

KENDALL WHALING MUSEUM MONOGRAPH SERIES No. 6

**African Americans in the Maritime Trades:  
A Guide to Resources in New England**



**Mary Malloy**

The Kendall Whaling Museum  
Sharon, Massachusetts USA  
1990

Old Dartmouth Historical Society  
AND WHALING MUSEUM  
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*For Stuart*

*African Americans in the Maritime Trades: A Guide to Resources in New England*  
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Includes illustrations, bibliography, and annotated guide to resources.

African American Studies / Afro-American Studies / Black Studies; American Slave Trade.

Biography; History; Industrial History; Maritime History; New England; Reference; Whaling.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

- Front cover* Crew of the New Bedford whaling bark *Kathleen*, outward bound in the 1890s. [Historic photograph from the William H. Tripp Collection, The Kendall Whaling Museum.]
- Title page* Whaleboat crew of the New Bedford bark *Wanderer* in the South Atlantic, with the boatsteerer (harpooneer) ready to dart at a sperm whale, 4 October 1923. [Tripp Collection photo, The Kendall Whaling Museum.]
- Frontispiece* Masthead lookouts searching the horizon for whales in the South Atlantic. [Gifford Collection photo, KWM.]
- Page 15* John D. Lopes, First Mate, bailing oil at the tryworks aboard the New Bedford whaling schooner *John R. Manta* in 1925. An original shipboard photo by William H. Tripp, who says of the scene: "After the scraps are removed, the mate with a copper bailer, holding a gallon [of oil], ladles the golden colored, clear, sweet-smelling pure oil into the 'cooler,' or cooling tank, from which it runs by means of pipes into tanks in the hold. Our try-pots each held about six barrels of oil." [Tripp Collection photo, The Kendall Whaling Museum.]
- Inside back cover* Protection Paper (Seamen's Passport) issued at New Bedford in November 1836 to whaleman Israel White, born at Little Creek, Delaware, and described as age 37, 5 feet 9 1/4 inches tall, with black complexion, woolly hair, and black eyes. [The Kendall Whaling Museum.]

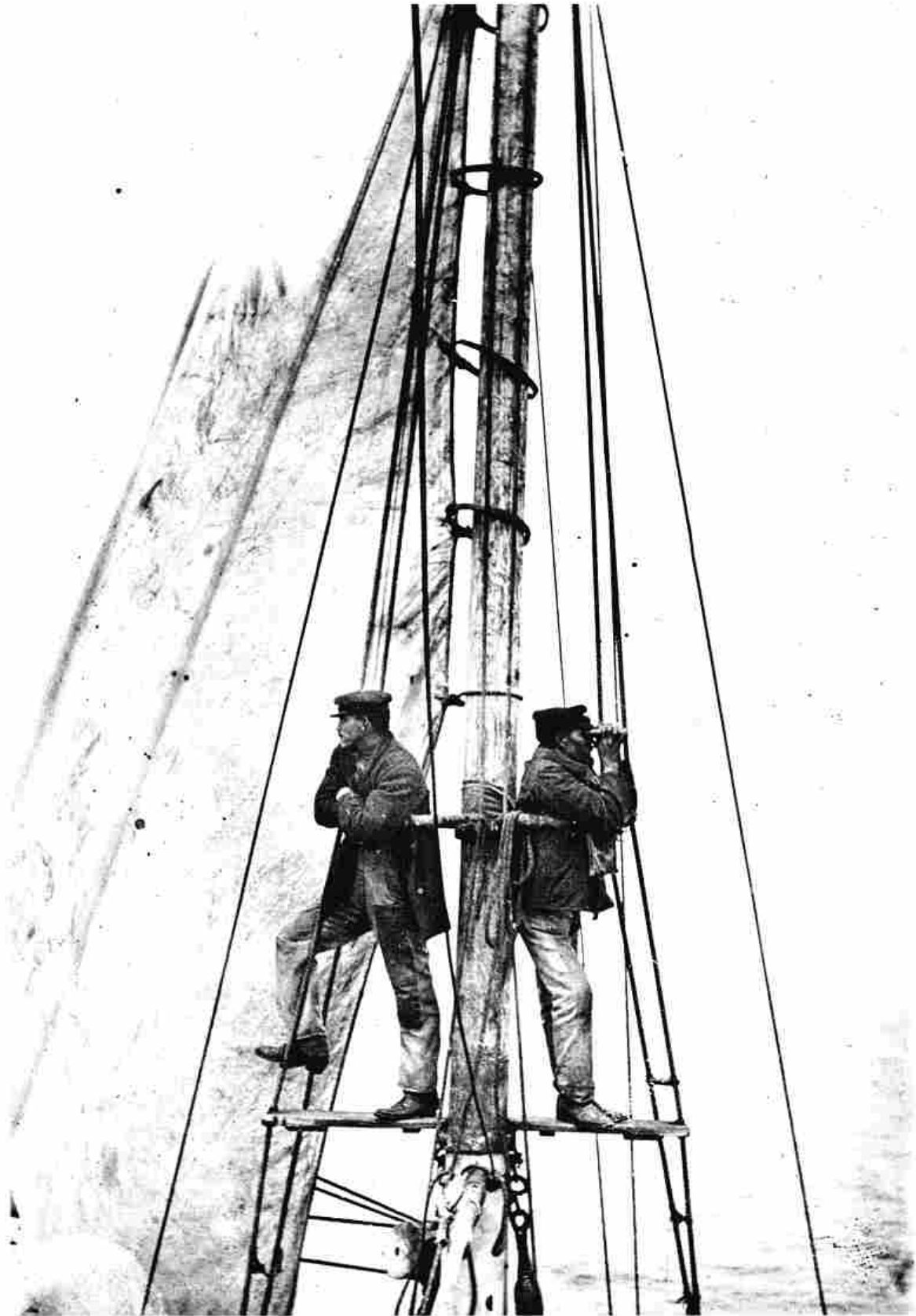
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## Foreword

by Stuart M. Frank

(Director, The Kendall Whaling Museum)

Characterized in song and story as the dramatic embodiment of the archetypal confrontation between man and the Leviathan, the New England whale fishery of the nineteenth century was, in more practical terms, an early haven for the jobless and socially disenfranchised. Even as the whaling industry grew exponentially in response to escalating requirements for oil in an increasingly urban and industrialized America, it was perhaps the first and certainly one of the few venues where people of color could obtain reliable employment at virtual parity with the caucasian majority. Indians and free Blacks on Long Island, Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard, and Cape Cod participated almost from the outset in the seventeenth century, working in close proximity and relative harmony with the white colonists. As the size and magnitude of the industry grew in the first third of the nineteenth century, making New Bedford one of the most prosperous and cosmopolitan cities in America, urban Blacks from other cities, escaped slaves from the South, and, increasingly, African and Creole immigrants from the eastern shores of the Atlantic, gravitated to the whaling hub in response to advertising for hands to man the Yankee fleet.

Racism was a factor in the whale fishery at the time, certainly. The races were segregated aboard some whaleships, as they were frequently in the "checkerboard crews" of deepwater merchant vessels; and there were relatively few Blacks, Creoles, and Native Americans among the officers, shipmasters, or owners until the late nineteenth century, when the fishery was in decline, leaving posts of professional and financial responsibility open to those who could not obtain them elsewhere. But in the enthusiastically abolitionist atmosphere of the whale fishery, with its origins in Quaker Nantucket and its prosecution necessarily meritocratic, opportunities for people of color abounded disproportionately to the norms in other industries.

It was thus in the atmosphere of such "lesser evils" that several African Americans rose to prominence from the Massachusetts whale fishery. The first was a onetime runaway slave from Framingham, Crispus Attucks (ca. 1723-1770). In Boston on leave from a Nantucket whaleship in March 1770, he was the leader of sixty or so anti-British agitators. When they were fired upon by the King's troops, Attucks became the first patriot slain in the Boston Massacre, and thus the first martyr of the American Revolution. Merchant Paul Cuffe, Sr. (1759-1817), of Westport, was the seventh son of Cuffe Slocum, an African-born slave who had purchased his own freedom; and Ruth Moses, a Gayhead Indian. After their father's death in 1772 the Slocum sons and daughters

repudiated their slave surname and adopted the African patronym. Paul Cuffe served as a common seaman, studied navigation, worked with his brothers as an independent boatwright and coastal trader, made some whaling voyages, and gradually built up his fleet and his fortunes to become a successful whaling merchant and shipowner—the first African-American capitalist-entrepreneur, and, simultaneously, the first of Native American ancestry. His kinsmen and heirs continued the business the patriarch had founded, and the Cuffes can with some justification be styled the first African-American merchant dynasty.

In the nineteenth century, shipbuilder John Mashow (fl. 1831-61) launched a variety of vessels from his yard at Padanaram, near New Bedford, during the palmy years of Yankee whaling. Among these were several important barks and schooners in which Mashow retained ownership interests in association with other prominent New Bedford merchants. Blacksmith and whalecraft manufacturer Lewis Temple (ca. 1800-1854), to whose memory a statue by the late Jim Toatley was dedicated at New Bedford in 1987, was born in Virginia to slave parents, owned his own shipsmithing business near the New Bedford waterfront by 1836, and in 1848 developed a toggle-type harpoon that revolutionized the whale hunt. Not as well known but perhaps even more significant to the betterment of shipboard and shoreside conditions for mariners of every nationality and color, was labor organizer James H. Williams (1864-1927) of Fall River, for whom a whaling voyage undertaken at age sixteen was but one of a galaxy of deepwater ventures prior to his taking an active leadership role in the struggle for sailors' rights at sea and ashore. Even Frederick Douglass—who had been trained as a ship-caulker in slavery in Baltimore and escaped disguised as a seaman—came to New Bedford in the late 1830s and worked at a variety of shore jobs connected with the whaling industry. It was there, to an audience of whalemens, shipwrights, longshoremen, and laborers, that Douglass first preached in public on abolition—probably the first Black American to do so.

Following the Civil War, when coal oil and petroleum had begun to supplant whale oil, and when there were more lucrative prospects for the investment of venture capital, the whale fishery fell on harder times and was accordingly populated more and more heavily by people of color. The largest and most conspicuous group were the Cape Verdeans. They were joined by the sons and grandsons of slaves, by African Americans from cities and towns all along the Atlantic seaboard and the burgeoning Midwest—and, notably, by Barbadians, Bahamians, and other Black and mixed-race seamen from the West Indies. Many became boatsteerers (harpooners) and deck officers; some ascended the quarterdeck to become captains; a few even found their way to the counting-rooms as ship owner-operators. Meanwhile, after the 1870s the

industry was increasingly preoccupied with bowhead whales in the Western Arctic; and the comparative proximity of San Francisco to the Alaska and Siberia grounds attracted a substantial portion of the fleet to California. Accordingly, Black and Creole mariners sailed West; and while many returned East with the fleet when the bowhead fishery collapsed (ca. 1904), a significant number did not, instead settling permanently in the Golden State.

After the San Francisco era, with the fishery in decline and only a few whaleships remaining, whalemen of color encountered unprecedented opportunities to realize their long-overdue destiny to fill prestigious berths in the white-collar counting rooms, as well as the officers' aftercabins of the whaling industry. This was a period in which Black and Creole mariners were a majority in many ship's crews and became a force genuinely to contend with, on shipboard, in the union halls, and, at last, as ship-agents and shareholders on the investors' side of the ledger. It was a swan-song in the twilight years of a doomed industry, respecting which new Norwegian technologies were already foreclosing on any enduring future, and would soon render hand-whaling obsolete. But, with its noble heritage of meritocracy, emanating from the likes of Paul Cuffe and John Mashow, the color line was finally broken.

Our general culture remembers few of these men today, and they remain almost entirely unknown even to most historians of the African-American experience. While the names and faces of a handful are preserved in intriguing photographs and documents housed in whaling museums and public archives, most remain anonymous and their careers hitherto unknown. To date there have been few concerted scholarly efforts to bring their individual or collective history to light—a situation that is particularly regrettable in light of the intrinsic drama of their stories, and the comparative success that many achieved in the face of adversity, in times when people of color were elsewhere excluded from self-realization at sea or ashore.

Mary Malloy's intention in preparing this Guide, our intention in publishing the fruits of her research, and the evident intention of the growing community of scholars and curators who are now discovering the dimensions and significance of the African American experience in the maritime trades, is to open the door on a fascinating component of the American pageant; and to provide a point of embarkation for future scholars and teachers in articulating a valiant heritage that stands to be lost lest the extraordinary history of these African Nimrods be made known. □

## Acknowledgements

Because, unfortunately, most maritime collections are not catalogued specifically for access to African-American subjects, the success of this project has depended on the generous assistance of a number of people. Richard Gordon, a volunteer at the Peabody Museum of Salem, was especially helpful: Dick surveyed the large and complex collection at the Peabody, and created a copy file of crew lists and journal excerpts which should prove valuable to future researchers working there. Jerry Hakes, a school teacher from Cambridge who spent most of the summer of 1989 consulting the collections of the Kendall Whaling Museum for his own research on Black sailors, graciously shared the information he found and read a draft of this monograph. Jeff Bolster also read the work in progress with a knowledgeable and critical eye, and gave me a pre-publication copy of his excellent article, "To Feel Like a Man: Black Seamen in the Northern States, 1800-1860," for which I am extremely grateful.

Every researcher working on this topic eventually ends up, as I did, in the Melville Whaling Room of the New Bedford Free Public Library, where Paul Cyr is an invaluable source of information. At Mystic Seaport, Paul O'Pecko, Andrew German, Peggy Tate Smith and Rhoda York guided me through the collections. John Koza and Paul Winfisky, friends and colleagues from the Peabody Museum, were always willing to talk about the project and offer suggestions.

My thanks also go to Gayle Michael, Nantucket Historical Association; Philip Weimerskirch, Special Collections, Providence Public Library; Ann Allen and Marian Halperin, Dukes County Historical Society; Madeline Telfeyan and Cynthia Bendroth, Rhode Island Historical Society; Marilyn Richardson, Museum of Afro-American History; and Judith Downey, Old Dartmouth Historical Society.

To the entire staff of the Kendall Whaling Museum, who were unfailingly good-humored and supportive throughout this project, I am much indebted, especially to Ellen Hazen, David Cruthers, Gare Reid, Joost Schokkenbroek and Bunny Katz.

Most of all, *African Americans in the Maritime Trades* would never have been completed without the commitment, enthusiastic support and editorial contributions of Stuart M. Frank, Director of the Kendall Whaling Museum, who has been, as always, my critic, editor, advisor and friend.

Mary Malloy  
Sharon, Massachusetts  
January 1990

# African Americans in the Maritime Trades

## Introduction

Before the turn of the twentieth century, maritime industries provided the greatest opportunities for Black employment and investment in America. Between the Revolution and the Civil War, more African Americans were employed in the maritime trades than in any other industry. In New England, the representation of Black men on shipboard was proportionally far greater than in the general population. African Americans were represented on the vast majority of the region's vessels as employees, investors or owners.

Successful research into the role of Black seafarers in maritime industries is dependent on documents which identify individual mariners by race. While this information is not always available, many of the historic records kept by maritime museums, libraries and historical societies in New England do include physical descriptions.

The purpose of *African Americans in the Maritime Trades: A Guide to Resources in New England* is to introduce the kinds of documents that might provide information about African Americans, and to identify some of the regional repositories that collect relevant documents, photographs, artworks and artifacts. Complete citations of articles and books mentioned in the text can be found in the detailed Bibliography that follows.

After 1796, each American sailor was required to carry a Seaman's Protection Certificate for identification and proof of citizenship. Information for these documents was collected by U.S. Customs officials at each port, and generally included a physical description of the sailor and his place of birth. These protection papers were based on proofs of citizenship issued by the individual states. In Massachusetts, as in New York, a separate form was used for Black sailors, as the act of Congress requiring the certificates had neglected to make provisions for "persons of color to obtain certificates at the Customs-Houses." These forms specified that the individual carrying the certificate, "a black man, mariner, is a free man and citizen of the United States of America...and entitled to be respected accordingly, in his person and

property at all times by sea and land in the due prosecution of his lawful concerns" (Dye, 352). Occasionally, ambiguous information on these records can be interpreted as an indication that the seaman was an escaped slave, as Stuart M. Frank speculates about Washington Fosdick in his forthcoming *Dictionary of Scrimshaw Artists*.

Shipping papers describing both individuals and entire crews are the most valuable source of statistical information on African-American sailors. Ira Dye provides an excellent model for applying information derived from these sources in his article on the port of Philadelphia, "Early American Merchant Seafarers." Martha S. Putney also makes extensive use of crew lists and protection certificates in her book, *Black Sailors: Afro-American Merchant Seamen and Whalemens Prior to the Civil War*, and in several articles listed in the bibliography. Putney worked with documents from New Bedford and Newport (as well as other ports outside of New England) for the period from 1803 to the Civil War, and found numerous descriptions of men that might have been, but were not necessarily of African ancestry. Among the ambiguous terms Putney encountered to describe complexion were "copper," "dark copper," "dark," "darkish," "yellow," "light brown," "brown," "dark brown," "clear brown," "inclining to brown," "brown and ruddy" and "dark and ruddy." Dye and W. Jeffrey Bolster found fewer instances where race was not readily apparent, and the records of Salem are generally consistent in the use of the term "black" to describe sailors of African descent, though the occasional crew member from India was also described in this way. Only on very rare occasions was the ambiguous term "brown" used in Salem crew lists. In later years, shipping papers carried an individual's photograph in addition to a written description; the National Archives has a particularly rich collection of these documents.

Other valuable sources of information on African Americans in the maritime industries include census data and city directories, which, in the nineteenth century, almost always identified the race of individuals; personal narratives, which occasionally have dramatic and important information about



Black sailors; and historic photographs, where the whale fishery is particularly well documented. Early films, both dramatic and documentary, often used working sailors in their ships' crews; again, the whaling industry, which employed a large number of African Americans and Cape Verdeans during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, is particularly rich in surviving resources. Local and regional newspapers are valuable for providing a background context for places and time periods. Most coastal newspapers carried current shipping information in a standardized location and format, and are easily referenced. Few, however, have been specifically indexed for access to Black topics, and researchers interested in exploring newspapers as a source might want to consult James Abajian's three volume *Blacks in Selected Newspapers, Censuses and other Sources; An Index to Names and Subjects*.

Once an individual is identified, state and local records can provide specific information in the form of birth, marriage and death certificates, registry deeds, and probate records. As these sources are accessible only through personal names, they are not included in this *Guide*. In their article on Absalom Boston, Lorin Lee Cary and Francine C. Cary provide a useful model for research on a known individual. The Carys used a number of sources, including vital records, local newspapers, registry deeds and even tombstones, to trace the biography of Nantucket's first Black whaling master.

Folklore and fictional works of literature that arose contemporaneously with historical events often help readers get at the heart of a subject, and can be effectively placed in an historical context. Melville's sea romances, for example, contain numerous references to Black sailors and their plight. Royall Tyler's *The Algerine Captive* (1797) has a harrowing description of a slave ship, quoted in Thomas Philbrick's *James Fenimore Cooper and the Rise of American Sea Fiction*. Chanteys, the shipboard worksongs of the nineteenth century, were derived from African and Afro-Caribbean songs of labor, and often contain descriptions of the working situation of Black sailors. Among collections of American chanteys, those of Joanna Colcord, William M. Doerflinger, and Frederick Pease Harlow are especially recommended.

Four discrete maritime subject areas are specifically addressed in sequential sections of this *Guide*: "Whaling"; "Merchant Trade"; "Navy"; and "Slaves and the Slave Trade." The slave trade section is included to provide background on the work of slaves aboard New England ships, and on the participation of Black crewmen aboard slaving vessels, but is not intended as a comprehensive introduction to the slave trade itself. Several Black New Englanders, most notably Captain Paul Cuffe of Westport, Massachusetts, were active in the movement to establish colonies of freed slaves in Africa, but the subject is generally considered to be beyond the scope of this project. Persons interested in pursuing research on this topic should consult Debra Newman's *Black History: A Guide to Civilian Records in the National Archives*, which has an excellent index to manuscript materials. And, while African Americans have played a major role in southern fishing industries, there were apparently few Black fishermen working in New England during the heyday of the schooner fishery from Gloucester, Marblehead and other ports.

Much work remains to be done on this subject before the contributions of African-American sailors and shore workers to the growth of maritime industries can be fully recognized. It is our hope that researchers using this publication will begin to tell the story of New England's Black mariners within the larger context of the region's economic, social and maritime history, and will not treat the subject of African-American seafaring as a separate entity. In his article "To Feel Like a Man: Black Seamen in the Northern States, 1800-1860," the best work to date on this subject, W. Jeffrey Bolster makes this point eloquently:

"Observers along the wharves and aboard ship during the years of the early republic saw quite a variety of African-American mariners—greenhands and old salts; casual laborers and committed professionals; adventuresome rakes and responsible providers. Contemporaries recognized the ambiguities and multiple realities of blacks' seafaring experience. Scholars should do the same, and resist the attempt to reconstruct that experience in entirely consistent terms" (Bolster, 4).



## Whaling

The American whaling industry of the nineteenth century, which provided thousands of African Americans with opportunities for employment and investment, is, fortunately, extraordinarily well documented. There are several reasons for this: a majority of the vessels involved were registered in relatively few ports; abundant leisure time on shipboard allowed the men and women involved to document their activities through journals, scrimshaw, sketches and photographs; and a number of institutions undertook collecting activities while the industry was still being actively prosecuted in New England.

In addition to the wealth of primary resources, there are a number of reference works that make it possible to find information on almost any vessel involved in whaling. Indispensable to any researcher is Alexander Starbuck's *History of the American Whale Fishery from its Earliest Inception to the Year 1876*, which lists the returns of whaling vessels to American ports year by year. Information on the rig and tonnage of each vessel is given, along with the names of the master and owner or agent. The returns of each voyage in oil and bone are included, as are any remarkable details. *Whaling Masters*, compiled as part of the Federal Writers Project of the Works Progress Administration, is a flawed but valuable resource that lists known captains of American whaleships and their commands. Reginald B. Hegarty's *Returns of Whaling Vessels Sailing from American Ports* carries Starbuck's list forward from 1877 to 1927, using the same format; and his *Addendum to Starbuck and Whaling Masters* provides an alphabetical index to Starbuck and a series of corrections and emendations to both originals. Dennis Wood's voyage abstracts for the period 1831-1862 substantially enhance voyage details: originally compiled in five manuscript volumes, they have been made accessible in microfilm facsimile at major repositories.

*Whaling Logbooks and Journals 1613-1927: An Inventory of Manuscript Records in Public Collections* by Stuart C. Sherman, Judith M. Downey and Virginia M. Adams, is an extremely helpful guide to the surviving

whaling logs and journals that are available to researchers. The manuscripts are listed in alphabetical order by name of vessel, and indexes provide access to the resources by date, repository, whaling ground, and the individual names of captains and journal-keepers.

*The Whalemens' Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript*, a newspaper of the trade, was published weekly in New Bedford between 1843 and 1904. It "contains the names of every whaler belonging to the U.S.," listing names, tonnage, master, agent, when sailed, where bound, date and place of last report, and catch (quantities of oil and bone). It also gives a weekly total of U.S. imports of whale products and the prices current in New Bedford. The originals or microfilm copies are available at the Kendall Whaling Museum, Mystic Seaport Museum, the New Bedford Free Public Library, and the New Bedford Whaling Museum. Robert Owen Decker's *Whaling Industry of New London*, and the *Information Bulletins* of the G.W. Blunt White Library of Mystic Seaport, supplement the statistical resources pertaining to whaling vessels and voyages of New London County, Connecticut. Stuart C. Sherman's *The Voice of the Whaleman* provides detailed information on utilizing whaling records for historical research, on shipboard journal-keeping, and includes voyage statistics for some 835 manuscript volumes in the Nicholson Collection of the Providence Public Library. And the various Ship Registry compilations assembled by the WPA, notably for the Ports and port Districts of New Bedford, Boston, Dighton-Fall River, Newport, Providence, and Bristol, R.I., provide useful indexes of personal names, masters and owners, vessel statistics, and some data about voyages.

There is no easy or precise way reliably to identify all of the African Americans from among the tens of thousands of men involved in the whaling industry as sailors, officers and investors, but certain kinds of documents can provide helpful information. Seamen's Protection Certificates provide physical descriptions, from which it is generally, but not always possible to determine race. Crew lists often had a space provided for physical descriptions, but the information is not con-

sistent. Diarists occasionally refer to the race of individuals in their shipboard journals, as Mary Chipman Lawrence did in meeting Captain Severino D. Pierce of the *Magnolia* in 1859. "He is," she said, "a Portugese with ... considerable black blood in his veins, but a very likely man for all that" (Lawrence, 185). Photographs and films are valuable for showing the large numbers of Black whalem- men active at the turn of the century, as well as documenting some of their specific ship- board activities.

Black participation in whaling during the colonial period was apparently quite intensive. Crispus Attucks, a fugitive slave from Framingham, Massachusetts, who was later the martyred leader of the Boston Massacre in 1770, was a professional sailor who served aboard at least one Nantucket vessel. Lorenzo J. Greene, in *The Negro in Colonial New England*, claims that "in some cases nearly half of the whaling crews were Negroes. As late as 1807 it was reported that the larger whaleships carried 'twenty-one men, of whom nine are commonly blacks; — the smaller — sixteen men; of whom seven are blacks.' The crew of the whaler, *Lion*, in that year carried three officers, eight white men, a boy and nine Negroes" (Greene, 1942, 116-117). Though Greene is probably making too great a generalization from his particular examples, there were, nonetheless, many Black whalem- en in the early years of the Republic.

Paul Cuffe, of Westport, Massachusetts, was so successful an entrepreneur that he earned a large measure of fame and promi- nence in his own time. He was born in 1759 to a Gayhead Indian mother and a father who had been an African slave. At the age of 16, Cuffe signed on a whaling voyage to the Gulf of Mexico. On his second voyage, a Revolu- tionary War-era trading venture to the West Indies, he was captured by the British and imprisoned. After the Revolution, he built a small coasting vessel and eventually became the sole owner of the brig *Traveller*, half- owner of the ship *Alpha* and the schooners *Mary*, *Ranger*, and *Sunfish*, and held shares in the schooner *Hope* and brig *Hero*.

Cuffe evidently had a talent for naviga- tion. Peter Williams, in his eulogy for Paul Cuffe in 1817, said that "he acquired such a

knowledge of navigation in two weeks as enabled him to command his vessel in the voyages which he made..." (Williams, 6). Cuffe also taught navigation to a number of local men and boys of various races and backgrounds, and "was so conscientious ... he would not deal in ardent spirits, nor in slaves, though he might have done either without violating the laws of his country, and with great prospects of pecuniary gain" (P. Williams, 8).

Members of the Cuffe family had extra- ordinary opportunities to own, command, and man vessels, and Paul Cuffe's heirs, including his sons Paul, Jr., and William, inherited a seafaring dynasty. Son-in-law Pardon Cook commanded three voyages of the brig *Elizabeth* (1839-41), and invested in the vessel when she moved to Westport in 1841. On a voyage of the brig *Juno* under Cook's command in 1843, Paul Cuffe's nephew, Asa Wainer, served as first mate. Another son-in-law, Alvan Phelps, was master of the *Traveller* on a whaling voyage in 1822 and on two trading voyages. Captain William Cuffe, son of the patriarch, led an African-American crew on the brig *Rising States*, a vessel owned by his brother-in- law, Richard Johnson, and other Black investors. Paul Wainer, a nephew and name- sake of Paul Cuffe, was captain of the New Bedford brig *Protection* (1821-2). Absalom F. Boston, who commanded an all-Black crew on the ship *Industry* in 1822, had two famous kinsmen—Paul Cuffe and Prince Boston, an ex-slave whose whaling voyage in 1770 ended slavery on Nantucket. The autobiography of Paul Cuffe, Jr, *Narrative of the Life and Adventure of Paul Cuffee* [sic], a *Pequot Indian: During Thirty Years Spent at Sea, and in Traveling in Foreign Lands*, was published in 1839. Some of the Cuffe women may also have been actively involved in the family business: Paul Cuffe's daughters Alice and Rhoda inherited owner- ship interests in the Westport brig *Traveller* which they held from around 1817 until after 1821.

Instances of African-American investment in whaling vessels after the Cuffe dynasty is still largely unexplored; however, Stephen Canright, citing Dr. Anthony Campbell, reports one vessel, "the *Black Star*, which



was entirely owned and manned by blacks and run on a typical commercial basis" (Canright, 6). Unfortunately, no further particulars are given regarding date or port of registry, and neither Starbuck nor Hegarty confirms that there was ever an American whaling vessel of that name. However, an Oxford-educated Liberian visitor to America in the 1840s, Alexander Crummell, later wrote that he had seen among Blacks in New Bedford "evidences of their unusual wealth, and of their large interest in shipping," and that he had "made the acquaintance" of "several parties... who were owners of whale craft," among them some youthful descendants of Paul Cuffe (Carlisle, 201).

Many African-American sailors became officers in Yankee whaleships. Peter Green was a young officer who unexpectedly became captain of the Nantucket whaleship *John Adams* in 1821. Signing on as second mate, Green took command after the captain and first mate both died in separate incidents. While it is difficult to establish the exact number of Black mates who served on American whaleships, Martha Putney has extracted statistics from the New Bedford crew lists in the National Archives for the period 1803-1860. According to Putney, there were 80 African Americans who held 110 positions as mates on 105 different voyages during that period, and an additional 55 who were probably Black.

Estimates on the number of African Americans working as boatsteerers, seamen, cooks, stewards, blacksmiths, coopers and greenhands on board whaling vessels vary widely. Martha Putney surveyed protection papers for New Bedford for 1809-1865 and found the names of 3,189 American-born Black sailors who had signed on for foreign voyages. At least 643 of them made multiple voyages, and one of them, James D. Scott of New York, made eleven voyages from New Bedford. Her survey of Nantucket papers for 1816-1860 produced 461 names. In an article entitled "Coloured Seamen—Their Character and Condition," in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* of 14 September 1846, the author estimated that 2,930 Black men were then employed in the whaling industry, an average of four aboard each of 732 ships from 33 ports:

"Some ships manning five boats, very often have from ten to twelve coloured men, second and third mates, three boat-steerers, five foremast hands, and cook, and steward. ... In fact, there can be no doubt about the actual number of coloured men engaged in the whaling service; the table may vary, but in my opinion, not enough to effect it materially. The number of ships are [sic] correct, and from my knowledge of whaling, having performed one voyage myself, and resided eleven years in New Bedford, one of the largest whaling ports in the Union, I think I am nearly correct" (Foner and Lewis, 198).

James Freeman Clarke's report of 1859, the "Condition of the Free Colored People of the United States," estimated that there were then some 2,900 Black men aboard American whalers, or about one man in six (Farr, 92). The "Report of a Special Commission to Inquire into the Condition of the Colored Population of New Bedford," produced by the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission in 1863, includes statements made by James Bunker Congdon, who described whaling voyages commanded by his father-in-law, Gideon Randall, to the effect that there were 20 Black men in a crew of 30. Randall was master of four voyages in the ship *Barclay* of New Bedford between 1801 and 1811, and though his crews were exceptional, they were not unique. Eleven men in the ship *America's* crew of 27 in 1843 were Black, and that same year at least a third of the crew of the ship *Omega* of Fairhaven was made up of African Americans (Farr, 87).

While census figures indicate a drop in New Bedford's Black population immediately after the Civil War, most whaleships continued to have a significant number of African-American and Creole men in their crews, and a ship that did not have several Black sailors was unusual in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Proportions were even higher in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Regular outward-bound calls at the Cape Verde Islands were made to recruit hands, and large numbers of Cape Verdeans were brought back to New Bedford when voyages ended. When artist Clifford Ashley took a 1904 cruise aboard the bark *Sunbeam*, there were 21 Cape Verdeans in a crew of 34, including the mate, Antonio T. Pina. Ashley documented the voyage in paintings and photographs; many of the latter are included in the anthology *Sperm Whaling From New*



*Bedford*, by Elton W. Hall. Researchers interested in these Black mariners should refer to the landmark 1985 article by Britton C. Busch, "Cape Verdeans in the American Whaling and Sealing Industry, 1850-1900."

With a commission from the American Museum of Natural History, Robert Cushman Murphy took a voyage on the brig *Daisy* in 1912-13, and all but three of the 27 men on board were Black, including First Mate João da Lomba and most of the other officers and boatsteerers. Murphy produced a wonderful account of his voyage, written in the form of letters to his wife, Grace, and published years later as *Logbook for Grace*; and his photographs from the voyage were published in book form as *A Dead Whale or a Stove Boat*. Two other collections of photographs are worth perusing for their depictions of largely African-American and Cape Verdean crews. *Whale Ships and Whaling*, by Albert Cook Church, includes photos taken at sea by Captain Henry Mandley, Jr., of the schooner *John R. Manta* and by Captain and Mrs. J. A. M. Earle of the bark *Charles W. Morgan*. A voyage of the *John R. Manta* is also the subject of William Tripp's *There Goes Flukes*. During his six weeks aboard the *Manta* in 1923, Tripp extensively photographed members of the crew, including the two Black mates, Mr. Lopes and Mr. Crowie, and a number of the Cape Verdean crewmen. Rare film footage of a whaling cruise in the schooner *Viola* (1916) documents the high proportion of African Americans in the crew; and even the commercial film *Down to the Sea in Ships* (1922) illustrates many men of color among the professional sailors used as extras in the whaleboat crews.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, a number of Black and Creole captains, some of them natives of Cape Verde and the West Indies, became masters of whaling vessels. Manuel F. Gomes was master of six whaling voyages (1898-1906), in the schooners *E.B. Conwell* and *Bertha*, and bark *Cameo*, of New Bedford. Gomes also held shares in the *Cameo* and in the whaling schooner *Mystic* (1908-15). John T. Gonsalves commanded eight voyages (1901-20) in the bark *Bertha* and schooners *A.M. Nicholson*, *Eleanor B. Conwell*, *Golden City*, *T. Towner*, and *William A. Graber*. Joseph H. Senna was

also captain of eight whaling voyages, in the schooners *Adelia Chase*, *Carleton Bell*, and *Claudia* (1906-19). Louis M. Lopes was master of the schooner *A.E. Whyland* in 1915. One of the most successful Black captains of this era was William T. Shorey, a Barbadian whose 22-year career as a San Francisco whaling master (1886-1908) is documented (with notable flaws) in E. Berkeley Tompkins' article, "Black Ahab." On the first of these voyages, which may actually have been a merchant cruise in the *Emma F. Herriman*, Shorey took along his wife, Julia. He later led fourteen voyages from San Francisco in the barks *John and Winthrop* and *Gayhead*, the auxiliary steamer *Alexander*, and the bark *Andrew Hicks*. João da Lomba, a native of Brava in the Cape Verdes and a naturalized American citizen, commanded the schooner *William A. Graber* in 1920, and, in 1922, he succeeded his longtime shipmate and mentor, Captain Benjamin D. Cleveland, as managing owner-agent for that vessel's final voyages.

It is generally believed that Black whalemasters were less often victims of discrimination than their counterparts in other maritime industries, or than African Americans ashore. The author of "Coloured Seamen" in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, himself a former whalerman and resident of New Bedford, claimed in 1846 that

"there is not that nice distinction made in the whaling as there is in the naval and merchant services; a coloured man is only known and looked upon as a MAN, and is promoted in rank according to his ability and skill to perform the same duties as the white man; his opportunities for accumulating pecuniary means--investing his earnings in whaling capital, is equally the same" (Foner and Lewis, 198).

While there is no evidence of formal segregation among the integrated crews of New England whaleships, there is no doubt that Black sailors were often the victims of discrimination. Whalerman Robert Smith Owen described a musical evening in 1838 aboard the ship *Warrena*, when he went forward to hear the Portuguese-speaking Black sailors playing the guitar: "They feel pleased by being taken notice of, and because they are darkies as the sailors call them—do not associate with them. Such unkind feelings I never can cherish, and whatever the

caste it pleases me to join in their conversation..." (Busch, 114). In 1900, one of the white mates of the schooner *Era* "refused to serve with a black boatsteerer in his boat, and the master, George Comer, put about in Long Island Sound to return for another mate" (Busch, 115).

African Americans were also involved in all aspects of the ancillary industries ashore, though the environment was not free from discrimination. Frederick Douglass, an experienced caulker, encountered hostility in the New Bedford shipyards which prevented him from practicing his trade. Undoubtedly other Black workers did, too. John Mashow overcame this problem by founding his own shipyard at Padanaram, where he designed and launched a number of important whaling vessels between 1831 and 1861. By 1838, blacksmith Lewis Temple was operating his own shop, and in 1848 he developed a harpoon with a riveted point that turned at right angles to the shaft when thrust into a whale's body. This "toggle" harpoon, which fastened to the whale more securely than other models then in use, was the most important technological innovation of the nineteenth-century whale fishery.

## Merchant Trade

Though African Americans, including Crispus Attucks and Paul Cuffe, are known to have worked on trading vessels during the Colonial period, research in this area is still sparse. There are occasional references to Black sailors in the period immediately following the Revolutionary War, as in Joseph Ingraham's journal of the Boston brigantine *Hope* (1790-92). However, unlike the whaling industry, documentation of early trading ventures is widely scattered and largely unexplored for this subject.

Crew lists and protection certificates provide a great deal of information after the turn of the nineteenth century. A survey of shipping papers from Salem, Massachusetts by Richard Gordon, indicates that African Americans served aboard almost 90 percent of the merchant vessels of that port prior to the Civil War. While the role of Black sailors

was not restricted to such service positions as cook and steward, Blacks commonly filled those jobs on shipboard. Two of the able-bodied seamen serving on the bark *Active* of Salem in 1807 are listed as cook or steward on other Salem voyages. Prince Farmer, a Salem native, made at least six voyages from his hometown, serving as cook only on the first, aboard the bark *Eliza* in 1805. He later made two voyages on the brig *Venus* and one each on the brig *Return* and ship *William*. William Reynolds of Norfolk, Virginia, Farmer's shipmate on the *Active*, served aboard seven different Salem vessels, as an able-bodied seaman on the ship *Two Sons* in 1803, the brig *Hind* in 1804, the schooner *Fame* in 1805, the *Active* in 1807, and the ship *Marquis De Someruelos* in 1809. Reynolds was the cook aboard the ship *Algol* in 1807, and the steward on the ship *Fame* in 1809.

Rhode Island shipping records have been extensively mined for information on African Americans by W. Jeffrey Bolster and Martha Putney. Bolster points out that "Black men occupied approximately 20% of the available berths in Providence, R.I. [between 1800 and 1820], an era when blacks comprised only 8.5% of Providence's population, and only 4% of Rhode Island's population.... As late as 1839, a fifth of the black men sailing out of Providence did so in predominantly black crews" (Bolster, 2,19). Putney identifies a number of Rhode Island vessels with fully-integrated crews in the first decades of the nineteenth century. The Newport brig *Cleopatra* had a crew that was 86% African-American in 1815; and the brig *Atlantic*, ship *George and Mary*, and schooner *Antelope* had evenly-mixed crews in 1816. The brigantine *Clarissa* of Providence made a voyage in 1816 with an all-Black crew, as did the schooner *Fame* in 1831.

City directories from the first half of the nineteenth century for Providence, Salem and Boston, and the Federal census of 1830 and 1840, identify individuals by name, address, race and occupation; and a survey of these suggests that if seafaring was not the primary African-American occupation, it was second only to the general category of "laborer." However, information from these sources can be misleading. The Boston City Directory of 1840 identifies 39 mariners and



45 laborers in the Black population, while the U.S. Census of that same year identifies 500 African Americans engaged in "navigation of the ocean" in Ward 2 alone. The *National Anti-Slavery Standard* of 14 September 1846 estimated that some 1,000 Black men and boys were then sailing regularly from Boston (Foner and Lewis, 197). A survey of Black families by Reverend R. Spaulding a decade earlier identified 171 mariners and 112 laborers. One problem in counting seamen is that they often shipped out of a port without having a permanent home there. For example, according to the 1842 City Directory, Salem had two boarding houses used exclusively by a transient community of African-American sailors (Farr, 224).

As in the whaling industry, members of Paul Cuffe's family were in the forefront of African-American activity in the merchant trades. Two of Cuffe's nephews, Thomas and Paul Wainer, commanded coastwise trading voyages in vessels that Cuffe owned. Thomas was master of the schooner *Hero* on a voyage to Portugal in 1803 and, like his brother, commanded both all-Black and interracial crews.

Northern vessels trading in southern ports provided a potential means of escape for southern slaves, and several slave narratives describe the passage to freedom on a ship from New England. Tom Wilson, who is extensively quoted in John Blassingame's *Slave Testimony*, was aided by "some of the coloured crew of the American cotton ship *Metropolis*," who, he says, "took me on board, and hid me away among the bales.... During the time I was secreted I was kept alive by the coloured men, who had been so good to me. They brought me something to eat and drink every night." Neither the captain nor any of the white crew knew of Wilson's presence when the ship docked at Liverpool, and he escaped to freedom (Blassingame, 340). Edinbur Randall was a slave who found a hiding place for himself on the bark *Franklin* of Portland while the vessel was preparing to leave Jacksonville, Florida for Bath, Maine. Randall left the ship at Holmes' Hole, on Martha's Vineyard, with the help of local Gayhead Indians, and without ever having been discovered by Captain Cooke (Blassingame, 321). Captain Thomas

Dalton of Boston was an African American who commanded three voyages to Havana in the ships *Venus*, *Easter Trader* and *George* (1822-1829). All of his voyages included calls at New Orleans and are recorded in customs records there (Putney, 1987, 60), but whether he may have assisted fugitive slaves is not known.

Fear of slave revolts, and the difficulties encountered in distinguishing between slaves and free Black sailors, led several of the southern states to pass "Negro Seamen Acts" after 1822. These racially restrictive laws proscribed the entry of African Americans into the major ports of the South, and ordered the arrest and detention of free Black sailors and Black passengers arriving on visiting vessels. These laws had a dramatic impact on New England's coastal shipping, which depended upon African-American labor. In 1846, the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* estimated that over 1,000 free Black sailors were imprisoned in that year alone at the ports of New Orleans, Charleston, Savannah and Mobile. The paper published a number of statements written by prisoners and former prisoners, which are reprinted in Vol. 1 of Foner and Lewis's *The Black Worker*. Massachusetts merchants challenged the legislation in 1842, petitioning Congress to intervene; and in 1844 the state appointed agents to supervise the treatment of jailed sailors at New Orleans and Charleston. Resolutions adopted by a group of Boston citizens condemning the acts as unconstitutional are reprinted in *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the U.S.*, edited by Herbert Aptheker.

The hostility displayed toward African-American sailors in U.S. ports was food for thought for Herman Melville, whose fictionalized account of his own transatlantic voyage in *Redburn* (1849) contains an interesting description of the reception received by African-American seamen in the principal English entrepôt:

"Speaking of negroes, recalls the looks of interest with which negro-sailors are regarded when they walk the Liverpool streets. In Liverpool indeed the negro steps with a prouder pace, and lifts his head like a man, for here, no such exaggerated feeling exists in respect to him, as in America. Three or four times, I encountered our black steward, dressed very hand-



somely, and walking arm in arm with a good-looking English woman. In New York, such a couple would have been mobbed in three minutes; and the steward would have been lucky to escape with whole limbs. Owing to the friendly reception extended to them, and the unwonted immunities they enjoy in Liverpool, the black cooks and stewards of American ships are very much attached to the place and like to make voyages to it" (Melville, 277).

Some idea of the views of Black sailors held by the non-seafaring population can be found in the remarks of William D. Huntington, a passenger on board the clipper ship *Contest* (1863), whose manuscript journal survives at the Peabody Museum of Salem:

"The officers are first rate & treat the crew as men ought to be treated. The latter are negroes & are most ludicrous to look upon, but work well and are all good singers. One tremendous fellow with feet that are perfectly immense is made Boatswain & causes a great deal of merriment wherever he goes. The steward is remarkably obliging & has had a great deal to do with the sea sick passengers."

After several derisive comments about the steward's assistant, "a perfect jackass," Huntington further reveals his bias in describing the following incident:

"This afternoon while the sailors were pulling on the top gallant halyards the runner broke & down came block & all. the block in its fall struck one of the niggers on the pate & knocked him senseless. Had it been a white man the blow would probably have killed him, as the block was large & iron bound & then there were some ten niggers exerting their whole strength on the rope."

Among African Americans who kept journals of their trading voyages are two men whose insightful narratives give us some indication of the treatment of Black sailors on shipboard and ashore. Charles Benson served for nineteen years as steward on the Salem bark *Glide*, traveling to Zanzibar, Mozambique and Madagascar. His four unpublished journals, in the collection of the Essex Institute, demonstrate his knowledge of seamanship and navigation and his ironic appreciation of "the excitement, danger, and money that a sea life brings." The autobiographical papers of sailor / labor organizer James H. Williams have been edited by Warren F. Kuehl and published as *Blow the Man Down! A Yankee Seaman's Adventures Under Sail*. Williams was an erudite sailor who served on a whaling voyage, coastwise

and Oriental trading voyages, and even a stint in the Navy, between 1876 and 1920. These experiences formed the basis of his lifelong advocacy of seamen's rights in the nascent years of the maritime labor movement.

In his book, *The Negro in the Offshore Maritime Industry*, William S. Swift points out that the maritime trades always provided opportunities for African Americans when hands were hard to find, and that, in fact, "maritime employers have been more objective in their hiring than any of their shore-based counterparts, but racial discrimination has still appeared during periods of labor surpluses" (Swift, 52). Bolster's Rhode Island research bears this out. When Jefferson's embargo threatened maritime commerce, "the proportion of integrated crews in Rhode Island dropped from three-quarters to half, and the number of available berths going to non-whites fell from twenty-two percent to fifteen and a half percent" (Bolster, 13). For individuals, a general decline in the maritime industries after 1840 was mirrored in a corresponding decline in personal possibilities "as Afro-Americans generally went from a position of numerical strength on specific ships in the early national period, to being alone on board as cook or steward in the antebellum years" (Bolster, 3). For the port of New London, Connecticut, Bolster examined 3,879 Seamen's Protection Certificates issued between 1803 and 1879, and found that "a significant whitening of the work force" was indicated after 1850.

Unlike whaling, the carrying trades seem to have offered little opportunity for a Black man to rise to an officer's berth. As late as 1911, Dorothea Moulton Balano praised the seamanship of Mr. Dawson, second mate of the Maine schooner *R.W. Hopkins*, who, even as an officer, preferred "to stay in the forecabin with the other three blacks, all good sailors." According to her husband, Fred, "Dawson would be a captain if he were white" (Balano, 66, 69). Problems encountered by African Americans in the twentieth-century merchant marine are well described by William S. Swift in *The Negro in the Offshore Maritime Industry*.

## Navy

Except for documents related to privately operated armed vessels, and those outfitted by colonial states, most of the records related to African Americans in the U.S. Navy are located in Washington, D.C., and are outside the scope of this project. However, as sailors in the nineteenth century often signed aboard Naval vessels for individual cruises, and alternated naval service with employment on merchant traders or whalships, some introduction to the role of African Americans in the Navy is appropriate here.

Much of the history of the Colonial Navy is concerned with private armed vessels, or privateers, many of which employed slaves and / or free Blacks. Howard Chapin's two books on privateering provide a good deal of information on sources available for persons researching this topic. Crew lists of the privateers *Yankee*, *Fly*, and *Andrea Doria*, all of which employed Black seamen, are included in *Naval Documents of the American Revolution, 1775-1776* edited by Clark and Morgan.

The New England states outfitted vessels during the Revolution, and in a 1775 broadside Connecticut advertised for "able-bodied sailors, men, white or black, to volunteer for naval service in ye interest of freedom" (Farr, 106). J.H. Trumbull prepared a "summary of the service of Negroes in Connecticut forces" in the Revolution, which is reprinted in Volume 1 of MacGregor and Nalty's *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents*. This valuable source also includes Massachusetts documents, among them a statement from the State Council that "Negroes seeking to enlist on board state vessels may do so." According to Dennis D. Nelson, "many of the thirteen original states promised emancipation, and there were additional inducements—bounties of money and land," for slaves that enlisted (Nelson, 1).

Federal policy was more discriminatory: papers and letters outlining orders to exclude African Americans from enlisting in the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps are reprinted in *Basic Documents*. Despite this policy, first implemented in 1798, "the Navy Department has estimated that about 1,500 or 10% of the

total number of men who served in the various navies were Afro-American" (Farr, 110). Among men impressed by the British Navy in the period leading up to the War of 1812 were a number of African Americans, including three of the four men taken from the American frigate *Chesapeake* by the British warship *Leopard* in 1807. While the Navy vacillated on policy, there were apparently many Black sailors serving on warships. Dr. Edward Cutbush, a physician who promoted exercise on shipboard to prevent scurvy, wrote in 1808 that "there will be no difficulty in procuring a 'fiddler,' especially among the coloured men in every American frigate, who can play most of the common dancing tunes" (Cutbush, 126). *Basic Documents* includes a copy of the Act of 3 March 1813 which again permitted free Blacks to enlist in the Navy.

Personal observations made by Ship's Surgeon Usher Parsons certainly indicate a significant number of Black seamen in the Navy after the War of 1812 era. Serving under Commodore Perry aboard the frigate *Java* in 1816, Parsons noted that the "white and Negro seamen messed together. About one in six or eight were Negroes." Three years later on the *Guerriere* he observed that "the proportion of blacks was about the same in her crew. There seemed to have been an entire absence of prejudice against the blacks as shipmates among the crew. What I have said applies to the crews of the other ships that sailed in squadrons upon this Lake" (Nelson, 3-4).

Discrimination in Navy recruitment was a recurring factor throughout the nineteenth century, and the subject was frequently discussed both in the Navy and in Congress, but the success of such legislation when labor was short is questionable. In an article published in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* on 14 September 1846, the author estimated that some 1400 Black men were then serving in the Navy despite Congressional prohibitions:

"Though a successful motion was made and passed in Congress in 1843, to exclude coloured seamen from the naval service, *waiters and musicians* excepted, yet, to my certain knowledge, no regard is paid to this law. Subsequent to the passage of this law, in fitting ships for the African station, the Secretary of the Navy issued a *special* order to ship a larger propor-



tion of coloured men than usual. Then again, another rule is to ship one coloured to every twenty white seamen; but in either case it is at the discretion of the Secretary of the Navy" (Foner and Lewis, 197).

Japanese artists painted the Black sailors who traveled with Commodore Matthew C. Perry to Japan in 1853 and 1854—as well as the minstrel show performed by white sailors in black-face which served as part of the entertainment. Scrolls, paintings and prints of this event are in the collection of the Peabody Museum of Salem.

Researchers interested in the role of African Americans in the Civil War Navy should consult Volume II of *Basic Documents*, "Civil War and Emancipation." Included in this volume are many documents from an unpublished "History of the Negro in the United States Navy," including official correspondence urging Naval Officers to employ fugitive slaves. In *Before the Mayflower: A History of the Negro in America*, Lerone Bennett, Jr., claims that one quarter of the sailors in the Union Navy were Black: "Of the 118,044 sailors in the Union Navy, 29,511 were Negroes. At least four Negro sailors won Congressional Medals of Honor" (Bennett, 286). In his unpublished Ph.D. thesis, *The Negro in the Union Navy: 1861-1865*, David Lawrence Valuska, provides extensive discussion of the difficult problem of determining Black participation in the Civil War Navy.

Following the Civil War, African Americans continued to enlist in the Navy, making up 10-14% of the total force, but they were increasingly relegated to the service roles of cook and steward. The percentage of Blacks assigned to those two positions jumped from 29% in 1870 to 49% in 1890, a trend that continued into the World War II era (Farr, 143). In his article, "Jim Crow in the Navy (1798-1941)," Frederick S. Harrod discusses the increasingly discriminatory policy of the Navy, noting that Black midshipmen were driven out of the Naval Academy soon after the Civil War and that by 1900 the Navy was approaching an all-white force. The history of the re-integration policy of the Navy is amply covered by Dennis D. Nelson in his book, *The Integration of the Negro into the U.S. Navy*.

## Slaves and the Slave Trade

Before the Revolution, both slaves and free Blacks were commonly found in the crews of New England ships, as they were elsewhere in America until Emancipation. Some fugitive slaves, like abolitionist Frederick Douglass, took advantage of the fact that African-American sailors were not uncommon and disguised themselves as seamen to make their escape. Another Maryland slave who fled to New Bedford, John Thompson, shipped as steward aboard the whaleship *Milwood* in 1842. His narrative, *The Life of John Thompson, A Fugitive Slave; Containing His History of 25 Years in Bondage, And His Prudential Escape*, describes a voyage in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, including landfalls in Cape Verde and South Africa. Crispus Attucks had escaped slavery by signing on several coasting vessels, and was on leave from a Nantucket whaleship at the time he was killed in the Boston Massacre in 1770 (Farr, 76). William Brown of Framingham, fearing that Attucks would escape by sea, had advertised in the *Boston Gazette*, specifically cautioning "Masters of vessels" against carrying off his slave (Temple, 255).

Private armed vessels commonly carried slaves among their crews, their service being arranged by owners who claimed whatever prize money was earned. The privateer *Duke of Marlborough*, a Newport vessel active during King George's War, carried free Blacks and eight slaves in its crew of 85 (Chapin, 1928, 125). In Salem during the War of 1812, a slave named Titus acted as a recruiting agent for privateering ventures, and another Salem slave, Richard Seaver, was captured with his vessel and imprisoned at Dartmoor, where he exercised a great deal of control over his fellow inmates (Farr, 59, 66).

Some free Black men found themselves sold into slavery after signing shipping articles. In an eighteenth-century petition to the Massachusetts legislature, alarmed sailors stated, "...we can aseuer you Honners that maney of our free blacks that have Entred on bord of vessels as seamen and have been sold for Slaves & sum of them we have heard from but no not who carred them away; Hence is it that maney of us who are good



seamen are obliged to stay at home thru fear..." (Aptheker, 1951, 20).

Legal employment of slaves on New England vessels ended after 1770 when a Nantucket court freed Prince Boston, an escaped slave, rather than return him to the custody of the Swain family, who claimed ownership of him. The case was described in "Free Negroes and Mulattoes," a report made to the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1821:

"Mr. Rotch, a member of the Society of Friends, received on board a vessel called the Friendship, at that time engaged in the whalfishery [sic], and commanded by Elisha Folger, a young slave by the name of 'Boston,' belonging to the heirs of William Swain. At the termination of the voyage, he paid to 'Boston' his proportion of the proceeds. The master, John Swain, brought an action against the captain of the vessel, in the Court of Common Pleas of Nantucket, for the recovery of his slave; but the jury returned a verdict in favor of the defendant, and the slave is said to have been 'manumitted by the magistrates.' Swain took an appeal from this judgement to the Supreme Court at Boston but never prosecuted it" (Moore, 117).

Given the numbers of Black men who participated as seamen in the commercial ventures of New England, it is not unlikely that some of them served aboard vessels that were engaged in the African slave trade. The evidence suggests that merchants from Massachusetts dominated the Colonial slave trade until Rhode Islanders assumed the larger share just prior to the Revolution. For the next 75 years, "the Rhode Island slave trade and the American slave trade were virtually synonymous," with more than 900 slaving vessels active from that small state (Coughtry, 1981, xi, 6). Martha Putney has identified eight potential slavers among vessels that left Newport with Black crew members in 1804-1805, and Jay Coughtry's statistical table of crew birthplaces shows African-born crewmen on Rhode Island slavers between 1803 and 1807 (Putney, 1972, 159; and Coughtry, 1981, 59).

"Although the slave trade might seem an unlikely occupation in which to find free black seamen, they were represented in the Newport trade in considerable numbers. ... Freed by legislation in 1784, Rhode Island's blacks continued to seek maritime employment. During the years 1803 to 1807, when blacks comprised 7 percent of Newport's population, black

seamen made up 21 percent of all Newport crews engaged in the West Indian, European, and African trades" (Coughtry, 1981, 60n.).

The crew of a slaver faced the worst possible duty then available in the American maritime trades. In his book, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, Marcus Rediker notes:

"Seamen disliked the African trade more than any other, and their reasons are not difficult to discern. First among them was health. The African coast was deadly to English and American seamen who visited it... Anglo-American seamen died in roughly the same horrendous proportions, and occasionally in even greater ones, as did the slaves themselves. During the daylight hours of the Florida's voyage from the African coast to Antigua in 1714, the seamen tossed overboard the corpses of four to five Africans daily, 120 to 360 slaves (33 percent) in all. At night, in order to disguise their own declining numbers, they flung the bodies of their brother tars into the blue: 8 of 20, or 40 percent, were lost, and this figure does not include those who died before the vessel reached the coast of Africa" (Rediker, 46-8).

Even after slavery was abolished in New England, vessels from Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire and even Maine, are known to have carried slaves to destinations outside the region. At least four whaling vessels sailing from New England between 1847 and 1862 ostensibly to hunt whales, ended up on the African coast engaged in the slave trade. *The Whalemens' Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript* of 30 November 1847 reports the seizure of the bark *Fame* of New London on the coast of Brazil with a cargo of African slaves. Similar articles on 27 August 1861 and 24 June 1862 provide details of the activities of the ships *Brutus* and *Margaret Scott*. As African Americans commonly served in the crews of whaleships at this period, it is not unreasonable to assume that some found themselves unexpectedly involved in illicit slaving.

Edward Manning, who signed aboard the ship *Thomas Watson* of New London for a whaling voyage in 1860, describes his unexpected slaving experience in the book *Six Months on a Slaver* (1879), which is extensively excerpted in George Francis Dow's *Slave Ships and Slaving*. According to Manning, the ship's try-pots were used to cook rice for the almost 800 slaves. Captive Krumen, natives of coastal Sierra Leone with

extensive maritime skill and experience, were assigned a variety of jobs on board the ship. Manning describes the relationship between the Yankee sailors and the Krumen:

"I suppose they all had names in their own dialect, but the effort required to pronounce them was too much for us, so we picked out our favorites and dubbed them 'Main-stay,' 'Cat-head,' 'Bull's-eye,' 'Rope-yarn,' and various other sea phrases. These men did certain parts of the work and at night kept order and silence in the hold. The business of feeding the negroes was entrusted to them" (Dow, 295).

George Pinckard, an English physician who wrote *Notes on the West Indies* (1806), describes slaves who "made themselves highly useful on the passage and were already becoming expert sailors" (Dow, xxiv).

No attempt has been made to identify here all of the material available on the carriage of Africans aboard New England slave ships as

hostage cargo, or the resulting legal, moral and social movements that led to the abolition of the trade. W.E.B. DuBois' pioneering work, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870*, is recommended to readers seeking an excellent summary of legislation related to the slave trade. Appendix C of that work describes "Typical Cases of Vessels Engaged in the American Slave-Trade." Some 313 documents related to the New England slave trade are reprinted in Volume III of Elizabeth Donnan's *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, including newspaper accounts, personal and business correspondence, and bills of sale. George Moore also reprints a number of documents, including several relating to the disposition of slaves captured by privateers on the high seas, in his *Notes on the History of Slavery in Massachusetts*.





## Collections and Resources

### The Kendall Whaling Museum

27 Everett Street, P.O. Box 297  
Sharon, Massachusetts 02067  
(617) 784-5642

The Kendall Whaling Museum collects artworks, artifacts, books, manuscripts, and information pertaining to all of the world's whaling cultures, from prehistoric times to the present. The documentation of New England's whaling industry is extensive and includes a wealth of information on Black whalemens.

Possibly unique among illustrated journals is one from a voyage of the bark *Orray Taft* (circa 1864-65) which includes watercolor sketches of African-American seamen. Pictures from this journal have been reproduced in Kenneth R. Martin's *Whalemens' Paintings and Drawings: Selections from the Kendall Whaling Museum Collection*, and in Margaret Creighton's *Dogwatch and Liberty Days: Seafaring Life in the Nineteenth Century*. Robert Smith Owen's journal from the ship *Warrena* of 1838 describes the treatment of Black sailors. The log of the bark *Adeline Gibbs* of 1875 describes a call at the island of São Nicolau in the Cape Verde Islands, where Captain Snell allowed his fourth mate and boatsteerers to visit their homes. Two journals kept by Washington Fosdick are also in the collection, one from the ship *Montreal* (1852-53), in which he used the pseudonym Washington Foster, and one from the ship *Saratoga* (1857-60).

There is a 1916 logbook of the schooner *William A. Graber*, commanded by a Black captain, John T. Gonsalves. Miscellaneous papers include the correspondence of Captain Edward Cole of Providence, who made an early whaling voyage on the ship *Abigail* in 1798, and later made a slaving voyage from the Bahamas to Charleston. A beautiful hand-drawn map of part of the West African coast is among the Cole papers. There is also a transcript of a lecture delivered in 1988 by Paul Cyr of the New Bedford Free Public Library, "Cape Verde: A Whaling Heritage: Vignettes of the Black Experience in the American Whale Fishery."

The Kendall Whaling Museum holds fine collections of historic photographs, and has developed a separate reference file of photos with Black subjects. There are several photos of Black officers and some images of their families. Vessels represented in this archive include the barks *Andrew Hicks*, *Canton*, and *Wanderer*; brigs *Daisy* and *Sullivan*; and schooners *A.E. Whyland*, *A.T. Gifford*, *Bertha D. Nickerson*, *Cameo*, and *Valkyria*; numerous images associated with the bark *Charles W. Morgan*; and many of William Tripp's photographs from the schooner *John R. Manta*. The museum also has a fully equipped whaleboat from the *John R. Manta* and fifteen journals of her voyages.

African-Americans are represented in several original works of art, including sketches and / or paintings by George Gale, Anton Otto Fischer, Clifford Warren Ashley, and Cape Verdean whalerman G. Telles; and prints by George Gale and Gordon Grant. Whaling on the West Indian island of Bequia is depicted in film footage and photographs, and in several watercolor paintings and ink drawings by Wren Bynoe.

A portrait of a Black man appears on a sperm whale's tooth scrimshawed by João da Lomba, the Cape Verdean mate of the brig *Daisy* during 1906-13, including the voyage documented by Robert Cushman Murphy in *Logbook for Grace and Dead Whale or a Stove Boat*. It is one of the few pieces of scrimshaw that can be positively attributed to a Black sailor. There is also an extremely rare African relief-carved scene on a sperm whale tooth; and an ornately engraved draftsman's triangle made of skeletal whale bone and inscribed "F. Manapsal" and "1906," possibly by a Cape Verdean hand. There are also five whaling dioramas made in the early twentieth century by ship-modeler Manuel Pacheco Gamboa of Somerset, Mass.; and an anonymous sailor-made shadow-box diorama model of a sperm whaling scene featuring a Black harpooner.

Permanent exhibits feature New Bedford shipsmith Lewis Temple and highlights from the African-American collection.

**Mystic Seaport Museum**

Greenmanville Avenue  
Mystic, Connecticut 06355  
(203) 572-0711

The bark *Charles W. Morgan*, the last of New England's square-rigged whalers and a vessel on which many African Americans served, is one of the central exhibits at Mystic Seaport. The G.W. Blunt White Library has excellent records of the *Morgan's* crews, including photographs and a number of logbooks and journals. Among other whaling vessels represented in the manuscript collection are several that called at the Cape Verde Islands to recruit hands, including the brig *Rebecca* (1797-99), schooner *Mary Jane* (1833), schooner *Pacific* (1858), bark *Alert* (1861), schooner *Charles Colgate* (1867-76), and schooner *Era* (1900). Numerous photographs of the *Era* also survive from the latter voyage. Among the shipboard papers of Black sailors are the logbooks of First Mate João da Lomba, written in Portuguese aboard the brig *Daisy* during 1910-12.

The James D. Driggs shipsmith shop, moved from Merrill's Wharf (AKA Homer's Wharf) in New Bedford to Mystic Seaport in 1944, was the home of one of the principal latter-day whalecraft smithies in New Bedford from 1885 to 1924. Lewis Temple, Jr., son of the inventor of the toggle harpoon, worked for the parent firm of Dean & Driggs, circa 1851, which advertised "Toggel & joint irons of Superior Quality" in 1853 (Kaplan, 1953, 86). Information on this shop can be found in Stuart M. Frank's article "James D. Driggs Shipsmith Shop," and in William N. Peterson and Peter M. Coope's *Historic Buildings at Mystic Seaport Museum*.

In Frank's forthcoming *Dictionary of Scrimshaw Artists*, whaleman / scrimshaw-artist Washington Fosdick (alias Foster) is tentatively identified as an African American. Mystic has an unusual club (bludgeon) fashioned by Fosdick from a sperm whale tooth, on which he etched a nude figure (the piece is illustrated in Richard C. Malley's *Graven by the fishermen themselves...*, 62). A plane that belonged to Black toolmaker C.E. Chelor of Wrentham, Massachusetts is also in the collection, as are several paintings depicting African-American sailors, including

one of the ship *Abula* by Nicolai Camilliori, and one of the ship *Pacific* at Marseilles by Joseph H.M. Pellegrin.

In 1988, Mystic Seaport instituted an annual fellowship, named in honor of Paul Cuffe, to support research on African-American and Native American mariners.

**Nantucket Historical Association**

Broad Street  
Nantucket, Massachusetts 02554  
(508) 228-1655

The Peter Foulger Museum and Library of the Nantucket Historical Association has collections related to Nantucket's Black population, many of whom worked in the Island's whale fishery. "Because of Quaker influence, the free black population grew rapidly on Nantucket; in 1820, 274 of a population of 7,266 were black, still segregated but free. They had their own churches and stores; they occupied a separate section of the town called 'New Guinea' and even established their own abolitionist society, led by Edward J. Pompey, a black man" (Haring and Michael, 111). Some of Pompey's letters are in a file related to Black subjects at the Foulger Library.

Ship registries and enrollments for the port of Nantucket can be accessed by vessel name, owner or master. Seamen's Protection Papers and crew lists are generally filed with the papers of a particular ship or individual, but a computerized index, which notes men of color, can be used to generate statistics on Nantucket's African-American mariners. A yearly census of Nantucket between 1796 and 1895 gives some inconsistent information about race and occupation.

A portrait of Absalom F. Boston, the African-American captain of an all-Black crew on the ship *Industry* (1822), hangs in the Foulger Museum. A song composed on the *Industry's* voyage by a crew member, contains the verse, "Here is health to Captain Boston / His officers and crew / And if he gets another craft / To sea with him I'll go" (Cary and Cary, 18).



**New Bedford Free Public Library**  
613 Pleasant Street  
New Bedford, Massachusetts 02740  
(508) 999-6291

Protection certificates issued to sailors by the New Bedford Custom House between 1841 and 1867 are one of the richest sources of information in the Melville Whaling Room of the New Bedford Free Public Library. The actual certificates are arranged chronologically, but the library also has an extraordinary alphabetical index of some 250,000 whalers who shipped out of New Bedford. Most of the data is from protection papers and crew lists spanning the century between 1820 and 1920; the majority include physical descriptions, age and place of birth. Other Custom House records include Cape Verdean immigration lists for 1823-1942, lists of alien crew members, and occasional information on the wives and families of whalers; however, none of these is indexed.

Owing to the interest of Joseph and James Bunker Congdon, who began to assemble materials relating to Black seamen as early as 1850, the New Bedford Free Public Library has a strong collection of personal documents, including most of the surviving papers of Paul Cuffe. Three logbooks document voyages commanded by Capt. Valentine Rosa, one in the bark *Canton* (1907-09) and two in the bark *Morning Star* (1912-14).

The library has microfilm copies of the 1855 Massachusetts State census and all of the Federal censuses. A typed index to the 1850 U.S. Census includes a section on non-Whites. Five different city directories for the period of 1836-1845 use a "c." to designate "colored" citizens. The S.C. Parmenter New Bedford Directory is complete through 1971.

Miscellaneous collections include an unpublished "Report of a Special Commission to Inquire into the Condition of the Colored Population of New Bedford," produced by the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission in 1863, giving information about Black whalers. Receipts from Lewis Temple's blacksmith shop and miscellaneous pamphlets and newspaper clippings are included in three manuscript boxes on "New Bedford Black History." A statue of Lewis Temple

holding his revolutionary toggle harpoon, sculpted by James Toatley and completed posthumously by Toatley's widow, Linda, in 1987, stands on the front lawn of the library.

**New Bedford Whaling Museum**  
18 Johnny Cake Hill  
New Bedford, Massachusetts 02740  
(508) 997-0046

The enormous collection of logbooks at the New Bedford Whaling Museum (Old Dartmouth Historical Society), is a particularly rich resource for the study of African-American seafaring. Several journals survive of voyages commanded by Black captains, including three from the ship *Elizabeth* of Westport under Captain Pardon Cook (1839, 1840, 1841); a merchant voyage of the brig *Rising States* under William Cuffe (1834-35); one of the schooner *Thrifer* of Boston under Severino D. Pierce, who was killed by a whale on that voyage (1870-71); one from the schooner *Golden City*, commanded by John T. Gonsalves (1901-03); and one from Joseph H. Senna's voyage as master of the schooner *Claudia* (1919).

A journal of the schooner *Clara L. Sparks* (1891) contains a particularly interesting account by Captain Joseph P. Benton of an altercation between two sailors, and their resulting punishment. Seaman Charles Williams complained to the captain that three times "I would be sitting down on my chest and this Antona Evero would come and fart right in my face." Williams ended his charges by referring to Evero as "a black Nigger." Benton made it clear that he would not countenance the use of such racial epithets "because I am a coulered man myself and all of my offercers are coulered but one" (Benton Journal, 24 August 1891).

Paul Wainer, a nephew of Paul Cuffe, kept the log of the bark *Hero* of Westport (1806-07); Wainer was probably the mate on the voyage. Washington Fosdick, using the pseudonym Washington Foster, was the keeper of two of the logs in this collection, one for the sealing schooner *Emeline* (1843-44), and one for the ship *Montreal* (1850-

53). A voyage of the brig *Sullivan* (1905-07) that is known from photographs to have been manned largely by men of color, is documented in the log kept by the African-American mate, Louis Lopes. The log of the *Manhattan* of Sag Harbor describes a visit to Japan eight years before the Perry expedition, with Pyrrhus Cance, an ex-slave, as one of the boatsteerers. According to Michael Cohn and Michael K.H. Platzer, "the visiting Japanese aboard the *Manhattan* were amazed at the black skin of Cance and gave him many gifts" (Cohn and Platzer, 87). The museum also has a contemporaneous painting of the *Manhattan* by a Japanese artist.

A number of vessels, including the bark *Wanderer* and the schooner *John R. Manta*, of which the New Bedford Whaling Museum has six logbooks and journals, are known to have had a large number of African Americans in the crew. The log of the schooner *Chile* describes a call at Cape Verde for recruits.

There are papers relating to Paul Cuffe, his brother John, and his son William, including documents of the brig *Traveller*, and business and personal correspondence concerning the colonization movement. In the Cory family papers are additional documents relating to Paul Cuffe, who was a partner with Isaac Cory in the brig *Hero* (1802-14). Cory also owned the schooner *Albert* of Philadelphia, which made a voyage to Madeira, Gibraltar and Malaga with a predominantly Black crew (1819-22).

Among the photographs in the collection are those taken by Clifford W. Ashley aboard the *Sunbeam* in 1904, when he had 21 Cape Verdeans among his shipmates, including the first mate, Antonio T. Pina. A selection from the 300 photographs, including several of landfalls in the Cape Verdes, was edited by Elton W. Hall and published under the title *Sperm Whaling from New Bedford*. There are also numerous prints and paintings of Black interest, a harpoon made by local African-American shipsmith Lewis Temple, half-hull models from the shipyard of John Mashow, and several miscellaneous receipts related to Mashow's business interests.

### **Peabody Museum of Salem**

East India Square  
Salem, Massachusetts 01970  
(508) 745-1876

Founded as the East India Marine Society in 1799, the Peabody Museum has one of the oldest and finest maritime collections in the world. The library was recently canvassed by volunteer Richard Gordon for documents relating to African-American seamen. There is a small collection of Salem crew lists in manuscript form, and an extensive collection of typescript crew lists copied from originals at the Customs House and Essex Institute. Mr. Gordon has prepared a copy-file of some 500 lists of Salem crews that include Black seamen.

In his article "Manuscripts Relating to Maritime Business Activities in the Peabody Museum of Salem," Ernest Dodge describes the kinds of records available. The town had an extensive trade to both the East and West coasts of Africa in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and numerous manuscripts document that trade. Interested parties should consult Norman R. Bennett et al., "Materials for African History in the Peabody Museum and Essex Institute." There are several accounts of voyages to Cape Verde, including the logbook of the *Columbia* (1811-12), Nathaniel Silsbee's account book from the ship *Benjamin* (1792-95), and papers of Samuel Hodges, the U.S. Consul at Cape Verde (1818-27).

The logbook of the *Benefactor* (1881-84) is especially interesting for its descriptions of Kru sailors hired at Liberia during two merchant voyages to the Gold Coast. A journal kept by William D. Huntington, a passenger aboard the clipper ship *Contest* of New York (1863), has numerous disparaging references to the ten or more Black crewmen. Accounts of African Americans impressed into the British Navy are mentioned in a journal kept by a Marblehead privateersman, Francis G. Selman, who was confined on several British prison ships during the War of 1812; the museum has a typewritten transcription of portions of this journal.



There are also pertinent decorative and fine arts holdings. An Abolitionist meeting is the subject of an unusual piece of scrimshaw by H. Comings. Black sailors served on Commodore Matthew C. Perry's mission to Japan (1852-54), and the museum has several contemporaneous depictions of the expedition by Japanese artists, including a minstrel show performed by white members of the crew in black-face, in the style of the Christy Minstrels.

**The Rhode Island Historical Society**  
121 Hope Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02906  
(401) 331-0448

The Rhode Island Historical Society is the repository for the Providence Customs House records, including what W. Jeffrey Bolster describes as "the best organized, best catalogued crew lists in the country." Among the manuscripts are many related to the Rhode Island slave trade, including the papers of Capt. George Scott (circa 1740), Capt. David Linsay (circa 1753), Richard Ward Greene (circa 1834), and James De Wolf, a member of the State Legislature for nearly 30 years and a U.S. Senator from Rhode Island. Bills of sale for cargos including slaves are available for the *Elizabeth* (1754) and other vessels.

Miscellaneous information on African-American seamen can be found in the papers of the firm of Edward Carrington & Co.; in the log of the ship *Resource* (1803); and in ship's papers related to the brigs *John* (circa 1806) and *Nelson* (1834). The latter vessel, registered in Eastport, Maine and commanded by Capt. Edward Tilley, had an all-Black crew when it sailed to Pictou, Nova Scotia for coal. A report of 24 June 1822, entitled "Return of Colored Persons Being Housekeepers," contains information on African-American residents of Providence, including seafarers.

The archives of the New England Yearly Meeting of Friends is a special collection (of which the curator is present on Thursdays only) accessible on microfilm Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 A.M. - 5 P.M. Yearly records of this Quaker organization include some papers of member Paul Cuffe.

**Providence Public Library**  
150 Empire Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903  
(401) 521-8731

The Nicholson Whaling Collection of the Providence Public Library has a number of logbooks and journals of whaling voyages commanded by Black captains, including one kept by Captain Pardon Cook on the brig *Juno* (1843-44); two from Captain Manuel F. Gomes' voyages on the bark *Bertha* (1901-07); six of John H. Senna's voyages as master of the schooners *Adelia Chase* and *Carleton Bell* (1906-16); six from Captain John T. Gonsalves' voyages in the schooners *A.M. Nicholson*, *Eleanor B. Conwell*, *T. Towner*, and *William A. Graber*, and bark *Bertha* (1906-20); and one kept aboard the schooner *A.E. Whyland*, commanded by Louis M. Lopes (1915). There are also logs from two voyages of the schooner *Bertha D. Nickerson* (1906-11), known from early photographs to have had a large number of Black men in her crew; and a logbook written in Portuguese by João da Lomba as first mate of the brig *Daisy* (1911-13), the voyage on which naturalist Robert Cushman Murphy collected specimens for the American Museum of Natural History and about which he produced the books *Logbook for Grace and Dead Whale or a Stove Boat*. Stuart C. Sherman's *The Voice of the Whaleman: With an Account of the Nicholson Whaling Collection* is a useful guide, not only to the logbooks and journals in this collection, but to shipboard record-keeping in general. The Nicholson Collection also contains turn-of-the-century photographs of whaling vessels and crews, and some miscellaneous documents, including crew lists; however, these are currently uncatalogued and difficult to access.

The C. Fiske Harris collection of Civil War and Slavery material, another of the Providence Public Library's Special Collections, is a rich resource of books, pamphlets, broadsides, newspapers, scrapbooks and some manuscripts.

## Other Collections

Because seafaring was an element in the experience of most Black families in New England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, personal narratives of the period often contain relevant material for maritime research.

The Collection of Afro-American Literature at the Mildred F. Sawyer Library of **Suffolk University** has a particularly good representation of these narratives, including those of Daniel Coker and Nancy Prince. Coker was a self-described "mulattoo" clergyman who made a voyage to Sierra Leone and described the traditional Kru sailors there. Nancy Prince's fascinating journal includes descriptions of her travels to New Orleans when the Negro Seamen's Acts were being strictly enforced, and voyages to Russia and Jamaica. A resident of both Salem and Boston, Prince was the wife, daughter, step-daughter and sister of sailors. A joint project of Suffolk University, the Museum of Afro-American History and the Boston African American National Historic Site, the collection is also strong in periodicals, histories, and fictional works by Black writers.

The **Museum of Afro-American History** maintains two historic buildings significant to Black communities in New England seaports, the African Meeting House on Beacon Hill in Boston and the African Baptist Church in the whaling community of Nantucket. The **Dukes County Historical Society** on Martha's Vineyard has the original records of the 1850 U.S. Census for the Island, which list both race and occupation; ship registers, included in the customs records; and the 1870 census of Gay Head, which lists personal names and professions but does not distinguish between the Black and the Native American residents. The **New England Historical Genealogical Society** in Boston has a large collection of city directories, census data, family histories and local records, and has published such valuable reference works as *Vital Records of Dartmouth, Massachusetts to the Year 1850*. The **Newport Historical Society** holds Newport crew lists for the period 1803-1860, and a sizable collection of documents related

to the slave trade of that port, including the correspondence of Thomas Richardson, Stephen Webb, Nicholas Coleman, Abraham Redwood, Jr. and William Vernon.

The extensive library collections of the **Essex Institute** in Salem contain many records for that port, including personal and business papers and Custom House documents. Four sea journals kept by Charles A. Benson between 1862 and 1881 are a truly extraordinary source of information. This Black steward worked aboard the Salem bark *Glide* on multiple voyages to Zanzibar, Mozambique and Madagascar. Literate and insightful, they discuss shipboard life, health problems and family matters. William B. Bates describes the slave trade at Mozambique in his personal journal of 1845; other accounts of the slave trade are included in the logbooks of the *Sophronia* and *Ionia*, and in the papers of Aaron Lopez. The personal diary of Salem minister William Bentley, published by the Essex Institute in four volumes, contains many references to the African-American population at the height of the port's seafaring activity. The scrapbooks of Historian Francis Henry Lee also contain references to the Black community in the early nineteenth century.

The **National Archives** in Washington, D.C., and the regional repository in Waltham, Massachusetts, have numerous crew lists, manifests, protection papers and shipping articles for New England ports, in Record Group 36. The Archives also hold extensive documentation on the slave trade, African colonization, shore industries, the Negro Seamen's Acts, and all except the most current records of the Coast Guard, Navy and Bureau of Census. Debra L. Newman's *Black History: A Guide to Civilian Records in the National Archives* is an indispensable aid to locating records related to African Americans. The Smithsonian Institution has a large archive of early photographs of maritime scenes, including many whaling photos also represented in the collections of the Kendall Whaling Museum, Mystic Seaport, the New Bedford Whaling Museum and the Peabody Museum.

**University libraries** are often the repositories of relevant records, but researchers must be willing to spend some time digging.



At Brown University, for example, there are holdings related to African trade and exploration in the John Carter Brown Library; and to the Navy and whaling in the Ann Mary Brown and Morse Collections of the John Hay Library. While Afro-American Studies or African Studies Departments might be able to guide a researcher to some University collections, the use of maritime records for the study of African-American topics is still so limited that there is a good chance that important documents in university libraries are underutilized even by potentially interested campus communities. Certainly the libraries at Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, Boston University, Boston College, Northeastern, New England's several state universities, and the well-established smaller colleges in some of the old seaport towns (such as Wesleyan and Bowdoin) are worth exploring for useful materials related to African Americans in the maritime trades of New England.

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**PROTECTION.**

No. 1012



**United States of America.**

STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS.

DISTRICT OF NEW-BEDFORD.

I Samuel Williams Collector of the District aforesaid,  
Do hereby certify, That  
An American Seamen, aged thirty seven years, or thereabouts, of the height  
of 5 feet 9 1/2 inches, black complexion, curly hair, black eyes,  
born at Little Rock

Delaware

has this day produced to me proof in the manner directed in the Act entitled "An  
Act for the relief and protection of American Seamen," and pursuant to the said Act,  
I do hereby certify, that the said Israel White  
is a **CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES** of AMERICA.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and  
Seal of Office, this 25<sup>th</sup> day of November  
in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and  
thirty. 1833

Samuel Williams Collector.