

Baker Street *Elementary*

PRESENTS
"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"



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THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON
134 - A WHALE OF A TALE - SEPTEMBER, 2023



**WELCOME TO TOPIC NUMBER # 134... TODAY WE WILL
BE LOOKING AT THE WHALING PROFESSION DURING
THE VICTORIAN PERIOD.**



IN 'THE ADVENTURE OF BLACK PETER,' THE VICTIM WAS A FORMER CAPTAIN OF A WHALING VESSEL, THE SEA UNICORN.



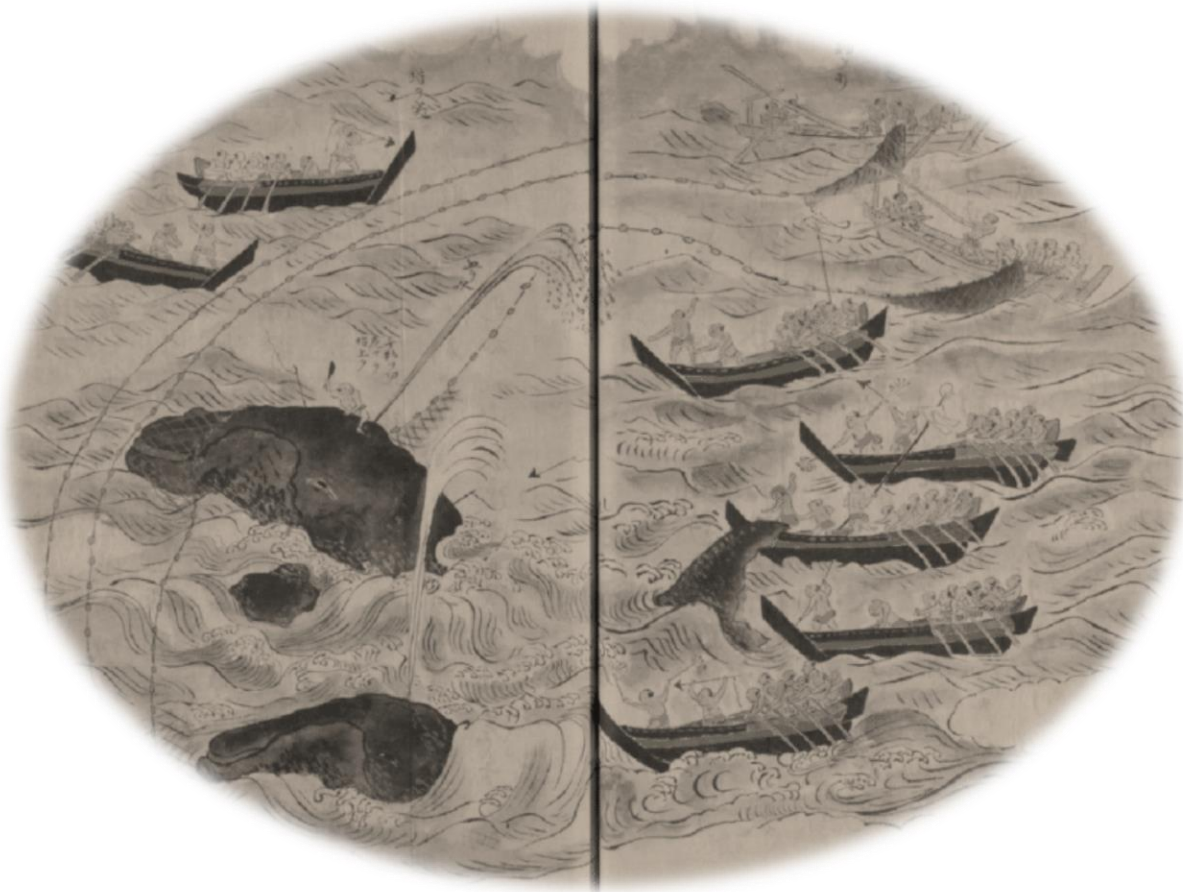
HE HAD BEEN HARPOONED TO A CABIN WALL...
YOU CONCLUDED ONLY A PROFESSIONAL
HARPOONER COULD HAVE COMMITTED THE
CRIME BECAUSE OF THE STRENGTH REQUIRED
TO PIN THE MAN.



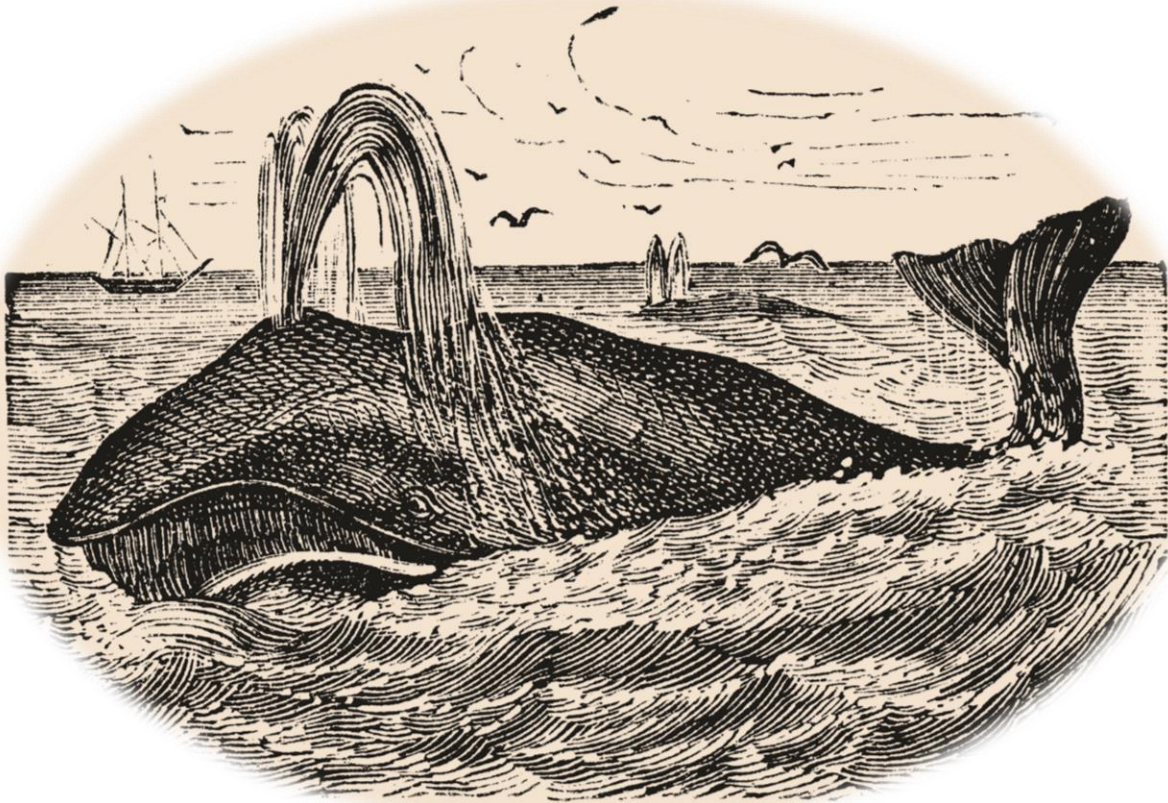
WHEN THE CASE OCCURRED IN JULY 1895, THE WHALING INDUSTRY HAD OPERATED FOR MORE THAN 700 YEARS BUT WAS THREATENED BY BOTH A DEPLETION OF THE WHALE POPULATION AS WELL AS MORE EASILY PRODUCED SUBSTITUTES FOR WHALE PRODUCTS.



WHALING HAS AT LEAST AN 8000-YEAR-OLD HISTORY. NORWEGIANS HUNTED WHALES AT LEAST 4000 YEARS AGO, AND PETROGLYPHS IN SOUTHERN KOREA SHOWING WHALES TIED TO BOATS DATE BACK TO 6000-5000 BCE.



THESE EARLY WHALERS FOLLOWED PRACTICES SIMILAR TO THOSE OF THE INUITS TODAY... WHILE DIFFERENT WHALE SPECIES WERE HUNTED, THE MOST COMMON AT THAT TIME WAS THE BOWHEAD BECAUSE ITS BLUBBER CAUSED IT TO FLOAT EVEN AFTER DEATH. '



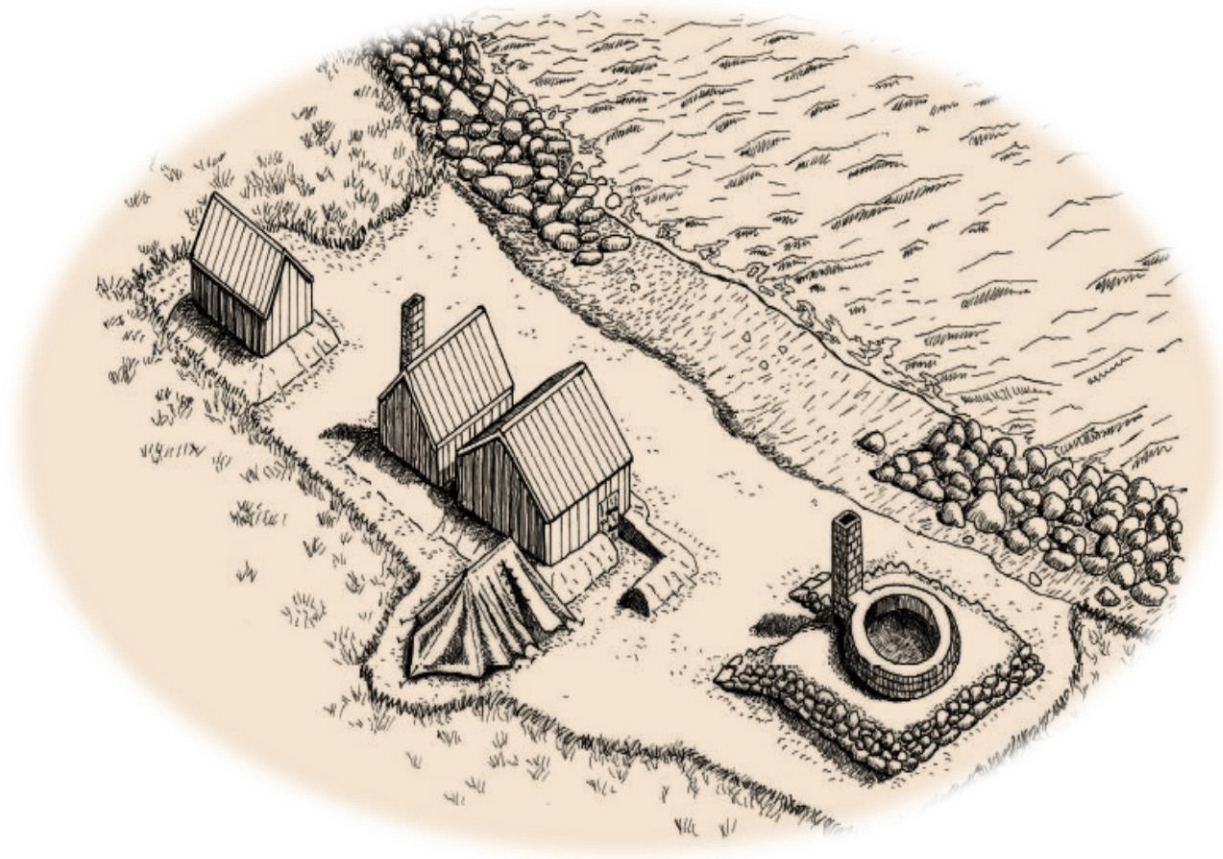
THE WHALE HUNTERS WOULD SELECT AND PURSUE ONE WHALE, HARPOONING IT UNTIL IT DIED... THEY WOULD THEN TOW THE WHALE TO SHORE FOR FLENSING... STRIPPING THE FLESH FROM THE CARCASS.



ALL PARTS OF THE WHALE WERE USED—THE SKIN FOR BOATS, THE MEAT FOR FOOD, THE OIL FROM THE BLUBBER FOR EVERYTHING FROM FOOD TO PRESERVING BOAT SKINS; THE BALEEN (WHALEBONE) FOR A VARIETY OF USES, INCLUDING BOAT RIBS; AND WHALE BONES FOR CONSTRUCTION.



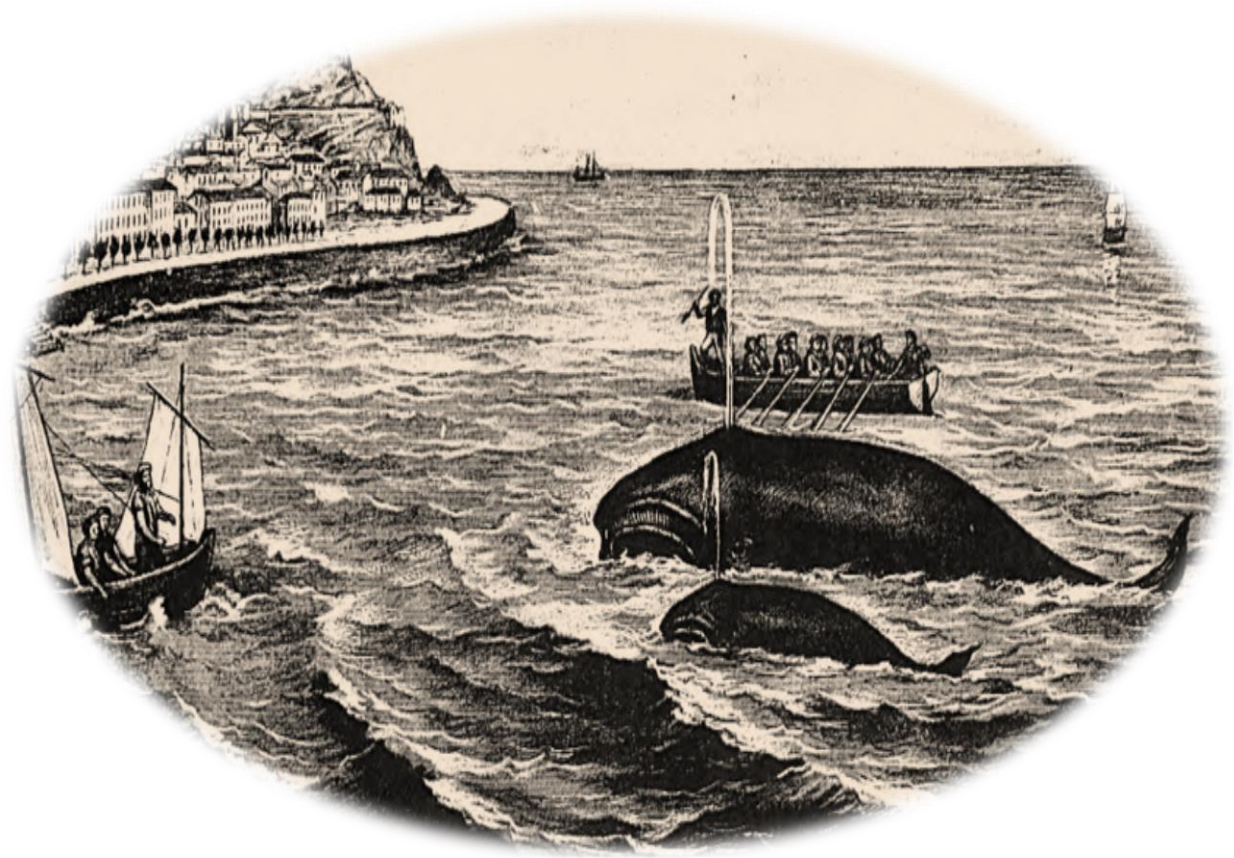
**THIS TYPE OF SUSTAINABLE WHALING
CONTINUED UNTIL THE BASQUES INTRODUCED
COMMERCIAL WHALING IN THE 11TH CENTURY.**



BEFORE THAT PERIOD, BASQUE VILLAGES ON THE BAY OF BISCAY WOULD SLAUGHTER A WHALE THAT OCCASIONALLY BEACHED ITSELF IN THE BAY'S SHALLOW WATERS... SIMILAR TO OTHER GROUPS, THEY WOULD HARVEST ITS MEAT, BLUBBER, AND BONES.



OVER TIME, THEY RECOGNIZED HOW PROFITABLE THESE MAMMALS WERE AND DEVELOPED MEANS OF DRIVING A WHALE INTO THE SHORE.



AS THE RIGHT WHALE (THE ONE PRIMARILY HUNTED BY THE BASQUES) DECLINED ALMOST TO EXTINCTION, OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES BEGAN THEIR OWN COMMERCIAL WHALING ON THE OPEN SEAS, FOCUSING ON THE HUMPBACK AND SPERM WHALES.

A Brief History of Whaling

EARLY HUNTING
3000 BCE: Whaling was practiced by Inuit peoples and others in the North Atlantic and North Pacific oceans.

1000 BCE: The Basques caught northern right whales that gathered to breed in the Bay of Biscay.

17TH CENTURY:
Smeerenburg ("Blubbervtown") was built on Spitsbergen after 1619. During its heyday in the 1630s and '40s, the settlement had 150 men servicing whalers that hunted the whales in the surrounding Arctic Ocean. Arctic bay whaling ended in the mid-1650s because of the onset of a miniature ice age that lasted for the rest of the 17th century.

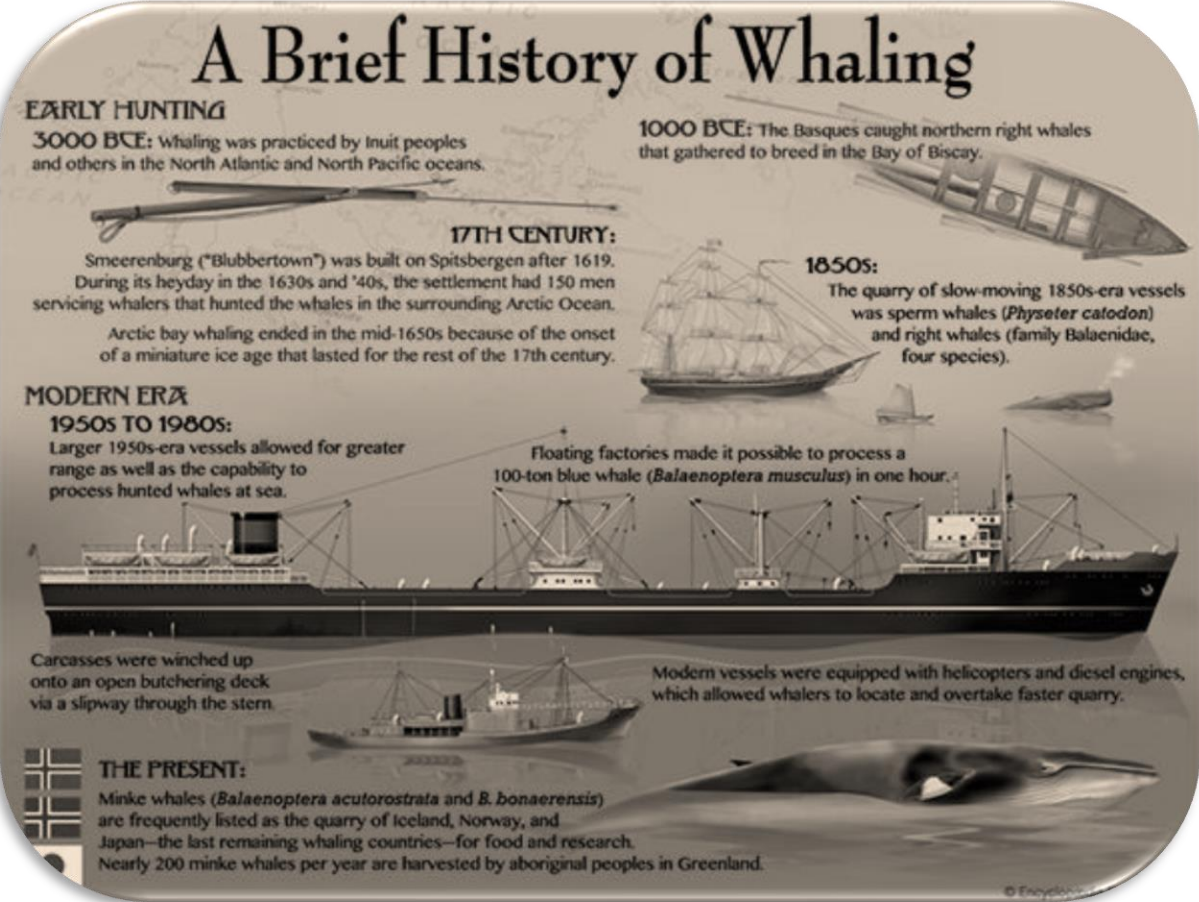
1850s:
The quarry of slow-moving 1850s-era vessels was sperm whales (*Physeter catodon*) and right whales (family Balaenidae, four species).

MODERN ERA
1950s TO 1980s:
Larger 1950s-era vessels allowed for greater range as well as the capability to process hunted whales at sea. Floating factories made it possible to process a 100-ton blue whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*) in one hour.

Carcasses were winched up onto an open butchering deck via a slipway through the stern.

Modern vessels were equipped with helicopters and diesel engines, which allowed whalers to locate and overtake faster quarry.

THE PRESENT:
Minke whales (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata* and *B. bonaerensis*) are frequently listed as the quarry of Iceland, Norway, and Japan—the last remaining whaling countries—for food and research. Nearly 200 minke whales per year are harvested by aboriginal peoples in Greenland.



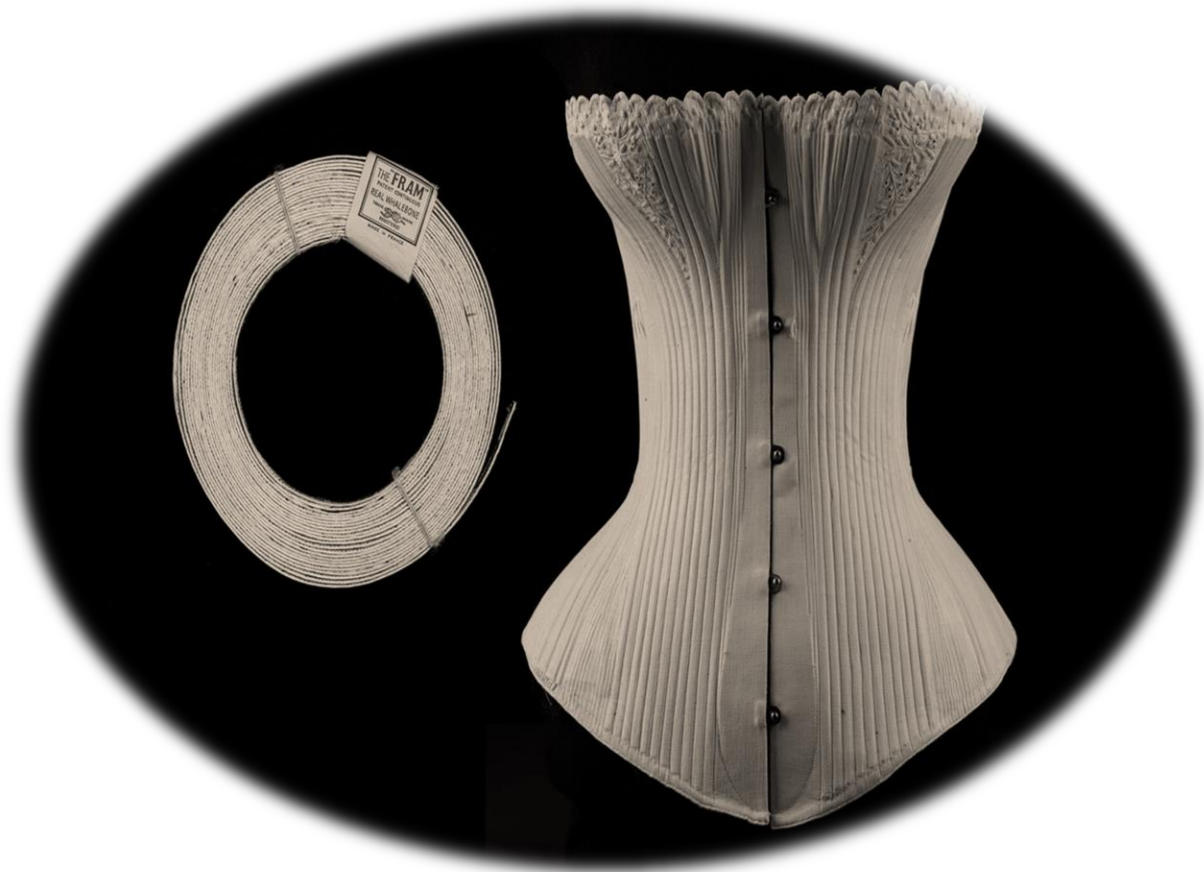
THESE WHALES PROVIDED OIL DERIVED FROM THEIR BLUBBER THAT LUBRICATED MACHINERY AND WAS USED IN SOAP-MAKING... THE SPERM WHALE ALSO PRODUCED AND STORED IN ITS HEAD A VERY HIGH-GRADE OIL CALLED SPERMACETI.



*THIS OIL WAS COLORLESS AND ODORLESS AND
HIGHLY PRIZED... ADDITIONAL PRODUCTS THAT
BECAME POPULAR DURING THIS PERIOD INCLUDED
BALEEN FOR A VARIETY OF FASHION ACCESSORIES...*



INCLUDING CORSETS, PARASOLS, AND WOMEN'S HATS; AND AMBERGRIS, FOUND IN WHALES' INTESTINES AND USED TO MAKE PERFUMES.



UNTIL THE MID-1800S, WHALES WERE HUNTED
WITH HARPOONS THROWN BY THE CREW FROM
SMALL BOATS.



ONCE ONE OR MORE HARPOONS WERE EMBEDDED INTO THE WHALE, THE ANIMAL MIGHT DRAG THE BOAT FOR MILES UNTIL IT TIRED AND EXPIRED.



AFTER KILLING THEIR PREY, THE CREW
WOULD HAUL IT BACK TO THE MAIN SHIP
FOR PROCESSING.



IN THE LATTER HALF OF THE 1800s, SVEND FOYN, A NORWEGIAN, REVOLUTIONIZED THE WHALING INDUSTRY WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF THE STEAM-POWERED WHALE CATCHER AND THE HARPOON CANON THAT INCLUDED AN EXPLOSIVE AT THE END OF ITS BARB.



THIS INCREASED EFFICIENCY LED TO FURTHER DEPLETIONS OF THE WHALE POPULATIONS, WHICH, IN TURN, MOVED THE HUNTING TO THE ANTARCTIC.

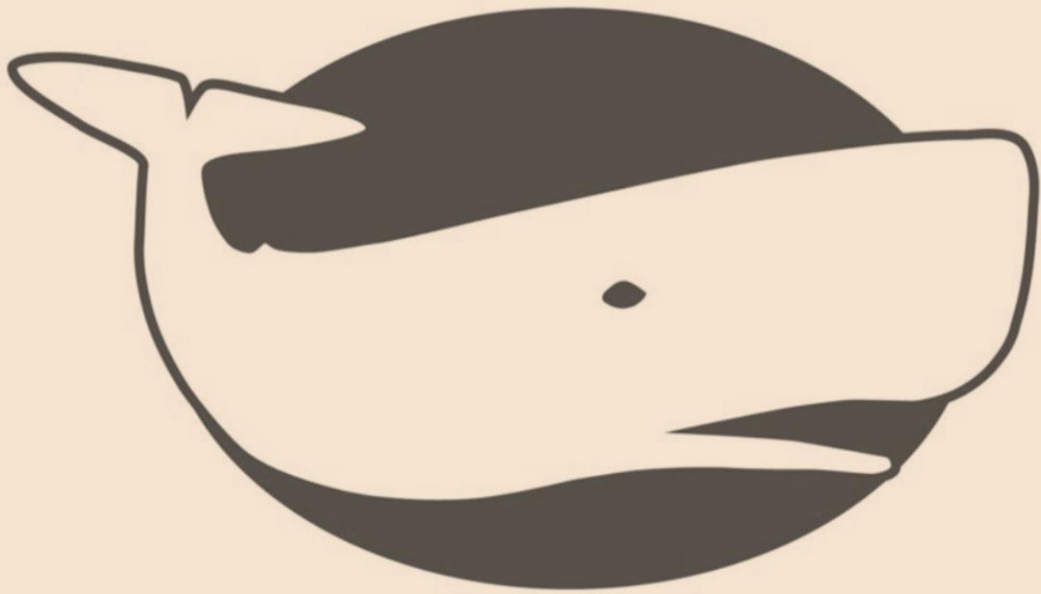


THE MARKET FOR WHALE PRODUCTS, HOWEVER,
DECLINED BY THE END OF THE 1800s AFTER
PETROLEUM WAS DISCOVERED.



WITH THE ADVENT OF THE GASLIGHT (AND LATER ELECTRIC LIGHTS), STEEL FOR CORSETS AND OTHER FASHION ITEMS, AND VEGETABLE OIL, DEMAND FOR WHALE OIL DROPPED, ONLY TO INCREASE DURING WWI WHEN THE ALTERNATIVES BECAME SCARCE.





INTERNATIONAL
WHALING COMMISSION

*SINCE 1946, THE INTERNATIONAL WHALING
COMMISSION HAS REGULATED THE WHALING
INDUSTRY AND HOLDS RESPONSIBILITY FOR
THE CONSERVATION OF WHALE POPULATIONS.*



SINCE 1982, THE IWC HAS IMPOSED A MORATORIUM ON COMMERCIAL WHALING TO PRESERVE THE SPECIES.



**NORWAY, ICELAND, AND JAPAN LEFT THE IWC IN
ORDER TO CONTINUE THEIR COMMERCIAL ENDEAVORS.**



**BY THE TIME CAPTAIN BLACK PETER CAREY
RETIRED IN 1884, COMMERCIAL WHALING WAS
ALREADY IN DECLINE.**



A NEED STILL EXISTED, HOWEVER, FOR WHALING
BOAT CREWS ON A SMALLER SCALE... OTHERWISE,
CAPTAIN BASIL—YOU IN YOUR SEAFARING
DISGUISE—WOULD HAVE APPEARED RATHER FOOLISH
LOOKING FOR A HARPOONER FOR HIS OWN SHIP.



SO, WE HAVE COMPLETED TOPIC # 134 IN OUR SERIES...

IN TOPIC # 135, WE WILL BE LOOKING AT LIFE INSURANCE AND HOW MURDER RELATED TO THIS PROGRAM DURING THE VICTORIAN PERIOD.



ORIGINAL SOURCE MATERIAL FOR FOR THIS TOPIC:

- [HTTPS://EDUCATION.NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.ORG/RESOURCE/BIG-FISH-HISTORY-WHALING](https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/big-fish-history-whaling)
- [HTTPS://WWW.SCIENCEANDMEDIAMUSEUM.ORG.UK/OBJECTS-AND-STORIES/HISTORY-WHALING](https://www.scienceandmuseum.org.uk/objects-and-stories/history-whaling)
- WHITRIDGE, PETER. "THE PREHISTORY OF INUIT AND YUPIK WHALE USE." REVISTA DE ARQUEOLOGÍA AMERICANA, NO. 16, 1999, PP. 99-154. JSTOR, [HTTP://WWW.JSTOR.ORG/STABLE/27768424](http://www.jstor.org/stable/27768424). ACCESSED 15 MAY 2023.
- [HTTPS://NABASQUE.EUS/WHALING.HTML](https://nabasque.eus/whaling.html)
- [HTTPS://WWW.THECOLLECTOR.COM/HUNTING-WHALES-WHALING-IN-THE-INDUSTRIAL-REVOLUTION/#](https://www.thecollector.com/hunting-whales-whaling-in-the-industrial-revolution/#)
- [HTTPS://WWW.LIVESCIENCE.COM/WHY-WHALING-NINETEETH-CENTURY.HTML](https://www.livescience.com/why-whaling-nineteenth-century.html)
- [HTTPS://COLLECTION.SCIENCEMUSEUMGROUP.ORG.UK/OBJECTS/CO41125/](https://collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/objects/co41125/)
- [HTTPS://WWW.BRITANNICA.COM/TOPIC/WHALING](https://www.britannica.com/topic/whaling)
- [HTTPS://WWF.PANDA.ORG/WWF_NEWS/?13796/THE-HISTORY-OF-WHALING-AND-THE-INTERNATIONAL-WHALING-COMMISSION-IWC](https://www.panda.org/wwf_news/?13796/the-history-of-whaling-and-the-international-whaling-commission-iwc)
- [HTTPS://IWC.INT/MANAGEMENT-AND-CONSERVATION/WHALING/COMMERCIAL](https://iwc.int/management-and-conservation/whaling/commercial)



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"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"

IS CREATED THROUGH THE INGENUITY & HARD WORK OF:
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