

Whale Products

Henry Bull Almy was not alone in his journey to New Bedford. This Massachusetts town was a center of the whaling trade in the nineteenth century. The whaling industry slowed considerably around 1860 as kerosene replaced whale oil as a source of fuel for lamps.

Bones were used for making tools such as a jaggging wheel (pie crimper), tooth pick, and emery board.



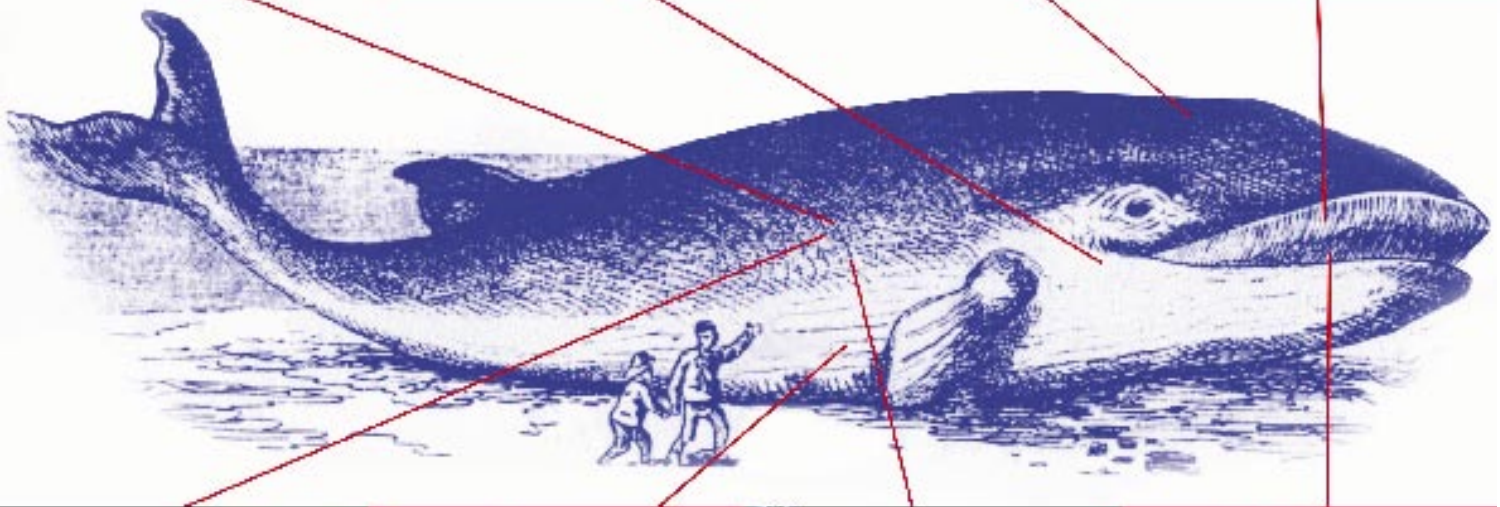
Baleen (often called whale-bone) was used for corset stays, umbrella ribs, brushes, and tool handles. This busk, a decorative corset stay, was incised with a poem and illustrations.



Spermaceti, liquid wax from the head of a sperm whale, was used for lighting in candles and oil lamps.



Teeth of sperm whales were used for scrimshaw.



Bones were used for making tools. The fids were used in making fishing nets. (The larger fid comes from a walrus.)



Ambergris was used to manufacture perfume.



Whale bone parasol handle.



Teeth of sperm whales were used for scrimshaw. The gaming pieces are also made of whale ivory.

Image Credits: Sperm whale tooth, fids, parasol handle, busk, courtesy of Brewster Historical Society Museum. Oil lamp, gaming pieces, jaggging wheel, emery board, toothpick, perfume bottles, courtesy of William Wibel Antiques.