Today, New Bedford is a city of nearly 50,000, born in historic districts that retain embellishments that honor Melville’s admiral. Walk its cobblestone-lined streets by modern buildings, banks, and storefronts, from the days when New Bedford was the whaling capital of the world. Your historic stroll will take you back to a time when the working waterfront, homeport to one of America’s leading fishing and maritime histories, was used in making whale-oil, tallow, soap, and candle-making, and whale blubber was used to make candles. Whale-oil was also used to make lighthouses, street lamps, and lamps. Whale-oil was gathered from American ships in the 1830s until petroleum alternatives were placed in the 1860s.

In January 1841, a 21-year-old man named Herman Melville chose to embark from New Bedford, Massachusetts, on one of the most important voyages of his literature. The book inspired by that voyage was the world-famous Moby-Dick. The book was published in 1851, and it is not surprising that Melville set sail aboard a whaling ship on one of the most important voyages of America’s history.

In the 1850s more whaling voyages sailed from New Bedford, and the town itself is perhaps than from all of the world’s ages sailed from New Bedford—it was the whaling port of entry and of opportunity.

The whaling industry flourished in New Bedford because of its location near the Atlantic Ocean, which was the center of the whaling industry. The city was home to many whaling companies, and the whaling industry was a major contributor to the city’s economy.

The whaling industry used small ships to chase whales and brought back a variety of whale products. The whale oil was used to make candles and lamp oil, while whale blubber was used to make soap and candles. Whale teeth, whalebone, and baleen were also made into eating utensils such as plates, bowls, and spoons. Whale-oil was also used in lamp oil, soaps, and candles, and whale blubber was used to make whale-oil, tallow, and candles.

The whaling industry in New Bedford continued to grow for another decade and a half. In the 1860s, the whaling industry began to decline, and the city’s economy suffered. However, the whaling industry in New Bedford continued to grow for another decade and a half. In the 1870s, the whaling industry began to decline, and the city’s economy suffered. However, the whaling industry in New Bedford continued to grow for another decade and a half.
Visiting the Park

One of the pleasures of visiting New Bedford is to walk its streets and look at its buildings. Most sites described here are within the national historical park, some are open in the public face of the city, and others are managed by nonprofit organizations that charge an admission fee. Stop first at the park visitor center to get oriented. Then, using the map at the far right as your guide, tour the park sites, including the waterfront.

For more information: contact: New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park 22 William Street New Bedford, MA 02740 508-996-4000 www.nps.gov/nbwh

Whaling

John Law wrote in the 1760s: “This place is a pattern to all seaports in this country. Whales are there brought in great numbers and made into oil, salt, and tallow.”

In 1818, Herman Melville wrote: “The industries of New Bedford are all marine.”

In 1888, the New Bedford Whaling Museum was founded by rival whaling companies as an educational propaganda project. In 1934, Congress established the New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park. Today, the museum is the largest in the world devoted to whaling and maritime history.

New England during the whaling era was a bustling port city. Whalers sailed to the Arctic and South Seas. The city was home to over 200 whaling vessels that left for five years or more. The Whaling Museum’s permanent collection includes forty whaling ships, fifty-thousand artifacts, six thousand folk-art objects, and over 100,000 historic photographs, documents, and oral histories.

The whalers worked in groups of three: the master, master’s mate, and commoner. All had keen eyesight and a good sense of direction. They were whalers and navigators.

Each ship was commanded by a master, who was responsible for the vessel’s safety and the health of the crew. The master’s mate was second in command and was responsible for the ship’s day-to-day operations. The commoner was the third member of the crew and was responsible for the ship’s stores.

The whaling industry was a major contributor to the economy of New Bedford and the state of Massachusetts. It employed thousands of workers and generated millions of dollars in revenue. The industry declined in the late 19th century as the availability of whale oil decreased and synthetic substitutes became available.

Today, the whaling industry remains a significant part of the city’s history and economy. The New Bedford Whaling Museum continues to attract visitors from around the world. The museum’s exhibits and programs offer visitors a glimpse into the fascinating world of whaling and maritime history.

New Bedford Whaling Museum

1853 Wharf (Schooner Ernestina), 1855
can whaling and maritime history
collections. Highlights include the
collections. A 153-foot replica of the
right small bark, and

The museum features a granite façade with a pediment
designed by architect John R. Kellogg.

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