

# Guide to the Whaling Logs Collection

MS 540



compiled by Thomas J. Connors

August 1980

Yale University Library  
P.O. Box 208240  
New Haven, CT 06520-8240  
(203) 432-1735  
(203) 432-7441

[beinecke.library@yale.edu](mailto:beinecke.library@yale.edu)

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## Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Collection Overview .....              | 3  |
| Requesting Instructions .....          | 3  |
| Administrative Information .....       | 3  |
| Conditions Governing Access .....      | 3  |
| Conditions Governing Use .....         | 4  |
| Preferred Citation .....               | 4  |
| Existence and Location of Copies ..... | 4  |
| Scope and Contents .....               | 4  |
| Collection Contents .....              | 5  |
| Inventory, 1830-1912, 1955, 1970 ..... | 5  |
| Selected Search Terms .....            | 12 |

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Manuscripts and Archives  
Yale University Library  
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<http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/>

**CALL NUMBER:** MS 540

**TITLE:** Whaling logs collection

**DATES:** 1830-1970

**BULK DATES:** 1830-1912

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 5 linear feet (2 boxes, 1 folio)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** A collection of eleven logs of whalers mostly sailing from New London and Norwich, Connecticut. Also two from Massachusetts (New Bedford and Provincetown) and one from Sag Harbor, Long Island. Also in the collection are newspaper clippings relating to whaling vessels.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0540>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0540>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to [http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr\\_copy\\_order.html](http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html). The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box  
f.      folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Conditions Governing Access

The entire collection is available on microfilm. Patrons must use FILM HM 21 instead of the originals.

## **Conditions Governing Use**

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## **Preferred Citation**

Whaling Logs Collection (MS 540). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## **Existence and Location of Copies**

Log records of thirty-nine whaling and sealing voyages are available on microfilm (3 reels, 35mm.) from Scholarly Resources, Inc., Wilmington, Delaware.

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## **Scope and Contents**

A collection of eleven logs of whalers mostly sailing from New London and Norwich, Connecticut. Also two from Massachusetts (New Bedford and Provincetown) and one from Sag Harbor, Long Island. Also in the collection are newspaper clippings relating to whaling vessels.

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## Collection Contents

### Inventory, 1830-1912, 1955, 1970

*2 linear feet (2 boxes, 1 folio)*

For a full description of the logbooks and voyages of these vessels see the print finding aid in Manuscripts and Archives.

Entire collection is available on microfilm. Patrons must use FILM HM 21 instead of originals.

#### Logs

|                              |   |   |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| b. 1, f. 1, reel 1reel<br>1U | <p><i>Bertha</i> (bark) of New Bedford, Mass.<br/>English<br/>Home Port: New Bedford, Massachusetts<br/><br/>Period of cruise: October, 1911 - September, 1912<br/><br/>Master: Arthur O. Gibbons<br/><br/>Type: Bark<br/><br/>Cargo: Whale oil<br/><br/>Pages: 128</p> | <p>1911 October<br/>21-1912<br/>September 7</p> |
|------------------------------|---|---|

The cruise departed from New Bedford and proceeded to the "Western Grounds" in the area of the Azores. Almost from the start they were plagued with lack of equipment or faulty equipment. Ten days out they found they had no matches. A week later they discovered they had no smoke stacks for the try works and had to improvise some till they reached St. Antoine. Then they found faulty blocks and windlass. After that they found one of the try pots cracked, which meant a trip to Barbados for a replacement. The bark never made it, because it couldn't beat to windward. For 103 days they didn't sight a whale. But after ten months they did process some 597 barrels of whale oil, mostly in the central Atlantic. There are many days without log entries, and whaling stamps, where they exist, are sketched in with pencil. The same type of lengthy navigation figures which appear in the log of the "Ellen A. Swift" (Master Gibbons) appear in the same handwriting in this log. Five pages are of special interest. (1) The fly leaf records the navigation locations of four important whaling ports in the Azores. (2) Page 1 records the locations of where whales were sighted during the preceding year. (3) Pg. 134-135 gives oil inventory. (4) Page 140 records a value scale for bbls. of oil. (5) Page 142 records the professional service record of Captain Gibbons from 1877 to 1912 with names of vessels on which he served and his title or rank on each such vessel.

## Logs (continued)

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| b. 1, f. 2, reel 1reel<br>1U   | <p><i>Commodore Perry</i> (ship) of New London, Conn.<br/>English<br/>Home Port: New London, Conn.<br/>Period of cruise: August, 1834 - January, 1836<br/>Master: George Hobron<br/>Type: Ship<br/>Cargo: Whale oil and bone<br/>Pages: 120</p>   | 1834 August 2-<br>1836 February 29        |
| <p>This was a whaling cruise to the then popular whaling grounds in the central South Atlantic Ocean between the islands of St. Helena and Tristan da Cunha. Enroute to the South Atlantic they stopped at Fayal in the Azores and counted 21 ships and 4 brigs in port on August 4, 1834. By July 4, 1835 they had taken 16 whales, possibly representing 1000 bbls. of oil. Some of this oil and some whale bone they sent home on the vessel "Palladium". The second year of the cruise they established a base for their operations near Walvis Bay, coast of West Africa, where they stayed for about a month. Unusual action is mention of trying to take more humpback whales - instead of just right whales, sperm whales, and sulphur bottom whales. Great number of whalers sighted and hailed testifies to great whaling activity in this region at the time. All kinds of supplies abounded on the African coast. On the homeward trip very careful navigational computations were entered to aid in plotting the speediest return possible. No whaling stamps appear in this log. Mention is made of contact with Hottentots in procuring supplies.</p> |   |   |
| b. 1, f. 3, reel 1reel<br>1U   | <p><i>Ellen A. Swift</i> (schooner) of Provincetown, Mass.<br/>English<br/>Home Port: Provincetown, Massachusetts<br/>Period of cruise: December, 1902 - September, 1904<br/>Master: Arthur O. Gibbons<br/>Type: Schooner<br/>Cargo: Whale Oil<br/>Pages: 199 [Pp. 1-197, 279, 280J (blank pages 216-271, 286, 287)</p> | 1902 December<br>11- 1904<br>September 13 |
| <p>This was a whaling voyage to the so-called "Western Banks" in the central Atlantic Ocean between the Azores and Cape Verde Islands. The log is not well kept and lacks daily entries. It is apparent several men had a hand in making the entries. Occasionally a pencil sketch of a whale substitutes for a stamp record. The cruise got off late, being delayed four days by a snowstorm; then they developed leaks, broke the main boom, and found all their potatoes frozen. In the spring of 1903 the Master borrowed a chronometer from the bark "Canton" to be returned or paid for at Fayal. They signed on most of their whaling crew at St. Vincent, (15 men).</p> <p>[Of incidental interest: Other random notations (after p. 199) in this volume make mention of three other vessels: - Bark "Alice Knowles"; bark "Andrew H. Lake"; bark "Charles W. Morgan"; which is now at Mystic, Connecticut, museum]</p>  |   |   |

## Logs (continued)

|                              |   |                                 |
|------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| b. 1, f. 4, reel 1reel<br>1U | <p><i>Era</i> (schooner) of New London, Conn.<br/>English<br/>Home Port: New London, Conn.<br/>Period: June - August, 1888<br/>Master: John O. Spicer<br/>Type: Schooner<br/>Cargo: Whale oil and other oil and skins<br/>Pages: 6 [thress sheets (handwritten on both sides)]<br/>Routine entries while schooner on location in Davis Strait or Greenland area where stationed for whaling, sealing or hunting operations for indefinite period.</p>   | 1888 June 13-<br>August 2       |
| b. 1, f. 5, reel 2reel<br>2U | <p><i>Margaret</i> (schooner) of Norwich, Conn.<br/>English<br/>Home Port: Norwich, Connecticut<br/>Period of cruise: October, 1909 - July, 1910<br/>Master: Arthur O. Gibbons<br/>Type: Schooner<br/>Cargo: Whale oil<br/>Cargo: Whale oil<br/>Departing from New London on a whaling voyage to the South Atlantic, vessel was found to have a bad leak which could not be repaired at sea. The schooner hastened to Barbados to be dry docked; then waited 29 days for permission from home to repair leak; then lost another week waiting for a dry dock to be free. Lost another ten days repairing leak. Then cruised north of Santo Domingo to Great Inagua Island. No whales, so headed for Norfolk, Va. Lost about 5 days there when 10 of crew quit and new men recruited. Then for two months off Cape Hatteras near the Gulf Stream they had fair ,success whaling. Away from home for 288 days.</p> | 1909 October<br>14-1910 July 30 |

## Logs (continued)

|   |   |                                     |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| b. 1, f. 6, reel 3reel<br>3U  | <p><i>Talma</i> (schooner) of New London, Conn.<br/>Home Port: New London, Connecticut</p> <p>Period of cruise: October, 1832 - March, 1833</p> <p>Master: Gordon L. Ailyn</p> <p>Type: Schooner</p> <p>Cargo: Seal Skins</p> <p>Pages: 24</p>  | 1832 October<br>21-1833 March<br>30 |
| b. 2, f. 8, reel<br>1reel 1U  | <p><i>Era</i> (schooner) of New London, Conn.<br/>English</p> <p>Home Port: New London, Connecticut</p> <p>Period of cruise: June, 1879 - November, 1880</p> <p>Master: Captain Spicer, John O.</p> <p>Type: Schooner</p> <p>Cargo: Whale oil and bone; seal and bear skins</p> <p>Pages: 184</p> | 1879 June<br>24-1880<br>November 24 |
| <p>The beginning pages and the end pages of this log seem to be missing. The log entries commence with the "Talman situated in the South Atlantic, southeast of Argentina, bound for Staten Island and the coast of Tierra del Fuego. Careful navigational notations are recorded as well as frequent soundings, since they followed a coastal route. Constant heavy gales and high seas. They worked the southern coast of Patagonia without result. Fighting snow, sleet and hail they went ashore on Staten Island on November 8, 1832 and took some seals. While working the coast of Tierra del Fulgo, they met other sealers and native Indians; they lost a crewman who fell 50 feet from masthead and was drowned. Log entries end in this area. Many skins taken.</p>  |   |                                     |
| <p>This is a whaling cruise to the Hudson Bay area. Upon arrival there, they set up a base ashore near the entrance to Hudson Strait. They operated from the schooner, but also retained natives to hunt whales in small boats and beach them to be cut up. By the end of August, 1879, pack ice made them give up working Hudson Bay, Fox Channel and Hudson Strait. Mention made that schooner "Delia Hotchkiss" also in the area. By December 1, 1879 pack ice hampering operations. At the end of December with temperature at -28°, they "banked ship" for the winter at edge of pack ice. With native help they engaged in seal and bear hunting during winter - suffering great hardship. By February 1 schooner was 7 miles from edge of ice pack. By February 12, thermometer had been below zero for 6 weeks. By April 15 small boats could be drawn to edge of ice pack, but the "Era" was ice-bound for 8 months and 8 days. During the winter their supply base ashore was robbed of blubber and bone stored there by crew of a vessel identified by natives as the "Aby Bradford." October 25, 1880 they returned to New London. A most arduous cruise.</p> |   |                                     |



## Logs (continued)

|                                 |   |                                       |
|---------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| b. 2, f. 9-10, reel<br>1reel 1U | <p><i>Hamilton</i> (ship) of Sag Harbor, Long Island, New York (with map)<br/>English<br/>Home Port: Sag Harbor, Long Island, New York<br/>Period of cruise: July, 1840 - April, 1842<br/>Master: Isaac Ludlow<br/>Type: Ship<br/>Cargo: Whale oil<br/>Pages: 192</p> <p>This is an unusually complete account of a successful whaling cruise in three areas off the west coast of Australia. Voyage statistics and whaling stamps are carefully recorded. A printed map of route going and returning, with location of all catches. Captain Ludlow was an active Master. Mention is made of meeting ship with scurvy sufferers to which was transferred potatoes, flour and bread in exchange for a cask of oil (July 15, 1840). The crew got little relief from duty. Christmas, 1841, was at Geographe Bay, S. W. Coast of Australia. Enroute home they spent about a week at St. Helena Island. They took 46 whales on the voyage, producing cargo of 2249 barrels.</p>   | 1840 July 3-1842<br>April 30          |
| b. 2, f. 11, reel<br>3reel 3U   | <p><i>Roswell King</i> (ship) of New London, Conn.<br/>Home Port: New London, Conn.<br/>Period of cruise: August, 1886 - June, 188?<br/>Master: David Shepard<br/>Type: Ship<br/>Cargo: Whale (or other oil from seal and walrus) and skins<br/>Pages: 73</p> <p>This is a log of a whaling vessel already on location, probably in the Hudson Strait area, at a place called "King Harbor". The ship was used as an operating base for whaling and hunting seal, walrus, bear and deer. Because of ice, active whaling was only done for about three months. Natives were employed as hunters. The log entries are mostly day-to-day weather reports. It was customary to send out natives starting about March on week-long whaling trips in small boats. On November 5, 188? the ship froze in permaturely (about a month early) and had to be chopped out. In the spring, ship was usually ice-free by end of June. On September 2, 188?, the mate died. Though whales seemed numerous, the ice floes cut down the number captured.</p> | 1886 August<br>19-1889 June 12        |
| b. 3, reel 1reel 1U             | <p><i>Connecticut</i> (ship) of New London, Conn.<br/>English<br/>First voyage<br/>Home Port: New London<br/>Period of cruise: September, 1832 - March, 1833<br/>Master: Robert N. Tate<br/>Type: Ship<br/>Cargo: Whale oil</p>   | 1832 September<br>27-1834 March<br>12 |

Pages: 40

The account of the cruise starts with the ship already in the South Atlantic in the area of Tristan da Cunha, its most successful fishing area. Farther south they found no whales. Returning home they stopped at St. Helena, where the crew got drunk. On the whaling grounds there were 12 ships in sight at one time on November 7, 1832. On December 28, 1832 they reported picking up adrift 17 bb1s. of flour, 12 kegs of lard, and 8 boxes of Havana cigars, and the rudder of a yawl. Final entry of this voyage was made as ship was off Cape Hatteras homeward bound. Whaling stamps are used.

[First 40 pages of a series of log sheets enclosed in a burlap cover containing also the log of a later cruise of ship CONNECTICUT.]

Second Voyage

Home Port: New London, Connecticut

Period of Cruise: May, 1833 - March, 1834

Master: Robert N. Tate

Type: Ship

Cargo: Whale oil and freight from St. Helena

Pages: 67

Entries for this voyage start some 400 miles east of New London en route to the South Atlantic Whaling Grounds off Tristan da Cunha via Fayal in the Azores and the Cape Verde Islands. Large number of dead whales she found and processed; large number of whales sank. She liked company while cruising and would keep another whaler she knew in sight for days. Homeward bound she picked up a cargo of seal skins and 138 bundles of whale bone as freight for New London from the Island of St. Helena. Log entries end while homeward bound south of the Cape Verde Islands.

[Second part (pages 41-102) of a series of log sheets enclosed in a burlap cover containing also log of an earlier cruise of ship CONNECTICUT.]

## Logs (continued)

|                     |   |                             |
|---------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| b. 3, reel 3reel 3U | <p><i>Stonington</i> (ship) of New London, Conn.<br/>Home Port: New London, Connecticut<br/>Period of cruise: July, 1830 - June, 1831<br/>Master: Phi1etus Pierson<br/>Type: Shp<br/>Cargo: Whale oil and whale bone<br/>Pages: 102</p> | 1830 July 7-1831<br>June 20 |
| b. 1, f. 7-8        | Newspaper clippings re whaling vessels  | 1955, 1970,<br>undated      |

The volume commences with 14 pages of miscellaneous business notations and chronometer readings. The voyage was from New London, Conn., to Patagonia via the Azores. This whaler seemed to be partial to the taking of right whales, since they took no action against the many finbacks sighted. Great number of whales chased but not captured. Abundant whales in the Spath Atlantic. The ship suffered much from storm damage in the South Atlantic and reported that another whaler the "Acasta" had her try works washed away by a heavy sea sweeping aboard. On October 21, 1830 the log reports that they shot an albatross with a vial tied to its neck containing a message from the whaler "Electra" giving the location of where whales were sighted. Has no whaling stamps.

## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

Shipping -- Connecticut  
Shipping -- Massachusetts  
Shipping -- New York (State)  
Whaling  
Whaling ships

### **Geographic Names**

New Bedford (Mass.)  
New London (Conn.)  
Norwich (Conn.)  
Provincetown (Mass.)  
Sag Harbor (N.Y.)  
West Indies

### **Genres / Formats**

Logs (records)

### **Corporate Bodies**

Commodore Perry (Ship)  
Connecticut (Ship)  
Hamilton (Ship)  
Roswell King (Ship)  
Stonington (Ship)