
THE WHALE WATCH

Descendants of Whaling Masters, Inc.

Spring 2008

Eric Jay Dolin

You do not want to miss this year's DWM Annual Meeting and Luncheon, June 14, 2008 at the Wamsutta Club, New Bedford. Eric Jay Dolin, author of *Leviathan: The History of Whaling in America* will be our guest speaker. Dolin has brought new life to the story of our whaling heritage and the *Boston Globe* chose *Leviathan* as one of the best non-fiction books of 2007. Several DWM board members have enjoyed hearing Dolin speak while on his book tour. We are especially pleased that he is able to meet with our organization and share his research and discoveries. Invitations are in the mail and guests are welcome. Please send your reservations to Bud Potter, 194 Main St., Fairhaven, MA 02719 by the 8th of June.

Feeding Frenzy

The North Atlantic Right Whales have returned to Cape Cod Bay in "unprecedented" numbers. Estimates range from 75 to 100 whales drawn in by a concentrated bloom of copepods. Typically the whales number 30 to 50 during the spring feeding season. Whale watchers delight in being able to see this amazing spectacle from shore. Folks from the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies led a hike out to the Race Point Lighthouse to watch for the whales. Marine warnings are in place due to the high risk of collision with whales so all vessels must remain 500 yards away. The Division of Marine Fisheries reports the greatest risk of collision is east of Manomet and Race Point. Warnings stay in effect until the whales leave the area.

Whaling Heritage Symposium

NOAA National Marine Sanctuaries Maritime Heritage Program, NOAA Fisheries Services and the National Maritime Historical Society have joined forces with Mystic Seaport, the New Bedford Whaling Museum and the New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park to present a three day Whaling Heritage Symposium, June 16-18, 2008. The event takes place at both Mystic Seaport and in New Bedford. The program includes plenary presentations, speaker panel sessions, public talks, tours, dinners and receptions. The themes for the symposium include Indigenous Whalers and 19th - Early 20th Century Cultural Interactions, The History and Archaeology of Whaling: Where Heritage Trails Meet and New Directions in Whaling Heritage Research. Numerous historians, authors, curators, archaeologists, cultural practitioners and other noted specialists will be featured. The program is designed for the public and professional alike who are interested in the broad scope of



historic whaling and in the significance of specific events and geographic locations in the industry's history. Be sure to visit the historic whaleship *Charles W. Morgan* at Mystic. She is slated for dry dock this November. Registration fee for the symposium is \$175. Please register by 1 June 2008. For more information visit the Whaling Heritage Symposium website at <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/maritime/whaling/>.

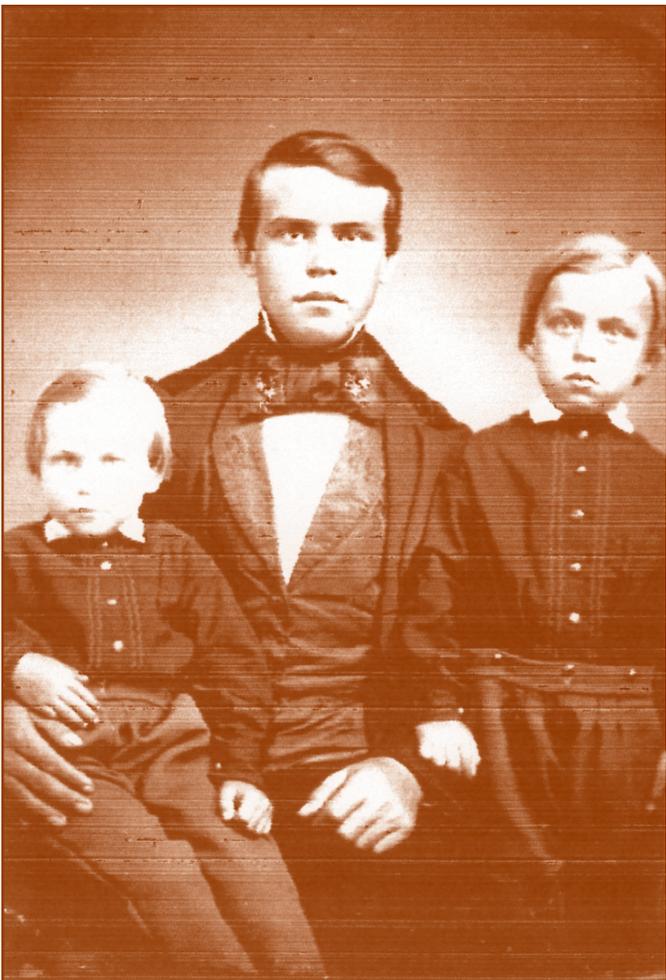


Remembering Our Ancestors

Jim Siburg, fellow DWM member and our West Coast Correspondent to the *Whale Watch* was kind enough to share the following story and photo from his family's whaling past.

A BUSY STORK

“Captain Peter Smith, of Nantucket, used to tell an amusing story of an incident occurring when, as master of the whaler *Young Hector*, of New Bedford, on a Pacific whaling voyage in 185- they spoke the *Sea Gull*, also of New Bedford, and commanded by Captain Nichols, who, as was often the custom with whaling masters, was accompanied on the voyage by his wife.



Captain Nichols' twins William Holly Nichols (L) and Charles Arthur Nichols (R) with older son James C. Nichols were Jim Siburg's great-great uncles.

Captain Nichols went aboard the *Young Hector* for a 'gam,' in the course of which he confided to Captain Smith the interesting news that the *Sea Gull* was anticipating at any time a visit from the stork. Being inexperienced in matters obstetrical, he asked Captain Smith to 'keep company' (as the saying was) with him until the ordeal was over, in case he should need help. Captain Smith readily consented, but advised Captain Nichols that in case he could not be on hand at the critical moment, to turn the new arrival over to his mate, and devote his entire attention to the mother, with full instructions as to just what to do.

The two ships kept in sight of one another for several days, but one morning as day broke the officer of the watch on the *Young Hector* reported the *Sea Gull* bearing down on them with all sails set, flags flying, and Captain Nichols on the quarter deck ready to hail. A boat was lowered and Captain Smith went aboard the other ship, where from the Captain's story, supplemented by the mate's, he learned what had happened.

It seemed that the stork had arrived in the night and in something of a hurry. Following Captain Smith's instructions, the mate had taken charge of the infant, but before his attentions to it were completed, the Captain again opened the cabin door and shouted: 'Ahoy, there! Call the *second* mate!' The second mate was summoned, and in a few moments a second lusty youngster was passed out and both mates were busy. Captain Nichols returned to his job, but a moment later once more opened the cabin door, and called out: 'I dunno! I dunno! Wait a minute — I'm not sure it's over yet. Better tell the *third* mate to stand by!' Fortunately, however, for all concerned the third mate's services were not required, and Captain Nichols reported all hands doing well, so it is safe to presume that the main brace was duly spliced."

The Nantucket Scrap Basket

William F. Macy

Editor's Note: Judith Navas Lund's *Whaling Masters and Whaling Voyages Sailing from American Ports* lists Charles Nichols as master of the ship *Phocion* of New Bedford from 1849 to 1852 and the ship *Sea Gull*, also of New Bedford, from 1853 to 1857 and 1858 to 1863. The Nantucket Historical Association holds the *Phocion* logbook but there are none listed for the *Sea Gull*. It would have been interesting to see how this story was officially recorded.

House Bill 3964

One might have expected the petition to originate from New Bedford, but it was from the small western Massachusetts community of Pittsfield that the school children set their sights on making Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick; or The Whale* the official book of the Commonwealth.

This monumental civics lesson took root in the Fall of 2006 when State Representative Christopher Speranzo (D) - Pittsfield was explaining the basics of government to fifth graders at the Egremont School. Putting the lesson into action he challenged the students to create their own bill designating *Moby-Dick* as the state book. It made sense since Herman Melville wrote his epic tome while living in Pittsfield on the farm he called Arrowhead.

The first hearing took place in May of 2007. Then, in March of 2008, nine New Bedford 5th graders read their essays in support of the bill at a public hearing held at the New Bedford Whaling Museum. Students from the Taylor and Parker Schools had their own lesson in democracy watching and listening to testimonies from scholars, dignitaries and their own classmates.

Some suggest that Massachusetts already chose William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation* as the state book in 1897. Others say it was a resolution never voted upon. In a state with a rich tapestry of literature such as ours this may not be an easy decision. State Representative Antonio F. D. Cabral (D)-New Bedford, presiding over the hearing, reminded all that the wording of the bill will probably change in the months ahead as it progresses through the legislative process. Call it what you will, state book, novel or epic, *Moby-Dick* deserves to be an Emblem of the Commonwealth.

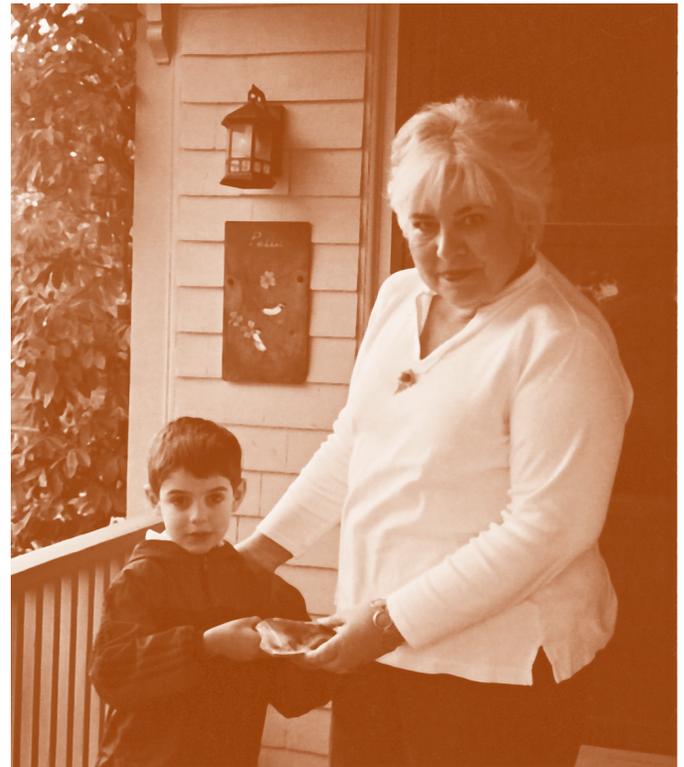
Staying in Touch

DWM members are encouraged to visit our web page (www.whalingmasters.org). Click on "Event Calendar" to see photos of our activities, trips and the past two annual dinners. We would also like to build an e-mail list of our membership. If you would like to be included, please reply to whalingmasters@yahoo.com with your e-mail address.

Contest Results

For the second time in as many years, the DWM has sponsored a children's whale coloring contest in *Fairhaven's Monthly Navigator*. The winners selected for 2007 were Cole Radke (Ages 4-6) and Nicole VanWyck (Ages 7-10). Darien Raposo received an honorable mention for creativity. Each of our winners received a Humpback Whale figurine and all contestants earned a free pass to the New Bedford Whaling Museum.

The coloring contest is an extension of DWM's Whale of the Year educational outreach at our booth during the Mattapoisett Harbor Days. The North Atlantic Right Whale was featured in 2006 and the Humpback Whale in 2007. Children and their families have the opportunity to learn about different types of whales at our whale table full of detailed figurines and they are given coloring fact sheets to take home. The 2008 Whale will be the Sperm Whale.



Cole Radke receives his Humpback Whale figurine from DWM Board Member Cathy Potter.



2008 Calendar of Events

June 14th

Annual Meeting - 12 noon

Wamsutta Club, New Bedford
Luncheon, Business Meeting & Election of Officers
Guest Speaker: Eric Jay Dolin, author of *Leviathan: The History of Whaling in America.*

July 19 & 20

Mattapoissett Harbor Days

Shipyard Park, Mattapoissett
Meet us at the rock and help peddle our wares! Enjoy the company of fellow descendants as we spread the word about DWM and present attractive gift items, books and other educational materials on whales and whaling history. Meet Marc Songini, distinguished author of the *Lost Fleet* at our booth on Saturday, July 19th, at 11 a.m.

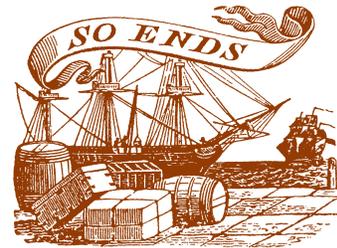
October 23rd

7:00 pm

New Bedford Whaling Museum Theater
Whaling Lecture by Marc Songini,
author of *The Lost Fleet: A Yankee Whaler's Struggle Against the Confederate Navy and Arctic Disaster.*

Reception and book signing to follow.

Save the Dates!



www.whalingmasters.org



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