



The Penniman House: A Whaling Story

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(From the collection of Cape Cod National Seashore)

Captain Edward Penniman steps outside his house on Fort Hill in Eastham, Massachusetts in the late summer of 1881. He can feel the chill of the winds blowing off the Atlantic Ocean. He can smell and taste the salt air. By habit, he scans the white-capped horizon in search of a whale's spout. Soon he would leave on his fifth voyage across the world's oceans, to hunt these "leviathans of the deep." The voyage could last for four years. Would his wife Gustie come along this time? Would any of their children accompany them? Where would he find his crew? Would this whaling voyage be successful? It was the whaling industry, or "whale fishery," as it was known then, that satisfied Captain Penniman's adventurous spirit and offered him an opportunity to earn enough money to support a family and to construct an impressive home in Eastham. Captain Penniman built his French Second Empire style house on Cape Cod in 1868. Today, over 100 years later, the Penniman House is a National Historic Site owned and interpreted by the National Park Service as part of Cape Cod National Seashore. The house holds the Penniman family's written records and artifact collections, which provide glimpses of the places and people that the family visited on their whaling voyages. Theirs is a true life whaling story representative of hundreds of other whaling captains and their families that traveled the globe to pursue whale fishery.



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Where this lesson fits into the curriculum

Time Period: 1850-1874

Topics: This lesson could be used in US history, social studies, and geography in units on maritime history and the whaling industry.

Relevant United States History Standards for Grades 5-12

This lesson relates to the following National Standards for History from the UCLA National Center for History in the Schools:

US History Era 6:

- **Standard 1D:** The student understands the effects of rapid industrialization on the environment and the emergence of the first conservation movement.
 - **Standard 2A:** The student understands the sources and experiences of the new immigrants.
-

Relevant Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

This lesson relates to the following Curriculum Standards for Social Studies from the National Council for the Social Studies:

Theme I: Culture

- Standard A: The student compares similarities and differences in the ways groups, societies, and cultures meet human needs and concerns.
- Standard C: The student explains and give examples of how language, literature, the arts, architecture, other artifacts, traditions, beliefs, values, and behaviors contribute to the development and transmission of culture.
- Standard D: The student explains why individuals and groups respond differently to their physical and social environments and/or changes to them on the basis of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs.
- Standard E: The student articulates the implications of cultural diversity, as well as cohesion, within and across groups.



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Theme III: People, Places and Environments

- Standard A: The student elaborates mental maps of locales, regions, and the world that demonstrate understanding of relative location, direction, size, and shape.
- Standard C: The student uses appropriate resources, data sources, and geographic tools such as aerial photographs, satellite images, geographic information systems (GIS), map projections, and cartography to generate, manipulate, and interprets information such as atlases, data bases, grid systems, charts, graphs, and maps.
- Standard G: The student describes how people creates places that reflect cultural values and ideals as they build neighborhoods, parks, shopping centers, and the like.
- Standard I: The student describes ways that historical events have been influenced by, and have influenced physical and human geographic factors in local, regional, national, and global settings.
- Standard K: The student proposes, compares, and evaluates alternative uses of land and resources in communities, regions, nations, and the world.

Theme IV: Individual Development and Identity

- Standard A: The student relates personal changes to social, cultural, and historical contexts.
- Standard B: The student describes personal connections to places associated with community, nation, and world.
- Standard C: The student describes the ways family, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and institutional affiliations contribute to personal identity.
- Standard E: The student identifies and describes ways regional, ethnic, and national cultures influence individuals daily lives.
- Standard G: The student identifies and interprets examples of stereotyping, conformity, and altruism.
- Standard H: The student works independently and cooperatively to accomplish goals.

Theme V: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

- Standard A: The student demonstrates an understanding of concepts such as role, status, and social class in describing the interactions of individuals and social groups.

Theme VII: Production, Distribution and Consumption

- Standard A: The student gives and explain examples of ways that economic systems structure choices about how goods and services are to be produced and distributed.



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- Standard I: The student uses economic concepts to help explain historical and current developments and issues in local, national, or global contexts
- Standard J: The student uses economic reasoning to compare different proposals for dealing with a contemporary social issue such as unemployment, acid rain, or high quality education.

Theme IX: Global Connections

- Standard B: The student analyze examples of conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among groups, societies, and nations.
- Standard D: The student explore the causes, consequences, and possible solutions to persistent, contemporary, and emerging global issues, such as health, security, resource allocation, economic development, and environmental quality.
- Standard F: The student demonstrate understanding of concerns, standards, issues, and conflicts related to universal human rights.

Theme X: Civic Ideals and Practices

- Standard C: The student locate, access, analyze, organize, and apply information about selected public issues recognizing and explaining multiple points of view.
- Standard D: The student practice forms of civic discussion and participation consistent with the ideals of citizens in a democratic republic.
- Standard G: The student analyze the influence of diverse forms of public opinion on the development of public policy and decision-making.
- Standard I: The student explain the relationship between policy statements and action plans used to address issues of public concern.

Relevant Common Core Standards

This lesson relates to the following Common Core English and Language Arts Standards for History and Social Studies for middle and high school students:

Key Ideas and Details

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.1
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.2
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.3

Craft and Structure

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.4

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.7

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.10



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About This Lesson

This lesson is based on the National Register of Historic Places registration file, "[Edward Penniman House](http://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/b098def4-462e-406c-b6e3-3dd62823ba99/?branding=NRHP)" [<http://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/b098def4-462e-406c-b6e3-3dd62823ba99/?branding=NRHP>] (with [photographs](http://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/d77ea310-7a74-4f06-b312-0e90f61626b1?branding=NRHP) [<http://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/d77ea310-7a74-4f06-b312-0e90f61626b1?branding=NRHP>]) and related materials from the archives of Cape Cod National Seashore. It was published in 2004. It was written by Barbara Dougan, National Park Service Education Specialist, and Cathy Skowron, National Park Service Interpretive Park Ranger. The lesson was edited by the Teaching with Historic Places staff. This lesson is one in a series that brings the important stories of historic places into classrooms across the country.

Objectives

1. To chart places and regions associated with the whaling industry on a historic whaling ground map;
2. To describe the impact of the whaling industry on a captain and the captain's family;
3. To identify the global, cultural, and economic connections made by the whaling industry in the middle through late 1800s and the impact of the whaling industry on ethnic diversity in the United States;
4. To explore the concept of "sky glow" and list ways to protect the night sky that in the past was used to navigate by;
5. To research the historic homes in their community that are historically significant because of their association with a profitable industry of a particular time.

Materials for students

The materials listed below can either be used directly on the computer or can be printed out, photocopied, and distributed to students.

1. Two maps of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, and a world map showing 19th-century whaling grounds;
2. Four readings on whaling history, the Penniman family, cultural connections, and the Penniman House;
3. Four photographs of the Penniman House, the Atwood-Higgins House, Captain Penniman, and scrimshaw.

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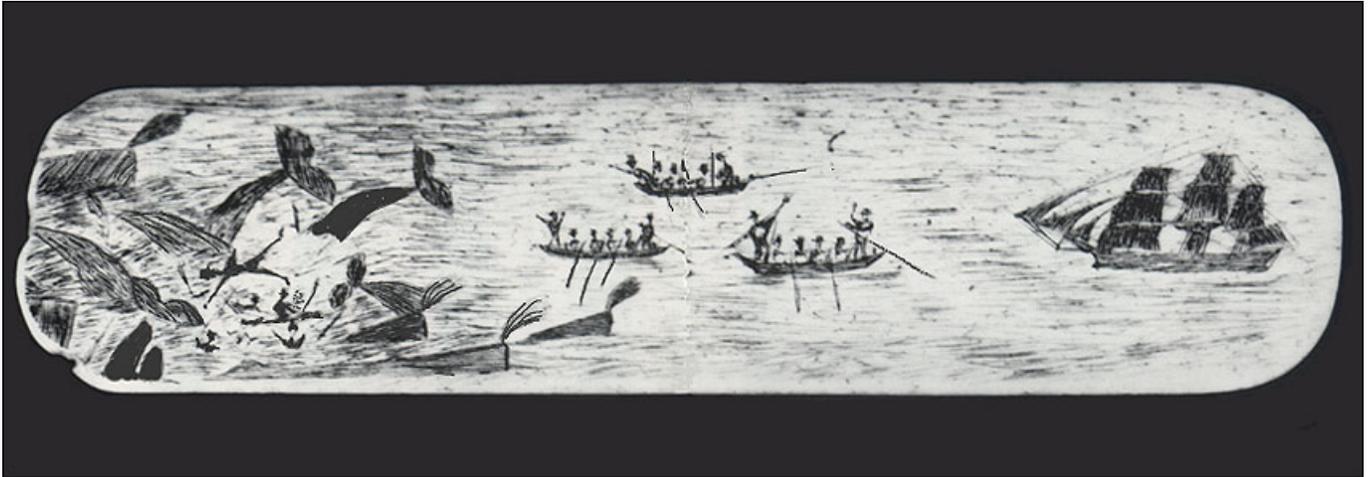
Visiting the site

Cape Cod is a peninsula in the shape of a bold, flexed arm extending some 60 miles into the Atlantic Ocean and forming the easternmost part of Massachusetts. Cape Cod National Seashore lies mostly along the eastern portion of the Cape and is about 100 miles southeast of Boston. Cape Cod National Seashore contains 44,000 acres along a 40-mile section between Chatham and Provincetown, which sits at the end of the peninsula. The Captain Penniman House is located off Route 6 in the Fort Hill area of Eastham. Cape Cod National Seashore offers tours of the Captain Penniman House during the summer months. Educators should contact the Salt Pond Visitor Center in advance of visiting. The phone number is (508) 255-3421. Additional information about the seashore may be obtained by writing to the Park Superintendent, Cape Cod National Seashore, 99 Marconi Site Road, Wellfleet, MA 02667, or by visiting [the park's website](#).



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Getting Started



**What do you think is happening in this scene?
What material or medium might the scene
etched upon?**



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Photo Analysis Worksheet

Step 1:

Examine the photograph for 10 seconds. How would you describe the photograph?

Step 2:

Divide the photograph into quadrants and study each section individually. What details--such as people, objects, activities--do you notice?

Step 3:

What other information--such as time period, location, season, reason photo was taken--can you gather from the photo?

Step 4:

How would you revise your first description of the photo using the information noted in Steps 2 and 3?

Step 5:

What questions do you have about the photograph? How might you find answers to these questions?



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Setting the Stage

Edward Penniman was one of the most successful whaling captains in New England. However, his letters indicate that he did not like life at sea. Captain Penniman whaled in order to make a living. Whales were considered a natural resource even centuries before Captain Penniman set out on his voyages. The lives of many people, in addition to the captain and crew, depended on a successful whaling trip. From a single whale could be harvested several tons of oil and whalebone.

With the money earned from whaling, Captain Penniman was able to afford a large ornate house in the latest style for his family. The Penniman House, built in 1868, was considered by many at the time to be "pretentious and unconventional," but Captain Penniman was proud to say "I have sailed the seven seas and have never seen anything more beautiful than Fort Hill."

Many times Captain Penniman was accompanied by his wife Augusta and one or more of their three children on the long whaling voyages. Items found in their Eastham house reflect the diverse nature of the lands that Captain Penniman and his family explored and the people they met in their travels. Yankee whalers were often the first Americans to explore the Pacific Islands, Asia, and the Arctic realm. In order to navigate these distant and at times strange waters, ship captains like Penniman relied on specialized instruments, charts, and even the stars in the sky.

The crewmen exchanged material goods such as tools, food, souvenirs as well as ideas and experiences with indigenous peoples. In many instances, men from these far away lands joined as crewmembers on the Yankee whaling ships. At the end of the voyages, they would often settle in the United States. Eventually, their family members immigrated to join them or they married into local families thus creating a diverse cultural heritage in coastal port towns.

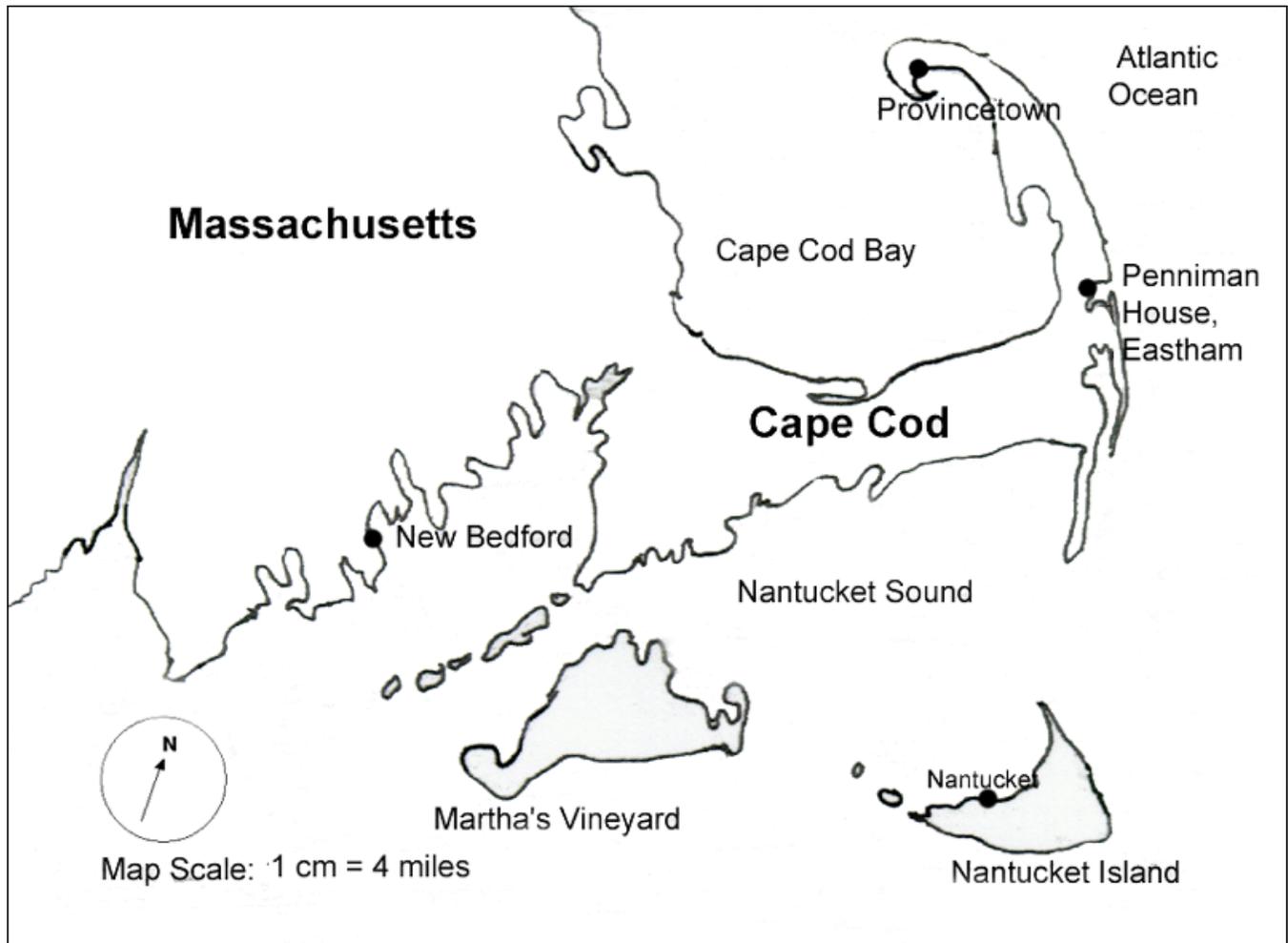
Today, the life and experiences of the Pennimans give us a glimpse into the lives of whaling captains and their families of more than a century ago.



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Locating the Site

Map 1: Cape Cod, Massachusetts



(National Park Service, Cape Cod National Seashore, Map drawn by Cathy Skowron)

Captain Penniman lived in the Town of Eastham on Cape Cod with a view of the ocean, yet he traveled to New Bedford to launch his whaling voyages. New Bedford became the whaling hub because it had a deep-water harbor that could accommodate large boats and it had transportation systems in place. In 1840, a rail line opened going straight to the waterfront thus cementing its success as a whaling port. Roads and railways to and from the city allowed for easy shipping of whaling products to customers.

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Questions for Map 1

1) Locate the towns of Eastham and New Bedford on this map. Using a ruler and the scale provided on the map, determine the distance between these two places. Why do you think Captain Penniman traveled to New Bedford for his whaling voyages?

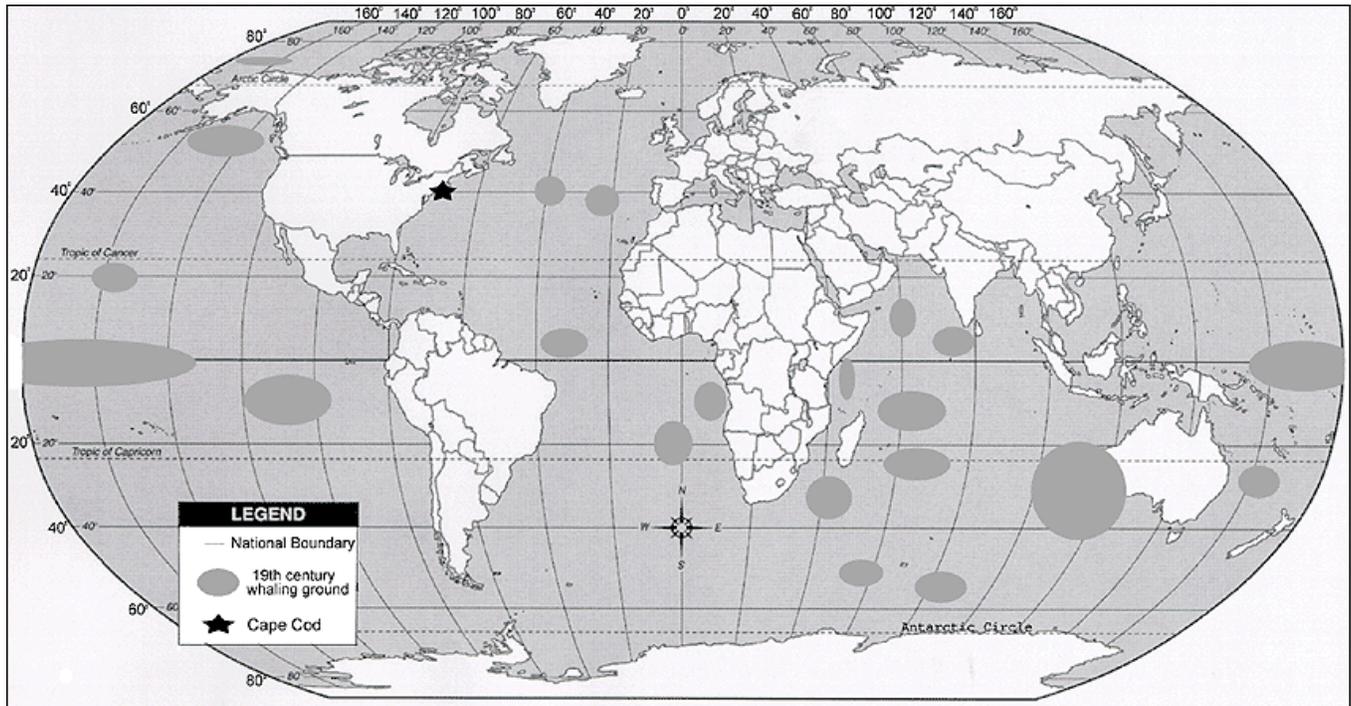
2) Locate the towns of Provincetown, Nantucket, and New Bedford on this map. Compare and contrast their locations. New Bedford was easily accessible and well protected. Why might these features contribute to its success as a port?



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Locating the Site

Map 2: Modern world map showing 19th century whaling grounds.



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To be a successful captain, Edward Penniman had to navigate to known whaling grounds around the globe, and then safely return to New Bedford with his ship full of whale oil and other products harvested from whales. He recorded his latitude and longitude into his daily logbook.

Latitude is the angular distance north or south of the earth's equator, measured in degrees along a meridian, as on a map or globe. Lines of latitude run parallel to the equator around the world and are marked either North or South.

Longitude is the angular distance on the earth's surface, measured east or west from the prime meridian at Greenwich, England, to the meridian passing through a position, expressed in degrees. Lines of longitude stretch from pole to pole. Degrees of longitude are marked either East or West.



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Questions for Map 2

- 1) Using a textbook or world map, locate and label the five oceans and seven continents on Map 2.

- 2) The shaded ellipses in the oceans indicate the known whaling grounds. Trace Captain Penniman's voyage around the globe using the coordinates listed below. Does tracing the voyage help you better understand the distances traveled and the amount of time needed for these journeys? Why or why not?

Voyage of the Whaling Bark Minerva--May 1860 to April 1864.

	Latitude	Longitude
A	40° N	70° W
B	45° N	16° W
C	15° N	15° W
D	35° S	20° E
E	45° S	160° E
F	55° S	70° W
G	5° S	35° W
H	40° N	70° W

- 3) Whaling captains kept information like this in their logbooks. Why might records like these be useful in future voyages?

- 4) Would you consider taking a voyage like this one? Why or why not.



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Determining the Facts

Reading 1: Whaling in Southeastern Massachusetts

Imagine sailors of long ago seeing a strange creature the size of a school bus splashing near their ship, only its huge back, strange head, or massive tail flashing into view. It is no wonder that early sailors thought whales to be frightful sea serpents. This fear probably lessened when whales washed ashore and people learned they could eat the meat for food and boil the fat skin called blubber to make oil for lamps.

Paintings and written records made by early people from around the world provide us with evidence that humans first began using beached whales to help them survive several thousand years ago. From whales came meat for food, oil for fuel, bones for tools, and skins for shelter. Archeological evidence, such as whale bones and tools made from whale bone found in ancient refuse pits (middens), suggests that the demand for whales grew so high that people from coastal communities and cultures from around the world began actively hunting whales.

In the Arctic communities of Northwest Alaska, whaling was central to the way of life as early as 1000 A.D. By the 1400s, Europeans from France, Holland, Great Britain, and other countries hunted whales for oil and whalebone. Some European ships went whaling off Greenland as early as the 1500s. However, the first known commercial whalers were the Basques from Spain who voyaged to North America during the 16th century. The Basques held a long heritage of whaling in their home waters, the Bay of Biscay. In the early 17th century, whaling became an organized industry in Japan. Similar to the native Alaskan whaling industry, Japanese whaling was founded on great tradition and ceremony.

The Pilgrims were familiar with the utility of whale oil when they arrived on Cape Cod in 1620, but learned how to hunt whales from American Indians. The Wampanoag, a local Southern New England tribe, taught the Pilgrims their techniques for drift and inshore whaling. Drift whaling was harvesting a whale that washed up on onshore, while inshore whaling was hunting whales close to shore in small boats with harpoons made with sticks, stones, and bones. The Wampanoag thought of whales as gifts from the gods as whales provided them with food, bones for tools, and other survival needs. By the late 1600s, whale products and income from their sale had become so important to colonists that every Cape Cod town had residents practicing whaling to support themselves.

As the population of America grew so did the demand for whale products. Thus more people and communities became interested in learning and profiting from the whaling trade. Nantucket's 14 mile offshore location gave it an advantage in searching for whales feeding and migrating past Cape Cod. In 1690, the people of Nantucket Island recruited Icabod Paddock, a Cape Codder, to teach them how to whale. Early on, Nantucket whaleboats remained in local waters as they searched for whales. However, American whaling lore states that in 1712 offshore whaling was started when a Nantucket whaler was blown out to sea by a gale into the middle of a pod of sperm whales. The men aboard the whaler seized their luck and took some of the sperm whales. These men learned that the blubber from the toothed whales produced high quality oil, as well as a waxy substance called spermaceti and ambergris. Ambergris was used in making perfumes and spermaceti was made into smokeless candles that produced a bright, clear light.

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Whalers also profited from whale baleen. Baleen is a flexible material, up to 12 feet long and 6 inches wide, found in the mouths of toothless whales. Baleen grows in a comb like row and hangs from the whale's jawbone. The baleen acts like a spaghetti strainer, letting water out of the whale's mouth while keeping the food in. Because of its versatility and strength, baleen was fabricated into a multitude of functional and decorative objects, from baskets to fishing line to frames of petticoats. The raw material is comparable to present-day plastics and was commonly used by the brush industry for bristles. In the 20th century, baleen was eventually replaced with spring steel and plastics.

The profits from whaling were high due to the fact that so many parts of the whale could be used. As a result, the increased whaling activity caused all whale populations to drastically decline in the Atlantic Ocean. Whalers then needed to go farther and farther away from their homeports to make a profit. As voyages became longer, the ships were redesigned to be wider, longer, and sturdier to carry the necessary number of men, food, and equipment, for 2 to 4 year voyages. However, these larger vessels could not cross the sandbars at Nantucket's harbor entrance because the water was too shallow. Large whaling vessels had to unload their products onto smaller ships that could then bring the products to land. Eventually, New Bedford became New England's busiest whaling port, as it had a deep harbor and a railway system that could transport whale products to many destinations.

In 1868, the harpoon gun, a gun used to fire a spear-like weapon with a barbed head, was invented. Later, explosive harpoons and faster steam powered factory ships hunted humpback, fin, and blue whales that had been too swift for the sailing ships to follow. These technological advances reduced whale populations so that some species were in danger of extinction. Whales became so rare that in 1946 the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling was signed and the International Whaling Commission (IWC) was established to oversee whale populations and establish guidelines for the whaling industry. In 1986, IWC approved a resolution to end commercial whaling, though some countries continue to whale. Today, the populations of many whale species are increasing, but the North Atlantic right whale and the southern blue whale remain in danger of extinction.



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Determining the Facts

Reading 2: The Pennimans: A Whaling Family

Edward Penniman was born in Eastham, Massachusetts on August 16, 1831. He began his life at sea at age 11 when he signed on as a cook on a schooner bound for the Grand Banks, a rich fishing area off the coast of Newfoundland, Canada. Unfortunately this trip ended in disaster, and for the next several years Edward only fished the local waters. In 1852, at age 21, he went to New Bedford where he set sail on his first whaling voyage. He held the position of boatsteerer aboard the *Isabella*. When he became captain, Edward chose New Bedford as his home port. From this busy harbor, Captain Penniman set sail seven times to hunt whales. His letters home often hinted that he did not like life at sea, but the riches to be earned could not be ignored. He wrote to his son Neddie from the Bark (a sailing ship with three or more masts square rigged) named *Jacob A. Howland*:

Dear Neddie,

I hope you will not be a sailor. At best it is a miserable life to follow, full of hardships and trials, to say nothing about being away from home, and friends for long years at a time, you must learn all you can at school, so by the time you are twenty years old, I hope you will have a much better education than I did at that age. By and by when you are a man and go out into the world you will see the need of it. This is the way I found it.

Father

In order to make the three to four year whaling voyages more bearable Captain Penniman took his family with him several times. The Captain's wife was Betsy Augusta Penniman whom he called "Gustie." Being on board a whaling ship for years would have been a hardship for many women, but Gustie appeared to make the best of it. She enjoyed spending time cooking, making clothes out of fine fabrics, teaching her children, keeping journals and corresponding with friends back home. She also had navigation skills and was an active participant in the whaling expeditions. In her journal she says, "I spent the day washing and taking care of the ship. For a crew I had four Portuguese, one Irish, one German. We manage very well." Her daughter Bessie tells how one time when the Captain and most of the crew were ashore off Patagonia, South America, a large storm arose and blew the ship 100 miles out to sea. Under Gustie's direction the ship weathered the storm and two days later sailed back to pick up the Captain and his crew. Another time Gustie spotted a large sperm whale close to the ship while the Captain and crew were five miles away in the whaleboats, open rowing boats used to hunt the whales. In the excitement the carpenter hoisted the flag upside down, a distress signal, so the Captain returned quickly fearing Neddie had fallen overboard. The whale was still there, and after processing it, they collected \$10,000.00 worth of oil. It was the most valuable single cargo ever brought to New Bedford and the ship's owner gave Gustie \$600.00 as a token of his appreciation.

On three of the whaling voyages Mrs. Penniman brought one or two of their three children. Their first son Eugene, at age four, sailed with them on a four-year trip to the Arctic Ocean. Eugene, or Genia, as his parents called him, liked whaling so much that he eventually became a whaling



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ship captain. Neddie, the Penniman's youngest child, and Eugene were both with Mrs. Penniman onboard the *Europa* from September 1876 to September 1879, her second whaling trip. Six-year-old Neddie amused himself by crafting toy wooden boats on their three-year journey. He also drew pictures of other ships they passed using the remaining pages of a journal that had belonged to a mate onboard the *Europa* after that unfortunate man drowned earlier in the trip. Daughter Bessie, at age 13, joined her mother and father on Mrs. Penniman's third and last trip. This voyage included stays in Panama, Hawaii, and San Francisco. Bessie learned to speak some Hawaiian and she met the royal family.

An excellent navigator, the Captain entered ports in the Arctic, Cape Verde Islands, New Zealand, Hawaii, and many more. To successfully navigate in unknown seas and strange ports around the world, Captain Penniman used many special skills. He had to rely on the clear night sky to help him navigate using a sextant, a tool that measures the angle between a heavenly body, such as a star or planet, and the horizon. If the sky was not clear, his readings could be inaccurate and the ship might be lost at sea. Another tool he used was a chronometer, which measures time, and he was skilled in reading charts. He also knew how to handle his ship in extreme weather, avoiding icebergs in Polar Regions, and sailing out of danger when necessary. In 1865 Captain Penniman quickly sailed his ship to a new location to escape the *Shenandoah*, a Confederate privateer, sent to the Arctic to sink Yankee whalers during the Civil War.

In spite of his reservations about life at sea, Captain Penniman went on to become one of Cape Cod's most successful whalers. In the 1860s whale oil sold for \$1.45 per gallon, sperm oil sold for \$2.55 per gallon, and whalebone sold for \$15.80 a pound. On various voyages he took 4,237 barrels of sperm oil, 12,096 barrels of whale oil, and 166,871 pounds of whalebone. It was said of Captain Penniman that "he was so successful that at age 53 he was able to retire with a considerable fortune."

Captain Penniman and his family traveled around the globe, became familiar with many different cultures, accepted diverse crewmembers from distant ports, and communicated by letters about their experiences with family and friends. Unlike the majority of their Eastham neighbors who lived quiet, Puritan lives in simple Cape Cod homes, the Pennimans "actively accumulated wealth, retired in leisure, and showcased their good fortune." Captain Penniman was one of the most successful whaling captains in New England history. Finally, in 1884, he returned for good to his beloved Fort Hill and his grand home.



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Determining the Facts

Reading 3: Cultural Connections

To successfully hunt whales Captain Penniman had to travel the world's oceans for years at a time stopping at far away ports. These distant ports were sources of supplies, trade goods, and even crewmembers. New men were often needed during the course of a voyage to replace others that died from sickness, injuries, or drowning; or men that deserted ship. In the last half of the 19th century, most whaling ships had a racial and ethnically diverse crew. There were American Indians, free blacks, Cape Verdeans, Azorians, Hawaiians, and other peoples from coastal ports around the world. Frugal Yankee ship owners preferred recruiting men from Cape Verde and the coast of West Africa because they worked hard to save money, could be initially hired for less, and "made for a more disciplined crew." Crewmen from Portuguese West Africa, known as "Bravas," were outstanding whalers and "usually surpassed all others of whatever racial or national origin."¹ Captain Penniman, like other whaling captains, hired the best men he could find.

A Sampling from Captain Penniman's crew list onboard the Bark *Europa*, Whaling, September 11, 1876 (as written by Captain Penniman)

Edward Penniman, Master

	Age	Height	Complexion/Hair
John S. Coquin, Dartmouth	28	5'5"	LL
Charles Ellis, Plymouth, Mass	20	5'4"	LB
Manuel Gonzales, Bravo, CVI	24	5'4"	DB
Henry Hoeper, Germany	20	5'6"	L BR
Matthew Kanaka, Roratouga	20	5'8"	DD
Mopsa Ross, Celebes	23	5'5"	DD
Christian F. Semoina, Copenhagen	29	5'7-1/2"	LL
Eugene B. Penniman, Eastham	16	5'7"	

By most accounts, there was little racial discrimination aboard whaling ships. A man earned recognition for his skills rather than his ethnicity. Men of color occupied all ranks onboard whaling ships, from crewmembers to captains, and owners. For example, the Cape Verdeans acquired old whaling ships either by default or by purchasing them with money they earned as seamen. Eventually, they came to own almost all that remained of the New Bedford fleet. Each person on board was paid a "lay," a share of the profits, based upon their duties aboard the ship. However, those who made lucrative sums of money from the voyages were the captains and the owners, the crew received low sums in comparison.

Onshore industries that supported the whaling and maritime trades also included a sizable percentage of diverse peoples. During the Civil War more African Americans were employed in the maritime trades than any other industry. Shipbuilding, rope, barrel, sail, and tool making

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were some of these shore-side industries. In 1848, Louis Temple, an African American blacksmith from New Bedford, invented a new kind of harpoon with a "toggle" or swiveling barb that did not pull out of a whale after it was harpooned. This technological advancement improved the rate at which ships caught whales and thus filled their holds with oil and baleen. Frederick Douglass, a famous black abolitionist, was an experienced caulker in the New Bedford shipyards.

The deep sea Yankee whaling industry had distributed newcomers to countries around the world during its two centuries of existence. It added populations of ethnically diverse people to world ports. These newcomers added their own traditions, languages, and culture to each place. In New Bedford, what remained from the whaling industry were the many men from foreign ports that had returned to the city on board their whale ships, found work, and married local women.



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Questions for Reading 3

- 1) Examine Captain Penniman's crew list. How many of the men were from foreign countries? Where were they from? Why do you think the crew was so ethnically diverse? What do you think the letters in the Complexion/Hair column stand for? Why do you think Captain Penniman recorded all of this information about his crew?

- 2) Why did Captain Penniman hire crewmembers from different parts around the world? How do you think this culturally diverse group of people could work together?

- 3) How did the whaling industry affect the economic status of people of color, both onboard ship and on shore?

- 4) Why do you think there were so many African Americans employed in the maritime industry?



The Penniman House: A Whaling Story

Determining the Facts

Reading 4: The Penniman's House

In 1868, after his fourth whaling voyage, Captain Penniman returned home to Eastham, Massachusetts. He decided to build a home for himself and his family on 12 acres of land he purchased from his father. The site is on the west side of Town Cove in the Fort Hill section of Eastham, an area of Cape Cod that is about 3 miles wide from the Atlantic Ocean to Cape Cod Bay. The landscape was gently rolling with freshwater ponds and a noticeable lack of trees, since earlier settlers cut down the hardwood forests. Homes were scattered about rather than grouped around a village green. The main occupation of Eastham residents was agriculture, specifically wheat, corn, and other grains for export and local use. There were maritime related industries as well, such as shipbuilding, saltmaking, shore whaling, shellfishing, and cod and mackerel fisheries. As the fisheries and saltworks declined, many residents reverted to farming.

The impressive home Captain Penniman built was French Second Empire style. The plans and drawings for the house are of high quality and indicate it was "designed by an established architect" whose identity remains a mystery. The house is a 2-½-story wood frame structure and is symmetrical in design. It is set on a stone foundation with a characteristic mansard roof; a unique roof that is steeply pitched usually providing extra living space. The exterior is covered with clapboards and "exuberant millwork trim" painted in their circa 1890 colors: yellow clapboards, white trim, black window sashes, green window blinds, brown and red roof shingles. Captain Penniman kept a detailed account book for all the expenses related to building the house. For example: he paid James Rodgers \$15 for digging the cellar; it cost \$24.99 for 238 pounds of nails; he paid Thomas Nickerson \$21.60 for 8 days of exterior painting; and it cost \$17.88 for 511 feet of hard pine lumber.

The house interior is also symmetrical with 2 rooms on each side of a central hall. The woodwork and finishes are as "ornate" and of the same high quality as the exterior. The Penniman House was the first house in Eastham to have indoor plumbing. The roof had a water collection system that led to a cistern, a large tank for storing water, in the attic. A gravity flow water system piped water from the cistern to the kitchen and bathroom. The heating and lighting systems of the home were updated as new technologies developed. An oil-fired hot air furnace replaced a coal/wood stove, and kerosene lights were replaced by electrical ones. The house size, its ornate architectural details, elevated setting, and "modern" technology distinguished it from the simple subsistence homes of its Eastham neighbors. The Penniman House is also noteworthy for its "remarkable state of preservation." The interior room plan is the same as it was in 1868 and most of the interior woodwork and hardware, the wall and ceiling coverings, and the "grained" finish on some of the woodwork are original.

The house reveals much about the family's taste and wealth after retiring from whaling. The eight rooms of the house were once filled with arctic bear robes, paintings, scrimshaw, and other artifacts from around the world. In addition, there are over 100 glass plate negatives taken between 1880 and 1913 by Captain Penniman's daughter Bessie. The photos captured the family's smiles, clothing, activities, their home, and the local landscape. The souvenirs that the Penniman family brought back to Cape Cod stirred the imaginations of their friends and excited a desire to know more about the people that made them and places where they lived. At some point, whale jawbones were placed as an arched "gate" to the entrance of the yard further

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The Penniman House: A Whaling Story

reflecting Penniman's work and travels. It was thought to be good luck to pass between the whalebones.

The historical significance of the house, its unique appearance, and its association with the Penniman family prompted Cape Cod National Seashore to purchase the property in 1963 from Irma Penniman Broun, the Captain's youngest granddaughter. The price at that time was \$28,000 for 12 acres of land on Fort Hill, the house, and its barn. Today it is worth millions of dollars, yet it is priceless for its value to history. The National Park Service is committed to maintaining the house as it was during Captain Penniman's time and to interpreting its history so that the public can learn about the exceptional lives of this whaling captain and his family.



The Penniman House: A Whaling Story

Questions for Reading 4

- 1) Why do you think Captain Penniman kept a detailed log of his building costs?

- 2) What are some of the features of the house that made it noteworthy for its time?

- 3) How did the design of the house and the Penniman's lifestyle "complement" each other?

- 4) Why is this house historically significant? Do you think Cape Cod National Seashore should continue to preserve the house? Why or why not?

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The Penniman House: A Whaling Story

Visual Evidence

Photo 1: Captain Penniman's House, French Second Empire style, built in 1868



(From the collection of Cape Cod National Seashore)

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The Penniman House: A Whaling Story

Photo 2: Atwood-Higgins House, a typical Cape Cod home



(From the collection of Cape Cod National Seashore)

Both houses are now preserved by the National Park Service as part of Cape Cod National Seashore.

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The Penniman House: A Whaling Story

Visual Evidence

Photo 3: Captain Penniman in his northwest parlor, circa 1890



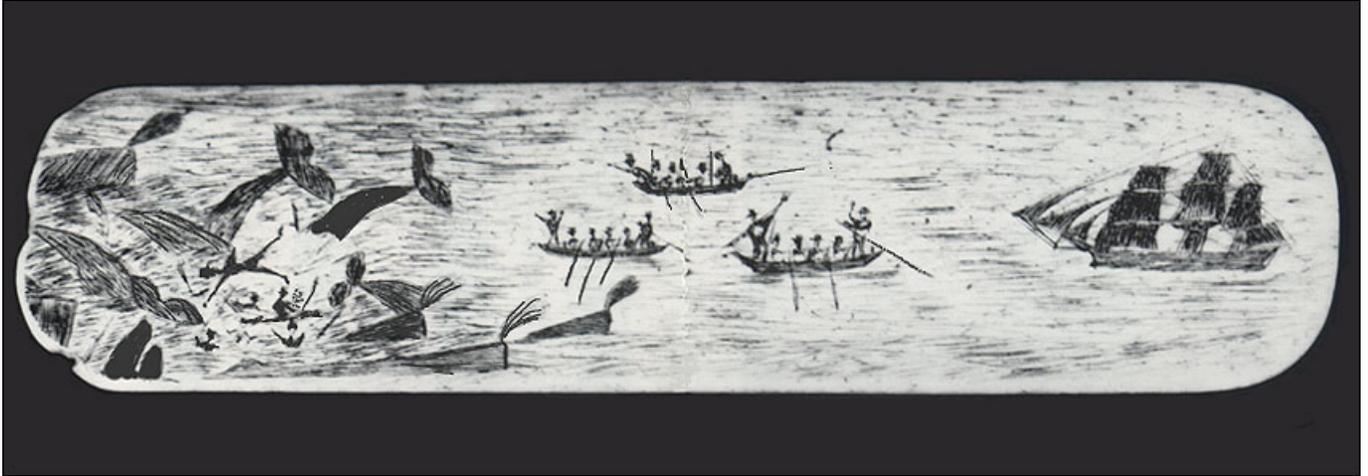
(From the collection of Cape Cod National Seashore)



The Penniman House: A Whaling Story

Visual Evidence

Photo 4: Scrimshaw



(From the collection of Cape Cod National Seashore)

To pass the time and entertain themselves the whaling crew sang, played card games, dominoes, wrote letters home and in journals, did wood carvings, needlework, and carved scrimshaw. Scrimshaw is the sailors' art of carving and inking drawings on whale teeth or bone. Usually the subjects of scrimshaw were ships, whales, and women. Sailors used a variety of tools and inks to create scrimshaw, but typically they used their pocketknives to carve the pictures, and then rubbed in ink, tobacco juice, or charcoal to color them.

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The Penniman House: A Whaling Story

Putting it all Together

Upon reading *The Penniman House: A Whaling Story*, students will be introduced to Captain Edward Penniman and his family and learn how their lives were impacted by the whaling industry. The following activities will help students learn architectural terms, understand the consequences of sky glow, find out what threatens whales today, and determine which industries influenced their communities.

Activity 1: The Penniman House Revisited

Captain Penniman's home has specific architectural details incorporated into it: portico, Corinthian column, baluster, dentil, bay window, dormer window, quoin, and cupola. Have the students look up the definitions of each, then use Photo 1, the exterior photo of the Penniman house, to identify and label each detail on the house. Ask the students to be architectural detectives. Have them look at their own homes and buildings in the community for similar architectural details to those on the Penniman House. If possible, ask them to take pictures and create a display for the classroom. How have styles and tastes changed in the last 140 years?



The Penniman House: A Whaling Story

Activity 2: Preserving the Night Sky

Compared to Captain Penniman's time, stars are now often harder to see. For many of us, light pollution or "sky glow," from outdoor lighting has all but erased the delicate splendor of a starry night. An estimated 30% of all outdoor lighting in the United States is wastefully directed skyward. About 1.5 billion dollars is spent each year to burn the 6,000,000 tons of coal, a non-renewable fossil fuel, to power this misdirected light.

After learning that people in many locations could no longer see the Milky Way and the stars that guided early American Indians and Captain Penniman to their destinations, the National Park Service listed the night sky as a threatened heritage resource. National parks across the country are now changing their outdoor lighting fixtures to reduce sky glow. At Chaco Culture National Historic Park in New Mexico, light fixtures were shielded to prevent light from escaping sideways and skyward, and outdoor lightbulbs were replaced with more energy efficient ones. This action preserved the park's view of the night sky and reduced the electric bill by 30%.

Have the students locate a book on the night sky, finding a picture of their hemisphere for the correct season. Have them compare what is on the sky chart with what they can see on a clear night outside their homes both with and without the outside lights turned on. How is their view of the night sky changed with the added light? How does their view compare to that presented in the book? Have students discuss whether they think preserving the night sky is important or not, and explain why. Ask how sky glow might have affected Captain Penniman's ability to navigate. As a class, have students brainstorm and make a list of suggestions that could help decrease sky glow in their community. Consider drafting a letter to the city or county with their suggestions explaining why the night sky is a threatened resource

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The Penniman House: A Whaling Story

Activity 3: A New Age, A New Way of Thinking

Today, many countries around the world are working to protect marine mammal populations and ocean resources. Whale watching is now a popular activity in the same waters in which whale hunting once took place. Have the students research "[marine protected areas](#)". What information is available on this website? Who might use it and why? Do any of the protected areas overlap the 19th century historic whaling grounds shown on Map 2 in the Penniman lesson? Research the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Federal Endangered Species Act with available resources in your library and/or on the internet. Compare the regulations for each act and discuss their purpose. Divide students into teams and hold a debate on whether or not present-day whale watching is harmful to whale populations.

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The Penniman House: A Whaling Story

Activity 4: Community History

Every community has its own history or story to tell. Have the students research the history of their community to determine what industry was influential to its development, similar to the way whaling influenced many New England coastal towns. What impact did this industry have on the community? What kind of workers came to support it? Who was in charge of the industry? Next, divide students into teams and have them find out whether or not any homes of noteworthy persons associated with the industry survive. If not, have them pick the name of another important individual in local history and research who that person was and determine what their home reveals about them. Make a local history display with the information gathered and present the display to the community, perhaps at the town library or town hall.



The Penniman House: A Whaling Story

References and Endnotes

Reading 1

Reading 1 was adapted from documents at the archives of the New Bedford Whaling Museum and New Bedford Whaling National Historic Park, New Bedford, MA and Julie A. Lauffenburger, "Baleen in Museum Collections: Its Sources, Uses, and Identification," *Journal of the American Institute of for Conservation*, 1993, Volume 32, Number 3, Article 1, pp. 213-230.

Reading 2

Reading 2 was compiled from documents at Penniman archives at Braintree, MA Public Library and Providence, RI Public Library; *The Pennimans: A Cape Cod Whaling Family at Home and Abroad*, Cape Cod National Seashore, Eastern National, 2001; and Journals of Augusta Penniman, collection of Cape Cod National Seashore.

Reading 3

Reading 3 was compiled from documents at the archives of New Bedford Whaling National Historic Park, New Bedford, MA; *The Pennimans: A Cape Cod Whaling Family at Home and Abroad*, Cape Cod National Seashore, Eastern National, 2001; and Raymond A. Almeida, "[Cape Verdeans in the Whaling Industry](#)" website, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth.

¹ Raymond A. Almeida, "[Cape Verdeans in the Whaling Industry](#)" website, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth.

Reading 4

Reading 4 was adapted from *The Pennimans: A Cape Cod Whaling Family at Home and Abroad*, Cape Cod National Seashore, Eastern National, 2001.



The Penniman House: A Whaling Story

Additional Resources

By studying *The Penniman House: A Whaling Story* students will be introduced to Captain Edward Penniman and his family, and learn how 19th-century whaling impacted their lives. Those interested in learning more will find that the Internet offers a variety of interesting materials.

Maritime History of Massachusetts

The Discover Our Shared Heritage online travel itinerary on the [Maritime History of Massachusetts](#) highlights 89 of the historic places that tell the story of the interdependent relationship between Massachusetts and the sea. The itinerary features locations along the 750 miles of Massachusetts coast line, including the [Edward Penniman House](#).

Cape Cod National Seashore

Cape Cod National Seashore is a unit of the National Park System. [Visit the park's web pages](#) for more information on the park's 43,604 acres of shoreline and upland landscape features, as well as the park's historic structures, which include lighthouses, a lifesaving station, and numerous Cape Cod style houses.

New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park

New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park is a unit of the National Park System. [Visit the park's web pages](#) for more information on the heritage of the world's preeminent whaling port during the 19th century. A variety of cultural landscapes, historic buildings, museum collections, and archives preserve this history and collectively recount the stories of a remarkable era.

New Bedford Whaling Museum

[The New Bedford Whaling Museum](#) is the world's foremost museum devoted to the historic interaction of humans with whales worldwide. The Museum explores the history of whaling worldwide and the rich cultures – and conservation issues – it inspired.

Mystic Seaport Museum

[Mystic Seaport](#) is the largest and most comprehensive maritime museum in North America. Visit the online Research section for more information (including images) about scrimshaw, nautical instruments, shipbuilding tools, maritime history, whaling gear, and much more.

The Library of Congress

Visit the [Library of Congress website](#) for more information about the cultural connections made in whaling, fishing, and industrial employment in Southeastern New England. Also learn more about the Library of Congress [Faces of Whaling project](#), an oral history project documenting the life experiences of former whalers of New Bedford and their descendants.

National Park Service: Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record

[Search the Historic American Building Survey](#) for architectural documentation on the Edward Penniman House, included in the collection are photographs of the interior and exterior of the home.

International Whaling Commission

The International Whaling Commission (IWC) was set up under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling which was signed in Washington DC on 2 December 1946. The purpose of the Convention is to provide for the proper conservation of whale stocks and thus

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make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry. [Visit the IWC website](#) for more information about the history and purpose of this organization and how they are relevant today.





