still missing some of the necessary historical connections to make the paper cohesive.

I ended up using only two or three internet sources (excluding Google books) and was impressed with my ability to find really old books about whaling. I used a lot of books which had been written in the late 1800's and were only available in online formats, which were very cool to look at and read. I also studied a lot of old whaling records written in the original writing of the whaling boat captains.

The addition of many snow days was really a life-saver, because I could spend entire days at a time working on the thesis. I don't know how I would have done so much editing without six days of isolation and boredom. I would recommend that next year, the juniors are given the same amount, if not more, snow days.

The thesis was overall a really fun paper to write. Although I had heard some terrifying rumors about the essay, it wasn't half bad if you managed your time and made schedules. The research/notecard portion was long and the last six or seven notecards may have been useless for my essay. I am glad that I don't have to write another paper like this next year, but I also come away from the experience with the knowledge and ability to research a broad topic and then write an insanely long essay about it. It was difficult to switch out of the five paragraph essay mode and turn those five paragraphs into many more. It was also fun to have something to commiserate about with my classmates, and last-night Facebook posts really brought us together.

In conclusion, I really enjoyed this assignment. I got to write about a topic that I will probably never get to write about again. I also know weirdly specific things about the lineage of several Nantucketers, and exactly how many sheep were living on the island at a certain point in

history. Rarely do students get to write about a topic of their choice, especially to go in depth.

Thank you for the opportunity to write about whales!