# FUGITIVE SLAVES IN ALASKA:
# PHASE ONE RESEARCH REPORT

*Kathryn Grover / September 2001*

Proposed by Gates of the Arctic National Park, New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, and San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, this project has aimed to document whether people of color attempting to escape slavery in the American South had made their way to New Bedford, had signed on as crew of whaling vessels, and had continued on to, and settled in, the territory that became the state of Alaska.

The sources that exist for studying this question are numerous, chief among them whaling crew lists, logbooks and journals kept on whaling voyages, exploration narratives, censuses, and an array of quantitatively oriented secondary sources.[i] Crew lists, which the United States Congress mandated in 1803 in order for a vessel to be cleared for a voyage, exist for New Bedford from about 1807 forward. For this project lists from 1842 to 1861 were surveyed: the first bowhead whales in the North Pacific were taken in 1843 by vessels that left the port of New Bedford in 1842, the first New

Bedford whalers destined for the Northwest Coast of America appear to have left port in 1842, and 1861 represents the beginning of the American Civil War.[ii] For San Francisco such lists exist from 1851 forward; because crew lists and associated shipping articles have never been processed or cataloged, it was only possible to review carefully the lists for 1851.[iii]

Crew lists, in combination with census work that can distinguish the settled from the transient population in New Bedford, are valuable because they can pinpoint those whaling voyages on which fugitives are most likely to have been present. But many caveats pertain to their use. The use of aliases among men who signed onto whaling voyages was common, and one might logically expect the tendency to have been much more prevalent among fugitive slaves. Moreover, the reporting of physical characteristics is highly inconsistent. Crew lists do not reliably report race, and even less commonly do they indicate the status of the crew—that is, whether they returned to port with the ship, were discharged, or deserted. In some cases a crew list may make note of the fact that a crew member ran away, deserted, or "left the ship," but it may not indicate where that act took place. San Francisco crew lists, at least those for 1851, were less apt to list physical features than New Bedford lists were. Earlier printed crew

lists included columns for race, height, eye color, complexion color, and hair color. But the San Francisco shipping paper for the New Bedford whaler *Nile*, for example, featured columns for "time of entry" into crew, crew member's name, "quality" (meaning one's rank aboard ship), a witness to signing, and the crew member's share of the voyage's take. Fortunately, the shipping articles for vessels often contain multiple crew lists, some of which do designate race. Finally, a seemingly increasing number of whaling crew members were simply listed by name, probably indicating that they were what historian Martha S. Putney has termed "no proofs," men who did not possess a seaman's protection paper.

The second major source, and one that must be used in conjunction with crew lists, are the logbooks and journals kept by various crew members during a voyage. In John Bockstoce's exhaustive survey of whaling in the western Arctic between 1848 and 1914, he found that logbooks existed for fully one-third of the 2,700 whaling cruises that took place in that region over those years.[iv] For the years 1842-61, this study determined that 470 voyages carrying crew of color known not to have been settled New Bedford residents took place from New Bedford to the Northwest Coast, the Northern Pacific, or the Arctic (appendix A). Logbooks or journals, quite often more than

one, exist for189 of those voyages, or for 40.2 percent of them.

Logbooks vary widely in legibility and the quality of the information they present; some are straightforward accounts of a vessel's position, the weather, and the number and type of whales encountered, lowered for, and caught; others are more revealing of life on board and contact with other vessels and peoples. Because crew lists almost never listed a man of color as a fugitive slave (Putney found one instance of it in her detailed work with New Bedford crew lists)[v], logbooks and journals are probably the only source that may do so. Journals describing Northwest Coast or Arctic voyages, some of them published, are a more useful source for this study.[vi] Exploration and ethnographical narratives about this period have also been reviewed.

Census records are the least useful of all sources for this study. No census of Alaska as a whole exists until 1900; a census was compiled from 1880 to 1882 but did not include southeastern Alaska, and the 1890 census burned. Data from the 1880-82 work may exist for individual towns (though not in an East Coast archive),[vii] and a 1870 census does exist for the town of Sitka. Compiled by American military officials after Lady Jane Franklin visited the island in October that year, the census did not embrace the native population or soldiers stationed there, but it counted 391 persons, among

them four people of color.[viii] All of the earliest federal censuses for the territory count a large number of Alaskans as “creole” or “mixed,” terms which have entirely different meanings there than they do on the East Coast. “Mixed” persons were usually the children of a white person (almost always a white male) and an Eskimo, Aleut, or Indian person. The partial 1880 Alaska census found 1,756 creoles and 430 white persons in a total population of 33,426, more than half of whom were classed as Eskimo.[ix] In my own analysis of the 1900 Alaska census I found not a single instance of a person of color having married a native Alaskan, and for adults listed as mixed the state or nation of birth, not the race, of parents is indicated; thus it is impossible from the census alone to determine the racial background of all adult mixed-race persons listed in the 1900 census for the state. In 1900 the census listed 63,592 residents; 174 people of color were listed among them, and of those fully 135 were members of Company L, Twenty-fourth U.S. Infantry, stationed that year at Fort Wrangell, Skagway, or Sitka Jail.[x] Of the 39 nonmilitary people of color in Alaska in 1900, none had been born before 1840, three had been born before 1850, eight had been born before 1860, and eleven had been born before 1865. Thus twenty-two people of color in Alaska in 1900 might have been born in slavery (appendix B).

The population of Alaska in that year was highly diverse, but it was not made so by the presence of people of African descent. White Americans, Russians, Finns, Norwegians, Swedes, Germans, and Danes tended to be managers and owners of mining camps, canneries, fisheries; the labor in canneries and fisheries at Ketchikan, Loring, Hunter's Bay, Fort Wrangel, Petersburg, Gerard Point, Dundas Bay, Karluk, Uganuck Bay, and other places were almost invariably Chinese. The fishing fleet at Hunter's Bay Cannery and Karluk was staffed entirely by Italian-born men who had come from San Francisco; Hunter's Bay supplemented its Chinese labor force with men from Guam; all of the section hands on the White Pass and Yukon Railroad project were Chinese or Japanese. In short, men of African descent were not embraced within the territory's pool of inexpensive, manual labor.

The final source for this project are reputable secondary sources (see endnote 1), but these too must be used with caution. For one thing, statistics for whaling voyages leaving the port of New Bedford, to say nothing of those hunting in the waters off Alaska, vary widely. In his 1928 study of whaling, for example, Northwestern University economist Elmo Paul Hohman stated that Nantucket, New Bedford, Fairhaven, Westport, and Mattapoisett sent out 366 whaling vessels in 1843, together

comprising 57 percent of the total American whaling fleet. However, Alexander Starbuck's history of the whale fishery lists only 117 vessels leaving those ports on whaling voyages that year. In their recent study on the economic and labor issues in whaling, Lance Davis et al. stated that New Bedford sent out 252 whaling vessels in the five years between 1846 and 1850, 314 between 1851 and 1855, and 320 between 1856 and 1860. Starbuck's totals are higher for all three periods—363, 507, and 395 respectively.[xi] In addition, discrepancies exist between Starbuck's listing of vessels and those found in the New Bedford Port Society's collection of crew lists. In 1845, his first full year of record keeping, Moses How of the Port Society recorded 127 voyages from the port of New Bedford; Starbuck listed 117. How listed 183 voyages in 1851 to Starbuck's 174. Not only do the number of voyages often differ, but their destinations differ as well. This latter mismatch was probably unavoidable: many whaling vessels changed destination depending upon their success in intended whaling grounds. Because of these discrepancies, it is not possible to determine exactly the number of New Bedford whaling voyages that fished in Alaskan waters, the proportion of the city's total fleet fishing in such waters, or the proportion of total vessels bound for Alaskan waters that carried men of color as crew. However, raw figures from Starbuck and from

Port Society lists are included here (table 1).

*Locating Fugitives in Alaska*

Several compelling historical coincidences suggest that fugitive slaves might have traveled to what became Alaska. First, slave escapes are believed to have been heaviest after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in September 1850. By that date, the North Pacific and Arctic Oceans were the primary destinations of the American whaling fleet, dominated by vessels registered at the port of New Bedford. My own count, based on Starbuck, indicates that more than half of the New Bedford customs district whaling fleet was found for the Northwest Coast, the North Pacific, or the Arctic in 1845, 1850, and 1851, but historians apparently working with different sources disagree. Howard Kushner has noted, "Almost all of New Bedford's ships fished in grounds over which the Russian-American Company claimed jurisdiction. In 1845, for instance, New Bedford and her sister port, Fairhaven, sent 86.5% of their entire whaling fleet to these Russian-American waters."[xii] The discrepancy between these two sets of figures—54.7 and 86.5 percent—is too large to be explained away by Starbuck's vagueness about vessel destinations. Kushner has also stated that of 256 American

whaling vessels sailing in 1835 alone (1835 being the year that Captain Barzillai T. Folger, in the Nantucket whaler *Ganges*, discovered the Kodiak whaling grounds), 200 were sent to the North Pacific and 139 sailed exclusively to the Russian coast; Starbuck, however, did not list the Northwest Coast or North Pacific as destinations until 1842. Whatever the figures may be, the fact remains that during 1842 the Russian-American Company issued its first documented complaint about the impact of American whaling vessels on the company's viability. In that year a Russian naval officer reported to St. Petersburg that at least thirty American whalers were seen fishing in the Bering Sea alone. Claiming that "American whalers are injuring its [the Russian-American Company's] commerce," the officer asked the Russian government to patrol the region. A year later company manager Adolf Etolin asked directors for guidance in dealing with "whaling vessels which threatened to ruin the fur trade by scaring the sea otters away and what to do about whaling captains, who despite the Convention and Russian orders, continue to enter harbors, etc., in the Russian possession." Russia's minister of foreign affairs replied that whalers "can be kept from landing, but not from whaling," and little was done to curb foreign whaling in these waters.[xiii] Thus there is no doubt that American whaling vessels were present in Alaskan waters by the early 1840s.

At this time, too, New Bedford had the densest population of people of color of any other Massachusetts city (indeed, one of slightly more than six Massachusetts people of color lived in the whaling port by the mid-1850s). It is also true that by 1850, a greater percentage of its settled people of color claimed a slave-state birthplace than obtained in either New York City or Boston (table 2). Evidence so far does not permit researchers to identify, in most instances, whether any given individual was born into slavery and manumitted, born into slavery and permitted to purchase his or her freedom, born free, or born into slavery and still in slavery at the time of escape to the North. Contemporary estimates of the number of fugitive slaves in New Bedford between the mid-1830s and the Civil War range from three hundred to seven hundred, and my own work on this subject identified by full name more than one hundred fugitives. In its time the city was touted, by both blacks and whites, as one of the best places not only for fugitives but for free people of color.[xiv] Whether it was or not cannot be determined until similar studies are done of other communities, but what is clear is that the city was so viewed during the time that fugitive slave activity was greatest.

Nearly 18 percent of crewmen of color on New Bedford whaling ships were born in the South (table 3), and a comparison between the settled population of color and the

whaling population of color in 1850 intimates that many who claimed a free-state birthplace other than Massachusetts may have been born in the South. The case of John W. Thompson is suggestive of what may have been a common trend.[xv] Born in 1812 on a Maryland plantation, Thompson escaped on stolen horse and on foot to Baltimore and to a farm about ten miles from Columbia, Pennsylvania, a well-known abolitionist stronghold, probably in the late 1830s. He worked on this farm for six months until he learned of the presence of slave catchers in the area. Thompson then went to Philadelphia, where news of the rendition of several slaves from that city convinced him that it would be, as he wrote, "best for me to go to sea." His maritime inexperience made it impossible for him to secure a merchant berth in New York City, but there an agent advised him "to go to New Bedford, where green hands were more wanted, and where, I was told, I could go free of expense. Accordingly, next morning, in care of an agent, I started on board a vessel bound for that port."

With the assistance of a cook in his New Bedford boardinghouse, Thompson was able to ship out on the whaling vessel *Milwood* as a steward on 25 June 1842. But his clear unfamiliarity with stewardship caused a confrontation between him and Captain Aaron Luce. Thompson confessed to Luce, "I am a fugitive slave from

Maryland, and have a family in Philadelphia; but fearing to remain there any longer, I thought I would go on a whaling voyage, as being the place where I stood least chance of being arrested by slave hunters. I had become somewhat experienced in cooking by working in hotels, inasmuch that I thought I could fill the place of steward." Thompson did not desert the *Milwood*, as many hands were wont to do, but remained in the crew until the end of the voyage and returned to New Bedford with the ship in 1844. Having been virtually unreachable for more than two years, Thompson appears to have felt safe to return to Philadelphia.

On the seamen's protection paper he took out before the *Milwood's* 1842 voyage, Thompson stated Adams County, Pennsylvania, as his place of origin. However, what his answer indicates is unclear. For earlier crew lists, customs officers asked men for both their place of birth and their place of residence, but by the 1840s this distinction was no longer upheld. It appears almost as though customs officers had begun to ask, ambiguously, "Where are you from," a question for which a man could provide either his place of birth or his place of residence. It seems likely that an indeterminate number of black mariners did as Thompson did—to claim the most recent place of residence in his flight from slavery as his place of birth. Thus it seems likely,

though perhaps never susceptible of proof, that men of color escaping slavery on board whaling vessels were either not entirely candid about their origins or truthfully reported their most recent stop on their escape from slavery.

Probably the majority of vessels destined for North Pacific, Northwest Coast, or Arctic waters carried crew members of color. Of the eight New Bedford vessels that whaled along the Northwest Coast in 1842—the ships *Caroline*, *Copia*, *Hercules*, *Janus, Magnolia*, *Minerva*, *Roman 2d*, and *William Hamilton*—six had men of color in their crews.[xvi] Of the ten black crew members on these vessels, seven claimed free-state birthplaces or residences, while three were from the South—"Queen Anne" (probably Queen Anne's County, Maryland), New Orleans, and Richmond, Virginia. The first vessels to take humpback whales both had black crew; Henry W. Williams on the *Hercules* deserted the vessel at Maui and probably never saw the Northwest grounds. Status is indicated for five of these ten men. Two of them, including Williams, deserted (the other, Joseph Phillips of New York, at Oahu), and three of them returned with their ships to New Bedford.[xvii]

Of the 813 men of color who shipped out on New Bedford whaling vessels bound for the Alaska region, crew lists indicate that 602, or 74 percent, claimed to have been

born or to live in free states (table 4). Nearly 21 percent claimed slave-state birthplaces or residences, while a negligible proportion were from other countries. In the case of twelve crewmen of color no information about place of birth or residence was shown; in the case of twenty-five answers are ambiguous and cannot be attributed to any given state. It should be noted, however, that a very high number of crew from free states claimed major cities such as Boston, New York City, and in particular Philadelphia (fully 77 crew, or 9.5 percent of the total) as their place of origin. Among the 82 Maryland men of color, 58 claimed to have come from Baltimore. These figures should not be surprising, as all were major ports. However, it is not clear that these cities, oriented more to merchant marine, shared a maritime labor pool with the whaling industry of New Bedford.[xviii] And it would seem logical, at least, that men trying to escape slavery would seize upon large cities, places full of strangers, as places that a customs officer or whaling agent would be unlikely to seek to verify.

Other places raise suspicion. On the Northwest Coast voyage of the *Marengo* in 1848, a man of color named John Davis gave his place of birth/residence as Salem, New Jersey, the home of Abigail Goodwin, a Quaker abolitionist and documented worker with Philadelphia's William Still in fugitive slave assistance. In 1851 the same

vessel signed on a man of color named Joseph Hill, who listed the same town as his place of birth or residence. Another example is Jericho, a town on Long Island that was home to Elias Hicks, a radical Quaker abolitionist who spurned the use of any goods produced with slave labor. Three men claiming to come from Jericho—Robert Duree, William Johnson, and Joseph A. Williams—signed on as crew of New Bedford whalers between 1845 and 1851, Duree on both the *Harrison* in 1845 and the *Enterprise* in 1851. Southern ports, such as Baltimore, may also signal the presence of a fugitive slave on a whaler: in addition to Baltimore and numerous other southern places, men of color on whalers were from Annapolis and Snow Hill in Maryland, Richmond and Portsmouth/Norfolk in Virginia, New Orleans, and Washington, Wilmington, New Bern, and Edenton in North Carolina. Known men of color are listed among "no proofs," including Reuben Winslow, in the crew of the *Lagoda* in 1843, and Robert Eliot, on the bark *Cossack* in the same year.[xix] Joseph Ambey was listed among the six "no proofs" in the crew of the ship *Dartmouth*, bound for the "Arctic and elsewhere" in August 1851. But his name, age, and place of origin—Cambridge, Dorset County, Maryland—were listed in the crew list for the *Copia* six years earlier as well as on the protection paper he took out in July 1849, at the same time as did other New Bedford men, white and black,

who wanted to take part in the California gold rush. Clearly, though, if Ambey went to California, he had returned by August 1851. Despite the fact that some men of African descent were among the "no proofs," a far greater part of this population on Alaska-bound whalers were men from South Pacific islands (usually the Sandwich Islands), the Cape Verde Islands, the Azores, Madeira, and mainland Portugal.

Statements of slave-state origin coupled with notations about desertions might increase the probability that any given crew member was a fugitive slave. One suspects in particular men of color such as Frederick Turner, whose place of birth or residence was left blank on the crew list for the New Bedford *Lewis*, bound for the Northwest Coast in November 1844. Turner and four other men deserted, but the crew list does not indicate at what port or ports. However, even if all men of color from the American South could be assumed to be slaves, it is clear that they did not all desert. Thomas Starkey, a man of color who stated his place of birth or residence as Swanboro, North Carolina, was in the crew of the Fairhaven whaling ship *Columbus*, bound for the Northwest Coast in late November 1843. But Starkey clearly returned with the vessel, for he was listed as a resident of New Bedford from 1849 until at least 1856. Henry Freeman, who shipped on the bark *Science* in 1844, was from Johnson County, North

Carolina, and lived in New Bedford until his death in 1871. Desertions are so irregularly noted in crew lists that to tabulate and draw conclusions about them would be meaningless. Still, in the few instances where places of desertion are noted, never is an Alaskan port identified, though whaling narratives sometimes note desertions at Siberian ports.

There is no question that desertions from New Bedford whaling vessels were high; in 1928 Hohman put the desertion rate at 30 percent. Of about 2,000 men shipped by one New Bedford whaling agent between 1854 and 1872, 248, or about 12 percent, deserted.[xx] On the six voyages of the ship *George Howland* between 1840 and 1866, anywhere from twelve to twenty-four of the crew of twenty-eight to thirty men died, were discharged, or deserted, for an average turnover of 63 percent.[xxi] But, as the cases of Henry W. Williams and Joseph Phillips suggest, desertions appear far more apt to have taken place in the islands of the South Pacific and in San Francisco. "I do not intend to continue a whole voyage, as the Arctic ocean has no charms for me, especially with the prospect of getting capsized into the by-no-means Warm water," James F. Munger wrote to his parents in October 1850 from on board the whaler *St.*

*George*, then laying off the coast of the island of St. Iago in the Cape Verde Islands. "My intention is to leave the ship at the Sandwich Islands."[xxii] In late April two men deserted the Newport whaler *George C. Champlin*, en route to the Northwest Coast, at Lahaina on the island of Maui, and another three, including the ship's carpenter, ran away from the ship at Petropavlovsk in Siberia in early October.[xxiii] In early November 1857, five men deserted the New Bedford whaler *Addison*, apparently in Honolulu.[xxiv] One of them was Walter A. Seals, the son of Spencer Seals, who had come with his family to New Bedford from Alexandria, Virginia, between 1847 and 1849. It is not known whether they were fugitive or free. The *Addison's* 1856 trip was Walter Seals's second whaling voyage—he had shipped out on the *Osceola* at age fourteen—and he is not known ever to have returned to New Bedford: the wills of both of his parents state that his whereabouts as unknown. Washington Fosdick, the African American steward of the ship *Montreal* from 1850 to 1853, noted in his log book how the presence of native women on the Pacific islands seemed to impel some crew members to "form a resolution to desert, and when the ship has recruited and is ready for sea, oftentimes 8 or 10 are missing. . . . On all these islands there are a class of men, called 'beach combers,' deserters in the first place from ships, making it a practice to ship for the

season, to be discharged then at the expiration of the season."[xxv]

After the discovery of gold in California in 1848, San Francisco became an increasingly attractive desertion point. "The harbor of Honolulu was full of whalemen, and officers and crews were deserting every opportunity [to go to California]," a correspondent reported to the *Whalemen's Shipping List* in early February 1850. "The mountains are said to be full of runaway sailors."[xxvi] Indeed, the popularity of San Francisco among deserters was sufficient to discourage many whaling vessels from provisioning and recruiting there. "I went to San Francisco to recruit, but the excitement there in relation to the discovery of gold, made it impossible to prevent the crew from running away," the captain of the New Bedford whaler *Minerva* wrote to the same newspaper at the turn of 1849. "Three of the crew in attempting to swim ashore were drowned, and the ship's company soon became too much reduced to continue the whaling voyage."[xxvii] In early November 1860, moored in the Japanese port of Hakodate, the ship *Florida* welcomed aboard an American passenger whom vessel Captain Thomas W. Williams agreed to carry to San Francisco. But, within thirty miles of that port by the end of the month, Williams changed his mind. "We are now going away from San Francisco," his wife Eliza wrote. "The wind was not fair—and the

greatest thing was that my Husband found out that some of the Men would run away. Then he gave up the idea of going at all," she wrote, and Williams put his passenger in a pilot boat to go ashore.[xxviii] My survey of vessels clearing the port of San Francisco in 1851 revealed very few whaling vessels, which may indicate how serious the desertion issue was. And the problem appears to have continued at least until the Civil War; in an article about desertions from the New Bedford whaling ship *Hillman* in the California port, the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* of Honolulu noted in 1864, "Trouble, as usual, attends the ships that go to San Francisco."[xxix]

As the *Advertiser's* comment suggests, Honolulu was anxious to retain its standing as the premier transshipment port for the New Bedford whaling industry. Particularly after right whales were discovered in the Gulf of Alaska in 1835, northern California ports began to appear attractive alternatives to those of the Sandwich Islands; the Northwest Coast grounds were, after all, only a two weeks' sail from San Francisco. Yet anchorage and tonnage fees imposed by the Mexican government in the 1830s, as well as the desertion problem and Mexico's insistence that Monterey stand as the only official port of entry, kept whaling vessels away from San Francisco until the early 1840s. Then a ban of the sale of goods from whaling vessels in 1844 made it

impossible for captains to provision at that port. Even after the United States assumed control of California in 1846, Honolulu remained a more attractive port to many whaling captains. It was less expensive to repair a ship and to provision there, especially after the gold rush inflated the prices of all goods and services in San Francisco. It was also, on the whole, easier to recruit men in Honolulu to replace deserted or discharged crew members. Options for cash income were fewer there than they were in San Francisco, where a man might work in the mines, in the rapidly growing commercial economy, or on a better-paying merchant vessel.[xxx] At San Francisco, Richard Crawford has noted, "Captains were often forced to fill their forecastles with untrained waterfront workers. Honolulu offered hundreds of experienced Hawaiian-born seamen who could be signed aboard for minuscule lays. As the Hawaiian press observed, San Francisco lacked the chief requisites of the industry—'thorough-bred, smart whalemen.'"[xxxi]

Indeed, 1851 San Francisco crew lists and shipping articles include numerous testimonies of captains unable to secure sufficient American-born labor to man their vessels. One of few identifiable whalers clearing that port in 1851, the San Francisco ship *Mary Mitchell*, signed thirty-two men between 9 and 12 April for "a whaling voyage to the Arctic Ocean & elsewhere."[xxxii] All but the captain, Benjamin C. Sayer, the three

mates, and the cooper were born in the Sandwich Islands. On a note attached to the crew list Sayer certified "that we have made great efforts but have been unable to procure a crew of two thirds of American seamen." The San Francisco schooner *Pontiac* left that year with a crew of seven and three officers "on a whaling voyage"; they may have been shore whaling. All seven of the crew were foreign-born.

In short, Americans who found their way to San Francisco apparently did not tend to sign on for whaling voyages, and few whaling vessels from eastern ports appear to have visited there to repair their vessels, replenish supplies, and sign on crew. It soon became clear to New Bedford whaling merchants that men were signing on as crew with the intent of deserting in California, thereby achieving free passage; indeed, enterprising whaling men such as New Bedford's Charles W. Morgan, recognizing the greater profitability at that time of shipping passengers over hunting whales, refitted whaling vessels for the passenger trade. Numerous men of color either worked as crew or sailed as passengers aboard these San Francisco-bound vessels. At least 104 New Bedford men and women of color left the city for California between 1848 and 1861. Of those 104, 23 came back to New Bedford (14 of them born in southern states), but 78 probably never came back to the city. Of that 78, 47 claimed to have been born in slave

states. At least another five went on to other places—the Fraser River in British Columbia, where gold was discovered in 1858, among them.

In only a few cases, whether some of these California migrants were fugitives is so far impossible to say. Rudolph M. Lapp has identified the Rev. T. E. Randolph and Gilbert Carter as fugitives who left New Bedford for California, though Carter was endeavoring to purchase the freedom of his children by working in California; he himself may have been free.[xxxiii] David W. Ruggles, extremely active in racial equality issues in New Bedford, probably was an escaped slave; in an interview with historian Dorothy Porter, Ruggles's son claimed his father had taken his name from the black Underground Railroad activist of that name in New York, who had helped him, presumably in his escape. Other New Bedford black activists who engaged themselves in similar issues in California—Solomon Peneton, Philip F. Piper, Lloyd Brooks, and Nathan Johnson—may have been fugitives, but there is no firm evidence attesting that status. James R. Davis, who had stated his place of origin differently in every official enumeration, took out a protection paper in June 1849 and went first to California; by 1856, the city directory notes, Davis was in Australia.[xxxiv] In the 1930s New Bedford's Elizabeth Carter Brooks told Works Progress Administration writers that Henry Carroll

was one of the fugitives Harriet Tubman had brought north and that Carroll "came up here to New Bedford later"; he was living in New Bedford by 1855, when he told state census takers that he was born in Maryland. In 1860, however, he stated that he was born in Massachusetts. The next year, Carroll shipped out aboard the whaler *Hector* and left the ship when it reached California. Assuming that Carroll was a fugitive, he clearly felt no particular urgency to leave New Bedford to escape slave agents.[xxxv] Neither did William Ferguson, identified as a "runaway slave" in the city's poor relief records in February 1848: he did not leave New Bedford for California until 1863, when he signed on as cook aboard a trading vessel, and he returned to New Bedford thirteen months later.[xxxvi]

Because the statistical work has not yet been done, it is not exactly known how many vessels clearing the port of San Francisco were bound for the Northwest Coast and the Arctic before the Civil War. One count puts the number of whalers clearing that port during the entire 1850s at forty-six, and whether these were all bound north is unknown. In 1851 only six of hundreds of vessels leaving San Francisco were either trading vessels or whalers bound for the Arctic; of the three whalers, destinations are identified for only one of them. The great majority of vessels leaving San Francisco in

that year were bound for Calcutta, Valparaiso, Hong Kong, Canton, and Panama (mostly steamers with large crews, no doubt picking up East Coast passengers bound for California); smaller numbers aimed for the western ports of Mexico, Acapulco, Mazatlan, Rio, the Sandwich Islands, the Society Islands, Manila, Singapore, and Shanghai.

In addition, no evidence exists to confirm that any suspected New Bedford fugitives went from San Francisco to Alaska, though some did travel to the Fraser River strike. Most appear to have worked in the California gold mines or in the region's booming service economy, as two letters from Samuel Griffits Morgan to his uncle Charles W. Morgan suggest. Griffits Morgan had traveled to San Francisco on one of his uncle's former whaling vessels to seek his fortune, and his letters home appear to report on people of color who owed Charles W. Morgan money.

> Samy Woodline & wife are making money washing—they have so far only been able to pay their freight bill—your turn will come next and I will look after them on yr account. . . . Th P. Buchanan is back here from the mines worse off than he started—I immediately applied to Macundsay [?] & Co for his old situation as

steward of their mess—and he is now there at $200 pr month so poor Thomas is prospering again--he has the pluck and determination of a bull terrier and vows the Bath house shall be paid for before he leaves here—Nathan is worse off a good deal than when he left home.

Still in debt a year later, Buchanan had switched jobs. Griffits Morgan reported that he working in a "Fresh Oyster establishment lately opened by William Russell whose brother has discovered a bed of them on the Oregon shore."[xxxvii]

Because crew lists are rarely definitive about fugitive status, they must be combined with whaling log books and journals. Even if these latter documents make no note of the presence of a fugitive on board a vessel, they are the only records that permit one to develop an understanding of how often whaling vessels made port on the Alaskan coast and whether desertions occurred at such times. American vessels, for the most part from the port of Boston, had been trading with Alaskan natives since the late 1780s.[xxxviii] Between 1787 and 1826 American vessels made at least 127 voyages to the Northwest Coast to trade manufactured goods for furs, which they then traveled to Chinese ports to sell. Russian consternation over loss of trade to foreign vessels as

well as the growing presence of American and British firearms among the native population brought an effective end to the Alaskan fur trade in 1821, when the Russian government forbade the agents of the Russian-American Company from trading with American or British captains. The ban was lifted in 1824, but most scholars agree that the region's furs had been seriously depleted by then and that the enterprise was no longer viable by the War of 1812. Historian Dorothy Ray has stated that no English or American vessels traded in Alaskan waters from 1820 to 1848, when the first whalers appeared in Bering Strait and the first vessels commissioned to search for the lost Sir John Franklin expedition wintered over in northwestern Alaska.[xxxix]

Whaling vessels are known to have traded with Alaska's native populations, particularly toward the end of the nineteenth century.[xl] Evidence exists of such trade before the Civil War as well. Ray has argued that before 1884, when a shore coaling station was set up for steam whalers at Port Clarence, the only Alaskans to have direct contact with whaling vessels and their crews were those on the islands.[xli] Accounts surveyed so far for this study suggest as much. As the Fairhaven whaling ship *Citizen* passed St. Lawrence Island, just south of the Bering Strait, the crew saw "the huts of the natives" from the deck; the vessel anchored in St. Lawrence Bay so that the natives

might come aboard to trade. Members of the *Citizen's* crew stated that the Alaskans "brought their accustomed articles for traffic, such as deer and walrus skins, furs, teeth, &c. They take in exchange needles, fancy articles, tobacco, &c." In September 1852 Washington Fosdick saw native Alaskans "waving skins, walrus teeth &c to attract attention" from the shore of one of the Diomede Islands, in the middle of Bering Strait. From the deck of the *Montreal* Fosdick could see the "20 or 30 huts on the side of a steep mountain" that formed the native settlement, where the captain traded "a bag of bread and a dozen bottles of mulasses [*sic*]" for walrus teeth. After a group of twelve Eskimos rowed a canoe to the *St. George* "for the purpose of bartering furs and skins for tobacco and rum" in July 1851, captain and crew also went ashore. But they did so at East Cape, on the Siberian, not Alaskan, side of the Bering Strait.[xlii]

"Since 1854, when the first whalers came as far north as the Point [Barrow], there has hardly been a season in which ships have not visited this region," ethnologist John Murdoch wrote in 1892, "and for a couple of months every year the natives have had considerable intercourse with the whites, going off to the ships to trade, while the sailors come ashore occasionally." One result of such interchange, he stated, was the introduction of Hawaiian words among the Eskimo on the part of "Kanaka sailors on the

whaleships,"[xliii] another indication that American-born crew was hard to secure. Russian-American Company officials had complained of the contact among American whalemen and natives as early as 1845, when they accused the Yankee "Hell-Ships" of stealing oil from the Eskimo and Aleut whale hunts as well as food and women, and Murdoch saw in Barrow an Eskimo man he thought he had first met in Boston in 1862 or 1863. "In spite of the Russian posts in Norton Sound," traveler Frederick Whymper wrote in 1869, "a large part of the Indian trade was carried on with the American whaling-vessels who annually visited Port Clarence, Kotzebue Sound, and adjacent coasts, and paid much larger prices than the tariff fixed by the fur company.[xliv]

From these accounts, however, it is difficult to gauge how much trade took place between whaling vessels and native populations during the era of slave escapes. And as Ray suggests, the trade may have been largely confined to exchanges with islanders and with Siberians. Logbooks and journals surveyed for this project suggest that few whaling vessels made port along the Alaskan coast. The most recent data on the paths of New Bedford whalers indicates that between 1836 and 1855 only 7.4 percent of the city's fleet went to the western Arctic; over the next decade, 16.4 percent did.[xlv] But preliminary evidence suggests that they fished closer to Siberia than to

Alaska. This tendency may be explained in part by the fact that the waters of the Pacific Ocean enter from the Indian Ocean and circulate to the Sea of Okhotsk and Bering Sea of the North Pacific; the first American whaler to enter the Pacific came by way of the Indian Ocean.[xlvi] Moreover, bowhead whales might have been more plentiful on the Siberian side. Captain Michael Healy of the Revenue Cutter Corwin stated in 1884 that bowheads tended to "track along the Asiatic side in Bering Sea and Strait, and, as they reach the Arctic, cross over and work up the American shore to the northward and eastward," where the danger of becoming trapped in or destroyed by ice grew extreme.[xlvii] In addition, because of the ever-present danger of ice damage in these northern seas, whaling vessels tended to stay within reasonable distance of navigable harbors. John Bockstoce has noted that in Alaska only the Port Clarence had a harbor deep enough to accommodate whaling vessels and was relatively free of ice; most whaling vessels made port, when they had to, at Rudder, Plover, or St. Lawrence Bays along Siberia's Chuckchi peninsula. Point Barrow was considered all but inaccessible until after 1854, when reports reached whalemen of the fact that the *Plover*, part of the Franklin search expedition, spent the winter at Elson Lagoon and another British vessel had found the waters between Port Clarence and Barrow to be largely unobstructed by

ice. Still, Healy noted fully thirty years later, "Point Barrow is approached with the greatest caution, as it is one of the most dangerous places in the Arctic. . . . by far the major portion of the vessels lost in the Arctic are wrecked in its vicinity."[xlviii]

There is also the suggestion that contact between mainland Alaskans and whaling crew may not have been encouraged even if it had been feasible. Stories had spread of the capture of ship's blacksmith John Jewitt by the Nootka in 1803 and of the attack on and disappearance of one of explorer Frederick Beechey's surveying parties in 1827.[xlix] The ethnographer John W. Kelly noted in 1890 that the Eskimo tribe he called the Tigara Mutes at Point Hope had "often attacked parties of whalemen who have been on shore after casks of water or driftwood for fuel," and specific instances of such attacks have been documented. Inuit people are believed to have killed eleven members of the crew of the New Bedford whaler *Arabella*, lost near East Cape in 1851, and in 1868 Eskimos are said to have attacked the crew of a whaleboat from a vessel wrecked near Point Hope. Kelly also reported that Alaskan natives from Cape Prince of Wales had taken and pilfered goods from a San Francisco trading vessel and a Hawaiian brig in the 1860s.[l] Reports of prostitution, adultery, sexual disease were common in the 1840s and 1850s, and the documented rate of intermarriage between

Alaskan women and foreign men at a later period suggest a contrary impulse among native peoples with respect to strangers. But data on intermarriage in the years of fugitive slave traffic do not appear to exist.

Finally, the real window of opportunity for the settlement of fugitive whalemen in Alaska is quite small, from roughly 1842 to 1859. By 1855, Bockstoce has argued, whaling captains became convinced that the Arctic's whale populations had been depleted; by 1857, the older Northwest Coast or Kodiak grounds appeared largely scoured of whales as well. As Table 1 indicates, voyages to Northwest Coast and Alaskan waters declined sharply from 1854 to 1861, the only exception being the fifty-six voyages in 1857. Some vessels did find whales on the Alaskan side of the Bering Strait in the late 1850s, but whaling captains seemed to agree that if they had not killed most of the whales in these waters they had taught the animals very well how to elude them.[li] Healy had noted in 1884, "The bowhead whale keeps as far to the northward as he can find spouting holes, and to take him the whalers are obliged to keep as close to the [ice] pack as possible." Bockstoce has suggested that bowheads, rather than being decimated by the American whaling fleet, actually learned to hide beneath the deep ice where whaling vessels could not go. One whaling captain stated his own theory to this

effect in a letter published in the *Whalemen's Shipping List* in December 1852:

> He is no longer the slow and sluggish beast we at first found him. Particularly at the latter part of the season, they are very shy. I have often noticed, after one or two whales were struck in the morning, after the fog cleared, that the entire body of whales would be stirred up so that it would be almost impossible to strike one during the whole day. Within a space of from ten to twelve miles, there would be from fifteen to thirty ships, all doing their best, but the greatest number were to be seen without any smoke [from the tryworks on deck]. I counted fifty-eight ships and only twelve of them were boiling and I have seen a much smaller proportion in smaller fleets. I know that the whales have diminished since I was here two years ago and they are more difficult to strike. . . . It will not long be profitable to send ships to the Arctic.[lii]

By 1860, Alexander Starbuck's listing of vessels began to include Davis Strait, in the eastern Arctic, as a destination. Crawford has argued that the Panic of 1857, the discovery of kerosene, and the high cost of outfitting whalers for long voyages to the

Arctic induced whaling merchants to send vessels through the north Atlantic to the Hudson Bay and Davis Strait grounds, where both right and bowhead whales could be hunted.[liii] The whaling fleet returned to the Arctic after the Civil War, but it did not then carry fugitive slaves. Whether fugitive slaves settled in Alaska can only be determined by attempting to document oral histories to that effect and by an exhaustive survey of the 188 whaling logbooks and journals that document cruises to the region.[liv] Fugitives could have come to Alaska earlier than 1842 on fur trading vessels; John Jacob Astor, perhaps the preeminent fur trader in the region, is known to have played some role in the escapes of the fugitives William Henry Johnson and John S. Jacobs, who both came from Astor's New York City hotel to New Bedford. In addition, because many of these trading vessels were registered in Boston, it is possible that fugitives from both cities were on board. However, the bulk of this trade took place before 1812, when fugitive escapes appear to have been far less common.

It seems more likely, too, that the presence of people of African ancestry in Alaska dates to a later period of whaling, that which took place after the Civil War. According to Bockstoce, in these years vessels were far more apt to winter over in Alaskan ports with an eye toward being nearer to the bowhead whale's summer feeding

grounds. Bockstoce has documented only six whalers wintering over in the Arctic between 1850 and 1863, five of them in Siberian ports and one at an unknown port in the Bering Strait region; another seven wintered in the region between 1869 and 1890. During these layovers contact between whalemen and Alaskan natives were far more frequent and sustained that at any time before the Civil War. It may be as Dorothy Ray has observed of the many "first ship" stories among the Bering Strait Eskimos: "The 'first ship' stories . . . appear to be based on much more recent ships than the first. Eskimos smelled the 'first ship' before it arrived in Golovnin Bay (possibly whalers trying out whale fat?). And the 'first ship' at Sledge Island had Negro sailors and traded hardtack, flour in cloth sacks, and 'Navy plug tobacco,' all items sold during the last half of the nineteenth century."

· 1 · New Bedford Whaling Voyages, 1842-61

| *Year* | *Total voyages* | *Number/Percent to Alaskan waters* | *AK-bound whalers with black crew** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1842 | 104 | 6 / 5.8 | 6 |
| 1843 | 103 | 20 / 19.4 | 21 |
| 1844 | 123 | 33 / 26.8 | 35 |
| 1845 | 117 | 64 / 54.7 | 63 |
| 1846 | 100 | 26 / 26.0 | 19 |
| 1847 | 102 | 22 / 21.6 | 20 |
| 1848 | 98 | 26 / 26.5 | 21 |
| 1849 | 82 | 1 / 1.2 | 0 |
| 1850 | 112 | 59 / 52.7 | 37 |
| 1851 | 174 | 94 / 54.0 | 86 |
| 1852 | 104 | 19 / 18.3 | 12 |
| 1853 | 131 | 59 / 45.0 | 36 |
| 1854 | 133 | 57 / 42.8 | 41 |
| 1855 | 125 | 26 / 20.8 | 16 |
| 1856 | 121 | 36 / 29.7 | 23 |
| 1857 | 130 | 56 / 43.1 | 26 |
| 1858 | 97 | 29 / 29.9 | 3 |
| 1859 | 94 | 10 / 10.6 | 5 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1860 | 94 | 7 / 7.4 | 0 |
| 1861 | 42 | 0 / 0.0 | 0 |
| *Total* | 2,186 | 650 / 29.7 | 470 |

*These figures are taken from Port Society crew lists and do not include voyages that included black crew known to have been legal residents of New Bedford.

· 2 · Black Populations in Northern Ports, 1850

| | *New Bedford* | *New York* | *Boston* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total Population of Color | 1,008 | 14,000 | 1,999 |
| Number Born in South | 302 | 2,100 | 332 |
| Percent Born in South | 29.9 | 15.0 | 16.6 |

· 3 · New Bedford Population of Color and New Bedford Whalemen of Color Numerical Totals / Percentages of Totals, 1850

| | *NB Residents* | *NB Whalemen* |
|---|---|---|
| Total | 1,008 | 154 |
| Total from Free States | 537 / 53.2 | 104 / 67.5 |
| MA | 372 / 36.9 | 33 / 21.4 |
| Other New England | 63 / 6.2 | 17 / 11.0 |
| Other Free States | 102 / 10.1 | 54 / 35.1 |
| Total from Slave States | 302 / 29.9 | 27 / 17.5 |
| Border States | 263 / 26.1 | 25 / 16.2 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Other Slave States | 39 / 3.9 | 2 / 1.3 |
| Total from Outside USA | 46 / 4.6 | 14 / 9.1 |
| Ambiguous/Unknown | 122 / 12.1 | 9 / 5.8 |

**· 4 · Places of Birth or Residence,**

**Men of Color in Crews of Whalers Bound for Alaska Region, 1842-61***

| | *Number / Percent of total* |
|---|---|
| Total Crew of Color | 813 / 100.0 |
| From Free States | 602 / 74.0 |
| New England | 261 / 32.1 |
| New York | 196 / 24.1 |
| Pennsylvania | 77 / 9.5 |
| New Jersey | 40 / 4.9 |
| OH, MI | 8 / 0.9 |
| From Slave States | 168 / 20.7 |
| Maryland | 82 / 10.1 |
| Virginia | 27 / 3.3 |
| Delaware | 21 / 2.6 |
| North Carolina | 14 / 1.7 |
| All other | 13 / 1.6 |
| From Outside U.S. | 6 / 0.7 |
| Not Indicated/Unclear | 37 / 4.5 |

*These figures were taken from New Bedford Port Society crew lists. They represent instances of reporting; in some cases the same man listing the same place of origin shipped out on more than one voyage.

Notes

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i. Among the best secondary sources on whaling are Lance E. Davis, Robert E. Gallman, and Karin Gleiter, *In Pursuit of Leviathan: Technology, Institutions, Productivity, and Profits in American Whaling, 1816-1906* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Elmo Paul Hohman, *The American Whaleman: A Study of Life and Labor in the Whaling Industry* (New York/London/ Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1928); vol. 2 of Alexander Starbuck, *History of the American Whale Fishery from Its Earliest Inception to the Year 1876* (1878; reprint, New York: Argosy-Antiquarian Ltd., 1964); and Everett S. Allen, *Children of the Light: The Rise and Fall of New Bedford's Whaling and the Death of the Arctic Fleet* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971). John Bockstoce, *Whales, Ice, and Men: The History of Whaling in the Western Arctic* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1986) is the authortative source on its subject, but it focuses largely on a later period than this study considers.

ii. The first whalers hunting off the coast of Kamchatka and in Sea of Okhotsk, in 1843, were the ships *Hercules* and *Janus* of New Bedford, according to Starbuck, American Whale Fishery, 98, quoting Charles M. Scammon, *The Marine Mammals of the North-Western Coast of North America* (1874). Starbuck first listed "N.W. Coast" as a whaling destination in 1841, for the ship *Daniel Webster* of Sag Harbor, N.Y., for the ship *York* of Edgartown, Mass., and for the ship *John Wells* of Newark, N.J. Bockstoce, *Whales, Ice, and Men*, 93, dates the beginning of the Arctic whale fishery at 1849, the year after Captain Thomas Royce (or Roys) became the first to travel through the Bering Strait in the whaling vessel *Superior*.

iii. Though its harbor had been used extensively before 30 March1849, San Francisco

was established as a port of entry on that date by the United States Congress; the customs office opened in 1850. See U.S. Customs Service, Port of San Francisco, Shipping Articles and Crew Lists, 1851-63, Record Group 36, National Archives and Records Administration, San Bruno, CA.

iv. Bockstoce, *Whales, Ice, and Men*, 15.

v. Martha S. Putney, *Black Sailors: Afro-American Merchant Seamen and Whalemen Prior to the Civil War* (New York and Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1987), 34, cites the notation "runaway slave" on a crew list for the New Bedford whaling vessel *Abigail* in 1824. Martha S. Putney, Washington, D.C., 7 September 1999, to Guy Washington, Underground Railroad Coordinator for the Pacific region, San Francisco, Calif., states her conviction "that many, many slaves used to seaways to escape to freedom" but that it is "virtually impossible to quantify" because of the large number of mariners who went to sea without protection papers, the shortcomings of the protection papers themselves, "the need to conceal one's identity to make good the escape," the use of aliases, and the need of vessel captains quickly to secure crew because of discharges and desertions. In an accompanying list Putney provided "names of those designated as slaves or runaways who may have ended up on the West Coast," but here I think Putney has misinterpreted the term "runaway"; more often than not, I have found, the term was added later and was synonymous with "deserter." She cites, for example, the case of John Henry Morris of Baltimore on the whaler *Arnolda* as a possible runaway slave, but the crew list itself says "ran away at Altaccama." In addition, I have found that the use of aliases among fugitives was not universal; some, such as John S. Jacobs and George Weston, shipped under their own names.

vi. See, for example, Harold Williams, ed., *One Whaling Family* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1964); Stanton Garner, ed., *The Captain's Best Mate: The Journal of Mary Chipman Lawrence on the Whaler Addison, 1856-60* (Providence, R. I.: Brown University Press, 1966); and Rev. Lewis Holmes, *The Arctic Whaleman; or, Winter in*

*the Arctic Ocean* (Boston: Wentworth & Co., 1857).

vii. Jo Ann Williamson, chief Research Support Branch, NARA, 19 January 2000, to author, states that no census is available for Alaska before 1900 except for the special 1870 census of Sitka. See Ernest Gruening, *The State of Alaska: A Definitive History of America's Northernmost Frontier* (New York: Random House, 1968), 62-63 on the 1880 census.

viii. They were Jamaican-born Thomas M. Groves, age 34, a saddler, cook, and steward for the *Cyane*, living at "residence no. 41" with his wife Martha E. Groves, age 20, born in Washington D.C. and a laundress for the *Cyane*. In a notes column the Groveses were described as "colored couple, freshly married." The other two were Henry Melvin, age 37, born in Jamaica and a "Negro" seaman, and Tom Steward, age 39, born in Martinique, and a cook working for Prussian-born baker and restaurateur Albert Richter. See R. N. DeArmond, ed., *Lady Franklin Visits Sitka, Alaska, 1870* (Fairbanks: Alaska Historical Society, 1981), Appendix II, 93-125.

ix. Gruening, *State of Alaska*, 63.

x. A list of these men, their rank, their hometown, their place of birth, and their post is available on the Internet from the Blacks in Alaska History Project, http://www.yukonalaska.com/akblkhist/menof24.html.

xi. Hohman, *American Whaleman*, 8-9; Davis et al., *In Pursuit of Leviathan*, Table 1.1; Starbuck, *American Whale Fishery*, Appendix I.

xii. Howard I. Kushner, "'Hellships': Yankee Whaling along the Coasts of Russian-America, 1835-1852," *New England Quarterly* 45, 1 (March 1972): 85.

xiii. Kushner, "'Hellships,'" 90-91.

xiv. See Kathryn Grover, *The Fugitive's Gibraltar: Escaping Slaves and Abolitionism in New Bedford, Massachusetts* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001).

xv. *The Life of John Thompson, a Fugitive Slave; Containing His History of 25 Years in Bondage, and His Providential Escape. Written by Himself* (Worcester: John Thompson, 1856).

xvi. Starbuck listed only six vessels as bound for the Northwest Coast in 1842; both the *Hercules* and the *Janus* (elsewhere *James*) were listed as destined for the Indian Ocean.

xvii. Because seamen's statuses are reported so inconsistently, it would have no meaning to tabulate these indications when they do occur.

xviii. Davis et al., *In Pursuit of Leviathan*, 180, has noted, "The comparison of the wages of whalemen (excluding officers) with those of merchant seamen produces results that, if they do not confirm the view that there were two separate labor markets, imply behavior outside the normal bounds of economists' assumptions." They note that if shipboard positions in both the merchant marine and the whaling industry were truly comparable, and if both industries had access to the same workers, the fact that whaling crew members demonstrated a tendency to accept lower wages and greater variability in wages suggests either that "whalemen were drawn from an unusual group—people who believed that a small probability of a big win was a goal worth sacrificing for—or that they were paying apprenticeship dues on the way to more remunerative positions as boatsteerers or officers. It is more likely that the two groups were being hired for different jobs: merchant seamen as seamen, whalemen as oarsmen. It is also possible that the two groups were doing the same job, but that the whalemen were not very good at it."

xix. A protection paper for Reuben Winslow states that he was born in 1809 in Falmouth, Mass., and was in the crew of the Fairhaven whaler *Martha* from 1836 to

1841; he married in New Bedford in 1833. A Robert Eliot shipped out on the New Bedford whaler Abigail in July 1839; his crew listing states that he was born about 1779 in Norfolk, Va. The papers of whaling merchant Charles W. Morgan, owner of the Abigail, state that Eliot shipped as a cook on the voyage but noted afterward that he was "too old" to serve. Eliot had died by 1849, when his wife is shown as a widow in the New Bedford city directory. Morgan's papers are at Mystic Seaport Museum.

xx. Hohman, *American Whaleman*, 69, 92, 94-96; the records of the unnamed agent are "Mss. Memorandum Book of a New Bedford Firm, Giving List of Men Shipped on Whaling Voyages 1854-1872," at New Bedford Free Public Library.

xxi. Davis et al., *In Pursuit of Leviathan*, 158.

xxii. James F. Munger, *Two Years in the Pacific and Arctic Oceans and China, Being a Journal for Every Day Life on Board Ship, Interesting Information in Regard to the Inhabitants of Different Countries, and the Exciting Events Peculiar to a Whaling Voyage* (1852; reprint, Fairfield, Wash.: Ye Galleon Press, 1987), 60.

xxiii. Sea journal kept by Richard Mitchell Sherman on board the bark *George C. Champlin*, Newport, 1844-48, HDC 63, J. Porter Shaw Library, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, San Francisco, Calif.

xxiv. Seal's desertion is documented in Stanton Garner, ed., *The Captain's Best Mate: The Journal of Mary Chipman Lawrence on the Whaler Addison, 1856-60* (Providence, R. I.: Brown University Press, 1966), 54.

xxv."Journal of a Voyage to the Arctic Ocean and Around the World on Board the American Whaleship Montreal of New Bedford/Frederic L. Fish, Master in the Year 1850, 51,52, and 53 continued/Forsdick [sic] Steward," Reel 67, 526+, Kendall Whaling Museum, Sharon, Mass.

xxvi. Davis et al., *In Pursuit of Leviathan*, 193-94.

xxvii. Richard William Crawford, "Whalers from the Golden Gate: A History of the San Francisco Whaling Industry, 1822-1908" (Master's thesis, San Diego State University, Spring 1981), 51 n. 3.

xxviii. Williams, ed., *One Whaling Family*, 156, 159.

xxix. Crawford, "Whalers from the Golden Gate," 57, quoting the 12 November 1864 issue of Honolulu's *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*.

xxx. Ibid., 44, 46, 53 n. 33.

xxxi. Ibid., 58. John R. Bockstoce and Charles F. Batchelder, "A Chronological List of Commercial Wintering Voyages to the Bering Strait Region and Western Arctic of North America: 1850-1910," *American Neptune* 38, 2 (April 1978), 82, state that during the 1850s and 1860s much of the Arctic whaling fleet refitted in the Hawaiian islands.

xxxii. Davis et al., *In Pursuit of Leviathan*, table 2.5, indicates that no whaling vessels were registered in San Francisco until the 1850s, when 46 clear; by contrast, New Bedford sent out 915 in that decade.

xxxiii. Rudolph M. Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977), 19.

xxxiv. In his 1833 protection paper said said he was from New York City, but in another one he took out in 1839 he stated that he was from Richmond, Va. In his 1849 protection paper he gave his place of origin as New Bedford. But he told federal census officials in 1850 that he had been born in Savannah, Georgia, and in 1855 that his birthplace was Washington, D.C.

xxxv. See Warren E. Thomson, "The Story of Harriet Tubman," in *Spinner: People and Culture in Southeastern Massachusetts* 4 (1988): 67. That Carroll went to California is documented in the records of the New Bedford Overseers of the Poor, vol. 4, entry dated 18 November 1864: "Jane Carroll, c [colored], age 40. Born in Maryland. To State 1855. Married in Maryland. Husband Henry. Born same place, came same year. Sailed in a whaling voyage in ship Hector. 3 years ago, left the ship & is now in California. Sent her $5.00 last June."

xxxvi. Ferguson's life story, including his escape from slavery, appeared in the New Bedford *Standard Times* on 15 May 1910.

xxxvii. Box 4, Folder 19, Charles W. Morgan Papers, Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, Conn. The letters are dated 21 October 1850 and 13 December 1851. In every other listing the "Woodlines" are Samuel and Nancy Woodland, who had come to New Bedford from Delaware by 1836; Buchanan is Thomas P. Buchanan, the son-in-law of Nathan Johnson's wife Mary (Polly), who had been married before; he ran a public bath house in New Bedford from 1836 until he went to California in 1849 aboard the ship *Mayflower* of New Bedford. "Nathan" is Nathan Johnson, one of the city's foremost abolitionists, a caterer, and a continuous assistant to fugitive slaves. Johnson and his wife owned a good deal of real estate in New Bedford, and it seems likely that he was deeply in debt to mortgagees at the time he left for California. He did not return to New Bedford until 1873. Buchanan may have returned with his father-in-law, for he is recorded to have died in the city that year.

xxxviii. Cape Verdean Marcus Lopez joined the crew of one of the first two Boston traders, the *Lady Washington*, at Cape Verde on 21 December 1787; he is credited with having been the first person of color in the Oregon Territory. See Elizabeth McLagan, *A Peculiar Paradise: A History of Blacks in Oregon, 1788-1940* (Portland, Or.: Georgian Press, 1980), 1.

xxxix. See James R. Gibson, "Bostonians and Muscovites on the Northwest Coast, 1788-1841," in *The Western Shore: Oregon Country Essays Honoring the American Revolution*, ed. Thomas Vaughan (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1975), 85-86, 111, 116, and Dorothy Jean Ray, *The Eskimos of Bering Strait, 1650-1898* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1975), 45-46, 65, 140. Gibson states that the 1839 signing of an agreement between the Russian-American Company and the Hudson's Bay Company ended trade with the "Boston ships" for good. On the early contacts between whalers, Franklin expedition searchers, and Alaska natives see Ernest S. Burch Jr., *Eskimo Kinsmen: Changing Family Relationships in Northwest Alaska* (St. Paul: West Publishing Co, 1975), 2-3, and John Murdoch, *Ethnological Results of the Point Barrow Expedition. Extract from the Ninth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1892).

xl. Bockstoce and Batchelder, "Commercial Wintering Voyages," 82.

xli. Ray, *Eskimos of Bering Strait*, 140-41.

xlii. Holmes, *Arctic Whaleman*, 44-45; Montreal log book; Munger, *Two Years in the Pacific and Arctic*, 23.

xliii. Murdoch, *Point Barrow Expedition*, 53-55.

xliv. Kushner, "'Hell-ships,'" 92-93; Murdoch, *Point Barrow Expedition*, 35 n.; Frederick Whymper, *Travel and Adventure in the Territory of Alaska* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1869), 162.

xlv. Davis et al., *In Pursuit of Leviathan*, table 2.4.

xlvi.Thomas, William L. Thomas Jr., "The Pacific Basin: An Introduction," 13-14, and Kenneth J. Bertrand, "Geographical Exploration by the United States," 261, in *The Pacific Basin: A History of Its Geographical Exploration*, ed. by Herman R. Friis (New

York: American Geographical Society, 1967).

xlvii. Healy quoted in Lieutenant D. H. Jarvis, *Alaska: Coast Pilot Notes on the Fox Island Passes, Unalaska Bay, Bering Sea, and Arctic Ocean as Far as Point Barrow*, Treasury Department, United States Coast and Geodetic Survey, Bulletin No. 40 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1899), 195,197. Healy, an African American who could have been a fugitive, served on the revenue cutters *Bear* and *Corwin* in Alaskan waters for many years, but he never settled in the territory.

xlviii. Bockstoce and Batchelder, "Commercial Wintering Voyages," 81-82; Bockstoce, *Whales, Ice, and Men*, 50, 97; Healy quoted in Jarvis, *Alaska*, 197.

xlix. Briton C. Busch and Barry M. Gough, eds., *Fur Traders from New England: The Boston Men in the North Pacific, 1787-1800: The Narratives of William Dane Phelps, William Sturgis & James Gilchrist Swan* (Spokane, Wash.: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1997), 20, state that Jewitt's tale was "well known to every school child." On the Beechey expedition, see John W. Kelly, *Ethnographical Memoranda Concerning the Arctic Eskimos in Alaska and Siberia,* Bulletin No. 3 (Sitka: Society of Alaskan Natural History and Ethnology, 1890), 11-12.

l. Kelly, *Ethnographical Memoranda*, 10, 12; Davis et al., *In Pursuit of Leviathan*, 153. Holmes, in *Arctic Whaleman*, relates the kind treatment the crew of the shipwrecked *Citizen* received in 1851, but the crew reached land at East Cape, Siberia.

li. Davis et al., *In Pursuit of Leviathan*, 144-45, has stated that the bowhead population before offshore whaling began has been estimated at thirty thousand and was reduced to about three thousand by 1915. However, they state, the "total productivity" of bowhead grounds did not begin to show a notable decline until 1880.

lii. Bockstoce, *Whales, Ice, and Men*, 98-99; Everett S. Allen, *Children of the Light: The*

*Rise and Fall of New Bedford's Whaling and the Death of the Arctic Fleet* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971), 141-42.

liii. Crawford, "Whalers from the Golden Gate," 56; Davis et al., *In Pursuit of Leviathan*, 28.

liv. A complete review of all San Francisco customs district crew lists might also be in order, but it would be worth consulting with Lance Davis and his fellow researchers to determine whether their whaling voyages data set could narrow this search down.